

Switzerland in the foreign media: 1st quarter of 2025

Defence policy: where does Switzerland stand?

Switzerland's defence policy attracted interest in the foreign media following several high-ranking resignations and the appointment of a new minister in the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). The question raised was

“Die Schweiz wird sich bald die Frage stellen müssen, welche Rolle sie in einem sich auch sicherheitspolitisch neu sortierenden Europa einnehmen möchte.”

(*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Germany)

whether critical security and defence institutions are in the throes of a leadership crisis at a geopolitically inopportune time. Switzerland's positioning within the European security architecture was also the subject of in-depth analysis during this

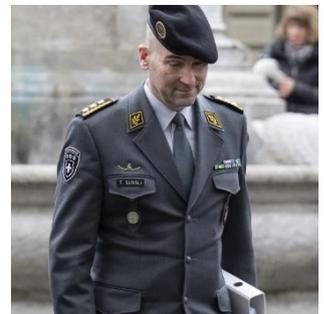
quarter. The German media was – sometimes sharply – critical of Switzerland for freeriding on security issues and opportunistically aligning with the US. Switzerland, they suggested, considers itself part of the community of shared values in Europe only as long as there are no costs. English- and German-language media outlets, in particular, highlighted Switzerland's outdated military equipment and low defence expenditure compared to the rest of Europe. Another topic was the decline in arms exports, which the media attributed to Switzerland's policy of neutrality. The international media also frequently reported that Switzerland is considering closer cooperation with NATO.

“En Suisse, crise au sommet de la hiérarchie militaire : Les démissions en cascade [...] interrogent sur le sérieux de la gestion de la sécurité nationale”

(*Le Monde*, France)



The new head of the DDPS, Martin Pfister (© *Financial Times*)



Army chief Thomas Süssli was among the high-ranking officials who resigned. (© *FAZ*)

Financial centre: regulation and the long shadow cast by CS

The Swiss financial centre received coverage in the foreign media on a range of issues during the 1st quarter of 2025. One of the main issues pertained to regulating UBS after the merger. Several foreign media outlets reported that Swiss authorities

“Es wäre schon ein Fortschritt, wenn auf einem führenden Finanzplatz, auf dem Banken ausländische Kundengelder von 2200 Milliarden Dollar verwalten, die gleichen Regeln gälten wie andernorts.”

(*FAZ*, Germany)

would stipulate an increase in the bank's capital requirements, while UBS was resisting this and had threatened to shift its headquarters abroad. Some foreign media outlets have criticized the current regulation of UBS as too weak, while others advise caution with regard to any restructuring of it. The media also reported that the compensation package

for UBS CEO Sergio Ermotti during the financial year 2024 was kept relatively low given the fierce political debate on regulation. Foreign media also picked up on the allegations of a US Senate committee probing Credit Suisse for concealing its links with the National-Socialists and obstructing investigations on the matter. The bank's conduct was criticised largely, especially in the US and German media. On social media, the criticism occasionally extended to the entire Swiss financial centre.

“UBS vs the Swiss regulation drive: Bank now finds itself confronted by the prospect of tougher rules than global competitors”

(*Financial Times*, UK)

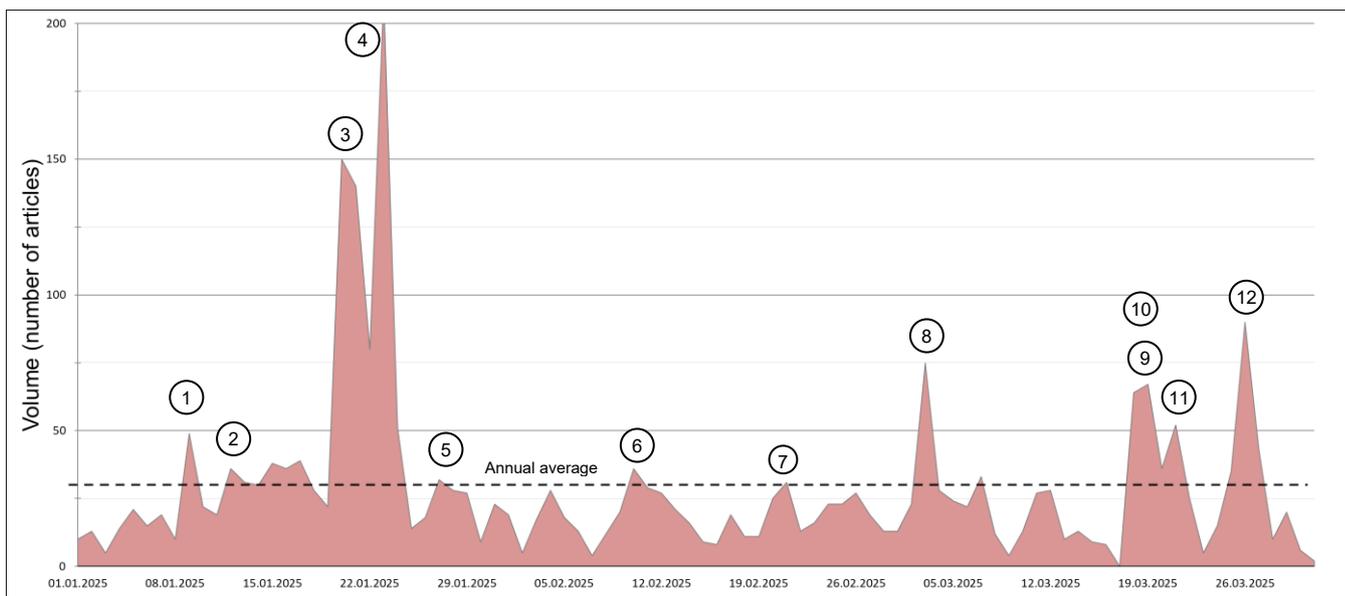


Credit Suisse continues to dominate coverage of the Swiss financial centre even after its emergency takeover. (© *Wall Street Journal*)



UBS CEO Sergio Ermotti (© *Bloomberg*)

Quantitative trends in foreign media coverage related to Switzerland



Changes in the volume and tone of foreign media coverage related to Switzerland (volume = number of articles per day in the leading media analysed, 01.01.2025 – 31.03.2025). A spike can correspond to multiple events. The numbered events have been selected on the basis of the volume of the coverage and its significance.

(1) Death of a Swiss national in an Iranian jail (2) Switzerland signals willingness to host a meeting between Trump and Putin (3) WEF in Davos (4) WEF: video address by Donald Trump (5) Arrest and deportation of Ali Abunimah (6) Federal vote (7) Issue of Swiss participation in a potential peace mission to Ukraine (8) Federal Criminal Court: commencement of the appeal proceedings against former football bosses Blatter and Platini (9) Future regulation of the UBS bank (10) Death of Swiss author Peter Bichsel (11) Crash of a small plane in Engadin (12) Federal Criminal Court: judgment in the appeal proceedings against former football bosses Blatter and Platini.

Focus: positive coverage of Switzerland in the foreign media

News coverage in the media follows its own dynamics and is not necessarily representative of actual events or how they are popularly perceived. Consequently, critical developments or stories that are highly emotionally

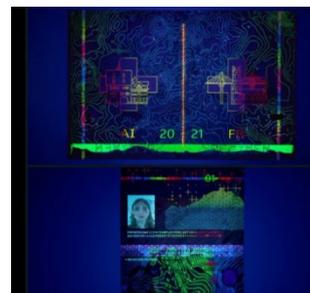
“Unser Nachbarland, die Schweiz, hat [...] das derzeit wahrscheinlich beste Demokratiesystem weltweit.”
(Standard, Austria)

charged usually receive greater media coverage than factual issues that tend not to be controversial. An added factor is the strong tendency to focus on topicality. While current events are usually covered by several media outlets there tends

to be only isolated in-depth coverage of non-topical content. The number of positive topics that the foreign media focused on in the last quarter for in-depth coverage of Switzerland is consequently all the more remarkable. These included the competitiveness of Swiss industry, green roofs in Basel, noise pollution policy, direct democracy, the regulatory framework for self-driving cars, political stability, low government expenditure,

“Switzerland is leading the world in purifying its water of micropollutants.”
(Guardian, UK)

high life expectancy, clean water bodies, high wages and Switzerland as a hub for research. Switzerland as a travel destination also received much attention in traditional and social media. A Swiss landscape photo shared by Elon



Swiss Design is also going viral – like the new Swiss passport here. (© @avstorm)

Musk on X, for instance, received 55 million views in the last quarter. Overall, positive media coverage of Switzerland frequently comprises analytical reports on issues where Switzerland is regarded as a model in terms of its legislation or policy environment. This includes aspects of governance, sustainability and quality of life. Aesthetically appealing content tends to achieve a lot of resonance on social media.

Monitoring the image of Switzerland in the foreign media covers all the reporting on Swiss-related topics in the leading media of 23 countries – Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, the UK and the US – as well as in the leading pan-Arab and EU media. Contact: FDFA, Presence Switzerland, Monitoring and Analysis, Bundesgasse 32, 3003 Bern, tel. +41 58 462 34 63, prs@eda.admin.ch, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/praesenzschweiz>