Chapter 2

Multilateralism: A Critique

2.1 Introduction

Multilateralism has assumed a significant place in China's calculus of security concerns in the post-Cold War period. Given this development, this chapter locates China's approach to multilateralism in the larger context of international politics. Multilateralism is a norm of cooperation under which states internalise the spirit of cooperation and operate for absolute gains. Within the broad framework of multilateralism, cooperation is made rule-based and states are expected to follow rules even if they have to give up their short-term gains for the sake of upholding rules of cooperation. Multilateralism requires institution-building which can transform traditional notions of sovereignty and national identity. The twentieth century witnessed the creation and establishment of a number of global and regional multilateral institutions. It also saw multilateralism setting standards for international cooperation by nations which left their relative gains aside to lead towards larger-community building. Multilateral form of cooperation has been much celebrated, especially among democratic world and developing countries. In this century, multilateral cooperation has been seen in economic, political and security fields alike.

This chapter, thus, focuses on increasing international cooperation and complex interdependence bringing normative change in the behaviour of states, thereby altering basic nature of international structure, state maximisation of power and interests. In this context, the study would assess the potential of multilateralism in international cooperation. Another objective is to make an attempt to study the concept of sovereignty in the light of multilateralism. It aims to look at how far sovereigns have internalised norms of multilateralism? Whether they have followed multilateralism only for utilitarian purposes or they have accepted to pay the price for multilateralism, when multilateral decision-making reasonably asks them to surrender some of their rights. This chapter will also examine the interplay among sovereignty, multilateralism, regimes and security communities from a constructivist standpoint. The premise is that learning and interaction can correct mutual perceptions and bring
convergence among interests, which can change identity of states from egoist rational actors to responsible members of global society.

In the post-Cold War period multilateral international regimes have become facilitators of multilateral cooperation. International regimes have generally gone beyond the parameters set by functionalism and neo-functionalism and are a step towards democratization of world politics, both in concept and practice. Our purpose here is to discuss a particular kind of international cooperation, i.e., multilateral cooperation. First we define multilateralism and then distinguish it from other forms of international cooperation. Since multilateralism emerged at particular juncture of time, its emergence should be seen in a historical context, and the twentieth century inter-war and especially post-Second World War international order provide this context. In this context, a view that international relations should be organized on the basis of the spirit of rule of law in international politics has prevailed. However, multilateralism should be understood from major world powers' as well as weaker countries' point of view. Multilateral engagement among powerful and weaker states, defined in terms of rule of law, draws our attention towards relationship between Westphalian conception of sovereignty and multilateralism. Whether sovereignty and multilateralism are mutually compatible, or multilateralism breaches weak states' sovereignty or guarantees their sovereignty, or multilateralism is an arrangement which makes traditional concept of sovereignty outdated and takes state-system beyond this concept are some of the pertinent inquiries which have been addressed at appropriate places in this chapter. Why states comply with multilateral norms is one of the fundamental questions that need to be answered. Whether multilateralism has a utilitarian-realistic value or powerful normative appeal, driven by ideas, is capable of transforming identities and interests of states have been discussed further. Finally, this chapter locates multilateralism in the broad framework of security. It intends to explore possibilities of the development of multilateral international cooperation in the security realm which might lead to the formation of security communities.
2.2 Historical Evolution of Multilateralism: American Contribution

The concept of multilateralism began to evolve under the influence of Wilsonian liberalism in the United States during inter-war period. It came as a foreign policy agenda of the US with a moral appeal in the form of the League of Nations intending to resolve the problem of war and peace forever. The establishment of the United Nations further consolidated Wilsonian liberalism.\(^1\)

2.2. (a) Multilateralism in American Worldview and National Identity

Though there is a robust opposition to the US for its disregard towards multilateralism and its sharp unilateralism in Afghanistan and Iraq, the fact is that the emergence of discourse on multilateralism and the multilateral setting of international relations have been explicitly linked with the emergence of the US as a major power. In fact, multilateralism has followed the rise of the US and these two developments of the early decades of twentieth century were interrelated and serving mutually. Till the First World War, the dominant institution of international politics (basically European politics) was balance-of-power and international cooperation was normally bilateral. Multilateralism gradually replaced balance-of-power from ideational plank of international politics and arrangements of international relations as well. The multilateral ideas directly flowed from dominant American foreign policy of interwar and post-Second World War periods. These ideas came in American liberal Wilsonian tradition. Wilsonian tradition of American liberalism corresponds to a particular juncture of American history that comes with American ascendancy in international politics, where Europe took the back seat. This process was not just coincidental. In fact, these inter-related developments showed shifting of power base from old world of Europe to new world of America for consequent prevalence, pervasiveness and diffusion of American norms and values.

Change of power-base from one region to another has been a recurring feature of history, as Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly J. Silver have highlighted. According to them, every time in the history of major powers, when a new rising hegemonic power replaced old hegemonic power, it also replaced old set of institutions and norms with new set of institutions and norms. History testifies that ascendancy of Dutch power in

\(^1\) Wilsonian liberalism is refered to the American President Woodrow Wilson. He was president during the First World War. President Wilson articulated the philosophy of liberal internationalism.
the second half of seventeenth century was marked with stabilisation of European politics in accordance with Westphalian concept of sovereignty and English ascendancy established Euro-centricity and institutions of colonialism and gave freedom to the African/Asian slaves who were not taken care of in the Dutch-introduced Westphalian system despite their significant contribution in the emergence of that system. Every new emerging great power tries to establish a new international order to expand and consolidate its power base.²

American advocacy for multilateralism in foreign policy should be seen in the historical experiences of these great powers which introduced international order of their choice at the time of their ascendancy (Arrighi and Silver 2001: 257-279). American-aspired international order during inter-war and post-Second World War periods strived to address the question of self-determination and for developing a unity between the elites of Western and newly independent countries of Afro-Asian world and germinated new norms of multilateral cooperation in Western Europe, which might have evoked a kind of community sense to fight the ‘Soviet threat’. International cooperation based on multilateral principles flowed from American leaders' conscious choice and from geostrategic imperatives as well.

American leadership has identified political principles of universal significance and scope which are liberal by nature. The rule of law as the source of legitimacy and political inclusion has been the basic orientation of the American state. This tradition which is grounded in its national identity provides support for a multilateralist foreign policy (Ikenberry 2003: 381). American national identity in its philosophical conception is voluntary unlike European national identities, which are basically defined in hereditary and genealogical terms. As the American society has been a society of emigrants, and geographically non-contiguous and far-away from other centers of world civilizations; its conception about society has been entirely different from that of rest of the world. American society as a whole lacks ethnic bonds, though there may have been local and micro-level presence of ethnic loyalties. In sum, the final product of American society that emerged has been civil in nature. American national identity and society reflects basically a sense of community. A community that does not enjoy primordial sense of unity needs legal order on the

² In strictly theoretical terms, a distinction is made between great powers and hegemons. However, these are used here in descriptive terms and hence used interchangeably.
basis of rule of law to sustain. "A multilateral world order vision is singularly compatible with America's own collective self-concept. Indeed the vision taps into the very idea of America itself" (Ikenberry 2003: 381).

America's multilateralist agenda attempts to organize international society on the basis of rule of law the way it has organized its domestic society. Thus, Wilson's Fourteen Points or Roosevelt's Four Freedoms can be considered as logical extensions of America's sense of the nature of its own community. Had Wilson and Roosevelt not articulated their worldviews in terms of multilateral world order - an idea derived from America's very own tradition of civil community sense - it would have been difficult for them to understand the moral purpose which America should serve.

Conscious and unconscious multilateral training at home also guided America's foreign policy, particularly when it assisted Europe as a whole (of course not in Soviet controlled Europe) through the Marshall Plan and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) rejecting ethnic national boundaries. It was understood that the Cold War rivalry between the US and the USSR had a powerful civilizational angle not less significant than geopolitical angle. The Leninist communism was directly challenging American way of life and notion of society (Ruggie 1994: 566).

3 These are the four out of the Fourteen Points articulated by Woodrow Wilson in Paris after the First World War. These points provide glimpses of Woodrow Wilson's liberal internationalist worldview:

Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.
Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.
The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.
Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.
A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.
A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

Besides, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Four Freedoms - Freedom of Speech, Freedom of religion, Freedom from want and Freedom from fear - also add another dimension to American Wilsonian liberalism.

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US had never been adjoined with powerful potential adversaries. This is why its policy has never been able to see, at least on an ideational level, the foreign policy in terms of balance-of-power, especially the way European countries saw it. Wilson and Roosevelt framed the ideational framework of American foreign policy in which the national interest within a world order vision was visualized according to their own sense of community (Ruggie 1994: 569-70).

2.2. (b) Multilateralism in American Foreign Policy since First World War

Multilateral rhetoric at the end of World War I and World War II was a reflection of the American sense of community (Ruggie 1994: 554). Woodrow Wilson in 1919 and Franklin Roosevelt in 1945 shared this multilateral vision. Support for national self-determination, aversion to the bilateral alliances, efforts for a League of Nations in 1919 and the United Nations in 1945 and a free economy on the basis of uniform rules to govern trade and monetary relations were common to their visions. These ideas constitute an American vantage of a desirable world order (Ruggie 1994: 555).

The term multilateralism has never been a popular political statement. However its spirit has been expressed by different euphemisms at different times (Ruggie 1994: 559). After the World War II, it was largely because of American interest, initiative and enthusiasm, the UN, International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the General Agreements on Tariff and Trade (GATT) came into existence. US created “rules and organizations-international regimes that laid down a global framework for international relations while protecting American economic and security interests.” Because of this simple reason, one may call twentieth century as “American Century” (Keohane and Nye 1985: 148). NATO in which an attack on one would be considered an attack on all was another multilateral creation of America outside the purview of the UN, when the Cold War politics thwarted cooperation through the UN (Ruggie 1992: 566-67).

According to Ikenberry, though the end of the Cold War defeated non-liberal Soviet Union and made the USSR centric US policies out of place, it did not change American liberal worldview of 1940s any way (Ikenberry 1996: 79-80). For him, "in world historical terms, the end of the Cold War is an overrated event". Contrary to the common wisdom, it only declares triumph of American way of life and American liberal democratic model of post-World War II economy and politics (Ikenberry 1996: 22).
80-81). According to him, the establishment of World Trade Organization testifies to the vigour of liberal multilateral principles (Ikenberry 1996: 90). Today, Western liberal democratic system is much more robust than in 1930s and 1940s and there is no alternative to it (Ikenberry 1996: 89-90).

Ikenberry is so optimistic about the success of American liberal world order that he rejects every proposition that seems even slightly sceptical about the success of American liberal world order. Even if one accepts in good faith that “the United States after the Cold War faces its third try (the first was after the WW I and the second try was during the post WW II period) at forging a durable world order, at reinventing the basic rules of world politics, just as after both world wars”, it only appears to be rhetoric. It appears that he had a firm belief in fundamental righteousness of the American values. For him, the only minor thing is just to reclaim old liberal order (Ikenberry 1996: 91).

Ruggie also believes that Mikhail Gorbachev’s speech at Stanford University in May 1990 was a candid confession of the superiority of world order based on American vision:

"I am convinced that we stand on the threshold of revisiting the concept of alliance building. Until now, alliances have been on a selective and in fact discriminatory, basis. They were based on setting countries against each other... But we are approaching a time when the principle of alliance-building should become different. It should mean unity to create conditions for a life worthy of a human being" (Ruggie 1992: 567).

Thus, the American vision of a desirable world order has been clear and consistent, and it embodies certain key multilateral principles: movement towards greater openness, greater non-discrimination of treatment, and more extensive opportunities to realize joint gains. It does not impute endowing multilateral organizations with extensive autonomy (Ruggie 1992: 567-8). As Ikenberry (2001) and Ruggie (1996) argue, rather than coercive and unilateral policies, multilateralism has been preferred by other countries and thus has been a strategy for the United States to manage alliances legitimacy and construct international order. For instance, the United States took the United Nations and other regional organizations such as NATO and the Organization of American States (OAS); the United States also assisted in the recovery of Asian and European economies through IMF, the World
Bank, and other multilateral institutions. Multilateralism has clearly been a basic feature of US postwar foreign policy (Atisushi Tago 2005: 586).

Since the end of World War II, multilateralism has become increasingly important in world politics, as manifested in the proliferation of the number of multilateral intergovernmental organizations from fewer than 100 in 1945 to about 200 by 1960 and over 600 by 1980 (Keohane 1990: 731). In fact, during this period, one of the major trends within non-communist world has been of institution-building and community-building. United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and lastly World Trade Organization and regional multilateral institutions like European Union (EU), NATO and ASEAN are examples of global and regional multilateral institutions.

2.3 The Present Context of Multilateralism

Some of the recent developments in international politics necessitate an examination of multilateralism. Multilateralism has, of late, been under threat. In 1990s, the importance of United Nations has been greatly challenged. Treaties like CTBT and Kyoto Protocol have not been ratified by American Congress itself.4

In Iraq and Afghanistan, the blatant imposition of unilateralism by US has totally undermined UN. The threats towards multilateralist ideas of last century came largely from two sources – unequal distribution of the process of globalisation and the US unilateralism. Moreover, in one interpretation the US unilateralist policies are emanating from the need to maintain status quo in the distribution of the benefits of globalisation in favor of the US. Since 1990s a concern has been raised about the achievability of a free and fair multilateral world order in which egalitarian distribution of benefits of liberal economy and legitimate and authorized use of force are adhered to.

4 Latest COP-14/MOP 4 (UNFCCC Conference of parties and Meeting of Parties of the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC ) has been organized in December, 2008. So far around 183 countries have signed and ratified Kyoto Protocol. US has signed United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change only. It has not signed Kyoto Protocol.
2.3. (a) Threat from US Unilateralism

The first source of threat to multilateralism in contemporary time emanates from US unilateralism. In regard to the use of coercive force in post-Cold War world order, Alex Cante expresses anxiety of the contemporary world. According to him, Interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq are two major international events in first five years of the present century. They have posed significant challenges to the United Nations and to the international community. Because of these incidents some questions have arisen e.g., has the interlude between the creation of the United Nations and the beginning of this century, a period during which there has been a relative peace, been an aberration? Is intolerance and the waging of war in pursuit of religious, ideological, political and economic motives, an inevitable feature of humanity? Are the events of the First and Second World Wars so distant in memory that we are no longer motivated to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war (as first stated in the preamble to the UN Charter)? (Cante 2005: 187)

Three crucial elements of National Security Strategy unveiled by President George W. Bush are a reflection of American view of global order under the neo-conservatives. These elements are:

- We will not hesitate to act alone, “if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defence by acting preemptively against terrorists.”
- The notion of an unchallenged American superpower-“Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military buildup in hopes of surpassing, or equaling the power of the United States.”
- The idea that in dealing with the world, the American super-power would seek to promote overseas the country’s democratic values.

Ramphal categorically opines, “Stripped to its core, the national strategy projects a view of the world in which multilateralism is dead and unremembered, and unilateralism is rampant” (Ramphal 2004: 5-6).

According to Chief Emeka Anyaoku, the new administration under President Bush gave the first blow to the emerging new multilateralism of 1990s by rejecting the Kyoto Protocol to which its predecessor government under President Clinton had

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5 George W. Bush administration announced National Security Strategy. The stated objective of this policy was to fight terrorism.
agreed, (Anyaoku 2004: 195). And, the 9/11 gave powerful pretext and seemingly valid reason to the US to deploy its superpower resources in pursuing their national security and to flaunt open contempt for multilateralism. In fact, 9/11 has proved decisive blow against this emerging multilateralism of 1990s. Rejection of the Kyoto Protocol is not an isolated example. CTBT and Rome Statue met the same fate.6

For G. John Ikenberry, opposition to multilateralism is an ideological development in the US. In fact, present contempt for multilateralism comes from neo-conservative ideology. Neo-conservatives seem to harbor a cynical contempt for multilateralism. As Ikenberry quotes Robert Kagan as saying "multilateralism is weapon of the weak" and Max Boot as saying "power breeds unilateralism, it is as simple as that". They see multilateralism from purely utilitarian value. "It is an article of faith among fundamentalists that multilateralism and rule-based international order is a dangerous constraint on American power". "Now that the United States is strong, it is natural and sensible for it to resist such entanglements". They just do not want to be “mediated or constrained by international rules, institutions or alliance”. Their simple message is “because America is powerful, it should move toward a power-based rather than a rule-based international order” (Ikenberry 2004: 15). If we charge them that they on purpose forget that power has to have some moral basis and that power need to have some justification and power has to serve some moral purpose, we are not wrong. Power without fulfilling these criteria just cannot be acceptable in a civilized world.

The resentment among neo-conservatives against multilateralism has no real basis. This hostility against multilateralism does not take place because of any immediate and visible crisis. Neo-conservatives’ arguments are basically passion-driven. Their dissatisfaction is mainly psychological. Otherwise, their dissatisfaction

[1] is not a response to any specific development that can be considered a major policy failure. Nor is it a response to any imminent significant setback to interest and position. The perceived danger lies in the future, either when (as one side contends) a world that already deeply resents American hegemonism has gained the strength to oppose US assertiveness, or (as the other side argues)

6 The Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court (also known as International Criminal Court Statue or the the Rome Statue) established the international Criminal Court (ICC). It was adopted in Rome on 17 July, 1998 and it came into effect on 1 July, 2002. So far around 108 states are party to the treaty. US is not party to the treaty. Initially, in 1998, it signed the treaty, but later in 2002 it and Israel 'unsigned' the treaty.
when a world lacking real leadership finds that it no longer enjoys the order that only the exercise of American power can bring... The central issue in the present debate is recurring one: whether America should act alone or with others (Tucker 1999: 15).

Whatever may be the source of unilateralism, the net result is same. On the one hand, the US sharp unilateralism is proving dangerous for weaker countries, but at the same time, this is proving a "costly misadventure" for the US itself. This has damaged America's prestige, credibility, security partnerships and goodwill of other countries. The leadership, which the US has shown to the world by campaigning against terrorism and the so-called rogue states with an implied threat is nothing but 'a geostrategic wrecking ball' that has the potential of destroying 'America's own half-century old international architecture.' Later, American diplomats will have to own the responsibility to repair 'the damaged relations and political disarray it wrought' (Ikenberry 2004: 7).

2.3. (b) Threat from Uneven Globalisation

The current phase of globalisation is generally perceived as a formidable force in regularizing and institutionalizing the international order. However, multilateralism faces a severe threat as the process of globalisation is dominated by the few keeping the interests of the developing countries on the margins. Fernando Henrique Cordoso approaches globalisation from developing countries' perspective. He says that the international economy is affecting individual lives in an increasingly direct manner. However, at the same time, the mechanisms for international policy cooperation and coordination have been insufficient for responding to the problems arising out of globalisation. In spite of the entire range of opportunities globalisation offers, it certainly represents a unique challenge to democracy, which depicts a picture in which one can see a cosmopolitan and globalized economics alongside a national politics, restricted by national frontiers. This anomaly leads to "social injustice, unemployment, and the outrageous inequalities, both within and among countries that coexist with unprecedented levels of prosperity." (Cordoso 2000: 41).

Cordoso's solution to address the issue of uneven globalisation falls within the broad framework of multilateralism. This solution is very close to the concept multilateralism. He says that the creation of innovative forms of international cooperation provides an opportunity for citizens of all nations to see their concerns
reflected in policy decisions on global issues such as the financial system and international trade. It is the principal challenge of international politics in this era of globalisation (Cordoso 2000: 42).

Maria Claudia Drmmond explains, in agreement with the report of Commission for Global Governance which envisages a clear linkage between inequality in the globe and, global security and stability of the international system, that "a sophisticated, globalized, and increasingly affluent world currently coexists with a marginalized global under class, and this in itself represents a threat both on the national level, but also to the stability of the international system". Drmmond further argues that, "Global security must be broadened from its traditional focus on the security of states to include the security of people and the planet" (Drmmond 2001: 180).

Though Drmmond does not propose idea of any kind of institutional form of global cooperation, it is quite clear that only the idea of multilateralism can flow from her view of global humanism. "The new world-order must meet global needs, rather than serve a state-centered version of vested interests. Global humanism presupposes fundamental shifts in the planetary distribution of wealth, environmental protection, and rules of trade and investment that should contemplate the asymmetries between the industrialized and the emerging and low-income economies" (Drmmond 2001: 181)

Similarly, Shridath Ramphal insists passionately that "globalisation must not run ahead of global governance or it will become like wild horses unharnessed from the chariot of human good." The concept of global governance necessarily contains the idea of multilateralism (Ramphal 2004:5).

Wang Zaibang maintains that since the post-Cold War period the process of globalisation has intensified in an unprecedented way, and the need to enhance global governance has become more pertinent. As far as China and global governance are concerned, he argues that since China has greatly benefited from this process, it is its responsibility to make 'greater contribution to the global governance.' He points out that more effective global governance will benefit China also as it still is a developing country, and it has yet to cover a great distance on the path of development and prosperity. He reminds that it is also China's duty towards international community to
contribute in strengthening global governance as global challenges like spread of weapons of mass destruction and environmental degradation are common challenges to humankind, which have to be dealt with jointly by nations (Wang 2007: 1-8).

China is aware of crises that globalisation is causing to the international society. In Chinese view, mismanaged globalisation is not only detrimental to the interests of poor and weak countries but, later it will harm interests of the developed countries as well. Therefore, it holds, "a globalizing economy calls for global operation" in which all the countries of the world have rights to equal participation. China demands that the international financial system should be reformed and made perfect and a just and fair new international order should be established (Yang December 2002: 193).

2.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Multilateralism

The concept of multilateralism has been examined by many from the perspectives of realism, neo-liberal institutionalism, constructivism and critical theory. Realist and neo-liberalist schools are helpful in explaining multilateral cooperation. These are basically of explanatory use and many times the perspectives are sceptical about sustainability and longevity of multilateral cooperation. Realism and neo-liberalism are more concerned about states' inherent tendency of pursuing short-term and relative gains, and maintenance of multilateral institutions respectively. On the other hand, tools of constructivism and critical theory not only explain but they constitute and contribute to multilateral processes and take multilateralism more radically in terms of fundamental transformation of identity of states. Basically, constructivism and critical theory visualise this transformation of states from rational egoist actors to enlightened members of international community. Their main standpoint is that rate and pace of interaction can bring positive change in states' mutual perceptions and can lead them towards absolute gain-oriented community formation.

Joseph Grieco presents a neo-realist view on international institutions. Robert O. Keohane has liberal institutionalist understanding about multilateral institutions. G. John Ikenberry discusses as an upholder of neo-Wilsonian political thought. James A. Caporaso, John Gerard Ruggie and Steve Weber have advocated constructivist vision.
Robert W. Cox and W. Andy Knight apply critical theory to understand multilateral cooperation. Further discussion on multilateralism has been structured in a way that it touches various aspects of multilateralism and depicts different theoretical angels.

The issues involved in the study of multilateralism are whether multilateralism is, and could be, a distinct theoretical category. How can this theoretical category be defined? Whether multilateralism has to do only with number of participants in any multilateral process or goes beyond formal participation. What is the place of internalization of norms in multilateral processes? And which theoretical paradigm serves the objectives of our present study best? These are the main theoretical questions which need to be answered.

A number of theoretical perspectives have been advanced by several IR theorists based on the present context and historical evolution of multilateralism (as the two previous sections highlighted) in which Ruggie, Caporaso and Weber emerge as treating multilateralism as a theoretical category. Basically, the purpose of treating multilateralism as a theoretical category is to attach some qualitative difference in the process of multilateralism that makes it different from other forms of cooperation that will lead states towards a transformation of identity.

2.4. (a) Multilateralism as a Theoretical Category

Multilateralism as a theoretical category has traverssed a long way in its evolution despite certain initial conceptual conundrums. For instance, Caporaso says that there has been a lot of work on “multilateral activities and organizations”, but multilateralism as a “theoretical category” is largely ignored (Caporaso 1992: 601). Despite this problem, multilateralism has been conceptualized by several scholars.

According to Robert O. Keohane, “Multilateralism can be defined as the practice of co-coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states, through ad-hoc arrangements or by means of institutions” (Keohane 1990: 731). He limits multilateralism to arrangements involving states (Keohane 1990: 732). Keohane locates multilateral arrangements involving states in multilateral institutions. He defines institution “as persistent and connected sets of rules, formal and informal, that prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations” (Keohane 1990: 732). As far as international institution, in his understanding, is concerned, it is

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7 The term IR stands for International Relations, the academic discipline. It is used as such throughout the study.
"persistent sets of rules that affect the behavior of the actors, which in most important cases are, but need not necessarily be, states" (Keohane 1990: 732). Multilateral institutions, then, are multilateral arrangements with persistent sets of rules; they can be distinguished from other forms of multilateralism, such as ad hoc meetings and short-term arrangement to solve particular problems (Keohane 1990: 733). Thus, Keohane visualizes the format of multilateral cooperation, though it has some lacuna that need to be adhered. For instance, it defines multilateralism as an arrangement on very formal level. The very purpose of the study of multilateralism cannot be served if multilateralism is not defined on the level of content and substance.

Here, Ruggie engages Keohane. Ruggie makes a general complaint about missing focus on multilateralism in the study of new institutionalism in international relations. Though he acknowledges seminality of Keohane's pioneering work on institutionalism, he insists that Keohane, too, does not focus on multilateralism per se. (Ruggie 1992: 565). Ruggie adds to the study of multilateralism by highlighting the point that Keohane's nominal definition of multilateralism defines multilateralism in terms of numbers of involved states in multilateral process. But Ruggie argues that this "nominal definition of multilateralism misses the qualitative dimension of the phenomenon that makes it distinct" (Ruggie 1992: 566). Here, he quotes Diebold, who suggests, "Issue is not the number of parties so much, as it is the kind of relations that are instituted among them" (Ruggie 1992: 566). The meaning, which Ruggie gives to multilateralism, conveys that distinctiveness about multilateralism comes from the principled basis of multilateralism, which orders relations among states, instead of number based coordination of national policies (Ruggie 1992: 567).

Ruggie deals with multilateralism on the level of content and substance. He associates certain principles to the concept of multilateralism that makes this concept more coherent and structured and lead towards larger objective of identity transformation of states. Ruggie's central concern behind the study of multilateralism is that "the role of multilateral norms and institutions" in the current transformation of identity and interests of states can be understood only by employing principled meaning of multilateralism "by showing how and why those principled meanings have come to be institutionalized throughout the history of modern interstate system; and by exploring how and why they may perpetuate themselves today, even as the conditions that initially gave rise to them have changed" (Ruggie 1992: 567).
According to Ruggie, "multilateralism is a generic institutional form of modern international life...must not be confused with formal multilateral organizations." (Ruggie 1992: 567-8).

Ruggie unambiguously states, "the term "multilateral" is an adjective that modifies the noun "institution." The question is "how does multilateralism modify institution?" His answer lies in his definition of multilateralism that "multilateralism is an institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of "generalized' principles of conduct i.e., principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions, without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence" (Ruggie 1992: 571).

Caporaso is again in agreement with Ruggie and pushes forward Ruggie’s case in the definition of multilateralism by accepting multilateralism as the idea of “an architectural form”, a deep organizing principle of international life. He elaborates the principle of indivisibility compatible with Ruggie’s explanation (Caporaso 1992: 601-602).

"Indivisibility can be thought of the scope (both geographic and functional) over which costs and benefits are spread, given an action indicated in or among component units.... Generalized principles of conduct usually come in the form of norms exhorting general, if not, universal modes of relating to other states, rather than differentiating relations case-by-case on the basis of individual preferences, situational exigencies, or a priori particularistic grounds. Diffused reciprocity adjusts the utilitarian lenses for the long view, emphasizing that actors expect to benefit in the long run and over many issues, rather than every time on every issue” (Caporaso 1992: 602).

To make his point clear, Ruggie gives an example of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) in the economic realm and considers it as a classic case of what he has argued about multilateralism in terms of “generalized principles of conduct”. As he mentions, MFN treatment “forbids discrimination among countries producing the same product.” In security realm, according to him, multilateralism is realized when “states respond to aggression whenever and wherever it occurs – whether or not any specific instance suits their individual likes and dislikes” (Ruggie 1992: 571).
In contrast to the indivisibility of generalized principles of conduct in multilateralism; traditional alliances, bilateral institutions and Imperial institutions “differentiate relations case-by-case based precisely on a priori particularistic grounds or situational exigencies” (Ruggie 1992: 571), and does not uphold principled position on equality among states. “They do so by denying the sovereignty of the subject states” (Ruggie 1992: 571).

Two corollaries follow from Ruggie’s definition of multilateralism. First, indivisibility among the members of any multilateral institutions. Here, he explicitly clarifies that indivisibility should not be treated in technical sense, this is just “a social construction” means to say it is a norm, which ought to be satisfied. He explicates it by the example of GATT in trade. According to him, “it is the GATT members’ adherence to the MFN norm which makes the system of trade an indivisible whole, not some inherent attribute of trade itself.” Second, multilateral arrangements are “expected by its members to yield a rough equivalence of benefits in the aggregate and overtime”, whereas “bilateralism, in contrast, is premised on specific reciprocity, the simultaneous balancing of specific quid-pro-quo by each party with every other at all times” (Ruggie 1992: 571-2).

Multilateralism is fast emerging as a major theoretical tool of analysis for Chinese IR scholars and policy orientation for Chinese government. For example, Jianwei Wang identifies a paradigm shift in China's approach to multilateralism moving beyond cliches like national sovereignty, territorial integrity, hegemony, power politics and balance of power. He points out that its diplomatic discourse is replete with interdependence, globalisation, win-win diplomacy, cooperative security, common interest and coordination (Jianwei 2005: 160). At the turn of twenty-first century, multilateralism contributes to its vision for international order the way it contributed to the US vision for international order in the beginning and then better part of the twentieth century. There could be various interpretations of China going multilateral and many factors to occasion this development. However, on the level of normative analysis, Chinese stand on multilateralism is part of its overall demand for democratization of international politics, which intends to change content and character of international politics. According to Jianwei Wang, the development in Chinese thinking on multilateralism shows China moving from hardcore realist to liberal and cooperative international relations theories.
Xu Jian analyses Hu Jintao's idea of "building a harmonious world" advocated in 2005 and points out philosophical underpinning of China's foreign policy of post-Cold War period. He avers, "theoretically, the concepts of harmonious world and harmonious society form an integrated system of theory and values. They strive for an organic unity between pursuit of the internal development of an individual country and the common development of the external world" (Xu 2007: 40). According to him, "harmony and a win-win result are the central goal of a harmonious world, and attainment of that goal is conditioned on fairness and rationality" (Xu 2007: 37). Moreover, fairness lies in equality and respect for diversity. Besides him, Yu Xintian has also analysed the idea of "building a harmonious world". For both of them, this idea is a big idea (or theoretical summation) that China has stood for in the post-Cold War period. They basically stress on equality of states and democratization of international politics. Xu Jian maintains, "the principle of equality of sovereign states and other norms commonly recognized in the world should be fully enshrined in international law, and international and regional institutions so as to provide a strong legal and institutional guarantee for the principles of equality and fairness and furthermore for the establishment of a fair and rational order" (Xu 2007: 38) Yu Xintian also makes a special mention of international law and international organizations as critical feature of the idea of "building a harmonious world" as they make survival of small and weak countries possible. Further, he says that they are of immense help in restraining hegemony and power politics as well. In this regard, he cites the example of ASEAN in the Asia-Pacific region and SCO in the Central Asian region (Yu 2007: 19-20).

Tang Guanghong has made an imaginative and novel attempt to establish a relation between 'diplomatic idea of China' and Chinese support for diversity of the world. He has elaborated Chinese idea of respect for diversity in international society, and links it with democratization of international politics. His argument is that diversity in international society is natural and involuntary phenomenon which is driving progress and growth. Therefore, it must be protected at any cost, and democratization is the best way to safeguard it. In this context, he points out China's diplomatic aim of 'maintaining world peace and promoting common development'. And towards this end, international regimes like the UN and other related institutions enjoy central importance in China's foreign policy (Tang Winter 2005: 24-30).
2.4. (b) Refutation of Neo-realist and Neo-liberal Scepticism towards Multilateralism

Several theoreticians have attempted to address neo-realist and neo-liberal criticisms of multilateralism as these criticisms have certain inherent scepticism and ambiguity towards multilateralism. Keohane, a neo-liberal himself, applies different approaches such as neo-realist arguments about interdependence and domestic politics, uncertainty and transactions costs, and models of organizational adaptation and learning in explaining multilateral institutions. According to him, “none of these perspectives has established itself as superior, but all contain promising elements” (Keohane 1990: 763).

As Keohane explains, neo-realism emphasizes the weakness of international institutions because ‘in a condition of anarchy relative gain is more important than absolute gain’ (Keohane 1990: 734). He further explains that neo-realists do not outright reject the utility of international institutions. Instead, they share neo-liberal premises of the significance of international institutions in international cooperation. Explaining multilateralism from neo-liberal institutionalist approach he argues that it shares “significance of self-interested state action and the importance of structural analysis at the systemic level” with neo-realism. Keohane further says, “however, it (neo-liberal institutionalism) argues that state behavior can only be understood in the context of international institutions, which both constrain states and make their actions intelligible to others, and it denies that states consistently search for relative gains” (Keohane 1990: 734).

Caporaso's objections against neo-realist approaches to multilateralism are that they are so preoccupied with exogenous givens that they do not take “embeddedness of cooperative habits, shared values, and taken-for-granted rules” into their account and treat multilateralism just as “a question of strategic interaction”. It means that neo-realist approaches ignore constitutive roles of “collective beliefs, presumptive habits, and shared values” in international politics. According to him, if we go by neo-realist approaches, it simply means that we should take multilateral institutions and arrangements only as reflection of “functional responses to environmental challenges” or as reflection of “the prevailing power distribution".
Miles Kahler brings to our attention the realist and neo-liberal scepticism about the success of international institutions embodying multilateral principles. As Realist argument goes, “multilateralism will fail because great powers wish to exploit their national interests in bilateral bargaining, immune from the scrutiny of other states. The leveling impulse of multilateralism simply does not fit the hierarchical power configuration of the international system”. Similarly, “neo-liberal scepticism about multilateralism emphasizes the obstacles to cooperation in groups with large memberships”. However, he reminds Realist scepticism of the fact that “the most powerful nation in the postwar system, the United States, was also the most fervent and consistent supporter of multilateral norms and procedures” (Kahler 1992: 682). To neo-liberal scepticism, he responds by saying that “the content of cooperation, not simply its existence, needs assessment” (Kahler 1992: 708). In explaining his point against neo-liberal scepticism by providing empirical evidence that minilateral (trade agreements comprising very few countries) great power collaboration disguised by multilateral institutions and derogations from multilateral principles in the form of persistent bilateralism addressed the collective action problems posed by multilateral governments for much of the postwar era, he argues that in certain issue-areas such as international monetary affairs and economic policy coordination, great power minilateralism are likely to continue to dominate since the collaboration of lesser economic power is neither necessary nor desirable from the point of view of the United States, Japan, and the European Community (EC). In several other-issue-areas, however, the ability of minilateralism to produce satisfactory cooperative outcomes had eroded by the 1980s. Bargains limited to the great powers were less valuable because of the large number of free riders. Obtaining the cooperation of less powerful states requires not only the substance of a new bargain but also new modes of governance, incorporating larger numbers of participants and their interests (Kahler 1992: 707).

2.4. (c) Constitutional Order versus Balance of Power

An order based on the principles of multilateralism comes very close to the principles of an institutionalized international order as both intend to make international order as a rule-based and democratic order. Institutionalization or constitutionalization of international politics has remained a long quest. The establishment of League of Nations and the United Nations can be considered as
attempts to constitutionalize international politics. However, certain intractable problems continued to persist leading to questioning their efficacy. Therefore, a debate exists whether constitutional order is more enduring and stable than an order based on balance of power.

Ikenberry and Schweller present two contrasting positions on multilateralism. Ikenberry is a neo-Wilsonian thinker in contemporary America whereas Schweller is a realist. Ikenberry advocates a constitutional order in international politics whereas Schweller approaches it from realist perspective. Ikenberry’s constitutional order is very relevant in our study because it can be applied for a multilateral order.

Ikenberry’s definition privileges constitutional order over other order like balance of power. In his view, “an essential element of political order is that the participants within the order must have some acknowledgment or awareness of the order- its participants, rules, and mode of operation is not enough to identify patterned behavior or interactions between actors” (Schweller 2001: 169-170). First, he explains from hegemon’s perspective arguing that a constitutional settlement conserves the hegemon’s power by lowering the bargaining, monitoring and enforcement cost of maintaining international order and enhances its status and it is a form of hegemonic investment because, “they are likely to continue to shape and constrain state action even after the power that created them has declined” (Schweller 2001: 167-8). Second, from subordinate states’ perspective he tells, “secondary states do not need to spend as many resources (in a constitutional order) on ‘risk premiums’ which would otherwise be needed to prepare for either domination or abandonment”. A constitutional order increases weaker actors’ bargaining power with the hegemon. Specifically, international security institutions create multiple channels of transgovernmental planning and policymaking contacts between the hegemon and the subordinate members of the system that routinize and rationalize the joint decision making process. The open character of a democratic polity also allows groups of transnational experts, so-called epistemic communities, to have access to governmental policy making at both the domestic and international levels, which is helpful in establishing consensual knowledge bases regarding the nature of and solution to complex global problems and helps to reinforce continuity in the policy process and to limit the ability of a hegemonic power to arbitrarily get its way on any particular issue. Third, multilateral institutions mitigate the problems of anarchy.
Finally, the short-term time horizons of weak states in the immediate postwar period compel them to strike a constitutional bargain with the new hegemon (Schweller 2001: 167-8).

Taking on Ikenberry, Schweller privileges balance of power over constitutional order on two accounts of predictability and stability. His counterpoint is that constitutional orders are complex systems that rely on ad hoc human choices and require actors to voluntarily choose to subordinate their immediate interests to remote ones. In contrast, the operation of a balance-of-power system is fairly automatic and thereby highly predictable and commonsensical (Schweller 2001: 171-2). In Ikenberry’s sense, a constitutional order is more resilient in the face of disturbance—such as shifts in power, the rise of new states, and changes in the goals of states. But, the problem with Ikenberry is that what he describes as constitutional order is basically the value notion and optimism about the rule of law and institutional binding. Precisely what the corresponding response mechanisms are in constitutional order is unclear (Schweller 2001: 172).

According to Schweller, Thomas Hobbes stated that what makes men give up their independence is not reason but fear. Basically, Schweller avers that Ikenberry’s constitutional order satisfies neither the hegemon nor the secondary and weak states because hegemonic power does not want to be constrained and weak states cannot rely on doubtful enforceability of the rule of law. According to Schweller, Ikenberry’s constitutionalism is “pseudo-multilateralism” in which “a dominant great power acts essentially alone, but, embarrassed at the idea and still worshipping at the shrine of collective security, recruits a ship here, a brigade there, and blessings all around to give its unilateral actions a multilateral sham.”

The inevitability of hegemonic decline leads Ikenberry to claim that a new hegemon pursues a policy of strategic restraint if it realizes at the outset of the postwar juncture that its capability advantage is a wasting asset. Accordingly, the hegemon will forego short-run gains and instead invest in its future, establishing a durable set of institutional arrangements that bind its power but lock in long-term benefits. According to Schweller there are several problems with this logic (Schweller 2001: 173). In practice, the predictable behavior is that growth of power does not breed humility in powerful states but irresistible temptation to extend their territorial control, and domination of the international economy. Second, domestic electoral-
political considerations do not allow leaders to abandon policies of autonomy and unilateralism in favor of multilateralism and self-restraint. Since, history has not appreciated decision makers who acted in such a farsighted manner; it does not inspire leaders to show such statesmanship. Finally, this has never been the question when decline will come and how much deterioration can be expected (Schweller 2001: 176).

As Richard Betts puts it, a "system designed in good times to cope with bad time should be judged in terms of the bad times rather than good times" (Schweller 2001: 173-5). The mere coexistence of binding institutions and hegemonic restraint is not the evidence that the former is causing the latter (Schweller 2001: 173-5). According to Schweller, Ikenberry's claim that the institutional arrangements constructed after 1945 worked to check American power is not historically valid. According to him, what restrained US power and made its use of legitimate force in the eyes of its postwar partners was not the creation of a constitutional order but rather the common Soviet threat and the bipolar structure of the international system (Schweller 2001: 177). More generally, the logic of Ikenberry's constitutional order asserts that binding institutions are designed to check concentrated power in the hands of the leading state. Yet the European industrial democracies and Japan feared American abandonment, not the unfettered exercise of its preponderant power (Schweller 2001: 178).

Many of the most momentous decisions to exercise American power or dramatically change the direction of US foreign policy were made unilaterally, without prior consultation among its allies (Schweller 2001: 178-9). According to Schweller international institutions have simply created a facade of multilateral legitimacy around American unilateralism. According to him, present conditions are tailor-made for Ikenberry's theory to work:

- America secured total victory over its rival and gained unprecedented hegemonic power and status;
- the current Post-War structure is the only one, since the birth of the modern state system in 1648, which is universally recognized as unipolar by all its members;
- there is no serious challenger to American supremacy on the horizon;
• America's ideals, values, and domestic structures are the embodiment of constitutional order and democracy; and the world has never been more populated by democratic states. If there was any easy case to test a theory, this is it: The United States is the perfect candidate at precisely the right moment in history to transform the system into a constitutional order. (Schweller 2001: 179-80).

According to Schweller, Ikenberry prescribes liberal idealist means to achieve Machiavellian realist ends (Schweller 2001: 184). Schweller's point is that the purpose of this institutional order is to lock in the hegemons's advantage after it has reached its peak in actual power. Here, the strategy illustrates the Machiavellian maxim that the prince should always appear virtuous but not act virtuously (Schweller 2001: 185). Thus, Schweller presents a case against Ikenberry's constitutional order.

2.4. (d) Critical Theory and Multilateralism

Critical theory provides a new dimension to the study of multilateralism by extending it beyond the ambit of interstate system and poses some new questions to define multilateralism. In this context, critical theorist Robert Cox raises the following pertinent questions:

• What kinds of entities are involved in multilateral relations?
• What kind of system connects these entities?
• What specific condition of the system gives the contextual meaning to the terms multilateral and multilateralism?
• What kind of knowledge is appropriate to understanding the phenomenon of multilateralism?

Cox examines multilateralism from two main standpoints: one, as a tool to institutionalize and regularize the existing order; the other, as the tool to transform the existing order. In his view, "the question of transformation is the more compelling of two", though he does not wish away or reject utility of first standpoint. In fact, questions posed by him simply reflect his concerns about the transformative role of multilateralism (Cox 1992: 163). According to Cox's reading of realism, realism does not ignore utility of multilateral institutions, because realists know that power of states is constrained by so many factors. States do associate with other states and find common interests, though temporary. However, international institutions cannot acquire authority of their own and play a transformative role (Cox 1992: 167).
Cox's point on liberal institutionalism is that it is basically useful in maintenance and adaptation of existing international regimes and institutions, but not so much useful in initiating new international regimes and institutions. At best, "these regimes and institutions facilitate the interaction of states and components of civil society within their spheres" (Cox 1992: 167). In broad categorization of W. Andy Knight, traditional and critical approaches are two major conceptual approaches to the study of multilateralism and global governance (Knight 1995: 564-65). These two approaches correspond to two major standpoints to multilateralism that Cox delineated. According to Knight, traditional approach rationalizes uncritically "the existing configuration of state and economic power" and tries to reform this configuration and "existing multilateral and governance structures". These reforms are what he calls "piecemeal reforms" and status-quoist by nature. In contrast, critical approach tries to analyze interrelation between global order and the multilateral process. This approach examines correctness of the "institutional structures and arrangements" whether they correctly represent the new demands that are bound to emerge from changes in global order. "According to the critical theory of IR, the UN system represents the most recent universalist attempt at institutionalizing a particular form of world order; the immediate post-1945 world order, and its various sub organs are improvements on previous institutional features designed to meet the demands for greater security, welfare and justice emanating from the global society. However, it is not to be regarded as the final product in multilateral evolution" (Knight 1995: 564-65).

Knight clearly avers

"we cannot speak as though we have arrived at any coherent or viably aggregated, form of 'global governance'...at the same time, it would seem, however, that there has been an evolution of sorts in the multilateral activity of human society whose trajectory bears as a progressive, albeit not consistently unilinear, development in the direction of what might be called 'global governance'".

In fact, what appears from Knight's analysis is that though he privileges critical approach over traditional approach, he does not treat the existing "institutional structures and arrangements" just as a conspiracy to maintain the existing system. He puts them in an evolutionary trajectory in which new "institutional structures and
arrangements” are better and more progressive than previous “institutional structures and arrangements” (Knight 1995: 565).

Critical theory has its importance in questioning the existing form of whatever stage of global governance and cooperation international society has reached. But, it has very little to offer by way of credible road map for multilateralism in its evolution.

2.4. (e) Multilateralism in Security Realm: Insights from NATO

Since the main objective of our study lies in security realm, multilateralism needs to be analyzed in the specific context of security. What we have to see is whether democratic spirit of generalized principles can work in security matters where dilemma is always very high. In this context, NATO being oldest surviving and successful security grouping fulfilling the conditions of a security community provides a better case study in which we can assess our propositions.

In the study of NATO, Steve Weber locates multilateralism in the security realm. In agreement with Ruggie’s “generalized principles of conduct” and indivisibility of principles, he says that in the security realm “multilateralism tends to make security a non-excludable good”, which “minimizes the hegemon's coercive power and its ability to extract payment for protection” (Weber 1992: 637). He further says that multilateralism in the security realm “makes the sanctioning of free riders difficult and threats of abandonment almost impossible.” Weber highlights the inadequacy of neo-realism in explaining the principles on the basis of which an alliance is formed. According to him, neo-realists' general understanding about security alliances that states aim to increase their security against potential adversaries is agreed. But, power of principles and norms behind any security alliance, which may allow it to acquire strength of its own and transform the identities and interests of the states, remains a puzzle for neo-realism (Steve Weber 1992: 675).

Certainly, nominal definition of multilateralism, which specifies a condition of coordination among three or more states, applies to security community also. But what makes a security community distinct in comparison to other forms of security cooperation is, according to Ruggie, indivisibility of peace, which is the basic premise of collective security in which “a war against one state is, ipso facto, considered a war against all… Facing the prospect of such a community wide response, any rational potential aggressor would be deterred and would desist. Thus, the incidence of war
gradually would decline” (Ruggie 1992: 569). In Ruggie’s opinion, “the United States frequently invoked the collective security model in leading the anti-Iraq coalition in the Persian Gulf crisis and then in war, though what if any permanent institutional consequences will fall from that effort remains to be seen” (Ruggie 1992: 570).

According to Ruggie,

“NATO reflects a truncated version of the model, in which a subset of states organized a collective self-defence scheme of indefinite duration, de jure against any potential aggressor though de facto one [here, Ruggie eludes the USSR]. Nevertheless, internally the scheme was predicted on two multilateralist principles... The first was the indivisibility of threats to the collectivity...and the second was the requirement of an unconditional collective response” (Ruggie 1992: 570)

According to Steve Weber, “most American policy makers believed that bipolarity would pit the United States and the Soviet Union against each other in ideologically charged, competitive struggle that would be at best a temporary interlude to war.” In fact, in 1940s and 1950s, there was a multipolarity debate in the US. In this debate, multipolarity was roughly corresponding to multilateralism. And the crux of debate was how to revitalize and strengthen post-Second World War West Europe, which could be effectively converted into a third pole apart from the US and the USSR. Under this policy, the US' aim was to do away with deep fault lines within that part of Europe, which was under its influence. US was mainly concerned about historical rivalry between Germany and France. US tried its best to foster multilateralism in post-Second World War Europe. NATO came into existence in this context.

Weber argues that the strength of political ideas of American policy makers was responsible for their enthusiastic support for multilateralism in the European security. He says that the strength of these ideas varied across individuals within the decision-making elite. The 1950s were not generally a time of low threat perception in Washington and Eisenhower commitments to multilateralism within the alliance were not noticeably weakened by periods of increased threat, including periods marked by US-Soviet crises’, the Suez debacle, and the Sputnik launch. These crises and events reinforced the precedents to transform NATO through the sharing of nuclear weapons with the allies because Eisenhower’s determination was driven by political ideas,
neither by military considerations nor abstract strategic arguments about credibility of extended deterrence. The Kennedy administration reversed Eisenhower’s policy on nuclear sharing. But the reasons for this were not that the new threats pushed the issue of multilateralism in NATO from low politics into high. Instead multilateralism was overwhelmed by a new set of ideas about nuclear weapons that set fresh requirements for maintaining deterrence and planning for nuclear war. Multilateralism neither came in with low politics nor went out with high. Its movements are better explained by the movements of threats of ideas that were disconnected from any objective exigencies of security (Weber 1992: 676-677). He further argued that NATO has broadened the concept of security linking it with the domestic concerns of states. “In this conception, security institutions have a broad mandate for peace management, economic and social progress, and other kinds of positive cooperation among states. Within NATO, security became linked political standards of multiparty democracy, human rights, and economic freedom” (Weber 1992:679). According to Weber, neither in 1949 nor in 1992, Europe has been only with one option of NATO type multilateralism. Realist fears have always been there among European states or even against the US itself. These fears continue to make bilateral alliances attractive. But, this is the pervasive power of ideas that has percolated so much through European mind so that, even “if the European Community goes on to construct its own security apparatus through the Western European or otherwise, whether tightly linked to NATO or not that institution will almost certainly embody similar principles.” Weber’s claim is that “Institutions have created new possibilities and have changed states’ conceptions of self-interest in fundamental ways. Important parts of those conceptions are now being reproduced and spread to other emerging states through new and modified institutions developed under the legacy of the old” (Weber 1992:.680). Alastair Iain Johnston’s proposition, that actors who enter into a social interaction rarely emerge the same, buttresses Weber’s claim (Johnston 2001: 488).

Lastly, the central problem with realist interpretation of international cooperation and institutions is that, first of all, it does not concede much to the fact that states do cooperate in normal circumstances and cooperation exists in the long run; secondly, it weighs too much on worst-case-scenario. If cooperation is a general habit of states, can they not overcome conflict through institutionalized cooperation?
Recurrence of conflict does not prove the point that quest for peaceful society should be stopped and conflict-ridden society should be accepted as only reality.

Ruggie's understanding about multilateralism within the broad framework of constructivism is more optimistic for the success of multilateral cooperation. Any attempt to build a serious and responsible long-term cooperation or to form a community in security matters will not be successful without bringing about a change in the fundamental identity of states. Ruggie's definition can explain not only success of community like European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization but it also sets parameters of cooperation required for any new community building on the basis of multilateralism. The unique aspect about multilateralism is that it presents a blend of theory and praxis. Multilateralism as a modern phenomenon attempts, on a subtler level, to set an agenda towards a democratic and constitutional international and global order and governance.

As far as China's understanding about multilateralism in security realm is concerned, it extends its qualified and measured support to multilateral institutions dealing with security issues. China is still an ardent supporter of Westphalian model of nation-states. Its support to multilateral institutions in general and multilateral institutions operating in security domain in particular remains subject to paramountcy of the principle of equality among sovereign states. However, China's foreign policy shows sufficient flexibility in accommodating multilateral security institutions in its ambit. It recognizes their importance at both the levels of norm and utility. At the normative level, multilateral security institutions form part of its agenda of democratization of international politics, and on the utilitarian level, it serves its foreign policy of peace and development. It provides a framework to effectively counter non-traditional security threats and to stabilise its peripheries. The idea of 'comprehensive security', appeared in mid-1990s in China among Chinese foreign policy and security experts, throws light upon Chinese understanding about security. The idea of 'comprehensive security' broadens the scope of notion of security from traditional to non-traditional. And, it points out the positive role of multilateral institutions in the security arena. (Wang Yizhou 2002: 4-5)
2.5 Future of Multilateralism

Many argued that with the end of the Cold War, time had come when institution-building on the basis of multilateralism could be possible and was deemed as a synthesis of Cold War politics and as the only process that could stabilise international politics in the post-Cold War period. We can assume that post-Cold War international order should have been more rule-based, if we take the speech of former President George H. W. Bush on its face value momentarily:

“A new world order.... a new era-freer from the threat of terror, stronger, in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace, an era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and south, can prosper and live in harmony.... Today, that new world is struggling to be born, a world, where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle, a world in which nations recognize the shared responsibility for freedom and justice, a world where the strong respect the right of the weak” (Miller 1992: 7)

In fact, the reality is in complete contrast to the above pronouncement. International order has become more and more unilateral. Price has quoted Robert Kagan as saying, “contemporary US strategy is more the inevitable product of hegemony and less the choice of a particular administration” (Price 2004-05: 129). Kagan stated this in “Power and Weakness” in Policy Review, June 2002. However, Price is not in agreement with Kagan on this point. He says that “(h)egemony does not necessarily mean a rejection of multilateral institutions and international law, and indeed rejecting them will make dominance much more costly than a strategy of leadership of these institutions that others could accept” (Price 2004-05: 133). The US practices have been nonetheless by the expectations of the international community and its attendant rules and norms partially because such norms are not disembodied from US traditions and practice. If contemporary expectations of the conduct of a civilized state really did not matter at all, the US would simply have destroyed Iraq. The US has been compelled to invest billions, and eventually turned for the benefits preferred by legitimacy to the very UN that the Bush administration threatened with irrelevance, in case it did not provide Security Council’s approval of the war. In short, while the international community was not able to prevent the US from going to war, neither has the US under the Bush administration been entirely successful in completely resisting key social structures of world politics (Price 2004-05: 135-6).
2.5. (a) Multilateralism with and without America

The future of multilateralism is dependent on the US to a large extent given its global reach. In such a scenario, two questions need immediate answers for better understanding of future of multilateralism. Is the compliance of the US to the rule-based international system indispensable for multilateralism to sustain in international politics? Or has Multilateralism irreversibly become fundamentally incompatible with American hegemony?

As has been observed in history that the international institutions require backing of some powerful states to sustain. In the light of this observation, multilateral institutions in contemporary times really face a unique challenge as their relevance is occassionaly questioned by the US. They are in dilemma because they cannot do business without the US or ignore it either. At present, on the surface level, prospects for multilateral cooperation seem grim. However, an in depth analysis shows situation is not as hopeless as it appears because economic structure in the world has become quite diffused. Though no international power measures up the US in military terms, economic bargaining power of countries like China, India, Russia and Brazil has increased considerably. These countries together with other countries can diplomatically contain incongruous behaviour of the US in multilateral institutions. Another point is that the US itself is not necessarily predisposed to oppose multilateralism all the time. Alberto R. Call (1993: 5-14) sums that multilateralism is quite compatible with US national interests. Though, his vision for a cooperative international order is Eurocentric, he advocates US integration with multilateral fora and proposed principled use of power.

The Cold War was characterized by two important elements: the ideological conflict, and the militarization of confrontational foreign policies (Jasjit Singh 1991: 773). In post-Cold War world order, ideological conflict has almost come to an end and it is American foreign policy which seems to be confrontational. According to Jasjit Singh, post-Cold war world would be polycentric. The term polycentric world seeks to indicate a complex, pluralist system, characterized by a number of centers of powers trying to achieve a balance of interests rather than the classical balance of power model. Pragmatic national interest is likely to be the dominant driving force of state policy in the evolving political architecture. At the same, two important characteristics are likely to seek “areas of influence” as perceived in the earlier
models, and conflictual confrontation is likely to be avoided in inter-state relations between major actors (Jasjit Singh 1991: 780-1).

The international order, thus, has rapidly moved towards a polycentric paradigm of pluralistic, complex, and asymmetric relationships of cooperation, competition and in some cases, conflict. What it means in practical terms is that the new international order will continue to be characterized by change and uncertainty (Jasjit Singh 1991: 784). The Asia-Pacific Region has emerged from the background to the center-stage in world affairs with a potential to shape future history (D. Banerjee 1993: 1143). There are two metaphors, which characterize emerging world order: one is John Gaddie’s geological metaphor of “tectonic motion”. Here the tectonic movement of giant “plates” below the earth’s surface is the massive shifts in the “historic tectonics” of human civilization caused by changes currently around the globe. The allusion is to the democratic and human rights urges of the people as well as to breakup of large empires and unions. The pressures they generate are claimed to be inexorable and reflect deep socio-historical forces that lie embedded in the world’s coexistence. The other metaphor is that of “fractured glass”. At one level are integrating factors such as economic interdependence, globalisation and supranational capitalism. At another is the widening gap between the “north” and the “south”, attempts at regional economic groupings and tensions in the developing world due to the non-fulfillment of rising expectations, diffusion of power, rise of ethnicity and assertion of political identity, a phenomenon of the diminishing power of the state, population movement and environmental degradation (D. Banerjee 1993: 1144).

In new world order, sovereignty is not inviolable. It can be violated in the interests of a “larger good”. Some of these are in order to protect minority groups from oppression, defend severe ecological degradation, protect democracy, secure human rights, and prevent excessive militarization or irresponsible arms acquisition. Another key element of change in the emerging world order is the shift from geopolitics and geo-strategy to geo-economics. This shift has three dimensions: Now boarders are not restricted. Now neighbors are not possible threats. They need not to be outflanked. Geo-economics considers neighbors as allies. Whereas geopolitics is primarily an interaction between governments, geo-economics is the interplay of commerce and trading institutions with playing marginal role. The most significant development in the emergence of geo-economics is being manifested in East Asia-
even though the European Community (EC) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are relevant examples. In Asia-Pacific, trans border interactions are immense. Whether it is the growth triangles, in Southeast Asia, or the enlarged circles between China and its neighbors, its potential impact on international relations in Asia-Pacific will be very great (D. Banerjee 1993: 1146-7).

As far as emerging world power structure is concerned Banerji claims that unipolarity did exist for a brief period of time during 1990-1992, has surely passed. For him, economically world would be nearly multipolar. Technologically Japan and other countries are catching up with the US and militarily, the US is not that awesome as it is made out to be. He prescribes a new world-order in which no breach in sovereignty, no interference, no imposition of values should be there. These are the prescriptions to make the arrival of multipolarity less turbulent. These prescriptions are required because some states, "nations, groups have shown that they are more at home in the jungle than the law courts; Western ideas are not universally shared. International institutions have proved inadequate to meet many of the new challenges; and no clear new global structure has emerged' (Barber 1993: 153).

CV Rangnathan does not accept absolute American predominance in the world despite the US blatant show of unilateralism in post 9/11 and post Iraq II phase of current international politics. According to him, American predominance measured in the traditional concept of hard power does not capture the full picture of role of globalisation and the democratization of technology in the transformation of world politics (Rangnathan 2004: 139). In this picture, one realizes an anomaly resultant from expansion of fruits of globalisation and technology some states are outperforming the US at least in the realm of soft power and have become indispensable for the US. Apart from states, some non-state actors like al Qaeda, which are equally taking advantage of integrated global economy network and easily accessible technology, are outside of the ambit of the US power. Paul Heinbecker articulates the same view about the relative strength of the US. "The US is too powerful to be coerced by anyone but not powerful enough to coerce everyone. Most significantly, in an age of asymmetric warfare, the US is invincible but not invulnerable." The US can neither avoid cooperation nor can dictate terms of the cooperation (Heinbecker 2004: 787).
Heinbecker reminds the existence of powerful American public opinion/public space, which is very much liberal in its values. According to him, liberal values of American society will not let the US convert itself into a barbarian imperial power of medieval style and become a demon (Heinbecker 2004: 785). American support to multilateralism is not going to die out for the functional demands of interdependence, the long-term calculations of power management and America's political tradition and identity will remain intact (Ikenberry 2003: 380). Multilateralism represents dominant ideological discourse in American foreign policy. There is a powerful ideological realization that multilateral agreements and institutionalized partnerships are necessary in order to achieve its goals. This realization keeps faith in international rules and institutions intact despite the commanding position of isolationist and unilateralist ideas (Ikenberry 2003: 382). "Politicians can champion go-it-alone diplomacy, but they are not doing so because the public demands it." Multilateralism has percolated in the psychology of common American (Ikenberry 2003: 382). Walter B. Scocmbe says, "America, however patriotic, jingoistic and ostensibly disdainful of foreigners is, its popular culture is far from unilateral by preference when it comes to military operations. Opinion polls consistently show- in a variety of contexts-that public support for American military operations is far higher when the United States has the support of its allies than when it would be alone. In part, this reaction is no doubt the sensible one that Americans like others to share the costs and risks, but it also appears to reflect a more complex judgment about international affairs" (Scocmbe 2003: 120-121). The reality is that the American people are not interested in empire (Heinbecker 2004: 785). The US was born anti-imperial, and remains anti-imperial in its soul, its late 19th century experimentation with colonialism and its all too frequent interference in Latin America notwithstanding (Heinbecker 2004: 786). In fact, notwithstanding some of the attitudes on display at the 2004 Republican Party convention, in the polls after the Iraq invasion, a majority of Americans even said they supported the United Nations, the presumed rival of the United States for world leadership, at least in the fevered minds of some American foundationalists (Americanists) and defunct senators (Heinbecker 2004: 785)

From ground strategic interests also, multilateralism does not lose its relevance. Only support for multilateralism can buy other States' acquiescence and cooperation (Rangnathan 2004: 380). Walter B. Scocmbe points out the fundamental
changes in the international security environment since the end of the Cold War (Scocmbe 2003: 118). According to him, pre-emption and unilateralism are central to this environment. What Scocmbe is pointing out cannot be just wished away because in the absence of contending super power and any powerful structure of global governance, the world has been watching the US sharp unilateralism since the end of the USSR. The world has seen this unilateralism not only in the security realm but in other fields also (Scocmbe 2003: 118). Walter B. Scocmbe is hopeful that universal unilateralism can not sustain for long because of practical, logistical and strategic difficulties. It is clear from the fact that “American military operations are almost always greatly facilitated by having the cooperation and support of others” (Scocmbe 2003: 120)

Atisushi Tago makes two categories of multilateralism. They are procedural and operational. Though he points out that there are very few cases of US using procedural multilateralism under the cloak of operational multilateralism, he accepts America’s alliance/security alliance/permanent like CEATO or CENTO or occasional like coalition of willings as multilateralism (Tago 2005: 580-587). He mentions burden sharing and legitimacy-seeking factors influencing the US decision to use multilateral fora (Tago 2005: 588-589).

Notwithstanding criticisms by both realists and universalists, multilateralism is likely to figure prominently in American foreign policy for the foreseeable future. This is due to at least four sets of reasons. The first is simply the law of institutional inertia. In many instances, however, considerably more than inertia is at work: the East European countries actively clamor for access to NATO and the European Union: all the formal centrally planned economies wish to be accommodated within the global multilateral trade and financial arrangements; the demand for peace keeping services remain high, despite setbacks in Somalia and a resolute intervention in Bosnia; the world economy is more integrated than ever necessitating new rules of conduct; issues of global ecology continue to pose risks and surprises requiring new forms of collaboration. The United States has interests in advancing the cause of multilateralism in several if not all these areas. Moreover, as the United States scales back its own global military commitments, it will try to persuade others to provide for more of their own security. The final factor favoring variants of multilateralism as a key element of US Foreign policy after the Cold War the most intangible, but
ultimately it may prove the most decisive: the evolving American sense of community itself (Ruggie 1992: 567-68).

When Terrence O’ Brien says that “American power is not eternal”, he simply implies that multilateralism in the guise of “a workable and equitable international system” should be devised to meet unforeseen eventualities in a situation in which the US power withdraws itself from its hegemonic role (Brien 2004: 21). He treats this policy as “a good insurance policy.” That is why even if the US does not participate in the multilateral process enthusiastically, that does mean that non-Americans should not shape multilateralism and assert their rights collectively. Therefore, lack of cooperation from the US should not be allowed to create unnecessary pessimism for the future of multilateralism (Heinbecker 2004: 796).

Ian Hurd’s suggests that international society has powerful presence of its own, which assesses decisions in the light of legitimacy and authority (Hurd 1999: 404-405). International society must pave the way for multilateralism in international politics. Besides this, there is a whole range of problems which are not any particular nation or state specific problems. They are common problems of international state system. The existence of these problems makes multilateral cooperation binding. (Heinbecker 2004: 795).

2.5. (b) Need for Multilateralism

The need for multilateral cooperation in international relations will persist simply because of “a whole range of international problems, including security problems.” It will persist “for international security, for trade and finance, for health and environmental protection, for human rights and human development-in sum, multilateral cooperation is indispensable” (Heinbecker 2004: 794). According to Heinbecker, in this increasingly globalized, integrated, interdependent world, in which cooperative management just cannot be avoided, “not even the United States has the capability to run alone even if it wants to” (Heinbecker 2004: 784).

Anyako (2004) and Rangnathan (2004) see few problems in which multilateral management is required. They include: Sustaining the environment and the survival of the planet; Maintaining the security, not just of nations but also of peoples; Expanding national and international economic activity; Regulating international transportation and telecommunications; Controlling pandemic diseases;
Deterring terrorism, especially after the events of 11 September 2001; controlling illicit drug traders, spread of weapons mass destruction (WMD), financial stability, migration of population, ethnic divides within states, military and non-military support for failing states.

1.5. (c) UN and Multilateral Cooperation

One point that needs due deliberation is role of the UN in any multilateral cooperation. Possibilities should be explored how far multilateral cooperation can be brought under the UN framework. Heinbecker considers the United Nations integral to multilateral cooperation (Heinbecker 2004: 795). Indeed, an innovative UN can fulfill promises of multilateralism. However, one must not forget that the UN is, still, a model, which we aspire and strive to achieve. First of all, the UN has to reflect new security and development concepts relevant to our contemporary time. Second, it has to assert authority over unilateralism and unauthorized preemption. Third, the UN should take it as its utmost priority to create a more equalitarian economic development of the world. Fourth, the UN should enhance its efficiency (Wu 2005: 17-18). However, one can argue that since the UN does not have the strength of its own and cannot withstand the US pressure, demanding such assertiveness is expecting too much. But these demands are directed more towards the developing countries and the countries which have potential to make the world multipolar. It is incumbent upon them to strive for building a conducive environment in which the UN can become fulcrum of international politics.

As far as China's understanding about the UN is concerned, one of the salient developments in Chinese foreign policy during 1990s is that it has acknowledged the due importance of the United Nations after a long time. For a long period of time, China remained highly unenthusiastic about the UN and viewed it as an institution under the US control. However, with multilateralism taking shape in Chinese foreign policy in 1990s, the UN also started acquiring an important place in Chinese foreign policy discourse. At present, China stands for a strengthened UN and is an avowed advocate of reforms in the UN. In China's view, an ideal UN system reflects China's vision of democratization of international politics. It insists that the UN should be made a meaningful vehicle of democratization of international politics. Pan Zhongying has indicated China's changing attitude to the UN by highlighting its changing attitude to UN peacekeeping. China considers peacekeeping as an essential
function of the UN (Pan Spring 2005: 74). However, it is its principled position that any UN peacekeeping must adhere to the UN Charter. The crux of its insistence to adhere the UN Charter is that state sovereignty is fundamentally inviolable.

Wu Miaofa also highlights six aspects, where it needs reforms in order to reflect the current realities. He argues that the UN should:

- intensify its multilateral consultation mechanism, contain unilateralism and play a leading role in major international security issues;
- enlarge Security Council membership, increasing the seats of developing countries so as to expand its representativeness, enhance the authority of the organization as well as balance and intensify this collective security mechanism;
- further strengthen and improve its peacemaking mechanism and enhance its efficiency so as to enable it to practically and efficiently assume the mission of preventing conflicts and safeguarding peace;
- also strengthen its role in promoting development and strive for achievement of some progress toward the millennium goals, especially halving extreme poverty;
- also play the role of intensifying communication and coordination between North and South and urge the developed countries to honor their commitments in providing aid of 0.7 percent of their GDP, to developing reduce or remit the debts of poor countries, thus gradually narrowing the gap between north and south;
- intensify its measures to combat non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, proliferation of WMD, aggravation of ecological environment as well as universal social problems such as AIDS, drug trafficking, human trafficking and illegal migration (Wu 2005: 17-18).

In the security realm, Heinbecker aptly summarizes the concerns of weaker countries saying that the UN has to engage with three fundamental challenges deriving from the sovereignty issue:

- When to intervene in the internal affairs of a state out of humanitarian necessity;
- When to intervene to combat terrorism; and
- When to intervene to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In his view no issue carries more weight and requires immediate attention more than the question of military intervention for humanitarian purposes in the light of above mentioned sovereignty related issues (Heinbecker 2004: 798).
Heinbecker has rightly quoted Kofi Annan “the UN will be genuinely relevant only when it can adequately address the concerns of both its most powerful and least powerful members” (Heinbecker 2004: 798). Heinbecker visualizes some innovations in the UN such as democratic and like-minded caucus working in different areas either within the UN or outside of the UN as a complementary to the UN. “The UN would retain its unique legitimacy by virtue of its universal membership and its indispensable security role as framed in the charter of international law.” The very purpose of such a caucus is to help in arriving at general understanding and consensus on contemporary issues among the world’s growing number of democracies and to mobilize support for their cause and inspire reforms in some non-democratic countries, “as the prospect of EU membership has done in Eastern Europe.” The intention behind this novel idea appears to snatch so-called transformative agenda of the US, in the pretext of which unilateralism is executed (Heinbecker 2004: 799).

However, “The UN system is only part of the complex set of rules and institutions that affects how states mange their interdependent relationships. International regimes—the rules and procedures that define the limits of acceptable behavior on various issues—that extend far beyond the scope of the United Nations.” It simply means that multilateral cooperation and multilateralism as an ideology do exist outside the UN, too. Multilateralism outside the UN purview is equally valid and legitimate (Keohane and Nye 1985: 151).

Ramphal (2004: 6) reminds Americans their very own president Eisenhower’s five precepts chosen by the United States to “govern its conduct in world affairs”: No people on earth can be held, as a people, to be an enemy, for all humanity shares the common hunger for peace and fellowship and justice; No nation’s security and well-being can be lastingly achieved in isolation but only in effective cooperation with fellow-nations; Any nation’s right to a form of government and an economic system of its own choosing is inalienable; Any nation’s attempt to dictate to other nations their form of government is indefensible; A nation’s hope of lasting peace cannot be firmly hailed upon any race in armaments but rather upon just relations and honest understanding with all other nations. Eisenhower’s five precepts chosen by the United States to govern its conduct in world affairs and Jawaharlal Nehru’s Panchsheel are powerful expressions around which discourse of multilateralism can be constructed.
2.5. (d) Various Countries' Position on Multilateralism

Sometimes, it may seem that only poor, weaker and third world countries of the Afro-Asian and Latin American world clamour for multilateralism. Contrary to the supposition, demand for multilateralism is widespread among several continents. This demand begins right from Canada and joined by European countries and even by countries like New Zealand. Heinbecker presents the case for Canada very well in four points, as follows: Canada should cooperate actively in the defence of North America but should take care not to further identify itself with an American Foreign Policy that is estranging the US from much of the rest of the world and endangering Americans in the process; Multilateral cooperation will continue because there is no satisfactory alternative at all; The multilateral system, nevertheless, needs both renovation and innovation and promoting such reform ought to be a major Canadian foreign policy priority (Heinbecker 2004: 392).

In addition, Europe is also strongly inclined to strengthen multilateralism as Pascal Boniface argues

"The European Union’s political culture is now based on respect for international law, negotiated solutions, rejection of unilateralism, and support for international institutions and multilateral bodies. Europe is naturally dedicated to the multilateral approach because it is itself the product of multilateralism...the emergence of Europe as a strategic power will only help in the creation of a multipolar world, which is in the interest of all the people in the world" (Boniface 2001: 392).

European countries like Germany and France advocate multilateralism vigorously, though for different reasons. German position is considered purely idealist position resultant from and intended to correct its shameful Nazi past, whereas French position is perceived in terms of balance-of-power intended to counterbalance the US (Krause 2004: 48-50).

With this discussion on multilateralism as a theoretical backdrop, the next chapter will delve into various dimensions of Chinese approach to multilateralism focusing on traditional and non-traditional security concerns.