



## Combating Coercion Through Influence in The Maritime Sphere

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## Executive Summary

This paper aims to understand coercion theory in an international framework, and thus how Australia can combat offensive compellence through influence in the Indo-Pacific. The first section will discuss maritime-based international theory that covers sea power and diplomacy, as well as focusing on coercion theory. As a result of this, a maritime coercion framework was created to unify various contested literature with a focus on the international rules-based order, differentiating offensive compellence, defensive compellence, deterrence and diplomacy. The second section will apply this framework to maritime events that have occurred across history after the creation of the United Nations Charter. This includes an analysis on the Battles of Yeonpyeong, the Kuwait invasion, Malacca Straits Patrol, and Operation Sumatra Assist. Thirdly, this paper will give two recommendations on how to combat offensive compellence in the current international system following a discussion on the current climate in the Indo-Pacific. The first recommendation states that the Royal Australian Navy with support from the Australian government needs to review and update Australia's maritime strategy. Secondly, Australia needs to strengthen vulnerabilities in shipping routes by building alliances.

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## Introduction

Conflicting concepts across international relations theory have given rise to many different definitions and explanations of coercion theory. Even less present in literature is coercion theory that is directly relevant to maritime operations and international order. As Australia continues to develop and expand its naval resources, it will be important to analyse how those resources can be used to combat aggressive and coercive force effectively.

With the growing tensions in the Indo-Pacific and the increasing significance placed on maritime power as a result of this, it is important to discuss the role of maritime coercion as it has existed and will continue to evolve. This paper aims to move away from state versus state coercion theory to its significance within an international framework, and thus how Australia can combat offensive compellence through influence in the Indo-Pacific. The first section will discuss maritime-based international theory that covers sea power and diplomacy, as well as focusing on coercion theory. As a result of this, a maritime coercion framework was created to unify various contested literature with a focus on the international rules-based order, differentiating offensive compellence, defensive compellence, deterrence and diplomacy. The international rules-based order refers to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, the shared commitment nearly all states have made to maintain international peace and security.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, this paper will aim to explore the rich history of maritime coercion and influence, while proving its relevance in security today. The second section will apply the maritime coercion framework to maritime events that have occurred in the period following the creation of the United Nations Charter. This includes an analysis of the Battles of Yeonpyeong, the Kuwait invasion, Malacca Straits Patrol, and Operation Sumatra Assist. The third section aims to provide realistic recommendations for Australia – how to combat offensive compellence without sacrificing the international rules-based order and moral legitimacy, and highlighting the importance of naval power through the use of influence, a shared commitment to good order, and collective security within the Indo-Pacific. The first recommendation asserts that the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), with support from the Australian government, needs to review and update Australia's maritime strategy to alleviate tensions in the Indo-Pacific and show its commitment to regional stability. Secondly, Australia needs to strengthen vulnerabilities in shipping routes by building alliances, to prevent and deter disruptions, as well as strengthening multilateral partnerships.

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## Section 1: Understanding Coercion in a Maritime Context

The RAN defines coercion as ‘the use of force, or the threat of force, to persuade an opponent to adopt a certain pattern of behaviour, against their wishes’.<sup>2</sup> Coercion is a heavily used tool in international relations theory and is often analysed in scholarly literature to be applicable broadly. The most influential work that defines coercion theory is arguably *Arms and Influence* by Thomas Schelling.<sup>3</sup> Schelling divides coercion theory into two sectors – compellence and deterrence – to separate the threat of action as opposed to the initiation of action.<sup>4</sup> While both sectors differ in methodology, the intent is the same, which is to give the recipient a choice, whether that is to escalate or retreat.<sup>5</sup>

Coercion theory continued to evolve and develop, with coercive diplomacy, blackmail strategy, gunboat diplomacy and deterrence theory finding their relevance within both international relations and the maritime space.<sup>6</sup> Another notable contributor to coercion theory, Alexander George, differentiated between offensive and defensive coercive threats, which he labelled as blackmail strategy and coercive diplomacy respectively.<sup>7</sup> George argues Schelling’s definitions of compellence do not allow for the differentiation, although he agrees with the idea that coercion still requires the recipient to decide on the path forward.<sup>8</sup>

From an understanding of coercion theory by these two key thinkers, the relation between coercion theory within international relations and sea power becomes clearer. The capability of sea power to affect and coerce states was alluded to as early as the 1890s when Rear Admiral Alfred Mahan identified six key elements that affect sea power: (i) Geographical Position, (ii) Physical Conformation, (iii) Extent of Territory, (iv) Number of Population, (v) Character of the People, and (vi) Character of the Government.<sup>9</sup> While the world has dramatically changed since Mahan created his definition of sea power, his influence is far reaching. Some authors such as James Cable focus on a narrow definition of sea power encompassing solely military power, whereas others such as Ken Booth delve into the importance of non-traditional maritime power, such as international law and diplomacy.<sup>10</sup>

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Geoffrey Till wrote:

*Sea power is not simply about what it takes to use the sea (although that is obviously a prerequisite). It is also the capacity to influence the behaviour of other people or things by what one does at or from the sea.<sup>11</sup>*

Consequently, it can be inferred that coercion strategy in the maritime domain is an extension of sea power, that is, the ability to shape or change a state's behaviour, against a challenging state's wishes, based on particular use of maritime resources. The maritime system is incredibly complicated, especially for Australia, which relies on maritime strategy for many strategic goals or national interests, such as communication networks, humanitarian aid and trade.<sup>12</sup> Thus, a broad definition of sea power, as reflected in the RAN's *Australian Maritime Doctrine*, better suits the needs and capabilities of Australia, whose maritime capabilities are more than pure naval power.<sup>13</sup>

The maritime domain is strengthened through the international system, rather than domestic-based law. For example, North Korea has not been able to change its Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) from those determined by the United Nations.<sup>14</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) exerts a determining effect upon the international rules-based order.<sup>15</sup> Everything from states' EEZs and the boundaries of territorial waters, to the regulation of neutral international waters, are governed and regulated by international law.<sup>16</sup> It is important to recognise that UNCLOS was still not implemented when many early coercion or sea power theorists published their work, such as Schelling, Booth and George.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, coercion theory, including maritime theory such as gunboat diplomacy, is usually focused on state versus state interplay, such as one power against another. This makes it difficult to apply these definitions to an international system, in which states take part in collective security over individual security. Moreover, states may instigate coercion to protect the international rules-based order, rather than their individual state sovereignty, due to the globalised nature of the world. Consequently, narrowly defined theories, such as coercive diplomacy, are difficult to apply to this paper.

I propose a maritime coercion framework (see Figure 1), which better suits the vulnerabilities that are occurring within the international system.

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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>OFFENSIVE COMPELLENCE</b> <i>Shifting away from IRBO</i></p> <p>Using maritime threats and/or force as a means to challenge the international rules-based order, or exert hostility towards other states e.g., entering other state’s EEZs, militarisation of fishing vessels, disrupt maritime activity</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DEFENSIVE COMPELLENCE</b> <i>Shifting towards the IRBO</i></p> <p>Using maritime threats and/or force as a means to compel noncompliant actors to return to the international rules-based order. e.g., blockades, increasing maritime capacity, establishing maritime militia</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DETERRENCE</b> <i>Maintaining IRBO</i></p> <p>Using maritime threats and/or resources as a means to deter actors from disrupting the international rules-based order, or influencing them to maintain it. e.g., inverse blockades, naval exercises, protection of EEZs</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DIPLOMACY</b> <i>Preserving IRBO</i></p> <p>Using maritime resources and spheres of influence to prevent disruptions to the international rules-based order and contribute to collective security e.g., maritime law, collective security, alliance-building, aid</p>

Figure 1: The Maritime Coercion Framework.

This framework was created with the international rules-based order forming the immediate centre to which all coercive activity revolves around. As George spoke about shifting of status quo, reframing was required to position coercive activity within the four movements; shifting away, shifting towards, maintaining or preserving the international-rules based order. As maritime missions are becoming increasingly multilateral (rather than using singular state assistance), such as humanitarian aid response or United Nations sanctioned blockades, this framework enables activity post 1945 to be recognised in all its complexity, including multiple stakeholders.

In reference to early coercion theory, the typology reflects the position of Schelling that deterrence and compellence are two separate features of coercive behaviour, split between the use of threats to compel, or physical force against the recipient.<sup>18</sup> However, it also recognises the research by George that compellence should be split into offensive and defensive types of coercion that differ from deterrence, as displayed in the framework as offensive compellence and defensive compellence.<sup>19</sup> However, the framework still rests on the concept outlined by both academics, that all aspects are still reliant on the fact that the recipient makes the choice, whether that is to escalate to a higher use of force, or de-escalate through diplomatic measures.<sup>20</sup>

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Finally, diplomacy is listed under the maritime coercion framework, as its actions have the ability to coerce unwilling states to preserving the international order. For example, in 2021 the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a multilateral alliance, chose to ban Myanmar's military chief, who was responsible for the military coup in February of that year, from attending its annual summit.<sup>21</sup> This demonstrates that actions within diplomatic capabilities, such as alliances, can be a contributing factor to coerce unlawful or aggressive states that are challenging the international rules-based order to shift back towards it. Furthermore, humanitarian action can coerce states that may have differing opinions on the value of the giving state, through the provisions of immediate support and aid, such as Pacific Island states accepting aid from Australia, even though they disapprove of Australia's climate policies.<sup>22</sup>

## Section 2: Coercion is History

This section aims to apply the maritime coercion framework to particular case studies, taken from Appendix A, and demonstrate how coercion and influence have been used through sea power. The case studies are limited to the period following the creation of the United Nations, as this framework relies on the international system as the formative standard on a shared commitment to the international rules-based order.<sup>23</sup>

### Case Study I – Offensive Compellence – The Battles of Yeonpyeong

The Battles of Yeonpyeong in 1999 and 2002 are defined as offensive compellence within the coercion framework, as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DRPK or North Korea) chose maritime force as a means to challenge an internationally recognised maritime border.

The Northern Line Limit (NLL) is a maritime boundary created by the United Nations Command on 30 August 1953 to separate the territorial waters of DRPK and the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea).<sup>24</sup> The boundary led to brief diplomatic conflict, with DRPK protesting twice in the 1970s about the conditions of the NLL, and declared the sea surrounding the five islands off the coast of the Korean peninsula as its territory; no formal arbitration occurred.<sup>25</sup>

The first of the Yeonpyeong battles occurred on 15 June 1999 after a North Korean torpedo boat initiated fire on a South Korean boat.<sup>26</sup> After the South Korean ships returned fire, the North Korean vessels withdrew to safety, resulting in 30 DPRK soldiers killed and two of its ships sunk.<sup>27</sup> The second battle,

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on 29 June 2002, resulted in higher casualties for the ROK navy, with five dead, 22 wounded and one ship sunk.<sup>28</sup>

Labelling the Battles of Yeonpyeong as offensive compellence does not denote the objectives of the DRPK to be wrong, merely its maritime actions. The battles, both occurring in June, coincided with the peak of the blue crab fishing season, a major source of income for North Korea that has been disrupted by the maritime boundary and illegal Chinese fishing.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, the NLL was financially untenable, due to the cost in redirecting shipping around the NLL, as well as security costs due to the close proximity of ROK maritime vessels.<sup>30</sup>

However, rather than progressing with diplomatic measures to rework the boundaries, the DPRK employed ‘bullying’ tactics by using maritime vessels to invade the boundaries set out by the United Nations Command.<sup>31</sup> Initially beginning as a display of force, the escalation into using naval force is disruptive to both state and regional peace and security.<sup>32</sup> The DPRK’s refusal to cooperate was a display of hostility towards both the international system and the Republic of Korea.

## **Case Study II – Defensive Compellence – Persian Gulf War**

After Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait without provocation on 2 August 1990, the RAN Operation DAMASK, within the Maritime Interception Force (MIF 1), used defensive compellence to coerce Iraq back towards the international rules-based order.<sup>33</sup>

As Kuwait requested assistance, states were legally permitted to respond and participate in the Maritime Interception Force under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which states the permissibility of ‘collective self-defence’.<sup>34</sup> On 25 August, this was reinforced by the United Nations Security Council passing Resolution 665, which called on member states to deploy naval forces to the Arabian Gulf to assist with the execution of sanctions.<sup>35</sup> Resolution 665 specifically authorised the use of naval resources to intercept incoming and outgoing maritime shipping.<sup>36</sup>

The Maritime Interception Force, a coalition of 17 states including Australia, was deployed to the Arabian Gulf to conduct warnings, interrogate intercepted crew and board vessels to check for compliance.<sup>37</sup> UN Resolution 661 called on states to enforce bans on commodities, goods or products that leave or enter Iraq, excepting humanitarian aid such as food or medical supplies.<sup>38</sup>

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The Persian Gulf War continued for 43 days, during which Australian warships under Operation DAMASK defended other nations' aircraft carriers, provided logistical support, and intercepted vessels that were sailing towards Iraq.<sup>39</sup>

These actions are labelled as defensive compellence as they are in a response to an action that had already occurred: invested states are choosing to prevent escalation that would further disrupt peace and security within the international system. Furthermore, the most force used by over 95 warships was several warning shots, demonstrating that maritime forces can be used to coerce compliance without engaging in combat.<sup>40</sup>

By conforming to the United Nations Charter under Article 51, these actions can be perceived by the international system as legally justifiable.<sup>41</sup> This is especially due to the Maritime Interception Force primarily existing to enforce the United Nations sanctions in a constabulary position within the limitations of the Resolution, as opposed to imposing its own self-determining interests.<sup>42</sup>

### **Case Study III – Deterrence – Malacca Straits Patrol**

Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand formed the Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP) in 2004 as a deterrence mechanism to reduce piracy and ensure the security and safety of all vessels and personnel using the Straits of Malacca.<sup>43</sup>

The MSP incorporates several frameworks – regular maritime patrols under the Malacca Straits Sea Patrol and air surveillance over the waterways via 'Eyes-in-the-Sky' that provides additional support for maritime efforts.<sup>44</sup> In addition, there is also the MSP Intelligence Exchange Group, formed so states can engage and share information and intelligence instantly, negating miscommunication and improving response times when a threat occurs.<sup>45</sup>

According to the *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia Annual Report 2020*, 34 piracy attacks occurred within the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS).<sup>46</sup> Although the incidents have fallen dramatically in numbers since 2015, an increase in attacks from 2019 has become more concerning for the states that rely on the shipping channels for trade and transport.<sup>47</sup> The Straits of Malacca are critical to ensuring nearly 50 per cent of the world's maritime trade reaches its destination in a timely manner, and any disturbances can cause consequences in the supply chains that are responsible for trade such as commodities, food and energy.<sup>48</sup>

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Deterrence is essential to ensuring that piracy in the Malacca Straits and Singapore remains low. Notably, the majority of piracy incidents that occurred in 2019 targeted unmanned barges, towed by tugboats whose crews were oblivious of what was occurring.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the perpetrators were unarmed in all attacks in 2019, demonstrating that small-scale, invisible and petty theft is easier for pirates to accomplish than armed large-scale robberies, which would result in a quick response time by the MSP.<sup>50</sup>

With the Malacca Straits having the reputation as the ‘most dangerous waters’, deterrence is essential as a defensive measure to maintain peace and security, ensure the safety of all vessels and crew, and through projection, a method to coerce piracy actors to abandon theft before they begin.<sup>51</sup>

## Case Study IV – Diplomacy – Operation Sumatra Assist

After the 2004 Boxing Day earthquake and tsunami off the coast of Indonesia, HMAS *Kanimbla* sailed to provide aid, support and assistance to those most heavily affected by the natural disasters.

On 26 December, several tsunamis triggered by an earthquake crashed into 12 states, causing over 225,000 fatalities, with the dominant damage impacting Indonesia.<sup>52</sup> The Landing Platform Amphibious (LPA) HMAS *Kanimbla* was immediately sent to northern Sumatra with the Combined Joint Task Force 629, designed to support four capabilities – aid, engineering, medical and air lift.<sup>53</sup> The *Kanimbla* provided 3700 medical treatments and 4.7 million litres of clean water to displaced communities, alongside other states’ contributions to the relief response.<sup>54</sup>

Diplomatic measures are essential to building trust and resilience in the international community, especially when emergencies arise and Australia comes to the aid of its neighbours. Although the *Review of the Defence Annual Report 2003–2004* found that the benefits of ‘Defence Assistance to the Civil Community’ were primarily in personnel training, diplomatic missions also reduce the severity of community conflict.<sup>55</sup> As Greet asserts, ‘displaced populations can . . . exacerbate internal crises’, indicating disasters such as tsunamis and earthquakes can disturb regional security.<sup>56</sup> HMAS *Kanimbla* carried a detachment of engineers, which enabled a joint force to deliver clean water and basic sanitary measures for badly affected areas in Aceh.<sup>57</sup>

A fast response was essential to ensuring that further destruction and aggravation in Indonesia were minimised, whether they be spurred on by malnutrition, disease or conflict.<sup>58</sup> The Free Aceh Movement, a violent separatist group, had been in combat with the Indonesian government since 1976, and were operating in the hardest hit areas of the tsunami.<sup>59</sup> Quick relief of exacerbating factors such as

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malnutrition, damaged infrastructure and unclean water, as well as the presence of Australian troops, helped to defuse tensions in the area.<sup>60</sup>

Using aid and support as a diplomatic tool provides states with the opportunity to maintain peace and security as scripted in the United Nations Charter, and therefore preserve the international rules-based order.<sup>61</sup>

### Section 3: Responding to coercion through influence

As outlined in Appendix A, and expanded in Case Study I, offensive compellence has been consistently used by states as a methodology under sea power to influence state behaviour and challenge the international rules-based order.<sup>62</sup> For Australia, offensive compellence is most relevant in terms of China's actions in the South China Sea.<sup>63</sup>

China's coercive measures in the South China Sea can be classified as offensive compellence, as China is using its maritime militia in direct violation of the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.<sup>64</sup> In 2016, the Court found that China had no claim to resources or maritime territory 'falling within the "nine-dash-line"', including the sea areas within other states' EEZs.<sup>65</sup> The most prevalent use of power in defiance of this verdict is China's continued use of maritime militia to enter the EEZs of other countries in an attempt to harass and intimidate ASEAN fishermen.<sup>66</sup>

The impact of China's offensive compellence within the South China Sea is damaging to global peace and security for multiple reasons. Firstly, the continual infiltration into other states' EEZs, regardless of international law, is leading to rising hostilities in the region.<sup>67</sup> Growing tensions and an increasing constabulary presence from all states in the South China Sea can lead to a greater risk of open warfare occurring, for example, through an accidental misfire from both China or the defending state in question.<sup>68</sup> Secondly, supply chains and significant shipping routes may be threatened using coercive maritime means, such as using maritime militias, employing aggressive Coast Guard actions, or targeting foreign vessels that enter Chinese waters for trade purposes by potentially disrupting the flow of supplies and trade.<sup>69</sup>

The asymmetry of maritime power is an intensifying issue in the South China Sea.<sup>70</sup> The extensive capabilities of China's sea power in all three key areas of maritime forces – military, diplomatic and constabulary – creates a power imbalance against smaller states in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>71</sup> An individual state with a smaller economy, militia, population and international presence than China presents a very little challenge.<sup>72</sup> Australia, as a middle power, also faces an asymmetrical power imbalance against China.

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When describing the influence of deterrence, Thomas Schelling wrote:

*Coercion depends more on the threat of what is yet to come than on damage already done. The pace of diplomacy, not the pace of battle, would govern the action; and while diplomacy may not require that it go slowly, it does require that an impressive unspent capacity for damage be kept in reserve.<sup>73</sup>*

Thus, in order to deter effectively, small or middle power states such as Australia require more strength behind their threats in order to coerce a state, which is highly impractical when that state holds more power.<sup>74</sup> Although some argue that sea denial can be achieved through strengthening international law, states such as China usually achieve their strategic objectives through offensive compellence, having little regard for international law when it does not fit their national interests.<sup>75</sup> International law is integral to hold as a diplomatic precedent, but cannot be solely relied upon as a strategy to deter; China's complete rejection of The Hague's ruling on the South China Sea demonstrates this.<sup>76</sup>

A key similarity of most case studies under the maritime coercion framework is multilateralism, whether that was responding to offensive compellence or wielding defensive compellence, deterring other states or being involved within diplomatic efforts.<sup>77</sup> This is demonstrative of the United Nations Charter, which the majority of states adhere to, that is, 'to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace'.<sup>78</sup> Collective security and cooperation have been recognised as vital to combating asymmetrical power in the region.<sup>79</sup>

This supports the point that states that use offensive compellence to achieve their strategic objectives are usually not supported by the majority of the international system (see examples in Appendix A). This is because states that resort to offensive compellence are usually disrupting peace and security and challenging the international rules-based order.

Bilateral and multilateral partnerships have been key to establishing trust and strengthening relationships between states that wish to maintain the international rules-based order. The support given to the Republic of Korea by the United Nations Command, or the multi-state force needed to combat Iraq, reveals the importance of international security over state versus state based conflict.<sup>80</sup> Often, international law, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, is used in maritime territories and accordingly usurps domestic law, as demonstrated by the Northern Limit Line, and again with the dismissal of the nine-dash-line.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, states are more likely to engage in multilateral

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alliances to help protect their maritime borders than take on security alone, such as with the Malacca Straits Patrol, or Operation Vantage (a 1961 British military operation in support of Kuwait).

Sharing similar fears about offensive compellence in the Indo-Pacific has strengthened partnerships such as the India–Japan bilateral relationship. The two countries have worked together as permanent allies on maritime exercises such as *Exercise Malabar*, alongside the United States.<sup>82</sup> Through intertwining strategic interests and trust with the sharing of operational capabilities, the relationship has also moved to include Australia occasionally in *Exercise Malabar*, but mainly within The Quad, a quadrilateral partnership that also includes the United States and is designed to combat the rising aggressiveness in the South China Sea.<sup>83</sup>

## Recommendations

To combat offensive compellence, Australia needs to give priority to building alliances and ensuring collective security in Asia. Doing so will help secure both domestic and regional vulnerabilities, as well as reducing tensions through support. Deterrence and diplomacy can be used to combat a coercive force without sacrificing the international rules-based order and moral legitimacy. Naval power, through the use of influence, a shared commitment to good order and collective security within the Indo-Pacific, is of utmost importance.

### Recommendation 1: Review and Update Australia’s Maritime Strategy

**Description:** The creation of the trilateral security alliance AUKUS for the Indo-Pacific, which involves only Anglosphere states, has caused concerns with regional leaders.<sup>84</sup> The agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States involves the acquisition of eight nuclear-powered submarines for Australia, leading some ASEAN member states to raise concerns about the possibility of a nuclear arms race in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>85</sup> Australia’s Foreign Minister has emphasised the need for transparency in the region, which is being achieved by resuming in-person diplomacy to appease Indonesian and Malaysian concerns, as well as by bolstering regional relationships in preparation for a ‘comprehensive strategic partnership’ between Australia and ASEAN.<sup>86</sup> With Cambodia taking over the chairmanship of ASEAN for 2022, Australia will need to tread carefully because of Cambodia’s alignment with China.<sup>87</sup> Cambodia has already displayed strong support for China by objecting to multiple joint communiqués condemning China’s actions in the South China Sea, and it therefore could hinder Australia’s interests because of China’s strong disapproval of the proposed nuclear submarines.<sup>88</sup>

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**Action:** The RAN, with support from the Australian government, should update its maritime strategy to increase transparency about its strategic interests and missions in the region.<sup>89</sup> As the RAN's *Australian Maritime Doctrine* notes, 'Australia's strategic approach requires a principally maritime strategy', due to the country's inherent reliance on the sea for communication, operations and security.<sup>90</sup> The maritime strategies discussed by military experts and academics range from technological approaches to protection of communication and trade, as well as regional multilateral strategies and deterrence.<sup>91</sup> Australia is long overdue to review its strategy, as the stability of the maritime region continues to shift due to offensive compellence challenging the international rules-based order.<sup>92</sup> The last maritime strategy tabled to the Australian Parliament was in 2004, nearly two decades ago.<sup>93</sup> A dedicated strategic document could ease allies' fears over the use of nuclear-powered submarines in the Indo-Pacific, as well as enshrining the significance of alliance-building and multilateral partnerships contributing to collective security.

## **Recommendation 2: Strengthen Vulnerabilities in Shipping routes by Building Alliances**

**Description:** Australia is extremely reliant on maritime trade, with 98 per cent of all trade entering through ports.<sup>94</sup> As an island nation, Australia's livelihood is vulnerable to any disruptions to shipping routes and thus supply chains. The Straits of Malacca is a significant chokepoint, not just for Australia, but all of Asia, as it is the shortest and most economical shipping route that connects the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.<sup>95</sup> Although the Australian Institute of Petroleum assessed that shipping lanes were safe and not easily disrupted, it failed to consider the concentration of ships attempting to find alternative routes, militia blockades, or the result of other nations' ships being disabled.<sup>96</sup> With shipping costs already increasing fivefold for Australians in 2021, and the fact that 90 per cent of all fuel and medicine has to be imported into Australia, a potential halt to a supply chain due to an incident in the Straits of Malacca could be catastrophic.<sup>97</sup>

**Action:** Australia should continue to develop relationships by initiating naval exercises with the Malacca Straits Patrol, which also includes Thailand, as it would be an essential contingency in the case of a disruption or terrorist attack in the Straits of Malacca.<sup>98</sup> As the Straits of Malacca are within territorial waters, Australia requires the permission of either Indonesia, Malaysia or Singapore to assist.<sup>99</sup> Thus, as Australia is already involved in Operation Gateway with Malaysia, naval exercises with the MSP would set a strong foundation to strengthen information sharing in the region through common interest.<sup>100</sup> The naval exercises will enable Australia to respond more quickly and effectively to an emergency, since we

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would have practised coordination with each state's operations system. This is essential to a quick resolution of any kind of disruption within the Straits, as trust and transparency are critical to balancing instability in the Indo-Pacific.

## Conclusion

This paper sought to understand how previous theories about coercion and sea power link to the contemporary maritime environment. Offensive compellence (see Figure 1) is a challenge for Australia to combat within the international rules-based order. Australia should use deterrence and diplomacy, such as naval exercises, maritime alliance-building and aid within the Indo-Pacific, as influential tools.

A discussion of coercion and sea power theory through key thinkers such as Mahan, Schelling, George, Booth and Cable demonstrates the conflicting ideas about maritime strategy around common underlying themes. The maritime coercion framework was created to tie together theory across the 20th century and demonstrate its application in a world where maritime law is predominantly governed within the international system. Case studies pulled from Appendix A demonstrate how the framework applies to historical instances of maritime coercion in the period following the creation of the United Nations.

Two recommendations were detailed as to how Australia can combat offensive compellence in the Indo-Pacific. Firstly, a review of Australia's maritime strategy will demonstrate Australia's commitment to shared collective security and good order. This will strengthen partnerships amid changes in regional security, especially in response to the concerns in many ASEAN states because of Australia's involvement in AUKUS. Secondly, an improved commitment to naval exercises operating within vulnerable shipping routes will increase the security of supply chains, with the added benefit of strengthening regional relationships. This will help contribute to the protection of Australia's heavy reliance on trade, as well as helping neighbouring states with additional sharing of information and intelligence. By demonstrating dedication to relationships within the region as well as outside states with vying interests, Australia will create stronger levels of trust, essential to combatting coercion in the Indo-Pacific through influence.

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## Appendix A – Application of historical case studies to the Maritime Coercion Framework (see Figure 1)

Incident	Year	Typology	Action	Parties affected
Sinking of INS <i>Khukri</i> (Indo-Pakistani War of 1971)	1971	Offensive Compellence	Sinking of Indian submarine.	Pakistan (perpetrator); India (target); Provisional government of Bangladesh (participant).
Operation Rosario (Falklands War)	1982	Offensive Compellence	Amphibious operation to capture the Falkland Islands.	Argentina (perpetrator); United Kingdom (target).
Battles of Yeonpyeong (Korean conflict)	1999, 2002	Offensive Compellence	North Korean vessels crossed maritime boundary and attacked South Korean patrol boats.	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (perpetrator); Republic of Korea (target).
Sinking of ROKS <i>Cheonan</i> (Korean conflict)	2010	Offensive Compellence	South Korean corvette sunk by an adversary. North Korea denied responsibility.	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (alleged perpetrator); Republic of Korea (target).
Naval Quarantine (Cuban Missile Crisis)	1962	Defensive Compellence	In response to nuclear weapons in Cuba, US Navy implemented a 'naval quarantine'.	United States (initiator); Cuba, Soviet Union (target)
Maritime Interception Force (MIF 1) (Persian Gulf War)	1990–1991	Defensive Compellence	United Nations Security Council used maritime forces to impose sanctions on Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait (S/RES/665).	United Nations, 17 nations including United States and Australia (initiators); Iraq (target).
Operation Maritime Guard (Yugoslavia)	1992–1993	Defensive Compellence	Blockaded ships to inspect cargo as per United Nations further sanctions on Yugoslavia (S/RES/787).	NATO (initiator); Yugoslavia (target).
Operation Sharp Guard (Yugoslavia)	1993–1996	Defensive Compellence	Continuation of Operation Maritime Guard with a further multinational response.	NATO, Western European Union (initiators); Yugoslavia (target).
Operation Vantage	1961	Deterrence	British maritime forces agreed to support and protect Kuwait through naval resources from Iraq after they claimed independence.	Kuwait (initiator); United Kingdom (support); Iraq (target).
Exercise Malabar	1992–	Deterrence	A joint military exercise primarily between US, Japan and India.	United States, Japan, India (permanent participants); Australia, Singapore, Canada (participants).
Malacca Straits Patrol	2004–	Deterrence	Multinational effort to reduce piracy and other	Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand (participants).

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			maritime issues in the Malacca Straits.	
<b>Saettia MK4 class – Iraqi Navy</b>	2006–	<b>Deterrence</b>	Sourcing of patrol boats to protect EEZs.	Iraq (participant).
<b>United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)</b>	1982–	<b>Diplomacy</b>	International treaty that establishes an international framework for all maritime activities.	167 states (participants).
<b>International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea</b>	1982–	<b>Diplomacy</b>	Intergovernmental organisation created as a mechanism for dispute resolutions about maritime issues.	167 states (participants).
<b>Operation Sumatra Assist (HMAS Kanimbla)</b>	2004	<b>Diplomacy</b>	Utilised in response to 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake – provided humanitarian aid.	Australia (participant).
<b>AUKUS</b>	2021 –	<b>Diplomacy</b>	Trilateral security alliance with primary focus of operations in the Indo-Pacific.	United States, United Kingdom, Australia (participants).

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## OUR VALUES

SERVICE

COURAGE

RESPECT

INTEGRITY

EXCELLENCE