

The Event

May 2026 Summit between Presidents Xi Jinping and Donald J. Trump.

The Invocation

The “Thucydides Trap” is brought into the open—the structural danger of a rising power displacing a ruling power.

The Outcome

Promises of ‘constructive strategic stability’ alongside unresolved flashpoints (Iran, Taiwan, AI arms race).

Beyond the Thucydides Trap

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

From Fear-Based Order to Relational Security in the U.S.-China Century



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ACADEMIC WHITE PAPER

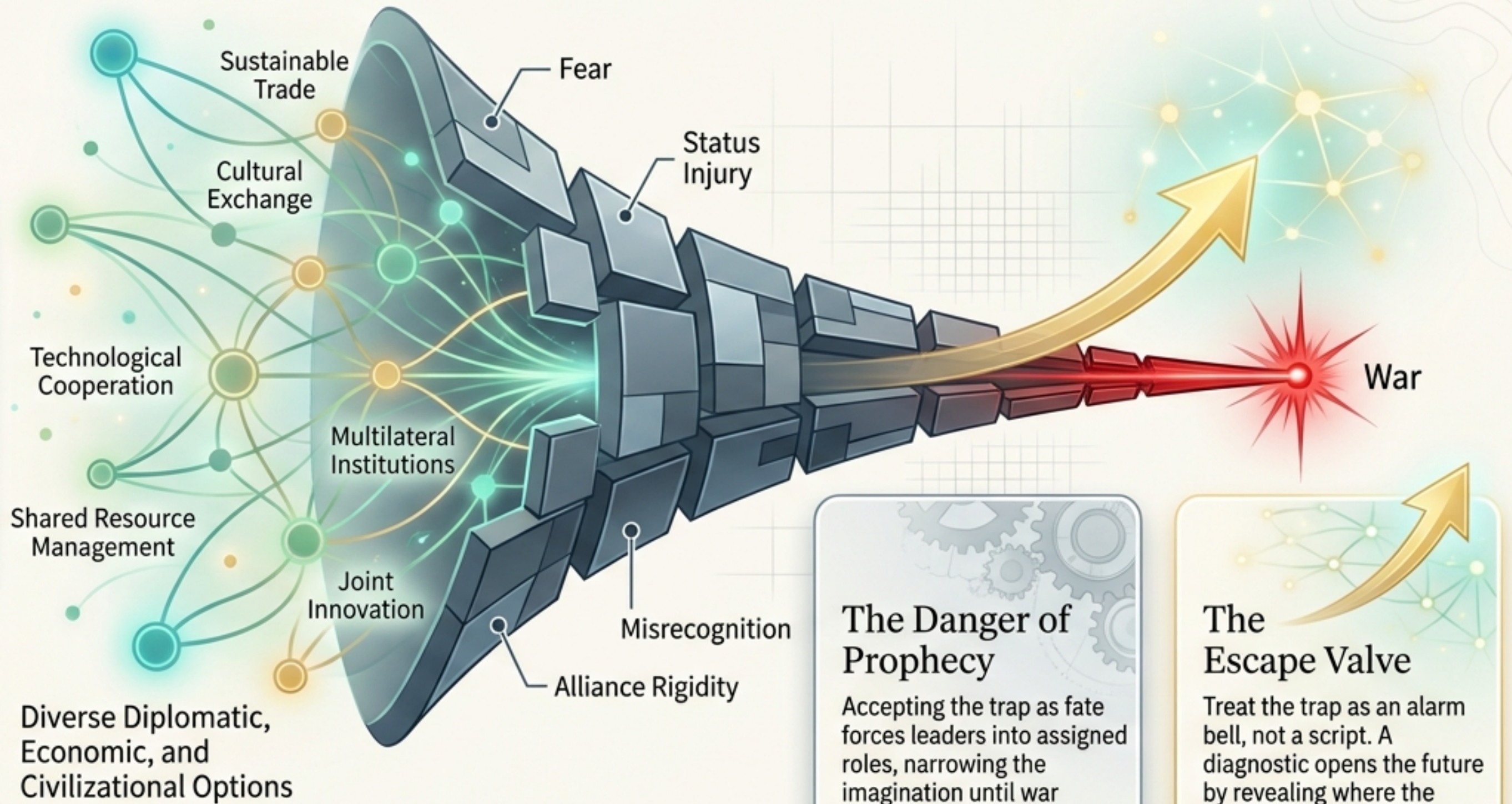
May 2026

The Thesis: Civilization is being asked a question that strategy alone cannot answer: Can great powers recognize a destructive historical pattern before they become governed by it?

The Thucydides Trap is a Diagnostic, Not a Destiny

The Historical Pattern

In 12 of 16 historical cases involving a rising power challenging a ruling power, the outcome was war (Allison, Harvard Belfer Center).



The Danger of Prophecy

Accepting the trap as fate forces leaders into assigned roles, narrowing the imagination until war appears necessary.

The Escape Valve

Treat the trap as an alarm bell, not a script. A diagnostic opens the future by revealing where the system is losing viability.



THE DEFINITION

A paradigm where the security of one power is pursued strictly through the insecurity of another.

THE SECURITY DILEMMA

Defensive moves appear aggressive. Interdependence becomes hostage-dependence. Technology becomes militarized.

LIFE-BLIND SECURITY

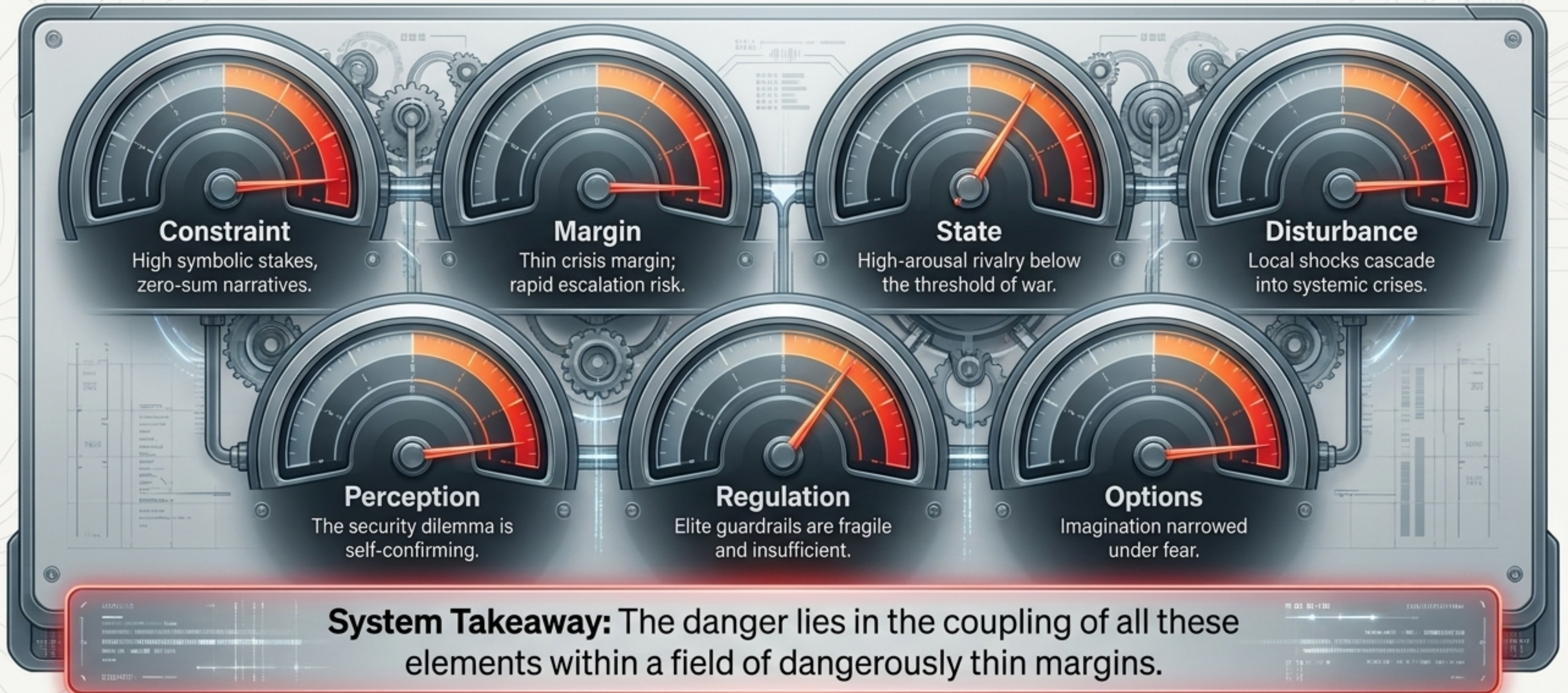
FOSSIL-ENERGY VULNERABILITY

ZERO-SUM DOMINATION

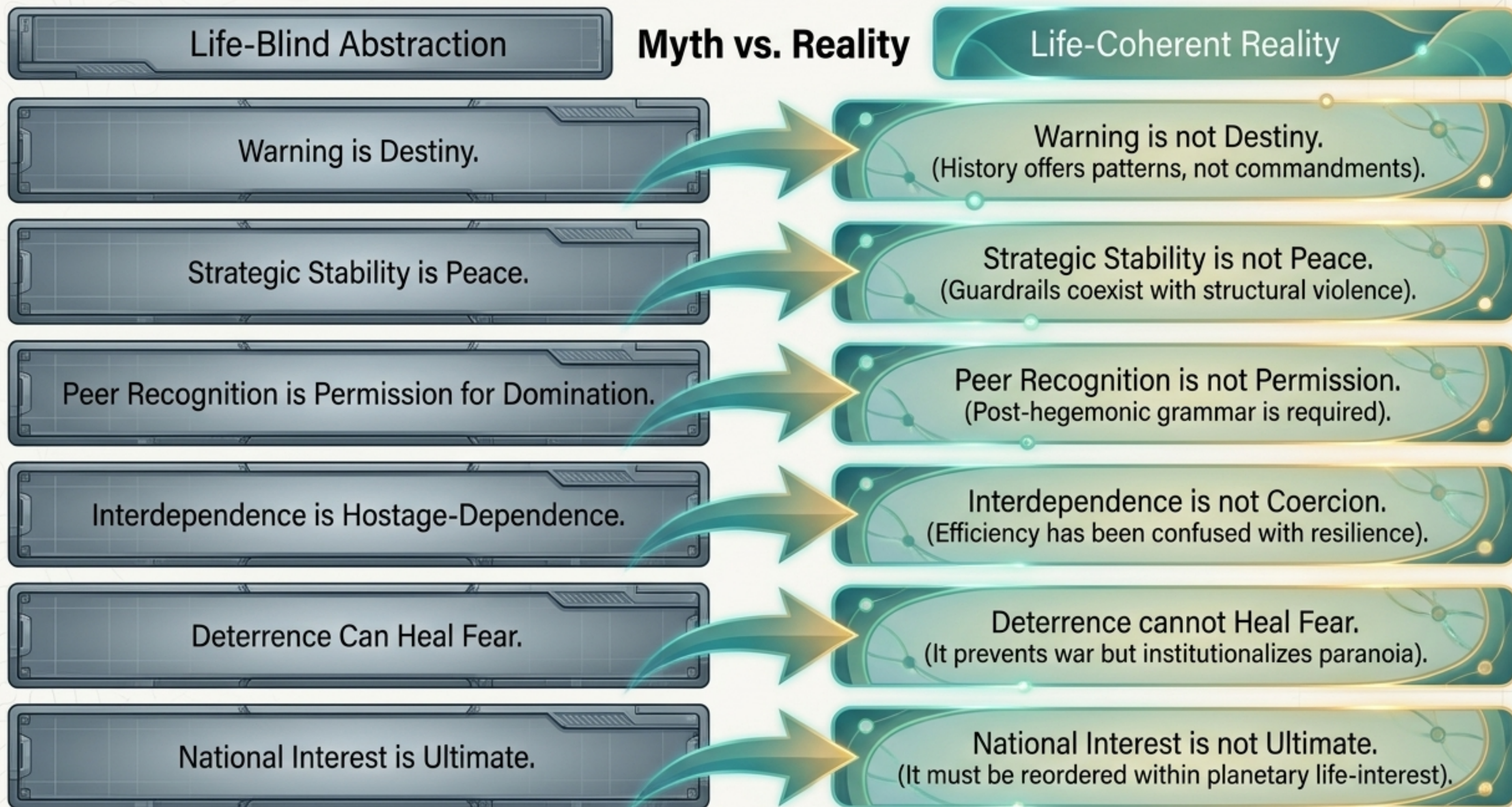
THE CONSEQUENCE

States secure their borders while neglecting bodies, civil commons, and planetary stability. They avoid open war while sustaining structural violence.

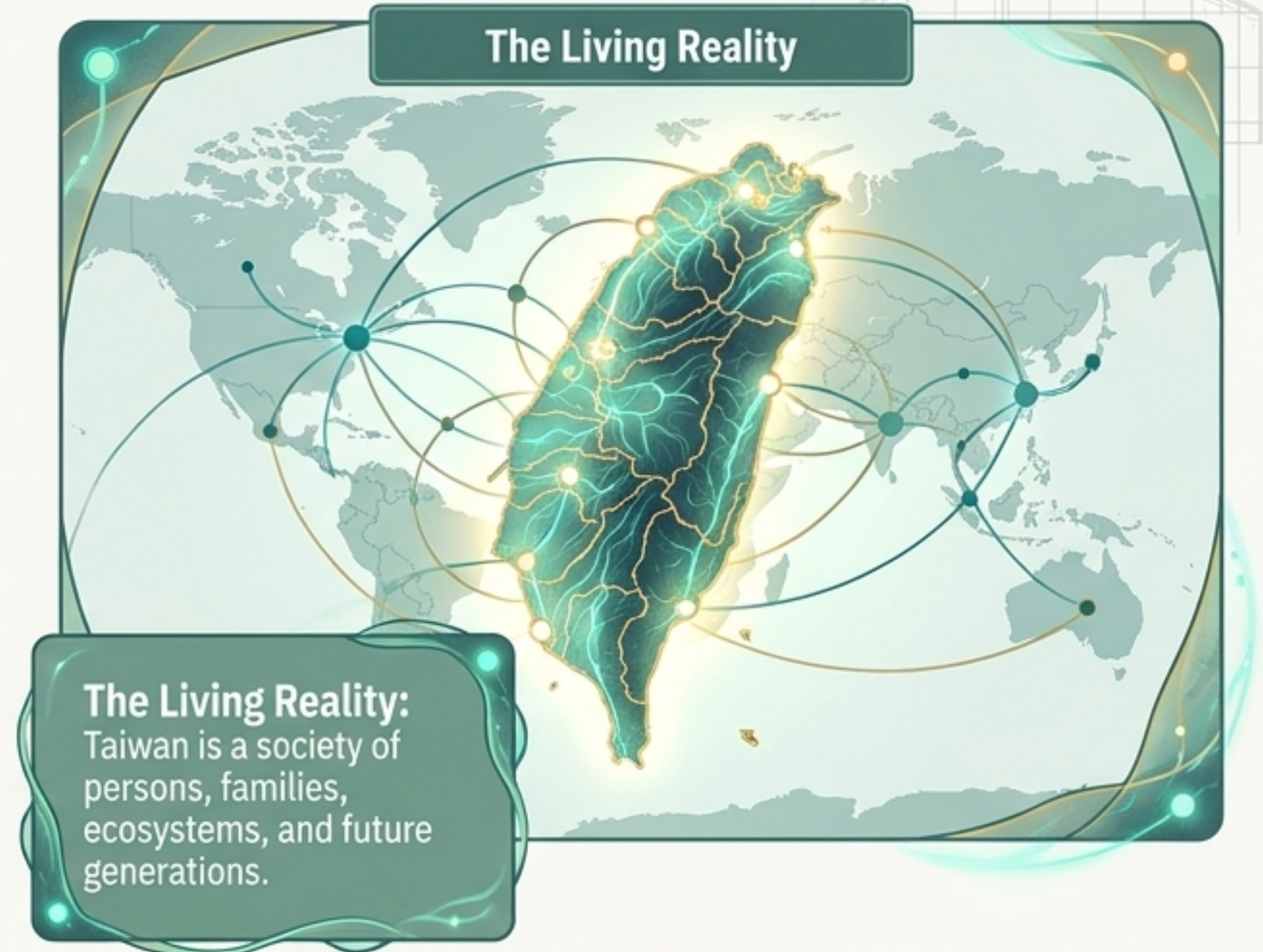
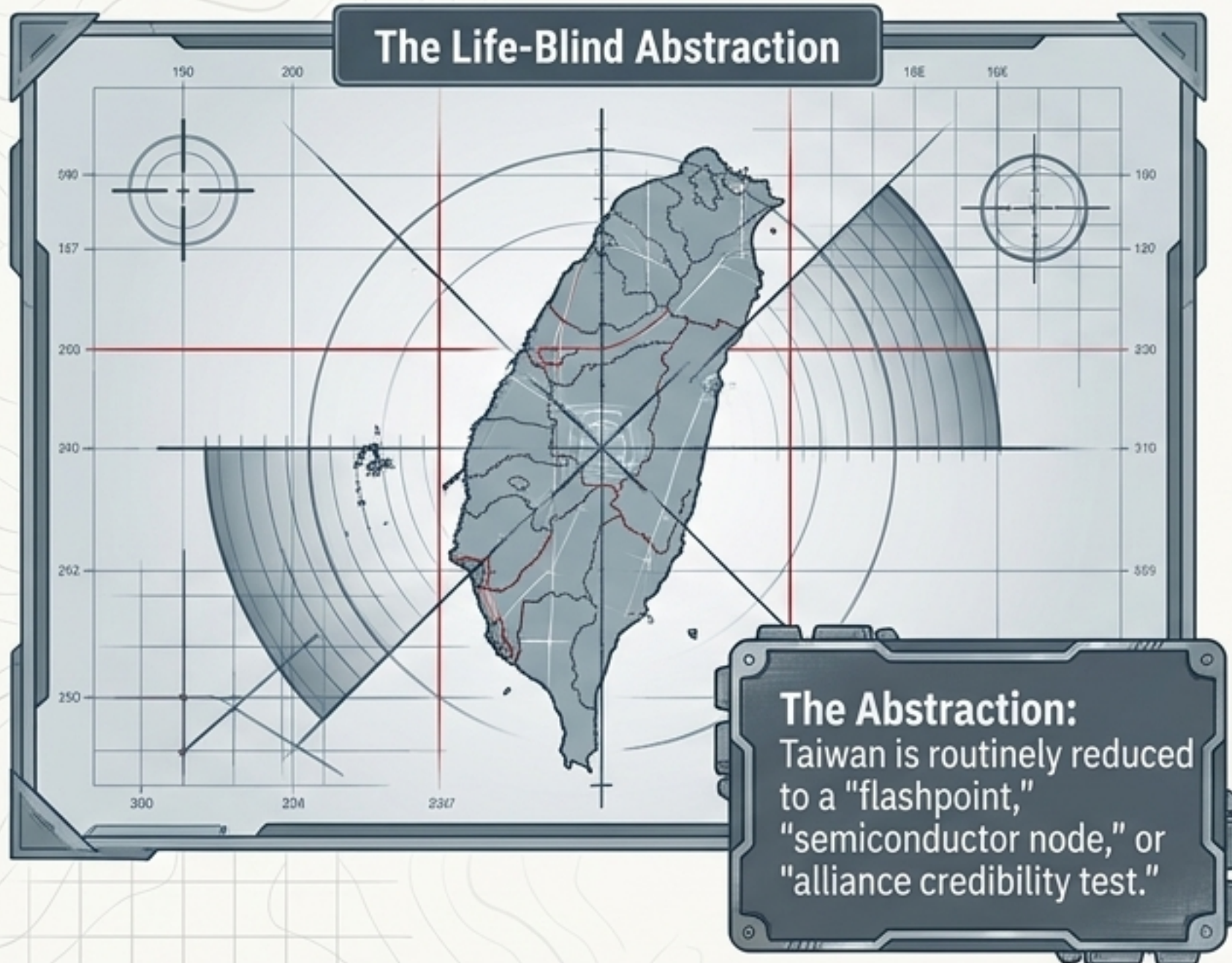
The U.S.-China Civilizational Stress Test



The Distinctions Required for Civilizational Metanoia



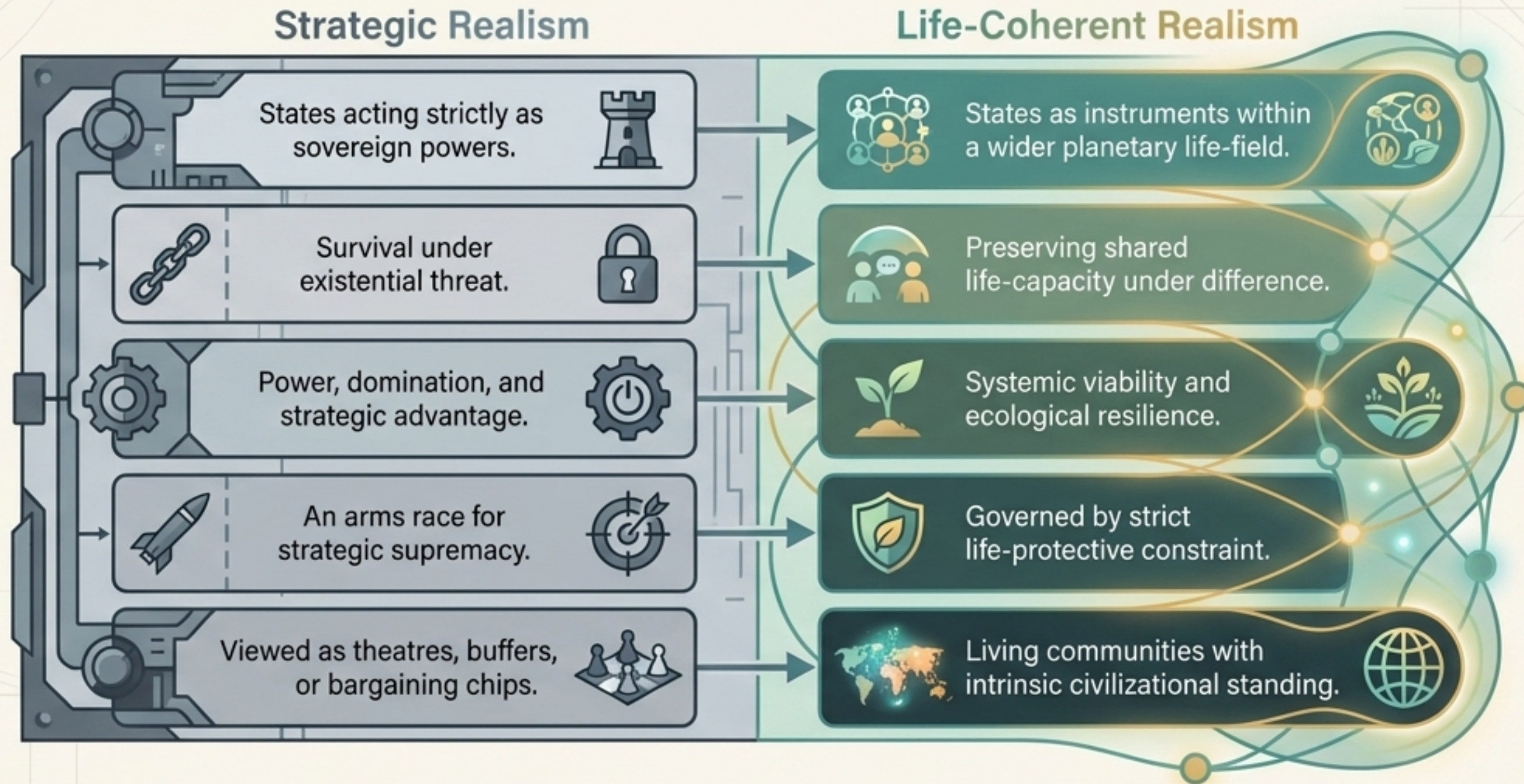
“The Most Acute Flashpoint: Restoring Taiwan as a Living Society”



The Ethical Floor: No settlement, deterrence strategy, or diplomatic bargain is legitimate if it treats Taiwan's living society as expendable. The living society must remain more real than the strategic abstraction.

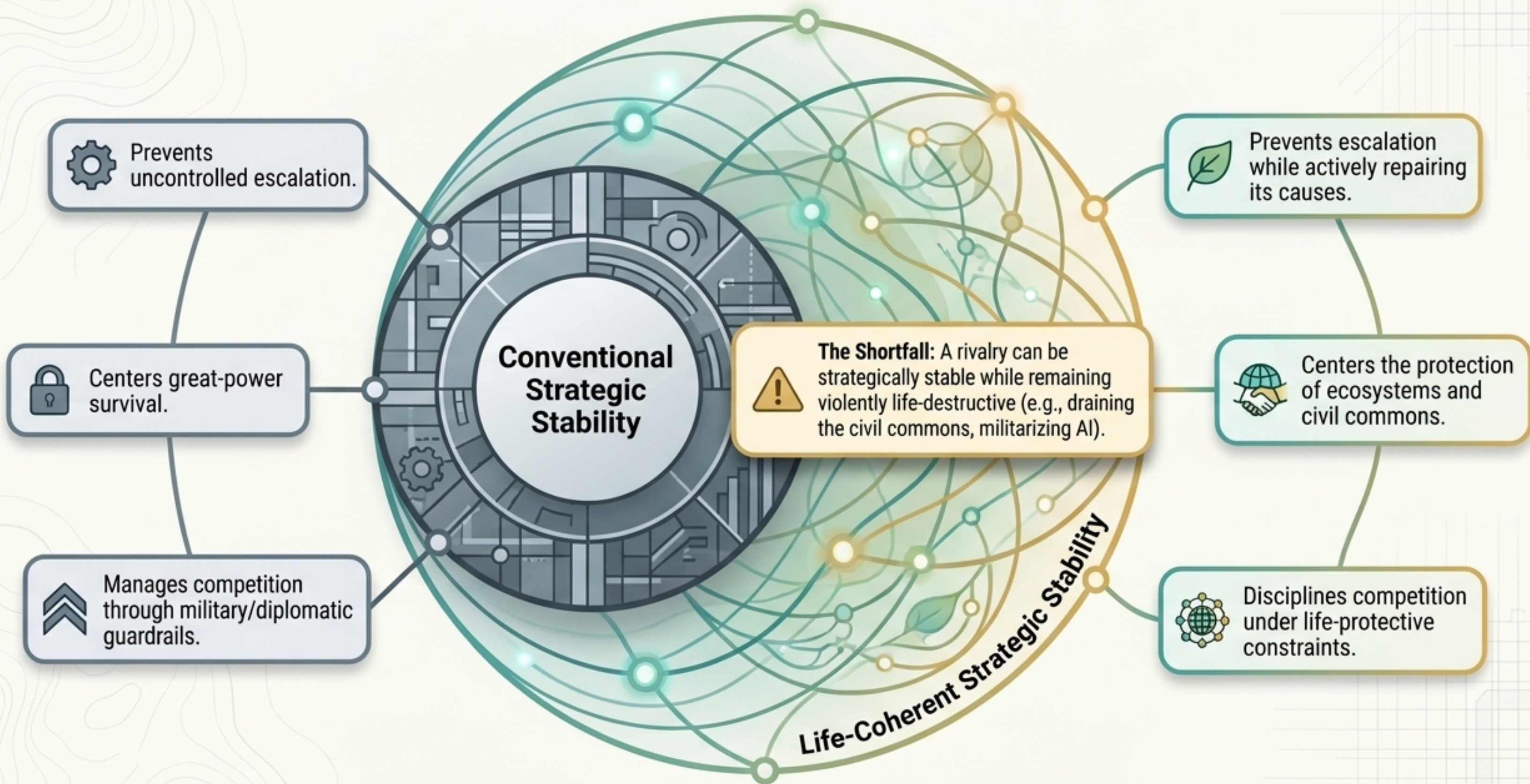
Deepening Realism: From Strategic to Life-Coherent

The Realism Matrix

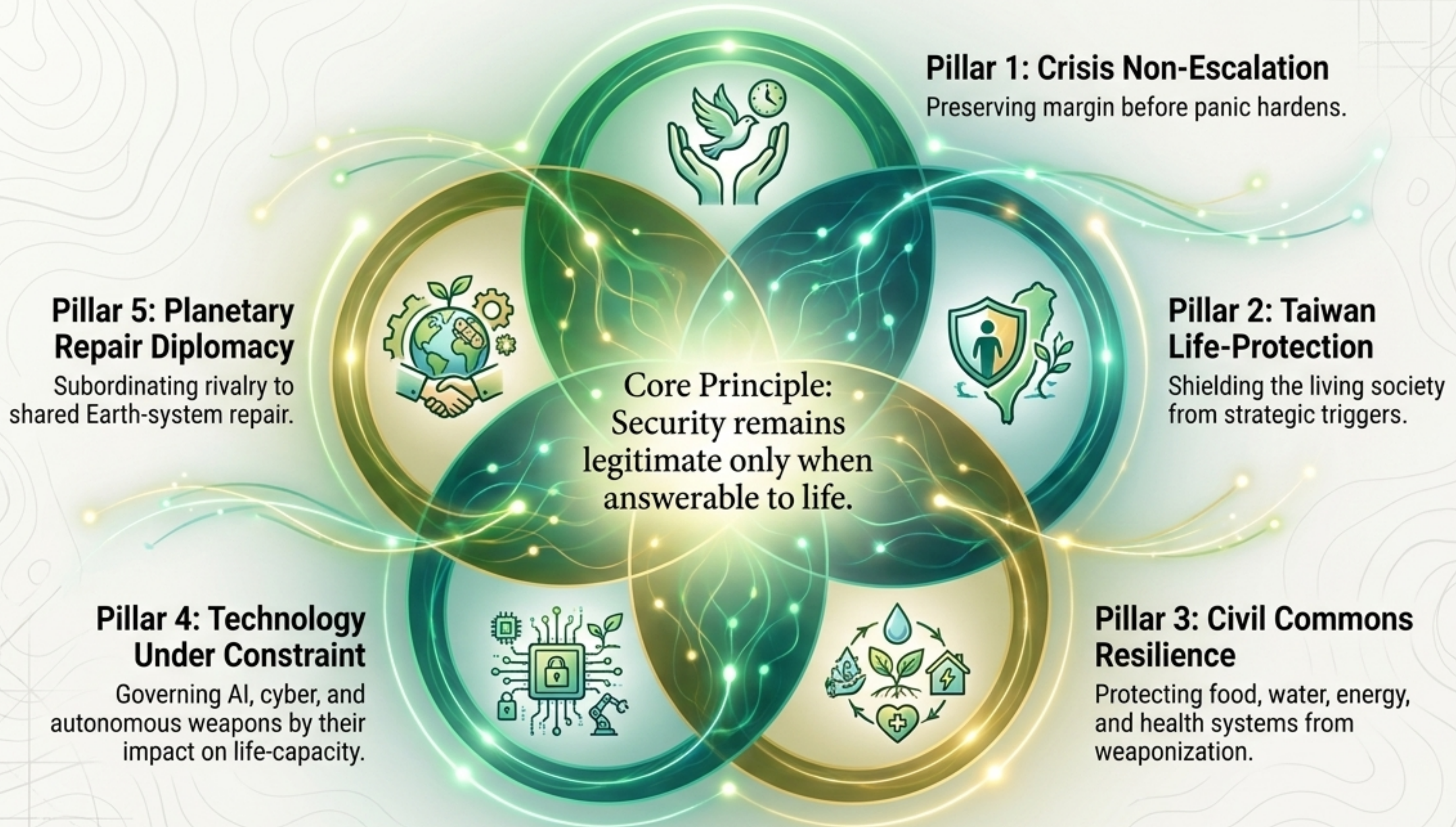


Life-Coherent Realism does not replace Strategic Realism—it *deepens* it by answering to the life-ground.

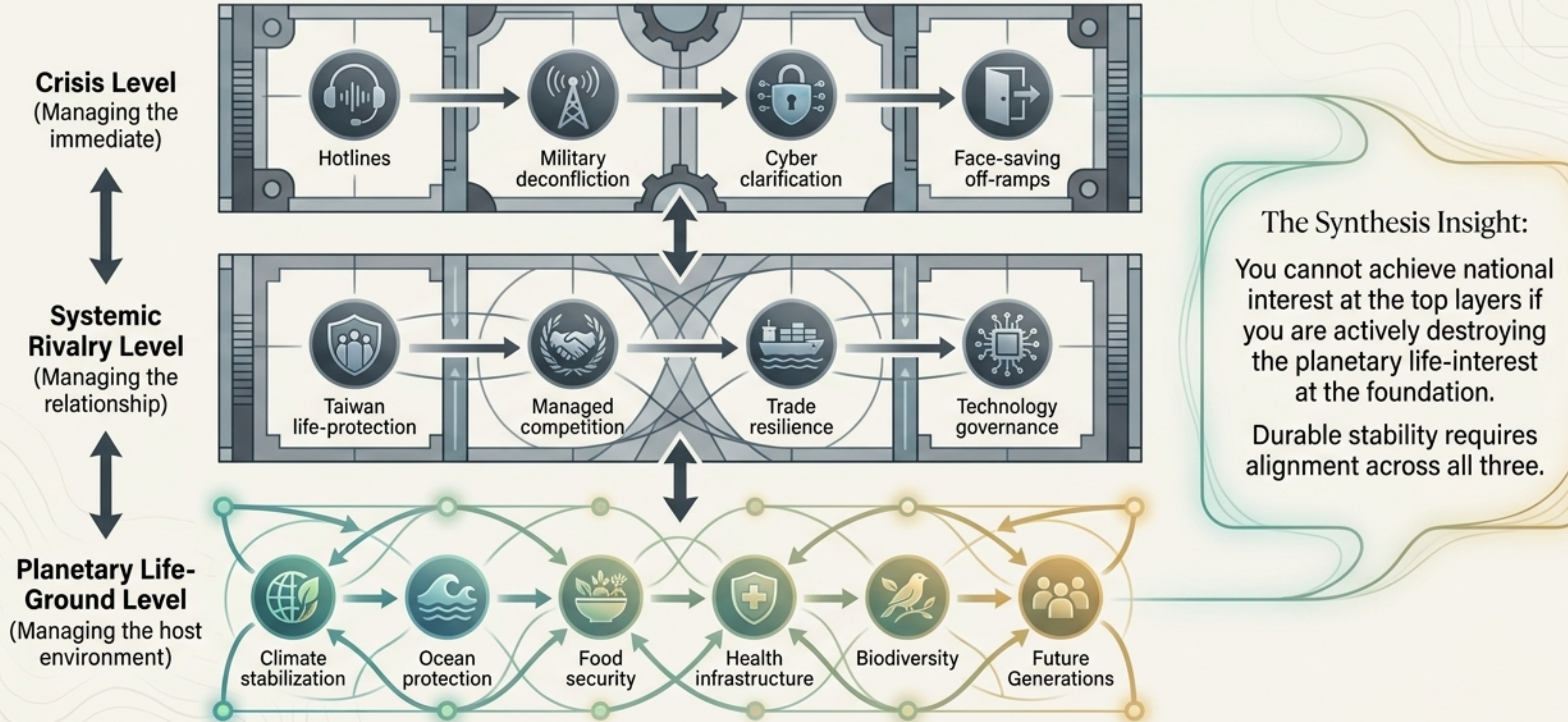
Strategic Stability Alone is Insufficient



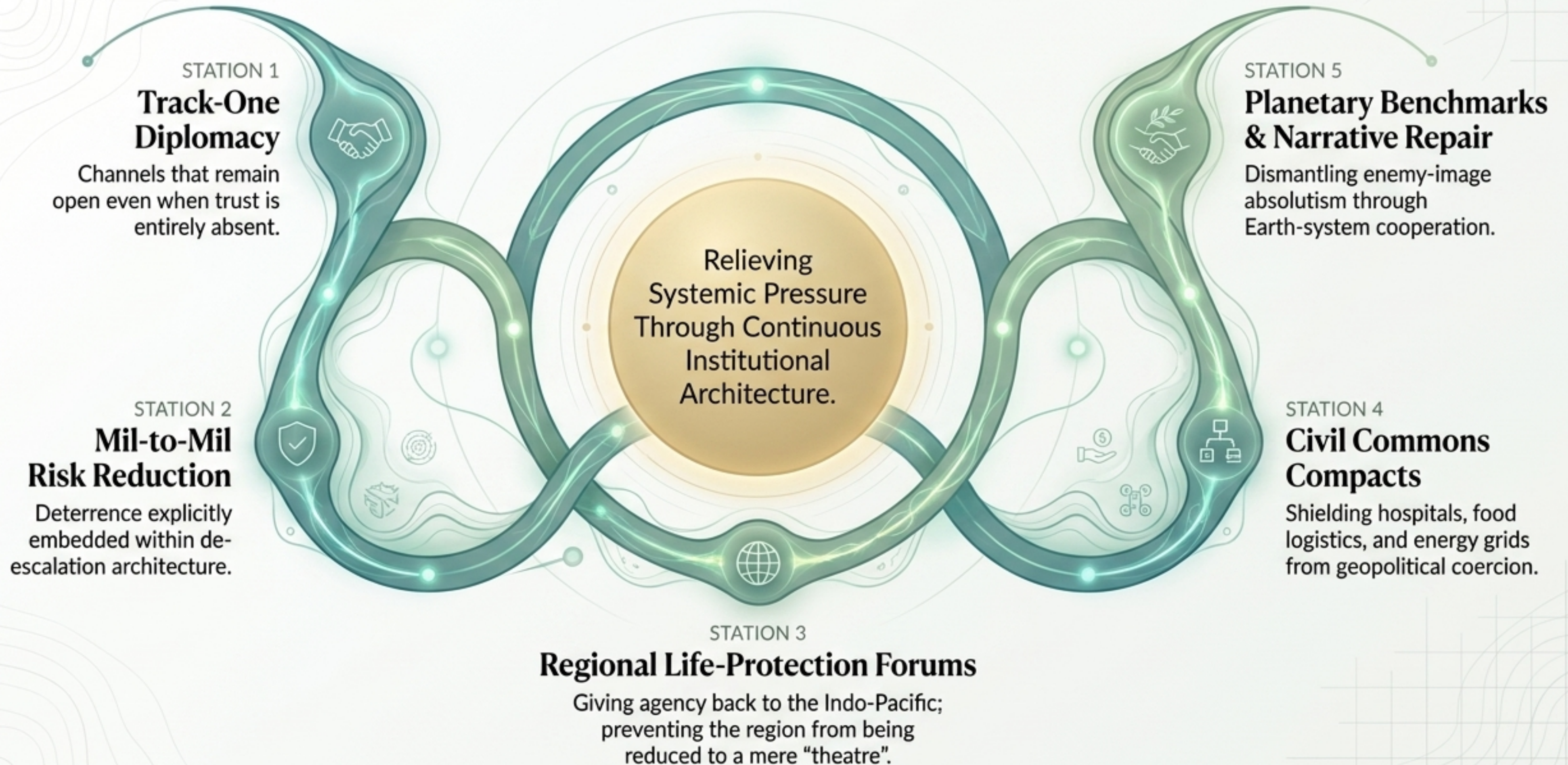
The Five Pillars of Life-Coherent Strategic Stability



The Architecture of Regenerative Regulation



Institutional Pathways for Repair



The Practical Test: Before You Act...



Before approving an arms package: Does it increase or decrease the probability that Taiwan's people can continue living without catastrophic disruption?



Before imposing export controls: Does it increase systemic fragility or incentivize technological militarization?



Before escalating sanctions: Are essential civilian systems being pushed toward breakdown?



Before deploying AI military systems: Does it reduce the human margin needed for restraint?



Before claiming strategic victory: Are the civil commons and planetary life-ground more secure than before?

The Systemic Metanoia

The final question is not simply whether China and the United States can avoid war.

It is whether civilization can bring forth a world in which no people's safety depends upon another people's fear.

Power must be restrained by life.
Sovereignty disciplined by responsibility.
Deterrence subordinated to de-escalation.

The Ultimate Takeaway: The highest realism is no longer domination.
The highest realism is **viability**.