

# THE NEWSTAR

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## FROM AUCA AND BACK

AUCA, despite the challenging times, keeps attracting interesting individuals into the ranks of its faculty members. The Sociology department is happy to introduce Asankojo Isaev, who became a new addition to the sociology department. He joined the department this semester after receiving a master's degree in sociology at AUCA. His diverse experiences living and studying in Budapest, Paris, and Morocco while studying art and sociology make him a unique addition to the AUCA faculty.

Isaev started his academic journey at American University located in India as a Business Administration student. The field did not work for him, as he was quite enthusiastic about art. In this regard, he reoriented his specialty to the art of human existence—sociology. Asankojo moved back to Kyrgyzstan and got his bachelor's degree at AUCA. He continued his education at Central European University and was fascinated by Budapest. It was a time when his interest in writing poetry and fiction thrived. He was able to search for answers and clues concerning society and life through sociology.

Later on, Isaev lived in Saint Petersburg, France, and Morocco. His interest led him to Paris, where he had a chance to experience the environment of legendary artists and scholars. Asan studied social anthropology in France and then moved to Morocco for an internship. He was involved in anthropological research and interacted directly with local people, living and working as one of them. His experience provided him with a new perspective on culture.

After some time traveling back and forth between France and Morocco, Isaev returned to Kyrgyzstan. He says he was impressed with the new AUCA campus and the thriving AUCA community. Asankojo explains his enthusiasm for teaching as an urge for unpredictable human interaction. He finds beauty in the “heart-to-heart” way of interaction with students that can only be reached in a highly stimulating academic setting.

Elida Kydyrova  
SOC



**"IF YOU HAD A MAGIC WAND AND COULD CHANGE ANYTHING ABOUT THE SCHOOLING SYSTEM IN YOUR COUNTRY, WHAT WOULD BE THE NUMBER ONE CHANGE YOU WOULD MAKE AND WHY?"**

The dissolution of the Soviet Union changed almost all aspects of the political sphere, economic governance, educational system, and social life in the newly independent states. Fifteen newly born countries had no choice but to restructure their institutions. The Tajik Republic is not an exception. However, unlike most post-Soviet states, Tajikistan experienced a serious crisis over its independence period. The civil war that took place during the first five years of independence (1992-1997) had severe effects on Tajikistan's industries, and educational infrastructure. In a scholarly article Jeroen Huisman, Anna Smolentseva, and Isak Froumin argue that it put a block on the procedure of the state's education growth until the 2000s. The education system in particular was given little attention at this time. Since the civil war, the schooling system has changed, well, it is the same soviet style without changes. Even if not many major things in the sphere of education have improved, or, Tajikistan increased the number of universities and schools to a great extent after the war. At the same time, the number of students attending high schools and colleges also increased. Nevertheless, the educational system needs major reforms and improvements. If I could change anything about the schooling system in Tajikistan, I would focus on prioritizing knowledge rather than students' appearance. In the current system, appearance matters more than knowledge. It is considered to be more important than their studies and activities. In addition to that, students need to appear in required uniforms. If their clothes

do not fit the instructions, they are not allowed to enter the schools or universities. Boys are banned from wearing T-shirts, jeans, or beards. Girls are forbidden from appearing in tight clothes, short skirts, or colorful or gauzy dresses. It is also not allowed to come to school with the hijab or other religious headwear for girls. It sometimes seems that these school dress codes are more important to the school than students' assignments or exam preparation. Dress codes can be important in the educational system of Tajikistan to a certain level, but they cannot be considered more important than knowledge. Students need to understand that knowledge matters not appearance.

Instead of forcing students to come to school, it is better to motivate them to come to school. Making students feel comfortable at school is more important for their personal and academic development than imposing strict dress instructions that can be inconvenient for many students. Therefore, if I had a magic wand I wanted to change anything in the educational system of Tajikistan, I would implement a policy to prioritize knowledge over appearance.

Khiraadmand Sheraliev



# HALLOWEEN IN KAZAKHSTAN: THE ANNUAL CLASH OF TWO CULTURES

The end of October in the big cities of Kazakhstan is probably the most frightening and fun time of the year at the same time. Public places are decorated with pumpkins, spiders, and ghosts and there is a high chance to meet almost any horror movie character—clowns (especially Pennywise), vampires, witches, the walking dead, and ghosts.

A long time ago, Irish pagans lit fires in order to disperse evil spirits, which is the origin of Halloween. But who knew that many years later people in Kazakhstan would start a fire as well—not a literal fire but a fire of hatred for the people walking around in scary costumes and makeup.

Every year before October 31st, almost all news channels broadcast the idea that the celebration of Halloween in Kazakhstan should be banned due to religious and cultural incompatibility, thus dividing society into two camps.

Many news programs refer to Halloween celebration using phrases such as “social diseases” and “Satan’s game,” describing those who celebrate it as people who “commit savagery for a day’s

fun.” Some popular commenters’ comments by experts on news channels claim that this holiday is harmful for people’s psychological state, that it is nothing more than a crazy celebration, or even that it involves worship of demons and evil spirits.

For several years, opponents of Halloween, the supposedly satanic rite, have tried to ban Halloween in the country: the voices of many opponents remain unheard, and apparently songs on this night sound louder than usual. As a result, the same exact scene plays out every year, not changing much in people’s willingness to have a Halloween party.

For many Kazakhstan people, Halloween is nothing more than a fun costume party that became popular due to the Hollywood movies, American influence, and Globalization. Looking at the features of Halloween in Kazakhstan, it seems that most young adults and teenagers support it because it is a good reason for a group of friends to gather and have a good time together.

Nuray Ozayeva

JMC

## HALLOWEEN

Oh Halloween, you inspire me to write.  
How I love the way you trick or treat,  
Invading my mind all day and through the night,  
I’m always dreaming about the day we meet.

There are only moments of joy.  
You are thrilling, scary, and fun  
As one feels like a little boy.  
And autumn time has the children go run.

How do I love you? Let me count the ways.  
I love your candy, costumes and spirit.  
Thinking of your nice costumes fills my days.  
My love for you is almost infinite.

Now I must away with a fighting heart,  
Remember my one word whilst we’re apart.

Many European cultural traditions hold that Halloween is when enchantment is generally powerful and spirits can connect with the physical world. After the advent of Christianity, Halloween turned into a festival held the night prior to All Saints’ Day. Emigrants from Scotland and Ireland carried the tradition to the United States.

Although many Muslims celebrate Halloween for entertainment, they may not be familiar with the beginnings and history of the celebration. With time, Halloween has become more popular, and at this point it is related with images of black magic, destructive spirits, etc.

Kurmanbek uulu Daniyar  
LAS



# THE NIGHT LASTS NOT MORE THAN A NIGHT!

It seemed to me that everyone was in a hurry, either to save their lives or to save their future. The army was restoring the order, the power. There was horror on people's faces, in soldiers' arms, in the clamor of the crowd, and in darkness of the night. And I was confused, just like every single person in that crowd, and confusion was the greatest horror of all. "What am I doing here!?" I did not know. I could not even remember how I had been brought there, I could have never been there. I looked around. The scene was real; I was feeling something in my feet. I looked downward and saw my new pair of shoes... Ah! my new pair shoes had put me into the ongoing adventure.

"You are already in it! Keep going and do not think of the past in this urgency of the present." My new shoes seemed to speak to me. How could I stay there? "Don't you see bullets are coming from all around? Look, everyone is escaping! Don't you see that hundreds are waiting to see where you are leading them to? Don't be a coward! You have both of us on your feet. Tonight you are going to mark history with your footprints." Was that true? Everyone except the cowards was looking at me, waiting to see how I would act. I wondered why. "In this crowd of people, you have the newest pair of shoes from the most prestigious brand!" said my pair of shoes. "They think of you as their leader!" I should have listened to my shoes; I should not have been a coward. Now that the fate of my new pair of shoes has put me in big trouble, I should have not ruined the dreams of an unsatisfied nation. They had put their lives in danger just to fulfill a dream that was coming from my shoes.

"Do not give up, my comrades!" I said to the crowd. The people gathered

around me, looking at my shoes with great enthusiasm. "Tonight will be the end of our dark past! And tomorrow is the beginning of our bright future! Keep going, my comrades! Toward the House that is ours, that is our children's! Tonight, finally tonight! We will take what is ours! From those robbers! Do not stop, my comrades!" I continued speaking to the crowd of people. And then the crowd rushed toward the House, we crossed the line of army officers, we climbed the walls, we broke the doors, and we finally entered the House where we could decide our destiny by ourselves. What a success I was achieving with these shoes!

Inside the House, a whole new story was going to happen. I knew well that my shoes would not stop there—they were going to write the story not of the past but of our whole future, the story of our children and our grandchildren. What a success! What a pleasure! "Let's first celebrate our victory!" I said to the crowd. And a great party began inside the House. But a celebration should not have been without spirits; my new pair of shoes led me to a liquor store.

Outside the House, there was still shooting. "Don't be a coward! None of them can injure you while you have us." My new shoes gave me courage. I believed and rushed to the store. It was at that moment that I felt a bullet hit my forehead. I fell to the ground...

"Kuttuu tanj, my dear! You have a class!" my flat mate woke me up. It was already morning, and my dream was over.

Hasina Ahmadi

LAS

## DREADING DEATH

A sinking ship  
I am the sinking ship  
In the dismal darkness  
Rowing in the dense weeds  
A gleam of light is winking  
I am busy quitting darkness  
I think of the parallel moment  
Being denounced for my loud laughter  
Life, the bitter contest  
Life, my untold anecdote  
I say goodbye under my breath  
Resenting heaven and hell  
The barely audible sound is calling  
From the solitary cell  
Catching a glimpse of it, I see  
Those probing eyes  
And a mouth with absurd laughter  
Oh, gloomy days!  
I am reluctant to go  
Everything is whirling in the vicinity  
I keep breathing in the hazy air  
But something thrusts my feet  
Into somewhere, in infinity  
That I am so unaccustomed to  
It is nothing but a sad deception  
In this very moment,  
Death is a generous treatment

Zainab Amirzai

ECO

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# HOW MY ACADEMIC LEAVE EXPERIENCE INFLUENCED MY LIFE

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On February 11th I turned 21, and with that lucky number came a tsunami of problems. I still can't believe we are in quarantine because of this pandemic. Additionally, I was diagnosed with schizophrenia, a rare condition in which the patient hallucinates. You won't believe what I was hallucinating about. I hallucinated about being a prophet. The confidence was amazing, but meanwhile it made people around me start to worry. My uncles each came to visit me for one to two weeks, and looking back, it was a really fun time. We explored Bishkek since I wasn't going to classes anymore, and I have to say Bishkek is an amazing city. They also took me to a doctor, who prescribed medications and after taking them my condition improved. I stopped hallucinating, but we were still in a quarantine, and that really made me feel depressed. I had to take academic leave due to my health condition and traveled to Philippine with my father. At first, I was very excited that I was travelling to the Philippines because it had been my dream to see the country someday.

After four months of depression, I'm now back to normal with the help of medications, and I'm happy with my progress. When I was depressed, it felt like I would never be able to finish my studies. I felt like a failure, but now I'm good and very happy that I will definitely be able to start my studies next semester, be it online or offline. I used to feel that this year was unlucky for me, but if I look on the bright side, this is actually the luckiest year of my life. My time away gave me more than enough time to think about my life, what I want to do, and why. It gave me a break from this rat race, and believe it or not, I'm very relaxed now. I finally travelled to the Philippines and will be staying here for a year, which gives me enough time to explore the whole country with all its beaches. Sometimes setbacks are just an opportunity to bounce back to a higher level. Never give up on life—always remember that you matter no matter what.

Ferdaws Dastegar  
ICP







# CLIMATE CHANGE: COUNTDOWN

## AUCA TEDX CLUB

We are endowed with various capacities to recognize our problems and challenges, and we need to start working on solving them. Climate change is an existential crisis, and while it has been worsening steadily, the climate challenge is another problem on the rise. The COVID-19 crisis is still continued, yet the reality is that crises such as COVID-19, climate change, racial injustice, poverty, and so on are highly intertwined. The history of various disasters conveys a simple message, and that is our common vulnerability to catastrophes. Having said that, we have obligations to use our capacity to facilitate a life of dignity, and value, to safeguard against upcoming natural and man-made threats. Humanizing our natural environment not only shrinks our struggle for the pursuit of well-being but also helps us avoid such problems as poverty and discrimination. We have powerful tools such as technology, knowledge, and rationality to bring back the resilience to protect the existence of humanity as we pushed our environments to limits.

Thus, to resolve issues we need wise and compassionate leadership. With that being said, AUCA TEDx Club hosted a global initiative called Countdown organized by TED Global to champion and accelerate solutions to the climate crisis, turning ideas into action. As it is mentioned in the countdown TEDx website: "The goal is to build a better future by cutting greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 in the race to a zero-carbon world – a world that is safer, cleaner and fairer for everyone. This virtual Global Launch vividly explained the climate crisis, sharing the solutions needed and calling for leaders and citizens to step up. More than 50 speakers, activists, actors, and musicians took the stage over five curated sessions that combine TED's signature blend of actionable and research-backed ideas, cutting-edge science, and moments of wonder and inspiration". Once again, what you can do? Ask yourself!

Abdul Ali Ismailzada

ICP

## REVOLUTION

Revolution, the only means of correcting the wrongs from rights

How I wish you could come without war

How I wish you could come without death,

How I wish you could come without bloodshed,

I walk down Manas street, the busy roads are empty,

The street are calm,

After a moment, after a movement, I find everyone in the center,  
crying for freedom

I look into the eyes of my comrades, full of passion and pain,

I look up and see the flags waving over everything, the guards  
standing by,

Manas on his horse looking at us, as we all cry for freedom.

The street is crying, everything seems to be dying,

We don't know what the night has for us, till morning comes we all  
can't sleep, the children are up, work is closed, the virus is rising,

The military took over the street, and everywhere is silent.

Oh revolution, what do you have for us?

Some are crying while some are rejoicing.

Some are been killed while some are injured,

We remember the past two revolution,

When the days were still young,

Now we are getting older, help us fix it all,

We want no more war; all we want is joy

Revolution bring back our peace and we will all rejoice.

Isikalu Oluwadamilare

MA Anthropology



PHOTOS FROM: PINTEREST





PHOTOS FROM: PINTEREST

## THE NOTION OF FAKE NEWS AND PROSPECTS FOR LEGAL REGULATION

Fake news has become a topic of conversation that produces tension, disharmony, and misunderstanding in human society. The abundance of fakes undermines people's trust in the media as sources of truthful and objective information about what is happening in the country and the world as a whole. More importantly, some experts and scholars believe that this “fake news” is one of the biggest menaces to democracy. Another leading reason why the world is worried about fake news is related to online media, which can be created and published faster than traditional news media such as TV and newspapers. The popularity of social networks and their impact also play an important role.

Most of the people around the world read news from social media. Data from the Digital 2020 Reports published with partnership with Hootsuite indicate that 3.96 billion people (51% of the global population) actively use social media. In this regard, many countries are trying to fight against the dissemination of fake news by adopting new legislation or finding out other solutions to counter and prevent its spread. For instance, in March 2019, Russia passed the legislation against “fake news”. The “fake news” bill bans the spread of “unreliable socially-important information” that could “endanger lives and public health, raise the threat of massive violation of public security and order or impede the functioning of transport and social infrastructure, energy and communication facilities and banks.” According to the law, individuals disseminating fake news will be fined 100,000 rubles, and legal entities up to 500,000 rubles. If there are repeated violations and fake news have such serious consequences as death of a person or disturbance of public order, then distributors of fake news will be severely punished. However, while trying to understand the negative impact of the fake news, we should not undermine freedom of speech and must be aware about other hidden political issues and their impact. As an example we can bring Singapore's fake news law which is considered a ‘disaster’ for freedom of speech. The law requires online media platforms to carry corrections or remove content the government considers to be false, with penalties for perpetrators including prison terms of up to 10 years or fines up to S\$1m (\$735,000). This is the evidence and it could be used to clamp down on freedom of speech that has been criticized by rights groups, journalists and tech firms. In this regard, in order to fully understand what fake news really is, we have to define fake news and summarize fundamental theories revolving around it.

The origins of fake news run deeper than the relatively recent coinage of the term would suggest, and there is no universal definition for fake news,

even in journalism. Historically, the term “fake news” has been used to mean “news parodies, political satires, and news propaganda,” but now, this word is used to describe false stories that often spread on the internet. Additionally, “fake news” is also sometimes considered to be a “story” that appears to be news on online media, mostly created in order to change people’s political opinions. This creates concern about the power of fake news to affect election results.

We can be concluded that fake news can be looked at from broad and narrow perspectives. The broad definition of fake news is as follows: fake news is false news broadly includes claims, statements, speeches, posts, and other types of information related to public figures and organizations. The broad definition aims to impose minimum constraints in accordance with the current resources: it emphasizes information authenticity and purposefully adopts a broad definition for the term news. There is also a narrow definition of fake news, which is understood as intentionally and verifiably false news published by a news outlet. This narrow definition of fake news addresses the public’s perception of fake news. In this sense, according to a 2016 scholarly survey on fake news by Xinyi Zhou and Reza Zafarani the top twenty frequently discussed false election stories generated 8,711,000 shares, reaction, and comments on Facebook, larger than the total of 7,367,000 for the top twenty most-discussed true election stories posted by 19 major news websites.

Even if it is possible to define the term “fake news,” it is difficult to determine in practice what is fake or not, and this has become arguably one of the greatest threats to democracy, journalism, and freedom of speech. Such a result suggests enhancing media literacy should be a high priority for governments. This especially the case with people who are going online for the first time and for individuals who cannot distinguish false from real news. The lack of consistent views concerning the nature of fake news means that we must develop a more consistent definition and approaches in the face of false news and disinformation. It is important for news organizations, governments to call out fake news without legitimizing them which threatens democracy and undermines freedom of expression.

**Aizirek Jusupova**

**LL.M student**



# EXCHANGE SEMESTER DURING THE WORLD PANDEMIC

You will probably ask me what I have learned, how my exchange experience was, how the Sciences Po campus was—but my answer to all these questions is “I don’t know.” It’s not that I didn’t like the Sciences Po campus in Reims or that I did not like France—it’s just that I could not enjoy these things like other exchange students because we happened to be facing a pandemic.

It all started one year ago this month, when I learned that I had been accepted to an exchange semester at Sciences Po. “Wow! It’s a great achievement, you’re going to have so much fun,” my friends said, and I smiled, blushing and imagining the beautiful days I would have in France. This happiness did not last long.

I reached Reims at the beginning of February 2020. The first half of the month was spent doing paperwork: going office to offices, banks, the dormitory administration, and so on. I hope you understand what it is like being alone in a completely new country without knowing the language fully and without a guide.

After all the paperwork was finished, I started to explore Reims and the university, as it was a big, beautiful campus, half classical architecture and half modern, with a beautiful view of the Notre Dame Cathedral of Reims. Just a month after I arrived, COVID-19 took over most countries in Europe, and France was one of the countries most affected. The government announced a full lockdown starting from the 16th of March, and classes were put online. For two months, we had a strict lockdown, and I would have preferred to be beside family and friends at that time rather than being alone in a strange country in a single room in a dorm.

After the lockdown was eased, my exchange partner Dilshod Hamroboev and I started going out and tasting different types of food as well as planning a trip to Paris together. This time I was lucky because Paris was empty of the excessive crowds and we could take photos easily with the views. Also, the buses were free for the period of quarantine. However, because of the pandemic, indoor places such as museums were closed, and we did not get a chance to visit those places.

Overall, my exchange semester was a mess: it didn’t go as planned at all, classes were put online, I couldn’t make many friends, and couldn’t explore the beautiful magical library of Sciences Po campus. However, I am grateful that I didn’t catch the virus despite the fact that I visited some other European countries on trains and buses.

Shahdukht Tapesh

LAS

## ISSUE PREPARED BY:

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