

Governing parties suffer losses in Danish election

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Denmark's 24 March parliamentary election saw a sharp drop in support for the three governing parties and a fragmented parliament with no clear path to a new majority.

Prime Minister and Social Democrat leader Mette Frederiksen called the election more than six months early with the hope of capitalising on her increased popularity following the clash with US President Donald Trump over the ownership of Greenland, an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark. Her party ended up with 21.9 percent of votes cast, a decline of over 5 percentage points from the last election in 2022, and 38 seats in the 179-seat parliament. It was the Social Democrats' worst ever result in a national election since 1903.

The election was arguably even worse for the Liberals (Venstre). Denmark's oldest party obtained its worst ever election result, winning just 10.1 percent of the vote and 18 seats. The Moderates, a breakaway from the Liberals led by Lars Løkke Rasmussen, a former Liberal Prime Minister and outgoing Foreign Minister in Frederiksen's Social Democrat/Venstre/Moderate government, took 7.7 percent of the vote and 14 seats. Overall, the three-party coalition could not muster 40 percent of the vote between them.

The main beneficiaries of the collapse in support for the government were the far right and parties claiming to be on the "left." The Socialist People's Party (SF) took 11.6 percent of the vote and became Denmark's second-largest party. SF's origins go back to a split in the Danish Communist Party following the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which prompted long-time Stalinist leader Aksel Larsen to establish SF in 1958. The party has repeatedly served as a junior partner of Social Democrat-led governments over the years and has recently portrayed itself as a voice for green politics.

The Unity list, also known as the Red-Green Alliance (RGA), achieved a modest increase in its vote, increasing from about 5 percent to 6.3 percent. It was created in the late 1980s as an electoral alliance between the Stalinist DKP, the Socialist Workers Party, the Danish section of the anti-Trotskyist United Secretariat, and elements associated with

the New Left.

The far-right Danish People's Party (DF) almost trebled its share of the vote to 9.1 percent with a Trump-style "Denmark first" campaign.

Neither the traditional "red block" of parties on the left or "blue block" of right-wing parties reached the 90 seats needed for a governmental majority in the 179-seat parliament. The result produced a highly fragmented parliament, with 12 parties represented, but only three, the Social Democrats, SF, and Venstre, winning more than 10 percent of the vote.

Frederiksen visited King Frederick Wednesday to formally submit the resignation of her outgoing government. Talks on a new coalition are complicated by the fact that Rasmussen, whose party holds the balance of power, has refused for the time being to join a government that makes any arrangement with the Unity List, whose votes would be needed for a Social Democrat-led government.

Liberal leader Troels Lund Poulsen has ruled out joining another government with the Social Democrats, urging Rasmussen to join with the right-wing parties to form a government under Venstre's leadership that would at least have to depend on the support of the far-right DF.

Later in the day, the Royal Household announced that Frederiksen would lead talks with the aim of forming a minority coalition with SF and the Social Liberals, which won 20 and 10 seats respectively.

Whatever the outcome of the parliamentary horse-trading, the election indicates, in a highly distorted form, the growth of opposition to the political establishment. Frederiksen has led a right-wing government for the past seven years, first as a minority Social Democrat administration between 2019 and 2022, and then in coalition with Venstre and the Moderates. She has overseen a massive increase in Denmark's military spending, which has risen from about 1.3 percent of the GDP in 2022 to 3.5 percent this year. This has been paid for by attacks on the working class, including the elimination of a paid public holiday.

Given this record, the attempt by Frederiksen to appeal to

growing anger over social inequality during the campaign with a proposal to introduce a wealth tax fell flat.

The Danish prime minister's partnership with fascist Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on immigration policy underlines the absurdity of any attempt to find any principled difference between Denmark's "red block" and "blue block" parties.

Just five days before the election, Frederiksen and Meloni authored a joint letter to the European Union Commission and Council meeting, urging participants to adopt even more stringent measures to keep refugees out of Europe amid the ongoing US/Israeli war of extermination against Iran. That the Social Democrats fully endorse this war was demonstrated by Denmark's vote in the United Nations Security Council in favour of Resolution 2817 (2026), which condemned Iran's retaliatory missile strikes in the Gulf without even mentioning the carpet bombing of Iran by the US and Israel.

A major reason for the revival of the far-right DF, which came close to falling below the 2 percent hurdle for parliamentary representation last time around, is that Frederiksen and her Social Democrats have made its fascistic anti-immigrant witch-hunting mainstream. With a few cosmetic changes, Frederiksen's government has retained a racist law allowing authorities to designate poor residential areas with a majority of non-native residents as "ghettos." Local authorities can then force people to relocate in the name of modernising the neighbourhood.

In her joint letter with Meloni, Frederiksen wrote of the risk that more refugees could come to Europe to flee the war on Iran: "We cannot afford to be caught by surprise. This means further strengthening our borders so that all member states are adequately equipped to ensure that the EU has full control of its external borders." On election night, Frederiksen parroted far-right talking points in her speech to Social Democrats, vowing that a new government under her leadership would deport "foreign criminals."

The parties to the "left" of the Social Democrats serve as safety valves for containing mounting opposition to the status quo. SF, which now hopes to take seats in a Social Democrat-led government, has provided crucial support to many of Frederiksen's main projects. This includes the massive increase in military spending, which SF and several other non-governing parties backed since the finalisation of a cross-party parliamentary agreement in 2022.

Both SF and the Red-Green Alliance have championed imperialist propaganda about the war in Ukraine being a fight for "democracy," fuelling the ideological justification for rearmament and public spending austerity. This is closely connected with their promotion of European imperialism as a supposed progressive counterweight to the Trump-led

United States. Denmark viewed Washington as its closest foreign policy ally throughout the Cold War and up to the recent period. Copenhagen deployed troops to Afghanistan and backed the war in Iraq. However, Trump's repeated threats to seize Greenland have forced even Frederiksen to admit that the US is no longer Denmark's closest ally.

Her government's response to Trump's threat was to deepen Denmark's collaboration with the major European imperialist powers in their rearmament drive. In 2022, the Social Democrats organised a referendum to abrogate Denmark's opt-out from European Union defence policy, which allowed closer cooperation with EU members on military affairs.

Following Trump's latest threats, the government dispatched soldiers with live ammunition to Greenland and agreed with the European NATO powers to a major build-up of military forces in the Arctic under the banner of NATO's Arctic Sentry mission. Denmark's goal is to find another imperialist patron to back up its continued hold over Greenland and the Faroe Islands, which are key to Copenhagen's claim to be an Arctic power.

SF and the RGA went along with all of this. At the height of the dispute with Trump, RGA leader Pelle Dragsted declared that Frederiksen's government deserved everyone's full support because of the crisis in which Denmark found itself. Party statements described the European powers' military build-up in the region as a defensive response to Trump.

As has been the case with Social Democrat-led governments across Europe, Frederiksen's time in office has resulted in a sharp shift of official politics to the right. This does not reflect mass support in the Danish population for far-right politics but rather the embrace of the far right by the political establishment and the smothering of opposition among leftward-moving workers by the parties of the nominal "left."

An acceleration of this development can only be prevented through the building of a genuine socialist leadership in the working class in Denmark and across Europe, committed to linking the struggle against militarism and war with the fight against austerity and anti-immigrant chauvinism. This requires the construction of a Danish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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