Important international political developments have taken place since 1986 when this book was first published. After several years of nonviolent struggle, a non-Communist government was established in Poland in 1989. In the same year, East Germans, who had organized massive nonviolent demonstrations in major cities, watched the Berlin Wall crumble as did the Communist Party’s control. Parallel nonviolent struggles occurred in Czechoslovakia and removed its Communist leaders. The independence movements that swept the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania from 1987–1991 were also nonviolent. Similarly, the hard-line coup in the Soviet Union seeking to oust Mikhail Gorbachev and restore a strong dictatorship in August 1991 failed in the face of massive nonviolent opposition. Other cases of nonviolent struggle in South Africa, the Philippines, Burma, Thailand, and Serbia, and later in Egypt and Tunisia, also made the news in both the United States and throughout the world.

Public awareness of vigorous, disciplined, and successful campaigns of nonviolent struggle has grown as a result of these experiences. Americans are often familiar with the use in their history of nonviolent action in the labor movement or the civil rights movement. Too few realize that because of the struggle during the years 1765–1775, Americans achieved de facto independence from the British through nonviolent means in a majority of the thirteen colonies.

Moreover, in the decades since 1986, many scholars have also published a variety of works on nonviolent struggle, including detailed studies of nonviolent campaigns
bringing down dictators in Central America, nonviolent resistance against Nazi rule and control, or other struggles in the contemporary world. Additionally, research guides and bibliographies concerning the history, methods, and dynamics of nonviolent action as well as strategic studies of nonviolent conflicts have also appeared. This body of scholarly work is substantial and growing, though the need for further research is imperative.¹

The editors of this book deliberately designed its structure to model a case study of nonviolent struggle. There are lengthy descriptive chapters on the resistance against the Stamp Act, the Townsend Acts, and the Coercive Acts taking place during 1765–1775.

Discussion of American developments is complemented by other chapters describing the responses by the British political and mercantile communities to the American nonviolent efforts. By focusing on both sides of this Atlantic world, one is able to see in detail the organization and implementation of the colonial resistance campaigns, the British perceptions and responses, and, finally, any subsequent strategic adjustments made by each side.

Additionally, the volume is divided between descriptive chapters, drawn from primary documents of the time period, and analytical chapters that evaluate the impact of each struggle. Here assessments of strategy and tactics, of commercial and political resistance, of the employment of ideological resources and third-party alliances, and of the significance of parallel governmental institutions come to the fore. Attention to description, grounded in contemporary sources, and to analysis, reflecting strategic issues, allows for a fuller understanding of these particular historical episodes.

As currently the only sustained examination of the nonviolent struggle for political independence by the American colonists, this volume demonstrates

- the campaign against the Stamp Act nullified its enforcement in America and brought about its repeal, de-
spite face-saving statements to the contrary by British politicians.

- the nonimportation agreements utilized against the Townshend Acts in 1768–1770 reduced trade with Britain. The strategic lessons of the need for unified action were applied to the later campaigns of 1774–1775.

- by early 1775 the establishment by Americans of hundreds of grass-roots, participatory, and purposeful committees to enforce the Continental Association had shifted the balance of power in the colonies. These committees—varying in size but deliberate in action—in fact governed in most of the colonies.

- America was politically independent from Britain prior to the battles at Lexington and Concord in April 1775.

- colonial Americans adopted nonviolent struggle as a strategic decision regarding the most effective means of resistance; however, they did not have a thorough familiarity with the nature of this technique. They did not understand that British power was so completely undermined by 1775 that the British military response was one of desperation. Ultimately, the colonists saw no other way to respond except by their own military capacity.

- while strategic thinking by the Americans did take place, there was insufficient attention given by the Americans either to recognizing the importance of the shift from nonviolent action to military force or to anticipating the broader consequences of this shift. The reduction of mobilization among the population, the subsequent polarization of American society, the re-alignment from broad-based committee decision-making to that of the command structure of the military, and the diminution of third-party British support—all of these dynamics occurred within the context of the change from nonviolent to military struggle.
Recognition of the significance of these insights is crucial for an adequate comprehension of the process of achieving American independence. Likewise, it enhances a fuller understanding of the role of nonviolent struggle in American history.

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