Stubb’s Gambit: Finland Bets on India Amid a Fractured West

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President of Finland Alexander Stubb made his first state visit to India from March, aiming to bolster bilateral relations. He received a ceremonial welcome and Guard of Honour upon arrival as the Chief Guest of Raisina Dialogue 2026. After landing, he met External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar to discuss the geopolitical landscape, including the Middle East, the Russia-Ukraine war, transatlantic ties, and EU-India relations. “We view strengthening EU-India ties as a strategic priority across domains; Finland is ready to act swiftly,” Stubb said. On 5 March, President Stubb was welcomed by Indian President Droupadi Murmu, and Prime Minister Modi hosted a luncheon in his honor. The leaders reaffirmed the mutual friendship between the two countries, founded on the principles of democracy and the rule of law; the need for a rules-based order with the UN at its center; and shared goals of sustainability and global cooperation in combating climate change.

President Stubb also met Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, while the EAM held a separate meeting with him. Following his engagements in New Delhi, Stubb travelled to Mumbai, where he met the Governor and Chief Minister of Maharashtra, interacted with business leaders, and addressed students at the University of Mumbai. The visit elevated bilateral ties to a 'Strategic Partnership in Digitalisation Sustainability'. Stubb returned to Finland having signed a new MoU on Migration and Mobility Partnership, an MoU on cooperation in statistics, and renewing an existing MoU on environmental cooperation. Both countries also agreed to deepen cooperation in 5G and 6G technologies, double trade by 2030, and establish a dedicated consular dialogue between their foreign ministries.

India Finland Ties

President Stubb's visit further elevated bilateral relations, though high-level exchanges between the two countries are not new. Then Indian President Pranab Mukherjee visited Finland in October 2014. Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä visited India in February 2016 for "Make in India Week" in Mumbai along with a business delegation. In April 2018, PM Modi met Sipilä on the sidelines of the first India-Nordic Summit in Stockholm. A Virtual Summit between Modi and Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin was held in March 2021.

In recent years, India-Finland relations have followed an upward trajectory, particularly in economic engagement. In 2022, bilateral trade reached USD 3 billion, with a surplus in India's favor. Trade in goods totaled USD 1.4 billion, up 45% from USD 959 million in 2021. However, between 2023 and 2024, India faced a trade deficit of USD 330.83 million, driven by imports of high-value technology and electronic equipment, while exports consisted mainly of pharmaceuticals, textiles and apparel, metal manufactures, and electrical machinery and components.

The Indian diaspora in Finland numbers around 20,000, while

over 100 Finnish companies operate in India. Major Finnish companies—such as Nokia, Kone Elevators, Metso Outotec, Wartsila, UPM, Lindstrom, Fortum, Ahlstrom, and Elcoteq—have manufacturing facilities in India. Nokia, in particular, has considered India one of its most strategic markets since 1995 and a key high-growth region. It has played a major role in expanding India's 5G infrastructure, with partnerships such as those with Netplus and Vortex Group illustrating its ability to scale locally.

India's telecom market is projected to grow substantially from USD 48.61 billion to USD 114.47 billion. Indian investments in Finland have crossed USD 1 billion, including acquisitions, and about 30 Indian companies, mainly in software and consultancy, are active there.

The Finnish government has always emphasized renewable energy initiatives. At the Virtual Bilateral Summit in March 2021, both Prime Ministers announced a sustainability partnership focusing on renewable energy, circular economy, and sustainable mobility noting the importance of green growth in bilateral cooperation. Given their shared commitments to carbon neutrality and a fossil-free advanced economy, both countries have strong incentives to deepen cooperation in sustainability—an area further reinforced by Stubb's visit.

Future Ties in an Increasingly Uncertain World

Geopolitically, Finland occupies a sensitive position as a NATO member bordering Russia. Its accession to NATO ended decades of non-alignment, driven by security concerns following the Russia–Ukraine war.

This shift places India in an interesting position. New Delhi has long emphasized strategic autonomy, avoiding alignment with either Russia or the West. However, this visit underscores India's pragmatic approach: it stands to benefit from cooperation in critical sectors such as

telecommunications and renewable energy, while also gaining a strategic link to the Arctic region, an important site for research and resources.

In August 2025, President Stubb spoke with PM Modi, briefing him on Europe-US-Ukraine consultations in Washington aimed at conflict resolution. Since Finland joined NATO, Stubb has consistently taken a proactive stance in support of Europe and Ukraine, urging India to leverage its balancing role between Moscow and the West.

Russian media have characterized Finland's shift as increasingly "Russophobic," reflecting deteriorating Helsinki–Moscow ties. Against this backdrop, the new Strategic Partnership may also be viewed as part of Finland's broader effort to build security linkages by engaging India more deeply with European strategic concerns.

Stubb has also emphasized personal diplomacy, establishing rapport with Indian leadership amid global instability. His recent remarks suggest an interest in contributing to ceasefire efforts in broader geopolitical contexts, including West Asia. Overall, evolving conflicts—from Ukraine to tensions involving Iran—are contributing to stronger India–EU engagement and a growing convergence in strategic understanding.