

in its White Paper of June 1987 and justified at least partly on the grounds of their under-ice capabilities in defence of Canadian sovereignty, suggested to many, both in Canada and abroad, that Ottawa was only aiding and abetting the growing militarization of the Arctic. Was the Canadian Government in fact serious about its commitment to “strive to limit excessive militarization” of the region? How could this commitment be reconciled with the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines for Arctic missions? Whether the Government would undertake an active campaign of diplomacy in behalf of Arctic arms control remained to be seen. But it was certain that public pressure for some such move would continue to grow in the years ahead.

The following paper will examine a variety of past proposals for Arctic arms control, seeking to explain why so few of them have elicited any interest so far among the governments concerned, and to determine whether any of them are both feasible and desirable in terms of enhancing security in the Arctic (and globally). Because such a large proportion of calls for Arctic arms control have centred around the concept of a NWFZ, the paper will begin with a brief summary of the past experience with such zones in various parts of the world. Such an examination demonstrates the complexity of these arrangements, the quite conditional and limited nature of their success so far, and the range of difficult problems likely to be encountered in any effort to apply the concept elsewhere, including the Arctic.

The paper then moves on to examine more closely the trials, tribulations, and prospects of a “sub-regional” measure of Arctic arms control that has received close but intermittent attention over a period of decades — namely, the proposal for a “Nordic NWFZ” encompassing the nations of Northern Europe. Our survey of this proposal’s checkered history and uncertain future makes it clear that, contrary to the apparent expectations of some proponents of a broader Arctic arms control regime, the option of expanding or simply joining forces with a nascent Nordic zone is not a viable one.

Still on the subject of NWFZs, the paper turns to an analysis of