



EN DETAILED ANALYSIS

2024-09-05 Der Talk vom 5. September

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2024-09-05 | Analysed on: 2026-03-12 17:41

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

TENDENCY (L – R)

4.8 / 10

Balanced

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

← Left

Right →

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

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

PROGRAMME INFO AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

Programme data

- Date: 05.09.2024
- Moderator: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



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Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political spectrum
Nikolaus Blome	Head of Politics RTL/NTV, journalist	Not affiliated with any party	Liberal-conservative, transatlantic
Florence Gaub	Security/strategy expert, close to NATO	NATO environment	Transatlantic, security policy mainstream
Gerhard Conrad	Former BND employee, Islamic studies scholar, international law expert	Intelligence community environment	Security policy, intelligence-influenced
Elmar Theveßen	ZDF correspondent Washington (connected remotely)	ZDF	Transatlantic, liberal
Vladimir Kara-Murza	Russian-British opposition figure, historian (connected remotely)	Russian opposition	Pro-Western, democratic, anti-Putin

Main topic

The programme covers the largest prisoner exchange since the Cold War, the security policy situation in Europe (Ukraine war, medium-range missiles), the state elections in Saxony and Thuringia, and the US election campaign Harris vs. Trump — all embedded in the question of Russian interference and Western deterrence capability.



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: Florence Gaub — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: "The essence of deterrence is credibility." — Classification: NATO-aligned security expert, consistently represents the deterrence logic. — Missing countervoice: No peace or conflict researcher representing alternative security concepts (cooperative security, arms control).

Expert 2: Gerhard Conrad — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: "That is the name of the game." — Classification: Former BND employee, intelligence perspective, confirms the threat narrative. — Missing countervoice: No independent international law expert illuminating the problematic nature of the prisoner exchange from a rule-of-law perspective.

Expert 3: Nikolaus Blome — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: "Democracy also means when the wrong people win." — Classification: Political journalist, liberal-conservative, transatlantically oriented. — Missing countervoice: No East German political scientist or sociologist analysing the election results from an insider perspective.

Expert 4: Elmar Theveßen — Timestamp: remote connection from Washington — Statement: "The Russian narrative simply seeps unhindered into German society." — Classification: ZDF correspondent, transatlantically shaped, confirms the basic narrative. — Missing countervoice: No US expert with a critical perspective on American foreign policy or the role of the USA in the Ukraine conflict.

Expert 5: Vladimir Kara-Murza — Timestamp: remote connection — Statement: "Russia deserves a better future." — Classification: Russian opposition figure, personally affected, moral authority. — Missing countervoice: No Russia expert presenting the complexity of Russian society beyond the opposition narrative.

Missing expert groups: Peace researchers, international law experts (independent), East German social scientists, economists, representatives of the criticised parties (AfD, BSW), Ukrainian civil society, media scholars.

Summary: All five guests essentially share the same transatlantic-security-policy worldview. There is not a single guest representing a structurally divergent position. This is the most serious deficiency of the programme and most clearly violates the requirement of diversity of opinion.



2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

Source 1: Timestamp: approx. 10:00 — Source: "Republika" (Italian newspaper) — Classification: Lanz cites Republika with the sentence that the election results were "a victory for Vladimir Putin". — Missing counter-source: No source interpreting the election results differently (e.g. as an expression of social discontent or as a normal democratic occurrence).

Source 2: Timestamp: approx. 23:00 — Source: US Department of Justice (indictment against RT/Simonyan) — Classification: Theveßen cites the indictment as evidence of Russian propaganda activities. — Missing counter-source: No contextualisation that indictments are not convictions, and no mention of Western propaganda or influence activities (e.g. US media funding in other countries).

Source 3: Timestamp: approx. 08:00 — Source: Marc-Felix Serrao, NZZ — Classification: Blome cites Serrao with the proposal to contain the AfD through participation in government. — Missing counter-source: Blome refutes the proposal himself, but a voice seriously representing it is absent.

Summary: The source selection is one-sided: exclusively sources are cited that support the basic narrative (Western media, US Department of Justice, NATO-aligned experts). Sources that could offer an alternative perspective are entirely absent.



3. TIME DISTRIBUTION

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Estimated speaking time (based on transcript length):

- Nikolaus Blome: (18%)
- Florence Gaub: (18%)
- Gerhard Conrad: (15%)
- Elmar Theveßen (remote): (15%)
- Vladimir Kara-Murza (remote): (18%)
- Markus Lanz: (15%)

Summary: The distribution of time among the guests is relatively balanced. The problem lies not in the distribution between guests, but in the fact that all guests share the same basic narrative. 100% of speaking time goes to representatives of a single perspective. A dissenting voice receives 0% of speaking time.



4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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Omission 1: Context: Socioeconomic situation in East Germany — Relevant at: approx. 04:00–08:00 (discussion of election results) — Effect: The election results are discussed without reference to deindustrialisation, emigration, wage disparities, pension inequality or transformation experiences. This makes voters appear irrational or manipulated, rather than as people with real problems.

Omission 2: Context: NATO eastward expansion and Western co-responsibility — Relevant at: approx. 14:00–22:00 (discussion of deterrence and Ukraine) — Effect: The entire discussion of Russia's aggression takes place without any mention of the Western policy decisions that, from Russia's perspective (and from the perspective of many Western realists such as Mearsheimer), contributed to escalation. This is not a justification for Russia's war of aggression, but a relevant contextualisation.

Omission 3: Context: Costs of rearmament and social spending — Relevant at: approx. 12:00–14:00 (Blome on "20 billion for Ukraine") — Effect: The statement is dismissed as populist, but the actual figures (defence spending vs. social spending, infrastructure investments in East Germany) are not mentioned. The real question of distribution thus remains unanswered.

Omission 4: Context: Criticism of the prisoner exchange from a rule-of-law perspective — Relevant at: approx. 35:00–50:00 (Conrad and Kara-Murza on the exchange) — Effect: The question of whether the release of a convicted murderer sets a dangerous precedent and incentivises further hostage-taking is briefly raised by Conrad ("dear children, you have been open to blackmail for 20 to 30 years already"), but not systematically discussed.

Omission 5: Context: Internal Ukrainian problems — Relevant at: approx. 26:00–30:00 (discussion of the course of the war) — Effect: Corruption, mobilisation problems, war fatigue among the Ukrainian population, democratic deficits (postponement of elections) are not mentioned, even though they are relevant to an honest debate about the future of Ukraine support.

Summary: The programme exhibits systematic omissions that all work in the same direction: everything that could complicate or call into question the transatlantic-security-policy narrative is left out. This concerns socioeconomic contexts, Western co-responsibility, real questions of distribution and internal Ukrainian problems.

Missing voices

- 1. East German social scientist or local politician:** Could have explained the socioeconomic and biographical reasons for voting behaviour in Saxony and Thuringia from an insider perspective, rather than merely framing it as a threat.
- 2. Peace or conflict researcher (e.g. SIPRI, BICC, HSFK):** Could have introduced a scientifically grounded alternative to pure deterrence logic — such as negotiation scenarios, ceasefire models or historical parallels of successful de-escalation.



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- 3. AfD or BSW representative:** Could have represented their own position on Ukraine, medium-range missiles and social policy in person, rather than having these positions discussed only in their absence and disparagingly.
- 4. International law expert (independent):** Could have systematically contextualised the legal implications of the prisoner exchange (precedent effect, incentive structure for hostage-taking, rule of law).
- 5. Ukrainian civil society representative or journalist:** Could have introduced the perspective of the Ukrainian population beyond the government line — war fatigue, mobilisation problems, internally displaced persons.
- 6. Russia expert with a differentiated view:** Could have explained Russian society beyond the black-and-white schema (Putin regime vs. heroic opposition) — for example the reasons for Putin's sustained popularity or the complexity of Russian civil society.
- 7. Economist:** Could have substantiated with data the real costs of rearmament, the opportunity costs for social spending and the economic dimension of voter frustration.
- 8. Media scholar:** Could have critically reflected on the role of the media in narrative formation regarding the Ukraine war and the AfD — including the question of whether media framing itself contributes to polarisation.



5. MANIPULATION OF FIGURES

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

Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 12:00 — Figure: "For the Ukrainians you have 20 billion and for us you have nothing." (Blome cites populist statement) — Missing context: The actual amount of German Ukraine aid, its share of the federal budget, the comparison with social spending — none of this is mentioned. — Effect: The statement is dismissed as populist, but is neither refuted nor contextualised with facts.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 33:00 — Figure (Theveßen): "2.3 million in 2023" (illegal border crossings USA) and "56,000, 58,000" (currently per month) — Missing context: The figures are cited but without contextualisation (share of total population, historical comparison, asylum recognition rate). — Effect: The figures stand in the room and can be interpreted as dramatic or manageable depending on one's perspective.

Summary: The programme works less with active manipulation of figures than with the absence of figures where they would be necessary — particularly regarding the question of defence spending vs. social spending and the contextualisation of the election results.



6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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Association 1: Timestamp: approx. 10:00–11:00 — Quote (Gaub): "Of course one can see, clearly, especially in these federal states, a rejection of foreign policy." — Technique: The AfD is directly associated with the Kremlin without differentiating between various currents within the party. — Effect: Every AfD voter is implicitly turned into a Putin supporter.

Association 2: Timestamp: approx. 22:00 — Quote (Theveßen): "The Russian narrative simply seeps unhindered into German society, into European society, into American society. And unhindered because it has loudspeakers. In Germany, among others, the AfD, and here in the USA partly the Trumpist movement." — Technique: AfD = Trump = Russian propaganda. A triple chain of association equating different phenomena. — Effect: Any criticism of Ukraine policy is brought into proximity with Trump and Putin.

Association 3: Timestamp: approx. 10:00 — Quote (Lanz, referring to Republika): "That was above all a victory for Vladimir Putin, what we saw in Saxony and in Thuringia." — Technique: Lanz cites an Italian newspaper that describes the state elections as "a victory for Putin" and adopts this framing as his own. — Effect: Democratic election results in Germany are framed as the success of a foreign dictator.

Summary: The programme works systematically with guilt by association: AfD voters = Putin supporters, criticism of Ukraine policy = Russian narrative, electoral successes of AfD/BSW = victory for Putin. These chains of association delegitimise democratic processes and pathologise dissenting opinions.



7. TIMING

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Finding 1: Position: approx. 48:00–58:00 (final third) — Content: Interview with Kara-Murza — Timing effect: The emotionally strongest segment of the programme is placed at the end. Kara-Murza's moving account of torture, poisoning and fear of death forms the emotional climax and the last impression the viewer takes away. — Effect: This maximally reinforces the basic narrative (Russia = murderous regime, opposition = heroes, Western support = morally required) emotionally. A more differentiated discussion of war aims or negotiated solutions would be psychologically almost impossible after this segment.

Finding 2: Position: approx. 04:00–08:00 (beginning) — Content: Election results Saxony/Thuringia — Timing effect: The election results are framed at the outset as a "pile of rubble" and then quickly transferred into the geopolitical context (NATO, Russia, propaganda). The socioeconomic dimension is never reached. — Effect: The viewer is drawn into the security policy framework from the very beginning.

Summary: The dramaturgy of the programme follows a clear logic of emotional escalation: from the domestic political "threat" (AfD electoral successes) through the geopolitical analysis (NATO, deterrence) to the emotional climax (Kara-Murza's story of suffering). This structure reinforces the basic narrative and makes differentiated consideration structurally difficult.



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. 55:00 — Reaction: Kara-Murza on Putin: "This is a regime of murderers." Lanz: "That was very moving, very impressive." — Comparable without outrage: No comparable outrage over Western double standards (e.g. arms deliveries to Saudi Arabia, drone warfare, Guantanamo). — Asymmetry: Russian human rights violations are treated with maximum emotional intensity; Western human rights violations are not mentioned.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 11:00 — Reaction: Gaub on AfD language: "...sounds almost like talking points that come directly from Moscow." — Comparable without outrage: No comparable outrage over the communication deficits of the federal government regarding the stationing of medium-range missiles, which Gaub herself acknowledges as problematic. — Asymmetry: The outrage is directed exclusively against the "wrong" actors (AfD, Russia), never against "one's own side".

Summary: The programme shows a clear pattern of selective outrage: maximum emotional intensity regarding Russian human rights violations and AfD positions, no comparable outrage regarding Western deficits or double standards.



9. COMPLETENESS

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The programme operates throughout within a transatlantic-Western security paradigm: Russia as an aggressive threat, NATO deterrence as necessary, support for Ukraine as morally and strategically required. Domestic electoral successes of AfD and BSW are framed primarily as a threat to this consensus and as the result of Russian propaganda influences. Alternative geopolitical perspectives — such as a multipolar world order, diplomatic approaches beyond military deterrence, or legitimate domestic political reasons for protest voting behaviour — are barely or only marginally addressed. The basic narrative reads: the West must become more resolute, and whoever questions this is playing into Moscow's hands.

Share of perspectives covered

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

[A] Transatlantic-security-policy perspective (NATO deterrence, arms deliveries to Ukraine as necessary)

[B] Peace and disarmament policy perspective (diplomacy instead of escalation, negotiated solutions)

[C] Domestic political perspective of East Germany (socioeconomic reasons for election results, transformation experiences)

[D] Perspective of AfD/BSW voters (legitimate concerns, not merely victims of propaganda)

[E] International law perspective on the prisoner exchange (rule of law vs. realpolitik, precedent effect)

[F] Russian internal perspective beyond the opposition (public mood, not only the Putin regime)

[G] Critical perspective on Western foreign policy (double standards, own contributions to escalation)

[H] Economic policy perspective (costs of rearmament vs. social spending, opportunity costs)

[I] Perspective of the Ukrainian population (not only the Zelensky government, war fatigue, internally displaced persons)

[J] Media-critical perspective (role of the media in narrative formation, self-reflection)

[A] ADDRESSED

Timestamp: Throughout, especially 14:00–22:00 (Gaub on deterrence), Theveßen on NATO support

Quote: "The essence of deterrence is credibility. So one must be credibly perceived as a potential threat." (Gaub)

Assessment: This perspective forms the dominant basic narrative of the entire programme and is shared by all guests.

[B] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 24:00–26:00 (Blome asks about end-of-war strategy)

Quote: "But two years after the start of the war there are a few questions, like how is this actually supposed to continue and for how long." (Blome)

Assessment: Blome raises the question, but no guest represents a decidedly peace- or disarmament-oriented position; the question is immediately redirected back into the deterrence framework.

[C] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 04:00–06:00 (Blome on election results)

Quote: "A demonstrably far-right party achieves 30 percent." (Blome)

Assessment: The election results are named, but the socioeconomic causes (deindustrialisation, emigration, transformation experience) are not analysed; any East German voice is absent.

[D] OMITTED

Timestamp: —

Quote: —



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Assessment: No guest represents or explains the perspective of AfD or BSW voters from their own point of view; voters are implicitly framed as victims of propaganda or protest voters, not as citizens with independent concerns.

[E] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 35:00–42:00 (Conrad on the mechanics of the prisoner exchange)

Quote: "Most exchange operations are at their core unpleasant transactions." (Conrad)

Assessment: The operational mechanics are well explained, but the international law problematic (precedent effect, incentive for further hostage-taking) is only touched upon, not systematically discussed.

[F] OMITTED

Timestamp: —

Quote: —

Assessment: Russian society is depicted exclusively through the lens of the Putin regime and the opposition (Kara-Murza); the mood among the broader Russian population, the reasons for Putin's popularity or internal Russian differentiations are entirely absent.

[G] OMITTED

Timestamp: —

Quote: —

Assessment: No critical reflection on Western foreign policy (NATO eastward expansion, Iraq, Libya, double standards in international law); the West is consistently portrayed as a values-based actor.

[H] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 12:00–14:00 (Blome cites the statement "For the Ukrainians you have 20 billion and for us you have nothing")

Quote: "With the statement, namely, for the Ukrainians you have 20 billion and for us you have nothing." (Blome)

Assessment: The statement is identified as a populist argument, but the underlying real question of distribution (social spending vs. defence spending) is not substantiated with figures or experts.

[I] OMITTED

Timestamp: —

Quote: —

Assessment: The Ukrainian population is not given a voice; Ukraine is discussed, but not from the perspective of those affected (war fatigue, internally displaced persons, mobilisation problems).

[J] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 06:00 (Blome on the term "firewall")

Quote: "Did you come up with that? You media, what does that mean?" (Lanz on Merz)

Assessment: The question of media terminology is briefly touched upon, but genuine self-reflection on the role of the media in narrative formation (e.g. regarding the Ukraine war or the AfD) does not take place.



Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

10. FRAMING (Setting the frame)

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 — Quote (Lanz, introduction): "Hostage-taking to press for the release of one's own people. Not only Russia does this with the Tiergarten murderer, with Krasikov, Iran, North Korea and China do it too." — Manipulation: The prisoner exchange is framed from the outset as "hostage-taking" and "blackmail", not as a diplomatic instrument involving complex trade-offs. — Why problematic: This framing excludes from the start the perspective that the exchange could also be read as successful diplomacy or as a values-based decision (as Kara-Murza himself later presents it). It sets the frame: we are victims, the others are blackmailers.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 10:00–11:00 — Quote (Gaub): "Of course one can see, clearly, especially in these federal states, a rejection of foreign policy." — Manipulation: The election results in Saxony and Thuringia are framed primarily as "rejection of foreign policy", not as an expression of socioeconomic frustration, democratic deficits or transformation experiences. — Why problematic: This framing reduces complex voting motives to a single topic (foreign policy/Ukraine) and implicitly delegitimises voters by suggesting they have not understood the security situation.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 22:00–23:00 — Quote (Theveßen): "The Russian narrative simply seeps unhindered into German society, into European society, into American society." — Manipulation: Any criticism of Western Ukraine policy is framed as a "Russian narrative" that "seeps in". — Why problematic: This framing pathologises dissenting opinions as foreign manipulation and makes a factual debate about war aims, costs and risks almost impossible, because every critic faces the accusation of having fallen for Russian propaganda.

Summary: The programme is set up from the very beginning in a threat and blackmail frame. Divergent positions on Ukraine policy are systematically framed as "Russian narrative", which structurally prevents open debate.



11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 22:00 — Quote (Theveßen): "The Russian narrative simply seeps unhindered into German society. And unhindered because it has loudspeakers. In Germany, among others, the AfD." — Manipulation: The metaphor of "seeping in" suggests a creeping poisoning of society; the AfD is described as a "loudspeaker" of Russian propaganda. — Why problematic: "Seeping in" is a contamination metaphor that equates legitimate political positions (scepticism towards arms deliveries) with foreign manipulation. Describing a democratically elected party as a "loudspeaker" delegitimises its voters.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 04:00 — Quote (Blome): "So a demonstrably far-right party achieves 30 percent." — Manipulation: The AfD is blanket-described as a "demonstrably far-right party". — Why problematic: While the domestic intelligence service classifies parts of the AfD as confirmed far-right, the blanket description of the party as a whole as "far-right" is a simplification that should be more differentiated in an analysis programme (e.g. "classified in parts as far-right by the domestic intelligence service").

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 11:30 — Quote (Gaub): "But also in part, when one also observes the language of these politicians, it almost sounds like talking points that come directly from Moscow." — Manipulation: The formulation "talking points directly from Moscow" implies direct control by the Kremlin, without concrete evidence. — Why problematic: Such a claim in a public broadcaster programme requires evidence; as a mere assertion it is a serious insinuation portraying democratically elected politicians as agents of a foreign power.

Finding 4: Timestamp: approx. 55:00 — Quote (Kara-Murza): "This is a regime of murderers. And the man at the top, Vladimir Putin, is a murderer." — Manipulation: No manipulation in the strict sense, but an extremely pointed choice of words that remains unchallenged and uncontextualised. — Why problematic: Kara-Murza's personal experience legitimises his choice of words; what is problematic is that Lanz does not contextualise this statement and offers no differentiation — for example between what is legally proven and what is conviction.

Summary: The choice of words throughout the programme is consistently evaluative and polarising. Terms such as "seeping in", "loudspeaker", "talking points from Moscow" pathologise dissenting opinions and delegitimise political actors without providing the required differentiation.



12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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Lanz is known for provocative follow-up questions — what stands out here is that he moderates almost exclusively in a confirming and empathetic manner.

Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 04:00 — Quote (Lanz): "Are we standing in front of a pile of rubble right now, or what is it?" — Analysis: The question to Blome is suggestive and negatively framed ("pile of rubble"). Lanz does not ask a comparably provocative question of Gaub or Conrad, such as: "Has NATO's deterrence policy failed?" or "Did the federal government bungle the communication on the stationing of medium-range missiles?"

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 22:00–24:00 — Quote (Lanz, after Theveßen's remarks on Russian propaganda): "I'm just looking over to Mr Conrad." — Analysis: After Theveßen's propaganda narrative, Lanz seamlessly passes to Conrad, who confirms it. No critical follow-up question such as: "But isn't any criticism of Ukraine policy immediately labelled Russian propaganda? Where is the line?"

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 24:00–26:00 — Quote (Blome): "So that we don't all agree too much here..." — Analysis: Tellingly, it is not Lanz but Blome who breaks the consensus of the round and raises the question of whether legitimate questions about the course of the war may also be asked. Lanz as moderator should have taken on this role.

Finding 4: Timestamp: approx. 48:00–58:00 — Quote (Lanz to Kara-Murza): "That was very moving, very impressive." — Analysis: The interview with Kara-Murza is consistently empathetic and respectful, which is appropriate given the guest's fate. However, Lanz does not ask a single critical or contextualising question — for example about the representativeness of the Russian opposition, the question of why Putin is popular in Russia, or whether the West has sufficiently supported the Russian opposition.

Finding 5: Timestamp: approx. 10:00–12:00 — Quote (Lanz to Gaub): "How is this being discussed at NATO?" — Analysis: Lanz asks a NATO-aligned expert how NATO views the election results — and predictably receives a NATO-conforming answer. A critical follow-up question such as "Does NATO policy itself contribute to polarisation?" is absent.

Summary: In this programme, Lanz moderates in a noticeably uncritical and confirming manner. He does not ask a single question that challenges the basic narrative of the round. The only remotely critical voice comes from Blome, not from the moderator. Lanz's usual provocation technique is deployed exclusively against absent actors (AfD, Putin), never against the guests present.



13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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Asymmetry 1: To Gaub, approx. 10:00: "How is this being discussed at NATO?" [soft, open, respectful] — To absent AfD/BSW, approx. 11:00: Gaub is allowed to say unchallenged: "...it almost sounds like talking points that come directly from Moscow." [no follow-up question, no countervoice]

Assessment

Guests present receive open, respectful questions; absent political actors are subjected to serious accusations without being able to defend themselves.

Asymmetry 2: To Kara-Murza, approx. 48:00: "What does freedom feel like right now?" [empathetic, open] — To Putin/Russia: Kara-Murza is allowed to say unchallenged: "This is a regime of murderers." [no contextualisation]

Assessment

The empathy towards Kara-Murza is humanly appropriate, but journalistically a contextualisation would have been necessary.

Asymmetry 3: To Blome, approx. 06:00: "Firewall, a word that everyone has been using..." [analytical, open] — To AfD (absent): Blome is allowed to explain at length why cooperation with the AfD is impossible, without anyone representing the opposing position.

Assessment

The question of the firewall is discussed exclusively from the CDU perspective.

Summary: The question asymmetry is considerable, but it manifests less between the guests present (who are all treated similarly) than between present and absent actors. The AfD, BSW and Russia are spoken about exclusively in their absence and negatively.



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 unequal positions), but with the exact opposite: there is no balance whatsoever. All guests represent the same basic position. Not a single structurally divergent perspective is presented.

Summary: False balance is not a problem in this programme — the problem is the complete absence of balance. The programme is an example of what could be described as "echo chamber journalism": all participants mutually confirm each other's worldview.



15. AGENDA-SETTING

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Finding 1: Agenda element set: Election results in Saxony/Thuringia as a security policy problem — Timestamp: approx. 04:00–14:00 — Evidence: Lanz immediately frames the election results in the context of NATO, Russia and propaganda, not in the context of social policy, quality of democracy or East German identity. — Alternative: The election results could have been framed as an expression of social discontent, as a democratic signal or as a challenge for the established parties.

Finding 2: Agenda element set: Russian propaganda as the main cause of Western problems — Timestamp: approx. 22:00–25:00 — Evidence: Theveßen: "The Russian narrative simply seeps unhindered into German society." — Alternative: The causes of the loss of trust in Western institutions could also have been sought in their own failures (communication deficits, social inequality, democratic deficits).

Finding 3: Agenda element set: Prisoner exchange as a moral triumph of the West — Timestamp: approx. 45:00–58:00 — Evidence: Kara-Murza: "This prisoner exchange has shown that values still hold." — Alternative: The exchange could also have been discussed as a problematic precedent, as a blackmail success for Putin or as a sign of Western weakness.

Summary: The agenda-setting of the programme follows a clear line: domestic political problems are framed as a consequence of Russian interference, Western policy is presented as values-based, and alternative explanatory approaches are systematically excluded.



CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

Results

Dominant techniques

- 1. Expert selection (Score 8):** The most serious deficiency of the programme. Five guests, one worldview. Not a single guest represents a structurally divergent position on the core topics (Ukraine support, NATO deterrence, assessment of the election results). This is not a talk show with diversity of opinion, but an expert discussion within a closed perspective.
- 2. Omission / Selective Omission (Score 8):** The systematic omission of socioeconomic contexts, Western co-responsibility, questions of distribution and internal Ukrainian problems produces a distorted picture in which the West appears exclusively as a values-based actor and Russia exclusively as an aggressor. Reality is more complex.
- 3. Framing and Guilt by Association (Score 7/7):** The consistent framing of dissenting opinions as "Russian narrative" and the systematic association of AfD voters with Putin support delegitimise democratic processes and make open debate structurally impossible.

Reasoning: The programme exhibits a clear one-sidedness that manifests itself primarily in the choice of guests (five guests, one worldview), the systematic omission of relevant perspectives and the consistent framing of dissenting opinions as "Russian narrative". This is not a deliberate propaganda programme, but rather what media studies describes as "consensus journalism" or the "echo chamber effect": the editorial team apparently has no intention to manipulate, but the selection of guests and the framing of topics produce a structural one-sidedness that contradicts the requirement of diversity of opinion under §26 MStV. It is worth noting positively that Nikolaus Blome adopts a somewhat more differentiated position and raises the question of whether legitimate concerns about the course of the war may be voiced — however, even this position is immediately redirected back into the consensus framework.

CONCLUSION

The programme from September 2024 addresses highly relevant topics — prisoner exchange, state elections, Ukraine war, US election campaign — within a closed transatlantic-security-policy narrative shared by all five guests. The absence of any structurally dissenting voice — no peace researcher, no East German social scientist, no representative of the criticised parties, no independent international law expert — constitutes the most serious violation of the requirement of diversity of opinion. The systematic framing of election results as "a victory for Putin" and of criticism of Ukraine policy as "Russian narrative" delegitimises democratic processes and pathologises dissenting opinions. The public broadcasting mandate under §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty requires that "the significant political, ideological and social forces and groups" are given adequate voice — in this programme only a single force is given a voice.



CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Concrete evidence
CDU/CSU	+1	approx. 06:00–08:00: Blome defends the CDU position on the firewall in a differentiated manner: "Once again, I believe Friedrich Merz and the entire CDU that they will not form a coalition with the AfD." Mario Vogt is mentioned positively as a possible minister-president. No critical follow-up question about CDU failures in East Germany.
SPD	0	Barely mentioned. Scholz is mentioned once historically as an opponent of rearmament in the 1980s (approx. 20:00). No criticism, but also no positive portrayal. The federal government is indirectly criticised for communication deficits.
Greens	0	Not mentioned. Neither positively nor negatively addressed.
FDP	0	Not mentioned.
AfD	-4	approx. 04:00: "Demonstrably far-right party" (Blome). approx. 11:00: "Talking points directly from Moscow" (Gaub). approx. 22:00: "Loudspeaker" of Russian propaganda (Theveßen). approx. 10:00: Election result as "victory for Putin" (Lanz/Republika). Höcke described as "highly unpopular" (Blome). No AfD representative present, no presentation of the AfD position from their own perspective.
BSW	-2	approx. 04:00: "Left-wing national populism" (Blome). approx. 12:00: Implicitly portrayed as disseminator of the statement "For the Ukrainians you have 20 billion". No differentiated engagement with BSW positions. No BSW representative present.
Linke	+1	approx. 07:00: Bodo Ramelow is described as "highly popular minister-president" (Blome). The only leading candidate with a direct mandate. Implicitly positive portrayal as a possible kingmaker.
Freie Wähler	0	Not mentioned.

Party bias summary

- Most favoured: CDU/CSU (Score +1) and Linke (Score +1) — The CDU is portrayed as a responsible actor that rightly distances itself from the AfD. Ramelow (Linke) is personally portrayed in a positive light.
- Most disadvantaged: AfD (Score -4) — The AfD is consistently portrayed as far-right, as a loudspeaker of Russian propaganda and as a threat to democracy, without a representative being present or the party's position being presented from their own perspective.
- Conclusion: The party-political bias is considerable and is directed primarily against the AfD, secondarily against the BSW. Both parties are portrayed in their absence and exclusively negatively. The portrayal of the AfD as a "loudspeaker" of Russian propaganda and of its electoral successes as "a victory for Putin" goes beyond legitimate criticism and delegitimises a democratically elected party and its voters. Regardless of the substantive assessment of AfD positions, the public broadcasting mandate requires that these positions also be discussed fairly and in the presence of their representatives.



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

Assessment under §26 MStV

Violation 1: Diversity of opinion (§26 para. 1 MStV in conjunction with §5 ZDF State Treaty)

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV obliges broadcasters to express "the diversity of existing opinions" in their programming "as broadly and completely as possible". §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty specifies: the ZDF must provide "an objective overview of world events" and should "promote cohesion in unified Germany".

Facts: All five guests of the programme share the same transatlantic-security-policy basic narrative. Not a single structurally divergent perspective is represented — neither from a peace policy standpoint, nor from an East German sociological perspective, nor from the viewpoint of the criticised parties. Diversity of opinion is not reflected "as broadly and completely as possible", but reduced to a single spectrum.

Evidence: Entire programme — five guests, one worldview. No peace researcher, no East German social scientist, no AfD/BSW representative, no independent international law expert.

Assessment: This constitutes a violation of the diversity requirement. While not every individual programme must reflect all perspectives (internal pluralism can also be achieved across multiple programmes), the complete absence of any dissenting voice in a 60-minute programme on four highly controversial topics is difficult to reconcile with the diversity requirement.

Violation 2: Objectivity and fairness (§6 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty)

Norm: §6 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty requires that reporting be "objective" and that "commentary" be separated from "news".

Facts: The description of AfD electoral successes as "a victory for Putin" (Lanz, approx. 10:00), the characterisation of AfD politicians as recipients of "talking points directly from Moscow" (Gaub, approx. 11:00) and the description of dissenting opinions as "Russian narrative that seeps in" (Theveßen, approx. 22:00) are evaluative statements presented as factual claims without being identified as opinion.

Evidence: approx. 10:00 (Lanz/Republika), approx. 11:00 (Gaub), approx. 22:00 (Theveßen).

Assessment: The boundary between news and commentary is repeatedly crossed. Serious accusations (foreign manipulation by Moscow) are presented as facts without evidence.

Violation 3: Promotion of cohesion in unified Germany (§5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty)

Norm: §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty obliges the ZDF to promote "cohesion in unified Germany".

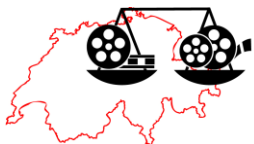
Facts: The election results in Saxony and Thuringia are framed exclusively as a threat, as "a victory for Putin" and as the result of Russian propaganda. The socioeconomic causes, the transformation experiences and the legitimate concerns of East German voters are not addressed. Not a single East German guest is represented in the programme.

Evidence: approx. 04:00–14:00 (entire election discussion without an East German voice).

Assessment: The programme fails the mandate to promote cohesion in unified Germany by framing East German election results exclusively as a problem and a threat, without incorporating the perspective of those affected.

Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme exhibits deficiencies in three areas that can be assessed as violations of the Media State Treaty and the ZDF State Treaty: (1) The complete absence of divergent perspectives in the choice of guests violates the diversity requirement of §26 para. 1 MStV. (2) The mixing of news and commentary and the presentation of unsubstantiated accusations as facts violate the objectivity requirement of §6 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty. (3) The exclusively negative framing of East German election results without East German voices fails the mandate to promote cohesion under §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty. It should be noted that the internal pluralism of the ZDF programme can be achieved across multiple programmes and a single programme need not reflect all perspectives. However, the one-sidedness of this programme is so pronounced — five guests, one worldview, zero dissenting voices — that it must be assessed as deficient even in the context of the overall programme. The competent



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supervisory body is the ZDF Television Council, which monitors the programme principles pursuant to §21 ZDF State Treaty.



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	4	••
6	GUILT BY ASSOCIATION	7	••••
7	TIMING	5	•••
8	SELECTIVE OUTRAGE	6	•••
9	COMPLETENESS	7	••••
10	FRAMING (Setting the frame)	7	••••
11	CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS	6	•••
12	MODERATION BEHAVIOUR	6	•••
13	QUESTION ASYMMETRY	7	••••
14	FALSE BALANCE	2	•
15	AGENDA-SETTING	7	••••

HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

6.3/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation

SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

5.8/10

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 scores

Individual scores per criterion (0–10)

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

Aggregated deviation index — Interpretation ranges

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

Party-political bias (-5 to +5)

-5 to -3	Strongly disadvantaged	Party is clearly disadvantaged in portrayal, speaking time or framing.
-2 to -1	Slightly disadvantaged	Discernible but weak disadvantage.
0	Neutral	No discernible favouring or disadvantaging.
+1 to +2	Slightly favoured	Discernible but weak favouring.
+3 to +5	Strongly favoured	Party is clearly favoured in portrayal, speaking time or framing.



Legal and methodological classification

No finding of fact	The results presented do not constitute findings of fact regarding 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.
No legal ruling	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).
No proof of causality	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.
No finding of intent	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.
Heuristic comparison instrument	The index serves for comparative pattern recognition across thousands of programmes, not for the precise metric measurement of individual contributions. Threshold values serve as heuristic orientation, not as sharp legal qualification.



APPENDIX: CANTONAL LEGISLATION

Legal basis Germany — ARD, ZDF

Law

Media State Treaty (MStV, 2020)

Relevant articles

- §26 para. 1 MStV: Public broadcasters must 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 federal government and the states. 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: Universal service mandate with objectivity and impartiality.

Core obligations

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

Supervisory authority

- 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 programming
- Legal supervision: Respective federal state (ZDF: Rhineland-Palatinate)

Complaints procedure

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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This book is not a media criticism book. It is a toolbox — for everyone who has a microphone in front of their face and wants 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.

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