

## Ambassador Jan Kickert presentation at UVU



Permanent Representative of Austria to the UN, Ambassador Jan Kickert spoke before students at Utah Valley University on Tuesday, February 19, 2019 on the theme: “What foreign policy for a small country? The case of Austria.” The overall theme of his talk was to educate the audience about how a small nation conducts foreign policy.

I really enjoyed his historical narrative of Austria and how the country achieved sovereignty shortly after the World War I. “Under the barrel of a gun you can be certain about the outcome of a vote.” This is a quote that he gave about how Austria reacted to the Nazi invasion of his country. He was very truthful about his country’s participation in the atrocities of the Holocaust.

After Stalin died in 1953, Austria had the opportunity to finally negotiate a state treaty and Austrian were able to be independent again. As they continued, they were able to become a neutral nation and have conversations with Yasser Arafat and Israel and helped them negotiate some types of peace. Austria does not have a large military and did not join any military pact. Nation used this to attract the United Nations to set Head Quarters for some its institutions in Vienna, Austria.

Ambassador said, that in foreign policy the biggest issue is to get along well with neighbors, when any nation will have intense relations with neighboring countries, some good and some bad. Before the fall of the Iron Curtain Austria was not allowed to join the EU. The Soviet Union did not allow this because it was a border nation to the USSR.

The UN is the only place where every country in the world is represented and has a say. It is interesting that a small island like Palau can have some interests in common with Austria, but in the UN anybody can discover these new situation. The UN is the lifeblood for small countries. Without it, the large countries would be able to dictate their policies. The multilateral relations at the UN allow for these different types of communication.

Austrian drafted the Ottawa convention and the Oslo convention to discuss how to eliminate weapons that indiscriminately affect civilians. Austria currently is working towards a ban on nuclear weapons. Austria wants also to spare civilians from armed conflict and interested in Artificial Intelligence (AI) to raise awareness about challenges of AI as a weapon without any human input. Overall, as Ambassador Jan Kickert summarized, international law is very important to a small country like Austria.

I thoroughly enjoyed this discussion today. It was interesting to think about foreign policy from the standpoint of a small nation like Austria. It is in a much different situation on the world stage than the USA.

*Joel Frost, member, Foreign Affairs club at UVU*