

Hersh unmasks Anglo-American economic warfare, spark for WWII

By Elisa Barwick

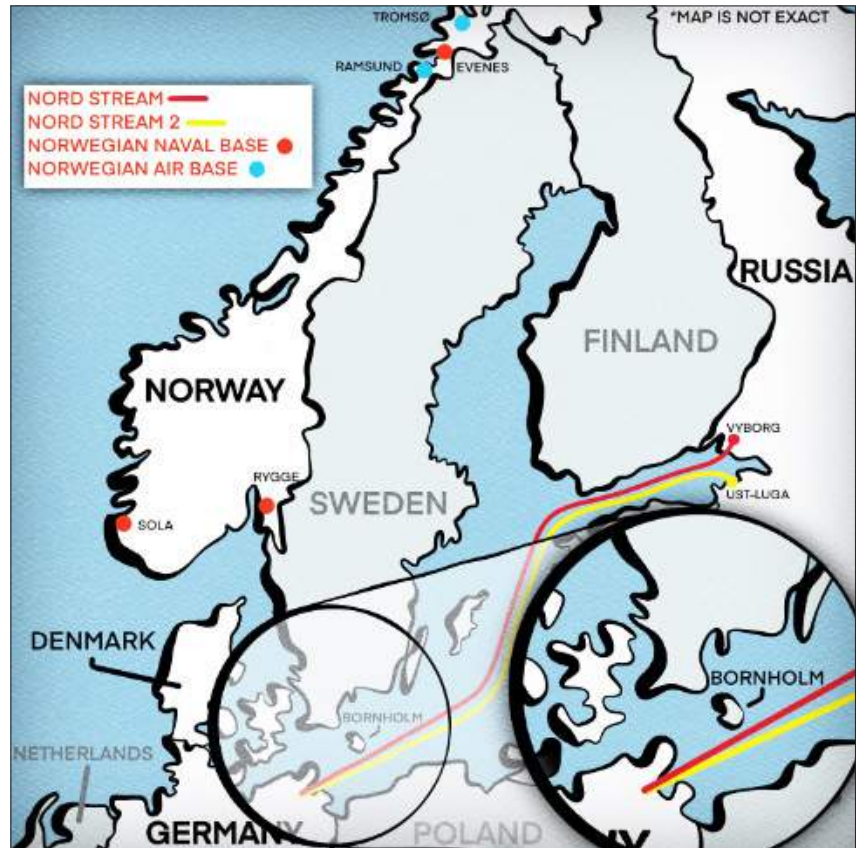
In an 8 February article published on his Substack page, celebrated American journalist Seymour Hersh lifted the veil for the first time on the events leading to the destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea, which delivered natural gas from Russia to Western Europe.

In June 2022, highly trained deep-water divers from the US Navy's Diving and Salvage Centre in Panama City, Florida, planted remotely triggered C4 explosives on the four Nord stream pipelines, reported Hersh, "according to a source with direct knowledge of the operational planning". The charges were detonated on 26 September of that year, putting three of the four pipelines out of action. None of the pipes are currently operating, but with one of the Nord Stream 2 pipelines still in working condition, in October 2022 Russia offered to deliver gas if Germany completed the pipeline's certification, which had been put on ice in November 2021.

The decision to use the Navy diving centre was part of an intricate plan to avoid having to inform the leadership of the US House and Senate, as mandated by the US Constitution. The Navy operations were outside of US Special Operations Command whose covert operations must be reported to Congress. According to Hersh the White House was acutely aware that it was committing an *act of war*, which was deliberately hidden from the US Congress, over which the Constitution gives Congress sole authority other than in an emergency defensive action.

Nord Stream 1 delivered cheap gas from Russia to Germany, facilitating Germany's economic growth and allowing it to sell excess capacity to other Western European nations. The original pipeline was always seen, noted Hersh, as "a threat to western dominance"; but Nord Stream 2, which was ready to open but delayed due to US and European Union sanctions against Russia, would have doubled the gas on offer, exacerbating the threat commensurately. That threat was double: Germany's transformation into a major economic power, and German-Russian collaboration, which had been a major concern (of the United Kingdom in particular) throughout the 20th century, and was a key factor in precipitating World War I (see for example, the impact of the 1922 Germany-Russia Rapallo Treaty, Almanac, p IV).

Early in 2021, newly elected US President Joe Biden had waived the sanctions on Nord Stream 2, only for its commencement to be stalled when German energy regulators suspended its approval later that year. The media pumped up a growing "Russian threat" against Ukraine over the course of the year, and Senate Republicans railed against Biden's toleration of Nord Stream. It was clear that Germany and other European states—if still reliant on Russian gas—would be less likely to support Ukraine with money and weapons when a conflict broke out. According to Hersh, Biden authorised US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan to put together an interagency taskforce to come up with a plan to take out both pipelines, and in December 2021 the group



Hersh's image of the Nord Stream pipelines. Photo: Screenshot

had its first meeting. This was two months prior to the Russian Special Military Operation being launched.

Hersh documents the departments involved, where they met, and the character of the discussions that took place, as imparted by his sources. A number of scenarios to take out the pipelines were considered. Reported Hersh: "The CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] argued that whatever was done, it would have to be covert. Everyone involved understood the stakes. 'This is not kiddie stuff', the source said. If the attack were traceable to the United States, 'It's an act of war'."

One of the working group's members happened to be familiar with the Navy's deep-sea diving group, and CIA Director William Burns approved a CIA sub-group to "craft a plan for a covert operation that would use deep-sea divers to trigger an explosion along the pipeline". By early 2022 the group had come back to Sullivan with a proposal to blow up the pipelines. Wrote Hersh: "The source recalled, Bill Burns comes back and says, 'Do it.'"

The plan involved planting explosives on the pipeline with assistance from Norway during the June Baltic Operations (BALTOPS) 22 naval exercises. The Norwegian Navy helped locate the best place for the divers to access the pipeline and to avoid Russian surveillance. It was done a few miles off Denmark's Bornholm Island, at a (shallow) depth of 260 feet, in an area with no major tidal currents. Hersh details the technical requirements of the operation, which were extensive, in order to stop Russian surveillance from detecting the mines, once placed, and any number of incidental actions that could trigger detonation of the charges before Biden gave the order. The White House didn't want the detonation to occur too soon after the BALTOPS exercise for fear their cover would be blown, so a complex

system was devised whereby the pipelines could be blown on demand, set off by a sonar buoy dropped by a Norwegian plane which would “emit a sequence of unique low frequency tonal sounds”. (This was done because a delayed timing device attached to the pipeline could have been accidentally triggered by ocean background noise, ships, drilling, seismic events or even sea creatures.)

Reported Hersh: “On 26 September 2022, a Norwegian Navy P8 surveillance plane made a seemingly routine flight and dropped a sonar buoy. The signal spread underwater, initially to Nord Stream 2 and then on to Nord Stream 1. A few hours later, the high-powered C4 explosives were triggered and three of the four pipelines were put out of commission.” (Note that Norway and the USA have profited the most from taking out the Russian natural gas supply.)

Reactions and implications

The Hersh story met with furious denials from the White House declaring the article “false” and a “complete fiction”. The story cannot be merely dismissed as “conspiracy” theorising, however. Hersh is a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist whose record is impeccable. In 1969 he broke the story about the massacre of civilians by US soldiers in My Lai, Vietnam; in 1974 he lifted the lid on illegal CIA domestic spying; in 2003, he blew open the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction lies; and in 2004, he revealed US torture at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

A parade of US leaders demanded, foreshadowed, and praised the interruption of Nord Stream operations. The most prominent was President Biden himself, who after a 7 February 2022 meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, declared: “If Russia invades [Ukraine] ... there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2. We will bring an end to it.” US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland, who had explicitly invoked the exact scenario one year earlier, stated in a Senate hearing on 26 January 2023: “I am, and I think the administration is, very gratified to know that Nord Stream 2 is now ... a hunk of metal at the bottom of the sea.”

The Norwegian Embassy did not reply to Hersh’s request for a comment. Reuters news agency noted that “Sweden and Denmark, in whose exclusive economic zones the blasts occurred, have concluded the pipelines were blown up deliberately, but have not said who might be responsible.” Earlier this month, German Attorney General Peter Frank announced that Germany’s ongoing investigation into the explosions has not turned up any evidence of Russian involvement, as many in the West had alleged.

On 10 February, German lawmakers in the Bundestag insisted that the government must determine if the USA had a role. If it did, the basis for mutual trust within NATO is gone. Member of the European Parliament, Gunnar Beck, told Russian newspaper *Izvestia* on 12 February that “The USA did not like the close economic relations between Germany and Russia.” *Izvestia* cites French military expert Laurent Enninger who said the Nord Stream sabotage was aimed at destroying Germany’s ties with Russia.

German political leader and International Schiller Institute President, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, on 8 February demanded a full investigation into Hersh’s revelations and that the Bundestag (Germany’s Parliament) “demand accountability from the US government. The German government has a constitutional duty to prevent harm to the German people. The destruction of energy infrastructure strikes at the



Gas bubbles up from the ruptured Nord Stream pipelines. Nord Stream AG reported on 2 Nov. 2022: “technogenic craters with a depth of 3 to 5 metres were found on the seabed at a distance of about 248m from each other. The section of the pipe between the craters is destroyed”. Photo: AFP/Anadolu Agency/Danish Defence

very foundation of our standard of living and economic stability.” Former UN Weapons Inspector Scott Ritter, in an 11 February YouTube discussion with political analyst Garland Nixon, called the destruction of the pipeline an “economic Pearl Harbour for Germany”. If US authorship is proven, he said, then the USA has attacked the critical infrastructure of a NATO ally!

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Mao Ning said on 12 February that “the US owes the world a responsible explanation”, given the Nord Stream pipelines formed “vital transnational infrastructure”.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova called for an emergency NATO meeting to be convened to deliberate upon the revelations. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, noting that US officials in their pronouncements have basically admitted they were behind the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipeline, in a 12 February interview with RT added: “The US decided that we [Russia] have been cooperating too well with Germany over the past 20 or 30 years”. According to Lavrov, “The ‘powerful alliance’ based on Russian energy resources and German technology, ‘began to threaten the monopoly position of many American corporations’”, reported RT.

Two days earlier, in remarks at a ceremony for Diplomatic Worker’s Day, Lavrov described Russia as facing “conditions of a total hybrid war. The collective West has prepared for a new crusade in the East. This time”, he said, “it is using Ukrainian neo-Nazis, the successors of [Ukrainian militant nationalist leaders and Nazi collaborators] Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevich, as their advance party.” The aim of West is “not only to defeat us strategically on the battlefield but also to wreck the Russian economy, and weaken or even destroy Russia’s centuries-long statehood.” On the other hand, he reminded, Russia is “strengthening neighbourly relations in the broadest sense of this word with the global majority—states of Eurasia, the Asia-Pacific Region, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, which are guided by their vital national interests.”

Gilbert Doctorow, a leading American expert on Russia affairs, warned in an 8 February article: “The Russians are stripping away the fiction of a proxy war and revealing the co-belligerent status of the US and its NATO allies in preparation for a kinetic war with NATO.” The USA seems to be doing a good job of that itself; the only question, as posed in Doctorow’s headline, is “Do We Act in Common or Is It Going To Be Every Man for Himself?”