REIMAGINING NUCLEAR DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST FROM ASYMMETRIC CRISIS TO MANAGED SYMMETRY:

A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY TOWARD REGIONAL NUCLEAR EQUILIBRIUM



"A rigid insistence on symmetry has long hampered dialogue. This framework recognises that durable progress begins by embracing asymmetry as a launchpad—not as a flaw to be corrected, but as a condition to be managed—transforming today's destabilising asymmetries on a sequenced journey toward strategic recognition, mutual accommodation, and ultimately, managed symmetry."

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Reimagining Nuclear Diplomacy in the Middle East from Asymmetric Crisis to Managed Symmetry: A Transformative Journey Toward Regional Nuclear Equilibrium

Executive Summary

The June 2025 Iran–Israel conflict—with 935 Iranian versus 29 Israeli casualties and unprecedented U.S. co-belligerency—exposed the structural fragility of deterrence built on opacity and asymmetry. It confirmed what Péczeli & Dalton (2020) warned: that unmanaged nuclear asymmetries escalate toward catastrophe when rigid symmetry demands override strategic realities. The crisis underscored the urgent need for a legally grounded, operationally viable framework that manages asymmetry rather than prematurely and permanently erasing it.

This policy paper proposes a Dual-Track Framework that embraces asymmetry as a strategic condition to be managed—not ignored or forcibly equalised. It introduces differentiated obligations, verifiable transparency, and economic interdependence as tools for building managed symmetry over time. The framework's legal and institutional architecture is designed to reduce escalation risks, restore the credibility of the global non-proliferation regime, and institutionalise a durable regional security compact.

Key Features of the Dual-Track Framework:

- *Track One (Israel):* Nuclear Archaeology—a phased historical disclosure process that builds regional credibility without compromising current deterrence. This transforms strategic ambiguity into structured transparency.
- *Track Two (Iran):* Phased compliance and economic reintegration, where restraint becomes a strategic agency, linking enrichment caps and verification leadership to over $100 billion in milestone-based development incentives.

Strategic Innovations:

- *Archaeological Safeguards:* Historical material accounting for undeclared nuclear states without requiring immediate NPT accession, allowing structured transparency.
- *Middle East Security Consultation Forum (MESCF) Governance:* A regional consultation forum with crisis response protocols, a Gulf nuclear fuel bank, rotating leadership, and 6-hour crisis response systems.
- *Escrow Diplomacy:* Autonomous financial mechanisms that convert political commitments into contractual performance, insulated from political volatility, with $50 billion+ disbursed upon compliance milestones.
- *Crisis Escalation Speed Limits:* Time-governed diplomatic mechanisms that match the tempo of modern provocations.
- *Narrative Discipline:* Strategic communication infrastructure that aligns public messaging with compliance credibility.
- *Adaptive Legal and Governance Architecture:* Modular annexes, rotating leadership, binding arbitration, doctrinal flexibility to accommodate asymmetry without sacrificing enforceability, hibernation protocols during political transitions, and 30-month review conferences to ensure resilience.

Strategic Impact:

The framework delivers five transformational benefits:

1. Managed Asymmetry, replacing unrealistic symmetry demands as a foundation for stability
2. Verification Without Trust through codified legal obligations—addressing what Philippe et al. (2018) identify as the core challenge of nuclear diplomacy: building compliance mechanisms that function despite fundamental mistrust between adversaries
3. Economic Integration as the backbone of compliance.
4. Narrative discipline as a strategic infrastructure to build reputational equity for legitimacy.
5. Adaptive Governance that evolves in response to regional dynamics.

Bottom Line

Rather than imposing symmetry, the Dual-Track Framework cultivates the conditions for its organic emergence through sequenced recognition, differentiated obligations, and institutionalised cooperation. It offers the most credible path from deterrence fragility to managed stability since the 1990s ACRS talks, addressing the fundamental instability of nuclear relationships built on strategic ambiguity rather than mutual transparency. By embracing asymmetry as a strategic condition to be managed—rather than erased—it offers the architecture for durable legitimacy, regional sovereignty, and strategic stability in the world's most volatile nuclear theatre. The window for preventive diplomacy is narrowing; this framework provides a regionally owned scaffold for durable peace.

1. Introduction: The Strategic Imbalance

The Middle East's nuclear security dilemma stems from stark asymmetries: Israel's undeclared capabilities under strategic ambiguity, and Iran's overt programme subjected to international scrutiny. These conditions fuel mistrust, regional hedging, and undermine the universality of the NPT (UNIDIR, 2022). The June 2025 Iran–Israel conflict highlighted the limitations of deterrence based on opacity, underscoring the need for a legal and operational framework that addresses asymmetry rather than attempting premature parity (UNSC, 2025). This paper proposes a Dual-Track Framework that treats asymmetry as a condition to be governed through differentiated obligations, phased convergence, and institutionalised cooperation.

> *"This is not just an Iran-Israel framework. It is a Middle East compact."*

Past diplomatic efforts—whether aimed at creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone or securing Israeli NPT accession—have repeatedly failed due to rigid symmetry demands that ignore strategic realities. Instead of imposing identical obligations on fundamentally different actors, a more effective model acknowledges asymmetry as a condition to be managed. This paper proposes a Dual-Track Framework that integrates legal, economic, and institutional mechanisms to manage asymmetry, build trust, and enable phased convergence toward managed symmetry.

The analysis explores: (1) the regional dynamics reshaped by the Abraham Accords; (2) the limitations of deterrence exposed by the 2025 conflict; (3) the structure and operationalisation of the Dual-Track Framework; (4) the role of economic interdependence as a compliance infrastructure; (5) the importance of narrative discipline in bridging credibility gaps; and (6) the legal and institutional architecture required to sustain long-term

stability. In doing so, it offers a regionally owned pathway to transform asymmetry from a source of volatility into a scaffold for durable peace.

2. Methodology

This study employs a comprehensive desk review methodology, synthesising primary documents, legal instruments, and scholarly analyses to develop a practical and resilient framework for regional nuclear governance.

Primary Sources:

- IAEA reports, UN Security Council resolutions, and NPT Review Conference proceedings (IAEA, 2024; UNSC, 2025).
- Official statements from regional governments and Abraham Accords documentation (U.S. Department of State, 2020).
- Core legal texts, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, Additional Protocols, and relevant international jurisprudence (e.g., ICJ and ICTY rulings on conflict classification and state responsibility) (ICRC, 2020; ICJ, 2005).

Secondary Literature:

- Peer-reviewed publications on Middle East nuclear dynamics, arms control verification, and regional security (Bahgat, 2023; Péczeli & Dalton, 2020).
- Policy briefs and reports from institutions such as UNIDIR and regional think tanks (UNIDIR, 2022).
- Comparative case studies, including the JCPOA, the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) talks, and South Africa's disarmament process (Davenport, 2015).

The analysis integrates legal reasoning, historical precedent, and policy innovation to design a Dual-Track Framework. This framework introduces novel concepts, including Nuclear Archaeology, which enables Israeli transparency without undermining deterrence (Acton, 2022); Escrow Diplomacy, linking economic incentives to compliance and resilience (Kaye, 2021); and Adaptive Legal Frameworks, which manage asymmetric obligations through sequenced accountability (Sivakumaran, 2012)

By combining legal precision with political realism, the study aims to construct a phased, ten-year roadmap for regional security that is both technically verifiable and diplomatically viable.

Addressing these legal uncertainties and strategic asymmetries requires more than technical fixes or rhetorical gestures. The region's security architecture must be reimagined through a framework that reduces the risk of nuclear escalation between Iran and Israel, restores the credibility and universality of the NPT, and builds a sustainable order grounded in inclusive diplomacy. This framework must institutionalise verifiable compliance, embed economic incentives for nuclear restraint through regional development, and establish crisis communication systems to avert accidental escalation. Integrating nuclear confidence-building with broader peace processes—and developing indigenous verification capacity—will transform asymmetry from a liability into a foundation for regional sovereignty and resilience (Philippe et al., 2018; Kaye, 2021).

3. Strategic Context and Historical Precedents

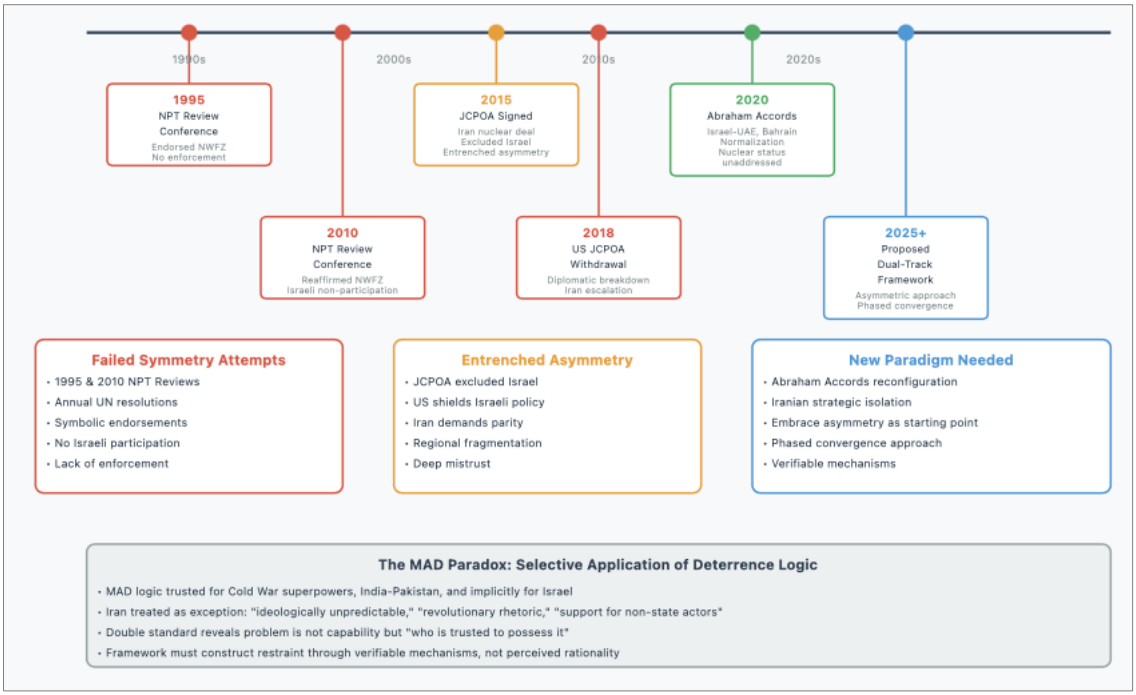
3.1 The Pattern of Diplomatic Failure

Over the past three decades, Middle East nuclear diplomacy has consistently failed due to rigid

symmetry demands that overlook regional asymmetries—a pattern tracing back to fundamental misunderstandings about how arms control functions in asymmetric security environments. The 1995 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences endorsed nuclear-weapon-free zones, but they lacked effective enforcement mechanisms and Israeli participation (Fahmy, 2022, p. 105). The JCPOA (2015) was successful in curbing Iranian activities, but it entrenched asymmetry by excluding Israel's undeclared arsenal (Davenport, 2015). Annual UN resolutions urging Israeli NPT accession have remained symbolic. At the same time, secret initiatives, such as the Oslo Channel (2013-2018), have faltered due to a limited mandate and lack of regional buy-in (Fahmy, 2022, p. 109; UNIDIR, 2023).

These failures reflect structural constraints: Israel views nuclear strategic ambiguity as existential deterrence; Iran demands reciprocal disarmament; the P5+1 prioritize Iranian containment while shielding Israeli policy; regional fragmentation undermines multilateral initiatives; and sanctions create perverse incentives, making nuclear capability strategic leverage rather than liability (Philippe et al., 2018, pp. 2-3; Bahgat, 2023).

Figure 1: *Historical Precedents and the Case for Asymmetric Diplomacy*



The timelines in Figure 1 illustrate how rigid symmetrical approaches (1995-2015) consistently failed, while recent developments (2020+) necessitate a new framework that works with, rather than against, existing asymmetries.

3.2 The MAD Paradox and Trust Asymmetry

The doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) validates nuclear deterrence among declared powers, such as the U.S., Russia, and, implicitly, Israel (Fahmy, 2022, p. 107). Yet Iran is framed as an exception—its potential capability treated as destabilising rather than stabilising, based more on narrative construction than technical assessment (UNIDIR, 2023).

Iran is cast as ideologically unpredictable and proxy-aligned, while Israel—despite opacity—is perceived as strategically mature and Western-aligned. This selective application reveals the trust hierarchies embedded in global non-proliferation discourse: if MAD logic applies to India-Pakistan, the Iranian exception reflects geopolitical identity rather than rational assessment (Fahmy, 2022, p. 110).

"If MAD applies to Cold War rivals and nuclear-armed adversaries like India and Pakistan, the exception made for Iran reflects global trust hierarchies—not Iranian irrationality."

3.3 Narrative Asymmetry and Strategic Communication



The credibility gap in Middle East nuclear diplomacy extends beyond capabilities to strategic messaging and reputational trust. International tolerance of Israel's undeclared arsenal versus alarm over Iran's suspected ambitions reflects profound asymmetry in political messaging and perceived legitimacy (Fahmy, 2022; UNIDIR, 2023).

Iran employs ideological discourse—references to Israel as a "cancerous tumour," calls for eradication—amplified through Quds Day events, state media, and school curricula, reinforcing confrontational postures that undermine diplomatic credibility (Independent, 2025; Times of Israel, 2025). Israel maintains strategic ambiguity through cautious, institutionally aligned messaging in defence briefings and allied surrogates, rather than direct rhetoric.

This divergence has tangible consequences: Iranian rhetoric justifies sanctions and containment. At the same time, Israeli perceived maturity enables tacit acceptance of strategic ambiguity. It shields it from equivalent scrutiny—what Fahmy (2022) describes as the 'credibility gap' that reflects global trust hierarchies rather than objective risk assessment (Chatham House, 2021; DIIS, 2023). The result is narrative asymmetry where Iran is delegitimised for behaviour while Israel is legitimised despite opacity, reflecting trust hierarchies rather than objective risk assessment.

The Dual-Track Framework addresses this through strategic communication mechanisms that harmonise messaging, counter disinformation, and build reputational equity, recognising that narrative discipline is as critical to non-proliferation as technical compliance.

***Table 1**: Comparative Rhetoric and Messaging Dimensions – Iran vs. Israel*

Dimension	Iran	Israel
Existential Framing	Calls for Israel's "eradication" and labels it a "cancerous tumour"	Frames Iran as a security threat; avoids calls for regime change
Rhetorical Tone	Ideological, absolutist, religiously framed	Strategic, cautious, anchored in defence and deterrence
Public Messaging Strategy	State-sponsored events (Quds Day), school curricula, and media amplification	Strategic silence; messaging through defence briefings and allied surrogates
Target of Delegitimisation	Israel's identity (Zionist regime, illegitimate statehood)	Iran's behaviour (nuclear non-compliance, support for proxies)
Institutional Messaging	Consistent across Supreme Leader edicts, military organs (IRGC), and foreign ministry lines	Consistent alignment between civilian, military, and diplomatic messaging
Narrative Impact	Fuels international mistrust and undermines Iran's nuclear credibility	Reinforces perception of maturity, justifying strategic opacity
Diplomatic Consequences	Justifies sanctions, isolation, and pre-emptive containment	Enables tacit tolerance of undeclared arsenal and preferential diplomatic treatment

Sources: UNIDIR (2023), Fahmy (2022), Times of Israel (2025), Independent (2025)

Table 1 synthesises contrasting strategic narratives by juxtaposing Iran and Israel's public messaging, institutional alignment, and perceived legitimacy, drawing on recent assessments from Fahmy (2022, p. 108) and UNIDIR (2023). As the table illustrates, the asymmetry in rhetorical tone and institutional coherence has measurable diplomatic consequences. Iran's ideological framing and public messaging undermine trust and legitimise containment, while Israel's strategic silence reinforces its image of deterrence maturity (UNIDIR, 2023). This disparity influences enforcement priorities and exacerbates the credibility gap.

3.4 The Abraham Accords and Regional Dynamics

The Abraham Accords (2020–present) normalised Israel's ties with key Arab states—UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, decoupling nuclear restraint from the Arab-Israeli conflict and sidelining collective leverage over Israel's arsenal (Bahgat, 2023). The Accords deepened Iran's isolation but created new opportunities for confidence-building through states like the UAE and Bahrain, which maintain ties with both sides (UNIDIR, 2023). As Bahgat (2023) notes, this shift fundamentally altered the strategic calculus of Middle East nuclear diplomacy. By sidelining the traditional collective bargaining position of Arab states, the Accords weakened regional leverage over Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal (U.S. Department of State, 2020).

These dynamics underscore the need for a Dual-Track Framework that leverages emerging diplomatic openings without replicating the symmetry-based models that have historically failed. Rather than insisting on reciprocal disarmament or formal recognition, the framework embraces asymmetry as a pragmatic foundation for lawful and durable nuclear governance (UNIDIR, 2023). The strategic lessons of the 2025 Indo-Pakistani conflict further reinforce this imperative. As that crisis demonstrated, mutual recognition and institutional restraint—not coercive symmetry—are the real anchors of nuclear stability. The Dual-Track Framework addresses this reality by incorporating asymmetry into a broader legal and institutional framework to sustain long-term regional security.

4. The 12-Day Iran–Israel War: Deterrence Trust Collapse, a Catalyst for Framework Urgency

The June 2025 conflict between Iran and Israel crystallised the dangers of asymmetric deterrence and exposed the fragility of the region's security architecture. The immediate trigger—a claim that Iran was "days away" from nuclear weaponisation—was contradicted by IAEA assessments but used to justify a rapid escalation, filtered through the lens of alarmism (UNIDIR, 2023; Fahmy, 2022, p. 110; UNSC, 2025; Toossi, 2025). The resulting war, short but devastating, revealed not only Iran's vulnerabilities but also Israel's deep dependency on U.S. military, economic, and diplomatic support.

4.1 U.S. Co-Belligerency and Strategic Decisiveness

For the first time in history, the United States did not merely fund or arm Israel—it fought alongside it, openly and directly (Ghannoushi, 2025, June 26). This marked a seismic shift in the U.S.–Israel alliance, transforming the nature of deterrence in the region. Joint U.S.–Israeli military exercises conducted before the war simulated attacks on Iranian infrastructure, which translated into real-time battlefield coordination. American ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) assets and satellite coverage were instrumental in targeting Iranian missile sites and command centres. In contrast, precision-guided munitions and missile defence systems enabled Israel to neutralise Iranian threats with unprecedented efficiency (Simendinger & Karisch, 2025, June 24).

The U.S. also conducted direct precision strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities—Operation Midnight Hammer—significantly degrading Iran's enrichment capabilities and neutralising its ability to produce a nuclear weapon core for the foreseeable future. These operations were not merely supportive; they were decisive. The destruction of key Iranian military assets and the elimination of senior IRGC officials

were inseparable from U.S. military power (Fleming, 2025, June 24; MSN News, 2025, June).

4.2 Diplomatic and Economic Dimensions of U.S. Support

Diplomatically, the U.S. played a central role in shaping international perceptions and responses. President Trump personally brokered the ceasefire, reportedly halting Israeli escalation attempts after the truce was declared (Ghannoushi, 2025, June 26). In international forums, U.S. advocacy helped legitimise Israeli actions and mitigate potential backlash, securing a more permissive environment for Israeli operations.



Satellite imagery shows surface damage at Iran's Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant following U.S. strikes, analysts cautioning that the extent of underground destruction remains unverified. (Image: Maxar Technologies/Handout via Reuters (June 22, 2025)

Economically, U.S. financial aid has long bolstered Israel's defence budget, enabling sustained military readiness and innovation. The 2025 war effort, estimated to cost between $12–20 billion, strained Israel's economy, prompting requests for additional U.S. financial aid and loan guarantees to support recovery and rearmament (The New Arab Staff, 2025, June 25; Sofuoglu, 2025, June 25). In essence, while Israel executed a high-impact campaign—crippling Iran's missile and nuclear infrastructure and demonstrating advanced interception capabilities—it could not have done so without U.S. backing (Ghannoushi, 2025, June 26).

4.3 Legal Fallout and the Erosion of Normative Restraints

The war's legal implications were equally consequential. U.S. co-belligerency transformed the conflict into a multilateral international armed conflict, as defined by the Geneva Conventions (ICRC, 1949; ICRC, 2020; Vite, 2009, pp. 70–73, 76–77; Heinonen & Charlier, 2013). The disproportionate casualties—865 Iranian versus 24 Israeli deaths—and extensive infrastructure damage exposed the unsustainability of pre-emptive deterrence (Invezz, 2025).

NATO's legal justification, articulated by Secretary General Mark Rutte, invoked pre-emptive self-defence—a rationale lacking UN Security Council authorisation and unsupported by Article 51 of the UN Charter. The claim that Iran was on the verge of weaponisation was contradicted by IAEA findings, raising serious questions about proportionality and necessity (Carlson, 2021; VCDNP, 2021; UNIDIR, 2022). As one analyst noted, "If NATO's legal threshold for intervention now includes unilateral pre-emption based on disputed claims, the credibility of international law as a constraint on force is dangerously eroded."

4.4 Strategic Takeaway: Fragility, Asymmetry, and the Case for a New Framework

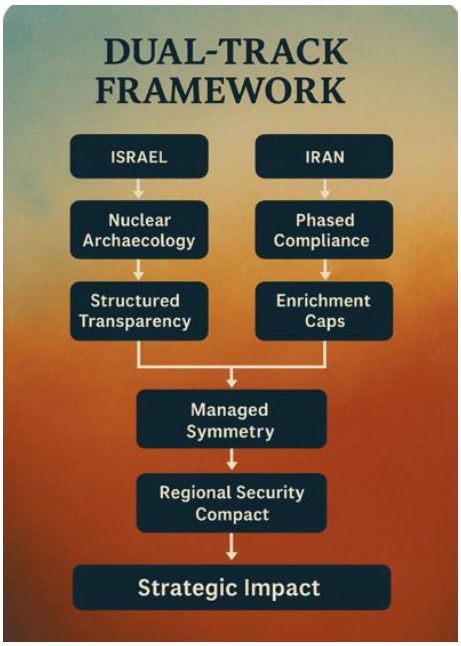
The 2025 conflict exposed both the fragility of deterrence and the steep asymmetry of consequence. Israel's strategic dominance was revealed to be contingent on external support, while Iran's deterrence posture was continually undermined by pre-emptive strikes justified through contested intelligence. This imbalance is not sustainable.

Addressing these legal uncertainties and strategic asymmetries requires more than technical fixes or rhetorical gestures. The region's security architecture must be reimagined through a framework that reduces the risk of nuclear escalation between Iran and Israel, re-establishes the credibility and universality of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and builds a sustainable security order grounded in inclusive diplomacy. Such a framework must institutionalise verifiable and enforceable

compliance mechanisms, create economic incentives for nuclear restraint through regional development initiatives, and establish crisis communication systems capable of averting accidental escalation. Integrating nuclear confidence-building with broader peace processes, while developing indigenous capacity for verification and monitoring, is essential to transforming asymmetry from a source of instability into a managed condition that strengthens regional sovereignty and resilience.

5. Strategic Recognition, Coercive Limits and the Symmetry Horizon

These structural failures and historical asymmetries set the stage for a new conceptual architecture. Section 5 introduces the Strategic Recognition Cascade and the Dual-Track Framework as operational responses to the region's enduring imbalance.

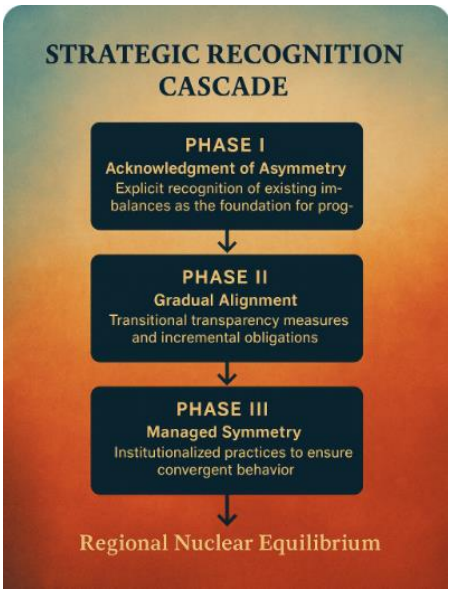


5.1 From Episodic Deterrence to Structured Recognition

The June 2025 Iran–Israel conflict revealed the fragility of deterrence architectures built on opacity and asymmetry. Despite Israel's decisive military advantage—amplified by U.S. co-belligerency—the war exposed the unsustainability of pre-emptive containment strategies and the reputational costs of strategic ambiguity (UNIDIR, 2023; Ghannoushi, 2025, June 26). Iran's retaliatory posture, though constrained, demonstrated that asymmetric actors can still impose regional disruption, especially when denied institutional pathways for recognition (UNSC, 2025; Toossi, 2025).

This underscores the need for a shift from episodic coercion to structured strategic recognition—a process that acknowledges asymmetry as a condition to be managed, not erased. The Dual-Track Framework operationalises this shift by embedding differentiated obligations within a legal and institutional scaffold that builds toward managed symmetry (Acton, 2022; Philippe et al., 2018).

If the 2025 conflict revealed the limits of deterrence, then the Strategic Recognition Cascade offers a roadmap for transcending them. The following sub-section unpacks how this cascade is operationalised through the Dual-Track Framework.



5.2 The Strategic Recognition Cascade and the Dual-Track Framework

The Dual-Track Framework enables managed asymmetry through phased convergence:

- *Track One (Israel):* Nuclear Archaeology enables historical disclosure without compromising deterrence, modelled on South Africa's precedent (Acton, 2022).
- *Track Two (Iran):* Phased compliance and economic reintegration link restraint to structured incentives (Kaye, 2021).

MESCF governance provides shared oversight, crisis protocols, and rotating leadership, embedding asymmetry management within a resilient institutional

architecture (UNIDIR, 2023).

The framework enables the Strategic Recognition Cascade through five interlocking mechanisms: reciprocal narrative de-escalation, MESCF-led technical cooperation, third-party facilitation, legal buffering, and reputational incentives, operating through the implementation phases detailed in Section 7.4

5.3 The Limits of Coercive Deterrence and Regional Precedents

The May 2025 Indo-Pakistani conflict offers a compelling analogue. Despite geographic and technological escalation—including India's first use of cruise missiles and Pakistan's deployment of conventionally armed ballistic missiles—both sides avoided nuclear signalling, implicitly reaffirming the logic of Mutual Assured Destruction (Clary, 2025; NPR, 2025; FAS, 2025; Belfer Centre, 2025). This restraint resulted not only from coercive deterrence, but also from mutual strategic recognition—tacit understanding of red lines and catastrophic thresholds. As Akhtar (2025) notes, the crisis revealed "the alarming normalisation of limited military action under the shadow of nuclear deterrence," underscoring the need for institutionalised mechanisms to control escalation.

Similarly, President Trump's threats to "obliterate" Iran's nuclear programme yielded only temporary setbacks (Martinez & Boccia, 2025; Sakellariadis, 2025), while the discrepancy between maximalist rhetoric and independent assessments of Iran's resilience illustrates the limits of coercive deterrence as a long-term strategy (Toossi, 2025; Fleming, 2025). These dynamics reinforce the rationale for the Strategic Recognition Cascade, which privileges structured de-escalation, reputational incentives, and institutional restraint over episodic coercion.

5.4 The Symmetry Horizon: From Managed Asymmetry to Managed Symmetry

The Strategic Recognition Cascade and the limits of coercive deterrence converge on a critical insight: sustainable regional security requires evolution from managed asymmetry to managed symmetry. This "Symmetry Horizon" is defined not by identical obligations, but by mutual recognition of legitimate security concerns (Elbahtimy, 2025); balanced obligations through differentiated pathways (Philippe et al., 2018); institutionalised cooperation via shared governance (UNIDIR, 2023); and strategic equilibrium through interdependence, not dominance (Kaye, 2021).

As Elbahtimy (2025) notes, this progression requires "functional recognition" that reflects strategic realities while building toward normative convergence. The Dual-Track Framework does not impose symmetry—it cultivates the conditions for its emergence through a three-phase implementation process, detailed in Section 7.4, which establishes parallel pathways for Iran and Israel. The success of these tracks hinges on their integration into a robust regional architecture.

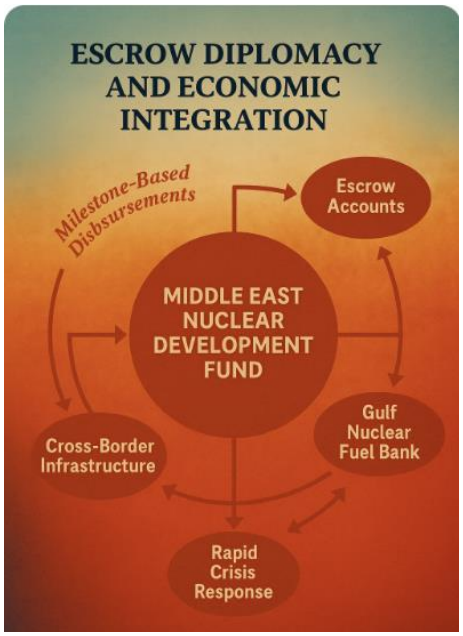
6. Economic Interdependence and Institutional Foundations for Compliance

Economic integration is not merely a by-product of stability—it is its precondition. This section positions economic interdependence as the backbone of compliance for the Dual-Track Framework. By embedding restraint within shared prosperity, the framework transforms transactional incentives into structural commitments. The Middle East Nuclear Development Fund, cross-border infrastructure, and joint research centres serve as institutional anchors that convert political convergence into contractual performance. These mechanisms are governed through the Middle East Security and Cooperation Forum (MESCF), which provides a platform for technical cooperation, milestone-based disbursement, and reputational alignment. Verification in this context is not punitive, but rather enabling, designed to build trust through transparency and shared benefits.

6.1 Economic Integration as Compliance Infrastructure

Economic integration, via the Middle East Nuclear Development Fund and cross-border initiatives, serves as a compliance infrastructure (Philippe et al., 2018; Baghat, 2023). Cross-border infrastructure and joint research centres build shared stakes in stability (UNESCWA, 2023).

6.2 The Middle East Nuclear Development Fund



At the heart of this architecture is the proposed Middle East Nuclear Development Fund (MEND-F)—a $50 billion regional investment vehicle modelled on sovereign wealth funds and administered through MESCF. Its purpose is to underwrite cooperative ventures in nuclear medicine, desalination, and energy resilience. The fund is structured around milestone-based disbursements, with tranches released upon verified compliance with technical benchmarks (Kaye, 2021; Philippe et al., 2018). This approach draws on escrow diplomacy models used in the JCPOA and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO), but with greater regional ownership and insulation from electoral volatility (Acton, 2022).

6.3 Cross-Border Infrastructure and Joint Research Platforms

Cross-border infrastructure projects—such as regional power grids, desalination corridors, and medical isotope supply chains—deepen economic interdependence and create shared stakes in stability (UNESCWA, 2023). These projects are complemented by Joint Research and Verification Centres (JRVCs), which foster indigenous capacity in nuclear science, radiological monitoring, and verification technologies. These centres are designed to elevate regional actors as scientific stakeholders, not just political participants, in the governance of nuclear restraint (Bahgat, 2023).

6.4 MESCF as Institutional Anchor



The Middle East Security and Cooperation Forum (MESCF) serves as the institutional platform for coordinating economic and technical cooperation. With rotating leadership, thematic subcommittees, and a standing secretariat, MESCF ensures that integration is governed through inclusive, non-hegemonic mechanisms (UNIDIR, 2023). Its governance model draws on lessons from ASEAN's consensus-based diplomacy and the African Union's Peace and Security Council, striking a balance between flexibility and enforceability (Turianskyi & van Wyk, 2021).

While economic interdependence provides the structural incentives for restraint, it must be underpinned by enforceable legal commitments and adaptive sequencing. The next section outlines the legal architecture that codifies these obligations and enables phased convergence toward managed symmetry.

6.5 Institutional Architecture and Crisis Governance

Mechanisms

Institutional Framework

The MESCF anchors the framework's institutional architecture, implementing what Elbahtimy (2025) envisions as a 'regional non-NPT model' that manages nuclear risks through inclusive dialogue rather than exclusionary treaties. Core members include Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, and Turkey, with global observers ensuring balance (UNIDIR, 2023). The forum coordinates monthly ministerial meetings, quarterly working groups (Nuclear Verification, Regional Security, Economic Cooperation, Counterterrorism, and Crisis Communication), and annual summits.

Crisis Prevention Mechanisms

To manage escalation risks, the framework introduces escalation speed limits and automated circuit breakers that UNIDIR (2023) argues are essential for preventing nuclear crises from outpacing diplomatic response capabilities: mandatory 24-hour consultations precede military action on nuclear targets; circuit breakers suspend sensitive activities if objective thresholds are crossed; and pre-deployed crisis response teams initiate dialogue within six hours, with containment benchmarked within 12 hours and de-escalation within 24 hours.



Adaptive Governance

The framework operates as living architecture through rotating leadership, professional secondments, and digital knowledge repositories, ensuring institutional continuity. Doctrinal flexibility allows reinterpretation to address emerging technologies and evolving norms (Roehrlich, 2018), while civil society engagement through civic forums and youth fellowships sustains legitimacy.

Narrative Discipline

The MESCF Joint Strategic Communications Unit harmonises messaging and builds reputational equity, framing Israeli transparency as scientific leadership, Iranian compliance as strategic sovereignty, and Gulf participation as regional technological prestige (Considine, 2021). The economic integration mechanisms detailed in this Section provide the material foundation for these institutional arrangements.

7. Legal Architecture, Verification, and Enforcement for Managed Symmetry

While economic interdependence provides structural incentives for restraint, durable compliance requires a resilient and enforceable legal architecture. The Dual-Track Framework meets this challenge through a verification and enforcement regime that integrates international norms, regional mechanisms, and bilateral innovations. At its core is a modular treaty design that codifies differentiated obligations, safeguards continuity across political transitions, and enables phased convergence toward managed symmetry. Tri-tiered verification protocols—including archaeological safeguards and regional inspections—transform opacity into structured accountability, while binding arbitration mechanisms ensure disputes are resolved without escalation. Implementation unfolds in three calibrated phases, each aligned with the Strategic Recognition Cascade. Collectively, these

legal instruments manage asymmetry without compromising credibility, converting it from a source of volatility into a condition that can be governed, sequenced, and ultimately harmonised.

7.1 Multi-Tiered Verification System and Legal Innovation



The verification system operates across three interlocking tiers, ensuring robustness, viability, and legal durability:

International Tier: Anchored by enhanced IAEA inspections and reinforced by independent satellite surveillance, this tier enables phased transparency without requiring immediate NPT accession, building on what Carlson (2021) identifies as the IAEA's evolving capacity to verify disarmament through non-intrusive historical reconstruction (IAEA, 2023, pp. 5–6; IAEA, 2024).

Regional Tier: Rotating peer inspections and joint technical committees coordinated through the MESCF foster operational independence and shared responsibility under transitional transparency standards that balance state sovereignty with credible oversight (UNIDIR, 2023, p. 7; Elbahtimy, 2025, pp. 3–4).

Bilateral Tier: Israel and Iran engage in reciprocal technical exchanges, facility visits, and collaborative scientific initiatives that normalise transparency and align deterrence with cooperative norms (Fahmy, 2022, p. 110).

The framework introduces key legal innovations addressing what Sivakumaran (2012) identifies as the core challenge of designing enforceable norms for asymmetric contexts linking state and non-state actors (Elbahtimy, 2025, pp. 6–7):

- *Transitional Nuclear Transparency:* Allows phased compliance by undeclared states without requiring immediate NPT accession (Carlson, 2021, p. 8).
- *Archaeological Safeguards:* As part of Track One, Archaeological Safeguards enable the accounting of historical material through non-intrusive techniques pioneered in South Africa's disarmament efforts (Carlson, 2021, pp. 6–8; Philippe et al., 2018; Bahgat, 2023).
- *Binding Arbitration:* Compliance disputes resolved via neutral panels governed by MESCF statutes and codified evidentiary rules, with third-party oversight from neutral states such as Switzerland or South Korea, insulating decisions from politicisation (UNIDIR, 2023, p. 10; ICJ, 2005; Philippe et al., 2018).
- *Proportional Sanctions:* A tiered penalty matrix calibrates enforcement based on verifiability and gravity of breaches, avoiding arbitrary sanctions while ensuring deterrent strength (Philippe et al., 2018, p. 5).
- *Doctrinal Flexibility:* Permits structured strategic ambiguity while retaining accountability through MESCF Legal Panel advisory opinions on emerging issues such as cyber-nuclear convergence and environmental impacts (Roehrlich, 2018, pp. 44–46).

7.2 Graduated Enforcement and Modular Treaty Design

The framework adopts graduated enforcement, grounded in codified legal triggers linked to verified violations of declared obligations, rather than speculation about intent, ensuring proportionality, predictability, and legal clarity (Philippe et al., 2018, pp. 2–4). Enforcement proceeds through escalating tiers: MESCF-led confidential consultations, targeted economic penalties such as

suspension of Middle East Nuclear Development Fund disbursements, coordinated diplomatic isolation with UN referral mechanisms, and exceptional collective security review reserved for grave violations like diversion to non-state actors (Philippe et al., 2018, p. 5; UNIDIR, 2023, p. 9). Military responses remain explicitly excluded unless violations constitute acts of aggression.

Automatic legal triggers include uranium enrichment above agreed thresholds, expulsion or obstruction of inspectors, and covert militarisation of civilian facilities (Philippe et al., 2018, p. 5). Enforcement is not discretionary—verified violations automatically activate pre-designed responses.

The framework treats asymmetry not as a flaw to be corrected, but as a condition to be governed through a modular treaty structure with differentiated annexes—Israel focusing on historical disclosure and non-expansion commitments, and Iran on phased enrichment caps and inspection protocols. These annexes are legally binding but independently ratifiable, allowing asynchronous entry into force (Roehrlich, 2018). This "variable geometry" approach, employed in the EU and the AfCFTA, will enable states to integrate at varying speeds under a shared legal framework (Garba & Alexander, 2023; UNCTAD, 2019).

7.3 Integrated Governance Architecture

Verification and enforcement mechanisms integrate with broader regional governance through three pillars that convert legal compliance into sustained cooperation:

MESCF Coordination: Regional ownership and procedural legitimacy through the institutional structures detailed in Section 6, preventing hegemonic capture while maintaining technical credibility.

Economic Integration: The escrow diplomacy, milestone-based fund access, and Gulf Fuel Bank participation described in Section 6.2 convert compliance into contractual performance, creating material incentives for sustained cooperation (ThisDayLive, 2021; Kaye, 2021; UNIDIR, 2023).

Narrative Discipline Infrastructure: Harmonises messaging and aligns technical compliance with reputational value through strategic communication mechanisms, ensuring that policy coherence translates into public legitimacy (Considine, 2021; Gupta et al., 2022).

These elements create a governance loop where legal enforcement is both insulated from politicisation and reinforced by institutional legitimacy and material reward, transforming verification from a punitive process into an enabling framework for sustained regional cooperation.

Legal and Institutional Architecture: A modular treaty codifies obligations through tri-tiered verification:

- *International Tier:* IAEA inspections and satellite monitoring.
- *Regional Tier:* MESCF-led peer inspections.
- *Bilateral Tier:* Reciprocal technical exchanges (Carlson, 2021).

Binding arbitration, proportional sanctions, and doctrinal flexibility ensure enforceability and adaptability (Philippe et al., 2018).

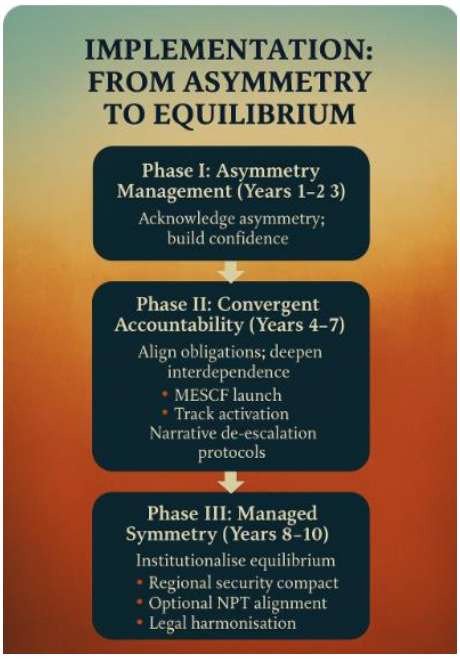
These elements create a governance loop where legal enforcement is both insulated from politicisation and reinforced by institutional legitimacy and material reward.

7.4 Phased Implementation and Political Feasibility

Implementation Phases

The framework unfolds through three calibrated phases aligned with the Strategic Recognition Cascade:

- *Phase I. Asymmetry Management (Years 1–3):* Acknowledge asymmetry and build confidence through MESCF launch, Track One/Two activation, and narrative de-escalation protocols. Behind-the-scenes consultations, finalisation of the economic incentive package (Section 6), and establishment of the verification protocol (Section 7) create foundational momentum (Elbahtimy, 2025, pp. 3–4; Philippe et al., 2018, p. 5)."
- *Phase II. Convergent Accountability (Years 4–7):* Align obligations and deepen interdependence through joint inspections, economic integration, and rotating MESCF leadership. Milestone-based sanctions relief, regional technical workshops, and the operationalisation of inspections scale engagement beyond bilateral tracks (UNIDIR, 2023, p. 6; Fahmy, 2022, p. 112).



- *Phase III. Managed Symmetry (Years 8–10):* Institutionalise equilibrium through regional security compact, optional NPT alignment, and legal harmonisation. The framework transitions into permanent regional security infrastructure with voluntary NPT pathways, institutionalising asymmetry management through a durable, rules-based architecture (IAEA, 2023, p. 8; Carlson, 2021, p. 7). Cascade

Political Feasibility Analysis

The framework's viability depends on alignment with key actors' constraints and incentives:

- *Israel:* Security establishment consensus around nuclear strategic ambiguity as existential insurance—the "Amimut" policy, rooted in secret U.S.-Israel arrangements, with 80% public support. Policy shifts are most feasible during post-election transitions, requiring U.S. security guarantees, Nuclear Archaeology, and phased transparency for political cover (Hussain, 2019; Fahmy, 2022, p. 108).
- *Iran:* Institutional dualism between the Supreme Leader's authority and the IRGC's influence over nuclear matters. Public opinion balances nuclear pride with economic relief desires (a 60-40 split), with Majles approval and regional prestige defining what is considered acceptable concessions. Phased compliance tied to economic incentives provides a viable pathway (UNIDIR, 2023; Fahmy, 2022, p. 111).
- *United States:* Congressional oversight, presidential transitions, and pro-Israel constituencies shape engagement. The framework's hibernation protocols and timeline realism effectively navigate electoral volatility, with mid-presidency windows being optimal for implementation.
- *Regional Powers:* Saudi Arabia's nuclear hedging and Vision 2030 create opportunities through Gulf Fuel Bank participation and economic integration. Turkey's NATO arrangements and regional ambitions position it as a key MESCF actor. Egypt's NPT credentials and its peace treaty with Israel enable a natural bridge role.

This sequencing reflects earned symmetry, not imposed parity. As Elbahtimy (2025) argues, "functional recognition and phased convergence offer the only viable path to regional nuclear equilibrium," transforming asymmetry from instability into a governed condition that can be sequenced and harmonised.

8. Risk Assessment and Contingency Planning

Given the political landscape and stakeholder dynamics, the framework must be resilient to shocks and disruptions. This section presents a risk assessment and contingency blueprint to safeguard its integrity and continuity.

8.1 From Forecast to Response

The success of the Dual-Track Framework depends not only on its legal and institutional design but also on its resilience to disruption. This section integrates probabilistic risk forecasting with scenario-based contingency planning, presenting a continuum from early warning to strategic response. It distinguishes between high-probability operational risks and low-probability, high-impact disruptions—each with tailored mitigation strategies and pre-scripted pivots.

8.2 High-Probability Risks and Mitigation Strategies

These risks are likely to emerge during early implementation phases and are addressed through sequenced safeguards aligned with political cycles, institutional capacity, and economic pacing (Table 2).

Table 2. *High-Probability Risks and Mitigation Strategies*

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Domestic political opposition	High	High	Align implementation with electoral cycles; deploy public diplomacy campaigns
Regional spoiler activities	High	Medium	Inclusive framework design; counter-spoiler coalitions (Elbahtimy, 2025, p. 8)
Technical verification disputes	Medium	Medium	Codified protocols; third-party arbitration mechanisms (Carlson, 2021, pp. 6–7)
Economic incentive delays	Medium	High	Front-loaded benefits; enforceable donor penalty clauses (Philippe et al., 2018, p. 5)

8.3 Low-Probability, High-Impact Risks and Systemic Buffers

While less likely, these risks carry catastrophic consequences. The framework embeds redundant safeguards, legal buffers, and rapid-response protocols to contain their impact (Table 3).

Table 3. *Low-Probability, High-Impact Risks*

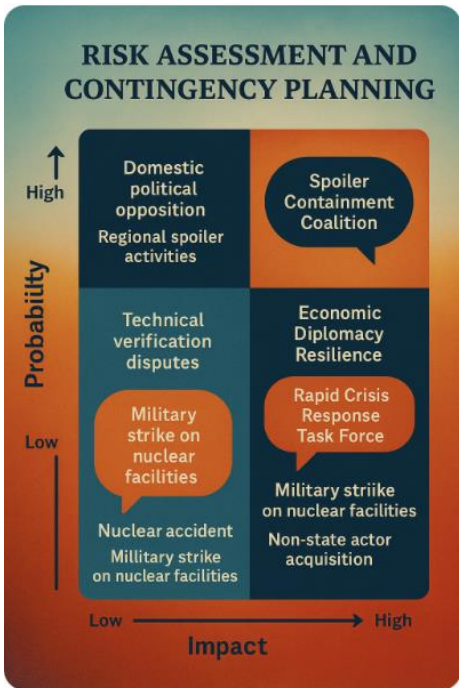
Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Military strike on nuclear facilities	Low	Very High	Crisis communication protocols; immediate de-escalation mechanisms (UNIDIR, 2023, p. 10)
Nuclear accident or incident	Low	Very High	Joint emergency response procedures; liability frameworks (IAEA, 2023, p. 9)
Regime change in key countries	Low	High	Hibernation protocols; legacy safeguards; phased re-entry options (Fahmy, 2022, p. 114)
Non-state actor material acquisition	Very Low	Very High	Enhanced security cooperation; shared intelligence (Goren, 2019, p. 4)

8.4 Contingency Scenarios and Strategic Pivots

The framework anticipates three major disruption scenarios and outlines pre-scripted pivots to preserve momentum and institutional coherence:

- Israeli Withdrawal → Elevate Track Two transparency as a regional benchmark. Sustain economic incentives and Arab-state alignment to facilitate future Israeli re-entry (UNIDIR, 2023, p. 11).

- Iranian Withdrawal → Intensify Track One disclosures and regional engagement. Utilise Iran's exit to consolidate verification norms and diplomatically isolate non-compliance (Elbahtimy, 2025, p. 7).
- U.S. Disengagement → Empower regional and European actors to assume leadership. Restructure incentives through MESCF and IAEA mechanisms to ensure continuity (Carlson, 2021, p. 8).



These pivots reflect the framework's layered resilience logic: no single actor's exit collapses the architecture. Instead, the system adapts through modularity, redundancy, and pre-authorised fallback strategies.

8.5 Spoiler Inoculation Strategies: Embedding Systemic Resilience

MESCF's architecture is designed to absorb shocks, not collapse under them. Its multi-track redundancy (technical, civil, academic, and financial) ensures that failures in one domain do not paralyse the entire compact (Fahmy, 2022, p. 113; UNIDIR, 2023, p. 12).

To shield the framework from internal or external sabotage, the Counter-Spoiler Cell coordinates:

- Intelligence-driven containment (targeted sanctions, reputational isolation)
- Real-time narrative response (via the Narrative Integrity Cell)
- System integrity audits (penetration testing, protocol stress simulations)

While legal triggers initiate enforcement, system robustness proactively deters escalation. Escrow mechanisms complement these by ensuring that incentives remain immune to manipulation by those who would benefit from their manipulation.

9. Adaptive Governance: Institutional Evolution and Narrative Discipline

Resilience is not only about managing crises but also about evolving through them. The framework's adaptive governance model ensures that it can adjust to changing realities while maintaining coherence in both policy and narrative.

The Dual-Track Framework is designed not as a static treaty, but as a living institutional architecture—capable of evolving through political transitions, technological shifts, and regional realignments. This adaptive governance model draws on lessons from post-Fukushima Japan, South Africa's disarmament trajectory, and the IAEA's safeguards evolution to embed iterative learning and legal flexibility into the compact's core (Gahir, 2024; Roehrlich, 2018; Turianskyi & van Wyk, 2021).

9.1 Doctrinal Flexibility and Strategic Recalibration

The compact's legal architecture permits doctrinal reinterpretation through advisory opinions issued by a standing MESCF Legal Panel. This allows the framework to adapt to:

- Emerging technologies (e.g., AI-assisted verification)
- Shifting threat perceptions (e.g., cyber-nuclear convergence)
- Evolving norms (e.g., environmental safeguards)

This doctrinal elasticity ensures that the compact remains relevant without sacrificing legal coherence (Roehrlich, 2018, pp. 44–46).

By embedding adaptive governance as a structural principle, the Dual-Track Framework avoids the rigidity that has plagued past arms control efforts. It matures not by resisting change, but by institutionalising the capacity to evolve—ensuring that deterrence, transparency, and cooperation remain aligned with the region's shifting realities.

9.2 Iterative Review and Legal Modularity

Every 30 months, MESCF convenes a Compact Review Conference (CRC) to assess implementation progress, recalibrate benchmarks, and propose legal amendments. These reviews are informed by:

- Independent compliance audits
- Regional polling and stakeholder feedback
- Scientific and technical advisory panels

Legal modularity is enabled through tiered annexes, allowing states to opt into new obligations without reopening the entire compact. This structure mirrors the Montreal Protocol's amendment logic, ensuring that innovation is incremental, not disruptive (UNIDIR, 2023, p. 12).

9.3 Institutional Succession and Bureaucratic Memory

To safeguard continuity across electoral transitions and generational shifts, the framework embeds deliberate institutional succession tools. These mechanisms distribute institutional memory and reduce system fragility:

- *Rotating Leadership:* The chairmanship of MESCF's working groups rotates biennially among member states to ensure equitable stewardship and prevent the monopolisation of strategic agendas.
- *Professional Secondments:* Mid-career civil servants and technical experts are seconded from national agencies to MESCF's secretariat. Roehrlich (2018) identified this as essential 'bureaucratic memory' that enables institutional learning and policy continuity across political transitions, fostering shared capacity, policy coherence, and a reservoir of regionally trained personnel.
- *Digital Knowledge Repository:* All protocols, inspection templates, arbitration rulings, and technical precedents are archived within a secure multilingual platform, accessible to verified stakeholders.

Together, these provisions establish a bureaucratic backbone that insulates the compact from political fluctuations, ensuring institutional learning persists even if leadership changes.

9.4 Stakeholder Renewal and Civil Society Integration

Recognising that legitimacy must be continually earned, the framework institutionalises civil society participation through:

- Annual MESCF Civic Forums
- Youth and academic fellowships
- Public access to non-sensitive verification data

These mechanisms, integrated with the MESCF governance structure described in Section 6, foster bottom-up accountability and help inoculate the compact against elite capture or technocratic drift (Elbahtimy, 2025, p. 9).

9.5 Narrative Discipline and Strategic Communication

The region's narrative asymmetry—where Israel's opacity is tolerated, and Iran's ambitions are delegitimised—fuels mistrust (Fahmy, 2022). The framework addresses this by institutionalising narrative discipline through MESCF's communication unit. Strategic messaging aligns compliance

with reputational incentives, countering disinformation and fostering legitimacy (Considine, 2021).

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

A Strategic Inflexion Point

By managing asymmetry rather than imposing symmetry, the Dual-Track Framework offers a credible path from deterrence fragility to managed equilibrium. It integrates legal, economic, and narrative mechanisms, transforming asymmetry into a scaffold for durable peace.

The June 2025 Iran–Israel conflict was not merely a crisis—it was a structural rupture. It exposed the limits of deterrence architectures built on opacity, the fragility of coercive containment, and the volatility of unmanaged asymmetry. The region now faces a stark choice: entrench instability through episodic coercion or institutionalise restraint through sequenced recognition and differentiated obligations.

This paper has argued that the path to durable stability lies not in prematurely imposing symmetry, but in managing asymmetry as a strategic condition—one that can be transformed, over time, into a scaffold for managed symmetry. The Dual-Track Framework offers a legally grounded, operationally viable, and regionally owned pathway to achieve this transformation.

> *"Time has always been a dangerous luxury in the Middle East. Quiet diplomacy must begin now."*

Strategic Contributions of the Dual-Track Framework

The framework's core innovation lies in its ability to sequence recognition, buffer asymmetry, and institutionalise convergence without demanding premature parity. It does so through:

- *Track One (Israel):* Structured transparency via Nuclear Archaeology, preserving deterrence while building regional credibility.
- *Track Two (Iran):* Incentivised compliance and phased reintegration, linking enrichment caps to economic and reputational dividends.
- *MESCF Governance:* A regional forum that anchors both tracks in shared oversight, rotating leadership, and adaptive legal architecture.
- *Narrative Infrastructure:* Strategic communication protocols that align public messaging with compliance credibility.
- *Escrow Diplomacy:* Financial instruments that convert political commitments into contractual performance, insulated from domestic volatility.

Together, these mechanisms operationalise the Strategic Recognition Cascade, enabling adversaries to move from denial and hostility to functional coexistence, without requiring formal diplomatic normalisation.

The Symmetry Imperative: From Fragility to Equilibrium

The framework's long-term vision is not symmetry as parity, but symmetry as equilibrium—a condition in which differentiated obligations converge into balanced restraint. This Symmetry Horizon is achieved through:

- *Mutual Strategic Recognition:* Acknowledging each actor's security concerns and deterrence logic.
- *Graduated Convergence:* Aligning obligations through phased, verifiable steps.
- *Institutionalised Cooperation:* Embedding restraint in shared governance and legal

modularity.

- *Strategic Equilibrium:* Achieving stability through interdependence, not dominance.

This evolution mirrors the Indo-Pakistani precedent, where mutual recognition—not coercive parity—prevented nuclear escalation despite intense conventional warfare. It also reflects the lessons of the 2025 Iran–Israel conflict, where deterrence without institutional architecture proved unsustainable.

Policy Recommendations

To translate this framework into actionable policy, the following steps are recommended:

1. Codify Asymmetry as a Legal Condition

- Draft bilateral and multilateral instruments that explicitly recognise asymmetry as a transitional condition.
- Embed legal buffering clauses that allow phased obligations without triggering treaty violations.

2. Operationalise the Strategic Recognition Cascade

- Launch Track 1.5 dialogues focused on narrative de-escalation and reputational incentives.
- Establish a standing MESCF Secretariat with rotating leadership and crisis response protocols.

3. Institutionalise Escrow Diplomacy

- Create autonomous financial instruments to hold and disburse milestone-based incentives
- Link disbursements to third-party verification of compliance benchmarks

4. Expand Narrative Infrastructure

- Develop a regional media code of conduct and joint messaging protocols
- Train strategic communicators in compliance storytelling and reputational framing

5. Build Adaptive Legal Architecture

- Design modular annexes that allow differentiated ratification and phased implementation
- Establish binding arbitration mechanisms to resolve disputes without escalation

6. Prioritise Verification Without Trust

- Deploy archaeological safeguards and tri-tiered inspections to secure compliance
- Use regional technical committees to lead verification, enhancing ownership and legitimacy

Final Reflection: A New Arms Control Paradigm

The Dual-Track Framework is not a return to symmetry—it is a departure from its coercive legacy. It offers a new arms control paradigm: one that treats asymmetry not as a flaw to be corrected, but as a reality to be managed. It replaces episodic deterrence with sequenced recognition and substitutes coercive parity with institutional convergence. In doing so, it provides the most credible path to regional stability since the 1990s ACRS talks. The window for preventive diplomacy is narrowing. This framework provides a scaffold—legal, institutional, and narrative—for a region poised to transition from deterrence fragility to a managed equilibrium.

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