

How does the AI-generated Lego video function as a new form of post-medium propaganda, and in what ways does it operationalize Lego aesthetics, YouTube's interface, and algorithmic circulation to navigate language and censorship boundaries?

The case study can be watched here: <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-889531>

While AI-generated content can be found almost everywhere today, one of its most striking manifestations emerges at the intersection of AI, Lego videos, and geopolitical conflict. In February 2026, as Iran shut down internet access during nationwide protests, Lego-style animations began appearing on social media depicting scenes related to the Iran war between the US, Israel and Iran, one of them depicting graphic revenge attacks on US and Israeli allies after the US had bombed an all-girls school in Minab killing 156 people.¹

The political AI-generated Lego videos are becoming increasingly common on social media, created by various users and collectively gathering millions of views.² YouTube suspended most of the content for violating its policy on “violent content.”³ A move the Iranian foreign ministry condemned as an attempt to “suppress the truth.”⁴ However, despite the ban from YouTube, the videos continue to circulate online on platforms such as X.⁵

This paper questions how the AI-generated Lego video functions as a new form of post-medium propaganda, and in what ways it operationalizes Lego aesthetics, YouTube's interface, and algorithmic circulation to bypass international language and censorship boundaries. I will begin by providing an overview of the case study, discussing and applying theory around the collapse of medium specificity, then applying the theory of interactivity and operational images to the case study.

This paper argues that the Lego animation is not traditional propaganda but a video that could only be created in the post-medium condition, one that weaponizes interactivity and the aesthetics of user-generated content to achieve geopolitical goals. This case is particularly relevant to post-medium studies because it blurs traditional distinctions between state-produced propaganda and liberal platforms such as YouTube where individual users upload videos. Driven by algorithms, this forces a redefinition of how political messages navigate and operate when there is no distinction between state and individual uploads, and anyone can upload content onto a platform for the world to see. This gives us critical insight into modern warfare and the ways states use media, continuously finding new methods to use it for their strategic benefit.

Before turning to theory, a detailed description of the case study is necessary. The video I will analyze was shared in an article by the Jerusalem Post. According to The Jerusalem Post, the movie was produced by the state-run Revayat-e Fath institute and later shared on Tasmin, the news agency of the IRGC. However, in an interview with Explosive News by The New Yorker, the

¹ Amnesty International, “Dodelijke aanval VS op Iraanse school.”; UNESCO “Bombing of Iran primary school.”; Lister, Karimi. “Iran’s two-tier internet access,”

² Alrefaai, “When Lego Goes to War.”

³ Al Jazeera, “Iran slams YouTube ban.”; Combs, “Iran-linked AI Lego video.”

⁴ Baqaei, “In a land that proudly hosts.”

⁵ Chayka, “The Team Behind.”

key creator of AI Lego videos about the US and Iran described his news outlet as "totally independent". He explained, Revayat-e Fath is the Persian name for the two-part videos they released, which are titled Victory Chronicles 1 and Victory Chronicles 2. The video was produced by Explosive News, a group that has since taken credit for it in an interview with the New Yorker.⁶

In the movie, the viewer navigates a recognizable aesthetic world (Lego) but is led through a revenge narrative that incorporates recent news events, such as the Epstein files. The animation has the distinctive visual language of Lego: yellow, plastic-looking, block figures, and simplified environments. However, its content is anything but childlike. To summarize the movie: In the first scene, President Trump becomes so enraged while viewing the Epstein files that he presses a red button, launching a bomb at the girls' school in Minab, Iran. After the school is destroyed, we see a soldier tearing up among the remains of the school. Iranian soldiers are then seen planning revenge attacks on neighboring countries Cyprus, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Iraq.⁷ Next, we see the bombing of these neighboring countries while people are fleeing, followed by the closing of the Strait of Hormuz. At the end, we see an Iranian soldier standing at the bombed school, signifying that the revenge has been taken. The video concludes with a text message reading: "In remembrance of the 178 students from Minab who were martyred at the hands of Zionist and American terrorists."

The timing of the upload maximized its impact. Released shortly after the US-Israeli bombing of the Minab school in February 2026, which was widely condemned, the video offers a narrative of righteous revenge.⁸ It depicts Iranian missiles striking targets across the Gulf region, presenting Iran as a capable power rather than a victim. Yet the circulation of the movie reveals a paradox crucial to this case study. Iran had shut down domestic internet access on February 28, 2026, meaning most Iranian citizens could not view the content.⁹ The target audience was explicitly international. Explosive News has explained their aesthetic choices as an intentional communication strategy. According to the BBC's interview with "Mr. Explosive," the head of Explosive News, the choice of Lego aesthetics is deliberate: "it is a world language".¹⁰ This global clarity allows the video to bypass linguistic barriers and circulate across cultures without translation. These movies produced by Explosive Media depict a mix of dying children, fighter jets,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Genn, "WATCH: IRGC-linked media shares propaganda."

⁸ UNESCO "Bombing of Iran primary school."; Amnesty International, "Dodelijke aanval VS op Iraanse school."

⁹ Lister, Karimi. "Iran's two-tier internet access."

¹⁰ BBC "making viral Lego-style AI videos for Iran."

and President Trump, imagery designed to provoke emotional responses while maintaining the look of playfulness with Lego.¹¹

To understand how this video operates, we must first clarify what propaganda means in the contemporary context. As Zeitzoff explains, propaganda on a mass scale involves official efforts to steer public discourse and manipulate the communication channels that carry it.¹² Whether the video can be officially flagged as propaganda should be reviewed through more thorough research into its provenance and creator. Whether the producer, Explosive News, is related to the Iranian government or not, the video functions as state propaganda. It guides the viewer through a revenge narrative, uses humor strategically, and inserts the nationalistic slogan "my country is my life" as is seen on the class whiteboard in the girls' school (figure 1). The video was later shared and praised on Instagram by the official account of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who themselves called it "a striking piece of propaganda".¹³ The video's use of satire and American pop culture references to challenge US and Israel's military operations makes it a compelling case study of how the Iranian state engages with contemporary geopolitical realities.



Figure 1: Teacher of the girls' school in Minab writing "my country is my life" in Persian. Screenshot by author of the YouTube video by Explosive News, watched on the Jerusalem Post.

I will now examine the medium and its connection to the tactics of this social media propaganda video. To understand this case, I will revisit Marshall McLuhan's foundational words "the medium is the message." McLuhan argued that the form of a medium shapes perception regardless of its content, whether a medium carries ideas, or entertainment is beside the point:

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Zeitzoff, "Social Media Is Changing Conflict." 1974.

¹³ Foreign Ministry of Iran "A 2-minute LEGO-style animation."

its true impact lies in the change of scale, pace, or pattern it introduces.¹⁴ However, the contemporary media environment has proven this medium-specific analysis insufficient.¹⁵ When a video is simultaneously a film, a Lego animation, a social media post, state-created propaganda, what is its “medium” in which we should analyze it?

The post-medium condition offers a more adequate framework for contemporary hybrid media objects. The concept of the post-medium condition, introduced by media theorist Rosalind Krauss and extended by Peter Weibel, argued that contemporary art and media operate beyond traditional medium specificity.¹⁶ No longer bound to the material properties of film, video, or print, mediums are "differential, self-differing" layering of conventions that cannot be reduced to their physical support.¹⁷ Weibel's post-medial condition is defined by the interaction of media, in which each medium constantly influences and depends upon the others.¹⁸

The Iranian Lego video exemplifies this condition concretely. This case illustrates the post-medium condition because the video's meaning derives not from any single medium but from its movement across multiple media and platforms. The media no longer possess fixed characteristics. Here, Explosive News uses an American corporate platform (YouTube) to globally distribute content made with a simulated medium (Lego animation, itself a digital imitation of a physical toy), which later gets reposted by the Iranian government on Instagram, thereby bypassing its own national internet shutdown to address a global audience directly. Each layer adds new meanings that cannot be reduced to any single medium's ‘message’. This collapse of medium specificity has transformed how propaganda functions. It has blurred the boundaries between entertainment, news, and propaganda. The video's power comes from blending media. It is not a film, animation, or news report but a hybrid. It mixes aesthetics which the public already knows (Lego), with new information, and offers it on a platform that is easily accessible and widely used. The Lego video uses the look of children's toys, a supposedly apolitical medium, to deliver violent political content. This strategy requires the collapse of medium specificity, where the viewer cannot categorize the media by a single medium, as it is not just a cartoon.¹⁹

¹⁴ McLuhan, *Marshall. Understanding Media: The extensions of man*, 9-11.

¹⁵ Al-Marashi “Pamphlets, radio, and now Iran’s AI-generated Lego videos:”

¹⁶ Krauss, “A Voyage on the North Sea,” 9-11.; Weibel, “Post-Medial Condition,” 15.

¹⁷ Krauss, “A Voyage on the North Sea,” 44.

¹⁸ Weibel, “Post-Medial Condition,” 15.

¹⁹ Krauss, “A Voyage on the North Sea,” 15.

However, the post-medium condition alone does not explain how these types of videos gathered billions of views.²⁰ Propaganda cannot succeed through this visual confusion alone; it must tap into existing narratives. As Eric Hoffer notes, propaganda by itself can neither “force its way into unwilling minds” nor introduce something completely new.²¹ Propaganda cannot succeed unless it attaches itself to stories people already know and distrust.²² That's why referencing ongoing news is effective. In the case study, Trump and Netanyahu look through a file named ‘Epstein files’ (Figure 2 and 3). Public suspicion of Trump is already widespread because of his connections to Jeffrey Epstein, and this ongoing internationally headlining story gives viewers a familiar entry point.



Figure 2: Netanyahu, Trump, and the devil reading the Epstein files. Screenshot by author, of the YouTube video by Explosive News, watched on the Jerusalem Post.



Figure 3: Netanyahu and Trump reading the Epstein files. Screenshot by author, of the YouTube video by Explosive News, watched on the Jerusalem Post.

²⁰ North, “Iran’s AI memes,”

²¹ Hoffer, Eric. *The True Believer*, 102-3.

²² Prier, Jarred. “Social Media as Information Warfare.” 56.

Having established the post-medium condition as a starting point, I conclude that this Lego propaganda video exemplifies the post-medium condition by operating across multiple media, thus blurring entertainment, news, and propaganda, yet its viral success ultimately depends not only on its visual hybridity alone but on attaching itself to pre-existing narratives. To understand what this video does rather than what it depicts, I turn to the concept of the operational image.

The Iranian Lego video exemplifies the operational image, a term coined by Farocki, as mentioned by Parikka.²³ Operational images are pictures that are part of a wider operation where function replaces the formal depiction of an image.²⁴ In other words, the video's power lies not in what it represents but in what it performs. Specifically, the video uses its Lego aesthetic, humor, and appropriation as tools to attract engagement and drive algorithmic circulation. The surreal image of Trump standing next to the devil is intriguing, attracting engagement. YouTube's algorithmic dynamics further complicate the picture, as even passive viewing or clicking out of curiosity registers as engagement and promotes the video.²⁵ Research on platform governance suggests that controversial content often performs well in recommendation systems because engagement, even negative engagement, signals relevance.²⁶

As Distelmeyer argues, "computer interfaces always empower users to regulate while at the same time forcing them to be regulated".²⁷ The buttons on YouTube empower the viewer to act (to like, comment, subscribe, and so on) while simultaneously regulating them. YouTube's interfacing appears democratic and participatory; features like the scrollable home screen where users choose on a video to watch, thumbs up/down, and comment section, create a sense that the viewer is in control of what they view and what gets put on their timeline. This undermines the fact that the algorithm is ultimately in control. The interface's illusion of control is misleading; the user who thinks they are autonomously choosing content is in fact being channeled by systems designed to maximize watch time and engagement. The algorithm recommended the video to the viewer; they did not choose to see it as much as they think they did, even though they actively clicked on it. Although the viewer cannot directly change the video, the act of watching, interacting and/or sharing it on YouTube, X etc. becomes the individual's modification, without knowing it, the viewer becomes a node in a propaganda distribution network.²⁸ Thus creates a situation where

²³ Parikka, "Operational Images," 4-6.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cakmak, Agarwal, and Oni, "The bias beneath," 7, 33-34.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Distelmeyer, "how interfaces matter," 29.

²⁸ Daniels, "Strategies of Interactivity," 29.

users are being regulated even as they exercise agency.²⁹ YouTube's interface appears to offer democratic participation where anyone can upload, comment, like, or share but this participation occurs within a platform governed by algorithms that remain closed systems.³⁰

YouTube removed the video only after the algorithm had already promoted it to a large audience. This suspension transformed the platform into a participant in the conflict, illustrating how platform moderation can become intertwined with geopolitical tensions. Distelmeyer's framework can again be applied in the sense that the ability of altering programs turns human-computer relations into a power struggle, because by suspending an already viral video, YouTube overruled its own algorithm.³¹ The Iranian foreign ministry's condemnation of the takedown as "suppressing the truth" is a strategic move within this power struggle.³² By invoking YouTube's own stated values of free expression, community guidelines, transparency, Iran positions itself as a defender of liberal principles against corporate overreach.³³ This is, of course, ironic given Iran's simultaneous shutdown of domestic internet access.

This paper has reviewed how the AI-generated Lego video exemplifies the post-medium condition by collapsing distinctions between children's toys, state propaganda, and user-generated content, creating a hybrid that cannot be reduced to a single medium. It weaponizes interactivity by exploiting the engaging aesthetic of Lego interface, viewers who click out of curiosity become complicit in the algorithmic system, which encourages the video's promotion. Algorithmic regulation rewards engagement regardless of intent, allowing violent geopolitical messaging to circulate as playful entertainment. Navigating itself by attracting views because of its absurdity and engaging interface, the video performs a new form of media warfare: propaganda is far less distinct and now comes in the form of entertainment and children's toys. This case forces us to question whether corporate platforms like YouTube, designed for user-generated content, should delete this type of propaganda movies. Should YouTube remove content potentially linked to the IRGC, or does deletion itself become a political weapon? How do platforms navigate regulation when diplomacy unfolds increasingly online, in public, where every moderation decision carries geopolitical load? As YouTube is an American-owned corporation, this raises fundamental questions about who truly governs global political discourse online when algorithms remain closed systems.

²⁹ Distelmeyer, "how interfaces matter," 29.

³⁰ Ibid., 31-32.

³¹ Distelmeyer, "how interfaces matter," 29.

³² Baqaei, "In a land that proudly hosts"

³³ Google, "Community richtlijnen van YouTube."

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