

Comments by PJ Keating
on the announced agreement between the United States, Britain and Australia

The announced agreement between the United States, Britain and Australia for Australia to move to a fleet of US supplied nuclear submarines, will amount to a lock-in of Australian military equipment and thereby forces, with those of the United States with only one underlying objective: the ability to act collectively in any military engagement by the United States against China.

This arrangement would witness a further dramatic loss of Australian sovereignty, as materiel dependency on the United States robbed Australia of any freedom or choice in any engagement Australia may deem appropriate.

Australia has had great difficulty in running a bunch of Australian built conventional submarines – imagine the difficulty in moving to sophisticated nuclear submarines, their maintenance and operational complexity.

And all this at a time when United States reliability and resolution around its strategic commitments and military engagements are under question.

If the United States military with all its might could not beat a bunch of Taliban rebels with AK47 rifles in pickup trucks, what chance would it have in a full blown war against China, not only the biggest state in the world but the commander and occupant of the largest land mass in Asia?

When it comes to conflict, particularly among great powers, land beats water every time.

It has to be remembered that China is a continental power and the United States is a naval power. And that the United States supply chain to East Asia would broadly need to span the whole Pacific from its base in San Diego and other places along the American west coast. Australia, by the announced commitments, would find itself hostage to any such a gambit.

There is no doubt about the Liberals: 240 years after we departed from Britain, we are back there with Boris Johnson, trying to find our security in Asia through London. Such is the continual failure of the Liberal party to have any faith in Australia's capacity, but more particularly, the rights to its own independence and freedom of action.

When the detail of these arrangements is more clear I will have more to say.

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