



EN DETAILED ANALYSIS

2025-01-28 Der Talk vom 28. Januar

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2025-01-28 | Analysed on: 2026-03-12 16:55

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

OVERALL SCORE

5.3/10

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

TENDENCY (L – R)

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Balanced

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

← Left

Right →

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

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

PROGRAMME INFORMATION AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

Programme data

- Date: 28.01.2025
- Presenter: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



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Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political spectrum
Ulrike Herrmann	Journalist, economics correspondent for taz	taz / left-liberal	Centre-left to left
Manfred Weber	President of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, deputy CSU chairman	CSU / EPP	Centre-right
Lars Wendland	Federal police officer, Police Union (GdP) Brandenburg	GdP	Pragmatic-institutional
Carlo Masala	Professor of International Politics, Bundeswehr University Munich	Political science	Security policy realist, centre

Main topic

The migration debate following the knife attack in Aschaffenburg, Friedrich Merz's five-point plan, the question of the so-called firewall against the AfD, and the European dimension of migration policy.



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: Ulrike Herrmann — Timestamp: Throughout — Statement: "That is practically the abolition of the EU." / "That is simply AfD." — Classification: Herrmann is an economics journalist for taz, a decidedly left-liberal newspaper. She argues throughout against the Merz plan and in favour of the position that the firewall has fallen. — Missing countervoice: A conservative journalist or political scientist who would classify the Merz position as legitimate and legally defensible is absent.

Expert 2: Manfred Weber — Timestamp: Throughout — Statement: "We embody that. And we also want to make it clear to people that they can rely on us to implement it after the election." — Classification: Weber, as a CSU politician and EPP group leader, is directly a party to the matter. He represents the Union's position but is intensively challenged by Lanz and Herrmann. — Missing countervoice: An SPD or Greens politician who could represent the opposing position first-hand.

Expert 3: Lars Wendland — Timestamp: from approx. 10:00 — Statement: "If Mr Merz now wants to close the borders, that would mean closing every border crossing. [...] That is not feasible with the federal police we currently have." — Classification: Wendland, as a GdP representative, brings the operational perspective and is the most knowledgeable guest on feasibility. His assessment is nuanced and practice-oriented. — Missing countervoice: A representative of the German Police Union (DPoIG), which tends to be more conservatively positioned, could have brought a different policing perspective.

Expert 4: Carlo Masala — Timestamp: Throughout — Statement: "Merz has rhetorically manoeuvred himself into an absolute dilemma." — Classification: Masala, as a political scientist, is the most analytical guest. He differentiates on the firewall question and introduces the security policy dimension (shadow fleet). His position is moderately critical towards all sides. — Missing countervoice: No specific countervoice needed, as Masala argues analytically.

Missing expert groups: Constitutional lawyers, SPD/Greens politicians, migration economist, representatives of refugee organisations, municipal representative.

Summary: The guest selection results in a constellation of 2:1 against the Merz plan (Herrmann and Wendland sceptical to opposed, Weber in favour, Masala analytically differentiated). The absence of an SPD/Greens representative is particularly serious because their position is criticised throughout the evening without them being



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able to defend themselves. The absence of a constitutional lawyer in a debate that is fundamentally a legal question is a considerable shortcoming.



2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

Source 1: Timestamp: approx. 04:00 — Source: Weidel tweet — Classification: AfD self-presentation as evidence for the firewall thesis — Missing counter-source: CDU statement proving the firewall is intact (Weber provides this verbally, but no visual evidence).

Source 2: Timestamp: approx. 08:30 — Source: Merz speech in the Bundestag, November — Classification: Documents a concrete contradiction, journalistically relevant — Missing counter-source: Current Merz statement explaining the change of position.

Source 3: Timestamp: Throughout — Source: Weber as EPP group leader on EU migration policy — Classification: Partisan source highlighting the EU successes of his own group — Missing counter-source: Independent EU migration experts (e.g. Gerald Knaus, European Council on Refugees).

Summary: The source selection is one-sided. The Weidel tweet is used as evidence without being classified as strategic communication. The Merz clip is relevant, but comparable evidence of contradictions by other parties is absent. Independent sources (academia, statistics, case law) are largely missing.



3. TIME DISTRIBUTION

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Estimated speaking time (based on text shares):

- Manfred Weber: (30%) — Longest speaking time, but also most confronted
- Ulrike Herrmann: (20%) — Second longest speaking time, less confronted
- Lars Wendland: (14%) — Shortest speaking time among guests
- Carlo Masala: (16%) — Moderate speaking time, analytical role
- Markus Lanz: (20%) — High moderation share with own assessments

Summary: Weber receives the most speaking time, which is appropriate since he is the only politician who must defend the Union's position. However, his speaking time is relativised by frequent interruptions and confrontations. Herrmann receives proportionally much unopposed speaking time. Wendland, who as a practitioner provides the most valuable insights, gets comparatively little time. The time distribution is not grossly unbalanced, but the quality of speaking time (opposed vs. unopposed) is asymmetric.



4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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Omission 1: Context: The SPD had introduced its own security package and the GEAS implementation into the Bundestag. — Relevant at: Throughout, particularly when Weber portrays SPD/Greens as blockers — Effect: Without presenting the SPD's counter-proposals, the impression arises that only the Union has proposed solutions. Herrmann briefly mentions that the SPD is introducing the GEAS implementation, but this is not explored further.

Omission 2: Context: The specific circumstances of the Aschaffenburg case — the perpetrator was a mentally ill Afghan who had not been deported despite a departure obligation and psychiatric conspicuousness. — Relevant at: approx. 24:00, when Herrmann briefly addresses it — Effect: Herrmann mentions the enforcement deficit, but the specific failures of the authorities (immigration office, psychiatry, police) are not systematically examined. This would have shown that the problem lies less in missing laws than in inadequate enforcement.

Omission 3: Context: The figures on actual asylum statistics 2024 — first applications, recognition rates, deportation figures, voluntary departures. — Relevant at: Throughout — Effect: Hardly any concrete figures are cited. Weber mentions declines at external borders, Lanz mentions 700,000 asylum applications in Europe, but the German figures (approx. 230,000 first applications in 2024, decline of approx. 25%) are not systematically presented. This prevents a fact-based assessment.

Omission 4: Context: The position of the Federal Constitutional Court and the ECJ on pushbacks at internal borders. — Relevant at: approx. 22:00, when the legal question is discussed — Effect: The central legal question is only touched upon ("scholars disagree on this"), but the specific rulings and legal opinions are not named. A 2024 ECJ ruling on the question of pushbacks at internal borders is not mentioned.

Omission 5: Context: The role of the 16 federal states in deportations — deportations are a matter for the states, not the federal government. — Relevant at: During discussion of the five-point plan — Effect: The federal aspect is briefly touched upon by Wendland ("each federal state its own decisions"), but not systematically presented as a structural problem. This is central because many of Merz's demands could founder on state jurisdiction.

Summary: Essential contextual information is systematically absent: the SPD's counter-proposals, concrete figures, the legal situation and the federal distribution of responsibilities. This means the debate remains at a superficial, emotional level and viewers are unable to form a well-founded assessment of their own.

Missing voices

- SPD interior policy spokesperson (e.g. Lars Castellucci, Sebastian Hartmann): Could have explained the SPD's position on the GEAS implementation act and the reasons for rejecting the Merz motion first-hand, rather than Weber portraying them unchallenged as blockers.
- Greens representative (e.g. Irene Mihalic, Konstantin von Notz): Could have explained the Greens' position on asylum policy and the reasons for the rejection in the European Parliament.



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- Constitutional lawyer (e.g. Anna Katharina Mangold, Matthias Herdegen): Could have provided expert classification of the central legal question — compatibility of pushbacks with EU law and the Basic Law.
- Representative of a refugee organisation (e.g. Pro Asyl, UNHCR Germany): Could have introduced the human rights dimension and the perspective of those affected.
- Municipal representative (e.g. district administrator/mayor): Could have described the concrete situation of overload on the ground first-hand.
- Migration economist (e.g. Herbert Brücker, IAB): Could have assessed the economic dimension — skilled labour shortage, integration costs, fiscal effects.
- Administrative lawyer or BAMF representative: Could have professionally explained the enforcement deficit and the specific procedural problems.
- AfD representative: Although the AfD is the subject of the entire evening, their voice is absent (though announced for the following programme).



5. MANIPULATION OF FIGURES

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

Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 15:00 — Figure Weber: "Over the Mediterranean route last year in 2024 we reduced the number of arrivals by 64% and over the Balkan route by 80%." — Missing context: Absolute figures are absent. A 64% decline sounds impressive, but the baseline (2023 was a record year) is not mentioned. Lanz follows up well here: "Even in the past year alone, they were still higher than in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022." — Effect: Weber presents relative figures as success, Lanz contextualises with absolute figures. Good journalistic work by Lanz.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 16:00 — Figure Lanz: "In the past year alone, approximately 700,000 people appeared in the middle of Europe and applied for political asylum." — Missing context: The figure is not broken down (countries of origin, recognition rates, distribution across EU states). "Appeared" is a choice of words that suggests lack of control. — Effect: The figure has the impact of a shock statistic, without being placed in the overall context.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 16:30 — Figures Lanz: "EU transfers for 2024. 20,000. Pushbacks. Greece 10,000. Italy 134,000. Hungary 13,000." — Missing context: These figures are displayed without explanation. What exactly "EU transfers" means and how they relate to the overall figures is not explained. — Effect: The figures stand in the room and suggest a dysfunctional system, without the viewer being able to contextualise them.

Summary: Figures are used selectively by various parties. Weber uses relative declines as proof of success, Lanz partially contextualises well with absolute figures. Overall, a systematic, fact-based presentation of migration figures that would enable viewers to form their own assessment is lacking.



6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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Association 1: Timestamp: approx. 07:00 — Quote Herrmann: "He presented himself as if he were Donald Trump. On the first day of my term of office I will then push through my five-point plan with the chancellor's power to issue directives." — Technique: Direct comparison Merz-Trump, placing Merz in proximity to an authoritarian political style. — Effect: Delegitimation of the Merz position through association with a figure predominantly viewed negatively in Germany. Lanz lets the comparison stand without comment.

Association 2: Timestamp: approx. 07:30 — Quote Herrmann: "That is simply AfD." / "Has now turned into this anti-European strategy of the AfD." — Technique: Equating the CDU position with the AfD position. — Effect: Delegitimation of CDU proposals by equating them with a party classified as extremist. Weber objects, but Lanz does not provide context.

Association 3: Timestamp: approx. 04:00 — Quote Lanz: Shows Weidel tweet "The firewall has fallen. CDU and CSU have accepted my offer." — Technique: Lanz uses the AfD's self-presentation as evidence of CDU-AfD proximity. — Effect: The AfD's interpretation is used as a quasi-objective piece of evidence for the firewall thesis, even though it is in the AfD's interest to create precisely this impression.

Summary: Guilt by association is used multiple times, particularly by Herrmann (Trump comparison, AfD equation) and by Lanz (Weidel tweet). Weber can defend himself, but the associations are not identified by the presenter as a rhetorical technique. The use of the Weidel tweet as evidence is particularly problematic, since the AfD has a strategic interest in asserting proximity to the CDU.



7. TIMING

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Finding 1: Position: approx. 08:30 — Content: Clip with Merz quote from November ("not even once a coincidental or actually brought-about majority with those people over there") — Timing effect: The clip is shown at exactly the moment when Weber has just built up his line of defence. The timing maximises the contradiction effect and puts Weber on the defensive. This is journalistically legitimate, but the timing is deliberately chosen to achieve maximum impact.

Finding 2: Position: Final third of the programme — Content: Change of topic to Russia/shadow fleet — Timing effect: The change of topic occurs after the migration debate has become emotionally charged. The Russia topic is linked to the migration debate (hybrid warfare, AfD as pro-Putin), which draws an implicit connecting line: whoever votes with the AfD is playing into Putin's hands. This connection is not made explicit, but operates through the sequence.

Finding 3: Position: Conclusion — Content: Lanz: "Tomorrow AfD and CDU will meet here, at a late hour. And then we will find out how great the proximity is, or possibly also not." — Timing effect: The closing cliffhanger already frames the following programme as a CDU-AfD confrontation and suggests "proximity" that remains to be verified. This sets the frame for the next programme.

Summary: The timing is professional and dramaturgically considered. The Merz clip is placed at the most impactful moment, the change of topic to Russia creates an implicit connection to the AfD problem, and the closing cliffhanger sets the frame for the following 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: approx. 04:30–07:00 — Reaction: Intense outrage over the possible breach of the firewall by Merz. Herrmann: "Firewall torn down." Lanz confronts Weber at length. — Comparable without outrage: Herrmann mentions in passing that the SPD has also voted with AfD votes in municipal parliaments. Lanz does not follow up on this. Masala confirms: "I believe that has already happened on the SPD side too." — Asymmetry: The possible breach of the firewall by the CDU is treated as a scandal, while comparable incidents involving the SPD are dismissed as a footnote.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 17:00 — Reaction: Weber repeatedly criticises SPD and Greens for their rejection of Frontex strengthening and GEAS. Lanz responds with: "You cannot seriously say that is a problem of the Greens and SPD." — Comparable without outrage: Herrmann's claim that the CDU is pursuing "the abolition of the EU" is not treated with comparable outrage or scepticism. — Asymmetry: Weber's attribution of blame to SPD/Greens is rejected as inadmissible, while Herrmann's attribution of blame to the CDU is accepted.

Summary: The outrage is distributed asymmetrically. The possible breach of the firewall by the CDU is treated as a central scandal, while comparable incidents involving other parties and extreme claims by Herrmann are subjected to less critical scrutiny.



9. COMPLETENESS

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The programme falls in a phase of extreme political tension a few weeks before the federal election on 23 February 2025. Friedrich Merz had presented a five-point plan following the knife attack in Aschaffenburg and announced his intention to push it through even with AfD votes — which triggered a fundamental debate about the so-called firewall. The programme moves in the tension between legitimate migration criticism, election campaign tactics, European legal limits and the question of whether CDU/CSU is moving closer to the AfD in terms of content. At the same time, the topic of Russia's hybrid warfare (shadow fleet, election interference) is addressed, which is only loosely connected thematically.

Share of perspectives covered

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

[A] CDU/CSU perspective: Why the five-point plan is necessary and legally defensible

[B] SPD/Greens perspective: Why they are not voting for the motion and what alternatives they propose

[C] AfD perspective: How the AfD interprets the situation and why it agrees

[D] Constitutional law perspective: Compatibility with Basic Law Art. 16a, EU law, Dublin Regulation

[E] Municipal perspective: Overload of district administrators, mayors, accommodation facilities

[F] Perspective of those affected/refugees: Human rights dimension, individual fates

[G] Police-operational perspective: Feasibility, staffing problems, practical reality

[H] European perspective: GEAS implementation, Frontex, external border protection, solidarity mechanism

[I] Economic perspective: Skilled labour shortage, costs of migration, economic integration

[J] Historical classification: Comparison with 2015/16, development of migration policy since Merkel

[A] CDU/CSU perspective — TREATED IN DETAIL

Timestamp: Throughout, particularly from approx. 08:00 — Quote Weber: "We embody that. And we also want to make it clear to people that they can rely on us to implement it after the election." — Assessment: Manfred Weber is given ample space to present his position, but is also critically questioned.

[B] SPD/Greens perspective — OMITTED

Timestamp: No representative present — Quote: n/a — Assessment: Neither SPD nor Greens are represented as guests. Their position is conveyed exclusively through third parties (Weber negatively, Herrmann partially). Weber repeatedly states: "Social Democrats and Greens will refuse to do so" — without anyone being able to explain or refute this first-hand. This is a serious lack of balance.

[C] AfD perspective — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 04:00 — Quote Herrmann: "The AfD has announced that it will agree to either all of them or at least a large part" — Assessment: The AfD position is only presented indirectly via the Weidel tweet and attributions by others. No AfD representative present (though Lanz announces: "Tomorrow AfD and CDU will meet here").

[D] Constitutional law perspective — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 22:00 — Quote Wendland: "Is it legally clean or is it not legally clean? And when even eminent scholars disagree on this..." — Assessment: The constitutional dimension is touched upon by Wendland and Masala, but no constitutional lawyer is present. The central question of compatibility with EU law remains superficial.

[E] Municipal perspective — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 12:00 — Quote Lanz: "The mayors, the district administrators, regardless of political persuasion... they say, what is happening there, we can no longer manage." — Assessment: Lanz refers to the municipal perspective from earlier programmes, but no municipal representative is present.

[F] Perspective of those affected/refugees — OMITTED

Timestamp: n/a — Quote: n/a — Assessment: No voice whatsoever from refugees, integration commissioners or human rights organisations. Migration is framed exclusively as a security and public order problem.

[G] Police-operational perspective — TREATED IN DETAIL



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Timestamp: from approx. 10:00 — Quote Wendland: "We would need at least 10,000 more colleagues than we currently have." — Assessment: Lars Wendland provides well-founded practical insights on feasibility. Very valuable contribution.

[H] European perspective — ADDRESSED

Timestamp: from approx. 15:00 — Quote Weber: "Over the Mediterranean route last year in 2024 we reduced the number of arrivals by 64%" — Assessment: Weber introduces the European dimension, though strongly from a CDU/EPP perspective. No independent European legal voice.

[I] Economic perspective — OMITTED

Timestamp: n/a — Quote: n/a — Assessment: Skilled labour shortage, economic integration, costs of migration are not addressed.

[J] Historical classification — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 09:00 — Quote Weber: "I can remember dark debates between Horst Seehofer and Angela Merkel. We already said in 2015..." — Assessment: Only from a CSU perspective, no independent historical classification.

Completeness score: 3.5/10

Rationale: Of ten relevant perspectives, only three are treated in detail (CDU/CSU, police, partially Europe), three are indicated, and four are completely absent (SPD/Greens as guests, those affected/refugees, economy, independent constitutional law). The most serious gap is the absence of an SPD or Greens representative, even though their position is criticised throughout the entire evening. The absence of a human rights or affected-persons perspective narrows the debate to a purely security-policy framing.



Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

10. FRAMING (Setting the frame)

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 — Quote Lanz (introduction): "Since the fatal knife attack in Aschaffenburg, Germany has had another intensive migration debate. [...] Permanent surveillance of German external borders, pushbacks for everyone without valid papers, essentially deportations on a large scale. We have heard this before." — Manipulation: The programme is framed from the outset as a reaction to an act of violence, which emotionally charges the entire migration debate and forces it into a security frame. The postscript "We have heard this before" is ambivalent — it can be read as journalistic scepticism, but also sets the frame "empty political promises". — Why problematic: Migration is framed exclusively as a security problem, not as a complex phenomenon with humanitarian, economic and demographic dimensions.

Finding 2: Timestamp: 01:30–02:00 — Quote Lanz (about Weber): "And if you listen carefully, you can sense how he is struggling right now. On the one hand he demands a tough migration course, on the other he speaks of the right balance. On the one hand he says the firewall against the AfD is holding. On the other he speaks of a healthy middle way." — Manipulation: Lanz frames Weber in the introduction as internally torn and contradictory. The word "struggling" is a psychologising attribution that puts Weber in a defensive position before he has even spoken. — Why problematic: Anticipation of an assessment by the presenter that already steers the viewer in a particular direction of interpretation before the conversation begins.

Finding 3: Timestamp: 02:00–02:30 — Quote Lanz (about Masala): "Instead of bold demands, wouldn't it be better if we simply started enforcing the rule of law." — Manipulation: Lanz paraphrases Masala's position as "bold demands vs. enforcing the rule of law" — a frame that implicitly devalues the Merz proposals as mere rhetoric ("bold") and presents the alternative as reasonable ("simply"). — Why problematic: Suggestive framing that anticipates a particular assessment of the political proposals.

Summary: The programme is conducted throughout in a security frame. The introduction already sets assessments, particularly the psychologising classification of Weber as "struggling" and the implicit devaluation of the Merz proposals as "bold". On the positive side, Lanz also signals scepticism about feasibility.



11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 04:30 — Quote Herrmann: "Firewall torn down." / Lanz: "You say." / Herrmann: "I say." — Manipulation: The phrase "firewall torn down" is put forward as a statement of fact and is not classified by Lanz as an opinion, but confirmed by "You say." — Why problematic: The formulation "firewall torn down" is a political value judgement, not a fact. The question of whether a firewall "holds" or has "fallen" depends on the definition (cooperation vs. tolerated approval). Lanz should have provided context here.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 06:00 — Quote Herrmann: "That is practically the abolition of the EU." / Lanz: "The abolition?" / Herrmann: "Yes, of course, if everyone proceeds like that, how is that supposed to work?" — Manipulation: The formulation "abolition of the EU" is an extreme exaggeration. Lanz does ask a follow-up question ("The abolition?"), but ultimately lets the claim stand unchallenged. — Why problematic: The claim that national border controls amount to "the abolition of the EU" is a hyperbole that is not contextualised. Several EU states (France, Austria, Denmark) practise temporary border controls without this being assessed as "abolition of the EU".

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 07:00 — Quote Herrmann: "He presented himself as if he were Donald Trump." — Manipulation: Guilt by association through comparison with Trump. — Why problematic: The Trump comparison is a rhetorical delegitimisation that places Merz in proximity to an authoritarian political style without this being substantiated factually.

Finding 4: Timestamp: Throughout — Term "Zustrombegrenzungsgesetz" — Lanz: "That is really what it is called, yes?" / Herrmann: "Yes, that is what it is called." — Manipulation: No direct manipulation, but the name of the law itself is a political framing ("Zustrom" implies uncontrolled mass). Lanz's follow-up question signals astonishment at the term, which shows a degree of critical distance. — Why problematic: Minor — the official name is reproduced correctly.

Summary: The choice of words is at times strongly evaluative. Terms such as "firewall torn down", "abolition of the EU" and the Trump comparison are presented as facts or obvious conclusions, without sufficient contextualisation. Lanz occasionally asks follow-up questions, but often lets extreme formulations stand unchallenged.



12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 08:00–10:00 — Quote Lanz (to Weber): "Do you have the feeling that this firewall is still holding? Or has it at least become leaky now?" / "I'll tell you why I keep harping on about this." / "He said, not even a coincidental, a confirming approval will we accept" — Analysis: Lanz confronts Weber intensively with the contradiction between Merz's earlier statement (November) and the current approach. He plays a clip that documents the contradiction. This is tough but legitimate journalistic work. However: comparable confrontation with Herrmann is absent — her claim "abolition of the EU" is not questioned with the same intensity.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 06:30 — Quote Lanz (to Herrmann): "On the substance. Would you agree that we have a problem, that we need to do something, that things cannot continue like this?" — Analysis: Lanz puts a soft fundamental question to Herrmann, which she can easily affirm. By comparison, Weber is confronted with concrete contradictions and a clip. The asymmetry is clear.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 15:00 — Quote Lanz (to Weber): "Sir, please, you are an upright CSU man, a decent man. But you cannot seriously say that, you are doing this again for the umpteenth time, this is a problem of the Greens and SPD." — Analysis: Lanz rightly confronts Weber here with the fact that the Union itself governed for 16 years. This is an important and justified follow-up question. However, Herrmann's claim that Merz is acting "as if he were Donald Trump" is not challenged with comparable sharpness.

Finding 4: Timestamp: approx. 20:00 — Quote Lanz (to Weber): "But that is not the actual topic. [...] No, that is not the topic." — Analysis: Lanz interrupts Weber when he attempts to steer the topic towards substantive cooperation among democrats. Lanz actively determines here what "the topic" is and what is not — a moderation decision that cuts off Weber's line of argument.

Finding 5: Timestamp: Throughout — Analysis: Lanz largely lets Herrmann and Masala finish speaking, interrupts Weber more frequently and puts significantly more confrontational follow-up questions to him. Wendland is questioned respectfully and with genuine interest. The treatment of guests is asymmetric.

Summary: Lanz moderates with overall engagement and asks important questions; in particular, the confrontation of Weber with the Merz quote from November is excellent journalistic work. However, the treatment of guests is asymmetric: Weber is confronted significantly more harshly and more frequently than Herrmann, whose at times extreme claims ("abolition of the EU", "as if he were Donald Trump") are not questioned with comparable intensity.



13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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Asymmetry 1: To Weber, approx. 08:00: "Do you have the feeling that this firewall is still holding? Or has it at least become leaky now?" [tough, confrontational, with clip] — To Herrmann, approx. 06:30: "Would you agree that we have a problem, that we need to do something?" [soft, inviting, open question]

Asymmetry 2: To Weber, approx. 15:00: "You cannot seriously say that is a problem of the Greens and SPD. Was this country not governed by the Union and how long has this whole topic been going on?" [tough, confrontational] — To Herrmann: No comparable confrontation with the question of whether her claim "abolition of the EU" is not exaggerated.

Asymmetry 3: To Weber, approx. 17:00: "But that is not the actual topic." [interruption, topic control] — To Herrmann: Not interrupted when she draws the Trump comparison or claims "abolition of the EU".

Positive: To Herrmann, approx. 06:30: "On the substance. Would you agree that we have a problem?" — This is an important follow-up question that forces Herrmann to acknowledge the problem. However, it is formulated significantly more softly than the Weber questions.

Summary: The question asymmetry is clear. Weber is confronted with concrete contradictions, clips and tough follow-up questions, while Herrmann predominantly receives open, inviting questions. Masala and Wendland are questioned respectfully and factually. The asymmetry is not extreme, but clearly recognisable and systematic.



14. FALSE BALANCE

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Finding 1: The programme does not suffer from false balance in the classical sense (equal weighting of a minority position with the scientific consensus), but from the opposite: a structural imbalance to the detriment of the Union's position. Weber must argue as the only politician against three guests, two of whom (Herrmann, Wendland) are critically to negatively disposed towards his position and one (Masala) is differentially critical. This is not false balance, but a structural imbalance.

Finding 2: On the legal question (compatibility of pushbacks with EU law), a false balance is suggested: Wendland says "scholars disagree on this", which creates the impression that the legal situation is completely open. In fact, there is a majority opinion among constitutional lawyers holding that pushbacks at internal borders are contrary to EU law, but there are also weighty dissenting voices. A professional classification is absent.

Summary: The programme shows no classical false balance, but a structural imbalance in the guest selection. The legal question is presented as "disputed" without clarifying the weighting of positions.



15. AGENDA-SETTING

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Finding 1: Agenda element set: The firewall question as the central topic — Timestamp: Throughout, approx. 50% of airtime — Evidence: Lanz in the introduction: "On the one hand he says the firewall against the AfD is holding. On the other he speaks of a healthy middle way." — Alternative: The programme could have placed greater emphasis on the substantive question: Are the Merz proposals feasible and legally sustainable? Instead, the procedural question (firewall) dominates, which is relevant but not the only relevant dimension.

Finding 2: Agenda element set: Migration as a purely security topic — Timestamp: 00:00 (introduction begins with "fatal knife attack") — Evidence: The entire programme frames migration as a security and public order problem — Alternative: Integration, skilled labour shortage, humanitarian dimension, root causes of flight are not addressed.

Finding 3: Agenda element set: Russia/shadow fleet as a connection — Timestamp: Final third — Evidence: Masala/Weber on the topic of hybrid warfare, Herrmann: "Two pro-Putin parties received in some cases up to 50 per cent in three East German state elections." — Alternative: The Russia topic is independently relevant, but through its placement after the migration debate it is implicitly linked to the AfD problem.

Summary: The agenda-setting prioritises the firewall question over the substantive migration debate and frames migration exclusively as a security topic. The connection with the Russia topic in the final third creates an implicit connecting line to the AfD problem.



CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

Results

Dominant techniques

- 1. Omission / Selective Omission (Score 7):** The systematic omission of SPD/Greens counter-proposals, concrete figures and the differentiated legal situation prevents a well-founded assessment by the viewer. Particularly serious is the fact that the SPD position is criticised throughout the entire evening without an SPD representative being present.
- 2. Expert selection / Guest imbalance (Score 6):** The constellation of a left-liberal journalist, a sceptical police union representative, a differentially critical political scientist and a single Union politician creates a structural 2-3:1 situation against the Union's position. The absence of an SPD/Greens representative is the most serious shortcoming of the programme.
- 3. Question asymmetry / Moderation behaviour (Score 5-6):** The significantly tougher confrontation of Weber compared to Herrmann — with clip, concrete contradictions and interruptions — combined with soft questions to Herrmann and a lack of contextualisation of her extreme claims creates an asymmetric conversational dynamic.

Rationale: The programme shows a clear one-sidedness that manifests less in overt propaganda than in structural decisions: the guest selection structurally disadvantages the Union's position, the SPD/Greens position is criticised without being represented, and the moderation behaviour is asymmetric. At the same time there are positive elements: Lanz puts important and justified questions to Weber (Merz contradiction, 16 years of Union government), Wendland provides valuable practical insights, and Masala differentiates on the firewall question. The programme is not propagandistic, but it falls short of the requirement of balance under §26 MStV, particularly through the one-sided guest selection and the asymmetric moderation behaviour.

CONCLUSION

The programme of 28 January 2025 addresses a highly relevant topic — the migration debate following Aschaffenburg and the firewall question — with journalistic engagement, but with considerable structural shortcomings in balance. The most serious violation of the principle of diversity of opinion (§26 MStV) lies in the guest selection: the SPD and Greens position is criticised throughout the entire evening without a representative of these parties being present to defend themselves. This contradicts the principle of "audiatur et altera pars", which is constitutive for public broadcasting. The asymmetric moderation behaviour — tough confrontation for Weber, soft questions for Herrmann — reinforces the structural imbalance. Worthy of positive mention are the justified confrontation of Weber with the Merz contradiction, the valuable practical insights of Wendland and Masala's differentiating analysis. Overall, however, the programme falls short of the requirement of balanced basic provision as envisaged by the ZDF State Treaty and §26 MStV.



CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Concrete evidence
CDU/CSU	-2	Weber is intensively confronted as the only politician. Merz contradiction via clip (08:30). Herrmann: "turned into this anti-European strategy of the AfD" (07:30). Lanz: "You cannot seriously say that is a problem of the Greens and SPD" (15:00). At the same time Weber receives a lot of speaking time and can present his position.
SPD	-1	Is portrayed throughout by Weber as a blocker: "Social Democrats and Greens will refuse to do so" (17:00). No SPD representative present to defend themselves. Herrmann partially defends the SPD position indirectly. SPD GEAS implementation act is only briefly mentioned.
Greens	-2	Are repeatedly named by Weber as blockers: "The Greens have completely rejected it together with the AfD" (19:00). No Greens representative present. No opportunity for defence. Are placed in the same category as the AfD (both against GEAS).
FDP	0	Is barely mentioned. Herrmann: "Even Ulrike Herrmann would in that context be in favour of the FDP getting in" — humorous aside. No substantive treatment.
AfD	-3	Is used throughout as a negative foil. Weidel tweet as evidence (04:00). Herrmann: "That is simply AfD" (07:30). Weber: "The AfD lives off the problem" (09:00). Masala: "Populists and extremists" (05:30). No AfD voice present (announced for following programme).
BSW	-1	Is classified as pro-Putin: Masala: "Two pro-Putin parties" (Russia section). Wagenknecht's position on the Zustrombegrenzungsgesetz is briefly referenced but not explored further.
Linke	0	Is not mentioned.
Freie Wähler	0	Are not mentioned.

Party bias summary

- Most favoured: No party is clearly favoured. The SPD benefits most from not being present and therefore not being confronted, while its position is partially defended indirectly by Herrmann.
- Most disadvantaged: AfD (Score -3) — used throughout as a negative foil, without its own voice. CDU/CSU and Greens (both -2) — CDU/CSU through asymmetric confrontation, Greens through absence combined with criticism.
- Conclusion: The party-political bias is complex. CDU/CSU is the only party directly confronted, but also receives the most speaking time. SPD and Greens are criticised but cannot defend themselves — which paradoxically represents both a disadvantage (no defence possible) and an advantage (no confrontation). The AfD serves as a continuous negative foil. Overall, a tendency emerges against the Union's migration policy and in favour of a position that classifies the Merz plan as populist and anti-European.



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 migration policy as a central election campaign topic four weeks before the federal election. The SPD and Greens position is criticised throughout the entire evening (Weber: "Social Democrats and Greens will refuse to do so", approx. 17:00; "Greens and Social Democrats who voted against the new European asylum policy in the European Parliament", approx. 16:00), without a representative of these parties being present. — Evidence: Throughout, particularly 17:00 Weber: "Tomorrow we will vote in the European Parliament's interior committee on strengthening Frontex. [...] And Social Democrats and Greens will refuse to do so tomorrow." — Assessment: §26 para. 1 MStV requires that "significant political, ideological and social forces and groups" are given adequate opportunity to speak. In a programme that addresses migration policy as a central election campaign topic four weeks before the federal election and throughout criticises the positions of SPD and Greens, the absence of a representative of these parties is a considerable shortcoming. The principle of "audiatur et altera pars" is violated. As a limiting consideration, it should be noted that talk shows are not required to be balanced in every individual programme, but can establish balance over a broadcasting period (internal pluralism). The announcement of a following programme with AfD and CDU indicates an effort towards balance across several programmes.

Violation 2: Asymmetric moderation behaviour in an election campaign context

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV, §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty (requirement of impartiality) — Facts: The presenter confronts the only politician present (Weber, CSU) with significantly tougher follow-up questions, clips and interruptions than the other guests. Extreme claims by a guest (Herrmann: "abolition of the EU", "as if he were Donald Trump") are not questioned with comparable intensity. — Evidence: 08:00 clip with Merz contradiction against Weber; 06:30 soft question to Herrmann ("Would you agree that we have a problem?"); 07:00 Trump comparison by Herrmann without contextualisation by Lanz. — Assessment: The moderation behaviour shows a recognisable asymmetry that is particularly problematic in an election campaign context. As a limiting consideration, it should be noted that Weber as a politician can naturally be questioned more rigorously than journalists or academics, and that some of the confrontations (Merz contradiction, 16 years of Union government) are journalistically justified and necessary.

Violation 3: One-sided presentation in an election campaign context

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV, broadcasting state treaty obligation of balance — Facts: Four weeks before the federal election, the central election campaign proposal of the Union's chancellor candidate (five-point plan) is treated predominantly critically to negatively. The guest selection (2-3:1 against the plan), the moderation behaviour and the source selection (Weidel tweet, Merz contradiction clip) result in an overall one-sided presentation. — Evidence: Overall assessment of the programme — Assessment: The one-sidedness does not result from individual elements, but from their cumulation: guest selection, moderation behaviour, source selection and framing all point in the same direction. This is particularly problematic in an election campaign context, since public broadcasting bears a special responsibility for voters' formation of opinion.

Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme, viewed as a whole, shows considerable shortcomings in balance that carry particular weight in the context of the federal election campaign. §26 para. 1 MStV obliges public broadcasting to give "significant political, ideological and social forces and groups" adequate opportunity to speak and to uphold the principles of objectivity and impartiality. The ZDF State Treaty specifies this in §5 para. 1 through the obligation to "provide a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life" and in doing so to "observe the principles of objectivity and impartiality of reporting".

The programme falls short of these requirements in three dimensions: firstly through the one-sided guest selection (no SPD/Greens representative despite continuous criticism of their position), secondly through the asymmetric moderation behaviour (tougher confrontation of the Union politician combined with soft questions to the critic) and thirdly through the cumulative effect of framing, source selection and agenda-setting, which in overall assessment result in a one-sided presentation.



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As a limiting consideration, it should be noted that balance in public broadcasting need not be established in every individual programme, but can be established over a broadcasting period (internal pluralism). The announcement of a following programme with AfD and CDU indicates an effort towards balance across several programmes. Responsibility for reviewing compliance with programme principles lies with the ZDF Television Council as the internal supervisory body pursuant to §§19 ff. ZDF State Treaty.



OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE 15 CRITERIA

Individual scores — All 15 criteria

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

HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

5.3/10

Considerable bias

SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

5.2/10

Considerable bias

OVERALL SCORE

5.3/10

Considerable bias

Averaged from hard facts and soft facts



KEY — Meaning of scores

Individual scores per criterion (0–10)

0	No finding	No relevant anomaly identified.
1–2	Weak finding	Minor anomaly without material impairment of balance.
3–4	Slight to moderate finding	Recognisable tendency; impact relevance low to moderate.
5	Moderate finding with impact relevance	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 impact relevance.
8–9	Serious finding	Pronounced imbalance; multiple 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 recognisable; programme meets the requirement of factual accuracy.
2.6 – 4.0	Slight bias	Isolated anomalies; statistically visible, but still within the tolerance range.
4.1 – 6.0	Considerable bias	Multiple considerable findings; relevant impairment of diversity of perspectives.
6.1 – 8.0	Serious deviation from the requirement of balance. High degree of deviation	Pronounced, cross-programme patterns; high impact relevance.
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	Recognisable, but weak disadvantage.
0	Neutral	No discernible preference or disadvantage.
+1 to +2	Slightly favoured	Recognisable, but weak preference.
+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 regarding individual persons, editorial teams or programmes. They are to be understood as the result of a standardised operationalisation, not as a determination of individual responsibility.
No legal ruling	The aggregated deviation index does not replace a legal assessment within the meaning of §26 MStV. The determination of whether a specific programme violates statutory requirements is the exclusive responsibility of the competent authorities (in particular media regulators).
No proof of causality	Statistical correlations are not to be interpreted as proof of causal relationships or editorial intentions. Deviation values may be influenced by topic selection, news situation, political controversy or format logic.
No 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 purpose of comparative pattern recognition across thousands of programmes, not the precise metric measurement of individual contributions. Threshold values serve as heuristic orientation, not as sharp legal qualification.



APPENDIX: CANTONAL LEGISLATION

Legal basis Germany — ARD, ZDF

Law

Media State Treaty (MStV, 2020)

Relevant articles

- §26 para. 1 MStV: Public 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 states. Their offerings shall serve education, information, advice and entertainment. They shall provide contributions in particular to culture. Entertainment shall correspond to a public broadcasting offering profile.
- §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty: Obligation of objectivity and impartiality of reporting, consideration of diversity of opinion.
- ARD State Treaty: Basic provision mandate with objectivity and impartiality.

Core obligations

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

Supervisory authority

- 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

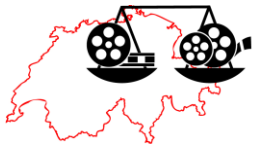
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You think you see the world. In reality you see the frame that someone has placed around it. Framing is the oldest and most elegant manipulation technique in the world. It does not change the facts — it changes what we make of the facts. How we feel. 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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The SRG collects 1.56 billion francs per year — compulsorily, from every household. Those who feel unfairly treated can complain. There is even an authority for this: the IGAC, the Independent Complaints Authority for Radio and Television.

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

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

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