

## Germany and its place in the United Nations



On October 13, 2016, Utah Valley University had the pleasure of welcoming the Honorable H.E. Harald Braun, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations to discuss the role Germany plays in the geopolitical sphere, and more specifically its place within the United Nations. Being a student of German and having lived for a year learning about its culture, I was excited to learn more about Germany in this context. Despite its absence from the permanent representation in the Security Council, Ambassador Braun stressed the leadership capabilities Germany has in leading peace efforts worldwide, with involvement in 16 separate peacekeeping missions worldwide, as well as supporting more than 6% of the UN budget on peacekeeping. He also stressed the importance of peace in his own country and the political system which sees that there is a continuation of peace and preventing a reoccurrence of the Weimar Period, while enabling democratic ideals in their society.

Ambassador Braun also discussed the weakness in the current UN system. He sees Germany as an underrepresented party, most specifically within the Security Council. The Council, established with the creation of the UN founding members holds the U.S., France, Russia, China, and the United Kingdom to permanent representation. Additionally, UN member states rotate among 10 positions, serving for 2 years. Each member has one vote. However, only the permanent members have the power to veto any agreement within the Security Council. Ambassador Braun stressed that this veto power was not being used in the way it was envisioned at its conception more than 70 years ago. The permanent

members, in his view, too often politicize their veto power to advance their country's interests, rather than to prevent war. He also emphasized the change in the geopolitical sphere in our current area, and that perhaps the Security Council structure is outdated. He advocated that Germany—as one of the largest economies in the world, as a leader of the European Union, and as the third largest contributor to the UN budget (After the U.S. and Japan)—should play a larger role in the UN.



***Jon Downs ( R ) with Ambassador Harald Braun***

It was especially remembering to meet Ambassador Braun after the presentation. I spoke to him about his studies in Tübingen. He was impressed on my knowledge of the region, and I clarified I had lived in the city the previous year. It was also nice to speak with him in German and practice my language skills. He encouraged me to continue my studies of the language and pursue my passion for international politics and diplomacy, a career which he emphasized is unique and one he wouldn't trade for any other.

***Jon Downs, UVU student***