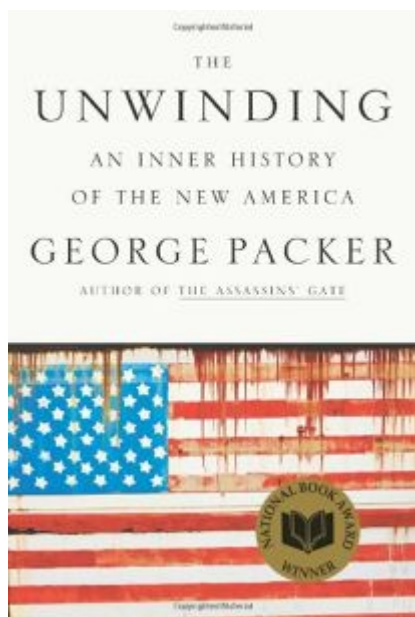




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★  PW PICKS **The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America**

George Packer. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$27 (432p) ISBN 978-0-374-102418

MORE BY AND ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

Sometime in the late 1970s, the foundations of the American Century began to unravel. In this trenchant account, New Yorker writer Packer (*The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*) charts the erosion of the social compact that kept the country stable and middle class. Readers experience three decades of change via the personal histories of an Ohio factory worker, a Washington political operative, a North Carolinian small businessman, and an Internet billionaire. Their lives follow the ups and downs of a changing country, where manufacturing jobs vanish, businesses thrive and fail, and political fortunes crest and recede. There's a pervasive sense that "nothing was locked down," thanks to the erosion of bank regulations that for 50 years averted the panics, and meltdowns that now push the middle class to the brink. Adroit homages to John Dos Passos's "newsreel" interludes provide astute quips and headlines. Brief biographies of seminal figures that shaped the current state of affairs offer the book's fiercest prose, such as in Packer's brutal takedown of Robert Rubin, secretary of the Treasury during some key 1990s financial deregulation that amplified the severity of the Great Recession of 2008. Packer has a keen eye for the big story in the small moment, writing about our fraying social fabric with talent that matches his dismay. Agent: Sarah Chalfant, the Wylie Agency. (May 21)

DETAILS