

binding. Nevertheless, there is much to be gained in terms of developing mutual trust through such an exchange. In the Middle East situation, most naval forces are not sufficiently large to be deemed strategic threats in themselves. For the most part, Middle East naval forces are defensive and intended to operate mainly in their own coastal zones. The Israelis, however, are an exception. Their naval forces have a "sea control" capability that appears to be increasing through new ship and submarine programs. Should Egypt modernize its submarine fleet, it too may have a limited "sea control" capability. For these reasons, observing the actual movement of warships becomes the key issue because unusual deployments or operating patterns provide warning of a preemptive attack from the sea. Ocean surveillance thus becomes an important factor in regional stability. Again, the problem is how to coordinate that activity. Under these circumstances **exchanging operating schedules would be a positive step in confidence-building.**

In seeking further ways to reduce misunderstanding, there is also room for a submarine "water-space management" agreement similar to that used in NATO and in the North Pacific as a means of avoiding mutual interference. Creating and establishing such a process would not be easy and could require the involvement of third parties (or external naval organizations) in coordination. The key questions, of course, are where would the coordination centre be located and which countries would participate.

It is doubtful if **personnel exchanges** beyond the naval attache level, other than between Egypt and Israel, would achieve much in the Middle East in the short term. There are better ways of furthering mutual understanding quickly. **For instance, the process of formal bilateral navy-to-navy staff talks is a time-honoured and tested way of exchanging information and for developing trust.** Egypt and Israel could well be at the stage where such sessions would be productive and could lead to a