

“What Foreign Policy for a Small Country? The Case of Austria.”



Utah Valley University (UVU) had the privilege to host Mr. Jan Kickert, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations on Tuesday, February 19th, 2019. The Austrian Ambassador was born in Bangkok, Thailand, attended the University of Vienna, and is married with four children. He currently works in the United Nations and represents Austria to the best of his ability. The purpose of his visitation on campus was to present the topic on “What Foreign Policy for a Small Country? The Case of Austria.”

Austria is a small country in Europe, and is often mistaken with Australia, as Ambassador Kickert humorously explained. It was an enormous empire after the First World War. With that, Austria had a short civil war that led to an undemocratic regime leaning towards Italian Fascism. Signing their state treaty in 1955, Austria was able to regain their sovereignty and full independence. The reason for the country attracting the United Nations is due to maintaining a neutral ground. Ambassador Kickert emphasized on Austria being a great addition to the United Nations because of its open economy and trading system. Six out of ten Euros actually comes from

exports. Without international law, dictation can occur, and since Austria is a peace-keeping nation, it is significant their leadership continues to succeed.

After the Ambassador's lecture on the foreign policy of Austria, the floor opened up to the audience for questions. I didn't get the chance to record every individual's names in order to give them credit for their questions, so the following information is not mine, but theirs.

The first question to the Ambassador Kickert was, "What is the role of the youth involvement in the Austrian government or politics?" Mr. Kickert stated how it all depends on the engagement and confidence one has to become familiar with the field. Because the interest in government and politics has been on the rise from the younger population, the voting age in Austria has been lowered to sixteen years old, which is quite stupendous. The Ambassador continued with informing us all about his nation's chancellor achievements and how he's managed to do it all at a young age. He will also be received by Trump at only 32 years old.

Another question that was rather important and useful involved advice from the Ambassador to those who wish to work in the United Nations. He answered by first noting that one needs to have the obligation to serve the industry with exceptional representation and work ethic. That includes attending missions abroad in difficult locations and continue those missions one after the next. The more, the better. Ambassador Kickert is such an intriguing person and I was pleased to have learned about Austria from him.

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