

adaptive and transformative facility. Furthermore, the future of multilateralism itself appeared to be in doubt.<sup>23</sup>

Analyses of adaptation or reform of the UN system was therefore considered timely, important and welcomed at this critical historical juncture when epiphenomenal and structural/ideological changes in international society appeared to be forcing a re-examination of the significance and relevance to contemporary world politics of specific multilateral entities. In addition, the advent of new security challenges, since the sea change at the end of the Cold War period posed a number of fundamental questions regarding the ability of multilateral institutions, particularly those created by states immediately after World War Two, to deal with increasing and new demands and needs of international society and the society of states. Yet, the inability of the UN system to reform itself or to grapple successfully with many of these challenges called into question the position of liberal institutionalism which held that as a result of increased interdependence states will be more prone towards accepting managed and institutional cooperative arrangements.<sup>24</sup> The problematic was decidedly more complex than that and required a different approach to the analysis of this period of transition and change in global order as well as to the understanding of the role (if any) that multilateral institutions would (ought to) play in the changed order.

The approach of some scholars who can be labelled "post-internationalists" and "critical reflectivists" was to link directly the concept of multilateralism with the notion of global governance by analyzing the nexus between the expansion of international society (with its exponentially growing demands and needs) and the striving of that society toward the creation of a regulatory framework within which conditions for peaceful interaction between people across the globe could blossom. Such an approach required a closer examination of the *longue durée* history of the evolution of multilateralism and its linkage to various conceptualizations of global governance, a more careful analysis of the reasons for the failed attempts at adjusting existing multilateral institutions to changing world conditions, and a prescriptive set of proposals for upgrading the practices of multilateralism to meet the challenges of what was perceived to be a "new era".

Both post-internationalists and critical reflectivists recognized the importance of having a broad historical view of the multilateral process. Among them, Simai reminds us that most ideas about multilateral organization and world order, presented as original to the 20th century, have actually appeared long before.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, modern multilateral practices have benefitted from concepts and routines tried in previous attempts at organizing and governing societies of states and other social groupings.<sup>26</sup> Therefore an understanding of the evolution of this historical and structural process was seen as essential for explaining and predicting the nature of change in the concrete entities that embody the traits of multilateralism and in the social institutions (defined by Young as those set of rules guiding the behaviour of those engaged in the identifiable social practices of multilateralism) that frame the context of their development and contribute to shifts in the design of world order.

Taking this historically-sensitive approach to understanding multilateralism allowed these scholars to remove the straight-jacket imposed on our thinking by neo-realist and liberal institutionalist theories. The impetus for developing the post-internationalist and critical paradigms came from the observations and assumptions that: world politics is undergoing