

Review of the *AJIL Unbound* symposium: Global Labs of International Commercial Dispute Resolution

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This post reviews the symposium issue of the *American Journal of International Law Unbound* on “Global Labs of International Commercial Dispute Resolution”. This issue includes an introduction and six essays explaining the current changes and developments in the global landscape for settling international commercial disputes. The multifarious perspectives have been discussed to show tendencies and challenges ahead.

Overall, the *AJIL Unbound* special issue is, without doubt, one of the most impactful contributions on changes in international commercial dispute resolution landscape. It is a successful attempt and a fascinating analysis of recent developments in this field. This is certainly a must-read for anyone interested in reshaping the landscape of dispute resolution worldwide. Beyond the theoretical context, it includes many practical aspects and provides new insight into the prospects of its development and potential challenges for the future. I highly recommend it not only to the researchers on international commercial dispute resolution, but also to legal practitioners—lawyers, arbitrators, and mediators among others. Below, I have outlined each of the symposium’s contributions.

As mentioned in the introduction by Anthea Roberts [1], instead of the previous bipolarity and centralization around New York and London, international commercial dispute resolution is facing a new process of decentralization and rebalancing. Today, we are all witnessing the adaptation to a new reality and the COVID-19 pandemic is speeding up the entire process. “New legal hubs” and “one-stop shops” for dispute resolution are springing up like mushrooms in Eurasia and beyond. Therefore, due to the competitiveness between the “old” and “new” dispute resolution institutions, these new bodies are more innovative and thus are expected to attract more and more interested parties.

The main aim of this symposium was to outline the new challenges of the international commercial dispute resolution mechanism around the world. New dispute resolution centres not only influence on the current landscape, but also they offer “fresh insight” in this field.

The first essay by Pamela K. Bookman and Matthew S. Erie, entitled “Experimenting with International Commercial Dispute Resolution” [2], pays attention to the new phenomena on emerging “new legal hubs” (NLHs), international commercial courts and arbitral courts worldwide. This new tendency has recently appeared in China, Singapore, Dubai, Kazakhstan and Hong Kong. All of these initiatives affect the international commercial dispute settlement landscape and increase the competitiveness among these centres. Those centres bravely take advantage of “lawtech” and challenge themselves. As a result, they are experimenting with legal reforms and some institutional design to attract more interested parties and to become well-known platforms providing high-quality dispute resolution services. The Authors set forth the challenges and threats that may exist in this respect. They also provide an insightful analysis of the impact of these new initiatives on the international commercial dispute resolution, international commercial law, and the geopolitics of disputes.

Further, Giesela Rühl’s contribution focuses on “The Resolution of International Commercial Disputes – What Role (if any) for Continental Europe?” [3]. The author pays attention to the Netherlands, which took the initiative to establish a new court exclusively devoted to international cases, and Germany and France, which took more skeptical efforts to establish international commercial chambers both before and after the Brexit referendum in 2016. Rühl believes that the far-reaching reform should be implemented at the European level. Therefore, she advocates the establishment of a common European Commercial Court. This seems to be an interesting approach that would certainly strengthen Europe’s position in the global dispute resolution landscape.

Julien Chaisse and Xu Qian outline the importance and key features of the recently established China International Commercial Court (CICC) [4]. Given its foundation, this court should operate as a “one-stop shop” combining litigation, arbitration, and mediation. It is dedicated to solving Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) related disputes. The Authors point out that this court is much more akin to a national court than a genuine international court. Therefore, they challenge its importance with respect to BRI-related disputes and attempt to determine

whether the Court will play a significant role in the international dispute settlement landscape. These considerations are especially important given the primary sources in Chinese which bring the reader closer to Chinese legislation.

The following essay, by Wang Guiguo and Rajesh Sharma, addresses the International Commercial Dispute Prevention and Settlement Organization (ICDPASO) established in 2019 [5]. It is another global legal hub that offers “one-stop” services in China. At first glance, the ICDPASO seems to be an interesting body with an Asian flavour, however, the Authors shine a spotlight on some practical challenges ahead and its limited jurisdiction. This body differs significantly from the aforementioned CICC. Whether the ICDPASO will be a game-changer in the BRI-related disputes and will influence importantly on international dispute resolution landscape seems to be a melody of the future. It is ultimately too soon to answer those questions now, but it is certainly worthwhile to watch this institution.

Further, S.I. Strong brings attention to the actual changes in international commercial courts in the US and Australia [6]. Although Continental Europe, the Middle East, and Asia try to reshape the current international dispute resolution landscape, common law jurisdictions, such as the United States and Australia, are less inclined to changes in establishing international courts specialized in cross-border disputes. Compared to the US, Strong believes that Australia has made more advanced efforts to establish such courts. Nevertheless, aside from the traditional international commercial courts, the newly emerging international commercial mediation services are gaining popularity, most notably due to the entry into force of the UN Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation (the Singapore Convention).

Last but not least, Victoria Sahani contribution’s outlines third-party funding regulation [7]. While third-party funding remains a controversial issue in litigation or arbitration, whether domestic or international, it is becoming much more popular globally. There are already over sixty countries experimenting with regulatory questions about third-party funding. In this case, we also deal with some “laboratories” that try out different methods of regulation.

The entire symposium is available [here](#).