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The Pitfalls of Unilateralism: The United States in Syria

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I. Introduction

Unilateral intervention by superpowers in the internal affairs of states is not a new phenomenon in the international political system. In the late 1930s, Hitler invoked the 'right of self-determination' of German nationals as a pretext for his incursions into Austria and Czechoslovakia (Duiker, 2005: 113-127). Hitler justified his intervention on the grounds that German inactivity in the internal affairs of its neighbours would have created catastrophic humanitarian disasters in central Europe. As history will later show, this German incursion into the territories of its neighbours was to be the beginning of a series of catastrophic events that culminated in the destruction of Germany and Europe between 1939 and 1945. In 2014, the United States intervened in the Syrian civil war with the aim of preventing what it claimed was an upsurge in transnational terrorism because of the Islamic States. The U.S. forcefully intervened in Syria again in 2017 after the Syrian government crossed an international red-line by using chemical weapons on its own people (Myre,2017). The American intervention rather than resolve the dispute between the Syrian government and the rebels fighting against it, further widened the scope of the conflict and turned that country into an unstable and combustible polity. Unilateral Humanitarian Intervention (UHI), the type carried out by the U.S. in Syria is prohibited by various international organizations such as the United Nations Organisation, International Court of Justice and the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court. Yet, there abound cases of unilateral intervention of a militarily capable state in the internal affairs of another state. Using the Syrian example, this paper examines the rationale / justification for the unilateral humanitarian intervention of the United States of America in the Syrian civil war. It discusses the implications of the unilateral intervention for America's external relations and world peace and security.

II. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

For better understanding of the paper, clarification would be made on the following concepts: Act of Aggression, Crime of Aggression, Chemical Weapon, and Unilateral Humanitarian Intervention.

a) *Act of Aggression*

Act of Aggression is the use of armed force by a state against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the charter of the United Nations (UNGGA,2010). Aggression is the use of force by a state or government against another state or government in any manner, whatever the weapons used and whether openly or otherwise for any purpose other than individual or collective self-defence of a group of states in pursuance of a decision or recommendation by a competent organization of the United Nations. The characteristics of an act of aggression in accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 3314 are as follow: Encroachment, invasion or attack embarked upon by the armed forces of a state against another state, or any military occupation and annexation of another state. It involves armed forces and the use of force.

a) Military bombardment of a sovereign state by another state or the application of weapons by a state against another sovereign territory.
b) The blockade of the Ports or Coast of a state by the armed forces of another state

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c) An attack by the armed forces of a state on the land, sea or air forces, or Marine and air fleets of another state.
d) The use of armed forces of one state which are within the territory of another state with the agreement of the receiving state, in contravention of the conditions provided for in the agreement or any extension of their presence in such territory beyond the determination of the government.
e) The action of a state in allowing its territory to be used by another state for perpetrating an act of aggression against a third state.
f) The sending by or on behalf of a state of armed bands, groups, irregulars or mercenaries, which carry out acts of armed force against another state of such gravity as to amount to the acts listed above, or its substantial involvement therein.

b) Crime of Aggression

Unlike Act of aggression, crime of aggression is individual–centred. It is a specific type of crime in which a person plans, initiates or executes an act of aggression using state military force that violates the Charter of the UN. The act is judged as a violation based on its character, gravity and scale. Crime of aggression is a leadership crime. It is an aggression committed by state officials who are in position of high political and/or military responsibility. They are officers with authority, who are involved in the decision-making process of waging wars and the illegal use of force. According to the UN Charter, three elements qualify an act to be a crime: perpetrator must be a leader; a competent international court must prove that the perpetrator had been involved in the planning, preparation, initiation or execution of such state of aggression; and it must, by its character, gravity and scale, constitute a manifest violation of the UN Charter. The crime of aggression is one of the crimes under the Rome statute of the International Crime Court. The International Criminal Court Statute or the Rome Statute is the treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC) 2002 (ICC,2002). The Rome statute identified four core international crimes, such as, genocide, crime against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression. Under the Rome Statute, the court has jurisdiction over crimes only if they are committed in the territory of a state party or if they are committed by a national of a state party. A review conference of the Rome Statute took place from 31 May to 11 June 2010, in the Kampala Conference. Instructively, as of 3 December 2016, 124 states became signatories to the Rome statue.

States parties to the Rome Statute, ratifiers of the Kampala amendments, and the activators of the court's jurisdiction do not include countries such as, Iraq, Syria, Iran, North Korea and the United States of America.

c) Chemical Weapon

Like nuclear, biological and radiological weapons, chemical weapons are also classified as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) described Chemical Weapon (CW) as any toxic chemical or its precursor that can cause death, injury, temporary incapacitation or sensory irritation through its chemical action (OPCW,2014). Chemical weapon is a toxic chemical contained in a delivery system, such as a bomb or shell. The toxic chemicals that are used for chemical weapons can be categorized as choking, blister, blood or nerve agents. These agents comprise of the following substances: choking agents – chlorine, chloropicrin, phosgene, and diphosgene; blister agents – phosgene oxime, sulfur mustard and nitrogen mustard; Nerve agents – tabun, sarin, VX, cyclosarin and soman; and blood agents – cyanogen chloride and hydrogen cyanide. Chemical weapons cause skin, eye, mucosal pain, irritation, tearing, and corneal damage, problems. Blood agents cause powerful gasping for breath, violent convulsions and respiratory failure. Choking agents affect human breathe, lungs, vision. They cause burning of the throat, coughing, vomiting, headache and pain in the chest. The nerve agents disrupt the mechanisms by which nerves transfer messages to organs. This further causes the contraction of pupils, profuse salivation, convulsions, involuntary urination and defecation (Robin: 1969). The use of chemical weapon, especially during the World War I had devastating health and humanitarian problems. Nearly 100,000 people lost their lives as a result of the use of chemical weapons during the war. Since the World War I, the use of chemical weapons had persisted by some aggressor leaders or states, such as, Adolf Hitler – against the Jews, and Saddam Hussein – against the state of Iran. Based on the destructive and health problems associated with CW, the Geneva Protocol, which prohibited the use of chemical weapons in warfare, was signed in 1925 (UNODA,2015). Despite the Geneva Protocol, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the development of chemical weapons. For example, an estimated 25 states developed chemical weapons capabilities. After 12 years of negotiations, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was adopted by the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on 3 September 1992. The CWC opened for signature in Paris on 13 January 1993 and entered into force on 29 April 1997. With the entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapon Convention, the OPCW became formally established.

d) Unilateral Humanitarian Intervention

The history of humanitarian intervention can be traced to Hugo Grotius's concept of customary international law and the European Politics in the 17th century (Eaton, 2011). Hugo Grotius made the first authoritative statement of the principle of humanitarian

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intervention – "the principle that exclusiveness of domestic jurisdiction stops when outrage upon humanity begins." Since NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999, humanitarian intervention became a compelling foreign policy issue among sovereign states, as it reveals the tension between the principle of state sovereignty, which is a major area of concern of the UN and international law, and evolving international norms related to human rights and the use of force.

The concept is defined as a state's use of military force (publicly stated that its use is for ending violation of human rights) against another state (Bull,et al.,1990:67-93). This definition has been criticized for being too narrow as it precludes non-military forms of intervention such as, humanitarian aid and international sanctions. Scheffer Davis gives a broader description. According to him, humanitarian intervention encompasses non-forcible methods, such as, intervention undertaken without military force to alleviate mass human suffering within sovereign borders (Schefer,1992). There is no one generally acceptable definition of humanitarian intervention as a result of some variations, including: the absence of consent from the host state; whether the intervention is limited to punishment action; and whether the intervention is limited to cases where there has been explicit UN Security Council authorization of action (Mersh,2004).

However diverse existing definition may seem, they have general essential characteristics, which include: threat and use of primary forces; intervention in the internal affairs of a state by sending military forces into the territory or air-space of a sovereign state; response to situations that do not necessarily pose direct threats to states' strategic interests, but motivated by humanitarian objectives (Frye, 2000). The legality of humanitarian intervention posed a profound challenge to the future of global order. Debates on its legal status, however has reached an impasse. A major obstacle to legalizing UHI is the overriding concern that states would use the pretext of humanitarian intervention to commit crime of aggression or perpetrate personal and selfish interest (Murphy,1996). In the late 19th century, proponents of UHI were highly influential and recognized, as states were allowed to use force on different grounds. In contemporary international relations, proponents have significantly lost the debate. A new international order exists. For example, NATO's intervention in Kosovo relegated the legality of UHI to the backdrop. In addition, James Pattison also argue that NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011 had broken the UHI phenomenon (Hurd,2012). Consensus of opinion among states/or government, international organizations and jurists favoured the approval of Security Council before a state can use force on another state. Report has it that more than 133 states, approximately 80 percent of the world's population, have issued individual or joint statements rejecting the legalization of UHI. Additionally, in a situation where by the UN Security Council cannot pass a resolution, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations due to Veto by a permanent member, unilateral humanitarian intervention becomes inevitable. Chapter VII permits the Security Council to take action in situations where there is a "threat to the peace, breach to the peace or act of aggression". Any resolution to that effect must be supported by all permanent members. The reference to the "right" of humanitarian intervention was, in the post cold-war context for the first time invoked in 1990 by the UK delegation after Russia and China failed to support a no-fly over Iraq (Economist,2008). There is still an on-going controversy as to whether sovereignty or humanitarian intervention should prevail in the outrage of the abuse of human rights.

e) Theoretical Consideration

This paper on unilateralism on the part of states requires a theoretical approach as it gives a clearer understanding and explanation to the pattern of inter-relations among them at the international level. To that effect, the paper adopts the realist theory. Realism or political realism has been the dominant theory of international relations. The main tenets of the theory have been identified as statism, survival, and self help. The theory sees the state as the main actor in international politics; it does not accommodate non-state actors; state survival is paramount above all in anarchical environment; and that only self-help is guaranteed (Falode, 2009: 35-47). Neorealist, a branch of political realism is the major focus upon which this work is based. Neorealism considers human society to be anarchical. Its proponents uphold the absence of world government, literally anarchy, to be the primary determinant of international political outcomes. The theory posits that since anarchy holds sways, the survival of a state comes first irrespective of the means of survival. It emphasizes "use what you have to help yourself." The theory promotes power as the overriding role in shaping interstate relations. States survive only when they are powerful. Some of its proponents are Thucydides, Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger. To these strategists the security of the state is the central issue. To attain security, states must increase their power and engage in power balancing for the purpose of deterring potential aggressors (Snyder, 2009). In his Book I *History* Thucydides demonstrates the relationship between state security and the attainment of power (Thucydides, 2009). He de-emphasizes the relevance of morality in interstate relations. In his work, there is no place for morality – a clear rejection of ethical norms in relations among states. To buttress the above position, Thucydides cites Athen's invasion of the Island of Melos, in a bid for the former to consolidate its position and power.

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The theory is relevant to this study because it demonstrates statism, survival and self-help among states in international relations. The theory provides a clearer picture of the egoistic traits of political leaders and governments in the pursuance of state interest. Finally, it gives credence to the perpetration of aggression by a state against another, which in itself is a means of attaining power and surviving in world politics.

III. America's Interventionism in the Middle east: A Historical Analysis

America's attack or involvement in Syria, following the use of chemical weapons against innocent citizens by the Assad's government on April 4, 2017 is not a new trend. The U.S. involvement in the Middle East crisis is phenomenal. Though not the first Western power to be involved in the Middle East Politics, however, it is instructive to note that the US involvement in the region has spanned over a period of seven decades (Tristam,2008). The history of America's intervention in the oil-rich region could be traced to the 2nd World War, 1939 – 1945. The US first major involvement came up under Harry Truman's administration, 1945-1952. Towards the end of the World War II, Truman deployed American Troops in Iran, to help transfer military supplies to the Soviet Union and to protect Iranian oil. After the war, American duplicity in the Middle East emerged one, opposed soviet influence in Iran and solidified America's relationship with Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, and two, facilitated Turkey's membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), invariably making it clear to the Soviet Union that the Middle East would be a Cold War hot zone. Also, in 1947 Truman's administration entangled in the Palestine debacle. Truman supported the UN partition plan of Palestine between the Jews and Palestinians. The US favoured 57% of the land to Israel and 43% to Palestine, and personally lobbied for its success. Ever since the implementation of the partition plan, the Middle East has become a cauldron of political violence between the Jews and Palestinians.

In 1953, Dwight Eisenhower administration (1953-1960) was practically involved through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the deposition of the popularly elected leader of the Iranian parliament and an ardent nationalist who opposed British and American influence in Iran. The CIA's coup and the eventual removal of the elected leader tarnished America's reputation among Iranians, who lost trust in America's claims of protecting democracy (Fawcett,2005). In addition, in 1958, two years after the nationalization of the Suez Canal, Eisenhower intervened in the Lebanon crisis. Following the threat from nationalist forces to topple Lebanon's Christian – led government, Eisenhower ordered the deployment of U.S. troops in Beirut to protect the regime. The period 1960 – 1963 was characterized by an improved US – Israeli relationship through economic aid. John Kennedy laboured to reduce the polarization between the Soviet and American Spheres of interest in the Middle East. In 1967, under the leadership of Lyndon Johnson, America once again swaggered its military capability in the Middle East. In the wake of the Soviet threat to attack Israel who had already occupied the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian Syrian Pennisula, the West Bank and Syria's Golan Heights, following the Six Day War, Johnson swung into action in favour of Israel. The U.S. Navy's Mediterranean Sixth Fleet was put on alert, but by June 10, 1967, Johnson compelled Israel to accept a cease-fire agreement (Rugh,2005). The Nixon – Ford administration (1969 – 1976) saw another US – Soviet Confrontation over the Middle East Crisis, the Arabs' attack on Israel during the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur in 1973, created tension between the US and the Soviet. The Soviet threat to unilaterally attack Israel if the latter failed to agree to the proposed cease – fire informed America's military deployment and battle – readiness in the region. Nixon-Ford government persuaded Israel to sign the cease-fire agreement. In 1974-1975 Henry Kissinger, the then Secretary of State negotiated and coordinated peace agreements between Israel and the Arab. Carter's involvement in the Middle East crisis had its high and low points. First, in 1978, Carter's intervention in the crisis led to the Camp David Accord, and in 1979 culminated in the signing of the Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel. On the other hand America's interest in Iran was greeted with uprising from the Iranian Islamic Revolution against the Shah Mohammed Roza Pahlavi regime, and this led to the establishment of an Islamic Republic under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, on April 1, 1979.

In April 1983, during the Reagan's administration, the attack on U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon informed America's involvement in the Middle East. The attack by Iranian-backed Lebanese Shiite Organization known as Hezbollah left over 250 Americans dead. Reagan's government however supported Israel's expansion of Jewish settlements in occupied territories. Reagan also supported Saddam Hussein's Iraq against Iran during the 1980-1988 war. The U.S. provided logistic and intelligence which could help destabilize Iranian regime and defeat the Islamic Revolution. From 1989 to 1993, the interest of George W. Bush's administration in the Middle East was centered on the protection of Saudi Arabia and the freedom of Kuwait from Iraq's occupation. In August 2, 1990, Iraq's President Saddam Hussein invaded his Southeast neighbour Kuwait. Upon the invasion of Kuwait, George Bush launched Operation Desert Shield by deploying U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia to defend against a possible invasion by Iraq. Bush however shifted strategy from Desert Shield (the protection of

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Saudi Arabia) to Operation Desert Storm, to repel Iraq from Kuwait. After a month and seven days of air campaign and a four-day ground battle, America liberated Kuwait. Bill Clinton administration 1993 to 2001 was more of mediation in the Middle East. For example, Clinton masterminded the 1994 peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. In December, 2000, Clinton convened a summit though failed with Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat and Israeli leader, Ehud Barak at Camp David.

The George W. Bush administration, 2001 to 2008 witnessed a deeper involvement in the Middle East. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America greatly informed Bush's aggression in the Middle East region. The American administration declared war on terror and any act capable of threatening or instilling fear on the American citizens. In October 2001, President Bush led an attack on Afghanistan, to topple the Taliban regime, which had given Sanctuary to al-Qaida. In March 2003, following the deadlock over the Inspection of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq, the U.S. attacked the former. George Bush Saw the removal of Saddam Hussein as a fundamental step towards the birth of democracy in the Middle East. During his administration, Bush pursued the doctrine of pre-emptive strikes, unilateralism democratic regime change and attacking countries that harbored terrorists. However, while Bush campaigned democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan, he continued to support repressive and undemocratic regimes in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and in several countries in North Africa. Barak Obama's administration, 2009 to 2016 was characterized by negotiation or diplomacy. Obama's approach was more of passivism rather than aggression. On several occasions, the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad crossed the U.S. 'red line' by the use of chemical weapons against civilians during the on-going civil war, without any reprisal attack from America.

IV. America's Unilateralism in Syria: an act of Aggression?

Before the 21st Century, US – Syria relations has been cordial as both states were involved in the promotion of international peace. In 1990, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Hafez al-Assad alongside the United States condemned the invasion of Kuwait. Syria joined the US – led coalition against Iraq's presence in Kuwait (Ricks,2006). In October 1991, Syria in order to achieve peace in the Middle East, participated in the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid, Spain. However, in the wake of the 21st century there evolved a frosty US – Syria relations. In June 2000, Bashar al-Assad succeeded his fathar Hafez al-Assad. President Bashar al-Assad's reign of terror and anti-international peace posture necessitated U.S. intervention policy in Syria. Assad's strict adherence to undemocratic principles, such as, gross abuse of fundamental human rights, non-active and unequal participation of citizens in politics and authoritarianism informed U.S. Interventionism. According to British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News, in 2002, the United States included Syria in the list of states that make-up an "axis of evil." In an interview on BBC, John Bolton, the US under-Secretary for state brought to the fore the issue of Damascus acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction. In May 2004, the Syrian government was criticized by the U.S. for its support for terrorist activities and the failure to stop militants from entering Iraq. As a result of government's support for terrorism, the U.S. imposed economic sanctions on Syria.

A more worrisome scenario in Syria was the race for varieties of weapons of mass destruction, the provision of Scud Missiles for Lebanon's Hezbollah, which is in violation of UN resolutions, and the continued support for terrorist activities. In 2010, in response to Syria's antithetical stance, the US renewed the economic sanctions against the former. The government's anti-democratic principles, and the untold hardship necessitated by the various economic sanctions had devastating effects on the generality of the people of Syria. It informed a general state of instability characterized by political uprising, the emergence of rebel groups, protesters and terrorist group. Following the start of the Arab spring in 2011, the Assad administration violently suppressed all forms of demonstrations or protests, but unfortunately Assad could not prevent the outbreak of war.

The civil war which broke out in 2011 became a major concern to the international community. The nature and numbers of deadly fighting groups was perturbing. It involved the use of weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical weapon, (which had been banned and prohibited by the Geneva protocol, United Nations and International Criminal Court (ICC), and several armed opposition groups, including the Free Syrian Army, Syrian Armed Forces, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, Syrian Democratic Forces and the Kurdish Forces emerged (Abouzeid,2014). The indiscriminate abduction, torture and killings by fighting forces, and the use of chemical weapons by Assad's government against innocent civilians made the American government to hold on to humanitarian reason for intervention in the Syrian debacle. Three western hostages, James Foley and Steven Sotloff Americans, and David Haines, a Briton were beheaded by the ISIS (Sherlock,2014). More than 2,142 civilians including women and children were killed by ISIS, more than 1,500 killed by rebel forces and another 420,000 plus civilians were displaced. The use of chemical weapons by the Assad's government was a major cause of death for both innocent civilians and rebel soldiers. Since 2012 to 2017, Assad had used chemical weapons against rebel forces and innocent citizens (ACA,2015). In 2012, chemical weapon known as "Agent 15" was deployed in

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Homs, with seven people fared dead and dozens injured. In 2013, chemical weapons were deployed by the government. First, in March, the use of Sarin Nerve gas killed about 25 people in the twain cities of Aleppo and Damascus. In August, the use of chemical weapon suffocated hundreds of people to death in rebel held suburbs of Syria. In 2014, the Idlib region was attacked with both the Chlorine and Mustard gas. Despite the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to evacuate and destroy Syrian Chemical Weapons, in 2015, Assad's regime unflinchingly continued the use of the chlorine and Mustard gas.

According to Human Rights Watch report, over 200 people were killed by both the Mustard and Chlorine gas (HRW, 2015). On August 10, 2016, Assad Forces once again used chlorine gas in Aleppo. On April 4 2017, Nerve gas was deployed against innocent civilians, in the town of Khan Sheikbonn Idlib a rebel-held Province. The attack killed over 80 civilians, leaving another 405 injured. The April 4 2017 use of chemical weapons in the province of Idlib significantly meant the cross of "red line" for the U.S. The Trump administration, anchoring on the health and humanitarian problems of chemical weapons, responded with 59 Tomahawk Missiles air strike against the Syrian air base from where chemical weapons were launched. America's attack on Syria came after several meetings and conferences organized by international organizations with the aim of resolving the Syrian chemical weapons. The UN ban on the use of chemical weapons and the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and both the US and UN economic sanctions on Syria have not deterred Assad from the use of chemical weapons. Diplomacy is said to have failed as various efforts geared towards the prevention of stockpiling, production and use of chemical weapons lacked efficiency. Moreso, beaucreautic procedure in the handling of the Syrian chemical weapons had provided leverage for the continued use of chemical weapons by the Assad's regime. The veto power of Russia, a member of the Security Council prevented a more pragmatic UN – led military action against Syria. Since 2015, Russia has overtly supported the Assad's government. In January 2015, the West and Syrian opposition reported that Russia carried out air strikes against anti-Assad rebels though the latter claimed to have attacked the Islamic state group. In 2016 August, Syrian government forces regained Palmyra from the Islamic state with Russian air assistance. In December, government troops, backed by Russian air power and Iranian sponsored militias, recaptured Aleppo, the country's largest city. Russia's meddling with Syria, Iran's support and a more recent North Korea – Syria relations have interplayed to provide Syria the aura to use chemical weapons. In addition, UN's ineptitude to emphatically and practically arrest the Syrian chemical weapons issue however became Donald Trump's explanation for America's unilateral intervention in Syria in April 6, 2017.

V. Implications of America's Unilateral Attack on Syria

The April 6, 2017 America's unilateral intervention in Syria, over the latter's use of chemical weapons have attracted diverse criticisms - among American Congressmen, actors in international relations and the world at large. To a section of the American populace, the attack has been adjudged to be justified and proportionate while another section sawit as a pre-emptive military action, and unnecessary aggression, partly for its lack of congressional approval. Russia, Iran and North Korea, allies of Syria, outrightly criticized the attack and tagged it an "act of aggression" against an independent state. Britain and France, allies of America, and some Arab States such as, Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, lend their support and backing to the attack. Also, the UN had pledged to investigate the attack as possible war crimes. Despite the rationale, justification or criticisms over the attack, the question which arises is, "are there consequential implications for US unilateral intervention in Syria?" This last section of the paper seeks to examine the implications of America's attack on Syria.

To start with, Donald Trump's attack against Syria for the use of prohibited chemical weapons restored American credibility in the International Arena. In contrast to President Barack Obama, Trump's promise to take action visibly followed through. Under Obama the "red lines" were crossed severally by Assad without any commensurate military action. Trump's attack became a response to the crossing of "red lines" by the Syrian government. Besides, before the April 6 attack against the Syrian government, America has a very small role to play in the Syrian crisis, and in getting Assad and other warring factions to the negotiating table. However, following the military intervention, the US now have a greater role to play, as the international community watches on for the next step after America's move. Would there be more attacks? How does America intend to resolve the Syrian issue? These and many more questions perturb the minds of discerning observers and actors in international relations.

In Trump's remarks, the strike against Syria is to prevent the continued use of chemical weapons by Assad and to deter other nations from the use of chemical weapons or any other weapon of mass destruction (Byman,2017). If really America's goal is deterrence, then there is need for sustained and repeated actions to bolster credibility. By implication, the April 6 strike would only be the beginning of America's intervention in Syria. Besides, air strike alone has limits if there are no forces on ground to magnify its impact. If

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the U.S's objective is to prevent Assad from killing his own people then ground force will have to be deployed to prevent barrel bombs, indiscriminate Russian airstrikes, torture, and secret killings in the Assad's prison. The perturbing question is, how prepared is the Trump's administration, ready to tangle in the Syrian debacle? The strikes represent a dramatic shift in the Trump's policy. At inception, it seemed that Trump wanted to work with Russia in Syria in order to clamp down on the Islamic state and accepted that Russia's ally, the Assad regime, would stay in power. However, the strikes signify a change of America's policy in Syria. America's policy is no longer in sync with Moscow. A U.S. – Russia collaboration in the Middle East or over Syria would have a negative effect on US relations with its western allies such as, Britain and France.

The dramatic shift in America's policy in Syria and the subsequent airstrikes against the latter is a discord in the U.S – Russia relations. Trump's use of Tomahawk missiles against an ally of Russia portends great risk of conflict between two powerful members of the Security Council – America and Russia. The displacement of Assad from power would require a significant commitment of diplomatic and military resources. Russia and Iran, and more recently North Korea, are strong backers of Assad. Even if military conflict is unlikely between Russia and America, war with Iran or North Korea is a possibility. Iran and North Korea possess weapons of mass destruction and are determined to defy America's threat over the non-testing of weapons of mass destruction (Diaz, 2017). North Korea and Syria have a long history of chemical weapons. Pyongyang helped Syria build chemical weapons factories in the 90's, and North Korea had in many occasions supplied Syria with protective coats and gas masks. According to Alex Diaz, North Korea is a supplier nation of chemical weapons to Syria and also played a role in Iran's CW acquisition. In recent times, there had been cozy relationship between North Korea and the U.S. as the former vowed to bolster its defenses in every way, and to continue in the production of weapons of mass destruction. Any military conflict between North Korea and the US would have its tolls on the latter's allies in Asia – China and South – Korea, and this could thus affect the Sino – US and US – South Korea relations respectively.

America's unilateral intervention in Syria is an implication of the UN's "foot dragging" procedures in the handling of aggression by one state against another. For example, Saddam Hussein did not receive any serious threat from the UN resolution, that would have prevented Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The UN's procedural approach lacks bites capable of deterring or preventing the likes of Saddam and Assad. It is important to note that the US rather than the UN has been more of a "whistle blower and challenger." For example, the use of chemical weapons by Assad against innocent Syrians had been on since 2012 without any serious military action from the UN. Infact, the US, under Barrack Obama publicized the Syrian issue more than UN, though his resolve to the use of military action was however disapproved by the American congress. A more disheartening trend before scholars and actors of international relations has been the inefficiency on the part of the UN and OPCW to monitor the evacuation and destruction of Assad's Chemical Weapons. After several meetings between the UN weapons inspection team, OPCW, and the Syrian government, over the removal and destruction of CW in Syria, the exercise turned haphazard as Assad continued in the deployment of chemical weapons against innocent civilians. Another case at hand is the North Korea nuclear test issue. This has created a serious rancor between the US and North Korea. The on-going tension between North Korea and the US has shown that Kim Jong-un sees America rather than the UN as a challenger to North Korea's armament and its nuclear weapons test (Hennessy-Fisk and Bulos, 2017).

The US intervention is Syria is a call to duty on the part of the UN. The attack, by implication, calls for a more proactive UN. It is an indication that the UN, ICC, OPCW and other concerned organizations are fast becoming "toothless bulldogs" and "legless organizations". Moreover, the attack is capable of instigating more terrorist activities within Syria and elsewhere. Religious interpretation of the attack is a possibility. This can give credence to terrorism within the Arab states and in Africa. According to the Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Bahram Ghasemi, the US air strikes only strengthen terrorists and further complicates the situ-ation in Syria [29]. At another instance, the Kremlin claimed that America's attack has created a "serious obstacle" against forming an international coalition to fight terrorism.

VI. Conclusion

America's unilateral intervention in the Syrian civil war has separated the international community into two divides. One divide criticizes the attack. To this group, it is an act of aggression against a sovereign state. Members of this group are Russia, North Korea and Iran. The other group in support of the attack includes Britain, France, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Whether the attack on Syria had been proportional or justifiable, it is a topic for continuous discussion among the various actors of international relations. However, it is clear to international observers and actors alike that Assad's use of CW was informed by a number of factors which include the backing of Russia, Iran and North Korea, and the inefficiency/ineffectiveness of the UN and other international organizations to stop Assad Bashar's outrageous activities. Finally, the gross abuse of fundamental human rights in Syria, continuous use of

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chemical weapons, ineffectiveness of international bodies and sanctions to deter the Syrian state from the use of CW, display of America's military capability, and America's zero tolerance for despotism, underline US's unilateral intervention in Syria. By implication, US unilateral intervention in Syria has created more tension between the former and Russia, Iran and North Korea. The military and / or weapons of mass destruction campaign in Iran and North Korea have been on the increase partly to challenge or equal America's military capability. This in every guise creates fear and suspicion which affects world peace and security. There is therefore a call to duty for the UN and other relevant agencies saddled with the responsibility of preventing the use of weapons of mass destruction, the re-enactment of the principle of collective security.

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