

Twilight Struggle

Game design by Jason Matthews and Ananda Gupta

1.0 – INTRODUCTION

Twilight Struggle is an area control game for two players, simulating the years of the Cold War through thematic event cards. Each player attempts to engineer best-case scenarios for the often detrimental events in their hand while also deducing the contents of their opponent's hand. The game is ended by victory point total or when one player initiates global thermonuclear war.

1.1 – About the Game

Designers Jason Matthews and Ananda Gupta created *Twilight Struggle* to fill a perceived gap in the historical wargame market: a game that could be understood immediately and played in ninety minutes.

Its design process began in 1998 and continued until publication by GMT Games (California, USA). GMT founder Gene Billingsley declined to print the game blindly and instead advertised it for preorder; *Twilight Struggle* received more than the minimum 500 preorders and was shipped to consumers in December 2005.

As of June 2020, *Twilight Struggle* is GMT Games' lifetime bestselling product. It has been reprinted in English by GMT nine times, translated into Chinese, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Spanish, German, French, Czech, Portuguese, Korean, Japanese, and Russian by partner publishers, and implemented digitally by Playdek (California, USA), a mobile game creator.

1.2 – About the Rulebook

This rulebook is the not-for-profit creation of **Lady Laurel Glass**; it is intended as a replacement for the rulebook found in any copy of *Twilight Struggle*.

This rulebook is meant to be correct, complete, and unambiguous; the most literal possible interpretation of any rule is always intended. Wherever the rules contained herein differ from the *Twilight Struggle* rules printed by GMT Games, such differences are intentional.

1.2.1 Terminology. This rulebook ascribes special meaning to the terms below.

(a) The game is played by two players, each controlling one side. The sides are named “USA” and “USSR,” and the name of a side also refers to its player.

(b) For each player, the enemy is the other player, the adjective “enemy” describes things belonging to the other

player, and the adjective “friendly” describes things belonging to themselves.

(c) A number is an integer greater than or equal to zero. To increment a number, increase it by one. To decrement a number, decrease it by one (to a minimum of zero).

(d) A die is a fair six-sided die with consecutively-numbered faces one through six; a die roll is a number obtained by rolling a die.

1.2.2 Axioms. The following rules are fundamental to *Twilight Struggle* and are always binding.

(a) When an event card instructs a player to take an action which contravenes the contents of this rulebook, those instructions are to be followed.

(b) Clauses on event cards containing the word “cannot” take precedence over the contents of this rulebook and over any event cards which contradict them.

1.3 – About the Cards

Many of *Twilight Struggle*'s 110 uniquely-numbered event cards have ambiguous or inadequate instructions.

Lady Laurel Glass maintains a database at

[URL]

which holds clarified text for all 110 event cards. This rulebook is intended for use with these clarifications.

2.0 – COMPONENTS

Twilight Struggle requires the following components:

- 1 gameboard [2.1]
- 2 differentiable dice
- 1 VP marker [2.1.2]
- 1 turn maker [2.1.3]
- 1 DEFCON marker [2.1.5]
- 1 AR marker, faces blue and red [2.1.6]
- 2 differentiable Space Race markers with differentiable faces [2.1.7]
- 1 Space Race bonus marker [2.1.7]
- a supply of influence markers [2.2]
- 110 uniquely-numbered event cards [2.3]

The following components are optional:

- 21 uniquely-numbered duration reminder markers [2.3.7]

2.1 – Gameboard

The *Twilight Struggle* gameboard depicts:

- 6 tracks which hold corresponding markers,
- 1 world map, which is composed of 84 countries and 2 superpowers,
- a map legend and misprinted reminder of the sequence of play, and
- the optional Chinese Civil War display.

2.1.1 Tracks and Markers. A track consists of a number of consecutive spaces. A marker occupies one space. A space can contain more than one marker.

(a) A marker indicates a quantity corresponding to the number or name of the space it occupies; when this quantity is altered, move the marker so that it remains accurate.

(b) A space is “ahead of” another space if it is further to the right on the same track and “behind” if it is to the left.

(c) A marker is ahead of or behind another marker if the space it is in is ahead of or behind the space the other marker is in, respectively.

(d) To “advance” a marker a number of spaces, move it that many spaces to the right. To “retreat” a marker, move it that many spaces to the left.

2.1.2 VP Track. The “Victory Point Track” track (VP track) and associated marker (VP marker) display the *difference* between total USA victory points and total USSR victory points. *Twilight Struggle* does not record absolute quantities of victory points for each side.

Note: When USA gains victory points, the difference between USA and USSR victory points increases; when USSR gains victory points, the difference decreases.

(a) Negative signs are implied before all numbers on USSR (red) spaces of the VP track.

(b) Each side begins the game with zero victory points.

(c) Sides cannot lose victory points.

(d) After either side scores victory points, if a side has twenty or more victory points more than the other, the player with more victory points wins. (The VP marker will be on step -20 or step 20 of the VP track to indicate this.)

2.1.3 Turn Track. The “Turn Record Track” track (turn track) and associated marker (turn marker) display the current game turn. Below each step of the track is indicated the period (early, mid, or late) of that turn.

(a) Phrases of the construction “if it is the [period] war” refer to the period of the current turn.

2.1.4 AR Track. “The Action Round Track” track (AR track) and associated marker (AR marker) display the current action round and active player.

(a) After a headline card is resolved, place the AR marker USSR (red) side up on space 1 of the AR track.

(b) After USSR completes an action round, flip the AR marker USA (blue) side up.

(c) After USA completes an action round, flip the AR marker USSR (red) side up and advance it.

(d) When a side is skipped during action rounds, that side manipulates the AR marker as though it had completed an action round.

2.1.5 DEFCON Track. The “DEFCON Status” track (DEFCON track) and associated marker (DEFCON marker) display the current DEFCON.

(a) If DEFCON is less than five, neither side may choose any country in Europe when performing realignments or launching a coup.

(b) If DEFCON is less than four, neither side may choose any country in Asia when performing realignments or launching a coup.

(c) If DEFCON is less than three, neither side may choose any country in the Middle East when performing realignments or launching a coup.

(d) When DEFCON becomes one, the active player loses the game. (The game ends.)

2.1.6 MilOps Track. The “Required Military Operations” track (MilOps track) and associated markers (MilOps markers) display, for each side, the number of military operations it has accumulated this turn.

Note: The USA MilOps marker is blue; the USSR MilOps marker is red.

2.1.7 Space Race Track. The “Space Race Track” track (Space Race track) and associated markers (Space Race markers and Space Race bonus marker) display, for each side, the cumulative effects of their research attempts.

Note: The USA Space Race marker is blue. The USSR Space Race marker is red.

(a) After a side advances their Space Race marker to a space, that side gains victory points if two numbers, separated by a slash, are printed in that space. It gains victory points equal to the first number if their Space Race marker is ahead of the enemy’s, otherwise it gains victory points equal to the second number.

(b) Some spaces of the Space Race track are associated with special rules. These rules apply to any side whose Space Race marker is the only one in or ahead of the space.

(c) The “Animal in Space” step of the Space Race track is associated with the following rule:

“You may make a second research attempt each turn. When you do, place the Space Race bonus marker in the ‘Start’ space of the Space Race track until the beginning of this turn’s reset phase.”

(d) The “Man in Earth Orbit” step of the Space Race track is associated with the following rule:

“Before you must choose a card in the ‘headline cards’ step of each turn, the enemy must place their chosen card in front of them faceup instead of facedown.”

(e) The “Eagle/Bear has Landed” step of the Space Race track is associated with the following rule:

“At the beginning of the reset phase of each turn, you may discard a card from your hand.”

(f) The “Space Station” step of the Space Race track is associated with the following rule:

“You must complete eight action rounds each turn. In your eighth action round of a turn, you may decline to play a card.”

2.1.8 World Map. The world map is a graph, each point of which is either a country or a superpower.

Note (i): Two points on a graph are adjacent when they are endpoints of the same line.

Note (ii): The line connecting USA and Japan* is represented by two labeled arrows pointing at the edges of the gameboard. This is a visual convenience.

(a) The two superpowers are labeled “U.S.A.” (USA) and “U.S.S.R.” (USSR) in large print. Each side always controls the superpower of the name appropriate to them.

2.1.9 Countries. The points on the graph which have a name printed above two squares are countries.

(a) Each country has a number, its stability, printed to the right of its name on either a yellow or a red field.

(b) Countries with stability numbers on red fields are battlegrounds. This rulebook appends an asterisk to the names of battlegrounds as a reminder.

(c) A side controls every country in which there is at least as much friendly influence as its stability plus the amount of enemy influence in that country.

2.1.10 Regions. Countries are grouped into nine regions; many countries are in more than one region. Regions are indicated by the tinting of their countries.

(a) Africa contains Algeria*, Angola*, Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria*, Saharan States, SE African States, Somalia, South Africa*, Sudan, Tunisia, West African States, Zaire*, and Zimbabwe.

To score this region, award to each side simultaneously:

- 1 victory point per battleground it controls there,
- 1 victory point if it has presence there,
- 4 victory points if it has domination there, and
- 6 victory points if it has control there.

(b) Asia contains Afghanistan, Australia, India*, Japan*, N. Korea*, Pakistan*, S. Korea*, Taiwan, and all countries in Southeast Asia.

To score this region, award to each side simultaneously:

- 1 victory point per battleground it controls there,
- 1 victory point per country it controls there which is adjacent to the enemy superpower,
- 3 victory points if it has presence there,
- 7 victory points if it has domination there, and
- 9 victory points if it has control there.

(c) Southeast Asia contains Burma, Indonesia, Laos/Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand*, and Vietnam.

To score this region, award to each side simultaneously:

- 1 victory point per battleground it controls there, and
- 1 victory point for each country it controls there.

(d) Central America contains Costa Rica, Cuba*, Dominican Rep, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico*, Nicaragua, and Panama*.

To score this region, award to each side simultaneously:

- 1 victory point per battleground it controls there,
- 1 victory point per country it controls there which is adjacent to the enemy superpower,
- 1 victory point if it has presence there,
- 3 victory points if it has domination there, and
- 5 victory points if it has control there.

(e) Europe contains all countries in Eastern Europe and all countries in Western Europe.

To score this region, award to each side simultaneously:

- 1 victory point per battleground it controls there,
- 1 victory point per country it controls there which is adjacent to the enemy superpower,
- 3 victory points if it has presence there,
- 7 victory points if it has domination there, and
- 100 victory points if it has control there.

(f) Eastern Europe contains Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, E. Germany*, Finland, Hungary, Poland*, Romania, and Yugoslavia.

This region is never scored.

(g) Western Europe contains Austria, Benelux, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France*, Greece, Italy*, Norway, Spain/Portugal, Sweden, Turkey, U.K., and W. Germany*.

This region is never scored.

(h) Middle East contains Egypt*, Gulf States, Iran*, Iraq*, Israel*, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya*, Saudi Arabia*, and Syria.

To score this region, award to each side simultaneously:

- 1 victory point per battleground it controls there,
- 3 victory points if it has presence there,
- 5 victory points if it has domination there, and
- 7 victory points if it has control there.

(i) South America contains Argentina*, Bolivia, Brazil*, Chile*, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela*.

To score this region, award to each side simultaneously:

- 1 victory point per battleground it controls there,
- 2 victory points if it has presence there,
- 5 victory points if it has domination there, and
- 6 victory points if it has control there.

2.1.11 Regional Influence. A side can have only one of presence, domination, or control in a region at a time; this is crucial when scoring that region.

(a) A side has control in every region in which it controls more countries than the enemy and controls every battleground.

(b) A side has domination in every region in which it controls more countries than the enemy, controls more battlegrounds than the enemy, controls at least one country which is not a battleground, and does not have control.

(c) A side has presence in every region in which it controls at least one country and does not have domination or control.

2.1.12 Chinese Civil War. The “Chinese Civil War” display, when the Chinese Civil War variant is in effect, can contain USSR influence.

2.2 – Influence Counter

An influence counter is a numbered, side-associated counter which indicates an amount of side-associated influence where it is placed.

2.2.1 Counter Supply. Influence counters can be exchanged and manipulated freely as long as the absolute quantities of each side’s influence in every location are always reflected accurately.

Note: Each influence marker has a “control” side (colored) and a “no control” side (white). Keep your influence counters no control side up except in countries you control.

(a) The influence counters provided with *Twilight Struggle* are not a limiting supply; that is, a side is not constrained by the number of markers available, and more should be improvised if they are needed.

2.2.2 Placing/Removing Influence. Each side begins game setup with no influence in any location.

(a) “Placing” influence in a location increases a side’s influence there; “removing” influence from a location decreases a side’s influence there.

(b) A side cannot have negative influence in a location, and if more of a side’s influence would be removed from a location than is there, instead all of it is removed.

2.3 – Event Cards

An event card is a uniquely named and numbered card associated with a period (early, mid, or late). An event card may be aligned with a side:

- a USA event card shows a black numeral on a white star,
- a USSR event shows a white numeral on a red star,
- an event card which is *not* aligned shows a star that is both red and white.

The starred numeral is a card’s operations value.

2.3.1 Draw. To draw a card, take the top card of the draw pile and put it in your hand.

(a) If you would draw a card when the draw pile is empty, reshuffle before drawing a card: turn the discard pile facedown and shuffle it to create a new draw pile.

2.3.2 Discard. To discard a card, place it faceup in the discard pile (starting a discard pile if there is not one).

2.3.3 Eliminate. To eliminate a card, remove it from the game faceup to a common area.

2.3.4 Play. To play a card, place it faceup in front of you, then choose either to resolve it, conduct operations with it, or make a research attempt with it.

2.3.5 Resolve. To resolve a card, perform all instructions in the card's text, then discard that card.

(a) If you would resolve a card aligned with the enemy, instead the enemy resolves that card.

(b) When you play a card aligned with the enemy and choose to resolve it, conduct operations with it after the enemy discards it.

2.3.6 Conduct Operations. To conduct operations with a card, discard it, then choose to spread influence, perform realignments, or launch a coup (one option only).

(a) When you play a card aligned with the enemy and choose to conduct operations with it, do not discard it. Instead, the enemy resolves that card after you conduct operations.

(b) To spread influence, a number of times equal to the operations value of the used card, place one influence in a country. Placing one influence in a country the enemy controls counts as two placements. You may place influence in countries this way only if they are adjacent to your superpower or to countries that contained your influence at the start of the current action round.

Note: Control of a country can change between each placement of influence.

(c) To perform realignments, a number of times equal to the operations value of the used card, choose a country which contains enemy influence. Each side makes a die roll and adds to it:

- 1 for each country or superpower it controls adjacent to the chosen country,
- 1 if it has more influence than its enemy in the chosen country.

The side which made the greater modified die roll removes from the chosen country enemy influence equal to the difference between their die roll and the enemy's.

Note: You may choose the same country repeatedly as long as there remains enemy influence there.

(d) To launch a coup, choose a country which contains enemy influence.

Gain military operations equal to the operations value of the chosen card. If the chosen country is a battleground, decrement DEFCON.

Make a die roll and add to it the operations value of the used card, then subtract the stability of the chosen country *twice*. Place influence in the chosen country equal to the difference between the modified die roll and the amount of enemy influence in the chosen country, then remove an

amount of enemy influence from the chosen country equal to the modified die roll.

2.3.7 Research. To make a research attempt with a card, discard that card, then make a die roll. If the die roll falls within the range indicated below the space immediately ahead of your Space Race marker on the Space Race track, advance your Space Race marker one space, then turn your marker "card played" side up until the beginning of the next reset phase.

(a) You may make a research attempt with a card only if its operations value is no less than the "ops" value indicated below the space immediately ahead of your Space Race marker on the Space Race track.

(b) You may make a research attempt only once per turn. You may not make a research attempt if your Space Race marker is in the final space of the Space Race track.

2.3.8 Effect Duration. Some event cards modify the rules of the game for a duration. When the duration of such an effect is longer than "until the end of the current turn," a duration reminder token is provided for use with the card. Each such token displays the number and name of the card with which it is associated.

(a) Place on the gameboard the duration reminder token of any card which has one while the card's effect applies.

Note: No duration reminder token is provided for 106-E NORAD*; this is a production error.

2.3.9 Scoring Cards. Seven cards have the word "scoring" in their name; these are scoring cards.

(a) The scoring cards are 001-E Asia Scoring, 002-E Europe Scoring, 003-E Middle East Scoring, 037-M Central America Scoring, 038-M Southeast Asia Scoring*, 079-M Africa Scoring, and 081-M South America Scoring.

(b) A scoring card does not have an operations value. A scoring card cannot be used to conduct operations.

Note: A nonexistent operations value is not zero and cannot be modified.

2.3.10 War Cards. Five cards have the word "war" in their name; these are war cards.

(a) The war cards are 011-E Korean War*, 013-E Arab-Israeli War, 024-E Indo-Pakistani War, 036-M Brush War, and 102-L Iran-Iraq War*.

2.3.11 The China Card. 006-E The China Card is never in the draw pile or in a player's hand. Instead, keep it faceup in front of the player who holds it.

(a) 006-E The China Card is either faceup or facedown; this does not affect whether a player holds it.

006-E The China Card can be played only if it is faceup.

(b) Because it is not in your hand, 006-E The China Card cannot be chosen when a card is chosen from your hand, randomly or otherwise.

(c) Because it is not in your hand, you are not compelled to play 006-E The China Card, even if it is the only card you could play in an action round.

(d) You may not make a research attempt or conduct operations with 006-E The China Card; you must choose to resolve it when you play it.

2.3.12 Shuttle Diplomacy. 073-M Shuttle

Diplomacy, when resolved, is not discarded until after the next time Asia is scored or the Middle East is scored.

Keep it on the table in front of USA until it is discarded.

3.0 – SETUP

Players decide whether the Chinese Civil War variant will be in effect this game. Players decide which sides they will play and whether there will be an influence handicap.

Perform the following steps (in order):

- Place the turn marker on step 1 of the turn track.
- Place the VP marker on step 0 of the VP track.
- Place both Space Race markers on the “Start” step of the Space Race track, “card played” side down.
- Place both MilOps markers on step 0 of the MilOps track.
- Place the DEFCON marker on step 5 of the DEFCON track.
- Place 006-E The China Card faceup in front of USSR, who now holds it.
- Separate all other event cards by period, then shuffle the early war cards to form the draw pile.

3.1 – The Chinese Civil War

The rules in this section are optional and are collectively referred to as the “Chinese Civil War variant.”

3.1.1 CCW Setup. Neither side holds 006-E The China Card at the beginning of the game. Set it aside.

3.1.2 CCW Influence. USSR can spread influence in the Chinese Civil War display as though it were a country adjacent to the “USSR” superpower.

(a) Resolving an event card cannot alter the influence in the Chinese Civil War display.

(b) USA cannot conduct operations in the Chinese Civil War display.

(c) The Chinese Civil War display has no effect on scoring Asia.

(d) When USSR places a third point of influence in the Chinese Civil War display, 006-E The China Card enters the game faceup. USSR holds it.

3.1.3 CCW Restrictions. If USSR does not have three or more influence in the Chinese Civil War display:

- USSR cannot resolve 031-E Red Scare/Purge or 058-M Cultural Revolution*;
- USA cannot resolve 035-E Formosan Resolution*;
- USA resolves 071-M Nixon Plays the China Card* and 076-M Ussuri River Skirmish as though USA held 006-E The China Card;
- USSR subtracts one from the die roll when resolving 011-E Korean War*.

3.2 – Influence Handicap

The influence handicap is an optional nonzero amount of influence. No more than one side may have an influence handicap in any game. The two most common methods of determining the influence handicap are described below.

3.2.1 USA +2. When the Chinese Civil War variant is not in effect, an influence handicap of two for USA results in the most even game. “USA +2” games are the standard of competitive organizations like the *International Twilight Struggle League*.

3.2.2 Influence Bidding. Each player may secretly choose a side (USA or USSR) and a number. Reveal all choices simultaneously. If a player chooses no side, their number of choice is always zero.

(a) If players choose opposing sides, each player will play as their side of choice and neither player will receive an influence handicap.

(b) If players choose the same side but different numbers, the player who reveals the greater number will play as their side of choice.

(c) If players choose the same side and the same number, or if neither player chooses a side, determine sides randomly.

(d) In either case (b) or case (c), each player not playing as their side of choice receives an influence handicap equal to the number revealed by their opponent.

4.0 – SEQUENCE OF PLAY

The game is divided into ten turns, each of which has ten steps. As a mnemonic convenience, these steps are grouped into four phases: the main phase, the check phase, the reset phase, and the final scoring phase.

The ten steps of each turn are as follows:

- [1] *Main Phase*
 - (1) Deal Cards
 - (2) Headline Cards
 - (3) Action Rounds
- [2] *Check Phase*
 - (4) Scoring Card Death
 - (5) MilOps Penalties
- [3] *Reset Phase*
 - (6) Flip China Card
 - (7) Advance Turn Marker
 - (8) Increment DEFCON
 - (9) Add Cards
- [4] *Final Scoring Phase*
 - (10) Final Scoring

4.1 – Main Phase

The main phase contains the only steps in which players make choices. Most time in *Twilight Struggle* is spent in a main phase.

The active player is the player who chose the headline being resolved or the player who is completing an action round. There is no active player outside these times.

4.1.1 Deal Cards. USSR first, side alternate drawing cards until each side has eight cards in its hand. If the current turn is turn four or later, instead each side draws up to nine cards. If a side begins a main phase with fewer cards than the enemy, they may have to draw multiple cards consecutively after the enemy.

4.1.2 Headline Cards. Each side places in front of itself, facedown, a card from its hand; these cards are headlines. Headlines are revealed simultaneously and their operations values are compared.

(a) A scoring card is compared as though its operations value were zero.

(b) In the event of a tie, the USA headline is valued above the USSR headline.

(c) Beginning with the higher-value headline, each side resolves the headline it played.

4.1.3 Action Rounds. USSR first, sides alternate completing action rounds until each side has completed six. If the current turn is turn four or later, instead each side completes seven action rounds.

(a) To complete an action round, a side plays a card from its hand if it has one.

(b) A side which holds 006-E The China Card faceup may play that card instead of a card from its hand; this also completes an action round.

Note: Only a side which has no cards in its hand can choose to play no card during an action round. Such a side may decline to play 006-E The China Card even if it holds that card faceup.

4.2 – Check Phase

During the check phase, sides update the game in accordance with actions taken during the main phase.

4.2.1 Scoring Card Death. USSR first, each side declares whether any card in its hand is a scoring card. In competitive settings, sides may be required to reveal the bottom portion of the cards in their hand, where the text “may not be held” is printed on scoring cards.

(a) If a side declares that it has a scoring card in its hand, that side loses the game. (The game ends.)

4.2.2 MilOps Penalties. Each side determines its MilOps penalty for the turn, which is equal to the difference between DEFCON and the number of military operations that side has accumulated this turn (as indicated by that side’s MilOps marker).

(a) If a MilOps penalty would be less than zero, it is zero instead.

(b) Simultaneously, each side gains victory points equal to the enemy’s MilOps penalty, then retreats its MilOps marker to step 0 of the MilOps track.

4.3 – Reset Phase

During the reset phase, sides prepare the game for the next turn. Beginning at the “Advance Turn Marker” step, the current position of the turn marker on the turn track is no longer reflective of the current game turn, and will not be so again until the beginning of the next game turn.

4.3.1 Flip China Card. If it is facedown, turn 006-E The China Card faceup.

4.3.2 Advance Turn Marker. Advance the turn marker one space. Until the next main phase, the turn marker indicates the current game turn plus one instead of the current game turn.

4.3.3 Increment DEFCON. Increment DEFCON.

4.3.4 Add Cards. If the turn marker is on step 4 of the turn track, shuffle the draw pile together with the mid war cards to create a new draw pile. If the turn marker is on step 8 of the turn track, shuffle the draw pile together with the late war cards to create a new draw pile.

4.4 – Final Scoring Phase

Perform this phase only at the end of turn ten.

4.4.1 Final Scoring. Score Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, the Middle East, and South America simultaneously.

End the game. The player with the greater score wins; if there is no such player, neither player wins.