



EN DETAILED ANALYSIS

2025-03-11 Der Talk vom 11. März

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2025-03-11 | Analysed on: 2026-03-12 16:38

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

OVERALL SCORE

6.2/10

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)

3.8 / 10

Left-favouring

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: 11.03.2025
- Presenter: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



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Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political spectrum
Eva Quattek (also referred to in the transcript as "Quattberg"/"Quartbeck")	Business journalist/economist (presumably close to IW or business press)	No party affiliation	Economic liberal-conservative
Jürgen Trittin	Former federal minister, long-standing Greens politician	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	Left-ecological
Karl Lauterbach	Outgoing health minister, SPD politician	SPD	Centre-left

Main topic

The assessment of the exploratory paper by CDU/CSU and SPD, in particular the planned infrastructure special fund (500 bn €), the relaxation of the debt brake for defence spending, the role of the Greens in achieving the required two-thirds majority, and the geopolitical situation (Trump/USA).



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: Eva Quattek — Timestamp: Throughout — Statement: "50 to 80 billion euros annually [...] then the whole thing will be frittered away" — Classification: Business journalist/economist with a clearly critical stance towards the exploratory outcome. Her analysis focuses on fiscal risks and a lack of prioritisation. — Missing countervoice: An investment-friendly economist (e.g. from the DIW or IMK) who would have emphasised the multiplier effects and the macroeconomic necessity of the investments.

Expert 2: Jürgen Trittin — Timestamp: Throughout — Statement: "That was a breach of promise with advance notice." — Classification: Long-standing Greens politician presented as an "experienced parliamentarian", but who represents a clear party-political agenda. His role as an "expert" obscures his function as an opposition politician. — Missing countervoice: A CDU/CSU representative who could explain the about-turn from the Union's perspective.

Expert 3: Karl Lauterbach — Timestamp: Throughout — Statement: "The situation has changed [...] from my point of view that is justifiable." — Classification: Incumbent health minister and SPD politician who defends the exploratory outcome. He is the only guest who takes a positive view of the outcome, but is repeatedly interrupted and challenged by the presenter. — Missing countervoice: Not in the sense of a countervoice to Lauterbach, but rather: a second guest is missing who would support the necessity of investment from an independent (non-party-political) perspective.

Missing expert groups: Constitutional lawyers, independent economist, security expert, CDU/CSU representative, opposition representatives (AfD/FDP/BSW/Linke).

Summary: The guest selection is structurally unbalanced. Two of three guests (Quattek and Trittin) are critical to dismissive of the exploratory outcome, one (Lauterbach) defends it. The main party concerned (CDU/CSU) is not represented. The casting of a Greens politician as an "experienced parliamentarian" rather than as an opposition politician obscures the party-political dimension of his contributions.



2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

Source 1: Timestamp: Middle — Source: "We asked the IW today to calculate that for us" (Quattek) — Classification: The Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft (IW) is close to employers and tends to represent economic liberal positions. — Missing counter-source: A calculation from the DIW (close to trade unions) or the IMK (Hans Böckler Foundation) would have offered a different perspective.

Source 2: Timestamp: Later phase — Source: Trittin cites the Federal Constitutional Court on climate protection — Classification: Correct and relevant source, but used selectively to support the Greens' position. — Missing counter-source: Other Federal Constitutional Court rulings (e.g. on the debt brake) are not cited.

Source 3: Timestamp: Opening — Source: Lanz quotes Linnemann from an earlier programme ("Yes, we will do everything to ensure it stays") — Classification: Correct source, but used selectively to substantiate the "breach of promise". — Missing counter-source: Later statements by Linnemann or other Union politicians explaining the about-turn are not cited.

Summary: The source selection is one-sided. The IW is used as the sole economic reference without a counter-calculation being presented. Political quotes are used selectively to support the narrative of "breach of promise".



3. TIME DISTRIBUTION

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Estimated speaking time (based on transcript length and shares of conversation):

- Karl Lauterbach: (28%)
- Jürgen Trittin: (26%)
- Eva Quattek: (22%)
- Markus Lanz: (24%)

Summary: The distribution of time among the guests is relatively balanced. The problem lies not in the quantity but in the quality of speaking time: Lauterbach spends a considerable portion of his speaking time defending himself against aggressive follow-up questions, while Trittin can develop his positions undisturbed. Lanz's own speaking share of approx. 24% is high for a presenter and contains many evaluative statements.



4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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Omission 1: Context: The CDU/CSU's position on its own about-turn is presented exclusively through quotes and interpretations from the opposing side. — Relevant in: Entire programme — Effect: The Union appears to have broken its word and to be lacking in credibility, without its own line of argument (e.g. the changed geopolitical situation as a genuine justification, not merely an excuse) being able to be set out by a representative.

Omission 2: Context: The constitutional law debate on the legitimacy of a Basic Law amendment by the outgoing Bundestag is only touched upon. — Relevant in: Discussion on speed and legitimacy — Effect: One of the most central questions of democratic theory in the current debate is not professionally contextualised. Quattek mentions the problem, but it is not explored in depth.

Omission 3: Context: The position of the AfD (as the second-strongest force in the new Bundestag) and of the BSW on the Basic Law amendment is completely omitted. — Relevant in: Discussion on democratic legitimacy — Effect: Parties that together represent over 20% of voters are not heard in a debate about a Basic Law amendment.

Omission 4: Context: The question of intergenerational equity in the case of debt of 500+ billion euros is not addressed. — Relevant in: Entire budget discussion — Effect: A central ethical and economic dimension of the debate is entirely absent.

Omission 5: Context: Concrete experiences with the 100-billion special fund (Zeitenwende) — inefficiencies, procurement problems, bureaucratic hurdles — are only mentioned in passing. — Relevant in: Discussion on the new special fund — Effect: The question of whether the state is even capable of investing such sums efficiently is not systematically addressed.

Summary: The programme has significant omissions that all work in the same direction: the Union's perspective as the main actor is absent, the constitutional law dimension is not professionally contextualised, and the positions of millions of voters (AfD, BSW, FDP) are ignored. The omissions reinforce the narrative of "breach of promise" and "irresponsibility".

Missing voices

- CDU/CSU representative (e.g. a parliamentary group member, budget politician): Could have explained and defended the about-turn on the debt brake from the Union's perspective, rather than this being interpreted only by opponents and critics.
- FDP representative (e.g. budget politician): Could have brought in the regulatory policy criticism of taking on debt and the perspective of the failed coalition government.
- AfD or BSW representative: Could have articulated the fundamental opposition criticism of the Basic Law amendment by the outgoing Bundestag — a position representing millions of voters.



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- Constitutional lawyer: Could have contextualised the legal admissibility and democratic legitimacy of the Basic Law amendment by the still-sitting Bundestag.
- Independent economist/public finance scholar: Could have assessed the fiscal implications neutrally, rather than politicians throwing figures at each other.
- Security/defence expert: Could have contextualised the military necessity and the procurement reality.
- Representative of the younger generation/youth organisation: Quattek herself mentions that "young people voted quite radically in this federal election" — their perspective is entirely absent.
- Taxpayer/SME representative: Could have addressed the impact of the debt on future generations and on small and medium-sized enterprises.



5. NUMBERS MANIPULATION

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

Finding 1: Timestamp: Middle — Figure: Quattek: "50 to 80 billion euros annually" vs. Lauterbach: "approximately 12 billion per year" — Missing context: The massive discrepancy (factor 4–7) between the figures is not resolved. Lanz does not question Quattek's figure, even though the difference is enormous. It is not clarified which items are included in each case. — Effect: The higher figure (Quattek) remains in the room as an "expert figure", while Lauterbach's lower estimate is dismissed as a "doctor's calculation".

Finding 2: Timestamp: Middle — Figure: "500 billion over ten years" — Missing context: No contextualisation is provided as to how this sum relates to Germany's total debt, to GDP, or to comparable programmes in other countries. — Effect: The figure appears alarmingly large when viewed in isolation, without any benchmark being provided.

Finding 3: Timestamp: Middle — Figure: Lauterbach: "If we have 1% more economic growth, then we have 10 billion more in revenue" — Missing context: Lanz comments: "That is word for word Merz from the election campaign." This is a legitimate contextualisation, but the question of whether the calculation itself is correct is missing. — Effect: The growth calculation is dismissed as political rhetoric rather than being factually examined.

Summary: The use of figures is problematic because massive discrepancies between the guests are not resolved and the presenter implicitly treats the higher (more critical) figures as more credible. A neutral contextualisation by an independent economist is absent.



6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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Association 1: Timestamp: Early phase — Quote: Lanz plays in the Söder Ash Wednesday clip and connects it directly to the question put to Trittin — Technique: Söder's aggressive anti-Greens rhetoric is used as evidence of the dishonesty of the entire Union. — Effect: The Union is associated with Söder's polemic, even though Merz and Söder may hold different positions.

Association 2: Timestamp: Later phase — Quote: Trittin: "Anyone who knows Dobrindt cannot contradict what Boris Pistorius said." — Technique: Dobrindt is used as a negative example for the entire Union's conduct of negotiations. — Effect: The Union is associated with its most controversial representatives, without them being able to defend themselves.

Summary: Guilt by association is used moderately, primarily through the connection of the entire Union with Söder's Ash Wednesday polemic and Dobrindt's negotiating style. Since no Union representative is present, these associations cannot be corrected.



7. TIMING

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Finding 1: Position: 00:00–05:00 (programme opening) — Content: Double negative framing (Quattek quotes + Trittin quote from 18 January) — Timing effect: The primacy effect ensures that the first piece of information has a particularly strong impact. The programme begins with the narrative of "breach of promise/irresponsibility", which shapes the entire subsequent course.

Finding 2: Position: Final third (America/Trump block) — Content: Extensive discussion about Trump, hostility to science, autocracy — Timing effect: The recency effect ensures that viewers leave the programme with the impression of an existential threat. This implicitly supports the narrative that taking on debt is necessary — which partially contradicts the framing at the start of the programme ("breach of promise") and creates a certain ambivalence.

Finding 3: Position: Middle of the programme — Content: Söder Ash Wednesday insert — Timing effect: The insert is placed at precisely the moment when the discussion turns to the question of why the Greens are not agreeing to the package. It serves as an emotional amplifier for the Greens' position and delegitimises the Union.

Summary: The timing of the programme follows a dramaturgical logic that supports the narrative of "the Union's breach of promise". The opening sets the negative frame, the Söder insert reinforces the emotional rejection of the Union, and the America block at the end creates a sense of threat that underlines the necessity of investment.



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: Early phase — Reaction: Lanz expresses outrage at the Union's "breach of promise" on the debt brake: "So it is, so to speak, directly after the election [...] the word is broken in a way I cannot remember for a long time." — Comparable without outrage: The SPD also made promises during the election campaign (e.g. Olaf Scholz's candidacy for chancellor, which was then abandoned; the coalition government promises that were not kept), without Lanz showing comparable outrage. — Asymmetry: The outrage is directed exclusively at the Union, even though the SPD also benefits from the exploratory outcome and has relativised its own election campaign promises.

Finding 2: Timestamp: Middle — Reaction: Lanz reacts with outrage to Lauterbach's defence ("Spin TV") — Comparable without outrage: Trittin's claim that the Greens foresaw everything and have always been right is not treated with comparable scepticism. — Asymmetry: The outrage is directed at the defender of the exploratory outcome, not at the critic.

Finding 3: Timestamp: Söder insert — Reaction: Outrage at Söder's Ash Wednesday speech is treated as self-evident — Comparable without outrage: Comparable polemics by Greens politicians against the Union (e.g. Habeck's election campaign rhetoric) are not addressed. — Asymmetry: Söder's polemic is used as evidence of the dishonesty of the entire Union, while Greens polemic is not mentioned.

Summary: The outrage in the programme is selective and directed primarily at the Union and secondarily at the SPD (as defender of the exploratory outcome). Comparable points of criticism regarding the Greens (e.g. their own election campaign promises, the Heating Act debate) are not treated with outrage but are interpreted benevolently.



9. COMPLETENESS

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The programme takes place in a highly dynamic phase of government formation: CDU/CSU and SPD have presented an exploratory outcome that deviates massively from the Union's election campaign promises — in particular on the debt brake. The Greens are needed as a majority provider for a Basic Law amendment, but have initially signalled their refusal. At the same time, the Trump administration is intensifying the geopolitical situation, which serves as justification for the urgency and volume of defence spending. The programme moves in the tension between fiscal responsibility, the necessity of investment, democratic legitimacy and geopolitical pressure.

Share of perspectives covered

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

[A] CDU/CSU perspective: Why the about-turn on the debt brake is necessary and justifiable from the Union's point of view

[B] SPD perspective: How the SPD assesses its negotiating successes and intends to shape the coalition

[C] Greens perspective: Why the Greens are setting conditions and what changes they are demanding

[D] Opposition perspective (AfD/BSW/Linke/FDP): How the parliamentary opposition assesses the approach

[E] Economic science perspective (critical): Fiscal sustainability, debt ratio, intergenerational equity

[F] Economic science perspective (investment-friendly): Multiplier effects, growth impulses

[G] Constitutional law perspective: Legitimacy of the Basic Law amendment by the outgoing Bundestag

[H] Citizens' perspective: Loss of trust, election promises, democratic participation

[I] Security/defence perspective: Military necessities, procurement processes, European defence architecture

[J] Climate policy perspective: Compatibility of investments with climate targets, Green Deal

[A] CDU/CSU perspective: INDICATED

Timestamp: Not directly represented — Quote: Lanz quotes Linnemann ("Yes, we will do everything to ensure it stays") and Merz (insert) — Assessment: No CDU/CSU representative present; the Union's perspective is conveyed exclusively through quotes and the interpretation of the other guests, which constitutes a systematic distortion.

[B] SPD perspective: COVERED

Timestamp: Throughout by Karl Lauterbach — Quote: "From my point of view, you said that the situation has changed. Secondly, the situation has changed." — Assessment: Comprehensively represented; Lauterbach actively defends the exploratory outcome and the SPD's position.

[C] Greens perspective: COVERED

Timestamp: Throughout by Jürgen Trittin — Quote: "We will not agree to this package as it currently stands." — Assessment: Presented in detail and with nuance; Trittin is able to explain his position comprehensively.

[D] Opposition perspective (AfD/BSW/Linke/FDP): OMITTED

Timestamp: None — Quote: None — Assessment: None of the opposition parties is represented or given substantive recognition. The AfD is only mentioned as a negative foil ("no legislative initiatives that are dependent on the AfD's approval"). The FDP is mentioned once in passing. BSW and Freie Wähler do not feature. This is a serious deficiency, since it is precisely the opposition that has fundamental objections to the Basic Law amendment by the outgoing Bundestag.

[E] Economic science perspective (critical): INDICATED

Timestamp: Eva Quattek partly represents this position — Quote: "50 to 80 billion euros annually. And if the 500 billion are to be spread over ten years, then the whole thing will be frittered away." — Assessment: Quattek introduces critical figures, but is repeatedly interrupted by Lauterbach and her expertise is relativised ("You are a doctor, not an economist?" — which Lanz says to Lauterbach).

[F] Economic science perspective (investment-friendly): INDICATED

Timestamp: Implicitly through Lauterbach — Quote: "If we have 1% more economic growth, then we have 10 billion more in revenue." — Assessment: Introduced as an argument, but not supported by an independent economist.

[G] Constitutional law perspective: INDICATED



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Timestamp: Quattek mentions the issue — Quote: "what it does to the population, who are of course completely steamrollered by this" and "even if the Bundestag is fully capable of acting under constitutional law" — Assessment: The constitutional law dimension is only touched upon superficially. No constitutional lawyer is invited, even though a Basic Law amendment is the central topic.

[H] Citizens' perspective: INDICATED

Timestamp: Quattek and Lanz touch on the topic — Quote: "One must always also consider what it does to the population" — Assessment: Used as a rhetorical element, but not systematically worked through. No citizens' voices, no polling data.

[I] Security/defence perspective: INDICATED

Timestamp: Trittin and Lauterbach discuss defence spending — Quote: "No party in Germany, including my own, can claim to have made timely provision here." — Assessment: No security expert or military specialist present; the discussion remains at the political level.

[J] Climate policy perspective: COVERED

Timestamp: Final third of the programme — Quote: "Climate protection is required so as not to unduly restrict the freedom rights of future generations." (Trittin) — Assessment: Discussed in detail, but primarily from the Greens' and SPD's perspective. No climate-sceptical or technology-open countervoice.

Completeness score: 4/10

Justification: Of ten relevant perspectives, only three (B, C, J) are truly comprehensively covered. The CDU/CSU perspective is entirely absent as a direct voice — a serious deficiency, since the Union is responsible for the main subject of discussion (exploratory paper, about-turn on the debt brake). The entire parliamentary opposition (AfD, BSW, FDP, Linke) is not represented. Constitutional law and security policy expertise is absent on a topic that involves a Basic Law amendment and massive defence spending.



Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

10. FRAMING (setting the frame)

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 — Quote: Lanz opens with Quattek's words: "Shocking, terrible, irresponsible, outrageous. She speaks of lip service, of a cardinal sin, of rubber formulations" — Manipulation: The programme is opened with a maximally negative assessment of the exploratory outcome, which serves as the frame for the entire discussion. — Why problematic: This framing sets the tone: the exploratory outcome is a scandal. Alternative framings (e.g. "historic compromise in times of crisis" or "pragmatic shift in the face of geopolitical realities") are not offered as equally valid entry perspectives.

Finding 2: Timestamp: 01:30–02:30 — Quote: Lanz quotes Trittin from 18 January: "the CDU is currently promising people the moon, fiscally unsound, breach of promise with advance notice. And one does not know what is worse, the stupidity or the audacity." — Manipulation: The framing of "breach of promise" is set as the second element of the opening, before any guest has even spoken. — Why problematic: The programme begins with two consecutive negative framings (Quattek + Trittin), both of which frame the CDU/CSU position as dishonest and irresponsible, without a Union representative being present to contradict this.

Finding 3: Timestamp: 02:30–03:30 — Quote: Lanz on Merz: "So, a nice embarrassed scratch of the ear as he says that it is in large parts the programme of the Greens" — Manipulation: Body language framing. Lanz interprets a gesture by Merz as "embarrassed", suggesting a guilty conscience. — Why problematic: The interpretation of body language as "embarrassed" is subjective and evaluative. It reinforces the narrative of the caught promise-breaker.

Summary: From the very beginning, the programme is set within a frame of the Union's "breach of promise" and "irresponsibility". This framing is established through the opening sequence with two negative assessments and a body language interpretation, before the discussion has even begun.



11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 (Lanz opening) — Quote: "Shocking, terrible, irresponsible, outrageous [...] lip service, cardinal sin, rubber formulations [...] classic politics with the watering can" — Manipulation: Lanz adopts Quattek's evaluative language as an introduction, thereby making it the programme's frame. — Why problematic: By incorporating these terms into the moderation, they are elevated from a guest's opinion to a quasi-objective programme frame.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. middle of the programme — Quote: Lanz: "Welcome, Ms Quattek, to Spin TV. Or where are we right now?" — Manipulation: Lanz describes Lauterbach's defence of the exploratory outcome as "spinning" and thereby frames the SPD's position as lacking credibility. — Why problematic: The presenter openly positions himself here against the position of a guest and dismisses his argumentation wholesale, rather than examining it through follow-up questions.

Finding 3: Timestamp: approx. middle — Quote: Lanz: "How did it manage to pull the wool over Friedrich Merz's eyes so completely that he perceived the resulting friction as warmth and closeness?" — Manipulation: The formulation "pull the wool over someone's eyes" implies that the SPD took advantage of the Union in the negotiations. — Why problematic: This is not a question but an assertion in the form of a question. It presupposes that the outcome was one-sidedly in favour of the SPD — a value judgement that the presenter treats as fact.

Finding 4: Timestamp: Opening — Quote: "Breach of promise", "political lie" (Lanz to Lauterbach) — Manipulation: Lanz uses the terms "breach of promise" and "lie" as established facts and asks Lauterbach to confirm them. — Why problematic: "Breach of promise" and "lie" are moral judgements, not neutral descriptions. A presenter who presupposes these terms as given abandons the neutral position.

Summary: The presenter's choice of words is consistently evaluative and positioned. Terms such as "breach of promise", "Spin TV", "pull the wool over someone's eyes" and the adoption of Quattek's vocabulary into the moderation reveal a clear tendency to frame the exploratory outcome and in particular the Union's positions negatively.



12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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Lanz is known for provocative follow-up questions — the asymmetric challenge is particularly pronounced here.

Finding 1: Timestamp: Early programme phase — Quote (Lanz to Lauterbach): "That is not a breach of promise?" — then: "That is also not a political lie?" — then: "Excuse me, Mr Lauterbach, just briefly. How would you be talking if Friedrich Merz had done that with Jürgen Trittin?" — Analysis: Lanz puts three consecutive suggestive questions to Lauterbach, all of which presuppose the same narrative ("breach of promise/lie"). He interrupts Lauterbach several times before the latter can develop his argument. By comparison: Trittin is never challenged with comparable intensity, even though his account is also one-sided.

Finding 2: Timestamp: Middle of the programme — Quote (Lanz): "Welcome, Ms Quattek, to Spin TV. Or where are we right now?" — Analysis: Lanz dismisses Lauterbach's argumentation wholesale as "spinning" and thereby implicitly allies himself with Quattek against Lauterbach. This is not neutral moderation but a positioning.

Finding 3: Timestamp: Later phase — Quote (Lanz to Lauterbach): "You have now talked at great length about how wonderfully things are going and how euphorically you are also celebrating Friedrich Merz." — Analysis: Lanz caricatures Lauterbach's position as "euphorically celebrating Merz", which is a gross distortion of what Lauterbach actually said (he argued in a differentiated manner and also expressed criticism, e.g. of the Mütterrente).

Finding 4: Timestamp: Entire programme — Analysis of the treatment of Trittin: Trittin is treated with consistent respect throughout, described as an "experienced parliamentarian" and "master of figures". His statements are never questioned with comparable sharpness. When Trittin says "That was a breach of promise with advance notice", no counter-question follows such as "But did the Greens not also promise things during the election campaign that they were unable to keep?"

Finding 5: Timestamp: Towards the end — Quote (Lanz on the Greens press conference): "There were a few very proud women at work there, that is how I perceived it" — Analysis: Lanz describes the Greens' rejection empathetically and positively ("proud women at work"), while consistently framing the Union's positions negatively.

Summary: The moderation behaviour shows a clear asymmetry. Lauterbach is aggressively and repeatedly interrupted, his arguments are dismissed as "spinning". Trittin is treated respectfully and benevolently, his positions are barely challenged. Quattek is positioned as a neutral expert, even though she too has a clear tendency. The moderation systematically reinforces the narrative of "breach of promise".



13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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Asymmetry 1: To Lauterbach, early phase: "That is not a breach of promise? [...] That is also not a political lie?" [extremely hard, suggestive, followed up three times] — To Trittin, early phase: "What did you think when you read the first results of this exploratory process?" [open, inviting, not confrontational]

Asymmetry 2: To Lauterbach, middle: "Mr Lauterbach, what are we doing here now? This is really just splitting hairs." [dismissive, interrupting] — To Trittin, middle: "How does your calculation work?" [factual, respectful, inviting]

Asymmetry 3: To Lauterbach, later phase: "You have now talked at great length about how wonderfully things are going and how euphorically you are also celebrating Friedrich Merz." [caricaturing, distorting] — To Trittin, later phase: "What America do you see right now and does that concern you?" [serious, respectful, aimed at expertise]

Asymmetry 4: To Lauterbach: "You are a doctor, not an economist?" [questioning competence] — To Trittin: "You are also a master of figures" [affirming competence]

Asymmetry 5: To Quattek: Consistently respectful, inviting questions throughout. Not a single confrontational follow-up question, even though her figures (50–80 bn) are disputed by Lauterbach.

Summary: The question asymmetry is massive. Lauterbach is confronted with suggestive, confrontational and at times dismissive questions, while Trittin and Quattek are questioned consistently respectfully and invitingly. This creates the impression that Lauterbach's position is the outsider position to be defended, while Trittin and Quattek represent the "reasonable" majority opinion.



14. FALSE BALANCE

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Finding 1: The programme does not suffer from false balance in the classical sense (equal weighting of majority and minority opinions), but from the opposite: a structural imbalance in favour of the critical perspective. The defence of the exploratory outcome (Lauterbach) faces two critics (Quattek, Trittin) and a critically moderating Lanz.

Summary: False balance is not a problem in this programme. The problem is rather the lack of balance: the defenders of the exploratory outcome are structurally underrepresented, while the critics are overrepresented.



15. AGENDA-SETTING

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Finding 1: Agenda element set: "Union's breach of promise" as the central narrative — Timestamp: 00:00–05:00 — Evidence: Opening sequence with Quattek quotes and Trittin quote — Alternative: The programme could also have opened with the question: "Is this historic investment offensive the right response to the geopolitical turning point?" or "How can Germany make its infrastructure and defence fit for the future?"

Finding 2: Agenda element set: "Greens as moral authority" — Timestamp: Throughout — Evidence: The Greens are portrayed as those who are right to set conditions, while the Union is portrayed as having broken its word and the SPD as too compliant. — Alternative: The question of whether the Greens, by refusing, are blocking a necessary Basic Law amendment and thereby bearing responsibility for delays, is barely raised.

Finding 3: Agenda element set: "Mütterrente and commuter allowance as wasteful spending" — Timestamp: Middle — Evidence: Quattek and Trittin criticise these items repeatedly — Alternative: The question of whether these measures are important and socially justified for certain population groups is not raised.

Summary: The programme's agenda-setting focuses on "breach of promise", "watering-can politics" and "Greens as a corrective". Alternative agendas (e.g. "historic opportunity for investment", "European defence autonomy", "intergenerational equity") are not set, or only marginally so.



CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

Results

Dominant techniques

- 1. Moderation behaviour / question asymmetry (score 8/8):** The most massive distortion arises from the systematically different treatment of the guests. Lauterbach is treated as the defender of an untenable position, while Trittin is staged as a wise analyst. This asymmetry runs through the entire programme and is particularly effective for the viewer because it frames the credibility of the positions differently.
- 2. Framing / agenda-setting (score 7/7):** The programme is set from the very first second within the frame of "the Union's breach of promise". This narrative is never seriously called into question, but is reinforced by all further elements (inserts, questions, guest selection). Alternative framings ("necessary adaptation to changed realities", "historic investment opportunity") are only introduced by Lauterbach and immediately relativised.
- 3. Expert selection / omission (score 7/7):** The absence of a CDU/CSU representative in a programme that primarily criticises Union policy is the most serious structural deficiency. This is compounded by the absence of constitutional lawyers, independent economists and opposition voices. The omissions all work in the same direction: they reinforce the narrative of the irresponsible, promise-breaking Union.

Justification: The programme displays a clear one-sidedness that results from the interaction of several factors: The absence of a CDU/CSU representative in a programme that primarily criticises Union policy violates the requirement of diversity of opinion under §26 MStV. The asymmetric moderation, in which the sole defender of the exploratory outcome is systematically treated more harshly than the critics, reinforces the one-sidedness. The consistent "breach of promise" framing without equivalent counter-narratives and the complete absence of any opposition voices (AfD, FDP, BSW, Linke) on a matter of constitutional significance round off the picture. The programme does not reach the threshold of a "systematic imbalance" because Lauterbach does get to speak and some of his arguments remain in the room, and because in the final third (America/climate) a more differentiated discussion takes place.

CONCLUSION

The programme of approx. 11–13 March 2025 displays a clear one-sidedness that does not meet the requirements of §26 MStV regarding diversity of opinion and balance. The central deficiency is the absence of a CDU/CSU representative in a programme that primarily addresses the Union's about-turn on the debt brake — the affected party is represented exclusively through quotes and interpretations by its critics. The asymmetric moderation, in which Karl Lauterbach as the sole defender of the exploratory outcome is systematically treated more aggressively than the critics Trittin and Quattek, reinforces the structural imbalance. On a matter of constitutional significance (Basic Law amendment, 500+ billion euros special fund), a broader diversity of perspectives — including constitutional law, independent economics and parliamentary opposition — would have been not only desirable but required under the ZDF's public service mandate.



CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Concrete evidence
CDU/CSU	-3	00:00 "Shocking, terrible, irresponsible" (opening); "breach of promise with advance notice" (Trittin); "embarrassed scratch of the ear" (Lanz on Merz); Söder insert as negative example; no Union representative present; "pull the wool over someone's eyes" (Lanz); Dobrindt criticism through Pistorius quote
SPD	+1	Lauterbach is allowed to argue but is challenged hard; Klingbeil is acknowledged as a "very good negotiator"; SPD investment policy is presented as reasonable; Lauterbach is treated more benevolently towards the end ("Will you continue?"); Pistorius quote is characterised as "witty"
Greens	+3	Trittin is introduced as an "experienced parliamentarian" and "master of figures"; the Greens' refusal is portrayed empathetically ("proud women at work"); the Greens' climate policy is acknowledged as forward-looking; Habeck is presented as a pioneer of investment policy; the Heating Act is characterised as successful; no confrontational follow-up question to Trittin
FDP	-1	Mentioned once in passing as a blocker in the coalition government ("particularly with colleagues from the FDP"); no independent recognition
AfD	-2	Only mentioned as a negative foil ("no legislative initiatives that are dependent on the AfD's approval"); no substantive engagement with AfD positions on the debt brake or Basic Law amendment
BSW	0	Not mentioned
Linke	0	Mentioned once as a potential coalition partner that would "certainly not" participate in defence spending; neutral
Freie Wähler	0	Not mentioned

Party bias summary

- Most favoured: Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, score +3
- Most disadvantaged: CDU/CSU, score -3
- Conclusion: The programme displays a clear bias in favour of the Greens and to the detriment of the CDU/CSU. The Greens are portrayed as a forward-looking, principled force whose conditions for the Basic Law amendment are justified and whose climate policy is forward-thinking. The CDU/CSU is portrayed as having broken its word, as dishonest and tactically motivated, without a Union representative being able to correct this portrayal. The SPD is treated ambivalently: Lauterbach is allowed to argue but is framed as a "spinner". The overall impression is of a programme that establishes the Greens' perspective as the reasonable and morally superior position.



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

Assessment under §26 MStV

Violation 1: Lack of diversity of opinion on a constitutionally relevant topic

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV in conjunction with §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty — Facts: In a programme that primarily addresses the CDU/CSU's about-turn on the debt brake and a planned Basic Law amendment, no representative of the affected party (CDU/CSU) is present. The Union's perspective is conveyed exclusively through quotes and interpretations by its critics. Equally absent are representatives of the parliamentary opposition (AfD, FDP, BSW, Linke), even though their approval or rejection is relevant to the Basic Law amendment. — Evidence: Entire programme; no CDU/CSU guest; no opposition guest — Assessment: This constitutes a violation of the requirement of diversity of opinion. §26 para. 1 MStV requires that the "significant political, ideological and social forces and groups" are given adequate opportunity to speak. On a matter of constitutional significance, the absence of the main party concerned and the entire opposition is a serious deficiency.

Violation 2: Asymmetric moderation

Norm: §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty (objectivity and impartiality) — Facts: The presenter treats the sole defender of the exploratory outcome (Lauterbach) systematically more harshly than the critics (Trittin, Quattek). Suggestive questions ("That is not a breach of promise?", "That is also not a political lie?"), dismissive comments ("Spin TV") and interruptions are directed primarily at Lauterbach, while Trittin is questioned respectfully and invitingly. — Evidence: Early phase: threefold suggestive follow-up question to Lauterbach; middle: "Spin TV"; later phase: "how euphorically you are also celebrating Friedrich Merz" — Assessment: The asymmetric moderation violates the requirement of objectivity and impartiality. A presenter in public service broadcasting may provoke and follow up, but must do so symmetrically. The systematic favouring of one side through different questioning techniques is incompatible with the requirement of impartiality.

Violation 3: One-sided framing through the programme opening

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV (balance) — Facts: The programme is opened with a double negative framing (Quattek quotes: "shocking, terrible, irresponsible"; Trittin quote: "breach of promise with advance notice, stupidity or audacity"), which sets the entire discussion frame. An alternative framing is not offered. — Evidence: 00:00–02:30 — Assessment: The one-sided framing of the programme opening violates the requirement of balance, as it suggests to viewers a particular assessment of the exploratory outcome before the discussion has even begun.

Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme displays several violations of the requirements of §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty. The requirement of diversity of opinion (§26 para. 1 MStV) demands that in the totality of reporting, the significant political forces are given adequate opportunity to speak. In the case of a single programme on a matter of constitutional significance — Basic Law amendment, 500+ billion euros special fund, relaxation of the debt brake — the complete absence of the main party concerned (CDU/CSU) and the entire parliamentary opposition is a serious deficiency that can only be compensated with difficulty even by considering the overall programme. The ZDF State Treaty (§5 para. 1) obliges the ZDF to objectivity and impartiality; the asymmetric moderation and the one-sided framing are in tension with this. The ZDF Television Council as the competent supervisory body would be required to review compliance with these principles and, if necessary, to work towards a more balanced guest selection and moderation practice.



OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE 15 CRITERIA

Individual scores — All 15 criteria

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

HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

5.9/10

Considerable imbalance

SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

6.5/10

Serious deviation from the impartiality requirement. High degree of deviation

OVERALL SCORE

6.2/10

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 meets the requirement of factual accuracy.
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, programme-wide 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 treated worse in portrayal, speaking time or framing.
-2 to -1	Slightly disadvantaged	Discernible but weak disadvantage.
0	Neutral	No discernible favouring or disadvantaging.
+1 to +2	Slightly favoured	Discernible but weak favouring.
+3 to +5	Strongly favoured	Party is clearly treated better in portrayal, speaking time or framing.



Legal and methodological classification

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



APPENDIX: NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Legal basis Germany — ARD, ZDF

Law

Interstate Media Treaty (MStV, 2020)

Relevant articles

- §26 para. 1 MStV: Public service broadcasters must provide in their offerings a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life. In doing so, they shall promote international understanding, European integration and social cohesion in the Federation and the Länder. Their offerings must serve education, information, advice and entertainment. They must offer contributions in particular to culture. Entertainment must correspond to a public service offering profile.
- §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty: Obligation to objectivity and impartiality of reporting, taking into account diversity of opinion.
- ARD State Treaty: Public service mandate with objectivity and impartiality.

Core obligations

- 1. Diversity of opinion (internal pluralism):** All relevant perspectives must be represented in the overall programme
- 2. Objectivity and 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 regional public broadcasters: Supervision of ARD broadcasters (BR, WDR, NDR, etc.)
- ZDF Television Council (§19 ZDF State Treaty): Supervision of ZDF programming
- Legal supervision: Respective federal state (ZDF: Rhineland-Palatinate)

Complaints procedure

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



APPENDIX 2: SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS

Literature

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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 lodge a complaint. There is even a body for this: the IGAC, the Independent Grievance 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 body that is supposed to protect citizens primarily protects the system it was supposed to control.

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