

A Weekend in Aachen

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Model United Nations is an internationally acknowledged club and hobby, lifestyle and career preparation. Students from dozens of different countries are brought together to attend conferences in Germany, in Paris, in Norway. It is doubtless a fantastic excuse to travel and flex your political muscles. But what many delegates who participate in these conferences don't realize is that there are months and months of preparation put into the conferences themselves. There are decisions to be made, and choices to be eliminated. Organization. Admin staff. Placards. Without this extensive preparation, the conference simply would not happen, and there would be no MUN at all.

And here at Model European Parliament 2011, the situation is no different. Though for many of you, the conference started on November 4th, for certain individuals—the chairs, heads of fractions, presidents, co-chairs—it started many months ago on a cold weekend in Germany. Without the preparation of this weekend and the following months to supplement the conference, everything would fall to chaos.

MUN, as a body, functions a bit like an independent state. Being a model, it is completely hypothetical, but its functions are such nonetheless. Various forms of legitimacy must be upheld in order for the conferences to function properly: without traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic legitimacy implemented in the procedures of the conference, ensuring the state-like function, MUN would not have the status and respect it accumulates today. Traditions play a huge role: the format of the conference, the opening ceremonies, the procedures, the formats of the resolutions, clauses, and directives. The revered gavel. Without these traditions to drive the conference and create connections to the past, there would be no continuance to spur faith in these procedures. There would be no, "if they worked before, they'll work again. That's the way it was, and that's the way it should be." It would merely be, again, chaos.

Rational-legal legitimacy shows itself in the rules and laws of the conferences, which are usually put in display in a "funny, relatable" way during the "mock-debate." No eating. No disrespect, racism, or inappropriate clothing. No talking out of turn. No talking out of topic. You are all familiar with these rules and regulations, and most of you follow them without even considering the alternative. You want to be a part of this conference. You've prepared for it. You want to do well and benefit from the conference so you subject yourself to the control and order implicated by the chairs. It's a mutual relationship. The chairs let you say what you need to say, and they maintain control. Again: chaos without these rules. Complete and utter chaos, as was shown in the mock-debate. If a real debate were to proceed as such, nothing would be taken seriously and nothing would get done. MUN would be illegitimate.

And finally, charismatic legitimacy. You all know the delegates who get the "best speaker" award. The ones who get the laughs while they're up on the floor. The ones who make the best points, the best arguments, who seem to be completely confident in everything they say. They gain followers with their charisma, and they gain support for their ideas. If no one had any charisma, no one would want to support each other. The whole conference would quite simply be a boring, ritual, authoritarian lock-down. It is thanks to you, and your inherent charisma, that the conference is made interesting. It is your interest in what you are saying, how you represent yourself, and how you can hold the audience's attention. *You* make the conference possible.

It is these three types of legitimacy manifested in MUN that make it function as an independent state might. And just as an independent state, it needs preparation, order, and planning. It needs forms of written law, and meetings between executive branches and legislative branches. States and governments are not spontaneous. They require agreements and foundations.

It was this weekend in Germany that constructed and cemented these forms of legitimacy, organized them, to make the conference as legitimate as possible in terms of the state of MUN. It took

much effort, much time, and much sweat and tears. And in the end, I ask you to keep this in mind: MUN is a state, yes. But this state is not capitalist. This state is socialist, and encourages co-operation instead of competition. Think in terms of teamwork and you might start to see the conference in a new light.