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Greece (Source: The Hindu)

- **Location:** Greece is a country in Southeast Europe, situated on the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula.
- **Capital:** Athens
- **Bordering Countries:** Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Turkey
- **Bordering Waterbodies:** Aegean Sea, Ionian Sea, Sea of Crete, and the Mediterranean Sea
- **Climate:** Mediterranean Climate
- **International Relations:** Greece is a member of NATO and the European Union





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Pacific Island Forum (Source: The Hindu)

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is the premier intergovernmental organization for political, economic, and policy cooperation in the Pacific region and was formed in 1971.

- **Headquarters:** Suva, Fiji
- **Members**
 - **Full Members (18):** Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
 - **Associate Members:** American Samoa, Guam, Tokelau, and Wallis and Futuna.
 - **Dialogue Partners:** Major external powers that engage annually with PIF leaders, including India, the United States, China, Japan, the European Union, and the United Kingdom.
- **Focus Areas**
 - Climate Change & Environmental Resilience
 - Regional Security & Governance
 - Economic Integration & Trade
 - Geopolitical Neutrality & Unity



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3 Right To Equality (Source: The Hindu)

Article 14: Equality before Law and Equal Protection of Laws

- *Applicable to both citizens and foreigners.*
- **Concept of Equality before the Law (British Origin)**
 - **Provisions**
 - The concept implies the absence of any special privileges in favour of any person.
 - The equal subjection of all persons to the ordinary law of the land administered by ordinary law courts.
 - No person (whether rich or poor, high or low, official or non-official) is above the law.
- **Concept of Equal Protection of Laws (American Origin)**
 - **Provisions**
 - The equality of treatment under equal circumstances, both in the privileges conferred and liabilities imposed by the laws.
 - The similar application of the same laws to all persons who are similarly situated.
 - The like should be treated alike without any discrimination.
- **Stand of Supreme Court:** The Supreme Court held that where equals and unequal are treated differently, Article 14 does not apply.
- **Exceptions to Equality**
 - The President of India and the Governor of States enjoy the following immunities (Article 361)
 - The President or the Governor is not answerable to any court for the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of office.
 - No criminal proceedings shall be instituted or continued against the President or the Governor in any court during his term of office.
 - No process for the arrest or imprisonment of the President or Governor shall be issued from any court during his term of office
 - No civil proceedings against the President or the Governor shall be instituted during his term of office in any court in respect of an act done by him in his personal capacity, whether before or a he entered upon his office, until the expiration of two months after notice has been delivered to him.
 - Protection from civil or criminal proceedings for publishing a true report of Parliamentary or State Legislature proceedings in newspapers, radio, or TV.
 - No MP is liable for any court proceedings for speeches or votes in Parliament or its committees.
 - Similar immunity applies to members of State Legislatures for speeches or votes in their Legislatures or committees.



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- Laws implementing Article 39(b) or 39(c) are immune from challenges under Article 14.
- Supreme Court interpretation: "When Article 31-C applies, Article 14 does not."
- Foreign sovereigns, ambassadors, and diplomats are immune from criminal and civil proceedings in Indian courts.
- The United Nations and its agencies enjoy diplomatic immunity in India.

Article 15: Prohibition of Discrimination on Certain Grounds

- *Article 15 provides that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.*
- **Meaning of Words**
 - The word 'discrimination' means 'to make an adverse distinction with regard to' or 'to distinguish unfavourably from others'.
 - The use of the word 'only' connotes that discrimination on other grounds is not prohibited.
- *The second provision of Article 15 says that no citizen shall be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth with regard to access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, road and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly by State funds or dedicated to the use of general public.*
- This provision prohibits discrimination both by the State and private individuals, while the former provision prohibits discrimination only by the State.
- **Exceptions to Equality**
 - The state can make special provisions for women and children, such as seat reservations in local bodies or free education for children.
 - Special provisions are allowed for socially and educationally backward classes, Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs), including seat reservations and fee concessions in public educational institutions.
 - The state can make special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes, SCs, and STs regarding admission to educational institutions, including private institutions (aided or unaided), except minority institutions.
 - The state is empowered to provide for economically weaker sections (EWS) by reserving up to 10% of seats in educational institutions, including private ones (aided or unaided), except minority institutions.



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Article 16: Equality of Opportunity in Public Employment

- *Article 16 provides for equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters of employment or appointment to any office under the State.*
- No citizen can be discriminated against or be ineligible for any employment or office under the State on grounds of only religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth or residence.
- **Exceptions**
 - Parliament can set residence as a condition for employment in a state, union territory, local authority, or other authority, but this provision is no longer applicable, except in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
 - The state can reserve appointments for any backward class underrepresented in state services.
 - Laws may require that certain offices related to religious or denominational institutions be held by individuals of the relevant religion or denomination.
 - The state can reserve up to 10% of appointments for economically weaker sections (EWS) of citizens, in addition to existing reservations. EWS eligibility is based on family income and other economic indicators.
- **Associated Case:** Mandal Case (1992)

Article 17: Abolition of Untouchability

- *Article 17 abolishes 'untouchability' and forbids its practice in any form.*
- **Legal Backing**
 - In 1976, the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955 was comprehensively amended and renamed as the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 to enlarge the scope and make penal provisions more stringent.
 - The Act defines civil rights as any right accruing to a person by reason of the abolition of untouchability by Article 17 of the Constitution.
- **Term Untouchability:** The term 'untouchability' has not been defined either in the Constitution or in the Act.
- **Stand of Supreme Court:** The Supreme Court held that the right under Article 17 is available against private individuals, and it is the constitutional obligation of the State to take necessary action to ensure that this right is not violated.



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Article 18: Abolition of Titles

- *It prohibits the State from conferring any title (except a military or academic distinction) on any body, whether a citizen or a foreigner.*
- *It prohibits an Indian citizen from accepting any title from any foreign state.*
- A foreigner holding any office of profit or trust under the State cannot accept any title from any foreign state without the consent of the President.
- No citizen or foreigner holding any office of profit or trust under the State is to accept any present, emolument or office from or under any foreign State without the consent of the President
- **Conditions of Historical Titles:** The hereditary titles of nobility like Maharaja, Raj Bahadur, Rai Bahadur, Rai Saheb, Dewan Bahadur, etc, which were conferred by colonial States, are banned by Article 18 as these are against the principle of equal status of all.