allies in war through a greatly expanded Department of External Affairs. (From 1912 to 1946, prime ministers had also headed that ministry. In 1946, King appointed Louis St. Laurent as Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs.) This experience was now put to use in shaping a new world organization that would be given the task of preserving the peace among nations. Canada played a significant role in the setting up of the United Nations, and became a principal member in UN agencies such as the World Food Board and the Atomic Energy Commission.

But, Canada, as with all other nations, had to adjust to the post-war reality of a world dominated by two major powers — the Soviet Union and the United States. Geography placed Canada between the two giants, and friendship closely linked the country to the United States in defence of North America. So, Canada took a leading part in forming the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This built on the old alliance of Britain, Canada, and the United States by adding most of the nations of Western Europe. Each country pledged to come to the defence of the others if they were attacked.

By now, there was strong support across Canada for these international involvements. The foreign policy of the Cold War period acted as a unifying force within the country.

Now closer than ever to the United States, Canada had to find ways of preserving its own identity in world affairs. It had to make it plain to Washington that Canada, while a staunch ally, could not be taken for granted. The interests of Canada and the United States were similar, not identical.

In the United Nations, Canada's efforts were directed at mediation and compromise; and, Canada did not always follow the American line on issues. Through the Commonwealth of Nations, Canada maintained ties with Britain's former colonies. So, Canada's desire to avoid world commitments was laid to rest in the aftermath of World War II. From now on, the keynote of Canada's foreign policy was to be to influence world decisions through multinational organizations

Peace-maker and peace-keeper

In 1948, Louis St. Laurent succeeded Mackenzie King as prime minister. Lester Pearson moved into St. Laurent's old job at External Affairs. Pearson had been a career diplomat rather than a politician. Under his direction, Canada in the 1950s continued to work for international security in a world of rapid arms growth and tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. There was also the need to maintain friendly relations with Washington, while defending Canadian interests and views. Canada also strengthened ties with Britain and the Commonwealth, particularly the emerging members from Africa and Asia.

But, it was in the Middle East that Canada passed the severest test of its position as a middle power. In 1956,

following years of border tensions, Israel invaded Egypt. At the same time, Britain and France attacked and seized the Suez Canal which Egypt had nationalized. Canada sought ways of ending the conflict peacefully through the United Nations. Pearson introduced a resolution calling for a U.N. Emergency Force to go to Egypt to supervise a ceasefire. With Canadians among its members, the Force was sent. The British, French, and Israelis withdrew and the region was policed by international peace-keepers. In 1957, Lester Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in the Suez Crisis.

Three years later, the Congo was engulfed in civil war. Once again, a U.N. peace-keeping force was sent to the area, and Canadians were prominent members. Later, Canadians helped to keep the peace in support of the policy of collective security through the United Nations, serving in Cyprus, Lebanon, India-Pakistan, and elsewhere.

At the same time, thousands of Canadians were working through the United Nations to combat the hunger, poverty, and ignorance that can lead to violence and war.

Linking the old with the new

Many of the emergent Commonwealth nations of Africa and Asia had opposed Britain's attack on Egypt. Canada, by not supporting Britain and France and by seeking a peaceful solution to the problem, earned respect from these states. Canada began to stand out as a link between Britain and the newly independent nations of the Commonwealth.

In 1959, the issue of South Africa's racist apartheid laws came to the fore. The South African government had enacted laws which relegated blacks to low-paying jobs, overcrowded and inadequate housing, and poor education. Non-white South Africans were not allowed to vote in elections, nor were they permitted to socialize or marry outside their racial group.

Such racist policies were seen by Canada and the former African and Asian colonies as an affront to the Commonwealth. Canada's prime minister at the time was John Diefenbaker. At the Commonwealth Conference in 1961, Diefenbaker led the condemnation of apartheid, which influenced South Africa's decision to quit the Commonwealth. Since then, Canada has maintained pressure, working through the Commonwealth, on the South African government. It has been a leader in applying economic sanctions which have played a part in encouraging a considerable softening of apartheid laws in recent years.

During the 1950s and 60s, Canada also began to increase the amount of aid it contributed to developing countries. The Colombo Plan of 1950, in which Canada was a full participant, directed technical and other aid to Asian members of the Commonwealth. Canada also began to offer food aid and technical help to the newly emerging countries of Africa.