The origin of security dilemmas has long been a central question in international relations. Three archetypal models of the security dilemma can be found in international relations literature. According to the spiral model, security dilemmas are driven by the inability of security-seeking states to coordinate their policies in an anarchic political space, while the deterrence model implies that security dilemmas are caused by the offensive intentions of at least one of the actors in an anarchic system. Advocates of the model of peaceful change, in turn, maintain that security dilemmas are nothing more than a social construction: anarchy is what states make of it.

In this thesis I deconstruct and reconstruct some key aspects of security dilemma theories in a hitherto unexplored (meta)theoretical context, that of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theory. The aim of the thesis is to show how a Lacanian interpretation of one phenomenon - "predationism" - can help us locate the logic of all three models described above (international relations as tragedy, evil, and a social construction) within one theoretical framework.

The thesis is structured around two parts. The first part deals with explaining the origins of anti-Western sentiments in the discourse of Russian "enlightened patriotism". I begin the study by reviewing contemporary neorealist and constructivist analyses of Russian foreign policy. Through a close reading of Waltzian neorealism and Wendtian constructivism I then show how the causal logics of both theories, despite their many differences, presume the existence of a phenomenon usually referred to as predationism (an aggressive policy of seeking non-security goals), which neither theory can explicate in scientific terms. Relying on Lacan and Slavoj Žižek, I conceptualize predationism as a cultural and political effort to escape the lack arising from representation by displacing it to a Symbolic Other, which is constructed as threatening, inferior, degenerate etc., and whose function in political discourse is to enable collectives to maintain the illusion of national/ethnic/civilizational unity. I demonstrate the potential usefulness of Lacanian discourse analysis by applying it to the thinking of Sergei Kortunov, a prominent Kremlin strategist, who has written extensively on Russian identity and foreign policy. Kortunov's anti-Westernism, I conclude, is not so much a reaction to Western deeds (as constructivism would suggest) or to the structure of the international system (as neorealism would lead us to believe) as a symptom of a discursive structure where the split inherent in identity is displaced to the Western Other in order to rescue the fantasy of an organic Russia from its own impossibility.

In the second part of the thesis, I make three moves in order to place the Lacanian-inspired explanation for predationism within the context of security dilemma theory. I begin by elaborating the relationship between the Lacanian reading of alienation and the interpretation of estrangement in the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Next, after tracing the imprints of the Enlightenment within contemporary objectivist, subjectivist, and intersubjectivist security dilemma theories, I suggest how a Lacanian reading of estrangement can help us (re)locate the role of culture in the formation of different kinds of security dilemmas. Finally, I propose some guidelines under which a dialogue between a structuralist understanding of the logic of anarchy and a Lacanian-inspired structuralist theory of the origins of threat perceptions could be developed into a research programme and how this programme could be evaluated. I sum up the thesis with a chapter in which I reflect on the potential usefulness of Lacanian theory for policy research.

The main source material of the thesis consists of academic literature dealing with international relations theory, political theory, psychoanalysis and Russian foreign policy. The case study on Sergei Kortunov's thinking is based on his recent articles and books.

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