

# **Neither security nor development? Czech and Hungarian identities and interests in the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan**

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## **Abstract**

This article builds on the securitisation and post-development literature and scrutinises the Czech and Hungarian legitimising discourses of their respective Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Logar and Baghlan provinces of Afghanistan between 2007 and 2013. In spite of the hybrid civil-military character of the PRTs, their security-development nexus was absent, and they were respectively securitised and “developmentalised” only indirectly and in different ways. The PRTs were mostly justified by the Czech Republic’s NATO membership as an identity issue, and they were justified as a Hungarian national interest and as both an obligation and an opportunity. Rather than merely importing NATO’s arguments as suggested by the previous literature, the depoliticisation and positive connotation of the intervention in Afghanistan was constructed through domestic NATO-related identities and interests in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

**Keywords:** securitisation; development; security-development nexus; Provincial Reconstruction Team; Afghanistan; Czech Republic; Hungary

## **Introduction**

Since their inception in 2002, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan are considered the foremost example of advanced civil-military cooperation in practice. In spite of the criticisms that their subordination to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) - which was launched by the United States and gradually co-opted by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) - determined the prevalence of the security component, PRTs are also considered as major proof of the relevance of the security-development nexus in the literature (Youngs 2009; Rosén 2009; Christie 2012). For the nation states of “New Europe”, as opposed to those of “Old Europe”, as these groups of countries were labelled by US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld in 2003, joint cooperation in the fields of security and development presented particular challenges. Following the geopolitical reorientation and costly economic reforms in the early 1990s, the newcomers that joined both NATO and the European Union (EU) during the late 1990s and the 2000s respectively only recently adapted their military forces to use in military operations outside Europe. At the same time, some of them had barely restarted their international development cooperation programmes according to the “Western” model of OECD donors. The military and civil activities of the Czech Republic and Hungary in Afghanistan represented their heaviest and most expensive foreign

involvement in modern history, making them interesting cases for studying their motivations for participating in the conflict, and for examining how the interventions were justified domestically. Central and Eastern European (CEE) and other post-communist countries are quite similar in their development, security, political, and societal aspects, and any possible divergences in their motivations and justification discourses may thus be revealing.

The Czech and Hungarian PRTs in the provinces of Logar and Baghlan, respectively, have received much scholarly attention and were analysed from a security perspective (Kiss 2009; Hynek and Marton 2011; Hynek, Eichler, and Majerník 2012), but their developmental aspects were presented only partially, mostly by practitioners (Descubes 2012), which reflects the dearth of development studies in Central Europe compared with security studies. Moreover, the continuing security threats make independent development evaluations of the PRTs impossible to carry out. Rather than evaluating the impacts of the two PRTs on the Afghan population, this comparative case study deals with their domestic legitimising discourses. More specifically, this research seeks to understand how the development-related assistance backed by the heavy military deployment provided by the Czech Republic and Hungary to Afghanistan through the PRT framework was justified domestically.

In line with the existing literature, we expect that the related legitimising discourses will also be “imported” (Hynek and Marton 2011) in a hierarchical leader-follower relationship and internalised by the domestic actors in a process of “cascade argumentation” (Hynek and Eichler 2012). The use of both security and development arguments are expected to be evident in the political debate. Moreover, the security-development nexus is also expected to be used as a specific supporting argument by the policy-makers who attempt to justify the high financial and personal investment in of both countries in their major civil-military operations in Afghanistan. There are good reasons for expecting the two governments to utilise security, development, and the security-development nexus as legitimizing discourses. First, these legitimizing discourses could clearly be seen in other NATO countries (see Hynek and Marton 2011), and as both the Czech Republic and Hungary identify strongly with the alliance, one can expect policymakers to use arguments which have been employed by their allies. Second, similar arguments have been imported in other cases to countries in the region, most notably related to debates on the third pillar of the US ballistic missile defence system (Hynek and Střítecký 2010). In this case, internal legitimising discourses focused on international security and the contributions the CEE countries could make, in a highly similar vein to discourses in other NATO members. On the other hand, we also accept the fact that some policies can be justified by unrelated pragmatic arguments and ideational values.

We therefore have four groups of legitimising strategies (development, security, the security-development nexus, and other unrelated strategies). We are also interested in how these groups changed over time and the reasons underlying these changes from the birth of the two PRTs in 2006 to their closure in 2013. To explore these four groups, this interdisciplinary article builds on the constructivist literature in development and security studies. In order to build the legitimisation typology, the first part of the article returns to the initial concepts of securitisation and developmentalisation authored by the Copenhagen School and post-

development thinkers in the early 1990s. Even though the joint consideration of these theoretical approaches has been virtually ignored until now, they are particularly suitable to explain *missing* justifying discourses. Therefore, we build on the similarities and complementarities of these two approaches in order to understand the CEE cases by identifying the relative absence of development and security-related discourses. A short review of the original concepts is complemented by a short overview of the current state of the art on the security-development nexus. The second part presents an introduction to the two countries' involvement in Afghanistan following the terrorist attacks against the US on 11 September 2001 and their place in the public debate. Parts three to six identify and classify the four groups of legitimising discourses of the Afghan intervention in the public space and media in both countries. The final and concluding part of the article attempts to clarify the reasons for the unexpectedly low securitisation and developmentalisation of the Czech and Hungarian PRTs, the extremely rare legitimization by the security-development nexus, and the differences between the two countries.

### **Securitisation, developmentalisation, the security-development nexus and other means of legitimising the civil-military engagement**

Since the beginning of the “War on Terror” launched by US President George W Bush in September 2001, the security of the Afghan people has not improved substantially. Afghan civilian casualties have been steadily rising since 2007, when their monitoring started; they decreased for the first time only in 2012, but they still approach the figure of 3,000 a year (UNAMA 2013). In spite of the steady and, by 2005, rapid improvement of the livelihoods of the local people as measured by the Human Development Index, Afghanistan still ranks 175th out of 185 countries in global terms (UNDP 2013, 150). Insecurity and poverty are the main messages transmitted by the international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and media from Afghanistan, and the framing of its “problems” in terms of security and development opened the country to diverse interventions by Western actors, including the PRTs. Indeed, the academic recognition of the states of (in)security and (under)development as unnatural social constructions by the Copenhagen school of security studies (Wæver 1993; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998) and by a number of other scholars (Ferguson 1990; Mitchell 1991; Escobar 1995) from the critical ‘post-development’ school of thought (Ziai 2007) remains as relevant today as in the 1990s with regards to the analysis of contemporary foreign interventions.

Even though the two schools of thought differ in their post-structuralist intellectual backgrounds, the Copenhagen School being inspired mostly by John Searle’s speech-act theory and the post-development school by Michel Foucault’s discourse analysis, they both similarly criticise a positivist approach to their respective objects of study and to political ethics. Neither security nor development is “out there”, but they are created by distinct speech acts or through a discourse. Thus, securitisation is defined as “an extreme version of politicisation that enables the use of extraordinary means in the name of security” (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 25). By analogy, we understand developmentalisation as a process

of increasing technicality that enables the use of foreign aid to induce social change in the global South in the name of development. This definition is based on the original Arturo Escobar's definition of "developmentalization" (including the quotation marks) as a "progressive insertion [of the Third World] into a regime of thought and practice in which certain interventions for the eradication of poverty became central to the world order (Escobar 1995, 24). This constructivist approach to security and development has three major consequences.

Firstly, security and development are socially constructed. As Ole Wæver, who coined the term securitisation, noted, security and insecurity are not a strict dichotomy. In order to call a place insecure, it must be already viewed through the lens of security (Wæver 1993, 8). By analogy, before talking of underdevelopment that is the opposite of development, a country must be first imagined in terms of advancement on the ladder of modernisation. For example, the same problem of sufficient nutrition can be framed by discourses other than development, such as inequality (food waste and overconsumption in the global North) and human rights (right to food). It can even be securitised (food security). As a consequence, the ideal would be a state in which the issues of development and poverty completely disappeared in the same way as the problem of security amongst the states of the European Union has vanished since World War II.

Secondly, securitisation and developmentalisation lead to depoliticisation. While poverty is very often a product of unequal economic and other power relations, the development apparatus composed of Southern states and Northern development agencies works as an "anti-politics machine" (Ferguson 1990) and reduces poverty to a problem that can be resolved by a technical fix. Securitisation also means depoliticisation, since it goes beyond politics and implies an "existential threat requiring emergency measures, and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Buzan 1997, 23-24), and especially military measures. At the same time, both security and development therefore imply less politics and more of the state, which alone has the monopoly on of the use of force as well as the legislation and institutions to intervene in people's lives. It must be noted, however, that the state is not necessarily involved directly nowadays. NGOs, businesses and private security contractors have recently become the vehicles of the (neoliberal) governmentality (e.g. Larrinaga and Doucet 2010).

Finally, the policies justified from security and development perspectives generally bear positive connotations despite their frequently problematic content. Indeed, who would disagree with the general statement that security is better than insecurity, and that development is better than underdevelopment? That is why post-developmentalists put "development" between inverted commas and even define it at best as an "empty plus" (Ziai 2009, 14). Similarly, Wæver labelled security as a synonym for "everything that is politically good" (Wæver 1993, 2). We operationalise both security and development as being socially constructed, depoliticised and positive later in this section.

Alongside the old parallels between security and development, special attention must be paid

to the relatively new concept of the security-development nexus, i.e. the mutual interrelatedness between security and development that justified the PRTs as instruments to win the “hearts and minds” of the Afghan people. In spite of a divergence of opinion on what the nexus actually is, there is a scholarly agreement that the nexus matters in theory and practice (Stern and Öjendal 2010). After the terrorist attacks against the USA in 2001, there has been an obvious process of securitisation and militarisation of both foreign development (Buur, Jensen, and Stepputat 2007, Christie 2012) and humanitarian aid (Shannon 2009). Yet the developmentalisation of security also took place, and the emergence of the concept of human security and humanitarian interventions after the end of the Cold War is not the only example of this linkage (see Kaldor 2007). The process is not one-sided. Even Afghanistan became a field of mutually negotiated boundaries between the military and NGOs (Goodhand 2013). More generally, Furness and Gänzle (2012) argue that security interests after 9/11 led to an increase in aid to Africa and Afghanistan, but the volume of aid to other regions also increased as well due to the coherence between the EU’s development and security policies. Since the Union has a strong track record in development policy, the developmentalisation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) helped to legitimise it with low political costs (Anderson and Williams 2011). At the national level, the United Kingdom introduced developmentalised military intervention as a tool for empowering the vulnerable beneficiaries in a participatory bottom-up approach that would be unthinkable in the classical top-down military approach (see Pugh, Gabay, and Williams 2013). Whilst the parallel processes of securitising development and vice versa can be considered as a case for the nexus, it has also been criticised from post-structuralist positions with similar arguments that were independently addressed to security and development. The nexus was labelled as an example of an “anti-foreign policy” that helps to justify the failure of the separate policies to reach their official goals. Moreover, despite formulating policies inspired by the nexus, there is little empirical evidence of a causal link between security and development. By covering up the ineffectiveness of the policies, the nexus aims more at strengthening a state’s own identity than the effects of the policy in the field (Chandler 2007), and it is also successful in depoliticising both security and development (Reid-Henry 2011).

These securitisation and post-development approaches as well as the following critique of the security-development nexus and their consequences are used in this article to develop an analytical framework for answering the research question of how CEE involvement in Afghanistan was justified. With their effects of taming potential critique by depoliticising and presenting their objectives as positive, governments justify potential reservations to such military- and development-related engagements through: general concerns over losing the lives of soldiers, the opportunity costs of such engagements in a context of austerity (especially in Hungary) and low public understanding of and support for international development activities that are analysed further in this article.

In the following sections, we recognise four types of legitimising of the hybrid PRTs: by security, by development, by the security-development nexus, and by other types of justification that are unrelated to the official character of the missions, and we follow their politicising and depoliticising effects. Indeed, the official descriptions do not automatically

correspond to the way they are legitimised in the public space. Securitisations are not one-way speech-acts but they are “in principle forced to enter the realm of discursive legitimation” (Williams 2003, 523), and development interventions are also frequently justified by domestic economic interests or by the country’s identification as a donor (see Horký 2011b for the Czech case). We broadly divide other justifications into the logic of appropriateness or the logic of interest, i.e. legitimisation by “ideational” internalised values and identity, on the one hand, and legitimisation by “pragmatic” preferences for outcomes based on action, on the other (March and Olsen 1989). This article pays attention to the legitimisation of the PRTs in the political sector with the central problem being that of the legitimacy of the governmental authority in carrying out activities outside its territory, unlike in the original Copenhagen School conception, in which governmental authority is focused on its own territory (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998). We identify these legitimisation types in a dataset composed of speeches in the parliament and its committees, political statements in the media, official government releases and documents, public relations materials related to the PRTs and public opinion surveys. We also analyse the changes in the discourses over time until the closure of the PRTs in 2013, and we analyse them in terms of their relative intensity as we do not carry out any quantitative analysis.

### **The making up of the PRTs and their place in the Czech and Hungarian public debates**

Along with Lithuania and Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were two of the four CEE and Baltic states to establish PRTs in Afghanistan as lead nations, in the provinces of Logar and Baghlan respectively (Horký 2009, 359). One can argue that these tasks proved rather ambitious for the two countries, especially from a development perspective since “weak governmental structures, low political will and low public understanding prevented the policy from acquiring strong roots’ in the region” (Horký and Lightfoot 2012: 1). While both countries had transitioned from being recipients of foreign aid to donors in the run-up to their EU accession in 2004, their international development policies, after an initial period of growth, remained rather low-key and underfinanced, although the Czech Republic did spend significantly more in the past 10 years on foreign aid than Hungary. Most of their bilateral aid was concentrated in countries in the Western Balkans and the post-Soviet region, and they had little post-1989 experience outside these contexts. Development projects financed by the two countries typically involved small-scale standalone technical assistance and consultancy projects, usually delivered by national NGOs and companies. Running the civil part of the PRT and being in charge of reconstruction in an entire Afghan province was therefore an unprecedented task for the two countries, although they were relatively more prepared for the military part because of their involvement in the Iraq War (see Marton and Eichler 2013).

During the five years of its functioning, from March 2008 to February 2013, the Czech PRT in Logar implemented almost 250 projects of varying scale worth approximately 2.5 million euros a year in total; they were implemented by only 10 civil experts each year on average (Rada pro ZRS 2013, 4). Yet just in 2012, the total military costs of Czech involvement in Afghanistan were around 60 million euros (Aktuálně.cz 2013), and 283 soldiers were stationed in the country as of November 2014. Altogether, hundreds of Czech soldiers carried

out duties other than protecting the PRT, such as training the Afghan army and operating in the field hospitals. The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) reported 15 million euros as total Official Development Assistance in 2008, and this gives a more precise idea of the very uneven ratio between the civil and military components of the Czech involvement in Afghanistan. This imbalance towards the military, not unusual in comparison with PRTs run by other countries, is even more striking in the light of the first proposals for the composition of PRTs, in which it was planned that more civilians than members of the military would be deployed (Hynek and Marton 2011, 230).

While the civil part of the PRT falls under the competence of the Czech government, its protection required sending additional troops to Afghanistan, and hence the Parliament had to give its approval as stated by the Constitution. While the right-wing governments of 2006 and 2010 had a strong majority in the Senate, their majorities in the Chamber of Deputies were more fragile by 2012. In 2007, the PRT-related proposal was approved by all parties except the Communists, who have little influence in the parliament. However, the right-wing government met resistance from some of the deputies from smaller coalition parties (the Greens and the Christian Democrats) in the following year, and it hence needed additional support from the opposition Social Democrats, the party which approved the involvement in Afghanistan in 2006 as a ruling party. The plan for the deployment of forces for 2009 was rejected in December 2008. In fact, only a few dissenting individuals were needed as the ruling parties held only a slight majority, and Jiří Paroubek, the leader of the opposition Czech Social Democratic Party, strongly politicised the issue by proposing a barter. He offered support for the prolongation of the Afghan mission in exchange for right-wing support for the abolition of the country's unpopular healthcare fees (see the edition of *Právo* from 12 January, 2009). Even though the Social Democrats rightly complained that they were not consulted by the government for the 2009 plan, this attempt at a bargain was rejected by the political scene at large. The 2010 election renewed a stronger centre-right majority, which passed from annual to biannual voting on the foreign missions as a way to limit political bargaining. Overall, the issue of the PRT was discussed more in the Czech Republic than in Hungary, but it never gained as much prominence as in the Netherlands, for example, where it contributed to the fall of the government (Hynek and Marton 2011, 19). The rising intensity of the debate did not significantly influence the ways of legitimisation, except for perhaps the relevance of the argument of the credibility, predictability, and continuity of the Czech policy that was unrelated to development, security, or both.

Afghanistan was also the largest recipient of Hungarian bilateral development aid between 2006 and 2010. Along with Logar, Baghlan was amongst the safer provinces in the country. Between 2006 and 2011, Hungary officially provided 36 million dollars of aid to Afghanistan, which was further complemented by the activities of Hungarian NGOs, which raised money for their projects from sources like the European Commission. In 2006, official development projects made up about 10 percent of the total costs of the Afghan mission, which indicates a similar gap between development and military funding as in the case of the Czech Republic. Over the years, however, Hungary's activity in Afghanistan broadened beyond the PRT to include training and mentoring for Afghan security forces, special operation forces engaged in

combat duty, and also guard duty. The number of Hungarian soldiers in the country increased from 150 to almost 500, with the PRT accounting for 190 to 240 of these. The number of non-military personnel in the PRT was extremely modest, with one political advisor and one development advisor being the norm. Due to the need to decrease the budget deficit, successive Hungarian governments after 2009 repeatedly cut the Afghan development budget. The growing military budget, reaching 75 million euros in 2011, and the shrinking development budget reduced the share of official development projects to a mere 0.6 percent of all Afghanistan-related spending by 2011 (see Wagner and Venczel 2012 for more data).

Afghanistan represented a highly unknown field for the Hungarian ministries, even though Hungarian non-state actors, mainly two large faith-based NGOs (Hungarian Interchurch Aid and, to a lesser extent, Hungarian Baptist Aid), were present in the country since the fall of the Taliban. This is one of the reasons why the public debate on sending troops and development resources to Afghanistan was much more low-key in Hungary than in the Czech Republic. In fact, it seems that Hungarian politicians refrained from engaging in any larger-scale public political debate on it, let alone starting a society-wide discourse. Both of the major political parties, the Socialists, who were in power between 2002 and 2010, and the right-wing Fidesz, agreed on the engagement, but they were rather reluctant to involve their voters in discussing this decision. In the context of domestic austerity, which more or less coincided with the existence of the PRT, there seems to have been a feeling amongst both of the major parties that sending troops and development finances to Afghanistan was something that could only hurt them politically. Thus, they tried to keep the issue out of the public sphere as much as possible, and the discourse on justifying the PRT remained very much on the elite level, with relatively little public interest. There were very few voices initially against the engagement, although these did get stronger over time. After 2010, the far-right Jobbik party, increasingly demanded Hungary's withdrawal from the Afghanistan, calling the ISAF operation an imperialist conquest, and citing the need to avoid the deaths of Hungarian soldiers. The leftist-green party *Lehet Más a Politika* (LMP), quite similar to the Czech Greens at their later stage, also became increasingly critical of the operation, although they mainly criticised the non-transparent nature of how successive governments communicated details and called for a public debate on the mission (HVG 2010a).

Hungary took over the operation of the PRT in Baghlan province from the Netherlands in October 2006, and development projects began in early 2007. The decision to take over the PRT from the Netherlands took the Socialist-led government a long time to make, potentially reflecting a fear of electoral backlash. NATO had officially asked Hungary to take over the PRT in mid-2005, but it took the Hungarian government more than a year to make a formal decision on it. The Socialist-led government began consultations with all the other parties in Parliament in regard to the issue, something rather unusual in the highly confrontational Hungarian political culture, even though – unlike in the Czech case – from a legal perspective, the government could have made the decision itself without taking the matter to Parliament. Discussing the matter in Parliament was most likely a way to increase the legitimacy of any decision. The hesitance of the government to make the decision is also shown by the fact that they postponed the decision in January 2006 to after the elections in April, officially saying

that an important decision like this should be made by a government with fresh legitimacy. This argument is, however, countered by the fact that there was already a consensus among the parties on the mission, and therefore the issue did not enter the election campaign at all. This is another example of “post-decisional politics” (Hynek and Marton 2011, 126). The question “Why are we in Afghanistan?” remained a part of the political discourse even after the PRT was set up. The PRT’s original mandate was for two years, but developments in Afghanistan and changes in the US’s strategy towards the country necessitated occasional political decisions and communication of these decisions.

### **Securitisation: unconvincing legitimisation of rising insecurity**

Since the Czech Republic’s legitimisation of the PRT by its identification with the US as a victim of terrorism after 11 September 2001 lost its appeal with increasing criticisms of the American “War on Terror”, which was seen to trigger further insecurity, securitisation of the PRT was only done indirectly. For example, the Czech Ministry of Defence still mentioned the “fight against terrorism and [the preservation of] the stability of the entire region – and thus the security of the Euro-Atlantic space” in 2006. (Ministerstvo obrany 2006) The Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg justified the government’s proposal by drawing a link between Czech and global security on the one hand, and a link between global and Afghan security on the other (PSP ČR, 3 November 2010). At a later stage, the security of Afghanistan was primarily linked directly to Czech security, but this was still done exclusively by the right-wing politicians. As a pro-government Member of Parliament put it with a special emphasis on the drug trade, “this is not some distant conflict on the other side of the world; it is a conflict with a direct impact on safety and crime, and direct links and impacts in the Czech Republic” (PSP ČR, 3 November 2010), and later on, the Prime Minister Petr Nečas from the conservative Civic Democratic Party made the following declaration in front of the Chamber of Deputies in regard to the Czech soldiers: “They risk their lives for health and safety in Central Europe!” (PSP ČR, 12 June 2012). The legitimisation went as far as to justify the deployment of further Czech troops due to the insecurity of the Czech troops in Afghanistan.

The attempts at justifying the Czech presence in Afghanistan as a security issue are in line with the declining perception of Afghanistan as a threat and the ISAF’s inability to increase its internal security. The support of the USA and its allies by two thirds of the population in 2001 (CVVM 2002) decreased to one third in 2004. Only 17 percent supported the Czech government sending troops to Afghanistan on average, ranging from 25 percent of the voters of the main right-wing party to only seven percent of the Communist Party’s electorate (CVVM 2004). In 2008, Afghanistan (along with Iran) belonged to the group of the most threatening countries in the view of 14 percent of the population, but it was still perceived as less threatening than either Russia or Iraq (CVVM 2008). However, this mostly geographically or topically indirect securitisation was generally quite rare, and it was never linked to the PRT as such, but to the whole involvement in Afghanistan. In reality, the PRT had “virtually no real impact on the security situation in Logar” (Balabán, Rašek, and Stejskal

2012, 16). Even Czech casualties in Afghanistan did not lead to substantial discussions on the rationale of the operation as the fifth soldier died in October 2011 (Armáda České republiky 2011). It is also possible that the generally low level of securitisation – that encourages military deployment – was also due to the fact that opposition criticisms of a military solution left many pro-government actors unconvinced about this course of action.

In the Hungarian PRT discourse, security issues started out as rather marginal, but gradually gained in importance, thus following the dynamics of the Czech case. How Hungarian involvement would contribute to building a stable nation which would no longer harbour terrorists or produce and export large amounts of opiates was not discussed at all in the discourse on justifying the government's decision to take the PRT over from the Dutch. The issue of how being in Afghanistan contributes to the security of Hungary was first raised in late 2007 in an editorial in the pro-socialist broadsheet *Népszabadság* – in the 4 November 2007 edition. More broadly, the article discussed why Hungary should be in Afghanistan, and came up with three reasons: it helps the army develop new capacities which will be useful in similar extraterritorial missions in the future; being in Afghanistan increases Hungary's prestige and leverage towards its allies (mainly the United States; see the "NATO opportunities" discourse below); and Hungary's national security indirectly depends on peace in Afghanistan, and thus it is a goal Hungary should contribute to. The last two arguments later entered the official rhetoric, as shown by an article published on 29 March 2009 by the Minister of Defence Imre Szekeres in *Népszabadság*, which called the stabilisation of Afghanistan an "interest of the Alliance, and thus an indirect national [Hungarian] interest". Also in 2009, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Balázs pointed out similar factors, arguing that "we are defending our own security in Afghanistan" from drugs and Al-Qaeda (HVG.hu 2009). In 2009, the Hungarian government presented a report entitled "Hungary's Role in Afghanistan – a Medium-Term Strategic Outlook", which is the only written official document which, among other things, attempts to justify the Hungarian presence in Afghanistan. The justifications presented in it are heavily securitised, and echo the statements by government members above on how Afghan instability affects the Euro-Atlantic region, how participation in the operation is vital for Hungarian foreign and security policy, and how it contributes to developing Hungarian (military) capabilities, this last argument being less prominent in the Czech debate.

### **Developmentalisation: a low but varying intensity according to the strength of the development constituency**

The developmentalisation of the Czech intervention in Afghanistan in general and of the PRT in Logar in particular was weak, as no references to poverty as the key related human-centred concept were observed in the initial phase. In the 2007 debate, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg did not use the word "development" or "poverty" at all and framed the PRT by the "reconstruction" of Afghanistan, presented the civil part as subordinated to the military mission, and linked these efforts primarily to democracy-building and the rule of law. Only the Social Democratic deputy Lubomír Zaorálek, who later became Minister of Foreign

Affairs in 2014, objected that the military support was planned to be 10 times more expensive than the civilian aid (PSP ČR, 5 December 2007). More development-related framing was given to the PRT through the creation of a coordination office at the MFA, composed of a team of a dozen experts, including a media expert and the officials from the Afghan Desk. Even though the team included technical experts, part of the staff was composed of the staff of the major Czech development and humanitarian NGO People in Need, which started to operate in the safe zones of Afghanistan in 2001, and they were thus well socialised in the style of development cooperation work and the related competences in public relations. On the other hand, the difficult communication with the local politicians and elites could be due to their relative lack of seniority (with an average age of 31 years), the fact of being women, and the absence of cultural anthropologists (Hynek, Eichler, and Majerník 2012, 140).

According to the publicly available information, only three projects out of 141 “large reconstruction” and 107 “smaller quick impact” projects did not succeed for “security and other reasons” (MZV ČR 2013a). But the internal evaluation by the Czech MFA revealed that success meant disbursement, and this gave mixed results for projects without impact or unsustainable projects (MZV ČR 2013b). The newly built security infrastructure came under attack, and the PRT could reach only a small area around the road connecting Shank Airbase with the province capital Pol-e Alam, where almost half of the projects were implemented. Even though the PRT in Logar put greater emphasis on ownership and participation than the teams lead by other nations (Balabán, Rašek, and Stejskal 2012), the response of the Afghans was “very diverging” and the whole cooperation “quite unbalanced”, as its programme manager admitted (Rádio Česko 2013). The focus on ownership went so far that the Czech Republic provided the Afghan government with general budget support worth eight million CZK, while Prague was severely criticising this aid instrument in other contexts (Horký 2011a: 325). But in terms of legitimisation, this part was mostly hidden from the Czech public. The PRT had an excellent public awareness campaign in the Czech Republic (at least compared to the rest of the Czech bilateral aid) with hundreds of positive media outputs, a website, an outdoor exhibition, etc. Yet, despite the strong public relations campaign, Afghanistan ranked as the least “sympathetic country” among the Czech citizens in 2012 (CVVM 2012).

It is striking how issues related to development, poverty reduction, and solidarity were also totally absent from the PRT’s initial justification in Hungary. Similarly to the Czech case, issues related to poverty in Afghanistan and the resulting moral obligations were never mentioned in Hungary. The fact that Hungary is a relatively rich country which has some form of obligation to support one of the world’s least developed nations was not referred to at all, not even in the 2009 Medium-Term Strategic Outlook. Development issues emerged even more slowly in the discourse than for security, but their importance gradually grew as the end of the PRT drew near, yet not as much as in the Czech case. In 2009, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Balázs emphasised the role Hungarian agricultural, educational, and infrastructural development projects played in assisting Afghan state building (HVG.hu 2009). The Fidesz government, in power after 2010, relied increasingly, and in fact almost exclusively, on the development performance of the PRT to justify its continued existence.

This seems somewhat paradoxical, as Fidesz took the austerity measures of the Socialists even further and cut the development budget of the PRT to about 15 percent of the original two million euros (Wagner and Venczel 2012). In June 2011, Deputy Foreign Minister Zsolt Németh talked about how successful Hungarian development assistance had been, and said that Hungary had funded more than 500 projects in Afghanistan (Kormany.hu 2011). The new Minister of Defence Csaba Hende also mainly emphasised development projects in a radio interview in August 2012 (Honvedelem.hu 2012), and in December of the same year, he argued that the PRT had successfully accomplished its task, since it “contributed to the amelioration of the living conditions of the people in Baghlan” – the PRT could thus be closed down at that point (Dehir.hu 2012).

It is questionable to what extent these statements are true, as there has been no official evaluation of the PRT. Politicians also made strong attempts to show how much the Afghan people value the Hungarian development assistance (Honvedelem.hu 2012), even though evidence provided by academic researchers drew attention to the problems of the PRT, such as the lack of any clear development strategy, over-centralisation, low amounts of resources, the lack of coordination between the state actors and NGOs involved, and an overemphasis on the military side (Wagner and Venczel 2012). These claims have been substantiated by Afghan sources, with one local politician saying that “Hungarians are good people, but they have too little money to help us” (Népszabadság 2011). In both countries, the generally low developmentalisation was related in time to the intensity of the involvement of the development actors in the PRTs.

### **The security-development nexus: the paradoxical absence of the PRTs’ official rationale**

If the securitisation of the Czech PRT was weak and the developmentalisation took place mostly at the public relations level, justification through the security-development nexus was extremely rare, which was in line with the narrow understanding of security within the Czech security community (Balabán, Rašek, and Stejskal 2007). The 2007-2008 official report “*The Czech Republic contributes to the development and stability of Afghanistan*” defined the PRT as a “tool supporting *security through development* and reconstruction and an instrument to spread the influence of the coalition units and especially of the central Afghan government” (MZV ČR 2009a, 4, emphasis added). Following the 2009 strategy of “Afghanisation” (MZV ČR 2009b), there was a slight discursive shift towards country ownership in the statement of the PRT’s mission in the 2010-2012 report: “The main mission of the PRT is to help in ensuring *security through development* and reconstruction as well as assistance to the Afghani government” (MZV ČR 2012, 4, emphasis added). Even though the Czech team was described as one of the most civilian PRTs, after the Turkish one, and it was also stated that it had a high “species diversity” and was formally equal to the military in its “double-headed command structure” (Balabán, Rašek, and Stejskal 2012, 15), development remained discursively subordinated to overall security.

However, this justification by positing the interrelatedness of security and development was

rather unique, and it did not “trickle down”. One exception to the lack of reference to the nexus was made by a right-wing deputy (Jan Schwippel) in the parliamentary debate directly related to the PRT: “Today all experts agree that there is no development without security. Security is a sine qua non condition for development; and development and security complement, condition and foster each other.” (PSP ČR 7 September 2007) Yet Schwippel used the nexus argument against the unreformed Czech Communist Party that has no coalition potential but plays an important role in the Czech politics. The communists were supportive of a humanitarian mission to Afghanistan without a military component and hence this solitary use of the security-development nexus in a political debate was hence instrumentalised to weaken the arguments of the political opposition and support the military intervention. With the low emphasis on both of its components in the Czech Republic, the potential of the two-way causality was not positively raised by any of the political actors.

While security and development issues did gradually emerge, the security-development nexus was only used even more sporadically in Hungarian justification discourses. One rare example of its use is a 2010 Ministry of Defence press release in response to a Taliban threat, which stated that the safety of the Hungarian soldiers depended on successful development projects, and not on bargaining with the Taliban (HVG.hu 2010b). Other than this, it very difficult to find further references to the security-development nexus, even in official PRT materials unlike in the Czech case, which against seems to be related to the experience of the constituency of actors active in the field of international development.

### **Other types of legitimisation: the identification with and interests in NATO membership**

Our research uncovers that Czech politicians have frequently used identity-related rather than subject-specific arguments to justify the mission and the PRT in the logic of appropriateness. The immediate Czech reactions after the 9/11 attacks on civilian and military targets in the United States show the path dependency that the Czech political elites have entered from the very beginning. For example, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Josef Zieleniec told the radio station *Radio Frekvence 1* on 12 September 2001 that it was “an attack against our civilization”, and hence he supported the attack against the country of the terrorists’ origin, as he said that it should not be “left to the Americans to carry on the attack alone.” On the same day, the Minister of Defence Jaroslav Tvrdík confirmed that the Czech Republic would join the NATO allies according to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, and he forecasted a deployment of only the rapid reaction corps (*MF DNES*, 13 September 2001). As Jiří Šedivý, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, put it the following day: “It might not be too adventurous for us. In certain circumstances our contribution can be limited to the ‘mere’ posting of some agents. Let us not scare people, for God’s sake.” (*MF DNES*, 14 September 2001) The government gave its support to the US reaction during its special session, and the US reaction was also supported by President Václav Havel and all of the parliament political parties except the Communist Party, the only relevant party to refuse NATO membership. Yet, for the government, the invocation of Article 5 meant “mainly a declaration of NATO’s solidarity with the United States”, which “at this moment, in any case,

[did] not mean that a NATO military action [had to] follow” (Vláda ČR 2001).

In spite of the unexpected length and costs of the campaign (and the situation was worsened by the parallel invasion of Iraq in 2003), the Czech government took a discursive path that it could not easily leave, and the frequently implicit argument of NATO membership and the Czech Republic belonging to the West was dominant in the debate. Of course, the intensity of the identification with NATO differed between the Atlanticist right-wing parties and the internationalist and pro-European centre and left-wing parties. Moreover, it also depended on the identification with the United States as a modern sovereign state based on the ‘othering’ of its external enemies, or rather with Europe as a post-modern, post-sovereign, and post-Westphalian polity based on the ‘othering’ of its own history and its past utopias (Šedivý 2002). Historical parallels such as the one of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia and Al-Qaeda’s attacks on the West were equally mentioned during the debate (PSP ČR 17 March 2010).

The Czech quasi-consensus on NATO membership excluded the partly unreformed Czech Communist Party – an element absent in Hungary that probably reinforced the Czech identification with the alliance. It was fully identified with the “return to the West” and used mainly by the pro-government right-wing politicians. Unlike in Hungary, there was no accession referendum, which is probably linked to the perceived strength of the consensus. Indeed, the Atlanticists, following the strongly pro-American part of the dissident movement led by Václav Havel, seem to have stronger influence on the Czech foreign policy. However, the logic of interests was not excluded from the debate, and it was increasingly promoted by the left-wing opposition, who criticised the lack of strategy and dispersion, and the missing visibility of the Czech Republic in Afghanistan. More importantly, the economic benefits promised by the MFA never materialised. As the former Prime Minister Jiří Paroubek put it, “it is also questionable what the operation achieved. Well, we put some money there; these are not excessive sums of money, they have a purpose, and they fund humanitarian-based projects, but, for example, Chinese companies exploit copper in that country” (PSP ČR 12 June 2013). In fact, Logar has the second largest global stock of unexploited copper (MZV ČR 2013b, 11), and the Communist member of the Chamber of Deputies Václav Exner initially expected to “pluck something from it” (PSP ČR 12 December 2007). The ore was indeed the main reason for the Czech Ministry of Trade and Industry promoting the switch between Baghlan and Logar with Hungary (Hynek and Marton 2011, 139; 240). The MFA however saw Logar as more favourable, due to the region’s proximity to the capital. The political instability in Afghanistan did not lead to the achievement of the Czech economic interests in the country but together with identity-based legitimisation, this lodestar played a minor role in justifying the PRT and the costly Czech involvement in Logar more generally.

Discourses other than those of security and development seemed to have been dominant in Hungary in regard to the PRT as well, especially at the beginning of the PRT. Three such approaches can be identified: those of “NATO obligations” (based on a logic of appropriateness), “NATO opportunities” (following a logic of interests), and “PRT costs”. First, the official statements justifying the decision to take over the PRT from the Dutch in

June 2006 focused on “NATO obligations”: Hungary must take over the PRT because it is a member of NATO, and this is what NATO wants. Politicians decided to focus on NATO as they thought this aspect would resonate most with voters. In the referendum on NATO accession in 1997 - there was no corresponding referendum in the Czech Republic - 85% of the voters approved of the accession, and the security of Hungary has been seen by many as a pivotal issue. Identity politics were also present in Hungary as in the Czech case, as Hungarian elites reacted similarly to 9/11 as their Czech counterparts and also supported the invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Thus, the discourse was built on Hungary’s obligations as a member of the organisation. As the Minister of Defence Imre Szekeres put it in 2006: “when the time comes, NATO will protect Hungary, but this protection is not for free. We must pay our dues now” (Népszabadság, 28 June 2006). This theme of obligations is also present in the 2009 Strategic Outlook. It is interesting to note that this debt-related investment-like justification was absent from the Czech case, which indicates Hungary’s weaker identification with NATO (and it is also different from the justification of the Baltic states, which claimed that they already received substantial aid from the West and it is time to pay it back).

Secondly, the obligations discourse later shifted to opportunities and interests, mainly through the reasoning that operating a PRT will increase the leverage of Hungary within NATO. The NATO opportunities approach was already made clear in 2007, when Szekeres hinted at getting something from NATO in return if the government extended the mandate of the PRT beyond autumn 2008. He mentioned the possibility of the alliance using a Hungarian air base for stationing C-17 transport aircraft, which would create jobs in the region (Népszabadság 2007a). It was also very often iterated how satisfied the NATO allies (mainly the US) were with Hungary’s performance in Afghanistan, again with hints towards how Hungary could use this satisfaction to its own advantage (Népszabadság 2007b).

Finally, the third element of the early discourse was centred on the potential human and financial costs of running the PRT. Given the fact that Hungary was facing severe austerity measures in 2006 due to a large budget deficit, it was understandable that the government tried to downplay the costs of the Afghan involvement. The government spokesperson said that the Hungarian development projects would be highly cost-saving, as Hungary would not develop any infrastructure, but rather concentrate on “knowledge-transfer” projects (Népszabadság 2006a). Much of the development activity would be carried out by NGOs, which would raise additional resources without burdening taxpayers (Népszabadság 2006b). Military costs would also be kept low due to the financial support and logistic assistance from the USA and Germany. Concerning the potential loss of soldiers, the dangers were also downplayed, as the government argued that Baghlan was a relatively safe province (which was probably more or less true in 2006), and the Hungarian force would be well prepared to cope with foreseeable dangers.

## **Summary and conclusion**

Taking into account the very high financial and personal costs of the Czech mission to Afghanistan, the limited use of the security, development and, *a fortiori*, security-and-development arguments may seem surprising. In the political space, the securitisation of the Czech PRT outweighed its developmentalisation, but still it was only indirect as it was carried out by the intermediary of the global level. When it was direct, it was unconvincing and used mainly by the pro-government politicians in the context of the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. In contrast to this, framing of the PRT as a development issue was almost absent from the political space, although the public relations efforts by the PRT itself, composed of people with backgrounds in development, aimed to present their activities as a “good thing” Eventually, other types of unrelated legitimisation were the most prominent. Economic arguments coming mostly from the left side of the political spectrum that were related to the logic of interests were also limited, and the identity-related logic of appropriateness was the driving force during the political debates. Unlike in Hungary, NATO membership and its implications were not justified by the logic of interests, but purely as an identity issue. Despite attempts by the opposition to politicise the issue, the right-wing government could rely on the strong identification of the Czech politicians and citizens with the (idealised) West to justify the unprecedented mission without recurring to a massive campaign related to the Czech security and economic interests.

Hungarian elites clearly saw participation in Afghanistan as a politically costly burden, and they thus tried to steer the discourse to various justifications that they thought would resonate most with the public. Therefore, the discourse originally centred not only on obligations towards NATO, but also on how Hungary could benefit from taking part in the mission. Security and development were mostly absent from the discourse initially, but they became increasingly important over time. During the Socialist government, security became almost as important an element in the limited public debate as NATO obligations and opportunities. Development entered the debate even later, but discussions of it mainly focused on quantitative lists of development projects that Hungary had implemented. Later, the Fidesz government mainly pointed to development successes, even though the actual evidence of these was questionable. Poverty reduction was hardly ever mentioned. The security-development nexus did not really enter the public debate. Neither of the two main parties questioned the Afghan mission (as opposed to some smaller parties), but the Fidesz government was in a more comfortable situation in the sense that they could talk of the mission as a legacy of the previous government. The lower politicisation of the issue in Hungary is also evident by the absence of a need for public surveys.

[Table 1 near here]

The analysis shows that the Czech and the Hungarian cases share most of the points. In spite of the hybrid civil-military character of the PRTs, the politicians and decision-makers almost never relied on the security-development nexus, and securitised and developmentalised the PRTs only indirectly and to a varying extent, depending on the domestic politicisation of the issue (see Table 1). This finding resonates with the critical assessment of the nexus by David Chandler (2007) as an anti-foreign policy that is more concerned with the domestic

repercussions than the impacts of the policy. The post-9/11 “We are all Americans” effect quickly vanished, leading to the fact that Afghanistan was not perceived as a direct threat to Central Europe, which made the securitisation of the Afghan missions difficult. What makes both cases different are the contrasting intensities of the developmentalisation of the PRTs in the public debates in Hungary and in the Czech Republic. The latter has had a stronger tradition of presenting development cooperation as an integral part of the foreign policy discourse. In both cases, development-related arguments were used almost only by development professionals, often with an NGO background, that are used to the justification of a policy by its impacts abroad. That does not mean, though, that the actors did not use the double effect of both securitisation and developmentalisation to present the PRT as a “good thing” despite its frequent failures. They also depoliticised PRTs so that the massive investments by the states seemed necessary, and were accepted by the Czech and Hungarian populations without any substantial popular protests.

However, the Czech and Hungarian politicians preferred to justify the PRTs mostly by domestic identity, values, and interests to achieve the same goal of mitigating criticism by presenting the mission as politically prudent and positive. The PRTs did not need to be securitised and developmentalised at all, as far as the involvement was presented as an indivisible part of the states’ recently gained NATO membership, and other discursive strategies were auxiliary. Indeed, once the countries became NATO members, the political question of *whether* they should access the alliance became a technical matter of *how* to fulfil the corresponding obligations. This is in line with the qualitative comparative analysis by Jan Došek (2012), who identified the appurtenance to the “new Europe” as the strongest explanatory factor of the involvement of the European NATO members in Afghanistan (paradoxically, this factor was discarded as irrelevant in the case of the Iraq war by Petra Roter and Zlatko Šabič [2004]). However, Došek obtained the strongest results by including the factor of their dependence on the importation of Russian gas, an auxiliary factor in our analysis as well. Our findings also concur with Marton and Eichler (2013), who related the willingness of the CEE countries to intervene in NATO missions with how they were valued by the USA in a neo-realist framework. We identify an additional difference between the Czech Republic and Hungary in our study. While the former country seemed to be more strongly identified with NATO in a logic of appropriateness, the latter needed to justify its deployment abroad by the obligation and opportunities rhetoric more. The higher level of identification in the Czech Republic seems to be related to the legacy of the strongly Atlanticist dissident movement and the opposition to the least reformed communist party in the region.

Nik Hynek and Péter Marton (2011, 120) understood the Czech mission in Afghanistan as an example of post-decisional politics and a successful internalisation of external contextual factors that were politically accepted by the Czech government and then discursively presented for its own motivation (Hynek and Marton 2011, 126). In other words, the legitimising discourses would trickle down from the hegemon in a process of “cascade argumentation” (Hynek and Eichler 2012). This observation is only partly accurate, though. We have seen that the absence of a direct threat makes securitisation difficult, which is in line

with their classification of the Czech Republic and Hungary as NATO members with a “strong alliance dependence and [a] weak balancing to domestic threats” (Hynek and Marton 2011, 5). Moreover, the domestic field for a deeper developmentalisation of Afghanistan was too fresh as the public awareness of global poverty remained too low for an emergence of a sustainable legitimisation through the impacts of the development policy. And *a fortiori*, creating a nexus at the intersection of the reduced security and development fields was doomed to fail, leaving space mostly for unrelated domestic legitimisation.

This is the big paradox of both PRTs: rather than being merely imported from discourses in other NATO members, as suggested by the previous literature, their legitimacy was mostly mediated by the very fact of NATO membership. In other words, against the expectations that the externally induced involvement of CEE countries in Afghanistan would be accompanied by the import of the related legitimising discourses through the introduction of a novel feature of their policies, it turns out that these discourses were imported only in a limited extent. The most prominent legitimising discourse was related to NATO, i.e. not to the *exported* discourses and practices of the PRTs but to the *exporter* itself. Reference to Afghanistan’s provinces and their people as the real targets of the missions was virtually absent from the discourses. However, the local Afghan population became the objects the undeniable and extensive practice of civil-military cooperation. The question for future research is whether and how the practice of the PRTs by the civil experts and the military contributed to the emergence or reinforcement of broader global security-related and development-related discourses in Central European political debates.

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**Table 1. Legitimising discourses of the Czech and Hungarian involvement in Afghanistan**

<i>Legitimising discourse</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>	<i>Hungary</i>
<i>Security</i>	Weak, indirect, by right-wing politicians	Strong between 2007 and 2010
<i>Development</i>	Very weak in polity, strong in PRT's public relations	Gradual increase, but focus mainly on development projects
<i>Security-Development Nexus</i>	Almost non-existent, instrumental	Non-existent
<i>Other</i>	Appropriateness: identification with NATO, strong Interests: economic, very weak	Appropriateness/interests: 'NATO obligations', strong Interests: 'NATO opportunities', strong

Source: authors