ADITUM
*Enrich your Research*

The Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Research Article

# From Hyper-Structural Decoupling to Institutional Realignment: The Translation Deficit Ripple Effect as an MPT-SST Early-Warning Framework for Democratic Instability

**Aliyu Sani Kafinga**
Center for Peace and Security Studies, Modibbo Adama University, Yola, Nigeria Originator, Unified Science of Peace (USP) Founder, General Theory of Translation (GTT) Inventor, Peace Translation Theory (PTT).

**Article Information**

**Received:** August 13, 2026
**Accepted:** October 06, 2026
**Published:** October 30, 2026

**Corresponding author:** Aliyu Sani Kafinga, Center for Peace and Security Studies, Modibbo Adama University, Yola, Nigeria Originator, Unified Science of Peace (USP) Founder, General Theory of Translation (GTT) Inventor, Peace Translation Theory (PTT), **email:** kmpt.ssty@gmail.com

**Citation:** Kafinga. (2026) "From Hyper-Structural Decoupling to Institutional Realignment: The Translation Deficit Ripple Effect as an MPT-SST Early-Warning Framework for Democratic Instability" The Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences, 4(2); DOI: 10.61148/3065-6990/JSBS/084.

**Copyright:** © 2026 Aliyu Sani Kafinga. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## Abstract

Contemporary democratic instability is often analysed through electoral polarisation, institutional weakness, inequality, ideological conflict and declining public trust. While these explanations remain significant, this article argues that a deeper analytical dimension concerns the relationship among institutional consciousness, ethical commitments and structural practices. It introduces the concept of Hyper-Structural Decoupling, a condition in which formal institutions remain operational while becoming progressively disconnected from the ethical expectations, shared consciousness and lived realities that sustain their legitimacy.

Building on this foundation, the article develops the concept of the Translation Deficit, defined as the widening gap between the values institutions formally proclaim, the policies and practices through which those values are implemented and the experiences of populations affected by institutional decisions. The article proposes that unresolved Translation Deficits may generate a broader Translation Deficit Ripple Effect, through which institutional contradictions move beyond their original setting, weakening trust, reducing institutional resonance and increasing the possibility of political decoupling, realignment or transformation.

Using the Ceuta humanitarian crisis as an illustrative entry point, the article examines the tension between territorial sovereignty, border governance and humanitarian responsibility. It argues that democratic legitimacy cannot be evaluated solely through domestic procedures and constitutional arrangements. It must also be assessed through the consistency with which democratic values are translated into external conduct, particularly in situations involving vulnerable populations. The article further applies the framework comparatively to the AES-ECOWAS institutional rupture, not as a direct historical equivalent but as an illustration of how perceived institutional disconnection may contribute to declining resonance and alternative political alignment.

The article does not predict the collapse of Western democratic institutions. Instead, it presents the Translation Deficit Ripple Effect as an early-warning framework for identifying conditions under which unresolved ethical and structural disconnection may weaken institutional coherence. By integrating consciousness, ethics and structure, the MPT-SST approach proposes that sustainable democratic resilience depends not only on preserving institutional forms but also on maintaining meaningful alignment between proclaimed values, institutional practices and human realities.

**Keywords:** Hyper-Structural Decoupling; Translation Deficit; MPT-SST; Unified Science of Peace; Democratic Instability; Institutional Resonance; Relational Sovereignty; Border Governance; Institutional Realignment

## 1. Introduction: From Democratic Contradiction to Institutional Realignment

The contemporary crisis of democratic legitimacy is often examined through visible political symptoms: electoral polarisation, declining trust, ideological fragmentation, institutional conflict and social division. These dimensions are important because democratic systems depend upon public participation, accountability and confidence in governing institutions. However, focusing only on visible symptoms may leave a deeper question insufficiently examined: what happens when democratic institutions continue to operate formally while becoming progressively disconnected from the ethical commitments, collective consciousness and lived experiences that give them legitimacy?

This article argues that democratic instability should also be examined as a problem of institutional coherence. A democratic institution is sustained not only by constitutional arrangements, legal authority or administrative capacity. It also depends upon the relationship between what it claims to represent, how it acts and how those actions are experienced by the populations connected to it. When these relationships become increasingly misaligned, institutional continuity may exist alongside declining legitimacy.

The article develops this argument through the MPT-SST framework, which examines social and political transformation through the interaction of consciousness, ethics and structure. The framework proposes that durable peace and institutional stability require alignment between internal human values, collective ethical responsibility and external structural arrangements [1]. Earlier applications of MPT-SST have explored how conflicts and social instability cannot be fully addressed through structural interventions alone without considering deeper dimensions of consciousness, identity and ethical transformation [2].

Building upon this foundation, the article introduces Hyper-Structural Decoupling as a concept for understanding situations in which formal institutional structures remain active while their deeper relationship with social meaning, ethical expectations and public consciousness weakens. In such conditions, institutions may continue to perform their legal and administrative functions while gradually losing the relational coherence necessary for long-term legitimacy [3].

Hyper-Structural Decoupling does not imply institutional collapse. Many institutions can continue functioning despite significant internal tensions. The concern arises when the gap between institutional form and institutional meaning becomes sufficiently wide that stakeholders increasingly perceive institutions as disconnected, inconsistent or unresponsive. The result is not necessarily immediate breakdown but a gradual weakening of resonance between institutions and the communities they are intended to serve.

From this perspective, democratic instability is not only a question of whether institutions exist. It is also a question of whether those institutions continue to embody and translate the values upon which they are founded. Democratic systems frequently present themselves through commitments to liberty, equality, human dignity and human rights. Yet the credibility of these commitments depends upon their practical translation into political decisions, domestic governance and external relationships.

The concept of the Translation Deficit is developed to explain this process. A Translation Deficit emerges when the values institutions formally proclaim become increasingly disconnected from the policies, practices and outcomes associated with those institutions. It represents a gap between normative commitment and practical expression. The deficit becomes particularly significant when contradictions persist, when explanations remain inadequate and when affected populations increasingly experience institutional conduct as inconsistent with stated principles.

This issue is especially relevant in contemporary debates concerning migration, border governance and humanitarian responsibility. Democratic states possess legitimate responsibilities regarding territorial security, public order and the regulation of borders. However, these responsibilities exist alongside broader commitments concerning human dignity and humanitarian protection. The challenge is not whether states should maintain borders, but whether border governance can remain ethically coherent with the democratic values that states claim to defend.

The Ceuta humanitarian crisis provides an important context for examining this tension. The movement of migrants toward the Spanish enclave of Ceuta has often been interpreted through security-centred narratives focused on border control, irregular migration and territorial protection. Such concerns reflect genuine state responsibilities. However, when humanitarian vulnerabilities and structural causes of mobility are marginalised, a deeper question emerges concerning the relationship between democratic principles and external institutional practice.

The central argument of this article is that democratic legitimacy cannot be evaluated solely through internal institutional performance. It must also be considered through the manner in which democratic values are translated beyond domestic boundaries. A state may maintain strong internal democratic procedures while facing challenges concerning the consistency between its domestic principles and external conduct.

This argument does not suggest that democratic states must abandon national interests, security responsibilities or border regulation. Rather, it proposes that sustainable democratic legitimacy requires a balance between territorial responsibility and ethical accountability. Where this balance weakens, institutions may experience declining moral credibility and reduced resonance among relevant stakeholders.

The article therefore develops the Translation Deficit Ripple Effect as an early-warning framework. The concept proposes that unresolved contradictions between institutional values and practices may generate consequences that extend beyond the original context in which they emerge. Through processes of interpretation, political mobilisation and institutional interaction, these contradictions may contribute to declining trust, weakening legitimacy and the search for alternative political arrangements.

The proposed analytical pathway is:

Hyper-Structural Decoupling → Translation Deficit → Declining Ethical and Institutional Resonance → Erosion of Trust and Legitimacy → Stakeholder Decoupling → Institutional Realignment

This pathway is not deterministic. Institutions possess different

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

levels of resilience, adaptability and capacity for correction. A Translation Deficit may be reduced through transparency, accountability, participatory reform and renewed ethical coherence. However, where disconnection persists without meaningful correction, the possibility of institutional realignment may increase.

The article contributes to existing debates on democratic instability in three ways. First, it provides a conceptual framework that connects institutional legitimacy with ethical coherence and lived experience. Second, it develops a mechanism through which democratic contradictions may produce wider institutional consequences. Third, it extends the application of MPT-SST beyond conventional peace and conflict contexts by examining democratic institutions, sovereignty and border governance through a consciousness, ethics and structure perspective.

The article also contributes to the wider development of the Unified Science of Peace, which seeks to examine peace-related challenges through interconnected human, ethical and structural dimensions [4]. Within this orientation, conflict, instability and institutional crisis are not treated as isolated events but as expressions of deeper relationships among consciousness, social structures and ethical responsibility.

The analysis proceeds through several stages. The next section examines Hyper-Structural Decoupling and democratic moral contradiction. It then develops the Translation Deficit concept and explores the ripple-effect mechanism. The Ceuta crisis is analysed as an external humanitarian entry point, while the AES-ECOWAS institutional rupture is examined as a comparative illustration of institutional realignment. The article concludes by proposing Relational Sovereignty and transformative institutional coherence as pathways toward addressing democratic contradictions in an interconnected world.

## 2. Hyper-Structural Decoupling and Democratic Moral Contradiction

The concept of Hyper-Structural Decoupling begins from the observation that institutional continuity does not always correspond with institutional coherence. Modern democratic systems are frequently assessed through visible indicators such as constitutional stability, electoral processes, judicial independence and administrative capacity. These indicators remain essential, but they may not fully capture deeper conditions affecting institutional legitimacy. An institution may preserve its formal architecture while experiencing a gradual weakening of the relationships that connect its structures with shared values, public consciousness and ethical expectations.

Within the MPT-SST framework, social and political systems are understood as dynamic relationships among consciousness, ethics and structure. Structures provide the institutional environment through which collective life is organised; ethics provide the principles that guide human relationships; and consciousness represents the meanings, identities and interpretations through which individuals and communities relate to those structures [1]. Institutional stability therefore depends not only on the existence of structures but also on whether these three dimensions remain sufficiently aligned.

Hyper-Structural Decoupling occurs when institutional structures become increasingly separated from the consciousness and ethical foundations that originally provided them with legitimacy. The term does not suggest that structures become irrelevant or disappear. Rather, it describes a condition in which institutions continue operating at the formal level while their deeper relational connection with society weakens [3].

This distinction is important because contemporary democratic instability is often interpreted through the assumption that institutional survival indicates institutional health. However, a democracy may maintain elections, constitutions and administrative systems while experiencing declining trust, increasing polarisation and growing perceptions that institutions no longer represent shared interests or values. In such circumstances, the central challenge is not institutional existence but institutional resonance.

Institutional resonance refers to the degree of alignment between institutional identity, public expectations and lived experience. When citizens and stakeholders perceive that institutions meaningfully reflect their values and concerns, institutional legitimacy is strengthened. When they experience repeated contradictions between institutional commitments and institutional behaviour, resonance may decline.

The concept of Hyper-Structural Decoupling therefore provides a framework for examining why democratic institutions may become vulnerable even when their formal structures remain intact. The problem is not simply that institutions fail to function. Rather, they may continue functioning in ways that gradually weaken the ethical and relational foundations upon which their authority depends.

### 2.1 Democratic Institutions and the Problem of Moral Coherence

Democracy is commonly associated with principles such as popular sovereignty, political equality, accountability and protection of fundamental rights. These principles provide democratic institutions with normative legitimacy beyond mere administrative effectiveness. However, democratic legitimacy requires more than the declaration of values. It requires continuous translation of those values into political practice.

The challenge emerges when there is a widening distance between democratic ideals and institutional conduct. This distance may appear in different forms: unequal political influence, inconsistent application of rights, declining public participation, weakened accountability mechanisms or contradictions between domestic principles and external policies.

Political theory has long recognised that democratic systems depend upon legitimacy, trust and citizen acceptance rather than coercive authority alone. Institutions survive when citizens perceive them as appropriate, justified and worthy of support [5]. When this perception weakens, institutional authority may remain legally valid while becoming socially contested.

The MPT-SST perspective extends this discussion by arguing that legitimacy also contains an ethical and consciousness-based dimension. Institutions do not exist independently from the meanings people attach to them. The relationship between institutions and society is therefore not purely administrative. It is relational.

A democratic system may experience moral contradiction when the values it promotes internally are not consistently reflected in its wider practices. This contradiction becomes particularly significant for states and institutions that present themselves as defenders of universal democratic principles. Their legitimacy is shaped not only by internal governance but also by how their external actions are interpreted.

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

### 2.2 From Democratic Values to Institutional Practice

The translation of democratic values into institutional practice is a continuous process rather than a single achievement. Human rights, equality and democratic accountability require constant interpretation because political realities frequently involve competing interests and difficult choices.

For this reason, not every difference between democratic ideals and political decisions represents institutional failure. Governments must balance security, economic interests, legal obligations and social demands. Democratic governance involves managing these tensions through transparent reasoning, accountability and public participation.

The deeper concern arises when contradictions become persistent and when institutions appear unable or unwilling to address them. At that point, the problem moves beyond ordinary political disagreement and becomes a question of institutional coherence.

This is the foundation of the Translation Deficit. When institutions repeatedly proclaim principles that are not experienced as reflected in their decisions, a gap develops between institutional language and institutional reality. Over time, this gap may influence how citizens, communities and external observers understand the legitimacy of those institutions.

The Translation Deficit is therefore not simply a failure of policy implementation. It represents a deeper challenge concerning whether institutions can successfully convert ethical commitments into meaningful social outcomes.

### 2.3 Hyper-Structural Decoupling and Western Democratic Instability

Western democracies provide a particularly important context for examining Hyper-Structural Decoupling because they have historically presented themselves as models of constitutional governance, human rights protection and democratic development. Their institutional strength has often been associated with established legal systems, economic capacity and democratic traditions.

However, institutional maturity does not eliminate the possibility of internal contradiction. Advanced democratic systems may also experience declining trust, political polarisation and disputes concerning whether institutions continue to represent shared values. Recent scholarship has highlighted concerns regarding democratic backsliding, declining confidence in political institutions and increasing social fragmentation across several established democracies [6].

The MPT-SST interpretation does not reduce these challenges to a single cause. Economic inequality, technological transformation, identity politics, political communication patterns and geopolitical pressures all contribute to contemporary democratic tensions. Rather, the framework identifies an additional analytical dimension: whether institutions remain coherently connected to the ethical meanings and collective expectations that sustain them.

Hyper-Structural Decoupling therefore focuses attention on the relationship between institutional performance and institutional meaning. An institution may achieve procedural success while experiencing relational decline. Elections may continue, but citizens may increasingly believe that political systems do not respond to their concerns. Institutions may defend universal principles, but observers may question whether those principles are consistently applied.

This tension creates the conditions from which a Translation Deficit may emerge.

### 2.4 The External Dimension of Democratic Legitimacy

The concept of democratic legitimacy has traditionally focused on internal political relationships between states and their citizens. However, in an increasingly interconnected world, democratic institutions are also evaluated through their external conduct.

Migration, climate change, international security, humanitarian crises and global economic relationships demonstrate that political decisions frequently affect populations beyond national borders. As a result, democratic values are increasingly tested through international actions as well as domestic governance.

This does not mean that states lose their sovereignty or that national responsibilities become irrelevant. States remain responsible for protecting their populations, maintaining public order and managing territorial boundaries. However, sovereignty operates within broader networks of human interaction and interdependence.

The tension between sovereignty and universal democratic values becomes particularly visible in border governance. A state may legitimately regulate migration while simultaneously facing ethical questions concerning how vulnerable populations are treated. The challenge is not whether borders should exist, but whether border practices maintain coherence with broader commitments to human dignity.

The Ceuta humanitarian crisis provides an important example of this tension. It demonstrates how border events can become sites where democratic values, security concerns and humanitarian responsibilities intersect. The crisis therefore provides a pathway for examining how Hyper-Structural Decoupling may extend from domestic political structures into external governance practices.

### 2.5 From Decoupling to the Translation Deficit

Hyper-Structural Decoupling represents the underlying condition. The Translation Deficit represents the mechanism through which that condition becomes politically visible.

The relationship may be expressed as:

Institutional Decoupling → Value-Practice Misalignment → Translation Deficit →

Declining Resonance → Institutional Vulnerability

The framework does not assume that every institutional contradiction leads to crisis. Institutions possess mechanisms of adaptation, reform and self-correction. However,

when contradictions accumulate without meaningful response, the distance between institutional identity and stakeholder experience may increase.

The significance of the Translation Deficit Ripple Effect is therefore found in its attention to process. Institutional instability does not always emerge suddenly from a single event. It may develop through gradual accumulation of unresolved tensions that weaken trust and reshape political expectations.

## 3. The Translation Deficit: From Democratic Values to Institutional Practice

The concept of Hyper-Structural Decoupling identifies the underlying condition in which institutional structures remain formally operational while becoming progressively disconnected from the consciousness, ethical expectations and lived realities that provide them with legitimacy. The next analytical question concerns the mechanism through which this disconnection becomes visible in institutional conduct.

The concept of the Translation Deficit addresses this question. It

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

refers to the widening gap between the democratic and ethical values institutions formally proclaim, the policies and practices through which those values are implemented and the lived realities experienced by populations affected by institutional decisions.

The concept is based on the proposition that values do not become socially meaningful merely because they are declared. Democratic principles acquire institutional significance through the processes by which they are interpreted, incorporated into policy, translated into practice and experienced by people. Human dignity, equality, freedom, justice and accountability remain normative commitments until institutions develop credible structures through which those commitments shape political decisions and practical outcomes.

Translation therefore refers to more than communication. It is the institutional process through which ethical principles move from the level of public commitment to the level of governance. It includes the interpretation of values, the development of laws and policies, the allocation of institutional responsibility, the implementation of decisions and the lived consequences experienced by affected populations.

A Translation Deficit emerges when these stages become disconnected. An institution may publicly affirm a democratic principle while implementing policies that do not adequately reflect it. It may adopt legal commitments without developing the institutional capacity required for meaningful implementation. It may preserve formal compliance while affected populations experience exclusion, unequal treatment or the absence of practical protection.

### 3.1 The Conceptual Structure of the Translation Deficit

The Translation Deficit may be represented conceptually as:

Proclaimed Democratic and Ethical Values → Institutional Interpretation → Policy Formation → Practical Implementation → Lived Experience

Where the relationships among these stages remain coherent, institutional values may retain credibility and generate ethical resonance. Where substantial gaps emerge, the meaning of the original commitment may weaken as it moves from principle to practice [3].

The Translation Deficit is not identical to ordinary policy failure. Governments may experience implementation difficulties because of limited resources, administrative constraints, competing obligations or unexpected political conditions. Such difficulties do not automatically establish ethical inconsistency. The deficit becomes theoretically significant when the gap between values and practice is persistent, inadequately explained and resistant to meaningful institutional correction [1].

This distinction is important. Democratic governance requires institutions to balance competing interests and respond to changing circumstances. Perfect consistency is neither possible nor necessarily desirable. Political decisions often involve difficult choices among legitimate priorities. The Translation Deficit does not require institutions to produce identical outcomes in every context. It requires institutions to explain how their decisions remain connected to the ethical principles they publicly affirm.

Within the MPT-SST framework, the Translation Deficit emerges through the interaction among consciousness, ethics and structure [4].

Consciousness concerns how institutions perceive political problems, interpret human vulnerability and recognise the experiences of affected populations. Institutional consciousness influences which concerns become visible, whose perspectives are treated as legitimate and how political responsibility is understood.

Ethics concerns the principles through which institutions evaluate responsibility, dignity, justice and accountability. Ethical coherence requires more than the public declaration of universal values. It requires that those values remain meaningful when political interests, security concerns or institutional pressures make their application difficult.

Structure concerns the laws, policies, administrative arrangements and institutional procedures through which ethical commitments are translated into practical action. Structures determine whether institutions possess the capacity to respond, adapt and correct identified inconsistencies.

The Translation Deficit may emerge when these dimensions become misaligned. Institutions may recognise human vulnerability but lack structures capable of providing meaningful protection. They may possess strong legal frameworks while interpreting ethical responsibility narrowly. They may publicly affirm universal values while political consciousness defines some populations primarily as threats or external burdens.

### 3.2 The Translation Deficit and Democratic Moral Contradiction

Contemporary democratic systems commonly present themselves through commitments to liberty, equality, human dignity and the protection of fundamental rights. These principles provide the normative foundation upon which democratic institutions claim legitimacy both domestically and internationally. However, the credibility of these commitments depends upon their translation into political decisions, institutional conduct and lived human experience.

A state may possess strong domestic democratic institutions while responding to vulnerable populations beyond its borders through exclusionary or securitised practices. This creates a potential tension between what the state declares and what it does. The existence of such a tension does not automatically establish hypocrisy or institutional failure. Governments must often reconcile competing responsibilities. The ethical concern arises when security considerations are treated as sufficient in themselves and humanitarian responsibilities are excluded from the institutional framework through which political decisions are made [7].

This is the point at which the Translation Deficit becomes relevant. The deficit is not simply a matter of communication. It reflects a deeper condition in which democratic values are proclaimed but not adequately translated into practice. Where this condition persists, the moral credibility of democratic institutions may weaken.

The Ceuta humanitarian crisis provides an illustrative context for examining this process. Spain and the European Union possess established legal and institutional commitments to human rights, human dignity and the protection of vulnerable populations. At the same time, the sudden movement of people into Ceuta created immediate concerns regarding border security, public order and administrative capacity.

The existence of these security concerns does not invalidate humanitarian responsibility. States may regulate borders while remaining accountable to the dignity and rights of those affected by their decisions. The Translation Deficit becomes relevant when

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

the institutional response treats territorial control as the dominant objective without adequately integrating the humanitarian conditions through which the crisis is experienced.

The question is not whether border governance should occur. It is whether democratic and humanitarian values remain visible in the interpretation and implementation of border governance.

A security-centred response may be legally authorised and politically supported while still generating perceptions of ethical inconsistency. If vulnerable people are represented primarily through the language of invasion, threat or deterrence, their experiences may become subordinate to the objective of restoring territorial control. This may widen the distance between universal commitments to human dignity and the practical treatment of populations located outside the political community.

The resulting contradiction is not necessarily a deliberate rejection of democratic values. It may emerge through institutional priorities, political narratives and the structural separation between domestic citizenship and external humanitarian responsibility. Nevertheless, the consequences may become ethically significant when the separation remains persistent.

**3.3 The Dimensions of Translation Failure**

The Translation Deficit may manifest across several interconnected dimensions.

The first dimension concerns interpretive disconnection. Democratic values such as human dignity or equality are not self-interpreting. They require institutional processes through which their meaning is clarified and applied to specific political conditions. An interpretive disconnection may occur when institutions adopt narrow interpretations that exclude vulnerable populations from the protection those values are intended to provide.

The second dimension concerns policy inconsistency. A state may affirm humanitarian principles while adopting policies that do not adequately reflect them. Border enforcement measures may be designed primarily for deterrence without sufficient attention to the protection needs of vulnerable people. Legal frameworks may exist on paper while remaining under-resourced or systematically ignored in practice.

The third dimension concerns implementation failure. Even where policies reflect humanitarian values, their actual implementation may fall short. Frontline officials may lack training, resources or supervision. Accountability mechanisms may be weak. The gap between policy design and practical outcome may therefore become substantial.

The fourth dimension concerns experiential disconnection. The lived experience of affected populations may differ significantly from institutional representations. A policy that appears reasonable at the level of formal design may produce exclusion, harm or indignity for those who encounter it. When affected populations experience repeated contradictions between institutional language and institutional conduct, the Translation Deficit may become entrenched.

The fifth dimension concerns accountability failure. Where contradictions emerge, institutions may lack credible mechanisms through which they can be identified, examined and corrected. Affected populations may have limited opportunity to raise concerns. Independent oversight may be weak. Institutional learning may be slow or absent.

**3.4 The Distinction Between Translation Deficit and Implementation Failure**

A critical distinction must be maintained between ordinary implementation failure and the broader condition of a Translation Deficit.

Implementation failure occurs when institutions possess appropriate policies but lack the resources, capacity or coordination required for their effective application. Such failure may be temporary and correctable through administrative reform, additional resources or improved training. While serious, implementation failure does not necessarily indicate a fundamental disconnection between institutional values and institutional conduct.

The Translation Deficit operates at a deeper level. It occurs when the gap between values and practice reflects not merely administrative weakness but a structural or interpretive problem in how values are understood and translated. The deficit may persist even when individual policies are implemented competently because the underlying relationship between values, interpretation and practice remains disconnected.

This distinction has practical implications. Institutions that address a Translation Deficit primarily through improved communication or administrative adjustment may fail to resolve the underlying condition. The gap may persist because it is produced by deeper factors: institutional culture, political priorities, the exclusion of affected populations from decision-making or the dominance of security-oriented consciousness over humanitarian concern.

**3.5 The Translation Deficit and the External Dimension of Democratic Coherence**

The Translation Deficit provides a framework for examining the external dimension of democratic coherence. Democratic institutions are commonly assessed according to internal indicators such as electoral competition, constitutional accountability, civil liberties and the protection of citizens' rights. These indicators remain essential, but they may not capture the full ethical reach of democratic authority.

Foreign policy, humanitarian responsibility and border governance are also arenas through which democratic values are interpreted. A state that promotes democracy and human rights as universal principles may be evaluated according to how those principles influence its relationships with vulnerable populations beyond its borders.

This does not imply that citizens and non-citizens possess identical political rights or that states must eliminate all distinctions between internal and external responsibility. Political membership remains an important foundation of democratic representation and public accountability. The issue is whether the distinction between citizens and non-citizens becomes a justification for excluding vulnerable people from meaningful ethical consideration [8].

The concept of the Translation Deficit therefore does not reject sovereignty. It examines how sovereignty translates ethical responsibility across political boundaries. A state may retain authority over its territory while recognising that its decisions operate within wider human relationships. The challenge is to ensure that territorial responsibility does not become disconnected from humanitarian accountability.

The deficit may also emerge in foreign policy. Democratic states may support human rights, democratic governance and international cooperation while pursuing external policies that appear inconsistent with these principles. Such contradictions may

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

be interpreted differently by governments, political movements and affected populations. Some may regard them as unavoidable consequences of national interest. Others may interpret them as evidence that democratic values are selectively applied.

The framework does not assume that every perception of inconsistency is accurate. Political narratives may be shaped by misinformation, ideological competition or strategic interests. A careful analysis must therefore distinguish among three related but different conditions:

1. Objective value-practice contradiction, where institutional conduct can be shown to conflict with a stated commitment;
2. Perceived institutional inconsistency, where stakeholders interpret institutional conduct as ethically contradictory even when the institution provides an alternative justification;
3. Politically constructed narratives, where claims of inconsistency are amplified or strategically employed to weaken institutional legitimacy.

These conditions may interact, but they should not be treated as identical. An institution may face a genuine ethical contradiction without widespread public recognition. Conversely, an institution may be accused of inconsistency even where its conduct remains compatible with its stated principles. The Translation Deficit framework therefore requires empirical investigation rather than relying solely on normative judgment.

The distinction also demonstrates why institutional communication alone may not resolve the deficit. Governments may explain their policies and defend their decisions, but explanations do not automatically restore ethical credibility. Where affected populations continue to experience exclusion, unequal treatment or institutional indifference, the gap between official narratives and lived experience may persist.

Meaningful correction requires more than public justification. It may require changes in institutional practice, greater participation by affected communities and the development of structures capable of translating ethical commitments into credible outcomes.

**3.6 From Translation Deficit to the Ripple Effect**

The Translation Deficit may consequently generate effects beyond the immediate policy area in which it emerges. A contradiction in border governance may influence perceptions of democratic credibility. A perceived inconsistency in foreign policy may affect trust in wider international institutions. Where similar contradictions accumulate across several institutional domains, their consequences may become relational and systemic.

This possibility introduces the next stage of the framework, the Translation Deficit Ripple Effect. The ripple effect explains how unresolved value-practice disconnection may move beyond its original setting through public narratives, institutional relationships and geopolitical alignments.

The proposed pathway is:

Democratic Value-Practice Misalignment → Ethical Disconnection → Translation Deficit → Declining Institutional Resonance → Erosion of Trust and Legitimacy → Institutional Decoupling → Defection, Fragmentation or Realignment

The pathway is conditional rather than deterministic. A Translation Deficit does not automatically produce institutional rupture. Its consequences depend upon historical conditions, political leadership, institutional resilience, stakeholder interpretation and the availability of alternative institutional arrangements.

At each stage, corrective action may interrupt the process. Institutions may reduce the deficit by improving ethical consistency, strengthening participation, addressing structural inequalities and creating credible mechanisms through which affected populations can influence institutional decisions.

The purpose of the framework is therefore not to predict institutional collapse. It is to identify the conditions through which unresolved disconnection may become institutionally consequential and to provide a basis for preventive transformation.

The relationship between the Translation Deficit and institutional legitimacy is central to the framework. Legitimacy is not a fixed attribute that institutions possess permanently. It is a relational condition that depends upon the continuing alignment between institutional values, institutional conduct and the expectations of populations affected by institutional decisions.

Classical approaches to legitimacy have identified several foundations for political authority: legal legitimacy, based on the existence of constitutional and procedural frameworks; performance legitimacy, based on the capacity of institutions to deliver effective governance; and normative legitimacy, based on the alignment between institutional conduct and widely accepted values [5].

The MPT-SST framework builds upon these foundations while adding an additional dimension. Institutional legitimacy also depends upon the extent to which institutions translate their proclaimed values into practices that generate ethical resonance among affected populations. Where a wide gap exists between what institutions declare and what they do, formal legitimacy may be preserved while relational legitimacy weakens.

The Translation Deficit therefore provides a mechanism for explaining how institutions may remain legally legitimate while experiencing declining normative credibility. The deficit is particularly significant for democratic institutions because their legitimacy depends substantially upon their capacity to reflect and respond to the values of the populations they govern.

**3.7 The Translation Deficit and Institutional Legitimacy**

The relationship between the Translation Deficit and institutional legitimacy is central to the framework. Legitimacy is not a fixed attribute that institutions possess permanently. It is a relational condition that depends upon the continuing alignment between institutional values, institutional conduct and the expectations of populations affected by institutional decisions.

Classical approaches to legitimacy have identified several foundations for political authority: legal legitimacy, based on the existence of constitutional and procedural frameworks; performance legitimacy, based on the capacity of institutions to deliver effective governance; and normative legitimacy, based on the alignment between institutional conduct and widely accepted values [5].

The MPT-SST framework builds upon these foundations while adding an additional dimension. Institutional legitimacy also depends upon the extent to which institutions translate their proclaimed values into practices that generate ethical resonance among affected populations. Where a wide gap exists between what institutions declare and what they do, formal legitimacy may be preserved while relational legitimacy weakens.

The Translation Deficit therefore provides a mechanism for explaining how institutions may remain legally legitimate while

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

experiencing declining normative credibility. The deficit is particularly significant for democratic institutions because their legitimacy depends substantially upon their capacity to reflect and respond to the values of the populations they govern.

**3.8 The Translation Deficit and the AES-ECOWAS Rupture**

The Translation Deficit concept provides a useful lens for understanding the institutional rupture between the Alliance of Sahel States and the Economic Community of West African States. While the specific historical and political conditions differ from those surrounding the Ceuta crisis, the AES-ECOWAS rupture illustrates how perceived institutional disconnection may contribute to the weakening of institutional loyalty and the search for alternative governance arrangements.

ECOWAS was established with commitments to regional cooperation, political stability and economic integration. However, over time, some member states developed perceptions that the institution had become disconnected from their security concerns, development priorities and political realities. The withdrawal of AES member states was preceded by growing perceptions that ECOWAS was inconsistently applying its principles, favouring certain governance models while disregarding others and failing to address the security challenges facing Sahelian states [9].

These perceptions did not necessarily reflect the objective position of ECOWAS as an institution. They were partly shaped by political narratives, strategic calculations and the influence of external actors. Nevertheless, the existence of such perceptions, combined with the availability of alternative institutional frameworks, contributed to conditions under which rupture became possible.

The Translation Deficit framework does not claim that ECOWAS exhibited a definitive Translation Deficit equivalent to that potentially identified in the European Union or other Western institutions. It suggests that the AES-ECOWAS rupture provides a comparative illustration of how perceived institutional disconnection may weaken stakeholder commitment and facilitate realignment.

The significance of this illustration lies in its demonstration that institutional legitimacy depends upon more than formal structures and established procedures. Where stakeholders increasingly perceive institutions as disconnected from their values, needs or experiences, the basis for continued cooperation may weaken. This observation applies to regional institutions in both the Global South and the West, though the specific conditions and manifestations will differ.

**3.9 Addressing the Translation Deficit**

The Translation Deficit is not inevitably permanent. Institutions possess the capacity to identify, reduce and ultimately transform the conditions through which it emerges. Several approaches may contribute to deficit reduction.

The first approach concerns interpretive reform. Institutions should examine how they interpret their core values and whether their interpretations adequately reflect the ethical commitments they have publicly affirmed. This may involve revisiting the relationship between domestic principles and external conduct and ensuring that humanitarian responsibility is not conceptually excluded from security decision-making.

The second approach concerns policy coherence. Institutions should examine whether their policies remain consistent with their normative commitments and, where inconsistencies exist, identify why they have emerged and how they might be addressed. Policy coherence requires more than formal compatibility. It requires that the meaning of democratic values remains visible in institutional practice.

The third approach concerns implementation capacity. Institutions should ensure that they possess the resources, training and oversight required to translate policies into meaningful outcomes. Implementation failure should not be allowed to persist indefinitely as an explanation for value-practice disconnection.

The fourth approach concerns participatory accountability. Affected populations should have meaningful opportunities to raise concerns, contribute to policy development and hold institutions accountable for their conduct. Participation may improve institutional understanding, strengthen legitimacy and reduce the gap between institutional language and lived experience.

The fifth approach concerns institutional learning. Institutions should develop mechanisms for identifying and correcting Translation Deficits before they become deeply entrenched. This may involve regular review processes, independent oversight and the capacity to respond to emerging contradictions.

The sixth approach concerns transparent communication. Institutions should communicate clearly about their decisions, explain how those decisions relate to their commitments and acknowledge where tensions or inconsistencies exist. Honest communication may not eliminate perceptions of disconnection, but it may strengthen institutional credibility.

**3.10 The Translation Deficit Ripple Effect**

The Translation Deficit Ripple Effect represents the wider consequences of unresolved disconnection between institutional values and institutional practice. The concept proposes that contradictions identified in one policy area may influence perceptions of institutional legitimacy in other areas. What begins as a specific inconsistency may generate broader effects through processes of interpretation, political mobilisation and institutional interaction.

The ripple effect operates through several mechanisms. First, public trust in institutions is often holistic rather than policy-specific. Citizens may generalise from their experience in one area to their assessment of institutional credibility more broadly. A persistent contradiction in border governance may therefore influence trust in democratic institutions as a whole.

Second, political narratives may connect specific institutional contradictions to wider claims about institutional hypocrisy, exclusion or lack of accountability. These narratives can amplify the consequences of an initial Translation Deficit by extending its relevance to additional policy domains.

Third, international perceptions may also be influenced. Political actors beyond the national setting may interpret a domestic Translation Deficit as evidence of broader institutional weakness or inconsistency. This may affect diplomatic relationships, institutional cooperation and the normative influence of democratic models.

Fourth, where multiple Translation Deficits accumulate across several institutional domains, their combined effects may be greater than their individual consequences.

The accumulation of contradictions may create conditions under which stakeholders increasingly question institutional legitimacy and consider alternative arrangements.

The ripple effect should not be interpreted deterministically. Institutions possess the capacity to interrupt the process through

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

corrective action. However, where disconnection persists without meaningful correction, the consequences of the initial Translation Deficit may extend beyond its original setting.

**4. The Ceuta Humanitarian Crisis as a Test of Democratic and Humanitarian Responsibility**

The Ceuta humanitarian crisis provides an important entry point for examining the tension between territorial sovereignty, democratic responsibility and transboundary human vulnerability. In May 2021, more than 8,000 people crossed from Morocco into the Spanish autonomous city of Ceuta within a short period. A substantial number were children and adolescents, many of whom required emergency protection and accommodation. The sudden movement created an immediate humanitarian, political and administrative crisis for Ceuta, Spain and the wider European Union [10,11].

The events were widely interpreted through the language of border security, territorial control and political pressure. Spanish authorities regarded the situation as a serious challenge to national sovereignty and European border governance. The scale and speed of the crossings placed considerable pressure on local institutions and generated legitimate concerns regarding public order, emergency response and the capacity of the city to provide immediate assistance. The crisis also occurred within a period of heightened diplomatic tension between Spain and Morocco, demonstrating that cross-border human movement may become entangled with wider political and interstate disputes [10,12].

These concerns should not be dismissed. States possess legitimate responsibilities to regulate their borders, maintain public order and protect the security of their populations.

Border governance is an established function of political authority and the inability of institutions to manage sudden and large-scale movements may create serious humanitarian and administrative consequences. However, the recognition of legitimate security responsibilities does not resolve the wider ethical questions raised by the crisis.

The people who crossed into Ceuta were not merely an undifferentiated security threat or an abstract challenge to territorial authority. They were human beings whose movement occurred within conditions of vulnerability, political uncertainty and unequal access to security and opportunity. Many were children and young people. Their presence therefore raised questions concerning protection, dignity, legal safeguards and the responsibility of institutions towards vulnerable populations regardless of nationality or migration status [11,13].

The humanitarian dimension becomes particularly significant when political language reduces complex human movement to concepts such as invasion, deterrence or border failure. Such language may express genuine public concerns regarding sovereignty and security, but it can also narrow the moral frame through which the crisis is understood. When vulnerable people are represented primarily as a threat to territorial order, their experiences, motivations and rights may become secondary to the immediate objective of restoring border control.

The MPT-SST perspective does not reject the importance of border security. Rather, it questions whether security-centred responses are sufficient when they become disconnected from the human, historical and structural conditions that shape contemporary mobility. Human movement across borders may be influenced by conflict, economic inequality, political exclusion, environmental pressure, social networks and changing regional relationships. A response focused exclusively on deterrence may address the visible movement of people while leaving many of its underlying causes beyond the scope of institutional responsibility.

Ceuta therefore reveals a central limitation of a narrowly territorial approach to governance. The border identifies where the movement becomes politically visible, but it does not necessarily explain why the movement occurred or what wider relationships contributed to it. The crisis cannot be understood adequately by examining the territorial boundary alone. It must also be situated within the interconnected relationships among Spain, Morocco, the European Union, North Africa and the vulnerable populations whose lives were directly affected.

This broader interpretation does not imply that Spain or the European Union bears exclusive responsibility for the conditions surrounding the crisis. Human mobility is shaped by multiple actors, institutions and historical processes. Morocco's role in the management of the border and the diplomatic context surrounding the crossings were also significant. The purpose of the analysis is not to assign responsibility to a single state. It is to demonstrate that contemporary humanitarian crises often emerge through relationships that extend beyond the territorial authority of any individual government.

The Ceuta crisis consequently presents a difficult question concerning the external dimension of democratic responsibility. Democratic states frequently affirm commitments to human rights, equality, dignity and the protection of vulnerable populations. These principles form part of the moral foundation through which democratic institutions justify their legitimacy and international leadership. Yet the credibility of such commitments may be tested when vulnerable people approach national borders under conditions of political uncertainty and human insecurity.

A democracy may protect extensive civil and political freedoms within its territorial community while responding to vulnerable populations beyond its borders primarily through exclusion, deterrence or securitisation. The existence of this tension does not automatically establish democratic hypocrisy or institutional failure. Governments must often reconcile competing responsibilities, including public security, legal obligations, resource limitations and the protection of their citizens. The ethical concern arises when security considerations are treated as sufficient in themselves and humanitarian responsibilities are excluded from the institutional framework through which political decisions are made.

The central question is therefore not whether states possess the right to regulate borders. They do. The question is whether the exercise of that authority remains consistent with the democratic and humanitarian values states proclaim as universal. Where democratic principles are strongly protected within national borders but applied selectively in external relationships, a gap may emerge between normative commitment and institutional practice. This gap forms an important foundation for the concept of the Translation Deficit developed later in this article. The Translation Deficit refers to the widening disconnection between the ethical and democratic values institutions formally proclaim, the policies and practices through which those values are implemented and the lived realities experienced by populations affected by institutional decisions. In the context of Ceuta, the issue is not simply whether border control occurred. It is whether democratic commitments to

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

dignity, equality and humanitarian protection were translated coherently into the institutional response to vulnerable people at the border.

The crisis also demonstrates that democratic legitimacy may possess an external dimension. The legitimacy of a democratic state cannot be evaluated solely through constitutional arrangements, electoral procedures or the protection of rights within its own territory. It may also be influenced by how the state exercises power beyond its borders and how its external conduct affects populations who are not members of its political community.

This does not mean that every foreign-policy decision should be evaluated according to a single moral standard without regard to context. Political institutions operate within conditions of competing interests and difficult choices. Nevertheless, states that present democracy and human rights as universal principles may face increasing questions when those principles appear to be applied selectively. The greater the claim to universal moral leadership, the greater the expectation that democratic values will retain meaning across both domestic and external relationships.

The Ceuta crisis therefore becomes more than a border event. It becomes a test of whether territorial sovereignty and humanitarian responsibility can be integrated within a coherent system of democratic governance. A state may defend its borders while still recognising the dignity and vulnerability of those who approach them. Security and humanitarian responsibility need not be treated as mutually exclusive. The deeper challenge lies in developing institutional arrangements capable of protecting territorial order without reducing human vulnerability to a secondary concern.

This challenge is particularly important in an interconnected world. Migration does not occur outside the global relationships created by trade, diplomacy, conflict, historical inequality and international political decisions. States may seek to manage the consequences of human movement at their borders while remaining connected to some of the wider conditions that influence mobility. A purely territorial approach may therefore create an ethical and institutional separation between the location where a crisis becomes visible and the wider relationships through which it develops.

The MPT-SST framework approaches this problem through the relationship among consciousness, ethics and structure. Consciousness concerns how institutions and political communities perceive vulnerable populations and interpret the meaning of human mobility. Ethics concerns the principles through which states balance security, dignity, justice and responsibility. Structure concerns the laws, policies and institutional arrangements through which those principles are translated into practical action.

Where these dimensions become disconnected, institutional responses may remain administratively effective while losing ethical and relational coherence. A border may be secured, yet the wider conditions producing human insecurity may remain unaddressed. Policies may comply with formal procedures, yet affected populations may experience exclusion, vulnerability or a denial of meaningful protection. Institutional success measured only through territorial control may therefore conceal a deeper failure of ethical translation.

The Ceuta crisis illustrates this possibility without establishing a deterministic conclusion. It does not prove that Western democracies have abandoned humanitarian responsibility or that border governance is inherently incompatible with human rights. Instead, it reveals a structural tension that requires closer theoretical examination. The crisis invites consideration of whether territorial sovereignty, when interpreted primarily through exclusion and control, possesses sufficient conceptual and institutional capacity to govern the interconnected human realities of the twenty-first century.

The significance of Ceuta therefore lies in its capacity to expose a wider democratic contradiction. The crisis brought together territorial authority, human vulnerability, diplomatic conflict, migration governance and competing moral expectations within a single political moment. It demonstrated how a border can become both a site of legitimate state responsibility and a point at which the ethical limits of territorially centred governance become visible.

**5. Westphalian Governance Lag**

The growing tension between territorial sovereignty and global interdependence reveals a deeper institutional problem. The difficulty is not simply that contemporary states face more complex challenges than those encountered in earlier historical periods. It is that many of the structures through which political authority is organised remain substantially territorial while the conditions they are expected to govern have become increasingly transboundary.

Migration, climate change, digital communication, economic interdependence, humanitarian crises and transnational security threats do not remain within the boundaries of individual states. Their causes, consequences and pathways of influence frequently extend across several political jurisdictions. Yet the dominant institutions of governance continue to allocate responsibility primarily through territorial authority, national jurisdiction and state-centred political accountability.

This condition may be described as a Westphalian Governance Lag. The concept refers to the widening gap between the territorial organisation of political authority and the interconnected realities that contemporary governance is required to address. It does not imply that the Westphalian system has become irrelevant or that territorial sovereignty has lost all institutional value. States remain central to public administration, law enforcement, democratic representation, social welfare, security and the protection of populations. The problem arises when territorial institutions are expected to govern relational realities without sufficiently adapting their ethical responsibilities, decision-making processes and cooperative capacities.

The governance lag becomes particularly visible in the management of cross-border human mobility. States possess legitimate authority to regulate entry, maintain public order and protect national security. However, migration is rarely produced by a single cause located within one territory. It may emerge through the interaction of conflict, poverty, political exclusion, environmental pressure, historical inequality, labour demand, transnational networks and changing regional conditions. A governance model that responds only at the territorial point of arrival may therefore address the visible movement of people while leaving many of its underlying causes beyond the scope of institutional responsibility.

The Ceuta crisis illustrates this difficulty. The immediate concern centred on the rapid movement of people across a politically sensitive border and the resulting pressure on Spanish authorities. Yet the crisis also emerged within wider relationships involving

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

Morocco, Spain, the European Union, regional mobility, diplomatic tension and the vulnerability of those who crossed. A purely territorial interpretation can identify the border as the primary site of governance, but it cannot fully explain the relational conditions through which the crisis developed.

The limitation is not that border governance exists. The limitation is the assumption that territorial control alone can provide an adequate response to problems generated through interconnected human systems. When institutional attention becomes concentrated exclusively on deterrence, exclusion or security enforcement, humanitarian responsibility may be treated as secondary rather than integrated into the governance process. This can produce a widening separation between the ethical values institutions proclaim and the practices through which they respond to vulnerable populations.

Within the MPT-SST framework, the Westphalian Governance Lag may therefore be understood as a structural form of misalignment. Institutional structures remain organised around territorial authority while human consciousness, ethical responsibility and lived experience increasingly operate across territorial boundaries. The result is not necessarily institutional failure. It is a growing difficulty in translating shared values into governance practices that correspond to the relational nature of contemporary realities.

**The challenge can be represented conceptually as follows:**

Expanding Global Interdependence → Persistent Territorial Governance → Institutional and Ethical Misalignment → Governance Lag → Increasing Relational Disconnection

This pathway is not deterministic. States and international institutions may reduce the governance lag through cooperation, legal adaptation, humanitarian accountability and more responsive forms of transboundary governance. The framework therefore identifies a condition of institutional tension rather than predicting the decline of territorial sovereignty.

The concept also helps clarify why conventional responses may appear increasingly inadequate even when they remain legally authorised and administratively effective. A state may strengthen border controls, improve surveillance and expand institutional capacity while still failing to address the relational conditions that produce recurring human insecurity. Administrative effectiveness does not automatically establish ethical coherence. Similarly, the preservation of territorial authority does not necessarily demonstrate that governance structures remain adequately aligned with the interconnected realities they regulate.

The Westphalian Governance Lag thus raises a broader question: how can states retain legitimate territorial authority while responding responsibly to the transboundary relationships through which contemporary political, humanitarian and security challenges are produced?

The answer proposed in this article is not the abolition of sovereignty. Nor is it the replacement of states by an unrestricted global authority. The need is for a transformation in how sovereignty is understood and exercised. Territorial authority must remain institutionally grounded, but it must also become more relationally aware, ethically accountable and structurally responsive.

This transition provides the foundation for the next stage of the argument. If the central limitation lies in the gap between territorially organised authority and interconnected human reality, then the task is not simply to weaken sovereignty. It is to develop a form of sovereignty capable of translating territorial responsibility into meaningful cooperation, humanitarian accountability and shared human security.

## 6. From Territorial Authority to Relational Responsibility

The limitations of territorially centred governance do not require the rejection of state authority. States remain essential institutions of political organisation. They provide legal order, public administration, democratic representation, social protection and mechanisms through which collective decisions may be implemented. Any serious proposal for transforming sovereignty must therefore recognise the continuing importance of territorial institutions.

The problem is not sovereignty itself. It is the tendency to interpret sovereignty as though political responsibility ends at the boundary of the state. In an interconnected world, the consequences of national decisions frequently extend beyond the populations over which governments exercise direct authority. Economic policies influence regional livelihoods. Environmental decisions affect neighbouring societies. Foreign policy shapes political conditions beyond national borders. Border practices influence the safety, dignity and future of vulnerable people whose lives may be affected by decisions made elsewhere.

Territorial authority therefore operates within wider relationships. These relationships do not eliminate national interests, but they complicate the assumption that national interests can be pursued independently of broader human responsibilities. The challenge is to recognise that sovereignty is exercised within a network of interdependence rather than in political isolation.

Relational responsibility refers to the ethical obligation of states and institutions to consider how their decisions affect other people, societies and political communities connected to them through historical, economic, humanitarian, ecological and security relationships. It does not require states to accept unlimited obligations or abandon their responsibilities to their own populations. Rather, it requires the consequences of political action to be evaluated within the wider relationships through which those consequences emerge.

This perspective is particularly important in the governance of migration. States have legitimate responsibilities to regulate borders and maintain public order. At the same time, people seeking movement across borders may be responding to conditions shaped by conflict, economic deprivation, environmental pressure or political instability. Some of these conditions may be connected to historical relationships, international economic structures or the external policies of powerful states.

**A relational approach therefore asks questions that a purely territorial model may overlook:**

How have historical and contemporary relationships contributed to the conditions producing human mobility?

What responsibilities arise when state policies affect vulnerable populations beyond national borders?

How can border security be combined with humanitarian protection?

How can states cooperate to address the structural conditions that generate displacement and irregular movement?

How can the dignity and agency of affected populations remain visible within institutional decision-making?

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

These questions do not deny the legitimacy of borders. They broaden the ethical framework through which borders are governed.

The Ceuta crisis demonstrates why this broader perspective is necessary. A territorial interpretation may focus primarily on the protection of the border, the management of entry and the restoration of state control. A relational interpretation includes these concerns but places them within a wider analysis of human vulnerability, diplomatic relationships, regional inequality and institutional responsibility.

The difference is significant. Under a narrowly territorial model, the movement of vulnerable people may be treated mainly as a problem entering the state. Under a relational model, the same movement is understood as an interconnected human condition involving both legitimate security concerns and ethical responsibilities that extend beyond the immediate border.

The transition from territorial authority to relational responsibility therefore requires a change in institutional orientation. Governance must move from asking only, "How can the state protect its boundary?" to asking, "How can the state protect its population while responding responsibly to the wider human relationships through which the challenge has emerged?"

This shift does not weaken state responsibility. It may strengthen the legitimacy of political authority by connecting national security with human dignity, humanitarian accountability and cooperative problem-solving.

Within MPT-SST, relational responsibility can be interpreted through the interaction of consciousness, ethics and structure. Consciousness concerns recognition of the interconnected human realities that extend beyond political boundaries. Ethics concerns the responsibility to respond to those realities with dignity, fairness and accountability. Structure concerns the institutional arrangements through which recognition and responsibility are translated into practical governance.

The relationship may be represented as:

Relational Recognition → Ethical Responsibility → Cooperative Institutional Transformation

Where these dimensions become aligned, sovereignty may remain territorially grounded while becoming more responsive to transboundary realities. Where they remain disconnected, institutional practices may reproduce the governance lag identified in the previous section.

The transition towards relational responsibility therefore prepares the conceptual foundation for Relational Sovereignty. Relational Sovereignty does not replace territorial authority. It reinterprets sovereignty as a form of political responsibility exercised within an interconnected human system.

## 7. Hyper-Structural Decoupling and Democratic Moral Contradiction

The Ceuta humanitarian crisis raises questions that extend beyond border management and migration policy. It also invites a deeper examination of the relationship between democratic values, institutional conduct and the lived experiences of populations affected by state action. A democratic institution may remain constitutionally stable, administratively functional and procedurally legitimate while becoming progressively disconnected from the ethical expectations and social realities that give its authority wider meaning.

This condition is described in the MPT-SST framework as Hyper-Structural Decoupling. Hyper-Structural Decoupling occurs when formal political and institutional structures continue to operate while their underlying relationships with collective consciousness, ethical coherence and lived social experience become increasingly weakened. Elections may continue, constitutions may remain intact and public institutions may preserve their formal authority. Yet institutional continuity does not necessarily demonstrate that the deeper foundations of democratic legitimacy remain intact [3].

The concept does not suggest that every disagreement between citizens and institutions constitutes democratic instability. Democratic societies are expected to contain competing interests, political disagreement and ideological diversity. Conflict and contestation are not inherently signs of institutional decline. They may provide important opportunities for representation, accountability and political renewal. The concern arises when disagreement becomes increasingly detached from shared ethical standards, when political identities become more important than common institutional responsibilities or when public institutions lose their capacity to sustain meaningful trust across social and political divisions [6,14].

Political polarization has become an important concern across several Western democracies. Contemporary research demonstrates that polarization cannot be reduced to disagreement concerning public policy. It may also involve growing emotional hostility towards political opponents, weakening confidence in shared institutions and the increasing tendency to interpret political competition through rigid social identities. Comparative evidence suggests that negative attitudes towards political out-groups have become increasingly important in several established democracies, even where changes in ideological distance are more complex and context dependent [15].

These developments reveal an important distinction between institutional operation and institutional coherence. An institution may continue to perform its formal functions while losing the relational conditions required for sustained legitimacy. Governments may enact laws, elections may produce recognised outcomes and constitutional systems may remain operational. However, if citizens increasingly perceive public institutions as ethically inconsistent, politically exclusionary or disconnected from their lived realities, procedural continuity may coexist with declining institutional resonance.

Within MPT-SST, democratic stability depends upon the interaction among three interconnected dimensions:

Consciousness Alignment: the extent to which institutions remain meaningfully connected to the collective perceptions, identities and lived experiences of the populations they govern;

Ethical Coherence: the extent to which institutional conduct reflects the values and normative commitments publicly affirmed by political leaders and governing structures;

Structural Alignment: the capacity of laws, policies and institutions to translate shared values into credible outcomes and to respond constructively to changing social realities.

These dimensions are interdependent. Structural strength alone may not sustain democratic legitimacy when ethical credibility declines. Similarly, shared ethical commitments may have limited practical effect when institutional arrangements cannot translate them into responsive policies. Democratic resilience therefore depends not only upon the existence of formal institutions but also upon the continuing alignment among consciousness, ethics and

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

structure [1].

The Ceuta crisis provides an important illustration of this relationship. Spain and the European Union possess established democratic institutions, legal frameworks and formal commitments to human rights and humanitarian protection. The crisis does not demonstrate that these commitments are absent or that democratic institutions have ceased to function. Rather, it exposes a tension between the principles democratic institutions proclaim and the political practices through which vulnerable cross-border populations may be governed.

The tension becomes particularly visible when human mobility is framed primarily through the language of invasion, deterrence or security threat. States may have legitimate reasons to protect territorial integrity and regulate migration. Yet a security-centred interpretation becomes ethically incomplete when it treats vulnerable people mainly as objects of exclusion and gives insufficient attention to their dignity, circumstances and rights.

The resulting contradiction is not necessarily located in a single policy decision. It may emerge through the cumulative relationship between political language, institutional priorities and the experiences of affected populations. A state may affirm human dignity as a universal value while responding to vulnerable people beyond its borders through practices that appear to prioritise territorial protection without adequately integrating humanitarian accountability. Where this pattern becomes persistent, the ethical credibility of democratic institutions may weaken.

This is the point at which the Ceuta crisis becomes connected to the wider problem of democratic moral contradiction. The issue is not simply whether Western democracies possess strong institutions. It is whether the values that support their claims to democratic leadership are translated consistently across domestic and external relationships.

Democratic legitimacy has traditionally been evaluated through internal indicators such as electoral competition, constitutional government, civil liberties, institutional accountability and the protection of citizens' rights. These indicators remain essential. However, the growing interconnectedness of political life suggests that democratic credibility may also be influenced by how states exercise power beyond their borders.

Foreign policy, border governance and humanitarian responsibility are not entirely separate from democratic legitimacy. They are external arenas through which democratic values are interpreted and tested. When a state presents human rights, equality and dignity as universal principles but applies them selectively according to political membership, strategic interest or territorial location, a gap may emerge between normative commitment and institutional conduct.

The existence of such a gap does not automatically establish moral failure. Governments operate under competing obligations and difficult political conditions. National security, public welfare, legal responsibility and humanitarian protection may sometimes create genuine tensions. The analytical concern arises when institutions repeatedly privilege one set of responsibilities without adequately recognising the ethical consequences for populations affected by their decisions.

In this context, Hyper-Structural Decoupling may acquire an external dimension. Institutions may remain internally functional while becoming increasingly disconnected from the wider human relationships through which their actions are experienced. Democratic structures may continue to preserve domestic legitimacy while their external conduct generates perceptions of ethical inconsistency, selective responsibility or unequal concern.

This external dimension is significant because institutional legitimacy does not remain entirely within national borders. Political narratives, public perceptions and moral judgments move across societies through communication networks, diplomatic relationships and transnational institutions. Perceived contradictions may therefore influence how democratic leadership is understood beyond the societies that produce it.

The consequences may include declining moral credibility, increasing distrust of international institutions and the growth of alternative political narratives. States or political movements may challenge established democratic models not only because they reject democratic principles but also because they perceive those principles as inconsistently applied. Where democratic institutions lose the capacity to generate ethical resonance, alternative institutional identities may become more attractive.

The MPT-SST framework does not assume that all criticism of Western democracy is accurate or that every alternative political arrangement possesses greater legitimacy. Political narratives may be selective, strategically constructed or influenced by geopolitical competition. The framework instead directs attention to the conditions under which perceived inconsistency may become institutionally consequential.

The central proposition is that institutional structures cannot rely indefinitely on formal authority when the relationships among consciousness, ethics and practice become progressively weakened. Institutional durability requires more than procedural continuity. It also requires a continuing capacity to generate trust, ethical credibility and meaningful identification among those whose cooperation sustains institutional life.

This relationship may be represented conceptually as follows:

Formal Institutional Continuity + Declining Consciousness Alignment + Ethical Inconsistency + Structural Unresponsiveness → Hyper-Structural Decoupling

The expression is heuristic rather than predictive. It does not establish a universal threshold at which institutional decoupling occurs. Its purpose is to clarify the possibility that democratic structures may remain operational while the deeper conditions of legitimacy and coherence deteriorate.

The Ceuta crisis therefore provides more than an illustration of contested border governance. It reveals how an external humanitarian event may expose tensions already present within the moral and institutional foundations of democratic authority. The crisis brings together territorial sovereignty, human vulnerability, political identity and ethical responsibility. It shows how institutional responses may be judged not only by their effectiveness in restoring order but also by their consistency with the values democratic institutions claim to uphold.

The concept of Hyper-Structural Decoupling helps explain the underlying condition. It identifies the progressive separation between institutional structures and the consciousness, ethical expectations and lived realities that provide those structures with legitimacy. However, the concept does not yet explain the process through which democratic values become disconnected from practical institutional conduct.

That explanatory task is addressed through the concept of the Translation Deficit. The Translation Deficit identifies the

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

mechanism through which proclaimed values fail to become coherent policies, institutional practices and lived experiences. It therefore provides the conceptual bridge between the underlying condition of Hyper-Structural Decoupling and the wider institutional consequences developed through the Translation Deficit Ripple Effect.

**8. The Unified Science of Peace and Transformative Border Governance**

8.1 From Relational Sovereignty to a Unified Framework for Peace

The transition from Westphalian Sovereignty to Relational Sovereignty requires more than a normative reconsideration of political authority. It also requires a coherent framework capable of translating relational responsibility into institutional practice. The concept of Relational Sovereignty establishes the ethical and political foundation for a more responsive form of governance, but its practical value depends upon the development of processes through which consciousness, ethics and institutional structures can be aligned.

The Unified Science of Peace provides a broader framework for this task. The framework emerged from the integration of Metaphysical Peace Theory and Spiritual-Structural Transformation, Universal Peace Dynamics and the Consciousness Resonance Cycle. It approaches peace not merely as the absence of violence or the temporary management of political disagreement, but as a dynamic condition produced through the relationship among consciousness, ethical orientation, social interaction and institutional structure [2,4].

Within this perspective, peace is neither exclusively internal nor external. It is not confined to individual consciousness, social relationships, political institutions or international systems. These dimensions interact continuously. A transformation occurring within one domain may influence the others, while disconnection in one dimension may generate wider consequences across the institutional system.

The MPT-SST framework places particular emphasis on the relationship among consciousness, ethics and structure. Consciousness concerns the meanings, identities, perceptions and interpretive orientations through which individuals and communities understand themselves and others. Ethics concerns the values that guide judgment, responsibility and political conduct. Structure concerns the institutional arrangements, policies, rules and material conditions through which social values are translated into practice.

**The three dimensions may be represented as:**

Consciousness ↔ Ethics ↔ Structure

The relationship is reciprocal rather than sequential. Changes in public consciousness may influence ethical expectations and institutional reform. Institutional structures may also shape social perceptions, political identities and patterns of interaction. Ethical principles may guide institutional conduct while being revised through lived experience and collective reflection.

Peace becomes more sustainable when these dimensions reinforce one another. Conversely, instability may emerge when they become increasingly disconnected. An institution may possess formal authority but lose legitimacy if its policies no longer reflect the ethical expectations or lived realities of affected populations. A society may affirm strong ethical values but remain unable to realise them where institutional structures lack responsiveness or capacity.

The Unified Science of Peace therefore provides a framework for examining the relationship between institutional coherence and institutional disconnection. It seeks to identify the conditions through which peaceful relationships may be strengthened and the processes through which emerging dissonance may be transformed before it develops into sustained conflict or institutional rupture.

In the context of border governance, this approach moves beyond the conventional separation between national security and humanitarian responsibility. Border governance is understood as a relational process involving states, local communities, migrant populations, regional institutions, humanitarian organisations and wider systems of political and economic interdependence.

The central question is consequently not only how states can control borders effectively. It is also how political institutions can govern borders in ways that preserve legitimate security responsibilities while maintaining ethical consistency, human dignity and cooperative relationships.

**8.2 MPT-SST and the Transformation of Border Consciousness**

The first dimension of transformative border governance concerns consciousness. Political responses to migration are influenced not only by material conditions or institutional policies but also by the meanings through which human mobility is interpreted.

Migration may be framed as a humanitarian condition, an economic process, a security concern, a demographic challenge, a political threat or a combination of these perspectives. Each interpretation influences the policies regarded as legitimate and the forms of institutional action considered necessary.

A narrowly securitised consciousness may interpret vulnerable movement primarily through the language of invasion, threat, disorder or territorial loss. Such interpretations may emerge from genuine public concerns regarding security, social cohesion and institutional capacity. However, where these concerns become the exclusive basis for political understanding, the human realities associated with migration may become marginalised.

MPT-SST does not require institutions to ignore security risks or deny the responsibilities of states. It proposes that political consciousness should remain capable of recognising multiple dimensions of a complex reality.

**A relational consciousness asks:**

- Who are the people affected by border policies?
- What conditions contribute to their movement?
- How do historical relationships shape contemporary vulnerability?
- What legitimate security concerns must institutions address?
- How may security responsibilities be reconciled with human dignity?
- What forms of cooperation may reduce the conditions that generate irregular movement?

These questions expand political understanding without removing the legitimacy of territorial governance. They encourage institutions to move beyond binary distinctions between security and humanitarianism, citizens and non-citizens or national responsibility and global responsibility.

The transformation of consciousness is therefore not the replacement of national identity with an abstract form of universalism. It is the development of a wider interpretive capacity through which national interests are understood within

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

relationships of shared vulnerability and interdependence.

Within the Unified Science of Peace, consciousness transformation involves recognising that the security of one political community may be connected to the well-being of neighbouring communities. Persistent human insecurity beyond national borders may contribute to displacement, regional instability and wider political pressures. A purely defensive response may therefore manage immediate symptoms while leaving deeper conditions unresolved.

The transformation of border consciousness consequently provides the first stage of transformative governance. Institutions must become capable of recognising the human, ethical and relational dimensions of mobility before these dimensions can be translated into policy.

**8.3 Universal Peace Dynamics and the Relational Nature of Border Stability**

Universal Peace Dynamics extends the analysis by examining peace as an evolving relationship among multiple interacting forces. Peace is not treated as a fixed institutional condition. It is understood as a dynamic process influenced by the quality of relationships among individuals, communities, institutions and political systems [4].

This perspective is particularly relevant to border governance because borders are not static spaces. They are sites of interaction among different political authorities, social identities, economic systems and human experiences.

Border stability may depend upon several interconnected conditions:

1. the legitimacy and effectiveness of state institutions;
2. the protection of human dignity and fundamental rights;
3. the quality of relationships between neighbouring states;
4. the availability of lawful and credible mobility pathways;
5. the capacity of communities to manage social and economic change;
6. the reduction of conflict, poverty and insecurity within regions of origin; and
7. the existence of cooperative mechanisms capable of responding to shared challenges.

These conditions demonstrate that border stability cannot be reduced to the physical strength of territorial control. A state may increase surveillance, strengthen barriers or expand enforcement capacity while continuing to experience instability if the structural conditions contributing to displacement remain unresolved.

Universal Peace Dynamics therefore directs attention towards the interaction between immediate institutional responses and wider relational conditions. A border policy may produce short-term control while generating longer-term dissonance if it weakens trust, increases humanitarian vulnerability or damages relationships among affected institutions.

The framework does not assume that every security measure produces conflict or that every humanitarian policy generates peace. The effects of institutional action depend upon context, implementation and the wider relationships within which policies operate.

The central proposition is that sustainable border stability requires the alignment of security, justice, cooperation and human dignity. Where these dimensions are treated as competing objectives, institutional responses may become fragmented. Where they are integrated, the possibility of more durable governance may increase.

**8.4 The Consciousness Resonance Cycle and Institutional Legitimacy**

The Consciousness Resonance Cycle provides a relational framework for understanding how shared meanings, ethical expectations and institutional practices may reinforce or weaken one another [4].

Institutional resonance exists when affected populations recognise a meaningful relationship between institutional values, political conduct and lived experience. It does not require complete agreement or the absence of political conflict. Democratic societies contain competing interests and diverse interpretations. Resonance concerns whether institutional relationships retain sufficient credibility and shared meaning to sustain cooperation despite disagreement.

In border governance, institutional resonance may be strengthened when political institutions communicate clearly, act consistently and demonstrate that security policies remain accountable to human dignity. It may weaken where affected populations perceive a persistent contradiction between public commitments and institutional conduct.

The Consciousness Resonance Cycle may be represented as:

Shared Recognition → Ethical Identification → Cooperative Interaction → Institutional Trust → Reinforced Relational Coherence

**The cycle may also operate in the opposite direction:**

Ethical Disconnection → Competing Narratives → Declining Trust → Institutional Withdrawal → Increased Relational Dissonance

These pathways are not deterministic. Institutions may interrupt negative cycles through dialogue, accountability, policy reform and credible recognition of legitimate grievances.

The Ceuta crisis demonstrates the importance of institutional interpretation. The same event may be understood through competing narratives of invasion, humanitarian vulnerability, political pressure, border insecurity or regional inequality. These narratives influence public consciousness and shape expectations concerning institutional responsibility.

A governance framework based solely on security may strengthen support among groups who interpret migration primarily as a threat. Yet it may weaken institutional resonance among communities and actors who view the same response as inconsistent with humanitarian values.

The purpose of transformative border governance is not to eliminate these differences through a single official narrative. It is to create institutional processes capable of recognising competing concerns while maintaining ethical consistency and human accountability.

The Consciousness Resonance Cycle therefore contributes to the development of policies that are not only administratively effective but also relationally credible.

**8.5 The MPT-SST Translation Process in Border Governance**

The central institutional challenge identified by the article is the Translation Deficit. Democratic values may be formally affirmed while remaining weakly connected to policy, implementation and lived experience.

MPT-SST addresses this challenge through a process of ethical and structural translation.

**The process may be represented as:**

Democratic Values → Ethical Interpretation → Participatory

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

Deliberation → Institutional Design → Policy Implementation → Lived Experience → Reflective Evaluation

Each stage is necessary.

Democratic values provide the normative foundation. Principles such as human dignity, equality, justice and accountability establish the ethical commitments through which institutions define their responsibilities.

Ethical interpretation examines how these principles apply to specific political conditions. Values may conflict in practice. States may need to balance public security, institutional capacity, legal responsibility and humanitarian protection. Ethical interpretation provides a process for examining these tensions rather than treating one value as automatically superior in every context.

Participatory deliberation introduces the experiences and perspectives of affected stakeholders. Border policies are often designed through central institutions without sufficient engagement with border communities, migrant populations, humanitarian organisations or local authorities. Participation does not eliminate political disagreement, but it may improve institutional understanding and strengthen legitimacy.

Institutional design translates ethical commitments into laws, procedures, accountability mechanisms and cooperative arrangements. Values remain symbolic when they are not supported by institutional capacity.

Policy implementation concerns the practical application of institutional commitments. The effectiveness of policy depends upon resources, administrative coordination, professional conduct and the capacity to respond to changing conditions.

Lived experience provides evidence concerning how institutional action is encountered by affected populations. A policy may appear coherent at the level of formal design while producing unintended harm or exclusion during implementation.

Reflective evaluation completes the process by allowing institutions to assess outcomes and revise policies where necessary. The translation process is therefore cyclical rather than linear. Institutional learning may generate new ethical questions and require further reform.

The proposed pathway may also be represented as:

Consciousness → Ethics → Structure → Experience → Reflection → Renewed Consciousness

This cycle reflects the central MPT-SST proposition that sustainable institutional transformation requires continuous interaction among human awareness, ethical responsibility and structural adaptation.

**8.6 Transformative Border Governance as an Institutional Framework**

Drawing together MPT-SST, Universal Peace Dynamics and the Consciousness Resonance Cycle, Transformative Border Governance may be defined as:

"An adaptive and ethically accountable approach to border administration that integrates legitimate territorial responsibility with human dignity, transboundary cooperation, participatory engagement and continuous institutional realignment."

This framework differs from conventional border management in several important ways.

First, it treats border governance as a relational rather than exclusively territorial process. Borders remain legally significant, but their governance is understood through the relationships that connect states, communities and mobile populations.

Second, it integrates security and humanitarian responsibility. Security is not rejected, but it is interpreted within a wider framework of human protection and ethical accountability.

Third, it recognises that institutional legitimacy depends upon more than legal authority. Institutions require credibility, transparency and meaningful responsiveness to affected populations.

Fourth, it treats migration as a complex social and political process shaped by conditions that extend beyond the border itself. Effective governance may therefore require engagement with conflict, inequality, environmental vulnerability and regional development.

Fifth, it emphasises institutional learning. Border policies should be reviewed regularly in response to changing realities and evidence concerning their consequences.

The framework may be organised through the following sequence:

Relational Consciousness → Ethical Coherence → Participatory Translation → Responsive Institutional Structure → Human-Centred Implementation → Resonance Assessment → Adaptive Realignment

This sequence provides a conceptual pathway rather than a rigid administrative model.

Relational consciousness expands the understanding of political responsibility beyond narrow territorial separation.

Ethical coherence examines whether institutional conduct remains consistent with democratic and humanitarian commitments.

Participatory translation connects ethical principles with the experiences and concerns of relevant stakeholders.

Responsive institutional structure develops the policies and mechanisms required to translate commitments into practice.

Human-centred implementation ensures that institutional action recognises the dignity and vulnerability of affected populations.

Resonance assessment examines whether policies remain meaningful and credible to stakeholders.

Adaptive realignment enables institutions to respond to emerging contradictions and prevent the accumulation of a new Translation Deficit.

**8.7 The Unified Science of Peace as an Early-Warning Framework**

The Unified Science of Peace also provides an early-warning orientation. Its purpose is not to predict political collapse or determine the exact point at which institutional instability will occur. It seeks to identify patterns of dissonance that may increase institutional risk when they remain unresolved.

In the context of border governance, early warning may involve monitoring:

· widening gaps between democratic commitments and border practices;
· declining trust among affected communities;
· increased perceptions of exclusion or institutional inconsistency;
· persistent humanitarian harm associated with migration policies;
· weakening cooperation among neighbouring states;
· the growth of competing narratives concerning institutional legitimacy;
· declining willingness among stakeholders to sustain existing governance arrangements; and
· the emergence of alternative political or institutional alignments.

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

These indicators should not be interpreted in isolation. A single policy dispute or temporary decline in public trust does not necessarily indicate institutional deterioration. The concern arises when multiple forms of disconnection persist, accumulate and reinforce one another.

The early-warning function may therefore be represented as:

Institutional Observation → Ethical Consistency Assessment → Resonance Evaluation → Translation Deficit Identification → Preventive Dialogue → Structural Correction → Adaptive Consolidation

The process is preventive rather than predictive. It does not claim that institutions will inevitably fail when a Translation Deficit is identified. It provides an analytical foundation for intervention before unresolved disconnection becomes institutionally entrenched.

The proposed indicators and pathways provide a conceptual basis for early-warning analysis. Their reliability, measurement properties and predictive value require systematic empirical testing across different institutional settings.

## 9. Policy Implications for Transformative Border Governance

### 9.1 From Theoretical Diagnosis to Institutional Practice

The preceding sections have developed a theoretical movement from the limitations of territorially isolated sovereignty towards Relational Sovereignty and then towards a Unified Science of Peace framework for transformative border governance. The purpose of this development is not to replace state authority with unrestricted mobility or to treat humanitarian responsibility as incompatible with national security. It is to identify institutional approaches through which security, human dignity, ethical consistency and transboundary cooperation may be integrated.

The policy implications of the framework begin with a central proposition: border governance should not be evaluated solely according to the extent to which it restricts irregular movement or protects territorial boundaries. Its effectiveness should also be assessed according to its capacity to reduce human vulnerability, preserve institutional legitimacy, strengthen regional cooperation and maintain coherence between democratic values and institutional practice.

This broader understanding does not deny the practical pressures confronting states. Governments must respond to public concerns, manage limited resources, maintain public order and address genuine security risks. However, policies designed only around deterrence may produce unintended humanitarian and institutional consequences when they fail to consider the structural conditions that contribute to migration or the ethical effects of enforcement practices.

Transformative Border Governance therefore requires a shift from reactive border control towards preventive, cooperative and ethically accountable governance. The following policy directions provide a conceptual foundation for this transition.

### 9.2 Establishing Democratic Value-Practice Audits

The first policy priority is the development of regular Democratic Value-Practice Audits. These audits would examine whether border policies remain consistent with the democratic and humanitarian principles that states publicly affirm.

The purpose is not to impose a single moral interpretation on complex political decisions. Democratic institutions frequently encounter competing responsibilities. Public security, legal authority, humanitarian protection and institutional capacity may create difficult policy choices. The audit process would therefore examine how institutions justify these choices and whether their decisions remain transparent, proportionate and ethically coherent.

**A value-practice audit may consider:**

- the relationship between public commitments and actual border practices;
- the consistency of humanitarian standards across different categories of migrants and affected populations;
- the proportionality of security measures;
- the availability of lawful procedures and mechanisms for protection;
- the human consequences of detention, return or exclusion policies;
- the transparency of institutional decision-making; and
- the existence of credible systems for accountability and corrective action.

The audit should not function merely as an administrative compliance exercise. Its purpose is to identify emerging Translation Deficits before they become deeply institutionalised.

A state may possess strong legal frameworks while experiencing substantial gaps between formal commitments and practical outcomes. Regular evaluation may help institutions identify these gaps and respond through policy revision, institutional learning and public accountability.

### 9.3 Creating Humanitarian and Institutional Coherence Mechanisms

The second policy priority is the establishment of Humanitarian and Institutional Coherence Mechanisms within national and regional systems of border governance.

These mechanisms would examine whether security policies, humanitarian commitments and institutional practices are mutually reinforcing or operating in contradiction.

**The proposed mechanism may include:**

1. independent ethical review of major border policies;
2. regular assessment of humanitarian consequences;
3. institutional consultation with affected communities;
4. transparent reporting concerning border practices;
5. review procedures capable of identifying unintended harm; and

**6. corrective mechanisms for addressing persistent ethical or institutional inconsistency.**

The purpose is not to prevent states from exercising border authority. It is to ensure that the exercise of authority remains connected to the ethical principles through which democratic institutions establish legitimacy.

Institutional coherence should also extend across different levels of governance. National agencies, regional institutions, local authorities and humanitarian organisations often operate through separate mandates. Fragmented responsibilities may produce implementation gaps and weaken accountability.

Coherence mechanisms may therefore improve coordination by establishing shared standards, communication channels and procedures for collective review.

### 9.4 Developing Relational Border Governance Councils

The third policy priority is the creation of Relational Border Governance Councils at national, regional and cross-border levels. Border policies are frequently developed through central government institutions with limited participation from

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

communities directly affected by migration, enforcement or cross-border economic relationships. A relational approach requires broader engagement.

**The councils may include representatives from:**

· national border and security institutions;
· local governments and border communities;
· humanitarian and civil society organisations;
· regional institutions;
· migration and development agencies;
· relevant academic and research institutions; and
· affected populations where participation can be organised safely and responsibly.

The purpose would be to create structured processes for dialogue, information exchange and joint problem-solving.

Participation does not require every stakeholder to possess equal decision-making authority. States retain legal responsibility for national policy. However, meaningful consultation may improve institutional understanding, reduce misinformation and strengthen the legitimacy of policy decisions.

Relational Border Governance Councils may also provide early-warning functions by identifying emerging grievances, humanitarian risks and institutional disconnection before they become severe political crises.

**9.5 Integrating Human Security into Border Policy**

The fourth policy priority is the integration of Human Security into national and regional border governance.

Traditional security approaches focus primarily on the protection of territory, institutions and citizens. These concerns remain legitimate. However, human security directs attention towards the conditions affecting the safety and well-being of individuals and communities.

**Human insecurity may include:**

· violent conflict;
· political persecution;
· economic deprivation;
· food insecurity;
· environmental degradation;
· forced displacement;
· limited access to public services; and
· the absence of meaningful social and economic opportunity.

These conditions may influence migration and contribute to regional instability. A border policy focused only on controlling movement may therefore address the visible outcome while leaving underlying vulnerabilities unresolved.

Integrating human security does not require destination states to assume sole responsibility for the development of other societies. It encourages shared responsibility through regional cooperation, development partnerships, conflict prevention and humanitarian support.

The policy objective is to reduce the conditions that make dangerous or irregular movement appear necessary or unavoidable.

**9.6 Strengthening Cooperative Regional Governance**

The fifth policy priority is the strengthening of regional and transboundary cooperation.

Migration and border governance involve relationships among multiple states. Unilateral policies may displace pressures rather than resolve them. A restriction introduced in one jurisdiction may redirect movement towards more dangerous routes or increase vulnerability in neighbouring areas.

**Cooperative governance may include:**

· joint humanitarian preparedness;
· shared early-warning systems;
· coordinated search and rescue arrangements;
· regional mechanisms for the protection of displaced populations;
· lawful and regulated mobility pathways;
· cross-border development initiatives;
· information-sharing systems that respect legal and ethical safeguards; and
· coordinated responses to conflict and environmental insecurity.

Regional cooperation should not be understood as a limitation on sovereignty. Cooperative institutions may strengthen state capacity by enabling governments to address challenges that cannot be managed effectively through isolated national action.

**9.7 Establishing Translation Deficit Early-Warning Systems**

The sixth policy priority is the development of Translation Deficit Early-Warning Systems.

The purpose of these systems is not to predict institutional collapse or determine a universal point at which political rupture will occur. They would identify patterns indicating that institutional values, policy practices and stakeholder experiences are becoming progressively disconnected.

Possible areas of observation include:

1. persistent differences between democratic commitments and institutional conduct;
2. declining public or stakeholder trust;
3. increased perceptions of exclusion or unequal treatment;
4. recurring humanitarian harm associated with border policies;
5. widening disagreement concerning institutional legitimacy;
6. declining cooperation among relevant institutions;
7. the growth of competing political narratives; and
8. increasing support for alternative governance arrangements.

These indicators should be interpreted through context-sensitive analysis. A single protest, policy disagreement or decline in public confidence does not necessarily indicate institutional deterioration. The early-warning concern arises where multiple forms of disconnection persist, accumulate and become mutually reinforcing.

**9.8 Promoting Ethical Consistency in External Democratic Conduct**

The seventh policy priority concerns the relationship between domestic democratic commitments and external political conduct.

Democratic states frequently present human rights, equality, dignity and political freedom as universal principles. The credibility of these commitments may be weakened where they are applied inconsistently in foreign policy, humanitarian engagement or border governance.

Ethical consistency does not require identical policies in every political context. States may face different legal responsibilities, security conditions and institutional constraints. Consistency concerns the transparency of ethical reasoning and the willingness to apply comparable standards of human dignity and accountability

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

across different populations.

External ethical review may therefore consider:

· whether foreign policy reflects stated commitments to human rights;
· whether humanitarian responsibility is treated as a central institutional concern;
· whether vulnerable populations receive meaningful consideration within security decision-making;
· whether international partnerships contribute to sustainable human development; and
· whether democratic principles are applied consistently when political or economic interests are involved.

The purpose is not to deny national interests. It is to examine whether national interests can be pursued without abandoning the ethical commitments through which democratic institutions claim moral legitimacy.

**9.9 Strengthening Participatory and Community-Based Border Governance**

The eighth policy priority is the development of participatory mechanisms capable of including border communities and affected populations in institutional decision-making.

Border communities frequently experience the direct consequences of migration policy. They may encounter changes in local economies, public services, security conditions and social relationships. Their knowledge may provide important insight into emerging risks and practical policy challenges.

**Community participation may include:**

· local consultation forums;
· cross-border community dialogue;
· participatory policy assessment;
· community-based early-warning mechanisms;
· local conflict-resolution processes; and
· partnerships among public institutions, civil society and community leaders. Participation should not be treated as a symbolic process. Institutions should provide clear explanations concerning how public input influences policy and why certain recommendations may not be adopted.

Meaningful participation may strengthen institutional resonance by reducing the distance between central policy decisions and local experience.

**9.10 Supporting Safe, Lawful and Cooperative Mobility Pathways**

The ninth policy priority is the development of safe and lawful mobility pathways.

Where lawful movement is severely restricted while economic inequality, conflict or human insecurity remain high, people may continue to move through irregular and dangerous routes. Enforcement may alter the form of migration without eliminating the underlying pressures that contribute to it.

**Lawful pathways may include:**

· regulated labour mobility;
· humanitarian admission programmes;
· family reunification procedures;
· educational and professional exchange opportunities;
· regional mobility agreements; and
· protection mechanisms for displaced populations.

These policies require careful institutional design. States must consider labour conditions, public capacity, security requirements and social integration. The purpose is not to encourage uncontrolled movement. It is to reduce the incentives that produce dangerous and exploitative forms of mobility.

Safe pathways may also improve institutional capacity by creating transparent systems through which movement can be regulated and supported.

**9.11 Building Adaptive Institutional Capacity**

The tenth policy priority is the development of Adaptive Institutional Capacity.

Migration patterns, political conditions and humanitarian risks change over time. Institutions that rely exclusively on fixed procedures may struggle to respond to emerging realities.

**Adaptive capacity requires:**

· regular policy evaluation;
· institutional learning;
· evidence-informed decision-making;
· flexible coordination mechanisms;
· professional training;
· transparent communication;
· contingency planning; and
· the capacity to revise ineffective or harmful practices.

Adaptation should not be confused with institutional instability. Stable institutions may remain capable of learning and reform. In fact, the ability to recognise and correct institutional contradictions may strengthen long-term legitimacy.

Adaptive governance also requires attention to the unintended consequences of policy. A measure introduced to improve security may increase humanitarian risk or damage regional cooperation. Institutions should therefore assess both immediate outcomes and wider relational effects.

**9.12 A Transformative Border Governance Policy Cycle**

The policy priorities developed in this section may be integrated into a broader Transformative Border Governance Policy Cycle:

Relational Assessment → Ethical Review → Participatory Dialogue → Cooperative Policy Design → Human-Centred Implementation → Resonance Evaluation → Institutional Adaptation

Relational Assessment examines the political, historical, economic and humanitarian relationships shaping border conditions.

Ethical Review evaluates whether proposed policies remain consistent with human dignity, democratic responsibility and institutional accountability.

Participatory Dialogue incorporates the experiences of relevant communities and stakeholders.

Cooperative Policy Design develops coordinated responses among states, regional institutions and local authorities.

Human-Centred Implementation ensures that policy practice recognises the dignity and vulnerability of affected populations.

Resonance Evaluation examines whether institutional actions remain credible and meaningful to stakeholders.

Institutional Adaptation enables policies to be revised in response to evidence, changing conditions and emerging Translation Deficits.

The cycle is iterative. Institutional learning at one stage may generate new questions that require renewed assessment and reform.

**9.13 Implications for the European Union, African Union and Regional Institutions**

The framework has implications for regional institutions whose responsibilities involve migration, security, development and

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

political cooperation.

For the European Union, Transformative Border Governance may encourage greater integration between border management, humanitarian accountability, development cooperation and regional partnership. The objective would not be to remove the authority of member states but to strengthen collective capacity for addressing the interconnected causes and consequences of migration.

For the African Union and African regional organisations, the framework may support the development of cooperative approaches that connect mobility, conflict prevention, regional development and human security. African institutions possess important traditions of regional cooperation and may contribute distinctive approaches grounded in local histories and social realities.

The framework should not be interpreted as a model flowing only from Europe towards Africa or from the West towards the Global South. Relational governance requires mutual learning. Different regions possess distinct institutional experiences, indigenous governance traditions and approaches to community responsibility. The broader objective is to create cooperative relationships in which knowledge and responsibility move in multiple directions.

**9.14 Section Summary**

This section has translated the theoretical framework into a set of practical policy directions for Transformative Border Governance. The central proposition is that border policy should be evaluated not only according to territorial control but also according to its contribution to human security, institutional legitimacy, ethical consistency and regional stability.

The proposed priorities include Democratic Value-Practice Audits, Humanitarian and Institutional Coherence Mechanisms, Relational Border Governance Councils, the integration of human security, strengthened regional cooperation, Translation Deficit Early-Warning Systems, ethical consistency in external democratic conduct, participatory border governance, safe and lawful mobility pathways and adaptive institutional capacity.

These proposals do not constitute a complete policy programme. They provide a conceptual framework for future institutional development, empirical research and policy experimentation.

**10. Conclusion**

The Ceuta humanitarian crisis demonstrates the growing difficulty of governing an interconnected world through an understanding of sovereignty centred primarily on territorial control. Although states retain legitimate responsibilities to regulate borders, protect public security and maintain political order, these responsibilities cannot be separated completely from the humanitarian realities, transboundary relationships and ethical consequences associated with human mobility. The crisis therefore raises questions that extend beyond migration management. It exposes a deeper tension between the territorial exercise of sovereignty and the relational responsibilities increasingly required within an interconnected global order.

This article has argued that the limitations of conventional Westphalian sovereignty become particularly visible when human vulnerability is treated primarily as a security threat and when the protection of territorial boundaries is conceptually separated from humanitarian accountability. The argument does not reject sovereignty, border regulation or the legitimate authority of states. Rather, it challenges the assumption that sovereignty can remain ethically and institutionally coherent when its exercise becomes disconnected from the human relationships and transboundary consequences through which political authority acquires wider legitimacy.

The Ceuta crisis also provides an important context for examining the relationship between democratic values and institutional practice. Democratic states frequently affirm commitments to human dignity, freedom, equality and universal human rights. Yet the credibility of these commitments depends partly upon their capacity to influence institutional conduct beyond domestic political boundaries. When democratic principles are proclaimed as universal but applied selectively in response to vulnerable populations, a widening gap may emerge between normative commitment, political practice and lived human experience.

Within the MPT-SST framework, this condition is understood through the concept of Hyper-Structural Decoupling. Democratic institutions may remain formally functional while becoming progressively disconnected from the consciousness, ethical expectations and lived realities that provide them with legitimacy and social meaning. Elections may continue, constitutional structures may remain intact and institutions may preserve their formal authority, yet institutional continuity does not necessarily demonstrate institutional coherence. The preservation of democratic structures may conceal a growing disconnection between what institutions proclaim, what they practice and how their conduct is experienced by affected populations.

The Translation Deficit identifies the mechanism through which this disconnection becomes visible. It refers to the widening gap between the democratic and ethical values institutions formally affirm, the policies and practices through which those values are implemented and the realities experienced by the populations affected by institutional decisions. The deficit is therefore more than a failure of communication or policy implementation. It represents a deeper problem of institutional translation in which normative commitments fail to become credible, ethically consistent and socially meaningful practice.

Where such deficits remain unresolved, their consequences may extend beyond the institutions or societies in which they initially emerge. The article has described this process as the Translation Deficit Ripple Effect. Through this mechanism, accumulated contradictions between institutional values and political practice may weaken ethical credibility, reduce public trust and contribute to declining institutional resonance. Under particular historical and political conditions, the resulting dissonance may encourage stakeholder decoupling, institutional defection, fragmentation or the search for alternative governance arrangements.

This framework should not be interpreted as a deterministic prediction of institutional collapse. The article does not claim that the European Union or NATO will inevitably fragment, nor does it suggest that the institutional developments associated with the AES-ECOWAS rupture will be reproduced in identical form within Western democratic systems. The AES-ECOWAS crisis has been used as a comparative illustration of how perceived political, ethical and structural misalignment may weaken institutional loyalty and contribute to the search for alternative regional pathways. The historical conditions, political actors and institutional realities involved remain distinct.

The MPT-SST contribution is therefore primarily diagnostic and preventive. It identifies conditions through which institutional

Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

coherence may weaken before dissonance develops into visible political rupture. The proposed analytical pathway may be expressed as follows:

Hyper-Structural Decoupling → Translation Deficit → Loss of Ethical and Institutional Resonance → Declining Trust and Legitimacy → Stakeholder Decoupling → Institutional Deterioration, Defection, Fragmentation or Realignment

This pathway is conditional rather than inevitable. Institutions possess the capacity to interrupt the process through ethical reform, meaningful participation, institutional adaptation, cooperative responsibility and the restoration of coherence between democratic values and political practice. The purpose of the framework is not to predict institutional failure but to identify emerging patterns of disconnection and provide an analytical basis for preventive transformation.

The article has proposed Relational Sovereignty as a constructive response to the limitations of a narrowly territorial understanding of political authority. Relational Sovereignty does not eliminate borders or deny the authority of states to regulate migration. It reconceives sovereignty as territorially grounded, relationally responsible and ethically accountable. Under this approach, the legitimacy of sovereign authority depends not only upon the control a state exercises within its territory but also upon its capacity to recognise interdependence, protect human dignity and respond responsibly to the consequences of its decisions beyond national borders.

The transition from Westphalian Sovereignty to Relational Sovereignty should therefore be understood as an expansion of political responsibility rather than a rejection of territorial authority. States remain responsible for protecting their populations and maintaining institutional order, but these responsibilities operate within a world in which migration, inequality, insecurity, climate conditions and humanitarian vulnerability cross territorial boundaries. Effective sovereignty increasingly requires cooperation because many contemporary challenges cannot be addressed adequately through unilateral action.

The Unified Science of Peace provides the broader framework through which this transformation may be understood and operationalised. Its central orientation is the alignment of consciousness, ethics and structure. Border governance becomes more coherent when institutional arrangements remain connected to the ethical principles they affirm and to the lived realities experienced by the people affected by their decisions. Security, humanitarian responsibility and political authority need not operate as mutually exclusive objectives. They can become complementary dimensions of a governance system designed to preserve both territorial responsibility and human dignity.

The Ceuta crisis should therefore not be understood only as a border-security event. It is also an early warning concerning the consequences of unresolved disconnection between democratic values, institutional practice and transboundary human realities.

What appears initially as an external challenge may reveal internal weaknesses in democratic moral coherence. If such contradictions remain unaddressed, their consequences may return through declining trust, political polarisation, institutional dissonance and wider geopolitical realignment.

The future resilience of democratic institutions may consequently depend upon more than their capacity to maintain borders, preserve formal structures or sustain geopolitical influence. It may also depend upon their capacity to translate democratic principles into credible, humane and ethically consistent action. Democratic legitimacy cannot rest permanently upon normative declarations when institutional practice repeatedly contradicts the values those declarations represent.

The central argument of this article is therefore that sovereignty remains institutionally necessary, but its legitimacy in an interconnected world increasingly depends upon its capacity to reconcile territorial responsibility with humanitarian accountability, transboundary interdependence and ethical consistency. The transformation required is not the abandonment of sovereignty but the restoration of coherence between political authority and the human relationships affected by its exercise.

The broader MPT-SST principle may be expressed simply: follow visible institutional symptoms towards their underlying ethical and structural causes, identify the dissonance that sustains them and transform the relationships through which institutional coherence can be renewed. From this perspective, the path beyond the limitations revealed by Ceuta lies neither in unrestricted mobility nor in absolute territorial exclusion. It lies in the development of a relational form of sovereignty capable of securing political communities while recognising shared human dignity and the interconnected responsibilities of a common world.

## References


1. Kafinga, A. S. (2026). The MPT-SST framework (Metaphysical Peace Theory and Spiritual-Structural Transformation) [Pre-registration]. Open Science Framework. https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/DRZSC
2. Kafinga, A. S. (2026). Beyond Military and Structural Responses: Applying the MPT-SST Consciousness-Based Framework to Youth Radicalization in Nigeria. LASU Journal of Peace and Security Studies, 2(1), 259–283. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19729282
3. Kafinga, A. S. (2026). Hyper-Structural Decoupling and Democratic Instability: An MPT-SST Theoretical Analysis of Political Polarization in Western Democracies. Journal of Political Science and International Relations, 9(3), 155–160. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.jpsir.20260903.13
4. Kafinga, A. S. (2026). The Unified Science of Peace: MPT-SST, UPD and CRC as an Emerging Paradigm for Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis. Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis, 8(1), 65–87. https://jtpp.uk/current-issue-download/
5. Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. Academy of Management Review, 20(3), 571–610.
6. Norris, P. (2017). Strengthening Electoral Integrity. Cambridge University Press.
7. Betts, A. (2011). Protection by Persuasion: International Cooperation in the Refugee Regime. Cornell University Press.
8. [Benhabib, S. (2004). The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents, and Citizens. Cambridge University Press.
9. International Crisis Group. (2024). Reorienting Europe's approach in the Sahel. In Watch List 2024. International Crisis Group.
10. Government of Spain. (2021, May 18). First meeting of the


Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga

Situation Committee for Ceuta and Melilla. La Moncloa. https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/gobierno/news/paginas/2021/20210518ceu-mell-committee.aspx

11. UNICEF Spain. (2021). Canarias: Niños y niñas migrantes en una de las rutas más peligrosas del mundo. UNICEF España. https://www.unicef.es/sites/unicef.es/files/recursos/informe-menores-migrantes/resumen-canarias-infancia-migrante.pdf
12. Amnesty International. (2021, May 19). Spain/Morocco: People "being used as pawns" as political games turn violent. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/05/spainmorocco-people-being-used-as-pawns-as-political-games-turn-violent-2/
13. UNICEF Europe and Central Asia. (n.d.). Protecting children affected by migration. https://www.unicef.org/eca/programme/protecting-children-affected-migration
14. Kafinga, A. S. (2026). Beyond Conflict Management: Operationalizing Metaphysical Peace Theory and Spiritual-Structural Transformation (MPT-SST) as a Unified Science of Peace. American Journal of Applied Psychology, 15(4), 84–94. http://www.sciencepg.com/article/10.11648/j.ajap.20261504.12
15. Kafinga, A. S. (2026). Hyper-Structural Decoupling and Democratic Instability: An MPT-SST Theoretical Analysis of Political Polarization in Western Democracies. American Journal of Applied Psychology, 15(4), 78–83. http://www.sciencepg.com/article/10.11648/j.ajap.20261504.11.

*Copyright © Aliyu Sani Kafinga*