



By: TA | AP Insight

Carney visits China in a bid to rebuild ties and reduce Canadian dependence on US



A leader of Canada is visiting China this week for the first time in nearly a decade, a bid to rebuild the country's fractured relations with the world's second-largest economy – and reduce Canada's dependence on the United States.

The push by Prime Minister **Mark Carney**, who arrives Wednesday, is part of a major rethink as ties sour with the U.S. — the world's No. 1 economy and long the largest trading partner for Canada by far.

Carney aims to double Canada's **non-American exports** in the next decade in the face of U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs and the American leader's musing that Canada could become “**the 51st state.**”

“At a time of global trade disruption, Canada is focused on building a more competitive, sustainable, and independent economy,” Carney said in a statement. “We’re forging new partnerships around the world to transform our economy from one that has been reliant on a single trade partner.”

Carney will meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday and other officials.

Canadian officials, in a briefing with reporters, said that it's an attempt reenergize a dormant strategic partnership and also noted that Washington's intervention in Venezuela is far reaching.

Canadian officials said that there will be progress on trade irritants with Beijing, but not a definitive elimination of some tariffs.

Carney will be in China until Saturday, and then visit Qatar before attending the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, next week.

Trump's tariffs have pushed both Canada and China to look for opportunities to strengthen international cooperation, said Zhu Feng, the dean of the School of International Studies at China's Nanjing University.

“Carney's visit does reflect the new space for

further development in China-Canadian relations under the current U.S. trade protectionism,” he said.

But he cautioned against overestimating the importance of the visit, noting that Canada remains a U.S. ally. The two North American nations also share a deep cultural heritage and a common geography.

Pivoting toward China

Carney has been in office less than a year, succeeding Justin Trudeau, who was prime minister for nearly a decade. He's not the first new leader of a country to try to **repair relations with China.**

Australian Premier **Anthony Albanese** has reset ties since his Labor Party came to power in 2022.

Relations had deteriorated under the previous conservative government, leading to Chinese trade restrictions on wine, beef, coal and other Australian exports.

Unwinding those restrictions took about 18 months, culminating with the lifting of a Chinese ban on Australian lobsters in late 2024.

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U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has sought to repair **ties with China** since his Labour Party ousted the Conservatives in 2024. He is reportedly planning a visit to China, though the government has not confirmed that.

The two governments have differences, with Starmer raising the case of former Hong Kong media magnate Jimmy Lai, a British citizen, in talks with Xi in late 2024 in Brazil.

Trump, who has said he will come to China in

April, has indicated that he wants a smooth relationship with Beijing, though he also launched a tit-for-tat trade war, with tariffs rising to more than 100% before he backed down.

Bumpy relations

In Canada, Trump's threats have raised questions about the country's longstanding relationship with its much more powerful neighbor. Those close ties have also been the source of much of Canada's friction with China in recent years.

It was Canada's detention of a Chinese telecommunications executive at the request of the U.S. that started the deterioration of relations in late 2018.

The U.S. wanted the **Huawei Technologies** Co. executive, Meng Wenzhou, to be extradited to face American charges.

China retaliated by arresting two Canadians, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, on spying charges.

While they were imprisoned, Meng was under house arrest in Vancouver, a Canadian city home to a sizable Chinese population. All three were **released** under a deal reached in 2021.

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More recently, Canada followed the U.S. in imposing a **100% tariff** on electric vehicles and a 25% tariff on steel and aluminum from China.

China, which is Canada's No. 2 trading partner after the U.S., has hit back with tariffs on Canadian exports including canola, seafood and pork. It has indicated it would remove some of the tariffs if Canada were to drop the 100% charge on EVs.

An editorial in China's state-run Global Times newspaper welcomed Carney's visit as a new starting point and called on Canada to lift "unreasonable tariff restrictions" and advance more pragmatic cooperation.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Monday that China looks forward to Carney's visit as an opportunity to "consolidate the momentum of improvement in China-Canada relations."

Canada-India ties

Carney met with Xi in late October in South Korea, where both were attending the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit.



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He has also tried to mend ties with India, where relations deteriorated in 2024 after the Trudeau government accused India of being involved in the 2023 **killing of a Sikh activist** in Canada.

The fallout led to tit-for-tat expulsions of senior diplomats, disruption of visa services, reduced consular staffing and a freeze on trade talks.

A cautious thaw began last June. Since then, both sides have restored some consular services and resumed diplomatic contacts.

In November, Canadian Foreign Minister Anita

Anand said that the two countries would move quickly to advance a trade deal, noting the government's new foreign policy in response to Trump's trade war.

Carney is also expected to visit India later this year.