



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

By Lawrence Wright

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Winner of the Pulitzer Prize

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

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. 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.)

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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 Review*). 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*).

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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*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Calvin Fischer:

Book is to be different for every grade. Book for children till adult are different content. As it is known to us that book is very important usually. The book *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* was making you to know about other understanding and of course you can take more information. It is very advantages for you. The reserve *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* is not only giving you considerably more new information but also for being your friend when you really feel bored. You can spend your personal spend time to read your e-book. Try to make relationship with all the book *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. You never feel lose out for everything in case you read some books.

Nick Zapata:

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