

GRADUATION DAY CEREMONY

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Master in International Relations

Michele Varalda

Dear professors, Dear families and friends, Dear fellow ASERI Students,

I am very honored to be here today in front of you to speak on behalf of the 2016 Class of the Master in International Relations and I hope my contribution will reflect also the view and the feelings of my colleagues.

I have been asked to tell you what the last year meant for me and my class, but rather than focusing on numbers, lessons, papers or academic and professional accomplishments, I would like to consider how the Master contributed for me to the build-up of a new perspective.

Let me start with a brief remark about my personal experience.

The main reason why I decided to apply for the Master in International Relations at ASERI did not depend primarily on the willingness to work in the field of international relations, but from the desire to learn and acquire a new perspective through which understand and interpret what is happening in the world.

Coming from philosophical studies, I already had a bag of categories, but I needed something new to complete my *weltanschauung* and the Master could represent a further step in my intellectual journey. This journey has come to an unexpected ending, considering how it began: right after the end of the last exams in July, I began my internship in the Investment Banking division of UniCredit Bank, here in Milan and I expect to continue my career in the field of financial services. It may be asked how and why a philosopher ends to work in an Investment Bank dealing with Anti-Money Laundering and Countering of Terrorist Financing. I would answer by saying that this Master, thanks to a faculty composed both by academics and qualified professionals, provided me with the instruments and the skills to easily get along with professional experiences not directly related to international relations, or philosophy. As I always say, I applied at ASERI expecting that the Master would have been a “school of diplomacy”, but it ended being mainly a Master in Economics with some courses in International Relations, and honestly I cannot be happier.

Now that we have reached the end of the programme, I can easily say that my academic and professional expectations, even in an unconventional and unexpected way, have been completely satisfied, and I hope my colleagues share my same feeling. Everything in the Master has been an enrichment to me and everything contributed to develop a new look and a new viewpoint.

Among the various aspects which played a significant role during the Master, what influenced the most my experience can be summarized in a single word: diversity. Diversities coming from the faculty and the Master’s programme itself, but specially diversities coming from the people I shared this course with.

Our class is composed by 19 people coming from 10 different countries and 3 different continents. It is this heterogeneity of nationalities, cultures, religions and even food that contributed mostly to make real and tangible all the political and economic issues addressed during the course, and helped me understand that diversity is always a possibility of enrichment.

The priceless value of the differences of our group came out vehemently through every class, when every issue and every topic became an opportunity to match ourselves and questioning our beliefs and convictions: many times, during the last months I changed some of my deeply rooted opinions, in every field, not only in politics or economics. Throughout my previous years, I met a lot of different people holding and defending divergent ideas and beliefs as compared to mine, but never, such as at ASERI, I had the opportunity to live so close and share so much with people of other nationalities and other cultures. The worth of national, cultural and intellectual diversity, and the need for it to be continuously preserved and appreciated is the greatest teaching that I take home at the end of this path.

To the incoming students of next year, I would like to say that the Master in International Relations is a tough experience, where you will engage with new and, sometimes, difficult issues and topics, but it is such an enriching experience that every effort will be repaid.

To my colleagues, I would like to say, Congratulations guys! We finally did it! I hope that the last year has been a great experience as it has been for me and I wish us all the best in our lives and in our careers.

I cannot conclude without saying a great Thank you, to all the ASERI Staff that accompanied us during the last months: to our invaluable tutor Elisa, for her patience and her constant support through lessons and exams; to Mrs. Nadia, thank to whom our school is a perfectly organized machine; to Prof. Parsi, Prof. Zoboli and the rest of our Faculty for the quality of the teaching and for always having represented an opportunity of a constant confrontation and clash of ideas.

I would like to personally thank Dr. Raoul Ascari and Prof. Paul Dembinski for having been able to convey to me the passion for their subject and their work.

A final thanks to my family and my girlfriend Veronica who supported me during the last year and hopefully will continue to do so for a long time.

Thank you very much to everyone and have a great life.

Master in International Cooperation and Development

Talisa zur Hausen

Dear future world-savers,

First of all – congratulations to us! I have to admit that even before starting this Masters I was looking forward to this particular day and being able to wear this crown on top of my head.

In the end time flew by so incredibly quickly that arriving at ASERI for the first time feels like a couple of months ago. I remember so well how we entered our beautiful classroom (where we nearly fainted of heat in the summer months – but that's secondary), I remember how we got to know each other better and better and friendships started to form. I also very well remember all the fun group works we had – something I might not miss all too much in my future adult life.

In any case, our time at ASERI was depicted by ups and downs. Courses we all enjoyed (at least I did) and courses we very much struggled in. We learned to relate game theory, statistics and economics to development cooperation and will hopefully be able to show off this acquired knowledge in our future careers (taken you still remember any of it). I must admit that up until today Excel and I are not the greatest of friends but one day I will hopefully enjoy it as much as Mialy does...

So, we had practical and hands-on courses, and some more theoretical – but all in all we went through these lengthy days (9 to 5, like a full time job) together. We had lunches in the ASERI courtyard, enjoyed the delicious paninis around the corner and indulged in aperitivos if we still had the energy to do so. We simultaneously survived a week packed with six exams and six hour lectures – all while the weather in Milan changed from cold to unbearably hot.

In this entire process though we got to know each others differences and similarities and had the honor to study amongst twenty diverse nationalities. I mean how awesome was it to constantly relate to our personal backgrounds when discussing issues of international cooperation? Thanks to Adriana, the gravity of Colombia's peace agreement now makes even more sense to me, grace to Melina and Dragana I am slowly starting to grasp what the hell happened in the Balkans and thanks to Nubi's Egypt examples we will now never forget the phrase: "In my country"... I could continue with examples of Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, the U.S. and even Italy – but time is limited. Still, thanks for all that everyone!

And in addition to our cultural differences, we also had different starting points, some still in their post-Bachelor glow, others recently returning from traveling, and even others that had already worked for years on end aiming to switch or diversify their careers. Our classroom was therefore filled with world travelers, nurses, bankers, physicists, economists, lawyers, and so on and so forth. This was topped by a diverse range of teachers and professors, telling us fascinating stories of the field, be it Afghanistan or South-Sudan, hereby encouraging our yearnings to pack up our things and go.

Every day was therefore a little trip of its own. We clashed and we made up, we debated and we compromised - in the process establishing our own little micro world of international cooperation. Experiences we can hopefully apply to the actual field rather sooner than later.

In the end, both studying and living here in beautiful Milan (with all its perks) has hopefully prepared us for whatever is still to come. I believe, if we managed to get through ASERI, if we managed to find an internship (which was harder than we expected) and we passed development economics – nothing can stop us.

So, from here on our paths will diverge, but I am sure to be seeing one or the other either by chance or in reunions in hopefully strange parts of the world. I am curious of where we will end up, what we will accomplish and whether our vision of saving the world will uphold.

I also hope that you will make the best out of this Masters and achieve what you are hoping for. I think we have all realized that we entered a damn competitive arena, but I have also learnt that everything is possible if you are patient and try hard enough. So, keep your heads up, stick by your values and be proud of yourselves to be able to be in this beautiful location today – we earned it! Good luck to all of you and thanks for making this experience fun, challenging and interesting at the same time.

Master in Economics and International Policies

Eliana Naddeo

Dear professors, colleagues and friends,

I'm proud to be here today and to have the opportunity to express in front of you how grateful I am to Azeri for the extraordinary training that we have done.

In these days I've been thinking a lot about a specific question that my father is used to ask to himself and his interlocutors and whose flexible mechanism can be applied to different contexts. Here is the question: "Is the University there for students or are students there for the University"? " At first it can seem a stupid question with an obvious answer. But I believe that behind this appearance there is a deeper truth, that is sometimes underestimated. In our ever-changing and faster societies, the University still has a central role: it is supposed to mould, more than ever today, "thinking beings" against ignorance and indifference, new brains that will form the new ruling class, hopefully for the benefit of the common good. People able to think and read the facts of the history, to evaluate current and future scenarios, but more importantly able to take conscious and balanced decisions.

In my opinion, the Master in Economics and International Relations fulfils this task. It was for me the spring that shaped my personal and academic cultural baggage. An incentive to get involved focusing on new topics and subjects, in a multidisciplinary class where mutual exchange was always there, being one of the essential elements, an actual resource.

As well as for the semester in the USI (Università della Svizzera Italiana) of Lugano, marked by tight schedules and an academic approach whose particular aspects I have particularly appreciated.

But the specificity and the success of this master have to be seen above all in the validity of its professors, some of them from foreign contexts such as prof. Mattew Evangelista of the Coronell University, or prof. Kamrava of the Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service of Qatar, and in their ability to constantly motivate students to go beyond their convictions and certainties.

After my secondary school I would have studied medicine, but I failed the admission test twice. I got my bachelor in law here in Cattolica, with only five exams left for the master degree, because I already knew that I didn't want to work as a lawyer.

Then someone talked to me about the master Azeri and I thought that all the efforts I had done so far would finally make sense and nothing would be lost. And at the end I couldn't imagine to get my internship in one of the most important organs of the Italian Government, that is the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

My personal thanks go to professor Alvaro Cencini, the director of the Master of the University of Lugano, and in particular to professor Vittorio Emanuele Parsi, for being a scrupulous thesis supervisor, patient and confident in my potential.

I would like to conclude with a wish to who like me today knows that an important goal has been reached but he is also aware that the real challenge is going to start outside these walls. I hope that everyone of you will have the opportunity to express their potential and to fulfill their ambitions. And in case you won't find

fertile ground for your aspirations, I wish you the courage and the strength to overcome the obstacles, because... you are worth. Always do your part in the best way possible.

Good luck. Thank you

Master in Middle Eastern Studies

Lorena Stella Martini

Honorable professors, dear guests and fellow students,

After quite a few years spent within the walls of this university, it feels almost unbelievable to be here, giving a speech during my Master's graduation ceremony.

Choosing to focus ones' studies on the Middle East, as my fellow colleagues and me chose to do by applying for this Master, is not a mainstream decision.

My first approach towards the Middle East was through the study of Arabic language and culture. I was 18 back then and I remember I felt extremely fascinated yet really scared of making such a choice. When, soon after that, the curiosity I had felt towards that world started to become a passion, the reason why I traveled and relentlessly wished to discover new realities, I decided that I wanted my future academic and professional career to be as closely linked as possible with the Middle East. Hence, it was natural to be excited when virtually bumping into the leaflet of the Master in Middle Eastern Studies offered by ASERI.

Throughout this program, we got the chance to come into closer touch with all the constituencies and facets of this wide region, trying to draw a line to connect all the several realities it is composed of, yet also learning to make fundamental distinctions and to appreciate its countless peculiarities. It was a tiring journey, which required us to be constantly receptive and made us feel challenged from several points of view and perspectives.

At the end of this path, I think the aspect of the course that I appreciated the most- the one I remember more dearly and I will certainly miss- was the amazing opportunity to be lectured by experts coming not only from very different geographical, but also professional backgrounds. We met many professors and academics coming from all over the world, together with diplomats, journalists, personnel working in International Organizations, business experts...all of them provided us with a new perspective and invited us to reconsider what we thought we had learnt so far. I could see the enthusiasm and the involvement in the eyes of many among them when they told us about their direct experiences in Middle Eastern countries. Their words guided us in the discovery and exploration of this region, and were also fundamental to foster our interest and to give a clearer face to our hopes and expectations.

In the end, I can say the master I am today completing certainly left me two intertwined souvenirs: a wider and deeper knowledge and understanding of the Middle East, together with the awareness of how dealing with this complicated and ever changing context requires that constant commitment and dedication many lecturers further inspired us throughout the course.

When an experience comes to an end it is a good and due custom to thank those people who helped to make it happen and to let it go in the smoothest, best way possible. Hence, I would like to thank our program assistant Dott.ssa Annalisa Pinchetti for her constant and precious support, and for having promptly and helpfully replied to my countless mails and questions throughout the last year, even when I was abroad and during the summer. I would also like to thank all our professors, especially the eclectic director of this Master, Professor Riccardo Redaelli, and my thesis' supervisor Dott. Andrea Plebani, whose enthusiasm really motivated me to make the best out of my exams and my research project about Iraq.

Finally, a big thanks goes to my family and friends, who believe in me way more than I do. Thank you, even because you always manage to bring me back to reality every time I overreact.

Dear classmates, our journey here is over; when I think about us, I can't help laughing while recalling that time almost all of us went to the supermarket to buy the ingredients for a half Italian half Indian dinner and all the customers and staff were surprised to see a group of ten young people visibly coming from all over the world arguing in English about which taste of ice-cream to choose or whether to buy pasta or spaghetti!! I am more than glad to have had the chance to meet people coming from all over the planet yet sharing my same interests and passions.

I wish all of you a bright, successful but above all happy future and I hope you will get where you want, wherever that place is.

Mabrouk and thank you!!