Canada between US tariffs, "territorial temptations" and China: what if Europe offered an (almost) natural anchor?

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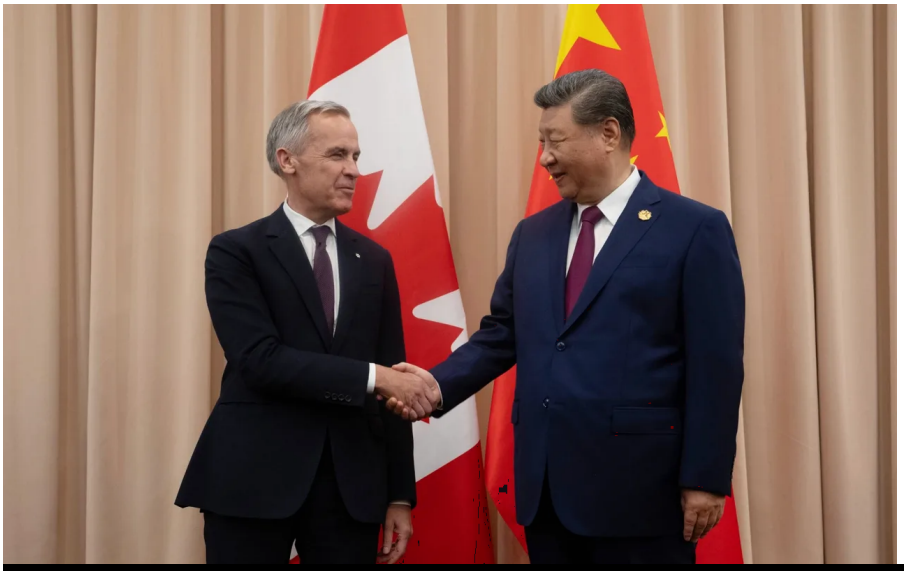
In recent weeks, the Ottawa–Washington relationship has returned to being a high-tension line. On one side, the **US tariffs** affecting Canadian goods not covered by USMCA rules (with rates cited up to **25%**, and a reduced band at **10%** for some categories like energy and potash out of preference) have reopened a trade dispute that North America thought was settled.
On the other side, in the same political climate, **"expansive" statements and postures** have resurfaced: not only the American obsession with Greenland – with tariff threats and public discussions on how to "acquire it" – but also the rhetoric (already heard) of Canada as the "51st State", which in Ottawa is seen as political pressure as well as provocation.

In this context, the news that made the most noise is not a "visit of China to Canada", but rather the opposite: **the visit of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to Beijing (January**

2026), with the declared goal of **diversifying** and reducing economic dependence on the United States, and with preliminary cooperation agreements in multiple sectors.



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The uncomfortable question: why must Canada choose only between the USA and China?

If the trade axis with the United States becomes more unstable, and the Chinese option carries geopolitical, technological, and security risks, then the real question is: **why not build a third strategic leg**? And here Europe comes into play.

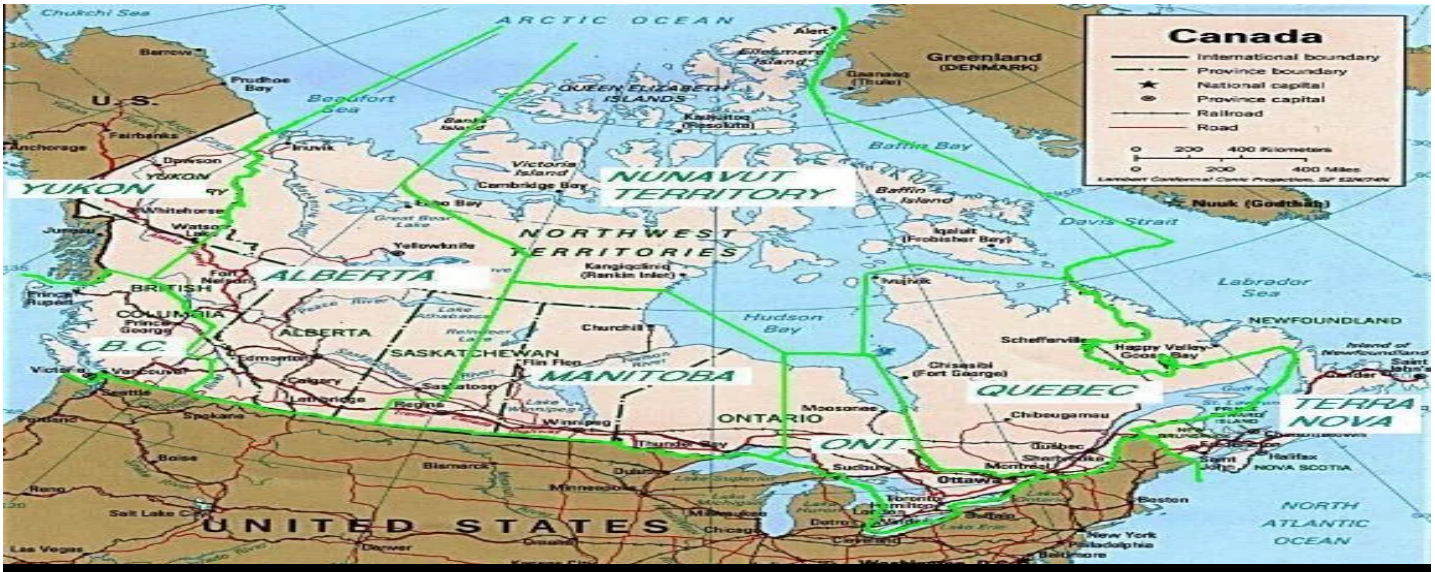
The provocative idea – “let's ask Canada to join the EU” – is perfect to open the debate, but it must be said clearly: **today it is almost legally impossible**, because EU treaties provide for membership for “a European State”.
But precisely because formal membership is out of reach, Europe could consider something politically more realistic: **enhanced integration** (commercial, industrial, technological, and even mobility) that transforms Canada into the **“almost internal” partner** of the European market.

Why Canada is “European” more than geography admits

Here lies the point that is often underestimated: **the social and cultural affinities between Canada and Europe are enormous**, and they are not folklore; they are a trust infrastructure.

- **Institutions and political culture**: parliamentary democracy, rule of law, protection of minorities, welfare and public health as shared pillars with much of Europe.
- **Bilingualism and cultural plurality**: English links it to the European Anglo-Saxon world (UK/Ireland and affinities with Northern Europe), French connects it directly to the continental tradition and Francophonie.
- **Social and family roots**: a substantial part of the Canadian population descends from European migrations (United Kingdom, France, Italy, Portugal, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia), with associative, community, and professional networks that still act as a bridge today.
- **Universities, research, arts**: academic and scientific exchanges, cultural co-productions, publishing circuits, and festivals make the Atlantic less wide than it seems.
- **Regulatory values**: on privacy, consumers, sustainability, and industrial standards, Canada often dialogues more easily with Brussels than with Washington.

In short: **Canada "resembles" Europe** in social architecture, public sensitivity, and rights culture, much more than it resembles a model of aggressive deregulation.



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What the EU could really do (without changing treaties tomorrow morning)

Europe and Canada already have a base: a structured economic relationship (CETA) and long political cooperation. The leap in quality could be a "Canada–EU package" with 5 pillars:

1. **Market and industry**: update and deepen rules on standards, procurement, digital services, qualification recognition.
2. **Energy and critical materials**: long-term agreements on hydrogen, civilian uranium, nickel/cobalt/rare earths, with transparent and sustainable supply chains.
3. **Defense and economic security**: protection of value chains, screening of sensitive investments, NATO-EU collaboration where possible.
4. **Mobility**: more “light” work visas, lanes for researchers and students, structured exchange programs.
5. **Finance and resilience**: common tools to mitigate tariff shocks and retaliations, and closer diplomatic coordination on trade disputes.

A political message: it’s not “anti-USA”, it’s “pro-autonomy”

The right narrative is not “detaching from the United States”, but **avoiding unilateral dependence**. Tariffs and muscular rhetoric (Greenland, tariff pressures on allies, “51st State”) have already produced a concrete effect: they push Ottawa to seek alternatives.
If Europe does not want the space to be filled only by Beijing, it must offer a credible option.

And so yes: “Canada in the EU” as a slogan is impractical. But “Canada with Europe” as a strategic choice is more sensible today than yesterday.