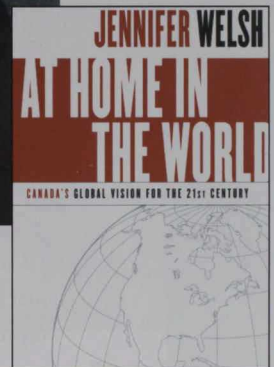


# CANADA AS MODEL CITIZEN

Jennifer Welsh is the author of *At Home in the World*, a new book that offers a vision of Canada's role on the global stage. Welsh, a former Cadieux Research Fellow in Foreign Affairs Canada's Policy Planning Bureau, holds master's and doctorate degrees in international relations from the University of Oxford and has written three books on international relations.



photo: Robert Thompson/FAC



*At Home in the World: Canada's Global Vision for the 21st Century* by Jennifer Welsh (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2004)

In order for Canada to play a new part on the global stage in the 21st century, we need to shed some of the traditional myths that have dominated our international identity for the past half-century. We should conceive of Canada not in traditional terms, as a middle power, but as a citizen in the world of nation-states. In fact, I believe Canada has the potential to be a model citizen for the 21st century.

Both words—"model" and "citizen"—are crucial to my vision. First, the notion of a model suggests a different approach to effecting change. A crucial aspect of Canadian foreign policy today is simply *being what we are*: a particular, and highly successful, model of liberal democracy.

Our model privileges pluralism, as reflected in our federal structure, our official policy of bilingualism and our immigration and refugee policy. It prizes mixed government, by balancing legislative decision making with an activist court and a robust human rights culture. Our model makes risk a collective problem for society, by establishing a set of state-funded benefits that Canadians can draw upon in their time of need. It seeks a balance between providing greater security for citizens in a world of terrorism and other transnational threats, and respecting hard-won civil and political liberties. The Canadian model is also extremely civil, as seen in our crime levels, the vitality of our cities and the success of our artists. Most of all, our model of democracy is internationalist, in embracing free trade and multilateral cooperation, but is also confident in its ability to sustain a unique national identity. All of these aspects of the Canadian model are exceedingly attractive. And what is attractive creates a

magnetic effect. It induces others to emulate what we do, to forge better and closer relationships with us.

But Canada can model in another sense. It can demonstrate how to establish the foundations of a strong society—much as a teacher or consultant might do. Rather than transplanting our model into other countries, our foreign policy can seek to help others help themselves. To contribute to regime building, rather than imposing regime change. In this task, Canada is ultimately a collaborator or partner, rather than an imperial occupier. To put it another way, we become a model rather than the model.

The idea of Canada as model citizen offers an alternative to our long-standing self-image as a middle power.

In my view, this alternative is a welcome one. We no longer live in an international system where great powers are pitted against one another, and smaller powers like Canada work skilfully to find a path through the middle. Instead, we live in a world with a single hegemon that, on the one hand, requires fewer friends to get the job done, but on the other hand, is demanding stronger demonstrations of allegiance. These changes have made the tactics of middle-powermanship much more difficult to apply.

Middle power identity is also uninspiring for our younger generations. The formative experiences of young Canadians—particularly their exposure to global media

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