

The far-right are making progress and social democracy ...

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The far-right Sweden Democrats is part of a four-party bloc that has narrowly won the Swedish general election, replacing a left-of-centre coalition. The SD took 20% of the vote less than two decades after they were widely viewed as neo-Nazi.

They have, admittedly, expelled some members from that neo-Nazi era, but the trend is frightening. What happened? The Guardian newsletter this morning has a good analysis:

So how did Sweden get here? While the country has long enjoyed an image as a prosperous society with a high standard of living, a strong social safety net, and a tradition of progressive values, many Swedish voters are frustrated and dissatisfied with the way the country is governed.

To those people, the perception of their country no longer matches the reality: "There's been a massive decline in the quality of public services, Swedish healthcare is a shadow of what it used to be, and the education system is really suffering," Hinde said. All of this has fed a narrative that the Sweden Democrats have been pushing of a country in decline.

A tepid left-wing coalition that largely bought into right-of-centre fiscal constraint dogmas could do nothing about this. And then, as the Guardian notes:

This sense of decline was heightened after the refugee crisis in 2015, when Sweden accepted a record high of more than 150,000 asylum seekers. That's almost 1.5% of its overall population.

So the racist card was played, very successfully.

The lessons are clear, I think. If the left promotes right-wing fantasies like balanced budgets and refuses, as a result, to deliver for those who expect the services that they need and deserve from the state then they simply open the door for right-wing extremism.

]It's not hard to see that happening here in the UK as well.

We need a left-of-centre re-set to build the foundation of a new social democracy. Nothing less will do, unless we want an even further right government in the UK when we're already in deeply dangerous territory.

I believe that we can do that. But it's going to be hard work.