



ASERI at 30

*Thirty Years
of the Graduate School of Economics
and International Relations*

2.9 Responding to international political change over more than a quarter century

Professor Matthew Evangelista, faculty member of the MAGS Master

Matthew Evangelista is President White Professor of History and Political Science Emeritus at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA. He has been affiliated with ASERI for about twenty-five years. His most recent book is “Allied Air Attacks and Civilian Harm in Italy, 1940-1945: Bombing among Friends” (London: Routledge, 2023), available to download for free through Open Access.

The founding of ASERI – Alta Scuola di Economia e Relazioni Internazionali – in 1995 coincided with the end of a long period of uneasy stability characterized by the Cold War, the militarized division of Europe, and the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. Elsewhere in the world the Cold War represented anything but stability, as the two superpowers took advantage of the nuclear stand-off to intervene militarily in and beyond their spheres of influence. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the US response – military support for the Islamist *mujaheddin* – gave rise to new dangers that continue to influence world politics to this day. The US reaction to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (carried out by al Qaeda militants protected by Afghanistan’s Taliban) and particularly the illegal invasion of Iraq in March 2003, contributed to a destabilization of the Middle East and a seemingly endless ref-

ugee crisis. Meanwhile, economic changes associated with globalization and neoliberal challenges to the welfare state produced a political backlash by increasing inequality in income and wealth. Immigrants and refugees became ready scapegoats for extreme right populist movements that have come to power in many countries, threatening the survival of democratic norms and institutions.

Throughout this period ASERI has been at the forefront of teaching and research about the tumultuous changes affecting the international system. My own relationship with ASERI dates back some twenty-five years and my ASERI-related courses, lectures, and publications reflect this era of change. In 2000 I was invited by Vittorio Parsi to contribute to a volume he was editing with John Ikenberry published the following year as “*Teorie e metodi delle Relazioni Internazionali. La disciplina e la sua evoluzione*” – a collection of essays by Italian and US scholars reflecting the accumulated knowledge of the field at a point of transition. My own contribution to domestic structure and foreign policy summarized an important theoretical influence on my own work, even as my research and teaching interests were shifting to new areas. From studies of US-Soviet military policies, arms control, and transnational efforts to end the Cold War I moved to a focus on ethical and legal issues associated with the so-called Global War on Terror and the role of gender in the nationalist violence that erupted in places like former Yugoslavia and Chechnya.

My first involvement with ASERI came when I was invited to a conference on “*Guerra, pace, e sicurezza: nuove sfide, vecchie risposte?*” in May 2002. At that point I had been living with my family in Italy for about four months, as a Jean

Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute. I had begun studying the Italian language for the first time a few years earlier while already serving on the faculty at Cornell University, in classes with students twenty years younger than I was (I remember one of them commenting about the singer Madonna, who shares my birth year: “She’s old!”). Although my language skills remained limited, I was determined to deliver my lecture at the conference in Italian and worked hard to translate it. I was so successful that when the lecture was published the next year as a chapter in the book, “Che differenza può fare un giorno: Guerra, pace e sicurezza dopo l’11 settembre”, the editors considered it better to start with the original English-language text and retranslate it into Italian.

An early association with ASERI came when I read and published a review of Vittorio Parsi’s book, “Interesse nazionale e globalizzazione: I regimi democratici nelle trasformazioni del sistema post-westfaliano”. It influenced my thinking about the limits of neoliberal economic policy and its potentially negative effects on democracy. The first course I taught at ASERI, “Ethical Issues in Globalization,” reflected insights I gained from this prescient book. The course covered topics including demographic change, economic decline, and the “youth bulge” as contributors to civil war, global warming, the environmental crisis, and the “resource curse.”

The ASERI leadership was always open to my suggestions of what to teach as I tried to reflect in my teaching as well as my scholarship the transformations we observed in international politics. For more than twenty years I have taught in two ASERI programs, the Master in Advanced Global Studies (MAGS, previously Master in International Relations) and

the Master in Economics and International Policies (MEPIN), offered jointly with the Università della Svizzera italiana in Lugano. The latter, Italian-language program made an exception for me to teach in English – much to the gratitude of the students who were spared my still-mediocre Italian. My MEPIN course for the last several years has been “The Return of Russia to International Politics” – a return that has upended the post-Cold War order, brought a devastating interstate conflict to Europe for the first time since World War II, and transformed global politics in a way few would have predicted at the founding of ASERI or my involvement with its programs.

For more than ten years the focus in my MAGS course has been on ethical and legal issues related to war. Since much of the basis for the laws of war comes from the Just War tradition, it seemed appropriate to be teaching in the area of Milan whose nearest metro stops – Sant’Ambrogio and Sant’Agostino – honor Bishop Ambrose and his guest Augustine of Hippo, who went on to develop several fundamental Just War principles. Even within a common framework reflecting international law and ethics of war, the course’s focus has changed over time. Questions about “humanitarian intervention” and the illegal practices of counterterrorist policies (torture, kidnapping, and extrajudicial killing) gave way to concerns about excessive harm to civilians in Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and Israel’s destruction of Gaza and what constitutes genocide. Topics such as nonviolent civilian resistance, the ethics of economic sanctions, and the role of gender remained relevant to the recent wars, even as we came to doubt that law and ethics could play much of a constraining role on states’ use of violence.

ASERI has maintained an active program of publication from its inception as well as regular lectures under the auspices of the Leading Scholars Program and the School of Global Politics. I was grateful to be invited often to lectures and to have my articles published in edited volumes and in the university's journal, *Vita e Pensiero*. I was also glad to participate in ASERI's numerous international initiatives, starting with an educational exchange with Russian scholars at Novosibirsk State University in November 2002. There I gave a lecture on "International Law as a Source of Russian-European Cooperation," proposing that Russia does not follow the illegal practices of the United States in its reaction to the threat of terrorism but rather work with European states to develop a more law-abiding approach to security. Given Russia's atrocities in its military interventions in Chechnya, Syria, and Ukraine, the proposal seems even more naïve now than it did then. Still, I was glad to participate in the initiative that allowed me to discuss with Russian colleagues our common interests, for example, in teaching about the role of gender in politics – a topic that the regimes of both Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump have since denounced. I enjoyed meeting the Italian participants in the exchange, including some, such as Fabio Armao, who have become lifelong friends.

The US invasion of Iraq in March 2003, in the face of opposition from the United Nations and even some NATO allies, influenced the work of ASERI in several ways. In spring 2005, Cornell's Institute for European Studies hosted a conference called "Inevitable Alliance? European-American Relations after the Iraq Invasion". At the suggestion of Vittorio Parsi, he and I edited a volume from the revised papers, "Part-

ners or Rivals? European-American Relations after Iraq”. It was published by Vita e Pensiero and distributed by Cornell University Press – a fitting token of the collaboration between ASERI and my home university. Professor Parsi also generously supported an Italian translation of my book, “Law, Ethics, and the War on Terror” with the same publisher.

In October 2005, ASERI invited a delegation from Iraq – then suffering from a civil war in the wake of the US invasion – to attend a series of mini-courses based on the regular curriculum in international politics. I was invited to give a seminar on “Ethics, Politics, and Human Rights”. It was a valuable but humbling experience for me. One of my topics, the humanitarian costs of economic sanctions, I had developed on the basis of a case study of Iraq after Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War of 1991. Now I was supposed to teach people who had experienced the pain inflicted by my government first-hand. I was particularly struck by my discussion with a woman who had been persecuted under the Sunni-dominated Ba’athist regime for her Shi’a beliefs. Despite having been imprisoned by Saddam Hussain, she remained critical of the US invasion and sanctions. Why, she wondered, did the United States bomb the capital city Baghdad in 1991 when its invasion was intended to dislodge the Iraqi troops from Kuwait? Why harm civilians rather than confine the use of force to the direct engagement with the Iraqi army? These were some of the questions we confronted in my course, as we discussed the ethics and legality of aerial bombardment.

Similar questions were raised by Serbian opponents of the dictatorial regime of Slobodan Milošević when in 1999

NATO conducted a 77-day bombing campaign to halt the Serb massacres of Albanian residents of Kosovo – another case that we discussed in my courses. Rather than send troops directly to expel Serb militia forces from the province, NATO bombed Belgrade and other cities in Serbia proper. NATO bombing raids hit some of the most anti-Milošević areas of Serbia, such as Nis and Novi Sad, depriving them of electricity and killing many civilians. The military intervention in Kosovo – NATO’s first war ever – provided an opportunity to discuss a range of Just War concepts, including the *ad bellum* principles of just cause, right authority, and reasonable hope, and the *in bello* principles of distinction and proportionality.

During my twenty-five years of involvement with ASERI, I developed a deep affection and respect for a remarkable group of faculty colleagues and administrative staff. Yet the core of any educational institution is its student body, and ASERI has been fortunate to attract outstanding students from around the world. Over the years I have benefited from interacting with students from Europe, Africa, Asia, and North and South America. In recent years the large majority of the students have been women – a welcome change for a field that has traditionally been male-dominated – and some of the best-prepared and most-engaged have been graduates of the Cattolica in foreign languages and international relations. It has been wonderful to witness their high level of fluency in English and their ability to engage critically on a range of theoretical and empirical issues. I also felt privileged to supervise more than twenty Master theses (“project work”).

I have always sought to solicit discussion and comments from students, even in courses mainly based on lectures. In

2013, however, I made a major change in my pedagogical approach to my ASERI courses: I converted the classes from lecture to seminar format. I would no longer present lectures to passive recipients. Instead, the students would read the articles from the syllabus in advance of our first meeting and come prepared to discuss them. To ensure their preparation, they would write and circulate among themselves and to me short papers engaging the readings for one of the course topics, identifying points of agreement and disagreement among the authors and offering their own views. This work was demanding, but the pay-off was substantial, and the students seem to have appreciated it. Our class sessions were characterized by lively discussions and increasing activities such as debates and simulations. Following an overview of the topic and some discussion of the readings, we would typically break up the class into small groups for research, discussion, and preparation and then reassemble to conduct the activity. That way the students who might be reluctant to speak up before the whole class would have the opportunity to participate in the smaller groups and perhaps even serve as a spokesperson for the group, when we reconvened. Then they could speak from a prepared text, whereas if they had to speak spontaneously during a class discussion they might have remained silent. The discussion-based format enriched the teaching experience for me, and, I hope, the learning experience for the students.

During the academic year 2022-2023, following the horrendous attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2022 and Israel's relentless retaliation that killed tens of thousands of civilians in Gaza, I began hearing from US colleagues that they were avoiding discussing the situation. Charges of Israeli genocide

brought by South Africa before the International Court of Justice, the indictment and arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, debates over whether slaughtering and kidnapping civilian men, women, and children constituted a legitimate form of Palestinian “resistance” – these topics were simply too controversial for US classrooms. And this was two years before Donald Trump’s second administration launched its assault on academic freedom and freedom of expression on university campuses. My teaching career at Cornell was coming to an end, as I faced retirement, but I was still teaching at ASERI. I immediately rewrote my syllabi to address these difficult ethical and legal issues. I knew that ASERI would provide a venue for thoughtful and reasoned discussion, and I was not disappointed. The level of maturity and mutual respect I encountered among my students was gratifying. Even if the world has arguably changed for the worse in my twenty-five years of teaching at ASERI, the institution itself is strong and offers hope for the future.



Prof. Francesco Mazzucotelli and Prof. Paolo Maria Maggiolini at lesson
of Prof. Vittorio Emanuele Parsi and Prof. Reza Aslan
Leading Scholars' Program, May 2007



From the left: Prof. Matthew A. Evangelista and Prof. Vittorio Emanuele Parsi
Leading Scholars' Program, July 2007

ASERI at 30

*Thirty Years of the Graduate School
of Economics and International Relations*



EDUCatt

Milano 2025

© 2025 **EDUCatt - Ente per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario dell'Università Cattolica**
Largo Gemelli 1, 20123 Milano – tel. 02.7234.22.35 – fax 02.80.53.215
e-mail: editoriale.dsu@educatt.it (produzione); librario.dsu@educatt.it (distribuzione)
web: <https://libri.educatt.online/>
Associato all'AIE – Associazione Italiana Editori
ISBN: 979-12-5535-443-7

Progetto grafico di copertina: Studio editoriale EDUCatt
In copertina: Villino ASERI, May 2025

Questo volume è stato stampato nel mese di giugno 2025
presso la Litografia Solari - Peschiera Borromeo (Milano)
su materiali e tecnologia ecocompatibili

Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations	7
Preface	11
<i>Professor Lorenzo Ornaghi, Honorary President of ASERI</i>	
Introduction	17
<i>Professor Damiano Palano, Director of ASERI</i>	
1. From Vision to Reality: Thirty Years of ASERI	21
<i>Dr. Mattia Fumagalli Ph.D.</i>	
1.1 The Birth of an Idea (1995-1996)	22
1.2 Early Challenges and the Structuring of Academic Programmes (1996-2000).....	27
1.3 Growth, Research and Internationalization (2006-2025).....	30
2. Thought, Education and Research: The Contribution of ASERI Faculty	37
2.1 ASERI 30 years mission: sailing the waves of international turbulence	38
<i>Professor Vittorio Emanuele Parsi, Director of MEPIN Master</i>	
2.2 International cooperation and development in a world of power	44
<i>Professor Simona Beretta, Director of MICAD Master</i>	
2.3 Moving Culture into the Security agenda	53
<i>Professor Federica Olivares, Director of MAPCD Master</i>	

2.4	MIMES: a Cognitive Compass for understanding the Middle East in a Changing International System.....	60
	<i>Professor Riccardo Redaelli, Director of MIMES Master</i>	
2.5	Yemen’s Transformative Conflict: A Political, Academic (and Personal) Reflection.....	67
	<i>Professor Eleonora Ardemagni, faculty member of the MIMES Master</i>	
2.6	Genocide: the highest stage of liberalism.....	73
	<i>Professor Marina Calculli, faculty member of the MEPIN Master</i>	
2.7	Paul Kennedy and the American Century.....	83
	<i>Professor Michael Cox, faculty member of the MAGS Master</i>	
2.8	Cultural Diplomacy, a program and a foreign policy moment.....	94
	<i>Professor Nicholas J. Cull, faculty member of the MAPCD Master</i>	
2.9	Responding to international political change over more than a quarter century.....	100
	<i>Professor Matthew Evangelista, faculty member of the MAGS Master</i>	
2.10	Reflections on My First Years at ASERI.....	108
	<i>Professor Joseph M. Grieco, faculty member of the MEPIN Master</i>	
2.11	Reflections on My Years with ASERI.....	115
	<i>Professor G. John Ikenberry, faculty member of the MEPIN Master</i>	
2.12	ASERI – the next 30 years.....	119
	<i>Professor Ludger Kühnhardt, faculty member of the MAGS Master</i>	
2.13	A Latin American Fondness for ASERI.....	130
	<i>Professor Andres Malamud, faculty member of the MAGS Master</i>	

2.14	A Special Time at a Special Place: Personal Reflections on Three Decades of Teaching at ASERI.....	133
	<i>Professor Michael Mastanduno, faculty member of the MEPIN Master</i>	
2.15	ASERI at 30: Reflections on a Shared Journey of Learning, Partnership, and Impact	138
	<i>co-authored by Elisabetta Minelli – faculty member of the MICAD Master –, Vanessa Candeias – faculty member of the MICAD Master – and Doctor Giuliano Gargioni</i>	
2.16	The Impact of Terrorism on the Red Sea Region.....	145
	<i>Professor Beatrice Nicolini, faculty member of the MAGS Master</i>	
3.	ASERI Alumni: Through the Eyes of Those Who Lived It.	153
3.1	In the beginning, the seed of development	154
	<i>Roberto Brambilla</i>	
3.2	From my Bedroom Wall to the World	161
	<i>Dr. Elena Angeleri Ph.D.</i>	
3.3	A Map to Understand the World: My ASERI Years.....	167
	<i>Angelo Bongio</i>	
3.4	Future Perfect. Studying at ASERI in a Changing World	171
	<i>Professor Raul Caruso</i>	
3.5	ASERI 1995: A life-changing experience	176
	<i>Professor Giuseppe Gabusi</i>	
3.6	From Uncertainty to Lifelong Friendship: My ASERI Journey	181
	<i>Timothy Herrmann</i>	
3.7	A truly global experience in changing times: my journey through ASERI.....	185
	<i>Dr. Ignacio Fernando Lara Ph.D.</i>	
3.8	From Learning to Leading: my ASERI Journey	191
	<i>Giovanna Lazzarini</i>	
3.9	My experience as an ASERI student (1999-2000)	195
	<i>Professor Andrea Locatelli</i>	

3.10	From Milan to the World: How ASERI Shaped My Global Path	199
	<i>Filippo Oggioni</i>	
3.11	Reflections on My Master’s Experience in Milan (2000)	201
	<i>Melissa Rizzo Battistella</i>	
3.12	ASERI 30 years – a contribution to celebrate	205
	<i>Arouna Roshanian</i>	
3.13	Thirty Years of ASERI: Shaping a Career from Milan to China	209
	<i>Professor Thomas Albert Rosenthal</i>	
	Conclusions	215
	Acknowledgements	217
	Visual Memories of ASERI	219