

ПРИКЛАДНОЙ АНАЛИЗ

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Western Europe through the Eyes of Students of Kazakhstan Universities: Countries' Images and Driving Force for their Formation

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We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception. They mark out certain objects as familiar or strange, emphasizing the difference, so that the slightly familiar is seen as very familiar, and the somewhat strange as sharply alien.

Walter Lippman. Public Opinion

Abstract. The image of a country, and especially how the country is viewed from beyond its borders, is becoming an increasingly important resource capable of exerting positive or negative influence in various fields, including international relations. In the USSR, Western Europe was endowed with a dual image of cultural treasury and the territory dominated by classes and forces hostile to the socialist camp. After the collapse of the USSR, Western Europe began to be perceived as a capitalist model to be coped, and it is from those years that the contemporary ideas of the youth in Kazakhstan about its image have been originated. In order to probe them, a pilot sociological survey was conducted in two Kazakhstani universities, one of which is located in the north-east of the country, in the city of Ust'-Kamenogorsk, the second is in the south, in Shymkent.

The results obtained allow us to assert with confidence that students do not have a holistic image of Western Europe; their views are dominated by images of individual European countries, and these images differ greatly in the degree of completeness. The most developed images are those of France and Germany, but even they represent no more than a set of widespread stereotypes about the economic, political, cultural characteristics of both countries. It is also striking that the images of Western European countries, which emerge from the students' answers, are generally deprived of any meaningful and easily recognizable embodiment, i.e. they are very rarely identified with historically, politically and culturally significant personalities. According to the authors, this feature indicates that students view Western Europe most and foremost as a place where their various consumer needs can be satisfied.

Key words: image, Western Europe, Kazakhstan, surveys of students, symbolic personification

The notion of “image” is applied to different spheres and activities and its meaning is therefore hard to define. Speaking of persons and groups, the following interpretation is deemed most relevant: “Image is an impression made by a person, company or an institution on a group or some groups of people. It is not a drawing, not a sketch, not a detailed painting. Rather it is an assembly of vivid particulars capable of making an emotional impression” [Korol'ko 2003: 307].

This is an apt definition, even more so because it is applicable to an image of a country. Another good point is its emphasis on emotional effects of an image (rather than its contents). Finally, it alludes to the affinity between images and stereotypes. Taken both in its psychological and political meanings, “stereotype is a standardized, schematized, reduced and flattened image of social and political subject or phenomenon, or else process; having been always necessarily stable and charged with certain emotion

(emphasis added. — *A.Y., S.P.*), stereotypes represent only some — and not infrequently unsubstantial — features of what they are expected to represent” [Ol’shansky 2001: 81]. Then we could categorize that an *image of country* is no more than simplified yet stable similitude of that desired yet hardly accessible holistic view one could combine from numerous facets of the country’s reality; and that simplification notwithstanding — or even thanks to it — this similitude is capable to provide a strong emotional impact upon the perceiver¹.

The images of countries/states are being studied both by theorists and by experts in applied science. The former usually consider images on the context of international relations² [Pardo 2010; Dobler 1997; Andersson, Hilson 2009], often through the lens of Joseph Nye’s “soft power” concept [Nye 2004] or identity studies. Speaking of applied approaches, there are two main avenues for the study of countries’ images. Adherents of the first study countries images in details — their formative constituencies, origins, continuity and changes, distinctive features and, finally, their ability to attract or repulse people living across their frontiers³. While those belonging to the other direction focus themselves generally on the practical task: they try to correct or invent technologies which supposedly help to improve images of that or this country [Govers 2009].

The images of Western Europe in general and its countries in particular are increasingly studied in the context of European Union image [Therkelsen, Gram 2010; Adam et al. 2002; Holland, Chaban 2011]. However, as Sonja Lucarelli has argued in her historiography review of image studies, “the greatest methodological difficulty is to design research that will capture the relationship between images of Europe (frequently historically shaped) and of the EU, without simply conflating them” [Lucarelli 2014: 12]. Taking the route of historically shaped images, we arrive earlier or later at the harbor of identities; and if we follow the other path, perhaps, we would agree with Anholt that “individu-

ally, the member states of Europe wield the most important soft power capability on the planet, but collectively, Europe is far less than the sum of its parts” [Anholt 2010: 116]. Consequently, we can predict that in some cases the image of EU and Europe as a whole might appear, particularly beyond their frontiers, as a less elaborated and less familiar ones than the images of its separate country members, or even might be nearly absent.

The plausibility of this hypothesis is to be tested in our paper. While preparing it, we chose the first avenue of applied studies of countries’ images, i.e. we decided to elucidate the key components of the images of Europe and European countries in Kazakhstan. Also, we were more interested in the result than in the process — what had formed, and not how it has been forming. Nevertheless, we were not going to omit the process of image formation altogether: as a reader can easily deduce from the epigraph to the article, we expected to answer the question, to what extent this process falls under the power of popular stereotypes about ‘others’. For, we could not ignore that the majority of citizens of Kazakhstan, who travel to other countries with business or educational purposes or visit relatives, went to the CIS states⁴, and the prime targets for tourism and recreation voyages were Turkey, China and United Arab Emirates. These three states have received a lion’s share of Kazakhstanis travelling beyond the borders of CIS in 2014 (74.4%), whereas only 11% traveled to Europe⁵. Western business in the country is represented mainly by transnational corporations; in public mind they are not relate to any particular country, or associated with the United States. Much more important to the way the image of Western Europe in Kazakhstan is formed are not personal impressions, but information from parents and peers, as well as cinema, Internet and print media — just those sources that are most thoroughly infected with stereotypes.

⁴ In 2008 5,242,643 citizens of Kazakhstan went outside the country, in 2014 — 10,449,972 people, of which 4,557,146 and 9,375,785 left for CIS states, respectively. See: Turizm Kazakhstana (Tourism in Kazakhstan), 2009. 2004—2008. Statisticheskiy sbornik. Astana; Turizm Kazakhstana (Tourism in Kazakhstan), 2015. 2010—2014. Statisticheskiy sbornik. Astana.

⁵ Calculations based upon: Turizm Kazakhstana (Tourism in Kazakhstan), 2015. 2010—2014. Statisticheskiy sbornik. Astana.

¹ For more details, see: [Yessimova, Panarin 2008: 7—8].

² In any case, this observation is applicable to the image of Western European states.

³ Simon Anholt combines both approaches quite well. See, e.g.: [Anholt 2007].

Let us briefly outline the spatial boundaries of Western Europe image. In the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary the following definition is provided: “Western Europe is how the whole Europe to the west of Russia’s borders is called, with an exception of the Balkan peninsula” [The Brokgauz and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary 1890—1907: 243]. In the Soviet era, it was assumed that Western Europe begins just beyond the western border of the Soviet state [The Great Soviet Encyclopedia 1972: 15]. After the fall of the USSR and NATO’s expansion to the East such a localization of Western Europe appears even more grounded. In our paper, “Western Europe” refers to all the states located to the West of the border of the former USSR. Baltic countries, Belorussia, Moldova and Ukraine are therefore not included — simply because the authors would like to focus on the political and cultural space that is perceived as foreign and even alien. As the results of our study have shown, this distinction is still valid in the contemporary images of Europe.

Image: the Structure of Influence

A carrier of an image usually sees it as something positive. However, a positive self-image might be accompanied by a negative counter-image or anti-image. Contemporary media technologies have led to information wars of growing intensity, the prime objective of which is to destroy the positive images of the country or its leading politicians and to create/spread their counter-images. The depictions of Ukraine in Russia and Russia in Ukraine that have become entrenched in the media of both countries after the conflict in Donbass had begun in 2014 are a vivid example.

Those who are in possession of or endowed with images can be individuals and communities of differing size — up to nations or places of variegated space, from village to states and continents or else numerous institutions — such as governments, corporations or universities, etc. Images of all of them are formed either without conscious efforts of image-bearer, or by means of its purposeful policy, or as a result of some mixture of the former and the latter. Images and counter-images are intentionally created by individuals, private companies and special institutions funded or set up

by the state. Any image, positive or negative, has its goal — speaking of the former, it is the successful positioning of a country on the international scene and global/regional markets. The more advanced, wealthy and powerful a country is, the more it is famous. The active policy of public relations pursued by the state plays a prominent role in this process. Still, as Simon Anholt aptly noted, “there are certainly policy approaches which enable places to improve the speed, efficiency and effectiveness with which they achieve a better image... but that better image can only be earned; it cannot be constructed or invented” [Anholt 2010: 11].

There are many ways to promote a given image — even an appearance of diplomats may help. For example, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs advises the heads of embassies “to order the clothes only from well-known fashion designers, to be always physically fit, to look like suntanned optimists” [Pocheptsov 2003: 61]. Yet other channels are more important: mass-media, tourists, personal contacts between people, business dealings, goods sold and advertised abroad. In other words, there are actors of image formation and channels used by these actors, yet the latter may serve as a kind of natural nursery for rising of a certain image regardless of the actors’ will. Anyway, the multiple manifestations of a country are reflected in its image. The volume and intensity of economic and cultural contacts between nations plays a substantial role. If activities of a state abroad are weakened or severed, its image becomes threadbare⁶.

The countries that purposefully form their image we will refer to as addressers, the countries targeted by these image-making activities — as addressees. The addressers may simultaneously act as addressees, and vice versa. We divide the addressers into three main types. The addressers of the first kind are aggressive: they use any means available to promote an image of their country. Second type is merely active: they do a lot, yet do not engage in aggressive expansive propaganda. The third type combines passive addressers: they do neither produce nor uphold the image due the lack of interest

⁶ This and the two next paragraphs that follow to the end of the section on the image represent an edited and shortened version of the corresponding piece from our earlier paper in Russian, see: [Yessimova, Panarin 2008: 11—12].

in such activities, lack of understanding of its importance or lack of funds. The addressees may also be broken down into three types: open, closed and semi-open. The first are open to the stream of information. The closed addressees make every effort to prevent information to penetrate field under their control by foreign influences — in other words, they try to become image monopolists. Those in the intermediate group receive and transmit a limited stream of information.

These constructs are valid under the condition of the lack of language barrier. If such barrier is present, there is one more player to the scene — a commutator. This term is derived from Latin verb *commutare*: to apply or to change. Basically it means that a certain country acts as an intermediary, forming an image of another country and translating it to the third state in this model. The role of a commutator implies a political engagement and may be attained under auspicious geopolitical circumstances, active position on the international scene and abundant information resources. The activities of commutators might be augmented by the use of channels controlled by the addresser itself. In Kazakhstan, Russia plays the role of commutator. The influence of Russian media is so huge that even Kazakhstani journalists perceive the West through its prism. This is the result of socially limited and often inconsistent knowledge of the European languages. Such a barrier prevents a direct perception of European programs⁷.

Sources and Methods

This article is based on the results of quick surveys undertaken among the students of two Kazakhstan universities in 2008 (April) and in 2014 (November). Both are located in provincial towns: Technical University of East Kazakhstan (TUEK) in Ust'-Kamenogorsk and Shymkent Institute of International Kazakhstan-Turkey University (SIKTU) named after Khoja Ahmad Yasawi in Shymkent. In 2011 the latter was renamed into South Kazakhstan State Pedagogical Institute (SKSPI).

20 TUEK students took the first survey. Two of them aged 18, nine aged 19, eight aged 20, one

aged 21; there were 19 women and one man; and 11 people identified themselves as Russians, eight as Kazakhs, and one as German. Only two of them visited Western Europe (UK and Germany). 21 students participated in SIKTU survey: 19 women and two men; one student aged 18, 11 aged 19, eight aged 20 and one aged 21. Ethnic composition turned out to be much more diverse: five Kazakhs, five Uzbeks, four Russians, three Koreans, one Turk, one Greek, one Azeri and one Kurd. 25 TUEK students participated in the second survey: four aged 18, 20 aged 19 and one aged 21; and there were 11 men and 14 women. All participants identified themselves as Kazakhs. In SKSPI 20 students took the second survey: 17 women and three men, with seven aged 17, eight aged 18 and five aged 19. Eight Kazakhs, eight Uzbeks, three Russians and one Azeri constituted this sample. None of the informants in 2014 surveys ever visited any Western European country.

The choice of students as respondents was due to their predictable role in the process of image formation and transformation. It is reasonably to suppose that issuing from their acquaintance, even if superficial, with such domains of humanities as history, international relations, political and regional/area studies students are generally able now and will be even more capable after graduating to exert growing influence upon both general public worldview and its specific image-relating constituency. Ust'-Kamenogorsk and Shymkent were chosen because these two cities are important regional centers, and yet different in many significant parameters. Ust'-Kamenogorsk is the capital of East Kazakhstan region, with its mainly urban population (59%). Shymkent is the capital of South Kazakhstan region, where only 39% of people live in towns and cities⁸. Mining is the staple of East Kazakhstan economy, whereas agriculture dominates the economy of the South. Russians make up 58% of the East Kazakhstan population, Kazakhs — 38%. However, under

⁷ See in this regard: M. Tazhin instructed to create several mobile groups of leading journalists for the preparation of "live" specials reporting on the situation in the world. Information Agency Kazinform. URL: <http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2537288> (accessed: 25.11.2015).

⁸ Here and from this point on all the data is taken from or calculated based upon: Dynamics of population. The official statistical information. Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, committee on statistics. URL: http://stat.gov.kz/faces/wcnav_externalId/homeNumbersPopulation?_afLoop=22050164825025727#%40%3F_afLoop%3D22050164825025727%26_adf.ctrl-state%3Db83gwlcf_163 (accessed: 10.12.2015).

the pressure of the fact that the majority of local Russians are prone more and more to get higher education in Russia, by the time of the second survey Kazakhs had grown into a disproportionately large percentage of students in Ust'-Kamennogorsk. Kazakhs are the dominant ethnic group in South Kazakhstan (73%), followed by Uzbeks (17%) and Russians (5%). The Kazakhs' share in total population of Shymkent amounts to 67%, those of Uzbeks (14%) and Russians (13%) gravitate to parity. The region is adjacent to Uzbekistan and is considered — in its culture and outlook — as “Oriental” because its ethnic groups, excepting Russians, staunchly adhere to their traditions, and Shymkent itself has to an extent a reputation of “Oriental” city [Alexeenko 2004; Aubakirova 2010].

In Ust'-Kamenogorsk, the questionnaires were handed out to the students who composed one of the groups attending the flow lecture on history of Kazakhstan. In Shymkent, an analogous group was selected from a general stream of listeners to lecture on political science. In both cases the sample was random, of cluster type and had to be recognized unrepresentative one in case that the aim of our research would be finding out image visions of the entire student population in each university. In fact, we pursued less ambitious goal to gain a benchmark or more or less assured starting-point for future researches of Western Europe images persistent in the student milieu. We would like to add that because all the members of groups involved as the survey units shared one and the same aspiration for higher education, the groups themselves can be rea-

sonably called, according to Neil Smelser's terminology, natural and instrumental ones [Smelser 1994: 167]. As to its size, it proved to be pre-ordained with the numerical strength of majority of student groups which fluctuated between 20 and 25 people.

The surveyed were asked to

- indicate their age, gender, nationality and to state whether they visited the countries of Western Europe;
- write down, rapidly and briefly, the associations that first came to their mind when they hear (or see) the words “Western Europe”;
- list the states that they perceive as a part of Western Europe;
- name the leading states among those;
- write down images associated with each of these countries.

To make a list of Western European states turned out to be the hardest task. In general, the students listed the states of European Union, adding Norway to them.

Western Europe in the Eyes of the Students: the Region as a Whole

While starting the study we assumed that the image of Western Europe would essentially match the image of the European Union, and that the students would mention key figures of European science and culture. Both hypotheses proved to be false.

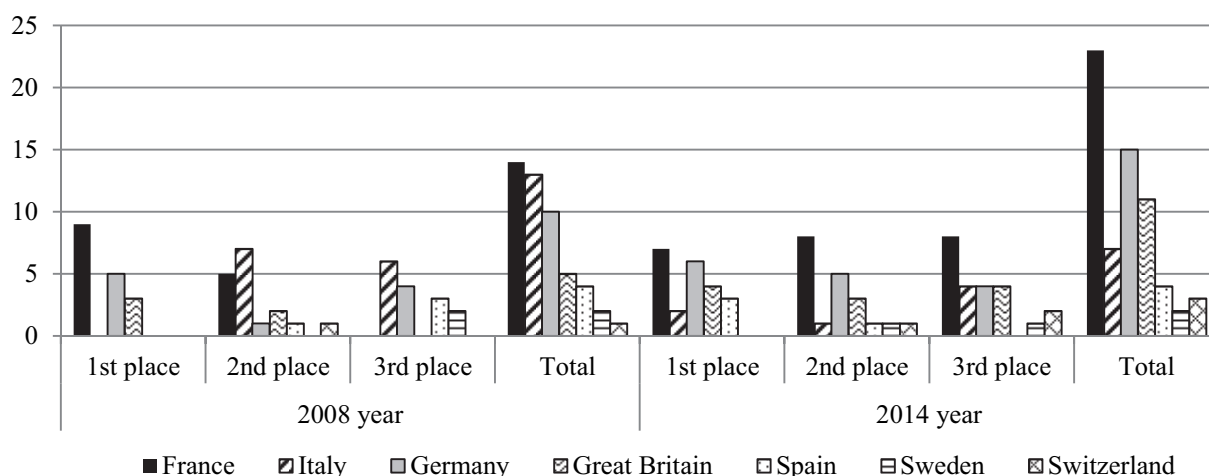


Fig. 1. TUEK: The most important states of Western Europe (first three positions)

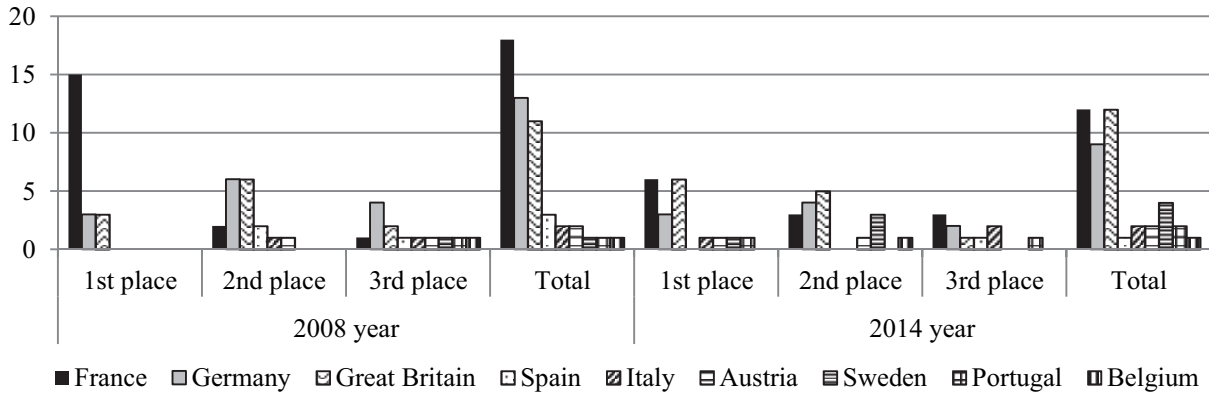


Fig. 2. SIIKTU/SKSPI: The most important states of Western Europe (first three positions)

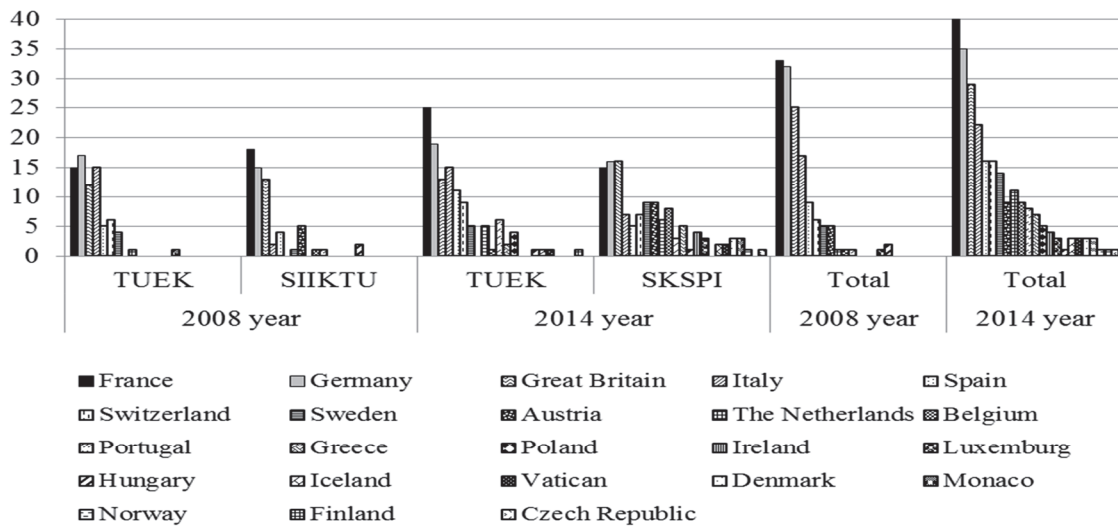


Fig. 3. Countries of Western Europe ranked by the frequency of mentions

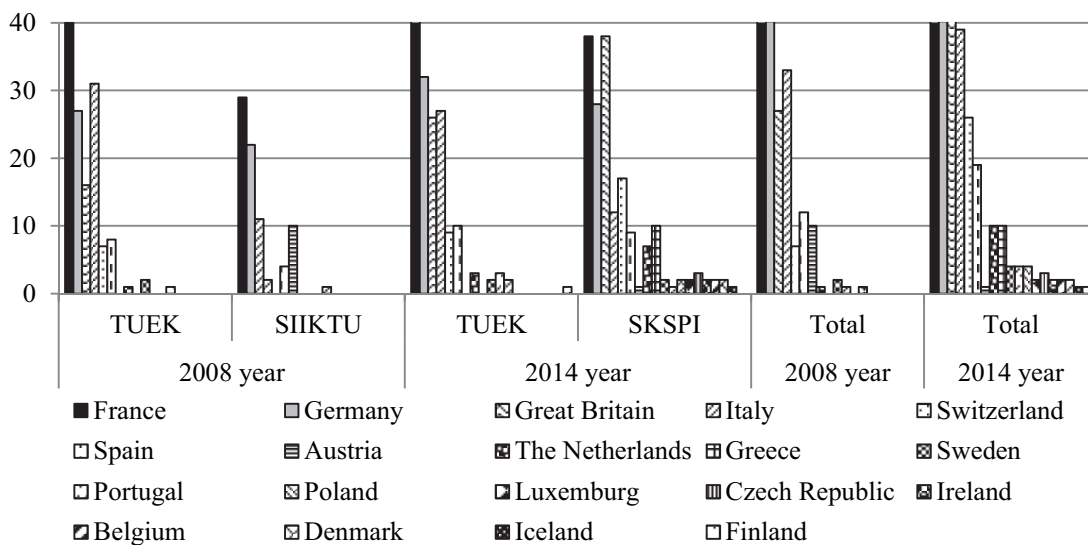


Fig. 4. Countries of Western Europe ranked by the quantity of associations

The Ust'-Kamenogorsk students selected seven European countries which were regarded by them as the most famous and developed (Fig. 1); the students in Shymkent selected nine (Fig. 2). Judging by first positions in the list, France is the “face” of Europe for all the students. In 2008, ranked second and third were correspondingly Italy and Great Britain in Ust'-Kamenogorsk, and Germany and Great Britain in Shymkent. Six years later, France was followed by Germany and Great Britain in Ust'-Kamenogorsk, whereas in Shymkent Britain scored almost as many votes as France received and Germany shifted to third place. Summing up the results of the two surveys, France got 67 total “votes”, Germany — 47, Great Britain — 39, and Italy — 24.

It should be noted that the frequency of how the states of Western Europe were mentioned not only in the first three positions of the list, but in all the replies in general, is also a very important indicator (Fig. 3). The leaders are the same — France, Germany and Great Britain. The SIIKTU/SKSPI students did not mention Switzerland at all, rarely mentioned Italy, but number of countries they mentioned grew between 2008 and 2014.

Another important indicator of the knowledge of a certain country is the number of image-words which the students used to describe it (Fig. 4). France is again the absolute leader, with Germany and Great Britain following her. The quantity of words-associations also grew in 2014.

It is interesting to note that the rank of France, Germany and Great Britain does not agree with the statistics of travel voyages of Kazakhstan citizens. In 2008 only 413 persons went to France (772 in 2007), 39,150 (41,269 in 2007) went to Germany, and 13,347 (13,327 in 2007) — to Great Britain. In 2014 the trends hardly ever changed: 526 persons went to France (589 in 2013), 48,536 went to Germany (49,723 in 2013), 21,694 went to Great Britain (18,065 in 2013). Netherlands went well ahead Great Britain, both in 2007—2008 and 2013—2014: 30,788 in 2008 (28,558 in 2007), and 39,622 in 2014 (34,754 in 2013). It means that Great Britain ranked fourth. Austria took the fifth place, while France (uncontested leader, according to our surveys) was among the last: less people visited France than Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Greece and Italy⁹. Basically

⁹ See: Turizm Kazakhstana (Tourism in Kazakhstan), 2015. 2010—2014. Statisticheskiy sbornik. Astana; Turizm Kazakhstana (Tourism in Kazakhstan), 2009. 2004—2008. Statisticheskiy sbornik. Astana.

that means that the primacy of France in the students' perception is not based upon personal experience. Students rarely visit the shores of the Seine, Rhone and Loire, and their knowledge of France stems from cinema, literature, media and Internet. Moreover, the statistics of visits to Europe (and the salience of Netherlands there — the country that never made it to the top three in our surveys) testifies to the fact that images of Germany and Great Britain were also formed at a distance via texts and pictures. There is a small difference, however: the perceptions of the last two states might be somehow shaped by the personal experiences of students' relatives and/or acquaintances which had travelled to these countries.

The words-associations reported by the students were divided into groups. Each group includes relatively homogeneous characteristics of the image of Western Europe. The first group comprises spatial features, the second — cultural traits, the third — anthropological issues, the fourth — economic traits, and the fifth — political features. We also picked out a separate group of generalized features of more or less evaluative character.

*The image of Western European space*¹⁰. Apart from individual images of certain states, it is formed by meaningful locations and features of urban and natural landscapes (plus climate). Judging by the places mentioned by survey participants, France is once again the symbol of the whole Western Europe. Its preponderance appeared to be on the wane, however: in 2008 France was mentioned in four location-specific associations out of nine, in 2014 — in four associations out of seventeen (“France” was mentioned once, “Paris” — thrice). In an earlier survey, only “England”, “Berlin” and “Vienna” were mentioned, while in 2014 the list of locations became more comprehensive: “Germany”, “Italy”, “London” and “Prague” were added.

As Western Europe is a heavily urbanized region, various urban images were abundant in the survey. In 2008 *big cities, skyscrapers* (TUEK — each image mentioned once), *cars* (SIIKTU — twice), *good paving asphalt, roads, parks, bridges*

¹⁰ Here and below, while speaking about contents and data and some issuing conclusions from our earlier meanings of the students replies collected in 2008, we borrow from work published in Russian [Yessimova, Panarin 2009].

(SIIKTU — each mentioned once) were on the list. In 2014 *capital city, cities of high culture, big buildings* (SIIKTU — each mentioned once), *cities, big buildings, big skyscrapers, bridges, cars, stadiums, double-decker buses* (SKSPI — each mentioned once) were on the list. In this case two sets of associations are relatively similar. The representations of climate and landscape underwent a substantial change, however. In 2008 Europe was associated with *temperate climate* and *fog*, in 2014 things got better: the region was interpreted with the words *sunny* (twice), *heat, hot, hot days, warm weather, wind, cloudy weather, rain*. In Shymkent, the greatest diversity was reported in 2008: *rocks* (twice), *rain* (twice), *mountains, forest, coolness, cloudy weather, snow, autumn* (once), and in 2014 only image *green* was mentioned.

Culture related images. This group of images is relatively well developed, especially among TUEK students mentioned *culture* (six times), *cultured* (1), *peculiar culture* (1), *dominant Anglo-Saxon culture* (1), *the center of culture, cleanness, new inventions* (1); in 2014 — *culture* (1), *beautiful* (4), *sights* (1), *art* (1), *high culture* (1), *cultured* (1).

A significant share of answers forms the aesthetic sub-image of Europe. The word *beauty* turned up three times in TUEK and four times in SIIKTU in 2008, the word *cleanness* was mentioned two and three times, respectively. Along with that, were mentioned once *beautiful streets, beautiful houses, beautiful setting* in TUEK, and *beautiful streets, beautiful cities, beautiful roads, beautiful things* in SIIKTU. In 2014 *beauty* emerged three times, and *cleanness* — five times, not to mention *beautiful buildings and edifices, beautiful nature, beautiful houses* (TUEK, once), *beautiful cities* (TUEK, three times), *beautiful places* (SKSPI, three times).

Aesthetic associations are adjoined by architectural sub-image (Table 1). It should be noted, however, that associations belonging to this category are generally rather vague: only palaces and museums are singled out, and no distinct architectural styles were mentioned. Still, some landmark buildings were listed (mainly by TUEK students in 2008): Big Ben (mentioned 12 times in total), Eiffel Tower (seven mentions) and a few others.

Table 1

Architectural images/associations of Western Europe (N of mentions)

2008		2014	
TUEK	SIIKTU	TUEK	SKSPI
Detailed			
Big Ben (6)	Big Ben (5)		Big Ben (1)
Eiffel Tower (2)		Eiffel Tower (2)	Eiffel Tower (3)
Arc de Triomphe (2)			
Stonehenge (1)			
Colosseum (1)			
Champs-Élysées (1)			
			Disneyland (1)
Generalized			
Historical cities (1), monuments (1)	Historical buildings (3)	Historical monuments (1)	Historical monuments (1)
Architecture (2)	Architecture (beautiful buildings) (1)	Architecture (2)	Architecture(1), splendid architecture (1)
Buildings (1)	Buildings (1)		Buildings (1)
	High buildings/houses (3)		High buildings/towers (2)
Palaces (1)	Museums (1)	Fortress (1)	Castles (3) Statues (1)
			Streetlights (1)

In 2008 fashion industry was well represented: TUEK — *fashion* (7), *fragrances* (6), *beauty* (3), *perfume* (2), *haute couture* (1); SIKTU — *fashion* (1), *perfume* (3), *fashion house* (1), “*French house*”¹¹ (1). In 2014 only Shymkent informants gave such images: *fashion* (1), *fashionable and high-quality clothes* (1), while those from Ust’-Kamenogorsk mentioned “male” cars: *Mercedes* (2), *Porsche* (1), *BMW* (1), *Audi* (1), *Bugatti* (1).

Resort area is yet another cultural sub-image of Western Europe. In 2008 the students from TUEK suggested seven such associations: *tourism* (2), *recreation* (2), *sun* (1), *beach* (1), *sea* (1). SIKTU students gave similar replies 12 times: *sea* (4), *resort* (2), *sun* (1), *beach* (1), *sand* (1), *ships* (1), *swimming pools* (1) and even *amusement ride* (1). In 2014, there were less replies falling into that category. In TUEK those were *sea* (2), *sun* (1), *tourism* (1), *developed tourism* (1), *recreation* (1), *shopping* (1), *nature* (1); in SKSPI — just *tourism* (2). This information hints at the general integrity of perceptions, structured by a certain “tourist” view of West-

¹¹ A retail chain in Kazakhstan selling French perfume and makeup.

ern Europe. For Ust’-Kamenogorsk students the cultural component of this tourist image was more important, whereas Shymkent students were focused on the entertainment/recreation component.

In 2014 new sub-images came to the fore. Sport (football, namely) is one of them: this word was mentioned twice both in TUEK and SKSPI. Education also gained prominence: TUEK students mentioned *science* and *knowledge*, SKSPI — *good education* (2), *universities* (2), *Sorbonne* (1), *Oxford* (1). In SKSPI there was a hint at gastronomical sub-image: it was expressed, however, in more or less bleak images reminiscent of a university canteen — *cuisine*, *sausages*, *tea*, and *schnitzel*.

Anthropological traits are akin to cultural, yet their focus on individual human beings justifies their singling out as a separate group (Table 2). The images given are almost all positive or neutral. The only exception is a TUEK student who in 2008 expressed a stereotype that was first coined by Russian thinkers of the 19th century (the Slavophiles): *regress in spiritual development of human beings*. Two “demographical” traits also stand aside: *many people*, *elderly people*.

Table 2

Anthropological images/associations of Western Europe (N of mentions)

2008		2014	
TUEK	SIKTU	TUEK	SKSPI
Famous people (2)	People (3), intelligent people (2)		
The birthplace of great artists and musicians (1)	Educated people (2)		Intelligentsia (1), Highly cultured people (1)
Gentlemanly people (1)	Gentlemanly behavior (2)		Modern civilized people (1)
Neat (1)	Neatness (2)		
Accuracy (1)			Punctuality (1)
Good organization (1), orderliness (1)			
	Sociability (1)		More open people (1), sociable (1)
Polite people (1)			Politeness (1)
Entrepreneurial people (1)			
The people are different there (1)	Free people (1)	Other values (1) Mentality (1), Manner (1), Unusual (1)	A different culture (1), Other mentality (1), Other values (2), Other ideas (1)
		Europeans (1)	Europeans (1), white (1)
English people (1)		English-speaking world (1)	
			Women at the wheel (1), Ladies with dogs (1)
Regress in spiritual development of human being (1)			Spirituality, but not always (1)

Table 3

Social and economic images/associations of Western Europe (N of mentions)

2008		2014	
TUEK	SIKTU	TUEK	SKSPI
Highly developed (3)	Developed countries (4)	Developed (1)	Developed countries (1), state of being developed (2)
High standard of living (2) / everyday life (1)	High standard of living (1)		
Rich (1), riches (1), luxury (1)	Rich (1)	Rich (1)	
Dollars (2), euro (1)	Money (1)	Euro (1)	Single currency (1)
Highly developed countries (1), an assembly of developed countries (1), everything is well-developed (1)	Highly developed states (1)		Developed economy (1)
Industrially developed country (1)			Developed medicine (1) / science (1)
Strong economy (1)			Many jobs (1)
Business (1)		Trade (1)	Industry (1)
Shops (1) / world-famous brands (1)			

Economic facets of European image are rather lop-sided (Table 3): Western Europe is seen as an economic paradise, a paragon of development, the society of well-being with no conflicts, or of richness and luxury.

Political component proved to be the least salient and expressed mainly in neutral images. In 2008 these were *queen* (TUEK, twice), *conservative* (TUEK, once) and *kings, democracy, transparent borders, foreign states* (SIKTU, once). In 2014 — *globalization* (TUEK, once), *queen, iridescent flag, adversaries of Russia* (SKSPI, once). Political images are adjoined by the rarest legal notions: *law, human rights* (TUEK, 2008, mentioned once), *discipline, order* (SIKTU, 2008, mentioned once) and *freedom of speech* (SKSPI, 2014, once).

Generalized features of Western Europe were rather diverse and often contradictory. Some mentioned *traditions* (TUEK, once), *coexistence of old traditions and innovations* (SIKTU, twice), others preferred *modernity* (SIKTU, twice), *trendsetter of all things modern* (TUEK, once). Europe was also associated with *energy* (TUEK, once), *ample opportunities / prospects* (SIKTU, twice). There

is actually a sizeable layer of emotionally positive and by their emotional upsurge even exoticizing images: *bright, singularity, admiration, uniqueness, all the positive things* (TUEK, once), *exotic countries, fairy tale* (SIKTU, once). Just three Shymkent students were less rosy about Europe: for them Western Europe was something *fashionable* and therefore transitory. Also it should be noted that all these images are from 2008, and no emotionally positive associations were reported in 2014. In that year, however, new association was on the table: *Napoleon*.

Western Europe in the Eyes of the Students: Individual Countries

France. We already noted that this state is usually perceived as the symbol of Europe as a whole. The symbol of France (Table 4) itself is the Eiffel Tower. Key elements of the image of France are the same among the students of both universities — perfume, fashion, beauty, Paris, love. The image of France in general is highly positive one, only two negative associations were listed. Still, in 2014 previously absent social and political issues turned up.

Table 4

Images/associations of France (N of mentions)

2008		2014	
TUEK	SIKTU	TUEK	SKSPI
Eiffel Tower (9)	Eiffel Tower (14)	Eiffel Tower (15)	Eiffel Tower (9)
Paris (2)	Paris (1) / beautiful town (1)	Paris (4)	Paris (2) / Paris, my dream city (1)
Arc de Triomphe (2)			
Champs-Élysées (1)			Champs-Élysées (1)
Fashion (7) / Haute couture (1)	Fashion (1) / Fashion house (1)	Fashion (1) / world of fashion (1)	Fashion (3) / Fashion industry (1)
Fragrance (6) / perfume (2)	Perfume (3) “French House” (1)	Fragrance (3) / Perfume (2) / cosmetics (1)	Perfume (3) / cosmetics (1)
Beauty (3)	Beauty (2) / beautiful buildings (2)	Beautiful (1)	Very beautiful places (1)
	Cleanliness (1)		Cleanliness (1)
Roads (1) / wash roads with shampoo (1)			
Shops (1) / Boutiques (1)		Shops (1) / shopping (1), brand clothes (1)	Sailors’ clothing (1)
		Nature (1)	
	Museum (1), bridges, parks (1)		Architecture (1)
	People (1) / French (1)		Immigrants (1)
	Beautiful women (1)		
Love (1)	Love (1)	Love (3) / the city of love (2)	
Beautiful language (1)		Language (1)	Wonderful (1) / Very beautiful language (1)
Aestheticism (1)	Glamour (1)	Harmony (1) cozy (1)	
	Romantic (1)	Romance (2)	
Football (1)		Zinedine Zidane (1)	Paris Saint-Germain F.C. (1)
	Actors, movies (1)		Movie “Taxi” (1)
	Cheese (1)	Pasta (1)	Baguettes (1)
	More developed (1)		
			Sorbonne (1)
	Technical equipment (1), transport (1)	Peugeot (1)	
	Cunning, flattery, foppery (1)		
			Freedom of speech (1)
			Strikes (1)
			Nuclear superpower, one of five permanent members of UN Security Council (1)

Germany. Students from two universities turned out to be most univocal in expressing opinions about this country, while the images provided show maximum preciseness and diversity. The informants indicated a largest amount of the features of national character — and no negative traits. On the other

hand, the students remember negative image of Germany obviously inherited from their grand-parents, personified in the figure of Hitler. Also, in 2014 German football clubs and Angela Merkel came to the scene (Table 5).

Table 5

Images/associations of Germany (N of mentions)

2008		2014	
TUEK	SHIKTU	TUEK	SKSPI
Automobiles (5), cars (2)	Mercedes-Benz (1) / powerful (1) / Expensive cars (1)	Cars (5), Mercedes-Benz (2) / BMW (1) / Porsche (1)	Autos (1) / technics (1)
	Roads (1)		
	Quality (1)	Quality (1)	
	Preciseness (2)	Preciseness (1)	Preciseness (2)
Tidiness (1)	Tidiness (2)	Tidiness (3)	Tidiness (2)
	Neat (2)		Neatness (2)
	Punctuality (1)		Punctuality (2)
Manners (1)			
	Practicality (1)		
Order (2)	Integrity (1)		Following all the rules (1) / order (2)
Strict laws (1)	Strictness (1)		
Conservatism (1)			
Music (1)	Music (1)		
		Medicine (2)	Medicine (1)
	Philosophy (1)		
		German language (4)	German language (1)
Nazis (1)	Fascists (1)	Fascists (1), 1941 war (1), Hitler (2)	Hitler (2)
Kind people (1)	Very developed, intelligent people (1)		
	A different mentality (1)		
		Germans (2)	Germans (2)
			Guys with moustache (1) / Ladies with dogs (1)
Rain (1)			
Landscape, verdure (1)	Trees, flowers (1)		
Sights (1), buildings (1)	Historical buildings (1)		
	The Berlin Wall (1)	The Berlin Wall (1)	
		Reichstag (1)	
		Arc of Triumph (1)	
	Berlin (1) / Beautiful city (1)		Berlin (1)
Small country (1)			Located in the center of Europe (1)
Chocolate (3)	Chocolate (1)		
Beer (1)		Beer (2), sausages (1)	Beer (1), sausages (1)
			Football club (1) FC Bayern München (2) FC Borussia (1)
			A. Merkel (1)

Great Britain. Its landmarks are the Big Ben and the queen (her name was only mentioned in 2014, though). Other changes between 2008 and

2014 include more details about the universities, a mention of a famous car brand, a football team, a playwright and a literature personality (Table 6).

Table 6

Images/associations of Great Britain (N of mentions)

2008		2014	
TUEK	SIKTU	TUEK	SKSPI
Big Ben (6)	Big Ben (5)	Big Ben (4) / clock (2)	Big Ben (3)
Queen (2), kingdom (1)		Queen (2), monarchy (1)	Queen (2) / Elizabeth (1) / and her family (1), monarchy (1)
Cultured people (1), culture (1)			Cultured people (1), culture (1)
		History (1)	
	Universities (2)	Oxford (1)	Oxford (2) Cambridge (1) education (1)
			Films (1)
	London (1)	London (3)	London (4)
		Manchester (1)	
Scotland (1)			
	Rich people (1)		
			Immigrants (1)
			Every man to himself (1)
			Men wearing cut-down trousers because of frequent rains (1)
	Tact (1)		
Architecture (1)		Skyscrapers (1)	Large buildings (1)
			Castles (1)
Stonehenge (1)		Stonehenge (1)	
			London Bridge (2)
			Wembley Stadium (1)
	Paved road (1)		
	Football (1)	Football (2)	Football (1), Manchester United (1)
Shops (1)			
		Double-decker buses (1)	Double-decker buses (1), excursions (1)
		Aston Martin (1)	
Ocean (1)	Rain, tornado (1)	Rain (2), Fog (1), umbrella (1)	Rains (1) / fog (1)
	Coffee (1)	Five o'clock (1)	
			Shakespeare (1)
			The Beatles (1)
			Sherlock Holmes (1)

Italy. In 2008 the students from two universities gave entirely opposite answers. Those from Ust'-Kamenogorsk reported tourism-oriented, rather vague yet positively charged "map" of the country. Shymkent students gave just two images of Italy, both highly negative. Such a clear-cut dissimilarity is very intriguing and demands additional explanation (Table 7).

It is already clear, however, that the image of one of the biggest and the most developed states of Western Europe, heir to Ancient Rome and Renaissance,

a home to a huge number of historical and cultural monuments, is perceived in Kazakhstan mostly through the lens of consumerism. As with France and Germany, students of two universities provided generally similar answers in what concerns the structure of replies. In 2014 SKSPI students gave even more similar answers and indicated no negative images, as well. Moreover, it was Shymkent where the students coined an image comparable to Big Ben for Britain and Eiffel Tower for France — the "boot" (an image that resembles the outline of Italy on the map).

Table 7

Images/associations of Italy (N of mentions)

2008		2014	
TUEK	SIKTU	TUEK	SKSPI
			Boot/heel (2)
Pasta (4) / spaghetti (2)		Pasta (2) / spaghetti (1) / pasta (1), pizza (2)	Pizza (2)
Famous Italian (1) / tasty cuisine (1)		Cuisine (1)	
		Wine (2)	Wine (1)
Coffee (1)			
Tomato (1)			
Footwear (5)			
Fashionable clothes (2), Italian fashion (1)		Clothing (1)	Fashion (1)
Furniture (2)			
Art (1), paintings (1)		Art (1)	Culture (1)
Dances (1)			
		Beauty (1), harmony (1)	
Resort (2), coast (1), mountains (1)		Tourism (1)	
		Nature (1), hot days (1)	
	Uneven development (1)		
	Mafia (1)		
Love (1)			
Beautiful language (1)			
		Rome (2)	Rome (1)
		Vatican (2)	
Venice (1)		Venice (1)	
			Milan (1)
Colosseum (1)		Colosseum (1)	
		The Leaning Tower of Pisa (1)	
		Castles (1)	
			Bridges (1)
			Little streets (1)
Football (1)		Football (1)	Football (1)
Rodeo (1)			
		Boat (1)	
		The Pope (1)	

Students' images of other European states were scanty, fragmentary and stereotypical. *Spain* for TUEK students means *dance* (3), *tourism* (2), *big passion* (1), *national costumes* (1) and *resort* (1) in 2008, and *bulls* (1), *Real Madrid FC* (2), *football* (1), *Spanish dances* (1), *songs* (1), *language* (1), *red* (1), *crisis* (1) in 2014. The Southern Kazakhstan selection is more or less similar: *tango* (1), *Real Madrid FC* (1), *coffee* (1) and *corrida* (1) in 2008, and *football* (2), *Barcelona* (2), *Madrid* (2), *Spanish dance* (1), *tango* (1), *pasta* (1), *bull* (1) in 2014. Cervantes, Velasquez, Salvador Dali and even Spanish guitar did not get a single mention. The

image of the country is comprised of basically three components (football — *corrida* — dance), and even the dance hails from Argentina.

Switzerland is another example of highly stereotypical perception. In 2008 it was mentioned only in TUEK, and it was associated with *watches* (4), *nature* (1), *resorts* (1) and *mountains* (1). In 2014 more images came to the scene: *watches* (5), *mountains* (2), *Alps* (1), *skirt* (2)¹² and Ibrahimović (foot-

¹² It looks like a student had a kilt in mind. He, most likely, took one mountainous country (Scotland) for another (Switzerland).

ball player who is actually a Swede) — in TUEK; *watches* (4), *banks* (3), *Alps, green mountains, clean city, fields, flowers, gardens, snow, resorts, schnitzel* (once each) — in SKSPI.

The Netherlands in 2008 were mentioned only once: *flowers* (TUEK). In 2014, named in a more familiar way (Holland) brought forward more associations: *Amsterdam, legality* (of light drugs, probably), *orange, cheese* in TUEK, and *football, cold, Amsterdam, water, Saba* (a resort island in the Antilles, currently a Dutch territory), *cigars, red lights street* in SIIKTU. **Greece**, ignored in 2008, later got its fair share of images in Shymkent: *Athens, myths, historical monuments, ruins, wine, Greeks, Greek salad, beautiful braided things, footwear, Greek braids*. **Austria** was mentioned only in TUEK in 2008: *Danube river* (2), *silence* (1), *church buildings* (1), *kingdom* (1), *gardens* (1), *guys* (1), *far away* (1), *déjà vu* (1). In 2014 it was mentioned only as a *Germany's ally* in SIIKTU.

Other European countries proved to be even less lucky. **Sweden** meant *high standard of living* and *many elderly people* (TUEK, 2008), *Swedish table* and *watch* (SKSPI, 2014; here Sweden was obviously mistaken for Switzerland). **Luxembourg** was mentioned in 2008 in TUEK as *a small country*; in 2014 it was mentioned only in SKSPI: *castle* and *mountains*. **Portugal** was mentioned in all the surveys: *beautiful beaches* (TUEK, 2008), *football* (2), *Cristiano Ronaldo, Lisbon* (TUEK, 2014), *Cristiano Ronaldo* (SKSPI, 2014). Finally, five remaining European states mentioned in these two surveys were **Ireland** (*fisheries, castles*), **Belgium** (*wafers, cheese*), **Denmark** (*war, dolphin massacre*), **Iceland** (*volcanoes*), and **Monaco**: *monarchy, prince, resorts, banks, recreation* (2).

The interim results of this study are as follows:

1. The sample is very small, and it means that the choice of images was substantially shaped by personal sympathies/antipathies of individual informants, their (and their friends'/relatives') peculiar experiences of visiting certain European countries. The appearance of football associations in 2014 is merely indicative of the fact that a handful of football fans took part in the survey. Images are born on the individual level — to a great extent so. Austria is a good example of this: it accidentally appeared and disappeared, and images of this country are pretty whimsical (personal observations in a bizarre mix with second-hand historical knowledge).

2. All in all, France, Germany and Great Britain are European leaders, while Italy took a notable place in the east and Austria in the south of Kazakhstan. The weight of the last two countries is most likely due to chance, while the leadership of the “big three” is more than justified because they are constantly and intensely represented in the media.

3. The images transmitted by mass-media, however, are subject to substantial change on the level of individual perception. The parameters of such shifts are defined by informants' social background, their education, relationships, their proclivity towards reflection and other personal and group traits. One may assume that the leading role of the images of France is due to gender imbalance among the informants — women make up the majority, and France for women of CIS is an established paragon of fashion, beauty and romance.

4. Images of France, Germany and Great Britain are remarkable for the opposition “Us versus Them”. This dichotomy may be expressed in more direct terms: *different people, different mentality* (2008); *differing culture, other values, mentality, manners, unusual, different mentality, different life* (2), *other concepts* (2014). Quite often, though, it is implicit and expressed in a choice of positive traits that are evidently contrasted with Kazakhstan deficiencies.

5. In general Western Europe for Kazakhstan students is a kind of consumer paradise — a place to spend vacations, make shopping and have fun in. At the same time this “paradise” is a distant and vague place, more of a mirage than an actual locality.

Conclusion

Western Europe is not yet perceived in Kazakhstan as an entity by student youth. European space is not demarcated by them exactly and definitively, its borders are usually defined by political yardstick, although this political principle — treating all what extends to the west of Brest as Western Europe and what stretches to the east of this border point symbolizing the separation of the two worlds as Eastern Europe — is getting more and more outdated. It also should be taken into account that within a European space demarcated in such a manner there are historical, cultural, religious, ethnic and other delimitations that may look more like insurmountable barriers, especially from the outside.

Such a fragmented image is somehow justified by the fact that Western Europe was — and in many respects still remains — a most heterogeneous region consisting of countries with centuries-old capitalism and market newcomers, states with uneven level of economic development, those of Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox traditions, etc. This fact, as well as differences in a political “weight” of Western European countries on international stage, and their unequal contribution to the hall of fame of art and culture, hinders the formation of integral image of Western Europe.

There is another side of the story: our study, however small it is, indicates that dominant representations of Western Europe in Kazakhstan are vague and stereotypical despite the fact that our informants belong to one of the most well-informed and educated groups. Particularly surprising was that there were no attempts, except for the taken by a single student, to personify the image of Western Europe; besides, Napoleon named by this student looks as a not very suitable figure for such an embodiment because for a half of Western Europe he was more a destroyer than creator. Why has nobody said that Western Europe is Leonardo da Vinci or Albert Einstein, Giuseppe Verdi or Richard Wagner, or at least Patricia Kaas? Why, unlike that of Russia¹³, the image of Western Europe in Kazakhstan has no “face” and bears no “name”? Equally, this question appears with separate European countries. At the country level of images probing our informants mentioned just six people, half of them football players: Hitler, Merkel, Elizabeth II, Shakespeare, Zidane, Ibrahimović, Ronaldo and additionally one multiple personality — “The Beatles”. That is to say, not only Europe as a whole, but also individual states gave out nothing else but just the same few names.

What is the reason behind this phenomenon? To give a definite answer to this question a new study with much more numerous sample used would be required, nevertheless, even now we can exclude safely some directions of search. Thus, the national education system cannot be blamed for lack of cul-

tural knowledge about Western Europe. Since 1991, the school and university curricula has undergone significant changes, first of all, by increasing the hours devoted to studying the contribution of ethnic Kazakhs to the national history and culture. Nevertheless, let the duration and content of those courses, lessons and lectures that introduce the audience to non-Kazakh deeds and feats in domains of arts, science and humanities seem to be partly curtailed, they are still continue to inform in sufficient details about achievements of European thinkers, scientists, artists, musicians, etc. More to that, a very plethora of widely-known names included in the curricula is partly responsible — truly, in the lesser part — for students’ failures: it was difficult to select a certain representative personality in a short amount of time that was reserved for this operation. However, this reason is too minor to remove the above question.

Similarly, we should not refer to the total absence among the overwhelming majority of our respondents of any personal “clear-cutting” visual impressions accumulated in the course of their stay, even short-term one, in Western Europe. It is no coincidence that our article was preceded by an epigraph concerning role of stereotypes in worldview taken from the famous book by Walter Lippmann. We really “imagine most things before we experience them” and the limiting force of this pre-ordained imagination is capable to prolong, perpetuate, eternalize not only our misunderstanding but even the unconscious self-exclusion from vision of some important characteristic features of foreign life that we did not encounter with earlier. The more important is that while staring at ones European features and omitting others we are guided by — perhaps, unconsciously once more — our own life preferences of the moment. Speaking in other words, a paucity of the Europe personification exposed so clearly by our respondents has something to do with the way both Western Europe and its countries are perceived. According to this specific perception, neither European Union nor France with its “French fashion houses” nor Germany with its *autobahns* **have no need** for a symbolic figure to personify the centuries of struggles and achievements of European genius that laid the foundation of the comfortable universe of motorways and supermarkets. Most probably, image recipients have just found in Western Europe a convenient symbol of well-being, of

¹³ In 2004 and 2007, during the surveys about the image of Russia, undertaken in the same two universities, the students mentioned about 30 persons seen as the symbols of Russia: politicians, writers, sportsmen, historical figures and singers. See: [Yessimova, Panarin 2008].

earthly goods that spread beyond their place of origin. To put it differently, Western Europe failed to acquire a “face” exactly because a consumer paradise has no need for a face. Yet the continent itself is hardly to blame. Its impersonal image has come to the scene, firstly, as derivative from the Soviet ideological heredity, secondly, as a result of the scarcity of image translated by the Russian intermediary, and thirdly and most importantly, because of the informants’ inner disposition to choose just a consumerist image of Europe at the expense of its other possible images.

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Западная Европа глазами студентов казахстанских вузов: образы стран и движущая сила их формирования

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Имидж страны и в особенности та его версия, которая воспринимается за ее границами, становится все более важным гуманитарным ресурсом, способным оказывать позитивное или негативное влияние в разных областях, включая и область международных отношений. В СССР Западная Европа и образующие ее страны были наделены двойственным имиджем: в нем соединялись представления о сокровищнице культуры и о территории господства классов и сил, враждебных социалистическому лагерю. После распада Советского Союза Западная Европа стала восприниматься на постсоветском пространстве как образцовая капиталистическая модель, на которую следует походить.

Представления молодежи Казахстана об имидже Западной Европы формировались как раз в этот период. С целью их зондирования был проведен пилотный социологический опрос студентов двух казахстанских вузов, один из которых расположен на северо-востоке страны, в г. Усть-Каменогорске, второй на юге, в Шымкенте. Полученные результаты позволяют с уверенностью утверждать, что у студентов нет целостного имиджа Западной Европы. В их представлениях господствует совокупность имиджей отдельных европейских стран в составе региона, сильно различающихся между собой по степени полноты. Наиболее разработаны имиджи Франции и Германии. Но и они, не говоря уже об имиджах стран, меньших по размерам и реже упоминаемых в СМИ, основываются преимущественно на широко распространенных стереотипных представлениях об экономических, политических, культурных характеристиках этих стран. Также бросается в глаза, что имиджи западноевропейских стран, вырисовывающиеся из ответов студентов, практически не персонифицированы — очень редко отождествляются с той или иной личностью, значимой в историческом, политическом и культурном отношении. По мнению авторов, эта особенность ответов может считаться одним из индикаторов преобладания у студентов восприятия Западной Европы как такого места, где могут быть удовлетворены их различные потребительские запросы.

Ключевые слова: имидж, Западная Европа, Казахстан, опросы студентов, символическая персонификация

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