

No. 04-5928

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IN THE  
**Supreme Court of the United States**

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JOSE ERNESTO MEDELLIN

*Petitioner,*

v.

DOUG DRETKE, DIRECTOR,  
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE,  
CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS DIVISION,

*Respondent.*

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**On Writ of Certiorari to the United States  
Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit**

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**BRIEF OF FORMER  
UNITED STATES DIPLOMATS  
AS *AMICI CURIAE* IN SUPPORT  
OF PETITIONER**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES .....	ii
STATEMENT OF INTEREST .....	1
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT .....	4
ARGUMENT .....	5
I.    THE TREATY POWER AUTHORIZES THE PRESIDENT AND THE SENATE TO ENTER INTO TREATY OBLIGATIONS THAT ARE BINDING ON THE STATES AND OVERRIDE CONFLICTING STATE LAWS .....	5
A.    Numerous Diplomatic Failures Under The Articles Of Confederation Led To The Creation Of Federal Authority Under The Treaty Power.....	5
B.    This Court Has Consistently Recognized That States Must Comply With Our Treaty Obligations To Maintain U.S. International Credibility And To Avoid Diplomatic Failures .....	10
II.   FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THE ICJ’S FINAL JUDGMENT IN <i>AVENA</i> WOULD UNDERMINE U.S. DIPLOMATIC CREDIBILITY .....	13
III.  FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THE <i>AVENA</i> JUDGMENT WOULD ALSO DAMAGE FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS GOVERNED BY OTHER TREATY REGIMES .....	22
CONCLUSION.....	26

## TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

	Page
<b>Federal Cases</b>	
<i>Asakura v. City of Seattle</i> , 265 U.S. 332 (1924) .....	11
<i>Breard v. Greene</i> , 523 U.S. 371 (1998) .....	13
<i>Crosby v. Nat’l Foreign Trade Council</i> , 530 U.S. 363 (2000) .....	2, 12
<i>Dep’t of Transp. v. Public Citizen</i> , 124 S. Ct. 2204 (2004) .....	25
<i>FPC v. Tuscarora Indian Nation</i> , 362 U.S. 99 (1960) .....	3
<i>Hauenstein v. Lynham</i> , 100 U.S. 483 (1879) .....	11
<i>Hilton v. Guyot</i> , 159 U.S. 113 (1895) .....	22
<i>Medellin v. Dretke</i> , 371 F.3d 270 (5th Cir. 2004) .....	13
<i>Missouri v. Holland</i> , 252 U.S. 416 (1920) .....	12
<i>Republic of Austria v. Altmann</i> , 541 U.S. 677 (2004) .....	24
<i>United States v. Belmont</i> , 301 U.S. 324 (1937) .....	11, 12
<i>United States v. Pink</i> , 315 U.S. 203 (1942) .....	11, 12
<i>Ware v. Hylton</i> , 3 U.S. (3 Dall.) 199 (1796) .....	11
<b>Decisions of Foreign Courts and International Tribunals</b>	
Aerial Incident of 3 July 1988 (Iran v. U.S.), 1989 I.C.J. 132 (Dec. 13), and 1996 I.C.J. 9 (Feb. 22) .....	23
Avena and Other Mexican Nationals (Mexico v. U.S.), 2004 I.C.J. No. 128 .....	1, 2, 3, 13
Canada v. S.D. Myers, Inc., 2004 Fed. C.C. LEXIS 20 (Fed. Ct. 2004) .....	25
<i>European Communities—Regime for the Importation, Sale and Distribution of Bananas</i> , WTO Doc. Series WT/DS27 .....	25
<i>European Communities—Measures Concerning Meat and Meat Products (Hormones)</i> , WTO Doc. Series WT/DS26 & WT/DS48 .....	25

**TABLE OF AUTHORITIES**  
(Continued)

	<b>Page</b>
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Trial of Pakistani Prisoners of War (Pak. v. India), 1973 I.C.J. 328 (July 13), and 1973 I.C.J. 347 (Dec. 15).....	23
Ramon Martinez Villareal v. United States, Case 11.753, Report No. 52/02, Inter-Am. C.H.R. (2003) .....	16-17
 <b>Constitutions</b>	
ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION AND	
PERPETUAL UNION, art. IX.....	6
U.S. CONST. art. I, § 10.....	9
U.S. CONST. art. II, § 2, cl. 2.....	5, 9
U.S. CONST. art. VI, cl. 2 .....	9, 10
 <b>Statutes and Legislative Materials</b>	
VIENNA CONVENTION ON CONSULAR RELATIONS, SEN. EXEC. REP. 91-9 (1969).....	
	15
 <b>Treaties and Other International Materials</b>	
Charter of the U.N., <i>entered into force</i> Oct. 24, 1945, 59 Stat. 1031. ....	
	3
Convention Defining and Establishing the Functions and Privileges of Consuls and Vice Consuls, Nov. 14, 1788, U.S.-France, 8 Stat. 106, 7 Bevans 794 .....	
	10
Convention on International Civil Aviation, <i>opened for signature</i> Dec. 7, 1944, 3 Bevans 944, 15 U.N.T.S. 295.....	
	24

**TABLE OF AUTHORITIES**  
(Continued)

	<b>Page</b>
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N. Amer. Free Trade Agreement, Sept. 6, 1992, 32 I.L.M. 296 (1993) .....	24
Optional Protocol Concerning the Compulsory Settlement of Disputes, Apr. 24, 1963, 21 U.S.T. 325, 596 U.N.T.S. 487 .....	1, 4, 13, 19
Patent Cooperation Treaty, <i>opened for signature</i> June 19, 1970, 28 U.S.T. 7645, 1160 U.N.T.S. 231 .....	24
Statute of the Int'l Court of Justice, 59 Stat. 1055.....	3
Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, Feb. 2, 1948, U.S.-Italy, 63 Stat. 2255, 79 U.N.T.S. 171 .....	23
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Treaty of Peace with Japan, Sept. 8, 1951, 3 U.S.T. 3169, 136 U.N.T.S. 45 .....	23
Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU), <i>entered into force</i> Jan. 1, 1995, <i>in</i> Final Act Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, Marrakesh, Apr. 15, 1994, 33 I.L.M. 1125 (1994) .....	24, 25
Universal Copyright Convention, <i>opened for signature</i> Sept. 6, 1952, 6 U.S.T. 2731, 216 U.N.T.S. 132.....	24
Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Apr. 24, 1963, 21 U.S.T. 77, 596 U.N.T.S. 261 .....	1, 4, 13, 19

**TABLE OF AUTHORITIES**  
(Continued)

	<b>Page</b>
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SAMUEL FLAGG BEMIS, A DIPLOMATIC HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES (4th ed. 1955) .....	8
Jonathan I. Charney & W. Michael Reisman, <i>Agora: Breard</i> , 92 AM. J. INT’L L. 666 (1998).....	21
Samuel B. Crandall, <i>Treaties, Their Making and Enforcement</i> (1904).....	6, 7
1 GEORGE TICKNOR CURTIS, HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN, FORMATION, AND ADOPTION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES (1854) .....	8
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LUKE T. LEE, CONSULAR LAW AND PRACTICE (2d ed. 1991) .....	14
FREDERICK W. MARKS III, INDEPENDENCE ON TRIAL, FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE MAKING OF THE CONSTITUTION (1973) .....	5, 6
Colter Paulson, <i>Compliance with Final Judgments of the International Court of Justice Since 1987</i> , 98 AM. J. INT’L L. 434 (2004) .....	23
S. Adele Shank & John Quigley, <i>Foreigners on Texas’s Death Row and the Right of Access to A Consul</i> , 26 ST. MARY’S L.J. 719 (1995) .....	14
JOHN LORD SHEFFIELD, OBSERVATIONS ON THE COMMERCE OF THE AMERICAN STATES (Dublin, Luke White 2d ed. 1784).....	8

**TABLE OF AUTHORITIES**  
(Continued)

	<b>Page</b>
Victor M. Uribe, <i>Consuls at Work: Universal Instruments of Human Rights and Consular Protection in the Context of Criminal Justice</i> , 19 HOUS. J. INT'L L. 375 (1997).....	13, 14
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George Boehmer, <i>Killer Loses Fight for Life</i> , DAILY TELEGRAPH (Sydney, Australia), Mar. 4, 1999, at 25.....	18
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Roger Cohen, <i>U.S. Execution of German Stirs Anger</i> , N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 5, 1999, at 14 .....	18
Barbara Crossette, <i>For First Time, U.S. Is Excluded From U.N. Human Rights Panel</i> , N.Y. TIMES, May 4, 2001, at A1 .....	18
THE FEDERALIST NO. 22 (Alexander Hamilton) .....	8, 9
THE FEDERALIST NO. 42 (James Madison) .....	9
THE FEDERALIST NO. 64 (John Jay) .....	10
<i>Germany Sues U.S. For Breaking Law</i> , REUTERS, Sept. 16, 1999, available at <a href="http://www.ub.es/penal/historia/PdeM/dpicintl.htm">http://www.ub.es/penal/historia/PdeM/dpicintl.htm</a> .....	19

**TABLE OF AUTHORITIES**  
(Continued)

	<b>Page</b>
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Colin Nickerson, <i>Canadians Protest a Texas Execution; Inmate Set To Die Today for 1975 Killing</i> , BOSTON GLOBE, Dec. 10, 1998, at A2 .....	16, 20
<i>Paraguay Angered by US Execution</i> , BBC NEWS, Apr. 15, 1998, available at <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/78602.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/78602.stm</a> .....	20
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**TABLE OF AUTHORITIES**  
(Continued)

	<b>Page</b>
<i>Resol. On Death Sentence Handed Down on Greg Summers in Texas, USA, B4-0188/99, 1999 O.J. (C 150)</i> .....	17
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**TABLE OF AUTHORITIES**  
(Continued)

	<b>Page</b>
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<i>Transcript: Confirmation Hearing of Condoleezza Rice</i> , Jan. 18, 2005, available at <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/18/politics/18TEXT-RICE.html">http:// www.nytimes.com/2005/01/18/politics/ 18TEXT-RICE.html</a> .....	22
<i>Transcript of State Dep't Regular Briefing</i> , FED. NEWS SERV., July 15, 1999 .....	14
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<i>U.N. Official Frets Over Canadian's Texas Execution; Ottawa Steps Up Bid To Spare Albertan Convicted of Murder</i> , TORONTO STAR, Nov. 26, 1998, at A9 .....	20
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Connie de la Vega, <i>Going it Alone</i> , AMER. PROSPECT, July, 2004, at A22 .....	18
Armando Villafranca, <i>Life and Death Chasm</i> , HOUS. CHRON., Sept. 28, 1997, at A1 .....	21

## STATEMENT OF INTEREST<sup>1</sup>

The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Apr. 24, 1963, 21 U.S.T. 77, 596 U.N.T.S. 261 [Vienna Convention], requires all signatory nations, including the United States, to inform “without delay” any detained foreign national of his right to request assistance from the consul of his own nation and, if the national so requests, to inform “without delay” the consular office of that national’s detention or arrest. Notwithstanding these obligations, the state of Texas arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced Petitioner Jose Ernesto Medellin—a Mexican national—to death, without ever informing him of his right to seek assistance from the Mexican Consulate.

In January 2003, the Mexican government brought suit in the International Court of Justice [ICJ] against the United States under the Optional Protocol Concerning the Compulsory Settlement of Disputes [Optional Protocol], which both Mexico and the United States have ratified,<sup>2</sup> alleging that the United States had violated the Vienna Convention in Petitioner’s case, among others. After full briefing and oral argument, the ICJ, on March 31, 2004, issued a final judgment holding, *inter alia*, that the United States had violated the Vienna Convention by failing to inform 51 identified Mexican nationals—including Petitioner—“of their rights” under the Convention “to notify

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<sup>1</sup> No party other than the *Amici* and their counsel authored this brief in whole or in part, and no person or entity, other than *Amici* and their counsel, has made a monetary contribution to the preparation or submission of this brief. Both parties have granted consent to the filing of this *amici curiae* brief. Letters of consent are on file with the Clerk of the Court.

<sup>2</sup> The Optional Protocol provides that any disputes “arising out of the interpretation or application of the Convention shall lie within the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.” Optional Protocol Concerning the Compulsory Settlement of Disputes, Apr. 24, 1963, 21 U.S.T. 325, 326, 596 U.N.T.S. 487, 488.

the Mexican consular post of the[ir] detention.” *Avena and Other Mexican Nationals* (Mexico v. United States), 2004 I.C.J. No. 128, at 43 [*Avena*]. To remedy that violation, the ICJ determined that the United States should “allow the review and reconsideration of the conviction[s] and sentence[s] by taking account of the violation of the rights set forth in the Convention.” The Fifth Circuit refused, holding that the Vienna Convention creates no individually enforceable rights and that no judicial remedy is available for the violation of Petitioner’s rights.

*Amici* have served as Senior State Department Officials, Ambassadors, and Legal Advisers to the U.S. Department of State, representing the government of the United States at home and abroad in both Republican and Democratic administrations.<sup>3</sup> See *Crosby v. National Foreign Trade Council*, 530 U.S. 363, 385 (2000) (“[O]pinions of senior National Government officials are competent and direct evidence of the frustration of congressional objectives by [a] state Act.”). *Amici* vary widely in their views regarding whether or not the death penalty can ever be lawfully administered and do not express any opinion on what the ultimate resolution of Petitioner’s conviction and sentence

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<sup>3</sup> *Amici* include former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, former Under Secretary of State Thomas R. Pickering, former ambassadors Stephen W. Bosworth, Jeffrey Davidow, James R. Jones, John O’Leary, J. Stapleton Roy, Nancy Soderberg, Malcolm R. Wilkey and Frank G. Wisner, former Legal Advisers Herbert J. Hansell and Abraham D. Sofaer, and Special Presidential Envoy James C. O’Brien. Of their number, four have retired with the rank of Career Ambassador, the highest rank that can be awarded to members of the United States Foreign Service. Ambassador Wilkey and Legal Adviser Sofaer were formerly federal judges, on the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, and the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, respectively. *Amici* appear in their personal capacities. Current affiliations of *Amici* are provided here for identification purposes only, and are not intended to convey the views of their affiliated institutions on the questions presented here. The qualifications of *Amici* are listed in the Addendum to this brief.

should be after review and reconsideration. Some of the signatories of this brief also disagree as to the correctness and merits of the ICJ's interpretations of the Vienna Convention. But all *Amici* agree that, so long as the United States adheres to the Optional Protocol, it is obliged to abide by those decisions, and that this Court's failure to respect the ICJ's judgment in *Avena* would significantly impair the credibility of American diplomats in the international arena.

Refusing to respect the ICJ's final judgment in *Avena* would violate U.S. obligations under four interconnected treaties that the President and Senate ratified—the Vienna Convention, its Optional Protocol, the United Nations Charter, and the annexed Statute of the ICJ.<sup>4</sup> To affirm the Fifth Circuit and condone such multiple treaty violations would impair important U.S. foreign policy interests and reduce American standing in the world community.

*Amici* believe that “[g]reat nations, like great men [and women], should keep their word,” *FPC v. Tuscarora Indian Nation*, 362 U.S. 99, 142 (1960) (Black, J., dissenting). This Court should reverse the Fifth Circuit's ruling, which is inconsistent with sovereign commitments we have made, and

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<sup>4</sup> In 1945, the United States accepted the duty to comply with ICJ judgments when the Senate advised and consented to ratification of the U.N. Charter and the annexed Statute of the ICJ, 59 Stat. 1055, T.S. 993 (1945) [ICJ Statute], as a treaty under Article II of the Constitution. The ICJ is the “principal judicial organ of the United Nations.” Charter of the U.N., *entered into force* Oct. 24, 1945, art. 92, 59 Stat. 1031, 1051. Under Article 94(1) of the Charter, “[e]ach Member of the United Nations undertakes to comply with the decision of the [ICJ] in any case to which it is a party.” *Id.* Article 93 of the Charter declares all U.N. Members to be *ipso facto* parties to the ICJ Statute, which is annexed to and an integral part of the U.N. Charter. *Id.* Under Article 59 of the ICJ Statute, decisions of the Court have “no binding force *except between the parties and in respect of that particular case.*” ICJ Statute, 59 Stat. at 1062 (emphasis added). Thus, the *Avena* decision has binding force between the United States and Mexico with respect to Petitioner Medellín and fifty other Mexican nationals who are specifically mentioned in the ICJ's judgment. *See Avena*, 2004 I.C.J. No. 128, at 43.

will disrupt our diplomatic relations with close American allies and damage critical U.S. interests governed by other treaty regimes.

### **SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT**

The ability of U.S. diplomats to carry out important foreign policy objectives from the Founding to the present day has critically depended upon strong enforcement of our treaty obligations by the federal government and federal courts. The Framers' difficult experiences under the Articles of Confederation taught them that the United States cannot credibly conduct its foreign relations unless it honors its treaty obligations. The severely limited treaty power granted to the Continental Congress nearly crippled the young nation by failing to ensure that state governments would abide by our treaty obligations. Indeed, state violations of national treaty obligations led important allies and adversaries to refuse to both honor their reciprocal treaty obligations and enter new commercial treaties with the United States.

In drafting the Constitution, the Framers made sure that the federal government would have the authority to bind the entire nation, including the individual states, to our international obligations. Since its inception, this Court has repeatedly reaffirmed that understanding. This Court has regularly held that treaties duly entered by the national government supersede conflicting state laws and bind the states to our national commitments.

Texas's noncompliance in this case with the Vienna Convention and its Optional Protocol offends the Framers' constitutional vision and has created the kind of diplomatic failures that prompted the formation of the treaty power. Texas's and other states' persistent practice of ignoring the Vienna Convention obligations has strained bilateral and multilateral relations, and has disrupted important national foreign policy interests by impairing the ability of diplomats to carry out critical initiatives with foreign governments and international organizations. Moreover, state noncompliance

with our treaty obligations has caused allies and adversaries alike to criticize the United States and to question our longstanding leadership in international law and human rights.

This Court's decision will affect not just the ability of the United States to enforce the Vienna Convention, but, more broadly, our nation's capacity to participate effectively in a diverse array of treaty regimes. Our executive and legislative branches of government have regularly chosen compulsory international adjudication as a means to protect our interests in national security and international trade. American diplomats have pursued and successfully secured numerous treaties that confer jurisdiction on the ICJ and other international dispute-settlement bodies. As American private commercial interests become increasingly global, reliable mechanisms for international dispute resolution will become increasingly central to our nation's foreign policy. The United States cannot build or benefit from these mechanisms, so long as its states and localities continue to violate ratified treaties and jeopardize our global reputation as a dependable treaty partner.

## **ARGUMENT**

### **I. THE TREATY POWER AUTHORIZES THE PRESIDENT AND THE SENATE TO ENTER INTO TREATY OBLIGATIONS THAT ARE BINDING ON THE STATES AND OVERRIDE CONFLICTING STATE LAWS**

#### **A. Numerous Diplomatic Failures Under The Articles Of Confederation Led To The Creation Of Federal Authority Under The Treaty Power**

The Framers established the treaty power (U.S. CONST., art. II, § 2, cl. 2) in response to their frustrating experience under the Articles of Confederation.<sup>5</sup> That experience taught

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<sup>5</sup> See generally FREDERICK W. MARKS III, INDEPENDENCE ON TRIAL, FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE MAKING OF THE CONSTITUTION (1973)

that permitting the states to impair the nation's treaty obligations would significantly impede the conduct of the fledgling nation's foreign affairs.

Under the Articles of Confederation, the Continental Congress possessed the treaty power,<sup>6</sup> but virtually all legislative authority rested with the states.<sup>7</sup> This structure left Congress nominally responsible for foreign affairs, but ultimately dependent on the good faith of the states to carry out those treaty obligations. *See generally* SAMUEL B. CRANDALL, *TREATIES, THEIR MAKING AND ENFORCEMENT* 19-43 (1904). This structure caused repeated failures for Congress in its diplomatic endeavors, as the states routinely refused to carry out important national treaty obligations.

The most serious failure involved the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain of 1783, which secured recognition of both the independence of the United States of America and the U.S. claim to expansive boundaries. Negotiated by Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay, the Treaty of Peace was quickly attacked on the ground that its principal

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(difficulty of obtaining state compliance with treaties motivated the Constitutional Convention); David M. Golove, *Treaty-Making and the Nation: The Historical Foundations of the Nationalist Conception of the Treaty Power*, 98 MICH. L. REV. 1075, 1102-49 (2000) (reviewing history).

<sup>6</sup> Article IX of the Articles of Confederation granted Congress sole and exclusive power to make treaties and alliances, but subject to the restriction "that no treaty of commerce shall be made whereby the legislative power of the respective States shall be restrained from imposing such imposts and duties on foreigners, as their own people are subjected to, or from prohibiting the expropriation or importation of any species of goods or commodities whatsoever." ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION AND PERPETUAL UNION, art. IX.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the Continental Congress had no authority to regulate interstate or foreign commerce. *See id.* art. II ("Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.").



concessions to the British—particularly the Treaty’s financial and amnesty provisions in Articles IV and VI—*infringed upon the authority of the states.*<sup>8</sup> Almost immediately, a number of state legislatures passed laws that violated Articles IV and VI.<sup>9</sup> As states continued to resist the terms of the Treaty of Peace, tensions with Great Britain worsened—so much so that the British refused to carry out its reciprocal obligation to withdraw troops from military posts in the northwestern territory. CRANDALL, *supra*, at 40-42. Critically, the Framers’ experience with the fractious behavior of the states under the Treaty of Peace was repeated in our diplomatic efforts to establish commercial relations as other nations became openly skeptical of the trustworthiness of the United States as a treaty partner.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Article IV of the Treaty provided, *inter alia*, that all debts owed to British creditors that had been extinguished under state law would be resuscitated. Article VI provided that there would be no further confiscations, prosecutions, or other actions taken against Loyalists and that those Loyalists still in prison would be released. Treaty of Peace with Great Britain, Sept. 3, 1783, 12 Bevens 8, 11-12.

<sup>9</sup> For example, in 1783, New York enacted a series of laws that patently violated Article VI, asserting that that provision was beyond Congress’s authority and, thus, null. In response, Alexander Hamilton argued in support of congressional authority to enter the obligations of the Treaty of Peace:

Does not the act of confederation place the exclusive right of war and peace in the United States in Congress? Have they not the sole power of making treaties with foreign nations? Are not these among the first rights of sovereignty, and does not the delegation of them to the general confederacy, so far abridge the sovereignty of each particular state?

Alexander Hamilton, A Letter from Phocion to the Considerate Citizens of New York (Jan. 1-27, 1784), *reprinted in* 3 THE PAPERS OF ALEXANDER HAMILTON 489 (Harold C. Syrett & Jacob E. Cooke eds. 1962).

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, foreign skepticism about the Continental Congress’s ability to enter binding treaties limited that body’s ability to negotiate any commercial treaties other than a limited commercial treaty with Prussia.

The ensuing diplomatic paralysis profoundly affected the Framers' vision of the proper scope of the treaty power. During the Convention, Madison remarked upon the "constant tendency in the States . . . to violate national treaties."<sup>11</sup> Alexander Hamilton echoed the same concern in *The Federalist Papers*.<sup>12</sup>

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Golove, *supra*, at 1131; *see also id.* (citing SAMUEL FLAGG BEMIS, A DIPLOMATIC HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES 66 (4th ed. 1955) ("[A]bortive negotiations with other powers, notably Austria and Denmark, failed because the growing ineptitude and powerlessness of the Confederation to enforce its treaties against the thirteen component states convinced foreign nations that the Continental Congress had ceased to be a responsible body and that the United States itself might soon cease to be a nation.")).

For example, in response to the American commissioners' request to open commercial treaty negotiations with Great Britain, the Duke of Dorset replied:

I have been . . . instructed to learn from you, gentlemen, what is the real nature of the powers with which you are invested,—whether you are merely commissioned by Congress, or whether you have received separate powers from the respective States . . . . [R]epeated experience having taught . . . how little the authority of Congress could avail in any respect . . . .

1 GEORGE TICKNOR CURTIS, HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN, FORMATION, AND ADOPTION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES 289-90 n.1 (1854) (quoting Letter from Duke of Dorset to American Commissioners (Mar. 26, 1785)).

Likewise, Lord Sheffield contended:

No treaty can be made with the American States that can be binding on the whole of them. The act of Confederation does not enable Congress to form more than general treaties: at the moment of the highest authority of Congress, the power in question was with-held by the several States.

Golove, *supra*, at 1128 (quoting JOHN LORD SHEFFIELD, OBSERVATIONS ON THE COMMERCE OF THE AMERICAN STATES 199-200 (Dublin, Luke White 2d ed. 1784)).

<sup>11</sup> 1 THE RECORDS OF THE FEDERAL CONVENTION OF 1787, at 164 (Max Farrand ed., rev. ed. 1937). Madison explained:

To ensure national compliance with treaties, the Framers drafted three constitutional provisions establishing that treaties would bind the states and supersede conflicting provisions of state law. The Treaty Clause of the U.S. Constitution granted the nation's treaty power exclusively to institutions of the federal government.<sup>13</sup> Article I, Section 10 further specified that that grant was exclusive, providing "No state shall enter into any Treaty, Alliance, or Confederation." U.S. CONST. art. I, § 10. Finally, the Supremacy Clause declared that the Constitution, the laws of the United States made pursuant thereto, and "all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby . . . ." *Id.* art. VI, cl. 2.

As the text and structure of these provisions make plain, where our nation's foreign policy is concerned, the Constitution does not recognize dual sovereignty. *See, e.g.*, THE FEDERALIST NO. 42 (James Madison). In Madison's famous words, "If we are to be one nation in any respect, it clearly ought to be in respect to other nations." *Id.* When treaties are at issue, the states disappear and the President

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The tendency of the States to [treaty] violations has been manifested in sundry instances. The files of Congs. contain complaints already, from almost every nation with which treaties have been formed. . . . A rupture with other powers is among the greatest of national calamities. It ought therefore to be effectually provided that no part of a nation shall have in its power to bring them on the whole.

*Id.* at 316.

<sup>12</sup> Due to the states' repeated violations of treaty obligations, Hamilton noted, "[t]he faith, the reputation, the peace of the whole Union are . . . continually at the mercy of the prejudices, the passions, and the interests of every member of which it is composed." THE FEDERALIST NO. 22 (Alexander Hamilton).

<sup>13</sup> The President shall have the "Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur." U.S. CONST. art. II, § 2, cl. 2.

and Senate act, in the words of the Supremacy Clause, with the sole “Authority of the United States.”<sup>14</sup>

Further confirmation of the broad treaty power that the Framers established in order to bind states comes from one of the first treaties ratified by the new American government: a Consular Convention with France, a bilateral precursor to the modern-day Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.<sup>15</sup> That treaty, ratified by the first Senate in 1789, extended foreign consular officials extensive immunities from the operation of state laws, ceded consuls jurisdiction to administer estates of deceased French nationals, and opened the state courts to French nationals. In ratifying the treaty, the Senate had no doubt of its authority to bind the states and to supersede state laws in areas that otherwise fell within the legislative province of the states. *See generally* Golove, *supra*, at 1149-50 & nn. 223, 225.

**B. This Court Has Consistently Recognized That States Must Comply With Our Treaty Obligations To Maintain U.S. International Credibility And To Avoid Diplomatic Failures**

Since its inception, this Court has ensured that our nation upholds its binding international obligations, notwithstanding contrary internal laws and policies of the individual states. Less than a decade after the Constitution took effect, this Court first invoked its authority to enforce the provisions of federal treaties and affirmed the Framers’ vision that the national treaty authority supersedes any

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<sup>14</sup> While the Constitution does not place substantive restrictions in favor of the states on the exercise of the treaty power, the Constitution does provide for the protection of the states’ interest through the Senate’s role in the ratification process. *See generally* THE FEDERALIST NO. 64 (John Jay) (discussing the Senate’s role in protecting the interests of the states “[a]s all the States are equally represented”).

<sup>15</sup> *See* Convention Defining and Establishing the Functions and Privileges of Consuls and Vice Consuls, Nov. 14, 1788, U.S.-France, 8 Stat. 106, 7 Bevans 794.

inconsistent or conflicting state laws: In *Ware v. Hylton*, this Court held that, pursuant to the Supremacy Clause, Article IV of the Treaty of Peace—which ensured British creditors that they would “meet with no lawful impediment to the recovery” of debts—nullified a conflicting Virginia statute that permitted such debts to be discharged. 3 U.S. (3 Dall.) 199, 235, 239 (1796).<sup>16</sup>

Subsequently, this Court has consistently enforced treaty rights, making clear the fundamental principle that treaties are supreme over inconsistent state law.<sup>17</sup> In *United States v. Pink*, in which this Court held that a policy of the State of New York could not override national obligations established in an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Court declared: “No State can rewrite our foreign policy to conform to its own domestic policies. Power over external affairs is not shared by the States; it is vested in the national government exclusively.” 315 U.S. 203, 233 (1942).<sup>18</sup> And in *United States v. Belmont*, the Court made clear that “[i]n respect of all international negotiations and compacts, and in respect of our foreign

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<sup>16</sup> As the Court explained, “[a] treaty cannot be the supreme law of the land, that is of all the United States, if any act of a State Legislature [or constitution or court] can stand in its way.” *Id.* at 236.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., *Asakura v. City of Seattle*, 265 U.S. 332, 341 (1924) (stating that “[a] treaty] will be applied and given authoritative effect by the courts” and holding that a city ordinance was unenforceable because it violated a treaty between the United States and Japan); *Hauenstein v. Lynham*, 100 U.S. 483 (1879) (holding that a treaty between the United States and the Swiss Confederation superseded inconsistent state law).

<sup>18</sup> As this Court explained, “[S]tate law must yield when it is inconsistent with, or impairs the policies or provisions of, a treaty or of an international compact or agreement. . . . [The treaty power] need not be so exercised as to conform to state laws or state policies, whether they be expressed in constitutions, statutes, or judicial decrees. And the policies of the States become wholly irrelevant to judicial inquiry when the United States, acting within its constitutional sphere, seeks enforcement of its foreign policies in the courts.” *Id.* at 230-31, 233-34.

relations generally, *state lines disappear.*” 301 U.S. 324, 331 (1937) (emphasis added).<sup>19</sup>

Likewise, this Court has consistently recognized that the constitutional vesting of full authority over foreign affairs in the federal government benefits our country by enabling us more effectively both to engage in relations with other nations and to protect the interests of our citizens.<sup>20</sup> As this Court put it in *Crosby v. National Foreign Trade Council*, effective diplomacy is best served when the federal government alone speaks for the entire United States on foreign matters: “Quite simply, if the [state] law is enforceable the President has less to offer and less economic diplomatic leverage as a consequence.” 530 U.S. 363, 377 (2000).<sup>21</sup>

Taken together, these constitutional principles and precedents firmly establish the federal government’s sole

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<sup>19</sup> *See also id.* (“[C]omplete power over international affairs is in the national government and is not and cannot be subject to any curtailment or interference on the part of the several states.”); *cf. Missouri v. Holland*, 252 U.S. 416, 434 (1920) (holding that the treaty power is not subject to “some invisible radiation from the general terms of the Tenth Amendment”).

<sup>20</sup> *See, e.g., Pink*, 315 U.S. at 232 (“If state action could defeat or alter our foreign policy, serious consequences might ensue. The nation as a whole would be held to answer if a State created difficulties with a foreign power.”); *Belmont*, 301 U.S. at 331 (relying on Madison’s statement during the constitutional debates that “[t]o counteract [a treaty] by the supremacy of the state laws, would bring on the Union the just charge of national perfidy, and involve us in war”).

<sup>21</sup> In *Crosby*, this Court faced a Massachusetts law that threatened to invite World Trade Organization (WTO) enforcement action by the European Communities. While “express[ing] no opinion on the merits of [those] proceedings,” the Court struck down the offensive state law, at least partly because an adverse WTO complaint against the United States would serve to “embroil the National Government . . . in international dispute proceedings” and “threaten[] relations with the United States.” *Id.* at 383 & n.19.

authority to bind the entire nation to treaty obligations to achieve national foreign policy interests. Yet, in this case, the Fifth Circuit ignored those national obligations out of deference to local state concerns, precisely the result that the Framers drafted the treaty clauses to avoid.<sup>22</sup>

## **II. FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THE ICJ'S FINAL JUDGMENT IN *AVENA* WOULD UNDERMINE U.S. DIPLOMATIC CREDIBILITY**

The Vienna Convention and its Optional Protocol are precisely the kind of treaties that the Framers had in mind when they rendered treaties supreme over inconsistent state law.<sup>23</sup> Texas's noncompliance with the ICJ's ruling in *Avena* defies the authority of the federal government to bind the states to international obligations. *Amici* believe that, if left unchecked, the persistent failure of Texas and other states of the Union to comply with *Avena* will surely alienate this nation from its allies. Likewise, *Amici* believe that the refusal of state and federal courts (such as the Fifth Circuit here) to provide the "review and reconsideration" required by the ICJ's judgment will undermine America's credibility as a global leader, and seriously hinder foreign policy objectives at a critical time in our nation's history.

The United States has long declared that the right to consular access guaranteed by the Vienna Convention and its Optional Protocol is "widely accepted as the standard of

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<sup>22</sup> Although recognizing that the ICJ's decision in *Avena* in 2004 held that "procedural default rules cannot bar review of a petitioner's claim," the Fifth Circuit nevertheless deferred to Texas's procedural default rule and denied Petitioner's application for a certificate of appealability, on the basis that the Supreme Court's earlier opinion denying review in *Breard v. Greene*, 523 U.S. 371, 375 (1998), reasoned "that ordinary procedural rules can bar Vienna Convention claims." *Medellin v. Dretke*, 371 F.3d 270, 279-80 (5th Cir. 2004).

<sup>23</sup> See generally Brief of *Amici Curiae* International Law Experts (discussing the difficulties enforcing previous treaty regimes on consular assistance that lack binding dispute-resolution mechanisms).

international practice of civilized nations.”<sup>24</sup> Through its diplomats, our government routinely calls on such nations as Iraq, Syria, China, and North Korea to abide by this minimal standard when U.S. citizens are detained abroad.<sup>25</sup> Over two decades ago, when Iran flagrantly violated the Vienna Convention by taking U.S. diplomats hostage in Tehran, then flouted its obligation under the Optional Protocol to comply with the ICJ’s order to release the hostages, then-President Carter accused Iran of showing “contempt, not only for international law, but for the entire international structure for securing the peaceful resolution of differences among nations.”<sup>26</sup> The United States led an effort to convince

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<sup>24</sup> Victor M. Uribe, *Consuls at Work: Universal Instruments of Human Rights and Consular Protection in the Context of Criminal Justice*, 19 HOUS. J. INT’L L. 375, 385 (1997) (quoting telegram sent from U.S. Department of State to its Embassy in Damascus on February 21, 1975).

<sup>25</sup> *Transcript of State Dep’t Regular Briefing*, FED. NEWS SERV., July 15, 1999 (James Rubin, State Dep’t spokesman, commenting on detention of U.S. female citizen: “We remind the government of North Korea of its obligations under the Interim Consular Agreement of 1994 and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations to permit consular access to detained U.S. citizens.”); *Transcript of State Dep’t Regular Briefing*, FED. NEWS SERV., Aug. 19, 1999 (James Rubin, State Dep’t spokesman, reporting on request for access and immediate grant of access to U.S. citizen detained in China); Associated Press, *Iraqis Refuse Access to Americans for Second Day*, Apr. 19, 1995 (quoting State Department spokesman: “Obviously, we are extremely disappointed that the Iraqi government has reneged on its promise to allow these weekly visits. We’re disappointed because that is their legal obligation under the Vienna convention.”); S. Adele Shank & John Quigley, *Foreigners on Texas’s Death Row and the Right of Access to a Consul*, 26 ST. MARY’S L.J. 719, 729 (1995) (quoting Consular Officers and Consulates, 1977 Digest § 2, at 290) (U.S. protest of delay in notification of detention of U.S. missionaries in El Salvador); see also LUKE T. LEE, CONSULAR LAW AND PRACTICE, 145-46 (2d ed. 1991) (documenting U.S. invocation of the Vienna Convention).

<sup>26</sup> Philippe Sands, *An Execution Heard Around the World*, L.A. TIMES, Apr. 16, 1998, at B9 (quoting President Carter’s comments during the Iranian hostage crisis).



nations throughout the world to confer compulsory jurisdiction on the ICJ precisely because it was dissatisfied with diplomatic overtures alone as the sole mechanism for enforcing the Vienna Convention.<sup>27</sup>

Today, our closest allies now accuse the United States of showing that same disregard for the Vienna Convention and the ICJ. Nations such as the United Kingdom, Mexico, Canada, Spain, Paraguay, Germany, and Italy have repeatedly objected to the U.S. practice of executing nationals of these countries after state and local violations of the Vienna Convention. Through numerous calls, meetings, and letters to both state and federal authorities, our allies have strenuously requested review and reconsideration of the convictions and sentences of their citizens, in compliance with the Vienna Convention and earlier provisional orders of the ICJ.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps in no other area of our foreign policy

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<sup>27</sup> See Brief of *Amici Curiae* Ambassador L. Bruce Laingen and Capt. John J. Swift, *et al.*, at 6-16; see also *United Nations Conference on Consular Relations Official Records*, 1st Comm., 29th mtg., ¶¶ 36, 54, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.25/16 (1963) [Official Records]; *id.* at Plenary mtg., 21st mtg., ¶¶ 17-20; VIENNA CONVENTION ON CONSULAR RELATIONS, SEN. EXEC. REP. 91-9, at 19 (1969) (statement of J. Edward Lyerly, Deputy Legal Adviser for Administration of the State Dep't).

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Ginger Thompson, *An Execution in Texas Strains Ties with Mexico and Others*, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 16, 2002, at A6 (citing call from President Fox of Mexico); Jonathan Tepperman, *Faulder: The Long-Term View*, NAT'L POST (Toronto), Dec. 11, 1998 (documenting efforts by Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister and Ambassador on behalf of Canadian citizen); Laura LaFay, *World Court—U.S. to Halt Execution*, VIRGINIAN-PILOT, Apr. 10, 1998, at A1 (describing protests by Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II, and Italian government to execution of Italian citizen); Somini Sengupta, *Appeal in Murder Cites International Treaty*, N.Y. TIMES, Dec. 23, 1997, at B5 (letter from Ecuadorean Consul General); David Schwartz, *Plan to Execute German Killers Attracts Scrutiny*, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, Feb. 22, 1999, at A1 (describing efforts by then-German President Herzog, Chancellor Schroeder, Foreign Minister Fischer, and Ambassador Chrobog requesting support for clemency from President Clinton and Arizona Governor Hull); see also Rodrigo Labardini, *International Court of Justice Finds U.S. Breached*

have *Amici* so consistently heard foreign heads of state, foreign ministers, and foreign ambassadors pleading for the enforcement of U.S. treaty obligations.

Indeed, officials of our closest neighbors, Canada and Mexico, have openly declared that the failure of American state authorities to provide their nationals with timely consular access has “strain[ed]” bilateral relations.<sup>29</sup> For example, in 2002, long before the ICJ issued its final judgment in *Avena*, Mexican President Vicente Fox took the extraordinary step of canceling a trip to President Bush’s Texas ranch as ““an unequivocal signal of rejection of the execution”” of a Mexican national who had not been informed of his consular rights.<sup>30</sup>

International and regional human rights bodies have echoed the protests of foreign governments. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the European Parliament, and the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights have each strongly criticized U.S. violations of the

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*its Obligations Under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations*, 20 INT’L ENFORCEMENT L. REP. 250, 251 n.8 (June 2004) (documenting six letters the government of Mexico sent to the United States regarding the execution of Irineo Tristan Montoya by Texas in 1997). Unlike these earlier cases, the Fifth Circuit’s ruling under review ignores a final judgment of the International Court that has “binding force” with respect to the parties. *See supra* note 4.

<sup>29</sup>Raymond Bonner, *U.S. Bid to Execute Mexican Draws Fire*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 26, 2000, at A20 (quoting Jorge G. Castaneda, foreign policy advisor to Mexican President Fox); Colin Nickerson, *Canadians Protest a Texas Execution; Inmate Set to Die Today for 1975 Killing*, BOSTON GLOBE, Dec. 10, 1998, at A2 (describing statements by Canadian government officials responding to execution of Canadian citizen Stanley Faulder who had been denied consular rights).

<sup>30</sup>Brian Knowlton, *Execution Pits Mexico Against U.S.; Fox Echoes World on the Death Penalty*, INT’L HERALD TRIB., Aug. 16, 2002, at 1 (quoting President Fox’s representative).

Vienna Convention.<sup>31</sup> The European Union has lodged numerous official demarches with state authorities requesting reconsideration of pending executions because of violations of the Vienna Convention.<sup>32</sup>

The widespread international opposition to the states' persistent practice of violating the Vienna Convention and refusing to abide by the decisions of the ICJ under the Optional Protocol has harmed our position as a human rights leader.<sup>33</sup> Our authority in several important international

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<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., Ramón Martínez Villareal v. United States, Case 11.753, Report No. 52/02, Inter-Am. C.H.R., ¶¶ 69-70 (2002) (describing notification of right to consular assistance as “among the minimum guarantees essential for foreign nationals also to adequately prepare their defense and receive a fair trial” and failure to notify of such rights violated Mexican national’s right to due process); *Resol. On the Death Sentence Handed Down on Greg Summers in Texas, USA*, B4-0188/99, 1999 O.J. (C 150) 383-84 (passing resolution condemning persistent U.S. failure to notify foreign nationals of rights to consular access and noting “demonstrably extremely poor quality” of defense counsel in case of two German brothers on death row who had not had consular assistance); Kevin Sullivan, *Mexico Challenges U.S. on Death Penalty Cases*, WASH. POST, Jan. 10, 2003, at A17 (citing concerns expressed by U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the execution of Javier Suarez Media, a Mexican citizen, because of the denial of his rights under the Vienna Convention by the state of Texas); Dana Priest & John M. Goshko, *Genocide Warning Center Established; Clinton Human Rights Initiatives Include Changes at INS*, WASH. POST, Dec. 11, 1998, at A52 (referring to speech by U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights before U.N. General Assembly, criticizing the execution of Joseph Stanley Faulder, a Canadian citizen, because of the denial of his rights under the Vienna Convention by the state of Texas).

<sup>32</sup> Demarches by the European Union have been filed in a number of cases, including: (1) Joseph Stanley Faulder, Canada, Dec. 8, 1998; (2) Miguel Angel Flores, Mexico, Nov. 3, 2000; (3) Hung Thanh Le, Vietnam, Dec. 4, 2003; (4) Gregory Madej, Poland, May 1, 2001; (5) Javier Suarez Medina, Mexico, July 23, 2002; (6) Osvaldo Torres, Mexico, Apr. 30 and May 6, 2004; (7) Gerardo Valdez Maltos, Mexico, June 5 and July 13, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Amnesty International, *The Execution of Angel Breard: Apologies Are Not Enough*, at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/>

human rights bodies has been impaired.<sup>34</sup> International disapproval of our noncompliance with the Vienna Convention has also deflected attention away from serious human rights abuses in other countries and has provided our adversaries with diplomatic ammunition to raise doubts about the sincerity of our commitment to human rights.

State violations of the Vienna Convention have also called into question our commitment to the rule of law in international relations.<sup>35</sup> For example, when the German

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engAMR510271998 (May 1, 1998) (quoting Paraguayan Deputy Foreign Minister Rachid: “[T]here is not an international summit at which they [the U.S. government] do not preach the preservation of human rights. . . . [T]he United States has been the champion of democracy . . . let them be the first one to demonstrate to us the principles of democracy; let them also respect human rights.”); George Boehmer, *Killer Loses Fight for Life*, DAILY TEL. (Sydney, Australia), Mar. 4, 1999, at 25 (quoting the German parliament’s Human Rights Committee Chairman Roth’s reaction to the LaGrand execution: “When (Secretary of State Madeleine) Albright talks of human rights, for example in China, she must prove her credibility by also taking human rights in the United States seriously.”).

<sup>34</sup> Shortly after the execution of two German nationals denied their Vienna Convention rights despite a provisional order of the ICJ, the United States was voted off the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in 2001 for the first time in that body’s 54-year history. Barbara Crossette, *For First Time, U.S. Is Excluded from U.N. Human Rights Panel*, N.Y. TIMES, May 4, 2001, at A1. The United States likewise failed to win a seat on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for the first time since that body’s inception in 1959, and its observer status in the Council of Europe—which bans executions—has been put in jeopardy. Connie de la Vega, *Going It Alone*, AM. PROSPECT, July, 2004, at A22.

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., Raymond Bonner, *Mexican Killer is Refused Clemency by Oklahoma*, N.Y. TIMES, July 21, 2001, at A8 (quoting Mexican government as declaring that execution of Mexican national denied Vienna Convention rights as “contrary to international law and the elemental principles of cooperation between nations”); Roger Cohen, *U.S. Execution of German Stirrs Anger*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 5, 1999, at 14 (quoting German Justice Minister, declaring that the execution of two German nationals whose Vienna Convention rights had been violated by state officials “is barbaric and unworthy of a [nation] based on the rule of law”); David Stout, *Do as We Say, Not as We Do: U.S. Executions Draw*

Justice Minister announced Germany's suit against the United States in the ICJ to challenge the execution of two German nationals who were denied consular rights, she declared: "Respecting international laws cannot be a one-way street."<sup>36</sup> When the United States seeks to promote the rule of law around the world, other nations will surely demand that we first comply strictly with our own binding obligations under the U.N. Charter, the ICJ statute, and the Vienna Convention and its Optional Protocol. This is particularly so given that the United States not only spearheaded the effort to create the Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention, but engaged in energetic diplomacy to convince other nations to adopt it.<sup>37</sup>

Taken together, the continued noncompliance with our obligations under the Vienna Convention and Optional Protocol has significantly hindered the ability of *Amici* and other diplomats to carry out foreign policy initiatives. In *Amici*'s experience, an inordinate proportion of important bilateral and multilateral meetings with our closest allies are now consumed with answering diplomatic demarches challenging these practices, diverting attention away from our core national foreign policy interests.

Our diplomatic efforts overseas have also been impeded by the public hostility stirred by the U.S. practice of executing foreign nationals who have been denied their Vienna Convention rights. The practice has led to persistent criticism in the press and angry demonstrations in front of

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*Scorn from Abroad*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 26, 1998, § 4 (Week in Review), at 4 (quoting Honduran newspaper upon execution of Honduran national denied rights under the Vienna Convention: "The most powerful country in the world, which claims to be a stickler for justice and legal rectitude, has violated its own precepts.").

<sup>36</sup> See *Germany Sues U.S. for Breaking Law*, REUTERS, Sept. 16, 1999, available at <http://www.ub.es/penal/historia/PdeM/dpicintl.htm>.

<sup>37</sup> Official Records, *supra* note 27, 1st Comm., 29th mtg., ¶¶ 36, 54; *id.*, at Plenary mtg., 21st mtg., ¶¶ 17-20.

U.S. embassies abroad.<sup>38</sup> Such protests have not only seriously disrupted important diplomatic missions, but have even threatened the physical safety of our U.S. diplomats and embassy staff trying to work in these countries.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See Knowlton, *supra* note 30 (documenting intense media attention in Mexico); Nickerson, *supra* note 29 (describing execution of Stanley Faulder as a “cause celebre . . . dominating front pages and television newscasts” in Canada); Stout, *supra* note 35 (citing protest in front of U.S. embassy in Paraguay); *Paraguay Angered by US Execution*, BBC News, Apr. 15, 1998, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/78602.stm> (documenting public outcry and inundation of radio channels in Paraguay with angry calls); Adam E. Jacobs & Mark A. Berman, *Rediscovering the Right to Consul*, NEW JERSEY L.J., Mar. 2, 1998, at 32 (describing demonstration in front of U.S. Consulate in Ecuador); *Texas Executes a Mexican Killer, Raising a Furor Across the Border*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 26, 1993, at A15 (describing street protests). After Arizona executed Jose Roberto Villafuerte, a Honduran national, 500 Hondurans protested at the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, and Honduran newspapers reported retaliatory threats against the lives of U.S. citizens in Honduran prisons. Nicaragua Solidarity Network of Greater New York, *Hondurans Protest Execution in the U.S.*, WEEKLY NEWS UPDATE ON THE AMERICAS, Apr. 26, 1998, available at [http://www.tulane.edu/~libweb/RESTRICTED/WEEKLY/1998\\_0426.txt](http://www.tulane.edu/~libweb/RESTRICTED/WEEKLY/1998_0426.txt). In 1999, to protest the execution of a Canadian who had been denied his rights under the Vienna Convention, local activists planned demonstrations and other organized protests, including letter-writing campaigns and threatened economic boycotts. *U.N. Official Frets Over Canadian's Texas Execution; Ottawa Steps Up Bid to Spare Albertan Convicted of Murder*, TORONTO STAR, Nov. 26, 1998, at A9; *Texas Embroiled in International Legal Rights Dispute Over Preparations to Execute a Canadian Citizen* (NPR Morning Edition broadcast, Dec. 9, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> During public demonstrations in front of the U.S. embassy in Honduras to protest the execution of a Honduran who had not been given timely access to the consular officials, more than 4,000 U.S. personnel, including diplomatic staff, had to be protected by armed security. See *U.S. Boosts Security in Honduras as Tempers Flare*, REUTERS, Apr. 24, 1998; Stout, *supra* note 35. After the execution of Tristan Montoya, a Mexican who had been denied his rights under the Vienna Convention, Mexicans issued death threats and U.S. tourists were given warnings to stay out of certain areas. Armando Villafranca, *Life and Death Chasm*, HOUS. CHRON., Sept. 28, 1997, at A1.

Indeed, the Secretary of State has written to state governors commenting on the disruption of foreign policy because of the persistent state practice of failing to provide consular notice. Most notably, in 1998, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (a signatory to this brief, *see supra* note 3) wrote to the Governor of Virginia with regard to Angel Francisco Breard, a Paraguayan national for whom the ICJ granted a nonfinal provisional measure directing the United States to stay his execution because Virginia officials had ignored his Vienna Convention rights.<sup>40</sup> In requesting that the Governor exercise his powers to stay Breard's execution, Secretary Albright explained that she was "particularly concerned about the possible negative consequences" of the execution for the many American citizens who live and travel abroad.<sup>41</sup> "The execution of Mr. Breard in the present circumstances," she observed, "could lead some countries to contend incorrectly that the U.S. does not take seriously its obligations under the Convention" and "could be seen as a denial by the United States of the significance of international law and the Court's processes in its international relations and thereby limit our ability to ensure that Americans are protected when living or traveling abroad."<sup>42</sup>

*Amici* fear that this Court's affirmance of the Fifth Circuit's rejection of the *Avena* judgment would inevitably impair diplomatic relations with our closest allies and promote distrust of our international commitments. In an age where global cooperation is crucial to our nation's security, we cannot afford to allow the several states to

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<sup>40</sup> Letter from Madeleine K. Albright, U.S. Secretary of State, to James S. Gilmore III, Governor of Virginia (Apr. 13, 1998), *quoted in* Jonathan I. Charney & W. Michael Reisman, *Agora: Breard*, 92 AM. J. INT'L L. 666, 671-72 (1998).

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

exercise a veto over our national obligations and interests under the Vienna Convention and its Optional Protocol.<sup>43</sup>

### **III. FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THE AVENA JUDGMENT WOULD ALSO DAMAGE FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS GOVERNED BY OTHER TREATY REGIMES**

The ICJ dispute-settlement provisions in the Vienna Convention's Optional Protocol are not *sui generis*. For that reason, the diplomatic fallout from America's perceived lack of respect for the ICJ and the Vienna Convention cannot be limited to just those settings. *Amici* submit that the failure of the United States to comply with the ICJ's decision in *Avena* would damage a number of existing treaty regimes that ensure the security of our citizens and safeguard our commercial interests, as well as undermine the United States' ability to negotiate new diplomatic covenants. Because "international law is founded upon mutuality and reciprocity," *Hilton v. Guyot*, 159 U.S. 113, 228 (1895), the creation and operation of international dispute-resolution regimes depends largely upon every signatory's good-faith compliance with decisions by these judicial bodies.

After World War II, when international trust and diplomacy were at a low ebb, the United States moved to establish numerous treaties with its former enemies that

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<sup>43</sup> Certainly, these concerns are of no less importance today than they have been in the past. As Secretary of State designee Condoleezza Rice stated at her confirmation hearing on January 18, 2005: "The United States will . . . continue to work to support and uphold the system of international rules and treaties that allow us to take advantage of our freedom, to build our economies and to keep us safe and secure." *Transcript: Confirmation Hearing of Condoleezza Rice*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 18, 2005, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/18/politics/18TEXT-RICE.html>; *id.* ("We must use American diplomacy to help create a balance of power in the world that favors freedom. The time for diplomacy is now.").



resolved disputes through binding decisions of the ICJ.<sup>44</sup> This diplomatic strategy of asking friends and foes alike to submit their disputes to binding international dispute-resolution bodies persists to the present day.

In return for our commitment to abide by ICJ judgments, the United States gains not only the cooperation of other states, but also a powerful diplomatic tool for encouraging non-judicial resolution of disputes. Indeed, “[m]any cases are settled before a final judgment is reached,” giving the ICJ “an important ‘pacifying effect’ on disputes at all stages of litigation.” Colter Paulson, *Compliance with Final Judgments of the International Court of Justice Since 1987*, 98 AM. J. INT’L L. 434, 436 (2004). Even nations with longstanding histories of extreme hostility toward one another have reached agreement on serious diplomatic disputes after referral (or threat of referral) to the ICJ.<sup>45</sup> This occurred, for example, after the United States inadvertently downed an Iranian civilian airliner, killing 290 passengers and crew. Despite our strained diplomatic relations, Iran sought a peaceful solution by bringing suit before the ICJ, and the parties ultimately were able to negotiate a settlement.<sup>46</sup>

The “mutuality and reciprocity” that forms the foundation of international relations is particularly critical for the effective operation of our nation’s commercial and

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<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, Feb. 2, 1948, U.S.-Italy, art. XXVI, 63 Stat. 2255, 2294, 79 U.N.T.S. 171, 212; Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, Oct. 29, 1954, U.S.-F.R.G., art. XXVII, 7 U.S.T. 1839, 1867, 273 U.N.T.S. 3, 36; Treaty of Peace with Japan, Sept. 8, 1951, art. 22, 3 U.S.T. 3169, 3188-89, 136 U.N.T.S. 45, 72.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Trial of Pakistani Prisoners of War (Pak. v. India), 1973 I.C.J. 328 (July 13), and 1973 I.C.J. 347 (Dec. 15) (dispute settled out of court).

<sup>46</sup> Aerial Incident of 3 July 1988 (Iran v. U.S.), 1989 I.C.J. 132 (Dec. 13), and 1996 I.C.J. 9 (Feb. 22).

economic treaties. International trade agreements have always been a major component of U.S. diplomatic relations with other nations, but the last half of the twentieth century has witnessed the direct application of such agreements to commercial relationships between individuals and nations.<sup>47</sup>

Critically, a vast array of agreements dealing with international trade and foreign investment now call for binding arbitration or resort to permanent international tribunals to resolve intractable disputes. Affirmance of the Fifth Circuit in this case might seriously impede the ability of our nation and its citizens to rely upon the international arbitration arrangements in these commercial treaties.

Many important economic treaties vest compulsory jurisdiction before the ICJ, including international sovereign disputes ranging from the international recognition of copyrights<sup>48</sup> and patents<sup>49</sup> to the transport of goods by air.<sup>50</sup> The United States has also agreed to submit to the jurisdiction of other binding arbitration mechanisms to protect U.S. trade and investment interests. Of most recent significance to commercial interests is Chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA),<sup>51</sup> and the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU) of the World Trade

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<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., *Republic of Austria v. Altmann*, 541 U.S. 677 (2004) (finding no sovereign immunity bar to suit by individual against sovereign nation regarding expropriation of private property).

<sup>48</sup> Universal Copyright Convention, *opened for signature* Sept. 6, 1952, art. XV, 6 U.S.T. 2731, 2743, 216 U.N.T.S. 132, 146.

<sup>49</sup> Patent Cooperation Treaty, *opened for signature* June 19, 1970, art. 59, 28 U.S.T. 7645, 7708, 1160 U.N.T.S. 231, 262.

<sup>50</sup> International Air Transport Agreement, *opened for signature* Dec. 7 1944, art. IV, sec. 3, 3 Bevans 922, 925, 84 U.N.T.S. 389, 394; *see also* Convention on International Civil Aviation, *opened for signature* Dec. 7, 1944, chp. XVIII, art. 84, 3 Bevans 944, 966, 15 U.N.T.S. 295, 352.

<sup>51</sup> North American Free Trade Agreement, chp. 11, Sept. 6, 1992, 32 I.L.M. 605, 639 (1993).

Organization (WTO).<sup>52</sup> Together, NAFTA and the WTO grant private interests and sovereign nations, respectively, compulsory resort to binding arbitral tribunals.

The benefits stemming from these treaties and their binding dispute-resolution mechanisms are not illusory. Since 1996, American investors have initiated arbitral proceedings under NAFTA against the government of Canada eight times, and against the government of Mexico twelve times, with at least five of those cases resulting in compensation for the American investors, while six of the cases remain pending.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, 74 of the 324 disputes that have been initiated before WTO tribunals were brought by the United States as a complainant.<sup>54</sup> However, an

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<sup>52</sup> In the DSU, WTO members agree to submit to binding arbitration of certain trade disputes, and are under an obligation “to have recourse to and abide by the rules and procedures” of the DSU. Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Dispute, *entered into force* Jan. 1, 1995, art. 23(1), *in* Final Act Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, Marrakesh, Apr. 15, 1994, 33 I.L.M. 1125, 1241 (1994).

<sup>53</sup> For a list of past and pending NAFTA Chapter Eleven cases, see NAFTA Investor-State Arbitrations, U.S. Department of State Website, at <http://www.state.gov/s/l/c3439.htm> (last visited Jan. 10, 2005), and NAFTA-Chapter 11-Investment, Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Website, at <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/NAFTA-en.asp> (last updated Jan. 22, 2004).

*See also* *Dep’t of Transportation v. Public Citizen*, 124 S. Ct. 2204, 2211 (2004) (recognizing U.S. adherence to the decision of a NAFTA arbitration panel); *Canada v. S.D. Myers, Inc.*, 2004 Fed. C.C. LEXIS 20, at \*15, \*16 (Fed. Ct. Jan. 13, 2004) (affording a “high level of deference” to a NAFTA Tribunal in affirming a \$7 million award to an American investor against the Canadian government, “so as to be sensitive to the need of a system for predictability in the resolution of disputes”).

<sup>54</sup> *See, e.g., European Communities—Regime for the Importation, Sale and Distribution of Bananas*, WTO Doc. Series WT/DS27, and *European Communities—Measures Concerning Meat and Meat Products (Hormones)*, WTO Doc. Series WT/DS26 & WT/DS48. For a list of past and pending DSU cases, *see* [http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/dispu\\_e/dispu\\_status\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/dispu_status_e.htm) (last updated Jan. 10, 2005).

unwillingness to honor our treaty commitments in this case would jeopardize the very scheme of international judicial protection our nation is increasingly using to safeguard our individual and national economic interests.

In sum, *Amici* submit that the continuing ability of the United States to secure international treaty regimes that are critical to the realization of our national interests throughout the world, and to secure reliable enforcement of those regimes already in place, depends directly upon our reputation for honoring the international obligations that we undertake. *Amici* believe that the practice of some of the several states in ignoring our obligations under the Vienna Convention and Optional Protocol presents a serious problem in this regard—one to which this Court should put an end.<sup>55</sup>

### CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, *Amici* urge the Court to reverse the decision below.

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<sup>55</sup> In doing so, this Court will also help ensure that the Vienna Convention is consistently interpreted and uniformly applied by all signatories—which is one of the principle goal of nations in entering treaties in the first place. *See also* Transcript: A Conversation on the Relevance of Foreign Law for American Constitutional Adjudication with U.S. Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia & Stephen Breyer, Jan 13, 2005, at American University School of Law, available at <http://wcl.american.edu/secl/founders/2005/050113.cfm> (Justice Salia stating, “[T]he object of a treaty being to come up with a text that is the same for all the countries, [the U.S. courts] should defer to the views of other signatories, much as we defer to the views of the agencies—that is to say, if it’s within the ballpark, if it’s a reasonable interpretation, though not necessarily the very best.”).

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