Governing Continuity in AI Systems: A Boundary Diagnostic

Version 1.0.1 — Governance Brief

Pre-Architectural · Non-Prescriptive · Diagnostic

Purpose

This brief isolates a failure mode increasingly visible across AI systems: **continuity becoming implicitly trusted across time, context, and authority**.

It does not propose a model, framework, or safety mechanism. It defines a **boundary condition** that, if left ungoverned, allows multiple known risk classes to persist regardless of downstream controls.

The Failure Mode

Across AI deployments, several risks recur in different forms:

- Context persists across sessions without decay

- Authority compounds through repetition rather than proof

- Prior state silently influences future judgment

- Observation and monitoring pathways acquire implicit standing

- Pressure (scale, urgency, automation) forces exception

These are not bugs.

They are **structural outcomes of cheap continuity**.

Core Diagnostic Insight

> **Continuity is not neutral.

> Continuity is a resource.

> If it is not governed, it amortizes.**

Most AI safety discussions focus on:

- model behavior

- intent inference

- alignment objectives

- output filtering

This brief focuses one layer earlier:

> **We govern continuity, not intent.**

Boundary Reframing

Rather than asking whether a system is behaving correctly, this diagnostic asks:

- What is allowed to persist?

- For how long?

- At what cost?

- Under what renewal conditions?

This reframing applies regardless of model architecture, training regime, or deployment context.

Practical Boundary Conditions (Non-Prescriptive)

When continuity is governed, the following conditions hold:

- Time is discretized; state expires by default

- Presence is leased, not assumed

- Authority decays faster than access

- Observation does not grant permission

- Persistence increases renewal friction

These are **ordering constraints**, not policies.

Inspection Question

> **Is continuity behaving as governed, or is it silently amortizing?**

This question can be applied during:

- architecture reviews

- deployment design

- safety evaluations

- incident retrospectives

No new tooling is required to ask it.

Measurement Signals (Indicative)

Where continuity is governed, organizations typically observe:

- shorter continuity half-lives (**CHL**)

- increasing cost to re-establish standing (**TTR**)

- rapid decay of authority time-in-state (**ATIS**)

- compression of persistence-based leverage (**DCR**)

These are **structural signals**, not performance metrics.

What This Brief Is / Is Not

This is:

- a boundary diagnostic

- pre-architectural

- compatible with existing safety and governance work

This is not:

- a proposal for adoption

- a critique of any specific system

- a claim of safety or correctness

Closing

This brief is offered as a **lens**, not a prescription.

If continuity is left ungoverned, no amount of downstream safety work can fully compensate.

If continuity is governed, multiple risk classes dissolve without confrontation.

Contact

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This brief is a descendant of the governance white paper

"Governing Continuity at the Boundary."