

# WHAT WERE THE CAUSES OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR?

What causes wars to break out? Wars are like large-scale arguments. They have short- and long-term causes. Short-term causes are an immediate response to an event. Long-term causes can result from tensions that build over time between competing groups trying to gain power. In this section, you will examine some of the causes of the Seven Years' War and determine why the fighting broke out when it did.

## GROWING TENSIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

By 1754, tensions among the French, the British, and First Nations living in North America had been building for more than a decade. As you learned in Chapter 2, French and British settlers came into frequent conflict. The French and the British wanted control over North America's resources for trade purposes. To achieve control, they needed people to lay claim to the land and defend it. Conflicts also grew between groups of settlers and First Nations. The Reverend Jonathan Mayhew, a religious and political figure living in the British colony of Massachusetts, commented on these tensions. The quote in **Figure 3.1** is from his 1754 sermon. What does this quote reveal about the relationships between the French and the British in North America in 1754? Compare **Figure 3.1** to the quote in **Figure 3.2** from Christian Frederick Post, a missionary and representative of the British government.

Why do you think some conflicts lead to war while others get resolved?

"We are peaceably extending our settlements upon our own territories. They [the French] are extending theirs beyond their own, by force of arms. We must meet at length, which cannot be without a violent concussion, and the time seems not to be far off.... The continent is not wide enough for us both."

— Reverend Jonathan Mayhew

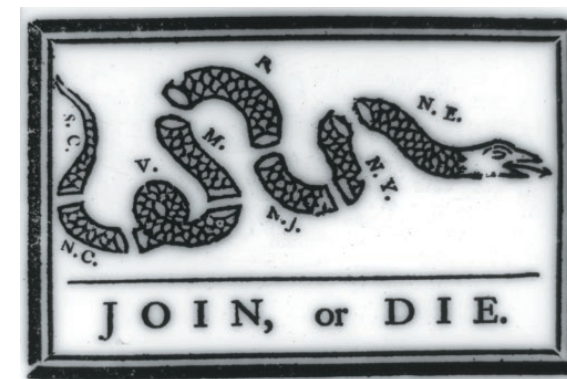
**FIGURE 3.1** Reverend Mayhew highlights the growing conflict between the French and the British in this excerpt from a sermon he delivered on May 29, 1754, in Boston, Massachusetts. **Analyze:** What does this quote reveal about the British perspective on French claims to land in North America?

"Brothers, this is the last time we shall come among you; for the French and the English intend to kill all the Indians, and then divide the land among themselves."

— Christian Frederick Post, missionary and British diplomat (quoting a speech by Delaware Chief Shingas, King Beaver, Delaware George, and Pisquetumen)

**FIGURE 3.2** This 1758 speech, recorded by Post, points to concerns about French and British intentions. **Analyze:** What does this statement tell you about the perspective of some First Nations on British and French settlement?

In 1754, Benjamin Franklin, one of the future founders of what would become known as the United States, published the cartoon shown in **Figure 3.3** in his newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. This early political cartoon shows segments of a snake labelled with initials that represent some of the British colonies. What do you think Benjamin Franklin was trying to accomplish by publishing this cartoon?



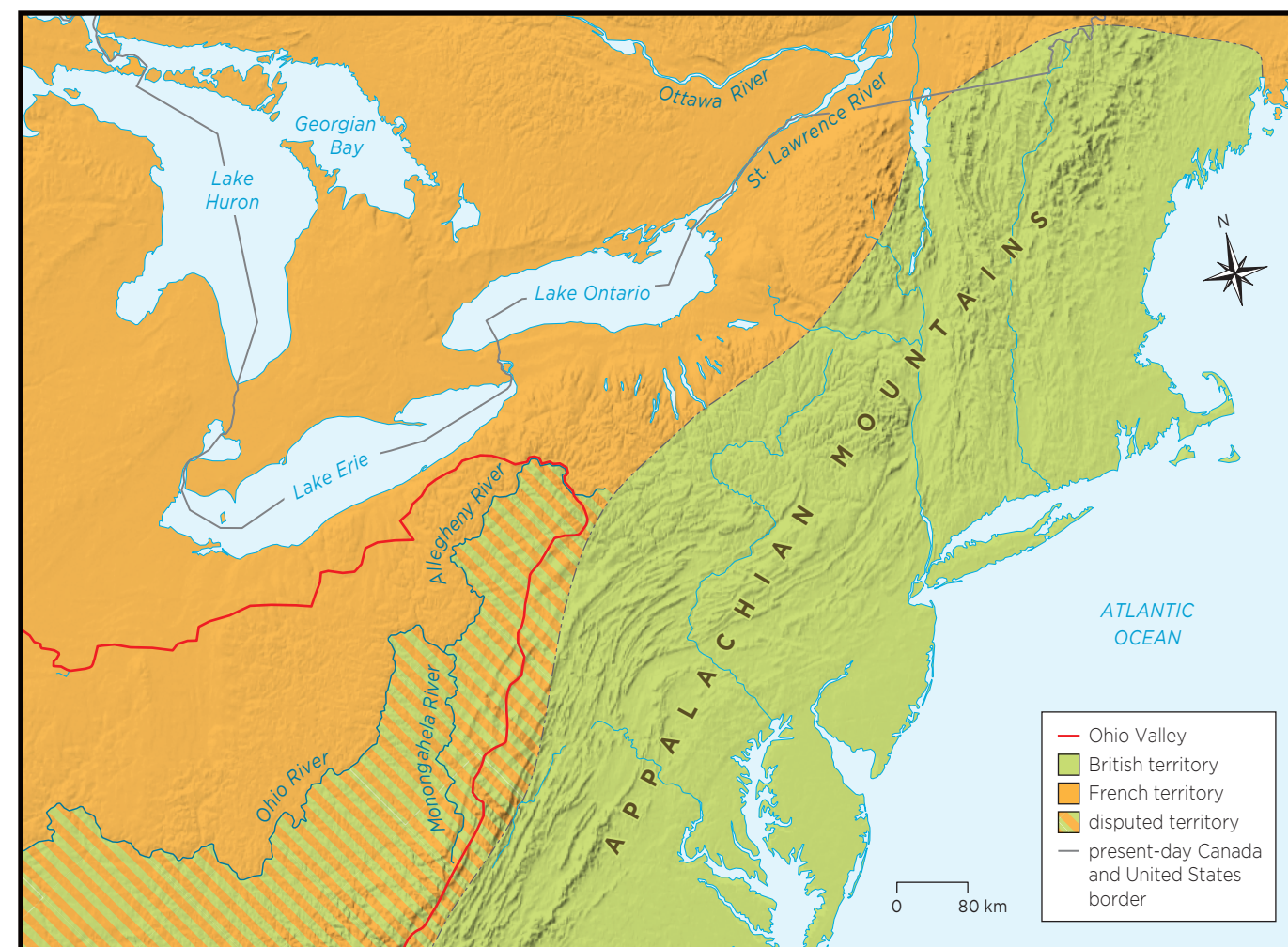
**FIGURE 3.3** This cartoon was published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9, 1754. **Analyze:** What does this cartoon say about the relationship among British colonies in North America at the time?

## COMPETITION FOR THE OHIO VALLEY

Around the time when the "Join, or Die" cartoon was published, conflict in the Ohio Valley was heating up. The British were planning to establish settlements in the area and were trying to drive out the French. The French reacted by attacking British colonists across the frontier and setting fire to their homes. Many colonists were injured or killed in these attacks, or were scared into fleeing the area. The French built more forts in the Ohio Valley to keep the British back. Examine the map in **Figure 3.4**. What information about the importance of the Ohio Valley can you gather? Look back at **Figure 1.6** from Chapter 1 to see where First Nations territories were located.

**FIGURE 3.4** This map shows French and British land claims and the Ohio Valley, which was of great interest to both groups in 1754. **Analyze:** Why do you think the disputed territories are located where they are?

Ohio Valley and Surrounding Territory, 1754



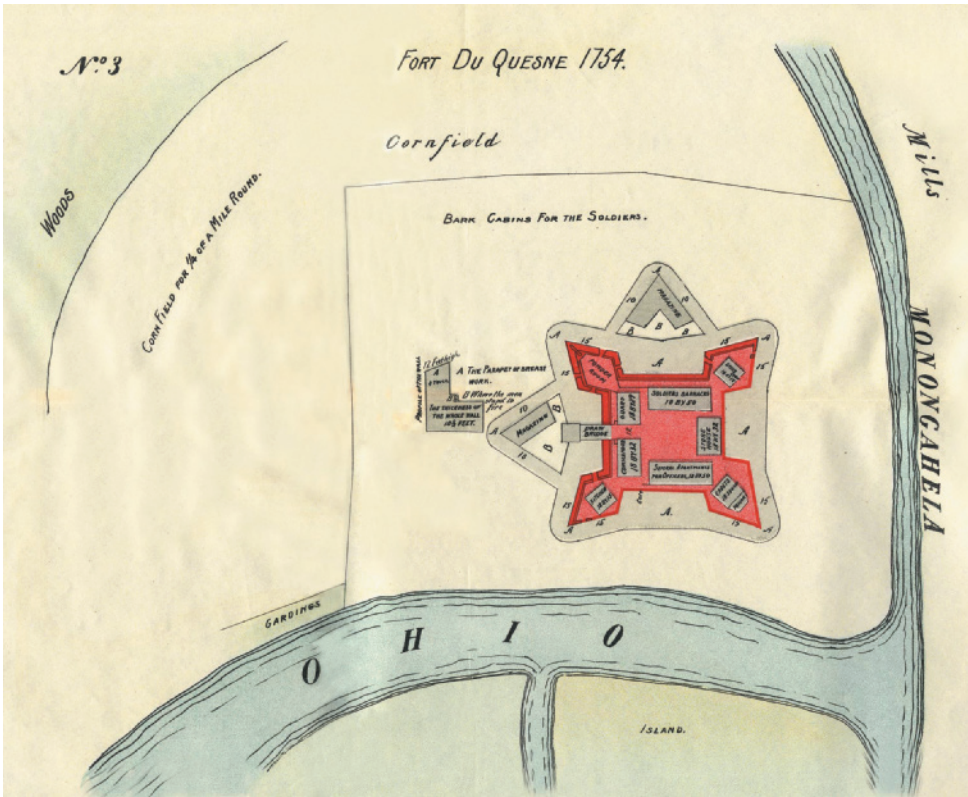


BATTLES FOR FORTRESS LOUISBOURG

As you learned in Chapter 2, in 1748, the British returned Louisbourg, which they had captured from the French in 1745. However, a few years later, in 1758, another military showdown resulted in the British capturing the fortress again. Their rivalry created further conflicts between the French and British settlers. What does the quote in **Figure 3.5**, recorded by Post, tell you about the impact on First Nations of the fighting between the French and the British?

BATTLE FOR FORT DUQUESNE

In 1754, the governor of New France, Marquis Duquesne, sent a French military team to build Fort Duquesne. It was built near present-day Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers meet and form the Ohio River. **Figure 3.6** shows a sketch of Fort Duquesne. Because the fort was in a strategic location, the British wanted to control it. The governor of Virginia, Robert Dinwiddie, responded by sending his own troops, led by militia leader (and future American president) George Washington, to drive out the French. The French, along with warriors from the Shawnee, Delaware, and Seneca nations, responded with overwhelming force. Many historians point to the battle for Fort Duquesne as the start of the Seven Years’ War. The British were forced to leave the area, but they returned multiple times to try to capture the fort from the French. The British finally succeeded in 1758, when the war began to turn in their favour.



**FIGURE 3.5** Post recorded interactions with different First Nations groups in his journal as he travelled around the Ohio Valley delivering messages for the British government in 1758. **Analyze:** Why would the British government ask missionaries such as Post to communicate with First Nations peoples during the war?

“It is plain that you white people are the cause of this war. Why do not you and the French fight in the old country, and on the sea? Why do you come to fight on our land?”

— Christian Frederick Post, missionary and British diplomat (quoting a speech by Delaware Chief Shingas, King Beaver, Delaware George, and Pisquetumen)

**FIGURE 3.6** This 1754 diagram shows the design of Fort Duquesne. Other French forts, such as Fort Frontenac in Kingston, Ontario, were built in a similar style. **Analyze:** What do you think are the advantages of the location and design of Fort Duquesne?

ECONOMIC INTERESTS

In the 1700s, in Europe, the economy was based on a system called **mercantilism**. In this system, countries compete by trying to sell their goods to other countries for a profit, while limiting what they buy from other countries. Exploring other parts of the world was key to finding new markets in which to sell their products. Tea and spices from India and sugar from the West Indies were sold to colonists in North America. The more colonies a nation had around the world, the more goods that nation could sell. European nations aimed to source gold and silver from their colonies. But the French and British also valued resources such as fish, furs, grain, timber, and tobacco. They used the timber to build warships and used the grain for food. They sold the tobacco and furs in Europe.

In 1754, the British sent troops to North America and attacked French forts. The British also began seizing hundreds of French merchant ships (ships filled with goods for trade). **Figure 3.7** depicts an encounter between the British and the French off the coast of the island of Newfoundland on June 8, 1755. The British were chasing French ships carrying 3000 troops and supplies. Why would the British want to destroy French ships?

**mercantilism** an economic system that increases wealth by increasing exports and by limiting imports through taxes

What were some of the intended and unintended consequences of mercantilism?



**FIGURE 3.7** This painting by an unknown artist, entitled *The Capture of the “Alcide” and “Lys,”* 8 June 1755, shows three British ships (left) engaging in action against two French ships bound for New France. **Analyze:** What message do you think the artist is trying to deliver with this painting?

CHECK-IN

- CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE** Identify and explain the causes of the Seven Years’ War. Label each cause as a short-term cause or a long-term cause.
- HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE** Form three groups to represent First Nations, the French, and the British. Debate what each might have said was the cause of the Seven Years’ War in North America.
- FORMULATE QUESTIONS** Identify main ideas that were clear to you in this section and main ideas that were unclear. For each unclear idea, write a question that would help you to clarify the issue.
- CONTINUITY AND CHANGE** Create a Venn diagram to show which aspects of the Seven Years’ War are similar to and different from wars today.