

If Germany Was so Successful through 1941, Why did She Lose the War?



The basic reason why Germany lost, is that it faced a coalition of powers that were much stronger than Germany was. European history has seen many cases in which one major power tried to dominate Europe. A coalition arose of weaker states that together, had more economic and military strength than that single major power—and defeated that one power.

1. The combined GDP of Great Britain, the USSR, and the United States in 1938 was four times larger than that of Germany. The combined population of Great Britain, the USSR, and the United States was five times that of Germany.

You can see from the table below, that Japan didn't help much, to address these imbalances.

2. Germany had access to far less natural resources than the other nations did. Not only did Germany itself not have many natural resources, but the navies of the US and Britain cut it off from importing them. Japan and Germany in 1938 produced 2.25 million tonnes of oil; that year, the US alone produced 165 million tonnes.
3. Germany opened up a two-front war (Britain and US on the west, USSR on the east).
4. Germany declared war on the United States.

From 1942-44, the three Allies (Britain, USSR, and US) produced 300,000 combat aircraft, and 184,000 tanks; Japan and Germany, only 105,000 aircraft, and 37,000 tanks.

Germany's resources, tactics, and armaments were well suited for a quick strike, which led it to success in the beginning against France and the USSR; but the Allies (who refused to surrender) were able to throw far superior numbers of soldiers, tanks, and aircraft against Germany, and so were able to defeat her in a long, drawn-out war of attrition.

1938 GDP and Population of the Main Adversaries

		GDP (in billions of 1938 \$US)	Population	<i>Similar reasons contributed to the Union victory over the Confederacy in the Civil War.</i>
<i>Axis Powers</i>	Germany	42	69	
	Japan	20	72	
<i>Allies</i>	Great Britain	34	48	
	USSR	43	167	
	United States	96	131	

Source for most of these numbers: Adam Tooze, The Wages of Destruction (2006).