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## **Introduction**

The 2019 coronavirus outbreak has changed the way we live and has affected every aspect of our lives. It accelerates existing trends in which people work and travel and consume information. Under the influence of COVID-19, the mass media as a powerful tool to influence public opinion has also undergone major changes. In the current global situation, various magazines and media in different countries have different opinions. So, what kind of magazine or public opinion is the fact that the public expects? This will be a question worth discussing

“The Economist” has a history of more than 160 years, and in the nearly 100 years since its establishment, it has developed very slowly. At the beginning of the publication of “The Economist”, the average weekly circulation was 1969, and it was published within 20 years. Circulation began to pick up in the 1950s, and did not exceed 100,000 copies until the 1970s. After World War II, with the continuous improvement of the global economic integration, the political and economic information in the world has become more and more important. The release of “The Economist” has seen continued growth.

Today, “The Economist” has a circulation of 1.4 million copies and has been distributed in many countries around the world. More than four-fifths of releases are outside the UK. In the context of the global outbreak of COVID-19, Western news, as a common English learning material, conveys implicit positions through language, which needs to be clearly understood and distinguished by learners. In today's information age, mass media has increasingly become a medium that affects individual cognition and value judgment of audiences.

As countries around the world become more interconnected, so does the breadth of news. Readers from all over the world are no longer limited to the media in their own countries, but want to understand the situation in the world and the insights of experts in various fields on specific events. External news magazines are an important way to understand the voices of the world, and also an effective means to promote the communication and integration of information among countries. The new crown epidemic has undoubtedly been a hot topic in the news media in the past two years. This practical report selects a series of articles on the theme of “new crown epidemic” in “The Economist”. The language characteristics of “Students”, and how the language and opinions of different authors on novel coronavirus-related topics differ, and what different vocabulary is used in this context. This work will also combine the reports from other media and newspapers in the UK to point out that they may influence readers' Western subjective positions, stereotypes and ideologies, and will present an analysis of the particularity and influence of different media on public opinion manipulation.

**The significance** of the research can be specified by identification and application of linguistic means as a speech influence strategy, as well as manipulative presentation tactics, which can be defined as a set of speech acts designed primarily to distort different kinds of information.

**The relevance of** the topic of coronavirus lies in the analysis of the impact of serious and unpredictable social phenomena on the nature and language of media publications on a global scale, how to solve the task of transmitting information in society and how this produces a language of change. This research will help future

research on language changes caused by the “black swan event” of the coronavirus.

It might be worth mentioning, that the research can be useful not only in solving further problems with COVID-19 but with probable pandemic and endemic situations in the future.

**The novelty of** my thesis is that the coronavirus pandemic broke out at the end of 2019. Until now, there have been few studies on COVID-19, and few analyses combined with the specificity of COVID-19. In addition, this research data is selected from the report on the coronavirus published by “The Economist” in 2019-2021, which is the latest and effective.

**The purpose is** taking the Economist as the object to study its reporting style and analyze the language features in media discourse and written discourse in description, narration, argument and exposition.

This research will accomplish its **goals** from the following aspects:

- 1) Defining the phenomenon and characteristics of the coronavirus pandemic in online publications;
- 2) Summarizing the linguistic commonality of the book “The Economist” based on the illustrative examples;
- 3) Exploring the differences in language and vocabulary used by different writers on coronavirus-related topics in “The Economist”;
- 4) Describing the characteristics of news coverage of the coronavirus by different online media.

**Structure of work:** thesis consists of an introduction, two chapters, a conclusion, a list of references and a list of used dictionaries.

**Key words:** coronavirus, linguistic, “The Economist”, mass media, Racism in language, language feature, different sections, global perspective

## THEORETICAL PART

### 1.Theoretical basis for the study of coronavirus theme in “The Economist”

#### 1.1 The object and the subject

The **object** of our work is the news coverage of coronavirus pandemic in “The Economist” and coronavirus news coverage in online media.

The **subject** is using “The Economist” as basic, to analyze the problems caused by the coronavirus described in the articles, and concern the specificity of Western media coverage of coronavirus and its impact.

The applied methods include:

- content analysis.
- quality analysis relating to the problematic, topical, genre, stylistic and lexical components.
- typological comparison.
- grammar analysis
- rhetorical devices analysis

The research is based on “The Economist” , according to the articles on the economic, political and other news reports are related to coronavirus in the magazine , using **content analysis methods** and the author's stated views to summarize and analyze and draw conclusions then make **quality analysis relating**



**to the problematic, topical, genre, stylistic and lexical components.** , and use **typological comparison methods** make a comparative analysis of other media such as the BBC etc. to summarize the language specificity, focus of public opinion, news reliability and the impact of Western media on coronavirus-related reports.

## **1.2 The new world situation under the new coronavirus pandemic**

For years, many governments brushed off countless credible warnings that the world was poorly prepared for a pandemic. When the novel coronavirus emerged in China, too many nations were too slow to respond.

The pandemic should encourage policymakers to pay more attention to other known but poorly managed risks. These include rising inequality, climate change and financial imbalances such as dangerous corporate-debt levels and asset bubbles.

Picture each of these obvious dangers as a two-tons grey rhinoceros with its horn pointed our way and its massive weight bearing down on us: they are very visible and their impact can be foreseen. The interactions among these rhinos heighten the danger. You could appropriately call them a crash—the zoological term for a group—of grey rhinos

With the spread of COVID-19, analysts quickly reduced the early prediction of the pandemic from a rapid V-shaped recovery to a slow

U-shaped recovery, and then gradually reduced to “moderation.” Now, we have

experienced a K-shaped recovery, which has given a lot of impetus to the wealthy class. While major workers and vulnerable sectors are struggling, it has created a financial asset bubble. COVID-19 has not only hit the global economy.

It changed the trajectory of the three major forces shaping the modern world. Globalization has been cut off. The digital revolution has radically accelerated. Geopolitical competition between China and the United States has intensified. At the same time, the epidemic has exacerbated one of today's greatest scourges: inequality. This pandemic has compressed years of transformation into months, and has greatly changed people's lives, purchases of goods and places of work.

### **1.3 Overview of “The Economist”**

#### **1.3.1 The background and development history of the publication**

##### **1.3.1.1 Repeal of the British Corn Law**

The Corn Laws (or the “Corn Act”) is an import tariff that was enforced from 1815 to 1846 to “protect” British farmers and landlords from imports from foreign countries with lower production costs. compete. It stipulates that domestic grains can only be imported when the average price of domestic grains reaches or exceeds a certain limit, and its purpose is to protect the interests of the land nobles. After the implementation of the law, the price of grains was so high that workers demanded higher wages, and foreign countries also increased the import tax on British industrial products, thus harming the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie. In 1846,

the law was repealed. The change of the English Corn Law between 1815 and 1846 is a typical case of the transition from a protective trade system to a free trade system. The landlord class and the industrial and commercial capitalist class competed on the Corn Law for their own interests. The strength of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie and the continuous increase in the level of political expenditure caused the adjustment of trade policies in their favor, which eventually led to the “Corn Law”. Of repeal.

### **1.3.1.2. Established to promote free trade**

“The Economist”, founded in 1843, was created to participate in the biggest political issues of the time. Its founder, James Wilson (James Wilson) is a hatmaker in a small Scottish town. He is a self

By a strong supporter of market theory. He believes that the use of taxes and restrictions on grain imports to increase the price of bread and the spread of famine is not good for Britain. In Wilson's view, free trade is good for everyone.

In order to promote free trade and resist government intervention, he hopes to influence public opinion by creating a publication. In his plan for the establishment of “The Economist”, he wrote: “If you look around, you can see our trade, which has given the entire island and continent a precious dawn to civilization; and we are serious Believe that free trade will promote the civilization and ethics of the entire world faster than any visible force.

Establish and make slavery itself perish”.

With the support of the Anti-Corn Law League, “The Economist” was formally founded on September 2nd, 1843.

Although the trade protectionist decree that prompted Wilson to create “The Economist”, the Corn Law, was abolished in 1846, the newspaper continued, never giving up its belief in the 19th-century classical freedom concept of its founder

### **1.3.1.3. “The Economist” development context: from the UK to the world**

“The Economist”, which has a history of more than 160 years, has developed very slowly in the nearly 100 years since its establishment. At the beginning of its establishment, the average weekly circulation of “The Economist” was 1969. For 20 years, the circulation remained below 3,000, and it slowly crawled below 10,000 for a long period of 100 years.

Only in the 1950s did the circulation increase, and it was not until the 1970s that the circulation exceeded 100,000. After World War II, with the increasing integration of the global economy, worldwide political and economic information became more and more important, and the distribution of “The Economist” ushered in continuous growth.

Today, the circulation of “The Economist” has reached 1.4 million copies, distributed in many countries around the world, and more than four-fifths of the circulation is outside the UK, of which the circulation in the United States accounts for More than half of the total circulation.

### **1.3.2 “The Economist” editing characteristics and reporting style**

#### **1.3.2.1. Firmly support free trade**

“The Economist” was founded to fight for free trade. In the following 160 years, the concept of “The Economist’s” firm support for free trade has not changed. The previous editors have not changed James Wilson when he founded this publication. The current position has always adhered to economic liberalism and equal competitionism, and opposed trade protectionism and monopoly. For example, in the 2009 Sino-US tire trade war, “The Economist” severely criticized the Obama administration's insistence on imposing punitive tariffs on tires imported from China in an editorial, believing that Obama’s actions were trade protectionism. Doctrine seriously violates the spirit of free trade. The article believes that under the global financial crisis, Obama's trade protectionism has set a bad example for other countries.

#### **1.3.2.2 Only write comments, not news**

Although “The Economist” has always claimed to be a newspaper (newspaper), it does not actually report news. Instead, it connects and analyzes related events of various sizes. The main task is to tell everyone how this happened. thing. In other words, “The Economist”, as a news weekly, is doing deep processing of information, focusing on in-depth reports and analysis and comments.

In each issue of “The Economist”, only the section “The world this week” can barely be regarded as news. A summary of the major political and economic events

that have occurred in the world this week. All the remaining sections are comments and analysis, in-depth interpretation and explanation of news events. Therefore, different from ordinary news weekly, the article in “The Economist” has a very clear standpoint and clearly expresses its attitude and the point of view, unabashedly support or oppose an event.

### **1.3.2.3 Editing Features - Unconventional Unauthorized System**

In addition to the idea of liberalism, another feature of “The Economist” is that it is a unique and unsigned reporting system that “The Economist” upholds and is proud of to this day. Even the editor-in-chief has only two signature opportunities in the magazine: in the announcement when he is appointed and in the open letter when he leaves. From the 1830s onwards, under the influence of ideological trends such as journalistic professionalism, the Western newspaper industry objected to journalists making themselves part of the news. It can be said that this concept has an important influence on the implementation and persistence of “The Economist's” “anonymity system to this day. The magazine insists that “what you write is more important than who writes it”, and even the best editors and writers must abide by this system. “Anonymity can make the newspaper's integration of many personal opinions have a unified rationality, it can not only help the author, but even the general audience to view news events more freely and fairly, and to a certain extent avoid becoming the portfolio of more or less famous people.”

## **1.4 Discourse Analysis Theory**

### **1.4.1 Concepts and theoretical points about discourse analysis**

1). The concept of words/discourse:

Discourse is the specific speech and behavior of communication between people in a specific social context, and the relationship between a certain speaker and a recipient.

The verbal activity of communication through text in a specific social context. The popularity of the word “discourse”, the “Linguistic turn” in the field of humanities and social sciences, and the contribution of Bakhtin (M.M. Bakhtin) is outstanding. In his view, as a kind of speech or expression, it is “living” rather than “dead”, its scope is as small as a symbol, a word or a single sentence, as large as an article, a work, even invisible public opinion, etc., its true meaning can only be obtained through social interaction and dialogue practice.

It was Michel Foucault who ultimately laid the foundation of the popular “discourse” theory. He defines “discourse” as “a whole of statements belonging to the same forming system”. In Foucault's view, each kind of “discourse” constitutes a relatively independent “unit”, which has a specific practical function, and “discourse practice”, through the relational network that can be analyzed, such as discourse objects, statements, concepts and strategies, etc. Reflected in the dynamic run.

Foucault very consciously distinguishes his discursive practice, i.e., the fractional method of the archaeology of knowledge, from the traditional study of the history of

ideas. The difference is manifested in the following aspects: 1. About the determination of new things; 2. Analysis of Contradiction 3. A description of the comparison 4. Determination of conversion.

2). The concept of discourse analysis:

“Discourse” and “discourse analysis” are tricky concepts, in large part due to the existence of so many conflicting and overlapping definitions, drawn from a variety of theoretical and disciplinary positions. According to the logic of postmodernism, since no one claims the possession of “truth”, no one can be simply “excluded from rationality”, which makes it even more difficult for people to choose generalizations.

First of all, the mainstream of “discourse analysis” has an obvious postmodern tendency. It treats all ideological theories as discourses or statements (a set of discourses) equally, and treats all knowledge as a certain value presupposition. Subjective statement as a whole, denies all authority regarded as truth (or science), and strives to dilute people's interest in pursuing objective and certain truth; the so-called self-evidence (a vague, floating “signifier”) and constructiveness of itself, attaches great importance to exposing the speech or analysis strategies, political motives, value presuppositions and practical functions of the discourse subject, and is committed to investigating the discourse in social practice. power relations, the socialization process of communication and operation, the mode of action and form, etc. At the same time, because it is a self-reflection and critical research path that is used to question the ideological presuppositions behind a statement or rhetoric, it usually has certain certainty for existing authoritative explanations and assertions. kind of deconstruction. Third, related to the above-mentioned emphasis on the



discourse content ambiguity, it refuses to find historical correlations or analogies for it, refuses to carry out the exploration of continuity and the kind of influence analysis commonly used in the history of original ideas, and also opposes the search for Analyzing the sameness of connotation among various discourses under the same proposition and some of their actual grounds shows a kind of paranoia about rupture and separation.

3) The theoretical points of “discourse analysis”:

<1>. When people communicate face-to-face or write articles, they often do not use an isolated sentence, but use a large number of organized sentence.

<2>. Context is an indispensable factor when using and understanding language.

<3>. Whether it is oral language in communication or written language, between clauses and clauses, between sentences and sentences, between paragraphs and paragraphs

There are structural or semantic connections between them.

<4>. The language in the human brain is stored in the form of chunks.

<5>. The text has a restrictive effect on the selection of sentence patterns and their variants, and there are also text phenomena (such as indefinite and indefinite expressions, etc.) in sentences.

#### **1.4.2 Linguistic analysis methods (including critical discourse analysis)**

Language characteristics are the characteristics of the language of the article,

which generally refer to the stylistic characteristics of all languages that are different from other languages. Different cultural backgrounds and situations lead to differences in the selected communication methods, and these differences are the basis for the formation of language characteristics. Therefore, the appreciation and analysis of the language characteristics of articles are often carried out from three aspects: 1). From the aspect of words. Look for expressive words in sentences, such as verbs, adjectives, reduplications, onomatopoeia, and more. Grasping the key words in the sentence to deeply understand the sentence is a commonly used and desirable way to appreciate the sentence. 2) Analysis from the point of view of sentence pattern. For example, the use of short sentences, or the combination of long and short sentences, are the language characteristics of sentences. 3) Analysis from the point of view of the method. The techniques include rhetorical techniques, various expressions, and various expressions. The common language functions are: liveliness, rhythm harmony, enhancement of momentum, humor and so on.

Discourse analysis research methods include: (1). Quantitative analysis. Discourse analysts rarely say that a certain sentence can be said or not, but observe the sentence “how many people say it”, so as to see the tendency of people when using language. (2) Context substitution method. For example, the same sentence “I am cold”, which will be understood differently in different contexts hierarchical representation. The whole chapter is composed of clauses, and between the clauses that make up the chapter, there are both linear sentences and overall screen performance.

When performing discourse analysis on sentences, the tasks that should be

focused on are as follows:

- (1) Semantic connection between sentences;
- (2) The cohesion and coherence of discourse;
- (3) Conversation principle;
- (4) The relationship between discourse and context;
- (5) The relationship between the semantic structure of discourse and ideology;
- (6) The relationship between the genre structure of discourse and sociocultural traditions;
- (7) Analysis of social attributes of subject content and language
- (8) The relationship between discourse activities and thinking patterns, etc.

## **PRACTICAL PART**

### **2. Research on the name and development of the global coronavirus pandemic**

#### **2.1 Rules for the formulation and development of new coronavirus names**

Three years have passed since the outbreak of the new coronavirus. From the initial outbreak of the new coronavirus in Wuhan, China, it has developed into a normalized epidemic prevention around the world. various names.

Most people in China call it “new coronavirus”, and the disease it causes is called “new coronavirus pneumonia”, the English name is “Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia”, or “NCP” for short.

Internationally, the World Health Organization (WHO) named the new microorganism “2019 Novel Coronavirus” on January 12, 2020, and the English abbreviation is 2019-nCoV. On February 11, 2020, the WHO announced that the disease caused by the new coronavirus infection will be officially named “COVID-19”. Also on February 11, 2020, the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) Coronavirus Research Group (CSG) issued a statement on bioRxiv, a preprint platform for biological papers, officially naming the new coronavirus “SARS-CoV-2”. In addition, at the beginning of the outbreak of the new coronavirus, there were various political and discriminatory names by some malicious people, such as “Chinese virus”, “Wuhan pneumonia”, etc.

Although the World Health Organization (WHO) temporarily calls it 2019-nCoV, it is quite lengthy and difficult to pronounce, and cannot be pronounced smoothly.

To this end, ten members of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) have met in secret for two weeks and spent two days. A new name was discussed.

At an international conference in Geneva, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus announced that the current outbreak of the new coronavirus is officially named COVID-19, which will replace the previously widely circulated name of 2019-nCoV. For the naming of COVID-19, this is based on the new naming method set in 2015, where CO stands for corona, VI stands for virus, D stands for disease, and 19 stands for the year, which is the end of 2019. appeared, so the new name is COVID-19.

The name of the new virus should avoid discriminatory information such as country or place names. Those infected by the virus are humans, not cold numbers, and countries are warned not to use discriminatory language. However, as the strains continue to mutate, how to distinguish the subsequent mutated new coronaviruses has become a new problem.

The World Health Organization announced on May 31, 2021 that it has decided to use Greek letters to name the main mutant strains of the new coronavirus. This method is simple and easy to use and remember, while avoiding the stigma and discrimination of variant strain names, which do not replace the original scientific name of the virus.

The Greek alphabet is the alphabet used in the Greek language. It is the earliest alphabet with vowels in the world. It is widely used in mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, astronomy and other disciplines. Alpha  $\alpha$ , Beta  $\beta$ , Delta  $\delta$ , Kappa  $\kappa$ ,

Omicron o are all commonly used Greek letters.

According to this naming method, the variant strain of the new coronavirus (No. B.1.617.2) discovered in India in October 2020 was named Delta Variant Virus; while the variant strain of the new coronavirus found in South Africa in November 2021 (No. B. 1.1.529) named Omicron mutated virus. Maria Van Kerhoff, head of the WHO's new crown epidemic technical department, said in an interview that if the Greek letters are used up, they may consider naming the new crown variant virus with a constellation, and there may be an "Aries" strain in the future. etc. nomenclature.

## **2.2 The racist question behind coronavirus names**

At present, the world is facing a public health emergency caused by the novel coronavirus pneumonia, and an unprecedented and heroic anti-epidemic battle is starting. With the understanding, sympathy and support of the governments and people of many countries, there are also many foreign media. The English translation of "coronavirus" is too sloppy, and even carries serious prejudice and discrimination, such as "The Herald Sun", "The Daily Telegraph" in Australia, "USA Today" in the United States, etc. These foreign media frequently use China/Chinese virus, Wuhan virus/pneumonia and other words. During this period, there were also incidents of insulting China and xenophobia. For example, on January 27, 2020, the Danish "Jullands-Posten" published a cartoon desecrating the Chinese national flag on the basis of the novel coronavirus epidemic, which seriously hurt the feelings of the Chinese people. Feng Tie, the Chinese ambassador to Denmark, protested

immediately and published a signed article in the newspaper on January 30, criticizing this vile behavior. The outlet declined to apologize, arguing that the comic had no “intent to demean or ridicule.” Even more puzzling is that Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen justified the newspaper's despicable behavior on the grounds that “freedom of speech is a Danish tradition”.

The German news and current affairs best-selling magazine “Der Spiegel” on the cover of the latest magazine shows a suspected Asian man wearing a gas mask, wearing a red protective suit and holding a red iPhone in his hand. The title is: “Corona-Virus Made in China Wenn die Globalisierung zur tödlichen Gefahr wird(Coronavirus, Made in China, When Globalization Brings Death Danger)”. Among them, the words “Made in China” are specially enlarged and presented in yellow. The photo is inlaid in a red frame that symbolizes China. Although such an expression has attracted the attention of some readers, it has almost slipped to the edge of media ethics while China and the world are fighting the epidemic with all their strength.

For years, viral diseases have often been associated with the region, location or region where outbreaks first occurred, such as Middle East respiratory syndrome or Zika virus — named after a forest in Uganda. However, WHO issued guidelines in 2015 calling for an end to the practice in order to reduce stigma and adverse effects, such as fear or anger towards the region or local population in question. The guidelines emphasize that the virus infects all humans: in the event of an outbreak, everyone is at risk, no matter who they are or where they come from.

But as countries struggle to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, a handful

of politicians are sticking to their old rhetoric. U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly linked the new coronavirus to China, and Brazilian congressman Eduardo, son of Brazilian President Bolsonaro, called the new crown pneumonia epidemic “China’s fault.” Politicians elsewhere, including the UK, are also saying China is to blame.

In fact, there are lessons learned from the careless naming of viruses and diseases.

On March 4, 1918, an influenza outbreak occurred in a military camp in Kansas, USA, followed by successive outbreaks of influenza in China, Spain, and the United Kingdom. At that time, only the symptoms of a common cold appeared. But by the fall of 1918, there was a sudden global outbreak, and by the spring of 1920, about 1 billion people were infected and nearly 40 million people died worldwide. The origin of its name is also a coincidence, because 8 million people in Spain were infected with the flu at that time, and even the King of Spain did not escape bad luck, so it was called “Spanish Flu”. At that time, it was not clear what pathogen was causing the flu. It was not until 1933 that British scientists isolated the first human influenza virus and named it H1N1. Since then, it has been known that influenza is caused by influenza virus.

In the 1980s, when AIDS was discovered, it was called “Gay-related Immune Deficiency”. This intensified discrimination against the homosexual community, and after strong opposition, it was changed to the more neutral “Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome” (AIDS).

The 2009 H1N1 epidemic, also known as “Swine Flu”, resulted in the slaughter



of hundreds of thousands of pigs in Egypt. In fact, the flu virus is transmitted by humans, not pigs.

Inappropriate official names can also raise a variety of potential problems. In 2012, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome-related Coronavirus (MERS) raged. Since the virus that caused the disease was first discovered in dromedary camels in Saudi Arabia, the initial disease name included the abbreviation of Saudi Arabia. After five months of struggle, the Saudi government finally removed the country's name from the disease's name and changed it to “Middle East Respiratory Disease.” But this has caused protests from Middle Eastern countries, arguing that the name is geographically discriminatory, affecting trade and tourism in the region. After all, the virus was only discovered by chance in this area, and no one can prove that the virus does not exist anywhere else in the world.

In 2015, WHO issued guidelines for naming new human infectious diseases, requiring that the names of new viruses should not include the following information: geographic location, names of people, names of animals or foods, references to specific cultures or industries, and The name should also be short and concise, and the description is in place, such as SARS. The full medical name of SARS (abbreviation for SARS), which was popular in 2003, is severe acute respiratory syndrome, and the English is “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome”, thus forming the abbreviation SARS.

To insist on associating a virus and the disease it causes with a place is irresponsible and needs to be stopped immediately. In his timely book, *The Rules of Contagion*, published in February, infectious disease epidemiologist Adam

Kucharski has a famous sentence: “History has shown that pandemics can lead to the stigmatization, that’s why we all have to be careful in what we say and do. If in doubt, seek the opinion of others, but in any case, be sure to fall back on solid evidence.”

### **3. The example-based language commonality of “The Economist”**

This practice report is based on 10 COVID-19 news reports in “The Economist”, guided by Li Changshuan's “understand, express, choose” framework. This chapter mainly expounds the main content of the selected materials, and analyzes the characteristics of the text from the three levels of vocabulary, sentences, and language style, combined with specific examples, and briefly introduces the theoretical guidance framework.

#### **3.1 Introduction to the content of the selected text**

The translated texts of this practice report are 10 news reports on the theme of COVID-19 in “The Economist”. The main content is the impact and measures taken by countries after the outbreak of the new crown epidemic, which more intuitively shows the impact of the epidemic on people's lives and social development in various countries. negative impacts, and the effectiveness of countries’ responses. The following table summarizes the contents of the 12 selected texts:

	Source	Title	Main content
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1	“The Economist” April 25, 2020	“A crisis within a crisis”	This article reports on the situation of the new crown epidemic in Turkey. It is necessary to describe the difficult situation of immigrants and refugees to reflect the epidemic. Serious losses to people's lives and national economy.
2	“The Economist” May 9th, 2020	From Crisis to Crisis	This article reports on the COVID-19 situation in Lebanon. Lebanon's outbreak is under control, but the country's economy is in jeopardy In the machine, banks are heavily indebted, currency exchange rates are collapsing, people Civil protests are frequent.
3	“The Economist” May 9th, 2020	Bargain Abatement	This article reports on developing countries such as Vietnam and India COVID-19 situation. Due to the timely and appropriate measures of the blockade, Vietnam, Kerala, India and other places to control at a lower cost live with the epidemic.
4	“The Economist” May 23, 2020	Riders Wanted	This article reports on the COVID-19 situation in Egypt. Egypt took the form of a looser lockdown, but its economy is still decline. Egypt has turned to the International Monetary

			Fund for expect additional loans.
5	“The Economist” May 30, 2020	Brazil's losing battle	This article reports on the COVID-19 situation in Brazil. Brazil's outbreak spins out of control, health system collapses in poorer regions, deaths due to bad decisions by President Jair Bolsonaro, the death toll soared.
6	“The Economist” May 30, 2020	Germany's COVID-19 sleuths	This article reports on the coronavirus situation in Germany. Germany is relying on contact-tracing teams to monitor cases to stem a second wave as the outbreak is brought under control and state restrictions are gradually lifted.
7	“The Economist” June 6th, 2020	Deadly tide	This article reports the situation of the new crown epidemic in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and other South Asian countries. The three countries have largely lifted their national lockdowns, causing the outbreak to re-accelerate  The number of infections is rising rapidly.
8	“The Economist” June 20, 2020	COVID-19 testing in Africa	This article reports the situation of the new crown epidemic in South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria and other African countries. African countries

			are trying to track the new crown virus, but due to insufficient testing capacity and materials, the results are not obvious.
9	“The Economist” July 11st, 2020	Lock, Unlock, Repeat	This article reports on the COVID-19 situation in Australia. Australia faces the threat of a new wave of infections due to lax controls, such as Victoria's failure to impose a two-week quarantine on people arriving from abroad.
10	“The Economist” August 8th, 2020	Not as Stated	This article reports the situation of the new crown epidemic in Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo and other Balkan countries. Governments claim to have the virus under control, but this is not the case. Infection rates are still rising due to premature reopenings, withholding real data, and more.
11	“The Economist” February 6th, 2021	“A black swan, no”	This article reports on what people think of as a “black swan event” for COVID-19, but in fact it was discussed many years ago that governments are not sufficiently equipped to defend against a global pandemic event
12	“The Economist” February 6th, 2021	“Chaguan Migrants’ woes	This article reports on the conflict between Chinese workers'

		as a big holiday looms”	willingness to go home for the New Year and the strict measures under the epidemic control amid the epidemic.
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### 3.2 Features’ Analysis in the texts

This chapter will combine the specific cases in the process of reading practice, analyze from point to point, and explore the characteristics of “The Economist” vocabulary use according to the characteristics of news vocabulary. The sentence structure of the text is complex and diverse, and the unique characteristics of the news commentary should be combined to analyze the language characteristics of the article and the author's point of view from the aspects of language style and cultural factors.

**Example 1:** The plan proposes a bail-in: shareholders would take a bath, and wealthy clients would see their deposits become long-dated, low-interest obligations

**Analysis:** The “take a bath” phrase in this example uses American slang, and the deep meaning of the phrase “to suffer a heavy financial loss” can be determined by looking up the Collins Online Dictionary. By using slang, the author here makes the sentence more regional and more lifelike. Slang has become a necessary tool for humorous masters and journalists, and when used properly, language can be unique and innovative.

**Example 2:** “Testing is our Achilles heel,” says John Nkengasong of Africa CDC,

a pan-African health institution

**Analysis:** The “Achilles heel” in this example involves mythological allusions. The surface meaning of “Achilles heel” is “Achilles' heel”, that is, “Achilles' heel”, which is derived from Greek mythology. Achilles' mother soaked the young Achilles in the river Styx, But because of the rapid flow of water, the heels I pinched were not soaked. Achilles was completely invulnerable, except for his heels. Later in the Trojan War, the poison arrow hit his only weakness, causing him to die. Therefore, “Achilles' heel” is its “Achilles heel”.

After clarifying the meaning, the expression here could have directly used “detection is our Achilles heel”, but the author has adopted the way of using allusions to express it. The advantage of using allusions is that it can strengthen arguments. Using classic examples can strengthen our arguments, increase persuasiveness, and enrich our reading experience for the content of the article. It will not be so simple and boring. Straight words can be elicited in allusions. This example can provide a certain key reference for us to understand and summarize the characteristics of the article.

**Example 3:** The economy, which rebounded late last year, is reeling again.

**Analysis:** There are many meanings of “reeling” in this example, involving polysemy, and it is necessary to reconsider the meaning that the author wants to express. According to the “Oxford Advanced English-Chinese Dictionary (8th Edition)”, “reel” means “to move in a very unsteady way”, which can be understood as “to move in a very unsteady way”, combined with the original text, it can be seen here that the economy has become unstable again due to the impact of the epidemic.

The use of the word “reel” here both reflects the instability of the economy and highlights the negative impact of its fluctuations that make economic conditions difficult.

**Example 4:** It made a compelling case for “paradigm shifts”, in which the accumulation of challenges to a supposed truth eventually overturns the accepted understanding of it.

**Analysis:** The meaning of Paradigm in the Oxford Dictionary is paradigm, example, style. The word “paradigm” was obtained by looking up materials. The concept was first proposed by American philosopher of science Thomas Samuel Kuhn in his masterpiece “The Structure of Scientific Revolution”. A description of its transformation. The so-called “paradigm shift” refers to the emergence of new academic research results in a field, breaking the original assumptions or rules, thus forcing people to make fundamental revisions to the basic theory of the discipline. The second half sentence of the original text is the explanation of the term concept. Therefore, only on the basis of understanding the term can the logical and semantic relationship of the entire sentence be accurately grasped. The use of these terms enhances the professionalism and authority of the text.

**Example 5:** The pandemic has highlighted the insecurity of “gig-economy” workers in the precariat, who cannot afford to stay at home or self-isolate, putting their own health and that of others at risk.

**Analysis:** Gig, as a noun, means “live concert, live comedy performance” in the “Collins Double Interpretation Dictionary”. Obviously, this is not an appropriate combination with the economy, so it cannot be understood directly from the surface



meaning of the word. As time goes, “Gig economy” has become an emerging term originally derived from American scholar Diane Mulcahy's book “The Gig Economy” published in 2017. The “gig economy” refers to replacing the traditional nine-to-five work form with short-time and flexible work forms, and quickly matching the supply and demand sides through the Internet and mobile technology, mainly including group work and application programs, mainly include two forms of contact for on-demand work. In addition, in a parallel text, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang also used the term “gig economy” when answering questions from Chinese and foreign journalists. The use of proper nouns can make the text more professional, and the real-time nature of the author's article can be seen from the term “gig economy”

**Example 6:** Findings are less likely to be kept under wraps for months, awaiting peer review in often pay-walled journals.

**Analysis:** Based on the previous knowledge, this paragraph is about the change in the way publications are published during the epidemic. It mentions that more than 100 papers on the new crown epidemic are newly published in the preprint system every day. A keyword search in Wikipedia yields a preprint that refers to any version prior to peer review and publication. Peer review is a process of reviewing scholarly achievement in which an author's scholarly work or plan is to be reviewed by other experts and scholars in the same field. review. Another word of interest in this sentence, “pay-walled” is a compound word consisting of a verb and an adjective. “walled” means closed, but here it clearly means “Pay regularly”. The use of compound words often has polysemy.

**Example 7:** If these were the only issues, classic value mantras would apply

(“when to catch the falling knife” or buying when “there’s blood on the streets”) and attention would turn, as it already has for some, to the very real opportunities the crisis has revealed

**Analysis:** When understanding this sentence, the first thing is to analyze the meaning of these two financial terms in order to better understand the sentence. The phrase “catch the falling knife” in this sentence first appeared in The Washington Post, where a falling knife refers to stocks, stocks, commodities, etc., whose price or value is rapidly declining. As a contrarian value investor, John Templeton, the most successful fund manager of all time, has repeatedly stated throughout his career that “blood on the street is the best time to buy, even your own blood” that is, “buying when there's blood on the streets” in the text. This does not refer to the death of people on the streets, but the panic caused by the crisis, which leads to the situation of stock selling. When extreme pessimism or panic occurs, it is investors who Great time to start. These two sentences are financial industry terms, and the use of these two sentences here adds a deeper meaning to the article, emphasizing the author's point of view that “a crisis is also a turning point”.

**Example 8:** “Michele Wucker: analyst and author, “The Gray Rhino” This was a “grey rhino”—a predictable crisis We must replace black-swan fatalism with grey-rhino pragmatism (subtitle)

**Analysis:** According to the book “Gray Rhino: How to Deal with High-Probability Crisis” by Guggenheim Scholar Award winner Michelle Walker, “black swan” is a metaphor for a small probability but a huge impact event, while “gray rhino” It is a metaphor for a potential crisis with a high probability and a huge impact.

In terms of finance, “black swan” generally refers to those unexpected small probability risk events; “grey rhino” refers to those high probability risk events that are often prompted but not fully taken into account; “Minsky moment” mainly refers to After a period of stable economic development, the continuous increase in liabilities is unsustainable, and the asset value collapse moment (inflection point) when the debt risk suddenly erupts. The use and interpretation of technical terms not only enhances the professionalism of the text, but also lays the foundation for the author's point of view with the “grey rhino theory”.

**Example 9:** “One of the biggest lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic has been the folly of ignoring warnings about highly likely, high-impact risks that are a matter of when, not if. For years, many governments brushed off countless credible warnings that the world was poorly prepared for a pandemic. When the novel coronavirus emerged in China, too many nations were too slow to respond. The pandemic should encourage policymakers to pay more attention to other known but poorly managed risks.”

**Analysis:** The author used “One of the biggest lessons” and the two words “one of” used capital letters. In linguistics, capital letters are usually used to emphasize meaning. Emphasizing “one of” here reflects the author's careful use of words. The author's view that “the novel coronavirus pandemic is not a black swan event” is supported by the fact that various governments have been under-prepared for pandemic disease defenses over the years. Among them, the author uses the phrases “too many” and “too slow”, but does not use “all” “most countries”, which also reflects the careful use of words.

**Example 10:** Solvency ratios, or insurers' capital relative to their written premiums, remain healthy.

**Analysis:** The solvency ratio here is a professional term, which is the ratio of judging the safety of corporate liabilities and the solvency of short-term liabilities. The size of the solvency to a large extent reflects the risk level of the business operation. This section discusses the risk level of the insurance company's operation after the impact of the new crown epidemic. The following section also conducts an in-depth discussion of this risk level. After understanding the meaning of this technical term, it will help us to have certain knowledge background to better understand the full text.

**Example 11:** GAVI, an alliance that funds vaccines for poor countries, has set up COVAX

**Analysis:** Two acronyms related to the epidemic are involved here, which are closely related to current affairs hotspots. Therefore, these words need to be searched and understood by using Internet resources. GAVI, the full name of The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the Chinese name is the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the organization's purpose is to cooperate with global governments and non-governmental organizations to promote the development of global health and immunization; participating members include developing countries and donors Governments, WHO, UNICEF, World Bank and vaccine industry in developing countries, etc. Since 2000, GAVI's catalytic role has ensured that 90 million children in the world's poorest countries have been vaccinated against hepatitis B, preventing millions of deaths from hepatitis B-related

conditions. COVAX, the full name of the New Coronary Pneumonia Vaccine Implementation Plan, is a project jointly proposed and led by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the World Health Organization and the Alliance for Epidemic Prevention Innovation. It plans to provide 2 billion doses of new coronary pneumonia vaccines to the world by the end of 2021. , supply to “own-financing economies” and “subsidized economies”.

The theme of the original text is the vaccine economy, which discusses the worldwide efforts of governments to invest in new crown vaccines and to allocate vaccines rationally, in which global organizations are also actively involved. Knowing these technical terms will help you better understand the related content in this article. The advantage of abbreviation is to shorten the length of the article to facilitate understanding and improve the readability of the article. If a word that is too long appears more than three times in the article, the abbreviated form is generally used.

**Example 12:** An increase in consumption tax last autumn, part of an effort to repair the government’s finances, was followed by a drastic pullback in spending.

**Analysis:** in this sentence was followed by means “...to be followed by...”. The use of passive sentences has the following linguistic effects: 1. Emphasize the bearer of the action; 2. Only know the bearer of the action, but do not know who is the executor of the action; 3 The style of discussing the content of science and technology needs to emphasize objectivity and science. Obviously, the use of passive sentences here makes the text more objective and scientific.

### **3.3 Conclusion: Language Commonality of “The Economist”**

There are various news genres, and the analyzed text of “The Economist” belongs to news commentary, which combines news and political commentary, mainly in the form of argumentative essays to demonstrate reasoning. “News comments” are different from “news reports”, characterized by objective and true dissemination of factual content, while news comments are characterized by focusing on the analysis of news events. Here are many forms of English news commentary, which can be roughly divided into editorial, commentary and column speech. “The Economist” adopts the form of column speeches, that is, speeches published in fixed columns and signed by individuals with independent opinions. News commentary has its own obvious characteristics: the topic has a strong news quality, the reasoning has a clear ideological quality, and the discussion has a wide publicity.

The language of news commentary should be easy to understand, flexible and diverse in sentence structure, and objective and fair. News commentary should be both narrative and commentary. Its content mainly focuses on in-depth analysis of annual hot events and topics. Examples are used to deepen arguments, play a timely guiding role in public opinion, and have strong rationality and orientation.

By analyzing the original “The Economist” text, it is not difficult to find that the text has the following characteristics. From the perspective of language expression characteristics, in terms of vocabulary, the text involves a large number of names of

people, institutions, and professional terms in the fields of economy and technology, reflecting the professionalism of the discussion. Sexuality and authority, compound words and news neologisms are also emerging, and through the use of rhetoric and polysemy, the author's attitude towards the content is expressed. In terms of syntax, this text is different from other news texts.

News reports are limited by the layout and length, and more long and difficult sentences are used. The use of passive sentence patterns appears frequently in every article. Passive sentences emphasize the recipient of the action. The style used to discuss the content of science and technology can emphasize objectivity and scientific mode.

In terms of discourse, the logical framework of the text is clear, narrating and discussing, and the reasoning is strong. The writers mainly use the form of stating facts and reasoning. Generally, the first paragraph and subtitle of the article express their views, and then gradually expand the analysis and reasoning, so that the article can be explained. Often with strong ideological characteristics, on the basis of understanding the original text, the information of the original text is truthfully and accurately conveyed, and it is readable and acceptable at the language and cultural level.

From the perspective of content and form, in addition to the objective third-person narrative, the text of "The Economist" is also written in the first person,

narrowing the distance with the reader, generating emotional resonance, and keeping the same position and point of view in the context of the text. The writers of the selected texts have a high level of ideology and theory and analytical thinking skills, and they have discussed the development direction of the post-epidemic era in all fields and in an all-round way need.

To sum up, the texts selected by “The Economist” mainly illustrate the development direction and trends of the world after the epidemic from different perspectives. The articles have clear viewpoints and rigorous language. They are examples of learning news reviews; the epidemic has spread all over the world. The authors of many texts focus on a global perspective and the language uses a large number of professional vocabularies, which makes the text more persuasive and the expression of opinions is also very objective.

#### **4. Linguistic characteristics of different sections of “The Economist” on coronavirus-related topics**

##### **4.1 Introduction to selected sections**

“The Economist” has 12 fixed sections, taking into account the regional and thematic, different sections have different length and difficulty, namely: “The world this week”, “Leaders”, “Letter”, “Briefing”, “continents and countries”, “Business”, “Finance and economics”, “Science and technology”, “Books and arts”, “Economic & financial indicators”, “Graphic detail”, “Obituary”.

Due to the proportion of some sections being small, and the fact that some



sections do not involve reports on the new coronavirus, so this chapter will take sections: “continents and countries (including Britain, Europe, United States, The Americas, Middle East & Africa, Asia, China)“ “Science and technology”, and “Economic & financial indicators”, as examples to select several of the articles related to the themes coronavirus topic to compare and analyze by language. The following table is the articles of each section selected in this chapter:

The section it belongs to	Title + Source
Continents and countries (including Britain, Europe, United States, The Americas, Middle East & Africa, Asia, China)	“The world after COVID-19” Jun 16th 2020 “A Crisis within a Crisis” Apr 25th 2020 “From Crisis to Crisis” May 8th 2020 “Bargain Abatement” May 8th 2020 “Riders Wanted” May 23th 2020 “Brazil’s Losing Battle” May 30th 2020 “The Virus Detectives” May 30 <sup>th</sup> 2020 “Deadly Tide” Jun 6th 2020 “COVID-19 testing in Africa” Jun 20th 2020 “Lock, Unlock, Repeat” Jul 11st 2020 “Not as Stated” Aug 8th 2020 “Back to Work” Mar 28th 2020
Science and technology	“Detecting elevated body temperatures” Apr 4th 2020 “Breaking the net” Apr 4th 2020 “To each according to his need” May 23th 2020 “Pandemic-proofing the planet” Jun 27th

	2020 “Maskarade” Apr 4th 2020 “The bat signal” Jul 25th 2020
Finance and economics	“Worth Its Weight” Jan 11th 2020 “Land of the Rising Sun” Jun 6th 2020 “This time is different” Jun 6th 2020 “Will Job Losses Last?” Jun 13th 2020 “Stranded Mariners” Jun 20th 2020 “Swapping panic for calm” Jun 20th 2020 “House Prices in America” Jul 4th 2020

## **4.2 Analysis of the language characteristics of different sections of “The Economist”**

### **4.2.1 “Continents and countries” Section**

In this part, usually appears in the form of soft news, we first analyze some language of the Chinese section.

Soft news is a review article, focusing on excavating representative and humane factual plots, and discuss it. Soft news articles reflect the author's position and attitude, has a strong guiding role for readers.

The material process objects of this dissertation are mainly a series of actions taken by the Chinese government and institutions to encourage the resumption of work after controlling the epidemic, as well as the economic response activities and status quo of various industries in China.

**Example 1:** March 20th it (the government) pledged to increase financial support for the unemployed.

**Example 2:** The government has given provinces more leeway to raise funds for such things as infrastructure and buildings.

**Analysis:** From Example 1 and Example 2, we can see that in the process of a series of verbs “promoting” and “move”, most sentences in the discourse clearly point out that most of the performers of the action respect and objectively record the Chinese government. Active regulation of different goals.

**Example 3:** ...when just about everyone was cooped up at home.

**Example 4:** In this case, an obsession with the “work resumption rate” has invited fiddling. To prevent such trickery, some companies... by turning on idle equipment.

**Analysis:** However, in Examples 3 and 4, words such as “be cooped up”, “fiddling”, “trickery” and “idle” are of a pejorative nature. They appear in the position of an action, target or environmental component, revealing some Disapproval of “superficial efforts” by officials and economies in response to resumption of the work

The process of expressing one's opinion through the mouths of others through direct and indirect speech. In news discourse, the use of speech process can enhance the objectivity and authoritativeness of news commentary. The “speaker” among the participants is the media, and the “recipient” is usually the reader by default.

**Example 5:** “We want to reduce risk to the absolute minimum and will not count the cost of that,” says Mr. Gu.

**Example 6:** Officials boast that things are almost normal again.

**Example 7:** Such measures are necessary but cumbersome, he (a German manager) says.

**Analysis:** Similarly, most of the speech processes in the discourse objectively describe China's insistence on economic activities premised on controlling the epidemic. The speakers of the speech process are from official institutions (China Securities Regulatory Commission), authoritative media (Xinhua News Agency), corporate employees with specific identities and names (Mr. Gu, etc.) and self-employed individuals (Bao, etc.), which enhances the reliability of the source.

The syntactic structure of English is congruent, involving function words, structural modifications and modifiers, and the components are quite complex. When the sentence is complex, there may be many modification and modification relationships, which may easily lead to structural ambiguity. The reader needs to clarify the sentence structure by combining the context to make the most reasonable judgment. However, after reading and sorting, it is not difficult to find that this part The frequency of long and short sentences and compound sentences is the highest, and the difficulty is also the biggest. Take the sentence in the Africa section as an example:

**Example 8:** The residents of Paraisopolis, a favela of perhaps 100,000 people in southern 550 Paulo, where COVID-19 deaths are rising at a faster rate than anywhere else in the city, saw the festive side.

**Analysis:** This example is a compound sentence with a relatively compact sentence structure. The sentence contains appositions, interjections, attributive

clauses and other components, and there are multiple prepositions “of” and “in”, and the grammatical structure is also relatively complex. By dividing the levels, it can be found that the main cadre of the sentence is divided into “The residents of Paraisopolis saw the festive side.”, “a favela of perhaps 100,000 people in southern 550 Paulo” is the apposition of “Paraisopolis”, “where COVID-19 deaths are rising” at a faster rate than anywhere else in the city” is an attributive clause with “Paraisopolis” as the antecedent. So, the sentence contains three layers of information: (1) the inhabitants of Paraisopolis saw the other side of the holiday; (2) Paraisopolis is a slum at No. 550 south of São Paulo, with a population of about 100,000; (3) Paraisopolis is seeing a rising number of COVID-19 deaths faster than anywhere else in the city.

**Example 9:** Imran Khan, Pakistan’s prime minister, has loudly pointed out that he was never a fan of the lockdown, which he had warned would hit the poor unduly hard, and could only slow the disease.

**Analysis:** This example is a compound sentence. The sentence contains apposition, object clause, attributive clause, and there is a parallel structure, and the components are relatively complex. By dividing the levels, it can be found that the main cadre of the sentence is divided into: “Imran Khan has loudly pointed out”; “Pakistan's prime minister” is the apposition of “Imran Khan”; “he was never a fan of the lockdown” is guided by “that” of object clause; “which he had warned would hit the poor unduly hard, and could only slow the disease.” is an attributive clause with “lockdown” as the antecedent, among which “would hit the poor unduly hard”

and “could only slow the disease” disease” is a parallel structure. Therefore, the sentence contains three layers of information: (1) Imran Khan is the Prime Minister of Pakistan; (2) Imran Khan pointed out he has always been against blockades; (3) Imran Khan once warned that blockades will disproportionately hit the poor, but only slow the spread of the epidemic.

**Example 10:** Such weaknesses are the main reason (2) why a study published by the Centre for Global Development, a thinktank, projected (3) that death rates in Africa could be many times higher than predicted by other models (4) that do not account for scant staff and cash-strapped hospitals.

**Analysis:** This example is a typical long and difficult sentence with complex sentence structure, including apposition, attributive clause, object clause, passive voice and other components, and there are few punctuations in the sentence, so it is not easy to divide the level. The backbone of the sentence is “Such weaknesses are the main reason”; “why a study published by the Centre for Global Development, a thinktank, projected” is an attributive clause with “reason” as the antecedent; “a thinktank” is “the Centre for The apposition of “Global Development”; “death rates in Africa could be many times higher than predicted by other models” is an object clause guided by “that”; “published by” and “predicted by” are passive voice; “that do not “account for scant staff and cash-strapped hospitals” is an attributive clause with “models” as the antecedent. So, the sentence contains the following information: (1) these weaknesses are the main cause; (2) a study was published by the Center for Global Development, a think tank; (3) the study predicts that mortality in Africa may be many times higher than other models predict; (4) Other models do not take into

account the shortage of staff and the shortage of hospital funds.

In addition, in this part of language expression, it is not difficult to find that passive sentences are also used frequently.

**Example 11:** Some Egyptians who test positive are told that relatives living in the same house cannot be swabbed unless they show symptoms.

**Analysis:** There are two passive voices in this example, “are told” and “be swabbed”.

**Example 12:** They had not been using protective gear properly and have been accused of breaching social-distancing rules by sharing cigarettes and car-pooling to work.

**Analysis:** “have been accused of” in this example is in the passive voice. From the context, the main content here is: Private guards are charged for violating regulations during the epidemic.

#### 4.2.2 “Science and technology” Section

There are many long sentences in science and technology news, because the author sometimes needs to support multiple aspects of information when explaining a scientific and technological phenomenon, and the use of short sentences will cause information shortage, and the connection is not close, the sentences are scattered when reading. Therefore, when reading English technology news, long sentences are often encountered, and the understanding and analysis of long sentences are very important.

**Example 1:** Dr Wang’s initial tests of the new mouse suggest it generates ace2 receptor molecules in all of the parts of the body where researchers think the virus makes its initial attacks in human beings.

**Example 2:** They show, too, that SARS-CoV-2 replicates well in the animals’ lungs and tracheas, and also in their digestive systems—another part of the human body that seems susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection.

**Analysis:** These are two sentences from the Science and Technology section of “The Economist”. The difference between the two sentences is that the first sentence has no commas and is completed in one go; the second sentence has more short sentences. The common point is the frequent use of parentheses, clauses or conjunctions to clarify a fact, in which the modifiers and logical levels are more diverse and complex.

**Example 3:** In 2012 Yoshihiro Kawaoka of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Ron Fouchier of Erasmus University in Rotterdam undertook to discover how many mutations would have been required to make H5N1 transmissible between people via the droplets expelled in a sneeze.

**Analysis:** The sentence has a total of 40 words. The subjects of this sentence are Yoshihiro Kawaoka and Ron Fushier, “undertook” is the object of the main clause, and an object clause led by “how” appears after “discover”. The difficulty of this long sentence lies in the second half part. We need to analyze the components of the clause layer by layer like peeling an onion. First of all, “how many mutations” is the subject of this object clause, and “require” is the predicate “to make” to



indicate purpose. “Between” and “via” are both prepositions. There is also a past participle “expelled” at the end, which defines “droplets” and “in a sneeze” is an adverbial component.

Different from literary texts, the main function of the scientific and technological texts we know is to convey objective and true scientific and technological information to the public, and the purpose is not to achieve a specific aesthetic effect. Therefore, the organization of discourse must be more logical and orderly, so that the relationship between semantic components is hierarchical and structural.

**Example 4:** The idea that these risks deserve systematic appraisal and monitoring surfaced after the emergence, in 2005, of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza. This was first detected in 1996, when it killed some geese in Guangdong province, China. The following year it infected 18 people associated with a poultry market in neighboring Hong Kong, six of whom died. But for most of the subsequent decade the virus was restricted to farmed birds on the Chinese mainland.

In 2004, however, a highly pathogenic strain emerged and began to spread across South-East Asia, killing tens of millions of birds. By the middle of 2005 this version of the virus had infected wild geese, which took it into Europe, India and Africa. That year, 98 people were infected, and 43 of them died—a death rate severe enough for David Nabarro, then coordinator of the UN’s response to influenza, to issue a warning that an unchecked H5N1 outbreak could kill up to 150m people. In 1968 a less pathogenic strain of flu, which had originated in the same area, killed 1m people

when it spread around the world. In 1957 a still-earlier relative killed 1.1m. H5N1 was considerably more lethal than either.

**Analysis:** Overall, there are two adaptor strands. “risks”, “emergence”, “killed”, “infected”, “flu”, “outbreak”, etc. are all words related to viruses, so they can be connected as a whole, the second linking chain is “poultry” The words “market”, “neighboring Hong Kong”, “farmed birds”, “Chinese mainland cross”, “South East Asia”, and “The same area” are used to describe where and how the virus spreads.

Next is the internal logical cohesion of the sentence. “The idea that” is the aftercare, which is the latter clause, “these risks deserve systematic appraisal and monitoring surfaced up to...”, “these risks”, “these” refers to the virus risks described above, “after” is a temporal cohesion, meaning “after...”, where the chronological order should be expressed, and here is an adverbial of time, when processing into Chinese, the word order should be advanced. “Emergence” refers to the chronological correspondence between “the emergence of H5N1” and “the first detected” in sentence 2.

“This was first detected” in the 2nd sentence, “This” uses an indicative anaphora, which refers to “H5N1 virus influenza”, and “When” is a temporal linker, referring to “1996”. “It killed some geese in Guangdong province China”, “It infected 18 people associated with the poultry.

The most obvious means of cohesion in the phrase “market in neighboring Hong Kong” is lexical cohesion. Words with similar meanings include “killed” and “infected”, both of which indicate the harm of the H5N1 virus. “Poultry markets” and “geese” are both Refers to poultry. If the discourse needs to be coherent, here

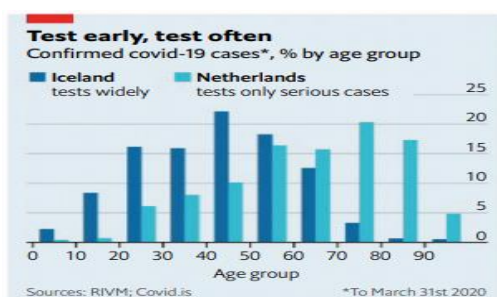
“geese” cannot be understood as “geese”, but should be “goose”. “Guangdong province China” and “neighboring Hong Kong” are also expressions of lexical cohesion. “Neighboring Hong Kong” “Cleverly shows the geographical location of Guangdong and Hong Kong: the two places are similar and have strong circulation. “neighboring” connects the locations that appear in the upper and lower sentences.

**Example 5:** Zoonoses have continued ever since. Of more than 330 diseases which emerged between 1940 and 2004, over 60% were zoo-notic. Of those over 70% originated in wildlife. For viruses the proportions were 69% and 87% respectively (see chart on next page).

**Example 6:** A test’s sensitivity refers to how good it is at detecting the thing it is meant to detect—in this case the igM and igG antibodies associated with sars-cov-2. A sensitivity of 95% means that, from 100 blood samples known (by other means, such as previous genetic testing) to be infected

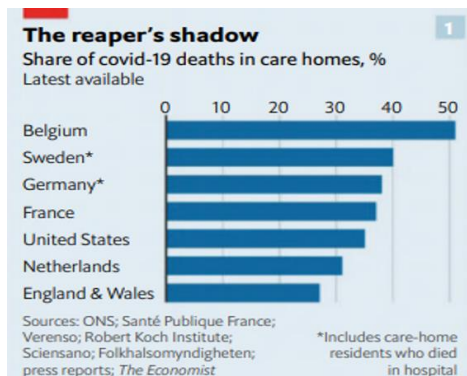
**Analysis:** Using specific figures to explain the problem can make the expository text more accurate, more scientific and more specific. The accuracy of language can be reflected through specific numbers, which can not only accurately and objectively reflect the facts, but also have strong persuasive force.

### Example 7:



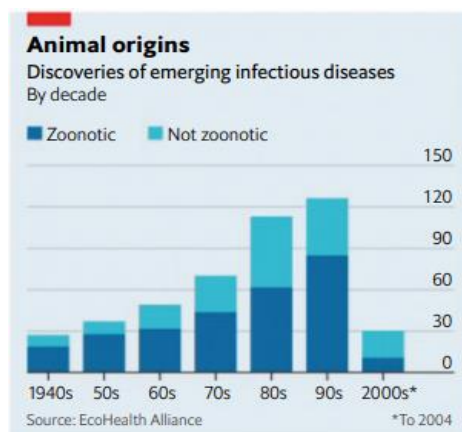
Pic 1

(Refer to “Breaking the net”)



Pic 2

(Refer to “To each according to his need” May 23th 2020)



Pic 3

(Refer to “Pandemic-proofing the planet” Jun 27th 2020)

**Analysis:** Charts are a good means of visualizing and "visualizing" object attribute data, especially for the expression of concepts such as time and space and the expression of some abstract thinking, which cannot be replaced by words and

word expressions.

### 4.2.3 “Finance and economics” Section

English-language financial reports are aimed at reports related to the professional field of finance and economics.

Therefore, one of the characteristics displayed at the lexical level is that there are many proper nouns or professional terms. Professional words in English financial reports come from the fields of economy, finance, trade, consumption, etc., such as “current-account surplus”, “balance sheet”, “household consumption”, “currency manipulator” and so on.

**Example 1:** Wenzhou’s shadow financial system amounted to 110 billion yuan in 2010 according to one estimate equivalent to 38% of the cities

**Analysis:** “shadow financial system” is an economic term. The concept was first coined by Mount McCulley, executive director of Pacific Investment Management Corporation. Later, the Financial Stability Board It is defined as “a credit intermediary system involving institutions and businesses other than the traditional banking system”. Specifically in China, it is mainly reflected in some financing activities in private equity funds, underground banks, and private lending. It can be clearly seen in the above discussion “shadow financial system” is an economic term; “GDP” means “gross domestic product”; “FSB is the name of an international organization, a proper noun, known as “global central bank”, meaning “financial stability board”. By discussing this sentence, we can see that there are many

professional words in English financial reports.

In the English financial and economic reports, in addition to “increase”, the words used to express the rise include “grow rise”, etc. and the words used to express the straight rise include “soar, jump, peak, surge”, etc. In English financial reports, in addition to decline, the words used to indicate the decline are often used “drop, fall, decline”, etc. The words to describe the sharp decline include “collapse, plummet”, etc. and the words for slow decline include “slow, dip”, etc.

It can be seen from this that many words in “Finance& Economy” section can represent rising or falling, but the degree of specific words is not the same. It always uses words that are suitable for their degree to indicate rise or fall, which can more objectively reflect the facts, and can also reflect the richness of contrasting words in English financial reports.

**Example 2:** If the investment rate were to drop back to its 2007 level for example the demand shortfall would run to over 6% of GDP.

**Example 3:** But outsiders principal concern--that its growth will collapse if it suffers a serious blow, such as the collapse of the euro is not justified

**Analysis:** From the above two examples, it can be seen that Example 2 and Example 3 use “drop” indicating a general decline and “collapse” indicating a dramatic decline. Different word representations give people a feeling of objective reality and specific images, and also reflects the richness of contrastive words in English financial reports.

English-language financial reports need to objectively describe the facts, usually through the use of a lot of data to achieve this purpose, so the numbers are overwhelming in English-language financial reports, mainly including two categories: the first category is the exact number. Exact numbers, as the name suggests, the numbers are very precise, like 6,566 of the 6,566 people killed. The second category refers to that in many cases, due to the need for timely reporting, reporters cannot come up with exact figures, or in order to avoid too detailed figures to make the report uninteresting, by first dividing the whole into zeroes, and then using some estimated words to modify the numbers, such numbers can not only reach the accurate standard as much as possible, but also improve the reading experience of readers. For example, roughly is used in roughly 270 billion yuan. Although this data is imprecise, it is also accurate. Such data modified by estimated words is scientifically reasonable and very common in news reports.

**Example 4:** The school has over 1500 students and almost as many professors many of whom are much younger than their students

**Analysis:** The estimated words appearing in Example 4 are “over”, “almost”, “many”, and “much”. Since it is not possible or necessary to know how many professors there are, how many professors are younger than their students, and how much younger these professors are than their students, these rough estimates are used to embellish the data. This not only improves the accuracy of the report, but also strengthens the authenticity of the report, but also avoids the drawbacks that the

number is too specific and the article is boring.

English financial reports usually cite the opinions of relevant authorities. Therefore, in the article on the topic of the novel coronavirus in the financial and economic section of “The Economist”, according to the author's statistics, such words are: say, advocate, argue, and to say, to add, to admit, to exclaim, to complain about, to assert, to declare, to claim, to say out loud, to shout, to explain, to point out, to emphasize, etc. (refer to the appendix for the article information)

**Example 5:** A propaganda post shows, China’s president Xi Jinping bullhorn in hand declaring that “Nothing Can Stop the Chinese”

**Analysis:** In Example 5, the neutral verb “declare” is used instead of “say” to express the meaning of “say”. First of all, the action of “speaking” comes from the president of China, not ordinary people. Secondly, the occasion when President Xi Jinping made this action was in

In the wake of the massive novel coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, say something soothing and encouraging people to have confidence in the future. In the end, the chairman made the action through the instrument of a loudspeaker. Therefore, the author chose “declare” to express. “declare” means that an important person solemnly announces or declares something in public. It is very reasonable to use it here in terms of expressing connotation and emotional color.

**Example 6:** Told that Chinese uses the same word for crisis and opportunity, Homer Simpson exclaimed: “Yes! Crisa-tunity!”

**Analysis:** Use “exclaim” to express the meaning of “speaking”. From the context,

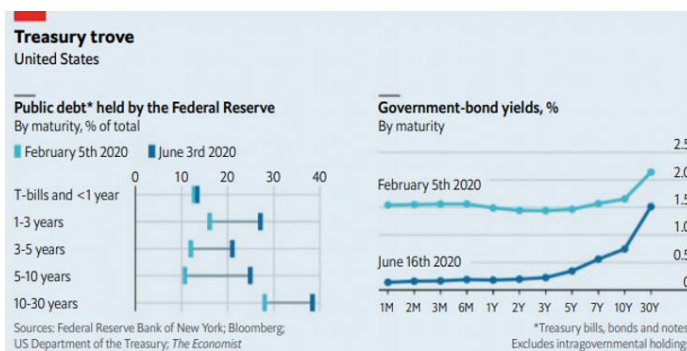


it can be seen that the tone and demeanor that the speaker blurted out with excitement at that time reflects the sudden shouting or exclamation because of excitement, shock, anger, etc. Layer specific meaning, meaning exclamation road”. It can be seen that in English financial reports, the author usually analyzes the specific situation and chooses the most suitable words to express the meaning of “said”. Therefore, such words expressing the meaning of “said” in English financial reports are very rich. A typical lexical feature in reports.

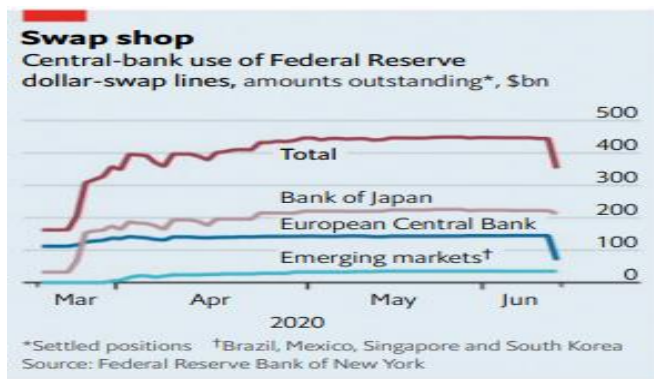
### Example 7:



(Pic 4: from “This time is different” Jun 6th 2020)



(Pic 5: from “Swapping panic for calm” Jun 20th 2020)



(Pic 6: from “Swapping panic for calm” Jun 20th 2020)

### 4.3 Conclusion: Differences in language characteristics between coronavirus-themed articles in different sections of “The Economist”

The “Continents and countries” section covers regional and global topics on all continents and three countries (US, China and UK). These include: 3 pages in Britain, 6 pages in Europe, 5 pages in United States, 3 pages in The Americas, 4 pages in Middle East and Africa, 4 pages in Asia, 3 pages in China, and International is 1 page. The content of this section usually appears in the form of soft news, so the vocabulary used by the author is generally more spicy, bold, and instructive, and his own opinions are implied in the sentences (refer to Example1 to 4 in 4.2.1) From the perspective of space, it is not difficult to find that “The Economist” is mainly used for reporting and commenting on Western countries, particularly in Europe and the United States. In addition, the language in this section mostly uses compound sentences and long and difficult sentences. According to examples 8 and 9, it can be analyzed that the author wants to express deeper thoughts through long and difficult sentences, but this also increases the comprehensive reading difficulty of

this section. The indirect quotations in this section are mostly paraphrased from interviews with passers-by, and rarely use famous quotes or paraphrases of professionals with social status. Therefore, in this part, the author uses the word "say" to appear more frequently than other words that express the meaning of speech in the indirect quotation (reference to examples 5, 6, 7).

The two concepts of science and technology are often used as a unified term "technology" in various disciplines and societies. The "science and technology" in "The Economist" connects the two concepts of science and technology in the column setting, and selects and publishes the relevant report content. Compared to the science news reports, the concept definition of science and technology news reports is more complete. It mainly reports on scientific and technological progress events or discoveries that can promote social development, and theoretical research on scientific and technological spirit and humanistic spirit. Therefore, in this column It is not difficult to find that the application of long and difficult sentences is not uncommon. The two concepts of science and technology are often used as a unified term "technology" in various disciplines and societies. The "science and technology" in "The Economist" connects the two concepts of science and technology in the column setting, and selects and publishes the relevant report content. Compared with science news reports, the concept definition of science and technology news reports is more complete. It mainly reports on scientific and technological progress events or discoveries that can promote social development, and theoretical research on scientific and technological spirit and humanistic spirit. Therefore, in this column It

is not difficult to find that the application of long and difficult sentences is not uncommon (reference to example 1-5).

However, compared with the authors in the "Continents and countries" section, most of them are to express their own views, so as to better guide the reader; while most of the authors in the "Science and Technology" section use long Difficult sentences, the purpose of compound sentences is to better explain what an emerging concept means. In addition, through examples 5 and 6, we can analyze that "The Economist" science and technology sections use more specific figures, and the application of percentages is the most frequent.

As shown in Example 7 in Section 4.2, the authors in the "Science and Technology" section often use diagrams to explain and analyze the articles in order to help readers understand the article more clearly. It is not difficult to find that most of the diagrams in this section are histograms. The advantage of the histogram is that on the one hand, it is convenient for users to understand a large amount of data and the relationship between the data, and on the other hand, the advantage is that the user can read the original data more quickly and intuitively through visual symbols.

"The Economist" is a typical financial and economic journal, and its "Economics & Finance" section is its top priority, and most of the selected articles are from economists and financial scientists with professional backgrounds , so as shown in Example 3 and Example 4, one of the characteristics of the relevant reports in this section at the lexical level is that there are many proper nouns or professional terms, and the vocabulary is accurate, and the verbs that describe the trend have different semantics. From this point, it can fully demonstrate that "The Economist", as an

English financial journal, has a certain professionalism in economics and finance. The precision of expression can also be reflected in this part, the frequent use of numerals (reference example 1 and example 2) is compared with the numerals in the "Science and Technology" section, in this part, the use of percentages and the use of numbers The frequency is about the same, because the facts need to be described objectively, so the authors need a lot of data for this purpose in this section, both exact and estimated figures are used.

In the use of indirect citations, the authors of the "Finance & Economics" section have more diverse lexical choices for citing other people's words than the "Continents and countries" section (reference Example 5 Example 6). The use of tables in this part is also common, but since economics is used to express and describe the trend of an event and the changes over time, most of the tables in this part use line graphs, which is also one of the important features of the "Finance & Economics" section compared to other sections.

## Appendix

### Article 1 from “The Economist” 25 April 2020

#### A Crisis within a Crisis

ISTANBUL In a battered country, millions of Syrian refugees have it worst. At the end of February, when Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced he would open his country’s borders with Greece to migrants and refugees, Salih, an Afghan living in Istanbul, heeded the call, as did thousands of others. But the Greek side of the border was closed. For ten days, Salih waited and slept rough near the main crossing. Eventually, Turkish police drove him and a few others to a river separating the two countries and ordered the group to cross by boat, threatening them with batons. Greek guards then captured him, took his cash and phone, and sent him back. By the time he returned to Istanbul, where he had earned a living fixing windows since escaping the Taliban, the COVID-19 pandemic was in full swing. His job was gone. The company he worked for had closed. Salih, who lives with his wife and two children, can no longer pay rent and faces eviction. “We ran out of money,” he says. “We have nothing left.”

Across Turkey, the pandemic is taking an increasingly heavy toll in lives and in jobs. For the second time in as many years, a recession beckons, this one more severe than the last. The IMF expects the economy to contract by 5% this year. An avalanche of lay-offs has already started to swell. It will hit the millions of migrants and refugees living in Turkey hardest, and it will hit them first. Mr Erdogan would like to prevent mass loss of life without risking economic collapse. But he may end up with both. His government has suspended all international flights, closed schools, cancelled communal prayers at mosques, and ordered people above 65 and below 20 to remain at home. But it has also kept the economy running, albeit in low gear. This piecemeal approach is starting to backfire. On April 10th the government imposed a weekend curfew in the country’s biggest cities with only two hours’ notice. Within minutes, hundreds of thousands of people stormed supermarkets and bakeries to stock up on food. Turkey’s infection rate was already rising rapidly. In the first three weeks of April, confirmed cases spiked from under 16,000 to over 90,000. The botched curfew will have made things even worse.

The economy, which rebounded late last year, is reeling again. Exports in March were down by 18% compared with the same period in 2019. Tourism, which generated \$35bn last year, is bracing for a lost summer. The central bank, having burned through billions of dollars to prop up the Turkish lira, has nearly run out of foreign reserves. The currency is sliding, placing yet more pressure on companies with foreign-currency debt.

No one is more vulnerable than the migrants and refugees who have made Turkey their home over the past decade. Some 70% of the 3.7m Syrians in Turkey are poor or nearly poor. The vast majority work informally, which makes them

ineligible for compensation or unemployment benefits. A recent survey revealed that only 3% of employed Syrians had official work permits. “They were hired for being the cheapest labour and they will be the most disposable ones,” says Omar Kadkoy, a researcher at TEPAV, a think-tank in Ankara.

Scores have already been sacked. Maysarah, an Egyptian who worked at a stall selling dried fruit in Istanbul’s once bustling Grand Bazaar, says his bosses fired him and dozens of other migrants when the bazaar closed in March. Waseem, a Syrian who drives a food-delivery truck, says he managed to hold on to his job. Four of his five Syrian flatmates have lost theirs. Because refugees generally work off the books, there is no telling how many have been laid off since the start of the crisis. The jobless rate is 14%, but that figure dates back to January. Economists fear it will easily pass 20% by the summer.

The government has tried to help the economy weather the storm with a 100bn-lira (\$15bn) stimulus package, which allows affected businesses to defer loan and tax payments and offers support to households in need. Parliament has also passed a law banning companies from sacking workers over the coming three months and offering those forced to take unpaid leave roughly \$6 a day. None of this applies to migrants or refugees.

Turkey may soon turn to a familiar source for additional funding. In 2015 the EU offered Turkey \$6bn if it agreed to look after the refugees and prevent them from crossing to Greece. Mr Erdogan deserves no reward for playing with their hopes to put pressure on European governments. But the migrants and refugees knocking on Europe’s doors do deserve better. Against the approaching storm, many of them are defenceless. Once again, the EU will probably be obliged to clench its teeth, loosen its purse-strings and entrust Turkey’s leader with lots more money.

## **Article 2 from “The Economist” 8 May 2020**

### **From Crisis to Crisis**

BEIRUT As the pandemic recedes, the protesters come out again COVID-19, JOKES Chadi Khoury, might have been good for his mental health. For six weeks a nationwide lockdown meant he could not fix a busted refrigerator in his Beirut snack shop. Now he can—but he has spent all morning arguing over prices. Repairmen want to be paid in dollars, which he lacks: gone are the days when customers might buy their falafel with greenbacks. “We’re in Lebanon, not America,” he yells into the phone. “Give me the price in Lebanese.” Down the street, the owner of a salon crunches the numbers for \$400-worth of new shavers. Last year that was equal to about 25 haircuts. Today, even after raising prices, he will need to coif 60 customers to cover the bill.

Lebanon is lurching back to life. Most businesses closed in mid-March to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Even Barbar, a much-loved west Beirut takeaway that served shawarma behind sandbags during the civil war, pulled down its shutters. But the government is cautiously declaring victory. It counts fewer than 800 confirmed cases; daily new infections have been in single digits since April 15th. Firass Abiad, the head of Lebanon’s main COVID-19 hospital, says the

outbreak looks under control.

Little else is, though. Lebanon was in economic crisis before the pandemic, with an illiquid banking sector and a collapsing currency. On March 7th the government decided to default on its debts. The lockdown has pushed the economy into free fall. Thousands of businesses may never reopen. Stories of hardship circulate daily on social media: a pregnant woman and her husband salvaging food from a refuse skip; penniless migrant workers trying to cross the militarised border into Israel. With no other options, Lebanon has asked the IMF for help. But that will require difficult reforms many Lebanese can ill afford.

Since the end of the civil war in 1990, Lebanon has built a service economy based on finance, property and tourism. It ran large fiscal and current-account deficits—11% and 26% of GDP in 2018—and financed them with foreign capital, much of it from a sprawling diaspora. The central bank (Banque du Liban, or BDL) in effect ran a Ponzi scheme to defend its currency peg, borrowing dollars from commercial banks at generous interest rates.

The scheme collapsed last year as bank deposits began to shrink after a decade of growth. The peg, 1,500 pounds to the dollar, is all but meaningless: last month a dollar fetched 4,000 pounds on the black market. Banks have imposed informal capital controls. The state predicts a 53% jump in consumer prices this year. A business federation estimates that one-third of registered companies have gone under.

The middle class has become poor, and the poor destitute: three in four Lebanese may need aid by the end of the year. Despite the lockdown, thousands have taken to the streets in protest. Banks have been firebombed. In Tripoli, one of Lebanon's poorest cities, a young man was shot dead by soldiers during a protest last month.

On April 30th ministers approved a “recovery plan” meant to win IMF support. It would drop the peg and devalue the pound to 3,500 to the dollar this year. The government would trim its wage bill, phase out electricity subsidies and broaden the tax base. Formal capital controls would keep scarce dollars in the country.

The plan is not perfect. It makes unrealistic assumptions such as strong tourism receipts—wishful thinking in a pandemic. It proposes lifting capital controls after one year. The government itself thinks this would cause an outflow of \$9bn in 2021, all but negating any foreign aid. The plan is also too optimistic about the prospect of clawing back billions in stolen assets.

Perhaps most contentious will be how to clean up the balance-sheets of Lebanese banks, which have an estimated 100trn pounds in losses. The plan proposes a bail-in: shareholders would take a bath, and wealthy clients would see their deposits become long-dated, low-interest obligations. Bankers are predictably furious, arguing this would shatter confidence. But their anger is partly a way of ducking responsibility for their role in the crisis. Far from being contrite, banks are still pursuing outlandish schemes to raise capital. One recently offered to double the amount of any fresh dollar deposits. Either the bank has discovered a money tree, or this is a last, desperate stage in Lebanon's state-



sanctioned Ponzi scheme.

If bankers are unapologetic, politicians are oblivious. A quartet of former prime ministers, the men who led Lebanon into the abyss, are fighting against the recovery plan. Appointments at the BDL, which are divvied up by sect, were postponed last month because of partisan squabbling.

Protests that began in October united many Lebanese in disgust at the entire political class. But the country's crises are giving its factions a new lease on life, as the state struggles to provide help. Hizbullah, the Shia militia and political party, has its own fleet of ambulances and more than a dozen COVID-19 clinics. Every party is vaunting its efforts to treat patients and distribute food and cash. Some even hand out surgical masks emblazoned with their logos. The state, meanwhile, has still not distributed a meagre 400,000-pound stipend to needy families.

Other countries should take heed. Before the pandemic protests roiled the region. Iraqis rallied against a useless government. Algerians overthrew their longtime dictator, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and kept protesting against his army-backed successor. The pandemic cleared the streets, but governments have squandered that respite. Low oil prices will push some states to insolvency. Iraq made just \$1.4bn from selling crude in April, down from \$7bn in April 2019. Analysts say it may need to borrow \$40bn to get through the year. Lebanon will not be the only country where lockdowns give way to protests.

Article 3 from "The Economist" 8 May 2020

### **Bargain Abatement**

DELHI Vietnam and the Indian state of Kerala have curbed the virus on the cheap The phone rings and a doctor picks up. "Sir, we've run out of ventilators. What do we do when more patients come?" Soon after, a grim medic explains that the disease they are battling kills three in four victims. There is no vaccine or treatment.

Kerala has used the same simple, cheap tools to fight COVID-19, with similarly stellar results. It was the first of India's 36 states and territories to report a COVID-19 case, a medical student who returned in January from Wuhan, the Chinese city where the epidemic started. By March 24th, when Narendra Modi, the prime minister, declared a nationwide lockdown to combat the disease, Kerala accounted for a fifth of India's cases, more than any other state. Just six weeks later, it ranks 16th. As Such talk has become commonplace in the time of COVID-19. Yet this scene has nothing to do with the current pandemic. It is the opening of "Virus", a film that won critical acclaim last year in Mollywood, as the Malayalam-language cinema of the Indian state of Kerala is sometimes known. Styled as a thriller, it tells the true story of the struggle to contain an outbreak of the Nipah virus in 2018. The bat-borne pathogen killed 21 out of the 23 people infected. But Kerala tamed Nipah within a month, adopting an all-hands approach that included district-wide curfews, relentless contact-tracing and the quarantine of thousands of potential carriers. India's active caseload has risen by a multiple of 71, Kerala's has fallen by two-thirds. It has suffered just four deaths. Many of Kerala's 35m

people work abroad; 20 times more of them have died of the illness in another country than have at home.

With 95m people, Vietnam is a much bigger place. In dealing with COVID-19, however, it has followed a strikingly similar script, with an even more striking outcome. Like Kerala it was exposed to the virus early, and saw a surge of infections in March. Active cases also peaked early, however, and have since tumbled to a mere 39. Uniquely among countries of even remotely similar size, and in contrast to such better known covid success stories as Taiwan and New Zealand, it has not yet suffered a single confirmed fatality. The Philippines, a nearby country of roughly the same population and wealth, has suffered more than 10,000 infections and 650 deaths.

Like Kerala, Vietnam has recently battled deadly epidemics, during the global outbreaks of SARS in 2003 and of swine flu in 2009. Vietnam and Kerala both benefit from a long legacy of investment in public health and particularly in primary care, with strong, centralised management, an institutional reach from city wards to remote villages and an abundance of skilled personnel. Not coincidentally, communism has been a strong influence, as the unchallenged state ideology of Vietnam and as a brand touted by the leftist parties that have dominated Kerala since the 1950s.

Some suggest that having relatively young populations may have lessened the toll of the disease in both places. Others speculate that universal inoculation with BCG, a vaccine against tuberculosis and leprosy, has made locals less susceptible. Todd Pollack, a specialist in infectious diseases based in Vietnam, says the reasons for its success are simpler: “Countries that took early, aggressive action, using proven methods, have severely limited the virus. If you reduce it fast enough, you never reach the point of exponential growth.”

Mr Pollack agrees that cultural factors may have aided Vietnam’s effort, such as a willingness to study and learn from China, social comfort with wearing protective masks, acceptance of being isolated away from home and respect for expert advice. He admits that the age profile of Vietnamese COVID-19 carriers has been generally younger than elsewhere, giving more resistance to illness. But that is largely because health workers swiftly and effectively isolated carriers, so protecting older people.

Before the end of January Vietnam had declared a national emergency, formed a top-level steering committee chaired by the deputy prime minister and begun screening passengers and restricting movement. The effort to trace the contacts of infected travellers drew on personnel from the army and civil service as well as health workers. At one large hospital in Hanoi, the capital, investigators tracked and tested some 5,000 people. As early as mid-February, Vietnam had imposed stringent lockdowns on some districts, with communes of as many as 10,000 inhabitants placed under heavy police guard. As in China, potential carriers of the disease were quarantined away from their own families.

The government’s public-awareness campaign was equally aggressive, relying on text-messaging, information-packed websites and downloadable apps

as well as a barrage of some 127 articles a day, on average, across 13 of the most popular online news outlets. “The impression they created was that the government was really doing everything it could,” says Mr Pollack.

Kerala’s state government has been similarly energetic, from the chief minister, its top elected official, giving nightly pep talks to village-level committees working to set up public hand-washing stations. Aside from showing logistical efficiency in monitoring cases and equipping its health system, it has also emphasised sympathy and compassion for people affected by the pandemic. The state has mobilised some 16,000 teams to man call centres and to look after as many as 100,000 quarantined people, ensuring they do not lack food, medical care or simply someone to talk to. Free meals have been delivered to thousands of homes, as well as to migrant workers stranded by a national lockdown.

Both Kerala and Vietnam are keenly aware that the danger is far from over. Until there is a vaccine or better treatment, Vietnam will remain on alert, says Mr Pollack. Kerala, for its part, is preparing for a huge influx of expatriate workers returning from the economically battered Arab Gulf countries. More than 300,000 have requested help getting home via a state website. Rajeev Sadanandan, a public-health expert who spearheaded Kerala’s Nipah campaign, admits this is a big risk, as well as an added burden at a time when state revenues are under severe strain. “But”, he says, “there is no doubt in government or in our society that they must be brought back and that we should stand by them whatever the circumstances.

#### **Article 4 from “The Economist” 23 May 2020**

##### **Riders Wanted**

BEIRUT Egypt chose a looser lockdown. Its economy is still cratering

There was never much chance of social distancing in Cairo, a city more populous than most countries. Buses fill to overflowing, passengers dangling out of open doors. Millions live in informal settlements with streets barely wide enough for a sedan. And indeed, unlike many other Arab countries, Egypt did not try to impose a strict lockdown. There is a night-time curfew; busy spaces like restaurants and cafés are shut. But public transport is running, factories are humming and shops keep at least limited opening hours.

So far, Egypt has dodged a devastating outbreak. Confirmed cases—about 14,000 on May 21st, in a country of 100m—are an unreliable measure. Data suggest the government is testing only about 30,000 people a week (it does not release exact figures). Some Egyptians who test positive are told that relatives living in the same house cannot be swabbed unless they show symptoms. But the death toll, a more reliable measure, is less than seven per 1m citizens, below some wealthy Gulf states, to say nothing of hard-hit countries such as Britain (over 500 per 1m citizens).

The looser lockdown has not spared Egypt an economic crisis, however. The private sector, weak to start, is in free fall: the purchasing managers’ index crashed from 44.2 in March to 29.7 in April, an all-time low (anything below 50 suggests

a contraction). Export orders fell even faster. Big sources of foreign currency are particularly vulnerable to a downturn. Citizens were already struggling after years of political turmoil and austerity; the state lacks the resources and reach to deliver large amounts of aid. Egypt may be first, but similar problems will clobber the Arab world's other non-oil states in the coming months.

First to suffer was tourism, which employs one in ten Egyptians. Last year foreign visitors brought in \$13bn, about 5% of GDP. With airports closed since March, revenue is now zero. The national carrier, Egyptair, had hoped to resume international flights in June, but the government has extended the closure indefinitely. Desperate to snag some cash, hotels have started to reopen (at a maximum 25% occupancy) for domestic tourists, but they spend a lot less than foreigners.

A larger concern is the 3.4m Egyptians who work overseas. In 2019 Egypt was the fifth-largest recipient of remittances: \$27bn, about 9% of GDP. It is too early to say how far that number will fall, but the World Bank estimates that global remittances could drop by 20% this year. More than half of Egyptian expats work in the Gulf states, which have begun widespread salary cuts and lay-offs driven by low oil prices.

Even the Suez canal, which collects a reliable \$5bn-6bn in annual transit fees, could take a hit. Fully laden vessels can pay almost \$1m to sail through it. They pay the toll because the alternative is to sail thousands of miles round Africa. But low oil prices mean fuel is cheap, and weak global demand means ships are in no hurry to make port. Almost two dozen vessels sailing to and from Asia have skipped the canal and gone the long way. The canal authority has lowered fees to stay competitive.

Foreign reserves, which plunged after the revolution in 2011, had recovered to a comfortable \$45bn in February. They are now dropping again, to \$37bn at the end of April, as the state covers loan repayments and portfolio outflows. Fitch, a ratings agency, thinks they will hit \$31bn this year. It sees the current-account deficit widening to 5.3% of GDP, up from 3.6% last year.

Bankers estimate that Egypt will need at least \$10bn in external financing. It has already turned to the IMF. Last year it finished a three-year, \$12bn IMF programme that trimmed the deficit to 8% of GDP, from 12% three years earlier. The fund has already approved \$2.8bn in new emergency financing and is in talks for a standby loan of up to \$5bn more.

Still, the state has limited firepower to help those struggling. Civil servants and pensioners will receive a modest pay bump. But many will have to give back 1% of their monthly income in a new "corona tax". Thousands of families were added to the main cash-transfer schemes, which reach 10% of the population. The central bank has earmarked 50bn pounds (\$3.2bn) for soft loans to help tourist businesses. They carry two-year repayment terms; travel agents think it will take at least that long for the sector to rebound. Informal workers generate perhaps half of GDP. Most are now idled. The government promised them 500 pounds a month for three months—less than half the average weekly wage. Charities are distributing twice

as many food boxes this Ramadan as last year.

Business is slumping. Many big firms reported soft sales in the first quarter, which captures only the early weeks of the pandemic. GB Auto, a car giant, saw revenue fall by 4.1% compared with 2019. Edita, a snack firm, reported a 44% drop in year-on-year profits. Billboards along Cairo's main roads, which should be full of advertisements aimed at Ramadan shoppers, are blank. Sensing a growing unease, the government has stifled any criticism.

Other Arab states are emerging from lockdown into the same problems. Although Egypt's tourism revenues are large in absolute terms, the sector in Tunisia, Lebanon and Jordan is bigger as a share of GDP. The latter two also depend heavily on remittances. All three have lower long-term credit ratings than Egypt (none worse than Lebanon, which defaulted in March). Egypt was astute to ask the IMF for early help: its neighbours are not far behind.

## **Article 5 from "The Economist" 30 May 2020**

### **Losing the Battle**

SÃO PAULO The country entered the pandemic with some advantages. Because of Jair Bolsonaro it is squandering them

ON MAY 18TH Bruno Covas, the mayor of São Paulo, Brazil's biggest city, announced an unscheduled five-day holiday to discourage people from going out. The residents of Paraisópolis, a favela of perhaps 100,000 people in southern 550 Paulo, where COVID-19 deaths are rising at a faster rate than anywhere else in the city, saw the festive side. A popcorn vendor set up shop to serve the stream of patients entering a clinic. School-aged boys flew kites nearby. "Brazil adapted well to this new reality," joked one, pointing to crowded rooftops and the dancing diamonds overhead.

Brazil's COVID-19 curve looks like a kite string. On May 28th it had 411,821 confirmed cases and 25,598 deaths. The United States, the only country with more cases, barred Brazilians from entering from May 26th. The World Health Organisation has declared South America "a new epicenter" with Brazil the worst affected country. A study In 133 cities by the Federal University of Pelotas in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul concluded that Brazil's caseload is seven times the official number.

Brazil entered the pandemic with strengths. Like the United States it has a federal system. Governors (and mayors) have the power to declare lockdowns. Brazil's free Unified Health System (SUS), modelled on Britain's National Health Service, serves 80% of the population, though poorly in some regions. In earlier crises, such as the H1N1 ("swine flu") epidemic in 2009 and the mosquito-borne Zika outbreak in 2015, the three levels of government and the SUS co-operated effectively.

More contagious than H1N1, COVID-19 exploits Brazil's weaknesses. Rich travellers brought the virus, but it is now concentrated in poor neighbourhoods like Paraisópolis, where people are packed together and have jobs without contracts or benefits. That makes social distancing hard. A monthly benefit of 600

reais (\$110) introduced in April has helped millions of informal workers, but long queues of people unable to obtain it are still forming at banks.

What makes social distancing harder is that Brazil's populist president, Jair Bolsonaro, scoffs at the medical establishment and its advice. He has quarrelled with and lost two health ministers since the crisis began. His attitude to COVID-19 resembles that of President Donald Trump: both tout hydroxychloroquine, a malaria drug that is useless against COVID-19 and can be dangerous, according to a new study in the Lancet.

Mr Bolsonaro's attitude causes more damage, however. Brazil's federal system is more president-centred than America's. To work well in a crisis, all levels of government must co-operate. Luiz Henrique Mandetta, Brazil's health minister when the outbreak began, held daily meetings with state and municipal health secretaries to plan for getting and distributing money, tests and equipment to combat the pandemic. But after Mr Bolsonaro sacked him on April 16th those meetings ended. "The SUS is a three-legged animal," Mr Mandetta says. "If you cut off one of its legs, it starts to go in circles."

Rich states with relatively strong health systems are coping better. In the state of São Paulo co-ordination among municipal and state health agencies and the private sector helped open thousands of hospital beds, including in stadiums and convention centres. Even so, in the city more than 90% of intensive-care beds are occupied. Douglas Cardozo, an auxiliary nurse at Hospital do Campo Limpo, south of Paraisópolis, says that staff lack bodysuits and other necessities. At least 50 patients a day check in with COVID-19 symptoms, he says. Two colleagues have died from it.

In poorer regions of Brazil the health system is buckling. Less than a month after the first covid case was reported on March 13th in Manaus, a city of 2m in the Amazon rainforest, the mayor said that its system had collapsed. A promised field hospital has failed to materialise and mass graves are being dug for victims, some of whom are dying on boats en route to the city.

The weaker the health system, the more it needs the protection of strict lockdowns. But Mr Bolsonaro has made these a wedge issue. He shows up at weekly protests in Brasília, the capital, against quarantines. Unlike in some European countries, Brazilians do not come to their front doors and windows to applaud health workers. Their covid clamour signals conflict. When Mr Bolsonaro says something incendiary, his fans drive around blasting car horns in approval while his critics bang pots and pans. In municipalities where support for Mr Bolsonaro is strong, adherence to social distancing is correspondingly weak, according to a recent paper by Nicolas Ajzenman, an economist, and two other authors.

This forces governors and mayors to fight on several fronts. Mr Bolsonaro mounted a legal challenge to their quarantine orders, which the Supreme Court rejected on April 15th. João Doria, the centre-right governor of São Paulo state, says that to implement a strict lockdown "would mean a clear confrontation with millions of Brazilians" who support Mr Bolsonaro. (Critics say he wants to avoid

angering businessfolk.) Some Brazilians are merely confused. They ask themselves: “whom should I listen to, the governor or the president?” says Mr Doria.

This adds to the economic and cultural forces that jam people together even as the president divides them. Just half in São Paulo are adhering to lockdown rules. To stop the virus’s spread 70% is needed, says the state’s government. On bustling Avenida Senador Teotônio Vilela on the city’s southern periphery more than 20 shoppers browse in a variety store, ducking in and out under half-lowered metal shutters. Reinildo Carneiro, a construction worker, donned a puppy-print mask and popped into a bar in Paraisópolis for a game of snooker. “You’re more vulnerable if you get depressed from staying at home,” he says. Beer kills the virus, he read on WhatsApp.

Mr Bolsonaro will not set him straight. His presidency is consumed by melodrama. In a two-hour video of a cabinet meeting released by the country’s Supreme Court and watched by millions of Brazilians, he gave himself over to unhinged and profanity-filled rants against police investigations of his sons but had little to say about protecting citizens from the pandemic. Widespread testing, a precondition for easing lockdowns safely, is not happening. By May 26th Brazil had processed fewer than 500,000 tests, just a tenth of the number acquired by the health ministry. Its testing rate is far lower than that of European countries and the United States.

Governors are yielding to pressure anyway. On May 27th Mr Doria announced plans to open parts of his state, though not the city of São Paulo. At the city’s São Luis cemetery 3,000 fresh graves await COVID-19 victims. Several hundred have been filled. The cemetery’s old average of 11 burials a day has jumped to more than 40, says a gravedigger. Most graves are covered with flowers but unmarked due to a backlog in engraving the plaques. A banner warns about Zika. None is needed for COVID-19, says the gravedigger. “once people lose a family member, they finally believe.”

## **Article 6 from “The Economist” 30 May 2020**

### **The Virus Detectives**

BERLIN Contact-tracers try to keep a second wave at bay

I F YOU HAD fallen asleep three months ago in Germany and woken up today you might not immediately notice much amiss. In much of the country shops are bustling, museums have reopened, and any bar that can pass for a restaurant is pulling in custom. If the shuttered theatres and conference halls dampen the spirits, consolation may be found in the beer gardens, in full swing under the spring sun.

New COVID-19 infections in Germany are now consistently below 500 a day. But as German states lift restrictions they must try to prevent a second wave. Masks are compulsory on public transport and in shops, and social-distancing rules remain in place (if often ignored). Borders and schools are partially shut. But perhaps most important in fighting contagion are Germany’s phalanx of

contact-tracers-part detectives, part social workers, part medical auxiliaries and part data clerks.

Their work has three elements. First, to obtain from people who have tested positive for COVID-19 a list of their recent contacts, and to categorise them. (Spending 15 minutes face-to-face with an infected person, for example, places you in a high-risk bracket.) Second, to alert those people and instruct them, if needed, to self-isolate for 14 days. Third, to check in with them periodically and get them tested, in some cases even if they show no symptoms. In some countries contact-tracers work from home or outsourced call centres. In Germany they are housed in one of 375 Gesundheitsämter (public health offices), such as one in north Berlin recently visited by your correspondent. In a light-filled room lined with maps and charts, two dozen people (of a total staff of 98) were managing various aspects of the pandemic, from manning phones to tapping in data. Doctors were on hand, ready to be dispatched to administer tests. The work has changed in recent weeks, says Lukas Murajda, head of the office: 80% of the contacts his team follows up are now in care homes for the elderly or other residential centres.

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI), a federal health agency, provides local offices with guidance and basic software to crunch their data. It has also recruited and helped train 500-odd “containment scouts” to help overloaded areas. But the offices retain considerable leeway to organise their own work. Some struggle to co-operate or share information, a task already hampered by data-privacy rules. (Certain information may only be shared via fax.)

But the advantages of decentralisation far outweigh the drawbacks. Health workers who know their regions are better placed to chase down infection chains in potential hotspots like meat-processing plants. Better-off health offices often ditch the RKI software and build or buy their own. “That’s the beauty of it,” says Peter Tinnemann, an epidemiologist at the Charité University Hospital in Berlin. “Local workers adapt solutions to local circumstances.” Some regions are struggling to meet the federally mandated target of five contact tracers per 20,000 inhabitants. But if they have seen no new cases for a week or more, they may see no reason to try.

There are valuable lessons in the history of contact-tracing, a technique long deployed to manage outbreaks of tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases. “People underestimate the nature of the work,” says Marcel Salathé, a Lausanne-based digital epidemiologist. Inexperienced tracers may be unprepared for interviewees who react defensively to intrusive questions, or who fear their answers will send friends to quarantine. The two-day training of Mr Murajda’s recruits is limited to technical matters, though psychologists are on hand to help. Offices need multilingual staff to reach non-German-speakers. Most tracers read to their charges from prepared scripts, but the better-trained may deviate from it. Rather than ask directly about contacts, for example, they might jog interviewees’ memory by asking general questions about their social networks.

Having abandoned contact-tracing in March, only this week did Britain kick it back into gear. American states have also struggled to up their efforts. In Germany



the Gesundheitsämter have long been underfunded; many in particular lack doctors, who can earn more in hospitals. Yet most offices maintained contact-tracing throughout the pandemic, even if understaffed spots in rural areas struggled when daily infections were in their hundreds. Many pulled in furloughed colleagues, like teachers or librarians. Some called on the army. Baden-Württemberg, an especially hard-hit state, ramped up contact-tracing staff from 500 to 3,000 and never saw infections spiral out of control, says Manne Lucha, its social-affairs minister.

Manual contact tracing has its limits: even the most helpful patient will struggle to identify fellow passengers on a train. Like other countries, Germany hopes to automate some tracing with a mobile app using Bluetooth. Yet its development has been plagued by technical and data-privacy woes; officials now hope to launch it in mid-June. Even then, technology can only support manual contact tracing, not replace it, says David Holtgrave, dean of the school of public health at the University of Albany, in New York state. Germany's virus detectives have plenty of work ahead.

#### **Article 7 from “The Economist” 6 June 2020**

##### **Deadly Tide**

**DELHI AND ISLAMABAD** Infections are rising fast in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan

Over the past week Bangladesh, India and Pakistan have largely lifted nationwide lockdowns intended to curb the spread of COVID-19. The freeing of 1.7bn people—more than a fifth of humanity—from varied restrictions will bring relief to the region's battered economies. Alas, it promises no relief from the pandemic itself. In luckier countries, stay-at-home rules reduced the number of new infections. In South Asia they managed only to moderate the disease's acceleration, but not to halt it. The lifting of the lockdowns, in turn, is likely to hasten its spread again.

With some 350,000 confirmed cases and fewer than 9,000 deaths so far, the region's toll looks relatively modest. Yet those numbers disguise both widespread undercounting and a rate of growth that was frightening even before the lifting of restrictions. At the current pace, the numbers are doubling every two weeks, suggesting that by the end of July, when some models predict the outbreak will peak, the official number infected may reach 5m and the death toll could approach 150,000.

Low levels of testing mean that the real numbers could be far worse. One foreign health official in Pakistan reckons the death toll is between two and three times the government's count. John Clemens of icddr,b (formerly the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh), estimates that Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital, may already have as many as 750,000 cases, even though the official national tally is less than 60,000.

In harder-hit parts of the region, health services are under severe strain. Madhuri, a 46-year-old nurse in Thane, a suburb of Mumbai, had been working 12-hour shifts with no days off from April 1st until she herself caught COVID-19

from a patient in May

The government hospital where she works does not treat the disease, passing positive cases to designated covid hospitals. But Madhuri (not her real name) says her colleagues must instead cope with the patients those places no longer treat. “We now do 60-70 deliveries a day, up from 40-50 in normal times, in addition to stab wounds, accidents and so on.” Her hospital’s 20-bed intensive care unit is staffed by just two nurses and its 16-bed isolation ward by just one, she says.

Her experience is far from unusual. Three medical interns at another hospital in the centre of Mumbai recently released a video claiming that they had been left for hours in sole charge of 35 seriously ill COVID-19 patients, with no doctors, nursing or cleaning staff to help. Another viral video revealed that corpses wrapped in plastic had been left in a covid ward full of patients, owing to lack of space in a hospital morgue. Staff at hospitals across India have repeatedly protested against unsafe conditions, poor equipment and long working hours. In Delhi, the capital, some 600 health workers have tested positive for COVID-19—including 329 at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, the country’s grandest government hospital. Overall, India has a ratio of doctors and nurses to population that is half China’s and a quarter of Europe’s. And the virus has now spread from better-served cities to poor rural states such as Jharkhand, where there is one doctor for every 6,000 people.

Doctors in Pakistan say the government’s claim that there are adequate hospital beds is nonsense. “The situation is very, very unsatisfactory,” says Qaisar Sajjad of the Pakistan Medical Association, predicting a surge in cases stemming from the recent holiday marking the end of Ramadan. Zubair Zahir, head of a local doctors’ association in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, fears its hospitals could run out of intensive-care beds and ventilators within the next two weeks. The crisis has already squeezed other services: despite a resurgence of polio, an immunisation campaign in the province has been suspended. In India treatment of endemic diseases such as tuberculosis, which kills some 400,000 people a year, has also been impeded.

In normal times, the region’s rich can largely insulate themselves from the implications of decades of puny public spending on health. “If they so much as sneeze they flee to Thailand, Singapore or India,” says a doctor at a private hospital in Dhaka. Now, she says, it is “almost impossible” to gain admission to Bangladesh’s elite hospitals, whether for COVID-19 or other illnesses.

Finding places in morgues, cemeteries and crematoria is also becoming a challenge. At the municipal graveyard of Narayanganj, an area with lots of garment factories on the outskirts of Dhaka, a typical month sees fewer than 250 burials. Last month it jumped to 575, only 70 of which were officially recorded as victims of COVID-19. Jawahar Baug, the biggest crematorium in Thane outside Mumbai, has seen a similar jump in custom. It has boosted its staff from 30 to 50 men working three shifts a day, while the volume of bodies they manage has grown from four to six a day to sometimes as many as 20. Delhi has relaxed a ban on traditional funeral pyres made of wood, instituted to reduce pollution,

because there are too few gas-fired ovens to meet the spurt in demand.

Inevitably, the failure of all three countries to control the pandemic has led to soul-searching and blame-casting. Imran Khan, Pakistan's prime minister, has loudly pointed out that he was never a fan of the lockdown, which he had warned would hit the poor unduly hard, and could only slow the disease. His detractors respond that a big reason for failure was precisely the half-hearted and inept way Pakistan's lockdown was enforced. In Bangladesh, inconsistent rulemaking, a collapse in average income in slum areas of an estimated 75% and the mass return to villages of hundreds of thousands of garment-workers undermined any gains from the lockdown.

Perhaps the most egregious errors were made by India's government. Despite imposing the most stringent and heavily policed restrictions in the region, the government failed to foresee that its measures might prompt a mass exodus from cities of tens of millions of migrant workers made suddenly destitute. The authorities first tried to block the movement, bottling migrants in urban slums with the highest infection rates, and then allowed perhaps 20m workers to leave, spreading the disease across the country. In Bihar, a state whose 110m people are among India's poorest, more than two-thirds of covid cases identified so far have been among returning migrant workers.

Whatever the cause, the damage is now done. Farid Uddin, a gravedigger in the Bangladeshi port city of Chattogram (formerly Chittagong), comes close to tears as he explains that he and his team have scarcely slept in four days. "There are so many deaths," he gulps. "We are overwhelmed. Please pray for us so Allah forgives us and takes back this disease."

## **Article 8 from "The Economist" 20 June 2020**

### **Testing Times**

JOHANNESBURG African countries are struggling to keep track of the coronavirus

SOUTH AFRICA had a plan for slowing the spread of COVID-19. As outlined by Salim Abdool Karim, chair of the medical committee advising President Cyril Ramaphosa, on April 13th, the country would draw on its earlier experience using community health workers to deal with HIV and tuberculosis. It would screen millions of people in poorer areas. Those with symptoms would be tested and then treated and quarantined if necessary.

Yet a sound strategy has been undermined by, among other things, testing failures. State-run laboratories suggested they could do 36,000 tests per day by the end of April. Since April 5th they have managed to do just one-fifth of that. Results have also taken too long. As of June 6th the average turnaround time was 12 days.

Such delays mean the HIV-inspired strategy is "totally futile", argues Marc Mendelson, an infectious-disease specialist at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town. Waiting 12 days for an HIV test is agonising, but the patient will probably not infect anyone during that time. In the case of COVID-19, by the time a result

arrives, a patient may have infected scores of others.

Delays put more pressure on hospitals. In the wider Western Cape province, which has 0.5% of Africa's population and 17% of its known coronavirus cases, intensive-care units are filling up. Others in South Africa may soon follow suit. The country had the 11th highest five-day moving average of confirmed new cases as of June 16th—and the rate of growth is accelerating.

If South Africa—which with Ghana accounts for about half of all tests in sub-Saharan Africa—is not testing enough, then nor are most other countries in the region. At the start of June African countries had tested, on average, fewer than 1,700 people per 1m, a fraction of the number in rich countries (America had done 26 times more per million people). “Testing is our Achilles heel,” says John Nkengasong of Africa CDC, a pan-African health institution. It is also symbolic of broader weaknesses in African health systems that mean the continent is less able to cope with mass outbreaks than rich parts of the world.

The challenge of testing has long been recognised. In February the World Health Organisation (WHO) overhauled African labs. Today 43 of the 47 countries in its Africa region can do molecular testing for COVID-19, up from just two at the start of the year. Nevertheless, most countries still lack resources. Nigeria has the capacity to do at least 10,000 tests per day, but has averaged fewer than 900 since announcing its first case on February 27th. Some countries have had to wait more than two months for orders of test kits to be delivered.

The problem is that African countries are competing in the market for testing materials with rich countries, many of which are regular customers of the manufacturers and often buy in bulk. Some small African countries have placed orders for fewer than 10,000 kits, as many as Germany uses in a few hours.

Philanthropy has helped. In most African countries most of the testing kits used are those donated by the charitable foundation of Jack Ma, Alibaba's founder. He has given at least 20,000 kits to every country in Africa. Yet this is far short of what is required. On June 3rd Dr Nkengasong said Africa needed at least 20m new test kits within 100 days.

To try to meet that goal, countries are pooling their resources and placing large joint orders. Africa CDC has agreed with manufacturers that 90m kits will be bought over the next six months. A bulk purchase establishes trust, argues Fatoumata Ba, a Senegalese venture capitalist and one of several African executives lending their expertise to the Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (PACT) scheme.

PACT is a step forward, but problems remain. The first kits bought under the agreement are due to arrive only by the end of the month. And having kits does not obviate the need for technicians; South Africa laboured to keep pace even when it had enough materials.

The struggle to increase testing augurs ill for the broader response. The number of confirmed cases in Africa has been rising by about 30% a week over the past month. But that glosses over trouble spots, such as South Africa or Guinea-Bissau, where almost one-tenth of health workers have been infected. And it means that

the absolute number of cases is mounting: it took 98 days for Africa to go from 1 to 100,000 cases, but only 18 days to reach 200,000.

The overall numbers matter, because African health systems will tend to be overwhelmed at an earlier point than those in Asia or Europe. Such weaknesses are the main reason why a study published by the Centre for Global Development, a thinktank, projected that death rates in Africa could be many times higher than predicted by other models that do not account for scant staff and cash-strapped hospitals. Already countries such as Kenya and Nigeria are planning ways to care for people in their homes rather than in hospitals.

Others are trying new ways of gauging the disease's progress. Just four African countries keep high-quality records showing causes of deaths, according to the UN. In many places most deaths are not recorded, let alone their cause. That makes it hard to calculate whether death rates are higher than average, a useful measure of the disease's effects. In the absence of excess mortality data, countries such as Rwanda and Senegal are doing "verbal autopsies", where next of kin are interviewed.

South Africa does have mortality data going back years. In the three weeks to June 9th deaths from natural causes were unusually high in Cape Town, and on the rise elsewhere, too. At this point more testing would help, says Dr Mendelson, but the focus must be on reducing deaths. With that in mind the Western Cape is rationing public testing to those over the age of 55 and opening field hospitals. "We cannot test our way out of the crisis," he says.

## **Article 9 from "The Economist" 11 July 2020**

### **Lock, Unlock, Repeat**

SYDNEY Melbourne, the country's second city, battens down the hatches again. It would be "the very worst thing" to have to impose a second lockdown, warned Daniel Andrews, the premier of Victoria, when he started easing the state's restrictions in May. On July 8th he was forced to do just that to 5m residents of Melbourne, the state's capital, plus a district to its north, where a second wave of COVID-19 has been rolling in. Active cases almost tripled in the first nine days of the month, to more than 930. Contact-tracers are overwhelmed, Mr. Andrews conceded, as he shut restaurants and bars for another six weeks. "To do anything else", he sighed, "would have deadly consequences."

The new wave threatens to undo Australia's good work containing the virus. Locally acquired cases were virtually stamped out a month ago, largely because of stay-at-home rules and the quarantining in bleak hotels of the few people still allowed into the country. Victoria's problems started with breaches of the mandatory two-week isolation for those arriving from abroad.

Blame has been levelled at poorly trained private security guards who were supposed to keep travellers in their rooms. They had not been using protective gear properly and have been accused of breaching social-distancing rules by sharing cigarettes and car-pooling to work. Local papers report that some had sex with the people they were supposed to be keeping in strict isolation. Several of

the guards contracted the virus and passed it on to friends and family just as Victoria's first lockdown, the toughest in Australia, was being lifted.

"This is what happens when you think you've got it under control," says Peter Collignon, an expert on infectious diseases at the Australian National University: "apathy and complacency". The seal would never have been broken if the army or police had overseen the private guards, as they do in New South Wales, argues Michael O'Brien, the leader of the opposition in the state. Businesses are dismayed. Victoria accounts for a quarter of Australia's GDP. The new restrictions will do "untold damage to the economy and employment", complains a business lobby group.

The state government has launched an investigation into what went wrong in its quarantine hotels. A testing blitz is now under way. Nationwide, infections are well below their peak in March, but in some ways this spike looks more threatening. Most of Australia's early cases came from travellers who were intercepted on arrival from abroad. This time the virus has moved through the community, making carriers harder to identify. Whereas the first patients were mostly wealthy, returning from holidays in places such as Italy, poor multiethnic suburbs in Melbourne's north and west are the worst-affected now. Many of the residents of these areas suffer from the kind of ill health that makes them especially vulnerable to coronavirus. Nine public-housing towers in the suburb of Flemington were put on what authorities call a "hard lockdown" on July 4th, meaning that tenants were banned from so much as setting foot outside their flats until they had all been tested. With crowded lifts and airless lobbies, the government feared the buildings had become "vertical cruise ships" for contagion. On July 9th the government lifted the police cordon around eight of the buildings after detecting 158 cases—although residents are still subject to the city's new lockdown.

Allowing life to return to normal in other parts of the country would be folly, warns the national medical association. The whole of Australia should "rethink the pace of easing", it advises. Other jurisdictions seem to agree. The Australian Capital Territory paused plans to unwind its restrictions after it uncovered a handful of cases linked to the outbreak in Melbourne. Several more infections have trickled across the border from Victoria into New South Wales. It has now been shut for the first time since the flu pandemic of 1918-19. Soldiers and police have been called in to enforce the closure. They will use drones to hunt for scofflaws trying to sneak across via bush tracks or along rivers. All this is especially galling given Victoria's longstanding rivalry with New South Wales. No need to patrol the border, sniffs an MP from Victoria, the coffee in Melbourne is far better than anything on the other side.

#### **Article 10 from "The Economist" 8 August 2020**

##### **Not as Stated**

Governments said they had the virus under control. They hadn't  
For a few months it seemed that the Balkans were having a good pandemic.

Infection and death rates were low. In March, as COVID-19 began to spread fast across Europe, most Balkan countries locked down quickly and strictly. In May the Montenegrin prime minister crowed that his was the first covid-free country on the continent. But by the end of July Montenegro had the second-highest infection rate in Europe. Now, eight of the ten European countries with the fastest-rising infection rates are in the Balkans. If it were ever true that early firm action had worked, that advantage was lost with rapid reopenings. Or perhaps the early numbers were wrong, thanks to poor measurement or a cover-up; maybe the picture was never as good as it had seemed to be.

Until the beginning of June, according to Serbian statistics, only 244 people had died from the disease. Then an investigative report claimed the true figure was 632. The president and government, at the time engaged in an election campaign, denied that it was trying to suppress the real numbers. But Gorica Djokic, a leader of Serbia's doctors' union, said the higher figures matched those the union received from colleagues across the country.

Today, says Dr Djokic, and under pressure from 2,870 angry doctors who have signed a letter of protest, the authorities seem to be publishing more accurate figures. She reckons that one reason for the low infection numbers in the early months was that there was hardly any testing. Today there is more. But even Serbian doctors who, like her, work in covid hospitals are still not being tested. She thinks the authorities fear the health system would be crippled if all the doctors carrying the virus took weeks off work.

As in much of the rest of Europe, official messages have been confusing. In the Balkans this confusion has been compounded by low levels of trust in government. Many people believe the government is lying about there even being a virus, says Brikena Hoxha of the Kosovar Stability Initiative, a think-tank; and that it is paying families to claim relations died from COVID-19 as part of a scam to procure foreign aid.

In March Kosovo's president, then embroiled in a political dispute with the prime minister and his government, told citizens they could ignore its instructions to stay at home. On August 2nd the prime minister announced that he had tested positive for the virus. Unchecked, families wander in and out of hospital to buy food and medicine for their infected relatives. Thousands are now flocking to Albania, where they are packing the beaches in scenes similar to those on the Romanian Black Sea coast; the number of infections in Romania is also rising fast.

As for Bosnia, Adi Cerimagic, an analyst, says that although hospitals have been coping well, scandals in covid-related procurement have led many to believe that "while they locked us down, they were making money with it." In May Silver Raspberry, a well-connected fruit-and-vegetable firm, bagged a \$5.8m contract to supply ventilators. In June Novak Djokovic, Serbia's tennis star, ignored advice and went ahead with a regional tournament he had organised. He hugged and partied with his Croatian and Bulgarian tennis buddies, several of whom were infected.

Large minorities believe covid conspiracy theories, which are often promoted by prominent people, including a former Serbian minister of health. Clerics have also played a role. In Montenegro infections have shot up as holidays begin, and also after huge anti-government demonstrations led by the Orthodox church. Across the region the pandemic has coincided with Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim festivals which have brought families and flocks together. Worse, says Mr Cerimagic, in this poor part of Europe the pressure to return to work is immense, and that pushes up infection rates further.

**Article 11 from “The Economist” 6th February,2021**

**A black swan? No**

Michele Wucker: analyst and author, “The Gray Rhino” This was a “grey rhino”—a predictable crisis We must replace black-swan fatalism with grey-rhino pragmatism

ONE OF THE biggest lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic has been the folly of ignoring warnings about highly likely, high-impact risks that are a matter of when, not if. For years, many governments brushed off countless credible warnings that the world was poorly prepared for a pandemic. When the novel coronavirus emerged in China, too many nations were too slow to respond. The pandemic should encourage policymakers to pay more attention to other known but poorly managed risks.

These include rising inequality, climate change and financial imbalances such as dangerous corporate-debt levels and asset bubbles. Picture each of these obvious dangers as a two-tonne grey rhinoceros with its horn pointed our way and its massive weight bearing down on us: they are very visible and their impact can be foreseen. The interactions among these rhinos heighten the danger. You could appropriately call them a crash—the zoological term for a group—of grey rhinos. Politicians, pundits and investors often invoke the metaphor of the “black swan” to describe highly improbable, even unimaginable events. In particular, the global financial crisis of 2007-09 is often described as a black-swan event, despite warnings about derivatives and a subprime housing-market bubble. By definition, black swans cannot be predicted, so nothing can be done to prepare for them. This kind of thinking makes things worse by encouraging fatalism, rejecting accountability and giving the nod to short-termism and wilful ignorance, which in turn generate volatility and tail risk. To face the looming risks of 2021, we must replace black-swan fatalism with grey-rhino constructive pragmatism.

As COVID-19 spread, analysts quickly downgraded their early pandemic predictions of a fast V-shaped recovery to a slower U-shaped recovery, and then to an even more gradual “swoosh”. We now have a k-shaped recovery that has given the well-to-do a big boost, creating financial-asset bubbles while essential workers and vulnerable sectors struggle. In 2021 the global economy will suffer from a ripple effect of bankruptcies, job losses and defaults, which stockmarkets cannot ignore for ever. At the same time, increasingly violent storms, droughts,



wildfires and freak weather will threaten insurers, property, coastal cities and, by extension, financial stability. Facing the daunting challenges ahead will require long-term thinking, a greater emphasis on the real economy rather than stockmarket performance and, above all, a commitment to hold ourselves and our leaders accountable. But it also presents new opportunities. Removing fossil-fuel subsidies and promoting investment in clean technologies will create jobs and reduce energy and health-care costs. Tackling inequality will lift the bottom leg of the k-shaped recovery and spread the benefits of the economic rebound. We can see black swans only in the rear-view mirror. In 2021 we should focus on the grey rhinos in front of us: obvious, foreseeable and giving us a choice to respond.

Michele Wucker is the author of “You Are What You Risk: The New Art and Science of Navigating an Uncertain World” (Pegasus Books, April 2021) and “The Gray Rhino: How to Act and Recognize the Obvious Dangers We Ignore” (St Martin’s Press, 2016)

### **Article 12 from “The Economist” 6th February 2021**

#### **Chaguan Of sickness and homesickness**

To fight COVID-19, migrants are being asked to miss the biggest holiday of the year

No crowd in China is truly anonymous. Subtle badges of class, income and even region mark out individuals in the densest throngs, such as those seen at lunar new year, when hundreds of millions of migrant labourers, white-collar workers and students cram into trains, buses, aeroplanes or cars to visit faraway relatives. China is a country in constant, restless motion. But even in a normal year, it is also a place of hard-to-shed social distinctions. This is not a normal year. In line with China’s ambition of keeping COVID-19 infections as close to zero as possible, national health authorities have asked the public to avoid non-essential travel to see in the year of the ox. That is a reasonable request. But the burden falls heavily on those 300m migrant workers, for whom the holiday is often a rare chance to see children and aged parents.

China’s transport ministry predicts that a total of 1.7bn journeys will be made during the travel surge either side of new year, which this year falls on February 12th. That is down from about 3bn journeys in 2019, before the pandemic. Millions employed by the government or state-owned enterprises have simply been ordered to stay put. Workers in the private sector being harder to boss about, several wealthy regions are offering bonuses to migrants who abandon plans to return home. These range from cash payments of up to 1,000 yuan (\$155), to extra points to help migrants apply for school places or residence papers in the city where they work. Travellers to rural areas with weak health services must take tests for COVID-19 and self-isolate on arrival for a week or two.

These various nudges and prods are having a visible impact. On a recent weekday there was only a thin crowd outside the main railway station in

Guangzhou, a southern boomtown of 13m people. Travellers were almost outnumbered by steel-helmeted police officers and guards, as well as health inspectors in protective suits.

Talking to that crowd, it becomes clear that this is no monolithic mass of people. Instead, each individual's decision to return home is shaped by employment status and regional background. Several migrants explain that they are taking off as much as a week earlier than usual. Many private employers have granted flexible holiday dates this year, enabling staff to stagger their departures. That allows all to enjoy emptier trains and roads, and some to get home before the strictest travel rules bite. A fortunate few locals need not worry about interprovincial controls. Chaguan meets one selling noodles part-time outside the station. A university student, she hails from Shantou, a city in the same province as Guangzhou, and plans to pop home by bus. She concedes that classmates from provinces which have seen recent outbreaks, in China's icy north-east, are forbidden to leave college over the holidays. Still, she backs restrictions: "It's best if you stay home and don't cause trouble for the country."

A married couple from Dengzhou county in Henan province are found waiting for their train on a low wall. Fearing infection, they paid for a ride-sharing car to the station to avoid crowded public transport. Both work for the same plastic-tubing manufacturer and are spurning an offer by bosses to pay 1,000 yuan to workers who skip holiday travel—employees' movements can be verified with the help of smartphone health apps that are now ubiquitous in China. Extra money would help: the couple was stuck in their home village for a month on minimum pay when the virus hit around the lunar new year in 2020. But they long to see their daughter, 15, and son, 12, who live in Henan with grandparents. "My parents are getting old my kids are still young. If we didn't go back, my heart wouldn't be at ease," says the husband.

A group of older workers from Lingbao county, a poor region of Henan, are bracing themselves for 25 hours on hard seats on a slow train home. Earning just 107 yuan a day at a hardware factory, they have brought buckets of steamed buns and fruit to avoid "expensive" train food. They each paid 75 yuan for a covid test and will need another after self-isolating for a week in their mountain homes. "Making money is hard," sighs one. Yet their precarious status gives them some autonomy, too. Their short-term contracts expired before the holiday, so no boss can make them stay. At one point, Chaguan hears conflicting views. You in the West call China's travel curbs mandatory but they are just advisory, insists a hotel tout. He asserts that China's Confucian culture means that people like to agree with the government. Another man weighs in, declaring that migrant workers are treated worse than city folk. Moreover, he says, once "advice" from national leaders is enforced by grassroots officials it turns into an order. Abruptly, his indignation subsides. He is going home, unable to bear missing new year with his wife and children. "I have to go back, they are waiting for me to set off the firecrackers," he says simply. The Communist Party seems wary of public anger. On February 3rd it warned local officials not

to over-egg virus controls.

### **The ones staying behind**

Away from the station, in a suburb of factories and shabby apartment blocks, many migrants are resigned to a holiday alone. A restaurant owner from the north-eastern province of Heilongjiang reports that most fellow northerners are staying in Guangzhou, for fear of getting stuck by a covid outbreak back home. In a nearby alley a seller of fake Gucci shoes last saw his children half a year ago. He is not going home to rural Henan, in case he is quarantined for too long and his children miss the start of term in their primary school. His children understand, he says. He has sent them toys and their teachers have told them that “everyone has to tough it out a little this year.” Actually, Chinese families are not all experiencing the same tough new year. The migrants at the bottom of the social ladder have it worst. The pandemic is teaching the shoemaker’s children this harsh lesson at a young age. As village kids in a crowded country that is better at economic than social mobility, they have more such lessons to come.

### **Article 13 from “The Economist” Mar 28th 2020**

#### **Back to work**

SHANGHAI But not back to normal

In good times Gu Changshi’s job is to persuade companies to invest in Lingang, a wind-swept free-trade zone on the edge of Shanghai, abutting the Pacific Ocean. But over the past two months, as China has battled COVID-19, his job has been to ensure basic survival, both physical and corporate. First his agency requisitioned two hotels to quarantine anyone coming to Lingang from virus-hit regions. Then it started offering conditional cash grants to beleaguered companies located there. “There is no fixed limit to the subsidies,” he says, his hands spreading wide. When China went into lockdown in late January, economists thought that its growth trajectory would be v-shaped. There would be a sharp slowdown, followed by a swift rebound as soon as the virus was under control, as happened with China’s outbreak of SARS in 2003. They were right about the slowdown. Hundreds of millions of people stayed inside for weeks on end. Factories, offices, restaurants and shops closed, in scenes now being replayed around the world. Most analysts think that China’s economy shrank in the first three months of 2020, perhaps by as much as 10%. The last time it contracted was more than four decades ago, at the end of the Cultural Revolution, according to official data.

The prediction of a quick, strong recovery is more debatable. With barely any new cases of COVID-19 now being detected, the government is trying to restore normal life. At four separate meetings of the ruling Politburo since late February, leaders have declared that they want to restart the economy. But doing so is far from simple when the pandemic is still raging elsewhere

Reviving growth involves boosting both supply and demand. Officials schooled in Marxist theory, which emphasises production rather than consumption, have naturally turned first to the former, ie, to ensuring that goods are made. The main problem has been a dearth of blue-collar workers, many of whom went to their

hometowns for the spring festival just before the lock down and have not yet returned. Production hubs along the coast have chartered trains and buses to bring them back.

Officials boast that things are almost normal again. Fully 98% of all listed companies have resumed work, says the securities regulator. Around the country 89% of big investment projects, from airport expansions to the laying of gas pipelines, are also under way, according to a planning commission. “Roaring Chinese factories in full swing”, Xinhua, a state news agency, proclaimed on March 21st.

The reality is less exuberant. When any measure becomes an official target, it is susceptible to distortion—a phenomenon known as Goodhart’s law. It has been amply demonstrated in China over the years. In this case an obsession with the “work resumption rate” has invited fiddling. Some low-level officials have told firms to embellish their recoveries, reports Caixin, a magazine. To prevent such trickery, the central authorities started checking electricity data. The logical next step? Some companies were told to consume more power by turning on idle equipment.

Measures aimed at preventing another surge of COVID-19 have added to the complexities of manufacturing in China. The German manager of an optical-wire factory in Jiangsu province has divided his workers into ten separate units to minimise the risk of cross-infections. The units are kept apart from each other in the factory, the canteen and their dormitories. Such measures are necessary but cumbersome, he says. Firms are also wary of sending staff around the country because some places still impose 14-day quarantines on outsiders. Travel between cities, whether by plane, train or car, is at less than half its normal level (see lower chart). Video calls only help so much when a creaking furnace needs fixing.

Nevertheless, on the supply side, the overall picture is encouraging. Large companies report that they are fully operational. Foxconn, which makes most of Apple’s iPhones in China, has said that it will resume normal production by the end of March. Even many smaller companies are in good shape. Sean Xie, the general manager in China of Lenze, a German automation company, says that all 260 of its employees had returned to its factory in Shanghai as of March 20th, apart from a couple still stuck in Wuhan, the centre of the outbreak of COVID-19 (Wuhan plans to lift its lockdown on April 8th).

Resuscitating demand is proving more difficult. It involves two things that are harder for the government to manage: global growth and public anxiety about the disease. Officials had hoped that factories, once up and running, would be able to tap into strong demand abroad. The relentless march of the virus around the world has put paid to that. “All the wheels started spinning very quickly here, but the orders aren’t there,” says a chemicals executive who oversees a factory in the city of Wuxi.

China can take some solace in the fact that it relies less on exports than it did during the global financial crisis of 2007-09. But domestic consumption is now far more central to the economy than exports ever were, and it is much curtailed.

Retail sales plunged, unsurprisingly, when just about everyone was cooped up at home. People now can move more freely, but many still avoid large crowds. Shops and restaurants are quiet. COVID-19 has cut people's incomes, so few seem willing to splurge yet on big-ticket items. Queues outside Apple stores—open in China but closed everywhere else—are deceptive. Apple strictly limits the number of customers to ensure a safe distance between them.

A good proxy for the state of consumption in China is urban traffic. Some thus welcome the return of traffic jams: congestion has reached about 90% of its normal level (see chart). But a closer look is less comforting. Some people who used to take subways to work are using cars instead, to limit contact with others. Passenger numbers on subways are down by roughly two thirds in big cities. Unusually, there is no road congestion at the weekend. The occupancy rate of a posh international hotel chain is in the single digits, says the company's boss in China. Bao Wenjun, who owns a restaurant in Shanghai selling cheap and tasty noodles, says that his revenues are down by nearly three-quarters.

Hey small spender For consumption to recover, people must feel confident. They do not. Most provinces have reduced their emergency-alert levels. Even Hubei, the worst-hit, has started to let people (other than residents of Wuhan, the capital) travel elsewhere. But anxiety abounds. Except in a few remote regions, schools are into their second month of closure. Only about 500 of the country's 11,000 cinemas have re-opened. The government has tightened border controls because many travellers—541 at last count—have tested positive for the virus after arriving from abroad.

In the past China has often been quick to unleash stimulus measures to counteract economic slowdowns. Its spending splurge in response to the global financial crisis was crucial to the world's recovery. This time China has been uncharacteristically restrained. Britain has pledged to make loans to firms worth 15% of gdp and America is working on a support package worth nearly 10% of its output. But China's fiscal measures—mainly tax and fee cuts—so far add up to little more than 1% of its gdp. Whereas America has slashed its interest rates to zero, China has barely trimmed its own.

What explains the frugality? One reason is that China has no need to replicate some of the other countries' actions. Take the struggling airline industry. The American programme includes \$58bn in aid for it. Britain may take direct stakes in its airlines. The Chinese government already owns the country's biggest airlines. Stateowned firms account for about three-quarters of corporate debt in China. The government need not spell out that it stands behind them. Investors know that. Whereas corporate-bond prices have fallen sharply in the West—reflecting concerns about firms' solvency—they have only inched down in China. In the Lingang free-trade zone, Mr Gu goes out of his way to note that the official subsidies are mainly aimed at private businesses, which have a harder time obtaining loans than state firms do.

For officials the most worrying trend is a sharp rise in joblessness. The unemployment rate in urban areas jumped nearly a full percentage point to 6.2%

in February, the highest on record. And this rate fails to capture the tens of millions of migrants who are still in their hometowns, waiting for the economy to perk up before returning to cities for work. So the government is cautiously rolling out some stimulus. On March 20th it pledged to increase financial support for the unemployed.

More help may be on the way. The government has given provinces more leeway to raise funds for such things as infrastructure and buildings. Spending of this kind has been a cornerstone of China's past stimulus packages. But now it is proceeding gingerly. It fears that unleashing more of it could push up debt levels, which are already dangerously high. Most crucially, for all their talk about restarting the economy, China's leaders are wary of letting growth rip until they are certain that a boom in business will not also bring a resurgence of COVID-19. "We want to reduce risk to the absolute minimum and will not count the cost of that," says Mr Gu. The economic rebound can wait.

#### **Article 14 From Jun 17th 2020**

##### **The world after COVID-19**

THE PANDEMIC in Africa will not be just a crisis of public health or the economy. It risks becoming a political emergency that threatens the democratic progress that countries across the continent have made in recent years. Africa is poorly placed to deal with the situation. Only a few countries have social safety nets and fiscal space to cushion the impact of the severe economic recession that both the IMF and World Bank forecasts. Millions of people may lose their jobs or other sources of income. This will cause widespread social distress and possibly political upheaval, especially among young people who lack work and opportunity more than ever.

This convergence of economic, social and political crises threatens stability. Ironically, democratic elections will be the match that lights the fuse. At least 18 African countries including Ethiopia, Ghana and Ivory Coast are expected to hold national elections in 2020. The majority of them are in the midst of conflicts or are just emerging from them, such as Niger, Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic. The governments face a tremendous challenge: impose strict social restrictions to prevent contagion, while at the same time let citizens meaningfully participate in the electoral process.

This presents complex questions involving fundamental human rights, the integrity of democracy and the legitimacy of governments. The answers will mean difficult trade-offs. But the people and leaders of Africa must be vigilant to ensure that the pandemic does not become an excuse simply to avoid or postpone elections for political advantage, or to institute authoritarian and anti-democratic measures in the name of public health.

What can be done to secure the democratic gains and individual freedoms that Africans have secured in recent times, often at great cost? There are several steps that governments and the public can take, based on recommendations from an international group of electoral experts convened by the Kofi Annan Foundation.

The foundational principle is the rule of law. Emergency measures on elections

should be grounded in constitutional provisions and electoral laws. Where the national legal framework does not anticipate the current situation, legal changes should be made in line with internationally accepted standards. The postponement of elections should not be open-ended. Rather, there should be clarity and agreement on when the health situation permits elections to take place with a reasonable assurance of safety.

Next, political trust. Leaders should consult widely to build consensus across the political landscape. If they do not, emergency measures may be perceived as a strategy for political gain by incumbents. This subverts the public trust needed to address the health crisis.

Third, transparency. Governments and electoral authorities should provide clear and frequent communication with the public. Citizens will need to understand what measures are being considered, by whom and on what grounds. The media and civil-society groups have a crucial role to play to preserve democracy by monitoring policies, fostering debate and shining light on critical issues. Governments must protect the freedom of expression. Cover-ups in politics, as in health, only make matters worse.

Finally, the principle of proportionality. Any measures that governments take—such as protection at polling stations, or changes in how voters are registered, ballots are cast or votes are counted—should be reasonable and proportionate to the health risk. The virus is not an excuse to ignore sound electoral practice. Election experts should be consulted as early as possible.

Even with free and fair elections, Africa's democracy is threatened by fragile economies. Countries will need substantial assistance to get through the crisis. Governments and their international partners must avoid the failed policies of the past, when even though debt was forgiven or rescheduled, budgets for education and health care were slashed. This contributed to the serial unrest that overwhelmed many countries. Imposing fiscal austerity amid mass unemployment would threaten stability and democratic progress.

Hard times often make people especially vulnerable to the siren song of populists and extremists trading on communal enmities. Only with measures like these can Africa prevent a health crisis from killing its nascent democracies.

Alan Doss is the outgoing president of the Kofi Annan Foundation and a former senior UN official with extensive experience in Africa. Mo Ibrahim is the founder of Celtel, an international mobile operator, and the chairman of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, which promotes leadership and good public governance in Africa with the ability to pay (Germany) to those struggling to (Spain). National capitals will now haggle over a final deal.

Ms Vestager says higher German spending has been on the au's wish-list for years. AB for long-term risks to the state-aid regime, she emphasises that the easing of the rules is temporary. She has insisted that companies which were in bad shape before COVID-19 struck cannot be rescued; troubled firms that get government bail-outs must pay them back. Those that get the most help cannot pay dividends or bonuses until they repay most of the state aid.

Old Brussels hands say the commission has little choice but to give states leeway in the crisis. "Governments will simply ignore the rules if they don't flex enough that's what the commission wants to avoid, says one lawyer. Once everyone has bought into the system's fast-track approval process, the rules can be tightened, for example by demanding that aid to companies is gradually withdrawn.

The aftermath of the crisis of 2008 gives backers of the state-aid regime confidence that such tightening will happen. But this time looks different. A decade ago Europe was in the ascendant, implementing its new fundamental treaty. Aid had gone mainly to unpopular banks seen to have gamed the system, so throttling that aid was politically easy. Fiscal weaknesses had yet to be exposed by the euro crisis.

In 2020, by contrast, bail-outs are seen as necessary and companies blameless. The crisis has amplified voices demanding that supply chains be repatriated to Europe, which would be easier if states could pay more subsidies. Britain, which long backed vigorous curbs on state aid, has left the club. Southern Europe gets nailed by state-aid rules regularly, and would not mind seeing the back of them. Ireland and the Netherlands have fallen foul of Ms Vestager for giving tax breaks to multinationals, a form of forbidden aid. Poland and Italy like the Franco-German plans to create industrial champions.

Ms Vestager says the concept of a level playing field" -backed by state-aid rules remains as important as ever. But concerns that China and America are pampering their own firms with subsidies are widespread. Even before COVID-19, Europe had made concessions, allowing industrial projects of the sort politicians favour (such as factories to make high-tech batteries for electric cars) to get government largesse.

A Franco-German deal made possible the whopping package Mrs von der Leyen is now touting. While suggesting that the EU receive huge new powers, Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel, France's and Germany's leaders, also called for the commission to "adapt" state-aid rules permanently to favour industry. That may prove a difficult recommendation to ignore.

IF YOU HAD fallen asleep three months ago in Germany and woken up today you might not immediately notice much amiss. In much of the country shops are bustling, museums have reopened, and any bar that can pass for a restaurant is pulling in custom. If the shuttered theatres and conference halls dampen the spirits, consolation may be found in the beer gardens, in full swing under the spring sun.

New COVID-19 infections in Germany are now consistently below 500 a day. But as German states lift restrictions they must to prevent a second wave. Masks are compulsory on public transport and in shops, and social-distancing rules remain in place (if often ignored). Borders and schools are partially shut. But perhaps most important in: lighting contagion are Germany's phalanx of contact-tracers-part detectives, part social workers, part medical auxiliaries and part data clerks.



Their work has three elements. First, to obtain from people who have tested positive for COVID-19 a list of their recent contacts, and to categorise them. (Spending: is minutes face-to-face with an infected person, for example, places you in a high-risk bracket) second, to alert those people and instruct them, if needed, to self-isolate for 14 days. Third, to check in with them periodically and get them tested, in some cases even if they show no symptoms.

In some countries contact-tracers work from home or outsourced call centres. In Germany they are housed in one of 375 Gesundheitsämter (public health offices), such as one in north Berlin recently visited by your correspondent. In a light-filled room lined with maps and charts, two dozen people (of a total staff of 98) were managing various aspects of the pandemic, from manning phones to tapping in data. Doctors were on hand, ready to be dispatched administer tests. The work has changed in recent weeks, says Lukas Murajda, head of the office: 80% of the contacts his team follows up are now in care homes for the elderly or other residential centres.

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI), a federal health agency, provides local offices with guidance and basic software to crunch their data. It has also recruited and helped train 500-odd containment scouts to help overloaded areas. But the offices retain considerable leeway to organise their own work. Some struggle to co-operate or share information, a task already hampered by data-privacy rules. (Certain information may only be shared via fax.)

But the advantages of decentralization far outweigh the drawbacks. Health workers who know their regions are better placed to chase down infection chains in potential hotspots like meat-processing plants. Better-off health offices often ditch the RKI software and build or buy their own. Much of the beauty of it, says Peter Tinnemann, an epidemiologist at the Charité University Hospital in Berlin. "Local workers adapt solutions to local circumstances: Some regions are struggling to meet the federally mandated target of five contact tracers per 20,000 inhabitants. But if they have seen no new cases for a week or more, they may see no reason to try.

There are valuable lessons in the history of contact-tracing, a technique long deployed to manage outbreaks of tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases. "people underestimate the nature of the work," says Marcel Salathé, a Lausanne based digital epidemiologist. Inexperienced tracers may be unprepared for interviewees who react defensively to intrusive questions, or who fear their answers will send friends to quarantine. The two-day training of Mr Murajda's recruits is limited to technical matters, though psychologists are on hand to help. Offices need multilingual staff to reach non-German-speakers. Most tracers read to their charges from prepared scripts, but the better-trained may deviate from it. Rather than ask directly about contacts, for example, they might jog interviewees' memory by asking general questions about their social networks.

Having abandoned contact-tracing in March, only this week did Britain kick it back into gear. American states have also struggled to up their efforts. In Germany the Gesundheitsämter have long been underfunded; many in particular

lack doctors, who can earn more in hospitals. Yet most offices maintained contact-tracing

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