



Indra Adnan

# Men, step aside: tackling terrorism is women's work

If persuasion, attraction and understanding are the new arts of power, then the future looks profoundly female

In the barren, brutal knockabout of British parliamentary politics, to be called "soft" on anything is clearly one of the worst school-yard curses. John Reid has proven his hard credentials in the debate about "soft" sentencing (practised by "soft" judges), by promising tough sentences for even minor crimes. Another opportunity, no doubt, for Tony Blair to taunt David Cameron on a willingness to "talk tough" about the issue, but "act soft" when voting.

But it's by no means clear that the charge of "being soft" in public and political life is always going to be read negatively. Cameron commanded headlines for championing his "soft" offensive – asking us to "show love" to hoodies. "Soft-focus conservatism" may be the critique on the lips of commentators, but the polls show it's having an effect on potential voters.

Yet "soft" might not always mean fuzzy, warm and yielding. For over a decade, the political analyst Joseph Nye has been proposing "soft power" as an alternative US foreign policy – in his words, "the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals. It differs from hard power, the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will." When Condoleezza Rice explicitly invoked soft power in the US's new approach to Iran, it seemed to signal that attraction and persuasion were being added (or restored) to the political toolkit of the west. But as the crisis in Lebanon demonstrates, when conflict erupts into zero-sum violence, it takes a different kind of courage to persist with these new tools over the familiar hard-power options.

There is an interesting ambivalence around the appearance of softness as a positive element in both national and international politics. Just as Nye's soft power is easy to perceive as mere entryism for the longer-term goal of US global imperialism, so Cameron's soft values could be seen as a pitch for the female vote and the growing green constituency.

Yet, given that the issue which has most damaged Blair's leadership has been his use of hard power in Iraq, might soft power be a concept worth developing and championing? The politics that Cameron represents is trying (however cynically) to resonate with a form of soft power that existed long before the advent of policy wonks: that is, the power of the feminine itself. Could the empathy, relatedness and horizontal responsiveness that so marks a female approach to the world – call it soft, if

you like – be a new and distinct input into political change and reform?

This goes beyond the traditional feminist case against patriarchy, and into positive examples of current female leadership, particularly outside the west. When Lu Hsiu-lien, vice-president of Taiwan, published her book on soft power in May, she began by saying: "The concept is not difficult to understand; yet very few leaders to date have put this concept into practice." Might this be because softness is a complex, feminine quality? And because politics is still dominated by men?

According to Lu: "Soft power consists of five key elements: human rights, democracy, peace, love and technological progress, which are intimately intertwined. It contrasts sharply with exploitative materialism and aggressive militarism. Hard power, with its heartless and mechanical nature, ignores humane values and misleads nations toward the over-centralisation of state power and even military hegemony. It is aggressive and destructive. Soft power, in contrast, makes use of mercy and wisdom to fight against corruption, poverty and injustice."

Lu, a Buddhist, is not afraid to use words like love, peace and beauty as legitimate goals for society. "At the heart of each of Taiwan's success stories," she writes, "lies the human spirit." She knows – and a growing body of scholarship on wellbeing backs her up – that tools such as psychological, emotional

and spiritual intelligence build cohesive and integrated societies.

Such "soft" knowledge is also crucial to the diplomatic and conflict-resolution skills required in our fissile world. For this reason, as Scilla Elworthy's recent Demos report notes, tackling terrorism is women's work. Is it the severe lack of women in Middle East politics that allows such devastating violence to occur? In the west, three decades of research into public policy shows that the leading presence of women makes for "broader social legislation, benefiting everyone", says Marie Wilson of the White House Project.

The prospect of a "feminised" soft power counters an image of women as a passive and indecisive audience, merely reacting to the combative postures of male politicians. A new narrative around the power of women is certainly needed. Today's third wave of feminism is faltering in the face of retro movements (such as raunch culture) that equate freedom with liberation from self-respect.

For women who want to transform their societies, the advent of soft power is a real opportunity. If persuasion, attraction and understanding are the new arts of power, then the future is more profoundly female than we could ever have imagined.

Indra Adnan is director of New Integrity and is writing a book on women and soft power  
indraadnan@newintegrity.org



'Soft' knowledge is crucial to the diplomatic and conflict-resolution skills that are required in our fissile world



## In pursuit of lost classics

David McKie  
Elsewhere

Thank goodness for the publishers who revive books that should never have gone out of print

The novelist Ian McEwan, author of *Saturday*, was asked at the Buxton festival about books that had influenced him. There's a moment in *Saturday* where the hero reflects on the way the pursuit of utopia seems to end up licensing every form of excess, and McEwan named a book right on this territory: *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, by Norman Cohn. "It drifts in and out of print," he added. I found this a shocking statement. There are certain books which in any sentient society would never be out of print. This is one: hugely researched, but compellingly, sometimes hair-raisingly, readable. There passes through it a weird procession of mystics, charismatic preachers and assorted fanatics who came to believe they possessed *The Answer*, and persuaded thousands of others, often to disastrous effect, that they were right. Throughout there's an inescapable link with movements in our own times that proclaimed a single indisputable route to salvation; with equally dreadful consequences.

McEwan, though, was too gloomy. The updated edition of Cohn published in 1993 by Pimlico is still on the shelves. There are other books in this class, however, which publishers have allowed to lapse. One of these is the opening volume of the memoirs of Alexander Herzen – long available from the Oxford University Press in a translation by JD Duff as *Childhood, Youth and Exile*. Jailed and banished under the tsars as a subversive socialist in the mid-19th century, Herzen too became hugely aware of the dangers of systems which preached a single authoritarian answer.

He could not accept that people should have to die in the name of creeds for which their advocates made the unprovable claim that they'd one day make the world just, peaceful and happy. Yet this isn't a polemical book: it is full of humanity, wry observation, and a sense of man's fallibility – which becomes still more poignant when you discover the struggles and tragedies of Herzen's subsequent life. I moan at friends for not having read it. But OUP, not for the first time, has let it get out of print.

There is better news of two other books I have lauded here. One is the memoirs of the soldier, MP, man about town, gambler, duellist, and chronic neglecter of his unfortunate family, Captain Gronow – whose *Reminiscences and Recollections*, edited by John Raymond for Bodley Head, I found last year in a second-hand bookshop. A new edition, marshalled by Christopher Summerville, has just been published by Ravenhall Books, one of a useful breed of what I think of as resurrectionist publishers, rescuing books that have fallen into unmerited obscurity.

Summerville is a much more hands-on editor than Raymond. Where Gronow simply wrote things down in the order that they occurred to him, leading for instance to disquisitions about London society in the midst of Wellington's Waterloo campaigns, Summerville has tidied him up and arranged him in sections by theme. And he's always on hand to explain contemporary references, which Raymond isn't. But to find your way round you need an index; and there isn't one. Which may be why I can't find my favourite Gronow story, the one where blundering Lord Westmorland –

required while visiting the court of the king of France to attempt the king's language – utters the sentence: "*Je voudrais si je coudrais, mais je ne canmais pas.*"

Best of all, since my original copy long ago fell to bits and second-hand ones are wildly expensive, a resurrectionist publisher in Nottinghamshire, Five Leaves, is to introduce an updated version of a book by Gillian Darley, commended here on several occasions, called *Villages of Vision*. Here are places devised in philanthropy, hugely deserving a visit, but so far off the beaten track that you might never find them unless prompted by Darley: Tremadoc, North Wales; Blaise Hamlet, Bristol; Whiteway, Gloucestershire, a commune created by devotees of Tolstoy; Silver End, Essex, built by enlightened Crittalls for their employees; New Earswick in Yorkshire; Ford, Stamfordham and Simonburn in Northumberland; and Robert Owen's utopian projects, New Lanark, Scotland, and Harmony Hall in Hampshire.

Ross Bradshaw, who set up Five Leaves in 1995, has also revived another of my favourite books, *Arcadia for All*, by Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward, an account of people bravely building unconventional communities despite the disdain of prissy opinion. He's also republished Louis Golding's once feted novel *Magnolia Street*, Paul Barker's *Arts in Society*, the East End histories of Bill Fishman, and a book called *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture*, by Ward and David Crouch, that's outselling them all. And how did he choose his list? Simple: they were all books he'd read and liked and wanted others to savour. It sounds a bit utopian; but it works.

McElsewhere@aol.com

## The questions won't go away

Ali Dizaei

Allegations of corruption in the Lawrence case must be investigated – but this time thoroughly

Many will feel irritation at the return of the Stephen Lawrence case to the policing agenda. They would have preferred that the incompetent and institutionally racist investigation into this tragic death should now be placed in the dustbin of history, as a sad episode that couldn't be repeated again.

There is no doubt that the police service has benefited from the recommendations of the Macpherson inquiry into Lawrence's death, and that it has gone a long way towards improving its investigations. However, Lawrence's parents are no further forward in knowing why the investigation was bungled and why the prosecution failed. Soundbites from the inquiry report such as "systemic failures" and "poor leadership" fail to explain why evidence was not collected; and investigative opportunities not explored. Was there corrupt activity among the investigators that was operating beneath the radar of those in charge? Why was it not detected? If it was, why was it not addressed and disclosed to the inquiry?

Whether retired Detective Sergeant John Davidson interfered with the investigation and obstructed the course of justice, as alleged in last night's BBC documentary, also needs to be answered. At face value the whistleblower, Detective Constable Neil Putnam, has very little motive to lie about Davidson and his assertions must be taken seriously. Although himself once jailed for corruption, Putnam's evidence was relied on by the Metropolitan police to convict others. There is also little incentive for him to suggest that the Met knew about Davidson's corrupt activities but chose not to investigate further. It appeared that he struck up a good relationship with anti-corruption officers after his conviction and had a positive relationship with the Met.

At the time of the Lawrence inquiry, the Met was under severe scrutiny and its legitimacy was being questioned. It is conceivable that some officers may have been tempted to try to protect the organisation from allegations that went beyond incompetence and institutionalised racism.

But if Met decision-makers at the time chose to minimise the collateral damage of the corruption allegation, it would have been a serious error of judgment, which will have untold consequences for the force. It is ironic that it was about this time that the then Met commissioner, Sir Paul Condon, gave evidence to the home affairs select committee about his crusade to rid the organisation of corrupt officers. Yet Davidson was able to allegedly sabotage a murder investigation that held such importance for the force.

On the other hand, the allegation of a cover-up seems unlikely since there were a number of competent and highly ethical officers brought in to ensure that the inquiry findings were implemented and robustly adhered to. The then home secretary, Jack Straw, personally chaired a Lawrence steering group and ensured that all stakeholders delivered. The ministerial commitment, and the energy of those tasked to implement the findings, were genuine and admirable. If all that positive activity and goodwill was taking place under a quiet stench of corruption that was not disclosed to the inquiry and the relevant stakeholders, then many people would feel badly let down.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission should not only launch a thorough investigation into Putnam's allegations, but also consider whether the inquiry and its recommendations were undermined by not fully investigating the charges. This new inquiry is important to Lawrence's family and friends, the public, and all who gave their time and energy to bring a positive outcome from a tragic incident.

Dr Ali Dizaei is a chief superintendent in the Metropolitan police, and legal adviser to the National Black Police Association