SAFE OR FREE?
Comparative analysis of media discourses on security

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Introduction

- The paper presents results of an international project SECONOMICS (Socio-Economics meets Security), founded by the European Union FP7.

- The project is driven by industry case studies and tries to identify security threats in transport (air, urban and suburban metro) and critical infrastructure.

- The results presented in this paper identify how security threats in critical infrastructures are presented in media and examine the dilemma between security and economy and security and privacy in three case studies – air traffic, electricity transmission network and public transportation.

- The paper provides a unique opportunity to compare media debates on three security issues (3D body scanners, malware Stuxnet and CCTV cameras) in 20 major dailies from 10 countries over the period of forty months between January 2010 to April 2013.

Structure of the Presentation

1. Research design

2. Data

3. Findings

4. Conclusion

Research design

- The conflict between degrees of freedom and security is an increasingly important issue in the contemporary media.

- The media may to some extent influence how citizens perceive risk and aid in to the acceptance or rejection of security measures.

- In democratic political systems the media function both as the transmitters of political communication and as the senders of political messages constructed by journalists and other sources such as bloggers.

- Political actors must use the media in order to have their messages communicated to the desired audiences.

- The media contribute to the public perception of security threats because they frame the communication about security problems by focusing on what will be discussed, how it will be discussed, and above all, how it will not be discussed.

Research questions

- Our research focuses on the role of the media in transmitting information and shaping attitudes to security issues and security measures.

- This paper focuses on a comparative analysis of the discourses and the justifications of security and risk in domestic and international media in connection with the selected three cases of critical infrastructure.

- Three issues were identified as transnationally salient in the current media and relevant for comparative analysis: 3D body scanners, CCTV cameras and Stuxnet.

- The 3D body scanners and CCTV cameras are highly relevant to the security versus privacy dilemma.

- Stuxnet was selected as an issue because it introduced cyber-terrorism and certain vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure into the public debate.

Conceptualising and operationalising political discourse

- The key element of the conceptual framework applied in this paper is discourse.

- For the analysis, it is crucial to identify not only the defining and enabling power of a discourse, but also its power to exclude and dominate actors, categories, and justifications by withholding recognition and endorsement of them.

- The comparative media analysis presented here goes beyond merely capturing and describing media debates on risk and security; it highlights how the perception of security is constructed and shaped by knowledge and the mediation of opinion.

Methodology and Data I.

- We develop a novel methodological approach (Guasti 2013) to analysis of security debates and the construction of security and risk perception, as well as to patterns of interaction and communication.

- Utilising and further developing qualitative methods of textual analysis, we are able to shed light on discursive interactions in the media; to demonstrate how the risk and security threats are framed; and to identify the justifications given for security measures in terms of security, freedom and costs.

Methodology and Data II.

- The articles in the analysis are all drawn from the period between January 2010 and April 2013.

- Each article was sourced from the two most widely circulated, good-quality daily (i.e. mainstream) newspapers in the following countries:

  - ❖ the old and the new EU member states of the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, the UK;
  - ❖ non-EU member states either important in shaping the global discussions of the selected issues (the USA) or key in providing relevant cultural diversity (Turkey and Mexico).

- More than 2800 articles were selected from twenty national newspapers for the given period. The qualitative sample analysed using Atlas.ti. software, was made up of between 40 and 45 articles per country.

Table 1. Overview of selected media.

Country	Media
Czech Republic	Mladá fronta Dnes, Právo
Germany	Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine
Great Britain	The Telegraph, The Guardian
Italy	La Repubblica, Il Giornale
Mexico	La Jordana, La Reforma
Poland	Gazeta Wyborcza, Rzeczpospolita
Slovakia	SME, Pravda
Spain	El Pais, La Vanguardia
Turkey	Zaman, Sozcu
USA	The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal

Source: SECONOMICS 2014
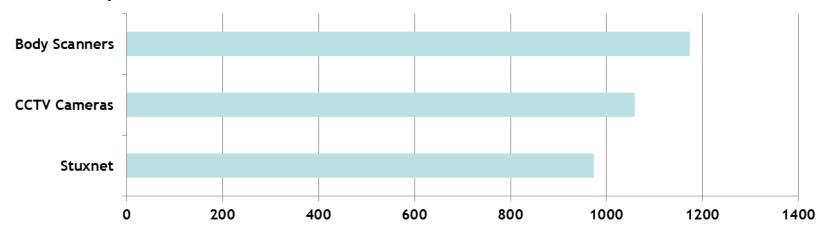
Methodology and Data III.

- For the analysis, a comparative coding scheme was developed and applied both during the pre-test and during the main coding period. The minimum discursive elements of a coded statement included the following:

(1) actors - a determination of which actors were taking part in the communication and what the dominant patterns of interaction among them were;

(2) topics: a description of the structure of each topic in terms of the individual subjects chosen or focused on was described;

(3) argumentative strategies: a description of the ways in which statements were structured (definitive, evaluative and advocative strategies) with a focus on the positive and negative aspects of evaluative and advocative statements;

(4) motivations and justifications: an analysis of the main motives highlighted or refuted by dominant actors, with special attention paid to ideas about security, privacy, and freedom.

Results I.

- The three topics that we included in the analysis didn´t attract the same level of attention equally across the countries studied; the issue of body scanners was the most salient, followed by CCTV cameras and Stuxnet.

Figure 1. Total number of articles in 2010–2013 in all countries (in N of articles).

Source: SECONOMICS, ISASCR

Results II.

- The media debates in the countries under study each prioritised a specific aspect of national security – in reaction to both global events (i.e. terrorist attacks) and domestic developments (economic and political).

- Countries that are generally more active on the international stage or have experience with domestic and international terrorism are generally more exposed to (and hence concerned about) potential terrorist attacks. In those countries (the UK, the US, Spain, and Germany) security measures rank high on the policy agenda.

- In countries where there is no real threat of a terrorist attack from (international/national) extremist groups (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia), there is a weaker policy interest in advanced and costly security devices.

Who communicate with citizens and how

Dominant actors in the analysed countries for CCTV cameras, Stuxnet, and 3D body scanners

Actors	CCTV cameras	Stuxnet	3D body scanners
Journalists	Spain, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, Great Britain, USA	Spain, Mexico, Poland	Spain, Poland, Czech Republic, Great Britain
Experts		Italy, Germany, Great Britain, USA	Czech Republic
State institutions			Mexico, Poland
Politicians	Italy		Italy, Germany
Private company	Mexico	Czech Republic	
Transport Security Agency			Czech Republic, USA

Source: Comparative analysis of the SECONOMICS ISASCR media sample

Differences in justifications given for 3D body scanner, CCTV and Stuxnet

- Differences were observed in the number of justifications of views in favour or against these security measures found in the articles.

- Articles about Stuxnet typically had a relatively small number of justifications, while articles about CCTV cameras and 3D body scanners included many more justifications (newspapers focused on the trade-offs between security, privacy and health).

The main factors affecting media coverage

- The way the media portray different security risks depends on several factors.

- Past experience with a particular security threat and the probability of the country being targeted in the future are the main factors that account for the differences in the extent of coverage dedicated to a security issue in the domestic media.

- The way the public comes to understand a topic is a balance between their perception of risk and their perception of the pros and cons of a given technological measure.

Conclusions I.

- The media landscape, although fragmented and largely confined to the boundaries of nation-states, is undergoing a transformation as the importance of the international context grows.

- At the same time, the media are shifting from a focus on security threats to an awareness of the possible trade-offs of security measures in terms of health, privacy, freedom, and civil liberties.

- Security-related issues, such as surveillance, the right to privacy, and the protection of that right are not clearly defined in static terms.

- Rather, their perception is influenced by the security context, the mass media, cultural variables, laws, and the specific context of a particular state.

Conclusions II.

- The public is becoming more sensitive not only to threats but also to the costs of security.

- The British and German media demonstrated signs of this shift away from a focus on security threats towards an awareness of the possible trade-offs between security measures and health, privacy, and freedom.

- Terrorism and organised crime are increasingly framed as transactional and beyond the scope of nation-states to control.

Conclusions III.

The safety and happiness of society are the objects at which all political institutions aim, and to which all such institutions must be sacrificed
James Madison

- Our results show that not everything that makes us safe makes us happy, and not everything that makes us happy makes us safe.

- Therefore, while the balance of security and freedom is the crucial task of contemporary governments, the role of critical media as a platform for public political discourse and as a guardian of freedoms is gaining considerable importance.

Thank you for your attention,
we are looking forwards to
your questions!