**The youth of today**

Africa’s population is indeed large, young and rapidly increasing (Special report on the African century, March 28th). But it is the ratio of working-age people to dependents that is important, and that ratio is not increasing. At low levels of development the ratio boosts economic growth, given the contribution that a growing labour pool makes to national productivity. The ratio reduces in importance once countries become middle- and high-income economies.

非洲的人口确实庞大，年轻，而且增长迅速(非洲世纪特别报告，3月28日)。但重要的是适龄劳动人口与受抚养人口的比例，而这一比例并没有上升。在发展水平较低的情况下，考虑到不断增加的劳动力对国家生产力的贡献，这一比例会促进经济增长。一旦国家成为中等收入和高收入经济体，这一比例的重要性就会降低。

Because of its extraordinarily young population, Africa will get to its demographic dividend—1.7 working-age people to every dependent—only at mid-century. Until then Africa’s very large number of children actually serves as a drag on development. The large demand for education means that governments have to focus on building more schools and associated infrastructure. As a result, there is little ability to improve the quality or quantity of teaching provided to those already in the system. In fact, the gap in schooling between Africa and the rest of the world has not narrowed but is as concerning now as it was 30 or 50 years ago.

由于非洲的人口非常年轻，非洲的人口将在本世纪中叶达到1.7个劳动年龄人口对每个受抚养人的比例。在此之前，非洲儿童的巨大数量实际上是发展的累赘。对教育的巨大需求意味着政府必须集中精力建造更多的学校和相关的基础设施。因此，对于那些已经在教育系统中学习的学生来说，提高教学质量或教学数量的能力是微乎其微的。事实上，非洲和世界其他地区的教育差距并没有缩小，但与30或50年前一样令人担忧。

Advancing Africa’s demographic dividend is key. This can be achieved mainly through the empowerment of women, providing education (secondary schooling in particular) and rolling out access to modern contraceptives.

推进非洲的人口红利是关键。这主要可以通过赋予妇女权力、提供教育(特别是中学教育)和普及现代避孕方法来实现。

JAKKIE CILLIERS

Head of African futures and innovation

Institute for Security Studies

Pretoria, South Africa

According to the World Bank GDP per person (at PPP) crept up from $2,000 to $4,000 in sub-Saharan Africa over the past 30 years. During the same period GDP per person rose from $15,000 to $43,000 in the European Union. However, the EU’s population is set to drop over the rest of this century. Sub-Saharan Africa’s population is expected to explode, to about 4bn people. It is difficult to put a positive economic spin on this.

根据世界银行的数据，过去30年，撒哈拉以南非洲地区的人均GDP从2000美元攀升至4000美元。在同一时期，欧盟的人均GDP从15,000美元上升到43,000美元。然而，欧盟的人口将在本世纪余下的时间里下降。撒哈拉以南非洲人口预计将激增至约40亿。很难对这一问题做出积极的经济解释。

JOHN HOLLAWAY

Ashford, Surrey

**Keep calm and carry on**

I am a huge fan of The Economist. As we all navigate this pandemic, I would like to urge world leaders to keep their cool and do the right thing (“The politics of pandemics”, March 14th). We all make mistakes, so let’s be more forgiving. Let’s keep perspective and stick to the facts. Let’s avoid sensationalist headlines that promote fear. What is the point of could have, would have, should have? It doesn’t matter. We are doing it now. More than 90% of those who are infected fully recover and they are the source of a cure or vaccine. The saddest aspect is the worry that increasing surveillance will breed distrust among friends, neighbours and family. We all know what fear does to a community. The increased stress and anxiety can cause long-lasting crippling effects.

我是《经济学人》的超级粉丝。在我们应对这场大流行的时候，我想敦促世界各国领导人保持冷静，做正确的事情(《流行病的政治》，3月14日)。我们都会犯错误，所以让我们更宽容一些。让我们保持客观，坚持事实。让我们避免耸人听闻的标题，因为这会增加恐惧。什么是可能有，会有，应该有?没关系。我们现在正在做。超过90%的感染者完全康复，他们是治疗或疫苗的来源。最可悲的是，越来越多的监控会在朋友、邻居和家人之间滋生不信任。我们都知道恐惧对一个社区的影响。增加的压力和焦虑会造成长期的破坏性影响。

Please, let’s not get sidetracked from the goal at hand.

求你了，不要偏离了我们的目标。

JIHYUN CHO

Hong Kong

**The top of the world**

The crowding and environmental damage on Everest, both on the mountain and throughout the Khumbu region, are contrary to the commitments each country has made in accepting the area’s World Heritage status (“High and climbing”, March 14th). “Because it is there” has lost its original meaning of almost a century ago. A few years before his death, Sir Edmund Hillary urged the Nepalese government to close Everest to climbing for a number of years, but he was ignored. Any death on the mountain that is caused by overcrowding rather than by the natural hazards of this formidable challenge is unacceptable. The waste being deposited, including dangerous drugs, is deplorable. Some splendid clean-up work is being carried out by joint teams of Nepalese and overseas climbers. Most encouraging is the Mount Everest Biogas Project, spearheaded by Dan Mazur and Garry Porter. If sufficiently funded their solar-powered composting facility could alleviate the cultural, health and aesthetic problems caused by human waste on and around this sacred peak.

珠穆朗玛峰上的拥挤和环境破坏，无论是在山上还是在整个昆布地区，都违背了每个国家在接受该地区的世界遗产地位(3月14日，“高与攀登”)时所做的承诺。“因为它在那里”几乎在一个世纪前就失去了它最初的含义。在他去世前几年，埃德蒙•希拉里爵士(Sir Edmund Hillary)曾敦促尼泊尔政府关闭珠穆朗玛峰，以便在数年内继续攀登，但没有人理睬他。任何由过度拥挤而不是由这一艰巨挑战的自然危险造成的山上死亡都是不能接受的。存放的废物，包括危险的毒品，是令人遗憾的。由尼泊尔和海外登山者组成的联合小组正在进行一些出色的清理工作。最令人鼓舞的是丹·马祖尔(Dan Mazur)和加里·波特(Garry Porter)牵头的珠穆朗玛峰沼气项目。如果有足够的资金，他们的太阳能堆肥设施可以缓解这个神圣的山峰上和周围人类排泄物造成的文化、健康和审美问题。

Everest is off limits now because of covid-19, but closing it completely is not the answer for a country heavily dependent on tourism.

由于新冠肺炎疫情，珠穆朗玛峰现在已被禁止进入，但对一个严重依赖旅游业的国家来说，完全关闭珠穆朗玛峰并不是解决办法。

JACK IVES

Former director

United Nations University Mountain Project, 1978-2002

Ottawa, Canada

**Vox pox**

Your intriguing article on why so many Dutch swear words relate to disease instead of sex made me wonder why in Belgium, where most people speak the same language, people do not use the same curses (“Dutch disease”, March 28th). In the 16th century, after the Calvinist revolt and the separation of the Netherlands, our histories diverged and the south experienced a vigorous counter-reform under the Spanish monarchy.

你关于为什么这么多荷兰语脏话与疾病而不是性有关的耐人寻味的文章让我好奇，为什么在比利时，大多数人说同样的语言，人们不使用同样的诅咒(“荷兰病”，3月28日)。16世纪，在加尔文主义叛乱和荷兰分裂之后，我们的历史出现了分歧，南部在西班牙君主统治下经历了一场激烈的反改革。

As a result, swearing in Dutch-speaking Belgium relates to the Catholic religion: loop naar de duivel (go to the devil), Godverdomme (Goddamn), and so on. But of late, youngsters in both countries use the same American street English they pick up from television, cinema, festivals, etc. So that after so many centuries they are once again united, at least in swearing.

因此，在讲荷兰语的比利时，说脏话与天主教有关:loop naar de duivel (go to the devil)， Godverdomme (Goddamn)，等等。但是最近，两国的年轻人使用的美式街头英语和他们在电视、电影、节日等场合学到的一样。因此，在这么多世纪之后，他们再次团结起来，至少在宣誓方面是这样。

ANDRÉ MONTEYNE

Former liberal MP

Brussels

Ironically, that English four-letter word starting with an f may well have originated from the Dutch fok, meaning to breed. It was re-adopted with an interesting twist. Instead of using the English word literally, Dutch youths domesticated it into their native fok. A fine example of how modernisation can sometimes marry the old fashioned.

具有讽刺意味的是，英语中以f开头的四个字母的单词很可能起源于荷兰语fok，意思是繁殖。它被重新采用了一个有趣的转折。荷兰的年轻人没有按字面意思使用英语单词，而是把它变成了荷兰语。现代化有时可以与传统结合，这是一个很好的例子。

FREDERIK OEGEMA

Deventer, Netherlands

On your suggestion that one day we will have *coronalijer* doing the rounds in Dutch playgrounds, I would like to add “corona train wreck”. This could apply to the performance of our finance minister during the pandemic, such as when he called for an investigation into countries without the financial ability to weather the crisis. This combination of pettiness and poor timing torpedoed an excellent opportunity to promote the spirit of the EU and pull together.

根据你的建议，总有一天我们会让coronalijer在荷兰的操场上巡逻，我想加上“科罗娜火车残骸”。这可能适用于我们的财政部长在大流行期间的表现，例如他呼吁对那些没有财力度过危机的国家进行调查。这种琐碎和时机不佳的结合，破坏了一个促进欧盟精神和团结一致的绝佳机会。

WYNAND HOOGERBRUGGE

Sotogrande, Spain

**Taking a stand**

Et tu The Economist, that you don’t know the difference between a podium and a lectern. Joe Biden was not “standing behind a podium” at his home to deliver a message to supporters (“Electoral distancing”, March 21st). You stand on a podium and behind a lectern. Signed: a fusspot.

还有经济学家，你不知道讲台和讲台的区别。乔·拜登(Joe Biden)并没有“站在讲台后面”向他的支持者发表演讲(3月21日，《选举的疏远》)。你站在讲台上，讲台后面。签名:一个吹毛求疵的人。

EBERHARD NEUTZ

Laguna Beach, California

**To be exact**

Your recent leader on paying for the pandemic said that such measures will still not prevent the coronavirus from “extracting a heavy toll” (“Closed”, March 21st). The correct expression should be “exacting” a heavy toll. “Extracting a toll” is an eggcorn, a misheard word or phrase that retains its original meaning. Thanos, a supervillain, said “this day extracts a heavy toll” in “Avengers: Infinity War”. So I guess now we are stuck with it.

你们最近的领导人在支付大流行费用时说，这些措施仍然不能防止冠状病毒“造成重大伤亡”(“关闭”，3月21日)。正确的表达应该是“苛求”沉重的代价。“提取通行费”是一个eggcorn，一个被误解的单词或短语，保留了它原来的意思。大反派灭霸说，“这一天让《复仇者联盟3:无限战争》付出了沉重代价。”所以我想我们现在只能这样了。