

How AI-Generated Allegory Functions In Digital Propaganda

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Abstract

This article examines how AI-generated allegory functions in digital propaganda through a semiotic analysis of the short video *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats*. Produced by China's CCTV, the video reframes contemporary geopolitical conflict involving Iran, the United States, and its allies through animal allegory, stylized visual narration, and cinematic battle imagery. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework and a qualitative multimodal analysis of fifteen selected scenes, this study investigates how meaning is constructed at the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth. The findings show that the video operates not merely as a representation of conflict but as a myth-making device that organizes political meaning through binaries of aggression and resistance, domination and defense, imperial threat and heroic struggle. Animal allegory functions to soften explicit political messaging while enhancing emotional appeal, ideological clarity, and audience accessibility. The study argues that AI-generated allegorical propaganda marks a significant shift in digital political communication, where automated visual production and symbolic storytelling converge to produce persuasive wartime narratives in highly shareable media formats.

Keyword: *Artificial Intelligence; Digital Propaganda; Animal Allegory; Visual Semiotics; Iran–US Conflict*

1. Introduction

In recent years, artificial intelligence has fundamentally transformed the production, distribution, and efficacy of digital propaganda. Unlike traditional propaganda, which required significant human labor and editorial oversight, AI-generated visual and narrative content can be produced at scale, continuously refined through algorithmic optimization, and tailored to exploit specific audience vulnerabilities with unprecedented precision (Goldstein et al., 2024; Loth et al., 2026). The emergence of AI-generated allegory as a propaganda tool represents a qualitatively distinct challenge to information integrity and democratic discourse. While scholars have extensively examined textual propaganda and disinformation, the rise of AI-mediated (Latinović & Krčadinac, 2025).

Recent scholarship has shown that AI is not merely a technical tool for automating content creation, but a communicative infrastructure that amplifies representational ambiguity, accelerates symbolic production, and intensifies the strategic manipulation of public meaning (Anastasiou, 2025; Ossewaarde, 2025). Within this context, AI-generated visual media has become increasingly important in contemporary propaganda ecosystems, particularly because algorithmically produced images and videos can package ideological messages into emotionally compelling, aesthetically coherent, and highly shareable forms. As Bjola (2017) argues, propaganda in the digital age is no longer limited to overt state messaging but increasingly operates through networked media forms that shape perception through speed, repetition, and affective appeal.

This study focuses on *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats*, an AI-generated short video produced and published by CCTV, China's state broadcaster, through its *AI奇谈* column on 18 March 2026. CCTV presents the work under the title 止戈为武：流金谷无“鹰”家, while online audiences also refer to it as 流金谷恩仇录, the video is explicitly framed as a wuxia-style allegory that uses the figures of the “White Eagle” and the “Persian Cat” to symbolize the broader geopolitical confrontation involving the United States, Israel, and Iran (CCTV, 2026; Chen, 2026). According to SCMP, the animation went viral shortly after its release and was widely read as a satire of the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, with plot elements that allude to air strikes, trade-route disruption, and the emergence of alliances seeking to reduce dependence on the United States and the U.S. dollar (Chen, 2026). In this sense, the video does not

simply depict conflict; it translates geopolitical tension into a symbolic and narratively compressed visual myth.

This transformation becomes especially consequential within the wider Middle Eastern conflict environment, where the confrontation involving Iran, the United States, and allied or aligned actors has been shaped by military escalation, regional insecurity, and strategic competition over energy routes and political influence (Reisinezhad, 2026). In such a context, representations of war are not secondary to conflict itself; they are part of the conflict. Media texts, including AI-generated videos, increasingly participate in shaping how aggression, resistance, legitimacy, and alliance are publicly imagined. Visual media do not merely illustrate political events; they actively participate in the construction of political reality by framing actors, intensifying emotional responses, and naturalizing ideological assumptions (Crisley et al., 2020; Schlag, 2025; Weikmann & Lecheler, 2023).

Roland Barthes' tripartite semiotic framework—denotation, connotation, and myth—provides the analytical precision necessary to deconstruct how meaning is systematically constructed across visual layers in AI-generated allegorical propaganda, yet when isolated from broader questions of power and institutional context, such textual analysis risks remaining apolitical and disconnected from the structural inequalities that enable certain representations to circulate dominantly while others remain marginalized. Stuart Hall's theory of representation as a site of power, combined with his encoding/decoding model and analysis of how media institutions shape "preferred meanings," addresses this theoretical gap by anchoring semiotic analysis within political economy: it forces critical attention to who produces representations, through what institutional apparatus, and with what asymmetrical access to distribution infrastructure and audience reach. Together, Barthes and Hall create a synthetic framework uniquely suited to analyzing AI-generated allegorical propaganda, where technical automation of visual production converges with ideological automation of meaning-making. Barthes' toolkit allows us to trace precisely how the white eagle's denotative posture activates connotations of Western aggression, which crystallize into the myth that imperialism is inherent to the West—a myth that operates beneath conscious awareness and resists rational counter-argument. Hall's framework then illuminates how this semiotic sophistication is not accidental but is strategically deployed by institutional actors (CCTV as a state broadcaster) with significant power to represent, distributed through media infrastructures and algorithmic amplification systems that privilege content from established, well-

resourced institutional actors, thereby naturalizing certain geopolitical narratives while making oppositional readings cognitively and affectively more difficult for mass audiences. The synthesis is theoretically necessary because AI-generated propaganda represents an emergent threat that multiplies both the sophistication of semiotic construction (through algorithmic optimization of visual and emotional persuasiveness) and the asymmetry of representational power (through automated production that only wealthy institutions and state actors can afford at scale), making it essential that our analytical framework simultaneously unpack the precise mechanisms of meaning-making while remaining vigilant about the political economy of representation in which those mechanisms operate.

Stuart Hall (2020) argues that representation is not a neutral reflection of reality, but a process through which meaning is produced through language, images, and cultural codes. In his words, *“representation is the production of meaning through language”* (Hall, 2020:28). This perspective is highly relevant to the present study because the video does not simply portray the Iran–United States allied conflict as it exists in reality; rather, it reorganizes that conflict into a stylized symbolic world through animal allegory, cinematic framing, dialogue, and sound. In this sense, AI functions not only as a technical medium of production but also as a representational apparatus that reshapes how geopolitical actors, power relations, and moral positions are made visible and intelligible to audiences.

While Hall clarifies how the media construct meaning, Barthes (1972) provides the analytical framework for examining how such meaning becomes ideological. Barthes distinguishes three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation refers to the literal elements shown in the text, connotation refers to the associative and cultural meanings attached to them, and myth refers to the broader ideological meanings that become naturalized through representation. Barthesian semiotics continues to offer an important framework for unpacking how images, sounds, gestures, and narrative structures produce seemingly “common-sense” meanings that conceal historical and political interests (Anastasiou, 2025).

This framework is especially useful for analyzing digital propaganda because propaganda often works by making political meanings appear natural, self-evident, and emotionally justified rather than openly argumentative.

One of the most effective ways such ideological messaging operates is through allegorical simplification, particularly by translating

geopolitical complexity into symbolic characters and familiar narrative archetypes. Animal allegory has long functioned as a powerful rhetorical device because it can condense political identities into visually recognizable moral types, predators, victims, protectors, or invaders, while simultaneously softening overt political confrontation through metaphor. In digital visual culture, this process is especially potent because allegorical representation allows political narratives to travel across linguistic, cultural, and platform boundaries with minimal explanatory burden (Chew, 2019). As semiotic scholarship suggests, ideological discourse often becomes most effective when it appears natural, entertaining, or culturally familiar rather than explicitly argumentative (Piliang et al., 2026). In AI-generated wartime storytelling, allegorical animal figures can therefore operate as ideological shortcuts that transform conflict into a morally legible spectacle (Galt, 2017).

Recent scholarship shows that generative AI has altered the conditions under which visual content is judged as trustworthy. Miskolczi (2026) finds that AI-generated images can deceive social media users because cognitive biases make fabricated visuals feel credible, especially when the imagery is visually polished and emotionally legible. Cazzamatta & Sarısakaloğlu (2025) Similarly, argue that AI-generated misinformation is already reshaping fact-checking practices across multiple national contexts, while also complicating the work of verification institutions and weakening informational ecosystems. In journalism, Erdem (2026) shows that digital editing technologies can alter the intrinsic meaning of photographs while also increasing audience engagement, which means that visual meaning is increasingly shaped by production choices rather than photographic indexicality alone. More recently, Papa and Theodosiou (2026) demonstrate that AI-generated visuals in conflict reporting can mimic the appearance of newsworthiness and blur the boundary between representation and simulation. Taken together, these studies indicate that AI visuals are persuasive not simply because they are new, but because they reproduce the formal cues of credibility, urgency, and realism that audiences are trained to recognize.

Studies on animal metaphor in political discourse show that animal figures are powerful tools for evaluation, positioning, and persuasion. Li and Dreyfus (2023) find that animal metaphors on a Chinese political web forum are used to judge others and maintain political division in volatile online discussions. Almaani (2023) shows that animal metaphors in political speeches serve persuasive functions and help speakers communicate complex political ideas, especially on themes such as terrorism. Zibin and Altakhaineh (2023) further

demonstrate that political cartoons often rely on layered metaphors, metonymy, and event allegories, including animal-based imagery, to shape how audiences perceive a political target domain. These studies suggest that animal allegory is not a decorative device; it is a strategic semiotic shortcut that compresses conflict into morally legible forms and makes political positions easier to consume, remember, and circulate.

The present study addresses that gap by analyzing *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats* as a multimodal ideological artifact. How does the AI-generated video *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats* construct and deploy allegorical representation as a mechanism of geopolitical propaganda, whereby animal characters and fantastical narrative frameworks obscure direct political messaging while encoding ideological claims about the nature of conflict, agency, and moral positioning of state actors involved in contemporary tensions between Iran, the United States, and their respective allies? In *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats*, the “white eagle” and the “Persian cats” operate not merely as fictional animals, but as symbolic signs that condense geopolitical identities into a morally legible opposition between dominance and resistance. Through this process, the video transforms a complex political conflict into a simplified visual myth, making Barthes’ semiotics an appropriate approach for understanding how AI-generated media function as persuasive instruments of digital propaganda.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using Barthesian semiotics to analyze how meaning is constructed in the AI-generated video *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats*. A qualitative design is appropriate because the study focuses on symbolic meaning rather than numerical measurement. The analysis is guided by Barthes’ three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth. (Barthes, 1972) Denotation refers to what is directly shown or heard in the video, connotation refers to the associative meanings produced by visual and auditory elements, and myth refers to the broader ideological meanings that are naturalized through representation (Oxman, 2010).

The primary data consists of the video *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats*, published on YouTube on 21 March 2026. The scene serves as the unit of analysis, as meaning in audiovisual texts is produced through the interaction of image, dialogue, sound, and sequencing. The video was viewed repeatedly and segmented manually, resulting in 15 selected scenes for close analysis.

Data collection involved repeated viewing, scene segmentation, screenshot selection, dialogue transcription, and formal English translation. Each selected scene was then organized into an analytical table containing screenshots of scenes, denotation, connotation, myth, camera angle, shot type, music or sound cues, and English dialogue as the main analytical instruments. All dialogue, narration, and textual content extracted from the original *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats* video, which was produced in Mandarin Chinese by China's CCTV, has been translated from Chinese into English via GPT AI for the purposes of this analytical study.

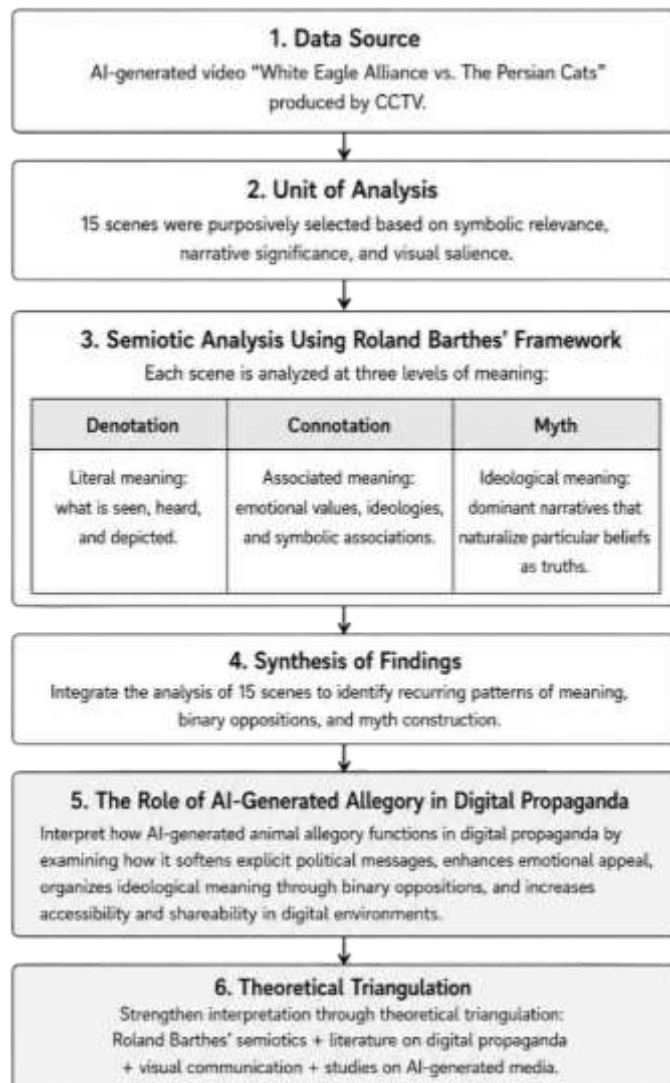


Figure 1. Workflow Diagram

The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, each scene was described at the denotative level by identifying observable visual and auditory elements such as characters, setting, actions, framing, camera angle, dialogue, and music. Second, each scene was interpreted at the connotative level to examine the symbolic meanings produced by cinematic choices, including how camera perspective, sound, and character positioning suggest power, vulnerability, aggression, resistance, or alliance. Third, each scene was read at the level of myth to identify the broader ideological narratives embedded in the video, particularly those related to war, hegemony, resistance, and geopolitical morality (Watts, 2016).



To ensure data transparency, all interpretations were grounded in observable textual evidence from the video and documented through screenshots and scene-based coding. The study clearly distinguishes between description and interpretation to reduce overreading. The use of AI-generated data in this study is limited to research purposes only. Ethical attention was given to transparency in data provenance, collection, and analysis, ensuring that the AI-generated material was used responsibly and reported clearly.


Validity was strengthened through theory triangulation by interpreting the selected scenes using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework in dialogue with relevant scholarship on digital propaganda, visual communication, and AI-generated media. This approach enabled the findings to be cross-checked across complementary theoretical perspectives. Reliability was ensured through the consistent application of the same coding procedures to all fifteen scenes and by maintaining transparent documentation of the analytical process.



3. Results


Using Barthesian semiotics (1972) The findings show that meaning in the video operates across three interconnected levels. At the denotative level, the scenes present visible characters, settings, actions, and sounds that form the immediate narrative surface of the text. At the connotative level, however, these same elements begin to signify relations of power, threat, vulnerability, heroism, betrayal, and resistance. At the level of myth, the video naturalizes broader ideological narratives, particularly those concerning imperial aggression, anti-hegemonic struggle, strategic morality, and civilizational conflict. In this sense, the video does not simply depict geopolitical actors through allegory, but reorders them into a mythic framework that makes political positioning appear natural, emotionally justified, and visually intuitive (see Table 1).

Table 1. Analysis of Barthes' semiotic


No	Scenes	Visual, Audio Techniques and Dialogue	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
1		Extreme close-up / detail shot. Static composition; the object fills the frame. The opening music is mysterious, with a low, subterranean hum. <i>"Buried under this ancient pass is the most precious substance in the world: Essence of Iron."</i>	A black stone fragment glowing red is embedded in dry ground.	It marks a strategic resource as a symbol of energy, minerals, or the material basis of conflict. The red glow suggests heat, danger, and contestation. This could refer to the struggle for oil resources.	Resources are positioned as the origin of geopolitical conflict. In political myth, war appears to emerge from a valuable object that must be seized, defended, or controlled (Meierding, 2020).
2		Static title card. No camera movement. The music and sound effects	A black screen with a vertical red title and an AI label.	The title functions like a manifesto: the film is not merely entertainment	Geopolitical conflict is reduced to a moral tale that is easy to read. The myth


No.	Scenes	Visual, Audio Techniques and Dialogue	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
3		<p>Close-up of a hand and an envelope. Eye-level framing, with the letter as the focal point. The music remains tense, as if a secret operation is underway. "Now"</p>	<p>A sealed envelope changes hands.</p>	<p>The envelope symbolizes instructions, intelligence, or tactical decisions. The scene emphasizes covert coordination and the beginning of action.</p>	<p>is that modern war can be explained through a simple classical epic: a powerful side, an opposing side, and an honorable struggle (Ropp, 2000). War does not begin randomly, but through messages, orders, and intermediary networks. (Der Derian, 2001). Power moves through small signals that shape the course of</p>



No	Scenes	Visual, Audio Techniques and Dialogue	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
4		Wide shot with a slight high angle. The cave headquarters appear vast and enclosed. The background music is dark, slow-tempo, and echoing. No dialogue.	A large cave interior, base-like structures, small torches, and ritual-like elements. The atmosphere is quiet but poised for movement.	The cave symbolizes concealment, consolidation of power, and an operational base. The high angle suggests the space is controlled from above or under strategic surveillance. This could refer to Ali Khamenei's place, Beit Rahbari	history. Political power is presented as a hidden network working behind the scenes. War becomes the result of disciplined organization rather than a spontaneous eruption (Osiel, 2017).
5		Extreme close-up with a slight push-in. Red eyes dominate the composition. The sound effect feels	A black masked or hooded cat with its mouth open, shouting or roaring.	Red eyes create an impression of aggression, threat, and collective anger. The close-up magnifies emotional intensity.	The enemy is represented not merely as a figure but as a personification of threat. (Ahmadypour et al., 2010). War


No	Scenes	Visual, Audio Techniques and Dialogue	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
.		like a tension stinger. No dialogue.			requires a clear, hard, almost monolithic enemy.
6		<p>Long shot / low angle toward the sky. The camera looks upward, so the aircraft appears dominant. The music becomes more heroic and tense, accompanied by engine sounds and rocket trails.</p> <p><i>“Come along, eagle! I won't be taking it easy on you!”</i></p>	<p>A formation of aircraft in the sky, with white smoke trails forming vertical lines.</p>	<p>The low angle emphasizes air power and the superiority of attack. The layered formation signals military coordination and escalation. War refers to the use of drones and long-range missiles</p>	<p>Controlling the sky means controlling the conflict. The myth is that aerial technology determines victory in modern war. (Keysar, 2020).</p>


No	Scenes	Visual, Audio Techniques and Dialogue	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
7		Wide shot with a high horizon. Flames rise above the wall; the camera remains relatively static. Music and explosion effects underscore the attack. No dialogue.	A large fire appears above a stone structure or fortress.	Fire signifies damage, threat, and pressure on the defense. The wall or fortress suggests a front under attack.	Defense must be continually tested for heroism to emerge. Conflict becomes an arena for proving endurance rather than mere material destruction (Igou, 2024).
8		Medium shot, eye-level. The repeated arrangement of characters gives the scene a classroom- or committee-like rhythm. The music is calmer but retains a military	A group of cats in robes sits at a table with a wooden bird box. One figure appears to be giving instructions.	The wooden bird box becomes a metaphor for logistics or resource provision. The classroom or committee setting suggests a systematic production of war.	War is portrayed as a planned and ongoing production process. Victory emerges from discipline, resource use, and collective repetition (Öberg, 2018).

No.	Scenes	Visual, Audio Techniques and Dialogue	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
9		Frontal close-up, eye-level, with a dominant expression. Musical intensity rises through percussive accents and a challenging heroic tone. <i>“Hmph! Want to sneak attack by night?”</i>	A crowned, robed eagle stares sharply into the camera.	The frontal framing creates direct confrontation. The angry expression rejects underhanded tactics.	The leader is represented as an honorable figure who rejects deceit. Legitimate war is framed as open warfare, while nighttime attacks signify cheating (Bell & Whaley, 2017).
10		Medium shot to medium long shot, eye-level. The	Many cats sit on benches with books in	The scene indicates cadre training, indoctrination, or the	Conflict is not only about weapons, but also about the

No	Scenes	Visual, Audio Techniques and Dialogue	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
.		classroom or training room appears orderly, symmetrical, and calm. The music is softer, like an educational or developmental interlude. No dialogue.	front of them, watched by a teacher or supervisor in the back.	formation of a new generation. The symmetry emphasizes discipline. The little Persian cat depicts the victim of the Iranian schoolgirl who was studying innocently at school.	formation of knowledge and loyalty. National strength comes from education directed toward collective goals (Fägerlind & Saha, 2016).
11		Long shot with a low angle from the base of a canyon. Projectiles cross overhead in a dramatic diagonal movement. The music builds toward a climax	Glowing objects fly across the sky between rocky cliffs.	The narrow canyon intensifies the sense of entrapment and strategic combat. The low angle suggests danger arriving from above.	Revenge is presented as a legitimate historical impulse. Conflict develops spirally; every attack calls forth a counterattack (Milne, 2012).

No	Scenes	Visual, Audio Techniques and Dialogue	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
.		with missile-launch effects. <i>“For revenge.”</i>			
12		Medium close-up, frontal, with shallow depth of field. The red eyes stand out sharply against a dark background. The music tightens again, marking a personal threat. <i>“I will cut you off at Heaven's Gorge.”</i>	A black-robed cat speaks in front of followers in a stone corridor.	Frontality and close distance make the threat immediate. The forceful speech suggests control over a choke point or narrow passage.	Controlling a narrow route means controlling the enemy's movement. War is won by controlling strategic geography, not just troop numbers (Moran, 2016).
13		Medium close-up, eye-level. Bright	A golden eagle wearing royal	The golden attire signals luxury,	Leadership in the Middle East is

No	Scenes	Visual, Audio Technique s and Dialogue	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
.		lighting and a rocky backdrop create a monumental effect. The music feels grander and more cinematic, as if a new phase of power assertion is beginning. <i>“Are the camels already kneeling outside the door?”</i>	clothing and a crown stands before a desert or cliff landscape.	authority, and imperial power. The reference to camel’s points to an Arab regional symbol, trade routes, or local actors.	understood as the ability to manage regional compliance . Alliances are read as forms of visible recognition , shown by others' willingness to bow. (Ababakr, 2024).
14		Extreme long shot / low-angle tracking from behind the camel's legs. The camera stays very close to the ground, making the	A camel caravan moves through a dusty desert with several figures behind it.	The ground-level low angle emphasizes material travel and logistical burden. The caravan symbolizes coalition movement, supply	War and trade are tied together within the same landscape. Whoever controls movement and distribution controls the

No	Scenes	Visual, Audio Technique s and Dialogue	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
.		caravan's journey feel heavy and long. The music follows a desert-travel motif. No dialogue.		lines, or trade networks.	direction of regional history (Brotton, 2020).
15		Frontal close-up, eye-level. The camera moves close to the camel's face, emphasizing expression and gesture. The music becomes lighter yet cynical at the end of the dialogue.	A camel looks into the camera and speaks directly.	The talking-animal close-up reinforces political personification. It suggests that relations among actors are not purely ideological, but transactional.	Conflict is reduced to profit-and-loss calculations. War, alliances, and diplomacy ultimately obey the logic of economics and the exchange of interests (Kahn, 2017).
		<i>“It's buying and selling.”</i>			

White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats operates across three interconnected levels. At the denotative level, the scenes present visible characters, settings, actions, and sounds that form the immediate narrative surface of the text. At the connotative level, however, these same elements begin to signify relations of power, threat, vulnerability, heroism, betrayal, and resistance. At the level of myth, the video naturalizes broader ideological narratives, particularly those concerning imperial aggression, anti-hegemonic struggle, strategic morality, and civilizational conflict. In this sense, the video does not simply depict geopolitical actors through allegory, but reorders them into a mythic framework that makes political positioning appear natural, emotionally justified, and visually intuitive (Barthes, 1972).

4. Discussion

The discussion that follows is organized around recurring semiotic patterns found across the selected scenes. Rather than treating each scene as an isolated unit, the analysis identifies broader representational logics that structure the video as a coherent propaganda text. These include the use of animal allegory as geopolitical coding, the role of cinematic techniques in producing asymmetries of power and vulnerability, and the ideological function of myth in transforming war into a simplified moral spectacle. Within contemporary digital environments, such semiotic compression aligns with the transformation of propaganda into a networked and multimodal system in which visual narratives, algorithmic circulation, and affective engagement converge to shape public perception of geopolitical conflict, including the Iran–United States–allied confrontation (Lin, 2024).

A. Animal Allegory as Geopolitical Coding

The video's most visible semiotic strategy is its use of animal allegory to convert geopolitical antagonism into a morally readable narrative. In Barthesian terms, the animals operate first at the level of denotation as fictional combatants, but their greater force appears at the levels of connotation and myth, where they become condensed signs of political identity and strategic position. This use of animal figures is consistent with scholarship showing that animal metaphors are frequently used to evaluate human behavior, negotiate political positioning, and mark division in volatile discourse (Li & Dreyfus, 2023). It also resonates with work on political cartoons, where multimodal metaphor and metonymy help produce country images through simplified symbolic

contrast (Guan & Sun, 2023). In *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats*, the allegory therefore does not merely decorate the narrative; it encodes the conflict into a legible symbolic opposition that turns geopolitical struggle into an immediately graspable visual code.

At the connotative level, the allegorical figures work as shorthand for power, vulnerability, and resistance. The “white eagle” suggests aerial superiority, intervention, and dominance, while the “Persian cats” suggest territorial identity, endurance, and defensive resilience. Such readings align with research showing that metaphors in political discourse function as cognitive and ideological framing devices that shape how audiences interpret power relations and conflict dynamics. The result is not a neutral fantasy world, but an ideologically charged one in which the Iran–US–ally conflict is translated into a struggle between predatory power and embattled resistance. At the level of myth, this symbolic opposition naturalizes a moral binary: one side appears expansive and coercive, while the other appears rooted, reactive, and legitimized by survival (Meng et al., 2025).

B. Cinematic Signs and the Construction of Power

Beyond animal allegory, the video constructs meaning through cinematic form. Its political force is not only in what it depicts, but in how it frames, angles, and sounds those depictions. Research on visual narratives of global politics shows that images and audiovisual texts actively shape how conflict, legitimacy, and violence are understood, rather than simply reflecting them (Crilley et al., 2020). Likewise, work on generative AI imagery argues that AI visuals are semiotic technologies, meaning-making systems shaped by specific aesthetic and ideological choices rather than neutral outputs. In this video, camera perspective, framing, and editing all participate in assigning symbolic power across the 15 scenes.

At the denotative level, the video repeatedly uses recognizable shot types such as medium shots, close-ups, wide shots, high-angle shots, and low-angle shots. These are observable formal features of the scene composition. At the connotative level, they guide interpretation: a low-angle shot tends to make a character appear dominant or imposing, while a high-angle shot tends to make a character appear exposed, diminished, or vulnerable. Medium shots, by contrast, stabilize the body in relation to its surroundings and make confrontation more socially legible. Read together, these choices distribute symbolic authority unevenly across the narrative. The video thus produces hierarchy not only through character identity but through perspective itself.

Sound and music further intensify this structure. Martial or dramatic musical cues elevate the scenes into an atmosphere of urgency, making conflict feel epic rather than contingent. In multimodal terms, music is not background decoration; it functions as an interpretive cue that shapes how the viewer feels before meaning is fully processed. This is consistent with scholarship on generative AI imagery, which shows that AI-based visual culture often relies on aesthetic legibility and promotional clarity to produce a sense of coherence and persuasion. Dialogue also anchors the image by assigning warning, defiance, or authority to the characters. Together, framing, music, and dialogue transform the video into a staged display of power in which hierarchy and resistance are made emotionally and visually intelligible (Markhabayeva & Tseng, 2024).

C. Myth, Morality, and Digital Propaganda

At the level of myth, the video converts a complex geopolitical confrontation into a naturalized moral narrative. In Barthesian semiotics, myth is the process through which historically contingent meanings are made to appear self-evident and common sense. This is precisely what the video achieves: the Iran–US–allied conflict is recoded as a struggle between domination and resistance, intervention and dignity, threat and endurance. Such a process matches scholarship on propaganda in the digital age, which emphasizes that contemporary propaganda often works less through direct instruction than through symbolic compression and affective persuasion (Bjola, 2017).

The mythic structure becomes clearer when the scenes are read together. Repeated visual and sonic patterns align one side with pressure, surveillance, and escalation, while the other is associated with defense, persistence, and retaliatory legitimacy. This does not simply simplify conflict; it moralizes it. The narrative makes the geopolitical confrontation feel like a settled ethical drama rather than an open political dispute. In this sense, the video resembles other forms of AI-mediated visual culture in which generative imagery organizes meaning through recognizable semiotic principles and familiar ideological framing (Westberg & Kvåle, 2025). The propaganda effect lies in that transformation: war is presented not as contested history, but as a visually naturalized moral order.

For this reason, *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats* should be read not only as an AI-generated animated work, but also as a digital propaganda text. Its allegory, camera work, music, and dialogue function together to produce an apparently intuitive worldview in which geopolitical actors are organized into morally unequal positions. The

result is a persuasive visual myth that compresses conflict into an aesthetically coherent and politically directive form.

The data across the fifteen scenes show that *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats* constructs war not as a sequence of realistic military events, but as a structured system of signs moving from resource extraction, covert coordination, hidden bases, aerial attack, collective mobilization, and finally economic exchange. The opening scene depicting the “Essence of Iron” positions natural resources as the origin of conflict, while subsequent scenes—sealed envelopes, underground bases, fighter jet formations, burning fortresses, training classrooms, and caravan routes—collectively frame war as a combination of material competition, strategic secrecy, organized production, and transactional logic. This progression suggests that conflict is narrativized as both inevitable and systemic, rather than contingent or negotiable. Importantly, the final emphasis on routes of trade and exchange also introduces the geopolitical logic of dedollarization, in which economic sovereignty and alternative systems of circulation emerge as symbolic responses to Western dominance. Within this framework, the conflict is not only militarized but also monetized, as resistance becomes linked to the struggle over financial order, resource control, and the possibility of bypassing dollar-centered global power. Through Barthesian myth, the video naturalizes this transition from battlefield confrontation to economic reorientation, presenting dedollarization not merely as policy, but as part of a broader moral and civilizational struggle.

In mythic terms, this symbolic opposition becomes more concrete when read alongside contemporary political figures such as President Donald J. Trump and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The figure of the “white eagle” can be interpreted as resonant with the United States’ posture of aerial supremacy, intervention, and hegemonic projection under Trump’s leadership, while the “Persian cats” can be read as symbolically aligned with Iran’s discourse of sovereignty, endurance, and defensive resistance associated with Khamenei’s political authority. Although the video does not explicitly identify these figures by name, its allegorical structure invites viewers to map fictional animal characters onto recognizable geopolitical actors and leadership styles. In this sense, the video’s persuasive force lies in its ability to transform real political antagonism into a morally legible symbolic drama, where leadership itself is translated into visual myth (Schlag, 2025)

At the level of myth, the video transforms a complex geopolitical conflict into a naturalized moral narrative. In Barthesian terms, myth operates by converting historically contingent realities into self-evident

truths (Barthes, 1972). The Iran–United States–allied conflict is thus recoded as a binary opposition between domination and resistance, intervention and dignity, threat and endurance. This simplification aligns with scholarship on digital propaganda, which emphasizes that contemporary propaganda often works through symbolic compression and affective persuasion rather than explicit ideological instruction (Bjola, 2017).

At the level of representation as Stuart Hall (2020)The video's ideological force is reinforced through cinematic form. Camera angles, framing, and sound design actively shape how power relations are perceived. As noted in studies of visual global politics, images do not simply reflect conflict but contribute to how legitimacy, violence, and authority are understood. In the video, low-angle shots elevate figures into positions of dominance, while high-angle shots render others vulnerable or exposed. Close-ups intensify emotional identification, and wide shots dramatize scale and confrontation. These visual strategies distribute symbolic authority unevenly across scenes, making hierarchy appear natural and visually grounded. Sound and music further intensify this effect: martial tones and dramatic scoring elevate conflict into an atmosphere of urgency and inevitability, guiding emotional interpretation prior to rational evaluation. This corresponds with research suggesting that AI-generated imagery relies on aesthetic legibility and patterned semiotic structures to produce coherence and persuasive clarity.

Further strengthening these findings, prior scholarship on digital propaganda and visual semiotics suggests that contemporary political communication increasingly relies on symbolic condensation, emotional immediacy, and narrative simplification rather than explicit ideological argumentation. In digitally mediated environments, visual content accelerates meaning-making by reducing complexity and amplifying affective response (Bjola, 2017). At the same time, research on generative AI imagery shows that such systems reproduce recognizable visual patterns and culturally embedded signifiers, thereby reinforcing existing ideological frameworks under the appearance of novelty (Westberg & Kvåle, 2025). Multimodal discourse studies further emphasize that meaning emerges through the interaction of image, sound, and text rather than any single element in isolation. In this context, the video analyzed in this study exemplifies a broader transformation in propaganda practices, where AI-generated audiovisual forms function as efficient vehicles for myth-making. The convergence of allegory, cinematic coding, and affective storytelling observed here reflects a wider shift toward synthetic,

multimodal, and ideologically condensed representations of geopolitical conflict.

Ultimately, *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats* operates as a form of digital propaganda in which representation, myth, and audiovisual form converge. Rather than presenting war as an open and contested political process, it frames conflict as a morally structured and visually naturalized order. This demonstrates how AI-generated visual media can function as a semiotic apparatus capable of transforming geopolitical complexity into intuitive, shareable, and ideologically charged narratives.

This study contributes to the practical detection of propaganda by offering a semiotic framework for identifying how AI-generated allegory can encode ideological messages in visually appealing and emotionally persuasive forms. In practice, the analysis can help media analysts, fact-checkers, and platform moderators recognize recurring patterns of symbolic framing, binary oppositions, and myth-making that may otherwise appear neutral or merely artistic. For policy and AI governance, the findings support the development of transparency standards, content labeling practices, and risk-assessment protocols for synthetic media, especially in politically sensitive contexts.

The alternative interpretation can be approached through several layers. First, the video may be understood as a form of China's soft power strategy in the global battle of narratives. Second, it can be viewed as a form of political infotainment that makes propaganda appear more entertaining, easily shareable, and appealing to younger digital audiences. Third, it may function as a critique of the U.S.-dominated global order, including references to emerging alliances and efforts to reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar. Fourth, it serves as an example of how AI can simplify complex geopolitical conflicts into emotionally engaging and persuasive visual myths.

From this perspective, the focus of critique shifts from merely examining “what happens in the war” to questioning who has the authority to define that war, through what symbols, for which audiences, and in pursuit of what ideological interests. By showing how AI-generated visuals can be used to soften explicit messaging while still advancing propaganda goals, this research provides an interpretive tool that can inform both public policy responses and responsible governance of AI-driven political communication.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study argues that *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats* is not simply an AI-produced animation about war, but a digital myth-making artifact that transforms geopolitical conflict into a persuasive symbolic order. By reading the video through Barthesian semiotics, this article highlights how AI-generated visual media can compress ideology into forms that are aesthetically compelling, emotionally immediate, and politically directive. As AI-generated audiovisual content becomes increasingly accessible and influential, critical attention to its symbolic and propagandistic functions will become ever more necessary. The findings suggest that AI-generated political videos should not be understood merely as a technical novelty or experimental visual form. Rather, it should be approached as a semiotic and ideological apparatus capable of producing persuasive narratives through synthetic imagery, cinematic familiarity, and symbolic compression. In this case, the use of animal allegory is especially significant because it transforms complex geopolitical actors into emotionally recognizable archetypes, while the AI-generated visual style enhances the speed, accessibility, and circulation potential of the propaganda message. The study, therefore, contributes to the growing scholarship on AI visual culture, digital propaganda, and multimodal political communication by showing how generative media can function as a vehicle for myth-making in contemporary conflict representation.

At the same time, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses on a single video artifact, which means that the findings cannot be generalized to all AI-generated propaganda texts or all forms of geopolitical allegory. Second, because the study is grounded in qualitative semiotic interpretation, the findings are necessarily shaped by the researcher's analytical perspective, even though efforts were made to maintain transparency through scene-based coding and close textual grounding. Third, the study does not examine audience reception, meaning it cannot determine how actual viewers interpreted, accepted, resisted, or redistributed the meanings embedded in the video. Finally, the analysis is limited to the textual and representational dimensions of the video and does not investigate the broader platform dynamics, algorithmic circulation, or transnational political economy that may have shaped its visibility and influence.

These limitations open several important directions for future research. First, future studies could compare *White Eagle Alliance vs. The Persian Cats* with other AI-generated geopolitical videos in order to

identify recurring narrative patterns, visual tropes, or ideological templates across national and platform contexts. Second, researchers could extend the analysis through audience studies, such as comment analysis, digital ethnography, or reception interviews, to better understand how viewers interpret and negotiate AI-generated propaganda. Third, future work could combine semiotics with platform studies to examine how recommendation systems, virality, and algorithmic visibility influence the circulation and persuasive force of synthetic political media. Finally, comparative research could explore how AI-generated propaganda differs from earlier forms of state media, political animation, meme warfare, and visual disinformation, particularly in relation to realism, emotional intensity, and symbolic efficiency.

This study implies that Roland Barthes' semiotic framework (Barthes, 1972) should be reconsidered within the context of digital media and artificial intelligence, where signs operate not only through denotation, connotation, and myth but are also continuously reproduced, amplified, and transformed by algorithms, platforms, and AI-generated content. In the context of war-related allegorical propaganda, AI technologies can refine, replicate, and disseminate narratives in ways that make ideological messages appear more natural, persuasive, and emotionally compelling. Consequently, readers must develop a more critical awareness of how meanings are constructed, circulated, and manipulated across digital environments. This study, therefore, highlights the importance of combining semiotic analysis with digital and AI literacy, enabling audiences to critically evaluate the ideological interests embedded in contemporary media representations of war rather than passively accepting them as neutral or objective narratives.

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