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A Glorious Maritime Past

Tim Severin, famous British explorer and historian, was the captain of the Sohar ship on its voyage from Muscat to Canton in China in 1980. Severin shared his voyage experience at a lecture session “the journey of the Sohar ship to China” organized by the International Cooperation Office at SQU in association with the Ministry of Heritage and Culture to commemorate 35 years of the voyage. At the same time, the original Sohar ship voyage, launched off the coast of Oman by more than fifteen centuries to reach the port of Canton in China is a proud achievement written in Oman’s history.

The Sultanate has always been one of the pioneering nations in seafaring. If you look for historical evidence, the 4500-year-old remains of a reed boat, used for trading with India, were found in Ras Al Jinz. Oman popularly known as Majan at that time, had maritime trade links with ancient cities of Ur and Sumer in Iraq and the Indus Valley in Gujarat, India. Oman was a prosperous country mainly due to the copper trade prevalent in Sohar, Samad A’Shan and Masirah island among other places. It all happened due to Oman’s excellent boat building capability and marine navigation skills. Over the centuries, Oman’s principal ports and harbours were found all along its coast from Khasab with numerous khors and inlets on the Musandam peninsula stretching up to Sohar, Muttrah, Muscat, Qalhat, and Sumharam in Dhofar. Places like Ras Al Hadd, Bandar Al Jissah and Bandar Khilyan, locked in by mountains or deserts effectively provided protection from rough weather and served as staging posts for sailors.

Towards the last millennium BC, Dhofar witnessed a flourishing trade in frankincense with the Kingdom of Sheba, India, Egypt, Rome and China. Frankincense was behind the prosperity of many cities and ports in Southern Oman. Pottery from Oman was also traded throughout the Arabian Peninsula. By the 8th century, Omani sailor Abu ‘Ubayda’ Abd Allah bin al-Qasim, thought to be the fabled Sindbad, had reached China where he set up a merchant community in Canton. Sinbad is the most famous sailor in the world though he never existed except in the yarns of early Arab seaman, expanded and immortalized into the ‘Tales of a Thousand and One Nights.’ However, the fables may have been versions of the actual exploits of a real man.
News Update

SQU, PAM Joint Committee Meets

The joint committee between SQU and the Public Authority for Mining (PAM) held its first meeting at SQU, headed by H.E. Dr. Ali bin Saud Al Bimani, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, and Eng. Hilal bin Mohammed Al Busaidi, CEO of PAM, and committee members from both sides. The Committee discussed many topics of mutual interest. In the field of scientific research, the committee discussed a number of research proposals of interest to both sides that serve the mining sector in the Sultanate. The committee stressed the need to benefit from the results of previous studies, which included the study of a number of important earth elements, such as meteorites and laterite.

The Committee also raised the need for a strategy to identify studies of economic feasibility and scientific research, with the creation of a database for reference in this important sector. The Committee discussed the strengthening of cooperation between SQU labs and PAM laboratories in the training of staff and students of the university in PAM and the firms engaged in the exploration, mining and quarrying. The Committee emphasized on continuous cooperation in this area to serve the public interest. The joint committee seeks to facilitate, strengthen and develop cooperation, benefit from the exchange of experiences and information, and the promote efforts of common interest in the field of metallurgy, mining, geological surveys and explorations.

SQU is Voted Most Trusted Brand

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) is again widely recognized by the community for its excellence as an educational institute in the Sultanate. In a survey carried out by Arabian Research Bureau (ARB) on behalf of Oman Economic Review (OER), SQU was named as the Most Trusted Brand in the category of “colleges and universities in Oman” for the year 2016. This is the second year in a row that SQU is elected as the leader in both executive and top management segments. In 2015 OER Most Trusted Brands Survey also, in the category of educational institutions, SQU emerged as the leader in both top management and executive segments.

OER’s Most Trusted Brands in Oman 2016 survey is an attempt to track the strength of various brands’ relationship with their consumers. The survey was conducted between September and October 2016 by ARB on behalf of OER. The survey is an effort to measure the recall that brands enjoy with consumers, in an increasingly cluttered market. For the survey, the responses were obtained through open-ended questions for each category. The survey was conducted across a random cross section of employees working in Oman. They were classified into two categories: top management and executive choice. The total sample size comprised 750 respondents. Out of this, 380 were Omanis and 370 were expatriates.

Conference Addresses Social Thought and Development

The Second International Conference of the Department of Sociology and Social Work of the College of Arts & Social Sciences at SQU entitled “Social Thought, Sociology and Development in the Developing Countries” was held recently. The opening ceremony was held under the patronage of H.E. Dr. Yahya bin Badr Al-Maawali, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development. The three-day conference discussed topics and issues on social thought, sociology and development in the current era. As many as 46 research papers were presented at the conference. This included 17 papers from Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar, Kuwait and Libya, in addition to 26 papers from the Sultanate. The presentations from Oman are mainly from faculty members of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, and other departments from the College of Arts and Social Sciences and the College of Education at SQU. The conference also featured three keynote speeches.

Prof. Abdulrahman Sophie, Chair of the Organizing Committee of the Conference shed light on continuous effort done by the committee in order to have a successful and productive conference. The conference aims to develop potentials of social thought, and the stimulation of scientific and critical studies and dialogues in sociology to respond to requirements of socio-cultural dimensions of modern and contemporary development after the success of the first academic conference of social work, which was held in March 2011 with the participation of some Arab and GCC countries.
Distance, virtual, electronic, mobile and ubiquitous learning are widely used as interchangeable terms. It is uncommon that researchers face difficulties to distinguish between different learning environments. A clear understanding of the concepts of these learning models and their fundamental differences are necessary for both learning and educational communities. E-learning first emerged in 1980s and then shifted from stationary desktops to portable laptops at the beginning of 1990s. More recently, the application of learning technologies has undergone many changes i.e. it has moved from normal desktop to laptop and from laptop to handheld devices such as tablets, smartphones and slate PCs. This opened a door for learning on the go where mobile learning has come into existence. Since then, the learning communities witnessed the rapid improvement of the processing power of mobile devices while becoming more affordable and even ubiquitous due to the high demand for business communications, games, context aware and generally the networked lifestyle of the wireless society. Traditional learning is on-campus classroom model, which have been the dominant learning and education techniques for generations. Traditional learning involves instructor-centered method focused on rote learning. The learning process is restricted to a physical place, where, learners and instructors meet at specific place and time in labs, classes or lecture theatres.

The use of advanced Internet and network technologies has provided a new learning model with different learning requirements such as, interactions, discussion and collaborations. Distance learning is a form of learning model that focuses on the separation between learners and instructors using different techniques e.g. written and printed words, telephone conversation, computer conferencing or teleconferencing which are utilized to bridge the physical gaps. Virtual learning uses the software application, Internet or both of them to deliver instructions to target learners through virtual classrooms regardless of learners’ geographical location. Virtual learning enables efficient access to learning materials from different locations. Virtual learning can be in different learning forms such as computer based, Internet base, remote instructor online, blended learning or facilitated Virtual learning.

Electronic learning (E-learning) refers to the use of electronic means in the learning process. E-learning utilizes wireless communication media for the learning process using different devices such as laptops, computers and other electronic learning tools which can be CD-ROM, DVD, Flash memory, Network, Intranet or Internet based depending on the learners requirement. Mobile learning is a learning solution that uses wireless and mobile technologies to support learning and education on the go. Mobile learning uses different mobile and portable devices including smart phones, cell phones, tablets, and laptops as learning medium through wireless communication. Mobile learning combines E-learning and mobile computing, it is a technique that uses mobile and wireless technologies for learning and education. Mobile learning enables learners to merge their learning experiences in a shared collaborative environment. The main target of the mobile learning to use current and modern technologies to provide new techniques of learning, training and education that will be easy access and available to all who wish to be part of it.

Mobile learning has the potential to additionally extend when, where and how students learn and perform in all aspects of their life. One of the main benefits of mobile learning technology is its possibilities to improve learners’ productivity by making knowledge and learning material available anytime and anywhere. It enables learners to participate in learning activities without the traditional place and time restrictions. Mobile technologies support accessible and widely available learning than the learning that used in the existing E-learning environments. Mobile learning is self-motivated, self-disciplined that supports studying with on time waste, studying anywhere and at any time. Mobile learning supports performance with easy access to information, which can immediately affect learners’ performance in a learning environment, facilitating their education.

Ubiquitous Learning is based on ubiquitous computing technology that uses various small electronic devices such as smart cards, handheld terminals, sensor network nodes, smart mobile phones and radio frequency identification (RFIDs). Ubiquitous learning is a learning approach that uses ubiquitous computing technology to enable learning and gaining the required knowledge at the right time and place in the right way. Mobile learning enables educators, learners and teachers to extend beyond the traditional schoolrooms. Modern mobile technology devices provide instructors and learners with new flexible interaction opportunities. Mobile learning enables anytime access to learning material, anywhere access to learning material; support distance learning, and enhance student-centered learning. Mobile learning supports just-in-time learning or review of content and it can be used more effectively for the differently abled. This technology supports differentiation of students’ learning needs and personalized learning and it can enhance interaction between and among students, learners and instructors. Mobile learning can reduce cultural and communication barriers between faculty and students using communication channels that students like. The use of mobile learning may also enable learning and education providers to spend staff training time on improving pedagogy, spend valuable student lesson time on using technology instead of wasting time learning to use technology first and then the lessons and spend less money on supporting existing technology and more on supporting its use in classrooms.

However, the mobile learning infrastructure should to be properly addressed for successful mobile learning adoption. However, the main concerns about mobile learning include the following; finding the best infrastructure; the trust ability of the wireless networks; disclosing of the learner information via network; and creating universal mobile learning system user interface. Designing an effective context aware mobile learning system and learners’ feeling of isolation, separation or of being out-of-the-loop are the other challenges. Finally, mobile learning may make it easier to cheat.

By: Dr. Mohamed Sarrab
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Beware of 'Teach-yourself' English Books

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In this article I would like to list some of the problems inherent in another type of commercial English teaching materials, namely the "Teach-yourself" EFL books. Besides the bilingual vocabulary posters, the shelves of the bookshops and supermarkets in the Arab countries are stocked with EFL books titled: Learn English in One Week, Learn English without a Teacher and How to Speak English in Five Days.

Many of these books are not designed by EFL teaching specialists, especially those with anonymous authors. The book usually starts with the English alphabet and the corresponding Arabic letters as a key to pronunciation. Inside, the writer presents lists of words classified according to topics (Food, Relatives, Diseases, etc.), language functions (Greeting, Requesting, etc.) or situations (In the Hotel, At the Airport, etc.). Such a book is nothing more than a sort of classified English-Arabic mini-lexicon. The writers of these "Teach-yourself" books always remain anonymous, the fact that reflects the poor quality of the materials and the designers’ reluctance to shoulder the responsibility.

Moreover, the incredibly short duration of the course (five or seven days) couched in propagandistic terms arouses suspicion. The books are infested with all kinds of language problems which render them useless or even harmful. They contain errors in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, capitalization, spelling in addition to typing mistakes.

A. Pronunciation

Some English sounds such as /p/ and /v/ do not exist in Arabic. These are represented in writing by the Arabic letters (ب) (= b) and (ب) (= f), thus reinforcing the incorrect use of “b” and “f” instead of “p” and “t” respectively. In one of the books, the words people, pen, fever, drive are written as سبيل بين فيفر درايف respectively.

Clusters of two or more consonant sounds are common in English as in screen. Such clusters are not common in Arabic; a vowel (usually /i/) is inserted before or within the cluster. The writers of “Teach-yourself” books appear to have been influenced by Arabic in their transcription of the English words containing clusters. Here are a few examples: (السأ Dich (“asked), (إسفين) (“spring), (اوريد) (“world), (أناشيد) (“traveled).

The Arabic sounds (ت س م ه) do not exist in English, yet they are used in the Arabic transcription of the English words: sign (SIGN), judge (JUDGE), cut (CUT), us (US), mud (MUD), but (BUT).

Even when there are Arabic letters that can safely be used to represent the English sounds, the “Teach-yourself” books fail to give the correct Arabic transcription. A lot of pronunciation errors in these books are due to mistranscription. Examples: life (لي) ( Fill), count (كنت) (Ewe), 

B. Grammar

The “Teach-yourself” EFL books contain various types of grammar errors. In many cases, the English infinitive or present form of the English verb is translated into a past form in Arabic (e.g. stand = (стоять) - to stand). Some of the Arabic equivalents are incorrect as in: Who is here? (من هو (هذا يكون كتا), This is my book. (هنا؟ هو (هذا كتابي, to worship (عبادة). Some of the English verbs are “regular” and “irregular” verbs. "Teach-yourself” EFL books fail to give the correct Arabic transcription. Examples:

Another problem is use of incorrect, incomplete or complicated explanations. For example, the verbs are explained as follows: ممتنع الأفعال من حيث تصرفها إلى الأمام تكون الكلمة المعالفة تصرف الأفعال العربية (see examples at the end of the book)

C. Vocabulary and Spelling

In these books, classified lists of words are presented with their Arabic equivalents. In many cases, the Arabic equivalent or the English word is incorrect. These are but a few examples:

narrow (نارون) (نارون) (used instead of tight) point (نقطة) (نقطة) (used instead of fullstop)

Some spelling errors appear to be due to the writer’s incompetence in English while others are typing mistakes. tomorrow, to-day, zero, jray (= grey), subscribe, manufacture,

A Word of Caution

All these types of errors found in a random sample of “Teach-yourself” EFL books indicate that their writers are not specialists in the field. Titles such as Learn English in Five Days or in One Week are not more than camouflage words intended to attract the unwary learner to buy the book. It is difficult to believe that a foreign language can be learned in such a short period of time even when it is taught by a qualified teacher using a well designed coursebook. This article is intended to be a cautionary note to the users of “Teach-yourself” EFL, especially those with anonymous authors. They are extremely dangerous to the learners’ linguistic health.
On the 30 November 2016 the Deanship of Postgraduate Studies at SQU, represented by the International Students section arranged a recreational trip for a group of international postgraduate students. The trip schedule included a comprehensive tour inside the National Museum, Muttrah souq and finally a dinner before returning to the University.

There are currently around 132 active international students at SQU from different countries across the world. The International Students section organizes activities on a regular basis such as the free Arabic course and trips for the international students to help them unwind, interact, have fun, and explore more about Oman. The section is planning to conduct more activities and events in the coming days. These include cultural events, the Induction week that includes the on-campus tour for newly admitted international students.

Famous British explorer, historian and writer Tim Severin, who was the captain of the Sohar ship on its voyage from Muscat to Canton in China in 1980, enthralled the audience with the account of the 6000 miles voyage that took eight months to complete. Severin shared his voyage experience at a lecture session titled the “the journey of the Sohar ship to China” organized by the International Cooperation Office at Sultan Qaboos University in association with the Ministry of Heritage and Culture recently.

The original Sohar ship voyage, which was launched off the coast of Oman by more than five centuries to reach the port of Canton in China is a proud achievement written in Oman’s history. To commemorate this voyage, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said ordered to build a vessel like Sohar ship in order to embark on a voyage across the sea with the same conditions and circumstances of that historic route. The Sohar ship voyage sailed on 23 November 1980 from the shores of Oman and travelled 6000 miles up to the city of Canton (Guangzhou) in China on 10 July 1981 passing the ports of India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

Severin said that in order to replicate the same conditions of the historic route from Muscat to Canton, the vessel had no engine but relied entirely on her sails. “There was no escort vessel to assist in case of difficulties and the online communication device was the amateur radio. The crew had to experiment in order to re-learn the skills of the early Omani sailors: how best to adjust the sails to the wind and steer a steady course. For navigation, the Kamal, the traditional star-measuring instrument, was found to be satisfactory to guide Sohar to Indian port of Beypore in Kerala”, he said.

It was Tim who guided Omani shipwrights in the construction of the “Sohar”, an 26.5 m replica of a ninth-century, lateen-rigged, cotton-sailed Arab dhow. The ship was constructed in seven months of hand-sawn wooden planks sewn together with nearly 640 km of hand-rolled, coconut-husk rope. Navigating by the stars, Severin and his crew of 25 travelled nearly 6,000 miles in eight months.

Severin Enthralls Audience with Story of Sohar Ship Voyage

SQU Organizes Recreational Trip for International Students

SQU Holds 3-Minute Thesis Competition

The Deanship of Postgraduate Studies at Sultan Qaboos University organized the second season of the 3-minute Thesis Competition (3MT) on Wednesday, 7 December 2016. The competition, which started last year at the University, has gained wide recognition, as it is a great opportunity to share postgraduate research in a competitive context. Not only do postgraduate students present their theses, showing its scope and significance, but they also do it in a competitive manner in three minutes. By doing so, they are now able to communicate their research precisely and competently to their future employer and other potential enterprises. The number of the participants is 6 for the Arabic session and 11 for the English session.

It is worth mentioning that the 3-minute Thesis Competition (3MT) was an international competition, which was originally developed by the University of Queensland in Australia to allow thesis-based graduate students to deliver a compelling presentation on their research and its significance in less than three minutes. Today, there are 3MT university competitors in more than 120 universities across 19 countries and Sultan Qaboos University is one of these universities.
Seaweeds: An Opportunity for Wealth and Sustainable Livelihood

By: Dr. Sergey Dobretsov

The Marine Science and Fisheries (MSF) department of the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences (CAMS) of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) is a leader in the marine science research and teaching dealing with the marine environment in the Sultanate of Oman and among GCC countries. In October 2016, the department together with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Oman and the Wageningen University (Netherlands) organized a mini-workshop entitled “Seaweeds and their use in Oman”. The speakers of the workshop included the faculties from SQU, Wageningen University (WU, the Netherlands), GEO-Resources Consultancy, Oman, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The aim of this workshop was to build up collaboration and to share knowledge about Omani seaweeds and their industrial use.

Dr. Rashid Al-Yahyai, the Dean of CAMS, welcomed the participants. Dr. Sergey Dobretsov, the director of Center of Excellence in Marine Biotechnology and the head of the MSF department, said, “Seaweeds refers to visible by the naked eye species of algae. In total more than 10,000 species of seaweeds are known worldwide. They are classified onto green, brown and red algae. Most of them are used as human and animal food, cosmetic products and pharmaceuticals. Seaweeds are cultivated or foraged from the wild. With more than 3000 km coastal line, Oman has a huge potential in harvesting and growing of seaweeds.”

Dr. Ir. Hans van der Beek, Agricultural Counselor to the GCC countries, the Netherlands, thanked SQU for organization of this workshop. He added that researchers at SQU and WU have established and maintained strong ties. He mentioned that in December 2014 a joint workshop on Aquaculture Development in Oman was conducted and the areas for the potential Oman-Holland projects in fish breeding and aquaculture were identified.

Dr. Raymond Jongschap, WU, the Netherlands, spoke about seaweeds as alternative protein source. He said, “It is estimated that the global population size will increase to a staggering 9.1 billion people by 2050, which will require doubling milk and meat production by that time. To reach that goal it is computed that in 2050 around 1,700 million ton of feed has to be produced. This is highly difficult due to the amount of protein and fresh water required”. He added, “Seaweeds can provide suitable alternatives. They contain up to 40% of protein. Contrary to many crops, seaweeds can be cultivated in seawater year-round. Based on our experiments at WU, green seaweeds grown during the summer period may produce up to 20 ton per ha in the Netherlands, and during winter time brown seaweeds produced 15 ton per ha, giving a total of 35 ton of dry weight per ha per year. Beside of proteins seaweeds contain anti-oxidants, pigments, carrageenan and specific carbohydrates, like mannitol which can be used as a natural sweetener”. Dr. Jongschap suggested that in Oman, seaweeds grown as a crop in the sea can replace alfalfa-alfa, which requires a lot of fresh water resources to grow.”

Dr. Barry Jupp, GEO-Resources Consultancy, provided information about seaweeds in Oman and their potential use. He said, “During our project with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, we found 232 seaweed taxa in Oman. Red algae are mostly dominated. The algal biomass and diversity are affected by the NE and the SW monsoons. Seaweeds are quite dominant on the south of Oman, which mostly affected by upwelling which brings nutrients to coastal areas.” He continued, “The highest diversity of seaweeds was found in Dofar province in post-monsoon time in October. There the biomass of algae can reach more than 3.5 kg per square meter. Omani seaweed contained bioactive compounds, as well as agar, alginate and carrageenan”. Characteristics of carrageenan and agar polysaccharides from some Omani seaweed were presented by Dr. Ahmed Al-Alawi, head of Food Science and Nutrition Department, SQU. He highlighted that some seaweeds contained carrageenan and agar of a high quality.

During round table discussion the participants analyzed possibilities of seaweeds cultivation and use in Oman. It was concluded that both partners SQU and WU have good experience and knowledge of seaweeds. Several challenges for aquaculture of seaweeds in Oman were identified. These include seasonality in algal species due to monsoons and upwelling, presence of many grazers and fouling species, lack of information about seaweed growth. This highlighted the necessity of a pilot seaweed aquaculture project. Different possibilities of financial support of such project were discussed. Additionally, it was suggested to have cultivation of fish and seaweeds together. In such farm waste produced by fish will be utilized by algae thus enhancing their growth and cleaning the environment.

Overall, the workshop highlighted high biotechnological potential of Omani seaweeds, which can generate value added products, provide jobs for farmers and fisherthen, create new economic opportunities and contribute to food security to Oman.
Contemporary Challenges of Jus Ad Bellum

Dr. Emanuele Sommario

Dr. Emanuele Sommario is Assistant Professor of International Law at the Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna of Pisa (Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies), Italy. His main interests lay in Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, International Criminal Law, the International Law on the use of force, Collective Security Law and International Disaster Response law, and he is the author of several scholarly works on the above topics. The Department of Political Science at SQU and the Institute of Law, Politics and Development at the Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies, have started collaboration initiatives in teaching and research. To foster the cooperation with SQU, Dr. Sommario visited its Department of Political Science in November 2016. During his stay in Oman, Dr. Sommario gave a talk titled “Appraising the evolution of the Jus ad Bellum (the right to resort to war): History, Law and Politics” at the College of Economics & Political Science. This interview is based on his talk at SQU.

Horizon: Your talk initially focussed on the historical perspectives of on the use of force by States. Can you elaborate?
Dr. Sommario: From the early stages of human history, conflict was recognized as a source of destruction and suffering, and the need to limit resort to armed violence was acknowledged in many different regional and cultural contexts. However, many States continued to consider war as a mere ‘fact’, which was meant to cyclically affect humanity, and could not be avoided by resorting to legal limitations. The first attempts to introduce legal limitations to the unilateral use of force by States were made at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet, these rules did not prevent the world from plunging into World War I. As a reaction to the devastations caused by the conflict, the international community decided to establish the League of Nations (1920) with the primary goal of preventing wars through collective security and disarmament and through the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

However, even the Covenant did not prove effective in stopping the onset of World War II. After the war, States resolved to create an organization with increased powers to preserve international peace and security, and to impose a complete ban on the use of force in international relations. Thus, the United Nations was established with the main aim to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind”.

Article 2(4) of the UN Charter states: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the U.N.” Only two exceptions exist to the absolute prohibition to use force between States: collective security actions decided by the UN Security Council; and the exercise of the inherent right to self-defense. The vast majority of States and authors agreed that self-defense could be used only after an armed attack had occurred (or at least after it had been launched); and only against another State.

Horizon: What changes did the 11/9 attacks brought to international relations?
Dr. Sommario: The 2001 attacks changed the way in which the US and other Western States perceived potential threats to their security. Among the main factors that have increased the level of threat are: the rise of terrorism as a global phenomenon; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and, the increasing number of failing states. This led some states to advocate a more permissive approach to the use of force. In particular, the idea was advanced that self-defense could be resorted to before an armed attack occurred (preventive self-defense), and that it could be used to justify an armed response to terrorist violence coming from non-State actors.

Horizon: What are the limitations of the international law regarding the conduct of war (Jus ad bellum)?
Dr. Sommario: Jus ad bellum is not going through a particularly happy spell, with States (especially the more powerful ones) seemingly paying only lip-service to its rules. Unfortunately, the poor performance of the UN Security System has caused dissatisfaction with the system, and triggered attempts to circumvent its rules. On the other hand, it is also true that the current jus ad bellum was conceived at a time when threats and risks such as the ones we face today were not contemplated, and it is only natural that States attempt to “update” its rules. Efforts should be carried out to “centralize” the use of self-defence in doubtful cases, perhaps by involving the UNSC which should determine that a given situations constitutes a threat to international peace and security.