

Title: **The Concept of Security in the Postmodern Era on the European Background**
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As her thesis Tereza Jandová decided to submit an essay on a rather sophisticated, topical and interesting theme – the contemporary concept of security and its manifestation in Europe. And indeed *this* or something similar should have been her main focus and the title of her thesis – as I shall explain below, the notion of a “postmodern era” merely blurs the image depicted by her work.

The essay itself is divided into four main parts, two if we omit the introduction and conclusion. Even at this stage the inclusion of “postmodernism” into the main scope of the essay can be seen as problematic: the second part is entitled “The Modern Versus the Postmodern” and takes up almost half of the essay, unfortunately without clearly connecting greater portion of this part with the overall topic of concept of security. Also, as far as the structure is concerned, it is indeed striking to find a chapter entitled “Conclusion” (2.4) in the first third of the essay and in the middle of its second part. The reason is obvious: the second part should have been divided into at least two, the first of these sub-parts ending by this semi-conclusion.

If one looks more closely at how Tereza draws a dividing line between “the modern and the post-modern”, he will find her image rather confusing. Of the four cited main features of the modern era, the first three could probably pass without a heated debate. The fourth, and as to the concept of security the most relevant, is however rather striking: according to Tereza’s view, “[m]odern political order [...] grows into the balance-of-power system constituted by *small nation states* acting according to their calculus of interests.” (p. 13, italics mine). It is at this point the reader realizes he doesn’t have a clue on the historical setting of the notions discussed – *small nation states* in Victorian times? at the verge of WWI? between the world wars? in the Cold War period (and could that time be even considered a part of modern era?)? When has *ever* been such time? The solution of this riddle is however

even more striking: “from political point of view, [...] as the dividing line between the modern and the postmodern clearly stands *the end of the Cold War*.” (p. 28, italics mine). Isn't *this* the time when the world of empires finally dissolved (if only for a short time) into a world of small nation states (or the closest to such a world ever)?

What makes the above example even more exemplary (and, I must honestly admit it, the arguments of the thesis easier to refute) is the fact that *not a single part* of the mentioned analysis is backed by any cited authority (or any true analysis for that reason, I would never demand an *authority* on postmodernism). And that is also the case with many more doubtful claims (to cite a few: “the typical image of a modern man is the image of a *provider of goods*” (p. 13), “the balance of power [in the Cold War era] was accompanied by the same *balance of terror*” (p. 28), “[e]xploitation of workers and natural resources, pollution of nature, politically motivated illegal imprisonment of people, military *atrocities* and other facts were overshadowed by this narrow-minded straightforward orientation [on evading the potential favourable position of the rival side in the bipolar setting of the Cold War]” (p. 29) - all italics and additions mine). The overall image of the argumentation is thus rather speculative. However, don't let me be misunderstood: Tereza does cite various sources at relevant times in her thesis and her bibliography (with sources varying from standard textbooks through scientific magazine articles to various online sources) shows her true effort to achieve in-depth understanding of the phenomena studied. The reader is nevertheless left only to trust her.

Turning back to the content of the thesis itself, after (rather convincingly) defining the threats the post-modern world faces it takes up the task of briefly analysing the European context of the matter. The main axis of this analysis is the historical development of European security system within (but not exclusively) the processes of European integration. Neither here did Tereza avoid some of the above mentioned shortcomings, most notably the failure to back up some of her doubtful claims with argumentation or authority (e.g. “beyond this system [of post-modern world, that is, in the “third world countries” and probably elsewhere] *the law of jungle still overrules*” (p. 65, italics and addition mine)). Her account presupposes rather thorough knowledge of institutions and inner relations of the EU, as she avoids any explanation of its structure. It is, of course, a difficult task, however, there may be doubts as to whether the author herself understands these issues – let that be a possible topic for the defence of her thesis.

Let the last point be the issue of terminology. Tereza rightly decided to provide the reader with a note on terminology (chap. 1.6). However, the choice of terms explained here is unconvincing. Not only do some of the terms explained here appear only several times in the entire essay (cf. referential objects, actors of securitisation, existential threat), the fourth term “security” is in fact explained later on in the essay, and the last couple of terms, “threat” and “risk” are defined (deriving from Eichler 2004) in a wholly doubtful manner that proves little useful in the essay itself (can *risks* really be defined as *social phenomena of subjective character*?).

From the above it would seem the thesis could be as well entirely rejected. That is, to my view, not the case. The essay suffers mainly from wrong definition of the topic, leading to blurry (and unnecessary) distinction between modern and post-modern era and their relevant inherent security issues. Had Tereza avoided this mistake and had she focused on European security issues and institutions of the past two decades, the essay could be a convincing account and analysis of these phenomena. However, even with this drawback the essay shows deep understanding of the issue at hand, capacity of the author to formulate her own thoughts in a concise manner (although she should improve the relevant argumentation) and her convincing work with sources of information. With the exception of the cited doubtful claims the essay lacks any flaws in argumentation or oversimplification of the relevant phenomena (I omit the modernity – post-modernity distinction, and the brief analysis of EU security policy, lacking deeper description of its institutional background, is introduced as such). The fact that Tereza managed to submit a 70-page thesis in English without making too disruptive errors should also not pass unnoticed.

In overall evaluation, I consider this thesis to be “little-below-average”, and I suggest it should be rated somewhere around **25** credit points.

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Prague, 11 June 2007