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SPOTLIGHT

Canada Tightens Ties with Central and Eastern Europe

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Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney made his first trip to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) on 24-27 August, visiting Ukraine, Poland, Germany, and Latvia. The visits are a fulfilment of the Carney government's foreign policy commitment to diversify Canada's relations with other key partners in order to reduce its dependence on the United States. In this context, elevating bilateral relations with Poland to a strategic partnership is particularly important.

Under what circumstance did the visits take place and what were the goals?

The trip complements Carney's first European visit in March of this year, during which he visited the UK and France, countries with which Canada has close historical ties and are key partners in achieving its foreign policy goals. The context for Carney's visits is the tentatively suspended trade war declared against Canada by the Trump administration. Consequently, the prime minister announced Canada would reduce dependence on the U.S. and, to this end, would seek [new platforms for cooperation](#) with European partners. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the CEE region has been considered a crucial area of interest for Canada. Close political, economic, energy, and defence cooperation with Poland, Latvia, and Germany is defined as being in Canada's interest. Support for Ukraine stems from, among other things, the active involvement of the Ukrainian diaspora (about 1.3 million) living in Canada, which is able to successfully influence political processes at the federal and local levels.

What stance did Carney take on Ukraine?

On the invitation of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Carney (the only Western leader) attended Ukraine's Independence Day celebrations. This underscored the importance of their countries' close, unwavering bilateral relations. Carney pledged to continue Canada's

policy of supporting Ukraine's defence against Russian aggression. He bolstered this with the announcement of another military support package worth \$1.5 billion, of which about \$800 million will be spent on materiel produced by Canadian defence companies (including armoured vehicles, ammunition, and drones), and \$500 million will go toward [purchases within NATO](#) from the U.S., such as air defence systems. An agreement was also signed to facilitate access for Ukrainian defence companies to the Canadian market, for example, for the production of advanced defence technologies. In the context of a possible ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, Carney signalled the potential participation of Canadian armed forces in a ["coalition of the willing"](#) intended to guarantee Ukraine's postwar security.

What is the importance of a strategic partnership for Canada and Poland?

The strengthening of relations between Poland and Canada is a response to changes in Europe's security environment and the Trump administration's reorientation of U.S. defence and economic policies. Carney and Prime Minister Donald Tusk's elevation of Polish-Canadian relations to a strategic level creates a framework for strengthening cooperation between the two countries, recognising security issues as crucial. The parties declare their readiness to counter the activities of Russia's "shadow fleet" (a group of outdated ships used to transport oil through the Baltic Sea while evading sanctions). They announced deeper intelligence-sharing, arms exports, and mutual investments in the defence industry. They also aim to strengthen

PISM SPOTLIGHT

deterrence capabilities against Russian cyber or hybrid attacks and interference in domestic political processes, among other things. Combating organised crime and deterring irregular migration will be a key element of collaboration. Canada and Poland also intend to cooperate more closely on energy security issues, including the development of nuclear technology. The partnership also institutionalises political cooperation by establishing annual consultation mechanisms between foreign ministers and high-level officials from individual ministries (for example, national defence or climate and environment).

What other agreements were reached?

Carney's discussions with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz focused on defence and energy issues. Canada plans to modernise its again submarine fleet, considering a proposal

from the Germany company Thyssen Krupp (and the Korean firm Hanwha Ocean) to build 12 new vessels. Interest in the area of critical minerals extraction was also expressed. Both sides intend to strengthen cooperation in securing supply chains of key resources essential for the production of electric vehicles and advanced weapons systems (cobalt and nickel, among others). Hydrogen cooperation is expected to be a key energy component. Canada also intends to increase its LNG export potential to Germany and Europe. This will be directly linked to significant investments in port and transmission infrastructure in Canada planned by the government. In Latvia, Carney extended Canada's military commitment to lead a multinational NATO battlegroup until 2029 and announced an increase in the contingent to 2,200 troops. This is intended to enhance Canada's image as a reliable ally in deterring Russian aggression on NATO's Eastern Flank.