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## IN EAST ASIA, KAZAKHSTAN PUSHES FOR NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION

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Astana has made nuclear nonproliferation its global calling card, and its setting sights on North Korea.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, on a five-day trip to East Asia split between Japan and South Korea, has proposed that North Korea could follow in Astanas footsteps toward denuclearization.

Over the past 25 years through its own practice, Kazakhstan has built an effective model to chart a path towards a nuclear-free world. We propose all countries, including North Korea, will use this model, he said in a written interview with South Koreas Yonhap News Agency.

Kazakhstan, at the moment of independence 25 years ago, inherited the worths fourth largest stockpile of nuclear weapons. For four decades, the countrys vast steppe had been used for nuclear tests. One of Nazarbayevs first initiatives was repatriating the Soviet nuclear weapons, a process completed in 1995, and in 2000 the Semipalatinsk nuclear weapon test site was dismantled.

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On the 20th anniversary of a nuclear-free Kazakhstan last year, Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov wrote in The Diplomat:

But even though the Semipalatinsk test site has now been shut for almost 25 years, there is no escaping its dark shadow. Huge areas of our land are still contaminated. Ill-health and birth defects in the adjacent areas are still far too common.

This history explains the determination of Kazakhstan and its citizens to campaign for a permanent end to nuclear testing and, in the long run, a nuclear weapon-free world. We dont want another

country or its people to suffer such a terrible fate.

In the past year, experts say North Korea has conducted two nuclear tests, and as many as 19 missile tests, to the South's increasing concern. In addition, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump suggested pulling back the American nuclear umbrella from the region – he had complained that South Korea and Japan did not pay their fair share for deterrence in the region – and suggested the two countries consider getting nuclear weapons themselves. With Trump's election, uncertainty is bound to skyrocket, especially in the lame duck period until Trump takes office in January.

With Washington's commitment to nonproliferation more in question, Astana shines ever brighter. Kazakhstan's nonproliferation message resonates in South Korea because of the current North Korean threat; the message just as well resonates in Japan, the only country to have been the victim of a nuclear attack.

In Tokyo, Nazarbayev and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shook hands on a range of business deals. Nazarbayev addressed the Japanese parliament, warning that [t]he world creeps in[to] a new nuclear age – potentially more dangerous and unpredictable. He went on to pitch the Kazakh government's reform agenda – the 100 Concrete Steps to achieve the Five Institutional Reforms – and make the case for greater Japanese economic cooperation with Kazakhstan. The two countries have trade turnover of nearly \$1.5 billion, with ample space to expand.

Nuclear nonproliferation is the core piece of Kazakhstan's global diplomacy. The country rejoiced when Iran and P5+1 settled a nuclear deal last year and now Astana has its sights on solving the North Korean conundrum. According to the Japan Times, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Nazarbayev agreed to cooperate toward further UN Security Council sanctions against North Korea. Starting in 2017, Kazakhstan will hold a nonpermanent seat on the council.

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Kaynak/Source: