

## It's all down to Johnson

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In the end, it all comes down to Johnson.

Tomorrow Johnson goes to Brussels. Using prerogative powers he can decide whether to compromise with the EU, or not. It is, then, his choice as to whether we will remain in the EU, or otherwise.

Notoriously, it is well known that he wrote two columns for the Telegraph before deciding whether to back Leave or Remain nearly five years ago. He backed Leave then. We have all paid the price for that.

British politics has been crippled by Brexit ever since. I sometimes wonder what might have been achieved if political effort had been put into so many other issues of greater real importance during that period.

It is impossible to know precisely what Johnson will do now. I strongly suspect that he does not know what his negotiating position will be. Maybe he is engaged in writing two political obituaries for himself today. One will document the Tory fury at his betrayal, and subsequent fall as Prime Minister. The other will document the country's fury in 2021 at having to suffer the consequences of having left the EU, and his subsequent fall as prime minister.

There is, in other words, no good decision that Johnson can make. Whatever he does now he backed the wrong policy in 2016. For all its many faults, and I acknowledge them, the EU provides a better trading environment for the UK than any alternative. If only a tiny part of the Brexit energy had been directed into its improvement and reform so much could have been achieved.

That, though, did not happen. As a result, Johnson now faces his moment with fate. Whatever happens will be a disaster for the country. Whatever happens, he will not be forgiven. And even he must know that.

So what will he do? I have little doubt that he will back no deal. My reasoning is quite straightforward, and solely based upon judgement of Johnson's character. As a natural

prevaricator he will wish to win the day irrespective of the consequence tomorrow. Leaving wins him time with his own party. It defers his fate. And for that reason alone I think we will leave the EU this week.