

## Finland as member of NATO



Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI.  
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- On April 4, 2023, Finland joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), becoming its 31st member. Undoubtedly, this is a significant event, given that NATO security guarantees will extend to this country which shares a 1,340-kilometre border with Russia.
- Before Finland's accession, countries such as Norway (1949, and a founding member), Latvia (2004), Estonia (2004), Poland (1999) and Lithuania (2004) were already a part of NATO.
- Cooperation between Finland and NATO began as early as in 1994 with the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. Finland had the status of an 'Enhanced Opportunity Partner' and contributed in a significant manner to the NATO-led operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

- According to the Constitution of Finland, every Finnish citizen is obligated to participate in national defense.
- The main rationale behind Finland's decision has been to receive additional security guarantees from NATO, which are specified in Article 5 of NATO's founding treaty. It 'binds the members together, committing them to protect each other and setting a spirit of solidarity within the alliance'.
- Given the rising tensions, both Russia and NATO should exercise cautious behavior vis-à-vis the other.
- Shortly after the alliance welcomed its new member, the Russian government expressed its concerns over 'potential weapons systems and infrastructure, which could be deployed right next to its borders'.

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#### Tiger census

- India's tiger population in 2022 was at least 3,167 cats, according to the results of the quadrennial census of the tiger population.
- The previous such exercise, in 2018, estimated the number to be 2,967.
- Being the 50th year of Project Tiger, it is notable that governments, since 1973, have consistently devoted

attention to ensuring that tigers generally vulnerable to environmental degradation and extinct in several countries continue to populate India's forests.

- Being able to ensure an increase in tiger numbers without relying on fenced reserves and by engaging the participation of forest-dwelling communities in conservation are distinct traits of India's big cat conservation approach.
- The 'Status of Tiger' report warns that all of India's five main tiger zones, while largely stable, face challenges of deforestation and loss of tiger habitat.
- The Western Ghats, while one of the most biodiverse spots globally, also hosts some of India's most populous tiger reserves.
- Over the years, there is an increasing presence of tigers outside protected reserves. Cited forests stable, the report says.
- From nine tiger reserves in 1973 to 53 today, the increase in numbers has not translated to all of these reserves becoming suitable habitats for tigers.
- Serious conservation efforts are needed to help, for instance, tiger population recovery in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.
- Wildlife habitats here face various threats that include habitat encroachment, hunting, and conflicts with humans, unregulated cattle grazing, excessive harvesting of non-timber forest products, fires, mining, and expanding infrastructure.
- India's reserves, in their present state, ought to be able to sustain populations of up to 4,000, and with expanded efforts at improving fledgling reserves, these numbers can increase.
- But, care has to be taken to maintain the delicate balance between making the ground fertile for conservation and keeping the rights of forest-dwelling communities intact.
- Showcasing conservation efforts ought not to come at the expense of ensuring the right to livelihood and dignified living of communities, who often live the closest to these majestic wild creatures.



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### **India US**

- There are also strong areas of convergence between India and the U.S. The India -U.S. Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology, launched in 2022, is expected to expand strategic technology partnerships and defense industrial cooperation between the governments, businesses, and academic institutions of the two countries.
  - The Indo-Pacific partnership is aimed at promoting security and economic growth, increasing trade and investment, and enhancing connectivity in the region.
  - The partnership is based on the shared vision of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region that is respectful of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries.
  - The partnership involves a range of initiatives, including joint military exercises, information-sharing on security issues, and collaboration on economic and infrastructure development projects.
  - It also involves cooperation in areas such as counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, and maritime security.
  - One of the key objectives of the Indo-Pacific partnership is to counter the growing influence of China in the region.
- The U.S. may want India to change its stance on the Ukraine crisis, while India may seek to persuade the U.S. to have a stronger position against China. While India would seek greater partnership with the U.S., it would also be reluctant to sever its stable relations with Russia.
  - Moscow has just released its foreign policy strategy in which it has identified China and India as its main allies.
  - India is also the president of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a forum that includes China and Russia, until September.

- The U.S. and India share concerns about China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea, its expanding military presence in the region, and its efforts to establish economic dominance through its Belt and Road Initiative.
- There has been growing interest in diversifying supply chains away from China due to geopolitical tensions, trade disputes, and concerns about over-reliance on a single country.
- India's growing consumer market makes it an attractive destination for U.S. businesses looking to expand their customer base.
- India has a relatively low-cost labor force and an abundance of skilled workers in sectors such as Information Technology, engineering, and manufacturing.
- The government has also implemented policies aimed at attracting foreign investment and promoting economic growth.
- The U.S.-India Strategic Energy Partnership, launched in 2020, aims to enhance cooperation in areas such as energy security and access and climate change.
- The nuclear deal, liberalization of markets, and the outsourcing of Indian techies for U.S. companies are a few key moments of the relationship. Indian Americans are among the most successful immigrants in the U.S.
- India needs the knowledge, skill, and investment of the diaspora to regain its global position.
- Previously, the U.S.-aided Green Revolution had transformed India from a shortage economy to one with surplus food. The U.S. has also played an important role in making India an IT superpower.
- The U.S. and India are also partners in combating climate change.
- This involves a wide range of initiatives, including promoting renewable energy, joint research and development projects, and investment in renewable energy infrastructure.

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### Climate change and wheat



- The unusual rise in mercury in February this year, followed by an untimely spell of widespread rain during the month of March in parts

of the country's key grain-producing States has left wheat-growing farmers worried as they anticipate a drop in yield.

- The Centre, however, is optimistic that wheat production would be close to 112 MT as estimated on account of an increased acreage (area) of wheat and better yield this season, despite recent adverse weather conditions
- If the country's wheat production drops below the government estimate it could lead to a hike in the prices of wheat in the domestic market.
- It's not just the untimely rains in March, but the unusually higher temperature in February this year that has also been detrimental to the wheat.

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previous forecast of a subpar monsoon.

- India defines normal rainfall as between 96% and 104% of the 50-year average of 88 centimeters for the four-month season beginning June.

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## EL NINO and monsoon



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- The monsoon rainfall in India is expected to be 94% of the long-term average, said Skymet, retaining its