



When the shooting stops: Distant media coverage of peacebuilding in Angola

SACCPS Seminar
Peacebuilding in Southern Africa

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Aims of the study

- To examine the quantity and type of Western media coverage devoted to peacebuilding: Angola (2001-2003) is used as a case study
 - To what degree was the post-violence phase covered?
 - To what degree were peacebuilding issues during the violence phase covered?
 - What aspects of peacebuilding were covered?

Journalists and 'peace'

- We have 'war correspondents', but not 'peace correspondents'
- Journalists are the ones seen running *towards* the gunfire/explosions... Does the reverse apply when the shooting stops?
- News = 'action', 'something happening'.
- If peace simply means the absence of war, is it newsworthy? ('no news is good news')
 - Peace does involve action/events (disarmament, demining, reconstruction, elections), maybe just not 'sensational' action

The image and the reality

- The image:
 - 'If it bleeds, it leads'
 - According to the literature (Gowing 1997, Jackobsen 2000), post-violence coverage is 'negligible', 'very little' (but unexamined)
- The reality:
 - Yes and no
 - Sharp drop in coverage in post-violence phase, but not necessarily 'negligible'

Some examples of coverage

- *New York Times* coverage
 - Israel-Hezbollah (06), Liberia (03), Sri Lanka (09)
- Conflicts chosen because of clear-cut phases

Conflict	Violence phase coverage (word count)	Post-violence phase coverage (word count)
Israel-Hezbollah (2006) 34 days before/after	164,037	47,889
Liberia (2003) 6 months before/after	59,764	18,501
Sri Lanka (2009) 6 months before/after	32,934	11,492

- Post-violence phase: dropped to one-third

The case of Angola: Background

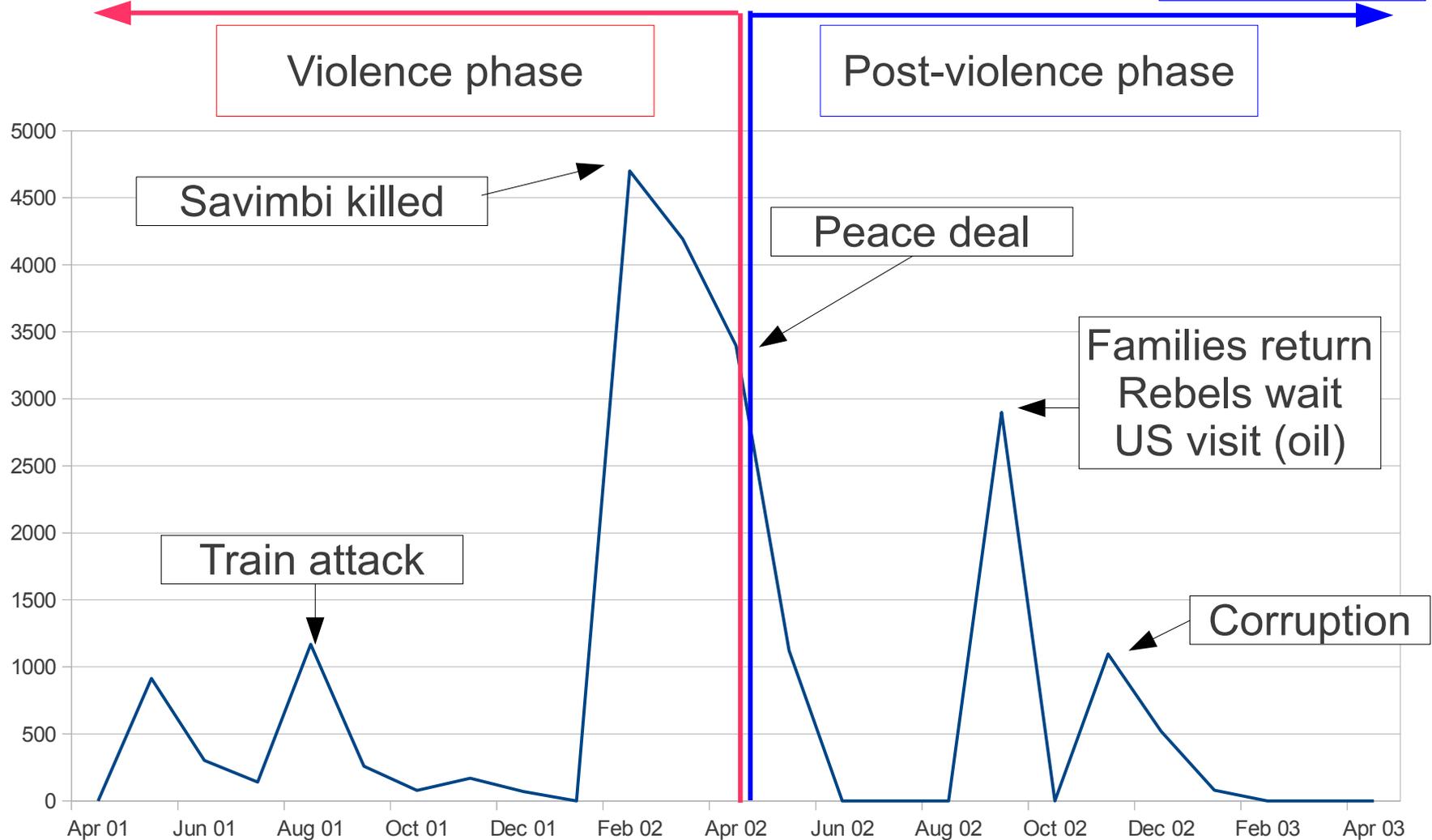
- 1950s Guerrilla war for independence
- 1974 Independence
- ~ 1991 Conflict: MPLA, FLNA, UNITA, South Africa, Cuba at war
- 1992 Elections, return to war
- 1994 Lusaka Protocol
- 1998 Return to war
- 2002 Savimbi killed, peace deal, UNITA demobilizes, people return home

Coverage of Angola: *New York Times*

April 2001 – April 2003

12,690 words

8,424 words



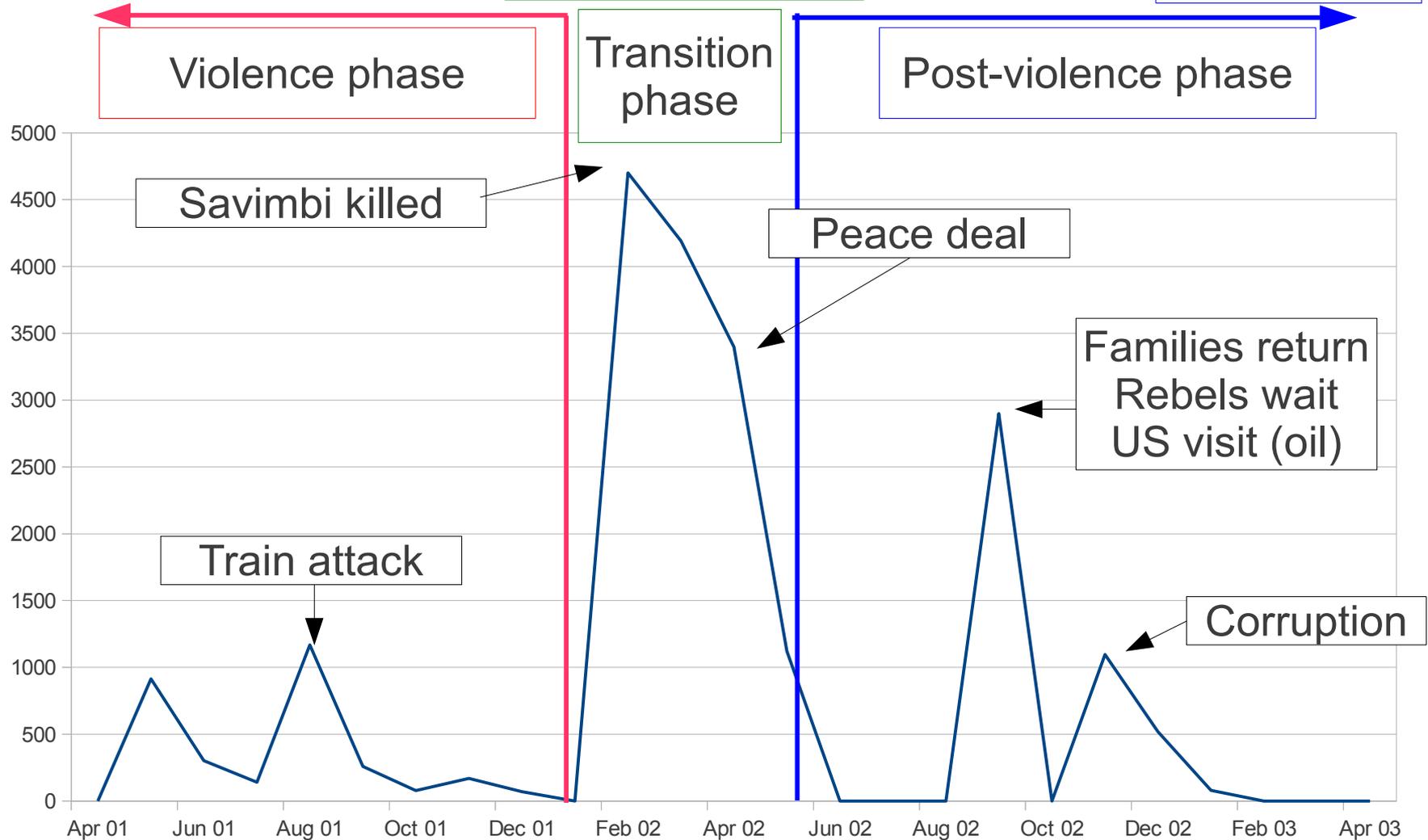
Coverage of Angola: *New York Times*

April 2001 – April 2003

3,105 words

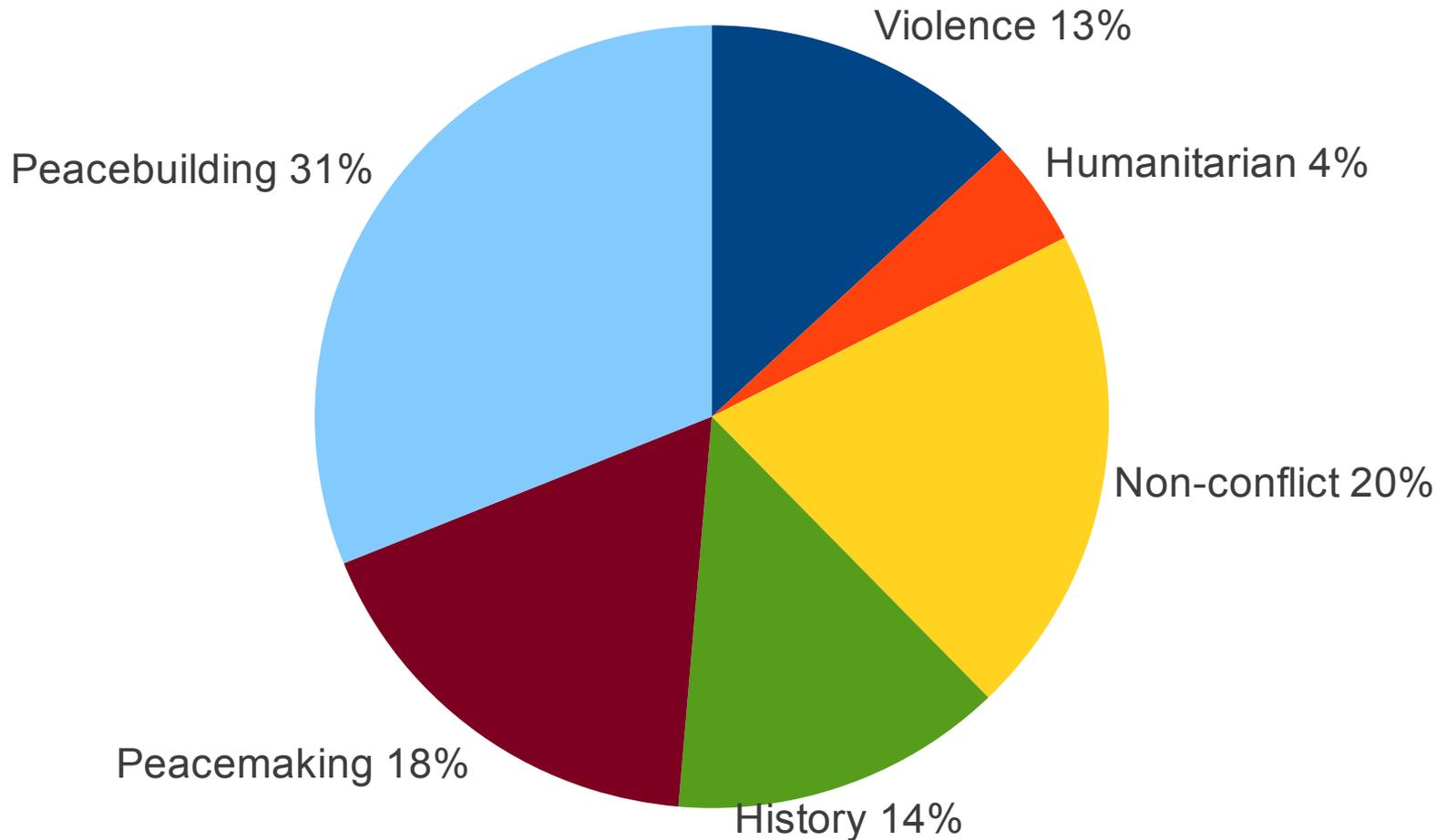
11,113 words

6,895 words



Types of issues covered

New York Times, April 2001-April 2003 (word count)



Peacebuilding-related articles

- **Violence phase (854 words)**
 - UN suggests a return to farms
 - De Beers suspends investment
- **Transition phase (1,705 words)**
 - Poor consider their future
 - Angola's opportunity: oil/diamonds (Editorial)
 - Amnesty for rebels agreed
- **Post-violence phase (3,703 words)**
 - War-weary refugees try returning to normalcy
 - Aid appeal for demobilized rebels
 - Families reunited
 - Rebels wait for help
 - UNITA sanctions lifted

Summary of findings

- In general:
 - Coverage of post-violence phase may not drop as sharply as presumed
- In the case of Angola:
 - Overall coverage very low
 - But, space for coverage opened in post-violence phase
 - Long-term peacebuilding coverage lacking
- Other southern African cases?
 - DRC: Line between phases blurred
 - Zimbabwe: Non-conflict, but worth studying