

Succeeding Revolutions

By Ian Hackett

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In these early years of the 21st century, we are witnessing the start of a global revolution whose eventual significance will dwarf that of anything which has gone before. But the essence of this revolution is not new. The 21st century's struggles for global democracy and against US hegemony, are very much a repeat, albeit on a much larger and potentially more horrific scale, of the 18th century struggles of the English colonists in America against the tyranny of the British empire. The events surrounding 2001/9/11 and its aftermath can be analysed as this century's global equivalent of the Boston Tea Party and the revolution that followed, and as the parallel histories presented in *Succeeding Revolutions* illustrate, the story of 18th century America is littered with themes which offer salutary lessons for today.

During the mid-18th century, Great Britain emerged victorious from a series of imperial wars. In 1763, it seemed destined to maintain the world's greatest ever empire well into the future, but the age of empires was already making way for the age of national democracy, and key North American parts of this empire would unravel violently over the next twenty years.

It is a striking story to follow the American revolution of British colonial rebels seeking to overcome the injustices visited upon them by King George III, his imperial government in London, and their

associated institutions and influences, such as the British Board of Trade and the British East India Company. The story shows how wise counsel was ignored then, and how short-sighted decisions, initially just those of the British, but later those of the rebels too, made an inevitable transition far more bloody and dangerous than it needed to be. It also shows that, throughout the run-up to the final showdown of British forces against American, French and Spanish forces, there was no shortage of wise counsel.

Unfortunately, it did not prevail – not only did it fail to avoid a war, but its rejection allowed the war to drag on for over 8 years before the British king accepted the inevitable – and the revolution led to far worse long-term consequences than may have followed had wiser counsel not been ignored.

Since the 18th century, the USA has emerged from America's revolution against its British imperial master to become the newest empire on the Earth and now, following the 20th century's world wars and cold war, it has become an even greater global power than the British empire ever was – a power that, despite its rhetoric, scorns global democracy and one whose fall will dwarf the falls of all the empires that have gone before. Just how violent this fall will be is in the hands of the decision-makers of both the USA and the emerging global majority.

Can Gordon Brown become a George Washington for the twenty-first century world?

This is one of the questions posed in a new book by radical UK author, Ian Hackett. "Succeeding Revolutions" compares the unfolding global crisis with the crisis that spawned the American Revolution and the USA, and looks at the possible trajectories for the embryonic 21st Century World Revolution we are witnessing today, and at the political choices that will determine whether this revolution ends in Armageddon or Global Democracy.

"Succeeding Revolutions" suggests that Gordon Brown, Tony Blair's heir-apparent, could lead the UK and the EU into a global compact with China, India et al to replace US hegemony and the failing UN institutions with a process leading to global justice and democracy, perhaps through a "Philadelphia Convention for the 21st Century" to replace the UN, just as the original replaced the New York-based Confederation Congress.

Ian Hackett is a former director of the One World Trust, recently retired head of the International School of London and an occasional writer on international history and current affairs with particular reference to their significance for our global prospects.



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It is important to trace the current inchoate global revolution of the people of the emerging majority world, which will one day overcome the injustices visited upon them by the world's last great empire and usher in a new age of global democracy. The terror campaign of Islamic fundamentalism is just a passing phase in something much bigger. The current stirrings of resistance against occupation in Palestine and Iraq represent the start of a global revolution just as surely as the rabble-rousing of a handful of eighteenth century Puritan English colonists in Massachusetts – against the greatest empire the world had ever known at that time – represented the start of the successful American revolution.

"Succeeding Revolutions" considers decisions already taken and choices yet to be made by those in control of the United States' current global hegemony, its allies and its rivals, and speculates about the possible consequences of those choices. The final outcome must be the eventual

victory of global democracy over the imperialist hegemony of the USA, but the decisions taken by the Americans and their friends today, and the nature of the global opposition to US hegemony, will determine how long, bloody and destructive the global revolution will become, and how difficult it will be for our descendants to live with its aftermath.

Will wise counsel prevail this time?

Just as the American War of Independence was the culmination of a false British belief in the beneficial nature of its imperial rule, the current war in Iraq – and all the "US v the rest" wars to come – are based on an unsustainable fiction that The American Way of Life is a beneficial model for the world.

The wars of The New American Century will postpone the achievement of a civilized, democratic world order – perhaps for generations – if the US persists with its policies of maintaining global hegemony, impoverishing the

helpless, polluting the planet and exacerbating climate change. But the ineluctable processes of history cannot be thwarted indefinitely.

We may be living in a century that opened as the New American Century, but history will look back on it as The Last American Century, or, more positively, as The First Global Century. The most the USA can do – and seems set upon doing – is to make the achievement of a just and sustainable world order much more costly than necessary in terms of lost time, lost lives and lost freedoms.

To order a copy

To order a copy of Ian Hackett's book, "Succeeding Revolutions: Eighteenth Century America and the Twenty-first Century World", paperback 112 pages, £6.99 (including p&p), ISBN 0-9552454-0-0 complete and return the form below.

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