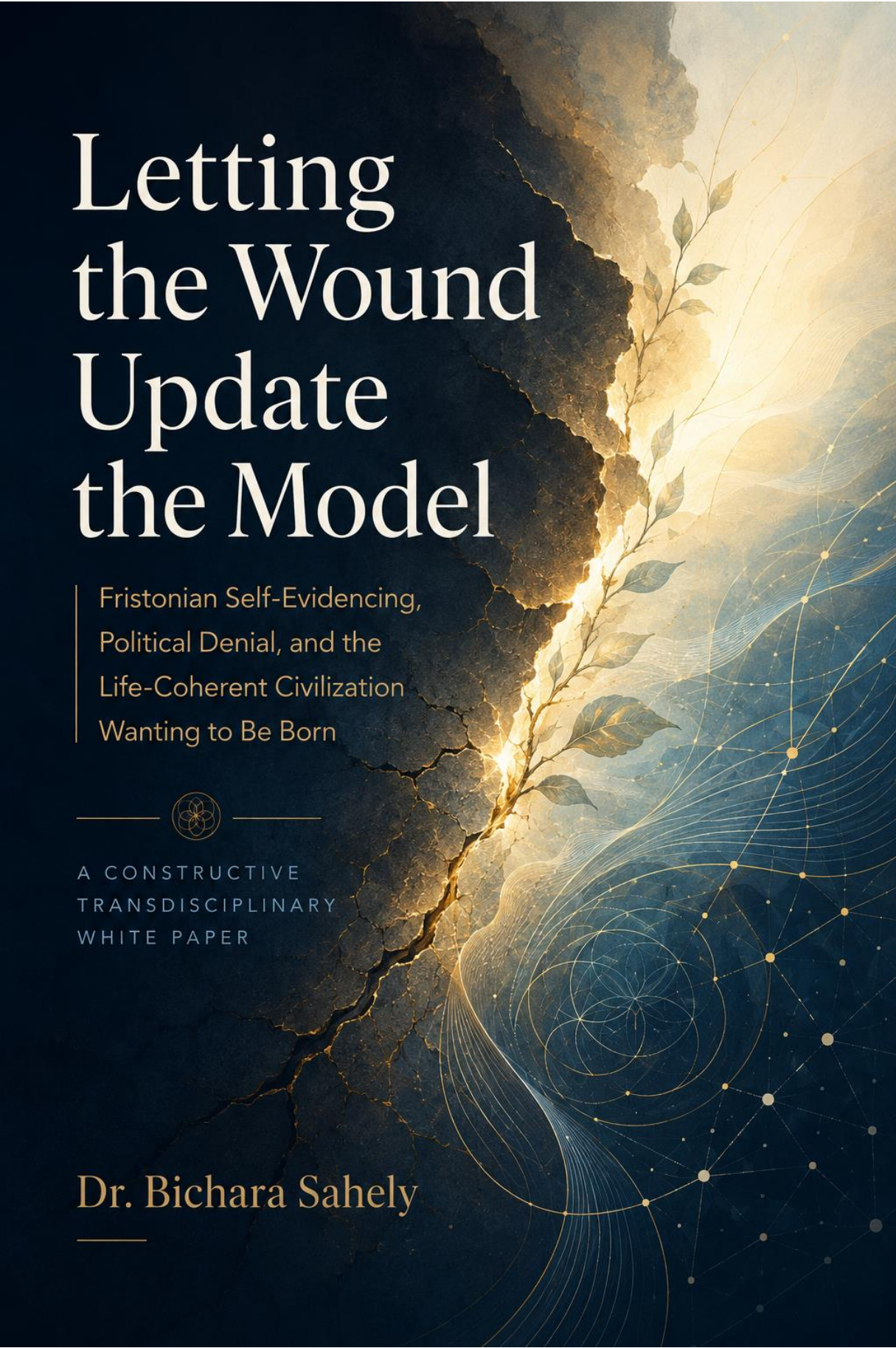




Letting the Wound Update the Model

Fristonian Self-Evidencing,
Political Denial, and the
Life-Coherent Civilization
Wanting to Be Born



A CONSTRUCTIVE
TRANSDISCIPLINARY
WHITE PAPER

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A Constructive Transdisciplinary White Paper

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AI Transparency Note

This white paper was developed through a human-AI collaborative process using ChatGPT as a dialogical, editorial, and synthetic research assistant. The conceptual direction, interpretive framing, ethical commitments, case selection, and final responsibility for the work remain with the author. AI assistance was used to help organize arguments, clarify theoretical connections, draft and refine prose, and identify relevant sources for verification.

The paper should be read as a constructive scholarly synthesis rather than as a substitute for legal adjudication, diplomatic negotiation, empirical field investigation, or the lived testimony of affected communities.

Scope and Methodological Note

This white paper develops a constructive transdisciplinary framework for distinguishing pathological self-evidencing from life-coherent self-evidencing in persons, institutions, states, markets, media systems, and geopolitical orders.

Its theoretical point of departure is Karl Friston's Free Energy Principle and the concept of self-evidencing, especially as developed through active inference, predictive processing, social cognition, regimes of expectation, epistemic communities, and narrative formation. The paper brings this explanatory framework into dialogue with a life-coherent normative tradition informed by John McMurtry's life-value onto-axiology, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's theory of autopoiesis, Johan Galtung's concept of structural violence, and broader traditions of ecological, legal, and decolonial critique.

The case studies - Palestine/Gaza, Cuba, OECS Citizenship by Investment programmes, Sudan, Haiti, Chagos, Western Sahara, Mediterranean migration, critical minerals, and climate finance for Small Island Developing States - are treated as revealing cases rather than identical cases. They are included because each shows, in a different register, how systems protect preferred models by lowering the precision of life-evidence, and how a more corrigible, reparative, life-coherent order might begin to appear.

The aim is not to disparage any people, nation, religion, civilization, or political community. The aim is to see more clearly what each system may be pathologically conserving, what evidence it is unable to receive, and what forms of self-correction are required for coexistence.

Terminological and Ethical Note

Self-evidencing is used in the Fristonian sense: the process by which a system acts and perceives in ways that maximize evidence for its own generative model and continued viability.

Pathological self-evidencing does not mean that a people, nation, culture, or group is pathological. It refers to a system-process in which identity, legitimacy, security, profit, sovereignty, innocence, or development is preserved by suppressing, discounting, externalizing, or destroying evidence of life-harm.

Life-coherent self-evidencing refers to self-maintenance that remains corrigible by life. A system self-evidences coherently when it preserves itself by learning from suffering, repairing harm, enlarging life-capacity, and sustaining right relationship with the wider field of life.

Life-evidence refers to embodied, social, ecological, and institutional signals that reveal whether life-capacity is being protected or diminished. These include hunger, illness, displacement, trauma, humiliation, ecological damage, civic exclusion, collapsed repair systems, silenced communities, and preventable death.

Life-capacity refers to the real ability of living beings and communities to breathe, eat, heal, learn, move, participate, belong, create, deliberate, love, grieve, and live with dignity within viable ecological and social conditions.

The wound is used metaphorically and ethically, not romantically. The paper does not suggest that suffering is inherently redemptive or that victims exist to educate systems. Rather, once suffering exists, a life-coherent system must refuse to render it meaningless. The wound must be allowed to become corrective evidence.

The paper rejects dehumanization in all directions. It recognizes that asymmetry matters: occupier and occupied, creditor and debtor, polluter and climate victim, armed faction and civilian, powerful state and vulnerable population do not occupy equal structural positions. At the same time, no community is exempt from the discipline of self-correction.

Abstract

This white paper develops a constructive transdisciplinary framework for understanding political denial, institutional capture, geopolitical violence, and civilizational self-correction through Karl Friston's concept of self-evidencing within the Free Energy Principle and active inference. Fristonian theory describes living and cognitive systems as self-organizing processes that persist by minimizing uncertainty and maximizing evidence for their own generative models. Recent work has extended active inference beyond individual cognition into social conformity, cultural expectations, epistemic communities, scripts, narratives, and collective behavior. However, the theory remains ethically underdetermined when applied to political and institutional systems: it can explain how systems maintain themselves, but not whether what is being maintained is life-serving or life-destroying.

This paper proposes a normative distinction between pathological and life-coherent self-evidencing. Pathological self-evidencing occurs when a person, institution, state, market, media system, or civilization preserves its identity by suppressing, discounting, externalizing, or destroying the evidence of life-harm. Life-coherent self-evidencing occurs when a system remains viable by allowing suffering, ecological damage, social breakdown, and violated dignity to become high-precision evidence that corrects its model and reorganizes its conduct.

The framework is developed through cases including Palestine/Gaza, Cuba, Citizenship by Investment programmes in the OECS, Sudan, Haiti, Chagos, Western Sahara, Mediterranean migration, critical minerals, and climate finance for Small Island Developing States. These cases are read as sites where dominant geopolitical, economic, legal, and institutional models reveal what they are pathologically conserving: innocence, sovereignty, security, development, fiscal discipline, strategic dominance, mobility privilege, or green-transition legitimacy. The paper argues that a life-coherent civilization would be one in which institutions are designed to be interruptible by life-harm.

Keywords

Free Energy Principle; active inference; self-evidencing; life-coherence; political denial; generative models; precision weighting; epistemic communities; international law; sovereignty; Palestine; Cuba; OECS; Small Island Developing States; structural violence; institutional self-correction; civilizational transition.

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1. Introduction: The Problem of Systems That Cannot Be Corrected

A central crisis of the present age is not simply that institutions fail to see suffering. It is that many institutions are organized to see suffering only in forms that do not require them to become different. A child killed by war becomes collateral damage. A hospital destroyed under siege becomes a disputed military object. A sanctioned population without electricity becomes evidence of regime failure rather than coercive life-support deprivation. A small island state dependent on passport revenue becomes a reputational risk rather than a symptom of a global order that has denied climate-vulnerable societies fair development space. A migrant drowning at sea becomes a border-management problem rather than a failed encounter between mobility, inequality, and human dignity.

The question, then, is not only moral or political. It is inferential. What kind of world-model must a system conserve in order for such evidence to become invisible, ambiguous, or acceptable?

Karl Friston's Free Energy Principle offers a powerful language for approaching this question. In its broadest formulation, the Free Energy Principle describes how self-organizing systems maintain their integrity by minimizing uncertainty and remaining within viable states. Friston and colleagues describe this as self-evidencing: systems act and perceive in ways that maximize evidence for the generative model through which they persist. In active inference, agents reduce uncertainty not only by updating beliefs to fit the world, but also by acting on the world so that the world better fits their expectations. This makes the theory powerful, but also ethically dangerous when applied to political and institutional life. A system can reduce prediction error by learning from reality, but it can also reduce prediction error by suppressing, excluding, silencing, or destroying the reality that contradicts its model (Friston, 2010; Friston et al., 2022; Parr et al., 2022).

This distinction becomes especially important when Fristonian theory is extended into social and cultural domains. Active inference has already been used to understand regimes of expectation, social conformity, cultural cognition, scripts, narratives, and epistemic communities. Constant, Ramstead, Veissiere, and Friston's work on regimes of expectations shows how shared social norms acquire directive force through active inference. Veissiere and colleagues show how humans think through other minds by internalizing the expectations of cultural worlds. Albarracin and colleagues model epistemic communities and echo-chamber formation through active inference and confirmation bias. These developments make it possible to think of institutions, professions, media ecosystems, and states as structured fields of expectation that determine what can be seen, believed, doubted, normalized, or acted upon (Constant et al., 2019; Veissiere et al., 2020; Albarracin et al., 2022).

But something decisive is still missing. The Free Energy Principle explains how systems maintain themselves. It does not by itself tell us whether the organization being conserved is compatible with life. A cancer cell self-organizes. A propaganda system self-organizes. A colonial order self-organizes. A bureaucracy self-organizes. A market that destroys its ecological preconditions may still self-evidence in the short term. A state may preserve its identity by rendering the suffering of another people invisible. Therefore, a normative supplement is required.

This paper proposes that supplement in the language of life-coherence. A system's self-evidencing is life-coherent only when its self-maintenance protects, restores, or enlarges the life-capacity of the wider field on which it depends. Conversely, self-evidencing becomes pathological when a system preserves its identity by sacrificing the living evidence that would require its correction.

Pathological self-evidencing asks: How do we preserve the model that tells us who we are? Life-coherent self-evidencing asks: What must we become so that all can continue living?

2. Friston's Free Energy Principle and the Meaning of Self-Evidencing

Friston's Free Energy Principle begins from a deceptively simple question: how do living systems persist as identifiable systems in a changing world? A living organism is not a passive object moved by external forces alone. It must maintain a boundary, regulate its internal states, act upon its environment, and remain within a range of conditions compatible with continued life. It must eat, move, repair, avoid injury, maintain temperature, regulate

chemistry, learn from the world, and anticipate what is likely to happen next. In this sense, life is not merely substance. It is organized self-maintenance under conditions of uncertainty (Friston, 2010; Parr et al., 2022).

The Free Energy Principle offers a formal account of this self-maintenance. In Friston's mature formulation, self-organizing systems can be understood as systems that minimize uncertainty or free energy by maintaining a probabilistic relation between their internal states and the external world. The system does not directly access the world as it is. It receives sensory perturbations and must infer their causes. It therefore lives through a generative model: an embodied, enacted, probabilistic model of what kind of world it inhabits, what kind of being it is, and what actions are available to it. Friston and colleagues describe this as self-evidencing, meaning that systems persist by acting and perceiving in ways that maximize evidence for the model through which they remain viable (Friston, 2013; Friston et al., 2022).

The word evidence is crucial. In ordinary usage, evidence suggests truth-seeking. But in the Free Energy Principle, self-evidencing does not mean that an organism neutrally discovers the world. It means that the organism behaves in ways that make its own continued existence probable. It seeks evidence that it is the kind of thing it is: a body that can breathe, eat, move, avoid danger, find warmth, maintain coherence, and act within a world that remains sufficiently predictable for its form of life.

Under active inference, agents reduce uncertainty in two intertwined ways. They update their beliefs so that their model better fits incoming sensory evidence, and they act on the world so that sensory evidence better fits their model. Perception and action are therefore not separate stages. They are two sides of the same process of adaptive self-maintenance. A hungry organism does not merely update its belief that it is hungry; it searches for food. A cold organism does not simply infer low temperature; it seeks warmth. A frightened organism does not merely register danger; it withdraws, hides, fights, or seeks protection (Parr et al., 2022).

This makes the Free Energy Principle powerful for understanding life, cognition, and behavior. It also makes it highly relevant to social and institutional life. For human beings, the generative model is not merely biological. It is linguistic, social, historical, symbolic, cultural, and political. Humans infer who they are, who belongs, who threatens, what counts as lawful, what counts as civilized, what counts as success, what counts as truth, and what kind of future is imaginable. Human self-evidencing therefore occurs not only through metabolism and perception, but through stories, laws, rituals, institutions, media, education, money, borders, technologies, and moral identities.

At this point, the concept becomes both illuminating and dangerous. It is illuminating because it explains how individuals and institutions can become attached to models of reality that organize perception before conscious reflection begins. But the concept is dangerous if it is treated as ethically neutral. The Free Energy Principle can explain how systems maintain themselves, but it does not automatically tell us whether the self being maintained is life-serving or life-destroying. A healthy organism self-evidences. A traumatized organism self-evidences. A bureaucracy, a military occupation, a propaganda system, a colonial order, and a market that destroys its ecological conditions may all self-evidence in the short term.

The question therefore becomes: what does the system treat as evidence of its own success? A life-coherent system treats flourishing, repair, truthfulness, dignity, ecological viability, and enlarged life-capacity as evidence that its model is working. A pathological system treats obedience, silence, growth, domination, narrative control, impunity, or the disappearance of visible suffering as evidence that its model is working. Both systems may reduce uncertainty. Both may stabilize themselves. But only one is corrigible by life.

In active inference, prediction errors do not all matter equally. Signals are weighted according to their expected reliability or precision. Highly precise signals strongly update the model. Low-precision signals are treated as noise, ambiguity, or irrelevance. In social and political systems, precision becomes a site of power. Institutions decide whose suffering counts as reliable evidence. Some testimonies are treated as authoritative; others are treated as biased, emotional, foreign, extremist, anecdotal, or unverifiable.

Pathological self-evidencing works by lowering the precision of evidence that would require transformation and raising the precision of evidence that confirms the protected model. It is not simply lying. It is a deeper

inferential organization of reality. The system acts to preserve the conditions under which its own model continues to feel true.

A life-coherent reading of Friston requires an ethics of self-correction. A system is life-coherent not because it has no priors, identity, boundaries, or preferred states. Such a system could not exist. A system is life-coherent when its priors remain open to correction by the conditions of life. It must allow suffering to become high-precision evidence and be able to say: if our model requires this much hunger, humiliation, exile, ecological damage, fear, silence, or death, then the model is wrong.

The concept of the Markov blanket helps clarify this transition. Living systems require boundaries. But boundaries can mediate relationship or harden into denial. Sovereignty, identity, professional role, legal jurisdiction, and cultural memory are not inherently pathological. They become pathological when the boundary prevents disconfirming life-evidence from entering the system with sufficient force to correct it. A life-coherent boundary is semi-permeable to truth (Kirchhoff et al., 2018).

3. From Brains to Institutions: Regimes of Expectation, Scripts, Narratives, and Epistemic Communities

The movement from individual cognition to institutional life must be made carefully. A state is not a brain. A court is not an organism. A market is not a nervous system. A media ecology is not a single mind. Yet human institutions are composed of embodied agents whose expectations, perceptions, decisions, and actions are shaped by socially organized fields of meaning. Institutions do not think in the same way persons think, but they stabilize patterned ways of seeing, not seeing, valuing, doubting, remembering, forgetting, rewarding, punishing, and acting.

Recent extensions of active inference into culture, social cognition, and collective behavior make this bridge possible. Human beings are born into worlds already patterned by language, law, custom, architecture, ritual, media, technology, money, borders, kinship, schooling, professional norms, and political narratives. These patterned worlds do not simply constrain behavior from the outside. They shape the generative models through which persons learn what is possible, expected, dangerous, admirable, credible, and unthinkable.

Constant, Ramstead, Veissiere, and Friston describe these patterned social worlds as regimes of expectations. People do not encounter evidence as isolated observers. They encounter evidence from within expectation fields that have already organized what evidence is supposed to mean. A civilian death may be perceived as murder, collateral damage, martyrdom, tragedy, security necessity, propaganda, or statistical noise depending on the regime of expectation within which it appears (Constant et al., 2019).

Veissiere, Constant, Ramstead, Friston, and Kirmayer deepen this point through the idea of thinking through other minds. We do not only think about the world. We think with, through, and under the gaze of others. We infer what can be said, what must not be said, what kind of person we become if we say it, and what social consequences may follow. In political life, denial is rarely just an individual failure of courage. It is often an adaptive conformity to a regime of expectation that distributes permission and danger (Veissiere et al., 2020).

Epistemic communities decide what counts as knowledge. They determine which methods are legitimate, which witnesses are credible, which journals matter, which legal opinions count, which datasets are trusted, which forms of suffering are admissible, and which experiences remain anecdotal. In life-coherent terms, epistemic communities are organs of collective perception. When healthy, they allow a society to learn from reality. When captured, they regulate reality so that the governing model does not have to change (Albarracin et al., 2022).

Narratives allocate precision. They do not need to falsify every fact. They organize facts into a model that conserves the identity of the system. Security can organize a vast array of actions into defensive necessity. Development can organize extraction into progress. Fiscal discipline can organize austerity into responsibility. Border control can organize migrant death into policy success. Green transition can organize mineral exploitation into planetary salvation.

Scripts are related. In a hospital, a script defines patient, doctor, administrator, triage, liability, discharge, and resource constraint. In a courtroom, a script defines plaintiff, defendant, judge, evidence, procedure, admissibility, and judgment. In a border regime, a script defines citizen, migrant, refugee, illegal entrant, trafficker, risk, detention, deportation, and asylum. Scripts reduce uncertainty, but they can also force living reality into roles that hide the structure of harm.

Power is therefore not only the ability to coerce action. It is the ability to organize inference. It can make some futures imaginable and others unrealistic; some suffering urgent and other suffering normal; some actors legible and others invisible; some questions respectable and others dangerous.

This does not mean that every shared expectation is oppressive. Trust, law, language, care, science, medicine, education, and democracy all depend on socially stabilized expectations. The question is whether the shared expectation remains corrigible by life. A life-coherent regime of expectation says: if our expectations are producing hunger, terror, ecological breakdown, humiliation, exclusion, chronic insecurity, or moral injury, then the expectations must be revised. A pathological regime of expectation says: if reality contradicts our expectations, then reality must be reclassified, silenced, disciplined, or destroyed.

Life-coherence does not belong to one side in advance. All actors self-evidence. All actors can become trapped in models that preserve injury, revenge, grievance, exceptionalism, or innocence. The diagnostic questions are symmetrical: what model are we conserving; what evidence do we treat as too dangerous to receive; whose suffering do we lower in precision; what role have we assigned to the other before they speak; what would we have to become if the other's wound were allowed to update our model?

The task of life-coherent politics is not to abolish generative models. That is impossible. The task is to build social orders whose models remain answerable to life. The life-coherent civilization wanting to be born is not a society without self-evidencing. It is a society that self-evidences through repair. The wound would no longer be noise. It would become instruction.

4. The Normative Gap: Why Self-Maintenance Is Not Yet Life-Coherence

The Free Energy Principle helps explain how systems maintain themselves under conditions of uncertainty. Yet this explanatory power creates a serious problem. Self-maintenance is not the same as health. Persistence is not the same as truth. Stability is not the same as justice. Coherence is not the same as life-coherence.

A system may maintain itself by learning, repairing, and enlarging its relationships with the wider field of life. But a system may also maintain itself by domination, denial, extraction, surveillance, coercion, scapegoating, or sacrifice. Both forms of self-maintenance may reduce uncertainty. Both may stabilize identity. Both may generate evidence for the model through which the system continues. But they are not ethically equivalent.

This is the normative gap in any political extension of Fristonian theory. The formal mechanism is not enough. We must ask what is being conserved, how it is being conserved, and at whose expense.

Life-coherence introduces the missing criterion. A system is not life-coherent merely because it persists, predicts, adapts, grows, dominates, or stabilizes itself. It is life-coherent only when its self-maintenance protects, restores, and enlarges the life-capacity of the wider field on which it depends. The unit of evaluation is not the isolated self, institution, state, market, or civilization. The unit of evaluation is the relational field of life.

Many pathological systems are internally coherent. A bureaucracy can be procedurally coherent while producing abandonment. A market can be financially coherent while destroying ecological preconditions. A security state can be operationally coherent while generating permanent insecurity. A colonial order can be administratively coherent while denying self-determination. A propaganda system can be narratively coherent while degrading truth. Pathology, then, is not always disorder. Often pathology is an order that has lost its relation to life.

McMurtry's life-value philosophy is indispensable here. Social systems must be judged by their consequences for life-capacity. A value system is not valid merely because it is believed, institutionalized, profitable, legal, traditional, or victorious. It is valid insofar as it enables life to become more fully alive. Conversely, a value system

is pathological when it disables life while presenting itself as rational, necessary, inevitable, or good (McMurtry, 2011, 2013).

Friston gives us the mechanism by which systems conserve themselves. McMurtry gives us the criterion by which conservation must be judged. Maturana and Varela help us understand how living systems conserve organization through autopoiesis, but autopoiesis alone does not guarantee ethical adequacy at social scale. Galtung's structural violence names the avoidable impairment of human life built into ordinary institutional arrangements (McMurtry, 2011, 2013; Maturana & Varela, 1980, 1987; Galtung, 1969).

This paper therefore distinguishes viability from life-coherence. Viability refers to the capacity of a system to persist. Life-coherence refers to the capacity of a system to persist in a way that protects and enlarges the life-capacity of the wider relational field. A predatory system can be viable for a time. It can reduce uncertainty for itself by increasing uncertainty for others. It can preserve prosperity by externalizing ecological cost. It can preserve innocence by silencing testimony. It can preserve security by producing insecurity beyond its boundary. This is pathological viability.

Self-correction becomes the decisive criterion. A life-coherent system must be capable of receiving disconfirming evidence from those affected by its actions. It must not require victims to become perfect, polite, assimilated, respectable, or strategically useful before their suffering counts. It must not dismiss suffering because it is inconvenient to allies, markets, donors, voters, institutions, or national myths. It must not convert every wound into a public-relations problem.

Powerful systems often assign high precision to signals of reputational threat, financial volatility, electoral risk, border anxiety, investor confidence, military vulnerability, or diplomatic embarrassment, while assigning low precision to the suffering of people outside the preferred field of concern. This is not merely a moral failure. It is an epistemic pathology. The system learns from the wrong signals.

Life-coherent self-evidencing requires a reversal of this weighting. The pain of the vulnerable must become high-precision evidence. Ecological damage must become high-precision evidence. Institutional betrayal must become high-precision evidence. Public distrust must become high-precision evidence. The testimony of affected communities must be treated not as anecdotal noise, but as indispensable feedback from the field of life.

The conservation of innocence is one of the deepest pathologies. It occurs when a person, institution, people, state, or civilization cannot integrate evidence of the harm it causes. Accountability feels like annihilation; criticism becomes attack; witness becomes threat; law becomes politicized; the victim becomes accuser; the accuser becomes enemy. The system's first task becomes not repair, but protection of the self-image.

The opposite is not self-hatred. Life-coherent self-evidencing requires the courage to remain in relationship with truth. A mature system can say: we have caused harm; our model is incomplete; our procedures are insufficient; our security has produced insecurity; our development has produced dependency; our silence has enabled violence. This is not the destruction of identity. It is the deepening of identity through correction.

The world now emerging demands a different form of self-evidencing. No state can secure itself permanently by externalizing instability. No economy can flourish by degrading the biosphere. No legal order can survive selective enforcement forever. No media system can preserve trust while suppressing reality. The question before humanity is whether our systems can become corrigible by life before they are catastrophically corrected by collapse.

5. Pathological Self-Evidencing: Precision Distortion, Selective Empathy, and the Suppression of Life-Evidence

Pathological self-evidencing occurs when a system preserves its identity by suppressing, discounting, externalizing, or destroying the evidence that would require it to change. It is not merely error. It is organized resistance to correction. It is the process by which a person, institution, state, market, media system, or civilization acts to keep its preferred model intact even when the living consequences of that model reveal harm.

This pathology is dangerous because it often appears as coherence. The system may remain procedurally orderly, narratively confident, legally articulate, strategically disciplined, financially productive, and morally self-assured. Yet beneath this surface coherence, the system may be conserving a model that disables life.

The first mechanism is precision distortion. Power determines what counts as high-precision evidence. A military spokesperson may be treated as credible before speaking, while a civilian witness must prove innocence before being believed. A market forecast may be treated as urgent, while a community's account of hunger is treated as anecdotal. A government's security concern may be treated as rational, while an occupied people's fear is treated as incitement. The system does not need to deny all facts. It only needs to regulate which facts have force.

The second mechanism is selective empathy. The suffering of those inside the moral community is rendered vivid, nameable, intimate, and urgent. The suffering of those outside the preferred frame becomes distant, abstract, suspicious, regrettable, or strategically necessary. Selective empathy is one of the ways systems preserve innocence. If the other's suffering were felt with full force, the model would destabilize.

The third mechanism is narrative capture. Security narratives are especially prone to this: domination predicts danger, domination produces danger, the produced danger confirms domination, and the confirmation authorizes more domination. The model becomes self-sealing. Austerity weakens public systems, then weakened public systems are cited as evidence that the public sector is inefficient. Sanctions degrade life-support, then degraded life-support is cited as proof that the targeted government has failed. Border militarization makes migration more dangerous, then migrant desperation is cited as proof of border threat.

The fourth mechanism is role assignment before encounter. The Palestinian becomes terrorist, demographic threat, human shield, security problem, or humanitarian case. The Cuban citizen becomes regime victim, counterrevolutionary, socialist subject, or geopolitical symbol. The Haitian becomes gang victim, failed-state inhabitant, security risk, or beneficiary. The migrant becomes illegal entrant, trafficked body, labor unit, or asylum burden. The living subject disappears into the administrative object.

The fifth mechanism is externalization of uncertainty. A powerful system may reduce uncertainty for itself by increasing uncertainty for others. Wealthy states stabilize energy supply by externalizing ecological harm. Financial systems stabilize creditor confidence by exporting austerity to debtor societies. Security alliances stabilize strategic advantage by militarizing other regions. The self remains predictable by making the other's world unpredictable.

The sixth mechanism is the conservation of innocence. Many systems cannot bear evidence that would reveal their self-image as false. A state that sees itself as democratic cannot integrate evidence that it practices domination. A market that sees itself as developmental cannot integrate evidence that it destroys local life-capacity. A humanitarian system that sees itself as benevolent cannot integrate evidence that it manages suffering without altering its causes.

The seventh mechanism is institutional anesthesia. Institutional actors may know a great deal, yet the institutional setting trains them not to feel the implications with enough force to act. The report is filed. The risk is noted. The concern is expressed. The recommendation is deferred. The mandate is limited. The meeting ends. The model remains.

The eighth mechanism is the conversion of repair into management. Humanitarian aid substitutes for political justice. Trauma counseling substitutes for ending the conditions that traumatize. Resilience programming substitutes for stopping the harm that communities must become resilient against. Management becomes pathological when it stabilizes the system that produces the harm.

The ninth mechanism is temporal deferral. Harm is admitted but correction is postponed: now is not the time, the matter is complex, more data are needed, a process is underway. Deferral protects the model by moving correction beyond the horizon of responsibility. Life-time is the time of hunger, breath, wound, childhood, pregnancy, illness, mourning, and ecological threshold. A life-coherent system must be accountable to life-time.

The tenth mechanism is enemy production. When disconfirming evidence persists, the journalist becomes propagandist, the dissident becomes foreign agent, the protester becomes terrorist sympathizer, the migrant

becomes invader, the wounded become manipulative, and the witness becomes dangerous because the witness threatens the model.

Pathological self-evidencing is thus both cognitive and civilizational. It occurs in the mind, but it is not merely psychological. It is embodied in institutions, incentives, sanctions, supply chains, newsrooms, courts, schools, borders, platforms, and budgets. It is the way a world protects itself from the evidence of the life it harms.

The diagnostic signs are recognizable. A system is pathological when it repeatedly produces life-harm but treats the harm as external, exceptional, exaggerated, or necessary; when those harmed must struggle to have their suffering recognized as evidence; when criticism is experienced as existential threat rather than corrective feedback; when institutions know but do not learn; when humanitarian management replaces structural repair; and when the system's preferred state requires someone else's permanent insecurity.

Pathological self-evidencing asks reality to protect the model. Life-coherent self-evidencing asks the model to answer to reality.

6. Life-Coherent Self-Evidencing: Corrigibility, Repair, and the Enlargement of Life-Capacity

If pathological self-evidencing preserves a system by suppressing the evidence of life-harm, life-coherent self-evidencing preserves a system by allowing life-harm to correct it. It does not abandon self-maintenance. It transforms the meaning of self-maintenance. The system remains itself not by defending its preferred model at all costs, but by becoming more truthful, more relational, more reparative, and more capable of sustaining the wider field of life on which it depends.

Life-coherent self-evidencing begins from a simple but demanding premise: a system is legitimate only insofar as its self-maintenance protects and enlarges the conditions of life.

The first feature is corrigibility: the capacity to be corrected without collapsing into defensiveness, denial, retaliation, or self-annihilation. A corrigible institution can say: this outcome reveals that our model is incomplete. A corrigible state can say: our security practices are producing insecurity for others and therefore must be revised. A brittle system can only preserve itself by denying error. A mature system can metabolize error into transformation.

The second feature is repair. Repair is more than apology, recognition, or compensation, though all may be necessary. Repair means changing the conditions that produced harm. A system has not learned merely because it has acknowledged harm. It has learned when it no longer reproduces the conditions that made the harm predictable.

The third feature is relationality. No self persists alone. Persons depend on families, communities, ecosystems, language, care, public institutions, and material infrastructures. States depend on citizens, legitimacy, neighboring states, trade, ecological systems, regional trust, and international law. Markets depend on labor, nature, public goods, social stability, and future confidence. To self-evidence coherently is to preserve the relations that make the self possible.

The fourth feature is the enlargement of life-capacity. Life-capacity refers to the real ability of living beings to breathe clean air, drink safe water, eat nourishing food, receive care, heal from illness, learn, move, participate, speak, belong, create, deliberate, love, grieve, and live without humiliation or preventable fear. It includes the ecological conditions that sustain life, the social conditions that make dignity possible, and the institutional conditions that allow harm to be corrected.

The fifth feature is precision reversal. Life-coherent systems treat suffering, ecological damage, civic distrust, public-health breakdown, and the testimony of affected communities as high-precision signals. They do not wait until catastrophe becomes undeniable. They build institutional sensors that detect harm early and respond materially.

The sixth feature is non-dominating coexistence. Coexistence means that different systems can maintain themselves without requiring the humiliation, erasure, starvation, dispossession, or permanent insecurity of others. If one state's security requires another people's statelessness, the model is not life-coherent. If one economy's prosperity requires another region's ecological sacrifice, the model is not life-coherent.

The seventh feature is institutionalized humility. Institutions must be designed to know that they can be wrong. This means independent review, protected dissent, public transparency, participatory oversight, enforceable rights, restorative processes, ecological accounting, conflict-of-interest controls, and mechanisms through which affected communities can compel response.

The eighth feature is time reorientation. Life-coherent systems must become accountable to life-time, not only procedural time. The hungry cannot wait for indefinite review. The sick cannot wait for diplomatic convenience. The detained cannot wait for endlessly deferred due process. The flooded cannot wait for theoretical climate finance. The child cannot wait for institutional maturity.

The ninth feature is memory as responsibility. Memory becomes life-coherent when it deepens responsibility: because we know what suffering means, we must not reproduce it; because we have been wounded, we must become more capable of recognizing wounds; because we have survived domination, we must not organize freedom through another's domination.

The tenth feature is repairing the ecology of evidence. Journalists, doctors, scientists, teachers, courts, community leaders, artists, human rights defenders, whistleblowers, public servants, and affected citizens form part of the ecology through which a society senses itself. When these organs are intimidated, captured, underfunded, discredited, or subordinated to power, the society loses the ability to know what it is doing.

The eleventh feature is conversion of power from control to service. Power is unavoidable. The question is whether power serves life or requires life to serve it. Pathological power seeks control. Life-coherent power seeks the protection and enlargement of shared life-capacity.

The twelfth feature is self-correction as the highest intelligence. Modern institutions often equate intelligence with prediction, control, optimization, speed, scale, and strategic advantage. But if a system uses predictive capacity to manipulate attention, control populations, intensify extraction, automate exclusion, or accelerate ecological damage, then its intelligence is not life-coherent. The highest intelligence is the capacity to be corrected before catastrophe.

The wound does not rule. But it is finally allowed to teach. Life-coherent self-evidencing asks every system, from the intimate to the planetary: can you remain yourself without sacrificing the life that reveals your error? Can you learn before collapse? Can you let the other appear without converting them into threat? Can you protect your boundary while remaining permeable to truth? Can you preserve identity through repair rather than denial?

7. Revealing Cases I: Palestine/Gaza and the Legal-Medical-Media Collapse

The case of Palestine, and especially Gaza since October 2023, is not introduced to collapse all political complexity into a single moral image. Nor is it introduced to deny Jewish historical trauma, Israeli civilian suffering, the unlawfulness of attacks on civilians, or the reality of fear. A life-coherent analysis must refuse every form of dehumanization. It must allow the suffering of all civilians to register. But it must also refuse false symmetry where power, law, territory, movement, military capacity, and structural control are radically unequal.

The Palestine/Gaza case is revealing because it shows how pathological self-evidencing can operate across law, medicine, media, security, diplomacy, and economy at once. It shows how a dominant model can preserve itself by lowering the precision of life-evidence, especially when that evidence comes from those already assigned the role of threat, demographic problem, humanitarian burden, or security object.

The dominant geopolitical model often presents the situation as a tragic conflict between two sides. This frame becomes pathological when it hides the legal and material asymmetry of occupation, blockade, settlement,

statelessness, military control, forced displacement, unequal mobility, and differential access to land, water, airspace, borders, and international protection.

Francesca Albanese's interview with Chris Hedges gives this asymmetry existential force. The interview centers not on abstract diplomacy, but on human beings whose suffering destabilizes official language: detained doctors, destroyed hospitals, orphaned and mutilated children, silenced journalists, punished witnesses, and a population whose pain is repeatedly translated into the categories of security, humanitarian management, or disputed narrative. Albanese's insistence is that the language of war and conflict can mask the structural relation that makes Palestinian life governable, killable, movable, and narratively suspect (Hedges, 2026).

The legal record matters because it interrupts the idea that the situation is merely a matter of political opinion. In July 2024, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion finding that Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful, that Israel is under an obligation to bring that unlawful presence to an end as rapidly as possible, and that other states are under an obligation not to recognize as legal the situation arising from that unlawful presence or render aid or assistance in maintaining it. This provides a legal prediction error against the dominant diplomatic habit of treating occupation as a negotiable background condition rather than as an ongoing unlawful structure (International Court of Justice, 2024b).

The same pattern appears in the genocide proceedings brought by South Africa before the ICJ. The Court's provisional measures were not a final finding on the merits, but they were not legally meaningless. A life-coherent system would treat such an order as high-precision evidence requiring immediate institutional recalibration. A pathological system treats the order as a public-relations event, a diplomatic inconvenience, or a text to be managed while the underlying model remains intact (International Court of Justice, 2024a).

Medicine is one of the core repair systems of any society. To disable doctors, nurses, hospitals, ambulances, laboratories, pharmacies, and public-health infrastructures is not only to harm individual patients. It is to damage the capacity of a people to heal, reproduce, endure, and recover. In the Hedges-Albanese interview, Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya becomes a focal point because his case condenses the legal, medical, and moral collapse. The transcript describes him as a respected physician and hospital director detained without charge, allegedly tortured, visibly weakened, and fearful that he will not survive. Albanese connects his case to a wider attack on medical personnel and facilities (Hedges, 2026).

A life-coherent order would treat harm to medical personnel and medical infrastructure as a high-precision alarm. Pathological self-evidencing does the opposite. It lowers the precision of medical life-evidence by placing it inside a security script. The doctor becomes potentially a militant. The hospital becomes potentially a command center. The ambulance becomes potentially a transport vehicle. The patient becomes potentially a shield. Suspicion becomes sufficient to collapse protection.

Media systems then determine whether this corruption is exposed or normalized. They function as organs of collective perception. They decide what becomes visible, which voices are credible, which vocabulary is permissible, and how agency is distributed. In the interview, Albanese and Hedges criticize Western legacy media for amplifying official narratives, casting doubt on Palestinian witnesses, and converting structural domination into a field of contested claims where the weaker party's testimony is treated as suspect.

The media system does not need to erase suffering entirely. It only needs to prevent suffering from becoming decisive evidence against the protected model. The dead child becomes an image too emotional to interpret politically. The starving population becomes a humanitarian crisis rather than evidence of a governing structure. The destroyed hospital becomes a disputed site. The detained doctor becomes a suspect. The legal report becomes controversial. The human rights witness becomes activist.

The sanctioning or delegitimizing of witnesses is revealing. A witness is dangerous because a witness raises the precision of suppressed evidence. Albanese's UN reports seek to transform dispersed suffering into legal, structural, and institutional evidence. Whether one agrees with every conclusion or not, the system's reaction to witness-bearing is diagnostically important. Does it answer evidence with evidence and law with law? Or does it punish the witness (Albanese, 2024, 2025)?

The children of Gaza bring the analysis to its moral center. Childhood is one of the clearest tests of life-coherence. A system that cannot allow children to appear first as children has entered deep pathology. When children are treated primarily as future threats, demographic problems, human shields, collateral damage, propaganda objects, or unfortunate casualties, the system's generative model has displaced the most basic signal of life: the vulnerability of the young.

A careful analysis must also address Israeli suffering and Jewish trauma. A life-coherent approach cannot build Palestinian legitimacy by denying Israeli fear, Jewish historical memory, or the reality of civilian loss. But historical trauma becomes pathological when it is organized into permanent permission to dominate another people. Security becomes pathological when it defines its preferred state as the other's permanent insecurity. Memory becomes pathological when the lesson of one people's suffering is used to lower the precision of another people's suffering.

Life-coherent memory would say: because Jewish life has been dehumanized, no people must be dehumanized. Because civilians have been massacred, civilians everywhere must be protected. Because antisemitism is real, it must be opposed without converting all criticism of state violence into antisemitism. Because trauma is real, it must not be allowed to reproduce trauma in others.

The Palestine/Gaza case reveals a full architecture of pathological self-evidencing: a security prior transforms civilian life into threat; a legal order names illegality but is prevented from correcting practice; a medical repair system is disabled under suspicion; a media ecology lowers the precision of Palestinian testimony; an economic network treats profit and innovation as success while externalizing life-harm; and a diplomatic system manages catastrophe without enforcing accountability.

A life-coherent response would require full protection of civilian life without selectivity; restoration of law as a corrective system; protection and rebuilding of medical life-support; repair of the media ecology; interruption of economic complicity; transformation of security itself; and restoration of Palestinian self-determination and Israeli safety as mutually required, not mutually exclusive.

Palestine/Gaza is not only a crisis of international politics. It is a diagnostic mirror for civilization. It asks whether the dominant world-system can still be corrected by suffering, or whether it will sacrifice more life to preserve the model that tells it it is already good.

8. Revealing Cases II: Cuba, CBI, and Caribbean Sovereignty Under Constraint

The Caribbean offers a particularly important testing ground for the distinction between pathological and life-coherent self-evidencing. Its societies are small but historically dense, geographically exposed, culturally resilient, politically complex, and structurally vulnerable to forces they did not create. Caribbean states are formally sovereign, yet sovereignty is often exercised inside narrow corridors defined by finance, energy, markets, visas, sanctions, climate risk, security expectations, and donor priorities.

Cuba and OECS Citizenship by Investment programmes appear different on the surface. Cuba is framed through socialism, sanctions, revolution, authoritarian governance, and U.S. hemispheric policy. OECS CBI programmes are framed through small-state finance, golden passports, due diligence, visa-free access, security risk, and reputational integrity. Yet both reveal a deeper question: how does a constrained society self-evidence sovereignty when the material conditions of viable sovereignty are externally restricted, internally strained, or globally commodified?

Cuba: Sovereignty Between Siege and Closure

Cuba is one of the clearest cases of competing self-evidencing systems locked into a mutually reinforcing inferential trap. The Cuban state conserves a revolutionary model of sovereignty, endurance, dignity, anti-imperial resistance, and social achievement under siege. The United States conserves a model in which Cuba's suffering proves the failure of communist governance and justifies continued pressure for political transformation. Each model can absorb the suffering of ordinary Cubans as evidence for itself.

For the Cuban state, external pressure confirms the need for revolutionary vigilance. Dissent can be interpreted as externally induced or insufficiently conscious of the siege. Scarcity becomes evidence of imperial aggression. Endurance becomes proof of national dignity.

For the United States, deprivation confirms the failure of the Cuban model. Blackouts, shortages, migration, deteriorating services, and protests become evidence that the state has lost legitimacy. Sanctions and pressure can then be presented not as life-support deprivation, but as instruments to hasten democratic correction.

Ordinary Cubans are caught between these models. As of July 2026, Cuba's life-support crisis was acute: blackouts, fuel shortages, cancelled surgeries, public transportation collapse, and public protests. These facts should not be forced into a single ideological explanation. External coercion matters. Internal governance matters. Cuba's inherited achievements in public health, literacy, medical internationalism, biotechnology, and anti-colonial dignity also matter (AP News, 2026a; Reuters, 2026a).

A life-coherent model would begin elsewhere: Cuban sovereignty is real and must not be strangled externally; Cuban citizens are real and must not be silenced internally; Cuban suffering is real and must not be converted into propaganda by either side; Cuban life-capacity is the measure of legitimacy.

The solution space cannot be regime collapse or heroic endurance alone. The life-coherent path would require an end to coercive life-support deprivation from outside, coupled with internal opening toward civic participation, local repair, energy decentralization, food-system renewal, transparent governance, public-service restoration, and protection of dissent as feedback rather than betrayal. The world wanting to appear in Cuba is sovereignty beyond siege and control.

OECS CBI: Sovereignty, Mobility, and the Commodification of Belonging

Citizenship by Investment in the Eastern Caribbean reveals a different pathology: the commodification of sovereign belonging under fiscal and climate constraint. The five OECS CBI jurisdictions - Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia - have treated CBI revenues as legitimate development tools for small island economies. These programmes can fund infrastructure, climate resilience, disaster recovery, public budgets, and development (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, 2025).

This is an important corrective to simplistic external criticism. CBI is not merely a corrupt shortcut for wealthy foreigners. For small island states, it has often functioned as a fiscal survival instrument in a world where climate vulnerability is high, economic concentration severe, concessional finance inadequate, and disaster recovery recurrent (International Monetary Fund, 2025, 2026).

At the same time, citizenship is not an ordinary commodity. It is a legal and civic bond. It encodes belonging, protection, rights, obligations, mobility, identity, and participation in a political community. When citizenship is sold primarily as a mobility asset, the passport becomes a vehicle for private escape from global instability rather than a covenant of shared responsibility within a living society.

External critique contains real concerns around due diligence, security, reputation, and visa-free travel. Yet the dominant geopolitical framing is incomplete. Larger states often treat Caribbean CBI as a risk to their borders while giving insufficient precision to the structural reasons such programmes became fiscally significant. Small island states are judged for monetizing citizenship, while the global order has not provided adequate, predictable, non-punitive finance for climate adaptation, disaster recovery, debt relief, water security, health systems, or economic diversification (European Commission, 2024).

OECS governments self-evidence sovereignty by saying they can use citizenship powers to fund national development and fiscal independence. External powers self-evidence security by saying those citizenship powers create risks for their borders. Investors self-evidence mobility privilege by treating citizenship as a rational asset in an unstable world. Citizens may experience ambivalence: CBI can fund public goods, but it can also deepen dependency, distort development, and hollow civic meaning.

The life-coherent path is not simple abolition or uncritical defense. Abolition without alternative finance could destabilize vulnerable states. Defense without transformation could deepen dependency and civic hollowing. The task is to convert CBI from a commodified passport market into a regulated life-capacity compact.

This requires CBI revenue to be legally bound to life-capacity outcomes such as renewable energy, water security, public health, education, food systems, affordable housing, ecological restoration, disaster reserves, and local enterprise. Transparency must become a sovereignty enhancer rather than an externally imposed humiliation. Citizenship should carry a genuine link: contribution, knowledge, residency, cultural orientation, tax transparency, and long-term responsibility. CBI should be regionally coordinated rather than competitively undercut. Global partners must meet Caribbean reform with structural fairness.

The shared Caribbean lesson is this: sovereignty should be measured by the real capacities of people to live. Not sovereignty as defiance alone, marketable passport, external compliance, elite discretion, permanent grievance, or dependency management. Sovereignty as life-capacity.

9. Revealing Cases III: Sudan, Haiti, Chagos, Western Sahara, Migration, Critical Minerals, and Climate Finance

The distinction between pathological and life-coherent self-evidencing becomes clearer when applied across diverse situations that are not reducible to one geopolitical frame. The point is not to flatten differences or rank suffering. Sudan is not Haiti. Chagos is not Western Sahara. Mediterranean migration is not critical-mineral extraction. Climate finance for Small Island Developing States is not the same as war, occupation, exile, or border death. Yet each case reveals a system conserving a preferred model while life-evidence presses for correction.

Sudan: Armed Legitimacy versus the Emergency Commons

Sudan reveals pathological self-evidencing in one of its most brutal forms: armed actors generating the very insecurity they then cite as evidence of their necessity. Armed factions treat their own violence as necessary and the other's violence as proof of existential threat. Civilian suffering becomes strategically regrettable but not model-correcting (AP News, 2026b; Reuters, 2026b).

Yet Sudan also reveals a life-coherent counter-pattern. Emergency Response Rooms have emerged as grassroots, volunteer-led networks providing food, healthcare, education, civilian protection, psychosocial support, and local assistance across all 18 states where many international organizations cannot reach. These communities preserve themselves not through domination, but through mutual aid, repair, and local life-support. What wants to appear in Sudan is political legitimacy from the emergency commons upward (Right Livelihood, 2026; OHCHR, 2026a).

Haiti: Security Without Civic Repair

Haiti is repeatedly framed as a problem of gangs, state collapse, and insecurity. These realities are real, but the security frame becomes pathological when it treats Haitian society as an object to be stabilized rather than as a wounded civic body requiring repair. Gangs self-evidence by creating fear and then presenting themselves as unavoidable authorities. External actors self-evidence by interpreting Haiti's suffering as proof that Haitians require external management while down-weighting the histories of intervention, debt extraction, and institutional undermining (The Guardian, 2026a; OCHA, 2026).

A life-coherent approach does not deny the need for immediate protection. But security must be subordinated to civic reconstitution. The test is not whether armed actors are temporarily suppressed, but whether Haitian communities regain the capacity to live, govern, deliberate, farm, trade, educate, heal, and move without fear.

Chagos: Strategic Security Built on Exile

The Chagos Archipelago reveals strategic self-evidencing with exceptional clarity. For decades, the UK and U.S. security model has treated Diego Garcia as indispensable military infrastructure. The disconfirming evidence is the forced displacement of Chagossians and the long denial of their full right to return. Security becomes pathological when it requires the erasure, exile, or indefinite marginalization of a people whose lives were displaced to create that security space (UK House of Commons Library, 2025; House of Lords Library, 2025).

The protected model says: the base is necessary, therefore the foundational harm must remain manageable. The Chagossian wound says: no security architecture can be fully legitimate if it is built on dispossession that has not been repaired.

Western Sahara: Trade Without Consent

Western Sahara shows how development and trade can become pathological when they proceed without self-determination. The Court of Justice of the European Union has affirmed that the consent of the people of Western Sahara matters for agreements extended to the territory. The pathological model says: trade, development, stability, and partnership justify proceeding. The life-evidence says: development without consent is not life-coherent development (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2024).

Life-coherent self-evidencing would treat consent as the immune system of international law. It would ask whether resource use, trade preferences, fisheries, agriculture, and investment arrangements enlarge the life-capacity and self-determination of the people concerned, or whether they stabilize arrangements in which the people remain spoken for.

Mediterranean Migration: Border Order versus Human Mobility

Mediterranean migration reveals lethal precision distortion. European border systems often assign high precision to arrivals, deterrence, smuggling, and domestic political anxiety, while assigning lower precision to deaths, disappearances, torture, rape, enslavement, and detention suffered by migrants and refugees along the route. The pathological model says: if arrivals are reduced, order is restored. The life-evidence says: if people are intercepted into abuse, pushed onto deadlier routes, or drowned beyond the horizon of public concern, then order has been purchased through externalized suffering (Le Monde, 2026; The Guardian, 2026b; Al Jazeera, 2026; OHCHR, 2026b).

A life-coherent migration system would judge success first by lives protected, rights honored, exploitation reduced, safe pathways created, root causes addressed, and search-and-rescue capacity strengthened. Mobility governance would become life-protection rather than threat-management.

Critical Minerals: The Green Transition as Extractive Self-Evidence

Critical minerals reveal that even morally necessary transitions can become pathological. The world must decarbonize, but when the energy transition treats mineral supply as a technical bottleneck rather than a life-field question, it risks reproducing the extractive grammar it claims to overcome (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2026; Amnesty International, 2026).

The pathological prior says: we are green because we are decarbonizing. The life-evidence asks: green for whom, at whose cost, and under whose governance? A transition that reduces carbon while reproducing child labor, dangerous working conditions, displacement, water depletion, pollution, and repression of defenders is not fully life-coherent. Life-coherent transition would require community consent, worker protection, ecological safeguards, local value creation, transparent supply chains, recycling, material substitution, demand reduction, and reparative investment in mining regions (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2026; Amnesty International, 2026).

Climate Finance and SIDS: Debt Discipline versus Planetary Responsibility

Small Island Developing States contributed little to historic emissions yet face disproportionate climate damages: stronger storms, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, coral loss, saltwater intrusion, water insecurity, disaster recovery costs, insurance stress, debt burdens, and existential uncertainty. The dominant financial model says debt contracts, fiscal discipline, credit ratings, and investor confidence must be conserved. The life-evidence says climate-vulnerable societies are being asked to borrow to survive harms they did not primarily cause (Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, 2026; United Nations University, 2026; Climate Policy Initiative, 2026).

Life-coherent climate finance would treat loss and damage not as charity, but as repair. It would include rapid-disbursing grants, debt suspension clauses, disaster-contingent instruments, adaptation finance at scale, community access windows, and recognition that resilience is a global public good. For SIDS, climate finance is not supplementary development assistance. It is part of the conditions of viable sovereignty (Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, 2026; United Nations University, 2026; Climate Policy Initiative, 2026).

Across these cases the shared pattern is clear: a system treats its own preferred state as high-precision evidence of success while down-weighting the life-harm required to maintain that state. The corrective is not to declare one side pure. The corrective is to restore life-evidence to full precision.

10. A Diagnostic Grammar: What Is Each System Conserving?

The preceding cases show that pathological self-evidencing is not confined to one ideology, state, culture, religion, market system, or geopolitical bloc. It is a general possibility of self-maintaining systems. Every system conserves something. Every system has preferred states. Every system organizes perception and action around the preservation of some identity, boundary, memory, interest, legitimacy, or future. The question is not whether conservation occurs. The question is what is being conserved, how it is being conserved, and whether that conservation protects or diminishes the wider field of life.

A diagnostic grammar is therefore needed. Its purpose is not to accuse from a position of purity, but to make visible the models that systems defend when they claim to be acting rationally, lawfully, defensively, developmentally, humanely, or responsibly.

The diagnostic questions are:

1. What preferred state is the system trying to conserve? Security, profitability, authority, access, operational freedom, procedural legitimacy, revolutionary dignity, fiscal sovereignty, border order, green legitimacy, or creditor confidence?
2. What evidence would force the system to revise its model? For a security state, the intolerable evidence may be that its security practices generate the hostility it fears. For an occupying power, it may be that domination itself is unlawful. For a revolutionary state, it may be that citizens' suffering cannot be explained entirely by external enemies. For a border regime, it may be that deterrence kills.
3. How does the system lower the precision of threatening evidence? It may call evidence anecdotal, biased, premature, politicized, unverifiable, emotional, extremist, exceptional, statistically insignificant, outside mandate, or too complex for immediate action.
4. Who or what carries the system's uncertainty? The poor carry the uncertainty of austerity. Migrants carry the uncertainty of borders. Small islands carry the uncertainty of climate damage. Extraction zones carry the uncertainty of energy transition. Occupied peoples carry the uncertainty of another state's security doctrine.
5. What role has the system assigned to the other before encounter? The other becomes terrorist, illegal, beneficiary, debtor, patient, consumer, security risk, failed state, hostile actor, human resource, collateral body, or data point.

6. What does the system count as success? Metrics are self-evidencing devices. A military counts targets neutralized but may not count future hatred. A border agency counts reduced arrivals but may not count deaths beyond the border. An economy counts GDP but may not count ecological depletion or unpaid care.

7. What is the system unable to apologize for, repair, or remember truthfully? The place where apology is impossible often marks the boundary of the protected model. Some systems can express regret for excesses but not for the structure.

8. How does the system treat the witness? The witness is one of the clearest tests of self-evidencing. A pathological system attacks the witness. A life-coherent system protects the witness, even when the witness is uncomfortable.

9. Does the system convert repair into management? Management stabilizes symptoms. Repair changes relations. Management asks how to deliver aid. Repair asks why aid is needed.

10. Can the system allow the other's legitimacy without requiring agreement, innocence, or sameness? The other does not become legitimate only after becoming harmless, silent, assimilated, defeated, or morally pure. The other is legitimate because life is legitimate.

11. What would the system have to become if the wound were granted full precision? If the hunger were fully recognized, food systems would have to change. If the destroyed hospital were fully recognized, security doctrine would have to change. If the drowned migrant were fully recognized, border policy would have to change. If the climate-damaged island were fully recognized, finance would have to change.

This diagnostic grammar can be applied at any scale. In a family, it asks what loyalty hides. In a hospital, what throughput hides. In a school, what performance hides. In a church, what doctrine hides. In a corporation, what profit hides. In a government, what sovereignty hides. In a media system, what balance hides. In a court, what procedure hides. In a military, what security hides. In an economy, what growth hides. In a civilization, what progress hides.

The point is not to destroy these forms. Loyalty, throughput, performance, doctrine, profit, sovereignty, balance, procedure, security, growth, and progress may all have legitimate life-serving forms. The point is to prevent them from becoming idols: self-evidencing structures that demand sacrifice while calling sacrifice necessity.

This diagnostic grammar asks not only what is wrong with them. It asks what are we conserving that prevents us from seeing them as fully alive. It asks not only how we defeat the error outside us. It asks how our own model has learned to survive by not learning. It asks what we would have to repair if we stopped lowering the precision of the other's wound.

11. A Practical Architecture for Self-Correcting Institutions

If pathological self-evidencing is the tendency of systems to preserve their preferred models by suppressing life-evidence, then life-coherent self-evidencing requires more than moral exhortation. It requires institutional architecture. A society cannot rely only on individual goodwill, enlightened leaders, occasional whistleblowers, heroic witnesses, or public outrage after catastrophe. It must design systems that can receive correction before harm becomes normalized, irreversible, or catastrophic.

The central institutional question is: How can a system be designed so that life-harm becomes actionable evidence rather than background noise?

A practical architecture for self-correcting institutions has several interdependent elements.

11.1 Life-Evidence as a Primary Signal

Life-evidence refers to embodied and ecological signals that reveal whether a system is protecting or diminishing life-capacity: hunger, preventable illness, displacement, homelessness, ecological damage, humiliation,

trauma, avoidable death, institutional distrust, public-health breakdown, exhausted caregivers, and silenced communities. Every major policy, budget, law, corporate strategy, security operation, development project, trade agreement, and technological deployment should be evaluated by its effects on life-capacity.

11.2 Precision Reversal and Evidentiary Justice

Institutions must reverse the usual hierarchy in which signals from powerful actors are treated as precise while signals from affected communities are treated as noisy or anecdotal. This does not mean abandoning verification. It means recognizing that people who bear consequences often know realities that managerial systems are designed not to see.

11.3 Independent Correction Loops

No institution should be the sole judge of the harm it causes. Life-coherent institutions require external and independent loops of correction: ombudspersons, independent courts, citizen oversight boards, human rights commissions, ecological auditors, public-interest journalism, civil society monitoring, whistleblower bodies, and participatory evaluation processes.

11.4 Protected Witnessing

Doctors, journalists, scientists, teachers, civil servants, community leaders, human rights defenders, judges, patients, children, workers, migrants, and whistleblowers are part of the social nervous system. They detect harm. Pathological systems attack witnesses because witnesses raise the precision of suppressed evidence. Life-coherent systems protect witnesses because witness-bearing is part of collective healing.

11.5 Reparative Accountability

Reparative accountability asks: what happened; why was it possible; who was harmed and what repair is owed; what must change so the harm is not reproduced? It differs from both impunity and scapegoating. It includes individual responsibility where appropriate, but also examines structures: incentives, laws, budgets, training, culture, metrics, power relations, historical patterns, and institutional blind spots.

11.6 Life-Time Triggers

Institutions often operate through procedural time. Life-time is the time of hunger, bleeding, illness, childhood, pregnancy, trauma, displacement, ecological threshold, and death. Life-coherent institutions need thresholds that trigger urgent response when life-harm reaches critical levels: humanitarian access, protection of medical systems, debt suspension after disasters, emergency procurement, mandatory investigation, moratoria on destructive extraction, and rapid repair financing.

11.7 Participatory Model Revision

Affected communities must have the capacity to shape problem definition, evidence standards, policy options, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Participation is not merely democratic etiquette. It is epistemic repair.

11.8 Metrics of Life-Capacity

Institutions become what they measure. Life-coherent metrics include survival, dignity, capability, ecological integrity, trust, resilience, participation, and repair. A border system should be judged not only by reduced arrivals, but by lives protected. A climate transition should be judged not only by emissions reduction, but by whether it repairs or reproduces sacrifice zones.

11.9 Anti-Capture Design

Institutions are vulnerable to capture by money, ideology, party, profession, bureaucracy, donor priorities, geopolitical pressure, or reputational self-protection. Anti-capture design includes conflict-of-interest rules, transparency of funding, beneficial ownership disclosure, independent appointments, open data, investigative freedom, and safeguards against revolving-door influence.

11.10 Multi-Scale Repair

Life-harm rarely occurs at one level only. Multi-scale repair requires action at the levels of immediate protection, institutional reform, legal accountability, economic restructuring, cultural narrative, ecological restoration, and regional or international governance.

11.11 Institutional Memory and Public Learning

Systems repeat harm when they forget selectively. Life-coherent institutions require accessible archives, implementation trackers, public dashboards, periodic hearings, survivor testimony records, curriculum integration, and formal mechanisms to revisit unresolved harms.

11.12 Law as a Learning System

At its best, law is a way for society to bind itself to correction. It gives force to memory, protects the vulnerable, limits power, and creates pathways through which harm can become remedy. Life-coherent law must be accessible, timely, enforceable, and substantively oriented toward protection of life-capacity.

11.13 Media as a Public Nervous System

Media are not neutral mirrors. They transmit signals, assign precision, create salience, form memory, and shape what a society can feel and know. A life-coherent media ecology helps society perceive reality accurately enough to correct harm.

11.14 Economy as Life-Capacity Provision

A life-coherent economy is not one that merely grows, attracts investment, expands consumption, or maintains fiscal indicators. It provisions the conditions of life without destroying the ecological and social ground of future life.

11.15 Security as Conditions for Peace

Security becomes pathological when it is defined as control over others rather than conditions under which all can live without fear. A life-coherent security system measures success by reduced fear, restored trust, civilian protection, accountability, and the disappearance of conditions that generate violence.

11.16 Regional and Planetary Institutions

Many harms cannot be corrected nationally. Small states cannot repair climate finance alone. Migrant-sending communities cannot repair border regimes alone. Extraction zones cannot regulate global demand alone. Life-coherent self-correction must become regional and planetary.

11.17 The Institutional Self-Correction Cycle

The cycle is: sense life-evidence; raise precision; protect witnesses; interrupt harmful action; investigate structurally; revise the model; repair materially; institutionalize memory; redistribute authority; reassess life-capacity.

11.18 From Heroic Witness to Designed Corrigibility

Many advances have depended on heroic witnesses. But a life-coherent civilization cannot depend indefinitely on heroism. If truth requires martyrdom, the system is poorly designed. The goal is to move from heroic witness to designed corrigibility. Ordinary evidence should be able to travel. Ordinary suffering should be able to trigger review. Ordinary people should be able to speak without ruin.

12. Conclusion: Letting the Wound Update the Model

The central claim of this paper is simple but far-reaching: systems do not become life-coherent merely by preserving themselves. They become life-coherent by preserving themselves in ways that remain answerable to the life they affect.

Friston's Free Energy Principle and the concept of self-evidencing provide a powerful account of how living and cognitive systems maintain coherence under conditions of uncertainty. Systems act and perceive in ways that make their own continued existence probable. They conserve generative models, assign precision to evidence, anticipate preferred states, and act to reduce uncertainty. When extended carefully into social and institutional life, this framework helps illuminate how persons, professions, institutions, states, markets, media systems, and civilizations conserve the models through which they remain intelligible to themselves.

But the theory requires a normative supplement. A system may reduce uncertainty by learning from reality, or it may reduce uncertainty by suppressing the reality that would require it to change. It may act to restore right relationship, or it may act to force the world to conform to its preferred model. It may preserve itself through repair, or through domination. It may become more truthful, or more defended. It may allow suffering to instruct it, or it may silence suffering so that its self-image can remain intact.

Pathological self-evidencing occurs when a system preserves its identity by lowering the precision of life-harm. Life-coherent self-evidencing occurs when a system allows life-harm to become high-precision evidence. It treats suffering not as a threat to be managed, but as a signal that the model has failed somewhere.

The cases differ, but the grammar is shared. A system protects a preferred self-image. Life-evidence threatens that self-image. The system lowers the precision of the evidence. The harmed are assigned roles before encounter. Uncertainty is exported to the vulnerable. Witnesses are discredited or punished. Repair is replaced by management. Delay protects the model. The system remains coherent while life becomes less possible.

The corrective is not reverse demonization. It is not to decide that one side contains all innocence and the other all error. The deeper task is to ask, at every scale: what are we conserving that prevents the other's life from appearing with full legitimacy?

The world wanting to be brought forth is not a world without boundaries, identity, sovereignty, law, memory, security, development, or difference. It is a world in which these forms become corrigible by life. Sovereignty becomes responsibility for food, water, health, energy, dignity, participation, and ecological viability. Security becomes the creation of conditions in which all parties can live without domination, humiliation, dispossession, or fear. Development becomes the enlargement of local and ecological life-capacity. Law becomes a learning system through which power is constrained and harm is repaired. Media becomes a public nervous system capable of transmitting neglected suffering with sufficient precision to require response. Finance becomes a mechanism of repair, resilience, and intergenerational responsibility.

This is not utopian in the weak sense. It is practical because the alternative is collapse by delayed correction. Systems that cannot learn from life-harm will eventually be corrected by breakdown: ecological, institutional, moral, financial, medical, legal, or social. The question is whether correction will come through conscious repair or through catastrophe.

To let the wound update the model is not to enthrone suffering. It is to refuse the civilization of denial.

If our prosperity requires your poverty, the model is wrong. If our security requires your terror, the model is wrong. If our sovereignty requires your silence, the model is wrong. If our development requires your displacement, the model is wrong. If our green transition requires your poisoned river, the model is wrong. If our border order requires your drowning, the model is wrong. If our fiscal discipline requires your social collapse, the model is wrong. If our memory requires your erasure, the model is wrong. If our law cannot protect the vulnerable from the powerful, the model is wrong. If our civilization cannot be corrected by children's suffering, the model is wrong.

Friston shows us that systems self-evidence. Life-coherence asks whether what they evidence is worthy of continuation.

The task now is to build persons, institutions, communities, states, and civilizations that can say, before collapse says it for them: we were wrong; we have learned; we will repair; we will become more capable of life together.

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Appendix A: Diagnostic Grammar of Pathological and Life-Coherent Self-Evidencing

This appendix summarizes the diagnostic grammar developed in Section 10. It may be used as an analytical tool for institutions, policies, geopolitical conflicts, development programmes, media systems, economic arrangements, or personal and communal patterns of denial.

1. What preferred state is the system trying to conserve?
2. What evidence would force the system to revise its model?
3. How does the system lower the precision of threatening evidence?
4. Who or what carries the system's exported uncertainty?
5. What role has the system assigned to the other before encounter?
6. What does the system count as success?
7. What is the system unable to apologize for, repair, or remember truthfully?
8. How does the system treat the witness?
9. Does the system convert repair into management?
10. Can the system allow the other's legitimacy without requiring agreement, innocence, or sameness?
11. What would the system have to become if the wound were granted full precision?

Appendix B: Life-Capacity Assessment Template

The following template may be used to evaluate a policy, programme, institution, law, technology, development project, security operation, economic arrangement, or diplomatic position.

- Name of policy, project, institution, or arrangement:
- Responsible actors:
- Affected communities or ecosystems:
- Time horizon:
- Decision point:
- Does this action protect or diminish access to food, water, sanitation, health, shelter, ecological integrity, participation, and dignity?
- Who benefits, who pays, and who carries uncertainty if the model fails?
- What early-warning indicators will trigger pause, review, remedy, or redesign?
- Does the action enlarge life-capacity: Yes / No / Mixed / Insufficient evidence?

Appendix C: Institutional Self-Correction Cycle

1. Sense life-evidence: detect harm early through data, testimony, ecological signals, and frontline knowledge.
2. Raise precision: treat suffering, ecological damage, and civic distrust as high-importance signals.
3. Protect witnesses: ensure those who reveal harm are not punished, isolated, or silenced.
4. Interrupt harmful action: use life-time triggers to pause or stop practices that exceed harm thresholds.
5. Investigate structurally: ask not only who erred, but what model made the harm predictable.
6. Revise the model: change assumptions, metrics, rules, budgets, incentives, roles, and decision rights.
7. Repair materially: restore rights, resources, relationships, ecosystems, dignity, and life-support capacity.
8. Institutionalize memory: track commitments, publish learning, preserve archives, and prevent recurrence.
9. Redistribute authority: include affected communities in ongoing governance and monitoring.
10. Reassess life-capacity: ask whether the corrected system now enlarges life more fully.

Appendix D: Case Matrix

Case	Pathologically Conserved Model	Suppressed Life-Evidence	Life-Coherent Correction
Palestine/Gaza	Security, legality, innocence, military necessity	Civilian death, medical collapse, child suffering, occupation, testimony, legal findings	Civilian protection, enforceable law, medical repair, self-determination, non-dominating security
Cuba	Revolutionary endurance; U.S. coercive pressure as democratic correction	Energy deprivation, citizen suffering, public-service collapse, constrained dissent	End external life-support strangulation; deepen internal civic correction and participatory sovereignty
OECS CBI	Fiscal sovereignty through citizenship monetization; external security discipline	Dependency, civic hollowing, climate-finance injustice, reputational vulnerability	Regulated regional CBI compact tied to life-capacity, transparency, genuine link, and fair climate finance
Sudan	Armed legitimacy and factional survival	Civilian hunger, displacement, sexual violence, local mutual aid	Support emergency commons, civilian protection, political legitimacy from life-support below
Haiti	Security management of chaos	Civic history, local agency, displacement, fear, public institutional collapse	Protection subordinated to Haitian civic repair and trustworthy public authority
Chagos	Strategic security infrastructure	Exile, dispossession, right of return, belonging	Security model corrected by Chagossian return, Mauritian sovereignty, ecological protection, and repair
Western Sahara	Trade, development, stability without full consent	Self-determination, resource control, Sahrawi subjecthood	Consent-centered development and lawful resource governance
Mediterranean Migration	Border order, deterrence, domestic political control	Deaths, disappearances, torture, detention, family rupture	Mobility governance centered on lives saved, rights protected, safe pathways, and root-cause repair
Critical Minerals	Green-transition legitimacy through accelerated extraction	Worker harm, child labor, ecological damage, community dispossession	Just transition across supply chains, consent, ecological safeguards, circularity, and local value
Climate Finance for SIDS	Debt discipline, fiscal credibility, slow finance	Climate loss, disaster debt, sea-level threat, sovereignty stress	Loss-and-damage finance as repair, debt suspension, adaptation grants, and resilient public goods

About the Author

Dr. Bichara Sahely is a physician, public-health thinker, and constructive transdisciplinary writer from St. Kitts and Nevis. His work explores the conditions of life through medicine, ecology, political economy, spirituality, law, systems theory, and civilizational repair. He writes at the intersection of life-value philosophy, autopoiesis, structural violence, institutional design, and the search for life-coherent futures.

His broader project seeks to develop practical conceptual tools for identifying where systems become detached from the living conditions they are meant to serve, and for reorienting institutions toward the protection, restoration, and enlargement of life-capacity.

Closing Note

This white paper is offered as an invitation to self-correction. Its purpose is not to condemn from outside the world it analyzes. It is to help reveal the inferential patterns by which persons, institutions, states, economies, and civilizations preserve themselves against the evidence of the life they harm.

The hope is that by naming these patterns clearly, we may become less defended, more corrigible, and more capable of bringing forth a world in which the wound is no longer silenced, managed, or externalized, but allowed to teach us how to live together.