Abstract

Expressive description of the importance of critical infrastructure (CI) has been a common trend in the security literature, especially in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, when for the first time civilian infrastructure was purposefully targeted and the cascading effect so evident at such a scale. The first step in building efficient protection is the correct identification of critical assets: the European Union (EU) set a respective common approach in its 2008 Council Directive. However, it recognises only energy and transport infrastructures as critical and does not correspond with the 2016 Network Infrastructure Security (NIS) Directive.

As compared to how much attention CI protection receives, CI sector identification is, arguably, a knowledge gap. Natural disasters, blackouts, human error, and especially resulting cascading effects are the focus of sectoral regulations, but are severely under-represented on the strategic level. The issue is that while pragmatic risk assessment may work for individual industries, on the state level the identification and designation are ultimately a political decision, which is something the existing frameworks do not account for. A study of securitisation in these domains could reveal the role of various sectoral and political interests, as well as social perceptions in the formulation of CI identification strategies.

The purpose of this research is to determine how the EU Member States utilise securitisation in CI identification. A better understanding of what makes states identify their particular infrastructures as critical could lead to a harmonised CI identification framework which would, in turn, increase resilience of the entire society.