



## Russia rejects US ceasefire proposal – Fabian Scheidler

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**Zain Raza (ZR):** Thank you for tuning in and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza. Before I start this interview, I would like to remind all of our YouTube subscribers about joining our alternative channels on Rumble, Telegram and our podcast called Podbean. YouTube, which is owned by Google, as you know from our content, has a long history of shadow banning and censoring content. Even though we have 156,000 subscribers on our YouTube channel, only 6100 have so far made a transition to these alternative platforms. If we ever get shadow banned and censored, we won't be able to reach you with our information, let alone with an announcement. Hence, as a precautionary measure, we're asking all of our viewers to join these alternative channels. You'll find the link to them in the description of this video.

Today, I'll be talking to independent journalist, Fabian Scheidler. Fabian Scheidler has also written several books, one of them being *The End of the Mega-Machine: a brief history of a failing civilization*. Fabian, welcome back to the show.

**Fabian Scheidler (FS):** Thanks for having me.

**ZR:** Let's start this interview with a breaking development regarding Ukraine. This week, during a visit to Saudi Arabia, Ukraine accepted a US proposal for a 30-day ceasefire with Russia. The proposal included working out a permanent peace plan during the truce. Shortly after, the US resumed military aid as well as intelligence support for Ukraine, which it halted following the incident in the Oval Office between US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. All eyes were now on Russia. And shortly before this interview, Russia casted some doubts on the US proposal on the grounds that it would "gain nothing" from it.

Yuri Ushakov, the Kremlin's senior foreign policy adviser, made the following points that I would like to paraphrase here: Firstly, this ceasefire gives the Ukrainians a chance to regroup, regather and continue. Secondly, any long-term solution must safeguard Russia's interests and address its concerns. Thirdly, Ukraine's NATO membership cannot be discussed in the

context of resolving this crisis. Another point that Russia considers unacceptable is the deployment of peacekeeping troops from other states – which France and Great Britain, for example, have offered – and views this as a direct provocation. This comes at a time when Russia is making significant advances in both eastern Ukraine as well as in Kursk. In Kursk, it's being reported that Ukrainian forces are at risk of being encircled by the Russian army. How do you assess Russia's concerns and doubts on the US proposal?

**FS:** Yes, first of all, I think we should dwell a little bit on the irony of the whole situation. I mean, look who Trump is – and the Democratic Party under Biden didn't come up with any peace proposal for all these years of war, a war which could have been avoided in the first place. And the European Union didn't come up with any peace proposal. And now we have Trump, an extraordinary person, a bully, a person who is terrible on many issues like migrants and poor people in the US and other issues but he came up with a peace proposal. And he has talked to Russia, which is incredibly important. Whatever comes out of it now, they are talking again and that is really so important because we were at a high risk level of nuclear war before that day. And now the heads of the secret services are talking with each other. Trump and Putin have talked to each other. So this is really important because it lowers the risk of a third world war. And Trump talked with Zelensky and the Oval Office about that risk. So that's a step in the right direction, certainly.

Now, concerning the proposals that we see on the table, the Russians have made clear from the outset that they are not interested in a ceasefire, because as they said, Ukraine could use that to rearm itself. I mean, Ukraine is losing the war. They've almost lost the Kursk region. They're losing ground by the day. They have enormous problems recruiting personnel for their military. So, of course, Ukraine wants a ceasefire and the Russians do not. The Russians want a peace agreement, which addresses the root causes, as they say, and they are territory and NATO. That's it. So any proposal that does not address these two issues – any compromise on territory and the exclusion of NATO membership for Ukraine – is doomed to fail. And the irony here is, I mean, the US and Ukraine have negotiated a ceasefire plan. Usually when you negotiate a ceasefire, you do that with both sides of the conflict. So they have a proposal on the table and the Russians will use the power they have. I mean, they have the upper hand militarily to pressure for a real peace deal.

**ZR:** Since Donald Trump took office in the US, a series of incidents have been interpreted by the European political establishment as a turning point in NATO and the long-standing transatlantic relations. First, it was US Vice President J.D. Vance's speech at the Munich Security Conference criticizing Europe's assault on free speech. And then there was the heated exchange between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Donald Trump in the Oval Office, which I won't get into as most of our viewers have already seen that exchange on our channel. Since then, Western Europeans across the board have called for the development of a new security architecture and have made one announcement after the other to remilitarize Europe. For example, under the name "ReArm Europe", European Union Commissioner Ursula von der Leyen has proposed a five-point plan that could mobilize around 800 billion euros for military spending. It will involve not only relaxing EU rules on

public debt but also divert credit facilities and loan and redevelopment programs towards military spending. The media and the political establishment in Germany, for example, are convinced of the narrative that Russian President Vladimir Putin intends to expand beyond Ukraine and has set sights on Poland and even the Baltic states, threatening Europe's freedom and sovereignty in the process. Can you provide your assessment on this geopolitical shift as well as the new foreign position that Europe finds itself in now?

**FS:** Well, I think the reaction of the European Union to the new situation is highly irrational. In the very moment when peace has become possible, what they do is only to talk about rearmament. They are not talking about the opportunities that a peace deal could have. And the whole idea that Russia would invade NATO is really completely absurd. They cannot do it. I mean, there is a Greenpeace study which came up with the numbers that NATO countries have 10 times, spent 10 times as much on military than Russia. You can reduce that imbalance by taking the purchasing power into account and so on, but still NATO is by far superior to Russia. And the Russians, I mean, they have been ruthless by attacking Ukraine, but they are not suicidal at all. And what would be the benefit of invading NATO? It would be utter destruction for both sides, even nuclear war.

So I think this whole idea that Russia is going to invade NATO is really absurd. And instead of going only for the military and spending these 800 billion more on the military, the Europeans should look for a real new security architecture. I mean, when they talk about security architecture, they mean confrontation. They mean only rearmament. That's not a security architecture. The more you go into confrontation, the more insecure Europe becomes. What you have to do is reestablish relations with those nations with whom you are in conflict. It's not about having nice relations with friends. It's about having difficult relations – a kind of detente with Russia, which seems possible now. And even with China. And so Europe could profit enormously. But if Europe continues to go in that direction, it becomes isolated. You know, NATO could be at the brink of breaking up. I think it's not the point now when it really breaks up. But Europe is isolated towards the East. They've broken ties with Russia under the pressure of the US. They are about to decouple from China. The US relations are at stake. So Europe is isolated. What they should do is they should try to become a force of peace and diplomacy between the blocs, between the US, Russia and China, and that will be the way forward. Otherwise, Europe will destroy itself economically and politically. Because Europe cannot pay for all that without destroying the social welfare state that is unique in Europe. And The Financial Times recently ran an article where they said Europe has to transform itself from a welfare state to a warfare state. That's what this is about. And I think that's really the way to destruction.

**ZR:** With Russia casting doubt – and some are viewing this as a rejection of the US proposed 30-day ceasefire with Ukraine – the narrative that Russia was never entrusted in peace and diplomacy, which the Western media and political establishment has been pushing for the past years, will only be further entrenched. How would you respond? Was Russia never interested in peace and diplomacy?

**FS:** No, I mean, history tells us that this is complete nonsense. We know a lot now about the peace negotiations that took place in March and April 2022, just weeks after the Russian invasion in Ukraine. And we don't know that from Russian sources, but from many Western sources, including people from the Ukrainian side who were involved. People from Switzerland, Naftali Bennett from Israel, the former prime minister, and many others, who said that, well, they were about to sign an agreement, there was a 10-point plan that was drafted by Ukraine, and Russia was willing to sign it. And then Boris Johnson arrived in Kiev on the 9th of April, and after that the negotiations collapsed. And on the way back to Britain, Johnson told reporters: you don't negotiate with monsters. So that's what's clearly in his own words his position. No negotiations. So whatever has been said about that, it's very clear that the negotiations broke down because of Western intervention. And of course, Boris Johnson didn't do that on behalf of Britain, which is only the poodle of the US, but on behalf of the US. So that's quite clear. So Russia was willing to negotiate because they have their objectives. And the main objectives are no NATO membership and territory.

**ZR:** I want to switch gears and focus on German politics with a focus on foreign policy. In the recent federal election in Germany, the conservative bloc Christian Democratic Union, CDU and the Christian Social Union, CSU, emerged as the strongest party with 28.5 % of the vote and 208 seats, while the far-right Alternative for Germany, AFD, made significant gains finishing with 20.8 % and 152 seats. The Social Democrats suffered the worst result in post-war history, falling to 16.4 % and 120 seats, while the Greens also fell to 11.6 % and 85 seats. In contrast, the left-wing party, Die Linke, saw a huge surge in popularity, winning 8.8 % in 69 seats while the newly formed Peace and Anti-War party, Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht, narrowly missed the 5 % hurdle, winning 4.97 % and therefore gained no seats. The liberal Free Democratic Party FDP flew out of the parliament. Let us analyze this election result from the perspective of war and peace. How would you evaluate the German election result from this perspective? Have the voices for war been strengthened or weakened?

**FS:** Well, yes, it's sort of disturbing that sort of 85 percent of German voters voted for pro-war parties. I mean, you have to keep in mind that the Green Party is really a neoconservative party in terms of foreign policy now. I've written an extensive article on that for Le Monde Diplomatique in many languages in which I tell the story about how the Green Party, which used to be a peace party, which was for ending NATO and the Warsaw Pact and the rest of it in the 80s, became really a party of warmongers who reject negotiations, who are for limitless rearmament and so on. And the Social Democratic Party, which was a party of détente in the era of Willy Brandt in the 70s – Willy Brandt got the Nobel Peace Prize for that – they had, with some reluctance, but still they embarked on that rearmament issue. Scholz, the chancellor, got this 100 billion package through the Bundestag and so on. And of course, the CDU is a pro-war party and a rearmament party and so is the AFD. Although they want to have better relations with Russia and end the war there, they have even said that they want 5 % of GDP for the army.

Now, when you hear about 2 % or 3.5%, as has been proposed by Robert Habeck, the head of the Green Party, or 5%, you say, well, that's little compared to the GDP. Well, look at it in budget terms. The German budget is about a tenth of the GDP. And so, if you spend 3.5 % of the GDP for the army, it's 35 % of your national budget. And you have to cut practically everything else for that. And that's really amazing that the Green Party has taken such a position because the army is the most destructive sector of the economy when it comes to climate and the environment. And you have to slash all programs for climate protection and the environment if you go for that rearmament. You have to slash social welfare and everything. So really the question here is, are we willing to sacrifice everything that has been gained in Europe for since World War II – or you can even go back longer in terms of social rights, in terms of welfare state, in terms of environmental protection – for this senseless rearmament? Which we don't need because we can build a new security architecture which is based on diplomacy. So from that perspective it's sad news.

Die Linke has had some kind of contradictory positions in the past. When it came to arms deliveries to Ukraine, they were also not so certain what they wanted to say about the war in Gaza, and so it's fortunate, I think, that they have gained in strength. Their program is quite progressive. They call for dissolving NATO, indeed, which is interesting, but I don't know where they will stand in practical policies. Because we have that situation now that the CDU and the SPD, which want to form a coalition, they want to push through the old Bundestag, which is not elected – we have had elections, but the old Bundestag is still in place until the new Bundestag is formed – and they want to push through the old Bundestag without any legitimation, a change in the German Constitution that would get rid of any limits to armament. Because we have the so-called debt brake, which was a bad idea in the first place to limit the public debt to 60 % of the GDP. But they want to get rid only of the limits for the military and not for all kinds of other investments into the future. And so that's deeply disturbing. And now we have discussions whether the Greens will vote with them or if they don't.

**ZR:** You mentioned that the Social Democrats and Conservatives are trying to implement a special military fund by using the old, outgoing parliament. Even the Alternative for Germany, AfD, and Die Linke, the left party, are challenging the legality of these measures in the federal constitutional court. They contend that such significant constitutional changes and substantial investments should not be decided by the outgoing old parliament. And also assert that parliamentarians have not been allotted sufficient time to scrutinize this plan. Could you talk about this 500 billion Euro special fund that will last over 10 years? There's a lot of confusion because there's talk that this will go into infrastructure as well as national security. In other words, into the military. Can you dig deeper and provide a comprehensive assessment on this military fund and what impact it would have on democracy if it is to pass through by the old parliament?

**FS:** Well, first of all, in terms of democracy, this is really a shame, you know. The voters have spoken, whether we like the result or not. I think any measures of this size and this relevance should be passed by the new elected parliament. And I think it's completely right

that it has been challenged by the Supreme Court. We will see what they do. They can even – the Supreme Court could prevent the Bundestag from reuniting, to vote on this. We will see. It's scheduled for next week. In terms of the content, the 500 billion package is for infrastructure. And what they want to do for the military is to do it through the regular budget, but without any limits. That is, to slash the debt break only for the military. And I think this whole deal is completely ill-minded and badly negotiated by the social democrats. Because we should get rid of the debt break anyway but for everything. We need investments in the future. Investments in the military are not investments in the future. We need investments in social well-being, in a social and ecological transformation of this country and of the economy. And this should be allowed in our constitutions and not boundless rearmament.

When it comes to the 500 billion, well, that's just a trick because it's nowhere said that these 500 billion are additional to the regular budget. So what a new government could do is they could say, well we spend everything on the military and for these social and ecological things, well, we have that fund, so we don't need the regular budget or we slash the regular budget. So, eventually, what could come out of it, is that there's no new money for the real crumbling infrastructure in Germany. I mean, remember, Merkel and even Schröder, the social democratic and green government, they really started to destroy German infrastructure. German rail is in dire straits, no investment, and many other infrastructures are as well. And when you look at it in terms of time and money, 500 billion over 10 years is not that much. It's 50 billion per year. It's much less than for the military. And it's not additional.

So it's a very bad deal and should be reversed. We should get rid of the debt break in the first place and then have in the regular budget, money for infrastructure and climate protection. And really, the elephant in the room that is not talked about at all is that we have a growing number of millionaires and billionaires in this country, which are not really taxed. And instead of going for more debt all the time, we should tax them. We should take the rich and tax them in a way that we can pay for the investments that we need in the future. Nobody's talking about that, except sometimes Die Linke, but not loudly. I mean, the Greens are not talking about that, the Social Democrats are not talking about it, and that's the elephant in the room.

**ZR:** To my last question, you were one of the very first European journalists to interview Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersch, who in 2023 broke the story that the US had blown the Nord Stream pipeline as part of a secret CIA operation. I'll be sure to link this interview for those subscribers that may have missed it on our channel. To me, it seems that the political and media establishment in Germany simply wants to forget one of the biggest acts of environmental sabotage and terrorism in modern history. However, we at AcTVism Munich, as an independent journalistic outlet, deem it to be of utmost importance to stay on top of this story even if the attention and interest on it has mostly faded. Could you provide a brief overview of the prevailing Nord Stream theories and then focus on what our governments could have done in their power that would have brought those responsible to justice?

**FS:** Well, basically there have been three narratives around for the last years. One was that Russia was responsible for that, but there is no evidence. Even the American Secret Services and The Washington Post and everyone said that they had no motive and there's no evidence at all. So that seems to be nonsense. So, there are two other narratives which should be considered seriously. One is what Seymour Hersh reported, which is that the US were directly responsible, that Biden ordered the destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines. And that would be in line with what Biden said in a White House press conference, Biden standing next to Olaf Scholz. And he responded to the question of what would happen if Russia invaded Ukraine. And he said, well, we would end Nord Stream. He said it very bluntly. You cannot say it more bluntly. And so, it's quite possible. And you know, the Seymour Hersh report was never debunked. There were many attempts to debunk it in terms of open source intelligence or whatever. And I have written extensively about that long article in Le Monde Diplomatique and in other outlets. And still, Hersh's story is in line with all the other data that we know. It could have happened that way. We don't know for sure if it did.

And then they came up – The New York Times, Die Zeit, and other newspapers – with that sailboat story, the Andromeda, and that there were six people who did it in a quite more improvised style. And the story goes that at the end of the day, Zaluzhny, the former chief of the Ukrainian army was responsible and there are contradictory reports whether Zelensky approved of it or not or whatever. So I think technically it could have happened that way. Ukraine could have done it that way, although I think it's not really probable they did it that way. But they could. But the key thing here is, they couldn't have done it without the US. The US knew about it for sure. They have extensive surveillance of the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Sea is one of the most and best surveilled waters on the planet. They have underwater surveillance, they have everything. And they have even deep surveillance of the Ukrainian infrastructure, the Ukrainian intelligence service, which is deeply intertwined with the US intelligence service, and so on and so forth. So at least the US knew about it, most probably the US was complicit in it, if Ukraine did it.

So there are several possible links between the Seymour Hersh story and the Andromeda story. One is that the Seymour Hersh version was the first plan and then they changed it and then went for the sailboat version. Another possibility, which is quite common in CIA operations, is that they planned a red herring. So they set up all of this sailboat thing – I mean these people went on a trip, they were close to Bornholm and so on. And so in case that something leaked about the real issue, they would have something to point the finger on. And the interesting thing is that the whole Western press – first of all, they went behind Russia, which was completely irrational because of no motive, no proof, nothing. Then they ignored Hersh, which was interesting in the first place. They dismissed him as a, I don't know, a conspiracy theorist, although in fact, Hersh was practically right all the time in his career. And then they came up with that sailboat story and they only got into the details of the sailboat story. So if you want to confuse people, well, I would do it like that. So let's keep it like that. At the end of the day, it was Western powers, it was close allies of Germany, whether Ukraine or the US or both of them together, which bombed crucial infrastructure of

Germany. And I mean, that's really the irony of the thing, that our allies bombed our infrastructure one way or another.

**ZR:** Fabian Scheidler, author and journalist, thank you so much for your time today.

**FS:** It was a pleasure, Zain.

**ZR:** And thank you for tuning in today. If you watched this video until the very end, please take a few moments and support us via a small donation. We are an independent and non-profit media outlet that does not take any money from corporations or governments, and we don't even allow advertisements, all with the goal of staying independent and providing you with information that is free from any external influence. Hence, we only depend on you, our viewers, to continue our independent and non-profit journalism. I thank you for your support and tuning in. I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you next time.

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