

The Occupation of Iraq - Winning the War, Losing the Peace by Ali A. Allawi.
Yale University Press 2007.

Many books have already been written about the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and its aftermath; their approach has been largely critical, and some have been outright in their condemnation of the whole exercise, both the invasion and occupation that follows. Ali Allawi's book is, however, the first authoritative account of events by an Iraqi insider.

Ali Allawi spent many years in exile during the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, but returned to his country of birth after the invasion to make a contribution towards its rebuilding. This he certainly achieved, serving as both Minister of Defence and Finance.

His knowledge of Iraq and of the swirling currents that inform its ethnic, religious and cultural life is without parallel and is put to good effect in this book.

Allawi retraces the entire sequence of events and concludes in a deeply pessimistic way about a country he describes as poised on the brink of civil war. He seems convinced that the only realistic future for Iraq involves its splitting into three parts, Kurd, Sunni and Shi'a but is uncertain whether that could be peacefully achieved.

This is a highly informative book about the issue that may well dominate the 21st century and is a further reminder of the disaster inflicted upon the Middle East, and the world as a whole, by a calamitously awful US President.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh