



## EN DETAILED ANALYSIS

2024-03-14 Der Talk vom 13. März

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2024-03-14 | Analysed on: 2026-03-12 20:19

Version 2.1-detail | Konverter 3.3 (2026-05-14) | Masstab: §26 MStV

### OVERALL SCORE

**6.1/10**

*Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation*

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	Left	Left	Left	Left	Right	Right	Right	Right

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

### TENDENCY (L – R)

**5.5 / 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.

## PROGRAMME INFO AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

### Programme data

- Date: 14.03.2024
- Presenter: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



**Schweizerischer Verein** für ausgewogene Berichterstattung  
**Association suisse** pour une information équilibrée  
**Associazione svizzera** per un reporting equilibrato

Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political spectrum
Alice Bota	Journalist (ZEIT), Russia/Eastern Europe expert	No party affiliation	Liberal-progressive, transatlantic-Western oriented
Nikolaus Gazeas	Criminal defence lawyer, attorney of Alexei Navalny in Germany	No party affiliation	Rule-of-law liberal, human rights oriented
Armin Coerper	ZDF correspondent in Moscow (live link)	ZDF-internal	Journalistic-observational

### Main topic

The programme addresses the upcoming Russian presidential election of 2024, the manipulation of the electoral process, Putin's nuclear threat posture, the death of Alexei Navalny and his detention conditions, as well as the threat to Russian opposition figures in exile.



## 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:** Alice Bota — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: Contextualisation of the Russian election, drone attacks, nuclear threat — Classification: Journalist at ZEIT with a clear Western-critical stance towards the Putin regime. Competent, but no counter-perspective. — Missing counter-voice: A Russian political scientist or an expert with a more differentiated view of Russian domestic politics.

**Expert 2:** Nikolaus Gazeas — Timestamp: from approx. 25:00 — Statement: Detailed account of Navalny's detention conditions, personal encounters — Classification: As Navalny's lawyer he is a party to the matter, not a neutral expert. His account is by nature one-sided in favour of his client. — Missing counter-voice: An independent human rights expert or international law scholar could have contextualised the detention conditions without being personally involved.

**Expert 3:** Armin Coerper — Timestamp: approx. 02:30–22:00 — Statement: Reporting from Moscow on drone attacks, the election, Navalny's funeral — Classification: ZDF's own correspondent, professional, but by nature operating within the ZDF narrative. — Missing counter-voice: An independent Russia analyst or a correspondent from a non-Western outlet.

Missing expert groups: Military expert, international law scholar, historian, economic expert, representative of a peace/negotiation perspective, Russian sociologist.

*Summary: All three guests share a fundamentally Western-critical perspective on Russia. There is not a single guest who introduces even a remotely divergent viewpoint. The casting of Navalny's own lawyer as an "expert" is particularly problematic, since by virtue of his role he is a party to the matter.*



## 2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

**Source 1:** Timestamp: throughout — Source: Nikolaus Gazeas (Navalny's lawyer) — Classification: Party representative who is presented as a neutral expert. — Missing counter-source: Independent human rights expert, Russian account of the detention conditions.

**Source 2:** Timestamp: approx. 09:00 — Source: Putin interview with Tucker Carlson — Classification: Used only as evidence of Putin's threatening gestures, not as a source for Russian positions. — Missing counter-source: More complete presentation of the interview, which also covered other topics.

**Source 3:** Timestamp: throughout — Source: Armin Coerper (ZDF's own correspondent) — Classification: In-house source that by nature operates within the ZDF narrative. — Missing counter-source: Independent Russia analyst, non-Western correspondent.

*Summary: The source selection is one-sided. All sources confirm the same narrative. Navalny's lawyer is used as the primary source for the detention conditions without his partisanship being made transparent. Russian sources are cited only as propaganda evidence, never as an independent perspective.*



### 3. TIME DISTRIBUTION

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Estimated speaking time (based on transcript shares):

- Nikolaus Gazeas: (37%) — Navalny's lawyer, party to the matter
- Alice Bota: (20%) — Journalist, Western-critical
- Armin Coerper: (20%) — ZDF correspondent
- Markus Lanz: (23%) — Presenter

*Summary: The time distribution is problematic insofar as by far the largest share of speaking time goes to Navalny's lawyer — i.e. to a party representative, not a neutral expert. The three guests share the same basic perspective, so the distribution of time among them is less relevant than the fact that 100% of the guests' speaking time falls to a single perspective.*



#### 4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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**Omission 1:** Context: Historical background of the conflict (NATO eastward expansion, Minsk agreements, Maidan 2014) — Relevant for: entire programme — Effect: Without historical context the conflict appears as pure Russian aggression with no prior history. Viewers are given no tools to understand the complexity of the situation.

**Omission 2:** Context: Diplomatic options and negotiation perspectives — Relevant for: approx. 09:00–13:00 (nuclear threat, Taurus debate) — Effect: The programme discusses exclusively confrontation scenarios. The question of whether and how negotiations would be possible is never raised. The Scholz position of restraint is dismissed as "fearful" rather than being discussed as a possible de-escalation strategy.

**Omission 3:** Context: Navalny's problematic past is mentioned (nationalist statements), but immediately relativised — Relevant for: approx. 55:00–60:00 — Effect: Bota mentions the nationalist statements but immediately relativises them with "that was to some extent Russian mainstream at the time" and "we always measure him by standards that we apply to politicians in Germany." A more critical contextualisation is absent.

**Omission 4:** Context: Effectiveness of Western sanctions — Relevant for: approx. 04:00–05:00 (drone attacks on oil infrastructure) — Effect: The economic dimension of the conflict is completely blanked out.

**Omission 5:** Context: Navalny's actual political significance in Russia — Relevant for: entire Navalny segment — Effect: It is not addressed that Navalny never had polling figures above approx. 2–4% in Russia and that his significance was assessed considerably higher in the West than in Russia itself.

*Summary: The omissions are systematic and follow a pattern: everything that could complicate the unambiguous narrative of "Russia = evil, West = good, Navalny = hero" is left out. Historical context, negotiation perspectives, economic analysis and critical self-reflection are entirely absent.*

#### Missing voices

- Military/security expert (e.g. Carlo Masala, Christian Mölling): Could have provided a well-founded assessment of the nuclear threat and the military situation, rather than having journalists speculate about it.
- International law scholar (e.g. Stefanie Bock, Claus Kreß): Could have systematically contextualised the detention conditions, the Tiergarten murder and the electoral manipulation from an international law perspective.
- Russian political scientist / sociologist (e.g. Lev Gudkov, Ekaterina Schulmann): Could have provided differentiated insights into Russian society beyond the Navalny narrative.
- Diplomat or foreign policy expert with a negotiation perspective: Could have introduced the question of diplomatic ways out and de-escalation.
- Historian specialising in Eastern Europe: Could have placed the conflict in its historical context (NATO eastward expansion, Minsk agreements, etc.).



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- Ukrainian representative: Could have authentically introduced the Ukrainian perspective on drone attacks, war strategy and prospects for peace.
- Critical voice on Western Russia policy (e.g. Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, Johannes Varwick): Could have introduced a counter-perspective to the uniform confrontation line.
- Economic expert: Could have analysed the effectiveness of the sanctions and Russia's economic resilience.



## 5. MANIPULATION OF FIGURES

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

**Finding 1:** Timestamp: approx. 42:00 — Figure: "308 days in solitary confinement", "27 times" — Missing context: The figures come from Navalny's lawyer and are presented as facts without independent verification. — Effect: The figures are shocking and possibly correct, but their source (party representative) is not made transparent.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: approx. 03:00 — Figure: "800 kilometres into the interior of Russia" — Missing context: The figure is used correctly to illustrate the range of Ukrainian drones. No finding of manipulation.

*Summary: Manipulation of figures in the strict sense barely occurs. The figures relating to Navalny's detention conditions are, however, presented as facts without independent verification, even though they come from a party to the matter.*



## 6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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**Association 1:** Timestamp: approx. 11:00–13:00 — Quote (Lanz): "At exactly the moment when Germany is having the Taurus debate and the German Chancellor [...] appears fearful [...] that is precisely when this nuclear threat comes again." — Technique: Implicit association between Scholz's restraint and Putin's threatening gestures. The suggestion: Scholz's caution encourages Putin. — Effect: Scholz is indirectly portrayed as someone who plays into Putin's hands.

**Association 2:** Timestamp: approx. 13:00 — Quote (Coerper): "Everywhere it was said that the Germans want to attack us with the Taurus." — Technique: No direct guilt by association, but the portrayal suggests that the German Taurus debate is being instrumentalised by Russia — which implicitly places the Taurus opponents in proximity to Russian propaganda. — Effect: Subtle delegitimisation of Taurus sceptics.

*Summary: Guilt by association is used rather subtly in this programme. The clearest instance is the implicit connection between Scholz's restraint and Putin's strength narrative.*



## 7. TIMING

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**Finding 1:** Position: 00:00–01:30 — Content: Introduction with "sham theatre", "obsession", "henchmen" — Timing effect: The evaluative framing occurs in the first 90 seconds and sets the interpretive framework for the entire programme. The primacy effect ensures that all subsequent information is perceived through this filter.

**Finding 2:** Position: approx. 55:00–60:00 (end of programme) — Content: Navalny's nationalist past — Timing effect: The only even remotely critical topic regarding Navalny is placed right at the end of the programme, where attention wanes, and is immediately relativised. The recency effect is neutralised.

**Finding 3:** Position: approx. 25:00–55:00 — Content: Extensive, emotional Gazeas segment — Timing effect: The longest and most emotional segment of the programme is placed in the middle, where it has maximum impact. The detailed accounts of the detention conditions (cold, hunger, isolation) generate strong emotional reactions.

*Summary: The timing follows a dramaturgical logic: evaluative framing at the beginning, emotional climax in the middle, critical nuancing (Navalny's nationalism) only right at the end and immediately relativised.*



## 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. 40:00–50:00 — Reaction: Extensive, emotionally charged portrayal of Navalny's detention conditions with visible distress from Lanz ("Incredible") — Comparable without outrage: The detention conditions of Julian Assange, the treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo or the situation of political prisoners in allied states (Saudi Arabia, Turkey) are never treated with comparable outrage. — Asymmetry: The outrage is selectively directed at the geopolitical adversary.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: approx. 04:00–05:00 — Reaction: Bota emphasises the difference between Russian attacks on residential buildings and Ukrainian attacks on infrastructure — Comparable without outrage: The Ukrainian drone attacks on Russian territory are presented as legitimate warfare, without the question of escalation risk or proportionality being raised. — Asymmetry: Russian attacks = crimes, Ukrainian attacks = understandable strategy.

*Summary: The outrage in the programme is systematically asymmetric. Russian actions are treated with maximum moral outrage, while comparable actions by other actors are either not mentioned or framed as understandable.*



## 9. COMPLETENESS

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The programme is embedded in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, Western sanctions policy and domestic political repression in Russia. At the time of broadcast, the Russian presidential election is imminent, Navalny died in custody a few weeks earlier, and the Taurus debate is dominating German security policy. The prevailing Western narrative sees Russia as an authoritarian aggressor state, Putin as the sole responsible warmonger and Ukraine as a defender of democratic values. Alternative perspectives — such as on NATO eastward expansion as a cause of the conflict, on internal Ukrainian problems or on differentiated positions within Russian society — are rarely reflected in the German media landscape.

### Share of perspectives covered

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

- [A] Russian government perspective / Kremlin view of the election and the war
- [B] Russian civil society / opposition figures within Russia (not only the Navalny camp)
- [C] Ukrainian perspective on the drone attacks and the course of the war
- [D] Security policy analysis: Is the nuclear threat real or a bluff? (Military experts)
- [E] International law contextualisation: Legitimacy of the election, detention conditions, Tiergarten murder
- [F] German/European foreign policy: Taurus debate, diplomacy options, negotiation perspectives
- [G] Historical context: NATO eastward expansion, Minsk agreements, background of the conflict
- [H] Economic dimension: Effectiveness of sanctions, Russian economic situation
- [I] Peace/negotiation perspective: Are there diplomatic ways out?
- [J] Critical reflection on Western policy: Own mistakes, double standards

### [A] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 03:00–04:00 — Quote: "Of course, the Kremlin then hastens to say these are the Ukrainians trying to sabotage, to torpedo this election." — Assessment: The Kremlin position is only referenced as a propaganda claim, never taken seriously as an independent perspective or presented by a representative.

### [B] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 18:00–20:00 — Quote (Coerper on the funeral): "More and more people came [...] they all called out, we will not forgive." — Assessment: Russian civil society is represented exclusively by those mourning Navalny; other opposition currents, apolitical citizens or even Putin supporters do not appear.

### [C] OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: The Ukrainian perspective on the drone attacks is briefly paraphrased by Alice Bota, but no Ukrainian representative speaks; the Ukrainian war strategy is not questioned.

### [D] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 09:00–11:00 — Quote (Bota): "The aim is also to sow and cause uncertainty." — Assessment: The nuclear threat is contextualised as a communication strategy, but a well-founded military-strategic analysis by a security expert is entirely absent.

### [E] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 40:00–45:00 — Quote (Gazeas): "The detention conditions were absolutely contrary to human rights and inhumane." — Assessment: The international law contextualisation of the detention conditions is provided by Gazeas, but a systematic legal analysis (e.g. by an international law scholar) is absent; the Tiergarten murder is only touched on superficially.



**[F] INDICATED**

Timestamp: approx. 11:00–13:00 — Quote (Lanz): "...the German Chancellor has positioned himself very clearly on this and [...] appears, shall we say, fearful." — Assessment: The Taurus debate is only introduced as a cue; a serious analysis of German foreign policy options does not take place. The Scholz position is framed as "fearful".

**[G] OMITTED**

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: No historical contextualisation of the conflict whatsoever. NATO eastward expansion, the Minsk agreement, the Maidan revolution or other background events are not mentioned.

**[H] OMITTED**

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: The economic dimension is only touched on marginally (drone attacks on oil infrastructure), but the effectiveness of Western sanctions or the Russian economic situation are not analysed.

**[I] OMITTED**

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: No discussion whatsoever of diplomatic ways out, negotiation possibilities or peace initiatives. The programme operates exclusively within a confrontation logic.

**[J] OMITTED**

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: No critical reflection on Western policy, no question about own mistakes, double standards or missed diplomatic opportunities.

### Completeness score: 2.5/10

**Justification:** Of ten relevant perspectives, four are merely indicated (A, B, D, E, F) and five are completely omitted (C, G, H, I, J). The programme moves exclusively within a Western-critical narrative towards Russia. Historical contextualisation, peace perspectives, economic analysis and any form of self-reflection on the Western position are absent. The guest selection is homogeneous in its basic stance.



## Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

### 10. FRAMING (Setting the frame)

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**Finding 1:** Timestamp: 00:00–01:00 — Quote (Lanz): "In exactly two days something will take place that this woman says is nothing other than a sham theatre." — Manipulation: The Russian election is already framed as "sham theatre" in the introduction, before any analysis has taken place. — Why problematic: The viewer receives an evaluative frame from the very first second that pre-shapes all further discussion. A journalistic contextualisation would be: "an election whose legitimacy is internationally disputed."

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: 01:00–01:30 — Quote (Lanz): "Putin needs this war and he has an obsession with America. Europe, on the other hand, he no longer takes seriously at all." — Manipulation: Complex geopolitical relationships are reduced to psychologising attributions ("obsession", "needs"). — Why problematic: Geopolitical strategies are framed as personal pathology, which replaces a rational analysis of Russian foreign policy.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: 01:30–02:00 — Quote (Lanz): "Typical of Putin's henchmen, Volkov called the attack afterwards and said they wanted to make schnitzel out of me." — Manipulation: The word "henchmen" is built into the moderation as a fact, even though it is a quote from Volkov. The boundary between quotation and editorial contextualisation blurs. — Why problematic: The presenter adopts the affected person's evaluation as his own presentation.

*Summary: The programme is set from the outset in an unambiguous interpretive framework: Russia as an authoritarian state of injustice, Putin as a pathological actor, the election as a farce. Alternative interpretive frameworks are not offered.*



## 11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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**Finding 1:** Timestamp: 00:30 — Quote (Lanz): "Sham theatre" — Manipulation: Strongly evaluative term for a state electoral process, presented as fact. — Why problematic: Even if the election genuinely does not meet democratic standards, "sham theatre" is a polemical, not an analytical term.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: 01:30 — Quote (Lanz): "Putin's henchmen" — Manipulation: A term with medieval connotations, denoting the lackeys of a tyrant. — Why problematic: Replaces a differentiated designation (e.g. "allegedly state-commissioned actors") with an emotionalising word.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: 11:00 — Quote (Lanz on Scholz): "...appears, shall we say, fearful, without my wanting that to be taken negatively" — Manipulation: Classic technique of "I say it, but I don't say it". The connotation is set, the qualification ineffective. — Why problematic: The Federal Chancellor is framed as fearful, which delegitimises his position in the Taurus debate without that position being discussed substantively.

**Finding 4:** Timestamp: 02:00 — Quote (Lanz): "brilliant criminal defence lawyer" — Manipulation: Superlative attribution for the presenter's own guest. — Why problematic: Advance elevation of the guest, which lends his statements additional authority.

*Summary: The choice of words is consistently evaluative and emotionalising. Terms such as "sham theatre", "henchmen" and "obsession" replace analytical language with moral condemnation. The elevation of the presenter's own guest as "brilliant" reinforces the asymmetry.*



## 12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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*Lanz is known for provocative follow-up questions — please analyse asymmetric challenging.*

**Finding 1:** Timestamp: approx. 11:00 — Quote (Lanz): "...the German Chancellor has positioned himself very clearly on this and [...] appears, shall we say, fearful" — Analysis: Lanz implicitly positions himself against the Scholz position in the Taurus debate, without a representative of that position being present to defend it. At the same time he does not put a single critical counter-question to any of his guests.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: approx. 25:00–55:00 — Quote (Lanz to Gazeas): Consistently empathetic, open questions such as "How did you experience this man?", "What were the conditions like?" — Analysis: Lanz acts throughout the Gazeas interview as an empathetic listener, not as a critical interviewer. Not a single follow-up question such as: "Mr Gazeas, as Navalny's lawyer you are of course a party to the matter — how objectively can you assess the situation?" or "Are there also Russian accounts of the detention conditions?"

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: approx. 55:00–60:00 — Quote (Lanz to Bota on Navalny's nationalism): "That was an accusation that actually always hung in the air right to the end." — Analysis: Lanz raises the topic but allows Bota to carry out the relativisation without pressing further. No question such as: "But isn't it problematic that he never distanced himself?"

**Finding 4:** Timestamp: approx. 02:00 — Quote (Lanz): "He in turn is regarded as a brilliant criminal defence lawyer" — Analysis: Advance elevation of the guest, which is never counteracted by critical follow-up questions throughout the entire programme.

*Summary: Lanz moderates the entire programme as an empathetic prompter, not as a critical interviewer. The hard follow-up questions typical of him, which he regularly deploys with domestic political guests (particularly politicians), are entirely absent. No guest is challenged, no thesis is questioned.*



### 13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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**Asymmetry 1:** To Gazeas, throughout: Open, empathetic questions — "How did you experience him?", "What were the conditions like?", "What can you tell us?" [consistently soft] — Missing: Not a single critical counter-question to Gazeas as a party representative.

**Asymmetry 2:** To Bota, approx. 55:00: "These accusations, that he was a nationalist [...] That was an accusation that actually always hung in the air right to the end." [somewhat critical, but space for relativisation immediately given] — Missing: No follow-up question after the relativisation.

**Asymmetry 3:** About Scholz (absent), approx. 11:00: "...appears, shall we say, fearful" [hard, evaluative] — Analysis: The harshest evaluation in the programme is directed at an absent person who cannot defend himself.

*Summary: The question asymmetry is considerable. All guests present are served with soft, open questions. The only critical evaluation is directed at the absent Federal Chancellor. Navalny's lawyer is never treated as a party to the matter.*



#### 14. FALSE BALANCE

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**Finding 1:** In this programme the problem does not lie with false balance (i.e. the artificial equalisation of a minority position), but with the exact opposite: there is no balance whatsoever. All guests represent the same basic position. Not a single divergent perspective is introduced, not even as a devil's advocate.

*Summary: False balance is not a problem in this programme — the problem is the complete absence of any balance. The programme is a monologue in three voices.*



## 15. AGENDA-SETTING

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**Finding 1:** Agenda element set: "The Russian election is a farce" — Timestamp: 00:00–00:30 — Evidence: "Sham theatre" — Alternative: "How does political legitimization function in authoritarian systems?" would have been a more analytical framing.

**Finding 2:** Agenda element set: "Navalny as martyr and hero" — Timestamp: approx. 25:00–55:00 — Evidence: Entire Gazeas segment with detailed accounts of suffering — Alternative: A more differentiated examination would also have seriously discussed Navalny's political significance in Russia (low), his problematic past (nationalist) and the question of whether his return was strategically wise.

**Finding 3:** Agenda element set: "Putin's nuclear threat as a reaction to Western weakness" — Timestamp: approx. 09:00–13:00 — Evidence: Connection between Taurus debate/Scholz fearfulness and Putin's threat — Alternative: The nuclear threat could also have been framed as an argument for de-escalation and diplomacy.

*Summary: The agenda-setting of the programme follows a clear pattern: Russia as a threat, Navalny as a hero, Western restraint as weakness. Alternative agendas (diplomacy, historical context, self-reflection) are systematically blanked out.*



## CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

### Results

#### Dominant techniques

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- 1. Expert selection (Score 8):** The homogeneous guest selection is the most serious problem of the programme. Three guests with an identical basic perspective create the impression of a consensus that in reality only reflects the absence of counter-voices. Presenting Navalny's lawyer as an "expert" without making his partisanship transparent is journalistically questionable.
- 2. Omission (Score 8):** The systematic omission of historical context, negotiation perspectives, economic analysis and Western self-reflection produces a distorted picture of reality. The viewer is given no tools to independently assess the complexity of the situation.
- 3. Framing / Moderation behaviour (Score 7/7):** The evaluative framing from the very first second and the complete absence of any critical follow-up questions to the guests reinforce each other. Lanz does not moderate, he orchestrates a narrative.

Justification: The programme displays a clear one-sidedness that does not arise from individual manipulation techniques but from their systematic interaction. The homogeneous guest selection, the complete absence of counter-perspectives, the evaluative language and the uncritical moderation behaviour together produce a one-sided picture. Pursuant to §26 para. 1 MStV, broadcasters are obliged to "take into account the principles of objectivity and impartiality of reporting, diversity of opinion and the balance of their offerings." The ZDF State Treaty concretises this through the basic public service remit, which requires comprehensive information for the population. The programme does not meet these requirements, as it gives the viewer no opportunity to form their own opinion on the basis of diverse perspectives.

#### CONCLUSION

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The programme from March 2024 on the subject of the Russian presidential election and the death of Alexei Navalny displays a clear one-sidedness that does not do justice to the requirements of §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty. The homogeneous guest selection (three guests with an identical basic perspective, including a party representative), the systematic omission of relevant contexts (historical background, negotiation perspectives, Western self-reflection) and the uncritical moderation behaviour produce a one-sided narrative that does not allow the viewer to form an independent opinion. Particularly problematic is the presentation of Navalny's lawyer as a neutral expert without transparency about his partisanship, as well as the implicit delegitimation of the Scholz position in the Taurus debate through the framing as "fearful". The public service basic remit requires reporting that reflects the complexity of geopolitical conflicts and offers the audience diverse perspectives for independent assessment — this programme does not achieve that.



## CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Concrete evidence
CDU/CSU	+1	No direct mention; the implicit criticism of Scholz's Taurus restraint indirectly favours the CDU position (pro Taurus delivery).
SPD	-2	11:00 "...the German Chancellor [...] appears, shall we say, fearful" — Scholz's position is framed as weakness, without an SPD representative being present.
Greens	+1	No direct mention; the hawkish basic stance of the programme (confrontation rather than diplomacy) corresponds more to the Greens' position in foreign policy.
FDP	0	No mention.
AfD	-1	No direct mention; the programme implicitly delegitimises any position that advocates negotiations or understanding with Russia, which affects AfD positions.
BSW	-2	No direct mention; the programme implicitly delegitimises any position that advocates diplomacy and negotiations. Wagenknecht's peace position is framed as naive or dangerous by the overall narrative of the programme, without being explicitly named.
Linke	-1	No direct mention; similar to BSW, diplomatic positions are implicitly delegitimised.
Freie Wähler	0	No mention.

### Party bias summary

- Most favoured: Greens/CDU (Score +1): The hawkish basic stance of the programme (confrontation, arms deliveries, no negotiations) corresponds most closely to the foreign policy positions of the Greens and CDU.
- Most disadvantaged: SPD/BSW (Score -2): The SPD is directly disadvantaged by the "fearful" framing of the Chancellor. The BSW is indirectly but effectively disadvantaged by the systematic delegitimation of any negotiation and peace perspective.
- Conclusion: The party-political bias in this programme is rather indirect, but nonetheless effective. By framing the Scholz position as "fearful" and completely blanking out negotiation perspectives, certain political positions are systematically delegitimised without their representatives being present or given a voice. The programme implicitly favours a confrontational foreign policy.



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

### Assessment pursuant to §26 MStV

Violation 1: Insufficient diversity of opinion in the guest selection

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV in conjunction with §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty — Facts: All three guests represent the same basic perspective (Western-critical towards Russia, pro-Navalny). Not a single guest introduces a divergent viewpoint. A party representative (Navalny's lawyer) is presented as a neutral expert. — Evidence: Entire programme; not a single counter-perspective in 60 minutes. — Assessment: This constitutes a violation of the requirement of diversity of opinion. §26 para. 1 MStV requires that "the significant political, ideological and social forces and groups" are given adequate voice. In a programme about the Russian election and the Ukraine conflict, at least some diplomatic, historical or security-policy counter-perspectives would need to be represented.

Violation 2: Insufficient objectivity due to evaluative moderation

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV (principle of objectivity) in conjunction with §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty — Facts: The presenter uses evaluative terms in the introduction ("sham theatre", "henchmen", "obsession") that replace analytical contextualisation. The Scholz position is framed as "fearful". — Evidence: 00:00–01:30 "sham theatre", "Putin's henchmen"; 11:00 "appears fearful" — Assessment: The evaluative language of the presenter violates the principle of objectivity. Even if a critical contextualisation of the Russian election is journalistically required, it must be carried out in analytical, not polemical language.

Violation 3: Insufficient balance due to systematic omission

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV (balance) in conjunction with §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty — Facts: Historical context of the conflict, negotiation perspectives, economic analysis and Western self-reflection are completely blanked out. — Evidence: Not a single mention of NATO eastward expansion, Minsk agreements, diplomatic options or Western mistakes in 60 minutes. — Assessment: The systematic omission of relevant contexts prevents the viewer from forming a comprehensive picture. This contradicts the requirement of balance.

Qualification: It should be noted that the case law of the Federal Constitutional Court (BVerfGE 12, 205 — Deutschland-Fernsehen) does not require balance in every individual programme, but in the overall output. An individual programme may well explore a particular perspective in depth, provided the overall output ensures diversity. However, the one-sidedness established here is so comprehensive (homogeneous guests, evaluative moderation, systematic omission) that it appears problematic even taking into account the internal pluralism doctrine.

### Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme displays violations of the requirements of §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty in three areas: insufficient diversity of opinion in the guest selection, insufficient objectivity due to evaluative moderation and insufficient balance due to systematic omission of relevant contexts. The ZDF State Treaty obliges ZDF in §5 para. 1 to "objectivity and impartiality of reporting" as well as to taking into account "diversity of opinion". The ZDF Television Council as the competent supervisory body would be required to examine the systematic one-sidedness of this programme in the context of the overall output. Individual programmes may set emphases, but the combination established here of homogeneous guest selection, evaluative language, uncritical moderation and systematic omission goes beyond a permissible emphasis and constitutes a structural violation of the requirement of balance.



## OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE 15 CRITERIA

### Individual scores — All 15 criteria

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

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

**6.1/10**

*Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation*

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

**6.0/10**

*Considerable imbalance*

#### OVERALL SCORE

**6.1/10**

*Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation*

*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>	Minor irregularity without material impairment of balance.
<b>3–4</b>	<b>Slight to moderate finding</b>	Discernible tendency; relevance of impact low to moderate.
<b>5</b>	<b>Moderate finding with relevance of impact</b>	Relevant imbalance 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-evidenced imbalance with marked relevance of impact.
<b>8–9</b>	<b>Serious finding</b>	Pronounced imbalance; multiple evidenced individual findings in this criterion.
<b>10</b>	<b>Maximum manifestation</b>	Systematic, pervasive imbalance in this criterion.

### Aggregated deviation index — Interpretation ranges

<b>0.0 – 2.5</b>	<b>Unremarkable</b>	No material patterns discernible; programme meets the requirement of factual accuracy.
<b>2.6 – 4.0</b>	<b>Slight imbalance</b>	Isolated irregularities; statistically visible, but still within the tolerance range.
<b>4.1 – 6.0</b>	<b>Considerable imbalance</b>	Multiple considerable findings; relevant impairment of diversity of perspectives.
<b>6.1 – 8.0</b>	<b>Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation</b>	Pronounced, cross-programme patterns; high relevance of impact.
<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, speaking time 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 favoured in portrayal, speaking time or framing.



## Legal and methodological contextualisation

<b>No finding of fact</b>	The results presented do not constitute findings of fact about individual persons, editorial teams or programmes. 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 programme violates statutory requirements is the exclusive responsibility of the competent authorities (in particular media regulators).
<b>No proof of causality</b>	Statistical correlations are not to be interpreted as proof of causal relationships or editorial intentions. Deviation values may be influenced by topic selection, news situation, political controversy or format logic.
<b>No finding of intent</b>	The analysis measures observable structural characteristics of programmes. A score of 7 means that a considerable imbalance 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 programmes, not for the precise metric measurement of individual items. Threshold values serve as heuristic orientation, not as sharp legal qualification.



## APPENDIX: CANTONAL 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 shall provide in their offerings a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life. In doing so they shall promote international understanding, European integration and social cohesion in the Federation and the Länder. Their offerings shall serve education, information, advice and entertainment. They shall offer contributions in particular to culture. Entertainment shall correspond to a public service offering profile.
- §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty: Obligation to objectivity and impartiality of reporting, taking into account diversity of opinion.
- ARD State Treaty: Basic public service remit 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 output
- 2. Factual accuracy 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 regional broadcasting institutions: Supervision of ARD institutions (BR, WDR, NDR, etc.)
- ZDF Television Council (§19 ZDF State Treaty): Supervision of ZDF output
- 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. Action before the administrative courts



## APPENDIX 2: SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS

### Literature

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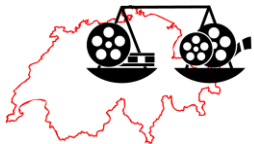
### SVFAB Working Papers

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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 go along with it. 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.

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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 complain. There is even a body 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 adequate, not based on separation of powers, not market-based. The body that is supposed to protect citizens protects above all the system it was supposed to control.

Essential reading for everyone considering a complaint — and for everyone who wants to understand why genuine media regulation in Switzerland is still outstanding.