

*Mar 10*

The Nationalization of Student Government Elections

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On Friday, March 2, Colton Becker and Mehraz Rahman were elected as the UT Student Government president and vice president, respectively. Coming out of a tumultuous last week of campaigning, the Colton-Mehraz coalition was justifiably elated. Students wept in the SAC auditorium as the results were posted, whether for joy or sorrow depended on their executive alliance affiliation.

While the results ushering in the Colton-Mehraz administration would be nullified by the Student Government Supreme Court a mere day later, the emotions surrounding the SG election endured. Colton, Mehraz, and Guneez all took to social media in the days following, professing that their participation in the executive alliance campaigns made them subject to verbal threats and harassment.

Debates surrounding the SG elections predictably focused on issues other than the technical policy specifics of the executive alliances. Instead, students used the SG elections as a vehicle for accessing broader conversations about minority representation, race relationships, and even the issue perennially vexing the political luminaries of UT SG, Palestine-Israel relations.

Using campus specific issues as an access point to national and international conversations is neither new nor inherently bad. However, together with the incredible level of emotion and vitriol expressed on campus, the



hijacking of SG elections by national issues helped to create a false conception of SG in the minds of students — namely, the false notion that SG is an assembly that actually matters.

The conversation concerning Zionism in the most recent executive alliance election is particularly demonstrative of this point. Underpinning the argument that an executive alliance candidate's positions on Palestinian-Israeli relations are pertinent is an acceptance of the argument that SG has a meaningful opinion on U.S. foreign affairs.

For example, consider this hypothetical tweet, “Hey folks, vote @SeinfeldCostanza for UT pres and vp! We’re tired of having Kramer-loving individuals in power!” While love for the character Kramer might say a lot about a person, its use in this context implies that it is a pertinent issue to Student Government that should be considered when choosing which candidates to support. The same applies to any issue which students consider important enough to mention about a candidate.

Students seemed undeterred by this fact when slating both campaigns for their views on the issue of Zionism, as though the SG president might potentially add some meaningful opinion or policy to an issue that has chafed U.S. presidents for more than half a century.

Conversations about these issues have their place on campus. However, in relation to Student Government elections, they simply contribute to the misconception that SG has broad power and the ability to enact meaningful policies on campus with substantive effects. Luckily, a quick glance at sections 3.10 and 4.24 of the Student Government Constitution will serve as an effective inoculant against such a notion.

Campus

student government



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Into The Jungle, Or: The Charade of Student Government

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