

# A Renewed Mediterranean Agenda

## Gaetano Armao



International Institute for Global Analyses

Vision & Global Trends. International Institute for Global Analyses  
Piazza dei Navigatori 22, 00147 – Rome (Italy)  
Analytical Dossier – N. 16/2021 – March 2021

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the Vision & Global Trends. International Institute for Global Analyses unless explicitly stated otherwise.

© 2021 Vision & Global Trends - International Institute for Global Analyses  
© 2021 Gaetano Armao

First Edition: March 2021

Analytical Dossier 16/2021 - ISSN 2704-6419

[www.vision-gt.eu](http://www.vision-gt.eu)  
[info@vision-gt.eu](mailto:info@vision-gt.eu)

# A Renewed Mediterranean agenda

## Gaetano Armao



Vision & Global Trends - International Institute for Global Analyses

# A RENEWED MEDITERRANEAN AGENDA<sup>1</sup>

Gaetano Armao

Vice-President of the Sicilian Region - Presidency of the Intermediterranean Commission (IMC) of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR)

The CPMR Intermediterranean Commission Network, which brings together more than 40 regions from the different shores of the Mediterranean, under the leadership of the Sicilian Region, is working to promote the consolidation of a cohesive and interacting Mediterranean region through strategic cooperation initiatives and activities. All these, within the framework put in place in recent decades with the *European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)* <sup>2</sup>, are accompanied by the dynamics of the Barcelona Process, whose 25th anniversary we celebrated last year, a process that commits the institutions involved to transform the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation, ensuring peace, stability and cooperation, ensuring peace, stability and prosperity.

Today, we stand alongside the Union for the Mediterranean<sup>3</sup>, the organization which acts for cohesion in the basin, and is also one of the key partners of this Commission, looking with renewed hope to the potential of a new policy for the Mediterranean, the "Middle Sea", whose millennial history has recently been reread in John Julius Norwich's golden book (Sellerio, 2020).

"What is the Mediterranean?" Fernand Braudel<sup>4</sup> asked himself in his investigation on the oldest sea in human history: "*A thousand things at once. Not*

---

<sup>1</sup> Statement made to the Policy Office of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR), on March 26<sup>th</sup> 2021. The Intermediterranean Commission of the Conference, chaired by the Sicilian Region and by the President Nello Musumeci, brings together over forty regions from ten different countries of the Mediterranean basin: Cyprus, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Portugal, Morocco and Tunisia.

<sup>2</sup> The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) applies to Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, and Ukraine. It is intended to strengthen the prosperity, stability and security of all countries involved. The ENP is based on democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and is a bilateral policy between the Union and each partner country, which includes regional cooperation initiatives: the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the Union for the Mediterranean.

<sup>3</sup> The Union for the Mediterranean is an intergovernmental institution that brings together the Member States of the European Union and 15 countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean to promote dialogue and cooperation.

<sup>4</sup> *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1949, transl. it. 1953, new edition 1966, transl. it. 1976).

*one landscape, but countless landscapes. Not one sea, but a succession of seas. Not one civilization, but a series of civilizations piled on top of each other<sup>5</sup> "*

My region, Sicily, is not only the largest island in the Mediterranean, but it represents, for history and culture, its synthesis, having welcomed over time the coastal peoples (Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, but also Europeans: Normans, Swabians, Spaniards, French). It is also a geo-strategic and logistical reference point for the entire Mediterranean area, from the transport sector, to the energy sector, to the digital sector, in the latter case as a hub of the largest backbones for data transmission connecting the two hemispheres of the world<sup>6</sup>. Sicily intends to fulfill this role also through the Intermediterranean Commission building peace, cultural and economic comparison, progress.

Following recent Communication by the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on "*A Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood: A New Agenda for the Mediterranean*"<sup>7</sup>, members of the Intermediterranean Commission have discussed several aspects of its content, the essence of which I would like to share in the considerations before the Political Bureau Policy.

In fact, in view of a potential, in our opinion urgent, review of the European Neighborhood Policy for the South in the next period<sup>8</sup>, our reflection must be articulated around several points concerning governance and thematic areas, assuming that the Southern Mediterranean region is facing socio-economic challenges - first of all those determined by the pandemic - climate, environmental, governance and security, many of which arise from global trends and require joint action by the EU and the Southern Neighborhood partners.

<sup>5</sup> For a reflection on the Mediterranean and the reconstructive contribution of the French scholar see for all S. TUSA, *Primo Mediterraneo. Meditazioni sul mare più antico della storia*, Ragusa, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Let me refer you to my contribution *Digital Agenda Sicily: "So the technology will be a lever for the redemption of the Island"* at <https://www.agendadigitale.eu/cittadinanza-digitale/agenda-digitale-siciliana-cosi-la-tecnologia-saraleva-per-il-riscatto-dellisola/>

<sup>7</sup> To revitalize and strengthen the strategic partnership between the European Union and its Southern Neighborhood partners, the European Commission and the High Representative adopted a joint communication on February 9, 2021, proposing an ambitious and innovative new Agenda for the Mediterranean, see <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0002&from=it>

<sup>8</sup> The new Agenda focuses on 5 areas of focus:

- Human development, good governance, and rule of law - Renewing our shared commitment to democracy, rule of law, human rights, and accountable governance;
- Resilience, Prosperity, and Digital Transition - Support resilient, inclusive, and connected economies that create opportunities for all, especially women and youth;
- Peace and Security - Providing support to countries to address security challenges and find solutions to ongoing conflicts;
- Migration and mobility - Jointly addressing the challenges of forced displacement and irregular migration and facilitating legal and safe pathways for migration and mobility;
- Green transition: climate resilience, energy and environment - Protecting the region's natural resources and generating green growth by harnessing the potential of a low-carbon future.

The strengthening of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, on which the European Institutions are committed, as well as the Member Countries and the Regions, starting from Sicily, involves by way of example:

- local and regional authorities that have been and are on the front line, both in past and current crises, on the one hand witnessing their evolution and on the other playing an undeniable and crucial role in supporting local communities in difficulty. **Multilevel governance must therefore be strengthened and imagined as a fundamental basis for the future implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy.** This concept, unfortunately, is not mentioned even once as such in the Communication in question, although it is of extreme importance and it is therefore our duty to demand its integration;
- moreover, as immediate emergencies may become more frequent, institutional responses must be combined with investments and long-term transition processes that address the root causes of crises. While the *European Recovery and Resilience Plan* and the next funding agenda 2021-2027 are under discussion, the current socio-economic situation of local communities requires that the definition of funds **reflect territorial needs and that their implementation be as rapid and relevant as possible;**
- more specifically, local and regional authorities must be involved and empowered through a solid **co-ownership and territorialization of the ENP**, considering the **decentralization of powers** and **decentralized cooperation** as key tools to promote peace, democracy ensuring greater stability and security of the Mediterranean area in the long run;
- likewise, **networks of regional and local authorities** should assume a significant role in the institutional cooperation and democratic effort pursued with Europe's southern neighbourhood. For example, the *Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance (MedCoopAlliance)*<sup>9</sup> represents a concrete example of such multilevel governance and cooperation, complementary to that of macro-regional strategies or sea basin initiatives;
- *MedCoopAlliance* represents, indeed, a strong ally and a tool to support the **territorialisation** of the **European Neighbourhood Policy for the South**, in coherence with the implementation of the Global Agenda 2030

---

<sup>9</sup> The "Alliance for Cooperation in the Mediterranean", #MedCooperationAlliance, was launched in Barcelona on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in order to reflect on the future of cooperation in the Mediterranean Region, towards a common and long-term strategy for a sustainable and integrated territorial development of the basin, by the *CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, the Euroregion Pyrenees-Mediterranean, the Euroregion Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion and the networks of local authorities MedCities and Arco Latino*, available at <https://www.adriaticionianeuroregion.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/IT-Alleanza-per-la-cooperazione-nel-Mediterraneo.pdf>

and related strategies, such as the European Green Pact and its neighbourhood dimension, the work of the Union for the Mediterranean or that of ARLEM of the European Committee of the Regions;

- at the same time, macro-regional and sea basin strategies are a relevant and appropriate approach to implementing such territorialisation and are frameworks for action that should be exploited in synergy with the implementation of the ENP;

- the progressive creation of a **comprehensive basin strategy**, complementary to the *EUSAIR* and *WestMED* initiatives towards the Eastern part of the Mediterranean basin, should be planned and supported through the ENP. This, in a process towards a single long-term integrated strategy for the Mediterranean, or at least aimed at a robust **coordination mechanism** that could see the light of day in the current decade;

- in addition, **South-South cooperation** between territories with similar characteristics and needs should be enhanced through the ENP in order to make programs and projects more goal-oriented and with a real impact on the local community;

- thematically, the ENP should better recognize **its transversality to Mediterranean socio-economic sectors**, considering to a greater extent **the transversality of the climate crisis**. Cooperation to mitigate the impacts of climate change and building more resilient economies should be the perspectives under which any socio-economic improvement action should be undertaken;

- as for its transversality, green and **sustainable reform should therefore be the main pillar of the ENP for the Mediterranean** (and not just a "section" of it), if not a *condicio sine qua non* to strengthen socio-economic partnerships across sectors, and through multi-level governance, also fostering public-private partnerships, cluster dynamics, links with civil society, and helping to meet other agendas in a complementary way, such as that of the **UfM and its latest ministerial declaration on the blue economy**<sup>10</sup>;

- the experience of local and regional levels in socio-economic sustainability should be **capitalized** to encourage other territories and national levels to move in this direction, thus supporting more efforts to

---

<sup>10</sup> UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN (2015), *Ministerial Conference 10 on Blue Economy*, in [https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015-11-17-declaration-on-blue-economy\\_en.pdf](https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015-11-17-declaration-on-blue-economy_en.pdf), last accessed on 1/8/2019, as well as the declaration of February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Declaration-UfM-Blue-Economy-EN-1.pdf>

On this subject see also *Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean region*, in [https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/UfM-Towards-a-Sustainable-Blue-Economy-in-the-Mediterraneanregion-EN\\_v2.pdf](https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/UfM-Towards-a-Sustainable-Blue-Economy-in-the-Mediterraneanregion-EN_v2.pdf)

build global sustainability pathways, particularly in relation to the blue economy<sup>11</sup>;

- it is worth remembering that **corporate social and environmental responsibility** should be considered to a greater extent and as a prerequisite for the allocation of public funding, while the implementation of sustainable finance principles should be strongly encouraged;
- finally, it is precisely because today's intervention emanates from an island region such as Sicily that the linking role between Europe and the Mediterranean partners that the Mediterranean islands can play, due to their historical, cultural, economic and **geopolitical role**, appears crucial.

We therefore address an invitation to the European Institutions, the Union for the Mediterranean, as well as ARLEM and the Committee of European Regions - of which I have the honour to be a member together with President Musumeci representing Sicily - and the various initiatives and programs previously mentioned, to take note of these recommendations, and I look forward to deepening our collaboration in the very near future towards the new Mediterranean Agenda.

*Gaetano Armao is the Vice President and Councillor for the Economy of the Sicilian regional government. Since 2018, he has been a Member of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union and Vice President of the Islands Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe.*

*He graduated with honors from the University of Palermo in 1985, he specialized with honors in law of financial intermediation at the University of Ferrara in 1988, he attended the doctorate in domestic public law and European community at the University of Palermo. University researcher of administrative law at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Palermo in 1992 and visiting scholar at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in London in 1993. Since 1996 he has taught administrative law and public accounting at the University of Palermo and public economic law at the Mercatorum University. He is a member of the Society of Advanced Legal Studies at the University of London. A lawyer at the Court of Cassation with offices in Palermo and Rome, he has been an expert advisor to the European Council and consultant to national and regional governments for the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission. He was also Vice President of the Teatro Massimo Foundation of Palermo from 2002 to 2005, Regional Ministry of Cultural Heritage in 2010 and Regional Ministry of Economy and Treasury of the Sicilian Government until 2012, participating in the Conference of Italian Regions, the State-Regions Conference, representing the Sicilian Government also the Economic Planning Committee and the Cabinet of the Ministry of State. Member of the Guarantor's Committee for the 150th Anniversary of the Italian Republic in 2011, he was a member of the Permanent National Conference of the Public Finance Coordination Committee. Since 2010 President of the Sicilian UNESCO Commission and the Sicilian Open Government Association. He has published more than eighty essays in administrative law, regional law and public contract law, and has published essays on "The judicial system of the opera and symphony foundations", Turin, 2008, "The compensation related to performance in the public sector: legislative solutions and practices of administrative path ", Palermo 2008, " Differentiated autonomy of the Sicilian government ", Naples, 2013. He also edited the publication of " Fiscal federalism and equalization: the autonomy of responsibility ", Rome 2013 and " New rules of implementation for credit and savings in Sicily ", Turin 2014.*

---

<sup>11</sup> In this regard, remember the report approved in Barcelona, January 23, 2020, at the *eleventh session of the Euro-Mediterranean Assembly of Local and Regional Representatives (ARLEM)*, *Report on the Blue economy for local and regional authorities in the Mediterranean*, rapporteur on V. BIANCO at <https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Documents/ARLEM/5th%20ARLEM%20Commission/Draft%20report%20on%20the%20Blue%20Economy%20for%20local%20and%20regional%20authorities%20in%20the%20Mediterranean%20Region/cor-2019-04007-00-00-tcd-tra-en.pdf> as well as *Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Principles* program developed by the United Nations cf. <https://www.unepfi.org/blue-finance/>





Vision & Global Trends - International Institute for Global Analyses

[www.vision-gt.eu](http://www.vision-gt.eu)

[info@vision-gt.eu](mailto:info@vision-gt.eu)