

We need a war on the corruption that lets world leaders...

Published: January 13, 2026, 12:07 pm

I have just [Tweeted this thread](#):

There is talk of war this morning. A thread....

Putin clearly agreed to take no action against Ukraine during the winter Olympics. The need to keep China on side shows how weak his position really is. It also suggests war could start tomorrow.

That Putin could win territorial gains in Eastern Ukraine appears indisputable.

That there is nothing that the West will do to stop him doing so, as also happened when he annexed Crimea and other parts of Eastern Ukraine in 2014, is also certain. No one has the ability to mount a military campaign to stop him.

But that does not mean that what is possible should happen. I do not for a moment agree that Russia has any justification for its actions.

At the same time I am profoundly disappointed by the responses of the UK government and those of other nations to this crisis. They are not calling out what this whole issue is really all about. There are at least four issues that underpin this situation.

The first is imperialism. Russia is seeking to recreate its empire. It is time that imperialism of all sorts was consigned to history, but too many in the West retain commitment to it for them to say so.

Second, this is about male aggression. But then, so too is the response. This picture of the lunch at Saturday's Munich Summit where white males were the only participants is clear indication of that.

Third, this is about the command of resources. Few wars have ever been about

anything else. There have been wars that are not economically motivated, but they are rare.

Fourth, this is about illicit behaviour. Russia has no right to Ukrainian assets. But then, many Russian leaders' claims over assets are illicit. But that is also true of many Ukrainian leaders' claims as well. We need to understand the consequences.

There have always been illicit claims to assets. What has changed is that in the last forty or so years the mechanisms for making those claims have been widely promoted in the name of supposed economic freedom.

All the apparatus of tax havens, backed up and supported by the City of London, has been used to facilitate illicit claims to which blind eyes have been turned.

That Johnson is now saying sanctions against illicit funds in London might be taken is the clearest indication that although this has been possible for a long time we have chosen not to enforce the laws that might have let us prevent abuse.

Why does this matter? Because what the West has very clearly said for a long time is that the UK and other countries will turn a blind-eye to Russian illicit assets and as a result Russia has come to believe that making claim on such assets is acceptable.

Of course I cannot be sure that there is a direct causal relationship between tax haven and City of London corruption and the Russian belief that the West is indifferent to its corruption, but the likelihood that this relationship exists seems very high to me.

According to Boris Johnson we are facing World War III. I think that exceptionally unlikely, simply because it is entirely predictable that there will be no military involvement in Ukraine. I therefore think the claim unjustified.

I also think it exceptionally unlikely that Putin will move against any other country. The balance of risks from doing so would simply be too high within the equation of causations that I have noted above. Putin knows that.

But there is a matter to resolve, and that is the corruption. There is a war needed now. It is a war on corruption that is required.

The City has to swept clean, and if that means lawyers, bankers and accountants cannot survive the process, so be it.

Tax havens need to be consigned to history.

If we are to eliminate the risks arising from avarice, from corruption, from illicit behaviour, and the nodded complicity with this that countries like the UK have provided, then we need genuine transparency.

We are suffering the consequence of limited liability. Putin has limited liability in one sense for his actions in Ukraine. He and we know that.

But we are also suffering the consequence of the abuse of limited liability companies that have been used to hide actions from view without belief that consequences follow.

That has to change. We need details of ownership and the full accounts of every limited liability company on public record now, without any exceptions. That is the price we must pay to end corruption.

If we need action as a result of what is happening in Ukraine it is that we need this renewed focus on transparency and accountability. They are really what democracy is all about. And we have forgotten that fact.

There is no transparency and accountability in Russia.

There is precious little here in the UK either, in truth. We have a prime minister and royal family who think that the law does not apply to them. That should be as shocking here as it is in Russia.

What we need is a focus on these essential issues. We must do that to eliminate the culture of irresponsibility in pursuit of illicit gain undertaken with the connivance of cooperative states that has led us to where we are today.

The possible war in Ukraine is all about corruption resulting in dire consequences for some, and maybe many.

If there is to be a lesson from this day, this issue, and this war if it happens (and I sincerely hope it does not) it is that we need to beat the mechanisms that facilitate corruption that permit dire consequences to happen.

That is the only way for democracy to happen. It is the only way for democracy to win. It is the only way to turn opposition to Putin into a truly just cause.

Will that peaceful war for openness, transparency and accountability, which will have victims and a cost in a society ridden with corruption like ours, happen? I do not know. But I am certain it should be pursued.