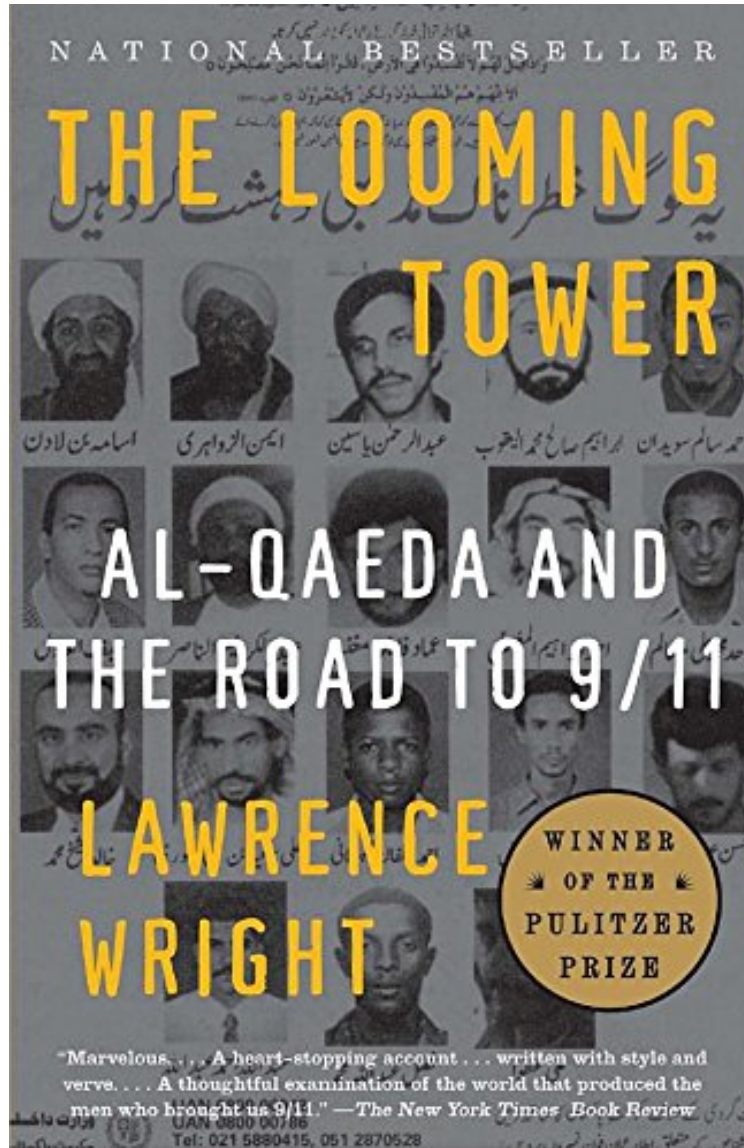


[Download ebook] The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11

# The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11

Lawrence Wright

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**Lawrence Wright : The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Impressive Research and Objectivity By R. Schultz This is a well-researched, temperate account of how various modern fundamentalist Islamic movements coalesced under different leaders and became juggernauts moving toward various bombing attacks and finally 9/11. If you often just listen to the news casually, as background Newsack, you might not really understand the difference between such groups as

Hamas, al Jihad, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban. This book distinguishes those groups by region, history, and leadership so that readers can approach currently unfolding news stories more intelligently. *Looming Tower* starts in the early 1950s with Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, telling how his ultimate martyrdom gave impetus to much of modern terrorist activity. Wright proceeds through the formation of the Taliban in the wake of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and on to bin Laden's activities under the al-Qaeda banner. He tells how the latter became in effect, a death-cult. Enough biographical information is given about each of these leaders to convey a sense of who they were in their personal lives of the frequent disjunction between what they did publicly and how they lived privately. There isn't a huge amount of psychological analysis of how presumably religious people arrived at the point of justifying mass murder and suicide, but Wright does provide some insights into the process of transformation away from simple, often happy childhood days. This book is written in straight-forward reportorial style. But it includes enough telling metaphor to graphically illustrate many points. For example, Wright tells how some factions fell away from having a centralized leadership and instead organized themselves into cells. This gave them a spongy quality, clandestine, hard to combat. With that one word spongy, Wright conveys the difficulty that U.S. and allied military forces have been up against. The narrative includes some really surprising details about how Western and Middle Eastern cultures can differ in their interpretation of events. I had no idea how the Monica Lewinsky/President Clinton scandal was interpreted by many in the Middle East and how it served to fuel further terrorist activity. Wright also tells of other instances where our failure to speak the language and realize cultural differences led to serious diplomatic and military miscalculations. The last third of the book moves quickly, almost too quickly, towards 9/11. A lot of it is told from the perspective of FBI investigator John O'Neill. There isn't quite the measured detail here that there is in the first part of the book. I felt a little hurried along. Of course, events themselves were rapidly sweeping towards the terrorists' fearful culmination. But I would have liked to have known somewhat more about how vital information that might have forewarned us got lost in the jostling egos of FBI and CIA operatives. Well, more detail on that score might have made this book too long and was perhaps better saved for separate books. *Looming Tower* was first published in 2006, and includes an Afterword written in 2011. In that afterword, Wright expresses some optimism that a partial, peaceful resolution might be possible, an optimism that unfortunately doesn't seem justified in light of recent developments. There's a map at the front of the book showing Middle East countries' relationships to each other, and the location of key bases of activity. Wright also provides a list of Principal Characters at the back of the book, reminding the reader who's who. Despite the many names in this book, I found that I didn't often have to refer back to that reference section. Wright provides such a clear, chronological account, it was easy to keep track of the key players.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Excellent History of al Qaeda By Adam Oliver In America we like our villains super. The popular media often paints characters like Osama bin Laden with that brush. Lawrence Wright helpfully avoids such a treatment of bin Laden without dismissing him as an inconsequential madman, which would only be half true. Wright deals with some of the intellectual history leading up to al-Qaeda without overwhelming the reader. The tracing of influential strands emerging out of Egypt was especially helpful. There are some great sub-stories intertwined throughout the book, especially about characters such as bin Laden's father, the rags to riches construction magnate, and the turbulent lives of some of the princes of Saudi Arabia. Wright also intersperses stories of US intelligence efforts to subdue bin Laden, which he ultimately concludes fail because of perpetually elevated walls of miscommunication between the FBI, CIA, and NSA. One of the more compelling and tragic stories woven throughout is the career and personal exploits of John O'Neill of the FBI. Wright argues that perhaps he alone had the force of personality and passion against terrorism to unearth the towers plot had circumstances been slightly different. Instead, his story ends tragically on 9/11 making his contribution all the more relevant to the book's narrative. This book is especially compelling in light of developments after its publishing in 2006. It would be interesting to see of post-script addressing the Arab Spring, the killing of bin Laden, the rise of ISIS, and the ongoing quagmire in Afghanistan (maybe my biggest critique would be the way Afghanistan is briefly painted as nearly uncomplicatedly successful, but to be fair addressing those issues would go well beyond the scope of his thesis). If you want to watch the news of today intelligently, this book will give you many foundational narratives to draw from.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Idiots Guide to Terrorism By R. Parry If you are looking for a book to help you understand the war on terror, the origins of 9-11 and discriminate the differences between such groups as Hamas, The Muslim Brotherhood, Al Qaeda, The Taliban, etc, then this book is for you. This book may be more relevant today than when it was originally published in 2006, because it tells the story of why and how these "movements" are created, gain momentum and rise to power. It is a well researched account of how several modern fundamentalist movements germinated under various leaders and became the political forces moving toward 9-11. "Looming Tower" starts in the 1950's with the ultimate Egyptian martyr, Sayyid Qutb, educated for a time in the United States. Wright moves into the creation of the Taliban during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. Just enough biographical background on the key players to give you insight into their personal life and personal demons. I found that Wright is a great storyteller and since he had no axe to grind, could tell a more "objective" but thoroughly gripping story. I thought the list of "Principal Characters" at the end of the book was a helpful tool ( you can't tell the players without a scorecard ). It's simply one of those books you just can't put down and may be one of the best books written on the subject. IMO, this book is a good

reminder why we should support our commitment toward the "War on Terror".

This Pulitzer Prize winner is the basis for the upcoming Hulu series starring Peter Sarsgaard, Jeff Daniels, and Tahar Rahim. A gripping narrative that spans five decades, *The Looming Tower* explains in unprecedented detail the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, the rise of al-Qaeda, and the intelligence failures that culminated in the attacks on the World Trade Center. Lawrence Wright re-creates firsthand the transformation of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri from incompetent and idealistic soldiers in Afghanistan to leaders of the most successful terrorist group in history. He follows FBI counterterrorism chief John O'Neill as he uncovers the emerging danger from al-Qaeda in the 1990s and struggles to track this new threat. Packed with new information and a deep historical perspective, *The Looming Tower* is the definitive history of the long road to September 11. National Book Award Finalist Updated and with a New Afterword

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Wright, a New Yorker writer, brings exhaustive research and delightful prose to one of the best books yet on the history of terrorism. He begins with the observation that, despite an impressive record of terror and assassination, post-WWII, Islamic militants failed to establish theocracies in any Arab country. Many helped Afghanistan resist the Russian invasion of 1979 before their unemployed warriors stepped up efforts at home. Al-Qaeda, formed in Afghanistan in 1988 and led by Osama bin Laden, pursued a different agenda, blaming America for Islam's problems. Less wealthy than believed, bin Laden's talents lay in organization and PR, Wright asserts. Ten years later, bin Laden blew up U.S. embassies in Africa and the destroyer Cole, opening the floodgates of money and recruits. Wright's step-by-step description of these attacks reveals that planning terror is a sloppy business, leaving a trail of clues that, in the case of 9/11, raised many suspicions among individuals in the FBI, CIA and NSA. Wright shows that 9/11 could have been prevented if those agencies had worked together. As a fugitive, bin Laden's days as a terror mastermind may be past, but his success has spawned swarms of imitators. This is an important, gripping and profoundly disheartening book. (Aug.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Bookmarks Magazine *The Looming Tower* may be the most riveting, informative, and "heart-stopping account" yet of the men who shaped 9/11 (New York Times Book ). The focus on individuals gives the book its emotional punch, but it is also a narrative bold in conception and historical sweep. Lawrence Wright conducted more than 500 interviews, from bin Laden's best friend in college to Richard A. Clarke, Saudi royalty, Afghan mujahideen, and reporters for Al Jazeera. The result, while evenhanded in its analysis of the complex motives, ideals, and power plays that led to 9/11, leaves few nefarious details uncovered. An abrupt ending did little to sway critics that *Looming Tower* is nothing less than "indispensable" reading (Cleveland Plain Dealer). Copyright 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc. From Booklist Wright, a talented New Yorker staff writer with a diverse portfolio and a long-standing personal interest in the Middle East, was on the al-Qaeda beat within hours of the 9/11 attacks. The product of his efforts is more deeply researched and engagingly narrated than nearly all of the looming stack of books on Osama bin Laden and his cohorts published in the past five years. The events are familiar: this account begins with theorist Sayid Qutb, covers the trajectories of bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, and culminates with Mohammed Atta and the collapsing Trade Center. But Wright's interview--fueled, character-driven approach captures both the complexity of individual actors--Qutb's alienation, for example, and bin Laden's struggle for legitimacy--as well as the fluid internal dynamics of the often covert terrorist organization. The tragic centerpiece of the book, familiar to New Yorker readers, is Wright's sensitive portrayal of John O'Neill, the deeply flawed working-class FBI gumshoe from New Jersey who may have been the only American to fully understand the al-Qaeda threat before 9/11. Wright seems to have found his calling: a perceptive and intense page-turner, this selection and Peter Bergen's *The Osama bin Laden I Know* (2006) should be considered the definitive works on the topic. Brendan Driscoll Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved