

**Remarks by PJ Keating
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British Foreign Secretary's demented remarks carried in an SMH beat-up

Remarks by the British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss that China could engage in military aggression in the Pacific, encouraged by Russia's contingent moves against Ukraine are nothing short of demented. Not simply irrational, demented.

And this piece of nonsense by Truss commanded the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* in a piece written by the Press Gallery's most celebrated beat-up merchant, Peter Hartcher.

Truss said, such a move by China 'could not be ruled out'. And on those fleeting words, Hartcher pounced, carrying the notion to the *Herald's* readership that China and Russia are working in concert, justifying the *Herald* headline, that 'China could follow Russia into war'. The irresponsibility of the story and Hartcher's writing of it is breathtaking.

But it is a measure of how far the *Herald* has sunk in accommodating Hartcher's extreme and unworldly positions - especially as they relate to China.

The underlying story is the government's desperate promotion of Britain as a strategic partner of Australia in a policy of containment of China.

The reality is Britain does not add up to a row of beans when it comes to East Asia. Britain took its main battle fleet out of East Asia in 1904 and finally packed it in with its 'East of Suez' policy in the 1970s. And it has never been back.

Britain suffers delusions of grandeur and relevance deprivation.

But there they were at Admiralty House kidding the rest of us that their 'cooperation' added up to some viable policy. Australia's great Foreign 'non minister', Marise Payne, supported by the increasingly strident and unhinged Defence Minister Peter Dutton standing beside the British Foreign Secretary looking wistfully for Britain's lost worlds of the 19th and 20th centuries. Really.

Truss would do us all a favour by hightailing it back to her collapsing, disreputable government, leaving Australia to find its own way in Asia.

Xi Jinping told the audience at Davos this week that 'major economies should see the world as one community'. Hardly the sort of sentiment that sits contemporaneously with someone about to spring an aggressive military action. A point perhaps way too subtle for the *Herald*.