



DE DETAILED ANALYSIS

2025-02-05 Der Talk vom 5. Februar

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2025-02-05 | Analysed on: 2026-03-12 16:45

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

OVERALL SCORE

6.4/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation

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

POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Classification according to Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) 2024

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

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

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

TENDENCY (L – R)

4.2 / 10

Balanced

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

← Left

Right →

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

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

PROGRAMME INFO AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

Programme data

- Date: 05.02.2025
- Host: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



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Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political spectrum
Antje Höning	Business journalist, Rheinische Post	politically unaffiliated, economically liberal	Centre / Centre-right
Nikolaus Blome	Journalist, author ("Twelve left-wing articles of faith that are leading our country astray"), NTV	politically unaffiliated, conservative-liberal	Centre-right
Gregor Gysi	Member of the Bundestag, Die Linke	Die Linke	Left
Tino Chrupalla	Federal spokesperson (co-chair) AfD	AfD	Right / Far-right
Elmar Theveßen	ZDF correspondent Washington (connected remotely)	ZDF-internal	Journalistic (not a guest in the strict sense)

Main topic

Germany in the 2025 election campaign: migration policy, the breach of the "firewall" through the CDU vote with AfD votes, AfD economic and tax policy, and the Gaza crisis under Trump.



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: Antje Höning — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: Business journalist at the Rheinische Post, argues from an economically liberal standpoint, criticises the AfD tax programme as a "programme for the rich" — Classification: Economically liberal to ordoliberal, represents mainstream economics — Missing countervoice: No economically liberal expert who, for example, defends tax cuts as growth-promoting; no heterodox economist.

Expert 2: Nikolaus Blome — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: Conservative journalist, author of a book against "left-wing articles of faith", positioned as an expert for political analysis — Classification: Clearly conservative, his book is recommended by the host as "worth reading" — Missing countervoice: No progressive journalist or author as a counterweight.

Expert 3: Elmar Theveßen — Timestamp: 03:00–10:00 — Statement: ZDF correspondent, reports on Trump/Gaza — Classification: ZDF-internal, journalistic — Missing countervoice: No Middle East expert, no international law scholar.

Missing expert groups: Constitutional lawyers, independent economist, migration researcher, energy expert, local government practitioner.

Summary: The expert selection is strongly journalisticly oriented (two journalists plus ZDF correspondent) and has a conservative-economically liberal bias. Academic experts who could neutrally contextualise factual claims are absent. Particularly notable: Blome's book is used as the programme's framework without a counter-author being invited.



2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

Source 1: Timestamp: approx. 48:00 — Source: "Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research" (ZEW) — Classification: Reputable institute, Gysi cites it as evidence against AfD tax policy — Missing counter-source: No study that evaluates AfD tax policy more positively or criticises the ZEW's methodology.

Source 2: Timestamp: approx. 50:00 — Source: "Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft" (IW) — Classification: Höning cites IW survey on AfD as a location risk — Missing counter-source: No entrepreneurs who view AfD economic policy positively (Chrupalla mentions them, but is not taken seriously).

Source 3: Timestamp: approx. 50:00 — Source: "DIW Berlin" — Classification: Höning cites DIW as evidence that the AfD programme "favours top earners" — Missing counter-source: No alternative economic analysis.

Source 4: Timestamp: approx. 00:30 — Source: Nikolaus Blome's book — Classification: Used as the programme's framework and book recommendation — Missing counter-source: No counter-book, no alternative analysis.

Summary: The source selection is one-sided. All cited institutes (ZEW, IW, DIW) are used exclusively as evidence against AfD tax policy. No source is cited in favour of the AfD's position. Blome's book is recommended as the only book source. The source selection systematically reinforces the narrative that the AfD is economically incompetent and socially unjust.



3. TIME DISTRIBUTION						6/10			
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Estimated speaking time (based on transcript analysis):

- Tino Chrupalla (AfD): (28%) — predominantly in a defensive position
- Gregor Gysi (Linke): (23%) — active, often interrupting
- Markus Lanz: (23%) — high proportion of moderation
- Antje Höning: (12%) — occasional interjections
- Nikolaus Blome: (9%) — few but well-placed contributions
- Elmar Theveßen: (8%) — remote connection at the beginning

Summary: The time distribution is heavily concentrated on Chrupalla and Gysi, which corresponds to the programme's dramaturgy (confrontation). Notably, Blome is disproportionately present despite limited speaking time, due to the book recommendation and framing. Höning, as the only economic expert, receives too little time. The missing perspectives (CDU, SPD, Greens) naturally receive 0% speaking time.



4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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Omission 1: Context: The substantive reasons of the SPD and Greens against the Merz motion (EU law, Dublin Regulation, practical feasibility) are not substantively presented. — Relevant at: approx. 13:00–20:00 — Effect: The rejection by SPD/Greens appears to be purely tactically motivated, not substantively justified.

Omission 2: Context: The specific contents of the Merz motion are never discussed in detail. What exactly was in it? What measures? — Relevant at: entire migration debate — Effect: Viewers cannot form their own judgement about the substance of the motion.

Omission 3: Context: The role of the BSW in the vote (voted with CDU) is only mentioned once in passing by Gysi, but never analysed. — Relevant at: approx. 14:00 — Effect: An important political dynamic is obscured.

Omission 4: Context: Empirical data on migration-related crime, deportation figures, and integration successes are completely absent. — Relevant at: entire migration debate — Effect: The debate remains at the level of opinions and emotions rather than being fact-based.

Omission 5: Context: The tax programmes of other parties (CDU, SPD, Greens) are not analysed — only AfD and Linke. — Relevant at: approx. 40:00–55:00 — Effect: The impression is created that only these two parties have problematic tax programmes.

Summary: Essential contextual information is systematically omitted: the substantive content of the Merz motion, the reasons of the SPD/Greens, empirical migration data, and the tax programmes of the governing parties. This considerably narrows the discourse and prevents informed opinion formation.

Missing voices

- CDU/CSU politician (e.g. interior policy spokesperson): Could have presented the strategic rationale for the vote and the substantive position on migration policy first-hand.
- SPD politician (e.g. Faeser or interior policy spokesperson): Could have explained the specific legal and substantive objections to the Merz motion.
- Greens politician or energy expert: Could have substantiated the energy transition debate with facts and brought in the Green perspective on skilled workers/migration.
- Constitutional lawyer: Could have neutrally contextualised the legal dimension of the vote (EU law, Basic Law, parliamentary law).
- Local government representative (mayor, district administrator): Could have described the practical reality of integration, overload, and skilled worker shortages on the ground.
- Independent economist (e.g. ifo, DIW, ZEW): Could have neutrally analysed the tax programmes of all parties, rather than this being done by a journalist.
- BSW representative: Could have explained the position of the new party, which voted with the CDU in the vote.



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- Migration researcher or integration commissioner: Could have provided empirical data on integration, crime, and skilled worker immigration.



5. MANIPULATION OF FIGURES

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

Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 45:00 — Figure: Gysi: "5% of gross domestic product, that is 209 billion" — Missing context: This figure comes from an interview with Weidel, not from the AfD election manifesto. Chrupalla correctly rejects this. Gysi insists nonetheless. — Effect: A non-programmatic statement is presented as a firm demand in order to make the AfD appear fiscally irresponsible.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 48:00 — Figure: Gysi: "Leibniz Centre: AfD highest increase in poverty 13%, Linke decrease in poverty 16%" — Missing context: The methodology of the study, its assumptions, and criticism of it are not explained. — Effect: The figure stands as an absolute truth, even though such model calculations depend heavily on assumptions.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 50:00 — Figure: Höning: "Households under 40,000 almost nothing, over 250,000 plus 8%" — Missing context: Which institute, which methodology, which assumptions? — Effect: The figure is presented as fact, without source citation or contextualisation.

Summary: Figures are selectively deployed by several parties. Particularly notable: Gysi's insistence on the 5% figure despite Chrupalla's correct objection that this is not in the election manifesto. Lanz does not intervene with a correction here. Overall, figures are used more as rhetorical weapons than as a basis for information.



6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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Association 1: Timestamp: approx. 25:00–32:00 — Quote: Lanz reads out Höcke quotes for several minutes and confronts Chrupalla with them, even though Chrupalla did not make these statements. "This man, who writes this, is part of your party." — Technique: Classic guilt by association — Chrupalla is held responsible for statements made by a party colleague. — Effect: Chrupalla is placed in proximity to Höcke's extremist positions, regardless of his own statements.

Association 2: Timestamp: approx. 26:00 — Quote: Lanz: "Martin Sellner is a well-known right-wing radical from Austria [...] with very many contacts within the AfD, who uses the word remigration in a very different way" — Technique: Chain of association Sellner → remigration → AfD election manifesto — Effect: The word "remigration" in the AfD programme is linked to Sellner's far-right agenda.

Association 3: Timestamp: approx. 32:00 — Quote: Gysi: "Höcke is a Nazi" — Lanz lets this statement stand without comment, even though it is legally contested (Höcke was classified as a "fascist", not as a "Nazi" in the criminal law sense). — Technique: By not contextualising, the association AfD = Nazi is reinforced. — Effect: The entire AfD is associated with National Socialism via Höcke.

Summary: Guilt by association is the most dominant manipulation technique in the programme. Chrupalla is systematically associated with Höcke and Sellner, even though he does not share their positions. The journalistically legitimate question of intra-party responsibility is pursued with an intensity and duration that takes on the character of a tribunal.



7. TIMING

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Finding 1: Position: 00:00–10:00 — Content: Gaza/Trump topic with Theveßen — Timing effect: The international topic is placed at the beginning, even though the programme is primarily about domestic politics. This serves as a "warm-up" and frames the programme in an international context (Trump, imperialism, international law), which then radiates onto the domestic political debate.

Finding 2: Position: approx. 25:00–32:00 — Content: Höcke quotes and demand for distancing — Timing effect: The Höcke confrontation comes in the middle of the programme, the segment with the highest attention. It dominates the programme emotionally and overlays the substantive policy debate.

Finding 3: Position: End of the programme — Content: Lanz recommends Blome's book: "I recommend the book by Mr Blome in this context" — Timing effect: The last substantive statement of the programme is a book recommendation for a conservative work against "left-wing self-deceptions". That is the impression with which the viewer is left.

Summary: The timing of the programme is structured so that the most emotional confrontation (Höcke/distancing) is in the middle and the programme ends with a conservative book recommendation. The substantive policy debate on taxes and the economy is pushed into the second half and overlaid by the prior emotionalisation.



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. 25:00–32:00 — Reaction: Lanz appears outraged by Höcke quotes, repeatedly demands distancing, calls the sentences "truly disgusting" — Comparable without outrage: Van Aken's "one million climate refugees" statement is briefly addressed, Gysi is allowed to relativise it, Lanz immediately accepts this without outrage. — Asymmetry: Massive outrage over Höcke quotes (which Chrupalla did not make) vs. quick acceptance of the relativisation of a controversial Linke statement.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 18:00 — Reaction: Lanz describes the AfD's jubilation at the vote as remarkable and historic — Comparable without outrage: The fact that 12 CDU and 16 FDP members of parliament stayed away from the vote (which Gysi values positively) is not highlighted as remarkable. — Asymmetry: AfD jubilation is framed as scandalous, CDU dissidents are treated as a footnote.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 35:00 — Reaction: Höning appears outraged by AfD energy policy: "The gate to hell that Alice Weidel is pushing open there in terms of economic and migration policy" — Comparable without outrage: The energy policy of the coalition government (nuclear phase-out, high electricity prices) is not treated with comparable outrage. — Asymmetry: AfD energy policy = "gate to hell", coalition energy policy = factual discussion.

Summary: The outrage in the programme is strongly asymmetrically distributed. AfD positions trigger intense, repeated outrage, while comparably controversial positions of other parties are treated with composure or even goodwill. This reinforces the impression of a moral hierarchy among the guests.



9. COMPLETENESS

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The programme takes place in a highly polarised phase of the 2025 federal election campaign, immediately after the historic Bundestag vote in which a CDU/CSU motion on migration policy for the first time achieved a majority with AfD votes. The public debate revolves around the question of whether the so-called "firewall" against the AfD has fallen, around the correct migration policy, and around Germany's economic crisis. Internationally, Trump's Gaza proposal dominates the headlines. The programme thus touches on core questions of democratic order, economic policy, and international relations.

Share of perspectives covered

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

[A] CDU/CSU perspective: Why did Merz conduct the vote in this way? Strategic rationale.

[B] SPD perspective: Why did the SPD not agree? Substantive objections.

[C] Greens perspective: Climate policy, energy transition, migration policy from a Green perspective.

[D] AfD perspective: Migration policy, economic programme, remigration.

[E] Linke perspective: Social question, right to asylum, peace policy.

[F] Economic science perspective: Skilled worker shortage, tax analyses, energy costs — neutral-academic.

[G] Constitutional law perspective: Basic Law, EU law, international law in migration policy.

[H] Perspective of those affected: Migrants, municipalities, volunteers, security authorities.

[I] BSW perspective: Wagenknecht camp as a relevant new force in the migration discourse.

[J] FDP perspective: Liberal economic and migration policy.

[A] CDU/CSU perspective: INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 15:00–18:00 — Quote: Höning: "He had three options..." / Blome: "He said in the debate, I have changed my mind." — Assessment: The CDU position is interpreted exclusively by journalists and opposition politicians; no CDU representative is present to explain their own strategy.

[B] SPD perspective: OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: The SPD is mentioned several times (Habeck quote, voting behaviour), but no SPD representative is present; the substantive reasons for the SPD's rejection are not presented.

[C] Greens perspective: OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: Only Habeck is quoted once (approx. 13:00: "American conditions") — Assessment: No Green voice on energy transition, climate policy, or migration; particularly notable since wind power and energy policy are discussed at length.

[D] AfD perspective: COVERED

Timestamp: throughout — Quote: Chrupalla receives extensive speaking time — Assessment: The AfD position is treated in detail, though predominantly in confrontational questioning.

[E] Linke perspective: COVERED

Timestamp: throughout — Quote: Gysi argues on asylum law, the social question, tax analysis — Assessment: Gysi receives substantial speaking time and can present positions.

[F] Economic science perspective: INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. 45:00ff — Quote: Höning: "The DIW says so, the Leibniz Centre..." — Assessment: Studies are cited, but no independent economist is present; contextualisation is provided exclusively by the journalist Höning.

[G] Constitutional law perspective: OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: Gysi briefly mentions "EU law, Basic Law" (approx. 14:00) — Assessment: No constitutional lawyer present; the legal objections to the Merz motion are only touched upon.

[H] Perspective of those affected: OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: Neither local government representatives, security authorities, volunteers, nor migrants are given a voice.



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[I] BSW perspective: OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: Chrupalla mentions BSW once in passing (approx. 14:00) — Assessment: The BSW voted with the CDU in the vote and is a relevant new force; no representation.

[J] FDP perspective: OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: The FDP is mentioned as a voting partner, but its position is not independently presented.

Completeness score: 3/10

Rationale: Of ten relevant perspectives, only two (AfD, Linke) are treated substantively, two further (CDU, economic science) are merely indicated. Six perspectives are entirely absent, including such central ones as SPD, Greens, constitutional law, and those affected. For a programme that wishes to discuss the "right way out of the crisis", this represents a considerable narrowing of the discursive space.



Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

10. FRAMING (Setting the frame)

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:00–02:00 — Quote: Lanz on Blome's book: "twelve left-wing articles of faith that are leading our country astray [...] very worth reading [...] pensioners are poor — not true, says Blome. Women are paid less — also not true." — Manipulation: In the introduction, Lanz uncritically adopts the theses of a conservative author as the framework for the programme. The formulation "What is interesting is that what are lies in Blome's world are truths in Gysi's world" frames the debate as "realism vs. left-wing illusions". — Why problematic: The host sets a conservative framing already in the opening, which categorises left-wing positions as "self-deceptions" and "astray" before the discussion has even begun. This is not neutral moderation.

Finding 2: Timestamp: 02:00–02:30 — Quote: On Chrupalla: "under the leadership of the AfD, a new wind would blow in Germany. And the big question is, what kind of wind exactly would that be? [...] could one theoretically only use this new wind to drive wind turbines? Or would they already have been dismantled?" — Manipulation: Ironic-mocking framing of the AfD position already in the introduction. — Why problematic: While Blome's book is framed as "worth reading", Chrupalla's position is introduced with a joke. This is asymmetric.

Finding 3: Timestamp: 03:00–04:00 — Quote: On Gysi: "who, for the sake of his blood pressure, had better not read this book" — Manipulation: Gysi is framed as someone who would get upset about Blome's theses — implicitly as emotional, not rational. — Why problematic: Subtle delegitimation of the left-wing position as an emotional reaction to "uncomfortable truths".

Summary: From the outset, the programme is presented in a framework that honours conservative theses as "interesting" and "worth reading", while left-wing positions are treated as "self-deceptions" and AfD positions are treated mockingly and ironically. The framing is not neutral.



11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:30 — Quote: "twelve left-wing articles of faith that are leading our country astray" — Manipulation: Lanz adopts the book title verbatim and uncritically as the programme's framework. "Articles of faith" and "leading astray" are evaluative terms. — Why problematic: A host of public broadcasting should not adopt book theses as the programme's framework without identifying them as the author's opinion.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 35:00 — Quote: Lanz: "these wretched wind turbines" — Manipulation: Lanz adopts the pejorative evaluation of the AfD position on wind power. He does correct himself ("that was meant casually"), but the term remains in the room. — Why problematic: A host should not use evaluative terms for politically contested infrastructure.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 28:00 — Quote: Lanz on Höcke quote: "truly disgusting sentences" — Manipulation: Here Lanz uses a strongly evaluative formulation. — Why problematic: While the assessment is substantively understandable, it is unusual for a host to formulate in such an evaluative manner. However, these are sentences that courts have classified as fascist, so the evaluation is defensible.

Summary: Lanz repeatedly uses evaluative terms that partly adopt conservative narratives uncritically ("left-wing articles of faith"), partly pick up AfD language ("wretched wind turbines"), and partly set clear moral judgements ("disgusting"). The choice of words is overall not consistently neutral.



12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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

Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. 25:00–32:00 — Quote (Lanz): "What is stopping you right now, in this moment, from simply distancing yourself from these truly disgusting sentences by Höcke?" / "That is an interesting understanding of leadership" — Analysis: Lanz confronts Chrupalla with Höcke quotes over several minutes and repeatedly demands distancing. This confrontation is journalistically legitimate, but by comparison: Gysi is never confronted with problematic positions of his party (e.g. van Aken's "one million" statement) with comparable intensity and duration. Gysi is allowed to relativise the van Aken statement himself, without Lanz pressing further.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. 20:00 — Quote (Lanz): "Mr Gysi, the AfD did not cause that. The government caused it." — Analysis: Lanz comes to Chrupalla's defence when Gysi wants to hold the AfD responsible for educational problems. That is fair. But: Lanz never comes to Gysi's defence in a comparable way when Chrupalla or Blome attack him.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. 35:00 — Quote (Lanz): "Nobody finds them beautiful, Mr Koppala" (about wind turbines) — Analysis: Lanz aligns himself with Chrupalla in the aesthetic evaluation of wind turbines. This is not neutral moderation.

Finding 4: Timestamp: approx. 00:30 — Quote (Lanz): on Blome's book "very worth reading" — Analysis: Lanz recommends the book of a guest that describes left-wing positions as "self-deceptions". A comparable recommendation for a book by Gysi or a left-wing work does not occur.

Finding 5: Timestamp: approx. 42:00 — Quote (Lanz): "Mr Gysi, it is never about the social question, it is only about migration" — Analysis: Gysi complains that the social question receives too little attention. Lanz dismisses this, even though the complaint is justified — the programme has up to that point dealt almost exclusively with migration.

Summary: Lanz moderates asymmetrically: Chrupalla is intensively and repeatedly confronted with Höcke quotes (journalistically legitimate, but notable in duration and intensity), while Gysi is treated considerably less harshly. At the same time, Blome is feted as an author and his theses are adopted as the programme's framework. The moderation shows a clear tendency: hard against AfD, benevolent towards conservative-liberal positions, moderate towards the left.



13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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Asymmetry 1: To Chrupalla, approx. 25:00: "What is stopping you right now, in this moment, from simply distancing yourself from these truly disgusting sentences by Höcke?" [very hard, emotional, repetitive] — To Gysi, approx. 22:00: "Would you simply let things continue as they are right now?" [soft, open, no confrontation with party programme]

Asymmetry 2: To Chrupalla, approx. 30:00: Lanz reads out Höcke quotes for several minutes and demands distancing [tribunal character] — To Gysi, approx. 22:00: Van Aken quote is briefly addressed, Gysi is allowed to relativise it himself, Lanz immediately accepts the relativisation.

Asymmetry 3: To Chrupalla, approx. 38:00: "Is that exaggerated? Is that symbolic? Will these wretched wind turbines now remain standing symbolically or will they be symbolically torn down?" [sarcastic, pressing] — To Blome: No comparably hard follow-up question about his book theses or previous controversial statements.

Asymmetry 4: To Chrupalla, approx. 45:00: Detailed confrontation with AfD tax programme by Lanz, Höning, and Gysi simultaneously — To Gysi: The Linke tax programme is only criticised by Chrupalla and Blome, not by Lanz himself.

Summary: The question asymmetry is considerable. Chrupalla is systematically questioned more harshly, more emotionally, and more repeatedly than all other guests. Gysi receives considerably softer questions and more space for self-presentation. Blome is practically not questioned critically at all.



14. FALSE BALANCE

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Finding 1: The programme shows rather the opposite of false balance — namely a deliberate unequal treatment. The AfD position is not treated as equivalent, but is systematically framed as problematic. This is journalistically defensible for a party that is partly classified as far-right, but it results in AfD positions that are substantively debatable (e.g. criticism of high energy prices, bureaucracy) also not being treated fairly.

Finding 2: Between Blome and Gysi there is a certain false balance: Blome's conservative theses are framed as "worth reading" and "interesting", while Gysi's left-wing positions are delegitimised as "self-deceptions" (through Blome's book). Both are, however, equally positions of opinion.

Summary: False balance in the classical sense (equal treatment of unequal positions) is not the main problem of the programme. The problem is rather the reverse imbalance: a systematic unequal treatment in which conservative positions are framed as mainstream and left-wing/right-wing positions are framed as problematic.



15. AGENDA-SETTING

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Finding 1: Agenda element set: Migration as the dominant topic — Timestamp: approx. 13:00–35:00 — Evidence: Over 20 minutes of migration debate, a large part of which concerns the Höcke distancing — Alternative: Economic crisis, skilled worker shortage, social inequality, energy policy could have been treated with equal weight.

Finding 2: Agenda element set: Remigration/Höcke as the central AfD topic — Timestamp: approx. 25:00–32:00 — Evidence: Lanz reads out Höcke quotes for several minutes — Alternative: AfD economic policy, which is more relevant to more voters, could have been treated with equal weight.

Finding 3: Agenda element set: Blome's book as the intellectual framework — Timestamp: 00:30 and end — Evidence: "very worth reading", "I recommend the book by Mr Blome" — Alternative: Neutral framing without book recommendation.

Finding 4: Agenda element set: The social question is systematically marginalised — Timestamp: approx. 42:00 — Evidence: Gysi: "It is never about the social question, it is only about migration" — Lanz dismisses this — Alternative: Equal treatment of migration and the social question.

Summary: The agenda-setting of the programme prioritises migration and the moral delegitimation of the AfD via Höcke associations. The social question, the economic crisis, and energy policy are treated as secondary. This corresponds to an agenda-setting that frames the AfD primarily as a moral problem and not as a political actor with debatable positions.



CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

Results

Dominant techniques

- 1. Guilt by Association (Score 8):** Chrupalla is systematically and over several minutes confronted with Höcke quotes and Sellner associations, even though he does not hold these positions. The technique aims to define the entire AfD through its most extreme representatives.
- 2. Expert selection (Score 8):** The guest selection with two conservative-liberal journalists, a Linke politician, and the AfD leader — without CDU, SPD, Greens, constitutional lawyers, or independent economists — massively narrows the discourse and prevents a balanced debate.
- 3. Framing / Question asymmetry / Selective outrage (Score 7 each):** These three techniques work together: the conservative framing through Blome's book, the asymmetrically hard questions directed at Chrupalla, and the selective outrage over AfD positions produce a consistent narrative in which conservative-liberal positions appear reasonable and AfD positions appear morally reprehensible.

Rationale: The programme exhibits a clear one-sidedness that results from the interaction of several factors: a heavily narrowed guest selection (no governing parties, no independent expert), a conservative framing through the book recommendation, asymmetric moderation (hard against AfD, benevolent towards conservative-liberal positions), and systematic guilt by association. The programme does not fulfil the requirement of §26 MStV for diversity of opinion, since essential political perspectives (SPD, Greens, CDU, BSW) are entirely absent and the existing perspectives are treated unequally. However, confronting the AfD with extremist positions within its own party leadership is in principle journalistically legitimate — the question is one of proportionality and whether this comes at the expense of substantive policy debate.

CONCLUSION

The programme from the eve of the 2025 federal election violates the principle of balance pursuant to §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty in several respects. The guest selection excludes, with SPD, Greens, CDU, and BSW, four of the seven Bundestag parties from the discussion, even though all four were directly involved in the central voting question. The moderation is asymmetric: while the AfD leader is confronted for several minutes with quotes from a party colleague that he himself did not make, comparably controversial positions of other guests are treated with leniency. The conservative framing through the host's uncritical book recommendation and the systematic marginalisation of the social question in favour of the migration topic narrow the discursive space in a way that does not do justice to the ZDF's public service remit. The programme does not inform the viewer sufficiently comprehensively to enable them to form their own opinion on the pressing political questions.



CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Specific evidence
CDU/CSU	+1	Merz's vote is discussed critically (Höning: "Pinot Grigio moment"), but the criticism remains moderate and strategic, not moral. No CDU representative present who would have to defend themselves. Blome implicitly represents CDU-adjacent positions benevolently.
SPD	+1	Not present, not attacked. Habeck is quoted once neutrally (approx. 13:00: "American conditions"). SPD rejection of the Merz motion is not critically questioned.
Greens	0	Practically not mentioned. Neither treated positively nor negatively. Energy transition is discussed, but without a Green voice.
FDP	0	Only mentioned as a voting partner. No substantive treatment.
AfD	-4	Systematic confrontation: Höcke quotes (25:00–32:00), Sellner association, "location risk" (Höning), "gate to hell" (Höning), tax programme as "programme for the rich" (Höning, Gysi), wind turbine mockery. Chrupalla in a permanent defensive position.
BSW	0	Mentioned once in passing (Gysi, approx. 14:00), no substantive treatment.
Linke	+2	Gysi receives a lot of speaking time, soft questions, is allowed to relativise the van Aken statement. His election programme is criticised by Blome, but Lanz does not pick up on this criticism. Gysi's Leibniz study (Linke = -16% poverty) goes unchallenged. Lanz allows Gysi to occupy the social question as his territory.
Freie Wähler	0	Not mentioned.

Party bias summary

- Most favoured: Die Linke (Score +2) — Gysi receives benevolent moderation, soft questions, and can present his election programme as socially just without Lanz picking up on the criticism from Blome/Chrupalla.
- Most disadvantaged: AfD (Score -4) — Systematic confrontation at the moral level (Höcke, Sellner, remigration), economic policy dismantling by three guests simultaneously, no fair opportunity to present their own programme.
- Conclusion: The programme exhibits a clear anti-AfD bias that goes beyond legitimate journalistic confrontation. At the same time, Die Linke benefits from benevolent moderation. CDU and SPD are spared through absence. The overall picture corresponds to a discursive space in which conservative-liberal positions (Blome, Höning) are framed as the reasonable mainstream and the AfD is framed as a moral-political problem case.



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

Assessment pursuant to §26 MStV

Violation 1: Insufficient diversity of opinion in the guest selection

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV in conjunction with §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty — Facts: Of seven parties represented in the Bundestag, only two (AfD, Linke) are represented by politicians. The three strongest parties (CDU, SPD, Greens) are entirely absent. The two journalists present do not represent a neutral position, but a conservative-liberal spectrum. — Evidence: Entire programme; no CDU/SPD/Greens voice despite their central role in the voting debate — Assessment: The guest selection does not ensure the diversity of opinion required by §26 MStV. While not every individual programme needs to reflect all perspectives, the absence of the governing parties and the presumably strongest party (CDU) at such a central topic (historic Bundestag vote, election campaign) is a considerable deficit.

Violation 2: Asymmetric moderation

Norm: §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty (impartiality) — Facts: The host treats the guests systematically differently: book recommendation for Blome, tribunal-like confrontation for Chrupalla, benevolent conversation management for Gysi. — Evidence: 25:00–32:00 (Höcke confrontation), 00:30 and end (book recommendation), 22:00 (soft questions to Gysi) — Assessment: The moderation violates the requirement of impartiality. Hard follow-up questions are journalistically required, but they must be applied symmetrically. The combination of book recommendation, asymmetric harshness, and selective outrage produces an overall picture that does not correspond to the neutrality requirement.

Violation 3: Insufficient factual basis

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV (factually accurate information) — Facts: Essential facts are omitted (content of the Merz motion, empirical migration data, methodology of cited studies). Gysi's false claim about 5% of GDP for armaments in the AfD election manifesto is not corrected by Lanz. — Evidence: Entire programme; approx. 45:00 (5% claim) — Assessment: The programme does not provide a sufficient factual basis for informed opinion formation. The host fails to correct false claims and to provide missing context.

No violation discernible in:

- Confronting the AfD with extremist positions within its own party is in principle journalistically legitimate and even required.
- The invitation of Chrupalla himself is a sign of diversity of opinion.
- The Gaza reporting by Theveßen is professional and balanced.

Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme exhibits several deficits which, in their cumulation, can be assessed as a violation of the balance principle of §26 MStV and the impartiality principle of the ZDF State Treaty. The insufficient diversity of opinion in the guest selection is the most serious problem: in a programme about the historic Bundestag vote, the three largest parties are absent as voices. The asymmetric moderation reinforces this deficit by treating the existing perspectives unequally. The ZDF Television Council as the responsible supervisory body would be called upon to examine the programme series for systematic patterns — a single violation does not yet constitute grounds for a programme complaint, but the cumulation of deficits in a single programme on such a central topic is remarkable. The programme fulfils the ZDF's public service remit in this edition only to a limited extent, since it does not enable the viewer to form their own opinion on the basis of comprehensive information.



OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE 15 CRITERIA

Individual scores — All 15 criteria

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

HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

6.6/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation

SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

6.2/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation

OVERALL SCORE

6.4/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation

Averaged from hard facts and soft facts



KEY — Meaning of the scores

Individual scores per criterion (0–10)

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

Aggregated deviation index — Interpretation ranges

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

Party-political bias (-5 to +5)

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



Legal and methodological classification

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



APPENDIX: CANTONAL LEGISLATION

Legal basis Germany — ARD, ZDF

Law

Interstate Media 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. In doing so, they shall promote international understanding, European integration, and social cohesion in the Federation and the Länder. Their offerings shall serve education, information, advice, and entertainment. They shall offer contributions in particular to culture. Entertainment shall correspond to a public broadcasting offering profile.
- §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty: Obligation to objectivity and impartiality of reporting, consideration of diversity of opinion.
- ARD State Treaty: Public service remit with objectivity and impartiality.

Core obligations

- 1. Diversity of opinion (internal pluralism):** All relevant perspectives must be represented in the overall programme
- 2. Objectivity and balance:** Hosts 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 regional 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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- Schläpfer, D. (2026). Source Traffic Light: A Six-Dimensional Credibility Framework for Systematic Source Assessment in Public Service Media. [SSRN 6733880](#)

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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 fulfils none of the three fundamental criteria — it is not appropriate, not based on separation of powers, not market-based. The body that is supposed to protect citizens protects above all the system it was supposed to control.

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