

# Is the Ukraine war undermining UK action on climate and social justice?

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*These slides will be made available at: <https://www.sgr.org.uk/>*

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Before the February 2022 invasion...

...of Ukraine by Russia

## Key UK govt policies in 2020/21

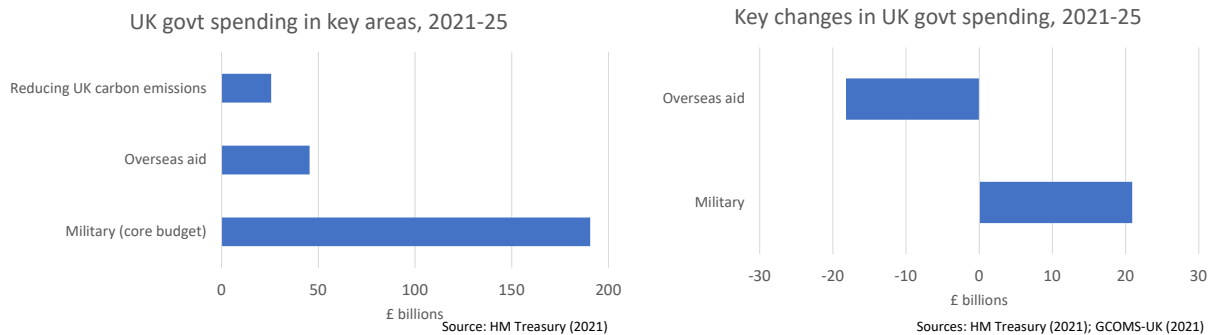
- At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic...
- Military
  - Major increase in military budget
  - Major increase in nuclear weapons stockpile – by 44%
  - Expanded circumstances for nuclear weapons use
- Social justice
  - Major cut to overseas aid budget
  - NHS and other public sector pay frozen (numerous other examples)
- Climate
  - ‘10 point plan for Green Industrial Revolution’
  - High emphasis on speculative/ military-friendly low carbon tech
    - e.g. nuclear, ‘jet zero’
  - Demand-side options & cheap renewables neglected

- Military policies
  - Military budget increase – figures on next slide
  - Revised military policies laid out in Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy:  
HM Govt (2021). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>
- Social justice
  - Aid budget cut – figures in next slide
  - Other issues not covered in detail in this presentation
- Green Industrial Revolution – notable controversies:
  - Civil nuclear power industry – much overlap with military nuclear sector, especially nuclear submarine tech; military interest in further development of small modular reactors
  - Jet zero – low carbon aviation fuels – of interest of both civilian and military sectors, but these fuels have major sustainability problems
  - Offshore wind given high priority, but onshore wind and solar photovoltaics excluded
  - Home energy conservation programme – Green Deal – poorly managed

and then abandoned

- Behaviour change intentionally excluded due to PM Johnson's ideological opposition
- BEIS (2020). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution>
- Other key climate policy
  - Climate is 'number one foreign policy goal' (HM Govt, 2021) – ring-fenced part of aid spending, but budget dwarfed by military

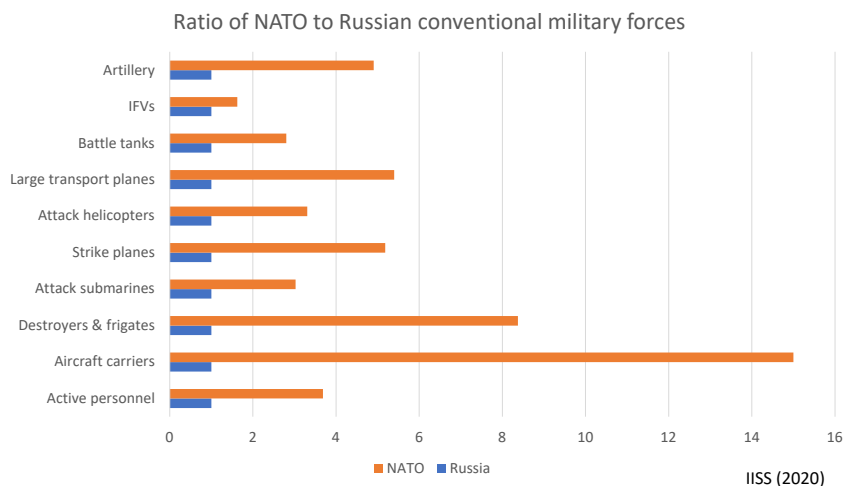
## UK govt spending comparisons: military v climate v overseas aid



- UK military spending was larger than Russia's in 2021

- This imbalance in military v climate v aid spending is even worse in many other wealthy nations
- UK govt spending
  - Analysis based on data from HM Treasury summarised in: GCOMS-UK (2021). <https://demilitarize.org.uk/gcoms-uk-briefing-points-on-the-uk-autumn-budget-and-spending-review/>
  - Military total does not include Trident contingency fund, military pensions etc
  - 'Reducing UK carbon emissions' covers spending commitments in the UK's new Net-Zero Strategy
  - Calculations on reductions in UK aid budget are based on the reduction from 0.7% to 0.5% of Gross National Income
- Spending comparison between UK and Russia based on data from: SIPRI (2022). <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2022/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2021>

## NATO v Russian militaries



- NATO's combined military budgets over 17 times Russia's – and rising
- NATO nuclear forces only slightly larger than Russia's due to limits in New START agreement

- Force data from: IISS (2020). <https://www.iiss.org/publications/the-military-balance/archive>
- Some military tech ratios even higher
  - Heavy drones – 50+ to 1
  - Tanker aircraft – 40+ to 1
- For more analysis of spending data, see: GCOMS (2022). <https://demilitarize.org.uk/is-the-invasion-of-ukraine-really-the-fault-of-nato-under-spending/>
- For latest figures on nuclear forces, see: FAS (2022). <https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>

## UK research and development

- Aspiration of ‘Global Britain’ to be ‘science superpower’
- UK’s total R&D spending well below average for EU and OECD
- Major rises planned in govt R&D
  - But military tech a key focus, with budget of £6.6bn over 4y
  - Linked to military industrial strategies
- Govt spending on energy R&D (see table)
- Cuts to R&D progs to help tackle poverty etc
- New body: Advanced Research & Invention Agency (ARIA)
  - Outside usual R&D and regulatory structures
- Lower regulation of emerging technologies

Govt spending on energy R&D	2021
Nuclear	48%
Energy efficiency	22%
Renewables	12%
Fossil fuels	2%
Other	12%

- UK total spending on R&D (public and private) was £38.5 billion in 2019 (latest year available)
  - This is 1.7% GDP. Average for: EU, 2.0%; OECD, 2.4%.
  - UK govt set target of 2.4% by 2027
- References and further analysis in: Parkinson (2021). <https://www.sgr.org.uk/resources/militarising-research-dark-side-global-britain-science-agenda>
- Energy R&D figures from: IEA (2022). <https://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/data-product/energy-technology-rd-and-d-budget-database-2>
- Lower regulation of genetics and other biotech, AI and robotics, nanotech etc

After the February 2022 invasion...



## UK military expansion



- War in Ukraine continuing with no end in sight
- Prime Minister Truss (at the time of writing!) plans massive rise in military spending to 3% GDP (from 2.2%)
- Policy analysis suggests:
  - 60% spending increase *above* inflation – largest single rise for 70 years
  - 30% increase in troop numbers
  - Huge expansion of military industrial base – diversion from green sector?
  - To cover costs, either rise in income tax from 20% to 25% or massive cuts to public services
- Very few democracies have military spending of 3% GDP
- Nuclear war risks growing – are US nuclear weapons coming back to UK shores?
- UK military ‘aid’ to Ukraine – £2.3bn in 2022
- Military carbon emissions very likely to grow
- *Increases in military spending will not help improve security – need different path*

- Spending increase to 3% GDP would mean £157bn spending above inflation over 8 years (up to 2030)  
Analysis from: RUSI (2022). <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/occasional-papers/famine-feast-implications-3-uk-defence-budget>
- New defence review underway – few details as yet
- Figures for military aid to Ukraine from: UK Parliament (2022).  
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9477/>

*[image credit: RAF]*

## Climate & energy policy changes



- 2022 another year of climate extremes and disasters
- Focus has shifted to national energy security as fossil gas prices spiral
- PM Johnson
  - British Energy Security Strategy – even more nuclear and North Sea oil & gas
  - Windfall tax on oil companies – but major loopholes
- PM Truss
  - Even bigger increase in North Sea oil & gas exploration – and fracking
  - Resistant to further windfall tax
- Energy bills support, even for wealthy
- Home energy conservation programmes continue to be small scale
- Behaviour change measures continue to be excluded
- 1.5°C climate goal exists in name only
- *Doubling down on fossil fuels/nuclear will not meet climate/energy security goals*

- British Energy Security Strategy: BEIS (2022).  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy>
- New North Sea oil & gas licensing round opened in early October – 900 locations offered, covered by 100 licences  
Source: The Guardian (2022).  
<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/oct/07/uk-offers-new-north-sea-oil-and-gas-licences-despite-climate-concerns>

*[image credit: iStockphoto]*

## Social justice



- Spiralling energy costs leading to ‘cost of living crisis’
- Fuel poverty currently affecting 7 million UK households and rising
  - Even stronger argument for huge home energy conservation programmes
- 345 million people globally in ‘acute food insecurity’
  - 150% increase on 2019
- Lower overseas aid levels continue
  - Both from UK and other wealthy nations
- More cuts in UK public services/ benefits/ pensions to come
  - ‘Black hole’ is around 50-80% of core military budget
- *Cutting help for the poorest will cause considerable suffering*

- Fuel poverty in the UK
  - 4 million households in fuel poverty in Oct 2021 – so increase of about 75% in 1y
  - 7 million is about 30% of households or nearly 20 million people
  - Figures on fuel poverty and further discussion at:  
The Conversation (2022). <https://theconversation.com/energy-crisis-the-uk-is-still-heading-for-widespread-fuel-poverty-despite-the-governments-price-cap-190290>
- Food security figures from: World Food Programme (2022).  
<https://www.wfp.org/global-hunger-crisis>
- At time of writing, gap in UK public finances projected to be £28-40bn/y by 2026/7 compared with MOD budget projected to be about £50bn/y
  - For further figures and analysis, see:  
HM Treasury (2022). <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-brings-forward-further-medium-term-fiscal-plan-measures>  
IFS (2022). <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/response-chancellors-mini-budget-reversals>

*[image credit: PublicDomainPictures via Pixabay]*

## Some recommendations...

- If we prioritised helping high numbers of people in poverty...
  - Huge home energy conservation progs/ protect overseas aid & benefits/ curb energy use by the wealthy to bring down energy prices / negotiate for rapid end to Ukraine war to bring down energy prices
- If we prioritised dealing with existential risk to civilisation...
  - Negotiate for rapid end to Ukraine war to reduce nuclear war risk
  - Public spending & policy focused on rapid reduction in carbon emissions of wealthy rather than speculative/ militarised energy tech like nuclear
- If we prioritised socially-useful work...
  - Just transition for industry from fossil fuel/ arms sectors to energy conservation/ renewable energy/ energy storage
- Scientists/ engineers/ R&D spending should be focused on these agendas