

Iben Bjørnsson¹

¹Stevnsfort Cold War Museum

From pacifist over reserved ally to super-ally: Social Democratic foreign policy in the 20th Century and beyond

Bakgrund/Frågeställning

On 10 February 2022, the Danish Social Democratic Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, announced at a press conference that Denmark and the United States were embarking on a new era of defence cooperation, which might entail the presence of American troops on Danish soil.

This is a marked break from the policy established by one of her predecessors, Hans Hedtoft in 1953, when he turned down stationing in Denmark (however, and quite importantly, excepting Greenland).

Hans Hedtoft had, in turn, presided over a similar break in Social Democratic security policy; namely a break with traditional Danish neutrality and not least with whatever remnants had been left of the Social Democratic pacifism and anti-militarism of the early 20th Century.

With recent developments, Denmark is – once again – following in the footsteps of Norway who, in April 2021, signed a Supplementary Defence Cooperation Agreement with the US, allowing for stationing of American troops in Norway.

However, the Danish negotiations with the US is not only a matter of following Norway. It is also the latest culmination of a process of foreign policy re-orientation in the Social Democratic Party, brought on by domestic as well as foreign policy issues.

In the 1950's and 1960's Social Democratic governments led a somewhat cautious security policy *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact. 1980's the Social Democrats in opposition were the architects of the infamous Danish 'footnote policy' expressed in a series of reservations within NATO. Post-Cold War, this policy has been successfully framed by right-wing parties as illoyal and borderline treacherous and the Social Democrats have been eager to show their loyalty to NATO and the US, which in these days is also visible from increasing military support for the Baltic countries in light of the present crisis over Ukraine.

In my proposed paper, I will give an overview over the development of Social Democratic foreign policy in the 20th and 21st Centuries, and of possible explanations – domestic and foreign – for these developments.

Metod och Resultat

Konklusion