

Double Fish Hook Strategy [UPSC International Relations]

Strategies and doctrines in international relations are very important for the UPSC exam. Questions can be asked about them directly in the prelims exam, and good knowledge about them also helps in writing well-rounded answers in the [IAS mains](#) exam. The Double Fish Hook strategy is in the news of late. In this article, you can learn all about the Double Fish Hook Strategy.

Double Fish Hook Strategy

Double Fish Hook is the name given to the strategy that India is thought to be implementing to counter the [String of Pearls](#) strategy of China.

- According to Alfred T Mahan, a leading strategist of the nineteenth century, “*Whoever controls the Indian Ocean, dominates Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas. In the Twenty-First century, the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters*”. This has been validated by the fact that the **Indian Ocean Region** is now a region of focus and currently, the Indo-Pacific accounts for 40% of global trade and 62% of the world’s GDP.
- The region is also under a state of geopolitical flux due to the aggressive rise of China. China has been challenging the norms and institutions put in place after the [Second World War](#) by the USA and increasing its military footprint in the region. China has developed a network of commercial and military bases and ports in many countries in the region as seen in Hambantota, [Gwadar](#), and Chittagong ports to preserve its trade and strategic interests.
- This has been called the “String of Pearls” policy and many commentators in India have considered this a strategic threat to India’s national security and its larger ambitions to emerge as a net security provider in the region. In response, India has put in place a multi-pronged strategy to counter the Chinese presence in the region. Strategists have hypothesized that the efforts have coalesced into what is being called the “Double Fish Hook Strategy”.

Double Fish Hook Strategy Components

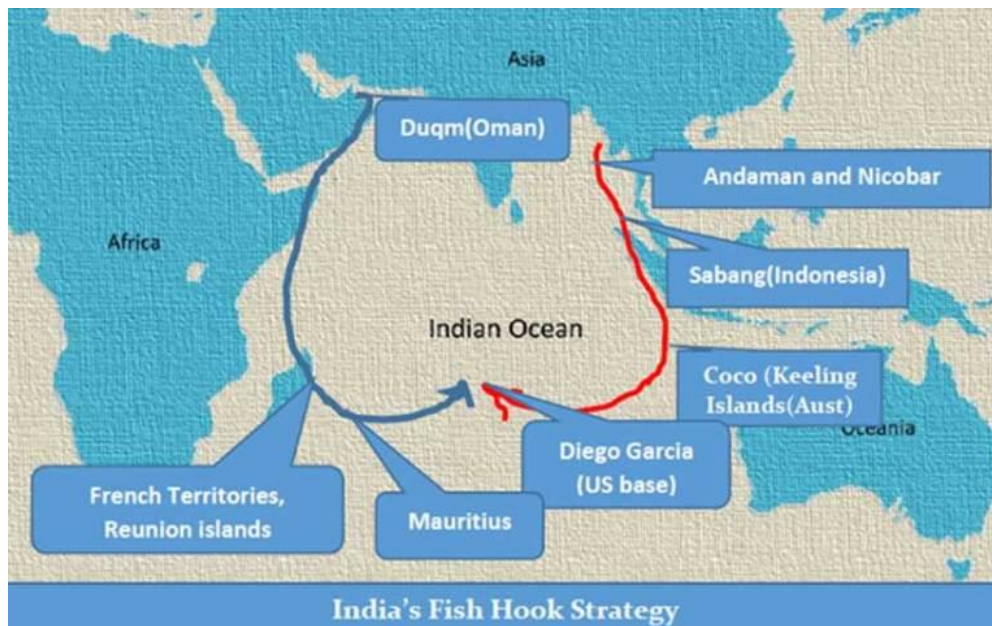


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One of the fish hooks spans across the Eastern Indian Ocean. It starts from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, moves to the Sabang port in Indonesia, and extends all the way to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The tip of this fish hook lands at the Diego Garcia, the US military base in the Chagos archipelago. The efforts initiated by India in this regard are:

- Andaman and Nicobar Islands have the Andaman and Nicobar Command, the tri-services theatre command of the armed forces. Efforts have also been made for the military infrastructure development by building jetties, deep-sea harbours, and extending landing strips to facilitate the landing of maritime surveillance aircraft. INS Kohassa has also been commissioned as the third aviation centre on the Island.
- India has also gained military and economic access to the Sabang port. It is a deep sea port being developed by India. Indian Navy patrol vessel, INS Sumitra, became the first-ever warship to sail into the port of Sabang, strategically placed at the mouth of the Malacca Strait.
- In June 2020, India has signed the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) with Australia to support their maritime reconnaissance missions and surveillance with the use of their island facilities. The islands which have been listed for such a logistics arrangement are the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (India) and Coco (Keeling) islands of Australia.

Similarly, the second hook involves the Western Indian ocean. It begins from the Duqm port in Oman, extends to the French territories as part of the Reunion Island and other island groups such as Mauritius, etc. This again will end at the Diego Garcia. Initiatives by India in this region are:

- India has entered into a Maritime Transport Agreement with Oman to gain access to the strategically located Duqm port. It will be useful for logistics and support and help the Indian navy to carry out long-term operations in the region.
- India and France also have a logistics support agreement and have been conducting regular maritime surveillance sorties from the Reunion islands. India's entry into the [Indian Ocean Commission](#) as an Observer was facilitated by France.
- India has also significantly increased its engagements with Mauritius, Seychelles and Madagascar by training and visiting ships as well as giving them coastal radar systems.
- With the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement ([LEMOA](#)), India and the USA will have access to each other's military bases and naval ports. India thus gains access to Diego Garcia, the biggest American base in the Indian Ocean.

If one connects these ports, it looks like a fish hook that ends at the Diego Garcia. These would help to keep track of the movements of Chinese submarines in the region. India will also have the option of fixing costs on China in case of any escalations on the border by blocking Chinese maritime traffic. Thus, according to some commentators, the “Double Fish Hook” strategy would help to undermine the “String of Pearls” strategy of China and give India an edge in the maritime domain.