

[Transcript] The News Agents / Liz Truss, the deep state and China

This is a global player original podcast here at the news agents.

We can't quite believe what we're about to say because it goes against the grain of this podcast.

It flies in the face of tradition.

It seems to call into question our central ethos, but maybe just maybe last night in Washington, Liz Truss was right.

Putin and Xi have made it very clear that they are allies against Western capitalism.

That's why I think it was a mistake for Western leaders to visit President Xi and ask for him to intervene in seeking a resolution to the conflict in Ukraine.

I believe that was a sign of weakness.

It's also why it's wrong for President Macron to suggest that Taiwan is simply something not of direct interest to Europe.

I don't agree with that at all.

It is of direct interest to Europe, and I think we should be doing all we can to make sure Taiwan has the support it needs to defend itself.

It's not just Liz Truss that thinks Emmanuel Macron has got himself into really hot water.

And today on the news agents, we're going to discuss his trip to Beijing, to China, where it went wrong, how it started to unravel on the plane with a journalist who we also bring you, and just what it means for Taiwan's independence and for all our safety.

Welcome to the news agents.

It's John.

It's Emily.

And a little bit later on, having been really lovely about Liz Truss, we're going to be maybe a little more critical about some of the other things she said in her speech celebrating Margaret Thatcher in Washington last night.

And we're going to talk about leaking as well.

When is it right to leak?

When is a leaker, a whistleblower, and when he's just a weird kid on discord?

We'll come to that.

But let us first set the scene, because Emmanuel Macron, the French president, was called up to Beijing on a state visit, and he arrived with 50 French business people in tow.

In other words, he wasn't there to talk about human rights.

He was there to get some deals done.

And Ursula von der Leyen, the EU president, arrived at pretty much the same time.

She didn't get the limo waiting for her.

She didn't get the red carpet treatment.

She was there to talk about human rights and all the things that she thinks China is not getting right right now, particularly their very ballistic behavior in the Taiwan Straits.

So everyone is looking at Macron now.

I'm wondering why he keeps on talking about strategic autonomy.

It's a weird phrase.

But it basically means, don't worry, whatever you think the US is doing, however much grief they're giving you, we're going to try and be a bit different.

And it goes back to a long tradition in France of being suspicious about an over mighty America

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and wanting the European Union to be another pole in a multipolar world where you have got China, you have got the US, and you have got Europe, and not surprisingly, Emmanuel Macron would like to see France as the leader of Europe and putting French interests first because those are European interests.

Well, shock horror, there are many in Europe who don't agree with that view of the world and Macron's interpretation of what Europe should be.

And so he is facing huge amount of blowback as a result of this little trip to China where China gave him the red carpet and it looks like Monsieur Macron was slightly seduced by it all.

And just to put this in, we're going to give you a little bit of geopolitical context here.

This all centres around the relationship that China has with Taiwan.

China calls Taiwan the breakaway republic, the renegade republic, like it's this really naughty child that it wants back in its house, back in its nest.

Taiwan, in 1949, declared independence.

The ruling party, the Guomindong, went off and started their own government and their own independence in the face of Chinese communism.

And right now, Xi Jinping, who is going to enter his fourth term before the end of this decade, is making noises and they're not just noises, they are military noises.

And today we understand he warned his own army to be on alert, to be prepared about trying to take back Taiwan.

Now take back is a very complicated phrase or word.

It doesn't mean a war necessarily, it doesn't mean an attack, but it means they want to bring Taiwan back into the fold.

And every international leader is trying to work out their own relationship with Taiwan as a very successful economic democracy.

And with China, who is the superpower, easily bruised, full of pride, who hates anyone who picks up the phone to Taiwan first.

And of course, there is an obvious comparison to make, given what happened in Ukraine last February.

Thank you.

Is Xi about to do what Putin did last February and invade a sovereign nation?

Now with Russia, and my God, the consequences have been enormous for Europe as a result of what Putin has done, pale into insignificance because the Chinese economy is so much bigger, so much more powerful.

International trade is so much more dependent on China that what China does in Taiwan would be like times a hundred compared to what Vladimir Putin has done in Ukraine.

And that is why global leaders are so anxious and why they are so alarmed at what Macron has done over these past few days.

Because every single word matters.

Because when Macron use a phrase like strategic autonomy, it sends out bells to China.

They think that they can woo France, that they can separate France or even Europe from the U.S. and they can make hay by causing that destructive chaos.

Well, joining us now is Isabel Hilton, writer, broadcaster, but critically for this, she is the founder of the China Dialogue and she understands the nuances and the complexities

of China and how it deals with everyone else so well.

And I'm just trying to get a sense from you, Isabel, of whether Emmanuel Macron, President Macron has really screwed up here.

Well, it certainly was unhelpful.

If you look at whose interests this served, China has been very keen to divide Europe and the United States for quite a long time.

That's the alliance that they really don't want to see consolidated.

Russia of course effectively consolidated that alliance by invading Ukraine, which is inconvenient for China.

But if China can create divisions in Europe, then it really serves its purpose.

And Macron's stance has clearly annoyed a lot of other European leaders and has presented a spectacle which is rather familiar of the European Union not being able to make its mind up on China.

He has sort of rode back and he's tried to explain what he was saying.

He didn't sit there saying, oh, Taiwan doesn't exist or we're all in it for China.

I mean, he was cautious, wasn't he, about saying we want to maintain the status quo?

He did say that, absolutely, and he wanted a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue.

But he also used particular phrases, which are actually Chinese phrases.

So talking about strategic autonomy for Europe, that constantly appears in Chinese documents.

What does it mean?

Well, it means not serving the US interests as China would put it.

And France of course has a goalist tradition.

It has been of many European countries, it's been the one that is most like to think that it's resistant to the United States, slow to join NATO and all of that.

And Macron seems to have picked up on this and that at this particular moment is really helpful to China, to Xi Jinping.

But that is why I suppose I was not that surprised by what he said because that is the goalist tradition, that there's a kind of lingering anti-Americanism or suspicion about America's power.

But also, you're a champion of French industry and French jobs.

And so all the time you're talking Europe, you're there with French companies trying to promote French national interest.

And he was there with 50 French businessmen, but that feeds into another Chinese perception, which is pretty much most countries and certainly most European countries will pretty much sell their grandmother for a contract.

And that the size of the Chinese market, China's economic importance in the world can always be played against a political interest.

And again, Macron, whether he liked it or not, rather bolstered that.

If you read what's being written in China about his visit, there is a resounding cheer for Macron.

And that doesn't happen by accident in China.

And it's damaging.

It's damaging to the European Union at the moment when they are trying to come to a consensus on China.

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Do you think Macron thinks it's damaging or do you think Macron was pretty clear-minded about what he was doing?

I mean, was this accident or was this deliberate?

It happens repeatedly with Macron.

I think that there is an element of Macron aspiring to lead the European Union, but not really being collegiate enough to pull it off.

The European Union has traditionally been a Franco-German-driven project.

That's shifting quite a lot, actually, with the arrival of the central European states and the Bolts.

The sentiment is no longer focused around what Berlin and Paris think.

So what do you think this means strategically for any response to Taiwan?

Because we've come out of a week where there was a military threat, it looked like a lot of saber-rattling in the Taiwan Straits from China.

And what does it mean for Putin and Ukraine as well?

I mean, do you put those on a sort of parallel footing that he's making exactly the same mistake with China that he made with Putin and Russia?

Well, if you look at, for all Macron's posturing about strategic autonomy from the United States, the French contribution to Ukraine is really small.

It's much smaller than Britain, it's smaller than Norway.

And if you're going to have strategic autonomy, it's going to cost the French taxpayers and every other taxpayer some money, which I don't know that Macron has shown any willingness to propose to the French public.

They like the gesture, but I'm not sure they want to pay the bill.

You have to be a little bit careful about drawing direct parallels between Russia and Ukraine and China and Taiwan.

China would certainly say it's a very different situation.

Militarily, it's a very different situation.

Because of the force of China?

Well, China has very large armed forces, but the biggest difference is the rather plain one that Taiwan is an island and the military proposition.

300 miles across the Straits of Taiwan before we get there.

Indeed.

Well, it's an archipelago actually, but the biggest island, you're absolutely right.

And that makes it complicated for both sides, to be honest.

It makes it difficult to take it and China has never done the kind of combined air, sea and land forces operation that would require.

But secondly, for anyone defending, it means two things.

It's very difficult for people to escape as they have in large numbers from Ukraine for the non-competence and it's very difficult to get reinforcements in.

And one of the things that China did this time was to demonstrate a blockade around the whole island.

So, including the East Coast as well as the West.

Why is Taiwan so important to the United States?

Okay, fine, it's a democracy, but also there have been other places in the world where

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America has turned a blind eye when bad things have happened, when a rival power steps in. Is there something strategically important about Taiwan in terms of economy?

It's partly history.

Taiwan became the Republic of Taiwan when the Kuomintang, who were the losing side in the Chinese Civil War, fled there in 1949.

And that had been the side with which the United States had a very close relationship and maintained

that relationship until Nixon's visit to China in 1972.

So that was the beginning of a shift in the American posture in the Pacific.

But in order to manage that, they had to maintain a good relationship with Taiwan, which included a pledge that they would always give Taiwan the means to defend itself against an enforced absorption by China.

So there's history there.

And then if you look at the map, strategically, it's pretty important for American presence in the Pacific.

If you lose Taiwan, then the other U.S. allies, Japan particularly, but also North Korea become very exposed.

It becomes very difficult for the United States to maintain a presence in the Pacific.

So when China says we think that Taiwan is just a landing pad for the U.S., they're not entirely wrong.

Well, it's a bit more than that, but that is an element.

Yes, yes.

I mean, it's strategically important.

And if you're moving little ships around a global map, looking at who dominates what

... Yes.

And then there's the semiconductor question, which is massive, economically.

That is critical for everyone.

And Macron is quite wrong if he thinks that Taiwan doesn't matter to France, if only because of TSMC, which is the company that produces almost all of the world's most advanced chips.

And those are the chips you need in absolutely everything from rockets to cars to computers.

And they make the best ones to Dutch design that it's a very, very complicated supply chain and they are completely dominant.

So one nightmare is that China gets, captures Taiwan, if you like, and gets hold of TSMC.

And then China simply dominates the world in terms of advanced technology and can cut off your supply tomorrow if you displease it.

So that's a problem.

So I think people don't quite understand how strategic Taiwan really is.

It may be a long way away, but it really does matter.

The thing we always say about China and its foreign policy is that it's incredibly slow and deliberative and far sighted and takes the long view and all the rest of it.

Why are we feeling this is sort of so urgent now?

Well, it's partly that Xi Jinping is a much more muscular leader than his predecessors.

You got rid of one of them, didn't you?

I mean, what?

What if his predecessors are out?

Yes.

And he's muscular in terms of the world.

You know, he has essentially said to the Chinese people, you know, look, the party has looked after you, evil foreigners want to put China down and you need the party to maintain or to make China great again, you know, to borrow an expression.

And that means if he wants a place in history, what is the big thing that's left to do?

And it's Taiwan.

And then he has set two centenary goals.

One was for the founding of the party, which has passed.

But the other is the founding of the People's Republic in 1949.

And it's quite clear that Xi Jinping would like Taiwan back in the fold before 2049.

There's the other deadline to think about, which is Xi Jinping himself.

Now, Xi Jinping is approaching 70.

He's essentially got a job for life, but he wouldn't want to leave it too long, which is why we're seeing intelligence reports that suggest that this decade would be closer to the mark.

Now, the question then is what methodology do we think he would favour?

Because a war, an armed assault would be catastrophic.

And that's, I think, little doubt about that.

But there are other options.

Part of these demonstration exercises, like the one we saw last week, is that, you know, they show that you can strangle Taiwan, you can blockade Taiwan, you don't actually have to assault Taiwan to make life extremely uncomfortable.

And if you look at the South China Sea, where China managed to militarise the South China Sea without really a shot being fired, by this very cautious, slightly kind of below, it's not exactly below the radar, but it's below the threshold for military response.

What did we do?

We're just pouring concrete.

Don't send your gun.

You know, that kind of thing.

And this kind of creeping advance, which I think is much more likely.

And to go back to the question of what mistakes that the EU is making.

What you don't see is a discussion of how the European Union would respond to the next step, whatever that is.

It might be China, for example, occupying one of the smaller islands in the archipelago.

Now, that's not the main island.

But that could be the Crimea for China.

It could.

Well, yes, you could see it like that.

You know, just a few people living there, is it worth a response?

But it's that kind of thing.

They declared, for example, they declared the Taiwan State a domestic waterway quite recently.

Much of the world's shipping goes through the Taiwan Strait.

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It's always been regarded as an international waterway.

But China has now unilaterally declared it domestic and was trying to impose an inspection regime for shipping.

All of these little things that we don't really have a policy response for at present.

And over time, they absolutely add up.

There are elections in Taiwan the beginning of next year.

They are determined, I'm sure, that the Guomandang will win rather than the DPP because the DPP is a Taiwanese party, the Guomandang started life as a mainland party.

Maybe a deal could be done.

Maybe you could persuade the Taiwanese that they'd have a better life if a deal was done.

That's how I would play it.

It's really fascinating.

Isabel, thank you so much.

Thank you.

It's really a pleasure.

And something amazing happened on one of the flights that Macron was on between two Chinese cities.

He gives an interview to journalists on the plane, nothing unusual about that, except the Elysée Palace demanded to see everything before it was written up and wanted to have the right to change any quotes that the president gave.

And it looks like some of the things that the president said were so out there that the Elysée Palace felt there was a need to change it all around.

Now one of the journalists who was part of that interview, he spoke to three people, is Jameel Andalini, and he is the editor-in-chief of Politico Europe.

And Jameel, just tell us about the interview and then what happened afterwards.

Yeah.

So the interview was on the plane.

We were flying from Beijing to Guangzhou, second part of Macron's state visit to China.

And we'd agreed that there would be an interview myself and two French journalists.

And we had 35 minutes or so with him.

One of his partly in French and partly in English.

And he was quite forthcoming, I would say, and he is a, and all the people around him would say, and he would probably say himself, he's a deep thinker, and he's a strategic thinker, and he likes to express those thoughts.

So yeah, it was fascinating.

He's very charming.

I was on the plane for the whole time, and he would, every time we would take off, before we took off, he would come down the plane, shake every person's hand from the lowliest security guards to the stewards.

And when he'd get to me, he'd speak English.

The only person on the plane who didn't speak French, he would speak in English, something very charming, something very friendly and nice.

And he's a seducer, as one of his entourage put it.

But Jameel, you've called him a deep thinker.

But am I right in understanding that immediately that the interview was finished, the Elisee Palace, as in his mind, has stepped in and said, could you not run this bit, please?

I mean, were there stuff that you were told to leave out?

I'm not sure how familiar you are with continental Europe and the rules around interviews in continental Europe.

But the norm in places like Germany and in France, and in fact, it's the law in Poland, the norm is that politicians give an interview and then they require the entire transcript to be sent to them.

And then they will cut out what the bits they don't like, and they will approve the bits they do like, and they will change quotes, things that they actually said they will change to completely different things.

And usually they won't do it themselves, but their press people will do that.

That's something that Politico refuses to engage in, something we don't do with almost the only publication in continental Europe that doesn't engage in this sort of thing.

I can tell you what happened, basically, is just before we were meant to go to China, the Elisee imposed conditions on the interview.

They said, you will have to send us the quotes beforehand and we will approve them.

And I said, I can't do that.

That's against all our rules.

We don't allow.

If you don't agree to this, trade to negotiate.

And they said, if you don't agree to this, you can't come on the trip at all.

And so at that point, I had to make a, as the editor-in-chief, I had to make a very tough decision whether or not to sort of accept the terms of an interview like that.

And in the end, my decision was that the value of being on that trip, especially for someone like me who spent, as I said, 22 years in China, I've spent my whole career effectively up until a year or two ago, was based in China for the financial times.

And I felt that the value I would get from being on the plane with Macron and inside the bubble and inside the Chinese bubble, and the bits I would be able to report on just from that, I thought it was very much worth me still going.

And the way I decided to treat the interview portion, which was on the plane, I decided that I felt that should be, from our perspective, I treated it mostly off the record, and then I would try to put as much on the record as I could, and we managed to get quite a lot on the record in the end.

But Jamil, I've heard, I've had it said to me by politicians, look, can I check your quote before?

I, if I need to polish it, or if I could phrase something more felicitously, is that okay?

And that's one thing.

But if they're going to change completely what has been said, when I said yes, what I meant to say was no, I mean, that's a different order altogether, isn't it?

Absolutely.

And the other approach I took was that any changes they tried to make to the quotes that I had sent them that were what he said, I wouldn't run them.

I just refused to.

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And I told them that.

So what came back was many, many of the quotes removed, but the ones that were left, we checked them very faithfully against the originals that we'd sent and the recordings that we had.

And we only ran the things that he actually said.

And we were very careful about that, because as you say, that's, you can't, we can't deceive our readers and say the French president said this when he actually never said anything of the sort.

So it's possible within the rules of your engagement to tell us what they insisted that you leave out.

I mean, can you, is that breaking your confidence?

Under the rules of the engagement, I think I should stick by that.

We did point out that he said, there was more that he said in particular about Taiwan and about European strategic autonomy.

And some of that he's in the aftermath, he's actually said little bits of that.

And if you look at the other transcripts from that interview that have been published by French media, he says a bit more there.

I mean, one apparent comparison is between, he said something along the lines, I want to paraphrase here because it was published somewhere else, but he said something along the lines of, you know, China sees it's one China policy in Taiwan, you know, as part of China, the way we see the European Union unity within the European Union, I would point out that the European Union is a voluntary and as we all know, you can leave as Britain has.

It's a voluntary, you know, institution and of democracies that willingly join the European Union, whereas Taiwan is a democracy that does not want to be part of the People's Republic of China and China is threatening to invade.

And so, I mean, I think what happened is he went on this trip.

He was keen to assert France's vision of strategic autonomy.

He was keen to show that France, especially, but Europe is not a vassal of America, as he said.

And I think he was somewhat, and he went to seduce Xi Jinping into helping to stop the war in Ukraine, which was totally a failure.

If you look at what Xi Jinping has said and the results of that, I think he was maybe a little seduced the other way by the power of an emperor like figure Xi Jinping.

You saw presumably the 50 businesses or business people that he took with him, the red carpet that came to greet him.

I mean, this was...

They were on the plane with us.

Yeah.

I sat with many of them, talked with many of them.

I was really in the bubble and it was fascinating and two decades of watching this kind of the way that foreign leaders are duchess and are kind of seduced by the power of totalitarian state with 1.4 billion people and the biggest navy and all the rest.

It's a very powerful thing and people get seduced by it.

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And I think there was a little bit of that.

And I think also he's under pressure at home, Macron, and he's hoping to get some distraction and some love.

Love.

Yeah.

Fascinating.

Jameel, listen, thank you so much for sharing that with us.

Yes, great.

Really interesting.

What an editorially challenging position to be in.

I mean, really, really difficult choices you have to make there, but well done for publishing what you've published.

Thank you.

Thank you very much.

It was really interesting listening to Jameel, who was just a little bit of a little bit interesting listening to Jameel, who was trying to explain that process to us and it is really fraught.

I want to...

I heard you gasp when...

I did.

You weren't one of his answers.

When, you know, they demanded what?

Yes.

But it's happened to me.

I interviewed President Clinton on a goat farm in Lucknow, in India, and they told me that he'd had a funny turn.

And I don't know what that meant, but I think they meant we don't quite trust what's going to happen on camera, and they said, we're going to seize the tape if anything happens.

And as a journalist, you're kind of stuck.

You think, well, I'm not going to allow that.

I'm...

No way.

I'm not going to let you seize my tape.

What happens if he dies on camera?

Of course I want to run that.

And then he realized you're stuck on a goat farm in Lucknow, and we'd had their transport to get there, and there was no way out.

So actually, yeah, it's do or die.

I'm stuck with an image of Maitreya on a goat farm in Lucknow, in India now, rather than anything to do with Bill Clinton.

In a moment, we'll be hearing a little more from Liz Truss, where she is more Liz Truss.

This is The News Agents.

Welcome back.

Time now for a little bit of expertise on The News Agents.

John.

Flower arranging with spring flowers.

Yes.

The offside rule, I think.

I like to do both from plumbing.

And we're going to hear from Liz Truss on economic management.

The sad truth is what I think we've seen over the past few years is a new kind of economic model taking hold in our countries.

One that's focused on redistributionism, on stagnation, and on the imbuing of woke culture into our businesses.

I call these people the anti-growth movement, and they come in many shapes and sizes.

They're the vested interests who don't want challenge and don't want competition.

They've always been there.

But they've been joined by socialists in environmental clothing, who in the name of combatting climate change insist that we should simply stop virtually every kind of economic activity.

And then we have the ESG culture, perpetrated by many in big corporations, where the focus is on hitting a diversity target or hitting a social target, rather than actually generating money for employees and for the country.

And of course, this model results in more taxes, it results in more subsidies, and it results in more regulation.

Oh, is that it?

Oh, I was hoping there would be much more.

Is the anti-growth movement the same thing as the anti-growth coalition?

Yeah.

There were some greatest hits in there.

Right.

Yeah.

I mean, some of it was sounding deliciously familiar.

Yeah, I think the anti-growth coalition has become and grown into a movement.

Because you were a key member of the anti-growth coalition.

I was.

Are you in the movement as well?

I am.

I am.

But I am a podcast maker.

I live in North London in a townhouse.

So yes, guilty as charged on all offences.

I'm just sorry that she didn't say the real greatest hit, which is wrong, wrong, wrong.

So good.

But what she basically says there, she takes aim at ESG, in other words, environmental social policies, so all the stuff that companies are doing to try and make themselves a little bit more, I don't know, human or a little bit more in tune with their consumers or a little bit more environmentally aware in the world, and she hates that.

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And then she thinks that sharing the wealth is a terrible thing and she hates that.
And then my favourite thing is woke, because like anything that she finds annoying is just woke.

I don't even know what that means.

Well, it's like if you, if my son kicked a football through a window, he would have to come in and say, oh, that woke football went through that woke window and it was nothing to do with my foot.

Her party, she's been in government and her party has been in government for 13 years, but all the ills of the world are caused by woke.

It's become the right wing version of neoliberal.

You know, whenever there's a discussion on the left and neoliberal, which once meant something, everything becomes neoliberal, doesn't really matter what it is.

Woke is the right version of neoliberal, but it's far more vacuous because at least neoliberal like once meant something, woke is just absolute, it's just nonsense.

But the thing that I just look at trust now and think is, you know what, it reaffirms which one of my cardinal beliefs in British politics today, which is, is a real shame that shame is no longer considered a desirable commodity in British politics.

I mean, honestly, most of us, if we make a mistake, we are willing to sort of just keep our heads down for a little bit.

You're not really going to go on match of the day and talk about the offside rule because that's not what you do best.

It would take a lot of convincing.

I mean, during the whole lineca thing, you know, Tim Davy was on the phone for a bit, but I did say, you know, it's not time yet for my return.

But look, it is just unbelievable.

Let's just take some of the substance involved here.

She's basically saying that this woke economic culture, this woke culture, whatever is one of the things responsible for the fact that we have had declining living standards across the West.

Actually, you know what?

We haven't had really substantial declining living standards across the West.

Certainly across the West, they generally haven't been growing quite as much as they were built for the financial crisis.

The country that has been at ground zero of the cost of living crisis is the United Kingdom, where we have had 13 years of this conservative government where, you know, you can say it's had its virtues or its vices or its successes and failures.

But she has been a key member of that government pretty much throughout rising up to be Prime Minister itself.

And there is zero sense of self-awareness of that, zero sense of engagement with some of the big trends which have led us to this point that we're at, including, guess what, Brexit, which has led to a collapsing business investment, something which she came to advocate. OK, I'm going to say there are two other things about that speech that really got my goat.

So let me get it off my chest.

Come on, come on, go for it.

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The first one is that she complained about the fact that the deep state was blocking her mandate.

What mandate?

She hadn't gone to the British people.

She'd gone to the membership of the Conservative Party, less than 50% of whom had voted for her.

She had not got the mandate of the country to do what she did.

And point two is she said the deep state blocked her from doing what she wanted to do, if only the bloody deep state had.

Where is the deep state when you needed it?

Where was the deep state when we needed them to say, you're not going ahead with that batshit crazy budget, are you?

And they didn't do anything.

They let her do it.

She did it all.

She cut the taxes without saying where the money was going to come from.

She helped the very wealthiest without any regard to everyone else.

And yet she dares to have the gall to say the deep state blocked me, are you shitting me?

Welcome to a new edition of Soap All Soap Box, here on The News Agency.

Well, I guess the other thing to say is, apart from the three of us, no one is discussing Liz Truss today.

Yes.

And that kind of tells you something because she's gone to the Heritage Foundation.

She's gone to Washington.

Right?

Washington is not a place you go to to disappear.

It's not like, oh, I've really heard enough of the bright lights in the big city.

I'll just go to Washington.

It's a place where you want to be heard.

She's speaking to the Heritage Foundation, and the Heritage Foundation is just to put it in context.

It has a history of climate denial and anti-LGBT rhetoric and making claims of voter fraud, actually, that, as we know from 2020, were completely inaccurate.

And she's making this speech in Washington.

And actually, I think the world's kind of sided, thanks, Liz.

We've moved on.

To play the speech just reminded me of all of the contradictions of her very brief period in office and her whole analysis.

Her analysis was always correct in a sense, which is that Britain's economy has been in relative decline, as I say, conveniently skating over the fact that her party's been in government for a long time, whilst for much of the time that has been going on.

But like, there is no engagement at all with trade-offs.

So for example, she says that there has been this woke culture, which is engaged in too

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much redistribution and too much government spending, whilst at the same time saying, we're not spending enough on defence, by the way, we need to be spending loads, loads more on defence.

Well, hang on a minute, Liz.

Then where are the cuts going to come from it in the rest of the state?

No engagement with the fact that during the last 13 to 15 years, where she says state spending has been climbing higher and higher and higher, our populations have been ageing and ageing and ageing, that in so many ways, the direction of travel in the 21st century is for structural reasons, whether we like it or not, to a bigger state.

But none of that matters in kind of Liz Truss land.

All that matters is these kind of sound bites and this dismissal, there's no real engagement with any of the things that have led us to the point, the economic or political realities that we now find ourselves in.

And I wonder whether Liz Truss, if you're listening now, because I'm sure you are an avid listener of the newsagents, because we are so ideologically aligned, whether Liz Truss will be flattered that we're at least paying some attention to it, because no one else is.

And in America, Liz who, I'm sure that is the reaction and there's been no coverage, zero.

Talking of America, we'll be hearing from Joe Biden in just a moment.

This is the newsagents.

Welcome back.

If you were listening yesterday, you'll remember Emily having spoken to one of her deep throat sources saying that they were worried that they needed to keep Biden short because otherwise there was a possibility he might make a gaffe.

And so this is after we've recorded, he's in the Republic and he's talking about an Irish rugby player who is a distant cousin, apparently, Rob Carney, and talks about him playing not against the All Blacks, the famous legendary rugby team, but against the Black and Tans, who are not a rugby team, but were the police force, pre-partition, that were trying to suppress any moves towards Irish independence, completely hated in Ireland to this day.

You see this tie I have with the shamrock on it?

This was given to me by one of these guys right here, who was a hell of a rugby player and they beat the hell of the Black and Tans, oh God.

It's so good, isn't it?

And I was sort of hearing from part of his entourage again, who said, this kind of proves my point.

Reminded me a little bit of that film Dave, where the real president's in a coma and they have to get the kind of, the lovely folksy bloke who lives in a sort of Tennessee village option because he looks like him, and they wheel him around saying, don't open your mouth. Look the part, don't open your mouth.

And you could tell that Biden and his team were terribly nervous about walking into anything on the Windsor framework, terribly nervous about anything on the DUP, terribly nervous about saying the wrong thing about the political machinations that are going on right now.

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And yet he still manages to say something incredibly awkward when he thinks he's talking rugby.

But you know, how do you mix up the all Blacks, the Black and Tans, I mean really, to be fair it's not as quite as bad as his worst Irish guy, which is when he said, I may be Irish but I'm not stupid, but it doesn't matter because one for Air Force One when the doors are shut and the wheels are up 2024 is going to be a cracker.

We'll be back tomorrow.

See you then.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.