

## WHEN THE NAVAL POWER SHOWS OFF UNDER THE SEA

Over the past ten years, while Europe has shown little interest in investing in anti-submarine warfare, new regional powers have been developing their submarine fleets. This rapid growth in the concentration of submarines near major shipping lanes and straits, as in South-East Asia, presents a risk to the global economy and to the European economy in particular. Such an increased threat requires the development of new anti-submarine capabilities.

### BRICS SCALING UP THEIR SUBMARINE POWER

Alongside Russia's expanding submarine fleet (*Voïenno Morskoi Flot*), China, India, Brazil, South Africa and other powers are also acquiring new submarines to protect their sea lanes and resources, and to influence strategic maritime theatres. For this, two instruments are required: aircraft carriers for projecting power, and submarines as a "force multiplier".

The Chinese navy has a slight edge: it acquired its first submarine in 1952 and has continued to build ever since. Its current fleet consists of 63 submarines, eight of which are nuclear powered and 31 of which are modern and operational. The Indians have just taken delivery of a Russian nuclear attack submarine, and are building six *Scorpene*-type submarines with the help of France. This is in addition to the 15 conventional submarines they already have. Brazil has five submarines designed in Germany but built domestically. They have also begun construction on four *Scorpene* with French aid and are planning their first nuclear-powered vessel. Finally, South Africa has three conventional submarines of German origin.

The modern submarine programs of most of these nations reflect their desire to become regional, if not global, powers, as these oceanic submarines allow not only denial of access strategies, but also carry the potential for more aggressive action.

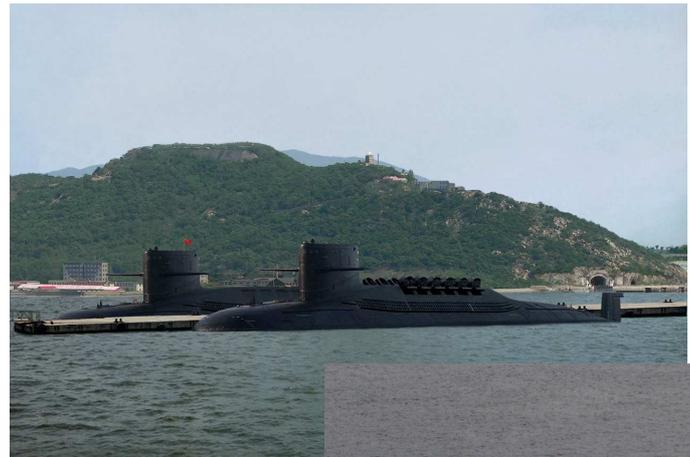
### SUBMARINE FLEETS ARE DEVELOPING

Thirty nine states currently operate a total of 270 conventional submarines (excluding pocket submarines). More than fifty submarines are under construction and 33 of them will be equipped with AIP (Air Independent Propulsion), a revolutionary immersion capability which makes them stealthier and less prone to detection.

Most countries currently acquiring or renewing submarines - mainly in Southeast Asia - justify their actions by the need to ensure the sovereignty of their coasts. Their crews and shipyard personnel are still relatively inexperienced, but are expected to improve over time.

These new units will soon be able to enforce, if necessary, the claims of their home countries in disputed areas of the South China Sea, maritime areas that are critical to the global economy.

Any submarine confrontation in the South China Sea could seriously disrupt maritime flows.



Top: Jin class SSBN in the People's Liberation Army.



Right: Scorpene type submarine purchased by Brazil, India and Malaysia.

### THE WESTERN REACTION

So far, Western navies have reacted with a certain amount of inertia. Since the end of the Cold War, the emphasis has been less on anti-submarine warfare (ASW) than on other areas of warfare. While research efforts have continued, the current level of military projection has consumed most resources, leaving little for anti-submarine warfare.

ASW is a very demanding field that requires significant investments in time and capital, and uses a set of complementary air, surface and submarine capabilities that only the major naval powers can attain. As shown recently with the sharp increase in maritime piracy, the protection of sea lanes against pirates requires both escort and sustainable ASW capability.

The United States, Japan and South Korea are busy training in this field in the volatile region of Southeast Asia. The renewal of relevant French capabilities - FREMM, NH90 and *Barracuda* - is entirely appropriate because our economy depends on this strategic area as well as on the Strait of Hormuz with its own submarine threat.