

Greenland spat gives Danish PM poll boost

RICHARD MILNE — COPENHAGEN

Mette Frederiksen was all but down and out at the end of last year after a brutal local election defeat. Then came US President Donald Trump and his renewed threats of taking over Greenland.

Now the Danish prime minister appears on course to win a third successive term in parliamentary elections today in which Frederiksen and her centre-left Social Democrat party are set to be boosted by the premier standing up to Trump's bullying.

"Trump has only helped the prime minister. International geopolitics has given her a huge platform. I think she has done a good job at representing Denmark," said Linea Søgaard-Lidell, an MP for the centre-right Liberals, the Social Democrats' main rivals.

Frederiksen has become one of Europe's most influential politicians through her tough stance on immigration, Ukraine, defence and on Trump.

But after more than six years in power running the most centralised administration in recent Danish history, she

looked more popular abroad than at home.

Her Social Democrat party may be certain to secure first place in the elections, but opinion polls suggest it could post its lowest score for 120 years.

The party lost control of Copenhagen council for the first time in a century in November, and forming a government from a highly fragmented parliament is likely to be a challenge.

"Although she will win, she will come out bruised," said Lykke Friis, a former centre-right minister who now heads Copenhagen-based Think Tank Europa.



Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen won praise for her Greenland stance

"She has had her Greenlandic moment. She has moved from saying there shouldn't be a sheet of paper between Denmark and the US to now advocating a Europe that can stand on its own feet and that can become independent of the US."

The Social Democrats scored as low as 16 per cent in the polls after a disastrous showing in local elections in November, well below their heyday of 30 to 40 per cent from the 1920s to 1990s.

In January, the US president — flush from his success in ousting Venezuela's president — rebooted his rhetoric on taking control of Greenland from Copenhagen, potentially by force.

Frederiksen responded firmly, insisting Greenland was not for sale while sending troops from Denmark and European allies.

That has brought the Social Democrats back to about 21 to 22 per cent in recent polls, almost double the level of the next biggest party.

"If it's a question of leadership, people will pick her every time. There are other issues where they might not prefer her," said Ida Auken, a Social Democrat MP.