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**THE WELFARE STATE REGIME APPROACH TO ANALYSING SANCTIONED STATES**

**ABSTRACT**

Despite sustained debates about the adverse effects of sanctions on social stability, there has been little evidence of their effectiveness: sanctioned states have maintained their foreign policy course and managed to become more economically self-reliant. Will sanctions against Russia harm the country’s welfare state regime and contribute to an internal socio-economic crisis? Alternatively, could the long-run compound effect of sanctions be positive and make Russia economically more self-sufficient and less vulnerable to external shocks?

In pursuit of these questions, a novel theoretical framework which places the welfare state regime at the centre of analysis will be proposed as a starting point for a broader conceptualisation of the effect of geopolitical pressures on sanctioned societies. The paper will begin with an overview of the mainstream academic literature on sanctions, followed by an introduction to the welfare state regime approach, developed by bringing together Geoff Wood and Ian Gough’s comparative non-Western welfare state study and the neo-Gramscian perspective on hegemony. The product of this merger, the notion of the self-protection of society, will enable the conceptualisation of welfare regime functions: de-commodifying, redistributive, connecting, and reproductive, within the context of the long-standing rivalry between the Lockean heartland and contender states, such as Russia.

The function of reproduction is the dominant one, as it secures a regime’s stability, and if needed, its transformation in response to geopolitical, economic, security, institutional and cultural challenges. How strong are welfare state counter-hegemonic settings in their opposition to international hegemony? In pursuit of exploring this central question, a holistic theoretical approach with reference to the experience of Iran could initiate an interesting discussion. The Iranian case will reveal why the reproduction of institutional welfare arrangements, of the labour force, of societal values and knowledge, should become essential to maintaining social stability and supporting the materialistic ground for common public ‘consent’.

**KEYWORDS**: **sanctions, Gramsci, welfare state regime, Russia, Iran**