



# People police

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## **Highlights**

- India's police has largely retained a repressive colonial character. It must introduce strategies of community policing
- In the 1960s, India and the US faced a similar law and order situation — escalating crime and street violence. The two countries responded differently with different results.
- A criminal justice system can hope to succeed in delivering peace and order only in a “majority defenders of law” situation, that is, most of the citizens obey the law voluntarily. And it is the responsibility of the police to facilitate the achievement of this objective.

## **Issues**

- India inherited a militaristic and repressive police force from the British. It has, by and large, persisted with the colonial crime-fighting model.
- Commentators attribute the system's persistence to a resource crunch, vested interests, an indifferent academia not challenging the efficacy of police practices and the glamourisation of tough cops.
- Faced with rising crimes, street violence and subversive actions, the central government did initiate the modernisation of the police force scheme in the 1970s.
- But instead of switching to problem-solving and community policing strategies as the US did, it kept investing in the crime-fighting strategy — motorised patrolling, quick reactions to calls for help and reactive investigation.
- It ignored the failure elsewhere of the fire-brigade model of reactive policing in curbing crime by itself. It apparently led to an uninterrupted trend of an increase in crime and street violence in India.
- The ever-increasing fear of crime is reflected in gated communities and the booming private security industry.

## **Way Forward and Conclusion**

- There is an urgent need to embrace a hybrid of the community-oriented and crime-fighting policing strategies and to reinforce it with crime-mapping and trend analysis.
- This will keep the majority on the side of the law as well as deal effectively with

career criminals and psychopaths. And it will be an optimum utilisation of scarce resources.

- This is the time to reinvent the role of constables, who constitute 86 per cent of the police, and transform them to problem-solvers. Or else, law enforcement agencies will be overwhelmed by rising crime and overrun by escalating street violence.

With 356 million people in the 10-24 years age group, a proactive police engaging an interconnected, volatile and youthful population through community policing programmes is perhaps the only hope for enduring peace and lasting order.

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