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## The cultural constituent of the European Soft Power in the Republic of Kazakhstan

**Abstract.** *The European Union dynamically exercises various forms and methods of the Soft Power in its foreign policy. The article reviews its main principles and characteristics as well as conceptual basics. As an example, the article considers the European cultural diplomacy in the Republic of Kazakhstan as a method of soft power. The authors pay an attention specific actions of the European cultural diplomacy in Kazakhstan as well as the mechanisms of its implementation. Apart from that, cultural soft power of two European countries – France and Germany – are considered as separate actions of the EU member states in the sphere of culture. Finally, it assesses importance of Kazakhstan for the EU and effectiveness of such policy in this country.*

**Keywords:** *the European Union, cultural diplomacy, EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations, Soft Power, Kazakhstan, cooperation.*

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**Introduction.** During the last decades we have been witnessing formation of a tendency to reinforcing of the role of culture in the foreign policies of states, as well as international and regional organizations. It is being used as an accelerator of developing and strengthening of dialogue with other countries. In terms of diplomacy, being a very essential part of the Soft Power, culture has become one of the most effective and significant instruments in the implementation of foreign strategies of governments who claim to play a decisive role in the system of international relations. The growing interest in cultural diplomacy is due to the fact that often classical diplomacy is not able to cope with crisis situations, this is especially true for such conflicts, where new political actors are involved in solving international processes. Cultural diplomacy is especially effective where there is a crisis of identity, which includes cultural, religion, ethnicity. Such diplomacy is aimed precisely at supporting and developing mutual respect and dialogue between different cultures. The affirmation of human rights is a

counterbalance in the fight against dictatorship and totalitarian regimes, “soft power” is an alternative to the traditional politics of power [1]. It actually combines the value of cultural heritage, languages, the promotion of artistic works and performing arts, creative industries, with their ability to promote identity, well-being, branding, social employment, as well as contribute to the development of international tourism. There is also an increase in the need to protect cultural heritage, which is threatened with extinction due to existing ethnic and religious conflicts. Hence, cultural diplomacy is associated with the concept of “soft power” by J. Nye and can be interpreted as promoting the interests of the state abroad through cultural cooperation [2].

The article analyzes the theoretical concepts “Soft power” and its use by the European Union; it is noted that both researchers and practitioners pay insufficient attention to this key concept of J. Nye, how attractive. As a result, in practice, the effectiveness of using “soft power” is significantly reduced. It is also shown that attractiveness is not a universal characteristic. For this reason,

the attractiveness, and hence the “soft power” of different actors is different and is aimed at different segments of the population.

The article discusses specific forms and directions of the implementation of “soft power” by the European Union in relations with Kazakhstan. It should also be noted that participants (EU, the USA, Russia and China) use different strategies and influence different groups of the population. If, Russia is working with a Russian-speaking audience; The United States pays great attention to working through Internet technologies mainly with a youth audience; EU focus on a variety of programs (educational, popularization of European culture); China is trying to influence through official channels, focusing on language and culture. The EU, along with China, uses a policy of “soft power” mainly for the realization of its economic interests.

**Purpose.** The main goal of this research is to analyze the cultural component of the EU “soft power” policy in Kazakhstan, to consider the influence of European culture on the consciousness of Kazakhstani society along with such countries as the USA, Russia, China, etc.

**The level of research.** Analyzing the concept of “soft power”, a significant amount of work by foreign researchers was used. The theory under consideration was created and subsequently finalized by J. Nye; therefore it was his work that served as the starting point for this study [2, P.15]. From a theoretical point of view, the concept of “soft power” is not something new, so we turned to works devoted to issues of power, influence, power technologies, which can be attributed to previous or competing theories.

These are the studies of A. Gramsci, S. Strange, J. Baudrillard, J. Lipovecki etc. [3-6]. It should be noted that the concept under investigation was often criticized, due to which J. Nye was able to develop and refine the theory. Critical were N. Fergusson, B. Womack, K. Gray, P. Bilgin and B. Elis, E. Lock [7-11].

Along with criticism, in the literature there are many attempts to further develop the concept or its rethinking. It is interesting the study of the works of G. Galarotti, M. Klare, R. Simha [12-14]. In addition, it is necessary to highlight

researchers whose work is devoted to the study of certain aspects of “soft power”: I. Katsuji (actors of “soft power”) [15], H. Kim (cultural diplomacy as an instrument of “soft power”) [16], M. Fraser (popular culture as instrument of “soft power”) [17], F.G. Altbach and P. McGill Peterson (the role of higher education among soft-impact technologies) [18].

**Research methods.** The following general scientific methods were used: comparison method, analysis and synthesis, historical and genetic methods. The comparison method was used to study the similarities and differences in strategic technologies of “soft power” of European states. The analysis made it possible to isolate the individual components of “soft power” and characterize them, and the synthesis of the data obtained made it possible to generalize various approaches to the concept of “soft power” and implement “soft” technologies in practice. Historical and genetic methods have proven useful in investigating the origin and development of the concept of “soft power”.

The work applied such methodological approaches to the study of “soft power” as discourse, structural-functional, institutional and measuring-instrumental.

The discourse approach allowed focusing on representative (building attractiveness), value-oriented strategies of “soft power”.

Thanks to the application of the structural-functional approach, “soft power” was introduced as a holistic system in which its main tools and their functions are described. This approach also allowed us to apply the idea of spectrum to the phenomenon of “soft power”.

The institutional approach was used to highlight the main institutions involved in the development and implementation of “soft power” strategies and determine their role in this activity.

The measuring and instrumental approach made it possible to address the problem of measuring “soft power”, to identify indicators on the basis of which it is possible to measure the “soft” potential of European states.

**History.** Creation of colonial empires in the West Europe, willing to establish sole positions

in the international trade, led to gradual export of the European confessional and cultural traditions to the world. Nowadays, the European Union, is a unique international unit of 27 independent states united under a single blue flag, which delegated parts of their national sovereignties towards creation of a political union with a single structure. Creation of such unprecedented subject in the international relations defined the formation of the Soft Power, where permanent dissemination of the European values takes place. Thus, as Luca Jagier noted, "Europe is a cultural superpower and it must be aware of its global diplomatic strategy - to fight with the help of soft power and culture". The EU should focus on the development of humanitarian assistance and the standardization of human rights [19]. Culture, in addition to intangible and "diplomatic" values, has the potential for economic development. The concept of the European values has become quite broad. It includes the ideas of peaceful resolution of conflicts by negotiations, observation of political, human and minority's rights. However, before analyzing cultural diplomacy of the European Union in respect of a certain state and before speaking of its effectiveness, it is essential to define its characteristics beforehand and to learn what kind of specific features form it.

Firstly, the main feature of the European cultural diplomacy is that its objective is formation of a general image of the EU in order to present it as something more significant than just a compilation of its members. This objective is not as simple as it may seem at first glance, because members of the EU have their own established old traditions of cultural diplomacy, and most of them, on the level of civil society, beware of losing their sovereignty in favor of a supranational body. Despite various attempts, projecting itself as one voice of all the European cultures, which represents united European identity, is still quite challenging task for the EU, since the European identity itself is on the stage of formation to this day [20].

Secondly, since 1973 the fundamental elements of the European identity have been the Human Rights. That is why the basis for projecting the European identity is the set of fundamental

values and principles embodied mainly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [21].

And finally, one of the most important factors in the cultural diplomacy of the EU is the relative novelty of such foreign policy instrument in the hands of a supranational body. Its beginning took place in 2007 when the European agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World defined the culture as one of the fundamental bases for the EU foreign relation with other actors. It's been declared that the cultural richness and pluralism of Europe are closely tied with its role and influence in the world, and the European Union was not simply an economic power, it was an unprecedented social and cultural project [22]. However, the EU Strategy on International and Cultural Relations was only adopted in 2016. It launched so called the EU Cultural Diplomacy Platform for unification of all participants in the European foreign culture relations of governments, regions, cities, cultural institutes, civil society organizations, artists, scientists, performers, individuals and many others, to attract them on permanent basis, to support them and to receive feedback and to get consultations on policy matters [23]. According to F. Mogherini, former High Representative of the European Union, the Platform was created to reinforce the ability of the EU to conduct relations with different levels of partners on equal conditions, whether it is an international organization or a national government [24].

Currently, the European Union is improving the regulatory framework in the field of the development of culture and the creative industry with a view to its compliance with the current foreign policy and socio-economic agenda. A special role in the development of cultural diplomacy in the EU belongs to the European Commission, which is engaged in the promotion of cultural diversity, the protection of cultural heritage. In November 2015, the document "The Conclusion of the EU Council on Culture in Foreign Relations" was adopted, which stated that culture should become part of a strategic and intersectoral approach to the implementation of EU foreign policy [25]. In addition, in June 2016, the "New Strategy for the Development of

International Cultural Relations” was adopted. Its main objectives were to strengthen cultural cooperation and interaction between the EU and partner countries; a world order based on peace, on respect for human rights, on freedom of expression, on mutual understanding and respect for fundamental values. The EU believes that culture can help deal with global issues such as refugee integration, combating violent radicalization and safeguarding world cultural heritage. In addition, culture can also become a tool for creating significant social and economic benefits within and outside the European Union [26].

### **The impact of European culture on Kazakhstani society**

In addition to political, diplomatic, trade and economic relations, one of the areas of cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the EU, as defined by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, is cultural cooperation.

The EU is relatively successfully using “soft power” in Kazakhstan. Against the background of a fairly high informational influence of the USA/West, the EU managed to form numerous mechanisms of interaction with the Kazakhstani public: various grant programs, projects and institutes, which include, among other things, broad employment and training opportunities.

In this regard, it is most likely not accidental that the main and locomotive direction of European social policy in Kazakhstan is precisely the educational one. In this regard, the EU’s achievements in terms of promoting European educational standards in Kazakhstan are particularly indicative and symbolic: in 2010, Kazakhstan became the first country of Central Asia, which officially joined the Bologna process (to build a single common European higher education space).

So, starting from 1994, the TEMPUS program was quite successfully operating in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Trans-European Mobility Program for University Studies, TEMPUS, for the improvement of higher education).

About 13 years after the launch of the TEMPUS program, the European Union began implementing another program in Kazakhstan

- Erasmus Mundus (Erasmus Mundus, for the exchange of students, scientific and pedagogical staff), which also made a certain contribution to strengthening the EU’s position in Kazakhstan. It is known that between 2007 and 2008, Erasmus Mundus allocated 1.3 million euros to Kazakhstan (a little more than 30% of the total for Central Asian countries). At the same time, in 2007 in the Republic of Kazakhstan there were about 60 recipients of scholarships for student mobility [27].

It is characteristic that the TEMPUS and Erasmus Mundus programs from the very beginning of their activities covered almost all key segments and directions of social policy. Later, in 2009, Kazakhstan joined another European program, the Central Asian Research and Education Network (CAREN), which turned out to be quite successful in Kazakhstan, although it did not receive such recognition as the same TEMPUS or Erasmus Mundus.

The Central Asian Scientific and Educational Network program in the Republic of Kazakhstan is implemented with the participation of the Kazakhstan Association KazRENA (Association of Users of the Scientific and Educational Computer Network of Kazakhstan). Back in 2003, the Association worked closely with the NATO Science Committee, which provided 15 grants to KazRENA. This allowed equipping with modern equipment, network operational centers in a number of Kazakhstani cities, connecting them into a single computer network, and creating public Internet access centers for institutions of higher education. The infrastructure of the national KazRENA network allowed intensifying the information exchange of Kazakhstani scientists with foreign partners. With the participation of KazRENA in Kazakhstan, such events as “NATO Week in Kazakhstan” (2007), “NATO Information Day” was successfully held (2009).

In 2014, the European Union made some changes to its educational policy. As a result of this, the TEMPUS and Erasmus Mundus programs have been replaced by the Erasmus + program (Erasmus +, for educational mobility, collaboration for innovation, sharing best practices and supporting educational reforms).

In addition to promoting educational programs (especially large ones like TEMPUS, Erasmus Mundus, and since 2014, Erasmus +), the EU also pays considerable attention to explaining European cultural values, principles and ideals. In particular, the European Union and its specific member countries regularly organize and conduct in Kazakhstani cities various social events, including the Days of Europe.

An additional impetus to this activity was given in 2011, when the Community of National Institutes of Culture of the European Union (European Union National Institutes for Culture, EUNIC) agreed with the creation of the organization "EUNIC-Almaty" in Kazakhstan, which aimed to promote the intensification of cultural dialogue between the EU and RK. The founders of this structure were the French Alliance-Almaty, the British Consulate, the Dante Alighieri Committee, the Goethe Institute in Kazakhstan and the General Consulate of Hungary.

EU educational and cultural programs, focusing mainly on representatives of the intellectual stratum of society, contribute to the gradual formation of pro-European (and, in general, pro-Western) sentiments in the Kazakhstani elite.

In turn, Kazakhstan itself has traditionally shown a rather high interest in interacting with the EU in the social sphere. This is especially true of the educational area. So in Kazakhstan at the state level, citizens are encouraged to study abroad, primarily to the West. Back in 1993, Kazakhstan established a special program, the Bolashak International Scholarship, under which Kazakhstani citizens study abroad, including in Europe.

From the point of view of the European Union, the expansion of partnership mainly means strengthening political ties and stimulating democratic processes in Kazakhstan, which will result in long-term stability of the country and its development. Kazakhstan has made economic progress and is considered a more stable state than some of its neighbors. And being one the most important partners in the Central Asian region and representing a huge interest

to the Europe, namely by its energy sector and connectivity prospects, it has become a subject to Cultural policy of the EU in recent years.

The bilateral cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan takes its beginning in 1995 when the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was signed and which established the base for political, economic, trade, energy and cultural cooperation. The Agreement contains one article dedicated to the cultural cooperation "The Parties undertake to promote, encourage and facilitate cultural cooperation. Where appropriate, the Community's cultural cooperation programmes or those of one or more Member States may be the subject of cooperation and further activities of mutual interest may be developed" [28]. So here we may state that the first steps towards cultural rapprochement were established during the first contacts between the Governments of the both sides. However, the Agreement did not contain any specific plans or visions for further deepening cultural cooperation and promotion of the European culture in Kazakhstan.

Later, when the parties signed more detailed and comprehensive agreement in 2015, titled "Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement", subsequently the cooperation in this field began to depict itself with even more details. For instance, Article 245 of the Agreement states "The Parties shall promote cultural cooperation that respects cultural diversity, in order to enhance mutual understanding and knowledge of their respective culture", where the EU attempted to promote its pluralism and diversity principles. On top of that, this Agreement contained concise examples of activities in this matter as "implementation of joint projects, programmes, activities as well as the exchange of best practices in the field of training and capacity building for artists and cultural professionals and organizations". Moreover, the European Union, positioning itself as a backer of observation of human rights, rule of law and democracy, which are considered as the basic foundations of the European culture, based on the mentioned Agreement, is implementing a good range of projects in this regard. According to this Agreement, Kazakhstan is to receive



financial and technical assistance from the EU based on a number of legal instrument, such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the Partnership Instrument and education support and exchange through the ERASMUS+ Programme [29].

Establishment of the dialogue between the Government and civil society is essential when speaking about the European democracy. Today we are witnessing that the EU is exporting such democracy values and culture through implementing various projects. And Kazakhstan is not an exception. The EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society is one of such projects which promotes the respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as good governance, accountability, independent judiciary and enhances social development, education for marginalized groups and inclusive growth in respect of the environment [30].

As a result, the mutual desire of two sides to intensify cooperation as a whole contributed to the growth of the EU's influence on Kazakhstan. This is particularly evidenced by the results of a sociological study "Europe through the Eyes of Kazakhstan" conducted by the Kazakhstan Center for the Study of Public Opinion in 2014. So, to the question "what values are perceived as European values and how important are they for Kazakhstan?" the vast majority of respondents (from 85 to 92%) called the following as "European" values: "human rights", "freedom", "democracy", "social justice", "Wealth", "stability", "equality", while recognizing that all these values are important for Kazakhstan as well [31].

Apart from the united front of the European Union, many member states conduct their cultural soft power in Kazakhstan separately. Even though all of the member states of the EU are promoting their culture through various tools and institution, two of them are comparatively more active – France and Germany.

France is one of those countries for which the development of cultural ties has been and remains one of the main directions of the foreign policy. This is evidenced by rich historical material and modern facts. France annually holds more than

10,000 cultural events in various countries of the world. This country has a peculiar model of foreign cultural policy, which is characterized by an annual increase in the funding of cultural events held in almost all countries of the world; a wide range of participants in cultural ties; a large number of diverse actions covering all spheres of culture. France, with its old history, attractive culture and delicious cuisine, is conquering hearts of the Kazakhstani people more and more in the recent years. The great desire to expand and strengthen cultural ties with Kazakhstan is demonstrated by the Agreement on cooperation in the field of culture and art dated September 17, 1993, signed during the official visit of French President F. Mitterrand to Kazakhstan. The agreement considers the development of cooperation in the field of culture through exhibitions, tours, the establishment of various associations and cultural centers, as well as through many other events [32]. Service de l'Action et de Cooperation Culturelle, which is a wing of the Embassy of France dealing with the Cultural policy is playing a decisive role in promoting French culture in Kazakhstan. Being responsible division for the cultural cooperation, it held many cultural events including French films festivals, discussion platforms and etc. [33].

One of the strongest instruments of the French soft power is the Alliance Francaise. The Alliance Francaise is an organization that promotes the dissemination of not only the French language, but also French culture. In Kazakhstan, it operates in five large cities, such as Astana, Almaty, Karaganda, Kostanay and Shymkent. "The Alliance Francaise was created with the goal of expanding cultural diversity and promoting cultural dialogue", said Jacques Chirac [34]. The French Alliance conducts French language training at all levels and for people of different ages, is accredited to conduct the DELF / DALF / TCF language proficiency test and issue certificates on them. This cultural and educational organization promotes various events to French missions and consulates. Its competence includes sending students to study in French-speaking countries. The French Alliance has a rich library with a large selection of French print media and a French media library [35].

In December 16, 1994 the Government of Kazakhstan and the Government of Germany signed an Agreement on Cultural Cooperation which stated that “the Parties shall endeavor to deepen mutual knowledge about the culture of their countries and further develop cultural cooperation in all fields and at all levels”. Moreover, Germany and Kazakhstan established a coordinating body for the development of Kazakh-German cultural cooperation, which is the Joint Commission on Cultural Cooperation. In the field of education, a successful example of implementing Cultural policy is the establishment of the Kazakh-German University (KNU) in Almaty [36]. On top of that Representatives of the Institute named after Goethe operate in Nur-Sultan. Moreover, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) also operates in Kazakhstan, annually providing scholarships to Kazakhstani youth and promoting education in Germany [37]. Along with it International Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) foundation has opened its representative office in Kazakhstan. The aim of the foundation’s civic education programs is, according to their official website the “promotion of freedom and liberty, peace, and justice” through “furthering European unification,

improving transatlantic relations, and deepening development cooperation”. Their function as a think-tank and consulting agency is intended to provide citizens with a basis for political action through the research and analyses of current political trends. The KAS offers more than 2,500 conferences and events each year worldwide, and actively supports the political involvement and education of intellectually gifted youth through a prestigious scholarship program as well as an ongoing comprehensive seminar program [38].

**Conclusion.** Thus, over the past 18 years, the European Union has achieved positive results in almost all areas of cooperation with Kazakhstan, and the new Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation agreement will undoubtedly contribute to further deepening the ties, however, considering the above described, we may observe that cultural constituent of the European Soft Power in Kazakhstan is limited by a small number of activities, which have been undertaken just recently. But on the other hand, it is fair to mention that the EU has just started using the culture as a foreign policy asset and more comprehensive actions are expected to be taken in the future due to the importance of Kazakhstan as a valuable partner in the Central Asian Region.

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### **Қазақстан Республикасындағы еуропалық жұмсақ күштің мәдени компоненті**

**Аңдатпа.** Еуропалық Одақ өз сыртқы саясатында жұмсақ күштің түрлі нысандары мен әдістерін қарқынды түрде қолданады. Мақалада оның негізгі принциптері мен сипаттамалары, сондай-ақ тұжырымдамалық негіздері қарастырылады. Мысал ретінде, мақалада Қазақстан Республикасындағы еуропалық мәдени дипломатия жұмсақ күш әдісі ретінде қарастырылады. Авторлар еуропалық мәдени дипломатияның Қазақстандағы нақты әрекеттеріне, сондай-ақ, оны жүзеге асырудың тетіктеріне назар аударады. Сонымен қатар, екі Еуропа елдерінің - Франция мен Германияның мәдени жұмсақ күші Еуропа Одағына мүше мемлекеттердің мәдениет саласындағы жеке әрекеттері ретінде қарастырылады. Соңында, Қазақстанның ЕО үшін маңыздылығы және осы елдегі мұндай саясаттың тиімділігі бағаланады.

**Түйін сөздер:** Еуропалық Одақ, мәдени дипломатия, ЕО халықаралық мәдени байланыстар стратегиясы, жұмсақ күш, Қазақстан, ынтымақтастық.

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### **Культурная составляющая европейской мягкой силы в Республике Казахстан**

**Аннотация.** Европейский Союз динамично использует различные формы и методы мягкой силы в своей внешней политике. В статье рассматриваются его основные принципы и характеристики, а также концептуальные основы. В качестве примера в статье рассматривается европейская культурная дипломатия в Республике Казахстан как метод мягкой силы. Авторы обращают внимание на конкретные действия европейской культурной дипломатии в Казахстане, а также механизмы ее реализации. Кроме того, культурная мягкая сила двух европейских стран - Франции и Германии - рассматривается как отдельные действия государств-членов ЕС в сфере культуры. Наконец, оценивается важность Казахстана для ЕС и эффективность такой политики в данной стране.

**Ключевые слова:** Европейский Союз, культурная дипломатия, Стратегия ЕС по международным культурным связям, мягкая сила, Казахстан, сотрудничество.

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