



## DE DETAILED ANALYSIS

2025-01-21 Der Talk vom 21. Januar

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2025-01-21 | Analysed on: 2026-03-11 23:10

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### OVERALL SCORE

**5.6/10**

*Considerable Bias*

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

## POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Classification according to Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) 2024

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

Party	Linke	Greens	SPD	BSW	CDU/CSU	FDP	Freie W.	AfD
CHES	1.23	2.28	3.41	3.78	6.23	6.54	6.77	9.10
Spectrum	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)

**4.2 / 10**

*Balanced*

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← Left

Right →

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

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

## PROGRAMME INFO AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

### Programme data

- Date: 21.01.2025
- Moderator: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



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

Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political Spectrum
Sigmar Gabriel	Chairman of Atlantik-Brücke, former Federal Foreign Minister & Vice Chancellor	SPD (former)	Centre-left to Centre
Anne Hennig	Editor-in-Chief of Zeit Online	Journalist/Media	Liberal-progressive
Bodo Ramelow	Former Minister-President of Thuringia, Bundestag candidate	Die Linke	Left
Elmar Theveßen	ZDF correspondent Washington (remote link)	ZDF-internal	Journalistic/institutional

### **Main topic**

The inauguration of Donald Trump, his first decrees and their consequences for the transatlantic order, Europe and German domestic politics — including the question of how liberal democracy in Germany can be strengthened.



## 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:** Sigmar Gabriel — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: Diverse, differentiated analysis of the geopolitical situation — Classification: Former SPD Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor, now Chairman of Atlantik-Brücke. Represents a transatlantic social-democratic position. As the only guest, occasionally introduces economic-liberal arguments (deregulation, pension funds). — Missing countervoice: A conservative foreign policy politician (e.g. Norbert Röttgen, Johann Wadepful) would have brought a CDU perspective on defence and transatlantic relations.

**Expert 2:** Anne Hennig — Timestamp: ~06:00, ~17:00, ~30:00, ~48:00 — Statement: "Trump says make America great again, but that contains the admission that America is no longer so great" — Classification: Editor-in-Chief of Zeit Online, a liberal-progressive medium. Provides analytical assessments that tend to be critical of Trump, but more nuanced than Ramelow. — Missing countervoice: A journalist from a conservative or business-oriented medium (e.g. Welt, Handelsblatt, NZZ) would have brought a different media perspective.

**Expert 3:** Bodo Ramelow — Timestamp: ~08:00, ~28:00, ~40:00, ~47:00 — Statement: "Hatred and incitement has been unleashed" / "Freedom for the powerful" — Classification: Left party politician, former Minister-President. Represents clearly left-wing positions (trade union rights, criticism of oligarchs, scepticism towards stock-market pensions). — Missing countervoice: An economic liberal or conservative would have challenged Ramelow's positions on pensions, regulation and capitalism.

**Expert 4:** Elmar Theveßen — Timestamp: ~03:00–20:00 — Statement: Detailed reporting on Trump's decrees and their feasibility — Classification: ZDF correspondent, provides facts and context. Tendency: sceptical of Trump's ability to implement, emphasises legal constraints. — Missing countervoice: A US correspondent from another medium or an American political scientist would have enabled a broader perspective.

Missing expert groups: CDU/CSU foreign policy politicians, economists, US political scientists (pro-Trump or neutral), migration researchers, defence experts, representatives of business/industry.

*Summary: The guest selection is the most serious problem of the programme. Three of four guests (Gabriel/SPD, Ramelow/Linke, Theveßen/ZDF) come from the centre-left to left spectrum. Hennig as Zeit Online editor-in-chief adds a liberal-progressive perspective. Any conservative, economic-liberal or right-wing voice is absent. The programme is a conversation within one political milieu, not between different milieus.*



## 2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

**Source 1:** Timestamp: ~06:00 — Source: "a poll that the New York Times published at the weekend" (Hennig) — Classification: NYT is a reputable but clearly liberal-progressive medium. The poll is presented as fact. — Missing counter-source: Polls from Fox News, Rasmussen or other conservative sources that might show different results.

**Source 2:** Timestamp: ~18:00 — Source: "Fiona Hill [...] she once summarised that in a truly brilliant speech" (Gabriel) — Classification: Fiona Hill is a respected expert, but clearly critical of Trump (witness in the first impeachment proceedings). — Missing counter-source: Pro-Trump foreign policy experts such as Elbridge Colby or Robert O'Brien.

**Source 3:** Timestamp: ~16:00 — Source: "Economists have calculated that" (Theveßen, on the costs of mass deportation) — Classification: Unspecific source citation. Which economists? Which institute? — Missing counter-source: Studies on the costs of illegal immigration (e.g. Federation for American Immigration Reform, Center for Immigration Studies).

**Source 4:** Timestamp: ~48:00 — Source: "Organisation Oxfam" (Hennig, on billionaires) — Classification: Oxfam is an NGO with a clearly progressive agenda, whose annual inequality report is regularly criticised on methodological grounds. — Missing counter-source: Studies showing that global poverty has fallen massively in recent decades (e.g. World Bank, Our World in Data).

*Summary: The programme's source selection is one-sidedly progressive-liberal. NYT, Fiona Hill, Oxfam, unspecified "economists" — all cited sources confirm the programme's narrative. Conservative, economic-liberal or pro-Trump sources are not consulted.*



<b>3. TIME DISTRIBUTION</b>									<b>5/10</b>
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Estimated speaking time (based on text shares):

- Sigmar Gabriel: ~22 min. (33%) — Dominant guest, longest continuous contributions
- Bodo Ramelow: ~15 min. (23%) — Second most speaking time, but interrupted more frequently
- Elmar Theveßen: ~12 min. (18%) — Remote link in the first third, then disconnected
- Anne Hennig: ~8 min. (12%) — Shortest speaking time among the studio guests
- Markus Lanz: ~10 min. (15%) — Moderate moderation share

*Summary: Gabriel dominates the programme with an estimated one third of the speaking time. Hennig as the only woman in the group gets significantly too little time. The time distribution reflects a hierarchy: experienced male politician > male politician > male correspondent > female journalist. This is also a gender balance problem.*



#### 4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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**Omission 1:** Context: Trump's democratic legitimacy — Relevant at: entire programme — Effect: Trump received 74+ million votes and clearly won the Electoral College. This democratic legitimacy is never explicitly acknowledged. Instead, his election is framed primarily as the result of fear, manipulation and weakness of the system. The omission implicitly delegitimises the democratic process.

**Omission 2:** Context: Positive economic data from Trump's first term (2017–2021, before COVID) — Relevant at: ~22:00 (economic discussion) — Effect: Low unemployment, wage growth particularly among lower income groups, stock market boom of Trump's first term are not mentioned. This would have substantively answered the question "Why do so many people vote for him?"

**Omission 3:** Context: Biden's term in office — problems — Relevant at: ~06:00 (Hennig on Trump's popularity) — Effect: Inflation under Biden, the border issue (record numbers of illegal border crossings), the chaotic Afghanistan withdrawal and Biden's cognitive problems are not cited as explanations for Trump's re-election. The programme asks "Why Trump?", without answering "Why not Biden/Harris?"

**Omission 4:** Context: European defence spending — Relevant at: ~10:00 (Gabriel on European self-responsibility) — Effect: The fact that most European NATO states have failed to meet the 2% target for decades and that Trump (like Obama before him) has criticised this is not mentioned. This would have contextualised Trump's frustration with Europe.

**Omission 5:** Context: Successes of Trump's first migration policy — Relevant at: ~13:00 (Theveßen on deportations) — Effect: The "Remain in Mexico" policy of the first term, which led to a significant decline in illegal border crossings, is not mentioned. Instead, only the logistical impossibility of mass deportations is emphasised.

*Summary: The programme systematically omits contextual information that could make Trump's policies appear rational or successful. Biden's failures, Trump's first-term successes, Europe's own deficits in defence spending and the democratic legitimacy of Trump's election are either ignored or only mentioned in passing.*

#### Missing voices

- Conservative foreign policy politician (CDU/CSU): Would have brought the transatlantic perspective from the point of view of the largest opposition party and formulated concrete defence policy demands.
- Economist: Would have been able to assess Trump's economic policy (tariffs, deregulation, energy policy) on a factual basis rather than speculatively.
- FDP representative or economic liberal: Would have authentically represented the deregulation perspective and discussed the opportunities of Trump's economic policy for Europe.
- Migration researcher or security expert: Would have underpinned the migration debate with data and facts rather than anecdotes.



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- Representative of the Global South: Would have brought the perspective of Africa, Asia or Latin America on the new world order.
- Technology expert (neutral): Would have been able to objectively assess AI, chip production and digital sovereignty.
- Representative of civil society / citizens' initiative: Would have authentically represented the concrete everyday concerns of German citizens.
- AfD-affiliated political scientist or AfD representative: Would have been able to explain why 20%+ of Germans vote AfD — beyond demonisation.



## 5. MANIPULATION OF FIGURES

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

**Finding 1:** Timestamp: ~15:00 — Quote Theveßen: "Even at the height of the Trump administration in 2019, he was unable to deport more than 350,000 illegal immigrants per year" — Missing context: The figure is used as evidence for the impossibility of mass deportations. Not mentioned is that under Biden the number of illegal border crossings rose to over 2 million per year, which explains the pressure to act. — Effect: Trump's migration policy is framed as unrealistic without providing the context of the problem.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: ~16:00 — Quote Theveßen: "the mass deportation alone over the next four years, if carried through, would mean damage in the trillions for the American economy" — Missing context: Which study? Which assumptions? "In the trillions" is extremely vague. Not mentioned are studies that quantify the costs of illegal immigration for social systems, healthcare and crime prevention. — Effect: One-sided cost calculation that only considers the costs of deportation, not the costs of non-deportation.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: ~06:30 — Quote Hennig: "55 percent of Americans approve of these mass deportations. 60 percent of Americans want fewer international entanglements." — Missing context: These figures are cited correctly, but not further analysed. If majorities support this policy, the question arises whether the programme is not framing the majority opinion as problematic. — Effect: The figures stand in the room, but are not acknowledged as legitimisation of the policy, but rather as evidence of a "problem" in American society.

**Finding 4:** Timestamp: ~48:00 — Quote Hennig: "Scientists have now calculated by how many billions the German budget would grow if all the ideas of the Left Party were implemented. That would be 46 billion euros" — Missing context: Which scientists? Which assumptions? Does the calculation take into account behavioural changes (capital flight, decline in investment)? — Effect: The figure is presented as fact without methodological context.

*Summary: The programme uses figures selectively. Costs of deportation are emphasised, costs of non-deportation ignored. Majorities for Trump's policy are mentioned, but not acknowledged as democratic legitimisation. Overall, the use of figures is not grossly manipulative, but one-sidedly contextualised.*



## 6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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**Association 1:** Timestamp: ~28:00 — Quote Ramelow: "Ms Weidel was able to say unchallenged that Adolf Hitler was a communist. And all of that together leads me to a tormenting feeling." — Technique: Chain of association Musk gesture → Weidel → Hitler → Camp Auschwitz T-shirt → pardoned Capitol rioters — Effect: By stringing them together, very different phenomena (a possibly clumsy gesture, a historically false statement, a tasteless T-shirt) are merged into a single threat scenario. The AfD is implicitly placed in proximity to National Socialism.

**Association 2:** Timestamp: ~34:00 — Quote Gabriel: "And one should be careful with comparisons to the Nazi era, I would not do that either. But the appeal, I will make a country great again, we Germans have heard that before." — Technique: Qualified Nazi association — Effect: Gabriel explicitly says he does not want to make the comparison — and then makes it anyway. "Make America Great Again" is associated with NS propaganda. This is a classic guilt-by-association technique with a built-in disclaimer.

**Association 3:** Timestamp: ~36:00 — Quote Gabriel: "Peter Thiel [...] has openly said, folks, I am not a democrat" → connection to Musk → connection to Trump → "useful idiot" — Technique: Chain of association tech oligarchs → anti-democrats → Trump as a tool — Effect: Trump is portrayed as a puppet of anti-democratic forces. The democratic election is implicitly delegitimised.

*Summary: The programme works with several chains of association that link Trump, Musk, the AfD and historical threats (National Socialism, imperialism). Gabriel formulates this most skilfully with built-in disclaimers ("I would not make the comparison, but..."). Ramelow is more direct. Lanz leaves both associations standing without comment.*



## 7. TIMING

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**Finding 1:** Position: ~00:00–20:00 (first third) — Content: Trump's decrees, migration policy, Musk gesture — Timing effect: The most emotionally charged topics (pardons, "internment camps", Musk Hitler salute debate) come at the beginning and set the emotional tone for the entire programme. The primacy effect ensures that these impressions shape the perception of all subsequent discussions.

**Finding 2:** Position: ~55:00–end — Content: FDP criticism, Left Party election campaign, Lanz's closing remark about "queer youth work" — Timing effect: The programme ends with a dig at the Left Party: "if it says that providing queer youth work should become a compulsory municipal task. That would also be an interesting topic." The recency effect ensures that this ironic comment remains as the last impression. It is a subtle hint that the Left Party is concerned with niche topics rather than the big questions.

**Finding 3:** Position: ~20:00–35:00 (middle) — Content: Gabriel's geopolitical analysis, tech oligarchs — Timing effect: The most differentiated analysis of the programme (Gabriel on bilateralisation, hegemonic power, European sovereignty) is in the middle, where attention is typically lowest.

*Summary: The timing of the programme follows a classic pattern: emotional charging at the beginning, differentiated analysis in the middle, domestic political campaigning at the end. The placement of the Musk gesture and the pardons at the beginning sets a negative emotional anchor for the entire programme.*



## 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: ~28:00 — Reaction Ramelow: "I was shocked" (about the Musk gesture) — Comparable without outrage: Biden's cognitive lapses, which were concealed by his entourage for months, are not mentioned in the programme and do not trigger any outrage. — Asymmetry: A possibly clumsy gesture by a private individual triggers "shock", while the systematic deception of the American public about the health of the incumbent president is not an issue.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: ~09:00 — Reaction Ramelow: "he is also privatising his office for the benefit of his own wallet. I find that outrageous" (about Trump's cryptocurrency) — Comparable without outrage: The enrichment of the Biden family (Hunter Biden, business dealings in Ukraine and China) is not mentioned. — Asymmetry: Trump's open commercialisation is described as "outrageous", while comparable allegations against the other side are ignored.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: ~30:00 — Reaction Ramelow: "Hatred and incitement has been unleashed" (about Meta changes) — Comparable without outrage: The censorship of conservative voices on social media platforms in the preceding years (Twitter Files, Facebook censorship of Hunter Biden laptop story) is not mentioned. — Asymmetry: Loosening of moderation = "hatred and incitement unleashed"; previous over-moderation = not an issue.

*Summary: The outrage in the programme is systematically asymmetric. Trump's and Musk's actions trigger strong emotional reactions ("shocked", "outrageous"), while comparable or worse actions by the other side (Biden cover-up, social media censorship, Hunter Biden) are not even mentioned.*



## 9. COMPLETENESS

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The programme takes place the day after Trump's inauguration and covers a bundle of topics: Trump's executive orders (migration, climate, economy), the role of tech oligarchs (Musk, Thiel, Bezos), the future of transatlantic relations and — in the final third — the situation of the Left Party and the FDP in the German election campaign. The basic tone of the programme is shaped by concern about the decline of the rules-based international order and the concentration of power among a few super-rich individuals. The guest selection represents a spectrum from centre-left to left, supplemented by a liberal journalist; conservative, economic-liberal or right-wing perspectives are completely absent as guest voices.

### Share of perspectives covered

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

**[A]** Transatlantic security policy: What does Trump's withdrawal mean for NATO and European defence?

**[B]** Economic opportunities through Trump: deregulation, tax cuts, possible positive impulses for global markets

**[C]** Conservative/right-wing perspective on Trump: Why do Americans vote for him? Legitimate reasons beyond accusations of populism

**[D]** Migration policy — restrictive position: Why strict border policy can also be democratically legitimised

**[E]** European self-responsibility in defence: concrete steps rather than complaints about America

**[F]** Economic-liberal perspective: over-regulation in Europe as the cause of the lag

**[G]** Perspective of the Global South: How do countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America view the changes?

**[H]** Technology optimism: AI and tech companies as an opportunity, not only as a threat

**[I]** AfD/right-wing domestic politics: Why is the AfD gaining — factual analysis instead of demonisation

**[J]** Citizens' perspective: concrete everyday concerns of German citizens (inflation, housing shortage, security)

### [A] INDICATED

Timestamp: ~08:00–10:00 — Quote Gabriel: "A global ordering power is withdrawing from its role" —

Assessment: The security policy dimension is formulated as a concern, but concrete NATO/defence questions are not explored in depth; no defence expert present.

### [B] INDICATED

Timestamp: ~22:00 — Quote Gabriel: "I am nevertheless a little concerned that we are talking ourselves too much into a so to speak predetermined negative development in the economy" — Assessment: Gabriel slightly slows the negative narratives, but a systematic presentation of economic opportunities through Trump's policy is absent. No economist or business representative present.

### [C] PARTIALLY ADDRESSED

Timestamp: ~06:30 — Quote Hennig: "55 percent of Americans approve of these mass deportations" —

Assessment: The popularity of Trump's policy is stated as fact, but not explained empathetically from the perspective of his voters. The programme asks "why do they vote for him?", but answers it primarily with fear, weakness and manipulation.

### [D] INDICATED

Timestamp: ~25:00 — Quote Gabriel: "when he says there, I am now putting an end to crime and gang crime. I would say, there are many in Germany and in Europe who say, yes, finally someone is seeing it through." —

Assessment: Gabriel formulates the restrictive position as understandable, but nobody in the group represents it authentically. The programme treats migration primarily as a humanitarian/logistical problem.



#### [E] INDICATED

Timestamp: ~12:00 — Quote Gabriel: "what are we actually doing to strengthen liberal democracy in our country at least" — Assessment: European self-responsibility is formulated as an appeal, but concrete defence policy steps (2% target, European army, armaments cooperation) are not discussed.

#### [F] ADDRESSED

Timestamp: ~40:00–45:00 — Quote Gabriel: "We regulate it so much that it simply cannot emerge here" and "In regulatory terms we still live in the world of the 60s and 70s" — Assessment: This is one of the strongest points of the programme. Gabriel and Ramelow discuss over-regulation substantively. However, a genuine economic liberal (e.g. FDP representative) who would represent this as a core position is absent.

#### [G] INDICATED

Timestamp: ~18:00 — Quote Gabriel: "the Global South says, we don't want that any more either" and reference to Fiona Hill — Assessment: Gabriel introduces the perspective of the Global South, but only as a reference. No representative from the Global South or expert on development policy present.

#### [H] INDICATED

Timestamp: ~42:00 — Quote Ramelow: "We must find new paths with AI. Because AI in itself is not a technology that is good or bad" — Assessment: Technology optimism is briefly touched upon, but the programme's basic tone towards tech companies is predominantly cautionary/critical.

#### [I] OMITTED

Timestamp: No dedicated section — Assessment: The AfD is mentioned several times (Höcke, Weidel/Musk conversation), but exclusively as a threat or problem. A factual analysis of why the AfD stands at 20%+ in polls and what legitimate concerns of its voters exist does not take place. No AfD representative or AfD-affiliated political scientist present.

#### [J] INDICATED

Timestamp: ~50:00 — Quote Gabriel: "Does she have the impression that completely normal tasks assigned to a state, such as enough teachers, enough police officers [...] Is that actually being done or not?" — Assessment: The citizens' perspective is addressed in the abstract, but no concrete citizen, no representative of a citizens' initiative or a social welfare organisation is present.

### Completeness Score: 3.5/10

**Rationale:** Of ten relevant perspectives, not a single one is addressed completely and with an authentic voice. Six are indicated, one partially addressed, one addressed (over-regulation), and two are factually omitted (AfD voter perspective, concrete citizens' perspective). The programme revolves around a transatlantic-progressive milieu and systematically lacks conservative, economic-liberal and right-wing voices. The guest selection (SPD-affiliated, Left Party, liberal journalist, ZDF-internal) does not reflect a spectrum of opinion that corresponds to social reality.



## Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

### 10. FRAMING (Setting the frame)

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**Finding 1:** Timestamp: 00:00–01:00 — Quote Lanz: "1500 pardons, dozens of decrees, withdrawal from Paris, withdrawal from the WHO. [...] Is this simply the end of the Old West as we know it?" — Manipulation: Catastrophe framing through enumeration of negative measures and apocalyptic lead question — Why problematic: The opening question sets the frame for the entire programme. "End of the Old West" is a maximum dramatisation that prescribes a particular direction of response. Alternative frames such as "Democratic change of power and its consequences" or "New opportunities and risks" are not offered.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: ~01:30 — Quote Lanz (about Ramelow): "my topic is the fear that is currently eating its way into our society. And he believes this fear is fuelled not only by Trump, but also by others, the AfD for example." — Manipulation: Equation framing Trump = AfD = fear — Why problematic: Already in the introduction a frame is set that equates Trump and the AfD as triggers of fear, rather than framing them as symptoms of social problems.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: ~02:00 — Quote Lanz (about Hennig): "when it apparently is no longer exclusively about isolation, but apparently also about new state territory, Greenland, Panama Canal" — Manipulation: Imperialism framing — Why problematic: Trump's statements on Greenland and Panama are framed as expansionism without mentioning the geopolitical context (Chinese influence on the Panama Canal, Arctic resources).

*Summary: The programme is opened from the outset in a threat and loss frame. "End of the Old West", "fear", "new state territory" — the lead questions suggest decline and aggression. A neutral frame could have been: "How is the world order changing and what opportunities and risks arise for Europe?"*



## 11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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**Finding 1:** Timestamp: ~01:30 — Quote Lanz: "the fear that is currently eating its way into our society" — Manipulation: Pathologisation through metaphor — Why problematic: "Eating its way" is an aggressive, physical metaphor that portrays fear as a destructive force. Legitimate concerns of citizens are thereby framed as an irrational, pathological phenomenon.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: ~14:30 — Quote Theveßen: "internment camps" — Manipulation: Historically charged term — Why problematic: The term "internment camps" for immigration detention facilities is historically connoted (Japanese-American internment in WWII, NS camps). The correct designation would be "detention facilities" / "immigration detention facilities". Theveßen uses the term without contextualisation or qualification.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: ~30:00 — Quote Ramelow: "Hatred and incitement has been unleashed" (about Meta changes) — Manipulation: Generalisation — Why problematic: The change in Meta's moderation guidelines is summarised as "unleashing hatred and incitement", without presenting the actual changes (loosening of fact-check cooperation, change of community standards) in a differentiated manner.

**Finding 4:** Timestamp: ~35:00 — Quote Gabriel: "For them I would say Trump is a useful idiot for destroying the institutions" — Manipulation: Denigration of the elected US President — Why problematic: "Useful idiot" is a derogatory term that portrays Trump as a manipulated tool of the tech oligarchs. This delegitimises the democratically elected president and his 74 million voters.

*Summary: The programme's choice of words is consistently negatively connoted when it comes to Trump, his policies and the tech billionaires. Terms such as "internment camps", "useful idiot", "hatred and incitement unleashed" and "fear eating its way" set emotional anchors that make differentiated consideration more difficult.*



## 12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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

**Finding 1:** Timestamp: ~47:00 — Quote Lanz (to Ramelow): "when you look at your election programme, the higher earner is always part of the problem and never the solution" — Analysis: This is the only genuinely critical follow-up question to a guest in the entire programme. Lanz challenges Ramelow, but in an almost playful tone. By comparison: Lanz does not ask Gabriel a single critical question about his SPD past or the coalition government's policies.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: ~07:00 — Quote Lanz (to Ramelow): "Do we perhaps also need to say goodbye to one or another comfortable illusion? [...] Migration is one such keyword." — Analysis: Lanz asks a provocative question, but it is immediately softened by "many others may also have painted a prettier picture for us". The question is not directed against Ramelow personally, but against "politics" in the abstract.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: ~22:00 — Quote Lanz (to Gabriel): "You are sceptical about that. Why?" — Analysis: Lanz gives Gabriel an open platform to present his differentiated position. No counter-question, no follow-up. Gabriel is treated as a wise analyst, not as a politician who himself bore responsibility.

**Finding 4:** Timestamp: ~55:00 — Quote Lanz (about FDP/Lindner): "He did not think about what is better for my party, but together with the FDP he decided, we are leaving the government. [...] But let it look like an accident." — Analysis: Lanz criticises Lindner/FDP sharply — in their absence. No FDP representative can defend themselves. Gabriel partially defends Lindner, but the basic criticism stands unchallenged.

**Finding 5:** Timestamp: entire programme — Analysis: Lanz interrupts Ramelow several times, but lets Gabriel speak at length. Hennig receives moderate speaking time. Theveßen is questioned professionally, but used primarily as a supplier of facts. The moderation is overall benevolent towards all guests — which is unsurprising in a round without controversial counter-positions.

*Summary: Lanz moderates the programme as a conversation among like-minded people, not as a controversial debate. The only real challenge is directed at Ramelow (Left Party programme), while Gabriel is treated as an elder statesman. Those absent (Trump, Lindner, Weidel, Musk) are criticised far more harshly than the guests present.*



### 13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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**Asymmetry 1:** To Gabriel, ~22:00: "You are sceptical about that. Why?" [soft, open, inviting] — To Ramelow, ~47:00: "when you look at your election programme, the higher earner is always part of the problem and never the solution" [hard, confrontational, substantively demanding]

**Asymmetry 2:** To Ramelow, ~07:00: "Do we perhaps also need to say goodbye to one or another comfortable illusion?" [provocative, but abstract] — To Gabriel, ~10:00: No comparable question about SPD comfortable illusions (e.g. energy policy, closeness to Russia under Schröder/Gabriel)

**Asymmetry 3:** To Hennig, ~06:00: "How do you look at what is happening there? How do you also discuss that in your journalist circles?" [soft, collegial] — No critical question to Hennig about the role of the media in polarisation or about Zeit's reporting.

**Asymmetry 4:** Absent parties: Lanz asks sharp questions about the FDP (~55:00: "let it look like an accident"), about the AfD (~28:00: Weidel/Musk), about BSW (~50:00: Wagenknecht) — but none of these parties can defend themselves.

*Summary: The question asymmetry is moderate, but systematic. Gabriel is treated as an analyst and receives open questions. Ramelow is occasionally challenged, but benevolently. Hennig is barely pressed. The sharpest questions are directed at absent actors (Lindner, Weidel, Musk), who cannot defend themselves.*



#### 14. FALSE BALANCE

2/10

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**Finding 1:** The programme does not have a false balance problem in the classical sense (equating a minority opinion with scientific consensus). The problem is the opposite: there is no balance at all. The programme presents a single political spectrum (centre-left to left) and acts as if this were the entire range of relevant opinions.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: ~22:00 — Gabriel as "counterweight": Gabriel's occasionally more differentiated positions (economy, FDP defence) are staged as a counterweight to Ramelow. But Gabriel is not a conservative or liberal — he is a moderate social democrat. The "controversy" Gabriel vs. Ramelow is an internal differentiation within the left spectrum, not genuine diversity of opinion.

*Summary: The programme does not have a false balance problem, but a no-balance problem. The absence of conservative, liberal or right-wing voices is not compensated by the internal differentiation between Gabriel and Ramelow. The score is low because false balance as a specific technique is barely present — the more fundamental problem of missing balance is captured under expert selection (criterion 3).*



## 15. AGENDA-SETTING

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**Finding 1:** Agenda element set: "Trump as a threat to the liberal world order" — Timestamp: 00:00 — Evidence: "Is this simply the end of the Old West as we know it?" — Alternative: "How does Europe respond to the democratic change of power in the USA?" or "What opportunities and risks does Trump's presidency hold for Germany?"

**Finding 2:** Agenda element set: "Tech oligarchs as a danger to democracy" — Timestamp: ~20:00–35:00 — Evidence: Gabriel: "useful idiot", Ramelow: "freedom for the powerful", Hennig: "I can do what I want" — Alternative: "How can European companies benefit from the tech revolution?" or "What can we learn from American innovation culture?"

**Finding 3:** Agenda element set: "Left Party as sympathetic underdog" — Timestamp: ~45:00–end — Evidence: Lanz: "there sits someone who could, honestly, take it a bit easier now, having earned it" — Alternative: Why has the Left Party lost so many voters? What did it do wrong? Is its programme still relevant?

**Finding 4:** Agenda element set: "FDP coalition break as scandal" — Timestamp: ~55:00 — Evidence: Lanz: "let it look like an accident" — Alternative: Was the coalition break not overdue given the dysfunctionality of the coalition? What responsibility do Scholz and Habeck bear?

*Summary: The programme's agenda-setting follows a clear pattern: Trump and tech oligarchs as a threat, European/German helplessness, Left Party as sympathetic fighter, FDP as traitor. Alternative agendas (opportunities through Trump, European self-responsibility, need for reform in Germany) are at best touched upon by Gabriel, but not set as lead topics.*



## CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

### Results

#### Dominant techniques

- 1. Expert selection / One-sided guest composition (Score 7):** The most serious manipulation of the programme is the composition of the group. Four guests from the centre-left to left spectrum discuss among themselves, without a conservative, economic-liberal or right-wing countervoice challenging the theses. This creates the impression of a consensus that does not exist in society in this form.
- 2. Omission / Selective Omission (Score 7):** The programme systematically omits contextual information that could make Trump's policies appear rational, successful or democratically legitimised. Biden's failures, Trump's first-term successes, European defence deficits and the costs of illegal immigration are ignored or marginalised.
- 3. Framing / Guilt by Association (Score 6/6):** The threat framing of the opening and the multiple chains of association with National Socialism and imperialism set an emotional framework that makes differentiated consideration of Trump's policies more difficult. The technique of "I don't want to make the comparison, but..." is particularly effective.

Rationale: The programme displays a clear one-sidedness that arises primarily from the guest selection and the systematic omission of counter-arguments. §26 MStV requires that the "significant political, ideological and social forces and groups" are given adequate voice. In a programme about Trump's inauguration and its consequences for Germany, conservative, economic-liberal and right-wing perspectives are completely absent. The programme is not a propaganda format — Gabriel occasionally introduces differentiated positions, and Hennig provides analytical assessments. But the basic structure (four guests from one spectrum discussing among themselves) prevents genuine diversity of opinion. The combined score of 4.8 falls in the range of "clear one-sidedness", with expert selection and omission being the main drivers.

#### CONCLUSION

The programme of 21 January 2025 displays a clear one-sidedness that arises primarily from the homogeneous guest selection (SPD-affiliated, Left Party, liberal-progressive journalist, ZDF-internal) and the systematic omission of contextual information that could make Trump's policies appear democratically legitimised or partially successful. The ZDF State Treaty (§5 para. 1) obliges ZDF to "provide a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life" and in doing so to uphold "the principles of objectivity and impartiality of reporting". §26 MStV specifies that diversity of opinion must be guaranteed. The programme does not fully meet these requirements: it offers a differentiated discussion within one political spectrum, but not a discussion between different spectra. The absence of conservative, economic-liberal or right-wing voices in a programme about the inauguration of a Republican US President is a structural deficit that considerably impairs the balance of the programme.



## CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Concrete evidence
CDU/CSU	0	Not mentioned, neither positively nor negatively. No CDU position on Trump, defence or migration is discussed. Complete invisibility.
SPD	+2	Gabriel as dominant, respected guest (~33% speaking time). ~22:00: "I hold Mr Theveßen in extraordinarily high regard and his analysis even more so" — is staged as a wise analyst. SPD failures (Russia policy, energy policy) are not addressed.
Greens	0	Not mentioned. Habeck's economic policy, the Greens' position on Trump or defence — not a topic.
FDP	-2	~55:00 Lanz: "let it look like an accident" — coalition break is framed as deception. Gabriel partially defends, but basic criticism stands. No FDP representative present to defend.
AfD	-3	~28:00 Ramelow: Weidel/Hitler-communist statement, Camp Auschwitz T-shirt. ~01:30 Lanz: AfD as trigger of fear. ~50:00 Gabriel: "national Bolshevist" (about Wagenknecht, but in the AfD context). AfD is portrayed exclusively as a threat, no factual analysis of its electorate.
BSW	-2	~50:00 Gabriel: "I consider her [Wagenknecht] a national Bolshevist who is not far from the AfD on many issues." Ramelow: BSW has split the Left and strengthened the AfD. No BSW representative present.
Linke	+1	Ramelow as sympathetic guest, Lanz: "there sits someone who could now, having earned it, take it a bit easier." Hennig analyses Left Party problems factually, but benevolently. Closing remark about "queer youth work" is mildly ironic.
Freie Wähler	0	Not mentioned.

### Party bias summary

- Most favoured: SPD (Score +2) — Gabriel as dominant, respected guest without critical follow-up questions about SPD failures.
- Most disadvantaged: AfD (Score -3) — Portrayed exclusively as a threat, no factual analysis, no representation.
- Conclusion: The programme displays a moderate bias in favour of the SPD and to the detriment of the AfD. The SPD benefits from Gabriel's dominant, uncriticised presence. The AfD is portrayed exclusively negatively, without a representative or even a factual analyst being able to explain its electorate. The FDP and BSW are criticised in their absence. CDU/CSU and Greens are invisible — which is remarkable given that the CDU leads in polls and the Greens are a governing party.



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

### Assessment under §26 MStV

#### Violation 1: Insufficient diversity of opinion in guest selection

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV in conjunction with §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty — Facts: The programme addresses a topic of the highest political relevance (inauguration of the US President, consequences for Germany and Europe) with four guests from the centre-left to left spectrum. Conservative, economic-liberal and right-wing perspectives, which are represented in German society by CDU/CSU (~30% poll ratings), FDP (~4%) and AfD (~20%), are completely absent. — Evidence: Guest list: Gabriel (SPD-affiliated), Ramelow (Linke), Hennig (Zeit Online/liberal-progressive), Theveßen (ZDF-internal). — Assessment: §26 para. 1 MStV requires that offerings serve diversity of opinion and that the "significant political, ideological and social forces and groups" are given adequate voice. A programme in which over 50% of the political spectrum (CDU/CSU, FDP, AfD) is not represented does not meet this requirement. This is not an isolated violation, but a structural deficit to be assessed in the context of overall programming. However, the individual programme as such is a clear indicator of insufficient balance.

#### Violation 2: One-sided contextualisation (Selective Omission)

Norm: §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty (objectivity and impartiality) — Facts: The programme systematically omits contextual information that would be necessary for a balanced assessment of Trump's policies: Biden's failures as an explanation for Trump's re-election, positive economic data from Trump's first term, European defence deficits as context for Trump's NATO criticism, costs of illegal immigration as context for Trump's migration policy. — Evidence: Entire programme; not a single contribution contextualises Trump's policies as a response to real problems of the Biden era. — Assessment: The duty of objectivity and impartiality requires that essential contextual information is not systematically omitted when it would change the overall picture. The programme violates this principle by framing Trump's policies exclusively as a threat, without adequately presenting the causes and democratic legitimacy.

#### Violation 3: Criticism of absent parties without opportunity to defend

Norm: Journalistic duty of care, §6 para. 2 ZDF State Treaty — Facts: FDP (Lindner), AfD (Weidel, Höcke), BSW (Wagenknecht) and Elon Musk are in some cases sharply criticised in the programme, without a representative of these positions being present or their position being fairly presented. — Evidence: ~55:00 Lanz about Lindner: "let it look like an accident"; ~50:00 Gabriel about Wagenknecht: "national Bolshevik"; ~28:00 Ramelow about Weidel: Hitler-communist statement. — Assessment: The journalistic duty of care requires that criticism of persons and parties is linked to the opportunity to respond, or that their position is at least fairly presented. The programme violates this principle on multiple occasions.

### Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme of 21 January 2025 displays several deficits that are relevant in the context of §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty. The most serious problem is the homogeneous guest selection, which excludes over 50% of the political spectrum. §26 MStV obliges ZDF as a public broadcaster to guarantee diversity of opinion as a contribution to free individual and public opinion formation. The ZDF State Treaty specifies this through the duty of objectivity and impartiality (§5 para. 1). The programme does not fully meet these requirements: it offers a differentiated discussion within one political milieu, but not a discussion between different milieus. Responsible for programme supervision is the ZDF Television Council, which pursuant to §21 ZDF State Treaty monitors compliance with the programme principles. An individual programme does not as a rule constitute an isolated legal violation, since balance can also be achieved across the overall programme. However, the systematic one-sidedness of this programme — in combination with the high political relevance of the topic on the day after Trump's inauguration — is strong evidence that the basic public service remit was not fulfilled in this specific programme. The ZDF Television Council would be called upon to review the guest selection practice of the "Markus Lanz" programme in the overall context.



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

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

**5.9/10**

*Considerable Bias*

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

**5.2/10**

*Considerable Bias*

#### OVERALL SCORE

**5.6/10**

*Considerable Bias*

*Averaged from hard facts and soft facts*



## KEY — Meaning of the scores

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

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

### Aggregated deviation index — interpretation ranges

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

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

<b>-5 to -3</b>	<b>Strongly disadvantaged</b>	Party is clearly treated worse in presentation, speaking time or framing.
<b>-2 to -1</b>	<b>Slightly disadvantaged</b>	Discernible, but weak disadvantage.
<b>0</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	No discernible preference or disadvantage.
<b>+1 to +2</b>	<b>Slightly favoured</b>	Discernible, but weak preference.
<b>+3 to +5</b>	<b>Strongly favoured</b>	Party is clearly treated better in presentation, speaking time or framing.



## Legal and methodological classification

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

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#### Law

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Interstate Media Treaty (MStV, 2020)

#### Relevant articles

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- §26 para. 1 MStV: Public broadcasting institutions shall provide in their offerings a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life. 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 broadcasting offering profile.
- §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty: Obligation to objectivity and impartiality of reporting, consideration of diversity of opinion.
- ARD State Treaty: Basic public service remit with objectivity and impartiality.

#### Core duties

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

#### Supervisory authority

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

#### Complaints procedure

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



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## APPENDIX 2: SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS

### Literature

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

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