

The Role of Small States in Monitoring Nuclear Explosions: The Case of Kazakhstan

There is no universally established definition of a “small state”, even though so-called small countries form a majority of UN members. In many respects, major powers have decisive impact on issues pertaining to international peace and security, while combined influence of small states on world affairs remains limited. However, as we observe more emphasis on multilateralism and concert-type arrangements, it is not infrequent that small states take responsible actions to promote a nuclear-free world. Being a typical small state, Kazakhstan, nevertheless, makes a major contribution to the treaty’s verification capacity building. Kazakhstan’s role in monitoring nuclear explosions is important as it is home to the five International Monitoring System stations. Moreover, the nation participates actively in CTBTO exercises by making available its nuclear expertise and facilities. Since 2012, Kazakhstan promotes the ATOM project, a campaign to raise public awareness and build global support for nuclear test ban. At Kazakhstan’s suggestion, the UNGA declared 29 August the International Day against Nuclear Tests to commemorate the closure of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test site. The case of Kazakhstan clearly demonstrates that a country’s perceived limited political, economic or military weight cannot prevent it from pursuing a bold agenda for achieving a safer world.

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Track Classification: 5. Monitoring for Nuclear Explosions in a Global Context