

Transatlantic Jihad, Halimi Report, Zemmour update and more – discussion with Nidra Poller



Malik Faisal Akram, at a Dallas homeless shelter | credit: LLC/ourCalling

Malik Faisal Akram, Texas Homeless Center, January 2, 2022

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

On a cold shabbat morning, January 15, 2022, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker opened the door of Reform Synagogue Congregation Beth Israel in Collyville, Texas. He found a shivering “homeless” person, 44-year-old Malik Faisal Akram whom he invited in to get warm and have some tea. Akram had flown across the Atlantic using a Visa Waiver departing from his Pakistani Muslim immigrant community in Blackburn, north of Manchester, England. He was cleared by the US Custom Border Patrol at JFK airport upon arrival in New York despite having

a criminal record and having been the target of a recent MI-5 investigation in the U.K. as a Subject of Interest. After landing at Dallas Fort Worth airport in Texas, he purchased a handgun and ammunition from a street vendor lit out for a Christian homeless shelter and used the time between January 2 and 15th to reconnoiter hostage taking opportunities.

Akram was seeking to hold hostages in a bold attempt to release a notorious fellow extremist Pakistani Muslim, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, who was incarcerated in Carswell Federal women's prison, 20 miles away from Collyville.

The Rabbi and three congregants were suddenly confronted with an armed Jihadist who wanted their intercession with authorities to release Dr. Siddiqui. "After all, "he told them; "Jews have enormous power." – a clearly anti-Semitic canard. During the hostage taking, Akram urged Rabbi Cytron-Walker to call "a major figure of importance" in the US Reform Judaism movement, Rabbi Angela Bachdahl, spiritual leader of New York City's venerable Central Synagogue. Akram released one of the elderly hostages during negotiations with the Police and FBI. Much of these proceedings were viewed on Facebook live by thousands who logged in for Shabbat services.

The 10-hour terror hostage standoff triggered by the Rabbi's kindness ended at 9 PM that night when Akram threatened the hostages with his automatic pistol. The Rabbi threw a chair at him, and the two remaining hostages escaped. An elite FBI SWAT team rushed in and Akram was killed in the crossfire. Akram's family in Blackburn issued a press statement, saying that he was mentally ill and that they were aggrieved at his act.

Siddiqui, the object of Akram's quest, has the sobriquet, "Lady Al Qaeda," is a Graduate of both MIT and Brandeis University, the latter awarding her a PHD in Neuroscience. In 2008 US Army officers and FBI Agents in Afghanistan arrested her when, during her interrogation at Bagram Airbase northeast of Kabul, she seized an M-16 rifle shot at a US Army Officer,

resulting in her being shot and restrained. In 2010 in a Federal Court in New York, she was convicted and sentenced to 86 years on multiple attempted murder and terrorism charges. In her possession were found plans for dirty radioactive bombs to be planted at several prominent historical sites in New York and Washington, DC. During her trial she demanded that prospective jurors be tested for their DNA, and Jewish ones excluded from the proceedings. It was a patent example of her extreme anti-Semitism.

Siddiqui's release was the quest of the global Pakistani Deobandi extremist Muslim community, that Akram adhered to. In the US, Siddiqui's freedom was the mission of many Muslim advocacy groups, led by the Council of American Islamic Relations, CAIR. Ironically, CAIR – a Muslim Brotherhood affiliate – was convicted of providing material support for Hamas's terrorism in a 2008 Federal trial in Dallas. The US House of Representatives passed a bill to have the Justice Department investigate instances of Islamophobia. FBI hate crime statistics 2020 indicate "Jews are the No. 1 target in America for hate crimes in proportion to population. A Jew is far more likely to be a victim of a hate crime than a black person, a Muslim, a Hispanic or an Asian."

After the Texas synagogue hostage terror event, CAIR renewed its campaign to free Dr. Siddiqui. The notoriously anti-Israel, Jewish Voices for Peace followed suit, calling for a rally to support Siddiqui's release. Confounding the situation were accusations by a former congregant that the Congregation Beth Israel rabbi supported the canard of Israel as an Apartheid state.

While the Texas act of armed violent anti-Semitism was unfolding, Jews in France were "outraged" by the outcome of the Parliamentary investigation into police handling of the brutal grisly murder of retired Teacher 65-year-old Sarah Halimi in 2017. As noted in a JTA report "Kobili Traore, a 31-year-old French-Muslim man entering her apartment beating

her and throwing her out of a window – because she was Jewish. Prosecutors also already knew that Traore recited verses from the Koran and shouted antisemitic statements during the murder.” A parliamentary committee led by French Jewish lawmaker Meyer Habib “found that police officers arrived on the scene of the 2017 murder before it occurred but did not stop it”. Traore had been found in a 2018 court ruling to be in a drug addled condition and not capable of realizing his actions. It was an insanity defense That misguided ruling triggered outrage by the French Jewish community which led to the Parliamentary investigation. But, once again despite testimony from the victim’s neighbors, the befuddled comments of police involved in the matter the report concluded “the judiciary followed perfectly the procedure” determined by the law. The police’s handling of the case “does not represent a failure.” The vote was 7 to 5 to accept the report. Habib who chaired the investigation called it “a Second Dreyfus Affair.” Eric Zemmour, the controversial Jewish candidate for the Presidency offered this ironic comment on the Parliamentary report in his Le Figaro column:

“Is it a crime? No! An antisemitic murder? Nonsense! An Islamist murders? Let’s not generalize! The experts have evaluated, studied, decided. The experts exerted their expertise, and their word is holy. Kobili Traore is crazy.”

This tragic outcome came on the 16th anniversary of the kidnapping, brutal torture and murder of French Jewish cell phone salesman, Ilan Halimi by the Muslim anti-Semitic Gang of the Barbarians. Perhaps because of these and other atrocities committed against French Jews, more than 50,000 have made Aliyah to Israel.

Against this background, we held another in our series of monthly discussions with American ex-pat in Paris, Nidra Poller, translator investigative and author of note. Among other topics addressed are Eric Zemmour’s campaign performance in the runup to the first round of the French Presidential

race, problematic French and EU counterterrorism effort in the Sahel region of Africa, French views on the US, EU-3 discussions in Vienna with Iran seeking to “revitalize” the failed 2015 JCP0A, and the threat of a conflict between Ukraine and Putin.



Nidra Poller

Jerry Gordon: I am Jerry Gordon, a senior editor at *The New English Review*. We are having another discussion with our friend in Paris, American ex-pat, Nidra Poller, great writer, investigator, and author of note. Before we delve into things that are going on in La Belle France, there is the interesting incident that occurred this past weekend here in the United States which has international implications. That was a terrorist hostage event at a synagogue in Fort Worth, Texas. The conclusion of which was the rescue of some remaining hostages, including a Rabbi and others. All of this was live streamed on Facebook when it occurred. It turns out that the suspect was a 44-year-old British subject by the name of Malik Faisal Akram, who came thousands of miles, and chose this synagogue in Fort Worth because it was less than 25 miles away from a prison holding a noted Pakistani terrorist, graduate of Brandeis University with a PhD in Neuroscience, by the name of Aafia Siddiqui. What was curious about this event was that the local Muslim Advocacy Group, the chapter of the Council of American Islamic Relations, said it had nothing to do with them. That was despite the fact that they had been proponents of releasing this convicted terrorist who's been sentenced to life in perpetuity in a Women's Federal Prison located 25

miles north of this terrorist event. Nidra, aren't there some more recent revelations about what went on with Mr. Akram?

TRANSATLANTIC JIHAD: Jewish hostages in a Texas synagogue

Nidra Poller: Well, what came out in *The Times of Israel* was that his family made a statement, of course, saying they terribly regret what happened, and they'd never condone any attack on anyone, Christian, Jewish or Muslim. His brother said the attacker had mental health problems. I was sure that would come up. I want to say that there can be all kinds of truth in these things. He could have mental health problems and be a Jihadi capable of committing an atrocity. We don't know yet when he came, how he came. I haven't seen any information about that. The family may well not condone what he did, it's always possible. We're dealing with something that's coming from a background ...like the earth we're standing on. That's what it is. It's ... one dandelion could pop up here, another dandelion pop up there and nobody can tell ahead of time where it's going to pop up. And certainly, you can't get to the root of the dandelion. We'd have to get to the root of jihad.

We know that Siddiqui was very successful. We know she was a graduate of Brandeis. So, this whole sociological argument, that Muslims in democratic countries commit attacks or crimes because they're not accepted and can't succeed, cases like this wipe that out. And we have many other examples. Siddiqui was so antisemitic that she wanted a DNA test for the jurors in the trial to make sure none of them were Jewish. Our friend Charles Jacobs has written about how radical she was when she was a student in Boston. When Charles Jacobs and his allies tried to warn people about this Islamization, they were slammed. They were called Islamophobes, anti-Muslims, racists, fascists. And now, it goes from Boston, to Texas, and it can be anywhere. As far as the reaction in France, the story is covered, but almost everything comes from press agencies, and there's little new information now. However, when I want to

know about an event like this, I go to *The Times of Israel* and that's where I find the latest. But it was covered in other media

Jerry Gordon: What is interesting to me is that a few weeks ago, the US House of Representatives passed a bill appointing an Islamophobia monitor, you may recall.

Nidra Poller: Yes, I do recall.

Jerry Gordon: You can just imagine how that gets manipulated in the context of an event like this.

Nidra Poller: Yes, I covered that in my weekly review of the English language press for *Tribune Juive*. With an article by Stephen Emerson of IPT about the dangers of CAIR, their interfaith dialogue, and how the Jewish Community Establishment was sucked into this and ended up being a cover for CAIR. I think people in France don't even know about CAIR and cannot imagine that an Islamist organization could reach that level of importance and acceptance from the general community.

Jerry Gordon: There is another aspect of this as well. It's interesting that Aafia Siddiqui's brother, Mohamed, who lives over in Houston put out a statement saying he was not involved. The reason for that is that the now deceased perpetrator Mr. Akram had said, "I'm her brother." Well, what he meant was that she was part of the Jihad movement.

Nidra Poller: Yes. I read that the word, he used in Arabic does not mean a blood brother, that it means brother in the sense of haver, plus-que-frère, comrade. That kind of brother. But more information will come out this week, I think. Then we must mention the FBI officer saying it wasn't a specifically antisemitic action. Now, what could that be? Self-imposed censorship? We know the FBI has been working with CAIR and against Islamophobia. So, it just happened in a synagogue, but that was incidental? There's already an uproar about that, I

don't think we'd have that kind of denial in France today.

Jerry Gordon: The rabbi at this Reform synagogue in Fort Worth was also apparently heavily involved with relations with Muslim community. While I don't take that away from him, one of the phone calls that he may have been urged to make was to a woman rabbi in New York City asking that she seek freedom for Siddiqi.

Nidra Poller: I didn't see any information about that, so I don't want to comment on it. CAIR said they were looking for justice for Siddiqi. We get this very often: interconnected attempts to impose Jihad through the courts, in the media and in the universities. Of course, the ones that are trying to impose it in the society at large will always say that they are against this kind of violence. But it serves their purpose, and in any case, if they're against it, I don't see them trying to stop it.

Jerry Gordon: And you also made a point earlier in our discussion that Siddiqi was obsessively anti-Semitic.

Nidra Poller: Yes, I mention that at her trial, she wanted them to do a DNA search on all the jurors to make sure none of them were Jewish.

Jerry Gordon: Great, what does that remind you about?

Nidra Poller: The Nazis. But I wouldn't make a Nazi comparison, I never ever make a Nazi comparison. I think she had that approach because she's a scientist.

Jerry Gordon: Interesting to find a scientist who's also a Jihadist.

Nidra Poller: We had some young Algerian engineers working in a nuclear power plant. They were planning something, and they were caught before they did it. Another thing, Jerry, that I think we should point out, very often, there's a public

conception that the Jihadists are mentally disturbed, on the margins of society, criminals that can't even read the Quran. But the masterminds are educated, they have big plans, they know how our societies work, and they can have as many foot soldiers as they want. They could never run out of foot soldiers.

Jerry Gordon: Her first husband divorced her because she was becoming increasingly extremist. But who does she marry at second time, the nephew of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the architect of 9/11 who orchestrated the murder of Wall Street Journal correspondent in Pakistan, Danny Pearl? This was as if to confirm her conversion to full Jihadism. This is really an overpowering saga in many ways. I'd like to return to some aspects of that in France. There was another brutal attack on an older French Jewish woman. There were reports here in the US press of criticism of the Parliamentary investigation into the police handling of the Sarah Halimi murder. Can you bring us up to date on that?



WHITWASHED REPORT OF PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE SARAH HALIMI CASE

Nidra Poller: What happened is that these very thorough investigations that were all covered on video, show the dysfunction on the level of the police and the judges. The way this case was mishandled came out clearly in those hearings, which anyone can watch on video. It's not like in the past where things disappeared. But then someone from Macron's party, LREM [la Republique en marche] drafted the report. And it was a whitewash. The report overlooked all the findings

that were important to the committee, and concluded that there had been no major dysfunction; improvements could be made, but ...

Of the 12 committee members, only seven voted in favor of accepting the report; the five that don't belong to LREM did not. They gave a press conference, and they're starting over again, with every kind of effort imaginable. They will never give up. This reminds me of the al-Dura case in France: attending the first court case, when France 2 sued Philippe Karsenty, we thought that justice would be done. It was rather exhilarating. And then the judgment came. In favor of France 2. I covered all those trials. The reports are in my book, *Al Dura: Long range ballistic myth*. France 2, at that time, and in all the appeals, never gave any evidence to support that fake report of the "killing" of Mohammed al-Dura

So, we thought the parliamentary investigation would get the truth about the mishandling of the Sarah Halimi case. Now, Florence Morlighem, the député who drafted the report, made a very shocking statement about the issue of non-assistance by the police: the police came right away, after several neighbors called and reported a woman screaming. The murderer, Kobili Traoré, had entered the apartment of a family he knew. From there, he climbed over the balcony and broke into Sarah Halimi's apartment. The police had the key to that apartment. They too could have climbed across the balcony. They could have saved her. I watched the testimony of the first police officer on the scene. He was stumbling bumbling, mumbling, and saying, "Oh, maybe I had the key. Or I didn't realize I had it, or maybe I didn't." He said he didn't hear any screams. People have publicly concluded that the police must be lying when they say they didn't hear screams." Here's what the member of Parliament who drafted the report said: "Given Kobili Traoré's husky build and the photos of Sarah Halimi's corpse, she couldn't have been screaming for very long." That tells everything about this report.

Jerry Gordon: Speaking about terrorism in France, we noted that the interior minister ordered the closing of the Grand Mosque in Cannes, whose leader was somehow involved with the terrorist murder of Samuel Paty by a teenage Chechen refugee as I recall.

Nidra Poller: The only connection that's been reported is that he was close to BarakaCity and the Collective Against Islamophobia, two organizations that were banned after the murder of Samuel Paty, because of inciting the murder. The Imam of the Cannes mosque is saying that the former Imam may have been involved with those groups, but he's no longer connected to the mosque. It will go through the courts. These things take so long, by the time they started the procedure, there was a change of Imam. Who knows? Maybe he sneaked out and the other one came in to try to avoid the closing. There are many mosques that must be closed.



Eric Zemmour, Campaign Rally, Cannes, France, January 22, 2022

ERIC ZEMMOUR UPDATE

Jerry Gordon: I'd like to segue to Mr. Zemmour and what has transpired with him. We are not very many weeks away from a deadline in late February for submission of endorsements that are required to enter these races. What is going on with Mr. Zemmour, who has been roundly castigated, and in many ways, has shot himself in the foot repeatedly.

Nidra Poller: He repeatedly shoots himself in the foot. That could be another position for him— shooter in the foot,

instead of President. Let's start with the most recent incident. Zemmour was visiting a school, talking about his wonderful project for education, and he was asked what he thought about the integration of handicapped children in normal schools. He replied, "Oh, no, no, they should be in special institutions. I hate this obsession with inclusion. And it's no use to them because they'll just fall behind the other students." It was such a shot in the foot that several of his advisors must have immediately called and told him to backtrack. He backtracked twice or three times. But it's done. And this is very revealing of something at work behind the scenes of Zemmour, a kind of will power, and a hatred of the weak.

To say that today, that handicapped children shouldn't be integrated into the schools, when everyone knows that heavily handicapped children who can't handle it aren't integrated,

For the endorsements, the general feeling is that he'll get the 500 endorsements, because a candidate that polls at 12-13 percent should be allowed to run. However, it might be a way for him to sneak out because we don't know if he has the money to run, and I don't think his campaign is going anywhere, I think it's completely blocked.

There was a program on an all-news channel, BFMTV, where Zemmour was interviewed by five journalists, asking questions him about his life, his work, his project, and his program. It was fair, the journalists weren't hostile, they didn't try to stick him with cliches and stupid questions that everybody brings up. He was free to say whatever he wanted on any subject. Here's what I observed...and it confirms I'd been saying: he's intellectually dishonest. When he doesn't know, he fakes, which was obvious when he talked to an economist? He couldn't defend his economic program, and it didn't feel like he knew how it would work. When the facts don't suit him, he twists them. It makes him look weak and wobbly. He outlined his project for the schools, and, again, it's... it's as if you

could go back to the past.

His vision of how he would govern is dictatorial: when he proposes something, you can tell he hasn't imagined that other forces are involved and would also have a say. When you try to reform the schools—I think it's the same in the United States, immediately, the teachers are outraged and opposed to whatever you suggest, and you must negotiate with them. He wants to bring back school as it was in the old days, in the '60s. Of course, people are horrified by the sharp drop in the level of French students. Kids get out of school... they can even pass the baccalauréat, ... and not be able to read and write. It's mysterious, how they manage to pass. But he wants a school where everything would be orderly, and the children would wear smocks to hide differences of style and income.

And then, on other questions, he says, "Well, this would be a very important question, so I would want a referendum." I guess you would say that's populist, because if you don't work with the legislature, you're not in a system of balance of power. He has no chance whatsoever of getting a majority in the legislature, the elections are two months after the presidential election. If you don't have a majority, you can't pass legislation. Again, he assumes the result of a referendum will be in his favor, right? I speak for the people, so whatever I ask them, they'll give the answer I want,

He's very dismissive of political parties and, particularly, of the political party that is way ahead of him at all levels of government:.., les Républicains, the conservative party., He says they care more about their party than about the country. But what does it mean to govern without a party? It means a dictatorial kind of government. A political party does exactly what Zemmour's advisors are trying to do ...in a very amateur way. A political party pushes the candidate forward and, at the same time, moderates the candidate. Democracy is based on this constant moderation of all kinds of opinions, all kinds of mentalities, and trying to resolve differences

peacefully.

Zemmour says he's the only one that can unite the Right. That's illogical: if you're going to unite several parties, the strongest candidate will lead, right? Anne Hidalgo, the mayor of Paris, would like to unite the Left, but she's polling at 3 to 4%; nobody wants to line up behind her. And so, it's a very weak argument for Zemmour. I think that French voters at the last minute when they get into the voting booth, they... we call it the "vote utile." They vote for what's practical. They might want to vote for Le Pen or Zemmour, but they know that Le Pen can't win and Zemmour can't get to the second round. If they don't want Macron, they have to vote for Pécresse. That gives her a chance to get to the second round. There will be a constant television programs, interviews, and rallies with TV coverage. Gradually, the picture becomes clear.

But it's important for me to have an honest evaluation of Éric Zemmour because he is Jewish, and he claims to be the one that will save France from Islamization. We know his Jewishness is variable, depending on whether or not it's useful to him. But we never saw him around in the early 2000s defending the Jews of France. He believes his French identity is more important than his Jewish identity. He is rather indifferent to Israel, and opposed to dual citizenship, which is important for French Jews who make aliyah, because they want to keep their dual citizenship. We'll watch as things go, I would say his campaign is stagnating, and these shots in the foot are not helping.

Jerry Gordon: In terms of the competition coming up for the presidential race in April, you have Le Pen, but she doesn't seem to be moving back to the position she had previously. Then you have the first woman who leads the center-right party, Pécresse.

Nidra Poller: I wouldn't describe it as center, it's right and

center-right. Then Le Pen and Zemmour will be labelled "extreme right. It's a mistake to think that Péresse is not strong on questions of immigration, protection of the frontier, citizenship, French identity or law and order. She's strong on those things. So, I would call les Républicains right and center. And I'd call the others the "marginal right."

THE PANDEMIC

Jerry Gordon: In the United States, we have another issue, it's called dealing with a pandemic, by the Biden administration, which looks like it's in pieces now. The only redeeming quality might be a gift of rapid tests sent by mail to every American household that wants to use them. The contrast is France where the handling by Macron has been deft. This is notwithstanding some of the complaints and riots against aspects of it. It is a lot better than some of the other major EU countries and in large measure better than the situation here in the US. Is that case reflected in the polling in France?

Nidra Poller: Strangely enough, I would say yes. That is why is he polling at 27 percent and steadily polling as winning the second round. At the same time, criticism is not coming only from the crazies and the anti-vaxxers. Almost everybody is criticizing the way it's being handled, which is normal, because we are faced with something that nobody can handle. They do their best, and they get little credit for it. But I would say that it's been handled rather steadily and with a light hand in France, trying to avoid measures like the lockdown that was necessary at the beginning. The aim here is to get a remarkably high level of vaccination, and that's been working, we're now getting a high percentage of people with the third dose, protecting the very vulnerable, improving hospital care, and trying to keep the hospitals from being overloaded.

We have not had some of the terrible things I saw in the US at the beginning. I saw pictures of a broom closet filled up with corpses in body bags at Maimonides hospital in Brooklyn. We have avoided these severe shocks. Some European countries had more zigging and zagging, and then suddenly made vaccination mandatory for everyone. The French won't do that. They have other ways to get people vaccinated: the pass.

A young person I know very well said, "That was really intelligent. You know how French people are, if you say, 'You have to get vaccinated because you might die and cause other people to die,' they'll say, 'Oh, there's more to life than dying and living.' But if you say you can't go to restaurants and cafés, they'll run and get vaccinated." That's what happened. So, I would say, below the surface, yes, this is appreciated. The people that complain are loud, but they're not the majority. The other candidates don't quite know what to do about that. They can't honestly say Macron messed up and they'll do better.

JIHAD IN THE SAHEL

Jerry Gordon: I want to turn to something that we discussed last time, which was an under-reported story about the problems of the French-led counter-terrorism effort against the jihadists in the Sahel, and there's the flash point with Mali. There was a coup recently, and in fact, the leader of the coup, a military leader, called in those little green men from Mr. Putin, the Wagner Group, and that has caused division within the so-called Takuba force composed of units from the EU.

Nidra Poller: Yes, special forces from 14 EU countries.

Jerry Gordon: What is really going on there? And how has Macron handled that?

Nidra Poller: Do you know that Ibrahim Keita, the former President, died today?

Jerry Gordon: Yes

Nidra Poller: This has been a terrible problem, and it's been openly reported. After the coup, the French warned that if the putschists formed an Islamist government, they couldn't maintain operation." The French wanted to go in there and just stop the jihadists that were on their way to Bamako. Every time our democracies go into failed or failing states solely to protect our own interests—whether it's Iraq, Libya, you can name all the examples— it doesn't work. For a while, some of the people are relieved by the presence and others are troubled by it. There's a bit of progress. And then, all the other forces in these societies mobilized, and the next thing you know, they turn against the French. That is what's happening today, and they're also turning against their neighboring African countries because ECOWAS put sanctions on them after they announced that the elections promised in February would be postponed for four years.

Sudan, that you know so much about ... guess who forgave the brutal leaders of the coup in Sudan, to get them into the Abraham Accords? Maybe the Mali coup plotters thought they could get away with it too. President Macron was scheduled to spend Christmas with the troops, but he didn't go to Mali supposedly because of COVID. It was reported that he wanted to bring representatives from ECOWAS and the Sahel 8, but the leader of the Junta refused So Macron cancelled the visit. There were anti-French, anti- ECOWAS demonstrations recently. Now the Mali government wants to complain to the UN against the sanctions. Another quagmire. What's the solution? If the democracies were ready to fight bravely, massively, intelligently and united against Jihad, we could have some progress. The pinpoint strategy falls short, and the forces of Jihad run rampant. As we said, there's no shortage of jihadists to take hostages in a synagogue or a supermarket or behead a teacher. And there's no limit to failed countries ...

Jerry Gordon: I think in part that's because of the fall of

whatever government you want to call it in Afghanistan, and the re-invigoration of the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS, who are warring parties there. There was an interesting statistic that has been compiled and released recently, it showed ISIS that we all thought was kiboshed, is still active in Jihad.

Nidra Poller: We didn't think so!

Jerry Gordon: ISIS perpetrated 27,000 attacks during the last year, and a lot of those occurred, as you well know, in the Sahel region.

Nidra Poller: Yes. For example, Burkina Faso. It was so peaceful when I was there in the late '70s. The withdrawal from Afghanistan is one of a series. It started after the Iraq operation. The idea that the "invasion" of Iraq was wrong. The French are still proud that they refused to go along with it in 2003. There are two things we might point out: The al-Dura affair in 2000— the accusation of child murder by Israel led to this wave of genocidal antisemitism, with the constant criticism of Israel that went on until the Jihadists started attacking elsewhere. For example, in France, when they started attacking the general population, the police, firefighters, hospitals, doctors ...

They realized there was a serious problem. And still condemned, the intervention in Iraq. The process continued right after Bush. Obama always thought he could settle things peacefully and diplomatically. And then came President Trump. He wanted to pull the troops out of everywhere. He abandoned the Kurds in Syria, he wanted to leave NATO. And he was the one that negotiated the defeat in Afghanistan and turned it over to the Taliban. That agreement of surrender to the Taliban is one of the most incredible official documents I've ever read.

Jerry Gordon: All done in, where was it, Qatar?

Nidra Poller: It reads like it was done on the kitchen table

with a bunch of Mafiosi standing over them. It's written like a rag. I can't give you the exact name, it's an "[agreement](#) with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan that we don't recognize." That's why Bolton left the Trump administration ... it was a year and a half before the withdrawal. There was a long process of criticizing those who tried to defend their countries, promising not to defend our troops, and pulling out and leaving room for these hostile forces to move in.

Then there is Zemmour: He wants to pull out of NATO. He said we don't need it anymore, there's no more Soviet Union, nothing to defend, and it makes us dependent on the United States. He wants closer ties with Russia, and looser relations with the United States. Also, he's against children learning English in primary school, and he's proud not to speak English. So, what's the next President going to decide about that? The Europeans have taken note that they can't count on the United States. But Jerry, you know much more than I do about military things. You can't improvise a huge military machine to deal with these problems. The United States has the military. So, in a way, it's a question of strategy. What will policy makers do so that the will United States, one day, assume this responsibility again?

RUSSIA & UKRAINE, IRAN & NUCLEAR TALKS

Jerry Gordon: Talking about that, the problem of the day is Mr. Putin may have bit off more than he can chew with these threats against Ukraine and his less than secret desire to resurrect the so-called USSR borders. And by that, I mean absorbing not only Ukraine, but also Poland, and of course, the Baltic States.

Nidra Poller: Yes. Isn't it incredible that after all that Russia has gone through in the 20th century, they would think of nothing better in the 21st than to cobble together, again, the Soviet Union, and get into another cold and hot war? When you look at China, China is potentially a serious military

threat. But look at what China has done economically. Russia has done nothing.

Jerry Gordon: The GDP of Russian Federation is, I think, less than that of the state of California.

Nidra Poller: And that's because the billionaires account for 98% of it. It's just incredible that they would do that to themselves.

Jerry Gordon: While the two-plus two-meetings, and meetings between the US and Russia at the Deputies level, and the NATO staff have failed, the question is what next with Mr. Putin? And in that regard, what is Macron's position regarding the dispute?

Nidra Poller: There's a European kind of intelligence, an understanding of the balance of power. The French try to stay in a situation where they can, as they say, talk to everyone. They always aim for a diplomatic solution. They may be trying to improve their strategy to get advantages and avoid war. They certainly have no intention of letting Ukraine fall into Russian hands. I would assume they work closely with the United States on this.

Jerry Gordon: The other issue is Mr. Macron has fashioned some bilateral relations with Israel, particularly as regards the US EU3 Iran nuclear talks, which seemed to be going nowhere. There is a reference by Israeli Prime Minister Bennett and his defense minister Gantz about a Plan B, which might mean military actions.

Nidra Poller: Secretly, Plan B means they just wish that Israel would do it. Get it done. And then afterwards they might say it was a bit too harsh, but... It's difference from 2015. First, the public isn't interested. There's been little coverage of the Vienna talks. But there's enough information to know that Iran isn't fooling them. They don't think there'll be an agreement, and they're not pushing for a

compromise. In reply to occasional statements hinting that an agreement could be close, our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Le Drian, usually differs, saying progress is too slow, too many things have happened in the interim, it's not going to work. That's the French position. You know, in 2015, the French wanted a tougher agreement. But Obama wanted to push through that impossibly blind JCPOA.

When we talk about democracies not wanting to get involved in military action, the plan B, look at how Israel has been striking in Syria or wherever they felt the Iranians coming too close. You haven't heard any outcry, no heavy pressure to stop them. I think there's a consensus that Israelis are the ones that can do it, so give them a free hand while we try to negotiate. But we know it won't work. I think that's what's happening.

Jerry Gordon: Israel has aggressively carried out what they call "the war between the wars." It means attacking at every opportunity Iran and proxies Lebanon and Syria, even in Iraq.

Nidra Poller: Yes.

Jerry Gordon: That would make more sense than to do a complex difficult attack on nuclear facilities now. They will do what they must do to destabilize Iran's progress. But the reality is we don't know whether Iran has really reached the point of nuclear breakout. There have been suggestions that that it could happen within months or years. One thing I can tell you that is concerning: during the talks, Iran launched a solid fuel rocket. Why is that significant? Because when they have typically launched satellites, they've been using liquid fuel rockets. Now Iran has launched solid fuel rockets which give them a range of mobility and non-detectability before they could do something. That is a threat. I've written about this for years. That is directed at Europe because of the range of those rockets and their ability to launch them from mobile pads, railway cars, and underground silos. That is very

concerning.

Nidra Poller: I can only agree with you. It is not going to be like the Osirak raid in 1981 in Iraq. It is not going to be a strike on one nuclear plant, and that's the end.

Jerry Gordon: Correct.

Nidra Poller: The "good" problem now is that Europe, Asia, and the United States are all targeted, so there's room for concerted action. We'll see what happens right after the talks fail. They're supposed to conclude at the end of January. They might drag on into February.

Jerry Gordon: We shall see. On that note, we would like to thank you very much for another brilliant roundtable discussion on issues affecting the US domestically, you in France, and our dear friends in Israel.

Nidra Poller: Well, as you can see, if the Jihadi could come from the UK to a little tiny synagogue in the suburb of Dallas, then we're all involved, but I think we can end each conversation with we'll see, on verra bien ...

Jerry Gordon: Very good. Thank you again, Nidra.

Nidra Poller: Okay. See you next month.

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

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Jerry Gordon is a Senior Editor of *The New English Review*, author of [The West Speaks](#), NERPress, 2012 and co-author of [Jihad in Sudan: Caliphate Threatens Africa and the World](#), JAD Press, 2017. From 2016 to 2020, he was producer and co-host of

[Israel News Talk Radio-Beyond the Matrix.](#)

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