

# Geography

## Theme II: Spaces Transformed by Globalisation

### Chapter 5: Seas and Oceans

#### Introduction

The rise of globalisation has witnessed the development of coastal zones around the world because maritime transport is essential for this process. Seas and oceans have become strategic resources and their exploitation can lead to tensions between states.

#### Ocean traffic



This photograph was taken in December and shows a cargo ship from China arriving in Sydney Australia. The containers are filled with merchandise for Christmas.

#### D.N.L. Vocabulary

**Containerisation:** system of freight transport based on steel containers of a standard size which can be easily transferred from boats to trains or lorries.

**Trade liberalisation:** the lowering or abolition of tariffs on goods.

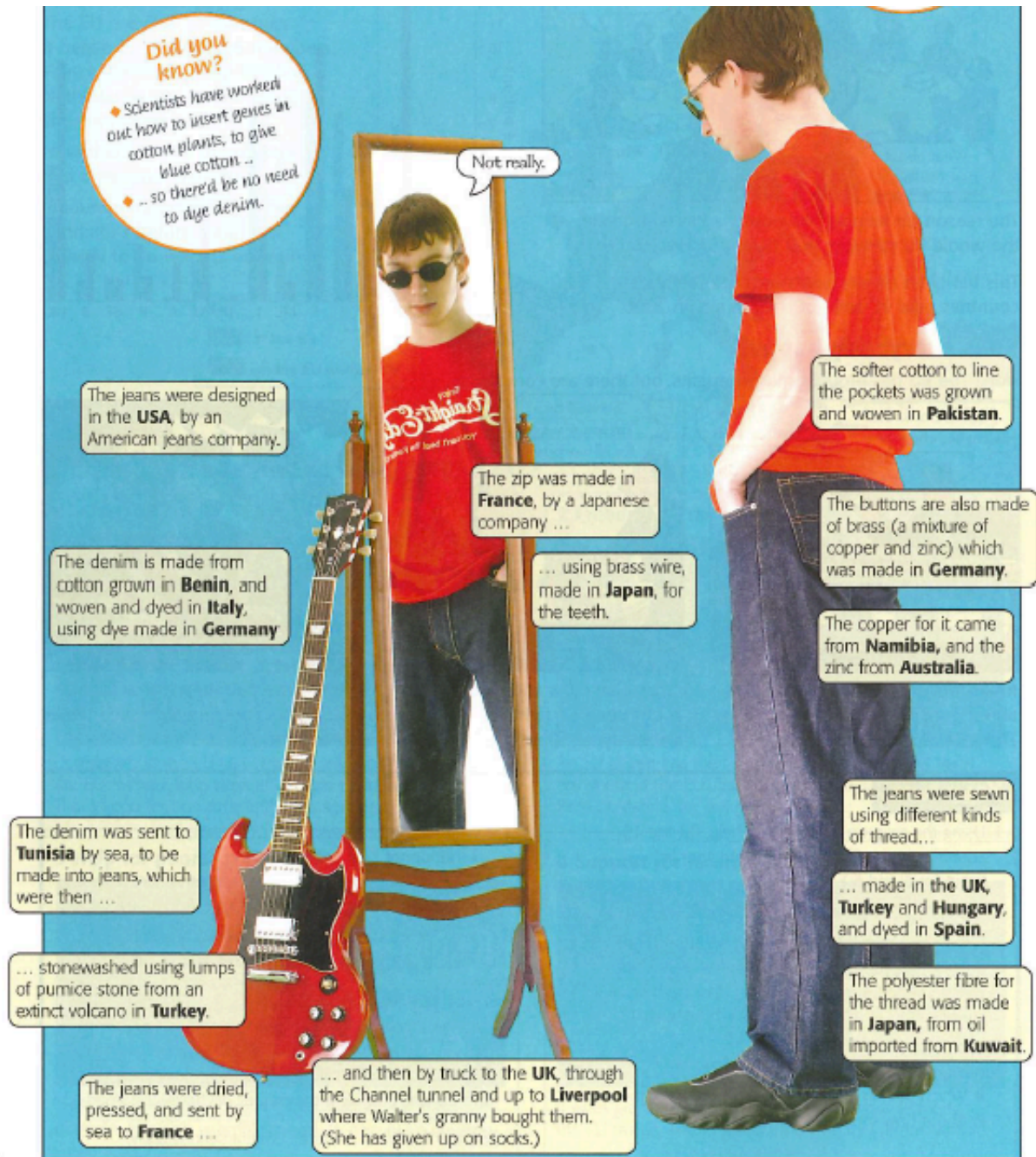
**Seas and Oceans:** seas are smaller than oceans and are usually located where the land and ocean meet. Typically, seas are partially enclosed by land.

**Strait (détroit):** a narrow passage of water connecting two seas or large areas of water (e.g. the Straits of Gibraltar).

**Shipping lanes:** a term to indicate the general flow of merchandise between ports.

## Case Study: Itinerary of a Pair of Jeans

Fifteen countries are involved in the production of this boy's pair of jeans. This demonstrates the presence of globalisation in our everyday lives and reflects the importance of seas and oceans as global trade routes.



## Seas and Oceans: Contested Spaces

The world's seas and oceans are used by 50 000 container ships each year. Between 1970 and 2014, the volume of this maritime traffic has quadrupled. It has been promoted by the lowering of customs barriers (l'abaissement des barrières douanières) and the advent of containerization.

Containerization, which involves the usage of standardized metal boxes to transport goods, has made maritime transport more profitable since containers can be easily and quickly transferred from one mode of transport (e.g. a ship) to another (e.g. a lorry).

### Containers: a multimodal form of transport



Oceans and seas are strategic spaces because of their resources such as fish, petrol and gas. This is why the Law of the Sea Convention was signed by the United Nations in 1982 to define Exclusive Economic Zones in which each state may exploit oceanic resources (see end of chapter for fuller explanation). However, conflicts still arise between countries over access to these resources.

Seas and oceans also need to be protected from overfishing and pollution which can damage and destroy marine ecosystems such as mangroves and coral reefs. They play a pivotal role in regulating global climate and are affected by the greenhouse effect.

## The Seas around South East Asia



### Principal Towns

- (red dot) More than 10 million inhabitants
- (orange dot) Between 5 and 10 million inhabitants

### A space organised by trade flows

Container ports in 2014 (in 20 million feet equivalent)

- (large blue square) More than 25 000
- (small blue square) Between 15 000 and 25 000
- (thick blue arrow) International shipping lane
- (purple broken circle) Strategic passage points
- (green) China
- (dots) Piracy zone
- (red hatching) Disputed zones
- (black triangle) hydrocarbon deposits

## Tensions in the South China Sea



**Rival countries have wrangled over territory in the South China Sea for centuries, but tension has steadily increased in recent years.**

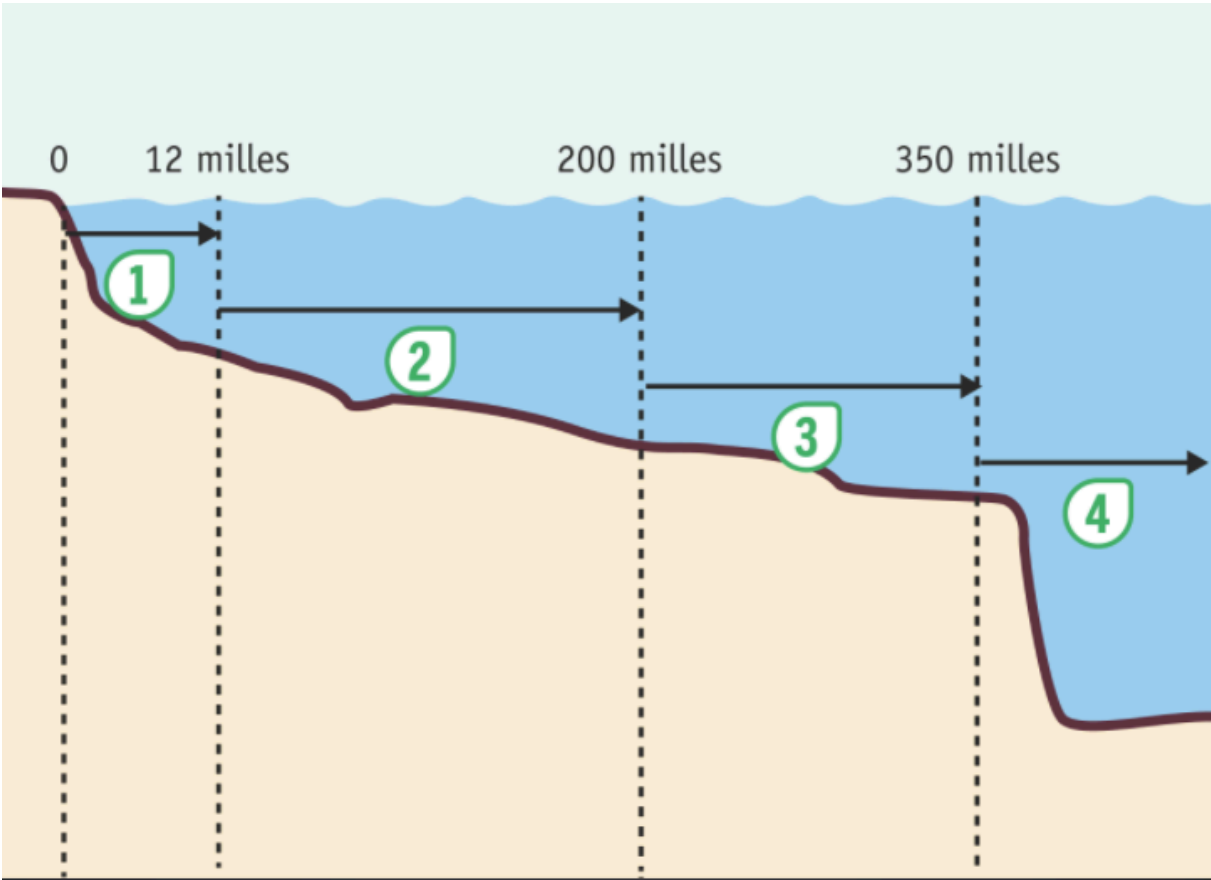
China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei all have competing claims. China has backed its expansive claims with island-building and naval patrols. The US says it does not take sides in territorial disputes, but has sent military ships and planes near disputed islands, calling them "freedom of navigation" operations to ensure access to key shipping and air routes.

Both sides have accused each other of "militarising" the South China Sea. There are fears that the area is becoming a flashpoint, with potentially serious global consequences.

Although largely uninhabited, the Paracels and the Spratlys may have reserves of natural resources around them. There has been little detailed exploration of the area, so estimates are largely extrapolated from the mineral wealth of neighbouring areas. The sea is also a major shipping route and home to fishing grounds that supply the livelihoods of people across the region.

Adapted from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349>, 12 July 2016

### Exclusive Economic Zones Explained



The UN Law of the Sea Convention, 1982, defined several different off shore zones. These distances are calculated in nautical miles (about 1,85km).

- 1: Territorial waters
- 2: The Exclusive Economic Zone in which a State can exploit the resources
- 3: Extent of a continental shelf
- 4: International waters