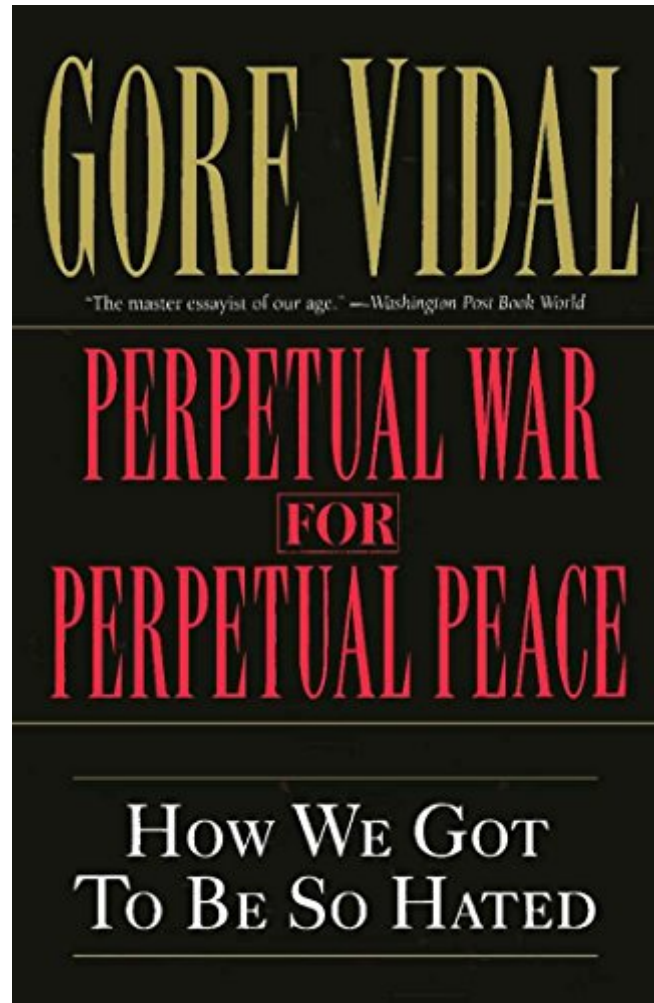


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Perpetual War For Perpetual Peace: How We Got To Be So Hated



Synopsis

The United States has been engaged in what the great historian Charles A. Beard called "perpetual war for perpetual peace." The Federation of American Scientists has cataloged nearly 200 military incursions since 1945 in which the United States has been the aggressor. In a series of penetrating and alarming essays, whose centerpiece is a commentary on the events of September 11, 2001 (deemed too controversial to publish in this country until now) Gore Vidal challenges the comforting consensus following September 11th and goes back and draws connections to Timothy McVeigh's bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. He asks were these simply the acts of "evil-doers?" "Gore Vidal is the master essayist of our age." — Washington Post "Our greatest living man of letters."—Boston Globe "Vidal's imagination of American politics is so powerful as to compel awe."—Harold Bloom, The New York Review of Books

Book Information

File Size: 9710 KB

Print Length: 174 pages

Publisher: Nation Books (April 10, 2002)

Publication Date: April 10, 2002

Sold by:Â Hachette Book Group

Language: English

ASIN: B01DNESF9M

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #291,353 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #55

inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > War & Peace #209 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > War & Peace #430 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Essays & Correspondence > Essays

Customer Reviews

Gore Vidal has been a pain in the establishment's keester for fifty-odd years, and his gadflying has gotten sharper, pithier, and more valuable with the passing of each year. In this latest collection of

essays, he dares to say something that many Americans are uneasily beginning to suspect but haven't yet dared to utter out loud: the reason "they"--the terrorists--hate us "so much" is at least partly because we're sometimes...well...hateable. Vidal's **Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace** collects a handful of his recent essays ranging on topics from the presidential election of 2000, to homegrown terrorism a la Timothy McVeigh, to the moralizing conservatism of mainstream America, to an open letter to the FBI on whether McVeigh was acting alone. All of these pieces have been published previously, and indeed, some of them appeared in Vidal's last collection of essays, **The Last Empire** (2001). What's truly new and exciting about this book is its lead essay, hauntingly entitled "September 11, 2001 (A Tuesday)". Vidal tells us in his Introduction that the piece was originally commissioned by "Vanity Fair," but was refused publication because the editors thought it too inflammatory. Inflammatory it unquestionably is, because in it Vidal argues for a thesis that is unpopular at the moment but just may make more sense as time goes on: that horrible as the terrorist attacks on the Trade Towers was, the Bush administration's high-handed wrestling to the ground of civil liberties in the attack's wake is worse. Vidal argues that the waging of war by the "Pentagon junta" is but another example of the U.S.

What has made America a great nation in the eyes of the world over the last two hundred years, is not its major technological advances, its competent military or its advances in all the arts, but its original pure ideals on what constitutes a free society, and the inalienable rights of the individual living in that society. The founding fathers of the United States knew all too well the corruptive nature of power. The creation of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights would ensure that those within its government seeking absolute power could be kept in check. In this ideal society, the state has limited power over its citizens, but just enough power to maintain peace within its borders. What is shocking about this short collection of essays by Gore Vidal, is he soberly illustrates with hard fact examples, particularly since the Oklahoma bombing and the events of 9/11, that the Bill of Rights and the important principles it states, protecting the rights of all citizens, is being manipulated to serve a small elite. The people are slowly, over time, losing their rights, because it is said, for their own protection. As a child growing up in the United States, there were three things I was taught, and that was always to respect the rights of others, always say please and thank you, and Governments always lie. "Never believe a politician, son. Because no matter what they say, there is always a hidden agenda." Time and again, this simple statement has turned out to be true. Sometimes their lies are found out. As a people, however, we have a tendency to forgetfulness, a kind of in-built amnesia, to then blindly vote our dubious leaders back into office.

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