BURDEN OF PROOF
AND RELATED ISSUES
A Study on Evidence Before International Tribunals

by

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# SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOTE BY THE SERIES EDITOR</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTENTS</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>xxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part One: Concept and Generalities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. CONCEPT AND GENERALITIES</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part Two: General Aspects of the Burden of Proof</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. CLAIMANT'S DUTY: ACTORI INCUMBIT PROBATIO</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. COLLABORATION OF PARTIES: RESPONDENT'S ROLE</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. AUTHORITY AND DUTIES OF INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS WITH RESPECT TO THE BURDEN OF PROOF</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. RULES OF THE BURDEN OF PROOF AS PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part Three: Particular Issues Concerning the Burden of Proof</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. PRESUMPTIONS AND BURDEN OF PROOF</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE COLLABORATION OF PARTIES</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. STANDARD OF PROOF</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CASES</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEX</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS

NOTE BY THE SERIES EDITOR ................................................................. v
FOREWORD ............................................................................................. vii
PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................... ix
SUMMARY OF CONTENTS ....................................................................... x
CONTENTS ............................................................................................... xi
ABBREVIATIONS .................................................................................... xxi

Part One: Concept and Generalities

I. CONCEPT AND GENERALITIES ............................................................. 3
   A. Introduction ...................................................................................... 3
      1. THE NATURE OF THE RULES IN INTERNATIONAL PROCEDURE ... 3
      2. INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY .......... 6
      3. EMPHASIS ON THE PRACTICE OF THE IRAN-UNITED STATES CLAIMS TRIBUNAL ................................................................. 14
      4. ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THE PRESENT STUDY .............................. 19
   B. Conceptual and Methodological Problems ....................................... 21
      1. TERMINOLOGY: A GENERAL PROBLEM IN INTERNATIONAL LAW ................................................................. 21
      2. THE CONCEPT OF BURDEN OF PROOF IN COMMON LAW AND CIVIL LAW COUNTRIES ................................................................. 23
         a. Common Law Countries ............................................................... 24
         b. Civil Law Countries .................................................................... 26
      3. THE NATURE OF ‘BURDEN OF PROOF’ IN INTERNATIONAL PROCEDURE ................................................................. 27
C. 'Burden of Proof' and 'Presentation of Pleadings and Evidence' .......... 30
   1. THE APPROACH OF COMMON LAW COUNTRIES DISTINGUISHED .......... 31
   2. BURDEN OF EVIDENCE IN INTERNATIONAL PROCEDURE .................. 33
   3. DISTINCTION BETWEEN 'BURDEN OF PROOF' AND
      'PRESENTATION OF PLEADINGS AND EVIDENCE' ....................... 35
D. The Scope of 'Burden of Proof' ........................................... 39
   1. 'PLEADINGS' AND 'BURDEN OF PROOF' .................................. 39
   2. EXTENT OF APPLICABILITY OF JURA NOVIT CURIA ....................... 42

Part Two: General Aspects of the Burden of Proof

II. CLAIMANT'S DUTY: ACTORI INCUMBIT PROBATIO .......................... 53
Introductory Remarks .............................................................. 53
A. Municipal Law ................................................................. 54
   1. ROMAN LAW ................................................................. 54
   2. ISLAMIC LAW ............................................................... 55
   3. COMMON LAW COUNTRIES ................................................. 57
   4. CIVIL LAW COUNTRIES ................................................... 60
   5. PRIZE COURTS ............................................................. 64
B. Practice of International Tribunals ......................................... 66
   1. ITALIAN CONCILIATION COMMISSIONS .................................. 66
      a. Introductory Remarks .................................................. 66
      b. Italian-United States Conciliation Commission ..................... 67
      c. Franco-Italian Conciliation Commission ............................. 68
      d. Anglo-Italian Conciliation Commission (1952) ...................... 70
   2. MEXICAN CLAIMS COMMISSIONS ......................................... 71
a. Introductory Remarks ........................................... 71
b. Practice of the Commissions .................................. 72

3. THE PERMANENT COURT OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE ....... 75
   a. General Observation ........................................ 75
   b. The Eastern Greenland Case .................................. 76
   c. The Lotus Case .............................................. 77
   d. The Mavrommatis Concessions ............................... 79
   e. The German Interests in Polish Upper Silesia Cases ....... 81

4. THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE ........................ 83
   a. The Corfu Channel Case .................................... 86
   b. The Colombian-Peruvian Asylum Case ....................... 90
   c. The Minquiers and Ecrehos Case (1953) ..................... 93
   d. Other Cases ................................................ 94

5. EXAMPLES FROM AD-HOC ARBITRAL TRIBUNALS .................. 96
   a. In the Matter of the Diverted Cargoes .................... 96
   b. The Ambatielos Claim ....................................... 97
      (1) Summary ................................................ 97
      (2) Burden of Proof on the Question of the Effectiveness of
           Non-Exhausted Local Remedies ............................. 98

6. IRAN-UNITED STATES CLAIMS TRIBUNAL .......................... 102
   a. Tribunal Rules ............................................. 102
   b. General Practice of the Tribunal With Respect to the Burden of
      Proof .................................................. 105
      (1) Burden of Proof in Claims ............................. 107
      (2) Burden of Proof in Defence ............................ 111
(3) Separate Opinions .................................................. 112

C. Summary of the Chapter ............................................. 116

III. COLLABORATION OF PARTIES: RESPONDENT’S ROLE ................................. 119

A. The Concept ............................................................. 119

B. International Rules and Conventions .................................. 122

1. EXAMPLES ............................................................... 122
   a. The Hague Conventions .............................................. 122
   b. The Permanent Court of Arbitration .................................. 123
   c. The Rules Prepared by the International Law Commission .......... 125
   d. Regulations and Rules of the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) .................. 125

2. IMPACT OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LITIGATION AND CONCILIATION .................. 127

C. International Precedents .................................................. 128

1. THE MEXICAN CLAIMS COMMISSIONS ..................................... 129
2. THE ILO COMMISSION ................................................... 131
3. THE CORFU CHANNEL CASE ............................................. 132
4. THE RANN OF KUTCH CASE .............................................. 133
5. COMMENTS ................................................................. 134

D. Limits ............................................................. 136

1. TIME ................................................................. 136

2. WHETHER THE DUTY OF COLLABORATION INCLUDES DISCOVERY ......................... 138
3. THIRD PARTIES AND COLLABORATION ..................................... 145
4. LUMP SUM SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS ..................................... 147
IV. AUTHORITY AND DUTIES OF INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS WITH RESPECT TO THE BURDEN OF PROOF .............................................. 153

A. Relevance ........................................................................ 153

1. THE AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF EVIDENCE VIS-A-VIS THE PRINCIPLE OF PROHIBITION OF JUDGES FROM ACQUIRING EVIDENCE ................................................. 153

2. THE SCOPE OF RELEVANCY ............................................ 155

3. THE EFFECT OF THE AUTHORITY OF INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS ON THE BURDEN OF PROOF .............................................. 156

B. Authority to Schedule the Presentation of Pleadings and Evidence .............................................. 156

1. NUMBER AND ORDER OF FILING OF PLEADINGS ................. 157

2. NUMBER AND ORDER OF PRESENTATION OF EVIDENCE .......... 160

3. ORAL PROCEEDINGS ..................................................... 162

4. AUTHORITY TO ACCEPT OR REFUSE FURTHER PLEADINGS AND EVIDENCE .............................................. 164

C. Measures Through Which International Tribunals Apply Their Fact-Finding Power .............................................. 165

1. THE GENERAL AUTHORITY OF INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS .... 165

2. SPECIFIC MEASURES ..................................................... 168

3. LIMITS .................................................................. 174

D. Authority of International Tribunals to Determine Whether the Burden of Proof is Fulfilled .............................................. 176

1. THE AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE THE PARTY WHICH CARRIES THE BURDEN OF PROOF .............................................. 176

2. ADMISSIBILITY AND EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE ................. 180

3. INSTANCES OF INADMISSIBILITY ...................................... 186
a. Late Filed Evidence ........................................... 186
   (1) Article 56 of The ICJ Rules .............................. 187
   (2) Practice of the Iran-U.S. Claims Tribunal .......... 188
   (3) The Starrett Case ....................................... 191
   (4) The Shinto Case ......................................... 195
b. Evidence Obtained Through Settlement Negotiations ........ 196
   (1) The Factory at Chorzow and Frontier Dispute Cases . 198
   (2) The Pepsico Case ....................................... 199
   (3) The ISS Case ........................................... 200
   (4) The Westinghouse Case .................................. 201
c. Evidence Obtained by Violation of International Law .... 203
d. Time-Barred Evidence ....................................... 209
   (1) Evidence of Facts Occurring After the Submission of Evidence by Parties ......................... 210
   (2) Evidence of the Events Occurring Subsequent to Expropriation .................................... 210
4. WEIGHT .................................................... 212
   a. Probative Value of Statements of Parties ............... 214
   b. Non-Applicability of the 'Best Evidence' Rule ......... 217
5. THE AUTHORITY TO DECIDE THE STANDARD OF PROOF .... 220

V. RULES OF THE BURDEN OF PROOF AS PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW .......................... 221
A. General Rules of the Burden of Proof ..................... 221
   1. THE RULE ACTORI INCUMBIT PROBATIO ............... 221
   2. THE RULE OF COLLABORATION OF PARTIES IN MATTERS OF
3. THE AUTHORITY OF INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS IN MATTERS RELATED TO EVIDENCE ........................................... 223

B. Whether the General Rules on the Burden of Proof Are to Be Considered as Principles of International Procedure ........................................... 224

1. ARGUMENTS AGAINST AND IN FAVOUR OF THE RULE ACTORI INCUMBIT PROBATIO ........................................... 224
   a. Difficulty in Distinguishing Between Claimant and Respondent .... 225
   b. Simultaneous Submissions ........................................... 227
   c. Silence of the Fundamental Texts of International Tribunals with Regard to the Burden of Proof ........................................... 228
   d. Non-technical Nature of the Rules of Evidence in International Procedure ........................................... 229
   e. The Duty of Parties in International Proceedings to Co-operate With International Tribunals to Establish the Truth in a Case ............. 230

2. THE CAUSE OF THE MISUNDERSTANDING: THE PARKER CASE .... 230
   a. Summary of the Parker Case ........................................... 231
   b. The Rule of Actori Incumbit Probatio ........................................... 232
   c. The Rule of Collaboration of Parties ........................................... 233

3. EQUILIBRIUM AS THE MAIN RULE ........................................... 234

Part Three: Particular Issues Concerning the Burden of Proof

VI. PRESUMPTIONS AND BURDEN OF PROOF ........................................... 239
   A. General Remarks ........................................... 239
   B. Legal Presumptions in International Procedure ........................................... 242
      1. APPLICABILITY ........................................... 242
         a. The Existence of Legal Presumptions ........................................... 242
b. Sources of Legal Presumptions ........................................ 245

2. EFFECTS ON THE BURDEN OF PROOF .................................. 251

3. IRREBUTTABLE PRESUMPTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL
   PROCEDURE .......................................................... 255

C. Judicial Presumptions or Inferences in International Procedure .......................... 259
   1. ADMISSIBILITY .................................................. 260
   2. EFFECTS ON THE BURDEN OF PROOF ......................... 266

D. Summary ............................................................... 273

VII. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE COLLABORATION OF PARTIES .... 275
   A. Practice of the Iran-U.S. Claims Tribunal ............................ 275
      1. INTRODUCTION .................................................. 275
      2. THE SHASHOUA CASE ........................................... 276
      3. THE EMBASSY CASES ........................................... 285
         a. The Request for Production of Evidence ...................... 285
         b. The Claimants' Response ..................................... 287
         c. Further Memorials of The United States ..................... 288
         d. The Tribunal's Pronouncement ................................ 289
         e. Cases Nos. B-4 and B-44 ..................................... 291
      4. CASE NO. B-55 .................................................... 292
      5. THE LEVITT CASE ................................................ 294
         a. Facts .......................................................... 294
         b. The Parties' Contentions ..................................... 298
         c. The Tribunal's Findings ..................................... 298
      6. THE GEORGE EDWARDS CASE ..................................... 302
7. THE INA CORPORATION CASE ........................................... 303
8. THE SHINTO CASE ....................................................... 305

B. Sanctions For Non-Production of Evidence .................................. 308
   1. GENERAL REMARKS .................................................. 308
   2. DIFFERENT APPROACHES ............................................ 310
      a. Ignoring the Failure of a Party .................................. 310
      b. Taking Formal Note .................................................. 311
      c. Drawing Negative or Adverse Inference .......................... 313
         (1) The Rule ......................................................... 313
         (2) Limits and Conditions for Drawing Adverse Inferences ...... 318

VIII. STANDARD OF PROOF .................................................. 323
   A. Introductory Remarks .................................................. 323
   B. Prima Facie Evidence .................................................. 326
      1. WHAT IS PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE? ................................. 326
      2. IS PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE AN ACCEPTABLE STANDARD OF PROOF? .................................................. 332
         a. Effect of Prima Facie Evidence .................................. 332
         b. Effect on Jurisdiction Distinguished ............................. 340
   C. Different Standards of Proof ......................................... 343
      1. PROOF BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT ............................. 344
      2. PREPONDERANCE OF EVIDENCE ................................... 347
      3. DISCRETION OF THE TRIBUNAL ................................... 350
   D. Effects of Difficulties .................................................. 352
      1. MEASURES USUALLY APPLIED BY INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS .. 352
CHAPTER V

RULES OF THE BURDEN OF PROOF AS PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

A. General Rules of the Burden of Proof

As discussed in Chapters II to IV above, in international procedure the general aspects of the burden of proof are related to the principal actors of all judicial or arbitral proceedings, i.e., the claimant, the respondent, and the tribunal. On that basis, three general rules, each reflecting a particular aspect of the burden of proof, can be identified in international procedure. As will be discussed below, these general rules mainly concern the allocation of the burden of proof between the parties, including collaboration of parties in matters of evidence, and the contribution of international tribunals in that regard. The issues dealt with in this Chapter include identifying those general rules more expressly, and the question as to which of the rules applied by international tribunals with respect to the burden of proof may be characterized as principles of international procedure.

1. THE RULE ACTORI INCUMBIT PROBATIO

This is the broad basic rule of the burden of proof. According to this rule, which is rooted in Roman law and is applied in different legal systems of municipal law as well as in international procedure, the burden of proof, as a point of departure, is on the “actori.” However, the “actori” is the party who alleges a fact, not necessarily always the party who instituted the proceedings. That definition of “actori” provides the rule actori incumbit probatio with enough flexibility for its smooth application in the complex international litigations of the world today. In international procedure, the rule actori incumbit probatio is not used in the sense of its old rigid Roman law concept, but rather as a comprehensive rule according to which each party has to prove its claim or defence.¹

¹ See, e.g., Christian Dieryck, “Procédure et moyens de preuve dans l’arbitrage commercial (continued...)
No doubt, there are differences between the methods, modes, standards, and quantum of proof acceptable in different municipal systems, as well as between municipal and international proceedings. As a general principle, however, it is necessary for the party who alleges a fact to prove the truth of its claim, if not accepted by the other party, before the authority which is charged with the duty to adjudicate the dispute. This rule is so well-founded in municipal law that it could easily be concluded to be a generally accepted principle of municipal law which, in accordance with Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, is a source of international law.\(^2\) Indeed, the

\[\text{(...continued)}\]


"The broad basic rule of burden of proof adopted, in general, by international tribunals resembles the civil law rule and may be simply stated: that the burden of proof rests upon him who asserts the affirmative of a proposition that is not substantiated will result in a decision adverse to his contention."


"Many courts apply the maxim ei incumbit probatio, qui dicit, non qui negat: It is for the party who asserts a proposition or a fact to prove it, regardless of whether the party is nominally applicant or respondent." (Footnote omitted.);


practice of international tribunals, in line with that of national fora, shows a constant application of the same concept in cases before them.³

2. THE RULE OF COLLABORATION OF PARTIES IN MATTERS OF EVIDENCE

As explained in Chapter III, the second general rule of the burden of proof concerns the duty of parties in international proceedings to co-operate in order to place the facts related to the disputed issues before an international tribunal. This is a general obligation on parties which is derived from the idea of peaceful settlement of disputes. It assists international tribunals in their efforts to establish the truth of a disputed matter on the basis of all material facts.

While the limits and other details regarding this rule may be subject to argument, the concept itself does not seem to have ever been challenged. In fact the necessity of collaboration of parties has been relied upon in order to justify the flexible application of the rule *actori incumbit probatio*.

In Chapter III examples were mentioned from State practice, international precedents and legal writers' opinion in support of the existence and applicability of this rule in international procedure. On that basis, it is fair to conclude that as a supplement to the rule *actori incumbit probatio* which emphasizes the claimant's role, the rule of collaboration of parties, with emphasis on the respondent's role, is a principle of international procedure.

3. THE AUTHORITY OF INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS IN MATTERS RELATED TO EVIDENCE

In international proceedings, judges and arbitrators are to take an active role in the proceedings in matters related to evidence, subject to the condition that it does not affect their impartiality or the important principle of equality of the parties before

³ See, generally, *supra* Ch. II.