

down, setting a pattern for subsequent unsuccessful attempts by the Warsaw Pact and the NNA to introduce such measures.

In the late 1980s, naval measures figured prominently in a series of Soviet proposals for arms control in neighbouring regions, including the Asia-Pacific, Arctic, and Mediterranean. These included ASW-free zones, various kinds of naval CBMs (such as prenotification and observation of exercises, and limiting their number and size), limits on naval activity in international straits and zones of intensive shipping and fishing, and multilateral incidents-at-sea agreements. Beginning with a Baltic Fleet exercise in 1988, the Soviet Union began inviting foreign observers to attend certain of its own naval exercises, describing this as a “unilateral CBM.” Neighbouring states in the regions concerned — as well as the major Western maritime powers — have been highly skeptical of most of these proposals. American allies such as Norway and Japan, in particular, fear the possible impact of such measures on the US ability and willingness to support them militarily in the event of a crisis.

Apart from their regional initiatives, the Soviets in recent years have called repeatedly for the convening of negotiations, or at least preliminary consultations (even if only at the expert level), on the limitation and reduction of naval forces generally. In early 1988, for example, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze called for an international conference, initially limited to the US, USSR, UK, and France, to discuss a treaty on the global reduction of naval forces. Later that year, Marshal Akhromeyev proposed bilateral talks between the US and USSR to reduce those elements of their naval forces that each side considered most provocative. While accepting the Western position that the CFE talks in Vienna should not themselves extend to naval forces, Soviet officials warned that progress in arms control on land and in the air in that theatre would be tied closely to parallel moves to reduce naval forces. In the end, no such linkage was made, and substantial cuts in conventional forces (as well as an even more substantial unilateral withdrawal of Soviet troops from Central and Eastern Europe) were made even in the absence of progress on naval arms control.

Obstacles to Progress

The failure to make greater progress in naval arms control can be easily explained by the pre-eminence of the US as a maritime power. The US argues that, unlike the USSR, it is critically dependent on its oceanic links to trading partners and allies. Although the Soviet Navy

has long been superior in sheer numbers of vessels, the US Navy, built around a force of aircraft carriers without parallel in the Soviet Navy (and hence with a much larger gross tonnage), has been universally recognized as superior overall, in terms of its capabilities and, especially, technological sophistication.

Unlike the case with strategic nuclear weapons, where the US is satisfied with “rough parity,” it considers the retention of its superiority at sea to be absolutely essential to its security interests. Moreover, the fundamentally different maritime interests and roles of the two superpowers have resulted in radically different force structures and strategies for their navies. The US concentrates on protecting the “sea lines of communication” or SLOCs (“sea control”) and maintaining a substantial strike capability ashore (“power projection”). In contrast, the Soviet Navy has focussed on defence of the homeland, including threats to the SLOCs (“sea denial”), by relying primarily on a massive submarine force. These further asymmetries are believed to make the pursuit of balanced arms control that much more difficult.

To these geostrategic factors must be added the traditional autonomy and jealously guarded independence of the Navy within the US military structure. Its perspective has to a considerable degree been shared by political decision-makers, and with the aid of key Congressional supporters, the Navy has proven more successful than some of the other services in resisting constraints on its activities. For these reasons, then, it has been generally hostile to — and largely successful in preventing — consideration of naval arms control measures involving “general-purpose” forces.

Nevertheless, many Western analysts and a number of Western governments, including Canada’s, have grown increasingly receptive to certain forms of naval arms control. Among the more popular proposed measures have been: (1) various kinds of naval CSBMs; (2) naval “tactical denuclearization”; and, (3) attack submarine limits.

NAVAL CSBMs

As noted above, both the neutral and non-aligned (especially such states as Sweden and Finland) and the USSR continue to push for various forms of naval CSBMs, at the UN as well as in the CSCE. In response, a number of NATO states — including Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Canada, the Netherlands, and Turkey — have either explicitly endorsed modest forms of naval