

Abstract

As one of the major players in cyber security, the United States (U.S.) holds a specific, national security-focused approach towards this field. The most prominent actor in the U.S. within this discipline is the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which has released its own cyber security strategy four months prior to the overall national strategy. Based on its position in this domain and the specific relationship with the president of the U.S., the thesis aims to explore the DHS and its agenda-setting powers that were used to push its discourse onto the national level. This thesis examines the cyber security strategy of the U.S., specifically the position of the DHS in cyber security, and attempts to determine if this federal department used its influence to mainstream its discourse in the national cyber security strategy. The thesis further analyzes what is the cyber security strategy of the U.S., and if there has been a securitization of this field after 9/11. It draws on a variety of theories and analytical tools, including Hansen and Nissenbaum's securitization theory and agenda setting theory, as well as various methods of political discourse analysis, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, historical analysis, and process tracing. Ultimately, the thesis reveals the securitizing discourse in DHS documents and demonstrates how it used its agenda-setting power to push its rhetoric into the national cyber security strategy. The thesis also fills the gap in the literature about the position of federal departments and agencies in the U.S. cyber security area. Furthermore, it finds that the national cyber security strategy of the U.S. holds a securitizing discourse which is comparable to the one of the DHS. Finally, the thesis uncovers that the strategy lacks details about the actors who would take charge and execute it. However, it still progresses further than its predecessors, and ultimately recognizes the need for a comprehensive strategy. Additionally, the thesis also concludes that the events of 9/11 served as a strong catalyst to legitimize the securitization of this discipline.