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Washington Watch

LABOUR BATTLES
EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

By Ouerdya Ait Abdelmalek and Alice Ritchie

As a new Conservative prime minister prepared to take over yesterday, Britain's opposition Labour Party was facing an existential crisis, riven by toxic splits over the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. At least two Labour MPs will challenge Corbyn in a contest that formally gets under way this week, after Owen Smith joined Angela Eagle in announcing a bid, with the winner expected to be named in September. Corbyn has been battling to keep his job since Britain's shock vote on June 23 to leave the European Union, holding on despite a vote of no confidence backed by three-quarters of the party's members of parliament.

Efforts to keep him off the leadership ballot paper by forcing him to secure a minimum 51 nominations from Labour MPs and members of the European Parliament - a 20 percent support prerequisite for his challengers - failed late Tuesday. He will now be able to campaign over the heads of MPs to trade union backers and grassroots party members who helped propel him to victory just last September - and whose numbers have swelled in recent months.

"Whoever wins the leadership contest is almost certainly going to divide the party further," said Brian Klaas, a fellow in comparative politics at the London School of Economics. "The party faces an existential crisis because one major force in the party - the party members - cannot reconcile with another major force - Labour MPs in parliament," he told AFP. Some commentators believe a lasting split in the party may now be inevitable. "Uncivil war could split Labour forever," headlined the left-wing Daily Mirror tabloid.

"The poison in Labour's veins is so deep, so toxic, that nobody can see a way of this ending harmoniously," it said. In a sign of the tensions, a brick was thrown through Eagle's constituency office on Tuesday, causing her to demand Corbyn "get control of the people who are supporting him". "There is hatred now on both sides," wrote Jonathan Freedland in The Guardian newspaper.

'Breaking the Party Apart'

Corbyn has been under intense pressure since the referendum amid criticism that he did not do enough to persuade working-class voters to stay in the EU. But many moderate MPs in the party, which shifted to the centre under former premier Tony Blair, had never reconciled to anti-war campaigner Corbyn's election as leader. Eagle, a 55-year-old former trade union official, fired the starting gun for the leadership race on Monday when she formally announced her candidacy.

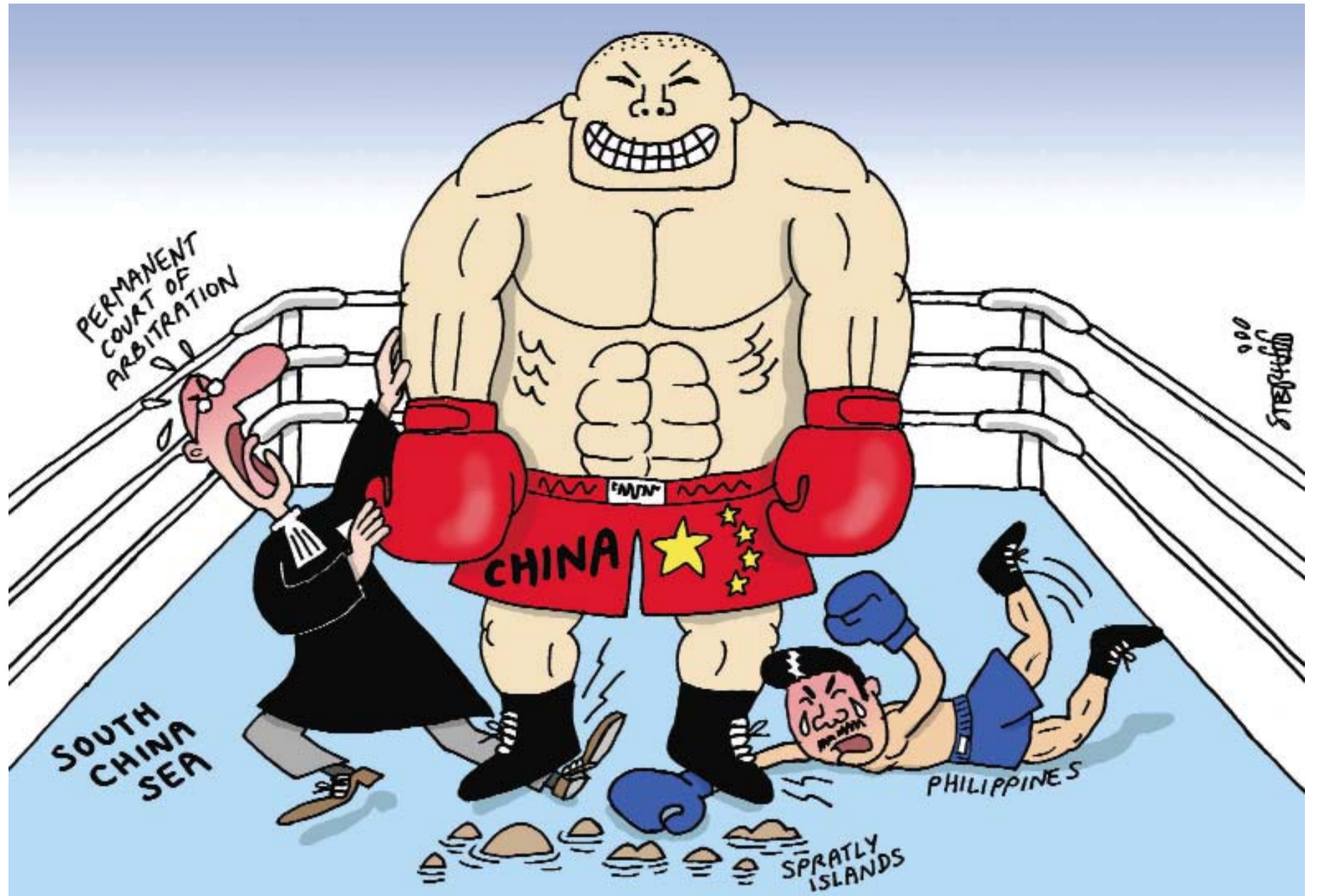
Smith, a 46-year-old member of Corbyn's shadow cabinet, announced yesterday that he would join her. The party is due to publish a formal timetable today. "If Corbyn wins, he will face the prospect of being a lame duck opposition leader - a man who is unlikely to be effective given that he has few friends or allies in Westminster," Klaas said. "That will risk breaking the party apart. But if Corbyn loses, the powerful unions and young activists that form his political base could choose to leave the party."

'Wrestling on the Titanic'

In his final appearance in the House of Commons, before he hands over to incoming prime minister Theresa May, David Cameron drew a contrast between his Conservative Party's orderly transition and Labour's warring. "We got on with it: we've had resignation, nomination, competition and coronation - they haven't even decided what the rules are yet," said Cameron, who stepped down after losing the EU vote. Facing him over the despatch box for the last time, Corbyn replied with a smile: "Democracy is an exciting and splendid thing and I'm enjoying every moment of it."

But in The Guardian, Freedland warned that the infighting risked blinding Labour to its "greatest, gravest problem" - its failure to engage millions of working-class voters who defied the party to vote for Brexit last month. "They could leave Labour forever," he said. He added: "Next to no one is speaking about that existential threat at all. Instead, Corbyn and Eagle are wrestling on the bridge of the Titanic, fighting for control of the wheel." — AFP

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STATEMENT OF CHINA ON THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

To reaffirm China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea, enhance cooperation in the South China Sea with other countries, and uphold peace and stability in the South China Sea, the Government of the People's Republic of China hereby states as follows:

I. China's Nanhai Zhudao (the South China Sea Islands) consist of Dongsha Qundao (the Dongsha Islands), Xisha Qundao (the Xisha Islands), Zhongsha Qundao (the Zhongsha Islands) and Nansha Qundao (the Nansha Islands). The activities of the Chinese people in the South China Sea date back to over 2,000 years ago. China is the first to have discovered, named, and explored and exploited Nanhai Zhudao and relevant waters, and the first to have exercised sovereignty and jurisdiction over them continuously, peacefully and effectively, thus establishing territorial sovereignty and relevant rights and interests in the South China Sea.

Following the end of the Second World War, China recovered and resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Nanhai Zhudao which had been illegally occupied by Japan during its war of aggression against China. To strengthen the administration over Nanhai Zhudao, the Chinese government in 1947 reviewed and updated the geographical names of Nanhai Zhudao, compiled Nan Hai Zhu Dao Di Li Zhi Lue (A Brief Account of the Geography of the South China Sea Islands), and drew Nan Hai Zhu Dao Wei Zhi Tu (Location Map of the South China Sea Islands) on which the dotted line is marked. This map was officially published and made known to the

world by the Chinese government in February 1948.

II. Since its founding on 1 October 1949, the People's Republic of China has been firm in upholding China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea. A series of legal instruments, such as the 1958 Declaration of the Government of the People's Republic of China on China's Territorial Sea, the 1992 Law of the People's Republic of China on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, the 1998 Law of the People's Republic of China on the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf and the 1996 Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China on the Ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, have further reaffirmed China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea.

III. Based on the practice of the Chinese people and the Chinese government in the long course of history and the position consistently upheld by successive Chinese governments, and in accordance with national law and international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, China has territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea, including, inter alia:

- China has sovereignty over Nanhai Zhudao, consisting of Dongsha Qundao, Xisha Qundao, Zhongsha Qundao and Nansha Qundao;
- China has internal waters, territorial sea and contiguous zone, based on Nanhai Zhudao;

iii. China has exclusive economic zone and continental shelf, based on Nanhai Zhudao;

iv. China has historic rights in the South China Sea.

The above positions are consistent with relevant international law and practice.

IV. China is always firmly opposed to the invasion and illegal occupation by certain states of some islands and reefs of China's Nansha Qundao, and activities infringing upon China's rights and interests in relevant maritime areas under China's jurisdiction. China stands ready to continue to resolve the relevant disputes peacefully through negotiation and consultation with the states directly concerned on the basis of respecting historical facts and in accordance with international law. Pending final settlement, China is also ready to make every effort with the states directly concerned to enter into provisional arrangements of a practical nature, including joint development in relevant maritime areas, in order to achieve win-win results and jointly maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.

V. China respects and upholds the freedom of navigation and overflight enjoyed by all states under international law in the South China Sea, and stays ready to work with other coastal states and the international community to ensure the safety of and the unimpeded access to the international shipping lanes in the South China Sea.

NOTE: This article has been submitted by the Embassy of China in Kuwait

PRESIDENCY IS TRUMP'S ULTIMATE EGO TRIP

By Nancy Benca

Donald Trump once owned up to the force driving him in life: Ego. "Almost every deal I have ever done has been at least partly for my ego," the billionaire declared in a 1995 New York Times opinion piece titled, "What My Ego Wants, My Ego Gets." What 70-year-old Donald John Trump wants now is the presidency. To understand why, consider the billionaire's ego not just as mere mortals might see it (an out-sized allotment of conceit) but also as Trump himself understands it (an extraordinary drive for excitement, glamour and style that produces extraordinary success). "People need ego," Trump has said. "Whole nations need ego."

The race for the White House, then, is guided by the same instincts he's relied on in a lifetime of audacious self-promotion, ambition and risk-taking. It was those instincts that allowed a fabulously wealthy businessman to pull off a mind meld with the economic anxieties of ordinary Americans, elbowing aside the Republican A-team and breaking every rule of modern politics on the way to the Republican presidential nomination. "I play to people's fantasies," Trump has acknowledged. And plenty of voters fantasize about bringing some of that Trump braggadocio to the American psyche.

Trump's candidacy has given rise to a nation of armchair analysts with their own theories about the man: He's a bully. He's a champion. He's insecure. He's a rebel. He's a narcissist. He's an optimist. He's calculating. He's unscripted. He's a pathological liar. He sees a larger truth. Trump himself shies away from self-analysis. But he's acknowledged that for much of his life, it's been all about the chase. Whatever it is, he's in to win it.

"The same assets that excite me in the chase often, once they are acquired, leave me bored," he said in 1990 as his boom years were sliding toward bust. "For me, you see, the important thing is the getting, not the having." That mindset has generated plenty of speculation about whether Trump really wants to set aside his my-way lifestyle to shoulder the heavy demands of governing. Trump bats away such talk. But his campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, addressing why Trump wants a strong and seasoned running mate, says the candidate sees himself as chairman of the board, not CEO, and "needs an experienced person to do the part of the job he doesn't want to do."

Trump's unbounded confidence - and obsession with winning - has been a lifelong constant. One of five children in a well-to-do Queens real estate family, Donald was the brash one. "We gotta calm him down," his father would say, as Trump recalls it. "Son, take the lumps out." It's advice Trump never really embraced. Trump followed his father into real estate, but chafed within the confines of Fred Trump's realm in New York's outer boroughs. Trump crossed into Manhattan and made it big before he hit 40.

"He was at the top of his own pyramid," says Stanley Renshon, a political psychologist at the City University of

New York who is writing a book about Trump. "Nobody was going to say, 'Donald, tone it down.'" Through years of boom, bust and more than a decade of reality-TV celebrity on "The Apprentice," the deals kept coming and the price tags (and, often, the debt) kept growing - as did the hype. Always the hype.

"Harry Potter" actor Daniel Radcliffe recalls his 2005 encounter in the "Today" show studios, when he confessed to the businessman that he was nervous about making a live television appearance. Trump's advice: "Just tell them you met Mr Trump," Radcliffe told "Late Night with Seth Meyers" recently. "To this day," added Radcliffe, "I can't even relate to that level of confidence."

Trump is not all chutzpah. A Mississippi man remembers a surprise phone call from Trump after his father wrote asking for a loan to build a hotel back in 1988. Trump didn't offer a loan to the Indian-American small businessman, but did give him a pep talk and some advice. "Trump inspired my father to the fullest when he told him that Dad's immigrant story was wonderful," Suresh Chawla wrote in a 2015 letter to The Clarksdale (Mississippi) Press Register. And pro golfer Natalie Gulbis tells of Trump coaching her on how to negotiate equal pay with male competitors. Far more often, though, Americans have seen the tweet-storming settler of

scores and hurler of insults.

For all the protesters who roil his rallies, Trump himself is the heckler of our time, who happens to do his heckling from the podium. No one is immune. Not senator and war hero John McCain, not the disabled, not Mexicans, not Muslims, not even those people who make up a majority of the country (and the electorate): Women.

Aubrey Immelman, a political psychologist at Saint John's University in Minnesota who has developed a personality index to assess presidential candidates, puts Trump's level of narcissism in the "exploitative" range, surpassing any presidential nominee's score in the past two decades. "His personality is his best friend, but it's also his worst enemy," says Immelman. The man who has married three times, lives large and offers the opulence of his real estate developments as a metaphor for what he can do for America, in fact has relatively simple tastes, if you are to believe his family and him.

He's never had a drink, smoked or done drugs, he says. He's a self-proclaimed "germ freak" who'd really rather not shake your hand. Trump has singled out meatloaf as a favorite meal when he's at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida. "Whenever we have it, half the people order it," Trump said in a 1997 New Yorker profile. "But then afterward, if you ask them what they ate, they always deny it." — AP



In this Dec 6, 1999, file photo, New York billionaire real estate tycoon Donald Trump makes an appearance for the media atop a Beverly Hills, California. — AP