

operations — there is a precedent for this in terms of unilateral Norwegian restrictions on military activities of various kinds in the areas adjoining its superpower neighbour. For example, apart from the well-known ban on nuclear weapons and Allied military bases which applies to the entire country, Allied aircraft, naval vessels, and ground forces are not allowed to operate in the easternmost county of Finnmark. As in the case of NWFZs, of course, the scope of the prohibitions associated with an “ASW-free zone” could be problematic. Passive detection systems of the type already in place off northern Norway might be permitted in certain areas, on the grounds that they serve a stabilizing, early-warning function, and pose no immediate threat to SSBNs as long as actual weapons platforms such as attack submarines, maritime patrol aircraft, and anti-submarine surface craft are excluded.

Finally, as with so many other arms control proposals dealt with in this paper, the SSBN sanctuary or ASW-free zone has been faulted on the grounds of verifiability, particularly as regards possible submarine intrusions. If the sanctuaries were limited to fairly discrete bodies of water, such as the Barents or Okhotsk Seas, or even to the 200-mile-wide EEZs of the Superpowers and other states, verification might not be so difficult; for the most part these areas are already littered with ASW detection devices and/or regularly patrolled by surveillance units. However, verification would be a greater problem in the case of an Arctic Ocean-wide sanctuary, given the difficulty of detecting submarines under the polar ice-cap. The most that can be hoped for by way of limiting ASW capabilities in the Polar Basin may well be the kind of “limited demilitarization” agreement discussed earlier.