

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) - UPSC Notes

An Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is a zone in the sea prescribed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) over which a country has certain rights. In this article, you can read all about EEZs, which is a part of both the economy and the geography segments of the [UPSC syllabus](#).

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defined the EEZ as a zone in the sea over which a sovereign nation has certain special rights with respect to the exploration and usage of marine resources, which includes the generation of energy from wind and water, and also oil and natural gas extraction.

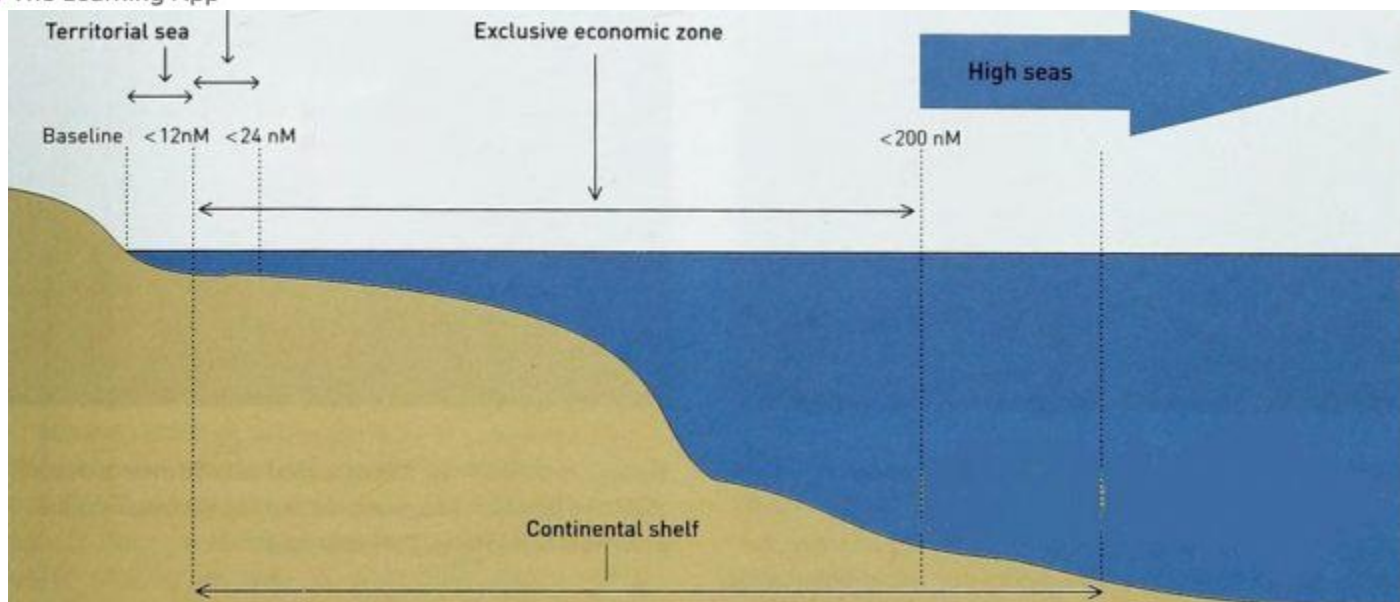
- The EEZ is an area that is adjacent to and beyond the territorial sea.
- It can extend to a maximum of 200 nautical miles from the baseline. The baseline is normally measured is the low-water line along the coast as indicated on large-scale charts officially approved by the coastal state.
- The EEZ does not include the territorial sea and also does not include the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.
- The EEZ includes the contiguous zone.
- Within the EEZ, the country has rights over natural resources. The country has jurisdiction over some activities for the reasons of environmental protection, among others.
- It also has to respect the rights of other countries in the EEZ such as the freedom of navigation.
- The difference between territorial sea and the EEZ is that the former confers full sovereignty over the waters, whereas the latter is merely a “sovereign right” which refers to the coastal nation’s rights below the surface of the sea. The surface waters are international waters.

Rights of the country in the EEZ

The coastal state has the rights to:

1. Explore and exploit, conserve and manage the natural resources (living or non-living).
2. Produce energy from wind, currents and water.
3. Establish and use artificial islands, structures and installations.
4. Conduct marine scientific research.
5. Protect and preserve the marine environment.

The following image will make the extent of EEZ more clear:



Territorial Waters

The term territorial waters of a country include any area of water on which it has jurisdiction. This includes the internal waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, the EEZ and potentially the continental shelf also.

Territorial Sea

As per the UNCLOS, the territorial sea is a belt of coastal waters that extends from the baseline to 12 nautical miles.

- It is a sovereign territory of the state.
- However, foreign ships, both civilian and military, are permitted 'innocent passage' through it.
- The sovereignty also includes the seabed below and the airspace above.
- The EEZ starts at the edge of the territorial sea.

Contiguous Zone

The contiguous zone extends from the edge of the territorial sea to 24 nautical miles from the baseline, i.e., a further 12 nautical miles from the territorial sea.

- It is a part of the EEZ. In this zone, states have limited control in order to curb or penalise the infringement of its customs, immigration, sanitary, or fiscal laws within its territorial sea.
- Only in four areas, it can enforce laws: taxation, customs, pollution and immigration.

To know more about the [divisions of ocean floors](#), click on the linked article.

UPSC Questions related to the Exclusive Economic Zone

Which country has the largest exclusive economic zone?

France has the world's largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) because it possesses several overseas departments and territories.

What happens when EEZ overlap?

Under UNCLOS, the contesting nations negotiate or divide the difference among themselves. The EEZs, by definition, should not overlap since they are exclusive. But the extent of a country's EEZ can be disputed by another country. In case of an overlap, the countries have to agree to a maritime boundary which would delimit their claims.

Is fishing allowed in EEZ?

Yes, it is allowed for the nationals of the country under whose control the EEZ falls.

How much is the exclusive economic zone of India?

India has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of about 2.37 million sq.km.