

## POLICE EFFICIENCY AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION OF MINORITIES IN DISTRICT MEERUT: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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### Abstract

This article examines the link between police performance and minority human rights in the District Meerut of the State of Uttar Pradesh, India, in the context of the constitutional ideals of equality, dignity, liberty and secular democracy, and policing in communally sensitive Indian cities. Meerut is a suitable context for this study since it has a large, visible, and identifiable minority population, a history of communal conflict, and a public debate on police legitimacy, accountability and public trust in the police. We argue that police effectiveness should not be defined through response times, crime-control and case-disposal targets, but can be seen through the lens of registering complaints, neutrality of proceedings, accessibility, humane treatment, non-discrimination and their ability to protect the most vulnerable individuals in a democratic society. Using constitutional provisions, the Protection of Human Rights Act, the National Commission for Minorities Act, published books on police reform, the theory of procedural justice, and recent reports from institutions, we outline a conceptual and methodological roadmap to measure whether minority citizens perceive police as effective and rights-protecting. The proposed empirical roadmap draws on survey data, key informant interviews, and structured content analysis of legal and institutional documents. The effectiveness of police can be assessed dimensionally by police responsiveness, police accessibility, equity of FIR registration, fairness of investigation, redressal of complaints and victim assistance. The protection of human rights can be assessed dimensionally by equality before law, freedom from harassment, dignity of treatment and confidence in institutional remedies. In summary, the paper argues that minority protection should not be seen as an add-on to policing but a core democratic police function. Dissociation of police efficacy and human rights can negatively affect police legitimacy, reporting, and the social distance between the citizenry and the state. Conversely, policing that is procedurally just and accountable, can improve trust, increase cooperation and deepen democratic engagement in communally sensitive cities like Meerut.

**Keywords:** Human rights, police accountability, procedural justice, democratic policing, minorities, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, police efficiency

### 1. Introduction

In modern constitutional democracies the police institutional responsibilities and functions are understood as not only maintenance of law and order, prevention of crime, investigation of crime, and protection of the safety of the public, but also as being subject to constitutional morality and due process and human dignity principles. Policing could not be measured merely in terms of its capacity for coercive action and the overall fall of crime. Policing needs to be evaluated in terms of police fairness, access for potential victims to legal redress, the treatment of minorities, and the legitimacy of police. This dual expectation becomes especially important in demographically diverse districts that have seen grievance and victimization in their past and have communities where the relationship between citizens and the state is particularly sensitive.

An example of a large, socially complex, and administratively important district with a large urban population is District Meerut in western Uttar Pradesh, with a pop. of 3443689 (2011 Census), 1346 persons per square kilometer and a literacy rate of 72.84 percent (2011), as the district's official page on the Census 2011 website states. As India Census 2011 religion page shows, Muslims also make up a meaningful minority of this district's population. Beyond that, the demographic profile influences policing practices, deployment of security forces, and the evaluation of the

states' commitment to their non-biased protection by minority groups. In heterogeneous societies, and when distrust and conflict between social groups is sometimes high, minority trust in police may depend not merely on authority, but on visible and public self-restraint.

This question is based on the provisions in the Constitution of India, such as equality before law, prohibition of discrimination, protection of life and personal liberty, freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion, and the right to preserve culture and establish and administer educational institutions under Articles 14, 15, 21, 25, 29 and 30. Constitutional guarantees of minority rights are supplemented institutionally by the Protection of Human Rights Act of 1993 that created the National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commissions and the National Commission for Minorities Act of 1992 that created a statutory framework for monitoring the realization of minority rights. However, this does not guarantee that the constitutional and statutory guarantees will translate into rights-protective outcomes at the local level. Much depends on other frontline institutions, and the police are one of the most immediate and visible representatives of the state.

We believe that police effectiveness and the protection of human rights are complementary. In a democratic society, an efficient police service is one that is capable of timely intervention, capable investigation, professional service delivery, and an effective and credible handling of complaints. Its sphere of operations is lawful, transparent and nondiscriminatory. Policing efficiency, conducted in a manner contrary to these principles, can create a climate of fear, foster disinclination to report incidents, and exclude minorities from the society. Officers taking a human rights approach may be inefficient, inaccessible or tardy, failing to protect some vulnerable populations from discrimination. In consequence, democratic policing must be viewed holistically, so that efficiency, accountability, and the protection of rights reinforce each other.

This issue has gained prominence in the context of reforms. The Supreme Court's *Prakash Singh v. Union of India* judgment (2006) stressed the insulation of the police from arbitrary political control, accountability of institutions, a mechanism to lodge complaints, and fixed tenure for key officers. According to PRS Legislative Research, the Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 2023 seeks to improve working, functioning, review of performance of police and hearing of complaints against police misconduct. A new *Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023* came into effect on 1 July 2024, consolidating and repealing the criminal procedure code, reviewing police powers, criminal process and procedural safeguards. Meanwhile, the NHRC annual report for 2023-24 recorded that there were 160 intimations of deaths in police custody and 2346 new intimations of deaths in judicial custody. Thus, efficiency and rights cannot be separated.

In the context of such a national frame, Meerut acts as a case study about the question of democratic policing. Meerut's record of communal violence, important presence of minorities, and developing urban cosmopolitanism make it the most appropriate district in which to study the attitudes of minorities towards police efficacy, neutrality and rights. Such an analysis will of necessity embrace doctrinal, conceptual and field materials. It will therefore not be limited to conflicts of the type just mentioned, but will also include matters such as the registration of complaints, contact with the public, police response behavior, the investigation and redress of grievance. These ordinary episodes create extraordinary judgments for whether the state provides minorities equal protection.

### 1.1 Background and Context of the Study

This study is important for four reasons. First, it brings together two strands of academic conversation that are largely treated separately, namely police efficiency and human rights. Second, it brings the minority experience to the forefront of police performance metrics, as opposed to a side issue in the debate over minority rights. Third, it is a district-level analysis, as opposed to the national or state-level analysis that dominates discussions of minority experiences. Fourth, this provides a practicable empirical design for researchers, local administrators, minority commissions, and police leadership who wish to assess the democratic quality of local policing.

**Table 1. Selected District Context Indicators for Meerut**

Indicator	Value
Total population (2011)	3,443,689

Population density	1,346 persons per sq. km
Decadal growth rate (2001-2011)	14.89%
Sex ratio	886 females per 1,000 males
Literacy rate	72.84%
Minority context	Substantial notified religious minority population

Source: Author's compilation

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

In India, district police performance is still mainly measured through enforcement statistics. There are few systematic indicators of access, courtesy, grievance redress, and equal treatment for all citizens. Especially unfortunate for minorities, who judge the state not so much on its constitutional declarations as on its reality at the police station, when filing a complaint, when being investigated, and in times of communal discord.

The problem in District Meerut: Are police institutions efficient if minority citizens do not experience them as fair, accessible, and rights-protective? This study adds to our knowledge of this problem by theorizing the relationship between operational efficiency and democratic legitimacy, proposing a new framework to analyze whether minority rights protection is in fact a substantive feature of routine policing at the local level.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To study police performance within the context of democratic policing and rights protection for minorities.
- To review the constitutional, legal, and institutional framework for the protection of minorities from police violence, discrimination, and denial of due process.
- To assess the perceived efficiency of police: accessibility, time taken in responding to citizens' complaints, quality of investigation and redressal of grievances.
- To assess minority perceptions regarding the treatment accorded to minorities by police institutions with regard to fairness, dignity, equality before law, and harassment.
- To explore how procedurally just policing impacts trust, cooperation, and willingness to seek legal remedies among minorities.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Police Efficiency Beyond Narrow Crime Control

Research on policing has since stressed the distinction between narrow operational efficiency and democratic efficiency. Conventional outcome measures for policing stressed narrow operational efficiency, such as response time, number of arrests, patrol level, and capacity for crime control. Subsequent scholarship has shown that citizen perceptions of police legitimacy depend not only on police effectiveness but also on whether citizens believe the police use legitimate power, whether officers are respectful, and whether police action conforms to the law. Tyler's contributions to procedural justice and legitimacy have been influential in showing that citizens are more likely to obey the law and cooperate with police when authority is perceived as legitimate rather than coercive.

### 2.2 Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy

The procedural justice theory of legitimacy is particularly applicable to research on minority groups. Rather than only focusing on aggregate outcomes, it stresses procedural justice, neutrality, voice and dignity as ways of gaining citizen's allegiance, acceptance, and identification with the state. Worden and Holladay's review of recent research on legitimacy concludes that procedurally just policing can influence the general public's perception, willingness to cooperate and to report. A survey by Madon, Murphy, and Sargeant found that procedural justice increased citizens' perceptions of legitimacy when previously unengaged groups of minorities perceived police treatment as fair, even if the group in question typically have negative views of law enforcement.

### 2.3 Human Rights-Based Policing in India

The Indian police has been criticized for being over-centralized, politicized, unaccountable, and non-egalitarian. PRS Legislative Research found persistent flaws in police organization, recruitment, complaints and functional autonomy. Where institutional weaknesses (for example, a lack of insulation from partisan control or weak means by which the police may be held accountable) are not addressed, socially marginalized communities may expect the law to be applied selectively. This is not simply an administrative matter, it is a constitutional issue because unequal access to policing weakens equality before law.

#### 2.4 Minorities, Equality Before Law, and Police Protection

In India, human rights scholarship sees the police as the front line of the citizen-state relationship. The 1993 Protection of Human Rights Act defines human rights in terms of life, liberty, equality, and dignity, and provides an institutional mechanism to promote those rights and redress grievances. The NHRC has drawn attention to custodial violence, due process and police obligations. In its 2023-24 annual report, it identified high incidences of custodial death, and continued to address police custody issues. These data do not, by themselves, describe the minority experience in Meerut, but they do point to a reason why rights protection should be a measurable dimension of police performance, rather than an abstract legal value.

#### 2.5 Meerut as a Sensitive Democratic Field Site

In addition, minority rights, including equal access to state institutions, protection from discriminatory targeting or profiling, and confidence that police and law enforcement officials will take an impartial approach when dealing with tension and conflict, are relevant beyond freedom of religion. Although the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992 provides a statutory mechanism for looking into safeguards and complaints affecting minorities, the local-level implementation is vital. These are the police station, the control room, the beat officer, the investigating officer and the district complaint system to which minority citizens can go.

#### 2.6 Institutional accountability and reform.

At the same time, police accountability institutions have gained growing prominence in contemporary police reform debates in India. The Prakash Singh judgment sought to improve the functioning of the police through the establishment of state security commissions, police establishment boards, police complaints authorities and minimum tenure of police officers. The above reforms matter for the current study because protecting minorities depends not only on actions by frontline personnel but also on organizational arrangements. If police leadership is unstable or if complaint and misconduct review mechanisms are too weak, then marginalized people have too few good options to contest police neglect and abuse.

#### 2.7 Police Performance as a Rights Outcome

In the literature, democratic policing is measured in terms of service outcomes. This may include rights outcomes, since a police station is not efficient for minority citizens merely because it responds quickly. A service that records complaints in a fair, non-stereotypical, and non-threatening manner, provides information about procedures and case status, and offers equal protection for each group will increase coercive visibility and its democratic legitimacy. By contrast, a service that responds quickly but arbitrarily detains individuals, acts impolitely, or enforces laws selectively will not.

**Table 2. Constitutional and Institutional Safeguards Relevant to the Study**

Provision / Institution	Relevance to Minority Protection	Analytical Value for the Study
Articles 14 & 15, Constitution of India	Equality before law and prohibition of discrimination	Benchmark for assessing impartial police treatment
Article 21	Protection of life, liberty, and dignity	Connects police conduct to substantive rights
Articles 25, 29 & 30	Religious and cultural freedom of minorities	Frames minority protection as constitutional, not discretionary

Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993	Provides NHRC, SHRCs, and Human Rights Courts	Institutional remedy for serious violations
National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992	Statutory oversight for minority safeguards	Links policing concerns to minority-rights governance
Prakash Singh judgment (2006)	Police complaints and structural reform	Connects accountability structures to local legitimacy
BNSs, 2023 (in force from 1 July 2024)	Current criminal procedure framework	Contemporary procedural context for police powers and safeguards

Source: Author's compilation

### 3. Research Methodology

Furthermore, the research seeks to be analytical, empirical and mixed-method in orientation since it seeks to investigate the relationship between policing efficiency and minority rights through legal, conceptual and institutional lenses. It is empirical in focus because it offers measurable metrics, methods of sampling and analysis that could produce evidence at the district level. It is mixed method in design because public trust, perceived discrimination, and protecting rights cannot be captured by numbers alone, but are illuminated as much by experience, complaints and institutional barriers.

The population for the study would include minority residents in District Meerut, including adult respondents from the notified religious minority communities and representatives of police, lawyers, civil society, and community leaders who might contribute knowledge on the issue. Given the social and demographic complexity of the district, a multi-stage sampling design is preferable. The urban and semi-urban localities may be purposively selected in the first stage on the basis of the concentration of minorities and in the second stage on the basis of snowball sampling. All possible variations in the age, occupation, gender, education, and socio-economic status of the respondents may be involved in the analysis.

A feasible protocol for a medium-sized district would survey 240 minority respondents and conduct 20-25 key informant interviews. The survey and qualitative components would generate both structured and detailed information respectively. These would include barriers to victims reporting crimes such as fear of police reprisals, failing to file a complaint, previous communal violence, perceptions of mediation, police neutrality, and lack of resolution of complaints. If available, interviews with a few officers may dive into operational and training limits, workload, and the difficulties of handling a sensitive situation in the community.

The survey data will be collected using a structured questionnaire, administered by a trained enumerator. Likert-scale items will be developed with five core dimensions of policing: police accessibility, responsiveness to operational challenges, procedural justice, impartial treatment, and protection of rights. Examples would include: ease of contacting the police; police willingness to take complaints; respect from police; community equality; investigation transparency; and rights protection. These secondary sources would include constitutional and statutory documents, official district population, NHRC reports, police reform task force reports and empirical studies surrounding the legitimacy, accountability and community policing.

Police efficiency has to go beyond the output efficiency used in production functions. In addition to this, police efficiency would include response time, registration of reports, quality of communication, follow-up behavior, problem solving orientation, and actual use of and access to police services by minority citizens. Since the right to protection of human rights was operationalized by guaranteeing respect, prohibiting discrimination, ensuring due process, guaranteeing equality before the law, prohibiting intimidation, and providing access to remedies, it allows assessments of police performance beyond mere rhetoric and permits practical assessments of police performance in a democratic society.

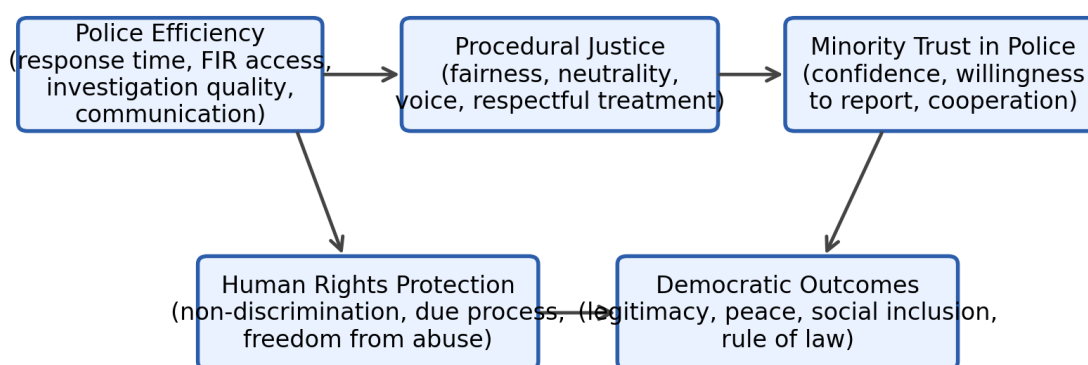
This is a cross-sectional study, and data from each participant will be coded and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics via statistical software. Qualitative interviews would be transcribed, analyzed thematically, and used to interpret the survey results. When focused on vulnerable populations, this would need ethical oversight, as

would discussions of sensitive recollections of police behavior. Anonymity, voluntary participation, informed consent and the right to withdraw must be maintained at all times, and questions about collective events or police violence must be handled carefully. Identifying details may not be included in the report unless volunteered and consented to in advance.

Reliability and validity are methodological concerns addressed through pilot testing. A questionnaire is piloted on a smaller sample in a similar environment to allow revision of the wording and eliminate misunderstandings while attending to social sensitivity. Internal consistency may be measured using Cronbach's alpha. There may be assessments of the scale's content validity through review by experts on policing issues, human rights or public administration. The instrument may be administered in simple Hindi or Urdu where this would ease local administration. Back-translation can be used to improve semantic equivalence when administering the instrument in different languages.

**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

### Conceptual framework for the analytical study



### 3.1 Proposed Sampling Design

Thus, an ideal sampling design for the study would be purposive and stratified sampling, in which after identifying minority concentrated wards and clusters of neighbourhoods, the researcher would collect data based on the gender, age, occupation and education of the respondents, so as to capture not only their vulnerability but also internal diversity, rather than treating them as homogenous in nature.

**Table 3. Proposed Operationalization of Key Variables**

Construct	Illustrative Indicators	Type of Measure	Expected Direction
Police accessibility	Ease of contact, approachability, station access, helpline confidence	Likert scale	Higher scores increase trust
Operational responsiveness	Timeliness, follow-up, emergency response, case attention	Likert scale	Higher scores improve confidence

Procedural fairness	Respect, neutrality, opportunity to explain, transparent communication	Likert scale	Higher scores strengthen legitimacy
Non-discrimination	Equal treatment across communities, absence of bias or stereotyping	Likert scale	Higher scores improve rights protection
Human rights protection	Dignity, due process, freedom from harassment, equality before law	Likert scale	Higher scores improve democratic legitimacy
Minority trust in police	Confidence, willingness to report, cooperation with police	Composite score	Dependent outcome

Source: Author's compilation

#### 4. Data Collection and Analysis Framework

I begin this analysis by looking at the descriptive characteristics of the respondents across age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, type of locality and prior contact with police to analyze whether distrust or confidence is patterned by socio-demographics. These can then be aggregated into mean scores and standard deviations that capture police accessibility, response quality, procedural fairness, non-discrimination and perceived protection of human rights, which provides the first overall view of whether minority respondents view police more favorably on operational dimensions or rights dimensions and vice versa.

The second step is to assess the reliability of the scales. If the constructs police efficiency and human rights protection are each measured with more than one item, internal consistency should be checked with Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Composite scores to use in inferential tests may need to be developed after the reliability of each scale is established. If not, treating loosely related items independently can lead to misleading results when conducting perception research at the district level.

The third level is association analysis. Pearson correlation can be used to determine whether those who feel that the police is more efficient are more likely to feel that they provide more protection for human rights, fairness, and trust. When these assumptions cannot be met, non-parametric measures such as Spearman's rho can be used. Correlation can be used to determine whether police responsiveness alone is sufficient to build trust, or whether other factors such as fairness and dignity are better indicators than visibility and speed.

The fourth stage is the hypothesis testing, which can also be done with either a regression or with a group comparison. In the case of a regression, the dependent variable is minority trust in police, and the independent variables are the five dimensions (accessibility, response quality, procedural fairness, non-discrimination, perceived political neutrality). This helps the researcher determine which aspects of policing are most associated with confidence. The researcher may also use t-tests (or ANOVA) to determine the effect of various population characteristics, including gender, age, level of education, and area of residence, on public perceptions of the police. For example, respondents from high-tension or historically vulnerable neighbourhoods may have different views of police conduct than those from relatively peaceful ones.

Step five, qualitative analysis, requires the analysis of the interviews in relation to the themes of fear of approaching the police, differential treatment, difficulty in lodging a complaint, respectful or disrespectful treatment, local intermediaries, and institutional remedy. Qualitative analysis can explain otherwise statistically insignificant scores: a low mean for police accessibility may mean not the absence of facilities or staff but fearing them, having been humiliated in their presence, the inability to communicate with them, or believing they support the dominant group in a conflict.

The sixth step involves triangulation, the interpretation of multiple forms of data (survey data, interview data and

quotations, legal rules and technical reports from institutions). This avoids the problem of treating public understandings as subjective. In a context of minority insecurity, perceptions are politically meaningful as they influence whether people report crimes, seek protection, cooperate with searches, and participate in state processes. A district may be administratively functional yet feel politically weak from the perspective of insecure minorities.

Finally, the seventh step (normative interpretation) asks whether those patterns are compatible with constitutional democracy. If, for example, minority respondents report that there is a delay in police registration of FIRs, that they are treated dismissively or that they hesitate to approach the police, such issues reflect not just service-users' dissatisfaction but also equality, dignity and access to justice. Alternatively, if, say, response time received relatively high ratings while fairness and neutrality received low ratings, the implication would be that operational modernization is no substitute for rights-oriented policing.

#### 4.1 Key Steps of Data Collection

**Table 4. Key Steps in the Data Collection Process**

Step	Activity	Purpose	Output
1	Review constitutional, statutory, and institutional sources	Build legal foundation	Doctrinal matrix
2	Identify minority-concentrated localities in Meerut	Context-sensitive field coverage	Sampling frame
3	Pilot-test questionnaire	Improve reliability and sensitivity	Refined instrument
4	Administer structured survey	Generate measurable perception data	Quantitative dataset
5	Conduct key informant interviews	Capture lived experience and institutional barriers	Qualitative transcripts
6	Code, clean, and verify data	Ensure analytical accuracy	Final analyzable dataset
7	Integrate survey, interview, and documentary evidence	Triangulate findings	Interpretive analysis

#### 5. Analytical Discussion

Thus, if this analysis is correct, then police efficiency in a minority community will have a different appearance; that is, efficiency in terms of patrol, emergency response, crowd management, and daily enforcement. The second is experienced efficiency: whether an ordinary minority citizen believes that the police will listen to their complaints, register them, protect them, and treat them fairly. Democratic legitimacy depends far more on the second than is often recognized in conventional administrative evaluations. Police institutions may appear efficient from the top but inaccessible from below.

This suggests that procedural justice may be more important than instrumental responsiveness, and even if minority respondents are in favor of police being responsive to their calls for service, their long-term attitude may still hinge on the police treating them with respect. Indeed, the empirical literature on legitimacy suggests that the value of authority lies not just in its outcomes but in the fairness of its processes. In communally sensitive districts, neutrality is not merely symbolic; it is an essential institutional quality.

Another possible finding relates to accountability within organizations: police behavior is still heavily influenced by supervisory culture, the complaint review process, political pressure, the availability of transfers, and the structure of station hierarchies. And this is where the Prakash Singh reform framework is relevant: if complaints authorities are

weak, tenure is unstable, and internal accountability is uncertain, the citizen presumes that impunity is normalized. Minority insecurity is therefore not simply an attitudinal issue, but can be structurally produced.

In the Meerut context, this suggests the need to draw the historical depth of memory into present police research. Communities do not encounter the police as blank, abstract institutions. These ideas are transmitted by memories of past violence, second-hand information, family explanations and narratives, being socialized into neighborhood dynamics, or from past experience of state action or inaction. Furthermore, in neighborhoods where policed violence and community conflict are frequent, legitimacy repair cannot be merely administrative. It must include visible fairness and dependable daily interaction, and it must provide for authentic grievance redress.

Further, rights protection improves rather than weakens operational efficiency because when minority citizens regard the police as protectors, they report threats, cooperate in investigations, share intelligence with officers, and prevent the conflict from escalating in the first place. Rights protection does not therefore make the police less efficient. Rather, it is a deeper form of operational efficiency because it improves the flow of information, reduces alienation, and stabilizes public order on legitimacy grounds.

To this end, the authors recommend five broad policies: police assessment should include citizen-facing indicators such as ease and reverence; filing complaints; civil service, respect, and equality of service. Finally, minority-sensitive training should stress communication and de-escalation, legal protections and liability, and bias-awareness. District-level complaint and review systems should be transparent, trustworthy, and easily accessible to the community they are intended to serve and protect. Fourth, strengthen police-community liaison forums in vulnerable communities, particularly during times of unrest. Fifth, HR principles should be incorporated into routine monitoring and not come into play after a crisis or scandal.

The study can also inform political theory. The police are one of the most visible manifestations of the state to the citizenry. If policing is perceived as distant, discriminatory, and punitive, then citizenship rights, however formal and technical, are a shaky foundation on which to build a democracy. When police institutions are also accessible and restrained public services, then citizenship is more substantive, and the district-level study of policing is ultimately a study of democracy itself.

### Summary

We argue that the issues of police productivity and protection of the human rights of minorities need to be studied together, particularly in sensitive localities such as Meerut. Democratic policing is not only defined by speed, presence, and the ability to enforce the law, but also by principles of fair access, fair process, dignity and non-discrimination. The principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution, the Protection of Human Rights Act, the National Commission for Minorities Act, and the debate surrounding police reform stress a rights based conception of the authority of the State, which is operationalized through the practices of district level institutions and through interactions between police and citizens. Using a combination of doctrinal, procedural justice, minority-rights and field observation approaches, the article seeks to carry out an engaged analysis of effective and just police institutions in Meerut in practice. The analytical framework was based on the assumption that protecting minorities is not a side issue of policing, but one of the most reliable indicators of police democratic performance. More access to complaints, better procedural fairness, more accountability, and greater public trust do not weaken policing. Instead they make policing more legitimate, more cooperative, and ultimately more effective.

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