# Economics in the Post-Imperium Realms

Astronomy specialists within the Universalist order estimate that Imperium space contains up to 1000 stars. The vast majority of these are red dwarf irregulars, and have no inhabited planets. Almost all the remainder are orange or yellow stars. A handful are red or blue giants, and there are an unknown number of "black stars" (neutron stars and pulsars), white dwarfs (leftover remnants of nova explosions), and brown dwarfs (stars that never grew large enough to start hydrogen fusion).

All the orange and yellow stars in Imperium space having stable planets in the habitable zone have human populations and self-sustaining ecologies. The Universalists and the Atlanteans agree that these are the result of colonizing and terraforming efforts dating back to ages lost to history. A few Reformer sects hold that these worlds were terraformed and seeded with primitive life eons ago and that human life evolved separately on each world. The Universalists point out the unlikelihood of evolutionary processes producing one species in a multitude of separate environments. The Reformers point out, since space travel had been available long before the oldest currently-existing historical records began, it is impossible to say what biological differences there may have been among the separate worlds originally.

Most human worlds in Imperium space are capable of supporting large populations and economies. The fact that most worlds are relatively unpopulated and undeveloped is due mostly to war. This is also the reason why the early records of almost every world are non-existent.

There is in many systems a desperate cycle of desolation from invasion and war, then a slow recovery phase, then a brief prosperous phase where the system either becomes an invader or else the target of invasion, and then the inevitable fall and new desolation. The typical system in Imperial space is therefore in the recovery phase. Most of the population is engaged in subsistence agriculture or light manufacturing. There may be regions where heavy manufacturing and high technology are available, usually due to the influence of ruins of previous civilizations or visits from off-world merchants. Most worlds are ruled by a predatory elite which may or may not be interested in increasing technology or economic development. Poverty, disease, and famine are common.

Worlds that have achieved enough internal stability to be able to profitably trade with spacefaring merchants are few. Usually, the ruling elite is interested in advanced weaponry and luxury goods and not much else, and merchants are usually content to sell these at enormous profits. Worlds entering a prosperity phase usually develop an interest in acquiring advanced medicines, computers and industrial technology, and seek to hire skilled trainers. If they can avoid catastrophe, such worlds may become valuable trading partners with spacefaring powers, or even trade centers, generating enormous wealth for themselves and their neighbors. A planet that has an economy based on interstellar trade can generate ten times the wealth of an isolated world with the same population and resources. Planets with particularly valuable resources or other advanced export potential can become richer still. These are the worlds that become trading powers within Imperium space. These valuable systems become either military powers in themselves or else military targets of other powers.

## Example: Messapia

The Messapia system consists of an orange-yellow primary star with a dim red dwarf companion star orbiting at 500 AU. The primary star has a class-M (Terra-like) planet (Lecce), and one of the gas giant planets has two moons that are class-K (Salento and Brinto). The system was invaded by the Helenics before the founding of Lupo, and native culture and language was displaced by a steady immigration. The system was on the natural travel path between the Helenic core region and its expansion region, so it grew into an important spaceport. Lecce imported agricultural products from nearby systems, and then resold them to the Helenic traders. Salento and Brinto became known for ship building and repair. During wartime, Messapia became an important rear staging area for the Helenics. As the Lupo system expanded during its Republic period, Messapia was subjugated, as were the other Helenic colonies. Casualties and destruction during that war were light, but the main trade routes shifted away from Messapia. The shipyards closed, and Messapia began to be an importer of goods from Lupo and then a distributor to nearby systems. This situation persisted during the long years of the Imperium. Messapia was at peace, moderately wealthy, but not a major world, and had no independent power.

During the final decline of the Imperium, Allemanic invaders swept through the region. They did not intend to stay and build, so they devastated Messapia taking whatever they could carry. Salento and Brinto became totally depopulated, and the ancient machines that kept their atmospheres breathable were allowed to deteriorate to ruins. Lecce lost all trade income, and became isolated. Its population became impoverished, and starvation and disease followed thereafter.

When the first scouts of the Novine Empire arrived centuries later, Messapia was a poor system with an economy based on subsistence agriculture. All advanced technology was lost. The Novines used Messapia as a base for invasion of the Lupanian core systems, and Messapia enjoyed a century-long resurgence as the economy switched towards servicing the military units passing through.

As the Novine Empire's strength waned, the ships arriving at Messapia became fewer and fewer, and poverty began to return. Messapia never did regain the technology and knowledge it had lost during the fall of the Imperium centuries before, and the Novines did not expend their resources to build up the system. The moons of Salento and Brinto remained barren. Messapia slowly lost what few slow starships it had gained during the Novine period, and again became isolated from the rest of humanity. Every once in a while, a Langobardian merchant ship would arrive, selling weapons and luxury goods to the Messapian ruling elite.

Centuries after the Novines left, representatives of the Universalist Society began to arrive. At first, they were interested in exploring the ruins of the Helenic and Imperial cities, but eventually, they began to found schools. Ambitious and talented Messapians saw the Universalists as their one option for a better life, and those trained by the Universalists travelled to other systems to pursue riches and knowledge. They did not often return home, so Messapia remained an undeveloped backwater system.