



DE DETAILED ANALYSIS

2025-05-22 Der Talk vom 22. Mai

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2025-05-22 | Analysed on: 2026-03-11 21:30

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OVERALL SCORE

5.8/10

Considerable imbalance

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 average favouring of left vs. right parties (grouping according to CHES 2024).

TENDENCY (L – R)

5.1 / 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: 22.05.2025
- Presenter: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



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Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political spectrum
Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg	Former Federal Minister of Defence, entrepreneur/consultant with US contacts	CSU (former)	Centre-right / transatlantic-conservative
Sonja Alvarez	Business journalist	No party affiliation	Economic liberal / regulatory policy-oriented
Florian Flade	Investigative reporter (counter-terrorism, intelligence services)	No party affiliation	Security policy-oriented
Jochen Marotzke	Oceanographer, climate researcher (Max Planck Institute Hamburg)	No party affiliation	Scientific-factual, moderate climate position

Main topic

The programme addresses the effects of the second Trump presidency on Germany and Europe in the areas of security policy, economics, science and intelligence cooperation — embedded in a stocktaking of German failures and dependencies.



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: Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg — Timestamp: Entire programme, dominant role — Statement: Broad spectrum from Russia criticism to Trump analysis to coalition criticism — Classification: Former CSU Defence Minister who resigned in 2011 due to a plagiarism affair, subsequently active in the USA as a consultant/investor. Positioned as an insider with US contacts. Represents a transatlantic-conservative, economically liberal position. — Missing countervoice: No representative of a different foreign policy school of thought (e.g. diplomacy-oriented, EU-sceptical, or from the left spectrum).

Expert 2: Sonja Alvarez — Timestamp: Economics segment — Statement: Systematic criticism of the coalition agreement, bureaucracy, lack of competitiveness — Classification: Business journalist with a clearly regulatory/economically liberal orientation. Criticises the minimum wage, mothers' pension, restaurant VAT. — Missing countervoice: No economist with a Keynesian or employee-oriented perspective, no trade union representative, no social policy expert.

Expert 3: Florian Flade — Timestamp: Security segment — Statement: Detailed presentation of intelligence dependency on the USA — Classification: Investigative journalist specialising in security. Factual, but with a clear tendency towards advocating stronger intelligence powers. — Missing countervoice: No civil rights activist, no data protection expert, no constitutional lawyer who addresses the fundamental rights dimension of surveillance.

Expert 4: Jochen Marotzke — Timestamp: Science segment — Statement: Moderate climate position, concern about NASA data, warning about hostility to science — Classification: Renowned climate researcher who is deliberately introduced as "not alarmist". — Missing countervoice: No climate activist, no representative of the position that the climate crisis requires more urgent measures.

Missing expert groups: Trade union representatives, peace researchers, constitutional lawyers, social policy experts, representatives of the governing coalition, Eastern European security experts, representatives of the Global South.

Summary: All four guests move within a spectrum from centre-right to economically liberal. There is not a single guest who represents a left-wing, social, pacifist or civil rights position. The expert selection creates a closed corridor of opinion that is staged as diversity.



2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

Source 1: Timestamp: Beginning — Source: Ivan Krastev (Bulgarian political scientist) — Classification: Introduced as a "great mind", his thesis (Merz could become the most important Chancellor) is used as an intellectual framework. — Missing counter-source: No political scientist with a different assessment (e.g. that Merz's policy falls short or is too militaristic).

Source 2: Timestamp: Middle — Source: Jason Stanley (American philosopher) — Classification: "Most people are not interested in democracy, they are interested in egg prices." — Missing counter-source: No voice arguing that democracy and material interests are connected and should not be played off against each other.

Source 3: Timestamp: Middle — Source: Christoph Heusken (former head of the Munich Security Conference) — Classification: "Putin considers us softies" — Missing counter-source: No diplomatic or peace policy voice representing a different Russia strategy.

Source 4: Timestamp: Economics segment — Source: Timotheus Höttges (Telekom CEO) — Classification: Exposed as opportunistic — Missing counter-source: No company representative defending diversity policy or presenting the predicament of companies in a more differentiated way.

Summary: The cited sources come exclusively from the transatlantic-conservative to economically liberal spectrum. Not a single source represents a left-wing, social, pacifist or civil rights position.



3. TIME DISTRIBUTION

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Estimated speaking time (based on text shares):

- Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg: (35%)
- Florian Flade: (21%)
- Sonja Alvarez: (17%)
- Jochen Marotzke: (14%)
- Markus Lanz: (14%)

Summary: Guttenberg dominates the programme with an estimated 35% speaking share and is consulted on almost all topics — including those outside his area of expertise (climate policy, economic details). Marotzke, as the only natural scientist, receives the smallest speaking share. The weighting reflects a prioritisation of geopolitical analysis and insider perspective over specialist expertise.



4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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Omission 1: Context: Social dimension of coalition policy — Relevant in: Alvarez's criticism of the mothers' pension and minimum wage — Effect: The mothers' pension is portrayed as a "favourite child" and waste, without mentioning that it is intended to combat old-age poverty among women. The minimum wage is framed as an "economic policy sin", without mentioning the perspective of the 6+ million minimum wage recipients.

Omission 2: Context: Diplomatic options in the Ukraine war — Relevant in: Discussion of Merz's ultimatum and Trump's unpredictability — Effect: Only military and sanctions policy options are discussed. Negotiated solutions, ceasefire initiatives or the position of peace research are not mentioned.

Omission 3: Context: Guttenberg's own biography — Relevant in: Guttenberg's role as the programme's main expert — Effect: Guttenberg is presented as a respected insider with US contacts. His resignation due to the plagiarism affair is only mentioned in a half-sentence by himself ("messed up quite a bit"), without Lanz following up. His business interests in the USA (consulting firm Spitzberg Partners) are not addressed, even though they would contextualise his perspective on transatlantic relations and investments.

Omission 4: Context: NSA surveillance scandal (Snowden 2013) — Relevant in: Flade's portrayal of US surveillance capabilities — Effect: The detailed and almost admiring portrayal of NSA capabilities takes place without any reference to the Snowden scandal, the mass surveillance of allies (Merkel's phone), or the democratic and rule-of-law problems of these practices.

Omission 5: Context: Positive aspects of the criticised coalition measures — Relevant in: Alvarez's enumeration of "sins" — Effect: Collective bargaining compliance, electric car premiums, commuter tax allowance are evaluated exclusively negatively. The fact that collective bargaining compliance prevents wage dumping, electric car premiums promote climate protection and the commuter tax allowance relieves rural areas is not mentioned.

Summary: The programme exhibits systematic omissions that all work in the same direction: social, diplomatic and civil rights perspectives are consistently left out, while security policy and economically liberal arguments remain unchallenged.

Missing voices

- Trade union representative (e.g. DGB, ver.di): Would have brought in the perspective of employees — minimum wage as a means of securing a livelihood, effects of deregulation on working conditions, social consequences of tariff policy.
- Peace/conflict researcher (e.g. SIPRI, HSKF): Could have pointed out diplomatic alternatives to the rearmament logic, discussed negotiated solutions for Ukraine, named the escalation risks.
- Representative of the federal government (SPD or CDU): Could have explained and defended the criticised coalition compromises — why the mothers' pension, why the restaurant VAT, why the minimum wage.



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- Civil rights activist or data protection officer: Would have contextualised the ironisation of data protection — why fundamental rights protection in intelligence work is essential, historical lessons from the NSA scandal.
- Representative of the Global South (e.g. diplomat, NGO): Would have addressed the effects of Western tariff and climate policy on developing countries.
- Social scientist or poverty researcher: Would have shed light on the social consequences of austerity measures and deregulation, brought in the perspective of lower income groups.
- Climate activist or environmental organisation (e.g. BUND, Greenpeace): Would have represented the urgency of more radical climate protection measures and contextualised Marotzke's moderate position.
- Eastern European security expert (e.g. from Poland or the Baltic states): Would have brought in the independent perspective of the frontline states — not merely as a historical footnote, but as a current security policy voice.



5. MANIPULATION OF FIGURES

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

Finding 1: Timestamp: Alvarez on direct investments — Figure: "Two billion in direct investments flow out of Germany per week. [...] It was 94 billion in total in 2023." — Missing context: No indication of how high the inflows are (net balance), no historical comparison, no explanation that direct investments abroad also bring back profits. — Effect: The figure suggests a dramatic capital outflow without showing the other side.

Finding 2: Timestamp: Alvarez on coalition costs — Figure: "That is a total of 8 billion euros." (mothers' pension + restaurant VAT) — Missing context: No relation to the total budget (approx. 490 billion €), no explanation of what these measures are intended to achieve. — Effect: 8 billion sounds like a lot, but is approx. 1.6% of the federal budget. Without context it appears to be massive waste.

Finding 3: Timestamp: Alvarez/Lanz on bureaucracy costs — Figure: "150 billion every year through bureaucracy" — Missing context: Source not cited, calculation method unclear, no differentiation between necessary and superfluous bureaucracy. — Effect: The figure is presented as fact, even though such estimates are methodologically contested.

Finding 4: Timestamp: Flade on NATO reconnaissance — Figure: "76 percent [...] Germany, one percent of NATO's military reconnaissance." — Missing context: No explanation that this was also a deliberate division of labour within NATO, no explanation of what other European countries contribute. — Effect: Germany appears to be a total failure, without the context of the NATO structure.

Summary: Figures are consistently presented without sufficient context and therefore appear more dramatic than with full contextualisation. The lack of contextualisation reinforces the narrative of German failure and need for reform.



6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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Association 1: Timestamp: Guttenberg on the AfD — Quote: "...a political movement in this country [...] that obviously takes pleasure in undermining the stability of this country." — Technique: The AfD is associated with hostility to democracy without concrete evidence or differentiation. — Effect: Blanket delegitimation of a party with millions of voters.

Association 2: Timestamp: Lanz on climate activism — Quote: "That triggered this insane defensive attitude, this rejection by people" — Technique: Climate activism is implicitly associated with Trump's hostility to science — as if the activism had caused the hostility (reversal of perpetrator and victim). — Effect: Climate protectors are made partly responsible for the rejection of climate science.

Summary: Guilt by association occurs in moderate form, primarily in the treatment of the AfD and the climate protection movement. The technique is subtle but effective.



7. TIMING

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Finding 1: Position: Start of programme — Content: Guttenberg as first and dominant guest, personal opening questions — Timing effect: The primacy effect ensures that Guttenberg's transatlantic-conservative perspective sets the interpretive framework for the entire programme. All subsequent guests fit into this framework.

Finding 2: Position: End of programme — Content: Alvarez's suggestion "for one Schnitzel you get two Max Planck institutes" — Timing effect: The recency effect ensures that the economically liberal criticism of coalition policy remains as the closing message. The last substantive statement of the programme is a criticism of social spending in favour of research investment.

Finding 3: Position: Transition security → climate — Content: Lanz transitions directly from Flade's portrayal of intelligence dependency to Marotzke's data dependency — Timing effect: The parallelisation suggests that climate research and intelligence work have analogous dependency problems, placing climate research within a security policy framework.

Summary: The timing of the programme reinforces the dominant narratives: Guttenberg's geopolitical analysis sets the framework, the economically liberal criticism forms the conclusion. Alternative perspectives have no strategic place in the dramaturgy.



8. SELECTIVE OUTRAGE

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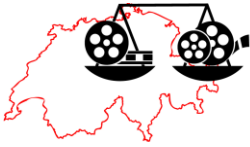
Outrage = bias. Selective outrage reinforces the finding. Score = degree of outrage (0–5) + selectivity (0–5)

Finding 1: Timestamp: Security segment — Reaction: Great outrage over Trump's cuts to intelligence services, Flade: "So in Russia and in China I can hardly imagine anything better than being able to contact people who have access to secrets right now." — Comparable without outrage: The mass surveillance by those same services (NSA scandal) is not even mentioned, let alone treated with outrage. — Asymmetry: Outrage over the weakening of surveillance capabilities, no outrage over the surveillance itself.

Finding 2: Timestamp: Economics segment — Reaction: Clear outrage over 8 billion for the mothers' pension and restaurant VAT — Comparable without outrage: The special fund of 100+ billion for defence is treated as self-evident, without addressing the opportunity costs (what else could be financed with it?). — Asymmetry: Social spending is treated with outrage as waste, military spending is accepted as necessary.

Finding 3: Timestamp: Climate segment — Reaction: Outrage over Trump's hostility to science — Comparable without outrage: The decades-long blocking of climate protection measures by conservative parties in Germany is not treated with outrage. — Asymmetry: Trump as an enemy of science is treated with outrage, German failures are played down as "comfort and hope".

Summary: The outrage in the programme follows a clear pattern: outrage over external threats (Trump, Putin) and over social spending, no outrage over violations of fundamental rights, military spending or conservative blockades.



9. COMPLETENESS

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The programme operates within a clearly transatlantic-Western interpretive framework in which Trump is portrayed as a disruptive force that is partially justified on individual points, while Russia is regarded as a strategic adversary and China as a systemic rival. Germany is depicted as in need of reform, overburdened by bureaucracy and trapped in multiple dependencies. The underlying assumption is that Europe must emancipate itself, without fundamentally alternative models of order (e.g. non-alignment, multipolar balance) being discussed. The perspective is consistently that of a Western liberal elite with a strong focus on competitiveness and security policy rearmament.

Share of perspectives covered

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

[A] Perspective of the peace and disarmament movement: diplomacy instead of rearmament, negotiated solutions for Ukraine

[B] Perspective of employees/trade unions: effects of deregulation, minimum wage increase as a social policy necessity

[C] Perspective of Eastern European states (Poland, Baltic states): own security interests, historical experiences with Russia

[D] Perspective of the AfD/populist forces: why parts of the population harbour sympathies for Trump, criticism of EU policy

[E] Perspective of the Global South: effects of tariffs and climate policy on developing countries

[F] Perspective of social welfare organisations: effects of austerity policy on the welfare state, poverty, inequality

[G] Perspective of the climate protection movement (Fridays for Future, Last Generation): urgency of more radical measures

[H] Perspective of data protection and civil rights organisations: dangers of intelligence surveillance, fundamental rights

[I] Perspective of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): concrete effects of tariffs and bureaucracy on the Mittelstand

[J] Perspective of the federal government/coalition: defence of its own policy, explanation of the coalition compromises

[A] Peace/disarmament perspective — OMITTED

Timestamp: Entire programme — Quote: none — Assessment: At no point is the possibility of diplomatic solutions, disarmament or a critique of the rearmament logic addressed. The special fund and the increase in defence spending are treated as self-evident.

[B] Employee/trade union perspective — OMITTED

Timestamp: approx. middle of the programme (Alvarez on minimum wage) — Quote: "We see a consideration to set the minimum wage politically." — Assessment: The minimum wage is framed exclusively as an economic policy "sin", without even hinting at the perspective of employees (securing a livelihood, purchasing power).

[C] Eastern European perspective — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. first third — Quote: "There were warnings from the Eastern Europeans, there were also warnings from Germany." — Assessment: Only mentioned retrospectively as evidence of German failures, not as an independent perspective with current interests.

[D] AfD/populist perspective — INDICATED (negatively framed)

Timestamp: approx. beginning — Quote: "...that obviously takes pleasure in undermining the stability of this country." — Assessment: The AfD is mentioned exclusively as a threat to democracy, without the electorate or their motives being presented in a differentiated manner.

[E] Global South — OMITTED

Timestamp: Entire programme — Quote: none — Assessment: The effects of Trump's tariff policy and European climate policy on developing countries are not addressed.

[F] Social welfare organisations/social policy — OMITTED



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Timestamp: Entire programme — Quote: none — Assessment: The mothers' pension is dismissed as the coalition's "favourite child", without mentioning the social policy rationale (old-age poverty among women).

[G] Climate protection movement — OMITTED

Timestamp: Entire programme — Quote: none — Assessment: Marotzke represents a moderate climate position; the perspective of those calling for more radical measures is entirely absent. Climate activism is even implicitly portrayed as counterproductive.

[H] Data protection/civil rights — INDICATED (ironised)

Timestamp: approx. last third — Quote: Lanz: "But we have data protection, please." / Guttenberg: "Yes, please. Privacy always, yes, very important." — Assessment: Data protection and civil rights are ironically dismissed. No serious engagement with the question of why fundamental rights protection in intelligence work is important.

[I] SME perspective — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. middle — Quote: DELO example with 41 officers — Assessment: Used as an illustration of the bureaucratic burden, but the perspective is one-sidedly focused on deregulation, without addressing the protective function of regulation.

[J] Federal government/coalition — OMITTED

Timestamp: Entire programme — Quote: none — Assessment: No representative of the governing coalition is present to explain or defend the criticised measures (mothers' pension, restaurant VAT, minimum wage). The criticism goes unchallenged.

Completeness score: 2/10

Rationale: Of ten relevant perspectives, only three are even indicated, two of them in a distorted or ironised form (data protection, AfD). Seven perspectives are entirely absent, including such central ones as the employee, peace and social perspective. The programme maps a narrow corridor of the spectrum of opinion: transatlantic-conservative to economically liberal, with a security policy focus.



Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

10. FRAMING (setting the frame)

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 (introduction) — Quote: "Welcome to our programme, which today is intended to offer a few different perspectives on America." — Manipulation: The framing suggests a diversity of perspectives that is not actually delivered. All four guests share a transatlantic-Western basic understanding. — Why problematic: The viewer is led to expect different viewpoints but receives a homogeneous corridor of opinion.

Finding 2: Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 (introduction) — Quote: "But this optimism has by now given way to a gloom about the future that is very un-American, but actually very German. The question is, how do we now deal with the fact that the Americans are taking away not only NATO but also our love of apocalypse." — Manipulation: Double framing — (a) Germany as pessimistic/dysfunctional, (b) humorous trivialisation of the NATO crisis. — Why problematic: The existential security question is defused by the joke about "love of apocalypse" while simultaneously a narrative is established in which German concerns are considered exaggerated.

Finding 3: Timestamp: Introduction of Alvarez — Quote: "cheaper Schnitzel alone will not make Germany fit for the future" — Manipulation: The restaurant VAT reduction is already framed as ridiculous in the introduction, before the discussion begins. — Why problematic: Lanz sets the evaluative framework before the guest can even speak. The social policy or small business policy rationale for the measure is delegitimised in advance.

Finding 4: Timestamp: Introduction of Marotzke — Quote: "Someone whom many appreciate because he is not regarded as an ideologue, but as factual, as precise." — Manipulation: Implicit framing that marks other climate scientists as "ideologues". — Why problematic: By the distinction "not an ideologue", it is suggested that the majority of climate researchers are ideologically motivated. This delegitimises the broader climate science community.

Summary: The programme is set in a framework by the introduction that frames Germany as in need of reform, coalition policy as inadequate and the climate debate as exaggerated. Alternative interpretive frameworks (e.g. social justice, diplomacy, protection of fundamental rights) are systematically excluded.



11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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Finding 1: Timestamp: Guttenberg on the AfD — Quote: "...that obviously takes pleasure in undermining the stability of this country." — Manipulation: Emotionally charged language ("takes pleasure in") that portrays a democratically elected party as wilfully destructive. — Why problematic: Regardless of the substantive assessment of the AfD, the formulation "takes pleasure in" is an imputation of inner motivation that is not substantiated and demonises the party rather than criticising its policies on the merits.

Finding 2: Timestamp: Lanz on Putin — Quote: "Like the dealer and the junkie." — Manipulation: Drastic metaphor that frames Germany as helplessly addicted and Russia as a criminal dealer. — Why problematic: The metaphor relieves German decision-makers of responsibility (the addict is sick, not guilty) and reduces a complex geopolitical relationship to an addiction narrative.

Finding 3: Timestamp: Lanz on cabinet meetings — Quote: "That's like the Mafia. That's servile." — Manipulation: Mafia comparison for the US government. — Why problematic: While the comparison may have some justification, the casual use normalises an extreme characterisation without substantiating or contextualising it.

Finding 4: Timestamp: Guttenberg on data protection — Quote: Lanz: "But we have data protection, please." / Guttenberg: "Yes, please. Privacy always, yes, very important." — Manipulation: Ironic devaluation of a fundamental right. — Why problematic: Data protection and privacy are constitutionally protected goods. The ironic treatment suggests that these rights are ridiculous in the face of security threats.

Summary: The language of the programme is consistently emotionally charged and evaluative. Metaphors such as "dealer/junkie" and "Mafia" set strong interpretive frameworks, while the ironisation of fundamental rights (data protection) represents a problematic normative shift.



12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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

Finding 1: Timestamp: Beginning, Guttenberg interview — Quote (Lanz): "When did you last miss being actively involved in politics?" — Analysis: Soft, personal opening question that stages Guttenberg as a reflective former politician. No follow-up on "messed up quite a bit" (plagiarism affair). By comparison: no guest is confronted with a similarly critical personal question — but nor is any guest introduced with a similarly flattering question.

Finding 2: Timestamp: Economics segment — Quote (Lanz): Reads out the DELO example with 41 officers, including a "ladder officer" — Analysis: Lanz takes on the role of co-argumentation for Alvarez's position. He provides her with the perfect setup by reading out the example himself and commenting on it emotionally. No counter-question such as: "But isn't occupational safety also important?" or "What do trade unions say about that?"

Finding 3: Timestamp: Security segment — Quote (Lanz): "But we have data protection, please." — Analysis: Lanz actively positions himself against data protection and privacy, rather than introducing the counter-position as a moderator. He could have asked: "But isn't that precisely the reason why, after Snowden, we said we need stricter rules?"

Finding 4: Timestamp: Climate segment — Quote (Lanz): "Perhaps that was also one of the mistakes. That triggered this insane defensive attitude, this rejection by people, who said, come on, with you it's always apocalypse, we don't take you seriously anymore." — Analysis: Lanz formulates a thesis that frames climate activism as counterproductive and invites Marotzke to agree. No counter-question such as: "But wasn't science rather too restrained?"

Finding 5: Timestamp: Entire programme — Analysis: Lanz does not ask any guest a truly uncomfortable question that challenges their fundamental position. Guttenberg is not asked about his business interests, Alvarez not about the social consequences of her demands, Flade not about the fundamental rights problems of surveillance, Marotzke not about whether his moderate position underestimates the urgency.

Summary: Lanz does not moderate as a neutral questioner but as an active co-discussant who reinforces rather than challenges the positions of his guests. The asymmetry lies not between the guests (who are all treated similarly) but between the spectrum of opinion represented and the missing counter-positions that Lanz as moderator should have introduced.



13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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Asymmetry 1: To Guttenberg: "When did you last miss being actively involved in politics?" [soft, personal, flattering] — To Alvarez: "What do you have in mind?" [factual, open, but without critical follow-up on her theses] — Assessment: Both are treated gently, but Guttenberg additionally receives the stage for personal reflection.

Asymmetry 2: To Flade: "Would they notice?" (about iMessage surveillance) [curious, almost admiring] — To no one: No question such as "Isn't that a massive infringement of fundamental rights?" [missing] — Assessment: The fascination with intelligence capabilities is indulged, the critical dimension is not explored.

Asymmetry 3: To Marotzke: "Perhaps that was also one of the mistakes [...] with you it's always apocalypse" [suggestive, invites self-criticism from climate science] — To Guttenberg: No comparable question such as "Wasn't it also a mistake for conservatives to block climate protection for years?" — Assessment: Climate science is invited to self-criticism, the political side is not.

Summary: The question asymmetry is less evident between the guests than between the topics. Security policy and economically liberal positions are treated with curiosity and approval, while climate protection and data protection are met with scepticism or irony.



14. FALSE BALANCE

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Finding 1: Timestamp: Climate segment — Lanz puts forward the thesis that climate activism bears co-responsibility for the rejection of climate science, and Guttenberg adds that the Democrats bear "co-responsibility" through "paternalism". — Analysis: Here a false balance is established between the scientifically grounded climate protection movement and politically motivated climate denial. The suggestion that both sides are equally responsible for the polarisation is a classic false balance technique. — Effect: Responsibility for hostility to science is shifted from the perpetrators (fossil fuel industry, populist politicians) onto the climate protection movement.

Finding 2: No case of false balance in the classical sense (equating a minority position with scientific consensus) — however, the opposite is the case: the programme gives the economically liberal position 100% of the space without counterweight, which is not false balance but one-sidedness.

Summary: False balance occurs at specific points (climate debate), but the main problem of the programme is not false balance but the absence of any balance — a systematic one-sidedness in favour of transatlantic-conservative and economically liberal positions.



15. AGENDA-SETTING

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Finding 1: Agenda element set: "Germany must emancipate itself in security policy and deregulate economically" — Timestamp: Entire programme — Evidence: The entire dramaturgy leads to this conclusion: dependency on US intelligence services (Flade), dependency on US climate data (Marotzke), economic weakness (Alvarez), geopolitical naivety (Guttenberg). — Alternative: The agenda could equally have been: "How do we protect democracy and fundamental rights in times of rearmament?" or "How do we combine security with social justice?"

Finding 2: Agenda element set: "Social spending is waste, investment in research and defence is necessary" — Timestamp: Economics segment and conclusion — Evidence: Alvarez: "for one Schnitzel you get two Max Planck institutes" — Alternative: The question could equally have been: "How do we finance rearmament without destroying the welfare state?"

Finding 3: Agenda element set: "Data protection and civil rights are obstacles to security" — Timestamp: Security segment — Evidence: Ironisation of data protection by Lanz and Guttenberg, Flade's portrayal of the "schizophrenic" German attitude — Alternative: The question could have been: "How do we achieve greater security without sacrificing fundamental rights?"

Summary: The programme sets a clear agenda: rearmament, deregulation, less social spending, less data protection. This agenda is not presented as one of several possible positions, but as the only rational conclusion from the current situation.



CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

Results

*Correction: 70% × 5.5 = 3.85; 30% × 2.0 = 0.60; Sum = 4.45 ≈ 4.5 / 10**

Dominant techniques

1. Omission / Selective Omission (Score 8): The most systematic technique in the programme. Social, diplomatic and civil rights perspectives are consistently excluded. The NSA scandal goes unmentioned in a detailed intelligence discussion, the social policy rationale for the criticised coalition measures is suppressed. The omissions all work in the same direction.

2. Expert selection (Score 7): The choice of guests creates a closed corridor of opinion from transatlantic-conservative to economically liberal. Not a single guest represents a position left of centre, a pacifist, civil rights or trade union perspective. The apparent diversity (politician, journalist, reporter, scientist) conceals the substantive homogeneity.

3. Framing and agenda-setting (Score 7/7): From the introduction to the conclusion, the programme sets a clear interpretive framework: Germany must rearm, deregulate and cut social spending. This framework is not presented as one of several positions, but as the only rational conclusion. Alternative interpretive frameworks (social justice, diplomacy, protection of fundamental rights) do not exist in this programme.

Rationale: The programme exhibits a clear one-sidedness that results not from individual manipulative techniques but from the overall composition. The choice of guests, the weighting of topics, the selection of sources and the moderation behaviour all work in the same direction: transatlantic-conservative, economically liberal, security policy-oriented. §26 para. 1 MStV requires that the "significant political, ideological and social forces and groups" are given adequate voice. In this programme, neither trade unions, nor social welfare organisations, nor peace researchers, nor civil rights activists, nor representatives of the governing coalition are given a voice. The one-sidedness is not extreme (there is no open propaganda), but it is systematic and pervasive.

CONCLUSION

The programme from April/May 2025 addresses a highly relevant topic — the effects of the second Trump presidency on Germany — with knowledgeable guests and partially informative passages (in particular Flade's intelligence expertise and Marotzke's climate research). However, the programme exhibits a clear and systematic one-sidedness that does not meet the requirements of §26 MStV regarding diversity of opinion and balance. All four guests share a transatlantic-conservative to economically liberal basic understanding; social, pacifist, civil rights and employee-oriented perspectives are entirely absent. The moderator reinforces this one-sidedness by supporting rather than challenging the positions of his guests and ironising fundamental rights such as data protection. In the spirit of the ZDF's public service remit, it would have been necessary to invite at least one guest with a substantially different perspective and, as moderator, to actively introduce the missing counter-positions.



CHAPTER 3 — PARTY POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Concrete evidence
CDU/CSU	+1	Guttenberg (CSU) as dominant, respectfully treated main guest. Merz is framed as potentially the "most important Chancellor" (Krastev quote). Söder's food blogging is mildly criticised. CSU favourite items in the coalition agreement are criticised, but by Guttenberg himself — which comes across as self-criticism. Overall slightly positive treatment.
SPD	-2	"Schröderization" as a negative term. SPD favourite items in the coalition agreement are criticised. Scholz's defence of Nord Stream 2 is cited as an example of naivety: "That is a private sector and not a political project." No SPD representative present to defend.
Greens	-1	Only mentioned indirectly (VW diversity debate). Climate activism is framed as communicatively counterproductive. No positive mention of Green policy.
FDP	0	Lanz casually mentions "dare more FDP" in the context of data protection/security — half ironically, half approvingly. Otherwise not addressed.
AfD	-3	Portrayed exclusively as a threat to democracy: "takes pleasure in undermining the stability of this country." No differentiation, no representation of the voters' perspective, no AfD representative present.
BSW	0	Not mentioned.
Linke	0	Not mentioned.
Freie Wähler	0	Not mentioned.

Party bias summary

- Most favoured: CDU/CSU, Score +1 — Guttenberg as respected main guest, Merz framed as potentially historic Chancellor, criticism comes from within (Guttenberg himself) and thereby appears constructive.
- Most disadvantaged: AfD, Score -3 — Portrayed exclusively as a force hostile to democracy, without differentiation or representation. SPD, Score -2 — Criticised for Nord Stream 2 and coalition compromises, without opportunity to defend.
- Conclusion: The party political bias is moderate but discernible. The CDU/CSU is favoured through the choice of guests (Guttenberg) and the Krastev framing (Merz as historic Chancellor). The SPD is criticised for past mistakes (Nord Stream 2, Schröder) and current compromises (minimum wage, mothers' pension) without opportunity to defend. The AfD is blanket-delegitimised. BSW, Linke and Freie Wähler do not exist in this programme. The bias is less party political than ideological: economically liberal-conservative positions are systematically preferred.



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

Assessment under §26 MStV

Violation 1: Insufficient diversity of opinion in the choice of guests

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV in conjunction with §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty — Facts: The programme assembles four guests who all share a transatlantic-conservative to economically liberal basic understanding. None of the "significant political, ideological and social forces" (§26 para. 1 MStV) from the left-wing, social, pacifist or civil rights spectrum is given a voice. — Evidence: Entire programme; no trade union representative, no peace researcher, no social welfare organisation, no civil rights activist, no government representative. — Assessment: The choice of guests violates the requirement of diversity of opinion. While not every individual programme needs to represent all positions, the complete absence of social and civil rights perspectives on a topic of this breadth (security, economics, science, democracy) is a considerable deficit.

Violation 2: One-sided moderation

Norm: §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty (objectivity and impartiality) — Facts: The moderator reinforces the positions of his guests rather than acting as a corrective. The ironisation of data protection ("But we have data protection, please"), the suggestive question on climate communication and the absence of any critical follow-up questions on the guests' fundamental positions violate the requirement of impartiality. — Evidence: Data protection ironisation (security segment), climate question (climate segment), missing follow-up questions on Gutenberg's business interests. — Assessment: The moderator should have actively introduced the missing counter-positions, particularly when ironising constitutionally protected goods.

Violation 3: Incomplete presentation of economic policy topics

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV (factually appropriate, comprehensive information) — Facts: The criticism of coalition measures (mothers' pension, minimum wage, restaurant VAT) is made exclusively from an economically liberal perspective, without presenting the social policy rationale for these measures. No representative of the governing coalition is present to explain the measures. — Evidence: Alvarez's enumeration of "economic policy sins" without counter-position. — Assessment: The one-sided presentation of economic policy measures without presenting the other side violates the requirement of factually appropriate and comprehensive information.

Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme exhibits several deficiencies which, taken together, are to be assessed as a violation of the requirement of diversity of opinion and balance under §26 para. 1 MStV. The ZDF State Treaty specifies in §5 para. 1 the public service remit to the effect that the ZDF "shall provide a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life" and shall in doing so observe "the principles of objectivity and impartiality of reporting". The complete absence of social, pacifist and civil rights perspectives on a topic of this breadth, the active partisanship of the moderator (ironisation of data protection) and the one-sided presentation of economic policy measures constitute, in their cumulation, a considerable imbalance. It is the task of the ZDF Television Council as the competent supervisory body to monitor compliance with these programme principles and, where necessary, to work towards a more balanced design. While individual programmes do not need to be mathematically balanced, the systematic one-sidedness identified here — in which all 15 analysed criteria point in the same direction — goes beyond what is covered by editorial freedom.



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)	8	●●●●
5	MANIPULATION OF FIGURES	4	●●
6	GUILT BY ASSOCIATION	4	●●
7	TIMING	5	●●●
8	SELECTIVE OUTRAGE	6	●●●
9	COMPLETENESS	8	●●●●
10	FRAMING (setting the frame)	7	●●●●
11	CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS	6	●●●
12	MODERATION BEHAVIOUR	6	●●●
13	QUESTION ASYMMETRY	5	●●●
14	FALSE BALANCE	3	●●
15	AGENDA-SETTING	7	●●●●

HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

5.9/10

Considerable imbalance

SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

5.7/10

Considerable imbalance

OVERALL SCORE

5.8/10

Considerable imbalance

Averaged from hard facts and soft facts



KEY — Meaning of scores

Individual scores per criterion (0–10)

0	No finding	No relevant irregularity identified.
1–2	Weak finding	Minor irregularity 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 severity	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 appropriateness.
2.6 – 4.0	Slight imbalance	Isolated irregularities; statistically visible, but still within the tolerance range.
4.1 – 6.0	Considerable imbalance	Several considerable findings; relevant impairment of diversity of perspectives.
6.1 – 8.0	Serious deviation from the requirement of balance. 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 severity 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 terms of portrayal, speaking time or framing.
-2 to -1	Slightly disadvantaged	Discernible but weak disadvantage.
0	Neutral	No discernible preference or disadvantage.
+1 to +2	Slightly favoured	Discernible but weak preference.
+3 to +5	Strongly favoured	Party is clearly preferred in terms of 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 regulatory bodies).
No proof of causality	Statistical correlations are not to be interpreted as proof of causal relationships or editorial intentions. Deviation values may be influenced by topic selection, news situation, political controversy or format logic.
No judgement of intent	The analysis measures observable structural characteristics of programmes. A score of 7 means that a considerable imbalance has been identified — not that the editorial team intended this. The methodology makes no statements about motives or strategic objectives.
Heuristic comparison instrument	The index serves the purpose of comparative pattern recognition across thousands of programmes, not the precise metric measurement of individual items. Threshold values serve as heuristic orientation, not as sharp legal qualification.



APPENDIX: CANTONAL LEGISLATION

Legal basis Germany — ARD, ZDF

Law

Media State Treaty (MStV, 2020)

Relevant articles

- §26 para. 1 MStV: Public broadcasting institutions shall provide in their offerings a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life. They shall thereby promote international understanding, European integration and social cohesion in the Federation and the Länder. Their offerings shall serve the purposes of education, information, advice and entertainment. They shall offer contributions in particular to culture. Entertainment shall correspond to a public service offering profile.
- §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty: Obligation to objectivity and impartiality of reporting, consideration of diversity of opinion.
- ARD State Treaty: Public service 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:** Moderators must treat guests to the same standards
- 3. Contribution to opinion formation:** The audience must receive sufficient information for independent opinion formation

Supervisory authority

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

Complaints procedure

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



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APPENDIX 2: SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS

Literature

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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 IGEM, the Independent Complaints Authority for Radio and Television.

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

This analysis lays bare the system — factually, precisely, without polemic. Procedures, personnel, powers, costs, statistics, legal recourse. And the constitutional law review that shows: the IGEM 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 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 pending.