

2021

THE AMERICAN LAWYER

TRAILBLAZERS

NORTHEAST

DAVID PRESSMAN
JENNER & BLOCK



What was the genesis of the path that has made you a trailblazer?

I manage legal crises for clients facing existential threats, often with a global dimension.

We are living in a moment where democratic systems around the world are under increasing attack; space for civil society is shrinking; dissidents routinely threatened (or worse); and fundamental values, including rule of law, are too often imperiled. My practice sits at the nexus of this geopolitical turbulence and increased global interdependence. Clients come to me where legal systems overseas have failed them (or targeted them), where lives are threatened or imperiled, where states have tried to silence them, or where there is a major brand-threatening crisis that requires extraordinary care in addressing.

I spent years as the representative of the United States locked in a room negotiating some of the thorniest international issues with the Russians and Chinese amongst others. This perspective, coupled with a very uncertain geopolitical moment, has rooted my commercial practice in tackling big, multifaceted problems for those victimized by powerful adversaries.

What sort of change has resulted from the concept?

The law cannot be laggard in responding to a disputes environment where fundamental norms are under attack – and yet it is. I have tried to build a litigation portfolio that pushes the law to protect the vulnerable in new and creative ways.

My current docket of cases includes matters such as work adverse to large Russian financial institutions complicit in the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 and litigation against authoritarians with a penchant for reaching across international borders to target dissidents.

What bearing will this have on the future?

Whether representing individual victims or sophisticated global clients navigating existential crises, we have a collective responsibility to push the law to deliver on its promise to protect the vulnerable and advance human dignity.