

What Foreign Policy for a Small Country?



H.E Jan Kickert, the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations, spoke before faculty and students at Utah Valley University on February 19, 2019. Based on the presentation made by Ambassador Jan Kickert, I like the fact that despite Austria being a small country, it has its own foreign policy. This is because of the notion surrounding the issue of having a foreign policy that it belongs to big countries such as Russia, China, and the United States etc. For instance; the Russian foreign policy, the U.S. foreign policy, and the China foreign policy. As said by H.E Jan Kickert, the foreign policy of a country is influenced by both its geography and its history.

A look of the recent Austrian history is indicative of how the event that took place at that time were influential when it comes to the Austrian foreign policy. I like their history part which played a crucial role in the Austrian foreign policy. I have narrated this brief short history about it as highlighted below. Austria was a big empire until the First World War. It was disintegrated and

given the fact that it was on the losing side only 6 million people were left who happened that they never wanted to be identified with Austria. In fact, two referenda were conducted with the aim of making Austria part of the neighboring countries i.e. Germany and Switzerland. In the year 1945, Austria had the same fate just like Germany, where they had the French, the British, the Americans and the Russians occupying Austria just like they occupied Berlin in Germany. Austria was lucky that it did not have permanent divisions like Germany. They took the historic opportunity when western Germany had joined NATO by making a promise to sovereign Russia not to join the NATO. Through this, they were able to negotiate the state treaty which made it possible for them to acquire full independence because initially, the allied powers used to rubberstamp whatever undertakings they wanted to execute.

The Austrian political price of neutrality had a long-term effect on its foreign policy. I like their fact of being neutral because of the fact that they were not a member of NATO, this gave them a room during the times of the cold war where they made themselves a kind of a bridge or rather a meeting point. Therefore, they were able to find themselves a niche. It became a meeting point of spies as well. As Ambassador Kickert said, it was also a neutrality meeting point of disarmament because they were not a member of any military pact. Austria by being a neutral ground, was able to attract the United Nations. In fact, the United Nations has established its headquarters at Vienna alongside the other three headquarters in the world i.e. New York, Nairobi, and Geneva.

Initially, Austria was hardly penetrable and therefore they had limited communication with their neighbors, but with the fall of communism, they were able to regain back their neighborhood and a chance to talk to them. This was of the very fact that the main feature and the building block of the foreign policy is the act of beginning talking with your neighbors. The historic opportunity of reformed Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union gave Austria an opportunity to join the European Union. I like the fact that they joined it because the European Union expanded their market, as they were the highly open and diversified economy. Furthermore, through the European Union, they were able to develop a network of a free trade agreement with the entire world thus giving them a bigger market. Despite being destroyed by the Second World War, by 1960 Austria was doing fine economic wise. They began assisting other countries to liberate themselves. In spite of being a small country Austria actively played a role in the peacekeeping missions and stability. Austria has between 1,000 to 1,100 soldiers abroad assisting in the peacekeeping mission. Austrian

were also very active in the disarmament convention which involved the destroying the weapons which have discriminate effects.

Therefore, from the above discussions it is evident that by being neutral, the fall of the Soviet Union as well as joining the European Union greatly played a bigger role in influencing the Austrian Foreign policy.

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