

Nazi and Allied forces massed along the Franco-German border in 1940 were approximately the same size, yet France was defeated and Britain evicted from the Continent in only six weeks. From May to July 1942, Axis forces under the command of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel swept through the deserts of western Libya to El Alamein and the gateway to Egypt despite fielding smaller armoured forces than the British. These examples suggest that factors other than the numerical balance of forces - including the quality of forces, the relative advantages of offense and defence, and geography - also influence the outcome on the battlefield.

1. The Quality of Forces - Numbers cannot, in all circumstances, substitute for quality in forces. Troop training and experience, as well as equipment reliability and effectiveness, are factors that, although difficult to measure, are critical to success on the battlefield. In the immediate post-war period, the Western Alliance relied on the technological superiority of its weapons to offset the numerical superiority of Soviet and East European forces along the Central Front. Many believe that this advantage has narrowed over time, although the West still enjoys a substantial lead in areas of micro-electronics and computer technology - technologies critical for the command and control of modern conventional forces. Troop training is even more difficult to assess. Different training standards geared to the execution of different tactical and strategic plans make comparisons within alliances, much less between alliances, difficult. The relative strengths of each training system only become apparent under actual combat conditions.

2. Offensive/Defensive Advantages - The offence has the advantage of choosing the time and place of attack, exploiting any weaknesses in the defence and capturing the element of surprise. The defence, however, has the advantage of fighting