

Canadian Nationalism Rises as US Threatens Sovereignty

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*The trade war between Washington and Ottawa has escalated from a tariff dispute into an aggressive campaign against Canadian sovereignty and identity. United States **President Donald Trump** recently signed an order renaming Lake Ontario to "Lake America," a move that has no legal force in Canada but is a national insult.*

***Prime Minister Mark Carney** rejected the change outright, noting that the indigenous Wendat word Ontari'io is more than four centuries old and that Canadians will continue to call the lake what it has always been.*

Trump's renaming of the lake came only days after trade talks collapsed and new American duties took effect, further straining relations between the two North American neighbors.

The US, Canada, and Mexico were required to conduct a joint review of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement in 2026.

Although Ottawa and Mexico City sought to lock in a fresh 16-year term, Washington declined to renew the pact in its current form, leaving the existing agreement in force until at least 2036. Canada has sought relief from sectoral tariffs imposed by the US on steel, aluminum, autos, and lumber, and has offered concessions on dairy access, provincial alcohol listings, and automotive content rules.

In mid-August, Trump briefly claimed a deal had been reached and paused a new 50% tariff, but the deal collapsed a few days later, leading to sanctions and reciprocal measures. This has hurt Canada more because more than two-thirds of Canadian merchandise exports head to the US. Therefore, Canada's commercial diversification will be a long and difficult process, especially since other countries diversified earlier.



Trump's attempts to interfere with Canadian sovereignty and cultural identity — including pressure on the French language, annexation talk, and symbolic gestures such as the lake renaming — are rekindling nationalism among Canadians. The US president has repeatedly claimed he could absorb Canada as an American state. Combined with the tariffs and a citizen-led boycott of some US goods and travel, these actions have reignited nationalist sentiment among Canadians.

US pressure on Canada started during **Justin Trudeau's** prime ministership. By the end of his government, Washington's stance had become more assertive, with discussions of annexation for the first time. Carney's rise indicated that public opinion supported a tougher approach to the US while still leaving open the possibility of a future trade agreement. That harder line now includes a pivot toward large markets outside the US orbit.

In January, Carney visited Beijing and announced a strategic partnership with China focused on energy, agriculture, and trade.

The agreement included an initial plan to cut Chinese tariffs on Canadian canola seed to about 15%, down from nearly 85%, affecting a market worth approximately \$4 billion for Prairie farmers. Canada also agreed to allow up to 49,000 Chinese electric vehicles at the most-favored-nation rate of 6.1% and to aim to increase exports to China by 50% by 2030. China already ranks as Canada's second-largest trading partner, and officials believe that trade volume there is crucial for Canada to double its non-US exports within ten years. However, there are questions and fears that Canada is simply replacing one dependency with another.

Carney has also made India a key partner.

After years of diplomatic coldness between India and Canada due to Trudeau's meddling in India's domestic affairs, Carney and **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** revived negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

Both countries aim to finalize the agreement by the end of the year and to more than double bilateral trade to \$70 billion by 2030.

New Delhi announced a strategic energy partnership covering LNG, LPG, uranium, solar, and hydrogen, as well as memoranda on critical minerals, technology, talent, and defense. Canadian energy and mining ministers view India as a natural buyer of Canadian LNG and high-grade minerals as New Delhi expands nuclear capacity and manufacturing.

Canada is also turning to its trade agreement with the European Union, under which merchandise trade has grown sharply; the

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership; critical-minerals partnerships with European and Indo-Pacific countries; and talks with ASEAN and Mercosur. Ottawa's stated target is to double non-US exports within ten years and to build trade corridors that extend beyond the Americas.

Predicting such a sharp decline in bilateral relations would have been unthinkable in recent times, given the historically deep political, economic, and social ties between Americans and Canadians. However, increasing unpredictability in White House domestic politics under Trump is causing tension with traditional partners like Canada, which are seeking to reduce their dependence on the US. This shift once again points to a major reorganization of the bilateral relationships between the White House and former allies. Canada cannot exit the American market but is under pressure and diversifying its trade partners to ensure it is no longer solely reliant on the US.

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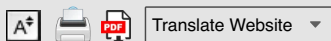
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