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## ***Restrictive Measures 'The EU way to go'?***

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Over the years, the European Union (EU) has been called many things. As realists and idealists launched in what appears a debate without an end, others, amongst which the author, sought to go beyond the normative debate by taking on a strategic perspective. Nevertheless, advocating a more holistic approach for the EU, including military capabilities, to secure its strategic interests appears in vain. The reality is that the EU does not have military capacities at its disposal and will not any time soon. Then what does the EU have? The most conclusive answer seems to be economic power.

This study aims to provide pragmatic guidance to the EU's foreign policy, and does so by addressing an instrument which establishes an explicit link between economic power and foreign policy: restrictive measures or 'sanctions'. Since the 1990s, the EU's use of sanctions has proliferated. Unsurprisingly, given that the EU is increasingly confronted with crises, sanctions simply are the most 'hard' tool at its disposal. Therefore, the question asked by this study is: are sanctions 'the EU way to go'? This particular question thus concerns an assessment of the relevance of this instrument for the EU, and what this implies for the EU as an international actor.

Starting from a dataset of 47 sanction cases, three particular case studies are selected which are evaluated on two principal variables of sanction theory: effectiveness and coherence. These cases seem to confirm the research hypothesis advanced by this study: although the instrument of restrictive measures undeniably poses several internal and external problems for the EU, its 'hard' and coercive nature make that it nevertheless remains a very relevant foreign policy tool which allows the EU to react and which, given that certain challenges can be addressed, has the potential to become even more so. This research concludes by suggesting a more pragmatic approach that would better enable the EU to balance its realist and idealist interests. It is the degree to which the EU will be able to reconcile these seemingly contrasting needs within one foreign policy actor in an effective and coherent way, which will influence the EU's credibility and role as an international actor.