

## Chinese Slowdown: Toward Crisis or Rebalancing?

*Jean-Raphaël Chaponnière*

In this spring of 2017, we have on several occasions seen rather optimistic commentaries on an economic upturn in China, where annual growth is again edging toward the 7% mark. And yet the last three years have actually been a time of Chinese economic slowdown. After holding up well in the global crisis of the late 2000s, China's economy has been marking time. What are the actual prospects for economic development in the mid- and long-term?

Going beyond short-term assessments, Jean-Raphaël Chaponnière offers a retrospective of China's return to the world economy, its adaptation to the market economy, its engines of growth (labour, consumption, investment) and the current limits these face. He shows how China has confronted the crisis, responding to the slowdown of its activity with a number of re-balancings (towards its internal market, among other things) and a transformation of its production structure. Lastly, drawing on various available analyses and a number of recently observed facts and findings, Chaponnière outlines the prospects for the possible development of the Chinese economy, asking how the various engines of economic activity will perform; whether it will experience a financial crisis (and what the consequences of such a crisis might be); whether it will become the leading global power and, if so, on the basis of what economic model.

## Modernizing Public Action: The Levers of Social Change

*Marjorie Jouen*

For some years now, public action has had to adapt to a number of changes in the habits and demands of service-users. Drawing on new methods and social innovations, this move toward modernization seems to be quite well advanced in France. By contrast, as Marjorie Jouen stresses here, when it comes to transforming public action because

certain practices or services have ceased to meet the general interest or have become detrimental to the community, the state seems to have more difficulty adapting. However, the analysis of social change and its drivers offers new opportunities for public actors to modernize their activity. After running through the various different motivations and levers of social change, Marjorie Jouen shows how these tools could be transposed to subserve the modernization of public action, so as to improve its efficiency and develop instruments that would enable it concretely to meet its desired objectives.

## Behaviour as a Lever of Ecological Transition? Understanding and Acting on Individual Behaviour and Collective Dynamics

*Solange Martin and Albane Gaspard*

Beyond broad policy declarations, the implementation of ecological transition — which consists mainly in curbing consumption of energy and raw materials in our societies — requires substantial behavioural change at the collective, but also, quite obviously, the individual level. Yet, though there is general consensus around the principle of embarking on the path to transition, things get more complicated when it comes to changing our practices and habits. Can we act on individual behaviour and collective dynamics in respect of this particular aim of ecological transition, and, if so, how are we to go about it?

Solange Martin and Albane Gaspard have examined this question for the French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME) and offer us the fruit of their labours here. They show, for example, how the social and human sciences help to understand behaviour both at the individual level and in its collective dimensions, and they outline different possible lines of action to modify it. But, given the entanglement between various levels, it is essential, if we are to act effectively on behaviour, to combine approaches, tools and actors, and to analyse

and understand social practices thoroughly before implementing political projects or measures.

## **Technology and Society: Irresistible Evolution**

*Thierry Gaudin*

The month of May 2017 was marked by a cyber-attack of international dimensions that affected companies and public organizations, demonstrating how vulnerable our contemporaries are to the current technical system. The relationship between human beings and technology is a structuring element of our civilization and has been so for centuries, if not millennia. Nonetheless, the staggering progress we have seen in science and technology since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the broadening of the scope of technology to communications, human relations and even the human body itself, has raised a wide range of questions. Hence the importance of the long-term analysis of the relations between society and technology offered here by Thierry Gaudin: what does the past tell us about those relations and the way technical culture is developed and disseminated? What have the engines of technical progress been, what are they today, and what do they reveal about our human organizational structures? How are we to envision the future evolution of technical progress, which depends more now on IT multinationals than it does on states, and whose major driver is the manipulation of minds? In this context, are we irremediably condemned just to go along with the evolution of the technical system, or can society still find positive, progressive solutions for a system that is disrupting both economic exchange and human relations?

## **The European Union's Areas of Competency: Perceptions and Realities**

*Gabriel Arnoux*

The recent French presidential elections have confirmed a lack of understanding and disapproval on the part of many citizens of policies that go back several decades, and also of the leaders who carried out those policies. They have also reminded us of how these same citizens distrust — or even reject — the European Union, which is often quick to figure as a scapegoat for national

problems. Yet, as this article by Gabriel Arnoux shows, this rejection of Europe is based on a misunderstanding — very often maintained by national governments — of the EU's actual areas of competency.

There is, in fact, a real difference between the *perception* many European citizens have of the role of the Union in shaping and determining national policies and the *reality* of that role. The exclusive areas of competency of the European Union are actually rather limited (relating mainly to compliance with competition rules, currency, and customs and trade policy). In most areas, the EU intervenes only to support member states or in collaboration with them. This clarification of the EU's real areas of competency is vital, since the Commission has just begun a process of reflection on the future of Europe, based on five scenarios aimed at determining how the Union might develop and what its proper areas of competency should be. It is also essential because the vagueness around the actual responsibilities and legal competencies of European and national institutions is an indicator of a more general malaise regarding the way public policies are presented and evaluated, which also plays a considerable role in the citizenry's general disaffection with politics.

## **The (Dis)United Kingdom and its Borders**

*Jean-François Drevet*

Following the British referendum of June 2016, which saw a majority of votes cast in favour of Brexit, on 29 March 2017 Article 50 of the European Union (EU) Treaty was triggered in order to settle the terms of the UK's departure from the EU. London has two years to work with the 27 other member countries on the UK's effective exit from the Union.

Above and beyond its economic and social consequences, which have received copious mention and comment, Brexit could also lead to a return of conflict in Europe, as is highlighted in this column by Jean-François Drevet. One of the challenges the EU has risen to most effectively since its creation has undoubtedly been the maintenance of peace on the European continent, yet that pertains not only to relations between the founder members (beginning with France, Italy and Germany) but also to the settling of a number of territorial disputes involving the United Kingdom, both in its multi-

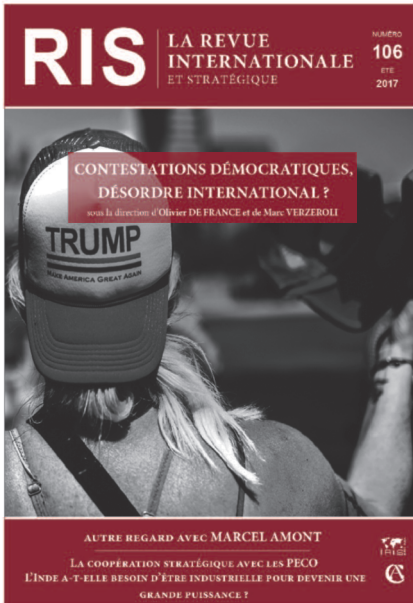
national structure and in its relations with other European states. Brexit could revive a number of these conflicts which EU membership had helped to ease — particularly disputes over Cyprus, Gibraltar and Northern

Ireland. This point, illustrated in this column, is one that British and European negotiators will have to keep in mind when the details of the UK's exit are being worked out. ■

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