

Russia, and London

Published: January 17, 2026, 3:19 am

The situation in Ukraine looks to be getting worse, and can no longer be ignored.

That is most especially true for one group in UK society who have much to lose. They are London's professional elite who service the needs of the oligarchs. As [Chatham House said last December](#):

The intertwining of financial globalization and deregulation with the post-Soviet transition has, since the 1990s, created a new international political and economic environment. In this context, the UK's relations with Russia and Eurasian states are characterized in part by features of transnational kleptocracy, where British professional service providers enable post-Soviet elites to launder their money and reputations.

Just reading the summary of their article is worthwhile, and covering. Note this for example:

The provision of aggressive reputation management services by UK professionals includes libel actions, quasi-defamation cases, and the use of public relations agents against journalists and researchers. These services also transplant authoritarian agendas and rivalries to the UK, which has become a leading site of legal action and political conflict between post-Soviet elites.

And this:

Opportunities for reputation laundering are placing the integrity of a range of important domestic institutions at risk. Philanthropy to UK universities and charities is one method by which post-Soviet elites clean up their reputations – but these donations are processed in secret, and several cases suggest that their due diligence has been flawed. Westminster – and the Conservative parliamentary party in particular – may be open to influence from wealthy donors who originate from post-Soviet kleptocracies, and who may retain fealty to these regimes.

As a result, the UK is not neutral in this dispute, as many of our supposed allies realise.

Some of the UK's elite have been bought by Russian money, and there are doubts as to our willingness to impose sanctions in the event of Russia invading Ukraine, which appears to be the chosen method of counter-attack. As Chatham House concluded:

This situation is materially and reputationally damaging for the UK's rule of law and to the UK's professed role as an opponent of international corruption.

Are we willing to change that, most especially now when Russian influence has become so embedded in some parts of UK society, unlike most other countries, and all because of our willingness to operate an ineffective money laundering regime? The test may come, quite soon.