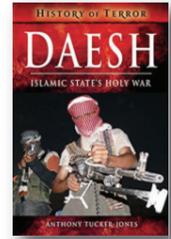


## BOOK REVIEW:

### *Daesh: Islamic State's holy war*

by Anthony Tucker-Jones

*Pen and Sword Military: Barnsley, South Yorkshire; 2018; 128 pp.; ISBN 9781526728814; RRP \$34.99; Ursula Davidson Library call number 411.1 TUCK 2018.*



*Daesh* describes the rise and fall of Islamic State's caliphate in Iraq and Syria and also the global spread of franchise terrorism under the Islamic State (Daesh) banner between 2006 and 2017.

The author, Anthony Tucker-Jones, for the past 15 years the terrorism and security correspondent for *The Journal of International Security*, is the author of three previously-published books on the rise of militant Islam and the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This well-researched book reflects his deep knowledge of his subject.

Islamic State's origins can be traced to the formation of al-Qaeda-in-Iraq by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2004, who pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden. Al-Qaeda-in-Iraq metamorphosed into Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) in 2006, following the death of al-Zarqawi and a split with bin Laden, who considered ISI's radical use of terror to be counter-productive in the global public relations war and opposed its targeting of the fellow-Muslim Shia in Iraq.

Islamic State is one of numerous Islamic militant groups around the world which aspire to the creation of Islamic, as opposed to secular, states. They see Islam as a political doctrine. They believe Islamic law (Sharia) should be state law and the global Muslim community (Ummah) should be joined irrespective of geopolitical boundaries.

The remnants of al-Qaeda-in-Iraq gained a new leader in 2010, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In 2013, he merged his forces in Iraq and Syria with ISI to create the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Daesh (the term used by Middle Eastern countries as it is linguistically distanced from Islam). In 2014, al-Baghdadi assembled an army without fanfare and then launched a surprise offensive in northern Iraq and eastern Syria. After capturing Falluja (Iraq), Raqqa (Syria) and Mosul (Iraq), and destroying six Iraqi infantry divisions and a motorised division in the process, al-Baghdadi declared the Islamic State caliphate from the Grand Mosque in Mosul on 29 June. Tikrit and Sinjar (both Iraq) and their surrounding areas were soon added to the caliphate, with Daesh waging genocide against the Yazidi people in the Sinjar area. Falluja and Ramadi north-west of Baghdad were added to the caliphate in May 2015.

In 2015, the Iraqi government, now recovered from its surprise, began the fightback, as did government and opposition forces in Syria. First, Kobane fell to the Syrian Kurds (March); and then Tikrit (April) and Sinjar (November) were recaptured by Iraqi government forces. In 2016, Iraqi government forces drove Daesh from Ramadi (February) and Falluja (June). In 2017, Iraqi

government forces drove Daesh from Mosul (June); and a coalition of Free Syrian forces drove Daesh from Raqqa (October). On 21 November 2017, victory was declared over Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, although isolated pockets remained holding territory in parts of Syria, as they continue to do to this day.

Tucker-Jones states that the legacy of the Islamic State caliphate is one of barbarism. Daesh was intent on plunging the captured territories back into the Middle Ages. It enforced strict Sharia law, conducted appalling human rights abuses and refused to grant protection to Shia or Yazidis, let alone non-Muslim religious minorities in the territories it ruled. As the fate of Palmyra demonstrates, Daesh also destroyed Syria's ancient archaeological sites because it saw them as idolatrous – it also raised much-needed funds from sale of looted artefacts.

During the years of the caliphate and subsequently, Islamic State has inspired the global spread of franchise terrorism under its banner. The book enumerates multiple examples from Australia (e.g. the 2014 Lindt café siege), Britain (especially among ex-patriot Pakistani communities in London and Birmingham), Canada and Europe (especially among ex-patriot north African communities in France, Belgium and Germany). The book also describes the phenomenon of foreign fighters ('holy war tourists') who have flooded into the war zones and then, if they survived, have returned as trained and experienced fighters to their homelands, either for a quiet life or to cause more harm. I was surprised, though, that no mention is made of the Islamic State-inspired uprising in Mindanao in 2017 where the town of Marawi was captured and held by Islamic State in the Philippines for some six months.

Tucker-Jones constructs his narrative around an intermixing of multiple themes and a chronological recounting of events. I found this confusing and would have preferred a chronological approach within defined themes. I also found the lack of punctuation and typographic errors disconcerting in many places. While the book has five very useful appendices, a selected bibliography and an index, it lacks references and footnotes, which reduces its value for researchers. Further, it does not draw any overall conclusions or derive any lessons from the evidence amassed.

Those limitations notwithstanding, this short book presents the story of the rise and fall of the Islamic State caliphate and its ongoing global legacy of terrorism dispassionately and with apparent accuracy. I commend it to anyone interested in the topic.

**David Leece**