

## UVU hosted Ambassador Jan Kickert



On February 19, 2019, Utah Valley University (UVU) had the honor to host Permanent Representative (PR) of Austria to the United Nations, Ambassador Jan Kickert. Distinguished guest delivered a lecture where he mainly discussed the foreign policy of small countries and Austria in particular. He explained that foreign policy does count on every state's history and geography as those two aspects are very important factors in shaping its identity. Additionally, he stated that the only way for small countries to have a remarkable foreign policy in the world is by concentrating more on international law than focusing on its military institution and in keeping its connection in facilitating communications with other states. Considering this fact, Austria always focuses efforts to form a middle center as a “bridge” between both of the Cold War forces of the east and the west.

On the other hand, Ambassador Jan Kickert declared that Austria is one of the well-known neutral countries in the modern world after Switzerland. In fact, being and maintaining to be a

neutral state and a peace-keeper, Austria made a name for itself on the larger international front as well as had the privilege to be one of the most attracted countries to the United Nations. (Austria is a European country, which has not to be mistaken with Australia, as emphasized Ambassador Kickert). Also, he added that Austria owns a very successful and lucrative economic and trading system, where six out of ten euros originate from the business of exports due to the country's belief and the importance of respecting and work in accordance to the international law.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire was in existence for just more than 50 years. Internal struggles and expansionist ambitions led in part to the start of World War I, which ended in the Empire's defeat and ultimate dissolution. Austria itself had a long history of dominance in European affairs. Additionally, Austria's capital, Vienna, was one of the most famous cities on the Continent, for its wealth and culture. Ambassador Kickert indicated that with the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the First World War, the country was reduced to a smaller nation on the European continent. Consequently, came the necessity for a new and different foreign policy in order for Austria to keep its international political identity and sovereignty. In reality, this was not an easy quest due to the many political movements at that time signifying that certain parts of Austria would separate in order to join with its close neighboring countries. However, Austria, thanks to its well united nation, was able to survive that tough time.

Ambasador Kickert continued to explain that Austria is a member of the European Union (EU), which is a remarkable advantage for such small country as it does benefit from the well-established European economy. So, a strong EU means a strong Austria. But, Brexit is a catastrophe and should not occur, because with the loss of the United Kingdom as one of its vital members, Austria will be the first country to suffer that loss.

Indeed, I had the honor of meeting Ambassador Kickert and the privilege of learning many new facts about Austria's history and politics that I was not aware of before his interesting presentation.

*Abeir Y. Isawi, Political Science and National Security Studies student at UVU*