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# KKK-style hate, ignorance fuel IS terrorists, experts say

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By Paul Wesley Sullivan [CONNECT](#)

(RNN) - Ignorance of Islam and lawless territory are fueling the growth of the Islamic State terror group, said an expert on the Middle East who compares ISIS to the Ku Klux Klan.

The militants have not followed the appropriate method for choosing a caliph, or leader of the caliphate that ISIS declared in late June, said Dr. Eren Tatari, who is an assistant professor of Middle East politics, Muslims in Western politics, and Islam at Rollins College in Winter Park, FL. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has announced himself as Caliph Ibrahim of the Islamic State, which now controls territory in Iraq and Syria that is bigger than Belgium.

"The followers he (the caliph) attracts are only the ignorant Muslims who do not know their religion," Tatari said. "No individual can declare themselves to be the leader of a Muslim community (caliphate). There is a process in Islam to do this which requires a consensus and voting..."

The terrorists have rampaged across northern and western Iraq capturing oil fields, Iraq's second-largest city, and setting up a home base or type of capital in the northern Syrian city of Raqqa along the Euphrates River.

## Illegitimate caliphate

The last legitimate caliphate in the Middle East was the Ottoman Turkish Empire, which existed from 1453-1924, according to Dr. Muhamad Ali, assistant professor in Islamic Studies and acting director of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the Religious Studies Department at the University of California, Riverside.

"The empire was abolished by Mustafa Kemal Attaturk in 1924, later regarded as the father of 'modern Turkey,'" Ali said, adding that some attempts at reviving the caliphate were never successful in gaining support from the already divided Muslim countries, left so by colonial powers, he said. There have been five major mostly Sunni and one Shi'ite caliphate from the time of the death of Muhammad in 632, Ali said.

Since 1924, efforts or mention of declaring a caliphate were only made by radical groups with the purpose of bolstering legitimacy, Tatari says. "By declaring caliphate, (IS) leader is trying to assume authority and attract followers," she said. Ali adds that ISIS has become the most controversial claim of caliphate in Muslim history.

ISIS is not recognized by the Muslim community because they do not follow Islamic rules and regulations in any of their political or religious practices, Tatari said. "Their declaration of the caliphate is tantamount to a fringe group of so-called Christians in a remote village in Africa declaring that they have established a new papacy," Tatari said.

## Ignorance, violence can grow Islamic State

The brutal Islamic State has the potential to grow only because there is no central authority in the area it is spreading into and because ignorance about Islam is rampant among some Muslims themselves, Tatari says.

Ali agrees.

"ISIS is attracting people, especially the youth, due to their lack of knowledge of Islam," he said. "The youth who are trained in general sciences, but not adequately trained in Islamic knowledge in schools and universities, the youth who need financial support. Hardly any students and scholars of Islam would be attracted to ISIS ideology and strategy."

In fact, the terrorists' claim to a caliphate is not taken seriously by any nation, government or leader outside of ISIS, Tatari said. But it does sit like a dangerous cobra in the heart of the Middle East. "However, the atrocities it commits and the turmoil it causes is leading (to) political instability in the region," Tatari said.

In the wake of a Syrian civil war and a weak central government in Iraq, a massive power vacuum was created. "Political instability in the region caused by the U.S. invasion of Iraq and withdrawal of forces before stability was achieved, ISIS' use of terror tactics and violence could continue to escalate," Tatari said.

## Middle East KKK

But the Sunni Islamic State's potential to grow and attract Shiites, for instance, is limited because the fighters even kill Sunnis who do not agree with their version of Islam, due to their deviation and their own twisted interpretation of Islam, Tatari said.

She compared the movement to the racism embodied in the KKK. "Their identity exists only in opposition to something else, in other words, they exist to be against something," Tatari said. "It is mind-blowing to others how anyone can be a member of KKK or Tamil Tigers (Sri Lanka militants) or other organizations that carry out atrocities and whose mission is hate and destruction."

And hatred apparently sells to some, Tatari said, attracting even Americans and Western Europeans to the barbaric cause, especially via the internet. "ISIS receives overwhelming media coverage in the Middle East and the West because of the shocking atrocities they engage in, which also

gives them free advertising. So people filled with hatred around the world who might sympathize with their message and methods join them," said Tatari, who specializes in ethnic and religious minorities in the U.S. and Western Europe, Middle East politics, and democratic theory.

Ali, an expert on Islamic history, movements, politics and the Quran said that ISIS is an example of the rise of a caliphate claim in a conflict zone, but it lacks appeal to the the Muslim mainstream. Only a few followers of the religion harbor dreams of a worldwide Islamic state, he believes.

"The idea of reviving caliphate has never gained mainstream support from 1.6 billion Muslims around the world, whose concerns are immediate, nationalistic, and local, rather than global," he said. "Muslims have a sense of spiritual and religious solidarity or brotherhood across borders but they lack capability and have no interest in supporting a holistic, religious-political global leadership."

For example Hizbut Tahrir (the Party of Liberation) is a caliphate movement around the world, and has gained only a tiny minority, he said. "In short, the idea (of a caliphate) will live on, but the reality of the Muslim world is so complex and fractured that no claims of caliphate today and in the future will gain any significant support," Ali said.

### Neighboring nations no fans of ISIS

Many nations in the neighborhood would like to see the Islamic State wiped from the Middle East map.

Ali said all Muslim majority nations now affiliated with the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) are threatened by ISIS claims and Egypt heads that list. President Barack Obama is hoping that those nations join a coalition to eliminate the IS.

"(Egypt) Because they want to bridge Israel and Palestine, the West and the Muslim Middle East," Ali said. "Egypt also is a pioneer of Islamic reform through education and proselytization not through military means."

Saudi Arabia also fears IS because it poses a threat to Mecca, and because of Saudi puritanist Wahhabism. Add in the Iranians, Ali said, because the Shiites have their own concept of leadership called an Imamate, or divine guide.

Ali said overall the number of ISIS supporters is negligible worldwide.

### Future of the Islamic State

The good news is that Tatari believes 99.9 percent of Muslims do not recognize the legitimacy of the Islamic State and it only exists because it uses extreme violence to stay in power. "Their pseudo claim to caliphate is hence a bitter joke to the wider Muslim community and has no foreseeable future," Tatari predicts.

Ali backs that assessment. ISIS will have some additional territorial gains within and around Iraq and Syria through their military campaigns and will have additional financial strength through oil and other financial gains, Ali believes. However, ISIS will not receive any stronger moral or ideological support from the wider Middle East and the Muslim world, now numbering 1.6 billion followers, he said.

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