

**“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”**

**Dr. Jessica Stern**  
Boston University

**Imam Abdullah Antepli**  
Duke University

March 2016

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Ladies and gentlemen, welcome again.

Now, we’ve saved the most sobering for the last, “Terror in the Name of God,” and we have two of the leading people in the country on this topic. You’ve seen from her bio, Dr. Jessica Stern, her Ph.D. is from Harvard University. I hope you notice in her bio, at the last paragraph, it says she was included in the Time magazine series “Profiling 100 People with Bold New Ideas.”

The film *The Peacemaker*, starring Nicole Kidman and George Clooney, is based on a fictional account of her work at the National Security Council.

So did Nicole Kidman play you?

**JESSICA STERN:** Yes.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Yes, indeed. Congratulations, that’s wonderful. But she also has written a very important book called, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Militants Kill*. She has a new book out now called *Denial: A Memoir of Terror*.

So when this topic came up at our advisors’ lunch, post-San Bernardino, I said you know the best person we could get would be Dr. Jessica Stern, and I was delighted when she said she could join us. So, Dr. Stern, thank you so much for being at this Faith Angle Forum on this very sobering topic. Welcome.

**JESSICA STERN:** Thank you so much. I am so glad I finally got to come here. It’s been a thrilling experience, and thank you all. I found the conversation really enlightening in all ways.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli • March 2016

---

So I think to begin with, I should try to define religious terrorism, what does that mean? What is “Terror in the Name of God?” I’ll start by telling you how I would define “terrorism.” There are hundreds of definitions in the literature. For me, it’s about violence, or the threat of violence, aimed at noncombatants, with the aim of influencing an audience, usually to change its policy.

A central feature of terrorism is that it involves deliberately targeting noncombatants, which means that it’s a violation of the Judeo-Christian just war tradition, as well as the Islamic just war tradition, by definition. However, it could, in fact often does, satisfy the *jus ad bellum* requirement. So it’s always a violation of *jus in bello*, but it may be for a just cause, and that’s important to remember: Unjust means, possibly for a just cause.

Who is the audience? Well, the audience includes the people who sympathize with the victims. Right now, we are a big part of ISIS’s audience. But the audience often includes those who sympathize with the terrorists, and it’s also the terrorists themselves. So I think that we need to see terrorism as partly solipsistic. It’s a form of theater. It’s psychological warfare, aimed at an audience that sympathizes with “enemy” victims. But the audience often includes the perpetrators and those who sympathize with them.

What makes it religious? And I see Jamie Smith right across from me, and I know you’re going to have some views. Again, there are many ways to differentiate religious terrorists from nonreligious terrorists. For me, it’s about what they say about the motivations for their violence.

So while the IRA was of a different religion from its enemy, the IRA terrorists didn’t say that they were fighting for religious reasons – so I would not refer to them as religious terrorists. But many Identity Christians, some Hindu Nationalists, ISIS, right now, the group we’re all talking about all the time, they say they’re killing people for religious reasons. And so I put them in the category of religious terrorists, even though I’m going to try to persuade you that their goals are not wholly religious. They describe their objectives in religious terms, and refer to religious texts to justify their actions, but in my view, they seek political power and territory as much as they seek religious goals. And religion isn’t necessarily critical to their recruitment drives.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

I’ve spent a lot of time talking to religious terrorists in Indonesia, Israel, India, Lebanon, Pakistan, and the United States. There are people who claim to be killing in the name of their God all over the world, across religions. There are even Buddhist terrorists. Every religion produces terrorists.

And I should say at the outset, I’m not an expert on Islam. And I don’t specialize in Islamist terrorists. My last book was about ISIS. But I study terrorists across religions. There are disadvantages to not specializing in Islamist terrorists — you know, certainly, writing a book on ISIS. But there are also advantages. I can see the tricks that religious terrorists play. And much of what ISIS does is similar to what Identity Christians do. That said, at this point in history, only the jihadis are able to recruit large numbers. ISIS has created a compelling ideology for youth who want to remake society and reinvent themselves, not just among Muslims. Forty percent of those who’ve been arrested in the United States, in connection with ISIS-related crimes are converts.

So it is an ideology that is appealing, and that’s something that we need to address. Why are jihadis so much more successful than for example, Identity Christians or the grandson of Meir Kahane, in Israel, who thinks the Israeli government isn’t Jewish-enough, and wants to destroy that government. Why are these terrorists flops in comparison with jihadis?

I think jihadis are significantly more successful than other religious terrorists because of a crisis of governance in Muslim-majority States, and the narrative of humiliation. Islamic civilization was once the greatest on earth. That is no longer the case, and jihadi leaders such as Zawahiri have interpreted this as a source of humiliation, and blame the West for that humiliation. And I believe the West is partly to blame for the crisis of governance in Iraq, which, along with the civil war in Syria, led to the rise of ISIS. I don’t blame the rise of ISIS on the United States by any means, but I think it’s important that we recognize that we played a role. We are largely responsible for what happened in Iraq as a result of our invasion. We left Iraq in the hands of a known, anti-Sunni leader.

Let me just say a little bit about how I first came to study this phenomenon. The first religious terrorist I ever spent time with was an Identity Christian. I started emailing him, and I was asking him questions about his spirituality. He had just gotten out of prison. He had been involved in a cult that aimed to take down the Zionist-occupied government. He

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli • March 2016

---

was actually surprised how interested I was in his spirituality, and I was very surprised by how spiritual he seemed. He said that he joined a religious fellowship in rural Arkansas. The group didn't start out violent. But the leader had a revelation that the end times were imminent. They began preparing, they felt they were in the times of Tribulation.

They began preparing for the end times. They had an idea that if they carried out acts of violence against “mud people,” that the Messiah would return more quickly. So they actually felt that by “purifying” the world of “mud-people,” homosexuals, Jews, they could influence on the timing of the Messiah. They saw violence as a form of worship.

The same is true of ISIS. ISIS relies on religious texts. The President won't call jihadist Islamists. He certainly won't call them Muslim. I will. They are relying on these texts, but so do Identity Christians. So did Kerry Noble, one of the leaders of the Identity Christian cult I just mentioned. I said to him, “Christians typically ascribe the qualities of light and love to God, and try to manifest those qualities in their own lives.” And he agreed.

“But the scriptures describe another aspect of God,” he told me. “The Lord God is a man of war.” He's quoting. I don't have the references— somebody will know where these come from. “If I wet my glittering sword, I will render vengeance on my enemies. I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh.”

So their hermeneutics were, I believe, dictated by their apocalyptic expectation and their politics, just as ISIS's are. I think Rabbi Sacks would say that ISIS and other religious terrorists are misreading the texts. I'm not qualified to say whether it's a misreading of the text. It's in the text.

But religious texts are filled with contradictions. These guys find a way to ignore the parts of the texts that promote peace, and focus instead on the parts of the text that justify what they want to do. We only need to remember that abolitionists referred to the Bible to justify the abolition of slavery. And those who supported slavery also justified it with reference to the text.

So what about ISIS? ISIS sees itself as purifying Islam. A good example is its “re-institution of slavery.” That's how it refers to its use of sexual slavery.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

It calls the re-institution of slavery “a means for improving the moral life of its fighters,” and “a way to fulfill one of the signs of the hour, indicating the imminence of the end time.” By sexually enslaving Yazidi girls, ISIS claims to believe that it’s revivifying Islam, offering its followers a version of Islam that was practiced by the Salaf, the first three generations of Muslims, their pious predecessors, which is unencumbered by hermeneutics or the accretions of historical practice.

I think it’s important for us to remember that at the time these texts were written, slavery was a common practice throughout the world. And of course, we can find reference to slavery in the Bible. I won’t bother quoting for you, but I’m sure you know.

Slavery, of course, is abolished throughout the world, but it’s still practiced throughout the world. It’s a billion-dollar business. Should we refer to the practice of slavery today, as Christian or Jewish because slavery is mentioned in Christian and Jewish texts, and some Christians and Jews are making money through human trafficking? I don’t think so.

This is my view, and I realize that there will be other views in the room, and I look forward to the debate. If you look at what ISIS says about slavery, I think it’s important to realize that they inadvertently admit that the practice is instrumental. They say that they realize that some young men cannot afford wives, and that they might be tempted to have sex with a family housemaid, and that therefore, this is their way of allowing those young men — I think it’s part of their recruitment strategy — to have sex. It’s one of the incentives they offer. Sex with a slave doesn’t count as premarital sex. Raping a slave is not a sin, according to ISIS’s scholars. But if you read closely, it really does look instrumental, as well as religious, their interpretation of religion.

So what does ISIS want? It wants two very different and contradictory things. On the one hand, it wants to run its so-called caliphate in Iraq and Syria, now in Libya. It has provinces now, in many parts of the world: In Egypt, in the Caucasus; it’s in Afghanistan; in Libya, of course; in Saudi Arabia. It wants to run its state. It likes to refer to itself as a “state.” But it also wants to goad the West into sending in ground forces for a final battle at Dabiq. And I have to say, when I first started looking at the apocalyptic narrative, I was really taken aback.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

I didn't expect that it would be as convoluted and well-articulated as the Christian Identity cult that I was talking about. The name of their online magazine, which I urge all of you to look at, if not read, is “Dabiq.” That's the name of the town where they anticipate they will fight out this final battle with the West. So these are clearly contradictory goals.

I've been troubled by this contradiction in studying ISIS, you know it's hard to figure out, this doesn't make sense. But there is one goal that ISIS is pursuing that would further both of these agendas, and that is to make Muslims in the West feel unsafe. They say they want to destroy the “gray zone” of moderate Islam. And for this reason, I do believe that Trump is falling into a trap. He is helping to destroy that gray zone by making Muslims in the West feel unsafe. If ISIS attacks in the West, it goads us into attacking it in Syria. But ISIS's leaders hope that these attacks in the West will ultimately make Western Muslims feel unsafe, and they hope, more vulnerable to being recruited to ISIS's side. The more ISIS can increase prejudice against Muslims in the West, the more it can actually pursue both parts of its agenda.

What's different about ISIS? ISIS, like most terrorist groups that aim to succeed and persist over time, has to attract capital, labor, and brand. ISIS is very good at this. Why are these other groups that I mentioned flops?

They cannot attract capital. They cannot attract labor. Their narrative, their ideology, is not appealing to a broader group, and they don't have a good brand. ISIS has all three.

Where does it get capital? You know it gets capital from exporting oil. Who buys the oil? Well, Assad is one of the major consumers of that oil. The oil is getting through the Turkish border. A lot of people, as often happens in civil wars, are getting rich off this conflict. It's also selling Captagon, an amphetamine. It's also using that amphetamine, while it is fighting. It's involved in currency trade. It is taxing the sale of antiquities. It is taxing refugee flows.. We would call it “extortion.” They call it “taxing.”

Also, it earns a lot of money from extorting the population trapped on the territory it controls. So it needs territory, partly as a source of finances. What about its brand? This group is better than any group in history at branding itself, and it is very active, as I'm sure many of you know, on social media, but that's just how it spreads its branding and marketing.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli • March 2016

---

It also has a compelling narrative. It's very good at magazine layout, filming. They have professionals who do these films. The films are stories, they're not just an old man droning on, which would be Zawahiri, who is very boring.

Part of their brand is brutality. And they are following a recipe that dictates that brutality is a good way to polarize Muslim against Muslim, Sunni against Shiite; to polarize the West against itself. And, of course, the Western governments against Muslim-majority states.

To attract labor, terrorists offer three kinds of incentives: spiritual incentives, emotional incentives, and financial incentives. To attract this labor. ISIS, is first of all, capitalizing on the disenfranchisement of Sunni Arabs in the territory it controls. And this is an area where I do believe the West has played a significant role.

We fired all the Baathists. They suddenly found themselves without jobs, with weapons. Some of them spent time in U.S. detention facilities, where Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, was busy creating a jihadi organization. The U.S. detention facilities in Iraq are a very important part of the story of how ISIS evolved into the group it is today.

ISIS also attracts foreign labor. We've never seen a group this capable of attracting foreign fighters, doctors, engineers. There is this spiritual incentive, the opportunity to live in what ISIS calls “the only Sharia-based State.”

There is the humanitarian incentive, the opportunity to help Syrians who are suffering. There's the attraction to violence. It seems impossible now that we wouldn't see psychopaths over-represented in ISIS. That doesn't mean they're all psychopaths, but certainly some of the people joining would have to be attracted to violence for its own sake.

It's an opportunity to re-create oneself. I think that the narrative, in some ways, has things in common with what happened in the '60s and '70s. Rather than “Make Love Not War,” it's “Make War, Not Love,” but it's a dangerous fad. It's a faddish narrative among young people.

Fortunately, in the United States, it's not very faddish.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Why is that attractive?

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**JESSICA STERN:** Because of the level of frustration, especially in Muslim-majority states. I think that we — why is it attractive in the West? There are two different questions: Why is it attractive —

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** You’re saying “Make Love, Not War,” but I don’t get “Make War, Not Love.”

**JESSICA STERN:** Well, that’s why you’re not —  
*(Laughter)*

**JESSICA STERN:** You’re not the recruit they want.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I didn’t mean to interrupt you, but there are so many incredible studies showing the patterns of attraction to gangs in the United States, and the attraction to terrorist organizations like ISIS. There are almost very identical character traits and personal background and mental health situations.

**JESSICA STERN:** Yeah. Yes. I think for those in the West that is how we should understand it. I’m involved in a big study at Children’s Hospital in Boston, and we’ve been interviewing Somali refugee youth. And we find a correlation between delinquency, including support for violent extremism, and trauma exposure, social marginalization, and mental health issues.

Strong bonds inside the community, as well as with the country, are protective. Ignorance about Islam is hypothesized to make youth significantly more vulnerable. So I think we need to bear in mind that ISIS poses a threat mainly to the region, secondarily, to the countries close to Iraq and Syria, primarily to Muslims, and only at the bottom, the United States. The biggest threat to us, is the lone wolf Western recruit, who is very much like a kid who would join a gang.

I have some ideas and some things we’re doing to help address that, but I’m going to stop here, so we can talk about that.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Thank you.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

*(Applause)*

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Thank you, Dr. Stern. Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, as I mentioned to you, we have a lunch twice a year to talk about future topics. Our good friend and colleague, Jeffrey Goldberg, when we talked about this topic, said, “You must get this young Imam down at Duke University.”

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** “Young?” Thank you.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Yes. He said the word “young.” “Imam Abdullah” he said, “is not only having an important impact at Duke, and teaching at Duke Divinity School, where he’s the Chief Representative of Muslim Affairs, and serves on the faculty there,” but Jeffrey said “he’s become a great source for me, in trying to understand this phenomenon.”

And in fact, Abdullah flies around the world trying to de-radicalize some of these young lone wolfs that Professor Stern has just told us about. So Imam Abdullah, we’re so grateful that you could join us. You have a lot to live up to because Jeff Goldberg has been singing your praises now for some time.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** And I feel the pressure. Good morning everybody.

It’s absolutely a pleasure, and an honor to be here. I learned so much already in a day and-a-half, and I’m looking forward to learning the remaining time of the conference. The brief, but very kind introduction that Michael told you, also reflects that I have two honorific titles given to me by my students at Duke University.

They call me two titles: One is “Turkish Delight Imam.”

*(Laughter)*

Which explains my thick Turkish accent. And my Turkish accent is often a source of humor, both at home and campus. One of the funniest one, is on the day of Eid Ul Fitr, which is like a Muslim Christmas at the end of Ramadan. I was invited by a Jewish community.

A significant part of my calling and my time, lately, I’m spending trying to improve Jewish/Muslim relations in the United States, but also in the Middle East as well, which I

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

believe the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is one of the main causes and sources of the virus that ISIS and Al Qaeda and all these evil people represent. That’s one of the sources, if you can put a lit on, it will be huge because this never ending conflict keep re-inserting “West is at war with Islam” phenomenon So I never miss any opportunity to talk to Jews.

When I went there, I said, “I brought the greetings of the Muslim community. We just celebrated Eid Ul Fitr, and I wish many of them could have been here, but they are still celebrating Eid Ul Fitr.” I will never forget.

One of the gentlemen in the front said, “What? You celebrated Adolf Hitler?”

*(Laughter)*

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** So if I say anything that sounds painfully wrong, check the spelling. And this also says so much about our communication issues; the way we talk about each other, the way we hear one another.

Of course my second honorific title, is “Blue Devil Imam,” which if you know anything about Islamic theology, we may do all sorts of weird things, but we don’t do devil business. I am the only Imam on the face of Earth, who is given permission to pray for the devils. And I do it five times a day, and once a week after the worship prayer on Friday, on Juma’h.

There are 150 Muslim blue devils. After the worship prayer, I say, “Glory be to devils are mean, and may God destroy its enemies,” the UNC of course, and there is —

*(Laughter)*

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** And there is always someone in the audience, who has no idea what’s going on and completely terrified. God forbid if ISIS gets it on the video, and says “Oh, look. American Muslims are praying for the devils.” That’s not the case.

What I will do in my 25 minutes, is not to talk about terror in the name of God, but more specific I will talk about terror in the name of Allah. The Muslim terrorism, terror in the name of Islam, the way it’s been presented and done. But before we move into this, there are two very unhelpful, extremely reductionist, simplistic forces dominating this conversation about Muslim terrorism that I would like us, I invite us to distance ourselves.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

There’s so much brain power experience, people have written extensively about this topic. I really hope we can go beyond the talking points on this cheap reductionist too almost propaganda-ish extreme of the poll. On one side, mostly apologetic Muslims and their liberal, progressive sort of allies and naive supporters.

One voice, is to me, very, very problematic, misleading, and it can potentially be harmful. Islam is a religion of peace. ISIS has nothing to do with Islam. To me, saying Islam is a religion of peace, is like as misleading, it makes me as uncomfortable as if somebody says, “Islam hates us.”

No religion is essentially one thing. If somebody comes and says, “Christianity is this, Judaism is this,” you should run away from that person. And a religion of 2,000 years old and millions of members, it cannot be essentially one thing. It cannot be essentially evil or good. To say Islam is a religion of peace, and all the shenanigans, destruction, savagery, and barbarism happening in the name of Islam, all these evil organizations like Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, Boko Haram, Al Shabaab, has nothing to do with Islam, despite all the things that have been happening. To me, it’s really silly to say the least, and therefore I have no patience, especially I guess if you are a Muslim, you have less patience with your own kind.

If one more person says, “This has nothing to do with Islam,” I want to pull my hair and scream.

On the other extreme, people getting on the wagon and buying the cheap propaganda after 9-11 and saying, this ISIS terror in the name of Islam is the only authentic expression of Islam. If you take this religion very seriously, if you take this religion by its book, if you take this religion by its own resources and expression, you get ISIS. And anything and everything else, is only the watered down, sugar coated, moderated, diluted version of the religion.

It’s unbelievable. I mean there are so many credible voices in the media, in academia, basically debating this is all about Islam. So the reality is much more complex than these two extreme dominant simplistic and reductionist voices, and that’s what I’m going to try to summarize in my remaining 19 and-a-half minutes. But I’m really hoping you will push me back on both fronts, as well as the historical and theological evidence that I will

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

provide. But ISIS is Islamic in the sense there is no one Islam. ISIS or Al Qaeda, is an expression of Islam. And I’m quite aware that this is on record.

ISIS, or similar organizations of terror in the name of Allah, is an expression of Islam, but there are three main Islams that I’m really hoping, anyone who will make an intelligent argument about this, will see that ISIS, or terror in the name of Allah, is an expression, a slice of these three different categories of Islam. There are three main categories in every religion, but again, I’m going to focus only on this one. I think Dr. Stern made a beautiful job in explaining how this resembles, this challenge resembles in every faith tradition.

So the first Islam, is Islam as religion. Islamist theology, Islamist belief system. Islam in its self-imagination as an abstract theological belief system. The way the Qur’an, the way the Prophet Muhammad and his sayings, and his examples represent.

It’s like Christianity as a religion, Judaism as religion, Buddhism as a religion. So the problem that we are discussing, definitely has its roots and connection to this first Islam. But I think we are spending way overtime trying to understand both the problem, as well as the solution, in this first category.

But there are many other Islams. The second Islam, how does that Islam in theory and the belief system, Islam as religion, manifest itself in the human experience? Islam as Muslims, Islam as people, Islam as it’s been lived. And you cannot take Islam at its cultural expression and say this has nothing to do with the religion of Islam. Ultimately, Islam is what Muslims do. Christianity is what Christians do. Judaism is what Jews do.

And when we talk about the second Islam, Islam as Muslims, we are talking about 1.6, 1.7 billion people on the face of Earth, from Indonesia to Argentina, from China to Iceland and Canada. And the uniqueness of the American Muslim community, is because of our immigration patterns, because of the way in which these Muslims came here, the 6 or 7 million Muslims living in the United States, they represent the entire ethnic, linguistic, racial, sectarian diversity of the entire Muslim world.

The Muslims that we have, almost everybody is here. You come to my campus on a Friday prayer, you’ll see 150 Muslims praying, even that small pool, you have Chinese Muslims, you have Indonesian Muslims, you have German Muslims, Pakistani, Turkish, Arab,

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

everybody is here. That’s another unique experience that unfortunately, in the heat of post 9-11 conversations, the very impressive reality of American Muslims are often get lost.

The third Islam, in addition to Islam as religion and belief system, in addition to Islam as Muslims, third Islam is Islam as history .This is one of the most-trickiest expressions of Islam. You will never understand the first Islam, Islam as religion of today, and you will never be able to understand, as Muslims of today unless you study this third Islam.

You will not be able to look into the Muslim majority societies, and make intelligent arguments unless you study, at least the first couple of centuries of Islamic history. What kind of history or histories gave birth to the present-day situation? What kind of histories gave birth to the present economic, social, political, and yes, terror/security-related issues as well?

So what I’m arguing, is terror in the name of Allah, is an Islamic expression. But it’s the slice of these three historical, cultural, social, economic, and political, as well as theological and religious expressions. And depending on the region and time, and depending on the organization that evolved. Depending on how, mostly the West and the Muslim societies respond to this, the percentage of theology, cultural, and political economic realities, change in the creation of these evil people, doing evil things, in the name of Islam. And the historical developments matter. Maybe in the Q&A session, when we talk about different terrorist organizations, like ISIS, Al Qaeda, Boca Haram, we can give more details.

From the remaining arguments, I want to build — and I want to go from history, to cultural, and to theology, because unfortunately we start with theology. We start with the text in the Quran. We start with the historical, textual, scriptural proof that ISIS and other organizations start, yes, and this is absolutely within Islam.

As much as these people despise me, disgust me, they turn my stomach upside down, I cannot say they are not Muslims. They are. And I cannot say their arguments have no basis in Islamic tradition. They do.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

But it is much more than seeing this as the most authentic expression of Islam, as I said. I want to build my arguments the Native American analogy. I love this Native American story.

The Native American elder invites the little kids in the tribe, and says, “As you grow up, there are two wolves in you.”

There are two wolves in you, W-O-L-F. Turks cannot pronounce W and they cannot pronounce V either. In Turkish, there’s no W or V, something in between. So bear with me.

“There are two wolves” — I don’t know if you heard the story. And of course the kids say, and the elders say, “One of them is evil, and one of them is a good wolf. And this good and evil wolf will always fight with each other in you, always.”

And kids immediately say, “Which wolf will win? Which wolf will win this fight?”

An elder says “Whichever you feed. Whichever you nurture. Whichever you empower and facilitate. Whichever you give attention to.”

So again, going back to my distaste in these extreme voices, we have to acknowledge that there are good and bad wolves in each and every one of us, and there are good and bad wolves in each and every one of our religions.

There are bad wolves in Koran. There are voices in the name of God demanding and asking violence and destruction, but also there are voices, as you always here in the interfaith conversations, “God created you from a man and woman, divided into tribes, God loves everybody.”

So there is the very essence of the sacred is ambivalent. And there are ambivalent elements in all of our religions, including Islam. And when a good wolf is nurtured, which is overwhelming majority of the Muslim history and Christian history, and the Jewish history, etc. But when the bad wolf is nurtured, when the bad wolf is fed, when the evil wolf is given opportunity to grow that’s what you see, in the form of ISIS, in the form of Al Qaeda, in the form of other terrorist organizations.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

I want to, at the risk of becoming a boring Duke University history professor, please bear with me for seven-and-a-half minutes and let me take you on a historical journey. How this bad wolf in Islam has been fed for so long, has been fed so much, and faced no real resistance that we have the kind of monster that we are dealing with in this situation.

You can basically take all these evil organizations conducting terror in the name of Islam, Again, I’ve been saying this all along publicly, not because I’m here, and not because I’m trying to convince your hearts. But if you look all the terrorist organizations from Nigeria to Afghanistan, to other places, you can absolutely trace the ideological, religious and theological roots to one major cancerous event: Wahhabism.

Wahhabism is a 19<sup>th</sup> century reformation movement in Islam. It’s quite ironic that one of the modern interpretations and modern reformations in Islam — we had our own reformation, but it’s in the form of Wahhabism — it is quite despicable and regretful quite honestly. And very literalist and potential for violent interpretation of Islam, emerged in the 19th Century by Imam Abdul Wahhab in Saudi Arabia, in direct response to European colonialism and the disintegration and fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire.

So as the Muslim civilizations were collapsing, like many people in the West, because we are a healthy society, we are a healthy civilization — we got out of our Dark Ages, and we are somewhat functional communities. When they think of civilizational decline and collapse, they think when the civilizations declined, as only the stock market collapse. As if only the roads collapsed.

That’s not the case. The real deterioration and destruction happens inside with your world view. And when the civilization finally collapses, which took place when Islam and the Muslim civilizations — by the end of the 19th Century. At the beginning of the 20th Century, that civilization collapsed in its internal resources destroyed as well, it lost its soft power as well.

Wahhabism, as a reformist movement, emerged within the Sunni Islam. And when it came out into existence, almost all Sunni traditions rejected and declared it as non-Sunni, as a heresy, as something that is not consistent with the main stream theology.

But regretful for two main reasons: This cancerous ideology has been successful over time at capturing the imagination of many societies of the Sunni world and even Shia

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

wors as well, and becoming extremely successful in infiltrating almost the entire global Muslim community, including the United States.

In the past, there have been many similar abnormal movements emerge in Islam, like if you know a little bit about Islamic history, Khawarij ( in the 1st Century of Islam. Or if you know anything about the Assassins or the Hashashin. There have been, like crazy movements in the name of religion, but it was the Muslim institutions that theologically defeated these movements.

And it was the health of the Muslim societies that they were able to marginalize these fringe crazy movements over time, and get rid of this cancer before this tumor becomes the mainstream. But it was for the first time in the Wahhabism that this cancer struck the body when the Muslim institutions who would otherwise counter and defeat this ideology, was destroyed by the European colonial establishments. This is not, again blaming the West for the problem, but this is exactly what happened.

The colonial powers, when they came they were so dismayed by the de-central nature of the Muslim institutions, like when the British came to India, when they saw there is no Church of England, they couldn't believe it. How come there's Church of England? Then how do you control the religion? How do you basically make sure they don't pose a threat to your regime? So they didn't only come, and suck the blood out of the Muslim world. They came, they introduced their religious institutions, their economic structure, banking structure, educational structure.

So when Wahhabism was spreading like a cancer, the Muslim institutions were completely destroyed, or so weak — but it's not only that. Also the internal decay, internal deterioration of Muslim civilization for a very long time made it impossible to fight against this abnormal reformation. The body was not healthy enough to fight yo begin with.

When I went to Bangladesh, when I saw a Hadith book, in the 9th Century written in Muslim Spain, it's incredible. Look at the Muslim civilizations when it's in dynamic years. The Hadith book, the sayings of the Prophet written in Muslim Spain, in three years it reached to Calcutta, and translated into Bengali in three years.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

An unbelievable speed of ideas, unbelievable dynamism of Muslim civilizations. But by the time of the 19th Century, the earliest Hadith book, written and taught in the madrasas was 200 to 300 years old. If you are going to understand the Muslim world, unimpressive picture, the real starvation is not economic, social, political, but also cultural and intellectual.

Just to give you one more example, which will, I think supplement. The number of books translated into and from Spanish in one year, is more than the number of books translated into and from Arabic in 100 years.

If you go to United Development Index, and if you look at the paper consumption and books, or research or number of patents, etc., there’s an incredible, incredible unhealthy, intellectual and cultural life in the Muslim majority of the world, which makes resisting ideologies as sick as, like Wahhabism, as despicable as Wahhabism, incredibly difficult. And their success today, depends on two things. And none of the evil or the distorted violent extremist groups, Muslim groups in the past, they never became a state religion, like Wahhabism.

Another unintentional, I assume and I hope, the British colonial inheritance that we have received, is Saudi Arabia inherited Wahhabism as their state official ideology. And for the first time, a very literalist and violent ideology became a state religion, and met with billions of dollars of oil money.

And for the longest time since they weren’t posing any threat to the West, because of my enemy’s, enemies are my friends because of economic interest unfortunately, quite honestly in the puzzle of this whole terrorism and Wahhabi contribution, Wahhabi ideological and theological contributions, ongoing contributions to this terrorism problem, I am beyond belief And completely lost, if anybody can tell me, why we are not going after this ideology?

Why we are not going to the heart of the matter? Why we are not trying to dry the wetland of Saudi establishment, or — I’m not saying regime change, but at least we should limit the kind of Wahhabi influence taking place and constantly pumping free literature, zealous missionaries all around the world. So one thing, this ideology had a free market to export the ideology, it got billions of dollars of money.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

The second thing — I will jump to my conclusion so that we can have a meaningful conversation. What’s the respectful way to say something hit the fan?

*(Laughter)*

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** The real thing hit the fan, is in 1980s in Afghanistan. When Afghanistan was invaded by Soviet Russia. This cancer, which was mainly destroying Islam in a theological sense, learned how to fight, how to kill, and partially, by our help. By our help, I have a lot of examples and it’s not conspiracy I think its public knowledge now, the way in which we took this ideology, and took so many men, and allowed and enabled this ideology in Afghanistan to defeat our mutual enemy. If you look, the way this cancer spread — religious violence is not new. Violence in the name of Islam, terror in the name of Islam is new.

But in this modern expression, the real violence took its muscles and violent capability in those 10 to 12 years of war in Afghanistan against Soviet Russia, where this violent ideology, extremist ideology, deeply anti semitic, deeply anti-western ideology, also learned military muscles, and learned how to fight, how to kill.

And when we won the war, and the Soviets left, we basically left these people all to their own. It’s so interesting. I go to southern Philippines Mindanao, where Muslim terrorists are trying to establish a Sharia state there, it’s a small number. And I am trying to implement the de-radicalization program in the prison with the captured terrorists.

And when I said, “How did you learn this Islam? Where did you get it from?”

Answer: “I learned it from Ahmad.”

Question: “Ahmad learned it from where?”

Answer: “He spent five years in Afghanistan. He was fighting for our religion.”

The cancer spread globally after Afghan wars of 1980s.

I took you to the Valley of Hopelessness, but I cannot leave you there. We have to climb up to mountaintop of hope and inspiration. I believe, as a functioning democracy, and a superpower, and a wealthy economy, we still have most of what we need, to undermine

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

this cancer and really treat this as a cancer model, and limit its resources, dry its ideological zeal and other resources.

And with the kind of more sophisticated 21st Century Marshall plans — because if we cannot help these areas where this cancer is infected, if only what we do is military solutions, if we only act as if all we know is a hammer and everything is a nail, this problem will only spread. We will hammer them down in Afghanistan, and they will show their evil face in Iraq. We will hammer them in Iraq, they will show in Somalia, they will show in Mali.

The military has a role to play. There’s a way in which those who are killing people with weapons — of course we should go after, and if necessary kill them, and prosecute them, and lock them up. But what you are fighting, is an evil ideology, which has roots in Islamic theology, in Muslim cultures. But the way in this theology and Muslim culture shaped through historical events, which we are partially involved, and played a partial role in creating this cancer. Therefore, we cannot put an ideology down by military muscles. Therefore, we cannot put a bullet through an ideology.

A bad religion, an evil religion, and bad ideology can only be cured and win and defeated by good ideology, and a good religion, and good social structure. Until, unless these societies, who are deeply broken in every possible sense: economically, socially, politically, religiously, culturally; until unless these societies don’t gain their help, this problem will not go away, it will grow.

We have been so far, only looking for military solutions, and today we have more terrorists than 15 years ago. We have more safe spaces producing this cancer than 15 years ago. Every terrorist we kill, we produce five to ten more terrorists.

I think the greatest rabbi and the philosopher of the 20th Century, Albert Einstein, said the definition of insanity is to keep trying the same thing over and over, and expecting different results. So I think our real conversation, like any other 12-step initiative says, what we have been trying is not working and therefore we have to — I love — I will end with this one.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

Psalms 96 and 98. Psalms is also a holy text for Islam. We believe it’s reveal to Prophet David. God says to David in Psalms 96 and 98:

“Sing me some new songs.” “Shir Hadash.” “Sing me some new songs”

If you look, why God revealed that text to David, because things were so messed up. And God is saying, the old songs that we have been singing, jumping into our simplistic, reductionist sound bytes and relying on our military muscles, is not working. It is fueling the fire, if anything, and the problem is growing.

We have to, as humanity at large and American people in particular, we have to, and we have most of what we need again. We can come up with 21<sup>st</sup> century version fo Marshall plans and help these broken socities to regain their health. What we don’t have, is the willpower. We don’t have at large as a society, to say we are going to sing a different song and defeat this enemy, and we will. Thank you very much.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Thank you.

*(Applause)*

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. I have a long list. Carl Cannon, you’re up first. And Graeme Wood, you did not raise your hand, but you just finished a book on ISIS, and so I’m going to call on you. Carl you’re up first, and then Graeme. And then I have others.

**CARL CANNON, RealClearPolitics.com:** Yes. For Professor Stern, but either one of you, or both. You said something that interested me. I think you said 40 percent of the Americans arrested for terrorism were Muslim converts.

And my question is, are they people who were attracted, typically to Islam, and then for tactical reasons are funneled into terrorism as cannon fodder because they’re expendable and naïve, or are they attracted to the violence and Islam is incidental to it?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I will only tell you, the latest case study that I have been working on. The story itself will answer almost all of your questions. There is no one story, like almost every one, single of them, all of the above, and even a different thing.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

For years, in North Carolina, I had been working to improve — home-grown terrorism and radicalization can only be solved if the Muslim community and the law enforcement learn how to work together. If the law enforcement will learn how to treat the Muslim community as part of the solution, not as part of the problem, and the Muslim community learns how to trust the law enforcement.

So we have come a long way. We have built enough trust that now, FBI and other local and federal law enforcement, when they see a case, which is so absurd, which means when somebody who is potentially radicalized, is so young, so ridiculously naive and misled, they call us, and mostly me, to intervene and help.

The latest story, and I have to be very careful not to reveal anything to violate the privacy of the family. A white kid, 12 years-old, a Catholic mother and a Protestant father. Never met a Muslim, never stepped into a mosque.

I’m not going to psychoanalyze the kid’s background and family structure, but at the age of 12, he starts watching YouTube videos of the ISIS propaganda. ISIS tweets 80,000 times a day almost. But there’s a very sophisticated, in terms of what to do, in terms of — we have to really talk about their capability, of this incredible, successful, as Dr. Stern said, messaging and branding, and trying to appeal to certain kinds of thrill seekers.

At the age of 13, he converted to ISIS Islam, without even meeting one Muslim, ever, in the United States. At the age of 14, he was talking to a Syrian Jihadi, ISIS — that’s what he thought, but he was talking to an FBI informant, making plans to go to Syria, to fight in ISIS.

And the FBI came. And I said, this is so bizarre. But if that boy was an 18-year-old Pakistani-American or Arab-American or Turkish-American, they would have never come to us.

They would send more informants to see how far he will go. And then he will — this was like many cases. We have nine cases brought to us, as a community, and we have a 100 percent success rate.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

We intervened. The results are different. This kid, after we said you have to — I said, I’m not going to tell you not to go ISIS, but I am going to tell you, if you’re going to accept Islam, accept and reject it, as it is.

So we conducted our, like basic information about mainstream Muslim theology. He’s been to the mosques. It’s so interesting, after six months of learning what Islam is, in all its complexity, including the ISIS version of Islam, he said, “I’m not interested, this is so boring.”

*(Laughter)*

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** He didn’t even want to remain as a Muslim anymore. It is so bizarre and interesting, but almost 50 percent of the people going, I heard it’s even higher, recent converts, and getting their conversion zeal buy into this idea that the West is at war with Islam, and the dignity and honor of Islam has been stabbed, and we have to go and defend our brothers and sisters in the Muslim world.

That’s their only selling message, and it’s working because Muslim societies are in some deep trouble. Deep, deep, deep pain, and ISIS gives a very black and white, very reductionist, simple answer to all the miseries in the Muslim world. And some people, who are recent converts are attracted to this.

**JESSICA STERN:** I’ve been talking at a great length to a young man, who had been at Columbia University. And he started a website — he converted — it turned into, essentially, *Inspire Magazine*, which is the magazine put out by Al Qaeda, in the Arabian Peninsula, that had the recipe “How to Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom,” which the Boston Marathon bombers followed.

He had read my book, “Terror in the Name of God,” when he was in prison, and he felt that I understood him, and he tried to get the prison authorities to have me come talk to him. Anyway, he’s out of prison now. He actually started out with a very left-leaning ideology.

And this is not common, I think, but people come from all kinds of ideologies. He was against globalization, and he still is, but he’s now interested in getting involved in playing a role in counter-radicalization, which I think is great.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Graeme Wood?

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**GRAEME WOOD, *The Atlantic*:** Thank you.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Graeme, when does your book come out?

**GRAEME WOOD:** I’ve got a book that’s coming out on ISIS that I hope will be worthy of Jessica’s example. Later this year, so possibly as early as the fall, but thank you both for very stimulating comments. I’ve got questions for both of you.

Jessica, I wonder if you might say some more about what you alluded to at the beginning, of ISIS using some familiar tricks, things that you’ve seen before, in the use of religious rhetoric for, perhaps insincere ways. Because you mentioned a few tensions or contradictions within the way that ISIS operates. One of them, the difference between the instrumental use of slavery, and on the other extreme, would be the inherent value of it, or the divine command to practice slavery. The contradiction between the desire to build a state, and the desire to bring about the apocalypse, which would presumably destroy all states.

And then there are other contradictions that I think are also sometimes adduced, like the difference between the religious origin and the political origin of ISIS, or of groups like it, or the difference between the lack of religious practice, or even the sinfulness of fighters, and their apparent religiousness now, or claims to be religious.

What has struck me, in some of the conversations that I’ve had with ISIS supporters, is that they don’t view any of these things as contradictions. They don’t view any of them as undermining their religious sincerity, or the religious nature of their organization. So I wonder if some of the conversation that we collectively have had about the religious nature of ISIS, versus the nonreligious nature of ISIS; if ISIS is willing to accept those contradictions, and to admit that its fighters have had sinful pasts, and have improved themselves to the point of being fighters in the name of God, whether this conversation might not actually be one that’s necessary to have at all.

**JESSICA STERN:** Um-hm.

**GRAEME WOOD:** I’ve got a second question for Blue Devil Imam, as well, but —

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

*(Laughter)*

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Go for it before you forget.

**GRAEME WOOD:** Okay. So I was first of all, very interested in your comparison with the Reformation, and I wonder if you might say more about that.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Sure.

**GRAEME WOOD:** And also your eagerness not to essentialize Islam, not to say Islam is a religion of war, Islam is a religion of peace. The Reformation comparison is one that I’m curious about, in part, because a lot of the Catholic polemics against Luther analogized him to Muslims.

**ADULLAH ANTEPLI:** Sure.

**GRAEME WOOD:** And said, “Look, he is proposing a kind of religion that is headless, that has no central authority.” But while you seem to be unwilling to essentialize Islam, you seem to be very willing to essentialize Wahhabism, which if you call it cancerous, violent and so forth. So if we were to extend the analogy further, I think we would, rightly, be careful about essentializing Protestantism, say. So I wonder if you might speak about whether Wahhabism also has this capacity to have — a peaceful Wahhabism, whether it can — rather than trying to eliminate it or oppose it inherently, we might see, after a few hundred more years of Wahhabism, a nice Wahhabism that we could all live with.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Excellent questions. That’s the hope.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Professor Stern first.

**JESSICA STERN:** I want to be clear. I didn’t mean to imply that anybody is insincere, any of the religious terrorists are insincere. I think that the reasons for the spread of this ideology have more to do with political, and economic factors, and cultural factors, and a crisis in Muslim-majority states, than with the religion, per se. So I’m not questioning

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

their sincerity, although clearly some of the locals, who have escaped are saying, “I joined this fighting force because they paid more than Nusra,” or “We know that those who were fighting on the U. S. side during the surge were promised jobs in the Maliki regime, and didn’t get those jobs became ripe for the picking for reasons of security, not necessarily because they buy into the ideology.

So I think it’s complicated. I think some are very sincere in their beliefs, but many who are there, who join, do so for other reasons. I mean they are going after gamers, for example. You know when we look at how they’re able to attract young people, they have “Call of Duty” films. Kids are joining for many, many different reasons and ideology is just one of them.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Can I add to that question also? I have never seen, as any Imam, way too many sinners come to my office, or I find out about them through law enforcement. I recently had been working with the police department, with a group of pedophiles, who have in the name of religion, often Christianity, some raped so many boys and girls for over decades.

And I was so appalled at their rationalization of this, like despicable, disgusting. I have never seen a sinner who hasn’t rationalized his sin, either a domestic violent abuser husband, or a pedophile, or a terrorist. Therefore, I would give very little credit to people who rape, who burn people alive, who destroy innocent lives.

What they say, and the way they rationalize these apparent contradictions, and not see themselves as sinners, in my mind they have no credibility because sin by itself is forcing people to rationalize it. Otherwise they will not repeat it. They will ask forgiveness for it.

Therefore, I would not dismiss it, but I think this is a sinner rationalization going on, not anything authentic, not anything scholarly or intellectual is taking place. If we are going to see the peaceful Wahhabism that’s the hope. And I’m not — do you want to know my third title?

When people hear me speak, they say, “Are you an Imam?”

I say, “Yes.”

They say, "No, no. There's a southern Baptist preacher in you."

*(Laughter)*

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Maybe my southern Baptist zeal might have sounded like I'm essentializing Wahhabism. That's the hope. I'm not advocating wiping out the whole Wahhabism. I believe every evil theology in the healthy context, it sort of tames itself, and domesticates itself, and becomes a healthy community.

If you look to previous examples that I gave, in the 1st Century of Islam, they became normal over time, when the institutions defeated their violent elements and when the overall health of the society absorbed and digested them, and they became incredible intellectuals later on.

The Assassins that are now Ismaili community, a sect of Shia Islam, who were serial Assassins, and now one of the best, and most organized intellectual, cultural, economic Muslim community, the Aga Khan community. That's their sources. They evolved and changed.

Protestantism, if it wasn't through certain helpful historical — it could have turned into ISIS. It could have been a Christian ISIS, but thank God it didn't. But Wahhabism, unfortunately got out of control. Wahhabism really became cancerous and it metastasized.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Mr. Imam, could you, in 25 words or less, I mean, not assume that everyone knows what Wahhabism is, and give a short definition of its roots? It's rooted in Saudi Arabia?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Yes.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Just a short definition of Wahhabism.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** It's a movement against — there are so many movements. When Muslim civilizations were collapsing, there were many answers by the Muslim scholars and movements. Why are we losing? Why are we collapsing?

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

Why, are we these people who, a couple of hundred years ago, in Dark Ages, and now coming and taking our land and insulting us, and breaking, stabbing our honor?

The Wahhabi ideology is “an” answer to this Muslim civilization collapse is because we lost our religion. Because we didn’t keep the originality of our religion. We were perpetual sinners.

We have to go back to the salaf, the Prophet and the immediate companions of the Prophet, and everything else in between is questionable, if not rejectionable. We have to go back and understand and live according to — basically rejection of tradition. It’s reformist.

It’s incredibly reformist. It’s rejecting 1400 years of Muslim history, and it’s saying we are going to go and implement the way the first 100 year Muslims lived, and we are going to — that’s why when you see the ISIS destroying those beautiful ancient artifacts, which was religiously protected by previous Muslims for generations. When you see them killing Yazidis and Iraqi Christians who were kept and protected and supported for many years. That’s why they say, no, we have to go back and create a pure Muslim state. That’s the ideological zeal.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** I wanted to get that. That’s very important. And if everyone saw Graeme Woods’ essay in *The Atlantic*, over a year ago, called, “What ISIS Really Wants,” which is now becoming his book. Graeme has a wonderful overview of all these different varieties —

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** The tone of anger and frustration that you see from me about Wahhabism, part of my State Department de-radicalization program is all in East Africa now. After 9-11, all the Wahhabi missionary free literature, billions of dollars of toxic, pure hate literature used to come to the United States. It was flooding all of our prison system.

After 9-11, thank God, *Alhamdulillah*, Baruch Hashem, it doesn’t come here anymore, but now they’re channeling all of it to East Africa, to Central Asia, to Southeast Asia. We have to do everything we can to at least in the ideological ground, minimize the impact and destruction.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Graeme, quickly?

**GRAEME WOOD:** You mentioned the Kharijites as a previous example of [muslim extremism]. The early Wahhabis and the Kharijites were basically defeated militarily.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Yes.

**GRAEME WOOD:** So it wasn't a matter of countering violent extremism through giving other forms of Islam, nurturing the other wolf. It was a matter of attacking that other wolf.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I respectfully disagree. They were militarily defeated by the violent elements, those who were killing people. They were defeated militarily, but ideological poison was treated by the overall health of the Muslim institutions reacting to what they are claiming, saying this kind of interpretation, literalists understand, it has no place in the Muslim tradition. You cannot confine Islam to the understanding of the first 100 years. Yes, you're absolutely right. Both assassins, [khawarij], and many other violent militant groups, they were defeated on the battleground.

But it didn't end there. If you look, there's an incredible amount of cultural and theological being work done. Oceans of literature have been produced to undermine their ideological and theological framework.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay.

**JESSICA STERN:** So I just feel the need to say that Saudi Arabia is at the cutting edge in counter-radicalization. Saudi Arabia, there's a letter that's in your paper from a senior member of the royal family. I think he's actually the Minister of Interior.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Your paper is the *Washington Post*?

**JESSICA STERN:** Yeah.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Your paper. Kathleen's paper.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**JESSICA STERN:** Really resentful that the President accused the Saudis of free riding. I don't think we should — we need to rely on Saudi Arabia to help in this fight. They are a critical part of it. They are most threatened by ISIS.

So I think it's important that we not demonize. I mean ISIS presents a threat to the entire world. Saudi Arabia is number one beyond the region that is threatened. I just wanted to add that.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** That's very helpful. Let me jump in. I'm going to call on Mort Kondracke. I've got you, and others on the list, and we're going to be taking a break in a minute, but Mort is up next, and then after Mort, someone who's not raised their hand is Fred Barnes.

And Fred, you had a wonderful question the other day, before the conference, for this panel. If you won't repeat it, I will. If you remember our conversation.

**FRED BARNES:** Not right off.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Not right off. Well then I'll ask it for you.

**FRED BARNES:** You're free to ask it for me.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Well, no, Fred's question quite simply, was okay, I get it, but why murder innocent people who have nothing to do with any of this? You work with them, you know them, and you go shoot them. That was your question? I mean can somebody just quickly explain? These are innocent people working in San Bernardino. They didn't harm anybody.

**JESSICA STERN:** Oh, in California?

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Yeah, in California. And Fred said to me, I can't wait for that panel, because I understand some of this, but to go and just find these innocent people and shoot them. Can somebody please explain that in 25 words or less, before Mort asks the same question.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Well, there is no rational explanation to that kind of barbarism. But I think, if I had to give it a try, ISIS thrives on fame and publicity. They count re-tweets, they count “likes.”

They thrive in that kind of — they recruit in an effort to be able to sensationally — that’s what terror in Arabic means; pumping fear into the hearts and minds of people. And they will do everything they can, they will do everything they can.

Look, a good example would be, on their way to Jerusalem, why did the Crusaders kill everybody? Christian, Jew, Muslim. My home town is on the Syrian border, southeastern part of Turkey. It was one of the major paths of Crusaders.

They ate babies alive, like the kind of cruelty. They sort of chop people into pieces and display their organs. Any organization that thrives in pumping fear into the hearts and minds of people, there is no limit to human genius in that regard.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Mort Kondrake, can you pull the mic over?

**MORT KONDRACK, *Roll Call*:** I have two items here. So I asked Jessica this question at dinner the other night, and I’ll ask you. Donald Trump says they hate us. A lot of them hate us. What percentage of the Muslims in the world, hate us?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Who are “they” and who are “us”? I mean I don’t —

**MORT KONDRAKE:** Well, he’s talking about the United States and he’s talking about —

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Mort is now speaking for Donald Trump.

**MORT KONDRAKE:** Yes. The first and only time. He’s saying that around the world, Muslims hate us, in general. How many? A lot of them. A lot of them. So what percentage of the world’s 1.7 billion Muslims —

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** God knows.

**MORT KONDRAKE:** — spend any time of their day hating America?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I don’t know. And anybody who says and gives a precise percentage would be lying. But I know it’s very small. I know it very — many people who are so angry with our policies, angry with our foreign policies, economic policies, as a result they sit on a pile of anger and frustration. Even them when they are “Death to America” with right hand, with the left hand they are saying “Give me visa.”

*(Laughter)*

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** So are there any data on this?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** No.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** There are no good data on the subject. I mean I’ve seen —

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Do you remember the Gallup, “Who Speaks on Behalf of Islam”?

**JESSICA STERN:** Yeah, yes. Dalia Mogahed.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Dalia Mogahed?

**JESSICA STERN:** Yeah.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** They were quite precise data there. I don’t have it now.

**WAJAHAT ALI, Al Jazeera America:** In 2009, Gallup did a poll of one billion Muslims, extensive. I think they spent seven years.

And then subsequently, it was written into a book by John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, “What Muslims Really Think.” But, I think it’s very telling.

Pardon me for this small interlude, but they said there are two major grievances that Muslims that they polled have against America: (1) the hypocrisy of the U.S. foreign policy compared to U.S. values; so it wasn’t just the U.S. foreign policy, but it was the hypocrisy between the U.S. foreign policy and values;

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

The second thing, which was very fascinating, which for some strange reason, people don't pick up on, which I think is really illuminating was (2) the disrespectful depiction of Islam and Muslims in U.S. media.

When it came to overall thoughts about the United States, the overwhelming majority of Muslims respect the United States for its freedoms, its values, its technology, also its education. It's a really good book. It was released in 2009.

**MORT KONDRAKE:** Okay.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Could you repeat the book again?

**FRED BARNES:** “What a Billion Muslims Really Think” and it was based on the 2009 Gallup Poll of “one billion” Muslims. I think they spent seven years on that poll and the book was written by John Esposito, of Georgetown, and Dalia Mogahed.

**MORT KONDRAKE:** So I suggested to Jessica that she write an op-ed piece because of what Trump has said, and because there is mass confusion in the United States about his assertion.

**KATHLEEN PARKER:** I need to stop you right there because that's my column today.

**MORT KONDRAKE:** Oh, it is? Okay.

*(Laughter)*

**MORT KONDRAKE:** And what data did you cite?

**KATHLEEN PARKER:** I'm citing these two people right here.

*(Laughter)*

**MORT KONDRAKE:** Good for you. Okay. So my second question is then, you started to say, as opposed to hammering ISIS that we've got to have a Marshall Plan. We've got to deal with Wahhabism. Have you laid out the agenda of what a smart U.S. President would do?

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Well, I’m an educator. Every pony has a trick. My trick is education. All the outline, agenda, and plan, is involved in education.

But in the long term, there needs to be a large scale of education campaign, both in the Muslim world, as well as in the United States, but I am not a politician. I’m not a policymaker. Not yet, at least. When I get to that level — but there are so many incredibly bright minds, who are really putting out so many impressive plans.

I highly encourage you to look at what ISPU has been doing, for example, in terms of specifically de-radicalization, what can we do in the short term and in the long run?

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** On this point, Tom — Tom wanted to jump in on this point.

**TOM GJELTEN, NPR:** Jessica mentioned Dalia Mogahed, who used to be with Gallup, and now she’s with another organization, the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. Is today March 15?

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Yes.

**TOM GJELTEN:** They have a poll that just came out that is just released today of American Muslims, only of American Muslims. Just very quickly, some of the key findings. Here’s one that’s interesting.

Muslims are as likely as Protestants to have a strong American identity. Eighty-five percent Muslims, eighty-four percent Protestants. They are also as likely as other Americans to identify strongly with their faith. Eighty-nine percent of Muslims, eighty-four percent of Jews, ninety-five percent of Catholics and Protestants.

But here’s the most interesting one, I thought. The percentage of Muslims who are satisfied with the direction the country is going, is almost double the level of optimism shown by Jews. The second most satisfied religious group, sixty-three percent of American Muslims are satisfied with the way the country is going, versus thirty-eight percent of Jews.

On the other hand, Muslims are the least likely faith group to be politically engaged. Only sixty percent of Muslims who reported they could legally vote, were registered to do so,

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

compared with at least eighty-six percent of Jews, Catholics, and Protestants. There are a lot of other findings in here. It’s the ISPU American Muslim Poll just released today.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Thank you, Tom.

(Break)

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Dr. Stern’s new book is called “ISIS; The State of Terror.” Here, we have copies. So just have a look. You can find it on Amazon.com.

Some of you have asked me a couple times about that three-minute talk that Jamie Smith gave on “How Augustine Can Save Your Life” and so I’m going to repeat it again. It’s on Vimeo at Laity Lodge Box Canyon.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Ladies and gentlemen, here we are. Let’s see, I think Miranda Kennedy and then Napp. So the mic’s are over there for the two of you. We’re back in on it now. And you’re on the list, Shannon.

**MIRANDA KENNEDY, NPR:** If Kathleen would stop laughing, we could talk about ISIS some more.

No, I was just curious about Saudi Arabia, but I was going to ask both of you what you think we, the U.S. should do about Saudi Arabia, but I feel like I know now, what you think we should do. That we should cooperate more. We should continue cooperating with Saudi Arabia. Is that right?

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Let me do this. I meant to make this announcement. What I would like to do, we have such a long list, is write down that question.

What I’m going to do is get a few people in the queue and we’ll add up the questions. So Miranda’s question and then Napp Nazworth. Let me get about three or four on, and then we can answer them, and then we can keep moving that way. Because there are so many of you on the list.

And then Napp, follow her question up with a question. You’re next.

**MIRANDA. KENNEDY:** Okay. Well, I didn’t finish.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Oh. Well, I thought you were. Oh.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**MIRANDA KENNEDY:** No, no. I was just making sure I understood her perspective, but it doesn't have to be a long one. I just was asking before. I'd like to know what you think we should do specifically about Saudi Arabia.

**NAPP NAZWORTH, *The Christian Post*:** So I just appreciated what you said about that. It's not your position to say what, is the theologically-correct position. And then Abdullah said that you thought that saying “Islam is a religion of peace,” is overly simplistic and it reminded me of this —

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** And not true.

**NAPP NAZWORTH:** And not true, okay. It reminded me of a debate two years ago at Faith Angle Forum. We had Elliott Abrams sitting where you are. Michael Gerson was somewhere down there, and they were debating whether it's appropriate for presidents to make the statement that Islam is a religion of peace. And so the issue for me, is I want the peaceful Muslims to win, right?

What the Koran says, is you know not important to me. What is important to me, is that the peaceful Muslims win. Meaning, you know that teenage Muslim, is deciding no, do I like the radicals or do I like the peaceful? I want him to go with the peaceful ones, right?

So for us non-Muslims, how do we encourage that? How do we help that happen, because we really have a big interest in the peaceful ones winning, right?

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** These are actually two very good questions so let's answer these, and then we'll keep moving. First Saudi Arabia, and then Napp.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Please. You are more charitable on Saudi Arabia than I am.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Well, good. Let's hear that.

**JESSICA STERN:** I get uncomfortable when we come up with univariate explanations for terrorism. So I was reacting out of discomfort. I think it's —

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** We are friends. You can be comfortable.

**JESSICA STERN:** And I also think it doesn't — I think we actually really need Saudi Arabia to — this is as Bernie Haykel says, “untamed” Wahhabism. He doesn't say it's Wahhabism. He says it is “untamed Wahhabism.” As a woman, obviously, I am not comfortable. Well, as a human being I'm not remotely comfortable with Wahhabism, but I don't think it's helpful to demonize a country that we really need in this fight.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I don't disagree with you, when you say we need Saudi Arabia in defeating ISIS, but I think we have to exercise caution here. We have to cooperate with Saudi Arabia, with very open eye and critical eye, and we have to exercise tough love. A religious establishment is in the hands of untamed Wahhabism. A religious establishment is in the hands of people who are pumping this ideology all over the world.

And therefore, as we did with communism and other ideologies, who we thought were not kosher, I think we should have the same kind of skepticism and filtering. Saudi Arabia beheads more people than ISIS every year. Women cannot drive.

Nine year old girls are allowed to marry because of a sickening despicable ideology which is the official religion. And I think again when we cooperate with a state, I think it should be in harmony with our ethical moral values. It shouldn't be only just solving problems and fixing issues and turning a blind eye on their gross human rights violations. This is a consistent, I think innate hypocrisy in our foreign policy, if we keep doing this.

Plus, these guys are still pumping this bad ideology to all over the world. Part of our engagement with Saudi Arabia should be twisting their arms and making them stop. And to your question, in terms of politicians, you know, if you say, a week after 9-11, trying to drop the temperature, I mean then maybe there's some wisdom there.

Especially if you are a Republican, if you understand American society is very vulnerable and there is a hate, an uncontrolled hate, and violence could take place against Islam and Muslims. In that particular sense, it's somewhat understandable, but just to score political points, to be cheesy, to stick to these stereotypes and sound bites, I think it's not very helpful.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

For peace loving Christians supporting peace loving Muslims, you know one of the biggest influences on me, after I came to the United States, was reading Abraham Joshua Heschel. This man, what he did as a nonblack for the civil rights movement, it’s an incredible American story. In the context of American civil rights struggles, he said something really profound.

He said, there are few people who are guilty. ISIS is guilty. This politician is guilty, etc. But as he says in that context, again, all of us are responsible.

We arrive to this point together, and we can only bounce back together. What peace-loving Jews, Christians, Hindus, and Muslims can do? Feeling that sense of responsibility and fighting the fight, and not being a moderate lazy person.

Part of the problem is these crazies are so active, so hardworking, so determined. The forces who are trying to divide us are working day and night. There is one group in Lynchburg, Virginia. Every week they are sending me literature that God will barbeque me in the dungeons of hell.

But every week, I admire the consistency, like hard work. Unbelievable that they never give up. I always respond, saying, “Look, even if you want me to convert to your brand of Christianity, don’t you think there’s a marketing problem here?”

*(Laughter)*

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** You should be talking to me. But I admire the consistency. Most peace loving Christians, like most peace loving Muslims and Jews and Hindus, regretfully, they are moderate peace loving, but they are lazy, my friend.

They are inactive. And they don’t understand how their laziness, silence, and inactivity, is empowering the fringe crazies in their communities. The problem is not these crazies and violent people. The problem is the choir that we preach.

They understand they are peaceful, but they don’t act. They don’t pay. They are not motivated. They are not mobilized.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Kathleen Parker? Kathleen, and then Will Saletan, and Shannon, and Clare, and Mindy, and Jamie, and Andrew, and Daniel.

**KATHLEEN PARKER, *The Washington Post*:** This question is directed to Jessica, but I welcome your thoughts, as well. Very early in your comments, you said that you would call ISIS Islamic or Islamist, and that the President refuses to.

And you hear a lot of criticism about that from the right and the republican party, that you can't fight an enemy that you won't name, or you can't deal with a problem that you can't identify, and I'm not sure that logic follows, but you are willing to call it, recognize that it is based on Islamic texts, etc., to limited degrees, or selective degrees. So my question is how important do you think it is to identify ISIS as motivated, in part, by the texts? I understand that the President can't every time he mentions it, explain all the nuances, but he has just declined simply to — I think that it's probably because he doesn't want to alienate good Muslims, moderate Muslims, who might otherwise be on board.

But anyway, I welcome your thoughts on the naming aspect, and then if we were to be more open about it, if the President were to be more specific, would that help in any way, other than political in this country? Would it help in our efforts to combat ISIS?

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Let's get Will on, and then we'll answer those two.

**WILL SALETAN, *Slate*:** Kathleen, thanks for taking my first question. So I've got two more. No, no, Kathleen's question was exactly the question, the first question I wanted to ask.

And actually, just to follow up on it, I wanted to just press Abdullah on whether, you know the Republican criticism of the violent extremism framework is that it's too vague. Do you think that way of framing the issue actually impedes addressing the problem, or is that just cosmetic? Is that just an umbrella term and within it that they are doing an adequate job of confronting these —

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Can you please define that Republican framework for me?

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**WILL SALETAN:** Oh, just what Kathleen was saying, the objection is that by talking about — that we won’t name the problem. The Ted Cruz version: if you don’t name the problem, you can’t address it.

Now, your criticism is much more complicated and specific, but it’s on a similar point.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Sure.

**WILL SALETAN:** Wahhabism, right. So do you think this violent extremism framework, is just superficial, an umbrella term, and within it they’re doing an adequate job of addressing the problem, or do you think that refusal to call it Islam, is part of failing to address the specific problem of Wahhabism?

And then if you want to, if you feel like talking about, I’m sure a bunch of us in this room would love to hear about your de-radicalization methods, and what kind of conversations do you have with these people, what’s effective? That may be too long to deal with, but I’m just curious about it.

And one thing that really struck me in your remarks is some of the language that you used here, and I don’t know, not having heard you before, “despicable, disgusting, sickening, turns your stomach.” Is that something that used for every audience? Is that something that you do to make clear to non-Muslims that Muslims do object to this? Do you think that non-Muslims don’t hear this enough from Muslims, particularly in this country?

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** So both of those questions are related, so let’s stay on those two, and then we’ll go to two more. Kathleen’s and Will’s.

So Jessica, your comments on Kathleen’s critique of the President.

**JESSICA STERN:** Yeah. I mean I understand why, and you understand why the President refuses to call this group Islamist, and why he uses “CVE.” I mean Muslims interpret CVE as —

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** What is CVE?

**JESSICA STERN:** Countering Violent Extremism, rather than Countering Islamist Terrorism or Islamist Violent Extremism. Unfortunately what it means, is Muslims object to any — many Muslims object to any kind of CVE, now because it’s a weasel-y term for going after

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

Muslim terrorists. I think it’s important to call it by its name, and not for Ted talk reasons, but I just — why not?

I don’t know, I mean everybody knows what we’re talking about, so I don’t know that it makes that big a difference politically. I think it’s silly, frankly. I’m curious what you —

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Well, thank you for giving words to my frustration. What should we call this problem? What’s the name, and what’s the word? It feels like Hillary Clinton emails, over and over and over. You remember what Bernie Sanders said about them. Like part of me says it’s not important — let’s deal with the real issue. These people are calling on each other, not to solve the problem or come up with the helpful term, but to basically stab at each other, score political points against each other, which is quite regrettable, which is another manifestation of the deep destructive polarization in our political life.

Every issue is a point to attack my political opponent. Every issue, including this one, as if we name it this way or that way will make any difference. Instead of talking about our substantial issues.

But I think we should call it as is. It’s a manifestation of Islam. It’s an expression of Islam in the way that I said.

It has roots in ideology and theology in Muslim cultures and histories, which our western policies and foreign policies and economic policies have contributed to — our invasions of those countries. Israeli/Palestinian conflict. These are contributing factors. In that sense, a slice of it, it’s an expression of Islam, but it’s not the authentic expression of Islam.

**KATHLEEN PARKER:** So I should rewrite my lead to say both Donald Trump and Barack Obama are helping ISIS?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** In some ways, yeah. I’m sure. I’m hoping not intentionally. But more Muslims should say — more Muslims should stop becoming naïve, unhelpful, apologetic. More Muslims should stop this nonsense of “This has nothing to do with Islam”.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

I understand why Obama, as a politician, as a non-Muslim is not saying this, but more Muslims confidently should say, yes these people are Muslim and they claim to do everything they do in the name of Islam. It’s an expression of Islam, which has its roots in Islamic history and Islamic facts.

But it’s evil, it’s perverted, it’s twisted. We should fight against it. I don’t understand that Muslim defensiveness that’s very common. “It has nothing to do with Islam”, really?!?.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Are you willing to go on T.V. and talk about this soon?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Sure. If I can ever get invited to FOX T.V.

*(Laughter)*

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Well, because if one of the first things we hear after San Bernardino, is “Where are the moderate Muslims who are condemning, or why are they so quiet? Why are they so intimidated? Where are they? Where are they?” And I’m going to say, well, call my friend in Durham.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Here we are.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Here you are.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** And there are so many of them.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Are there?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** There are so many. There are so many of us. That’s another question. Why after 14 years, so much effort by Muslim community in the United States, doing everything they can, almost at the expense of their own well-being? After 15 years, overwhelming majority of Americans are still saying, “Where are the moderate Muslims?” This is a one million dollar problem. Maybe as a question, we should discuss.

I think partially because Muslim community is working hard, but not working smart. And they need your help. American society at large, they are so lazy they don’t want to

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

diversify their sources of information. They are sticking with whatever they know, and they don't go one extra mile to see. It's amazing.

Like most of the conversations about Islam and Muslims are happening in the absence of Islam and Muslims. Muslims are not in the room. They are not at the microphone. This is an exceptional and admirable invitation, which I'm really grateful. I hope we are deserving of that trust.

**KATHLEEN PARKER:** May I just say one more thing? So I understand that it's silly not to name it, that we may as well name it, I get that, but would it help in any way, to name Islam as the problem? An aspect of Islam as the problem.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I think it would.

**KATHLEEN PARKER:** You do?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I think it would. I think he should call it. He shouldn't be too scared. he should have the courage. And yeah, some Muslims might be defensive and angry, but he should also provide that complexity.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** And some Muslims, like me and Wajahat and others, by articulating why this is an expression of Islam, but an unacceptable wrong expression. It should be defeated. It could help as well. I think it would.

**KATHLEEN PARKER:** All right.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** And just quickly on this, and then Shannon, you're next, and then Clare, and then Mindy.

**ERICA GRIEDER, *Texas Monthly*:** Yes, sir. And just to ask a quick technical question, following up on this discussion. I've been trying to use the phrase that is precise and accurate, in my writing about it, and I think we all try for that as journalists.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

What I’ve been using thus far, at this point, is “radical Islamist terrorism.” Is there a more precise phrase that either of you would suggest? That captures not as much nuance and context.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Do you have a precise phrase that would be better?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I think using “Muslim” more than religion, Islam, is helpful. Muslim terrorists. This is the accurate description.

And to be consistent. To call every terrorist with their religious affiliation or jihadi ideology or jihadi terrorist, also you could say this.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Shannon and then Clare Duffy?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I didn’t get a chance to answer Will’s question though. I think the whole Republican question in this recent exchange answered, but in terms of my honest emotional cry, vis a vis this reality, is not a PR campaign. I’m not trying to message it. It’s my original authentic sincere really sincere emotions.

You know it affects my life, my friend. Every morning my wife and I, before we send our children to school, we check the headlines, to see if it is safe to send our children to school. Every day I am hoping my wife will text me when she comes from hospital to home, because we live in a very interesting world.

The reality that’s seven or eight hours ahead of us, is affecting our daily life. Just a couple of days ago, again, if I can be a little bit personal. I have a 14-year-old daughter. She and a friend are going through a bitter breakup. They are very very close friends, have nothing to do with religion, nothing at all.

So in the heat of these 14-year-old teenagers fighting and arguing and ending their friendship, her friend said, “I hope Trump will win, and you will disappear.” And it’s painful to be a father of a 14-year-old, seeing your daughter is going through what she’s going through. So it’s affecting us.

And to think that Muslims don’t see this and are not pained by it, and not even caring about it, it’s just regretful. It shows a kind of lack of common sense as a result of very unhealthy biased media and otherwise presentation of the problem.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**UNIDENTIFIED PERSON:** As far as, when your daughter was told, I hope Donald Trump wins and —

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** You will disappear. “I hope Trump will win, and you will disappear.” So in the mind of a 14-year-old, average American girl, it went to that level of toxicity that she’s trying to hurt my daughter. I hope she doesn’t mean it, but that tells you how deep the problem is sinking.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** So but Will’s question was what? Kind of a description of your de-radicalization work.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** And quite honestly, I cannot talk about that on the record.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay.

**SHANNON BREAM, Fox News:** So many of the groups that were mentioned today, operate from a place of exterminating any dissent from what they believe or completely annihilating groups that have nothing in common with them, not just dissent, but completely in conflict with them. And I keep thinking about our conversation yesterday about secularism, secularity, about this concept of having space for competing, beliefs, no belief at all.

But the concept of you don’t go back from that once you know what’s out there, and I wonder about that concept being leveraged as a tool against these groups, and their attempts to stifle anything in their way that’s not in complete agreement with them.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Yeah. Interesting.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Abdullah, let’s do this. Let’s write that question down, and then Clare, get yours in, and then we’ll keep going.

**CLARE DUFFY, NBC Nightly News:** I’m actually good because mine was Will’s on de-radicalization. So we’ll take that up later.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay, good. Okay. Let’s answer Shannon’s question and then after Shannon, we’ll go to Mindy. And then, Tom, you had an intervention earlier, but you’re still on the list.

**TOM GJELTEN:** Yeah. I’m still on it.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** And you want to be on that list, don’t you? Yes, indeed. You’re on it. And Andrew, I’ve got you and Jamie. And yes, I’ve got you, Wajahat.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Jessica, do you want to take on Shannon?

**JESSICA STERN:** Yeah. I think “secularity three” is very very offensive to ISIS. They are going after number one, Shiites, but number two, also Sunni Muslims who don’t accept their interpretation of Islam. They publicize their massacres of Shiites.

They generally do not publicize their massacres of Sunni’s — that’s not part of their brand. They want to be seen as the vanguard of Sunni Islam. But that’s right. Secularity three is their enemy.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Also, I think Jamie said, if you get a cable, their radicalism is finished. Part of what we do in the radicalization program is to figuratively provide a cable, to get a variety of interpretations —

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Provide a what?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Figuratively provide them a cable. Jamie said yesterday, if you have a cable, you can’t be radical anymore. Cable TV, yeah. And I think Graeme and I, we were talking during the break, all you can do, is to put a doubt in their mind. And then all that absolutist, essentialist black and white world shatters automatically. Yeah.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Mindy Belz and then Tom and Jamie. Mindy?

**MINDY BELZ, *WORLD Magazine*:** I’ll try to be quick. Thank you. That story makes me sad about your daughter, and it reminds me, in 2007/2008 a couple of fathers in Bagdad told me that they were packing pajamas in the backpacks of their children when they

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

went to school, because they weren't sure it would be safe enough for them to come home. And so I just appreciate what you've said, and it is a joint problem that we have. That being said, what I wanted to ask both of you, is, coming from a perspective of following what's been happening with the Christians and the Yazidi and other religious minorities in Iraq and in Syria. The action yesterday in the House to declare that genocide, and it does seem that at the end of whatever day this ends, the Muslims who have been hurt so much, will be able to go back and rebuild their societies or have the potential to.

It seems unlikely that the Christians and the Yazidi population, just those two, will have that same opportunity in Iraq, especially. And so I just wonder what you all think, if there should be protection for those groups, for the indigenous Iraqi and indigenous Yazidi population.

My second question, I think is related, but it'll sound a little bit different, but I think it's important to talk about the Iraq, the head of Iraqi intelligence has said there are, they estimate between 100 and 160 former Saddam Hussein regime officers that are behind the structure of ISIS that are giving it, its organizational heft —

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Those numbers are very high. Much more higher than —

**MINDY BELZ:** Okay.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** — 160 —

**MINDY BELZ:** That's what I wonder, because we hadn't discussed that. And we saw the guy, who was captured last week. Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri. The Vice President of the United States, you know one of the few in the deck of cards United States never caught, still apparently is operating somehow behind the scenes, and giving ISIS some lift.

It seems to me that is something that you don't want to hear about in Washington, because it makes Republicans and the Democrats look bad for different reasons. I mean, if in fact ISIS took over and you had a Saddam Hussein left, a holdover regime installed in Bagdad somehow, you would have, even that basic premise in which we went to war there, would be undone. And it certainly makes the menace look more deep-rooted. And

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

so I just wonder if you can speak to that issue of what the Saddam Hussein regime’s role is in ISIS, and —

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I think, Jessica can speak to that much better —

**MINDY BELZ:** Okay. And then philosophically what that might mean too.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Absolutely. I fully hear, and share your pain about the death and destruction of ancient Christian and non-Muslim, Yazidi, and otherwise communities. But unfortunately this is a tsunami, it kills and destroys everybody. They don’t only destroy Christian and Yazidi, as you know. They destroy anybody and everybody, as Shannon said, who, is not part of them.

You are either with me or against me. And if you are not with me, they destroy them. One would think and hope, the happy ending story of this will be restoration of these societies, and that restoration will also include the full acknowledgement of the right of return of these ethnic and religious minorities.

And their rights and their properties will be compensated in line, and in an equal level with the Muslim population. But I think you are very right, it’s very unlikely that most of these people —

I visited, I told you, a group of Christian Arabs — just to form solidarity and give my own apology to them — in the Los Angeles area. Most, probably they are going to stay here for a long time. And by the time things are restored there, it will be very difficult for them to go back there, but you are absolutely right.

And there is — so much scholarly work is going on. That basic brain team and the infrastructure of the ISIS, is the former Baath Party, or former Iraqi, Saddam Hussein’s army people, who were basically fired the day after we arrived there in 2003 by Rumsfeld.

**JESSICA STERN:** Yeah. I think you’re right. It makes both administrations look bad. It makes the Bush administration look bad for responding to 9-11 by attacking Iraq, and by leaving Sunnis disenfranchised in the hands of a sectarian leader. It also makes the Obama administration look bad for not just removing troops, but removing diplomats.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

I think Obama just wanted to wash his hands of the problem, and these sectarian tensions built. And Sunnis, in the minority, had largely been in control since 1920, were suddenly, completely unsafe and ripe for the picking, including most importantly, military and intelligence personnel with great skills.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Not seeing the American invasion of Iraq, and its partial role in partial contribution to the creation of the ISIS, is really to me, dishonest. So many ISIS conversations are talked as if our invasion of this country has nothing to do with it. You hear speech after speech as if that 2003 invasion played no role, not even a partial role. This is unthinkable. If you’re going to talk about this problem, which is regional, it has its historical, theological roots — but again, it emerged partially as a result of our unwise decisions.

**MINDY BELZ:** Actually, I do want to add that the person who formed the group that became ISIS was initially a secular thug. He was an ordinary criminal, whose mother thought she was going to save him — Jordanian — thought she would save him from a life of crime, by having him study Islam. Unfortunately, the Islam he discovered was not a religion of peace, but a religion that justified his continuing criminal activity. And his skill at criminal activity is one of the reasons this organization is so wealthy.

**UNIDENTIFIED PERSON:** Who is that guy?

**JESSICA STERN:** Zarqawi.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Tom, you’re up next. Tom Gjelten.

**TOM GJELTEN, NPR:** This goes back to the question about whether there’s sort a peaceful version of the Wahhabi movement that might be part of the solution. There are two groups you didn’t mention, Abdullah. One is the Salafis, particularly the — I think it’s called the Quietists, the Salafis who are Quietists, who you know believe in sort of extreme Islam, but keeping to themselves.

And then, more important, the Islamists. I mean Jessica used the word “Islamist,” in describing ISIS. You did not call them an Islamist group, but the political Islam, and

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

specifically Muslim Brotherhood, who according to my understanding, have for the most part of their history, have eschewed violence.

Now, in Turkey, you have an Islamist party in power. You have an Islamist party in power in Tunisia, you know what do you think of the potential of political Islam movement, the Islamists, to counter ISIS?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Great question. Yes, I was rushing through my notes, and I skipped that part. That’s an important one. I want to give a shout out to Shadi Hamid from the Brookings Institute. If you really want to understand political Islam.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** We had him here.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** We had? Okay.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** About one year ago.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I really hope you will read what he writes. I think he is one of the best scholar of political Islam and some of his colleagues at Brookings Institute as well. He is advocating, I think, very constructive and meaningful, as someone who knows the topic, saying not all Salafis are bad. Not all political Islamists are bad.

There is a way in which we should be able to work some parts, or some forms of political Islamism. So his ideas, or his opinions, they pretty much reflect mine, as well. We can do so much in, investing in healthy partnership with the more peaceful, more engaging, more constructive parts of political Islamists and the Salafis, and this will also help, also root out and weed out the violent elements of Wahhabism, as well.

But Wahhabism poisoned political Islam, Wahhabism poisoned political Salafism as well. The way in which this poison untamed wahhabism, wahhabism with a small W. The way it infiltrated, it affected Brotherhood, it affected Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, India, and it affected political Islam in Turkey, as well.

You can really easily trace the theological and ideological arguments in those as well, but those camps are not totally violent and untamed, as Wahhabism. So they are low-hanging fruits that we should engage with, absolutely.

TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**UNIDENTIFIED PERSON:** Who is Brookings’ person?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Shadi Hamid.

**UNIDENTIFIED PERSON:** He’s got a new book coming out very shortly.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** In the last couple of weeks, he wrote phenomenal three or four articles. Understanding the role of political Islam in this context is really phenomenal. I highly encourage you to read it.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Quickly, on this point, Andrew, a short intervention, and then we have Wajahat, and then Jamie.

**ANDREW MILLER, *The Economist*:** My question was on the domestic inflection, the same question, actually, to do with nonviolent extremism, which has been a kind of — well, how, or whether to enlist nonviolent extremists and throw it against violent extremism has been a big live question in Britain and other European countries. And I wanted to ask you about that because the distinction — I understand from my reporting in Britain that the security services are very keen on nonviolent extremists. They actually like them, and even if they — these are people who reject the basic tenets of Western democracy and don’t really recognize the ultimate authority of the British government, but nevertheless oppose violence. And the security people tend to regard them as potentially very useful allies. Whereas, the government has been under increasing pressure to renounce them all together and denounce all forms of extremism, without making the distinction as to whether they are potentially actually violent or not. And I wondered, both of you, whether you have a — again, this is sort of a domestic version of Tom’s question, I think. I’m sure in America as well.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Thank you.

**ANDREW MILLER:** What do you think? You know, how would you make that judgment?

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Well, that’s a phenomenal question, but again, there’s a large scale of education that needs to be done. There are many people in the law enforcement, they find visible expressions of Islam as a form of extremism.

The NYPD, when they were surveiling Yale Muslim Student Association, NYU Muslim student association, they were recording the number of times they prayed, the length of their beard, the type of their hijab — this is so ridiculous. So when we talk about nonviolent extremism, we should not equate any religiosity, or piety, or level of practice, with extremism, which unfortunately, is so grossly taking place when it comes to Islam, in the Muslim communities.

If you are eating only halal, if you only shop from a Muslim butcher, etc., like this is unacceptable, but there is absolutely a problem with nonviolent extremism, if a significant number of violent extremists are coming from one pool of people, I think we should absolutely surveil them, look for them, at least make sure, as long as they remain nonviolent, and not advocating for violence, with the First Amendment, there’s nothing much you can do.

But I think we should absolutely critically, basically watch them, whether or not they are doing anything to turn that nonviolent extremism into violent extremism. Have you ever studied them?

**JESSICA STERN:** I understand your question. You want to know if they can be utilized to fight violent extremism.

**ANDREW MILLER:** And they have in London (inaudible) —

**JESSICA STERN:** Yeah. I mean I think a more useful approach, and this is what’s done with neo-Nazis in Scandinavia, is to use former violent extremists. I think that people who were not — it’s not all about ideology. So I think people who bought into the entire approach and left it, I think that is a better approach.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** They need to be lifted up.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** I’ll give you one example. For example, there are some scholars like Yasir Qadhi, who studied in Medina, Saudi Arabia, in the heart-bed of Wahhabi Salafi ideology. And pretty much, he’s not extremist, but people who are credible in that world they are doing phenomenally, wonderful job, like him. He’s doing an admirable job in countering any form of extremism, violent or nonviolent, or violent, of course, extremism.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Wajahat? Here we are.

**WAJAHAT ALI:** Yeah. I think my question has to do with the nature of terrorism and moving forward. Two questions, perhaps. First, is Syria.

You know we’re entering the sixth year of the war, more than 300,000 people have been killed, and it seems that with the refugee crisis, and with the civil war, even though Russia says it’s going to back out now, interesting developments, it seems to be a hot bed for extremism. And the people who go to Syria, many of them, I mean, there’s different profiles for the violent extremists ISIS recruits, they say they’re going to implement justice.

They want fairness, and justice, and peace in Syria. In fact, it seems like very noble, when they try to rationalize their actions. So how can we contain, if you will, any sort of violent extremism, or radicalization, whatever you want to call it, while we still have the Syria conflict ongoing, number one.

Number two, it seems that our future reality will see asymmetrical urban warfare. What happened in Paris, in San Bernardino, unfortunately, it seems it’ll be the norm. I hope I’m wrong, but with a globalized world, and how everything is going, I don’t see that as being a rare occurrence. I think we, unfortunately, are going to be seeing that for the rest of our lives.

If that is the case, how do we then inoculate ourselves, as an American society, from being terrified?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** One has to love Wajahat.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Yeah. He puts the strong questions.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Absolutely. So if we do our first point, I think that was my ending point. Until and unless these safe zones producing this cancer, producing these crazies, until and unless these deeply economically, socially, politically, culturally, and religiously broken societies with external help, they cannot do it by themselves; Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan. Name it, or East Africa, Nigeria, certain parts of Nigeria.

We have to find out a way, as a global community. Not only for self-interest but also for ethical moral reasons, because we played a role in the creation of these problems. So ethical moral reasons and also self-interest, because the violence and the kind of evil produced there is coming and affecting us.

We have to do everything we can. There are many creative Marshall plans and there are so many smart people in D.C. talking about this. I’m not going to go into details.

The second one, until and unless we don’t put a lid into this toxicity or limit it, we are going to continue to live in fear and in terror, absolutely. There is no guarantee, similar events like Paris and San Bernardino will not happen. There is nothing in the modern world.

If you listen to the people, the time these lone wolves decide and act is only two hours, three hours sometimes. When they get really radicalized and then they have the means to go, and basically kill people, there is very little with the available technology and the defense and security mechanisms, to interfere between his decision or her decision, and then doing that in the two hours.

This is something that we are not prepared. We have to dry the wetlands. And not only focus killing the mosquitos.

**WAJAHAT ALI:** I mean the second question, in particular, you know, because unfortunately, I think this is going to be a recurrence for the rest of my life, maybe in my child’s life. Globalization, the way people get recruited, the flowing of money and arms. The way you know, you can have a very peaceful society, and there’s one person who pops up, regardless if you want to call them Muslim violent extremists, or whatever. How do we, as a society, then if you studied this, American society, which is right now being paralyzed by fear and division and anger and racial hysteria, can we inoculate

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

ourselves against the feeling of terror that will inevitably happen as a result of another plot?

**JESSICA STERN:** There is a theory called “terror management theory” that anytime it comes out of the recognition that we all have to, unlike other animals, human beings are forced to live with the knowledge of their own demise, even if they haven’t had a near death experience. And that we try, we have a world view and that world view is strengthened any time we are reminded of our mortality unconsciously.

And if our world view is racist, when we are reminded of our mortality, we become more racist. If we’re xenophobic, we become more xenophobic. This is a real problem for us, because I agree with you. We will have more lone wolf attacks.

I think it’s very important for all of us to realize that the main problem is for government officials. For individuals, the risk of getting caught up in a terror strike is vanishingly small. But also, to remember what terror management theory teaches us, these experiments have been done thousands of times all over the world, including in Iran, and just be aware of how we might react in a counterproductive way.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** If I can also add? Fear reveals the worst of anybody and everybody. And if we can invest in our immune system as a society, and know how to manage, not allowing fear to unleash the bad wolf in us. And if we can come up with a collective spiritual discipline where we acknowledge the fear, but not allowing to be overcome by the fear, not operating from a frame of reference, purely for fear, that will absolutely diminish the potential damage of that bad wolf in us.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Jamie Smith? Jamie Smith is next, and then James Hunter.

**JAMIE SMITH:** I do wonder if there’s to be a fascinating conversation about whether exclusive humanism has the resources to overcome fear. That would be — I just think, if all you have is the resources of the imminent frame, I’m not sure who could tell you, “be not afraid.” But that’s a different point.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Next year’s. Maybe next year’s conversation.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**JAMIE SMITH, Calvin College:** I think this question is for Imam Abdullah. I’m intrigued and thinking a lot about your point that bad ideology is challenged and rolled back by good ideology.

But then that makes me wonder, how much is our — and in particular, it sounded like to me, in other words, healthy Islam, healthy Muslims countering cancerous Muslims, right?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Healthy global societies and healthy global policies countering unhealthy ones.

**JAMIE SMITH:** So what if, though, American foreign policy and diplomatic strategies and counterterrorism strategies are, let’s say by default almost, informed by kind of secular-two-ist ideologies, then the ideology that they’re going to try to counter Wahhabism with, would be sort of democratic liberalism, which might actually be fueled by “religion as herpes,” kind of ideology, right?

In which case, that’s not going to be very effective, because it is demonizing Islam, it is demonizing religion as such. We’re going to get you to stop being Muslim terrorists by becoming liberals.

A, I would be intrigued if anybody knows whether that is kind of the default sort of policy mentality and if secondly, though, doesn’t this mean that really Muslims have responsibility — I’m just wondering, what can the United States do, if its face isn’t seen as Muslim in having that kind of fight? That ideological kind of fight.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Sure. I think your first question is very profound. It all depends on the type of secularism. If it’s French type, that’s exactly what happened in the 1920s and ’30s in Turkey.

A French secularist ideology founded the Turkish republic, and basically according to this form of secularism, Islam should be confined to the four walls of the mosque. Anything beyond is unacceptable. And you see the result.

But if it’s an improved and even more evolved version of the Anglo-Saxon secularism that we discussed yesterday, that, in itself gives their religion to thrive and reveal the best of its self anyways. Look what America is doing to American Islam.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

If you pay attention to American Islam, as a reality, not in its perception, it’s incredible how the overall health and religion — frankly, Anglo Saxon secularism — is enabling Muslims, without even any external help, revealing the best of their selves and even reviving their religious thought, religious understanding. In the Georgetown study of top 500 Muslims, American Muslims are the most exceedingly well represented within that 500.

Why? Because they produce knowledge in English and they’re in a context with so many civil liberties where they can actually produce religious knowledge. Where they will not be bothered and oppressed. Ideas are not limited or challenged with that type of French secularism.

Sermons of American Imams, Wajahat’s talks, are downloaded all around the world. The people are responding to something that they cannot have it in their own society. I don’t know if you have any thoughts to the first one, but I’ll just answer the second one as well.

The second one is a little bit tough. Can you rephrase it again, it was —?

**JAMIE SMITH:** Yeah. I’m just, I’m wondering, and this is mostly out of ignorance, but I have this distant impression, at least, that some of the conversation about counterterrorism, the hearts and mind strategy, is effectively driven by an engine that assumes we need to make people liberals, so that they won’t be extremists and terrorists.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Right. They won’t be backwards.

**JAMIE SMITH:** Right. And I have a hunch that’s loaded with a particular kind of secularist or exclusive humanist kind of take on that and it just seems to me that is such a starkly other ideology. In contrast to what you were suggesting, which would be a counterterrorism ideological battle, where it is the articulation of a winsome, inviting, full Islamic world view, and understanding that is sort of a meeting of apples and apples, rather than apples and oranges.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Sure. And you were asking what we can do as an American. One of the confessional fantasies of Islam, in the heavens, friends will sit down and watch episodes from the world. Whether it’s going to happen literally or not ... but you and I,

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

basically will sip some tea and maybe heavenly wine in our mansion in paradise and watch historical episodes..

This happened in the history of Islam, with the other violent extremism. How, when something bursts as a cancerous tumor, how collective health of the society shrank that tumor, and ultimately turned them — it didn't wipe them out, but that community turned them into the heart of a civilization and they evolved into something much more constructive. They shed their evil and violent elements and they became like an added diversity to the intellectual core of the society.

What we can do, is — the main selling message of these evil people, terrorist organizations is: “West is at war with Islam.” “West Judeo Christian civilization is further stabbing the honor of Islam, humiliating the Ummah.” We can do a lot to undermine this main point of theirs.

Undermining this, pulling the rug under their feet, by not doing that. By not even appearing doing that. By controlling the crazies on our side, not necessarily giving more ammunition that we should to these evil people. In their perception of, West is at war with Islam.

Also we can do a lot with our humility, acknowledging our partial role, of our foreign policy, supporting dictators, invading countries based on wrong assumptions, etc., we can do a lot. I mean I can go over and over.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** James Hunter

**JAMES HUNTER, University of Virginia:** Great. Thank you. So successful movements in history are effective at controlling the means of cultural production. And we know that ISIS is very good at social media and other communications technologies and strategies. But I want to know about the intergenerational dimension of this.

I mean if you look at, again historically, at world-changing cultural movements, education is always a part of it, it is always about the formation of the young, and this ties in a bit with yesterday afternoon's conversation about character.

Because it's not simply about knowledge. It's about the formation of human beings into the incarnation of what they want to produce. And so I wanted to ask about the

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

madrassas and their role in ISIS, or in other radical Muslim terrorist organizations. What can you say about that? I just would like to learn.

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Wonderful. I think you are saying two profound things, James. One, the issue that we are facing in the form of Muslim terrorism, terror in the name of Allah. In many ways, it may look like archival medieval, it may look like and smell very old fashioned, but it isn't. It really, it's a very modern phenomenon. It's built in a modern way.

Its sources and its strength is coming from modern strategies, as you said, using social media, etc., so it's very difficult to go after in an archival old fashioned style. Like FBI is coming to these Imams and asking them to help them, to find what the radicalization — first, ask whether or not, if they have a social media account, if they are functioning within that parameter.

Again, most of our law enforcement surveillance is about surveilling Muslim communities, where they have never produced, or produced very little terrorists. Ninety-nine percent of the radicalization is taking place online. Developing, forming partnership with the Muslim community and developing online tools — that's what Wajahat's company and several others are successful trying to do — to develop modern strategies to this modern problem, which is very important.

The madrasas, again, another shout out, my former colleague at Duke, now he's in Notre Dame, Ebrahim Moosa.

He's a South African, now American, really remarkable scholar of Islam, who studied in the madrasas in India and Pakistan. He recently came out after seven years of research took book called “What is a Madrasa?” But in short, he acknowledged the role of primitive archival frozen intellectual and scholarly thought in the Muslim world. And how they are indirectly contributing to the extremism and violence in a very sophisticated. And in what ways reformation of madrasas and religious education and religious teaching can basically help the bigger goal that we are discussing in defeating this cancer.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**JESSICA STERN:** I’d like to add something here. I think there are a number of ways. The education of children is critically important. If we look at the Somali refugee community, the parents — and I’ve been studying this community with a group of psychologists for years — they were initially offering social services, and then when Al- Shabaab started recruiting them, they recruited me to be involved.

But we see that time on the Internet is definitely a risk factor. I forgot to mention that as a risk factor. The parents, and we see this also with the children of guest workers in Europe, the parents in this case, don’t necessarily speak English. They certainly don’t speak Internet.

And we see moms who think, oh, my kid’s inside, my kid is safe, and the kid is on the Internet. So that is a major risk factor.

Also, again thinking about education of children, ISIS is using children to kill people. They have a whole kind of technology of creating — I think eroding empathy, actually. Creating what we might call secondary psychopathy, creating people who actually get used to violence.

In fact, when people develop secondary psychopathy that’s a protection against posttraumatic stress disorder, it turns out. That’s a big part of what they’re doing, creating a new human being. Of course, the Soviets also had a fantasy they were going to create a new human being. They’re like the Khmer Rouge in this way.

About the madrasas. Here, I do want to talk about the Wahhabi influence. I have spent a lot of time studying the role of madrassas in Pakistan. Another issue that I think needs to be raised. It’s not just the spread of a foreign Islam among Somalis, they complain about it too, and South Asia, but the sexual abuse of little boys. They have the same problem —

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** And girls.

**JESSICA STERN:** — and girls — as we’ve seen in the Catholic Church. It just hasn’t been covered yet. Also I think the role of pederasty, we’re going to find out is important. There’s a reason why this narrative of humiliation resonates with some young boys. And I think this is part of it.

## TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** Absolutely. The madrasas that you should watch, is madrasas in large parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, in some places in India, Southern Philippines, where there’s no government control.

For better or worse, as a result of colonial impact, most madrasas in most societies like Turkey, Egypt, and other places, it’s under strict government control. And in there, there are so many problems, but religious violence is not one of them.

But in places that I just mentioned, there’s no government control, and these terrorist organizations are running the show.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Graeme Wood, you’ll have the final intervention. And by the way, name the name of your book. It’s going to be what?

**GRAEME WOOD:** The title’s not out yet. But I can endorse fully Ebrahim Moosa’s book as well, “What is a Madrasa?” But if you’re curious about the role of madrasas, he also wrote a really good outlook piece for the *Washington Post*, on exactly that topic.

In the discussions that I’ve had with ISIS supporters, though, and with people who have known them, overwhelmingly the story told about madrasas and mosques is that the people you should look for, are the people who were expelled from those institutions, rather than the people who excelled in them. So the stories of people who have been so ornery in their own view of how things should be that they were viewed as unteachable.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Right. So they were kicked out?

**GRAEME WOOD:** Yeah. They would say, “No, I’ve been reading on the Internet.” “You should be praying like this.”

And the others in the mosque would be there for a much longer period, or in the madrassa, who were trying to teach them, would say, “We see things in a different way, and you seem to be incorrigible.”

So that’s the relationship that I’ve seen most frequently between institutions like mosques and madrassas and ISIS recruits.

TRANSCRIPT

“Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources”

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

**JESSICA STERN:** I think that’s true for ISIS. I think some of the South Asian jihadi groups have used — a small percentage, I want to be clear — a small percentage of extremist madrassas have functioned as kind of factories.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Final word?

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** A related topic on to this is also we should look into people who kicked out of certain mosques and certain communities.

The same phenomena which Graeme beautifully articulated. Also, there’s an interesting study, James, the level of religious knowledge among many of these terrorists is incredibly shallow. There are so many good studies.

The kids who joined from UK to ISIS, before they left for Syria, the books that they bought —

**JESSICA STERN:** “Koran for Dummies.”

**ABDULLAH ANTEPLI:** — “Koran for Dummies,” “Islamic History for Idiots,” “Idiot Guide of Islamic History,” or something like that — those were the books they were reading on their way to Syria, to fight for jihad. There’s a very shallow, many of them are not — they externally look as if they are from 7th Century scholarship, but internally very few of them are functioning in a scholarly — not all.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Ladies and gentlemen, join me in thanking both of our speakers.  
*(Applause)*

♦ END ♦

# THE FAITHANGLEFORUM

TRANSCRIPT

*"Terror in the Name of God: Its Causes, its Sources"*

Dr. Jessica Stern and Imam Abdullah Antepli ♦ March 2016

---

The Faith Angle Forum is a program of the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

For more information visit our website: [www.faithangle.org](http://www.faithangle.org)

or contact Michael Cromartie at [crom@epc.org](mailto:crom@epc.org)