

Police powers and safety of citizens

[Government](#), [Military](#)



Policemen are seen all over the world as peacemakers, who base their actions on just and sound principles. In order to maintain law and order within the country, the police force is an integral part of society not only in that it manages to apprehend wrongdoers but also act as a deterrent for the prevention of crimes which could, otherwise, disrupt internal harmony within a society. As such, the police have within them, certain 'powers' to aid them in carrying out their duties, which put them above the law. However, the question lies in the extent of such a power the state should bestow upon such an organization.

The determination of how much power to allocate to these police forces rests on the conditions of a country, society and people involved, as well as whether these powers given would affect individuals. Policemen shoulder responsibility, huge responsibilities in fact. They are tasked with upholding and protecting the moral values society has put in place. They should therefore have the right to unlimited power because it allows for them to be able to stand above crime in the country to be able to efficiently put out wrongdoers and their actions.

This is based on the assumption of course that policemen themselves are not corrupt and would not abuse such power given to them. If policemen's powers were subject to boundaries and conditions, meaning that they are denied of certain powers and rights that would allow them to swiftly bring justice to perpetrators then their duties would be severely hindered and crime could end up being a problem in society. One such example would be seen in Singapore whereby police officers and its governmental systems have been known to be one of the least corrupt in the world.

In this, the SSP, or otherwise known as the Singapore Alice force hold significant power in society in that they are able to rise above individuals in society to be able to make clear judgments and arrests to ensure law is being abided by. Its power can be seen in its ability to conduct arrests of longhairs, gang members etc without having to go through much obstacles such as bureaucracy due to them wielding sufficient powers of their own to decide on choices on the spot so that the problem does not persist. This amount of power awarded to the police force of Singapore allows it to perform its duties with utmost efficiency.

The result, one of the safest countries to live in the world, recording one of the lowest crime rates as compared to Brazil. Seen here, the importance of not holding back power given to the police force ensures a country remains stable to be able to advance economically and socially. However as seen, assumptions in the real world rarely hold. Policemen are humans. And humans are subject to greed that gives rise to corrupt behavior in an attempt to gain more. Therefore policemen should not be given unlimited power because it sometimes interferes with our individual's intrinsic moral values of freedom.

The very fault in such a society lies in that ordinary citizens have no power against policemen and the law. In what many may argue that in a free world we live in today, we as individuals have sovereignty and the free will to choose what we want, libertarians as we are governed by the many laws outside of us that do not make us autonomous. Such laws could trample upon our basic rights of freedom. And thus allowing the police, who are part

of the law to hold significant, unlimited power would severely undermine our freedom as individuals.

Take for example earlier in the year, George Thompson who lives in Boston was arrested by policemen not for murder, not for theft, not even for indecency, but for filming a police officer which he deemed to be out of control. Also in the US was a man in Baltimore who was arrested and threatened after police found out he was recording them. The conversation between them read: Man: I have my rights Police: You have no rights Man: I thought I had freedom of speech here Police: You just lost it As seen the conversation (cut short) between them exemplifies what many would term absurd.

Something as harmless as filming in a technologically advanced world we owe live in could cause us to get arrested. Although it could be said that there was a thin line to be drawn between respecting the police officer and the freedom of the man, it can be argued that the arrest of this man from Baltimore was based on no justified grounds. The unlimited powers the policeman had had cost the man his freedom because he, as an ordinary citizen had no choice but to bow down to the orders of the police officer. Hence unlimited powers given to policemen tend to be abused.

Instead of trying to police the world, they should in fact be concerned with policing their own organizations instead. Hence their power should be limited. Conditions within society could also mean that unlimited power given to law enforcement agencies would present detriments to the country. Conditions such as social hierarchy that could still be present in third world

or developing nations. These class systems, coupled with unlimited power given to police agencies would pose a huge problem to a country.

This is so because policemen as said earlier are ordinary citizens as well, meaning that they are subject to discrimination and biasness towards a certain group. This could mean that rights of the minority could be stripped away because of social hierarchy. India is a good example to showcase this. Lately the country has been subject to cases of rape and murder of women. In this aspect policemen despite wielding significant power, the past 3-4 months have seen numerous cases of Indian women getting raped and after birth murdered. With the most recent case citing that 2 girls, aged 14 and 15 were raped and hanged from trees.

The two girls who were cousins after being raped were hanged. This incident sparked outrage not only because of the brutality of such an inhumane action but because police officers and officials refused to investigate into the matter. The reason being, these girls were of a lower caste and therefore it would not be worth their effort and time to dwell deeper into the matter. Further aggravating the matter was comments from the local police officials saying that such rape incidents should be considered as trivial due to the rampancy and frequency of such rape incidents.

Condemnation of such a reaction soon broke out and eventually caused the government to step in as police agencies in that region were not up to the task. Such security of people in India born into lower castes would be affected with their interests not being cared for. This goes against the advocating of human rights and basic freedom for all. Even with the

seemingly unlimited power policemen had in India, they were unable to make sound judgments of the rape case causing many more of such cases to persist.

One possible reason is, as stated, because of the presence of the class system that is still prevalent in India today. Because of this the only way the issue can be solved would be to grant police officers there lesser power ND to leave it to government intervention where a most just decision and action can be made. Therefore the police should not have unlimited power in this case as it would lead to discrimination and social instability. Lastly, police should not be granted unlimited power because they are not, and should not be seen as 'guardians or kings' of our own moral principles.

They should not have the rights to have absolute grip and rule over our lives and decisions we make as it is morally unjustified. This argument on freedom dates back to debates amongst philosophers and two main schools of thoughts. Utilitarianism and Libertarianism. In short utilitarianism supporters such as Jeremy Beneath held the view that our individual rights should be forgone for the sake of the greater good of society whereas libertarians such as John Locke and Nonionic argued otherwise, that our individual rights should be upheld.

In that it states that there should be the existence of a minimalist state with no paternalism and morals legislation which simply means no laws put in place to dictate how people should run their own lives. In the real world this is too extreme for such a notion to thrive in because humans quire constant guidance as we sometimes stray off the wrong paths. However if we were to

go along the lines of a libertarian argument we can see the importance of individual rights and how the law agencies such as the police should not be ultimate rulers of our own moral principles and decisions.

Giving police agencies unlimited power would be akin to giving them the rights to impose certain laws on us, some of which would not benefit.

Although many who oppose this might say what would happen if there is little or no one to keep tabs on society, won't society go out of control with crime rates rising? This would therefore call for limited powers granted to the police, such that they still hold enough power to enforce the law, but not enough power to infringe upon our individual freedom.

One way to see it would be how Emmanuel Kant a proponent of libertarianism argues about the importance of championing our intrinsic rights to freedom. He states first of all that 'We as human beings are rational and worthy of dignity and respect'. This bold statement shows that we are capable of sound thinking and hence deserve respect and dignity. Therefore to allow police to be masters over our lives through granting them unlimited power would be first of all, unnecessary and secondly, would mean that our individual rights are ignored.

Thus policemen should not have unlimited power because it is not justified. In conclusion as the quote goes, 'With great power, comes great responsibility'. Certainly the powers bestowed upon police should come with great thought and repercussions that could arise as a result. In this view, I believe that unlimited power should not be granted to police in dealing with

social issues such as crime because it would result in the abusing of it that could in turn lead to our individual rights being stripped away.