

Here Lies Boris Johnson... and Lies, and Lies, and Lies

Any political obituary of the disgraced soon-to-be ex-PM has to start with his inability to tell the truth

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The really annoying thing about being asked to write an article detailing the lies of Boris Johnson is that I am not paid by the word.

There are so many lies that even if you listed just the blatant, shameless, immediately disprovable ones, you could not fit them all into one edition of this paper. So, this is not a full folio of his falsehoods; rather it is just the cream of the crap he has spouted in a political life of deception.

And let us not forget that Boris Johnson was known to be a liar long before he became PM. He was fired twice for lying, once by the leader of the Conservative Party. But each time he was allowed to return to work, to win promotion and to get away with it. It worked for him and so he kept doing it. The damage he has been allowed to inflict on the country as a result is immense.

“We send the EU £350 million a week, let’s fund our NHS instead”

Johnson did not actually say this; but it was emblazoned on that big red bus that drove him around the country during the referendum campaign. Even at the time the UK Statistics Authority described the figure as “potentially misleading” and “a clear misuse of official statistics” as it didn’t take into account the rebate which was applied before Britain paid its contributions to the EU. Johnson gave not a damn. The whole point was to just get a lie on the news all day every day, and it worked.

Shamelessly, in 2021 he claimed the figure was, if anything, an “underestimation” of the UK’s contributions. This is another lie; the true figure is much lower (around £250m) and the

cost to the UK of leaving the EU has far outweighed those contributions. Meanwhile, the UK is still paying into EU funds, as agreed in the withdrawal deal. This year the figure is expected to be £9.4 billion or £180 million a week.

“It is the government’s policy that Turkey should join the EU”

The other plank of the Brexit platform was to stir up fear of mass immigration, hence Johnson’s claim that Turkey was about to join the EU, threatening an influx of 70 million Muslims and giving the EU a border with Iraq. Nudge, nudge, say no more.

In fact, there was no chance of this happening – the UK was opposed to Turkey’s membership and like every other member state, had a veto. Six years on, Turkey has not joined the EU and its membership is now further away than ever.

The effect of these two big lies – on the cost of EU membership and on Turkey’s imminent arrival – can be measured. We left the EU as a result and doing so has ripped through the British economy. Fully accurate calculations are impossible but the total cost of lower growth because of Brexit is close to £200bn and will continue to rise for years.

“Fuel bills will be lower for everyone” under Brexit Johnson and others claimed this in a joint article for *The Sun* in May 2016, just days before the referendum, writing: “In 1993, VAT on household energy bills was imposed... This makes gas and electricity much more expensive. EU rules mean we cannot take VAT off those bills.” And that “As long as we are in the EU, we are not allowed to cut this tax. When we vote Leave, we will be able to scrap this unfair and damaging tax.”

To be fair, Johnson only claimed he would be able to remove VAT after Brexit, not that he would do it – just as well as it has never happened during his premiership. But if being a member of the EU meant you could not cut VAT on energy bills, it seems rather strange that several EU states have done just that during this current energy crisis and the UK hasn’t.

“There is no threat to the Erasmus scheme”

Said in 2020. Turned out there was a threat to the Erasmus scheme, from which British students are now locked out.

“The economy, under this Conservative government, has grown by 73 per cent”

Curiously, the statistics show GDP grew by only 20% between 2010 and 2020, when Johnson made this claim.

“There will be no border down the Irish Sea – over my dead body”.

Johnson lied about the Northern Ireland Protocol from day one, telling “ a room full of Northern Irish business leaders, “There will be no checks on goods going from GB to NI, or NI to GB” and claiming that if they were ever handed paperwork to fill in they could throw it in the bin. Yet the Treasury’s own damage assessment of the protocol was already spelling out in complete detail the very checks and tests that Boris Johnson had signed up to.

His government then spent a small fortune building the facilities at Belfast and Larne to check those non-existent forms and introduced numerous other checks at the borders.

Johnson now professes himself so shocked by these barriers to trade that he wants to tear up the “oven-ready” deal he signed, breaking international law and quite possibly starting a trade war with the EU. To justify this he is also lying about the alleged “damage” the NIP is doing to the Northern Irish economy, and also about the legality of his new Northern Ireland Protocol Bill.

There are “more people in work than before the pandemic”

A claim made by Johnson in parliament on nine occasions, but untrue each time. The true figure is around 500,000 lower.

Staying in the European Medicines Agency “would have made (the Covid vaccine) roll-out impossible”

The UK was first off the mark to get a vaccine programme started, but that had nothing to do with leaving the EU or its Medical Agency, as Johnson has repeatedly claimed. The UK’s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), which approved the vaccine, has confirmed that even if Britain was still in the EU, a Covid-19 vaccine would have been able to be approved by the UK regulator alone.

“This Government are building a record number of hospitals – a total of 48 – across the country”

Claimed at various points in his premiership and likely to be rehashed as he says farewell, it’s a cynical lie. Only a handful of the 48 are actually completely new hospitals. Six are being upgraded by 2025 and up to 38 others have received money to plan for building work, but not the funds to actually do it.

“I am sure that whatever happened, the guidance was followed and the rules were followed at all times”.

This is the lie that helped bring Johnson down. As we now know, 126 fines were issued to 83 individuals for breaking Covid rules in Downing Street, including to the prime minister himself. Yet ultimately it was his habit of consistently sending ministers out to lie on his behalf and them then being caught in those lies that turned his party against him.

Johnson has broken the “decent man” convention of British politics – the idea that we did not need checks and balances because our decent politicians would never dare do what he has done and lie through their teeth, again and again and again.

The problem is that you cannot put the genie back in its bottle. Johnson has proved that lying wins elections and large majorities. His successor has no more incentive than he did to tell the truth.

In fact, she may have even less. Telling the truth now would mean having to admit that Brexit was won in lies, that Northern Ireland was betrayed by lies, that the economy is worse off, that social care and the NHS are collapsing before our eyes.

Why do that when you can just lie again? After all, Boris Johnson got away with it for a very long time.

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