

CSBMs or reportedly expressed sympathy for them in NATO councils. In fact, according to a May 1990 report of the North Atlantic Assembly (the parliamentary group which has been particularly active on this question), among NATO members "perhaps only the US, France, Portugal, and Spain still object to discussion of naval CSBMs." However, the US Navy has remained adamantly opposed to virtually any form of naval arms control, including CSBMs, with the exception of bilateral incidents-at-sea type agreements and the exchange of visits by naval personnel.

The reasons for continued Western naval opposition to CSBMs in particular are manifold. As a matter of general principle, navies are highly valued for their mobility and flexibility, making any kind of constraints on their movements or operations anathema to those who command them. The traditional "freedoms of the high seas" are often invoked in this regard, and thoroughly permeate naval thinking. Although certain types of modest CSBMs might be considered relatively innocuous in themselves, it is feared that to budge even an inch constitutes a kind of "slippery slope" to more dramatic and far-reaching forms of naval arms control.

Naval "purists" also object to the idea that concepts developed for land forces in the European theatre can be transferred holus-bolus to the radically different environment of the sea. Thus, exchanging observers on warships is ruled out on the grounds that the confined quarters of a naval vessel would virtually guarantee the compromising of sensitive information. Close observation of exercises at sea is a common practice in any case, it is said, so there is no *need* for legislation to this effect, as on land. Requiring prior notification of ship movements would deprive navies of one of their most important functions of signalling intentions during a crisis. (Of course, this depends entirely on one's perspective; what the maritime powers may consider as mere "signalling," in the interests of preserving international peace and security, may appear to the target of the signal as nothing less than a crude attempt at intimidation.) Finally, the risk of dangerous incidents arising from naval activities at sea is said to be greatly exaggerated. Thus, naval CSBMs have been rejected both on the grounds that they are prejudicial to the traditional freedoms of the high seas and threaten to vitiate the whole purpose of navies, and on the grounds that they are unnecessary or would be ineffective in their stated aim of preventing conflict arising from misunderstanding or misperception.

In spite of these widely held opinions, however, growing numbers of naval analysts — including many

serving or retired senior naval officers — have expressed the view that certain kinds of naval CSBMs would not be harmful to Western security interests, and might be positively beneficial to them. For example, past massive and unannounced Soviet naval exercises are said to have caused considerable alarm in Western naval circles. In general, the West is thought to gain more from any move towards greater military transparency, given the traditional excessive secrecy of the Soviet Union. Smaller Western states located close to Soviet shores see obvious benefits in measures that would reduce the potential for intimidation by Soviet naval forces.

Perhaps most importantly, certain types of naval CSBMs promise to be mutually beneficial in reducing fears of a surprise attack, preventing or mitigating actions deemed to be provocative by one side or the other, and in generally strengthening mutual confidence and understanding by, in the words of Norwegian Defence Minister Johan Holst, "emphasizing the ritual quality of normal peacetime operations and downgrading the competitive dimension." There is no denying the fact, as retired British Admiral Richard Hill puts it, that "military activities at sea can give rise to alarm," and not only for smaller states. This is especially the case with sudden or unannounced naval movements or exercises. Furthermore, precisely *because* of the international nature of the sea, opposing forces frequently come into close contact with each other, increasing the prospect of incidents which, if not dangerously escalatory, can at least serve to sour political relations between states.

Even if one were to concede the view of some analysts that naval CSBMs on the Stockholm model are largely cosmetic and militarily insignificant, there remain compelling *political* arguments for the West to pursue them in negotiations. These include the alleviation of inter-allied tensions caused by continued US intransigence in the face of widespread support for naval arms control, particularly in the Nordic countries. Vis-à-vis the Soviets, such measures could strengthen the hand of proponents of arms control by showing at least some flexibility on an issue which Soviet hard-liners have considered a kind of litmus test of Western sincerity. Finally, naval CSBMs may serve a useful ground breaking function similar to that of CSBMs on land, by which military officers on both sides gradually grow more accustomed to increased transparency and the regulation of their activities — perhaps eventually permitting the same kind of comprehensive arms control regime at sea that is now being brought to fruition, at long last, ashore.

It is likely that efforts to expand the mandate of future negotiations on CSBMs in Europe to include