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# **Sharing the Slovak transformational experience: How Can Slovak NGOs Contribute to Democratisation of Tunisia?**

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The thesis is submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial  
fulfilment of the degree of Master by Research

January 2014

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## Abstract

As democracy assistance of major donors, such as the EU and the US, has recently encountered fatigue due to the decrease of their credibility especially in the Middle East and North Africa, this study set out to examine the potential of a deeply under-researched smaller post-communist donor, Slovakia, which officially extended its support to Tunisia in 2011. The research question investigated in this project was how Slovak non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can contribute to democratisation of Tunisia.

Based on the data obtained through qualitative, semi-structured interviews with Slovak NGO, research and governmental representatives, this project argued that despite historical, political and cultural differences, the Slovak NGOs can contribute to Tunisia's democratisation by sharing Slovakia's very recent transformational experience, which provides the country with a comparative advantage within the donor community and increases its credibility not only as a donor but also as an international partner. The tumultuous Slovak transformation positioned its NGOs best to contribute to Tunisia's democratisation in the field of civil society building, security sector reform and electoral support. The Slovak experience with both sides of democracy assistance, as a recipient and a donor, allows it to avoid mistakes for which major donors have been criticised, such as one-size-fits-all or institution-centric approaches. Even though, due to its desire to anchor its Western and European identity, it promotes the same liberal values as the major donors, what further distinguishes its democracy assistance is its emphasis on the process of democratisation, rather than endpoints and putting the needs of the recipients to the centre of their project design.

However, if Slovakia wants to use its transformational experience as an added value of its democracy assistance, it should invest more into capacity-development domestically and reallocate finances from ineffective projects to allow the NGOs design long-term, and therefore more effective activities.

**Key words:** Arab Spring, democratisation, democracy assistance, nongovernmental organisations, transformation, Tunisia, Slovakia.

## Abbreviations

CEE	-	Central and Eastern European countries
EU	-	European Union
NATO	-	North Atlantic Organisation
UN	-	United Nations
US	-	United States of America

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# Introduction

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The events of the Arab Spring have forever changed the face of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and created a new regional context for international democracy promoters. Having inflicted the revolutionary movements in the region, firstly triggered by a self-immolation of a vendor M. Bouazizi in protest of the harassment by municipal officials, Tunisia was one of the first countries to attract foreign democracy assistors. However, the transformation does not only pose challenges to Tunisia itself, but also to the global democracy promotion scene, which has been on a defensive for almost a decade. The well-known military interventions (Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003), power interests, double standards, or economic problems of the major Western democracy promoters, such as the United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU), resulted in their lack of stronger credibility in the region and therefore now may decrease their ability to advance democratic transitions (Burnell, 2011). Therefore, the democratisations of Arab spring may be a great opportunity to test the potential of the new generation of international democracy promoters produced by the EU integration of and after 2004, whose recent transformational experience gives them potential to contribute to Tunisia's democratisation by offering a distinctive kind of democracy assistance.

The project selects Slovakia and Tunisia as a donor and a recipient assuming that this may be the best testing ground because Slovakia, as the only post-communist country, officially extended its support to Tunisia within the intergovernmental initiative the Democratic Partnership Challenge of the Community of Democracies joining Netherlands in Task Force on Tunisia in July 2011. Having previously contributed to securing democratisation gains in similar environments of post-communist space; now Slovakia faces a challenge of how to use its expertise in a very different context of the Arab world. Tunisia was the best choice for Slovak nongovernmental organisations' (NGOs) engagement, as it is relatively stable and most developed compared to other MENA states undergoing democratisation. Tunisia also lacks experience with escalated religious or political radicalism, which gives it a positive prerequisite for development leading to a consolidation of democracy.

Due to the extensiveness of the issue of state's democracy promotion and the limited scope of this project, the study dwells mainly on Slovak democracy assistance, which is carried out by NGOs, rather than that on the state level. However, as democracy assistance follows from official democracy promotion strategies, these will also be addressed briefly. Furthermore, the variousness and relative independence of NGOs best allow the study to shed light on the parallels and differences between democracy assistance of single donors.

A large and growing body of literature has concentrated on the external factors in the democratisation process and the role played by an external assistor in country's transition and consolidation. However, the vast majority of existing studies have focused on global actors, such as the USA or EU, while too little attention has been paid to smaller, recently emerged post-communist donors. Furthermore, there have only been a few studies, which compare major donors' and smaller countries' democracy support activities, but even those have only focused on democracy promotion, rather than democracy assistance on the nongovernmental level. Therefore, by researching the little-studied activities of Slovakia in Tunisia, this project contributes to previous studies of the role of foreign actors in the process of democratisation. Even more importantly, it is one of the few to shed light on activities of the new generation of donors, here represented by Slovakia, and on how their different experience and understanding translates into their democracy assistance in the field.

Therefore, this study intends to determine whether Slovak democratisation experience reflects in its democracy support and so makes it distinctive from the democracy support practices of major donors, such as the EU and the US. Also, secondly, it explores the transferability or usability of the Slovak experience in a very different environment of Arab Tunisia. Expecting that donor's experience with democracy at home reflects in their international democracy support strategies, the research question explored in this project is *how Slovak non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can contribute to democratisation of Tunisia*.

The overall structure of the study takes form of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. The first chapter will be concerned with methodology used for the research process. It will establish ontological subjectivism and epistemological

interpretivism as the research philosophies and then will move to introduce comparative politics as a research method, choosing qualitative approach in a form of semi-structured interviews, which will later be analysed by procedures of thematical analysis.

The second chapter will offer a conceptual framework for the study by engaging with the key frontlines in the literature essential for understanding the researched issue. The first part of the literature review will focus on debates on democratisation. This is important because academic debates and current knowledge of democratisation processes influences the capability of democracy assistors to advance democratic development effectively. The section begins setting out a definition of democracy suitable for adoption by democracy assistors. Further, it will examine a democratic transition and consolidation in order to reflect on challenges of the regime change, which Tunisia is currently facing. After outlining the most important factors influencing democratic development, and emphasising the role of the external factor, it will seek to locate Slovakia and Tunisia, to a wave concept. This will later help the study to establish the differences and parallels between the two transformations, which democracy assistors need to consider in their activities. The second part will then focus on democracy assistance. Taking into account that it never exists in a vacuum, the section will, firstly, contextualise democracy assistance within broader democracy promotion. Then it will identify the dominant model of democracy being assisted, examining its advantages and disadvantages. Further, it outlines the most significant factors influencing donors' democracy assistance design. Finally, it moves to introduce the main democracy assistors, while emphasising the extent to which smaller donors are under-researched.

To determine how Slovak NGOs can contribute to democratisation in Tunisia by sharing Slovak transformational experience, the third chapter will follow Burnell's (2011) finding that in their assistance, NGOs focus mainly on electoral support and civil society building and will highlight these themes within the Slovak democratisation. Consequently, it will also focus on Slovak experience as a donor, considering that the country could have accumulated democracy assistance know-how learning from its own donors. The next section will examine the parallels and differences between the Slovak and Tunisian transformations, which may most impact the transferability of the Slovak 'lessons learnt'.

The fourth chapter will concentrate on presenting findings and analysis of the collected qualitative data. In context of Petrova's (2012a) two factors influencing donors' democracy support strategies and based on the themes recurring in the interviews, the findings will be organised in sections focusing firstly on donor's values and experience, and then on donor's focus on the recipient. These sections will contain sub-chapters, which are based on the thematical analysis of the data. This will help the study to determine how the Slovak NGOs can contribute to democratisation of Tunisia and establish to what extent the strategies used by them are divergent or convergent with those used by major Western donors.

In the end, the final chapter will present conclusions and recommendations reached through examination and analysis of the collected data as stated in the previous chapter, while acknowledging limits and future opportunities for the study.

However, comparing Slovak democracy assistance to the assistance of major Western donors, it has to be kept in mind that small Slovak organisations are being compared with big Western ones. Methodologically, it might have been better to compare Slovak NGOs to small organisations in the West but looking for such organisations, the author found it difficult to find such, which would deal with or focus on the studied issue. Therefore, this research compares small NGOs to big ones, but sees this difference as a consequence of insufficiency of funding on the Slovak side, which will be dealt with later, rather than insufficiency of experience or professionalism. Another problematic issue was that the research could not have assessed the efficiency of the Slovak activities in Tunisia, as at the time when the research was conducted, the projects were too young to be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness.

# Methodology

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The research question explored in this study is how Slovak NGOs can contribute to democratisation of Tunisia. This chapter outlines the research process, while showing appreciation of different philosophical perspectives, major research implications, as well as advantages and disadvantages of the methodological choices. First of all, the chapter establishes ontological subjectivism and epistemological interpretivism as the research philosophies. Then it moves to introduce comparative politics as the most appropriate research method and chooses qualitative approach to the study. It further sets semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection, which are later analysed by procedures of thematic analysis. After establishing the secondary research as another data resource, the chapter explains how the study was conducted in keeping with ethical principles. Finally, it acknowledges the limitations of the research in terms of validity, reliability and generalisability.

## Research Philosophy

### Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality (Silverman, 2013). Therefore, its two main aspects are objectivism and subjectivism (Henn et al., 2008). Objectivism holds that reality is independent and external to social actors, while subjectivism understands it as a social phenomenon dependent on social actors and created through their actions and perceptions (ibid). In the context of democracy assistance, the social actors, such as donors (NGO workers) and recipients (local partners), may perceive situations in various ways, which may be influenced by their previous experience and reflect in their current and future actions. Therefore, in order to answer the research question, it is necessary to understand donors' and recipients' motivations and behaviour. Hence, despite the use of objectivist philosophical aspects, the research primarily relied on subjectivism.

## Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge (Silverman, 2013). Henn et al. (2008) identify two main philosophical positions: positivism and interpretivism. According to Hughes and Sharrock (1997), the distinction between these two stances is the central debate in the philosophy of social research.

Positivism holds that meaning “exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness” (Crotty, 1998, pg. 8). It understands reality as objective, independent and external of social actors and therefore collects data about observable and measurable realities while ignoring issues like cultural relativism or power (Curtis and Curtis, 2011). As explained before, to answer the research question, it was essential to rely on subjectivist stance, and therefore the objectivist nature of positivism made it unsuitable for adoption. Moreover, this philosophy prefers quantitative data which would have not been sufficient in order to explore this under-researched issue and to obtain deeper understanding of emerging correlations.

Interpretivism emerged as a reaction to the critique of positivism, which, according to Hughes (1990, pg. 90), “left no room for the idea that history and society were human creations and this constituted the essence of all social norms”. Interpretivism advocates the necessity of understanding people in their roles as social actors, as well as understanding meanings they attach to social phenomena. Therefore, methods used in natural sciences are insufficient for social sciences, since the latter seek to build understanding of people’s experience, perceptions, intentions and motives, which underpin their social behaviour (Henn et al., 2008). This position adopts qualitative methods, and allows developing a realistic and more thorough understanding of the studied issue based on a naturalist perspective (Silverman, 2013). For these reasons, the adoption of this philosophy was highly appropriate because it allowed the exploration of donors’ experience as well as motivations for their behaviour, which was then put into comparison. However, the drawback of this stance is that it may be too subjective and too value bound due to its reliance on qualitative data (ibid). This project resolved the issues of subjectivity and credibility by focusing on interviewees’ professional rather than personal accounts, which was then followed by a double-check of the analysed data by the interviewed while also

comparing the obtained information with secondary resources, looking for possible contradictions.

## Research Method

The very nature of this project, i.e. the interest in differences and similarities between the Slovak and Western democracy assistance in Tunisia as well as the assessment of the transferability of Slovak democratisation experience, predetermined using the method of comparative politics.

Comparative politics is a field and a method of systematic empirical study of states' political systems, institutions, behaviours and processes at international, national and local levels over time, attempting to establish empirical relationships between variables and draw conclusions from the comparisons (Lijphart, 1975).

Utilising the comparative method provides this project with a number of advantages. Firstly, 'it is concerned with both differences and similarities' in a systematic way (Calvert, 2002, pg. 27). The study is then more structured, data are selected at the most appropriate level, a small study sample makes a complex reality of politics more manageable and the results more precise (Lijphart, 1975). Its scientific value rests in the fact that it allows much deeper insight than pure observation. Moving beyond sheer description it provides explanations and so helps develop understanding not only of the studied subjects, but political science as a whole (Blondel, 1995). Drawing conclusions from observations and behavioural analysis, it adheres to hypothetico-deductive method (Calvert, 2002). An advantage of using comparative method for this project was that it allowed to research a phenomenon (Slovak democracy assistance to Tunisia) within its context (global democracy assistance to Tunisia), while shedding light on real-life contexts (expectations, motivations and needs of donors and recipients) (Silverman, 2013).

Even though comparative method is the best choice to research the studied issue, this method has some drawbacks, which need to be considered and, if possible, overcome. Firstly, with 195 independent states in the world (USDP, 2013), there may be too few cases and too many variables (Lijphart, 1975). Lijphart (1975) therefore suggests that the number of variables should be decreased to achieve greater

effectiveness. Further, to be able to make valid conclusions, completely identical, radically different countries or countries too far back in time cannot be compared. For the method to be useful, it is necessary to find states with only small differences, which may sometimes be problematic. However, using this method leads to decreased generalisability of conclusions (ibid). Following this logic, the study compares the democracy assistance of Slovakia and Western democracies, which despite their different historical experience with political systems, are now based on the same principles of liberalism and Western values. In order to explore the transferability of Slovak experience to Tunisia, which would then provide Slovakia with the basis different from other states in that it will be able to offer 'lessons learnt' from its own experience, it is also necessary to briefly reflect on differences and parallels between the two transformations.

## Research Approach

After establishing the research philosophy and method of the study, it was essential to choose between quantitative and qualitative research approach, depending on which of the two would best allow developing in-depth understanding of donors' behaviours and motivations.

A quantitative design focuses on examination of relationships, which can be measured numerically and analysed in a statistical manner. An advantage of using this research design is that it can be replicated across the broader population and the results of data analysis can be generalised as they are usually representative of the wider population (Bryman, 2012). However, its structured and statistical nature would have not allowed gaining deeper understanding of how actors' experience may reflect in their actions and what their motivations could be. Failing to establish people's understanding of the world, which is essential for this research, it was considered unsuitable for adoption.

A qualitative research, on the contrary, seeks to develop and deepen understanding of social actors' meanings of the world through their viewpoints (Henn et al., 2009). Gathering large amounts of data in textual form from a smaller number of research participants, it concentrates on words, rather than statistics (Bryman, 2012); hence is

most associated with the philosophy of interpretivism adopted by this study. Unlike quantitative design, qualitative methods of data collection allow for greater flexibility and can be carried out in different stages of the research process, which can be therefore developed mid-way to address additionally emerging issues or drop those which lose their relevance throughout the process (Henn et al., 2009). However, being grounded on small samples, findings based on qualitative research can hardly be considered representative, therefore they are problematic to generalise (Bryman, 2012). Also, its relatively unstructured nature results in data being less transparent and so the study is difficult to replicate (David and Sutton, 2011). However, despite the drawbacks, the qualitative research design was the most useful for the study, as its interpretative nature helped understand, describe and translate social actors' (donors') motivations and behaviours (democracy assistance strategies).

## **Techniques and Procedures**

### **Primary Research**

#### **Data Collection**

Due to the extent to which Slovak democracy assistance is under-researched, this project could not obtain sufficient information from secondary resources and a primary qualitative research had to be carried out. Silverman (2013) identifies interviews, observations, and review of documents as the most common techniques of qualitative data collection. However, observations were excluded on basis that even though they could provide interesting results, they were not feasible and, in their nature, not explanatory enough to provide a sufficient insight into the studied issue (Curtis and Curtis, 2011). Review of the documents was excluded as the materials were too difficult to access.

Therefore, an interview was considered the most appropriate. An interview is defined as a conversation between two or more persons while an interviewer asks purposeful questions relevant to particular research aims, which an interviewee is willing to answer (Silverman, 2013). An advantage of this method is that it enables an interviewer to acquire clear and deeper understanding of the issue, as the flexibility

and the personal dimension of an interview allows them to gain more accurate and thorough data (Curtis and Curtis, 2011). However, this method may pose problems of reliability, credibility, validity and generalisability of the research. The interview may be hard to analyse and interpret, the conversation may slip to topics irrelevant for the research and, moreover, the interviewer cannot be sure if the interviewee is saying the truth. Furthermore, the interviewer themselves could cause bias by their non-verbal behaviour, comments, personal stances or direction of the conversation (Silverman, 2013). To avoid these problems, the researcher carried out a cautious pre-interview preparation. To ensure the reliability and credibility, the analysed data were compared to each other as well as to accessible secondary sources in order to indicate possible discrepancies. Further, they were sent to all the interviewees in order to obtain their consent or suggestions for corrections. The issue of validity was addressed by using semi-structured interviews, which enabled the interviewer to further explore interviewees' answers and probe their meanings (ibid). Even though some generalisations about the post-communist democracy assistance donors can be drawn from this research, the study focuses on exploration of the Slovak democracy assistance to Tunisia exclusively; therefore, the problem of broader generalisability of conclusions was not an issue.

Silverman (2013) and Flick (2009) identify these types of interviews: focus groups, structured, semi-structured and unstructured interview. Even though focus groups may have offered interesting outcomes, this method could not have been used, because for the examination of the under-researched issue of Slovak democracy assistance it would not have been necessary to access NGO and governmental representatives, whose time schedule would have been too busy to synchronise. Structured interviews make use of questionnaires and so relate to quantitative research; hence, for the reasons explained above, they were inappropriate for this study. Unstructured interviews are informal without predetermined questions and usually focus on personal rather than professional accounts (Flick, 2009). This study therefore adopted semi-structured interviews, which, by having prepared a list of questions, help keep the conversation in the right direction while at the same time give a researcher scope to alter them depending on the development of the interview and provide the interviewee with an opportunity to talk more freely (Henn et al., 2008).

Also, a sample of interviewees chosen for this research helps minimise the problems of reliability and credibility as the choice of the interviewees aimed to balance the views of different NGOs operating in Tunisia, adding academic and governmental views, and interpret the issue from a professional perspective. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or online and were recorded on a dictaphone.

## **Data analysis**

Qualitative data can be evaluated using methods of discourse (Henn et al., 2009), content (Krippendorff, 2004), or thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Discourse analysis concentrates on how meanings of the social world are created through the use of language. Despite the fact that the focus of this method on the lingual structure and construction of the data could produce interesting results, due to its time-consuming nature, vague methodological suggestions (ibid) and relative redundancy in terms of the aim of this study, this method was not adopted. Content analysis focuses on producing replicable and valid data interpretation for the content of their use (Krippendorff, 2004). It helps code a text in a way that all cases with similar code can be compared and examined, while it helps to simplify extensive data. For this reason, some elements of this method were used in the study. However, Grbich (2007) points out that content analysis may focus too much on word count limits, which do not allow for a more comprehensive interpretation of the collected information and, moreover, it does not identify emerging themes.

This research adopts thematic analysis method, as it helps condense the extensive data into main characteristics (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This analysis is used to spot, analyse and record themes within that data. A theme is defined as a pattern which describes and organises or explains features of the studied issue (Boyatzis, 1998). In comparison to content analysis, it creates deeper-level topics rather than surfacing codes. It is also more systematic in identifying the emerging themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This study therefore drew themes from the collected qualitative data and analysed the recurring ones.

## **Secondary Research**

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Curtis and Curtis (2011, pg. 218) identify secondary research as "...an approach that collects and analyses data sourced from the writings of social scientists..." accessed across physical and online databases. It differs from primary research as, even though it collects and analyses data, it does not create new ones but rather reuses the primary research of other studies (ibid). This project used secondary materials for purposes of the literature review and also to obtain information on Western democracy assistance. As there has been enough literature on democracy assistance strategies of the US and EU, primary research was not necessary to collect the data. The secondary data, as the primary data, were analysed using thematic analysis method and consequently compared with the primary data acquired through interviews.

## **Ethics and Limitations of the Research**

### **Ethics**

Research ethics is a set of moral values and principles influencing the way in which a research is conducted (Silverman, 2013; Flick, 2009). For a research to be ethical, it should adhere to several principles. This project was therefore conducted in accordance with the principles of integrity and objectivity as stated in Saunders et al. (2012). The authors stress out that all social research should be truthful, accurate and open. The strengths and weaknesses of the methodology should be pointed out and analysis results should be presented honestly, irrespective of whether they confirm or contradict the expected outcomes. A very important aspect is trust between the researcher and participants based on respect for others and their rights. The research must ensure safety and avoidance of any harm, even in terms of stress and discomfort. All the participants must take part in the research voluntarily, based on acquisition of sufficient information in a way understandable to them while confidentiality and anonymity should be guaranteed and protected (ibid).

The data collection was conducted on basis of permission from the School Research Ethics Panel (School of Human and Health Sciences, University of Huddersfield). Before the data collection, all the participants were provided with information sheets with details about the study in the Slovak language through email communication, or

had an opportunity to ask additional questions during the interviews. The information sheets informed the interviewees about their right to withdraw from the research at any point and were ensured that all their details and provided information would be safeguarded (guaranteed anonymity). As the interview questions were not of a personal or sensitive character, no safety or harm management was necessary. All the primary data collection for this research was based on obtaining voluntary informed consent from all the participants, who, after proof-reading the data analysis, sent their permissions to the researcher via email.

## Limitations

The most common limitations related to qualitative research in terms of its subjective nature, are establishing validity and reliability, as explained above (Silverman, 2013). Reliability in this research was ensured by providing enough information about the research methodology so that it could be replicated or further examined.

The content validity was established by adequate coverage of the researched issue. However, due to the scope of this study, the project was unable to address many additional emerging issues in greater depth. The construct validity was secured by providing evidence based on theories emerging from the literature review (Curtis and Curtis, 2011). To ensure internal validity, the data were collected accurately and consistently (Silverman, 2013). In terms of external validity this research could be transferred to other contexts, but due to its specific nature, its ability to be generalised is quite limited (ibid).

To conclude, this project was based on subjectivist interpretivist philosophy since understanding reality as a social phenomenon was crucial in obtaining deeper understanding of social actors' (donors') past democratisation experience, as well as their motivations and perception, which all combined may impact their democracy assistance strategies. Comparative method of political science was used as a research method, the use of which emerged from the very nature of the hypothesis and was based on comparative politics ability to systematically assess both the differences and similarities between the studied subjects. Due to the extent to which the Slovak democracy assistance field is under-researched, it was necessary to obtain qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, which provide both the researcher and interviewee with flexibility to adapt to the flow of the conversation.

The secondary data was used for the purposes of literature review as well as data about Slovak democratisation and Western democracy assistors. This data was then compared against the conclusions of the primary analysis. Both sources of data were analysed in thematical manner, as this technique, by drawing themes out of the textual data, describes, organises and explains features of the studied issue. This project adhered to principles of ethical research conduction, and obtained informed consents from all the participants. As this project is based on qualitative approach, the problems of validity, reliability and generalisability arose and were addressed.

# Literature Review

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## Introduction

As democracy is a complex and living thing, the body of literature on democratisation and democracy assistance is very large and goes through many different aspects. The aim of this review is to offer a conceptual framework for the study by engaging with the key frontlines in the literature, which are essential to understand in order to research the studied issue. These debates are also important as the current knowledge of democratisation processes hugely impacts the capability of Slovak NGOs to assist democracy in Arab countries effectively.

This literature review consists of two main parts. The first section concentrates on exploring issues of democratic transformation, as these are crucial for developing understanding of the process, which Tunisia is undergoing right now. Also, this understanding is essential for work of democracy assistors as it influences their approaches. Firstly, looking for most appropriate definition of democracy to be adopted by democracy promoters and assistors, the review recommends adherence to Dahl's liberal understanding. After, it moves to define the two broad processes of democratisation, transition and consolidation and outlines the challenges, which transforming countries have to face. Thirdly, the review establishes the most influential conditions, which affect democratic development. This is important as there are a number of conditions, which have to be right for the Arab countries to be able to make any genuine transition or for Slovakia to be able to make any meaningful contribution to it. The review introduces external factors as an important condition and reflects upon issues concerning Arab capacities to democratise. Further, it classifies Slovakia and the Arab Spring within the wave concept. The classification enables the research to establish if the subjects of the case studies have enough in common to learn from each other.

Although the literature presents democratisation in a variety of contexts, due to its nature this study primarily focuses on application of one condition: democracy assistance. After contextualising democracy assistance into democracy promotion strategies in order to set up a context for the activities of NGOs, the review identifies

liberal democracy as a dominant model being promoted and explores its advantages and disadvantages. Next section sets up donors' domestic experience with democracy and recipients' needs as main factors influencing donors' democracy assistance approaches. Finally, it introduces the USA and EU as most influential global democracy supporters and point to their democracy assistance practices and their critiques, while emphasising the extent to which smaller donors are under-researched.

## **Definitions of democracy**

Despite its universal use, the term democracy lacks a uniform meaning, as it is highly politicised but it has also evolved historically, being constantly academically redefined (Markoff, 1996; Storm, 2008). The debate on definitions is important, because, as Pinkney (1993) states, the understanding of democracy directly impacts its quality in a country and therefore can be crucial in the transformational process. In the academic debates, Schumpeter's (1956) and Dahl's (1989) works feature most prominently.

Schumpeter's (1956) understands democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter, 1956, pg. 269). His conception is rather procedural than normative (Beetham, 1994). Therefore, this understanding encourages a very formalistic approach to democracy in which procedural means become ends to itself. Without any additional elements, the procedural understanding could result in empowering a new regime of authoritarians or radicals disrespectful of civil liberties or the rule of law and result in the emergence of hybrid or façade democracies, such as Russia and Iran (Zakaria, 1997). Therefore, merely procedural definition is not sufficient for the embedment of democracy.

However, Dahl (1989) builds on Schumpeter's (1956) concept and complements it with other essential criteria for a realistic democracy, polyarchy, corresponding with the current understanding of liberal democracy (Doorenspleet and Kopecky, 2008). This study agrees that a regime is considered a (liberal) democracy only if the three requirements are met, namely meaningful competition, sufficiently inclusive suffrage,

and a high level of civil liberties (Dahl, 1989). Burnell (2011) explains that this definition encompasses elections and emphasises respect for human, civil and political rights, and therefore secures the rule of law.

However, as the dimension of civil liberties may be independent of the other two (Diamond, 1996), this study considers a system meeting only the criteria of competition and inclusiveness an illiberal democracy (Doorenspleet, 2000). Since in such regimes there is a scope for civil and political right violations, this study sees the definition focusing only on the two requirements unsuitable for adoption by democracy assistants. A political system is considered nondemocratic if it fails to meet Dahl's (1989) requirement of competition or inclusiveness (Doorenspleet, 2000).

## **Defining democratisation**

The term 'democratisation' refers to "political changes moving in a democratic direction" (Potter et al., 1997, pg. 3). This study follows Huntington (1991), who uses the term to describe the overall process of political change, embracing both broad internal processes, 'transition' and 'consolidation'.

### **Democratic transition and consolidation**

A transition starts when an undemocratic regime begins to collapse or disintegrate. Then democratic structures are becoming routinised and the behaviours of political elites are starting to adjust to liberal democratic practices (Pridham and Lewis, 1996). Besides overthrowing an old regime, a country has to deal with tasks such as negotiation of the constitutional settlement and the procedures for political competition, demolishing authoritarian agencies and dissolving the laws not complying with democratic principles (ibid).

During regime transitions, elites are the principal actors, who, for any democratic development, must be willing to adhere to democratic values, and also find cooperative partners on the other side of the table (Malone, 2011). Even nondemocratic elites whose power resides in hegemonic parties can be willing to democratise, if they see it as the only way of keeping at least a minimum power and therefore negotiate pacted transitions to democracy (Geddes, 2009). Contrarily,

dictators relying on concentration of power and cults of personality have no incentives for considering democratisation. Their position is much weaker if the impetus for change comes from below, from the society (e.g. Arab Spring); or if it is driven by reform-minded elites, who, displacing authoritarians, impose democratisation from above (Sodaro, 2004).

The transition is completed when free and contested elections meeting Dahl's (1989) institutional requirements have been held. However, this is by no means the only sufficient condition. Also, partisan alternation of office must be possible and effective control of civilians over the military must be established (Przeworski, 1992).

Before speaking of consolidation, three minimal conditions need to be obtained; 'stateness', a completion of the transition and the new government ruling democratically (Linz and Stepan, 1996). Consolidation is lengthier than transition, usually taking between ten and twenty years. During the process democratic rules and procedures are internalised and disseminated (ibid). Its principal objective is for transitional uncertainties to be gradually reduced to the point where a probability of failure of democratisation is extremely low (Pridham and Lewis, 1996). However, not all the countries that have gone through transition are able to sustain democracy throughout the consolidation process (Beetham, 1994; Grugel, 2002).

For democracy to be consolidated, Linz and Stepan (1996) see the presence of these conditions inevitable: conditions for the development of a free and active civil society, relatively autonomous political society, a rule of law protecting individual freedoms and associational life, a state bureaucracy usable by the new democratic government and existence of an institutionalised economic society. In a consolidated democracy: Behaviourally, no social group is seriously and actively engaged in secession or a change of the regime. Attitudinally, the majority of the society accepts democracy as the best form of government. Constitutionally, all the major state organs and forces act in compliance with democratic principles and institutions. Democracy must become 'only game in town', when not only electoral winners, but also losers cannot imagine acting outside the democratic rules and instead of trying to destabilise the regime, they want to try again within the same system (ibid). Once a consolidation is well advanced, 'new' democracies are no longer regarded as 'new', but are referred to as 'established' (Pridham and Lewis, 1996).

## Preconditions of democracy

The emergence of democratisation is always attributable to several factors, which can vary throughout the process (Barro, 1999; Bellin, 2004; Huntington, 1991), depend on the nature of the old regime (Geddes, 2009) and can lead to or hinder democratic outcomes (Malone, 2011). Although due to the scope of the project it is not possible to talk about these conditions to a great extent, they must be mentioned, as each condition, if emerged, weakened or supported, may hamper or promote democratic development. The conditions can be broadly grouped into four interrelated categories – economic, social, cultural and external (Herb, 2005; Huntington, 1984; Gallagher, 2002; Malone, 2011). It is important to note that no single factor is sufficient for a democratic development, with an exception of a market economy, and the extent to which some of the preconditions are present could off-set the absence of others (Huntington, 1984).

### Economic development

Lipset (1959) emphasises a positive correlation between democracy and economic development arguing that more developed and educated citizens are more likely to believe in democratic values. Also, a market economy is conducive to democracy as decision making is necessarily dispersed and power is shared and based on the public consent (ibid). Przeworski (1991) contradicts, claiming that democracies are likely to be established at any level of development. However, Doorenspleet (2004) points to the fact that Przeworski (1991) focuses on a period from 1950 till 1990 and therefore, instead of no relation, it is a demonstration that the correlation varies depending upon time and space (Geddes, 2009). Also, economic development could be conducive to democracy as it weakens nondemocratic regimes by both rapid growth and economic recession (Huntington, 1991).

However, the MENA region countries were/are resistant to democratisation even though they were/are quite well-to-do. The problem has been widely analysed in terms of all four main preconditions for democracy but it is the economic factor that is generally believed to be the most explanatory (Diamond, 2010). 'The rentier state theory' shows that the problem is not the economic level, but the economic structure. In countries rich in natural resources such as oil, the need for taxation is reduced; hence there are fewer reasons for citizens to demand representation and

governments fail to develop the sense of accountability toward the citizens. The state is large, centralised, repressive, and corrupt; while the society is co-opted and weak (ibid).

### **Society and social structure**

According to Huntington (1984), pluralism of the society enhances the probability of existence of a stable democracy. Widely differentiated social structure with relatively autonomous social classes, ethnic, regional, occupational or religious groups provide basis for the limitation and control of the state power. On the other hand, societies without these groups are more likely to be dominated by nondemocratic centralised regimes (ibid). Social capital theorists (Putnam et al., 1992) stress the importance of civil society participation as it fosters an atmosphere of trust, 'norms of reciprocity, and the learning of organisational skills and social norms' (Malone, 2011, pg. 75), which are all believed to promote democracy (Moore, 1966; Sodaro, 2004). Furthermore, Rustow (1970) argues that national unity is inevitable for a democratic development, as it determines who 'the people' are. Hence, polarising social divisions can undermine or slow down democratisation, of which precondition is compliance between a nation and a territory (ibid). For instance, post-communist countries' transformations were complicated by the fact, that besides democratisation and marketisation, they also had to face the challenge of creating stateness, while resolving issues of nationhood. Therefore, this quadruple nature made the transitions slower and more difficult than in Latin America or Southern Europe (Kuzio, 2001).

Most importantly, economic development promotes the expansion of the middle class (Huntington, 1991) which Lipset (1959) considers a natural advocate of democracy as relying upon its own economic base, the middle class works against the concentration of power by the upper class and seeks to protect its interests through accountable, responsive government and the rule of law. However, Rueschemeyer et al. (1992) highlight the role of lower classes in advocating associational autonomy and extensions of suffrage. Therefore, it can be concluded that "the position of any one class on democratisation cannot be considered in isolation from others; various class alliances can occur in different countries which can be more or less favourable to democratisation" (Potter et al., 1997, pg. 21).

## Political culture

As political systems reflect fundamental characteristics of their citizens (Malone, 2011), in case of political transformations, the political culture also determines the type of regime that will replace the old one. Diamond (1999, pg. 163) defines political culture as “a people’s predominant beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments, and evaluations about the political system of their country and the role of the self in that system”. For any genuine democratic development, there has to be a widespread support for democracy, at least a moderate amount of trust in political and non-political institutions, government must be seen as legitimate and citizens must see some value in political participation (Rothstein and Stolle, 2008).

The cultural factor, more specifically, the presence of Islam has often been used to explain the lack of democracy in the MENA region (Diamond, 1999). However, the argument is problematic as it assumes that Muslims identify themselves first and foremost religiously, and it neglects other identifications, such as those with ethnic groups or economic classes. Also, the fact that millions of Western Muslims live in accordance with democratic principles contradicts this claim (Ramadan, 2012). Further, Koran contains no statements as to what characterises Islamic government (Miller et al., 2012). Huntington (1984, pg. 208) sees as a problem that there exists “no distinction between...the spiritual and the secular”. However, this proves problematic regarding the well-established secular rule in Turkey (Miller et al., 2012). Moreover, Catholicism before 1970’s was considered antithetical to democracy, too (Diamond, 2010).

To conclude, it is not Islam itself, but rather radicalism in any of its forms which is an obstacle for democracy and the ‘rentier theory’ proves much more useful in explaining the phenomenon of the ‘Arab gap’ (Sen, 1999).

## External environment

Major global events, the international economy, actions of states or international organisations can either facilitate or thwart democratic development (Huntington, 1991). As the external factor of democracy assistance is the main focus of this study, it is dealt in greater depth further in the literature review. However, it is here important

to shed light on external conditions, which have influenced democratisation processes of the case studies.

In case of Czechoslovakia, Huntington (1991, pg. 86) sums up the influences which most pushed its democratic development forward: 'Rome delegitimised authoritarian regimes; Brussels provided incentives for democratisation' and, most importantly, 'Moscow removed the principal obstacle to democratisation' when Gorbachev revoked the Brezhnev doctrine. After these changes, the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) experienced the most dramatic 'diffusion' or 'contagion' effect, when "successful democratisation occurs in one country and this encourages democratisation on other countries" facing similar problems (Huntington, 1991, pg. 100). The diffusion is the strongest among countries which are culturally similar and geographically proximate (Linz and Stepan, 1996). Czechoslovakia was one of the countries which were swept by the tide of democratisation in 1989, following the examples of Poland, Hungary and East Germany, and followed by Bulgaria and Romania (Huntington, 1991).

Contrarily, the reasons behind the democratisations of the Arab Spring, namely Tunisia, were indigenous, as the economic grievances and social injustice led to mass civic protests (PDCS, 2012). However, Tunisian events inspired revolutions in other Arab countries (ibid); hence it can be talked about the diffusion effect.

However, the international context played a very important role in the region already prior the revolutions. For years, the foreign aid was for non-oil regimes, such as Egypt or Morocco, a source of rents. They used it for survival as it gives them means to co-opt, repress or spent massively on public jobs without taxing much. According to Diamond (2010, pg. 101), external support for Arab regimes, coming mainly from the US and the EU, but today also from Russia and China, 'confers on countries' crucial economic resources, security assistance, and political legitimacy'. Ramadan (2012) argues that the presence of oil plays one of the key roles in determining countries' attitudes to domestic events in the Arab states. Another influential factor in the region is the Arab states themselves as they reinforce each other in their authoritarianism. Also, the Arab-Israeli conflict is often used by the authoritarians to divert public's attention away from domestic human rights violations and corruption. Still, generally, the West is not trusted in the Arab world, because of its double-

standards, power interest, the use of force by the US to promote democracy and also due to these countries' colonial history (Diamond, 2010). However, analysing the issue of geopolitical situation confronting Arab democracy is very complex and requires a more intensive study than is possible here.

According to Diamond (2010, pg. 102), before the Arab Spring the problem was also "... a lack of even a single clear example of Arab democracy". Now the question is whether any of the countries manages to consolidate so that it can be seen as a model. With regard to the recent development in the region, this study argues that such a role could be played by Tunisia.

Having gained its independence from France in 1956, Tunisia was under autocratic rule of President Habib Bourguiba's, then Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's for three decades, and was marked by serious human rights violations as well as severe suppressions of the civil society (Freedom House, 2013). The state was heavily centralised and the closest to resemble an otherwise non-existent democratic tradition in otherwise police state were regular elections, which, however, were manipulated by Ben Ali's tight media and candidacy restrictions, resulting in him taking almost ninety percent of the votes (ibid). In January 2011, the citizens engaged in mass demonstrations calling for democracy. As a result, Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia and Tunisia embarked on the path of regime change, facing the challenges of the transition period, such as establishing democratic rule, reforming security sector, holding first democratic election, creating a new constitution, and building a functioning civil society (PDCS, 2012).

## **Waves of democracy**

Huntington (1991, pg. 15) defines a wave as "a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time".

Internal factors, such as economic developments most influenced the first wave (1828 – 1926) while the first reversal (1922 – 1942) came as a reflection of the rise of fascist, communist and militaristic ideologies. External factors related to the World War II, when Allied occupation promoted inauguration of democratic institutions

engendered the second wave (1943 – 1962). The 1958 – 1975 militarisations at state levels again led to backsliding into authoritarianism. The third wave (1974 – left open until there is a reversal) was affected by both internal and external factors, such as declining legitimacy, economic development crises, performance dilemma, religious changes, and new policies of external actors.

With slight variations, scholars generally agree with Huntington's (1991) concept of the first two waves. However, the third wave's inclusiveness of CEE created a focus of disputes in approaching the wave concept. Some scholars (Brown, 2000; Gallagher, 2002; McFaul, 2002) argue that characteristics of ex-communist states transitions were so different from the previous changes in the third wave, that they should be considered constituting the fourth one. McFaul (2002) claims that the CEE transitions significantly diverge from the assumptions of the third wave studies, concretely by the casual relationship between mode of transition and resultant regime types, elite consensus or compromise, and de-emphasis on the role of the radicals and the masses in the transition processes. Brown (2000) also notes that previous transformations of conservative authoritarian regimes were not a trigger for democratisation of the communist states and these changes in 1970-1980's did not constitute a major reference group for citizenry and elites in CEE countries.

Although McFaul's (2002) and Brown's (2000) approaches offer a valuable insight into the decommunisation, they do not provide basis for a break with Huntington's (1991) third wave. Huntington (1991) himself stresses that regimes democratised in his third wave were a diverse lot and classifies them in his five patterns of regime change (cyclical, second-try, interrupted, direct, and decolonisation). For illustration, Czechoslovakia, with its multiple efforts to democratise, clearly belongs to the second-try pattern and therefore, qualifies for the third wave (ibid). The ex-communist countries also comply with Huntington's (1991) five phases of transformation process (emergence of reformers, acquiring power, the failure of liberalisation, backward legitimacy, and co-opting opposition). Akhaine (2010, pg. 9) states that Huntington's (1991) conception and analysis of the democratisation 'does not foreclose divergent strains in the democratisation processes'. Rather, decommunisation, even though it was a dramatic one, only provides bases for "the expansion of the third wave spatio-temporal delineation and thus constitutes a denouement rather than a new wave" (Akhaine, 2010, pg. 9).

The crucial thing is that for Huntington's concept (1991), reversals have a key importance, as they allow defining waves clearly. They are called 'waves' because to really count, there must be a phase of recovery, reflux or failure. Otherwise they are not waves. Therefore, to use Huntington's (1991) model of waves, reversals need to be considered as indicators.

The difficulty of classifying democratisations after 1989 is that there was not clearly defined a reversal of the third wave and many scholars adopted the concept that waves can overlap (Popescu, 2012). However, the overlap concept does not provide bases for clear distinction of where one wave ends and another one begins. Without these limits, scholars use very different methodologies for classifying countries in waves. In the literature on Arab Spring there is an apparent confusion over its classification as in writings of some it still could constitute the third wave (Sarihan, 2012; Tham, 2011), but in works of others it could be the fourth (Diamond, 2010), fifth (Engin, 2011) or even the sixth (Weyland, 2012). Although some disagreements in academic debates are inevitable and requisite in terms of research efficiency, such a big difference could make the study of democratisation disarranged. Therefore it may be better to either follow Huntington's (1991) concept and look for reversals or, if there are none and the current democratisations do not fit Huntington's (1991) third wave criteria, consider Doorenspleet's (2000) theory of trendless fluctuations.

Doorenspleet (2000) criticises Huntington (1991) for neglecting the requirement of inclusiveness and shows that focus on percentages of transitions can be misleading as they are also susceptible to changes in the number of world countries. In her analysis she shows that with the exception of the first wave, Huntington's (1991) other waves cannot be distinguished clearly. Seeing no second reverse wave she concludes that there are flows but the ebbs are much less evident. Therefore she suggests that instead of waves, democracy should be understood in terms of "trendless fluctuations, in which there are waves of both authoritarianism and democracy" (Doorenspleet and Kopecky, 2008, pg. 702).

However, due to the dominance of Huntington's work in the field, to classify the Arab Spring in the wave scheme, the study will firstly try using his concept. Therefore, it is necessary to look if there could be found any reversals of the third wave or if the Arab transformations fit the third wave criteria.

Between 1991 and 1995 there was a relative decline in democracy as the percentage of the nondemocratic regimes increased from 22.9% to 27.7% (Diamond, 1996). Popescu (2012) argues that this is due new states establishments and the number of abandonments is too small to create an opposite wave. However, Gerrits (2010) highlights that emergence of hybrid and semi-authoritarian regimes should also be understood as democratic reversals. Observing mid-1990s authoritarian turn in Russia and events before the 'coloured revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan he states that "different from earlier transitions from democracy, non-democratic behaviour by democratically elected politicians is the dominant pattern of democratic regression" (Gerrits, 2010, pg. 34). Therefore, it can be concluded that there indeed was a reverse wave in 1990s. The difference is that façade democracies now make the distinction often less clear than it was at the earlier reversals (ibid).

Sarihan (2012) attempts to determine if Arab Spring meets Huntington's (1991) third wave criteria using his five phases of transformation process which resulted in a deadlock. However, the removal of Egyptian president Morsi is problematic in terms of phase of acquisition of power and, altogether with the above mentioned reversal, shifts the Arab democratisations on the side of the fourth wave.

Also, fourth wave's fragmentation away from CEE to focus on post-Soviet countries' transformations, known as 'coloured revolutions', has been debated. Majority of them did not fully transition to democracy in the third wave but instead became 'hybrid regimes' with 'patronal presidentialism' inclining to autocracy (Hale, 2011). Despite the reversal of the third wave prior to these events, these transitions themselves cannot, according to Huntington's (1991) concept, be considered constituting a new wave due to their small number (Akhaine, 2010). The Arab Spring is considered to differ again as some (Engin, 2011) liken it to transitions before 1989. Therefore, it would be worth considering if 'coloured revolutions' and Arab Spring could constitute one wave, maybe as diverse as Huntington's (1991) third. However, because the Arab revolutions are so close in time, they can only be located in a wave after some time, when it is clear where the regime changes in the region actually lead.

## **Democracy Promotion and Democracy Assistance**

## Democracy Promotion

Democracy assistance, which is the centre of the focus of this study, never exists in a vacuum but, as a part of development aid packages, follows from country's broader democracy promotion strategies. Numerous studies have attempted to provide a precise definition of democracy promotion but the term remains contested, reflecting the plurality of political and academic opinions (Malone, 2011). Burnell (2011, pg. 4) comprehensively describes democracy promotion as referring to

"...a range of different strategies, forms and modalities directed at supporting movement towards (liberal) democracy: indirect approaches address democracy's requisites, which can include economic and social requisites; more direct approaches, including democracy assistance, concentrate on political objects. Strategies range from soft to hard power and can include attaching democratic conditionalities to diplomatic and official trade and aid arrangements".

According to Burnell (2013), democracy promotion is a Western concept, which rise is deeply interconnected with the Cold War and fight against Communism, when Western powers started promoting dual transitions (Huntington, 1991). Generally, donors' underlying motivations vary and are mostly impacted by their geopolitical interests or liabilities accruing from their memberships in international organisations. They can promote democracy for its own sake but the biggest democracy promoters' (EU, US) selectivity rather demonstrates a more practical approach (Hobson, 2009).

Burnell and Randall (2008) list three main approaches to democracy promotion: use of force, conditionalities and democracy assistance. The first approach has been largely discredited as a tool of spreading democratic values. The US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq eroded support for democracy promotion and its credibility. Also, the recent leaning of the two countries to radicalism and authoritarian practices proved this method inefficient (Burnell, 2013). Moreover, there exists no international legal right to promote democracy abroad (Burnell, 2011). Applying democratic conditionalities to receipt of development aid or trade concessions can improve democratic practices but faces problems when a determined authoritarian regime is in place. Burnell (2011) recommends reducing inconsistency in its use and linking it to more positive measures of engagement, such as the EU accession.

## Democracy assistance

Recently, donors have chosen to aid democracy in a gradual way, supporting a slow regime change through democracy assistance. Due to its prevalence, this study largely dwells on this method of promotion. Democracy assistance is “a particular way of promoting democracy through the provision of funding or technical assistance to governments, institutions or other actors in civil society working toward the establishment or strengthening of democracy in a certain country” (Malone, 2011; citing Azpuru et al., 2008). Burnell (2011) groups democracy assistance projects into the following sectors: electoral support; constitutional reform; support for legislative strengthening; rule of law assistance; judicial autonomy; support for capacity-building in civil society and support for political party development. Women’s political empowerment cuts across the sectors (Burnell, 2011).

Democracy assistance is combined with diplomatic strategies, depending on what is appropriate in the light of recipient’s political situation. Assistance is usually sufficient where a momentum for a change already exists and is supported by elites. However, when power-holders are determined to reverse the democratic development, other measures might be considered. Still, the democracy assistance programs prove the best at influencing the political culture so that it embraces democratic values (Burnell, 2011; Carothers, 2009). It is the democracy assistance that usually runs behind events as the projects are reactive and more flexible in comparison to in advance detail-planned broader democracy promotion (Burnell, 2011).

However, Carothers (2009) questions the usefulness of technical advice, financial support and trainings as they might be perceived as patronising. Therefore, to make a positive impact, projects and programmes need to be sensitive and put emphasis on establishment of local ownership, as highlighted in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD, 2013). Overall, a better coordination between different donors’ projects is necessary (ibid). Anyway, the causal connections between democracy on one side and expenditures of money, time, advice and technical expertise on the other are still unknown. It is difficult to draw conclusions as there are not enough credible evaluations of democracy assistance as a whole (Burnell, 2011). The evaluation studies available mostly focus on the US democracy assistance. The most ambitious assessment by Finkel et al. (Malone, 2011; citing Finkel et al., 2009) over 1990-2003 conclude that the assistance does have a positive effect on democratisation but less so in the field of human rights. Seligson et al. (Malone,

2011; citing Seligson et al., 2009) finds that states which received more democracy assistance from the US were likely to be more democratic. Even though these findings are encouraging, more research is needed.

Besides multilateral assistance, which is usually provided through international global organisations such as the United Nations (UN) or EU, public democracy assistance can be channelled through governmental, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations. Different side actors also vary in their comparative advantage. NGOs cannot threaten economic sanctions or, unlike intergovernmental organisations, they cannot offer politically conditioned aid. But despite their limited financial resources, they can offer much practical experience, valuable technical expertise, or extra political options. This study focuses on the assistance provided by the NGOs due to their relative independence and variousness, which can best demonstrate a variety of approaches to supporting democracy (Burnell, 2011). According to Burnell (2011), the democracy assistance of Western donors, such as the EU and the US, is usually channelled through projects in form of trainings, public discussions, conferences, study visits in donors' domestic institutions or publishing of relevant research or manuals.

### **Liberal Democracy in Democracy Promotion**

The broad acceptance of liberal democracy during the third wave transformations has been taken as a sign of its global appeal and worldwide ideational dominance. Its strength has been underpinned by a geo-political environment favourable to established Western democracies and the role of the US as a superpower as well as a vanguard of the global democratic movement (Hobson, 2009).

Hence, today, there is an apparent emphasis on this particular liberal model of democracy promotion, styled after the prevalent type of democracy in the West, empower mainly by American understanding (Hobson, 2009). This has been attracting increasing criticism as it is perceived by many as imperialistic and culturally biased. Indeed, there are legitimate questions about whether one understanding is suitable to all societies, especially relevant at the time of the Arab Spring, as these cultures significantly differ from the West (Zakaria, 1997).

Various forms of democracy resolve differently tensions between the principles of liberty and equality. If equality is prioritised, the Anglo-American model shows deficiencies. If liberty is considered supreme, liberalism is more useful (Hobson, 2009). The social upheavals of Arab Spring demonstrated the demand for the protection of individual rights and freedoms, equality before the law and the need for the economic reform, all of which are upheld by the liberal model (Burnell, 2013). Therefore, illiberal models (e.g. Iran) would not be a solution. By its market-based development strategies liberalism not only provides poorer countries with the necessary infrastructure, but by addressing internal social injustice and political oppression eliminates conflicts, which provides a tool against terrorism (Diamond, 2010).

Without naivety, it must be admitted, that the liberal model indeed serves to promote Western values and interests. This, however, is nothing surprising in the world of politics. Hobson (2009) is right that there are many, maybe sometimes more suitable, models which could be promoted instead, such as Scandinavian social welfare version, participatory or deliberative models. Still, it seems that the variation between Western democracies, for instance the US and Scandinavia, is significantly reduced when promoting democracy elsewhere (ibid). However, this uniformity is practical in terms of consistency and effectiveness of the democracy assistance strategies. Usually, many donors operate within a single country. This multiplicity is important as it, to some extent, eliminates recipients' suspicions that they may be occupied. Without the uniformity about what is being promoted, the promotion would become confusing for the recipients and therefore, ineffective. However, this uniformity is currently starting being challenged by the rising powers of Russia and China, which do not favour liberal democracy (Burnell, 2011). The uniformity was also criticised as attempting to homogenise the world. The justness of this is debatable but it can be understood in respect to the global security. Not only are politically similar states more likely to understand each other, but the liberal democratic values also create common norms about how to resolve conflicts and spread peace, stability and security (Carothers, 2009; Reynolds, 2011).

There are many eloquent critiques that add value to the debate on democracy promotion but generally many of them tend to make assumptions which are rebuttable when looking closely at what democracy promoters do on the ground

(Youngs, 2011). The liberal model has been criticised for alleged reduction of democracy to holding of competitive, free and fair elections (for instance, the US engagement in Afghanistan). In fact, no democracy promoter claims that democracy equals elections (ibid). Rather, the problem is how much effort is invested into holding elections in comparison to other elements of a quality democracy. The extent of concentration on elections varies by countries but the evidence shows that the West, including the US, currently prioritises civil society projects, which reflects in the funding (Malone et al., 2011).

It has already been shown that liberal democracy is not culturally imperialistic as it contains values relatively common for most world's cultures and religions. It is therefore unjust to accuse democracy promoters of not allowing any room for religiously-based representations. They do not equate democracy with pure secularism of which an illustration may be a fulsome support for Lebanon's confessional-based democracy (Youngs, 2011). It is true that the West does not do well engaging with Islamists but these shortcomings are not the result of liberal democracy's incapacity to include religiosity (Burnell, 2013). Rather, what is perceived as imperialistic and self-interested is not a promotion of a particular model of democratic reform, but double-standards of donors, who sometimes support and sometimes differ democracy or delink their business agendas (ibid).

### **Influences on Donor's Democracy Assistance Approaches**

Single countries' approaches to democracy assistance can diverge and converge. The way, in which donor NGOs carry out their activities are shaped, besides official democracy promotion policies, by their domestic values, institutions, and experience (Petrova, 2012a). Petrova (2012a, pg. 7) states that "...there are distinct national approaches to supporting democracy abroad that are based on the domestic models of democracy of each donor". Youngs (2001) demonstrates this point by showing how the US' approach and its aims have been changing with the development of the US democracy, while also EU's approaches reflect countries' core democratic values. Hence, donors' approaches depend on their understanding of the successes and failures of democratisation or democracy at home, as well as their former accomplishments as donors (Petrova, 2012a). Further, states' behaviours towards other countries are also influenced by their identity construction, which Jonavicius

(2008, pg. 2) explains as “how you are perceived by others is of a crucial importance for the general understanding of who you are”.

Majority donors' approaches focus on the institutions considered their domestic constituent elements of democracy. These are then set as desired endpoints and the assistors “...assess recipient countries in terms of how their major socio-political institutions compare to these endpoints. Aid programmes are designed to address the gaps between the idealised endpoints and the actual state of the correspondent institutions and processes in the recipient countries” (Petrova, 2012a; citing Carothers, 1997). Wedel (2005) points out that the Western donors, led by the US, export their own models of ‘democracy’ when the centre of the attention is institutions. However, such understanding of democracy assistance often leads to highly criticised institution-centric and one-size-fits-all approaches. The first one often neglects other important elements of building democracy, such as focus on civil society. Further, while stressing the endpoints, it fails to concentrate and advance the process of achieving the aims (ibid). One-size-fits-all strategies, on the other hand, approach similar countries uniformly, ignoring their specificities. This culture-blindness has often led to ineffective programmes as well as to decreased credibility of the donor in the eyes of the recipient (e.g. post-communist countries) (Wedel, 2005).

Different actors' approaches can also converge based on their mutual learning, either in terms of donors' cooperation or when a recipient becomes a donor. Over time, these ‘best practices’ convergences created an international normative consensus on the centrality of practices and values, such as civil society, elections or human rights, to a universal understanding of democracy and therefore, an international democracy assistance approaches (Petrova, 2012b). Other significant factors are such as donors' identities and international perception, which often impact how the assistance is accepted or welcome by the recipients (Carothers, 2009).

Last but crucial point is that democracy assistance approaches should always be formed according to recipients' needs and the development of recipient country's situation (Wedel, 2005). This means that even very distinctive donors' approaches, if they work within the same country, should significantly converge based on the centre of their focus (Petrova, 2012b). In sum, according to Petrova (2012a, pg. 9), different

donor's democracy assistance approaches should be explored in terms of factors influencing them most: "...the values and experiences of individual donors, and recipient's democratisation needs".

## Major Democracy Assistors

The most influential actors in the democracy assistance field are the US and the EU (Carothers, 2009). While they both promote westernised liberal democracy they differ in their approaches. Carothers (2009) identifies two distinct approaches to democracy support: the political and the developmental.

The political approach, preferred by the US, entails a more narrow conception of democracy focusing on promotion of elections and political liberties. The aid is directed at political processes and institutions (elections, politically oriented civil societies, political parties). The developmental approach, emphasised by the EU, differs as it focuses on a wider scope. It understands democracy as a process of economic and social modernisation. The concept includes concerns about justice and equality. It is a part of a broader development plan and uses indirect democracy promotion tools, for instance support of the local-level projects. Therefore, it can be concluded that the political approach aims to bring about specific endpoints, while the developmental approach focuses more on democratic potential. This means that the political approach is more useful in shaping the process of transition, while the developmental is more effective in assisting consolidation (Carothers, 2009). The political approach has been criticised for "...too easily turning confrontational vis-à-vis 'host' governments and producing unhelpful counter-reactions" (Carothers, 2009, pg. 5). On the other hand, the developmental approach has been faulted for being "too vague and unassertive in a world where many leaders have learned to play a reform game with the international community, absorbing significant amounts of external political aid while avoiding genuine democratization" (Carothers, 2009, pg. 5).

Today, there seems to be a global backlash against democracy promotion, especially in the US. The American association with military invasions, violations of human rights within and outside the US (Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay) prioritisation of their own interest and theories about the US involvement in the 'coloured revolutions' all contributed to its de-legitimisation as a democracy promoter (Hobson, 2009). Further,

the EU conditionality is reaching its limits and therefore there is a need for new democracy promotion strategies. The EU credibility can also be questioned due to its treatment of Turkey differently to other countries (Turkey is the only candidate country without a specific accession date) (McGlinchy, 2011). However, the EU accession of 2004, 2007 and 2013 has created a new generation of democracy assistors, consisting of smaller post-communist countries. These states' historical experience with democracy and democratisation is very recent and different from the Western 'old' democracies, which could serve as their added value on the democracy promotion scene. Still, despite the vast literature on democracy assistance of the US or the EU, there is just a few studies focusing on these small donors (Jonavicius, 2008; Petrova, 2012a, 2012b). Moreover, these studies only focus on official democracy promotion strategies, rather than democracy assistance carried out by NGOs. Studies, which would offer framework or any information on democracy assistance of post-communist donors generally, or Slovakia specifically, were not found and therefore, it may be concluded that this field is deeply under-researched.

Finally, the Arab Spring uprisings could be seen not only as a challenge for the international democracy promotion but also as an opportunity to regain credibility. The democratic progress in the region could have significant implications for relations with the West and especially for EU's security interests. However, the most challenging issue for the Western promoters remains whether or how to engage with political Islamists (Burnell, 2013). "In the past the West has been wary about supporting democracy in countries where Islamists might come to power through the ballot box, just as during the Cold War the West seemed willing to prop up the developing world military and other dictatorships if communist insurgency seemed the most likely alternative" (Burnell, 2011, 6). Thus, the search for lessons about democracy assistance which are transferable from one country to another needs to proceed carefully, especially as the situation in the MENA region is unique in some important respects. However, this will be complicated as the difficulties of evaluation harden the ability to learn from the previous donor experience (ibid).

## Conclusion

As the understanding of democracy directly impacts its quality in a country, it is important that transforming countries and democracy assistants emphasise both, procedural and normative features of democracy, and therefore adopt Dahl's (liberal) understanding. The literature shows that democratisation is a very complex and lengthy process, which means that Tunisia still has a long journey to go to make democracy 'the only game in town'.

Very important for the transformational process are economic, social, cultural and external conditions. Despite the fact that these conditions alone do not guarantee democratic development, they have a strong impact on democratisation as they can either advance it, or hinder it. The late twentieth century democratisations demonstrated the significance of external factors in particular and showed how democracy promoters, by acting upon these conditions, can positively or negatively impact the evolution of country's political systems. Slovakia's transformation was most engendered by the external factors, of which most significant were the changes in Soviet policies and the incentives offered by the EU. On the contrary, Tunisia was most influenced by internal factors, such as economic grievances and mass citizen protests. These factors have also often been used to explain why the Arab states had been so resistant to democratisation despite the global trend. Even though the cultural argument concerning Islam's incapacity to support democracy has been broadly used, it is insupportable as Koran does not state what characterises Islamic government. More useful in explaining the phenomenon seems to be 'the rentier state theory'. The external factor played a role in the MENA region even prior the Arab revolutions, but due to US' stance on Arab-Israeli conflict, double-standards, power interests or colonial history, the West lacks credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of domestic population.

Certainly, much of what Slovakia can offer Tunisia depends on parallels and differences between factors and circumstances influencing the two transformations. To make the distinction clearer, the literature review has classified the case studies into the wave theory, following Huntington's concept. This project rejects the arguments that post-communist transformations constitute the fourth wave due to their distinctiveness from previous transitions, on basis that Huntington's concept

does not foreclose divergent strains, but rather considers the third wave a diverse lot. Even though Arab Spring could constitute the fourth wave, being so close in time, it cannot be classified in a way with certainty. Still, this theory highlights that Slovakia's and Tunisia's transformations happened within very different global contexts and were influenced by different factors, which will be talked about later in the study.

Democracy assistance never exists in a vacuum but follows from broader democracy promotion policies. In their democratisation projects, NGOs offer practical experience and technical expertise by focusing mostly on electoral support, civil society, and political society development. In their democracy assistance strategies, donors concentrate on supporting the liberal model of democracy, styled after the prevalent model in the West. This has attracted much criticism as it can often be perceived as imperialistic and culturally biased. Even though it must be admitted that the liberal model indeed promotes Western values, the critiques accusing it of reduction of democracy to holding elections or culture-blindness are unsupportable when looking at how democracy assistance is carried out on the ground. Moreover, the uniformity of donors' approaches is important with respect to its effectiveness.

It has been argued that donors' democracy assistance approaches are shaped mainly by their domestic values, institutions and experience. However, these approaches should, first and foremost, reflect the needs of recipients and avoid often ineffective one-size-fits-all or institution centric approaches. If it is true that donors customise their approaches depending on their own experience and understanding, it may be assumed that countries with different experience with political systems and democracy will have different perceptions of what is the most effective way to democratise the recipient; and therefore their democracy assistance approaches will also differ. At the same time, there will be parallels, not only due to similarities of the donors, but mostly because of the need to always put recipients' needs first.

A large body of literature has explored the major democracy promoters, such as the US and the EU. However, smaller assistors' emerged in and after the EU 2004 accession remain deeply under-researched and the few existing studies focus on their official democracy promotion, rather than democracy assistance carried out on nongovernmental level. Therefore, identifying this gap in the literature, this research

not only contributes to the general theoretical studies on democratisation, but is one of the few to examine the little studied post-communist donors.

# Slovakia's Democratisation Experience

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As mentioned in the literature review, the crucial areas of focus of global NGOs' democracy assistance activities are electoral support and capacity-building in civil society (Burnell, 2011). Therefore, to explore how Slovak NGOs can contribute to democratisation in Tunisia by sharing the Slovak experience, this chapter highlights these themes within Slovak democratisation. Doing this later enables the study to examine if these 'lessons learnt' reflect in NGO' democracy assistance strategies and so offer a distinctive approach to electoral and capacity-building support. Except this domestic experience, Petrova (2012a) highlights that donors' approaches are strongly influenced by learning from each other. Therefore, the chapter briefly outlines Slovak experience as a recipient and what it may have learnt from it. However, most focus must be on recipients' needs and therefore, NGOs' capability to transfer these 'lessons learnt' depends much on parallels and difference between the Slovak and Tunisian transformations. Due to the scope of this study it is not possible to provide a comprehensive insight into the problem, but the chapter will outline the differences, which democracy assistors should bear in mind in their attempts to apply Slovak experience in Tunisia. These differences will be later discussed by the participants.

## **Slovakia's Democratisation**

After decades of control by the Soviet Union, the situational break came for Czechoslovakia in the late 1980s, when Gorbachev revoked the Brezhnev doctrine and delegitimised Czechoslovak Communist Party's leadership. Encouraged by the positive results of protests in Poland or Hungary, on 16th and 17th November 1989 students in Bratislava and Prague called for democracy and formed opposition movements (Bartlova and Letz, 2005). The communist party did not dare use force but agreed to negotiations in which it lost its leading role. Due to its nonviolent nature, the revolution is known as the 'Velvet Revolution' (ibid). However, an overwhelming majority of Slovaks accepted the regime change passively. It can be concluded that the system did not collapse as a result of mass popular opposition in

Slovakia. Rather, it broke down due to the diffusion effect provoked by liberalisation of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall and a mass demonstration in Prague (Butora and Butorova, 1991).

The democratic parties won the founding election of 1990 and started transforming the political system, as well as the economy. However, Slovakia was dissatisfied with 'the power structure of the Czech-dominated unitary state' (CSCE, 1993, pg. 3). Using increasingly strident anti-federation or anti-Czech rhetoric, the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) led by Meciar and recruited from ex-communists, exploited the situation promising that independence would help achieve greater economic prosperity. The HZDS won 1992 election and Prime Ministers Meciar and Klaus reached an agreement on dissolution of the federation and establishment of an independent Slovak Republic on 1. January 1993 (Szomolanyi, 2004).

The post-1994 development led to Slovakia's deviation from the transformational path followed by its newly democratised neighbours. The ruling coalition had a negative impact on the quality of democracy as it was marked by authoritarianism, nationalism and populism (Butora and Butorova, 1999). Being recruited mostly from communists, the HZDS represented 'an important strengthening of personnel continuity with the old regime' (Szomolanyi, 2004). This indicates the absence of the revolutionary exchange of the elites as well as the absence of counter-elites ready to take over. Therefore, compared to Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, Slovakia's development was delayed by many years (ibid). This development led to rejections of Slovak applications for membership in the EU and NATO in 1997 and Slovakia got into an international isolation (Bartlova and Letz, 2005). Slovakia's difficult transition trajectory may be explained by its more complicated, quadruple (democratisation, marketisation, stateness, nationhood) transformation (Kuzio, 2001).

However, the Slovak experience of coping with authoritarianism and overcoming the unfavourable circumstances could serve as a useful lesson on the significance of the role of the civil society in the transformational process. The associations were harassed by Meciar's administration, however, the persecution was counter-productive, as in fact, the population took their minds off economic problems and started paying more attention to issues of democratic governance (Bartlova and Letz, 2005). In defence, the NGOs mobilised and together with media and the opposition,

launched innovative electoral strategies, such as campaigns OK '98 and Rock the vote '98 (including public discussions, concerts, etc.), which aim was to mobilise citizens to participate in elections by increasing their awareness and secure citizen control over the election. These activities significantly contributed to a high election participation of 84.4 %, which led to Meciar's defeat and creation of a democratic and pro-reform government (Arbe et al., 2012). Even after 1998, when a state, rather than an enemy, became civil society's partner, the NGOs continued in their role of watch dogs and critics, while also engaging in a dialogue with the government concerning the preparation of reforms (Butora and Butorova, 1999).

Since the period of Meciar's rule led to a political regression, it may be assumed that a consolidation in Slovakia started only after the 1998 (Szomolanyi, 2004). Like in other transforming CEE countries, the prospects of membership in the EU and NATO played a crucial role to the success, speed and comprehensiveness of reform-making and overall democratisation process in Slovakia (OSCE, 1993). The country became a member of the NATO in March and the EU in May 2004 (Bartlova and Letz, 2005), which is often considered marking Slovakia's consolidation accomplishment (Rupnik, 2007). Despite the fact that Slovakia is currently considered a consolidated democracy, recently, it has been showing some signs of backsliding due to broadened state interventionism, clientelism, hostility to the independent press and discontinued liberal-oriented economic reforms. This could be caused by the unfinished process of democratic political culture development with mind-sets of people still marked by communism or Meciarism, therefore more vulnerable to the authoritarian temptation (ibid). These setbacks may serve as a demonstration of the importance of democratic consolidation of a civic and political culture, 'without which the legitimacy and stability of democratic institutions will always remain doubtful' (Rupnik, 2007, pg. 19). The Slovak case also illustrates that issues largely neglected during transformation, can later return with a vengeance, as did corruption and clientelism in Slovakia (Butora, 2007). Therefore, the most current question concerning Slovak democracy is not if the country remains democratic, but rather what kind of democracy it will be.

## **Foreign Democracy Assistors in Slovak democratisation**

Democracy assistance provided to Slovakia mainly by the US and the EU primarily focused on economic transformation, a conversion of the political and legal systems to multiparty democracy as well as development of conditions for future NATO and EU memberships. Due to a specific nature of Slovak democratisation, donors concentrated on free and fair elections and guaranteeing human rights much longer, than in the Czech Republic (Wedel, 2005).

Democracy assistance activities played a significant role for the 1998 election, when it concentrated on development of the civil society. Donors increased NGOs cooperation, which then mobilised to spread awareness about the importance of the election and citizen participation (Butora and Butorova, 1999). According to Butora and Butorova (1999, pg. 8), the high citizen turnout and the victory of the opposition is "...a remarkable argument for long term assistance aimed at fostering the growth of civil society, the rule of law, and democratic cultures".

After the EU and NATO accession in 2004, funding sources substantially reduced as donors shifted their attention East or Southeast. Overall, the civil society appreciated the pre-2004 assistance more than the later EU funded projects, as the aid in the first phases was more responsive to local needs and priorities were majorly established on the basis of mutual dialogue. Also, the assistance was more result-oriented and reporting procedures were much less bureaucratic, whilst today funded projects have very specific focus and limited duration, which often makes NGOs jump from project to project (Najslova, 2013).

## The USA

The first and most immediate foreign assistance came from the US, which had already been active in the country before 1989 supporting the Czechoslovak dissent. The then activities targeted mostly political opposition parties and unions (Najslova, 2012). The 1989 Support for East European Democracy Act identified economic transformation and democracy as main priorities of the US assistance (Wedel, 1995). Civil society development constituted only a portion of the assistance and it concentrated on democracy-building, social, environment and enterprise development (Najslova, 2013).

One of the most successful US activities were workshops, concerts and public debates aiming on raising awareness of young people of the importance of election participation. Campaigns such as 'Rock the vote – Year of the election' contributed to a high turnout, especially of the first voters, in the election of 1998, leading to Meciar's loss (Najslova, 2013).

However, working with US organisations, Slovak NGOs also experienced some difficulties. Wedel (2005) refers to these problems as typical for the US assistance's one-size-fits-all approach. The US-based organisations sent their experts, who often did not know the local context, did not do a country specific need assessment, treated the locals with disrespect or required the domestic NGOs to subscribe to their pre-set of priorities (ibid). Despite these nuances, however, the overall US democracy assistance had an overwhelmingly positive impact on a democratic development in Slovakia (Najslova, 2013).

## **The EU and member states**

In the period of 1993-2003, the key source of funding was the EU's pre-accession programme PHARE. Its goal was to prepare Slovakia for later membership in the union through focusing on assistance with restructuring the economy (Najslova, 2013). Besides the EU budget, the resources were also channelled through various bilateral democracy assistance programmes and embassy grants. The priority areas included civil society capacity-building, technical assistance, election campaigns and minority rights (Wedel, 2005). "Training and technical assistance were provided in priority areas agreed between the EU and national governments, a very different approach from US donors, as the EU's programme was intended directly to induce structural reforms and harmonisation with EU legislation" (Najslova, 2013, pg. 11).

From bilateral donors, most active were Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK). Netherland's assistance concentrated on supporting civil society and local governments. The UK's assistance focused primarily on transition to market-economy. Germany, besides sharing their sectoral know-how, they put more emphasis on working with individuals, instead of institutions. Also, hiring local staff avoiding and one-size-fits-all approach, unlike the US, they were subjected to criticism only rarely (Najslova, 2013).

## Differences and Parallels between Slovak and Tunisia's transitions

Even though democratisation brings about similar challenges for all transforming countries, as shown in the literature review, Slovakia and Tunisia have had to deal with the challenges in very different historical contexts, both international and domestic.

Firstly, the bipolarity of the post-Cold War world and the fall of communism as an ideational alternative to liberal democracy predetermined Slovakia's routing toward democracy and the West, supported by two main players, the EU and USA, who offered incentives for democratic development (Szomolanyi, 2004). However, today the world is more multipolar and Tunisia can choose from many models as it is being influenced by non-democratic regional actors, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as superpowers like China, which promote development without tying it to liberal-democratic reforms (Biscop et al., 2012).

Existence of previous experience with democratisation could also play a major role. Slovakia's (Czechoslovakia's) interwar democratic experience with economic and personal freedom reflected in people's general belief in democratic values and political participation and strengthened society's determination to achieve consolidation (Bartlova and Letz, 2005). Tunisia, lacking this experience, is also fragmented by the diversification of opinions and requirements. The situation is further complicated by major differences between towns and the countryside, the relative absence of a strong middle-class, and emergence of a large number of radical religiously-motivated political movements (Biscop et al., 2012).

As mentioned in the literature review, one of democracy's preconditions is compliance between the nation and the state territory. Due to the legacy of colonialism, Tunisia lacks this compliance and citizens' identities are often created on supranational (pan Arab) or local levels, creating tensions, which often lead to conflicts. Even though, after the split with the Czech Republic Slovakia had to build nationhood (Kuzio, 2001), the peaceful course of the split did not equip it with expertise to solve intense conflicts.

Also, in comparison to Arab Spring, Czechoslovak revolution was better organised, non-violent, with well-known leaders organised in opposition movements and requiring religious freedom. It is mainly the different culture and different perceptions of the role of the religion in a state, which could most impact Slovak ability to use its experience in order to contribute to and advance Tunisian democratisation process. Still, besides so many differences, there exist similarities too (Halliday, 2005). In both cases the impulse came from young people as a reaction to their economic grievances and in legacy to those, who had died fighting the authoritarian regime. The protestors were driven by hatred toward the existing political system, absence of freedom of press and speech, and centralisation of power (Miller et al., 2012)

To conclude, it may be assumed that Slovak difficult democratisation process and its deviation from the transformational path followed by its newly democratised neighbours provide its NGOs with expertise, which other donors, and especially the old democracies, do not have. The NGOs can use very concrete lessons from Slovak democratisations to highlight the importance of revolutionary exchange of the elites or point to how problematic issues (nationalism in the Slovak case) can be used by authoritarians to gain power. Also, the Slovak NGOs' experience of coping with authoritarianism and overcoming the unfavourable circumstances may serve as a useful lesson on the significance of the role of the civil society as a watchdog against authoritarian tendencies. Further, the assistors may apply strategies for citizen mobilisation used in successful campaigns such as Rock the vote '98 and OK '98. Overall, the difficulties of Slovak democratisation and the current democratic backsliding could serve as an illustration of the lengthy and complexity of the transformational process.

Still, as foreign donors, especially the USA and EU, played a major role in strengthening the Slovak civil society, Slovak NGOs may adopt the tools, which proved effective in Slovak democratisation. Also, they may avoid mistakes of Western donors during Slovak democratisation, such as one-size-fits-all approaches and insufficient dialogue between the donors and the local recipient.

Finally, Slovak democracy assistors should be aware of the differences between the two transformations, which may impact their ability to apply domestic 'lessons learnt' to Tunisia. Also, they could be expected to focus on changing the political culture, as

this is marked by the absence of democratic experience in the country. Despite the similarities between the two transformations, such as that both were inspired by economic grievances and triggered by young people calling for democratic values, the main problem for the Slovaks might be their lack of experience with the specific kind of national tensions characteristic for MENA region, as well as cultural and religious differences between the Arab and Central-European country.

# Findings and Analysis

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This chapter focuses on findings and analysis of the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with six representatives of Slovak nongovernmental, governmental and research organisations. As mentioned in the literature review, according to Petrova (2012a) donors' democracy support strategies are mostly influenced by a) the values and experience of individual donors, and b) the recipients' democratisation needs. Therefore, the interview data are analysed in this chapter in two separate sections reflecting these two factors, while being analysed in a thematical manner.

Firstly, the chapter examines the Slovak democracy assistance in terms of the values it promotes through the adoption of democracy promotion model and approach. Consequently, it investigates whether the Slovak experience influences its democracy assistance strategies and how it reflects in NGOs' cooperation with the recipients. Highlighting the parallels and differences between the Slovak and Western organisations, finally, it sheds light on limitations of the Slovak organisations in Tunisia.

## Values

### The Model

As mentioned, in its transformational process, multiple distinctive donors offer Tunisia a number of different models of political systems to choose from. Therefore, to answer the research question, it is of utmost importance to determine what model Slovak NGOs use to advance Tunisia's development and how, if at all, it differs from the major Western donors.

However, as NGOs' projects are chosen and financed majorly by SlovakAid and therefore follow official democracy promotion policies of the country, it is best to seek

this information at the level of the Government. As assumed, the collected data show a strong Slovak commitment to liberal democracy. Interviewee 1 (2013) explains that 'Slovakia, as a member of the EU, promotes liberal democratic values, shared by all the member states'. Further, they state that 'the Ministry pays a great attention to avoid suspicions of rivalling the EU' and note that '...the progress achieved thanks to the Slovak democracy assistance activities in Tunisia has been highly appreciated even by the US'. These statements may be understood as demonstrating this post-communist country's efforts to anchor its 'Western' and 'European' identity. Also, as Slovak democracy assistance is bound by its EU membership commitments, it may be assumed that promoting any other model than liberal is not negotiable. This supports social-constructivist theory that state's behaviour towards other actors is driven by its identity construction based on the assumption that "how you are perceived by others is of a crucial importance for the general understanding of who you are" (Jonavicius, 2008, pg. 2). Moreover, stressing liberal values in their projects, such as 'political' (Interviewee 3, 2013) and 'civil rights' (Interviewee 2, 2013) and 'inclusive suffrage' (Interviewee 6, 2013), in their interviews NGOs representatives also confirm these findings. An instance of such project may be the series of trainings of Tunisian high school teachers of civics, whose role then was to interactively acquaint students with human rights and civil liberties, which are the central values of liberal democracy (Interviewee 2, 2013).

Therefore, it may be concluded that the Slovak NGOs contribute to democratisation in Tunisia by putting an emphasis on the liberal aspects of democracy, and so to align themselves with 'the message' promoted by the major Western donors.

## The Approach

The literature review shows that the major democracy assistors adhere to two main democracy support approaches: the political approach, used by the US, and the developmental approach, preferred by the EU. The first one focuses more on the political aspects of civil society and the support of a dialogue between civil society and policy-makers; the later concentrates more on conditions favourable to democracy such as economic factors or general education (Carothers, 2009). Establishing, which of these approaches Slovakia follows, allows us to determine if

Slovak NGOs contribute more to the political democratisation process, or to the more general development of favourable conditions in Tunisia.

The approach adopted by the NGOs is strongly influenced by the official policy, which reflects in the government's financial support of these projects (Interviewee 4, 2013). Therefore, in order to determine the Slovak approach, it is vital to look at specifications of projects supported in Tunisia in the last two years as shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

<b>NGO</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Funding from the ODA</b>
Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia (PDCS)	The Role of Civil Society in a Transition Period: Sharing the Slovak Experience with Tunisia	- to strengthen the civil society organisation (CSO) capacities by investing in their leaders and sharing the Slovak experience in CSO development, security sector reform, women's empowerment and protection of human rights	69 998. 20 €
Civic Eye	Increasing the Capacity of Domestic Election Observers in Tunisia	- to increase the capacities of the partner organisation in specific areas of election monitoring	69 920 €
eSlovakia	Ambassadors of Democracy – Democratic Participation and Civil Society Development	- to spread information about democracy among students and political civil society by means of comic books and a handbook	69 560 €

Table 1 - Grants awarded to Slovak NGOs within Current Development calls for Tunisia in 2011 (Interviewee 1, 2013)

<b>NGO</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Aid</b>	<b>Funding from the ODA</b>
PDCS	Rooting of the Tunisian change success story: public dialogue and civic awareness	- to strengthen the capacities of NGOs and their leaders; to root the positive changes related to the transformational process	99 937. 40 €
Pontis Foundation	Building Partnerships for Democracy in Tunisia	- to build professional NGO capacities and contribute to	94 963. 63 €

		strengthening relations between the civil society and the government	
SAC	Security Sector Reform in Tunisia: the Way Ahead	- to transfer Slovak security sector reform experience and prepare the police to operate in compliance with democratic principles	91 407 €

Table 2 - Grants awarded to Slovak NGOs within Current Development calls for Tunisia in 2012 (Interviewee 1, 2013)

Overall, in the past two years the Slovak government have supported six projects focusing majorly on elections, security sector reform and democratic civil-society building, as well as strengthening the dialogue between the civil society and the government. Therefore, it follows that it is more knowledge-based and political, rather than developmental or economic by nature.

## Experience

It has been established that Slovak NGOs, similarly to the Western organisations, promote liberal democracy while adopting political approach preferred by the US. In this respect, the Slovak democracy assistance does not differ from the Western support. Therefore, it may be assumed that due to the limited finances, for Slovak democracy assistance to matter it has to offer something unique, which could fill in a vacant thematical niche, and following Petrova's (2012a) assumption that donors' approaches depend on their understanding of the successes and failures of democratisation or democracy at home, the author sought to determine how, or if at all, the Slovak democratisation experience influences NGOs' strategies.

### Task Force Tunisia

First of all, it was important to clarify why Slovakia has decided to engage in Tunisia at a formal level and what it can offer despite the very different historical and cultural contexts of the two transformations.

All the interviewees share the view that, similarly as it did in many post-communist countries before, Slovakia can offer Tunisia the most by sharing its own transformational know-how. Interviewee 5 points out that in their own experience, the

success of developmental cooperation is conditional on the progress in democratisation and building functioning economy, and therefore they consider sharing Slovak 'direct and ongoing transformational experience' the most significant added value of its developmental and democracy assistance. Interviewee 1 (2013) stresses out that Slovakia's 2011 decision to co-chair Community of Democracies' Task Force on Tunisia together with Netherlands was based on recognition that Slovak practical experience from its own democratisation can help advance Tunisia's transition, which would at the same time benefit from Netherlands' long tradition of democracy promotion. Interviewee 1 (2013) also emphasises that Slovak decision to engage in Tunisia was 'natural considering its unique experience among the EU members' and was 'highly appreciated and supported by the US'. This statement may be considered another implication of Slovakia's desire to anchor its 'Western identity' and in this sense, Slovakia's engagement in Tunisia may be understood as Slovakia's effort to demonstrate its loyalty to liberal democratic values of the West, while using its specific experience with democratic transformation as a comparative advantage.

However, Interviewee 1 (2013) further states that 'the beginnings of the Slovak-Tunisian cooperation presented a challenge for Slovakia due to the absence of intensive political relations between the countries; also the communication was hardened by the absence of Slovak direct representation in Tunisia'. They point out that the biggest encouragement for Slovakia to engage in Tunisia despite these odds was Tunisian interest in its experience, as Tunisia identified a list of priority reform areas in which it could benefit from Slovakia's experience:

- a) Security sector reform
- b) Judicial reform
- c) Public administration reform
- d) Promotion of regional development
- e) Civil society building

Interviewee 1 (2013) further explains that although Slovakia has experience in each of the areas, it had to take into account its limited resources and so it identified areas in which its assistance would be most beneficial for the recipient. Therefore,

democracy assistance to Tunisia is provided mainly as a ‘technical and expert cooperation’ (Interviewee 5, 2013) and ‘experience transfer’ (Interviewee 4, 2013) ‘focusing primarily on civil society building, elections, civil engagement in security sector reform, and strengthening dialogue between the civil society and government’ (Interviewee 1, 2013) (see Table 1 and Table 2). This statement supports Burnell’s (2011) claim that democracy assistance activities primarily target electoral support and capacity-building in civil society. Furthermore, it supports assumptions made in the previous chapter that the Slovak democracy assistance would reflect upon the most crucial aspects of its own transformation, which were the 1998 election, civil society building, and civil society’s engagement in dialogue with the government and security sector reform.

### **Focus on Civil Society Building and NGO Development**

Further, the interviewees were asked to describe the Slovak comparative advantage in Tunisia more specifically, emphasising its added value in comparison to the Western donors, but also within the V4 group.

According to Interviewee 2 (2013), despite the different cultural, political and economic background, the process of democratisation brings very similar challenges and therefore ‘lessons learnt by Slovakia during its transformation positioned it well to offer Tunisia a valuable and practical insight into civil society building, civic association and NGO development, as well as issues related to security sector reform, such as cultivation of civil-military relations’. They further state that sharing this expertise, which ‘other donors, especially the ‘old democracies’, do not have’, is also important in terms of creating a global transitional memory, which can both inspire and warn newly transitioning countries. Interviewee 5 (2013) and Interviewee 6 (2013) emphasise that in their projects, Slovak NGOs focus not only on best practices, but also negative ‘lessons learnt’, which illustrate to recipients how different steps and decisions may work out, and what issues may require higher attention or should be avoided. Moreover, Interviewee 6 (2013) states that ‘...before Tunisian elections, we tried to illustrate to the recipients how important it is for a real democratic development to ensure a genuine exchange of governing elites. To do so, we pointed to Meciar’s post-revolutionary rule in Slovakia and to the fact that majority

of his party members were former communists'. Interviewee 2 (2013) adds that the experience with Meciarism also illustrates the dangers of empowering radicals, which is very current in Tunisia, even though the context is very different (e.g. in Tunisia, the disputes on the role of religion in a country, and the issue of nationhood and stateness in Slovakia). This experience with authoritarianism and the related oppression of the democratic civil society makes the Slovak experience unique even within the V4 group (Interviewee 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, 2013).

According to the interview data, the Tunisian population as well as the civil society actors have often been impatient (Interviewee 5, 2013) and expected democratisation to solve various problems in a short time (Interviewee 2, 2013). Interviewee 3 (2013) states that having had an elected but authoritarian post-revolutionary government, the Slovak NGOs understand that democratisation is a complex and lengthy process, which may be protracted beyond any formal transitional period. Interviewee 2 (2013) explains that together with the case of Slovakia's current democratic backsliding they use this point to illustrate their partners that it is not possible to solve all the problems they plan in a short time. However, it is important that donors communicate this issue to the partners very sensitively: "We cannot tell them that their plans will not work out, because we may discourage them from progressing. At our trainings, we try to use the Slovak example to demonstrate that democratisation and especially a genuine change of people's mindsets are lengthy processes, but, at the same time, the trainings have to give the participants effective and concrete guidance; otherwise they may not come back" (Interviewee 5, 2013).

Furthermore, Interviewee 3, 4 and 6 (2013) emphasise that Slovakia, based on its communist and authoritarian experience, can offer Tunisia a practical comparison of life in nondemocratic and democratic systems. They maintain that its uniqueness lies in that, unlike the 'old democracies' (Germany, Netherlands, the UK, the US) whose experience is too far-back-in-time to be relevant in the modern world, or unlike the one of other post-communist countries', which transitioned relatively fast (the Czech Republic, Poland), Slovakia's experience with authoritarianism and democracy is very current, which makes the comparisons more 'authentic' (Interviewee 5, 2013). Interviewee 6 (2013) explains that because of the Tunisian previous absence of

experience with democracy, the recipients often do not understand that differences in opinions are 'good and in fact very desirable, as they help question and reconsider stances and opinions'. The inability of reaching a political consensus together with protracted debates is often perceived as hindering the democratic development (ibid). Interviewee 6 (2013) demonstrates the usability of the Slovak experience in this case: 'In our project, we point to how the Communist Party and later Meciar's coalition always reached a consensus very quickly, but, in fact, for Slovakia it might have been more useful if there was someone who would slow down the decision making process and point out to the controversial issues in their policy-making'. Interviewee 4 (2013) stresses out that Dzurinda's post-1998 coalition, on the other hand, which consisted of nine ideologically different parties<sup>1</sup>, led Slovakia to the EU and NATO integration and hence to democratic consolidation. Interviewee 5 (2013) explains that this impatience is a result of Tunisian civil society representatives' lack of necessary understanding of democracy and its principles. Therefore, they highlight that it is not only the political system which requires change, but most importantly it is the change of people mindsets and the political culture. To illustrate their point, Interviewee 5 (2013) points out to the current democratic backsliding of Slovakia which, in their opinion, is a result of uncompleted change of political culture in the country, not only on the elites' side, but most importantly in 'the voters' psyche', who, when taken as a whole, as they still prefer 'stronger, more authoritarian-like rhetoric'.

Furthermore, Interviewee 2, 5 and 6 (2013) underline that the most valuable about the Slovak expertise is the civil-society building know-how, which the NGOs accumulated during the tumultuous Slovak transformation. The hardships which the Slovak NGOs had to undergo during Meciarism made the non-governmental sector stronger and more vibrant even in comparison with other post-communist countries, and positioned it well to operate in oppressive environments (Interviewee 2, 2013). A strength of the Slovak non-governmental sector compared to the other countries, especially 'the old democracies', is that it not only uses best practices from its own

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<sup>1</sup> In the election campaign of 1998 five left-right opposition parties (KDH, the DU, the SDSS, the DS and the SZS) formed a unified bloc, the SDK (the Slovak Democratic Coalition). Although the HZDS won the election, no party was willing to enter into a coalition with it and so it became isolated on the political spectrum. An alliance of four parties was formed (SDK, SDL, SMK, SOP), also called 'a great coalition' (Szomolanyi, 2004).

experience but it has also learnt from the practise, both positive and negative, of foreign donors operating in Slovakia during its transformation (Interviewee 2, 3, 5 and 6, 2013).

Interviewee 3 emphasises the importance of the 'lessons learnt' from the US strategies and support provided to Slovakia during the 1990s, and names the campaigns OK'98 and Rock the Vote as very positive instances of democracy assistance in the country. Most interviewees (Interviewee 2, 3, 5 and 6, 2013) mention the two campaigns and the use of the innovative strategies as an inspiration for their electoral support and citizen mobilisation in Tunisia. Interviewee 2 (2013) highlights the value and importance of this expertise for the recipients. They explain that after three decades of oppression, intimidation, and harassment under Ben Ali's regime, the Tunisian civil society was extremely underdeveloped and a new Decree Law on Associations passed by the interim government resulted in emergence of approximately four thousand new NGOs. Interviewee 2 (2013) states that "many of them emerged because they wanted to contribute to a real change, but some may still only be interested in pursuing international funding or advancing political parties' agendas".

Naturally, immediately after the revolution, the majority of NGOs focused on election monitoring and voter education. However, after the elections, these organisations lost their focused missions and were experiencing problems reorienting to other agendas (Interviewee 6, 2013). Interviewee 5 (2013) stresses out that "for a positive development of Tunisia's democratisation, a vibrant and effective civil society is essential". However, Interviewee 2 (2013) explains that the transformational process in this sense will not be easy: "Both, newly emerged and long established associations, have weak organisational capacities and are still operating mostly on a voluntary principle". The civil society organisations concentrated primarily on democratic transition and public mobilisation before elections; therefore they had little time to invest in development of their own structures, capacities, or long term planning. The leaders often lack basic NGO management and administration skills, as well as knowledge of project writing and project implementation (Interviewee 2, 2013). Their missions are often vague as they focus on a wide range of issues, and

they need to transition their roles from election monitoring to serving as watchdogs for the civil society rights and democratic principles (Interviewee 5, 2013).

Furthermore, the Tunisian civil society leaders need to learn how to actively engage in a dialogue with the government as well as to participate in decision making and law drafting (Interviewee 2, 2013). However, due to the animosity and distrust between the government and the society, many find it difficult to imagine the cooperation or don't know how to advocate for reforms and hold the representatives accountable (Interviewee 2 and 6, 2013). For interviewee 6 (2013), this situation is very similar to the years after the Czechoslovak Velvet revolution, when people were in celebratory mood, but at the same time, there was 'an atmosphere of fear and distrust' and the civil society leaders saw themselves as watchdogs rather than governments' partners. Here, they state, the Slovak NGOs can use their post-1998 experience with building a dialogue with the government. Also, "for the newly emerged NGOs to survive and, at the same time, maintain their identities, they have to merge in larger wholes, associate in bigger platforms, and develop networking" (Interviewee 2, 2013). The recipients could, in this case, use a creation of NGO platforms in Slovakia as a positive example (Interviewee 5, 2013).

## The Process

So far, it has been established that the Slovak NGOs base their democracy assistance strategies in Tunisia on their domestic experience and understanding of democracy, which indicates a distinctive national approach. This approach is undoubtedly influenced by the US and EU strategies applied in Slovakia during its own transformation. Therefore, this study further examines to what extent the Slovak NGOs' projects and tools of providing the assistance differ from those used by the US and the EU.

The interview analysis shows that the Slovak democracy assistance carried out by NGOs is primarily provided through projects taking a form of conferences (Interviewee 4, 2013), trainings (Interviewee 2, 5 and 6, 2013), publications of manuals (Interviewee 2, 3 and 5, 2013) and research summarising country's transformational experience (Interviewee 2, 2013), as well as organising study trips to Slovakia to illustrate how democratic institutions and civil society organisations

may work in practise (Interviewee 2, 4, 5 and 6, 2013). All of these tools are included in Burnell's (2011) list of most commonly used practices of the US and the EU, as shown in the literature review. Therefore, the way in which the projects of the Slovak NGOs are realised is akin to this of the Western donors. This finding further confirms Petrova's (2012a) claim that different actors approaches can converge based on their learning from each other.

Further, all the interviewed stressed out that their projects are developed in a way through that they can share the Slovak transformational know-how and use it as an added value of their assistance. This finding confirms Petrova's (2012a) statement, mentioned in the literature review, that each donor's democracy assistance is based on domestic institutions and understanding of democracy, and therefore taking a distinctive national approach. In this case, it may be said that relying on their specific domestic experience, the Slovak NGOs do not differ from the Western organisations which also adhere to distinct national approaches.

However, the Slovak NGOs differ from the US and the EU ones by not adopting institution-centric approaches. Interviewee 5 (2013) explains that the Slovak NGOs do not like focusing mainly on institutions, as in their experience accumulated domestically in the 1990s, the civil society building, and the changing of political culture proved much more useful in achieving democratic development. Interviewee 6 (2013) also maintain that institution centric approaches tend to focus on setting "desired endpoints, but struggle designing the set of steps how to get there". According to the interviewee 5 (2013), Slovakia differs from the EU and the US by 'exporting a model of democratisation, rather than a model of democracy'. Other interviewees strengthen this point by describing their assistance as 'inviting the partners to follow the Slovak successful journey' (Interviewee 4, 2013), or 'a long but successful story' (Interviewee 3, 2013) while concentrating on 'procedural aspects of democratisation' (Interviewee 2, 2013). Interviewee 2 and 6 (2013) explain that when designing their projects they start from recipients' needs and with a goal in mind, together they set up a set of steps for achieving the desired results while using the Slovak experience as a motivation or an illustration. Throughout the process, these steps are constantly redefined according to the development of the situation. The projects reflect upon the fact that democratisation is a process, which, may not be

completed even after more than two decades, illustrating that by the fact that the issue is still disputable in Slovakia. What they are trying to pass on to the recipients, 'instead of institutional blueprints' (Interviewee 6, 2013), are rather instances of what works and what does not in attempt to defeat authoritarians and achieve consolidation; they offer "assistance with the process rather than endpoints" (Interviewee 5, 2013).

## Capacities

However, one of the key problems of Slovak democracy assistance emphasised by all the nongovernmental respondents is that country's transformational know-how, which is now being used as an added value, is slowly losing its hallmark of authenticity. According to Interviewee 5 (2013), the democratisation experience has not been captured sufficiently at the domestic level and "now it is getting more and more problematic to find someone who was directly present when changes were made and would now be willing to share this experience". Interviewee 4 (2013) adds that majority of people who contributed or were directly responsible for the changes, on both governmental and non-governmental level, now either hold governmental positions, changed their professions entirely, or have retired. Furthermore, Interviewee 3 (2013) notes that without people with direct experience who would be willing to share it, it is difficult to transfer or make use of any direct 'lessons learnt' and a deeper analysis and expertise of the Slovak transformation is necessary.

Interviewee 5 (2013) emphasises that the recipients are in fact interested not only in constitutional changes and reforms, which can always be transcribed, but, most importantly, it is the backstage information, for instance about the course of negotiations or the resolutions of different dilemmas. He recalls a visit of Tunisian NGO leaders at Slovak Nation's Memory Institute and explains that "what they found interesting was that they met a person who knew both Czech and Slovak model of the institute and was able to reason to them why the Czech model is better and what factors were decisive in deciding about the model to adopt". Thus, if Slovakia wants to continue using its transformational experience as an added value, it is essential that it invests more domestically. In 2011, the Foreign Ministry founded a special Centre for the Transfer of Integration and Reform Experience (CETIR) which goal is to enhance democratic development by means of expert exchange mainly at

intergovernmental level (SlovakAid, 2013). Even though all the interviewed appreciated this initiative, Interviewee 4 and 5 (2013) underline that it would be even more effective to create a platform or more programs where experts from all levels would meet and exchange their know-how, discuss their experience, so that this knowledge could be captured, systematised, formulated, and subsequently transferred.

However, despite these drawbacks, Interviewee 5 (2013) points to the fact that in Slovakia “there is still a number of individuals who were active in Slovak democratisation process or implemented reforms and have been still active in politics”, and concludes that the Slovak NGOs still may use these personal capacities as their comparative advantage, which older democracies, even those democratised in the third wave, such as Spain or Portugal, do not have.

### **Focus on the Recipient**

As mentioned in the literature review, democracy assistance should always reflect recipients' needs (Wedel, 2005). Petrova (2012b) reaches a conclusion that despite the distinctiveness of donors working within the same country, their approaches and strategies should significantly converge. Being interested in whether Slovak NGOs can contribute to Tunisian democratisation offering a distinctive kind of assistance, this study further examines to what extent, if any, Slovak NGOs differ from the Western organisations in their focus on recipient. Moreover, the literature review has pointed out that the US and the EU are often mistrusted in the Arab world, due to their power interests, double standards, and the use of violence in their democracy promotion (McGlinchy, 2011). Therefore, it may be concluded that receptivity of recipients also depends on the global perception of a donor as well as their historical background and donor-recipient bilateral relations. For this reason, this section starts with examination of the influence of Slovak global perception on receptivity of the Slovak NGOs' democracy assistance in comparison to the Western donors and continues by outlining the differences between the Western and Slovak approaches. First of all, Interviewees 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (2013) name the Slovak-Tunisian not burdened bilateral relations as another comparative advantage of the Slovak NGOs. Interviewee 3 (2013) explains that due to the fact that Tunisia was colonised by

France, it is now quite suspicious of assistance by countries with a colonial history and the population often sees the assistance as imperialistic. Interviewee 2 (2013) illustrates this by explaining that civil society leaders who accept aid from France or the US are often suspected of “plotting” against Tunisian interests. They add that considering the current significant position of France within the EU, this suspiciousness often spreads over the EU projects in general. Furthermore, “the EU and US are well-known for their power interests and double standards, which have discredited their assistance in the eyes of the Tunisian population” (Interviewee 5, 2013).

These findings comply with Hobson’s (2009) and McGlinchy’s (2011) explanations of the decrease in credibility and receptibility of the Western donors’ assistance as stated in the literature review. Interviewee 3 (2013), stresses out that “on the other hand, Slovakia has never colonised anyone and has itself been occupied”, which, in combination with the fact that “that it does not have any ambitious power interests” (Interviewee 4, 2013), has a positive impact on receptivity of the beneficiaries (Interviewee 2, 3, 4 and 6, 2013). Moreover, the Slovak NGOs’ expertise and direct experience of coping with authoritarianism and contributing to achieving a consolidation at home, gives their projects “credibility to assist and advise” (Interviewee 5, 2013), the fact reported by all the interviewees.

However, Interviewee 6 (2013) warns that the NGOs need to work very carefully with this premise. As already mentioned, the US support and often sponsor the Slovak NGOs’ activities (Interviewee 1 and 6, 2013), and the NGOs use many practices imported to them by the West earlier (Interviewee 2, 5 and 6, 2013). This may raise suspicions towards the Slovak projects (Interviewee 6, 2013). Najšlova’s (2012) article supports this finding as she warns against the emerging trend in the MENA region to perceive smaller donors backed by the US as an ‘invisible Western hand’.

Furthermore, the Slovak NGOs representatives (Interviewee 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, 2013) see their assistance as more sensitive and recipient-centred in comparison to the West countries’ practice. According to Interviewee 2 (2013), the recipient experience of Slovakia gives its NGOs a valuable insight into the Western democracy assistance practices. Therefore, the NGOs can not only use the best ‘lessons learnt’ from the

Western donors, but also avoid repeating their mistakes. The interviewees (2, 3, 4 and 5, 2013) recall that the US often came to Slovakia with 'complete recipes' (Interviewee 5, 2013) of what should be done without asking the beneficiaries about their opinions of how to proceed. The US one-size-fits-all approach was, in their opinion, problematic considering the specificities of single post-communist countries (Interviewee 2, 5 and 6, 2013). This has taught the Slovak NGOs about the importance of cultural and historical sensitivity of their approaches (Interviewee 2, 2013), as well as 'beneficiaries' ownership of the projects' (Interviewee 5, 2013). Interviewees 2, 3, 5, and 6 (2013) state that in their projects, they operate as facilitators, but let the recipients to decide about what they need, what should be done and how. Interviewee 5 (2013) explains that Slovaks understand they are just 'foreigners' in the country, and therefore do not understand many issues to such depth as the natives do. Based on that, they operate as trainers and facilitators who are in the country to offer their 'experience through partnership', rather than acting as 'teachers of democracy' (Interviewee 5, 2013). They use the Slovak experience to inspire and motivate the beneficiaries, but not as a guaranteed recipe for success: "Unlike many Western donors, the Slovak NGOs do not attempt to provide partners with guaranteed recipes for how to achieve successful consolidation. If the Slovaks learnt something from the US' practise during 1990s, it is that the transformational process cannot be copied and pasted across various countries, especially in the case of such different states as Slovakia and Tunisia" (ibid).

The interviewee 2, 4, 5 and 6 (2013) stress out that they do not offer solutions, but rather to use the Slovak experience to show the recipients the variety of options and possible consequences of particular steps. According to them, the Slovak strength compared to other donors lays in facilitating such a discussion which then helps the beneficiaries to form an opinion. "Later, it is up to them if they decide that certain steps from our transition are executable in their conditions" (Interviewee 5, 2013). Furthermore, Interviewee 6 (2013) explains that having experienced the problems with funding and survival of positive changes in the civil society development after the US donors had started withdrawing from Slovakia, its NGOs now reflect on that by designing projects so that they prepare the beneficiaries to work on their own, not only by granting them the 'ownership' of the work, but offering trainings focused on financing the activities.

Moreover, the Slovak NGOs' projects seem to contrast with the Western one-size-fits-all approaches by tailoring their activities to the recipient. This conclusion is based on the interview data which show that each of the Slovak NGO engaging in Tunisia designed its project after thoroughly consulting local partners. These consultations (also taking form of seminars) focused on direct requirements, needs and specificities of individual beneficiaries, while differences were considered and reflected upon in democracy assistance strategies even in case of cooperation with very similar organisations within the same locality (Interviewee 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, 2013).

## Limitations

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Slovakia and Tunisia differ historically, politically, and culturally. Therefore, this chapter examines what and to what extent, impacts the Slovak democracy assistance and transferability of its 'lessons learnt'.

Interviewee 4 (2013) explains that until 2011, when Tunisia became a priority within the Slovak Official Development Aid (ODA), the NGOs' democracy assistance had territorially focused mainly on the Western Balkans (Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) and countries of the EU's Eastern Partnership (Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), which came as a natural choice with respect to Slovakia's politico-economic interests in the region, and relatively similar post-communist transformational context as well as Slavic cultural and linguistic affinities. Especially in Balkans, the Slovak expertise has always been accepted with appreciation, particularly due to its success to achieve Euro-Atlantic integration, even though it had to catch up with other applicants, who had had smoother transitions (ibid). In Tunisia, on the other hand, "due to country's different historical and political background, and, most importantly, the absence of previous democratic experience" (ibid), the NGOs have had to deal with 'very different, non-western understanding of reforms and needs' (Interviewee 5, 2013), perceptions of modernisation, and ideas about both stable and democratic development (Interviewee 2 and 5, 2013). Interviewee 4 (2013) emphasises that the quality of discussion or acceptance of the content of

information may be in the Arab conditions very different from the post-communist region, in which the Slovak NGOs usually work. In this respect, the interviewees 2, 3, 4 and 5 (2013) describe the beginnings of their engagement in Tunisia as “going blind on”. According to Interviewee 2 (2013), the NGOs lacked the knowledge of the ‘work field’, did not know their partners’ work habits, or faced language barriers. Therefore, Interviewee 2, 3, 4, and 6 (2013) agreed that Slovak NGOs have a greater advantage and may be more efficient in their neighbourhood, the countries which have experience with kinds of political structures similar to those in past Slovak nondemocratic regimes.

However, Interviewee 5 (2013) questions the similarity of Balkan countries with Slovakia pointing to very different development of the states during 1990s. They stress out that, unlike in Slovakia, the conflicts in Balkan inflicted lives of the people to such an extent that this difference may in fact render the Slovak experience, in many aspects, untransferable. Therefore, according to Interviewee 2, 5, and 6 (2013) the differences do not play a major role in democracy assistance, if they are articulated in a way which helps recipients clarify the matters for themselves. They consider differences in general, if worked with sensitively, enriching because they help form opinions on the basis of critical thinking, which should then lead to a most reasonable and suitable choice. Yet, Interviewee 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (2013) emphasise the need for sensitive facilitation of these differences in diverse environments.

One of the issues, which the interviewees 2, 4 and 6 (2013) see as problematic is Slovakia’s lack of experience with regional tensions characteristic for Tunisia. Interviewee 6 (2013) explains that due to the colonisation, Tunisian borders were not created in a natural way, and therefore the population’s identities are often based on local levels, which leads to “conflicts and misunderstandings”. According to Interviewee 2, 5 and 6 (2013), this incompliance of borders and the nation may slow down or hinder the Tunisian democratisation process. This finding supports Rustow’s (1970) argument, as stated in the literature review, that for a democratic development, national unity is one of the most important preconditions. However, Interviewee 6 (2013) states that the absence of such experience on the Slovak side may not be a disadvantage. According to them, considering the Czechoslovak split in 1993 or Roma and Hungarian minority problems, “it is this absence of the conflict

which illustrates to partners that problems can be dealt with effectively in a peaceful, nonviolent way". Further, they add that the Slovak NGOs can offer a valuable lesson highlighting the fact that in Slovakia the minority or nationalism issues were often ignored and left unresolved, which then led to their constant reappearance.

However, all the interviewed stressed out that what the Slovak NGOs have to consider when passing on certain 'lessons learnt' is that the Slovak democratisation was, to a great extent, influenced by the EU and NATO integration ambitions, while Tunisia lacks such strong motivations or incentives. Interviewee 5 (2013) states that, for instance, the security sector reform in Slovakia was influenced by requirements from the NATO, 'which may be very sensitive in Arab environments due to the animosity and distrust the population feel towards the organisation'.

Yet, the biggest problem for the Slovak NGOs operating in Tunisia may be the role of religion in the state (Interviewee 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, 2013). Interviewee 6 (2013) explains that during Bourguiby's and Ben Ali's regime Tunisia belonged to one of the most liberal countries in the region due the nature of the regimes, and now, it is "in the process of discovering its own diversity". Interviewee 2 (2013) points out that Slovakia is not the only donor facing this problem, as there are not many instances of dealing with the issue successfully, stably, and without 'spike solutions'. According to Interviewee 6 (2013), in this case, out of all the cooperating countries', the most useful may be the example and assistance of Turkey, which, however, "for now, does not seem very realistic". Further, the NGO representatives (Interviewee 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, 2013) state that to operate effectively, they have to bring many topics through Islam, such as women empowerment or democracy itself. They state that in case of empowering women's right, they often have to work with men more than with women themselves. In this respect, due to the Slovak inexperience with Islam, they adopt approaches used by the US and the EU. Finally, all the interviewed agree that despite the cultural differences, the Slovak experience is relevant for Tunisia, as it focuses on supporting the basic democratic principles, which they understand as "universal". This stance supports Diamond's (2010) and Ramadan's (2013) claims about universality of democratic principles in Islamic cultures, as mentioned in the literature review.

However, all the interviewees from the nongovernmental sector also report the insufficiency of financing as negatively influencing the effectiveness of their work, mainly due to the inability to make long-term plans. Annual calls for grants make them “jump from one project to another without any certainty about what is going to happen next year” (Interviewee 3, 2013). Interviewee 5 (2013) points out that the financial instability also negatively influences the ability of Slovak NGOs to transfer the experience, as instead of focusing on capturing and formulating it, the nongovernmental sector has been struggling with existential problems. All the interviewed emphasise that for the effectiveness of their projects a long-term planning is essential since the evaluations have shown that short-time activities were ineffective for the recipients as well as the donors in respect to all the funds spent. Also, as Interviewee 2 (2013) explains, in 2011, the working environment of Tunisia was majorly unknown to most of the Slovak NGOs, and therefore, to increase effectiveness of the projects, some money could have been allocated to organise study trips into the field for experts to map the situation and identify potential partners instead of having to carry out these activities simultaneously with their projects later. It is understandable that if the Foreign Ministry cannot allocate more funds for democracy assistance, especially in times after the financial crisis. However, within the ODA, the Education Ministry allocates about two million euros annually for scholarships offered to students from developing countries without binding them to return home, and so far there has been no statistics about how many of them actually do return to their homes. Therefore, it might be worth considering reallocating these funds and using them as grants for the nongovernmental sector, which may then reflect in increased quality and effectiveness of their work. However, limited financing does not always need to be a disadvantage. Interviewee 6 (2013) maintains that smaller projects are more flexible and less fraud-prone, and the NGOs are not afraid to partner a young or smaller organisation outside the town, unlike many Western donors.

The results of this analysis show that the Slovak NGOs can contribute to the democratisation of Tunisia mainly by sharing expertise and ‘lessons learnt’ accumulated during its own tumultuous transformation. The crucial aspects of its own democratisation, such as electoral breakthrough of 1998, civil society building and engaging in a dialogue with the government, positioned Slovakia well to provide

Tunisia with a practical insight to civil-society building, NGO development as well as issues related to security sector reform, such as cultivation of civil-military relations. Considering, that due to its previous absence of democratic experience, expertise in these fields may be very valuable for Tunisia, which is currently experiencing a high increase in civic associations and because of the suppression during the past dictatorial regime, does not, at this moment, know how cooperation with the government should look like. An added value of Slovak democracy assistance for Tunisia rests not only in its transformational experience, but also in the fact that this experience allows the NGOs to pass along best practices of the Western donors and avoid their mistakes, such as institution-centric and one-size-fits-all approaches. Having an experience from the recipient side of the democracy assistance process, the Slovak NGOs realise the importance of cultural sensitivity and their partners' ownership of the project. Also, in comparison to the US and the EU, they tend to be more recipient-focused. Even though the Slovak organisations do not differ much from the Western organisation in terms of the values being promoted or in terms of the way in which their projects are being realised, the recency of Slovak democratisation allows them to contribute to the advancement of Tunisia's democratisation by providing the partners with experts who have a direct experience with the transformational process and therefore can offer very concrete 'lessons learnt'. The Slovak NGOs have also developed ways, in which they can use disadvantages, such as the Slovak lack of experience with regional tensions similar to the ones of Tunisia or the role of the religion in a state, to show their partners the variety of choices, which can inspire them and support further debates. Hence, all these findings support the assumptions made in the previous chapter about how the Slovak democratisation experience may reflect in its democracy assistance.

In order to get a more throughout understanding of the results of this study, the next chapter concentrates on the conclusions drawn from the research as well as recommendations for future policies and research.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

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It has been more than three years since the events of the Tunisian Jasmine revolution initiated the massive democratic movement throughout the MENA region and captured the attention of the international democracy assistors. Together with the major donors, such as the EU and the US, Slovakia, joining forces with Netherlands in Task Force on Tunisia created by the Community of Democracies, offered Tunisia its expertise to advance country's democratic development. However, considering the Slovak limited finances as well as the global perception, a question arises whether Slovak democracy assistance can make any meaningful contribution working side by side the biggest global democracy supporters. Starting from the assumption that donors' understanding and experience with democracy at home reflect in their international democracy support, this study has investigated whether the Slovak recent democratisation experience reflects in its democracy assistance to Tunisia and whether it makes it distinctive from the democracy assistance of major donors. Therefore, the research question examined in this project was 'how Slovak NGOs can contribute to democratisation of Tunisia'.

The project has focused on democracy assistance carried out by NGOs, rather than broader democracy promotion, not only due to the prevalence of this method but mainly because NGOs' relative independence and variousness best allow shedding light on the parallels and differences between democracy support approaches.

This research was necessary considering that Tunisia is currently facing challenges of democratic transformation dealing with which it could benefit from democratisation expertise of other countries. However, as the major donors have been discredited in the MENA region, this research was needed in order to examine the potential of the new generation of democracy promoters produced by the recent EU accessions, here represented by Slovakia. Despite the fact that these countries' recent transformational experience gives them potential to offer a distinctive expertise on the democracy support scene, the vast body of theoretical literature has focused on the major global donors, leaving smaller donors under-researched. Therefore, this study not only contributes to previous research on the role of foreign actors in

democratisation but, most importantly, it is one of a few to concentrate on a smaller post-communist donor's democracy assistance.

This chapter discusses the empirical findings reached through the qualitative data analysis, which is then followed by theoretical implications of the study, giving recommendations for future policies as well as the future research.

## **Empirical findings**

It has been assumed that for Slovak NGOs to make any meaningful contribution to Tunisia's democratisation, considered Slovakia's limited finances and the global perception, their projects should fill in a vacant but important thematic niche in the projects of other donors and emphasise the added value of the Slovak expertise.

In order to examine to what extent this experience distinguishes the Slovak NGOs' operations from Western donors', the study has firstly investigated the values, which the Slovak NGOs' projects promote and whether they have a potential to challenge the major model of democracy promotion, i.e. liberalism. It has been found that, in their activities, the NGOs contribute to democratisation in Tunisia, similarly to the EU and the US, by stressing liberal aspects of democracy, such as civil liberties and political rights. Furthermore, the fact that all six Slovak NGOs' projects in Tunisia in the past two years have focused primarily on electoral support, security sector reform and democratic civil society building, implies that Slovakia, likewise the US, adopts a knowledge-based political approach, rather than developmental approach, used majorly by the EU. This means that the NGOs contribute to Tunisia's democratisation by advancing political aspects of civil society building, and therefore support development of political culture, rather than development of other preconditions of democracy, such as economy or societal development. The loyalty of Slovak democracy assistance to liberal values follows from country's EU membership, as well as from its desire to anchor its European and Western identity. Therefore, the Slovak NGOs do not challenge the liberal model of democracy promotion and hence, in this sense, do not differ from the Western donors.

However, even though the Slovak and the Western democracy assistance promote the same values, the process through which it is done is different. The research has

shown, that Slovakia's very recent experience and 'lessons learnt' accumulated throughout its arguably not completed democratisation process, provide its NGOs with a comparative advantage, which other donors, and especially the 'old democracies', do not have. This experience gives the Slovak NGOs credibility to inspire and motivate the recipients using illustrations from the Slovak transformation. Moreover, even despite it is currently getting more problematic to find persons who were directly present when changes were made and would now be willing to share their experience, Slovakia, unlike older democracies, still has enough experts to offer. These experts can contribute to Tunisia's transformation by providing their unique direct know-how, such as information about backroom deals and negotiations. This implies Slovakia's distinctive national approach to democracy assistance.

In their projects, the NGOs do not only highlight Slovakia's successes on its way to democracy, but also point out the negative 'lessons learnt', in order to show the partners where certain steps may lead. Realising that the democratisation process is not a matter of replication, instead of offering guaranteed recipes, the NGOs use the Slovak expertise to advise the beneficiaries on their transformational path. Thanks to Slovakia's own lengthy and difficult democratisation, its NGOs realise the complexity of the political transformation and see democracy as a constantly developing process, rather than an endpoint. This reflects in their projects, which focus on assisting the partners with throughout planning, while the aims are set sequentially. This is in contrast with Western donors' projects, which often emphasize the endpoints but leave recipients unsure about how to proceed to achieve them. Therefore, rather than a model of democracy, Slovakia exports a model of democratisation based on its domestic experience.

Moreover, the Slovak NGOs have accumulated experience from both sides of democracy assistance process, as a recipient and a donor. This allows them passing along best practices of the Western donors, while at the same time avoiding their mistakes, such as one-size-fits-all approaches. Based on their recipient experience, the Slovak NGOs realise the importance of cultural sensitivity and their partner's 'ownership' of the projects. Therefore, in their projects, they operate as advisors, rather than teachers or democracy. Furthermore, the Slovak NGOs pay much attention to recipients' needs and design their projects accordingly, in contrast with many Western organisations, which use pre-set programs.

Another factor, which positively influences the receptivity of Tunisian beneficiaries, is the global perception of Slovakia as a smaller country, which is not well known for its power interests. Also, the fact that it has never colonised anyone increased the credibility of its assistance. Moreover, even the limited finances, which may seem a disadvantage of the Slovak democracy assistance projects, could be considered an advantage, as the Slovak donors are not afraid to partner a younger or smaller recipient; also, the projects are less bound to fraud and more flexible to react to situational development.

Hence, by their distinctive national approach to democracy assistance, the focus of their democracy assistance on the process rather than endpoints and by the high attention they pay to beneficiaries', the Slovak NGOs differ from the Western organisations' operations.

Further, The NGOs concentrate mainly on aspects of the democratisation process which were crucial for Slovakia itself, such as civil society building, NGO development, and electoral support. Due to the oppression during Meciarism, the Slovak NGOs know how to operate in oppressive environments, which gives them an advantage even within the V4 group.

Still, the NGOs realise that the context of the Slovak and Tunisian transformations differ politically, culturally, and historically and therefore, the NGOs may lack necessary knowledge to tackle issues like the role of religion in a state or tribal conflicts. However, the Slovak organisations often see these differences as enriching, as they illustrate the recipients the variety of steps and models to choose from, which helps form beneficiaries' opinions. Still, the biggest problem could be that many 'lessons learnt' during the Slovak transformation may not be of a practical use in Tunisia, as the Slovak democratisation was strongly influenced by the incentives of the EU and NATO memberships.

## **Theoretical implications**

The main problem encountered in this research has been insufficiency of academic resources dealing with democracy assistance of post-communist donors, or Slovakia

concretely, which would have allowed the research to compare its findings with similar studies.

It has been found that Slovakia understands its loyalty to liberal democratic values as a way of anchoring its Western and European identity and therefore it does not try to challenge the dominant model of democracy promotion. This may be understood as a confirmation of social-constructivist theory assuming that country's behaviour towards other actors is driven by its identity construction based on the hypothesis that "how you are perceived by other is of a crucial importance for the general understanding of who you are" (Jonavicius, 2008, pg. 2).

Further, the thematical analysis has produced themes or patterns, all of which are related to one of Petrova's (2012a) two most influential factors impacting democracy assistance strategies of single countries, which are a) domestic values and experience of donors and b) recipients' needs. The distinctive national approach of the Slovak NGOs also supports Petrova's (2012a) claim that donors' approaches depend on their domestic understanding of successes and failures of democratic development. Also, Slovak NGOs' focus on civil society development and electoral support confirms Burnell's (2011) finding that democracy assistance projects are most likely to concentrate on these two aspects of country's democratisation.

It has also been found that the external factor of democracy assistance may play a significant role in country's democratic transformation, as stated by Huntington (1991). Although the activities of the external actors themselves will not secure the existence of a democratic rule in Tunisia, they can play a significant role at rooting the positive changes gained so far. However, there exist problems with the way in which democracy assistors operate, such as one-size-fits-all, or institution-centric approaches, as well as problems related to their global role and perception, which often cause mistrust. These issues were also mentioned in the writings of Burnell (2011, 2013), Hobson (2009), and McGlinchy (2011).

## **Recommendations**

Following from the based data, it may be suggested that for the Slovak NGOs to use their potential most effectively, they should narrow down their priority sectors or their

aims and objectives should be formulated more specifically. Furthermore, the focus should be placed more or exclusively on direct transition experience transfer rather than financing. To maximise the value of the Slovak NGOs operations, their projects should be long-term. Although long-term projects are dependent on finances, which are at the moment after the financial crisis problematic, they could be reallocated from projects, which show low efficiency. Such are, for instance, scholarships (about two million euro every year) granted to students from developing countries studying in Slovakia, which do not bind the students to come home and therefore their positive effect on development is questionable.

Due to the practical nonexistence of research focusing on the Slovak democracy assistance carried out at the nongovernmental level, it is recommended that further research is undertaken in this area. The future research could not only focus on Slovakia, but could also examine democracy assistance of other post-communist donors, for instance V4 countries, which would allow determining differences between them and shed more light on how differences in domestic democratic development reflect in donors' democracy assistance strategies. Also, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Slovak projects could be conducted after a period of three years from the start of the Slovak engagement in Tunisian democratisation process, July, which is ascertained as a 'reflection period'.

Finally, it may be concluded that the Slovak very concrete, practical and recent 'lessons learnt' on how to defeat authoritarians, i. e. democratic breakthrough, and best practices on how to achieve reform objectives, i. e. consolidation, provide the Slovak NGOs with a comparative advantage within the donor community and increases its credibility not only as a donor but also as an international partner and so positions it well to contribute to Tunisia's democratisation by sharing Slovakia's transformational experience.

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# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Information Sheet

\*This is a translation of the Slovak version, which will be used to contact the potential interviewees.



### **Sharing the Slovak Transformational Experience: How Can Slovak NGOs Contribute to Democratisation of Tunisia?**

#### INFORMATION SHEET

As you are being invited to participate in the research, it is essential that you understand what the study is about and what it will involve. Please read the information provided in the sheet carefully and do not hesitate to contact me should you require any more information.

#### **What is the study about?**

The aim of this study is to assess Slovak ability to provide Tunisia with a high level of expertise in terms of development aid in the field of building of democratic institutions. To do that, it will analyse the Slovak democratization process, assess the development aid provided to Balkan countries and based on parallels and differences between the Czecho-Slovak Velvet Revolution and Arabian Spring, will try to assess Slovak ability to provide expertise in a different environment.

#### **Why have I been approached?**

You have been requested to take part in the study due to your knowledge in area of the Slovak foreign policy and your experience in the field of the Slovak development aid. This means that your expertise and opinions on the subject will provide a valuable insight into the problem.

### **Do I have to take part?**

It is completely up to your own decision if you decide to take part in the study. If you do you will be requested to sign a consent form and will also be free to withdraw from the study anytime.

### **What will I need to do?**

If you decide to participate in the study you will be asked to take part in an interview either personally, over Skype or over the telephone. You will be asked to discuss your carrier background and your role at the development project you have engaged in. Then, it will bring in questions regarding the process of Slovak democratization and your opinion on what lessons were learnt from it, how Slovakia can use this knowledge to provide a high level of expertise in the area of building of democratic institutions, your opinion on the previous Slovak experience in Balkan and Slovakia's ability to adapt the knowledge and use it in a different environment, Tunisia. The interview will take less than hour and will be arranged so that any inconvenience to you is minimised. The interview will only be recorded with your permission.

### **Will my identity be disclosed?**

For the purposes of this study, you are guaranteed anonymity. Your name will be changed and all the information provided will remain confidential.

### **What will happen to the information?**

All the information provided will be kept secure and confidential. Any identifying information will be changed.

### **Who can I contact for further information?**

Should you have any questions or require any further information about the study, do not hesitate to contact me to discuss any concerns. Please, find my contact details enclosed below.

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## Appendix B: Interview Guide

\*This is a translation of the Slovak version, which will be used to contact the potential interviewees.



### Interview guide

#### **Title of Research Project: Sharing the Slovak Transformational Experience: How Can Slovak NGOs Contribute to Democratisation of Tunisia?**

Where do you work and what is your role in the organisation?

How long have you been working there for?

What was your role in the development project in Tunisia?

What exactly was the project about and what aim was it trying to achieve?

What tools of development aid were used to achieve that aim?

Has Slovakia in your opinion completed its journey toward becoming a democratic state?

What has been the impact of Slovakia's aid and projects in Tunisia?

What would you consider an added value of Slovak democracy assistance compared with other donors, especially major donors like the US or the EU?

Do Slovak NGOs have something different to offer than NGOs based elsewhere?

How would you assess the Slovak development aid in Tunisia so far? How can it be improved?