

# Valérie Pécresse overtakes Zemmour on the Right: a discussion with Nidra Poller



Les Républicains Nominate Valérie Pécresse

by [Jerry Gordon](#) (January 2022)

This continues our [December 2021 edition](#) of our ongoing discussion with our good friend Nidra Poller, American ex-pat, author, journalist, and long-term Paris resident. In November, everyone was talking about Eric Zemmour, who rocketed in the October polls, pulling ahead of Marine Le Pen (*Rassemblement National*) with strong anti-Immigration and hard-on-Islam rhetoric. Now it looks like the best-selling author and TV personality may have slumped and stagnated for reasons that Poller raised in our November discussion: He has never held political office, has no party organization, is seen by many

in France as rejecting Republican values and making concessions to the old-fashioned, antisemitic Right. As Poller pointed out, the parliamentary Right had not yet chosen its candidate. Zemmour timed the launch of his Reconquête party to outdo the announcement of the Républicain candidate. But the choice of Valérie Pécresse, a successful politician who governs the important Il de France region that includes Paris, stole Zemmour's fire. She immediately zipped past him in the polls and became the first candidate to pose a serious challenge to outgoing president Emmanuel Macron in the second round of the campaign.

Described by minor political figures as a "proud French Jew," decried by others for curious affinities with disreputable losers, Zemmour launched his party with a rally before more than 10,000 fans. Presenting himself as the only candidate that can "save France," Zemmour captivated the cheering crowd for close to 1 ½ hours, claiming to be the "only one to establish the obvious link between immigration from the opposite shores of the Mediterranean, and the threats that increasingly weigh on French women, their freedom, and sometimes their lives."

Meanwhile, a Parliamentary investigation into the scandalous failure of the French judicial system to bring to justice the Muslim murderer of 65-year-old Sarah Halimi, sheds light on a danger that particularly targets French Jewish women. Mireille Knoll, an 85-year-old invalid, was brutally murdered by a Muslim neighbor one year after Sarah Halimi.

In this third discussion we also addressed Macron's policy regarding the Vienna talks aimed at reviving the JCPOA and hopefully control and rollback Iran's nuclear program, in the context of Israel's determination to thwart Iran's aggressive ambitions. We end with a discussion of the impact on immigration to France arising from Macron's challenging anti-Jihadist counter-terrorism campaign across the Sahel region in former French Equatorial Africa.

What follows is the third in our series of monthly discussions with Nidra Poller.



Nidra Poller

Jerry Gordon: I am Jerry Gordon, a Senior Editor for The New English Review. We are continuing our monthly dialogues with Nidra Poller, in Paris. Nidra is a well-published author, columnist, journalist, investigator who is currently keeping a watching brief, as the British would call it, on the question of what is transpiring with the rather interesting politics in la République française.

Nidra Poller: Yes.

Jerry Gordon: Éric Zemmour has really gotten a wave of attention particularly after he announced his “Reconquer” party for the presidential run. What has been the reaction?

Nidra Poller: This is typical Zemmour, Reconquête is a reference to “la Reconquista” when the Spanish kicked out the Muslims and took back Spain in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

Jerry Gordon: Correct.

Nidra Poller: They kicked out the Muslims...and they kicked out the Jews. That is one of the reasons why there were many Jews in North Africa. Zemmour’s references are often halfway out of focus. What happened is— he calculated that he would announce his candidacy, and take away the fire from Les Républicains, which I call the parliamentary right. I think sometimes in English, you say the legacy right, or we could even say the normal right, the conservative party. Zemmour thought he would take the fire away from them, because he has been saying that they are nobody, nowhere and of course, he believes in what he says. As it turns out, their choice of candidate looks like it was particularly good. In fact, it is Les Républicains that have taken the fire away from Zemmour. Many commentators admired Zemmour’s YouTube video announcement of his candidacy, they found it to be very original, very modern. To me, it was ridiculous. It starts out with Zemmour in a de Gaulle setting, against a backdrop of a bookshelf full of leather-bound books. There’s a 1940’s microphone on the desk, he’s looking down at

some papers. He introduces his solemn talk and continues with interspliced clips of dreadful things that are happening in France. To me, it was ridiculous, pretentious, and just slightly out of focus.

Then he was interviewed on prime-time TV. He was not happy with it and said so in an impromptu press conference in a hallway. He called the journalist that interviewed him *connard*, a bastard. Zemmour feels he can say whatever he wants about anyone...when he was doing journalism, he treated people as badly as he wanted. But he thinks they should be

fair to him., they were not, and they are not. It is an old story for Zemmour. He could have anticipated it. Fair-minded people say the interview was bad journalism. Granted. But Zemmour could have managed it better.

Then he had his rally. At the rally he spoke for something like an hour and 20 minutes. He had about 10,000 people. Fans, totally fans. So, again, people were a bit impressed. He was better on stage than they had expected, and he kept his audience enthralled from beginning to end. I thought the rally was like Facebook: you put out a few lines and then they give you the likes, and then you say something bad about somebody, and they give you "the raspberries" as you call it in English?

All very predictable, very ill-mannered, terribly harsh, and very dismissive of everyone but himself. He has no backing yet from any significant political figure. He stood alone, politically speaking. And the way he talked about President Macron...an ugly attack. I think you would feel the same way, as an American... You can be against a president...Yes, but I must say, discourse in America today is unhinged. Here, it was over the top, because first, he said, "Oh, it's not Macron, he doesn't matter, he doesn't interest me." And then it was an ad hominem attack, disgusting. Very much the way Trump did, in the Republican primaries. A disgusting way of attacking a human being.

After that, who rose in the polls? Not Zemmour, it is Valérie Pécresse, the candidate for the Les Républicains, and she shot up in the polls, and for the first time they predicted that she could win against Macron. So that is where it stands now.

Jerry Gordon: There has been commentary out of France criticizing Zemmour. One of the more intriguing ones to me was by somebody I have interviewed, Michel Gurfinkiel. He had a piece in the *New York Sun*, which indicated that there was an element among French Jews that had turned conservative that would vote for Zemmour.

Nidra Poller: French Jews are conservative.

Jerry Gordon: Right.

Nidra Poller: It is not like the United States. They do not vote for the left; they vote for the right. Zemmour has a small following among French Jews. He has done and said too many things that are unacceptable to French Jews. French Jews are known to be the most Zionist of all the Jews in the diaspora. Although Zemmour said something good, he said he was shocked by the French vote at the UN for this latest resolution, handing over the Temple Mount to the Islamists. I think, that from my point of view as a Zionist, the most hopeful thing would be if Valérie Pécresse could defeat Macron because I think it will make a change in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the French will stop voting this way at the UN. That is one small hope I can nourish. So far, I have not seen any evidence of Zemmour picking up steam. He has support from one person, Philippe de Villiers, who is a minor figure, sort of a loser has-been, appealing to sovereigntists. It is not enough to speak in slogans and promise to do things that are impossible. Zemmour gave his program at the rally. And again, it is out of focus, it is an overreaction to the point that I find myself starting to defend immigration and ethnic cultures, diversity, and multiculturalism. He is spending too much time hammering away at this theme without any kind of discernment and precision.

One of the things that struck me in his plan to really clamp down on immigration is, if an immigrant is unemployed for more than six months, he would be deported, sent back to his country. What does that mean? You could be an immigrant that has been working here for 30 years, in a high-level high-tech company, and then there is a change, and he is out of work for a while... You are going to deport him before he finds another high-tech job? Zemmour's rhetoric is filled with gimmicks like that. It arouses the kind of hatred that ends up turning against us, and that is not useful to anyone. It is a delicate

subject. Nobody knows how to deal with it. We can't simply dismiss it by saying, "Well, I wish it never happened. I wish we never had a mass Muslim immigration," or "I wish that all the Muslims that came to France turned into good citizens in the first generation and forever after," but it didn't happen that way. We must deal with it.

If you stir up hatred, anger, and violence, you cannot control it. It does not give you the practical results you are promising. Anyway, les Républicains are not far behind Zemmour in trying to deal with this problem. Security, the problem of immigration in a welfare state. We have a big social safety net in France. It is different from immigrants that come illegally to the United States, they go right to work, doing things that are essential, and whatever the parties say, they cannot really get rid of this input. In France we have a large safety net, we cannot have massive immigration of dependent people that are not able to rise to any decent professional level in France, with big families that must be subsidized. These are the things that must be dealt with. I think Valérie Pécresse was an excellent choice for Les Républicains because she is soft spoken, clear-minded and she has done exceptionally well as President of the Île-de-France region.

She is not a great speaker, and when she tries to stoke up the crowd, it is a little bit off-key, but that 'not important. She has a whole party behind her, and Zemmour does not have a party. Right now, he is in Armenia showing his concern for the Armenian genocide. A perfectly normal thing to do. But as far as I can tell you today, he has lost his touch. At his rally, he told the people to boo the journalists. He was a journalist until recently, and the journalists really helped talk him up. What he did, before declaring his candidacy, was organize book parties. They were like small political rallies for enthusiastic readers.

They were covered by the media as notable events, and that stoked interest in him and gave him a big boost in the polls.



The journalists did it. They even asked themselves, "Is this artificial? Are we making him important?" They concluded that he was an important personality, with or without media coverage. But, as I said, in our last discussion, once Les Républicains chose their candidate, the whole picture changes. Now Zemmour must compete with them. Until then, he could just say, "They're nobody, they're nothing." It is not true.

Jerry Gordon: So where is Zemmour getting his money from.

Nidra Poller: Do you know? You hinted in an email... Do you know? I do not.

Jerry Gordon: No. There has been suspicions that he was getting it from certain people in the City of London, but I doubt that.

Nidra Poller: No, that was another flop. He went to London, and the mayor said, "We don't want him here." The very posh place he had booked, cancelled on short notice. He held his encounter in a cold, bare-bones room on the fringes of London. In France, he will talk about immigration, immigrants, assimilation, and then he will go to London and speak to the French as French. He does not expect them to give up their Frenchness.

Jerry Gordon: So, there are three women now running in France for the Presidency?

Nidra Poller: Yes, the main candidates are Valérie Pécresse, Marine Le Pen, and Anne Hidalgo, the Mayor of Paris, and there may be one more, I think, a woman from a small party.

Jerry Gordon: Who controls the French Senate and National Assembly?

Nidra Poller: Les Républicains control the Senate. Macron has a majority in the Assemblée. The legislature is not as important here as in the United States. They have less

autonomy, they vote along party lines, they have nothing like the power of Congress. Les Républicains have the majority in the lower levels of government; – *régions, départements, communes, municipalités*. On those levels, les Républicains are stronger than Macron's party. Do you know what Zemmour said about Valérie Pécresse? "She's a Macron in skirts." It is such a nasty old-fashioned way to dismiss a woman. Who, furthermore, is a political leader, while he has never held any political position. He has never been elected to any office whatsoever. He has no political experience. She is running the most important *région* in the whole country, *l'Île de France*, and she has a good record, which is widely recognized. She is verry different from Macron. Zemmour dismisses her, saying she is the same as Macron, in other words, not a real conservative, and" in skirts," where political women are always in *pantalons* these days. There are large numbers of female journalists, politicians, and voters, and they do not like that attitude.

Jerry Gordon: Having said that, recent polls in France indicate that 60 percent of the French polity appear afflicted with something that has occurred in the past, a sense of malaise about how things are going. Even though France has been successful about the handling of the pandemic and, frankly, the economic numbers look robust, surpassing that of pre-pandemic levels. Are they all in this sense baying like a dog in a manger?

Nidra Poller: There are several factors: French people complain, they love to complain. They expect the government to do everything. And then they complain about everything the government does. And when the government tries to manage the pandemic by saying that they should wear a mask or get vaccinated, a certain sector, not the entire population, reacts by saying, "Who do they think they are, pushing us around and treating us like children?" The French, like Americans, and like other countries I know, tend to look at

things from the point of view of their own country. For instance, they are ignorant about what is happening in the United States.

Every time I compare the mortality rate from COVID in the United States compared to France, people snap back at me, "Oh yes, but they have a bigger population." Well, of course, I checked that out early on. Recently, you had 1,000 deaths a day and here it was between 50 and 100 deaths a day. The United States is just short of five times our population. Five times 100, is quite short of 1,000. So, we have done well. However, most people here think that we have not. On the other hand, we are one of the most vaccinated countries.

I was at the optician's the other day... there was a British customer ... without a mask... just yakking away. I was really surprised because in Paris nobody goes into a shop without a mask. People have gone along with government COVID-19 public health mandates in France at every step. When we had lockdowns, people stayed home. Now they closed the discothèques and nightclubs because that is where there was too much spreading. So, as often happens, the feeling of things going badly is not so realistic, On the other hand, as I have often said, the issue of crime is important to French people. Because we do not have the lifestyle of gated communities where you go everywhere in your car, with doors locked, and whisk through neighborhoods that would scare us out of our wits. Then, Americans like to tell us we have no-go zones.

This is one of the reasons that Zemmour has galvanized opinion in France. All the candidates, except for a few left-wing who will not get anywhere near the vote required to make the second round, are trying to address this problem. It is something that dampens the morale of French people. They are shocked. When I first came here to live in '72, there was virtually no street violence. You could go anywhere all the time. So that is one factor. Another factor, I think, is that

people have diverse ways of reacting to their panic about the pandemic. One of the ways is to not recognize that it has been managed well. There is a lot of criticism, but it is not well-founded. Yes, the pandemic has been managed quite well here. Not as well as in Israel, of course.

Jerry Gordon: Nidra, this brings me back to a topic we dealt with previously, but it just seems to be getting worse: that is, attacks by Muslim immigrants and others against Jews, particularly in housing areas in the suburbs, the banlieues.

Nidra Poller: The Jews have left the banlieues. Now, it is the peripheral areas where there has been an upsurge in violence in the last few years, with attacks concentrated on police, firefighters, or medical personnel, everything that represents the state. There have been attacks on Christians and lately an upsurge in attacks on Jews. There is still the unresolved case of Sarah Halimi. That is a tragic example of a mixed neighborhood.

Jerry Gordon: Right.

Nidra Poller: When politicians try to get their minds around the problem, they call the problem "immigration." I would call it 21st Century jihad, population jihad, stealth jihad. There is verbal stumbling over applying these concepts. The word was, in fact it still is, that we must "break up the ghettos."

But they are not imposed from the outside. In fact, it is people choosing to live among themselves. That is a first step. The second step is a higher percentage of new Muslim immigrants in public housing. They have too many people that behave badly. Anybody who can leave leaves.

The third step is the gangs that take over those neighborhoods and run them along with the drug dealers. They become unlivable. When we hear talk about breaking up the "ghettos" and spreading this population around, you think, "Oh yes, so that means that they could come next door to me. Is that going

to solve the problem?" Sarah Halimi was murdered by a violent Muslim that lived in her building. If she had the means, she would have moved out of that place. When she moved in, most of the tenants were Jews. When the Jews came here from North Africa, there was also a big influx of Muslims from North Africa, they lived in the same neighborhoods, and they used to get along.

Up to about the year 2000, they were getting along. Little by little, the Islamists have worked those populations over, and turned them into this hostile enemy. Every candidate who has any chance of getting elected is tough on crime, wants to find a way to civilize the uncivilized sectors of the population, usually fourth generation immigrants from Muslim countries. They want countries on the outer limits of the European Union countries to control their borders. They want to reform the Schengen system, where we have free circulation between European Union countries. It just cannot work as it now stands. There will have to be border control. This is the kind of program that will win this election.

Jerry Gordon: Nidra, was there anything further revealed in the continuing parliamentary investigations into the murder of Sarah Halimi?

Nidra Poller: It is heartbreaking. I watched the testimony of an ordinary police officer (he happens to be black) who was one of the first on the scene. He said he did not hear the screams of a woman being beaten. There was an account of the autopsy, I cannot bring myself to repeat the findings. To beat a human being that way ... And the police officer heard nothing! The investigating judge was hostile to anything coming from the Jewish community, or from anyone concerned about Sarah Halimi. She should have been dismissed. That can be done, even with an independent judicial system.

In the case of Sébastien Selam, which was the first Islamic murder (as far as we know) there were rumors going around,

that the victim was on drugs or he was dealing, and anyway we should not say it was an antisemitic crime. In the case of Sarah Halimi, it was so obvious that the perpetrator was anti-Semitic, so they fell back on other excuses... the police did not know what was going on, or they thought he might be an armed terrorist. They left this woman in the murderer's hands. The police were there...with their guns...and they did not try to do anything. It is unreal. What will come of it? Well, at least this investigation is extremely thorough, carefully done. It is not a propaganda operation of activists. They are carefully interviewing one person after the other. None of them can explain why they did nothing ...

Jerry Gordon: There's a new government in Germany, led by socialist Olaf Scholz with Green and Free Republican coalition members. What does it mean about Macron's leadership? Is that a legacy from the 16 years of association with former German Chancellor, Angela Merkel?

Nidra Poller: The tandem of Germany and France in the heart of the European Union will continue to have its force for a wide variety of reasons, including the fact that that the UK is no longer with us. The good relationship of friendship and understanding continues. We will see what happens after our elections. Will Macron or Péresse or someone else be elected? We will see-how that relationship develops. The European Union must be shaken up. There must be something stronger on the level of defense, whether it is military or diplomatic, to contain the threats facing it.

Macron is going to be president of the European Union during the French Presidential campaign. He will use that to his advantage by showing how important both he and France are. And he will demonstrate what he wants from the Union. Many people feel that the UK would not have left the Union if the Union had not been so stubborn in refusing the UK demands. All the member states are now asking for a greater degree of sovereignty.

Jerry Gordon: What is Macron's position with these faltering JPCOA renewal discussions in Vienna that Biden has been pushing and Israel has been resisting?

Nidra Poller: I would like to disagree with you. I do not think that Biden has been pushing them. He set himself the challenge to see if Iran could be reined in by re-integrating the JCPOA. I have followed the story every step of the way. All the statements by the United States government have been firm and uncompromising. They have said, "No sanction relief until Iran goes back into compliance with the original terms." All along they have been saying time is running out, Iran is making too many changes, their program is going too far. I do not think Biden is really pushing for reintegration.

The US did not make concessions. I 've summarized (in my weekly review of English-language media for ELNET) many articles claiming the US and EU-3 would give in and make compromises. Just wait and see... tomorrow, they will sell out. Fortunately, they have not done it. The Europeans are not in the same position as when they negotiated in 2015. They are not satisfied, they are not pushing, and they are looking to see what the United States will do, what Israel will do. They feel threatened by Iran, threatened by jihad throughout the world, and all around us. We are not far away, unlike the United States. Everything that happens is just next door to us and I would say there is zero enthusiasm for the JCPOA in France today.

The only ones that ever say anything good about the talks are the Russians. After every meeting they say, "Oh! It was very constructive." Then you get the real story, and it is less and less constructive. I do not even know if they are meeting this week. Last week they had two meetings and the second one ended after one hour. So, it is not the same situation as in 2015 when the JCPOA was concluded. No. Deep in their hearts, world leaders, democracies all over the world must be hoping that somehow Israel, with America's help, will smash Iran and get

this problem out of our headlines.

Jerry Gordon: Speaking about that, there was a poll recently taken in Israel about attacking Iran's nuclear program. This was juxtaposed with commentary that h Israel is amongst the top happiest countries in the world.

Nidra Poller: Yes.

Jerry Gordon: And yet, in this recent poll, they voted something like 62% approving an attack on Iran.

Nidra Poller: Yes.

Jerry Gordon: What is the logic behind those two faces of Israel's civil polity?

Nidra Poller: Well, for one thing, they have a wonderful culture, so that makes people happy, being surrounded by all that intelligence and creativity. Individually, Israelis have so much vitality, so collectively it makes for an incredibly happy place. It is because they are so much in touch with reality. It keeps your mind clear, right? They know their survival depends on their lucidity and strength. They have enough experience to see what they can do. That is really exhilarating in the world today, when so many people, who are further away from the danger, or think they are, feel they cannot talk about it, cannot think about it...and what are we going to do?

The Israelis know what they will do. They will do what they have done every time. They will just step up and do what must be done. I feel happy when I go there. It has been a long time now, because of the pandemic. But it is a culture that is bringing out the best in people. Oh, there are lots of complaints. After all Israeli s are human, they complain. And then there are different personalities. Some people are happy, and some complain all the time and gripe and drag their heels. The French enjoy life, they have a wonderful lifestyle and



sense of how to enjoy life. But if you ask them, they might say that their country is going to the dogs, even though they love dogs.

Jerry Gordon: On the one hand, the United States is being implacable in negotiations with the Iranians, but they seem to have inherited the restrictions made by Mr. Obama regarding the supply of certain critical weapons to allow Israel to attack Iran's nuclear, missile and drone programs. Recently, there was an announcement on Reuters that the US was refusing the request for an early deployment of the promised refueling planes that Israel would need if it were going to be making a conventional attack. Harking back to something that reported by *Yediot Ahronoth* and *New York Times* Intelligence columnist Ronen Bergman, whom I [interviewed](#) in February 2012 in *The New English Review*. At the time, ironically, Ehud Barak was defense minister during the Netanyahu regime. At that point in time, the Israelis had requested this very sophisticated US aircraft, it is called the VS-22, it is the Osprey, which the Marines use. It is by far the most mission critical aircraft to send in the Sayeret Matkal to do reconnaissance before an attack. Yet, Obama said, "No deliveries." Now we have Biden saying, "No refueling planes that we promised you were to be delivered as of the moment." It is always a mixed situation when it comes to the relationship with the US. That was made clear last week in Washington, by the defense minister, Gantz, that Israel was prepared to undertake this mission alone, if the need arises.

Nidra Poller: Israelis told me years ago, that when Obama was president, and insulting Israel, one week out of two, they had particularly good cooperation, as far as the weapons provision was concerned. I am following this closely, as I said, for my review, because it is a critical issue. I will go through the press, and I will come away with, "Things aren't going so well between Israel and the United States." Then I read further, and I find out it is not exactly the truth. I do not know what

the ultimate outcome of this will be. I do not know if other people can predict it better than me. What I observe is that the Biden administration is consulting more with Israel than with any other country, about the Iran problem. Whereas you would think it would be the Europeans because the Europeans were in the JCPOA with them, but it is not. The Israelis are constantly back and forth to Washington. They have the task force, the joint discussions...

Last week, Israel Prime Minister Bennett called US Secretary of State Blinken and said, "Stop these talks in Vienna. Iran is just fooling around, they're developing the weapon, and they're not moving one inch forward at the talks." The next day, the talks ended after one hour. Israel and the US are planning joint military exercises, simulating an attack on Iran. This is nothing like the atmosphere that we knew under Obama. Some people think that Trump is the best friend Israel ever had. His policy was, "No war whatsoever. Pull out of every place, don't go into any place, and just make deals." Well, he made a deal and now it turns out— or we find out— he thought the peace process had a two-state solution and, if Israel had only been reasonable, he would have made that deal too. Bolton said Trump had no coherent vision of any aspect of foreign policy. Everything was like a New York City real estate deal. Is that how he did it? "They want this, this one has that, I'll give them this, let's do a deal. " And nobody knows where those things go in the long term.

This is the first time I have seen this level of upfront public indication that there could be US-Israeli cooperation on a military effort. You certainly do not expect the United States to say publicly, "Yes, Israel's going to attack and we're going to help them." Or even to tell the truth about what weapons they are going to give. People that have inside information, which is not my case, could tell me I am wrong about that, but... And then the Americans sometimes give lip-service scolding: it is not too clever idea to be attacking

this way, that way, here and there... That sort of thing. If the United States wants to put pressure on Israel – “Don’t keep bombing Syria, southern Lebanon, don’t keep sabotaging...” – If they put pressure, we will know about it. They have not been putting pressure. It is only a bet I can make, but I do not think that they are going to go much further in this attempt to make a deal on Iran’s nuclear program.

It was quite a shock, not to us, but it was a shock when the new team came to Vienna and announce that everything that had been agreed up to now, which was hardly anything, was back up for discussion. If the Americans wanted to be played for fools, like they did under Obama, I think we would see it.

Jerry Gordon: I would like to close this discussion with something that has been underreported in the US press. It is something that, from my vantage point and that of a colleague, who is part of the resistance in Sudan that has emerged over the past two years. We were very prescient in reporting on it. That is the problem in the entire region south of the Sahara, commonly known as the Sahel, running from the Red Sea all the way over to the Gulf of Guinea. There is a spreading Jihadist war against weak corrupt governments in the region. The only counterterrorism force there of any consequence are the 5,000 French troops, a 2,000, Chadian Counter Terrorism Force, a contingent of 1,000 U.K. SAS, and 1000 US Special Forces. The problem has been that they have been unable to do anything tractable because the local political regimes, especially in Mali, in Niger, and now in Burkina Faso and heading over towards equatorial Africa, are not capable politically of doing anything. There have been coups upon coups like the Junta coup in Sudan which upset the Abraham accord.

Now there have been coups in Mali yet again. And who should be invited in, but Mr. Putin’s Foreign Legion, otherwise known as the Wagner group, they are now controlling security in Khartoum, in Central African Republic, and they have been invited into Mali. No one knows where else they will pop up to

shore up a kleptocratic regime. This is an issue that confronts Mr. Macron and to a degree, the EU, as well as the US. Why do we say this? Because lurking behind it, is the geopolitical Great Game of the 21st century. You've China, with military ports in Djibouti, and we now have China building another military port in the Gulf of Guinea. You have Russia negotiating a Red Sea naval port in Sudan, while intervening on the cheap with the "little green men" of the Wagner group providing security for the Junta leadership in Khartoum. How does that reflect on Macron's foreign policy?

Nidra Poller: He was an exception, in coming forward to start that mission in Mali. The French ... remember in 2003, their position was, "How dare the Americans invade Iraq. That is not the way how we deal with things, we believe in diplomacy, the UN, treating all countries with respect." Macron saw that if they did not stop the Jihadis in Mali, they would take over the Sahel, which is like, we are sitting on the beach, and our feet are in the water of that swamp. The French tried to manage it. They tried to get other European countries to come along. Most other European countries have no military to speak of. They do not want to create one, they do not want to contribute financially, they will not be involved in the fighting, they do not want to even hear about it. The French went in, and they thought they could treat it and localize it before it could spread all over the strategic Sahel region. It was exceptionally low key as far as domestic news is concerned. They hardly ever spoke about it.

Occasionally, they would report that a service man was killed. But you did not feel that the French people were waiting every day to see what happened in Mali. Then we started to hear that Mali was about to vote for an Islamic government. The French immediately threatened to pull out. In fact, they could not pull out completely. They modified the mission. This reminds us of what happened after the Americans got rid of Saddam Hussein. Liberated Iraq made a constitution based on Sharia

law... and started persecuting Christians. What do we do with these countries? The situation keeps worsening. And we get mass immigration from these failed states. Often, during debate, you hear the idea that we must, of course, must stop this mass immigration. So of course, we must protect our frontier. But we must help these countries develop, so that people will not want to leave.

You know from your contacts. I know from my contacts; good people leave those countries because they are tyrannical kleptocratic states. People are not free to express themselves, the so-called elections are phony... how can you deal with that? Foreign aid, as you know, goes into the kleptocrats' pockets. That is the situation. When people thought Muslim immigrants were only attacking Jews, they said it was the fault of the Jews. Now they see that everyone is exposed. When Israel was the international target y of the Muslims, it was Israel's fault for mistreating Palestinians. Now we are all targeted. It is a huge, geopolitical problem that has been boiling and simmering for decades. Then it is suddenly overwhelming. I do not know where our democracies will find the leadership to deal with it.

Jerry Gordon: On that note, I want to thank you for another brilliant discussion and assessment. We hope to do this frequently in the run up and culmination of the April 2022 elections in France. Thank you again.

Nidra Poller: Count on me. Bye.

JG: Until next time, Au Revoir.

[Watch](#) this YouTube video of our discussion with Nidra Poller.

[Table of Contents](#)

---

Jerry Gordon is a Senior Editor at *New English Review* and

Producer and former co-host of *Israel News Talk Radio – Beyond the Matrix*.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](https://twitter.com/NERIconoclast)