

Soviet conventional attack on NATO. By calling for NWFZs along its border regions, Moscow hoped to exploit anti-nuclear sentiments in Europe and work toward the removal of the USA military bases near the Soviet border which could be used for a nuclear strike. To this end, NWFZs were proposed for Central Europe (1956), the Pacific (1957)⁶, the Balkans, the Nordic area, and the Middle East (all in 1959), and the Mediterranean (1963). In addition, Poland (an ally of the USSR at the time) called for a NWFZ for central Europe in 1957; this was the first detailed proposal for a NWFZ anywhere.

Non-Soviet bloc interest in NWFZs during the 1960s included the Swedish concept of a NWFZ in the Nordic area (mooted in 1961), proposals by Australia and New Zealand in the mid-1960s for a NWFZ in the South Pacific, the idea of a NWFZ in Africa (first raised in 1961), and a Brazilian effort to seek an extension of the proposed African NWFZ to Latin America in the aftermath of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. These initiatives for NWFZs were inspired by a mix of motivating factors. While testing by a nuclear power (France) was a catalyst in the case of the South Pacific and Africa, testing by a regional country (India), in 1974 prompted Pakistan's call for a South Asia zone. Interest in NWFZs in each of Africa, Latin America, and Scandinavia was clearly inspired by the desire of the regional countries to keep nuclear weapons out of these regions and reduce the risk of becoming a nuclear target. Three factors, opposition to foreign military bases, French testing, and South Africa's nuclear programme, were behind the African NWFZ proposal, while the Cuban missile crisis contributed to demands for a NWFZ in Latin America.

While NWFZ proposals for the world's populated areas remained largely confined to the negotiating table during the 1960s, three Treaties containing nuclear proscriptions in regions without permanent population were successfully negotiated. The Antarctic Treaty, which was signed in 1959 and entered into force in 1961, was the first such agreement prohibiting all military activities, as well as nuclear testing explosions and the disposal of nuclear wastes in Antarctica. The Treaty allowed aerial inspections and complete access at will to all areas and installations in the frozen continent. The Outer Space Treaty, which entered into force in October 1967, prohibited the stationing of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in earth orbit, on the moon, or on other celestial objects, and banned military installations and testing of military weapons of any kind in these areas. Finally, the Seabed Treaty, which was signed in 1971 and entered into force in 1972, prohibited parties from placing nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction on the seabed or ocean floor beyond a 12-mile coastal seabed zone, while urging negotiations among parties toward further measures to ensure complete disarmament of the seabed and the ocean floor. The advent of these zones served to advance the idea of geographically-specific approaches to arms control and disarmament, and provided a general model for the establishment of such zones in the world's populated areas. Moreover, their exclusion of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is of significance in the context of the interest shown by arms control advocates to move regional non-proliferation frameworks beyond the NWFZ concept toward WMD-free zones.