

A submarine stand-off zone of such dimensions which went beyond SSBNs to include submarines of all types, as proposed above, would, of course, raise some real difficulties for NATO's defence. This suggests that such a zone, on the eastern side, should be restricted to waters poleward of Soviet Arctic territory. In effect, it would amount to recognition of the kind of SSBN sanctuary advocated by the Soviets, and others, in the past; this will be discussed in greater detail below. Since the West has never shown much interest in a "sanctuary" approach to its own forces, but *does* have a very real stake in keeping Soviet submarines as far from its shores as possible, there appears to be a logical trade-off here between quite extensive submarine stand-off zones on the North American side, and more geographically restricted SSBN sanctuaries on the Soviet. Whether the Soviets would actually agree to such an asymmetrical arrangement is another question, of course, but it is at least worth pursuing with them.

The creation of such zones would have the effect of dampening tensions, at least as long as the zones were respected; reducing the "decapitation" and first-strike threat from forward-deployed missiles; and ultimately, perhaps, deflating the pressure for unnecessarily large buildups of ASW capabilities in areas close offshore. As it stands, there is no bar to a state massing its submarine forces in the immediate vicinity of a potential adversary's coast, although such activities would almost surely be detected. A formal agreement proscribing such activities would add what Vick and Thomson refer to as "political weight to judgments made about the significance of certain warning indicators."¹⁶¹ In other words, any such activities which occurred in blatant violation of an explicit ban would rightly be viewed with far greater alarm than those which, in the absence of such an agreement, could be explained away, for example, as a mere exercise. On balance, despite some difficulties and undoubtedly fierce resistance by those seeking to preserve maximum freedom of operation for naval vessels of every description, such a measure deserves further serious consideration on the multilateral, as well as the bilateral, plane. Within the regional context that is the subject of

161. *Ibid.*, p. 102.