

# Truth is in the national interest

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As a New Zealander, I have always been proud of the fact that my country is ranked as the least corrupt nation on the planet – my upbringing there shaped my values, business and life. Yet yesterday, four members of Parliament made a harsh, public attack on my integrity. The apparent purpose of the attack is to discredit someone they believe to be an opponent in their campaign to reverse Brexit.

## The accusations

The substance of their statements is untrue. I am not and never have been associated with the Russian state in any capacity. There is no evidence to support claims to the contrary. The truth is that over the last four decades my global investment activities, commercial and philanthropic, have deliberately and measurably improved the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

The MP's unspecified allegations of wrongdoing are being based on a discredited report from 16 years ago. These accusers have refused to release the full report to me for scrutiny. Calling for a response, while hiding the document at issue is patently dishonest. Moreover, impugning my reputation while hiding behind Parliamentary privilege shows the lack of confidence which they have in their claims.

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## The truth

What is at stake here is something much more important than my reputation, which remains secure even in the face of baseless lies. The deeper problem is that, by using the floor of Parliament to make defamatory, untrue and damaging statements, these MPs degrade public discourse and undermine the very democracy they purport to be protecting.

## My story

Since its founding, my business has been voluntarily audited and reviewed by the world's top firms and counterparties, and we have never had an adverse finding of any sort.

In short, we have enjoyed an unbroken reputation for integrity, for over thirty years.

Were this not true, those promoting the current fabrications would have delighted in exposing any shortcomings. They have found none.

### **We have no skeletons in our closet.**

Hence the need for critics to fabricate allegations by creating guilt by association, smears and innuendo; while hiding behind the protection of Parliamentary privilege. This abuse of privilege to make such attacks, while evading proper accountability for their words, is a demonstration of the very corruption which these MPs purport to be exposing. Spreading lies does not advance the public interest.

**If these MPs are so confident in the veracity of their claims, they should have the courage to lead by example, stand up straight and take full, public responsibility for doing so. They should also have the integrity to provide us with a copy of their “secret” file.**

To assassinate someone's character and destroy a lifetime's reputation, on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations, and then call on them to reply, while refusing to provide details of the allegations, is the height of hypocrisy and demonstrates the depth of their desire to bury the truth.

## The Legatum Institute

[The Legatum Institute](#), which I co-founded with my business partners, has an eleven-year track record of standing up for the truth. Whether it is publishing data on what makes for prosperous communities or holding the Russian state accountable for the nefarious effects of their propaganda, I have been proud to support research and thinking that fearlessly stands up for what is true and right.

Regarding Russia in particular, my history of investing in that country is entirely characterised by calling for better corporate governance, especially in large Russian companies. In other words, calling business leaders to higher standards of conduct. This is all part of the public record and was available to these MPs, if they had bothered to enquire.

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## The Legatum Foundation

[The Legatum Foundation](#), also co-founded with my partners, has been active for more than a decade as an innovator of a number of highly impactful humanitarian organisations. We founded, funded, developed and continue to support organisations that have improved the lives of more than 270 million people in over 110 countries. The primary focus of the Foundation's work today involves deworming children ([The END Fund](#)), combatting modern day slavery and human trafficking ([The Freedom Fund](#)) and getting tens of thousands of disenfranchised and refugee children back into school ([The Luminos Fund](#)).

Our desire to see more prosperous people is not limited to the developing world, and it does not stop at Britain's border. Initiatives like the [Centre for Entrepreneurs](#) promotes the creation of jobs. And Legatum Institute's work on developing healthy UK communities ([UK Prosperity Index](#)) is all consistent with our approach to promoting an empowered and prosperous British citizenry.

## Brexit

To be clear, I have never taken a public position on Brexit. Many in the media and these MPs suggest otherwise, but I challenge them to point to one example of any statement by me one way or the other on Brexit. They can not. Regardless of this truth, they seek to make me an emblem of Brexit and then as with all others they perceive as enemies, discredit me in their quest to reverse the decision of the British electorate.

Nor has the Legatum Institute advocated for or against Brexit. What it has done, following the Brexit referendum, is to propose policy ideas to make a success of Britain's international trade policy once the referendum decision has been implemented (and the UK rejoins the international trading community as a sovereign nation). Assertions that either I, or the Legatum organisation, has advocated for or against Brexit at any time is simply a misrepresentation of the truth. What our critics are really objecting to is our belief that the British people can compete successfully in international trade and make a success of their decision to leave the EU.

## Monaco

They seem to be saying that I was investigated 16 years ago by authorities in Monaco, where I lived at the time. Despite repeated requests, no one has been willing to make this purported "evidence" available to us, so I have no way of assessing its veracity. But even if there was an investigation of some sort, the truth is that it must not have gone anywhere, as I was never – not once – contacted, questioned, or otherwise approached by the authorities in Monaco or any other authority about Russia, or any other questions about the propriety of my business dealings.

As I stated before, I have never had anything to do with Russian – or any other country's – intelligence services. If the Monaco authorities investigated this question at some point, they must have concluded the same, as they obviously never pursued the matter with me. Instead, I remained a resident in good standing in Monaco for the duration of my two decades there and for many years after I moved away.

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## Conclusion – my approach

My personal approach to life is to be at peace with all people insofar as it is within my ability to do so. I prefer to resolve questions and issues relationally. When Liam Byrne first raised some of these issues in an article in the New European in November of last year, he was provided with a detailed rebuttal, trying to help him understand the facts and embrace the truth. I attach the letter [here](#). He never responded. Instead, he knowingly repeated the same innuendo and slander from Parliament on Tuesday.

Despite the viciousness of the personal attacks made against me, I remain willing to meet with these MPs, even if they have made no effort to contact me. They may find my personal, business and philanthropic story more compelling and beneficial than the wild aspersions which they have been willing to cast on my character.

Regardless, in the interest of truth, and the integrity of healthy public debate, I once again call on these MPs to provide us with their “secret” dossier, to which they refer, so that the issues can be properly addressed. Truth, fair play and an open and honest debate are truly in the national interest. As these MPs have dedicated their lives to public service, I believe they can do better than this, and call on them to take responsibility, correct the record and prioritise the truth over their political agendas.

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