

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Dr. Osamah F. Khalil

JVN: Hey, curious people. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and welcome back to Getting Curious. We have back today, Dr. Osamah Khalil, if you have not gotten to listen to our first two episodes with him, Doctor Khalil and, and he's gonna talk about his book in, in the beginning of this episode. And we've, and we've talked about it, but just to give you a crash course, it summarizes the foreign policy and domestic policy from the Kennedy administration to the Biden administration. There's a lot there. Let's try to learn together.

So let's learn together. We're going to go back into it. We're going back with Dr. Osamah Khalil now, for part three of why does our foreign policy suck so bad? And if you need a refresher, Dr. Osamah Khalil is a historian of U.S. Foreign Relations and chair of the International Relations Program at Syracuse University. He's a frequent media commentator and contributor for outlets like the Los Angeles Times, NPR, USA, Today, PBS News Hour, The Hill, and Al Jazeera, his new book, *A World of Enemies: America's Wars at Home and Abroad from Kennedy to Biden* is out now.

I I don't know if there was ever a guest who we meant to have on once and then came on three times and I never want you to leave. Uh, we were joking listeners that, like, I was like, can it, can it be Getting Curious with Jonathan Van and Dr. Osamah Khalil? Because I've just, I've loved having you on. I, you really are one of my most, I think I, you have been one of our most, like I had just gotten so much richness of knowledge from getting to learn from you. And I'm so grateful for your book. And also you guys, we haven't gotten to talk, I think I went into like a soliloquy about how much I love your book um prior to this, but I think I'm going to get it in, in our intro but can just in case we haven't, Dr. Khalil will, you, will you just tell us about the title of your book and why you are like the most perfect person to guide us from 1940's to now when it comes to understanding international policy and domestic policy?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Well, it's really sweet of you to say Jonathan and, and I can't thank you enough. I love being on and, and talking to you about it. Uh, so the book, *A World of*

Enemies really traces this intersection between America's domestic politics and domestic wars. So the wars at home -- on wars on crime, drugs, and terror and then the wars that were launched overseas over those same issues. And so it traces it really from Kennedy and, and even a little bit of a precursor to Kennedy with, with Dwight D. Eisenhower to the present day with President Biden. And so one of things I want readers to take away from is, you know, many of the issues we're grappling with today are not new and they're deeply rooted historically, we can trace them back to Kennedy. In some cases, we can trace them as you and I talked about in the first episode back to the end of the Second World War, maybe even before in some cases. But you know what I hope the readers take away from that is we tend to think about domestic politics is one thing and foreign policy is another. And what I try and show is that there, there are a lot of intersections in between and they not only do they influence each other but domestic politics and domestic policy has been exported overseas and foreign policy has come home with the wars at home, the war on terror, the war on drugs, the war on crime. So we've seen all these intersections over 6 to 7 decades.

JVN: And you're a literal historian, you're a doctor of history. So, I mean, you are, your whole adult life has been in academia and like leading up to like, I mean, I just think, and also it's like the time because you started writing this book before October 7th, I would think, right?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: I started doing this book, thinking about this book almost three decades ago, but I started writing about it, in earnest in 2019 and finished up the first draft late 2021. I have been tweaking it since. When October 7th occurred and we were in advanced prints at that point. So I was trying to tweak the book and I thought it stood well enough on its own in the arguments. Unfortunately, so much of what's happened since October 7th just confirms a number of the arguments in the book about how U.S. foreign policy has been militarized, how we don't deal with diplomacy, how we've ignored certain conflicts or, we've actually allowed them not only to fester, but we've made them more difficult to solve. And I think October 7th brought that to a head and everything since.

JVN: So, I mean, I think not to make this like, actually, I will not make this about me. I'm such a fucking good journalist. I can't stand it. Ok. So where we left off was, I think we, I think we got up to September 11th 2001 people that were of like, teenage adult age in 2001, like, if you're old enough to remember where you were in 2001. And you were like, in junior high or high school or older, there was like, significant the media onslaught and the media coverage and the way that we, like, I mean, we watched it at school like that entire day and the next day and the day after that, I mean, it was a huge event for the United States. September 11th was, I think over 3000 people were killed in this terrorist attack. And, you know, but even when I say terrorists not to like, and it was a terrorist attack but years and years ago, I think it was 2018, we did an episode of Getting Curious where that was the first time where I learned that, like, you know, when there's something like September 11th, it's a terrorist attack. But then when there's something like Timothy McVeigh, that's like lone wolf or just, it's like, who gets labeled as a terrorist and who gets labeled as like a non threat. And so just the way that, like, the press and the government will, certain people get labeled a certain thing and other people get labeled a certain thing and there's a lot of racism in that. So I buy that. I believe in, I believe that. But so September 11th is this gigantic terrorist attack which causes a which causes like the second Gulf War, like it caused like this, like Iraq number two, which we covered the first Gulf War in our second episode. But can you tell us like, what was the fallout from September 11th for the United States foreign policy?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Sure, that's, that's a great question. So just to kind of bring your readers up to speed. So, you know, George Bush has only been in office for less than nine months and it was a very contested election. We talked a little bit about this last time and there's good evidence that Bush actually didn't win the election, had the Supreme Court not intervened, stopped the recount, Al Gore would have been President. Over the next nine months, the Middle East and in particular, the Israeli Palestinian peace process is falling apart. And that's one area that Bush is focused on terrorism is not terrorism per se broadly speaking, is not a real area of focus. And this is going to be one of the points of criticism of President Bush and the Bush administration because he's being warned by the head of the CIA George Tenet by his counterterrorism Czar, Richard Clark "we're getting signals that something is coming."

So we talked a little about this in the second episode, there had been the attack on USS Cole in September 2000. So just before the election, which the US believes Al Qaeda as we often call it -- Al Qaeda is the more correct pronunciation in Arabic. But Al Qaeda is the pronunciation your audience might be more familiar with that. They and Bin Laden are

involved in the, in the USS Cole attack. Clark and Tenet are attempting through the spring and especially in this summer to get Bush's attention and it's not working to do something on. And the way they're describing it is "we're getting signals that something is coming." They couldn't get Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser or the president to really kind of take this seriously. Rice will kind of dismiss the claims and say we're working on a counterterrorism policy or terrorism policy and it's going to launch in September.

Now, let me also throw this caveat out. There's still a lot that we're learning about what the CIA was monitoring through the summer. Because the team that is responsible -- the hijackers -- are inside the US and the CIA is tracking two of them and we know Saudi Intelligence is somehow involved. But a lot of this evidence we're still learning about. So why were they? Why were they tracking these guys? We know they were, but how much did they know about them? What were they trying to learn? And this is going to be one of the points -- and for example, the 9/11 commission is going to look at and say, "why didn't you do more?" "Why didn't you, the CIA inform the FBI that you were monitoring these individuals?" And what the CIA will claim at the time is: "Well, we didn't tell them because effectively, we wanted to map this network. Who were they talking to? Who were they getting money from? And if we tell the FBI, the FBI is going to go arrest these guys and then we're not going to be able to figure out what's going on."

So, nevertheless, the US does not and the Bush administration does not stop or, or arrest these individuals. They fall off the radar --

JVN: And Dr. Khalil will you just help me really quick, really quick because we went over this like last time. So FBI is the FBI is like foreign, what's like, what, what's the difference between the FBI and the CIA? Again, I feel like you told us.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: That's a great question. So, so FBI is supposed to be a law enforcement, domestic law enforcement. But they do have an intelligence and counterterrorism division that coordinates with the CIA on issues like this. CIA is only supposed to focus overseas and it's supposed to be intelligence and intelligence gathering, but also "operations." In other words, covert operations overseas, and this is all...

JVN: So there is like some liaising but like overall FBI is domestic, CIA is foreign and they do liaise in like some departments but like, generally.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Exactly so and in fact, one of the things that's exposed by 9/11 is, the liaison committee, especially on counterterrorism doesn't work well together. So what happens is you come into a meeting, you're basically assigned to this committee when your career is over. Like that's how, you know, your career is over. We're going to put you on this committee and you go into this, you go into this meeting and the CIA says "oh, well, what are you working on?" And you say "I don't know, what are you working on?" And nobody wants to share information. So this is all pre 9/11. So it's one of the big things that was exposed was, how little these, organizations were talking to each other and how much overlap there had been. But that redundancy didn't help with analysis. It didn't help with actual operations. Now, we're told that's improved in the past 20 plus years, right? CIA will say it's improved. FBI will say it's improved. Perhaps but nevertheless, on 9/11 they're not communicating well and then obviously the attack happens.

And it's traumatic, it's obviously traumatic for everyone, as you can imagine. You talked about whether you were in, in high school or grade school or daycare, especially the terrible

imagery that's coming across. And very quickly, the Bush administration settles on -- because this was a question you had last time -- very quickly the Bush administration settles on that this is Bin Laden. This was Al Qaeda.

Now the question is, what do you do? And so within three days, roughly after 9/11, President Bush is going to convene, his top national security team at Camp David, the, the presidential retreat at Camp David and we're going to see a split emerge in the administration. So Colin Powell, on the one side as Secretary of State is going to argue that the United States can pull coalition together to invade Afghanistan, overthrow the Taliban, who's the government at that point, which the US does not have a relationship with but have been in negotiations with over several different things including the surrender of Bin Laden pre 9/11.

On the other side, you have Vice President Cheney, Dick Cheney. You have the neoconservative wing of the Bush administration, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld, and Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. And they're arguing the following, this couldn't have happened without state support and that state is not Afghanistan, the state that was behind this is Iraq. Now there's going to be really tense exchanges between, for example, from what we know about this meeting between Colin Powell and Don Rumsfeld and that splits going to get worse over the next three years. But what Powell is going to say effectively is we have no evidence on Iraq. We have no evidence that Iraq was involved. We have really good evidence that Bin Laden and Al Qaeda was involved. We know that he has a "safe harbor" -- that's the term they'll use -- in Afghanistan. The Taliban has been protecting him and we can get a coalition together to go to Afghanistan.

What we also know is that even though the neocons don't win that argument at Camp David, that Bush is already thinking about Iraq. Some would argue, we have some evidence that he was thinking about, formulating a policy on Iraq and a new invasion of Iraq well, before 9/11, when he came into office. But clearly, right after that meeting, he's going to do a few things. He's going to agree at the meeting -- he will say we're going to go with Afghanistan first. And Colin Powell will later recount that the way he took that is we're going to go with Afghanistan first and then we're going to Iraq.

And what [Bush] will do almost exactly the time. So you may also remember this, your audience may remember this is, he's going to give the very public speech to Congress in which he lays out --

JVN: About the weapons of mass destruction?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: No, that's later. This is the, "you're with us or you're with the terrorists."

JVN: Oh oh, very binary. Very binary.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Within roughly a month after 9/11, the United States invades Afghanistan and is not successful in capturing Bin Laden. It is successful in overthrowing the Taliban, but it's not successful in capturing Bin Laden or his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was an Egyptian physician. And they do kill or capture some key figures in, Al Qaeda but not Bin Laden and Zawahiri.

And where Bin Laden and Zawahiri go at that point is anybody's guess. We later find out they're in Pakistan, but there's all kinds of rumors that will then occur over the next 10 years.

Where is he? It becomes like a Where's Waldo situation? Is he hiding somewhere in the borderland? You, you hear all kinds of leaks in the press.

JVN: I remember the NBC nightly news. I remember them being like these caves are really hard, the terrain in Afghanistan. It's really hard because they could just go here. And I mean, I remember, I think it was Tom Brokaw or it was Brian Williams and it was definitely one of them. And I remember like seeing this on the nightly news and I was like, wow, they're just not going to get him. That's just, you know, you think they could but they just couldn't. Like, that was like a whole thing.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Well, if you recall. So this is, this is going to play a role as we talked about in domestic politics. It's going to play a role in the 2004 campaign. But so if you recall, the story that had been told to the press was that Bin Laden had been holed up in this "mountain stronghold" of Tora Bora. This had been a base for the anti-Soviet insurgency in the eighties, the Mujahideen, the holy warriors that the U.S., the CIA and Pakistan have been funding to fight against the Soviet Union. And that he was back at this base with dedicated followers and he was going to fight to the death.

The United States had in the initial aftermath of 9/11, had a lot of international support, even in quarters that were not expected. So for example, Iran, which had very little, [and was] quite frankly opposed to Al Qaeda both ideologically and religiously, it had nothing in common with Al Qaeda. And [Iran] wanted to see them captured and [the Taliban] overthrown. They're providing information to the United States. Other groups who the United States had been at odds with like Hezbollah, for example, we can talk a little more about them were also trying to distance themselves from the 9/11 attacks. And then you had kind of a broader appeal, everybody, from Putin and Russia to Western European allies were all backing the US.

JVN: Just to recap really quickly. So what you're saying is, is that like you had a split in the Bush administration between Colin Powell on one side that was like, Al Qaeda is good for this. I don't know about all this Iraq stuff, but then you had Donald Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz and they were like, no, no, no, it's like we need to do Iraq like this is our opportunity to like for whatever reason. So then I remember like France was like, no, Putin was like mmm, because did, did Russia support that or you were just saying what, what did Russia think about that?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: So, so right now, I think the important thing to remember is the period we're talking about is like three days after 9/11 –

JVN: Yes.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: And right now the focus is on who did this. And is it in Afghanistan? Right? And the belief that it's Bin Laden in Afghanistan, they're within 24 hours of –

JVN: But there's already like a secret thing for like Iraq like, was that the 10 days later there was already like a little –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah, that's unfolding, that's unfolding secretly over the next, in the, just the initial days after 9/11 and the first two weeks after 9/11. And planning will be initiated at Central Command within two weeks after 9/11. But that's all secret. The other

thing that the Bush administration is going to do is they will create a national security policy related to terrorism. And so this is where and it takes back to how you framed it. What do we do? How do we define terrorism? And how do we define global terrorism?

So what the Bush administration is going to say is the war on terrorism is against all organizations with global terrorists, those who have the ability to conduct terrorism operations globally. So it's not just focused on Al Qaeda, it's not just focused on Bin Laden. Instead what they're going to do is initiate this policy that lumps in a bunch of groups together. So of course, there will be Al Qaeda and Bin Laden, but also Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic resistance movement, Hezbollah, Lebanon's Party of God, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and one or two other groups. So a bunch of groups that they're now piling together and saying these are all terrorist organizations with global capabilities and the United States and they're all bundled on under this policy, this new counterterrorism policy in which the United States will either directly or working with partners and allies indirectly target these organizations.

So that's pretty much not known to the American public. Where it will become evidenced if you want to say Mid-September 2001 into September 2002 and 2003 is the following. You're going to have domestic law cases where the United States will say, we don't really have a lot of Al Qaeda operatives. Al Qaeda is and I think that's the important thing for your audience to remember. They're very small, right? Bin Laden has maybe 200 maybe 300 at most fighters.

I mean, if you think about like, you know the Al Qaeda birthday party -- with the Bouncy House, everybody comes together to have the cake. There's going to be about 300 people there. That's it. Right. And then they have a couple of supporters in and around the Persian Gulf. Almost all of them are based in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It's very small. He doesn't have a ton of support. But what the Bush administration will try and do is say there's this much broader network of terrorist organizations with global reach that are in the 60,000, 70,000, 100,000 terrorists around the world and that's who we're fighting against. So they want to make this as big of a target as possible and it's still really shadowy and really unclear, but that also helps from a public relations perspective.

How do you sell this at home? How do you sell the war on terror at home? It's very simple -- you're running that video as you talked about of the planes hitting the towers of the Pentagon on fire, or the plane that went down in Pennsylvania -- well this is who we're fighting against, right? The US will get support from France and Germany and Russia will not have an issue with countering Al Qaeda and terrorism. That's not their, that's not what they will dispute.

For example, is Hezbollah a terrorist organization is Hamas a terrorist organization [they will ask?] Cwe can we differentiate these? But those are behind the scenes discussions not necessarily out in the open. What will happen is by President Bush's first state of the Union address. So here we are in January 2002 where he announces here's the axis of evil and this is where the evil. And this is where [the policy is] on public display --

JVN: Uh, the axis of evil.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah. So this is where --

JVN: I remember this.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Right, on public display. Who is the axis of evil? It's Iraq, North Korea and Iran. And then there are junior members, key members in the administration will come and talk about junior members of the axis of evil. But what the axis of evil speech does is a couple of things. Domestically, it starts to bring up some of those secret conversations that Rumsfeld and Cheney, what they've been pushing behind the scenes that we have to focus on Iraq. And in fact, one of the things we know about -- that they're pushing for Iraq in the discussions at Camp David was the following. Rumsfeld will actually say that there's a public relations aspect to this that we have to think about. There are no "good quality targets" -- as he'll put it -- in Afghanistan. But if Baghdad falls, that's a quality target, that's something we can show the rest of the world that we mean business in the war on terror. Afghanistan doesn't as, as he'll talk about over and over again. It doesn't have these quality targets.

So the axis of evil speech is part of this kind of setting the stage now domestically that the target has shifted. We overthrew the Taliban in Afghanistan. We haven't caught Bin Laden, but that's just a matter of time -- We will catch him eventually. And now we're talking about reshaping the region.

So when you start to talk about Iraq, Iran and then North Korea as part of the axis of evil, you're setting the stage for what's to come. Now, what we also know is behind the scenes, this also matches a policy memorandum that Rumsfeld has written, which is to say, what is our strategy in the war on terror? Our strategy in the war on terror is to overthrow two or three states in and around the region. Afghanistan --

JVN: Which is regime change. We talked about regime change in the Reagan administration with like what we were, you know, meddling and, and so I think yes, it always comes back to regime change, or like overthrowing a government.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Right. It's a government we want -- it's the government we want to work with. It's not the government that they made. What we will also say is we're doing the population a favor. The population doesn't want Saddam Hussein, right? He's running a regime. And look, this is not to defend Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein was this, ruthless dictator, he was very brutal. The challenge now is after a decade. And we talked about this last time. I talked about how the US had tried secretly to overthrow Saddam and it's not working, for eight or nine years after the first Persian Gulf War the US is running a regime change policy indirectly. So the CIA is trying to find an Iraqi general that will help overthrow Saddam or exile groups and it's just not successful. So now what 9/11 provides is the rationale to do it directly. We can do it directly and we can sell this at home.

So the axis of evil [speech] begins quite frankly, building that domestic support for an intervention. Meanwhile, and I want to make this clear Afghanistan is not settled. So the Taliban has been overthrown but they have filtered out and they've gone into effectively ghost mode. Now, what we now know is that there was outreach from different elements of the Taliban that some wanted to surrender. Some wanted to be included in the new Afghan government. And the US said, there's no surrender. And there's no including you in the government. And so what's going to happen is the Taliban will bleed into the population, some will flee, some will go into exile, and then reformulate and come back in and that won't take long. It's only within a year or two after being overthrown that you see the insurgency in Afghanistan starts to build up again while the US is distracted in Iraq. So I just want to throw that out there for your readers not to not to confuse them.

But from the US domestic perspective, you can draw a straight line to, to basically three events: the axis of evil speech, in which publicly now the US is targeting Iraq. President Bush will then go to West Point In June. So from January to June, he'll give the commencement address at West Point in which he'll start talking about the need for preemption. That the war on terror, the lesson we've learned from September 11th is that we will have to go out and fight before we're attacked and we have to include states and non state actors, particularly those states that have supported terrorism in the past or are doing so now. Now a state, for example, like Iraq. And then the other thing [Bush will] bring up is you can't have those states that have supported terrorism and have weapons of mass destruction programs that link is going to be very deadly for the United States and we have to prevent that. So that's what preemption is going to do. So that's in June. And then by September, the United States – the Bush administration will release what's known as the National Security Strategy of 2002 in which it's going to take the full elements of “you're with us or you're with the terrorists,” the “axis of evil.” and of this notion of preemption and add what's known as the “freedom agenda.” So now we're going to democratize the Middle East and we're going to begin with Iraq. And so Iraq is going to be this great test case of democracy.

JVN: So when do we actually invade Iraq?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: So that won't be until 2003. So now at September [2002] and now one of the things that Bush is going to do is go to Congress. And you've got two things happening. Keep in mind it's a midterm election year. So again, domestic politics is going to come in. By September- October, the Bush administration is going to go to Congress and say we want an authorization for military force. And this is where it's going to get interesting because now it's not just Republicans pushing this it is Democrats as well. So key conservative Democrats and those who want to run against Bush in 2004 are trying to figure out what position do they want? What's Joe Biden? Senator Joe Biden going to do? Biden is considering running in 2004. Senator John Kerry is considering running in 2004. Hillary Clinton is now a senator and is considering running in 2004. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, who had been, Gore's Vice President is considering running in 2004. And so those three or four, on their own each have particular presidential aspirations and are trying to, are trying to find some way to influence the Bush administration's policy here. So, and what level of support?

So you'll get, John Kerry will say things like, “Look, we all agree Saddam Hussein needs to go. The question is, how do we do it or should the Iraqis do it?” Lieberman and Clinton are going to back a use of military force. Biden is going try and find a middle road so that debate is going to go on into the fall in October and then the authorization of military force will pass. But none of those Democrats are going to benefit from supporting the war. In fact, what it's going to do is be a part of Bush's re-election campaign.

JVN: Because wasn't it also like, wasn't it like Senator Sanders the only one who voted against? But didn't he, like, famously, wasn't he like the only one who voted against or something?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: He wasn't the only one who voted against. There was more than a few. It passed by a comfortable margin. So the other thing, to take away from is this, what's going on in the fall of 2002, which is the Bush administration is rolling out a deliberate disinformation campaign. And quite frankly, this has been going on for over a year. So for example, you will have the show Frontline on PBS. So Frontline within a month or less than

two months after September 11th. So this is now November 2001. Will do a story in which they have “defectors” from Iraq talking about the weapons of mass destruction program that they knew about. And a terrorism training camp in which Iraqi intelligence taught terrorists how to hijack airplanes. And the reporter will ask, “well, did you see a connection on 9/11?” [The defector said], “Well, when I saw what happened on 9/11, I immediately thought the training camp.” So you already see the ground being laid by these defectors with ties to the CIA two months after 9/11 trying to link Iraq to 9/11.

The Bush administration will take that another step. Vice President Cheney will start talking about links and an alleged meeting between the mastermind of 9/11, the leader of the group [of hijackers], Mohamed Atta and Iraqi intelligence that turns out completely false.

JVN: In this Frontline video or this Frontline segment in October, November 2001, there are Iraqis like defectors, “defectors” who are saying that there's like these militarized training camps between the Iraqi government and these people. And, but then it turned out that those subjects in this article had links to the United States CIA, that's what you're saying?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah.

JVN: So it's literally like a little bit of a wag the dog.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah.

JVN: Like a full on wag the dog.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Jonathan, PBS actually has had to go back in and add all these editorial notes that they could never confirm these claims. You know, it's like three years later, 2004, 2005, where they go back and add these editorial notes that we could never confirm these claims by these defectors. They had a –

JVN: By then the damage is already fucking done. Like three years, four years later.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: The damage is done.

JVN: We learned about misinformation and disinformation here. Like we know that when people first hear something, they will always think that that's the true thing.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: That's the true thing. Here's the other thing they will do a dramatization of this training camp with this Boeing 737 or 707, a dilapidated 707 where they train these guys. They'll do a dramatization showing how they train them to take over airplanes. They will have a sketch. One of the defectors will draw this sketch literally in crayon of the map of this training facility where the Boeing is and this is shown to the public as if this is like the equivalent of a satellite image And it's still on the PBS website -- maybe not after this episode -- but it's still on the PBS website. I show it to my students. This is what's presented as evidence this, like this crayon map, ok?

JVN: And Frontline. I mean, Frontline on PBS is like, I, I, I just consider them the most valid, the most down the middle, the most neutral, like not politicized.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: You would never guess it. So we talked about these fake defectors. So what they actually are is they're members of a group called the Iraqi National Congress, which was an exile group funded by the CIA based in London, claiming to be defectors. Here's where the defectors also come in. Now we start to get in the fall [of 2002]. Now that was, remember that [report] was within two months of 9/11. That initial report was in November of 2001. Now we get to September-October of 2002 as there is the debate over

the authorization for military force. Keep in mind on the anniversary of 9/11 leading into the anniversary of 9/11. The first year [anniversary] cover the New York Times” [a story on] Iraq's weapons for mass destruction program, is underway and has not, has not been dismantled as Saddam Hussein claims and as the UN confirmed -- defectors claim again, here we get the defectors that the WMD program is active and it includes a nuclear component. So that's another part of this disinformation. And who does that leak, get leaked to Judith Miller at the New York Times? So the New York Times has that [on the] front page. And if you look at the same day that appears in the New York Times, there's articles about kind of like the missed signals of 9/11, warning about an Iraqi nuclear program, all of it on the front page above the fold and you know how important that is. And again, we're talking about 2001. We're not talking about 2024. How important that is building the case for war.

You're also going to get leaks from the Bush administration. So here's one of things Dick Cheney is going to do. So Dick Cheney has already told this lie and he's told it where - on NBC Meet the Press. The Sunday news show that everybody inside Washington goes on –
JVN: My mom watches. That's what I watched.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Right? He goes on Meet the Press and he says we have evidence that Mohammed Atta the head of the 9/11 hijackers met with Iraqi intelligence in Eastern Europe. Ok. Then he's going to bring in Dick Armev who's one of the key Republicans of Texas in the House [of Representatives]. And he's going to tell him we've got two things. We've got evidence that the Iraqis are trying to get uranium cake right from Africa. They never say where. Just somewhere in Africa. The Iraqis have gone to go get uranium cake and we know that they have bought, they've been able to acquire early versions of drones. And here's just to make it sound even more nefarious. They also have digital maps of the Eastern United States.

These are the kind of things and he's telling this to Dick Armev. And Dick Armev will later say I left the meeting and I fully believed him. Why would Dick Cheney lie to me? I've known Dick Cheney for 23 years. He's the Vice President of the United States. He's a member of my party. Why would you lie to me? Andnd then it wasn't until maybe a year or two later that I realized I had been goosed that he had just, he had completely misled me, so –

JVN: So there was no, there was no real evidence of a uranium cake or like nowhere?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: No! There's no uranium there. In fac this is going to be part of that, the nasty back and forth between Democrats with ties to the intelligence community who are going to come out and say the uranium cake story is false. The ties to Iraqi intelligence are false. All of this is part of this broad and sweeping campaign –

JVN: And so when is that? When's that gonna happen?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: That starts to happen in the spring and actually as things go bad, [in Iraq]. After the US invades and everything goes bad -- when it's frankly too late. Is when you're going to start to see these stories falling apart –

JVN: So when do they invade, when do they invade Iraq?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: March April of 2003? Right. So it's going to be –

JVN: March April of 2003 and then, and then when that is like video of like Saddam Hussein, like being found in that like hole, like when does that happen?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: That's in the fall of 2003. That'll be, that'll be in the fall of 2003 when he's captured.

JVN: Fast.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: I want to make this point. So here's where the disinformation campaign works. Pew Research goes out and does a poll and says to Americans especially registered voters. Do you believe Iraq was involved in the 9/11 attacks? And at that point, we're talking October-November of 2002. So a year after 9/11, 80% will say yes, Iraq was involved. Now, that number is going to decrease by the time the US invades, but it's still a majority of Americans polled, believe Iraq was involved in 9/11 and Iraq has an active weapons of mass destruction campaign and the majority will be in favor of an invasion. So when the US invades in the spring.

And this is again back to your point about France was opposed to this, Germany is opposed, to this Russia was opposed to this. That does not stop Don Rumsfeld. What Don Rumsfeld is going to talk about is "you go to war with the coalition you have." "We have put together a coalition of key states." In other words, those that support us and that's where we're going to war with.

JVN: Because the United Kingdom like famously supported that, right? Like they aligned –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yes, yeah. And in fact, unlike the United States, I mean to give the UK credit, the UK has conducted at least two assessments -- inquiries -- into why the why this happened. And what they will find is the following. Because who was the Prime Minister, Tony Blair. So it's Tony Blair's government. He had been a close ally of Bill Clinton and he will after 9/11 will be fully in favor of the Bush doctrine and interventions. And one of the things that one of the major inquiries found was this: Why did Blair do this? Blair feared losing influence with the Bush administration. [Blair] knew that the Bush administration was going to go to war. [Blair] didn't want to be on the outside. [The UK] thought it could help influence internally. We thought we could help get them to use the UN. We could get them to do certain things if we showed influence.

But here's the other thing UK intelligence is going to get juiced. So they actually have the memos of Jack Straw, the Foreign Minister putting pressure on the British Intelligence and saying "you need to show that Iraq here is the major threat." Because what they're going to get back is a report that says actually we don't have good evidence of a WMD program in Iraq. We believe it's been dismantled. We do have strong evidence of an Iranian WMD program and a North Korean WMD program, but we don't have good evidence of an Iraqi program. And Jack Straw will come back and tell them this is not good enough. You need to show that "Iraq is a unique threat." So they're going to juice British intelligence the same way that the Bush administration puts pressure on the CIA to show that Iraq is a threat.

JVN: So there is a year long uh disinformation campaign from September 11th, 2001 all the way to the first anniversary, September 11th, 2002 where the Bush administration is laying the groundwork for an invasion of Iraq, even though there isn't explicit evidence around Iraq being a part of, but they've so they've made, but no problem, they'll manufacture that they'll get on Frontline.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: So, there were studies of some of the press coverage from 2001 and especially 2002- 2003 about how many articles had, for example, a pro-war bent. Hundreds of articles with a pro-war bent, dozens if not more op ed's are coming out.

Because what you would get, what the administration did really effectively, Jonathan was, they created this echo chamber. And so here's how it would work. Condoleezza Rice would say something or for example, President Bush says something in Columbus, Ohio right before the midterm elections. And he uses this great phrase. "We can't wait for the smoking gun that will come in the form of a mushroom cloud." Think about that phrase. He's going to say that and Condi Rice will repeat it. Dick Cheney will repeat it. And then what you'll get is on the Senate floor or in the House, key Congressmen and Senators will also keep reusing this phrase or what they'll do is even better. They'll say this. "I spoke with the national security adviser and she informed me..." and they'll lay out these claims like the connections to Iraqi intelligence, like the WMD program. So it gets recycled on the Senate floor and then picked up by the nightly news.

The other place where they'll do it and this is where it worked amazingly well is the use of key think tanks -- the American Enterprise Institute, the Brookings Institution, the Heritage Foundation, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. All of these pro-war think tanks where their experts would go on the nightly news or 24/7 cable. They don't have to go on the nightly news -- 24/7 cable like CNN, Fox. And they're repeating the same claims and of course, "access to information" that they got from the administration.

So now you've got a full spectrum of support for the war and who's not being featured, anti-war voices, anti-war academic experts are not being brought out. Instead, what you get is the military experts. You get the expert from the think tank, all with ties to the administration and some they don't have ties to the administration.

One of the great examples is a guy named Kenneth Pollack. So Kenneth Pollack is coming out of the Brookings Institution. He's married to Ted Koppel's daughter -- remember Ted Koppel from ABC News Nightline, who herself is a reporter, right? He's married to Ted Koppel's daughter and of course, he worked for the National Security Council under Clinton. So he's going to write a book called *The Threatening Storm*.

JVN: Yes.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: It's going to come out right in the middle of this disinformation campaign. And what he's going to argue is the following and he's going to reproduce it in op ed's in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal. So the left wing New York Times, the right wing Wall Street Journal. And the argument is going to be this: we can fight a non-nuclear Saddam now or we can fight a nuclear Saddam tomorrow, but we will have to fight Saddam because he wants hegemony over the Middle East. So that's the [claim] over and over again. He's gonna hit that point. And what's important about somebody like Kenneth Pollack is because he's coming out of the Clinton administration and he works with the National Security Council and his book, he's going to claim has been vetted by the CIA and the NSC. So you know it's true. I'm sharing with you what I can that's not classified or has been deemed to be releasable.

So this is one of the things where they were able to get voices that would appeal to you as a centrist Dem living in the Midwest or even in Westchester County, New York. You know, I'm not comfortable with the war but man, I'm not comfortable with us going to war, but Saddam Hussein is a bad guy. There's been a decade of demonization of Saddam Hussein of Iraq, of his weapons of mass destruction program of his torture chambers. He could do anything. Saddam. He's like, he's like your perfect quintessential evil character. He can do anything and you can expect him to do anything but one of the things the Bush administration is going

to have trouble with, they're still encountering a lot of resistance and reluctance. And so what's remarkable about this disinformation campaign is how malleable it was. So, in other words, they went from WMDs are a threat. Saddam Hussein was responsible for 9/11. So we have those two connections. Now, it's human rights.

JVN: Oh, weapons of mass destruction. You guys? I had to think about WMD for a minute. But, yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. So is that then? And now it's human rights and now Saddam is just torturing all the Iraqis –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Just torturing all these Iraqis. And so now we have to save those Iraqis and, and then if that doesn't work, democracy.

JVN: So all this is happening in Iraq from 2000 and, or it's like, it's giving Afghanistan then we're in Iraq since 2001 Bush. Like, kinda really rides this domestic, this whole terrorism thing to a second term. I remember like in 2004. Yeah, because like, I, I think I missed being able to vote in 2004 by like four months or five months. Like I would have been able to, like, I would have turned 18 in 2005. So I missed that presidential vote. But I remember thinking that if I could have voted, I was like, well, God, it's like, kind of scary to like, switch courses in the middle of this. And we've always like, so like even me, like, so that seems deliberate. There was, I mean, he really cruises to re-election. So as all of this is happening, what is going on in Israel and in Palestine.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: I want to draw this connection, but bring and bring it, bring it back to Iraq. So one of the things that's happening with the [beginning of the] Bush administration is there's pressure from especially Arab, the key Arab states like Saudi Arabia, you have to restart the negotiations, you have to get the second [Palestinian] uprising under control? But the Bush administration has come out and done the opposite.

So at the same time in that, that summer of 2002 where it's already initiated the Bush doctrine, President Bush is going to come out and say we will no longer, the United States will no longer have relations with Yasser Arafat, the president of the Palestinian Authority. We want a Palestinian leadership that's "untainted by terror." It's the exact phrase he will use when the Palestinians have a new leadership that's untainted by terror, the United States will welcome that leadership and we work with them to achieve a Palestinian state. So that's in the summer of 2002.

So as all of this, this disinformation campaign is unfolding, you still have the second [Palestinian] uprising going on in which you have a heavy Israeli military presence in and attacks on Palestinian civilian areas. You have Palestinian attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians, suicide bombings conducted either by Hamas or by the mainstream Fatah movement and um –

JVN: Dr. Khalil will you tell me something?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah, sure.

JVN: Can I, can I recap something just to make sure that I'm correct about this and make sure that our listeners get it too because I want to make sure that I'm right about this. So you have Yitzhak Rabin get assassinated by the far right wing Israeli. Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat and Clinton had come to the Oslo Accords. Then election happens. It's now Bush, Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated, I think like, right, but he's assassinated. And so, and that's

why like the Oslo Accords are kind of like spiraling, not working because like there's this big turnover?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yes.

JVN: And then the second intifada that's like, is that like Palestinians uprising against the occupation? And was there like what was not to get too off track? But was the first intifada like when Israel came in, like kicked out the Palestinians, was that the like or that's Nakba? What is that? Oh my god –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: The Nakba was in 1948 when Israel was created and Palestine society was destroyed and some 800,000 Palestinians become refugees. So that's 1948. The first intifada occurs in 1987 and this is 20 years into the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. It's an organic uprising against the Israeli occupation and it really to challenge Israeli rule. And it's led mostly by youth/

JVN: And you haven't and that was in the eighties, you said?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: In 1987. It's led mostly by the youth. And not to complicate this. But the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) exists, it has activists inside the West Bank and Gaza even though it's heavily suppressed. But the leadership is in exile at that point in Tunisia. So Arafat who's the leader of the PLO is in exile in Tunisia and will slowly take control over the intifada and use it to try and create relations, not just with the United States, but with Israel and eventual negotiations. Now that's going to take some time to unfold.

Israel is going to work to do two things. Suppress the intifada, the first intifada. This is 87 to 92-93 and ignore the PLO. Eventually though it's going to reach an agreement with the PLO, what becomes known as the Oslo Accords in 1993. And that's where we get that famous scene of Arafat and Rabin shaking hands in the White House lawn and overseen by President Clinton. A couple of things to remember. The Oslo Accords is the beginning of a negotiation. So it's an initial recognition. What you have is the PLO recognizes Israel. Israel recognizes the PLO as a negotiating partner. That's it. It doesn't say we recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians and an eventual Palestinian government of a Palestinian state. Just that we recognize you as a negotiating partner to end this conflict.

What will then ensue are seven years of negotiations. It's supposed to be five, but there's seven years of negotiations in between Rabin is assassinated by an Israeli settler. So that's in 1995. In 1996 Benjamin Netanyahu is elected as Prime Minister and his whole goal is to scuttle the Oslo Accords. He not even shy about it. I'm going to kill the Oslo Accords. There will be no Palestinian state. Now he is only Prime Minister for about three years and his replacement comes back is now Ehud Barak, the famous general.

So it's in 2000 when Barak comes in and we talked a little bit about this in the second episode. Barak will come in. President Clinton is on his way out of office and will say we're going to try and pull together a high stakes summit. I'm going to bring you to Camp David in the summer of 2000 and we're going to negotiate the end of this. Remember Oslo was supposed to be a five-year interim agreement, but the negotiations have gone on for seven years, And even by the time they get to Camp David, the two sides are far apart. They haven't had the preliminary negotiations. I think I told you that story.

JVN: So it's Ehud Barak and, and Arafat and Clinton. And then, yeah, and then you told us this story and it was, and then, but basically Arafat gets –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: He gets blamed.

JVN: Kind of gets screwed.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah, he says to Clinton, "we're not ready. I don't think we're ready." Barak has not been negotiating in good faith. The preliminary negotiations haven't gone. They actually, they haven't even been held. We haven't really been talking and he says, you the negotiations are going to fail and you're going to blame me." And Clinton says, "I promise not to blame you." And of course they have the negotiations and they fail and who's Clinton blame.

But Barak is weak politically. He's not popular back at home. He's weak and he's being pressed on the right by another famous Israeli General, Ariel Sharon, the founder of the settlement movement. Hardcore, hardcore right wing Israeli Likudnik, the Israeli Likud party.

JVN: Oh my God, that's how you say that word?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Likudnik yeah, yeah.

JVN: Oh, my God. Oh my God. I, I, I have been sounding that out so wrong in my mind. I was always like the, the, Liku, Liku, I think I must be dyslexic. How do you say it again?

Likud –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: The party is Likud. Likudnik is kind of like a nickname for someone who's an activist in the Likud party, yeah.

JVN: Ok. Likud party. OK. Yes. Got it. Ok. I'm with you. So he's getting pressured –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah, he's getting, he's getting pressured by the right from Sharon. So when the negotiations collapse, and I think one of the things that's missed is when the negotiations collapse, the second intifada doesn't start immediately. It doesn't start a day later.

JVN: That's 2000 and then the second intifada doesn't start until –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: It starts in September of 2000. But what's the trigger? The trigger is mostly linked to Sharon's visit to what's known as the Temple Mount or the Haram al-Sharif in Arabic. So this is where you see where the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque are right, the area where the Wailing Wall is also located. So it's one of the most sensitive and holy sites, both for Muslims and for Jews.

Now Sharon is going to go do this very provocative visit to the Temple Mount. And he's deliberately provoking. What he's saying is "we have a right to walk here. We have as much right to walk here as Muslims do. And I'm going to show you we have a right to walk here. And there is a heavy police presence.

JVN: And what year is this again Dr. Khalil?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: September 2000. Everything's coming to a head in September 2000. Everything is coming to a head. The negotiations have collapsed. But they're still talking. The summit failed, but they're still talking. And that's one of the other things that's missed. So even though the summit fails and Clinton blames Arafat, they're still talking, they're still negotiating.

Then Sharon does the visit to the Temple Mount with a heavy police presence. There's a lot of anger among Palestinians. And so when the second intifada starts, it starts with an initial set of protests and rock throwing and then a heavy Israeli response to this and then it starts to spiral. What you start to see in September is this heavy Israeli response. And the idea is, we're going to teach the Palestinians a lesson. We're going to teach Arafat a lesson and we're going to show them right. You know, we're going to get those concessions [in the negotiations]. And so you're going to have a large number of Palestinian deaths and that's going to create in September and October this spiral [of violence].

And it's not until the first month or two into the intifada that you get the first suicide bombing in response. But it's after a number of Palestinian deaths. But keep in mind what's going on in the US. You have an election. We've got Bush v. Gore that's coming up. But the negotiations are still going on. They go on up until Clinton is on the way of leaving office in December of 2000. It's only when Sharon gets elected right in January of 2001 that it's over, right. Bush comes into office –

JVN: So Sharon, oh, oh, because Ehud Barak had been so he gets so he loses to Ariel Sharon. And so then it's Ariel Sharon and basically like a newly elected Bush.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: And so here's the other thing we know. The second intifada is spiraling, Sharon has been elected. We have some insights from key cabinet members that what Colin Powell wants is to restart the negotiations. "We have to get involved." The key Arab states like Saudi Arabia, like Jordan want us to get back involved. And Clinton says I'm sorry, Bush says the following: "I'm not going to do what Clinton did. I'm not going to devote my presidency to this. I met Sharon. I know Sharon and we're going to lean" -- literally say -- "we're going to lean back towards the Israelis." Implying that Clinton had leaned too far toward the Palestinians. And when Powell tells him, the violence is going to spiral if you do that, if we don't get involved. And he says, "well, sometimes a show of force by one side will help settle the issue." So he's willing to rely on Ariel Sharon's reputation as this hardline general to basically go crush the Palestinian intifada. And then force concessions on the Palestinians. That doesn't work.

Unfortunately, what it does is it leads to kind of entrenching this conflict and entrenching the violence. And that will kick in throughout the spring of 2001 leading into 9/11. So we talked about what was supposed to happen on 9/11 besides the attack. One thing that was supposed to happen was through the spring into the summer is that Powell wants the US to reengage with negotiations and he's getting push back from the right wing of the administration, particularly Cheney and Rumsfeld, and he can't get the president's support. We have indications that he was supposed to make a major announcement on 9/11 or 9/12 about the US re-engaging in the peace process with the goal of a Palestinian state as the outcome. That never happens. 9/11 happens and that gets sidetracked.

Now, what that brings us to, as I mentioned now, over the next year. So now you're at 9/11 over the next year, the intifada continues just as the US invades Afghanistan, it has a secret --

JVN: Which, which Dr Khalil, correct me if I'm wrong on this though. Do you like, and that's not really getting that much press coverage because like the US just like had like its fucking hands full and we like, we are so focused on this thing. Like, I don't remember hearing anything about like an intifada or like what was going on in Israel or anything in early 2000.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: So actually it was getting a ton of press coverage and it's challenging. Because what Palestinians are trying to get across is there's all this focus on negotiations, but the occupation never stopped. We're still being occupied. Settlements are still being built. We have a "government," but our government is corrupt -- the government led by Arafat—and it's not really fully in control of the territory. We still have Israeli checkpoints. Israel still controls all the resources, they control the cell phone network, they control everything. We can't get to our jobs without passing through three or four or five checkpoints. And this is before the intifada. This is before the second uprising.

So trying to get that message across and what the pushback they're getting from the media is: why did Arafat turn down the deal at Camp David? And then once the suicide bombings start: when are the suicide bombings going to end. So that narrative kicks in which is really reflective of the Clinton administration's position.

So where it gets put on the back burner, Jonathan is after 9/11 because now it's all within that war on terror, that war on terror narrative because now it's suicide bombings have to stop. Palestinians are terrorists and Palestinians supported, not only did Iraq support 9/11, Palestinians supported 9/11. There's a famous, kind of infamous video clip supposedly of Palestinians somewhere in the West Bank cheering 9/11. And it's one of these clips that will get shown over and over again on Fox or on CNN.

And that becomes the narrative. Oh, look, "they hate us." Ok. "And they're terrorists." So by the time you get to another rationale for the war for the invasion of Iraq it is going to be this: You want us, the Bush administration, us, the United States to re-engage in negotiations? Well, the road to peace in Jerusalem starts in Baghdad. Because we're going to reshape this whole region and because we want a Palestinian leadership untainted by terror. Well, Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat have ties, right? They're friendly. If we get rid of Saddam and we get rid of Arafat, now we can reshape the whole region.

We have President Bush talking to Condoleezza Rice and Karen Hughes, his key media person about his freedom agenda. And one of the things he says is the Palestinian territories could be a "lab" for my freedom agenda. Just think, the combination of democracy in Iraq and democracy in the Palestinian territories. "What a message this will send to the rest of the region," this will be our lab. So where that becomes important? Is that not only does the war in Iraq go bad, But now the Bush administration is going to start after Bush is re-elected after Yasser Arafat dies in November of 2004, right to say we need elections in the Palestine

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JVN: Oh Arafat dies in 2004?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah.

JVN: How did he die?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Well, that's a good question. So he dies of natural causes supposedly. He gets sick. He is taken to France for medical treatment and never comes back -- he comes back in a coffin. The Israelis have hinted -- there's a book out there uh by a well-known journalist where the Israelis have hinted that Sharon had Arafat killed. They only they won't come out and say it in black and white. The Israelis have hinted it. But of course, if you say this, you're a conspiracy theorist.

Now, Arafat's family, particularly his wife, his widow now has said that they believe there were traces of plutonium on some of his clothes on his -- but the autopsy - they did a post

mortem autopsy, obviously -- where they went back, they took samples from the body. They said they were inconclusive, they did not show plutonium. But there's things about his demeanor when he got sick that suggest that something that wasn't natural. We'll put it that way. OK?

JVN: Mmm. Mmm!

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Um, whether or not, whether he did or he didn't, right. His key deputy Mahmoud Abbas who had been favored by Washington --

JVN: Mahmoud Ab -- I remember him!

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yes *laughs.*

JVN: I remember that name too!

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Well he's still around!

JVN: Yeah!

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: He's still around and he's still president. So keep in mind I talked about and I know we're jumping a bit, but let me, kind of piece this together for the audience. So in the summer of 2002, as the Bush administration has laid out the initial Bush doctrine building, the case for war in Iraq and Bush announces that the US will no longer have ties with the Yasser Arafat and a new Palestinian leadership is needed who they will focus on is his key deputy. So they will say Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinians need to create a position of Prime Minister. They'd only had the position of president. Now we want a position, a weak president and a strong Prime Minister. And what we want to do is take away Arafat's control of the Treasury. So we are going to insist that we put in this new Minister of Finance, a guy who's trained because, you know Bush is from Texas. They have a guy named Salam Fayyad. He's a Palestinian from the University of Texas. He's going to be your new finance minister. Fayyad had a background, he worked for the World Bank, he worked for the International Monetary Fund. He's perfect for this.

So they're going to insert these two into the Palestinian Authority and Arafat thinks he's buying time. He's going to say, fine we'll create a prime minister. Fine. I'll bring this guy in as finance minister and he's going to buy time. Because Arafat, he's been a survivor for decades. I know how to play this game. I'm going to buy time and I'll undermine both of these clowns and I'm going to come out on top. It doesn't work out this time. So he's going to die in November 2004. In January 2005, Abbas will be elected the new president of the Palestinian Authority and now what the administration, the Bush administration is going to say is OK, great. We've got you elected and now we want to hold parliamentary elections. Remember this is the freedom agenda.

So what Bush is hoping for? So even though he's been re-elected and remember Iraq at this point, just to, to get your audience to understand these connections. Iraq is spiraling in the middle of this insurgency, right? 2003, 2004, very high body count, not just of us soldiers but of Iraqis. And you have a spiraling insurgency and a civil war that has actually developed inside Iraq, which we can talk more about. But in the Palestinian territories, what the Bush administration is now going to push for is elections? We want to show the freedom agenda works.

JVN: Quick question, Doctor Khalil Jesus Christ. Ok, ok, ok, ok, ok. So is there and this is our final question because I do have a meeting in three minutes and I have to go because

it's with the fab five. Iraq, Saddam gets deposed and like, or he gets killed or taken out whatever he gets like removed in 2003. The whole thing happens like he's like in the hole and, and then the US thinks, oh, this won't be that long. We like we'll get someone new in there like it'll be OK. But then it quickly devolves into a civil war. Americans are dying left, right and center Iraqis are dying left, right and center, very high body count. So that's going on from like 2002, like for a long time, and currently –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah, August 2002, right through the election, right through the November [2004] election. Yeah, absolutely.

JVN: Right. So then simultaneously, prior to 2001, you have the second intifada raising up which first started because like, um Sharon does the walk –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Right.

JVN: And then so then protests start, but then there's some rock throwing and stuff and then they're like, we're gonna fucking crush this down. So they over, they over crush, they like, let me make a statement, so then what's the result of that?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: I mean, they send in tanks, Apache helicopters. They do the overwhelming force, we're going to crush the intifada from the beginning, right in the bed and we're going...

JVN: And do hundreds die? Do thousands die, of Palestinians?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Thousands die. Thousands die. Yeah yeah.

JVN: Thousands of Palestinians die. So then as a result of that, then there is like some suicide bombings –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Exactly.

JVN: Inside Israel from Palestinian “terrorists.” And so that's why this starts like, that's why the intifada really spirals out of control –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah, yeah.

JVN: Because one thing I had heard but I, so one thing I had read like on a tik tok thing or maybe it was on an article I can't remember. But they were saying how like part of the current peace ceasefire thing like currently is like, uh it's like, well, we can't have a two state solution with the PLO as the head –

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Right.

JVN: But then didn't they, they elected the PLO or they elected this leader in 2005. And then, isn't it true that Israel's never allowed another election to take place since then?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Right, so Great points. So –

JVN: So much. Sorry.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: No, no, it's ok. Let's talk about the elections. That's where I was getting to, which is great. So they had the election in 2005. The election for president. Now they're going to do a parliamentary election in 2006. So now the Bush administration kind of outsmarts themselves.

Why? Because one of the other problems that's happened is the mainstream Fatah party is losing popular support. They're seen as complicit in the occupation, they're seen as corrupt.

Arafat towards the end, even though there was respect for him as a revolutionary figure, if you will, he was seen as corrupt. The Palestinian Authority was seen as incompetent.

But who was increasing in popularity, Hamas? Why? They're seen as not corrupt. They have effective social services. So the Palestinian Authority had poor social services, poorly funded because 60 to 70% of the budget went to security. Why? Because the Israelis and the Americans insisted on it. So we want you to create these security services, but it's not security for Palestinians, you're securing Israel. So it's effectively subcontractors of the occupation and that's how they're going to be talked about. So the average Palestinian is going to say, I'm either not getting paid or there's no jobs. We've got the occupation, the Israeli occupation up top and we've got the Palestinians actually maintaining the control on us day-to-day.

So Hamas starts to increase in popularity. And they're portraying themselves as they're not involved in negotiations, they are resistance force. And this of course adds to their myth - the myth of Hamas if you will. But now something interesting happens, they decide for the first time we're going to participate in the parliamentary election.

And this is one of these things where Fatah, and the United States will say about Hamas, they talk a good game but they actually won't stand in the elections. They would prefer just to play spoiler on the outside and they've been playing spoiler in the peace process since the nineties. There's some truth to that. They had been playing spoiler in the peace process since the nineties. And had been and had been marked as a terrorist organization by the United States since the nineties. But now all of a sudden, Hamas says "Ok, we're going to participate in the elections in the parliamentary elections and we're going to run on a platform." I think it's important for your listeners to know they don't run on a platform of "jihad forever" or "from the river to the sea." What they run on is a platform of "reform and change." We're going to be different than the corrupt government that's inside.

Now, here's what's interesting Fatah is split. So what you'll have is in each election, you'll have, basically two Fatah candidates and one Hamas candidate. So then the shock happens that Hamas wins this election. That is going to happen because they don't win by an overwhelming margin, they win by like a 43%. Why? Because the Fatah vote is split.

And so that's going to be a shock. That's going to shock the Bush administration. It's going to shock the Palestinian Authority, it's going to shock the Fatah movement. Ok. Hamas will win this parliamentary election. But I think what's also important for your listeners to understand is this parliament is only for the West Bank and Gaza. It's not for Palestinians around the world. It's not for Palestinians living in exile or refugees. It's just for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza under occupation and it has a very limited role -- the Legislative Council.

So almost immediately what the Bush administration does is say: "Oh, absolutely not. We will not accept this election result. We're not going to allow Hamas to take power." And so what they're going to do is they're going to pressure Abbas not to recognize the election, they're going to put pressure on Hamas. And this is, I think one of these things where kind of Hamas is often viewed as -- there's a lot of issues with the movement -- but they also attempt to kind of mollify [the US] where they'll say, "ok, we'll form a national unity government with Fatah," we'll find a way to form a national unity government. And what happens is Israel and the United States consistently undermine those negotiations and say there's no way we're going to recognize this government. In fact, what actually happens is the US, the European

Union and Israel placed sanctions on the Palestinian Authority. So this remarkable moment, in 2006-2007 in which a population under occupation is under sanctions, not the occupier. I mean, it's remarkable. Think about that. So what's going

to eventually –

JVN: Because we did not like the results of this democratically held election.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Yeah, of the election that we wanted. We want this election. We want this election as an example of the freedom agenda. And we don't like the result. So now –

JVN: And now what happens, what's going on with like Israel's leaders?

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: Can I just throw this out?

JVN: Yes. Yes, yes, sorry.

DR. OSAMAH F. KHALIL: So, so real quick, what's going to happen is the Bush administration is going to decide on something very, very simple. We are going to reward Abbas in the West Bank and we're going to punish – this should sound familiar to you because you can draw a straight line from these policies to October 7th and today, and we're going to punish Hamas in Gaza. And what we're going to try and do is force Palestinians in Gaza to overthrow the Hamas government. And we're going to put pressure on Abbas to challenge and overthrow Hamas. And so you're going to get this rift now and effectively a Palestinian civil war that's encouraged by the United States. And that policy of a siege on Gaza and punishing Gaza is consistent from 2005 to 2024 right? It's just how deep and how embedded that siege is and then periodic attacks by Israel on Gaza to try and weaken Hamas. Or as before October 7th, they would talk about this as kind of “mowing the lawn.” “We have to mow the lawn.” Meanwhile, I think I can stop there and that may be a lot for your listeners. But I think that's one of the lines you can draw right up to October 7th.

JVN: Doctor Khalil, I'm so sorry to cut our conversation short. You know, I love talking to you as always, but we're going to just, we're going to put a pin in here and we're going to pick it up for the fourth and last installment of our, of our series together. Um, but thank you so much for coming today. We're going to put a pin in here in 2006. We're going to pick it up when we come back. As always, Doctor Khalil, thank you so much for your time and for coming on Getting Curious again and for giving us space to learn more.

So, here's a huge takeaway that I have from this episode and, and this will come up again in our fourth installment. But Republican and Democrat administration alike have caused some amount of death, destruction and mayhem the world over because of our history, because of the, the things that have happened. It's like even if you look at Biden in Afghanistan, like if you look at the pull out from Vietnam, like there is whether it's Republican or Democrat, it's like if someone starts something, someone else is going to finish it. And so that's just, it's very complicated. And even though I don't have that many reasons to believe in America and in our politicians, I don't know why, but I still do. I believe that we can create a better world and future. I believe that we can elect leaders that can create a better world and future. But I believe that those leaders like need to have a plan. We have to figure out a way forward.

So it's messy. I love you guys. I hope you're ok. I hope we're ok. I love you guys. Ok, bye.

You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. You can learn more about this week's guest and their area of expertise in the episode description and follow us on Instagram @CuriouswithJVN. You can catch us here every Wednesday and make sure to tune in every Monday for episodes of Pretty Curious which we love. It's our podcast on all things beauty, get into it! Still can't get enough and you want to get a little spicy with us? You can subscribe to Extra Curious on Apple Podcasts for commercial free listening. And your subscription only show, Ask JVN where we're talking sex, relationships, or really just whatever is on my mind that week. Our theme music is Freak by Quinn. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. Our editor and engineer is Nathanael McClure. Getting Curious is produced by me, Chris McClure with production support from Julie Carrillo, Anne Currie and Chad Hall.