



Switzerland in the foreign media: 3rd quarter 2018

Suspected Russian spying activities in Switzerland

Suspected Russian spying activities in Switzerland drew considerable international media attention during the period under review. Reports initially focused on the two

«Nichtmal die Schweiz ist mehr sicher.»
(FAZ, Deutschland)

suspects in the Skripal case who were reported to have travelled to Geneva several times in the run-up to the attempted assassination. The foreign media then picked up reports published by the Swiss media about two other suspected Russian agents who had allegedly attempted to spy on the Spiez Laboratory and to hack into the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in Lausanne. International media outlets also covered the Federal Intelligence Service's (FIS) assessment according to which one in four Russian diplomats based in Switzerland is an agent. Western media coverage of the allegations of Russian spying and the resulting tensions between Switzerland and Russia mainly focused on facts, but there was also some editorial commentary that was critical of Russia. The Russian media, for its part, adopted a negative tone towards Switzerland. Quoting the Russian ambassador to Switzerland, who described the accusations of Russian spying as «fairy tales», the Russian press dismissed the investigative reports published by Swiss newspapers as an anti-Russian campaign.

«Die wachsende antirussische Rhetorik der Schweizer Medien schafft einen ungesunden Hintergrund rund um die Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Ländern.»
(Izvestia, Russland)

Reports on integration and cultural diversity in Switzerland

During the period under review, the international media covered two events related to the integration of people with a migration background. The debate about whether Switzerland should ban dual citizens from the national football team – sparked by the double eagle gesture symbolising the Albanian flag made by two players – drew

«Es wird immer Schweizer geben, die ein Problem damit haben, wenn in der Nationalmannschaft junge Männer über den Rasen rennen, die beim Rütli Schwur noch nicht dabei gewesen sind. Es wird immer Spieler geben, die zwei Ländern emotional stark verbunden sind. Daran ändert eine Ein-Pass-Regel nichts.»
(Süddeutsche Zeitung, Deutschland)

extensive media coverage. Media reports were for the most part factual, with a number of them also touching on Switzerland's national identity and cultural diversity. In August, numerous international media outlets reported the case of a Muslim couple in Lausanne

whose naturalisation application had been rejected because, among other reasons, they refuse to shake hands with people of the opposite sex for religious reasons. The reports published by traditional media outlets were largely factual in tone. In the social media, however, where the case was also widely discussed, opinions were polarised: on Twitter, for example, Kenneth Roth, director of Human Rights Watch, condemned Lausanne's decision, while the Austrian Vice-Chancellor, Heinz-Christian Strache, praised it. Swiss naturalisation decisions are regularly covered by the foreign media. Foreign media reports of how Switzerland deals with migrants are not always favourable. However, they do tend to present an image of a pluralistic society.



The Spiez Laboratory in the sights of suspected Russian spies (© New York Times)



Debate about dual citizens in the Swiss national football team (© FAZ)

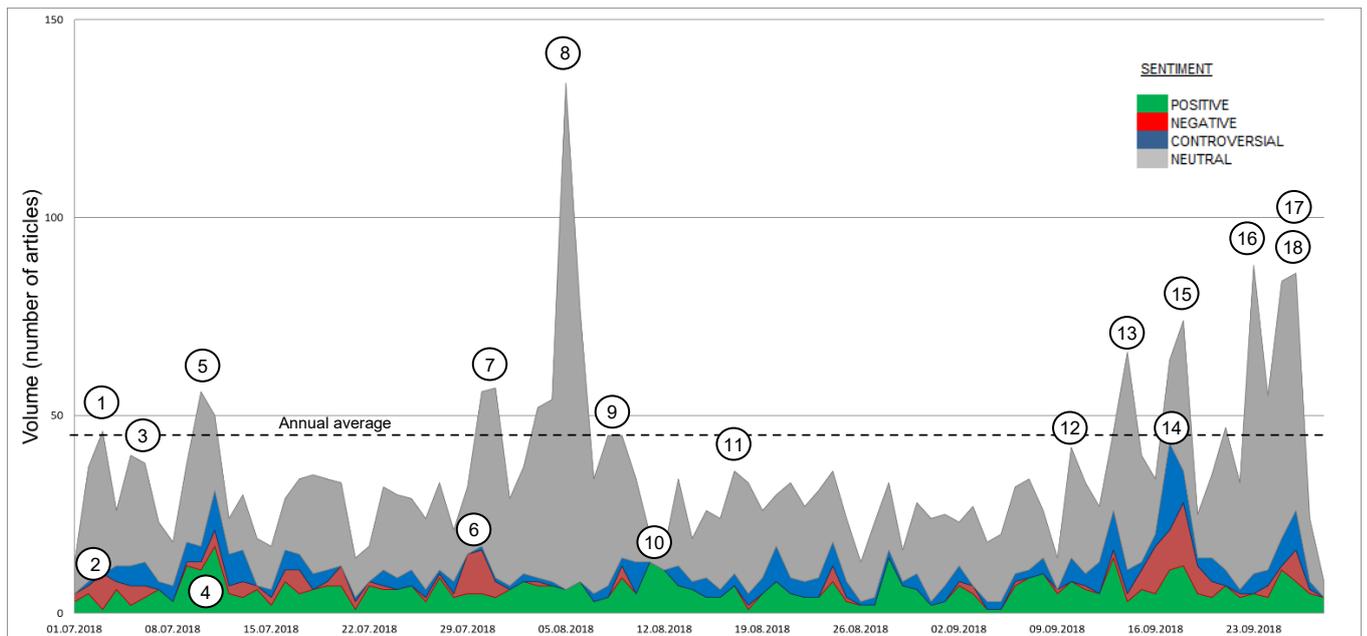


Tweets by Kenneth Roth (director of Human Rights Watch) and Heinz-Christian Strache (Austrian Vice Chancellor)



The contrast between the lifestyles of the host country and the country of origin (© Al-Quds Al-Arabi)

Quantitative evolution of foreign media coverage related to Switzerland



Evolution of the volume and sentiment of foreign media coverage in connection with Switzerland (volume = number of articles per day in the leading media analysed (01.07.2018–30.09.2018)). A spike can correspond to multiple events. The numbered events have been selected on the basis of their circulation volume and importance.

(1) Hassan Rouhani's visit to Switzerland. (2) Glencore: corruption and money laundering allegations. (3) Debate on dual citizens in the Swiss national football team. (4) Switzerland ranks first in Global Innovation Index for 8th time in a row. (5) Switzerland initiates WTO dispute settlement procedure over US import tariffs. (6) Tax investigation against former VW CEO Martin Winterkorn. (7) Death of a Swiss tourist in an attack in Tajikistan. (8) Crash of Ju-52s aircraft near Piz Segnas (GR). (9) Mud and rock slide in Chamossion (VS). (10) Locarno Film Festival. (11) Muslim couple's naturalisation application rejected in Lausanne. (12) Unconditional basic income project in Rheinau (ZH). (13) Allegations of Russian spying. (14) Allegations of Russian spying covered by the Russian press. (15) Spain's decision not to extradite Hervé Falciani. (16) Full-face veil ban in the Canton of St Gallen. (17) Job cuts at Novartis. (18) Rejection of Roman Abramovich's Swiss residency application.

A closer look: Switzerland's social policy on Twitter

In the third quarter of 2018, Switzerland drew a wide range of Twitter commentary, most of it positive. In particular, Tweets by two Americans suggesting that Switzerland's social policy could be a model for the US drew a great deal of attention. The first tweet was posted by Nathan Rubin, founder of *Millennial Politics*, a digital media company aimed at young, progressive Americans. Rubin's tweet, which described Switzerland as an exemplary model for health care, social security, and affordable college gathered over 200,000 likes and over 43,000 retweets. The second tweet was posted by Chelsea Clinton, who cited Switzerland's liberal drug policy as a model to address America's opioid crisis. Clinton's tweet garnered 20,000 likes, over 4,500 retweets, and an overwhelmingly positive response from the Twitter community in the US. Several high-profile doctors, public health scientists, and politicians joined the discussion, arguing that the US should look more towards Europe to address social problems. These Twitter debates show that Switzerland is sometimes invoked as a positive example to approach social problems at home.



Switzerland's monitoring of foreign media includes all coverage in connection with Switzerland in reference media in 18 countries (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, India, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, USA) in addition to reference media across the Arab world and in the European Union.
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