



MYANMAR WITNESS

A project by



CENTRE for
INFORMATION
RESILIENCE

Sentiment Analysis of The Online Space for
Two Distinct Operations in Myanmar

Sentiment Analysis of The Online Space for Two Distinct Operations in Myanmar

Public Discourse on Operation 1027 and Yan Naing Min Operations

23 December 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to analyse user sentiments in Burmese on TikTok and YouTube regarding two key military operations: Operation 1027, led by the Three Brotherhood Alliance in Shan State from October 2023, and the Myanmar military-led [Yan Naing Min Operation, starting](#) in early September in 2024. By conducting a sentiment analysis of Burmese comments and posts - translated for ease into English by our investigators - on these platforms, this project aims to understand how users express their opinions and emotions about these events and to reveal any patterns in the engagement between pro-military and anti-State Administration Council (SAC) actors across operations.

Year-on-year social media continues to be an important part of our daily lives and understanding online space's sentiment is crucial because it reflects the public's emotional and ideological stance on key events. In conflict settings, these sentiments can serve as early indicators of real-world impacts. This is incredibly relevant to Myanmar when we think about the way [sentiments online shifted towards inflammatory content](#) - advocating hatred, constituting incitement to violence, hostility and discrimination against the Rohingya - in the lead-up to and among the Rohingya crisis and 'clearance operations' in Rakhine State in 2017. For that reason, this study will explore how public sentiment around these operations is shaped online and how users' reactions differ across platforms and between these events. In addition to providing insights into online discourse, this analysis seeks to uncover whether sentiment around the newest operation (Yan Naing Min) is more aggressive, especially from pro-military supporters, compared to sentiments expressed during Operation 1027. By identifying and comparing user reactions, this investigation offers a deeper understanding of the rhetoric used in support of or opposition to the military during these operations.

The investigation reveals that while sentiments were similarly supportive and aggressive for both Operation 1027 and Yan Naing Min, the latter operation recorded the most instances of hate speech showing overlapping sentiment lines with some differences. These differences emerged especially in the type of aggression and the actors involved. Pro-SAC aggressive comments were frequent across both operations but were notably more intense during Yan Naing Min and their negative comments against Operation 1027. For example, pro-SAC users showed frustration and incited levels of violence towards ethnic groups, a sentiment which was less prominent during Operation 1027.

While anti-SAC comments include dehumanising language in the majority of their aggressive sentiments towards the SAC - referring to them as 'war dogs', for example, they do not use language which calls for violent military actions that could affect civilians. This includes airstrikes or language of ethnic hostility which is prevalent in pro-SAC comments across both Operations. For example, pro-SAC comments such as *'Kill them all and just keep that land'* illustrate a willingness to conduct indiscriminate violence that impacts civilians as well as combatants.

Additionally, it is important to note a distinction in the use of dehumanising language: pro-SAC rhetoric targets all anti-SAC actors indiscriminately, including civilians, whereas anti-SAC dehumanising language is more focused on combatants and military figures. This distinction is a key difference in the narratives, with pro-SAC discourse promoting the need for violence that includes civilians. At the same time, anti-SAC rhetoric focuses on hostility in military actions. The discourse surrounding the two operations reveals the growing polarisation and aggression in Myanmar's online space. It also highlights that the sentiments expressed in this study are not only a reflection of public perception but also a key indicator of how online platforms in Myanmar intensify hostility, ethnic tensions, and militaristic rhetoric.

Recognition of these dynamics is crucial because it emphasises conflict escalation risks such as real-world hostilities, especially when combined with ethnic and nationalistic sentiments. In addition, it also adds extra measure on platform influence, for instance, this study focuses on TikTok and YouTube platforms and reveals how platform-specific dynamics shape public discourse. This indicates the need for accountability by social media platforms and interventions by civil society organisations.

2 OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of this project were as follows:

- To analyse user sentiment in comments and posts related to two specific military operations on TikTok and YouTube.
- To compare the sentiment trends between TikTok and YouTube in reaction to those operations, examining how users on each platform engage differently with the content.
- This study compares sentiment trends and shifts in rhetoric across two specific cases, Operation 1027 and Operation Yan Naing Min, to better understand the potential risks of online polarisation resulting from these two operations. While differences in reactions to these operations highlight how their respective supporting audiences respond, these reactions are shaped by a range of

factors, including, but not limited to, the nature of the initial engagement from both groups.

- Identify key topics, themes, and emotional tones associated with positive, negative, and neutral sentiments and determine the factors driving these reactions.

This analysis uncovers critical insights into the evolving nature of online engagement with military operations, particularly the intensification of aggressive rhetoric and polarised discourse observed in the context of Operations 1027 and Yan Naing Min, examining whether shifts in sentiment signal larger social or political dynamics. These shifts could indicate growing divisions and potential risks for heightened social or political tensions in Myanmar.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 DATA COLLECTION

To gather data for this study, Myanmar Witness employed web scraping tools to extract comments from TikTok and YouTube videos. To ensure compliance with YouTube and TikTok's terms of service, Myanmar Witness followed its guidelines regarding data collection, which includes avoiding automated processes that violate YouTube and TikTok API policies. The collected data included user comments/links, timestamps, likes, and video metadata such as titles, descriptions, and view counts.

Before analysis, Myanmar Witness cleaned the data and conducted a preprocessing phase - which included removing emojis and reducing the dataset from over 1,000 comments to under 400 (385 for Operation 1027 and 324 for Yan Naing Min Operation respectively). This step involves removing spam and irrelevant content such as comments pertaining to another news story mentioned in the video. Preprocessing also includes removing repetitive or likely bot-generated comments, ensuring a more accurate analysis. To manage the data scope effectively, we limited our focus to a maximum of 10 videos per platform for each Operation under study, resulting in a total of 27 videos, 16 from Operation 1027 and 11 from Operation Yan Naing Min. The videos were chosen using keywords related to the operations, picking videos that had a significant amount of views and at least 40 comments to their post; so that it ensured a fair amount of exposure and engagement to be analysed. These videos haven't been listed due to privacy concerns. Our data sample was also verified for robustness by the creation of a data backbone to verify that our sampling strategy was valid. This was conducted through:

1. Creation of the minimum sample size requirement
2. Statistical tests for differences between population and sample parameters – comment length and likes count
3. Clustering and topic modelling
4. N-gram-based word cloud.

Once the data was prepared, analysts conducted sentiment analysis to evaluate the engagement with the content.

3.1.1 SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

For sentiment analysis, Myanmar Witness adopted a manual process where each comment was classified as either positive, negative, or neutral. The manual approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the content that automated tools may miss, such as sarcasm or cultural references. Each sentiment category was then further refined; for example, a comment marked as 'negative' may be further categorised into subtypes such as 'mocking', 'angry,' or 'aggressive'.

Neutral sentiments were considered a distinct category as they couldn't be categorised into either sentiment effectively. This assisted in assessing comments that do not explicitly express strong opinions but might indicate passive engagement or neutral participation. Additionally, Myanmar Witness introduced an additional category, 'generally hateful' to record comments containing gendered or ethnic hate speech that don't clearly align with either anti-sac or pro-military views. These comments were considered too hostile to be classified as neutral sentiments.

The analysis focused on comparing sentiment trends between comments supporting pro-military content and those opposing it. By categorising comments as either 'pro-military' or 'anti-SAC,' Myanmar Witness can assess how the tone of discourse differs between the two groups and across different operations. This provided insight into whether particular emotions, such as anger or hope, are more prevalent in one group compared to the other, and how this reflects broader public opinion trends.

As comments were in Burmese, some linguistic analysis was conducted to most accurately translate the sentiments. For example, စစ် (Sit) = military/war and ကျွေး (Khwe) = dog, were commonly used together in anti-SAC comments. In its contemporary usage, this phrase is used to refer to military personnel, civilian administrators under military authority, perceived military informants or collaborators and is occasionally used for pro-military social media accounts and commentators. While broad, its usage in this context is specific to our sentiment analysis.

3.1.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The thematic analysis builds upon sentiment analysis by identifying quotations that represent the diversity of viewpoints. This was focused on comments related to the two specific military operations already mentioned. The comments were grouped according to whether they supported or opposed the military's actions during these operations.

For each operation, Myanmar Witness identified select quotations that convey extreme emotional responses or noticeable shifts in sentiment. For example, highly aggressive language from pro-military supporters or hopeful and resilient rhetoric from anti-SAC commenters. These quotations were instrumental in illustrating the intensity of public discourse.

Myanmar Witness investigators also identified frequently recurring terms and phrases that characterise the emotional tone of the comments. Keywords like 'kill', 'hope', 'freedom' and 'death' were used to filter and extract the essence of the sentiments expressed. These sentiments were then further categorised as aggressive, with the exact type of sentiment being expressed. For example, the theme for negative coding is as follows:

1. VIOLENT AND MILITARY ACTIONS

- Support for Military Offensives (combine all support-based military comments).
- Eradication of Terrorists (includes calls for eliminating perceived enemies).
- Total Elimination of Opposition (specific calls for wiping out the opposition).
- Encouragement to Overcome Fear (encouraging persistence in violent actions).
- Execution of Captured Soldiers (specific mention of execution as part of military action).
- Intimidation Through Bombing (using bombing as a form of intimidation).
- Justification for Aggression (rationalising violent military actions).
- Dismissal of Foreign Concerns (ignoring or downplaying foreign warnings in favour of military action).

2. MILITARISTIC RHETORICS

- Endorsement of Military Leadership (support for military figures).
- Simple Endorsement of Military Force (non-specific endorsements of military actions).
- Glorification of Military (comments glorifying the military without specific violent actions).

3. ETHNIC AND NATIONAL HOSTILITY

- Anti-Kokang Sentiment (specific mentions of hostility towards Kokang people).
- Anti-Ta'ang/Palaung Sentiment (hostility towards Palaung).
- Anti-Chinese Sentiment (hostility towards Chinese people).
- Anti-Wa Sentiment (hostility towards Wa people).
- Anti-Foreigner Sentiment (general hostility towards foreigners).
- Labelling Foreigners as 'Slaves' (ethnic/national degradation)

4. DEHUMANISATION, VIOLENT AND MOCKING LANGUAGE

- Dehumanising the Opposition (using other dehumanising language).
- Ridiculing the Rebels (mocking the opposition without explicit calls for violence).
- Referring to Opposition as 'Dogs' (specific mention of dehumanising metaphors).
- Wishing Death Upon the Opposition (aggressive mockery or threats)

4. ANTI-FOREIGN HOSTILITY

- Dismissal of Foreign Concerns (comments downplaying foreign opinions).
- Anti-Foreigner Sentiment (hostility towards foreigners or foreign influence).

5. CRITICISM AND HYPOCRISY

- Criticism of Delayed Actions (comments criticising military inaction or delays).
- Frustration with Hypocrisy (criticism of perceived double standards or hypocrisy).

6. MISCELLANEOUS HOSTILITIES

- Fear of Future Consequences (comments expressing fear of negative outcomes).
- Consequences of Leniency (criticising leniency towards enemies).
- Demeaning Women's Behavior (gender-based derogatory comments)

8. HOSTILITY TOWARDS MILITARY

- Insulting the Military (hostile comments aimed at the military).
- Dehumanising the Military (using dehumanising language towards the military).
- Uprooting the Military (calls to remove or weaken the military).

Tools such as an [online word cloud generator](#) were employed to visualise this data and further refine the analysis. The investigators moved from descriptive coding to a

conceptual model that explains the underlying sentiments and discourses to better understand the relationships between keywords, codes, and themes.

Myanmar Witness extracted and compared sentiments used by pro-military and anti-SAC groups, interpreting whether their rhetoric has changed or their intensity has altered between the two operations. It looked for evidence of escalated rhetoric, particularly among pro-military supporters.

3.1.3 SENTIMENT CONTEXT AND LITERATURE INTEGRATION

The findings regarding aggressive sentiment, particularly the use of hostile or violent language, will be contextualised with existing studies on political discourse and social violence. Prior research has shown that aggressive rhetoric, including dehumanising opponents or legitimising violence, often plays a key role in escalating conflicts (Lazar and Lazar; Bandura; Galtung).¹ Such rhetoric fosters an environment where violent actions can be justified, framing opposition groups as threats that must be eliminated (SSRC, "Dehumanisation and the Normalization of Violence").² This aggressive sentiment will be compared with more 'hopeful' or defensive language in anti-SAC discourse. By integrating these insights with the conceptual model, we will better understand how rhetoric shapes public opinion and contributes to the broader socio-political landscape during these military operations.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 TOP-LINE ANALYSIS

Myanmar Witness' analysis of the sentiment trends and the comments from the sampled videos gathered from YouTube and TikTok do provide valuable insights into the discourse surrounding the two different operations; Operation 1027 and Yan Naing Min. This section will outline below the key findings as well as highlight the aggressive language used, the dominant sentiments and the overall implications these online interactions could have.

- **4.1.1 OPERATION 1027**
 - YouTube and TikTok both show the most frequent sentiment as supportive in the comments sampled, with anti-SAC comments being the majority of comments on the videos sampled on both platforms.

¹ Bandura, Albert. Moral Disengagement: How People Do Harm and Live with Themselves. Worth Publishers, 2016. (<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2015-43532-000>)

² "Dehumanization and the Normalization of Violence." SSRC, [items.ssrc.org/articles/dehumanization-and-the-normalization-of-violence](https://www.items.ssrc.org/articles/dehumanization-and-the-normalization-of-violence)

- The aggressive sentiment is complex, encapsulating many different types of aggressive commentary, with the most common being dehumanisation and violent and mocking language on both sides, though these sentiments have different slants based on the actors associated.
 - Pro-SAC comments have a higher variation of aggressive sentiment, including being the actor with the highest level of comments that are hostile to another's real or perceived ethnicity, as well as gendered hate speech. These comments sometimes call for violent military actions.
 - Anti-SAC actors most frequently use dehumanising, violent or mocking language in their aggressive sentiment and anti-SAC hostility, which calls the Myanmar military and its actors 'war dogs' and calls for death.
- **4.1.2 OPERATION YAN NAING MIN**
 - Pro-military users' support for SAC's operation is prevalent, in total, 57 % of the sample. The frequent themes are heavily aggressive and mocking sentiments towards the opposition, as well as calls for extreme military actions and dehumanising language, especially against PDFs and ethnic groups like the Kokang and Wa. This demonstrates a shift from the Operation 1027 comments which less explicitly called for military actions and suggests that supportive comments could be conceptualised as including this violent rhetoric.
 - The prevalent comments of ethnic hostility by pro-military mainly targeted those groups as foreign invaders or outsiders along with dehumanising words to justify the military offensive violence.
 - Most of the mockery sentiments are mixed with aggression and the demeaning of anti-SAC individuals or groups by emphasising the opposition's ability to defend themselves.
 - Anti-SAC comments are consistently deeply hostile towards Military leadership, institutions and Coup icons like Min Aung Hlaing (MAL), often using derogatory terms and promoting solidarity with Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), Peoples' Defence Forces (PDFs) and the National Unity Government (NUG). At the same time, expressing support for these groups by criticising the current supply to revolutionary forces and groups like PDFs by NUG.
 - **4.1.3 COMBINED ANALYSIS**
 - Both operations 1027 and Yan Naing Min show overlapping sentiment lines, especially in aggression and support. Interestingly, differences in intensity and actor focus are more prevalently emerging between TikTok

and YouTube, including more hateful speech identified on TikTok than on YouTube.

- o Pro-SAC aggressive comments are frequent regardless of the operation studied in aggressive support of Yan Naing Min and their negative comments against Operation 1027.
- o Pro-SAC comments can often be linked to real-world harms and ethnic tensions which have been historically linked to actual discrimination in Myanmar - further information cited in 'Discussion' in this report. Observation from the analysis reveals that pro-SAC rhetoric not only includes dehumanising language but also actively encourages actions with little regard for civilian harm, such as comments advocating for indiscriminate violence ('kill them all and just keep that land'). In contrast, while anti-SAC comments frequently include dehumanising language in their aggressive sentiments toward the SAC, they do not call for violent military actions likely to harm civilians, such as airstrikes, nor do they employ the same degree of ethnic hostility as observed in pro-SAC rhetoric.

The top-line analysis by Myanmar Witness also reveals key impacts, including a strong sentiment of 'ethnic and social polarisation', such as using aggressive and dehumanising language targeting ethnic minorities. This is significant as it can fuel existing ethnic divisions in Myanmar, potentially worsening social cohesion. Such rhetoric could lead to increased marginalisation and the normalisation of violence against these communities. Moreover 'shaping military strategies and pro-military perception' is also highlighted as a main impact from pro-military supporters. For example, these call for airstrikes and violent actions, which is an alarming public endorsement of state-led aggression that has resulted in the deaths of civilians. In addition, the findings emphasise the role of public sentiment on social media as both a conflict sensor and a tool for escalating violence in Myanmar.

The above impacts shed light on how civil society, policymakers and international actors must consider the online space as an indicator of potential conflict and division and work with platforms to monitor sentiments during military operations. These findings hope to spur the design of interventions that reduce existing conflict hostilities, promote social cohesion and hold social media platforms accountable.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 PRO-MILITARY SENTIMENT PATTERNS

Pro-military sentiment across both operations expresses a consistent show of aggressive rhetoric that supports military actions and uses dehumanising language targeting revolutionary armed groups and anti-SAC civilians. Examples of these sentiments often include calls for bombing opposition groups, endorsing military operations and offensives, and completely eradicating opposition forces. Such as: *'Just fight and bomb, beggars die like dogs', 'The more Chinese dogs die, the better' and 'Kokang people must be gone/killed, scatter many bombs, cheers Military'*. Moreover, revolutionary forces and ethnic groups (like Ta'ang/Palaung, and KoKang) are often referred to as 'dogs' or 'slaves'. Glorification of Min Aung Hlaing and the Myanmar military actions are frequently mentioned, often matched with calls for further offensive retaliation. Some sentiment, especially during Operation 1027, targeted ethnic minorities perceived to be associated with EAOs or foreign influence, for example, *'Please uproot Wa, they are not our tribe, Tatmadaw.'*, *'Chinese slaves deserve to die with the rebels.'* This is aggressive language which could have harmful implications, potentially reinforcing the Myanmar military perception of public support of violent operations against these ethnic groups.

5.2 ANTI-SAC SENTIMENT PATTERNS

Anti-SAC sentiment frequently employs dehumanising language, targeting military and leaders, often demonstrating anger towards the Myanmar military and its actions. For instance, phrases like *'Min Aung Hlaing and all war dogs should die a terrible death'*, and *'Dog Min Aung Hlaing is a military dog who must die in a bad way regardless of what he does.'* illustrate a desire for harm to the military coup figures. There is also hostility toward military actions, particularly airstrikes and campaigns identified as harming civilians and opposition forces. Examples include: *'What is the NUG doing? Try to start suggesting to holocaust the airfields. MF's'*, *'Destroy all planes'* and *'They are arming individuals of low intellectual capacity at the grassroots level and pitting them against each other in fatal confrontations. Min Aung Hlaing's military dog unit, which is very mean.'* These sentiments reflect a mix of anger, frustration, mockery and intense hostility against the Myanmar military and its actions, by frequently using dehumanising language. While still aggressive, this language is less likely to have the same harmful impact as pro-military sentiments against ethnic populations, as it primarily uses mockery and focuses on specific high-ranking military officials who are likely to not be affected by online vitriol in the same way as ethnic groups in Myanmar might.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL COHESION

Historically, Myanmar has demonstrated that threats and inflammatory incitement on online platforms can have a large impact on social cohesion in real-world situations. Regarding this study, the aggressive sentiments found on TikTok and YouTube, especially in the context of military operations, could have deeper implications for social cohesion in Myanmar. Deepening racial hostilities with comments targeting ethnic minorities, such as Kokang or groups associated with China, seem to further reinforce existing racial and ethnic divisions. Aggressive rhetoric such as *'the more Chinese dogs die, the merrier'* not only dehumanises these communities but also could potentially normalise racism and violence. Such sentiments marginalise these groups in northern Shan State, deepening ethnic animosities and making peaceful coexistence more difficult.

Sentiments from both pro and anti-military sides—where individuals or groups are labelled 'dogs' or 'slaves,' facilitate the justification of violence. This rhetoric not only glorifies SAC's operations but also calls for continuous airstrikes to further escalate the current conflict. For example, sentiments like *'uproot them, let them all die'* make real-world violence against targeted groups seen as acceptable or even necessary. Strong pro-military rhetoric, such as sentiments advocating for bombing and carrying out airstrikes or *'the eradication of opposition'* can also lead to potential significant psychological and social consequences for the people/public. Normalising bombing or carrying out airstrikes in civilian areas on social media platforms becomes a tool to legitimise offensive military aggression and that could lead to encouraging the cycle of conflict.

5.4 SENTIMENT TRENDS FOR OPERATION 1027

Pro and Anti-SAC Sentiment on TikTok and YouTube for 1027 Operations

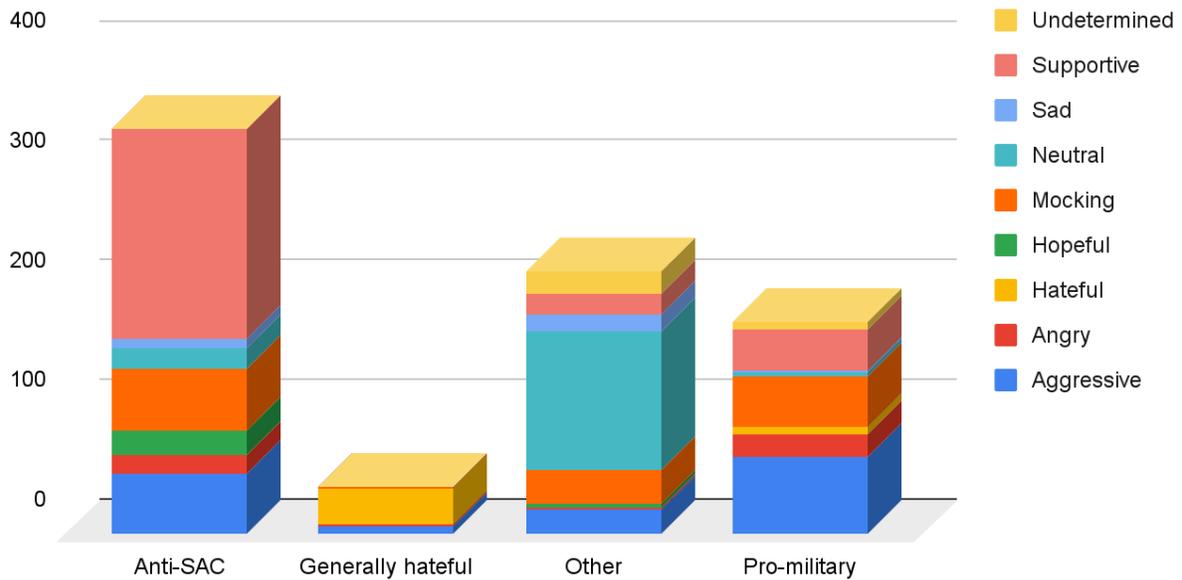


Figure 1: Type of sentiment per actor from sampled comments of Operation 1027, showing anti-SAC comments are the most common.

5.4.1. PREVALENCE OF SENTIMENTS

Sentiments for highly engaged content related to Operation 1027 sampled showed similar trends across YouTube and Tiktok, although there were some differences. Below is a specific sentiment breakdown in order of the trends.

YouTube

- Supportive Sentiment: 33.8% of the comments were supportive
- Neutral Sentiment: 21.8% of the comments were neutral, making it the second most common sentiment
- Aggressive Sentiment: 17.7% of the comments were aggressive
- Mocking Sentiment: 12.2% of the comments involved mocking the content, military and resistance forces
- Hateful comments: 2.1% of the comments sampled were generally hateful

TikTok

- Supportive Sentiment: 29.2% of the comments were marked as supportive

- Aggressive Sentiment: 18.1% of the comments were aggressive, making it the second most common sentiment in the trend
- Neutral Sentiment: 17.8% of the comments were neutral
- Mocking Sentiment: 16.0% of the comments involved mocking the content, military and resistance forces
- Hateful Comments: 4.7% of the comments sampled were generally hateful
- d).

Key findings were that there were significantly more hateful comments on TikTok (4.7%) compared to YouTube (2.1%). Additionally, the similarity in supportive sentiments across both platforms could indicate strong public support for Operation 1027. However, the differences between the aggressive and neutral comments across YouTube and TikTok suggest different dynamics that could be influenced by user demographics of those platforms. The figures below (2 and 3) demonstrate these similarities, with figure 3 demonstrating similarities in the form of a comparison bar chart of each sentiment.

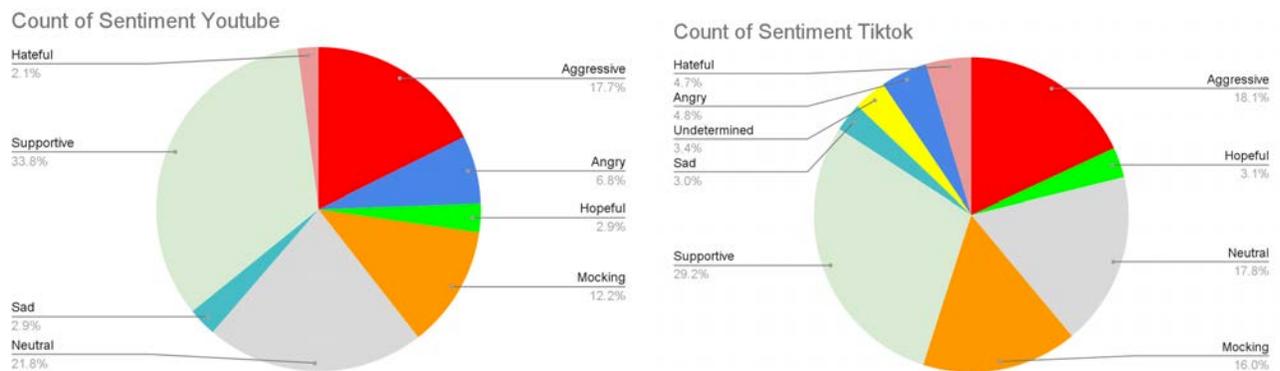


Figure 2: Comparative pie charts of the sentiment most prevalent on Youtube and TikTok, respectively, for Operation 1027.

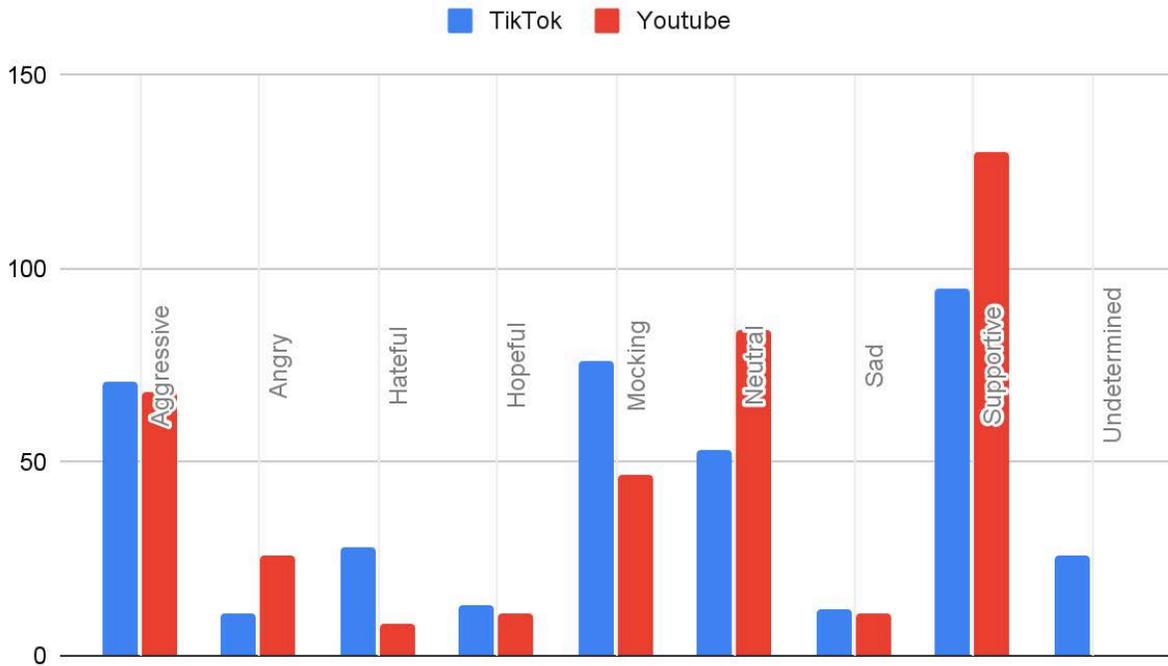


Figure 3: Comparative bar chart of sentiment in TikTok and Youtube for Operation 1027.

An analysis of keywords related to Operation 1027 shows that the most prevalent terms on TikTok were 'support', 'fight', 'Chinese', 'people' and 'motherf**ker' (figure 4). The most prevalent keywords on YouTube were 'people', 'mal [Min Aung Hlaing]', 'safe', 'military' and 'die' (figure 5). These indicate the differences in sentiment being expressed, with TikTok having more aggressive and sometimes ethnic hostilities or mentions being an important factor in comments, while YouTube has a more general aggressive focus and supportive comments overall that were sampled. By analysing these keywords the type of online discourse surrounding Operation 1027 and how it varies significantly between TikTok and YouTube becomes clear. Again, this could reflect the different types of user demographics and content styles for each platform.

5.4.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF NEGATIVE SENTIMENTS THEME

The most prevalent form of ‘negative sentiment’ was aggression and mocking across both Operations, with dehumanisation, violent and mocking language labels being the predominant form across ‘anti-SAC’, ‘others’ and ‘pro-military’ commenters. Meanwhile, pro-military commenters had the most varied categories of comments, including ethnic hostility - mostly towards the Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BHA), Kokang and those perceived to be ethnically Chinese ethnic minorities in Myanmar. Ethnic and national hostility was also observed in one ‘other’ actor’s comment and the most in the ‘generally hateful’ category where exact political leanings couldn’t be discerned.

Unsurprisingly, ‘hostility towards the military’ made up almost half of the anti-SAC comments, including comments making direct reference to SAC Chairman Min Aung Hlaing (MAL) and Zaw Min Tun (the SAC’s spokesperson). For example, derogatory nicknames or someone spreading disinformation - ‘Zaw Min Tun lost his voice?’, ‘Zaw Hamas (referencing Zaw Min Tun as a ‘terrorist’ by comparing him to the terrorist organisation Hamas) and ‘All because of useless MAL’ (figure 6).

Sentiment of comments coded as ‘negative’

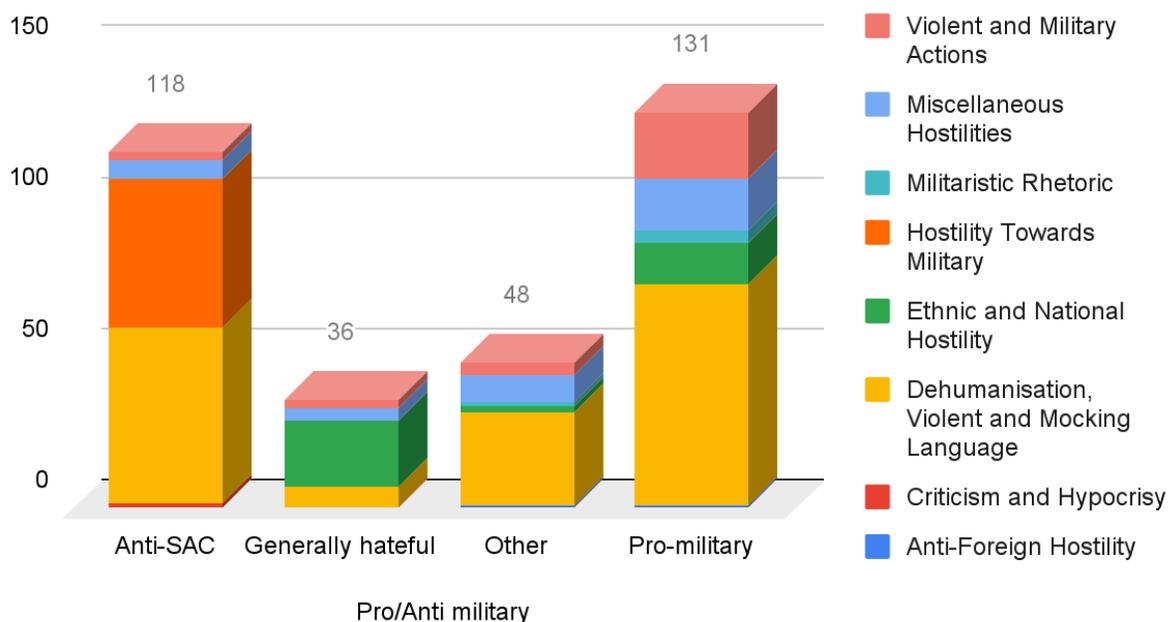


Figure 6: An overall categorisation of ‘negative sentiments’ across four categories: pro-military, anti-SAC, other and generally hateful.

5.4.3 PRO-MILITARY SENTIMENTS

Myanmar Witness' sampled analysis suggests that pro-military commenters predominantly post aggressive and mocking sentiments across online platforms, followed by supportive sentiments (figure 7).

Pro-military sentiment

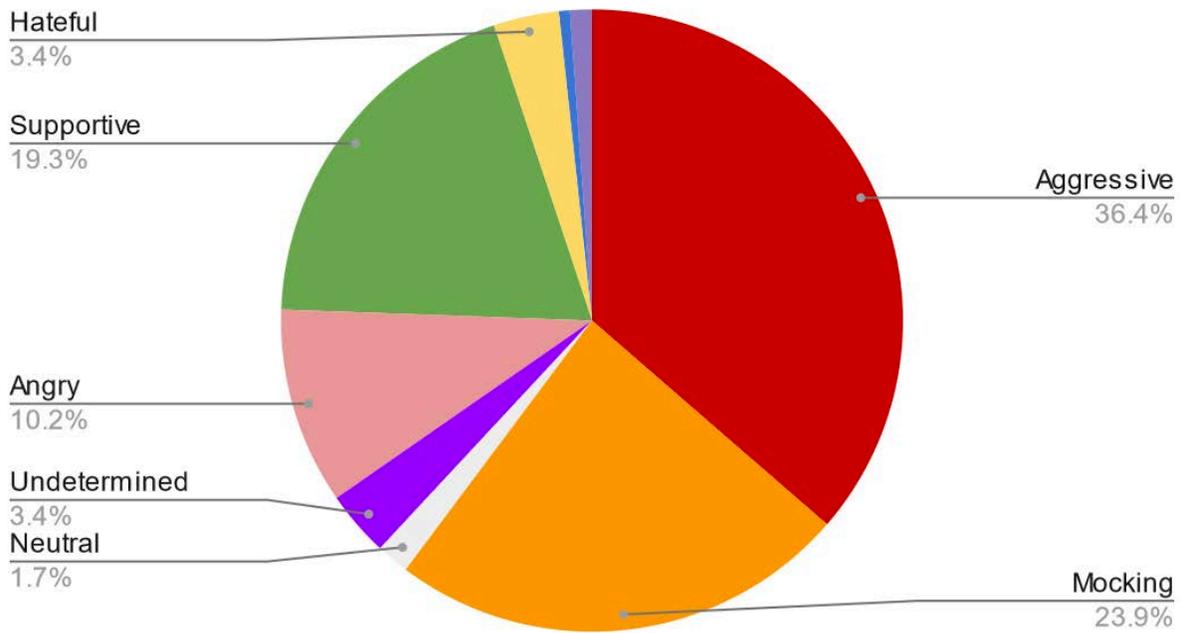


Figure 7: Divide of Pro-Military sentiments on TikTok and YouTube.

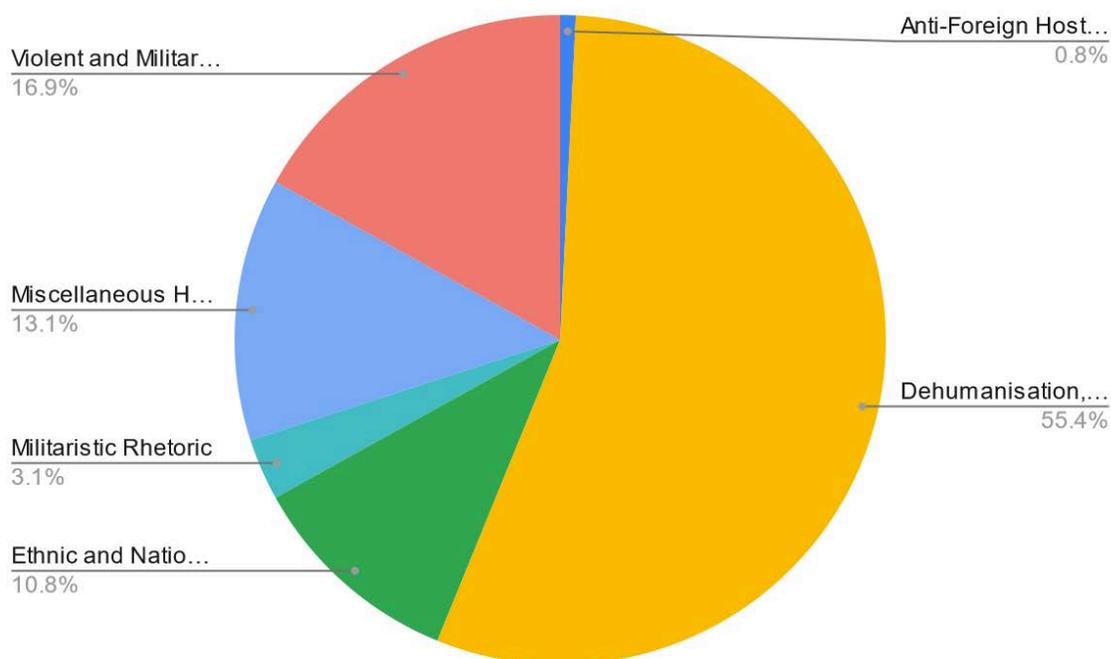


Figure 8: An in-depth categorisation of 'negative sentiments' for the pro-Myanmar military commenters, demonstrating their most prevalent theme is dehumanisation, violent and mocking language.

According to Myanmar Witness' analysis, pro-military users utilise a range of dehumanising, violent and mocking language. Many of these comments follow themes of 'Justification of violence based on dehumanisation', 'Wishing Death Upon the Opposition' and 'Ridiculing the Rebels'. Commenters also occasionally employ a mocking tone at the same time still advocating for violent actions or dehumanisation. Comments like 'Mice and barn fire 🤔🤔' and 'Is it because I'm going to run after I shoot it on my phone?' express a mix of dehumanising and mocking language, but other aggressive comments also targeting the opposition forces like 'All you PDF eat well at this time. Don't die starving. Pathetic'. This indicates mockery of those who've died while also potentially encouraging violent actions against them. This blend of mockery and aggression serves to denigrate the opponent as inexperienced or inhuman. By making light of their suffering, such sentiments not only ridicule the opposition but portray them as a threat that must be eliminated. This mix of dehumanisation and mockery could contribute to an online environment in Myanmar that normalises hostility and potentially justifies violent actions.

Pro-military users also express strong desires for violent retaliation against the opposition by framing their comments around themes such as 'support for military offensives,' 'total elimination of opposition,' and 'justification for aggression'. For instance, comments such as 'Bomb them all till only ashes are left' and 'PDF can't be saved, they are burning barns' highlight the support for extreme violence and aggressive tactics. This rhetoric often dehumanises opposition groups, labelling them as enemies of the state, thus justifying

calls for eradication. Such language again normalises aggression and frames opposition forces as threats, potentially reinforcing the justification for military actions.

There is also significant praise for military leadership among pro-military comments. Such sentiments include *'Myanmar military has morals and standards. Soldiers are loyal'* and *'Just war must win. Our air fighters'* express support for the military. In contrast, some comments go beyond praise and endorse the military's aggressive actions, as seen in comments such as *'We request the Myanmar Army to eradicate the inhuman and subversive rebels without leaving any roots. People's will [three Myanmar flag emojis]'*. With frequent phrases like 'fight' and some comments specifically requesting for the bombing to continue, further positions the military as supported in their aggressive actions. This rhetoric not only reinforces the military's leadership but could also aid in normalising violent actions in the conflict.

Additionally, in some cases, ethnic and national hostility has been identified. Some users express specifically targeting ethnic groups which are operating in China-Myanmar border areas, such as Kokang and those perceived to be ethnically Chinese in Shan State, urging their elimination with comments like *'We will be back. You are not of our origin'*. This type of ethnic dehumanisation justifies violence against these groups that the military might be committing. These comments also sometimes referred to the ethnic groups with dehumanising language like 'slaves' and 'dogs'. In one particular TikTok video of high engagement, over 111,000 views and 374 comments at the time of collection, showing female Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) soldiers, many ethnically hostile comments also featured gendered hate speech, with threats of rape and other sexually-based remarks. Many of the comments expressing ethnic and national hostility were categorised as 'generally hateful', as it was not always definitely confirmed to be pro-military or anti-MNDAA accounts producing these comments. However, the fact these women are MNDAA soldiers implies that some of the 'generally hateful' labelled comments are likely from those not in support of Operation 1027. For example, 14 of the 38 ethnic and national hostility sample comments could be identified as expressly pro-military. These include: *'The more Chinese dogs die, the better'* and *'Please also post pictures of how the lives of the Chinese slaves have changed [a comment referencing that the media should also report on the dead troops of 3BHA]'*.

This is significant because it highlights that the majority of the pro-military commenters have reacted negatively to Operation 1027, often using dehumanising, violent and mocking language in response to the operations. Additionally, on pro-military-focused videos (such as those featuring Myanmar military air force fighters involved in the clashes), comments include supportive messaging alongside aggressive sentiment toward the opposition, which is less frequently observed from the side of anti-military.

The retention of these aggressive comments related to Operation 1027 on these online platforms raises concerns about their potential negative impact. Despite being online since

2023, many of the comments remain visible, potentially violating Community Standards: designed to promote positive interactions. For instance, the continued harmful comments on TikTok, where the demographic is younger, is particularly concerning. As analysed, TikTok displays more hateful speech than YouTube, thus exposing young and impressionable users to aggressive rhetoric. Exposure to aggressive comments can shape the users' behaviour or perceptions of the conflict. In the context of Myanmar specifically, social polarisation has historically been a negative experience that has facilitated real-world harm and community ostracisation, in particular targeting [ethnic groups like the Rohingya](#), of which Kokang, Wa, and Shan are in Myanmar. These dynamics are also similar to the harmful discourse surrounding the Rohingya in Myanmar. By allowing these harmful comments to persist, platforms risk normalising this type of extreme negativity and fostering division, particularly for the ethnic groups in Myanmar.

5.4.4 ANTI-SAC SENTIMENTS

Based on Myanmar Witness' analysis across the two online platforms, anti-SAC commenters are focused on posting supportive sentiment. However, their aggressive sentiments are often directed at mocking or 'uprooting' the removal of the Myanmar military from power (figure 9).

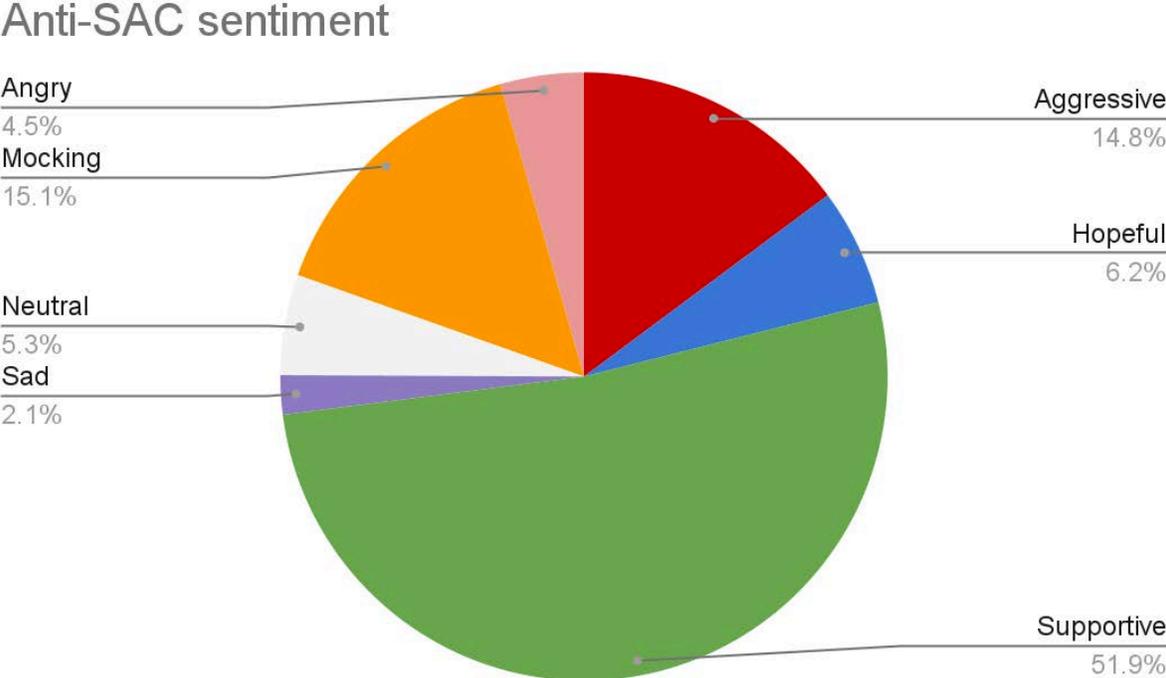


Figure 9: An overview of anti-SAC sentiments on TikTok and YouTube, showing that over 50% of comments were supportive..

Anti-SAC Sentiment

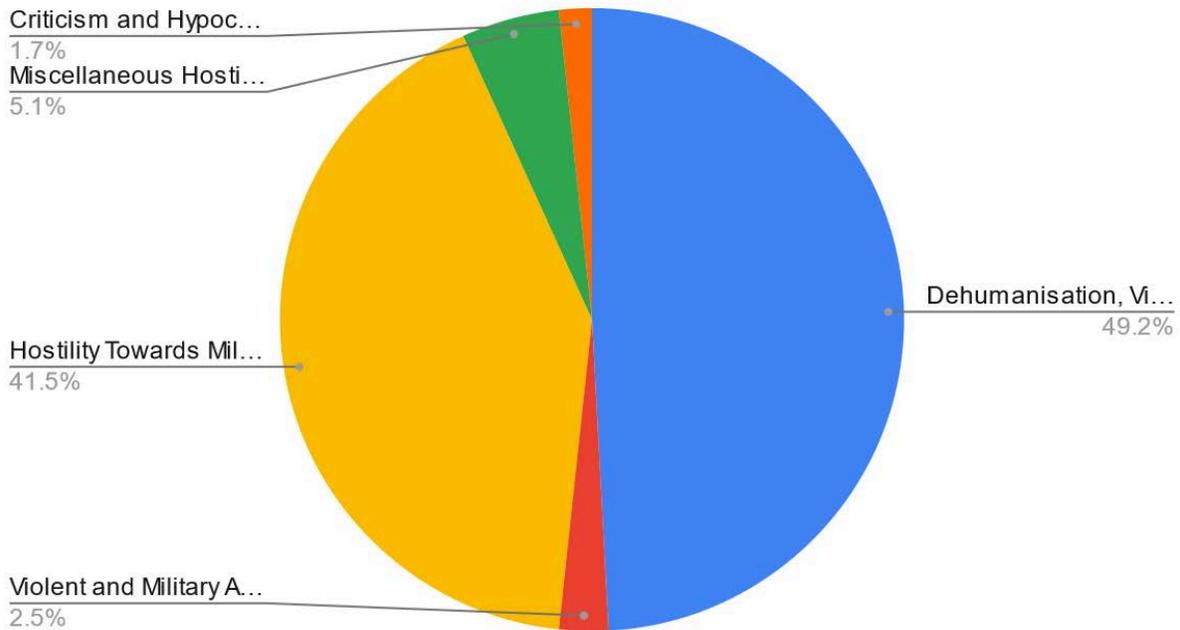


Figure 10: An in-depth categorisation of negative sentiments from the anti-SAC commenters, demonstrating their most prevalent theme is dehumanisation, violent and mocking language.

According to Myanmar Witness' analysis, anti-SAC users also utilise dehumanising, violent and mocking language and hostility towards the military. Many of these comments follow themes of mocking language, including 'Insulting the Military', 'Wishing Death Upon the Opposition', and 'uprooting the military' while advocating for violent actions or dehumanisation. For example, comments such as '*They should be hanged*', '*Action of "dogs"*' and '*Ask Zaw Min Tun (derogatory) to fight*' directly wish death or harm on the military, and others denigrate them by comparisons to 'dogs'. In more extreme cases, such as '*Uproot and eliminate the MAL military dogs*' comments combine calls for violent action with dehumanising language. While aggressive and hostile, the tone of most 'mocking' anti-SAC comments is less harmful than that of the pro-military comments. These comments often ridicule the Myanmar military and imply they are lying, such as the example, '*Did the king of Mandalay arrive at your mother's house? This is disinformation*'. With frequent phrases like '*motherf**kers*' and other curses, lots of the aggressive and angry sentiments are simple indictments of military actions, as opposed to more complex or ethnic hatred that was identified in the pro-military comments. This particular distinction suggests that while anti-SAC comments do engage in aggressive rhetoric, they lack the targeted dehumanisation found in pro-military comments.

As mentioned previously, a significant portion of online support from the anti-SAC reflects supportive comments. These interactions have been classified under our 'positive'

sentiment. However, classified in our negative sentiment section, some anti-SAC comments also use dehumanising, violent and mocking language. For example, one commenter stated: *'I support, and am glad. Keep going. May the "war dogs" die as soon as possible.'* This is significant because it demonstrates that although negative sentiments make up less than half of the sampled anti-SAC comments, a finding potentially influenced by the anti-SAC learning of the most popular videos sampled, many of these comments focus on mockery, cursing or insults towards the military. These types of comments are less likely to be graphically violent or employ ethnic or anti-foreign hostility. In comparison to our pro-military commenters expressing 'negative' sentiment, which could have broader implications for civilian populations.

5.5 SENTIMENT TRENDS FOR YAN NAING MIN OPERATIONS

The sentiment distribution on TikTok and YouTube regarding the Yan Naing Min operation highlights important differences between pro-military, anti-SAC and Other categories. The sentiment categories range from Aggressive, Mocking and Angry to Supportive, Hopeful, Neutral, and Undetermined. Although both pro-military and anti-SAC samples were aimed to collect balance for both platforms, pro-military sentiment (57% of the total sample) dominates both platforms, with aggressive sentiment forming the largest category. This suggests strong support for military actions, reflected in calls for violence and justification for military offensives, while the military represents 35% of the total comments. The prevalence of supportive and neutral sentiments further solidifies the narrative that many users actively endorse or are indifferent to the military's involvement in the conflict. The mocking sentiment also plays a significant role, with users ridiculing the opposition or casting them in a negative light to undermine their legitimacy. Thematic analysis of this distribution highlights how this type of hostility and aggression in the sampled comments could fuel further polarisation in the conflict.

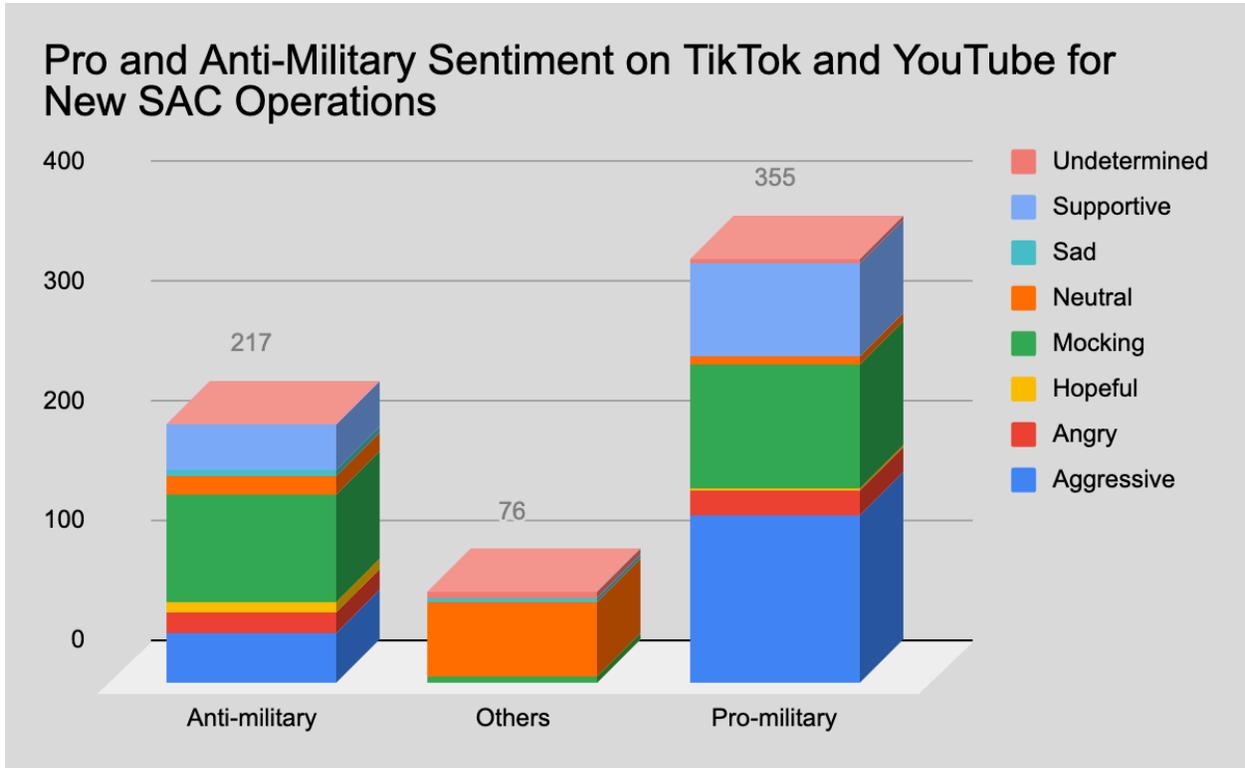


Figure 11: Total Pro-Military and Anti-SAC Sentiment on TikTok and Youtube for New SAC operations

5.5.1 PRO-MILITARY SENTIMENT

According to Myanmar Witness’ analysis, pro-military users express strong desires for violent retaliation towards opposition by emphasising themes such as ‘total elimination of opposition’ or ‘justification for aggressive actions’ for the acts to allegations of SAC’s airstrikes and attacks. This rhetoric often dehumanises opposition groups, labelling them as enemies of the state, thus justifying calls for eradication. That aggressive sentiment often highlights the glorification of military actions, endorsing military offensives with strong enthusiasm. Users may praise military strategies and leadership, portraying them as necessary to restore order. For example, many comments urge the military to bomb enemy-held territories, showing a clear desire for escalation of violence and military operations. Comments like *‘Just fight and bomb them, uproot them all and only left the land’* highlight this sentiment. Sometimes, these comments from pro-military often dehumanise opposition forces by referring to them in derogatory terms such as ‘terrorists’ and ‘dogs’, treating the opposition as they are not worthy of humane treatment. By praising military actions as well as dehumanising opposition forces it fosters an online narrative that endorses violence and hostility causing further division in the conflict in Myanmar.

There is also significant praise for military leadership, with sentiments such as *‘Welcome Tatmadaw (military), kill them all’*, indicating not only support but also a

glorification of Military actions. Many pro-military users express confidence that the military will prevail and urge continuous offensive actions, with frequent phrases like *'continue bombing'*, *'uproot them'*, and *'fight them'*. The Military is seen as a defender of the country among the pro-military users, also, the users express the justification of SAC's defeat of PDFs and EAOs in previous operations because the military was showing sympathy for the people. These types of comments reinforce pro-military rhetoric, positioning SAC as victorious as well as morally justifying their aggressive actions and thus polarising the conflict further.

Additionally, pro-military discourse aggressiveness also highlights support for violent military action and a desire for the complete eradication of opposition groups. Most of the comments justify violence through mocking, dehumanising, ethnic hostility and calls for widespread airstrikes related to SAC's new operations. In terms of SAC's airstrikes, pro-military commenters often justify these actions by framing them as defensive responses from opposition groups. For instance, they state that it is the opposition forces that initiated the violence, thus legitimising the military's use of airstrikes (figure 12).

In regards to themes, one that stood out in the aggressive rhetoric observed is Ethnic Hostility. Some users seem to be specifically targeting ethnic groups which are operating in China-Myanmar border areas, such as Kokang and Wa, urging their elimination with comments like *'Kokang people must/gone killed'* and *'please uproot Wa, they are not our tribe'*. This type of ethnic dehumanisation justifies violence against these groups, portraying and grouping them as outsiders and China who deserve eradication.

Other central themes included are related to the mocking tone while at the same time still advocating for violent actions. Comments like '👊👊👊 *Let's stop taking turns, which MF was responsible for the deaths of civilians'* and *'just die'* showcase a mix of mockery and aggression. These remarks dismiss the severity of civilian casualties while encouraging further violence. This mix of mockery and hostility trivialises the loss of life and normalises violent actions. This contradictory tone of both themes contributes to the approval of future violence, further accelerating polarisation within the conflict.

Pro-Military Sentiment

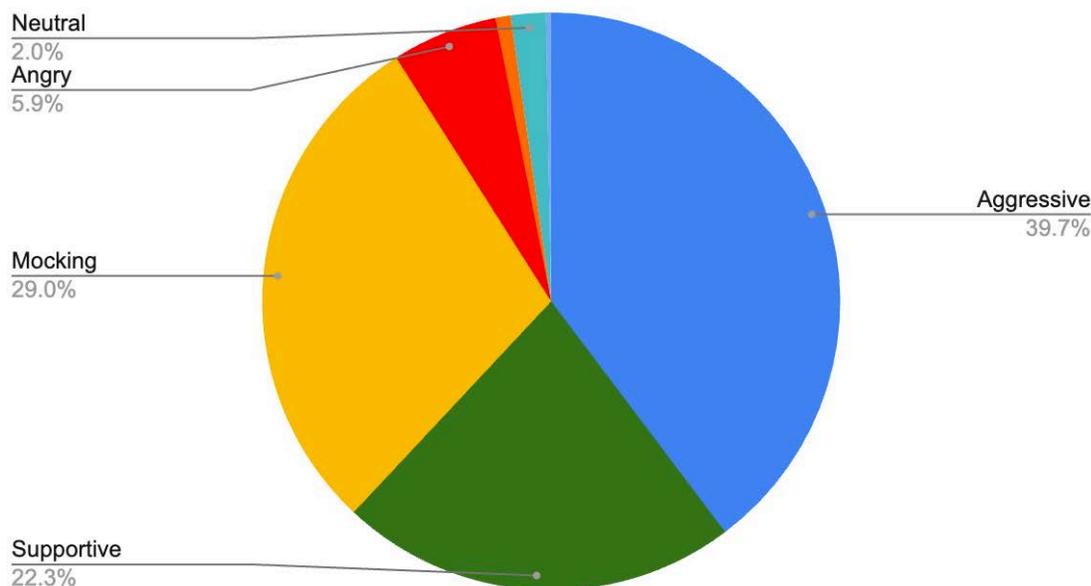


Figure 12: Pro-Military Sentiment

5.5.2 ANTI-SAC SENTIMENT

The anti-SAC aggressive sentiment was deeply rooted in hostility toward the Myanmar military leadership, particularly Coup leader Min Aung Hlaing (MAL) and the SAC. For instance, comments like *'Kill only Min Aung Hlaing'* and *'Let the war dogs die a terrible death'* show a clear advocacy for violence against individuals responsible for Military actions. The frequent use of derogatory language such as 'motherf**ker' and 'war dogs' illustrates the extent of hostility and retaliation expressed by anti-SAC commenters. This language serves to question military leaders of their humanity and justify violence against them. For example, comments like *'Min Aung Hlaing is a dog must die in a bad way'* aim to remove the moral barrier to violence. By using this type of hostile and dehumanising language, it seems anti-SAC commenters are trying to retaliate against the military's actions, thus framing violence as a justified response to their grief.

Additionally, several comments express frustration toward China's involvement in Myanmar politics. This sentiment forms a perspective of foreign powers' support to the Myanmar Military. For example, sentiment like *'China is Myanmar Military's father'* highlights that anti-SAC people view China as complicit in sustaining the Military. A significant portion of these comments combined aggressive mockery with harsh words. *'It's not Operation Yan Naing Min, this is Operation MF [Motherfu**ker]'* comments illustrate how Myanmar Military's previous failed operations trivialise

current operations. This perspective is not only hostile towards the military but also fuels resentment towards both internal and external actors involved in the conflict.

Some comments also express solidarity with ethnic armed groups, parallel governance and revolutionary forces like the NUG (National Unity Government) and PDF (People's Defense Forces). For example, 'May the ethnic armed forces and NUG and PDF be healthy and happy' reflects support for opposition groups fighting the Myanmar Military. These sentiments encourage continued resistance and even suggest strategies for retaliation, like bombing airfields (figure 13).

Anti-SAC Sentiment

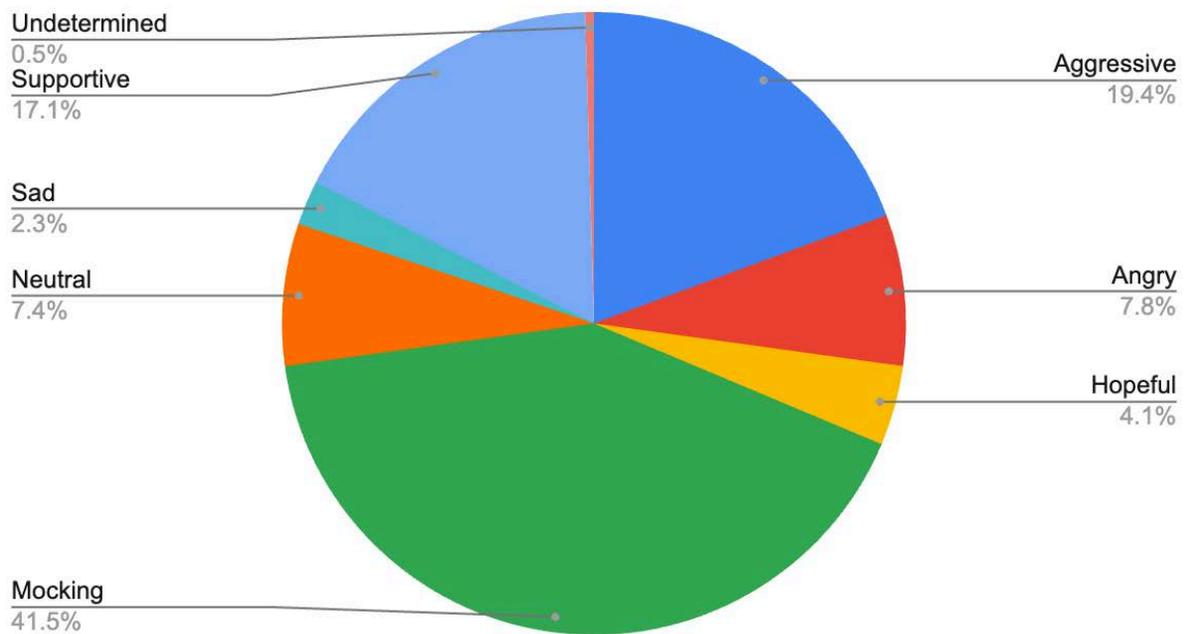


Figure 13: Anti-SAC Sentiment

5.5 COMPARATIVE TRENDS

Distribution of Emerging Theme for Aggressive Sentiment

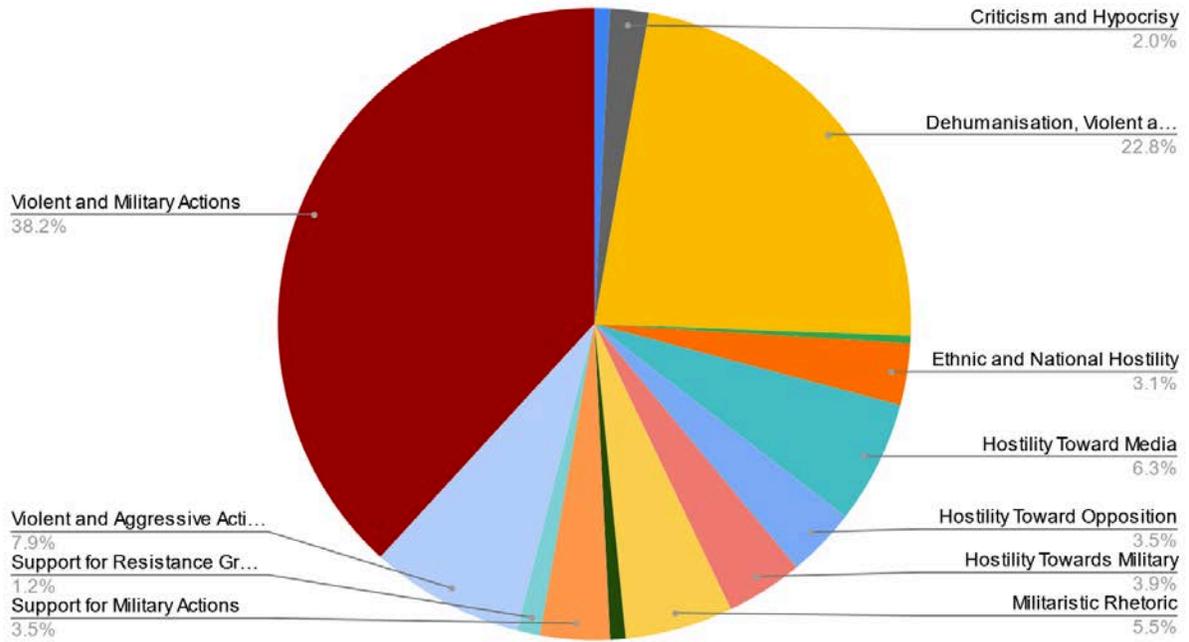


Figure 14: Emerging Theme for Aggressive Sentiment.

Distribution of Emerging Theme For Aggressive Sentiment (Anti-SAC)

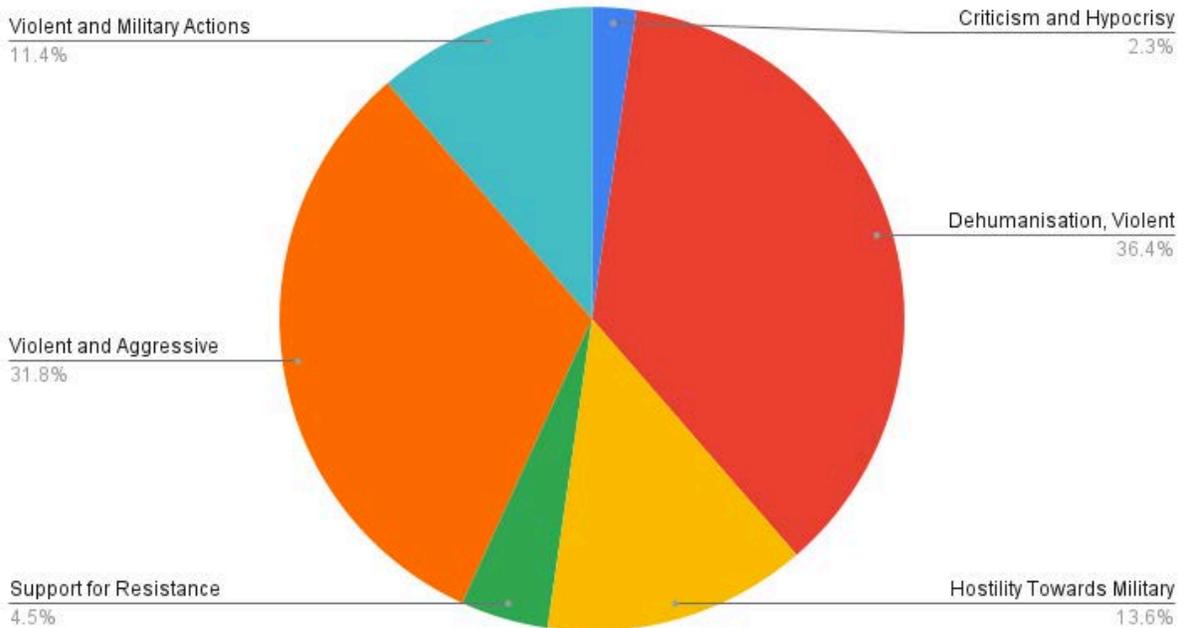


Figure 15: Emerging Theme for Aggressive Sentiment

Distribution of Emerging Theme for Aggressive Sentiment (Pro-Military)

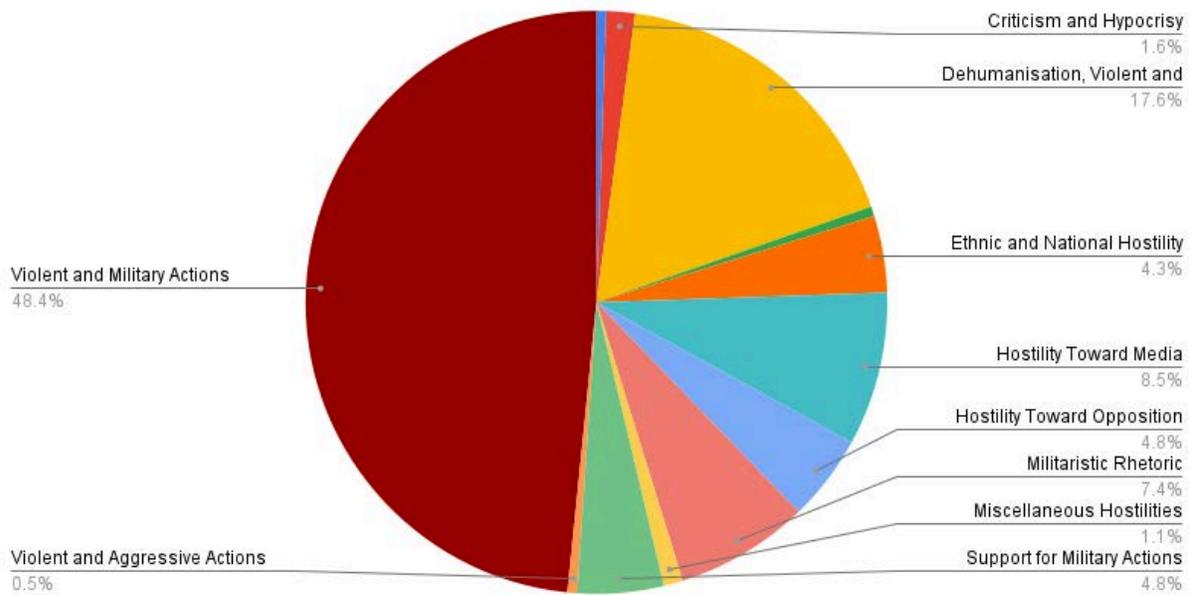


Figure 16: Emerging Theme for Aggressive Sentiment

5.6 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TWO OPERATIONS

Both operations, Operation 1027 and Operation Yan Naing Min show overlapping sentiment lines, especially in terms of aggression and support. However, differences in intensity and actor focus become apparent when comparing TikTok and YouTube. In terms of platform comparisons, TikTok features more aggressive-natured comments, while YouTube contains a higher volume of neutral and supportive comments. Pro-military users are more likely to use dehumanising and violent rhetoric, targeting not only revolutionary forces but also civilians who are perceived as opposition. In contrast, anti-SAC comments focused on hostility toward military leadership, mocking their failures and calling for retaliation against military violence.

In comparison to comments relating to Operation 1027 SAC's new operation, Operation Yan Naing Min, expressed similar aggressive and mocking sentiments while pro-military commenters endorsed military actions through violent language and urged attacks on revolutionary groups like PDFs and EAOs. Anti-SAC sentiments for Operation Yan Naing Min leaned more towards mockery and criticism of SAC leaders and their military operations, with less focus on ethnic hostility and more on supporting the resistance forces. So, while both operations express similar sentiments in terms of aggression and support, it is evident that platform-specific dynamics shape how they are expressed. Myanmar Witness observed more aggressive comments on TikTok, whereas YouTube featured a higher proportion of neutral interactions.

For instance, in Operation 1027, pro-military users expressed intense aggressive support for military operations actions and offensives. Sentiments were often dehumanising towards anti-SAC groups and supporters, focusing on eradication and legitimising military violence and operations. Themes of ethnic and national hostility were significant, especially against groups like the Kokang-Chinese ethnic minorities. The pro-military sentiment was aggressive, on occasion advocating for bombing and calling for generalised violence. In contrast, anti-SAC users expressed hostile sentiments towards the SAC's violent actions and coup leader Min Aung Hlaing. They used derogatory language, mockery, and wishes of death. While a significant portion of anti-SAC comments were supportive of resistance forces and EAOs, they predominantly framed the SAC as oppressors. Overall, the aggressive and mocking language from both sides does contribute to the polarisation of the conflict, as each group uses some form of extreme rhetoric to dehumanise the other side.

Aggressive and mocking sentiments were recorded as the most distributed in both operations of the negative sentiment. Below is a breakdown of the sentiment comparison:

5.6.1 Aggressive Sentiment Comparison:

- **Pro-Military Aggression**

SAC supporters' response to Operation Yan Naing Min is seen as more aggressive than SAC's past [operations](#). The sentiments expressed during Operation Yan Naing Min are notably more aggressive, with users endorsing more violent actions such as airstrikes. This can be seen in the comments: '*bomb them all*'. There was also continued use of ethnic hostility, dehumanising metaphors like 'dogs,' and militaristic rhetoric. This increasing aggressiveness of SAC supporters' responses, along with their hostility, further fosters this approval of violence in this conflict, making the idea of reconciliation more challenging.

- **Anti-Military Aggression**

In both operations, anti-SAC users combined dehumanisation and hostility towards the military. However, during the Yan Naing Min Operation, there was a significant increase in explicit calls for violence against military leadership, such as the desire to eliminate Min Aung Hlaing and his troops. While anti-SAC users continued mocking the military, they also supported violent actions more intensely than during Operation 1027. This shift towards endorsing more violent actions highlights the severity of the conflict and the ever-deepening division between opposing sides. This could further exacerbate the violence as well as normalising this type of extreme rhetoric.

6 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that online discourse around military operations is shaped by various factors, including the platform that is being utilised as well as the actors engaging in the comments of these videos.

The sentiment analysis of the online discourse surrounding Operation 1027 and the new operation, Operation Yan Naing Min, reveals an intensifying polarisation among pro-military and anti-SAC users. Pro-military supporters have escalated in their aggressive and dehumanising language since the announcement of Operation Yan Naing Min, increasingly endorsing violent military actions, including airstrikes, against opposition groups and using ethnic hostility to justify these actions. Anti-SAC users have also shifted, with their rhetoric moving from mocking criticisms to more explicit calls for violence against military leadership in the newest operation as compared to the data collected in Operation 1027. The hostile tone on platforms like TikTok reflects an aggressive attitude among pro-military actors, suggesting a potential shift toward

a more aggressive stance in both public discourse and, possibly encouraging this in military strategies too.

The study's findings can be contextualised with existing research on political discourse and social violence, as the study concludes that the prevalence of aggressive and dehumanising language online can contribute to social polarisation and real-world harms, particularly in the context of Myanmar's conflict, as it deepens existing ethnic and national divisions. The dehumanisation of ethnic and opposition groups not only normalises hostility but also perpetuates racial and ethnic animosities, especially in conflict-prone areas.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- | | |
|---|-------|
| ● Ethnic Armed Organisations | EAOs |
| ● Min Aung Hlaing | MAL |
| ● Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army | MNDAA |
| ● National Unity Government | NUG |
| ● Peoples' Defence Forces | PDF |
| ● Three Brotherhood Alliance | 3BHA |
| ● State Administration Council | SAC |