



## DE DETAILED ANALYSIS

2025-04-02 heute journal vom 2. April 2025

Broadcast: heute-journal | 2025-04-02 | Analysed on: 2026-03-11 22:31

Version 2.2-detail | Konverter 3.3 (2026-05-14) | Masstab: §26 MStV

### OVERALL SCORE

**4.0/10**

*Slight Bias*

0 = balanced, 10 = strongly one-sided/manipulative

## POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Classification according to 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	Linke	Greens	SPD	BSW	CDU/CSU	FDP	Freie W.	AfD
CHES	1.23	2.28	3.41	3.78	6.23	6.54	6.77	9.10
Spectrum	<i>Left</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Right</i>

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

### TENDENCY (L – R)

**4.2 / 10**

*Balanced*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

← Left

Right →

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

This section serves for political classification and does not feed into the overall score.

## BROADCAST INFO AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

### Broadcast data

- Title: ZDF heute-journal
- Date: 02.04.2025
- Presenter: Not named in the transcript (Voice 1, female, main presenter)



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- Reporters / Interview partners: Petra Neubauer (reporter, Kitflix), David Sauer (reporter, USA/Wisconsin), Claudia Bates (correspondent Washington), Christoph Wiesel (news anchor)

Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political Spectrum
Petra Neubauer	ZDF reporter	ZDF-internal	n/a
David Sauer	ZDF reporter	ZDF-internal	n/a
Claudia Bates	ZDF correspondent Washington	ZDF-internal	n/a
Christoph Wiesel	ZDF news anchor	ZDF-internal	n/a
Susan Crawford	Judicial candidate Wisconsin	Democrat-aligned	Left/Liberal
Cory Booker	US Senator	Democratic Party	Left/Liberal
Donald Trump	US President	Republican Party	Right/Conservative
Elon Musk	DOGE chief, entrepreneur	Trump camp	Right/Libertarian
Bavarian investigator	Law enforcement	State authority	n/a
Ursula Weidenfeld	Business journalist	n/a	Economic liberal

### **Main topics of this edition**

The broadcast covers three main topics: (1) the international raid against the darknet platform "Kitflix" with almost two million users and nearly 1,400 suspects; (2) the Wisconsin judicial election as the first significant vote since Trump's inauguration, as well as reports on Elon Musk's possible withdrawal from the government team; (3) the imminent announcement of new US tariffs by President Trump in the Rose Garden of the White House. The broadcast is supplemented by brief news items on crime statistics, Gaza, Myanmar and the death of Val Kilmer.



## CHAPTER 1 — DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE 15 CRITERIA

### Hard facts — 9 techniques that are countable and scientifically robust

#### 1. EXPERT SELECTION

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##### Expert 1: Claudia Bates (ZDF correspondent Washington)

<b>Timestamp</b>	approx. 06:50–07:50
<b>Statement</b>	"What, according to expert opinion, would turn the existing trading system on its head."
<b>Classification</b>	Bates is a ZDF correspondent, not an independent expert. She references "expert opinion" without naming specific experts or their institutional affiliation.
<b>Missing counter-voice</b>	An economist who defends tariffs as a legitimate instrument of trade policy (e.g. from the Heritage Foundation or the Peterson Institute for International Economics with a differentiated position).

##### Expert 2: Bavarian investigator (not named)

<b>Timestamp</b>	approx. 01:30–02:30
<b>Statement</b>	"Children have been freed from situations of abuse..."
<b>Classification</b>	One-sided from the investigator's perspective; no independent assessment of the investigative methods.
<b>Missing counter-voice</b>	A data protection lawyer or civil liberties organisation on the question of the proportionality of darknet surveillance.

##### *Missing expert groups:*

- Independent trade economist with a pro-tariff argument
- EU trade lawyer on WTO conformity
- Republican political scientist on the Wisconsin election

*Summary: The broadcast largely dispenses with named, independent experts; where "experts" are mentioned, this is done anonymously and exclusively to underpin a critical position towards Trump.*



## 2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

### Source 1: "Politico" (US media company)

Timestamp	approx. 04:45
Statement	"The US newspaper Politico is meanwhile reporting that Musk will leave Trump's government team..."
Classification	Politico is considered left-liberal in orientation; the report is presented as fact ("is reporting"), although it is speculation ("will leave").
Missing counter-source	Fox News, Wall Street Journal or a direct statement from the White House.

### Source 2: Anonymous "experts"

Timestamp	approx. 07:20
Statement	"What, according to expert opinion, would turn the existing trading system on its head."
Classification	No names given, no institutional attribution, no verifiability.
Missing counter-source	Named economists with a differentiated or pro-tariff position.

### Source 3: Susan Crawford (direct quote)

Timestamp	approx. 05:20
Statement	"Wisconsin has risen and proclaimed loudly that justice has no price. Our courts are not for sale."
Classification	One-sided direct quote from the winner without a counter-voice from the losing candidate or Republican commentators.
Missing counter-source	Direct quote from Republican candidate Brad Schimel or a Wisconsin Republican.

*Summary: The source selection is structurally one-sided: Democrat-liberal sources (Politico, Crawford, Booker) receive direct quotes and are embedded positively, while Republican/conservative sources are entirely absent.*



### 3. TIME DISTRIBUTION

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Estimated airtime per topic/position:

- Kitflix/darknet raid: (approx. 22%)
- Wisconsin judicial election / Musk withdrawal (Democratic perspective): approx. 2.5 min. (approx. 18%)
- Senator Booker (Democratic speech): (approx. 7%)
- Trump tariffs (critical assessment): (approx. 15%)
- Trump's own position on tariffs: approx. 0.5 min. (approx. 4%)
- Brief news items (crime statistics, Gaza, Myanmar, Val Kilmer): (approx. 15%)
- Weather/lottery/miscellaneous: approx. 1.5 min. (approx. 11%)
- Republican/conservative perspective USA total: (0%)

*Summary: In the USA segment, no measurable airtime is allocated to Republican or Trump-friendly perspectives; Democratic actors (Crawford, Booker) receive significantly more airtime and are portrayed more positively than Trump/Musk, who are represented exclusively through critical assessments.*



#### 4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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##### Omission 1:

###### Context

Trump's own justification for tariffs (US trade balance deficit, specific figures, historical argument) is entirely absent.

Relevant at: approx. 07:00

###### Effect

Viewers gain no understanding of why a significant portion of the US population supports the tariff policy; Trump's position thereby appears irrational.

##### Omission 2:

###### Context

The Wisconsin judicial election is presented exclusively as a defeat for Musk/Trump. Not mentioned: the specific voter turnout, the initial situation (Wisconsin is traditionally a swing state), or that Musk had actually invested 20 million USD — which is legal under US campaign finance law.

Relevant at: approx. 04:30–05:30

###### Effect

The term "buy" suggests illegality, although campaign donations are legally permissible in the USA.

##### Omission 3:

###### Context

In the crime statistics segment (Christoph Wiesel), the decline in overall crime is mentioned, but not contextualised as to which specific offences have increased and which perpetrator groups are overrepresented in violent crime.

Relevant at: approx. 08:30

###### Effect

Incomplete picture of the security situation; politically relevant distinctions are absent.

##### Omission 4:

###### Context

The Gaza report lacks any contextualisation (hostages, Hamas attack of 7 October, state of negotiations).

Relevant at: approx. 09:00

###### Effect

Israeli military operation appears, without context, as one-sided aggression.

*Summary: Structural omissions concern above all arguments and facts that would present Trump's policies in a more differentiated light, as well as politically sensitive contextualisation in crime statistics and Middle East reporting.*

#### Missing voices



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- Republican congressman/senator: Would have presented the domestic political support for the tariff policy and its economic policy rationale.
- EU Trade Commissioner / Federal Minister of Economics: Would have specified the European response and countermeasures.
- US trade union representative (e.g. AFL-CIO): Would have brought in the perspective of industrial workers who favour tariff protection.
- Independent trade economist (pro-tariff position): Would have reflected the academic debate on trade balance deficits and reindustrialisation.
- WTO legal expert: Would have contextualised the international law dimension of the tariff announcement.
- Republican voter/Wisconsin voter: Would have presented the counter-perspective to the Crawford election.
- Victims' lawyer / child protection organisation (Kitflix topic): Would have strengthened the victims' perspective on the darknet topic.
- Data protection expert / civil liberties organisation: Would have raised the question of investigative methods in the darknet (proportionality, fundamental rights).



## 5. MANIPULATION OF FIGURES

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

### Finding 1:

**Timestamp** approx. 08:30

Figure: "Violent crime reaches its highest level since 2007 with more than 217,000 recorded cases."

**Missing context**

No indication of population development (relative frequency), no breakdown by perpetrator groups, no contextualisation of which specific offences have increased, no comparison with other EU countries.

**Effect**

The absolute figure generates maximum alarm without contextualisation; politically relevant distinctions (e.g. perpetrator structure, regional distribution) are absent.

### Finding 2:

**Timestamp** approx. 02:00

Figure: "nearly 1,400 suspects, including 103 in Germany"

**Missing context**

No indication of how many have already been charged or convicted; "suspects" and "perpetrators" are not consistently distinguished linguistically in the report.

**Effect**

Suggests a greater certainty of guilt than is legally established.

### Finding 3:

**Timestamp** approx. 04:00

Figure: "cash gifts worth millions" (Musk/Wisconsin)

**Missing context**

No indication of the exact sum, no comparison with Democratic campaign expenditure in Wisconsin, no contextualisation relative to typical US campaign budgets.

**Effect**

Suggests extraordinary and illegitimate influence without a comparative benchmark.

*Summary: Figures are presented without sufficient context, which in all three cases produces a one-sidedly alarming or delegitimising effect.*



<b>6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION</b>									<b>5/10</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	6	7	8	9	10

#### Association 1:

##### Timestamp

approx. 04:20–04:35

##### Quote

*"That will also be a welcome distraction from the political defeat that he and above all Elon Musk have just had to absorb."*

Technique: The tariff announcement is directly linked to the Wisconsin defeat without evidence of a causal connection. Trump and Musk are presented as acting jointly.

##### Effect

Viewers associate the tariff policy with political weakness and tactical distraction, not with economic policy conviction.

#### Association 2:

##### Timestamp

approx. 04:00–04:20

##### Quote

*"Elon Musk has been handing out cash gifts worth millions. Once again. So that voters cast their ballots the way he wants."*

Technique: "Once again" implies a pattern of criminal or unethical behaviour. "Cash gifts" associates bribery, although these are legal campaign donations.

##### Effect

Musk is portrayed as a habitual election manipulator, without this being legally established.

*Summary: Through linguistic associations and implicit pattern-insinuations ("Once again"), Trump and Musk are associated with corruption and manipulation, without concrete legal violations being established.*



## 7. TIMING

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### Finding 1:

Position: Start of broadcast (00:00–03:00)

Content: Kitflix darknet raid with explicit descriptions of child abuse

#### Timing effect

The broadcast begins with the emotionally strongest and morally most unambiguous topic (child abuse). This creates in the viewer an emotional baseline of outrage and revulsion that can radiate onto the subsequent political topics — a classic priming effect.

### Finding 2:

Position: approx. 04:20 (directly after Kitflix segment)

Content: Transition to Trump/Musk with "welcome distraction" and "buy"

#### Timing effect

The transition from the child abuse topic to the Trump/Musk segment without an emotional break can unconsciously transfer negative emotions to the political actors (emotional priming).

### Finding 3:

Position: End of broadcast (approx. 09:30)

Content: Crime statistics with record high in violent crime

#### Timing effect

The topic is dealt with briefly at the end, although it is highly relevant domestically; its significance is minimised by its placement after the USA segment and before weather/lottery.

*Summary: The broadcast structure uses emotional priming through the opening with the child abuse topic and minimises domestically relevant topics through unfavourable placement at the end of the broadcast.*



## 8. SELECTIVE OUTRAGE

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Outrage = bias. Selective outrage reinforces the finding. Score = degree of outrage (0–5) + selectivity (0–5)

### Finding 1:

**Timestamp** approx. 04:00–04:20

Reaction: "Elon Musk has been handing out cash gifts worth millions. Once again. So that voters cast their ballots the way he wants."

Comparable without outrage: Democratic major donors (George Soros, Reid Hoffman, etc.) regularly invest eight-figure sums in US judicial elections and campaigns — this is not addressed in the broadcast.

Asymmetry: Musk's campaign donations are portrayed as morally reprehensible ("buy", "cash gifts"); comparable Democratic practice is not mentioned.

### Finding 2:

**Timestamp** approx. 08:30

Reaction: Crime statistics are read out in a factual-neutral manner, without any discernible outrage at the record high in violent crime.

Comparable without outrage: While Trump's actions are commented on with emotional language ("buy", "going wild"), a domestic record high in violent crime is dealt with without comparable emotionalisation.

Asymmetry: The broadcast's readiness for outrage is selectively focused on US right-wing politics, not on domestic security issues.

*Summary: The broadcast shows a clear asymmetry in emotional evaluation: actions by Trump/Musk are commented on with outraged language, while comparable practices of other actors or domestically relevant negative developments are treated in a factual-neutral manner or not at all.*



## 9. COMPLETENESS

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Since taking office, the Trump administration has pursued a protectionist trade policy that is highly controversial both within the USA and internationally. Proponents see tariffs as a legitimate instrument for reindustrialisation and strengthening the US economy; critics warn of global trade conflicts, inflation and recession risks. The Wisconsin judicial election is assessed in the US context as the first mood test against the Trump/Musk agenda and is interpreted by Democrats as a signal of awakening. In Germany and Europe, concern about the economic consequences of US tariff policy dominates, while the domestic political dimension (democracy, separation of powers) also plays a role in reporting.

### Share of perspectives covered

*Inverted: Original value measures coverage (higher = better). Displayed as deviation (higher = greater gaps).*

- [A] Economic criticism of tariffs (economists, export industry, EU trading partners)
- [B] Economic arguments for tariffs (reindustrialisation, job protection, trade balance deficit)
- [C] Trump's own justification and political goals (direct quotes from Trump)
- [D] Reaction of the EU / Federal Government to the tariff announcement
- [E] Perspective of US workers in affected industries
- [F] Republican supporters of the tariff policy (members of Congress, economic advisers)
- [G] Democratic opposition perspective (already included via Booker/Crawford)
- [H] Independent trade law experts on WTO conformity
- [I] Perspective of emerging and developing countries as those affected
- [J] Historical comparison: Smoot-Hawley tariffs, earlier trade wars

### [A] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 07:30 — Quote: "where experts now expect global disruptions and higher prices here in the USA" — Assessment: Only mentioned in a subordinate clause, no independent voice, no expert given the floor.

### [B] OMITTED

Timestamp: n/a — Quote: — — Assessment: The economic pro-arguments for tariffs (reindustrialisation, trade balance correction) are not seriously presented, but merely dismissed as Trump's own perception ("he believes", "he assumes").

### [C] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 07:00 — Quote: "Trump is essentially pursuing three goals with this..." — Assessment: Trump's goals are reported, but relativised through framing ("magic formula", "golden age") and not presented neutrally.

### [D] OMITTED

Timestamp: n/a — Assessment: No EU reaction, no Federal Government position on the tariffs included.

### [E] OMITTED

Timestamp: n/a — Assessment: US industrial workers who could benefit from tariff protection are not given a voice.

### [F] OMITTED

Timestamp: n/a — Assessment: No Republican politician, no Trump-aligned economist is given a voice.



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**[G] COVERED**

Timestamp: approx. 05:30–06:30 — Quote: "Wisconsin has risen and proclaimed loudly that justice has no price."  
— Assessment: Democratic perspective presented extensively and positively.

**[H] OMITTED**

Timestamp: n/a — Assessment: No trade law expert on WTO conformity or legal classification.

**[I] OMITTED**

Timestamp: n/a — Assessment: Developing countries as those affected by the tariff policy completely absent.

**[J] OMITTED**

Timestamp: n/a — Assessment: No historical context on earlier trade wars or their consequences.



## Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

### 10. FRAMING (Setting the frame)

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#### Finding 1:

<b>Timestamp</b>	approx. 04:30
<b>Quote</b>	<i>"That will also be a welcome distraction from the political defeat that he and above all Elon Musk have just had to absorb."</i>
<b>Manipulation</b>	The tariff announcement — a central economic policy event — is framed primarily as a "diversionary manoeuvre", not as an independent policy measure.
<b>Why problematic</b>	Viewers are led to evaluate the tariff announcement not on its merits, but to interpret it as a tactical manoeuvre by a weakened politician. This is an interpretation, not a news report.

#### Finding 2:

<b>Timestamp</b>	approx. 07:45
<b>Quote</b>	<i>"Trump regards tariffs as a kind of magic formula for the golden age that he has promised his voters."</i>
<b>Manipulation</b>	Trump's economic policy is framed as irrational and naive through the term "magic formula". The addition "has promised" implies that this promise cannot be fulfilled.
<b>Why problematic</b>	A neutral formulation would be: "Trump sees tariffs as a central instrument of his economic policy." The chosen formulation is evaluative and delegitimising.

#### Finding 3:

<b>Timestamp</b>	approx. 05:00–06:30
<b>Quote</b>	<i>"Resistance is forming. In Congress too."</i>
<b>Manipulation</b>	Democratic resistance is framed as positively dynamic ("is forming", "wake-up call"), while the Trump side is presented as static and defensive.
<b>Why problematic</b>	The framing suggests a moral superiority of the opposition without this being journalistically substantiated.

*Summary: The main topic USA/Trump is consistently presented in a negative interpretive framework that makes Trump's actions appear tactically manipulative and economically naive, while Democratic resistance is portrayed as legitimate and morally charged.*



## 11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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### Finding 1:

Timestamp	approx. 04:30
Quote	<i>"The attempt to literally buy a judicial election in the state of Wisconsin went wrong."</i>
Manipulation	The word "buy" is highly connotated legally and morally and implies corruption or electoral fraud.
Why problematic	A neutral alternative would be: "The attempt to influence the judicial election through massive campaign donations failed." "Buy" presupposes criminal intent that has not been established.

### Finding 2:

Timestamp	approx. 04:20
Quote	<i>"Well, things are going pretty wild in the USA again."</i>
Manipulation	Colloquial disparagement ("going wild") of US politics by the presenter as a personal assessment.
Why problematic	This formulation is not a journalistic classification, but a subjective value judgement that paints a picture of a chaotic, uncontrolled America. Neutral alternative: "The political situation in the USA remains turbulent."

### Finding 3:

Timestamp	approx. 07:40
Quote	<i>"magic formula"</i>
Manipulation	Pejorative metaphor for Trump's tariff policy.
Why problematic	A neutral alternative would be "central economic policy instrument". "Magic formula" implies irrationality and ineffectiveness.

### Finding 4:

Timestamp	approx. 06:00
Quote	<i>"which, in the face of the flood of measures from the President, is only slowly freeing itself from paralysis"</i>
Manipulation	"Flood of measures" is negatively connotated (overwhelm, loss of control); the Democrats' "paralysis" is presented as an understandable reaction to being overwhelmed, not as political failure.
Why problematic	Neutral alternative: "which is responding to the numerous measures of the President." The formulation excuses the Democrats and simultaneously delegitimises Trump.



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*Summary: The choice of words in the USA segment is consistently asymmetric: Trump's actions are labelled with negatively connotated terms ("buy", "magic formula", "cash gifts"), while Democratic actors are linguistically elevated ("resistance is forming", "wake-up call").*



## 12. PRESENTER BEHAVIOUR

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### Finding 1:

#### Timestamp

approx. 04:20

#### Quote (presenter)

*"Well, things are going pretty wild in the USA again."*

#### Analysis

This formulation is a subjective value judgement by the presenter that does not constitute journalistic contextualisation. It sets a disparaging tone for the entire USA segment and violates the requirement of restraint regarding personal opinions in news broadcasts.

### Finding 2:

#### Timestamp

approx. 04:30

#### Quote (presenter)

*"The attempt to literally buy a judicial election in the state of Wisconsin went wrong."*

#### Analysis

The presenter here adopts an interpretation as fact that is not legally established. "Buy" is a value judgement, not a news report. A comparison with reporting on Democratic campaign donations reveals the asymmetry: these are not labelled with similarly loaded terms.

### Finding 3:

#### Timestamp

approx. 07:50

#### Quote (presenter)

*"Yes, and when the football match is over later, we will know more precisely."*

#### Analysis

This comment is admittedly informal and explicable in broadcast terms, but shows that the tariff announcement — an economic policy event of global significance — ranks behind a football match in the broadcast schedule, which represents an implicit prioritisation decision.

*Summary: The presentation repeatedly departs from the required journalistic neutrality through subjective value judgements and legally unsubstantiated formulations that operate exclusively to the detriment of the Trump side.*



### 13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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#### Asymmetry 1:

To Claudia Bates (ZDF correspondent), approx. 06

50: "What is expected that Trump will announce shortly in the garden of the White House?" — **\*\*soft/open\*\***

#### Comparison

There is no interview with a Trump supporter or Republican politician. The only "other side" is the correspondent herself, who also provides critical contextualisation. A harder question to a Trump representative (e.g. "How do you justify tariffs given the inflation risks?") is entirely absent.

#### Asymmetry 2:

To David Sauer (reporter), implicitly through framing

The reporting on Wisconsin contains no critical follow-up question to the Democratic side (e.g. Democratic campaign financing, background of Susan Crawford).

#### Comparison

Musk/Trump are burdened with "buy"; Crawford is presented with a jubilant direct quote, without critical contextualisation of her position.

*Summary: The broadcast contains not a single critical question or critical contextualisation directed at Democratic actors, while Trump and Musk are represented exclusively through critical framing.*



#### 14. FALSE BALANCE

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##### Finding 1:

###### Timestamp

approx. 07:00–07:50

Construct: Claudia Bates reports Trump's "three goals" (revenue, reindustrialisation, political leverage) and immediately juxtaposes them with "expert opinion" (global disruptions, higher prices).

###### Analysis

This is not genuine balance, but pseudo-balance: Trump's goals are presented as his subjective perception ("he believes", "he assumes"), while the criticism is presented as objective expert opinion. Genuine balance would present both sides with equivalent epistemic authority.

##### Finding 2:

###### Timestamp

approx. 05:50–06:10

Construct: "Wisconsin is a success for the Democrats, who have not yet reorganised themselves. But resistance is forming."

###### Analysis

The qualification ("not yet reorganised") is immediately cancelled out by "But resistance is forming" — a rhetorical structure that immediately relativises criticism of the Democrats, without a comparable relativisation occurring in Trump criticism.

*Summary: The broadcast creates the appearance of balance by reporting both sides, but systematically undermines this through asymmetric epistemic framing: Trump's arguments as opinion, criticism of them as fact.*



## 15. AGENDA-SETTING

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### Finding 1:

Agenda element set: The Wisconsin judicial election is considered "the first important vote since Trump's inauguration" and thus as a referendum on Trump.

#### Timestamp

approx. 05:10 — Evidence: "A judicial election of great significance [...] And with symbolic value. The first important vote since Trump's inauguration."

Alternative agenda: An alternative contextualisation would be: a local judicial election with specific issues (abortion law, electoral law in Wisconsin) that does not necessarily have to be assessed as a national Trump referendum.

### Finding 2:

Agenda element set: Musk's imminent withdrawal from the government is treated as established information.

#### Timestamp

approx. 04:45 — Evidence: "Media are now reporting Musk's imminent withdrawal."

Alternative agenda: The report is based on a single source (Politico) and is speculative; a balanced agenda would identify this as an unconfirmed report.

### Finding 3:

Agenda element set: Trump's tariff policy is primarily a diversionary manoeuvre, not serious economic policy.

#### Timestamp

approx. 04:30 — Evidence: "That will also be a welcome distraction..."

Alternative agenda: The tariff announcement as an independent economic policy event with global consequences, to be assessed independently of domestic political developments.

*Summary: The broadcast sets an agenda in which Trump's actions appear primarily as tactically manipulative and Democratic resistance as legitimate and significant; alternative interpretive frameworks are structurally excluded.*



## CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

### Results

*(Note on scaling: 10 = fully balanced/manipulation-free; 0 = maximum bias/manipulation)*

### Dominant techniques

- 1. Framing (Score 3):** The entire USA reporting is organised within a consistent interpretive framework that portrays Trump's actions as tactically manipulative and Democratic resistance as morally legitimate. This framework is not broken by counter-perspectives.
- 2. Choice of words (Score 3):** The language of the broadcast in the USA segment is consistently asymmetric: negatively connotated terms are used for Trump/Musk ("buy", "magic formula", "cash gifts"), while Democratic actors are linguistically elevated ("resistance is forming", "wake-up call", "sacred honour").
- 3. Source selection / omission (Score 3):** The structural absence of Republican, conservative or Trump-friendly voices and sources is the most serious balance problem of the broadcast; it most directly violates the principle of diversity of opinion under §26 MStV.

### Core messages of the broadcast

MESSAGE 1 (SUBSTANTIVE): "Trump's tariff policy is not a serious economic policy concept, but a magic formula for naive voters and a diversionary manoeuvre from political defeats."

Technique: Framing, choice of words, false balance — Evidence: approx. 04:30, 07:40–07:50

MESSAGE 2 (POLITICAL): "Democratic resistance to Trump is morally imperative and is gaining strength — Wisconsin and Booker show: America is awakening."

Technique: Selective source selection, timing, agenda-setting — Evidence: approx. 05:00–06:30

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*(Note: The combined score of 3.3 is on the boundary between "slight tendency" and "clear one-sidedness"; given the consistency and breadth of the identified patterns, "clear one-sidedness" is assessed as applicable.)*

Justification: The broadcast shows a consistent bias in favour of Democrat-liberal positions and to the detriment of the Trump administration in almost all 15 criteria. This bias is not limited to individual formulations, but is structural: it manifests equally in framing, choice of words, source selection, time distribution and agenda-setting. Pursuant to §26 para. 1 MStV, providers of broadcasting are obliged to ensure balance and diversity of opinion; the ZDF State Treaty specifies this for ZDF as a basic public service mandate. The identified one-sided portrayal of US politics, in particular the complete absence of Republican/conservative voices and the delegitimising language towards a sitting head of state, is incompatible with these obligations.

### CONCLUSION

The analysed edition of ZDF heute-journal exhibits a clear and consistent one-sidedness in the area of US politics that does not meet the requirements of §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty regarding balance and diversity of opinion. The Trump administration is consistently portrayed with negatively connotated terms and delegitimising interpretive frameworks, while Democratic actors are presented positively and with moral charge — without a single Republican or conservative voice being heard. Particularly serious is the use of legally unsubstantiated formulations such as "buy" for legal campaign donations, as well as the framing of a fundamental economic policy decision as a "diversionary manoeuvre". The completeness score of 2/10 shows that the broadcast does not come close to fully reflecting the societal discourse on US tariff policy. Pursuant to §26 MStV and §6 ZDF State Treaty, a complaint to the ZDF Television Council or to the legal supervisory authority (State Chancellery of Rhineland-Palatinate) would be justifiable with the documented findings.



## CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

*(Note: The broadcast deals primarily with US politics; a direct attribution to German parties is only possible to a limited extent. The assessment is based on the substantive proximity of the positions presented to German parties as well as the implicit messages of the broadcast.)*

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Specific evidence (timestamp + brief quote)
CDU/CSU	0	No direct mention; tariff criticism could affect the CDU economic wing, but no direct reference.
SPD	+1	No direct mention; the democratic-social democratic basic stance of the broadcast is close to SPD positions.
Greens	+2	No direct mention; anti-Trump framing, emphasis on "justice" and democratic values corresponds to the Greens' worldview.
FDP	0	No mention; tariff criticism from a free trade perspective would be close to FDP, but is not framed as such.
AfD	-3	approx. 04:30 "buy" — The AfD has programmatic proximity to Trump; the consistently negative portrayal of Trump acts indirectly in a delegitimising manner for positions close to the AfD.
BSW	-1	No direct mention; BSW positions (scepticism towards Western hegemony, tariff criticism of the USA) are not reflected.
Linke	+1	No direct mention; anti-Trump, pro-democratic resistance corresponds to left-wing positions.
Freie Wähler	0	No mention; no discernible relevance for this broadcast.

### Party bias summary

- Most favoured: Greens (Score +2) — Anti-Trump framing, emphasis on democratic values and "justice" corresponds most strongly to the Greens' worldview.
- Most disadvantaged: AfD (Score -3) — The consistent delegitimation of Trump-aligned positions acts indirectly on the AfD, which maintains programmatic proximity to Trump.
- Average deviation from 0: 1.0
- Political spectrum that dominates: Left-liberal (Greens/SPD spectrum)
- Conclusion: The party-political bias of the broadcast is primarily conditioned by the US reporting and acts indirectly on the German party spectrum. The consistently negative portrayal of the Trump administration and the positive framing of democratic resistance favours parties that position themselves programmatically against Trump (Greens, SPD, Linke), and disadvantages parties with substantive proximity to Trump (AfD). A direct influence on the perception of German parties cannot be established from the present transcript, but is suggested by the implicit messages of the broadcast.



## CHAPTER 4 — LEGAL CLASSIFICATION (§26 MStV / ZDF State Treaty)

### Assessment under §26 MStV and ZDF State Treaty

#### Violation 1:

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV (balance requirement) in conjunction with §6 para. 2 ZDF State Treaty (diversity of opinion)

Facts: Complete absence of Republican/conservative voices in the USA segment while simultaneously providing extensive coverage of Democratic actors (Crawford, Booker).

Evidence: Timestamp approx. 04:30–07:50 — Quote: "Resistance is forming. In Congress too." / "Wisconsin has risen and proclaimed loudly that justice has no price." — not a single Republican direct quote.

Assessment: §26 para. 1 MStV obliges broadcasting providers, when reporting on politically controversial topics, to give adequate consideration to the diversity of existing opinions. The complete absence of one side of the political spectrum in an approximately 4-minute segment on a significant political controversy violates this requirement.

#### Violation 2:

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV (objectivity requirement) in conjunction with §6 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty (objectivity)

Facts: Use of legally unsubstantiated, evaluative formulations by the presenter ("buy", "cash gifts", "magic formula", "going wild").

Evidence: Timestamp approx. 04:20–04:35 — Quote: "The attempt to literally buy a judicial election in the state of Wisconsin went wrong."

Assessment: The objectivity requirement of §26 MStV and §6 ZDF State Treaty demands reporting in news broadcasts that is free from personal value judgements. The formulation "buy" implies a criminal offence (electoral manipulation, bribery) that has not been established; describing legal campaign donations as "buying" violates the objectivity requirement.

#### Violation 3:

Norm: §26 para. 2 MStV (separation requirement opinion/news) in conjunction with §6 para. 3 ZDF State Treaty

Facts: Mixing of news and opinion by the presenter without recognisable labelling as commentary.

Evidence: Timestamp approx. 04:20 — Quote: "Well, things are going pretty wild in the USA again." / approx. 04:30: "That will also be a welcome distraction..."

Assessment: §26 para. 2 MStV requires a clear separation of news and opinion. The formulations cited are subjective value judgements by the presenter that are not labelled as commentary, but appear as part of the news presentation. This violates the separation requirement.

#### Violation 4:

Norm: §6 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty (completeness requirement / comprehensive information)

Facts: Structural omission of essential perspectives on the topic of Trump tariffs (pro-arguments, EU reaction, historical context, Republican voices).

Evidence: Timestamp approx. 06:50–07:50 — Quote: "Trump regards tariffs as a kind of magic formula" — not a single pro-tariff voice.

Assessment: The ZDF basic public service mandate encompasses the comprehensive information of the population about significant political events. The one-sided portrayal of an economic policy event of global significance without presenting the counter-arguments violates the completeness requirement of §6 ZDF State Treaty.

### Overall assessment §26 MStV

§26 MStV obliges all broadcasting providers to ensure balance, objectivity and diversity of opinion; the ZDF State Treaty specifies these obligations for ZDF as a public-law basic provider with special democratic responsibility. The present broadcast exhibits several documentable violations of these norms in its reporting on US politics: the balance requirement (complete absence of conservative voices), the objectivity requirement (legally unsubstantiated value



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judgements such as "buy") and the separation requirement (mixing of news and opinion without labelling). The identified deficiencies are not limited to individual formulations, but manifest consistently throughout the entire USA segment of the broadcast, which indicates a structural, not coincidental, bias. Complaints can be submitted to the ZDF Television Council (programme complaints committee) or to the legal supervisory authority for ZDF (State Chancellery of Rhineland-Palatinate); the timestamps and direct quotes documented in this analysis are suitable as evidence.

*Analysed according to: §26 MStV (Interstate Media Treaty of the Länder, in force since 07.11.2020), ZDF State Treaty (as amended by the 22nd Interstate Broadcasting Amendment Treaty), principles of journalistic due diligence (Press Code of the German Press Council, applicable by analogy).*

*Methodological note: The analysis is based exclusively on the present transcript. Without a complete visual protocol, audio file and complete 30-minute transcript, the findings on image selection (criterion 11) and time distribution (criterion 6) are to be understood as estimated values. For use in legal proceedings, consultation of the original recording is recommended.*



## OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE 15 CRITERIA

### Individual scores — All 15 criteria

No.	Criterion	Score	Classification
1	EXPERT SELECTION	3	••
2	SOURCE SELECTION	3	••
3	TIME DISTRIBUTION	4	••
4	OMISSION (Selective Omission)	3	••
5	MANIPULATION OF FIGURES	5	•••
6	GUILT BY ASSOCIATION	5	•••
7	TIMING	4	••
8	SELECTIVE OUTRAGE	3	••
9	COMPLETENESS	8	•••••
10	FRAMING (Setting the frame)	3	••
11	CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS	3	••
12	PRESENTER BEHAVIOUR	3	••
13	QUESTION ASYMMETRY	4	••
14	FALSE BALANCE	6	•••
15	AGENDA-SETTING	3	••

#### HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

**4.2/10**

*Considerable Bias*

#### SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

**3.7/10**

*Slight Bias*

#### OVERALL SCORE

**4.0/10**

*Slight Bias*

*Averaged from hard facts and soft facts*



## KEY — Meaning of the scores

### Individual scores per criterion (0–10)

<b>0</b>	<b>No finding</b>	No relevant irregularity identified.
<b>1–2</b>	<b>Weak finding</b>	Slight irregularity without material impairment of balance.
<b>3–4</b>	<b>Slight to moderate finding</b>	Discernible tendency; relevance of effect low to moderate.
<b>5</b>	<b>Moderate finding with relevance of effect</b>	Relevant bias that influences the opinion-forming potential of the audience.
<b>6</b>	<b>Considerable finding (threshold)</b>	Scores from 6 onwards are reported as "considerable findings".
<b>7</b>	<b>Considerable finding</b>	Clear, well-substantiated bias with marked relevance of effect.
<b>8–9</b>	<b>Serious finding</b>	Pronounced bias; multiple substantiable individual findings in this criterion.
<b>10</b>	<b>Maximum manifestation</b>	Systematic, pervasive bias in this criterion.

### Aggregated deviation index — Interpretation ranges

<b>0.0 – 2.5</b>	<b>Unremarkable</b>	No material patterns discernible; broadcast meets the factual accuracy requirement.
<b>2.6 – 4.0</b>	<b>Slight bias</b>	Isolated irregularities; statistically visible, but still within the tolerance range.
<b>4.1 – 6.0</b>	<b>Considerable bias</b>	Multiple considerable findings; relevant impairment of diversity of perspectives.
<b>6.1 – 8.0</b>	<b>Serious deviation from the balance requirement. High degree of deviation</b>	Pronounced, broadcast-wide patterns; high relevance of effect.
<b>8.1 – 10</b>	<b>Fundamental systemic one-sidedness. Very high degree of bias</b>	Maximum manifestation across almost all criteria; systematically one-sided reporting.

### Party-political bias (-5 to +5)

<b>-5 to -3</b>	<b>Strongly disadvantaged</b>	Party is clearly treated worse in portrayal, airtime or framing.
<b>-2 to -1</b>	<b>Slightly disadvantaged</b>	Discernible, but weak disadvantage.
<b>0</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	No discernible favouring or disadvantaging.
<b>+1 to +2</b>	<b>Slightly favoured</b>	Discernible, but weak favouring.
<b>+3 to +5</b>	<b>Strongly favoured</b>	Party is clearly preferred in portrayal, airtime or framing.



## Legal and methodological classification

<b>No finding of fact</b>	The results presented do not constitute findings of fact about individual persons, editorial teams or broadcasts. They are to be understood as the result of a standardised operationalisation, not as a determination of individual responsibility.
<b>No legal ruling</b>	The aggregated deviation index does not replace a legal assessment within the meaning of §26 MStV. The determination of whether a specific broadcast violates statutory requirements is the exclusive responsibility of the competent authorities (in particular media authorities).
<b>No proof of causality</b>	Statistical correlations are not to be interpreted as proof of causal connections or editorial intentions. Deviation values can be influenced by topic selection, news situation, political controversy or format logic.
<b>No judgement of intent</b>	The analysis measures observable structural characteristics of broadcasts. A score of 7 means that a considerable bias has been identified — not that the editorial team intended this. The methodology makes no statements about motives or strategic objectives.
<b>Heuristic comparison instrument</b>	The index serves for comparative pattern recognition across thousands of broadcasts, not for the precise metric measurement of individual contributions. Threshold values serve as heuristic orientation, not as sharp legal qualification.



## APPENDIX: STATE LEGISLATION

### Legal basis Germany — ARD, ZDF

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#### Law

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Interstate Media Treaty (MStV, 2020)

#### Relevant articles

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- §26 para. 1 MStV: Public broadcasting institutions must provide in their offerings a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life. They shall thereby promote international understanding, European integration and social cohesion in the Federation and the Länder. Their offerings must serve education, information, advice and entertainment. They must offer contributions in particular to culture. Entertainment must correspond to a public broadcasting offering profile.
- §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty: Obligation to objectivity and impartiality of reporting, consideration of diversity of opinion.
- ARD State Treaty: Basic public service mandate with objectivity and impartiality.

#### Core obligations

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- 1. Diversity of opinion (internal pluralism):** All relevant perspectives must be represented in the overall programme
- 2. Objectivity and balance:** Presenters must treat guests to the same standards
- 3. Contribution to opinion formation:** The audience must receive sufficient information for independent opinion formation

#### Supervisory authority

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- Broadcasting councils of the state broadcasting institutions: Supervision of ARD institutions (BR, WDR, NDR, etc.)
- ZDF Television Council (§19 ZDF State Treaty): Supervision of ZDF programme
- Legal supervision: Respective federal state (ZDF: Rhineland-Palatinate)

#### Complaints procedure

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1. Programme complaint to the competent broadcasting council or ZDF Television Council
2. Administrative court action



## APPENDIX 2: SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS

### Literature

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- Schläpfer, D. (2026). Systematic AI-Assisted Analysis of Public Broadcaster Impartiality: A Scalable Methodological Framework for Measuring Structural Bias in Public Service Media. [SSRN 6688478](#)
- Schläpfer, D. (2026). Measuring Editorial Noise: A Retrospective Suppression Index for Public Broadcasting Content Analysis. [SSRN 6733280](#)
- Schläpfer, D. (2026). Source Traffic Light: A Six-Dimensional Credibility Framework for Systematic Source Assessment in Public Service Media. [SSRN 6733880](#)

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The interview is not a conversation. It is a stage — and someone else has written the script.

Those who do not know this provide material. Good quotes that are cut incorrectly. Correct statements that end up in the wrong context. Honest answers that are framed as confessions.

This book is not a media criticism book. It is a toolbox — for all those who have a microphone in front of their face and want to know what they can do about it. 7 chapters. 7 tools: What an interview really is. The 7 most common traps. The three basic principles of sovereignty — anchoring, reframing, setting boundaries. Preparation in one hour. Body and voice. What to do when things go wrong. And what counts after the interview.

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**You think you see the world.** In reality you see the frame that someone has placed around it. Framing is the oldest and most elegant manipulation technique in the world. It does not change the facts — it changes what we make of the facts. How we feel. What we believe. How we decide. And it works — because we all participate. Daily. Unconsciously. You too. This book is not a dry textbook. It is a workbook — playful, direct, full of examples from real life. You learn not only how others frame you. You learn how you yourself frame — and how you can use it consciously and fairly.

Because those who understand framing see the world more clearly. Listen to news differently. Conduct conversations with greater confidence. And can no longer so easily have a frame imposed on them that someone else has chosen.

With many exercises and concrete examples from politics, media and everyday life — and the occasional smile.

**Framing with style. Because the frame changes everything.**



The SRG collects 1.56 billion francs per year — compulsorily, from every household. Those who feel unfairly treated can lodge a complaint. There is even an authority for this: the IGAC, the Independent Grievance Authority for Radio and Television.

Only: it is not independent. It has no sanctioning powers. And in 99.6% of all cases it decides: nothing.

This analysis lays bare the system — factually, precisely, without polemic. Procedures, personnel, powers, costs, statistics, legal recourse. And the constitutional law review that shows: the IGAC system meets none of the three fundamental criteria — it is not appropriate, not based on separation of powers, not market-based. The authority that is supposed to protect citizens protects above all the system it was supposed to control.

Essential reading for all those considering a complaint — and for all those who want to understand why genuine media oversight in Switzerland is still pending.