

In 1776 the prospects for American victory seemed small. Colonial elites—large landholders and plantation masters—benefited most from American independence: They continued to rule at home without outside interference. The pamphlet *Common Sense* by Anglo-American philosopher Thomas Paine presented powerful arguments opposing kings and supporting a pure republic. They fought on their own territory, and in order to win they did not have to defeat the British but only to convince the British that the colonists could not be defeated. Britain had a population more than three times that of the colonies, and the British army was large, well-trained, and experienced. But Americans had powerful advantages that in the end were decisive.