

Our Closest Friend Is Becoming Our Frenemy

By Victor Davis Hanson

I want to talk, in two parts this time, about President Donald Trump's problems he's having with both Canada and Mexico, but let's [look at Canada](#) first and we'll talk later about Mexico.



He's in hot water with the Canadians. He's aroused a dormant nationalism. Justin Trudeau—who will step down as prime minister and hand the Liberal Party

directorship and with it the prime ministership, under their parliamentary system, to [Mark Carney](#)—was headed toward defeat.

That whole party was headed toward defeat when Donald Trump started to troll them—"Art of the Deal"—sort of goad them in bombastic style that they should be the 51st state in the union of the United States. They got very angry about it, especially when he brought up a series of outstanding issues.

And the result is that a Conservative politician, Pierre Poilievre, may lose the election. And that would be tragic because Canadians are basically saying, in their anger at us, that if you're liberal and you are anti-American, we'll vote for you, but if you're conservative and pro-American, they won't.

We've got to correct that. But Donald Trump does have a point on a number of issues.

No. 1, Canada runs up a \$50 billion surplus with us. It usually has, except for a few years, always run a surplus. But it's getting bigger and bigger. It's based on a couple of facts: exports to us, a lot of gas and oil and electricity, and it protects, in two different ways, both with tariffs and with state subsidies, its agricultural and timber industries. And it puts tariffs as high as 250% on things like American butter or milk or lumber and timber—things like that.

So, it's running up a sizable trade surplus. I think it's about the sixth nation in the world in terms of its surplus with the United States.

The second issue that Donald Trump has mentioned is the open border. Now, usually, we just think of [border problems](#) with Mexico. After all, we've got this long, long, historically calm border—unfortified, no fence, no wall—with Canada. But lately, there's been some fentanyl—not as much, hardly as much as Mexico. Maybe 2% of fentanyl comes across from Canada. But there have been terrorists and there have been illegal aliens. So, Trump wants that border secure.

Third, Canada is a [member of NATO](#). In 2014, there was an agreement that all NATO countries would supply 2% of their gross domestic product and defense spending. Canada is one of the lowest—it's 1.3%.

This is astounding because in World War II, the Canadian Navy was the third largest in the world. Juno Beach, on D-Day, was reserved for the First Canadian Army. It had one of the most successful armies on the Allied side. It has a wonderful military tradition, and yet, they just laugh at the idea that they're going to rearm.

And they're not meeting their NATO commitments. And to be frank, in some ways, they're subsidized by the United States

with our North American NORAD shield. And they know that if any country were to threaten Canada—and I think that would be unlikely—the United States would step in and shield it and protect it.

So, there's a trade surplus. There's this problem with Trudeau that Trump does not—whom he does not like. And there's a problem with an open border. And there's a problem, as I said, with defense spending.

What's the remedy? I wish it could be solved, this divide, by the absence of Pierre Trudeau, but it won't. These other issues are outstanding.

We don't want Canada as a 51st state. [Donald Trump](#) knows that. "Art of the Deal," as I said, trolling style, he knows that. Canada is a very left-wing country. Socialized medicine. State-run industries. Its GDP is not as great as similar-size California, which also has 40 million people, but its per capita income averages about like Mississippi. I don't think it's as large as Mississippi's per capita income.

But more importantly, if it was a state, it would get—the whole country as a state—it would get two left-wing senators and probably 50 left-wing House of Representatives.

So, let me just finish. How do we resolve it? All Canada has to do is lower its tariffs on certain American products and get the surplus down from \$50 to \$20 billion.

And then, it's got an excellent record of shipbuilding. And we have a problem in the Arctic Circle with China and Russia infringing on the North American parts of the Arctic. And all Canada would have to do is revive its hallowed shipbuilding industry. Why doesn't it just build 20 icebreakers? They used to be one of the best countries in the world in that type of shipbuilding and operation.

They could come to America and say, "Where do—how do we make

an Iron Dome together, America? Here's key places in Canada where you might want to put missile defense places. Here's 20 ice-breaking ships that we will staff and keep the Arctic clear of China and Russian intrusions." That would help. They could produce—patrol the border just a little bit more, and we would have no problem.

But right now, our closest friend is becoming one of our frenemies, if not one of our enemies, and it should stop as quickly as possible.

First published in [The Daily Signal](#)