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**Development Cooperation as a Soft  
Power Tool:**

A case study of Slovakia & Kenya

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# Abstract

Slovakia has as a small state in the Central Europe gone through two types of transformations. First was from socialism to democracy, accompanied by various reforms, the second from an aid recipient to an aid donor. These experiences have, naturally, shaped Slovakia's identity, ideas and interests. Slovakia has gradually built up close bilateral development cooperation with Kenya, which figures as its program country. Using the 'comparative advantage' of the transformation experience in the development cooperation policies, combined with knowledge transfer as well as an increasing involvement of business entities, as soft power tools of its foreign policy, Slovakia seems to have followed two main goals, one of advancing of the economic agenda, and one of making itself more visible in the donor community and acquiring certain prestige.

Key words: soft power, development cooperation, small state, foreign policy, social constructivism, Kenya, Slovakia

Word count: 19 506 words

## **List of Abbreviations**

CEE	Central and Eastern European
CETIR	Centre for Experience Transfer from Integration and Reforms
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FP	Foreign Policy
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
IP	International Politics
MF	Ministry of Finance
MFEA	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGDO Platform	Non-Governmental Development Organisations Platform
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAIDC	Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation
SR	Slovak Republic
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
V4	Visegrád Four

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# I. Introduction

Slovakia a small state in the Central Europe has gone through a significant transformation. Based on the previous transition from socialism and command economy to democracy and market economy, the country has eventually turned from an aid beneficiary to an actual aid donor. This has been accompanied by an entrance to various international structures and organizations, such as the EU, OECD/DAC, the World Bank or the United Nations. Naturally, due to obligations arising from the membership in these organizations, Slovakia had in 2003 established its own mechanism of the Official Development Assistance (ODA). Since then, aid has been distributed to selected countries in need under logo SlovakAid. However, the field of development cooperation of Slovakia has not received that much of a research attention, and mostly considered the works by Slovak academics (Gažovič 2012, Profant 2015, Gažovič & Profant 2015, Beňáková 2010, Benč 2005, Bátora 2004), with an exception of Lightfoot (Vittek & Lightfoot 2010).

A significant gap has been found in regards to available research on Slovak development cooperation. While most of the academic texts have been focused on the ODA system provision, motives or implication as a whole, none has focused on a particular bilateral relationship. Due to the fact that Slovak bilateral aid receives just 20% from the allocated aid budget, as 80% goes towards multilateral aid, the perspective research has been dismissed as not significant. The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to contribute to academic knowledge with this single-case study on the development cooperation between Slovakia and Kenya. There are several reasons why this particular relationship might be relevant and worth researching.

Firstly, the ties between these two countries date back to 1990s, where the Slovak Embassy and presence of several NGOs and missionaries played a

crucial role in establishing the presence in the country. Secondly, Kenya has been since ever since the creation of the ODA mechanism in 2003 a territorial priority country. Third reason is that a complex network of Slovak subjects, volunteers, NGOs, research institutions, business companies and diplomats has created a space for a very close cooperation between these two countries, and since 2014, a specific Country Strategy Paper for Kenya has been presented, signaling the importance of this development partner. Finally, Kenya figures as a number one recipient of Slovak ODA as well as is one of the top three program countries of Slovak Aid.

Small states, however, might find it harder than the large ones to exercise their power and influence. Soft power then may in many regards represent a foreign policy tool with a potential of bringing desired political goals. Within bilateral cooperation, this form of power is easier to be exercised than within multilateral one. This brings into forefront the research question which this thesis sets at answering:

***Why may the Slovak development cooperation with Kenya be perceived as a soft power tool of its foreign policy?***

The mutual ties between Slovakia and Kenya have been present for almost 25 years and over this time, also the development aid policies have changed. Development cooperation became listed as one of the integral parts of the Slovak foreign policy. And since foreign policy usually encompasses political as well as economic goals and priorities, it is argued here that this provides a space for research on whether this particular cooperation reflects those elements and if so, how. As mentioned above, soft power represents one of the main tools that small states may exploit for own benefit, and since it relies not on coercion but on attraction, it is employed differently than traditional power.

Since this would be a single-case study research, generalizations might be limited to a certain extent, yet hopefully this research may still contribute to

academic knowledge on how small states exercise soft power through the bilateral development cooperation. In the next chapters, the analysis of this phenomena would be guided by social constructivist theory as well as theory of small states and concept of soft power.

## II. Literature review

Before proceeding with the analysis of the proposed research theme, a literature overview of the academic work related to the topic of development aid and cooperation of Slovakia is to be presented in this section. The research in this particular area has been quite limited, and thus the gaps within provide a great potential for the future investigation. The research has been mostly conducted by Slovak authors or those within Visegrád countries. It is also these four Central-European countries which have often been grouped together under the label ‘new donors’ and the discussions concerning their roles, motives, aid effectiveness and historical evolvment preceding the current policies were presented. Often, a wider Central and Eastern European (CEE) region is included. Finally, since these materials mention and lightly touch upon Kenya only in a broader context and a very limited manner, by analyzing the official documents and combining them with the interviews, this thesis can hopefully contribute to the debate on the bilateral development cooperation of Slovakia and especially in relation to Kenya.

### II.I CEE Countries as ‘new donors’

In terms of the CEE region, several academics have contributed to the research. Horký-Hlucháň & Lightfoot (2015) in their book *Development Cooperation of the ‘New’ EU Member States* discussed a variety in development aid policies of

the Central and East-European member states. Horký & Lightfoot (2012) summarized the emergence of the CEE region as development aid donors and evaluated on the challenges they face in both global and domestic context and stressed that their identity as 'aid donors' is also partly due to EU membership requirements. More importantly, however, they pointed out that the vision of achievement of certain security and foreign policy goals is a priority as opposed to actually seeing the poverty reduction as the overarching goal of the CEE countries. Therefore, as the national interests are equally expressed via the development policies, the altruistic concerns often fall behind.

Szent-Iványi and Tétényi (2008) compared the development aid policies of the Visegrád 4 countries (Slovakia, Czechia, Hungary and Poland) with those of 'traditional' Western donors and concluded that they differed due to three main conditions: the Communist past, the consequent transition process as well as the contemporary eco-soc. conditions. They concluded that based on this, the increased focus should then be on the 'transition' countries or those with the Communist past, as that is where the comparative advantage of the 'new donors' lies. On the other hand, Horký (2012) argued that actually, the transition experience sharing of the CEE countries is rather a myth than reality, as it is very marginal, and especially not suitable for a completely different cultural contexts. Moreover, it is serving as more of a cover for quite low public support for development cooperation, and that is in contrast to "promised" commitments when joining the EU or OECD.

Kopiński (2012) analyzed the approach of the Visegrád Group countries towards the Sub-Saharan region in Africa and found that the rhetoric differs significantly from reality, as these countries still do not assign Africa on a list of priorities, and largely prefer the close-neighborhood countries in the EU, especially due to business and political aims. He also stated that by building on the rhetoric of transition experience and thus a comparative advantage, among the actual priorities of the foreign policies of the V4 countries belong



promotion of their own visibility, economic cooperation as well as regional stability.

## II.II Slovakia as an aid donor

Slovakia as one of the Visegrád 4 ‘new donors’ has received the attention in academia also in a separate manner. Since the mechanism of the ODA only started in 2003, most of the research came after the institutionalization of the development agenda into the official structures. Benč (2005) was among first to map the Slovak development aid and cooperation as well as how this system of aid provision started, providing a useful introduction and overview of this tool of foreign policy of Slovakia. Bátora (2004) introduced the foreign policy as a tool for identity formation, using the social constructivism. Additionally, the phenomena of the transformation of Slovakia from aid receiver to aid donor relates in the available studies predominantly to the critical analysis of the volume of the official development assistance (ODA) and sectoral priorities as well as the constitution of the institutional framework of ODA in general. (see e.g. Lipková-Raslavská 2006, Benč 2005, Rusnák - Szép - Brzica 2002 in Gažovič, 2012: 22)

Vittek and Lightfoot (2010) evaluated the Slovak development cooperation in relation to taking over the EU acquis and concluded that it was actually the main driving force behind the established policies and frameworks. Beňáková (2010) elaborated on challenges of the SlovakAid, calling it “an Unemployed Foreign Policy Tool” and argued that the ODA does not seem to be among priorities of the government, even though the aid provision brings also the benefit of perception from international actors and building up of a good name. Gažovič and Profant (2015) argued under the chapter name “Slovakia: Aid donor against its will?” that Slovakia gives aid mostly because it is an obligation imposed by the EU membership. They conclude that there are two main features of Slovak development cooperation. Firstly, the transition

experience serves as 'niche' on basis of which the expertise may be based and thus policies reasoned. Secondly, this experience is more of a deeply political top-down project by the EU, just imposed on Slovakia.

Gažovič (2012) focused on the reasoning and interpretations behind the ODA provision in the official discourse of the SR, concluding that the interests, fear of sanctions and obligations are main reasonings, but important is also the perception of Slovakia by the international community. Both Bátor (2004) and Gažovič (2012) discussed also how Slovak identity is created through development cooperation as well as how it serves own interests and policies. Profant (2015) examined the power discourse and the transformation experience as a way of creating identity of Slovakia as an aid donor. He concluded that by accepting the new identity as 'new donor', Slovakia could create a distinction from 'old' or 'traditional' donors, and the transformation experience was one of the most crucial parts of it.

## II. III. Small states, soft power, development cooperation

Delgado (2015) explored through constructivist lens the motivations and aspirations of China when it comes to development cooperation with Africa and benefits gained from it. He argued that it is those benefits that shape the image-building of China as as both friendly and responsible nation and also of one which can relate differently than the Western donors to the developing countries. Hwang (2014) discussed the case of South Korea's foreign aid to Africa as a tool of soft power, trying to balance out the national interests versus the "altruistic" motives of poverty reduction embedded in the OECD membership and purpose of aid provision. In pursuit of building a positive image as well as using its transition experience from aid recipient to aid donor and the strategies used to achieve the state's interests through various means of soft power, this resembles the case of Slovakia.

Panasevič (2013) examined the internal motives in the context of development cooperation in a case study of Lithuania. She concluded that within the models used, the power-political one which is connected to soft power, was the most relevant, but important was also the perception in international merit and attractiveness for partner countries. The transitional experience is equally highlighted. As Lithuania may be also categorized as a small state, these above-mentioned conclusions also parallel the case of Slovakia. Moreover, combining a concept of soft power & small states, Chong (2010) argued on a case of Singapore and Vatican that soft power, in means of good governance model, diplomacy and political economy, represents 'virtual' enlargement of their presence and foreign policy reach.

### III. Slovak ODA system

The mechanism of the Slovak ODA was established in 2003, and in the first years, assistance of the CIDA as well as UNDP was crucial. Later on, in 2008, Slovakia was reclassified from an aid recipient to aid donor and the assistance was no more needed. Multilateral as well as bilateral cooperation became part of the aid budget allocations. Slovakia as a member of the EU as well as OECD/DAC shares the responsibility to devote a certain amount of budget to the ODA. The two main building blocks are represented by the bilateral and multilateral aid. Despite the fact that this thesis focuses predominantly on the development cooperation with Kenya, it is essential to compare these two and how they relate to each other. All in all, from 2003 until the 2013, an implementation of over 400 projects of a value of approximately 40 million EUR in almost 20 countries took place under the SlovakAid. (Medium-Term Strategy 2014) The country-focus and the financial volume have been constantly changing.

### III.I. Multilateral aid

In general, Slovakia is contributing majority of its aid budget, around 80%, to the multilateral aid. In comparison, the average contribution of the DAC countries for the multilateral aid is only around 26.2% (OECD 2017: 257), thus Slovakia figures very high on this list even though the volumes are nonetheless lower than those of larger countries. This type of ODA flows predominantly to the EU (included is also European Development Fund), the OECD/DAC, the UN, the World Bank Group or the European Investment Bank. As of 2017, the official ODA represented just 0.12% of GNI (thus 2nd lowest among DAC members, leaving behind only Hungary which joined DAC just very recently in 2016). Compared to a total of 0.31% for OECD/DAC, and the established target of the UN of 0.7%, Slovakia really falls behind with its commitments. All in all, the Slovak ODA contribution amounted just to 113 million USD, as of 2017, being the third lowest among the DAC members, right behind Slovenia and Iceland.<sup>1</sup> The latest Medium-Term Strategy (Strategy 2014) also acknowledges that Slovakia's ODA share is still not sufficient, as the target is 0.33%. Even though there is strong statement that “*The SR is determined to gradually meet these targets depending upon the development of the economic situation in the country*” (Strategy 2014: 6), there is no further elaboration on how this process could look like, nor any measure which are to be taken in order to achieve the percentage. Also, it is unclear what kind of economic situation would be suitable for Slovakia to increase this contribution.

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<sup>1</sup>

<http://www.oecd.org/development/development-aid-stable-in-2017-with-more-sent-to-poorest-countries.htm>

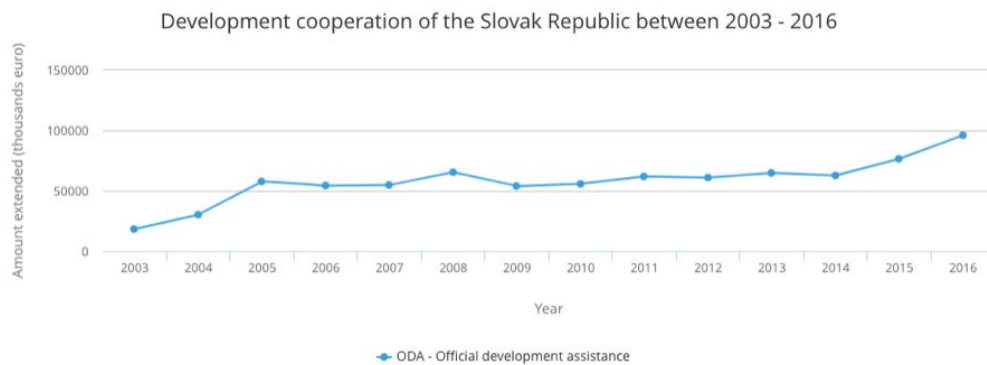


Table 1. Overview of Slovak ODA. Source: OECD. (see footnote 1)

The first graph shows the ODA flows over the years, since the establishment of the system in 2003. Since 2014, it seems that it is gradually rising despite a bit uneven past.

### III.II. Bilateral aid

The bilateral component of the Slovak ODA represents approximately 20% of the overall budget contribution. During 2014-2015, Kenya was number 3 recipient with 1.3 million USD, following Ukraine and Serbia. (OECD 2017: 258) Sub-Saharan Africa, however, only represented around 10% of the bilateral ODA share (1.6 million USD), while the Eastern Europe received 37% (7 million USD), thus staying a priority. (ibid, 258) On the other hand, in terms of geographic location and priorities, Africa is represented solely by Kenya and South Sudan, while the European region has 7 representatives and South/Central Asia is only represented by Afghanistan.

The first table represents the financial allocation to Kenya covering years from the start of the ODA mechanism up until 2012, covering 33 bilateral development projects. (CSP, 2014: 6-7)

The second table represents the financial allocations after joining the OECD/DAC, thus from 2013, up until 2016. Interestingly, while in the first case, the amount of aid reached around 6 million EUR over a period of 8 years, in next 4 years 5.1 million EUR was allocated to Kenya, thus a significant rise.

**Table 1. ODA SR for bilateral projects in Kenya (in thous. EURO)**

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	TOTAL:
79	128	396	258	633	680	1,244	1,424	1,114	5,956

Table 2. Overview of bilateral aid to Kenya I. Data source: CSP for Kenya 2014.

<b>Slovak Bilateral ODA to Africa (€)</b>				
Year/Country	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Kenya</b>	1 224 301	918 062	1 185 035	<b>1 804 595</b>
<b>South Sudan</b>	517 275	292 428	150 137	220 625

Table 3. Overview of bilateral aid to Kenya II. Data source: [slovakdev.sk](http://slovakdev.sk);

Design: own table.

The motivations for this case study, then, also considered these interesting facts.

## IV. Theoretical framework

The theoretical section of this thesis is divided into few sub-themes, each representing either a theory or a concept which would guide the analysis. The main research question is to explore *Why may the Slovak development cooperation with Kenya be perceived as soft power tool of its foreign policy*. In order to explore the proposed issue, theory plays an irreplaceable role as it guides the researcher and provides necessary “lens” through which one explains the phenomena. Based on a chosen theoretical position, the same issue may be investigated from different perspectives and thus provide different reasonings and outcomes. In this paper, social constructivism is selected as an overarching theory guiding the analysis, as it focuses on a role of ideas, identities, beliefs, interests and norms, and thus is more suitable for understanding the research problem than the 'traditional' IR theories of realism or liberalism. Moreover, small states, soft power and foreign policy are additional (and as will be shown also all quite intertwined) concepts which are to be applied and interconnected with social constructivism. The question(s) which would be led by the theoretical framework, besides the main research question, include: How did the foreign policy of Slovakia change on the basis of its transformation from aid receiver to aid donor and what are the implications of this change? What are the causes of foreign policy change? Why this form of foreign policy (development cooperation) became incremental?

### IV.I. Social constructivism

In international relations area, realism and liberalism have always been considered the traditional disciplines, while social constructivism has taken a

longer road to be established and recognized as a respected discipline ever since its enter into the IR world in the 1980s. It has brought a new way of looking at and interpreting various issues in the world politics, thus contributing significantly to the academic research and understanding of the reality. In general, there are two main beliefs that constructivism shares with (neo) realism & (neo) liberalism: that states occupy the central position in the international system and that their overarching goal is one of a survival. (Weber, 2010: 69) Constructivists are, at the same time, mainly critical of neoliberal and neorealist methodological individualism and their omission of state interests and of the “social fabric of world politics.” (Checkel, 1998: 324) An important difference between these theories, however, relates to the essence of the anarchical international system. “Anarchy is what states make of it”, as Alexander Wendt (1992) famously proclaimed and later on further developed the theory in his book ‘Social Theory of International Politics’ (1999), and this embodies perfectly the kind of world that constructivists believe in.

Constructivism mostly challenges the traditional IR theories by claiming that it is the social context (Checkel, 1998: 325-6; Checkel, 2008: 72), cognitive structures (Adler, 1997: 319) and also individuals and their ideas and identity (Houghton, 2007: 29-30) which provide meaning to material structures and capabilities as well as that it is in this kind of environment that the possibilities for agents to shape their interests arise. For constructivists, reality is socially constructed and therefore constantly changing, depending on the actors who shape it via their actions. Naturally then, anarchy is also dependent on how the agents “construct” it via engagement with each other and co-creation of the meanings and structures. Thus, it is this interaction of agents (state/non-states actors or individuals) with the structures of environment that constructs the world. (Checkel, 2008: 73) Ontologically, agents and structures are mutually constituted. (Checkel, 1998: 326) Consequently, the ideas, identities, and interests which make up the social world are not given but are likewise socially constructed. (Kubáľková, 1998) Therefore, social structures, and especially the



values and belief systems, constitute both identities and interests of various actors. (Reus-Smit, 2008)

The principal discussions surrounding constructivism have been also often based around its own “internal division”, relating to what is the “right” way of seeing and analysing phenomena, as well as the relevance and prominence within the IR. (Smith, 2001: 40; in Kubáľková, 2001) As Adler (1997: 320) noted, constructivism has suffered from the problem of unclarity and ambiguity and absence of one clear guiding framework. As a cause can be considered also several divisions among the social constructivists themselves. Constructivism is likewise seen by some as occupying “middle ground” between the two main intellectual positions in the IR theory, rationalist (liberal, realist) and reflexivist/interpretivist (critical, post-modernist/structuralist), and thus offering a new way of understanding of a role of ideas, beliefs, norms or identities. (Adler 1997, Wendt 1999 or Checkel 1998) For example Checkel (1998: 340-42) also criticizes constructivism for its structure-centered approach and lack of emphasis on individual agency (also the level of agents in general) and their weakness at the micro-level, e.g. in proper explanation of how agents connect with norms.

Nonetheless, despite some of the differences within, all strands of social constructivism agree on several fundamental points which are guiding for understanding of the world. The shared ontological ground is a view of social world as “intersubjectively and collectively meaningful structures and processes.” (Adler, 2012: 121) Here, firstly, both reality and knowledge are socially constructed. (Guzzini, 2000: 149, in Adler 2012: 113) Secondly, structures in the society are shaped by shared ideas and not solely by material forces. Thirdly, identities and interests are also co-dependent and shaped by shared ideas in the constructed reality. Wendt (pg.66 in Weber, 2010) argues that states as the primary actors create via relationships with others their own identities, which then become fundamental for their own interests. The emphasis in constructivism is thus on state’s identity, instead of just its

capabilities. Therefore, there is an important shift and change in what the states are capable of doing due to their position in structure, towards what they actually want to do due to “how they see themselves in relation to others” and identities are this way “harnessed to interests.” (Kubálková, 2001: 33) Moreover, states may create several identities for interactions with the rest of the actors, and these identities themselves are “representations of an actor’s understanding of who they are, which in turn signals their interest.” (Theys, 2017: 37)

Constructivists are also interested in *how* certain interests are constructed, not only in what these interests are. (own emphasis, Checkel, 2008: 72) According to Adler (1997: 337), “national interests are intersubjective understanding about what it takes to advance power, influence and wealth, that survive the political process, given the distribution of power and knowledge in a society.” Norms, change, power and knowledge are likewise central in constructivism. Norms form both interests and identities of the actors, thus they are collective understandings in their essence. (Checkel, 1998: 327-8) Adler (2012) highlights the change as an essential part of constructivism and that the always-changing social structures reflect these changes. Within, the identities, interests, beliefs and ideas are also constantly changing and co-creating the reality. Constructivist scholars have also elaborated on structures when it comes to culture and norms. (Checkel, 1998: 332-4 in Long, 2017:190) Power (made of resources, conditions and authority that determines meanings) is similarly essential in social reality construction (Adler, 1997: 336). In addition, by merging power and knowledge for partial explanation of the origin of (national) interests, constructivism is argued to seize the middle ground in this regard as well. (ibid, 336-7) Adler (1997: 324) thus summarizes the view of constructivists that “ [...] the identities, interests and behavior of political agents are socially constructed by collective meanings, interpretations and assumptions about the world.”

## IV.II. Social constructivism and Foreign Policy

Foreign policy making constitutes a fruitful ground from the constructivist perspective. Goldstein and Keohane (1993) discuss how (predominantly) the foreign policy decisions and outcomes may be explained by ideas. They define ideas as “beliefs held by individuals” that have an incremental role in influencing policy making and provide a guidance for decisions they are about to take. (ibid, 3) And once ideas become institutionalized, their effect is multiplied, yet, at the same time, ideas might as well be reflection of particular interests of the powerful (elites for example). (ibid, 21) All in all then, the combination of interests, power and human beliefs is suitable for understanding of ideas and explanation of policy outcomes. (ibid, 13) Merging social constructivism with the analysis of the foreign policy has been proposed by several authors. (Checkel 2008: 72; Ted Hopf (2002?); Houghton 2007)

Within FPA, the most prominent constructivists include Ted Hopf, Roxanne Doty or Jutta Weldes, who, again, see the combination of these two perspectives as possible and rewarding. (Houghton, 2007: 27) Houghton (2007) discusses the FPA and its inability to establish itself as a stable discipline in the area of the IR theories, and argues that merging with social constructivism may provide the most suitable starting point towards a new approach to FPA, although he proposes that it should be the cognitive psychological one.

Constructivism, on the other hand, also tries to merge back together agents and structures split which occurred between Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and International Politics (IP). (Kubálková, 2001: 22) FPA focuses on agents, thus decision-makers in the foreign policy field, while the IP focuses on the international systems structures, and therefore relations of states. (ibid, 15) Agents are referred to as persons (or states, if given this kind of agency by individuals) who are (capable of) making particular choices in a certain social setting. (ibid, 22) In addition, in FPA, states are the main actors, thus implying state-level analysis. (Smith, 2001: 38) Smith (2001: 44-45, 53 in Kubálková 2001) argues that when it comes to domestic foreign policy construction, the

reflectivist (Miami IR Group where for example Onuf belongs) stance lies more in alignment with Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), as both integrate rules, agents and institutions and analyze how these affect the choices by states as collective agents “governed by language, rules and choices” (52) in constructing foreign policy.

### IV.III. Soft power

Power represents one of the most contested and most imperative concepts in the International Relations. Traditionally, hard power has been argued to be vital for state and its ability to survive in the contested political realm, based chiefly on a realist perception. Dahl (1957: 202-3 in Long, 2017) provides one of the most well-known realist positions on power where “A has power over B to the extent he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.” Dahl (1957, in Long, 2017: 193) further argues that in order for state to achieve this kind of influence over another state, several power resources must be available, such as objects, opportunities or acts. On the other hand, power in liberal terms has been referred to as the ability to influence behavior of others without having to change their own. (Keohane and Nye, 1977: 91-8 in Long, 2017: 190) Those two traditional perceptions of power, however, have been criticized for their limited scope of definition and it is argued that hard power is not the only type of power through which states may gather influence and desired outcomes, as another source and type of power - soft power - has become equally, if not even more, relevant in today’s world politics.

Joseph Nye with his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990) introduced the concept of soft power into the area of international relations, and it has been ever since widely used for an analysis of the foreign policies of states. He distinguishes between hard and soft power,

where the former is in essence connected to material capacities - often the military and economic means - and thus relies on policies of “carrots and sticks”, while on the other hand, soft power may be characterized as the ability of “getting others to want the outcomes that you want.” (Nye, 2004: 5) Naturally, these values must be intriguing enough in order for others to let themselves be affected by them and thus making soft power successful. (ibid, 5) This type of power may then become essential for various areas, such as economy (open markets), international norms (human rights) as well as politics (democracy promotion). (ibid, 17) Similar rhetoric may be traced in the official statements and texts, where Slovakia promotes its values, such as democracy, rule of law, and functioning institutions and courts as well as it constantly relies on its own transition and transformation experience as a way of perhaps “justifying” its foreign policy aims. By highlighting its own ability to transform, it reflects also its gained values, acquired in the process. Joseph Nye distinguishes three kinds of power: economic, soft and military. Within soft power government policies belong the public diplomacy as well as bilateral & multilateral diplomacy, taking form in e.g. culture, values, institutions and various policies. (ibid, 31)

Avoiding coercion in the pursuit of policy goals, states should then rely on soft power sources. As Nye (2004: 6) notes, since influence may be achieved both through hard and soft power, the actual advantage of the soft variant of power lies in “the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence.” One of the aims is then to induce cooperation, or “an attraction to shared values and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of these values.” (ibid, 7) In addition, due to changing nature of processes in society, it is actually also the information sharing as well as politics that are increasingly important sources of power, attractiveness or credibility. (Nye, 2004: 31) According to Nye, the soft power is depending on three resources. These are a) foreign policies - when seen as “legitimate” & “having moral authority”); b) political values (“living up” to them both at home and also abroad); c) culture (“in places where it is attractive to others”) (Nye, 2004: 11) In summary, attraction

is essential and when employed ‘correctly’, it serves the interests of states without any use of coercion.

Since this thesis applies social constructivism as the main theory, it is necessary to elaborate on its stance on concept of power, too. Contrary to the two above-mentioned traditional power definitions, social constructivists argue that power of A over B and change of the latter’s behavior can be achieved, as to reflect own interests, without use of any actual material resources. (Szalai, 2014: 6) Since the reality is socially constructed, power must then be as well, and it can be said that its potential rests upon not only social context, but how much agency the agents involved give to it. As Guzzini (2005: 495) noted, “the meaning of power is always embedded in a theoretical context.” In addition, soft power & foreign policy has been especially prominent when it comes to public and cultural diplomacy. (Hall, 2010: 189)

When it comes to development aid, Nye (2004: ) categorized it as an economic and not soft power. However, in this thesis, it is argued that since my focus is predominantly on development cooperation and not just aid per se, it is more than just a financial instrument and thus it does not fit only within the economic category. All in all, it is a complex network of people, institutions and subjects that are involved on both ends.

Naturally, there has been also a critique of soft power as coined by Nye (2004). Todd Hall (2010) provides a substantial critique of Nye’s concept of ‘attraction’ as the main tool of soft power, and its three main sources - culture, foreign policy and political values, arguing that attraction is rather ‘ambiguous mechanism’ (ibid, 207) and problematic as an actual analytical tool. (ibid, 190) He instead proposes that soft power should be “replaced with a conceptualization of various soft powers rooted in different mechanisms which operate through discrete pathways.” (ibid, 211) Gallaroti (2011) elaborated on Nye’s soft power thesis, keeping attractiveness as basis, although using a term “endearment” instead. He also shares a view that the sources of soft power may

be both of material and non-material character. The difference, however, comes in theoretical reasoning, as Gallaroti places it in the constructivist and neoliberal theory, while Nye keeps it within realist realm. (Meričková, 2014: 189) Gray (2011: 32) argues that although soft power is important, it is unpredictable as it depends on how the others accept it, and that it would never replace the traditional hard power and especially military power. Mattern (2005 in Meričková 2014: 192) accepts the nonmaterial character of soft power and its roots in attractiveness, but adds coercion as one of its equally relevant elements. This is due to the fact that since each state is different and the context plays a huge role, when confronting each other, they often cannot find a common and shared position and thus try to convince, thus at the end coerce each other about their own truth.

#### IV.IV. Small states

Another essential theory employed in this thesis is one of small states. Over the decades, this area of International Relations has included various research on perspectives, roles and behavior of small states when it comes to their foreign policies and ways of navigating through the world affairs. Theory of small states is directly or indirectly intertwined with the the concept of power (both hard and soft) and together with social constructivism provides an excellent ground for a compact and complex analysis of the proposed research question. Even though small states behavior and foreign policies have not been in academic research as prominent as those of larger states, a significant contribution has been made nonetheless.

‘Smallness’ has been in the IR literature predominantly connected to lack of influence, power, capabilities and options in the world politics area. (Browning, 2006: 669) The challenges, ability to deal with them as well as a successful pursuit of foreign policy aims have thus been predominantly assigned to bigger

states and larger powers, while the smaller ones were rather seen as vulnerable and often dependent on the state of external conditions in the area of international relations. From a (neo)realist perspective, power is measured in relative terms and thus small states are associated with less power and with weakness, they depend considerably on the large states' actions and must be also preoccupied with survival more than bigger states. (Elman, 1995 in Browning, 2006: 670-672) Liberal scholars, on the other hand, argue that small states tend to support international institutions, also because it may provide them with options for influence. (Wivel 2005, in Browning 2006: 672)

Constructivism found its way to small state studies after the 1990, driven by changing power concept, including Nye's soft power, as well as concepts of structural and discursive power. (Szalai, 2014: 6) Ideas, norms or discourses related to power have been prominent in the constructivist theory, and especially when it comes to "norm entrepreneurs" within small states studies. (see Ingebritsen, 2002) Yet, just because state is small, it does not mean that its identity has to automatically be tied to actions limited in scope and capacities or any form of weakness. (Browning, 2010: 674) Therefore, it is a matter of perspective and how the actors define their capabilities and capacities within this frame. Or in the words of Browning (2010: 681), "the capacities available to self-proclaimed small states are also often as much a function of the resources understood to exist within an identity of smallness." Barnett and Duvall (2005: 52-55 in Long, 2017: 190) see interests as well as identities shaped by structures, yet mutually constituted. Thus, the interests of small states may not be the same as those of larger ones, as they will be under influence of mutually constituted norms. (Long, 2017: 190)

The categorization of small states in the academic literature differs extensively and there is no general consensus on what exact criterion may one use to put a certain state under such label. The criteria differ, but in general, it has been primarily focused on either defining what are the conditions on basis of which we can categorize states, or the discussion on how the small states may



establish their position in the world affairs (e.g. alliances vs bandwagoning). (Long, 2017) The discussions on criteria for categorization under the label of 'small state' often follow two streams, qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative approach is based on the amount of resources and thus the measure of a state is based on anything from GDP, area or population to military capabilities. (East 1973: 557; Vital 1967: 8-9). The qualitative, on the other hand, are connected to non-material capabilities.

Joenniemi (1998: 62 in Browning, 2006: 670) criticizes those categorizations as they do not tell us how the state may behave. From the research it seems detrimental to make distinction solely on basis of small and great/large and consequently make positive or negative attributions attached, as in line with positivist framework, but instead, it may be more suitable to go with the interpretivist methodology, which brings into forefront the actual understanding of the actors/states. (Browning, 2010: 674) Often, the problem with categorization of small states is in its "mainstream" view based on the limited and resource-based "compulsory" power understanding. (Barnett and Duval, 2005: 49-51, in Long, 2017). Proponents of this view are for example Mearsheimer (2001) or Morgenthau (1985), who see power to influence others and change their behavior through resources possession, despite the fact that having resources does not mean their transformation into capabilities is automatic and that these would consequently influence other actors. (Long, 2017: 188)

Since small states do not have the same capacities as do large states in relation to power, it is crucial for them to "specialize" in how they make use of their relationships as well as available resources. (Long, 2017: 187) Browning (2006: 673) argues that in order to gather a certain influence, small states may actually deliberately choose to be identified as 'small'. Moreover, the perception of small states may also be that they are more altruistic, have fewer 'hidden agendas', are more peaceful, or that their national interests are not as ambitious as those of larger states. (Nina Græger, Henrik Larsen and Hanna Ojanen (2002, 221) in Browning, 2010: 674) Chong (2010: 383) also presents a

view that “the anomalies inherent in small state power become an advantage when they are construed as symbolic strategies.” Moreover, Chong (2010: 385) states that being small may also become an actual tactic for a state in order to shed off the suspicion of bigger powers in regards to their motives. Tom Long (2017) explored a connection between small states and different power concepts and gaining influence. He argues that the power of the small states comes from three distinct categories: Firstly, derivative (based on a relationship with a great power), b) collective (coalition-building of supportive states (often via institutions), and c) particular-intrinsic (rests on the assets of the small state). He concludes that these sources of power are crucial, and especially for small states aiming at increasing their power and influence, and this may be done through relationships via institutions or coalitions. (ibid, 201)

When it comes to small states and their development cooperation policies, Hoadley (1980) examined how the provision of development aid differed for small state donors compared to the large ones, applying small states theory to policies of aid distribution. Using OECD/DAC members back from 1987 and dividing them into small and large state, he concluded that the small states usually provided aid more generously and in bigger amounts, their range of recipients was more narrow, they abode more in terms of international aid targets, provided more bilateral aid to the poorest countries as well as gave more aid via multilateral channels. However, since this quantitative study was conducted in 1976 and to author’s knowledge no other study of the similar kind has taken place since then, it leaves the space open for further research and comparison, as the number of DAC/OECD members grew from 17 to current 30 members, many of which are the new (and mostly small) EU member states, including Slovakia.

This ambiguity in the categorization as well as the definitions of small states thus results in a form of asymmetry. Sweden, Slovakia or Singapore may end up under label ‘small states’, yet their position and ability to influence is completely different. As a result of this asymmetry not only within the broader global states arena, but also the category of small states itself, these states may

also look for individual ways of affecting their position and power, besides the traditional involvement in various international bodies, forming alliances or bandwagoning. One of the ways of doing so may be represented by bilateral agreements. This thesis would thus analyze to a deeper extent this form of bilateral cooperation between Slovakia and Kenya, in order to explore the exercise of power and influence through the development cooperation.

## V. Methodological framework

This thesis employs a qualitative research, including case study and analysis of documents and interviews. After the preparation of documents as well as interviews, common themes were found and these became sub-headings for the analysis.

### V.I. Document Analysis

One of the essential parts of the qualitative research is the analysis of data from different sources, as the data in documents may be useful in providing additional insight, context, background, information and overall deeper understanding of a problem in question. (Merriam, 1988:118 in Bowen 2009: 29) Document analysis as a research method then refers to a process of “evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced and understanding is developed”. (Bowen, 2009: 33) Within, the documents are systematically processed and the data are put into categories and themes in order to investigate certain phenomena and gather knowledge. (Labuschagne, 2003 in Bowen, 2009: 28). This method is often part of a ‘triangulation’, a combination of a few methods and sources of evidence (such as participant

observation, interviews), which may not only bring credibility (as several sources are used), but researcher may avoid bias and questioning of a relevance. (Denzin, 1970, p. 291; in Bowen, 2009: 28). In this thesis, a combination of interviews and document & content analysis is believed to be sufficient enough to serve as a source of evidence for an analysis of the topic and credibility of the research.

**The primary official documents used for the document analysis:**

- The Concept of Involvement of Business Entities into Development Cooperation of the SR (2012)
- Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Development Cooperation with the Republic of Kenya for 2014-2018
- Medium-Term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the SR for 2014-2018; 2009-2013 & 2003-2008
- The Law on the Development Aid 2007
- The Law on the Development Cooperation 2015
- The Focus of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the SR for 2018
- Annual Report of the SAIDC (2016)

The above-mentioned documents were selected as they provide an official framework for the development cooperation of Slovakia (also with Kenya) and address the policies, strategies and goals of Slovakia. Besides the official documents, websites and the statements of the government officials closely related to the issue in question would be, too, included. Consequently, as mentioned before, common categories/themes around which the documents and other sources revolve would be identified and further analyzed, in a combination with the interviews.

The analyzed documents provide 5 main functions, based on Bowen's (2009: 29-31) listing:

- 1.) a context & background information: Each of the chosen documents addresses a different aspect of the development cooperation and its evolvement, challenges and visions and thus provide a stable ground for the analysis.
- 2.) a complementary material for questions that should be asked: providing a complex overview of the development cooperation agenda, the information within likewise served as an additional point of reference for interviews, as it stimulated a production of new questions.
- 3.) an extra research data: the analysis would not be possible without including and de-constructing the official documents in question.
- 4.) the means of tracking change and development: the documents have been published over time, starting from 2003, up until the most recent one from 2018, thus providing an opportunity to compare and see evolvement and change in policies as well as the rhetoric.
- 5.) verifying the findings or confirming other-sources evidence: together with interviews and previous research papers published in relation to the topic, an evaluation, comparison and consequently an establishment of a solid argument and evidence for the case is possible.

## V.I.I Limitations

Naturally, there are certain limitations to document and content analysis and the context in which it was conducted. Firstly, one must ask a certain set of questions related to the documents themselves. Who they were produced for? When? With what purpose? Also, what kind of data are encompassed within? There are certain biases which are always present and should be addressed. Some of the documents were only available in the Slovak language, which indicates that the primary audience is not of an international background, and may also signalize that it may not be prioritized enough as a policy. Closely tied is also the problem of translating. It is never completely possible to preserve the original rhetoric once the translation is conducted, as it is based primarily on the researcher and the abilities to preserve as much from the

original source as possible. Similarly, since the documents which were analyzed are official, their primary audience would most likely fall into category of decision-makers within the field, and perhaps less the wider audience or even academia. Another limitation is the subjectivity. Since the researcher bears the research aim and question in mind, he/she approaches the texts with a partial bias as there is a strategic search for a particular evidence for the research question, and thus a complete objectivity is perhaps unachievable.

## V.II. Semi-structured Interviews

A final methodological part would include (mostly) semi-formal qualitative interviews with representatives from the related area of the thesis focus. Certainly, there are certain ethical standards which are to be upheld while conducting interviews. American Anthropological Association<sup>2</sup> provides suitable guidelines which I will follow. They include, based on the National Research Council, for example: informal consent from participants, informing them on nature of case study and formally gaining their approval; protection from harm and deception of those participating; protect privacy and confidentiality; selecting participants equitably so no group is excluded and so on. (Yin, 2014: 78)

The interviews were conducted with experts from the field and occupying the very top positions within their organization/agency. They were conducted: in person with two representative from the SAIDC and one from the representative of The Slovak NGDO Platform, via Skype with a representative from the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Nairobi and the questions were answered in electronic form also by representative from the MFEA.

The reason for conducting semi-structured interviews is the flexibility offered when leading the conversation. There is no strict limit to a certain set of

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.americananthro.org/ParticipateAndAdvocate/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=1895>

questions and this also allow for asking follow-up questions, which are equally important, as they may provide extra desired information. (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) After conducting the interviews, transcribing follows. Since the language of the conversation was Slovak, after transcription a translation of relevant parts into English would be included. Next step is coding and consequent categorization into similar themes/topics relevant for the analysis and occurring in both interviews and document analysis, providing synchronization. The interviews serve as complementary to document analysis and they provide additional “human” factor and explanation of policies and the ways things are constructed.

### V.II.I Limitations

During the week of conducting the interviews in Bratislava, Slovakia, a Peer Review of the DAC/OECD was taking place, and thus, I was not able to arrange an interview with an representative of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. An alternative was offered - answering the questions electronically. Although this is not the best way of gathering information, the communication with the Ministry representatives was rather complicated and there was not much of a willingness to participate. I acknowledge that this represents a hurdle and limitation for this research, as the interview in person is the most relevant form of obtaining the necessary data and information. Another limitation is that during this time, there was a government crisis due to some domestic protests and this might have also affected the willingness of the MFEA representative to meet.

### V. III. Qualitative case study research

Contemporary case study research, with origins in qualitative research, has been present in the research studies for over 50 years, yet it has only rather slowly established itself as respected methodology, used in a number of disciplines ranging from the social sciences to health or law. (Harrison et al., 2017: 1) Case studies, naturally, differ when it comes to their aims, characteristics as well as final outcomes and their overall role and contribution is often a subject of discussions as to what they are and the gap between theory and practice. (Vennesson, 2014: 225) To Gerring (2007: 20) the case study is “the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is - at least - in part - to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)”. The emphasis, it can be argued, is then in most of the definitions on the importance of the in-depth single-case study with implications for a more general class of cases. Two important issues, sample-bias as well as generalizability, however, should always be considered in a single case study, therefore each chosen case ought to be carefully thought-through. (Gerring, 2007: 84, 145, 149) A research design then links to-be-collected data with questions related to the study, while theory helps to strengthen the design when doing case-study research, and having good theory helps also with generalization. (Yin, 2014: 26)

In general, there are two predominant perspectives in regards to case studies and process tracing. The positivist (King, Keohane and Verba 1994) and interpretivist (Burawoy 1998) conceptions represent two ends, while there are also few authors who hold a middle ground (Brady and Collier 2004; Gerring 2007). For the purpose of this thesis, the interpretivist approach would be employed. In this type of study, the cases are explained based on the theoretical framework, with possibility of modification of theories. (Vennesson, 2008: 227-228) Moreover, here the interest lies not only in the “why” question, but also in “how” the investigated phenomena occurred. Likewise, since we always interpret the data we encounter, the techniques of getting evidence are interpretative. (Gerring, 2007: 69) The goal is to understand intentions of the actions of various actors within their social actions, from their point of view.



(ibid, 71) Since constructivism is used as an overarching theory with its emphasis on socially constructed reality and thus interpretations, the case study research design fits well, as it equally aims at seeking the understanding of an issue at stake, through interviews and document analysis as methods. (Creswell, 2013; in Harrison et al, 2017: 6)

Naturally, the research design developed by individual researchers had created a space for critique of this methodological approach as being confusing, perhaps too flexible and without proper single guidelines for conduct and the issues of applicability or generalization have been raised equally. (Harrison et al, 2017: 1) Among other problems of the single-case study research methodology are also often provided the bias in cases selected, free-form, non-replicability, non-generalizable theories, subjective conclusions or weak empirical leverage. (Gerring, 2007: 6; see more: King, Keohane and Verba 1994) All these need to be considered carefully while conducting case study research in order to eliminate potential hurdles. On the other hand, however, as social constructivism is used as a main theory, claiming the reality as socially constructed, the concern for generalizability should not be at the forefront. Reflexivity may be more suitable in this regard. Moreover, Stake (1995: 4) advises to use case study based on three main criteria: to maximize our understanding and learning, be easy to get to and finally, the context and uniqueness. As Stake (1995: 8-9) argues, the purpose of case study is not generalization, but rather particularization, which means that we try to thoroughly understand one particular case in its essence, “what it is, what it does.” Interpretation is absolutely crucial, and researcher’s interpretations usually prevail over those studied, yet he/she should aim at keeping a space open for contradictory views. (Stake, 1995: 12)

## VI. Context of the development cooperation between Slovakia & Kenya

Before proceeding with the analysis, it is appropriate to provide a context and main motives behind focusing on Kenya in this case study. The guiding question is then *Why did Kenya become a priority ODA country for Slovakia?* A partial answer is provided already in the existing documents, but the interviews also helped in giving more insight and reasonings behind. Firstly, already one year after the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic in 1993, thus in 1994, Slovak Embassy in Nairobi was opened. Consequently, since the mid-1990s, various Slovak NGOs started to make a presence in Kenya. As it turns out, these two factors were crucial for development of bilateral ties between Slovakia and Kenya, having a long-term implications. Among the first NGOs operating in Kenya was eRko, who through private funds helped the street children in Nairobi. Some others were present too, side by side with Christian missionaries. The functioning mechanism of the ODA provision was established in 2003 and the first Medium-Term Concept for ODA for 2003-2008 already included Kenya as one of the territorial priority countries. In the second and third Medium-Term Strategies, Kenya figured already as a program country, which means that it moved up towards a category which is considered the most important.

In 2013, the bilateral Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Kenya on Development Cooperation entered into force. In 2014, the Memorandum of Understanding on Nuclear Science and Technology Cooperation was likewise signed. Slovakia thus found itself among the countries like China, South Korea and Russia, who signed MoU as well. This is certainly impressive for a small country with limited resources and expertise, and when asked on this, the MFEA

Representative confirmed that: “*The signing was mainly due to a strong position in the country and well-developed relations, influenced by, but not only, development cooperation.*” (e-mail communication, 2018) Moreover, in 2014, the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) was introduced, being one of the first of its kind for a specific country in the Visegrád 4 Group. Finally, likewise in 2014, Development Diplomat to Kenya has been appointed for the first time. Despite previous research pointing out towards Slovakia’s trend of orientation towards the Western Balkans or the Eastern Partnership countries, as it becomes clear further in the analysis, Africa has also found its prominence in the Slovak development cooperation agenda.

The role of embassy in the bilateral ties formation between Slovakia and Kenya was defining, which is confirmed throughout the documents as well as in all of the interviews. The role is not only in coordinating of all the activities with other donors, partners and government institutions (CSP, 2014: 6), but also with organizations and local communities (Bilateral Focus, 2018: 6). Moreover, as the Representative of the Platform articulated: “[...] *in terms of foreign policy, it is then more convenient for the MFEA to be active in a country where it has an embassy.*” (Interview n. 1, 2018) This was emphasized also in relation to establishment of business entities thanks to presence of the embassy: “[...] *the embassy is a place, where a space is created for entrepreneurs and for a search for contacts*” (Interview n.1, 2018)

Language proximity was highlighted as another factor, as the Representative from the Platform of the NDGOs stressed, as it was easier back in the mid-1990s to work in anglophone than francophone countries. On the other hand, later in the interviews, the same Representative listed this as a current disadvantage, as the former 'colonial powers' have huge presence in those anglophone countries (thus also in Kenya), making it harder for Slovakia to be ‘visible’ enough. Stability and safety were listed as another factor contributing to the choice of Kenya. This may be observed in the CSP as well, where, since the presence was already established, making cooperation “*more intense*”, at the same time, “Kenya confirmed its important role as *a stabilizing factor* in the region of Eastern Africa.” (CSP, 2014: 1) Thus, “*it was a natural step that*

*Kenya has become one of the territorial priorities of SlovakAid and over the time it has proved its legitimacy.” (ibid, 1) Among other contributing factors the Platform Representative accentuated its good geographical location, accessibility and relative good level of development.*

To summarize the primary reasons for the start of bilateral cooperation with Kenya, the Embassy and presence of NGOs since the 1990s served as a ground for building up a complex structure of subjects through the development aid and cooperation activities. As the Representative from SAIDC put it: “ [...] we, as Slovakia, would make ourselves more visible, as we would not start there, 'on a green meadow', we would simply build on the previous experience.” (Interview n.2, 2018).

## VII. ANALYSIS

After the introduction, a brief overview of the system of the ODA of Slovakia and the general context, presentation of the methods and the theoretical framework, and reasons why Kenya became program country and thus a ground for this case, the analysis as the most vital part of this thesis will follow. The primary research question is:

***Why may the Slovak development cooperation with Kenya be perceived as a soft power tool of its foreign policy?***

In order to investigate the reasons, official documents and statements related to development cooperation were combined with the interviews conducted with the officials from the leading agencies/bodies when it comes to ODA & development cooperation in Slovakia. The analysis is guided by several themes

which occurred in both of the above-mentioned types of data collection as well as by the theoretical framework which was set out earlier.

## VII.I. Soft power: attraction through THE experience

Soft power has, according to Nye (2004) three main sources - culture, political values and foreign policy - and its main aim is to induce cooperation through attraction. Slovakia as a small state has not only limited resources, but must also be attentive with its foreign policy choices in order to achieve its goals. And since foreign policy encompasses interests of states and strategies for their achievement, it is essential to discover what are the main interests and how they are achieved.

The development cooperation with Kenya has evolved over the years, due to several internal as well as external impulses, which shaped not only this relationship, but especially Slovakia's ideas, interests and its own identity. Through the analysis of the primary documents relating to development cooperation, the most visible emphasis was placed on the 'transformation' or 'transition' experience which Slovakia went through and the consequent comparative advantage acquired from this specific experience. Firstly, during the 1990s, it was the transition from socialism to democracy and market economy, and connected to it were all kinds of structural reforms. Secondly, another transformation was one from an aid beneficiary to aid donor, which could be connected more to identity change. Both of these are, however, quite intertwined. Naturally, certain implications arise from this experience, and especially in terms of identity change.

To return back to the central question of the development cooperation as a soft power tool and the reasonings behind, this identity change, and the consequent change of policies are imperative. Social constructivism elaborates on the role of ideas which also shape identities and interests. In this case, Slovakia's

journey towards the membership in either EU or OECD/DAC may be seen as central idea and interest, and after gradually achieving these, priorities and identity changed and well. Despite the fact that by joining the above-mentioned bodies, Slovakia was indirectly ‘forced’ to create an ODA mechanism and start contributing to the EU budget for multilateral aid, the country has slowly accommodated itself with the obligations and set up its own bilateral cooperation with certain countries. More confidence, ambitions and different interests have been in play throughout the years and these affected the foreign policy decision and priorities. Vital in this case is also why certain small states, such as Slovakia, choose to develop bilateral ties through development cooperation with certain other states. The choice of Kenya was explained in the previous chapter and provided a solid ground for a further investigation of evolvement of this relationship and why this cooperation may be seen as a soft power tool of Slovakia’s foreign policy.

Since there is only one official paper - Country Strategy Paper - relating to the development cooperation between the two countries, other documents were analyzed as well, as Kenya falls under the category of a program country and thus it is affected by these completely. As mentioned in the beginning, this ‘unique’ Slovak experience and transfer of knowledge acquired throughout this transformation seems to be a dominant and defining factor occurring in all of the documents. Most of the time, it is framed as Slovakia’s ‘comparative advantage’ and one of the most essential tools in the ODA provision as well as cooperation. Often, a contrast to the ‘old’ or ‘traditional’ or ‘Western’ donors is also present, and Slovakia’s experience is reasoned as ‘unique’ and specific, as something that distinguishes it from the other donors. Officially established in 2011, it is formulated under ‘CETIR’ (Centre for Experience Transfer from Integration and Reforms), and represents one of the “*flexible tools of bilateral development cooperation of the SR*” (Annual Report, 2016: 15), which aims at sharing the experience from the transformation as well as from the implementation of various reforms.

In general, all three Medium-Term Strategies (from 2003-2018) include the transition experience & sharing as one of the fundamental ODA tools. The first Strategy set up the pace. *“The SR has a unique experience, which the traditional donors do not have.”* (Medium-Term Strategy 2003: 4) Not only is there an emphasis on how this makes Slovakia different, but also that it is in comparison to the other donors who do not possess this sort of advantage. For a small state, it is important to find something ‘special’ that separates it from others and that may be used to its own benefit. Concluded was, at the end, that this provides the country with a certain advantage and *“Slovakia can be a fully pledged member of donor community only with a consistent application of its comparative advantages.”* (Medium-Term Strategy 2003: 10) Back in 2003 when this first Strategy was published, Slovakia was only preparing itself for joining the EU and other international bodies, organizations and institutions, thus the experience was mostly tied to the reforms it went through when moving towards democracy and market economy. Therefore, it may be argued that the emphasis on this experience could have served as a ground from which to take off.

In the second Strategy, a change in rhetoric may be observed: *“Thanks to this experience, Slovakia has a specific position in the international donor community.”* (Medium-Term Strategy 2009: 5) Since at that time Slovakia was already a member of the EU as well as Schengen Area and even adopted EUR as its currency, it has situated itself in the international community and started to present itself more confidently. Meanwhile, in 2008, the World Bank officially reclassified Slovakia from aid recipient to aid donor, despite the fact the the ODA mechanism was fully at play already from 2003, but this mostly meant that the country stopped receiving money for domestic reforms and recovery. The transformation experience is portrayed as something that grants Slovakia a unique place among the donors. Additionally, this could also be interpreted as that Slovakia now possesses a particular role based on this experience, and that it should share it with its development partners. Norms, in social constructivism, are essential as well as they also form identities and

interests of the actors. In this case, norm is represented by provision of the development assistance and by development cooperation. Therefore, in order to become respected and fully-integrated member of the international community, Slovakia had to develop its own development aid mechanism.

Finally, in the latest Medium-Term Strategy, it is stated ambitiously that “ [...] *Slovakia is already acting as a donor country. The strategy for development cooperation of the SR, therefore, bears in mind the new position, new tasks and new responsibilities.*” (Medium-Term Strategy, 2014: 4) As at this point Slovakia was already part of the OECD/DAC (joined in 2013) and established itself in the donor community over the last 10 years, it is making the statement to reflect this. And especially the newly acquired position in the DAC club provided an extra motivation as well as obligations. Further on, the vision of Slovakia as of a contributor to sustainable development is underlined to be built on “[...] *historical experience and specific story of the country which has gone through difficult and successful transformation process*” and in order to achieve the vision, the main supporting “tools” for doing so are: the *transformation experience*, the *experience of being an aid recipient* and lastly, successful integration into international organizations. (own emphasis, Medium-Term Strategy 2014: 7) All in all, in the three most important documents and guiding documents on Slovak ODA strategies framing the development cooperation, this transformation experience is portrayed as not only giving Slovakia comparative advantage and an additional value, but also making the country different from the rest of the ‘traditional’ donors.

On the other hand, it is also important to add that there is a slight discrepancy not only among some of the documents, but also among interviews and documents, too, when it comes to sharing of this form of transformation with Kenya, which is in a sense intriguing, as it is one of the essential tools employed and highlighted all along. In four interviews & one e-mail communication, when asked about sharing of this experience in relation to Kenya, four out of five representatives claimed that it does not really apply, and



that it is predominantly the Western Balkans or the Eastern-Partnership countries which are the primary beneficiaries. Emphasis on those regions in terms of sharing of the transformation experience is also highlighted in the Focus of the Bilateral Cooperation for 2018 (Bilateral Focus, 2018: 6)

However, this contrasts the official CSP for Kenya, as well as parts in the newest Strategy. In the latest Medium-Term Strategy of 2014-2018, for the first time, specific sectoral priorities were listed under each program country. For Kenya, these became healthcare, education, agriculture and good governance. And as stated within the last one (good governance), “*by sharing Slovak transformation and reform experience*”, Slovakia can contribute to achievement of the sub-goals falling under this priority. (Medium-Term Strategy 2014: 13) In the Country Strategy Paper for Kenya, the main objectives of the Slovak development cooperation with Kenya are listed to be: health, youth unemployment, poverty reduction, food security and democratic system, rule of law and good governance as well as “*the implementation of reforms, with a special focus on sharing the Slovak transitional experience.*” (CSP, 2014: 2)

Continuing further, it is stated that Slovakia decided to focus on the social and economic pillars, these including health, education and training, agriculture and the rule of law, security, peace building and conflict management, predominantly due to “*Slovak comparative advantages, as well as experience gained from the past Slovak development cooperation.*” (ibid, 9) Likewise, in the area of health, the aim is to grant “*Slovak health activities will as well seek to establish cooperation [...] to enhance capacity building of national institutions and transfer of Slovak experience in providing healthcare . These activities can be implemented through CETIR.*” (ibid, 10) It thus seems obvious that the sharing of the experience in various fields (not just political or economic) is vital and Slovakia constantly stresses that it has certain advantages which are beneficial to Kenya, based on the experience the country went through.

This is also very clear in the overall framing of the CSP for Kenya, where three main pillars with sub-goals are defined, reflecting Kenya's Vision 2030 priorities. Slovakia then highlights where its comparative advantage is situated under each pillar areas and where it could provide necessary expertise. For example, in Social Pillar under Education and Training part: *“Because of the strong Slovak experience in vocational training [...] this includes supporting the provision of sufficient numbers of skilled teachers - which is a major issue not only in Kenya [...] in the following year Slovakia will actively address the shortcoming through education and training of teachers.”* (CSP, 11) Thus, Slovakia makes itself attractive by stating that it has strong experience in the particular area, which is underdeveloped in Kenya, and thus may provide necessary skills for solving the problem, while on the other hand, for Kenya, this may be attractive as it is something that they want too. Attraction to shared values is one of the pre-conditions of success of soft power and Slovakia exercises it as well.

Finally, in the Political Pillar, among the main objectives of the SR is to *“contribute to stronger democratic political system, rule of law, good governance and the implementation of reforms, with a special focus on sharing the Slovak transitional experience.”* (ibid, 15) Within, one of the specific objectives is to *“share Slovak transitional experience to support and accelerate ongoing reform processes in Kenya in the area of democratic governance and the rule of law.”* (ibid, 15) Moreover, *“reform of the security sector (SSR) represents another added value that Slovakia has to offer.”* (ibid, 15) Here it is also underlined that: *“The objectives will primarily be implemented through CETIR as a separate ODA programme aimed at transferring Slovak transformation and integration experience to partner countries.”* (ibid, 15) Since Slovakia went through the transformation process and acquired certain knowledge, skills and capacities, it claims that it has also necessary expertise which is required in order to assist Kenya in achievement of the desired goals in particular areas, and this is what makes Kenya attracted. The vision of

achievement of shared values is what sustains the attraction and makes the soft power through this development cooperation exercised.

In connection to the SSR sector, the Minister of the Foreign and European Affairs, Miroslav Lajčák at the official visit of Kenya made a following statement: *“We do not come here as mentors who would like to pontificate – we want to share our experiences from the processes we went through, which you are facing. One of the areas where we can offer our expertise is security sector reform (SSR)...”*<sup>3</sup>

Firstly, not only did this statement highlight the sector where Slovakia has an advantage (SSR), but Minister also made it more ‘personal’ by stressing its importance, while at the same time granting Kenya that Slovakia has what Kenya lacks and desires, and is ready to share it. All in all, as one may observe, it is stated multiple times that this experience is to be used in those three pillars and specific areas. On the other hand, however, nowhere throughout the documents is any specific explanation provided as to what is exactly encompassed in this experience. Therefore, it is even harder to assess to what extent this experience may be shared. All in all, however, one may notice that while in the primary strategic paper for Kenya this experience is regarded as a building bloc, the interviewees were mostly negative about the actual applicability of it in the context of Kenya.

From the interviewed officials, only the Embassy Representative elaborated on the transformation experience sharing and its potential benefit and applicability in Kenya, offering quite a different understanding, stating that: *“ [...] if we take the Slovak experience [...] I would formulate it that it is like a ‘human experience’ [...] how we gathered these experiences and knowledge also ‘through generations’. And we bring those here. But there is a lot of ‘human’*

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[https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/ministry/minister/activities/-/asset\\_publisher/nNnVuDsSsgB1/content/lajcak-in-kenya-ssr-is-a-way-to-identify-and-get-ready-for-future-security-challenges-/10182](https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/ministry/minister/activities/-/asset_publisher/nNnVuDsSsgB1/content/lajcak-in-kenya-ssr-is-a-way-to-identify-and-get-ready-for-future-security-challenges-/10182)

*factor in it, so human attitude and the way we communicate ...”* (Interview n. 4, 2018) Soft power is also about attracting to certain values, and by making the transformation look ‘personal’, it is also easier to create connection. Since this inconsistency between the statements of the officials during the interviews and the official documents, this may signal that the development cooperation policies may be different on paper and different in reality.

To conclude, the ability to attract rests in Slovakia’s transformation experience, which provides it with a comparative advantage, which is Slovakia 'willing' to share with Kenya, and thus create attraction towards the acquired knowledge and expertise during the process, and which at the same time, are aligned with Kenya’s 2030 Vision and its main aims. If then the attractiveness of Slovakia is based on its transformation experience, which encompasses some shared goals (successful economic reforms, democratic system or rule of law and others) with the partner country, it may serve for Slovakia’s own benefit and pave a way for national interests. There might seem to be a shared interest in certain goals and values and since Slovakia has ‘means’ for achieving these (the transformation experience), it helps in inducing cooperation and advancing foreign policy goals.

## VII. II. Scholarships and Volunteers

Exercise of soft power of Slovakia through development cooperation may be also observed in regards to official government scholarships and the involvement of volunteers. Slovakia began to offer its government scholarships to Kenya back in 2004, and since then, more than 40 Kenyan student were able to receive this modality, and Kenya still tops the list of the main recipients.<sup>4</sup> In the CSP (2014: 18), the program of government scholarships is listed as one of the implementation tools of the bilateral cooperation. Here, under social pillar

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/kena-je-najvacsim-prijemcom-rozvoj/243111-clanok.html>

and part on Education and Training, it is stated that Kenya is still rather weak in this sector and thus Slovakia may provide assistance in the field of its needs as “*underprivileged university students will be supported through governmental scholarships for studying at Slovak universities.*” (ibid, 11) This portrays Slovakia in almost ‘altruistic’ light as it offers scholarships for a very vulnerable group, and at the same time, it creates attraction for Kenya as (access to) good education is ‘universal’ value which is desired by every country for its own citizens. Yet, when looking closely on the conditions under which the scholarships are offered, it is clear that Slovakia has a benefit for itself too, although indirectly.

Legislatively, § 10 / 2015 of the Law (Law on Dev. Cooperation, 2015) mentioned requirements for the government scholarships to citizens of partner country, however, the condition for receiving this form of government support is that the perspective student must either already know Slovak language, or must enroll into preparation language course, which usually lasts one year. One may thus see the changes in the foreign policy in this area as well. While in the 2007 Law on the development aid the program of government scholarships was not included, within the newly approved Law of 2015, it figures among the main tools of the ODA and is legislatively rooted and states actual requirements. Moreover, despite the fact that it is acknowledged that promoting education in the partner countries may be more effective, Slovakia still currently bases the specializations for the studies on its own sectoral priorities for the country. (Medium-term Strategy, 2014-2018: 17) In addition, since language is also considered part of culture, an indirect influence in this sense is there as well.

Complementary, in the Bilateral Strategy (2018: 8), it is stated that the program of government scholarships is a “*traditional form of Slovak ODA*” (likewise is stated in the latest Medium-term Strategy 2014-2018 on pg. 17) and that “*the choice of countries would reflect the foreign policy priorities as well as challenges in the international environment.*” Thus, it is explicitly highlighted

that this program is connected to foreign policy goals, and by providing stipends to Kenya, it signals certain interest. The Respondent from the Embassy also elaborated on the important role of the government scholarships as the Kenyan students really spend years at the Slovak universities, and thus “ [...] *the transfer of the Slovak element is really strong there [...]*” (Interview n.4, 2018) Positive image of the country and the values it represents is what soft power also aims at. The benefit is then even multiplied and Slovakia has a win-win situation in this case. First of all, not only does it portray itself for both Kenya & international community in a positive light, as it offers this possibility as a part of its development cooperation agenda, but also as education and language may be considered a part of culture, and that is one of the soft power sources, it is also indirectly a political aim.

In the Annual Report of the SAIDC for 2016, the program of sending volunteers and development experts is likewise highlighted as one of the forms of the ODA, as “besides cooperation with young people and building national capacities it supports *the creation of partnerships and institutional relations*, allowing young people to acquire inter-cultural experience and it assists in *knowledge transfer.*” (SAIDC Report, 2016: 10) Kenya also became in 2015 a number one destination for the Slovak volunteers heading to the ODA-receiving countries, altogether 19, sent by 7 different NGOs. One may observe that instead of focusing on the benefits of the receiving partner country, the official discourse focuses more on the gains of the sending one. Knowledge transfer as well as new partnership-making are especially worth of highlighting as these are again connected to the main argument of why the development cooperation may be seen as soft power tool of foreign policy. Naturally, the scope of finances, but also number of scholarships available or a number of volunteers sent reflects the size of the country. Small states as Slovakia may devote only limited resources for pursuit of its own goals, yet it tries to do it the way that it brings some profit as well.

### VII. III. Slovakia as a small state: (being seen as) doing good

Based on the “traditional” quantitative as well as qualitative merit, Slovakia may be categorized as a small state. Development cooperation may, therefore, represent a way for making itself visible and build up a good image based on this relationship. Emphasis on the visibility and good external perception due to the development cooperation effort in Kenya has been highlighted in all of the interviews. Possible reasons for these may be two-fold. Firstly, on the local level, Slovakia wants to be “seen” and the achievements under its logo of SlovakAid to be properly recognized by those involved. Secondly, on the international level, since there is a huge presence of the donors from other countries as well as various meetings and conferences take place both in Kenya and at the EU level, Slovakia also aims at being “visible” as a committed ODA provider and partner. Thus, the benefit is not just on the state level, but equally on the international. Therefore, it is argued that through development cooperation with Kenya, Slovakia is able to amplify its own prestige as well.

In terms of documents, *Visibility* is listed as one of the five main principles of the bilateral development cooperation (Bilateral Focus, 2018: 3). Further on, in the Focus of the Bilateral Development Cooperation for 2018, the document elaborates on how the brand SlovakAid must be not only beneficial for the partner country, but also “*visible enough*” (ibid, 3). In addition, the role of the embassies/consulates is also to “*in the utmost extent possible integrate an official logo of the SlovakAid brand into the communication and representation activities.*” (ibid, 3) Both Laws on development aid (§ 7 & § 10 /2007) and cooperation (§ 4 / 2015) also stated the requirement for the organs involved in ODA implementation to use SlovakAid logo in all of the employed activities. Thus, by making it even legally embedded, the importance of the SlovakAid logo has been established, which has been confirmed by the interviews as well.

This was also reflected in the second Medium-Term Strategy, where during the ODA implementation, logo is to be used. (Medium-Term Strategy, 2009: 6)

The SAIDC Representative highlighted the dwelling on the use of logo, too: *“We basically have an obligation when implementing a project from our budget, from SlovakAid, that they have to give tables SlovakAid on everything. So the projects must always be labelled, but it also depends on whether it is an investment project or other projects. For example, when you build a school, then there would be a table that it was built from SlovakAid right away, but if you train someone, it is going to be hanging on the doors somewhere, but then they put it down. So that is the difference.”* (Interview n. 3, 2018) One may accordingly interpret this as an emphasis on visibility that a particular project/object was financed by SlovakAid. Also, the second part of the quote means that it is not just about the material things, but also about knowledge sharing which is transferred, and which is hard to be kept seen. On the other hand, knowledge and information sharing is also a source of soft power. In addition, in the Business Strategy of 2012, it is stated that *“Slovak firms increase their own credibility in the receiving country by sponsoring projects and activities under SlovakAid brand...”* (Business Strategy, 2012: 6) This means that the brand must be well-received and well-established as it holds a promise of credibility for Slovak business entities when adopting projects under SlovakAid.

Interestingly, the first two Medium-Term Strategies use the term “Official development assistance/aid”, while the third Strategy uses term “Development Cooperation”, thus one can see the change in rhetoric as well. This was also noted during the interview with the Representative from the Embassy of Slovakia in Nairobi: *“[...] I hear that you use the term “development aid”, yet it would be better if you used “development cooperation” instead, [...] as you know, it evolved from the aid to cooperation [...] it is a word that gives others the capacity to get involved, as we also talked, also to entrepreneurs. For them it is also better when they hear they are gonna cooperate rather than to just*



help.” (Interview n. 4, 2018) This has two elements: there has been a clear change in the international communities in terms of 'wording' and Slovakia would like to reflect that as well, plus there is specific emphasis on the business sector and how they perceive this difference, too. The Embassy Representative followed then: *“Maybe it is like a ‘theory’ when it comes to words, but in reality, it really works like this and OECD also stresses that we talk about ‘cooperation’ and OECD .. as we had now Peer Review, rates exactly this ‘agenda’.”* (Interview n. 4, 2018) This signals a strong interest to oblige with the international ‘standards’ set by the international bodies and reflect changes on the international level as well as how much emphasis is Slovakia placing on positive perception.

One of the questions asked during the interviews also concerned the benefit of Slovakia from the development cooperation. The answers shared a common thread, which is a positive reputation, visibility and prestige. When it comes to the country-level advantage, the Embassy Respondent underlined that:

*“Definitely the results that we monitor in particular sectors, they are well-known on the provincial level [...] they register that Slovak project exists there, so not just the know-how, but the country itself, the reputation and prestige of the country is there. And when you move it to a higher level, then all kinds of high-level meetings bear you certain fruit, as they can ‘categorize’ you, they know that it is a partner who was able to achieve this and this [...] this can bring that effect when talking about bilateral business, bilateral relations, so this without any dispute contributes and rises the publicity of Slovakia. And now we talk about Eastern Africa, so Kenya, which is really a huge player in the Horn of Africa, which means that in the neighborhood of the countries such as Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania, which also have their own prestige, but Kenya is the best performer in terms of economy. So on the basis of that you then gain very important positions. So that is good.”* (Interview n. 4, 2018)

This reflects that Slovakia, again, also benefits from the development cooperation, as through the development projects, it also secures for itself 'important positions' and becomes part of the high-level meetings with other states from the donor community. It can be then said that for a small state like Slovakia, it is significant to not only 'sit at the table' with the big donors, but also have a 'say' in the discussed issues, while at the same time build an image and prestige, too. And development cooperation allows this.

The Representative from the SAIDC was equally vocal about this form of benefit: *"And if we have any benefit profit from it? The president also attends conferences, the state advisor as well and gives 'pledges', it is also the international image, that we take part in it."* (Interview n. 3, 2018) Likewise, the other SAIDC Representative stated: *"We try to really fairly build up the brand and thus our 'strategy' is to do projects well [...] on the other hand, one should not be too naive to think that now the whole Kenya would know where Slovakia is, but at least everyone involved can learn something about us [...] it also opens up the doors to various potential partnerships."* (Interview n. 2, 2018) The Representative from the MFEA confirm the repeated pattern: *"A positive side-effect of providing development cooperation is forming of a good name for Slovakia abroad, especially in its partner countries, yet at the same time among other donors or EU members states and international organizations and a support for business partnerships."* (e-mail communication, 2018) On the other hand, the Platform Representative saw the benefit of Slovakia in the international merit in forms of visibility like this: *"Well, the development aid is a part of foreign policy and the priority of FP is to build 'entrance to other markets' and from that point of view is the development aid also a positive 'PR'."* (Interview n. 1, 2018) So while for the government officials the development cooperation was seen also as a way to gain visibility and acquired certain positions, the representative from the Platform of the NGDOs questioned the whole involvement provision of aid and the development cooperation, and making a statement that the true interest may lie elsewhere.

To summarize, from the perspective of Slovakia, since Kenya is quite an important 'player' in the East-African region, having a good name and establishing itself positively in the country through the development cooperation allow Slovakia to gain a more prominent perception from other donors and international community and indirectly also support creation of new partnerships. Various visits of the state officials help in establishing further connection, too.

## VII. IV. Engagement of Business Entities

Among the most striking elements occurring within the development cooperation with Kenya during the past years is one of involvement of business entities. Certainly, this would not have been possible without strongly established presence of Slovak subjects in the country. As reflected in the documents, an increasingly higher amount on emphasis has been gradually placed on the economic component of the development cooperation with Kenya. The interviews have likewise confirmed this trend, which is predicted to be even more relevant in the future, transforming into one of the most essential elements of the development cooperation between Slovakia and Kenya. The question which arises from this finding is whether this inclusion of business subjects is a logical outcome of the mutual cooperation, or whether this represents the means towards achievement of a certain foreign policy goal, enabled to a significant extent by the development cooperation.

Already in the first Medium-Term Strategy (2003-2008), among the main goals of the ODA was listed widening of economic cooperation with developing countries, yet stressed that "*the support of economic ties between the donor and recipient of development aid is not a motive, but a positive outcome of mutual relationship.*" (Medium-term Strategy 2003: 5) The second Medium-Term

Strategy (2009-2013), interestingly, is less vocal about the economic agenda. On the other hand, it uses term “subjects”, which is not defined, and the business entities may definitely fall under this term. Economic reforms are also listed as part of the economic sector where Slovakia may contribute with knowledge as well as acquired experience. (Medium-Term Strategy 2009: 12) The latest (2014-2018) Medium-Term Strategy is, by comparison, the strongest when it comes to economic elements. It underlines that: “*Development assistance has become an integral part of the Slovak foreign policy and of the strategy of external economic relations*”. (Medium-Term Strategy 2014: 4) Moreover, it adds for example block grants, small grant scheme, financial contributions (micro-grants), supply of goods and services, Start Up, Loans with a grant element, financial contributions, or financing scholarships as instruments of bilateral cooperation. (ibid, 2) One could, therefore, observe that the trend has become especially vocal in the latest Medium-Term Strategy, and the inclusion of all the tools of financial nature, thus this is an interesting evolution to follow.

When it comes to legislative framework, § 4 / 2015 Law states that into the implementation of development cooperation are now also involved NGOs, as well as entrepreneurs and ‘legal’ persons. In previous Law from 2007, these subjects were not part of it. Moreover, the new Law/2015 added for example call for tender, or provision of ‘privileged’ export credit to the tools, thus more of economic dimension tools of ODA implementation. One could observe a change which happened over a period of 8 years between these two strategies and how the inclusion of business individuals and business tools became embedded into the legislative system. Importantly, however, in 2012, *A Concept on Involvement of Business Entities into Development Cooperation of Slovakia* was introduced. It was first of its kind focusing solely on the business element of the development cooperation aiming at the creation of a proper mechanism for their involvement as well as introducing new modalities and steps for allocation of grants and funds. In the Aims of this Concept, *Entrepreneurship* is defined as “*a key factor of development*” and on this

grounds, a justification for the involvement of private sector is provided, as it represents “*a necessary condition for success of development activities*”. (Business Involvement, 2012: 2) Moreover, it is stated there that: “*The natural interest of MFEA is thus a search for synergy between development aims of the Slovak ODA and business aims of the Slovak business entities, especially small and medium-size entities in the developing countries.*” (ibid, 2) Therefore, it seems that MFEA as a foreign policy “maker” became especially invested in making the business element work in a combination with the development one, plus already the creation of document per se signals which area of development cooperation is a ‘priority’.

In addition, in 2014, Business Partnership Program as one of the SAIDC development cooperation programs was introduced. It aims at synchronizing goals of business sector and of development cooperation, while also “ [...] *helps to establish new partnerships with local business entities.*” and “*helps Slovak entities to access the market of the partner countries.*” (Medium-Term Strategy 2014: 15) SAIDC as implementing agency of the ODA and main body involved in the development cooperation thus created a separate program for this purpose, which, again, serves as a symbol of the strategic importance of this element. Finally, in the most recent Focus of Bilateral Cooperation for 2018, “*more intensive engagement of the business sector into the development activities*” (Focus 2018: 3) is presented as one of the areas of challenge for the upcoming period. Moreover, there is also an interest in a further extension of the network of development diplomats and to activate an engagement of economic diplomats, thus developing “*new forms of interconnection of corresponding activities of economic and development diplomacy.*” (ibid, 4) This signals that the economic elements with everything that falls under it would be even more intense in the future cooperation.

Therefore, strong emphasis on this economic element of the development cooperation can be spotted in all of the important documents. And by adding more financial instruments, it is clear that this is *the* priority. Moreover, back in

2013, Platform of Business Subjects for Development Cooperation was established, with a purpose of gathering business firms and subjects with an interest in projects which could be implemented in the program/priority countries of the Slovak development cooperation. Despite that fact that the Platform has not been that much of a success, it still reflects the utmost significance given to the business subjects and their entrance onto the markets of the developing countries through the development cooperation.

More specifically, when it comes to the primary document related to Kenya, the acknowledgement of this trend can be found in its CSP as well and the cooperation with the private sector is listed as one of the CSP's implementation tools and that “*Slovakia will support the development activities of Slovak business entities in Kenya [...] Emphasis will be put on building partnerships between private and non-governmental sector.*” (CSP 2014: 18) In regards to the interviews, all the representatives confirmed that the trend has been set and will follow in the future, even more intensively. The Embassy Representative, for example, stated: “*[...] it is always about a dialogue between donor and receiving country and involvement of other parts and that is for example that we do not talk about the ‘classical’ development, but rather about connecting the economic component [...] more and more the representatives from the business sphere are being invited to participate on these projects, you have non and for profit component intertwined and that is increasingly emphasized.*” (Interview n. 4, 2018)

This trend was confirmed also by the Representative from the Platform, who, however, stressed the weaknesses of this collaboration: “*[...] the goal of organization is different from the goal of entrepreneur. The aim of entrepreneur is to gain the profit at all times, so here is where the opinions differ a bit.*” (Interview n. 1, 2018) As the NGOs are often the ones who keep the governments ‘in check’ in the field, this might have come from an experience of merging these two types of entities. Yet, one of the SAIDC Representatives articulated that “*[...] the benefit of having foreign aid*

*precisely in Kenya is from the foreign policy and economic policy point of view disputable.*” (Interview n. 3, 2018) When asked in a follow up question if that’s concerning the economic benefits, the Respondent replied that *“Exactly [...] we want to make the business sector join the development cooperation and we like to think of the ways they could.”* (Interview n. 3, 2018) This may be interpreted as that there are certain elements which must bring about a benefit for Slovakia, otherwise Kenya would not be kept among priorities and the involvement there would not be so intense. The Platform Representative added another interesting point in this regard: *“ [...] it really depends on people, when there are competent ones, a lot of things can be changed, but when there are incompetent, [...] I am going to paraphrase, ‘development aid is just a path for entrepreneurs, so the doors get opened for them!’.”* (Interview n. 1, 2018) This statement does not really resemble an ‘altruistic’ interest and signals that the role of agents as decision-makers is crucial as they frame the policies and political decisions and have an influence on what would the development cooperation used for and look like.

Naturally, the engagement of business entities has not been without its own controversies. In 2011, OECD/DAC conducted a Special Peer Review in Slovakia, evaluating the development cooperation and providing suggestions for improvement. One of the most visible feedbacks was received precisely in relation to the economic element of development cooperation, stating that *“MFEA and MF of SR confuse commercial and development goals of ODA in a manner, which is not compatible with the DAC standards [...] it is crucial to clearly distinguish between the support of the Slovak trade/investment activities and development cooperation [...] Slovak ODA should not be used to support Slovak business and for building the capacities of Slovak subjects.”* (Business Entities, 2012: 2) This clearly shows that there is a discrepancy between the outcome as promoted by the government officials and the actual motivations, and even OECD concluded that the motives of aid and cooperation often are not so clear-cutting.

The latest Peer Review DAC/OECD Mission in Slovakia was taking place in March 2018, but the outcomes and recommendations were not published at the time of writing this thesis. However, even here, during the first official meeting, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Lukáš Parížek explicitly articulated the interest in the business entities and their deeper integration in the developing countries: “*We constantly try to make our development aid more effective and therefore we search for opportunities for cooperation with partner countries, especially from the V4, and possibilities how to engage our business entities as well.*”<sup>5</sup>

All in all, the involvement of business sector into development cooperation with Kenya has been a on a rise. However, the motives and the engagement itself has not been without controversy and questioning. The introduction of several documents and bodies which concern the financial tools and activities of business sector only multiplies this concern. Defining the involvement of entrepreneurs as one of the means for achieving success in development efforts, Slovakia has over the years established a system for their involvement and now they configure among priority tool of bilateral cooperation.

## VIII. Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to find the answer to a stated research question of *Why may the Slovak development cooperation with Kenya be perceived as a soft power tool of its foreign policy*, and thus contribute to academic field with a new knowledge based on this particular single-case study. The analysis of the primary documents on development aid and cooperation and interviews, which were conducted with the leading officials from this field, has brought concrete results and the main findings as well as their relevance for this particular field of research are to be summarized and discussed in this section. First of all, the

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[https://www.mzv.sk/web/pmvienna-en/detail/-/asset\\_publisher/XptbLMYwZmJ6/content/oecd-dac-peer-review-systemu-rozvojovej-spoluprace-sr/10182?p\\_p\\_auth=xOXRneNz](https://www.mzv.sk/web/pmvienna-en/detail/-/asset_publisher/XptbLMYwZmJ6/content/oecd-dac-peer-review-systemu-rozvojovej-spoluprace-sr/10182?p_p_auth=xOXRneNz)



development cooperation has become an integral part of the foreign policy of Slovakia. In comparison to multilateral aid, the bilateral aid or cooperation allows the country to form partnerships and become more engaged in the mutual ties. For Slovakia, this form of cooperation is essential, as it serves its own national interests, as a part of its foreign policy. All in all, Slovak development cooperation with Kenya may be perceived as a soft power tool of its foreign policy because it creates attraction and thus consequent cooperation, mainly through its 'success story' of transformation experience, but also knowledge sharing, in order to achieve its two main foreign policy goals: to advance its economic interests as well as to gain prominence and visibility and prestige in the international donor community.

The emphasis on Slovakia's transformation experience has been presented throughout all of the official documents related to the development aid and cooperation. Stressed as Slovakia's own "comparative advantage", it served as a ground for an argument that it is this experience that not only provides Slovakia with specific skills and knowledge acquired throughout the process, but also it is what distinguishes it from the rest of the 'old' or 'traditional' donors. It is framed as a unique experience which had given Slovakia special position as well as responsibility to share it with others through the development cooperation. However, there was a contrast between the official documents and the interviews on this matter. While the Country Strategy Paper used this transformation experience as a building bloc, the interviewed officials stated that this experience sharing is mostly related to the countries of the Western Balkans/Eastern Partnership. Therefore, there is a discrepancy, which may mean that the policies stated in the documents are different from those actually taken on the ground. Since soft power uses attraction as its main source in order to induce cooperation, it can be argued that Slovakia has used this experience to attract Kenya to the shared values embedded within, which are seen by Kenya as intriguing too, in order to advance its own foreign policy interests. Moreover, 'Slovak element' is also shared through government scholarships, which, on one hand may be by default perceived as positive, yet

the condition of learning Slovak prior to start of studies points towards benefit on the Slovak side as well. Knowledge sharing is equally important part of soft power, and volunteers programs encompass this element, too.

The second important finding was that Slovakia holds in high regard its perception by the external actors, wants to make itself visible as well as gain prestige through the development cooperation with Kenya. All of the interviews confirmed that based on the achievements on the ground, Slovakia is being positively recognized by the donor community and thus it ‘bears fruit’ for example at the high-level meetings or discussions and opens up the doors to other important positions. Most importantly, the prestige and reputation are being built in process too, which seem to be vital for Slovakia as a small state. Moreover, visibility also particularly in Kenya through logo of SlovakAid has been likewise pointed out as important, as that is being recognized by the donor community as well.

The third trend which was pointed out was one of involvement of business entities into development cooperation, which is increasingly being seen as the most important tool for development cooperation. Their engagement is on the rise, as was stated in every interview, plus there are incentives for cooperation between non- and for-profit sectors, and several new financial tools for ODA implementation have been introduced, signaling the importance. All interviewed officials elaborated on a crucial role which business sector involvement is having. Yet, this has not been without controversies as well as reluctance on the part of the NGDOs. As explicitly stated in one of the most important documents - Medium Term Strategy for 2014-2018 that: *“Development Assistance has become an integral part of the Slovak foreign policy and of the strategy of external economic relations”*, supported by statements of the representative of the NGDOs Platform that this involvement is mostly serving the business community, and a critical OECD Peer Review which pointed out that “MFEA and MF of SR confuse commercial and development goals of ODA [...] Slovak ODA should not be used to support

Slovak business and for building the capacities of Slovak subjects” (Business Entities, 2012: 2), all point towards conclusion that perhaps it is also the self-interest which is the main driver of the development cooperation.

Findings of this thesis, however, should be contextualized in order to highlight their relevance, their contribution as well as to point out towards future research areas. In a wider context, this transformation experience is certainly not unique only for Slovakia. The Central and some of the Eastern European countries have gone through this process. In relation to previous research, the conclusion of this thesis is partially in alignment with Horký’s & Lightfoot’s (2012) argument that CEE countries often used the development aid and cooperation for the advancement of their own interests and foreign policy priority goals and the primary aims (such as poverty eradication) often remain in the background. It seems to be confirmed that Slovakia utilizes the cooperation to advance own FP goals and interests, yet it is unclear whether it is at the expense of the ‘altruistic’ and primary goals of the involvement.

If the answer was based on the statements of the government officials from the Embassy, SAIDC and MFEA, plus some of the documents, one would most likely disregard the claim. However, the interview with the representative from the NGDO Platform has been very fruitful, as many conflicting opinions were presented. For example, the representative made several remarks about the aim of the aid and cooperation and whom it serves. “[...] *and aid itself, like I said, it is just a good PR for the foreign policy, it is not a priority.*” (Interview n. 1, 2018) Or: “[...] *it really depends on people, when there are competent ones, a lot of things can be changed, but when there are incompetent, who, I am not going to name, .. I am going to paraphrase: ‘development aid is just a path for entrepreneurs, so the doors get open for them.’*” (Interview n. 1, 2018) As the focus of this thesis was not on whether the cooperation is based on altruistic notion, only partial agreement with the above-stated argument is possible. On the other hand, Horký (2012) in his article *The Transfer of the Central and Eastern European ‘Transition Experience’ to the South: Myth or Reality?* dismisses the whole concept of transition and its sharing and presenting is as

something unique, and argues that it is not even suitable for certain contexts, as the experience was very specific and marginal. Within this thesis, the officials stated that this experience sharing is not very applicable for Kenya, yet the Country Strategy Paper referenced several times to this experience and built on it its priorities alignment with Kenya's Vision 2030. However, since this thesis did not state as its main goal to assess whether it is suitable or not for Africa, this opens up a prospect for future research.

Self interest as the main driving force of the aid donors has been identified, for example, by Alesina & Dollar (2000), and these thesis findings lie in agreement with it, as it became clear that there are certain 'egoistic' foreign policy goals which are exercised through the development cooperation. Some argue that this experience serves as a 'cover' for the disinterest in reaching the EU aid targets, and in essence it is only used for advancement of own national policies and interests. (Horký, 2012) Since research of this thesis likewise did not focus on whether Slovakia meets its aid targets, only the self-interest factor can be agreed with.

Kopiński (2012) focused on the Sub-Saharan African region and the approach of Visegrád 4 towards it as one of the few, and claimed that Africa still does not dominate as a priority country in development policies. Yet, as examined throughout this thesis, Slovakia has Kenya as a program country, plus South Sudan figures as a country with exceptional humanitarian and development needs. These receive not only most of the aid, but are also focus-countries with own sectoral priorities. Despite the fact that generalizations are not easy to be made, as this was a single-case study, at least in the case of Slovakia, Kopiński's argument does not hold in this regard. On the other hand, findings in this thesis partially corroborate with Kopiński's (2012: 41) other argument that by dwelling on the transformation experience, the foreign policies of the countries of V4 follow own interests such as regional stability, visibility or economic cooperation. Slovakia seems to follow the economic interest as well

as visibility by development cooperation in Kenya, regional stability does not apply in this particular case with Kenya.

In terms of the distinction created between the 'old' or 'traditional' donors and Slovakia as a country which has specific comparative advantage, the findings of this thesis correlate with Profant's (2015), who claimed that the transition experience became one of the most important parts of Slovakia's new 'identity' and consequently has been used for differentiation between 'old' and 'new' donors. However, Profant (2015) in his paper focused on the creation of identity of Slovakia and power discourse in general. Therefore, the conclusions from this thesis are different in a way that Kenya was used as a 'target' country of the research of development cooperation of Slovakia. Also, the identity change was part of, but not the main focus of the thesis. Moreover, Slovakia transformed itself also through a gradual membership in various international bodies and organizations and thus its identity has been likewise changing. Development cooperation certainly was part of this identity creation and change, thus in corroboration with the arguments of Bátor (2004) and Gažovič (2012), too. The importance of the international perception for Slovakia was likewise highlighted by Gažovič (2012: 40).

The findings of the thesis are also partially in parallel with argument of Schraeder, Hook & Taylor (1998) that when it comes to foreign aid, the donor countries also often choose countries which have certain economic potential and especially if they are regionally the most powerful economy. In case of the explored development cooperation, Kenya figures as the strongest economy in the region, yet this factor could have been only partial reason, as many other factors played role as well (such as established Embassy, presence of NGOs, stability of the country, language proximity etc.) On the other hand, the findings of the analysis mostly conflict the findings of Hoadley (1980) when it comes to aid provision of small states. He found that they not only give aid in bigger amounts and more generously, but also provide more aid via multilateral bodies and more of its bilateral aid goes towards the poorest regions. Only the

third point of channeling more aid through the multilateral aid applies to Slovakia, while the others are in opposition to the results. As a small state (and also very 'young' one - just 25 years of its own independence), Slovakia certainly does not possess enough financial resources to contribute significantly in larger amounts. This was also mentioned in the interviews. Likewise, looking at Slovakia's program and project ODA countries, majority belong to the Western Balkans and the countries of the Eastern Partnership, and these are not part of the poorest ones (or LDCs). On average, Slovakia devoted around 80% of its budget towards multilateral aid, thus is in parallel with an argument of Martinussen & Pedersen (2003) that small states actually channel most of their aid via multilateral channels.

As argued throughout the analysis part, the aim of the soft power is to induce cooperation through non-coercive means. Development cooperation is in this regards a perfect source of soft power as the transformation experience and claimed skills, knowledge and expertise acquired in the process are portrayed as comparative advantage. Since the values must be intriguing enough, Slovakia has aligned its sectoral priorities with the goals of Kenya and has used its comparative advantage from the transformation experience in order to give a signal that Slovakia possesses necessary expertise to contribute to achievement of goals and thus making itself attractive and thus able to advance own interests.

## IX. Conclusion

On February 12th 2017, Slovak President Andrej Kiska stepped on the Kenyan soil as the first president ever since the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic (SR) twenty-five years ago. This was made possible on a basis of strong bilateral ties between these two countries, evolving from a simple

donor-receiver of the development aid relationship to a partnership in the development cooperation. In this thesis, the research question concerned the potential reasons why this development cooperation could be seen as a soft power tool of the foreign policy of Slovakia. Based on the documents as well as interviews, the analysis has pointed out the main findings, which can be summarized as follows:

Slovakia has utilized its own transformation experience and the skills and expertise acquired in the process as its own strategy for exercising the soft power. Highlighting the comparative advantage of this experience, in comparison to 'old' donor, Slovakia was able to find a unique and distinguishing characteristic and has used it to advance own aims. Based on this, further cooperation has been made possible, including the increased involvement of business entities. Since the primary aim of a foreign policy of a state is to advance its own political, but also economic gains, in this case, the goals of FP of Slovakia were identified to be advancement of economic interests as well as to increase its own visibility and gain prominence. Since the primary purpose of soft power is to induce cooperation through attraction, the transformation experience and consequent expertise has been what made Slovakia attractive for Kenya, as that is where are the shared values which are intriguing for Kenya situated. Development cooperation, therefore, may be considered as a soft power tool due to the reason that the transformation experience as well as a system of scholarships, and involvement of volunteers represented what was attractive for Kenya, granting further and more intense cooperation with the country. One of the main trends highlighted was the emphasis on the involvement of business entities. This became not only embedded within the structures of the SAIDC, but also it turned into one of the tools of the ODA. The importance was likewise placed on the visibility of Slovakia through Slovak Aid and one of the essential interests was also to gain prominence through this cooperation. All in all, the combination of these factors has contributed to the conclusion that Slovakia uses soft power

strategies to achieve its own foreign policy goals via the development cooperation.

The research field may benefit from these findings in several ways. Firstly, Slovak bilateral cooperation has not been researched in the academic area, and thus potential findings could contribute to the first pieces of knowledge on this subject. Secondly, the combination of small states theory with concept of soft power, guided by social constructivism and applied on a particular country in the Central Europe, this case also provided an interesting way of analysing the data and answering the proposed research question. This may be further connected to a wider research on small states or soft power strategies in the development cooperation area.

This thesis is unique in this regard, as it was a single-case study of a particular development cooperation between Slovakia and Kenya and combining the concept of soft power with that of small states through development cooperation. Moreover, as a first one in this academic field focuses on bilateral cooperation with African country.

Naturally, certain limitations of this research must be outlined as well. First of all, in terms of methods, this was a single-case study research with a specific focus on bilateral relationship and development cooperation between Slovakia and Kenya. While this method allowed for a formulation of a very narrow research area, the generalizability is one of the potential pitfalls. Moreover, the nature of the studied documents and the interviewed officials also does not provide much space for speculations. Secondly, since the only separate document for bilateral cooperation with Kenya is the Country Strategy Paper, majority of the analyzed documents concerned the development aid and cooperation only in general manner (for example the 5-year Medium-Term Strategies). Therefore, there could have been a repetition in some of the research findings as some of the documents used were the same.. On the other



hand, if some of the results are in parallel, it may serve as a confirmation of a certain trend and may become a verified claim.

When it comes to future research prospects, a wide array of opportunities is opened up. Firstly, the wider CEE region is under-researched in terms of bilateral cooperation. The focus has been mostly on general aid provision, identity formation or 'Europeanisation' of new donors' aid policies. Therefore, there is an existing space for a deeper research on the bilateral cooperation between CEE countries and Africa. Further research in this area could be also focused, for example, on one of the Balkan countries (Moldova) or on a country which receives mostly humanitarian aid (Afghanistan). This could provide a more complex overview of whether the motivations differ and what are the primary foreign policy goals when it comes to these countries. Similarly, since this thesis does not address the evaluation of the projects under SlovakAid which supposedly employs this transformation 'experience' in the selected priority areas under CETIR, it could serve as an input for further research. Likewise, the position of Kenya and its perception of this cooperation and the impact of it is not in the scope of this thesis, and may again, provide as a ground for future exploration.

All in all, the main research question has been answered and results pointed towards new trends in Slovak development cooperation and its foreign policy. Slovakia uses development cooperation in order to achieve its two main foreign policy goals: more visibility and prestige; and advancement of economic interests. The means for doing so are the transformation experience as well as programs of scholarships and sending volunteers, through which attraction is created and further cooperation is enabled. The new Medium-term Strategy for 2019-2023 is currently produced and the latest Peer Review from the OECD would be available later on this years. We shall then see how the cooperation between Slovakia and Kenya evolves further.

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### Interviews:

Interview n.1 - with representative from the NGDO Platform

Interview n.2 - with representative from SAIDC

Interview n.3 - with representative from SAIDC

Interview n.4 - with representative from the Embassy of Slovakia in Nairobi

E-mail communication - with representative from the MFEA



# Appendices

## Interview guide

- 1.) Slovakia is classified not only within academic literature, but also in the international merit as a 'small state'. To what extent may this have an influence on the foreign policy making and especially in terms of development cooperation?
- 2.) What could be the motivations, but also the development cooperation 'making' different than at the bigger states and donors?
- 3.) Kenya has been for a long time a program country of Slovakia, even the ODA flows are highest there. What is behind this focus on Kenya and its constant priority position in terms of region of Africa? Will this trend continue in the future?
- 4.) Slovakia has gone through its own transformation and in the documents, this is often mentioned as our 'comparative advantage'. To what extent could one discuss about this type of advantage also in context of Kenya? Is there something else in which Slovakia differs (as a comparative advantage ) in the development cooperation with Kenya?
- 5.) What could be an actual benefit of Slovakia as a small country from the development cooperation?
- 6.) To what extent has brand SlovakAid and at the same time presence of various business subjects, NGOs, (development) diplomats, volunteers, but also schools and firms in Kenya an influence on visibility of

Slovakia and what 'side effects' this brings? Is there anything that Slovakia may gain from this complex structure?

- 7.) The trend of establishment of business subjects in the developing countries is on a rise. How is it for Slovakia? Is there similar effort also in Kenya? What are the motives of involvement of this type of subjects?
- 8.) To extent may be activities of Slovakia in Kenya be classified as just 'altruistic'? Are there any other motivations for this cooperation?
- 9.) Development aid and cooperation are defined as 'national priority'. Does this still hold?

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