



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** Assess the effectiveness of economic sanctions as a tool for achieving foreign policy objectives. (250 words)

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### Approach

- Start your answer by briefly introducing the concept of economic sanctions.
- Discuss their advantages and disadvantages.
- Conclude accordingly.

### Introduction

- Economic sanctions are **measures taken by one country or a group of countries to restrict trade, investment, and financial transactions with another country** in order to achieve specific foreign policy objectives. Economic sanctions are often **used as a non-military tool to pressure targeted countries to change their policies or behavior.**
  - Sanctions can take various forms, such as trade embargoes, financial restrictions, travel bans, and arms embargoes. Economic **sanctions have been used in a number of high-profile cases, including Iran, North Korea, Russia, and Venezuela.**

### Body

- **Advantages of economic sanctions:**
  - **Cost Effective:** Sanctions can be a relatively cost-effective tool compared to military action or other forms of coercion.
  - **Target a Specific Country:** sanctions can be a way of sending a signal to the targeted country that its behavior is unacceptable, and can put pressure on the government to change its policies.
    - For example, the United States imposed **economic sanctions on Iran to force it to abandon its nuclear program.** These sanctions targeted Iran's oil industry, which is a critical source of revenue for the country.
      - The sanctions had a significant impact on Iran's economy and led to negotiations that resulted in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.
  - **Provide International Support:** Sanctions can be a way of rallying international support and creating a united front against the targeted country.
  - **Avoids Collateral Damage:** Sanctions can be a way of **avoiding direct military confrontation, which can be costly and dangerous.**
    - For example, the USA and European Union imposed economic sanctions on Russia to protest its annexation of Crimea.
      - These sanctions targeted Russia's banking and energy sectors, which are critical to the country's economy. The sanctions have had a significant impact on Russia's economy.
- **Limitations of economic sanctions:**
  - **Creates Humanitarian Crisis:** Sanctions can harm innocent civilians and create a humanitarian crisis in the targeted country.

- **Harden the Stance of Targeted Government:** Sanctions can be counterproductive and can harden the resolve of the targeted government, making it less likely to change its policies.
  - For example, the **United Nations imposed economic sanctions on North Korea to pressure it to abandon its nuclear program.** These sanctions targeted North Korea's exports, particularly coal and iron ore, which are a critical source of revenue for the country.
    - The sanctions have had a limited impact on North Korea's behavior, and the country has continued to develop its nuclear program.
- **Increase the Role of Third-Party Actors:** Sanctions can be undermined by third-party actors, such as black-market traders or other countries that are willing to flout the sanctions.
- **Ineffective in Self Sustain Economy:** Sanctions can be ineffective if the targeted country has a strong economy and is able to find alternative markets and sources of funding.
- **Factors contributing to the success or failure of economic sanctions:**
  - **International support:** The level of international support for the sanctions can be a significant factor.
    - If the sanctions are supported by a large number of countries, they are more likely to be effective.
  - **Economic Strength:** the strength of the targeted country's economy can be a factor.
    - If the country has a diversified economy and can find alternative markets and sources of funding, the sanctions may be less effective.
  - **Nature of Foreign Policy Objective:** the nature of the foreign policy objective can be a factor.
    - If the objective is achievable and clearly defined, the sanctions may be more likely to succeed. However, if the objective is too broad or ambiguous, the sanctions may be less effective.

## Conclusion

- Economic sanctions can be an effective tool for achieving foreign policy objectives, but their success depends on a range of factors. While there have been cases where economic sanctions have been successful, there have also been cases where they have failed or had unintended consequences.
- Policymakers should carefully consider the advantages and limitations of economic sanctions before using them as a tool of foreign policy, and should also explore alternative strategies for achieving their objectives.