

Help a Brother Out

by David Barnett

The Human Cost of Poverty

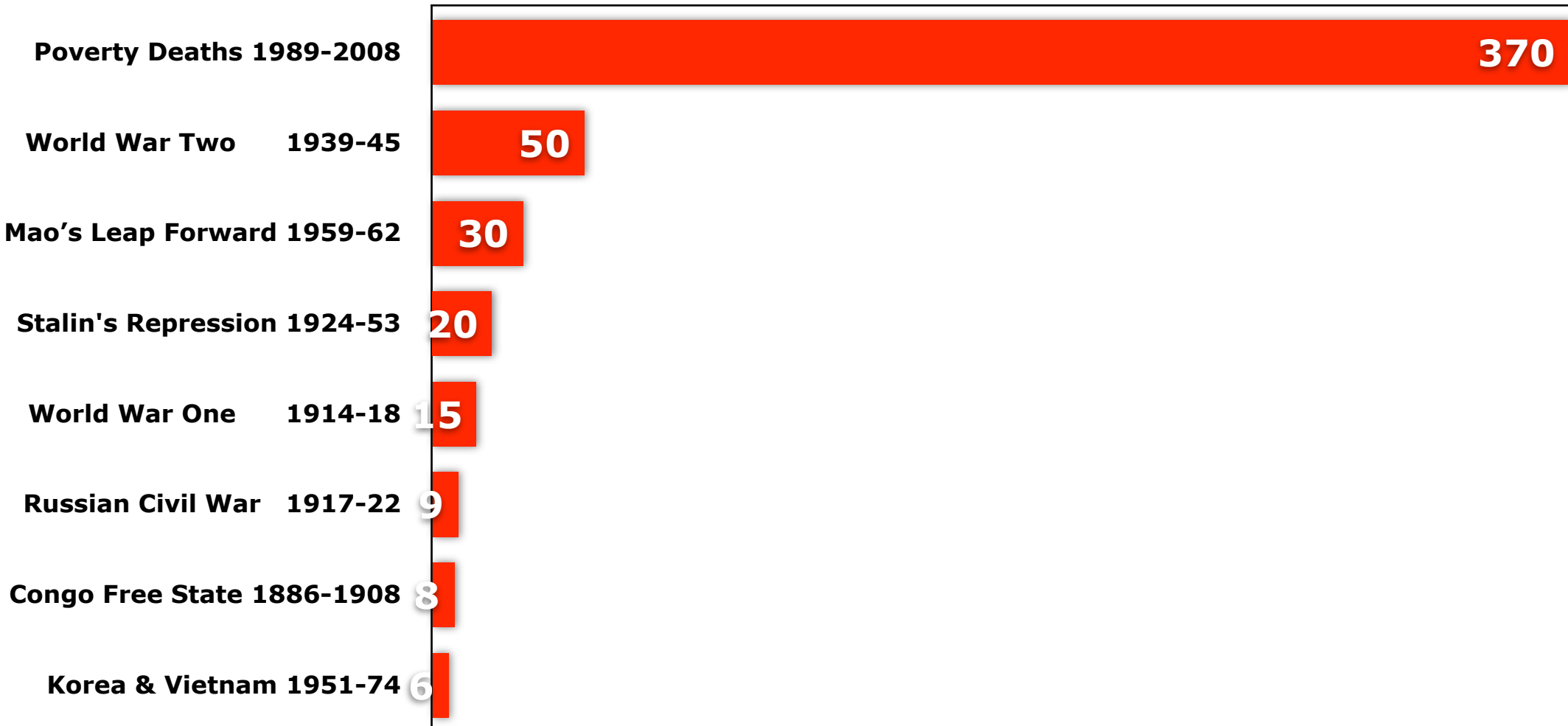
Among 6.5 billion humans (2007):

- 931 million are undernourished
- 980 million have no basic medical care
- 1.7 billion lack safe drinking water
- 1.2 billion lack adequate shelter
- 2.2 billion have no electricity
- 3 billion lack basic sanitation
- 5.9 billion lack any sense of humor
- 976 million adults are illiterate
- 8.4 million children work in slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, forced recruitment for armed conflict, prostitution and pornography

The Human Cost of Poverty

- 34,000 children under age five die daily from hunger and preventable diseases
- One third of all human deaths — some 18 million per year or 50,000 daily — are due to poverty-related causes (such as starvation, diarrhea, pneumonia, tuberculosis, measles, malaria, perinatal and maternal conditions) which could be prevented or cured cheaply through food, safe drinking water, vaccinations, rehydration packs, or medicine.

Millions of Deaths



Singer: Famine, Affluence, and Morality

1. Suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad.
2. If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought to do it.
3. It is in our power to prevent suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance.
4. Therefore, we ought to prevent suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care.

How to evaluate an argument

- An argument is valid iff it is impossible for its premises to be true and its conclusion to be false.
- An argument is sound iff
 - i. it is valid
 - ii. its premises are true.

Valid?

1. Whoever smelt it, dealt it.
2. You smelt it.
3. Therefore, you dealt it.

Valid?

1. Fred is bigger than an ant.
2. Whatever is bigger than an ant is a whale.
3. Therefore, Fred is a whale.

Valid?

1. If my parents leave town, I'll throw a party.
2. My parents will not leave town.
3. Therefore, I won't throw a party.

Valid?

1. Suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad.
2. If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought to do it.
3. It is in our power to prevent suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance.
4. Therefore, we ought to prevent suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care.

In Defense of Premise 2: The Pond vs The Envelope

The Envelope

 What would most Americans think?

The Pond

 What would most Americans think?

Is the difference justified?

Scientific method applied

1. Identify and list candidate sources of morally significant difference.
2. Examine each candidate in isolation: is it morally significant, or merely psychologically significant?
3. If no morally significant difference is found, difference in reaction is not justified:

The two scenarios are morally indistinguishable.

The Pond vs. The Envelope: Candidate morally relevant differences

1. Victim member of one's society
2. Victim closer in distance
3. Victim's suffering/immanent death salient
4. Victim not responsible for predicament
5. Agent's society views cases differently
6. Agent only possible hero
7. ...

Back to Singer

- ③ What explains the equivalence in moral status of The Envelope and The Pond?
- ③ Singer's Premise 2: If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought to do it.

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