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# Chapter 25. International investment arbitration: winning, losing and why

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Franck, Susan; Sauvant, Karl P.; Sachs, Lisa; Davies, Ken; Zandvliet, Ruben; Hufbauer, Gary Clyde; Kekic, Laza; Jensen, Nathan M.; Malesky, Edmund J.; Avi-Yonah, Reuven S.; Guimon, Jose; Cotula, Lorenzo; Bellak, Christian; Leibrecht, Markus; Ozawa, Terutomo; Mortimore, Michael; Razo, Carlos; Satyanand, Premila Nazareth; Bruche, Gert; van Aaken, Anne; Kurtz, Jürgen; Gordon, Kathryn; Pohl, Joachim; Fotak, Veljko; Megginson, William L.; Kovacs, Charles; Plotkin, Mark; Fagan, David N.; Bhattacharjee, Subrata; de Mestral, Armand Claude; Yackee, Jason Webb; Gallagher, Kevin P.; Skovgaard Poulsen, Lauge N. University College London; Smit, Hans; Nolan, Michael D.; Sourgens, Frederic G.; Peterson, Luke Eric; Van Harten, Gus; and de Gramont, Alexandre, "Chapter 25. International investment arbitration: winning, losing and why" (2011). *Contributions to Books*. 310.

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# **FDI PERSPECTIVES**

## **Issues in International Investment**

Edited by Karl P. Sauvant Lisa Sachs Ken Davies Ruben Zandvliet

Vale Columbia Center on Sustainable International Investment January 2011

## ISSN 2159-2217

Electronic copy available at: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1989606

Electronic copy available at: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1989606

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#### Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to the people who have made the *Columbia FDI Perspectives* series possible. Rex Chatterjee and Amanda Barnett both served as managing editor of the *Perspectives*, and did a wonderful job in the publication process. We also thank Zehra Gulay Kavame for her work in realizing this series.

Furthermore we would like to thank the authors, Reuven S. Avi-Yonah, Christan Bellak, Subrata Bhattacharjee, Gert Bruche, Lorenzo Cotula, Alexandre de Gramont, Armand de Mestral, David N. Fagan, Veljko Fotak, Susan D. Franck, Kevin P. Gallagher, Kathryn Gordon, José Guimon, Nathan M. Jensen, Laza Kekic, Charles Kovacs, Jürgen Kurtz, Markus Leibrecht, Edmund J. Malesky, William Megginson, Michael Mortimore, Michael D. Nolan, Terutomo Ozawa, Luke Eric Peterson, Mark E. Plotkin, Joachim Pohl, Lauge Skovgaard Poulsen, Carlos Razo, Premila Nazareth Satyanand, Hans Smit, Frédéric G. Sourgens, Anne van Aaken, Gus van Harten, and Jason Yackee for their inspiring contributions.

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*Columbia FDI Perspectives* is a peer-reviewed series. We would like to acknowledge our deep appreciation for the contributions of all the peer-reviewers, most of whom work in the field of international investment as academics or practitioners. Their insightful comments have strengthened the *Perspectives* series and this volume. We thank:

José Alvarez Harvey Arbeláez Todd Arena Anthony Baldanza Mark Barenberg Agnès Bénassy-Quéré Rudy Bogni Mary Bonar Karen Brown Glen Biglaiser Andrea Bjorklund Deborah Brautigam Rachel Brewster Marc Bungenberg Tim Büthe Stephen Canner John Cantwell Efi Chalamish Armand de Mestral Christopher Drahozal Mark Drumbl Persa Economou Lorraine Eden Thomas Eilmansberger Geza Feketekuty Veljko Fotak Torbjörn Fredriksson José María Serena Garralda Joern Griebel Jerry Haar **Robert Howse** Gary Hufbauer Mark Kantor Edward Kehoe Laza Kekic John Kline April Knill Jürgen Kurtz

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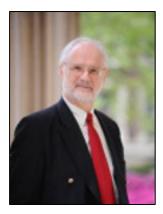
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#### Foreword

Succinct yet insightful reports are most welcome – especially in our era, distracted as it is by a rising tide of shallow commentary. For those who care about foreign direct investment (FDI), the premier reports are *Columbia FDI Perspectives*, published every few weeks by the Vale Columbia Center on Sustainable International Investment. Since the first issue (here republished as chapter 2) appeared in November 2008, the *Perspectives* have adhered to a format of about two pages, authored by a leading expert, on an FDI question of immediate interest. Consequently, there is no better way to keep abreast of changing trends and emerging themes.

Chapter 2 carries the prescient title, "The FDI recession has begun"; several issues (chapters 9-13) document the ascent and challenges of multinational enterprises based in emerging markets, particularly Brazil, India and China; chapter 6 explores farm deals in Africa with the provocative title, "Land grab or development opportunity?"; chapter 1 reveals that emerging markets would attract more than half of FDI in the midst of the Great Recession; chapters. 29 and 30 debate the arbitration featuring environmental claims between Pacific Rim LLC and El Salvador; chapter 22 surprisingly reports that general counsels often know little and care less about bilateral investment treaties.

Fortunately for FDI watchers, these issues of the *Perspectives* and many more – in fact the complete collection through 2010 – are now available in a single eBook. Corporate executives, who always have too much to read, will find this eBook essential for a quick briefing. Scholars, who always want to read more, will find the eBook a great place to start their quest. And policy officials, who want to know how the wind is blowing on hot questions, can find the direction from these *Perspectives*.

Much credit for this collection goes to the editor-in-chief, Karl P. Sauvant, the world's pioneer in gathering reliable statistical information on foreign direct investment, a lifelong observer of FDI questions and a foremost scholar of multinational enterprises. Together with his team at the Vale Columbia Center, Sauvant has done a great service to those of us who care about FDI trends and emerging themes.

Gary Clyde Hufbauer Reginald Jones Senior Fellow Peterson Institute for International Economics

#### Preface

Foreign direct investment (FDI) has become an increasingly important feature of the globalized economy in the past 20 years. Global FDI inflows more than quintupled from 1990 to 2009, rising from US\$208 billion to US\$1.1 trillion, resulting in a cumulative stock of nearly US\$18 trillion by end-2009. International investment has become roughly twice as important as trade in delivering goods and services across frontiers. The rapid growth of global FDI—which has grown faster than world GDP—reflects major underlying policy changes toward FDI in host and home countries. In addition to widespread liberalization of national investment policies, especially in developing countries and former centrally planned economies, many countries have now also adopted active FDI attraction strategies through a proliferation of investment promotion agencies at both national and sub-national levels.

The rapid growth in the importance of investment flows raises a number of important issues. There is first of all the question of the impact of FDI on host and home countries, particularly the extent to which positive effects can be enhanced and negative effects minimized – largely a policy question. The steep rise in the number of international investment agreements and disputes has generated discussion about the nature of the international investment regime. The proliferation of treaties that govern investment flows has raised questions not only about their utility and importance but also about the suitability of their content, especially (but not only) for developing countries. There are also questions about the ability of international arbitration mechanisms to resolve disputes fairly, affordably and consistently. Increased FDI flows from sovereign wealth funds and state-owned enterprises have raised concerns about the impact of such investment on national security and created a ripple effect of legislation and guidelines to govern sovereign investment. More generally, there is continuing discussion about the balance in the international investment regime between investors' rights and responsibilities on the one hand and host countries' rights and responsibilities on the other, and whether we are heading for a "rebalancing" of the regime. The discussions about these and other issues raised by the global surge in FDI take place in classrooms, boardrooms and legislatures.

In late 2008, as financial markets were crashing, the Vale Columbia Center on Sustainable International Investment launched the *Columbia FDI Perspectives*. The first *Perspective*, entitled "The FDI recession has begun", correctly forecast an FDI recession in the following year. From that first *Perspective* in late 2008 to the end of 2010, the series published thirty-three concise notes on topical FDI-related issues by diverse experts in the field. The purpose of these *Perspectives* is to inform readers about some of the important issues and trends in the contemporary debate on FDI, and to promote a wide-ranging discussion about the policy implications of these trends and events.

The topics of these *Perspectives*, while not an exhaustive list of the issues raised by the global investment regime, capture a dynamic period in the global debate on international

investment and reflect many hot topics and issues of continuing relevance in 2009-2010. Topics ranged from the implications of the financial crisis and recession for major economies, to the changing geography of the international investment regime and policy questions faced by emerging markets; from the implications of sovereign investment for national security and measures taken to restrict such investment, to policy options for countries seeking to increase inward investment flows and trying to stay competitive in a downward market; from investment in land and agriculture, to investment in extractive industries – raising important questions both for national policy and for the international investment regime.

The range of topics reflects the multifaceted, interdisciplinary and rapidly evolving nature of key issues in international investment. This compilation of the *Perspectives* offers snapshots of some of the most topical issues of 2009-2010 and an opportunity to connect the dots, drawing out the interconnections among the various themes addressed in the stand-alone *Perspectives*. It is the collection of these issues and policy considerations that, woven together, forms the changing fabric of the international investment regime. By putting these pieces together in one volume, this e-book allows a clearer picture to emerge.

Two years of these *Perspectives* capture an extraordinary range of topics. Yet some important areas remain underexposed in this volume. We expect that future *Perspectives* (to be posted on <u>www.vcc.columbia.edu</u>) will fill some of these gaps, including, for instance, by addressing the implications of the investment regime for climate change policy, the impact on human rights and mechanisms to maximize the contribution of investment to sustainable development.

The Vale Columbia Center welcomes submissions on these and all other FDI-related topics for future *Perspectives*, to share new and important developments in the field and to continue the generation and discussion of new approaches and policy recommendations to keep apace with the ever-growing importance of foreign direct investment.

Karl P. Sauvant Lisa Sachs Ken Davies Ruben Zandvliet New York, January 2011

#### List of abbreviations

- BIT bilateral investment treaty
- BRIC Brazil, Russia, India, China
- CAFTA Central America Free Trade Agreement
- FDI foreign direct investment
- FTA free trade agreement
- GDP gross domestic product
- ICSID International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
- IMF International Monetary Fund
- M&A mergers and acquisitions
- MAI Multilateral Agreement on Investment
- MNE multinational enterprise
- NAFTA North American Free Trade Agreement
- NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- NGO nongovernmental organization
- OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- R&D research and development
- SWF sovereign wealth fund
- TRIPS The Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
- UNCTAD United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- WTO World Trade Organization

## PART IV

# INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT TREATIES AND ARBITRATION

#### Chapter 25

#### International investment arbitration: winning, losing and why

### Susan D. Franck\*

We know several things about foreign investment. First, foreign investment matters, reaching US\$ 1.7 trillion in 2008. Second, we know that foreign investors have new international law rights to protect their economic interests. Third, we know that those rights are now being used. So since we now know that the international legal risk is not illusory, the real questions are: who wins, who loses and why? While various commentators have asserted a variety of answers to those questions, many have done so without reference to valid and reliable data.<sup>89</sup> In its most benign form, these observations create misinformation, but perhaps more troublingly, might also lead to policy choices based upon unrepresentative anecdotal evidence, supposition or political rhetoric. To help alleviate these possible outcomes, this Chapter reviews recent empirical research<sup>90</sup> in order to provide basic information to fundamental questions about investment treaty arbitration (ITA) to create a more accurate framework for policy choices and dispute-resolution strategies.

So who does win and lose international investment treaty arbitration? The answer is: both foreign investors and host states win and lose.<sup>91</sup> The data suggest, however, that they lose in reasonably equivalent proportions. Not including the disputes that ended with an award embodying a settlement, respondent governments, for example, won approximately 58% of the time. Meanwhile, investors won 39% of the cases.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>\*</sup> The author thanks Andrea Bjorklund, Christopher Drahozal, Mark Drumbl, Ian Laird, Clint Peinhardt, Andrea Schneider, Jason Yackee and David Zaring for their comments on an earlier draft. This chapter was first published as a *Perspective* on June 15, 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> See, e.g., Press Release, Food and Water Watch, World Bank Court Grants Power to Corporations (April 30, 2007), available at: http:// <u>www.foodandwaterwatch.org/press/releases/world-bank-court-grants-power-to-corporations-article12302007</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> See Susan D. Franck, "Empirically Evaluating Claims about Investment Treaty Arbitration," *North Carolina Law Review*, vol. 86 (2007) 1, pp. 16-23 [hereinafter *Evaluating Claims*] (describing the method of gathering data from publicly available arbitration award to identify 102 public awards from 82 disputes that resulted in 52 final determinations); Susan D. Franck, "Development and Outcomes of Investment Arbitration Awards," *Harvard International Law Review*, 50 (2009) 2, available at:

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\_id=1406714</u> [hereinafter *Development and Outcomes*] (conducting chi-square and analyses of variance tests at significance levels of  $\alpha = .05$ ).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> This Chapter defines "winning" and "losing" using quantitative measures: (a) a binary yes/no answer about whether a government breached a treaty, or (b) a scaled quantitative variable of damages awarded. Qualitative approaches might assess experiences with ITA and measure "success" differently. Subjective approaches could consider how parties, with varying levels of familiarity with ITA, and other situational differences understand success.

 $<sup>^{92}</sup>$  Approximately 4% of the cases were settlement agreements. Figures do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Winning and losing, however, is not just about whether there is a breach of the underlying investment treaty. The amount awarded is also critical. Despite the fact that investors claimed US\$ 343 million in damages on average, that is not what they received. Rather, tribunals awarded investors only US\$ 10 million on average. This US\$ 333 million difference is not insubstantial, and it may give investors a basis for some reflection about the value of arbitration – particularly given the need to pay the arbitral tribunal and the other legal costs associated with bringing a claim.<sup>93</sup>

Knowing which parties actually win and lose begs a further question – namely: why are parties successful? This question is critical given suggestions that ITA is potentially biased.<sup>94</sup> There has been some debate about whether respondents' development status or whether arbitrators come from the developing world improperly affects outcome. If these development variables cause particular results, this would raise issues about the integrity of investment treaties and arbitration.

To address this critical issue, recent research considered whether there was a reliable statistical link between the level of development and ITA outcomes. The results suggest that development variables did not generally cause particular outcomes. One study found that there was no relationship between a government's level of development and the outcome of ITA.<sup>95</sup> A second study then showed that - at a general level - outcome was not reliably associated with the development status of the respondent, the development status of the presiding arbitrator, or some interaction between those two variables. This held true for both: (1) winning or losing investment treaty arbitration, and (2) amounts tribunals awarded against governments. Follow-up tests in the same study showed, however, that there were two statistically significant effects – found in one sub-set of potentially non-representative cases – that suggest arbitration must be used carefully in certain situations. Only where the presiding arbitrator was from a middle income country, the data showed that high income countries received statistically lower awards than: (1) upper-middle income respondents, and (2) low income respondents. Nevertheless, in other circumstances involving middle income presiding arbitrators or all cases involving presiding arbitrators from high-income countries, the amounts awarded were statistically equivalent.<sup>96</sup> In other words, in limited circumstances, tribunals with presiding arbitrators from middle-income countries made awards that tended to favor developed countries and were different than one might expect from chance alone.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Franck, *Empirically Evaluating Claims*, op. cit., pp. 49-50, 64.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> See e.g., Third World Network, *Finance: Bias Seen in International Dispute Arbiters*, June 22, 2007 (JUN07/02), available at: <u>http://www.twnside.org.sg/title2/finance/twninfofinance060702.htm</u> ("A little-known entity closely affiliated with the World Bank that mediates disputes between sovereign nations and foreign investors appears to be skewed toward corporations in Northern countries"); Gus van Harten and Martin Loughlin, "Investment Treaty Arbitration as a Species of Global Administrative Law," *European Journal of International Law*, 17 (2006). ("No matter how well arbitrators do their job, an award will always be open to an apprehension of an institutional bias against the respondent state").

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Susan D. Franck, "Considering Recalibration of International Investment Agreements: Empirical Insights," in José E. Alvarez, Karl P. Sauvant and Kamil Gerard Ahmed, eds., *The Evolving International Investment Regime: Expectations, Realities, Options* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
<sup>96</sup> Franck, *Development and Outcomes*, op. cit.

The overall results cast doubt on the arguments that: (1) ITA is the equivalent of tossing a two-headed coin to decide disputes, (2) the developing world is treated unfairly in ITA, and (3) arbitrators from the developed and developing world decide cases differently. The evidence creates a basis for cautious optimism about the integrity of ITA and suggests radical overhaul, rejection or rebalancing of these procedural rights is not necessarily warranted. While the follow-up tests and limitations of the data suggest optimism must be tempered properly, a sensible approach would involve creating targeted solutions to address particularized problems and enacting targeted reforms to redress perceived concerns about the international investment regime.

Ultimately, the data suggest that investors and governments won and lost in relatively equal measure, but governments won a bit more. While the data show also that, when they did win, investors ended up with substantially less than they requested. Moreover, the data do not establish that a respondent's development status was a reason why investors or governments were successful in pursuing arbitration. This suggests that why a party wins or loses arbitration may ultimately have more to do with factors other than development, such as the merits of a particular claim or defense. Other factors may also be linked with outcome, such as the business sector involved, the amounts claimed or the type of host state government, but they may not necessarily cause particular results. This suggests that although there are risks in pursing arbitration, there will be times when it is warranted and, ultimately, parties should think carefully about why arbitration is in their interests.