

During World War I (WWI) trench warfare was used to attack and defend from. Trench warfare evolved from fox holes to trenches that dominated WWI. Trench warfare dominated WWI because it was used all over the western front by both Allied and Central armies. The length of WWI was affected majorly by the use of trench warfare.

Trench warfare is a type of warfare where two or more oppositions attack and defend from trenches that are dug in the ground. Warfare is armed conflict between enemies or armies. Trenches originated from fox holes. Previously fox holes were used as protection for soldiers during WWI. As fox holes were generally small, soldiers knew they needed something bigger they could safely stand up in. This encouraged the soldiers to start digging trenches that could fit many more men. There were multiple trenches constructed throughout WWI on each battle site. Soldiers still used fox holes when in battle and for going between trenches. (Britannica, 2021) The way trenches were constructed impacted the way sides fought. When digging the trenches, using the entrenching method, Soldiers were completely open to enemy fire. Trenches were usually within 230 meters from the opposing side. As the weapons used in WWI could shoot over two kilometres, 200 meters was an easy shooting range. (National Army Museum, N.D.) Trenches were made from materials that were readily accessible around battlefield, such as sandbags, wooden planks, woven sticks, barbed wire and mud. (The National WWI Museum and Memorial, N.D.) There were three main ways that soldiers used to construct the trenches. Entrenching was a method that left soldiers open to enemy fire whilst constructing. Entrenching was fast because they dug straight into the ground. A second method of constructing trenches was called Sapping. Sapping was where they extended one end of an existing trench. This method was slow, but it was safer for the soldiers. The safest, but most difficult way to build a trench, was to build underground tunnels and then remove the roof. This method was known as tunnelling. Trenches were not built in straight lines, they were built in 's' shapes, so an opposition could not stand at one end and shoot through the whole trench. (Australian War Memorial, 2021) This led trench warfare to become very dominate throughout WWI.

Trench warfare dominated WWI because trenches gave soldiers an easy, fast way to get good protection and utilise available resources. Trenches were easier to build than any other type of protection. In six hours, with 450 men around 250 metres of trench could be constructed. During the Battle of the Marne, Germans started digging trenches on September 15, 1914. The Battle of the Marne was the first time in history known to use trench warfare (History, 2021) On the Western front, over 760 kilometres of land had been dug out and turned into trenches. The trenches stretched from the English Channel to the Swiss Alps. (The World War, 2021) During the Battle of the Marne, Germans were pushed back by Allied forces. The Germans dug trenches to avoid losing any more ground. Once the Allies found that they could not break through the line they also began to dig trenches of their own. After a month of fighting both armies could no longer advance. It had become a stalemate. Strategies or tactics that would usually advance teams, were no longer effective. Strategies that armies used prior to trench warfare were head-on attacks or the use of machine guns and heavy weapons. Fox holes were also a major tactic used. Soldiers would use fox holes to hide in and shoot from. Trench warfare started as a temporary strategy, before dominating as the main strategy used throughout WWI. (Thought Co, 2021) Using trench warfare gave armies lots of advantages such as protection and easy fast completion, but also came with many disadvantages. Trenches were muddy and due to no drainage, they easily filled with water.

Jack Symons, a British soldier says, "John and I were up to our knees in water and got our gum boots half full." (The National Archives, N.D.) This quote from Jack emphasises the tough conditions of the trenches. Another disadvantage of using trenches was gassing. Other armies would go to their oppositions trench and fill it with poisonous chlorine, mustard gas, bromine, or phosgene. The gas was an irritant to the lungs and would usually cause death. As gassing caused so many casualties armies put in place many gas measures. These included gas alarm gong, these were placed along the front lines so that sentries could ring the bell anytime there was a gas attack. Another anti-gas measure was where soldiers would wear cotton face pads soaked in bicarbonate soda. By 1918, soldiers would use charcoal or other chemicals to neutralise the gas. (Imperial War Museums, N.D.) Trench warfare was dominant because it used resources that were already available on the battlefields which made it easy to construct, as well as it being a good source of protection from bombs, shells, and guns. The dominance of trench warfare in WWI majorly impacted the length of the war.

Trench warfare had an immense impact on the length of WWI which was prolonged because of trench warfare. As trench warfare usually led to stalemates, this caused the war to go slower. (Britannica, 2020) If trench warfare was not used, armies could have easily injured or killed opposition armies. The battles were not fast battles, they were long and slow. Armies would gain some land then be pushed back even further. Stanley Terry, a British soldier wrote a letter to his family in 1915. He wrote about his experiences in the trenches, "we have just come out of the trenches after being in there for six days and up to our waists in water." Stanley says how treacherous the conditions were and how long they were there for. Being in waist high water for six days is very dangerous and can have serious health risks. (Spartacus, 2020) WWI dragged out for years longer than it could have. The battles were widespread without much fast movement. The complex detail and length of the trenches also added time to WWI. The trenches were easy to construct, but as there was so many across the western front, it took years to get to that level. Trenches were hard to attack. As armies were trying to attack, the defending army saw and alerted the rest of the army of an attack. Thus, giving the defending team more time to prepare. Also, the defending army often turned 'no man's land' into rough land so it was harder for the attacking army to get to their side. This also slowed down the war. No-man's-land is the land between trenches, that does not belong to anyone. (Britannica, 2020) Trench warfare caused WWI to be extensively longer.

Trench Warfare was a strategy used by armies. Trench warfare dominated WWI because of the protection it gave soldiers. Trench warfare was fast and easy to construct the trenches but overall caused WWI to go for longer. Trenches used in WWI were muddy and waterlogged, which left many soldier's sick, and some died. Trench warfare was very effective in not losing ground, but did not allow for fast battles. Each battle was long and dragged out over weeks and months. Technology in 1915 was not good so soldiers were forced to use trench warfare which caused the war to go significantly longer.

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