

Building on Bandung: What Does Cooperation Do for Regional Engagement?

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This article examines the outcomes of collective forms of engagement in the ASEAN region. By examining how convening power in these south-south engagements has worked since the Bandung Conference, the paper reviews how the mode of consensus building adopted in 1955 has been channelled into regional cooperation. In particular, the paper considers the implications of these forms of cooperation for the consensus building that characterizes ASEAN today. The paper uses the processes evident in the ASEAN Development Outlook to set out the consequences of these findings for how the UN system can set out more effective criteria for global South cooperation. This has direct implications for institutional mechanisms for advancing capacity and expertise in new forms of cooperation between the global North and global South.

Keywords Bandung Conference, consensus, national sovereignty, norm localization, global South, ASEAN Development Outlook

Introduction

South-South cooperation between developing countries and the additional opportunity for support from international donors using the mode of Triangular Cooperation are regarded as innovations that can improve technical and knowledge exchange. This United Nations (UN)-supported form of development cooperation has been advanced as a form of equal partnership that replaces the typically hierarchical relationship between the North and the South. These forms have increasingly become favoured over traditional aid relationships as a better fit for achieving development objectives.

This article will examine the rationale for the engagement between developing countries, starting with a review of forms of cooperation that developed across newly independent nations. In particular, the paper will consider the implications of these forms of cooperation for the consensus building that characterises the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It will deploy a procedural investigation of how member states in the ASEAN have identified national priorities, and how this was impacted by experiences of country-to-country cooperation within the ASEAN region. By examining how these priorities have been advanced through cooperative forms of engagement, the paper will evaluate the consequences of such cooperation in advancing the regional principles of cooperation and trust. The paper will conclude by setting out the consequences of these findings for how the UN system can move to setting out more effective criteria that could demonstrate the effectiveness of country-to-country cooperation. The opportunity to place the mechanisms of convening power at the centre of south-south and triangular engagements provides a new rationale for identifying agreed red lines in international negotiation and how these features can be drawn on to increase capacity to channel these mechanisms into regional cooperation.

Framing the Context of Cooperation

The starting point to understanding why there are different regional perspectives on how to achieve cooperation and trust requires a review of the regional processes of institution building that are put into place in different regions of the world. This is an important consideration if South-South cooperation between developing countries and the additional opportunity for support from international donors using the mode of Triangular Cooperation, regarded as innovations that can improve technical and knowledge exchange are to actually be beneficial for countries in the global South. In the absence of such a review of variation in regional processes, it becomes difficult to advance these opportunities if these forms do not sit comfortably with the processes of regional cooperation that were underway in regions across the globe. An example of this discomfort is evident in how international organizations rank the principles of cooperation within a region and how these are used to shore up national concerns. This is a particular feature that can be identified in the case of the ASEAN decision making process: where the ASEAN approach to national policy making for its member states is often in contradistinction to agreements in other regional bodies, such as the European Union, which approach agreements in relation to identifying the principles that must be adhered to by all member states. In such cases, where the specificity of the regional mechanism is at variance with the principles of absolute adherence, the opportunity provided by new forms of development cooperation might not be a good fit.

While the UN supports these new forms of development cooperation as they are forms of equal partnership that replaces the typically hierarchical relationship between the North and the South, these new forms cannot be operationalised

presuming that all regional cooperation are identical and based on absolute adherence to legal principles (Börzel 2016). In the case of regional cooperation that is based on consensus and where future forms of cooperation will need a new round of negotiation it is crucial to better understand how these forms might be revised to get a better fit in the case of these other forms of regional cooperation. In particular, the manner in which development objectives are achieved in countries within regional organisations that use negotiated norms rather than formally agreed laws would be an appropriate foundation on which to build the new procedures for South-South cooperation. While the move away from the existing hierarchies between the global North and the global South is laudable such a change in global power relations is unlikely in an international framing where there is a ranking of regional norms of cooperation which assigns a lower rank to negotiated norms over compliance of agreed laws.

The need for change in global power relations is an important mandate as the aid provision in the first decade of the twenty first century continued to view the lack of development in the global South as a consequence of weak institutions in these countries. In particular, the use of a narrative around “fragile and failed states” was used, resulting in the casting of developing countries into categories that emphasised their limited state capacity and that linked their ability to develop to their own shortcomings (Acemoglu and Robinson 2013). The global North and the international organisations were, in contrast, cast in the role of “saviours” (Easterly 2006) and it was deemed to be their moral and economic responsibility to improve state capacity through the provision of aid. The regional organisations and countries were explicitly depicted as being responsible for directing and supporting institution building in new regional bodies in the global South to overcome the tendency to these countries to default into a condition of state failure, and due to which they would not be able to sustain regional cooperation (USAID 2005; OECD DAC 2007; Whaites 2008).

In sharp contrast, the thinking within South-South collaboration was that there was a strong driver for cooperation that had long roots in the notion of solidarity that was explicitly stated in the Final Communiqué of the Bandung conference of 1955. The key regional organisation of the African Union, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the ASEAN and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) closely followed the five principles agreed at Bandung: political self-determination, mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, and equality in their intra-regional negotiations.

The importance of cooperation was examined in the fields of political science and economics, with an early distinction made by Mancur Olson between first order and second order collective action problems (CAP). The first order problem is that of how to form a group, while a second order problem is how to

Figure 1. Bandung Conference, 1955

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ensure that an already formed group can achieve its desired group objective (Olson 1965). In the case of first order CAP, the focus is on the incentives of signing up (with or without a subscription) to the features associated with achieving first order CAP conditions, while the awarding of official positions such as secretary and treasurer (which he termed selective incentives) are those associated with a second order CAP. In the context of nations that are deciding to form groups, whether regional unions, trade associations, or other associations, the decision is a version of first order CAP, while the considerations regarding selection of a strategy to further their common goals as akin to a version of a second order CAP problem. The assigning of offices to nations within these regional or international groups is an example of Olson's selective incentives within the larger process of discussions among representatives of different nations of how to devise their common strategic approach to achieve their agreed goal.

The affinity of nations to a common objective, and how they choose institutional forms are based on their own conceptualisation of how to create alternative regional forms of power. The events leading up to the Bandung Conference of 1955 provide a valuable backdrop against which to understand the forms of cooperation and processes for managing potential first and second order collective action problems. The photograph in Figure 1 from the archives shows leaders from across Asia and Africa meeting at Bandung, Indonesia in 1955.

The view of liberal institutional framing is that regional cooperation requires

a homogenous form of regional integration. This advances the requirement that there should be a shared set of organizing principles in the domestic environment in each country as well as a strong set of intra-regional economic relations (Acharya 2001). A consequence of a liberal framing is that it would regard countries that use principles on non-interference in internal affairs as lacking state capacity, so they are unable to manage conflictual spill overs beyond their national boundaries and into the region. Since they lack this quality they prefer a strategy where they do not enforce a set of agreed principles, choosing to adopt a form of cooperation that belies adoption of a common set of rules that is regarded as the bedrock of a democratic regional engagement.

The form of regional cooperation that emerged in the case of Southeast Asia was that of the ASEAN established in 1967, with the signing of the Bangkok declaration by the founding nations of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The value of analyzing the ASEAN is the opportunity to examine an alternative “institutionalist” framework based on the construction of a common identity undertaken by domestic elite. It also provides new tools to examine how the activity of regional organization can develop the capacity to manage conflict among member states (ibid.). By examining the effectiveness of such a framing that is able to understand how the engagement among these southeast Asian nations is based on a mutual recognition of difference, provides explicit evidence of the use of a consensual rather than prescriptive process for devising a shared set of principles. It could also provide a different set of indicators with which to evaluate the probability of a stable regional order.

The foundation of a common identity amongst the ASEAN member states is based on a process of active *institutional* construction through political interactions within and between its governments (Acharya 2013). This notion of “region” did not emerge from a previously circumscribed geography or single agreed culture, but was the consequence of strategic interaction among the region’s elite. The point is that “ASEAN identity” is not a “given” fact (Park 2021). It represents the outcome of conscious thinking, strategy and policy. However, this formalisation has not altered the ASEAN ethos of how cooperation and trust are engendered through a philosophy of informal relations, open regionalism, cultural sensitivity, and a careful balance of political, economic, and social priorities. The “ASEAN way” relies on the power of consensus (UNDP 2017) and the underlying institutional mechanism has emerged from the processes that were first in evidence in the build-up to the Bandung conference.

Consensus Building and the Outcome of the Bandung Conference

Countries that were colonies of Western Powers at the end of the nineteenth century were portrayed as uncivilized, and colonial authorities made it explicit

Figure 2. Heads of State in Rangoon, 1955



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that only countries that were deemed to be civilized could be conferred national sovereignty (Anghie 2017). On gaining independence these erstwhile colonies recognized that while it had been imperative for them to meet western notions of what constituted civilized behavior to gain national sovereignty it was crucial to find a new form of association to mutually agree on what would be the norms for ensuring their sovereignty that they would adopt going forward. The forms of cooperation that were developed in immediate post-independence period had a clear sense of the need to decolonize the international norms that had previously been imposed on colonized nations and to devise legal systems that moved away from the Eurocentric notions of the law prevalent in the previous half century (Pahuja 2017).

The Bandung conference provided a very important venue for formalizing and finalizing these decolonizing objectives. The event itself is not only an important watershed in the construction of the non-aligned movement but also a significant milestone in radical shift evident in newly independent countries, moving away from the hegemony of Eurocentrism and towards creating an intellectual arsenal that recognized other criteria for self-determination (Chatterjee 2017).

In Figure 2, Nasser, Nehru, and U Nu, are pictured in national Burmese dress. The form of dress as a gesture is not unimportant, as it provides a visual record that these leaders were willing to participate in the different cultures in the global South and to share in important cultural moments. The event captured in the picture is the celebration of Burmese Thingyan (new year festival), that was underway at the time that Gamel Abdel Nasser, Zhou Enlai, Pham Van Dong, and Jawaharlal Nehru had arrived in Rangoon, on route to Indonesia, as Rangoon

was the international aviation hub at the time. While the leaders gathered there, U Nu was able to convince these two leaders to participate in the festivities and while the picture has subsequently been assigned to marginalia, the moment is indicative of the ability of leaders to devise strategies to build a common purpose and vision. The importance of sharing cultures and building a sense of common identity can be seen as a strategic signaling of a form of inclusion and celebration by newly independent nations (Pahuja 2017).

The pre-conference meetings that were undertaken by the group in Rangoon provided a collaborative platform for the subsequent discussions in Bandung. The expected outcome of the conference was under discussion in the final stages, and leaders were agreed that there should be concerted push for a consensual approach. The preferred result in the group was for announcing general principles, rather than making a declaration about the establishment of a permanent institution and headquarters with an associated formal resolution. Indeed, U Nu indicated that it was important not to set up an institutional headquarter at this juncture. He reminded the group that he has already made this point at their meeting in Rangoon, as he believed the only purpose of this conference was to provide an opportunity for the delegations of various countries to meet. The focus of principles by the leaders fits well with the formalisation of rules necessary to ensure a successful negotiation of a first order CAP.

Nehru's speech followed U Nu's intervention and he presented the idea of the the Five Principles, *Panchsheel*, of which three were related to mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, nonaggression and non-interference with each other's internal affairs would be the focus. It was agreed by the heads of state that the principles would be the focus, and that there should be regional organisations rather than a single headquarters for the twenty-nine members of the conference, across three continents would be a more strategic outcome.¹ The emphasis on principles was a primary and crucial plank in the construction of new international legal thinking that emphasised the plurality of laws and the importance of non-European thinking (ibid.). On the other hand, the agreement on principles did not provide the guidelines for a regional organisation and could be regarded as a form of "diplomacy as theatre" signalling symbolic value rather than institution building (Shizamu 2014).

The centrality of building consensus through strategic manoeuvres undertaken by elites in individual member countries has continued to be the preferred form of negotiation among regional organisations. The current programmes undertaken by the ASEAN, in particular the recent focus on advancing sustainable forms of human development is an outcome of the original 1967 "ASEAN Declaration" (or Bangkok Declaration). In the case of the recent decision to highlight the importance of inclusion, it too signalled as an evolution: in this case as a logical progression from the "Joint Declaration on the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)" in March 2009. The official declaration

endorsing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the co-chairs of the ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development in 2020 provides the official recognition of the importance of sustainability in the region (EU and ASEAN 2020). Furthermore, since 2007, the ambition “to leave no-one behind” has been underpinned by the ASEAN Charter, and this principle has been formalized the current framework of three institutional pillars: the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) in their current programmes of work.

The vision of a world with multiple legal traditions that exists outside the global North laid out at the Bandung Conference was the foundation for the concept of South-South Cooperation (SSC) and it is built on an understanding that cooperation exists across economic, technical, and cultural axes (Engel 2018). What is noteworthy is that the basis of these axes of cooperation is not based on formal ruling, but of an agreed set of social norms. The original process of negotiation set up by the first heads of state of newly independent countries across Asia and Africa, which were based on mutual respect of sovereignty, non-interference in internal matters and non-aggression become the basis for devising a successful form of conditions for moving towards achieving a second order CAP. By creating this set of agreed norms, it provides a strong basis for continued support of other member states despite economic crisis and political instability in individual countries. Such a method of buttressing of the value of a cooperative global South creates a foundation for advancing of the benefits of mutual support.

This framing of collective decision making has a positive impact on regional cooperation through the strategic agency of domestic political elite in the global South. This norm creation as an outcome of the active engagement by national governments is a marked shift from the liberal institutional framing that provides representation of elites in developing countries as operating within the context of perverse interests. This markedly different result also raises the question of whether the investigation of national actors within the context of regional cooperation should be revisited.

Revisiting Regional Cooperation: A Case of Reducing Reputational Risk or the Need to Identify Red Lines?

The classic proposition by Schelling (1966) is that nations regard their reputation as paramount and international commitments (and threats) are made to ensure the credibility of a nation. However, there is another and more recent view that political elites are not concerned by the reputational risk if it does not adversely affect the domestic audience, as will be the case if there is only a small negative “audience cost” in future electoral processes (Kertzer, Renshon, and Yarhi-Milo

2021). If national considerations have an impact on how national elites undertake international stances, then it becomes important to think explicitly of the red lines that exist for each nation. By identifying critical features that a nation state regards as inviolable, such as the importance of protecting national icons, could become the basis for national leaders to accept those regional cooperation initiatives that accept to national specificity. If this is the basis for regional agreements, then it becomes important to consider whether such decisions regarding regional cooperation should only be regarded as a reflection of the fragility of a nation state that will result in spill overs of conflict to neighbouring states. If regional cooperation is recast into a frame that examines external engagement as a strategy for building common axes, emerging from negotiations among neighbouring countries through consensual processes. This moves diametrically from the previous notion that regional cooperation is largely a complex platform that is driven by concerns about the inability to manage intra-national conflicts (Rubin 2002).

While the liberal institutional framing has regarded red lines as an important method for countries to show that they are strong contenders within regional and global politics, the ASEAN experience displays a different facet. In contrast to the conventional international understanding that there is a need for confrontation and deterrence in the international sphere to gain ascendancy, the ASEAN approach uses economic growth as a preferred axis to bring together member states. Furthermore, the success of the region in building an enduring relationship with the global North arises from regional spill overs, particularly those that emphasise the importance of according respect to its varied religions, and cultures. This extends to the recognition of the value of multiple legal orders in protecting national sovereignty for countries in the global South. The initial emphasis of norms that were adopted at the Bandung Conference provided the negotiatory mechanisms that was later taken up and ratified at the Non-Aligned Movement conference at Belgrade in 1962 (Chatterjee 2017).

These forms of norm creation continue to influence the functioning of regional bodies. In the case of the progress within the ASEAN on intra-regional economic and social parameters is the result of building on norms and creating a “norm cascade” (Engel 2018) that even includes the borrowing of “foreign” ideas. The introduction of an idea by a member state, based on an idea that has previously evident in national strategies in countries outside the region can be incorporated in the region, if the member state introducing it can show that it has value. The form in which such a norm is adopted would be one that is regarded as a “best fit” after having it refashioned through a process of localisation suitable for the region. It is processes of negotiation and iteration that introduce newly agreed norms within the regional body. These selected ideas, such as adopting a particular standard, are subsequently transmitted to member states through a “socialisation” mechanism using persuasive and non-coercive engagement. This

“socialisation” mechanism is a form of transmission that allows member states into the regional body to familiarize themselves with the agreed standards and specification before they move towards adopting a more homogenous view across the regional organization on the value of an introduced norm (Acharya 2004).

Another intellectual framing through which to consider the procedures for improved regional cooperation is to use the concepts of Lowest Common Multiple (LCM) and Highest Common Factor (HCF) that are used in mathematical thinking. The former, LCM, is a method for finding the least number which is exactly divisible by each of the given numbers; while the latter, HCF, is the largest number that divides two or more numbers. If the selection of criteria that must be followed are based on the principle that it must be one that is upheld by all countries in the region, then it is akin to using the LCM. For example, all countries must have the same understanding of culture. Alternately, if the selection of criteria is based on a feature that might be found in all countries in the region, then it is akin to that of the HCF. For example, that all countries can identify what they consider as culture can be the basis on which they join.

By taking up a HCF type approach to selecting criteria for agreement, ASEAN has chosen a process that permits the selection of a smaller number of criteria that can be adopted, and this makes it more feasible for undertaking a “socialisation” mechanism. The case of adoption of human development criteria has been the outcome of such a process and it has resulted in a series of policies and programmes that can allow each country to operate in the selected space but to take up only those aspects that they can deliver. An illustration of this process is evident in the processes adopted by ASEAN Social and Cultural Council (ASCC) in the collation of the key features of the *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025*. The blueprints set out its key principle, to foster a “committed, participative and socially-responsible community” that is “aware and proud of its identity, culture and heritage with the strengthened ability to innovate and proactively contribute to the global community” (ASCC 2016, 3). The agreed principle is the result of collating all the views provided by member states and then drawing out of the pool the set of ideas that are common to all member states. In this case, the resulted principle allowed ASEAN to agree a society that can embrace the future without losing touch with its past, while ensure non-interference with the varied positions on culture within each member state. It is also clear that this cultural agenda was building on a previous consensus building operation to ensure cooperation on agreed measures for signalling progress in the sphere of social and cultural development. Indeed, there is complementarity between the 2025 Blueprint’s “Key Results Areas” (organized under the headings: “Engages and benefits the people”, “Inclusive”, “Promotion and protection of human rights”, “Resilient”, and “Dynamic”), the 2015 ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Scorecard (ASEAN 2016a), and the international development agenda.

The consensus building that has evolved from the original principles of *Panchsheel* that were enunciated and adopted at the Bandung Conference and has subsequently become an established protocol for ensuring mutual respect for national sovereignty are also reflected in ASEAN's efforts to refine and align social and cultural objectives with global development goals over the last two decades. A case in point, is the response to the MDGs adopted by the international community between 2000 and 2015,² ASEAN issued a "Joint Declaration on the Attainment of the MDGs" on March 1, 2009 (ASEAN 2012b). This was followed by a subsequent *Roadmap for the Attainment of the MDGs* to allow member states to gain capacity in measuring progress of achievement of the goals by providing clear guidance of how the region would collectively collaborate to establish a monitoring and evaluation framework (ASEAN 2012a). The Joint Declaration formalised ASEAN's commitment to end poverty across the region and promised a more gender responsive approach. It also pledged to strike "a balance between economic growth and social development and environmental sustainability in order to... [further] the attainment of the MDGs" (ASEAN 2012b, para. 2).

Moving forward to September 2015, the UN set out a far more ambitious and comprehensive strategy for global development in *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations 2015). Instead of focusing on poverty reduction in eight basic dimensions as the MDGs had done, the 2030 Agenda sought to promote sustainable development across economic, social, and environmental fields. A new set of SDGs consisting of seventeen goals, 169 targets and an expanding set of 232 indicators provided guidelines. The SDGs were adopted by the co-chairs of the ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development (EU and ASEAN 2020). Since 2007, and the ambition "to leave no-one behind" has been underpinned by the ASEAN position on how to advance sustainability and inclusion objectives. The *ASEAN Development Outlook (ADO)* is the first report produced by the ASEAN, and an effort is made to chart progress towards sustainable human development in the ASEAN region, and to identify key challenges together with examples of best practice for the future.

The report adopts an analytical framework, focusing on people, through using the conceptual framework of the Capability Approach and advocates the use of Foresight thinking to sharpen policy insights. Three broad research objectives guide the report: (1) assess the ASCC's goals and performance against likely future challenges to identify gaps or shortfalls; (2) evaluate progress and highlight best practices and room for improvement across the region; and (3) make policy recommendations to accelerate progress against existing goals and to propose new ones if appropriate. Another distinctive feature of the consensus-based approach is that the ADO adopts a forward-looking approach as this ensures the adherence to an HCF approach, where all member states can cooperate on previously agreed principles. The ADO facilitates the working of the member states using a HCF thinking as it focuses on offering new perspectives

and questions, rather than new evidence and answers. In keeping with the principle that member countries should feel fully able to exercise national sovereignty the report sketches frameworks of problem diagnosis, rather than detailed universal blueprints. This ensures a policy space for individual member states to continue to take forward their thinking about social questions, and not be shoehorned into accepting universal “best practice” solutions.

ASEAN commissioned a research team for the project, based at the University of Cambridge. The research team worked over eighteen months on reviewing a wide selection of secondary literature from ASEAN and non-ASEAN resources and commissioned over seventy global and regional experts from over twenty countries across a range of disciplines to conduct research, write new background papers and review ADO drafts. Over this period the core members of the research team also had numerous lengthy and fruitful conversations with ASEAN Divisional staff who have been most welcoming and provided valuable insights. Through this engagement, the core researchers sought to lay the foundations for a Global-ASEAN knowledge-network to introduce new ideas that would encourage ongoing dialogue. The open spirit in which all such conversations were held is a testament to cross-country collaboration and to the people involved.

A key part of this engagement was with ASEAN senior officials. National teams across the region participated in a series of online focus group discussions through June and July 2020 and completed a questionnaire to inform the forthcoming ADO about the key themes, challenges and opportunities facing the region and cases of good practice. Across the thirty-seven completed questionnaires, there was a clear sense that equitable access, education and learning, and inclusive development were at the top end of priorities, followed by cultural diversity, the environment and climate change, poverty reduction/resilience, best practice and capacity building, and regional cooperation and collaboration. The importance of education, inclusive development, cultural diversity, and the environment identified by the respondents from different member states also dovetailed neatly with the key themes of the ADO report: Identity, Natural and Built Environment, Livelihoods and Social Welfare.

The nurturing of “ASEAN awareness” and community participation are central to the ethos that underpins ASEAN’s social development strategy. In recognition of this, Identity is placed at the start of this ADO and its inter-relationship with socio-economic development choices and outcomes are examined throughout. The collation and construction of the identity theme has drawn on several ASEAN documents on a broad range of subjects that came under the purview of Theme 1. By reviewing case studies, the team were able to identify any metrics that had been devised through relevant divisions or sectoral bodies to evaluate the objectives of their strategic plans and work plans. These include: the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community Blueprint 2025 (ASCC 2016); the

ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), 2016-2025 (ACWC 2015)³; the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, 2016-2020 (ASEAN 2017)⁴; ASEAN Youth Work Plan, 2016-2020 (ASEAN 2019b)⁵; ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ASEAN 2018); Regional Action Plan for ASEAN Heritage Parks, 2016-2020 (ASEAN 2008); ASEAN Communication Master Plan II, 2018-2025 (ASEAN 2019a); Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, 2025 (ASEAN 2016b); ASEAN Strategic Plan for Information and Media, 2016-2025 (ASEAN 2016a); Report of the Secretary General of ASEAN on the Work of ASEAN, 36th ASEAN Summit (ASEAN 2020a), The Narrative of ASEAN Identity (ASEAN 2020b).

Drawing on these documents it became evident that the harnessing of collective identity undertaken by ASCC is the result of finding those features that have emerged as “common factors” across the priorities set out by individual member states. The importance of those aspects of identity that are the topmost priority of each member state are listed in their national workplan and drawing on the common factors from these national plans provides the consensual basis for building additional layers of collective action. This protocol follows from the principle of non-interference, so that it protects the ability of member states to channel their own system of cultural and historical ties, while also facilitating the forging of a multi-dimensional “common identity.”

What emerged from an examination of the documentation, was that while the orthodoxy of globalisation set out in the global North regards ASEAN’s modern economic success has been founded on its *external* relationship with the world, rather than its *internal* relationship with its own past and future, the principles of non-intervention in national matters to ensure mutual respect of sovereignty has been the cornerstone of respect for the diversity between ASEAN member states in terms of economic, social, and cultural development. The view ASEAN—and indeed Asia—is a homogenous block, defined in terms of economic indicators, rather than the rich heterogeneity of its culture and people, is based on a set of perceptions are viewed through the lens of Western languages, clothing and economic values, and the opposing view is that presented by ASEAN.

The internal reality within the region is that the ASEAN region is rich in group diversity, and based on different perceptions how the development process should be devised, the building of consensus as a way forward to undergird the conditions for a successful second order CAP. By enhancing successful collective action, the ASEAN region has not faced the acute political tension, nor has the region faced major intra-state armed conflict (Engel 2018) despite the numerous and often decades-long conflicts at the national and sub-national levels.

Such an approach appears to be in line with the considerations of respecting sovereignty and the primary principle of solidarity that were adopted at the

Bandung conference. Lumumba-Kasongo (2015) makes the argument that this is not incidental, but is a core feature of an anti-colonial and non-aligned movement. The power of the Bandung Conference was that it brought to the fore the importance of adopting a multipolarity system. In contrast to the bipolar world of the Cold War, and the unipolar world of the Washington Consensus, this multipolar approach makes it possible to understand that regional bodies can be formed by member states who follow strategic development whereby national interests can have positive spill overs in the region. If the HCF type selection criteria permit a smaller subset of policy areas, it becomes more feasible to allow individual countries to familiarise themselves with the necessary codes and standards. This can be the basis for regional groupings to negotiate more effectively within the grouping, as well for developing a platform to cross regional negotiations.

This alternative framing for developing regional cooperation with a focus of learning codes and standards, through an acceptance of sovereignty and use of non-binding institutional processes is becoming recognised as a different approach (Barbieri 2019). It is also one that creates a more equal relationship between member states and does not regard the global North as superior to the global South on account of adhering more closely to the neo-liberal market paradigm or on its greater proclivity for a fuller requirement for a protocol to be absolutely adhered by member states. Furthermore, it could be argued that with the end of the Cold War, the possibility of adopting models beyond the European model of regionalism would be more suited to the interests of countries in the global South (Barbieri 2019; Lumumba-Kasongo 2015; Park 2022). The UN system might like to consider these new models of regionalism as a subject for further study, as they do accord far more importance to equal treatment of member state interests and are far more likely to build trust, as they are based on consensual processes of decision making.

Conclusion

Looking across the last two decades, from the acceptance of SSC that was initiated in the mid-1990s (Engel 2018) to the launch of ADO in mid 2021, it is evident that the ideas of national sovereignty and the upholding the principle of non-aggression have created a new set of norms for achieving the objectives of inclusion and sustainability. The crucial role of fostering the recognition of multiple laws across the global South at the Bandung Conference was the first stage of new norm creation, and it is on this foundation that the SSC was constructed. The core of the SSC is in the legitimacy of using the plurality of ideas and priorities around countries in the global South to build new forms of cooperation that emerge for a protocol of consensus building. This crucial form

of enhancing second order CAP conditions is also at the core of the ADO report, providing the flagship principles of the ASCC publication that looks forward at how to ensure a regional identity that reflects unique generational and regional perspectives for inclusive and sustainable future ASEAN development.

In the face of confrontation between nations, at both regionally and international levels, where red lines and the need to show forms of deterrence dominate, the use of a consensus protocol reduces intra-regional conflict and upholds the principles of national sovereignty. The focus is on identifying HCF priorities across member states, and this enables individual member states to retain their cultural and historical specificities while agreeing on the importance of enhancing of individual capacity and social resilience in addressing future shocks and challenges. The ASEAN agreement that there is a need to develop a deeper sense of inclusive and collective ASEAN “policy ownership” by extending the ASCC knowledge platform to a wider stakeholder base as the top priority was successful because of ensuring that the original Bandung principles were adhered to in word and spirit.

A more inclusive ASEAN that regularly makes use of SSC engagement is appropriate as a norm approach that explicitly recognizing the richness of intra-regional dialogue. It is also the expected outcome of the “ASEAN way” where different national histories are respected as justification for the right of nations to choose their own development path. The continued upholding on this form of engagement over the last seventy years, in sharp contrast to previously hegemonic principles of Western liberal thinking that privileged a legal tradition that placed the history of European economies as the only norm at the beginning of the twentieth century, has explicitly introduced norm localization as a legitimate form of regional cooperation. By establishing and promoting these alternative protocols for convening power in these south-south engagements works, new forms of consensus building can be adopted that will enhance conditions for succeeding in overcoming second order CAPs. These protocols have reduced acute conflict between nations in the global South, and the extent to which these forms of capacity building within nations can enhance new collaborative initiatives going forward, makes them an attractive platform for adoption at UN knowledge platforms and future regional cooperation.

Notes

1. A Chinese summary of the discussion among the heads of state in Bandung in 1955 is available at <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114671>.
2. The goals were to: (1) eradicate poverty and hunger; (2) achieve universal primary education; (3) promote gender equality and empower women; (4) reduce child mortality; (5) improve maternal health; (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (7) ensure

environmental sustainability; and (8) develop a global partnership for development.

3. The sixteen themes set out in the workplan are found in the introduction of the ASEAN Development Outlook (ASEAN 2021).

4. The six components of the workplan are: Rural Economic Growth; Social Protection and Safety Nets; Development of Infrastructure and Human Resources in Rural and Peri-Urban Areas; Public-Private-People Partnership (4Ps) for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication; Resilience of the Poor and Vulnerable Groups to Economic and Environmental Risks; and Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Development and Poverty Reduction in the Region.

5. The five sub-goals are youth entrepreneurship, employability, people to people exchange, youth participation, and youth competencies (ASEAN 2021).

Appendix

Abbreviations

ACWC	ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
APSC	ASEAN Political-Security Community
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
HCF	Highest Common Factor
LCM	Lowest Common Multiple
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSC	South-South Cooperation
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	US Agency for International Development

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