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Western Front

Western Front was a term used during the [First](#) and [Second World Wars](#) to describe the "contested armed frontier" between lands controlled by [Germany](#) to the East and the [Allies](#) to the West. A "contested armed frontier" during a war is called a "[front](#)".

There was also an [Eastern Front](#) in both [World War I](#) and [World War II](#).

World War I

Main article [Western Front \(World War I\)](#)

From the end of the [First Battle of Ypres](#), at the end of the [Race to the Sea](#), until the last few months of the summer of 1918, the Western Front consisted of a relatively static line of trench systems which stretched from the coast of the [North Sea](#) southwards to the [Swiss](#) border. In their efforts to break through the opposing lines of trenches and barbed wire entanglements, the opposing forces employed huge artillery bombardments followed by attacks of tens of thousands of soldiers. Battles typically lasted for months and lead to casualties measured in the hundreds of thousands for attacker and defender alike, such as the [Battle of the Somme](#), where 20,000 men died on the first day. Battles on this front were also typified by poor advance planning and the application of 19th century warfare tactics, such as direct frontal assaults on enemy positions, that were doomed to failure in the face of modern technology. The general result of these huge expenditures of effort was only a small shift, measured in a few kilometres, in a short section of the front.

The principal adversaries on the Western Front, who fielded armies of millions of men, were [Germany](#) to the East against [France](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) to the West, with sizable contingents taken from the Allied empires, especially the British [Dominions](#). The [United States](#) entered the war on the side of the Entente Powers in 1917 and by the summer of 1918 had an army of around half a million men, this rising to a million by the time the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

The Alpine Front between [Italy](#), and Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was a member of the [Central Powers](#), is usually considered to be a separate front.

World War II

Main article [Western Front \(World War II\)](#)

In early 1943 (till July or September) 40% of all axis forces (not German Army) were deployed against the western allies. (The count includes all fronts except the [Balkans](#), which would be counted as the western front. Allies of Germany are excluded in the 1944 statistic as a result of there being almost no foreign allies by this point in significant strength (strategically) on any front.)

The Western Front of World War II was generally restricted to the same geographic regions as during World War I. During the war the front moved much further, as far West as the [English Channel](#) and as far East as the line which would become the [Iron Curtain](#) during the [Cold War](#). Although fighting took place in [Norway](#) and Italy these are not usually included as part of the Western Front but as separate campaigns.

The Western Front had three distinct phases during World War II.

The first phase lasted from September 1, 1939, until June 25, 1940. It started with the Phony War with the allies taking up positions which created a front similar to that held during most of World War I. The first phase lasted until the [Germans](#)

[attacked](#) and won a stunningly fast victory in June 1940. The British had to withdraw the [British Expeditionary Force](#) to Britain with an [evacuation through Dunkirk Operation Dynamo](#) and France was forced to capitulate.

The second phase from the late summer of July 1940 until the early summer of June 1944 consisted of a stalemate along the English Channel where neither side was strong enough to invade the other's territory with anything more than [commando](#) raids. The main action during this period was happening in the [Eastern Front](#).

The third and final phase started on June 6, 1944 with the [invasion of Normandy](#) on the D-Day of [Operation Overlord](#), when an allied force consisting of American British and Canada Army Groups (with units from many other nations), successfully gained a beach head in [Normandy](#) in northern France. By the early autumn of 1944 the front was approximately where the World War I front had been. It ended on May 9, 1945 with the unconditional surrender of German troops. By that time western allied forces were on a front which stretched from the [Baltic](#) east of [Denmark](#), southwards along the river Elbe, through the German/Czechoslovakia border into [Austria](#) and North Italy.

Total surrender of the German armed forces on the western front was completed on May 9th when Nazi Germany was forced to cede all remaining territory to the Allies. By this stage, Nazi Germany had very little captured land remaining, apart from Norway, Denmark, and few strong points on the western front including the Channel Islands. By May 1945, the war in Europe was over, with total defeat of enemy resistance down to the last few small pockets of resistance remaining after the fall of Berlin. The Red Army marched through Moscow on June 25th to show off Soviet power by marking the 4th anniversary of Operation Barbarossa in 1941 launched by Germany for the invasion of the Soviet Union and the end of World War II in Europe.

See also

[Eastern Front](#)