

Alexander Thompson

CALL: 2014

✉ athompson@twentyessex.com;
yellowteam@twentyessex.com

☎ +44 (0)20 7842 1200

Languages: French (proficient); Italian (proficient); Spanish (proficient)



Overview

Alexander has a wide and varying practice that encompasses the fields of commercial law, international arbitration, private and public international law, as well as public and EU law.

Alex's commercial practice spans a broad range of matters in the business world, including civil fraud, finance, intellectual property, shipping and international trade, joint ventures, as well as general corporate disputes. He is listed in the most recent The Legal 500 directories.

In addition to his commercial practice, Alexander has particular specialisms in private international law and public international law, including the law of state immunity, diplomatic immunity, as well as disputes involving foreign affairs in the English Courts. He writes and speaks in various fora in these areas and is the co-author (with Professor Andrew Dickinson of Oxford University) of The State Immunity Act 1978 (OUP, 2025), the first comprehensive commentary on the principal legislation governing the law of state immunity and related topics in the United Kingdom. Alexander also has relevant experience in EU law and its application in the UK post-Brexit.

Alexander acts as sole counsel or as part of larger teams for governments, State entities, corporates, and individuals, and has been instructed at all levels of the judicial hierarchy, including the High Court (King's Bench Division, Commercial Court, and Chancery Division), Court of Appeal, Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, and the Court of Justice of the European Union. He also regularly appears in major international arbitrations in London and other

Professional memberships

- Commercial Bar Association
- Young Fraud Lawyers Association

Education

- BPP Law School: Bar Professional Training Course, Very Competent (2014)
- University of Oxford, Lincoln College: Bachelor of Civil Laws, Distinction (2013)
- University of Cambridge, Trinity College: BA (Hons) in Law, Double First Class (2012)

Major awards/prizes/scholarships

Scholarships

- Lord Mansfield Scholarship, Lincoln's Inn (2013)
- Hardwicke Entrance Scholarship, Lincoln's Inn (2013)
- Crewe Scholarship, Lincoln College, University of Oxford (2012)

seats worldwide, including under the ICC and LCIA Rules.

Alexander holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in Law from the University of Cambridge (Double First) and the University of Oxford (Distinction).

- Travelling Studentship, Trinity College, University of Cambridge (2012)
- Whittaker Scholarship, Trinity College, University of Cambridge (2012)

Prizes

- Norton Rose Prize for Commercial Law, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge (2012)
- Lizette Bentwich Prizes for outstanding performance in Tripos, Trinity College, University of Cambridge (2010, 2011, 2012)
- College Council Awards for outstanding performance in Tripos, Trinity College, University of Cambridge (2010, 2011, 2012)
- FW Maitland Prize for outstanding performance in the Constitutional Law Tripos, Trinity College, University of Cambridge (2010)

Public international law

Alexander acts in a range of public international law disputes and has particular specialism in the fields of jurisdictional immunities (including diplomatic immunity, state immunity, and head of state immunity) and related areas of public international law (including issues of justiciability and Crown or foreign act of state). Alex also advises and takes instructions in other areas of public international law, in particular in relation to investment treaty arbitrations.

Examples of recent cases include:

- *The London Steam-Ship Owners' Mutual Insurance Association Ltd v The Kingdom of Spain and the French State (The MT Prestige)* – Alexander has acted for over 8 years as junior counsel (in a counsel team led by Christopher Hancock KC and Thomas de la Mare KC of Blackstone Chambers) for the P&I insurer in this long-running dispute against the Kingdom of Spain and the French State in relation to claims for c USD 1 billion arising out of one of the largest oil spills in recent times. The case spans a number of issues in private international law, arbitration and state immunity. There have been a number of arbitrations and proceedings before the Commercial Court, the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, the UN Human Rights Committee, and the CJEU in Luxembourg: see [2020] 1 WLR 1538 (Teare J); [2020] 1 WLR 4943 (Henshaw J); [2020] 1 WLR 5279 (Butcher J); [2022] 1 WLR 3434 (CA); [2020] EWHC 3540 (Comm) (Butcher J); [2022] 4 WLR 39 (CA); [2022] 1 WLR 99 (Butcher J); Case C-700/20 [2023] 1 WLR 1 (CJEU); [2024] 1 WLR 2331 (Butcher J); [2024] 2 All ER (Comm) 175 (Butcher J); [2025] 1 WLR 3011 (CA). An appeal is due to be heard before the Supreme Court in June 2026.
- *UK P&I Club NV v Venezuela (The Resolute)* [2022] 1 WLR 4856 (Sir Ross Cranston); [2024] KB 399: Alexander acted as junior counsel (in a counsel team led by David Lewis KC) for the P&I insurer in a substantial arbitration against the Republic of Venezuela relating to claims for c. €425 million brought in Venezuela and Curaçao arising from the loss of the Naiguatà, a Venezuelan navy patrol vessel, following an armed altercation at sea with the Resolute, an ice-classed cruise vessel, in international waters off the coast of Venezuela in 2016. Alexander also acted in related court proceedings in England concerning the availability of injunctive relief against States.
- *Corinna Zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Sayn v His Majesty Juan Carlos Alfonso Víctor María De Borbón y Borbón* [2023] EWHC 2478 (KB). Alexander acted (in a counsel team led by Adam Wolanski KC of 5 Raymond Buildings) for His Majesty Juan Carlos I, the King Emeritus of Spain, in relation to claims under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Alexander was instructed in a four-day hearing in the High Court in respect of substantial interlocutory applications and appeared as advocate on the issues of territorial jurisdiction and state immunity.
- *Confidential arbitration and court proceedings* (2023-ongoing): Alexander is instructed in relation to a substantial investment arbitration and related court proceedings against a foreign State.

- *Confidential Arbitration* (2025-ongoing): Alexander is instructed (with Sudanshu Swaroop KC) in a substantial arbitration against a foreign State under the ICC Rules.
- *Confidential matter* (2025): Alexander was instructed in relation to issues of diplomatic immunity for an official of an overseas Commonwealth State with a High Commission in the UK.

Maritime law and international trade

Alex has broad experience in a range of disputes in shipping and maritime law and has been listed (including as a “Rising Star”) in this field in the Legal 500 directories. He acts for a wide range of parties in disputes involving dry shipping, commodities disputes, shipbuilding, ship finance, limitation proceedings, and marine insurance (in particular P&I insurance). In recent years, Alex has acted in a number of very substantial disputes marine insurance disputes involving sovereign States and is particularly well placed to act in maritime disputes involving States or related entities.

Recent cases include:

- *The Prestige* – see above.
- *The Resolute* – see above.
- *Re two arbitrations* (2023-date) – Alex is instructed as sole counsel in a substantial dry shipping dispute for various losses arising from the confiscation of an oil tanker by the Saudi Authorities in international waters due to alleged violations of UN sanctions whilst shipping oil to Yemen.
- *Re an arbitration* (2020-2022) – Alex was instructed as sole counsel in a dry shipping dispute for a substantial demurrage claim arising out of delays in Jordan caused by the wetting of cargo.
- *Re four concurrent arbitrations* (2020) – Alex acted (with Julian Kenny KC) in for concurrent arbitrations worth c US\$40 million in a dispute concerning the termination of lease finance arrangements over four very large crude oil carriers (VLCCs) following the restructuring of a substantial shipping business and its flotation on a public exchange.
- *Re an arbitration* (2021) – Alex acted as sole counsel in an LCIA arbitration for c €30 million in relation to claims of fraud and breach of contract arising out of a sale of cattle from Spain to Turkey.
- *NTS v Erushi* (2021) – Alex acted (with Julian Kenny KC) on an application for an urgent freezing injunction and disclosure order to secure payment of a substantial arbitration award, including orders restricting the sale of certain vessels in Vietnam.
- *Re an arbitration* (2020) – Alex acted as sole counsel in claims for charterers for an indemnity for up to US\$6 million in respect of tax liabilities incurred from trading the vessel in Mexican waters.
- *A v B* – acted (with Thomas Raphael KC) in section 68 and 69 challenges to award in an international commodities dispute (defeated at permission stage).
- *Re two arbitrations* (2020) – Alex acted (with Timothy Hill KC) in an international commodities dispute arising out of the declaration of a public emergency in certain Russian ports.
- *Re an arbitration* (2019) – Alex acted as sole counsel in an international trade arbitration relating to the sale of petroleum coke in Latin America.

Civil fraud and commercial disputes

- *Pan-NoX litigation*: Alexander is acting as junior counsel (in a counsel team led by Leigh-Ann Mulcahy KC of Fountain Court Chambers) for the Vauxhall defendants in relation to the *Pan-NoX* litigation. One of the largest group litigations in history in the UK, the proceedings concern substantial claims by hundreds of thousands of claimants against various of the world’s car manufacturers in relation to allegations that relevant vehicles placed on the UK market contain ‘prohibited defeat devices’ under applicable EU and UK emissions legislation.
- *Confidential arbitration and court proceedings* (2023-ongoing): Alexander is instructed in relation to a substantial investment arbitration and related court proceedings against a foreign State.
- *Confidential Arbitration* (2025-ongoing): Alexander is instructed (with Sudanshu Swaroop KC) in a substantial arbitration against a foreign State under the ICC Rules.
- *Deutsche Bank AG v Alexander Vik* – Alex acted for Mr Vik (in a counsel team led by Duncan Matthews KC) at various stages of committal proceedings brought against Mr Vik arising out of Deutsche Bank’s attempts to enforce a c US\$250 million judgment against his trading company.
- *Jakob v Mazur* – Alex acted (with Blair Leahy KC) for two Russian defendants in a substantial action in the Chancery Division, including trust claims over property situate in England, claims for freezing injunctions and relief under s 423 of the Insolvency Act 1986 (proceedings stayed before trial).

- *The Algerian Space Agency v Wisscom* – Alex acted (with Noah Rubbins KC of Freshfields Paris) for a UK-based satellite operator in relation to proceedings to resist the enforcement in England of a substantial Algerian judgment alleged to have been procured in breach of an ICC Swiss arbitration agreement (matter settled prior to hearing).

Intellectual property

Alex has developed an impressive practice in recent years in a variety of intellectual property disputes, in particular in cases involving an international element and with complex issues of private international law. He has experience of a broad range of intellectual property, including patents, trademarks, copyright, as well as claims for passing off and breach of confidence. He takes instructions in appropriate cases both as sole counsel and as junior to specialist Leading Counsel. He has acted in disputes across the pharmaceutical, telecommunications, sport, and music and entertainment industries.

Recent cases include:

- *Getty Images Inc v Stability AI* – Alex is instructed (on a Counsel team led by Lindsay Lane KC of 8 New Square) for Getty Images in relation to high-profile proceedings in England and the United States concerning breach of copyright and other rights in databases of images alleged to have been “scraped” without consent for the purposes of training Stable Diffusion, an open-source model which produces AI-generated art.
- *Telecoms Provider v Telecoms Provider* – Alexander was instructed as junior counsel (with Thomas Raphael KC) in relation to a substantial global telecoms dispute involving infringement of SEPs in the telecommunications sector and FRAND licensing (matter confidential, settled prior to litigation).
- *Lifestyle Equities CV et anor v Hornby Street et ors* [2022] EWCA Civ 51 – Alex was instructed (with Lindsay Lane KC of 8 New Square) in a dispute between the Beverley Hills Polo Club and the Santa Monica Polo Club involving claims for trade mark infringement and passing off. Alexander was instructed for the purposes of an appeal to the Supreme Court on jurisdictional aspects of the litigation involving related proceedings in California (matter settled).
- *TOT v Vodafone* [2021] EWHC 46 (Pat) – Alex was instructed (with Thomas Raphael KC) for Vodafone in its appeal to the Court of Appeal in a jurisdictional dispute concerning related claims for patent infringement and breach of confidence in Spain and England. The litigation raised complex issues concerning 3G mobile phone technology (settled day before appeal).
- *Ablynx NV et anor v Unilever* [2019] EWCH 792 (Pat); [2019] EWCA Civ 2191 – Alex acted (with Lindsay Lane KC of 8 New Square) for the Unilever defendants in a substantial jurisdiction challenge concerning related international claims for patent infringement in the Netherlands, Belgium, and England. The litigation concerned a dispute involving pharmaceutical products based on cameloid-derived proteins. Alex acted in the High Court and Court of Appeal. He was also instructed for an appeal to the Supreme Court (permission granted, settled prior to hearing).
- *MML v Universal* (2019) – Alex was instructed as sole counsel for one of London’s leading recording studios in a claim in the Chancery Division against Universal arising out of a joint venture to produce a series of live music programmes (matter ended prior to trial).

Recommendations

Alex is very user-friendly and down to earth with no ego or pomposity. He rolls up his sleeves and gets stuck in and is a real team player [The Legal 500, 2026](#)

A joy to work with and a fierce intellect. [The Legal 500 UK Bar 2023](#)

Incredibly bright. [The Legal 500 UK Bar 2022](#)