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**Denmark**

# **Enhedslisten: Support for more defence - but which defence?**

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**From 7-9 June, 365 delegates from around 100 branches of the Danish left-wing party Enhedslisten (strictly Unity Party but usually known in English as the Red-Green Alliance) gathered for the party's annual meeting in Copenhagen. The main political issue was the discussion and decision on a proposal from a majority of the party's executive committee entitled: 'The Unity Party's defence and security policy in a new era'.**

The proposal contained a significant change in the party's policy, which opened the door for the party to support military armament. It was expressed in this sentence:

To be able to stand on our own two feet, we must strengthen our defensive capabilities with an effective territorial defence, which must be able to enforce the sovereignty of Denmark and the Danish Realm and protect the population and our infrastructure.

No less than 96 amendments were submitted to the proposal from the Executive Committee, with the common thread being that Enhedslisten will not support military armament. A small number of the amendments, which did not touch on the crucial question of the position on military armament, were incorporated by the Executive Committee. The rest of the amendments were put to a vote, and not a single one of them was adopted.

The Executive Committee's proposal was then adopted with 250 votes in favour and 101 votes against - including members of SAP, the Danish section of FI. 14 delegates abstained. This vote was secret, so no one knows who voted what, but presumably about half of the 101 who voted against military armament are delegates who - unlike the SAP - also want to stop Denmark's military support for Ukraine's defence against imperialist Russia's attacks on the country.

## On the quay of the mists

The now adopted policy on "defence and security" states that Denmark must be able to handle climate disasters, cyber-attacks, epidemics, fisheries control, energy supply and drinking water. In other words, Denmark must strengthen its civil defence.

Did anyone have anything against it? No, no one suggested that this part of the policy proposal should be changed or cancelled. The decisive conflict at the annual meeting was about what the now adopted policy calls "effective territorial defence", which is about military spending.

In the now adopted policy, the civilian and military parts are mixed together in the concept of "defence", which Enhedslisten wants to strengthen - but at the same time, the now adopted policy contains this sentence: 'It is crucial that Denmark does not contribute to an armament spiral'

With this, everything becomes unclear, and Enhedslisten stands on the shore of the fog: What is it that we need to strengthen? Civilian preparedness or military armament? What does Enhedslisten mean? The answer is - excuse the

expression: A shot in the dark.

# Elastic by the metre

In the discussions at the annual meeting, members of the executive committee and the party's parliamentary group countered the criticism of the proposal with statements claiming the following:

- It is not the intention of the new policy that Enhedslisten can or should enter into a defence agreement with the current centre-right government with a social democratic prime minister - but none of them ruled it out under a new government after the upcoming election, which must take place no later than 2026
- Enhedslisten will not support a rearmament to either 5 or 3.5% of GDP in Denmark - but none of them ruled out that the party could support a smaller rearmament that increases military spending from the 2% of GDP included in the current political agreements between the government and the right wing in the Danish parliament.
- The policy now adopted is not a support for rearmament at all, but for re-armament- but this understanding does not exist in the policy that has been adopted!

Several of the critics emphasised in their speeches at the annual meeting that it is the written text that applies to the party and that it will not be changed by any of the speeches at the annual meeting from any of those who support the proposal.

# The party leadership got its room to manœuvre

With the annual meeting's adoption, the Unity Party now has a defence and security policy that is like an elastic band, where the party's leadership (parliamentary group and executive committee) has the freedom to interpret how much or how little the party can support military armament.

The statutes of the Party contain this provision:

Enhedslisten MPs are nominated and elected on Enhedslisten's basis and are accountable to the Enhedslisten's main board and annual meeting. Significant political issues shall be discussed between the parliamentary group and the Executive Board, and consensus shall be sought. In the event of disagreement, the matter must be submitted to the Executive Board for decision.

In theory, this could mean that the party's Executive Committee can ensure that the party's parliamentary group does not participate in military armament agreements. In practice, however, this is unlikely to happen, as a large majority of the members of the new Executive Committee elected by the Annual General Meeting fully agree with the policy adopted by the Annual General Meeting.

# Opposition to rearmament

Part of the military build-up in Denmark is a new agreement with the US to establish bases. Two days after the annual meeting of the Danish Red-Green Alliance, a large majority in the Danish Parliament approved an agreement that gives the US the right to have military bases on Danish soil, station soldiers and store military equipment. The US military on the bases will be responsible for law enforcement for the stationed soldiers. Only Enhedslisten, Alternativet and three non-party members voted against the agreement - a total of 18 votes out of 179. The left-reformist SF (Socialist People's Party) voted in favour of the agreement with their 15 seats.

Although only 10% of the members of the Danish Parliament voted against the new base agreement, there is much greater public opposition to increased military armament. A few days before the Enhedslisten's annual meeting, a poll showed that 35% of voters are against allocating more money for military armament, which is less than the 41% who said no a year ago. This opposition has not yet been expressed in demonstrations or other political actions outside the Danish parliament.

The new defence and security policy adopted at the annual meeting does not indicate that initiatives to organize protests against military armament will come from this direction - at least not from the party leadership. Time will tell if others take up the task.

In the real world there is no political vacuum, so if the opponents of military armament do not organise and mark their protests in the public space, this space will be filled by the supporters of military armament alone.

25th June 2025

Translated by **International Viewpoint**. This article will appear in French in **Inprecor**, July 2025

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