

## Community policing

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The apparently unproblematic expression “Community Policing” needs to be unpacked and critically reviewed. What is called uniformly community policing across countries and continents hides a variety of empirical formulas of policing. Each formula, as I would like to argue, is essentially embedded in a type of political regime. This presentation will distinguish four types of community policing: the social control model (illustrated by the *Shurta Mujtamaia* in the Arabic world), the administrative coordination model (France), the civilian oversight model (Anglo-Saxon), and the community self-policing model (illustrated with the *Sungusungu* of Tanzania).

The "*shurta mujtamaia*" (community police) instituted in the last decade by a number of Arabic states is conceived as a modern instrument of social control. In a way, it is repression by other, softer, means. Wiktorowicz (2002) coined the word « embedded authoritarianism » to designate states that have liberalized/democratized their political institutions but maintain a tight control of their alleged unruly societies. Community policing, in these regimes, is one of the instruments that allow the state to collect intelligence and regiment civil society. Revealingly, the local committees instituted by this formula of community policing are called “Friends of the police” (India) or “Friends of the Ministry of Interior” (Iraq). Community policing is meant here to ensure the loyalty of society to the regime rather than, as this is the case in more Western models, to develop the service function of the police to local communities.

In Western democracies, community policing does not have the same meaning and the same function everywhere. Formulas of community policing “Western-style” seem to reflect fine variations of political institutions and ideologies within democracies themselves. The French/francophone model of community policing is thus not to be confused with the Anglo-Saxon one. The francophone formula – the *Police de proximité* – is strongly associated with the principle of “reaching out” communities locally (deconcentration of police services) and the problematic of coordination of local security policies generated by decentralization. The wave of decentralization in Europe in the eighties “produced” new autonomous administrative actors – local

governments – who controlled the implementation of a number of policies relevant to the prevention of crime, accidents and disorders. With decentralization, the local representative of the central state (the prefect, the governor) had lost his traditional tutelage authority over local governments and no institution filled the local “coordination gap” that resulted from this administrative transformation. Local Boards of Security have been the answer. These new institutions function as local platforms of dialogue and negotiation over prevention of disorders between representatives of the state and local governments. In sum, the French model of community policing is essentially concerned with the administrative coordination issue rather than, as in the British case, with a civilian oversight problematic. How local communities, civil society and citizen can input their views into local policing agenda is arguably of secondary importance in this model. Typically, the outputs of the local negotiation – the Local Contracts of Security – are signed in France by the prosecutor, the prefect and the mayor. Civil society plays no or little role in the definition of local policing.

Based on the UK matrix of policing, the Anglo-Saxon formula of community policing emphasizes notions of local police autonomy, delegation of policing powers to local governments and municipalities (sometimes even private actors), and plural policing agencies frameworks. The model is essentially concerned with the traditional Peelian issue of “policing by consent” or, in other words, with the question of maximizing the input by communities to local policing agendas. In the official discourse, the Anglo-Saxon model promotes civilian oversight core notions such as transparency, accountability, consultation, access of marginalized groups, performance indicators measuring the satisfaction of the public with policing. While a management system of policing using yearly and locally measured indicators of public satisfaction has been introduced in the UK in the late eighties already, the Ministry of Interior in France is only starting considering using such a system to guide policing at the national level.

A last type of community policing often encountered on the African continent and Asia is associated with community self-rule in weak state or/and contested contexts. Community self-policing can be associated to traditional leaders (tribal policing in the Democratic Republic of Congo for instance), new social movement leaders (the *Bakassi Boys* in Nigeria), or new men in traditional societies such as the *Sungusungu* in Tanzania and Kenya. Often, these informal *de facto* police are governed by local informal and traditional governments and, as in Tanzania, can be recognized by the state under framework laws.

In each of these respective formulas, the community police perform a specific function. The *shurta mujtamaia* controls “unruly societies” through intelligence, territorial neighbourhood deployment and national prevention/regimentation programmes; the French local security boards coordinate policies relevant to security at the municipal level; the Anglo-Saxon model emphasizes civilian oversight of policing and community input into policing agendas; the informal policing groups provide security for and by communities themselves.

For policy-making and police reform programmes, it is highly relevant to view the formulas of community policing we identified as fitting in state regimes. Clearly, the first model sits comfortably in an embedded authoritarian regime concerned with securing the loyalty of civil society. The second model is associated with a strong state regime facing the challenge of decentralization and in need of coordinating prevention of criminality, disorders, and accidents at the local level. The third formula has a close correspondence with political regimes delegating policing to local authorities as well as federal countries. Finally, the fourth model of informal policing is often associated *de facto* to regimes combining weak states and strong civil or traditional societies.

Community policing formulas do not “travel” well from one type of state to another. The national political ideology (political culture) and the political regime are inescapable defining factors for police reforms and are likely to dictate what kind of formula of community policing is « acceptable » for national political elites. Let me substantiate this argument with two case studies.

In Democratic Republic of Congo, an Anglo-Saxon formula of community policing does not fit well with the national political ideology carried by political elites. A British-inspired community police formula is not likely to find much resonance in the national political *ideology* that emphasizes a strong national state and the monopoly by the central state over policing. Let me state immediately that this ideology is programmatic and does not reflect necessarily the reality of the state on the ground. The “strong state” in Democratic Republic of Congo is mainly imaginary and programmatic. As ideology, I argue, it guides and nurtures political discourse and it constrains police reform programmes in Kinshasa.

National Congolese political elites strongly resist any attempt at delegating policing powers to local authorities – a feature often implied in an Anglo-Saxon model of

community policing. The logic of the state construction is the reverse. The new constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo has abolished tribal police forces still in operation today in the country as a sign, if needed, that the political elite think and act in the framework of a French-inspired national modern and strong state ideology.

What may better fit the political ideology and the constitutional regime of the Democratic Republic of Congo is a community policing model that suggests deconcentrating national policing services territorially and coordinating local prevention of crime and disorder policies at *Entités Territoriales Décentralisées* level. The new decentralization law in the Democratic Republic of Congo opens up indeed a window of opportunity for the implantation of a more fitting French-inspired community policing doctrine. Under this new law, local governments (*Entités territoriales décentralisées*) are expected to control the implementation of a number of public policies as well as a significant percentage of national financial resources. Congolese authorities will quickly face a local coordination vacuum regarding security policies and French-inspired local boards of security could “make sense” to fill the gap for the same reasons that led the French authorities to create them thirty years ago. These local boards of security could develop with time into consultation mechanisms with civil society.

By contrast, the *Sungusungu* model of community self-policing might be much more acceptable in an Anglo-Saxon tradition. Delegation of policing powers to local governments fits in this government model and, in Africa and elsewhere, may also be nurtured by a history of “indirect rule” that existed during colonial times. In some instances, as illustrated by the case of Tanzania, it can even resonate well with a new state ideology. Self-policing was indeed encouraged by the doctrine of village self-sufficiency of President Nyerere (Heald 2002). By emphasizing principles of local governance and relying on local policing autonomy, the Anglo-Saxon model of policing provides the political and ideological space for experiences with policing systems involving local informal policing groups. Finding the right balance between the national and the local will however always nurture heated political discussions in this model. Ideally, central governments define rules, regulations and standards of policing while leaving the actual execution of policing to local actors. The *Sungusungu* model of community policing is a radical version of this approach as it involves possibly “other” local policing standards and a plural policing (standard)

system. While more in line with an Anglo-Saxon approach of community policing and with the empirical reality of weak states, the case of informal policing remains controversial. How this type of policing can be harnessed in a regulative and controlling framework ensuring that human rights and basic policing standards are complied with remains the fundamental question that needs to be answered satisfactorily.

## Bibliography

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