

Geopolitical Instrumentalization Theory (GIT)

A Comprehensive Theoretical Introduction

Introductory Paper to the GIT Research Series

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February 2026

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*First published in Arabic: Istiqlal Forum — IFSS Damascus, February 2026.
This is an author-prepared English-language version of the original Arabic paper.*

Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive theoretical introduction to Geopolitical Instrumentalization Theory (GIT), a framework developed through a series of four research papers published between August 2025 and February 2026. GIT addresses a structural gap in mainstream international relations theory: the capacity of hegemonic powers to exploit the dynamics of ostensibly adversarial projects in ways that systematically serve their strategic objectives — without requiring direct coordination or conspiracy.

The theory is grounded in three classical Arab-Islamic intellectual traditions: Ibn Khaldun's analysis of state power cycles and the logic of monopolization of rule (*Muqaddima*); Malik ibn Nabil's concept of colonizability as an internal structural disposition that precedes and enables external manipulation (*The Conditions of Renaissance*); and Abdel Wahab El-Messiri's distinction between intention and objective functionality. These references are not decorative — they constitute the epistemological foundation from which GIT analyzes phenomena that Western IR theory systematically mischaracterizes.

GIT proposes a three-phase lifecycle for geopolitical instruments: positive instrumentalization (the instrument actively serves the hegemonic project); negative instrumentalization (the instrument exhausts its primary function and begins generating costs); and disposal (the instrument is discarded when its continuation becomes a net strategic liability). The framework also introduces four susceptibility coefficients — adversarial identity, external funding dependency, exit cost, and internal cohesion — that determine a political actor's vulnerability to instrumentalization. A foundational distinction between intentional instrumentalization and objective functionality renders the theory analytically falsifiable rather than conspiratorial.

The paper concludes by identifying three open methodological challenges that define the theory's future research agenda: the falsifiability problem and the need to specify null conditions for non-instrumentalization; retrospective validity testing on closed historical cases (Yugoslavia, Iraq 2003, Libya 2011); and the epistemological responsibility of a theory written from within the events

it analyzes — and the critical-trusteeship method (following Taha Abderrahmane) it employs toward both its Arab-Islamic and Western references.

Keywords: *Geopolitical Instrumentalization Theory · Objective functionality · Ibn Khaldun · Malik ibn Nafi · El-Messiri · Hegemony · Political instrument lifecycle · Arab political thought · Iran · Syria*

Subject Areas: International Relations · Political Theory · Middle East & Africa Studies · Arab-Islamic Political Thought · Security Studies

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In August 2025, when we placed the first paper on the table, the question driving it was simple in formulation but deep in implication: how could a revolutionary project that declared explicit hostility to American-Israeli hegemony produce, over two decades, outcomes that served that hegemony with systematic consistency? The question was not new in substance — history is full of revolutions emptied of their content and ideologies instrumentalized for purposes alien to their own. What was new was the attempt to build a theoretical framework that could explain this phenomenon without falling into the trap of conspiracy theory on one side, or reducing it to blind coincidence on the other.

Between conspiracy and coincidence lies a vast space that mainstream international relations theory has neglected. In that space, Geopolitical Instrumentalization Theory was born.

Between conspiracy and coincidence lies a vast space that mainstream international relations theory has systematically neglected. Structural realism — in both its classical and neorealist variants — explains international politics through interest and power, but assumes rational actors who know what they want and pursue it by the shortest available route. Constructivism sees the

world as a field of negotiated identities and meanings, but in doing so weakens the role of material power to the point of near-invisibility. Hegemonic stability theory, for its part, describes the world as the victor believes it should be, not as the defeated actually experience it. In the space opened by these neglects, Geopolitical Instrumentalization Theory (GIT) was born.

But before these papers are read as a contribution to Western international relations theory, their epistemological location must be specified with precision. GIT did not emerge from the corridors of American think tanks, nor from the frameworks of Waltzian structural realism or Keohanian liberal institutionalism. Its primary intellectual root is Khaldunian — grounded in Ibn Khaldun's exceptional analysis in the *Muqaddima* of the phases of state: its emergence through *asabiyya*, its expansion through dominance, and its decomposition when *asabiyya* turns against itself and becomes an instrument of monopolization rather than a bond of solidarity. What these papers add is the extension of this dynamic from the interior to the exterior — from understanding how states decompose internally, to understanding how they are exploited in their decomposition by forces operating in the international arena.

The second root is Nabian — grounded in the foundational distinction that Malik ibn Nabi established in *The Conditions of Renaissance* between external pressure and internal susceptibility to it. Ibn Nabi did not absolve the colonizer, but he refused to make it the sole cause. Colonizability does not reside in the invader's army; it resides in the society that opens its gates before the invader even knocks. This concept is the cornerstone for understanding why instrumentalization operations succeed where they succeed and fail where they fail — not because of the instrumentalizing power's capacity, but because of the instrumentalized actor's internal structure.

The third root is Messirean — grounded in the precise distinction that Abdel Wahab El-Messiri established between →intention→ and →objective functionality." El-Messiri, in his model of analytical bias, warns that demonstrating the existence of a phenomenon does not require demonstrating the intention of those who produced it. A phenomenon that consistently serves a party across different contexts and independently of the varying intentions of the actors involved — this is a functional phenomenon, not a conspiratorial one. And this distinction is what rescues

the theory from being an unfalsifiable claim and makes it an analytical tool grounded in objective effect rather than presumed intent.

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Departing from this intellectual triad, the first paper constructed the concept of geopolitical instrumentalization in its original formulation: the structural capacity of hegemonic powers to exploit the dynamics of projects ostensibly opposed to them, in ways that serve their strategic objectives, through the creation of an interactive environment that produces outcomes systematically favorable to the hegemon without requiring direct coordination. The Iranian case was the empirical model: how the Umm al-Qura project — despite its declared enmity to the American-Israeli project — produced over two decades outcomes that matched with disturbing precision what the architecture of the →New Middle East→ required: the dismantling of Arab national states, the deepening of sectarian divisions until they became the primary language of regional politics, and the exhaustion of Arab societies in peripheral conflicts that drained their capacity for political resistance.

But the first paper stopped at the boundaries of a binary model — the instrumentalization phase, then the collapse of the instrument. What events between August 2025 and February 2026 revealed called for the development of the framework to accommodate a deeper logic. The second paper added the third phase that the original model had overlooked: the disposal phase, which occurs when the instrument completes its function and transforms from a strategic asset into a liability. The American-Israeli war on Iran in 2025 — which at first glance appeared to contradict the instrumentalization hypothesis — became, in light of this addition, its logical culmination. Iran was not removed because it failed to perform its function. It was removed because it had succeeded — and its continued existence had become the primary obstacle to the next phase of the project.

Iran was not removed because it failed to perform its function. It was removed because it had succeeded — and its continued existence had become the primary obstacle to what came next.

This third phase found its theoretical anchor, again, in Ibn Khaldun — in his chapters on what he calls →monopolization of rule": the phase in which the victorious power eliminates the partners who helped it reach dominance. Not because they betrayed it. Because their usefulness has expired. The mechanism requires no malice; it requires only rationality applied to changing conditions. That a fourteenth-century North African jurist and historian identified this pattern six centuries before IMEC was conceived is not coincidence. It reflects the degree to which structures of power reproduce themselves across civilizational contexts, and the degree to which classical Arab political thought offers analytical tools that Western international relations theory has yet to formalize.

The third paper then shifted the angle of analysis from →what happened to Iran?" to →what does the disposal of the instrument mean for the surrounding region?" The central question became: who fills the vacuum? Here it became apparent that the vacuum does not remain a vacuum — a new regional order forms, with Syria as its pivotal node. The third paper developed a typology of instrumentalization types that was absent from the original framework: fragmentary instrumentalization (Iran in the Arab region), attrition instrumentalization (Ukraine against Russia), and suspensive instrumentalization (Taiwan in the American-Chinese calculations). This typology is necessary because each type follows a different logic and demands a different strategy of resistance.

Fragmentary, attrition, and suspensive instrumentalization — three types that follow different logics and demand different strategies of resistance.

But the framework, after the second and third papers, still implicitly assumed that the →instrument→ is an entity with relative coherence — a unified actor facing external pressure that it either resists or drifts into. The fourth paper broke this assumption and added to the framework its fourth and most dangerous variable: the internal cohesion coefficient. A sentence of seven

words heard from the Syrian street — →just replace the head→ — was the key. When the cohesive bond of the revolutionary body unravels from within through corruption, monopolization of decision, and the absence of transparency in strategic choice, external powers require no infiltration strategy. They simply wait for the invitation.

The sum of these four papers constitutes today an integrated research program upon which Geopolitical Instrumentalization Theory rests in its completed formulation. The theory stands on three temporal phases — positive instrumentalization, negative instrumentalization, and disposal — and on four susceptibility coefficients — adversarial identity, external funding dependency, exit cost, and internal cohesion — and on a foundational distinction between intentional instrumentalization and objective functionality, a distinction that makes the theory testable rather than conspiratorial.

Yet the theory in its current formulation still faces a genuine methodological challenge that cannot be ignored. The challenge is what philosophers of science call the problem of falsifiability: a good theory specifies in advance what would prove it wrong. GIT knows how to diagnose instrumentalization — but it has not yet specified with sufficient precision what does not constitute instrumentalization. Not every failure to achieve stated objectives is evidence of instrumentalization. Not every convergence between the interests of two adversarial parties is evidence of objective functionality. The next methodological step the theory requires is the construction of →null conditions→ — specifying the cases in which the framework explicitly acknowledges that what occurred was autonomous collapse rather than external instrumentalization, and that what happened was structural coincidence rather than objective functionality.

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A second challenge concerns the verification phase. The four papers applied the framework to contemporary cases still in the process of formation. The hardest and most valuable test of the

theory is its application to closed historical cases — where outcomes are known, documentation is available, and assessment is possible independently of current analytical bias. The disintegration of Yugoslavia, Iraq after 2003, the Libyan experience after 2011 — these are cases ready for testing the theory's →retrospective validity." If it succeeds in explaining what occurred more fully than the prevailing explanations, the theory will have passed its hardest test. If it fails, its assumptions require revision — not insistence.

A third challenge is the deepest philosophically: the theory is built on an original Arab-Islamic referential framework — Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Nabi, El-Messiri, al-Shatibi, Taha Abderrahmane, Wael Hallaq — and it engages from that position the dominant theories of international relations. This dual location allows it to see what Western theories cannot, because it looks from outside them, and to be articulated through concepts that express the historical experience of the societies it analyzes rather than the historical experience of those who dominate them. But this location equally demands a doubled critical consciousness: the theory questions its Arab-Islamic references at the same level it questions Western theories — no veneration of heritage, no capitulation to Western modernity. This is what I call the Taha Abderrahmane principle of →critical trusteeship": we accept what holds and reject what does not, after careful examination, regardless of its source.

These four papers are presented together — with this introduction — as an integrated research program in the process of formation, not as a final and closed theoretical system. The difference between the two is fundamental: a research program acknowledges its limits, identifies its paths of development, and invites testing and revision. A final system silences questions rather than opening them. And the questions these papers open are more important than the answers they provide — which, in the author's view, is a sign of health rather than deficiency.

Ukraine and Iran and Taiwan have not yet been treated with the systematic depth they deserve within this theory's framework. The monopolization of decision and structural corruption have not yet been placed in a measurable model amenable to comparative application. And the internal cohesion coefficient requires more precise operational indicators than what has so far been

proposed. These gaps are not deficiencies to be concealed — they are the map that defines where the research must go in its coming phases.

One final word must be said about the time in which this theory was born. The papers were written at the moment of great transformation — between the fall of Damascus in December 2024 and the war on Iran in 2025 and the Syrian-Israeli negotiations of January 2026. This simultaneity between writing and event is strength and weakness at once. The strength lies in that the analysis engages the living rather than the archived, the present rather than the filed away. The weakness lies in that the temporal distance necessary for objective judgment has not yet formed. Those who read these papers ten years hence may see what we cannot see today — of shortsightedness or error of estimation. This is the legitimate right of every subsequent reader, on the condition that they remember that the theory's author wrote it from inside the storm, not from his ivory tower.

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Ibn Khaldun wrote the Muqaddima after defeat, imprisonment, and exile — at a moment of personal rupture in which he watched the region taking shape anew. Malik ibn Nabi wrote The Conditions of Renaissance in colonial Paris, far from his occupied homeland. Both wrote from inside the event, not from outside it — and both produced what has withstood the test of time. These papers make no claim to stand at that height. But they claim the right to belong to that tradition in method: to analyze what is occurring with honesty, to acknowledge what is unknown, and to invite criticism at the same level at which they criticize the phenomena they study.

What began with a single question in August 2025 — how does a revolutionary project become an instrument of hegemony? — concluded in four papers, a theoretical framework, and open questions that merit a full research program. It concluded also in a sentence of seven words heard from the Syrian street that proved more diagnostically precise than much of what has been written in academic centers. →Just replace the head→ — in this sentence lies the genuine test for any theory claiming to understand what is occurring: can it answer it with a depth that adds to what the

street already knows, or does it merely repackage that knowledge in academic vocabulary? That is the question this introduction leaves open.

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