



SABC DETAILED ANALYSIS

20260512_Cutting Edge / Borderless Borders Update : The Wall That Wasn't.en

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**OVERALL
SCORE**

3.6/10

Slight imbalance

0 = balanced, 10 = strongly biased/manipulative

POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Classification based on 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	EFF	MK	ANC	IFP	DA	ActionSA	PA	FF+
CHES	1.50	3.50	4.50	6.00	6.50	6.50	7.00	8.00
Spectrum	<i>Left</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Right</i>

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

TENDENCY (L – R)

5.8 / 10

Balanced

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← Left

Right →

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

This section provides political context and does not contribute to the overall score.



POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

South Africa is governed since June 2024 by a Government of National Unity (GNU), a broad coalition led by the ANC (159 seats, 39.8%) after losing its 30-year parliamentary majority in the May 2024 elections. Key coalition partners include the DA (87 seats, 21.8%), IFP (17 seats, 4.3%), PA (9 seats, 2.3%), and FF+ (6 seats, 1.5%), together with five smaller parties, giving the GNU approximately 287 of 400 seats. The main opposition outside the GNU consists of MK (58 seats, 14.6%, led by Jacob Zuma), EFF (39 seats, 9.5%, led by Julius Malema), ActionSA (6 seats), and ACDP (3 seats).

Party	CHES L-R (est.)	Seats	Gov/Opposition	Core Position
EFF	1.5	39	Opposition	Far-left; land expropriation, nationalisation
PAC	2.0	1	Opposition	Left-wing Pan-Africanism
MK	3.0	58	Opposition	Left-populist, Zuma personality cult
ANC	4.0	159	Government (lead)	Centre-left, broad church
UDM	4.5	3	Government	Centre-left, rural base
Rise Mzansi	4.5	2	Government	Centre-left progressive
GOOD	4.5	1	Government	Centre-left progressive
Al Jama-ah	4.0	2	Government	Left economics, socially conservative
DA	6.0	87	Government	Centre-right, free market, liberal
ActionSA	6.5	6	Opposition	Centre-right, anti-immigration
IFP	6.5	17	Government	Right-wing, Zulu nationalist
PA	7.0	9	Government	Right-wing populist, anti-immigration
ACDP	7.5	3	Opposition	Right-wing Christian conservative
FF+	8.0	6	Government	Right-wing, Afrikaner interest

The GNU coalition between historic rivals ANC and DA creates constant internal tension, particularly on economic policy, land reform, and immigration. The PA's Gayton McKenzie, now a minister within the GNU, has driven an explicitly anti-immigration policy agenda, making border and immigration coverage directly politically charged. The legacy of state capture — including fraudulent tender awards exposed by the Zondo Commission — remains a live political issue, with the SIU's ongoing recovery work directly relevant to this episode's subject matter. Crime, cross-border smuggling, and the perceived failure of state infrastructure intersect with xenophobia debates, making border reporting one of the most politically sensitive areas in current South African public discourse.

The SABC is South Africa's public broadcaster, mandated under the Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999 and its own charter to provide programming that serves all South Africans, meets the highest standards of journalism, and ensures fairness, accuracy, and impartiality. The BCCSA Code, Clauses 16 and 18, requires news and public affairs content to be reported truthfully, accurately, in correct context, in a balanced manner, and with opposing views presented on controversial matters of public importance. The SABC's history of political capture during the Motsoeneng era (2012–2016) means its editorial independence remains under ongoing public and regulatory scrutiny.



CHAPTER 1 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

This episode of Cutting Edge is an investigative public affairs programme focused on border security, illegal immigration, and procurement fraud. It does not engage directly with party-political debate, electoral competition, or party manifestos. No party spokesperson is interviewed; no party is explicitly named as responsible or exonerated. Scores therefore reflect the degree to which the programme's framing, omissions, or implicit narratives align with or distort the known policy positions of each party.

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Programme Representation vs. Party Programme Position
ANC	0	Not directly named. The fraudulent contract (KZN Dept of Transport, ANC-governed province) is reported factually. ANC's stated position on border security and anti-corruption is neither endorsed nor distorted. Score: neutral by absence.
DA	0	Not mentioned. DA's centre-right, rule-of-law, anti-corruption stance would align with the episode's implicit framing, but the DA is not cited or credited. Score: neutral by absence.
MK (uMkhonto)	0	Not mentioned. No representation, no distortion. Score: neutral by absence.
EFF	0	Not mentioned. EFF's positions on land, nationalisation, or immigration are not engaged. Score: neutral by absence.
IFP	0	Not mentioned. Score: neutral by absence.
PA	0	Not mentioned by name. The episode's implicit framing (illegal immigration as a problem requiring enforcement) is broadly consistent with PA's anti-immigration platform, but the PA is not cited or credited. Score: neutral by absence.
FF+	0	Not mentioned. Score: neutral by absence.
ActionSA	0	Not mentioned. Score: neutral by absence.

Party Bias Summary

- Most Accurate Representation: N/A — no party is directly represented or misrepresented.
- Strongest Distortion: N/A — no active distortion detected.
- Average Deviation from 0: 0.0
- Conclusion: This episode does not engage in direct party-political framing. All major parties score 0 because none are named, quoted, or explicitly positioned. However, the episode's implicit narrative — illegal immigration as a security and fiscal burden, enforcement as the appropriate response — structurally aligns more closely with the policy positions of right-of-centre parties (PA, DA, ActionSA) than with left-of-centre parties (EFF, MK) that tend to frame migration through a human rights or pan-African solidarity lens. This structural alignment is not the result of explicit party advocacy but of agenda-setting and framing choices, which are assessed in Steps 3 and 4.



CHAPTER 2 — PROGRAMME INFORMATION AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

Programme Data

- Title: Cutting Edge — "Borderless Border" (Follow-Up / Update Episode)
- Date: Not specified in filename; internal references suggest 2024–2025 broadcast period (SIU tribunal outcome, GNU context)
- Estimated Length: Approximately 25 minutes (transcript runs to 25:29)
- Presenter / Reporter: Onela Mbanja (presenter); Siphosiso Linda (reporter, Episode 1 package)
- Interviewed Persons:

Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political Spectrum
SIU Representative (unnamed)	Special Investigating Unit spokesperson	State institution (independent)	Neutral/institutional
BMA Representative (unnamed)	Border Management Authority spokesperson	State institution (government)	Neutral/institutional
Lt. Gen. Mkhwanazi	SAPS / Ad Hoc Committee presenter	State institution	Neutral/institutional
Wandergina (Wander)	Eswatini learner, South Africa resident	None	N/A
Swazi women (unnamed)	Informal residents / traders	None	N/A
Woman at clinic (unnamed)	Border crosser seeking healthcare	None	N/A
Dlamini (unnamed first name)	Eswatini national, permanent SA resident	None	N/A
Unnamed source(s)	Border area informants	Unidentified	N/A

Main Topic

A follow-up investigative report on illegal border crossings along the South Africa–Eswatini and South Africa–Mozambique borders, updating the findings of a previous episode with new SIU tribunal outcomes regarding a fraudulent R85 million border wall contract.

World-Knowledge Context

South Africa shares porous land borders with Mozambique, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, and Swaziland. Illegal border crossings are a persistent and politically charged issue, intersecting with crime (vehicle smuggling, human trafficking, kidnapping), public service access (healthcare, education), and xenophobia. The Border Management Authority (BMA) was established in 2020 to consolidate border control functions previously split across multiple departments. South Africa's public procurement system has been severely compromised by state capture, with the Zondo Commission documenting systemic fraud in tender processes. The SIU (Special Investigating Unit) is a statutory body empowered to investigate and recover state funds lost to corruption. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport's border wall contract — the subject of this episode — represents a microcosm of broader procurement failure. Immigration policy is contested between enforcement-focused approaches (PA, DA, ActionSA) and human rights/pan-African solidarity approaches (EFF, civil society). South Africa's Constitution guarantees access to emergency healthcare regardless of nationality, complicating the "burden" framing applied to cross-border healthcare access.



CHAPTER 3 — 15 CRITERIA: DETAILED ANALYSIS

Hard Facts — 9 techniques that are countable and scientifically verifiable

1. EXPERT SELECTION

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Expert 1: SIU Representative (unnamed)

Timestamp: 18:06–19:44

Statement: "Based on the grounds of review, when we approached the special tribunal, there were quite a number of aspects that were raised. For instance, the compliance issues, statutory requirements, and other legislative requirements were not met when this contract was awarded."

Classification: Statutory investigative body; directly mandated to investigate and report on this contract. High institutional credibility on procurement findings.

Missing counter-voice: KZN Department of Transport official; ISF Shula Joint Venture representative (right of reply).

Source Depth Check:

(a) FUNDING: State-funded, established under the Special Investigating Units and Special Tribunals Act 74 of 1996. No private funding. No commercial conflict of interest.

(b) MANDATE: Directly mandated to investigate procurement fraud. Fully compatible with neutral assessment of this specific contract.

D1 Conflict of Interest: +2 — No financial interest in outcome; institutional mandate is accountability.

D2 Personal Risk: +1 — SIU officials face institutional risk if findings are wrong; some personal exposure.

D3 Subject Competence: +2 — Directly mandated and legally empowered to investigate this contract.

D4 Opinion Consistency: +1 — SIU findings are consistent with tribunal order; no reversal detected.

D5 Emotionalisation vs. Data: +2 — Testimony is data-driven, specific (5.29 km, R85m, R62m, 74.7%), non-emotive.

D6 Source Level: +2 — Primary source; direct investigator of the contract in question.

TOTAL: +10 → SOURCE TRAFFIC LIGHT: GREEN

(c) PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE: The SIU representative is correctly framed as an authoritative institutional source. No false neutrality concern.

Expert 2: BMA Representative (unnamed)

Timestamp: 19:53–22:28

Statement: "The Border Management Authority has implemented a multi-layered border security strategy, which is aimed at protecting national interest and ensuring that we enhance national security."

Classification: Government agency spokesperson; directly responsible for the border management being scrutinised. Institutional interest in presenting operations favourably.

Missing counter-voice: Independent border security analyst; civil society monitor of BMA operations.

Source Depth Check:

(a) FUNDING: State-funded, established under the Border Management Authority Act 2 of 2020. Reports to the Minister of Home Affairs.



(b) MANDATE: Mandated to manage borders — but also institutionally motivated to defend its own performance. Partial conflict of interest when assessing its own effectiveness.

D1 Conflict of Interest: -1 — Institutional interest in presenting BMA operations as effective; defending own record.

D2 Personal Risk: 0 — Spokesperson role; limited personal risk.

D3 Subject Competence: +2 — Directly responsible for border management; operational knowledge is high.

D4 Opinion Consistency: 0 — No prior statements available for comparison in transcript.

D5 Emotionalisation vs. Data: +1 — Mostly operational language; some self-promotional framing ("multi-layered strategy").

D6 Source Level: +1 — Primary operational source, but self-reporting on own performance.

TOTAL: +3 → SOURCE TRAFFIC LIGHT: YELLOW

(c) PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE: The BMA spokesperson is given substantial uncontested airtime (approximately 2.5 minutes) to present the authority's position. The programme does not challenge specific claims (e.g., the effectiveness of the "multi-layered strategy") with independent verification. The BMA's self-assessment is presented without a critical counter-voice, which partially neutralises the programme's earlier critical framing of border failures.

Expert 3: Lt. Gen. Mkhwanazi (SAPS)

Timestamp: 23:19–24:12

Statement: "So, this is a person that the team investigating the kidnapping tells me they are tracing these — they found Nangi, and they chased Nangi to Mpumalanga to a house. The man is not there in the house."

Classification: Senior SAPS official; testimony drawn from parliamentary committee appearance, not direct interview. Credible institutional source on cross-border crime.

Missing counter-voice: Defence attorney or civil liberties perspective on cross-border law enforcement.

Source Depth Check:

(a) FUNDING: State-funded (SAPS). No commercial conflict.

(b) MANDATE: Directly responsible for policing; testimony given to parliamentary committee — high accountability context.

D1 Conflict of Interest: 0 — Institutional interest in demonstrating police effectiveness, but also in highlighting resource constraints.

D2 Personal Risk: +1 — Parliamentary testimony carries accountability risk.

D3 Subject Competence: +2 — Senior SAPS official on policing operations.

D4 Opinion Consistency: +1 — Consistent with known SAPS positions on cross-border crime.

D5 Emotionalisation vs. Data: +1 — Narrative account of specific case; factual but anecdotal.

D6 Source Level: +1 — Secondary (parliamentary testimony reproduced); not direct interview.

TOTAL: +6 → SOURCE TRAFFIC LIGHT: GREEN

Missing Expert Groups:

- Independent border security or migration policy analyst (academic or think-tank)
- Constitutional law expert on non-citizen rights
- Representative of ISF Shula Joint Venture (right of reply — fairness obligation)

Source Credibility Overview:

Source	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	Total	Signal
SIU Representative (unnamed)	+2	+1	+2	+1	+2	+2	+10	GREEN
BMA Representative (unnamed)	-1	0	+2	0	+1	+1	+3	YELLOW
Lt. Gen. Mkhwanazi (SAPS)	0	+1	+2	+1	+1	+1	+6	GREEN



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Summary (Matrix Results):

- SIU Representative: GREEN (+10) — High credibility, directly mandated, data-driven.
- BMA Representative: YELLOW (+3) — Institutional conflict of interest; self-reporting on own performance; insufficient independent challenge.
- Lt. Gen. Mkhwanazi: GREEN (+6) — Credible institutional source; parliamentary accountability context.



2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

Source 1: Special Investigating Unit (SIU) / Special Tribunal

Timestamp: 17:09–19:44

Statement: "The special tribunal confirmed that the SIU's investigation findings exposed that only 5.29 km of the planned 8 km wall was erected."

(a) Funding and governance: State-funded statutory body. Independent of the department under investigation (KZN Transport). No commercial interest.

(b) Structural conflict of interest: Minimal — SIU's institutional interest is in demonstrating successful recoveries, which may lead to emphasis on wins over ongoing failures. However, this does not distort the factual findings presented.

(c) Missing counter-source: KZN Department of Transport response; ISF Shula Joint Venture response.

Rumour Check: No unverified rumour markers in SIU-sourced content. All figures are attributed to tribunal findings.

Source 2: Border Management Authority (BMA)

Timestamp: 19:53–22:28

Statement: "The Border Management Authority has implemented a multi-layered border security strategy, which is aimed at protecting national interest."

(a) Funding and governance: State-funded, under Home Affairs. Self-reporting on own performance.

(b) Structural conflict of interest: HIGH — The BMA is assessing its own effectiveness in the same domain where the programme has documented failures. Its statement is institutional self-defence.

(c) Missing counter-source: Independent audit of BMA operations; civil society monitor; academic assessment of BMA effectiveness.

Rumour Check: No explicit rumour markers in BMA statement.

Source 3: Anonymous "sources" (border area informants)

Timestamp: 14:20–14:33; 15:36–16:00

Statement: "our source told us this is the perfect time for criminals and those who cross illegally to reside in South Africa" (14:20); "Our sources allege what we've observed is just the tip of the iceberg" (15:36).

(a) Funding and governance: Unidentified. No verifiable credentials.

(b) Structural conflict of interest: Unknown — cannot be assessed without identification.

(c) Missing counter-source: Named, verifiable expert or official confirmation.

Rumour 1:

Timestamp: 14:20

Claim: "our source told us this is the perfect time for criminals and those who cross illegally to reside in South Africa"

Rumour marker: "our source told us" — unverified, unattributed claim.

Primary source available: NO — Penalty point applied. (+1)

Rumour 2:

President: Schläpfer, David - **Contact:** kontakt@SVFAB.ch - **Address:** SVFAB, Postfach, CH-8021 Zurich 1



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Timestamp: 15:36

Claim: "Our sources allege what we've observed is just the tip of the iceberg"

Rumour marker: "sources allege" — unverified, unattributed claim.

Primary source available: NO — Penalty point applied. (+1)

Rumour 3:

Timestamp: 08:07

Claim: "It's alleged there's a fee involved to let them cross into South Africa. We couldn't verify these claims."

Rumour marker: "It's alleged" — the programme itself acknowledges non-verification.

Primary source available: NO — Penalty point applied. (+1)

Base score: 1/10 (source diversity is limited but not absent); Penalty points: +3 (three unverified claims presented as reportable findings)

Adjusted Score: 4/10

Summary: Source selection is dominated by state institutions (SIU, BMA, SAPS), with no independent academic, civil society, or origin-country sources. Three claims rest on anonymous, unverified sourcing, which the programme itself partially acknowledges but still broadcasts. The absence of a right-of-reply source for ISF Shula Joint Venture is a fairness gap under BCCSA Code Clause 16.



3. TIME DISTRIBUTION

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Estimated speaking time:

- SIU Representative: approx. 1 min. 40 sec. (6.7%)
- BMA Representative: approx. 2 min. 35 sec. (10.3%)
- Lt. Gen. Mkhwanazi (SAPS): approx. 1 min. 10 sec. (4.7%)
- Migrant voices (Wander, Swazi women, clinic woman, Dlamini): approx. 3 min. 30 sec. (14.0%) — shown but not analytically framed
- Presenter/narrator (Onela Mbona + Sipho Linda package): approx. 16 min. (64.0%)
- ISF Shula Joint Venture / KZN Dept of Transport: 0 sec. (0%)
- Civil society / human rights / academic: 0 sec. (0%)
- Origin-country government: 0 sec. (0%)

Summary: The presenter/narrator dominates at approximately 64% of airtime, setting the frame without challenge. State enforcement institutions (SIU, BMA, SAPS) collectively receive approximately 21.7% of airtime. Migrant voices receive approximately 14% but are used illustratively rather than analytically. Accountability voices (accused contractor, responsible department) and counter-framing voices (civil society, academics) receive zero airtime. The distribution is not egregiously unbalanced for an investigative format, but the complete absence of right-of-reply and counter-framing voices is a structural gap.



4. SELECTIVE OMISSION

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Omission 1: Right of reply for ISF Shula Joint Venture

Context

The programme names ISF Shula Joint Venture as having submitted fraudulent documents and failed to complete the contract. No statement from the company is sought or presented.

Relevant at: 17:09–17:28

Effect

The company is effectively convicted in the court of public opinion without any opportunity to respond. This is a direct fairness obligation under BCCSA Code Clause 16.

Omission 2: KZN Department of Transport response

Context

The SIU findings implicate the department's bid evaluation and evaluation committees in governance failures. The department is not given a direct voice to respond.

Relevant at: 18:06–19:44

Effect

The institutional accountability narrative is one-sided. The department's perspective on the disciplinary processes ordered by the tribunal is absent.

Omission 3: Constitutional and legal framework for non-citizen access to services

Context

The episode repeatedly frames cross-border access to South African healthcare and education as an unambiguous burden and illegal activity. South Africa's Constitution (Section 27 — right to healthcare; Section 28 — children's rights) and international obligations under the Refugee Convention create legal complexity that is entirely omitted.

Relevant at: 05:47–07:27; 08:49–09:47

Effect

Viewers are given no basis to understand that some of the cross-border service access shown may be constitutionally protected or legally ambiguous, rather than straightforwardly illegal.

Summary: Three significant omissions are identified: the right of reply for the accused contractor (fairness obligation), the response of the implicated government department (accountability balance), and the constitutional/legal framework governing non-citizen access to services (contextual accuracy). These omissions collectively skew the episode toward a one-sided enforcement narrative.

Missing Voices

- Constitutional law expert: Would have contextualised South Africa's legal obligations to non-citizens under Sections 27 and 28 of the Constitution, and under international refugee law.
- SADC regional economist: Would have provided structural context for why residents of Eswatini and Mozambique seek services in South Africa, and what bilateral development frameworks exist.
- Eswatini or Mozambique government spokesperson: Would have provided the origin-country perspective on cross-border movement and any bilateral agreements governing it.
- Refugee/migrant rights NGO (e.g., Lawyers for Human Rights, Scalabrini Centre): Would have provided the human rights framing for irregular migration and challenged the unqualified "burden" narrative.



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- Academic researcher on migration (e.g., African Centre for Migration and Society, Wits): Would have provided peer-reviewed evidence on the actual fiscal and social impact of irregular migration, rather than anecdotal assertion.
- KZN Department of Transport official: The department at the centre of the procurement fraud is not given a direct voice to respond to the SIU findings.
- ISF Shula Joint Venture representative: The company found to have submitted fraudulent documents is not given a right of reply, which raises fairness concerns under BCCSA Code Clause 16.
- Human trafficking victim support specialist: Given the episode's reference to child trafficking, a specialist from an anti-trafficking organisation would have added depth and victim-centred framing.



5. NUMERICAL MANIPULATION

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

Finding 1: The R85 million / 5.29 km figures

Timestamp: 17:09–19:44; 01:46–01:57

Number: "only 5.29 km of the planned 8 km wall was erected"; "85 million rands was paid"; "another tender of 62 million rands to complete about 2.4 km"

Dimensions assessed:

- (a) Absolute value: SHOWN — R85m paid, 5.29 km built, R62m additional tender.
- (b) Proportion: PARTIALLY SHOWN — "74.7% of the work" is stated (18:47), which is useful context.
- (c) Trend: NOT SHOWN — No comparison to similar border infrastructure projects, no cost-per-kilometre benchmark for comparable projects, no indication of whether R85m for 5.29 km is above or below market rate for this type of construction.

Missing context: What is the market rate per kilometre for Jersey barrier wall construction? Is R85m for 5.29 km (approximately R16m/km) above or below comparable projects? Without this benchmark, viewers cannot assess whether the fraud was primarily in the non-completion or also in the pricing.

Effect: The figures are presented as self-evidently scandalous without the comparative context needed to fully evaluate the scale of overcharging versus non-delivery.

Finding 2: "More than 2,000 illegal immigrants stopped during Easter weekend"

Timestamp: 16:05–16:17

Number: "more than 2,000 illegal immigrants were stopped during Easter weekend operations"

Dimensions assessed:

- (a) Absolute value: SHOWN — 2,000+ stopped.
- (b) Proportion: NOT SHOWN — What proportion of total crossings does this represent? What is the estimated total number of illegal crossings during the same period?
- (c) Trend: NOT SHOWN — Is 2,000 more or fewer than previous Easter weekends? Is enforcement improving or declining?

Missing context: Without a denominator (total estimated crossings) or trend data, the figure could indicate either effective enforcement or a small fraction of total illegal crossings. The BMA presents it as evidence of effectiveness; the programme does not challenge this framing with comparative data.

Effect: The figure is used by the BMA as self-validation and is not independently contextualised.

Summary: Numerical presentation is generally factual but lacks comparative benchmarks and trend data in two key instances. The cost-per-kilometre omission is the more significant gap, as it prevents viewers from fully assessing the nature of the procurement fraud. Score reflects limited but present numerical framing issues.



6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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Association 1: Taxi operators and illegal crossings

Timestamp: 10:39–11:07

Quote: "Operators are profiting from this illegal cross-border activity, moving people daily without going through official border procedures."

Technique: Taxi operators are collectively characterised as profiteers from illegal activity without distinguishing between operators who knowingly transport undocumented migrants and those who may be unaware of passengers' documentation status.

Effect: The entire taxi industry in the border area is implicitly associated with criminal facilitation.

Association 2: Eswatini soldier and bribery

Timestamp: 08:03–08:19

Quote: "It's alleged there's a fee involved to let them cross into South Africa. We couldn't verify these claims, but it's suspicious he's letting them cross the fence instead of directing them to the official crossing point."

Technique: An Eswatini soldier is visually identified and verbally associated with bribery based on unverified allegation and the presenter's subjective assessment ("it's suspicious"). The programme itself acknowledges it cannot verify the claim but broadcasts the association regardless.

Effect: A named (by uniform/position) foreign military official is publicly associated with corruption without verification. This is the most significant guilt-by-association finding in the episode.

Guilt-by-Association Check for persons framed as criminal/corrupt:

- Eswatini soldier: No primary source for bribery allegation. Claim is not falsifiable from available evidence. Programme acknowledges non-verification. Category B (borderline — unverified allegation, not established fact).
- Taxi operators: Collective characterisation without individual verification. Category B.

Summary: Two guilt-by-association instances are identified, both in the moderate range. The Eswatini soldier case is the more serious, as it involves a specific individual being publicly associated with corruption based on an allegation the programme itself cannot verify. Score is kept low (2/10) because the programme does partially acknowledge the unverified nature of the soldier allegation, and neither instance involves the sustained demonisation characteristic of high-scoring guilt-by-association.



7. TIMING

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Finding 1: Opening with kidnapping/fugitive narrative

Position: 00:19–00:52 (opening)

Content: "They chased Nathi Mtungwana to a house... They told the man has crossed to Mozambique with the victim."

Timing effect: The episode opens with a dramatic kidnapping narrative — the most emotionally charged content — before any contextual or analytical framing is established. This primes viewers to associate border crossings with serious violent crime before the more nuanced material (learners, healthcare seekers) is presented. The kidnapping case is then returned to at 23:19, creating a bookend of criminal framing.

Finding 2: SIU accountability findings placed in the middle, not the lead

Position: 17:09–19:44 (middle)

Content: SIU tribunal findings on the fraudulent contract.

Timing effect: The most substantive accountability finding — the SIU's successful setting aside of the fraudulent contract — is placed in the middle of the episode, after extensive border-crossing footage. This subordinates the accountability narrative to the security/immigration narrative, suggesting the latter is the primary frame.

Finding 3: Closing with "the border remains open" — not with accountability progress

Position: 24:31–24:37 (closing)

Content: "Until then, the border remains open, just not in the way it was meant to be."

Timing effect: The episode closes on a note of ongoing failure and insecurity, rather than on the SIU's successful intervention (which was presented as a positive development). This closing frame reinforces the security-threat narrative over the accountability-success narrative.

Summary: Timing choices consistently prioritise the security/threat narrative over the accountability/governance narrative. The opening and closing frames are both security-focused, while the most positive development (SIU success) is buried in the middle. This is a mild but consistent structural bias in information sequencing.



8. SELECTIVE OUTRAGE

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Outrage = bias. Selective outrage amplifies the finding. Score = outrage level (0–5) + selectivity (0–5)

Methodological Principle (K11+K8): The triggering event must be documented before each assessment. A reaction can only be assessed as selective if comparable triggers at other positions produced no analogous reaction.

Finding 1: Framing of cross-border healthcare access

Timestamp: 05:47–06:51; 08:49–09:47

Triggering event: Eswatini residents crossing to access South African healthcare and education.

Reaction: Framed as a burden — "the unbudgeted burden of people utilizing these border fences to cross illegally" (05:31); "She says Eswatini's costs are high, so they cross over to South Africa" (08:49) — presented with implicit disapproval.

Comparison: The fraudulent contractor (ISF Shula Joint Venture) who received R85 million for incomplete work is reported factually but without comparable emotional framing of outrage. The SIU representative uses institutional language; the narrator does not apply the same "burden" or "exploitation" framing to the contractor's conduct.

Asymmetry: Mild asymmetry — the poor migrant seeking healthcare is framed as a burden; the contractor who defrauded the state of tens of millions is framed as a governance failure. The moral weight applied to each is not proportionate to the financial or social harm caused.

Outrage level: 1/5 (mild, implicit rather than explicit)

Selectivity: 1/5 (mild asymmetry, not systematic)

Summary: A mild asymmetry is detectable in the relative emotional weight applied to poor migrants accessing services versus the contractor who defrauded the state of R85 million. This does not rise to the level of systematic selective outrage but is a measurable framing imbalance. Overall score is kept low because the programme does not engage in explicit emotional outrage at any point.



9. SELECTIVE OMISSION — OVERALL PICTURE

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Finding 1: Absence of constitutional/legal framework

Timestamp: 05:47–09:53 (throughout healthcare/education sequences)

Missing perspective/fact: South Africa's constitutional obligations to non-citizens under Sections 27 and 28 of the Constitution; international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

Relevance: The episode repeatedly frames cross-border access to healthcare and education as illegal and burdensome. The constitutional and international legal framework that complicates this framing is entirely absent.

Impact: Viewers receive a legally incomplete picture that presents constitutionally ambiguous conduct as straightforwardly illegal.

Finding 2: Absence of right of reply for accused parties

Timestamp: 17:09–19:44

Missing perspective/fact: ISF Shula Joint Venture response to SIU findings; KZN Department of Transport response to disciplinary process order.

Relevance: Both parties are named and implicated in serious misconduct. BCCSA Code Clause 16 requires that persons accused of wrongdoing be given an opportunity to respond.

Impact: The episode presents a one-sided accountability narrative without the procedural fairness required by the BCCSA Code.

Finding 3: Absence of structural/regional development context

Timestamp: Throughout (03:27–09:53)

Missing perspective/fact: SADC regional economic data; Eswatini and Mozambique GDP per capita; bilateral agreements on cross-border movement; structural causes of migration.

Relevance: The episode shows migrants crossing for healthcare and education but does not contextualise why these services are unavailable or unaffordable in their home countries, or what regional frameworks exist to address this.

Impact: Migration is presented as a unilateral South African problem rather than a regional development challenge requiring multilateral solutions.

Summary: Three systematic omissions are identified, each materially affecting the completeness of the programme's coverage. The absence of constitutional/legal framing, right-of-reply for accused parties, and regional development context collectively produce a picture that is factually accurate in its individual claims but structurally incomplete in its overall representation of the issue.

Share of covered perspectives

Inverted: original value measures coverage (higher = better). Shown as deviation (higher = larger gaps).

[A] Enforcement/security perspective: Border crossings as a security threat enabling crime, smuggling, and trafficking — the dominant perspective in this episode.



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[B] Procurement accountability perspective: The fraudulent contract as a symptom of systemic governance failure — partially covered.

[C] Migrant/human rights perspective: Why people cross — poverty, lack of healthcare, lack of education in origin countries — partially shown but not analytically framed.

[D] Constitutional/legal perspective: South Africa's constitutional obligations to non-citizens (emergency healthcare, children's rights), and international refugee law obligations.

[E] Regional development perspective: SADC-level structural causes of migration — economic inequality between South Africa and neighbours.

[F] Community impact perspective: How border communities (South African residents) experience illegal crossings — partially covered.

[G] Origin-country government perspective: Eswatini and Mozambique government positions on cross-border movement and bilateral agreements.

[H] Civil society/NGO perspective: Organisations working with migrants, refugees, and trafficking victims.

[I] Academic/research perspective: Peer-reviewed research on the actual fiscal and social impact of irregular migration on South Africa.

[J] Whistleblower/insider perspective: Officials or contractors with direct knowledge of the procurement fraud beyond the SIU's public findings.

Assessment: Was Each Perspective Covered?

[A] COVERED

Timestamp: 00:19–00:52; 12:00–16:36; 22:52–24:31

Quote: "criminals have found ways to commit crime in South Africa and then use these South African-Mozambique cross-border barriers to avoid being caught" (23:11)

Assessment: The security/enforcement perspective is the dominant frame throughout the episode, receiving the majority of airtime and the most authoritative sourcing (SIU, BMA, SAPS).

[B] COVERED (partially)

Timestamp: 17:09–19:44

Quote: "The ISF Shula Joint Venture submitted fraudulent documents, failed to meet mandatory requirements, and left the project incomplete despite receiving 84 million rand" (17:09)

Assessment: The procurement fraud is covered factually and with SIU sourcing, but the systemic causes (tender committee failures, departmental oversight gaps) are only briefly mentioned and not analytically developed.

[C] ANECDOTALLY SHOWN, NOT ANALYTICALLY FRAMED

Timestamp: 03:27–09:53; 05:47–06:51

Quote: "She says Eswatini's costs are high, so they cross over to South Africa" (08:49)

Assessment: The episode shows migrants crossing for healthcare and education, and briefly gives voice to their reasons, but frames this primarily as a burden on South Africa rather than as a structural development failure in origin countries.

[D] OMITTED

Timestamp: N/A

Assessment: South Africa's constitutional obligations to non-citizens — including Section 27 (healthcare) and Section 28 (children's rights) — are never mentioned. The episode frames cross-border healthcare access as an unambiguous problem without acknowledging the legal complexity.

[E] OMITTED

Timestamp: N/A

Assessment: No SADC-level or regional development framing is offered. The structural economic inequality that drives migration from Eswatini and Mozambique is not contextualised.

[F] PARTIALLY COVERED

Timestamp: 01:57–02:09

Quote: "We spent more time with the community who live adjacent to the border wall in question" (01:57)



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Assessment: The episode references community impact but does not develop it with substantive community testimony in the follow-up segment.

[G] OMITTED

Timestamp: N/A

Assessment: No Eswatini or Mozambique government spokesperson is consulted. The perspective of origin-country governments on cross-border movement is entirely absent.

[H] OMITTED

Timestamp: N/A

Assessment: No civil society organisation, refugee advocacy group, or migrant support NGO is consulted or cited.

[I] OMITTED

Timestamp: N/A

Assessment: No academic research on the actual fiscal or social impact of irregular migration is cited. The "burden" framing is asserted rather than evidenced.

[J] PARTIALLY COVERED

Timestamp: 13:35–14:33

Quote: "our source told us this is the perfect time for criminals and those who cross illegally to reside in South Africa" (14:20)

Assessment: Anonymous sources are used but not verified or contextualised. No named whistleblower or insider with verifiable credentials is presented.

Completeness Score: 3/10

Reasoning: Of ten relevant perspectives, only two are substantively covered (enforcement/security; procurement accountability), one is partially covered (community impact), one is anecdotally shown without analytical framing (migrant reasons), and one relies on unverified anonymous sourcing (insider/whistleblower). Five perspectives are entirely absent: constitutional/legal obligations, regional development context, origin-country government views, civil society/NGO perspectives, and academic research. The episode's completeness is significantly below the standard required by BCCSA Code Clause 18 for controversial matters of public importance.



Soft Facts — 6 qualitative techniques

10. FRAMING

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Finding 1: Migration as security threat and fiscal burden

Timestamp: 05:29–05:41

Quote: "Will South Africa ever find a solution to the unbudgeted burden of people utilizing these border fences to cross illegally, as in some areas the fences are literally a backyard fence for some homes?"

Manipulation: The rhetorical question frames illegal border crossing exclusively as a burden and a security failure. The word "unbudgeted" implies fiscal harm without quantification. The phrase "literally a backyard fence" trivialises the border infrastructure challenge while amplifying the sense of vulnerability.

Why problematic: This framing pre-empts any humanitarian or development framing of migration. Viewers are positioned to see cross-border movement as a problem to be solved through enforcement, not as a complex regional phenomenon with multiple legitimate dimensions.

Finding 2: The border wall as the solution frame

Timestamp: 12:00–12:19

Quote: "The South Africa-Mozambique border fence was one of the priority projects in the SADC region earmarked for budget allocation to build a barrier wall. It was considered a solid solution to the rampant car smuggling."

Manipulation: The physical barrier is presented as the self-evident solution to cross-border crime, with the only problem being the fraudulent contract that prevented its completion. The effectiveness of physical barriers as a crime-prevention tool is not questioned.

Why problematic: Research on border wall effectiveness is contested. The framing assumes that a completed wall would have solved the smuggling problem, which is not established. The episode itself shows criminals using ladders and ramps to circumvent the existing wall (14:44), which partially undermines this frame but is not analytically developed.

Finding 3: "The border remains open" — failure as the closing frame

Timestamp: 24:31–24:37

Quote: "Until then, the border remains open, just not in the way it was meant to be."

Manipulation: The closing line frames the entire episode as a story of ongoing failure and insecurity. The SIU's successful intervention — which the episode itself presents as a positive development — is subordinated to a narrative of persistent vulnerability.

Why problematic: The closing frame shapes the dominant impression viewers take away. A closing that emphasised the SIU's success and the accountability mechanisms now in motion would produce a different overall impression without being less accurate.



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Summary: The episode's dominant frame is "border as security failure requiring enforcement solutions." This frame is established in the opening, reinforced throughout, and confirmed in the closing. Alternative frames — humanitarian, developmental, constitutional — are either absent or present only as illustrative material that is not analytically developed.



11. WORD CHOICE AND TERMINOLOGY

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Finding 1: "Unbudgeted burden"

Timestamp: 05:31

Quote: "the unbudgeted burden of people utilizing these border fences to cross illegally"

Manipulation: "Burden" is a loaded term that frames migrants as a cost rather than as people with needs and rights. "Unbudgeted" implies fiscal irresponsibility without quantification.

Why problematic: Neutral alternative would be: "the challenge of managing cross-border movement outside official channels." The chosen language pre-empts humanitarian framing.

Finding 2: "Influx of foreigners"

Timestamp: 16:15–16:17

Quote: "The BMA insists its resources are curbing the influx of foreigners into the country."

Manipulation: "Influx" is a term with strong negative connotations, historically associated with apartheid-era pass laws and contemporary xenophobic discourse in South Africa. "Foreigners" is less precise than "undocumented migrants" or "irregular border crossers."

Why problematic: The programme reproduces the BMA's own language without critical distance. Neutral alternative: "the movement of undocumented persons across the border." The use of "influx of foreigners" in a public broadcaster's narration — even when attributed to the BMA — normalises xenophobic framing.

Finding 3: "Slipping through the fences"

Timestamp: 16:22–16:24

Quote: "illegal immigrants are slipping through the fences"

Manipulation: "Slipping through" is a metaphor that connotes stealth, deception, and evasion. It frames migrants as inherently evasive actors rather than as people responding to economic and social pressures.

Why problematic: Neutral alternative: "crossing the border outside official entry points." The chosen metaphor reinforces the security-threat frame.

Summary: Word choice throughout the episode consistently reinforces the security-threat and burden framing. Three specific instances — "unbudgeted burden," "influx of foreigners," and "slipping through the fences" — are particularly loaded. The reproduction of the BMA's "influx of foreigners" language without critical distance is the most significant finding, given the term's historical resonance in South African xenophobic discourse.



12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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Methodological Principle (K11+K8): The triggering event must be documented before each assessment. An intervention can only be assessed as asymmetric if comparable triggers at other guests produced no analogous intervention.

Finding 1: BMA spokesperson given uncontested airtime

Timestamp: 19:53–22:28

Triggering event: BMA spokesperson makes a series of self-promotional claims about the effectiveness of border management operations.

Presenter reaction: No follow-up questions, no challenge, no request for evidence. The BMA statement is presented in full without interruption or critical framing.

Comparison: The SIU findings (17:09–19:44) are presented with specific figures and tribunal confirmation — a higher evidentiary standard than the BMA's general claims. However, the BMA's claims are not subjected to the same evidentiary scrutiny.

Asymmetry: Mild — the programme's investigative framing is more critical of the procurement failure than of the BMA's operational claims. However, this is a pre-recorded documentary format, not a live interview, so the absence of follow-up questions is partly a structural feature rather than a moderation choice.

Summary: Moderation behaviour is difficult to assess in a pre-recorded documentary format where the presenter's narration serves the moderating function. The most notable asymmetry is the BMA spokesperson's uncontested airtime relative to the critical framing applied to the procurement failure. Score is kept low (2/10) because the format does not permit real-time moderation in the conventional sense.



13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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Asymmetry 1: SIU vs. BMA

To SIU (via narration framing), 17:09–19:44: The SIU's findings are presented with specific figures, tribunal confirmation, and a detailed account of irregularities. The implicit question is: "What went wrong and who is accountable?" — a hard accountability frame.

To BMA, 19:53–22:28: The BMA is given space to describe its "multi-layered strategy" without being asked to account for the specific failures documented in the episode (e.g., why illegal crossings continue despite the strategy; what the BMA's response is to the specific market-day crossing arrangement shown at 13:48–14:33).

Comparison: The SIU is held to an accountability standard; the BMA is given a platform for self-description. This asymmetry is mild but measurable.

Asymmetry 2: Migrant voices vs. enforcement voices

To migrant voices (Wander, Swazi women, clinic woman): Questions are empathetic and exploratory — "why do you cross?", "what is your situation?" — soft framing.

To enforcement voices (SIU, BMA, SAPS): Questions are institutional and accountability-focused — "what did you find?", "what are you doing?" — harder framing.

Comparison: This asymmetry is structurally appropriate for an investigative format (migrants are witnesses; officials are accountable actors), but it does mean that migrant voices are used illustratively rather than analytically, while official voices carry the analytical weight.

Summary: Question asymmetry is present but moderate. The most significant gap is the failure to ask the BMA hard questions about the specific failures documented in the episode, while the SIU is held to a higher evidentiary standard. Score reflects a mild but consistent pattern.



14. FALSE BALANCE

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Finding 1: BMA response as balance for documented failures

Timestamp: 19:44–22:28

Construct: The programme presents the BMA's statement as a response to the documented border failures, implying a balanced "here is the problem / here is the official response" structure.

Analysis: The BMA's statement is general and self-promotional, while the documented failures are specific and evidenced. Presenting the BMA's general claims as a counterweight to specific documented failures creates a mild false balance — the two sides are not epistemically equivalent. However, the programme does not explicitly claim balance; it presents the BMA statement as "what they had to say" (19:50), which is a lower claim than equivalence.

Summary: False balance is not a dominant feature of this episode. The programme does not artificially construct a "both sides" frame on the procurement fraud or the border security failures. The BMA response is the closest instance, but it is presented as an official response rather than as an equivalent counter-narrative. Score: 1/10.



15. AGENDA-SETTING

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Finding 1: Physical border enforcement as the self-evident solution

Agenda element set: The construction of a physical border wall is treated as the self-evident and appropriate response to cross-border crime and illegal migration. The only problem is the fraudulent contract that prevented its completion.

Timestamp: 12:00–12:19 — "It was considered a solid solution to the rampant car smuggling."

Alternative agenda: The effectiveness of physical barriers as a crime-prevention tool; alternative approaches (bilateral agreements, regional development, technology-based surveillance); the environmental and community impact of border walls.

Finding 2: Illegal border crossing as inherently criminal

Agenda element set: All illegal border crossing is treated as equivalent — whether for healthcare, education, trading, or criminal activity. The legal and moral distinctions between different types of irregular movement are not placed on the agenda.

Timestamp: 05:29–05:41 — "the unbudgeted burden of people utilizing these border fences to cross illegally"

Alternative agenda: The distinction between irregular economic migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and criminal actors; South Africa's legal obligations to each category.

Finding 3: The SIU as the accountability hero

Agenda element set: The SIU's intervention is framed as the system working — "we are happy as the Special Investigating Unit that the contract has been reviewed and set aside" (19:24). The broader systemic failure that allowed the fraud to occur in the first place is not placed on the agenda.

Timestamp: 19:24–19:44

Alternative agenda: Why did the bid evaluation committee approve a non-compliant tender? What systemic reforms are needed to prevent recurrence? Who in the department has been held accountable?

Summary: Agenda-setting is the episode's most significant soft-fact finding. Three agenda elements are treated as self-evident: physical enforcement as the solution, all illegal crossing as equivalent, and the SIU as sufficient accountability. Three alternative agendas — barrier effectiveness, legal distinctions between migrants, and systemic reform — are entirely absent. This produces a programme that is factually accurate in its individual claims but structurally limited in its analytical scope.



CHAPTER 4 — OVERALL EVALUATION

Results

- HARD FACTS SCORE (Average Criteria 1–9): 3.8 / 10
- SOFT FACTS SCORE (Average Criteria 10–15): 3.3 / 10

Dominant Techniques

- 1. Selective Omission / Completeness (Score 6):** The episode's most significant structural weakness is what it leaves out — the constitutional framework governing non-citizen access to services, the right of reply for accused parties, and the regional development context for migration. These omissions are not random; they collectively reinforce the enforcement narrative and prevent viewers from accessing the legal and developmental complexity of the issue.
- 2. Framing (Score 5):** The episode establishes and maintains a "border as security failure requiring enforcement" frame from opening to closing. This frame is not factually wrong, but it is analytically incomplete. The same facts — migrants crossing for healthcare, a fraudulent contract, criminals using the border — could be framed through a governance, development, or constitutional lens. The consistent choice of the security/enforcement frame constitutes a measurable editorial bias.
- 3. Agenda-Setting (Score 5):** Three agenda elements are treated as self-evident without analytical justification: physical barriers as the appropriate solution, all illegal crossing as equivalent, and the SIU as sufficient accountability. The failure to place barrier effectiveness, legal distinctions between migrants, and systemic reform on the agenda limits the programme's analytical depth and public service value.

Core Messages of the Programme

****MESSAGE 1 (SUBSTANTIVE):** "South Africa's borders are dangerously porous, and the state's failure to build effective physical barriers — compounded by procurement fraud — has left communities exposed to crime, illegal migration, and fiscal burden."*

Technique: Framing + Agenda-Setting — Belege: 00:19, 05:29, 24:31

****MESSAGE 2 (INSTITUTIONAL):** "The SIU is a functioning accountability mechanism that can recover from procurement failures, but the underlying system remains broken."*

Technique: Timing + Selective Omission — Belege: 17:09, 19:24, 24:46

****MESSAGE 3 (SOCIAL):** "Illegal border crossers — whether seeking healthcare, education, or criminal opportunity — represent an unmanaged burden on South Africa that enforcement alone has not solved."*

Technique: Word Choice + Framing — Belege: 05:31, 16:15, 24:31

Manipulation Level Classification

Reasoning: The overall score of 3.6/10 places this episode in the "mild tendency" range. The programme is factually grounded, uses credible primary sources (SIU, SAPS), and does not engage in overt political advocacy. However, it exhibits a consistent pattern of enforcement-framing, selective omission of constitutional and humanitarian perspectives, and failure to provide right of reply to accused parties. These are not isolated editorial choices but a coherent pattern that produces a structurally incomplete picture of a complex issue. Under Broadcasting Act s. 6 and BCCSA Code Clauses 16 and 18, the absence of right of reply for ISF Shula Joint Venture and the failure to present the constitutional framework for non-citizen service access are the most directly actionable concerns.

CONCLUSION

Cutting Edge's "Borderless Border" follow-up episode is competent investigative journalism that successfully documents a specific procurement fraud and its consequences for border security. The SIU findings are accurately reported, the BMA is given a right of response, and the programme demonstrates genuine public interest journalism in exposing the gap between the R85 million paid and the infrastructure delivered. However, the episode falls short of the BCCSA Code's requirements for balanced and contextually complete reporting in three measurable respects: it fails to provide a right of reply to ISF Shula Joint Venture (Clause 16 fairness obligation); it presents cross-border



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service access as straightforwardly illegal without acknowledging South Africa's constitutional obligations to non-citizens (Clause 16 accuracy and context obligation); and it does not present the humanitarian, developmental, or legal perspectives that would constitute the "opposing views on controversial issues of public importance" required by Clause 18. The programme's consistent enforcement framing and loaded terminology ("unbudgeted burden," "influx of foreigners") further indicate a mild but measurable editorial tendency that, while not rising to the level of systematic bias, is inconsistent with the highest standards of journalism required by Broadcasting Act s. 6.



OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE 15 CRITERIA

Individual Scores — All 15 Criteria

No.	Criterion	Score	Rating
1	EXPERT SELECTION	5/10	Significant imbalance
2	SOURCE SELECTION	4/10	Slight imbalance
3	TIME DISTRIBUTION	3/10	Slight imbalance
4	SELECTIVE OMISSION	6/10	Significant imbalance
5	NUMERICAL MANIPULATION	3/10	Slight imbalance
6	GUILT BY ASSOCIATION	2/10	Unremarkable
7	TIMING	3/10	Slight imbalance
8	SELECTIVE OUTRAGE	2/10	Unremarkable
9	SELECTIVE OMISSION — OVERALL PICTURE	6/10	Significant imbalance
10	FRAMING	5/10	Significant imbalance
11	WORD CHOICE AND TERMINOLOGY	4/10	Slight imbalance
12	MODERATION BEHAVIOUR	2/10	Unremarkable
13	QUESTION ASYMMETRY	3/10	Slight imbalance
14	FALSE BALANCE	1/10	Unremarkable
15	AGENDA-SETTING	5/10	Significant imbalance

HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

3.8/10

Slight imbalance

SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

3.3/10

Slight imbalance

OVERALL SCORE

3.6/10

Slight imbalance

Average of Hardfacts and Softfacts



KEY — Score Definitions

Individual Scores per Criterion (0–10)

0	No finding	No relevant anomaly detected.
1–2	Weak finding	Minor anomaly without substantial impact on balance.
3–4	Slight to moderate finding	Recognizable tendency; low to moderate impact relevance.
5	Moderate finding with impact	Relevant imbalance affecting the audience's opinion-forming potential.
6	Significant finding (threshold)	Scores of 6 and above are classified as 'significant findings.'
7	Significant finding	Clear, well-documented imbalance with distinct impact relevance.
8–9	Severe finding	Pronounced imbalance; multiple documented individual findings in this criterion.
10	Maximum severity	Systematic, pervasive imbalance in this criterion.

Aggregated Deviation Index — Interpretation Ranges

0.0 – 2.5	Unremarkable	No significant patterns detected; broadcast meets the impartiality standard.
2.6 – 4.0	Slight imbalance	Isolated anomalies; statistically visible but within tolerance range.
4.1 – 6.0	Significant imbalance	Multiple significant findings; relevant impairment of perspective diversity.
6.1 – 8.0	Serious deviation from the impartiality standard. High degree of deviation	Pronounced, cross-broadcast patterns; high impact relevance.
8.1 – 10	Fundamental systemic one-sidedness. Very high bias degree	Maximum severity across nearly all criteria; systematically one-sided reporting.

Party-Political Bias (-5 to +5)

-5 to -3	Strongly disadvantaged	Party is significantly underrepresented in framing, airtime, or presentation.
-2 to -1	Slightly disadvantaged	Recognizable but minor disadvantage.
0	Neutral	No detectable favoritism or disadvantage.
+1 to +2	Slightly favored	Recognizable but minor favoritism.
+3 to +5	Strongly favored	Party is significantly overrepresented in framing, airtime, or presentation.



CHAPTER 5 — LEGAL CLASSIFICATION (Broadcasting Act s. 6)

Assessment under Broadcasting Act s. 6

Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999, Section 6 (SABC Charter) requires significant news and public affairs programming that meets the highest standards of journalism, including fairness, accuracy, and impartiality. BCCSA Code Clause 16 requires news to be reported truthfully, accurately, and fairly, in the correct context and in a balanced manner. Clause 18 requires opposing views to be presented on controversial issues of public importance.

Violation 1:

Standard: BCCSA Code Clause 16 — Fairness; right of reply

Conduct: ISF Shula Joint Venture is named as having submitted fraudulent documents and failed to complete the contracted work, yet no statement from the company is sought, presented, or noted as having been declined.

Evidence: Timestamp 17:09–17:28 — "The ISF Shula Joint Venture submitted fraudulent documents, failed to meet mandatory requirements, and left the project incomplete despite receiving 84 million rand."

Assessment: Clause 16 requires that persons or organisations accused of wrongdoing be given a fair opportunity to respond. The programme does note that the BMA was contacted and did not initially respond (16:26–16:32), demonstrating awareness of this obligation. The failure to apply the same standard to ISF Shula Joint Venture — the primary accused party — is a direct and actionable violation of the fairness requirement. A note that the company was contacted and declined to comment, or that it could not be reached, would have satisfied this obligation.

Violation 2:

Standard: BCCSA Code Clause 16 — Accuracy and correct context; Clause 18 — Opposing views on controversial matters

Conduct: The episode repeatedly frames cross-border access to South African healthcare and education as illegal and burdensome, without acknowledging South Africa's constitutional obligations to non-citizens under Sections 27 and 28 of the Constitution, or its international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Evidence: Timestamp 05:29–05:41 — "Will South Africa ever find a solution to the unbudgeted burden of people utilizing these border fences to cross illegally, as in some areas the fences are literally a backyard fence for some homes?"; Timestamp 07:03–07:27 — "Even Swazi learners benefit from South African healthcare systems" (framed as a problem).

Assessment: The characterisation of cross-border healthcare access as straightforwardly illegal is legally inaccurate in the context of South Africa's constitutional framework. Section 27(3) of the Constitution provides that no one may be refused emergency medical treatment, regardless of nationality or documentation status. The framing of this access as an "unbudgeted burden" without any acknowledgement of the legal framework constitutes a failure of accuracy and context under Clause 16. The absence of any opposing view — from a constitutional lawyer, human rights organisation, or migrant rights advocate — on this controversial matter of public importance violates Clause 18.

Violation 3:

Standard: BCCSA Code Clause 16 — Accuracy; Broadcasting Act s. 6 — Highest standards of journalism

Conduct: Three claims are broadcast on the basis of anonymous, unverified sources, with the programme itself acknowledging in one instance that it "couldn't verify these claims."

Evidence: Timestamp 08:07–08:19 — "It's alleged there's a fee involved to let them cross into South Africa. We couldn't verify these claims, but it's suspicious he's letting them cross the fence instead of directing them to the official crossing point."; Timestamp 14:20 — "our source told us this is the perfect time for criminals"; Timestamp 15:36 — "Our sources allege what we've observed is just the tip of the iceberg."

Assessment: Broadcasting unverified allegations — particularly one that publicly associates a named (by uniform and position) foreign military official with corruption — falls below the accuracy standard required by Clause 16. The programme's own acknowledgement that it "couldn't verify these claims" regarding the Eswatini soldier makes the



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decision to broadcast the allegation, accompanied by visual identification of the individual, particularly difficult to justify under the highest standards of journalism required by Broadcasting Act s. 6.

No Violation Identified:

The programme's overall factual accuracy regarding the SIU findings, the BMA's operational response, and the documented border security failures is sound. The SIU figures are specific, attributed to tribunal findings, and internally consistent. The programme correctly notes when the BMA did not initially respond and presents its eventual response in full. These elements are consistent with Broadcasting Act s. 6 and BCCSA Code Clause 16.

Overall Assessment — Broadcasting Act s. 6

This episode of Cutting Edge demonstrates genuine public interest journalism and meets the Broadcasting Act s. 6 standard in its core accountability function — exposing procurement fraud and documenting border security failures with credible, primary-source evidence. However, three specific violations of the BCCSA Code are identified: the failure to provide a right of reply to ISF Shula Joint Venture (Clause 16); the legally inaccurate framing of cross-border healthcare access without constitutional context, and the absence of opposing views on this controversial matter (Clauses 16 and 18); and the broadcast of unverified allegations against an identifiable individual (Clause 16). These violations do not individually rise to the level of systematic editorial misconduct, but collectively they indicate that the programme's editorial standards, while above average for the genre, fall short of the "highest standards of journalism" required by the SABC's public mandate under Broadcasting Act s. 6. A formal complaint to the BCCSA would most likely succeed on the right-of-reply ground (Violation 1) and the unverified allegation ground (Violation 3), and would have reasonable prospects on the constitutional context ground (Violation 2).



CHAPTER 6 — Source Depth Check

1. Special Investigating Unit (SIU)

1. FUNDING: State-funded under the Special Investigating Units and Special Tribunals Act 74 of 1996. No private or commercial funding. Accountable to the President and Parliament.

2. MANDATE: Directly mandated to investigate and recover state funds lost to corruption and maladministration. Fully compatible with neutral assessment of the specific contract under review.

3. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Minimal institutional interest in demonstrating successful recoveries (may lead to emphasis on wins). No financial conflict. No conflict with the specific findings presented.

D1 Interessenkonflikt: +2

D2 Persönliches Risiko: +1

D3 Fachkompetenz: +2

D4 Meinungskonsistenz: +1

D5 Emotionalisierung vs. Daten: +2

D6 Quellenstufe: +2

TOTAL: +10 → QUELLENAMPEL: GREEN

5. COUNTER-VOICE: No independent audit of SIU findings is presented. The tribunal order is cited as confirmation, which is an appropriate secondary verification. No counter-voice is strictly necessary given the tribunal confirmation, but an independent procurement law expert would have added analytical depth.

2. Border Management Authority (BMA)

1. FUNDING: State-funded under the Border Management Authority Act 2 of 2020. Reports to the Minister of Home Affairs.

2. MANDATE: Mandated to manage borders — but also institutionally motivated to defend its own performance when that performance is under scrutiny. Partial conflict of interest.

3. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: HIGH in this context — the BMA is assessing its own effectiveness in the same domain where the programme has documented failures. Its statement is institutional self-defence.

D1 Interessenkonflikt: -1

D2 Persönliches Risiko: 0

D3 Fachkompetenz: +2

D4 Meinungskonsistenz: 0

D5 Emotionalisierung vs. Daten: +1

D6 Quellenstufe: +1

TOTAL: +3 → QUELLENAMPEL: YELLOW

5. COUNTER-VOICE: No independent assessment of BMA effectiveness is presented. An academic researcher on border management or a civil society monitor of BMA operations would have provided the necessary counter-voice. The absence of this counter-voice means the BMA's self-assessment is presented without critical challenge.

IMPORTANT NOTE: "Recognised" or "official" is not a substantive qualification. The BMA's status as a statutory body does not make its self-assessment of its own effectiveness a neutral or reliable source on that specific question. The programme treats the BMA's statement as a sufficient response to documented failures without subjecting it to the same evidentiary standard applied to the SIU findings.

Source Credibility Overview:

Source	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	Total	Signal
Special Investigating Unit (SIU)	+2	+1	+2	+1	+2	+2	+10	GREEN
Border Management Authority (BMA)	-1	0	+2	0	+1	+1	+3	YELLOW



Legal and Methodological Notes

No factual determination

The results presented do not constitute factual determinations about individual persons, editorial teams, or broadcasts. They are the product of a standardized operationalization, not a finding of individual responsibility.

No legal judgment

The aggregated deviation index does not replace a legal assessment under Broadcasting Act s. 6. The determination of whether a specific broadcast violates legal requirements is exclusively the responsibility of the competent authorities (in particular BCCSA).

No proof of causation

Statistical correlations are not to be interpreted as proof of causal relationships or editorial intent. Deviation values may be influenced by topic selection, news environment, political controversy, or format logic.

No judgment of intent

The analysis measures observable structural characteristics of broadcasts. A score of 7 means a significant imbalance was detected — not that the editorial team intended it. The methodology makes no claims about motives or strategic objectives.

Heuristic comparison tool

The index serves comparative pattern recognition across thousands of broadcasts, not precise metric measurement of individual segments. Threshold values serve heuristic orientation, not sharp legal qualification.



APPENDIX 1: NATIONAL BROADCASTING LAW

South Africa — Legal Framework for Broadcasting Impartiality

Primary Legislation

Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999 (as amended)

The Broadcasting Act establishes the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) as a public broadcaster and defines its Charter obligations.

Section 6 — Charter of the Corporation:

The SABC Charter mandates that the public broadcaster must:

- Provide programming that reflects South African attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity
- Offer a plurality of views and a variety of news, information and analysis
- Provide significant news and public affairs programming that meets the highest standards of journalism, including fairness, accuracy, and impartiality

Section 10 — Editorial Independence:

The SABC's news and current affairs programming must be independent from government or political party influence. The Board must ensure editorial policies that safeguard journalistic integrity.

ICASA Act 13 of 2000

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) is the regulatory body responsible for broadcasting licensing and compliance.

Electronic Communications Act 36 of 2005

Provides the overarching regulatory framework for electronic communications, including broadcasting standards.

BCCSA Broadcasting Code of Conduct

The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) enforces the Free-to-Air Broadcasting Code of Conduct, which includes:

Clause 16 — News:

- News must be reported truthfully, accurately and fairly
- News must be presented in the correct context and in a balanced manner
- Only verified facts may be presented as facts; opinions must be clearly identified as such

Clause 17 — Comment:

- Comment must be clearly distinguished from fact
- Comment must be an honest expression of opinion and must be presented fairly

Clause 18 — Controversial Issues of Public Importance:

- When a programme deals with a controversial issue of public importance, opposing views must be presented, either within the same programme or in a follow-up programme within a reasonable time
- This requirement applies to all broadcasting services

Clause 20 — Elections:

- During election periods, broadcasters must ensure equitable treatment of all political parties
- ICASA issues specific election broadcasting regulations

Regulatory / Complaints Bodies

Body	Role	Binding?
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ICASA (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa)	Licensing, spectrum, compliance enforcement	Yes — can fine, revoke licences
BCCSA (Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa)	Content complaints (bias, fairness, accuracy)	Yes — can reprimand, fine, require corrections
SABC Board	Internal editorial oversight	Internal
Parliament Portfolio Committee on Communications	Political oversight of SABC	Indirect

Notable Enforcement

- May 2024: ICASA fined SABC R500,000 for refusing to broadcast the Democratic Alliance's election advertisement showing a burning South African flag, ruling that SABC violated the right to free political communication.
- 2016: Western Cape High Court ordered removal of COO Hlaudi Motsoeneng for systematic censorship and political interference at SABC.
- 2017: Labour Court ruled that dismissal of the "SABC 8" journalists (who protested censorship of protest footage) was unlawful.

Equivalent to Other Countries

Country	Law	South African Equivalent
CH	Art. 4 RTVG	Broadcasting Act s. 6 (SABC Charter)
SE	Radio- och TV-lagen 5 kap.	BCCSA Code Cl. 16-18
DE	MStV §26	ICASA Act + BCCSA Code
NO	NRK-vedtektene §6	Broadcasting Act s. 10 (Editorial Independence)



APPENDIX 2: SCIENTIFIC REFERENCES

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Unbalanced Reporting is the response to the halving initiative in Switzerland: Manipulation techniques are explained in detail, starting with the selection of staff and sources. Then 15 principles are explained: omission, framing, temporal framing, guilt by association, emotionalisation, context removal and many more, illustrated with numerous examples. Additionally, it becomes apparent where we ourselves apply these techniques – fostering not only awareness but also empathy.

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You think you see the world. In Wirklichkeit siehst du den Rahmen, den jemand um sie gelegt hat. Framing ist die älteste und eleganteste Manipulationstechnik der world. Sie verändert nicht die Fakten – sie verändert, was wir aus den Fakten machen. Wie wir fühlen. Was wir glauben. Wie wir entscheiden. Und sie funktioniert – weil wir alle mitmachen. Täglich. Unbewusst. Auch du. Dieses Buch ist kein trockenes Lehrbuch. Es ist ein Übungsbuch – spielerisch, direkt, voller Beispiele aus dem echten Leben. Du lernst nicht nur, wie andere dich framen. Du lernst, wie du selbst framest – und wie du es bewusst und fair einsetzen kannst.

Because whoever understands framing sees the world more clearly. Hears news differently. Conducts conversations more confidently. And no longer so easily accepts a frame chosen by someone else.

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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 file a complaint. There is even an authority for this: the UBI, the Independent Complaints Authority for Radio and Television.

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

This analysis exposes the system – factual, precise, without polemics. Procedures, personnel, powers, costs, statistics, legal recourse. And the constitutional review showing: the UBI system meets none of the three fundamental criteria – it is not proportionate, not separated by powers, not market-based.

The authority supposed to protect citizens primarily protects the system it should be overseeing.

Essential reading for anyone considering a complaint – and for anyone who wants to understand why genuine media oversight in Switzerland is still pending.