

Loring Christie even went so far as to believe that even if Britain went to war against Germany, Canada might not have to be drawn in. Mackenzie King shared these isolationist sentiments but knew that Canada could never stand aside in the event of war. A week after the British declaration in 1939, we followed with our own. Christie, a disappointed man, went to Washington.

Our preoccupation with the influence of Whitehall may have helped blind some of our diplomats to what was happening in Europe. This was certainly not true for all our officers – Lester Pearson, for example, saw clearly what was happening – but it is curious that, apart from our determination not to subordinate ourselves automatically to imperial strategies and goals, the Department of External Affairs did not always, in those days, vigorously pursue national interests when these departed from imperial company. For example, at the historic Hague Codification Conference on Territorial Waters in 1930, the Canadian delegation made only one intervention during the entire lengthy proceedings. It consisted of a single sentence; the Canadian delegate said, "I agree with the statement of my distinguished British colleague" (or words to that effect). The Canadian delegate was Lester Pearson.

So, prior to World War II, it was the shadow of London, not Washington, that fell over Ottawa, and, not surprisingly, the primary focus of our fledgling foreign policy was emancipation from the imperial tie. Not only was Washington not seen as threatening; it was the target of our strong embrace. First wanting to see the U.S. in the war, then wanting to support its efforts in the most effective way, the Department of External Affairs, under the leadership of Hume Wrong, Norman Robertson and Lester Pearson, articulated the principle of functionalism to describe the role we might legitimately seek to play in allied counsels and to determine when we might appropriately claim a voice of our own at the committee tables.

Concerns about British dominance in our foreign policy died during the war and, of course, were never revived. But, in the early postwar period, they were not immediately supplanted by concerns about dominance from Washington.

On the contrary, our principal worry was that the world's most powerful nation – the most powerful nation in the history of the