

Headlines:

- **Another Arab Spring beckons in Egypt?**
- **Chinese economic interests clash with its Muslims**
- **Saudi Monarchy Grand Ambitions**

Details:

Another Arab Spring beckons in Egypt?

Monday, 25th April, saw large swaths of Egyptians take to the streets to protest against current Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al Sisi for his transfer of two Egyptian islands to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia claims that these islands were originally theirs which they gave to the Egyptians to look after during the 1950's. Media agencies made this issue the focus of the protest, but it is clear the issue is clearly a lot deeper. High youth unemployment, a failing economy, widespread poverty and severe food shortages continue to plague Egypt which is home to a population of 82 million. Chants reminiscent of the 2011 protests could be heard, calling for the removal of military rule and a change in regime as the conditions which originally gave rise to the first Arab Spring have got worse under Sisi. Only time will tell whether Sisi will be able to hold his population under control as tensions are rising quickly.

Chinese economic interests clash with its Muslims

There is no doubt that the minority Uighur Muslims of China have been subjugated to marginalisation under various draconian policies by the Chinese regime. The Uighurs, roughly 10 million in number are located bordering 5 Muslim majority countries, in China's Xinjiang province. A strategically important province that is key in securing China's national security from so-called terrorist threats. Not only is Xinjiang strategically important but the recent development of the economic corridor, a highway that would begin within Xinjiang and end at the port of Gwadar, Pakistan. Allowing the Chinese access to the vast Middle Eastern market. It is therefore no surprise that China's stance on its minority population is softening, summed up in the words of the prime minister as he visited the province, *'let the people, especially the young, have something to do and money to earn.'* China has suppressed the Uighur and Islamic culture, even taking steps to dilute the population of the Uighur Muslims by encouraging Han Chinese settlers to move into the province. Along with dilution and marginalisation, suppression has also been used with the Adhan being publicly banned, children under 18 being barred from the Masajid and now Muslims banned Muslims from fasting in Ramadan.

Saudi Monarchies Grand Ambitions

This has been an important week for Saudi Arabia. The invasion of Yemen and low oil prices has crippled the economic situation of the monarchy. In this vain Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced the monarchies 'Vision 2030,' which envisaged raising non-oil revenue to 600 billion riyals (\$160 billion) by 2020 and 1 trillion riyals (\$267 billion) by 2030. *"We will not allow our country ever to be at the mercy of commodity price volatility or external markets,"* Prince Mohammed said at his first news conference with international journalists, who were invited to Riyadh Palace for the event. But the plan gave few details on how this would be implemented, something that has bedevilled previous reforms. Asked where Riyadh would find the funds for a \$2 trillion dollar fund, he said it would come from transferring the ownership of Aramco to a new Public Investment Fund. *"We are speaking about more than \$2 trillion. We expect the valuation to be more than \$2 trillion. In addition to that there are other assets that will be added to the fund, and part of it is already added."* Saudi Arabia has long wasted its oil wealth on infrastructure projects, military hardware and in the financial markets in the west. But Saudi now faces a perfect storm with regular budget deficits and with 51% of the country's 27 million population under the age of 25 demanding jobs and a prosperous future that the monarchy can no longer guarantee. It remains to be seen if this grand vision ever materialises or just be like many other ambitions projects that were mere mirages in the desert.