

If it bleeds it leads? Distant media coverage of the peace process in Angola

University of the Free State

Bloemfontein, South Africa

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Virgil Hawkins

Osaka School of International Public Policy (OSIPP)

Osaka University, Japan



OSAKA SCHOOL OF
INTERNATIONAL
PUBLIC POLICY

Aims of the study

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

Conflict phases

- Simple distinction:
 - Violence phase:
 - Everything up to ceasefire/peace deal
 - Post-violence phase:
 - Everything after ceasefire/peace deal
- Reality is not so simple:
 - Violence phases have phases
 - Violence happens post-ceasefire
 - 'Peace' happens pre-ceasefire
 - Peacebuilding happens/is necessary pre-ceasefire

Journalists and 'peace'

- We have 'war correspondents', but not 'peace correspondents'
- Journalists are the ones seen running *towards* the gunfire/explosions...
- Does reverse apply when 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
- 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 (2001-2003)

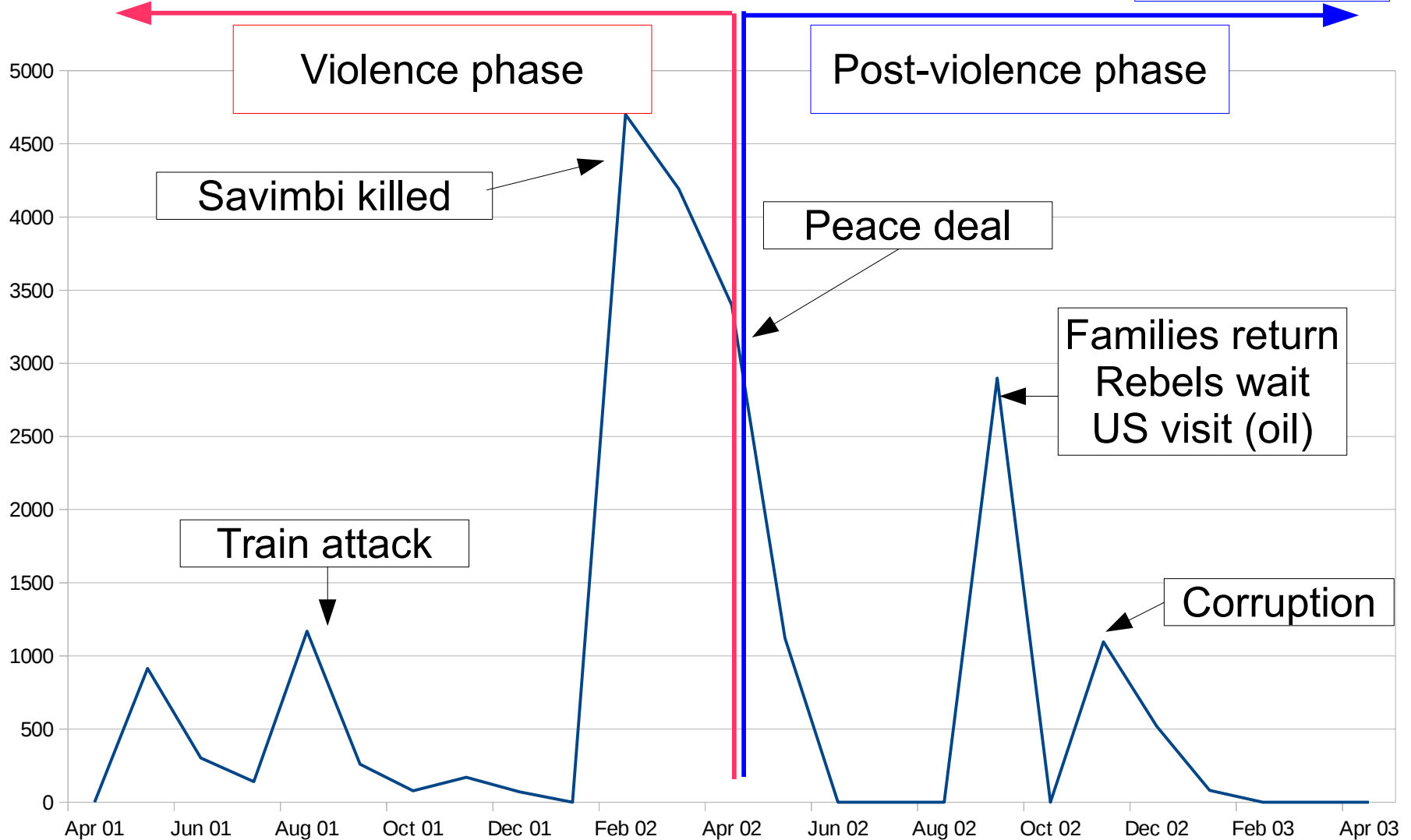
- 1950s Guerrilla war for independence
- 1974 Independence
- ~ 1991 Conflict: MPLA, FLNA, UNITA, South Africa, Cuba at war
- 1992 Elections, return to war
- 1994 Lusaka Protocol
- 1998 Return to war (MPLA/UNITA)
- 2002 Savimbi killed, peace deal, UNITA demobilizes, people return home

Coverage of Angola: *New York Times*

April 2001 – April 2003

12,690 words

8,424 words



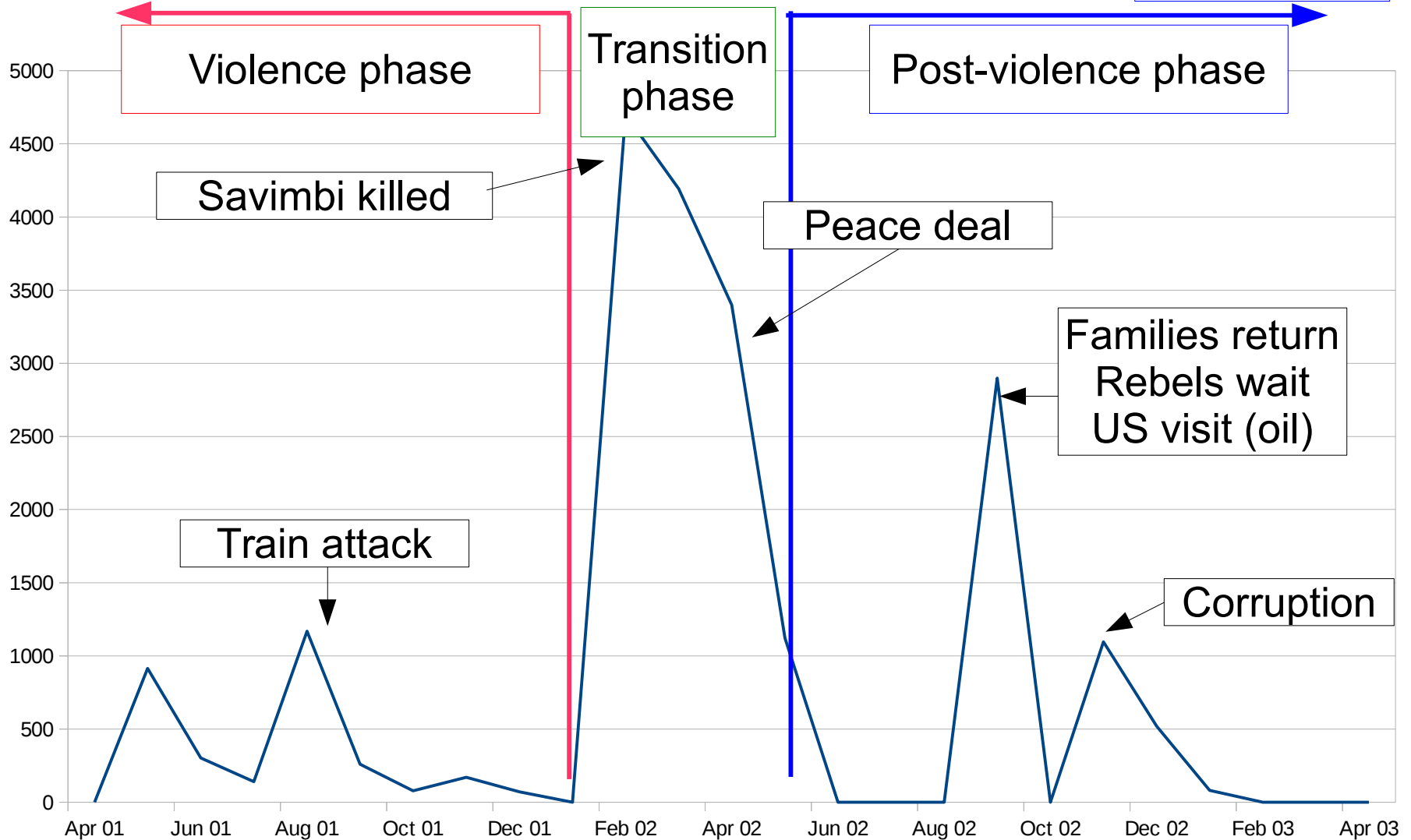
Coverage of Angola: *New York Times*

April 2001 – April 2003

3,105 words

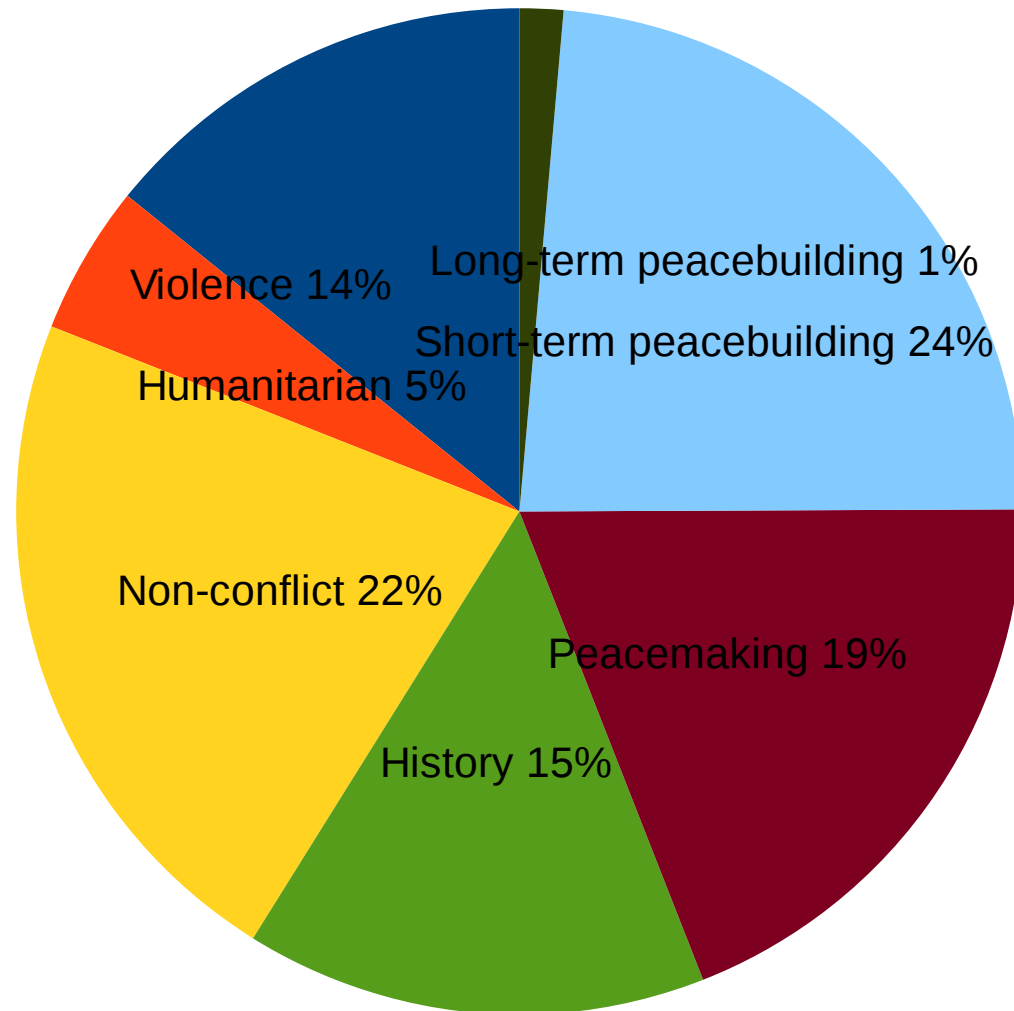
11,113 words

6,895 words



Types of issues covered

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



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