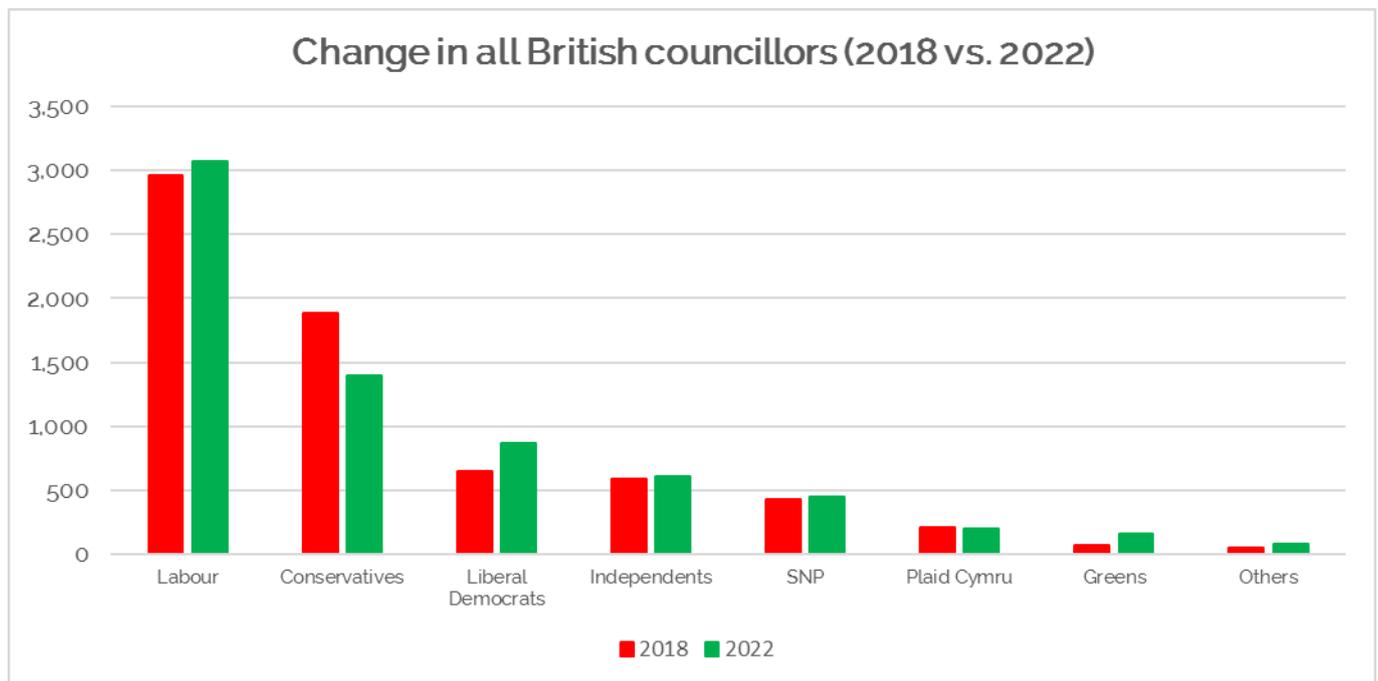


MEDIA: SPIN TO WIN?

By Christopher J. Wilkinson ([Website](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Telegram](#), [MeWe](#))



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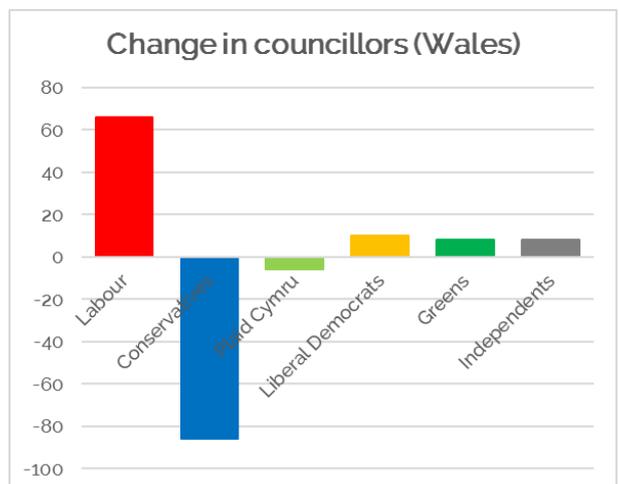
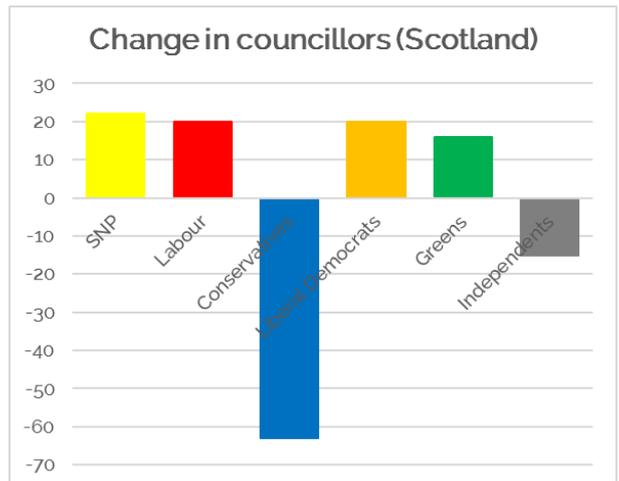
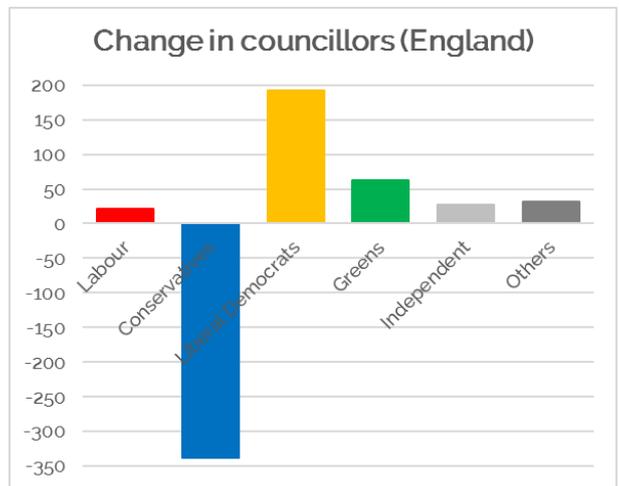
If you're someone who enjoys listening to the radio, watching the television or reading the newspapers, mainstream media are almost desperate to have you believe that the Labour Party performed strongly during the local elections this week – but nothing could be further from the truth. Spectators must surely be asking themselves: is media spin now the only way to win?

In England, [the Liberal Democrats made the biggest gains](#) with nearly two hundred new councillors, the Greens gained sixty-three councillors, independents picked up a further twenty-seven councillors, while Labour gained just twenty-two councillors and the Conservatives lost more than three hundred. In Scotland, [the Scottish National Party added a smattering of new councillors to their totals](#) with twenty-two gains, Labour and the Liberal Democrats both scored an additional twenty councillors each, the Greens picked up sixteen, while independents lost fifteen and the Conservatives lost sixty-three. In Wales, [the Labour Party secured a modest advance](#) with sixty-six extra councillors, the Liberal Democrats gained ten, the Greens and independents picked up eight more councillors each, while Plaid Cymru lost six and the Conservatives suffered the largest loss with eighty-six councillors being defeated. In London, overall control of Barnet, Wandsworth and Westminster came down for Labour, whilst Harrow went to the Conservatives, and Tower Hamlets was claimed by Aspire – defeating Labour. Such swings against the incumbent Conservatives [simply don't match up to the dreadful performance seen during the 2019 local elections with Theresa May as Prime Minister](#), which saw the loss of over one thousand councillors.

The Barnet Labour leader said [the result was the more so down to Conservative disillusionment than Labour enthusiasm](#). Sir Keir Starmer [declared that Labour had reached a 'big turning point'](#), but the bar was set so low after the 2019 General Election defeat that gains during this point of the electoral cycle are fairly typical for opposition parties. For all his ranting about Boris Johnson breaking his own lockdown rules, [the media and the police are now conveniently addressing Starmer's "Beergate" scandal and an investigation is now being prepared](#) – why was this held off until after the election? If there was a secret agenda was to provide a boost for the ideologically redundant Labour Party, then it has spectacularly failed to take flight. [Indications or implications of a Labour victory at the next general election must be taken with a large pinch of salt](#); the local election results were indeed a mixed bag, and if support remains firm for the Conservatives in key marginal and “red wall” areas as demonstrated at this week’s polls, [the Conservatives could well be back for a fifth term](#). The over-hyping of Partygate has led everyone to an ill-informed opinion about Boris Johnson, but has led no one to an informed opinion about the efficacy or ethics of lockdowns, vaccine coercion and other anti-COVID measures. Across the border, Nicola Sturgeon may claim that SNP success at the polls proves overwhelming support for Scottish independence, [but new research suggests that the precise opposite is true](#).

Turning to international political news, the situation becomes even more bleak as it emerges the “spin to win” strategy is not merely confined to the United Kingdom. Joe Biden [has officially become one of the worst Presidents of the United States in history](#) as new polling data places him a percentage point behind the man he replaced against a background of surging inflation and the situation in Ukraine. [One source ludicrously claiming that Biden is the only candidate who could fend off a challenge from a resurgent Donald Trump at the 2024 Presidential Election](#). In Australia, the federal election campaign now underway to decide a new parliament has been [blighted by revelations of a controversial security deal agreed between China and the Solomon Islands, the first of its kind for the Indo-Pacific](#), which could see a threatening Chinese military presence in the region. Despite losing the French presidency to Emmanuel Macron, [Marine Le Pen is back on the campaign trail hoping to make gains in the upcoming legislative election](#) – but [will Macron's second term be as different as initially promised](#), or is it yet more media spin?

[Maybe we should all have our tomatoes at the ready...](#)



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YOUTHFUL PERSPECTIVES

By Stephen McNamara ([Website](#), [Twitter](#))



Source: Amber, courtesy of Amber's family
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When asked about the Ukraine-Russia War, the perceptions at the start versus now, I thought it would be appropriate to seek the opinion of children at school as they are at the blunt end of the UK's media and government propaganda.

So, I started with one simple question to break the ice with Islay (twelve years old). "What do you know about Ukraine and Russia?" I asked. "Well, they're fighting, and Russia is losing. Oh, and I think Putin has cancer," as she then proceeds to open up the Tik Tok app on her phone to show me. It appears that kids have access to all these powerful social media and communication tools, but are not aware of the power it has or the ability to filter through to the actual source of information. Is this not covered in schools these days?

Amber (thirteen years old) says that "Sometimes teachers will talk about Ukraine and Russia. They'll tell us about refugees needing our help too." Amber continues: "In English class, the teacher will include examples of Ukraine in the lesson as part of questions." It's clear that the current situation with the conflict and invasion is heavily promoted in schools but not in any great detail, although in fairness, I'm not of the opinion that the horrific side of war should be

shared with those so young. What I am concerned about is that the discussion appears to be talked about as a long-term issue without any mention of how it could be ended.

I asked Owen (eleven years old) about Russia, and he thinks Russia is wrong for invading: "I think our Army should go and invade Russia!" Amber concurs: "Ukraine is a lot smaller. Maybe we should go to help along with the other countries. Russia is basically in the wrong." Islay adds: "Definitely. We need to do something."

Three children. Three different schools. Three very similar opinions. Zero diversity. Are the schools really trying to promote a new world war to children? Is this really our future?

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

By Mike Swadling ([Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Gettr](#))

I'm not entirely sure why the global community has decided national borders matter more than anything else. Nations continue to trade with China as they intern millions of Uyghurs. [Allegations of slave Labour and Genocide](#) haven't led to sanctions against leading members of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party), business leaders or the Chinese media. [Statista lists Egypt at the top of the list of worst countries for human rights and rule of law as of 2021](#), and Amnesty International says "Authorities targeted human rights defenders, opposition politicians and other activists through unlawful summons, coercive questioning, extrajudicial probation measures, criminal investigations, unfair prosecutions and inclusion on a "list of terrorists", yet we have no sanctions against them.

Prior to the invasion of Ukraine, [Amnesty reported the following on Russia](#): "Torture and other ill-treatment in places of detention remained endemic and prosecutions of perpetrators rare. Enforced disappearances were reported in Chechnya. The authorities failed to address domestic violence. LGBTI people continued to face discrimination", yet none of this led to sanctions. The things we choose to care about, or more to the point, the things we don't choose to care about baffles me, but that doesn't mean the national borders don't matter or that we shouldn't be profoundly concerned by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The “West's” reaction to the invasion has so far stayed surprisingly unified. While we haven't been able to fully wean ourselves off Russian gas, no country was going to impoverish itself deliberately overnight; progress has none the less been made. We have imposed meaningful sanctions against Russia as a nation and punished the plutocrats that enable the Putin regime. On the more absurd end we have seen sanctions against individual sports men and women, [the refusal to play Tchaikovsky by the Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra](#), and the banning of Russian media. Chemical Ali was a propaganda boon to the coalition during the Iraq War, Lord Haw-Haw if anything, stiffened resolve against Germany. We could now be watching Putin's propagandists having to explain the failing of the paper bear Russian army, instead by banning them, we have protected them from their own shortcomings.

Ukraine might not be the poster boy country some in the media make out, but they are a sovereign state and a sovereign people and they like all sovereign people deserve the right to self-determination. Britain's independence and ability to act alone, backed by the fact we are the leading military power in Europe has been proven. Whilst I won't pretend to be a military expert the ability for relatively small arms to disrupt a large invading force must be a concern to all military powers. Cheap domestic drones have become a feature in this war that will surely challenge future acts of aggression, but will also I fear fall into the hands of terrorists as these weapons become simpler to produce. Naval warfare has changed [as ships have been seen to be more vulnerable to land-based missile attack](#), something that will affect activities in the Taiwan Strait for years to come.

The coming together of the Ukrainian people and their successful defence of their country sets them clearly apart as a nation from Russia. In the medium to long term a humiliated nuclear Russia would be a concern for all, and soon after the end of the Putin regime we should look to re-engage Russia in the international community. Perhaps my biggest concern from the invasion of Ukraine has been the willingness of India to work with Russia to secure energy supplies. With 1.36 billion people, India is by far the largest democracy in the world, and this should be celebrated. The looming global threat of the CCP making sure India is on the side of the good guys, on the side of the liberal democracies, is good for one billion souls and good for the globe. During the EU referendum I was fond of saying the EU could never be a democracy because it had no demos. For all its faults and challenges with 447 languages spoken, at least four major religions and a surprisingly unshared history, India has over seventy years of functioning democracy.



Source: [Nastya Khachatourians](#),
[Wikimedia Commons \(CC BY-SA 4.0\)](#)

So what have we learned and what should we do differently next time? Some actions we already appear to be taking. We need to align states with NATO and other tenants of the western military alliance as ultimately security only comes through strong defence. Winston Churchill once said, “*Safety and certainty in oil lie in variety, and variety alone*”, we need to exploit domestic supplies of energy and encourage other countries to diversify their supplies of energy and other key commodities. Lastly as mentioned above we should be forming an alliance of democracies with not just India but all countries who are set on a democratic path and open to the peaceful transition of government. The emerging global power of the CCP, and regional threat of nations like Russian and Iran, is best stopped by democratic nations working together. We have shown in the Ukraine, economic sanctions against the aggressor and a well-supplied local militia can push back against authoritarian rule.

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