



## Nord Stream Update | The Hidden Context of the Ukraine War – Fabian Scheidler

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**Zain Raza (ZR):** Thank you for tuning in today and welcome back to another episode of The Source, I'm your host Zain Raza. Before we begin this interview I would like to remind you to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. We are not asking you to permanently leave YouTube, all we are asking you to do is to join these channels as a precautionary measure because YouTube is owned by Google and Google is a US corporation that has a history of shadowbanning and censoring content of independent critical media voices such as ours. Even though we have 165,000 subscribers, only a few thousand have made this transition. And if that day ever comes where we're shadowbanned or censored, we won't be able to reach you with any information, let alone with an announcement. How to join these alternative channels you can find out in the description of this video.

Today, I'll be talking to independent journalist Fabian Scheidler. Fabian Scheidler is the author of several books and his newly released book which is out in German – let me translate the title for you – Apt For Peace: How We Can Stop Creating Our Own Enemies [*Friedenstüchtig: Wie wir aufhören können, unsere Feinde selbst zu schaffen*]. Fabian, welcome back to the show.

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

**ZR:** Before we discuss your new book, I'd like to start with the latest developments surrounding the Nord Stream pipeline. A Ukrainian suspect was arrested in Poland on a German-European arrest warrant, but later released after a Polish court ruled that Germany had provided only very general information which did not constitute sufficient evidence. The judge further argued that those supporting Ukraine could not be considered terrorists as they were defending their fatherland and weakening their enemy, and that the act took place in international waters as part of a just defensive war. Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk publicly welcomed the ruling, while Berlin has so far avoided much commentary, merely stating that it "takes note" of the decision. An appeal against the court's ruling can still be made. You were one of the very first European journalists to interview Pulitzer Prize-winning

journalist Seymour Hersh, which was published on our channel, and who broke the story that the United States was behind the bombing of the Nord Stream pipeline. Political developments and mainstream media and reporting, however, have gone in the direction of the Andromeda story, which claims that Ukraine was behind this attack and used a yacht to blow up the pipeline. Can you comment on the latest developments as well as how this fits into the overall picture?

**FS:** Well, what we've seen in Poland now is just another chapter in the charade that has been going on for years now. Apparently, authorities and people behind the scenes don't want the case to be solved. Donald Tusk even said, "the case is closed", so there's nothing more to discuss. And the same suspect that was released now has already escaped a year ago. There was already a European arrest warrant and the Polish authorities helped this suspect to escape to Ukraine. So there are clearly forces at work that don't want the case to be solved. And there are two possible options why that is the case. The first option is the Andromeda story that the Ukrainian secret services and the military are behind this and possibly or probably I would argue the Ukrainian government. That is the story that has been told by the mainstream media for years now. It is possible that Ukraine was behind the assault. And of course, many forces don't want that to be resolved, because if it turns out that Zelensky gave green light to these attacks, it would be very strange that Germany still supports Ukraine, while Ukraine has attacked its crucial energy infrastructure. The second possibility is that the US has been behind the attack. The Seymour Hersh theory is not debunked yet. I've written extensively about that. It is still possible that it was authorized by Joe Biden and executed by American and Norwegian forces. We don't know that yet. And in this case as well, there are forces at work that don't want that to come to light. And whether it was Ukraine, or whether it was the United States, or both of them together, even possibly with the help of Poland, in any case it would be close allies of Germany and Western Europe that helped to destroy crucial infrastructure, which is a huge scandal. And it's even a greater scandal that our mainstream media and our governments, the German government as well, are not willing to comment on the fact that our allies have bombed our infrastructure. So I think this will go on for a while. There has also been an Italian suspect who should be extradited to Germany, who is supposed to have been part of the attack on that sailboat. And an Italian court ruled that he cannot be extradited. So it's a hide and seek game that will go on for quite a while, I think.

**ZR:** I mean, at the bare minimum, one could say, if the Ukrainian story is true with the yacht, that the US knew about this, right? I mean we saw from the reporting of The New York Times last year that the CIA is heavily involved in the Ukrainian state, has access to its entire apparatus, and nothing goes beyond Washington's sight. So what would your assessment be on that – that, at the bare minimum, the United States had a role of being observer, which makes it still coupleable, right?

**FS:** Absolutely. There's no question that if Ukraine was behind it, the US knew about everything. I mean, the US and Ukrainian secret services are tied to the hip. The US Secret Service surveilled the Baltic Sea, it surveilled it like no other sea in the world. They have underground surveillance. They know everything that happens in the Baltic Sea. They know

that everything that happens within the Ukrainian secret service apparatus, in the military apparatus. It's no question that they knew about it, if Ukraine was behind it. I think there's no question that they gave green light to it, because Ukraine would have never dared to do it without the approval of the United States. And it's also possible that the whole Andromeda story is a cover-up story, which is typical of secret covert operations. I mean, you do one thing and you have another sailboat sailing around with some members of the secret services to distract people. It's entirely possible. It would have been logical. We still don't know. But in any case, the US must have been involved in the case.

**ZR:** Let us now switch to Gaza and let me first recap some of the latest developments for our viewers. In early October, US President Trump announced the Gaza Peace Plan, followed by an international summit in Egypt, on October 13th. The plan, supported by Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as European countries including France, Germany and Italy, produced a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas that came into effect on October 10th. Trump described it as, quote, "the first step towards a strong and lasting peace", unquote. Phase One, which included the exchange of Palestinian detainees held largely without due process in Israeli prisoners, for Israeli hostages held by Hamas, was carried out successfully. Yet in the past week the situation has sharply deteriorated. On October 29th, Israel resumed heavy airstrikes across Gaza, saying it was targeting "terror infrastructure" and killed more than 100 people in a single night, including 46 children. It accused Hamas of violating the truce by firing on Israeli soldiers and by staging a fake handover of hostage remains, allegedly reburying bodies to simulate new discoveries. Hamas denied these allegations and insisted that it remains committed to the ceasefire while accusing Israel of multiple breaches of the agreement and calling the renewed bombings "a treacherous escalation" intended to destroy the peace plan. The US has downplayed the violence. Vice President J.D. Vance referred to the renewed fighting as "minor skirmishes", while Trump stated that, quote, "nothing is going to jeopardize the ceasefire", unquote, but that Israel "has the right to hit back if attacked". According to the United Nations, humanitarian access remains critically low. Israel had promised to allow 608 trucks per day, yet fewer than 700 in total have entered Gaza since the truce began. The overall Palestinian civilian death toll now exceeds 67,000, including more than 18,000 children. In your book, you devote significant attention to Gaza. Already in part one of your book you write, quote, "Gaza or the path to complete destruction", unquote. Can you elaborate on why Gaza is so vital to the global system and why, if not addressed adequately, could lead to further destruction of the global system?

**FS:** Well, what we see in Gaza, or what we have seen for more than two years now, is a televised live genocide. And that's new in history. There were many genocides that were backed or executed by Western powers over the last 500 years, but this is televised and the world is seeing what is going on. So the blatant double standards of the West, of our politicians, of our media, are exposed every day. They pretend to protect and defend international rights and the so-called rules-based international order in Ukraine and elsewhere, while they have trashed the international system and international right in Gaza from the outset. From the outset, from October 8th, 2023, Israel has engaged in atrocities and

war crimes from the beginning. After a couple of months, it was clear that it is genocidal in their intentions and in the practices of the Israeli armed forces. And still our government, the German government in particular, has backed Israel without any restraint. So did the US.

Now, Trump came up with a first ceasefire before his inauguration, because he wants to be lauded as a "peace president". But Israel violated this first ceasefire after a couple of weeks, and Israel has a track record of violating ceasefires, of trashing ceasefires. It has also a track record of killing people who are engaged in negotiations as it did in Qatar when it killed some Hamas officials who were invited by the US to participate in negotiations. So Israel is, in my view, not really interested in lasting peace, let alone giving the Palestinians the rights for their own statehood. I think they were pressured by Trump because Trump has several problems with Gaza. He fully supported the genocide as well, in spite of these ceasefires. But inside his MAGA movement, there are voices like Tucker Carlson and others who are quite critical, who have become quite critical of Israel, so he is afraid of losing part of his base domestically. He has another problem with Arab oligarchies and Arab heads of state, because he wants to make big real estate deals with those people. And after the assassinations in Qatar, they see Israel really as a problem for their own security. So Trump has a couple of problems with unconditionally supporting Israel. This is not because he is interested in international law or in humanitarian aid for Gaza, but because of domestic and international problems. So this might be a window of opportunity.

However, I think that Israel is still devoted to breaking the ceasefire. It has done so for the last few weeks. It has killed a couple of hundred Palestinians. As you mentioned, it has allowed in only about 80 to 90 trucks a day instead of more than 600. So they're still starving the people in Gaza. And the agenda has not changed. They want to take over the Gaza Strip and they want to take over the West Bank. The Knesset, the Israeli parliament, has just voted for taking over the West Bank illegally. And so I think Israel will look for possibilities to convince the Trump administration to look away when they break the ceasefire and when they continue the genocide and the ethnic cleansing in Gaza.

**ZR:** I want to dig deeper into Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan, especially Phase Two and Three, which calls on Hamas and other arms factions to disarm and relinquish governing authority in Gaza. However, the plan does not address Israel's broader occupation policies, apartheid or the ongoing genocide, nor does it require Israel to make major concessions beyond Gaza itself, such as halting settlement and annexation of the West Bank, as you mentioned, or lifting the long-term restrictions of Palestinian movement, border control, energy and transportation. In this context, do you think Trump's peace plan can realistically hold? And secondly, do you think under these conditions that Israel is imposing on Palestine, that calling on Hamas and other armed factions to disarm is even realistic?

**FS:** Well, interestingly, Hamas has agreed to 98% of what the Trump administration in Israel asked for in that ceasefire agreement, but they did not agree on a complete disarmament because they would have no leverage anymore. And I think they won't do that. I think it is not very probable that we will see Phase Two and Phase Three implemented, unfortunately. In

spite of all the shortcomings that you mentioned of that plan, it would still be a step forward. The plan does not mention also that the United States would be willing to acknowledge and recognize a Palestinian state. It's mentioned that the Palestinian state could be part of the future, but it's not clear whether it would be recognized. And Israel has clearly no interest in letting Phase Two and Phase Three happen.

And so the most probable scenario, unfortunately, is that Israel will not go to Phase Two or Phase Three, and they will use the hostage issue, probably, to legitimize the breaking of the ceasefire, because there is this question about 13 corpses, 13 dead persons who have not been delivered yet and it's very hard for the Palestinians to do so. Cynically, the Israeli armed forces have now provided equipment to get these bodies, but this equipment is not used to get tens of thousands of Palestinians who are still under the rubble. So you see the blatant double standards, the blatant dehumanization of Palestinians because their bodies do not count at all. And so I think it depends really on international pressure. The West could end this genocide if they stopped providing weapons to Israel. It's very simple. The US should do so. Europe should do so. Europe has been dragging its feet on this issue all the time. Spain and Ireland and others have demanded sanctions. Especially the German government has blocked all significant progress to sanction Israel and to end the genocide. So it depends on the pressure of populations of the peace movement on their governments to end this genocide.

**ZR:** I want to switch gears here and look at Ukraine. First let me recap once again some of the latest developments for our viewers. On the 17th of October 2025, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met US President Donald Trump in Washington to press him on long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles, but the meeting ended without a formal US commitment. A few days later, Zelensky appealed directly to European leaders in Brussels for the same weapons and the European Union responded cautiously with Germany and France warning that such deliveries could further escalate the conflict. Throughout October, Russia intensified missile and drone strikes on Ukraine's energy and civilian infrastructure, while Ukraine expanded cross-border drone attacks into Russian territory, targeting mainly oil depots and supply routes. The front line remains largely static, but by the end of the month, Russian forces were reported to be coming close to encircling Pokrovsk – a key logistical hub in the Donetsk region.

On October 22nd, President Trump floated the idea of freezing the war at the current frontlines, a proposal Zelensky described as, quote, "a workable framework", unquote, which the Kremlin immediately rejected. Just recently, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced that Moscow is planning to offer security guarantees to the European Union and NATO countries, pledging that Russia has no intention of attacking them – a message many observers view as a new diplomatic signal towards Europe. Meanwhile, the Trump-Putin meeting that had been discussed earlier this month now appears to be on hold. In addition, just a few hours ago, President Donald Trump ordered the US military to immediately resume nuclear testing after a gap of 33 years. Let me take a step back and look at your book again. You spent considerable time debunking dominant narratives about the origins of the Ukraine war and highlight the early peace efforts that followed after the war broke out. Could you

provide our viewers with an overview of that and then assess whether you believe peace is still possible within the current geopolitical constellation between the US, Europe and Russia?

**FS:** Yes. So let's wind back to the times when the Berlin Wall fell. That was a time when Mikhail Gorbachev offered to the West the idea of a common European house. And that meant specifically a new peace order that is not built on NATO but built on the OSCE. That is a civil institution, and of mutual respect and common security, such as it was developed by Willy Brandt, Egon Bahr, and others in the 1970s in the context of the Détente policies, which were enormously successful in ending the First Cold War. So that was a huge chance, a historical chance, to end the bloc confrontation and create a new peace order. And it appeared first that some of the European leaders went along with this, François Mitterrand, the French president at the time, said in 1991, "we should dissolve NATO to create something new". And in fact, it was a no brainer. So what was NATO good for if there was no Cold War anymore? And even Helmut Kohl and others spoke about a new peace order.

What happened then is, at least starting from the mid-90s, Bill Clinton and his administration went for NATO enlargement. They had promised to Gorbachev not to do so. And we often hear that that was not the case. For example, the German foreign minister Wadephul recently said in the German parliament that there was no such promise. It's just plain wrong. It is in the documents. There are so many documents and protocols which prove that there was a promise made to the Russians. And so they started the first phase of the NATO expansion. Then there were people in the United States like George Kennan who invented the containment policies. So he was really a hardliner when it came to Russia, no friend of Putin or even of Yeltsin at the time. And he said, "it's the worst mistake we can make to enlarge NATO because these are red lines for Russia and we will see very bad things happening". But they went on with NATO enlargement number two, and then in 2008, we had Bill Burns – who was the American ambassador in Moscow at the time, he knew Russia very well, he was later CIA director – and he said, "we should not do that because we will have war in the Donbas. Russia will intervene". He proved to be right, but he was ignored. Henry Kissinger, a cold warrior of the hardest kind, said the same thing. He said, "Ukraine must be neutral". So that was all put aside. They went on with NATO enlargement.

And then we had the Maidan coup, which was a coup d'etat led by a violent sector of the Maidan protests and supported by the US and some European governments. And the Minsk II Agreements, which were supposed to end the conflict, but Ukraine did not abide by it because there were no autonomous rights for the Donbas regions, which were promised in the Minsk II Agreements. And so then we had this escalation leading to the invasion. And even two months before the invasion in December 2021, the Russians sent a memorandum to the United States and said, "we should talk, we should negotiate about neutrality of Ukraine and other issues". And the Americans refused to negotiate about everything. And then they invaded – which was a crime and a huge mistake, in my view, but there was a story behind that. And then, interestingly, in March and April 2022, directly after the invasion, there were serious talks, serious negotiations taking place in Istanbul between the Ukrainians and the

Russians. There was also a shuttle diplomacy led by Israeli Premier Naftali Bennett in those days. And they came up with a 10-point plan that was drafted by Ukraine to end the war. And they had agreed on most points, almost all points at that time, that meant neutrality for Ukraine and withdrawal of the Russian troops to the lines before the invasion. It would have been a very good deal for Ukraine compared to the situation today.

But on April 9th, 2022, Boris Johnson came to Kiev and told the Ukrainians not to negotiate, otherwise they wouldn't have any backing from the West. And so the negotiations broke down. Very often in our media, it is said that that was not the case, that the negotiation broke down because of the war crimes in Bucha. That was not the case. Zelensky went to Bucha. He had a television interview in Bucha and he said, "we should continue to negotiate". And we have a lot of witnesses for the fact that Boris Johnson, on behalf of the Americans, went to Kiev to shut down the negotiations. First of all, Ukrainska Pravda, a pro-Western media outlet in Ukraine, reported that. Then we had, interestingly, the head of the parliamentary section of Volodymyr Zelensky's party's people servant. So he was a very high official in the Zelensky government, he led the negotiations in Istanbul for Ukraine, and he said they shut down the negotiations. The Turkish foreign minister who led the negotiation for Turkey said the same thing. He said, "there are forces in the West that don't want the war to end, they want to continue the war, to weaken Russia". So that was the program. We have a lot of witnesses, we have a lot of congressmen and senators in the US that have said the same thing. So what the West has been doing is to use that war to weaken Russia, and to use Ukrainian lives, Ukrainian soldiers. They posted in the US senate that they don't need to send the American troops to Ukraine, they can sacrifice Ukrainian lives for their geopolitical goals. That's highly cynical. So that's where we are.

Now, can we get out of this? I think yes, we can, but the situation is much harder than a couple of years ago. Ukraine lost a lot of territory. The Russians won't give away any of this. And the key question that still remains is neutrality. So with the West Trump already said that neutrality is an option, but the Europeans refuse to even discuss that. And when they, the European governments, in spring and summer said, "well, we need a ceasefire, and if there's a ceasefire, we will send NATO troops to Ukraine". That was highly absurd because the Russians started the war to prevent NATO troops in Ukraine in the first place. So if you tell the Russians, we'll send NATO groups after the ceasefire that the Russians will continue fighting, they have no incentive. And they have no incentive for a ceasefire for several reasons. First of all it would allow Ukraine to prop up its military and continue fighting. That was the case with the Minsk Agreements already. So what the Russians want is a peace agreement. A peace agreement that guarantees neutrality for Ukraine to have borders that are secured and that are recognized internationally. And so this is doable. But the main problem at this point are European governments, especially the British government, the German government, and the French government, which block this kind of solution.

**ZR:** Yeah, let us look deeper at that, especially at Moscow's recent offer of security guarantees to the European Union and NATO countries. In theory, such an initiative could pave the way for demilitarization, denuclearization and a broader peace architecture. In

Germany, however, the trajectory is moving in the opposite direction. Earlier this year, the Basic Law was amended with support from all major German political parties to exempt military spending from the constitutional debt break, effectively institutionalizing higher and longer-term military budgets. In 2025, Germany's total military expenditure will amount to roughly €86 billion euros, which equals about 2.4 percent of GDP. Of this, around €62 billion euros comes from the core federal military budget, while an additional 24 billion euros are drawn from the special military fund, known as the Sondervermögen, which was passed in 2022. Government projections foresee total military spending rising to approximately €162 billion euros by 2029, reaching about 3.5 % of GDP. Berlin is also investing heavily in air and missile defense, including nearly €4 billion euros for the Arrow-3-System, expanding drone capabilities, and has reopened debate on compulsory military service. The Ministry of Defense also recently announced that roughly 200 former military sites, previously earmarked for civilian redevelopment such as housing, sports and other public purposes, will instead remain under the control of the German Defense Ministry and be repurposed for military use, citing the perceived threat from Russia. Your book examines Germany's militarisation and its impact on the social fabric. What is your assessment of this trend and its dangers? And is reversal even possible? Are there any historical examples that show how such militarization can be reversed once it takes hold?

**FS:** Well, what we see is the most extreme militarization in Europe that we have seen since World War II. And the Financial Times has put the agenda in a nutshell, in a headline in spring, which said "Europe must dismantle its social welfare state and build a warfare state". That's the agenda. And if they talk about 5% of GDP for the military, what that means is 50% of the national budget for the military, which is extreme. Under the German emperor, before World War I, we had 60% of GDP for the military. So we're back in these times, if you will, if they realize this kind of budget. Because if you give all the money to the military, you cannot pay for health care. You cannot pay for education. You cannot pay for an ecological transition. It's impossible. So that's the agenda.

Now, the question is, why are they pursuing this agenda? Because I think it's a path of self-destruction. Europe will destroy its unique welfare system. It's very different from the United States. It's far superior to what the United States has, although we had 30 or 40 years of neoliberalism in Europe, where they have already weakened the welfare system, but it's still there in some meaningful sense. And if they wreck this, they will have an economic downturn, they will have social upheavals and political instability. So it's a path of self-destruction. Now, why do they pursue this kind of agenda anyway? So one thesis is, and I think it's part of the truth, that they want to prop up the military-industrial complex to generate profit and growth in this part of the economy. But they could do it with other parts of the economy as well. So why the military industrial complex? Noam Chomsky has once remarked that since the times of the New Deal in the US, very strong forces in the US government and in Europe, dislike the welfare state and favored the military industrial complex. Because if you give people more say in their economic lives, they will demand more say in their political life as well. So it's an authoritarian agenda, in my view. And I call it "the permanent state of exception". We have seen this tendency since the war on terror. We



have seen so many laws in the US and Europe reducing civil rights and creating a surveillance state to fight a certain enemy. So the system needs a strong enemy to legitimize the destruction of civil rights in the name of war. We've seen that in the pandemic as well. In the name of "fighting the war against the virus", as Emmanuel Macron put it in that case, our civil rights were severely severed, and the freedom of speech also has been severely diminished in Western countries. In the case of Gaza, of course, we've seen in Germany a crackdown on dissenting voices, including Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Territories in Palestine and many other people. So that's the tendency – the state of war allows the government to create a permanent state of exception and to tell people, "well, your civil rights don't count because we have to fight the Russians. We have to fight terrorists. We had to fight a virus". It also allows to delegitimize dissent and so that's the tendency we see.

Now, can it be reversed? I think it can. We've seen the movement against the Vietnam War. That was a major war and it was the first time in modern history that the population of a country stood up in the count of millions against an ongoing war. They took to the streets, they pressured the government. It took a long time to end that war in those days, but the movement made a significant difference in the turnout. And since then, it has become much more difficult for US governments to lead wars abroad. They managed to convince the population to send troops to Iraq in 2003, but that backfired because everybody knows today that it was built on lies. It has become much more difficult to go for these wars. So the peace movement has become a factor of geopolitics.

The second factor that could change things is the countries of the global south and especially China. The US and Western powers are losing the hegemony. It's really a significant historical shift because Western powers have dominated the global system for hundreds of years. That is over. G7 countries are only about 10 % of the global population. BRICS countries have more economic power than the G7 countries. So Europe and the US are on a declining path. Now, the question is whether Europe will choose to go with the drowning US empire or if they will choose a new role in geopolitics, which is to negotiate between the big powers, which are China, the US, and other countries like India. This is indeed a possibility. It would be a possibility that would be to Europe's advantage economically, politically, and geopolitically. It would also reduce the risk of a major confrontation between NATO and Russia, or NATO and China for that matter. And so I think that would be the rational path. Will they pursue the rational path? The current parties in the German parliament and the European parliament clearly don't want to seek that path. But I think movements could play a role to change the trajectory.

**ZR:** Fabian Scheidler, independent journalist and author. Unfortunately, we ran out of time. Thank you for your time and insights and I will contact you soon to explore your book even further.

**FS:** Thanks for having me, Zain.

**ZR:** And thank you for tuning in today. If you watched this video to the very end and liked the journalism that we undertook, then make sure to subscribe to our channel by clicking on the subscription button below. And if you'd like us to continue with our independent journalism, journalism that doesn't take any money from corporations or governments, all with the goal of providing you with information that is free from external influence, then make sure to donate today. How you can donate you will find out in the description of this video. I thank you for your support and for tuning in. I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you next time.

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