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As China pushes back on virus, Europe wakes to 'Wolf Warrior' diplomacy

LONDON/BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Earlier this month, Europe's ambassador in Beijing submitted to Chinese censorship. Seeking to mark an anniversary of the European Union's relations with China on May 6, he and the EU's 27 ambassadors co-wrote an opinion piece titled "EU-China ties vital amid global crisis," for publication on embassy websites and in China Daily, an English-language newspaper controlled by the state.

"The outbreak of the coronavirus in China, and its subsequent spread to the rest of the world over the past three months," said the carefully orchestrated piece, had "temporarily side-tracked" plans for meetings.

But in the China Daily version, the reference to the virus starting in China was deleted.

The change emerged as the article appeared on EU embassy websites, causing alarm among representatives of member states. Diplomats said the ambassador, French diplomat Nicolas Chapuis, had not consulted his bosses in Brussels or his fellow envoys about the change. He had, the EU executive said on May 7, unilaterally decided to accept it, with "considerable reluctance."

Chapuis told a news conference the omission was "regrettable," his boss, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, subsequently spoke out against censorship by China's state controlled media. Borrell also said that accepting the cut "was not the right decision to take," though Chapuis kept his job.

China Daily did not respond to requests for comment, but the paper's bureau chief in Brussels, Chen Weihua, responded to the EU ambassador on Twitter, saying, "You did nothing wrong. I don't think those people should make a big fuss of the editing out of such a phrase."

As the new coronavirus casts its shadow over geopolitics,



FILE PHOTO: The Chinese national flag flies at half-mast behind a statue of late Chinese chairman Mao Zedong in Wuhan, Hubei province, as China holds a national mourning for those who died of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), on the

the episode highlights concern among European diplomats over what they see as an increasingly conflictual relationship with Beijing. the pandemic threatens to its global reputation, the government of President Xi Jinping is pushing hard to control the story from Berlin to Bratislava, diplomatic cables seen by Reuters and interviews with more than a dozen diplomats, advisers and officials show.

In a campaign of increasingly assertive and at times aggressive diplomacy, China has

sought to pressure European countries that criticise its handling of the outbreak, Reuters found. At a time when Europe's ties with the United States are already strained by President Donald Trump's 'America First' policy, the fallout from the coronavirus underscores how the EU is caught between two powers - needing both, but reluctant to side with either. On the one hand, officials in Brussels and European capitals argue they need to show China that the European Union

- the world's largest trading bloc and a wealthy market of 450 million consumers - won't be pushed around. On the other, countries within Europe are rarely unanimous. States such as Germany have large trade relationships with China that they don't want to jeopardise. German manufacturers, for example, depend on China, Germany's biggest trading partner, to both supply components and to buy their cars.

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Reopening The Country Seen As Greater Risk Among Most Of Americans: National Poll

APRIL 2020



Economy vs. Death: Month of April shaped America's coronavirus response. Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Americans, by a large 30-point margin, are resistant to re-opening the country now, believing the risk to human life of opening the country outweighs the economic toll of remaining under restrictive lockdowns -- a concern that starkly divides along partisan lines, according to a new ABC News/Ipsos released Friday. In the new poll, conducted by Ipsos, a research and opinion organization, in partnership with ABC News using Ipsos' Knowledge Panel, nearly two-thirds of Americans said they more closely align with the view that opening the country now is not advantageous since it will result in a higher death toll, while slightly more than one-third agree with the belief that an immediate reopening is beneficial to minimize the negative impact on the economy.

But those attitudes show deep partisan divisions, with only 6% of Democrats, compared to 65% of Republicans, siding with the viewpoint of opening the country now to salvage the economy. An overwhelming 92% of Democrats

and only 35% of Republicans oppose an immediate re-opening, citing the effect of the deadly virus. Independents trace the outlook of the country, with 36% supporting opening up the country now, and 63% opposing such a move.

Sill, when asked about the likelihood of agreeing to get a safe and effective vaccine, the new survey shows some skepticism about being inoculated. One-quarter of Americans said they were not likely to get vaccinated, even if a safe and effective vaccine was developed. About three-quarters said they would likely get the immunization.



If a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine is developed, how likely would you be to get vaccinated?

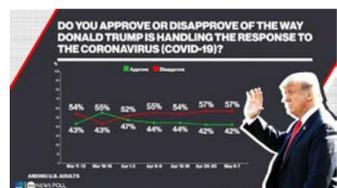
If a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine is developed, how likely would you be to get vaccinated? ABC News/Ipsos Poll

"There's always been an anti-vaccine group of individuals that are going to refuse vaccines no matter what," said Dr. Carlos del Rio, an infectious disease expert, and a professor of medicine, epidemiology and global health at Emory University. "The question is, how do they impact other people."

Del Rio told ABC News that while the country is generally "very good" at vaccinating children, the number of adults who receive vaccinations pales in comparison, citing the influenza vaccine as an example.

"After the pandemic of influenza, the influenza vaccination...became recommended for every age beyond six months," he said. "We've done really good at vaccinating young people - were getting rates in the order of 40% or so - we're doing terrible vaccinating adults, and we're particularly bad vaccinating adult males."

But del Rio emphasized the critical role vaccines play in keeping the public safe. "We frequently tend to underestimate their benefit and overestimate the risk," he said. "Vaccines save lives." The new poll was conducted over two days, during which the death toll in the country surpassed 70,000 and President Trump reversed course on disbanding the White House coronavirus task force, announcing that the team would "continue on indefinitely" to focus on vaccines and therapeutics but that they "may add or subtract people."



Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

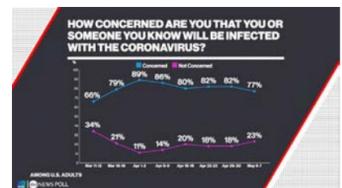
More states, too, began easing restrictions this week, despite the number of confirmed cases continuing to climb. As more governors began lifting orders this week that were put in place to slow the spread of the coronavirus, Trump acknowledged in an exclusive interview with ABC News "World News Tonight" Anchor David Muir that there might be more deaths from COVID-19 during the reopening process.

"It's possible there will be some because you won't be locked into an apartment or a house or whatever it is," Trump said. "But at the same time, we're going to practice social distancing, we're going to be washing hands, we're going to be doing a lot of the things that we've learned to do over the last period of time."

Trump's approval for the handling of the coronavirus pandemic continues to be underwater among Americans and sharply polarizing among political tribes.

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Trump's approval for the handling of the coronavirus pandemic continues to be underwater among Americans and sharply polarizing among political tribes.



How concerned are you that you or someone you know will be infected with the coronavirus?

How concerned are you that you or someone you know will be infected with the coronavirus? ABC News/Ipsos Poll Across eight weeks of polling, Trump's approval has consistently hovered in the low-40s among Americans, except for one week in March. For the second week

in a row, 42% approve of the president's management of the crisis and 57% disapprove.

Eighty-seven percent of the president's own party approves of his oversight of the crisis, compared to 8% of Democrats. Meanwhile, only 13% of Republicans disapprove compared to 92% of Democrats.

As the country enters another month of this new reality, 22% of Americans say they are now working from home in response to the coronavirus, up from 3% in mid-March, and 24% say they are still working in their normal workspace, which is down from 55% at the onset of the crisis.

Among those who are not currently employed, 20% said they lost their job due to the outbreak. (https://abcnews.go.com/



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Editor's Choice



Children Mila and Teo Principe and Alexandria and Juliana Lyles, maintain social distance during an outdoor movie night at a home in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. REUTERS/Arin Yoon



The U.S. Navy aerobatic team the Blue Angels perform a flyover to honor first responders and essential workers in Chicago, Illinois. U.S. Navy/Lt j.g. Chelsea Dietlin/via REUTERS



A turtle makes its way across the empty campus of San Diego State University during the outbreak of the coronavirus in San Diego, California. REUTERS/Mike Blake



Gravediggers wearing personal protective equipment walk away after burying a person, who presumably died of the coronavirus, in the special purpose section of a graveyard on the outskirts of Saint Petersburg, Russia. REUTERS/Anton Vaganov



Newborn children who lost their mothers during the attack lie on a bed at a hospital, in Kabul, Afghanistan. REUTERS/Omar Sobhani



Gravediggers bury a coffin near open graves as the spread of the coronavirus continues, at Vila Formosa cemetery, Brazil's biggest cemetery, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. REUTERS/Amanda Perobelli



Monica Samudio, 46, whose husband Jorge Garcia, 51, died from the coronavirus, is reflected in the window as she looks out of her new apartment, in Mexico City. Samudio said she moved from her previous home after feeling discriminated



Nursing home workers and residents release balloons as a tribute to the residents who passed away and to celebrate that they have been coronavirus-free for over two weeks at the nursing home Centro Casaverde in Navalcarnero, outside Madrid, Spain....
MORE

The U.S. Census Bureau Is Delaying The Deadline For Counting Everyone In The U.S. By Two Weeks Because Of The Spreading Novel Coronavirus

Census Bureau Delays Deadline For 2020 Count By Two Weeks



In this Aug. 13, 2019, file photo, instructions on how to fill out the 2020 census during a town hall meeting in Lithonia, Ga. are being prepared for distribution. The U.S. Census Bureau on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, suspended field operations for two weeks, citing the health and safety of its workers and the U.S. public from the novel coronavirus. (AP Photo)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

ORLANDO, Fla. -- The U.S. Census Bureau is delaying the deadline for counting everyone in the U.S. by two weeks because of the spreading novel coronavirus, officials said Friday. The 2020 census had been scheduled to stop at the end of July, but the deadline has now been extended to mid-August, said Tim Olson, an associate director for field operations at the bureau. Most U.S. residents started being able to respond to the 2020 census last week when the bureau's website went live and people started receiving notices to participate in the mail. As of Friday, 18.6 million households had answered the questionnaire, primarily online, said Al Fontenot, the bureau's associate director for decennial programs. That accounts for 14% of total households in the U.S., according to Cen-

sus Bureau figures released Friday. Midwestern states — Nebraska, Iowa and Kansas — had the highest response rates in the first week or so that most of the U.S. was able to start taking the census. Alaska, West Virginia and Montana had the lowest response rates.



This is the first once-a-decade census in which most people are being encouraged to fill out their form online, although people can still respond by telephone or by mailing back a form. The extension of the deadline came after

several lawmakers and advocacy groups asked Trump administration officials to keep the count going past July. The most recent request was sent Thursday by Democratic U.S. Rep. Grace Meng of New York, who asked for an extension through September. Earlier this week, the Census Bureau suspended field operations for two weeks out of concern about the health and safety of its workers and the U.S. public from the novel coronavirus. This primarily affected several thousands of workers who were already dropping off questionnaires in rural areas with no fixed addresses, Puerto Rico and tribal areas.

The Census Bureau also was pushing back by a month its operations to count the homeless, which was supposed to begin at the end of the month, as residents of states encompassing three of the nation's largest cities — New York, Los Angeles and Chicago — faced stay-at-home orders from the governors this week. Counts of people living in group quarters such as dormitories, prisons and nursing homes also was pushed back a month to May.



Most census takers won't go out into the field until May when they knock on the doors of homes whose residents haven't yet responded. The start of that operation also was pushed back two weeks to the end of May because of coronavirus. "Of all of our worst nightmares of things that could have gone wrong with the census, we did not anticipate this set of actions," Fontenot said. "But our staff has been extremely resilient about looking for solutions and ways we can still be very effective in terms of reaching out to get a response from every person in the United States."

Advocates Continue To Urge People To Respond Online, By Phone, Or Mail

The bureau had planned to hire as many as 500,000 workers, primarily to knock on the doors of residents who haven't answered the questions by May, but bureau officials said Friday that the virus outbreak was leading them to consider hiring more temporary workers than previously planned. As of Friday, more than 600,000 applicants had accepted job offers, but the bureau officials said they realized that some might drop out because of the coronavirus, and the Census Bureau was keeping open its job application process. The bureau so far has 2.8 million applicants and has switched all training online for new hires.



The Census Bureau is required by law to turn in state population counts to the president by Dec. 31. When asked if the bureau would meet that deadline, Fontenot said, "We don't want to attempt to forecast what will happen in the future." The 2020 census will help determine how many congressional seats each state gets, as well as the distribution of \$1.5 trillion in federal spending. A coalition of civil rights and advocacy groups on Friday praised the Census Bureau's decision to extend the deadline, saying it would give them more time for outreach efforts to get people to participate.

"Extending census operations is not the same as delaying the census," The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Census Task Force said in a statement. (Courtesy abcnews.com)

Related
Census Extension Increases

Flexibility During Major Public Health



The Leadership Conference

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WASHINGTON — The co-chairs of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Census Task Force — Arturo Vargas, CEO of NALGO Educational Fund; John C. Yang, president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC; and Vanita Gupta, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference — issued the following statement in response to the U.S. Census Bureau's extension of 2020 Census operations from July 31, 2020 to August 14, 2020:



"As all of us, including vulnerable communities, deal with the impact of COVID-19, this extension gives the Census Bureau and advocates the flexibility we need to expand and modify outreach. The Census Bureau understands the public health challenge it is up against and is properly adjusting in real-time. As the situation continues to evolve, we encourage the Census Bureau to make any necessary adjustments in coordination with community partners and stakeholders. We are not backing down in our efforts to ensure our communities are counted — in fact, we are doubling down. We all need to work together to ensure a full and accurate count. People can, and should, continue to respond online, by phone, or by paper form. Essential rights, funding, resources, and political power are still at stake." (Courtesy civilrights.org)

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