

Abstract:

The United States of America and the People's Republic of China have a record of a complex relationship of both cooperation and competition. The perceptions and narratives prevailing in the US authoritative circles and broader society about China's role in what Washington has formally characterised as *strategic competition* and the threats attributed to it have been subject to numerous interdisciplinary studies. Yet the reverse phenomenon—the perceptions of the US as a strategic rival in China's authoritative circles and broader society—has gone relatively under-researched in Western academia. The present dissertation seeks to fill in the gap. There is no publicly available white paper or strategy, directly and explicitly addressing China's evaluation of and policy for managing the Sino-American rivalry. Nonetheless, collecting and evaluating the US-related sections of broader publicly available authoritative statements in text and speech can help identify at least some elements of Beijing approach to the competition. The ultimate research question of this dissertation can thus be formulated as follows – how do the Chinese authorities narrate the United States as China's strategic rival in publicly available authoritative statements? To answer the question, the dissertation differentiates between narratives (a construct) and narrative-building (a process) and regards the former as a product of the latter, constituting complex securitisation efforts. The dissertation approaches the research question in two steps. First, it identifies the dominant securitisation narratives regarding the US in the capacity of a rival through discourse analysis of publicly available authoritative sources. Second, the dissertation explains the logic of the securitisation narrative-building processes through an analysis of the narratives' contextual placing. To guide the research, the dissertation employs a three-fold theoretical framework. The first component of the framework accounts for the critical role of perception in generating and maintaining strategic rivalry. The second component is securitisation theory. The third and central piece of the framework is the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu.

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Bourdieu