



China's Strengths and Weaknesses



Author: Karine Lisbonne-de Vergeron

The Robert Schuman Foundation has published a study by Karine Lisbonne-de-Vergeron, a specialist of the Asian emerging countries, which focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of the Chinese model. The country has achieved a spectacular economic take-off and more recently created major industrial groups; it has also started investing abroad as well as in new technologies. However many challenges remain: an unbalanced economic model that supports exports and questionable energy and environmental sustainability, the persistence of major inequalities and even the need to strengthen creativity and education. This young, talented researcher is also the author of a paper published recently by the Robert Schuman Foundation, the Global Policy Institute and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung on "Chinese and Indian views of Europe since the crisis: New perspectives from the emerging Asian giants".

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Front page! :

Order the "Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union" 2012



"The Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union" a work of reference on Europe has just been published. This, the 3rd edition, is devoted to the means to be applied to overcome the crisis with an exclusive interview with Jean-Claude Trichet, former President of the European Central Bank. All of the 26 articles agree to present one message: "the reasons calling for Europeans to unite have never been as numerous as today". Using a base of 67 commented tables and graphs and 34

colour maps, most of which are unique, the authors invite you to gain a better understanding of all the challenges facing the EU. This work is available in both French and English... [Read more](#)

Robert Schuman Foundation Partnership with France24/RFI



In March 2012 the Robert Schuman Foundation set up a partnership with France24 and RFI (soon to be merged under the name "Audiovisuel Extérieur de la France", AEF) so that it can broadcast information during the programme "Ici Europe/Talking Europe" which will be produced every 15 days. This week the Foundation offers viewers the opportunity to see the most recent programme that took place on 24th March and which focused on the European Commission's proposals in terms of reciprocity. Janusz Lewandowski, European Budget Commissioner for the Internal Market and Financial Services answered questions put by Jean-Dominique Giuliani, chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation... [Read more](#)

The Permanent Atlas of the European Union : a practical tool for everyone!



In an interview given to Canal Académie, Jean-Dominique Giuliani, chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation presents the "Permanent Atlas of the European Union", published by Lignes de Repères, available only in French. This atlas presents the Union, its institutions, and each of its Member States via their history, culture and statistics. A unique innovation, it offers free access to an internet site, www.atlas-permanent.eu, where data is permanently updated, thereby enabling everyone to consult the best information available on the EU in every State. Order the Atlas on the Foundation's site... [Read more](#)

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Newrope: European Political Competition



The European Association of Sciences Po Lille, Visions d'Europe, is organising, together with the Robert Schuman Foundation, the fifth Newrope competition on 6th April in Lille. This competition aims to promote the idea of Europe and to give Europe life in the areas of culture and education. This year five projects designed to make Europe more real put forward by five university delegations, will be running. The jury will be chaired by Ms Anne Dorte Riggelsen, Ambassador for Denmark in France. A conference debate on "the return of national feeling in Europe" will take place during the morning in which Magali Balent, researcher and project manager at the Robert Schuman Foundation will be taking part... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

800 billion euro for the euro zone



On 30th March the euro zone Finance Ministers came to agreement to bring the euro zone's firewall up to 800 billion euros. This sum includes around 300 billion euros in aid that has already been provided or promised to countries in difficulty and 500 billion for the European Stability Mechanism. This decision was taken just as the International Monetary Fund and the emerging countries were urging the EU to come up with effective tools before they provided any further support themselves... [Read more](#)

Unemployment continues to rise in Europe and the social situation is still a source of concern



According to a quarterly review on Employment and the Social Situation in the EU published by the Commission on 29th March the number of unemployed people in the EU rose again in 2011. Men are most affected, which brought the unemployment rate of both sexes to equality at around 10.1% in January 2012. Differences between the Member States are still significant and the Commission is planning to introduce "a package for employment" the aim of which will be to pinpoint priorities for the reform of the labour market and for the creation of jobs. The idea will also be to determine how European funds can be effectively invested into the Union's "human capital"... [Read more](#)

Unemployment reaches a record low in Germany



According to figures published on 29th March by the Federal Labour Office, the unemployment rate in Germany fell to 6.7% in March, an all time low since the country's reunification. The number of job seekers dropped by 18,000 over the last month - its fifth consecutive decrease - to total 2.841 million people... [Read more](#)

Austria: the parliament adopts a 27.9 billion euro austerity plan



On 28th March the Austrian Parliament adopted a five-year austerity plan of 27.9 billion euros with the aim of achieving budgetary balance in 2016 and the hope of recovering the country's triple "A". The measures that were drawn up by the government coalition comprising social democrats (SPÖ) and conservatives (ÖVP), were adopted thanks to the support of the MPs in the majority. The Greens, the populists and the far right voted against these measures... [Read more](#)

Unemployment up in France



According to the latest figures published by the Employment Ministry on 26th March the number of people without any work at all in mainland France rose by 6,200 in February (+0.2%) to total 2.86 million. This is the tenth consecutive month that figures have risen. The rise in the number of job seekers in the A category over one year lies at 6.2% in mainland France. If the numbers of part time workers is added (B and C categories), the number of those registered rose by 20,400 in February (+0.5%) to stand at 4.278 million. The situation is still difficult for the over 50's, whose unemployment rate rose by 1.4% in February (+15.3% over one year) whilst youth unemployment dropped (-0.2%). The number of long term unemployed in all categories totalled 1.634 million in the mainland if the figures are taken together... [Read more](#)

UK: growth revised downwards



According to figures communicated by the National Statistics Office on 28th March the British economy contracted by 0.3% in the fourth quarter of 2011 whilst the previous forecast assessed the contraction at 0.2%. The same applied to all of 2011 when GDP growth was assessed at 0.7% whilst the previous estimate lay at 0.8%. To this we might add high inflation and an unemployment rate of 8.4% of the working population, ie the highest rate in 17 years... [Read more](#)

Spain presents a draft budget comprising major austerity



The Spanish government approved the draft 2012 budget on 30th March that plans for more than 27 billion euros in savings and further revenues notably thanks to the freezing of civil servants' salaries and an average 16.9% cut in ministers budgets. "It is the biggest budgetary consolidation bid in our democratic history," said Budget Minister Cristobal Montoro after the Council of Ministers. "Spain will be reliable in 2012," he promised whilst the country blew its deficit goal in 2011 - achieving 8.51% instead of 6%; it won a reprieve from the Eurogroup for 2012 with a new goal of 5.3% of the GDP instead of 4.4%... [Read more](#)

Portugal: pessimistic growth forecasts from the Central Bank



The Portuguese economy, that is under financial assistance, is due to contract by 3.4% this year and stagnate in 2013, which might force the government to take further austerity measures said the Bank of Portugal on 29th March. In its spring economic bulletin it forecasts a "quite significant contraction in economic activity in 2012 (-3.4%) followed by stagnation in 2013", whilst it speaks of recovery as of next year... [Read more](#)

European Council :

Conclusions of the EU/South Korea Summit



On 28th March during the 6th EU/South Korea Summit the Korean and European leaders welcomed the positive effect of the free trade agreement that entered into force in July 2011 regarding trade between the two parties, as well as the " positive developments" provided by the Strategic Partnership. They said they wanted to step up cooperation, notably in terms of higher education, research and innovation. They also expressed concern over the situation in North Korea, Syria and Iran. They said they wanted to respect their international commitments to fight against nuclear terrorism as well as those taken during the G20 and the Durban Summit on the environment. They finally recalled that they wanted to complete the WTO's Doha Round negotiations... [Read more](#)

Herman van Rompuy's Declaration on nuclear safety



On the occasion of the Nuclear Safety Summit in Seoul, the President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy recalled the EU's main guidelines in this regard. He pointed to the main threats: terrorism and proliferation. These threats require specific responses to go hand in hand with those set up to counter biological and chemical threats. He stressed the responsibility held by the States who have to act effectively to make safe their nuclear installations and to limit proliferation, whether it was intentional or not. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plays a major role. Finally he said he was pleased with the clear aim of not using highly enriched uranium in civilian activities which is due to become effective in the EU by the end of the decade... [Read more](#)

Commission :

A European Centre to Counter Cybercrime on the Commission's Agenda



Since cybercrime claims new victims everyday on 28th March the Commission suggested the creation of a European Cybercrime Centre within Europol. Its aim is to protect citizens and businesses from organised criminal groups, notably those which generate significant profit thanks for example to on-line fraud or the theft of banking credentials, in the knowledge that nearly 36% of Europeans make on-line payments. The Centre will also counter pedo-pornography. According to Cecilia Malmström, European Commissioner for Internal Affairs, a Centre like this "will be at the heart of cooperation to defend an internet which is both free, open and safe".. [Read more](#)

The launch of the Citizens' Initiative



Since April 1st people can launch European citizens' initiatives since the regulation has now entered into force. The citizens' initiative that has to be delivered by 7 citizens from 7 different States, enables one million European citizens from a representative number of Member States, to ask the European Commission to put forward a legislative proposal on an issue that is part of its competence and within European law. This citizens' initiative planned for in the Lisbon Treaty is supposed to bring the EU closer to its citizens by enabling them to achieve direct involvement in the legislative process... [Read more](#)

Takeover of British Midland by IAG (British Airways/Iberia)



On 30th March the European Commission allowed the take over of British Midlands by International Consolidated Airlines which brings together British Airways and Iberia. To avoid a monopoly some national and international flights will have to be granted to some other niches leaving Heathrow in London and take transit passengers in order to guarantee market access by other airlines... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policy



With the approval of three resolutions on 29th March, MEPs expressed their support of rapprochement with Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. They asked for a return to the negotiation table with Serbia as soon as possible, and welcomed the launch of the talks with Montenegro planned for June - they called on the five Member States that have still not acknowledged Kosovo's independence to do so. They finally asked the EU to step up sanctions against the Belarus regime, notably those of an economic nature... [Read more](#)

Council :

Roaming: telephone tariffs will decrease as of July 1st



On 28th March MEPs and the Council's representatives adopted an agreement to limit roaming bills, ie the surcharge applied by operators for the use of a mobile phone abroad. This new regulation, which is planned to enter into force on July 1st next, is supposed to create a stable sustainable structure for telephone communications' prices. Consumers will have two different contracts (one for calls within borders and one for those made outside) without having to change their number. This new measure brings the cost of calls down to 29 centimes for a call issued or 9 centimes for an SMS. In the future and by 2014 the price of an SMS is due to drop to 6 centimes ... [Read more](#)

A new directive for accidents involving dangerous substances



On 28th March the agreement between the Council and the European Parliament with regard to the Directive on the control of major accidents involving dangerous substances, SEVESO III, has been approved. This is the result of intense negotiations since the launch of the proposal by the Commission in December 2010. The text is due to be officially adopted before the end of 2012... [Read more](#)

Iceland's progress towards membership



On 30th March negotiations over Iceland's accession to the EU moved forwards. The chapters on consumer protection and healthcare and on the European Security and Defence Policy have been finalised. Two new chapters have also been opened regarding the competition and energy policies. Out of 35 chapters 15 have been opened and 10 have been finalised. The next ministerial meeting is due to take place in June... [Read more](#)

First discussions on the multi-annual financial framework 2014-2020



On 26th March the 27 European Affairs Ministers addressed the multi-annual financial framework for 2014-2020. Indeed the latter is still the focus of long and difficult negotiations because it determines the future of the Union from a budgetary point of view for the next 7 years. The present budgetary framework ends in 2013. An agreement has to be found before this period ends... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Joachim Gauck in Warsaw



Joachim Gauck, President of Germany, chose Poland as his first destination abroad on 27th and 28th March. In Warsaw Joachim Gauck met his Polish counterpart Bronislaw Komorowski who said: "We both experienced the same period without freedom. This common experience will be the main base for our future bilateral cooperation, and also for our work in the EU." Joachim Gauck also met Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, and the leader of the Diet (Sejm) Ewa Kopacz... [Read more](#)

Belgium :

Introduction of quotas in the civil service



The Belgian government decided on 29th March to set a 33% quota of women in positions of responsibility in the federal civil service to be achieved by 2013. At the beginning of 2012 only 13% of the 114 'top managers' and 27% of the 1,820 executives of the units or departments in the federal civil service were women noted the Equal Opportunities Minister Joëlle Milquet and Secretary of State for the Modernisation of the Public Services, Hendrik Bogaert after a council of ministers. In 2013 women will have to represent one third of these posts in each of the federal service's departments... [Read more](#)

Estonia :

Tallinn introduces free public transport



On 26th March the Mayor of Tallinn Edgar Savisaar announced that the Estonian capital was going to make public transport free as of 1st January 2013. This decision will make Tallinn the first European capital to have introduced free public transport. This step is the result of a consultation with the population which revealed that 75% of the town's inhabitants approved the idea of free public transport. To fund this project the town council will need 20 million additional euros ie 40% of its present transport budget... [Read more](#)

Ireland :

Referendum date on the budgetary pact set for 31st May



On 27th March the Irish Foreign Minister Eamon Gilmore announced that the Council of Ministers had come to agreement on the referendum date on the European budgetary pact, which will take place on 31st May. This text was approved on 2nd March by 25 European government out of 27 during a European Council. Ireland, whose Constitution obliges it to hold a referendum on each "sufficiently significant" change of the latter, will be the only EU country to organise a popular consultation on the budgetary pact... [Read more](#)

Slovakia :

Composition of Robert Fico's government



Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico presented his government on 30th March, which is due to be appointed officially on 4th April, after his victory in the general elections on 10th March. The government is due to comprise ten members of SMER-SD including one woman... [Read more](#)

Sweden :

Resignation of the Defence Minister



On 29th March the Swedish Defence Minister, Sten Tolgfors, handed in his resignation to the Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt. The main reason for this he said were the revelations that had recently been made by the media regarding his involvement in a scandal linked to the support - which was only just within the limits of legality - granted by Swedish Defence to the construction of an arms factory in Saudi Arabia. After his resignation his post will temporarily be taken on by the present Infrastructure Minister Catharina Elmsäter-Svärd... [Read more](#)

Belarus :

Belarus opponents prevented from attending a meeting in Brussels



On 28th March three members of the Belarus opposition were arrested on the border between Russia and Belarus. They were travelling to a meeting planned for 29th March in Brussels with the European Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle. The meeting was to focus on the modernisation of Belarus and they decided to pass via Moscow to avoid the border controls between the EU and Belarus. This is another episode in the tension between the EU and Belarus... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

Nils Muiznieks takes office as Human Rights Commissioner



On April 1st Latvian Nils Muiznieks took office as Human Rights Commissioner at the Council of Europe. Former director of the European Committee against Racism and Intolerance, he was elected to this post by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in January 2012. Amongst his priorities feature the defence of the most vulnerable groups, whose position has been weakened by the economic crisis; migrants', women's and minorities' rights; and the respect of Human Rights "within the information society". This last point covers issues such as the freedom of the media, the protection of personal data, social networks and access to IT competences... [Read more](#)

OECD :

The OECD asks for the EFSF's capacities to be raised



OECD Secretary General, Angel Gurría, declared on 27th March that the euro zone's Member States should raise the EFSF's capacities to total 1000 billion euros. This recommendation was made on the occasion of the presentation of economic studies that were respectively devoted to the euro zone and the EU. To counter economic, budgetary and financial imbalance in the euro zone OECD experts suggest an ambitious programme to reform the goods and services' market as well as the labour market... [Read more](#)

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Additional reform for Poland



Poland which recorded the highest growth rate amongst the OECD countries during the entire world economic crisis should continue reform to reduce the vulnerability of its economy warns the OECD in a report presented on 28th March in Warsaw. "Poland's economic performance has made it a star in the OECD," commented Angel Gurría, the OECD's Secretary General during the presentation of this report. But "the time has come for the authorities to foster green and innovative sources of growth and to implement structural and social reform that will continue to help the country catch up with the rest of Europe, whilst consolidating the confidence of the capital markets in the country's economic future," he added... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Trade between the EU and South Korea



On 27th March on the eve of the EU/South Korea summit, Eurostat published figures showing variations in the goods trade between the Union and South Korea. The increase in trade is significant but unequal. Whilst exports doubled between 2000 and 2011, imports from Korea to the EU have only increased by a third. In the Union France, (13%), the Netherlands (11%) and Italy (9%) are the main export countries. Germany is both the main export (36%) and import country (23%)... [Read more](#)

Inflation slightly down in the euro zone



According to a rapid estimate by Eurostat published on 30th March inflation in the euro zone declined from 2.7% to 2.6% in March... [Read more](#)

Euro Zone: a new record unemployment rate of 10.8% in February



On 2nd April, Eurostat published figures indicating an increase of 0.1% in the unemployment rate in February in comparison with January, rising to 10.8% in the euro zone and to 10.2% in the EU, in comparison with 10% and 9.5% one year ago. Austria and the Netherlands record a rate below 5%, whilst it is over 20% in Spain and

Greece... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

The world crisis: have we learned the right lessons?



Hungarian think-tank CASE (Centre for Social and Economic Research) has published a study entitled "The Global Crisis: Have we learned the right lessons?" Author György Suranyi reviews the causes of the crisis. He highlights the shortfalls in the regulation of the financial markets but also other factors such as excess liquidities, fiscal laxism, inadapted monetary policies and world imbalances. He particularly focuses on the role played by the ECB in the euro zone during and after the crisis... [Read more](#)

Assessment of the Common Agricultural Policy post-2013



"Notre Europe" has published a report entitled "Does the draft CAP post-2013 announce major reform?" This study focuses on assessing the draft CAP post-2013, as it is defined in the seven draft regulations put forward in October 2011. According to its author Louis Pascal Mahé although some of the planned reforms represent major progress, notably towards better consideration of environmental imperatives, the changes are still "limited"... [Read more](#)

Mariano Rajoy's 100 Days



The Foundation for International Relations and External Dialogue (FRIDE) has published a paper entitled "Spanish Foreign Policy Monitor: January-March 2012" in which it analyses the first 100 days of Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's office in terms of foreign policy. The author stresses that his priorities have been dictated by the crisis: Europe as a main reference, the reduction of available resources and the promotion of Spain's image in the world... [Read more](#)

Kosovo and Serbia: moving towards a normal relationship



The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has published a study on relations between Serbia and Kosovo entitled "Kosovo and Serbia: towards a normalisation of relations." Reviewing the sensitive issue of Kosovo's status and then the tense relations entertained by the two countries and also the recent work accomplished by Serbia as part of its accession to the EU, author Stefan Lehne lists the work that both Kosovo and Serbia will have to undertake to normalise their relations... [Read more](#)

Aid for Food Security in Africa



The development aid given by the EU towards food security in Sub-Saharan Africa "is generally effective" but often it does not lead to a sufficiently sustainable improvement in the situation, said the European Court of Auditors on 28th March. In a report devoted to food aid in Sub-Saharan Africa where 239 million people - ie 30% of the population - suffered from hunger in 2010, the Court acknowledges that "most of the results of the EU's interventions have been achieved"... [Read more](#)

Publications :

French voters face a difficult choice



The Deutsch-Französisches Institute has published issue number 26 in the series "Aktuelle Frankreich Analyse" which focuses on what is happening in France. The study entitled "Machtwechsel in Frankreich? Die Präsidentschaftswahl 2012: Kandidaten, Themen, Alternativen" (Change of Power in France? The Presidential election 2012; candidates, themes, alternatives), reviews the economic and social challenges that the new French president will have to face... [Read more](#)

Culture :

"Frauen" at the "Pinakothek der Moderne" in Munich



The "Pinakothek der Moderne" in Munich is holding an exhibition devoted to Max Beckmann, Pablo Picasso and Willem Kooning which highlights the image of women in their work. Women are not the subjects but generally become catalysts of history (Picasso), symbols of autonomy (Beckmann) or an independent strength (de Kooning). The exhibition presents 90 paintings and major works from the world's biggest international museums and private collections. The exhibition will be open until 15th July... [Read more](#)

Maurice Denis, the eternal spring



An exhibition devoted to painter Maurice Denis (1870-1943) is open until 15th July 2012 at the impressionist museum in Giverny. Devoted to the theme of spring in Denis's work, it is split into three parts: the waking of nature in spring, the Christian spring and earthly paradise and finally the beginnings of love and the spring of life... [Read more](#)

Carl Larsson, the quest for the good life



The Atheneum Museum in Helsinki is presenting more than a hundred works by Swedish painter, Carl Larsson (1853-1919), until 29th April - it focuses on the central theme of house and home. Larsson's work, which attempts to reflect light, joy and lightness, deeply influenced the vision Swedish people and other Europeans had of daily life... [Read more](#)

Tribute to Spuris Egons



The National Museum of Art of Latvia is putting on an exhibition from 4th April until 27th May 2012 entitled "A place with an exceptional view" that brings together various pieces of work by artist Spuris Egon, who made a profound impression on the history of Latvian photography in the 20th century. More than 350 photographs from the start of his work until the photographer's death will be on show in tribute to the man who was the first Soviet artist to receive a golden medal from the International Photographic Art Federation in 1971. At the same time the Goethe Institute in Riga will be presenting another series of his photographs from 4th April to 7th May 2012 under the title of "Bremen"... [Read more](#)

Patrick Modiano honoured by Austria/European Prize



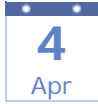
French author Patrick Modiano is the winner of the Austrian State's European Literature Prize, announced the Austrian Culture Minister Claudia Schmied on 28th March in a press release. The minister indicated that the author has been honoured for his work that is marked by "profoundly human accounts of the past and present, remembering and forgetting". Patrick Modiano will receive this prize on 28th July in Salzburg. Winner of the Grand Novel Prize of the Academie Française in 1972 and of the Goncourt Prize in 1978, he has published 25 novels in the 40 years of his writing career... [Read more](#)

New Exhibition at the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam



There is an exhibition until 15th September 2012 at the Anne Frank Museum of Amsterdam entitled "We too might move on." The focus is the story of the Frank and Van Pels families and also Fritz Pfeffer who fled Germany to take refuge in the Netherlands, trying to find asylum in the UK, USA, Australia, Chili, Cuba and Aruba. Between 1933 and 1941 around 410,000 Jews left Germany and Austria... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



4th April
Frankfurt
Meeting of the Council of Governors of the European Central Bank

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