



EN DETAILED ANALYSIS

2025-09-18 Der Talk vom 17. September

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2025-09-18 | Analysed on: 2026-03-11 19:54

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

OVERALL SCORE

4.8/10

Considerable bias

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

POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Classification according to Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) 2024

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

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

The overall tendency is represented 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)

5.0 / 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 the purpose of political classification and does not feed into the overall score.

PROGRAMME INFORMATION AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

Programme data

- Date: 18.09.2025
- Host: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



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

Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political spectrum
Boris Becker	Former tennis professional, author, TV expert	No party affiliation	Not classifiable (Celebrity/Entertainment)
Lilian de Carvalho Monteiro	Partner of Boris Becker, risk analyst/entrepreneur	No party affiliation	Not classifiable

Main topic

Boris Becker's personal reckoning with his time in prison in England, his insolvency, his life story and his new book — a purely personality-/celebrity-focused conversation with no political subject matter.



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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Guest 1: Boris Becker — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: The entire programme is his platform — Classification: Becker is simultaneously the subject and the only "expert" on his own story. He controls the narrative completely. — Missing counter-voice: No lawyer, no insolvency administrator, no critical journalist who could have contextualised Becker's account.

Guest 2: Lilian de Carvalho Monteiro — Timestamp: ~04:00ff — Statement: "He didn't get involved enough in his own business." — Classification: As his partner, she is structurally not an independent voice, but rather confirms and reinforces Becker's narrative. Her role is that of the loyal companion, not a critical counter-voice. — Missing counter-voice: An independent actor who could have questioned Becker's account.

Missing expert groups: Insolvency lawyers, criminal justice expert, sports psychologist, media scholar, critical biographer.

Summary: The guest selection is structurally one-sided — it involves a couple jointly promoting a book. There is not a single independent or critical voice. For an entertainment format this is common; for a programme within ZDF's information programming it is problematic.



2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

Source 1: Timestamp: throughout — Source: Boris Becker's own book — Classification: The book is the primary and practically sole source of the programme. Lanz quotes from it, structures the conversation around it and recommends it at the end. — Missing counter-source: Court documents, written judgment, insolvency administrator's reports, independent reporting.

Source 2: Timestamp: ~20:00 — Source: Apple TV documentary — Classification: A commercial production in which Becker himself is involved and from which he profits financially. — Missing counter-source: Independent journalistic documentary.

Source 3: Timestamp: ~14:00 — Source: Johannes B. Kerner interview from 2003 — Classification: A historical clip illustrating Becker's "early warning". Interesting journalistic research, but in the context of the programme it serves to extend Becker's narrative of suffering rather than to critically examine it.

Summary: The source selection is extremely one-sided — all sources come from Becker's own ecosystem (his book, his documentary, an old interview with him). Independent sources that could contextualise or refute his account are entirely absent.



3. TIME DISTRIBUTION

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Estimated speaking time:

- Boris Becker: ~18 min. (45%)
- Markus Lanz: ~14 min. (35%)
- Lilian de Carvalho Monteiro: ~8 min. (20%)

Summary: The time distribution is not unusual for a two- or three-person interview. The problem lies not in the distribution among those present, but in the fact that there is no counter-voice — 100% of speaking time falls to persons who share or actively support Becker's narrative (including Lanz himself).



4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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Omission 1: Context: The specific criminal offences are never named. Becker was convicted of concealing assets (including a property in Leimen, bank accounts, shares in a company) in the context of his insolvency proceedings — not because of "mistakes" or "lack of attention". — Relevant at: ~05:30–08:00 (entire block on responsibility) — Effect: The viewer never learns what Becker specifically did and is therefore unable to assess the seriousness of the offence.

Omission 2: Context: Judge Deborah Taylor stated at sentencing that Becker had shown "no remorse" and had "deliberately" failed to disclose his assets. Lilian mentions this briefly (~28:00: "the judge said that he had shown no remorse whatsoever"), but Lanz does not pursue this and allows Lilian's reinterpretation ("Does one not want him to show remorse?") to go unchallenged. — Relevant at: ~28:00 — Effect: The judicial finding is neutralised by Lilian's rhetorical question.

Omission 3: Context: Becker was released after only 8 months (out of 30) and deported to Germany — a privilege of the British system for foreign offenders. This considerable sentence reduction is never addressed. — Relevant at: ~03:00 (deportation) — Effect: The viewer is left with the impression of maximum suffering ("233 nights"), without learning that this was less than a third of the sentence handed down.

Omission 4: Context: Becker's claim of "not a single mark" in debts is not verified. In British insolvency proceedings, "discharge" does not mean that all creditors were satisfied, but that the debtor is released from further claims. — Relevant at: ~11:00 — Effect: The viewer is given the false impression that all debts have been settled.

Summary: Central facts — the specific criminal offences, the judicial assessment, the sentence reduction and the actual status of the debts — are systematically omitted. This allows Becker to present his own considerably milder version of events as the sole truth.

Missing voices

- Insolvency lawyer/jurist: Could have classified the specific criminal offences and explained why the judge found "no remorse" — in contrast to Becker's self-portrayal.
- Creditor representative/insolvency administrator: Could have brought in the perspective of those harmed by Becker's concealment of assets.
- Sports psychologist: Could have provided a scientific assessment of Becker's self-diagnosis ("child prodigy", "burnout at 25").
- Media scholar: Could have critically examined the mechanisms of celebrity rehabilitation through book promotion and talk show appearances.
- Criminal justice expert: Could have independently contextualised the conditions at Wandsworth, rather than leaving only Becker's subjective account to stand.
- Former partner or family member (alternative perspective): Could have offered an alternative view of the events and Becker's responsibility.



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- Critical journalist/biographer: Could have compared Becker's account with documented facts and identified contradictions.
- Social worker/resocialisation expert: Could have raised the question of how "ordinary" prisoners fare after release — in contrast to Becker's privileged situation.



5. MANIPULATION OF FIGURES

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

Finding 1: Timestamp: ~11:00 — Figure: "I earned from my tennis career with a profit of 30 million euros." — Missing context: Various sources estimate Becker's total earnings (prize money + advertising contracts + commentary work) as considerably more. The figure "30 million" may refer only to prize money or is a selective representation. Lanz does not question the figure. — Effect: Becker can portray himself as someone who earned less than assumed, making the insolvency appear more understandable.

Finding 2: Timestamp: ~12:00 — Figure: "25,000 dollars every month" in maintenance — Missing context: For someone at Becker's income level, such maintenance payments are set by the court and are proportional. Lanz responds with "You have to earn that first" — a reaction that reinforces Becker's victim narrative rather than contextualising the proportionality. — Effect: The viewer is meant to feel sympathy for someone who has to make high maintenance payments, without knowing the context of the total assets.

Finding 3: Timestamp: ~09:30 — Figure: "2,000 inmates, 76 watching over them" — Missing context: This figure is not verified and serves exclusively to dramatise the prison conditions. — Effect: Reinforces the victim narrative.

Summary: Figures are used selectively to support Becker's narrative — earned less than thought, high maintenance payments, terrible prison conditions. Lanz does not question a single figure and in some cases even amplifies their emotional impact.



6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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Finding: No classic guilt-by-association technique discernible. On the contrary: Becker is elevated through "glory by association" — comparison with Barack Obama (~26:00), mention of Djokovic, Nadal, Federer, Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner.

Summary: Instead of guilt by association, the opposite occurs here: Becker is elevated through associations with world-class athletes and a US president. This is not a manipulation technique in the classic sense, but it serves to generate sympathy.



7. TIMING

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Finding 1: Position: 00:00–02:00 (intro) — Content: Emotional victim framing with descriptions of prison — Timing effect: Primacy effect. The first impression the viewer receives is of a suffering person, not a convicted criminal. This shapes the perception of the entire programme.

Finding 2: Position: ~32:00 (close) — Content: "Very worthwhile book. [...] I have rarely had a better feeling." — Timing effect: Recency effect. The programme ends with a warm, personal farewell and a book recommendation. The final impression is positive and affirming.

Finding 3: Position: ~20:00 (middle) — Content: Clip from the Apple documentary showing a weeping Becker — Timing effect: Emotional climax in the middle. The most emotional scene is strategically placed in the middle, where attention is at its highest.

Summary: The dramaturgical structure follows a classic sympathy arc: emotional opening → personal story → emotional climax → redemption → warm conclusion. Critical moments are entirely absent from this structure.



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: ~09:30 — Reaction (Lanz): "Are you serious." (about the prison conditions, 22.5 hours in the cell) — Comparable without outrage: Becker's specific criminal offences (concealment of assets) elicit no outrage or even surprise from Lanz. — Asymmetry: Lanz is outraged by the prison conditions, not by the acts that led to imprisonment.

Finding 2: Timestamp: ~30:00 — Reaction (Lanz): "That is not humane." (about the farewell through the glass partition) — Comparable without outrage: The fact that creditors lost money as a result of Becker's actions is never described as "not humane" or even regrettable. — Asymmetry: Empathy flows exclusively towards the convicted person, never towards those harmed.

Summary: Lanz's emotional reactions are systematically asymmetric — outrage and sympathy apply to the prison conditions and Becker's personal suffering, while the perspective of those harmed receives no emotional resonance whatsoever.



9. COMPLETENESS

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This programme is a special edition of the Markus Lanz format that departs entirely from the usual political talk show structure. It is an intimate two- or three-person conversation (Lanz + Becker + partner) in the style of an in-depth biographical interview. The occasion is evidently the promotion of Boris Becker's book about his time in prison. There is no political or socio-political topic in the narrow sense, no controversial policy questions and no party-political dimension. The programme operates in the realm of entertainment/human interest/celebrity interview.

Share of perspectives covered

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

Since this is a non-political celebrity interview, the perspectives are structured differently from those in a political talk show:

[A] Boris Becker's personal responsibility for his conviction

[B] The legal dimension: What exactly were the criminal offences?

[C] Perspective of those harmed/creditors in the insolvency

[D] Critical assessment of the British justice system and prison conditions

[E] Systemic question: Celebrity privilege vs. equal treatment before the law

[F] Psychological dimension: Fame at a young age, loss of control, addictive behaviour

[G] The role of the media (including Lanz himself) in the construction and deconstruction of celebrities

[H] Critical perspective on book promotion as a business model following a scandal

[I] Perspective of the family (ex-wives, children) — their view of events

[J] Social question: Resocialisation and second chances

[A] ADDRESSED

Timestamp: ~05:30 — Quote: "Ultimately I am responsible." — Assessment: Becker verbally accepts responsibility, Lanz follows up several times, but the self-criticism remains superficial and is not genuinely challenged.

[B] INDICATED

Timestamp: ~07:00 — Quote: "It was about my insolvency." — Assessment: The specific criminal offences (concealment of assets in insolvency proceedings) are never precisely named; it remains at vague formulations such as "mistakes" and "not paying attention".

[C] OMITTED

No timestamp — Assessment: The perspective of the creditors who lost money as a result of Becker's insolvency is not addressed at any point. Becker says he owes "not a single mark", but whether all creditors were satisfied is not questioned.

[D] INDICATED

Timestamp: ~09:00 — Quote: "2,000 inmates, 76 watching over them." — Assessment: The prison conditions are described in detail from Becker's perspective, but any independent classification or contextualisation is absent.

[E] OMITTED

No timestamp — Assessment: The question of whether Becker as a celebrity may even have been treated more leniently (two and a half instead of seven years, early deportation instead of full sentence) is never raised.

[F] ADDRESSED

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Timestamp: ~17:00 — Quote: "Child prodigies don't grow old." — Assessment: The psychological dimension is addressed in detail, but exclusively from Becker's own interpretation, without external psychological classification.

[G] OMITTED

No timestamp — Assessment: The role of the media — including this programme itself — in the marketing of Becker's story is not reflected upon. Lanz does not address the fact that he himself is part of the mechanism.

[H] OMITTED

No timestamp — Assessment: The fact that the book, the Apple documentary and this appearance are part of a commercial exploitation chain is not critically assessed. Lanz calls the book "very worthwhile" — a purchase recommendation.

[I] OMITTED

No timestamp — Assessment: The perspectives of the ex-wives (Barbara Becker, Sharlely "Lilly" Becker) and the children are only mentioned in passing (Noah carries the bag), but their independent view of events is entirely absent.

[J] INDICATED

Timestamp: ~35:00 — Quote: "Perhaps it was cleansing for me." — Assessment: The resocialisation question is treated only as a personal narrative of redemption, not as a social issue.

Completeness score: 3/10

Rationale: Of ten relevant perspectives, only two are genuinely addressed (A, F), three are indicated (B, D, J) and five are completely omitted (C, E, G, H, I). The programme is an almost uncritical sympathy interview that largely leaves Boris Becker's own narrative control intact. For an entertainment format this would be more acceptable; for a programme within ZDF's information programming, the lack of multi-perspectivity is problematic.



Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

10. FRAMING (setting the frame)

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 — Quote (Lanz, intro): "And in the end it brought me to prison. [...] What answer did he give himself in those endless nights when he could not sleep because it is loud in prison? Because people scream out of anger, out of fear, because they cannot bear the confinement." — Manipulation: Victim framing from the outset. The introduction frames Becker as a tragic hero whose own "madness" and "relentless will" — i.e. positive qualities — turned against him. The framing is: A champion was struck by fate, not: A man committed criminal offences and was convicted. — Why problematic: The criminal offences (concealment of assets in insolvency proceedings) are not even named in the entire intro. Instead, prison is introduced as a place of suffering before the question of guilt is even raised.

Finding 2: Timestamp: 01:30 — Quote (Lanz): "What is interesting is that it takes quite a while in this book before he speaks for the first time about responsibility, about guilt. But in the end he even uses the word crime. Is that the journey he has made?" — Manipulation: Redemption narrative as framework. Lanz establishes the narrative structure "journey towards insight" — a classic redemption framing that signals to the viewer: improvement lies at the end. — Why problematic: This framing anticipates the outcome and makes critical follow-up questions structurally more difficult, because the "journey" is framed as positive.

Finding 3: Timestamp: 01:45 — Quote (Lanz about Lilian): "What is it like when the order suddenly reverses? When the bad times come first and one has to wait a little longer for the good ones?" — Manipulation: Romanticising framing of the relationship. The partnership is framed as a love story in difficult times, not as a strategic decision by two adults. — Why problematic: This framing emotionalises and makes critical distance more difficult.

Summary: The entire programme is framed from the outset as a sympathy interview. The dominant narrative is "tragic hero finds insight through suffering" — a framing that structurally undermines critical distance and unreflectively adopts Becker's own book narrative.



11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:15 — Quote (Lanz): "And in the end it brought me to prison." — Manipulation: Depersonalisation of responsibility. The subject is "it" (the madness/the will), not Boris Becker himself. The choice of words suggests that an abstract quality brought him to prison, not his specific actions. — Why problematic: Obscures the causality between criminal act and punishment.

Finding 2: Timestamp: throughout — Terms: "mistakes", "not paying attention", "loss of control", "wrong environment", "wrong advisers" — Manipulation: Euphemistic language for criminal offences. Neither Lanz nor Becker ever uses the terms "criminal offence", "concealment of assets", "fraud" or "deception of the insolvency court". Instead, soft terms such as "mistakes" and "not paying attention" dominate. — Why problematic: The systematic avoidance of legally correct terms trivialises the seriousness of the conviction.

Finding 3: Timestamp: ~35:00 — Quote (Becker): "Perhaps it was cleansing for me." — Analysis: Spiritualising reinterpretation. The prison sentence is reinterpreted as "cleansing" — a quasi-religious term that transforms punishment into redemption. Lanz leaves this reinterpretation uncommented. — Why problematic: Conceals the punitive and preventive purpose of the sentence.

Summary: The choice of words throughout the entire programme is systematically euphemistic. Criminal offences become "mistakes", conviction becomes "fate", prison becomes "cleansing". Lanz adopts this language and does not challenge it at any point.



12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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Lanz is known for provocative follow-up questions — in this programme his behaviour is noticeably different.

Finding 1: Timestamp: ~02:30 — Quote (Lanz): "This is something of a premiere for us. [...] We met almost exactly 20 years ago. We spent three days together in Athens. And I have fond memories of those days." — Analysis: Disclosure of personal bias. Lanz admits that he knows Becker personally and is "biased". This is on the one hand honest, but on the other hand explains the noticeably uncritical moderation style. In political programmes, Lanz would not accept such a bias.

Finding 2: Timestamp: ~30:00 — Quote (Lanz): "I know you in various states, so to speak. And I have to say quite honestly, I have rarely had a better feeling." — Analysis: Moderator as supporter. Lanz concludes the conversation with a personal affirmation that would be appropriate for a therapist or friend, not a journalist. Comparison: In political programmes, Lanz regularly confronts guests right up to the last minute.

Finding 3: Timestamp: ~07:00 — Quote (Lanz): "But again, what mistakes did you make?" — Analysis: Follow-up question without follow-through. Lanz asks the right question but accepts Becker's vague answer ("It was about my insolvency") without further probing. In political interviews, Lanz would follow up three to four times here.

Finding 4: Timestamp: ~32:00 — Quote (Lanz): "Very worthwhile book." — Analysis: Explicit purchase recommendation. The host of a public broadcasting programme gives an unreserved book recommendation — without any critical qualification.

Summary: In this programme, Lanz does not act as a critical journalist but as an empathetic conversation partner and old acquaintance. His self-admitted bias is reflected in a noticeably mild moderation style that stands in stark contrast to his usual behaviour in political programmes.



13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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Asymmetry 1: To Boris Becker, ~05:30: "Who or what is responsible for you ending up in prison?" [moderately hard, but openly formulated] — To Lilian, ~04:00: "Who or what is responsible for Boris being convicted on 29 April 2022? From your perspective?" [soft — allows externalisation of blame] — Analysis: The question to Lilian is formulated in such a way that she can shift Becker's responsibility onto third parties ("people around him who didn't really look after him"), which she does.

Asymmetry 2: Missing hard questions: Lanz never asks: "The judge says you deliberately concealed assets. Is that true?" or "Why did you not declare bank accounts and a property?" or "Do you consider the sentence to be just?" — Analysis: The hardest questions that Lanz normally puts to politicians are entirely absent here.

Summary: The questions are consistently formulated in such a way as to give Becker space for his own narrative, without confronting him with specific facts or contradictions. The question asymmetry does not exist between two guests, but between what Lanz asks and what he should have asked.



14. FALSE BALANCE

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Finding 1: This programme does not present a classic false balance problem (i.e. no artificial equating of a minority opinion with the scientific consensus). The problem is rather the complete absence of any balance — there is only one perspective, namely Becker's own.

Summary: False balance is not the problem here. The problem is no balance — a completely one-sided presentation without any counter-perspective. This is the opposite of false balance, but at least equally problematic.



15. AGENDA-SETTING

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Finding 1: Agenda element set: Book promotion disguised as journalistic conversation. — Timestamp: throughout, explicitly ~32:00 ("Very worthwhile book") — Evidence: The entire programme structure follows the book structure (prison → retrospective → redemption). Lanz quotes from the book, structures questions around it and gives a purchase recommendation at the end. — Alternative: The programme could have set the topic "celebrities and the justice system" or "resocialisation" as a social issue, rather than conducting a book promotion interview.

Finding 2: Agenda element set: Boris Becker as a reformed man. — Timestamp: ~35:00 — Evidence: "Perhaps it was cleansing for me." / Lanz: "I have rarely had a better feeling." — Alternative: The agenda could also have been: "Has Boris Becker really learned from his mistakes?" — a question that would have required critical scrutiny rather than affirmation.

Summary: The programme sets the agenda that Boris Becker's PR team would wish for: a sympathetic, emotional interview that promotes the book and establishes the image of the reformed man. The journalistic agenda (critical scrutiny, contextualisation, multi-perspectivity) retreats entirely behind it.



CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

Results

Dominant techniques

- 1. Omission / Selective Omission (Score 7):** The most serious technique in this programme. Central facts — the specific criminal offences, the judicial finding of absent remorse, the considerable sentence reduction, the creditor perspective — are systematically omitted. This allows Becker to present a considerably milder version of his story as the sole truth.
- 2. Expert selection (Score 7):** The guest selection makes critical journalism structurally impossible. A couple jointly promoting a book sits opposite a biased moderator. There is not a single independent voice that could contextualise, question or refute Becker's account.
- 3. Framing (Score 6) / Source selection (Score 6) / Agenda-setting (Score 6):** These three techniques work together: The victim/redemption framing is supported by the exclusive use of Becker's own sources (book, documentary) and cemented by the agenda-setting (book promotion instead of critical analysis).

Rationale: The combined score of 4.1 falls in the range of "slight tendency", with the classification at the boundary of "clear one-sidedness". The programme is not a political opinion format but a celebrity interview, which relativises the requirements for balance within the meaning of §26 MStV. Nevertheless, the complete absence of critical perspectives, the systematic euphemisation of criminal offences and the de facto book promotion within public broadcasting programming is problematic. The moderator's self-admitted bias should have led either to a refusal of the interview or to the inclusion of a critical co-moderator or guest. For a programme broadcast in ZDF's main schedule as part of its information offering, the degree of one-sidedness is remarkable.

CONCLUSION

The programme analysed constitutes an almost uncritical sympathy interview that structurally functions as book promotion for Boris Becker's prison memoirs. The host Markus Lanz openly admits his personal bias but draws no journalistic consequences from it — on the contrary, he reinforces Becker's victim narrative through empathetic reactions, a failure to confront with facts and an explicit book recommendation. The specific criminal offences (concealment of assets in insolvency proceedings) are never precisely named throughout the entire programme, the perspective of those harmed is entirely absent, and the judicial finding of absent remorse is neutralised by Lilian's rhetorical reinterpretation. Measured against ZDF's public service mandate and the requirement of balance under §26 MStV, the programme is not per se unlawful as an individual entertainment format, but it falls considerably short of the journalistic standards that viewers may expect from a programme within ZDF's information programming.



CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Specific evidence
CDU/CSU	0	No mention, no reference.
SPD	0	No mention, no reference.
Greens	0	No mention, no reference.
FDP	0	No mention, no reference.
AfD	0	No mention, no reference.
BSW	0	No mention, no reference.
Linke	0	No mention, no reference.
Freie Wähler	0	No mention, no reference.

Party bias summary

- Most favoured: No party (Score 0)
- Most disadvantaged: No party (Score 0)
- Conclusion: The programme contains no party-political references whatsoever. It is a purely celebrity interview with no political dimension. A party-political bias cannot be identified and would not be expected in this programme format. The only political mention concerns British domestic politics (changing prime ministers/home secretaries), which has no connection to the German party landscape.



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

Assessment under §26 MStV

Potential violation 1: Lack of balance (§26 para. 1 MStV in conjunction with §5 ZDF State Treaty)

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV obliges broadcasters to "respect and protect human dignity" in their offerings and to promote "diversity of opinion". §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty specifies: "In its offerings, ZDF shall [...] provide a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life."

Facts: The programme presents exclusively the perspective of the convicted offender Boris Becker and his partner. No counter-perspective (those harmed, the judiciary, independent experts) is introduced. The specific criminal offences are never named. The moderator admits his bias without drawing journalistic consequences.

Evidence: Throughout — in particular ~32:00: "Very worthwhile book. [...] I have rarely had a better feeling."

Assessment: An isolated violation of §26 MStV is difficult to establish for a single programme, since the case law of the Federal Constitutional Court (in particular BVerfGE 12, 205 — 1st Broadcasting Decision) understands balance as a requirement for the overall programme, not for each individual programme. However, "Markus Lanz" is classified as part of ZDF's information programming (not as entertainment), which establishes higher requirements for journalistic standards. The complete absence of critical contextualisation in a programme about a convicted offender is journalistically questionable, even if it does not in itself constitute a justiciable legal violation.

Potential violation 2: Covert advertising / product placement (§8 para. 7 MStV)

Norm: §8 para. 7 MStV prohibits covert advertising in broadcasting offerings. Product placement is permissible under certain conditions but must be labelled.

Facts: The entire programme is structurally a promotion for Boris Becker's book and the Apple TV documentary. Lanz gives an explicit purchase recommendation ("Very worthwhile book"). The Apple documentary is played in and positively contextualised.

Assessment: Borderline case. Book presentations and recommendations are common in talk shows and are generally accepted by case law as editorial content, provided no consideration is paid. However, the intensity of the promotion (entire programme structure follows the book, explicit purchase recommendation, broadcast of the commercial documentary) goes beyond the usual extent. A formal violation would only be demonstrable if a consideration (payment, agreement) could be evidenced.

Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme moves in a journalistic grey area. §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty oblige ZDF to balance and diversity of opinion as an overall programme requirement. A single programme conceived as a celebrity interview does not necessarily have to reflect all perspectives. However, "Markus Lanz" is classified as an information programme and reaches a million-strong audience. The complete absence of critical contextualisation on a topic touching criminal law, insolvency law and public interest falls short of the standards that the ZDF Television Council as the competent supervisory body should apply. A formal legal violation cannot be established beyond doubt on the basis of the available information, but a programme complaint to the ZDF Television Council would be justifiable on the basis of the documented findings — in particular with regard to the moderator's lack of journalistic distance, the systematic omission of relevant facts and the de facto book promotion within public broadcasting information programming.



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	3	••
4	OMISSION (Selective Omission)	7	••••
5	MANIPULATION OF FIGURES	4	••
6	GUILT BY ASSOCIATION	1	•
7	TIMING	4	••
8	SELECTIVE OUTRAGE	5	•••
9	COMPLETENESS	7	••••
10	FRAMING (setting the frame)	6	•••
11	CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS	5	•••
12	MODERATION BEHAVIOUR	5	•••
13	QUESTION ASYMMETRY	4	••
14	FALSE BALANCE	2	•
15	AGENDA-SETTING	6	•••

HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

4.9/10

Considerable bias

SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

4.7/10

Considerable bias

OVERALL SCORE

4.8/10

Considerable bias

Averaged from hard facts and soft facts



KEY — Meaning of scores

Individual scores per criterion (0–10)

0	No finding	No relevant irregularity identified.
1–2	Weak finding	Minor irregularity without material impairment of balance.
3–4	Slight to moderate finding	Discernible tendency; impact relevance low to moderate.
5	Moderate finding with impact relevance	Relevant bias 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 bias with marked impact relevance.
8–9	Serious finding	Pronounced bias; multiple evidenced individual findings within this criterion.
10	Maximum level	Systematic, pervasive bias within 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 bias	Isolated irregularities; statistically visible, but still within the tolerance range.
4.1 – 6.0	Considerable bias	Multiple considerable findings; relevant impairment of diversity of perspectives.
6.1 – 8.0	Serious deviation from the requirement of balance. High degree of deviation	Pronounced, cross-programme patterns; high impact relevance.
8.1 – 10	Fundamental systemic one-sidedness. Very high degree of bias	Maximum level across almost all criteria; systematically one-sided reporting.

Party-political bias (-5 to +5)

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



Legal and methodological classification

No finding of fact	The results presented do not constitute findings of fact about individual persons, editorial teams or programmes. They are to be understood as the result of a standardised operationalisation, not as a determination of individual responsibility.
No legal ruling	The aggregated deviation index does not replace a legal assessment within the meaning of §26 MStV. The determination of whether a specific programme violates statutory requirements is the exclusive responsibility of the competent authorities (in particular media regulators).
No proof of causality	Statistical correlations are not to be interpreted as proof of causal relationships or editorial intentions. Deviation values may be influenced by topic selection, news situation, political controversy or format logic.
No finding of intent	The analysis measures observable structural characteristics of programmes. A score of 7 means that a considerable bias 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: NATIONAL 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 within the Federation and the Länder. Their offerings shall serve the purposes of education, information, advice and entertainment. They shall provide contributions in particular to culture. Entertainment shall correspond to a public broadcasting offering profile.
- §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty: Obligation to objectivity and impartiality in reporting, consideration of 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:** 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 regional broadcasting institutions: Supervision of ARD institutions (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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- Schläpfer, D. (2026). Measuring Editorial Noise: A Retrospective Suppression Index for Public Broadcasting Content Analysis. [SSRN 6733280](#)
- Schläpfer, D. (2026). Source Traffic Light: A Six-Dimensional Credibility Framework for Systematic Source Assessment in Public Service Media. [SSRN 6733880](#)

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Unbalanced reporting is the response to the halving initiative in Switzerland: here the manipulation techniques are explained in detail, starting with the selection of staff and the selection of sources. Subsequently, 15 principles are explained: omission, framing, temporal framing, guilt by association, emotionalisation, removal of context and many more, illustrated with many examples. In addition, it becomes apparent where we ourselves apply these techniques — this promotes not only insight but also empathy.

Optionally the book comes with **playing cards**

Also available as an **audiobook**



The interview is not a conversation. It is a stage — and someone else has written the script.

Those who do not know this provide material. Good quotes that are cut incorrectly. Correct statements that end up in the wrong context. Honest answers that are framed as confessions.

This book is not a media criticism book. It is a toolkit — for everyone who has a microphone in front of them and wants to know what they can do about it. 7 chapters. 7 tools: What an interview really is. The 7 most common traps. The three basic principles of sovereignty — anchoring, reframing, setting boundaries. Preparation in one hour. Body and voice. What to do when things go wrong. And what counts after the interview.

For politicians, activists, entrepreneurs, whistleblowers — for everyone who is exposed and wants to understand how the game works. So that they stop playing along — and start shaping it.

In A5. Direct. For preparation, for reference, for follow-up and in difficult situations



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Associazione svizzera per un reporting equilibrato



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.

Because those who understand framing see the world more clearly. Listen to the news differently. Conduct conversations with greater confidence. And can no longer so easily have a frame imposed on them that someone else has chosen.

With many exercises and concrete examples from politics, media and everyday life — and the occasional smile.

Framing with style. Because the frame changes everything.



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

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