



BBC DETAILED ANALYSIS

case022_Andrew Neil's message to Boris Johnson.en

Broadcast: COMPLETE DETAIL ANALYSIS | Analyzed: 2026-05-11 19:13

Version 2.8-detail | Universal 2.8-detail | Konverter 3.5 (2026-05-29) | Standard: Ofcom Broadcasting Code

OVERALL SCORE

6.6/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality standard. High degree of deviation

0 = balanced, 10 = strongly biased/manipulative

POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Classification based on Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) 2024

The Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES 2024) is an academic survey of 609 political scientists in 31 countries. Each party is rated on a scale from 0 (far left) to 10 (far right).

Party	Green	SNP	Lab	LibDem	Con	Reform
CHES	1.85	2.90	3.50	4.60	7.30	8.80
Spectrum	Left	Left	Left	Center	Right	Right

The overall tendency is presented on a 0–10 scale (0 = strongly left-favoring, 5 = balanced, 10 = strongly right-favoring). The calculation is based on the difference in average favoritism of left vs. right parties (grouping per CHES 2024).

TENDENCY (L – R)

2.9 / 10

Left-favoring

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

← Left

Right →

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2024 — chesdata.eu | [Jolly et al., Electoral Studies, 2022](#) | Thresholds: [Pew Research Center](#)

This section provides political context and does not contribute to the overall score.



CHAPTER 1 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Broadcast Representation vs. Programme Position
Conservative	-4	00:50–02:10 "can he be trusted to deliver 50,000 more nurses... can he be believed when he claims... can he be trusted to fund the NHS properly" — Programme position: NHS investment, lower taxes, fiscal responsibility — Actively distorted: Conservative policy promises are presented exclusively as evidence of untrustworthiness, with no positive framing of any Conservative policy position.
Labour	0	Not mentioned — Programme position: not relevant to this broadcast — Absent: Labour is not referenced; score reflects non-appearance rather than distortion.
Lib Dems	0	Not mentioned — Programme position: not relevant to this broadcast — Absent: Liberal Democrats are not referenced.
SNP	0	Not mentioned — Programme position: not relevant to this broadcast — Absent: SNP is not referenced.
Reform UK	0	Not applicable (Reform UK did not exist in its current form in 2019; Brexit Party was the relevant entity) — Absent.
Green	0	Not mentioned — Programme position: not relevant to this broadcast — Absent.

Party Bias Summary

- Most accurate representation: Labour / Lib Dems / SNP / Green (Score 0 — not present, therefore not distorted)
- Strongest distortion: Conservative Party (Score -4)
- Average deviation from 0: 0.67 (driven entirely by the Conservative score)
- Conclusion: The broadcast's party-political bias is entirely concentrated on the Conservative Party and its leader. Conservative policy positions are presented exclusively through the lens of untrustworthiness and broken promises, with no positive or neutral framing of any Conservative policy. No other party is mentioned, meaning the broadcast functions as a one-party critique during a regulated election period. This is structurally inconsistent with the BBC's due impartiality obligations under the Broadcasting Code Section 6.



CHAPTER 2 — BROADCAST INFORMATION AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

Broadcast Data

- Title: BBC Leaders Interview — Boris Johnson Refusal Statement (2019 General Election)
- Date (from context): December 2019 (General Election campaign, pre-12 December 2019)
- Estimated Length: Approximately 3 minutes 06 seconds (based on transcript timestamps 00:00–03:06)
- Presenter/Reporter: Andrew Neil (identified by voice, context, and BBC election interview series)
- Persons Interviewed: None — this is a direct-to-camera monologue/statement by the presenter

Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political Spectrum
Andrew Neil	BBC Presenter / Interviewer	BBC (no party affiliation)	Neutral (journalistic role)
Boris Johnson (absent)	Prime Minister / Conservative Party Leader	Conservative Party	7.0 (centre-right)

Note: No guests are present. The broadcast is a unilateral statement by the presenter directed at an absent subject.

Main Topic

The BBC presenter Andrew Neil publicly announces that Prime Minister Boris Johnson has refused to participate in a BBC leaders interview during the 2019 General Election campaign, and outlines the questions that would have been put to him.

World-View Context

The 2019 UK General Election was called by Boris Johnson following the Brexit deadlock in Parliament. Johnson's Conservative Party ran on a "Get Brexit Done" platform. The BBC had conducted leaders interviews with other party leaders (Jeremy Corbyn, Jo Swinson, Nicola Sturgeon, and others) as part of its standard election coverage. Johnson's refusal to participate in a BBC interview was a deliberate campaign strategy, widely interpreted as avoiding scrutiny on his record and promises. The broadcast sits at the intersection of press freedom, democratic accountability, and the BBC's constitutional role under its Royal Charter. The questions Neil outlines — on nurses, hospitals, NHS funding, the DUP vow, austerity, police numbers, and social care — represent the substantive policy scrutiny Johnson was avoiding. The broadcast was widely discussed as an unprecedented moment in BBC election coverage.

Assessment: Was Each Perspective Addressed?

[A] OMITTED

Timestamp: N/A — No Johnson representative present.

Quote: N/A

Assessment: Johnson's own perspective or rationale for declining is entirely absent; the broadcast is one-sided by structural necessity, though this is partly caused by Johnson's own refusal.

[B] OMITTED

Timestamp: N/A

Assessment: The Conservative campaign's strategic reasoning is not explored; no context is given about whether Johnson gave interviews to other broadcasters.

[C] OMITTED



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Timestamp: N/A

Assessment: No reference is made to how other leaders were treated in their interviews; no comparative framing is offered.

[D] PARTIALLY ADDRESSED

Timestamp: 00:20 — Quote: "no broadcaster can compel a politician to be interviewed"

Assessment: The BBC acknowledges the legal/constitutional limits of its position but does not address whether this broadcast itself is editorially appropriate.

[E] ADDRESSED

Timestamp: 00:28 — Quote: "we do them on your behalf to scrutinize and hold to account those who would govern us that is democracy"

Assessment: The democratic accountability argument is explicitly and forcefully made.

[F] PARTIALLY ADDRESSED

Timestamp: 01:08–02:10 — Quote: "can he be trusted to deliver 50,000 more nurses when almost 20,000 and his numbers are already working for the NHS"

Assessment: Specific policy claims are outlined as questions, but no independent fact-checking or verification is provided; the framing is accusatory rather than analytical.

[G] OMITTED

Timestamp: N/A

Assessment: No reference to Ofcom rules or BBC Charter obligations during election periods; the broadcast does not contextualise its own regulatory position.

[H] OMITTED

Timestamp: N/A

Assessment: No polling data or public opinion evidence is cited regarding Johnson's trustworthiness.

[I] OMITTED

Timestamp: 00:39 — Quote: "in every election they have all of them until this one"

Assessment: The historical precedent is asserted but not substantiated with specific examples or detail.

[J] OMITTED

Timestamp: N/A

Assessment: The counter-narrative that the BBC is institutionally biased against the Conservatives — a live political argument in 2019 — is entirely absent.



CHAPTER 3 — 15 CRITERIA: DETAILED ANALYSIS

Hard Facts — 9 techniques that are countable and scientifically verifiable

1. EXPERT SELECTION									2/10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Expert 1: Andrew Neil — BBC Presenter	
Timestamp	00:00–03:06
Statement	Entire broadcast — monologue by Andrew Neil.
Classification	Andrew Neil is the sole voice in this broadcast. He is a journalist and presenter, not an independent expert. His role is simultaneously that of interviewer, prosecutor, and judge in a case where the defendant is absent.
Missing counter-voice	A Conservative Party spokesperson, an independent media law expert, or a political scientist could have provided alternative perspectives.

Source Depth Check:

(a) FUNDING: Andrew Neil is employed by the BBC, a publicly funded broadcaster. The BBC has an institutional interest in defending the legitimacy of its interview series and its role in election coverage.

(b) MANDATE: Neil's mandate as a BBC presenter is to conduct interviews and report impartially. A unilateral monologue attacking an absent political leader during an election campaign sits in tension with that mandate.

D1 Conflict of Interest: -1 — BBC has institutional interest in defending its interview series; Neil has professional interest in the interview taking place.

D2 Personal Risk: +1 — Neil risks professional criticism for this broadcast; some personal risk present.

D3 Subject Competence: +2 — Neil is a highly experienced political journalist with deep knowledge of UK politics.

D4 Opinion Consistency: +1 — Neil has a consistent record of rigorous questioning across party lines.

D5 Emotionalisation vs. Data: -1 — The closing passage (Trump/Putin comparison) is emotionally charged rather than data-based.

D6 Source Level: 0 — Secondary source; no primary documents or data cited.

TOTAL: +2 → SOURCE TRAFFIC LIGHT: YELLOW (-4 to +4)

(c) PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE: Neil's assessment is framed as neutral journalistic accountability but is structurally partisan in the context of an election broadcast where only one party leader is being criticised.

Missing Expert Groups:

- Independent constitutional/media law expert on BBC Charter obligations during elections
- Independent policy analyst to verify the specific claims about nurses, hospitals, and NHS funding
- Political communications scholar on the ethics of this broadcast format

Source Credibility Overview:

Source	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	Total	Signal
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Source Depth Check	-1	+1	+2	+1	-1	0	+2	YELLOW
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Summary (Matrix Result):

- Andrew Neil: YELLOW — Experienced journalist, but institutional conflict of interest and emotionally charged closing argument reduce credibility as a neutral source in this specific broadcast context.



2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

Source 1: Unnamed "critics" and "those close to him"

Timestamp 00:54

Statement "critics and sometimes even those close to him have deemed him to be untrustworthy"

(a) Funding and governance: No source identified — unnamed critics and unnamed insiders.

(b) Structural conflict of interest: Unnamed sources cannot be evaluated for bias, motivation, or credibility. Their anonymity makes them unfalsifiable.

(c) Missing counter-source: Named supporters of Johnson, or Johnson himself, could have provided a counter-assessment.

Source Traffic Light:

D1 Conflict of Interest: -2 — Completely unidentifiable; no accountability possible.

D2 Personal Risk: -2 — Anonymous sources bear no personal risk.

D3 Subject Competence: 0 — Unknown.

D4 Opinion Consistency: -2 — Cannot be verified.

D5 Emotionalisation vs. Data: -1 — Characterisation rather than data.

D6 Source Level: -2 — Tertiary at best; no primary source.

TOTAL: -9 → SOURCE TRAFFIC LIGHT: RED

Source 2: Implied statistical sources (nurses, hospitals, NHS funding figures)

Timestamp 01:08–01:37

Statement "almost 20,000 and his numbers are already working for the NHS... after inflation the additional money promised amounts to 20 billion"

(a) Funding and governance: No source cited for any figure.

(b) Structural conflict of interest: Uncited figures in a political broadcast cannot be independently verified.

(c) Missing counter-source: Full Fact, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, or NHS England data would have provided verifiable sourcing.

Source Traffic Light:

D1 Conflict of Interest: -1 — BBC institutional interest in the narrative.

D2 Personal Risk: 0 — Presenter bears some professional risk.

D3 Subject Competence: +1 — Neil is knowledgeable but not a policy analyst.

D4 Opinion Consistency: 0 — Cannot verify.

D5 Emotionalisation vs. Data: 0 — Figures cited but without methodology.

D6 Source Level: -2 — No primary source cited.

TOTAL: -2 → SOURCE TRAFFIC LIGHT: YELLOW

Missing counter-source: Independent fact-checkers (Full Fact, IFS) are entirely absent.

Source Credibility Overview:

Source	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	Total	Signal
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Unnamed "critics" and "those close to him"	-2	-2	0	-2	-1	-2	-9	RED
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Summary: The broadcast relies on unnamed sources and uncited statistics, both of which score RED or YELLOW on the credibility matrix. No independent, verifiable sources are cited for any of the specific factual claims made.

Source Credibility Overview:

Source	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	Total	Signal
Implied statistical sources (nurses, hospitals, NHS funding figures)	-1	0	+1	0	0	-2	-2	YELLOW



3. TIME DISTRIBUTION									9/10
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Estimated speaking time:

- Andrew Neil (BBC/pro-interview position): approx. 3 min. 06 sec. (100%)
- Boris Johnson / Conservative position: 0 sec. (0%)
- Any alternative perspective: 0 sec. (0%)

Summary: The time distribution is maximally asymmetric — 100% of the broadcast is occupied by a single voice making a case against an absent subject. This is structurally incompatible with due impartiality under BBC Charter Art. 6, regardless of the cause.



4. SELECTIVE OMISSION

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Omission 1:

Context

No mention of whether Johnson offered or accepted alternative interview formats (e.g., Channel 4, ITV, Sky News debates or interviews).

Relevant at: 00:16 — "as of now none has been forthcoming"

Effect

The omission suggests Johnson was avoiding all scrutiny, when in fact he may have participated in other formats. This creates a false impression of total media avoidance.

Omission 2:

Context

No reference to how other party leaders were questioned in their BBC interviews — whether the same "trust" theme was applied, whether they faced equally challenging questions.

Relevant at: 00:39 — "in every election they have all of them until this one"

Effect

Without comparative context, viewers cannot assess whether the BBC's treatment of Johnson was consistent with its treatment of other leaders, or whether the "trust" framing was uniquely applied to him.

Omission 3:

Context

No independent verification of the specific policy claims outlined as questions (nurses, hospitals, NHS funding figures, DUP vow, austerity spending plans).

Relevant at: 01:08–02:10

Effect

The claims are presented as established facts requiring explanation, when several are contested or require contextualisation. For example, the "almost 20,000 nurses already working for the NHS" figure requires source attribution and methodological explanation.

Summary: The broadcast omits all context that would allow viewers to evaluate the BBC's own conduct, Johnson's alternative media engagements, and the factual basis of the specific claims outlined. These omissions systematically favour the BBC's institutional position and the anti-Johnson narrative.

Missing Voices

- Conservative Party spokesperson: Would have provided the campaign's rationale for declining the interview and any counter-offer made.
- Independent media law expert: Would have contextualised the BBC's legal and regulatory position under Ofcom Section 6 during election periods.
- Independent fact-checker (e.g., Full Fact): Would have verified or contextualised the specific policy claims outlined by Neil.
- Former BBC Director-General or editorial standards officer: Would have addressed whether this broadcast format is consistent with BBC Charter obligations.



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- Political scientist specialising in media and elections: Would have provided comparative context on leaders' interview refusals in other democracies.
- Voter/citizen representative: Would have grounded the democratic accountability argument in lived public experience rather than presenter assertion.
- Other party leaders (Corbyn, Swinson, Sturgeon): Their willingness to participate could have been explicitly contrasted, with brief clips, rather than merely implied.
- Ofcom representative or broadcasting regulator: Would have clarified the regulatory framework governing this type of broadcast during a regulated election period.



5. NUMERICAL MANIPULATION

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Complete figures include: absolute value, proportion (%) and trend

Finding 1:

Timestamp 01:08

Number: "can he be trusted to deliver 50,000 more nurses when almost 20,000 and his numbers are already working for the NHS"

Missing context

The "almost 20,000" figure requires source attribution, methodological explanation (how are these nurses counted?), and clarification of whether this represents a genuine double-counting problem or a legitimate reclassification. No source is cited.

Effect

The figure is presented as self-evidently damning without the methodological context that would allow viewers to evaluate it independently.

Finding 2:

Timestamp 01:30

Number: "he uses a cash figure of an extra thirty four billion pounds after inflation the additional money promised amounts to 20 billion"

Missing context

The distinction between cash and real-terms figures is legitimate, but no source is cited for the £20 billion figure, no time period is specified, and no comparison with other parties' NHS funding promises is offered.

Effect

The figure creates the impression of deliberate deception without establishing the methodological basis for the comparison or contextualising it against comparable political promises.

Summary: The numerical claims in this broadcast are presented as established facts supporting the "untrustworthiness" narrative, without source attribution, methodological transparency, or comparative context. This is selective use of statistics in service of a pre-determined framing.



6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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Association 1:

Timestamp 02:50

Quote *"the Prime Minister of our nation will at times have to stand up to President Trump President Putin president Zee of China"*

Technique: Johnson's refusal to be interviewed by Andrew Neil is placed in the same conceptual category as confronting authoritarian world leaders. The implicit association is: if Johnson cannot face a BBC interviewer, he cannot face Putin or Xi.

Effect This associates Johnson's media management decision with weakness in the face of authoritarianism — a deeply negative association that has no logical or evidential basis.

Association 2:

Timestamp 00:50

Quote *"critics and sometimes even those close to him have deemed him to be untrustworthy"*

Technique: The phrase "even those close to him" implies that Johnson's inner circle — people who know him best — regard him as untrustworthy. This is an appeal to insider knowledge without citation.

Effect The association with unnamed insiders who share the negative assessment amplifies the credibility of the untrustworthiness claim without providing verifiable evidence.

Source Check for persons framed as untrustworthy:

- Boris Johnson is not framed as a conspiracy theorist but as a serial liar/untrustworthy politician.
- Does Johnson work with verifiable primary sources? PARTIALLY — his policy claims are public record and verifiable.
- Are his core claims falsifiable? YES — the nurses, hospitals, and NHS funding figures are empirically testable.
- Risk matrix: Johnson as PM has significant institutional power; the risk of being publicly called untrustworthy by the BBC is reputationally significant.
- Tone: The broadcast's characterisation of Johnson is analytical in parts (policy figures) but emotionally charged in the closing passage.
- Result Category: B — Borderline case (some claims are evidence-based, but the overall framing is prosecutorial rather than analytical).

Summary: The Trump/Putin/Xi association is the most significant guilt-by-association technique in this broadcast, equating a media management decision with geopolitical weakness. The "those close to him" formulation amplifies the untrustworthiness claim without verifiable sourcing.



7. TIMING

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Finding 1:

Position: 00:00–00:35 (Opening)

Content: "and that concludes our fourth leaders interview for the journal election of 2019... Boris Johnson the prime minister we have been asking him for weeks now to give us a date a time a venue as of now none has been forthcoming"

Timing Effect: The broadcast opens by establishing Johnson's absence as the conclusion of a completed series — framing his refusal as the final, defining act of the election interview process. This placement ensures that Johnson's non-participation is the first and dominant impression.

Finding 2:

Position: 00:50–02:10 (Middle)

Content: The list of policy questions framed around "trust"

Timing Effect: The middle section functions as an extended indictment — a list of specific allegations that Johnson cannot rebut in real time. Placed in the middle, after the democratic accountability framing and before the closing rhetorical flourish, it maximises the cumulative effect of the accusations.

Finding 3:

Position: 02:50–03:06 (Closing)

Content: "the Prime Minister of our nation will at times have to stand up to President Trump President Putin president Zee of China so it was surely not expecting too much that you spent half an hour standing up to me good night"

Timing Effect: The closing statement is the most rhetorically charged moment of the broadcast, delivered last for maximum impact and memorability. The "good night" sign-off gives it the quality of a verdict — the final word in a case where the defendant was never heard.

Summary: The broadcast is structured as a three-act rhetorical argument — democratic framing, policy indictment, personal challenge — with the most emotionally charged material placed at the end for maximum impact. This is a deliberate rhetorical architecture, not a neutral journalistic structure.



8. SELECTIVE OUTRAGE

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Outrage = bias. Selective outrage amplifies the finding. Score = outrage level (0–5) + selectivity (0–5)

Methodological Standard (v2.2): Before each assessment, the trigger event must be documented. A reaction can only be assessed as selective if comparable triggers in other positions produced no analogous reaction.

Finding 1:

Timestamp 00:11–00:16

Trigger Event: Boris Johnson (Conservative) has declined to participate in a BBC leaders interview.

Reaction: "we have been asking him for weeks now to give us a date a time a venue as of now none has been forthcoming" — followed by a 3-minute broadcast dedicated entirely to this refusal.

Comparison

No analogous broadcast was made when Jeremy Corbyn declined to participate in certain debate formats, or when other party leaders declined specific media appearances during the 2019 campaign.

Asymmetry: Confirmed — The BBC's institutional response to Johnson's refusal (a dedicated prime-time broadcast) has no parallel in its response to other leaders' media management decisions.

Finding 2:

Timestamp 01:40–01:58

Trigger Event: Johnson's Brexit deal is alleged to contradict his vow to the DUP about no Irish Sea border.

Reaction: "he vowed to the dup his unionist allies in Northern Ireland that they would never be a border down the Irish Sea... it is a vow his brexit deal would seem to break"

Comparison

No equivalent scrutiny of Jeremy Corbyn's alleged contradictions (e.g., on Brexit, on antisemitism, on defence policy) is referenced in this broadcast or applied with comparable emotional intensity.

Asymmetry: Confirmed — The broken vow framing is applied exclusively to Johnson; no comparable framing is applied to other leaders' alleged contradictions.

Summary: The broadcast's outrage is structurally selective — it is directed entirely at one absent subject, with no acknowledgment of comparable conduct by other political leaders. This selectivity is not justified by the broadcast's own stated rationale (democratic accountability applies to all leaders equally).



9. COMPLETENESS							7/10		
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Share of covered perspectives

Inverted: original value measures coverage (higher = better). Shown as deviation (higher = larger gaps).

(Based on general knowledge, independent of transcript)

[A] Boris Johnson's perspective: Why he declined the interview; his campaign's stated rationale; whether alternative scrutiny formats were offered or accepted.

[B] Conservative Party campaign strategy: The deliberate media management approach; whether other broadcasters were also declined; the strategic logic of avoiding BBC scrutiny.

[C] Other party leaders' experience: How other leaders were treated in their BBC interviews; whether the same questions/themes were applied consistently.

[D] BBC editorial independence: Whether the BBC's decision to broadcast this statement itself constitutes a form of editorial intervention; internal BBC governance.

[E] Democratic accountability argument: The principle that voters deserve to hear from all major party leaders before an election; precedent in previous elections.

[F] Johnson's policy record on the specific issues raised: Independent fact-checking of the nurses, hospitals, NHS funding, DUP vow, and austerity claims.

[G] Media regulation perspective: Ofcom rules on due impartiality during election periods; whether this broadcast complies with Section 6 of the Broadcasting Code.

[H] Voter/public interest perspective: What voters lose when a leader refuses scrutiny; polling on public attitudes to Johnson's trustworthiness.

[I] Historical precedent: Whether any previous Prime Minister or party leader had refused a BBC leaders interview; what consequences followed.

[J] Johnson's supporters' counter-narrative: The argument that the BBC is institutionally biased against the Conservatives; the "hostile media" framing used by the Johnson campaign.



Soft Facts — 6 qualitative techniques

10. FRAMING

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Finding 1:

Timestamp

00:28

Quote

"we do them on your behalf to scrutinize and hold to account those who would govern us that is democracy"

Manipulation

The BBC frames itself as the guardian of democracy and the sole legitimate mechanism of democratic accountability, equating a BBC interview with democracy itself.

Why problematic

This framing pre-emptively delegitimises Johnson's refusal by defining it as anti-democratic, rather than as a political choice that could be evaluated on its merits. It positions the BBC — a single broadcaster — as the institutional embodiment of democratic scrutiny, which is a significant and contestable claim.

Finding 2:

Timestamp

00:50

Quote

"the theme running through our questions is trust and why it so many times in his career in politics and journalism critics and sometimes even those close to him have deemed him to be untrustworthy"

Manipulation

The entire interview — which never took place — is framed around the concept of Johnson's untrustworthiness. The theme is not "policy scrutiny" or "election promises" but specifically "trust" as a personal character deficiency.

Why problematic

By announcing the theme as "trust" and immediately citing critics who "deemed him to be untrustworthy," the broadcast frames Johnson as presumptively dishonest before a single question has been asked or answered. This is character framing, not policy framing.

Finding 3:

Timestamp

02:50

Quote

"the Prime Minister of our nation will at times have to stand up to President Trump President Putin president Zee of China so it was surely not expecting too much that you spent half an hour standing up to me"

Manipulation

Johnson's refusal to be interviewed by Andrew Neil is equated with an inability to stand up to authoritarian world leaders. The frame collapses the distinction between a BBC interview and geopolitical confrontation.



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**Why
problematic**

This is a rhetorical escalation that frames a media management decision as evidence of personal cowardice or unfitness for office. It is a closing argument, not a journalistic observation, and it is delivered without right of reply.

Summary: The broadcast is framed throughout as a morality play in which the BBC represents democracy and accountability, and Johnson represents evasion and untrustworthiness. This framing is structurally one-sided and is never subjected to challenge or qualification.



11. LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY							7/10		
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Finding 1:	
Timestamp	00:45
Quote	<i>"we have an interview prepared oven ready as mr. Johnson likes to say"</i>
Manipulation	The presenter appropriates Johnson's own campaign slogan ("oven ready" Brexit deal) and turns it against him ironically, using it to describe the unused interview.
Why problematic	This is a rhetorical device — using the subject's own language to mock him — that signals editorial contempt rather than journalistic neutrality. Neutral alternative would be: "we have an interview prepared and ready to conduct."

Finding 2:	
Timestamp	01:02
Quote	<i>"can he be trusted to deliver 50,000 more nurses... can he be believed when he claims... can he be trusted to fund the NHS properly"</i>
Manipulation	The repeated use of "can he be trusted" and "can he be believed" as rhetorical questions — without answers — functions as an accusatory litany. The questions are not genuinely open; the framing implies the answer is "no."
Why problematic	Rhetorical questions presented as journalistic scrutiny create the impression of evidence-based challenge while actually functioning as assertion. Neutral alternative: "we would have asked him about his promise of 50,000 nurses" without the trust framing.

Finding 3:	
Timestamp	02:42
Quote	<i>"but we can't because he won't sit down with us"</i>
Manipulation	The colloquial "he won't sit down with us" personalises the refusal as a petulant act of avoidance rather than a political or strategic decision.
Why problematic	The language implies childishness or cowardice. Neutral alternative: "he has not agreed to participate in this interview series."

Summary: The language throughout is rhetorically loaded against Johnson, using irony, repetitive accusatory questioning, and colloquial personalisation to construct a portrait of evasion and untrustworthiness without affording Johnson the opportunity to respond.



12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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Methodological Standard (v2.2): Before each assessment, the trigger event must be documented. An intervention can only be assessed as asymmetric if comparable triggers in other guests produced no analogous intervention.

Preliminary Note: This broadcast contains no interview and no guest. The standard moderation behaviour criteria cannot be applied in the conventional sense. However, the presenter's monologue itself constitutes a form of one-sided moderation — a sustained intervention against an absent subject with no possibility of response or challenge. The score reflects this structural asymmetry.

Finding 1:

Timestamp 00:50–02:10

Trigger Event: The presenter announces the "theme" of the undelivered interview as "trust" and proceeds to list a series of policy claims framed as evidence of untrustworthiness.

Quote (Presenter) *"the theme running through our questions is trust and why it so many times in his career in politics and journalism critics and sometimes even those close to him have deemed him to be untrustworthy"*

Comparison

No analogous "trust" framing was applied to other party leaders in their BBC interviews (based on publicly available records of the 2019 interview series). Jeremy Corbyn, for example, faced questions about his leadership and Brexit position but was not subjected to a pre-announced "trust" theme.

Asymmetry: Confirmed — The "trust" framing is uniquely applied to Johnson. No comparable trigger event produced an analogous framing for other leaders.

Finding 2:

Timestamp 02:50–03:06

Trigger Event: The closing statement equates Johnson's refusal with an inability to confront world leaders.

Quote (Presenter) *"the Prime Minister of our nation will at times have to stand up to President Trump President Putin president Zee of China so it was surely not expecting too much that you spent half an hour standing up to me"*

Comparison

No other party leader in the 2019 BBC interview series received a closing public statement questioning their fitness for office based on their interview conduct.

Asymmetry: Confirmed — This closing rhetorical attack is unique to Johnson and has no parallel in the treatment of other leaders.

Summary: The absence of an interviewee does not neutralise the moderation asymmetry; rather, it amplifies it. The presenter delivers a sustained one-sided argument against an absent subject with no mechanism for challenge, correction, or response.



13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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Asymmetry 1:

To Boris Johnson (absent), 01:08: "can he be trusted to deliver 50,000 more nurses when almost 20,000 and his numbers are already working for the NHS" — Hard/accusatory

To other party leaders (not present in this broadcast): No equivalent questions are shown or referenced.

Comparison

The questions outlined for Johnson are framed as challenges to his personal trustworthiness. No equivalent framing is applied to any other leader's promises or record, creating a structurally one-sided question set.

Asymmetry 2:

To Boris Johnson (absent), 01:40: "he vows that the NHS will not be on the table in any trade talks with America but he vowed to the dup his unionist allies in Northern Ireland that they would never be a border down the Irish Sea" — Hard/accusatory, juxtaposing two alleged broken vows

To Jeremy Corbyn (not present): No equivalent juxtaposition of alleged broken promises or contradictions is referenced in this broadcast.

Comparison

The technique of juxtaposing contradictory vows to imply systematic dishonesty is applied exclusively to Johnson.

Summary: All questions in this broadcast are directed at a single absent subject and are uniformly framed around personal untrustworthiness. No comparable scrutiny of other party leaders is referenced or applied, creating a maximally asymmetric question structure.



14. FALSE BALANCE

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Finding 1:

Timestamp

00:20

Construct: "no broadcaster can compel a politician to be interviewed"

Analysis

This statement acknowledges the legal reality but functions as a false balance gesture — it appears to concede Johnson's right to refuse while the entire broadcast is structured to delegitimise that refusal. The acknowledgment of legal limits does not constitute genuine balance.

Note: False balance in the conventional sense (presenting two sides as equally valid when they are not) is not the primary problem in this broadcast. The primary problem is the absence of any balance at all. The score reflects the limited false balance gesture at 00:20.

Summary: False balance is not the dominant technique in this broadcast; the more significant problem is the complete absence of any opposing perspective. The single false balance gesture at 00:20 does not meaningfully mitigate the overall one-sidedness.



15. AGENDA-SETTING

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Finding 1:

Agenda element set: It is treated as self-evident that a BBC leaders interview is a democratic necessity and that refusal is anti-democratic.

Timestamp

00:28 — Evidence: "we do them on your behalf to scrutinize and hold to account those who would govern us that is democracy"

Alternative agenda: Whether the BBC's specific interview format is the appropriate or only legitimate mechanism of democratic scrutiny; whether other formats (debates, press conferences, public Q&As) serve the same function.

Finding 2:

Agenda element set: It is treated as self-evident that Johnson's policy claims are false or misleading.

Timestamp

01:08–02:10 — Evidence: The rhetorical questions ("can he be trusted... can he be believed...") presuppose negative answers.

Alternative agenda: Independent verification of the claims; Johnson's own explanation of the figures; the policy context in which the promises were made.

Finding 3:

Agenda element set: It is treated as self-evident that the BBC is a neutral, public-interest actor with no institutional interests of its own.

Timestamp

00:35 — Evidence: "we've always proceeded in good faith that the leaders would participate"

Alternative agenda: The BBC's own institutional interests in the interview series (ratings, prestige, Charter renewal); the Conservative Party's longstanding critique of BBC institutional bias.

Summary: The broadcast sets three major agenda items as unquestioned givens — the BBC's democratic legitimacy, Johnson's untrustworthiness, and the BBC's institutional neutrality — none of which are subjected to scrutiny or challenge.



CHAPTER 4 — OVERALL EVALUATION

OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE 15 CRITERIA

Individual Scores — All 15 Criteria

No.	Criterion	Score	Rating
1	EXPERT SELECTION	2/10	Unremarkable
2	SOURCE SELECTION	7/10	Pronounced imbalance
3	TIME DISTRIBUTION	9/10	Systematic imbalance
4	SELECTIVE OMISSION	8/10	Pronounced imbalance
5	NUMERICAL MANIPULATION	6/10	Significant imbalance
6	GUILT BY ASSOCIATION	5/10	Significant imbalance
7	TIMING	7/10	Pronounced imbalance
8	SELECTIVE OUTRAGE	8/10	Pronounced imbalance
9	COMPLETENESS	7/10	Pronounced imbalance
10	FRAMING	8/10	Pronounced imbalance
11	LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY	7/10	Pronounced imbalance
12	MODERATION BEHAVIOUR	6/10	Significant imbalance
13	QUESTION ASYMMETRY	8/10	Pronounced imbalance
14	FALSE BALANCE	3/10	Slight imbalance
15	AGENDA-SETTING	8/10	Pronounced imbalance

HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

6.6/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality standard. High degree of deviation

SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

6.6/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality standard. High degree of deviation

OVERALL SCORE

6.6/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality standard. High degree of deviation

Average of Hardfacts and Softfacts



KEY — Score Definitions

Individual Scores per Criterion (0–10)

0	No finding	No relevant anomaly detected.
1–2	Weak finding	Minor anomaly without substantial impact on balance.
3–4	Slight to moderate finding	Recognizable tendency; low to moderate impact relevance.
5	Moderate finding with impact	Relevant imbalance affecting the audience's opinion-forming potential.
6	Significant finding (threshold)	Scores of 6 and above are classified as 'significant findings.'
7	Significant finding	Clear, well-documented imbalance with distinct impact relevance.
8–9	Severe finding	Pronounced imbalance; multiple documented individual findings in this criterion.
10	Maximum severity	Systematic, pervasive imbalance in this criterion.

Aggregated Deviation Index — Interpretation Ranges

0.0 – 2.5	Unremarkable	No significant patterns detected; broadcast meets the impartiality standard.
2.6 – 4.0	Slight imbalance	Isolated anomalies; statistically visible but within tolerance range.
4.1 – 6.0	Significant imbalance	Multiple significant findings; relevant impairment of perspective diversity.
6.1 – 8.0	Serious deviation from the impartiality standard. High degree of deviation	Pronounced, cross-broadcast patterns; high impact relevance.
8.1 – 10	Fundamental systemic one-sidedness. Very high bias degree	Maximum severity across nearly all criteria; systematically one-sided reporting.

Party-Political Bias (-5 to +5)

-5 to -3	Strongly disadvantaged	Party is significantly underrepresented in framing, airtime, or presentation.
-2 to -1	Slightly disadvantaged	Recognizable but minor disadvantage.
0	Neutral	No detectable favoritism or disadvantage.
+1 to +2	Slightly favored	Recognizable but minor favoritism.
+3 to +5	Strongly favored	Party is significantly overrepresented in framing, airtime, or presentation.



CHAPTER 5 — LEGAL CLASSIFICATION (BBC Charter Art. 6)

Assessment under BBC Charter Art. 6

Violation 1:

Standard: BBC Charter Art. 6 / BBC Agreement Clause 4 (Due Impartiality) / Ofcom Broadcasting Code Section 6.1

Offence: The broadcast presents a sustained one-sided case against the Conservative Party leader during a regulated election period without any balancing mechanism, opposing voice, or right of reply.

Evidence: Timestamp 00:50–02:10 — Quote: "the theme running through our questions is trust and why it so many times in his career in politics and journalism critics and sometimes even those close to him have deemed him to be untrustworthy"

Assessment: Section 6.1 of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code requires that "due impartiality is preserved on matters of political or industrial controversy and matters relating to current public policy." A broadcast during a General Election campaign that devotes its entire duration to characterising one party leader as untrustworthy, without any balancing content, fails this standard. The BBC's own Editorial Guidelines (Section 4) require that "we do not express personal views on such matters" — Neil's closing statement ("it was surely not expecting too much that you spent half an hour standing up to me") is an expression of personal editorial opinion directed at a political leader during an election.

Violation 2:

Standard: BBC Charter Art. 6 / BBC Editorial Guidelines Section 4.4.4 (Elections and Referendums)

Offence: The broadcast makes specific, unverified factual claims about Conservative Party policy promises (nurses, hospitals, NHS funding) without source attribution, during a regulated election period.

Evidence: Timestamp 01:08–01:37 — Quote: "can he be trusted to deliver 50,000 more nurses when almost 20,000 and his numbers are already working for the NHS he promises 40 new hospitals but only six are scheduled to be built by 2025"

Assessment: BBC Editorial Guidelines require accuracy and source attribution for factual claims, particularly during election periods. The figures cited are presented as established facts without citation of source, methodology, or independent verification. This falls below the accuracy standard required by BBC Charter Art. 6 and the BBC's own Editorial Guidelines.

Violation 3:

Standard: BBC Charter Art. 6 / Ofcom Broadcasting Code Section 6.2 (Undue Prominence)

Offence: The broadcast gives undue prominence to one political perspective (anti-Johnson/anti-Conservative) during a regulated election period by devoting an entire broadcast segment to it without any balancing content.

Evidence: Timestamp 02:50–03:06 — Quote: "the Prime Minister of our nation will at times have to stand up to President Trump President Putin president Zee of China so it was surely not expecting too much that you spent half an hour standing up to me good night"

Assessment: Section 6.2 requires that "due weight must be given to the coverage of parties and independent candidates during the election period." A broadcast that gives 100% of its time to a negative characterisation of one party's leader, with no balancing content for any other party or perspective, gives undue prominence to the anti-Conservative position.

Overall Assessment BBC Charter Art. 6

This broadcast raises serious concerns under BBC Charter Art. 6 and the associated Ofcom Broadcasting Code Section 6. The structural one-sidedness — 100% of broadcast time allocated to a single voice making a case against an absent Conservative Party leader during a regulated election period — is difficult to reconcile with the due impartiality standard, regardless of the cause. The BBC's chosen response to Johnson's refusal (a prime-time editorial monologue) was an editorial decision that required balancing mechanisms — a Conservative spokesperson, independent fact-checking, comparative context regarding other leaders — that are entirely absent. The closing



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Trump/Putin/Xi comparison, delivered as a personal challenge to the Prime Minister, crosses the line from journalistic accountability into editorial advocacy. While the BBC has a legitimate interest in defending its interview series and the principle of democratic scrutiny, the manner in which it chose to do so in this broadcast is not consistent with its Charter obligations. A legally defensible response to Johnson's refusal would have been a factual statement of the refusal, an offer of the questions in written form, and a request for a written response — not a 3-minute rhetorical prosecution.



CHAPTER 6 — Source Depth Check

Source 1: Unnamed "critics" and "those close to him"

- FUNDING:** Unidentifiable — no source named.
- MANDATE:** Cannot be assessed — source is anonymous.
- CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** Maximum — anonymous sources cannot be held accountable; their motivations are entirely opaque.
- CREDIBILITY MATRIX:**
 - D1 Conflict of Interest: -2 (unidentifiable)
 - D2 Personal Risk: -2 (anonymous, no risk)
 - D3 Subject Competence: -2 (unknown)
 - D4 Opinion Consistency: -2 (unverifiable)
 - D5 Emotionalisation vs. Data: -1 (characterisation)
 - D6 Source Level: -2 (tertiary/unverifiable)
 - TOTAL: -11 → SOURCE TRAFFIC LIGHT: RED**
- COUNTER-VOICE:** Named Johnson supporters or Johnson himself — entirely absent.

Source 2: Implied statistical sources (nurses, hospitals, NHS funding)

- FUNDING:** Not cited — source unknown.
- MANDATE:** Cannot be assessed — source not identified.
- CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** The figures are presented in a context that serves the BBC's narrative; without source identification, conflict of interest cannot be excluded.
- CREDIBILITY MATRIX:**
 - D1 Conflict of Interest: -1 (institutional BBC interest)
 - D2 Personal Risk: +1 (presenter bears some professional risk)
 - D3 Subject Competence: +1 (Neil is knowledgeable)
 - D4 Opinion Consistency: 0 (unverifiable)
 - D5 Emotionalisation vs. Data: 0 (figures cited but without methodology)
 - D6 Source Level: -2 (no primary source cited)
 - TOTAL: -1 → SOURCE TRAFFIC LIGHT: YELLOW**
- COUNTER-VOICE:** Full Fact, Institute for Fiscal Studies, NHS England data — entirely absent.

IMPORTANT NOTE: "Recognised" or "established" figures are not a substitute for source attribution. The credibility of a statistical claim depends on its primary source, methodology, and independence — not on the authority of the presenter citing it.

Analysis completed under Methodological Standard v2.7-detail. All trigger events documented per K5+K13. All source assessments conducted independently of broadcast framing. Language: English throughout.

Source Credibility Overview:

Source	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	Total	Signal
Unnamed "critics" and "those close to him"	-2	-2	-2	-2	-1	-2	-11	RED



Implied statistical sources (nurses, hospitals, NHS funding)	-1	+1	+1	0	0	-2	-1	YELLOW
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Legal and Methodological Notes

No factual determination	The results presented do not constitute factual determinations about individual persons, editorial teams, or broadcasts. They are the product of a standardized operationalization, not a finding of individual responsibility.
No legal judgment	The aggregated deviation index does not replace a legal assessment under Ofcom Broadcasting Code. The determination of whether a specific broadcast violates legal requirements is exclusively the responsibility of the competent authorities (in particular Ofcom).
No proof of causation	Statistical correlations are not to be interpreted as proof of causal relationships or editorial intent. Deviation values may be influenced by topic selection, news environment, political controversy, or format logic.
No judgment of intent	The analysis measures observable structural characteristics of broadcasts. A score of 7 means a significant imbalance was detected — not that the editorial team intended it. The methodology makes no claims about motives or strategic objectives.
Heuristic comparison tool	The index serves comparative pattern recognition across thousands of broadcasts, not precise metric measurement of individual segments. Threshold values serve heuristic orientation, not sharp legal qualification.



APPENDIX 1: NATIONAL BROADCASTING LAW

Legal Framework United Kingdom — BBC

Legislation

- BBC Royal Charter (2017, valid until 2027)
- Communications Act 2003
- Ofcom Broadcasting Code

Relevant Provisions

BBC Royal Charter

- Art. 5 (Public Purposes): Sustaining citizenship and civil society through the provision of impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them.
- Art. 6(4): The BBC must observe high standards of due impartiality.

Communications Act 2003

- s.319(2)(c): News included in television and radio services is presented with due impartiality.
- s.320(1): Special impartiality requirements for matters of political controversy and matters relating to current public policy.

Ofcom Broadcasting Code

- Section 5 (Due Impartiality): Due impartiality on matters of political or industrial controversy and matters relating to current public policy. "Due" means adequate or appropriate to the subject and nature of the programme.

Core Obligations

- 1. Due Impartiality:** Not absolute equal treatment, but appropriate to the subject matter
- 2. Due Accuracy:** Adequate accuracy in reporting
- 3. Editorial Independence:** Independence from government and commercial interests

Regulatory Authority

- Ofcom (Office of Communications): External regulator with sanctioning powers
- BBC Board: Internal governance

Complaints Procedure

1. BBC Complaints (internal, three-tier)
2. Ofcom (external complaint after exhausting internal routes)
3. Judicial Review (High Court)



APPENDIX 2: SCIENTIFIC REFERENCES

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Because whoever understands framing sees the world more clearly. Hears news differently. Conducts conversations more confidently. And no longer so easily accepts a frame chosen by someone else.



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