

Fears of a nuclear war are not as far-fetched as it would seem

For those who lived through 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the recent nuclear saber-rattling by Russian dictator Vladimir Putin evokes fears of the darkest days of the Cold War era between the two superpowers.

Putin, who was just a 10-year-old boy when the former Soviet Union took the world to the brink of Armageddon, is acting like a juvenile now by flexing his country's military muscles by suspending the last major nuclear arms treaty (START, short for New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty). His one-two punch delivered last week also included threats to unleash weapons of mass destruction if the U.S. and its allies decide to up the ante in sending arms and advanced military equipment to aid Ukraine.

Putin, of course, has become a pro at manipulating Western fears, constantly playing a series of mind games designed to create hysteria in hopes of weakening the resolve of the NATO alliance. His unilateral suspension of the nuclear arms treaty also serves as a roadblock to in-person inspections of Russia's nuclear arsenal, while preventing bilateral talks and cooperative engagement that could prove vital to heading off a potential military conflict.

Yet, the crisis we are now facing is not just about Putin. It stems from the development of nuclear weaponry near the end of World War II some 80 years ago. That is when our reckoning with the devastating impact of weapons of mass destruction really began, as perhaps best illustrated by a comment from famed physicist Robert Oppenheimer, the so-called "father of the atomic bomb."

Back then, after witnessing the first

detonation of a nuclear weapon at a Los Alamos, N.M. test site in July 1945, Oppenheimer reportedly observed, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds," borrowing a phrase from a piece of Hindu scripture.

It would be followed less than a month later by a somber reflection from General Douglas MacArthur, who according to an aide was "appalled and depressed by this Frankenstein monster" that pulverized the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at an enormous loss of life.

Suddenly, planet Earth had entered the nuclear age, triggering the very real possibility that mankind possessed the power to destroy itself.

In a sense, we have returned to that doorstep again, as the world's nuclear powers periodically dangle the possibility of using such weaponry to bring current military conflicts to a horrifying end. The very thought of that happening seemed especially remote because of the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) concept, a doctrine of reciprocal deterrence resting on the principle that each power would be able to inflict unacceptable damage on the other in retaliation for a nuclear attack.

But the doctrine only works if the weapons are safely secured and are in the hands of sensible people. Technological development and nuclear proliferation change the equation in dramatic fashion. In stark terms, it is like moving from a Winchester Model 75 rifle under lock and key by sensible gun owners, to an AR-15 assault rifle in the hands of those with mayhem on their minds. To them, the MAD doctrine is not a deterrent, as they



are ready to go down with a barrage of firepower, claiming countless innocent victims along the way.

Likewise, a cornered dictator or an unfit political leader within reach of a red button could put an early end to the human race.

Helping stop such a doomsday scenario is one of the underlying reasons behind the creation of the Primerus™ Foundation, which is our attempt to convey the seriousness of the current political situation in the world. We come in the form of a "voice," uttering a wake-up call for the world to answer to prevent a cataclysmic nuclear event.

Our mission is not framed in a political debate. It is much more basic than that, hinging on a quest for survival of current and future generations who long to live in a world full of peaceful promise.

Best regards,
Jack Buchanan, President