

## Letter n°1060 of Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024

### Sino-Russian relations in a geopolitical Europe

Pierre Andrieu - 26 Mar 2024

The Sino-Russian alliance is one of circumstance, with all its vulnerabilities. Although confirmed by the conflict in Ukraine, this relationship is marked by an asymmetry in China's favour. Geopolitical Europe, for its part, faces a seemingly insurmountable gulf with Russia, while commercial rivalry with China should not prevent it from pursuing dialogue with the latter. Even if this is proves complex.



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### ■ Elections :



#### Slovakia: the 2nd round will pit Ivan Korcok against Peter Pellegrini on 6 April

Ivan Korcok, former Minister of Foreign and European Affairs (2020-2022), came out on top in the 1st round of Slovakia's presidential election on 23 March. He won 42.51% of the vote, ahead of Peter Pellegrini, current President of the National Council of the Republic, who won 37.02%. The two candidates will face each other in a second round on 6 April. [Read more](#)

### ■ Foundation :



## A site for all you need to know about the European elections

From 6 to 9 June, Europeans are invited to elect 720 MEPs for the next five years. The Foundation has set up a website to help you better understand the elections and the issues at stake, and to follow the campaign with the lists of candidates and the programmes of all the parties in each Member State. [Read more](#)



## The Schuman Network

The Schuman Network is an initiative launched in November 2023 by the Robert Schuman Foundation, which works to promote the sharing of ideas on a European scale. With 19 members from 11 European countries, the Schuman Network is a space to pool research on current European issues. Since its launch, around sixty studies have been published on the network's website. [Read more](#)

## ■ European Council :



### Conclusions

On 21 and 22 March, the Heads of State and Government reiterated their support for Ukraine and their desire to speed up the delivery of arms and ammunition. They examined the proposal to use the profits generated by frozen Russian assets for the benefit of Ukraine. They also undertook to implement the European Defence Investment Programme (EDIP) and invited the EIB to adapt its lending policy to the European defence sector. They also called for a "humanitarian pause leading to a lasting ceasefire" in Gaza, and agreed to the opening of accession negotiations with Bosnia-Herzegovina. [Read more](#)

## ■ Commission :



### Capitalising on the advantages of the biotech sector

On 20 March, the Commission published a communication aimed at helping the highly promising biotechnology sector. Biotechnology can help to modernise areas such as agriculture, energy, food and healthcare. The Commission is proposing ten actions, including stimulating research, innovation and consumer demand. Legislation will also be reviewed to reduce the time it takes to bring biotechnological innovations to market. [Read more](#)



## Horizon Europe Plan 2025-2027

On 20 March, the Commission adopted its second strategic plan for Horizon Europe, the research and innovation funding programme. Between 2025 and 2027, it will focus on the ecological transition; the digital transition; and Europe's competitiveness, inclusiveness and resilience. This new plan reaffirms Horizon Europe's initial objective of devoting 35% of the total budget to the fight against climate change. [Read more](#)



## Reforms with a view to future enlargement

On 20 March the Commission published its communication on institutional and political reforms with a view to enlargement of the Union. It recommends the gradual integration of the candidate countries, in particular by encouraging their gradual accession to the single market. Enlargement should also be taken into account when the next multiannual financial framework is drawn up. A review of the Union's main policies will be undertaken in early 2025, in particular to assess their financial viability in the context of an enlarged Union. [Read more](#)



## Third round of funding for NextGenerationEU loan

On 19 March, the Commission announced the raising of €7 billion in bonds as part of its third operation for 2024. Maturing on 4 February 2050, the third NextGenerationEU bond issue will be used to finance Member States' green projects included in their national Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) plans. [Read more](#)



## Investigation against Apple, Google and Meta on suspicion of non-compliance with the DMA

On 25 March, the European Commission launched five proceedings against Apple, Alphabet (Google) and Meta (Facebook, Instagram) on suspicion of breaching European competition rules, a first under the new Digital Markets Regulation (DMA). [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Council :



## Summit of eurozone members

The heads of state and government of the eurozone met in Brussels on 22 March. Despite sluggish economic activity in the short term, the 20 leaders expressed their confidence in a recovery, thanks to the continued fall in inflation and the strengthening of the union of capital markets. They also congratulated Bulgaria on its progress towards adopting the euro. [Read more](#)

## ■ Diplomacy :



### Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers

On 18 March, the foreign affairs ministers discussed Russian-Ukrainian tensions, the Middle East and the situation in the Indo-Pacific with Antony Blinken. Following a speech by the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, they approved additional funding of €5 billion for Ukrainian defence. A provisional agreement was reached on sanctions against Hamas and Israeli settlers on the West Bank. Finally, conclusions were adopted on green diplomacy to combat climate change. [Read more](#)

## ■ Court of Justice :



### Judicial Activity in 2023

On 22 March, the Court of Justice of the European Union published its statistics for 2023, showing an increase in the number of cases brought before it. The report notes an increase in the number of direct actions - for annulment and for failure to fulfil obligations - particularly in the area of the environment. It also points out that in terms of preliminary rulings - i.e. those that precede or must precede a judgment - questions relating to the area of freedom, security and justice, particularly those concerning the right of asylum, have been the most numerous. [Read more](#)

## ■ Germany :



### Franco-German Agreement on the "tank of the future"

On 22 March, Germany and France reached an agreement to unblock the Main Ground Combat System (MGCS) tank project of the future. The aim of this project is to replace the French Leclerc and German Leopard 2 tanks with a technologically innovative Franco-German tank by 2035. [Read more](#)

## ■ Belgium :



## Summit on Atomic Energy

Some thirty countries, including a majority of European countries as well as the United States, China and Brazil, met in Brussels on 21 March for an international nuclear summit. The meeting follows the agreement reached at COP 28 on the need to develop the nuclear energy sector with a view to achieving carbon neutrality. The participants expressed their desire to strengthen the security of the sector, promote investment in nuclear power and assist emerging countries in their efforts to produce nuclear energy. [Read more](#)

## ■ Croatia :



## General Elections on 17 April

On 15 March, Croatian President Zoran Milanović called parliamentary elections, scheduled for 17 April. This follows the dissolution of the Croatian parliament on 14 March. He also announced his candidacy for these elections on the list of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia in a bid to become Prime Minister. The Croatian Constitutional Court ruled on 18 March that Milanović must first resign as president before standing in the elections. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ France :



## Senate rejects agreement with Canada

On 21 March, four and a half years after the vote in parliament, French senators examined the free trade agreement with Canada negotiated by the European Commission. In an alliance involving both the Communists and the Right, the senators rejected the treaty by 243 votes to 26. However, this rejection does not mean that the treaty is dead at European level: the National Assembly must now give its final verdict on the text. [Read more](#)



## Michel Talagrand receives the Abel prize

French mathematician Michel Talagrand was awarded the prestigious Abel Prize on 20 March. Awarded by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters since 2003, this prize is presented each year in recognition of the work of a mathematician. A former director of research at the CNRS, Michel Talagrand has transformed the theory of probability, functional analysis and statistics. [Read more](#)

## ■ Hungary :



### Law to protect national sovereignty

On 19 March, the Venice Commission, the Council of Europe's advisory body, published its opinion on the Hungarian law on the protection of national sovereignty. This introduces restrictions on foreign funding of political parties and election campaigns. The Commission judged that the law complies in principle with international standards, but is concerned that it is too broadly defined, allowing it to be applied outside the election period and making it more difficult to mount political opposition. [Read more](#)

## ■ Ireland :



### Resignation of Leo Varadkar

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar announced his resignation from the Fine Gael party and therefore from the post of Taoiseach on 20 March, following the failure of the referendum proposed by the government to amend the references to women and the family in the Constitution. Simon Harris, elected Fine Gael leader on 24 March, will officially take over on 9 April. At 37, he will be the youngest Prime Minister in Irish history. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Portugal :



## Luis Montenegro appointed Prime Minister

Luis Montenegro was appointed Prime Minister by President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa on 21 March, after his centre-right Democratic Alliance party came first in the 10 March general election. He will take office on 2 April and present his government on 27 March. With 80 deputies out of 230, he plans to form a minority government, refusing an alliance with the far-right Chega party. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Moldova :



### Strengthening the partnership with NATO

On 20 March, NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană hosted a meeting with Moldova's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mihai Popșoi, at NATO headquarters. They discussed the cooperation partnership, particularly with regard to cyber defence, disaster management and the strengthening of the country's armed forces. [Read more](#)

## ■ Ukraine :



### European Union-Ukraine Association Council

On 20 March, at the ninth meeting of the Association Council with Ukraine, European and Ukrainian representatives condemned the Russian "presidential election" held in the occupied territories of Ukraine. They discussed the military, economic and humanitarian situation in Ukraine, as well as the Commission's recommendations on the reforms necessary for Ukraine's accession. [Read more](#)



### Trade support for Ukraine renewed, but guarantees given to farmers

On 20 March, Parliament and the Council reached a provisional agreement to extend trade liberalisation measures with Ukraine until 5 June 2025. The agreement nevertheless caps imports of poultry, sugar, eggs, honey, as well as maize, oats and groats. The Commission will be responsible for reintroducing customs duties within two weeks in the event of a surge in imports. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## European payment of €4.5 billion

On 20 March, the Commission announced the payment of a first tranche of €4.5 billion under the Ukraine Facility, with the aim of helping the country to finance the operation of its public services, in particular salaries and pensions. [Read more](#)

## ■ UN :



## World Happiness Report

The World Happiness Report 2024 was published on 20 March by Gallup, the United Nations and Oxford University. The countries of Northern Europe are once again the happiest in the world, with Finland crowned "happiest country in the world" for the seventh year running. This year, for the first time, the report looks at generational differences. [Read more](#)

## ■ Culture :



## Holy Week in Seville

Holy Week in Seville lasts until 31 March, ending on Easter Sunday. These festivities, celebrated since the 16th century, commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Members of 71 brotherhoods take part in these processions, crossing the streets day and night, carrying religious statues - the pasos - to the rhythm of drums and songs. [Read more](#)



## Easter festivals in Aix, Salzburg and Baden-Baden

A number of classical music festivals are being held to coincide with Easter. In Aix-en-Provence, the event will run until 7 April. Visitors can enjoy a variety of classical music and take part in master classes and workshops. In Salzburg, Mozart's birthplace, a top-class orchestra will be enthraling audiences until 1 April. In Baden-Baden, until 1 April, the Berlin Philharmonic will be performing works by Ludwig von Beethoven, Franz Schubert and Richard Wagner. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)





## Van Eyck at the Louvre

To mark the restoration of "The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin", the Musée du Louvre is organising an exhibition on this major work by Jan Van Eyck, running until 17 June. The exhibition guides visitors in their discovery of the painting, which is complemented by some sixty painted panels, manuscripts, drawings, sculpted bas-reliefs and orphevered objects by the artist and several of his contemporaries. [Read more](#)



## Holbein, Burgkmair and Dürer in Vienna

The exhibition "Holbein. Burgkmair. Dürer. Renaissance in the North" will be on show in Vienna until 30 June. Visitors can view works by some of the most influential artists of the Renaissance. The 160 paintings, sculptures and other works of art immerse viewers in the artistic period around 1500, revealing the city of Augsburg as the centre of the Renaissance. [Read more](#)



## Julia Keilowa in Warsaw

Until 1 September, the Warsaw Museum will be showing works by the Ukrainian-born artist Julia Keilowa. A leading artist of the first half of the 20th century, she was one of the pioneers of modern design and the Art Deco style. The exhibition includes almost 80 objects that reveal an artist in search of harmony, rhythm and elegance. [Read more](#)



## Richard Mortensen in Aarhus

One of the icons of modernism, Richard Mortensen, is on show at the ARoS art museum in Aarhus until 1 September. Through more than 80 paintings, the exhibition "Between the lines" offers a re-discovery of this master of surrealism and figurehead of concrete art, whose works seek to show the power of art in social progress. [Read more](#)



## Lucian Freud in London

The exhibition "Lucian Freud's Etchings: a creative collaboration" will be on at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London until 25 August. A twentieth-century British artist of German origin, Lucian Freud is best known for his figurative paintings. The exhibition reveals lesser-known etchings, including some produced in collaboration with Marc Balakjian. Inspired by Rembrandt and Whistler, these works are distinguished by their large size and style. [Read more](#)



## Art Brut in Rome

The "Celestial Epics" exhibition, on show at Villa Medici in Rome until 19 May, invites visitors to discover 180 works, a veritable panorama of international Art Brut. This genre has constantly shaken up the history of art and nurtured minds that are resistant to norms, questioning classic notions of art and creation. [Read more](#)



NATIONAL GALLERY  
PRAGUE

## Filomena Borecká in Prague

The National Gallery in Prague is showing the work of Czech artist Filomena Borecká until 8 September. The exhibition, entitled "Breath of Silent Thoughts", explores breath and the way it is shared, through drawing, the artist's preferred means of expression, which enables her to capture the present moment and preserve its authenticity. [Read more](#)



Musée  
d'Orsay

## Impressionism at the Musée d'Orsay

Until 14 July, the Musée d'Orsay is commemorating the first Impressionist exhibition in Paris in 1874, showing over 130 works by Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley and Edgar Degas. The exhibition retraces the circumstances that led to the advent of this artistic movement, which emerged in a period of contemporary creation full of contradictions and richness, in the tumultuous political context of the nascent Third Republic. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Musée  
National  
Eugène  
Delacroix

## Ingres and Delacroix in Paris

To mark its reopening, the Musée Delacroix in Paris is presenting the exhibition "Ingres et Delacroix, Objets d'artistes" until 10 June. These two artists, emblematic of the early 19th century, embodied the confrontation between Neoclassicism and Romanticism. [Read more](#)

## ■ Agenda :

 26 March 2024

**Agriculture and Fisheries Council** (Brussels)



### The Letter n°1060

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