Underdevelopment in Southern Italy: Traditional Setbacks and Modern Solutions

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Abstract
The intention of this paper is to identify the economic problems facing the nation-state of Italy, in regards to the current underdevelopment of the southern regions over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The nation-state of Italy has had complex problems facing it throughout its ever long history on the divided Italian peninsula, as well as its brief history as a unified nation-state. Many complex problems have been solved over time, but a few such problems still linger: underdevelopment and poverty. These problems revolve around the underdeveloped south and how it affects the Italian nation as a whole. Basically, underdevelopment and poverty in Southern Italy isn't caused by a lack of funding, but by geographical hindrance, poorly designed and improper use of fiscal policies, crime and internal corruption, and the traditional southern lifestyle. These factors are the true culprits behind the backwardness of Southern Italy in historical times, as well as modern times.

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Underdevelopment in Southern Italy: Traditional Setbacks and Modern Solutions

A Master’s Thesis submitted to

The Faculty of the Master of Science in International Studies Program

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Science in International Studies

By

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Abstract

The intention of this paper is to identify the economic problems facing the nation-state of Italy, in regards to the current underdevelopment of the southern regions over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The nation-state of Italy has had complex problems facing it throughout its ever long history on the divided Italian peninsula, as well as its brief history as a unified nation-state. Many complex problems have been solved over time, but a few such problems still linger: underdevelopment and poverty. These problems revolve around the underdeveloped south and how it affects the Italian nation as a whole. Basically, underdevelopment and poverty in Southern Italy isn’t caused by a lack of funding, but by geographical hindrance, poorly designed and improper use of fiscal policies, crime and internal corruption, and the traditional southern lifestyle. These factors are the true culprits behind the backwardness of Southern Italy in historical times, as well as modern times.
1. Introduction

2. Historical Background
   2.1 Roman Empire
   2.2 Medieval Era
   2.3 Renaissance
   2.4 Unification
   2.5 Second World War Era
   2.6 Post-War Era

3. Modern Issues
   3.1 Globalization
   3.2 Geographic Disadvantages
   3.3 Lack of Industrialization
   3.4 Political Corruption
   3.5 Traditional Lifestyle

4. Failed Solutions
   4.1 Italian Structural Policies
   4.2 European Union Structural Policies

5. New Solutions
   5.1 Improve Infrastructure in the South
   5.2 Promote Industrialization
   5.3 Eliminate Corruption
   5.4 Proper Education

6. Conclusion

Bibliography
1. Introduction

Throughout history, economic prosperity has yielded considerable power regionally and eventually globally. This has been witnessed countless times through the centuries and they all seem to have similar characteristics, especially in relationship to the correlation between economic prosperity and regional power. This correlation between economic prosperity and regional and or global power are discussed within this thesis in regards to the nation-state of Italy and the European Union.

The nation-state of Italy has encountered a stagnant economy over the late twentieth century and this problem can be clearly observed when the nation-state of Italy is divided into two economic sections: the northern and southern. The prosperous northern economy, with a GDP per capita of an estimated $39,000, has been plagued by the southern economy, with a GDP per capita of an estimated $21,400.¹ Thus, this has negatively affected the Italian economy overall, as well as the European Union.

In this thesis, a critical analysis of the stagnant economy of Italy is conducted and illustrates the negative effects on the overall economy of the European Union. This thesis is divided into four major sections, which are made up of eighteen minor subsections. Some of these major sections examine the causes and effects of underdevelopment in Southern Italy through historical and modern issues, while the other sections identify the failed solutions and formulate possible new solutions. The minor subsections identify and illustrate countless examples revolving around the Italian peninsula and the European continent overall.

¹ Joseph Alessia, Italian Culture and Civilization, (State University of New York at Oswego, 2004).
First of all, this scholarly article presents the historical background to give a better understanding of the troubling economy plaguing the Italian peninsula over time. The historical background is made up of six subsections; from ancient times to modern times. The second major section focuses on the modern issues facing the nation-state of Italy and the European Union. This major section on modern issues is made up of five minor subsections, which address different issues negatively affecting the economic prosperity of the southern regions in Italy. Failed solutions is the third major section and this section identifies past structural policies and critiques them with hindsight. Basically, this section is brief, but very informative and this builds into the final major section on the new solutions. The forth major section attempts to solve the economic problem facing the southern regions in Italy by offering new solutions that could be implemented by the nation-state of Italy and/or the European Union.

In the end, this thesis will analyze this recurring problem plaguing the nation-state of Italy and the European Union. This analysis begins with a reexamination of the causes and the effects, as well as the failed attempts for a solution. The new solutions make up the culminating part of this thesis. This culminating part brings this thesis to the conclusion, thoughtfully and literally.

2. Historical Background

The historical background behind the underdevelopment of southern Italy encompasses two millennia. Many historical events occurred within these two millennia, including some on the Italian peninsula. These historical events on the Italian peninsula took place in many eras and they include the Roman Empire, the Medieval Era, the Renaissance, Reunification, the Second World War Era, and the Post-
War Era. All of these historical eras had major effects on the development and underdevelopment of the Italian people, which are discussed below.

2.1 Roman Empire

The history of the Italian peninsula, on the European continent, goes back to ancient times. These ancient times saw the beginning of complex civilizations. The Roman Empire was established before the Common Era in the eternal city of Rome, which is located within the center region of the Italian peninsula. This was where all economic, political, and social decisions were made by the Roman Empire. These decisions were implemented throughout the area surrounding the city of Rome, especially towards the north.

This direct contact with the northern people can be attributed to the easily accessible geographic terrain of the northern section of Italy. This allowed a profusion of northern people to become citizens of the Roman Empire, which benefited from the Roman Empire directly, which were located below them on the Italian peninsula. The Roman Empire, being a conquering empire, brought about cultural diffusion throughout the northern section of the Italian peninsula. This cultural spillover from the Roman Empire enhanced development ideologically, as well as economically within the northern regions. Basically, the northern regions’ direct contact with the city of Rome benefited the northern regions over time.

The southern regions were on the opposite end of the spectrum. These southern regions didn’t encounter the widespread cultural diffusion from the city of Rome, especially when compared to the northern regions. Many different reasons can be

\[2\] Ibid.
attributed to the Roman Empire’s nominal influence over the southern regions. First of all, there was a lack of direct contact between the capital city of Rome and the southern regions. This lack of direct contact could be attributed to the geography of the southern regions.

Historically, the southern regions were heavily wooded within the mountainous landscape, especially the internal southern area within the Aspromonte Mountains. This heavily forested, mountainous landscape became a major geographic barrier, which was scarcely ventured into by the Roman Empire, besides the Mediterranean coastal areas. Basically, the internal southern regions were too remote and dangerous for Roman expansion into the inland areas of the southern regions. Eventually, superstitions and fear would develop within the Roman Empire over the southern regions’ mysterious and dangerous landscape, which supposedly possessed demons and monsters that haunted the forests.

Also, these southern regions didn’t have many major cities. The cities that they did have were located along the prosperous Mediterranean coastline, including the cities of Naples, Reggio di Calabria, and Messina. Trade and commerce were huge for these southern cities, but they were influentially weak throughout the inland territory of the southern regions. This can be attributed to the rough terrain, which made traveling difficult and it caused these cities to greatly isolate themselves from each other in the southern regions. Geographical barriers were the primary causes of detachment between the Roman Empire and the southern peoples.

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
In the end, the southern peoples in these regions did not benefit from the Roman Empire like the northern peoples. This was the first major setback for the southern peoples on the Italian peninsula.

2.2 Medieval Era

Eventually, the Roman Empire would decline and fall away into history and a new era would be bestowed on the peoples of the Italian peninsula. This new era would be quite different, as the peoples on the Italian peninsula turned inward economically, politically, and socially after the fall of the Roman Empire. This era would be known as the Medieval Era and it occurred during the Common Era.

The Medieval Era witnessed a massive decline in economic commerce and political institutions throughout much of the Italian peninsula, as well as the European continent. The regions on the Italian peninsula became fractured from one another and this created small kingdoms and a new system of rule known as feudalism. These small feudal kingdoms were widespread throughout the northern and central sections and this fueled interdependence between them, which caused economic growth and diplomatic relations within and between these kingdoms and regions.

The southern section was divided into a few big kingdoms and this was caused by a profusion of geographical features; mountains and rugged terrain caused natural boundaries. It was harder for these large kingdoms to implement control over the southern peoples through economic commerce and diplomatic relations. Their kingdoms were too vast and isolated in regards to the geographical features and boundaries. This was similar to the Roman Empire’s troubles in establishing control over the southern regions as well. Tommaso Astarita addresses this and believes the difference that one can
observe today originates from the inner regions, with little of the commercial vitality, cultural diversity, and varied activities and opportunities of the coastal cities.\textsuperscript{5} Overall, the southern regions would remain difficult to control over the Medieval Era and eventually history would repeat itself to a certain degree with the next era of history on the Italian peninsula.

\subsection*{2.3 Renaissance}

The next era in historical context was the age of rebirth, also known as the Renaissance. The Renaissance was a rebirth of the ancient classical period of the Greek civilizations and the Roman Empire. This progressive period began north of Rome in the Tuscan region on the Italian peninsula. The capital city of the Renaissance was the Italian city of Florence. The city of Florence and most of the northern section of Italy flourished more than any other section on the Italian peninsula, as well as the continent of Europe. Some scholars believe that this was the beginning of modern ideas and ideologies that would make up Western Civilization.\textsuperscript{6}

Eventually, this movement spread from the northern section on the Italian peninsula to the rest of Western Europe, but it did not influence the southern section decisively enough. Once again geographical features and boundaries, as well as Spanish rule, caused southern peoples of the Italian peninsula to miss out on another movement. The dynamic experience of the Renaissance was altogether bypassed by the majority of southerners, but a minority of southerners experienced an attenuated version of it under Spanish rule. This diluted version of the Renaissance was customized to southern


\textsuperscript{6} Mario B. Mignone, \textit{Italy Today}, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995).
standards and traditions by the prominent local families in the southern kingdoms and pressed onto the common people within their kingdoms.

This was done for many different reasons. The main reason was that prominent local families wanted to keep a strong hold on traditional values in order to keep control among their so-called Italian tribal areas. In these so-called Italian tribal areas, local ruling families with wealth and power dictated local policies for their own benefit. These local ruling families were the only southerners with internal and external connections within their ruling kingdoms and external ones throughout the southern section. Basically, local control by wealthy and powerful families was a resolute form of feudalism that didn’t conclude during the Renaissance in the southern section of the Italian peninsula, as it did throughout the rest of the Italian peninsula and the European continent. This resolute form of feudalism would continue throughout the southern regions until the era of unification in the nineteenth century.

2.4 Unification

Finally this cycle of feudalism would be broken during the unification of Italy within the nineteenth century. This would be the beginning of the nation-state for the peoples on the Italian peninsula. The unification of the Italian peninsula began with a few prominent northern leaders, which included Giuseppe Mazzini, Camillo Cavour, and Victor Emmanuel II. These prominent northern leaders had the idea of a united Italy that stretched completely down the Italian peninsula. The rest of the prominent northern Italian leaders didn’t want it that way, because of their loyal connections with other

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7 Alessia, Italian Culture and Civilization.
8 Ibid.
nations and kingdoms, including France and Austria. These supporters of foreign nations and kingdoms wanted to exclude the southern section completely, as they didn’t see them fit enough to be part of the new nation-state of Italy. Mario Mignone discusses this northern ideology in his book *Italy Today: A Country in Transition* and states:

Northerners would like to think of themselves as being closer to the continent than to the peninsula: to France which has had much influence in Piedmont, to Germany through old ties to the Austro-Hungarian Empire which provided efficient administration for so long, to Switzerland to which many of those on the borders commute (136)

Basically, many of these prominent northerners came from the ideologically advanced northwest regions of the Italian peninsula and they looked upon the seemingly backward southerners as if they were not Europeans, but Africans. Also, they didn’t think that the internal regions of the south were important resourcefully and economically for this new Italian nation-state. To the prominent northerners, the new Italian nation-state would be a lot stronger without the southern regions. They justified this statement from an analysis of the southern regions and their major cities, which led them to conclude that the south would be an economic drag on the new nation-state as a whole. In the end, the prominent northerners on the Italian peninsula addressed the creation of a new nation-state through a compromise, which included the city of Rome, the areas directly surrounding Rome, and the south to a certain extent.

The prominent northerners agreed that the southern coastal regions, with their ports, were beneficial economically for the new nation-state of Italy. Prominent

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10 Alessia, *Italian Culture and Civilization*.
11 Ibid.
northerners believed southern ports could be very useful in the Italian nation-state for expanding their influence and goods to new markets in their region and eventually in the world. This form of trade and commerce could be easily achieved, because the southern ports were already established as economic centers with the presence of major cities located along them. This made these southern coastal harbors prime economic sites for the newly forming nation-state of Italy. Eventually, these southern coastal areas would be easily transitioned into the newly formed Italian nation-state, but much of the inland areas would continue to stay economically stagnant after being bypassed by the prominent northerners. The southern inland populations missed another opportunity and this time it would fuel distrust for the northerners. This distrust against the northerners led to the rebirth of stubborn ideals and the strengthening of southern traditions.\footnote{Ibid.} This would become the first major problem during and after the unification for the nation-state of Italy.

Some prominent northerners decided to solve this problem, knowing that the newly forming nation-state of Italy needed complete support of all of the peoples located on the Italian peninsula if it were to succeed. An idea came out of this to solve this problem and this idea revolved around spillover. These prominent northerners believed that a great economic influence on the rich coastal harbors would promote more southerners inland to move to these areas and/or do business with them. This would create a swell of support from the peoples on the Italian peninsula, as they experienced economic prosperity from the newly formed Italian nation-state.

Eventually, words were put into actions in the mid 1800s. Giuseppe Garibaldi, with much of the support of the prominent northerners, led his army of unifiers, the “Red
Shirts,” and united the Italian peninsula to the best of his ability, especially in regards to the isolated internal southern regions. The internal southern regions would be one of Garibaldi’s Red Shirts toughest tasks due to the isolation of towns and cities within the rugged terrain. Garibaldi decided to unite only certain areas within the southern section, hoping that these united areas would influence the rest of the southern country side. This was implemented by Garibaldi and his army of Red Shirts, as they continued northwards on the Italian peninsula and into the more favorable northern regions to complete the unification of the Italian nation-state.

In the end, the northerners did unite most of the southern regions with the rest of the Italian peninsula, but not from an ideological perspective. Much of the southern populations held onto their ideals and traditions, as well as their distrust for the northerners and their control over the new nation-state of Italy. The traditional southern culture lived on and the northern influence decreased and became minimal to nonexistent outside of the coastal areas, but that has changed with growing national, European, and international pressures starting before the Second World War.

2.5 Second World War Era

The young nation-state of Italy entered the twentieth century with continuing growing pains from lingering internal troubles and newly arisen external problems in the global arena. These internal and external pressures affected the economic, political, and social stability of Italy before and during the Second World War. Imperialism and then militarism increased greatly among the European powers leading to increase competition between the European powers, including the young nation-state of Italy.

13 Ibid.
Eventually, this competition would lead to the First World War. The First World War was centered on the European continent and it involved international alliances. These alliances brought a balance of power to the war and this created a drawn-out stalemate. Eventually, the First World War concluded in 1918, but it did not end the negative tensions between the European powers. These tensions continued to escalate, especially during the Great Depression. The Great Depression occurred at the dawn of the 1930s and worsened relations between the European powers. This event affected many nations throughout the world, including the nation-state of Italy. This helped fuel these economic, political, and social pressures even more and at an alarming rate. The nation-state of Italy responded to these pressures through a progressive transition in government during the 1920s, which expanded in credibility after the Great Depression with its successes of prosperity for the Italian people. This transition was called Fascism.

The origins of Fascism are quite simple to understand. Many factors led to the rise of Fascism, including instability within the governmental sector, then the economic sector, and finally the social sector. The governmental sector was one of the first to be affected by the rising instability of the Italian nation-state. Competition among the political leaders wreaked havoc within the Italian government during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Liberals and conservatives took turns controlling the Italian government by eliminating the progress that their rival politicians enacted before them. This created a stagnant government and soon tensions would arise and instability as well.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
This instability within the Italian government would allow Fascism to take hold in the Italian nation-state under the dictator of Benito Mussolini and his followers. Benito Mussolini took control of the national government in the early 1920s and gave himself authoritarian control over everything within the Italian nation-state. The nation-state of Italy was now ruled by a radical dictator and his followers. Not only did the government change rapidly, but so did its policies regarding the social classes throughout Italy, especially the southern regions.

This Fascist regime succeeded in breaking the power of Southern Italy’s landlord class by encouraging the development of a class of small peasant proprietors. The development of a class of small peasant proprietors weakened the system of organized social consensus implemented by the northern elite after Italy’s unification. The Italians in the south began to redistribute land amongst each other and this gave them new found wealth. Also, the infrastructure and transportation sectors were strengthened through public work programs, which gave jobs to the unemployed. Overall, all of these improvements pleased the Southern Italians and made them think highly of the Fascist regime at first; soon things would change with the economic problem facing the nation-state of Italy during the Great Depression.

The relationship between the Fascists and the southern Italians began to take a gradual turn for the worse during the latter years of both the Great Depression and the Second World War. Benito Mussolini and his Fascist regime faced many daunting situations domestically and in Europe as well. Policies created and implemented during this period improved the nation of Italy in the short run, but hurt it in the long run,

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especially during the Second World War. Benito Mussolini and his Fascist regime solved the economic crisis of the Great Depression by diverting the attention of Italian citizens from their domestic troubles with the successes of their imperialism in Eastern Europe and Africa. This bought time for Benito Mussolini in the short run, while rebuilding the military. Eventually, this militarization would lead to the Second World War in the long run.

The Second World War began at the end of the 1930s between the Allies and the Axis. The nation of Italy was doing well conquering weak nations along the Mediterranean Sea, which increased prosperity for the Italian people through new resources and markets to deal with. This caught the eye of the Germans, as they began to commit similar actions in Europe. The Germans understood the importance of the Italian state and its control over the Mediterranean Sea and its coastlines and thus worked towards having a better relationship with Benito Mussolini’s Italy. This German pressure persuaded Benito Mussolini into making agreements with Germany’s Adolf Hitler before the war began and eventually it induced Italy into the Axis alliance for the Second World War. This was especially the case with the alliance with Germany in the Rome-Berlin Axis agreement. This agreement forced the nation of Italy to be subordinate to Germany and its decisions.\(^{16}\) This further alienated many Italians, because they didn’t want to be aligned with Germany in this submissive form, and because they didn’t agree with many German policies during the Second World War. Also, the majority of Italians felt that the Germans would weaken Italian industry and make Italy into an agrarian client state.\(^ {17}\) In the end, the nation of Italy was united, north and south, and took back control from

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 37.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 37.
Benito Mussolini, as the Allies invaded the Italian peninsula. Eventually, the fear of Germany would vanish after the Anglo-American military destroyed the remaining Fascist regime and its German supporters during the massive military invasion of Italy. This put an end to the Second World War, including the unity between the north and the south, and this segues into the post-war era.

2.6 Post-War Era

The post-war era witnessed the end of unity and the rebirth of sectional rivalry. This occurred with the new assemblage of northwestern elites. These northwestern elites reclaimed their power and authority over the Italian national government under their new identity as the Christian Democratic Party (DC).\(^\text{18}\) They did this with support from the Roman Catholic Church and especially the United States. The United States wanted stability on the Italian peninsula and looked into supporting the northwestern elites, because they feared the expansion of communism in Italy.

At this time communist ideals were expanding throughout the world, including the nation of Italy with the ongoing Leftist movement; also known as the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI).\(^\text{19}\) The Leftist movement was gaining strength among the majority of Italians during and after the Second World War through the resistance, especially within the central and southern sections. This alarmed the United States, which stemmed from the renewed strength of the Left in Italy and Italy’s geographic location in

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\(^{19}\) Carello, *The Northern Question: Italy’s Participation in the European Economic Community and the Mezzogiorno’s Underdevelopment*, p. 39.
the context of the East-West conflict. The United States believed it had to act swiftly and it looked at all the options.

Eventually, the United States decided to forge together an alliance with the northwestern elites and this allowed these two nations to create a plan to contain the Leftist movement within Italy. This plan revolved around keeping the Leftists out of the government by persuading the local Italians through propaganda to not support the communists, because the communists used poor economic policies. The plan would eventually be instituted and the Leftist movement would be contained. This kept the northwestern elites in power politically, while being regulated through funding by the Roman Catholic Church and the United States. This regulation through funding by the Catholic Church and the United States was also done to avoid extremism through the abuse of power by the northwestern elites.

Soon after, new problems arose and they stemmed from the regulation of the Italian government by the United States. This issue of regulation revolved around the United States and how it forced the northwestern elites to swear allegiance to them for needed support. This produced a new political divide in Italy among the social classes, especially between the northwestern elites and the southern populations. A new era of instability had begun and this would characterize the nation of Italy throughout the latter years of the 1940s and into the next couple of decades.

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20 Ibid., p. 39.
21 Ibid., p. 40.
3. Modern Issues

The Cold War Era split the world into two ideological factions: the capitalists and the communists. This separation would suspend international affairs and/or mask them on a secondary level until one of these ideologies could be eliminated on the primary level. This masked period of international relations between nations lasted close to five decades. Finally, this shrouded period would be cast off with the end of the ideologically motivated Cold War and this accelerated the suspended international affairs. The acceleration of the elapsed international affairs began a new era of problems not seen since the beginning of the Cold War Era.

This new wave of international affairs would revolve around a more interdependent world based on individual nations’ self-interests, which would include the nation-state of Italy and their state of affairs in relationship with globalization, geographic disadvantages, lack of industrialization, political corruption, and traditional lifestyles. This state of affairs regarding the Italian nation-state has become the modern issue facing the Italian government, as well as the governance of the European Union. These issues begin with globalization and its effect on the nation-state of Italy and the European Union.

3.1 Globalization

The ever-expanding globalization of the world has forced the nation-state of Italy to deal with this modern issue more than ever. Globalization has been an effect of interdependence between nation-states through free trade and commerce. Free trade and commerce has led to an increase in economic outsourcing and a rise in nonrenewable energy prices.
First of all, the job market in Italy has been weakened by outsourcing and this has greatly hurt the Italian economy. The increase of outsourcing by Italian and European businesses has fueled unemployment in Italy over the past two decades.\textsuperscript{22} This increase in outsourcing is due in part to the rising taxes on Italian and European industries and the economic opportunity in foreign markets elsewhere in the world. Second of all, the increased cost for nonrenewable energy has negatively affected the Italian economy, especially industries. Industries consume a lot of energy to produce their goods. An increase in energy costs affects these industries negatively with an increase in their product prices and employment layoffs, which could lead to an economic recession.

Basically, the Italian nation-state entered a more competitive world in the mid to late twentieth century and they need all that they can get out of their land, resources, and population to stay prosperous. Economic prosperity shouldn’t be an issue for the nation-state of Italy with its wealth of economic potential, but that potential hasn’t been utilized to its fullest extent and this is where the problem resides. This can especially be witnessed with the underdevelopment of Italy’s internal southern regions, in regards to geographic disadvantages.

3.2 Geographic Disadvantages

Geographic disadvantages have a direct effect on economic prosperity. This can especially be seen with industries within the Italian nation-state in modern times. These Italian and European industries do not want to invest their time and money in southern Italy, especially inland, because of physical disadvantages. These physical disadvantages

\textsuperscript{22} Alessia, \textit{Italian Culture and Civilization}. 
include vast distances between markets, inaccessible terrain, and a lack of natural resources and waterways.

The vast distances between markets in the southern regions are affecting economic prosperity for the Italian nation-state. These southern regions include many major and minor cities. The major and minor cities are scattered throughout southern Italy and this isolates them to a certain extent. This also makes transportation of goods and services more difficult.

Also, the distances between markets are impeded by inaccessible terrain. Inaccessible terrain has hampered industrial growth in southern Italy. Many industries find the southern Italian landscape unprofitable, because of the added money spent on developing and maintaining their property. Developing and maintaining these properties aren’t cost effective for most companies, especially when you factor in added economic complications from globalization.

Finally, the lack of natural resources has been the foremost deterrent for industrial development in southern Italy. Natural resources include nonrenewable energy, as well as the natural element of water. The element of water and its waterways are a necessity for industries in the southern regions in regards to shipping goods and services, as well as for input and output during production. Water is a vital resource needed in the makeup of industrial products. Without water, products would cost a lot more, because water would have to be bought and/or shipped to these southern industries for production.

In the end, these physical disadvantages are not appealing for industries focused on the short run. The risks are just too high, which is especially true for novice companies looking to establish themselves. Basically, Italian and European industries look for
advantages that will favor their businesses institutionally and commercially, not
disadvantages. This segues into the lack of industries in southern Italy and its outcomes:
poverty.

3.3 Lack of Industrialization

The main issue of poverty in southern Italy is the outcome from being
underdeveloped economically. They are interrelated. This lack of industrialization has
created an economic drag that has affected the nation of Italy as a whole domestically and
the rest of the European continent internationally. The origins of this poverty through
underdevelopment come from the southern regions.

A handful of regions make up the southern third of the nation of Italy. These
regions are very rich in horticulture, but poor financially and underdeveloped
economically. The poorest southern regions in Italy include the island of Sicily, Calabria,
and Basilicata. These three regions place a huge drag on the Italian economy, because
of the high unemployment and lack of taxable income based directly from the
underground economy in the southern regions. The unemployment rate has hovered
around the 40 per cent mark in southern Italy during modern times and this has been
cased by a lack of industrial jobs. Southern Italy is mainly a rural economy with an
abundance of agricultural goods and services. These agricultural goods and services are a
deterrent for most industries, because agricultural goods and services don’t yield a huge
profit. Thus, income taxed is marginal compared to the rest of the Italian nation-state.
This is why many industries do not attempt to operate within these agricultural outlets.

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23 Ibid.
24 Jane Perry Clark Carey and Andrew Galbraith Carey, The South of Italy and the Cassa per il
Basically, the southern economy is based on agriculture and horticulture sectors and this is just one of many causes that have led to the lack of industrialization.

Another cause for the lack of industrialization originates from misguided policies from the Italian national government to combat free trade. Free trade in Italy, as well as in Europe, has greatly affected these intra and supra economies. The nation-state of Italy cannot enact policies and tariffs to combat the pressures of free trade, in regards to their industries, without the approval of the European Union.

First of all, southern industries have been weakened financially from free trade more than the northern industries. These southern industries are on the opposite end of the spectrum and they have suffered greatly from the lack of governmental support, which has greatly affected their profits. The opposite can be said about the northern industries. The stronger northern industries have adapted better to free trade by accumulating extra financial assets over the years. Also, these larger and more prosperous northern industries have had financial support through economic policies and tax breaks, which allowed them to adapt better to the emergence of free trade. Tax breaks have been part of the solution for the northern industries, but not for everyone. A steady increase in taxes has become a reality in the nation-state of Italy.

The overall increase of taxes in the Italian nation-state has been a direct effect from tax breaks to financially strapped industries. This has placed a major burden onto the population, especially within the southern regions. The Italian government is a republic based on social democratic principles and needs income from taxes to support programs for the well being of the overall population, including domestic industries. The northern regions aren’t affected by these taxes as much, because their household incomes
are a lot higher than the south. These taxes tend to be more beneficial for the northern regions, because the northerners budget funding for improvements in education and other social programs.

The southern regions have been less successful with this tax burden. This is due in part because they have more issues to contend with than the north; including high unemployment. Collecting taxes from the unemployed is quite difficult and this redirects the tax burden on the southern industries. Thus, this negatively affects the financial prosperity of the southern industries.

Basically, industrial tax breaks and economic policies do not work as well in the southern regions. Industrial policies and tax breaks tend to serve northern interests better, because they are stronger financially and there are more markets in the north than in the south in regards to location. Also, the industrial development hasn’t been properly supported through governmental and private investments from economic policies and tax breaks; which tend to promote stability and growth for businesses in the short run and the long run. Maybe another issue is at the root of these modern issues of southern underdevelopment in the Italian nation-state.

3.4 Political Corruption

Political corruption is a major issue that has plagued the nation-state of Italy since its conception in the nineteenth century, especially throughout the southern regions currently. Much of this political corruption is enforced upon industries by the Mafia. Corrupt industries make up a huge part of political corruption and this has negatively affected the inadequate economic structure of the southern regions. Corruption within industries favors the high level workers, but hurts the lower level workers and the
community around them. It's basically a power struggle between the high level workers and the low level workers. The high level workers make up the minority, while the majority of workers are low level and this is why corruption takes place.

The government and their position in these matters is another issue related to political corruption. The Italian government has been supplying funds to high-ranking businessmen to spend on their industries, but they instead choose to use the funds on improper investments and/or themselves through self-promotion and pay raises. This form of corruption makes up a small segment of the overall political corruption, because it's outside of the government's control, unless the government decides to take action against corrupt politicians.

Corrupt politicians influence southern industries negatively as well. These corrupt politicians influence certain industries that would favor them politically, which gives them political clout and power over their designated area. The corporate side of these industries benefits from these politicians through financial influence and profits, but not every industry reaps the benefits. Some industries are deliberately excluded from these funds, because these corrupt politicians are only backing industries that support them politically.

Basically, it's a political and economic bias that operates between corrupt businesses, corrupt governmental programs, and corrupt politicians. This part of the modern issue seems to be one of the most disturbing problems facing the Italian nation-state, but there are others, including the unknown societal issues regarding the traditional lifestyle in Southern Italy.
3.5 Traditional Lifestyle

The traditional lifestyle present in the southern regions of Italy has created an acceptance of poverty, rather than discouraging it. This feeds into the southern Italian socio-culture. Poverty has become the norm and wealth seems so distant that it is forgotten over time. This has and still occurs so heedlessly, that it turns into a never-ending cycle of poverty. One generation after another concedes to poverty in southern Italy. Breaking this cycle has proven to be a very difficult task.

The southern social culture in Italy is very unique and distinct, because of their acceptance of poverty and reliance on governmental social services. This unique and distinct social culture has been fueled by a poor job market over the years, which produces high unemployment among the southern populations. After many years, unemployment starts to become the norm as the southerners learn to adapt to their societal reality. The southern populations have adapted to this form of unemployment through governmental social services and the reliance on extended families to pool their incomes together for survival. These two forms of assistance have helped the southerners' societal status, but it has also caused an economic burden elsewhere in the Italian nation-state.

The acceptance of poverty by southern Italians is the primary reason for the division between the northern and southern populations within the Italian nation-state. Much resentment comes from the northern Italians. The northern Italians have felt the effects of higher taxes from the overuse of governmental social services by unemployed southern Italians. This has fueled resentment and the rise in negative stereotypes towards the southern Italians. One of these stereotypes from the northern populations is that
southerners are uneducated and lazy and this ignorance has caused their poor societal conditions. The northerners also believe that the poor education system in parts of the south encourages societal laziness, which then forms into societal poverty. In return, the southern populations vent their societal frustrations back at the northerners, thus creating reciprocal tensions between each other.

The traditional lifestyle is a major obstacle facing the current Italian nation-state. This issue has been around for decades and has morphed into the societal norm in much of the Italian southern regions. In the end, time is going to be needed to transform the centuries old ideology of poverty into a new beneficial one for southerners and Italians overall.

4. Failed Solutions

The modern day issues stated above have plagued the nation-state of Italy, especially in regards to their economic and societal sectors. These issues have been addressed in the past with solutions that failed. These failed solutions both revolved around intra and supra structural policies from the Italian national government and the European Union. The Italian and European Union structural policies make up the failed solutions regarding the Italian south.

4.1 Italian Structural Policies

Many solutions for underdevelopment and poverty have been explored and implemented over the years. Most of these solutions involve the use of monetary funding as a way to correct this problem plaguing the nation-state of Italy. The national government of Italy turned to an idea of a regional economic policy, through monetary

25 Alessia, Italian Culture and Civilization.
funding, to solve this economic division between the north and the south. Sometimes a regional economic policy is referred to as a structural policy. This Italian structural policy was called the Casa per il Mezzogiorno (Southern Development Fund).\textsuperscript{26}

The Casa per il Mezzogiorno was the principal instrument used by the Italian national government to improve the underdevelopment of the southern region of Italy after the Second World War. Originally, much of the planning, finances, and distribution came from the World Bank, which was heavily dominated by the United States.\textsuperscript{27} This program was charged with formulating and implementing public works projects, coordinating them with the ordinary institutions of government, and it also sought to attract private investment capital to Southern Italy from within the region.\textsuperscript{28} Also, the Casa per il Mezzogiorno promoted the use of private investment which would decrease funding from the national government, which then could be used elsewhere in the long-run.

Over time, the Casa per il Mezzogiorno would be renewed and expanded as the Italian national government took a greater role in this structural policy. The Italian national government did this through the Committee of Ministers for the Mezzogirono. The Committee of Ministers for the Mezzogiorno focused their attention on improving the implementation of the Casa per il Mezzogiorno by consolidating their decisions under one umbrella. Under this umbrella, the Committee of Ministers of the Mezzogiorno

\textsuperscript{26} Astarita, \textit{Between Salt Water and Holy Water: A History of Southern Italy}, p. 310.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 311.

\textsuperscript{28} Carello, \textit{The Northern Question: Italy’s Participation in the European Economic Community and the Mezzogiorno’s Underdevelopment}, p. 45.
approves the projects of industrialization submitted for judgment by an assemblage of communes from many southern regions.\textsuperscript{29}

There are many interpretations of this structural policy. Mignone believed that the Casa per il Mezzogiorno was an overall success, because this structural policy improved the economic and social discrepancies through proper monetary funding from the public and private sectors. Also, success was identified with the Italian national government’s implementation of the structural policy, the Casa per il Mezzogiorno, for southern Italy in countless federal budgets. Mignone’s statement below illustrates the annual levied capital, which was flowing into the south under the Casa per il Mezzogiorno program since the 1950s till it’s termination in 1992. Mignone states:

\textit{It will be up to the state to provide them with good roads, telecommunications, research centers and so on-and then hope that new industries will develop on their own accord (134)}\textsuperscript{30}

Basically, the Casa per il Mezzogiorno structural policy planned to bring in needed infrastructure into a section of Italy that lacked it. The southern infrastructure would be improved and then the other parts of development would fall into place. Some of these other parts would include industrial relocation from the north to the south and local industrial development in southern Italy. The Italian national government would allocate funds to serve as a catalyst and the regional and local governments in southern Italy would complete the rest. This structural policy was a great idea presented by the Italian national government, but underestimated complications arose and caused this program to

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 49.
\textsuperscript{30} Mignone, \textit{Italy Today}, p. 134.
flounder throughout much of the south during the latter years of the Casa per il
Mezzogiorno.

Most parts of southern Italy benefited from these funds, but some inland areas
were left out of these structural improvements. The Italian national government could
only do so much and the rest had to be done by the southern regional governments,
politicians, and populations.31 These participants in the south failed to make the Casa per
il Mezzogiorno structural policy a success, because of fundamental disorganization,
corruption and crime, and general idleness. Mignone acknowledges this side of the Casa
per il Mezzogiorno and adds to this matter by stating:

All regional governments had gained responsibility for such fields
as urban affairs, housing, agriculture, public works, hospitals and
health services, vocational education, and economic development.
On paper, the twenty regional governments are virtually identical
and potentially powerful. However, the social, economic, political,
and cultural contexts into which the new institutions were
implanted differ dramatically. Some regional governments have
been constantly more successful than others—more efficient in their
internal operations, more creative in their policy initiatives, more
effective in implementing those initiatives. The regions in the
South have been less effective (133)

The southern and local governments let their own self-interests cloud the national vision
of a prosperous Italian nation during the latter years of the program. Also, the national
government is partly to blame. They should have taken extensive measures to oversee the
proper use of the funding given by them to these regional and local governments in
southern Italy. This would have eliminated the improper use of funds by corrupt regional

31 Ibid., p. 133.
and local governments, because of direct supervision and intervention by the national government of Italy.

In the end, more should have been done by the Italian government. This ultimate failure of the Casa per il Mezzogiorno would eventually bring another governmental agency, with its own ideas for a new structural policy for the Italian south. The European Union would be this new governmental agency and they became involved in order to strengthen their single united European market.

4.2 European Union Structural Policies

The European Union is a continental organization that has instituted structural reforms based on its own self interest as a supra governmental organization. These structural policy programs were created by the European Union at the end of the twentieth century. The European Union located these programs within two governmental committees: the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund.

The first program linked to European structural funds is the European Regional Development Fund. The European Regional Development Fund finances investment, particularly linked to creation or maintenance of jobs, infrastructure projects, education and training, research and development, and environmental projects.\(^{32}\) This program encompasses an array of structural needs for many developing countries, as well as a few non-developing countries in the European Union. The nation of Italy is one of these non-developing countries in the European Union receiving structural funds.

The second program linked to European structural funds is the European Social Fund. The European Social Fund helps long-term and young unemployed citizens, those

excluded from work, and promotes equal opportunities, especially within the agricultural and fisheries sectors (the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, and the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance). These two programs make up the majority of the structural funds implemented by the European Union and have taken control over much of the structural policies in Italy, which were once instituted by the Italian national government.

The Italian national government’s structural policy, the Casa per il Mezzogiorno, seemed ready for abolishment. The Casa per il Mezzogiorno was weak and left in financial disarray, because this policy was full of disorganization and corruption. Structural funds from the European Union were the replacements meant to deal with industrial decline and to promote job creation through direct and or indirect actions, within their membership. All members were to benefit from it. Stephen George and Ian Bache define the structural policy of the European Union in the book *Politics in the European Union* and they state:

> EU regional policy is concerned with correcting economic and social disparities between European regions that are caused by the creation of a single European market (458)

The European Union is truly focused on the proper development of economic and social problems that plague member nations in their organization. Also, the European Union has an edge over the individual national governments, including Italy, because it can accumulate and allocate funding at a greater rate. The European Union receives capital

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33 Ibid., p.114.
from their pool of member nations yearly, which is a lot more than the Italians receive from their national government through taxation. George and Bache comment further on this funding and state:

From modest beginnings, EU regional and structural policy has grown to account for over a third of the EC budget (456)\textsuperscript{35}

This gives the European Union an advantage over the nation of Italy for structural policy through funding. The monetary funds from the European Union, coupled with a greater presence, should have brought dynamic improvements to southern Italy, but that is not entirely true. George and Bache state:

In 1998, the commission (1998 bill) stated that: while significant progress has been made in involving regional authorities, in particular where regionalization is least developed, the involvement of local authorities most directly concerned...is still very patchy (473)\textsuperscript{36}

The regional and local governments continue to misuse their funds, which causes development to lag behind. This causes southern Italy to undergo further predicaments from underdevelopment and poverty. Basically, the European Union’s structural policy through funding has problems similar to the version used by the Italian national government. The structural policy issued by the Italian national government and the European Union are the ideal solutions, only if the regional and local governments use this funding correctly, which is not the case. Once again the structural policy through funding falters at the disposal of the regional and local governments’ irresponsibility in southern Italy. More needs to be done with this program to counteract the regional and

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 456.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 473.
local governments’ role in these structural policies. The recreation of a multifaceted proposal is the new solution.

5. New Solutions

A multifaceted proposal for the nation-state of Italy and the European Union is needed to fix the underdeveloped and poverty stricken parts of southern Italy. This multifaceted proposal has to address the geographic, economic, political, and social factors that contribute to the problem. Addressing and improving these factors will simplify the complexity of underdevelopment and poverty in southern Italy. Once the complexity of this problem has been improved, steady development will increase in southern Italy from the obliteration of underdevelopment and poverty.

It’s important for improvements to be done at a good pace, because it is crucial for the success of southern Italy’s development. A steady pace will allow Southern Italy to have a smoother transition from where they are now and where they want to be later. Overall, improvements will be observed throughout southern Italy by way of newer and better infrastructure, more industry, higher employment, and improved household income if this multifaceted proposal is executed with respect to improvements of infrastructure, the promotion of industrialization, the elimination of corruption, and the reinstallation of proper education.

5.1 Improve Infrastructure in the South

In years and centuries past, rapid southern transformations attempted to solve geographic barriers through public works projects on roads, water availability, and electrical power with little to no success. A lack of direct government control and the
rush to get these projects underway led to the mismanagement on public works, while the geographic impediment was still not solved completely.

Many past proposals have been explored by scholars, including Hollis B. Chenery. Chenery focuses on the geographical impediment and the need for improved infrastructure in his journal article and states:

...Southern Italy is of considerable interest because there the Italian government has attempted to carry out the theoretically attractive procedure of developing external economies by massive doses of public works while leaving the direct investment in commodity production to private individuals (515)\(^{37}\)

The national government of Italy’s implementation of privatized public works, through a massive dose, can solve the geographical limitations in southern Italy. Projects of public works need more government involvement, while receiving continued support from the private sector.\(^{38}\)

The national government of Italy also needs more involvement with regional and local governments on these public works, if it is to continue to use private companies for infrastructure improvements in southern Italy. Trying to achieve success quickly is doomed for failure. Chenery adds to this with statistics from the mid 1900s and states:

The stated objective of southern policy – to develop as fast as or faster than the North – has not yet been met, and in the south has fallen from 63 per cent to 56 per cent of the national average in the past decade (517)\(^{39}\)


\(^{38}\) Ibid., pp. 515-547.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., p. 517.
Chenery made this statement in 1962 on the basis of what had happened in Italy since the Second World War. Rushing through public work projects didn’t catch southern Italy up with the north economically. Southern Italy fell further behind.

Preferable to speed is regularity. Completing a job at a steady pace allows room for needed changes and improvement throughout the process, in regards to infrastructure development through public works. It’s a fact that geographic hindrance has decreased overtime, but more needs to be done. Eventually, this will be an issue of the past in southern Italy.

5.2 Promote Industrialization

Economic factors also complicate underdevelopment and poverty solutions in southern Italy too. Industries directly influence the southern and national economies through employment. Southern Italians are burdened by a lack of major industrial businesses, which causes high unemployment in the south. The south is known for its high unemployment, as compared to the north’s low unemployment. Also, unemployment stands out in the south, due in part to the northerner’s repugnance over this issue in Italian society as a whole.

More needs to be done to encourage industrial development in the southern regions of Italy with the help of the northerners. Possibly, giving the northern industries better incentives to relocate from the northern regions, with their surplus of industries, to the needy southern regions could work. These incentives would be very enticing if the geographic impediments were solved. Specific actions need to be taken in relation to

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40 Alessia, *Italian Culture and Civilization*.  

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geographic impediments. An example of this could be better highway engineering, or the diversion of water resources from the coastline, to the interior.

Economic factors are directly related to geographical factors, because industries need natural resources for the production of their products. Basically, industries need adequate infrastructure, which needs to be addressed in order for industries to relocate to the southern regions of Italy.

5.3 Eliminate Corruption

Political issues add to this problem, especially in regards to the implementation of structural policies from the Italian national government and the European Union. Structural policies are used to fund underdeveloped areas within a country and/or region. Most nations that receive a form of a structural policy, including foreign aid, are third world nations. These third world nations lack financial capital and are stricken with political corruption. This causes instability for a nation.

The nation-state of Italy is a unique case, because Italy is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, while still receiving a lot of structural funds. They have received these structural funds from their national government in the past and the European Union most recently. These policies haven’t worked well in the past, because of corruption in the national, regional, and local governments. Basically, this corruption exists in all levels of the Italian government and has led to structural policy failures. Antonio Vitti discusses this occurring problem in his journal article “Picone’s Tragicomical Dual Life: Revisiting the Southern Question,” and states:

To make things worse, the 1996 yearly report of the Agency for the Development of the South (SVIMEZ) spoke of another emergency:
organized crimes, while, like a parasite, hides in the South, and makes the Mezzogiorno an area of high economic risk for the so-called “structural funds” granted by United Europe to establish a healthy and competitive industrial matrix (188)\textsuperscript{41}

Organized crime is directly related to internal political corruption and this has caused another emergency in regards to the structural development of southern Italy.

Overall, politicians need to be held accountable for this reemergence of organized crime through more enforcement by police agencies and court systems, because they allow it to function and even strengthen under their guidance and/or neglect. They work together to achieve each other’s goals: political power and wealth for politicians and for organized crime. These are the basics of southern Italian corruption in regards to the structural polices used to enhance their economic structure.

5.4 Proper Education

Finally, social factors contribute to the complexity of southern Italian underdevelopment through the southern populations’ aversion to work. Southern Italians have become uninformed and complacent with their poverty over the last two thousand years. This isn’t a current problem, but an everlasting one from centuries before.

The historical points addressed this occurring problem and a solution is actually closer now than it really appears. These social factors are on the brink of fragmentation, because of an improving education system and integration policies from the national government of Italy. It’s the youth of Italy that are reshaping their nation-state for the better. The northern and southern prejudice has been on a decline during the twentieth

\textsuperscript{41} Antonio Vitti, Picone’s Tragicomical dual Life: Revisiting the Southern Question, (Italica 77.2, 2000), p. 188.
century with the growing tolerance of the youthful population. This information came from past informational dialogues with Professor Alessia and the Italian youth while in Italy. 42

Continuing efforts to improve education are necessary, because education can refocus the youth of Italy towards Italian economic interdependence and social acceptance between the north and the south, especially if given more governmental support through funding. Other scholars believe more can be done too, including Brian A’Hearn. Brian A’Hearn discusses the social factors in his journal article “Could Southern Italians Cooperate? Banche Popolari in the Mezzogiorno.” A’Hearn makes note of the difficulty of social traditional ways and how it was and still is affected by regional incomes and states:

Yet from the beginning wide regional differences were evident along the North-South divide: differences in land tenure and agricultural production, in the progress of industrialization, in the provision of infrastructure, in financial development in the distribution of income, in literacy, and in political institutions (67-68) 43

All of these contribute to social traditions that hamper the southern regions in Italy. A’Hearn is correct and acknowledges education as the most pivotal part of these social factors. Education will allow social integration to occur smoothly. 44 This improved social integration will result in the growing tolerance among the Italian people, especially between the northern and southern Italians.

42 Alessia, Italian Culture and Civilization.
44 Ibid., pp. 67-70.
Overall, every properly educated generation from now on will be breaking down the southern social traditions. Funding from the Italian national government needs to increase or at least continue steadily for more progress to be made in the breakdown of this poverty producing traditions, as well as in improving social integration.

6. Conclusion

The underdevelopment of southern Italy can to be solved through the implementation of this multifaceted proposal. This will eliminate geographic disadvantages, the lack of industrialization, political corruption, and the poverty driven aspects of the traditional southern lifestyle.

First of all, geographic hindrance can be transformed through programs of public works by the Italian national government and/or with the financial assistance from the European Union. This would bring jobs to the southern population as the government hires local workers from the southern regions. The economy of the south would feed off of these public works and this will increases household income. The economic basis of industrialization can be put into place in this way.

Eventually, these newly experienced workers have to find new jobs towards the end of their stints with public works. This would seem like a setback, but it isn’t. These newly experienced workers could find jobs in the central and or northern regions of Italy. Possibly, more industries would relocate to the southern regions knowing that there are experienced workers waiting to work. Also, some of these newly experienced workers could start up their own businesses in the southern regions to make a greater profit as entrepreneurs.
Southern politicians will see this ever-changing landscape and try to benefit from this through political gains. They would help support localized southern industries through economic backing from the national government of Italy and European Union structural policies and tax revenue. This would keep their populations economically stable and in return the politicians would receive political stability through electoral victories. Yet, industrial and political corruption could still be a problem. This is why the national government would have to take steps to enforce proper ethical relations between industries and politicians with existing and/or new governmental departments. Also, these governmental departments would create more jobs for the nation-state of Italy.

Finally, education would flourish with the increase of industrial and corporate jobs, because these jobs require higher education. Each generation in southern Italy would then be better prepared through education to obtain these industrial and corporate jobs. Also, this would radically change the social factors that contribute to economic complacency and age-old unawareness. Thus, all of these factors will be solved and the underdevelopment and poverty of southern Italy will be a problem of the past.

In the end, this problem that affects the nation-state of Italy occurs in other nations as well, but in different extremes. The economic extremes are very troublesome for a nation of Italy’s grandeur. Underdevelopment and poverty should not exist in Italy today. Inadequate solutions in the past, coupled with neglect, have let this problem get out of hand. A multifaceted proposal solution, with a focus on the specific factors contributing to the underdevelopment, will revive prosperity in southern Italy and in the nation-state of Italy as a whole.
Bibliography


