

# German, Romanian officials plan further escalation against Russia

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Three months after his election victory, the new Romanian president, Klaus Johannis, visited the German capital last week. Following a conversation with President Joachim Gauck, he was received by Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Topics discussed included the situation in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, as well as trade relations between the two countries.

Merkel reiterated her support for the aggressive stance of many east European states against Russia. She assured Romania, a NATO and European Union (EU) member state bordering Ukraine and Moldova, of her support. It was important that “we direct our attention not only to the Baltic States and Poland,” explained Merkel after the meeting. Geographically, Romania was “in a prominent strategic position”, she said.

Johannis supports the agreement negotiated in Minsk by Merkel with the presidents of France, Russia and Ukraine. He said that the stability of Ukraine was “in the interests of all Europe”. However, he also advocated harsher sanctions against Moscow and blamed Russian president Vladimir Putin for the crisis in Ukraine.

In an interview with broadcaster ARD before meeting Merkel, he demanded a stronger NATO presence in Romania and the entire Black Sea region: “Romania does not feel threatened militarily and we do not expect the conflict to spill over to Romania. But we want to be prepared for any development. That means the support of NATO.”

Merkel responded cautiously, explaining that NATO had agreed on important steps at its summit in Wales. “We must first focus on implementing these steps. Then we should also talk about further requests by Romania.” In Wales, NATO had committed to increasing its troop levels in eastern Europe, but this

does not go far enough for many eastern European governments.

The demand of the Romanian president coincided with remarks by NATO Commander in Chief-Europe General Philip Breedlove. He warned that Moscow could try to prevent a rapprochement with the West with the help of Russian troops stationed in the rebellious region of Transnistria. “In Moldova and other places,” Moscow is already pursuing “a broad information campaign,” Breedlove claimed.

Already last year, Breedlove came out in favour for stronger intervention in the Black Sea region. He said that Russia would “militarise” Crimea and so extend its control over almost the entire Black Sea region. Regional conflicts have massively intensified. The US is planning to establish a new rocket base in Romania this year, while Russia will increase the capacity of its Black Sea fleet.

The right-wing Romanian paper *România Liberă* expressed fear that Johannis’s close collaboration with Merkel could weaken the “Bucharest-London-Washington” axis. “The sole political axis in which Romania can be sure Russia will not exert its influence is the one connecting us with London and Washington. Berlin, by contrast, still wants to believe that it can engage in rational discussion with Putin”, the paper commented.

Nevertheless, Merkel promised Moldova her support. The country, sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine, will receive “considerable aid from the European Union,” she said. Merkel and Johannis declared unanimously they were “closely bound politically” with Moldova, and supported the new government of Chiril Gaburici.

Destitute Moldova confronts a deep political crisis, exacerbated by the aggressive course of the Western

powers against Russia. Russian-speaking Transnistria split from Moldova in a short and bloody war in 1991. Russian troops are still stationed there today.

Merkel and Johannis also discussed economic relations between the two countries, saying that they wanted to strengthen economic collaboration. The EU and business circles constantly raise cynical demands that Bucharest fight against corruption and nepotism.

Since the collapse of the Stalinist Ceausescu regime and the restoration of capitalism at the beginning of the 1990s, a fierce struggle between rival cliques has raged in Romania over access to the levers of power and associated financial rewards. Whether they be ex-Stalinists of the former Ceausescu regime or advocates of the free market, they all share contempt for the working class and lust for money and influence.

According to the web site Clean Romania, more than 30 ministers who have served in the last three governments have either been charged with corruption or have already been given prison sentences. This involves the cabinet of the Socialist Democratic Party prime minister Adrian N?stase (2000-2004), who himself has served a term of imprisonment; liberal premier C?lin T?riceanu (2005-2008); and Emil Boc (2009-2012), as well as the current government of Victor Ponta, five members of which face charges.

Moreover, hundreds of government officials, family members and establishment party members are deeply implicated in corruption. TV screens show politicians in handcuffs almost daily. The fight against corruption has long been used to eliminate political opponents. The different bourgeois political camps routinely hurl accusations of corruption against each other.

The conservative Johannis won the second round of the presidential election in November last year against social-democratic Prime Minister Victor Ponta. He had previously been mayor of Sibiu in Transylvania since 2000. He has close ties to conservative circles across Europe.

He has received his marching orders from the imperialist powers, to put an end to the trench warfare in Romanian politics and implement radical austerity measures. On this basis, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* called on him to “reform parties, politics and government” and change “the state’s modus operandi.... This applies particularly to budget planning.”



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