

Trip Report

Name: Saliman Nasypbekova

Major: BA International Relations

Program Name: TFAS Prague 2026

Date: 11 July - 1 August 2026

Location: Prague, Czech Republic

Organizer: Charles University, The Fund of American Studies

Between 11th of July and 1st August 2026, I had an opportunity to participate in TFAS Prague 2026. TFAS' academic goal is to engage students in a thorough and philosophical examination of government, economics, society and culture, and conflict management. The course consisted of three modules, each of which ended with a final exam. Besides academics, I had a chance to participate in NATO and EU Commission simulation, as well as listen to guest speakers and participate in cultural presentations representing Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, we visited the Museum of Communism, American Councils office in Prague, and had a sightseeing tour of Prague.

Course/Academic overviews:

- **Political Economy taught by Dr. Adam Martin (Texas Tech University)**

This course component examines the structure and functions of a market economy in the context of such fundamental issues as free trade, the role of government in the economy, and private property rights. We discussed economic theory and analyzed economic strategy in real world political situations.

- **Political Philosophy taught by Dr. Nikolai Wenzel (Universidad de las Hespérides)**

This component of the course studies the principles of democracy and market economics, and applies those principles to the region. Lectures contrast the features of democratic and authoritarian regimes and evaluate the economic, international and political benefits of democracy. We discussed frameworks for developing and sustaining civil societies in the countries of the region.

- **Conflict Management taught by Dr. Tyson Chatagnier (University of Houston)**

This course component examines the role of the international community in reducing violent conflicts. Lectures and readings analyze the politics of international conflict management, the roles played by states and international organizations, and examine relevant concepts offered by a variety of theories from the social sciences.

Guest Lectures:

- **“Czech History and Culture”** by Ms. Adela Muchova
- **“Lessons Learned from the European Values Center’s Dual-Escalation Crisis Simulation”**
by Mr. Ondrej Malek
- **“The Outcomes of the NATO Summit”** by Ms. Barbora Maronkova

Overall, the academic part of the program was very informative, and the professors were ready to answer all the questions students had. I learned much more about free markets and governing systems, as well as important philosophical foundations and questions to ask to sustain the civil society.

Simulations and Cultural Activities

Outside the classroom, the program offered numerous opportunities for practical learning and intercultural exchange. One of the highlights was the Cultural Presentations, during which participants introduced their home countries through performances and presentations. Together with the Kyrgyz delegation, I performed the traditional Kyrgyz dance Kara Jorgo, while students from other countries shared their own customs, music, and traditions. It was a unique opportunity to celebrate cultural diversity and learn more about the backgrounds of fellow participants. We also participated in two large-scale policy simulations. During the NATO simulation, I represented Croatia, where delegates addressed the scenario of Russian drones entering the territory of NATO member states. The exercise required balancing national interests with collective security and demonstrated the complexity of consensus-building within the Alliance. In the European Commission simulation, my team represented Hungary. We worked on a policy response to challenges related to commercial shipping, migration management, and civilian safety in the Mediterranean. The simulation provided valuable insight into EU decision-making, negotiations between member states, and the process of developing common European policies. Beyond the formal program, participants visited the Museum of Communism, the American Councils office in Prague, and joined a guided sightseeing tour of the city. Equally memorable were the informal moments spent exploring Prague with fellow participants, visiting museums and art galleries, trying Czech cuisine, and exchanging perspectives with students from across Europe, Central Asia, and beyond.

Reflection

Overall, participating in TFAS Prague 2026 was an incredibly rewarding academic and personal experience. The program strengthened my understanding of political economy, political philosophy, and

international conflict management while encouraging me to think more critically about governance, democracy, and international cooperation. The simulations transformed theoretical concepts into practical decision-making exercises, allowing me to better appreciate the challenges faced by policymakers and international institutions. Equally valuable were the friendships and professional connections I built with participants, professors, and practitioners from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds. These conversations broadened my perspective and reinforced the importance of international dialogue and cross-cultural cooperation.

I am sincerely grateful to ELTE for awarding me the ELTE Travel Grant, which made my participation in this program possible. Their support allowed me to represent both my university and Kyrgyzstan in an international academic environment, gain invaluable knowledge and practical experience, and create friendships and professional networks that I am confident will last well beyond the program. I return from TFAS Prague inspired, better equipped for my future studies and career, and even more motivated to contribute to international cooperation and public service.



Attachment: *Certificate of Participation*



Attachment: My friends and I at the graduation/closing ceremony



Attachment: TFAS Prague 2026 cohort