

# Beyond the Thucydides Trap

A Life-Coherent Civilizational Framework for Great-Power Rivalry, Strategic Stability, and Planetary Repair.

Sparked by the May 2026 Beijing Summit between President Xi Jinping and President Donald J. Trump.



Can civilization organize security around life rather than domination?

# The Thucydides Warning Must Not Become a Destiny



## The Fatalistic Prophecy

Assigns roles in advance (China as **"Rising"**, US as **"Ruling"**, Taiwan as **"Flashpoint"**).

Imagination **narrows** until **war** appears necessary.

Historical analogy becomes **performative script**.



## The Civilizational Diagnostic

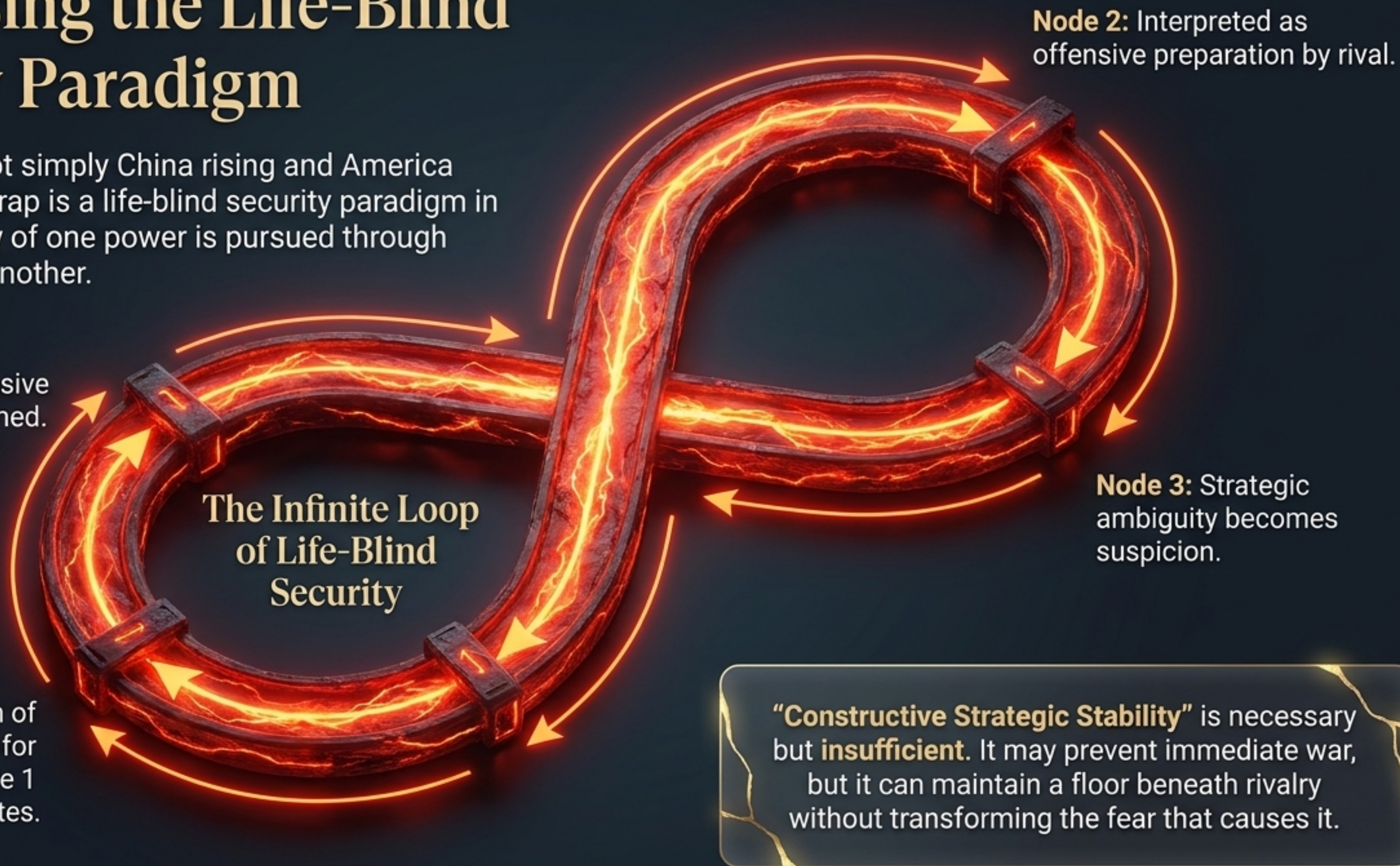
Opens the future by disclosing where the system is **losing viability**.

History offers patterns, not commandments.

A warning generates responsibility; fatalism generates **enactment**.

# Diagnosing the Life-Blind Security Paradigm

The true trap is not simply China rising and America fearing. The true trap is a life-blind security paradigm in which the security of one power is pursued through the insecurity of another.



# Measuring the Field: A Civilizational Stress Test



## 1. Constraint:

Bounded by high symbolic stakes (Taiwan, alliances, domestic nationalism).

## 2. Margin:

Alarmingly thin trust, compressed decision time, fragile supply-chain buffers.

## 3. State:

High-arousal rivalry operating just below the threshold of open war.

## 4. Disturbance:

Local shocks (cyber, energy chokepoints like Hormuz) risk systemic cascades.

## 5. Perception:

Hardened. The security dilemma is entirely self-confirming.

## 6. Regulation:

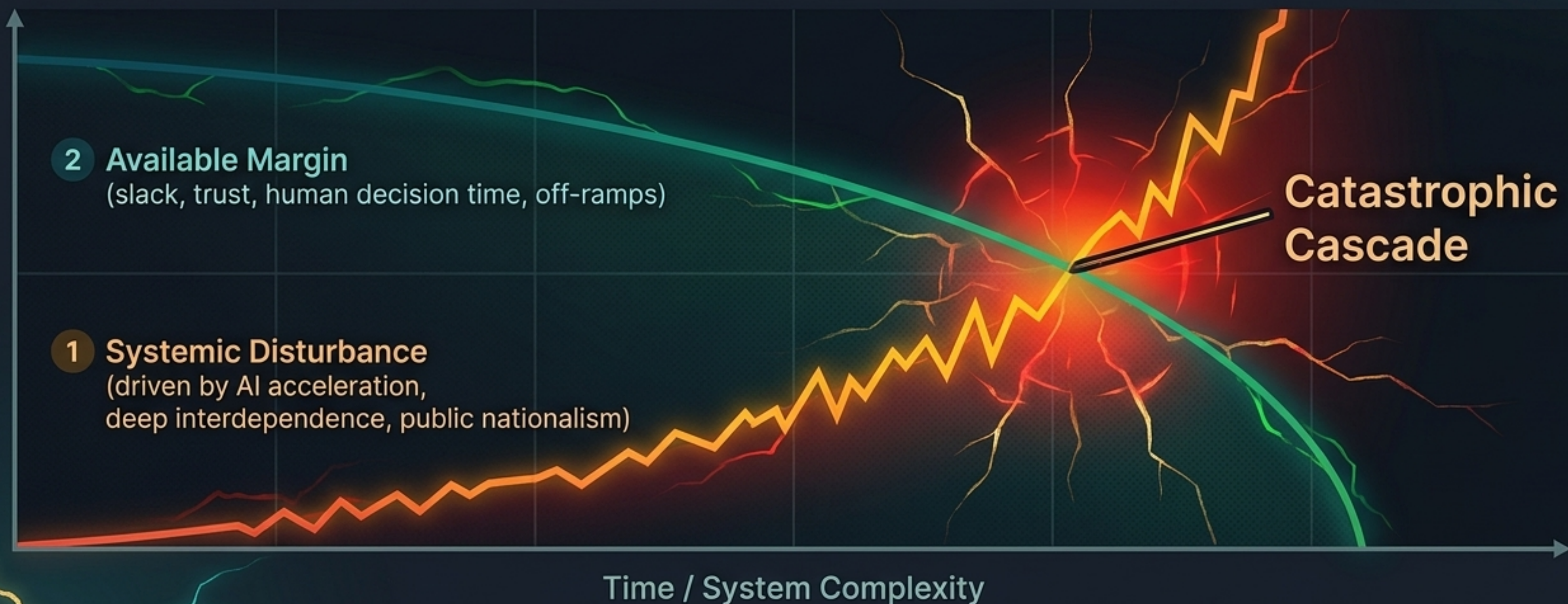
Elite guardrails exist (summits, hotlines) but remain too reactive and thin.

## 7. Options:

Imagination artificially narrowed to war, decoupling, or transactional détente.

# The Architecture of Cascading Error

When a system can escalate faster than it can interpret events, it has lost its margin. A naval collision, AI misclassification, or energy shock interpreted through an already fearful frame rapidly bypasses human wisdom.



# Taiwan is Not a Trigger. Taiwan is a Living Society.

In the strategic imagination, Taiwan is reduced to an object. But a living society cannot be treated as a bargaining chip for national rejuvenation, imperial credibility, or alliance signaling.



No settlement, deterrence strategy, or diplomatic bargain is legitimate if it treats Taiwan's living society as expendable.

# From Hostage-Dependence to Resilient Interdependence

Modern globalization confused efficiency with resilience. Supply chains were built for speed and price, not for life-protection under crisis. When essential flows (food, medicine, energy) can be weaponized, connection becomes coercion.

## Hostage-Dependence



## Resilient Interdependence



### The Repair

Applying Ostrom's commons governance to geopolitics to build diversified, protected civil commons. Connection must not equal coercion.

# The Paradigm Shift: Redefining Realism

## Strategic Realism

**Actor:** States are primary, ultimate actors.

**Security:** Survival under threat; dominating the adversary.

**Peace:** Negative peace (the temporary absence of major war).

**Interdependence:** Exploited as leverage.

**Technology:** A race for strategic advantage.

## Life-Coherent Realism

**Actor:** States are instruments to serve the life-ground.

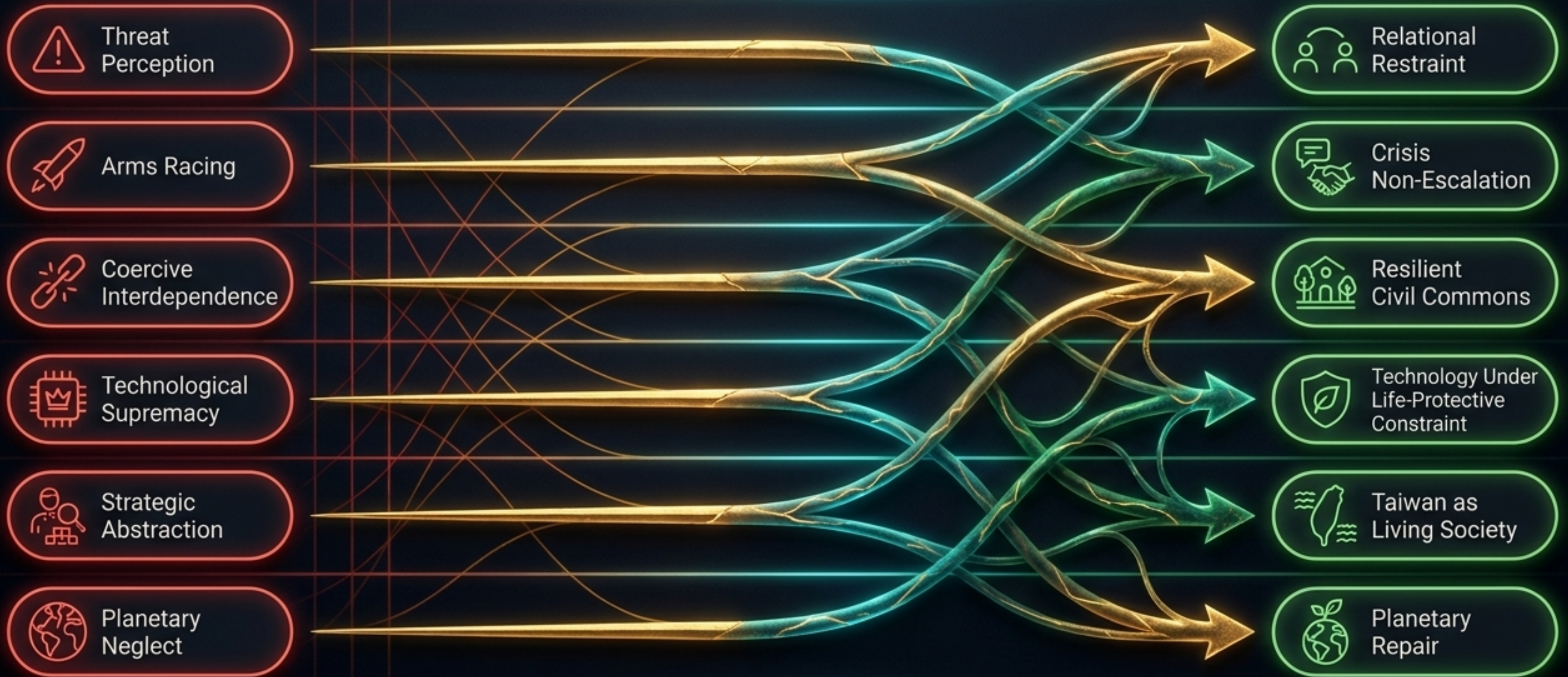
**Security:** Preserving life-capacity under difference and conflict.

**Peace:** Positive peace (the presence of life-serving order).

**Interdependence:** Managed as shared resilience.

**Technology:** Governed strictly by life-protective constraint.

# Mapping the Civilizational Transition



# The Five Pillars of Life-Coherent Strategic Stability



Deterrence and strategic stability matter. But deterrence cannot heal fear. Stability must become answerable to life.

# The Integrated Architecture of Repair




# Regenerative Regulation: From Guardrails to Practice




# The Practical Rubric for Decision-Makers


Before policy is enacted, the questions asked in the Situation Room must change:




Instead of: "Does this arms package improve deterrence?"




Ask: "Does this protect Taiwan's civilian continuity from catastrophic disruption?"



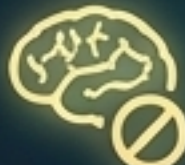
Instead of: "Do these export controls slow the rival?"



Ask: "Do they increase retaliatory systemic fragility for the global commons?"



Instead of: "Does this AI deployment increase our targeting speed?"



Ask: "Does it fatally reduce the human margin needed for restraint?"

Policy as life-responsible action, rather than mere advantage-seeking.

# The Metanoia Demanded by History

The Thucydides Trap is an alarm bell, not a script for catastrophe. We must refuse to organize the future around mutual fear. A civilization that can dominate but cannot repair is not secure; it is powerful and fragile at the same time.



The highest realism is no longer domination.  
The highest realism is viability.