

Democracy in action: Scotland votes to remain a part of the United Kingdom

BY AMOL GARG
STAFF WRITER

An opportunity for freedom — has it gone to waste or is it the dawn of a new age?

1.6 million votes were counted, a turnout of about 86 percent of the nation. With 31 out of 32 councils declaring no to independence, Scotland's democratic proceedings ended with the decision to remain part of the United Kingdom.

"The Scottish referendum was an incredible demonstration of democracy," said Associate Professor of Political Science Ken Gilmore. "The fact that it had such a massive turnout and no violence was truly remarkable — more power to them."

On Sept. 18, nicknamed "the day of unity," Scotland held a referendum to determine if the nation should remain part of the United Kingdom or dissolve the 300 years of unity with Great Britain and become an independent country.

"We welcome the result of yesterday's referendum on Scottish independence and congratulate the people of Scotland for their full and energetic exercise of democracy," said President Barack Obama in a statement released by the White House. "Through debate, discussion and passionate yet peaceful deliberations, they reminded the world of Scotland's enormous contributions to the U.K. and the world, and have spoken in favor of keeping Scotland within the United Kingdom."

Perhaps because of the initial surge of nationalism and call for independence, however, this decision was by no means a landslide victory, with 45 percent voting "Yes" and 55 percent voting "No" to independence.

"Post-imperial Britain has become sclerotic and corrupt vide (an) 850-strong unelected House of Lords," said former leader of the Scottish National Party Gordon Wilson in an email interview with The Guilfordian. "The Union is outdated. The only nation that counts is England with 85 percent of the U.K. population. A social and political revolution

has occurred here in Scotland and can be a wakeup call for other nations."

Shortly after the decision to remain unified with Great Britain was announced, First Minister and Scottish National Party leader Alex Salmond announced his decision to resign in mid-November. The decision was mainly accredited to Scotland rejecting independence. Salmond announced that, despite stepping down, he would want to serve as a member of the Scottish parliament.

"I believe that many people decided it would be too much of a hassle separating from Great Britain," said Early College sophomore Maksym Kosachevsky. "Not only would they have to handle their own affairs, they would also no longer be (protected by) the UK's army."

Some days before the referendum, United Kingdom party leaders Ed Miliband, Prime Minister David Cameron and Liberal Democrat chief Nick Clegg signed a pledge to authorize Scots' "extensive new powers" — including tax-raising authority — if they remained part of Great Britain.

Thus, by declining the offer to become independent, Scotland has managed to not only prevent itself from having to undergo structural changes but also from having to establish its own financial market.

"For many in Scotland and elsewhere today, there will be strong feelings and contrasting emotions — among family, friends and neighbors," said Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in a public statement. "That, of course, is the nature of the robust democratic

tradition we enjoy in this country. Knowing the people of Scotland as I do, I have no doubt that Scots, like others throughout the United Kingdom, are able to express strongly held opinions before coming together again in a spirit of mutual respect and support, to work constructively for the future of Scotland and, indeed, all parts of this country."



CONWAY BORCE/GUILFORDIAN

University professor's tenure revoked over anti-Israel tweets

BY LANDON FRIED
STAFF WRITER

Steven Salaita's Twitter posts cost him his job.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign offered him a tenured professorship in 2013 but revoked the offer

on Aug. 1 before school started this year due to his opinionated posts on the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

Now Salaita stands at the center of a firestorm of controversy about academic freedom and the rights of professors.

As the conflict in Gaza came to a boil over the summer, Salaita voiced his personal

opinions on Twitter.

"It's simple: either condemn Israel's actions or embrace your identity as someone who's okay with the wholesale slaughter of children," said Salaita in one of his tweets.

Comments like this one convinced administration at the University of Illinois that he did not deserve a tenured professorship at the university.

"What we cannot and will not tolerate at the University of Illinois are personal and disrespectful words or actions that demean and abuse either viewpoints themselves or those who express them," said Chancellor Phyllis Wise to the university community.

People have started voicing their opinions questioning whether the university was justified in denying Salaita his job.

"When you're in that position, you have to be careful about saying things that are provocative or hurtful," said Max Carter, director of the Friends Center at Guilford and campus ministry coordinator. "But, there was a major conflict going on where people in his own community were being killed. Obviously, there's emotion there, and one ought to be given some leeway in freedom of speech and freedom of expression if it's not leading directly to harming others."

The university and its supporters have justified the de-hiring due to the impolite nature of many of Salaita's tweets.

"The University of Illinois must shape men and women who will contribute as citizens in a diverse and multicultural

democracy," said the trustees in a statement to the university community. "To succeed in this mission, we must constantly reinforce our expectation of a university community that values civility as much as scholarship."

Others took offense at other aspects of Salaita's comments.

"It's not the politeness I have an issue with, it's the language," said Josh Weil, president of Guilford College Hillel. "He deserved to lose his job. There's a limit to where your language can go."

However, professors on Guilford's campus more sympathetic to Salaita's situation have expressed their concerns about Salaita losing a tenured position over personal opinions.

"In academia this is a very big deal, as tenure is there to protect faculty exactly against this kind of thing," said Diya Abdo, associate professor and chair of English.

It would take a drastic change of events for the University of Illinois to re-hire Salaita at this point. The board of trustees voted 8-1 to uphold the decision against the professor.

Salaita, though, had this warning for academic institutions.

"Dear Guilford students: terms like 'civility' are subjected and easily co-opted into the service of repression," said Salaita. "I urge you to complicate simplistic moral formulations and come to conclusions — on Palestine, my situation, foreign policy and anything else — based on a thoughtful engagement with a variety of sources and points of view."

Steven Salaita @stevesalaita · Jul 30

#Israel isn't suddenly getting out of hand. It's been acting this way for 66 years.

#Gaza #GazaUnderAttack

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The colonizer invokes the native's violence while ignoring the fundamentally violent nature of colonization itself.

#Gaza
#ISupportGaza

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