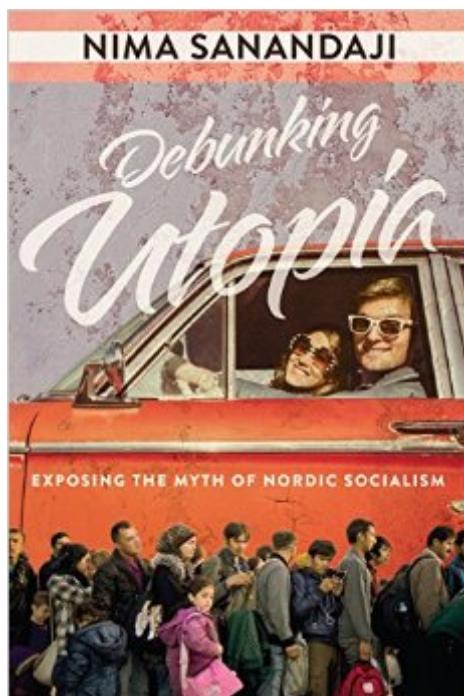


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Debunking Utopia: Exposing The Myth Of Nordic Socialism



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

The traditional, liberal-Marxian schools of economics have many shortcomings, but the most important is their reliance on a dangerously flawed and unscientific anthropology: the concept of the "blank slate" of human personality -- Namely, that human nature is infinitely malleable through education, with intrinsic innate and genetic qualities playing no part in determining character or personality. For example, under such a paradigm, a Japanese child raised among Africans would have the exact same intelligence, temperament and character in every way as an African, and an African child raised among Norwegians would similarly be completely Norwegian in every way, except, as the saying goes, for the color of its skin. Genetics are held to have no influence on the human personality. That Somalia is chaotic and dysfunctional while Japan is orderly and prosperous is held to be due entirely to environmental factors; if only foreign aid made Japanese-style education available to the Somalis, they would be just as successful and competitive as the inhabitants of Kyoto and Osaka. Unfortunately, however much we might wish were true the well-intentioned saying that "all men are created equal," it is rapidly becoming apparent that this simply is not so. In "Debunking Utopia," Iranian economist Nima Sanandaji performs a very useful case study of the development of the Nordic economies, which thoroughly debunks the conventional liberal-Marxian interpretations of how these formerly very poor countries could achieve a living standard that was, for a time, the envy of the world. It is not possible to do full justice to his argument, here, but I will attempt to summarize the most important lines of it, adding also some observations and evaluations of my own.

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