



China's Strategic Advantage in Selling Cheap Submarines

OE Watch Commentary: Chinese actions to sell cheap submarines to Indian Ocean nations is alarming India. The accompanying article describes these sales and offers excellent insight on some of the potential ramifications of such transactions. For example, in 2013, Bangladesh purchased two used Ming-class diesel-powered subs, which became operational in 2017. Last year, Thailand agreed to buy two new Yuan-class subs. In 2015, China and Pakistan entered into an agreement for Islamabad to acquire eight Chinese subs.

According to Japan's *Asahi Shimbun* news source, China's maritime strategy is shifting from being focused on coastal and near-sea defense to one extending to the Pacific and Indian Oceans. In doing so, China has been building more aircraft carriers and subs.

The article goes on to list several potential benefits for Beijing to sell subs to Indian Ocean littoral states. First, such sales allow Beijing to extend its influence. Second, because nations that purchase Chinese subs must also have the appropriate repair and supply facilities to meet their requirements, China will require access for repairs or to acquire weapons. Third, it gives China an avenue to acquire vital information, such as seabed mapping, which China can use to its own advantage.

The final note in the article points out that Cuba is one of an undisclosed number of countries that has also expressed an interest in purchasing Chinese subs. If that is the case, based on the analysis and conclusions given, with only about 100 miles separating Cuba's closest point to Florida, this is a process worth monitoring. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“The more submarines China sells to regional nations, the more data it will amass that is related to operations and potential challenges.”

Source: “China Alarms India by Selling Cheap Subs to Indian Ocean Nations,” *Asia Times*, 16 January 2018. <http://www.atimes.com/article/china-alarms-india-selling-cheap-subs-indian-ocean-nations>

...China's new focus on the Indian Ocean is part of a shift in maritime strategy from coastal and near-sea defense to one that extends to the Pacific and Indian oceans. The strategy puts more emphasis on aircraft carriers and submarines — which China has been building at an accelerated rate.

Asahi notes it allows Beijing to extend its influence in related maritime areas... “This gives China the option of asking that its submarines be allowed to temporarily berth there for repairs or to acquire weapons,” Asahi said.

The more submarines China sells to regional nations, the more data it will amass that is related to operations and potential challenges. All this can be used to improve China's sub technology, experts told Asahi.

Countries purchasing Chinese subs must also rely on Chinese naval officers and technicians for advice on operations and maintenance. “Those personnel could also play a key role in gathering vital information, including seabed mapping, as China strives to improve its submarine capabilities,” Asahi said.

Egypt and Cuba are reportedly among the other countries that have expressed an interest in buying Chinese submarines.



Yuan (Type 039A) Class Attack Submarine.

Source: By CSR Report RL33153 China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress by Ronald O'Rourke dated February 28, 2014 (United States Naval Institute News Blog). [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AYuan_\(Type_039A\)_Class_Attack_Submarine.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AYuan_(Type_039A)_Class_Attack_Submarine.JPG), Public domain.