

Headlines:

- **Growth in China**
- **Tensions increase in Asia-Pacific**
- **UK Prime Minister Calls Snap Election**

Details:

Growth in China

China's economy grew by 6.9% in the first quarter of 2017, according to official figures. The growth rate, which compares expansion with the same three months in the previous year, was slightly higher than many economists had forecast. State-led infrastructure spending and demand for new property helped drive the world's second-largest economy. Last month China cut its growth target for this year to 6.5% from 6.7% in 2016. China's National Bureau of Statistics said the economy maintained momentum from the second half of last year, "getting off to a good start in 2017 and laying a solid foundation for accomplishing the whole-year growth target". Another set of data also suggests a rise in domestic consumption. February retail sales jumped 10.9% from the previous year. China is a key driver of the global economy and its performance is closely watched by investors around the world. Its 2016 growth was its slowest in 26 years. Hidenobu Tokuda of the Mizuho Research Institute in Tokyo said China should be trying to slow its growth rate in the long term, though "uncertainties remain high" about how that slowdown would happen. Meanwhile Brian Jackson of IHS Global Insight predicted both industrial output and the property sector would slow.

Tensions increase in Asia-Pacific

North Korea has warned its army is on "maximum alert" after the US Vice President visited the heavily militarised border between the two Koreas and reiterated Washington's position that "all options are on the table" in dealing with Pyongyang. "The time of dictating orders by brandishing the US military might has gone. If those businessmen in power in the US thought of intimidating us by any military or sanction threats - as the [Barack] Obama administration used to do and failed - they will soon find out such threats are useless," stated Sin Hong-chol North Korea's Deputy Foreign Minister. Tensions between Pyongyang and Washington have soared in recent weeks, as a series of North Korean missile tests have wrought ever-more bellicose warnings from Donald Trump's administration. However it is evident to see that whilst North Korea has nuclear ambitions it is after economic gains rather than global domination, Hong-chol specified this in his interview with the news outlet this week when he stated that Washington, "should look at the world with open eyes" and that, "The nuclear weapon in our possession is not illusion; it is not a commodity that may be traded for American dollars - nor is it for sale. So it cannot be put on the negotiating table with the aim to rip it off". Hong-Chol statements echo the stance of Pyongyang, the missile tests coupled with the rhetoric indicate that North Korea is attempting to negotiate a removal of US sanctions and imposed isolation, it does not have global ambitions nor does it have the ability to sustain itself in battle against a global superpower as the failure of the Sunday missile launch duly highlighted.

UK Prime Minister Calls Snap Election

On Tuesday 18th April, British Prime Minister Theresa May called for a snap general election after previously stating she had no intention do so. This comes at a surprise to most but in light of party politics elsewhere this is prime time to obtain a majority in parliament. This is in order to push for the type of Brexit she wants, one that will ensure Britain has its fingertips dipped inside European affairs despite being an external actor.