



Iran Forces US to the Table, Nord Stream & US Withdrawal from Germany | 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 I begin this interview, I would like to remind you to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. YouTube, which is owned by Google, has a close cooperation with the US national security apparatus, as well as a long history of shadow banning and censoring content of independent and critical media such as ours. In addition, over the last few months, we reached millions of people and won around 7,000 subscribers, but in the last two weeks our reach has dropped dramatically. For these reasons, we are asking you to join these authoritative channels. You will find the link to them in the description of this video. Also don't forget to like, comment and share this video within your network. Today I'll be talking to independent journalist Fabian Scheidler. Fabian Scheidler has also written on numerous books, the latest being: *Welfare or Warfare? Why Europe has to choose between reason and self-destruction*. This book is only available right now in German and Spanish. Fabian, welcome back to the show.

Fabian Scheidler (FS): Thanks for having me.

ZR: Let us begin with the Nord Stream pipelines and I'd like to first briefly summarize some key developments for our viewers. In September 2022, the pipelines were blown up in one of the most consequential acts of sabotage against Germany's energy infrastructure, with far-reaching economic and environmental implications. Two main theories emerged regarding the perpetrators. First, the theory advanced by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh, whom you interviewed shortly after we broke the story and which we published on our channel, that the United States carried out the bombing of the Nord Stream, and second, and currently the dominant narrative within the German media and political establishment is that a Ukrainian linked group allegedly was behind the attack using the sailing yacht Andromeda. In 2025, one alleged suspect from a Ukrainian group, Serhii K, was arrested in Italy under a European arrest warrant and extradited to Germany. His lawyer argued that

under international law, he had acted as a soldier attacking enemy infrastructure and was therefore entitled to combatant privilege. Germany's Federal Court of Justice rejected this argument and appealed its pre-trial detention. Another Ukrainian national, Volodymyr Z., was arrested near Warsaw, but on 17th October 2025, a Polish court refused to extradite him to Germany, arguing that he had acted under the context of Ukraine's defensive war and therefore did not constitute a crime under Polish law. In my observation so far neither the majority of the media nor the political establishment in Germany has seriously explored whether there were any links between the suspects and elements of the Ukrainian state. Given all of this, how do you assess these developments? In your view, has Germany done enough to pursue those responsible?

FS: Well, first of all, we have to say that this is an unresolved case. It is possible that Ukrainians were behind it, and that is what the media, the Wall Street Journal and others, have been reporting on for a long time. But hardly any mainstream media has followed the Hersh track. And I think Seymour Hirsch, with his assessment, has not been debunked yet. So it's still entirely possible that the US was directly responsible for the attacks and that the whole Andromeda story is a red herring. That's entirely possible. We don't know that yet. The journalists who are reporting on that are incredibly naive. I mean, if the SBU or other secret services in Ukraine tell them, well, it was a bunch of Ukrainians and Zelensky knew about it, but he was against it, they just print that. They don't question even that, such an operation could not have been done without the approval of President Zelensky, nor without the approval of the United States of America. So, if there was a Ukrainian operation, it was a joint operation, the CIA knew about the plans, we know that the CIA was involved in the early phases, and it's completely incredible that the US would not have green light for that. And so that's the main thing. The main thing in this story, which nobody talks about, is that either Ukraine or the United States or both of them attacked the most important German energy infrastructure, and both of these states are our allies. And the European Union has just given a credit to Ukraine, after Viktor Orban, the president of Hungary, lost the election, this money was deblocked. Germany will pay \$22 billion to Ukraine. The so-called credit is not a credit, it will never be repaid. Ukraine cannot repay it, doesn't want to repay it. And it's given to the most corrupt state in Europe, which has possibly bombed our infrastructure. So that's the main scandal here. And nobody is talking about that. Now let's go briefly into the details. The German government has done very little to shed light on who was behind the attacks. I mean, Olaf Scholz famously was standing next to President Biden when he announced before the Russian invasion in Ukraine, that he will take out the pipeline. I mean, that was announced. And the Germans didn't say a word about that. That was the first scandal. And after the bombing of the pipeline, they did very little either to follow the Hersh story, they didn't follow at all the Hersh story, and now we have five more suspects on the Ukrainian side running free in Kiev. And there seems to be not even a demand for them to be extradited to Germany. So there's only one suspect, and it will be interesting to see when he is in court what we will hear about that story. I think the German authorities haven't really shown much interest, certainly not the government, to shed light on this, because it will be embarrassing in either case. If it was Ukraine, well we are giving huge credits, huge amounts of money to a

country that has bombed our infrastructure. I mean, this is impossible to uphold such a situation, and that's why they don't want to shed light on the whole story.

ZR: Let us switch gears here and discuss the recent US announcement to withdraw troops from Germany, a development that received considerable attention in German state and corporate media. According to Deutsche Welle, the US currently has between 35,000 and 39,000 soldiers stationed in Germany plus around 13,000 Air Force personnel across roughly 40 military sites, mainly in the south and southwest of the country. At the end of April, speaking to students in Marsberg, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said that the United States was being, quote, "humiliated", unquote, by Iran's leadership in the negotiations. Germany had initially supported the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran rhetorically, but as the economic halt mounted, its tone began to shift. The US reacted sharply to Merz's remarks and revived pressure around tariffs on European carmakers and immediately announced plans to withdraw around 5,000 US troops from Germany, in particular the Stryker Brigade based in Vilseck, Bavaria. The US is also halting the planned deployment of long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles, which had been agreed under the previous US and German administrations, and would have given Germany deep strike capabilities. In response, Germany has stated that it is modernizing its existing Taurus cruise missile stockpiles and continuing the European Long Range Strike Approach Program, or ELSA, which is a joint program involving France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. What I found quite interesting, Fabian, is how the German media framed these developments. Between May 2 and May 4, the Tagesschau, one of Germany's largest prime-time news segments watched by millions every day at 8 p.m., repeatedly presented the withdrawal and possible cancelation of Tomahawk deployments as a negative development, stating that it would damage the local economy, send the wrong signal to Putin, and create a deterrence gap between Russia that has itself deployed medium-range Iskandar missiles in Kaliningrad. How do you assess the US withdrawal from Germany, and what do you make of the economic and deterrent gap argument being presented by the media to the public?

FS: Well, first of all, the withdrawal of about 5,000 troops is in itself a minor issue. I mean, we would go back to the number of troops in Germany before the Russian invasion in Ukraine. So Germany is, besides Japan, the country with most US troops, and Germany is also the hub for US military operations all over the world, including the commands for Africa and other parts of the world in Stuttgart. And we have US nuclear bombs in Büchel. And so nothing of this changes, indeed. And indeed, Germany has supported the illegal war of aggression against Iran, because the US has used all these bases and Ramstein everywhere. So I don't see that Merz has in any way seriously criticized the US, let alone done anything to stop that war. Having said that, the announcement that the Tomahawks will not be stationed here is good news indeed, because in case of a conflict with Russia, I don't believe that Russia is interested in a conflict with NATO at all, and the US secret services tell that. I have been saying that for a long time. They don't have the means. They don't want to confront NATO. But in case of any conflagration, this would be a target. So we had all these developments already in the 1980s. There were new missiles and rocket stations in Germany, and there were hundreds of thousands of people in the streets to stop that, because they did

not understand that more of these weapons which could reach Moscow in a very short time make Germany more unsafe because all these are targets and Russia will react. Russia will station other missiles, cruise missiles, and other of their weapons in Kaliningrad and other places. So in order to get security in Germany, we don't have to go down the path of more militarization. But we should create a new peace and security order in Europe, which would be entirely feasible. Russia is interested in that. They have been saying so for a very long time, and they have been excluded by NATO expansion. So that's the background here. And when it comes to Tomahawks here, Germany wouldn't have any control for what these Tomahawks will be used for. So if we have a president like Trump or Biden who was in terms of foreign policy as bad as Trump is, we shouldn't have any illusions about a better democratic government in Washington in terms of foreign policy, that's extremely dangerous because they could push the red button and the German government couldn't do anything about it and we would be the battlefield here in Germany. The withdrawal of these weapons, or the non-stationing of these weapons is good news, so my viewpoint is quite the opposite of what most of our media have been telling all the time, and we have to consider also that the French government, back a long time under President de Gaulle, has thrown out all US troops of France. There are no US troops on French soil. And they have done that to become more independent in terms of foreign policy. And I think that was a good decision and that would work perfectly well for France. Why shouldn't it work as well for Germany? I think that would be the path to go for.

ZR: Let us now look at the US-Israeli war of aggression which you mentioned but let me first recap some latest developments for our viewers. The war began at the end of February under Operation Epic Fury and roughly after 6 weeks of fighting they entered a so-called ceasefire phase through regional mediation led in part by Pakistan. However, those talks failed to produce any breakthrough as the United States imposed a naval blockade around Iran, seized Iranian ships, oil tankers and expanded its military presence in the region. The situation just escalated again on May 3, when Donald Trump announced Project Freedom, a US operation aimed at guiding ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Within hours, reports emerged of renewed confrontations around the waterway. Iran reportedly targeted vessels attempting to pass without its approval, including a UAE-linked oil tanker near Fujairah and a South Korean-operated vessel, while US forces had destroyed six Iranian small boats. Iran then reportedly targeted a strategic oil infrastructure in Fujairah using drones and missiles. Fujairah is significant because it lies on UAE's east coast, on the Gulf of Oman, outside the Strait of Hormuz and serves as a key oil export route that can bypass the strait. Project Freedom was immediately paused short after, just a day after Trump announced it. Now diplomacy appears to be moving again. Reports suggest that Iran is reviewing a proposal to end the war, including a phase de-escalation, limits on Iran's nuclear program, sanctions relief, unfreezing of Iranian assets, and arrangements of reopening the Strait of Homs. Right now, Al Jazeera reported that Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi just called Pakistan and told them they are open for dialog and diplomacy. How do you assess the war so far? And how do you think it has affected Iran's position and standing in the world? And secondly, geopolitically, what do you think the United States and Israel are trying to achieve in this war beyond their stated goals?

FS: Well, first of all, we have to see that this illegal war of aggression was a complete failure from the point of view of the United States. They haven't achieved any of their goals, which were shifting all the time, but neither regime change occurred, nor has Iran collapsed economically. And so they are in control of the Strait of Hormuz and I think that won't change in the foreseeable future, because they can collect money and they have some kind of leverage on the global economy. And so I think Iran has the stronger hand here and the Operation Freedom that Trump announced was doomed to fail from the start. I mean, how can you escort vessels in the Strait of Hormuz? Iran can sink them all if they just want to. Iran has also destroyed some of the military bases. There are 13 US military bases around the Persian Gulf. Iran has destroyed some and damaged others. And they have, by the way, demanded for a peace deal that the US withdraws from all these bases. I think that won't happen in the near future, but it's interesting that they have this key demand. And so I think Trump is in a difficult position. Iran also is not in an easy position and when the war was still hot, they had the upper hand because the US and Israel were running out of missiles, of interceptors. There were few interceptors left and they had a very serious shortage and that meant that all the Gulf states and Israel were extremely vulnerable. Now, with the ceasefire in place, Iran cannot just restart the war by itself. It will be seen as the aggressor in that, and they don't want that. So they are very, very, I'd say, cautious about what they are doing now. They want to secure some sanctions relief. If they don't get that directly, then they will collect the money from the Strait of Hormuz, taking fees there. That's also kind of, if you want, reparations that which they have also demanded for the war damages in Tehran. And so we will see. Israel, of course, is interested in continuing the war. They were very angry that Trump had this ceasefire, because they want to de-industrialize Iran, at least. They call it haircut, and so they just want to destroy as much of Iran as they can, and they cannot do that without US support. So, I think that's one key point which makes a deal very difficult to reach because Israel would be susceptible to destroy it as soon as it has taken effect.

ZR: I mean, you mentioned Iran's ability to affect the global economy and how it relates to the nuclear program. We've seen that Iran's position on the nuclear program has changed. Before it was: we will not negotiate and it's part of Iran's sovereignty. But now, in the last negotiating round, they were open to freezing it for 20 years. Do you think, in essence, Iran has realized it doesn't need a nuclear program because it has the ability to control the Strait of Hormuz, which some can argue has as much of an effect, in terms of economically speaking, like a nuclear weapon in the economy. And secondly, why do you think Israel and the US are so adamant about Iran's nuclear program given that they possess nuclear weapons themselves?

FS: Well, that's precisely why they don't want Iran to possess nuclear weapons, because Israel wants to be the hegemonic force in the region. And if other players in the region have nuclear weapons they cannot be the hegemonic force in the region, so they want to prevent it by any means. And so I think the control of the Strait of Hormuz, and also the missile program of the Iranians, which has proven to be very effective, and the interceptors of the US and Israel have proven to not be very affective, they couldn't protect the Gulf States, so they have two means of leverage in their hands, but of course a nuclear bomb would be a much, much stronger

deterrent, because they wouldn't have got attacked in the first place, I think. I'm not for Iran to have a nuclear bomb, I think this is the most inhumane weapon that was ever invented, and we should rather go for a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East, which by the way the United Nations vote for every year. For decades there have been votes on a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, and everybody wants that except the United States and Israel, of course. But they are very realistic in Tehran, so they know they cannot achieve a nuclear bomb. The previous president, who was killed by the United States, he was firmly against a nuclear weapon for many reasons. The new president, his son, might have a different position, but they know it's not realistic to pursue that under these conditions. They are willing to make compromises even on the civilian nuclear program because Tehran of course was very severely hit and very simply they don't want their country to be destroyed even if they have cards to play. So I think they are willing to compromise here but they won't go to the point where they will stop their whole nuclear program. I think that's a point of serenity that they won't give up on.

ZR: Let us move to Ukraine, which has somewhat moved in the background because of the Iran War and the increasing role Europe is playing in it. On the battlefield, Russia has made significant gains in recent years. According to the Institute for the Study of War, Russia seized about 3,600 square kilometers in 2024 and around 4,800 to 5,600 square kilometers in 2025. In 2026, Russia claims, it seized around 1,700 square kilometers since January, while pro-Ukrainian sources, on the other hand, put the figure closer to 600. When it comes to external support, as you mentioned before, the European Union formally approved a 90 billion euro loan for Ukraine at the end of April. The UK is also now in talks to join this loan scheme so that British military companies can access contracts financed by this money. At the same time, Europe is deepening its military-industrial cooperation with Ukraine. On May 5th, the European Commission moved forward with a EU-Ukraine Drone Alliance, calling on European companies and institutions to become founding members. Germany also recently elevated its partnership with Ukraine to strategic partnership, focusing on air defense, drone ammunition, missile developments, and long-range capabilities. European support for Ukraine is often justified on the basis of defending the rules-based international order and preventing states like Russia from redrawing borders by force. In your view can the 90 billion euro protect the rules-based order? And if not, what alternative policies should the European Union pursue to bring an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine and actually protect international order?

FS: The rules-based international order has always been a joke. I mean, it was acknowledged by the Canadian prime minister recently in his speech that there was no equal rule for everybody, but the strongest nation, and of course, that is the US, always has broken the rules for decades. And so I think this term even is very misleading and they don't use terms like the UN charter or the United Nations framework or international law because international law of course would have prevented Russia from invading Ukraine but also the US to bomb Iran and Israel to kill about 70,000 civilians in Gaza. So there is no real existing order based on international law in this moment and so it's ridiculous for the West to defend that they are doing that in Ukraine while the German governments and other European governments have

supported the Israeli genocide in Gaza from the outset and they haven't done anything to prevent the Iran war, or supported it even like Germany with all these bases that the US has been using there. So this argument really doesn't work at all. Now, concerning the support for Ukraine, the European Union and especially Germany is supporting a lost war there. And they are also supporting, as I mentioned earlier, the most corrupt regime in Europe. So all these 90 billion will be lost. And where do they go? Just recently, one of the oligarchs from Ukraine has bought the most expensive apartment in the history of the world in Monte Carlo for more than \$500 million. Now where does that money come from? Well, it's part, of course, the European Union, who is paying the oligarchs, and because much of the military aid and the civilian aid is going into these corrupt channels. And Europe is in my view on a path of self-destruction. If we keep on putting all that money into this corrupt state, into a lost war, instead of looking for negotiations, then we will ruin this country, and we will ruin Europe. And we're about to do that. You know, this militarization that we are seeing, Germany is about to triple its defense budget to 150 billion per year. And they've already started to slash, really, social security and everything else. So this is extremely destructive. And I still hope that some people will wake up to this to defend the European social welfare state and to defend our tradition of peacemaking that we do have in Germany instead of this madness.

ZR: So what can our alternative policy look like in terms of Ukraine if we want to get to peace? What will be the most important components that we can advocate for? Because the argument is always made that Russia is not interested in peace and is just interested in taking over as much territory that it can and that at the next stage it will go to conquer Poland, Germany and France. But what would a peace plan framework look like?

FS: Well, of course, they want to take territory now. That's true, because they have paid very dearly for that war in terms of lives lost. And so Putin has to show something to his base that he has gotten something. But I do think that Russia is still very interested in a real peace deal, which would lead to a new peace order on the Eurasian continent. What he wants is to keep NATO out of Ukraine. That has been a key issue from the outset. Now, what do European governments say? What have they been saying since Trump took office and negotiations restarted in a way, they just said, well, once we have a ceasefire, we will send NATO troops into Ukraine. I mean, that's a way to prolong the war, and that's what the European Union has effectively done. They sabotaged any negotiations with such proposals. Russia is not interested in a ceasefire, because a ceasefire just means rearmament for Ukraine. They want a peace deal, no NATO in Ukraine, and of course they want to secure the territory that they have gained. That's clear. But I think they would compromise on borders, on swaps between territories if they get NATO out of Ukraine. That's the main issue still.

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

FS: Thanks for having me, Zain.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you like the journalism that we undertook in this video and would like to follow us going forward, then make sure to click on the subscribe

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