

South Korea: a tale of growth not working

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Ha-Joon Chang [has a great article in the Guardian this morning](#). In it he points out that South Korea - his country - is the model of what capitalism should deliver. There's been massive growth and, as he notes:

The country is, per capita, the third most innovative in the world, after Japan and Taiwan, when measured by the number of patents granted by the US patent office. It has one of the world's highest university enrolment ratios, and schoolchildren who rank in the top five in virtually all standardised international tests.

It's also after Hungary the second most unhappy place in the OECD. Why: There's little welfare. There is massive job insecurity. Financial deregulation means investment is falling and debt is rising. The pressure on children to perform with no promise of work to follow is ruining childhoods. A weak medical system means ill health can destroy families.

As he concludes:

The sad tale of my country should serve as a salutary warning to Britain and other European countries that are embarking on major cuts to welfare. They believe that such cuts will reduce budget deficits and make their economies more productive by making people compete more vigorously. However, the Korean story shows that insecurity actually makes people less, not more, productive, and also desperately unhappy. Surely, that is not what they want.

Well, actually, you'd think that's exactly what our politicians want right now. If you listened to my local MP, far-right Tory Liz Truss, you'd think if only we could sack anyone at will all the world's problems would be solved, but that's about a step removed from economic insanity and is certainly closely linked to callousness.

Of course, what we really need is [a Courageous State](#). That would deliver exactly what the people of Korea have not got. And what the people of Bradford West have not got either.