

4. CANADA AND NUCLEAR WEAPON-FREE ZONES

BACKGROUND

Nuclear Weapon-free Zones (NWFZs) consist of defined geographic areas in which the manufacture, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons is prohibited. Various types of NWFZs exist and have been proposed since the 1950s. They have been supported as a means to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons and provide a confidence-building measure (CBM) in the pursuit of regional security, as well as constituting steps in a progressive "denuclearization" of the planet.

The first NWFZ was proposed at the United Nations by Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki in 1957. The Rapacki Plan would have prohibited the manufacturing, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and West Germany. While the Plan had Soviet support, it was opposed by NATO and subsequently dropped. The Plan did, however, succeed in generating widespread interest in the establishment of regional denuclearized zones.

Two NWFZs for populated areas have been established by international agreement: the Treaty of Tlatelolco of 1967, establishing Latin America as the first such zone in the world; and the Treaty of Rarotonga of 1985, establishing a South Pacific Nuclear-free Zone. The latter, negotiated by the thirteen members of the South Pacific Forum, bans the deployment, production, and testing of nuclear weapons in their area. The question of transit and visiting rights for ships and aircraft carrying nuclear weapons in the zone has been left open for signatory nations to decide independently. The Treaty has encountered problems, since only two of the five nuclear weapons states, China and the Soviet Union, have signed the relevant Protocols. France, which maintains an active nuclear testing programme in the region, is opposed to the zone, as are the United States and the United Kingdom, which have both expressed reservations over the Treaty's symbolic importance as a precedent allegedly incongruent with their national interests.

Proposals have also been made to establish NWFZs in the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, the Indian Ocean, the Balkan states, the South Atlantic, the Nordic states, the Mediterranean, and South East Asia. Most of these efforts have been made in the United Nations General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament, with interest in them varying over time. Two areas which have received considerable international attention recently include the Arctic--stimulated by the Soviet Union's October 1987 initiative (please see **ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY**, Chapter 14 of *The Guide*), and South East Asia--through the efforts of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). At their December 1987 summit meeting, ASEAN members agreed to intensify efforts for a Southeast Asia NWFZ given the example of New Zealand and improved US-USSR relations. The US has stated its strong opposition to the concept, however.