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AMANAH BEYOND BORDERS: A THEORY OF EXTRAJURISDICTIONAL PUBLIC STEWARDSHIP

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Abstract: *Leadership theory assumes a leader holds authority over those led, and public administration assumes action within a governed jurisdiction. Neither assumption holds for the public official who works, from inside another country, to develop people the state does not employ, to conserve assets it inherited rather than built, and to shape cross-border flows it neither funds nor originates. This paper argues that a scattered family of leadership ideas, concerning welfare, service, custody and the leadership of flows, are facets of a single underlying phenomenon, and it names that phenomenon extrajurisdictional public stewardship: leadership exercised on behalf of a state or public, beyond its jurisdiction, over people, assets and flows that the state does not own or command, in order to create and sustain public value that the state cannot produce by directive. Drawing together stewardship theory, servant leadership, public service motivation, public value, diaspora diplomacy and Islamic leadership, in which the leader is a khalifah who holds what is not owned in trust (amanah), the paper defines the construct, specifies six dimensions, differentiates it from its neighbours, including leading without authority, boundary spanning, collaborative governance and transnational administration, and advances seven propositions with boundary conditions and a research agenda. Its distinctive claim is that public value made this way is produced by stewarding, without ownership or jurisdiction, a heterogeneous set of objects across conflicting cultural fields, and it proposes, rather than assumes, that such value weakens where the stewardship is visibly conditioned on short-term gain. The construct extends public leadership beyond the jurisdictional organisation, carries stewardship beyond the organisational and within-polity settings to which it has so far been extended, and argues that the trusteeship ethic of Islamic leadership offers a firm normative foundation for it.*

Keywords: *extrajurisdictional public stewardship; public leadership; leading without authority; amanah; public value; conceptual paper*

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Introduction

Consider an education attache posted to a foreign capital. She holds no line authority over the several thousand students from her country studying in that host state. They are not her staff, she cannot direct them, and neither the universities enrolling them nor the host authorities licensing their stay answer to her. Yet she is held responsible, at home, for their welfare, their success, and the goodwill they will carry for the rest of their lives. She inherits an alumni network built by predecessors she never met, a reputation she did not manufacture, and a set of institutional relationships she must keep alive. She works to draw in more of what her state wants from that country, whether students, researchers or research partnerships, and her state manufactures none of it. She does all of this inside another country's rules, addressing several audiences at once whose expectations do not agree. This is leadership, but it fits no standard account of it.

The difficulty is that the two literatures one would reach for both rest on assumptions the situation breaks. Most leadership theory, public variants included, is built for a leader who holds some authority and whose followers belong to the same organisation (Van Wart, 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015). Public administration has been built around action within a jurisdiction, even where it urges the manager to look past the formal mandate to an authorising environment (Moore, 1995). Our attache holds neither. She has no authority over the people she leads, and no jurisdiction over the ground she leads on. She leads what the state does not own.

The leadership involved has been approached only in pieces. Five strands run through the literatures reviewed below and none of them meets the others: what a state owes its citizens once they are outside it, how developmental service earns goodwill, what happens to public assets a mission inherits rather than builds, how an official holds several cultural fields at once, and how a state courts flows it cannot manufacture. What has not been done, as far as we are aware, is to treat these not as separate constructs but as facets of one. Each strand describes the same underlying situation: an official leading for a state, outside what that state governs, over something it neither owns nor commands. That common structure is the subject of this paper.
We name the phenomenon extrajurisdictional public stewardship and develop it as a construct. The aim is theoretical: to give the field a single, defensible name for a form of public and diplomatic leadership it has been describing piecemeal, and to specify it well enough to be tested. The paper first sets out the theoretical basis by showing the gap the adjacent literatures leave and the resources they supply. It then presents the construct, its dimensions, its propositions and its boundaries. It closes by differentiating the construct from its neighbours, stating its contributions and a research agenda, and drawing a conclusion.

Theoretical Basis

Approach

This is a conceptual paper of the theory-synthesis type: it integrates evidence and concepts across literatures that have not been brought together, in order to name and specify a phenomenon rather than to test one (Jaakkola, 2020). The construct is built in the order Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2016) recommend. The phenomenon is identified first, then its necessary attributes are stated, then the concept is placed against its nearest neighbours, and only then are propositions derived. Literatures were selected on one criterion: each has been used to describe some part of the phenomenon in the opening vignette. Each is then tested for whether its own assumptions survive that vignette. Where a literature reaches further than we first supposed, we say so and narrow the claim accordingly.

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Literatures were reached in three passes rather than by systematic search, and we say so because the novelty claim depends on it. The first pass took the constructs the opening vignette invites, namely public leadership, stewardship, servant leadership and public service motivation. The second followed the citation trails of those constructs into the literatures that have relaxed their assumptions: government-steering and environmental stewardship, leading without authority, boundary spanning, collaborative governance and transnational administration. The third took the setting rather than the construct, and reached diaspora diplomacy, soft power and international education. Any claim below that a literature does not reach the phenomenon is a claim about the works cited here, not about a literature exhaustively searched.

The Gap in the Adjacent Literatures

Five bodies of work stand near enough to this phenomenon to be candidates for explaining it, and every one of them carries an assumption the phenomenon violates. Laying them side by side is what exposes the space the construct has to fill.

Public leadership is now a field of its own, with a settled interest in what leaders of public organisations do, value and face (Van Wart, 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015). Its cases, however, are almost always leaders acting inside their own jurisdiction. Even the collective and relational turn, which explicitly detaches leadership from formal authority and studies it across organisational and sector boundaries (Ospina, 2017), keeps its actors inside a single polity. The official who leads beyond jurisdiction, over non-members, falls outside its frame.

From stewardship theory comes the figure of a manager whose motives run to the principal's long-term interest and not to narrow self-interest (Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997). Public administration arrived at something similar on its own, casting officials as holders of public trust (Kass, 1990) working to create public value (Moore, 1995). Its original model describes a manager inside a firm whose motives align with the owners', and it has since travelled well beyond that setting: to government steering and the relationship between departments and public agencies (Schillemans, 2013), to the psychology of stewardship, where what is protected is beneficiaries' long-term welfare and not owners' returns (Hernandez, 2012), and to environmental settings where stewardship is exercised by individuals, groups and networks with no owner-manager relationship at all (Bennett et al., 2018). What none of those extensions takes up is a steward who acts from outside the jurisdiction of the public on whose behalf the stewardship is exercised, over objects that lie under another state's authority. Servant leadership names the leader who develops and serves followers first, and it does include stewardship among its six characteristics (van Dierendonck, 2011), which captures the developmental impulse in the phenomenon. But stewardship there means a willingness to take responsibility for the leader's own institution, and to serve where one might instead control; it is not custody of assets and flows that lie outside the leader's organisation altogether. Public service motivation explains why public officials are disposed to serve the public interest (Perry & Wise, 1990), but it is a motivational disposition, not a mode of leadership. Its norm-based and affective motives were originally framed as loyalty to one's own government and an attachment to the public within one's own political boundaries (Perry & Wise, 1990), and the later measurement work set out four dimensions, namely attraction to policy making, commitment to the public interest, compassion and self-sacrifice (Perry, 1996), of which the last three are not territorially bounded and the first is orthogonal to locus altogether. Our claim is therefore narrow, and concerns locus rather than motive: public service motivation says why an official is disposed to serve, not how leadership is exercised over beneficiaries who are not that official's own public. Diaspora diplomacy asks who the diplomatic actors are and how

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diplomatic work is enacted through diaspora assemblages (Ho & McConnell, 2019), which maps the terrain; but its analytical move is to widen and decentre the field of actors, and it therefore does not descend to the leadership conduct of the individual official posted abroad. Islamic leadership theory offers a further resource, and a further gap: it articulates leadership as amanah, a trust, and the leader as a khalifah, a steward accountable for what is not owned (Beekun & Badawi, 1999), but it has largely been developed for leadership within an organisation or an administration (Al-Buraey, 1985) or for the leadership of a Muslim polity from within it (Ali, 2009), rather than for the official acting beyond their own state's jurisdiction. Four bodies of work sit closer still, and the construct has to survive them rather than pass them by. Heifetz (1994) makes leadership without authority a category in its own right, and shows that people with no formal power routinely lead by forcing attention onto problems an authority structure prefers to avoid. But that leader acts inside the society whose problem is at stake, and answers to constituencies and factions rather than to a state that has posted them; the official here acts for a named state, under its instructions, from inside another state's jurisdiction. Williams (2002) corrects the same imbalance we are addressing, moving the analysis from institutions to the individual, and specifies the competencies of the boundary spanner who manages relationships across organisational and sectoral boundaries. Those boundaries, however, lie within one legal order, among parties who are members of a shared governance system.

Collaborative governance theorises leadership directly, as one of the variables that decides whether a collaboration succeeds. Ansell and Gash (2008) build their model on a forum that has been convened by a public agency and stakeholders who have been assembled, which the present setting does not supply. Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2012) deliberately reach further, defining collaborative governance as engaging people across the boundaries of agencies, levels of government and sectors, and modelling the system context and drivers that precede any convening, so that self-initiated and externally directed regimes both fall inside it. What their framework still presupposes is a regime, a set of parties with a shared public purpose and some structure that can hold them to it. The official here has no such regime, and no authority above the parties could constitute one. Transnational administration goes furthest, abandoning the methodological nationalism that ties administration to the nation-state and treating administration as a multi-actor, multi-scalar activity conducted by international organisations, networks, private standard-setters and officials operating beyond their own states (Stone & Moloney, 2019). It is a field rather than a single thesis, and we do not claim it is silent on any of this. What we have not found in it is a construct for the individual official who acts for one named state, from inside another's jurisdiction, where no transnational arrangement confers the authority.

Read together, these literatures relax the two assumptions one at a time but never both at once. The first assumption is that the leader has authority over those led; the second is that the leader acts within a jurisdiction, whether their own state's or a transnational order's. Heifetz and Williams relax the first while keeping the second, since their actors work inside the polity or governance system whose problems are at stake. Environmental stewardship also relaxes the first, since its stewards need own or command nothing, but it does not theorise a steward who acts for a state from beyond that state's jurisdiction. Collaborative governance and the public-sector extensions of stewardship theory loosen the first and retain the second. Transnational administration relaxes the second but restores the first at a higher level, since its actors draw authority from the transnational arrangement. The phenomenon in this paper is defined by the absence of both at once: an individual official, acting for one state, from inside the jurisdiction

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of another, over people, assets and flows that neither state's authority makes theirs, with no forum convened and no shared institutional order to hold the parties. That is the empty space the construct occupies.

Partial Resources from the Adjacent Literatures

Every one of these neighbours contributes something the construct needs. Naming the contribution exactly is what credits the lineage and, at the same time, earns the construct its independence. Stewardship theory supplies the psychological core: the stance of acting for another's long-term interest without ownership, and in a relationship where close control is held to be counterproductive rather than necessary (Davis et al., 1997). Its public-sector and environmental extensions carry it out of the firm (Schillemans, 2013; Bennett et al., 2018), but not to a steward acting for a state from beyond that state's jurisdiction. Servant leadership supplies the developmental content of that stewardship, the idea that serving and growing people is the work, not a means to it (van Dierendonck, 2011). Where it reaches beyond the organisation it reaches chiefly toward people rather than toward inherited assets or flows. Public service motivation supplies a plausible antecedent, the disposition that makes an official willing to assume responsibility with no incentive to (Perry & Wise, 1990). It is not itself a form of leadership.

Public value theory supplies the outcome variable, the public value the steward is trying to create and sustain (Moore, 1995; Thabit, Sancino, & Mora, 2025). It does not specify the conduct of the individual official acting beyond the jurisdiction. Diaspora diplomacy supplies the setting and the cross-border relationships that make the leadership matter (Ho & McConnell, 2019), and the study of state diaspora strategy supplies the policy frame within which such relationships are designed and evaluated (Birka & Wasserman, 2023). Nye's third dimension of public diplomacy, the building of lasting relationships with individuals over years through scholarships, exchanges and alumni associations, is this paper's terrain exactly (Nye, 2008). What that literature specifies is the instrument and the return, not the leadership by which a posted official sustains the relationship. Islamic leadership supplies the normative foundation: the conception of the leader as a trustee (amanah) and a steward (khalifah) who answers for what is not owned, even when unobserved (Ali, 2009; Beekun & Badawi, 1999). Islamic administrative thought carries this into public office, where consultation (shura) and justice (adl) are duties of the office-holder (Al-Buraey, 1985), and the higher objectives of the law (maqasid al-shariah), read as a system oriented to human flourishing and the common good, supply the end that such stewardship serves (Auda, 2008). The construct developed here draws the steward's stance from the first, the developmental content from the second, the motivational root from the third, the outcome from the fourth, the setting and stakes from the fifth, and the normative foundation from the sixth, and then adds what none of the literatures reviewed here contains: the exercise of that stewardship beyond jurisdiction, over a heterogeneous set of objects, on behalf of a state.

Results

Defining the Construct

We define extrajurisdictional public stewardship as leadership exercised on behalf of a state or public, beyond its jurisdiction, over people, assets and flows that the state does not own or command, in order to create and sustain public value that the state cannot produce by directive. Three elements do the work of the definition, and a fourth clause states its purpose. The first is the fiduciary orientation carried across a border: the official acts as a steward of the state's and

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the beneficiaries' long-term interest, holding what is in their care as a trust rather than as a resource to be exploited or a personal return to be maximised. The second is the constitutive absence of ownership, authority and jurisdiction over the object of leadership. This is not a limitation to be overcome but the condition that defines the construct; where the official does own, command or govern the object, the situation is ordinary line administration and the construct does not apply. The third is the breadth of the object. What is stewarded is not only people and the leader's own institution, as in servant leadership, but also inherited assets and cross-border flows. The fourth clause is teleological and belongs in every statement of the definition: the purpose is to create and sustain public value that the state cannot produce by directive. It is the combination, a fiduciary stance, exercised without ownership or jurisdiction, over heterogeneous objects, on behalf of a state, toward value no directive can compel, that no single construct among those reviewed here captures.

A word about the label, since a nearby term would mislead. In law and in international relations, extraterritorial ordinarily denotes the extension of a state's jurisdiction beyond its territory, as in the extraterritorial application of a statute. That is close to the opposite of what is described here, where the official acts precisely because no such extension has occurred and none can be assumed. We therefore use extrajurisdictional, which carries the plain sense of the prefix: outside the jurisdiction rather than reaching it outward. The second dimension below, extrajurisdictional responsibility, names the same condition at the level of a facet. Wherever the term appears here, it means outside the jurisdiction, not carrying the jurisdiction outward.
Two specification points follow, and stating them determines what can be measured. First, the six dimensions are attributes of a person in a role rather than of an organisation, and Propositions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 are individual-level claims. Two propositions are stated at mission level and are flagged as such where they appear: Proposition 5, whose antecedent is a set of mission practices, and Proposition 6, whose antecedent is the institutional embedding of the mission. Cross-level tests should therefore nest officials within missions. Second, the construct is formative rather than reflective: the dimensions constitute extrajurisdictional public stewardship rather than manifest it, so they need not correlate with one another, and a steward may be strong on one and weak on another. This matters for any attempt to build a scale, since formative constructs are not validated by internal consistency and require a measurement model specified as formative from the outset (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011; Podsakoff et al., 2016).

Dimensions

Six dimensions specify the construct. Each is a facet that a steward may hold strongly or weakly, and each carries a proposition below it, which is what holds the framework together. One further proposition, Proposition 6, concerns the institutional embedding of the stewardship as a whole rather than any single dimension of it.

Dimension 1: Fiduciary orientation. The steward acts for the long-term interest of the state and the people connected to it, absorbing effort and risk that no incentive rewards and no supervisor monitors. This is the stewardship stance of Davis et al. (1997), carried into a setting where monitoring is weak precisely because the action is abroad.

Dimension 2: Extrajurisdictional responsibility. The steward assumes duty and initiative for people, assets and flows that lie outside the state's legal authority, treating the absence of a mandate as a reason to act rather than an excuse not to. This is the facet that most sharply separates the construct from public administration inside a jurisdiction.

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Dimension 2 carries a risk that has to be stated rather than assumed away. Acting beyond one's mandate inside another state's territory is not costlessly virtuous. The reception of foreign missions rests on host-state consent, and initiative that a sending state reads as care can be read by a host as interference, particularly where the beneficiaries are resident nationals of the sending state and the activity touches their organisation or welfare. The construct therefore does not recommend unbounded initiative. It holds that the absence of a mandate is not by itself a reason for inaction, and that the steward's judgement about where initiative is legitimate is part of the competence the construct names. Where that judgement fails, the goodwill Proposition 2 predicts is not merely absent but negative, which is one reason host-state receptivity appears among the boundary conditions below.

Dimension 3: Object breadth. The steward leads across a heterogeneous set of objects: developing people, conserving inherited assets, and shaping valued flows. A steward strong on this dimension does not reduce the role to any one object, and it is object breadth that makes extrajurisdictional public stewardship a genus rather than one more special case of servant leadership.

Dimension 4: Multi-field cultural reconciliation. Three cultural and institutional fields press on the steward simultaneously: the home state, the host state and the community being served. Their expectations conflict, and taking them one at a time does not work. The dimension is the capacity to reconcile those demands in a single course of action rather than to switch between them.

Dimension 5: Non-instrumental value creation. The steward produces public value and goodwill as a by-product of genuine service and custody rather than as an advertised aim. The facet is the steward's own orientation, the refusal to condition service on a short-term return to the state, and it is present or absent independently of whether goodwill in fact follows. Whether non-instrumentality actually produces more durable goodwill is an empirical question, and it is put as Proposition 5 rather than assumed here. One distinction has to be held firmly here. Non-instrumentality is a property of the steward's orientation; visible conditionality is the observable proxy by which a beneficiary infers it. The construct does not hold that concealment substitutes for sincerity. It holds the opposite: over the horizons on which these relationships run, an instrumental orientation becomes visible through accumulated conduct, so a mission that conditions covertly should show the same decay as one that conditions openly, only later. That is itself a testable claim, and it is the amanah dimension's practical bite, since a steward who answers beyond any supervisor has no reason to manage appearances.

Dimension 6: Amanah, or trusteeship accountability. The steward treats the people, assets and flows in their care as a trust for which they answer beyond any contract or supervisor, to the community served and to a normative order they hold themselves to. Islamic leadership theory gives this its sharpest statement: the leader is a khalifah, a steward or vicegerent who holds what is not owned in trust (amanah) and is accountable for it (Ali, 2009; Beekun & Badawi, 1999). The idea is not confined to one tradition. Stewardship as trust recurs widely, but the Islamic formulation explains most clearly why a steward keeps faith with what they do not own even when no one is watching. This dimension is not the fiduciary orientation of the first under another name. Fiduciary orientation is a managerial and psychological stance, the disposition to act for another's interest (Davis et al., 1997). Amanah is a normative and accountable one: a trust for which the steward answers to the community and to a higher order, not only to the state's measured interest. The two can come apart: an official may be a diligent fiduciary who

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feels no trusteeship beyond the organisation, or may hold a sense of amanah that sustains stewardship where no managerial incentive would.

Table 1 sets out the six dimensions, the stewardship work each involves, and the proposition to which each is linked. Proposition 6 stands outside that mapping, since institutionalisation is a property of the arrangement rather than of any one dimension.

Table 1: The Six Dimensions of Extrajurisdictional Public Stewardship

Dimension	The stewardship work it involves	Related proposition
1. Fiduciary orientation	Acting for the long-term interest of state and beneficiaries without ownership, incentive or monitoring	P1
2. Extrajurisdictional responsibility	Assuming duty and initiative beyond the state's legal authority	P2
3. Object breadth	Stewarding people, inherited assets and cross-border flows together	P3
4. Multi-field cultural reconciliation	Reconciling the conflicting demands of home, host and community in one course of action	P4
5. Non-instrumental value creation	Producing public value and goodwill as a by-product of genuine service	P5
6. Amanah (trusteeship accountability)	Holding people, assets and flows as a trust, answerable beyond any contract or supervisor	P7

Source: Authors' own work. Note: Dimension 5 is linked to Proposition 5 by subject matter; Proposition 5's stated antecedent is the mission practice by which that dimension becomes observable, not the dimension itself. Proposition 6 stands outside the mapping.

The dimensions are easier to see at work together. What follows is stylised, and names no actual post, person or country. A scholarship mission of a state whose public service shares the trusteeship ethic described above maintains an alumni body abroad that it neither employs nor controls. An officer treats that body as an amanah: she keeps faith with graduates long after any transaction with them has ended (dimension six), develops them without a mandate to do so (dimensions one and two), and tends at once the people, the endowment that funds them, and the flow of new students the relationship attracts (dimension three). She consults home ministries, host universities and the alumni themselves, reconciling demands that conflict rather than serving them in turn (dimension four). The goodwill this produces holds only while the service is genuine; were the mission to instrument the alumni openly for short-term advantage, the trust would thin (dimension five). No single construct among those reviewed here accounts for all of this at once, which is the work the genus is meant to do.

Propositions and Framework

The propositions share a common logic: a capacity exercised under the defining condition of the construct, without ownership or jurisdiction, produces an outcome that ordinary administration within a jurisdiction would not. The set is kept to seven. Six link an antecedent to a conceptually separate outcome; the fourth, Proposition 4, states a moderator rather than a main effect.

Two of the outcomes need distinguishing, since they are easily conflated. Durability in Proposition 1 is the persistence of value created by one steward within that steward's tenure and after it, and is measured on the value itself. Sustainability across succession in Proposition 6 is whether the arrangement continues to produce value when the individual is replaced, and is

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measured on the mission. A post may create durable value that does not survive succession, which is precisely the case Proposition 6 is about.

Proposition 1. The stronger a public official's fiduciary orientation, relative to an agentic orientation toward measured outputs and personal return, the more durable the public value the official creates abroad. (Antecedent: fiduciary orientation. Outcome: durability of public value.)
Proposition 2. Officials who assume responsibility beyond their formal jurisdiction generate greater legitimacy and goodwill among beneficiary populations than officials who confine their action to their explicit mandate. (Antecedent: extrajurisdictional responsibility. Outcome: beneficiary legitimacy and goodwill.)

Proposition 3. The breadth of the objects a steward tends, across people, inherited assets and flows, is positively associated with the resilience of the state's presence abroad. Resilience must be measured independently of the objects themselves, or the proposition reduces to a portfolio identity: we propose the continuity of the mission's access through a disruption, such as a change of host government, a funding interruption or a public controversy, which can fall to zero while the count of objects is unchanged. (Antecedent: object breadth. Outcome: continuity of access through disruption.)

Proposition 4. Multi-field cultural reconciliation moderates the effect of object breadth on the continuity of access through disruption: the wider the set of objects a steward tends, the more that continuity depends on reconciling the demands of home, host and community in a single course of action, so that at low object breadth reconciliation adds little and at high object breadth its absence is costly. This is the one proposition that requires two dimensions to co-occur, and it is therefore the direct test of whether the construct is a genus rather than a container. (Moderator: multi-field reconciliation, D4, on the Proposition 3 path from object breadth to continuity of access.)

Proposition 5. The more a mission's dealings with beneficiaries are visibly conditioned on short-term return to the state, through the branding of assistance, conditional access to services, or the routing of support toward those judged immediately useful, the weaker the goodwill it produces among those beneficiaries, other things equal. The antecedent is a set of mission practices that can be observed and coded without reference to the goodwill they produce, which is what allows the proposition to fail. (Antecedent: observable conditionality of mission practice. Outcome: beneficiary goodwill, in inverse relation.)

Proposition 6. Where stewardship is institutionalised, embedded in roles, routines and budget lines rather than resident in the person of a single official, the public value it creates survives the tenure of any individual steward. The antecedent is deliberately stated without reference to succession, since the outcome is survival across succession and the two would otherwise define each other. This proposition is stated at the level of the mission rather than of the official, and it therefore predicts the condition under which the individual-level propositions continue to hold after the individual leaves. It is the one proposition that answers to no single dimension. (Antecedent: institutionalisation, at mission level. Outcome: sustainability of public value across succession.)

Proposition 7. The stronger a steward's amanah, or trusteeship accountability, the greater the moral legitimacy they command among beneficiaries, and the effect is larger where those beneficiaries share the ethical frame than where they do not. The persistence half of this claim

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needs care, since answering beyond a supervisor is close to what the dimension means: to keep it empirical, persistence must be measured behaviourally, as costly effort continued during documented periods when no supervision was in place, and amanah must be measured with items that make no reference to conduct when unobserved, which existing scales do not respect. It can then fail if amanah predicts stated commitment but not sustained conduct. (Antecedent: amanah accountability. Outcome: beneficiary-assessed moral legitimacy, moderated by shared ethical frame; and, separately, behavioural persistence under absent supervision.)

Figure 1 sets the framework out as a whole: the constitutive condition that defines the construct, the six dimensions, the outcomes each is predicted to produce, the moderator, the mission-level proposition, and the boundary conditions within which the whole is expected to hold.

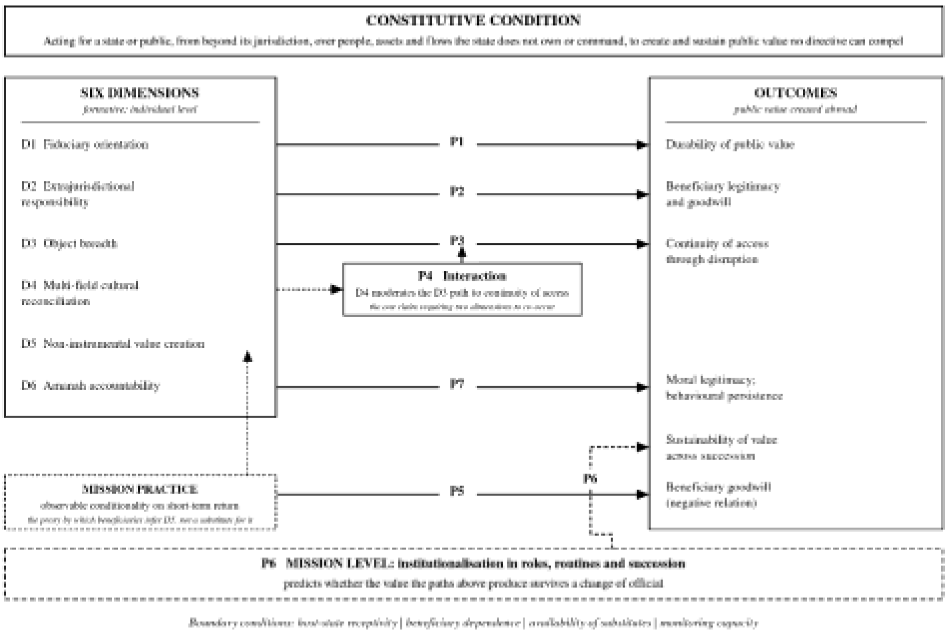

Figure 1: The Extrajurisdictional Public Stewardship Framework
Source: Authors' own work.

Scope and Boundary Conditions

The construct applies to an official, or a small team, acting on behalf of a state or public, from beyond that state's jurisdiction, over people, assets or flows the state does not own or command, toward public value the state cannot produce by directive. It does not apply in three cases, and stating them makes the construct testable rather than elastic. It does not apply to ordinary line management within a jurisdiction, where the leader owns the role and commands the staff; there the absence that defines the construct is not present. It does not apply to purely private transnational actors, who act for no public principal. And it does not apply to coercive statecraft, where the state acts by command or pressure rather than by stewarding what it does not own; stewardship and coercion are different modes.

Two contrasting cases sharpen the boundary. An education attache who nurtures an alumni network she cannot command, conserves a scholarship relationship she inherited, and works to attract research partnerships her state does not own is an instance of the construct on every dimension. A consular officer who processes visa applications under a clear legal mandate, within the authority of the office, is not, however transnational the setting, because the ownership, authority and jurisdiction that the construct requires to be absent are present. The

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difference is not the border; it is whether the leadership is exercised over what the state holds or over what it does not.

The exclusions above set the scope of the construct. Its boundary conditions are a separate matter, and they state where the propositions should stop holding rather than where the construct stops applying. We propose four. The first is host-state receptivity: where the host restricts or politicises foreign missions' contact with resident nationals, the extrajurisdictional initiative that Proposition 2 predicts will earn goodwill may instead attract suspicion, so the sign of that relationship should weaken and may reverse. The second is beneficiary dependence: where beneficiaries rely on the mission for something they cannot obtain elsewhere, expressed goodwill is confounded with compliance, and the effects in Propositions 2 and 5 should attenuate and become harder to read. The third is the availability of substitutes: where another sending state or institution offers the same support, the service is discretionary in the beneficiary's eyes and the goodwill effect in Proposition 2 should be larger, so the relationship should strengthen as substitutes multiply. The fourth is monitoring capacity. The construct assumes monitoring at a distance is weak, so where a sending state has instituted continuous reporting on its officials abroad, the stewardship mechanism should give way to ordinary agency mechanisms and Proposition 1 should attenuate. Each of these four can be assessed before any outcome is known, which is what distinguishes a condition from an excuse.

One objection to the boundary deserves a direct answer. The claim that an official who gains ownership, authority or jurisdiction has, by that fact, ceased to practise the construct can look like a definition that shields itself from disproof, since any counter-example is ruled out as not really an instance. The construct is not immune to evidence, however, and it can be shown false in at least three ways. If, among officials all of whom act beyond their own state's jurisdiction, those who assume more responsibility beyond their formal mandate generate no more legitimacy and goodwill among beneficiaries than those who assume less, Proposition 2 fails, and one of the construct's central predictions fails with it. The comparison has to be made within the construct's scope rather than against officials it excludes, or it tests only that the phenomenon exists. If missions whose practice is visibly conditioned on short-term return produce as much beneficiary goodwill as missions whose practice is not, Proposition 5 fails. And if diversifying the objects a steward tends does nothing for the resilience of a state's presence, Proposition 3 fails. The definition fixes what the construct is; the propositions expose it to being wrong. The construct should be judged on whether it survives those tests.

Three of these propositions sit closer to the definitions than the others, and the honest course is to say which and how each is kept empirical. Proposition 3 risks reducing to a portfolio identity and is saved by measuring resilience on continuity of access rather than on the objects. Proposition 6 risks being analytic and is saved by measuring institutionalisation on ex ante structural features, such as documented handover, a standing budget line and a role description that survives the person, and the outcome on beneficiary-side continuity. The persistence half of Proposition 7 is the closest of all to its dimension and is saved only if persistence is measured as costly conduct during documented periods without supervision. Where these measurement conditions are not met, the propositions concerned should be treated as definitional and not reported as tests.

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Discussion

Differentiation from Adjacent Constructs

The construct must be shown to differ from each neighbour by a stated mechanism, not by an adjective. From stewardship theory it borrows the steward's stance, but stewardship theory, in its original model and in its public-sector and environmental extensions, typically places the steward inside the polity, organisation or community whose interest is served (Davis et al., 1997; Schillemans, 2013; Bennett et al., 2018). Extrajurisdictional public stewardship moves the steward outside it: the steward acts across a border, over objects with no owner present, on behalf of a public that cannot monitor and did not contract. From servant leadership it borrows developmental service, but servant leadership is predominantly theorised and measured as a relationship between a leader and followers within an organisation (van Dierendonck, 2011), and where it reaches outward it does so as value created for the community by an organisation's own members (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008); here the beneficiaries are non-members abroad, and the objects include assets and flows, not only people. From public service motivation it borrows a likely antecedent, but public service motivation is a disposition, not a mode of leadership (Perry & Wise, 1990), and its motives are framed in relation to the official's own government and public rather than beyond it. From agency theory it takes the opposite position: agency theory models the distant actor as self-interested and the relationship as one to be monitored and incentivised (Eisenhardt, 1989), whereas the whole point of the construct is that monitoring is weak and costly across the border and stewardship is what functions in its place. From diaspora diplomacy it borrows the setting, but diaspora diplomacy deliberately widens and decentres the field of diplomatic actors (Ho & McConnell, 2019); the construct names the conduct of the individual official that this widening leaves unspecified.

The four literatures that came closest in the theoretical basis have to be differentiated by mechanism as well, not merely noted. From leading without authority the construct takes the fact that authority is not needed to lead. But Heifetz's actor mobilises a constituency around a problem they share, inside one society. The steward here acts for an absent principal, over beneficiaries who are not a constituency and need not share any problem at all. From boundary spanning it takes the shift to the individual, but the boundary Williams (2002) spans is organisational and the parties belong to one legal order, whereas the boundary here is jurisdictional and the parties are governed by different states. From collaborative governance it takes the seriousness about leadership as a variable, but collaborative governance requires a regime, however loosely constituted, and here no authority above the parties could constitute one. From transnational administration it takes the escape from methodological nationalism, but its actors draw their warrant from the transnational arrangement itself, or from expertise or market position, rather than from one state that has posted them and whose authority stops at the border. In each case the difference is the same one: the leadership is exercised for one state, from inside the jurisdiction of another, with no arrangement above either that could confer authority or convene the parties.

The construct is also sharpened by Islamic leadership theory, which conceives the leader as a khalifah holding people and resources in trust (amanah) and answerable for them beyond any contract (Ali, 2009; Beekun & Badawi, 1999). This tradition supplies the normative depth the managerial neighbours lack: it explains why a steward stays faithful to what they do not own in the absence of monitoring, grounding the fiduciary stance in accountability to the community and to a higher order rather than in incentives. Recent work shows such faith-informed public leadership operating within secular administrative systems (Riskawati, Salim, Putro, & Ginting,

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2025), which is close to the hybrid setting the construct describes. Its wider vocabulary maps onto the construct: consultation (shura) informs the reconciliation of conflicting fields, justice (adl) governs the fair treatment of beneficiaries who cannot compel it, and the higher objectives of the law (maqasid al-shariah) cast the whole as service toward human flourishing rather than advantage (Al-Buraey, 1985; Auda, 2008). What the construct adds is the extension of that trusteeship across borders and its application to a heterogeneous set of objects.

One clarification about the population, since the nearest literature can mislead. Sponsored students and recent alumni abroad are sojourners rather than a settled diaspora, and the diaspora-diplomacy and diaspora-strategy literatures are built around populations that have stayed. Work on international education and soft power is closer to the setting, and it is also sceptical: Lomer (2017) argues that the soft-power rationale for international education rests on assumptions about influence that policy documents assert more often than they evidence. We take that scepticism as a reason to state the mechanism at the level of the official's conduct, where it can be observed, rather than at the level of national influence, where it cannot.

The sharpest objection is that this is simply servant leadership, or stewardship theory, practised abroad. It is not, and the reason is a mechanism the neighbours do not contain. Extrajurisdictional public stewardship is constituted by the simultaneous absence of ownership, authority and jurisdiction over what is led, the breadth of the objects led, and the non-instrumentality of the value produced. A servant leader who acquires authority over followers is still a servant leader; a steward who comes to own the asset is still a steward. But an extrajurisdictional public steward who gains ownership, command or jurisdiction over the object has, by that fact, stopped doing the thing the construct names. The construct is defined by what the leader does not hold. That is what is genuinely new.

A related objection is that the construct is merely a container, a label placed over several things already studied separately, so that naming the genus adds nothing. The reply is that the genus is generative rather than additive: some of its claims hold only when the facets co-occur and are invisible in any facet taken alone. That public value corrodes when stewardship is instrumentalised (Proposition 5) is not a property of servant leadership, or of custody, or of flow attraction on its own; it appears only when non-instrumental service is exercised over objects one does not own, on behalf of a principal who cannot monitor. That object breadth builds resilience (Proposition 3) cannot be stated at the level of any single object. And the trusteeship that keeps a steward faithful without monitoring (Proposition 7) does its work precisely because ownership, authority and jurisdiction are absent at once. The whole therefore predicts relationships that none of the parts does, which is the test of whether an integration is more than a list.

Contributions

The paper makes five theoretical contributions. To public leadership research, it moves the field past the jurisdictional organisation. That field has already detached leadership from formal authority (Ospina, 2017), but it has kept its leaders inside a single polity (Van Wart, 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015). We show that leadership is exercised, and can be studied, where the leader has neither authority over the led nor jurisdiction over the terrain. To stewardship theory, it takes the steward outside the jurisdiction of the public served, a move its firm-based, public-sector and environmental extensions have not made, and specifies a steward who tends people, inherited public assets and ownerless flows at once (Bennett et al., 2018; Davis et al., 1997; Hernandez, 2012; Schillemans, 2013). To the study of diplomacy and soft power, it supplies

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the leadership conduct that produces the reputational returns those literatures observe at the level of states (Birka & Wasserman, 2023; Ho & McConnell, 2019; Nye, 2008). To Islamic and values-based leadership, it shows that the trusteeship (amanah) at the heart of that tradition is not only an intra-community ethic but a workable foundation for public leadership exercised across borders, and that faith-informed stewardship can operate inside secular administrative systems (Ali, 2009; Beekun & Badawi, 1999; Riskawati et al., 2025). Within that same contribution, it connects public leadership to a maqasid-based view of development, in which the state's cultivation of its people abroad is service toward their flourishing and the common good rather than the projection of influence (Al-Buraey, 1985; Auda, 2008). And, integratively, it unifies a scattered family of ideas, concerning welfare, service, custody, multi-field navigation and the leadership of flows, under a single genus, so that they can be seen, and tested, as variations on one form of leadership rather than as separate matters.

A single move runs through all five contributions: taking the absence of ownership, authority and jurisdiction not as a deficiency to be corrected but as the defining feature of a distinct and consequential form of public leadership.

The construct also speaks to social development and the governance of public value. The developmental work a state does abroad, growing its people and sustaining the flows that connect them to it, is a form of public value governance carried out through collaboration beyond the jurisdiction, in which value is created with actors the state does not control (Birka & Wasserman, 2023; Thabit et al., 2025). Reading that work as stewardship rather than as projection reframes what a mission is for and how its success should be judged.

The construct also has implications for practice. Selection for extrajurisdictional posts should weigh fiduciary and amanah orientation and multi-field competence, not only technical or representational skill. Preparation should treat the reconciliation of conflicting cultural fields as a core capability rather than an incidental one. Role design should give officials an explicit remit to assume responsibility beyond their formal mandate, since the construct predicts that goodwill follows from exactly that. The corresponding warning is not about appearances. A mission that treats its beneficiaries as instruments should expect the goodwill to decay whether or not the instrumentality is announced, because conduct accumulates and is read; the remedy is not better presentation but a different orientation. Appraisal should shift from output measures toward developmental and custodial measures. And if Proposition 6 holds, stewardship should be institutionalised in roles and routines rather than left to individuals, so that the purpose it serves is embodied in the office and not only in the person (Selznick, 1957).

Research Agenda

The construct is offered to be tested. Four lines of work would do so. The first is operationalisation: developing measures for each of the six dimensions, including a scale for fiduciary orientation, extrajurisdictional responsibility, object breadth, multi-field reconciliation, non-instrumentality, and amanah or trusteeship accountability, calibrated on officials in education, trade, cultural and consular missions. That work must include discriminant and incremental validity tests against the nearest existing measures, administered to the same officials: if servant leadership, boundary-spanning competence and public service motivation together account for the variance the six dimensions capture, the construct is a container after all, and the claim made here fails at its most important point. The second is the direct test of the propositions. Critical-incident studies with serving and former attaches would surface the conduct; vignette experiments manipulating visible instrumentality would test

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Proposition 5, and field conflict Proposition 4; comparative case studies across missions would test Propositions 2 and 3. Two designs are harder and matter most: a test of whether a shared ethical frame between steward and beneficiary community amplifies the moral legitimacy that amanah accountability produces, as Proposition 7 states, and longitudinal work following a post across a change of official, which is the only way to test the institutionalisation claim in Proposition 6. The third is the study of antecedents, among them public service motivation, tenure, and the design of preparation and training, that raise or lower each dimension. The fourth is the study of outcomes worth measuring, including the condition of inherited assets, the quality and durability of valued flows, and the goodwill of beneficiary populations over time. Framed as falsifiable hypotheses rather than claims, the propositions give each of these designs a clear target.

One limitation of the design should be named rather than left for a reader to find. The constitutive condition does not vary within the construct's scope, because the scope rules exclude every case in which ownership, authority or jurisdiction is present, and the propositions therefore vary the dimensions while holding that condition fixed. A study confirming all seven would show that the dimensions behave as predicted among officials abroad. It would not show that acting from outside the jurisdiction is what makes them behave that way. Answering that requires the cross-scope comparison the argument above forecloses, and the nearest partial answers are a within-official design across postings that differ in mandate strength, and a comparison with domestically posted officials on the same dimensional measures. Both test the condition rather than the construct, and should be reported as such.

Conclusion

A great deal of a state's most durable influence abroad is produced by officials who lead what the state does not own. They develop people they cannot command, conserve assets they inherited, and shape flows they did not originate, from beyond their own jurisdiction and across cultural fields that do not agree. This paper has argued that the several ideas used to describe such work are facets of one phenomenon, has named that phenomenon extrajurisdictional public stewardship, and has specified it as a construct with six dimensions, a set of testable propositions, and clear boundaries, resting on a fiduciary and trusteeship ethic that the Islamic conception of the leader as khalifah states with particular clarity. The claim is not that stewardship abroad is admirable, though it may be, but that it is a distinct and specifiable form of public leadership, defined by what the leader does not hold, and consequential for the value a state creates in the world. The invitation is to test it.

Declaration on the Use of Generative AI

In preparing this manuscript, a generative AI assistant was used solely for language copy-editing, that is, to improve the clarity, grammar and readability of the authors' own original text. It was not used to generate the ideas, the argument, the construct, the propositions or the interpretations, which are entirely the authors' own. The authors have reviewed and take full responsibility for the content, and no AI tool is credited as an author, consistent with COPE guidance.

Declarations. This is a conceptual paper. It reports no empirical study, recruited no participants, collected no data and used no personal information, so ethical approval was not required and none was sought. The illustrations are stylised and name no real post, person, organisation or country. The authors received no funding for this work and declare no competing interests.

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