

Abstract (English)

The aim of this dissertation is to answer the question of whether the U.S. security policy is influenced by the threat of cyber terrorism. The dissertation is divided into chapters that can be regarded as steps in a logical reasoning process.

In the first chapter, cyber space is introduced and described to illustrate its importance and complexity. The next chapter analytically compares various definitions of terrorism, and partially rejects the initial hypothesis that cyber terrorism is not included in the general definition of terrorism. The following chapter statistically analyzes the available data on terrorist groups and terrorist attacks to empirically confirm the hypothesis that terrorism is still a real threat to American security. The analysis actually proves that the threat of terrorism has not decreased in relation to the number of terrorist groups. It also shows that the number of terrorist attacks against the U.S. targets has significantly decreased in the United States, while terrorist actions have been increasing constantly on a global level. The analysis shows that the success rate of terrorists attacks does not form a time series, and therefore each terrorist attack has to be examined individually to assess its success probability. The following analysis reviews the possibilities of terrorists obtaining weapons of mass destruction in comparison with the option of cyber attacks. This analysis is based on case studies which prove that cyber attacks have the potential of being even more destructive than conventional terrorist attacks in some cases. The findings show that terrorists would be more likely to rely on massive attacks, whereas other actors like state-supported groups of hackers would probably launch more sophisticated and well-targeted attacks. The next chapter assesses the current position of the U.S. in cyber space. The results show that different factors have to be considered in cyber space to determine the cyber capabilities of a particular state. The position of the U.S. is not so dominant in cyber space, based on the findings in this chapter. Finally, the last chapter analyzes important documents that have shaped American security policy related to cyber terrorism and cyber security. This analysis shows that cyber terrorism has been addressed in documents influencing American security policy since 1998, when terrorists were first identified as a possible source of cyber attacks. In conclusion, the dissertation confirms that the threat of cyber terrorism is indeed influencing the U.S. security policy, but that cyber security is a more important issue. Further research should focus on the role of the state in ensuring cyber security, and on the qualitative aspects of any security measures that are implemented.

Key words: Cyber space, terrorism, U.S., USA, cyber security, virus, terrorist attack, critical infrastructure, homeland security, hacker.