

War TTRPG

The war has dragged on for years. It no longer matters why it started—only that it must be won. You are high-ranking officials, advisors, generals, strategists. You do not fight. You do not suffer. You command from secure rooms, pushing numbers, signing orders, and discussing the future in comfortable offices far from the front.

What You Need

- A deck of 52 playing cards (including Jokers)
- A way to track the war's progression (a simple notepad or shared document)
- At least three players

This war is phasic, with multiple stages of gameplay for the players to discuss. Since you are playing as warmasters, there is no direct brush with the consequences of this combat. However, given the sensitive and brutal nature of war, all players should expect this TTRPG experience to be emotionally heavy, and encounter triggers like mass violence, forced exile, and combat to be an unavoidable fact of this game.

Additionally, players need to discuss how they feel the game should progress. How much roleplay between characters should be expected? And how public should it be? Are the characters communicating over spoken word, or using some other medium, like mail (passing notes, email, etc.)? These discussions impact the timelines for playing the game, and can drastically speed up or slow down the experience depending on what is desired.

Lastly, it is forbidden to imitate or make light of historical war criminals in the playing of this game.

Each player represents a key figure in the war effort—not soldiers, but those who decide the war's direction. Choose a title and define your approach to war. These are positions of power that can share titles but differ in ideology. Conversely, these positions can hold drastically different titles but retain ideological similarity.

Examples:

- The Supreme Commander – Pragmatic, emotionless, victory-focused.
- The Diplomat – Speaks of peace but extends the war to gain leverage.
- The War Minister – Sees war as numbers and logistics, nothing more.
- The Propagandist – Keeps morale high, hides the truth from the public.
- The Financial Backer – Has no allegiance except to profits.

Each player starts with one belief—something that still makes them feel justified in what they do.

Once these roles are determined, shuffle the 52 card deck.

Each round, a player draws a card, which determines the next event in the war. You must act accordingly and justify your actions

Card Drawn	How the War Escalates
2-4	A minor operation—a bombing run, a new arms deal, a border skirmish. Minimal casualties.
5-8	A major offensive—troops advance, new fronts open, infrastructure is destroyed. The body count rises.
9-10	A political or economic maneuver—sanctions, propaganda campaigns, strategic alliances. No immediate bloodshed, but suffering continues.
Jack, Queen, King	A critical decision—escalation or negotiation. A city can be leveled, a ceasefire can be ignored, or a secret peace talk can take place.
Ace	An opportunity—a game-changing move that could tilt the war in your favor. What will you sacrifice?
Joker	The war no longer matters. Something happens that makes every death, every order, every strategy feel hollow.

The first Joker drawn shifts the tone of the game. Up until now, you have spoken about war in abstract terms—treating human lives as numbers on a page. But the Joker represents a moment where you see the reality of your choices for the first time. Maybe:

- A city is completely erased, and you realize how many millions you've just wiped out.
- The enemy surrenders, and you realize you kept the war going for political gain.
- An unforeseen disaster—famine, nuclear fallout, a collapse of the global order—renders victory meaningless.

At this moment, your characters change. Every decision made before was easy. Now, with the second half of the game, every decision has stakes.

Card Drawn	Reckoning Scene Type
2-4	A desperate plea – A civilian, a soldier, or an ally questions what you've done.
5-6	A ghost from the past – A letter, a recording, or a survivor reminds you of an early decision you made.

7-8	A truth uncovered – The war was never what you thought. Maybe it was a lie. Maybe it was rigged from the start.
9-10	The human cost – You see the aftermath: the starving, the displaced, the lost generation.
Jack	A betrayal realized – Someone you trusted—perhaps your own side—used the war for personal gain.
Queen	The war machine keeps turning – Even if you stop, others won't. A new enemy rises, and the cycle starts again.
King	Your name will be remembered – Statues are built. History books are written. But you know the truth.
Ace	A chance at redemption – One final opportunity to undo even a fraction of the damage.
Joker (Final Card)	The war ends. The world moves on. You must live with what you've done.