

HOW U.S. ALLIES INFLUENCE AMERICAN DEATH PENALTY POLICIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper posits that United States death penalty policy has become ripe for repeal. Waning support domestically coupled with intense criticism internationally has made death penalty policy susceptible to forces seeking to shift ideological preferences toward policy abolition. The U.S. organs of state that both craft and conduct death penalty policy can be moved by international pressures such as consular intervention, international litigation, extradition negotiation and economic sanction.

This dissertation will employ a qualitative case analysis study focusing on seminal death penalty cases between the United States and Mexico to demonstrate how the institutional mechanisms in the United States that implement the death penalty policy can be effectively levered by foreign pressures that can influence policy outcomes. It will also examine statistical measures of success of external foreign pressure, using data from multiple sources to broadly extrapolate from case analysis conclusions.

This paper makes a unique contribution to the multidisciplinary body of academic research that has explored the U.S. death penalty policy, and hopes to advance the discussion regarding the viability of this controversial policy. It takes a bifurcated case study approach, testing both the U.S. institutional receptivity to policy change, and also conducting an analysis of institutional responsiveness to specific forms of foreign intervention and influence.