Chapter 2

CHINA'S ADAPTATION TO GLOBAL REGIMES: A THEORETICAL DEBATE

In the post-Cold War period, China has made tremendous progress in adapting itself to the new world politics by continuing to pursue a pragmatic foreign policy of peace, development and co-operation. It has shown considerable skill and flexibility in bringing about relatively smooth shifts in its global strategy in response to the perceived changes in the international politics. One of the most significant shifts that has taken place in the Chinese foreign policy in recent years is reflected in its approach towards the global regimes. It is in the area of institutional engagement where China has significantly moved forward in recent years. China's approach to international institutions and regimes has become a crucial component in its evolving foreign policy. Thus, the post-Cold War period saw China actively participating in various multilateral regimes and drawing closer to widely accepted international norms and practices. In fact, China has so far joined almost all the post-War Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) as well as international institutions and regimes (Pang 2006:26). Since the end of the Cold War, Beijing has been able to play a remarkably influential role in various global regimes dealing with issues such as development, trade, security and disarmament. The present degree of cooperation and interaction with different global regimes lies in total contrast to Maoist China's limited interaction with the international community between 1949 and the 1970s, and despite China having less time than other potential great powers to adapt to the 'rules' of state to state cooperation, Beijing has managed to greatly enhance its power through international institutions (Lanteigne 2005:31). However, there is a difference between joining a regime per se and adhering to the spirit of the regime. Though China has become an active participant in different regimes, questions still remain about its actual compliance with the rules and regulations of these regimes. In practice, while China clearly wants to be a respected member of the international community, it is deeply conflicted about how active and what kind of a role to play.
in international governance. The lag between the announced policies of the PRC government and the lack of actual compliance illustrates the gap between intention and reality. The phenomenon leads one to ask the following question: has a new international legal consciousness pervaded the PRC, or has China merely become more legalistically incisive in responding to the pressure of international relations? This chapter endeavours to answer this particular question. Apart from conceptualizing (global) regimes, the study would try to establish the correlation between global regimes and the emergence of new governance practices at the global level. Moreover, we would seek to theoretically analyze China's adaptation and participation in different global regimes and look at the historical trends in the process of adaptation starting from the Maoist period to the present. How China and different regimes- of which the UN, the WTO, and the arms control regimes have been taken up as case studies- have influenced each other is also an issue discussed in this chapter.

**Conceptualizing Global Regimes**

The focus on the study of international regimes marked the significant shift away from the exclusive emphasis on international organizations. It was John Ruggie who first introduced the concept of 'regime' in 1975 (Ruggie 1975:557-83). In one of the earliest systematic attempts to define an international regime and to create a theoretical framework for regime analysis, Ernst B. Haas defined a global regime as “norms, rules, and procedures agreed to in order to regulate an issue area” and observed that it involved “institutional collaboration on topics and issues characterized by complex interdependence - not all kinds of collaboration or even multinational arrangements” (Haas 1983:23-61). However, the study of regimes got maximum attention as an important aspect of international relations only with the publication of a special issue of the journal *International Organization* in 1982.1 Subsequently, a consensus developed among IR theorists on the substance of this definition. As Stephen Krasner summarized:

---

Regimes can be defined as sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision making procedures around which actor's expectations converge in a given area of international relations. Principles are beliefs of fact, causation and rectitude. Norms are standard of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations. Rules are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action. Decision-making procedures are prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice (Krasner 1983:18).

On the basis of Krasner's definition, it is now possible to identify the distinctive characteristics of an international regime which distinguishes it from other kinds of international formation. In the first place, an international arrangement or formation cannot be called a regime if it is not issue-specific and has no functional boundaries. Second, a global regime has a structure, in terms of distribution of capabilities among its members, which gives meaning and substance to the process of collaboration among them as well as the distribution of costs, gains and values. Third, a global regime, like all other international systems, is characterized by both conflict and co-operation among its members. A necessary condition for the formation and maintenance of an international regime is that co-operation must prevail over conflict in the mutual relations of the members over the issue area concerned; otherwise, the regime would fail.

Consequently, some have suggested looking for an alternative definition altogether and replacing it by a more straightforward formulation which would be less amenable to divergent interpretations. At one point, Robert Keohane defined the concept of regime as follows: "Regimes are institutions with explicit rules, agreed upon by governments that pertain to particular sets of issues in international relations" (Keohane 1983:141-72). Thus, the complex apparatus of principles, norms, rules, and procedures were assimilated into the single concept of rules. Scholars are relieved of the burden of justifying their decision to call a given injunction a "norm" rather than a "rule" (or perhaps even a "principle") of the regime concerned.

According to leading regime theorists Peter Mayer, Volker Rittberger and M. Zurn, an increasing part of international political interactions and processes has become the object of international collective self-regulation- the voluntary
participation by states and other international actors in collective action to achieve joint gains or to avoid joint losses in conflictual or problematic situations (Rittberger et al 1993:1-25). Examples of this kind of collective self-regulation on the global level include the WTO-based international trade regime, the nuclear non-proliferation regime, or a universal regime like the UN protecting world peace and security. These theorists have divided the theories of global regimes into three schools: power-based, interest-based, and knowledge-based theories.

Regimes should not be mistaken merely as temporary arrangements that change with shift in power or interests. Keohane points out a basic analytic distinction between regimes and agreements. While agreements are temporary arrangements based upon short-term interests of concerned states, regimes are long-term mechanisms that expedite agreements and offer solutions to common problems. Robert Jervis similarly argues that the concept of regimes “implies not only norms and expectations that facilitate cooperation, but a form of cooperation that is more than the following of short-run self-interest” (Krasner 1983:3). Similarly, a regime is not same as an international organization. International organizations and regimes are independent of one another; each can exist without the other. “Regimes can be non-institutionalized as well as institutionalized and international organizations need not be regimes” (Stein 1993:133). While an international organization does not constrain independent decision-making by the member states, a regime demands full compliance to the rules and principles that have been laid out on the basis of common agreement. Moreover, the international organizations are not issue specific like the regimes; they take up various issues pertaining to different fields. International organizations are highly institutionalized.

A regime can be bilateral, multilateral, regional or global in scope. It can also be formal and highly institutionalized or quite loose and informal. The WTO is a good example of a formal and institutionalized regime, while UNCLOS and CWC are less institutionalized. Regimes can take the form of conventions, international agreements, treaties or international institutions. They are formed with regard to

---

2 Also see Hasenclever, Andreas, Mayer, Peter and Volker Rittberger(1997), *Theories of International Regimes*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1-23.
different issue areas such as trade, environment, transport, security, communications
human rights and arms control. They in fact exist in most issue areas where states
share similar interests. However, all the regimes are similar in the sense that each
requires compliance from the states. The states that join a regime on the basis of
certain commonly agreed upon rules and norms are always under an obligation to
comply and act according to those principles. After joining a regime, no state could
afford to violate its rules. “The notion of convergence is crucial to understanding the
close of regimes. Regimes presuppose that states have similar interests across a
range of issues and these interests can best be served by coordinated action. In other
words, regimes provide a regulatory framework that facilitates a semblance of global
governance” (Griffith and Callghan 2004:272-73).

Global Regimes and the Emergence of New Governance Practices

The problems being faced by the world today like the rapidly increasing
threat of terrorism, proliferation of diseases like HIV/AIDS and other diseases;
weapon of mass destruction –nuclear, chemical, and biological; the persistence of
poverty; environmental threats such as climate change and collapse of global
fisheries etc are truly transnational in nature and in no way can be managed by
sovereign states acting alone. All these problems require co-operation among the
governments and the increasing number of non-state actors in the world; many
require the active participation of ordinary citizens; some demand the establishment
of new international mechanisms for monitoring or negotiation of new international
rules; and most require the refinement of means for securing states’ compliance
(Karns and Mingst 2004:5-30). In short, there is a wide variety of international
policy problems that demand governance at the global level. Therefore, a brief
discussion on global governance is essential to understand the relevance of the
global regimes.

In 1995, the Commission on Global Governance, an independent group of
prominent international figures, formed to consider what reforms in modes of
international co-operation were called for global changes, and published a report on
their five years of deliberations. The Commission defined governance as:
The sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken. It includes formal...as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest.... (Commission on Global Governance 1995:12).

The central issue that concerns is how does governance relate to government? While clearly related they are not identical. As James Rosenau puts it:

Both refer to purposive behaviour, to goal-oriented activities, to systems of rule; but governments suggest activities that are backed by formal authority, by police powers to ensure the implementation of duly constituted policies, whereas governance refers to activities backed by shared goals that may or may not derive from legal and formally prescribed responsibilities and that do not necessarily rely on police powers to overcome defiance and attain compliance. Governance, in other words, is a more encompassing phenomenon than government. It embraces governmental institutions, but it also subsumes informal, non-governmental mechanisms whereby those persons and organizations within its purview move ahead, satisfy their needs, and fulfill their wants (Rosenau 1992:24).

Thus, global governance is not global government; it is not a single world order; it is not a top down, hierarchical structure of authority. It is rather the sum total of governance related activities, rules and mechanisms, formal and informal, existing at a variety of levels in the world today. Thus, governance, as a concept of analysis, refers to the process of social coordination with a public purpose-a process in which the state plays a strategic but not necessarily the dominant role. Given the absence of a world government, the concept of global governance provides a language for describing the nexus of systems of rule making, a framework for political coordination and problem-solving mechanisms, which transcend states and societies. It constitutes a broad analytical approach to addressing the central questions of political life under conditions of globalization, namely - who rules, in whose interests, by what mechanisms and for what purposes (Held and McGrew 2002:1-35).  

The concept of global regimes has been developed to understand governance on a given issue area. When governance is undertaken with regard to issues such as nuclear weapons proliferation, environmental pollution, trade, telecommunications and transportation, where principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures are linked to one another, it is called global regime. In a global regime, participating states and other international actors recognize the existence of certain obligations and feel compelled to honor them. Moreover, since this is 'governance without government', they comply as they accept the legitimacy of rules and underlying norms, and the validity of the decision-making procedures. Key characteristics of global regimes are their association with a specific issue area and the links among the constituent elements. Global regimes encompass rules and norms as well as the practices of actors that show both how their expectations converge and their acceptance of, and compliance with, rules (Tooze 1990:201-16).

The traditional international system has often been referred to as the Westphalian system after the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, which recognized the state as the supreme or sovereign power within its boundaries. The States’ mutual respect for each other’s sovereignty is generally regarded as the constitutive principle of the system. Other key principles that are derivative of state sovereignty are nonintervention in each other’s internal affairs (at least with respect to religious practices), consent as the basis of obligation to comply with international laws, and diplomatic immunity (Gross 1968:45-67). However, nonintervention has never really been a strong dimension of the system since some states have tried to influence internal political developments in other states quite frequently (e.g., the Holy Alliance). At best what states sought to do in the traditional system was to preserve the existence of most other states (although not their borders) and to prevent the dominance of any single state through either the operation of the very flexible balance of power system or a great power concert. Cooperation to protect each other's sovereignty and manage wars varied a great deal and was strongest in the half-century after the Napoleonic wars. Also, within the Westphalian system until very recently, economic, social and environmental interdependencies were not intense enough to necessitate high levels of coordination. A significant proliferation
in international organizations and laws did not really begin until the twentieth century.

In looking back at this traditional system, states’ respect for each other’s sovereignty and the existence of a very modest corpus of global regimes deserve highlighting and recognition. However, it is equally important to stress that states had a very high degree of autonomy in their international relations in that they accepted very few international obligations in either conventional or customary law. In other words, not only were states sovereign, but they also maintained a high degree of policy autonomy by not enmeshing themselves in a large number of international regimes - and especially not in a regime that restricted their ability to use military force (Zacher 1992:58-101).

From a purely legal perspective, states still have the sovereign right not to be bound by international accords supported by most or even all of their fellow states. However, in practice they are becoming increasingly enmeshed in a network of interdependencies and regulatory/collaborative arrangements from which exit is generally not a feasible option. This portrayal is in broad agreement with the assessment of Harold Jacobson: “states entangled in webs of international organizations is the proper simile to describe the contemporary global political system” (Jacobson 1984:516). Basically, it is no longer accurate to conceptualize states as having their traditional degree of complete autonomy because of the network of formal and informal regimes in which they are becoming increasingly involved, and this process of embedment is likely to continue in future.

Beginning in the 1970s, legal scholars began to use the concept of global regimes as they recognized that international law consisted not only of formal authoritative provisions but also of norms that are more informal and rules of behaviour that over time may become codified and sometimes institutionalized. By referring to the totality of these norms and rules of behaviour as “regimes”, they emphasized the role of governance in addressing certain specific issue areas (Karns and Mingst 2004:5-30). International relations scholars have found regime theory particularly useful for examining many aspects of governance.
Activities designed to serve a system's functional necessities are readily self-evident in the operations of governments, which, normally, either evolve constitutions to regulate their conduct domestically or sign treaties to guide their performance internationally. During the present period of rapid and extensive global change, however, the constitutions of national governments and their treaties have been under pressure by the demands and greater coherence of ethnic and other subgroups, the globalization of economies, the advent of broad social movements, the shrinking of political distances by microelectronic technologies, and the mushrooming of global interdependencies fostered by currency crises, environmental pollution, terrorism, the drug trade, AIDS, and a host of other transnational issues that are crowding the global agenda (Rosenau 1992:1-29). These centralizing and decentralizing dynamics have threatened constitutions and treaties in the sense that they have contributed to the shifts in the loci of authority. Governments still operate and they are still sovereign in a number of ways; but, as noted above, some of their authority has been relocated toward sub-national collectivities (Rosenau 1992:1-29). Some of the functions of governance, in other words, are now being performed by agencies other than the governments. Regime theory has shown how states create these frameworks to coordinate their actions with those of other states, if and when necessary for achieving their national interests. Regimes can provide information to participants and reduce uncertainty. Over time, coordination may lead to a partial convergence of values as well as a growing sense of legitimacy among the states who choose to join a regime.

International politics today displays behaviour patterns which reflect the operation of competing ordering principles including governance by collective self-regulation. Now, the emphasis has clearly shifted from individual state action to multilateral arrangements for combating common problems and for determining the proper functioning of the system at the global level. "Regime analysis strives to make the point that international relations cannot be reduced to a state of anarchy... from the intersection of their competitive self-help strategies which they pursue as relative-gains seekers" (Grieco 1990:225). An increasing part of international political interactions and processes has become the object of collective self-regulation- the voluntary participation by states and other international actors in
combined actions to achieve joint gains or to avoid joint losses in conflictual or problematic situations (Rittberger et al 1993:1-25). Examples of this kind of collective self-regulation at the global level include the WTO-based international trade regime, the nuclear non-proliferation regime, or the regime for the protection of the stratospheric ozone layer under the auspices of the UN. However, global regimes are only one dimension, perhaps the most prominent, of collective self-regulation by states (and other international actors); it also comprises contractual arrangements short of a regime as well as formal international organizations which facilitate collaboration short of generating compelling obligations - by the production and dissemination of information.

The conception of governance that has evolved in the era of globalization serves to highlight regimes as important sources of global governance. Most notably, since they allow for the evolution of a variety of arrangements whereby non-governmental as well as governmental actors may frame goals and pursue policies in particular issue areas, regimes meet the need for a “wider view” that includes not only states, “but also the often implicit understandings between a whole range of actors, some of which are not states, which serve to structure their cooperation in the face of common problems” (Volger 1992:123). In some instances, the control mechanisms of issue areas may be informal, disorganized, conflictual, and often ineffective in enforcing authority - that is so rudimentary and nascent that governance is sporadic and weak. In other cases, the control mechanisms may be formalized, well organized and capable of effectively exercising authority - that is, so fully institutionalized that governance is consistent and strong (Rosenau 2005:130). But, in all regimes, regardless of their stage of development, “the interaction between the parties is not unconstrained or is not based on independent decision making” (Stein 1993:31).

Moreover, a host of post-Second World War and post-Cold War regimes exist that effectively limit the sovereignty of many states - starting from the IMF and the World Bank’s requirements for financial probity to the Western European and American conventions that demand democratic governments within the region. Global regimes take many forms, with a variety of rules, dispute settlement
procedures and loopholes. Some regimes have become robust over time - even legalized, with more obligatory and precise rules, and with dispute-settlement arrangements (Keohane and Nye 2001:1-70). In the field of trade, for instance, since 1995 the rules of the WTO have authorized third-party arbitrators to adjudicate trade disputes. Thus, alongside the necessary but imperfect interstate institutional framework, an informal political process is evolving to supplement the formal process of cooperative relations among states. Globalization poses, with renewed immediacy, the question of how world affairs are and should be governed. Moreover, the demand for multilateral co-operation and the provision of global public goods, including financial stability, the setting of common standards in several areas such as environmental protection have increased in recent times. A new system of global regulation has evolved, reaching more deeply into the domestic affairs of states and societies, and it remains central to the promotion and management of globalization.

**Significance of Global regimes**

Global regimes in the post-Cold War world have assumed much significance as they have facilitated cooperation among the states on different issue areas to achieve certain desired outcomes. They have also played an important role in reducing the level of international conflict between states and establishing order in an otherwise anarchical system.

Global regimes have helped in reaching agreements on matters of substantive significance on different important issues. The regimes have created a collaborative mechanism through which the states seek to eradicate common problems and derive common benefits. They facilitate agreements by offering rules, norms, principles, and procedures that help states to overcome barriers. The establishment of global regimes has immensely strengthened the post-Cold War world order as they led the states to coordinate their actions and collaborate among themselves. As global politics today is concerned with not only traditional geo-political issues but also an increasing number of transnational policy issues, which require international cooperation for their effective resolution, global regimes have emerged as alternative
fora for policy formulation and implementation at the global level. As regimes create the space for the evolution of a variety of arrangements whereby non-governmental as well as governmental actors frame goals and pursue policies in particular issue areas, they provide opportunities for greater cooperation among the states to face the common problems (Rosenau 1992: 1-29). The establishment of global regimes pertaining to various issue areas such as trade, environment, health, and security has certainly helped in binding states in stable and mutually beneficial ways for achieving long-term objectives. In the era of globalization, a major function of global regimes in world politics is to facilitate agreements through dialogue and negotiation. Moreover, the expansion of international rules and legal mechanisms—their construction and monitoring—have all received an impetus from the establishment of global regimes.

A Theoretical Understanding of China’s Adaptation to Global Regimes

The significant changes that have occurred in China’s relations with international organizations and regimes should be analyzed with reference to larger theoretical issues discussed in the study of international relations. There has been a great deal of theoretical debate as to how strong a role the regimes play in international relations. Some of the major approaches need elaboration.

Realism, one of the most dominant schools of thought in international relations is a useful starting point in approaching the question of China’s relation with global regimes. The major assumptions of realism are: 1) the international system is anarchical wherein states are primary actors; 2) States aggressively promote their national interests that often result in international conflicts. Realism also surmises that there is a significant distinction between international and domestic politics and those international relations are distinguished by struggles for power and attainment of peace. On the other hand, neo-realism maintains that while states may be concerned with raising the living standards of the people and promote their interests internationally; these goals must ultimately remain subordinate to ensuring the state’s survival, without which all aspirations are doomed. According to ‘neo-realist’ theories of cooperation, states, which had previously ascended the
international hierarchy towards global power status had traditionally followed a pattern of pursuing relative gains (gains measured against those of other states in the system) as well as absolute gains (those which are measured against what the state itself previously possessed) to enhance their power at the expense of cooperating with international organizations and regimes (Lanteigne 2005:1-33). Neo-realism also assumes that states are national, unitary actors in their external behaviour because when it comes to foreign policy, all factions and organizations agree on the common goal of making the state as secure as possible.

There was consensus among the Western analysts that the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China and the pattern of its involvement in the international regimes strictly conforms to the realist school of thought. They cite China's consistent campaign to protect its sovereignty as the most sacrosanct principle of international politics and a notable dimension of its realist worldview. Further, China's espousal of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is interpreted as a euphemism for holding realist view on various issues. The consensus among scholars regarding Chinese realpolitik is stated concisely by William Tow's statement: "China adheres to a largely unqualified realist worldview" (Tow 2001:33). The common view is that China's realist attitude can most prominently be seen in its state-centric, uncompromising position on the institution of sovereignty, both its own and that of other states. For example, Denny Roy states that the PRC currently holds an "archaic notion of 'sovereignty'" (Roy 1998:156), while Alastair I. Johnston notes, "China clearly is 'constrained' by a particularly extensive and absolutist version of the sovereignty norm: It may be argued that China's version of sovereignty comes 'closer than most to the 'Westphalian ideal'" (Johnston 1994:73). Evan Feigenbaum asserts, "Chinese leaders stubbornly cling to orthodox principles of sovereignty that many U.S. and European observers view" (Feigenbaum 2001:33). James Seymour exclaims that China has "embraced the sovereignty concept with a vengeance" (Seymour 1994:218). Realists believe that China intends to "return to a status in the modern world similar to the one it enjoyed in the pre-modern world", in order to attain its rightful position, that of a great power in the world (Johnston 1994:73). Andrew Nathan and Robert. Ross highlight the point that China's tough position on sovereignty can be seen as an instrument for the
fulfillment of its national goals. According to them, "To oppose great-power intervention and defend sovereignty and equality among states is not only high-minded but represents China’s national interest in regions where China can not intervene itself" (Nathan and Ross 1997:6).

However, the unprecedented economic and social change that occurred in China since the start of the Open Door Policy of 1978 and the subsequent speeding up of the movement towards global interdependence have necessitated revisiting the theoretical understanding about China. China’s interactions with economic, political, and security international regimes do highlight some liberal patterns in the country’s foreign policy. These patterns could be used to consider as to whether China really does behave as realist theory predicts or whether the PRC’s conduct is more properly explained by other theories of international relations, including specifically neo-liberal institutionalism and constructivism (Hempson-Jones 2005:702-721).

The liberal patterns in China’s foreign policy are reflected in its more comfortable attitude towards interdependence that takes two forms: enhanced cooperative behaviour and a more flexible position on external interference in state sovereignty. Both these forms starkly contrast with the ways the realist theorists believe interests should determine state decisions. For example, realists believe that cooperation between the states must remain limited because of the problem of who gains more from a given context. As illustrated by Waltz, "[S]tates that feel insecure must ask how the gain will be divided. They are compelled to ask not ‘will both of us gain?’ but ‘who will gain more?’" (Waltz 1979:105). Again, with an emphasis on the apparent zero-sum quality of international politics, realists advise-as far as possible-retention of state autonomy and rejection of any doctrine that appears to undermine state sovereignty (Mearsheimer 2001:1-15). Though the Chinese leadership often toes the realist line by attempting to prevent any possible erosion of state sovereignty, an analysis of China’s interaction with the international regimes illustrates that the country does not always follow the realist prescriptions.

Even if we discount China’s dealings with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and other international economic institutions as purely guided by self-interest, its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) after a
long period of negotiations cannot simply be dismissed as a realist move. China had to make significant concessions in order to gain entry into the apex trade body. While the rhetoric remains tough in the political realm, Beijing’s actual conduct regarding what it terms interference in other states’ affairs has softened. This can be particularly seen through the PRC’s attitude towards UN peacekeeping missions in Cambodia, Somalia, and East Timor, in which a rigid defense of absolute sovereignty has given way to a more pragmatic stance that sanctions a certain level of interference in other states’ affairs. There are signs of liberal trends in Chinese foreign policy “even in the fundamentally important area of state security- the stronghold of prudent realpolitik- exemplified by the PRC’s embrace of dialogue in organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its Regional Forum (ARF)” (Hempsom-Jones 2005:715). If China’s case were judged by applying the theoretical framework of realism, it would appear that Beijing would substantially lose by participating in regimes, since the country is developing global power status and wishes to consolidate it. Thus, considering China’s increasing involvement in political and even security regimes apart from the economic ones in the post-Cold War period, the realist model cannot be suitably applied to understand the Chinese behaviour.

Neo-realist theory seems to best explain the Chinese behaviour at the global level in the post-Cold War period. In line with neo-realist thinking, internal regimes tend to infringe upon Beijing’s sense of sovereignty and its fear of vulnerability to outside nations. China is also not very comfortable in making the kind of adjustments it is expected to do as part of various global regimes. China’s involvement in international trade and global regimes in recent years is mostly because that was the only way available for China to achieve economic modernization and diplomatic acceptability, and not because it was committed to the principle of political and economic integration among nations (Roy 1998:156). Beijing still remains fearful of penetration of the Chinese state by outside forces and organizations, and those fears place limits on how much perceived vulnerability the government will tolerate. Also as per the neo-realist assumptions, China continues to view other powerful states such as the US and Japan with suspicion, a perception that sometimes restricts cooperation that appears mutually beneficial in purely
Marc Lanteigne referring to Lisa L. Martin's analysis maintains that, since the end of the Cold War as states are valuing their institutional ties more than ever, China, arguably the first great power to rise within a milieu of international institutions, is more compelled, unlike great powers of the past, to make the (global) regimes an important part of its goal to increase its power and maintain an enhanced role in the global order (Lanteigne 2005: 21).

However, despite its increased involvement in the global regimes, China has not shed its reservations regarding state sovereignty and power in consonance with neo-realist assumptions. The distinct realist tenets that China had adopted during the Maoist period, when it was outside most of the global regimes, have not been completely discarded yet. China still remains defensive and reluctant while dealing with the global regimes, reflecting suspicion that these institutions could potentially be instruments for unwarranted intervention in China’s internal affairs. An analysis of the PRC's interactions with the various global regimes and institutions makes clear the point that China cooperates only if the following basic realist principles are satisfied: first, relative gains should be pursued over absolute gains, and, second, cooperation must not be found to undermine state sovereignty or greatly constrict China's autonomy and freedom of action.

China's relations with the global regimes and the multilateral institutions has undergone a process of transformation in the post-Cold War years. The changes in the international system and China's domestic imperatives necessitated this paradigmatic shift in China's approach towards global regimes. The next chapter traces the evolution of China's adaptation to global regimes, analyzes the rationale behind its growing engagement with global regimes in the post-Cold War period and examines the impact of global regimes on the policy making process in China.