MSC Conversation on the Future of German Foreign and Security Policy

Beyond Westlessness: Germany's Role in the World

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Background

What should be Germany’s future role in the world? What will be the implications for its foreign and security policy – both in the transatlantic relationship and beyond? The three Chancellor candidates of CDU/CSU, SPD, and Bündnis 90/The Greens discussed these issues in a joint TV broadcast by MSC and ARD on June 26, 2021, precisely three months ahead of the German federal elections.

Speakers

Armin Laschet – Minister President of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, Chairman of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) and Chancellor Candidate of the CDU/CSU, Düsseldorf

Olaf Scholz – Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister of Finance, Federal Republic of Germany, Chancellor Candidate of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Berlin

Annalena Baerbock – Federal Chairwoman and Chancellor Candidate of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Member of the German Bundestag, Berlin

Moderation

Tina Hassel – Head, ARD Capital Studio, Berlin

Wolfgang Ischinger – Ambassador, Chairman, Munich Security Conference, Munich

Tina Hassel: Good evening from the ARD Capital Broadcasting Studio at the end of an eventful week for German Foreign and Security Policy, EU Summit, Libya Conference in Berlin and U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken was here. Angela Merkel is still responsible for Germany’s role in the world. However, our guests today want to succeed her. And what they want to continue or what they want to change, that’s what we hope to find out very concretely in the next 90 minutes. And at my side for this is Wolfgang Ischinger, Chairman of the Munich Security Conference.

Wolfgang Ischinger: Thank you very much, dear Tina Hassel. I, too, warmly welcome you, the candidate for chancellor of the Greens, the CDU/CSU and the SPD. And you, especially the viewers at home to this debate of the Munich Security Conference. Last year, at the Munich Security Conference, we stated Germany is in the midst of a turning point. So this federal election will be crucial in terms of how Germany will adapt to a rapidly changing global political situation. I am very much looking forward to discussing these issues with you in detail today.
Tina Hassel: Yes, and then we’ll start directly with a short question and the request for a short answer to you three. Assuming you were now Chancellor, where would your first trip abroad be? And why, Mr. Laschet?

Armin Laschet: Now that’s a special act. Where is the first one going? And I wouldn’t reveal that until the time comes. You can guess, but I won’t do it until the time comes.

Tina Hassel: Ms. Baerbock, can you help us with this and be more concrete in your answer?

Annalena Baerbock: To Brussels because German foreign policy must always be European. And America has said ‘America is back’ and you need a European answer to that. And therefore, to Brussels.

Tina Hassel: Mr. Scholz, where is your plane going to?

Olaf Scholz: Paris. Franco-German cooperation is central to our ability to move Europe forward and achieve European sovereignty. And that, I believe, is also a good tradition.

Tina Hassel: That was the brief opening question. Now we’re going to look at our first big block, and we want to look at the transatlantic partnership. President Biden was in Europe for a charm offensive and there were also many warm words from Foreign Minister Blinken in Berlin. The West is back. But for how long? To that extent, to you the question. We have a short window of opportunity that may remain. What would have to happen? Most urgently? I’ll start with you now, Mr. Scholz. To use this time to make the West strong.

Olaf Scholz: This important message sent by President Biden is that he understood that there is something that unites us in the West as democracies. And this is also something that will continue to connect us in a world that will continue to change. And this is something we have to strengthen, use this window of opportunity for the next time. So I’m strongly convinced if we look at the world, China, Russia and many other emerging nations in Asia and others, it will remain the central aspect for us to stay together and banking on our democracy also as a transatlantic alliance. This is the first important task, to make that strong.

Wolfgang Ischinger: May I ask you a question, Mr. Laschet? In 2024, a Donald Trump or a politician similar to Donald Trump could be elected in Washington. From our point of view, that’s not exactly a happy prospect. What exactly would you believe you could do as chancellor to prevent exactly that?

Armin Laschet: So, I don’t think that a German Chancellor can prevent how the voters in the United States vote. But a German Chancellor can use this window of opportunity after his election, as Ms. Hassel said, to use so much common ground now, also across the Atlantic, to move together, that perhaps a President will be successful with this and we ourselves will also be successful. And the same is true for France. We have May elections in France and here, too, it is important that something also moves in Europe and that Germany and France also develop a new dynamic, which then always has interactions in the respective countries, especially where populists try to disrupt this multilateral order and return. On the principle of my country first. That’s not the answer now, and I think you can play a very strong role in shaping that, even as German Chancellor.
Wolfgang Ischinger: So, let me ask you about the same question. Is there anything we can do? And if so, was it to reinforce the impression in America that Europe, that we are, as they say in New German, an “asset” for America, that is, something positive and not dead weight for which you constantly have to pay more than you would like to pay as a farmer in Idaho? What are we doing to maintain a willingness in America to continue to embrace Europe, to support it, and not to fall into a second era of Trump?

Annalena Baerbock: We can do a lot. And that means that we will have to engage in an active European foreign policy. The Americans, the new U.S. administration has called for that by saying America is back now. We need a European response to that. The former U.S. President Trump has tried to make clear that global cooperation and multilateralism don’t work under the theme of America. First, Biden has made it clear no global cooperation is our strength. And this will only work if the other big liberal Democratic actor, the EU, supports this, too. At the beginning of the 90s, the U.S. administration already offered partnership and leadership to Germany. Back then, this was way too early for Germany. But from my point of view, now is the right time for German foreign policy as part of European foreign policy to engage in this partnership and leadership concerning the great challenges at an international level. And I’m, of course, talking about systemic competition between liberal democracies and the climate crisis as well as authoritarian regimes.

Tina Hassel: What makes our program special is that prominent voices from abroad ask questions of them or make demands of them. Because it’s not just Mr. Ischinger and me who do that. And we’re going to start with that right now. Because what can we offer the two of them in concrete terms? And are we in a position to take on more burdens? Because that’s what burden sharing means. Here’s a question from former U.S. General David Petraeus.

David Petraeus: I would like to ask a question about German military readiness, noting that I was privileged to have German forces under my command in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2011 when they conducted very impressive operations. More recently, however, reports on the German military have often focused on their lack of readiness. With the twenty eighteen Bundestag report sharply critical of Germany’s combat readiness, funding has been increased since then. However, significant gaps still exist. Given that, what would each of the candidates propose to ensure that members of German armed forces are provided the funding, training, personnel and equipment needed for sustained military readiness? Thank you.

Wolfgang Ischinger: May I start with you, Mr. Scholz, listening to this question. The concept of burden sharing has been on our minds, that is, on the minds of the Federal Government and its predecessor government, for about 40 years or more now. Would you share my opinion, that the time has actually come to talk about burden-sharing rather than burden-taking? Don’t we have to take a bigger piece out of the pie of shared responsibilities to do exactly what Ms. Baerbock just said? That from the American point of view we do not appear as a burden, but as an important partner.

Olaf Scholz: First of all, Germany is pursuing a large number of missions abroad. The German Bundestag has voted on this several times and, at least with the votes of our two parties, has made these missions possible. And that, I believe, will also be a major task for the future, that we are ready for this and that, conversely, we naturally ensure that we have the necessary capabilities. I believe that this was a bad time for the Bundeswehr, that with the start of the black-yellow coalition government, something like an austerity period began and the arms budget in particular was used as a piggy bank for public finances. That has changed, however, and during the period in which I have been and continue to be Federal Minister of Finance, we have managed to increase the federal defense budget by billions to over 50 billion euros. However, we have always remained realistic, and that is part of the job.
We have made this possible in each case, and in the longer term we have to see what economic development will enable us to do. After all, we can’t just print the money that’s needed. And that’s why this tremendous increase in recent years is the foundation on which we have to build. And that must not be called into question.

*Tina Hassel*: Money is one thing. I’ll pass the ball to you, Mr. Laschet. But the other thing is that the equipment is still not there, that the Bundeswehr is not really equipped enough. Therefore, what would you say to General Petraeus? How would you, as Chancellor, ensure that the Bundeswehr is equipped for its tasks, which are becoming more rather than less?

*Armin Laschet*: So, the first thing that is often noticeable in these discussions is that they are already being applied to the question. Germany should now contribute. And here is my answer: Germany has been making its contribution for many years. Afghanistan has been mentioned. Just recently, German soldiers in Mali also suffered injuries in an attack. And there are many places in the world where the Federal Republic is involved in UN missions. In addition, there is a great deal of German civilian involvement in conflict prevention or in the post-war period, where they are involved again in reconstruction. Germany is active on a large scale, yet still need to do. That’s why the two percent target is not today or tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. But as a perspective has pledged. We have to stick to that and also make our Bundeswehr better. In many projects. And I agree with what Ms. Baerbock said, that we have to embed this in a European foreign policy and in NATO. But European foreign policy also means that if you agree on something together, you have to implement it. And we have the project of a joint drone between Germany and France, for example. Yes, that then also means that you can’t start discussions with us afterwards. Can this or that screw be supplied to the project, but then you also have to implement it domestically.

*Wolfgang Ischinger*: Ms. Baerbock, before we come back to the subject of Mali, which is also highly topical. In your party election program, you described this two-percent target as arbitrary. The Federal Republic of Germany has also set other targets, for example for the euro zone, for certain debt ceilings. Do agreements apply to you?

*Annalena Baerbock*: Yes, the important agreement in NATO is a fair burden, a fair burden sharing and, above all, that the Europeans. That was actually the basic tenor of the two-percent target, that they should take more care of their own security. And that’s exactly what I want Europeans to do: take more care of their own security. That is now also the important thing for the new U.S. administration. And anyone who has just listened carefully will have heard that our American friends are not coming up with this abstract two-percent target, because not only the Greens, but also high-ranking military officers and other nations have established that a target is dependent on economic fluctuations. That is, if we just don’t have such a strong economy as we have here, for example, Corona, then on paper our military spending at two percent is quickly reached by poor economic growth, without the security and capabilities, which is what it’s all about, what it’s also about for the Americans, has somehow been healed. And that’s where honesty now includes a balance sheet. NATO does not have a major review process, and I would like Germany to play an active role in this review process to find out what is lacking. And Germany needs to read itself the riot act a bit. Mr. Scholz, you said. As finance minister, you have increased the budget. That’s right, by 10 billion, but the problem is that the capabilities, the equipment of the Bundeswehr, the safety of the soldiers and what we Europeans can achieve have not improved. New helicopters in the Navy, new helicopters in the military. Unfortunately, a third of them don’t fly. We obviously have a big problem there. Mali was mentioned. We urgently need transport helicopters. They have not been procured. And that is why it is so important for me to set clear priorities. Better equipment for the Bundeswehr. We Europeans have to take more care of our own
security, for example, a cyber defense center or rapid deployable units in the direction of Eastern Europe, and above all, we have to make sure that we bundle our European capabilities in such a way that we don’t spend three times as much as Russia and still aren’t able to provide for our own security.

Tina Hassel: Because that was a long speech now. That’s why I’m only asking for a short answer, because you’re talking about Mali. In the wake of this terrible attack, however, the Chairman of the Bundeswehr Association, Mr. Wüstner, has now called for We need armed drones with a view to Mali. What is your position? What is the position of the Greens on this?

Annalena Baerbock: We have just specified this again in our election program. We made it very clear that there are situations where drones can be useful for the safety of Bundeswehr soldiers. However, we have also seen - and this is the reality - that other countries have used these drones in contravention of international law.

Tina Hassel: Would Mali be such a situation?

Annalena Baerbock: For the protection of the servicemen and women. But I’m sorry, we have to go into detail now, because foreign and security policy decisions are made in a second. This terrible attack, in which many soldiers have been injured, was carried out by a suicide bomber, as far as we know. That’s why we have to take a stand. That is also our position on the question of drones. For what situation? It’s about when members of the Bundeswehr go into the field and walk into open traps.

Armin Laschet: The first thing is to acquire them, and then we can discuss under what criteria Germany uses them. That is the question that Ms. Baerbock is raising. My impression is that there is already a disagreement about procurement, at least between the CDU and the Greens, if you read the program.

Annalena Baerbock: Well, there is a difference of opinion. We have asked this time and again in the Defense Committee: for which cases do we want to acquire these drones? Because it is not the case that so much money is not available for every mission, but that is why we have to clearly define for which situation. And in the past, the Ministry of Defense did not provide an answer.

Tina Hassel: Okay, we have understood that now. I would like to stay with Mali for a moment and bring Mr. Scholz into the discussion. We all find what happened there absolutely terrible. What do you think the consequences of what happened there would be? Would the mission still have to continue? Would the SPD demand "Get out of Mali." What are the consequences of an event like yesterday?

Olaf Scholz: First of all, we have to re-evaluate and work through the specific event. The fact is that it was in fact a suicide attack, as far as we can tell, and it is very difficult to protect oneself from it, especially not with the help of the police, and you can only protect yourself from it if you are actually aware of it. In a sense.

Tina Hassel: This shows how dangerous this mission is.

Olaf Scholz: This is a dangerous operation. I want to say that explicitly. And that’s why I talked to the Minister of Defense again today to find out about the condition of the soldiers. It now looks like we can hope quite well that this can guarantee safety and good treatment. And that must be considered to the end. First of all, it is important that this dangerous situation is brought to an end and that health is
ensured. But no, it can't be the case that when you go on a dangerous mission, the moment you realize that it’s a dangerous mission, you say, we didn’t think it would be like this. But I think we have to say that with all clarity and consistency. This is a highly dangerous operation, even if it is not very large. And that’s why every decision we make is always about the fact that we have responsibility for the lives and safety of the soldiers and servicemen who are deployed there. That always has to be with deliberation.

Wolfgang Ischinger: But Mr. Scholz, I put the question to all three of you. Aren’t we in danger of running into the same problem with this limited mission in Mali? After all, training within the framework of the EU and the United Nations is running into exactly the same problem, an uncertainty of objectives. A problem that we have been going through for 20 years now in Afghanistan. So I ask the question again. If you become chancellor now, you chancellor, you chancellor? Would you actually take the responsibility, this blurry training times astime? In which only Macron. Has to revise its massive combat mission, at least to review and perhaps on other bases to continue. Must one not ask the question here as Chancellor. Either we go out, if we cannot stand the risk yes. We can influence them also hardly; we train only or we go completely differently in. Then namely with everything that was. The whole EU or NATO so that we can get this thing under control. You are the next chancellor. What do you say now?

Armin Laschet: There are different degrees of approaches. In fact, this is a training mission. And if that is the German contribution in a UN mandate, to contribute to training, that is fine. It doesn't have to be combat mission every time. In other places, it may be said from the outset. This will also be a combat mission, i.e. the participation in the Balkan wars in the 1990s, when the Red-Green Party was immediately in charge, with the goal of eliminating Milosevic and stopping the ethnic cleansing from the very beginning. You can’t do that with training, because it’s combat. In Mali, the hope was that, in coordination with the other partners, what the Bundeswehr was doing would be sufficient. And if, as you just asked, the strategy then changes. France changes its strategy; we have to consider in close coordination What can the German contribution be then? Can it even be more? Or does it then make no sense and you have to withdraw and that applies to every time hope?

Wolfgang Ischinger: You leave the question open.

Armin Laschet: The security situation is always different. This mandate came into being. Initially, there were the Tuareg in Mali, who broke away with their party in the north and were infiltrated at some point by al-Qaeda and later by IS, thus becoming a security threat for Germany and for Europe. And during that time, the Bundeswehr then said, we want to stabilize the situation in Mali. And that can change again and again over the course of all these years. And that’s why you have to respond flexibly with the willingness to do more if security is threatened in such a way that you have to do more.

Tina Hassel: Ms. Baerbock, therefore you also again. We were now Mali and want to understand that also again the position of all parties. What would be the lessons that the Greens, that you draw from what happened yesterday in Mali?

Annalena Baerbock: I think Mr. Ischinger’s question is very justified, because these are exactly these difficult decisions in foreign and security policy, that you never have a template and have said they made from the past. That’s how we're doing it again now, but every foreign deployment is different and that changes the situation. And here I have a different attitude than Mr. Laschet. Just wait and see what happens in the other countries? We have a responsibility as a federal government, as a
parliament, where these missions are mandated for the safety of the soldiers. Plus, we are the largest country in the European Union, which is why Germany needs a position on such foreign deployments. We have therefore already made it very, very clear in recent months that the security situation has changed and have therefore said that MINUSMA, i.e. this UN mission, where there has now been this attack, is still the right thing to do despite the many problems. But with a view to the EUTM Mali mission, which goes beyond that, which also involves training the armed forces of dictatorial regimes. We don’t think that the way the Bundestag or the Federal Government has decided is right and that’s why we said that we can no longer agree to this EUTM Mali mission for the first time in the last decision in the Bundestag, because it doesn’t take the safety of our female soldiers into account. We were heavily criticized for this, including by the CDU/CSU. Now Mr. Macron has basically said the same thing as we Greens to say, we have to look at this very, very critically. And this again shows that it doesn’t make sense for a German government to say that we’ll just go along with it, but we won’t define our strengths for ourselves.

Armin Laschet: But the contrast is really artificially created.

Annalena Baerbock: These are two different missions

Armin Laschet: You can’t seriously say we are judging. I said you have to assess the situation every time and see. What is the German contribution? You can’t seriously disagree with that. Any reasonable person would ask me that.

Annalena Baerbock: I only said that the German Government’s assessment of the situation in EUTM Mali was wrong. There are two missions, you must not lump them together. I was talking about EUTM Mali, the EU mission, which has additional training in Chad. What I think is wrong, and we have your Federal Government, says one sentence with regard to UN MINUSMA. There, the situation has changed. There was a coup in the situation and that is why my position is at this point. If we come with regard to this coup is no change, then the German must be halt German attitude. With UN, MINUSMA to review this deployment.

Tina Hassel: It is good that we have clarified this again and that there was indeed a disagreement. We have to and want to move on to the next block. And the next block after the transatlantic relationship, we want to take a closer look at the European Union. Angela Merkel had the French President as a guest in the Chancellor’s Office a week ago and his Minister for Europe is now taking the floor and has a question for her.

Clément Beaune: France and Germany are key players in Europe. Franco-German cooperation remains extremely important to move the EU forward. We are talking more and more about European sovereignty and strategic autonomy. What do you think of these concepts? Are they a high priority on your European agenda?

Wolfgang Ischinger: I’ll start with you, Mr. Scholz. If you think about your answer to this question, I’ll add one more. Once again, and not for the first time, the SPD has spoken out in favor of a European army. But it probably won’t work if we have to consult the German Bundestag before every deployment. Parliamentary reservation. So, do you have a strategy for how you imagine this European army would work, with or without parliamentary scrutiny? Who would give the marching orders to this army? How should decisions be made? Under certain circumstances, it must be possible to do this quickly.
Olaf Scholz: Thank you very much for the question. If I may, I will first answer the question that was put to me there by the French minister. From my point of view, it is very important that we make a clear commitment to the further integration of Europe and to European sovereignty. But this must not be some kind of Sunday speech where we have some lofty feelings about it, but we must be very, very, very concrete. That's why I'm in favor of making majority decisions possible in matters of foreign policy, qualified majority decisions, of course. But that not one, two countries can stop common position of the European Union.

Tina Hassel: Everywhere or in which areas?

Olaf Scholz: I believe that on foreign policy issues and how we act, that must now become possible. I am not for narrow majorities, but for qualified majorities to start with. But that should be agreed and that would also change things. We have just had a very intensive discussion about the European Union's relationship with Russia. There has been a proposal from France and Germany to talk to the Russian President and to argue, that it has now moved into a process in which we first talk about what questions, if any, can be discussed. And that is a sign that we are not well positioned, because we should already be able to do that. The U.S. President meets with Putin and speaks plainly, and we should be able to do that, too. And by the way, this is also a very important sign, because I see one thing. I have one thing in mind that is very, very important to me. We also have to insist to others that they negotiate with us as a Union, as the European Union. Russia, who don't like it so much, maybe at some point the United Kingdom, which has been incredible about accrediting a European representative in London. Turkey, China, even the United States are not all ready yet. And they would actually like to have the 17th, 18th, and 19th century world where you talk to Germany or the United Kingdom and France. And that, I think, has to be prevented.

Tina Hassel: Mr. Scholz, how do you create these majority decisions? Angela Merkel always wanted them, and for good reason they won't be. So far, they have not been enforced. How would you like to have them?

Olaf Scholz: That's why you have to make that a central point. I said earlier, in response to your question "Where would I go first? I said I would go to Paris. And that is indeed because I believe that this is the basis for achieving an understanding with Europe, for example, on foreign policy issues. There are other issues, too, financial policy, for example, making qualified majority decisions possible and agreeing that this should be the case. That still has to be done unanimously. But we have just seen that this is possible, when the concepts were developed for the European reconstruction of which I discussed in Germany with the Chancellor, in all of Europe with all the other participants, many initially countered me that this can only be done unanimously, we have to achieve ratification in all the parliaments of all the member states. I said that the matter is so important, it will work. And that is why I say. The issue is so important. If we are energetically behind it, it will also work, that we get the others on this course. And that is the basis for achieving common security in Europe.

Tina Hassel: Mr. Laschet, Clement Beaune just to come then again. He has said, wanted to hold the European strategic beaurocracy, save quite long.

Olaf Scholz: I am not answering the question that was put to me because I accept that the discussion is going on now.

Tina Hassel: That's nice. I'm glad you accept that.
Olaf Scholz: I do not want to give the impression that I do not respond to this.

Tina Hassel: No, you want to answer now, but we have also noted that. But I would now like an answer from Mr. Laschet, namely to the question from Clement Beaune, who said Strategic European autonomy. What do you say to that? Would that be a priority for you as chancellor? And above all, what would that mean for you?

Armin Laschet: He asked. Sovereignty? Not how. And I would say yes to that. To his question, I would answer yes, we need that. And Germany and France are there the basis for the Aachen Treaty, which Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron have concluded in renewal of the Elysée Treaty. It is so concrete, so detailed, that there is every possibility of giving it a new dynamic, also open to other EU member states. That has not happened since signing, was Corona and many other things that have kept us from it. But that has to be the next step now. And that means Then I agree with Mr. Scholz that we need to bring that strength into the European Union, to get to majority voting. This does not require a treaty change. That is possible with the current European law. And then, beyond the military aspect, where can we act together? Let me give you an example. Lebanon is on the verge of collapse after the explosion, but also after internal problems. France has become involved. Germany has accompanied that. In this case, however, should the state implode in Lebanon, it will affect us directly here in Europe.

Tina Hassel: And that's where they would like to see more active German policy?

Armin Laschet: Especially in our immediate environment around the Mediterranean. At the beginning of the millennium, we had a European Neighborhood Policy. The idea was to bind all neighbors so closely to Europe, with science, with economic relations, with rule-of-law programs, to transfer the acquis communautaire of the European Union to those who could not become full members. Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, you name it. And I think it would be an ideal European task to inject a new dynamic into this process. You don’t have to be active everywhere in the world, but stabilizing the situation in our immediate environment is, I think, a very important contribution.

Wolfgang Ischinger: So, Mr. Laschet, again Clement Beaune, so just so the facts are clear, he used both terms, he used European sovereignty, you support that, and strategic autonomy. But let’s not continue to argue about those terms right now. I would like to stay with you for a moment and ask you the following question you will guess This is about Viktor Orbán and the community of values that we embody. How do we go? How would you deal with Orbán as chancellor? I just want to sharpen it a little bit. If you look at what has just happened in the last few days. In the discussion at the European Council, the EPP let Orbán go on for too long.

Armin Laschet: It is not an EPP question. That is precisely a mistake, Mr. Ischinger. He is and remains one of 27 heads of state and government. In the reconstruction fund, Hungary’s vote was also needed in the end. And that’s why you always have to find a way. So, the answer yes then should go out of the EU is no answer. With each country, where it is more disliked. There is European law. There is the European Court of Justice and what is going on in Hungary is not acceptable. And it has to accept European law in the end. This is also true for Poland, is also true for other countries where individual cases are considered. But they are still members of the European Union. And European Union does not only mean, as much as I am attached to it, Germany and France. We have to find a way to bring the Central and Eastern Europeans, who have a very different tradition and history, back into the project. And that is sometimes difficult, sometimes you have to speak plainly. But the attitude that we are just lecturing them and trying not to keep them in the project is not the right one.
Wolfgang Ischinger: Ms. Baerbock, You are probably not quite of the identical opinion, If it goes, in short version, please.

Annalena Baerbock: Should I answer the question on Hungary or the one from Clement Beaune first?

Tina Hassel: No, Hungary, we are now dealing with those who may no longer share our values in the EU. How do you deal with that?

Annalena Baerbock: Yes, I see it differently. Because Europe is a union of values. Europe is founded. It is based on democracy, on the rule of law, on equality and other values in the treaties of the European Union. And every country that joins the European Union has to comply with the so-called acquis communautaire. So, all laws are looked at once, rightly, to say can you join our alliance of values? And we have now in recent years that concerns not only Hungary concerned also times before repeatedly found that when countries are members, there have been developments where just European values and European legality have not been respected. And the lesson learned by all Europeans was to say that this cannot go on. Because we can’t trample our own values underfoot, can we? Excuse me, but as EPP, you said...

Armin Laschet: What do you do with Orbán?

Annalena Baerbock: Yes, I might have let that finish once. Then I could also answer that. If the EPP had then said in recent years, you are a member of the Conservatives. You do not stand on the values of Europe, you can no longer be a member of our group, of our party, then that would be a clear position.

Armin Laschet: He is suspended and no longer a member. You know that.

Annalena Baerbock: If you then briefly now I just told him. Well, actually, that’s not an EPP problem.

Armin Laschet: Ms. Baerbock, the question How do you, as if you want to become Chancellor, deal with a country that cannot accept that? From my point of view, only the European Court of Justice decides.

Annalena Baerbock: If you would let me finish, then I could share my opinion. You interrupt me now for the third time. So, the EPP, has made sure, because they themselves did not want to exclude Orbán, that with regard to the rule of law mechanism that is the. Answer Where the Europeans say How do we deal with such countries? It has been blocked, and now that it has been introduced, they have ensured with their votes that it cannot be applied immediately. That is the problem now. How do I deal with this case of introducing an infringement procedure? Which also means that with money that the European Union pays, as a sanction you cannot receive this money because they have ensured that the European court would I want to decide, no, the Court of Justice?

Wolfgang Ischinger: So, that’s become pretty clear now. Mr. Scholz?

Tina Hassel: You sit there and smile. How would you deal with Mr. Orbán? Very specifically.

Olaf Scholz: Clear words. I think that is quite a lot. After all, we must not forget now the difference between the members of the European Union and other states in the world. We must. We have created the right for ourselves to discuss their internal issues because we are a community of values. Because
we have agreed that we are constitutional states. And I say now Mr. Orban is so little love, quite deliberately liberal democracies in the minorities must be protected. And nevertheless, we must know, that is of course a process, which constantly as a dispute also finds itself again. And then you simply can’t avoid it. It must be conducted, as has always been the case in many other alliances. But we must have the serious will to assert ourselves, and we have many citizens on our side. I have just met with the mayor of Budapest and talked to him. He may have a good chance of becoming the next head of government there. And the other thing is that we have to use our opportunities. We have created a new instrument. I have worked very hard to ensure that we can raise the issue of the rule of law in connection with the disbursement of European funds. And this instrument is now being complained about by Hungary. And I am quite sure that you will not succeed. Will that be my hope? And then we can also act with this sharp sword. And I think that is right.

Annalena Baerbock: But here is a crucial point because that is part of it. If you want to make Europe capable of acting, and this is exactly what Klement Bonn said in his contribution, capable of acting now and not in two years. And their attitude of saying that this will only go to the European Court of Justice means that it will only be there in one or two years. But if you want to act now, also to support people like the mayor of Budapest, then Europe must. Then the EU must have a clear stance now. The German government is a key player and could make clear to the EU Commission Now the sanctions, the dissent.

Tina Hassel: Because there are really prominent questioners on important issues who want to have their turn. So, what would you do if you didn’t want to wait for the European Court of Justice? What would you want to do now?

Annalena Baerbock: A reduction in European funding. This is good for this regime.

Armin Laschet: Violation of European law.

Annalena Baerbock: No. You can make that possible, through the rule of law mechanism. You don’t want to do that because you want the European Court of Justice to decide first.

Tina Hassel: But now we really understood what they would do. And they both say that’s not possible. And at this point we have to put a button on it and keep looking. Because the world has become confusing. Friend, foe, competitor or partner. The boundaries are sometimes blurred. And that’s why we’re now taking a closer look at the competition between systems. And there is no getting around China. And here’s a question from Professor Timothy Garton Ash.

Timothy Garton Ash: How must Germany’s China policy change after the next election to enable a coherent and more effective European China policy and also a coherent and more effective China policy of like-minded democracies around the world?

Wolfgang Ischinger: So, before you answer, I want to read out briefly that according to a survey that was done just these days by the Körber Foundation, it was shown that more than three quarters of Germans are in favor of continuing to support EU sanctions against China in the case of human rights violations, even if this, even if this would harm German economic interests. So, it seems that the majority of Germans would be ready for more engagement against China. Let’s start with you, Mr. Laschet. How do you keep a clear edge?
**Armin Laschet:** Well, what does clear edge against China mean? We are a system competitor with China. We have a completely different view of human beings, right down to every single area of life. Such an authoritarian system. And the difficulty we face. In the past, authoritarian systems were not so successful economically. In the Cold War. Now, on top of that, they are a competitor in the world markets. And in this respect, I think that on the one hand, when it comes to human rights violations, you have to name them and speak plainly. Nevertheless, China is our partner in many areas.

**Wolfgang Ischinger:** Can I pin you down a little bit there, at least I’m trying. You said the following on Monday, I noted, in an interview with the Financial Times. I quote: If we’re constantly talking loudly and aggressively in public about the human rights situation, China, I’m not sure that’s going to change the situation. Doesn’t that sound a bit like ducking away?

**Armin Laschet:** No, this is work. You've been in foreign policy for so long, Mr. Ischinger, in the Cold War, that was exactly the point. We had a clear position. But foreign policy consists of defining and changing common ground with states that think completely differently from us. The example, often cited In 1968, tanks of the Soviet Union march and crush the Prague Spring in Wenceslas Square. And two years later, Willy Brandt launches the new Ostpolitik. So actually, let’s say, we shouldn’t have talked to them at all. We don’t talk to them anymore. Out of the question. Carrying big posters through the streets. No, they did both. We protested and said, “Where can we find common ground and solve the problems we have in the world if we only do that? You can’t fight climate change without China after all. So if we have to talk, have to cooperate, have to be partners. And this is actually in the world where they have Russia, where they have the Arab world, where they have Turkey, where they have China, the core of foreign policy.

**Tina Hassel:** Let’s stay on the topic of China. Let’s turn to the SPD election program, Mr. Scholz. It says, “We are looking for a closed, critical, constructive dialog between Europe and China on competition and cooperation. Is that political lyricism, or what does it mean in concrete terms? For example, when it comes to car parts that are manufactured somewhere where human rights are trampled underfoot.

**Olaf Scholz:** We have just introduced a very clear legal regulation with the Supply Chain Act, which says that this plays a role. Incidentally, this also applies to the actions of companies in this country. And that is also meant seriously. In any case, I am convinced that human rights, working conditions and environmental issues must play a role in our trade agreements. It's not just about as much free trade as possible, it's already about fair construction, and that will also play a big role for the future. But I just want to dig into that one wound and put my finger in it. I speak out very firmly against all of them. Decoupling fantasies, in other words, that was North America, Europe, China each stay for themselves and then develop all kinds of economic structures each for themselves. It's a great step forward that we have a global economy. It is a great step forward that there is an international division of labor and that we also gain wealth from it. And that, by the way, is also the great opportunity of the last three or four decades, that billions of Asian citizens not only in China have a chance for a better life. That’s why we need something that actually returns to the basic assumptions of Willy Brandt’s and Helmut Schmidt's policy of détente in the 1970s and what the West as a whole has made of it. Successfully, by the way, because we have overcome the East-West divide. The Iron Curtain has disappeared,...

**Tina Hassel:** But let’s stay on the topic regarding China.

**Olaf Scholz:** But I want to be more specific with China, because these things keep coming. You have to do something now. And the next day everything is different. If this megalomania...
Tina Hassel: Former SPD Chancellor Schröder, who is still an SPD member, said with regard to China. We can’t be crazy. It was a reply to you, Ms. Baerbock, and the approach. We must now separate the economy from the question of how China behaves technically in terms of human rights or democracy. As a major exporting nation, they can’t start questioning our jobs in China now. I understand your point, and you would clearly disagree with it.

Olaf Scholz: That is not my attitude. I believe that we need clear principles. We should not now build up this megalomaniac illusion rhetorically. As if a decision by the German Bundestag would lead to this. That everything in China will change the next day. We must be clear that the world is really dangerous. There are many powers and there will be many new ones in the next 10, 20, 30 years, which nobody is discussing today. And that’s why we will always have to manage to find the right balance between our own strength. That’s why I and many others talk about European sovereignty. That’s why I’m talking about the community of democracies, which President both now come back to, as with the phrase America is back. And, of course, that means, though, that by being clear and firm, we don’t make the mistake now of trying to divide up the world again. That would be wrong.

Wolfgang Ischinger: We’re beating around the bush a little bit, which is that there is of course a divergence here, a collision of our interests in jobs here in Wolfsburg, in Ingolstadt and wherever else, and the values-led foreign policy that we would like to pursue. You have it, and the Green program also calls for more toughness against China. What do you say, Ms. Baerbock, to the worker in Wolfsburg who then fights for his job?

Annalena Baerbock: My position is that we should pursue a clear course in foreign policy and not build up any cardboard dummies but look at reality as it is. And that’s why my position is that we have to show dialogue and toughness. So, Mr. Laschet and Mr. Scholz, no one is saying that we don’t have to talk to other countries, and certainly not with China, but of course China is central to our exports and imports. With regard to jobs in Germany, but also with regard to our prosperity. And the same applies to Russia. Only what? My stance on foreign policy is that you can’t follow a purely economic course, say in nice prose. Human rights are important to us, and when it comes down to it, we don’t act accordingly. With regard to China, because that was your specific question, that is what our French friend Clement Beaune has just mentioned here, that means defining European sovereignty rather than just using it as a word. For me, this means firstly, with regard to the human rights violation with the Uyghurs, products from forced labor, also from China. This is a breach not only of European values, but also of the international human rights convention, of the treaties, so that these products cannot enter our European domestic market. That is a clear foreign policy position. Secondly, it means that the course we have taken of simply doing economic relations has led to us leaving Hong Kong out in the cold. So that’s exactly where a stance from us Europeans was necessary. And the third point is that a clear stance on values also serves our European industries and jobs, because what has now been done, especially with the investment agreement, that they say okay, we’ll make sure that some industries have a chance, but leads to the fact that China has completely closed other industries. And even the BDI says that we have to do both in terms of human rights and international competitiveness. Dialogue and toughness, and that is exactly my guideline.

Tina Hassel: That’s where we are in a certain way. We were always talking about China, but in a similar way about Russia, which could be used as a basis for discussion. We now want to bring back questions that prominent experts are asking. And now we want to have a question from the EU Parliament with regard to Russia.
Radoslaw Sikorski: Do you think President Putin treats Nordstream solely as an economic project and would you allow its completion if elected?

Tina Hassel: That was Radoslaw Sikorski and the question went now already very fast, turned to Nordstream. That’s why I’m now asking Mr. Laschet. The question was: Do you seriously believe that Nordstream 2 is a purely economic project for President Putin?

Armin Laschet: President Putin I do not know. It is purely an economic project. And Angela Merkel, at the Munich Security Conference, did, after all, put the molecule of gas in a nutshell. Don’t look at whether it is transported by land or by sea. And to that extent, it’s fine that this project is taking place and will be completed shortly. Part 1. Part 2: The geostrategists I mentioned Martinique geostrategic activity is also agreed. This must not be at the expense of Ukraine. There are European commitments. And should President Putin not abide by this rule and the is used against Ukraine, it can be stopped at any time, even when the pipeline is ready, because then the business basis is gone. But it is not that simple.

Tina Hassel: You wanted to respond to the point regarding Mr. Putin.

Wolfgang Ischinger: I wanted to quote Vladimir Putin. Three weeks ago, during a speech in St. Petersburg, he said, and I’m quoting from this translation, that Ukraine would have to show goodwill if it wanted to remain a transit country for Russian gas in the long term. So that is, I think, a total rejection of this idea that this is a purely commercial, even plain speaking.

Armin Laschet: If that became his policy, the project is stopped because that was the basis in all the treaties and everything that Europe has signaled to President Putin and whether Germany has signaled to him. Should any rhetoric that he uses in St. Petersburg, what we have agreed with Russia?

Tina Hassel: Does that apply to you in the same way, Mr. Scholz?

Olaf Scholz: Mr. Putin certainly does not have only economic considerations. But we have economic considerations when it comes to this project. It’s almost finished construction and there has to be great clarity that we continue what we've already started, which is to provide security for Ukraine. I have made the proposal, which the German government has demanded, that we appoint an authorized representative to enforce the extension of the current gas transit contract, so that this does not get lost in the institutional structure with the EU, with Germany, with Ukraine, with Russia. That also worked and what was done there by the Special Envoy of the Federal Republic of Germany was very, very successful. Secondly, we have to say that this must also be a principle for the future. The impairment of the gas transit and the security of Ukraine has consequences for the possible transit through the pipeline that will then be completed. That has to be talked about. And thirdly, I have now talked very carefully with the representatives of Ukraine who have come to see me and whose idea is that we are very much helping them to advance a project that is of the utmost importance for Germany, namely the entry into the hydrogen economy. They are firmly convinced that they can be a producer of renewably produced hydrogen, which, by the way, will then have to go through the pipeline that now transports gas, in the future world. When we discuss these issues geostrategically, we must not leave aside the fact that we want to be CO2 neutral even after 2040. Then gas will no longer have any role at all.
Wolfgang Ischinger: You are not yet Chancellor, but still Finance Minister and Vice Chancellor in this government. At the European Council just a few hours ago, the Chancellor and her French counterpart were unable to get their way with the course correction vis-à-vis Russia, with the attempt to resume talks with Russia at the top level. Let me put it a little more pointedly. Is this the bill that we now have to pay because of Germany’s loss of credibility in the matter of Nordstream 2?

Olaf Scholz: No. But this is something we have to take very seriously. First of all, I am very much in favor of following up on President Macron’s proposal to the Chancellor. And the first step, after all, was ultimately the result of the European consultations, namely that we jointly take stock of what we want to discuss with each other with the between the EU and Russia. The political position of many countries, by the way, not only those who are concerned about the guest transit, is that we should not talk to Putin at all at the moment. My attitude is that President Biden is right when he says that you have to talk with the man with whom you have a lot of dissent. Dancing is with those who are in the room and there is now quite powerful present.

Tina Hassel: But America has hard power. That’s why they can sit down in a dialog like this.

Olaf Scholz: But I think that’s the real problem in the Rhineland. Because we are talking about European sovereignty, it is also about finding hard power for Europe an important issue. The perspectives that we have to develop is that we have to take ownership of the question of Ukraine’s development prospects. And that is what I just talked about. This is really clear policy for the future. And that, by the way, will change the world. Russia’s prospects and future, after all, are also very much affected by the changes that will result from the goal of being CO2 neutral. Because at the end of the day, someone who only supplies basic materials has as a major export commodity. Must ask itself yes also times the question What is actually in the world if from renewable energies it produces deep holes?

Tina Hassel: So, it’s an interesting question whether Russia would really be interested in passing any green hydrogens through there. But I would like to get into the discussion before we go on to the next one.

Tina Hassel: Okay, all right, but in any case, Russia is definitely not interested. And Ms. Baerbock, so that you don’t just listen this time when we’re talking about Nordstream 2, just very briefly, the Greens are very critical of this Nordstream 2 project and want to stop it. On what legal basis would you want to do that? Or wouldn’t it make more sense from today’s perspective to do what Mr. Laschet indicated shortly before completion? Namely, finish construction and then see whether you stop it or not. Depending on what Russia’s policy towards Ukraine really is.

Annalena Baerbock: My stance is that we should not talk about European sovereignty and then duck away at the crucial moments and pretend and say something. It is a purely economic project. I have been involved with this pipeline for years. I was in Russia years ago to talk to the key players about exactly what their goal was. Quite openly, they kept saying that the goal is Ukraine. The goal is to get around the sanctions. Everyone knows that. Of course, we can continue to pretend that this pipeline is an economic one. But that is not the case. Our Eastern European neighbors are very worried because we have seen with regard to Ukraine. The situation has worsened. Since then, there has been murder in Tiergarten here with us in the middle of Germany. Since then, a plane has been taken out of the sky to get a blogger out, also with Russian support. And we Europeans can’t be naive about that. And what has been said here now, Mr. Ischinger, has quoted it. At the moment when one hopes that you, Mr. Laschet, will say, well, they will play by the rules. With regard to Ukraine, President Putin says, "I won’t
do that. And if you look at it in reality now. The point is we are still dependent on Russian gas. We will not have the hydrogen in 2023 that Mr. Scholz is talking about right now. When this pipeline is finished, gas will flow through there. And Putin’s goal is to use that gas to shut down the Ukrainian pipeline. Then no more gas will flow through there, because he wants to destabilize Ukraine with it, because it won’t get any more money. That is why what you are proposing, Mr. Laschet. Yes, that is agreed. But the moment he breaks that, he has already shut down the Ukrainian line before. And if we then have winter in Europe, then we won’t be able to say Oh, now there’s no gas coming through Nordstream 2 either, because then we Europeans will have no more gas at that moment. And that’s the whole calculation. And if you really want to lead a country, to lead a Europe, then you have to look a little bit ahead and say what will happen in the future? And Mr. Putin is in a competition not only with Ukraine to destabilize, but also with us Europeans. And to your question, what would I do, not finish building this pipeline. There is still a permit pending, namely that at Band Ling that not the operator can also pass the gas through, that this permit may not exist, may not exist under European law. That means we can stop it there and on the other side we will want to stop. Otherwise, if it comes later, yes then you can also guess into a situation where you have to pay compensation. But here, too, key players who have invested in this project have themselves already pulled out because they have determined that this pipeline has no future and it is directed against Europe.

Tina Hassel: We have now understood your position on this. We have now talked a lot about Ukraine and therefore I think it will be exciting, because we now have not a question, but a short position statement from none other than the President of Ukraine himself. Who formulated his position President Zelensky now to them 3, let’s listen in there?

Volodymyr Zelensky: Dear candidates for the office of the German Chancellor. September 26 will be an important day not only for you, but also for Ukraine. The federal election is important for us because Germany is our most important partner. It is a leading member in the Normandy format and our ally on the way to the European Community. Your political vision for Ukraine as a future Chancellor is extremely important for me. Therefore, I would like to ask. Do you agree that the European project will be incomplete and not full without Ukraine? Do you agree that Ukraine’s road to Europe should not be a one-way street? Seven years have passed since the Revolution of Dignity, in which hundreds of Ukrainians gave their lives for Ukraine's choice of Europe. Isn't Europe tired of hiding from the issue of Ukraine's EU membership for so long? Isn't it time to move from diplomatic evasions to clear answers, conditions, steps and deadlines? Today there are about 100 000 Russian military troops on the state borders of Ukraine. At the same time, all European leaders support the provision of adequate security guarantees to Ukraine. But at the same time, Ukraine is not a NATO member state. So, if we are not in NATO, what kind of security guarantees are we talking about? Thank you very much for your honest answers.

Wolfgang Ischinger: It was not so easy to get Mr. Zelensky to give us a question in so few seconds. Let me start with Mr. Scholz. Your position on the question of the EU perspective, your position on the question of the NATO perspective of Ukraine, security guarantees. The word has been spoken. This demand has been made. We will then certainly come to the issue of arms deliveries. That is a green issue at the moment. But let's start with you!

Olaf Scholz: Clear answers to the question. European democracies have come together in the European Union. And countries that define themselves by democracy, freedom and the rule of law can never decide. Others never do. To put it that way. Nevertheless, there is also a great deal of realism involved. The next tasks we have in Europe are to complete the integration process in the Balkans. To make membership possible there, to initiate the process in the European Union. And that will take many,
many years and will be our next task there. And it will be important for Europe that we do not leave anyone there alone. In the former Yugoslav successor states of the former Yugoslavia and besides. And the second thing, which is very important from my point of view, is that we first of all continue to reform the European Union. Because we are now realizing how difficult it is to reach decisions with 27 member states. We have spoken here several times. The task, the principle of unanimity in certain bodies and all that must first be done. That’s why, I think, it’s about making a partnership, a closeness to the European Union, the further development of Ukraine possible. And I also want to say that. I think that a NATO perspective is not pending.

Wolfgang Ischinger: So, if I were Ukrainian, I’d say Scholz offered me pretty stale bread. What are you offering?

Armin Laschet: President Zelensky was one of the first to call me after I became CDU chairman? Because, I think, Ukraine in particular knows how important it is how Germany positions itself on this issue. And in this respect, the democracy process in Ukraine is also the close ties with Europe. Something that Germany has to guarantee. What he has now said very specifically in this statement are institutional issues. And there, I think, you have to broaden the framework a little bit. The first one is membership in the European Union. You can promise that lightly. Yes, they can become members. The reality is different. At least at the moment. I know from the time when I worked in the European Parliament, those who were against Europe, especially some British colleagues, were always in favor of making the EU as big as possible. So, Ukraine in the process, Russia in the process, Turkey in the process, a huge entity, which is then just a free trade zone. If Europe is to function, the institutions must be aligned in such a way that the same legal area applies everywhere. That here in Berlin the same right is valid as in the east of the Ukraine up to the smallest, up to the water protection framework guidelines or whatever. And I don’t see that at the moment, that the 27 EU is able to absorb such a large country in the foreseeable future. So, I share the position. The big task now will be to bring in the Western Balkans, which is complicated enough. And then I think, in principle, Ukraine also has a theoretical perspective. But to promise now that it would be in the foreseeable future, not honest.

Tina Hassel: Just briefly before we come to you, Ms. Baerbock, I would like to ask you, Mr. Laschet, Mr. Zelensky also said that this was not only institutional. He said, what security guarantees are you giving Ukraine? I do. What would you say to him? He asked for honest answers.

Armin Laschet: Germany is doing everything it can to help Ukraine's security, to involve it in the dialogue with Russia as well. Without the initiative of President Macron and Chancellor Merkel in the Minsk process, the conflict would probably have escalated much more than it has now. It's bad enough, but it certainly hasn’t escalated further to the detriment of Ukraine. And Ukraine knows in many ways that it has Germany's help, both financially and institutionally, so from security issues.

Wolfgang Ischinger: If you were chancellor, you would be on the Green question of arms deliveries. There is also talk of such terms as defensive weapons, which is a difficult concept. Would you be more open than the current federal government?

Armin Laschet: That’s not strategic either. It is far too short-sighted. The first demand was to deliver weapons to Ukraine. Then they interpreted what are defensive weapons and, in the end, it was ambulances. Of course, an absurd description of a weapon - an ambulance. So, the Greens would have to say what is the weapon that they deliver? I think that weapons deliveries in general are wrong, because this would discredit our role in the Minsk process and in the Normandy format, where
Germany and France, Ukraine and Russia act together, agree on things, because we would suddenly be a party.

Tina Hassel: Die Zeit, Mr. Laschet, quasi put a question to you, Ms. Baerbock, what the Greens actually mean there, I think you can explain that best in the round.

Annalena Baerbock: What's always interesting that the CDU is currently asking us a lot of questions when they don't have any answers themselves.

Armin Laschet: I have an answer, Ms. Baerbock, I have a clear answer. No arms deliveries. Do you have it too?

Annalena Baerbock: Then I'm wondering why you are giving them to Egypt....

Armin Laschet: We are talking about Ukraine right now, not the East.

Annalena Baerbock: United Arab Emirates supply weapons?

Armin Laschet: It is about Ukraine now and peace in Europe.

Annalena Baerbock: So, for us it is clear that we have a responsibility towards Ukraine. Ukraine has destroyed its entire nuclear arsenal in order to provide security. In return, other countries have told them we will protect your security. And then there has been the occupation of Crimea in violation of international law. Then the invasion of eastern Ukraine took place. There was the process, which we have always supported on the part of the Europeans with regard to the Normandy format to say. There has to be an appropriate withdrawal here. There were sanctions. And then not much moved. Russia kept on provoking.

Tina Hassel: That's quite a description, Ms. Baerbock. What would you do?

Annalena Baerbock: You have to have an analysis in order to give answers. And then, in these moments, it was always Germany that did not take a clear stance. Some of its CDU players then even questioned the sanctions. Plus, this Nordstream pipeline. And that has led to further escalation. That's why we say very clearly. With regard to the Minsk Agreement, we must ensure that the withdrawal actually takes place. This would require that is now with regard to the issue of arms deliveries. Yes, we have specified that. What do we mean? You sometimes specify statements about what we are doing. I believe that it is a core element of politics that when you create misunderstandings, you say clearly and unambiguously what you want. And clearly, we have to strengthen the OSCE mission. There was a drone taken from the sky, the OSCE. There are mines falling in front yards of families. That is, the least that the Federal Republic could do. And that is my clear answer to this question, is to help clear mines so that innocent civilians do not die. And that is what Germany could do as a first step, as a contribution here.

Tina Hassel: Now we have been to Ukraine, to Russia, to China. There are many trouble spots and many expectations of Germany. But some countries are particularly important to us. And that's why there is now a question from former Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.
Tzipi Livni: The Middle East faces major threats to security and stability, especially from Iran and other terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. This overshadows new opportunities arising from normalization between Israel and Arab states and a hopefully future peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Given Germany's important role in strengthening the transatlantic partnership with the United States and its special relationship with Israel. What concrete practical steps should Germany support to counter regional security threats and promote peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

Wolfgang Ischinger: Mr. Scholz, if I may start with you again. In Iran, a so-called hardliner has just won the presidential election. We will see whether the prospects for the so-called JCPOA, i.e. the nuclear agreement, become gloomier as a result. They certainly haven't gotten any better. So, we are holding Germany, the whole European Union is holding on to it. Where would you, if you became Chancellor now? Where would you draw your red lines? How far would you go, even with consideration for our partner Israel, whose security interests are directly and massively and centrally and existentially affected from Israel's point of view?

Olaf Scholz: The task that we all have in common is to make sure that Iran is not in a position to develop, to use, and to nuclear-arm pullout missiles that can reach Israel or Europe. And that's why the negotiation of the nuclear agreement is a very, very important security issue for the Middle East, for Israel, and for Europe, and we can't put a low enough value on it. It's arduous, and it's going to be even more arduous now, as you quite rightly described in light of the elections that have now taken place there. But the fact that it is so difficult and so arduous does not change the fact that it is so threatening to Israel, to the Middle East, and to Europe. And so, we have to keep at it and try to get something good out of it. And we hope that we have a chance to get something done again with the new American administration as well. Despite the gloomy outlook, which I don't think can be glossed over. And the second thing that must always be clear in everything we do is that Israel can rely on us and that we also make Israel's security possible, for example, by clearly stating that we are prepared to support Israel's military equipment with arms exports. I would continue that, and I have always thought that was right.

Tina Hassel: Mr. Laschet, you rely on dialog. We already have it in many fields. In all of Chancellor Merkel's years, there has never been a conversation, an invitation from the Iranian president to the chancellor, unlike the French, for example. How would you handle that? Would you rather follow the French example and say that there must also be talks, even directly?

Armin Laschet: A visit by the Iranian president is really not on the agenda, the hardliner has just won in Iran. But one thing is clear, President Trump has taken the hardest measures against Iran in the last four years, has left the agreement, has imposed sanctions and the result is zero. So, the hard line obviously doesn't bring anything either and that's why it's right and the hardliner is just elected. This is the result after four years. So, it is right to try to get back, to get to the process of the agreement that the nuclear program is controlled internationally. And that's why these talks are right. And Ms. Livni also asked, what do you want to do as Germany to get the process between Israel and the Palestinians going again? Yes, would be good, because Israel and the Palestinians themselves would also take a few steps to get those going again. To come back to the Oslo process. Germany alone will not be able to do that. There used to be the Quartet - European Union, Russia, U.S. and United Nations. And getting back to such formats, however, presupposes that the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, for their part, have the will to take steps toward détente again.

Tina Hassel: The Munich Security Index has asked the current biggest crises and threats and of 30 risks in the top ten, even in the top three positions, the Germans have said climate change is the biggest
threat and also the position 2 and 3, as we can see here. Extreme weather events and forest fires and destruction of natural habitats are on top. As I said, of the 30 total threat scenarios, the top 3 of the top ten say have to do with climate change and the consequences. Now it would be easy if I asked you, Ms. Baerbock, because you are nodding now. That’s why I’m not asking you right now, even though you haven’t been around for a while, but I’d like to bring Mr. Scholz into the game now and say, what would be your response as Chancellor to this, to this perceived risk? And what would be your kind of climate foreign policy?

Olaf Scholz: First of all, the citizens' perception of security on this issue is very plausible. These are threats that are coming our way. And therefore, one can only say that a good judgment is reflected in what we have to expect for the next years and decades. That is why stopping man-made climate change must be one of the very great tasks of a future German government, but also internationally. That’s why I’ve been campaigning for us to go ahead and provide a great deal of funding to combat climate change. And are also prepared to do so even further. That is assured. We also need to do that in advance of the international understanding. I had among the heads of government and among the finance ministers and finance ministers confronted with the idea of a climate club, because it’s not enough. Everybody does something on their own, but we have to work together, and we cannot. After we have then sometime the right measures on the way, threaten us all with tariffs, because everyone wants to make his own measures safe from the others, but that must run as a cooperation project. My impression is, this will be a big task and should also be an important, important challenge during Germany’s G7 presidency. And the third answer in one sentence for a very big issue for mankind, we have to show technologically that there are alternatives to the use of coal and gas and oil. We will have to prove that here in Germany as a major industrial policy project, and thus also create the opportunities to resort to something other than what is planned in many countries today.

Wolfgang Ischinger: Ms. Baerbock, as the German public is well aware, the Greens have defined very, very far-reaching climate targets. What do you do as chancellor when you realize that not even here in the EU, let alone worldwide? Just think about the really big climate violators, if there are any who refuse to follow you, how do you get others to follow your certainly good example?

Annalena Baerbock: The first thing I would do is to anchor climate policy as a cross-sectional policy in the federal government, also in the sense of directive competence, because precisely this result makes it clear. Climate policy is not just environmental policy. In Germany, we know that climate policy is also social policy. It’s about jobs, it’s about Germany as a business location. But climate policy is also security policy. That’s why we are proposing, for example, the creation of a Peace and Security Council for the German government, which would then also include a climate or environment ministry to address precisely these issues. 2015 I was there at the time. At the climate conference, it was actually precisely these issues that were addressed, that countries like the EU or communities like the EU provide countries like Germany with 100 billion euros a year to contribute to the issue that they just raised, so that all over 190 countries worldwide can participate. There are the very small island states, they can’t do anything about the climate crisis. But they will be the first to suffer because they can no longer live where they live. That means our responsibility is to take measures to relocate people or to build higher dams to protect them. The second point is the issue of technology transfer. We need Kliema partnerships with countries where we can produce hydrogen, for example. And the third point, which you then asked about domestically. We have to do everything we can to get on the 1.5-degree path. And that means I had made a proposal for the industrial park, because you mentioned jobs. We have to convert our industry to climate neutrality. And to do that, we not only protect the climate, but also safeguard jobs in Europe and Germany.
**Wolfgang Ischinger:** Mr. Laschet, the word "directive competence" has now been mentioned. Chancellor Laschet would also raise the climate issue in such a way that he would make it an issue of guideline competence. So, I'll say it a little more casually as a matter for the boss.

**Armin Laschet:** Well, it is the biggest challenge, without any doubt. And it is a huge challenge. You probably asked the people; they named the three issues. What are the biggest risks? And we answer directly them foreign policy and global. Yes, that is of course the...

**Tina Hassel:** We are in a foreign policy round and we didn't want to get into domestic issues right now.

**Armin Laschet:** No, political action is good. If you ask a person in Germany, what is the most important thing? Says climate change, extreme weather events, destruction of natural habitats. And we rightly say I don't want to criticize that at all. This is a global issue that must also concern the international community. And that is what John Kerry is doing as climate envoy. I believe that we also need this in Europe. There is a commissioner who is responsible for this, but that is not the power that John Kerry has now. Politically, economically, and with the instruments of the financial market and as part of foreign policy. Addressing that everywhere and working together. That's one thing that needs to be done. And the second thing is to make our German contribution in domestic policy. Some say yes, that's only two percent. Yes, okay. But if we show that we can bring a strong industry, which we still have, to climate neutrality and promise to do everything we can to ensure that in 20 years the automotive industry, the chemical industry and the steel industry will still be based in Germany, but then Klimann. Then that's a huge achievement. Of course, this applies not only to the Environment Minister, but to the entire German government.

**Tina Hassel:** 90 minutes come to an end. But we want just as concretely as we started, also concretely all three again in the back in a round with questions that they really only answer with yes, no or never or always with one word and not with long explanations, but. And the question that I ask, so that everyone still knows that, then always goes in turn to you three. And I'll just start with Mr. Scholz, Ms. Baerbock. Mr. Laschet, so no one gets confused. So, one word. And the question is, will a government under your leadership and now until 2025 firstly decide to procure armed drones for the Bundeswehr?

**Olaf Scholz:** I explicitly state my position and it is, we have launched the Euro Drone.

**Tina Hassel:** Good. Ms. Baerbock, until 2025?

**Annalena Baerbock:** If the deployment scenarios are clear, then yes.

**Tina Hassel:** Mr. Laschet?

**Armin Laschet:** Yes.

**Tina Hassel:** Good, that was a word. Will Nord Stream 2 be canceled by 2025?

**Olaf Scholz:** No.

**Annalena Baerbock:** Yes.
Armin Laschet: Depends on how the development is. In principle, no.

Tina Hassel: Will the two percent target be met by 2025?

Olaf Scholz: In financial planning, we are over 50 billion, but not 2 percent.

Tina Hassel: So, no. Ms. Baerbock?

Annalena Baerbock: That is the wrong benchmark. The operational capability of the...

Tina Hassel: So, no?

Olaf Scholz: It’s 19 billion on top.

Tina Hassel: I want to try to be looser. Don’t try any rules of the game. We ask. If you don’t accept our answers on a motion, yes, but not if you’re too long. That’s why, Mr. Laschet, the two percent target will be met by 2025?

Armin Laschet: Forecast closer. But no.

Tina Hassel: Will military support be provided to Ukraine by 2025?

Olaf Scholz: There are many things that can be thought of in this question. But I understand it in a certain way now. No, it is not about that. So, we have the support that we are doing now with the Minsk process. And what we are doing so far. We will continue in this direction, also for the security of the country. But this is not a matter where you have to hold something now with funny yes/no.

Tina Hassel: But I accept that, I understand it well. Ms. Baerbock?

Annalena Baerbock: The goal is to comply with the Minsk Agreement, the withdrawal of Russian troops.

Armin Laschet: A yes or no foreign policy question in four years is difficult. If everything is as it is today, I would say no.

Tina Hassel: Then we try to make it a little easier. After all, we only do foreign policy issues in this round. So, by 2025, Germany will be in the European Union for qualified majorities. On foreign and security policy issues, it will stand up.

Olaf Scholz: Yes.

Tina Hassel: And that means we won’t have them by then?

Olaf Scholz: But I think it’s going pretty fast. We just got quite a bit done on the recovery program. Unanimous. We have to unanimously decide that we want to go to majority rule. Then you don’t even have to change the treaties.
Annalena Baerbock: Yes.

Armin Laschet: Yes.

Tina Hassel: And by 2025, will arms deliveries to authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, will those continue? Still. 2025 in a government you ask then?

Annalena Baerbock: Sorry, but you can't answer that because there is a difference between Israel and Iran. That's why you can't lump the Middle East together now.

Tina Hassel: Yes, and if you subtract Israel now. That's exactly why I wanted to say that if you withdraw Israel and ask authoritarian regimes, will there still be arms deliveries there? Well, we can continue directly with them now.

Annalena Baerbock: No, because applicable law is not to war zones and not to dictators.

Tina Hassel: Mr. Scholz?

Olaf Scholz: I believe that we can wisely continue on the cautious course we have so far.

Armin Laschet: The course should stay, and you still have to decide the threats individually in each country in 2025.

Tina Hassel: And our very last question before we say goodbye may be one where you have to think about it longer. Maybe not. I'll just have that with Mr. Laschet. Which ability of the other two candidates would you like to think about?

Armin Laschet: Well, I don't have some of the skills, but I appreciate Mr. Scholz's healthy pragmatism when it comes to solving problems. And in Ms. Baerbock, the idealism of courageously changing things in the world.

Tina Hassel: Ms. Baerbock, I would like to ask you which of the two candidates you would like to have?

Annalena Baerbock: I use the same words as Mr. Laschet. I appreciate Mr. Scholz's calmness and I appreciate Mr. Laschet's steadfastness in the face of headwinds.

Tina Hassel: Mr. Scholz, now you've had the longest time to think.

Olaf Scholz: Since we can give each other similar answers, I'll give you a slightly different one. I appreciate the great commitment and the Rhineland.

Tina Hassel: I appreciate that you have been here for over 90 minutes and have joined in the discussion. And just say thank you in advance for your willingness to join in the discussion and to get involved in difficult fields that we will certainly, and they will certainly go into more depth in broadcasts.
Wolfgang Ischinger: I would like to join you in thanking you. I am afraid that we were not able to deal with some topics that we would have liked to discuss with you due to a lack of time or because we were not able to deal with them intensively enough. I would have been insanely happy to talk much more intensively with all three of you about nuclear sharing issues, about armed drones and similar issues. But I think we at least ticked off quite a lot from the foreign and security policy spectrum in 90 minutes. It should be continued at some point. Thank you very much.

Tina Hassel: Thank you very much.