

separate Britons and Americans. This happened in part because the Seven Years' War brought such a large contingent of British troops into intimate contact with colonists. Almost 25,000 British troops descended upon the colonies, and many colonists found them not only different but disagreeable. British troops and Massachusetts militia members discovered that they kept different holidays. The British did not celebrate election day or Pope's Day, and the colonists did not celebrate the king's birthday or Saint George's Day. Colonists admired the courage of the British troops in battle but were shocked by their mercilessness. British officers regularly used physical coercion, including whipping, to enforce discipline in their own ranks, a practice colonial militia officers largely forswore. British troops often ridiculed militia members and seemed eager to pursue physical confrontations with the colonial militia. Finally, the New England militia members frequently expressed shock at the obscenity and ignorance of religion among British troops. Rev. John Cleaveland thought that "profain swearing seems to be the naturalized language of the regulars," who also seemed addicted to "Gaming, Robbery, Theft, Whoring, [and] bad-company-keeping." Neither regular British troops nor even officers observed the Sabbath.⁸⁵

The Seven Years' War brought a subtle shock of recognition to many colonists. On the one hand, the war quietly bound many colonists together in modest but telling ways. Militias from several provinces joined the British campaigns at Fort Duquesne, the New York frontier, and the great victory at Montreal. These soldiers shared a common experience of one another. The war did not unite them. But the experience of soldiering with other colonists did suggest that in the mainland colonies European settlers might be more alike than different despite regional contrasts and mismatched backgrounds. On the other hand, colonists also shared common experiences of the British, or at least of British soldiers, and far too many of these experiences cast the British and their soldiers in a poor light. [It was only ironic, then, that achieving an imperial victory in the Seven Years' War quietly undermined the very relationship that the war had been designed to preserve.]

It was unfortunate, certainly for the British, that colonists entered major political contests with Parliament and Crown in the mid-1760s with such a dualistic view of empire and politics. The experience of the Seven Years' War summarized all too well, and all too negatively, long-