



FIG 1:

Who will lead Germany post-Merkel?

The five conservative contenders compared

	 Armin Laschet	 Friedrich Merz	 Norbert Röttgen	 Markus Söder	 Jens Spahn
Position	North Rhine-Westphalia Prime minister	Deputy chairman, CDU economic council	Chair, Bundestag foreign affairs committee	Bavaria prime minister	Federal health minister
Party	CDU	CDU	CDU	CSU	CDU
Federal state	NRW	NRW	NRW	Bavaria	NRW
Age	59	65	55	54	40
Chancellorship chances	Low-medium	Medium-high	Low	Medium-high	Medium
Strategy	Status quo, Merkel follower. Prefers Free Democrats over Greens as future coalition partner	Return to conservative values, capture AfD vote, plays down Merkel pragmatism. Agnostic on partner, little sympathy to Greens	Modern technology, European, Atlantic orientation, open to Greens	Whatever works, open to Greens. Nakedly ambitious Marxist (Groucho): 'These are my principles, if you don't like them... I have others.'	Younger generation conservative, European and Atlanticist, open to Greens and high tech, strong on traditional values
Ties with Merkel	Warm	Deep frost	Frosty, no evident warmth	Lukewarm, mutually suspicious	Lukewarm, mutually suspicious
Running for CDU chairman?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Personality	Engaging, jovial CDU stalwart, no brilliance or dynamism. Safe, non-offensive common denominator, new stress on law & order. Hedges bets: Söder, Spahn alliances	Smartest, most competent of the 3 (despite no government experience), antagonistic, can create unnecessary conflicts. Many CDU enemies. Merkel detests him	Intelligent and sincere, only candidate to surprise positively. Internationalist moderniser, but lacks talent to build loyalty. Failed environment minister. Merkel disdains him	Long seen as vicious, self-centered, now displaying on-the-surface congeniality. Courting Greens & Laschet. Helpful nationwide: Franconia protestant and not 'deep Bavarian'	Young, headstrong. Conservative, gay – brings progressive touch. Was doing well on corona, now faltering over vaccinations, Not yet clear if really is leadership material
Scenarios	Keeping options open. Loses first round on 16 Jan, leads to Spahn as chair. Wins on 16 Jan, makes way for Söder as chancellor candidate.	Faces CDU functionaries' scepticism. Wins on 16 Jan, rallies party – or party disunity resurfaces, pressed to make way for Söder or Spahn	Gaining ground through US foreign policy interest. Would be weak compromise choice as chancellor-candidate	Gained popularity through Covid actionist. CDU weakness post-March 2021 could promote his candidacy – but high risk for Bavaria politics	Gained popularity through Covid, weakened by vaccination controversy. Backing Laschet bid, could enter race and win if Laschet crashes out
Personal life	Married to Susanne, 3 children	Married to Charlotte, 3 children	Married to Ebba, 3 children	Married to Karin, 3 children (plus one from previous relationship)	Married to Daniel
Background	Law, Catholic newspaper editor. Bundestag (1994-98), European parliament (1998-2005), NRW Landtag (2010-)	Law, banking, business, asset management. European parliament (1989-94), Bundestag (1994-2009)	Law. Bundestag (1994-). Federal environment minister (2009-12)	Law, Bavarian TV journalist. Bavaria Landtag (1994-)	Banking. Bundestag (2002-) Youngest ever member (aged 22)
Economic and social policies	Continuity, high deficits while pandemic lasts. No strong economic contours	Underlying stringency. Spending discipline, market orientation, industrial competition	Continued high deficits while pandemic lasts. Economic moderniser	Expansionist despite traditional CSU hard money principles. Strongly opportunist in all areas	Liberal social policies. Former state secretary under Fin Min Schäuble. Medium-term financial discipline
Green policies	Technology, claims NRW credentials. Could co-exist with Greens	Carbon emissions: says CDU green policies superior. Mutual wariness with Greens	Former Merkel environment minister (she sacked him in 2012), strong Green leanings	Strong emphasis on technology & innovation. trying to woo Greens, who remain wary	Technology & innovation Could co-exist with Greens. Would match Greens as moderniser
Europe	Strong Kohl-style federalist. Focus on Macron, recovery fund. Backs European 'sovereignty'	Focus on Macron, criticises Merkel's lacklustre French strategic effort, wants EU reforms, harder on recovery fund	Focus on Macron, pleads for strengthened US-Europe ties, wants EU reforms	Focus on Macron, hails historical Franco-Bavarian ties, harder on national sovereignty	European modernisation, Franco-German tandem
ECB	Strong EU support, would leave money to the experts	Would argue that ECB should return to orthodox mandate	Strong EU backer. Would not interfere with ECB	Backed CSU Draghi criticism, now retreating from attacks	Supports eventual return to ECB orthodoxy
US	Rebuild links based on traditional post-war partnership. Profits from Merkel link	Strong economic message. Sympathy to Trump team now a drawback	Strong foreign policy message. Return to 'partners in leadership'	Technology & innovation partnership	Rebuild links based on modernisation
China	Cautiously tough	Strongly hawkish	Tough	Tough	Tough
UK	Lukewarm	Economic, security, foreign policy links	Strongest UK relationship of the 5 - security, foreign policy	Lukewarm	Economic, security ties