



INTERVENTION

Delivered by

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Thematic Review: Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies
Perspectives of LDCs, LLDCs and MICs
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There is no one size that fits all—not in economies, not in politics, societies or any other activity. It is always a loose fit or too tight. The political question has been: to adjust it to the people's size or the people to the size. Even then, it doesn't fit every individual or community and of course we all outgrow our clothes. But one size fits all is a start. A necessary and indispensable start. Countries, societies, people and their futures are too important to be left to originality and chance. Only one size must fit all: morality which is never relative to time or place but universal over all. As Cory Aquino said here at the UN: "There are many ways to govern people but only one way to treat them all: and that is with decency."

It all starts with an attempt to find the one size that fits, if not all their needs and capacities, then most of those. If we groped blindly as we went along, we'd be lost. There's always been planning. We need a template; if not for everything in every situation, something that works in most situations. We are more alike than we are different.

A free market economy has over time generated a great deal of progress, perhaps more than any other economic system. But a free market system assumes a free market, which is not the original state of economic man as the historical similarity of every place has shown. Free markets are the most complex to sustain. There is always a tendency to anarchy or overregulation.

It starts with scattered agriculture; and branches off to hydraulic agriculture as in Han China and ancient Egypt. Or into feudalism where the strong who grow nothing take everything they can from those who grow. The strong who are violent offer protection to the weak who are productive—feeding off each other's capacities and incapacities; though the strong tend to have a bigger appetite than they deserve. Feudalism yields surpluses—or it does not. Surpluses inspire barter then trade. Trade may develop into commerce and commerce beget industry; things start because someone wants it. This is a gross simplification but every society goes through such stages. Some get stuck in one stage; or several stages are conflated at one time: feudalism, commerce, industrialization and military power in the Prussian state: the preeminent model for the most advanced Asian countries in the past century and a half—and it worked after fashion. It is called mercantilism or paradoxical state-sponsored free enterprise that works pretty well in China. Collectivization

was a complete failure. One size fits all though: and that is honest accounting of expenses and the proscription of stealing. Stealing now is not justified by the specious claim that it will be in the victims' interest tomorrow; yet that is what all governments do except maybe in Scandinavia says Fukuyama.

Yes, one size fits all but there are many fashions. The thing is not to reinvent the wheel but study whatever rolls, and make adjustments and refinements for the kind of road a country travels.

The key is to study the patterns and follow each or several as far as they can take you; and change them a bit or altogether. This is why we need to be able to appeal to a final authority; nothing compulsory but something dependable like the United Nations, offering a buffet of designs for economies, politics and societies—each one of a size that fits all with adjustments for place and capacity.

Here at the UN are all the tried and tested sizes on display; every country showing how well or badly the size fitted them if at all. In showing and sharing experiences, they discover the adjustments others made, and make the one size fit each one better.

My country is set to become an upper middle income economy if everything goes well; but one can never tell if everything will go well until it does. Or not. And so, with confidence in the path we have taken this far, and in the scheme we adopted that has worked—we remain open to new ideas in the expectation that the unexpected will happen. But it will not catch us unprepared without alternatives to cope with new situations and fresh challenges. Thank you.