Taking Back Sicily: The Antimafia Movement and its Counter-Hegemonic Attack on Cosa Nostra

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Abstract
This thesis utilizes Gramscian theory to explore the antimafia movement’s shift in tactics from the 1980s to present day. The movement that arose out of the violence of 1980s Sicily is hardly the same in nature as the contemporary movement. During the 1980s, the mafia was conceptualized mainly as a political problem requiring political solutions. When legislative reforms did not eradicate the mafia’s entrenched power, however, Cosa Nostra came to be perceived as a cultural phenomenon. In order to curb mafia power, therefore, the antimafia movement recognized the need to focus on society as the agent that could deliver Sicily into a new future. Using my own fieldwork from Sicily, it will be shown that the movement has changed its focus over time from state to society. Gramscian theory will be employed to argue that the antimafia movement is counter-hegemonic in nature, as it works to eliminate the physical and ideological domination Cosa Nostra has held over Sicilians for nearly 150 years. Moreover, Gramsci’s ideas will show why — when challenging hegemonic power — it is not enough for civil society to target the state for reform. Rather, the antimafia movement must engage in a deliberate and evolving attack on Cosa Nostra, working amongst society in order to redirect Sicily’s political, social, and economic trajectory that the mafia has dictated since the 1860s.

Level of Access
Open Access

Date of Graduation
Spring 5-2011

Degree Name
Bachelor of Arts

Recommended Citation

Number of Pages
179