

A country's reputation rests on trustworthiness

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The Financial Times (letter). Available from:

<https://www.ft.com/content/b37ee130-8dd4-11e9-a1c1-51bf8f989972>

Boris Johnson threatened that, as UK prime minister, he will retain the £39bn the UK needs to pay as a “divorce bill” until we secure a “better deal” from Europe (“Johnson’s leadership bid leaves Europe unimpressed”, [June 10](#)). Interestingly, however, Boris has “played it safe” by not elaborating on the threat of the divorce bill during Conservative leadership launch ([June 13](#)).

Whether or not Brexiter politicians consider the £39bn bill a legal debt obligation, failure to pay it will hit hard our country’s reputation in international markets. This is not a trivial issue. Keeping a good reputation has long been considered a driving force behind a country’s willingness to pay its obligations.

Despite his classics education at [Balliol College](#), Oxford, Mr Johnson appears to have forgotten the wise words of Greek statesman and orator Demosthenes, who flagged the importance of the state’s reputation [by noting](#): “My prayer to the Gods is that, if possible, we may have wealth also in abundance, but that in all events, we may maintain our character of being trustworthy.”

Surely, a no-deal Brexit belongs to the “all events” mentioned by Demosthenes.