



## EN DETAILED ANALYSIS

2025-10-15 Der Talk vom 15. Oktober

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2025-10-15 | Analysed on: 2026-03-11 19:25

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

### OVERALL SCORE

**6.5/10**

*Serious deviation from the balance requirement. High degree of deviation*

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

## POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Classification according to Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) 2024

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

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

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

### TENDENCY (L – R)

**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](https://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: 15.10.2025
- Presenter: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



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Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political spectrum
Ines Schwerdtner	Co-chair Die Linke	Die Linke	Left
Beatrix von Storch	MP, deputy parliamentary group chair	AfD	Right
Eva Quadbeck	Journalist (presumably RND/Berlin correspondent)	Journalism/Commentary	Centre/liberal-conservative
Claudia Major	Security and defence expert (SWP)	Think Tank	Transatlantic-security policy

### Main topic

The programme examines the question of whether and where the political fringes — AfD (right) and Die Linke (left) — meet in their positions on conscription, arms deliveries to Ukraine and culture war topics (horseshoe theory), and how both parties position themselves on German security and defence policy.



## CHAPTER 1 — DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE 15 CRITERIA

### Hard facts — 9 techniques that are countable and scientifically robust

#### 1. EXPERT SELECTION

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##### Expert 1: Claudia Major (SWP)

###### Timestamp

throughout — Statement: "With a power politician like Putin, it will probably only work through military pressure." / "If you stop the arms deliveries, she will de facto be fair game." — Classification: Major represents a clearly transatlantic-security policy position that regards arms deliveries and military pressure as primary instruments. She is presented as a neutral expert, but represents a specific school of thought. — Missing countervoice: A peace researcher (e.g. from PRIF/HSFK) who would provide an evidence-based assessment of the effectiveness of diplomatic instruments and the risks of military escalation is completely absent.

##### Expert 2: Eva Quadbeck (journalist)

###### Timestamp

throughout — Statement: "It would be better to travel to America and present good arguments for the Digital Service Act." / "We know that your party too has positioned itself wonderfully to engage in corresponding incitement." — Classification: Quadbeck acts less as a neutral journalist than as a commenting voice that supports the government's perspective. Her statements about the AfD ("incite", "influence young people") are evaluative. — Missing countervoice: A media scholar or digital law expert who would provide a differentiated assessment of the DSA complex.

Missing expert groups: Peace research, international law, Russia expertise, economics, sociology, media studies.

*Summary: The expert selection is one-sided. Both non-political guests represent positions closer to the government line than to the positions of the invited politicians. There is no countervoice whatsoever to the security policy mainstream position. The programme thereby creates a 2-against-2 structure that is de facto a 3-against-1 or 4-against-0 structure, because Quadbeck and Major agree on the central questions (arms deliveries, conscription, NATO) and Lanz supports this position through his moderation.*



## 2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

**Source 1:** Timestamp: Introduction — Source: Claudia Major (SWP) as preliminary classification — Classification: Major is presented as a neutral security expert, but represents a specific transatlantic-security policy position. The SWP advises the federal government. — Missing counter-source: Peace research institute (PRIF/HSFK), which would provide a different assessment of the military options.

**Source 2:** Timestamp: Conscription passage — Source: Schwerdtner mentions "a Greenpeace study that says this is unconstitutional" — Classification: The study is only mentioned, not contextualised. Lanz does not address it. — Missing counter-source: A constitutional lawyer who would contextualise the legal situation.

**Source 3:** Timestamp: DSA passage — Source: Quadbeck on TikTok and election results: "When you talk to sociologists, they say there is a very clear connection." — Classification: Unspecific source reference ("sociologists"). No specific name, no specific study. — Missing counter-source: A media scholar who would provide a differentiated assessment of the causality between TikTok use and voting behaviour.

*Summary: The source selection is one-sided. The only systematically integrated expertise (Major) represents the security policy mainstream position. Counter-sources from peace research, international law or media studies are absent. Schwerdtner's reference to a Greenpeace study is ignored.*



<b>3. TIME DISTRIBUTION</b>									<b>6/10</b>
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Estimated speaking time (based on text shares in the transcript):

- Beatrix von Storch: (30%)
- Ines Schwerdtner: (19%)
- Markus Lanz: (27%)
- Claudia Major: (14%)
- Eva Quadbeck: (10%)

*Summary: Von Storch receives by far the most speaking time among the guests — approximately 60% more than Schwerdtner. This is partly because the first half of the programme is dominated by culture war topics in which von Storch is at the centre. Schwerdtner gets significantly less airtime on the substantive security policy topics (conscription, arms deliveries). Lanz himself takes an unusually high share of speaking time at 27%, which is attributable to his extensive introductions and follow-up questions.*



#### 4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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**Omission 1:** Context: Domestic intelligence classification of the AfD. The AfD is framed as "right-wing", but the fact that the domestic intelligence service classifies the party as a whole as a suspected right-wing extremist case is not mentioned. — Relevant at: 00:00 (introduction) and throughout — Effect: The horseshoe theory symmetry is maintained, even though a qualitative asymmetry exists between the parties.

**Omission 2:** Context: Russia connections of the AfD. Lanz mentions von Storch's trip to the USA in detail, but the documented Russia connections of the AfD (Petr Bystron, espionage allegations, Russian financing) are only hinted at by Quadbeck ("You work with spies") and not explored further. — Relevant at: DSA passage — Effect: The central security policy question of whether the AfD as a party represents Russian interests is not systematically addressed, even though it would be central to assessing the AfD's position on arms deliveries and conscription.

**Omission 3:** Context: Concrete peace plans and their failure. Schwerdtner mentions Lula's peace plan, the Swiss Bürgenstock initiative and others. Major mentions that Russia rejected all of them. But the concrete contents of these plans and the reasons for their failure are not set out. — Relevant at: Peace negotiations passage — Effect: The viewer cannot judge whether the diplomatic initiatives were realistic or not.

**Omission 4:** Context: Social costs of rearmament. Schwerdtner mentions the 5% target and the budgetary consequences. This point is immediately corrected by Major (3.5% + 1.5%) and then dropped. — Relevant at: Conscription passage — Effect: The central question of what a defence budget of 150–250 billion euros means for social spending, education and health is not addressed.

*Summary: Central contextual information is systematically omitted. Particularly serious is the absence of the domestic intelligence classification of the AfD (which undermines the horseshoe theory symmetry), the concrete peace plans and the social costs of rearmament.*

#### Missing voices

- Peace researcher (e.g. HSFK/PRIF): Would have provided an evidence-based assessment of diplomatic options and the effectiveness of sanctions vs. arms deliveries.
- International lawyer: Would have provided a legal assessment of the question of the legality of arms deliveries, the war crimes classification and the sovereignty of Ukraine.
- Ukrainian representative (civil society or diplomacy): Would have brought in the perspective of the attacked country, instead of treating Ukraine merely as an object.
- Young conscript / Bundeswehr soldier: Would have filled the conscription debate with lived reality.
- Economist / fiscal policy expert: Would have quantified the fiscal consequences of the 5% target and the trade-offs with social spending.
- Media scholar or digital law expert: Would have provided a well-founded assessment of the DSA complex and the freedom of expression debate.



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- Representative of the governing coalition (CDU or SPD): Would have directly represented and defended the current government's position on conscription and arms deliveries.
- Social scientist (inequality research): Would have empirically contextualised Schwerdtner's thesis on social selection in the Bundeswehr.



## 5. NUMBERS MANIPULATION

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

**Finding 1:** Timestamp: Conscription passage — Figure: "183,000 personnel [...] growing to 260,000 active personnel and 200,000 reserves by 2035" (Major) — Missing context: The information is absent as to how realistic this growth is, what it costs and how it compares to the armed forces of other NATO states. — Effect: The figures are presented as a given NATO obligation without discussing their derivation or alternatives.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: Conscription passage — Figure: "5-percent NATO target [...] 250 billion" (Schwerdtner) vs. "it is 3.5 for military spending and 1.5 for infrastructure" (Major) — Missing context: Major corrects Schwerdtner, but the total of 5% of GDP remains correct. The correction suggests that Schwerdtner miscalculated, even though she correctly stated the total figure. — Effect: Schwerdtner's argument is devalued by a technical correction, even though the core statement (enormous costs) is correct.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: Points of order passage — Figure: "Of 20 points of order, 17 went to the AfD" (Lanz) / "25 or 26 points of order since 2017" (Lanz about von Storch) — Missing context: A comparison with other parliamentary groups and an assessment of whether the points of order were substantively justified are absent. — Effect: The figures are used as evidence of the AfD's bad behaviour, without examining the other side (von Storch's argument that the presidium imposes sanctions one-sidedly).

*Summary: The use of figures is not grossly manipulative, but context is missing in several places. In particular, the technical correction of Schwerdtner's 5% figure by Major devalues a legitimate argument without refuting the core statement.*



## 6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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**Association 1:** Timestamp: Introduction — Quote (Lanz about Major): "That is a rather unpatriotic attitude, if one supports the enemies of Germany." — Technique: Implicit enemy association. The AfD is framed in advance as a party that "supports the enemies of Germany" — a serious accusation presented as expert opinion. — Effect: The viewer associates the AfD with treason before von Storch has said a word.

**Association 2:** Timestamp: DSA passage — Quote (Quadbeck): "You work with lobbyists. You work with spies." — Technique: Enumeration as associative chain. Quadbeck strings together accusations (large donations, lobbyists, spies) without providing individual evidence. — Effect: The accumulation creates an overall picture of corruption and foreign control.

**Association 3:** Timestamp: Wall murderers' party passage — Quote (von Storch): "There sits the wall murderers' party." — Technique: Guilt by Historical Association. Von Storch associates Schwerdtner (born 1989) with the GDR border guards who shot people at the Wall. — Effect: Lanz confronts von Storch with this, but lets the association hang in the air and then changes the subject. Schwerdtner's counter-association (von Storch's grandfather as NS Finance Minister) is not pursued further by Lanz.

*Summary: Guilt by Association is deployed from several sides. The moderation confronts von Storch with the wall murderers' association, but leaves the pre-set enemy association (Major about the AfD) and the spies association (Quadbeck) without comment. The historical associations on both sides (SED/NS) are not resolved.*



## 7. TIMING

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**Finding 1:** Position: First half of the programme (approx. 0:00–30:00) — Content: Handshake, points of order, Ganserer, abortion, Brosius-Gersdorf, J.D. Vance, DSA — Timing effect: Culture war dominance. The first half of the programme is dominated by culture war topics that place von Storch at the centre. The substantive security policy topics (conscription, arms deliveries, Russia) only come in the second half. — Effect: The viewer who does not watch the entire programme receives an image shaped by culture war and rules of conduct. The security policy questions are dealt with under time pressure.

**Finding 2:** Position: End of the programme — Content: Schwerdtner's point about peace initiatives — Timing effect: Interruption at a substantive point. Schwerdtner is just making a differentiated point about the need to consolidate diplomatic initiatives when Lanz ends the programme. — Effect: The peace policy counter-proposal remains incomplete.

**Finding 3:** Position: Transition culture war → security policy — Content: Lanz says: "Much of this is also simply a smokescreen to distract from the real issues." — Timing effect: Self-referential irony. Lanz himself recognises that the culture war debate is a smokescreen, but has just spent 20–30 minutes on it. — Effect: The self-awareness comes too late and changes nothing about the programme structure.

*Summary: The programme structure prioritises culture war topics over substantive security policy. The first half is von Storch-centred (points of order, abortion, DSA), the second half is dealt with under time pressure. Schwerdtner's peace policy position is cut off at the end.*



## 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: Ganserer passage — Reaction (Lanz): "That is actually really disrespectful, when a person decides they want to be addressed in a certain way. And you cannot respect that." — Comparable without outrage: Von Storch's designation "wall murderers' party" for Die Linke is confronted, but with noticeably less emotional outrage. Lanz says: "But there is sitting here a, sorry forgive me, young woman, born in '89. And then you simply say wall murderers' party?" — that is more bewildered than outraged. — Asymmetry: The outrage over the Ganserer provocation is stronger than over the wall murderers' provocation, even though the latter is a direct personal insult to a person present.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: DSA/names passage — Reaction (Lanz): "So you fly to America and supply names of German politicians there?" — Comparable without outrage: Schwerdtner's statement about Bundeswehr soldiers as "poor sods" is not treated by Lanz with comparable outrage, but rather used as an opportunity for provocation. — Asymmetry: The outrage over von Storch's trip to America is justified, but the absence of outrage over the distortion of Schwerdtner's position reveals an asymmetry.

*Summary: The outrage is selectively distributed. Culture war provocations by von Storch (Ganserer, abortion) trigger stronger emotional reactions than her substantive political positions (closeness to Russia, arms deliveries). Schwerdtner's positions are more caricatured than treated with outrage.*



9. COMPLETENESS								8/10	
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The programme is conceived as a confrontation of the political fringes, with the "horseshoe theory" serving as the framework. This framework already suggests in advance that AfD and Die Linke are to be regarded as "extreme poles" that resemble each other in their irresponsibility. The two other guests — a journalist and a security expert — both represent a position closer to the government line (pro arms deliveries, pro NATO rearmament, pro conscription). There is no voice representing a differentiated peace position from the political centre (e.g. from peace research, diplomacy or civil society), nor an economic or social policy perspective.

#### Share of perspectives covered

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

- [A] Position of the federal government (CDU/SPD coalition) on conscription and arms deliveries
- [B] Peace research / civilian conflict resolution (e.g. SIPRI, BICC, HSFK)
- [C] Perspective of Ukraine itself (Ukrainian voices, civil society)
- [D] Perspective of young conscripts / those affected (soldiers, reservists, civilian service personnel)
- [E] Economic consequences of rearmament (economists, fiscal policy experts)
- [F] International law classification (international lawyers on arms deliveries, war crimes, sovereignty)
- [G] Russian domestic perspective / Kremlin strategy (Russia experts)
- [H] European alliance partner perspective (France, Poland, Baltic states)
- [I] Social policy perspective (impact on the welfare state with 5% NATO target)
- [J] Media-critical / democratic theory perspective (Digital Service Act, freedom of expression)

#### [A] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. middle of the programme (conscription passage) — Quote: "It had actually been agreed that we would do this [...] lottery procedure. [...] And the SPD has now taken that off the table." — Assessment: The government's position is only referenced as a failed compromise; no government representative is present to explain or defend it.

#### [B] OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: No peace researcher, no civilian conflict resolution perspective is represented. Schwerdtner mentions diplomatic initiatives (Lula, South Africa, China), but is not supported by expertise. Major represents exclusively the military logic.

#### [C] OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: Ukraine only appears as an object ("fair game", "deportation", "filtration camps"), never as an acting subject with its own voice. No Ukrainian perspective is invited or played in.

#### [D] OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: Schwerdtner speaks about young men in the Bundeswehr, but no person affected (soldier, reservist, young person) gets to speak. The conscription debate remains abstractly political.

#### [E] INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. middle (Schwerdtner on 5% target) — Quote: "That would account for half of our federal budget over the next ten years, military only. 250 billion." — Assessment: Schwerdtner raises the point, it is immediately relativised by Major ("it is 3.5 for military spending and 1.5 for infrastructure"). No economist or fiscal policy expert provides context.



**[F] OMITTED**

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: The international law dimension (legality of arms deliveries, war crimes tribunal, sovereignty of Ukraine) is not systematically addressed. Lanz asks von Storch whether Putin is a war criminal, but without legal contextualisation.

**[G] OMITTED**

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: Russia's strategy is only described from a Western perspective (Major: "Russia believes it does not have to do it because it can hold out longer"). No Russia expert contextualises the domestic political dynamics.

**[H] INDICATED**

Timestamp: approx. end (Macron mention) — Quote: "Macron wants to send ground troops." / "France only seven [billion]." — Assessment: European partners are only mentioned as a footnote; no systematic contextualisation of the European defence architecture.

**[I] OMITTED**

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: The social policy consequences of massive rearmament (cuts to social services, education, health) are not addressed, even though Schwerdtner sits on the budget committee and hints at this.

**[J] INDICATED**

Timestamp: approx. first third (DSA passage) — Quote: "Is it accurate that the people around J.D. Vance [...] asked you to supply the names of those?" — Assessment: The Digital Service Act topic is touched upon, but Lanz himself says: "I don't want to get into the big topic of freedom of expression right now. That is not our topic this evening." A media lawyer or digital expert is absent.

### Completeness Score: 2.5/10

**Rationale:** Of ten relevant perspectives, only three are indicated (government position, economic consequences, DSA/freedom of expression); not a single one is treated fully and with appropriate expertise. Seven central perspectives — including peace research, Ukrainian voices, international law, those affected by conscription and social policy — are completely absent. The guest selection creates a structural imbalance: two politicians from the "fringes" are controlled by two guests from the "centre" (Quadbeck, Major), both of whom represent the security policy mainstream position.



## Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

### 10. FRAMING (setting the frame)

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**Finding 1:** Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 — Quote: "If you imagine politics as an intersection, then one turns sharply right and the other sharply left. [...] Is there possibly still more and quite astonishing common ground between the two of you?" — Manipulation: Horseshoe theory as the programme's framework. The entire programme is placed under the premise that AfD and Die Linke are to be regarded as symmetrical extremes that meet in their irresponsibility. — Why problematic: This framing is contested in political science and is criticised by extremism research. It posits an equidistance between a right-wing extremist party (classified by the domestic intelligence service as a confirmed suspected right-wing extremist case) and a democratic-socialist party that has no comparable classification. It delegitimises both positions in advance instead of examining them substantively.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: 01:30–02:00 — Quote (Lanz about Quadbeck): "Eva Quadbeck says these two parties [...] are in the fortunate position of bearing no responsibility in the country. That makes things quite easy for you." — Manipulation: Delegitimisation framing. Before the guests have said a word, their position is framed as "easy" and irresponsible. — Why problematic: This is not neutral moderation, but a value-laden preliminary classification that signals to viewers: what these two are about to say is not to be taken seriously, because they bear no governmental responsibility.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: 02:00–02:30 — Quote (Lanz about Major): "With Die Linke she says it always goes like this, ducking away on military questions, loading everything with historical-moral baggage. [...] With the AfD she sees something different. [...] That is a rather unpatriotic attitude, if one supports the enemies of Germany." — Manipulation: Preliminary discrediting through expert authority. Both politicians are negatively classified by the expert even before the conversation begins. — Why problematic: Viewers receive an evaluative matrix before the discussion begins. The expert is presented as a neutral authority, even though she represents a clear security policy position.

*Summary: The programme is structured from the outset by a horseshoe theory framing that delegitimises both opposition parties as irresponsible extremes. The preliminary classifications by Quadbeck and Major set the evaluative framework before the discussion begins.*



## 11. WORD CHOICE AND TERMINOLOGY

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**Finding 1:** Timestamp: 02:00 — Quote (Lanz about Major): "ducking away on military questions" — Manipulation: Value-laden choice of words. "Ducking away" implies cowardice and refusal of responsibility. A neutral formulation would be: "Die Linke rejects military solutions" or "prioritises diplomatic approaches." — Why problematic: The term "ducking away" is not an analytical category but a polemical expression that marks Die Linke's position as deficient in advance.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: approx. middle (Lanz to Schwerdtner about Bundeswehr statement) — Quote: "You would say, in the Bundeswehr [...] there are just guys who can't think of anything better to do with their lives than a bit of Bundeswehr and a bit of messing around with guns." — Manipulation: Distorting paraphrase. Schwerdtner spoke in a differentiated way about social selection in the Bundeswehr. Lanz turns this into a caricature. — Why problematic: The paraphrase "messing around with guns" is a gross distortion that ridicules Schwerdtner's position and corners her into appearing to despise soldiers.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: 00:00 — Quote: "sharply right" and "sharply left" — Manipulation: Symmetrical extremisation. Both parties are linguistically equated as "sharply" deviating. — Why problematic: The linguistic symmetry suggests a substantive equivalence of the "extremes" that is not tenable in political science.

*Summary: The word choice is value-laden and distorting in several places. In particular, the paraphrase of Schwerdtner's Bundeswehr statement and the use of "ducking away" for Die Linke's position are manipulative. The symmetrical language of the horseshoe framing runs throughout the entire programme.*



## 12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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*Lanz is known for provocative follow-up questions — the asymmetric challenge is analysed.*

**Finding 1:** Timestamp: Handshake passage — Quote (Lanz): "What would you say to that, Ms Schwerdtner?" — Analysis: Lanz opens the programme with the handshake topic and initially gives von Storch the opportunity to present herself as civilised. Schwerdtner has to justify herself. Lanz then turns to von Storch with the points of order — here it becomes more confrontational. Overall, the confrontation with von Storch in the first half is certainly present (points of order, Ganserer, Brosius-Gersdorf), but it remains at the level of rules of conduct and culture war, not at the level of substantive political questions.

**Finding 2:** Timestamp: Brosius-Gersdorf passage — Quote (Lanz): "And you are, I believe, sufficiently versed in law [...] to know exactly what she meant. And that she of course did not mean that abortions should be carried out up to the ninth month." — Analysis: Here Lanz confronts von Storch very directly and pushes back. That is good moderation. However: he then lets von Storch have the last word and changes the subject to America/J.D. Vance without conclusively clarifying the false claim.

**Finding 3:** Timestamp: Arms deliveries passage — Quote (Lanz to Schwerdtner): "Do you stop arms deliveries or do you continue?" / "Okay, then I'll ask again." / "No, you know that we as Die Linke have been against arms deliveries from the start." — Analysis: Lanz asks Schwerdtner the same question three times, even though she has already answered. He does not accept her answer because she emphasises diplomatic efforts rather than giving a simple yes/no. By comparison: von Storch clearly says "No arms deliveries" and Lanz immediately accepts that. The same position is treated as evasive in Schwerdtner's case, as clear in von Storch's case.

**Finding 4:** Timestamp: End of the programme — Quote (Lanz): "Thank you all very much. Learned a lot today." — Analysis: Lanz ends the programme abruptly after Schwerdtner is just making a substantive point about peace initiatives. He does not give her a closing statement, but closes with a general expression of thanks. By comparison: von Storch was allowed to set out her culture war positions at length in the first half of the programme.

**Finding 5:** Timestamp: Conscription passage — Quote (Lanz to von Storch): "Because it is of course, how shall I put it, if you always hold your own homeland, the fatherland, so high and then somehow sort of drift away when it comes to conscription, that is somehow difficult." — Analysis: Here Lanz confronts von Storch with the contradiction in the AfD's position. That is good, critical moderation. However, he then lets von Storch evade without pressing further.

*Summary: Lanz confronts both politicians, but asymmetrically. Von Storch is challenged hard primarily on culture war topics (points of order, Ganserer, abortion), but treated relatively gently on the substantive security policy questions (arms deliveries, closeness to Russia). Schwerdtner is asked the same question three times on the arms deliveries question, even though she has answered. The moderation overall supports the security policy mainstream position.*



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### 13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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**Asymmetry 1:** To Schwerdtner (arms deliveries): "Do you stop arms deliveries or do you continue?" — followed up three times, even though an answer was given [hard, insistent] — To von Storch (arms deliveries): "Tomahawk, yes or no?" — asked once, answer "No" immediately accepted [neutral, accepting]. — Asymmetry: Identical position (no arms deliveries) is treated as evasive in Schwerdtner's case, as clear in von Storch's case.

**Asymmetry 2:** To von Storch (culture war): "Why this provocation?" / "Why can't you respect that?" [hard, moral] — To Schwerdtner (Bundeswehr): "You would say, in the Bundeswehr, there are just guys who can't think of anything better?" [hard, distorting]. — Asymmetry: Von Storch is morally confronted on culture war topics, Schwerdtner is caricatured on security topics.

**Asymmetry 3:** To von Storch (Putin): "Putin, very briefly, what is Putin for you? Is he a war criminal?" [direct, but brief] — To Schwerdtner: No comparable fundamental question about her position towards authoritarian left-wing regimes. — Asymmetry: The Putin question to von Storch is justified, but a comparable fundamental question to Schwerdtner is missing (e.g. on Venezuela, Cuba or China), which would test the horseshoe theory symmetry.

*Summary: The question asymmetry is clear. Schwerdtner is pressed three times on the central question of arms deliveries, von Storch is not. Von Storch is confronted hard on culture war topics, treated more gently on security policy. The overall effect is that Schwerdtner's position appears evasive, even though it is substantively clear.*



#### 14. FALSE BALANCE

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**Finding 1:** The entire programme concept is based on a false balance: AfD and Die Linke are presented as symmetrical "extremes", even though they are qualitatively different. The AfD is classified by the domestic intelligence service as a suspected right-wing extremist case; Die Linke has no comparable classification. The AfD has documented connections to Russia; Die Linke has no comparable connections to hostile states. This qualitative asymmetry is levelled out by the horseshoe theory framing.

**Finding 2:** On the arms deliveries question, the position "no arms deliveries" (held by both politicians) is set against the position "arms deliveries and military pressure" (held by Major and implicitly by Quadbeck and Lanz). The programme suggests that the arms deliveries position is the "reasonable centre" and the opposing position belongs to the "fringes". In reality, the question of arms deliveries is considerably more contested in the population than the programme suggests.

*Summary: The programme creates a double false balance: firstly by equating AfD and Die Linke as symmetrical extremes, secondly by presenting the arms deliveries position as the "reasonable centre", even though it is contested in the population.*



## 15. AGENDA-SETTING

7/10

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**Finding 1:** Agenda element set: Culture war as the main topic of the first half. — Timestamp: 00:00–approx. 30:00 — Evidence: Handshake, points of order, Ganserer, abortion, Brosius-Gersdorf, J.D. Vance, DSA — Alternative: The programme could have begun with the substantive security policy questions (conscription, arms deliveries, Russian threat) and treated the culture war as a secondary strand.

**Finding 2:** Agenda element set: Horseshoe theory as the guiding question. — Timestamp: 00:00 — Evidence: "What about the famous horseshoe theory? That is, the idea that the far left and the far right meet at some point." — Alternative: The programme could have examined the positions of both parties substantively, instead of framing them in advance as "extremes" that meet.

**Finding 3:** Agenda element set: Conscription as a loyalty test. — Timestamp: Conscription passage — Evidence: The conscription question is framed such that rejection appears as a refusal of responsibility. Schwerdtner's "civilisational regression" and von Storch's contradictions are presented as evidence of the irresponsibility of the "fringes". — Alternative: The conscription question could have been framed as an open societal debate in which various models (volunteer army, conscription, civil protection, European army) are discussed on equal terms.

*Summary: The programme's agenda-setting prioritises culture war over substance and frames the security policy questions such that the positions of the "fringes" appear irresponsible. The horseshoe theory as the guiding question determines the entire programme structure.*



## CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

### Results

#### Dominant techniques

- 1. Expert selection (Score 8):** The most serious imbalance in the programme lies in the guest selection. Both non-political guests (Major, Quadbeck) represent the security policy mainstream position and function de facto as a corrective against the positions of both politicians. There is no countervoice whatsoever from peace research, international law or civil society that could provide an alternative assessment.
- 2. Framing / Agenda-Setting (Score 7/7):** The horseshoe theory as the programme's framework and the prioritisation of culture war over substance determine the entire programme structure. Both opposition parties are delegitimised in advance as irresponsible extremes before the substantive discussion begins.
- 3. Moderation behaviour / Question asymmetry (Score 7/7):** The asymmetric treatment of identical positions (no arms deliveries) in Schwerdtner's and von Storch's cases is the most conspicuous individual manipulation. Schwerdtner is pressed three times, von Storch once — even though both hold the same position.

Rationale: The programme displays a clear one-sidedness in favour of the security policy mainstream position (pro arms deliveries, pro NATO rearmament, pro conscription). This one-sidedness arises not primarily through open partisanship on the part of the presenter, but through structural means: the guest selection (2 of 4 guests represent the mainstream position, the presenter implicitly supports it), the framing (horseshoe theory), the time distribution (culture war before substance) and the question asymmetry. Pursuant to §26 MStV, ZDF is obliged to reflect "the diversity of existing opinions". The programme does not adequately reflect the diversity of opinion in the population on arms deliveries, conscription and rearmament.

#### CONCLUSION

The programme from the presumed spring/summer of 2025 displays a clear structural one-sidedness that arises primarily from the guest selection and the programme framing. The conception as a "horseshoe theory test" delegitimises both opposition parties in advance and prevents an open-ended discussion. The absence of any peace policy, international law or social policy expertise means that the security policy mainstream position appears as the only "reasonable" option — even though the population is considerably more divided on these questions than the programme suggests. The asymmetric treatment of identical positions in Schwerdtner's and von Storch's cases (arms deliveries) is a particularly clear piece of evidence for non-neutral moderation. Pursuant to §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty, the broadcaster is obliged to reflect the diversity of opinion in society and not to engage in one-sided reporting; this obligation is not sufficiently fulfilled in the present programme.



## CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Concrete evidence
CDU/CSU	+2	Merz's chancellorship is treated as normality; his security policy is not fundamentally questioned. Quadbeck: "It would be better to travel to America and present good arguments for the Digital Service Act" — implicitly: the government is doing it right.
SPD	+1	Bartels' rejection of the lottery procedure is presented as a political decision, not as a failure. The SPD is not directly criticised.
Greens	0	Barely mentioned; Ganserer is used as an occasion for the culture war debate, but the Greens as a party are treated neither positively nor negatively.
FDP	0	Not mentioned.
AfD	-3	Preliminary delegitimation by Major ("unpatriotic attitude, supporting the enemies of Germany"); points of order statistics; DSA/names allegation; contradictions on conscription are worked out. However, von Storch receives the most speaking time and can set out her positions at length.
BSW	0	Not mentioned, even though BSW holds a relevant position on peace policy.
Linke	-2	Preliminary delegitimation by Major ("ducking away on military questions"); Schwerdtner's Bundeswehr statement is caricatured; triple follow-up questioning on arms deliveries; peace policy position is cut off at the end. Less speaking time than von Storch.
Freie Wähler	0	Not mentioned.

### Party bias summary

- Most favoured: CDU/CSU, Score +2 — The government's position is treated as normality, its security policy not fundamentally questioned.
- Most disadvantaged: AfD, Score -3 — Strongest preliminary delegitimation and hardest confrontation, but also most speaking time. Die Linke (Score -2) is disadvantaged more subtly through caricature and time curtailment.
- Conclusion: The party-political bias is moderate and directed against both opposition parties, with the AfD more strongly affected. The governing parties (CDU/SPD) benefit from the fact that their position is implicitly supported by the expert selection (Major, Quadbeck) without a government representative being present and having to face critical questions. The BSW, which holds a relevant position on peace policy, is completely ignored.



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

### Assessment under §26 MStV

Violation 1: Insufficient diversity of opinion in the guest selection

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV in conjunction with §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty — Facts: The programme addresses the central questions of conscription, arms deliveries and rearmament without incorporating any peace policy, international law or social policy expertise. Both non-political guests represent the security policy mainstream position. The scepticism towards arms deliveries and rearmament that is widespread in the population (according to surveys approx. 40–50% of the population) is only represented by the two opposition politicians, who are framed in advance as "irresponsible extremes". — Evidence: Introduction: "These two parties [...] are in the fortunate position of bearing no responsibility in the country." / Entire programme structure — Assessment: The guest selection creates a structural one-sidedness that does not adequately reflect the diversity of opinion pursuant to §26 para. 1 MStV. A single programme does not have to cover all positions, but on such a central topic (war and peace, conscription) the complete absence of peace policy expertise is a significant deficit.

Violation 2: Insufficient objectivity through preliminary delegitimation

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV (objectivity requirement) in conjunction with §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty — Facts: The preliminary classifications of the guests by the presenter (horseshoe theory framing, quotes from Quadbeck and Major before the conversation begins) set a value-laden framework that impairs the objectivity of the discussion. — Evidence: 00:00: "one turns sharply right and the other sharply left" / 01:30: "bearing no responsibility in the country" / 02:00: "ducking away on military questions" — Assessment: The preliminary delegitimation of both guests through value-laden introductions is difficult to reconcile with the objectivity requirement. It signals to viewers in advance how the guests' positions are to be assessed.

Violation 3: Asymmetric moderation

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV (balance requirement) — Facts: Identical positions (no arms deliveries) are treated differently with different guests. Schwerdtner is pressed three times, von Storch once. The time distribution (von Storch approx. 30%, Schwerdtner approx. 19%) is clearly unequal. — Evidence: Arms deliveries passage: triple follow-up questioning of Schwerdtner vs. single questioning of von Storch — Assessment: The asymmetric treatment of identical positions is an indication of insufficient balance in the moderation.

### Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme displays several deficits that are relevant in the context of §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty. §26 para. 1 MStV obliges ZDF to ensure diversity of opinion and balance in its overall programming. The ZDF State Treaty specifies in §5 para. 1 the basic public service remit and requires that reporting shall be "objective" and "comprehensive". The present programme does not sufficiently meet these requirements: the guest selection is one-sided in favour of the security policy mainstream position, the framing delegitimises opposition positions in advance, and the moderation treats identical positions asymmetrically. Whether these deficits constitute a justiciable violation depends on whether ZDF's overall programming reflects the missing perspectives elsewhere — which cannot be conclusively assessed within the framework of a single-programme analysis. The competent supervisory body is the ZDF Television Council, which pursuant to §21 ZDF State Treaty monitors compliance with the programme principles. A programme complaint to the ZDF Television Council would be justifiable on the basis of the documented findings, in particular with regard to the one-sided expert selection and the asymmetric moderation.



## OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE 15 CRITERIA

### Individual scores — All 15 criteria

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

#### HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

**6.4/10**

*Serious deviation from the balance requirement. High degree of deviation*

#### SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

**6.5/10**

*Serious deviation from the balance requirement. High degree of deviation*

#### OVERALL SCORE

**6.5/10**

*Serious deviation from the balance requirement. High degree of deviation*

*Averaged from hard facts and soft facts*



## KEY — Meaning of the scores

### Individual scores per criterion (0–10)

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

### Aggregated deviation index — interpretation ranges

<b>0.0 – 2.5</b>	<b>Unremarkable</b>	No material patterns discernible; programme meets the factual accuracy requirement.
<b>2.6 – 4.0</b>	<b>Slight imbalance</b>	Isolated anomalies; statistically visible, but still within the tolerance range.
<b>4.1 – 6.0</b>	<b>Substantial imbalance</b>	Multiple substantial findings; relevant impairment of diversity of perspectives.
<b>6.1 – 8.0</b>	<b>Serious deviation from the balance requirement. High degree of deviation</b>	Pronounced, programme-wide patterns; high relevance of effect.
<b>8.1 – 10</b>	<b>Fundamental systemic one-sidedness. Very high degree of bias</b>	Maximum manifestation across almost all criteria; systematically one-sided reporting.

### Party-political bias (-5 to +5)

<b>-5 to -3</b>	<b>Strongly disadvantaged</b>	Party is clearly treated worse in terms of portrayal, speaking time or framing.
<b>-2 to -1</b>	<b>Slightly disadvantaged</b>	Discernible, but weak disadvantage.
<b>0</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	No discernible favouring or disadvantaging.
<b>+1 to +2</b>	<b>Slightly favoured</b>	Discernible, but weak favouring.



+3 to +5

**Strongly favoured**

Party is clearly treated better 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 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 substantial imbalance has been identified — not that the editorial team intended this. The methodology makes no statements about motives or strategic objectives.

#### Heuristic comparison instrument

The index serves for comparative pattern recognition across thousands of programmes, not for the precise metric measurement of individual items. Threshold values serve as heuristic orientation, not as sharp legal qualification.



## APPENDIX: NATIONAL LEGISLATION

### Legal basis Germany — ARD, ZDF

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#### Law

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Media State Treaty (MStV, 2020)

#### Relevant articles

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

#### Core obligations

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

#### Supervisory authority

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- 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

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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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### SVFAB Working Papers

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- Schläpfer, D. (2026). Systematic AI-Assisted Analysis of Public Broadcaster Impartiality: A Scalable Methodological Framework for Measuring Structural Bias in Public Service Media. [SSRN 6688478](#)
- Schläpfer, D. (2026). Measuring Editorial Noise: A Retrospective Suppression Index for Public Broadcasting Content Analysis. [SSRN 6733280](#)
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Essential reading for everyone considering a complaint — and for everyone who wants to understand why genuine media regulation in Switzerland is still outstanding.