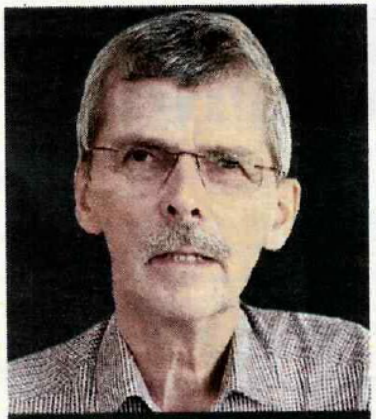
HUMAN BEINGS NEED CHECKS AND BALANCES



DR IAN CLARKE

President Donald Trump and the Israelis launched a war against Iran in the middle of discussions on denuclearisation. I had been watching the US military build-up in the Gulf and concluded that there was no way Trump would send his troops back to America without a shot being fired because he needed some action. The fact that he did not consult Congress before going to war was regarded as a detail, because as a president he had already been testing the limits of his power and did not think he needed permission from lawmakers. Therefore, he claimed there was an imminent threat and started a war.

The question as to whether the war is illegal will now be argued out, with the Republicans backing Trump and the Democrats opposing him. It will be settled not according to the law of the land, but by the political balance of power.

In an act of 'the pot calling the kettle black' Trump has been roundly condemned by the only other person who has recently launched his own war — President Vladimir Putin. It seems like the rules-based world order is well and truly dead, having been trashed by both the US and Russia. We live in the age of rule by the strongman.

When I was a student, I travelled through Iran, which at that time was under the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Iran stood in stark contrast to its neighbour Afghanistan, which was a backward state, while Iran had modernised and appeared to be progressive. However, the cultural clashes that the Shah's programme brought about caused deep divisions in the society. There were many American expatriates employed in the oil industry who caused offence to Iranians because they were trampling over their cultural and religious traditions. Thus, when the Shah left, Ayatollah Khomeini was welcomed with open arms by the population.

» **IT SEEMS LIKE THE RULES-BASED WORLD ORDER IS WELL AND TRULY DEAD, HAVING BEEN TRASHED BY BOTH THE US AND RUSSIA. WE LIVE IN THE AGE OF RULE BY THE STRONGMAN.**

Unfortunately, the pendulum swung too far, and instead of getting a leader who continued the tradition of an erudite and respected Persian nation, the Ayatollah brought in a hardline Islamic regime.

The war launched by Sadam Hussein against Iran served to strengthen the militarisation of Iran and gave the clerics and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps an iron grip on society.

The Iraq war launched by George W Bush in 2003 allowed the Iranian influence to spread, penetrating Iraq, supporting the Assad regime in Syria, controlling Lebanon through Hezbollah and Gaza through Hamas. Netanyahu was itching to topple the regime and finally found an American president who would listen to him. Hence, Trump suddenly attacked Iran calling for the Iranian people to rise up and bring about regime change.

The Ayatollah and his top lieutenants were eliminated within hours, and the Americans and Israelis have since been systematically destroying thousands of targets, such as missile launchers and the Iranian navy. A few weeks ago, we witnessed massive demonstrations against the regime which were violently put down, apparently with a death toll in the tens of thousands.

This massacre of its own citizens showed how repressive the regime has become, and many Iranians will not be shedding tears for the demise of their leader.

Despite taking out the top leadership, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has continued to launch missiles and drones indiscriminately throughout the Middle East.

No one really knows the final outcome of this war, and we can only hope for a swift end. But the scary part is that after 80 years of comparative peace, both the Russian president and the American president have launched wars at their own discretion.

This means that millions and even billions of people can be severely affected by the whims of two human beings. In the case of Russia, President Putin rules with absolute authority and in the case of America, the war was launched purely on the impulse of one man.

Meantime, there is another handful of individuals, billionaires with unlimited cash, in a mad dash to bring about Artificial Superintelligence, which will spell the end of humanity.

Allowing individuals, no matter their wealth, status or political position to determine the fate of humanity without checks and balances is a very risky strategy, yet that is what is happening in the world today.