



Switzerland in the foreign media: 4th quarter 2019

Elections in Switzerland are perceived as historic

Both the federal elections and elections to the Federal Council received an unusually high amount of attention in the foreign media. Coverage focused on the redistribution of seats in the National Council and Council of States in favour of younger candidates, women and the green parties, which was described as historic.

“Not a wave, a tsunami! Green parties celebrate historic gains in Swiss election”

The Independent, UK

Some reports made the link to civic movements such as the women’s strike, the “Helvetia ruft” campaign to increase the number of women in Swiss politics, and the climate youth movement.

Some media also linked the result to a more immediate understanding of climate change in Switzerland given the melting of the Swiss glaciers. The electoral gains of The Greens and the Swiss Green Liberal Party (glp) failing to translate into a seat on the Federal Council also attracted interest and met with incomprehension in some foreign media. This news was sometimes accompanied by explanations of how the Swiss political system works.



Images in most media primarily featured women politicians from the green parties. (© *Le Monde*)

Swiss Embassy in Sri Lanka in the spotlight

Starting from late November, the abduction and interrogation of a local employee of the Swiss embassy in Sri Lanka by unknown persons received worldwide media attention, especially in Sri Lanka itself. While international media reports were generally balanced and tended to be sympathetic to Switzerland’s version of the events, the Sri Lankan media usually adopted the line taken by the Rajapaksa government, which denied any evidence of an abduction and alleged that the embassy employee had made a false accusation. In the same period, the Sri Lankan media picked up on the acquittal of twelve Tamil Tiger supporters by the Federal Supreme Court. This was controversial news in Sri Lanka. Media aligned with the Sinhala majority tended to condemn the verdict, while reactions from Tamil minority news outlets were positive. The two stories were sometimes linked in local coverage and on social media in which Switzerland was accused of conspiring against Sri Lanka.

“The Swiss shouldn’t be allowed to side-step the inquiry, having been publicly humiliated by being caught lying”

(The Island, Sri Lanka)



Swearing in of the Federal Council (© *Infobae*)



The arrest of a local employee of the Swiss Embassy in Colombo. (© *BBC*)

Credit Suisse spying scandals

Two spying scandals at Credit Suisse received worldwide media attention in the last quarter of 2019. Two leading employees of Credit Suisse were spied on at the bank’s instigation. The media reported extensively on the details of both cases and

“Die Schweiz und Banken - das passt eigentlich hervorragend zusammen: Beide...legen Wert auf Diskretion und makellostes Renommee. Doch was derzeit...passiert, hat damit nichts mehr zu tun.”

(Der Spiegel, Germany)

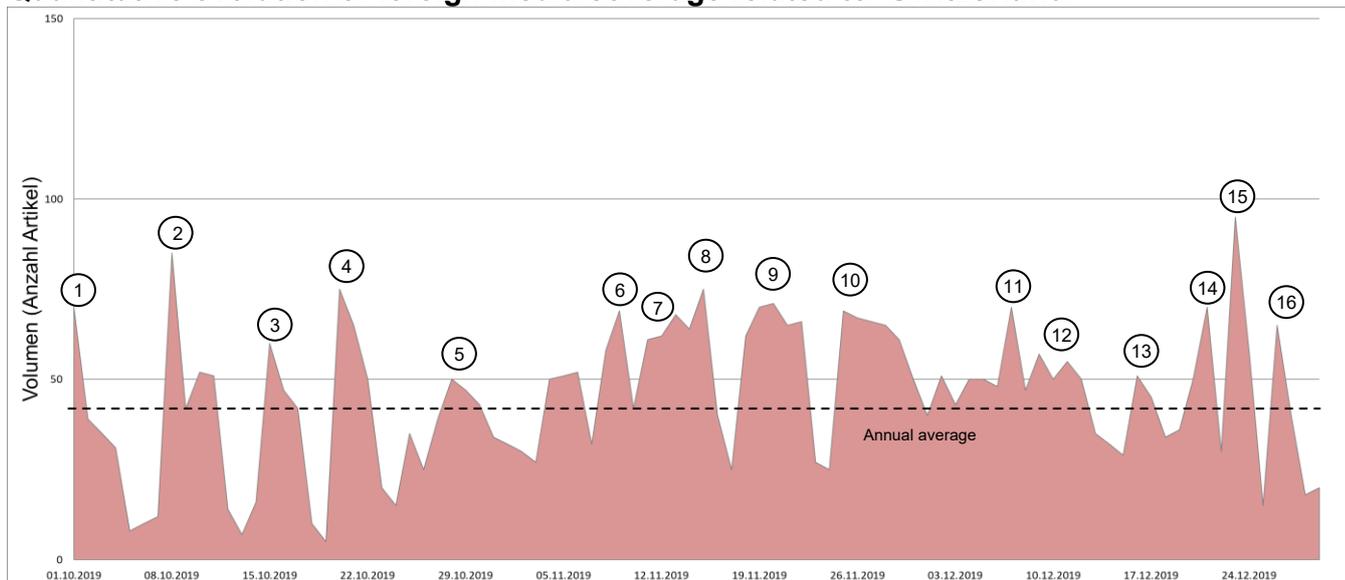
discussed who was to blame and the likely consequences for CS. The tonality in regards to the bank was entirely negative in tone. Some media considered

the incidents damaging to the reputation of the Swiss financial centre as a whole.



Most coverage of the corporate espionage scandals was accompanied by symbolic images. (© *Economist*)

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, 01.07.2019 - 30.09.2019). A spike can correspond to multiple events. The numbered events have been selected based on their volume and significance.

(1) First spying scandal at Credit Suisse (2) Nobel Prize in Physics awarded to two Swiss scientists, Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz (3) Study on glacier melt by the Swiss glacier monitoring network GLAMOS (4) Federal elections (5) Ueli Maurer's visit to the Gulf region (6) New charges against Roman Polanski for rapes suspected to have been committed in Switzerland (7) UBS in Hong Kong fined (8) Automatic exchange of information in tax matters with India (9) SIX takeover bid for Spanish stock market BME (10) Local Swiss embassy employee in Sri Lanka abducted (11) Switzerland facilitates prisoner exchange between US and Iran in Zurich (12) Re-election of the entire Federal Council (13) Local Swiss embassy employee in Sri Lanka arrested (14) Mühleberg nuclear plant shut down (15) Second spying scandal at Credit Suisse, the bank is fined by FINRA (16) Andermatt avalanche

A closer look: Switzerland and space

In the fourth quarter of 2019, reports linked Switzerland with space-related basic research and technologies. The Nobel Prize awarded to Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz of the University of Geneva for their research in physics including the discovery of the first exoplanet in 1995 received the most coverage. Switzerland enjoyed a great deal of visibility as a centre for research and scientific discovery in this context. Various European Space Agency (ESA) mandates for actors from Switzerland also generated media interest for Switzerland and space. Researchers from the University of Bern are closely involved in efforts to discover further exoplanets with the Cheops space telescope, and the start-up ClearSpace, an EPFL spin-off, was selected to lead a mission to clean up space debris.

Media coverage presenting Switzerland as a centre for space research built on earlier successes. Earlier this year, on the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing, foreign media reported that the solar sail, the first experiment carried out on the moon, was developed by the University of Bern. The Rosetta space probe launched in 2003 drew repeated positive coverage for Switzerland in relation to space, since the University of Bern also played a major part in its design.

Switzerland's monitoring of foreign media includes all coverage in connection with Switzerland in reference media in 19 countries (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, India, Israel, 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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