



## **Nord Stream Update, Israel's Pager attack & the war in Ukraine**

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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. Please join our alternative channels on Rumble, Telegram and our podcast called Podbean. If you've been watching our videos regularly, you would know that YouTube is owned by Google. And Google has a long history of shadow banning and censoring content from independent and alternative voices. And if that day ever comes that we get shadow banned or censored, we won't be able to reach you even with an announcement. So make sure to join these channels by visiting the description of this video below. It takes no money and costs you only a few seconds to subscribe to these other platforms. Today I'll be talking to independent journalist and author Fabian Scheidler about the latest developments surrounding the Nord Stream pipeline, as well as the situation in Israel and Gaza. Fabian has written several books, one of them being *The End of the Big Machine: A Brief History of a Failing Civilization*. Fabian, welcome back.

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

**ZR:** I would like to start this interview with the latest development surrounding the Nord Stream pipeline. On August 14th, Germany for the first time issued arrest warrants in connection with the Nord Stream Two pipeline bombing that took place in September 2022. A Ukrainian diving instructor named Volodymyr Z and two accomplices were accused of blowing up the pipelines. Both the German media and the state public prosecutor's office are sticking to the Andromeda story, claiming that there's clear evidence from foreign intelligence services as well as photographic material. According to their report, this includes a photo of a white van believed to have been used for transporting diving materials taken by a traffic camera on the island of Rügen in September 2022 with a passenger who, quote, 'strongly resembles Z', unquote. Volodymyr Z was staying in Poland for a period of certain time, however, according to Reuters, Polish prosecutors stated that although they had received the arrest warrant from Germany, he had already left the country by then, as Berlin did not include his name in the database of wanted persons. In a recent interview with the

ZDF broadcaster the German chancellor Olaf Scholz stated and let me quote him here, quote: "It is absolutely clear that this must be investigated. I am glad that the Federal Prosecutors office and the security agencies have gone so far, as the media have reported", unquote. This theory, of course, refutes Seymour Hersh's claim that the US, under the orders of President Biden, carried out a CIA operation to destroy the pipelines. You were one of the very first European journalists who interviewed Seymour Hersh when he broke the story. The video, which we just published on our YouTube channel. Can you comment on this recent story as well as talk about how we should view the Seymour Hersh story in light of these new developments?

**FS:** Yes. First of all, I think we should still say that we don't know who did it. I mean, there are various or there have been various narratives. The first narrative was that Russia was to blame. That was basically what Western media said for almost half a year after the incident. And although there was no indication at all that Russia was behind that. I mean, they owned the infrastructure or 50% of the infrastructure and they had no real interest to do that. And even CIA boss William Burns said that there is no indication that Russia is behind that. Although that was the case, many of our politicians and even some media keep noting that maybe the Andromeda story was a false flag operation by the Russians and so on. And but there's no indication of that. But it's interesting to see how long this narrative that Russia blew up its own infrastructure was perpetuated. Then the second story that was broken was the one by Seymour Hersh, who said that it was a US-CIA job, and that the Biden administration was behind it with the help of Norway. One month later, the New York Times and die Zeit and other media came out with the Andromeda story. And that was the story that was followed up by practically all Western media. And besides, Seymour Hersh's story was discarded as a conspiracy theory and so on, although he had many details that you could look at. And to that day, we still don't know which story is true. There are lots of more details about the Andromeda story, but that doesn't prove, finally, that it is true. It can be true. But we have to look a little bit closer into the Andromeda story first. What is interesting about the latest arrest warrant of that person called Volodymyr Zhuravlov is that the Germans issued the arrest warrant, but the Polish administration didn't do anything. They said they would do something, but they didn't do anything, although they are obliged by European law – it was a European arrest warrant – to arrest that person immediately. And the interesting thing is also, as you mentioned, that the Germans didn't demand to put that person Zhuravlov into the Schengen register, which is used at the border, to keep that person from escaping to Ukraine. And according to the Wall Street Journal, Zhuravlov was driven to Ukraine and in a car owned by the Ukrainian embassy in Poland. And interesting also what Donald Tusk, the Polish prime minister said after that person escaped, he said, well, you Germans who supported the Nord Stream pipelines just shut up and apologize. Which is a very strange kind of command by the head of state when it comes to international terrorism. Because the bombing of the Nord Stream pipelines was the largest sabotage and the largest act of state terrorism in Europe for decades. So all of this raises the question, if there is really a will of the administrations of Poland, of European countries, and even of the Germans, in fact, who are leading the investigations to really arrest somebody and to put somebody on trial?! Because if that was the case, we would either – there are two options now. Either the

Andromeda story could be proven, which means that it could lead up to Volodymyr Zelensky, the head of state of Ukraine, who, according to some reports, ordered or approved of the bombing of the Nord Stream pipelines and later on the CIA told him, no, you shouldn't do that and Zelensky tried to stop it, but the then head of the military, Zaluzhnyi, he kept on with the plan, which is not really credible. That the head of state of Ukraine tried to stop the bombing of the pipelines, but Zaluzhnyi just got on as if nothing had happened. That's not really credible. But whatever is the case, if somebody would be put on trial, the Ukraine government would be in dire straits, if the end of this story proves to be true. Now, the other story, of course, by Seymour Hersh is even more explosive in geopolitical terms because he said the US was directly not only involved but was behind the attack. Now, the trace was not followed up by the administrations, by the authorities and by the press. So we don't know. If Hersh could be right, there is a Swedish engineer called Erik Andersson, and he led an expedition to the sides of the blast. And he tried to prove Seymour Hersh ('s story) and he really found some interesting evidence at the bottom of the Baltic Sea. I mean, much of that has been cleaned up by the Swedish authorities who have closed the investigation without saying anything. But what he found out is that they were not as Seymour Hersh claimed in the beginning two explosives per tube, per pipeline, used, but probably only one. So there are some details that contradict Seymour Hersh. There was also a lot of reporting on open source intelligence, that's data that can be openly collected about movements of ships and airplanes and so on in the Baltic Sea and around the world. And there were lots of reports that Seymour Hersh was wrong, that the open source intelligence data showed that the ships were not there, the airplanes were not there and so on. And Erik Andersson debunked that whole story because you can easily trick open source intelligence. You could switch on and off the devices. You can even claim to be a different ship. You can claim to have a different speed, a different position and everything. And so what Erik Andersson found out is that the actual positions of ships and airplanes, as far as they can be constructed, are in line with what Hersh said. So we still cannot rule out that Hersh was right. Now, on the other side, if the Andromeda story is right and if Ukraine was behind it, there are lots of people who are very familiar with the intelligence services, like James Bamford and others, with real expert on American intelligence, who say, it's impossible that the Ukrainians could have done it without the knowledge of the United States. And there was a report by the Washington Post earlier that the CIA already knew in June 2022 that Ukraine was planning to do something. There was a report of the Dutch Secret Service that was passed on to the CIA. The CIA warned the Germans and other countries, but they didn't do anything. And then in September, pipelines were blown up and we already said that the Ukrainians are the main suspects here, which is very interesting. They all said, well, probably it was Russia. Although their own intelligence report said, well, the Ukrainians are about to do something. So the U.S., if Ukraine was behind it, I mean, it could all be a red herring to really distract us from the story, but in case it was the Andromeda, all governments knew that Ukraine was the main suspect and they didn't say anything. Now, the second point is that the US knew about it. But according to James Bamford and according to Erik Andersson and others, it's quite unlikely that the Ukrainians could have done it without even the green light from the US. Because the United States have pervasive surveillance of the Baltic Sea and of Ukraine. They have undersea surveillance with microphones, which is very high tech. They put it up with the help of the Swedish a long

time ago. They have pervasive intelligence of what's going on inside Ukraine, in the government, in the military, in the secret service. The secret services of Ukraine and America are very close. So it's practically impossible that the US didn't in some way know or even approve or support the operation. Now, whatever comes out in the end, if there will be a result of the investigations, it's extremely embarrassing for the West to say the least. Because it was either our closest non NATO ally that bombed crucial infrastructure of Germany or it was the United States or both of them. And Poland probably, or possibly, was complicit in all of that. What does that mean? That means that this great alliance of the West that stands for Western values, whatever they are, is in fact fractured. And some of our allies bomb our own infrastructure. I mean, that's really a very explosive story. And that explains why our governments and our authorities were so slow to really find out what's happening and still are. I mean, the fact that the main suspect now, Zhuravlov, could escape to Ukraine, that the Germans don't even ask the Ukrainian government, their closest allies – I mean, they're giving weapons worth billions every year, and much more in finance and they don't even dare to ask Ukraine to have a talk with that person?! I mean, that's really interesting. And I think the German government, Scholz, tries to disconnect the Nord Stream story from the help of Ukraine. But I think it's a quite awkward maneuver to do so, because, in fact, if it turns out that your Ukraine bombed our infrastructure, how can we go on, give them weapons and provide them with the means to do even more harm?

**ZR:** A very detailed answer. I had so many questions, but you answered all of them in this very detailed analysis of yours. So let us switch to the war in Ukraine. British Prime Minister Starmer and US President Biden met in Washington recently to discuss support for Ukraine in its war against Russia. On their agenda was the issue of giving Ukraine the permission to use Western made long range weapons to target sites deep into Russian territory. According to Ukrainian President Zelensky, these long range capabilities will protect Ukrainian life and people and are essential to defeating Russia. Russian President Putin, on the other hand, warned that if the West decides to pursue this, then NATO will be effectively at war with Russia. Although the discussion on long range missiles was considered productive by the British Prime Minister Starmer, no new agreement on delivering long range missiles to Kiev was reached. On the frontline, the war continues to rage. Today, the BBC is reporting that a partial evacuation has been ordered in Russia's Tverat region after Ukraine conducted a massive drone attack at a military site where weapons that Russia uses for its offensive were being stored. According to the BBC, Kiev has grown confident and has ramped up its drone attacks inside Russia as far as 1800 kilometers. In your view, should the US, UK and other NATO partners permit Ukraine to use NATO made long range missiles to target sites deep into Russian territory? Especially given the fact that the long range drone attacks of today and over the last months by Ukraine have proven that Ukraine is only concerned with targeting military sites that Russia is using for its offensive?

**FS:** Yes, I think we are sort of at a crossroads in that war. Ukraine tried that offensive in the Kursk region, which was rather a public relations offensive to tell the world, well, we are still alive, we can conquer some territory inside Russia. But militarily it was very counterproductive because it stretched the front line even longer. And the Ukrainians are

running out of soldiers. I mean, they have about 200,000 according to estimates, and the Russians have like 690,000 or so. And they have huge difficulties in recruiting soldiers and they also are running out of ammunition and so on. And so stretching the frontline is bad for the Ukrainian military. It was just a public relations move to draw the West deeper into the conflict. And now Russia is advancing steadily. So there is a lot of nervousness, to say the least, in Washington and London, Paris and Berlin, because they fear that Russia will win that war. And there is no talk any more about Ukraine re-conquering the Donbass, let alone Crimea. I mean, that has always been a fiction, but now everyone approves that this is fiction. And so, now there's a turning point because Ukraine is asking for these long range missiles, for permission to launch them deep into Russian territory. And the West has to decide whether they will go down that path of escalation with Putin saying, well, if you do that, we are at war with NATO. That's what he said. And I think the Biden administration is considering this really deeply because they haven't said anything after the meeting with Keir Starmer in Washington. There was no comment and I think it would be highly dangerous if they would give Ukraine the permission to escalate that war in that way. There's no way that Ukraine can reconquer its territory with this kind of action, but there's a high risk that this could lead to further escalation, including nuclear war. So I think the real thing to do now is to come up with concepts for real negotiations, and that's very difficult to do. The Russians have repeatedly said that there are some requirements for that to happen because they are in the offensive. They have the upper hand now. So all this talk about Zelensky's peace plans, or in Ukraine they're called victory plans, but there is no victory at hand for Ukraine. What could be done is to have really an international framework, including China, Brazil, the United States, under the umbrella of the United Nations, that maybe led by Guterres, the general secretary, to really come up with a serious frame for negotiations, for a ceasefire and peace talks. That possibility, which is the faint possibility in that very moment, would be destroyed if the West would allow Ukraine to launch these missiles. It would only escalate the situation without providing any solution for Ukraine because finally the border line will be fixed according to the frontline.

**ZR:** You talk about the escalation threat. However, when I watched the Tagesschau, or today I read the BBC, they are always providing a different perspective in which they state that Putin has made similar threats when it came initially to defensive weapons, then to the patriot systems, then to tanks, then to fighter jets, then to medium range missiles, however, Russia never made real on the threat. And as we can see, there was never any retaliatory strike on a NATO country or the use of nuclear weapons. Why is it different this time, in your view?

**FS:** Well, I don't know if it's different this time, but if the Tagesschau and the rest of them are wrong, we are all dead. I mean, that's a risk that we cannot take. It's so utterly dangerous that we should not take the risk. I mean, we are not in the head of Vladimir Putin. And I don't want to risk my life and the life of my family and the lives of all other people, because I have maybe a misconception of what's going on in the head of Vladimir Putin. I mean, that's a very bad gamble that we are doing here. And it doesn't provide any solution. So it's highly irrational. And the thing with nuclear war is that the greatest danger is not that one of the leaders in Moscow or Washington puts his finger on the red button and just pulls the trigger,

but it's the risk of escalation, which could lead to misunderstandings, which could lead to one side getting too nervous and launching an attack because they think the other side is attacking. We had that situation in 1983 with a great NATO maneuver that the USSR took very seriously. They thought that was a cover for NATO to attack the USSR with nuclear weapons and they were about to pull the trigger and it was just one person in the Russian military that said, no, we can't do that. So there are lots of situations like that in the history of nuclear weapons where humanity was very close to an annihilation and we shouldn't play with that.

**ZR:** Independent voices like you are advocating peace and diplomacy - but what could that look like in concrete terms? Do you think diplomacy is even possible at this stage, given the hundreds of thousands of soldiers who have lost their lives on both sides, in Russia and Ukraine? Also, so much political capital has been invested not only by Ukraine and Russia, but also by Germany, the United States and other NATO countries, that a change in policy would seriously damage the credibility of these governments, especially when it comes to the long standing rhetoric that purports to defend international law, human rights and democracy. We know that Russia and Ukraine were able to carry out an exchange of prisoners recently mediated by the United Arab Emirates, in which 103 prisoners were exchanged. But is diplomacy between these two countries even possible on a larger scale that involves territorial issues? And secondly, would the US even allow it?

**FS:** Well, the thing is with the peace negotiations, that's always the problem, I mean, people, nation leaders, losing their face. And to avoid that, you need the high skill of diplomacy. Unfortunately, in Germany, we have no diplomats at all in the government. They don't even know what diplomacy is. But Germany is irrelevant in the current situation, it has made itself irrelevant because it's just parroting US positions and doesn't have its own position on these issues. Now, when we look back to the peace negotiations more than two years ago, there were very serious negotiations and the Turkish negotiators did a very good job. They came very close to an agreement. And now we know that the story that Boris Johnson came on April 9th 2022 to Kiev to tell them not to negotiate is most probably true because Victoria Nuland, the undersecretary of state then, said that that was the case. They told them not to negotiate. The US was the main obstacle to reaching peace. Tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands of people would now still be alive and Ukraine would have the largest chunk of their territory if the negotiations would have succeeded and the US would not have intervened. Now, the situation, as you said, is much more difficult. People are traumatized. There are a lot of human losses and that makes it much more difficult to get out of it. But I think there is a lot of incentive even for the West to get out of it because they know they can't win the war. Now for Washington it's all about the elections. And so I think Biden and Harris want to avoid a disaster in Ukraine and to lose face in the Ukraine war until the election. But there might be a window of opportunity after the election. If Trump wins, we don't know. I mean, he's been posting that he will end the Ukraine war in a day, but he's lying as soon as he opens his mouth. We don't know if that's true. I mean, he was opposed to that war from the outset. I don't know if it's credible that he will end that war. When it comes to Harris and Biden, Biden will be a lame duck before the inauguration of Harris, and that could be an

opportunity for him to just sneak out of the whole thing. And Harris could move in as a new president without that legacy. So I think that's a window of opportunity. And I think European leaders, if they have some brains left, should use that opportunity to prepare. And we know from some reports that there is a divide within NATO, within the West, whether to go more into escalation or whether to sneak out into some kind of negotiation. And when it comes to the terms on the ground, it's very clear what it's all about. It's about NATO and it's about territory. So the Russians won't give up the territory they have conquered. Maybe there can be some swaps of territory between Ukraine and NATO, but they won't give up their territory. And the second thing is NATO. We don't know; Russia said repeatedly that they won't accept NATO membership. But we don't know if that could be changed in negotiations. I doubt it. But these are the two main issues.

**ZR:** Let us switch to the Middle East, in particular the situation in and around Israel and Gaza. I would like to first recap the situation there for our viewers. Israel's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip continues and in just a few weeks, it will be its first anniversary. It's estimated that around 41,500 civilians have been killed by the Israeli military offensive in Gaza so far. Some estimates, for example, from the nonprofit human rights group Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, put the death toll beyond 100,000, claiming that the current figure does not include the missing, as well as bodies still buried under the rubble. Tensions seem to have simmered down for a few weeks between Israel and Iran, as well as the Lebanese Hezbollah militia, following Israel's extrajudicial assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, as well as Hezbollah's top commander Fuar Shukur in Beirut in July. Now they've returned to an all time high again as just this week, Israel conducted a major sophisticated remote attack in Lebanon by targeting the pagers of Hezbollah militants. Around 3000 people were injured and 12 killed, including two children. And according to our research, there is no evidence yet that all 3000 people injured were part of Hezbollah's network. Hezbollah has vowed to retaliate against Israel. And even though it initially looked like Iran was holding off against a retaliatory strike in response to the assassination of Ismail Haniya in its territory, there is a strong possibility now that it may pursue that after all. Can you first comment on Israel's pager attack with the focus on how the German media have covered this attack? And then talk about the geopolitical implications that Israel's actions could have on the wider region as well as on the globe?

**FS:** Yes. You know, the pager attack was a severe act of state terrorism. And Israel has engaged in state terrorism for decades. It's known for that. I mean, they have bombed embassies, which is really a no go, even in very serious wars. You don't bomb embassies on foreign territory. And they do that and they escalate the situation in a very dire way. And they certainly killed many civilians and wounded many civilians. And the reaction of some of the German media was really outrageous. I mean, some of the conservative commentators said, how great that these men lost their balls because they're pagers just exploded in their pockets. I mean, it was really very inhumane the way they responded. There was a ten year old girl reported to have been killed and many other civilians. And the conflict with Hezbollah is a very long conflict. Israel invaded Lebanon, and all of this was, of course, in violation of international law. And I think what Israel now is doing is to distract also from the failure of

the Gaza war. I mean, the Gaza war is a series of massive war crimes, to say the least. It's probably genocidal in its dimensions because the intent there is to really destroy large parts of the population, to cut them off from water, health and food and so on. And the new estimates that maybe more than 100,000 people were killed, it's outrageous. It's one of the worst wars that we have seen for decades. More journalists have been killed in that war by Israel than in any other recent conflict. More people who work for international organizations have been killed in any other recent conflict. And also, if you compare that to the war in Ukraine, which is a very bad war already, but outdoes the Ukraine war by far. And now concerning Hamas, all the offensive, all the destruction in Gaza have destroyed all universities and so on, it's a major failure because Hamas is still there. And Hamas is saying, well, if the war ends, we will be the major force in Gaza and they might be right. It's a complete failure. And they haven't freed the hostages and so on. And so to distract from that, I mean, that's the kind of very cruel and inhumane power games that Netanyahu is playing. He distracts to escalate the war in Lebanon and for Israel, for the future of Israel, all of this makes things much worse. Because they have the Houthis. The Houthis have launched recently a rocket which arrived near Tel Aviv, near Ben-Gurion Airport. So Israel is vulnerable, apparently. And if they have a war on three fronts, it's very bad for the state of Israel. And the point here is that many Israelis are leaving the country. And the economy goes down because people are not investing in a country that is fighting three wars at the same time. I mean, the Netanyahu government is really destroying Israel. It has destroyed Gaza. It is about to destroy the West Bank. I mean it is open talk, that they want to annex the West Bank. But they are destroying Israel as well.

**ZR:** Can you talk about how this will end? Will the Israeli state collapse at a certain point? Or will the West be forced to act and rein in Israel? And what will that look like? And secondly, could you talk about the geopolitical implications of Israel's actions?

**FS:** Well, they could end that war very easily if the US would stop shipping weapons and money to Israel and the Germans would do so as well, and other Western countries, they can't go along with it. I mean, in formal terms, Germany reduced its delivery of weapons, but there are a lot of tricks there. Britain announced that it reduces the delivery of weapons. But most of that is symbolic. They're fueling that war. And that's really outrageous because it could be a genocide. It probably has genocidal dimensions at least, and we are continuing to support that. We could end that quickly. If Israel doesn't get any diplomatic, military and financial support from the West, it would break down. And in a very short term, we could end it imminently. If you take the Ukraine war and the developments in Israel, the war in Gaza, together, you really see that the West is in very steep decline now. It has lost a lot of its credibility in the Global South, especially because they are supporting and have supported the Israeli war crimes now for more than a year. They are losing ground in Ukraine. They didn't achieve their geopolitical objectives, which were to weaken Russia. Russia is now much closer to China. China will very soon be the most powerful economic nation in the world. And in military terms, China is advancing very fast with its naval systems and so on. And I think the West has lost so much credibility and now the Global South has other countries to turn to. Some of them prefer already trade with China because conditions might be a little bit



better than with the West and so on. And so I think what is needed in the West now is to really realize that the 500 year period through colonialism and postcolonialism after World War Two is coming to a close. The West is not calling the shots anymore and we have to accept that. If we accept that, we can contribute to a more peaceful world or a truly multipolar world order which will not be Chinese hegemony but a multipolar order, we could contribute to that. Europe could contribute to that a lot. The US could. But if you still pretend that we are the boss, we really risk going down the spiral of escalation not only with Russia but with China. I mean, there's a lot of warmongering when it comes to China. It could easily escalate when it comes to Taiwan. We see a lot of war talk, even in the EU by Ursula von der Leyen and others, that Europe would play a role if there's an escalation, a military role, if there's an escalation in Taiwan and so on. And this is a very dangerous development. We should become more modest in the West and become good citizens in the world and not try to impose our failed hegemony on other peoples.

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

**FS:** You're welcome.

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