

Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations, His Excellency, Jan Kickert at UVU



On February 19, 2019, UVU was able to have His Excellency, Jan Kickert, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations speak about how it is being a small country in the United Nations. It was a really interesting presentation not only for the political side of Austria but also the history of Austria leading up to its place today. Being a history education major and have also considered something in political science it fit a lot of my interest.

Ambassador Jan Kickert discussed foreign policies in small countries, stating that geography and history are big determining factors in how countries decide on their foreign policies. Austria had a major role in the First World War. It was a big empire up until the end of the the world war.

After the empire fell, it took time for Austria to find itself. Some of its provinces wanted to join neighboring countries. The rest of it eventually became an independent country. Once the

Second World War started, many of the Austrians became part of the German Nazi group. They became some of the worst Nazis when it came down to the death camps and mass murders. For a small time after the Second World War had ended it fell into the same fate as Germany, it was split into four parts and owned by different countries. Although, they did become independent once again.

Austria became a neutral power agreeing not to join NATO. Which ended up playing a major role during the Cold War. Since it was a neutral power it was a meeting ground in the middle of the boundaries. The Iron Curtain fell along its Eastern Border. Austria not being apart of a military pact gave “wobble room” in its foreign policy. They played a big part in the banning of weapons during the Cold War, as military weaponry was advancing. It remains apart of banning weapons and has worked closely with the UN to ban nuclear weapons. Considering nuclear weapons have the power to end humanity.

Austria joined the United Nations in 1955. Its neutrality was considered similar to Switzerland's. Although, Switzerland did not become a full member of the United Nations until 2002. Austria also plays a big part in working with the United Nations to stop global warming.

Austria is one of four places to have a United Nations meeting ground. Although, New York's location is the only place in the world to represent every nation in the world. He talked about how the Chancellor of Austria became apart of politics at a young age and became chancellor when he was 31 (still being considered a young adult). Austria lowered the voting age to the age of 16 about 10 years ago, feeling like it would spark youths interest in politics at a younger age and give elections a new view. For the first time in 14 years, the Chancellor of Austria has been invited to meet with our president. Which is a big move showing that although, Austria is a smaller country it still has a big part in the United Nations and in the world.

Utah Valley University is one of the few schools in America to address global issues on a higher level, and has had interactions with the United Nations. Ambassador Kickert, talked about how important it is for organizations to try and interact with the UN and address global issues. He wants people to be able to change the world for the better one and made sure to address how UVU is doing its part.

I thought this presentation was a unique opportunity to hear from an PR of Austria to the UN. It gave new insights on some major global issues. I think it is amazing how UVU has made it possible for students to interact with the UN and have gotten students involved in leadership roles.

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