

Swedish government commits to coalition with fascist Sweden Democrats after upcoming parliamentary election

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Over the past two months, the Swedish political establishment has moved to consolidate the Sweden Democrats—the far-right party that emerged from the neo-Nazi milieu of the 1980s—as the dominant force in official politics. Prime minister Ulf Kristersson publicly committed to include them in any future right-wing government. Against the backdrop of a broader resurgence of far-right and openly fascist parties across Europe and beyond, this is a significant escalation in the normalisation of such forces within Swedish and European politics.

On 1 April, Kristersson, standing beside Sweden Democrat leader Jimmie Åkesson, announced that if the right-wing group of parties wins the general election on September 13, the Sweden Democrats will enter government with “major policy influence and important ministerial posts in migration and integration.” The pre-election commitment resolved the last formal ambiguity within the four-party right-wing alliance, consisting of Kristersson’s Moderates, the smaller Christian Democrats and Liberals, and the Sweden Democrats. The current government is a three-party coalition of the Moderates, Christian Democrats and Liberals, which has relied for a parliamentary majority since 2022 on the votes of the Sweden Democrats. The arrangement is known as the “Tidö Agreement” after the castle where it was negotiated.

The Sweden Democrats have been the largest force on the Swedish right for several years and the country’s second-largest party overall, after the Social Democrats. They draw their strongest support from smaller towns and rural regions. Under the new arrangement, should the Tidö parties secure a majority in September, the Sweden Democrats will be seated directly at the cabinet table rather than held, as before, at arm’s length.

In the lead-up to the announcement, the Liberals abandoned their longstanding veto on the Sweden Democrats participating in a cabinet including the Liberals—a position defended for years as a line of principle. On March 13, they signed the “Sverigelöftet,” or Sweden Pledge, a framework designed to stabilise cooperation with the far-right party and secure a continued right-wing government. An emergency party congress on March 22 reelected leader Simona Mohamsson by 95 votes to 80 abstentions, formally preserving the new line but exposing serious internal disagreement within the Liberals. Voters have not rewarded the shift. By mid-April, the Liberals had fallen to 2.2 percent, well below the 4 percent needed for parliamentary representation, according to an

SVT/Verian poll.

The move to integrate the Sweden Democrats into government comes as Swedish voters have soured on the right-wing bloc, whose combined support has declined from roughly 49.5 percent at the 2022 election to 44.7 percent by early April. Kristersson’s Moderates have slipped from 19.1 percent to 16.8 percent, while the Sweden Democrats have held steady at around 21 to 22 percent. The outcome of the September election remains unclear, but the opposition bloc has opened a lead over the Tidö parties, polling at 53.4 percent against 44.7 percent.

The broader context for the integration of the Sweden Democrats is a sustained push by the ruling class to degrade the welfare state, expand the powers of the police and prisons, clamp down on refugees and restrict immigrant rights, and prepare the population for military conflict with Russia.

On April 16, the government sent a youth-offender bill to the Riksdag. It would temporarily lower the age of criminal responsibility to 13 for the most serious crimes, cut sentencing discounts for minors, raise the maximum sentence for under-18s to 18 years, and tighten youth supervision. If adopted, it would make Sweden an outlier in Europe and relative to most US states. UNICEF recommends 14 as an absolute minimum for criminal responsibility. On April 13, demonstrators turned out in 10 cities. Civil-society groups argued the bill violates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ignores basic research on adolescent development.

The bill is part of a larger package. The government has tightened around 50 penalty scales, introduced a new aggravating rule for crimes linked to criminal networks, extended life imprisonment to repeat serious violent and sexual offenders, and, on April 1, submitted a broader expulsion-due-to-crime bill. That bill lowers the threshold at which non-citizens can be deported and removes protections for those who arrived in Sweden before the age of 15. The Lagrådet, the government’s own legal review body, called parts of the sentencing reform rushed and deficient. Justice Minister Gunnar Strömmer’s response was that elected politicians, not experts, decide what counts as a just punishment.

The official justifications leave out the social conditions from which Sweden’s gang violence has actually grown. Criminal networks have expanded over the past decade alongside rising inequality, the privatisation of schools, housing and care, and

repeated tax cuts for the wealthy. Public services in working class suburbs have been cut back as a direct result. During consultation on the age-of-responsibility bill, the police, prosecution service, and the Prison and Probation Service all warned that locking up 13-year-olds would not work and would push gangs to recruit younger children.

The latest budget reflects the same priorities. On February 19, the government announced a new military aid package for Ukraine worth about 12.9 billion kronor (around €1.9 billion), focused on air defence, long-range systems and ammunition. Kristersson's government is committed to a 64 percent increase in military spending between 2022 and 2028, which will raise the annual defence budget to around 2.6 percent of GDP. Saab, Sweden's main arms manufacturer, has told investors that the current rearmament cycle is a multi-year growth opportunity running through 2030.

In early March, Sweden agreed to join France in a formal dialogue on European nuclear deterrence—a step that would have been politically unthinkable five years ago. On April 19, Sweden signed a leaders' statement backing a defensive multinational mission in the Strait of Hormuz.

The Social Democrats under Magdalena Andersson have denounced Kristersson's move to bring the Sweden Democrats into power, arguing that Åkesson, not Kristersson, will run any new right-wing government. This criticism is hypocritical. Of all the established parties, the Social Democrats bear chief responsibility for integrating the far right into official political life.

Social Democrat-led governments have, since the 1990s, been decisive in dismantling Sweden's once-generous welfare state and militarising society, creating the social and political conditions for the Sweden Democrats to grow. From 2014, Social Democrat Prime Minister Stefan Löfven relied for the first time on support from parties from the right-wing bloc, known at the time as the Alliance, for parliamentary support. His government implemented budgets dictated by the Alliance and cracked down on refugees arriving in the country during 2015, when hundreds of thousands of Syrians reached Europe as they fled the imperialist-instigated civil war.

After the 2018 general election, Löfven codified this arrangement in the January Agreement, under which the Centre and Liberal parties, two members of the right-wing bloc, committed to supporting his minority government. It was this government that oversaw the enforcement of a "herd immunity" response to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in Sweden suffering higher levels of death and infection than its Nordic neighbours, and serving as a model for far-right forces around the world to demand the mass infection of the population with a potentially deadly disease.

Magdalena Andersson replaced Löfven in 2021 after a months-long government crisis, which culminated in Andersson pledging to implement a budget drafted jointly by the Moderates and the Sweden Democrats to ensure parliamentary backing for her minority government. Andersson also used her brief term in office to apply for Sweden's membership in NATO following the US-instigated Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It was the Social Democrats that initiated the rearmament drive and full

integration of Sweden as a frontline state into the major imperialist powers' push to subordinate Russia to semi-colonial status.

The Left Party, meanwhile, has been instrumental in keeping the working class politically tied to the Social Democrats. Left Party votes in parliament between 2014 and 2022 ensured that first Löfven and then Andersson could carry through their ever more openly right-wing agenda. The Left Party went so far in November 2021 as to abstain on the vote that elected Andersson as prime minister on the basis of her pledge to implement the Sweden Democrat-drafted budget. Had the Left Party voted against, this arrangement would have been voted down by a majority in parliament. As it was, the acceptance of the Sweden Democrats' budget set the stage for its further integration into official politics after the September 2022 election.

Among other things, the Left Party has endorsed Sweden joining NATO and drummed up pro-war propaganda for the war in Ukraine. Left Party leader Nooshi Dadgostar stated in 2022 it was important "that we do this together as one people and one nation. I don't often agree with Carl Bildt [former conservative prime minister and NATO advocate], but on this question I do. There's the left-wing and there's the right-wing, but the Swedish military is all Swedes together."

The ex-Stalinist party has now gone a step further, demanding to be included in a potential Social Democrat/Green Party government after elections due later this year. Such a government would be fully committed to continuing the bloody war against Russia, expanding Sweden's aggressive role within the militarist NATO alliance, and strengthening Swedish military cooperation with the European imperialist powers. As Dadgostar put it after the party's congress held earlier this month, "The Left Party should not be treated differently as a party; if our voters' votes are needed to form a new government, their voices must be heard too. They cannot afford high rents and want them to be reduced; they want lower food prices and they want a more secure future for their children."

Such phrases cannot change the fact that a future Social Democrat-led government would achieve none of these things. It would be led by former prime minister Andersson, and would follow the example of social democratic governments across the continent by unloading the costs of war onto the backs of the working class. Social inequality would continue to grow and the business-friendly climate created by successive governments would continue.

The only way forward for workers in Sweden who want to fight war and austerity, and achieve affordable housing and food prices, secure jobs, and decent living standards, is a decisive political break from the Social Democrats and their Left Party adjuncts. This requires the building of a new socialist and internationalist leadership in the working class, a Swedish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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