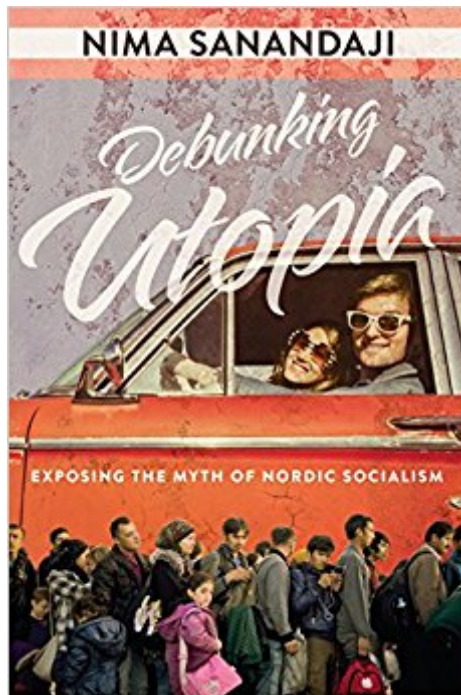




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Debunking Utopia: Exposing The Myth Of Nordic Socialism



Synopsis

Left-leaning academics, liberal pop stars such as Bruce Springsteen, and Democrat politicians from Bernie Sanders to Bill and Hillary Clinton to Barack Obama all have one thing in common: they are avid admirers of Nordic-style social democracy. The reason is simple. At first glance, Nordic countries seem to have everything liberals want to see in America: equal income distribution, good health, low levels of poverty, and thriving economies, all co-existing with big welfare states. By copying Nordic policies, many in the American left hope to transform America to a similar socialist utopia. *Debunking Utopia* Swedish author Nima Sanandaji explains why this is all wishful thinking. Certainly, some aspects of Nordic welfare states, such as childcare provision, merit the admiration of liberals. But overall, it is a unique culture based on hard work, healthy diets, social cohesion and high levels of trust that have made Nordic countries successful. Sanandaji explains how the Nordic people adopted this culture of success in order to survive in the unforgiving Scandinavian climate. He systematically proves that the high levels of income equality, high lifespans and other signs of social success in the Nordics all predate the expansion of the welfare state. If anything, the Nordic countries reached their peak during the mid-twentieth century, when they had low taxes and small welfare states. Perhaps most astonishing are his findings that Nordic-Americans consistently outperform their cousins who live across the ocean. People of Nordic descent who live under the American capitalist system not only enjoy higher levels of income, but also a lower level of poverty than the citizens of the Nordic countries themselves. Sanandaji's previous writings on the roots of Nordic success have gained media attention around the world and been translated into many languages. *Debunking Utopia*, which expands on this work, should be read by all liberals and conservatives alike who follow the debate over the future of American welfare. As Sanandaji shows, there is much Americans can learn from both the successes and failures of Nordic-style social democracy.

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Customer Reviews

Dr. Nima Sanandaji is an author and researcher of Kurdish-Iranian origin who migrated to Sweden as a child. He grew up with welfare support and personally experienced how the welfare state with one hand gave the less well-off opportunities to climb the social ladder, while with the other hand unintentionally trapped them in welfare dependency. He has previously written twenty books, some of which have received international acclaim. Sanandaji is the president of the think tank European Centre for Entrepreneurship and Policy Reform.

The author is a Kurdish-Iranian whose family immigrated to Sweden. He was able to break out of the welfare dependency that traps so many immigrants and become a scientist as well as an expert on public policy. Here he explains how the welfare state is hurting Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries. First he explains how the welfare state has become less popular in Scandinavia due to its shortcomings. Of the five Scandinavian countries, four now have center-right governments which have scaled back welfare benefits, cut taxes, and promoted individual responsibility. Only Sweden has a center-left government but it has kept the same welfare reforms enacted by previous center-right governments. In all these countries there is increased public opposition to immigration which strains the welfare state. He also explains how Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries were prosperous before their welfare states were established. The liberal American belief that welfare made Scandinavia prosperous is wrong; it was Scandinavian prosperity that made the welfare state possible. Before it became a welfare state in the 1960s, Sweden was prosperous, with low income inequality, and low crime. Now it has greater income inequality and higher crime, as immigrant groups like Muslims have remained dependent on welfare and resorted to criminal activity. He credits Swedish culture for creating the country's prosperity. It used to be a homogeneous country based on the Protestant work ethic, individual responsibility, and social cohesion which brought a high level of mutual trust. When Sweden first established the welfare state, these factors prevented anyone from abusing the welfare system. Now welfare recipients routinely abuse the system and taxpayers are beginning to retaliate by cheating on taxes.

He believes the Scandinavian countries have been successful despite welfare, not because of it as espoused by American liberals. He notes that countries like Greece, Italy and France have extensive welfare systems but not the prosperity of the Scandinavian countries. It is Scandinavian culture which keeps these countries prosperous, not their welfare systems which are draining their prosperity. He notes that Swedish-Americans are just as prosperous as the Swedes, as a result of Swedish culture. He supplies statistics to show that America has more social mobility than the Scandinavian countries since its welfare system is not as extensive. The US has greater per capita income and lower unemployment than Scandinavian countries, except for oil-rich Norway. All the Scandinavian countries have cut their tax rates. This happened after the height of their welfare states produced economic stagnation until the 1990s when the social democrats were thrown out and center-right governments were installed. He also reminds Americans that FDR, the father of the American welfare state, was concerned that continuous welfare was a "narcotic" that would cause "spiritual and moral disintegration" and become a "subtle destroyer of the human spirit." Today the goal of the Democrat Party is to get as many people on welfare as possible to maintain its political power.

drawn out, spends a lot of time repeating the same ideas instead of developing them.

The author brings out many interesting facts and reliable statistics to bolster his argument that the prosperity, social equality and harmony found in the five Scandinavian countries is not caused by their social democratic/"socialism-lite" government policies as much as by their long standing cultural mores, winter climate and history. I have always been fascinated by utopian communities of all sorts and that is why I purchased this book. I think some of the social policies that Scandinavia has could be successfully adopted in the U.S. despite our much more diverse and much larger population. It seems that there is always an emotional and often ugly debate in the U.S. between the advocates of free market capitalism and socialism/federal government control of the economy. I see a middle ground that is based on human decency, common sense and does not require an advanced degree in economics. It is clear that capitalism has benefited more people with material goods than any other system in history but when unrestrained by reasonable regulation and driven by greed, it has hurt people, animals and the environment. Most socialist/communist societies have failed - just look at Venezuela today. If we just had "Golden Rule" capitalism, we would have the proper balance between capital and labor and people, animals and the environment would be properly protected and not abused. Golden Rule capitalism, if ever implemented would create a

successful utopia in my view.

It's a start. But was unsatisfying and incomplete

Parts of this is correct. It as a Scandinavian the author misunderstands and leave out main pieces, especially the positive one, on Scandinavian life.

If you are tired of hearing the political left brag about this supposed socialist paradise called Sweden and the Nordic countries, then this book is for you. This book explains how a combination of out of control government welfare and mass immigration can destroy a country whose culture has been for centuries all about hard work, respect and social cooperation. The interesting part is that the author actually did benefit from this system but can see how damaging it is in general and in most cases. Highly recommended. Lots of statistical data to backup each concept.

This is a superb book that is balanced in its approach and tells the real reasons behind successes in Scandinavia, why they cannot be transferred here, and why the Scandinavians are slowly dismantling their welfare states. One of the authors most salient points is that Scandinavian demographics are becoming slowly like the rest of the world. Their model is based on a particular ethnically homogeneous culture and cannot be applied in a multicultural milieu. This is a must read for these days when politicians are talking about the applying the Scandinavian model to multicultural countries. Of note is that the author, an immigrant Kurd, could view the Scandinavian systems from the objective standpoint of an outsider.

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