

Why Countries Choose the Death Penalty

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THE ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY was brought to the fore after the end of the Second World War, particularly by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which the United Nations General Assembly adopted in 1948. Although the death penalty was highly debated in subsequent decades, it took quite awhile before the abolitionist movement truly gathered speed. The turning point came in the 1980s with the drafting of a number of international treaties that proclaimed the abolition of the death penalty.¹ At the same time, countries started to remove the death penalty from their criminal codes at high rates and ever since, the number of abolitionist countries has increased steadily.²

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The present article stems from the premise that the attitude toward the death penalty has become increasingly critical over the past decades. As noted by Anthony McGann and Wayne Sandholtz, abolition is championed not only by international lawyers, but also by national governments and a number of non-governmental organizations. Accordingly, “abolition of the death penalty [has become] part of the world cultural environment.”³ A similar conclusion has been reached by William Schabas, who has remarked that “those that still retain [the death penalty] find themselves increasingly subject to international pressure in favour of abolition,” and that “the day when abolition of the death penalty becomes a universal norm...is undeniably in the foreseeable future.”⁴

Nevertheless, despite these attitudinal changes, there are countries that have resisted pressures for abolition and continue to use capital punishment even in

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this internationally “hostile” environment. The present study’s ambition is to provide an answer to the question of whether there are common characteristics that help explain why countries make use of capital punishment. If there are factors that are particularly conducive to the death penalty, these traits should manifest as we move along the time axis and the international pressure for abolition increases. In other words, we can expect the group of countries that uses the death penalty to be characterized by a greater degree of homogeneity today than it was in the past.

This article introduces and discusses a number of plausible determinants of death penalty usage. It starts with an account of regional variances in death penalty usage over time, and then proceeds to study the extent to which form of government, population size, socioeconomic development, colonial heritage, dominant religion, and ethnic fragmentation are statistically related to death penalty usage.

The study includes all independent countries of the world and is conducted at three points in time: 1985, 2000, and 2014. The points in time have been chosen mainly with regard to how death penalty trends have evolved over the years. The latest point in time is chosen to account for the present situation. Regarding the first point in time, the evidence shows that the abolitionist movement gained significant strength in the late 1980s.⁵ It is therefore important to choose a point in time that precedes this change of trend. Finally, it makes sense to use a point in time that falls in between 1985 and 2014 and reflects the situation at the turn of the millennium.

CATEGORIZING DEATH PENALTY USAGE

The most common method of categorizing death penalty usage is to apply Amnesty International’s classification system, in which countries are assigned to one of four categories.⁶ This categorization is based on regularly conducted surveys of death penalty usage undertaken by the United Nations since 1975.⁷ The first category consists of countries that are “abolitionist for all crimes,” meaning that the death penalty is forbidden in all circumstances. This category includes, for instance, most European countries, South Africa, Argentina, and Venezuela. A second category is made up of countries that are “abolitionist for ordinary crimes only.” In this group of countries, which includes Brazil, Chile, and Israel, the death penalty can be used “only for exceptional crimes such as crimes under military law or crimes committed in exceptional circumstances such as wartime.”⁸

Countries that do not fall within either of the two aforementioned categories have death penalty statutes. However, far from all of these countries apply the death penalty frequently; thus the two remaining categories separate countries that do not use the death penalty in practice from those that actually execute persons. Accordingly, countries in the third category are “abolitionist de facto,” meaning “they have not executed anyone during the past ten years or more, or...have made an international commitment not to carry out executions.”⁹

The category includes countries like Algeria, Kenya, South Korea, and Sri Lanka. The fourth and last category consists of countries like China, Egypt, India, Japan,

and the United States, where the death penalty is allowed and where executions have been carried out within the past 10 years. For these countries the label “retentionist” is used. The present work applies this categorization with one small modification: countries with death penalty statutes are considered de facto abolitionist if and only if they have not executed anybody for a period of 10 years. This means that Mongolia—which signed the *Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* in 2012, but where the death penalty has not yet been abolished in the legal statutes of the country, and where the last execution took place in 2008—is still considered a retentionist country.¹⁰

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REGIONAL PATTERNS

Table 1 (included in the appendix) examines how use of the death penalty varies regionally over time, and clearly demonstrates that the popularity of the death penalty has declined steadily during the last three decades.¹¹ In 1985, 73 percent of the countries had death penalty statutes for ordinary crimes and 63 percent made active use of it. Today, less than half of the countries in the world retain the death penalty and only 30 percent actually apply it. It is evident, however, that the abolitionist movement has lost some momentum during the last decade or so; the differences in the shares of countries that retained and used the death penalty are much larger between 1985 and 2000 than between 2000 and 2014.

We also note that instances of capital punishment have decreased in all corners of the world. The only exception is the Americas, where the share of countries that have executed at least one person during the last decade is higher in 2014 than it was in 2000. At the same time, however, the evidence indicates

that regional variances in the attitude toward the death penalty are considerable and quite stable across time. The death penalty's stronghold is in the Middle East and North Africa, where death penalty statutes exist in 90 percent of the countries and where only one country, Turkey, has abolished the death penalty within the last 30 years. It is worth noting that nonetheless, the region has not remained unaffected by the abolitionist trend, as the share of countries that make active use of capital punishment has dropped by almost 16 percentage points in the last 14 years, as shown in the table above.

Similar, but more manifest, trends in death penalty usage are discernible in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Three decades ago, almost all of the countries in the two regions had death penalty statutes and more than 80 percent of the countries in the regions made active use of them. Today, death penalty statutes are still upheld in more than two-thirds of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia, but as shown in table 1, capital punishment is now only applied in 31 and 45 percent of the countries in the respective regions. Authors have explained the popularity of the death penalty in Asia as related to cultural traditions, particularly Confucianism, but the matter remains contested.¹² In Africa, the death penalty has been justified by factors such as a high level of political instability and strong support for retributive justice.¹³ Some scholars also argue that the death penalty, to a considerable extent, is an alien feature in Africa, brought to the African continent by the colonial powers.¹⁴ However, the death penalty existed in pre-colonial Africa and many African countries have extended the list of crimes punishable by death after gaining independence.¹⁵

The abolitionist movement has been strong in Oceania and exceptionally strong in Western Europe. It is telling that by 1985 not a single Western European country actively used it—the last execution in Western Europe took place in 1977 in France.¹⁶ In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, the death penalty was applied in all countries until the fall of the Soviet Union. It has been subsequently removed from the statutes in all countries except for Belarus and Russia. The reason for this shift in attitude toward capital punishment was a desire to integrate more closely with the Western European countries that have made abolition of the death penalty a requirement to join organizations such as the Council of Europe and the European Union. In Eastern Europe, external pressure appears to be the decisive factor when explaining death penalty trends. This is manifested most clearly by the fact that in a number of countries (e.g., Poland, Lithuania, and Georgia), the death penalty was abolished against the will of the majority of the population.¹⁷

In the Americas, the abolitionist movement has been markedly less suc-

cessful. Death sentences are currently carried out in an increasing number of countries—40 percent of the countries in 2014, whereas the corresponding number for the year 2000 was significantly lower at 29 percent. The literature on capital punishment often mentions the Caribbean countries as a regional bastion of capital punishment, but it should be emphasized that the crucial dividing line in the Americas appears not between the Caribbean and the mainland but rather between countries with an Anglo-Saxon heritage and those without one. All Caribbean island states with a British colonial heritage have death penalty statutes, and of these all but one (Grenada) have executed persons during the last 10 years. In contrast, the death penalty has been completely abolished in two of the three Caribbean countries with a Spanish or French heritage (Dominican Republic and Haiti) and is currently in use only in communist Cuba. Furthermore, of the four English-speaking countries situated on the mainland, three—Belize, Guyana, and the United States—employ the death penalty, whereas only one, Canada, has abolished it. Correspondingly, of the non-English speaking countries in the Americas, only Cuba and Guatemala make active use of the death penalty.

It is unclear how this difference should be explained, but one argument suggests that the negative attitude of the Catholic Church toward the death penalty, combined with a strong cultural connection to the European Enlightenment, could explain why many Latin American countries reject the death penalty.¹⁸ Correspondingly, countries with a strong British legacy, such as the English-speaking countries in the Caribbean, inherited the death penalty from their former colonizer and continued using it even after Britain became an advocate of the abolitionist movement.¹⁹ The popularity of the death penalty in the Caribbean has also been explained by other factors. One such factor is the geographic and cultural closeness to the United States, where the death penalty is applied and consistently supported by a majority. The death penalty has also been justified as a deterrent against the high levels of crime in the region.²⁰ Finally, the fact that slavery was a central feature in the Caribbean during the colonial era could provide an explanation in the sense that the populations of the islands were accustomed to corporal punishments and the ever-present threat of death.²¹

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REGIME TYPE

In the following section, a number of plausible determinants of death penalty usage are introduced and discussed. In the section after that, their effects on capital punishment trends are assessed empirically. A recurring point of view

maintains that capital punishment is incompatible with democratic forms of government. The crux of this argument is that a democracy is built on the conviction that all humans have inalienable rights, including the right to life. In democratic societies, the principle of human rights influences how penal systems are shaped, whereby corporal punishment is replaced by prison terms.²² At the

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same time, it is far from self-evident that the majority of the population should have a restrictive attitude towards the death penalty. In many democracies, the abolition of the death penalty has been imposed by the political leaders against the will of the majority.²³ Even in many

stable democracies where the death penalty has been abolished for decades, such as Britain, Canada, and France, popular support for the death penalty continues to be quite high despite the fact that no political party openly supports it.²⁴ In the subsequent empirical analysis, countries are placed in three regime categories based on their status in Freedom House's yearly conducted surveys of political rights and civil liberties.²⁵ Countries considered "free" by Freedom House are democratic, countries labeled "partly free" are semi-democratic, and countries that are "not free" are regarded as autocratic.

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SIZE AND SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As stated earlier, the present article's premise is that the choice of countries to either use or reject the death penalty is heavily influenced by international actors and governments of other countries. It is easy to make the assumption that the stronger the position of a country in the world, the stronger the likelihood that it can resist pressures for abolition. Admittedly, the relative power of nations is difficult to measure, but here I shall follow the strategy of Eric Neumayer and measure the power of countries using GDP per capita and population size.²⁶ The assumption laid out above is complicated by the fact that there is also a counterargument that suggests an inverse correlation between economic wealth and the death penalty. Socioeconomic development can be presumed to affect the death penalty much in the same manner as democratization. Economic development should foster higher levels of education and thereby, a growing tendency to regard the death penalty as a cruel and barbaric punishment, unfit for modern societies.²⁷ In order to test both of these assumptions, I comple-

ment the measure GDP per capita with that of infant mortality. The goal is to account for two different dimensions of economic development, namely wealth and quality of life. GDP per capita, then, is used as a proxy for how powerful a country is, but it also measures the wealth of a nation. Infant mortality, again, captures the extent to which wealth is distributed and the overall level of health in a country.²⁸

RELIGION

Attitudes toward the death penalty are often thought to vary according to religious beliefs, but the theoretical arguments underlying these assumptions are far from unambiguous. The two major world religions, Christianity and Islam, are both Abrahamic religions with holy books—the Old Testament and the Quran, respectively—that recognize and justify the death penalty. In Christianity, however, the attitude toward the death penalty has become more and more restrictive, and the Catholic Church in particular has developed into a influential and strong voice of the abolitionist movement during the last decades. For instance, the decision by the Philippines to abolish the death penalty in 2006 was strongly influenced by the Catholic Church and came only days before a meeting between President Gloria Macapaga Arroyo and Pope Benedict XVI in the Vatican.²⁹ Also, in Christian belief there is quite a deep tradition of separating Church from State. The principle is central in most of the Protestant denominations but is recognized earlier in the New Testament, which instructs Christians to “pay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God.”³⁰ In other words, to a large extent, judicial doctrines can develop without much consideration of old religious doctrines. In contrast, Islam is characterized by the principle of *Ummah*, which states that Islam is all-encompassing and that the religious and political spheres are therefore intertwined. In a strict sense, this means that laws have been made by God and cannot be changed by man. Although few Islamic countries base their judicial systems primarily on the *Sharia*, it is reasonable to expect that, in general, the law-making bodies in countries dominated by Muslims must be sensitive to the teachings of the Quran to a greater extent than lawmakers in Christian countries must be with regard to the Old Testament.³¹

In Buddhism, the attitude toward the death penalty appears to be very negative. Buddhists are urged to abstain from the taking of life in the authoritative scriptures of the *Pancasila* and *Dhammapada*, and the requirement to avoid killing applies not only to human beings but also to animals.³² Since the

number of countries dominated by persons who adhere to other religions than the three mentioned above is limited, I only pay regard to these three in the empirical analyses. For Christian countries, I further make a distinction between Protestant (including Anglican and Christian independents), Catholic, and Orthodox countries.³³

COLONIAL HERITAGE

Death penalty statutes were in force in all major European countries that held colonies—although Portugal and the Netherlands abolished the death penalty for ordinary crimes as early as 1867 and 1870 respectively—and it is therefore

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possible that capital punishment was also exported to their colonies.³⁴

A British colonial heritage in particular should result in a higher likelihood of implementing the

death penalty since the death penalty was applied more widely in Britain than in countries in continental Europe.³⁵

14 It is evident that the impact of the colonial legacy is likely to diminish over time and it therefore makes sense to consider positions of dependence during only the last 100 years or so. Here, a country is considered to have a colonial legacy if it has been under the rule of a foreign power for a period of 10 consecutive years from 1920 to present. As we have seen, in terms of death penalty usage, the crucial dividing line is the one that separates former British colonies from those of all other states but it makes sense to also account for other colonial legacies than British. However, since the number of countries that have been under the rule of countries other than Britain or France is limited during this period of time, I only consider the colonial legacies of these two countries.³⁶

ETHNIC FRAGMENTATION

One line of thought suggests that ethnic constellations can affect death penalty usage. The underlying reason for this relationship is a presumed association between ethnic heterogeneity and instability or violence, which has been detected in some studies but rejected or qualified in others.³⁷ The argument stems from the assumption that ethnically divided societies are unstable and conflict-ridden, and therefore require hard punishments to maintain order and to keep minorities under the control of the majority.³⁸ The empirical evidence at hand suggests

that globally there has been a slight association between the level of ethnic fractionalization and death penalty usage.³⁹ Here, ethnicity is defined widely, according to race or language along with religion. To begin with, an index of fractionalization on the basis of racial or linguistic cleavages has been calculated according to Rae and Taylor's measure of fractionalization.⁴⁰ This figure has then been added to an index of religious fractionalization, calculated according to the same formula. Thus, the level of ethnic fractionalization varies between 0.0 (maximal homogeneity) and 2.0 (maximal heterogeneity).⁴¹

PATTERNS OF DEATH PENALTY USAGE

REGIME, COLONIAL HERITAGE, AND RELIGION

In table 2, death penalty trends are related to regime type, colonial heritage, and religion. First, we note that there is indeed a statistical association between democracy and abolitionism, but that this link is clearly weakening over time. In 1985, only 15 percent of retentionist countries were democracies, whereas the corresponding figure today is 31 percent. The figures also reveal that, on the whole, capital punishment has lost some of its popularity in semi-democratic countries, whereas almost half of retentionist countries are autocratic at all three points in time.

With regard to colonial heritage, a very clear and interesting pattern emerges. Among the countries that apply the death penalty, the share of countries with British colonial heritage has increased substantially over time—today, 57 percent of retentionist countries are former British colonies. In countries with a French colonial past, the death penalty has also retained its popularity in the sense that death penalty statutes still exist. However, in this category the bulk of the countries are *de facto* abolitionist. Correspondingly, the link between a lack of colonial heritage and abolitionism, strongly manifested in 1985, is still discernible but less pronounced.

With regard to religion, we note that among the countries that retain the death penalty, the share of Christian countries has dropped slightly in the period covered. However, there is a difference between the two major subcategories of Christianity. Whereas the abolitionist movement swept across the Catholic world between the two first points in time, the death penalty has retained its popularity in countries where Protestants constitute the largest religious group, including the Bahamas, Guyana, and the United States. In both of the two categories where the death penalty exists, the share of Muslim countries is higher today than it

was 30 years ago. It is worth emphasizing, though, that this change occurred between the first two points in time; during the last 14 years the death penalty has lost ground in roughly equal proportions in Christian and Muslim countries. The same pattern applies also to countries where a religion other than one of the three largest dominates.⁴² For Buddhist countries, the number of countries that retain the death penalty has been quite stable across time, although there has been a decrease in the number of countries that commit executions.

POPULATION SIZE, SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ETHNIC FRAGMENTATION

Table 3 provides information on how population size, socioeconomic development, and ethnic fragmentation are correlated with capital punishment. The assumption that larger countries are more resistant to pressures to abolish capital punishment than smaller ones is only partly verified. Although population size is much larger in the retentionist countries category than in the other three, this finding is heavily influenced by China and India, both of which belong to the retentionist category. If median values are compared, the difference in population size between the retentionists and the other categories disappears.⁴³ With regard to GDP per capita, the dividing line goes between countries that have abolished the death penalty for all crimes and countries that fall in the other three categories. However, abolitionist countries are much wealthier than countries where death penalty statutes are still in use in some form. This does not mean, however, that the death penalty is enforced particularly in poor countries. In fact, retentionist countries are relatively wealthier today than they were in the year 2000.

Regarding the second indicator of socioeconomic development, infant mortality, we note that countries that retain or make active use of the death penalty have much higher levels of infant mortality than countries that have abolished capital punishment partly or completely. This finding supports the presumption of a negative link between socioeconomic development and death penalty usage. It could also lend support to the assumption that welfare states dislike the death penalty, especially since the data reflects the results obtained by scholar Eric Neumayer. Neumayer found that ratification of the *Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, the only global treaty that commits countries to abolish the death penalty, was expedited if the chief executive was from a left-wing political party.⁴⁴

Finally, with respect to ethnic fragmentation, results indicate that patterns are fairly stable over time. Abolitionist countries are more homogeneous than

the other three categories of countries. For what it is worth, except for the first point in time, the highest level of fractionalization is found in countries that are de facto abolitionist, including Kenya, Mali, and Tanzania, whereas the values for retentionist countries and countries that are abolitionist for ordinary crimes only are rather similar.

DISCUSSION

The number and share of countries that retain the death penalty have decreased markedly in the last three decades. At the same time, there are some indications that the abolitionist movement has lost pace during the last decade or so. The most evident finding is likely that regional differences in death penalty usage have become more pronounced during the time period covered. This regional homogenization has occurred as a consequence of both external socialization and external pressure.⁴⁵ In some cases, norms have spread from country to country without coercion, while in other cases, most notably in Europe, countries with strong economic or political capabilities have been able to impose their values on countries in subordinate positions. It is evident that Europe, and to a lesser extent, Oceania, have consolidated their positions as bastions of abolitionism and it is equally evident that the death penalty has remained exceptionally popular in the Middle East and North Africa. In Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the abolitionist movement has gained steady ground during the period covered, whereas in the Americas it has stopped or even reversed in the last 14 years.

The finding that the death penalty has remained particularly popular in former British colonies is interesting, but should be interpreted carefully. First, using a dichotomous scale when measuring colonial heritage lumps together countries where the British presence has been very strong with countries where the British influence was marginal. Furthermore, most former British (and French) colonies are found in regions where the death penalty is popular and it is not evident that comparisons within these regions would generate similar results. On the other hand, in the Americas, the evidence does suggest that the popularity of the death penalty goes hand-in-hand with Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage.

The data further indicate that the presumed link between democracy and abolitionism is far from definitive. To be sure, more than 90 percent of the abolitionist countries have been ranked as “free” or “partly free” by Freedom House at all three points in time. However, these figures should be contrasted with others that show that, at present, 31 percent of the retentionist countries

are ranked as “free,” whereas the corresponding figure for the year 1985 was 15 percent. In other words, with regard to political regime, the category of countries making use of the death penalty is now more heterogeneous than before.

Regarding the relation between the power of nations and the death penalty, the evidence indicates that no such relation exists. Retentionist countries are, on average, very large. On the other hand, economic wealth goes hand in hand with abolitionism, not retentionism. Countries that make use of the death penalty are, on average, less developed than abolitionist countries, but this difference has become somewhat less manifest over time. Findings also indicate a connection between ethnic homogeneity and abolitionism, but since the differences between the categories are quite small, we should be careful not to draw far-reaching conclusions regarding this relation.

The interpretation of the relation between religion and capital punishment is also problematic. In 1985, the results were unequivocal: all of the abolitionist countries were Christian and all but five of the Muslim countries actively used the death penalty. However, the abolitionist wave has swept through both Christian and Muslim countries, and during the last 14 years, the share of Muslim countries has remained more or less the same in the two categories where capital punishment is applied. On the other hand, we should acknowledge the fact that all Muslim countries that have abolished the death penalty completely or for ordinary crimes (Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Djibouti, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Senegal, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) are both geographically and psychologically located far from the heartlands of Islam, whereas all countries situated on the Arabian Peninsula are retentionist.

CONCLUSION

The present article’s point of departure was the claim that international pressure for abolition of the death penalty has increased markedly during the last decades. We then set out to assess to what extent the countries that retain the death penalty have become a more homogeneous group during the past 30 years. Overall, the results gave little support for such an assumption of increasing homogeneity. However, a bird’s eye view showed that the death penalty has remained popular in two regions, the Americas and the Middle East and North Africa, whereas in Europe and Oceania it is a rare phenomenon.

It is evident that the geographical and cultural contexts in which countries are situated play a major role in explaining why countries uphold the death penalty. What is perhaps the most important factor of all is the example set by

the major powers in each geographical region. In other words, although there is no direct relation between the power of nations and death penalty usage, there appears to be an indirect relation; small and weak countries can resist pressures for abolition, particularly if there are strong examples of countries that uphold it. The fact that the death penalty has remained popular in the Americas and among many democracies is most likely explained to a large extent by the United States' example. In Asia, death sentences are carried out in communist China and democratic India. In Africa, again, only one of the 10 most populous countries has abolished the death penalty completely or for ordinary crimes, namely South Africa.

The mirror image is Europe, where the issue of the death penalty appears to be buried. In Western Europe, no execution has been carried out for almost 40 years and, accordingly, supporters of the death penalty have no powerful example to which they can refer back. Even in Russia, where the formal status of the death penalty remains unclear but where public support for the death penalty is strong, the government has thus far ignored popular demands to make active use of it.

It is consequently easy to predict that the future of the death penalty depends heavily on the few dominant powers where it is upheld. With regard to democracies in general, and particularly the countries in the Americas, the example of the United States is extremely important. If the United States were to abolish the death penalty, it is quite possible that other countries would follow suit very quickly. In other words, although regional variances in death penalty usage have become more manifest during the last decades, these differences can disappear quite rapidly if key countries in the regions revise their stand on capital punishment. 

APPENDIX

TABLE 1: SHARE OF COUNTRIES THAT RETAIN THE DEATH PENALTY WITHIN SEVEN REGIONS AT THREE POINTS IN TIME

REGION	1985			2000			2014		
	A&R	R	N	A&R	R	N	A&R	R	N
sub-S Africa*	95.7	82.6	46	77.1	45.8	48	67.3	30.6	49
Americas	57.1	48.6	35	48.6	28.6	35	45.7	40.0	35
Asia	96.0	84.0	25	87.1	64.5	31	67.7	45.2	31
Eastern Europe	100.0	100.0	9	19.0	14.3	21	8.7	4.3	23
Western Europe	17.4	0.0	23	0.0	0.0	24	0.0	0.0	24
ME/N. Africa**	95.0	95.0	20	94.7	89.5	19	89.5	73.7	19
Oceania	30.0	10.0	10	23.1	0.0	13	21.4	0.0	14
Total	73.2	62.5	168	55.5	37.7	191	47.2	29.7	195

A&R: de facto abolitionist and retentionist countries

R: retentionist countries, N: number of countries

*Sub-Saharan Africa **Middle East/North Africa

TABLE 2: DEATH PENALTY USAGE AT THREE POINTS IN TIME ACCORDING TO POLITICAL REGIME, COLONIAL HERITAGE, AND RELIGION (%)

	1985				2000				2014			
	Abolitionist	Abolitionist for ordinary crimes	De facto abolitionist	Retentionist	Abolitionist	Abolitionist for ordinary crimes	De facto abolitionist	Retentionist	Abolitionist	Abolitionist for ordinary crimes	De facto abolitionist	Retentionist
Democracy	82.1 (23)	76.5 (13)	33.3 (6)	15.2 (16)	69.4 (50)	61.5 (8)	35.3 (12)	22.2 (16)	60.4 (58)	71.4 (5)	20.6 (7)	31.0 (18)
Semi-dem.	14.3 (4)	17.6 (3)	44.4 (8)	38.1 (40)	25.0 (18)	38.5 (5)	35.3 (12)	30.6 (22)	30.2 (29)	14.3 (1)	44.1 (15)	24.1 (14)
Autocracy	3.6 (1)	5.9 (1)	22.2 (4)	46.7 (49)	5.6 (4)	0.0 (0)	29.4 (10)	47.2 (34)	9.4 (9)	14.3 (1)	35.3 (12)	44.8 (26)
Number	28	17	18	105	72	13	34	72	96	7	34	58
Chi-squared (sig.)	61.99 (0.000)				49.07 (0.000)				37.17 (0.000)			
Colonial heritage	None	78.6 (22)	52.9 (9)	24.8 (26)	51.4 (37)	61.5 (8)	11.8 (4)	19.4 (14)	45.8 (44)	57.1 (4)	2.9 (1)	22.4 (13)
	British	17.9 (5)	47.1 (8)	44.8 (47)	18.1 (13)	23.1 (3)	44.1 (15)	47.2 (34)	15.6 (15)	28.6 (2)	44.1 (15)	56.9 (33)
	French	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	19.0 (20)	4.2 (3)	0.0 (0)	38.2 (13)	12.5 (9)	6.3 (6)	0.0 (0)	38.2 (13)	10.3 (6)
	Other	3.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	11.4 (12)	26.4 (19)	15.4 (2)	5.9 (2)	20.8 (15)	32.3 (31)	14.3 (1)	14.7 (5)	10.3 (6)
	Number	28	17	105	72	13	34	72	96	7	34	58
Chi-squared (sig.)	36.42 (0.000)				57.38 (0.000)				68.53 (0.000)			
Religion	Christian	100.0 (28)	94.1 (16)	61.1 (11)	45.7 (48)	88.9 (64)	76.9 (10)	55.9 (19)	83.3 (80)	71.4 (5)	52.9 (18)	39.7 (23)
	Protestant	39.3 (11)	29.4 (5)	16.7 (3)	23.8 (25)	27.8 (20)	7.7 (1)	29.4 (10)	22.9 (22)	14.3 (1)	38.2 (13)	25.9 (15)
	Catholic	60.7 (17)	58.8 (10)	38.9 (7)	18.1 (19)	52.8 (38)	46.2 (6)	23.5 (8)	51.1 (46)	57.1 (4)	11.8 (4)	15.5 (9)
	Orthodox	0.0 (0)	5.9 (1)	5.6 (1)	3.8 (4)	8.3 (6)	23.1 (3)	2.9 (1)	12.5 (12)	0.0 (0)	2.9 (1)	3.4 (2)
	Muslim	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	27.8 (5)	30.5 (32)	4.2 (3)	15.4 (2)	32.4 (11)	10.4 (10)	14.3 (1)	35.3 (12)	43.1 (25)
	Buddhist	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	5.6 (1)	6.7 (7)	1.4 (1)	0.0 (0)	11.8 (4)	2.1 (2)	0.0 (0)	8.8 (3)	6.9 (4)
	Other	0.0 (0)	5.9 (1)	5.6 (1)	17.1 (18)	5.6 (4)	7.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	4.2 (4)	14.3 (1)	2.9 (1)	10.3 (6)
	Number	28	17	18	105	72	13	34	96	7	34	58
Chi-squared (sig.)	37.42 (0.000)				44.73 (0.000)				36.57 (0.000)			

TABLE 3: POPULATION SIZE, SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ETHNIC FRAGMENTATION, AND DEATH PENALTY USAGE AT THREE POINTS IN TIME; COMPARISONS OF MEANS.

		1985	2000	2014
Population size (1,000)	Abolished	7,746 (28)	11,832 (72)	13,634 (96)
	Abolished OCO	27,434 (17)	28,558 (13)	36,663 (7)
	De facto abolitionist	3,818 (18)	7,729 (34)	17,014 (34)
	Retentionist	38,615 (105)	61,392 (72)	68,414 (58)
	Total	28,611 (168)	30,922 (191)	31,343 (195)
	Eta-squared (sig.)	0.018 (0.388)	0.042 (0.044)	0.040 (0.050)
GDP/cap. (US dollars)	Abolished	5,502 (28)	12,542 (72)	20,169 (96)
	Abolished OCO	4,564 (17)	5,803 (13)	12,270 (7)
	De facto abolitionist	3,487 (18)	2,221 (34)	4,678 (34)
	Retentionist	2,096 (105)	4,461 (72)	11,857 (58)
	Total	3,062 (168)	7,200 (191)	14,712 (195)
	Eta-squared (sig.)	0.107 (0.000)	0.112 (0.000)	0.062 (0.007)
Infant mortality (deaths/1000 live births)	Abolished	29.3 (28)	31.5 (72)	19.6 (96)
	Abolished OCO	30.9 (17)	30.5 (13)	14.4 (7)
	De facto abolitionist	69.7 (18)	61.1 (34)	43.1 (34)
	Retentionist	77.3 (105)	54.9 (72)	31.0 (58)
	Total	63.8 (168)	45.5 (191)	26.9 (195)
	Eta-squared (sig.)	0.183 (0.000)	0.119 (0.000)	0.136 (0.000)
Ethnic fragmentation	Abolished	0.60 (28)	0.73 (72)	0.75 (96)
	Abolished OCO	0.79 (17)	0.78 (13)	0.85 (7)
	De facto abolitionist	0.72(18)	1.03 (34)	1.09 (34)
	Retentionist	0.94 (105)	0.90 (72)	0.87 (58)
	Total	0.85 (168)	0.85 (191)	0.85 (195)
	Eta-squared (sig.)	0.096 (0.001)	0.070 (0.003)	0.085 (0.001)

OCO: Ordinary crimes only

NOTES

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19. Julian B. Knowles, “Capital Punishment in the Commonwealth Caribbean: Colonial Inheritance, Colonial Remedy?,” in *Capital Punishment: Strategies for Abolition*, ed. Peter Hodgkinson and William A. Schabas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 282–308; Hood and Hoyle, *The Death Penalty*, 4th ed., 104–5.
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42. Compare with: McGann and Sandholtz, *Patterns of Death Penalty Abolition*, 281–5.
43. At the latest point in time, the median value for retentionist countries is 9.3 million, compared with 9.0 million for de facto abolitionist countries, 14.8 million for countries where the death penalty is abolished for ordinary crimes only, and 5.3 million for abolitionist countries.
44. Neumayer, *Death Penalty Abolition*, 10–16.
45. Ibid., 8; McGann and Sandholtz, *Patterns of Death Penalty Abolition*, 277–8, 281–4.

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