

# The Coherence Frame and Iran–Israel Settlement

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*Why will this conflict not end durably until the meaning changes —  
and how action can be structured to make that change possible*

*Long conflicts are rarely ended by agreement on truth. They are ended by agreement on limits, standing, guarantees, and a structure within which incompatible truths no longer require blood. Then begins the longstanding process of discovering and reshaping shared truth.*

A strategic-civilizational memorandum | April 2026

This memorandum argues that the Iran-Israel conflict cannot be settled durably by deterrence, punitive bargaining, or technical sequencing alone. Its central claim is that diplomacy has worked mostly on technicalities and risk management protocols while leaving the current “meaning” largely intact.

Using the Coherence Operating System as a frame, it contends that any durable settlement must begin by shifting the cultural hierarchy of (Purpose, Worldview, Identity, Values, Capabilities, Behaviours, and Rewards) and then using the **corresponding** strategic hierarchy (Context, Vision, Strategy, Processes, Roles, and Performance) as the instrument that can make that inner shift politically survivable, institutionally credible, and historically durable.

This paper sees the war, ongoing in the middle East in April 2026, as a manifestation of the underlying rivalry of Iran and Israel; with the United States as an instrument versus being principal owner of the conflict.

As of this writing, a two-week ceasefire has been tenuously agreed on.

## I. The Misdiagnosed Problem

The present ceasefire is not peace. It is an interval in which the region is being asked a more serious question: whether it wants merely to postpone the next round of violence, or whether it wants to redesign the conditions that keep making violence feel necessary. The diplomacy now underway may still prevent immediate catastrophe. But its fragility is already visible. Even the meaning of the ceasefire remains contested across fronts, especially around Lebanon, maritime access, and the nuclear file. That is not a procedural defect. It is a sign that the system is trying to negotiate action while leaving meaning largely untouched.

That fragility is not an accident. It is the visible sign of a deeper incoherence. The parties are trying to negotiate strategic de-escalation while leaving the cultural engines of escalation largely intact. **They are discussing what each side will do, without first confronting what each side still needs to believe about itself and the other.** Long conflicts are rarely ended by agreement on terms alone. They are ended when the structures of memory, honour, legitimacy, fear, and reward are rearranged enough that new terms can actually hold.

The usual diplomatic grammar is too thin for this conflict. It speaks of deterrence, leverage, red lines, enrichment, sanctions, proxies, and balances of power. None of that is trivial. But none of it reaches the heart of the problem. Iran and Israel are not simply two states in dispute. They are, in the minds of their own peoples and elites, civilisational projects carrying historical wound, sacred memory, fear of erasure, and claims to justice. The first proposition of this memorandum is therefore simple: **this conflict will not be settled durably by strategic bargaining alone, because its deepest drivers are cultural before they are strategic.**

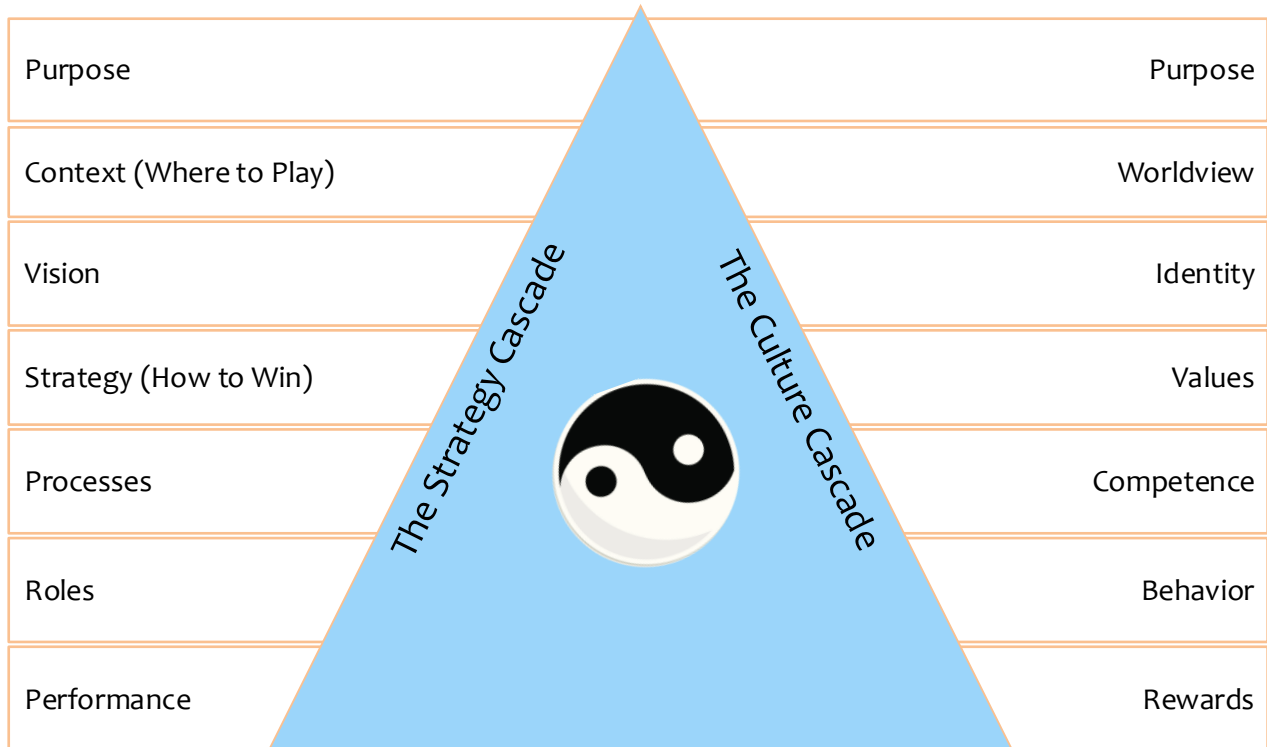
## II. What Coherence Frame Sees That Conventional Diplomacy Misses

Most diplomatic analysis begins too late in the chain of causation. It begins with events: a strike, a provocation, an enrichment level, a militia action, a maritime threat, a failed round of talks. It then moves to interests, capabilities, alliance signalling, and bargaining positions.

This is useful, but incomplete. It describes the visible mechanics of escalation while often leaving untouched the deeper architecture that makes escalation repeatedly intelligible, honourable, and politically survivable.

The Coherence frame begins earlier. It asks a prior question: what kind of inner order keeps generating this outer behaviour? In that sense, **Coherence is not a softer moral supplement to realism. It is a fuller realism. It recognises that enduring systems act not only from interests, but from meanings:** self-understandings, inherited wounds, sacred obligations, social rewards, and institutionalised habits of interpretation.

Coherence therefore reads any durable order through two interdependent cascades. The cultural cascade is the meaning frame — Purpose, Worldview, Identity, Values, Capabilities, Behaviours, and Rewards. The strategic cascade is the action frame — Purpose, Context, Vision, Strategy, Processes, Roles, and Performance.



In this paper, because the conflict is so civilisationally loaded, it is also useful to think of them as the **meaning cascade** and the **action cascade**. The first governs what a people believes itself to be doing. The second governs how that belief becomes organised action in the world. The power of the model lies in the fact that these are not two separate descriptions. They are two dimensions of one living order.

**Strategy is rarely sustainable unless culture makes it legitimate. Culture is rarely consequential unless strategy translates it into institutions, roles, and measurable performance.** Meaning seeking without Action becomes rhetoric, grievance, or myth. Action without meaning becomes process without legitimacy — a shell that may hold for a while under pressure, but eventually cracks.

This is why so many peace processes disappoint. They are negotiated largely on the action cascade. They focus on ceasefire texts, sequencing, verification, sanctions, timelines, and guarantees. All of that matters. But when these arrangements are not anchored in a corresponding movement in the meaning cascade, they remain external to the deeper system. They are experienced as tactical constraints rather than as expressions of a transformed order.

One can therefore produce a ceasefire without peace, a process without legitimacy, or a treaty without settlement.

### III. The Historical Spine of Settlement

A ceasefire with peace, process with legitimacy and a treaty with true settlement. Is this an unrealizable dream?

Certainly rare; but there are instances in history where such outcomes were met. Iran and Israel need is the historic settlements of Good Friday in method, Hdaybiyyah in moral-strategic logic, and Zuhab in civilisational realism. Those precedents matter not because they are identical in content, but because each confronted sacred difference, incompatible self-understandings, and the need to build a structure within which adversaries could continue to be themselves without requiring endless war.

#### Good Friday: coexistence without identity erasure

The Good Friday / Belfast Agreement remains the best modern analogue for the logic of transformation. It did not ask either community to dissolve its identity first. It accepted that constitutional aspirations, historical grievances, and rival affiliations would endure. Its genius lay in building a structure of consent, parity of esteem, and interlocking institutions strong enough to carry disagreement without making blood inevitable.

#### Hdaybiyyah: truce before full convergence

The Pact of al-Hdaybiyyah is the more culturally resonant precedent for a conflict carrying sacred depth. It offered an Islamic example of dignified restraint under conditions some contemporaries experienced as concessionary. Its significance lies in the fact that political recognition and strategic patience came before full moral convergence. It shows that accepting an imperfect peace need not mean surrendering identity.

#### Zuhab: civilisational rivalry converted into stable limits

The Treaty of Qasr-e Shirin / Zuhab matters because it demonstrates something diplomacy often forgets: long sacred-political rivalry can be converted into bounded coexistence without sentimentality. The Ottoman and Safavid orders did not reconcile in any deep emotional sense. They accepted limits. They made rivalry governable. They transformed war from destiny into a condition that could, at least for long stretches, be contained by order.

Taken together, these precedents offer a stern lesson. Long conflicts are not ended by agreement on truth. They are ended by agreement on limits, standing, guarantees, and a structure within which incompatible truths no longer require blood.

## IV. Iran and Israel Through the Cultural Cascade

The value of the Coherence frame here is that it does not ask first, who struck first, whose red line was crossed, or whose leverage is stronger. It asks a prior question: what kind of inner order makes a system repeatedly interpret confrontation as necessary, honourable, and survivable? The answer must be built node by node. A long conflict hardens when both parties become internally coherent in ways that are mutually destabilizing.

### Purpose

#### Israel

At the deepest level, Israel's purpose is not simply governmental administration or normal state interest. It is bound up with the restoration and protection of Jewish continuity through sovereignty. The Declaration of Independence locates Jewish peoplehood historically in the Land of Israel, where its spiritual, religious, and political identity was shaped; the 2018 Basic Law then describes the state as the national home of the Jewish people. This gives Israel's founding purpose a civilisational intensity beyond ordinary nationalism. The state is not merely meant to exist. It is meant to ensure that the Jewish people are **never again** left to history without sovereign protection.

#### Iran

Iran's purpose is layered. One layer is older and civilisational: a long continuity of Persian statehood and historical distinctiveness. Another is specifically post-1979: the Islamic Republic's constitutional purpose of resisting domination, preserving independence, defending Muslim interests, and supporting what it describes as just struggles. The constitution embeds Twelver Ja'fari Shi'ism as enduring state doctrine and formalises anti-domination as a governing principle. Iran's purpose is therefore not exhausted by ordinary sovereignty. It combines civilisational endurance, religious-political legitimacy, and an outward-facing mission of resistance.

#### Why this node widened the conflict

At the level of purpose, both sides carry sacralised reasons for being. Israel experiences Jewish survival and continuity through sovereign self-protection as a historical obligation. Iran experiences dignity, independence, and justice through resistance to domination as a historical obligation. **When purpose is framed this deeply, compromise is no longer felt as tactical adjustment. It can be felt as betrayal of founding meaning.** That makes war more thinkable because the stakes are no longer presented as negotiable interests, but as obligations to history.

### Worldview

#### Israel

Israel's worldview is profoundly shaped by Jewish historical vulnerability: exile, persecution, antisemitism, the Holocaust, and the lesson that Jewish safety cannot depend on the goodwill of others. That history does not merely produce caution. It produces a disciplined suspicion of delay.

Ambiguity is not neutral; it may be dangerous. Deferred risk is not merely a policy problem; it can be read as moral negligence. In such a worldview, early action often appears more responsible than patient optimism.

### **Iran**

Iran's worldview is shaped by imperial memory, foreign intervention, civilisational pride, sectarian distinctiveness, the 1979 revolution, and a constitutional suspicion of domination. The international system is not easily imagined as neutral. Pressure, sanctions, external monitoring, and alliance encirclement can all be read through a wider anti-hegemonic lens. In such a worldview, compromise is never only compromise. It risks being interpreted as a prelude to discipline, humiliation, or subordination.

#### **Why this node widened the conflict**

Here the divergence becomes self-sealing. Israeli actions that are experienced internally as prudent pre-emption are read in Tehran as proof that force and domination are still the real language of the region. Iranian actions that are experienced internally as sovereign resistance are read in Jerusalem as proof that delay invites catastrophe. This is one of the principal engines of recurrence: **each side's defensive realism confirms the other side's fear structure.**

## **Identity**

### **Israel**

Israel's identity is explicitly Jewish in national terms, but it is also democratic, militarily vigilant, technologically advanced, and shaped by the memory of returning from precarity into sovereignty. At its strongest, this identity is resilient, inventive, and disciplined. At its most brittle, it becomes siege-based. The risk is not Jewish identity itself; the risk is the way permanent exposure to threat can make that identity feel as though it must constantly prove its seriousness through hardness.

### **Iran**

Iran's identity is equally layered: Persian, Shi'i, revolutionary, civilisational, and anti-hegemonic. It is not merely a nation-state identity. It is also an identity-bearing project in which sovereignty, religion, and historical mission reinforce one another. At its strongest, this identity is proud, enduring, and historically self-aware. At its most brittle, it becomes dependent on antagonism to sustain its own moral intensity.

#### **Why this node widened the conflict**

Identity conflicts become acute when each side experiences the other not merely as a rival but as a negation. Israel can read Iran-backed hostility as hostility not only to policy but to Jewish sovereignty itself. Iran can read Israel not merely as another state but as a formation that embodies exclusion, hierarchy, and humiliation in a wider regional imagination. Once the conflict enters identity space, it ceases to be only strategic. It becomes ontological: **their persistence in this form threatens who we are.**

## Values

### Israel

Israel's value architecture combines Jewish self-determination, continuity, security, and a legal language that also includes human dignity and liberty. This is not a flat value system. It contains both protective and relational possibilities. At its best, it can bind security to reciprocity. Under extreme pressure, however, security can become the master value through which all others are filtered, and dignity can become increasingly inward rather than reciprocal.

### Iran

Iran's value architecture combines justice, independence, anti-domination, religious legitimacy, and solidarity with Muslims and the oppressed. This too is a morally potent but dual structure. Justice can point toward restraint and reciprocity; anti-domination can point toward permanent confrontation. Which side of the value architecture rises depends on what the political order and the prestige system choose to honour.

#### **Why this node widened the conflict**

The widening occurred because both systems increasingly activated the protective side of their values rather than the bridging side. Israel's security values can become justification for exceptional measures. Iran's resistance values can become justification for sustained antagonism. So **neither side lacks moral language. The difficulty is that each possesses moral language that can be selectively mobilised to harden the conflict.**

## Capabilities

### Israel

Israel has built exceptional capabilities: military reach, intelligence sophistication, alliance depth, technological superiority, and layered defensive architecture. These capabilities are not accidental. They are part of how the state reassures itself that Jewish vulnerability will not recur. Capability, in this sense, is not just an instrument. It becomes a cultural proof that history will not be allowed to repeat itself.

### Iran

Iran has built a different capability structure: strategic depth through regional networks, missile capacity, endurance under sanctions, and a nuclear posture that has become central to regional fear and leverage. Here too capability is not merely instrumental. It is tied to dignity. The ability to endure pressure, complicate coercion, and preserve ambiguity becomes part of the regime's self-understanding and part of how it signals seriousness to its own constituencies.

#### **Why this node widened the conflict**

Capabilities did not merely reflect mistrust; they institutionalised it. Israel's superiority encourages an internal logic of pre-emption and control. Iran's asymmetry and threshold posture encourage an internal logic of deterrence through opacity and distributed pressure. **Each side's capability development therefore makes the other side's worldview appear more accurate.**

## Behaviours

### Israel

Israel's behaviours, viewed through this cultural lens, tend toward pre-emption, rapid coercive signalling, and a refusal to normalise certain threat thresholds. That pattern is coherent with its worldview. If vulnerability is historically catastrophic, acting early appears responsible. Restraint becomes harder to code as virtue when passivity is so easily associated with danger.

### Iran

Iran's behaviours tend toward strategic patience, indirect pressure, regional networking, and resistance symbolism. That pattern too is culturally coherent. If domination is the danger, then resilience, ambiguity, and indirect leverage appear legitimate. Endurance under pressure becomes not only tactic but proof of integrity.

#### Why this node widened the conflict

Behaviour is where culture becomes visible. Israeli force confirms Iranian beliefs about domination. Iranian resistance behaviour confirms Israeli beliefs about encirclement and future threat. **The behaviours are therefore not random escalations. They are culturally rewarded expressions of each system's self-understanding — and that is why they recur.**

## Rewards

### Israel

This is the decisive node. In Israel, especially under threat, what tends to be rewarded is vigilance, deterrent credibility, and the refusal to appear passive in the face of danger. Given the long history of Jewish precarity and the centrality of sovereign self-protection in modern Israeli statehood, this reward system is understandable. But it also means that the figure who acts hard can be admired more quickly than the figure who restrains hard.

### Iran

In Iran, what tends to be rewarded is steadfastness, refusal of humiliation, resistance to domination, and proof that the state has not been bent into submission. The constitutional and revolutionary inheritance gives these traits unusual prestige. That means the actor who dramatizes dignity through non-submission can be admired more quickly than the actor who seeks bounded coexistence.

#### Why this node widened the conflict

This is where recurrence becomes highly probable. Israel rewards proof that danger is being neutralised. Iran rewards proof that pressure is being resisted. **The very acts that elevate legitimacy on one side often intensify outrage on the other.** One side's honoured firmness becomes the other side's evidence of aggression. One side's honoured resistance becomes the other side's evidence of implacability. This is the cultural engine of escalation.

## Summary diagnosis

**The conflict widened not because the two systems simply disagreed, but because they became coherent in ways that were increasingly incompatible.**

Israel's cultural coherence can be summarised as Jewish continuity through sovereignty; a worldview in which delay can be fatal; an identity of resilient but exposed peoplehood under arms; values centred on security and continuity; superior capability as proof that history will not repeat itself; behaviours of pre-emption and coercive clarity; and rewards flowing to vigilance and threat neutralisation.

Iran's cultural coherence can be summarised as civilisational dignity plus revolutionary anti-domination; a worldview in which power seeks to subordinate unless resisted; an identity of Shi'i-revolutionary sovereignty; values centred on justice, independence, and resistance; asymmetric capability as proof of endurance; behaviours of strategic patience and indirect pressure; and rewards flowing to steadfastness and non-submission.

The deepest diagnosis is therefore this: **the war became thinkable not simply because interests clashed, but because two strong cultural systems evolved in ways that made confrontation increasingly honourable, compromise increasingly suspect, and coexistence increasingly hard to narrate without loss of self.** The parties did not merely fail to trust one another. They learned to reproduce the very dispositions that make trust politically difficult.

## V. What Each Side Must Relinquish Without Ceasing to Be Itself

This is the hardest sentence in the whole argument, and the one diplomats most often avoid. Neither side needs to surrender identity. But both sides will have to relinquish some interpretations of identity that no longer fit the world of today or a universally peaceful world. Maturation is not erasure. It is the relinquishment of those sacred self-readings that make permanent enmity feel like fidelity.

Israel may have to relinquish the belief that historical injury grants an enduring moral exemption from reciprocal justice. It may have to abandon the idea that permanent strategic overmatch can substitute indefinitely for legitimate coexistence. It may have to stop drawing civic reassurance from disproportionality itself.

Iran may have to relinquish the belief that revolutionary virtue requires permanent antagonism. It may have to abandon the idea that dignity is best proved through ongoing resistance theatre, proxy depth, and threshold ambiguity. It may have to stop drawing civilisational prestige from being history's perpetual resister.

These are **painful relinquishments because they touch sacred narratives. But they are not betrayals. They are maturations. The alternative is to keep confusing fidelity with escalation.**

## VI. Where the Coherence Shift Must Begin

The instinct of policymakers is to begin with context papers, technical talks, and security guarantees. Those are necessary, but they are not the beginning.

The Coherence shift must begin at **Rewards**. What a society honours, it reproduces. What it reproduces, it becomes. The first move is therefore not to ask either side to love the other. It is to change what each side finds admirable in **itself**. The heroic figure must slowly cease to be only the one who can punish, outwait, threaten, or refuse. The heroic figure must become the one who can secure dignity without requiring endless enmity, and secure safety without requiring permanent humiliation.

Once **Rewards** begins to loosen, Worldview can start to move — but this does not happen through exhortation alone. It happens when each side encounters repeated evidence that the old interpretive reflex is no longer the only honorable one available. Israel must become able to believe that not every ambiguity is fatal, that not every pause is merely camouflage, and that strategic patience need not always be the prelude to catastrophe. Iran must become able to believe that not every accommodation is submission, that not every monitored restraint is a disguised surrender, and that sovereign dignity can survive forms of bounded reciprocity. This is the first interior revolution of peace: when suspicion ceases to be the only serious posture left.

Only then do **Behaviours** change visibly. Until worldview loosens, behavior remains trapped in symbolic repetition. Israel continues to prove seriousness through pre-emption, disproportional signaling, and refusal to let threat linger. Iran continues to prove seriousness through defiance, indirect leverage, calibrated ambiguity, and the theatre of endurance. Once worldview shifts, a different behavioural repertoire becomes possible: restraint without loss of face, transparency without self-abasement, de-escalation without naïveté, and compliance without humiliation. Peace becomes visible not when affection appears, but when old reflexes cease to be the only publicly legible proof of resolve.

Only then can **Values** be reinterpreted without sounding treacherous. This is a crucial threshold. Before the reward system shifts, any attempt to emphasize dignity, reciprocity, justice, restraint, or mutual survivability is easily denounced as weakness, betrayal, or capture by the adversary. After the shift begins, however, the moral vocabulary inside each system can be reopened. Israeli security can be tied again to reciprocal dignity rather than to permanent exceptionalism. Iranian justice and resistance can be tied again to disciplined restraint rather than to endless antagonism. The values were never absent; what changes is which readings of them become legitimate.

Only then can **Identity** soften without feeling erased. Identity is not weakened by this softening; it is freed from the compulsion to prove itself through endless negation. Israel can remain unmistakably Jewish, historically vigilant, and sovereign without requiring permanent siege as the grammar of selfhood. Iran can remain unmistakably Persian, Shi'i, sovereign, and anti-subordination without requiring permanent resistance theatre as the proof of seriousness. This is the point at which the adversary stops being necessary as a mirror in which each side keeps re-confirming itself.

Only then can **Purpose** mature from vindication toward stewardship. At the beginning of long conflicts, purpose is often experienced as rescue, redress, or historical correction. At a higher level of coherence, purpose does not disappear; it ripens. Israel's purpose can remain the protection of Jewish continuity, but become less tied to disproportional dominance and more tied to secure, just endurance. Iran's purpose can remain the defense of dignity and independence, but become less tied to permanent mobilized resistance and more tied to sovereign coexistence without humiliation. That is the final movement of the cultural cascade: a people does not cease to be itself; it becomes capable of carrying its deepest purpose in a form the world can live with.

## VII. Using the Strategic Cascade as the Instrument of Change

Once the cultural shift is understood, the strategic side can be used properly — not as a substitute for culture, but as the machinery through which cultural change becomes survivable and repeatable. The action cascade must therefore be sequenced in service of the meaning cascade.

**Performance** must move first because rewards change only when success is redefined. As long as success is measured by damage inflicted, deterrence restored, symbolic steadfastness displayed, or domestic toughness signalled, the prestige economy of war will remain intact. *The first strategic move is therefore to redefine success around verified de-escalation, lower civilian harm, compliance, reduced probability of recurrence, and stable non-escalation across fronts.*

**Context** must change next. The conflict has to be reframed from a morality play of permanent enemies into a regional-system risk problem: nuclear opacity, proxy spillover, maritime insecurity, civilian devastation, and repeated crisis recurrence. This is how worldview begins to loosen. The system must not choose innocence and guilt first; it must face a shared architecture of ruin.

**Processes** come next because peace fails when ambiguity remains an escalation engine. The system needs a single authoritative ceasefire text, agreed definitions of violation, explicit proxy-front triggers, monitored channels for deconfliction, and a standing mechanism for crisis interpretation before retaliation resumes. This is where the action cascade prevents the meaning cascade from collapsing back into its old reflexes.

**Roles** come next because peace collapses when legitimacy is too narrow. It will require mediating states such as Pakistan and likely Turkish intelligence-diplomatic channels as shadow deconflictors, with the United Nations widening legitimacy and the IAEA narrowing myth in the nuclear domain. But the deeper roles belong inside the societies themselves: retired security elites, jurists, clerical

interpreters, bereaved moral witnesses, and public voices capable of redefining honour without looking naive or captured.

**Vision and strategy** come later, not first. Vision must not be sentimental. It must be sterner than that: a future in which both sides remain fully themselves, but no longer need permanent enmity to prove it. Strategy then translates that future into bounded choices — what will be constrained, what will be verified, what will be guaranteed, what will be relinquished, and what forms of rivalry can continue without turning automatically into war.

## **VIII. Who Can Actually Carry This Shift**

No single actor can carry the whole transformation. Different nodes belong to different kinds of power. The people who can broker a ceasefire are not necessarily the people who can shift a culture, and the people who can shift a culture are often not the visible diplomats at all. The settlement therefore requires an ecology of actors: conveners, backchannel security bridges, technical demythologisers, legitimacy wideners, domestic prestige reallocators, moral witnesses, and ex-security elders who can make restraint sound serious rather than weak.

### **Process conveners and backchannel carriers**

The most probable current convener is Shehbaz Sharif. Pakistan has already shown that it can host, broker, and keep a channel alive without becoming the existential story itself. General Asim Munir and Pakistan's security establishment matter for a related but distinct reason: they can translate diplomatic movement into security language that hard-power systems can hear.

Turkey appears to fit the role of shadow deconflictor, with Hakan Fidan and İbrahim Kalın representing the type of intelligence-diplomatic actors who can reduce misreading without grandstanding. Jean Arnault, as the UN envoy, widens legitimacy; Rafael Grossi, as IAEA chief, turns one of the most mythologised parts of the conflict—the nuclear question—back into an inspectable technical problem. Abbas Araqchi fits the role of credible insider-negotiator inside Iran: flexible enough to test movement, legitimate enough not to look captured. Ali Bahreini fits the quieter but important archetype of the guarded interpreter: someone who can speak caution, mistrust, and conditional openness in one register without tearing dignity in half.

### **Moral and cultural carriers**

The deeper shift, however, cannot be outsourced. Only domestic actors can change what each society honours. That means retired security elders who can redefine seriousness without sounding weak; religious interpreters who can ground justice in restraint and dignity in coexistence; public intellectuals and editors who can widen the moral frame; and bereaved families whose suffering can interrupt the romance of escalation.

A figure like Pope Leo matters not because he can negotiate a settlement, but because he can help make exterminatory rhetoric morally illegible.

A bereaved witness such as Hussein Saleh matters not because he can draft a protocol, but because he humanises the cost of letting sacred narratives feed endlessly on civilian death. Their role is not technical settlement. It is moral reevaluation.

### Who matters most in probability terms

If the question is who is most likely to move the system one notch toward genuine settlement, the answer is layered. Pakistan and Turkey can move the outer machinery. The UN and IAEA can make it inspectable and less mythic. Gulf commercial interests can make recurrence materially expensive. But the decisive shift will only come if Israeli and Iranian domestic prestige allocators begin to honour a new archetype: not only the one who can punish or resist, but the one who can preserve security and dignity without requiring endless enmity. That is the rarest actor in the system, and therefore the most important one.

## IX. A Sequence for Progress — and How to Know Each Stage Has Been Reached

A serious settlement needs not only aspiration but sequence. The order below is not a timetable in days or weeks; it is a logic of progression. Each stage is designed to create the conditions for the next. Each also needs a visible indicator, because in long conflicts the absence of agreed markers allows every side to claim movement while reproducing the old pattern.

Stage	Objective	Primary actors	Indicator of progress	What accomplishment means
1. Ceasefire legibility <b>(Performance)</b>	Produce one authoritative understanding of the truce across Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and Hormuz.	Pakistan, Turkish channel, UN envoy, U.S. and Iranian negotiators	A single written text or jointly acknowledged matrix of scope, exclusions, and violation definitions.	The conflict is no longer being fought through mutually incompatible interpretations of what was agreed.
2. Proxy containment <b>(Roles and Rules)</b>	Prevent secondary fronts from becoming the loophole that destroys the pause.	Pakistan, Turkey, UN, Lebanese interlocutors, regional security services	A measurable drop in cross-front incidents and no public dispute over whether Lebanon or other fronts are “inside” the settlement frame.	The action cascade has stopped rewarding ambiguity as a weapon.
3. Nuclear demythologization <b>(Capability)</b>	Move the nuclear file from symbolic terror back into technical supervision.	IAEA, Rafael Grossi, Abbas Araqchi, technical teams, external guarantors	Restored inspection access, a verifiable accounting of enriched material, and a public reduction in alarmist uncertainty.	Fear is no longer fed primarily by opacity; capability begins to lose its sacred aura.

4. Reward-shift in public discourse <b>(Values)</b>	Change what each society admires in itself.	Retired security elders, editors, religious voices, bereaved families, civic authorities	Public praise begins to attach to prevention, restraint, and protection of life—not only to punishment or defiance.	The meaning cascade is beginning to move; de-escalation is no longer coded automatically as weakness.
5. Identity-safe coexistence <b>(Identity)</b>	Make it thinkable that both sides remain fully themselves without permanent enmity.	Religious interpreters, constitutional thinkers, domestic prestige allocators	Authoritative voices on both sides begin articulating security with dignity, and dignity without endless antagonism.	Identity has started to loosen without feeling erased.
6. Strategic architecture <b>(Purpose / Coherence)</b>	Translate the cultural opening into durable structures.	Convening states, UN, IAEA, guarantors, domestic negotiators	A sequenced framework covering verification, maritime security, proxy restraint, crisis deconfliction, and reciprocal obligations.	Peace is no longer only a pause; it has institutions, roles, and enforcement pathways.

The sequence matters because it respects how real systems change. Processes without reward-shift will relapse. Vision without proxy restraint will look delusional. Identity work without inspectable capability limits will fail. A durable settlement therefore has to be staged so that each accomplishment reduces the psychological cost of the next one.

## X. Conclusion: From Truce to Historical Settlement

The region is now close to a choice it has postponed too often. It can continue to treat each truce as a tactical pause inside a larger civilisational quarrel, or it can begin the much harder work of settlement: not reconciliation theatre, not managerial sequencing, but the deliberate reconstruction of the meanings that make recurrence feel honourable.

That is why the peace effort must become more ambitious and more disciplined at the same time. More ambitious, because it must address purpose, worldview, identity, values, and reward rather than pretending missiles and clauses alone will do. More disciplined, because such a transformation cannot be achieved by sentiment. It requires institutions, guarantees, boundary logic, process clarity, and actors with enough standing to change what each side admires in itself.

**The Coherence frame offers that grammar. It insists that peace must be built simultaneously in the architecture of meaning and the architecture of action.** It suggests that the **settlement worthy of this conflict will not begin when the parties trust one another. It will begin when they stop needing war to remain legible to themselves.** Until then, every ceasefire will remain an interval. After that, it may finally become a beginning.

## **XI. Selected Sources**

- Reuters reporting of April 2026 on the Pakistan-brokered ceasefire, follow-on talks, the role of Jean Arnault, continued strikes in Lebanon, maritime insecurity, Turkish backchannels, and the IAEA-related nuclear file.
- State of Israel, Declaration of Independence; Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People (2018).
- Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially Articles 12, 152, and 154.
- Text of the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica entries on Zionism, the Safavid dynasty, the Pact of al-Hudaybiyyah, and the Treaty of Qasr-e Shirin / Zuhab.
- IAEA material on monitoring, safeguards, and verification issues relating to Iran's nuclear programme.