

Community & the State

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Some basic definitions

Two multifarious, variegated and contested terms

Community

- ethnic, religious, arts/cultural, sports groups
- key parts of the social fabric – distinct from state / market

State

- Institutions with “monopoly on the legitimate use of force” (Weber)
- Regulators, externality managers, custodians of the large and long view

Some basic definitions

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Community

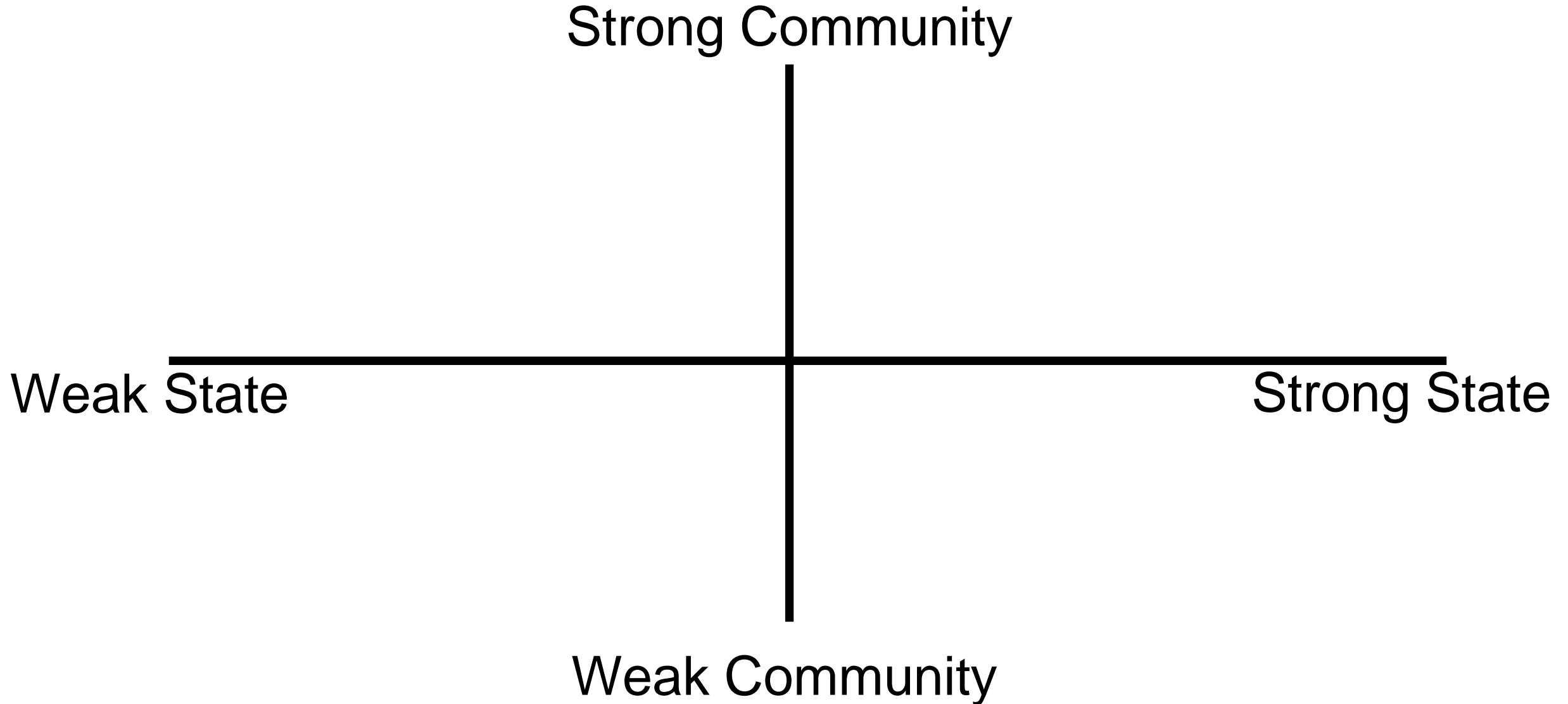
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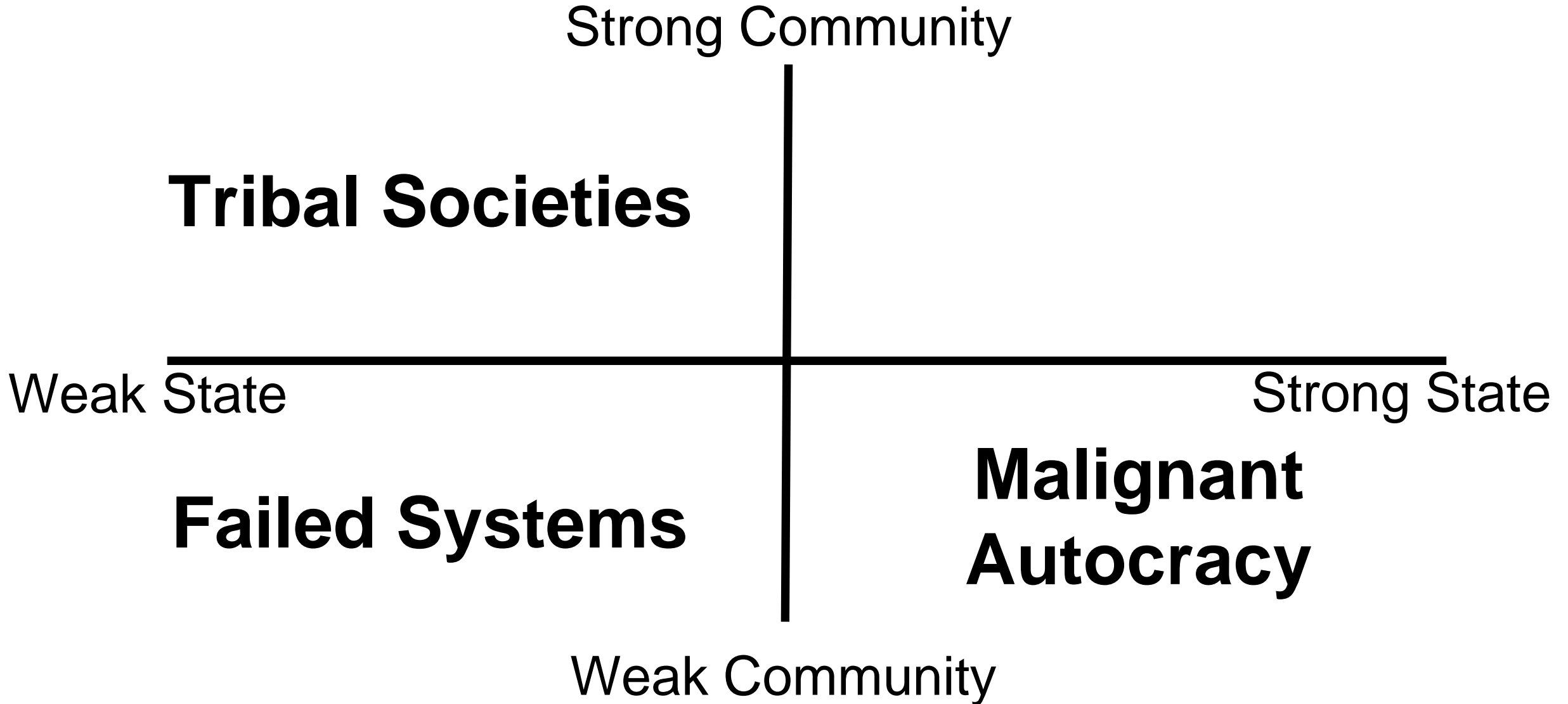
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- Regulators, externality managers, maintainers of order, custodians of the large and long view

How do we think about these more clearly and precisely?

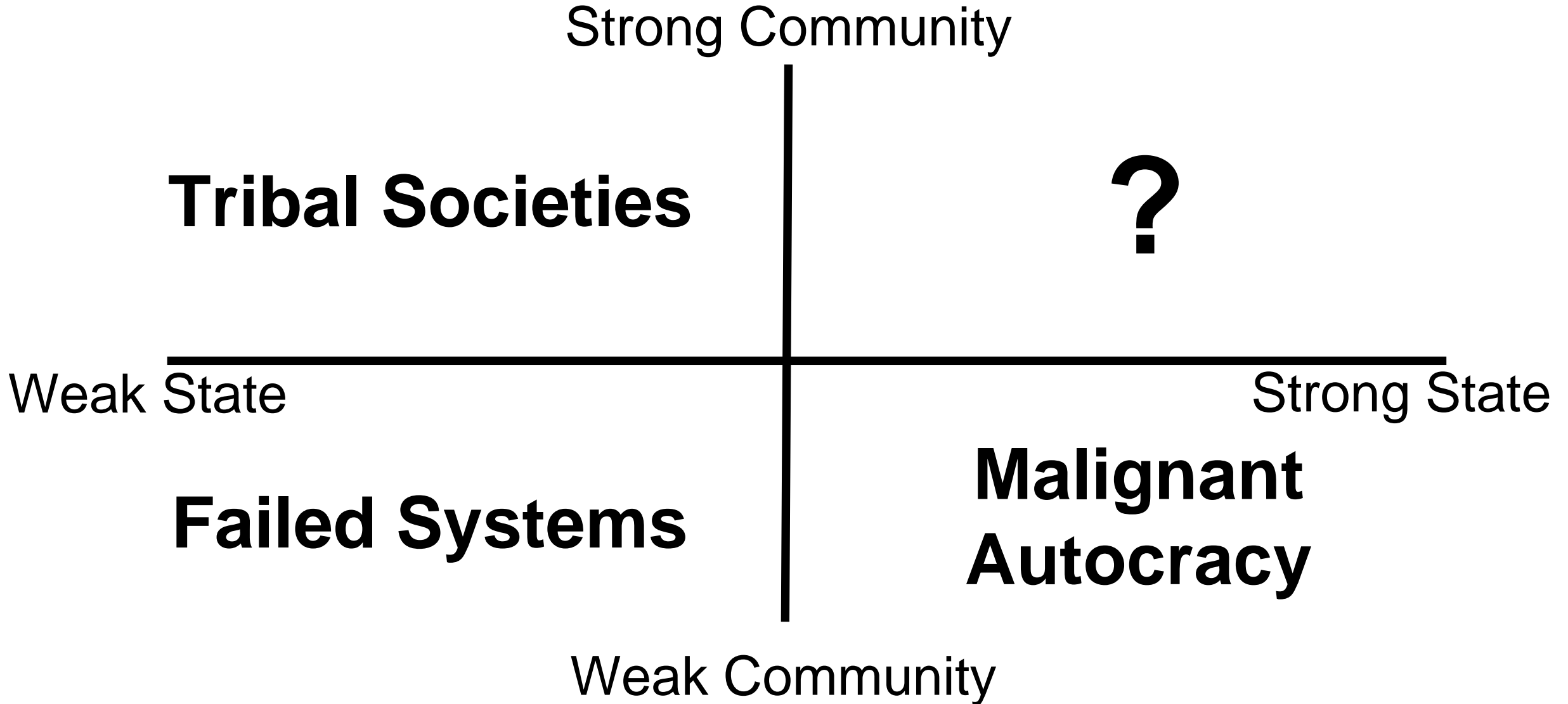
Both communities & states can be strong or weak at achieving desired outcomes



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Strong communities can have varying intentions

Constitutive Community

- Ties that bind (Ostrom)
- Civic nationalism, values
- Family resemblances (Wittgenstein)
- Aim to coexist with others and steward for common gain

- “Lies that bind” (Appiah)
 - Ethnic nationalism
 - Essentialist
- Aim to dominate others

Exclusivist Community

Strong communities can have varying intentions

Constitutive Community

- Ties that bind
- Civic nationalism, values
- Family resemblances (Wittgenstein)
- Aim to coexist with others
- **Self-help groups in SG**
- **Sing Lit**

- “Lies that bind” (Appiah)
 - Ethnic nationalism
 - Essentialist
 - Aim to dominate others
- **Apartheid / racism / MAGA**

Exclusivist Community

Strong communities can have varying intentions

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 - Ethnic nationalism
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Exclusivist Community

Constitutive Community

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Tagore – “not ... a uniformity that is dead, but ... a unity that is living”

Strong states can have varying intentions too

- Paternalist intervention
 - State as Control tower
 - Rowing
 - Rule-setting & enforcement
 - Convene, facilitate, partner
 - State as Network and Platform
 - Steering, not rowing
 - Rule-setting, some enforcement
-

Constrictive State
(crowds out)

Enabling State
(crowds in)

Strong communities / states can have varying intentions

Constitutive Community

**Competition &
Conflict**

**Collaborative
Nation Building OR
Co-existence**

Constrictive State

Enabling State

**Legal Checks on
Chauvinism**

**Rising Nativism /
Echo Chambers**

Exclusivist Community

Implications for Singapore

Constitutive Community

Responsible communities
can usefully complement
state perspectives

Some collaboration is
useful. But respectful
distance (coexistence)
can be okay too

Constrictive State

State powers can usefully
check chauvinism ...

Enabling State

... but can reinforce it too.

Exclusivist Community

Some closing thoughts

- Pragmatic idealism (Koh) takes constant effort - but is the bedrock of Singaporean exceptionalism.
- Trust (amidst risk) is key to arrive at, and stay in, the top right.
- In other quadrants, there can be dangers of a self-fulfilling Nash Equilibrium.
- Strategic interests and human needs should drive policy - not administrative efficiency alone.
- Deliberative spaces and participatory policymaking help build mutual familiarity, trust and predictability, to avoid less optimal outcomes.

Questions? Thoughts? Responses?

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