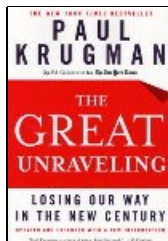


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Book Review
The Great Unraveling
Losing Our Way in the New Century
by [Paul Krugman](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer
Posted: April 3, 2006

The Great Unraveling is a generous collection of columns by the economist Paul Krugman, most of them first published in the *New York Times*. The original edition appeared in 2003, and was published just as the war in Iraq was beginning. The paperback edition of 2004 added 29 more columns on the ugly realities that continued to unfold.

It's almost two years later. Why read this book now? In my case, because I discovered Krugman's work fairly recently and was eager to catch up on what I missed. Unless you subscribe to the *New York Times*, you may not be aware that Krugman has been using common sense and basic economics to launch some of the most devastating attacks on the Bush regime ever written. Though the scandal du jour may have changed, the tactics of the Bushies haven't, and *The Great Unraveling* is an excellent guide to those tactics.

"I began pointing out the outrageous dishonesty of the Bush administration long before most of the rest of the punditocracy," Krugman writes in his preface. "One reason is that as a trained economist I wasn't even for a minute tempted to fall into the he-said-she-said style of reporting, under which opposing claims by politicians are given equal credence regardless of the facts."

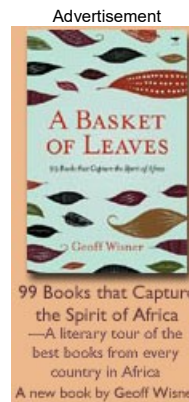
As others have pointed out, George Bush and his team are not conservatives. They have little in common with traditional Republicans who like balanced budgets and avoid foreign entanglements. They are radicals and revolutionaries for whom the truth is less important than winning elections and consolidating power. When news media, assuming that their statements are more or less grounded in reality, report what they say at face value, reporters themselves become part of a massive nationwide effort to deceive.

On Social Security, tax cuts for the rich, and the California energy scam, Krugman's combination of clear exposition and moral outrage is hard to beat. But problems like these are likely to persist unless we can change the people in power, which is where his most urgent warning comes in:

"Let me put it this way: nothing on the American political scene scares me as much as the shift to electronic voting machines that leave no paper trail. Maybe the people who, in a supposed drive to root out felons, prevented thousands of eligible voters from voting in Florida in 2000, who redistricted Texas, not to reflect a new census but simply to gain political advantage, who boasted about letting the earthmovers roll in over the Plame affair, would refuse to engage in high-tech ballot-box stuffing. Do you want to bet your democracy on it?"

About the Reviewer

[Geoff Wisner](#) is a freelance writer and staff member of Indigocafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at www.geoffwisner.com.



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