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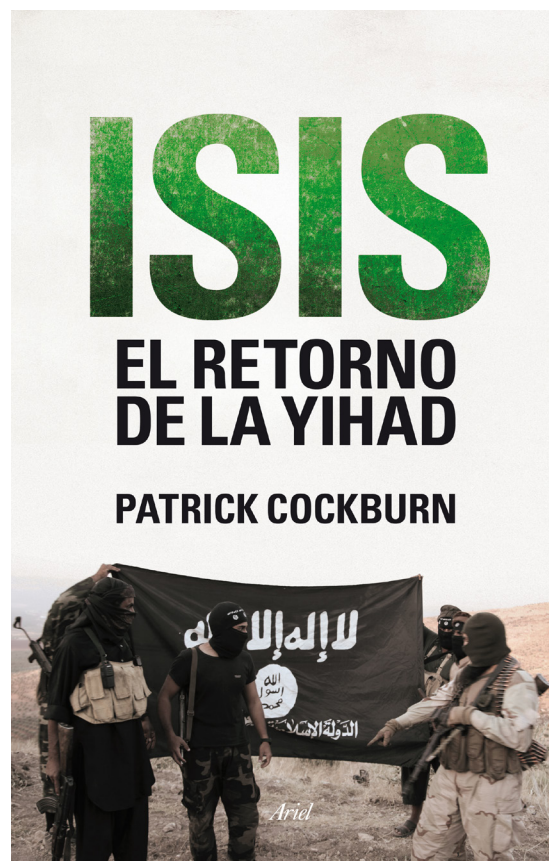
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REVIEW

THE JIHADIS RETURN

Author: COCKBURN, Patrick. ISIS, el retorno de la yihad. Barcelona, Ariel, 2015, 136. ISBN:-9788434419247. (136 pages)



Few books provide such a quantity of valuable data concentrated into so few pages as the work of one of the most internationally respected journalists in the Middle East, Patrick Cockburn. And if this literary attribute were not enough to attract any reader, his subject matter is highly topical, as it deals with the gestation and evolution of the self-styled Islamic State (ISIS), currently regarded as one of the main security nightmares in the world.

Without mincing his words or the slightest qualms about pointing the finger at countries and organisations for hiding spurious interests in the genesis of ISIS and the manipulation of this insurgent organisation, which has perpetrated so many acts of terrorism, Cockburn takes us on a detailed tour of the short life of this self-proclaimed Islamic State.

In this sense, he provides his own –and often very alternative- vision of its emergence, the key elements of the battle of Mosul where the Iraqi army was exposed to the world and the presence and activities of the group in Iraq and in Syria, scenarios which the author discusses extensively, giving his readers a very comprehensive idea of the situation within the recent historic context, beginning with the invasion of Iraqi territory in 2003 and the erroneous decisions adopted at the time.

In certain paragraphs, all of which are absorbing, our attention is drawn to sentences like “Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey were as hostile to the Assad government, the Syrian Kurds and those fighting ISIS on the ground as they were to ISIS itself” (pg. 18) and the claim that financing for al-Qaeda and jihadi groups came from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies (pg. 23).

Moreover, he is quite categorical in some of his claims, such as when he argues that “the fall of Mosul (in the hands of ISIS) was the result of a popular uprising as well as a military assault” (pg. 32).

In similar provocative vein, he claims that “the foster-parents of ISIS and the other Sunni jihadi movements in Iraq and Syria had been Saudi Arabia, the Gulf monarchies, and Turkey” (pg. 45).

Nor indeed does Cockburn leave out al-Qaeda, an organisation which he regards as a puppet-like group whose strings are pulled by a few powerful hands, when he indicates for example, that in 2011 in Libya “any similarity between al-Qaeda and the NATO-backed rebels fighting to overthrow the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, was played down” (pg. 60).

As it unfolds, the book deciphers many of the key elements of this very complex picture, while at the same time debunking many of the clichés created by the media’s manipulation of facts, which we are constantly subjected to.

Without any doubt, it is difficult to relate in fewer words and with such precision the true forces that led to the creation of ISIS, which to a large extent instigated the disaster currently being experienced in Iraq and Syria.

To conclude, this is an indispensable work for all students and analysts of ISIS and its convoluted environment, centred in Iraq and Syria, providing them not only with detailed information, but moreover a work which is most enjoyable to read.