

**JOHN QUINCY ADAMS
SOCIETY**

Ethics and Foreign Policy

Comparing Intentions with Consequences

Intro Video

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Euqsbr_xr38
- <https://youtu.be/Ay2RE9FrqPM>

How Should Nations Act?

- People want their government to act ethically
- But what does that mean for military intervention?



- Military actions are frequently justified using moral arguments
- In cases like Iraq and Libya, they failed to produce moral outcomes
- In judging the choice to go to war, are good intentions sufficient?

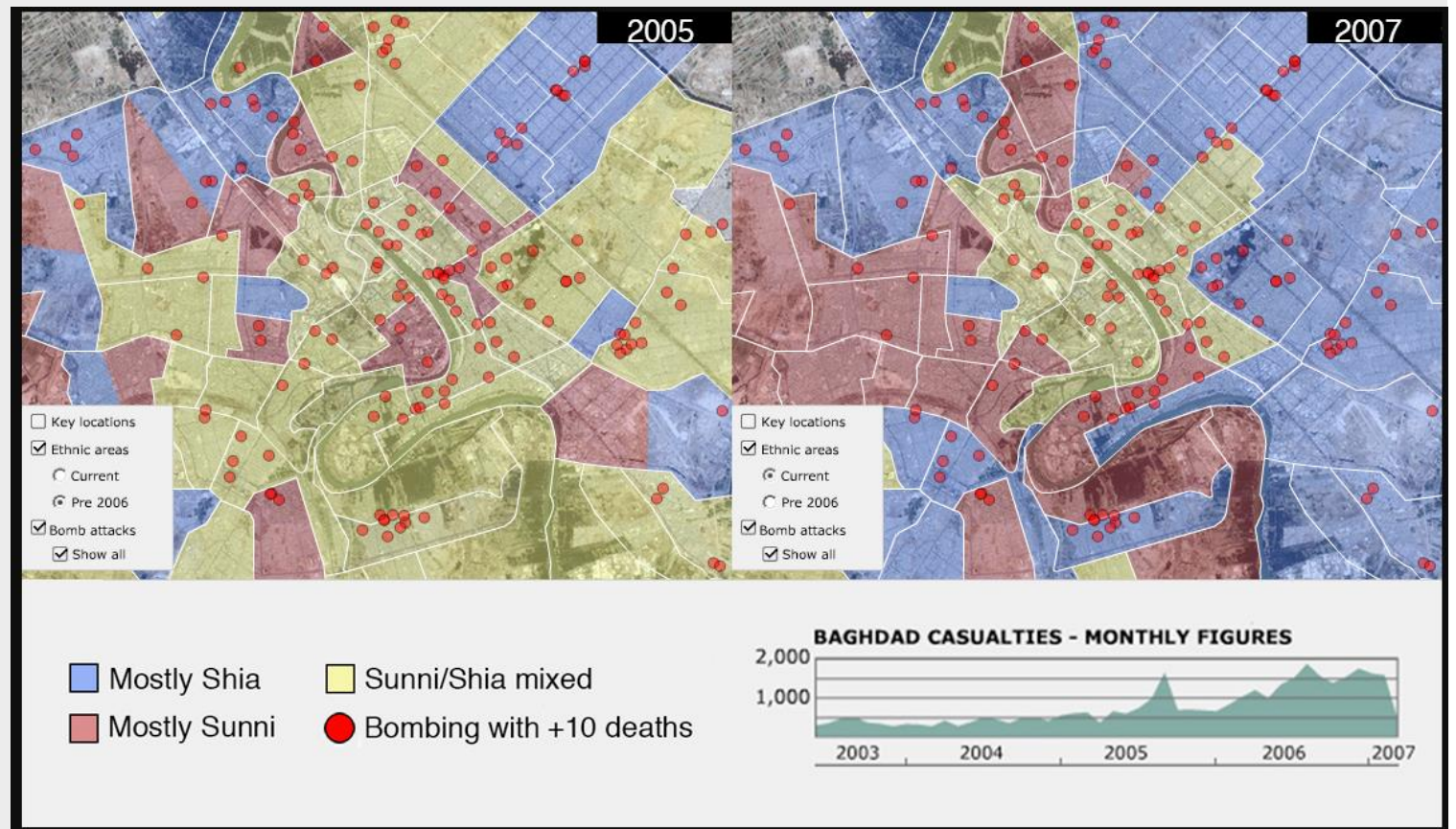
Intentions and Consequences



Intentions

- Iraq, 2003
 - “As we enforce the just demands of the world, we will also honor the deepest commitments of our country. Unlike Saddam Hussein, we believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty. And when the dictator has departed, they can set an example to all the Middle East of a vital and peaceful and self-governing nation.”
George W. Bush, [ultimatum to Iraq](#)
 - “And wherever you go, you carry a message of hope — a message that is ancient, and ever new. In the words of the prophet Isaiah: "To the captives, 'Come out!' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!'”
George W. Bush, ["Mission Accomplished" speech](#)
- Libya, 2011
 - “It clearly can be in the US and the west’s strategic interest to help social revolutions fighting for the values we espouse and proclaim. The strategic interest in helping the Libyan opposition came from supporting democracy and human rights.”
Anne Marie Slaughter, ["Why Libya sceptics were proved badly wrong"](#)

Unintended Consequences

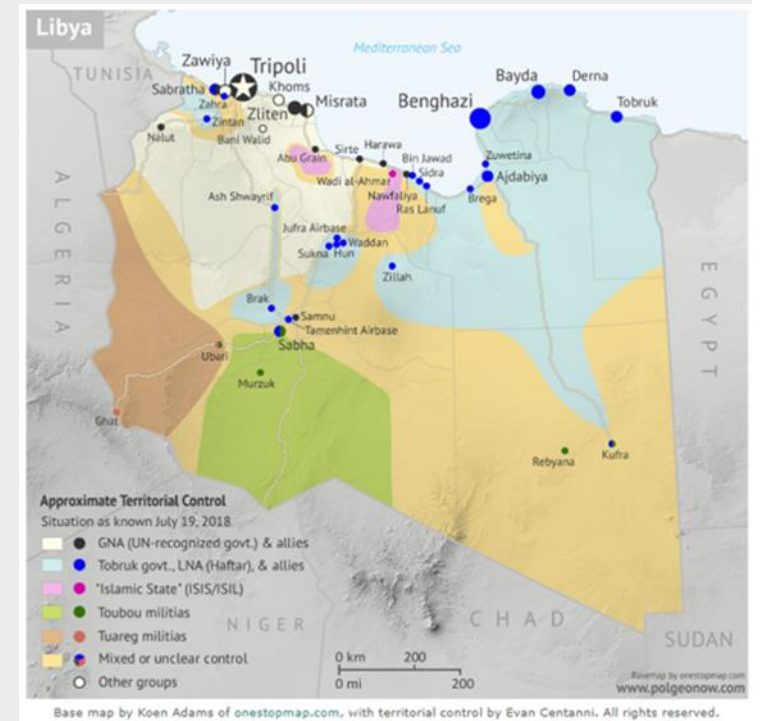


The Costs of War

- <https://youtu.be/aVr0MSEW2SU>

Libya

- The case for war
- The chaos that followed



John Quincy Adams on Good Intentions

- “[America] well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself, beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and **usurp the standard of freedom.**”
- Video: Ahmed Chalabi, a dissident Iraqi exile who advocated for the U.S. invasion
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sz9F-Ma5NjY&feature=youtu.be>

John Quincy Adams' Alternative Approach

- “Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will [America’s] heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy.”
- “She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will recommend the general cause, by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example.”

Discussion Questions

- Is military action uniquely prone to unintended consequences versus other tools of statecraft? What about regime change?
- What are some other examples of unintended consequences in US foreign policy?
- Why do you think that the Libya and Iraq interventions failed to achieve their stated goals?
- Were the Iraq and Libyan interventions worth it, given that they also had positive consequences (the removal of Saddam and Gadhafi)?
- Are there other examples of other actors “usurping the banner of freedom?”
- What do you think of John Quincy Adams’ solution?
- How should we judge the legacies of policymakers whose decisions had serious, unintended negative consequences?

Further readings

- Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*
- McDougall, *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy*
- Bacevich, *America's War for the Greater Middle East*