Beyond States and Empires: Chiefdoms and Informal Politics

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ABSTRACT

At the very beginning of the twenty-first century, the sovereignty and near supremacy of the state are being challenged. Barely half a century ago, some scholars envisaged an inevitable or direct historical path to more consolidated and larger polities: a world government, possibly a planetary state, at the very least a concert of nation-states (Carneiro 1978; Hart 1948). Now this appears to have been a flight of fancy. Even in the face of a revolution in telecommunications and a powerful process of economic globalisation, it has become evident that there has been no linear progression in political development or centralisation. Political philosophers may find the prospect of an unstoppable march towards homogeneous polities desirable or immoral. Social scientists simply register the forces which go against it and, indeed, which may well pose dangers to the nation-state as it evolved during the last two centuries.

Globalisation, the quest for democracy, as well as new processes of collective identification, have enabled people to become

increasingly aware of the inequalities between nations, between whole continents, but also of the sharp social divisions within states themselves. As a result various ethnic, regional, local, professional, party political and associational identities have emerged to compete with, and indeed defy the state. These identities have political overtones but they may be wrapped in cultural garb and underpinned by economic or ideological arguments.

There are today a vast number of non-state organisations across the globe, ranging from separatist insurgencies, extremist parties, warlord networks, liberation movements, internationally organised crime networks, but also various non-governmental organisations, with ambitions far greater than those of most states. Some newly created religious bodies invoke loyalties never achieved by nation-states. In other parts of the world, a number of so-called traditional polities claim back the authority they possessed before the advent of colonial rule, arguing that the state is a foreign body, brought to those areas by the imperial rulers and that societies should be governed by principles that evolved locally.

In brief, the contemporary world exhibits myriad political groupings which do not fit easily within the accepted categories of nation-states and are evolving in ways which do not match the standard expectations of political and economic development (Chabal 1992). Their very existence is a challenge to the common conceptualisations of the world order and their varied activities test the fabric of the international system. At the same time, they ignore the boundaries of the nation and operate either across regions or in the deeper recesses of individual countries. It is our view that what links these groupings and movements is a series of attributes – political, cultural, social and economic – most readily associated with the type of non-state, small-scale, informal entities that have frequently been defined as chiefdoms.

Let us mention a few examples. The Kurdish people may comprise twenty million people, yet there is no Kurdish state. Whereas the latter is evidently not desired by those countries where Kurds live, it is also the case that strong kinship structures with family chieftains at their head have permeated Kurdish political life and may have created disunity, thus preventing a nation-state from emerging. The FARC

rebels have been fighting the Colombian state for four decades. They effectively rule over large territories. Their ideology is however anti-state and the question arises as to what form their polity takes today and what form it might take if they managed to take over the whole country. In Lebanon, where the central state has been comparatively weak for decades, the political culture associated with the various confessional communities may also be seen as that of chiefdoms. Further away, the recently defeated separatists on the island of Bougainville in eastern Papua New Guinea had set up a military style polity, led by their 'chief', Francis Ona. Recently in Chad, Sierra Leone, or Angola, today still in Somalia or Ivory Coast, parts of each country are or have been in the hands of political movements whose existence depends to a high degree on the outstanding personal qualities of leaders, warlords, or modern chiefs.

Even when a movement strives for national independence, the conditions in which it struggles require a face-to-face organisation that is structured along informal lines, yet may be hierarchical. We know of the existence of the Palestinian National Council but this overtly democratic body rarely assembles. The daily politics have been for decades in the hands of Yasser Arafat and a small group of his collaborators. What is the organisational character of this group? How does it work? Are we dealing with some kind of self-reproducing fiefdom, upon which has been erected the ostensibly democratic edifice of the Palestine Liberation Organisation? On the other hand, we know nearly nothing about the structure of Hamas, which could be seen as a theocratic chiefdom at its core but is otherwise, a loose network of supporters, would-be martyrs or suicide bombers. Equally we hardly know little of the organisational structure of Al Qaeda and the relationship between spiritual and executive leadership. Finally, what can we say about religious sects such as cargo cults in Melanesia or the Johnstown cult in Guyana which proclaim independence or simply behave as though they were totally autonomous, 'a state within a state', with an internal structure that parallels chiefdoms.

Within contemporary nations there are numerous collective entities or political groupings that act as though the state does not exist

or, at times, work in direct opposition to it. In well-established nation-states, as in Western Europe, these most frequently take the form of militant organisations, such as Greenpeace, or secretive groupings, such as masonic lodges and religious sects (one recently announced the first successful human cloning). In the less consolidated or more recent nation-states of the so-called Second and Third Worlds, competitors to the established order can be located within political parties, trade unions, professional associations, and other bodies, many of which may nominally belong to the state structure but are organised by people who in fact do not recognise the state's supremacy. Even in authoritarian regimes like China, human rights and religious movements (such as, for instance, the Falungong) are accused of being well organised and politically motivated, although no evidence has hitherto been produced to prove their subversive anti-state goals. At the other end of the spectrum, we find groupings that plan and execute the overthrow of existing governments, or are parasitic on state and society – on the model of criminal networks and mafias, whose aims are the acquisition of illicit wealth but whose reach may sometimes impact on political power, as has been the case in Italy.

While there is general awareness of these political groups and some information about the way in which they operate, their political significance has not yet been fully grasped, even less analysed. There is no adequate political theory to account for these trends within contemporary societies – although one has developed an approach to account for the 'informalisation' and 're-traditionalisation' of politics in the context of the African continent (Chabal and Daloz 1999). Nor are current theories of international relations able to cope with the emergence of independent and informal non-state formations, which do not care about the existence of borders and act in defiance of the sovereignty of existing states. International law itself is helpless in the face of these networks without territory or clear organisational framework. Most human and social science disciplines badly need concepts to help explain these seemingly new political phenomena. By extending our reach into the past, sometimes the very distant past, and by employing comparative multidisciplinary analysis to develop the concept of chiefdom, a way could be opened towards a general

theory of informal politics, and conversely towards a new approach to the theory of the state.

CONCEPTS OF CHIEFDOM

Our approach is to use and build on the concept of chiefdom as formulated by anthropologists and archaeologists and employ it for the examination of present day non-state political entities and structures. Chiefdom has gradually become the central concept among anthropologists and archaeologists working on archaic politics. The literature on chiefdoms is historically deep and globally comparative (Carneiro 1981; Earle 1997; Feinman and Neitzel 1984). In reference to an organisational formation, chiefdoms first were used to characterise relatively small, bounded, chief-led groups in the ethnographic present of South America (Oberg 1955) and Polynesia (Sahlins 1958). Such societies had ascribed forms of leadership and affiliation was largely based on the rhetoric of kinship. By the middle of the twentieth century, the term chiefdom was incorporated into neo-evolutionary schema (Service 1962) that defined a broad class of chiefly societies poised on the development ladder between egalitarian groups (bands and tribes) and larger, more bureaucratic, states (Feinman 1996). Generally, in such theoretical constructions, chiefdoms refer to those traditional social forms that measure in the tens of thousands of people (or fewer), have inherited (as opposed to achieved) forms of leadership, are integrated through kinship or fictive kin ties, and have non-bureaucratic structures. That is, in chiefdoms, one typically finds only one or two tiers of decision-making above the general populace. Authority tends to prevail over raw military might or institutionalised power (Skalník 1996, 1999).

Yet gradually, significant variation in chiefdoms was recognised (Renfrew 1974). For example, although redistributive economies were seen by some to be one of their core features, others argued that chiefly economies were in actuality far more diverse (Earle 1978, 1987). The key feature was that those in power had access to whatever kinds of resources were needed to reproduce the existing structure. This characteristic distinguishes chiefdoms from big-man socie-

ties in which leadership is more tied to charisma and ability, and is thus more situational and less replicable over time. Building on earlier comparative analysis, recent work has described 'corporate chiefdoms' in which rule was not focused on individual chiefs, but handled by councils and sometimes grounded in strong communal codes of behaviour (Blanton *et al.* 1996; Feinman *et al.* 2000).

The implicit neo-evolutionary assumption that chiefdoms are a stepping-stone, or way station, on the historical path to state formation also has received much critical scrutiny. In the Caribbean, Central America, northern South America, eastern North America, as well as in areas of Africa and Polynesia, archaeological studies, often in conjunction with ethnographic research, have demonstrated that chiefly formations have endured for centuries and even millennia (Drennan and Uribe 1987; Redmond 1998). Although specific chiefships and head-towns may rise and fall, the organisational formations persist over time. In other regions, such as pre-Hispanic Mexico and the Andes, the break-down products of earlier states have been referred to as chiefdoms, since they are relatively small, hierarchical, yet not bureaucratic (Costin and Earle 1989). Others have preferred to label these balkanized polities as petty-states or city-states (Brumfiel 1983), given that they often have features (stratification, writing, markets) that are not typical of the chiefdoms that preceded or were outside the reaches of states. Although such relationships between historical sequence and structure are no doubt important, in terms of organisational politics or political structures, petty-states and chiefdoms have significant parallels. Thus, once thought to be unstable, many chiefdoms have been found to endure or persist for centuries and sometimes longer. Elsewhere, historical cycling over time has been described between chiefdoms and more and less hierarchical forms (Leach 1954; Southall 1956). Significantly, there does not appear to be a single unilinear path of change when it comes to these oscillations (Feinman 1998: 102).

The recent neo-evolutionist fascination with early states has now sobered into the realisation that many of them, whether labelled 'kingdoms' and even 'empires', may not have really been the strong, well-integrated, political entities that we sometimes presume them to be

(Brumfiel 1992). For example, a sizeable number of the 'inchoate' early states did not hold together and fell apart into smaller but viable units because they lacked the requisite attributes, such as efficient coercive mechanisms (monopoly of violence or its threat), systematic taxation, full-time bureaucracy or complex wealth stratification. In contrast to this, many centralised polities existed for centuries without ever developing the features of the state. Yet they had hereditary or elected heads, called chiefs in professional language, who were backed by political ideology, religion and ritual.

For their part, chiefs and chiefdoms in Africa, Oceania and parts of Asia and South America never ceased to exist. Western colonial rule and the subsequent modern independent states did not manage or find it possible to get rid of them. The policy of 'indirect rule' relegated them to the lowest rungs of colonial politics but that, paradoxically, enabled them to survive. In some cases, the colonial rulers and their successor independent regimes attempted to abolish local chiefdoms and 'kingdoms'. Some of them, such as the well-known Buganda and Moogo (Burkina Faso), were recently restored. The fact that these chiefdoms, chieftaincies or kingdoms, persist and function in the shadow of the modern state is obviously intriguing. As the modern state fails to meet the most basic democratic expectations in many parts of the world, people turn to existing chiefdoms for succour. They are mindful of the longevity of these polities and, more importantly, they value their local roots. Chiefdoms (or at least some of them) provide in this way a more accountable political system. This feeds back to the Western world which has begun to recognise the cultural and social specificities of more informal, face to face, politics even within the orbit of liberal democracies. The call for autonomy within these unitary nation-states may revive some of the principles of more direct democracy common to some chiefdoms.

The return of chiefdoms onto the stage of national politics in many African states was not smooth. For example in Ghana the 'chieftaincy conflicts' are closely connected to the constitutional stipulations defining particular areas as historical chiefdom lands. However, the ability to move and establish oneself anywhere within the colonial and postcolonial state created situations where 'strangers' settled in a

large number of locations, usually with the permission of local chiefs, but as their numbers increased, tensions arose (Skalník 2002). Another intriguing development is that chiefs and chiefdoms have more, rather than less, prestige in countries like Ghana. For many Africans who have acquired a modern western education, becoming a chief is a coveted personal goal. In some complex Ghanaian chiefdoms such as Asante or Gonja, chiefs are normally well-educated, but see no contradiction in promoting chiefly ideology.

In Cameroon, chiefs representing historically powerful chiefdoms in the north-western part of the country have sometimes joined the dominant political party and fulfilled important responsibilities within its ruling body, but they do so primarily because they want to protect and promote their chiefdom. Even though they claim not to want to embroil themselves in national politics, they do so in order to sustain, or even increase, the power and reach of chiefly politics. In South Africa, the demise of apartheid has been seen by hereditary chiefs as an opportunity to seek new roles beyond the marginal and subordinated position they had been granted in the Bantustan politics of yesteryear. The chiefs are members of a national organisation and they vie for reserved seats in the various representative bodies. Their claims seem to be supported by ideology and rhetoric of the African Renaissance. For them, a truly African political dispensation is unthinkable without chiefs. Of course, problems may arise when for example Swazi-speaking South African citizens consider themselves simultaneously subjects of the Swazi king, who is the head of another independent state. The claim that citizens of a particular country are the subjects of neo-traditional chiefdoms whose paramountcies are located in another country, are an especially acute challenge to present African political realities. In sum, the role and office of the chief are often ideologically identified with the very substance and survival of a society – as in some African cases such as the annual renewal rituals of the Swazi or the succession practices among the Nanumba of northern Ghana.

Outside Africa chiefly politics, springing from traditional political arrangements, can be observed in the Arab world, especially in the Gulf area where most sovereign modern states are actually direct

heirs of pre-colonial chiefdoms, or emirates. In Afghanistan and in the Northwest Frontier of Pakistan, as well as in some parts of India, Burma and northern parts of Thailand, Laos and even Vietnam, chiefly politics is quite common. Bhutan is a kingdom run like a chiefdom. The recent liberation of Afghanistan from the theocratic centralising rule of the Taliban has made it possible for established chieftains to re-assert authority and brazenly to challenge the weak central state led by Karzai. This is not surprising since the Afghan resistance movements which for years fought against the Russian occupation and the Taliban were essentially organised as warlord chiefdoms.

In the Federated States of Micronesia, some island states rejected the idea of an assembly of chiefs only because the local population did not want their chiefs to come together with modern politicians and administrators (Petersen 1997). However, in Polynesia, countries like Samoa or Tonga have been monarchies in which chiefs dominate or influence politics. In Samoa, the head of state since 1963 is Chief Tanumafili II Malietoa, and the Fono (legislative assembly) is solely composed of matai (chiefs). Tonga is officially an independent kingdom but in fact functions as a neo-traditional chiefdom. Chiefs are key members of the King's Privy Council and nine out of thirty members of the Legislative Assembly are noblemen, or chiefs. In Fiji, officially a republic, and where the indigenous Austronesian population tries to reconcile itself to the existence of a sizeable immigrant Indian minority, the real authority rests in the Bose Levu Vakaturaga (Great Council of Chiefs) established in 1997 by the Fijian Affairs Act. This chiefly council appoints and dismisses the president and vice-president and nominates fourteen out of the thirty-two members of the senate. Ethnic voting ensures that a number of chiefs are also elected into the 71 member Legislative Assembly. In New Zealand administered Tokelau, the members of the General Fono are chosen by three atoll Taupulega (Council of Elders). Finally, even New Zealand is currently discussing some form of legislative status for the Maori chiefs.

As these examples imply, chiefdoms appear more durable and stable than was originally envisaged by neo-evolutionist thinking. Not

only have they survived into the present age but, in countries where the state has collapsed or failed to discharge its most minimal responsibilities, chiefdoms are increasingly taking over a more overtly political function, buttressing the important social and cultural role they have always played. Not surprisingly, the partisans of chiefdom stress longevity and consensual patterns of decision-making as two of the most crucial characteristics of this form of political arrangement. Interestingly, it is precisely the claim for more culturally rooted and proximate forms of social and political interaction which proponents of non-state, more informal, organisations in the West invoke.

For this reason, scholarly debates regarding past and present chiefdoms serve as a useful basis from which to address the diversity of radical movements, balkanized polities, warlord groups, and emergent non-state bodies that are active in the world today. It ought to help us to test the current assumption that such groupings are aberrant, inherently unstable, or unlikely to endure beyond the lifetime of their present leaders. Is it not possible that, as in the past, chiefdoms might last over time, even in the contemporary age? When it comes to the chiefdoms we know, what are the economic underpinnings that ensure their continued social reproduction, and what processes, either local or external, might undermine their integrity and persistence? Chiefdoms are no longer defined simply through redistribution, but do chiefly economies share specific features that distinguish them from states? What about the nature and range of wealth disparities, and how does that affect chiefly dynamics?

Archaeological and historical studies have already demonstrated that historical sequence and pre-existing conditions may correlate with different patterns of chiefly organisation and structure. For example, in highland Central Mexico, the small petty-states or chiefdoms that flourished following the fall of the urban state centred at Teotihuacan (AD 700–1300) had a distinct elite class, written texts, and, by the end of this period, just prior to the rise of the Aztec Empire, were interwoven into a regional market network (Brumfiel 1983). Such features are generally not typical of chiefdoms that precede the emergence or imposition of the state. In which ways can such knowledge be of use to the present? Conversely, can a study of

contemporary chiefly formations, and their relations with existing states, shed any light on what happened in Central Mexico so many centuries ago?

What effects do historical contingencies and new technologies, such as the written word and satellite communication, have on the small hierarchically structured groups of today? While many past chiefdoms depended at least in part on face-to-face interactions, does that necessarily mean that chiefly rule was always based on authority rather than brute power? Such issues are being discussed now in respect of the Pashtun world, where most of the populace are non-literate and myths of heroes are based largely on oral communications. Does the use of satellite phone by warlords make it harder to maintain control in a political situation where face-to-face meetings are difficult to arrange?

Traditionally, as well as in the modern world, what means do chiefs use to assert their will? What are the organisational consequences of the despotic use of personal power, or force, as opposed to the tyranny of the 'just' or that of the majority? Is it possible to have chiefdoms that are not directly personified by a chief? One of us has argued that certain large pre-Hispanic Pueblos in the United States Southwest, such as those at Chaco Canyon, were marked by hierarchical decision-making and organised as chiefdoms (Feinman *et al*. 2000). Yet at most of these great Puebloan sites, many of the personal trappings of chiefly power (such as wealth laden burials and elaborate residences) are rare or missing. Is the ostentatious display of wealth, or strength, a necessary attribute of chiefly power today? Or can the force of religion, for instance, be the greater mobilising factor?

Since almost all past and contemporary chiefdoms were part of wider networks that exchanged goods, people, and ideas with their neighbours, sometimes even adjacent states and empires, it is productive to examine how such linkages affect their dynamics. Did their geographic positioning in relation to states impinge on the patterns of resource procurement in chiefly polities? Can we say whether known chiefdoms were more or less able to persist when they were at the fringes of states? Can we identify the ebb and flow of such relations? Are chiefdoms that are economically dependent on productive activi-

ties (particularly agrarian economies) different organisationally from those whose livelihoods come principally from the circulation of goods and access to networks of exchange? Through such questions, we aim not only to tear down the disciplinary barriers in academic languages that we use to describe political actions and processes, but to construct a comparative set of theories and questions that can transcend the somewhat artificial divisions that separate the past from the present, the traditional from the modern, and the West from the rest.

QUESTIONS, THEMES, HYPOTHESES

The purpose of re-examining the work of students of archaeology, anthropology, history and politics is not merely to compare the definitions of chiefdoms they may provide. As we reassess the configuration of power in the contemporary world, we seek to study the extent to which an understanding of the past may inform the present. At stake here is the question of whether the numerous, and continuously diversifying, forms of non-state politics found across the globe today can be analysed more fruitfully by taking into account the history of such polities in earlier times. Conversely, we aim to consider whether the knowledge of long disappeared political entities may be made more critical if proper attention is given to the actual evolution of informal polities today.

We wish to tackle this comparative task by identifying a number of key questions, relevant to all four disciplines, and from which a number of themes may emerge. The first, quite clearly, is that of boundaries, since there is wide variation in the understanding of chiefdom found across the fields. Although we need not be prescriptive on this issue, it will be necessary to agree on some broad criteria. How large and dispersed can a chiefdom be? How much do means of communications and transport impinge on the form such a group takes? How much can such a 'community' grow or shrink before it ceases to function as a chiefdom?

The second question, therefore, concerns variability, since here too there is obviously no single model. Is it possible to compare chiefdoms of greatly different scale and scope? Is it legitimate to contrast

those that lasted but a few decades with those that have endured through centuries? How wide do we cast our nets? Do we not run the risk of stretching the concept over far too many political groupings, thus undermining its usefulness as an analytical tool?

This brings us to the issue of dynamics, or perhaps better, processes. It is sometimes argued, though less and less convincingly, that so-called traditional polities are timeless, or unchanging. Even the most superficial examination of these groupings would make it clear that they are no more static than other, larger or more modern, ones. Nevertheless, it is essential to attempt to conceptualise the ways in which chiefdoms, past and present, evolve and, even more importantly, what the factors may be that have prompted those quantum, or catastrophic, changes which have marked their breakdown.

What such questions point to, of course, is the key issue of the relationship between structure and sequence. Once it has been admitted that neo-evolutionism is in this respect nothing but a dead-end, it is by no means easy to proceed with certainty in respect of the possible causalities between these two variables. Although it would be nice to think that fairly general rules could be enunciated, historians would probably argue that context is all-important. There may well not be any meaningful correlation between structure and sequence. This remains to be tested, not only within our respective discipline but also by means of comparative analysis of either contemporaneous or cross-historical cases.

Beyond these general issues, there are a number of other questions which a comparative study of chiefdoms must address more specifically. The first, and perhaps most critical, is that of the nature of power and authority. Although it is generally agreed that such polities are based on (real or fictive) kinship and that they are devoid of bureaucracies, there is still a myriad of possible forms of rulership. How do we assess types and levels of authority? How critical are the personal attributes of the chief? What role does charisma play? How, finally, is power reproduced over generations?

The matter of power is, naturally, linked to that of legitimacy. Whilst at a general level it is often argued that chiefs must combine earthly and magic qualities, in reality both the nature of these two

types of authority and the way in which they combine are subject to considerable variation. Indeed, it may well be that some chiefdoms are singularly devoid of 'religion' and rely instead on other forms of ideology – nationalism or terrorism, for instance – to cement and develop the bonds that make them rightful in the eyes of their members.

The texture of power relations within any given chiefdom is, quite naturally, related to its economic basis. Critical, therefore, to the understanding of how such polities evolve and maintain themselves is the manner in which they obtain and deploy resources. Here too, it is apparent that there are very wide dissimilarities both in the ways in which they are acquired and in how important they are to the operation of the chiefdom. At one extreme, in the past as in the present, there are stable communities in which exchange (and/or gift) is limited, though perhaps symbolically important. At the other, there are movements or networks (like mafias), perhaps chiefly in attributes, but otherwise engaged in a transcontinental trade underpinned at once by personal and technological webs.

Equally important is the question of redistribution. It is usually agreed that chiefdoms are characterised by high levels of resource sharing. Contemporary neo-patrimonial relations, for instance, are predicated on the chiefs' ability continuously to feed the networks on which they depend for their power. Yet, we also know that there are wide-ranging inequalities within past and present chiefdoms. Are there limits here, beyond which such political entities begin to disaggregate? Equally, can chiefdoms accommodate substantial wealth or social stratification?

Finally, there are a range of issues linked to the interaction between chiefdoms and more complex polities – states, kingdoms, empires, etc. Today, as before, the groupings with which we are concerned operate both at the margin of, and within, such larger political entities. It is useful, therefore, to seek to assess the strategies employed by chiefdoms to navigate the treacherous waters of 'international' relations. Now, as in the past, there is constant duelling between the chiefdom's need for autonomy and the larger polities' 'imperialist' ambitions. Contrary to common sense, however, the struggle is far from unequal. Chiefdoms have a long record of dura-

bility, proving thereby that some of their core attributes may well enable them to survive and adapt to the vagaries of the 'world' system they confront.

Of course, these are only a few of the questions, or themes, around which one would construct a productive comparative analysis of chiefdoms across time periods and geographical areas. They are instruments to be used, rather than prescriptive characteristics which we would hope to incorporate into our comparative work. Nevertheless, they suggest that it is possible to devise a methodology that will inform the assessment of such smaller-scale, informal and adaptable political groupings.

CONCLUSION

Chiefdom-like political formations today often compete with the cumbersome, over-bureaucratised, state for the allegiance of its members. Due to the informality of its social relations, the face-to-face character of its public sphere, a more consensual decision-making process and the very nature of chiefly leadership – which is based on authority rather than coercive power – chiefdoms frequently appear to suit people better in their quest for proximate forms of governance. Hierarchy in chiefdoms is more transparent, hereditary or election principles of recruitment to offices are simple and acceptable. On the other hand some chiefdoms may become self-contained isolationist units of social interaction which view the world around them as hostile. Such are the criminal or terrorist organisations which either wish to subvert the state or to seize power.

It is clear, therefore, that there can be no simple approach to the question of the future of chiefdoms. Whilst many will argue that they provide a more acceptable face to political and social interaction, others will recoil at their potential for mischief. It seems in this respect that chiefdoms, like all other forms of human political institutions, can be either more 'democratic' or more 'tyrannical'. Although it would not do to view them in an overly idealistic way, as a solution to intractable contemporary political problems, it would be unwise to dismiss them as archaic remnants from the distant past, deviant or mutant forms within a world in which liberal democracy is destined to dominate.

What we can at least aim for is to develop a language for understanding such political groupings, in their varied and intricate complexities, that will cut across disciplines. Or rather, that will make it possible for students of the various fields both to understand the work of the others and to draw analytical tools which will facilitate the analysis of what is undoubtedly one of the most intriguing and enduring political entity the world has ever known.

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