

# Britain's next test: What if Brexit works?

By Mark Landler

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LONDON — Britain's departure from the European Union on Friday drew a mournful reaction from many people who have long viewed Brexit as consigning their country, once the vanguard of Europe, to a future of economic mediocrity and geopolitical irrelevance.

But there are many others who view Brexit as a day of liberation, when Britain, unshackled from the bureaucracy of Brussels, will stride into a future of eco-

nommic innovation and vigorous, clear-eyed politics — a "moment of real national renewal," in the words of Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

That positive case for Brexit will now be tested, and it is prompting even those who ardently opposed it to wrestle with a question they had mostly dismissed during 3 1/2 years of debate: What if it works?

"Disruptive change can be beneficial for a country," said Tony Travers, a professor of politics at the London

School of Economics. "That is, in a sense, what Brexit has accomplished."

Britain is no stranger to disruptive change, of course. After the end of World War II, it adjusted to the end of empire by embedding itself in an Atlantic alliance and building a European-style welfare state. In the early 1980s, Margaret Thatcher led a free-market revolution that dismantled parts of that state and nurtured a British nationalism that fully flowered in the wrenching debate over Brexit.

By giving the Brexiteers a chance to put their ideas into action, Travers said, British politics could be reinvented.

"Boris Johnson's argument is that 10, 15 or 20 years from now, we'll look back and say, 'Getting out was in our national interest,'" said Mujtaba Rahman, a managing director at the political risk consultancy Eurasia Group. "The jury is out on that, but if he can pull this off, there are reasons to think Britain will prosper."

With Britain likely to ham-

mer out some sort of trade agreement with the EU, the most alarmist predictions about Brexit — food shortages, trucks lined up for miles at ports — are not likely to happen. Rather than a triumph or a tragedy for the country, Brexit may end up being a long twilight.

"We're not going to go off a cliff," said Jonathan Powell, who was a chief of staff to former Prime Minister Tony Blair. "It will be more of a glide path. Britain is going to have to come to terms with being a small country."

# Chinese criticize United States travel restrictions

dpa

BEIJING — China's Foreign Ministry has blasted the U.S. government for restricting the entry of Chinese nationals due to the coronavirus outbreak, which this week was declared a global health emergency by the World Health Organization.

"While the WHO has only just specifically advised against any travel restrictions, the U.S. has decided to act in the opposite way. This has set a bad example. It is certainly not a gesture of goodwill," ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said.

New U.S. measures include a ban on the entry of foreign nationals — other than the immediate family of U.S. citizens and permanent residents — who have traveled in China within the last 14 days.

The U.S. also took the "unprecedented" step of placing 195 U.S. citizens who recently returned from the Chinese city of

Wuhan in quarantine for 14 days.

Schools, factories and offices across China are due to remain closed even as the weeklong Lunar New Year holiday comes to an end.

Apple on Saturday became the latest company to announce the closure of its stores in mainland China to prevent the spread of the virus, with the measure set to remain on place until Feb. 9.

The number of people infected with the new coronavirus in China has risen to more than 11,000, while a total of 259 people have died, according to the most recent figures from Chinese health officials.

Officials in Hubei province in central China, the epicenter of the coronavirus crisis, said an additional 1,347 new cases had been reported in that province alone, bringing the number of infections there to 7,153.

Wuhan, with a popu-

lation of 11 million, has been placed on lockdown, as have many other Chinese cities. The number of people infected and China's national death toll are expected to climb further once other regions report their latest statistics.

On Saturday, more than 3,000 Hong Kong nurses and doctors registered with a newly formed public hospitals union voted in favor of closing the semi-autonomous city's borders with Mainland China to stem the spread of the virus.

More than 100 other people in about two dozen countries have become ill with the virus.

Sri Lanka became the latest country on Saturday to report a case when a Chinese woman traveling there was found to have coronavirus.

The European Union and several countries have already flown their

citizens out of China, including the United States, Japan, South Korea, Jordan, Britain and most recently Sri Lanka, India and Turkey.

A German air force jet left Wuhan early Saturday to evacuate 130 people — 90 German citizens and around 40 citizens of other countries.

It arrived in Frankfurt on Saturday afternoon. The flight was delayed after Moscow refused to allow the plane a short layover in the Russian capital as planned. The plane stopped in Helsinki instead, German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer said.

The official explanation given in Moscow was a lack of capacity at the city's airport. Kramp-Karrenbauer said the German Foreign Office plans to discuss the turn of events thoroughly.

The passengers are to spend two weeks in quarantine following

medical testing upon their arrival, the Frankfurt health authority said.

Hundreds of flights to and from China have been canceled around the world, including those run by Air Canada, Lufthansa, British Airways, Turkish Airlines, United, American Airlines, KLM, Air France, Qantas and Delta.

Three Philippine airlines — Philippine Airlines, Cebu Pacific Air and AirAsia Philippines — announced on Saturday they have canceled flights to and from China.

Russia announced earlier this week it was closing its land border with China, similar to steps taken by China's other neighbors. Moscow reported its first case of the virus on Friday.

Both the U.S. and Japan told citizens not to travel to China, with Washington issuing a warning on par with its advisories for Afghanistan and Iran.

The Italian government on Friday declared a six-month state of emergency in response to the first confirmed cases of the new coronavirus in the country.

The decision resulted in \$5.5 million being earmarked for civil protection purposes.

Italian cruise company Costa announced on Friday that it would not allow anyone who had been in China in the last 14 days on board — including guests, visitors or crew members of any nationality.

The coronavirus broke out at a seafood market in Wuhan that reportedly sold exotic animals for consumption — similar to the outbreak of SARS.

SARS, a disease that infected 8,000 people and killed 800 globally, was linked to the consumption of civet cats, another exotic meat. The coronavirus belongs to the same family of viruses.

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