

Financial Times 2009: A year of Middle East editorials January 2010

Executive Summary

This report provides a detailed qualitative study of key themes in the Financial Times's editorial coverage throughout 2009 relating to Israel, the Palestinians, Iran and the Arab states. An analysis of 121 editorials from the period shows clear patterns of thinking on the major political issues in the Middle East.

The over-riding impression is that the FT's editorials have a tendency to omit much of the broader argumentation and wider context central to understanding the situation in Israel and the Middle East. The key messages emanating from the editorial column are summarised below:

- The FT views Israel as primarily responsible for the perpetuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while downplaying other factors. In particular it places the role of settlement-building in the West Bank above any other single factor affecting the conflict. Settlement-building is referred to as 'colonisation' in nine editorials
- Other aggravating factors such as terrorism, disunity within Palestinian ranks and a failure to accept Israel as a Jewish state are downplayed. Neither of these last two are addressed as areas of legitimate concern for Israel; rather, both are viewed as ploys by Israel to 'change the subject'
- The editorial coverage over the past year reflects a gradual shift away from the view that Iran's nuclear intentions might be peaceful towards the conclusion at the end of 2009 that they are not
- The prospect of an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear facilities is referred to in five editorials; yet no Financial Times editorial in 2009 makes reference to the threatening rhetoric from Iran's President Ahmadinejad against Israel
- The publication backed the Goldstone Report, which described the Israeli military operation as 'a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population'. The Financial Times described Israel's actions in Gaza as 'disproportionate' in four editorials
- Israeli political leaders are depicted as 'irredentist', 'hawkish', and 'ultra-nationalist'. In contrast, Palestinian leaders are portrayed as 'moderate' and 'conciliatory', if corrupt
- Israel's total military and civilian withdrawal from Gaza in August 2005 is not viewed as a meaningful Israeli concession, rather it is seen as inadequate at best, and a cynical ploy at worst
- The Arab world is portrayed as having made a substantial effort for peace in the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. The Saudi Peace Initiative of 2002 is touted in seven editorials and the newspaper expresses sympathy with the recent Arab refusal to meet Israeli concessions with Arab concessions
- Mixed attitudes towards the nature of Arab regimes are displayed. The newspaper attacks the West - the US in particular - for backing 'an ossified order of ... Arab strongmen' typified by the Mubarak regime in Egypt; however, Saudi Arabia is spared harsh criticism, particularly regarding its human rights record

Introduction

The Financial Times has an international reputation as a provider of business and world news. Circulating over 400,000¹ copies daily in 23 countries² and attracting more than 11 million unique users³ to its website, FT.com, the organisation has a large global audience. While previously recognised primarily for its provision of high quality business news, in recent years the publication has strengthened its reputation for political news and is widely regarded as a leading opinion-shaping broadsheet, particularly within global political and professional circles. Given its important reach, Just Journalism has analysed the Financial Times' position on a particularly controversial political topic - the situation in the Middle East.

Looking specifically between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2009 the Financial Times published 121 editorials, which FT.com categorised as Middle East-related⁴. This report is an example-led qualitative analysis of relevant leader articles and aims to present key themes and trends in the newspaper's editorial coverage of the region across the year. Attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Iranian nuclear programme and Arab regimes are analysed to determine the publication's positions on the major issues concerning the Middle East through 2009.

1. Israel and the Palestinians: Leaders & efforts for peace

Key Messages

- ▶ The FT views Israel's leaders as hawkish, and Palestinian leaders as moderate
- ▶ The Palestinians are regarded as having received little from the Oslo process, in contrast with Israel, which allegedly benefited from it greatly
- ▶ The FT believes Israel's current government does not intend to allow the creation of a Palestinian state
- ▶ The significance of the split between Fatah and Hamas for prospects for peace is downplayed by the FT

1.1 Israel

Editorial coverage of Israel's leaders in the FT demonstrates the view that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud party are extremely rightwing in contrast to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Fatah. Netanyahu is described as 'hawkish'⁵ and Likud as 'ultra-nationalist'⁶, and even the traditionally left of centre Labour party was described as 'trying to out-hawk'⁷ Likud in the run up to national elections in February 2009. Conversely, Abbas is described as 'moderate'⁸ and 'conciliatory'⁹.

Another epithet commonly applied to Netanyahu and Likud over 2009 is 'irredentist', used in seven editorials¹⁰. 'Middle East test of Obama's resolve'¹¹, published on 17 May, described Netanyahu as: 'At the head of Israel's most right-wing and uncompromisingly irredentist coalition'. This trend highlights a consistent view at the Financial Times that Israel's leaders want to keep the land widely regarded as belonging to a future Palestinian state.

Benjamin Netanyahu is represented throughout 2009 as an opponent of a two state solution with the Palestinians. In 'Netanyahu pushes one right button'¹² published on 15 June, following the Israeli premier's speech in which he referred to a future Palestinian state, he was described as '[t]he Israeli premier, who has dedicated his political life to thwarting a Palestinian state'. He is explicitly accused of being against a two state solution on at least four other occasions.¹³

Israel is not deemed by the FT to have made genuine attempts to make peace in the past. The Oslo process in particular is dismissed on three occasions¹⁴ as a process which favoured Israel over the Palestinians. 'The cost of Arab peace concessions'¹⁵, published on 3 August, asserted: 'In 1992-96, at the height of the peace process, Israel reaped a peace dividend without concluding a peace.' It went on to cite alleged benefits reaped by Israel and detriments suffered by the Palestinians as a result of the process:

'Diplomatic recognition of Israel doubled, from 85 to 161 countries, exports doubled and foreign investment increased six-fold. Per capita income in the occupied territories fell in the same period by more than a third, while the number of settlers expanded by half... The Arabs have not forgotten, and Mr Obama will have to get more than a settlement freeze out of Israel to lure them down that road again.'

Later in the same month, the above paragraph is repeated almost word for word in another editorial, 'Netanyahu's peace is a cynical evasion'¹⁶.

Not only is Israel deemed to have avoided a meaningful peace in the past, but the Financial Times is also convinced that the maximum Israel's current government under Benjamin Netanyahu envisages offering represents nothing more than 'a sort of supra-municipal power over discontinuous cantons, but no state'¹⁷. This claim is repeated on 25 March¹⁸, 17 May¹⁹ and even on the day following Netanyahu's statement in June, in which he offered conditional backing for an independent Palestinian state:

'His utterance of the word "state" looks a purely semantic concession, so hedged by sovereign limitations as to be vitiated of meaning. Israel would have the same control over the West Bank as it now has over Gaza. Palestinians would get supra-municipal rule.'²⁰

1.2 The Palestinians

The Palestinians are deemed to have made a consistent and genuine effort for peace over a long period of time, in contrast with Israel. In 'A man humiliated'²¹, published on 8 November following Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' announcement that he does not intend to run for the presidency again, the editorial declared:

'Mr Abbas's position has been steadily eroded over time because he has absolutely nothing to show for his years of pursuing a peace strategy based on a negotiated settlement - except for expanded Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land.'

This claim is repeated nine days later in another editorial, 'Mideast brinksmen'²² which also sympathised: 'The Palestinians are understandably at the end of their tether.'

The political dissociation between Fatah and Hamas is viewed by the FT as far less significant in the scheme of peacemaking, than factors controlled by Israel, such as settlement-building. Three editorials²³ referred to the split in the first quarter of 2009. In the only one of these which cited the divide in the Palestinian leadership as possibly having a negative bearing on the peace process, it was Israel that was ultimately blamed:

'Despite his determination to relaunch peace talks, President Obama may now find he lacks an Israeli interlocutor. The Palestinians are split and Israel's recent assault on Gaza has tilted opinion towards Hamas and rejectionism.'²⁴

'The agony of Fatah'²⁵, published to mark the first congress in the occupied territories in 30 years, once more barely refers to the political divide on the Palestinian side. However, a strong indicator is given as to the Financial Times' view on how best to unify the Palestinians and steer the leadership away from 'its further slide into corruption and irrelevance'. Promoting Marwan Barghouti, currently serving five life sentences in Israel for terrorist activity²⁶, over the current President Abbas on the grounds that the latter has been too conciliatory towards Israel, the editorial states: 'It is with such leaders - capable of delivering not just the rank-and-file of Fatah but Hamas - that Israel will have to deal if it ever wants a negotiated solution.'

2. Key points of conflict: Settlements and Gaza

Key Messages

- ▶ The FT regards Israel's occupation and settlement of the West Bank as the primary cause of conflict with the Palestinians
- ▶ Terrorism is cited by Israel to excuse rather than justify its actions, according to the FT
- ▶ The FT found Israel's actions in Gaza to be 'disproportionate' and supported the controversial Goldstone report
- ▶ Israel's withdrawal from Gaza is regarded as an insincere move of little, if any, significance to the peace process

2.1 1967 and the settlements

The occupation of the West Bank in 1967 and the subsequent and continued settlement of the area by Israelis is a central concern in FT Middle East editorials. The publication defines the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as 'at bottom a conflict over occupied land'²⁷ and claims that 'occupation of Palestinian territory after the 1967 six-day war has locked [Israel] in a deadly embrace with its Palestinian neighbours that only the creation of an independent Palestinian state can break.'²⁸

Israel's settlement policy in the West Bank is condemned in very strong terms, and labelled 'colonisation' in nine separate editorials²⁹. Furthermore, continued settlement is viewed as clear proof that Israel does not want peace. In 'Israel voters look set to move right'³⁰, published on 9 February before Israel's national elections, the newspaper claimed: 'There is no sign that Israelis are ready for a conversation with anyone but themselves' and that '[s]ecurity for Israelis and justice for Palestinians is attainable - but only if the US comes to realise that it is no part of its or Israel's national interest to enable Israel to colonise Arab land.'

Other aggravating factors in the conflict such as terrorism and a failure to accept Israel as a Jewish state are given short shrift. In fact, Israel is repeatedly accused of citing these issues to excuse rather than justify its behaviour. For example, 'The ruins of Gaza'³¹ published on 21 January, following the ceasefire in Gaza, asserted:

'But if Israel needs to reflect on how its militarist tactics and continuing occupation strengthen its most militant enemies, Hamas should recognise how its attacks on Israeli civilians have enabled Israel to change the subject: from the occupation to threats to its existence.'

Israel is also accused of trying 'to persuade the world what is at bottom a conflict over occupied land is really part of the global "war on terror"'.³² This rejection or downplaying of the role of threats to Israel's existence and terrorism in the continued conflict is also reflected in the way the Financial Times approaches the Iranian nuclear issue, discussed in Section 3.2: Iran and Israel.

2.2 'Historic Palestine'

The centrality of 1967 to FT Middle East editorials is consistent with the publication's belief that the only way for a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians is for the creation of an independent Palestinian state in territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war - namely, the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem.³³

However, the newspaper indicates that it views this chiefly as a pragmatic, rather than a just, solution for the Palestinians. It describes the area allocated as 'the shrinking residue of Palestine'³⁴ and 'the remnant of Palestine [Israel] occupied in 1967'.³⁵ In two separate editorials in 2009, the Financial Times contrasts the size of the putative

Palestinian state with that of Israel by referring back to 'colonial' or 'historic' Palestine of which the Palestinians would receive 22% and the Israelis seventy-eight per cent.³⁶

2.3 Gaza war

The Gaza war was the most reported element of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2009. The FT editorial column was unambiguously critical of Israel's conduct, describing it as 'disproportionate' in four editorials³⁷. However, the view on Israel's moral culpability for civilian deaths hardened over the course of the year as more allegations against Israeli soldiers were aired.³⁸

During the Gaza campaign itself, whilst Israel's use of force was disapproved of, there was nothing to suggest that the Financial Times believed that Israel purposefully harmed civilians. In 'Diplomacy must include Hamas'³⁹, this explanation of the newspaper's stance was given:

'Overwhelming force is an understandable military response, provided it is used against a recognisable military enemy. To use it inside a densely populated and blockaded urban arena, where civilians make up the majority of casualties, is disproportionate.'

In October, an editorial⁴⁰ was published specifically to back the findings of the Goldstone report, which alleged that 'what occurred in just over three weeks at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009 was a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population'⁴¹. In 'Goldstone's Gaza report is balanced' Israel's objections to the report were slammed as 'disingenuous' and its claims of bias rejected out of hand. The FT supported the report's emphasis on Israel's actions and implied that Israeli military action and Palestinian rocket fire were morally comparable.

2.4 Gaza withdrawal

Israel's total military and civilian withdrawal from Gaza in August 2005 has a very low profile in Financial Times editorials. The move is not viewed as significant in terms of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. Rather than being characterised as a significant concession by Israel or a symbol of peaceful intentions towards the Palestinians, the disengagement is seen as inadequate at best, and as a cynical ploy at worst.

On 4 January, in the midst of the Gaza conflict, the FT published 'A dangerous gamble in Gaza'⁴² in which the disengagement is mentioned in passing:

'But the claim that the Islamists' extremism is the main cause of Gaza's misery, after Israel offered Palestinians freedom by pulling out of the Mediterranean enclave in 2005, is less than a half-truth.'

Immediately following the cessation of fighting, another reference to the disengagement was entirely dismissive:

'But Israeli unilateralism is a blind alley. Its unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 has resolved nothing.'⁴³

In March, the disengagement was described as an attempt 'to trade Gaza for big chunks of the West Bank.'⁴⁴

It is noteworthy that no criticism is levelled at Hamas for responding to Israel's forgoing of Gaza with increased attacks on Israel from Gaza. Rather, Israel is the recipient of criticism amid accusations of unilateralism and ulterior motives. Given that the Financial Times' central demand is for Israel to give up occupied land in order that the Palestinians have a state of their own, this stance is striking.

3. Iran: Nuclear ambitions and tensions with Israel

Key Messages

- ▶ Advocating a patient approach at the start of 2009, the FT now regards Iran's nuclear ambitions as suspicious and in need of restraining
- ▶ FT Middle East editorials do not discuss threats made against Israel by Iranian President Ahmadinejad
- ▶ The FT views Israel's claims of an existential threat from Iran as an excuse to deflect attention from its own actions

3.1 Iran's nuclear ambitions

The mounting diplomatic tension over Iran's nuclear ambitions has been one of the biggest international stories of 2009. The Islamic Republic has repeatedly stood firm against Western demands that it cease its pursuance of a nuclear capability, spurning offers from the international community and ignoring threats of further sanctions.

FT editorial coverage reflects a gradual shift from a willingness to give Iran's intentions the benefit of the doubt, evident in the first part of 2009, to the conclusion that Iran's nuclear intentions are not peaceful, evident towards the end of the year.

In 'Sticks and carrots and engaging Iran'⁴⁵, published on 26 February, the newspaper advocated a combination of incentives and deterrents in handling Iran. The editorial was directly critical of the US, Europe, China and Russia for their handling of Iran, but offered no direct criticism of Iran itself. On the contrary, the piece expressed doubt about whether Iran was pursuing a nuclear capability:

'Findings by the UN nuclear watchdog that Iran now has 1,000kg of low-enriched uranium has set alarms ringing, even though Iran would have to recast its operations in a detectable way to enrich this to weapons grade - and there is no sign that Tehran has concluded its internal debate on weaponisation.'⁴⁶

However, by September, following the discovery of a secret uranium enrichment facility near Qom, the newspaper was more convinced of Iran's intentions. 'Time to confront Iran's deceptions'⁴⁷ from 27 September called Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his government 'cheats and deceivers' and asserted: 'Iran's claim that it is part of a peaceful civil nuclear programme cannot be taken remotely seriously.' It also demanded that, 'Above all, Iran must agree by December that it will halt all further expansion of its nuclear programme. If it does not, the imposition of tough new sanctions by the UN will be fully justified.'

A similarly strongly worded warning was published two months later on 30 November⁴⁸, following Iran's announcement that it intended to build a further ten uranium enrichment facilities. The newspaper labelled the move as a 'provocation' and claimed: 'Tehran is close to frittering away the best opportunity to end the 30-year stand-off between Iran and the west - and is making an armed conflict daily more likely.'

3.2 Iran and Israel

Parallel to the increasing tensions between Iran and the West in 2009 are those between the Islamic Republic and Israel. Over the course of the year, hostile rhetoric and military muscle-flexing have characterised the escalating situation. Iranian President Ahmadinejad has issued numerous threats against Israel over the last five years⁴⁹,

including a restatement in June 2008⁵⁰ of his 2005 contention that Israel 'should be wiped off the map'⁵¹. For its part, Israel has refused to rule out military action to prevent Iran gaining a nuclear weapon.

Whilst the FT's trust in Iran has eroded over time as a result of its conduct following controversial elections in June⁵², as well as repeated obfuscation over its nuclear programme, its view on the prospect of military action to forcibly prevent Iran obtaining nuclear weapons remains unchanged.

In March, the prospect of an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities in Natanz was described as 'an event that would be a calamity for the world'⁵³. An editorial nine months later on 23 December maintains its opposition to any such action, warning that this would lead to 'a slide to war'.⁵⁴

This position may be explained in part by the FT's interpretation of the Iran-Israel relationship in general. Despite addressing the issue of Iranian nuclear ambitions in at least 22 editorials⁵⁵, and, specifically, the prospect of an Israeli attack on Iran in five leaders⁵⁶, not once did a Financial Times editorial refer to threats issued by President Ahmadinejad against Israel. The Iranian premier's notorious Holocaust denial was mentioned in one editorial.⁵⁷

Throughout 2009, Israel was depicted as the more belligerent party, whose claims of an existential threat from Iran were a deliberate attempt to mislead the international community. As early as January⁵⁸, the Financial Times was taking the editorial line that Israel was fabricating an Iranian threat in order to 'change the subject' from the central issue of the occupation of the West Bank. In 'The ruins of Gaza'⁵⁹, published on 21 January, immediately following the cessation of fighting in Gaza, the editorial claimed:

'Israel's (and the Bush administration's) pretence that Iran is behind every leaf that stirs in the Middle East is also deliberately misleading.'

It goes on to argue that the link drawn by Israel between Hamas and Iran as well as the former's attacks on Israeli civilians 'have enabled Israel to change the subject: from the occupation to threats to its existence.'

In May, the Financial Times again accused Israel of exploiting the Iranian issue to stall on its diplomatic obligations:

'Mr Netanyahu, and a palpably rattled Israeli leadership, want to change the subject. There can be no movement on the Palestinian conflict, they say, until the threat of Iran's nuclear ambitions has been resolved.'⁶⁰

The only instance where an FT editorial explicitly ascribes genuine concern to Israel about Iran is on 30 October⁶¹, when the publication strongly criticised Iran's failure to fall into line with an offer by the international community to allow the country to enrich uranium abroad. Having described Tehran as 'recklessly close to frittering away this opening' the editorial implied that Iran was obligated to reassure its neighbours, 'including an alarmed and increasingly bellicose Israel.'

4. The Arab world: Regimes and peacemaking

Key Messages

- ▶ The FT's criticism of Arab regimes is selective, lauding Saudi peace efforts, but criticising limited freedoms in Egypt
- ▶ The FT supports the Saudi Peace Initiative of 2002 as the main framework for reaching an agreement
- ▶ The US is criticised by the FT for supporting 'local tyrants' in the Arab world

4.1 Arab regimes

The Financial Times exhibited mixed attitudes towards the rulers of the Arab world on its editorial pages in 2009. The newspaper acknowledges a lack of democracy in the region, as well as a preoccupation with 'legitimacy and survival'⁶² which comes at the expense of modernisation; however, it is selective with its criticism. For example, an editorial in August⁶³ marking the first visit to Washington by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in five years, took the opportunity to openly criticise the regime:

'Mr Mubarak boasts of stability, yet he has ruled Egypt under emergency laws for 28 years, during which the country has become an introspective autocracy preoccupied with regime maintenance.'

The leader goes on to provide a summary of all the essential problems facing the Arab states, like an extreme wealth disparity, caused ultimately by 'the debris of ideological bankruptcy'. Citing '[t]he failure of pan-Arabism' and its subsequent replacement with Islamic revivalism, in part assisted by the regime's own clerical establishment, the article concludes:

'The US and its allies have long supported this set-up in the interests of short-term stability... Egypt is at the centre of an ossified order of western-backed Arab strongmen that has stifled freedom and stunted development, provoking the jihadism against which it claims to be a bulwark.'

The Financial Times' position regarding Saudi Arabia, however, is markedly different, best illustrated in an editorial on 25 January⁶⁴, in which the newspaper touts the Kingdom's warning to the United States that 'it can either change course radically on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or forfeit the US "special relationship" with Saudi Arabia.'

The article paints a highly complimentary picture of Prince Turki al-Faisal, who issued the warning⁶⁵ on the FT's comment pages the previous week, describing him as 'part of the reforming wing of Saudi Arabia's absolute monarchy'⁶⁶ and 'a man who expresses himself with care and moderation', who along with his brother, foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, 'have represented the pro-US kingdom to the world for well over three decades.'

The Financial Times quotes Prince Turki's view that former US President George W. Bush left 'a sickening legacy in the region' and 'contributed to the slaughter of innocents'. The depiction of Saudi Arabia as upset by 'the slaughter of innocents', is notable given the country's own notoriety for meting out harsh and violent punishments to those found in contravention of its strict social and moral codes.⁶⁷

In numerous editorials⁶⁸, the FT criticises the United States for its relationships with Arab regimes. Its editorial reporting US President Obama's Cairo University speech in June⁶⁹ closed with the following words:

'But what the peoples of the broader Middle East will also want to know is whether the US will continue to collude with despotic regimes. Decades of support for local tyrants, every bit as much as unconditional backing for Israel, is what has most inflated Islamist appeal. That is something "realists" should really think about.'

It is not clear whether the Financial Times counts Saudi Arabia among these 'despotic regimes'.

4.2 Arab peacemaking

The proposition that the Palestinians have tried to make peace with Israel extends to the wider Arab world, which the FT considers to be relatively free from blame in the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. The newspaper endorses the Saudi Peace Initiative of 2002 in seven editorials⁷⁰ over the course of 2009, and on 25 January⁷¹, ran an editorial supporting the position of Saudi diplomat Turki al-Faisal, as discussed above. The editorial reads:

'Mr Obama should embrace the 2002 peace plan of King Abdullah, offering full Arab recognition of Israel for full Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land and the creation of a Palestinian state, with Arab east Jerusalem as its capital.

'Prince Turki reveals that Iran last week called on Saudi Arabia to lead a jihad against Israel. "So far, the kingdom has resisted these calls," he said, but "eventually, the kingdom will not be able to prevent its citizens from joining the worldwide revolt against Israel". Strong stuff.'

Quite clearly, the inference here by Turki Faisal is that Saudi Arabia would not be responsible for violence by its citizenry against Israel if the latter does not accept the terms of the Saudi peace plan. Furthermore, its response to this ominous quote, simply 'Strong stuff', implies that the Financial Times editorial board does not disagree.

The FT stance is most saliently revealed in August in 'The cost of Arab peace concessions'⁷², in which the newspaper offers a defence of the Arab refusal to make concessions to match a settlement freeze on Israel's part:

'Despite intense US diplomacy, Saudi Arabia, Washington's closest Arab ally, has brushed aside efforts to extract Arab concessions - such as the opening of Israeli trade delegations in Arab countries - in exchange for a settlements freeze.

'But their experience of the peace process has ensured that is not how most Arabs see it.'

The editorial then cited the alleged benefits reaped by Israel from the Oslo Accords, as discussed previously.

Conclusions

The high level of editorial coverage devoted to the Middle East in the Financial Times reflects the importance the publication attaches to the region. The following findings indicate key positions taken by the Financial Times in 2009:

Israel

- The FT believes that Israel must change its behaviour, particularly regarding settlement activity, if the prospect of peace with the Palestinians is to be revived
- It views military action by Israel against Iran as very ill-advised, predicting that it would lead to dire consequences. There is a strong indication that the Financial Times does not regard Iran as an existential threat to Israel

The Palestinians

- The FT believes that President Mahmoud Abbas should be replaced with a less conciliatory leader – specifically, Marwan Barghouti – in part to appeal more to Hamas supporters
- The publication contends that the Palestinians should pursue ‘civic resistance and diplomatic war’ against Israel to deliver results rather than return to violence

Iran

- The Financial Times displays increasing concern about Iran’s nuclear programme, no longer accepting that the Islamic Republic is pursuing a purely civil capability
- However, the publication maintains that military action would be the worst course of action, favouring the continuation of diplomatic pressure and, if necessary, the application of sanctions

Arab world

- The Saudi Peace Initiative of 2002 is regarded by the Financial Times as the best available framework for a peaceful solution between Israel and the Arab world
- The publication calls for Arab regimes to modernise and democratise; however, criticism is applied unevenly, with Saudi Arabia treated more sympathetically than Egypt

- 1 401,072 (ABC figures, November 2009) as cited on <http://www.ft.com/aboutus>.
- 2 <http://www.ft.com/aboutus>.
- 3 11.4 million unique users (ABCe figures, March 2009) as cited on <http://www.ft.com/aboutus>.
- 4 The study sample of 121 editorials published in 2009, is based on the search results listed on FT.com when the term 'Middle East' is entered into the website's search facility and narrowed down using Date range filter ('1 Jan 2009 - 31 Dec 2009') and Keyword filter ('Editorial'). While some of these listed editorials focus exclusively on Middle East issues, others only contain a passing reference to the Middle East but have nonetheless been included for consistency.
- 5 'A dangerous gamble in Gaza' (4 January 2009); 'Israel voters look set to move right' (9 February 2009).
- 6 'A dangerous gamble in Gaza' (4 January 2009); 'A Labour fig-leaf for Netanyahu' (25 March 2009).
- 7 'Israel voters look set to move right' (9 February 2009).
- 8 'Perils of ignoring festering conflicts' (2 January 2009).
- 9 'The agony of Fatah' (9 August 2009).
- 10 'Israel voters look set to move right' (9 February 2009); 'A Labour fig-leaf for Netanyahu' (25 March 2009); 'Middle East test of Obama's resolve' (17 May 2009); 'Obama gets off to a new beginning' (4 June 2009); 'Netanyahu pushes one right button' (15 June 2009); 'The cost of Arab peace concessions' (3 August 2009); 'Israel's revealing fury towards EU' (13 December 2009).
- 11 'Middle East test of Obama's resolve' (17 May 2009).
- 12 'Netanyahu pushes one right button' (15 June 2009).
- 13 'Middle East test of Obama's resolve' (17 May 2009); 'Obama gets off to a new beginning' (4 June 2009); 'Netanyahu's peace is a cynical evasion' (25 August 2009); 'A man humiliated' (8 November 2009).
- 14 'A Labour fig-leaf for Netanyahu' (25 March 2009); 'The cost of Arab peace concessions' (3 August 2009); 'Netanyahu's peace is a cynical evasion' (25 August 2009).
- 15 'The cost of Arab peace concessions' (3 August 2009).
- 16 'Netanyahu's peace is a cynical evasion' (25 August 2009).
- 17 'Israel backs into political gridlock' (11 February 2009).
- 18 'A Labour fig-leaf for Netanyahu' (25 March 2009).
- 19 'Middle East test of Obama's resolve' (17 May 2009).
- 20 'Netanyahu pushes one right button' (15 June 2009).
- 21 'A man humiliated' (8 November 2009).
- 22 'Mideast brinksman' (17 November 2009).
- 23 'A dangerous gamble in Gaza' (4 January 2009); 'Endgame in Gaza' (14 January 2009); 'Israel backs into political gridlock' (11 February 2009).
- 24 'Israel backs into political gridlock' (11 February 2009).
- 25 'The agony of Fatah' (9 August 2009).
- 26 In 2004, Marwan Barghouti was convicted of five murders, as well as attempted murder, conspiracy to murder, and membership of a terrorist organisation.
- 27 'Diplomacy must include Hamas' (7 January 2009).
- 28 'Perils of ignoring festering conflicts' (2 January 2009).
- 29 'Israel voters look set to move right' (9 February 2009); 'Obama gets off to a new beginning' (4 June 2009); 'An unholy row' (20 July 2009); 'The cost of Arab peace concessions' (3 August 2009); 'Netanyahu's peace is a cynical evasion' (25 August 2009); 'Israel's provocation' (6 September 2009); 'Goldstone's Gaza report is balanced' (19 October 2009); 'A man humiliated' (8 November 2009); 'Mideast brinksman' (17 November 2009).
- 30 'Israel voters look set to move right' (9 February 2009).
- 31 'The ruins of Gaza' (21 January 2009).
- 32 'Diplomacy must include Hamas' (7 January 2009).
- 33 'Middle East test of Obama's resolve' (17 May 2009).
- 34 'The agony of Fatah' (9 August 2009).
- 35 'Israel backs into political gridlock' (11 February 2009).
- 36 'Middle East test of Obama's resolve' (17 May 2009); 'The need for peace in the Holy Land' (23 December 2009).
- 37 'A dangerous gamble in Gaza' (4 January 2009); 'Diplomacy must include Hamas' (7 January 2009); 'Endgame in Gaza' (14 January 2009); 'Goldstone's Gaza report is balanced' (19 October 2009).
- 38 Investigation by The Guardian (23 March 2009); Report by 'Breaking The Silence' (15 July 2009); The Goldstone Report (15 September 2009).
- 39 'Diplomacy must include Hamas' (7 January 2009).
- 40 'Goldstone's Gaza report is balanced' (19 October 2009).
- 41 'Goldstone's Gaza report is balanced' (19 October 2009).
- 42 'A dangerous gamble in Gaza' (4 January 2009).
- 43 'The ruins of Gaza' (21 January 2009).
- 44 'A Labour fig-leaf for Netanyahu' (25 March 2009).
- 45 'Sticks and carrots and engaging Iran' (26 February 2009).
- 46 'Sticks and carrots and engaging Iran' (26 February 2009).
- 47 'Time to confront Iran's deceptions' (27 September 2009).
- 48 'Iran is playing a dangerous game' (30 November 2009).
- 49 Speech broadcast on Islamic Republic of Iran News Network on 18 September 2008: 'I would like to declare that the idea of "smaller Israel" is also dead. The very notion of Israel is dead, but they are lagging behind the times.' (translated by MEMRI); Speech published on website of the Presidency of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 3 June 2008: 'O dear Imam (Khomeini)! You said the Zionist Regime that is a usurper and illegitimate regime and a cancerous tumor should be wiped off the map. I should say that your illuminating remark and cause is going to come true today.'; Remarks reported by AFP on 8 May 2008: 'Those who think they can revive the stinking corpse of the usurping and fake Israeli regime by throwing a birthday party are seriously mistaken'.
- 50 Speech published on website of the Presidency of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 3 June 2008 (see footnote 36).
- 51 Speech made at Islamic Student Associations conference, titled 'The World Without Zionism' on 26 October 2005: 'Our dear Imam said that the occupying regime must be wiped off the map and this was a very wise statement.' (translated in New York Times, 30 October 2005).
- 52 'Iran protests enter dangerous waters' (22 June 2009); 'Theocratic disarray' (31 July 2009).
- 53 'Obama woos Putin' (6 March 2009).
- 54 'The need for peace in the Holy Land' (23 December 2009).
- 55 'Iran and US: a tale of two republics' (3 February 2009); 'Pyongyang pugilist' (5 February 2009); 'Sticks and carrots and engaging Iran' (26 February 2009); 'Obama woos Putin' (6 March 2009); 'Obama strikes new tone with Tehran' (22 March 2009); 'US and Russia must build bridges' (26 March 2009); 'Middle East test of Obama's resolve' (17 May 2009); 'Iran's vigorous theo-democracy' (10 June 2009); 'Iranian theocrats impose their will' (14 June 2009); 'Iranian clerics caught in a bind' (16 June 2009); 'Unfreezing cold war attitudes' (3 July 2009); 'Theocratic disarray' (31 July 2009); 'Iran's nuclear call' (3 September 2009); 'Time to confront Iran's deceptions' (27 September 2009); 'Patient diplomacy opens door to Iran' (2 October 2009); 'Iran's last chance' (30 October 2009); 'Turks' eastern turn' (25 November 2009); 'Iran is playing a dangerous game' (30 November 2009); 'Dealing with Iran' (17 December 2009); 'How Obama can earn peace price' (21 December 2009); 'The need for peace in the Holy Land' (23 December 2009); 'Iran protests turn into open rebellion' (30 December 2009).
- 56 'Obama woos Putin' (6 March 2009); 'Iranian theocrats impose their will' (14 June 2009); 'Time to confront Iran's deceptions' (27 September 2009); 'Iran is playing a dangerous game' (30 November 2009); 'The need for peace in the Holy Land' (23 December 2009).
- 57 'Iran's vigorous theo-democracy' (10 June 2009).
- 58 'The ruins of Gaza' (21 January 2009).
- 59 'The ruins of Gaza' (21 January 2009).
- 60 'Middle East test of Obama's resolve' (17 May 2009).
- 61 'Iran's last chance' (30 October 2009).
- 62 'Perils of ignoring festering conflicts' (2 January 2009).
- 63 'Mubarak's return to Washington' (18 August 2009).
- 64 'Saudi warning' (25 January 2009).
- 65 Turki al-Faisal, 'Saudi patience is running out' (22 January 2009).
- 66 'Saudi warning' (25 January 2009).
- 67 Human Rights Watch: 'Precarious Justice' (24 March 2008); Amnesty International: 'Death sentences over Saudi 'sorcery' claims' (10 December 2009).
- 68 'Mubarak's return to Washington' (18 August 2009); 'Obama gets off to a new beginning' (4 June 2009).
- 69 'Obama gets off to a new beginning' (4 June 2009).
- 70 'A dangerous gamble in Gaza' (4 January 2009); 'Saudi warning' (25 January 2009); 'Obama brings new tone to Mideast' (27 January 2009); 'Israel voters look set to move right' (9 February 2009); 'Middle East test of Obama's resolve' (17 May 2009); 'The cost of Arab peace concessions' (3 August 2009); 'Mideast brinksman' (17 November 2009).
- 71 'Saudi warning' (25 January 2009).
- 72 'The cost of Arab peace concessions' (3 August 2009).

www.justjournalism.com contact@justjournalism.com Registered company number: 06345885

Just Journalism is an independent research organisation focused on how Israel and Middle East issues are reported in the UK media. We produce analysis of print, broadcast and online media and regularly publish research on trends in the media's coverage.

© Published by Just Journalism, January 2010

The text of this report may only be reproduced with prior permission of Just Journalism.