by the descriptions of the colonists in London's newspapers as a "mixed rabble of Scotch, Irish and foreign vagabonds, descendants of convicts, ungrateful rebels &c."[26] By 1770, Franklin represented a cross-section of the North American colonies, from Georgia to Massachusetts, and had come to view the colonies as having an identity and interest that differed from those of the mother country. Imperial measures, from the Stamp Act to the closing of the port of Boston, encountered little opposition in Parliament because they expressed a newly developed British nationalist consensus that transcended domestic rivalries. Indeed, the reign of George III saw an unusual display of British political unity as the ministry was formed of both Whigs and Tories and the monarch projected himself as the embodiment of the new patriotism. The colonies were defined out of the new nationalist consensus. In the eyes of British patriots, the colonists became, as Franklin put it, not "fellow subjects, but subjects of subjects."[27]

The man who returned to Philadelphia had come to conceive American identity in a civic and inclusive manner. He who in the 1750s and 1760s feared the declining Englishness of Pennsylvania was calmly projecting in 1783 "great Emigrations from England, Ireland, and Germany." Franklin also reread his 1751 pamphlet on population as a celebration of immigration, for "every Man who comes among us and takes up a piece of Land" adds to the nation's strength. Franklin's tenure in Europe transformed him from an ethnic to a civic nationalist.[28]

Nations, however, are not made of mere civic abstractions. A collective identity is but a fiction without a cohesive, integrated state and economy marked by effective internal communication. When writing for foreign consumption revolutionary Americans declared that "Our union is perfect." Below the surface, however, the founders worried about the disintegration of the confederation, which

lacked political, cultural, and economic bonds. As Franklin wrote in 1760, the colonies "are not only under different governors, but have different forms of government, different laws, different interests, and some of them different religious persuasions and different manners. Their jealousy of each other is so great that however necessary an union of the colonies has long been . . . they have never been able to effect such an union among themselves, nor even to agree in requesting the mother country to establish it for them."[29] Anxious that factious and divided colonial society were incompatible with political stability and nationhood, Franklin believed that economic growth and transregional interdependence were the surest route to unification. But what kind of growth and interdependence? Agriculture heightened regional competitive tensions within the confederation. Commercial activity was accompanied by a high degree of dependence on British mercantile houses. Turning his back on traditional mercantilism, Franklin favored liberalizing trade and encouraging the growth of domestic manufactures. Properly managed industrial development promised to glue the different regions and interests of North America together while launching the young nation toward independence and self-sufficiency.[30]

The sharp rise in colonial consumption of English manufactured goods in the second half of the eighteenth century redefined imperial relations. Consumption allowed women and men of the common people to assert their equality with the gentry. Standardized goods themselves created a common colonial vocabulary. Yet, many were alarmed by the acquisitiveness, selfishness, and cruelty of the new order. Parliamentary measures which targeted consumption politicized the American public and reinvigorated the movement to establish home manufacturing. News of the Townshend Revenue Act of June 29, 1767, for example, revived the faltering American Society for Promoting and Propagating Useful Knowledge.