

Marshall here. Welcome back to The Realignment.

Some of my favorite Realignment episodes focus on how the United States can learn from the experiences and history of other countries. Most of the conversations on the show have focused on the United Kingdom. In the case of today's episode, we're focusing on France, speaking with the author and journalist Nabila Ramdani about her new book *Fixing France How to Repair a Broken Republic*. The challenges facing France include everything from a debate over whether its parliamentary

system combined with its powerful presidency, whether this model of governance is up to the challenges of the early 21st century, we of course are going to speak about debates over identity, political correctness, slash wokeness, which has taken a particularly interesting turn in France, and of course, the country's debates over its foreign policy in Africa and Eastern Europe, and the country's body replaced in Europe. All this is happening under the leadership of French President Emmanuel Macron, who famously came out of nowhere to defeat the two established

political parties in France. One of the central questions of his presidency has been can a renewed centrist vision of French politics offer an alternative to both those establishments he defeated and populist to his right and his left. All that said, I think there's a lot of interesting stuff here and I'd definitely love to explore these topics on a deeper level. So of course, right in with any comments, questions, concerns, if you have any suggestions. Huge thank you to the Foundation for American Innovation for supporting the work of this podcast. Hope you all enjoy the conversation. Nabila Ramdani, welcome to the realignment. Thank you for having me, Marshall. Yeah, I'm really excited to speak with you. I mentioned this to you before we started recording, but I've had probably more than a dozen episodes with folks from the United Kingdom discussing events in the UK over the past decade or so, because there are various aspects of the UK political scene, the debates between the Tories and the Labour Party, populism, Brexit, that really rhyme well with political events in the United States, namely the election of Donald Trump during the same period as Brexit. Speaking from a French perspective, though, are there any ways that you could think of the political challenges and events in France relating it all to what listeners are seeing in the United States? Yes, absolutely. For sure. I think that both France and the United States are countries adapting to the modern world.

They have old institutions that are not entirely fit for purpose and that needs some adjusting, not least because we live in a world with lots of new technologies, new forms of communication, new liberal ideas, particularly woke ideas. I think people are also becoming far more aware of inequality and other forms of unfairness and injustice, including around race relations, for example. And this is thanks to social media, 24 news channels, TV channels. So if we are to put it in simple terms, I think the world is becoming smaller and globalisation means that the world is sharing many of the huge problems in a way that they didn't in the past. And I think this is particularly so in relation to global problems such as global warming and, of course, immigration. So there is, in my view, a global consciousness that affects all countries. And certainly my book *Fixing France* raises all these challenges affecting many of, let's call them late stage capitalist, modern Western democracies. And that includes the United States. And it raises questions such as, you know, what is the future of the national social contract in a globalised world where populism is also increasing. But I think

these challenges are addressed differently by different countries because of the unique political systems, the unique structures, the unique histories. Sometimes these histories are often painful, the unique legacies. And also, dare I say, because they have different geopolitical realities, but they certainly share similar shortcomings and systematic failings to those I find in France. I like your framing of the challenge. This is obviously a transatlantic challenge, the challenge of adapting a 20th century country to the modern world. What are ways that France struggles to adapt to the modern world? Well, I would say that, you know, the French like to keep things as they are. And that is actually putting them in a lot of trouble because they're simply not adapting to this changing world. Then we can see this in the very large number of people who oppose developments associated with globalism or indeed immigration. And the French mindset very much remains parochial, certainly beyond the very clever technocrats who run multinational in France and who are doing quite well. And this is why, you know, millions of French people vote for reactionary parties in France who are, which are by definition, parochial parties. And that's why, you know, the anger is frequently expressed on the streets of major cities across France. There's a sense of disappointment in institutions letting people down. And this is reflected in, you know, what the French do best, which is take to the streets and express their anger. This is a really interesting direction to take the conversation because I'm not sure how aware of this you are, but in the United States at least, including from your publisher, Public Affairs, there are a bunch of books that have come out in the past month debating why protest in the United States didn't lead to political change over the past decade as so. So they're talking about Occupy Wall Street, they're talking about BLM protests in the summer of 2020. So you're bringing up the French example and the long French tradition of protest. How do you understand political protest as a means of achieving systemic reform and change? Well, let's say that, you know, first of all, you know, France is a country of illusions because in theory, France is an idealistic country that projects itself as the land of liberty, equality and fraternity for all. But in practice, it delivers on those ideals only for some for those with the right background, with the right education, the right gender, the right connections, the elite, basically. And the reality is that modern France is actually racked by social divisions. It has a cost of living crisis. It has regular complaints that the French Republic is only working for the people at the top. And that's the reason why, you know, you have institutionalized rioting as a reaction to this kind of economic injustice, if you like, whether it's by groups such as the so-called yellow vests, because they wear the trademark Hive's jackets when they demonstrate. And they have been demonstrating pretty violently and ransacking major cities, including Paris practically every Saturday since November 2018. And they tend to represent the white working class rural left behind France, if you like. But there's also the sporadic rioting by French youths from ethnic minority backgrounds who live on neglecting housing estates literally on the margin of major cities. And, you know, they're pretty angry at the state of things. And how effective their protest is remains to be seen. Yes, France is a revolutionary country. That's how it historically brought about change. But the current French Republic is not changing its ways. And there's a good case to be made, if you like, for bringing about a Sixth Republic. There's a very strong argument that the Fifth Republic has outlived its time. And one needs to review the institutions

and adapt them. And that certainly means that there's a blatant need for more democracy in France. And certainly change comes not just from the street, but also from the institutions that underpin the very foundation of the French Republic. And there needs to be a greater emphasis on parliamentary government rather than presidential government, as is the case at the moment. Observers around the world might have noted that the French President Emmanuel Macron has been ignoring parliament to push through his most divisive legislation. And that is a scandalous way to utilize power earlier this year. Half of the country took to the street to oppose his radical pension reforms. And yet he pushed them through anyway by passing parliament. So change certainly is put on the agenda. I mean, the call for change is put on the agenda by people making noise about what's wrong with France. But it's ultimately the tools of power, such as the institution of the presidency and parliament, which are best equipped, if you like, to make a society more egalitarian. So many different questions here. So I was trying to take them one at a time as we keep this coherent. So first question, when you're bringing up a lack of democratic practice in France with Macron and various centrist, in the American sense, reforms he's pushed through, would a France that was more parliamentary in nature, would that be a France that be more reactionary and more to the left and to the right? Because what's interesting about Macron from the American perspective is he's very much upending the two traditional parties, but he's doing it from this very neoliberal centrist position, which is kind of the opposite of how it operates in the US and the UK. So how could we expect a more parliamentary France to look different from the one we see today? Well, Emmanuel Macron is an interesting character in himself because he, when he campaigned to become president of France, he very distinctly portrayed himself as somebody who's neither from the left, neither from the right. He's not an ideologue. He very much is a pragmatic politician. Before he became president of France, he was a socialist, the socialist economics minister on the socialist presidency of François Hollande. Even though he never joined the socialist party per se, he was also a banker before becoming president. So he's very much a finance man. But when he came to power in 2017, he promised to revive the country through his dynamic, reforming leadership. But instead, France has been declining and that decline has accelerated dramatically to the extent that the crisis is deepening in every field of life. In many ways, he's someone who promised reforms, but ended up really showboating, trying to hold the country together and generally failing to liberalise the economy in the way that he said he would. And as we all know, the economy really is the crux of the matter. But Macron has proven to be a lame duck president who has to rely on decrees to push through his reforms. This includes the pension reforms. But as we've seen, this has happened with previous presidents, with Nicolas Sarkozy, for example, a conservative, Gaullist president who also had a go at reforming the pension system in France. And the legislation that he pushed through was reversed by the next president. So in a way, this is not just a failure by Macron, but a failure of the entire system. And I don't think that long lasting reform is possible under this current system.

And instead, we end up with chronic problems, such as a hugely bloated, expensive state that the French cannot really afford any longer. 60% of France's GDP goes on government spending, for example. This is a huge amount of money. But I think Macron is currently seen as a very conventional president who comes across as an old reactionary who thinks that the system works pretty well. So there's no appetite to reform it, as far as he's concerned. But the reality is that it only works for the super rich. And so he fits in really in the mold of this image that's attached to him of the Republican monarch. And you might have noticed that he last week only received actual monarchs from the United Kingdom. He threw them a lavish banquet at Versailles, which was the home of former French monarchs, of course. And this is a prime example of Macron's conduct. He loves being surrounded by the rich and the famous, instead of acting like a modern, radical president, actually working for the people. And this exposes many of, I would say, the major fault line in France today, which is the lack of genuine will for reform. Something I'm really curious about. You mentioned meeting President Macron at the start of his presidency. What is something radical that you could have done? Because once again, from the American perspective, you discussing pension reform, that sounds pretty radical to us in the first place. So if someone said, look, I'm trying to reform Social Security, like it or not, that we would interpret that as radical reform. So from your standards, then, what would he have in the French context done that could be described as radical, that would have made his presidency leadership more effective? Well, I'm struggling a bit to find something radical to associate with President Macron. Well, I mean, in a way, you're actually kind of answering the question, because what you're basically articulating, and in a way, is this idea that a presidency that, I think, to an outsider's view could appear radical at its inception, putting aside the two parties, it's young, it's vigorous, he has his charisma at the core was just not a radical project. So it's hard. It's like kind of saying Joe Biden, the radical president, there's something not radical to Joe Biden in his very nature. So is that maybe kind of the problem here then? I think the major problem is there's a deficit of democracy in France. And nothing radical can come out from this starting point. There's a yawning democratic deficit in the French system of governance itself, which was created by the, well, with the establishment of the Fifth Republic under Charles de Gaulle in 1958, during the Algeria War of Independence. And ever since then, far too much power has been centralized in the head of state, who is literally acting like a quasi-monarch overriding parliament and appointing anyone he likes to form a government, whether they are close friends or corporate cronies. And I say he likes because there's never been a woman president in France. So this kind of structure also encourages sleaze, as shown by the criminal convictions of former presidents, including Nicolas Sarkozy and the late Jacques Chirac. So this very lack of checks and balances is disastrous, but especially so when the caliber of the president doesn't match the scale of the position, as could be said of Macron. He very much is perceived as somebody who is far more of a technocrat, a technocratic manager, if you like, rather than a national leader. And every time I have met him, I have been struck by his aloofness and his insistence that he is right. He is quite arrogant and lacks empathy, and that these are not qualities or lack of qualities that you would expect in a leader, while the opposite. I'd love for you, let's do a little history here,

to talk about Charles de Gaulle, because in the American context, we're going through a de Gaulle Renaissance. I've got the Julian Jackson biography behind me. I think I have another one over somewhere

in this other bookshelf. To my left, there's a lot of interest in him, because if we're looking at the America of the 21st century, there's a lot that I think there's admirable about our understanding of him. I love the certain idea of France's articulation. You kind of want to imagine an American president who could say, I have an understanding of what America is, and therefore I could fix it. You appreciate his strength. You appreciate how even the sort of negative sides of him are actually able to be harnessed in service of the country. So how do you understand both the mythos of de Gaulle and the actuality of de Gaulle, and how that shapes how you think about things? I think one very important aspect of my book, which is worth mentioning, is that my background is in Algeria. My parents are from Algeria. I was born and brought up in France, but I'm of Algerian descent. And Algeria was once France's largest and certainly most prestigious colony, well, to the extent that it was actually made part of France.

And this had a massive influence on the development of the current Fifth Republic.

For example, the current constitution of France was created as an emergency measure to try and deal with the crisis called by the Algerian War of Independence in the late 1950s. France was being torn apart because French nationalists wanted to hold on to the dual in their imperial crown, while many others, not least of all Algerian nationalists, wanted liberation. And that's when de Gaulle was brought back into the picture. He was, of course, lauded as a hero of the resistance during the Second World War. Then he disappeared into all the wilderness for a number of years, and he was brought back to deal with this emergency crisis effectively as a strong man. And he was given extraordinary powers, ones that carry on with the current iteration, whoever is in charge effectively in France, whoever ends up being President of France. So he was given the powers to, again, bypass parliament, to choose his Prime Minister, to choose his cabinet, and they don't have to be elected politicians. And that's what I call the democratic deficit in France, because ever since de Gaulle was brought to power in a situation of crisis, of emergency, to deal with a very specific situation at the time, those, the powers that were given to him remain attached to whoever ends up President of France now. And this is more than 65 years ago that de Gaulle was brought back in 1958. And this is why, this is, in my view, the major flaw in the current system.

Something I'm curious about, and this speaks to the crisis in Algeria and de Gaulle coming back and the fact that a lot of that coming back is a response to a military, attempted military coup. There's just very, you know, just unimaginable, that's a real crisis, right? Crisis is sometimes a euphemism. That is a definition of a crisis in a republican form of government.

Earlier on in the conversation, you mentioned how there could be a need for a sixth republic.

I guess what I wonder is, do you worry that the only way that one actually gets to a sixth republic is an actual crisis of serious stakes? Like, would it be possible to calmly sit down, let's say, next election, next few years and come up with a new conception of the country, or is it going to take something potentially disastrous like that moment in the 1950s?

Well, that's a very interesting and very pertinent question because, you know, as we know, there have been various iterations of the French republic from the first one to the current fifth one. The first one occurred at the height of the revolution in the 1790s

and brought an end to the monarchical period, which saw King Louis XVI and Queen Mary Antoinette

having literally the heads chopped off. And ordinary people were clearly unhappy to put it very simply with the idea of the concentration of so much power, so much wealth and privilege, in the hands of a monarch who had absolute power with no checks and balances while the rest of the country was struggling. So the monarchy was replaced by the first republic, which was based on noble ideals such as the declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen, the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity for all, rather than an absolute king running the show.

And as you said, you know, it often takes either a cataclysmic event such as a war, like the war in Algeria, which brought about the Fifth Republic, or another revolution taking place leading to a new republic. There had been some restorations of the monarchy in between different iterations of the republican model. They were not particularly legitimate ones, and there were more revolutions taking place as well. Remember, France is a revolutionary country par excellence. But Louis XVI was the last legitimate king of France. But, you know, the Fourth Republic gave way to the current Fifth Republic in a peaceful way, if you like. There was no war involved, simply because the Fourth Republic wasn't working. It was incredibly unstable, with dozens of governments succeeding each other and failing, because parliament wasn't working, it was wrapped with divisions, prime ministers were coming and going. And that's why it wasn't deemed to be fit to deal with the Algeria crisis at the time.

So having different republics is, in fact, a very logical, theoretical way of running a country, if you like, and certainly that's how France views it. When a system doesn't work, you change it, you create a new constitution, you start again. And that's the nature of a revolution, rather than evolution. You change the makeup of the whole system overnight, and you recreate the whole thing again. So it is, of course, quite possible that the Sixth Republic can be brought about in a technocratic manner, if you like, in a constitutional manner, by changing the constitution. The problem is that the president has the final say on any change on the constitution, and you are hardly going to get anyone who is going to be willing to relinquish that kind of power. So there will have to be some tension involved, some antagonism involved. I'm not sure that the kind of protests, the street protests that we have seen, however violent, however recurrent they have been, are enough to bring about that kind of change. It may well be that France will need to reach an extreme, or there I say an even more extreme position, where somebody like Marine Le Pen, who is the leader of the national rally, formerly known as the National Front, who's a far-right politician, there's a good chance of her coming to power at the forthcoming 2027 election. And it might need that kind of awakening, if you like, or realization for the French to think, well, maybe we have allowed this to happen, and we will now try to reverse this, because in this day and age, it's unacceptable to have somebody in charge of the country, a party that was founded by her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, a convicted racist, an anti-Semite, who still has masses of influence on the rank and file of the party. It will be, in my view, it will shame France even more on the global stage, and it might be that moment in time when the French wake up and truly try to reform the system much more deeply. I want to get to the global stage in a second, but something I'm very curious about is how the politics of nostalgia function in France, especially compared to the United States, the United Kingdom, because a huge aspect of the post-2015, 2016 period in both the US and

the UK has been on the right. You've always got Make America Great Again. On the left, you kind of have Democratic Socialists speaking of how in the 1950s, you had higher levels of taxation in the UK, Brexit's fueled by a lot of the imagery of World War II and Great Britain before the empire had fallen. But if you're looking at this from France, obviously, World War II isn't quite the triumphal story. It's going to be in the Anglesphere, and at the same time, you're going to have events like Algeria, which obviously Britain gives up the empire, but you don't quite have. It wasn't as if India was literally a part of Great Britain, the way that Algeria was part of France. How should we understand the role, if any, that nostalgia plays in the political situation today? Well, it plays a great deal of importance, not least of all, because there are some uncomfortable shadows, if you like, in French history. France's collaboration with Nazi Germany during the Second World War being one of them. And in many ways, it hasn't disappeared,

especially when you look at how mainstream the far right is in France. Marine Le Pen was runner up twice in the last two presidential election. Her father was also runner up in 2002 against Jacques Chirac, who ultimately won the election. But this is the kind of nostalgia that's still very much popular in France, and is reflected in the rise, and not just the rise, but populist parties such as the National Front, the National Rally, and far right politicians do extremely well in France. You also have that kind of nostalgia attached to the loss of empire, not least of all, the loss of Algeria. And there's still an awful lot of resentment at France's losing its colonies, having to part with a past that was perceived as prestigious. And it informs the current political atmosphere in France. And that's why it's also reflected in the current climate in France. There are not only grievances about the economic situation, but there's also the inability of politicians to sort out domestic grievances, especially economic ones. But this ineptitude by the French political class to implement promised reforms and economic growth is also equaled by numerous foreign policy failures, which include poor performances, if I can put it that way,

by President Macron with his deluded visits to Moscow, for example, to try to appease Vladimir Putin. He has made quite a fool of himself, I think, on the international stage when he was desperately trying to appease Vladimir Putin while leading up and following his invasion of Ukraine. And I think this attitude by Macron who sees himself as not only an important world leader, but also the leader of the European Union, for example, after Angela Merkel, the German chancellor retired, he very much saw himself as taking on the mantle of the leader of the European Union. But his record so far has been quite unimpressive. And even his political opponents at home view him in that light as well, behaving more like an autocratic monarch rather than a modern politician. If you look at France's former colonies, for example, in sub-Saharan Africa, there has been a succession of coups in countries such as Niger, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and these were all old French colonies. And unfortunately, I was going to say for Macron, all these coups seems to be coming all at once. But there are countries that still represent, even though they've gained independence from France in 1960, they are still very important to France, not least of all because France retains security interests, economic interests, and those countries still provide everything from uranium to their powers, important nuclear power stations to oil and gold security wise. There are also places that the French used as basis to fight terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, for example, in the Sahel region.

All this can sometimes feel like colonialism by another name. And that's why a lot of Africans are pushing back against the French and they're creating a power vacuum. And we're seeing other global powers closing in on Africa, such as Russia or China, but certainly this testifies to a kind of degrading, if you like, in France's place in the world. You know, it's interesting when you're describing Macron's somewhat bumbling attempts to avert the worst consequences of the war in Ukraine. It seems like, and this I think particularly was manifested in his recent visit to China, which ended up just ticking everyone off. It seems like he's attempted to position France as this kind of third force, whether it's between the US and Eastern Europe and Russia or between the United States, China and then Europe. That's a case where he seems to be trying to present himself as the leader of the EU in that front. To what degree is, separate from his individual personal performances, those situations, his clear objective of placing France as a third force possible? Or at the end of the day, is he just doomed to ticking everyone off and bumbling by positioning the country in a way that just can't be positioned effectively? I think he's very much perceived for very valid reasons as a windbag who trots about the world stage with very little talent for dealing with or even understanding a real politic. Even if you look at his provision of military assistance to Kyiv, for example, it has been massively botched before the start of the war in Ukraine. He infamously referred to the brain death of NATO, and he said that the US could no longer be relied on to defend the alliance. You can imagine that these words were welcomed by Russia as truthful words, the words of Vladimir Putin. I think he did a great deal of disservice to his allies in that respect. He is certainly somebody who is a composite, I think, which summed him up. He acts very often in an isolated, isolated, in a narcissistic way, and he's impervious to other people's views. That's not the kind of attitude that a world leader, certainly the President of France who would like to project himself as a world leader, should conduct himself. I think he's doing diplomacy in a way, a great disservice. I think the last section I just want to cover, I want to fill out a few topics that you mentioned that folks would find very interesting. At the start of the conversation, you mentioned wokeness, which is a whole fascinating other conversation, but I think we could just cover it very quickly so listeners who want to delve deeper can go there. Could you explain why the debate over quote, wokeness, looks a little different in France than it does in the US and the UK? I think France is a massively conservative country. It very much remains, as I said, quite parochial and conservative with a small sea, and yet it likes to project itself as this kind of liberal, progressive country, which to a certain extent, it played that role historically. It's the country, the land of revolution, of enlightened bastion of human rights. There are many positive aspects to France which influenced the rest of the world culturally, politically, but I think France is a country of illusions. What they like to think are liberal, progressive policies, by in fact, quite reactionary. There's this constant tension, if you like, this constant contradiction within French society, where, for example, there is a constant interference of the state in the business of people, if you like, and this translates into, for example, the attitude towards Muslim women, for example. You constantly have those polemics of the French, like those controversies about telling women, and especially Muslim women, what to wear, for example. Now, they use the excuse, if you like,

of the French state being a secular state, and therefore religion should remain firmly in the private domain, but of course secularism is not that. It allows the expression of religious faith, and certainly I think it is quite wrong in the 21st century to tell women what to wear, whether they want to wear short skirts or longer ones, and this is the kind of seemingly liberal, progressive messages that the French government wants to put out. We're looking after those women, we're actually protecting them from, I don't know, some oppressive man in their lives who are telling them what to do, telling them what to wear, when in fact they're curbing the freedom of those very women who are independent agents, who often choose what they want to do with their lives, what they want to wear, and how they want to conduct themselves. And I think there is this fundamental contradiction at the heart of the French way of thinking that needs resolving.

Second to last question, I'm really fascinated by debates about globalization, the world getting smaller, the world getting flatter, and what's always stuck out to me even before I got into this line of work were France's very endemic efforts to resist aspects of globalization, like let's say language. For example, the strong efforts to not allow the word email to just leak into the French language, because that's obviously Anglo in its origin. How have you assessed France's efforts to retain its Frenchness in contrast to the sort of commoditizing nature of the global project?

Well, it is certainly the case that France would like to hang on to its language, which is a big part of its identity, and who doesn't want to protect one's identity and retain elements of one's history, of one's legacy. These are all elements that make any nation proud, if you like. But I would contend that France uses these noble elements of its identity and weaponizes them, if you like. It becomes not so much a pride, but a lack of, for example, embracing what's also available out there, other cultures, other languages, other aspects of global culture, becomes a reason for France to put the barriers up, if you like. This is why at the very heart of the definition of French identity, the Fifth Republic very much sees itself as colorblind. That means that you're French and you're French only, and you should leave your cultural, religious baggage at the door when you come into France, and even if you're born in France with cultural, religious legacies, you are meant to keep that quiet.

Now, I think this is a very reactionary approach to a sense of identity, and in that respect, France fails to reconcile different identities while keeping its social cohesion altogether, and this translates into reactionary forms of policing the country, if you like. That's why you see these constant antagonism against young people who are of different background. The stop and search policies are 20 times more common amongst young men who are from

Arab or Muslim or black background than they are when you are a white person in France. Any sense that you can be different is effectively held against you in France, which doesn't make for social cohesion, let alone social justice and indeed peace. It's not an appeased way of looking at a society. It's quite confrontational, it's antagonistic, and it's an issue that France has to grapple with with some urgency.

So, I'll close with this question, which is a good place for you to promote the book.

I'm stealing this from a recent guest, but a recent guest on the show argued that a successful politics requires a successful story that has a happy ending and the ability

to articulate that. And I think from this conversation, I think given that frame, one could understand that Macron has been unable to tell a successful story of his vision for France that leads somewhere effective, what's your kind of quick rendition of a story you're trying to tell in this book that could lead in a hopeful direction, given the fact that you argue we're in a crisis or that France is in a crisis? Yes, France is in a crisis in so many ways.

I mentioned segregated parts of France stuck on the margins of major cities, the institutional writing, the sense of economic injustice. There's also a very monolithic education system that doesn't take young people very far in life. There is deep seated, racial and religious discrimination. The issue of policing is a crucial one and extremism in general. And I address all these fault lines, if you like, in modern France in an uncompromising way, in the sense that I merely state a truthful, you know, I give a truthful picture of what modern France is like. It is a hard-hitting critique, if you like, but it's also a very constructive one, one that offers solutions. It's not, you know, my book is by no means preachy, it's not full of moaning. It just tries to tell it as it is. And it is, in fact, about highlighting fundamental problem within the country. And this includes a ludicrously powerful head of state who very much governs like a quasi-monarch. And so, to me, the urgency is to reform the way France is governed. And only this change, this crucial change can lead to a more positive domino effect, if you like, in reforming other aspects of French life.

Nabilia, this has been really great. Thank you so much for coming on to discuss your new book, Fixing France, How to Repair a Broken Republic, out now for any listeners who are interested. Thank you for having me, Marshall.

I hope you enjoyed this episode. If you learned something, like this sort of mission, or want to access our subscriber exclusive Q&A, bonus episodes and more, go to realignment.supercast.com and subscribe to our \$5 a month, \$50 a year, or \$500 for lifetime membership rates. See you all next time.