A Study on Canada’s Human Security Policy: International Contributions, Strategies and Domestic Institutions*

Hyun Seok Yu(유현석)

Kyung Hee University, Department of Political Science, Professor
Kyung Hee University, Research Institute of Social Science, Executive Researcher
hsyu@khu.ac.kr

Abstract

This study examines the experience of Canada in mainstreaming human security concept. It was not a smooth and easy journey for Canada accepting the human security concept and applying it to her foreign policy. Since the inception of the concept by foreign policy circle there was an intense debate whether the concept should be the major principle of Canada’s foreign policy. Internationally, human security policy faced lukewarm responses from international community. Canada needed to have sophisticated strategies to mainstream this new concept. The aim of this paper is to show the importance of careful strategies in promoting new concept as a policy guideline and the role of domestic institutions in that task. In terms of strategies, Canada has promoted human security agenda through multilateral framework. Although U.N. has been a favorite multilateral platform Canada often acted outside existing multilateral fora. Norm making and creating international network with like-minded countries were also major strategies of Canada as shown in landmine ban campaign case in promoting human security agenda. Finally, the partnership with NGO is the most striking feature of Canadian human security policy. Domestic institutions have been instrumental to mainstream human security policy. DFAIT has been a major organizational platform for promoting human security. Other government organizations such as CIDA also played important roles. Also, CCHS as research network funded by DFAIT, has contributed to facilitate the exchange of information on human security issue and to help build a human security community in Canada and internationally.

Key words: Canada, Human Security, Domestic Institution, Ottawa Process, Human Security Network, NGO, Multilateralism

* This work was supported by a grant from the Kyung Hee University in 2008.(KHU-20080374)
I. Introduction

The idea of human security is enjoying increasing acceptance and influence in academia as well as in policy communities. Considering short history of the concept, the current status of human security idea in both realms is nothing but impressive. Now many universities open courses on human security while the idea is acting as a policy guideline or orientation in many countries. Some countries deserve credit for this achievement. Countries such as Canada, Norway, Netherlands and Japan have been promoters of human security. The role of Canada in advancing human security initiatives has been well publicized. Success story of banning antipersonnel mines (Ottawa process) is symbolic case which shows the leadership of Canada in promoting human security. What more important is that Canada was able to make human security idea as a framework for disarmament and arms control issue. Ottawa Convention was very important event for the spread of human security idea which was in its infant stage.

This study examines the experience of Canada in mainstreaming human security concept. It was not a smooth and easy journey for Canada accepting the human security concept and applying it to her foreign policy. Since the inception of the concept to foreign policy circle there was intense debate whether the concept should be the major principle of Canada’s foreign policy. Internationally, human security policy faced lukewarm responses from international community. Canada needed to have sophisticated strategies to mainstream this new concept. The aim of this paper is to show the importance of careful strategies in promoting foreign policy agenda and the importance of domestic institutions for the success of foreign policy.

The paper consists of three parts. First part discusses the evolution of Canada’s human security policy and Canada’s international contribution in human security agenda. Major achievements of Canada in advancing human security agenda are discussed. Second part deals with the strategies of Canada in promoting human security agenda. Attention will be on the Canada’s domestic politics around the human security and diplomatic maneuvering in relations to other states, international organizations and non-government organizations. Finally, the paper examines the domestic organizational platform for promoting human security agenda. Several domestic institutions have been instrumental to promote human security policy.