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# NEWSLETTER

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## Foreign Policy Synthesis and Debates

### THE MAIN TOPICS OF THE SHOW:

- 1.** The visit of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel has meant a strong signal of support for the European course of the Republic of Moldova, but also a message addressed to other Eastern Partnership countries, says the Executive Director of the Foreign Policy Association, **Victor Chirila**.
- 2.** **Nicu Popescu**, analyst of the European Council on Foreign Relations, London, says that the public discourse of the Chancellor had a message addressed to the Russian Federation, in the sense that EU and Germany will no longer accept in the 21st century a Europe divided in spheres of influence.
- 3.** **Victoria Reinhardt**, researcher at the Institute for Global and European studies at the University of Leipzig, browsed the German press and tells us how was reflected and perceived in Germany the visit to Chisinau of the Chancellor Angela Merkel.

### **Significance of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Chisinau in the view of Western and Republic of Moldova experts**

■ **Lina Grau:** Expert community and political class in Chisinau have had very high expectations of Angela Merkel's visit. It is believed that this visit will result in the definitive establishment of the Republic of Moldova on the political map of Europe. I've asked the Executive Director of the Foreign Policy Association, Victor Chirila, if the results of the visit were as expected.

■ **Victor Chirila:** Expectations remain still; they have not disappeared with the end of the visit. There are expectations to be achieved in practice over the coming years. It is a milestone visit, I would say, for our relationship with Germany, a visit which can be transformed into a true strategic partnership with Germany, a strategic partnership focused on European integration, a strategic partnership that could encourage further our relationships with the European Union.



There were different expectations. Some expected that Mrs. Merkel will come up with a project of Republic of Moldova's federalisation and so will revive the Kozak memorandum. This did not happen. Believed and hoped that this

could mean a kind of Russian-German Alliance, not the case. It's kind of intense dialogue with the Russian Federation without any doubt, a dialogue in the field of European security and the Transnistrian problem is part of this dialog.

■ **Lina Grau:** And in this context, to me it seemed relevant Angela Merkel's statement in which she said that in the 21st century we cannot conceive a Europe divided into spheres of influence. Is a message addressed to Russia: "we are partners, but not sharing the spheres of influence, as was done in 1939".

■ **Victor Chirila:** This is a message for Russia and it is a message for us, the Republic of Moldova, which must get rid of this idea of spheres of influence and think first and foremost taking into account the need to modernize Republic of Moldova, transform it into a European State with functional democracy, market economy which would inspire trust to foreign investors. This is the message. It's a message not just for Russia – it's a message for us, in order to see the European integration beyond the geopolitical choice between West and East.

■ **Lina Grau:** With regard to the European perspective for the Republic of

Moldova, I heard someone say that this visit is a turning point. So far, Republic of Moldova has knocked on the door of the European Union, and this visit could mean that the EU's door has opened for Moldova. Can we really talk about a European perspective for the Republic of Moldova in 5, 10, 25 years?

■ **Victor Chirila:** The EU door was always open for 20 years. The problem is that Moldova didn't know how to take advantage of this, often didn't know what it wants, the political class has not been united, had no long-term vision on the development of the country and the relationships that we have with the European Union.

It opened more once with the Eastern Partnership. We were offered a clear prospect of economic integration with the EU; we will sign the Political Association Agreement which actually is the first step towards achieving the EU candidate status. There are some achievements that we owe to the changes which have occurred in the past three years. We still have a huge sympathy from the part of the European Union, an increasing political and financial support, I would say. But, in order to take advantage of this turning point there is a need for more commitment on our part, on the part of the authorities, political parties. Let's not swing from the left to the right, not knowing that is our unique way that could unite us all. I believe that our path is European integration and there should no longer be discussions about the usefulness of this line.

■ **Lina Grau:** In view of this existing extremely favourable international situation for the European course of the Republic of Moldova, which are the internal challenges that might prevent us follow this path?

■ **Victor Chirila:** The internal challenges primarily are related to the unity of the

political class. We saw that the idea of European integration is the one that unites them. But, at the same time there is also mutual distrust between the components of the Alliance for European Integration. There is an unfair competition, rancour related to certain suspicions that the partners use European integration as a tool to enhance their image, good image, on the outside and on the inside. I believe that such things shouldn't exist. There must be a single understanding of the fact that as soon as we move towards the European Union, and especially when it comes to internal reforms, everyone will have benefits, including the components of the Alliance for European Integration. Thus, for the next elections they will have good result to share with the electorate.

That's why I think that first and foremost we need unity, more unity and confidence between the components of the Alliance for European Integration and then there will be a much better consistency, dynamics of reforms, there will no longer be internal intrigues between components, different ministries, institutions. I think it takes more unity, coherence, solidarity to mobilize all forces in order to implement those reforms that are experiencing difficulties on the ground.

■ **Lina Grau:** Mrs. Merkel stated in Chisinau that she came to support and welcome the democratic reforms, but noted that the Republic of Moldova, taking into account the developments in recent years, has become a pillar of the Eastern Partnership. Could this visit be perceived as a message and, as a signal to the other members of the Eastern Partnership?

■ **Victor Chirila:** There is no doubt about that. I believe that this visit was not just a visit to the Republic of Moldova, as some sarcastically try to present it, saying that Mrs. Merkel

came to the Republic of Moldova, the poorest country in the European Union. Thus, they forget that Moldova is part of the Eastern Partnership, it shows more consistency and more willingness to implement reforms than other countries in the Eastern Partnership, is appreciated abroad. It has to be encouraged to give a positive example to other countries from the Eastern Partnership, encouraged by proving that the principle "more for more" works, is not only a general, declarative principle. It is an applied principle. And this visit is a demonstration of this principle.

The "more for more" principle does not mean just money and technical assistance, but a lot more. It means political approximation to European capitals, a bigger sympathy and greater EU political support. Including such visits is an element of this principle.

■ **Lina Grau:** As regards the Transnistrian issue, Mrs. Merkel came and stated Germany's vision of how this settlement should be done: territorial integrity, sovereignty, a strong central Government and a local autonomy for the local power. Did Mrs. Merkel's message intended to disperse those concerns which exist in Chisinau regarding a possible federalization, a possible intervention from outside, a plan imposed by force to Chisinau?

■ **Victor Chirila:** The paradox of the situation and at the same time the hilarious nature of the state of mind before Mrs. Merkel's visit lies in the fact that those who were most worried about the idea of federalization are the ones actually interested in the existence of this discussions. Namely they are the promoters of the idea of federalisation – they were ringing the bells hoping that Mrs. Merkel will revive the discussions, will inspire a new blast to the debates regarding federalization.

However, this didn't happen, because

Mrs. Merkel cannot afford herself to dictate possible types of settlement. She represents not just Germany; she is part of the Club which is called the “European Union”. Or, in this club which is called the “European Union” decisions on foreign policy are taken by consensus. And if there is no consensus, there is no common position with regard to a settlement plan, no one will come up with such a plan and this has been proved.

In exchange, Mrs. Merkel came with certain messages for Russia: the status quo is no longer acceptable; Moldovans from both banks of the Nistru River should not tolerate this division because it affects their daily life; things must be changed through concrete steps, step by step. First, because the Transnistrian settlement is a process, a long process that requires European Union’s support, including that of Germany. Second, because the money coming from the EU for various common infrastructural projects in the Transnistrian region are coming from Germany.

This assistance will increase even further as we demonstrate together with the Transnistrian region that we are approaching, that we want to change the situation. And this way is the safest way to force the Russian Federation to change its position on the status of peacekeeping forces in Transnistria, and in relation to the withdrawal of ammunition and military forces that are still in the Transnistrian region on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

■ **Lina Grau:** Related to the Transnistrian region, to me it seemed relevant that the Transnistrian region is not excluded from the European perspective. The Chancellor pointed out several times that the residents of that area will benefit from the free trade agreement and facilitated visa regime. To what extent this topic of the Transnistrian conflict is closely linked to that of

European integration and does it somehow hinder our European course?

■ **Victor Chirila:** Mrs. Merkel said that European integration and Transnistrian conflict settlement do not exclude each other; on the contrary, they are complementary, which means, in other words, that the Transnistrian conflict is seen by Germany and the European Union as a whole, as being an integral part of our European integration process. As we get closer to European integration, by changing things here at home, the Republic of Moldova will become more attractive for the right bank. Attractive not only from the economic point of view and this is very important, but also in terms of respect for human rights, in terms of functional democratic institutions and respect for human beings in general. Then, without any doubt, the chances of bringing the Transnistrian region within the country will be higher.

■ **Lina Grau:** How do you think should we understand those historical references that Mrs. Merker stated in Chisinau? She spoke about sufferings that have been produced to this territory by the Hitlerian Germany as well as the Soviet Russia.

■ **Victor Chirila:** I am glad that Germany has not forgotten about these events, that Germany understands that the citizens of the Republic of Moldova had suffered because of those sad events in 1939 and the events that followed the Second World War. I think that in the middle there is the feeling of a historical responsibility that Germany has in relation to the Republic of Moldova and for the region as a whole.

Europe’s historical feeling of responsibility in general has been shown very clearly in the case of the Baltic States, which were helped, assisted, to integrate into the European Union. I think that in our case, we are

witnessing the same commitment, the same historical responsibilities. And I really think that Germany, Mrs. Merkel is sincerely committed to help us follow this path. She stated that we will not be left alone as long as Moldova follows Germany on the path of democratic and economic reforms, which would get us closer to EU. Certainly, we will get there sooner or later.

I am glad to observe again that there is a feeling of responsibility and understanding of the fact that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact affected to a great extent the destiny of our history.

■ **Lina Grau:** What seemed to me very interesting during the two speeches held in the Parliament by Prime Minister Filat and Chancellor Angela Merkel was a common reference to the famous phrase of the Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who said that “We all live under the same sky, but we don’t have the same horizons”. Mrs. Merkel said at the end that “We live under the same sky and we should have the same horizons”.

■ **Victor Chirila:** Every nation makes its own horizons. It depends on the society; on how prepared it is to choose a political class that would lead to those horizons.

In our case, finally appear politicians that look forward, have a vision. We also need unity and internal institutional capacities to reach those horizons. We were offered horizons - a European perspective offered by the Eastern Partnership, a European perspective that includes already, at this stage, economic integration with the EU. Other opportunities will come up as we get closer, as we demonstrate that we are more prepared for another stage. I think it is a good horizon. Let’s see if we have the wisdom to get there.

## ***Angela Merkel's message addressed to Russia was that the EU and Germany will not accept a Europe in the 21st century divided into spheres of influence***

■ **Lina Grau:** We discussed the main conclusions of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit with Nicu Popescu, analyst at the European Council on Foreign Relations in London.

■ **Nicu Popescu:** This visit was not as we expected, but over the maximum of our expectations. Angela Merkel has offered support to the Republic of Moldova on absolutely every file that Moldova wanted support. First, Angela Merkel reiterated that Moldova has a European future, a European perspective. Secondly, reiterated that Moldovan citizens will be able to travel without visas in the EU. Thirdly, she reiterated that Germany and the EU sees the country's reintegration under the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, with a special status for Transnistria. And fourthly, Angela Merkel has promised economic assistance, a better investment environment, inclusively by liberalizing the trade with EU which would generate more jobs, better wages, so that the process of European integration could be felt by every citizen. Obviously, these benefits will not come automatically and will not come overnight, they involve a lot of work.

If we look at the significance of the visit, it is obvious that things cannot change overnight. Mrs. Merkel has sent strong signals of support for the Republic of Moldova and now the European and German administration and bureaucracy will go on implementing the vision set out by Angela Merkel in Chisinau. I



suspect that as a result of this visit will follow an intensification of relations between Moldova and Germany regarding relations between Ministries of Interior, energy partnerships and trade relationships. And all these things will gradually have a positive impact.

Obviously, before seeing the benefit of any process of reform, effort must be done. Or, if you want to build a house, you have to work a lot, give up your weekends work hard even through rains or heat. Broadly, the same functions a State as the Republic of Moldova - you must put effort. Sometimes it will be difficult, sometimes painful, but you do that for a more prosperous future for the next generations, but also for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, which will gradually feel the benefits of European integration and that, moreover, already have some positive effects of this process.

■ **Lina Grau:** Beyond this positive message in support of democratic aspirations and achievements of the democratic Government, Angela Merkel came with some criticism, which at least for the time being were not emphasised by the authorities in Chisinau. Angela Merkel spoke about corruption, about justice problems and certainly has raised the issue of business climate in Moldova.

■ **Nicu Popescu:** Obviously, she stressed issues that any citizen of the Republic of Moldova and any decision-maker know. It would be great to deal with these issues for the benefit of the local citizens, not because Angela Merkel said so. These problems limit the positive impact of the reforms and the process of European integration. However, as long as you have a corrupted country, a dysfunctional business environment, corrupt judicial system, slow and dysfunctional, obviously this struck every citizen and limits the Republic of Moldova's development capacity.

■ **Lina Grau:** Related to the European aspirations, the German Chancellor said that Moldova is the pillar of the Eastern Partnership. Could this visit be perceived as a message to other countries in the Eastern Partnership?

■ **Nicu Popescu:** The message addressed by Angela Merkel referred to Republic of Moldova 90-95%. This visit, by its magnitude, the messages sent, by its choreography was organized around the Republic of Moldova, with messages addressed first and foremost to Republic of Moldova's citizens. But, alongside Angela Merkel has sent certain messages for other external actors. Inclusively it was a message addressed to the Russian Federation, when Angela Merkel said that in the 21st century the European Union and Germany will not accept new dividing lines in Europe, new spheres of influence in Europe. This is a direct message addressed to the Eurasian integration initiatives. And, of course,

by the fact that namely the Republic of Moldova was chosen as the destination for this visit, an example is sent to the other countries of the Eastern Partnership, which are much slower in the reform process, including Ukraine, Armenia or Belarus. An example in the sense that, you see Moldova through these reforms that it committed got UE's full political and economic support and if other countries would have followed Moldova's path could have also benefited from this. But, it is not the case due to developments in the internal politics of other countries of the Eastern Partnership.

■ **Lina Grau:** Angela Merkel referred also to the Transnistrian problem, perhaps in the context of the fact that it was extremely long speculated this topic before her arrival. Does Mrs. Merkel's statement rule out the federalization scenario of which Republic of Moldova is afraid of?

■ **Nicu Popescu:** Angela Merkel neither includes nor excludes federalisation. Angela Merkel said that Germany and the EU supports the Republic of Moldova's reintegration, with Transnistria as a constituent part of this reintegrated country. The practical aspects of reintegration depend on Chisinau and Tiraspol. If they want federalisation is one thing, if not they don't want federalization than is something else is. What Germany does is to assist Chisinau in this process and wishes to see a reintegrated country. It does not require, does not oblige, but it offers support to the current position promoted by Chisinau.

■ **Lina Grau:** What is the connection between the reintegration of the country and the European aspirations of the Republic of Moldova? How do you see the exit from this deadlock? Because apparently one process excludes the other...

■ **Nicu Popescu:** The Chancellor said that reintegration does not exclude progresses on European integration path. Obviously, everybody would like to see Republic of Moldova reintegrated, to become a new Switzerland, which makes progress overnight. But obviously, the realities are much more difficult and the Europeans, including Germany, have a very clear policy – Moldova cannot and will not become a hostage of reintegration during the European integration process. So, the process of European integration of the Republic of Moldova is not and cannot be blocked because of some external factors that are not related to the Republic of Moldova. But, the dynamics of the European integration process fundamentally depends on what is being done on the territory controlled by Chisinau.

Obviously, Transnistria is a factor that complicates European integration, along with other processes – the reform, border control, investment attractiveness. Yes, Transnistria is a real problem, but it is not an insurmountable obstacle. It is an issue that should be managed and Moldova will not be held hostage by the Tiraspol administration.

■ **Lina Grau:** After this visit you think Germany will become much more active in the Republic of Moldova? Do you think we could talk about a partnership, perhaps even about a strategic partnership with Berlin?

■ **Nicu Popescu:** The strategic partnership was initiated already for some time. Now, obviously, we entered a new phase and intensity of this partnership. It is important that this privileged relation has been established at the level of Prime Ministers. Now, we expect an intensification of the dialogue at lower level. And, yes, I think that this visit will be an impetus that will make the German presence in the Republic of Moldova to be larger, both political

and economic and through institutional partnerships, so that this partnership initiated at a higher level could get more practical essence.

■ **Lina Grau:** Do you think it is a coincidence that both Prime Minister Filat, in his speech and Chancellor Angela Merkel used that quote of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer who said, referring to the European countries, that “we all live under the same sky, but we have different horizons”. The phrase which Angela Merkel used in order to finish her speech was: “Let's live under the same sky and have the same horizons!” Were these messages coordinated in advance?

■ **Nicu Popescu:** I don't think they were coordinated. And if they were, one of them would have excluded this phrase. It is rather a parallelism of thinking in developing messages. Even more, I would say that these speeches basically coincided on many issues, including the benefits of European integration. At the same time, both speeches - Angela Merkel's, and the one of Vlad Filat, recognized that the reforms involve a lot of effort and sometimes are difficult and painful, but they must be done. In this regard, including this phrase, but also the logic and the messages were quite similar.

■ **Lina Grau:** There were a lot of speculations regarding the fact that this visit comes to do PR, or image to the current Government, and particularly to the Prime Minister Vlad Filat. Do you find this opinion an argued one?

■ **Nicu Popescu:** We should not interpret every motion and blast of any domestic or foreign leader via PR perspective. Of course, PR is a part of any governance. But, we cannot be so obsessed as to see PR in every breeze. It is a message of support to the current Government in Chisinau in the reform process, which is a painful one. It is also recognition of Republic of Moldova's

achievements in recent years – which are not finalised, which sometimes are made only half, or even are at the beginning of the path. But, it is a message of support in the sense that the current direction is a good one.

■ **Lina Grau:** Given this unprecedented openness that exists in the West for the Republic of Moldova, which could be the things that would prevent our European integration path?

■ **Nicu Popescu:** There are two great challenges. One refers to how and if the Republic of Moldova will indeed be able to go on fighting corruption and improving the investment environment. Because what Republic of Moldova is missing today is a transformation and transfer of foreign policy positive messages in order to improve citizen's life. And this is the "Achilles' heel" of the current policy of rapprochement with the EU. So, we must ensure that European integration policy is perceived by ordinary citizens. And the second challenge is the situation of the European Union and the crisis there, which does not mean that the EU will fall apart, but it is obvious that this crisis consumes a lot of EU's political and economic energy. And as soon as the EU will overrun this crisis, the faster we will all benefit, both economically and politically.

## ***In the German society there is openness and sympathy towards the Republic of Moldova***



■ **Lina Grau:** In the Republic of Moldova the visit of the German Chancellor held a long time the first pages of the most important publications. I wanted to know how the press reflected in Germany the essence of the seven hours visit made by Angela Merkel in Chisinau. The German publications were browsed for us by the Member of the Board of Directors of the Moldova – Leipzig Institute, Victoria Reinhardt, researcher at the Institute for Global and European studies at the University of Leipzig, whom I asked first of all about how was this visit reflected in Germany.

■ **Victoria Reinhardt:** The visit to Moldova was seen in Germany with slight daze, at first. But, Mrs. Angela Merkel took care even before planning this visit to explain very well the reasons.

I would like to explain why this daze, astonishment regarding the visit to

Republic of Moldova. First, now is a time when Mrs. Angela Merkel is involved in many issues relating to the financial crisis in the EU, economic processes less pleasant in the southern Europe and so on. The Bundestag is still on holiday and now Angela Merkel devotes time to foreign policy. Before coming to Chisinau she has been in Canada and for the week she planned to visit the Republic of Moldova there was also planned a meeting with the Prime Minister of Greece, Antonis Samaras, and with the President of France, Francois Holland. Then Mario Monti, the President of Italy had to pay a visit.

In this context, the visit in the Republic of Moldova seemed very exotic. And Angela Merkel was even asked why she goes to the Republic of Moldova and if this visit is inappropriate in this period of time. Her answer was very clear – the visit to the Republic of Moldova is very well placed in the European context, because it is about building a common European house. In this way Mrs. Merkel shaped the visit before it has started. This fact aroused the interest of the press and German television and the visit was presented in detail. In particular, serious press in Germany reported very detailed and very seriously the key issues discussed during this visit.

If to present some important domains, I can say that the German press talks very clearly about the European perspective of the Republic of Moldova, it is stressed that the Republic of Moldova is the most advanced in the course of reforms among all countries in the Eastern Partnership,

the Republic of Moldova is presented as a country that takes very seriously the process of European integration. In addition, the Transnistrian conflict is shown, again, from the European perspective, finding a solution to this conflict is presented as an EU priority.

So, this is how the press reacted. It is also interesting that the German society follows with interest what is happening in the EU neighbourhood.

■ **Lina Grau:** This is exactly what I wanted to ask you – to what extent German people are interested in this area of foreign policy and the European neighbourhood and if there were echoes in German society regarding this visit?

■ **Victoria Reinhardt:** Of course, Republic of Moldova is not a very well known State in Germany, although it is more commonly known now than it was a few years ago. However, the image of the Republic of Moldova is not as bad as you think. Of course, in the newspapers is written that it is the poorest country in Europe, but the reaction of the people to the articles in the German press is a very positive. On the web pages of the publications which reported on Angela Merkel's visit there are some very interesting comments of the readers. In one of the comments to the article in Spiegel was said that "Moldova is one of the most beautiful countries in Europe and very recommendable for those who want individual travels". Another reader wrote that "Moldova is a country that

deserves all the EU's support". From reactions on the forums you can see that German citizens know pretty well what is happening in the Republic of Moldova, pursue the process of the Transnistrian conflict settlement.

There is one important thing that I think should be highlighted here. In the EU are being discussed now intensely the internal processes of Europeanization, internal problems with the single currency, issues of economic integration within the EU and so on. German society and society of the European Union appears to be already tired of these themes. And a visit to the Republic of Moldova in this context is to some extent refreshing.

Doing a summary on the subject, I can say that the German society is open for the Republic of Moldova and this visit has shown somewhat that a country on the edge of the continent is not necessarily a peripheral country from all points of view. Germany wants to support this country; Republic of Moldova was evidenced among all EU neighbours, but also among other countries of the Eastern Partnership. Very clear it is discussed about the fact that Moldova has clear prospect, though distant, but clear. And this visit is presented in the context of building a common European house. It is a very clear message, from my point of view.

■ **Lina Grau:** How do the risks of the Republic of Moldova's European path are

seen from Germany? What could hinder our European integration path taking into account such Western support?

■ **Victoria Reinhardt:** I think the factors which might diminish the chances of the Republic of Moldova are factors which Chisinau cannot influence very much and refer to bigger political processes in the EU. What the Republic of Moldova can do is clear and it is repeated every time - implementation of reforms. Not only adopting them, but also their sustainable implementation. There is also the change of mentality. I think that people are already tired to hear these words, but it is true. There are some reforms of the tax system that are absolutely necessary – namely in this field EU is extremely sensitive, taking into account the current situation in southern EU -Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and so on.

But, as I said, there is a perception here that Moldova has demonstrated that it is willing to go through this journey and this is understood very clearly. Of course, if in the Republic of Moldova something happens and this process is seriously jeopardized, then the perception here will change. But at the moment, things look pretty good.

