

Right-wing consensus over militarism and austerity in Sweden's election campaign

Jon Andersson
11 September 2026

The outcome of Sunday's parliamentary election in Sweden will do nothing to change the Nordic country's increasingly aggressive role as a frontline state in NATO's war on Russia, and rapidly growing social inequality at home.

All of the main parties taking part, from the ex-Stalinist Left Party through the Social Democrats, traditional right-wing Moderates, and far-right Sweden Democrats, agree on readying Sweden for war, scapegoating immigrants for the social crisis, and imposing tight restraints on public spending to fund rearmament and subsidies to wealthy investors.

The election campaign has been dominated by debased mudslinging and anti-immigrant xenophobia and Islamophobia. The danger of the NATO war on Russia escalating into a direct confrontation between nuclear armed states, in which Sweden's 10 million population would be in the crossfire, has barely received any attention.

Sweden is currently ruled by a minority government led by the Moderates. The Sweden Democrats, which grew out of Sweden's neo-Nazi movement in the 1980s, is not formally a member of the government, but has secured it a parliamentary majority for the past four years.

As the second-largest party at the 2022 election, the Sweden Democrats have held enormous sway over government policy, especially on immigration. The Moderates, Sweden Democrats, Christian Democrats, and Liberals have become known as the "Tidö parties" after the castle where they reached a comprehensive policy agreement following the 2022 election that removed Social Democrat leader Magdalena Andersson from power.

The last four years have been dominated by all eight main political parties moving sharply to the right, particularly on immigration, war, and rearmament.

Russia's reactionary invasion of Ukraine, provoked by decades of US/NATO expansion eastward and the 2014 Kiev coup, was seized on by Sweden's political establishment to carry out a long-planned entry into NATO. This was initiated by the previous Social Democrat-led government, which was backed from the outside by the Greens and Left Party, and implemented under the current right-wing coalition. A massive rearmament programme was subsequently unveiled, together with a "Defence industry strategy for a strong Sweden" released last year to grow the country's production of military equipment.

For several months, polls have suggested that the bloc of four opposition parties—led by the Social Democrats—could win by a

significant margin. The most recent polls, however, suggest that the lead of the four-party "left" bloc is narrowing.

A shift to the left has occurred among young people disgusted by the government's treatment of migrants, opposition to climate policies, support for Israel's genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, and its broader right-wing agenda. This has been expressed most immediately in surging support for the Left Party and the Green Party. The Left Party is polling at 17 percent among those aged 18–29, compared with 11 percent in the last election, while the Greens are at 12 percent, compared with 6 percent.

Left-wing opposition in the population has been fuelled by Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson's ever-more open integration of the Sweden Democrats into government. On April 1, Kristersson announced that, if the four Tidö parties win a parliamentary majority, the Sweden Democrats will enter the government and receive important ministerial posts, particularly in migration and integration. The Liberals, which had previously opposed serving in government with the Sweden Democrats, have dropped their veto.

The Sweden Democrats have run an explicitly anti-Islam campaign, calling for Sweden to be "de-Islamified," mosques to be demolished and legal immigrants to be encouraged to leave through state-funded "remigration." Leading SD politician Richard Jomshof says he "hates Islam" and has urged Muslims to abandon the religion. An SD media personality celebrated the party's 2022 election victory by shouting "helg seger"—a near-homophone of "Hell seger," the Swedish Nazi equivalent of "Sieg Heil."

As in other European countries, the fascists are being integrated into power because the ruling class needs them to impose its programme of war and attacks on public spending in the face of mass opposition in the working class. Social inequality, especially wealth inequality but also income differentiation, has grown steadily in Sweden over recent years, albeit from a relatively low level. The sharpening of global competition in the car industry and other manufacturing sectors has hit the economy especially hard, with the clearest recent example being the bankruptcy of battery start-up NorthVolt.

The company was conceived of by business circles in Sweden as the basis for developing a homegrown EV sector based on the residual presence of Volvo Cars and Volvo Trucks, and a domestic source of "clean energy" technology for European imperialism amid mounting antagonisms with the US and competition from China. It was promoted by the EU and governments across the

continent, including in Germany where a planned battery factory in the country's north remains in limbo. Northvolt's demise resulted in the loss of some 3,000 direct jobs in Skellefteå and had a devastating impact on the comparatively remote region in northern Sweden.

But the problems facing Swedish capitalism go far deeper. Its relative post-war stability rested on concessions to the working class in social welfare and workplace benefits that went much further than most Western European countries, and the ability up until the early 1980s of regulating capitalist development within the nation-state. Over the past four decades, large swathes of the provisions that made up the "Swedish model" have been rolled back and others will be on the chopping block in the next parliament.

Sweden is one of the most internationally integrated economies in the world. Its banks depend on global capital markets; its heavily indebted households are acutely sensitive to interest rates; its industrial companies live through a conflict-ridden system of global trade; and its celebrated technology sector risks a full-frontal assault from the growth of AI, which Sweden plays no leading role in.

Sweden's central bank, the Riksbank, has warned that rising sovereign debt, richly valued technology companies, leveraged non-bank financial institutions and geopolitical shocks could reinforce one another, producing financial turmoil that would rapidly spill over into Sweden. Yet virtually none of this figures in the choices being presented to Swedish voters on September 13.

There is mass opposition to the promotion of a fascist party into power, especially among the urban working population. In June 2025, as many as 30,000 people joined a mass demonstration against the Gaza genocide in Stockholm, with protesters demanding an end to Swedish arms trade with Israel. Sweden, despite its population of just 10.6 million, is a major European arms producer.

In August, a demonstration over climate change brought around 50,000 people onto the streets of Stockholm—equivalent to about five percent of the city's population. Some carried homemade signs declaring, "Eat the rich."

As in Germany with the rise of the AfD, the success of the Sweden Democrats—and the broader sense of malaise and disgust with the entire political establishment—lies chiefly in the bankruptcy of what passes for the left.

The Social Democrats responded to the 2015 refugee crisis by sharply restricting asylum, then led Sweden into NATO and now promise that the country's "strict migration policy" will remain. The Left Party, despite formally opposing NATO and denouncing inequality, decided at its party congress this year to make the securing of ministerial posts in a government led by the Social Democrats a condition for supporting it in parliament.

The result is that opposition to war, inequality, climate breakdown and racism finds no genuine expression on the official "left," while the far right is left free to redirect social anger against migrants and Muslims.

The Left Party's collaboration with the Social Democrats is hardly new. From 1998 to 2006, it entered formal budget cooperation with Göran Persson's Social Democrat minority

government; before the 2010 election it sought a Red-Green government and ultimately accepted the Social Democrats' demands for a balanced-budget framework and an independent central bank. In 2011, despite its anti-NATO posture, the Left Party voted to send eight Swedish Gripen fighters into the NATO-led intervention in Libya.

The Left Party nominally opposed Swedish NATO membership, but has accepted membership as an accomplished fact, and, critically, has supported the massive Swedish rearmament effort.

Like the Left Party in Germany, it has seized on the escalation of war and the growth of the far right to ally itself with supposed "democratic" forces even on the right of official bourgeois politics.

Left Party leader Nooshi Dadgostar declared in 2022 on the issue of NATO membership, "My position is that we are safer in Sweden if we are outside of any military alliance. But it is important that we have broad agreement. That we do this together as one people and one nation. I don't often agree with Carl Bildt [a former conservative prime minister and long-standing advocate of NATO membership], 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 task confronting Swedish workers and youth is not to line up behind a Social Democrat/Left Party government, but to break with these parties and build their own independent political movement, based on the programme of world socialist revolution. That movement is the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Against war, austerity, and the rise of the far right, the working class in Sweden must fight for its international unity with workers throughout Europe and internationally against all the imperialist powers. It must fight for the reorganization of society to meet human need rather than private profit. Only on this basis can the growth of fascism be stopped and the catastrophe now being prepared—war, financial collapse, and social devastation—be averted.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact