

Review: Chapter 6. Libya and the Sanctions  
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### **The Central Arguments**

In this chapter, Hurd argues that Libya's strategy of appealing to various international laws and symbols and reinterpreting them in light of new evidence succeeded in increasing its supporters and delegitimizing the sanctions imposed on it, prompting America and Britain to reconsider their decisions. When Libya was confronted with UN sanctions in the early 1990s, it was a relatively weak state confronted with the international community. In the absence of coercive resources or powerful supporters, Libya's approach to weakening sanctions relied on absorbing and appropriating the symbols and principles of liberal internationalism. According to Hurd, this case is important because it demonstrates more broadly how the legitimacy of an institution is a source of power for weak actors (Libya) as well as a constraint on the behavior of powerful actors (p.137). This legitimacy produces powerful symbols in international relations that are strategically useful to states in pursuing their interests.

### **How did Libya applied his strategy by appropriating the symbols and norms of liberal internationalism?**

Libya challenged the sanction on its own terms by presenting an alternate image of the relationship between the sanctions regime and the international community, one in which Libya was seen as the defender of liberal internationalism and the United States and the United Kingdom were seen as the outliers. Libya attempted to disprove the widespread belief that this sanction was an "outlaw" by demonstrating strict adherence to international norms, as well as the sponsors' failures to meet those criteria. (p.150-151). The Libyan government advanced various arguments to refute the sanction sponsors' claims that procedural justice contributed to the sanctions' validity. For instance, Libyan authorities constantly highlighted the fact that sanctions were applied before the subject was thoroughly investigated "via judicial channels." The central procedural infringement on which Libya relied was the resolution's failure to comply with the Montreal Convention on Civil Aviation (p.151). In short, according to Libya, the sanctions regime violated procedural justice norms established in international law and most states' domestic legal systems.

Furthermore, Libya took multiple steps to demonstrate that its position was endorsed and supported by various renowned international organizations in order to establish that the United States and the United Kingdom were out of line with the international community (p.153-155). Some instances here; First, Libya emphasized its role as a decent world citizen in the fight against international terrorism. Second, Libya made public its willingness to work with a variety of international organizations as representatives of the world community to help address the specific problem at the heart of the resolutions. Third, Libya made public any evidence that sanctions were being disrespected by reputable actors, while concealing any violations that might hurt its cause. Finally, Libya took full advantage of the opportunities provided by the Security Council and other international organizations.

Finally, Libya used the language of threats to "international peace and security". According to Libya, such disrespect made by the sanction sponsors is itself a threat to international peace and security. Libya's speeches in the Council and elsewhere backed the Council's authority to act against "threats to international peace and security" and hence the Council as an institution (p.156).

To sum up, in the case of Libya, the author argues that strong states with strong material power do not always parallel the distribution of symbolic power. As a result, when fighting over symbolic stakes, it is not uncommon for seemingly strong states to be defeated by seemingly weak ones.