**来自魏剑峰，公众号：经济学人赏析**

1. If Mr Yanukovych clings on, weakened at home and ostracized abroad, Mr Putin will be content, for he will have another dependent leader to add to his collection of pliable clients.

2. Fiscal shame may help prevent a fiscal fright.

3. Up-to-date information on these fiscal lifelines is not easy to come by. But their size can be inferred from other ratios presented in the provincial audit reports.

4. But the days of anger and recrimination have been forgotten.

5. By 2010 the number had risen more than tenfold thanks to a huge expansion in admissions to universities and technical colleges since the beginning of the century.

6. The interest in membership is a byproduct of the expansion of college enrolment, which has created a glut of graduates in the job market.

7. In competition for jobs at state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which are among the most coveted of all, a lack of party membership appears to be no bar.

8. But meritocracy extends only so far: the party still keeps the top slots for its own.

9. That could be a recognition by SOEs that ability trumps political loyalty for entry-level jobs.

10. Chinese directors and officials were ecstatic.

11. Mr Diao is hopeful his film can do the improbable: thrill viewers at home and abroad, pass Chinese censors and stay true to his artistic vision.

12. The opening scenes depict dismembered body parts tumbling along a coal chute.

13. A UN report accuses North Korea of “unspeakable” human-rights abuses and hints at China’s complicity in some of them

14. prisoners were forced to forage for food in the wild

15. It interviewed another 240 victims confidentially (many fear reprisals on family members still in North Korea).

16. It includes a catalogue of cruelties meted out by the North Korean regime to its main targets:

17. the fierceness of its condemnation. It describes a totalitarian state that is without parallel in the contemporary world.

18. North Korea has flatly rejected the UN’s accusations, just as it continues to deny the existence of its network of prison camps.

19. Although sceptics argue that the report amounts to little more than a call for more engagement (including inter-Korean dialogue and humanitarian aid), it may help to push human rights higher up the agenda.

20. The American government will now no longer be able to prioritise one issue over the other,

21. China has a visceral dislike of human-rights investigations.

22. It fears that condoning the exposure of other countries’ abuses might invite scrutiny of its own.

23. One is that the Chinese public might step up criticism of their government’s support for the North.

24. such issues might prompt Mr Kim to become more bellicose.

25. And the viral nature of its appeal means it has achieved all this without spending a penny on marketing.

26. entrepreneurs can create globe-spanning businesses on shoestring budgets.

27. Indeed, WhatsApp’s success in many ways mirrors that of Facebook itself, which came from nowhere to dominate social networking.

28. Recently, however, Facebook has been losing some of its cool, especially among younger users.

29. That may explain why the famously paranoid Mr Zuckerberg is willing to pay a king’s ransom for a company that might ultimately eclipse his own creation.

30. Mr Koum, who has a well-known aversion to collecting people’s data and plastering advertising over his app, seems an odd bedfellow for Facebook.

31. The half option—seemingly kept alive as a sop to Boris Johnson, London’s mayor—is to shut Heathrow and build a giant modern airport east of the capital.

32. In big cities business is down at many of the best private clubs and restaurants.

33. Meanwhile, the campaign for official frugality presses on.

34. ON THE night of January 30th 700m viewers will see in the year of the horse by watching the “Spring Festival Gala” on Chinese television, a four-hour parade of song, dance and a traditional form of two-man comic repartee called xiangsheng. Popular

35. ON THE night of January 30th 700m viewers will see in the year of the horse by watching the “Spring Festival Gala” on Chinese television, a four-hour parade of song, dance and a traditional form of two-man comic repartee called xiangsheng. Popular opinion among the increasingly sophisticated urban populace is that the programme is cheesy and the jokes lame.

36. Fodder for jokes ranges from the universal—city life, losers looking for a girlfriend—to the latest social issues such as unaffordable housing.

37. Topics for jokes include China’s uncouth nouveaux riches and food-safety scandals.

38. Politics can be hinted at but only obliquely:

39. Popular anger against medical staff sometimes spills over.

40. One of the main reasons for such hostility is the high price of medicines and the corruption that contributes to it.

41. Yet a recent spate of scandals involving public hospitals suggests that few heed the prohibition.

42. But it is also the result of a system that inflates the cost of medicine.

43. Even the cheapest generic drugs sold in Chinese hospitals are much more expensive than their international benchmark.

44. The government has taken a series of measures to attack this problem,

45. “since you don’t let me take kickbacks openly, I’ll do it under the table.”

46. In July local authorities in the city of Zhangzhou in Fujian province recovered over 20m yuan ($3.3m) that more than 1,000 medical professionals had taken in bribes from pharmaceutical representatives.

47. Drug firms have a strong incentive to get their products into the hands of doctors at hospitals,

48. Some distributors issue or buy inflated invoices to extract large sums of cash, creating slush funds to bribe officials and doctors.

49. Four senior executives of the company have been detained over allegations of funnelling up to three billion yuan ($490m) to travel agencies to fund bribes to doctors and government officials.

50. the profit margins of drug companies are squeezed as they strive to offer bigger kickbacks to hospitals.

51. he grew up in rural poverty and read engineering at university.

52. But when Lenovo bought IBM’s personal-computer division in 2005 he decided to immerse himself in English: he moved his family to North Carolina, hired a language tutor and—the ultimate sacrifice—spent hours watching cable-TV news. This

53. Chinese firms are proving harder to crack: they have a huge internal market and are struggling to recruit competent managers of any description, let alone English-speakers.

54. Tsedal Neeley of Harvard Business School says that “Englishnisation”, a word she borrows from Mr Mikitani, can stir up a hornet’s nest of emotions.

55. Slow learners lose their self-confidence, worry about their job security, clam up in meetings or join a guerrilla resistance that conspires in its native language.

56. Ms Neeley argues that companies must think carefully about implementing a policy that touches on so many emotions.

57. Those who are already proficient in English should speak more slowly and refrain from dominating conversations.

58. Mr Mikitani, who was a fluent English speaker himself, at first told his employees to pay for their own lessons and gave them two years to become fluent, on pain of demotion or even dismissal.

59. the most proficient speakers can still struggle to express nuance and emotion in a foreign tongue.

60. But businesses worldwide are facing up to the reality that English is the language on which the sun never sets.

61. this reason, native English speakers often assume that the spread of their language in global corporate life confers an automatic advantage on them.

62. In fact it can easily encourage them to rest on their laurels.

63. Mark Harper had spearheaded the government’s campaigns to crack down on illegal workers and to deter legal European migrants from coming to Britain.

64. Thailand’s constitutional court rejected an opposition request to annul the general election that was held on February 2nd.

65. Senior diplomats from North and South Korea held talks, hastily set up at the North’s suggestion.

66. Yoichi Masuzoe cruised to victory to become governor of Tokyo.

67. America’s Justice Department issued an edict to its staff to recognise same-sex marriage “as broadly as possible” under federal law.

68. Mr Jiang, in a grey T-shirt and 3D glasses, scurries up and down the stage giving directions.

69. It was about a bandit who poses as the mayor of a remote Chinese town.

70. The government did not appreciate its portrayal of an illegitimate leader gulling the masses, but the film was wildly popular.

71. It has a budget of around $50m, a princely sum by Chinese movie-making standards.

72. Young people, flush with cash, are eager to get out of the house.

73. Enormous IMAX screens and 3D films are the rage, and in big cities carry a similar ticket price to America.

74. only 7% of British films turn a profit.

75. To gain a foothold in China, Hollywood studios are helping finance films or co-producing them.

76. It got flak from the Western press for shooting a movie in Linyi,

77. Yet the differences are more obvious than the similarities.

78. Even costly Chinese movies often look amateurish.

79. it wants people to see films that will inculcate Chinese values and culture.

80. While producers in Hollywood try to drum up as much interest as possible in their films, those in China keep them quiet, so as not to pique censors’ interest or suspicion.

81. A saccharine tribute to materialism, “Tiny Times” did particularly well in smaller, less-developed “tier 3” and “tier 4” cities, whose citizens aspire to be rich and fashionable but want to watch characters that feel home-grown.

82. The plots tend to be blunt and the acting melodramatic.

83. The Chinese film that has garnered most attention in the West lately is “A Touch of Sin”

84. Struggling BlackBerry called off a deal whereby its largest investor would have taken it private;

85. China also further relaxed its one-child policy, in place since the 1970s, by allowing parents to have two children if one of the parents is an only child.

86. Barack Obama’s approval ratings headed to the emergency room after the botched roll-out of his health-care reforms.

87. In Turkey a protest against developing a park in Istanbul snowballed into nationwide demonstrations against the authoritarian tone of Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s government.

88. Elsewhere, an increase in fares on São Paulo’s buses was the catalyst for bringing millions of disaffected Brazilians out onto the streets in 100 cities.

89. There was a sense of déjà vu about protests in Thailand (against a government run by a member of the Shinawatra family), Ukraine (against an unreconstructed pro-Russian president) and Greece (against just about everything).

90. two British Islamists of Nigerian descent shocked Londoners when they ran down an off-duty soldier and tried to decapitate him.

91. But the government declared that austerity was bearing fruit after several international forecasts of British growth were revised upwards.

92. But its price is volatile, soaring from $15 in January to above $1,200 in early December and crashing to under $600 a week later.

93. Small food companies in Europe faced an unbridled disaster when it emerged that a few suppliers to British supermarkets were using horsemeat instead of beef in frozen meals.

94. Nowadays, the majority of economists confidently wave such worries away.

95. On the contrary, it created employment opportunities sufficient to soak up the 20th century’s exploding population.

96. Yet some now fear that a new era of automation enabled by ever more powerful and capable computers could work out differently.

97. In America the real wage has hardly budged over the past four decades.

98. For those not in the elite, argues David Graeber, an anthropologist at the London School of Economics, much of modern labour consists of stultifying “bullshit jobs”—low- and mid-level screen-sitting that serves simply to occupy workers for whom the economy no longer has much use.

99. Be that as it may, drudgery may soon enough give way to frank unemployment.

100. Yet the road to riches was rockier than is often appreciated.

101. Bosses imposed a tight schedule and strict worker discipline to keep up the productive pace.

102. the more intricate machines, techniques and supply chains of the period all required careful tending.

103. This was the loss to which the Luddites, understandably if not effectively, took exception.

104. Not until the late 19th century, when the gains had spread across the whole economy, did wages at last perform in line with productivity

105. For 60 years, from 1770 to 1830, growth in British wages, adjusted for inflation, was imperceptible because productivity growth was restricted to a few industries.

106. Although in many simple economic models technology pairs neatly with capital and labour to produce output, in practice technological changes do not affect all workers the same way.

107. Some find that their skills are complementary to new technologies. Others find themselves out of work.

108. The development of mechanical and electronic computing rendered these arrangements obsolete.

109. New machinery displaced handicraft producers across numerous industries,

110. A startling progression of inventions seems to bear their thesis out.

111. Its acumen will grow, and its costs fall, as firms learn to harness its abilities.

112. rich economies seem to be bifurcating into a small group of workers with skills highly complementary with machine intelligence, for whom he has high hopes, and the rest, for whom not so much.

113. developing the business models which make the best use of new technologies will involve trial and error and human flexibility,

114. Just as past mechanisation freed, or forced, workers into jobs requiring more cognitive dexterity, leaps in machine intelligence could create space for people to specialise in more emotive occupations,

115. However, society may find itself sorely tested if, as seems possible, growth and innovation deliver handsome gains to the skilled, while the rest cling to dwindling employment opportunities at stagnant wages.

116. But politicians have recently sought their scapegoats more widely, from energy companies to technology giants,

117. For tragedies of the commons to be averted, rules and institutions are needed to balance the short-term interests of individuals against the long-term interests of all users.

118. Governments should make it mandatory, creating a global record of vessels to help crack down on illegal high-seas fishing.

119. Non-members break the rules with impunity.

120. So in the meantime the law of the sea should be beefed up.

121. Two of the biggest—acidification and pollution—emanate from the land.

122. Britain’s three main political parties flatly declared that they would not countenance a currency union with an independent Scotland.

123. Mr Salmond has responded with a mixture of bluster, denial, obfuscation and crude threat.

124. Even while it remains a petro-state, Scotland’s revenues will veer up and down with oil prices.

125. Divorce in haste, repent at leisure

126. Nonsense: the dispute over the pound is just a taster of the bitter rows that would follow—involving the division of North Sea oil, pension payments and much else.

127. Mr Salmond seems to forget that British politicians would no longer be beholden to the people of his country.

128. There could be no suggestion that the meeting was of equals, as one side imagined, nor that it was of a supplicant greeting his master, as the other would prefer to believe.

129. The meeting itself was a photo opportunity, more symbolic than substantive.

130. In spite of shared linguistic and cultural ties, trust remains low after more than six decades of enmity.

131. China’s increasing assertiveness in the region might be brought to bear on Taiwan.

132. So China is in a bind. If it pushes too hard, then the Taiwanese push back.

133. Economics was not the subject on which Mr Xia was most forthright.

134. China’s continued modernisation has meant that students are more open to Western influences and have more social and economic freedoms than ever before.

135. That has made the clampdown on their teachers even more jarring.

136. Mr Zhang, the legal scholar, sees his own dismissal as a scare tactic that will fail in the long term as the dissonance grows between politics and everyday life.

137. Last year China’s exchange rate, weighted by trade and adjusted for inflation, rose by over 7%, according to the Bank for International Settlements.

138. But, as he points out, China’s economy is now far bigger than it was when it was causing so much international consternation.

139. Inefficient government interventions created a capitalism without markets and a socialism without planning.

140. Unfortunately, President Cristina Fernández has a fixation with those policies, which means we are tripping over the same stone.

141. Argentina is indeed confronting some big issues, but to add some nuance to your argument, it is also receiving a record number of foreign scientists such as myself, because of the professional and social opportunities it offers.

142. In my own case, not only did Argentina provide my husband and me with great jobs, but our decision was also motivated by the fact that here we have more legal and social rights than in the United States.

143. To get out of this mess, Argentines need nothing short of a profound cultural transformation.

144. It enjoys 8% higher GDP per head than Argentina. Unlike Argentina and many others, Poland advanced by ten places in the World Bank’s “Doing Business” ranking for 2014.

145. Picturing Argentina’s history as 100 years of gradual decline may be too simplistic.

146. SIR – Schumpeter’s column on the dominance of English as a business language (February 15th) missed the important point that native English-speakers have a large vocabulary, speak fast and often use figurative expressions. A former boss of mine was fond of using cricketing metaphors, to the bafflement of his international audience.

147. In this case, like so many others, palatable solutions will now be found.

148. I recall reading a few years ago that someone developed a condom that played Russian patriotic tunes.

149. Autocrats lose office the same way, as the fate of Viktor Yanukovych, Ukraine’s deposed president, dramatically illustrates.

150. After the savage shooting of scores of his own people in Kiev, Ukraine’s capital, once-supportive tycoons and generals abandoned him, and his power evaporated.

151. with Mr Yanukovych gone, Ukraine has a chance at last to ditch its ersatz, post-Soviet version of democracy for the genuine kind.

152. for the European Union, in particular, this is a chance to show that, for all its internal fissures and foreign-policy quiescence, it is more than a busted flush.

153. By any historical measure, Ukraine is part of Europe.

154. Tension is crackling between Ukrainians who welcome the revolution, and those who repudiate it: in Kiev its victims are mourned as martyrs, yet elsewhere the riot police who battled them are lionised.

155. Even with the unadulterated goodwill of outsiders, the situation would be perilous—and goodwill is not conspicuous in the Kremlin, which propped up Mr Yanukovych’s presidency and now denounces those who ousted him as terrorists.

156. Meanwhile, this perennially mismanaged nation is almost broke.

157. When he wasn’t pillaging his country, Mr Yanukovych undermined its courts, suborned its constitution and harassed its media, institutions that are as much a part of an enduring democracy as elections (see essay).

158. Russia is unlikely to honour the $15 billion bail-out it agreed with Mr Yanukovych in December.

159. Europeans can help, too, both with technical assistance and by holding out the best inducement to reform they can offer:

160. The EU and its allies should do all this because it is right, rather than to rile Vladimir Putin.

161. He exorcised his grievance over the Kosovo war of 1999 by invading Georgia in 2008.

162. Ukraine is much more important to him than Georgia, for without it Russia’s sphere of influence looks paltry.

163. Creating an honest, competent government, devoted to the well-being of its people, is the best way to persuade all Ukrainians that they are better off without the kleptocrats—and, incidentally, to show that the West is still a force for good.

164. Can Ukraine find any leaders who will live up to the aspirations of its battered, victorious but sceptical protesters?

165. A crowd of tens of thousands heckled the mainstream politicians and cheered those—about a third—who were nominated from their own activist ranks.

166. The revolution which last week saw the overthrow of Mr Yanukovych, a corrupt, cowardly and thuggish president, has not yet been given a name.

167. Yanukovych is gone and his regime broken, but the post-Soviet order which prevailed in Ukraine over the past two decades has not been uprooted.

168. the possibility of failure, a descent into chaos, insurrection—notably in the Crimea—or even secession remains stark.

169. There is little by way of an elite devoted to forging a new, modern nation state;

170. In 1917 tsarist Russia vanished within just three days. The Soviet Union was despatched in just as short a tumult in August 1991.

171. Ukrainians—particularly young ones—saw a lifeline that might have winched them up to a civilised European world being cut, and the “EuroMaidan” protests began.

172. The House of Trade Unions, which served as a revolutionary news centre and hospital, had been torched.

173. it was a broader uprising against a malevolent state which failed in its basic tasks—a state in which the government robbed the public rather than served it, in which the courts covered up injustice rather than right it, in which prosecutors perpetrated crimes instead of investigating them.

174. In part because of that broader agenda, in part because of last week’s brutality, the swift overthrow of Mr Yanukovych produced no euphoria.

175. Over the past three months of demonstrations Maidan displayed exemplary discipline and self-organisation.

176. Civil order may well be maintained; but Ukraine is also staring into an economic abyss.

177. the president and his family, broadly construed, embezzled between $8 billion and $10 billion a year since he took power in 2010.

178. but it will drive up inflation and encourage all who can to get their money out of the country’s banks to do so.

179. The first will bring prompt pain to almost all citizens, the second will be resisted by many functionaries.

180. A less visible battle has been going on between various Ukrainian oligarchs and the members of Mr Yanukovych’s extended family who took their place at the trough.

181. In the Orange revolution she was treated like a messiah. This time, while people were glad to see that she had been freed, they knew better than to put their fate in her hands—or those of any other politician for that matter.

182. What complicates the picture further is that holding the country together depends in large measure on the co-operation of the oligarchs,

183. Some this is the product of hysterical propaganda on the Russian television channels that are watched on that side of the country.

184. Some people in Donetsk—Mr Yanukovych’s home city—have said they will reciprocate by speaking Ukrainian.

185. Sebastopol, Crimea’s largest city, is mostly populated by Russians —not least because it is home to Russia’s Black Sea fleet.

186. Politicians in Russia are talking of distributing passports in Crimea—a ruse used to strengthen Russia’s pretext for annexing the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008.

187. While making no public comment on Mr Yanukovych’s defeat, Mr Putin has ordered an urgent drill to test the combat-readiness of 150,000 soldiers in the region.

188. he despised the man, but placed great store in having a compliant Ukraine.

189. elites on whom Mr Putin depends. Even if Russia does not make a military move on Crimea, it may use it as a lever to ratchet up pressure on whoever holds power in Kiev.

190. In the original map included in this article we transposed the Party of the Regions’

191. In the original map included in this article we transposed the Party of the Regions’ election results with those of the Freedom party.

192. The resultant economic burden—estimated in the tens of billions of dollars—will soar as the economy and the cost of health care grow.

193. China is starting to take notice of the problem.

194. Although these proclamations look impressive on paper, they have not amounted to much in practice.

195. Smoking is less common than it was in urban offices and restaurants but China has hardly kicked the habit.

196. Medical studies add to the sense that the damage done by tobacco is set to rise.

197. Hence talk of beefing up efforts to curb smoking.

198. But even then the impact may be limited, for two reasons.

199. And the tobacco business is so entwined with government that it is likely to thwart any effective anti-smoking effort.

200. anti-tobacco campaigns need six planks.

201. The first is reliable data on tobacco use and prevention, which is lacking in China.

202. The second is the sweeping imposition of smoking bans, not the partial bans still being mooted in Beijing.

203. Another plank is to educate smokers on the harms of tobacco.

204. But China’s cigarette brands have found many ways to circumvent official prohibitions, for example by setting up charities that fund schools and sporting events in their name (though officials say they will now crack down on this practice).

205. Foreign brands are relegated to a niche market in China but the ciggy bigwigs now have their eyes on global expansion.

206. China’s government is hooked on cigarette revenues.

207. some argue that all that show-biz has become a liability, dragging the military’s name into the quagmire of commercialism.

208. Laying off entertainers may be relatively easy but changing the army’s predilection for syrupy songs sung by comely stars could prove more difficult.

209. More fundamentally, democracy lets people speak their minds and shape their own and their children’s futures.

210. That so many people in so many different parts of the world are prepared to risk so much for this idea is testimony to its enduring appeal.

211. Where autocrats have been driven out of office, their opponents have mostly failed to create viable democratic regimes.

212. In the second half of the 20th century, democracies had taken root in the most difficult circumstances possible—in Germany, which had been traumatised by Nazism,

213. Yet just a few years ago democracy looked as though it would dominate the world. In the second half of the 20th century, democracies had taken root in the most difficult circumstances possible—in Germany, which had been traumatised by Nazism, in India, which had the world’s largest population of poor people, and, in the 1990s, in South Africa, which had been disfigured by apartheid.

214. The collapse of the Soviet Union created many fledgling democracies in central Europe.

215. Such hubris was surely understandable after such a run of successes.

216. After the fall of Athens, where it was first developed, the political model had lain dormant until the Enlightenment more than 2,000 years later.

217. democracy’s global advance has come to a halt, and may even have gone into reverse.

218. Faith in democracy flares up in moments of triumph, such as the overthrow of unpopular regimes in Cairo or Kiev, only to sputter out once again.

219. The Chinese elite argue that their model—tight control by the Communist Party, coupled with a relentless effort to recruit talented people into its upper ranks—is more efficient than democracy and less susceptible to gridlock.

220. Autocratic leaders in Venezuela, Ukraine, Argentina and elsewhere have followed suit, perpetuating a perverted simulacrum of democracy rather than doing away with it altogether, and thus discrediting it further.

221. Mr Bush sincerely believed that the Middle East would remain a breeding ground for terrorism so long as it was dominated by dictators.

222. Foreign-policy realists took Iraq’s growing chaos as proof that American-led promotion of democratisation was a recipe for instability.

223. But the euphoria soon turned to despair.

224. Along with war in Syria and anarchy in Libya, this has dashed the hope that the Arab spring would lead to a flowering of democracy across the Middle East.

225. Meanwhile some recent recruits to the democratic camp have lost their lustre.

226. National politicians have also responded to globalisation by limiting their discretion and handing power to unelected technocrats in some areas.

227. Douglas Carswell, a British member of parliament, likens traditional politics to HMV, a chain of British record shops that went bust,

228. Plato’s great worry about democracy, that citizens would “live from day to day, indulging the pleasure of the moment”, has proved prescient.

229. The result can be a toxic and unstable mixture: dependency on government on the one hand, and disdain for it on the other.

230. countries naturally wanted to emulate the world’s leading power.

231. But as China’s influence has grown, America and Europe have lost their appeal as role models and their appetite for spreading democracy.

232. Democracy has been on the back foot before.

233. The elite is becoming a self-perpetuating and self-serving clique.

234. They regarded democracy as a powerful but imperfect mechanism: something that needed to be designed carefully, in order to harness human creativity but also to check human perversity, and then kept in good working order, constantly oiled, adjusted and worked upon.

235. Conversely, the first sign that a fledgling democracy is heading for the rocks often comes when elected rulers try to erode constraints on their power—often in the name of majority rule.

236. Mr Morsi would not be spending his life shuttling between prison and a glass box in an Egyptian court, and Mr Yanukovych would not be fleeing for his life, if they had not enraged their compatriots by accumulating so much power.

237. Established democracies need to update their own political systems both to address the problems they face at home, and to revitalise democracy’s image abroad.

238. America’s Senate has made it harder for senators to filibuster appointments.

239. But many more such experiments are needed—combining technocracy with direct democracy, and upward and downward delegation—if democracy is to zigzag its way back to health.

240. But if democracy is to remain as successful in the 21st century as it was in the 20th, it must be both assiduously nurtured when it is young—and carefully maintained when it is mature.

241. Tellingly, commodity prices are slipping too. The price of iron ore fell by more than 8% in January.

242. It suggests that all the figures for January, including the all-important employment figures, which were due to be released on February 7th after The Economist went to press, should be taken with a truckload of salt.

243. Really bold action, such as buying bundles of bank loans, is more likely when financial markets are in a funk.

244. Our prognosis is a lot better than the outcome markets now fear.

245. California’s economy may be falling short of its potential and of its own past golden age, but what is most striking is that the state’s growth keeps pace with America’s, despite onerous regulations, taxes and, above all, housing costs.

246. It is worth stressing that the capital substitution for labour is largely not through “machines” but through intangibles such as intellectual property (IP), business models, algorithms, data aggregations and now also digital currencies. As one example, the lion’s share of the iPhone’s profits accrues to the owners of the IP, rather than the owners of the machines that make the smartphones. Equally, the vast share of the profits from the chips that are used to power smart devices accrue to the owners of the patents on various circuit components that constitute the chip.

247. Human genes have not changed appreciably in the brief history of civilisation.

248. Exhorting students to be more conscientious so that we can give them postgraduate degrees won’t be enough.

249. The mayor dodged the question in standard government-speak when the reporter, a portly man in a checked shirt and blue jeans, rudely interrupted her: “Please answer my question directly.” The room erupted with laughter.

250. This was, it turns out, a class at the China Executive Leadership Academy Pudong (CELAP) in Shanghai—one of five national schools for training Communist Party members.

251. The message of the classes is clear: officials must be more responsive to the press and the public even as they toe the party line.

252. Mr Tan showed the class a photograph and a mocking cartoon of an official who attended the scene of a grisly road accident in 2012 and was photographed smiling and sporting a luxury watch. He became known as “Brother Watch”, the punchline of online jokes and a liability to the party.

253. “I hope none of you will bring shame on the party and the government with your own problems,” intoned Mr Tan.

254. The staid Central Party School in Beijing is the most coveted place of study, with the best reputation. CELAP is next of the five.

255. So its recent moves to include the public in enforcing environmental regulations have caused a flutter.

256. NGOs such as the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE) can take some credit for the new policy.

257. A study by the Lancet, a British journal, in 2012 estimated that 1.2m premature deaths in China in 2010 could be attributed to the effects of pollution.

258. And, born of necessity, the top-down moves to encourage bottom-up pressure may signal a broader trend that will have an impact far beyond China’s murky skies.

259. China’s external imbalances are as nothing compared with its internal ones

260. NINGXIA, an autonomous region in China’s north-west, is home to 6.3m people.

261. Aung San Suu Kyi’s road to the presidency grows longer and more winding

262. the question of whether the country’s most popular politician would be able to stand for president next year has hung over the whole process.

263. But all this will count for nothing if Myanmar’s constitution continues to bar Miss Suu Kyi from standing for president.

264. At the root of the problem is Clause 59(f).

265. Were it not for the peccant clause, freshly elected NLD lawmakers would elevate Miss Suu Kyi to the presidency.

266. The NLD hit back immediately. One MP, Zaw Myint Maung, said the claimed results were just an organised signature campaign among USDP members in Yangon, wholly unrepresentative of public opinion.

267. WHEN, in 2008, the American embassy in Beijing started publishing a measure of the fetid smog enveloping the capital, China’s government protested and ordered the publication to stop.

268. Its instinct was to sweep unwelcome facts about the nauseating level of pollution in the country under the carpet.

269. Pollutants in the air in Beijing have hit 40 times the level decreed safe by the World Health Organisation.

270. the government has done its best to keep information about the levels of filth in the air and water under wraps.

271. The impetus behind this new transparency is not a sudden enthusiasm for liberalism.

272. And that system is subject to “regulatory capture”—getting nobbled by the enterprises it is supposed to control and by the local governments who own or influence them.

273. The new rules should thus expose polluters to a scissor-style pressure: from above, through the central-planning system, and from below, from the media and organisations such as Mr Ma’s.

274. The new disclosure rules have only milk teeth, not real bite.

275. He lambasts a tax code that benefits “special interests”, but has not pushed for tax reform.

276. He wants to invest more in the poor, but has shown no appetite to overhaul America’s welfare state,

277. If he wants to counter America’s economic stratification rather than just rail against it, Mr Obama needs to think again.

278. Both sides will be tempted to hunker down and trade barbs.

279. A print version of the English Wikipedia—1,000 bulky volumes and 1,193,014 pages—will be on show at a gathering of Wikipedians later this year.

280. Visitors to Wikipedia’s headquarters in downtown San Francisco, not far from the buzzing offices of giant internet firms like Twitter, will find an eerily silent workplace.

281. Wikipedia’s most pressing difficulty is finding and keeping contributors, says Phoebe Ayers, who sits on the foundation’s board.

282. The fabled grumpiness of established editors is one reason: “Please do not bite the newcomers” runs a reminder on its noticeboard, presumably frequently ignored.

283. Last year it added a “thanks” feature, so editors can be complimented for their work, rather than just harangued for errors on message boards.

284. A decade ago, the mere discussion of taking advertising caused a schism, with a purist Spanish version splitting off.

285. Last year Naver indexed its 100-millionth question: a user asking for the title of a particular song, that begins with a giggle.

286. News organisations grumble that Naver pays them a pittance for licensing their stories.

287. Within 18 months it hit the 100m-user mark, which took Facebook and Twitter around four years; in November 2013 it surpassed 300m downloads, making it a serious rival for WhatsApp, an American messaging service Facebook is paying $19 billion for.

288. It is unclear if smartphone users in Europe and America will warm to such cutesy characters, but Naver hopes to draw those wary of Facebook’s open network to Line Band, a closed social-networking service.

289. Though Mr Park expects Line’s valuation to converge with that of Facebook “in the long term”, for now it is tiny by comparison—about 9% the size.

290. In 2014 the European Union will adopt a law similar to Germany’s, obliging online firms to offer a no-questions return period of 14 days. American law is not so generous, but online firms there still face hefty costs from customer returns.

291. Like physical stores, online clothes sellers suspect they have a hard core of habitual returners.

292. But this risks a backlash: rejected shoppers are likely to rush to the newspapers or social media to complain—and their gripes may turn other, more profitable customers against the firm.

293. Mr Goldman’s book is best remembered for coining the rule that in his industry, “nobody knows anything”: it is anyone’s guess whether a film will be a hit or a miss.

294. Steven Spielberg, no introduction necessary, reckons that the studios could face “meltdown” if several big films flop at once.

295. A new species of intermediaries, such as Village Roadshow Entertainment Group and Skydance, have sprung up to bankroll projects.

296. But even after a film’s release it remains unclear why it boomed or bombed. Why was “Gravity”, starring George Clooney and Sandra Bullock in a tale about stranded astronauts, one of this year’s hits despite the misgivings of its studio, Warner Bros, whereas “The Lone Ranger” was such a flop, despite Disney’s high hopes for a film starring Johnny Depp?

297. Faced with bankruptcy 50 years ago, Fox might have been better off keeping the property and junking the film-making.

298. The media conglomerates that own the major studios grouse about the lousy economics of the business, particularly since DVD sales peaked in 2004 and then waned, with consumers shifting to lower-cost rentals and subscription services like Netflix.

299. Technology should have helped Hollywood, by lowering the cost of distributing films, but it has also cost the industry dearly, as film-makers doll up their movies with expensive special effects, and negative social-media buzz kills films before they even open.

300. Thirty years ago Hollywood tried to make films that appealed to “popcorn buyers”: 16- to 24-year-olds who used to go to cinemas in droves before they became so preoccupied by their smartphones.

301. “Football belongs to everyone,” it says, in a schmaltzy advertisement ahead of the World Cup.

302. Although his businesses are exceptionally profitable by global standards, the services are slow and expensive, and their uptake low, even by Latin American standards (see charts).

303. Ernesto Estrada, an Ifetel commissioner, says there are two prongs to the inquiry: has the concession been violated? And should the relationship preclude Dish from airing Televisa and Azteca’s content without paying?

304. However, the risk is that the incumbents may scrimp on upgrading their networks, out of a reluctance to help their competitors. Luca

305. this is a particular worry in Mexico, where internet usage is low.

306. He now wants foreigners to plough another $1.5 billion or so into JD (previously known as 360buy) at its forthcoming initial public offering in New York.

307. JD now has 82 warehouses across China, and over 18,000 delivery staff.

308. Two big questions hang over the firm’s future.

309. The firm, which controls perhaps 80% of all e-commerce in China, is expanding into ancillary areas to fortify its position.

310. It has invested in social-messaging outfits, launched online wealth-management services and bought into a popular taxi-hailing app.

311. WHEN Australia’s first locally made car, a Holden FX, rolled off the production line in 1948 it was greeted with an excitement that befitted a symbol of a youthful nation taking its place among advanced economies.

312. Toyota’s announcement on February 10th that it would join Ford and Holden in pulling out of carmaking in Australia, closing its assembly line in 2017, was greeted with commensurate dismay.

313. Australian plants lack economies of scale but not employees with bulging wage packets.

314. But carmaking is a small and unprofitable part of a shrinking manufacturing sector, employing relatively few, in an economy dominated by services and resources. The main damage caused by the carmakers’ departure is to Australians’ self-esteem.

315. It boasted wonderfully fertile agricultural land, a sunny climate, a new democracy (universal male suffrage was introduced in 1912), an educated population and the world’s most erotic dance.

316. Why dwell on a single national tragedy?

317. turn to North Korea as a model; the governments in Madrid or Athens are not citing Lenin as the answer to their euro travails.

318. The real danger is inadvertently becoming the Argentina of the 21st century.

319. weak institutions, nativist politicians, lazy dependence on a few assets and a persistent refusal to confront reality will do the trick.

320. Building institutions is a dull, slow business.

321. Argentine leaders prefer the quick fix—of charismatic leaders, miracle tariffs and currency pegs, rather than, say, a thorough reform of the country’s schools.

322. Argentina’s decline has been seductively gradual.

323. Italy’s petulant demand that rating agencies should take into account its “cultural wealth”, instead of looking too closely at its dodgy government finances, sounded like Ms Fernández.

324. The European Union protects Spain or Greece from spiralling off into autarky. But what if the euro zone broke up?

325. The bigger danger, however, lies in the emerging world, where uninterrupted progress to prosperity is beginning to be seen as unstoppable.

326. Some languages have no word for cancer.

327. Bringing true competition to these businesses would do wonders for Mexico’s economy, which in some industries resembles the United States before the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890.

328. Both América Móvil and Televisa have dodged past attempts to rein them in, partly by exerting excessive influence over regulators and partly because competition law was full of holes that allowed them to use the courts to tie the authorities in knots.

329. By the same token, if Televisa had greater access to Mr Slim’s wires it would be able to challenge América Móvil by offering its pay-TV subscribers “bundles” that included telephone and broadband services.

330. Britain’s experience provides a salutary example.

331. In 2006 it forced BT, the former state telecoms monopoly, to create an arms-length subsidiary to run its network infrastructure and sell access to new entrants at fair prices. Consumers

332. Orchestrating a similar battle of the titans in Mexico, while clearing a path for other contenders, is the best way to bring about the competitive revolution the country’s communications industries need.

333. This will stop insurers cancelling individuals’ health plans just before the mid-term elections, which would have been bad news for the Democrats.

334. They were said to have been heading for Port Sudan and then to the Gaza Strip, which abuts Israel.

335. Gunmen suspected of belonging to Nigeria’s Boko Haram Islamist terrorist group rampaged through villages in the north-east of the country, killing scores of people over several days.

336. opposition protesters continued with their rolling demonstrations.

337. He is heavily trailing the left’s Luis Guillermo Solís in a run-off vote on April 6th.

338. Gunmen burst into the building and opened fire before suicide-bombers detonated explosives.

339. Some in the West will argue that the starting point for policy is to recognise reality, however unpalatable.

340. That thinking is mistaken. In the past week Mr Putin has trampled over norms that buttress the international order and he has established dangerous precedents that go far beyond Ukraine (see article).

341. The Ukrainian citizens who protested in Maidan did not drive out a home-grown autocrat only to become beholden to the one next door;

342. many of the youths on the streets of Donetsk and Kharkiv, in the Russian-speaking east, are as eager to belong to a sovereign Ukraine as are their compatriots in Kiev and Lviv.

343. If the West implicitly accepts this line, Mr Putin will have a pretext for intervening to protect Russians scattered across the former Soviet Union, from Central Asia to the Baltic.

344. Such preposterous claims are not meant to be taken at face value.

345. Unchallenged, this is a licence for Russian aggression.

346. Mr Putin expects a slap on the wrist. Sanctions must exceed his expectations.

347. And the West should strengthen its ability to resist the Kremlin’s revanchism: Europe should reduce its dependence on Russian gas (see article); America should bin restrictions on energy exports; NATO should be invigorated.

348. As things stand, mindful of their fragile economies, and with the Kremlin hinting at revenge against sanctions, many Europeans worry about the cost of all this (see article).

349. For too long Western leaders have hoped that their countries’ economic ties with Russia could be impervious to the Kremlin’s belligerence.

350. The turmoil in Ukraine is one of a host of troubles that Western firms are facing in emerging markets.

351. Slowing growth, falling currencies, weak commodity prices, bad investment decisions and that catch-all of a thousand corporate woes, political risk, have combined to disappoint managers’ expectations.

352. Research operations have been rejigged to create more products for poor people.

353. In their enthusiasm to get into emerging markets, plenty of companies did not take the risks involved seriously enough.

354. A Spanish oil firm, Repsol, had its assets in Argentina expropriated (on February 26th it agreed to a compensation package).

355. At least 20 of the world’s insurers are squabbling over the tiny slice of India’s insurance market that is not state-controlled.

356. A decade of low interest rates and rampant Chinese demand allowed almost all developing countries to grow at turbocharged rates—even those that were badly run. Now the global environment is less forgiving.

357. Businesses that have weak returns or are peripheral are candidates to be sold, restructured or shut.

358. By borrowing in local debt markets and shifting more production to the emerging world, they can create a hedge against currency turbulence and ward off protectionism.

359. Eventually growth in the emerging world will pick up, rewarding firms with strong businesses and persistence.

360. But the stampede of Western firms into those markets will not be repeated.

361. In the next decade, more emerging-market firms will snap up rich-world assets. And you can be sure that trend will lead to plenty of duff decisions, too.

362. But as well as rounding up the culprits, the Communist Party must face up to an uncomfortable truth.

363. Uighur resentment of the Han runs deep.

364. students are banned from fasting during Ramadan,

365. Many Uighurs, like their neighbours in Tibet, fear that their culture will be extinguished.

366. It is one of several areas in the country where Russian speakers outnumber their Ukrainian-speaking countrymen.

367. Now that we are no longer distracted by shiny medals, maybe we can focus on the body count in the Maidan, or on the fratricidal horror in Syria, or on the billions misspent on the Olympics, in a country which is not nearly as rich as it pretends and where millions of people continue to live in bleak poverty.

368. As a result, they are less prone to engage in the sort of reckless fiscal behaviour that necessitates a bail-out.

369. It is sad that so much of the debate on Scottish independence revolves around the question “Will Scots be better off staying in the United Kingdom?

370. But before that there was another colossal failure to use the Panamanian isthmus as a locus of trade.

371. As an orthopaedic surgeon, however, I found it most interesting that you thought the Vikings had a “tibula” instead of the tibia and fibula that are found in modern humans.

372. within the UNCLOS framework. Although among the smallest UN agencies, with commensurately modest costs, the IMO regulates the global shipping industry very effectively through a wide range of diplomatic conventions that are genuinely enforced worldwide.

373. It is true that the world’s fisheries face a crisis unless action is taken to protect our oceans as a common good for this and future generations.

374. In this respect, we expect the international community to contribute positively to this process.

375. What Banyan terms as a rejection of both “pre-1989 leftism” and “market fundamentalism” is actually just the vacillating position of the party’s leadership, rather than any consistent commitment to an economic policy (it opposes more foreign investment in retail).

376. Many residents whose families have lived in the city for generations are being evicted from their homes because rents are rocketing in response to the influx of tech workers.

377. Would you have us just pull up our roots and leave, as if we were itinerant workers?

378. Are you saying that highly qualified ethnic minority and female engineers are being passed over for less qualified white and Asian men at tech companies?

379. The world’s vilest regime flirts with economic reform

380. Choe Ryong Hae, who had the rank of marshal (though a civilian), was reckoned to be the second-most powerful man in the country. He has not been seen in public since February 16th, and rumours are swirling about his fate.

381. Yet tantalising hints are also multiplying that the government is getting serious about economic reforms of the kind that were anathema to Kim Jong Il.

382. Astonishingly, the government has also praised an experiment in family-based farming, seeming to hint at a loosening of the strictures of collectivised agriculture.

383. The country’s army, government institutions and decrepit enterprises are being urged to dive into their work with “Masikryong speed”.

384. Improving the common lot does not have to be entirely at odds with the regime’s narrower and overriding motivation:

385. Yet in recent years, the world has wised up, and foreign currency has slowed to a trickle.

386. But the regime has fewer resources to spray about.

387. Almost certainly that rankled with the Korean People’s Army.

388. Licences for excavating coal, gold, silver and iron ore are divvied up and doled out to the regime’s most

389. It may help explain a mildly friendlier approach to the South, after ructions last year.

390. Ripping off foreigners remains a patriotic duty, and the changes do not yet amount to a real opening.

391. A brutal knife attack shocks China and raises questions about its policy towards ethnic minorities

392. a retired train driver stood before a makeshift shrine in front of Kunming railway station, where on the evening of March 1st a group of assailants, clad in black and wielding long knives and cleavers, unleashed terrible carnage.

393. Two days later police said that three more had been detained, and that the search for the perpetrators was over.

394. But the impact of the attack, on Kunming and on China, may be far-reaching.

395. It could mark a disturbing escalation of China’s long-festering problem of ethnic tension.

396. But discontent occasionally surfaces in the form of attacks with low-grade explosive devices and knives.

397. a sport-utility vehicle crashed into pedestrians in front of the iconic portrait of Mao Zedong.

398. The bloodletting comes as a particular shock for Kunming.

399. Large vans guard intersections near the district, and police in full riot gear patrol the narrow alleys.

400. THE annual session of China’s rubber-stamp parliament, the National People’s Congress, is rarely remarkable for the rhetorical flourishes of the leaders who address it.

401. But at the opening on March 5th of this year’s nine-day meeting the prime minister, Li Keqiang, in his maiden speech, deviated at least a little from the usual stodgy fare.

402. Growing public furore about pollution has at last goaded China’s leaders into admitting the urgency of the problem.

403. Mr Li’s state-of-the-nation speech dwelt on the problem of air pollution much more than those of his predecessors.

404. That may be an unfortunate comparison, much of China’s success in dealing with poverty having been a by-product of the same rapid growth that has wreaked environmental havoc.

405. Smog notwithstanding, researchers at Harvard University last year said China’s cuts in sulphur-dioxide emissions in recent years may have been “one of the most swiftly effective air-pollution policies ever implemented anywhere”.

406. In recent days internet users have heaped scorn on a Chinese general who said on state television that smog might protect China from attack by American laser weapons.

407. Mr Li wisely avoided repeating the claim. But his government is not scrimping on defence.

408. It was a scathing critique of American foreign policy during Mr Locke’s two-and-a-half-year tenure as ambassador to China.

409. In 2011, as he arrived in China, photographs of him buying his own coffee circulated on social media, as did descriptions of him carrying his own luggage.

410. Chinese microbloggers marvelled at such unassuming behaviour, in contrast with the pomp that attends most Chinese officials.

411. China “should have the national self-confidence to withstand the media scrutiny that most of the world takes for granted”, he said.

412. PEERING from a 46th-floor vantage-point at the other spectral skyscrapers puncturing the murk, a Hong Kong resident grumbles out loud to no one in particular about the smog.

413. And they fear that the freedoms Hong Kong has enjoyed under both British and Chinese sovereignty, despite its unrepresentative government, are being slowly whittled away.

414. The Basic Law also stipulated that candidates will be nominated by “a broadly representative nominating committee”.

415. Pro-democrats fear, with good reason, that any such body will simply replicate the rigged election committee,

416. The terms of the debate as set by China seem to portend endless wrangling over how the nominating committee might be expanded and become a bit more representative.

417. They also argue that, regardless of the threat of violence, press freedom is already circumscribed.

418. Both Mr Tai and Joseph Cheng, convener of the pro-democracy alliance, believe that a candidate whom Chinese leaders excoriated as unacceptable would have little chance of winning an election.

419. The Kremlin was greatly assisted in its task by Ukraine’s parliament which, despite the obvious tension between the Russian-speaking east of the country and the Ukrainian-speaking west, irresponsibly passed a bill (later dropped) that repealed the status of Russian as an official language on a par with Ukrainian.

420. Thus, under the guise of fighting fascism, Russia achieved a bloodless takeover that could not help but remind the West of the Nazi annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland in 1938-39.

421. Still, not everything has gone quite to plan.

422. Ukrainian troops in Crimea were put under enormous psychological pressure to defect, their officers blackmailed with threats of retribution to their families if they did not surrender.

423. But if Russia was hoping to follow the scenario of the Georgian war in 2008, when it managed to provoke the Georgians to fire first, it flopped. Ukrainian forces remained calm, the vast majority refusing to budge.

424. A war with Ukraine could provide a boost if it led to the de facto annexation of Crimea, which in the Russian imagination is a storied, cherished territory, the place where Vladimir I adopted Christianity as the state religion of ancient Rus, and a part of Russia until 1954.

425. He appears to be driven by the idea that Russia is fundamentally different and morally superior.

426. In this world view, Ukraine’s revolutionary bid to escape to the West is a betrayal of Slavic brotherhood.

427. This is the Kremlin’s way of punishing a traitor, demonstrating strength to the West and to its own population and preventing the emergence of an alternative civilisation on its territory.

428. In Donetsk, the Ukrainian and Russian flags have alternated atop the local administrative offices.

429. Global stockmarkets fell sharply in response to Russia’s intervention in Ukraine, and then rallied as the threat of a full-scale invasion receded.

430. The Japanese government prepared to draw up plans to regulate Bitcoin and tax transactions involving it, following the collapse of the Tokyo-based Mt. Gox exchange and various hacking incidents.

431. The glory days in the 1980s are long gone.

432. To revive the scheme in order to punish Mr Putin would make it look as though it had been a plot against Russian interests all along.

433. Mrs Merkel’s approach may owe quite a lot to the importance of her country’s trade relationship with Russia—about a third of the gas and oil Germany imported last year came from Russia, while around $48 billion worth of German vehicles, machine tools and chemicals went in the other direction.

434. How far apart does this leave the Europeans and Americans? To some extent the differences are more rhetorical than real.

435. China, while saying it respects “the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine”, has avoided explicit criticism of Russia, just as it did when Georgia was invaded in 2008.

436. Like his predecessors, President Xi Jinping regards China’s relations with Russia as a useful counterweight to American power.

437. Secondly, Russia’s aggression has breathed new life into NATO, which has been searching for a post-Afghanistan role.

438. In seizing Crimea and cocking a snook at the West, Mr Putin believes he has got away with an act of daring that will cement his popularity at home as a brutally effective statesman.

439. A quarter of Ukraine’s exports head east and Vladimir Putin is not shy about messing with them;

440. And some fine print stipulates that if Ukraine’s debt-to-GDP ratio exceeds 60% it would automatically be in default.

441. Alexander Turchinov, the interim president, has already said he would accept all the IMF’s terms, including draconian spending cuts.

442. Another noteworthy aspect of this deal, argues Andrew Chung of Khosla Ventures, is that it suggests the best way for inventive energy startups to achieve scale: make a big push in China.

443. since slow growth and legacy assets make incumbent manufacturers reluctant to take a punt on unproven new kit.

444. Maybe so, but there are two caveats. The first is that Chinese firms will not pay much for intellectual property, and will copy it as soon they figure out how.

445. Consider the much-trumpeted recent arrival of Tesla Motors in China.

446. The American electric-car firm unarguably has cutting-edge clean technology, but its business model of importing all its vehicles does not enrich powerful Chinese firms or transfer intellectual property to local joint ventures.

447. Western firms have piled into emerging markets in the past 20 years. Now comes the reckoning

448. VODAFONE’S latest figures appear at first glance to vindicate the most powerful management idea of the past two decades: that firms should expand in fast-growing emerging economies.

449. Sales at the mobile-phone company fell in the rich world while those in the developing world rose smartly.

450. Corporate strategy is usually a contentious subject: there are fierce debates about how big, diversified and financially leveraged firms should be.

451. On longer-term measures things look cloudy, too.

452. These operations made a paltry 1% return on capital last year.

453. There has been a long bout of share-price underperformance as investors have lost their euphoria.

454. Divisional chiefs from Brazil or Asia will no longer get a blank cheque from their boards.

455. The companies suffering a slowdown in profits come in three buckets.

456. Most are still upbeat about the long term, says Andrew Wood of Sanford C. Bernstein, an analysis firm.

457. Companies in the second bucket face a sharper slowdown. They are in cyclical and capital-intensive industries.

458. After the 1997-98 Asian crisis many multinationals tilted back towards the rich world.

459. Many of these operations pre-date the boom.

460. A wave of privatisations in Latin America enticed a new generation of conquistadores from Iberia

461. But by the mid-2000s the process had accelerated dramatically as executives and boards latched on to the idea of the fast-growing BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China) and their ilk.

462. Other firms’ efforts to peacock their emerging-market credentials look, with hindsight, like indicators of excess.

463. Every corporate-investment cycle creates triumphs and disasters, and a lot of mediocrity.

464. This is a colossal sum, equivalent to 11% of the emerging markets’ combined GDP in 2013.

465. Many firms have prospered, such as the banks that braved Mexico in the 1990s. But there is plenty of rot, too.

466. Rising costs have made it unviable, and most of the $10 billion sunk has been written off.

467. Besides such eye-catching failures, there are pockets of serious underperformance tucked away in corners of sprawling multinationals.

468. Consumer-goods firms have made hay in emerging markets, but even the best have some iffy businesses.

469. Insurance is a case in point. India has more than 20 foreign firms slugging it out for tiny market shares while bleeding cash.

470. Turkey is also an insurers’ graveyard.

471. The car industry also has a long tail of flaky businesses.

472. But there are psychological barriers to this. One is that most Western businesses have low gearing—usually it is only when they have a debt problem that they make difficult decisions quickly.

473. And a whole generation of chief executives has learned that quitting emerging markets is a mug’s game.

474. Bosses who panicked and left after the 1997-98 crisis ended up looking like idiots.

475. Most industries have become more competitive, as emerging economies’ local firms get into their stride. The low-hanging fruit is gone.

476. Rather than being the panacea envisioned by many Western firms during the boom, emerging markets are governed by the oldest business rule of all—survival of the fittest.

477. IT IS getting harder to go anywhere without stepping on a piece of Lego-related hype.

478. The toy business is one of the world’s trickiest: perennially faddish (remember Beanie Babies?) and, at the moment, convulsed by technological innovation.

479. To cap it all, the company almost collapsed in 2003-04, having drifted for years, diversifying into too many areas, producing too many products and, in a fit of desperation, flirting with becoming a “lifestyle” company, with Lego-branded clothes and watches.

480. Under Mr Knudstorp Lego has struck a successful balance between innovation and tradition.

481. Lego produces a stream of kits with ready-made designs, such as forts and spaceships, to provide children with templates.

482. It has also got better at tapping its legion of fans—particularly adult fans of Lego, or AFOLs—for new ideas.

483. Lego is now at an inflection point, building its organisational capacity and embracing globalisation, to help it find new sources of growth.

484. The aim is twofold: to replicate in the rapidly growing east Lego’s success in the west; and to transform a local company that happened to go global into a global company that happens to have its head office in Billund.

485. Globalisation, as we point out at length in our business section this week, is fraught with difficulties.

486. The Chinese middle class is exploding, the toy business in the west is stagnant, and Lego needs a global workforce if it is to serve a global market.

487. Grown-ups everywhere welcome it as a respite from the endless diet of videos and digital games that their offspring would otherwise consume.

488. “The Lego Movie” may be providing the company with a welcome boost during the toy industry’s post-Christmas doldrums.

489. But Lego’s long-term success rests on the way adults feel reassured at buying a toy whose roots lie in an age before video games, mobile apps and toy-themed films.

490. Turkey saw its worst street violence for months, sparked by the death of a 15-year-old who had been in a coma after being hit by police with a tear-gas canister during last year’s protests.

491. Ed Miliband, the leader of Britain’s opposition Labour Party, all but ruled out holding a referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union should he win next year’s general election.

492. The leaders of 15 Caribbean states pushed ahead with plans to demand reparations from European countries for their part in the slave trade.

493. Normally a stalwart defender of the intelligence services, Mrs Feinstein claimed the CIA had crossed a constitutional line and referred it to the Justice Department.

494. Chaori Solar, which has become the first company in China to default on a corporate bond, said it would sell assets to repay debt and would try to avoid bankruptcy.

495. He became chief executive last May, seeing through a rescue plan for the Co-op’s bank that ended up with the group losing full control of the business.

496. To ease the passage of the deal, only the brand is slipping between hands; no workers or assets are being transferred.

497. On March 5th China’s president, Xi Jinping, vowed to act “without mercy” against corruption in an effort to placate public anger.

498. As in America at the turn of the 20th century, a new middle class is flexing its muscles, this time on a global scale.

499. People want politicians who don’t line their pockets, and tycoons who compete without favours.

500. In America, this system reached its apogee in the late 19th century, and a long and partially successful struggle against robber barons ensued.

501. Some privatisations have let tycoons milk monopolies or get assets cheaply.

502. As our briefing on India explains (see article), resources are misallocated: crummy roads are often the work of crony firms. Competition is repressed: Mexicans pay too much for their phones.

503. And if linked to the financing of politics, rent-heavy capitalism sets a tone at the top that can let petty graft flourish.

504. When ministers are on the take, why shouldn’t underpaid junior officials be?

505. Rich countries score comparatively well, but that is no reason for complacency.

506. Countries with governments that are reforming and trying to tackle vested interests, such as Mexico, have been better insulated from the jitters in the financial markets.

507. Governments need to be more assiduous in regulating monopolies, in promoting competition, in ensuring that public tenders and asset sales are transparent and in prosecuting bribe-takers.

508. The boom that created a new class of tycoon has also created its nemesis, a new, educated, urban, taxpaying middle class that is pushing for change.

509. Mr Singh is no more a Jason Bourne than the next entomologist—he has a doctorate on metamorphosis in insects—and the infiltration he mounted with a few colleagues led to no gunplay.

510. The brash new tycoons who came of age during the boom years of 2003-10 are under a cloud, too.

511. “too many people have got too rich based on their proximity to the government.”

512. That said, critics note that his personal rapport with tycoons, credited for some of the industrial success of his home state of Gujarat, may not make him the most thoroughgoing of purgatives.

513. Graft does not function, as some claim that it does elsewhere, as an unseemly but expedient market solution to inert bureaucracy, greasing the seized-up wheels of industry.

514. Mines and other assets lie idle as courts dither over how crooked their owners are.

515. India’s cranky legal system, its overlapping investigative agencies and its raucous media have meant that responses to the problem may have done as much to paralyse business in general as to punish wrongdoers.

516. Few senior people go to jail; but officials fear being accused of malfeasance, so many think the safest course of action is to make no decisions at all.

517. The task fell to him because many mines come under the remit of the forestry agency, and work on a previous pink-granite scandal had earned him a reputation in the area.

518. The Reddy family, which had close connections to the state’s BJP-led government, appeared to rule the roost.

519. quantifying graft in India is a frustrating affair, and distracting conspiracy theories and innuendo abound.

520. To try to get to grips with the problem The Economist has interviewed politicians, industrialists, bureaucrats, financiers and investigators. Their

521. Jobs with opportunities for extortion are sought after and a slice of the profits funnelled up the ranks.

522. In the old days graft was almost quaint.

523. Property became a multi-billion-dollar business governed by officials paid a pittance.

524. The Economist has looked at three ways of quantifying the profits from rent-seeking.

525. The first is to tally the money made from scams, based on estimates from officials and investigators.

526. An average of the approaches suggests the gains from rent-seeking over the past decade peaked at about $80 billion.

527. But if one were to assume politicians and officials got an average cut of 5-15%—a rate consistent with the trail investigators have found in the iron-ore and telecoms scams,

528. Property deals are also used to launder cash—even legitimate deals often have a cash component.

529. The excess profit booked by that second party, also controlled by the politician, is pocketed outside India—tax-free and with little risk of investigation if it is a shell company domiciled in a free-trade zone such as Dubai.

530. How much Indian money is stashed abroad?

531. The banker adds that India’s big political clans may have been dealt with by a separate wing of the bank.

532. A 2008 telecoms scandal saw a minister allocating spectrum on iffy grounds.

533. To hold a rally at which Sonia Gandhi, the head of Congress, appears costs up to $330,000.

534. Parties have arms-length treasurers who act as their bankers.

535. Illegal party funding is at the heart of corruption. But politicians are in denial, says the Congress bigwig. “Nobody wants to admit that they have taken money. It is a completely hypocritical system.”

536. Regulators say that if they act against the interests of industrialists they can get an earful from politicians.

537. Then there are chunks of the economy that are already pretty free of graft, such as consumer goods and the technology business;

538. Perhaps market forces and a backlash from voters will turn the tide. But even if they don’t, citizens like Mr Singh, the insect-expert turned mafia-buster, will fight on. He doesn’t carry a phone lest it betrays his location;

539. But in an office decorated with posters of plants the ferocity he brought to his fight can still boil over.

540. At the latest count 42 ships and 39 aircraft from a dozen countries have taken part in one of the most intensive searches ever undertaken, scouring nearly 27,000 square nautical miles (93,000 square kilometres) of the South China Sea and even the Andaman Sea.

541. The failure to find any wreckage or the aeroplane’s flight-recorder means there are no clues, as yet, as to what happened.

542. In the absence of facts, speculation rules.

543. But in a hijack, pilots should have time to send out a distress signal.

544. Yet Uighur militants have never shown the organisation or ambition for airborne terrorism. And no credible outfit has claimed responsibility.

545. For the relatives and friends of the missing passengers and 12 crew, it has been harrowing.

546. In Beijing families have been holed up at a hotel near the airport.

547. There relatives have expressed growing frustration, despite Chinese officials taking pains from the start to show concern for their nationals.

548. Chinese authorities have publicly hectored their Malaysian counterparts to search harder.

549. The deal would create a Goliath far more fearsome than the latest ride at the Universal Studios theme park (also Comcast-owned).

550. Comcast has said it would forfeit 3m subscribers, but even with that concession the combination of the two firms would have around 30m—more than 30% of all TV subscribers and around 33% of broadband customers. In the cable market alone (ie, not counting suppliers of satellite services such as DirecTV), Comcast has as much as 55% of all TV and broadband subscribers.

551. For consumers the deal would mean the union of two companies that are already reviled for their poor customer service and high prices. Greater size will fix neither problem.

552. Between 1995 and 2012 the average price of a cable subscription increased at a compound annual rate of more than 6%.

553. The basic result of this sham plebiscite is certain: a rigged decision to secede from Ukraine (see article).

554. The answer has two distinct parts. The West must be vigorous in its denunciations of what is, in effect, a seizure of sovereign Ukrainian territory—much more so than it has been so far.

555. He might try formally to subsume Crimea into Russia; his own parliament is paving the way for that illegal land-grab.

556. He might choose to wait, leaving Crimea to languish as a twilight non-state.

557. that is a start, but it must go much further, and fast, with financial support to stave off bankruptcy and then, in tandem with the IMF, to rebuild the state.

558. With luck and time, the people of Crimea will look north at a prosperous democracy and push to rejoin it.

559. He gleefully stoops to thuggery—insulting foreign leaders, harassing diplomats, assassinating critics, and, now, invading his neighbour and pretending he hasn’t—knowing full well that Western leaders cannot copy him.

560. Helping Ukrainians to achieve that goal is the surest way to resist—and ultimately reverse—Mr Putin’s crimes.

561. The United States has taken Abraham Lincoln’s admonition to heart: its constitution has been amended several times since coming into effect in 1789, but never replaced.

562. South of the border, however, constitutions are perishable items.

563. The Dominican Republic heads the list, with 32, from its first in 1844 to its latest version in 1994.

564. (Scholars differ over whether the 2010 document counts as a rewrite or a thorough edit.)

565. The chopping and changing has slowed in recent decades; Latin America’s propensity to fiddle is now not so different from that of other developing countries.

566. Some need to have bad ideas excised: Mexico was right to change its constitution last year, to end a ban on foreign investment in its oil-and-gas industry.

567. Small amendments can obviate the need for wholesale changes.

568. But habitual fiddling is still corrosive.

569. Constitutions represent the institutional continuity of the state. The players may change and regulations may get tweaked, but the promise of a constitution is that the rules of the game are predictable.

570. The more contingent those rules appear, the less confidence citizens have in their ability to plan and invest for the long term.

571. Constitutions need not be as minimalist as that of the United States, but Latin America’s framers tend to prescribe the nature of their states in detail, sometimes to a point of absurdity.

572. The bossier the document, the greater the chance of having to make constitution-sapping amendments in future.

573. Politicians tempted to fiddle with their founding documents should exercise more self-restraint, and generally leave them alone.

574. Chile’s constitution needs changing, but not binning.

575. Voters asked to approve constitutional change should regard the prospect with deep scepticism.

576. The more often rules are altered, the less seriously people take them; and without proper rules, democracy becomes a dangerous game.

577. China’s fast-growing defence budget worries its neighbours, but not every trend is in its favour

578. What is more, China may be experiencing higher inflation in defence than in the economy as a whole.

579. However, the more China commits itself to sophisticated weapons systems, the more it dissipates the cost advantages of buying (and sometimes stealing) mature foreign technologies.

580. And while China is testing home-grown stealth fighters, replicating the communication, sensor and information systems that make America’s F-35s so potent is another matter.

581. it chafes at unresolved claims and resents what it sees as encirclement by an American-led alliance. Hubris coupled with insecurity, says Mr Johnson, is a scary mix.

582. Mr Lin’s treatment may be abhorrent but it is far from uncommon in China’s big cities.

583. The country declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder in 2001.

584. Almost all young people come under pressure to provide an heir, a basic tenet, influenced to a certain extent by Confucianism, that leads some young people to feel their homosexuality must be unfilial.

585. Elsewhere in the world, therapies that purport to turn gay, lesbian or bisexual people into heterosexuals have been discredited.

586. Seeing no alternative, he came out to his parents. It has taken his mother months to come to terms with his sexuality.

587. These days the phrase is trotted out whenever a spokesman is asked about China’s stance on Ukraine.

588. Swift to pounce on any alleged hypocrisy in Western foreign policy, China now seems to be upholding double standards of its own.

589. It opposes the sanctions imposed by America and threatened by Europe. And it harps on about the “complexity” of the situation.

590. But America has tried in vain to persuade China to be explicit in condemning Russia.

591. Yet it is not as if this approach isolates China. Other Asian countries are also mealy-mouthed over Ukraine.

592. Not only does India have long-standing defence and other ties with Russia, its relations with America are rather tetchy at present.

593. Suppose Tibetans or Uighurs in China were to be offered a vote on their international status? Or, slightly less fancifully, the people of Taiwan? (India must have similar qualms, seeing an awkward parallel with the parts of Kashmir claimed by Pakistan that it controls.)

594. all the while insisting China’s foreign-policy “principles” remain sacrosanct.

595. If China really wants the respect due to a global power, it has to assume global responsibilities. It cannot opt out of the role just when things gets awkward.

596. China’s new consumer law has local and foreign firms worried

597. Nowhere is that day marked with more gusto than in China, where it is known as san yao wu (three one five).

598. Every year on that date, the national broadcaster airs a much-watched programme lauding consumer rights. It is also used as an excuse to bash successful foreign firms—Apple was last year’s main target—for small or imagined transgressions.

599. The television gala is still due to be broadcast this weekend, and corporate evildoers—internet firms are rumoured to be in the crosshairs this time—will probably be shamed again.

600. At face value, it appears to give a big boost to consumer protection.

601. Indeed it may leave consumers ill-protected even as it saddles firms with extra costs and complexity.

602. Opening the door to class-action lawsuits may also prove a damp squib. In America aggrieved consumers can club together and go to court themselves.

603. China is catching up with the European Union’s exacting standards of consumer rights in much the same way as it has begun imposing EU-style curbs on cars’ emissions.

604. Besides benefiting the public, the pollution measures give an edge to firms with the most advanced technology, which in this case happen to be foreign multinationals.

605. Mr Son has his eye on T-Mobile USA, which ranks fourth: he wants to create a bigger rival to the two dominant carriers, AT&T and Verizon.

606. Regulators have received the idea coolly. So has T-Mobile USA.

607. Hope of peace comes from France, where Free, a cut-price entrant, has been harrying the established operators for two years.

608. The Hong Kong firm has made proposals, thought to include a release of spectrum, to assuage the commission’s concerns.

609. So it came as a shock last month when a bill sprinted through the lower house of Congress, on the first day of a new session, that sets out to change the terms of their 30-year concessions after only 17 years.

610. Senators hint that they will tone down the bill—not least because drastically changing the terms of a concession partway through would send a bad signal to foreign investors just as Mexico is inviting them to invest in its oil industry.

611. Many Mittelstand companies are not big enough to ride out a prolonged conflict.

612. A law being considered in Russia’s parliament to allow the expropriation of foreign firms’ assets may be a bluff, but it is a scary one for those with big, immovable investments there.

613. Some law schools have long given aid to a few alumni who forsake high-paying corporate firms to pursue public-interest law.

614. Their cash-strapped temporary employers, meanwhile, get talented staff they can put to socially useful ends.

615. But so long as graduates put on these schemes are lumped in with those who found genuine paid work at law firms, the schools will in effect be buying themselves precious U.S. News ranking spots for a few million dollars a year.

616. Moreover, their success in getting graduates into genuine jobs is spotty: the NALP survey found that only 24% of participants from the class of 2012 had been hired by their employers or in related fields by the following February.

617. Much as the internet is a foundation for digital services, the technology behind Bitcoin could support a revolution in the way people own and pay for things.

618. Every transaction became part of an oral history of ownership, which allowed islanders to know the proprietor of each stone and made it difficult to spend the same stone twice.

619. All that may sound like science fiction, but a growing number of startups are working on bringing such applications to market.

620. But turning Bitcoin into a platform comes with risks.

621. Yet if history is any guide, the blockchain will be fine. Two decades ago, when millions went online after the invention of the web browser, pundits predicted the internet’s collapse.

622. And even if Bitcoin were to break down, another similar system would most likely take its place.

623. Chronic deflation may keep Bitcoin from displacing its fiat rivals

624. The Bitcoin economy keeps growing, despite the periodic disappearance of large quantities of currency in hacker heists.

625. It must be a “medium of exchange”, which can reliably be swapped for goods and services. It should be a stable store of value, enabling users to tuck some away and come back later to find its purchasing power more or less intact. And

626. The combination of functionality and user interest means that people are finding it easier to swap coins for both goods and services and for other currencies.

627. But the currency’s worth is prone to wild gyrations. Massive Bitcoin heists, like the recent plunder of roughly 6% of outstanding Bitcoins from the Mt Gox exchange, reduce confidence in the currency.

628. Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss, twin brothers known mainly for their early quasi-interest in Facebook, recently announced plans to launch a Bitcoin tracking fund, to make it easier for amateur investors to take a punt on the technology.

629. That may be for the best, given another Bitcoin quirk.

630. If employed workers hoard cash in expectation of further price reductions, the downturn gathers momentum.

631. In the days following, the Malaysian government provided information only in dribs and drabs, much of it confusing, even contradictory.

632. But a search along its flight path failed to turn up any sign of wreckage.

633. This makes the notion of an emergency more likely, perhaps a fire that incapacitated crew and passengers, leaving the plane to fly on ungoverned.

634. They will eventually replace radar when their safety and reliability are beyond dispute, a long process in the plodding world of aviation regulation. And the next generation of communications technology, due in around a decade, will relay all flight information at once, acting like a real-time version of the black box that all planes now carry.

635. The underlying issue is the gulf between the theoretical rights for minorities enshrined in China’s constitution, and the administrative practice on the ground.

636. The continent lost out by beginning its fertility decline when investments in family planning and population policies were falling drastically, but that disinterest is now in abeyance.

637. European countries are just as open and just as technologically advanced (if not more so) than America, yet the rise in inequality in America has been much more pronounced.

638. What is unusual about China’s bubble is not its persistence but its prevarication.

639. Falling prices would be a natural outcome of China’s frenetic pace of homebuilding.

640. A rapid expansion of the housing stock means fewer people living in the boondocks or in urban discomfort.

641. Instead of accommodating China’s overcrowded urban masses, too many houses stand empty, serving as stores of value for people dissatisfied with bank deposits and distrustful of the stockmarket.

642. Where housing is oversupplied, prices will have to fall, inflicting losses on homeowners. But where housing needs remain unmet, scope remains for further construction to fill the gap.

643. Realignment of the industry will be painful for local developers that cannot diversify across regions.

644. Cut off from banks, they have borrowed at punishing rates from less regulated trust companies instead.

645. In China’s patchwork housing market, the Cassandras are never right everywhere but they are often right somewhere.

646. Big ones, such as Shanghai, are fond of grandiose exhibitions showing off their dreams (see picture).

647. Chinese leaders wanted bigger cities, but worried about the cost of giving migrants full access to urban welfare and public services.

648. (in cities that have experimented with this, points are awarded on the basis of educational qualifications, property ownership and other factors that rule out most migrants).

649. The new plan gives few details of how beefing up these services will be paid for, an omission that suggests much bickering remains to be done.

650. that is not a bad signal to send given how local governments have been using high urbanisation targets as a pretext to continue grabbing land from farmers and engaging in an orgy of often wasteful construction.

651. The plan also gives a nod to the aspirations of China’s new middle-class, some of whom are pressing for a greater say in how their cities are run.

652. In an ornate hall reminiscent of an imperial past, Vladimir Putin decreed that “Crimea has always been part of Russia” and signed a treaty with the peninsula’s new premier to annex it.

653. China’s government revealed a blueprint for urbanisation that envisions giving permanent urban residency to 100m rural migrants and plans for 60% of China’s population to live in cities by 2020.

654. A North Korean-flagged tanker taking oil from eastern Libya on behalf of a faction opposed to the government in Tripoli was commandeered by a unit of American Navy Seals at the request of the authorities in Tripoli and Cyprus, into whose waters the vessel had sailed.

655. Zhejiang Xingrun would not be the first property firm to collapse in China, but its woes are seen as a possible harbinger of problems storing up in the economy associated with informal lending practices, or “shadow banking”.

656. The company has been rocked by news that America’s Justice Department has begun a preliminary investigation into how it handled a separate recall for faulty ignition switches, which may have caused a dozen deaths.

657. Mike Lynch upped the ante in his fight with Hewlett-Packard over its claims that his management team cooked the books at Autonomy, a software firm, before HP bought it in 2011.

658. It will be the biggest tech stockmarket flotation since Facebook’s in 2012, and is another trophy for New York’s booming IPO market.

659. Since then Barack Obama has tried to fashion a more collaborative approach, built on a belief that America can make common cause with other countries to confront shared problems and isolate wrongdoers.

660. He dresses up his takeover of Crimea in the garb of international law, arguing for instance that the ousting of the government in Kiev means he is no longer bound by a treaty guaranteeing Ukraine’s borders that Russia signed in 1994, when Ukraine gave up nuclear weapons.

661. That combination of protection and subterfuge is a formula for intervention in any country with a minority, not just a Russian one.

662. Sadly, too few people understand this. Plenty of countries resent American primacy and Western moralising.

663. Even China should pause. Tactically, Crimea ties it in knots. The precedent of secession is anathema, because of Tibet; the principle of unification is sacrosanct, because of Taiwan.

664. For decades, it has sought to rise peacefully within the system, avoiding the competition that an upstart Germany launched against Britain in the 19th century and which ended in war.

665. But peace is elusive in Mr Putin’s world, because anything can become a pretext for action, and any perceived aggression demands a riposte.

666. Mr Putin’s kleptocratic friends would yelp if Britain made London unwelcome to Russian money linked to the regime (see article).

667. But instead of acquiescing in his illegal annexation of Crimea, they should reflect on what kind of a world order they want to live under.

668. IN THE beginning was the word and the word was “inflation”. That is no blasphemy. It is, rather, a celebration of human curiosity, ingenuity and bloody-minded persistence in the quest to try to find out how the universe actually works.

669. And by linking gravitational waves with inflation it provides a chink through which physicists can peer to try to solve one of their field’s biggest mysteries: why general relativity, which has passed every test applied to it, cannot be reconciled with quantum theory, which has also passed every test applied to it.

670. It also gives physicists investigating the link something real to play with in their search for how that link actually works.

671. They have been overwritten time and again by other signals, and these have had to be scraped away to make the gravitational waves visible.

672. And in showing that the deepest truths of the material universe are to be found by gazing out into the deepest, earliest recesses of space, it feeds not just the intellect, but the spirit.

673. The third factor is imagination. In the past few years, clever companies have seen ways to make robots work as grips and gaffers on film sets

674. They will let farmers tend their crops in new ways, give citizens, journalists and broadcasters new perspectives on events big and small (see article), monitor traffic and fires, look for infrastructure in need of repair and much more besides.

675. But robots will not just animate the inanimate environment. They will inhabit it alongside their masters, fulfilling all sorts of needs.

676. Is it necessary that wars always be fought by people who can feel pity and offer clemency, and yet who can also be cruel beyond all tactical requirements?

677. robots can serve not just as workers and partners, but as purveyors of new perspectives—not least when the people looking at them see the robots looking back, as they one day will, with something approaching understanding.

678. Distraught families of the missing—the majority of whom were Chinese—could not understand the certainty of the analysis when no physical trace of the plane has been found.

679. But East Asia’s understanding of the word contrasts with their traditional ideal of harmony in society, as practised throughout Japan’s keiretsu, South Korea’s chaebol and China’s state-owned enterprises and guanxi.

680. As is often the case among our increasingly interdependent economies,

681. Yet the current government and senior military officers remain myopically focused on so-called “stabilisation” missions in regions that are marginal to Britain’s security.

682. Managers, egged on by investment bankers, overestimate the benefits and value of synergy and cost savings, and underestimate the problems and costs of meshing two different cultures.

683. Wry and poised, with an American mother and Japanese father, she has the languages and cosmopolitan attitude that Japanese companies particularly value nowadays.

684. In April she will join McKinsey, a consultancy that should give her immediate membership of a globe-trotting elite.

685. Above all, she worries that having a family will be nigh on impossible to combine with a demanding career.

686. The consequent dearth of young people means that Japan’s working-age population is expected to fall by 40% by 2050, exerting a powerful drag on the economy.

687. But this M-shaped curve is much more pronounced in Japan than in most other rich countries (see chart 1).

688. But relative to other countries the numbers are still dismal.

689. Male dominance extends beyond the corporate world: in politics, too, women are grossly under-represented.

690. When the choice is between leisurely dependency in the home—known as sanshoku hirune tsuki (“three meals and a nap”)—and the sorry life of a salaryman there is something to be said for putting your feet up.

691. More Japanese women are opting out of marriages to overworked and largely absent salarymen, and so thus increasingly need to fend for themselves.

692. Now, as the Japanese engineers who built it celebrate below, it squats impassively on its backwards-facing haunches.

693. The comparison is given extra bite by Google’s acquisition,

694. Google is being tight-lipped about its plans for all these robots; speculation on what lies ahead

695. But the mere fact that a company with an impressive track record in innovation has rounded up a lot of robot engineering talent and intellectual property is a striking vote of confidence in the field’s prospects.

696. For the most part they are not replacements for humans; they are better seen as extensions.

697. Humans can come together to do things they cannot do alone; in future they will increasingly come together with robots to do things they cannot otherwise do so easily, or in some cases at all.

698. To fit into the social world, robots will need to take both casual and formal instructions and to meet tacit expectations: daunting tasks for doornails.

699. Especially when helped along by good design, people can be quite empathetic towards technology.

700. It is about ten times the size of the company’s current headquarters, a five-minute drive away.

701. As a result, academic robotics research has generally been concentrated at universities that already have a flourishing robotics programme with capabilities across the board, such as Carnegie Mellon, MIT and the University of Tokyo.

702. By drawing on the computing power of cloud-based systems, its robots, and others, should be able to do much more than they are currently capable of.

703. The self-driving car demonstrates the idea; it can mesh information on its whereabouts from its sensors

704. Mr Pratt traces the genesis of the DRC to the day after a tsunami hit Fukushima, when it became clear that the robots needed for such emergencies, widely believed to exist already,

705. Mr Pratt traces the genesis of the DRC to the day after a tsunami hit Fukushima, when it became clear that the robots needed for such emergencies, widely believed to exist already, were nowhere to be found.

706. AMERICA’S DECADE OF misbegotten war in the early 21st century will be remembered for many things, but when it comes to technology, the rise of the drone will stand out.

707. His company’s most serious commitment to robotics to date—its acquisition in early 2012 of Kiva, a company whose robots move shelves around in warehouses—got far less attention.

708. It is quite easy to imagine a future in which “robots” remain an esoteric subject of public fascination even as more and more services are automated with techniques developed in robotics laboratories.

709. Away from the highly regimented world of the production line, they are worth investing in only if they are vital to the tasks that the robot has, as it were, at hand: if it needs to change something in its environment in the way a human would.

710. His company got well down the road towards developing robots for commercial floor-cleaning before realising it did not have the right model for the business.

711. But although there are technical and business challenges still to be overcome, the idea that within a decade or so cars will be increasingly able to drive themselves is now widely accepted as plausible, even if the details are hazy.

712. And it is a safe bet that the more capable, acceptable and thus widespread self-driving cars become, the less they will be seen as robots and the more as just cars.

713. But the message could also be read another way: robot overlords forcing human helots into back-breaking labour.

714. That all this cleverness could be put into a machine that sells for just $25,000 has amazed many of Mr Brooks’s former colleagues in academia.

715. Universal Robots, which has less nifty technology than Rethink but perhaps a more down-to-earth approach to the market,

716. problems restricted to the world of data are much more tractable than those that require manipulating things in the real world.

717. Some will long remain spry; most will eventually need care.

718.  Needing help with something can engender affection.

719. The future, like “technology” and “robots”, is by its nature an ill-defined residue of hope or fear left behind when the seamlessly working, unconsciously accepted and apparently inevitable parts of the world are taken out of the picture. Sometimes,

720. TAIWAN’S Legislative Yuan, the island’s parliament, is used to rumbustious scenes.

721. The students have vacillated over that.

722. Like the students, the main opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), accuses Mr Ma of trying to railroad the trade bill through parliament (he has said he wants it passed by June).

723. So why is Facebook paying so much for it? And why is it betting on a much-hyped technology that has so far failed to live up to its promise?

724. But experiments in marrying entertainment with headgear, like 3D televisions that require viewers to wear special glasses, have been disappointing.

725. As the country’s banking association reassured customers that the bank was solvent, police detained a man suspected of starting the rumour that it was broke.

726. The contest for SFR is shaping up as a classic takeover battle in France, pitting the blue-chip Bouygues against the upstart Altice, backed by Patrick Drahi, a French-Israeli entrepreneur.

727. The heft of China’s GDP combined with the modesty of its GDP per person is one of the curiosities of China’s economy.

728. Stormbirds squawk incessantly about a “Lehman moment”.

729. The third, interminable act consisted of a prolonged shortfall in spending, as chastened banks and bloodied borrowers licked their wounds.

730. China suffers from neither inflation nor a big trade deficit. It is not living beyond its means.

731. For every sunset industry that must contract (steel, solar energy, baroque flats), a sunrise industry should expand (health care, logistics, spartan flats).

732. But this is not a challenge unique to China, nor is it unique to this period in its history.

733. The composition of China’s output, like every other economy’s, is always changing.

734. China’s excesses should also be kept in perspective.

735. Indeed, of all the goods and services ever produced by the People’s Republic of China, over 30% were churned out in the four years since your correspondent arrived in 2010.

736. Now Shanghai is conjuring a third tower to overshadow the other two.

737. This feeling of being overawed, under-equipped but well-rewarded is familiar to anyone lucky enough to write about China’s vertiginous economy.

738. Giant Exxon is not doing this because it has gone mushy or caved in to green activists. Rather, it is heading off a shareholder resolution by Arjuna Capital,

739. Until the late 2000s, most firms saw the environment as either irrelevant or a bit of a nuisance.

740. And the European Union plans to make firms with more than 500 employees publish environmental and social data in their management accounts—though this proposal, like many emanating from Brussels, may sit gathering dust for years.

741. Stockmarkets are reluctant to demand much from quoted companies, lest they list somewhere more lenient.

742. Yet releasing good environmental information would be hugely beneficial.

743. TED has revolutionised the ideas industry, in part by putting old wine in new bottles

744. Today TED (which for the uninitiated stands for Technology, Education, Design) is the Goliath of the ideas industry.

745. The heart of the enterprise is TED’s twice-yearly conference at which big ideas are presented in short, punchy talks.

746. And it has become a central part of the world’s star-making machinery: an invitation to speak at TED can turn an obscure academic into a superstar guru and a struggling journalist into a celebrated writer.

747. There is certainly some truth in these criticisms: any organisation that invites Sting to its 30th birthday party is in danger of jumping the shark.

748. But it has also discovered hundreds of lights hidden under bushels: the most viewed TED video, with 25m downloads, features Ken Robinson, a once-obscure British educationalist.

749. TED meetings have a revivalist feel, from the preacher’s promises of salvation to the happy-clappy congregation.

750. The ultimate secret of TED’s success is not its commitment to disruptive innovation but its ability to repackage old-time religion for the digital age.

751. People buying their first smartphones today, perhaps to replace a basic handset, care less about the brand and more about price than the richer, keener types of a few years ago.

752. They choose cameras, screens and so forth to wrap around the innards, and have phones churned out in Chinese factories.

753. Apple may be insulated by its operating system and apparently impregnable brand, although it has lately been selling cheaper (if scarcely cheap) iPhones.

754. Samsung is doubtless wise to this. Hence its attempt to push beyond the smartphone, into smart watches and wristbands, connected domestic appliances and the business market.

755. Mobile-phone brands have been brittle before: ask Ericsson, HTC, Motorola and Nokia. Samsung has spent bucketloads building its name. It will not want to be usurped by the Wikos of the world.

756. The German airline had to cancel 3,800 flights in the latest, and potentially most damaging, strike to hit it over the past few years.

757. But if they don’t stop dithering and get on with it, demography will catch up with them.

758. But amid complaints from orphanages that they cannot cope with the high volume of babies, the policy is getting a second look.

759. At the Tianjin facility, a surly watchman says visitors are not allowed in and that the facility will close soon.

760. The tale of how Apple’s visionary boss saved it from oblivion and then turned it into an innovation powerhouse that wowed the world with its iPods, iPhones and iPads is one of the greatest business stories of all time.

761. There is no doubt that Apple has been deeply embarrassed by revelations about working conditions at some of its suppliers. But its ability to source parts quickly and cheaply remains the envy of many competitors, who are keen to copy its methods.

762. The wrangling over patents is more telling. By the end of April 2012 Apple and Samsung had filed more than 50 lawsuits against one another in 16 courts in ten countries.

763. The burden of responsibility for producing revolutionary new products lies squarely with Mr Cook and his senior team, notably Sir Jonathan Ive, Apple’s design guru.

764. Unsurprisingly, Mr Cook has rubbished “Haunted Empire”, claiming that it “fails to capture Apple, Steve, or anyone else in the company”.

765. THE rulers of China have always seen its history as binary. Long divided, the empire will unite, goes a famous saying; long united, it will divide.

766. On the one hand, cadres have always railed against “peaceful evolution”—a phrase that strikes most mortals as a desirable aim but in party-speak means Trojan horses stuffed full of Western liberal ideas first subverting and then overthrowing the regime.

767. Meanwhile, the party should also make its disbursal of funds to NGOs more transparent.

768. Anadarko Petroleum is to pay $5.2 billion, the bulk of which will go to cleaning up sites contaminated by an energy company it bought in 2006.

769. America’s mortgage giants, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, used a $120 billion funding subsidy to line shareholders’ pockets for decades.

770. Modern finance is a more slanted system in which savings are drawn towards subsidies and tax distortions. Debt-fuelled housing goes wild while investment in machines and patents runs dry. All this dulls growth.

771. Bank bosses might start advertising their capital ratios, as happened before deposit insurance was introduced.

772. AGAINST a powerful alliance of factory bosses and Communist Party chiefs, Zeng Feiyang cuts a frail figure.

773. For his troubles, Mr Zeng has been evicted from various premises, had his water and electricity cut off, and been constantly harassed by local officials and their thugs.

774. Of those genuine groups that do seek to improve the common lot, nearly all carry out politically uncontentious activities.

775. These unregistered NGOs are growing in number and influence.

776. Until 2012, any NGO that wanted to register—and so be legal—had to have a sponsoring official organisation, typically a government agency that worked in the area of the NGO’s interest.

777. It was a rigid regime, but it actually represented a liberalisation compared with what went before.

778. In other words, what elsewhere came to be known as civil society was shut down completely in China, at least until after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976.

779. Still, local NGOs with limited, mostly charitable concerns were allowed to develop in some areas, provided they submitted to control by the state through the process of registration.

780. The growth of NGOs since has not always been a smooth one. In 2005, spooked by “colour” revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, Chinese leaders clamped down on NGOs, especially in their more activist manifestations.

781. Thousands of volunteers converged on Sichuan to lend a hand to the rescue.

782. It is telling, however, that these changes come at a time of increased political repression, including against those who simply call upon an overweening party to abide by China’s own (Communist-written) constitution.

783. The emerging civil society is not a clear-cut story of stooges and heroes.

784. Limitations and frustrations are legion. Changes to the registration procedure will be slow to affect the day-to-day life of ordinary Chinese.

785. Duer and his accomplices knew that investors needed federal bonds to pay for their BUS shares, so they tried to corner the market.

786. Awash with credit, the residents of Philadelphia and New York were gripped by speculative fever.

787. Some blamed investors’ sloppiness: they had invested in unknown countries’ debt, or in mining outfits set up to explore countries that contained no ores.

788. But as finance flowered the discount houses morphed, taking in investors’ cash with the promise that it could be withdrawn at will, and hunting for firms to lend to.

789. large depositor withdrawals. Perennially facing the squeeze, London’s new financiers trimmed away their capital buffers.

790. There was “wild panic” with troops needed to calm the crowds.

791. That step made the 1857 crisis an all-too-rare example of the state attempting to dial back its support.

792. we argued that decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, rather than applying blanket bans.

793. For a while it looked as though the crisis could be nipped in the bud.

794. In its mission to act as a source of funds in all emergencies, the Federal Reserve had failed.

795. China’s urbanites whizz from city to city at 300kph (186mph) on a bullet-train network that did not exist six years ago yet now is longer than all of Europe’s.

796. Yet the model of pell-mell urbanisation is breaking down. Even the government recognises this.

797. It praises China for avoiding ills common in the developing world such as urban poverty, squalor and unemployment.

798. a migrant underclass which toils in factories and menial jobs but is denied public services because its hukou (household registration) is still in the countryside.

799. If the next stage of China’s phenomenal urban transformation is to bring prosperity and stability rather than conflict and chaos, the party needs to live up to the phrase. Arab democracy The lesson of Algeria Even if the Arab spring has sorely disappointed, dictators, even benevolent ones, are not the answer Apr 19th 2014 | From the print edition

800. If the next stage of China’s phenomenal urban transformation is to bring prosperity and stability rather than conflict and chaos, the party needs to live up to the phrase.

801. ZHU GUANG, a 25-year-old product tester, projects casual cool in his red Adidas jacket and canvas shoes. He sports the shadowy wisps of a moustache and goatee, as if he has the ambition to grow a beard but not the ability.

802. Like millions of others, he mockingly calls himself, in evocative modern street slang, a diaosi, the term for a loser that literally translates as “male pubic hair”.

803. Calling himself by this derisive nickname is a way of crying out, “like Gandhi”, says Mr Zhu, only partly in jest. “It is a quiet form of protest.”

804. Calling yourself a diaosi has also become a proud statement of solidarity with the masses against the perceived corruption of the wealthy.

805. He then receives a phone call from work, apologetically takes his leave to go to the office and finally pops up again as a waiter when his date asks for the bill.

806. Though their salaries are above average even in Shanghai—which had China’s third-highest annual urban disposable income per person in 2012 at 40,000 yuan—the cost of appearing successful is stratospheric.

807. Casting around for a solution, last summer he announced on his microblog that he was becoming an independent journalist.

808. On February 9th CCTV released its report, which included undercover footage of alleged prostitutes in slinky dresses lined up in a brothel for selection.

809. Even though state-run media are not as bland as they once were, principled journalists still struggle to find a home for their work.

810. Since a crackdown on microblogs last year, many users have gravitated to WeChat, a smartphone-messaging application.

811. Relying on donations from a public used to consuming free media is not sustainable, he thinks. And muckraking in China can be risky.

812. State Internet Information Office, calls control of the media, like the party’s handle on the military, an unassailable principle for upholding leadership.

813. Benno Leeser, the boss of Gassan Diamonds, a Dutch jewellery chain with 14 outlets in the airport, travels to China every year to schmooze with the travel agents who bring him his best customers.

814. New destinations are trying to work out how to get themselves on the itinerary.

815. Thailand saw the number of Chinese visitors triple after a blockbuster film, “Lost in Thailand”, inspired a generation to come and sample Thai beer.

816. Now he has infiltrated eastern Ukraine, but the world is hesitating—because infiltration is not quite invasion.

817. The West could take comfort that the Russians had not actually invaded.

818. And he has abrogated a commitment to respect Ukraine’s borders, which Russia signed in 1994 when Ukraine gave up nuclear weapons.

819. He now has the tools to intervene on his borders and beyond so as to upend the post-Soviet order.

820. But the West has other cards to play.

821. Such financial sanctions, like those that led Iran to negotiate over its nuclear programme, would deprive Russia of revenues from oil and gas exports, priced in dollars, and force it to draw on reserves to pay for most of its imports.

822. But even if the 13th-century Venetian merchant did not lay eyes on the coastal city of Hangzhou himself, he certainly reflected the awe it inspired in other foreign traders when he described it as “beyond dispute the finest and the noblest in the world”.

823. “Everything appertaining to this city is on so vast a scale…that it is not easy even to put it in writing.”

824. And if all goes according to the Communist Party’s plan, the coming two decades will evoke a few more gasps.

825. “the dream of staggering profits for those who get here first, the hype and hope that has mesmerised foreign merchants and traders for centuries”.

826. After taking over as party chief in 2012, Xi Jinping (now also president) launched his expected decade in power with a catchphrase: “The Chinese dream”.

827. Increasing numbers of middle-class Chinese are looking for boltholes abroad for themselves, their families and their assets.

828. This seems all the more stirring after years of vacillation under Mr Xi’s predecessor, Hu Jintao, who retreated from reform in the face of powerful resistance by vested interests, above all local governments, huge state-owned enterprises and, ironically, the new middle class, which would rather not share the fruits of growth with rural migrants.

829. Like his predecessors, Mr Xi is nipping signs of unrest in the bud.

830. The Chinese often say that theirs is a country of too many people and too little land. The cavernous Global Centre building begs to differ.

831. The capital’s most iconic new structures are stadiums, office buildings and a colossal egg-shaped centre for the performing arts. Chengdu’s is a jaw-dropping shopping experience.

832. Thanks to massive government investment since the turn of the 21st century, the gap between the wealthy east and the far less developed west of China has narrowed.

833. The Global Centre seems to be reckoning on a fair number of wealthy spenders in Chengdu: it provides 15,000 parking spaces.

834. This year’s overall growth target is for 7.5%, the same as last year’s and a far cry from the double-digit advances of most of the past decade. But that does not mean household spending will falter.

835. MIGRANTS ENCOUNTER BARRIERS of speech, habits and manners the world over, but in China these are heavily reinforced by the system of hukou, or household registration, which permits routine discrimination against migrants by bureaucrats as well as by urbanites (a term applied in this special report to city-dwellers who have no rural connections themselves, and nor do their parents).

836. Not that it matters in a one-party autocracy, but migrants and their urban-raised offspring are not even allowed to vote in the cities.

837. Even so, migrants often live in grim conditions. Out of sight are pockets of wretchedness similar to slums in developing countries such as India.

838. Thousands of migrants, most of them from impoverished villages in a single prefecture of the central province of Henan, prepare sackfuls of tin cans, piles of iron scrap and mountains of plastic bottles for bulk sale to recycling plants.

839. It is a scene of Dickensian poverty, with migrants packed into tiny brick shacks off muddy, rubbish-strewn streets.

840. Their children go to ramshackle private schools that charge around 4,500 yuan ($725) a year, several weeks’ income for many migrants.

841. A new word has entered the party lexicon: shiminhua, which means turning a migrant into an urbanite with all the perks of a city hukou-holder.

842. It glossed over the crucial question of how to pay for it all, which hints at strong resistance by local governments that do not want to foot the bill, and by urbanites who fear their privileged access to education and health care will be stripped away.

843. That chimes with the views of the waste-recycling migrants of Dongxiaokou village.

844. That would rule out most migrants, who often live in unauthorised lodgings and work without contracts.

845. Officials sometimes hold up the city of Zhongshan in the southern province of Guangdong as an example of how hukou reform could work.

846. Since 2007 migrants into the city (who make up more than half its population) have been able to apply for city hukou on the basis of points scored for educational qualifications, ownership of property, payments of social-security contributions and volunteer work (such as giving blood).

847. Yet most local governments would simply not be up to the task.

848. officials who hoped that by destroying the villages and building 56 blocks of flats in their place they could create a semblance of urbanity.

849. The thuggery, often brought to light by social media, is a political embarrassment to the central government.

850. Chaobei New City is symptomatic of both.

851. the biggest worry to bearish observers of China’s economy.

852. Along with WMPs, this has become the biggest worry to bearish observers of China’s economy.

853. Taken together with other debts for which local governments are, or might be, liable, such as those of local state-owned enterprises, it amounts to one-third of GDP.

854. It could also ramp up its own spending. It would not solve the problem, but could avert an immediate crisis.

855. Changes in both are vital if China’s new “human-centred” urbanisation is to succeed and officials’ rapacious instinct to grab land is to be tamed.

856. Looking at a map, it would be easy to dismiss it as a backwater, tucked in a mountainous subtropical corner of China that borders on some of South-East Asia’s poorest countries: Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar.

857. Yunnan, the province of which Kunming is the capital, is one of China’s most backward, with a nominal GDP per person roughly that of Albania.

858. Not so long ago Chenggong was derided as a ghost city in the making. Few are now so scornful.

859. Kunming’s orgy of urban expansion sits oddly with a long-established Chinese policy of seeking to limit the population growth of large cities.

860. For all the party’s recent emphasis on the role of market forces, they are still not allowed to determine people’s movements.

861. Even greater Beijing, which city officials think is bursting at the seams, is far less densely populated than greater Tokyo.

862. Local bureaucrats have a predilection for vast areas of concrete. Plazas, broad boulevards and colossal airports and railway stations have become their badges of honour.

863. better reason to worry about sprawl is that it is making China’s cities less “harmonious and liveable”, to use a phrase in vogue among the country’s city planners.

864. Old neighbourhoods are being demolished, their inhabitants scattered into far-flung gated communities, commuting times are lengthening, car-dependence is growing and the spatial divide

865. It is so much cheaper here than in central Shanghai, he says—and, traffic permitting, it is only an hour away by car.

866. Electric buses ply the still largely empty streets. Public litter bins are equipped with solar lighting so that residents can find them more easily at night.

867. This sounds like a bit of a stretch. China’s urban landscapes appear to be the antithesis of green:

868. They often use it as an excuse for prettification, or worse, for seizing yet more land from farmers and using it to build luxury housing, with golf courses next to them (because grass is “green”).

869. Mr Register himself is not altogether bowled over by the project.

870. The party talks green and sometimes even acts tough, but all the while it has been machinating to prevent the growth of an environmental movement.

871. police were rounding up dissidents and even telling florists not to sell the flower.

872. The demonstrators’ ability to gather in public places in their tens of thousands, with the help of mobile text messages and microblogs, has highlighted the weakness of China’s censorship system.

873. Those of dissident bent gleefully count off the cities that have witnessed PX protests: Xiamen in June 2007, Dalian in August 2011, Ningbo in October 2012, Kunming in May 2013 and Maoming earlier this month.

874. Could an anti-corruption campaign such as President Xi Jinping’s current drive land them in jail? Growing numbers are voting with their feet.

875. Equality, democracy and being rich and powerful were rated most highly as the hallmarks of such a society.

876. Its tiny land area comprises about 200 islets clustered in three groups that are bitterly contested.

877. Second, China is now much more worried about the security of its supplies.

878. China cosies up to America’s rivals, most notably Russia, but it also sees its economic interests, and hence its strategic ones, as closely linked with America’s.

879. Its north-east had been wracked by large-scale protests by workers laid off during the massive downsizing of the state sector from the 1990s, but Mr Hu kept the region largely quiet by directing dollops of cash to it.

880. As this special report has explained, rapid urbanisation has spawned two huge new social forces: a middle class and an underclass.

881. He may be China’s strongest leader since Deng Xiaoping, but urbanisation has fuelled the growth of other, often countervailing, powers too:

882. They have been making encouraging noises about the need to reform the iniquitous hukou system, strengthen farmers’ property rights and make cities more “liveable”.

883. At 83, he also epitomises a striking demographic trend: for highly skilled people to go on working well into what was once thought to be old age.

884. The world is on the cusp of a staggering rise in the number of old people, and they will live longer than ever before.

885. The experience of the 20th century, when greater longevity translated into more years in retirement rather than more years at work, has persuaded many observers that this shift will lead to slower economic growth and “secular stagnation”, while the swelling ranks of pensioners will bust government budgets.

886. In the lexicon of popular hate-figures, work-shirking welfare queens breeding at the taxpayer’s expense may be replaced by deadbeat grandads collecting taxpayer handouts while their hard-working contemporaries strive on.

887. Inequality will increase and a growing share of wealth will eventually be transferred to the next generation via inheritance, entrenching the division between winners and losers still further.

888. They would probably encourage old people to spend their cash rather than salt it away.

889. The swelling ranks of older voters, and their disproportionate propensity to vote, have left politicians keener to pander to them than to implement disruptive reforms.

890. Politicians need to convince less-skilled older voters that it is in their interests to go on working.

891. But as a share of the total population, at 8%, it is not that different to what it was a few decades ago.

892. This is a natural corollary of the dropping birth rates that are slowing overall population growth;

893. The received wisdom is that a larger proportion of old people means slower growth and, because the old need to draw down their wealth to live, less saving; that leads to higher interest rates and falling asset prices.

894. A third group harks back to the work of Alvin Hansen, known as the “American Keynes”,

895. The move away from corporate pension plans that provided a fraction of the recipient’s final salary in perpetuity will also have kept some people working longer.

896. Overall work rates among the over-60s will still be lower than they were for the same cohort when it was younger.

897. Alfred Sauvy, the French thinker who coined the term “third world”, was prone to worry that the first world would become “a society of old people, living in old houses, ruminating about old ideas”.

898. But Japan’s slowed productivity growth can also be ascribed to its burst asset bubble, and Germany’s to reforms meant to reduce unemployment; both countries, ageing as they are, score better in the World Economic Forum’s ranking for innovation than America.

899. A dearth of workers might prompt the invention of labour-saving capital-intensive technology, just as Japanese firms are pioneering the use of robots to look after old people.

900. And a wealth of job experience can counter slower cognitive speed.

901. In an age of ever-smarter machines, the attributes that enhance productivity may have less to do with pure cognitive oomph than motivation, people skills and managerial experience.

902. Perhaps most important, better education leads to higher productivity at any age. For all these reasons, a growing group of highly educated older folk could increase productivity, offsetting much of the effect of a smaller workforce.

903. A clutch of recent studies suggests that older workers are disproportionately more productive—as you would expect if they are disproportionately better educated.

904. Some of these earnings will finance retirement, when those concerned finally decide to take it; more savings by people in their 60s will be matched by more spending when they reach their 80s.

905. The most successful emerging economies have built up huge stashes of foreign currency; many are leery of depending too much on foreign borrowing.

906. A set of forces pushing investment down and pushing saving up, with no countervailing policy response, makes the impact of ageing over the next few years look like the world that Hansen described:

907. Yet many Japanese women, who are particularly protective of their children, distrust day care (one reason women in the countryside have more children is that they are more likely to have parents nearby to lend a hand).

908. The negative effects of offshore secrecy fall particularly heavily on developing countries. Offshore secrecy provides corrupt individuals and companies an easy way to stash illicit assets.

909. Journalists and whistle-blowers should not be penalised for bringing such crimes and injustices to light.

910. This could not be further from the truth.

911. Even more profound than the impact on jobs will be the impacts on our relationship with technology, on how we identify ourselves, on how we measure the value of a human being and on what we mean by contributing to society.

912. They admit they are cheap knock-offs, made elsewhere, and guffaw at the notion that people like them could afford the real thing.

913. FOR years Lin Chen resisted his wife’s entreaties to move abroad.

914. Mr Ma recently launched kits for smartphone users to crowdsource data on poor water quality across China, a sly dose of insurrection.

915. Each situation is different, but in the echo-chamber of global politics they reinforce each other.

916. Admittedly, deterrence always has some element of doubt.

917. For every leader deploring Mr Putin’s tactics, another is studying how to copy them.

918. Deeply divided, one can expect the EU to name and shame Russians while avoiding broader measures that increase the likelihood of blowback.

919. Gone are the dark days where one had to stay in a lousy job just to get good health insurance. Novel employment arrangements are on the rise and here to stay, indicating a robust and flexible labour market that can do without the outdated and paternalistic employment model, rife with inefficiency and exploitation, in exchange for increased self-worth and opportunity.

920. But this disaster underscores the risks they run.

921. The economic gap between the rich south and dirt-poor north of the peninsula grows ever wider, implying mounting reabsorption costs for South Korea.

922. “dirty comfort woman for the US and despicable prostitute selling off the nation”.

923. They have produced two different peoples—one poor, isolated and downtrodden; one well-off, cosmopolitan and free.

924. The North as a kind of Chinese protectorate is the alternative to unification.

925. China will not want on its border a united Korea bristling with American ground troops.

926. At five in the afternoon he would emerge into the fading light with his eyes wide, as though he had discoursed with the dead.

927. Rice, they reason, is a problem that has been solved.

928. No Indian or Chinese government could contemplate the possibility with equanimity.

929. For two months each year he leaves his wife in charge of the farm and takes his combine up to the poorer north-east of the country.

930. would be more accurate to say that mechanisation enables families to keep their plots, hold urban jobs and should enable them to take some advantage of the second green revolution.

931. It would be more accurate to say that mechanisation enables families to keep their plots, hold urban jobs and should enable them to take some advantage of the second green revolution.

932. We now recognise that this approach to international relations betrayed a deplorable conservatism.

933. Downtown LA is undergoing a revival with countless modern mixed-use high-rises sprouting up, including the soon-to-be tallest skyscraper in the western United States being built by Korean Air.

934. SIR – Leisure is a more complicated concept than implied in your Free exchange column (April 19th).

935. The relationship between leisure, productivity and innovation may be curvilinear: more work and less leisure is effective to a point, and then declines.

936. Much of the media’s opprobrium was aimed at him, leading him famously to utter that “I would like my life back”.

937. Much less clear is who will succeed Mr Ren or how the next boss might be chosen.

938. As long as Huawei is growing quickly and Mr Ren, who is only 69 years old, remains hale and hearty, this may not matter, but eventually it will.

939. Huawei has a half-formed plan: as well as the founder it has three “rotating and acting” chief executives, who serve six-month terms.

940. In short, demography is once again coming to the fore as a hot

941. In short, demography is once again coming to the fore as a hot political issue.

942. It does not help that the government has made next to no provision for the educational and other needs of the children of immigrants.

943. By 1992, then retired, he had concluded that the collapse of the Soviet Union and its allies was mainly attributable to their failure to make citizens richer.

944. To avoid a similar fate for China, he went on his famous “southern tour” to drum up support for a fresh round of economic reform.

945. Not since the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911 has China enjoyed such a prolonged period of stability as it has between Tiananmen and today (barring a handful of high-level purges and numerous street protests, most of them isolated and triggered by local grievances).

946. Your correspondent recalls respected analysts in the months before June 1989 pooh-poohing rumours of a serious rift within the leadership.

947. Your correspondent vividly recalls the exhilaration of that occasion in the Great Hall of the People, when the newly appointed party chief, Zhao Ziyang, raised glasses with foreign journalists and fielded impromptu questions in an unprecedented display of openness.

948. Ever since, Chinese officials grow nervous in the run-up to the anniversary of the crackdown.

949. But the memories that remain are potent, as Ms Lim shows, which is why the party still expends so much effort in trying to suppress them.

950. Their task is harder than it was for South Korea, Taiwan and China when they went through the same phase in the late 20th century.

951. Japanese and South Korean firms are terrified that China will move up the value chain, blighting their high-tech manufacturing industry. India and Indonesia, for their part, should be praying that China will do just that, making space for them in labour-intensive industries.

952. Big South Korean conglomerates such as LG, Samsung and Hyundai have global scale, and Samsung’s profits are not far off Apple’s.

953. Not all of this is quite what it seems.

954. Innovation at first sight appears to be one of Asia’s strong points.

955. Asia Inc has one further weakness: it remains too parochial.

956. This lack of global presence is partly a reflection of the relative youth of some Asian firms, but is also both a cause and a consequence of weak brands and innovation.

957. Most Asian bosses publicly disdain American-style capitalism and have little intention of aping it.

958. But as this special report will show, Asian firms are discarding some of their traditions as they limber up for a new era of growth.

959. Internet entrepreneurs are working to upend the old corporate order.

960. The communication difficulties attendant on the aftermath of civil conflict mean they may not have seen Real Madrid win the European Champions League last month.

961. For various reasons, football is a much lesser preoccupation in the world’s giant countries than elsewhere.

962. in India there is another sport so deep in the national psyche that football seems hardly to get a look in.

963. These various indicators have many in the footballing establishment hoping that the hold-out nations will soon join the football-mad small fry.

964. If ever there was a sign that football is taking off in America, this is it, says Mr Goldblatt.

965. America’s demography is working in football’s favour, too.

966. Up until the death of Syed Abdul Rahim, a revered national coach, in 1963, India’s football was in reasonable fettle.

967. But interest shown off the pitch—the Chinese are keen to watch football played elsewhere, and to bet on it—is not proving easy to translate into participation and success on it.

968. Rather than investing in the coaching and infrastructure that might lead to long-term success, party leaders have sought quick fixes, such as shipping promising young players abroad to hone their skills. They often fail to flourish.

969. The club has built an enormous football academy in the southern province of Guangdong that students compare to Hogwarts, the school in the Harry Potter novels.

970. Football’s situation, and prospects, in each of the sidelined countries differs. But there are common themes.

971. FIFA chose the latter, apparently because of the largesse its supporters spread around.

972. The world needs friendly competition around which to gather; at the same time football’s diversity of styles is a welcome demonstration that globalisation need not mean homogenisation.

973. And FIFA’s moral turpitude is hardly unique.

974. In FIFA’s defence, the big three’s reticence owes much to their respective histories and cultures and the strength of existing sports, notably cricket in India.

975. Sponsors should also weigh in on graft and on the need to push forward with new technology: an immediate video review of every penalty and goal awarded would be a start.

976. The Westminster style of parliamentary government in such a diverse and vast country has laid the seeds for inefficiency and corruption.

977. “the Italian banking system is able to withstand both the already weak baseline macroeconomic outlook and the protracted slow-growth scenario”.

978. PUBLIC rows can be a welcome relief from the stifling obfuscation and pussyfooting courtesy in which much diplomacy is cloaked.

979. What may be more likely to put them off is who might get to see all their assiduously compiled data, especially about their health, a concern Apple sought to allay this week.

980. The biggest of them, Samsung, plans to sell a smartphone based on its own operating system, Tizen—probably as a hedge against reliance on Google. “This is something only Apple can do,” purred Mr Cook this week. For now, he is right.

981. The image of the City has taken a knock after the LIBOR scandal.

982. For the moment, admiration should count for more than fear.

983. This still irks some professional critics, and some of the most fulsome five-star ratings may be from spouses of authors.

984. Apple may be better known as an innovator, but Amazon may have had just as big an impact on the workings of the digital world.

985. Indeed, if your glasses are particularly rose-tinted, Amazon seems to have put the “long term” back into Anglo-Saxon capitalism.

986. On tax, the picture is a little more nuanced.

987. This week an attempt to patch up things with Vietnam failed noisily.

988. China’s advance is all the more potent in the context of a series of disappointments for democrats since 2000.

989. They should remember that state spending should benefit society as a whole, not protect tenured professors from competition.

990. Whether this dragnet is leading directly to an uptick in suicides is the subject of much online gossip.

991. The first MOOC began life in Canada in 2008 as an online computing course.

992. It was 2012, dubbed the “year of the MOOC”, that generated vatic excitement about the idea.

993. For all their potential, MOOCs have yet to unleash a Schumpetarian gale of disruption.

994. Even successful print products have had to take on aspects of their digital rivals’ model.

995. That may not reflect badly on what is offered: the negligible cost of enrolment means that many people sign up without the firm intention to finish the course.

996. The universities least likely to lose out to online competitors are elite institutions with established reputations and low student-to-tutor ratios.

997. Whereas online courses can quickly adjust their content and delivery mechanisms, universities are up against serious cost and efficiency problems, with little chance of taking more from the public purse.

998. For now the main plank of Poland’s success is cheap labour, which western European and American companies are using to turn the country into a big outsourcing and subcontracting hub. But in time that advantage is bound to be eroded.

999. But at least they carry their head high when they go. These days Poland’s voice abroad once again counts for something.

1000. A proportion of dropouts return to education later, bearing their credits, in which case their initial investment is not lost.

1001. What is behind this generation of hard-working, strait-laced kids? It is hard to pin down any single explanation. Lots of interlinking factors contribute to social trends, and the changes are neither uniform within countries nor between them.

1002. In Germany, for example, the median age is now 46, and increasing about three months every year.

1003. A British survey shows that in 1994 almost 70% of lone parents did not know where their children were after 9pm—roughly double the rate of nuclear families. By 2005 the rates had almost converged.

1004. There have already been instances of nefarious types taking control of webcams, televisions and even a fridge, which was roped into a network of computers pumping out e-mail spam.

1005. In order to avoid lurid headlines about cars crashing, insulin overdoses and houses burning, tech firms will surely have to embrace higher standards.

1006. His literary creation turned out to be remarkably prescient.

1007. Individually, they are world leaders in hiding their light under a bushel.

1008. The industry is carved into niches, making it hard for integrated service providers to emerge.

1009. If officials would just get out of the way, China’s domestic logistics system could yet take off.

1010. President Dilma Rousseff, eyes on an election in October, urged her countrymen to bounce back. See article

1011. Such mind games in the badlands of eastern Ukraine and the South China Sea may feel far away from Toledo or

1012. The slow recovery from the recession may have lengthened this delay, by deterring many firms from investing in information technology.

1013. So when it emerged from communism, having known independence for only 20 of the previous 200 years, it was at first focused on itself and its transformation from a dictatorship with a centrally planned economy to a free-market democracy.

1014. The previous Law and Justice (PiS) government was sceptical about the benefits of EU membership for Poland and open in its loathing of both the Germans and the Russians.

1015. Lexus’s initial success in America spurred the Germans to fight back hard, spending heavily on designing vehicles whose technical brilliance opened motorists’ wallets, and on broadening their ranges to fill every possible niche.

1016. JLR’s brands have heaps of heritage, especially Range Rover and its association with British royalty.

1017. Just as China has become the place to manufacture cheaply everything from tennis shoes to iPads to Bibles, so it is with drugs.

1018. Meth is especially addictive. It is also easily manufactured. It has become the scourge of China’s anti-drug departments and of neighbouring countries.

1019. Poland has bagged a large proportion of it, employing as many in the sector as Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia combined, according to a study by the McKinsey Global Institute.

1020. When communism collapsed, the divide between east and west, as well as rural and urban, re-emerged with a vengeance.

1021. The joke making the rounds at the time was that the PiS government was one of the world’s most technologically advanced: it was radio-controlled.

1022. The region is depopulating.

1023. Lublin lies about 100km (62 miles) from the border with Ukraine and 150km from that with Belarus.

1024. At the moment the 166km journey from Lublin to Warsaw takes a nerve-racking three hours by car on a single-carriageway road buzzing with huge Ukrainian lorries.

1025. They were in for a happy surprise when the money started rolling in: Polish agriculture received a bountiful €40 billion ($55 billion) in 2007-13 and will get another €42.4 billion between now and 2020.

1026. Even when she offers discounts to whip up interest, clients are scarcer than they were.

1027. In places where the job market slumped, the effect is more marked (whether prostitution is legal may affect prices, too, but the wide variation between American cities shows that this is not the only factor).

1028. But where the inward flow is unceasing, or where the market was previously very closed, immigrants can push prices down.

1029. Creating an online profile separates the decision to take up the work from parading for punters.

1030. The customers who reported encounters to the website we analysed clearly value the stereotypical features of Western beauty: women they describe as slim but not scrawny, or as having long blonde hair or full breasts, can charge the highest hourly rates (see chart 3).

1031. For those not naturally well endowed, breast implants may make economic sense: going from flat-chested to a D-cup increases hourly rates by approximately $40, meaning that at a typical price of $3,700, surgery could pay for itself after around 90 hours.

1032. In Britain, where brothels are illegal though prostitution is not, massage parlours advertise the rotas and prices of their workers online but are coy about the services rendered.

1033. Melanie, who earns £65,000 ($109,000) a year, says that she is considering selling sex on the side for a few months to pay off debts.

1034. The stress of living a double life should not be underestimated, they caution, and it will not be easy money.

1035. As they wise up to this, sex workers are using sites that allow them to verify clients’ identities to help them avoid stings.

1036. That shift will make the sex industry harder for all governments to control or regulate, whether they seek to do so for pragmatic or moralistic reasons, or out of concern that not all those in the industry are there by their own free will.

1037. The Iraqi army and Iraqi Kurds ousted the jihadists of the Islamic State from a great dam near Mosul, raising the prospect that they may be pegged back elsewhere in the country.

1038. He professed himself happy that Britain’s tribute, though admittedly commonplace, should have come from supplicants so far away.

1039. In the following two centuries all of that would be reversed. China would be semi-colonised, humiliated, pauperised and torn by civil war and revolution.

1040. On the international stage people and Communist Party want a new deference and the influence that befits their nation’s stature.

1041. It is made harder by the fact that China’s Leninist leadership is already managing a huge contradiction between change and stasis at home as it tries to keep its grip on a society which has transformed itself socially almost as fast as it has grown economically.

1042. Just as it was right for the emperor to occupy the apex of China’s hierarchy, so it was meet for China to sit atop the world’s.

1043. China’s coal and its factories were separated by thousands of kilometres, a problem that remains trying today.

1044. In an attempt not to be carved up by the colonial powers, they began to ditch much of China’s cultural heritage; to save themselves as a nation, many believed they had to destroy themselves as a culture.

1045. After Mao reunited China in 1949, the Communists stepped up the assault on Chinese culture yet further.

1046. FOR all this ambition, China is not bent on global domination.

1047. Though China’s influence is undoubtedly growing, its engagement is not imperial but transactional, says Deborah Brautigam, of Johns Hopkins University.

1048. Acute awareness of its domestic weaknesses acts as a restraint, as does the damage China sees done by the militarisation of America’s foreign policy in recent years.

1049. Rules such as those which say the nine-dash line must be respected might be acceptable for the small fry.

1050. With a handful of allies it rode roughshod over the international legal system to invade Iraq.

1051. At least in its early years, they were the doctrine’s beneficiaries, not its subjects.

1052. China’s armed forces are much less proficient than America’s.

1053. The deep fissures in the country will be increasingly hard to paper over with mere prosperity.

1054. There is a racial gulf in how these events are perceived.

1055. The civilians they meet are often armed; small wonder they are jumpy when they cannot see your hands.

1056. If drugs were legal, no one would be patted down for pills or jailed for possessing them.

1057. The ills of shrinking rust-belt towns with tetchy race relations cannot be fixed quickly.

1058. The second phrase is used by many of Africa’s new Chinese diaspora to denote their ability to live rough in remote and inhospitable places and to work staggeringly hard, qualities that the continent’s previous roaming visitors, principally from Britain, France and America, seem to have lost, at least in Chinese and African eyes.

1059. What is tantalisingly unclear is whether the Chinese economic onslaught is the result of a methodical policy fashioned in Beijing as part of an imperialist venture to promote “Chinese values” and dominate the continent as Europeans did a century ago, or whether it has become a self-generating process fired up by individual Chinese who are simply keen to enrich themselves without the slightest intention of kowtowing to the authorities back home.

1060. In Liberia a Chinese hotelier explains that his compatriots generally bring their own towels for fear of using one previously used by “hei ren” (“black people”) as they are lumpenly known.

1061. Moreover, if Western donors or investors try to lay down conditions on such matters, African leaders have become adept at threatening to “go east”.

1062. SOCIETY has long romanticised the creative power of the loner, be it the scientist who works all night in a laboratory or the cloistered writer wrapped up in the world of his own imagination.

1063. Still, the tantalising possibility arises of Mr Kim being at the centre of a cult, but not the centre of power.

1064. His decision to make the Shanghai Free Trade Zone, a special economic area on the outskirts of the port city, a shining example of market reform is thus a test of his mettle.

1065. Although big firms deploy armies of PR flacks, anyone with a smartphone and a socialmedia account now has the same power to reach a global audience.

1066. No sensible company will go to the mat to protect an embattled boss when there are plenty of replacements waiting in the wings.

1067. avoid the “reply all” function on their e-mail; think twice before sending any strongly worded message.

1068. England and Wales approved same-sex marriage, by resounding margins, in 2013.

1069. Marriage traditionalists crowed that the people would never accept a hare-brained idea foisted upon them by homosexual activists and their elitist friends.

1070. No one doubts that, in due course, the entire country will join them.

1071. A more contemporary and pernicious Western influence is that of conservative American evangelists who export their anti-gay message to places where it may meet more receptive ears, along with money that makes it all the more attractive.

1072. Well-known international human-rights groups devote as much attention to the quiet cultivation of links with local activists as they do to public denunciations of laws they disagree with.

1073. The wells of homophobia on which populist politicians can draw in Africa and elsewhere seem not to have dried up quite as much as people might like to believe.

1074. Yet even if it is becoming slightly easier among India’s elite to be openly gay, almost no one in public life dares declare it. And the legal position for homosexuals is in flux.

1075. The church had won a battle, but at a steep price.

1076. Dariusz Oko, a theology professor, inveighed against “drug and sex maniacs”.

1077. Yet Mr Xi has also courted friends under the catchphrase of “peaceful development”.

1078. It now appears less likely that Twitter will hatch into such a giant.

1079. “Twitter has developed into an indispensable media outlet for us, but there are different levels of indispensability,”

1080. The signal agreement was later sealed when Mr Xi met Mr Abe for the first time as president. Admittedly, the withering handshake and puckery expression he offered Mr Abe lent the impression of a dog owner obliged to pick up another pooch’s turd.

1081. The magnanimity and wisdom on display count as welcome engagement.

1082. At times magnanimous, at times vituperative: China may continue to show both facets to the world for as long as it may not feel as confident about its strengths as it would wish to appear.

1083. And if firms in one badly run commodity-driven country start to default on their dollar debts, then investors will worry about others—such as Brazil.

1084. On November 17th it emerged that an Uber executive, Emil Michael, had said at a private dinner that the firm should consider spending $1m to dig up dirt on its critics in the media, in particular Sarah Lacy, the editor of Pando, a tech-news site.

1085. Mr Michael has since apologised. Travis Kalanick, Uber’s boss, said on Twitter that his remarks showed “a lack of humanity and a departure from our values and ideals”, but brushed off calls for Mr Michael to resign.

1086. Today many of their exemplars are struggling. IBM is treading water, Motorola is a shadow of its former self and Procter & Gamble has been forced to bring back a retired boss, A.G. Lafley, to sort it out.

1087. We might still be in the dark about Tesco’s accounting fiasco if the British grocer did not have to update investors on its performance every few months.

1088. More important, short-termism can allow “creative destruction” to work its magic.

1089. Perhaps the strongest argument for rewarding long-term investors is that they think more about sustained growth, whereas short-term ones will sacrifice this for a quick buck.

1090. However, he argues that this argument breaks down when firms become enthusiastic repurchasers of their own shares, as American companies have: last year those in the S&P 500 index bought back $500 billion of their own stock.

1091. Long-termism and short-termism both have their virtues and vices—and these depend on context. Long-termism works well in stable industries that reward incremental innovation. But it is a recipe for failure in such businesses as social media, where firms are constantly forced to abandon their plans and “pivot” to a new strategy, in markets that can change in the blink of an eye.

1092. Nor are long-termism and short-termism mutually exclusive.

1093. In recent years activist investors have repeatedly bought stakes in big firms, from Yahoo to Fortune Brands, and agitated for a shake-up.

1094. Making sweeping statements about the virtues of long-termism and the vices of short-termism is a satisfying pastime: it confers a sense of moral seriousness and intellectual depth. But it is a poor way of analysing the dynamics of wealth creation—and it is an even worse way of designing corporate policies.

1095. The promise of years of monopoly rents, he points out, provides a powerful incentive to innovate.

1096. No amount of money, though, could make such growth possible without the digital world’s increasingly mature and ubiquitous infrastructure.

1097. The robber barons of days of yore would look on in admiration.

1098. Instead they scuffle for position in markets that are less important to them while trying to build up defences around their core businesses.

1099. (Interestingly, though, for many purposes Facebook’s trove of finely nuanced information does not provide a must-have edge; most social-media apps can learn as much about their users’ contacts as they need to get started just by tapping into their address books.)

1100. As the first flush of heady growth wears off and the technological or business edge that made it possible gets copied or ground down, the need to keep satisfying market expectations gets stronger and once insurgent, even idealistic cultures turn more corporate.

1101. But it is hard to get around the fact that the same measures also cement and expand Google’s dominant position. And in the world of indirect effects, helping the user is not all that has to be done to play fair.

1102. “Google is trying to leverage the advantage it has in one area into many others,”

1103. Suburbs are curious places, neither here nor there.

1104. Those who argue that suburbia is dying are wrong on the facts; those who say it is doomed by the superiority of higher-density life make a far from convincing case.

1105. Cities that have sought to stop the sprawl—London is the most striking example—have achieved dubious benefits at great cost.

1106. In one sense the critics are right: suburbs are a place apart. People who live close to the heart of buzzing cities can feel themselves part of a great project. Suburbanites have relinquished that, or forgone it. What they have gained in its stead is surprisingly consistent from city to city and from country to country. Suburbs are about family, ease and quietness. Searingly ambitious people find them dull, and some become alienated in them. But many others experience a humble liberation. D.J. Waldie, then an official in the southern California city of, as it happens, Lakewood, described his suburb as “adequate to the demands of my desire”. And to a great many other people’s desires, it turns out.

1107. She likes city living for its convenience, but has heard that the schools are better in the suburbs, and would prefer to live closer to work.

1108. And many people will opt not to live in towers but in even less dense detached or semi-detached houses.

1109. Phoenix is suburban in its heart, suburban at its extremities and suburban in between. But some in power wish it was not.

1110. A few years ago, when foreclosure and rising petrol prices held American suburbs in a vice, confident predictions were made about their abandonment and the repopulation of city centres.

1111. Yet the people who moved out of Maryvale did not pile into the city centre; they went to newer, more distant suburbs. And the district’s new Mexican inhabitants are probably better off there than they would be crammed into tower blocks.

1112. Brookings, which has crunched FBI data, finds that violent crime has dropped steeply in principal cities since the early 1990s—but only to a level twice as high as in either old suburbs or new ones.

1113. Old folk rattle around houses that once contained families.

1114. John Hickman, a retired scientist turned local historian, points to a row of large detached houses in South Norwood, a residential part of Croydon.

1115. The local high street is in a sorry state. Rubbish has been dumped in alleyways and next to a pedestrian underpass.

1116. It has also forced many people into undignified homes, widened the wealth gap between property owners and everyone else, and enriched rentiers.

1117. All these unfortunate side effects of the green belt stem from its all-or-nothing character.

1118. This sort of thing might strike urbanites as laughably ersatz.

1119. Investors from the mainland (and, in the case of Taiwan, rich Taiwanese who live on the mainland) bid up property prices.

1120. Media in China shrug off Taiwan’s elections as “the chaos of democratic politics”, but have no suggestions for making voters happier.

1121. She helped her husband deliver gas canisters on the outskirts of Shanghai but hid some of the proceeds lest he fritter them away on gambling and booze.

1122. For mothers divorce proceedings mean the risk of losing custody of their children. Rather, victims are routinely advised by the police, women’s federations and confidantes to sort out their problems at home.

1123. Vast and unwieldy, China has many problems enforcing its existing laws. Cultural hurdles may make this one even harder to implement. But where the letter of the law leads, society may one day follow.

1124. Reassurance is needed. Hopes that China’s spectacular climb to superpower status might be completed without conflict have been dented in recent years. Its assertive approach to old but until recently largely quiescent territorial disputes with Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam and India has jangled nerves.

1125. But probably not their substance. America and China are too intertwined in too many ways not to co-operate in some.

1126. The researchers are also looking at possible applications which their process can be tried out on.

1127. Kickstarter has let over 7m people fund 73,000 projects to the tune of more than $1 billion.

1128. Some see in the flotation a harbinger of a nuclear renaissance.

1129. China put a moratorium on new plants after that accident too, but the boosters have now prevailed over the doubters.

1130. Such forecasts should be taken with a big pinch of salt.

1131. In short, today’s nuclear revival may well not live up to investors’ lofty expectations.

1132. Since the export-oriented and investment-led model of growth is sputtering, officials may soon be keen to boost domestic consumption rather than merely shovel subsidised capital at big investment projects.

1133. Yet they are also keenly aware that a big nuclear accident would prompt an ugly—and, in the age of viral social media, nerve-wrackingly unpredictable—public backlash against the ruling party.

1134. Xi Jinping, speaking at a nuclear-security summit in the Netherlands earlier this year, likened the technology to the gift of fire granted by Prometheus to humanity.

1135. Having lost to Uzbekistan and Holland in friendly matches earlier that month, China were thrashed 5-1 at home by a Thai youth team.

1136. But the party itself is above the law. The ritual of political humiliation follows a rigid protocol: first, the internal party investigation; second, expulsion from the party. Only then—at the party’s behest—are legal charges framed.

1137. Many other brands followed Cartier’s sortie du temple (descent from the temple), seeking to broaden their appeal while retaining their cachet. Not all succeeded.

1138. Personal luxury goods are just one small corner of this empire of opulence.

1139. This special report will concentrate on personal goods, which face the tricky task of trying to achieve global scale while maintaining the artisan roots that give them rarity appeal.

1140. To view the world through the lens of luxury is to see it subtly altered.

1141. Luxury companies often get the most attention for the things they sell least of.

1142. “You need to be a black belt in relationships when it’s about luxury,” says James Thompson, who runs the division.

1143. In some ways, today’s preoccupation with sustainability plays into the hands of luxury-goods makers. With their ample margins, they can afford to reduce the environmental damage they cause.

1144. WHAT EXACTLY IS luxury? The concept is both slippery and divisive, not least because so many purveyors wish to lay claim to it.

1145. Key money paid up front to open a shop can cost up to £10m ($16m) on London’s Bond Street; the cost of fitting it out comes on top of that.

1146. Billboards touting Swiss watches and Italian shoes dominate the skyline. At shopping centres, high-wattage façades compete for space. Louis Vuitton’s lights square up against Burberry’s cinema screens.

1147. The gaudy signage helps guide them to shopping destinations they have already picked out.

1148. His rich initial customers have been joined by middle-class consumers with a penchant for European luxury. Nigeria is a difficult market, with shoddy infrastructure and few decent shopping malls.

1149. The concern that loyalist raiders might be emboldened or anger boil over in Monmouth if nothing was done seems meagre justification.

1150. Not a few presume they will cash in on all their stored leisure time when they finally retire, whenever that may be.

1151. Nearly 2,000 years later, de Grazia offered similar advice. Modern life, that leisure-squandering, money-hoarding, grindstone-nosing, frippery-buying business, left him exasperated.

1152. No one knows how to give a funny name like the Chinese, for whom the Mandarin xihongguo (“Western red fruit”) for tomato, is par for the course.

1153. The apparent improvement in affordability does not tally with the perception of many Chinese.

1154. A department store in Shanghai went full swing into the Christmas spirit, which it understood as a Christian as well as a retailing festival, with a huge replica of Santa Claus, but nailed to a cross.

1155. Even in the ship’s bowels, the strongest odour is not the fuel oil used to power the engine but the coffee used to power the engineers.

1156. This efficiency has put paid to extended shore leave. “Sail around the world and see nothing,” jokes David Staven, the ship’s bearish third officer.

1157. No one is exactly sure what grew in New York before the city took over.

1158. When people think of creative destruction in the economy, steel or Detroit’s car industry spring to mind.

1159. But flowers have felt Schumpeter’s scythe just as sharply.

1160. Florists grumble that without their guidance, middle-class customers are ripped off.

1161. And the business is tied more than ever to Wall Street: after Lehman Brothers’ collapse, demand plunged as fortunes were lost and ostentatious displays of wealth frowned upon.

1162. The story of how London expanded so swiftly at the turn of the 20th century is one of financial ingenuity, bold risk-taking and low skulduggery.

1163. Bribery of officials was rife, as was the badmouthing of competitors.

1164. An image classifier may be spookily accurate, but it has no goals, no motivations, and is no more conscious of its own existence than is a spreadsheet or a climate model. Nor, if you were trying to recreate a brain’s workings, would you necessarily start by doing the things AI does at the moment in the way that it now does them.

1165. THE celebrations in Moscow on May 9th to commemorate the capitulation of Nazi Germany 70 years ago will speak volumes about today’s geopolitics.

1166. All need autonomy to function, all can take on life of their own and all can do great harm if not set up in a just manner and governed by laws and regulations.

1167. Other firms will want to hedge their bets by investing in new fields unrelated to their core revenue streams.

1168. The self-service revolution rolls on to this day.

1169. Being able to do one or two things for yourself can feel liberating; having to do everything can make you feel like a slave to the machine.

1170. They are helped by the fact that their home market is so huge. But they are also fleet of foot.

1171. Rogue employees can wreak more damage on a company than competitors

1172. EMPLOYEES are often said to be a company’s biggest resource. It is equally true that they are its biggest liability. Scarcely a week goes by without a company falling victim to employees-turned-enemies-or-embarrassments.

1173. On July 6th HSBC fired a group of employees when it emerged that they had filmed themselves engaged in an “ISIS-style mock beheading” of an Asian colleague dressed in an orange jumpsuit.

1174. Other enemies-within are the very opposite of high-flyers.

1175. Just as the big platforms like Google, Facebook and Apple benefit from “network effects”, because each new user makes the service more valuable for all the others, so the Valley’s success as a venue to launch, fund, staff and sell a technology firm is feeding on itself (see article).

1176. The enormous, disruptive creativity of Silicon Valley is unlike anything since the genius of the great 19th-century inventors.

1177. Yet cracking open established industries inevitably results in conflict.

1178. Uber is the firm most embroiled in controversy, whether facing licensed taxi-drivers on the streets or demands from its own drivers in the courts.

1179. Their likes and dislikes make or break products.