



DE DETAILED ANALYSIS

2024-09-11 Der Talk vom 11. September

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2024-09-11 | Analysed on: 2026-03-12 17:36

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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)

6.0 / 10

Balanced

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← 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: 11.09.2024
- Moderator: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



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Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political spectrum
Thorsten Frey	Member of the Bundestag, First Parliamentary Business Manager of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group	CDU	Centre-right / conservative
Viktorija Rietig	Migration expert (DGAP)	Non-partisan / think tank	Liberal-pragmatic, academic
Jürgen Trittin	Former Federal Minister, retired Member of the Bundestag, Greens veteran	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	Centre-left / left-green
Wolfram Weimer	Publicist, publisher (The European, among others)	Non-partisan, conservative- liberal	Centre-right / conservative- liberal
Elmar Theveßen	ZDF correspondent USA (remote link)	ZDF-internal	Journalistic / no party affiliation

Main topic

The failed migration summit between the Ampel government and the CDU/CSU opposition, the question of turn-backs at the German border, and embedded within this the first TV debate Harris vs. Trump with a focus on migration.



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: Thorsten Frey (CDU) — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: Represents the Union's position as the only direct participant in the summit. — Classification: As First Parliamentary Business Manager of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, he is a senior party representative, not a neutral observer. — Missing countervoice: No Ampel representative (SPD parliamentary group representative, Interior Minister Faeser, FDP parliamentary group leader Dürr) is present in the round, even though the topic is explicitly the summit between the Ampel and the Union.

Expert 2: Wolfram Weimer (publicist) — Timestamp: approx. 28:00ff — Statement: "Merz is making an impact" / "The Ampel tree is burning in Berlin" / "Kamala Harris moment in the SPD" — Classification: Weimer is a conservative-liberal publicist who regularly represents positions close to the Union and business. He is introduced as a neutral "publicist" but acts as a political commentator with a clear tendency. — Missing countervoice: A progressive or government-aligned publicist/journalist is absent.

Expert 3: Jürgen Trittin (Greens) — Timestamp: approx. 08:00ff, 50:00ff — Statement: Nuanced assessment, criticises both the Union and the Ampel. — Classification: As a former Greens minister and elder statesman, he brings a left-wing perspective, but is no longer an active politician and therefore more detached. — Missing countervoice: Trittin is the only guest who to some extent represents the Ampel perspective, even though he himself criticises the Ampel.

Expert 4: Viktoria Rietig (DGAP) — Timestamp: approx. 20:00ff — Statement: Fact-based assessment, dual-strategy argument. — Classification: As a migration expert at the DGAP, she brings the most academic perspective. Her position is nuanced and partly contradicts the Union's line. — Missing countervoice: No counter-expert who, for example, supports the Union's position legally (such as a constitutional lawyer like Rupert Scholz or Daniel Thym).

Missing expert groups: Constitutional lawyer, Ampel government representative, police union representative, local practitioner, refugee organisation.

Summary: The guest selection creates a structural imbalance: two guests (Frey, Weimer) clearly represent Union/conservative positions, one expert (Rietig) is nuanced-neutral, and one guest (Trittin) represents a green perspective. The absence of an Ampel representative on a topic that explicitly deals with the Ampel-Union conflict is the most serious gap.



2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

Source 1: Timestamp: approx. 22:00 — Source: "Deutschland-Trend, 77% want a fundamental change of course" — Classification: Cited by Frey as legitimation for his position, not questioned by Lanz. — Missing counter-source: Surveys that ask more differentially about specific measures (e.g. Infratest dimap on turn-backs vs. better integration).

Source 2: Timestamp: approx. 45:00 — Source: Weimer cites "the Austrian Chancellor" and "Mr Mitsotakis" from personal conversations — Classification: Anecdotal evidence, not verifiable. — Missing counter-source: Official statements from European partners, EU Commission.

Source 3: Timestamp: approx. 45:00 — Source: Weimer cites "Bild newspaper: Merz is making an impact" — Classification: The Bild newspaper as a source for a political assessment is not neutral. — Missing counter-source: Other media with a different assessment (e.g. Süddeutsche, Spiegel, which viewed the summit breakdown more critically).

Summary: The source selection is one-sided. Surveys are cited selectively, personal anecdotes are used as evidence, and the Bild newspaper is used as a reference. Academic studies, EU documents or more differentiated surveys are absent.



3. TIME DISTRIBUTION

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Estimated speaking time (based on text shares in the transcript):

- Thorsten Frey (CDU): (30%)
- Wolfram Weimer (publicist, conservative): (17%)
- Jürgen Trittin (Greens): (17%)
- Viktoria Rietig (expert): (13%)
- Markus Lanz (moderation): (17%)
- Elmar Theveßen (ZDF, remote link): (6%)

Summary: Frey receives by far the most speaking time, which is understandable given his role as the only summit participant, but is problematic since no Ampel representative receives comparable space. Adding Frey and Weimer as conservative voices, they account for approx. 47% of speaking time. Trittin and Rietig as counterweights together account for approx. 30%.



4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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Omission 1: Context: The specific content of the Ampel's offer is never fully presented. — Relevant at: approx. 20:00–40:00 — Effect: The viewer learns in detail why the Union was dissatisfied, but not what the Ampel specifically offered and why it considered that sufficient.

Omission 2: Context: The role of the CDU/CSU in migration policy over the past 16 years (the Merkel era) is only briefly mentioned once by Lanz ("which bears significant responsibility for this migration policy of the last 10 years"), but not explored further. — Relevant at: approx. 45:00 — Effect: The Union can present itself as a problem-solver without its own responsibility for the current situation being systematically addressed.

Omission 3: Context: The actually declining asylum figures in 2024 (minus 20%) are mentioned by Rietig, but immediately relativised by Lanz and Weimer. — Relevant at: approx. 22:00 — Effect: Facts that contradict the narrative of an "emergency" are marginalised.

Omission 4: Context: The CEAS reform (Common European Asylum System), adopted in April 2024 and applicable from 2026, is only mentioned in passing by Trittin. — Relevant at: approx. 55:00 — Effect: A central European reform project that addresses many of the problems discussed remains invisible.

Omission 5: Context: The question of whether turn-backs at the border would work in practice (staffing requirements, infrastructure, reaction of neighbouring countries) is only superficially touched upon. — Relevant at: approx. 35:00 — Effect: The Union's demand is presented as politically plausible without critically examining its practical feasibility.

Summary: Information that would weaken the Union's narrative is systematically omitted: the specific Ampel offer, the historical CDU responsibility, declining asylum figures and the already adopted CEAS reform. At the same time, information that would strengthen the Ampel's position is absent.

Missing voices

- Ampel government representative (SPD minister or parliamentary group representative): Would have presented the government's position first-hand and directly confronted the Union's narrative of a "script". The absence is the most serious gap in the programme.
- Constitutional lawyer (e.g. professor of European law): Would have been able to assess the core legal question (Art. 72 TFEU, Dublin III, Art. 16a Basic Law) independently and with professional expertise, rather than leaving it to political point-scoring.
- Local government representative (district administrator, mayor): Would have been able to describe the practical reality of accommodation, integration and overload on the ground.
- Representative of a refugee organisation (Pro Asyl, UNHCR, Diakonie): Would have brought in the human rights dimension and the perspective of those affected.



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- AfD or BSW representative: Would have presented the positions of the parties that have gained massively in recent elections and whose voters are most strongly moved by the issue.
- Labour market/economic expert (e.g. IAB, IW Köln): Would have been able to provide a fact-based assessment of the economic dimension of migration (skilled labour shortage, costs, labour market integration).
- Police union representative (GdP, DPoIG): Would have been able to assess the practical feasibility of border controls and turn-backs from the perspective of the Federal Police.
- European politician (e.g. MEP): Would have been able to systematically contextualise the European dimension (CEAS reform, reactions of EU partners).



5. MANIPULATION OF FIGURES

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

Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 22:00 — Figure (Frey): "77% of people in Germany want a fundamental change of course in migration policy" — Missing context: The source (Deutschland-Trend) is cited, but not what exactly is meant by "fundamental change of course". 77% could also mean better integration, more skilled labour immigration or more efficient administration — not necessarily turn-backs at the border. — Effect: The figure is instrumentalised as legitimation for the specific Union demand (turn-backs).

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 35:00 — Figure (Frey): "in the last three years, around two million people have come to us through humanitarian migration [...] and also around 2.5 million people through legal migration" — Missing context: Frey cites the figures correctly but deliberately conflates humanitarian and legal migration in order to make the total figure appear as high as possible. — Effect: The impression of being "flooded" is reinforced, even though legal migration (skilled workers, family reunification) is politically desired.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 22:00 — Figure (Rietig): "This year we have 20 per cent fewer asylum applications than last year" — Missing context: Rietig cites the figure, but Lanz and Frey immediately relativise it. The absolute figure (approx. 160,000 in the first half of the year) is not put in relation to the size of the population or to other EU countries. — Effect: The declining trend is marginalised.

Summary: Figures are used selectively. The 77% survey is used as a blank legitimation for the Union's position without differentiation. Declining asylum figures are marginalised. Frey's conflation of humanitarian and legal migration goes uncorrected.



6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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Association 1: Timestamp: approx. 08:00–10:00 — Quote (Lanz about Trittin): "his spirit still hovers over everything at the Greens" / "the green legend, Wolfram Weimer calls him" — Technique: Trittin is introduced as a historical figure, not as a current political actor. This is respectful, but depoliticises his statements. — Effect: Trittin's criticism of the Union is framed as "wisdom of age", not as a political position.

Association 2: Timestamp: approx. 03:00 — Quote (Lanz): "Omid Nouripour, who spoke of a cheap farce at the Union" — Technique: The Greens' chairman is associated with the term "cheap farce", which makes the Greens appear unsophisticated. — Effect: The Greens' position is introduced via a polemical term, not via substantive arguments.

Summary: Guilt by association is not a dominant instrument in this programme. There are slight tendencies to introduce the Greens via polemical quotes from their leadership, while the Union is presented via substantive arguments.



7. TIMING

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Finding 1: Position: 00:00–15:00 — Content: US TV debate Harris/Trump with focus on Trump's lies and migration — Timing effect: The programme begins with the US topic, which frames migration as a global crisis issue and establishes Trump as a negative example of populist migration policy. This creates an emotional framework in which the German migration debate appears equally urgent.

Finding 2: Position: approx. 08:00–10:00 — Content: Trittin on fascism, his father in the Waffen-SS, Madeleine Albright — Timing effect: The fascism warning is placed early and creates a moral framework that overshadows the entire migration debate. The association Trump-fascism-migration is established before the substantive German debate begins.

Finding 3: Position: approx. 55:00–end — Content: Trittin's nuanced closing remarks on immigration needs and AfD correlation — Timing effect: The most nuanced and fact-rich statements come right at the end, when viewers' attention typically wanes. The primacy effect belongs to the Union's narrative.

Summary: The timing favours the Union's narrative: the emotional framing (Trump, fascism, crisis) comes at the beginning, the substantive differentiation (declining figures, dual strategy, implementation problems) comes at the end. The main part of the programme is devoted to the question "Why did the Union walk out?" — told from the Union's perspective.



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. 28:00 — Reaction (Weimer): "he was completely out of control [...] ranting so aggressively and almost uncontrollably" about Scholz's Bundestag speech — Comparable without outrage: Frey's walking out of the talks is treated as an understandable political decision, not as "uncontrolled" or "aggressive". — Asymmetry: Scholz's emotional speech is pathologised, Frey's walking out is rationalised.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 40:00 — Reaction (Frey): "that something was suggested to us and we were thereby kept in the conversation, which was subsequently not delivered" — Comparable without outrage: The question of whether the Union in turn used the summit as a stage (Scholz's accusation) is raised by Lanz, but Frey's denial is accepted. — Asymmetry: The Ampel is accused of deception, the Union of honesty.

Summary: Outrage is distributed selectively: Scholz's emotional appearance is interpreted as a loss of control, while the Union's walkout is framed as a rational decision. The Ampel is accused of dishonesty without an Ampel representative being able to defend itself.



9. COMPLETENESS

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The programme takes place in a phase of maximum domestic political tension: after the terrorist attack in Solingen, before the Brandenburg state election, with historically poor poll ratings for the Ampel parties and strong AfD results in Thuringia and Saxony. The migration debate has become the central domestic political field of conflict, raising the question of whether the political centre is capable of acting. At the same time, the US TV debate provides an international framework in which migration is also negotiated as a key issue. The programme moves in the tension between the call for a "migration turnaround" and the question of the limits imposed by the rule of law and European law.

Share of perspectives covered

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

[A] Position of the Federal Government / Ampel coalition (SPD, Greens, FDP) — Why was the offer considered sufficient?

[B] Position of the CDU/CSU opposition — Why was the summit broken off?

[C] European law / constitutional law assessment — Are turn-backs at the border legal?

[D] Perspective of the municipalities — How do district administrators and mayors experience the situation on the ground?

[E] Perspective of those affected / refugees — Human rights dimension, causes of flight

[F] Perspective of European partners — How do Austria, Poland, Italy view the German debate?

[G] Perspective of the AfD / BSW — What are the demands of the parties that are gaining massively in elections?

[H] Economic perspective — Skilled labour shortage, demographic change, labour market integration

[I] Security perspective — Internal security, terrorism prevention, crime statistics

[J] Perspective of civil society / aid organisations — Voluntary work, integration efforts, capacity limits

[A] Ampel position — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 20:00–22:00 — Quote (Lanz, indirectly): "The Chancellor says the decision to leave this round had already been made beforehand, speaks of conjuring tricks" / Scholz clip: "You have taken to the bushes." — Assessment: The Ampel's position is conveyed almost exclusively through clips and Lanz's paraphrases; no Ampel representative is present in the round, which creates a structural imbalance.

[B] CDU/CSU position — TREATED IN DETAIL

Timestamp: throughout, in particular approx. 15:00–50:00 — Quote (Frey): "This topic of migration, asylum, flight, that it is not a topic that benefits us politically in any way." / "A central point in order to really achieve a change will be the turn-backs at the border." — Assessment: Thorsten Frey, as the only direct participant in the summit, receives maximum space to present the Union's position.

[C] European law assessment — ADDRESSED

Timestamp: approx. 25:00–35:00 — Quote (Rietig): "That is very difficult to do under European law" / Frey: "Article 72 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union" — Assessment: Both sides of the legal debate are touched upon, but without an independent constitutional lawyer.

[D] Municipal perspective — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 38:00 — Quote (Lanz): "We have had many conversations here with district administrators" — Assessment: Only as a reference to earlier programmes, no municipal representative present.

[E] Perspective of those affected / refugees — OMITTED

No timestamp — No quote — Assessment: The human rights dimension, individual stories of flight or the perspective of those seeking protection is completely absent.

[F] European partners — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 45:00 — Quote (Weimer): "I spoke with the Austrian Chancellor about it [...] Mr Mitsotakis in Greece" — Assessment: Only through Weimer's personal anecdotes, not systematically or substantiated by clips.

[G] AfD / BSW perspective — OMITTED



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No timestamp — No quote — Assessment: The AfD is only mentioned as a threatening backdrop ("strengthens the extreme"), its specific demands or the BSW's position are not presented.

[H] Economic perspective / skilled workers — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 55:00 — Quote (Trittin): "If we have 5 million people, the baby boomers, leaving working life" — Assessment: Only briefly touched upon at the end by Trittin, not systematically discussed.

[I] Security perspective — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 18:00 — Quote (Frey): "IP address storage and other matters" — Assessment: Only mentioned as a keyword, Solingen is not analysed in terms of content.

[J] Civil society / aid organisations — OMITTED

No timestamp — No quote — Assessment: Voluntary integration work, capacities of aid organisations, voices from practice are completely absent.



Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

10. FRAMING (setting the frame)

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 — Quote: "have the unique opportunity to clarify the process that half the country has already been discussing for a day. Namely the question of what really happened at this migration summit" — Manipulation: The programme is framed as "clarification", with the only direct participant in the summit being the CDU representative. "Clarification" suggests objectivity, but structurally delivers a one-sided perspective. — Why problematic: When "clarification" is promised but only one side of the conflict is personally represented, a distorted picture emerges. Viewers expect neutrality but receive an asymmetric conversation constellation.

Finding 2: Timestamp: 01:00–01:30 — Quote: "He says none of it went far enough. The Chancellor says the decision to leave this round had already been made beforehand, speaks of conjuring tricks, provincial stage theatrics and indirectly even of characterlessness and dishonesty." — Manipulation: Lanz presents the Chancellor's accusations as "juicy" and announces being "very curious" about what Frey has to say. The frame is: Frey must defend himself against serious accusations — but he is allowed to do so at length without anyone representing the Chancellor's position. — Why problematic: Scholz's accusations are used as a perfect setup for Frey's defence, not as an equally valid position.

Finding 3: Timestamp: 03:30–04:00 — Quote (about Weimer): "He speaks of open agony and recently publicly called on Christian Lindner to do a Lambsdorff and finally put the divorce papers on the table." — Manipulation: The Ampel is already framed in the introduction as a dying coalition ("agony", "twitches rather than shines", "caretaker government"). — Why problematic: This framing sets the framework for the entire programme: the Ampel is finished, the Union is right. Alternative frames (e.g. "Union blocks compromise" or "democratic negotiation process") are not offered.

Summary: From the outset, the programme is framed as "clarification" of a process in which only the Union side is personally represented. The Ampel is already presented as dysfunctional and finished in the introduction, which pre-shapes the entire discursive framework.



11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 01:20 — Quote: "conjuring tricks, provincial stage theatrics and indirectly even characterlessness and dishonesty" — Manipulation: Lanz quotes Scholz's accusations with relish and at length, but frames them as "juicy" — i.e. as entertainment, not as a serious political accusation. — Why problematic: The trivialisation of serious accusations as "juicy" devalues the Chancellor's position and turns it into a spectacle.

Finding 2: Timestamp: 03:30 — Quote: "open agony" / "the Ampel only twitches instead of really shining" — Manipulation: Medical metaphors ("agony", "twitches") for an elected government. — Why problematic: Such terms delegitimise a democratically elected government and suggest that its end is inevitable and desirable.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 30:00 — Quote (Weimer): "He has the charisma of a paper clip, today he was a firecracker" — Manipulation: Demeaning metaphor for the Federal Chancellor, which goes unchallenged. — Why problematic: Personal denigration of the head of government without substantive content, which Lanz does not contextualise.

Finding 4: Timestamp: approx. 28:00 — Quote (Weimer): "In Berlin the Ampel tree is burning, blazing" — Manipulation: Catastrophe metaphors for the political process. — Why problematic: Suggests loss of control and chaos where a normal democratic conflict is taking place.

Summary: The choice of words is consistently characterised by delegitimising metaphors directed at the Ampel government. Terms such as "agony", "twitches", "charisma of a paper clip" and "Ampel tree burning blazingly" are neither contextualised by Lanz nor balanced by positive or neutral descriptions.



12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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Lanz is known for provocative follow-up questions — the asymmetric challenging is particularly striking here.

Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 25:00–35:00 — Quote (Lanz to Frey): "Did you break it off or did you not break it off?" / "So you did break it off?" / "Why do you stand up there?" — Analysis: Lanz does ask Frey some tough follow-up questions about the course of the summit. However, the basic attitude is more that of an investigative interviewer who wants to find out the "real story" — not that of a moderator who substantively challenges the Union's position. The questions target the process, not the substance of the Union's demands.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 28:00–30:00 — Quote (Lanz about Scholz): Lanz plays the Scholz clip and then asks: "How differently the interpretations of this appearance diverge" — Analysis: Lanz allows Weimer to comment on Scholz's appearance as "out of control", "uncontrolled" and "thin-skinned" without himself taking a counter-position. Trittin disagrees ("I found him clear"), but is not questioned further on this.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 40:00 — Quote (Lanz to Frey): "You are a very clever lawyer and a good negotiator. I always experience you as an honest person." — Analysis: Lanz pays Frey a personal compliment that strengthens the CDU representative's credibility. A comparable personal tribute to an Ampel representative is absent — there is none in the round.

Finding 4: Timestamp: approx. 50:00 — Quote (Lanz to Rietig): "Do you really need to change the policy?" — Analysis: Lanz asks Rietig a question that implicitly relativises the Union's position (not changing the policy, but improving implementation). This is a good, differentiating question — but it comes late and is not explored further.

Finding 5: Timestamp: approx. 55:00 — Quote (Lanz to Trittin): "If you now look from a distance [...] at what you see, at the battle that is currently being fought" — Analysis: Trittin is questioned as an elder statesman with distance, not as a political actor with his own position. This defuses his criticism.

Summary: Lanz does ask Frey tough questions about the process, but not about the substance of the Union's position. At the same time, there is no Ampel representative who could be questioned equally hard. The personal tribute to Frey as an "honest person" and "clever lawyer" asymmetrically strengthens his credibility. Weimer's delegitimising comments about Scholz go unchallenged.



13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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Asymmetry 1: To Frey (CDU), approx. 25:00: "Did you break it off or did you not break it off?" [tough, but procedural] — To Trittin (Greens), approx. 08:00: "Where do you see the parallels?" [soft, inviting, about his book] — Assessment: Frey is questioned hard on the process, but spared on substance. Trittin is questioned respectfully and intellectually, but not pressed on specific Green positions in migration policy.

Asymmetry 2: To Frey, approx. 40:00: "You are a very clever lawyer and a good negotiator. I always experience you as an honest person." [compliment + soft question] — To Scholz (via clip): "conjuring tricks, provincial stage theatrics" [harsh accusations, without opportunity to defend] — Assessment: The absent Chancellor is confronted with the harshest accusations, the present CDU representative with personal compliments.

Asymmetry 3: To Weimer, approx. 28:00: "What does Wolfram Weimer hear in this regard?" [open, inviting question] — To Rietig, approx. 50:00: "Do you really need to change the policy?" [implicitly sceptical question towards her nuanced position] — Assessment: Weimer receives open stage questions, Rietig is rather put on the defensive.

Summary: The question asymmetry is less evident in the toughness towards Frey (who is indeed questioned hard) than in the overall structure: the absent Chancellor is attacked most harshly, the present CDU representative receives personal compliments, and the nuanced voices (Rietig, Trittin) are treated more as supplements than as counterweights.



14. FALSE BALANCE

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Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 25:00–35:00 — Description: The legal question of whether turn-backs at the border are possible under European law is presented as "two equally valid opinions" (Frey: yes, Art. 72 TFEU / Rietig: very difficult). — Problem: The prevailing opinion in legal scholarship tends more towards the position that blanket turn-backs are problematic under European law. By presenting this as a 50/50 debate, the Union's minority position is upgraded. — Assessment: However, the legal debate is genuinely complex and not clear-cut, which is why the score remains moderate.

Summary: A certain false balance arises on the legal question, where the Union's position is presented as equivalent to the prevailing opinion. Since the legal situation is genuinely contested, this is less serious than in other areas.



15. AGENDA-SETTING

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Finding 1: Agenda element set: "Why did the Union break off the summit?" — Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 — Evidence: "have the unique opportunity to clarify the process" — Alternative: "Why did the Ampel fail with its offer?" or "What are the realistic options for a migration turnaround?" or "How do experts assess the turn-back demand?" would have been alternative agenda-settings.

Finding 2: Agenda element set: "The Ampel is finished" — Timestamp: 03:30 — Evidence: "open agony" / "Kamala Harris moment in the SPD" — Alternative: "How can the government remain capable of acting?" or "What compromises are possible?" would have been more constructive agenda-settings.

Finding 3: Agenda element set: "Migration as an existential crisis" — Timestamp: approx. 28:00 — Evidence (Weimer): "if the political centre does not solve the migration question, then the migration question will dissolve the political centre" — Alternative: A more differentiated agenda would also have asked whether the perception of crisis corresponds to reality (declining figures) and what other factors (economy, housing shortage, infrastructure) are driving social discontent.

Summary: The programme's agenda-setting follows the Union's narrative: the summit breakdown is "clarified" from the Union's perspective, the Ampel is presented as dysfunctional, and migration is framed as an existential crisis. Alternative agendas (compromise possibilities, implementation problems, differentiated crisis analysis) are marginalised.



CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

Results

Dominant techniques

- 1. Expert selection / structural asymmetry (score 7):** The most serious manipulation is not rhetorical but structural: on a topic that explicitly deals with the conflict between the Ampel and the Union, an Ampel representative is absent. Thorsten Frey can present his version of events at length and largely unchallenged. This is the foundation on which all other imbalances are built.
- 2. Framing / agenda-setting (score 7/7):** From the outset, the programme is framed as "clarification" from the Union's perspective. The Ampel is already delegitimised as dysfunctional in the introduction ("agony", "twitches"). The agenda-setting consistently follows the Union's narrative: Why did the Union walk out? — not: Why did the Ampel not offer more? or: What are realistic solutions?
- 3. Omission / selective omission (score 7):** Information that would weaken the Union's narrative is systematically marginalised: the specific Ampel offer, the historical CDU responsibility for migration policy over the past 16 years, declining asylum figures in 2024 and the already adopted CEAS reform.

Reasoning: The programme shows a clear one-sidedness in favour of the CDU/CSU position, which arises primarily from the structural guest selection: on a topic dealing with the Ampel-Union conflict, an Ampel representative is absent. This violates the principle of impartiality under §26 MStV, which requires that the significant political forces be given a voice. The one-sidedness is reinforced by framing, choice of words and agenda-setting, but is partially mitigated by Rietig's nuanced expertise and Trittin's counterpoints. This is not a systematic imbalance, since Lanz does ask Frey critical questions and allows counter-arguments — but the basic structure of the programme clearly favours the Union's position.

CONCLUSION

The programme of 11 September 2024 shows a clear structural one-sidedness in favour of the CDU/CSU, which results primarily from the guest selection: on a topic that explicitly deals with the failed migration summit between the Ampel government and the Union, no representative of the Federal Government or the Ampel parliamentary groups is present. Thorsten Frey (CDU) can present his version of events at length and largely unchallenged, supported by the conservative-liberal publicist Wolfram Weimer. The counterweights — Viktoria Rietig with fact-based expertise and Jürgen Trittin with a green perspective — cannot compensate for the structural asymmetry. This stands in tension with §26 para. 1 MStV, which requires that news offerings must be "independent and objective" and must guarantee "diversity of opinion", as well as with the ZDF State Treaty, which links the public service mandate with the requirement of impartiality. A legally binding determination of a legal violation would require an overall assessment of the ZDF programme; however, the individual programme shows a pattern that, if repeated, would violate the principle of impartiality.



CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Specific evidence
CDU/CSU	+3	00:30 "have the unique opportunity to clarify the process" [Frey as protagonist]; 40:00 "You are a very clever lawyer and a good negotiator. I always experience you as an honest person" [personal compliment]; Frey receives approx. 30% speaking time without an equivalent counterpart; 45:00 Weimer: "Merz is making an impact" [unchallenged]
SPD	-3	01:20 Scholz's accusations trivialised as "juicy"; 03:30 "open agony"; 28:00 Weimer: "charisma of a paper clip" / "out of control" / "thin-skinned" [unchallenged]; 30:00 Weimer: "Kamala Harris moment — who tells him he should no longer stand as a candidate?" [Scholz replacement set as topic]; no SPD representative present
Greens	-1	03:00 Nouripour quote "cheap farce" [introduced polemically]; 03:30 Nouripour: "caretaker government" [framed as weakness]; Trittin treated respectfully as elder statesman but depoliticised; Greens implied as blockers of turn-backs
FDP	0	25:00 Vogel quote is dismissed by Frey as "misinformed"; FDP is presented as a potential Union ally but not independently represented; neutral treatment
AfD	-1	Only mentioned as a threatening backdrop ("strengthens the extreme"), no substantive engagement with AfD positions; 55:00 Trittin: "AfD voters are strongest not where immigration is strongest, but where emigration is strongest" [only nuanced mention]
BSW	-1	No mention despite strong election results in Thuringia and Saxony
Linke	-1	No mention
Freie Wähler	0	No mention, not relevant to the topic

Party bias summary

- Most favoured: CDU/CSU, score +3 — Frey as protagonist, personal compliments, maximum speaking time, Union's narrative as programme framework, supported by Weimer.
- Most disadvantaged: SPD, score -3 — No representative present, Chancellor is delegitimised through clips and Weimer's comments ("agony", "paper clip", "Kamala Harris moment"), Scholz's accusations trivialised as "juicy".
- Conclusion: The programme shows a clear bias in favour of the CDU/CSU and to the detriment of the SPD. This arises primarily from the guest selection (CDU representative present, no SPD representative) and is reinforced by framing, choice of words and Weimer's unchallenged delegitimising comments about the Federal Chancellor. The Greens are represented through Trittin, but treated more as a historical than as a current political force. The AfD and BSW are not substantively included despite their electoral successes.



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

Assessment under §26 MStV

Violation 1: Impartiality requirement (§26 para. 1 MStV in conjunction with §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty)

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV obliges the guarantee of diversity of opinion; §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty specifies: "The ZDF shall [...] provide a comprehensive overview of [...] events in all essential areas of life. [...] The programmes [...] shall [...] serve the free individual and public formation of opinion."

Facts: On a topic that explicitly deals with the conflict between the Federal Government (Ampel) and the opposition (CDU/CSU), no representative of the Federal Government or the Ampel parliamentary groups is present as a guest. The Union's position is represented by a directly involved actor (Frey) and a sympathising publicist (Weimer). The government's position is conveyed only through clips and indirect paraphrases.

Evidence: 00:30 "have the unique opportunity to clarify the process" — clarification is promised, but only one side is personally represented. 40:00 Lanz to Frey: "You are a very clever lawyer and a good negotiator. I always experience you as an honest person" — personal strengthening of the CDU representative's credibility without equivalent for the other side.

Assessment: The guest selection creates a structural asymmetry that touches on the impartiality requirement. However, it must be taken into account that (a) talk shows have greater creative latitude than news programmes, (b) Rietig and Trittin partly take counter-positions, and (c) the impartiality requirement is applied to the overall programme, not to individual programmes. An isolated legal violation is therefore not necessarily determinable, but the programme moves at the edge of what is legally permissible.

Violation 2: Objectivity requirement (§26 para. 1 MStV)

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV requires that news offerings must be "independent and objective".

Facts: Delegitimising comments about the Federal Chancellor (Weimer: "charisma of a paper clip", "out of control", "thin-skinned", "Kamala Harris moment") are left uncontextualised and unchallenged by the moderator.

Evidence: 28:00 Weimer: "He has the charisma of a paper clip, today he was a firecracker" — 30:00 Weimer: "In the SPD the debate has long since begun about how to tell him that he would no longer be the Chancellor candidate."

Assessment: In a talk show, pointed expressions of opinion are permissible. However, it is problematic that the moderator does not contextualise these statements and no guest is present who could defend the Chancellor's position. This touches on the objectivity requirement without necessarily violating it.

No violation discernible in:

- Lanz does ask Frey critical follow-up questions about the course of the summit.
- Rietig and Trittin are given space for nuanced counter-positions.
- The programme deals with a topic of high public interest.

Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme moves in the borderline area of what is permissible under §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty. The structural asymmetry of the guest selection — no Ampel representative on an Ampel-Union conflict topic — is the most serious weakness and touches on the impartiality requirement. The objectivity requirement is affected by uncontextualised delegitimising comments about the Federal Chancellor. However, according to the consistent case law of the Federal Constitutional Court, the impartiality requirement is applied to the overall programme, not to individual programmes (BVerfGE 12, 205; 57, 295). An isolated legal violation by this individual programme is therefore not necessarily determinable. However, should a pattern emerge in which the programme "Markus Lanz" systematically favours Union positions and underrepresents government positions, this would be a matter for the ZDF Television Council as the competent supervisory body. The programme complaint would be the appropriate instrument to initiate a review.



OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE 15 CRITERIA

Individual scores — all 15 criteria

No.	Criterion	Score	Classification
1	EXPERT SELECTION	7	●●●●
2	SOURCE SELECTION	6	●●●
3	TIME DISTRIBUTION	6	●●●
4	OMISSION (Selective Omission)	7	●●●●
5	MANIPULATION OF FIGURES	5	●●●
6	GUILT BY ASSOCIATION	4	●●
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	7	●●●●
13	QUESTION ASYMMETRY	6	●●●
14	FALSE BALANCE	4	●●
15	AGENDA-SETTING	7	●●●●

HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

5.9/10

Considerable imbalance

SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

6.2/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation

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)

0	No finding	No relevant irregularity identified.
1–2	Weak finding	Minor irregularity without material impairment of impartiality.
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-evidenced imbalance with marked relevance of effect.
8–9	Serious finding	Pronounced imbalance; several evidenced 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	Several considerable findings; relevant impairment of diversity of perspectives.
6.1 – 8.0	Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation	Pronounced, cross-programme 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 treated worse in presentation, 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 preferred in presentation, speaking time or framing.



Legal and methodological classification

No finding of fact	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.
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 judgement 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 the comparative identification of patterns across thousands of programmes, not the precise metric measurement of individual contributions. Threshold values serve heuristic orientation, not sharp legal qualification.



APPENDIX: CANTONAL LEGISLATION

Legal basis Germany — ARD, ZDF

Law

Media State Treaty (MStV, 2020)

Relevant articles

- §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. They shall thereby 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, consideration of diversity of opinion.
- ARD State Treaty: Public 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 impartiality:** 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 programme
- 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

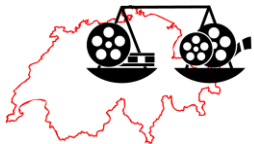
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You think you see the world. In reality you see the frame that someone has placed around it. Framing is the oldest and most elegant manipulation technique in the world. It does not change the facts — it changes what we make of the facts. How we feel. 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 — objectively, precisely, without polemic. Procedures, personnel, powers, costs, statistics, legal recourse. And the constitutional law review that shows: the IGAC system meets none of the three fundamental criteria — it is not appropriate, not based on separation of powers, not market-based. The authority that is supposed to protect citizens primarily protects 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.