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Allawi (The Occupation of Iraq), former minister of defense and minister of finance in Iraq's postwar governments, offers his version of the causes and consequences of the decline of Islamic civilization and proposals for its rejuvenation. The author argues that the West's violent encroachment on the Muslim world in the 19th and 20th centuries shattered local institutions and economies and disrupted any natural evolution of Islamic society; furthermore, current efforts to modernize the faith amount to draping an entire civilization in ill-fitting, inorganic ideas. Allawi calls for a return to the creative and artistic heritage of Islam and a restoration of balance_between the physical and the spiritual... between men and women; between rights and duties_while suggesting that the time to find balance may soon run out. The writing is erudite and the conclusions fascinating, but Allawi's dismissive attitude toward Western societies and their mass rejection... of the cardinal virtues, not least wisdom and moderation, as well as a reluctance to accommodate anything other than a faith-based understanding of human reality might limit his audience. (Apr.)

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