

Worst of the Worst: Human Rights Abuses by States—Violence, and Intervention

Recommended Use: The lesson addresses violence by states and intervention by the International community. Would be ideal for a class with students who have not done much work in human rights—such as an intro to human rights course, or an intro to a module on human rights. This assignment was originally for an intro to human rights class (approximately 30 students), and was given towards the start of the semester to familiarize students with human rights abuses and important events relating to state violence, and international intervention attempts to stop the violence, in the 20th century.

Keywords: Violence, Genocide, State Violations, Intervention, Human Rights Abuses.

Objectives: Students will be able to critically evaluate the recent history of state atrocities. Students build quantitative reasoning skills, and will learn to put current atrocities into quantitative context. Students will be more aware of the pitfalls and benefits associated with using quantitative analysis on human rights abuses.

Material/Readings:

Could be taught as an introduction to the subject with limited readings, but works well as an assignment to quiz students about the texts as the answers are almost exclusively from the following two short readings:

Goodhart, Michael, *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*. Oxford University Press, Chapters; 5, 16, 17. First Edition, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-19-954084-6

Issues For Debate In Human Rights (selections from CQ Researcher). Chapter 2 CQ Press (May 12, 2010), ISBN-10: 1608714128

Synopsis of Materials:

The chapters in the Goodhart text focus on comparative perspectives of human rights, genocide and human rights, and humanitarian intervention. They provide useful analysis for comparing various atrocities and attempts at intervention in the 20th century by states or the UN. Chapter from Issues for Debate provides a background on military intervention and world peacekeeping in the 20th century.

Recommended extra reading and data for instructor:

The Worse Genocides of the 20th and 21st Centuries. <http://www.scaruffi.com/politics/dictat.html>

Parade Magazine "Worst Dictator" 2011

<http://www.parade.com/dictators/index.html>

Discussion Questions/Activity:

Before conducting the activity instructor will want to provide some background on potential problems and pitfalls of quantitative analysis on this subject matter. For instance, some of the answers are rather simplistic (i.e. where does WWII fit in?); these estimates do not consider percentages, but pure amounts killed—which can cause bias in body counts. Describing these issues in quantitative analysis allows for some points of discussion about classification, but can certainly complicate answers quickly.

Also the lesson takes a lot of time (likely 50 minutes if adequate discussion of the events takes place).

Finally, this assignment was written in 2014 and may have to be updated as world events change (e.g. Syria).

Activity: This lesson is primarily ‘activity’ based learning rather than lecture. Students are asked to get into small groups (3-5 students) and give their best guesses to the questions below about state violence and intervention. Students were given 15-20 minutes (or until every group was finished) to write down their answers. This was a NO ‘Internet’ allowed event (to stimulate critical thinking skills rather than research skills—potentially the lesson could be taught in a lab setting with research required—but that approach would need some restructuring of the lesson). This assignment could be done with more students, or less, but

small group component should be maintained. It could also be re-framed as an individual assignment as well, but than debate, critical thinking skills, and general student chatter the lesson produces may be lost.

Handout to Students:

The Worst of the Worst: The bad, the terrible and the worst.

Give the following your best guesses. This is a no 'Internet' allowed event. Almost all the answers come from the CQ book—chapter 2, and the assign chapters of the Goodhart book (noted where an outside source was utilized).

1. Of the following 5 'worst of the worst' mass murderers in modern history, which do you think killed the most people?

Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Leopold II of Belgium (Congo, 1886-1908), Pol Pot (Cambodia, 1975-79).

2. How many 'millions' of people do you think this 'worst of the worst' mass murderer killed? (Team that guesses closest gets 3 points, second place 2 points and third place 1 point).

3. Not counting the Iraq war (where estimates vary, especially on the extent of civilians killed and on who is responsible for the killing), which state led event of 'genocide' has killed the most civilians since the year 2000? Bonus: Give an estimate of how many were killed.

4. In the 1990s the worst genocide of the decade took place over the course of only about 100 days. It is estimated that 800,000 people were killed. Where did this occur?

5. Optimist or pessimist: In general, has the extent of violence caused by war, including civilian and military deaths compared to the population, gone up or down since 1991?

6. What three developing countries have the highest murder rates in the world today? (measured by homicides per 100,000 people)

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8. Who would be your guess for Parade Magazine's choice for the 'Worst' dictator in the world in 2011? (while certainly not a scientific study, they seemed to base their criteria on how terrible it would be to live in the country—from killing of citizens, fear of arbitrary prosecution from the government, gross violations of economic rights (including unemployment rates as high as 85% or forced military service/labor for everyone).

The following questions address a few ways the world has dealt with military intervention for humanitarian intervention purposes.

Intervention: The good, the bad and the ugly.

9. What organization was founded by the international community in 1945 that had a goal “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”?

10. How many peacekeeping troops does the UN have ready for deployment around the world today? (Hint it is their all-time high).

Bonus Question. What was the largest peacekeeping troop deployment by the UN? How many and where?

11. What event happened in Mogadishu in 1993 that led to the U.S. retreating from engaging in military intervention for humanitarian purposes? (Hint: this event was popularized in a book and major motion picture).

12. What was an example of a successful UN peacekeeping mission?
13. The new concept coined R2P in humanitarian intervention really gained traction in the early 2000s. What does R2P stand for?

Human Rights Abuses by States: Violence vs. Intervention

Answers for Instructor: The Worst of the Worst: The bad, the terrible and the worst.

1. Of the following 5 worst mass murderers in modern history, which do you think killed the most people?

Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Leopold II of Belgium (Congo, 1886-1908), Pol Pot (Cambodia, 1975-79).

Answer: Mao Zedong estimated to have killed 70 million. (Source: Goodhart)

2. How many 'millions' of people do you think this 'worst of the worst' mass murderer killed? (Team that guesses closest gets three points, second place 2 points and third place 1 point. It is rather disturbing that these question to "win' points on).

Answer: Mao Zedong (China, 1958-1961 and 1966-1969), estimates are around the 70 million people mark, making him by many millions the worst of the worst. (Source: Goodhart)

3. Not counting the Iraq war (where estimates vary, especially on the extent of civilians killed and on who is responsible for the killing), which state led event of 'genocide' has killed the most civilians since the year 2000? Bonus: Give an estimate of how many were killed there.

Answer: Darfur, 400,000 (Source: CQ)

4. In the 1990s the worst genocide of the decade took place over the course of only about 100 days. It is estimated that 800,000 people were killed. Where did this occur?

Answer: Rwanda, 1994 (the World did Nothing). (Source: CQ)

5. Optimist or pessimist: In general, has the extent of violence caused by war, including civilian and military deaths compared to the population, gone up or down since 1991?

Answer: Optimist: violence caused by war seems to be going down. (Source: Goodhart)

6. What three developing countries have the highest murder rates in the world today? (Measured by homicides per 100,000 people)

Answer:

1. Honduras=86
2. El Salvador=71
3. Venezuela=67 (Source: CQ)

7. What three developed countries have the highest murder rates in the world today? (Measured by homicides per 100,000 people)

Answer:

1. Russia=13
2. Moldova=7.4
3. USA=4.8 (Source CQ)

8. Who would be your guess for Parade Magazine's choice for the 'Worst' dictator in the world in 2011? (while certainly not a scientific study, they seemed to base their criteria on how terrible it would be to live in the country—from killing of citizens, fear of arbitrary prosecution from the government, gross violations of economic rights (including unemployment rates as high as 85% or forced military service/labor for everyone).

Answer: #1 Kim Jong-Il (died), Isaias Afewerki, Eritrea (forced labor). Omar Al-Bhashir (Sudan). (Source: Parade Magazine <http://www.parade.com/dictators/index.html>)

The following questions address a few ways the world has dealt with military intervention for humanitarian purposes.

Intervention: The good, the bad and the ugly.

9. What organization was founded by the international community in 1945 that had a goal “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”

Answer: UN (Source CQ)

10. How many peacekeeping troops does the UN have ready for deployment around the world today? (Hint it is their all-time high).

Bonus Question. What was the largest peacekeeping troop deployment by the UN? How many and where?

Answer: Today the UN has a record 100,000-130,000 peacekeeping troops ready for deployment around the world. (Source CQ)

Yet the largest UN peacekeeping mission was launched in 1960 in Congo where only 20,000 served. 250 died and larger scaled missions have not taken place since then. To put this in prospective, it was less than the U.S. troop surge in Iraq in 2007. (Source CQ)

11. What event happened in Mogadishu in 1993 that led to the U.S. retreating from engaging in military intervention for humanitarian purposes? (Hint: this event was popularized in a book and major motion picture).

Answer: Blackhawk down 18 U.S. soldiers killed. Some dragged through the streets. US public soured on intervention. (Source CQ)

12. What was an example of a successful UN peacekeeping mission?

Answer: Namibia-1989 helped bring the country independence. UN negotiated a peaceful withdrawal of Marxist Rebels (SWAPO) and Cuban and African troops.

Liberia 2005 election monitoring allowed the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf—first female head of state in Africa. (Source CQ)

13. The new concept coined R2P in humanitarian intervention really gained traction in the early 2000s. What does R2P stand for?

Answer: Responsibility to Protect. International law proposed at UN that the world community has a responsibility to citizens being abused by their governments. (Source: Goodhart)