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**Salam Fayyad and the drive towards Palestinian statehood:  
A comparison of British and US media coverage**



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with a Foreword by Hussein Ibish

## Foreword – Hussein Ibish

Just Journalism's new report highlighting disparities between UK and US journalism on the state and institution building program led by President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad is extremely suggestive. Its main conclusion is that, for whatever reason, the US media has been more receptive to the idea that Palestinians are proactively building the institutional, infrastructural, economic and, perhaps most importantly, administrative framework of their state in spite of the occupation, in order to end the occupation. At its core this development constitutes a historic paradigm shift in the Palestinian national movement away from strategies based on either armed struggle or top-down diplomacy and grand gestures to one that recognizes the value of peaceful approaches and, most importantly, the crucial role that bottom-up institution building and social and economic development play in the quest for independence and statehood. It reflects not only a transformation in strategies, but also in attitudes and, as Just Journalism's report notes, has already had a significant positive impact on the quality of life in the occupied West Bank for Palestinians and on the security climate for Israelis.

The report's conclusions are based mainly on the volume of coverage devoted to these important developments in the UK and US media, suggesting that British coverage tends to focus intensively on the settlements issue as an obstacle to peace and ignore Palestinian efforts to create new strategies for independence which they control and which give them both leverage and agency beyond the core strategy of seeking a negotiated agreement. This is profoundly unfortunate, because the state and institution building program can and should be read as the Palestinian answer to the settlements: unilateral and strategically significant changes on the ground, except in this case they are consistent with international law, the legitimate interests of all parties, the Roadmap of the Quartet and stated international positions, and advance rather than impede prospects for a negotiated agreement. As such, these measures and this historic paradigm shift, along with other peaceful Palestinian tactics reflecting the same logic including nonviolent protests and boycotts of settlement goods, deserve, and indeed demand, sustained attention from all serious journalists and analysts who cover this issue. It's not a matter of emphasizing good news as much as it is a simple fidelity to the responsibility of communicating important developments to one's readers and viewers.

The Just Journalism report is a welcome contribution to research into media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hopefully it will alert the British press to what certainly appears to be a blind spot in its range of vision on the conflict. What is happening on the ground in the West Bank, initiated by and for Palestinians themselves and designed to both complement negotiations and bring the day of independence forward, deserves more attention than it's received anywhere in the world thus far. It certainly deserves more attention than it appears to have received in the UK.

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## Salam Fayyad and the drive towards Palestinian statehood: A comparison of British and US media coverage



Since his appointment as Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority in June 2007<sup>1</sup> Salam Fayyad has applied himself consistently to improving the security and economy of the West Bank. Over the last two and a half years, life there for Palestinians has improved considerably. The economy grew by 8.5 percent in 2009 and is predicted to grow a further 5 to 7 percent in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, racketeering gangs on the street have been brought to heel, and a scattered and corrupt police force has been replaced by a more efficient and largely US-trained security force.

The US-educated former World Bank economist with a reputation for financial transparency believes that by bolstering capital investment,

professionalising the PA's security forces, and building trustworthy and accountable institutions of government, Palestinians can create their own 'facts on the ground' which will make the reality of an actual Palestinian state a foregone conclusion. Though not disdainful or dismissive of a brokered political resolution with Israel, Fayyad's approach is fundamentally materialist: his prescription, he says, amounts to a declaration of 'de facto statehood' to precede the real thing. His mixed domestic reception derives in part from his lack of popular support – he is not a member of the mainstream Fatah or Hamas parties – but also from his pragmatic and technocratic, rather than ideological, approach to governing.

This report examines the treatment of Salam Fayyad and his policies in the mainstream UK and US media, and identifies the different ways he is portrayed. Clear distinctions emerge, with the US media demonstrating a much greater interest in, and more positive attitude towards, the Palestinian Prime Minister than the UK media.

### Key findings:

- The US media attribute real importance to Salam Fayyad and his active approach to state-building, whereas the UK media find him to be irrelevant in the grand scheme of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- Whilst a measure of diversity exists within both the UK and the US, in general, the US media are more supportive of Fayyad and his politics than the UK media
- The UK media identify an emphasis on restarting the Palestinian economy with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom they broadly dislike, whereas the US media identify it with Fayyad's own focus on this subject
- The UK media present the focus on economic improvement in the West Bank as a ruse by Netanyahu to distract focus from reaching a full political settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, indicating a strong inclination to emphasise points of conflict over potential co-operation
- UK media coverage of Fayyad is more likely to give ultimate emphasis to the problem of settlements whereas US media coverage does not conflate the subject of economic success in the West Bank with the problem of settlements

## Salam Fayyad: Man with a mission

Often regarded as more of a managerial technocrat than a politician, Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad's negative characterisation by the UK media is indicative of broader trends in coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given the strong emphasis on Palestinian helplessness in the face of Israeli dominance in the UK broadsheets, one might have expected the emergence of a Palestinian leader who has stepped outside of this paradigm in order to actively pursue an independent Palestinian state to be presented as a laudatory phenomenon. However, this portrayal has not transpired.

Fayyad has a distinctly Western profile given his previous role as an economist at the World Bank, as well as his United States post graduate education at St Edward's University and the University of Texas at Austin. Whilst this background makes him appealing to some audiences, it has the opposite effect among others, namely those who are suspicious of a Palestinian leader who has the approval of many in Israel and the United States. Fayyad's ease within Israeli society is also provocative. In 2005, he attended the wedding of the daughter of former Israeli legal adviser Dov Weissglass. Fayyad has also said, in a 14 August 2009 interview with Haaretz<sup>3</sup>, that the classification of Israel as a 'Jewish state' is up to Israelis, putting him at odds with the bulk of the Palestinian leadership, and certainly with the PLO and Fatah hardliners.

Electoral, too, Fayyad does not enjoy popular support among his West Bank constituency. His 'Third Way' party only gained 2.4 percent of the vote in the 2006 elections and his installation as Prime Minister by President Mahmoud Abbas in 2007, following the Palestinian Authority's ousting in Gaza by Hamas, is widely viewed as unconstitutional. His relationship with Hamas is particularly hostile. In response to an interview with Haaretz<sup>4</sup> on 2 April 2010 in which he implied that Palestinian refugees abroad would be absorbed into a future Palestinian state and not Israel, the Islamist party called for Fayyad to be put on trial.<sup>5</sup>

'Fayyadism is based on the simple but all-too-rare notion that an Arab leader's legitimacy should be based not on slogans or rejectionism or personality cults or security services, but on delivering transparent, accountable administration and services.'

**Thomas Friedman,**  
**The New York Times, 4 August 2009**

Nonetheless, Fayyad has presided over a period of genuine positive change in the West Bank. As Israel's ambassador to the US Michael Oren recounted in an article in the Wall Street Journal in 2009<sup>6</sup>, 'Since 2008, more than 2,000 new companies have been registered with the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Where heavy fighting once raged, there are now state-of-the-art shopping malls.' He cited further statistics supported by the IMF and other financial observers pointing to other marked improvements, including an '[Eighteen percent] increase in the local stock exchange, a 94% growth of tourism to Bethlehem - generating 6,000 new jobs - and an 82% rise in trade with Israel.'

Fayyad's work in the West Bank has impacted ordinary Palestinians who aspire to be safe and earn a decent living. However, his emphasis on the bricks-and-mortar approach to nation building is not devoid of a political component. In parallel with the practical business of building viable state institutions, he is also encouraging Palestinians to adopt a strategy of 'peaceful resistance' against Israel. In an address at an international conference at the West Bank village of Bilin on 21 April 2010, he called on Palestinians to boycott settlement products:

'There has been progress in the boycott of settlement products, which comes from the idea of popular peaceful resistance, and I hope we will rid our markets of all settlement goods by the end of the year.'

He has also participated in the burning of Jewish settlement goods as a mark of opposition to the occupation. Yet Fayyad has, notably, not called for a boycott of goods imported from Israel.



## Fayyad's approach: A breath of fresh air or cause for concern?

Even prior to 25th August 2009 when Fayyad announced in London his intention to build the institutions of an independent Palestinian state within two years, the Palestinian Prime Minister was making a name for himself in the US as the driving force behind the rehabilitation of the West Bank.

In a New York Times article in early August, Thomas Friedman coined the term 'Fayyadism' calling it 'the most exciting new idea in Arab governance ever' ('Green Shoots in Palestine', 4 August 2009). Describing him as 'unlike any Arab leader today', he emphasised the PM's commitment to functioning and accountable government:

'Fayyadism is based on the simple but all-too-rare notion that an Arab leader's legitimacy should be based not on slogans or rejectionism or personality cults or security services, but on delivering transparent, accountable administration and services.'

Friedman reported eagerly the concrete improvements achieved, such as increased numbers of new companies in 2009 and a predicted annual economic growth rate of 7 percent for the same year. Citing a combination of Fayyad's policies together with improved security and co-operation from the Israelis in reducing checkpoints, he exclaimed: 'Things are truly getting better in the West Bank.'

This overwhelming sense of optimism about Fayyad's grassroots work has no parallel in the UK broadsheet newspapers. Indeed, UK coverage tended to cast heavy doubts over the efficacy of focusing on improving everyday life for Palestinians in the West Bank and implied that this would necessarily come at the expense of political progress, particularly with regards to settlements and Jerusalem.

Typical of this approach was The Independent's 'Nablus: a template for peace, or Netanyahu at his most cynical?' (25 August 2009) which, as the headline suggests, coloured with a sense of mistrust what could have been a story about certifiable positive change in one of the West Bank's major cities. Middle East correspondent Ben Lynfield opened the piece sceptically, stating: 'The shopkeepers in Nablus, the West Bank's toughest town, are smiling for a change. But no one knows for how long.'

After setting out a similar set of new realities to Friedman's New York Times piece - predicted growth of 7 percent, the town 'filled with shoppers', sales in the market 'up 50 or even 100 per cent' - the journalist devoted the remainder of the article to painting these successes as a deception:

'But critics say Mr Netanyahu's approach is aimed at evading the broad political concessions needed to really defuse the Israeli-Palestinian powder keg. Nablus residents are themselves cautious, especially given the Jewish settlements that surround the town. Back at his shop, Mr Jarwan says the economic boost alone will not be enough to satisfy his countrymen.

"Buying and selling isn't everything," he explains. "We want our own Palestinian country and to get our freedom. If the settlements continue to go on like this, I'm sure there will be another explosion."

Two other Palestinians were quoted, saying that the new measures are 'very flimsy' and 'all theatre, nothing substantial, a show for the Americans and Europe.'

Crucially, it is Israeli PM Netanyahu that the Middle East correspondent identifies the economic policies with and not the Palestinian PM, which perhaps explains the negative characterisation of the policies. Fayyad is only mentioned once in the article, as being in town to be the first to taste a giant pastry produced there. However, his role in the city's turnaround was absent. Taken against Thomas Friedman's positioning of Fayyad at the heart of this progress, the contrast could not be starker.

The shopkeepers in Nablus, the West Bank's toughest town, are smiling for a change. But no one knows for how long.'

**Article subheading in The Independent, 25 August 2009**

## The de facto statehood announcement

Following Fayyad's announcement that he was embarking on the challenge of creating the apparatus of a Palestinian state within two years, which attended the publication of a 38-page white paper<sup>7</sup> detailing this strategy, the Palestinian Prime Minister again captured the attention of the New York Times which reported the plan in detail. In 'Palestinian Leader Maps Plan for Separate State' (25 August 2009) Isabel Kershner described the plan as the 'first of its kind from the Palestinian Authority' and quoted sections outlining what precisely it aimed to achieve, including rights to 'shelter, education and health insurance'. The American consul general Jacob Walles was cited praising the plan: 'He said that it was the first time he had seen such a "concrete plan" and that the Palestinians were working in a practical way toward their goal.'

Across the Atlantic, media coverage in the UK of Fayyad's plan for achieving de-facto statehood within two years illustrated a clear dissonance with the US interpretation. Whilst both left and right of centre publications in the US viewed Fayyad's proactivity as a step in the right direction, the UK broadsheets were overwhelmingly negative.

An extreme example of this rejectionism can be seen in a Financial Times editorial published the day after Fayyad announced his plan. Extraordinarily, 'Netanyahu's peace is a cynical evasion' (26 August 2009) did not even mention Fayyad, electing to focus instead on criticising the Israeli prime minister for – like Fayyad – focusing on the economic track. The publication accused him of 'trying to change the subject', of 'obfuscat[ing] about an "economic peace"' and of being against a two state solution: 'Mr Netanyahu, in London and due to see George Mitchell, the president's special representative, wants to talk economics. This is a cynical evasion.'

The exclusion of Fayyad from the Financial Times' analysis suggests that either the newspaper considers the Palestinian Prime Minister and his policies to be somewhat irrelevant to the Middle East process, or that it has a preference for excluding facts which counter its preferred narrative.

The Israeli Embassy in London responded to the hostile editorial with a letter, published in the Financial Times on 1 September 2009, which challenged the notion that economic steps were part of an Israeli ploy to avoid a two state solution. It asserted, 'Mr Netanyahu's emphasis on the Palestinian economy is not an attempt to "change the subject", but a crucial step in the realisation of that vision', and it noted economic growth in the West Bank 'as a direct result of Israel's policies in co-operation with the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and prime minister Fayyad, himself a distinguished economist.'

The letter to the Financial Times was not the only instance of Israeli officials reminding British media outlets of the progress in the West Bank. In an op-ed in The Daily Telegraph published on 25 August 2009, Israeli Ambassador to the UK Ron Prosor wrote:

'Israel's prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu is in London this week. He can point to the co-operation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority which has helped develop and strengthen the Palestinian infrastructure in the West Bank...

President Abbas and prime minister Fayyad saw the West Bank Palestinian economy grow by 5-7 per cent in 2008. Since July 2007, the number of permanent security checkpoints in the West Bank has been reduced from 41 to 14. As Israel continues to implement measures to ease movement and trade, the rate of economic growth is predicted to double.' (‘ Hamas is leading Palestine down the road of carnage’)

Unlike the Financial Times, other UK media organs at least reported Fayyad’s policy announcement, but they often presented it in negative terms. For instance, ‘Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad says time is running out for peace’ (25 August 2009) by James Hider of The Times, is infused with negativity, preferring to focus on complaints against Israel regarding settlements and Jerusalem rather than the components of the Palestinian plan itself. Hider devoted most of the article, which reported the contents of an interview with Fayyad, to quoting and citing the Palestinian PM’s criticisms of the Israeli government. However, the Middle East correspondent failed to incorporate the key point that Fayyad works closely with the Israelis in implementing his policies in the West Bank.

Interestingly, the editorial line at The Times on the following day was at odds with the approach to the story by its news team. ‘Road Maps’ and Roadblocks’ (26 August 2009) called for a return to peace talks in view of the success of the focus by Israel and the Palestinians on grass roots economic improvements in the West Bank. Mindful of the tense bilateral relations, citing a recent eviction of a Palestinian family in east Jerusalem, the leading article nonetheless contended that there were reasons to be optimistic:

‘The real ground for some optimism, however, is Mr Netanyahu’s insistence that economic improvements for the Palestinians, rather than territorial concessions, are the essential first steps towards peace. In this, he is hugely helped by a similar stance taken by Salaam Fayyad, the Palestinian Prime Minister. Both men believe that what matters is getting things moving on the West Bank. Growth is already running at 7 per cent.’

The editorial strongly emphasised Israeli-Palestinian co-operation, in stark contrast with the news article which only discussed the points of contention between the two sides.

## **Increasing Fayyad focus in the US, silence in the UK**

A key difference between the US and UK media handling of Fayyad is that the Palestinian PM’s 2009 de facto state announcement had a lasting effect in the US print media, triggering numerous articles focused on Fayyad in the months after August in The Washington Post, Newsweek and Time Magazine. Only one such article was penned by a UK broadsheet journalist in the same period up until the end of 2009.<sup>8</sup> The only other news piece devoted to change in the West Bank was The Guardian’s ‘CIA working with Palestinian security agents’ (18 December 2009) which focused not on the massive improvements in West Bank security but on the alleged abuse of Hamas supporters by the Palestinian security forces.

The Washington Post took a particular interest, publishing two editorials calling on the Obama administration to pay attention to Fayyad and his approach to advancing Palestinian statehood, compared to no editorial comment in the UK broadsheets. ‘The Mideast impasse’, published on 5 November 2009 amidst the diplomatic row between Israel and the US over settlements, argued that action rather than traditional diplomacy was currently the best option: ‘At the moment, the most promising idea comes from Mr. Abbas’s prime minister, Fayyad, who has vowed to build the institutions of a Palestinian state within the next two years, with or without peace talks.’ The editorial closed saying, ‘the administration would do well to refocus its efforts on supporting Mr. Fayyad.’

A second editorial appeared in The Washington Post on 5 December 2009, again, endorsing the two-year plan. ‘The Fayyad Plan’ urged the US administration to ‘continue cajoling Mr. Abbas - but design its strategy around

Mr. Fayyad. It also cited predicted 'double-digit economic growth' in the West Bank in 2010. In addition to the editorial coverage, associate editor David Ignatius dispatched a report from the West Bank capital of Ramallah, titled, 'Ramallah's road map to statehood' (19 November 2009), describing visible progress in security and construction. In line with the editorial message of the publication Ignatius recommended getting behind Fayyad: 'I have a suggestion, drawn from a visit here and several days of conversations with Israeli, Palestinian and US officials: Follow the lead of Salam Fayyad, the prime minister of the Palestinian Authority and the man who's largely responsible for Ramallah's turnaround.'

Newsweek and Time Magazine also gave Fayyad's national project column inches, including an interview on 24 October 2009 by Newsweek senior editor, Lally Weymouth, titled, 'Salam Fayyad: Building a Palestinian State' and an article by Time Magazine's Joe Klein in the same month, in which he praised the co-operation in the West Bank between Israel, the Palestinians and the US ('How Obama Could Earn His Nobel Prize,' 15 October 2009).

The one UK article devoted to Fayyad during this period was not even primarily about his state-building project in total contrast with the US coverage from the same period. 'Why Palestinians have lost faith in Obama' (The Independent, 15 October 2009) reported on a press conference given by Fayyad in which he was critical of Israel, saying that the Palestinian leadership was not interested in a 'process for the sake of a process'.

The Independent's Middle East correspondent Donald Macintyre addressed Fayyad's two-year plan, but it was presented more as an outgrowth of the failure of negotiations than a positive development in its own right. This chimes with the fact that the journalist did not report the original pledge for a state within two years made on 25 August 2009. He did, however, file two reports on 26 and 27 August focused on the settlements.<sup>9</sup>

It is not the case that US journalists have universally embraced Fayyad and reported him uncritically. On the contrary, he - like Netanyahu - has been subjected to criticism on numerous occasions. Writing an in-depth profile of Fayyad for Newsweek Kevin Peraino noted with caution that imposing law and order in the West Bank - one of Fayyad's key accomplishments - was only possible through close co-operation with the United States, something which does not sit well with many Palestinians:

'At the moment, the most promising idea comes from Mr. Abbas's prime minister, Salam Fayyad, who has vowed to build the institutions of a Palestinian state within the next two years, with or without peace talks... the administration would do well to refocus its efforts on supporting Mr. Fayyad.'

**Editorial in The Washington Post,  
5 November 2009.**

'Fayyad's troops, financed and outfitted by Western donors, fanned out across the West Bank. Working so closely with the Americans was and is politically risky for Fayyad. Palestinians are deeply sensitive to the charge of collaboration with the United States, and especially Israel.' ('How Salam Fayyad Will Save Palestine - Or Not,' 4 September 2009)

Peraino also spoke frankly about the heavy-handed tactics utilised by President Mahmoud Abbas and PM Fayyad in order to achieve the success

of order in the streets, citing 'brutal crackdowns' and reports of 'beatings and torture' from some of the 8,000 Palestinians alleged to have been arrested in the West Bank as part of a zero tolerance strategy. Furthermore, Fayyad's lack of popular support was also addressed: 'the same decisions that are improving security on the ground in the West Bank are making it more difficult to reconcile with the Islamists in the Gaza Strip... And the qualities and actions that make Fayyad so appealing to Americans are the same ones that could torpedo him at the ballot box at home.'

Writing in March 2010, Newsweek editor Fareed Zakaria<sup>10</sup> also illustrated that US media support for Fayyad's policies is not simply a product of, or mask for, support for the Israeli right. In an article criticising Netanyahu's policies ('Bibi is Undermining Israel's Security', 19 March 2010) he still found praise for 'Fayyadism':

'The Palestinians in the West Bank have extremely good leadership, with President Mahmoud Abbas committed to a peaceful path to a two-state solution and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad committed to a competent, clean, and effective Palestinian government that focuses on economic growth, not violence... compared with any previous point in their history, the Palestinians are being led wisely.'

## The Herzliya conference

The trigger for the next bout of (mild) UK media interest in Fayyad's West Bank state-building project, was his attendance at the annual security and policy conference in Herzliya, Israel in January and February 2010. Again, the disparity in tone between US and UK treatment of this story was pronounced.

In his special report, 'State of denial: Robert Fisk searches for peace in Israel' (11 February 2010) The Independent's Robert Fisk spoke disdainfully of the proceedings in Herzliya and was particularly disparaging about Salam Fayyad, criticising, amongst other things, his use of mainstream rather than partisan language:

'And along came Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority... He pleaded for an end to settlement building - he did not use the word 'colonisation' - and to Israeli "incursions" and he did not - once - mention the word 'Hamas'. An obedient man, Fayyad, a good guy, someone with whom the Israelis could 'do business' because - as Barak and his friends in the Israeli government keep telling us - "it takes two to tango."

Again, the assumption in the UK press that common ground between Israel and the Palestinians is to be treated with extreme caution prevailed; the mere fact that the Israelis were willing to 'do business' with Fayyad seemed to be enough to disqualify him from respectful treatment from the Middle East correspondent. This contrasts greatly with the US approach illustrated in Joe Klein's October 2009 Time Magazine piece in which he portrayed Israeli-Palestinian co-operation in positive terms.



Salam Fayyad with Ehud Barak at the Herzliya Conference in February 2010

In a less commonly represented view in The Independent, Lorna Fitzsimons of the pro-Israel think tank BICOM, mentioned the Palestinian PM's appearance at the Herzliya conference in an op-ed published on 4 February 2010 ('Israel faces a battle for credibility. But it's winnable'): 'Salam Fayyad, the Palestinian Prime Minister whom Israel had invited to attend, was treated like a rock star even when he was delivering a tough message to a cynical audience. This says much more about what is happening in Israel than others would have you believe.'

Unlike any UK coverage of the conference, The Washington Post's reporting led with the fact of Fayyad's participation. In 'Palestinian premier speaks at Israeli conference,' (3 February 2010) Howard Schneider noted that his attendance at such a conference in Israel was 'novel', as was his sharing a podium with Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak 'at a time when the two sides are not formally meeting.'

Fayyad's continuing efforts for economic renewal in the West Bank were again praised: 'In that sour environment, with each side blaming the other for the paralysis, Fayyad's effort to keep Palestinian self-governance in the West Bank on track continues to command Israeli respect and keeps U.S. and European funds flowing in.' Twice, the

article referred to comparisons between Salam Fayyad and David Ben-Gurion, and Schneider also included words of empathy from Fayyad: 'Israelis have a long history. Pain. Ambitions. Like you, we have our own history of pain and suffering, and we have our own ambition – to live alongside you in peace and security.'

The Guardian did report the Palestinian PM's participation in Herzliya but only on the back of a story primarily about Defense Minister Ehud Barak's warning about the dangers of a failure to create a Palestinian state ('Barak: make peace with Palestinians or face apartheid,' Rory McCarthy, 3 February 2010). The article nonetheless described the joint appearance of Barak and Fayyad in relatively positive terms:

'There have been no formal negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians in more than a year, but Barak was speaking at a rare joint event with the Palestinian prime minister, Salam Fayyad, as part of an annual national security conference in the Israeli city of Herzliya. The pair shook hands and both were warmly applauded.'

Like Fisk, The Guardian's Middle East correspondent cited the fact that Fayyad called for a cessation of settlement building and incursions in the West Bank but did not quote him drawing a parallel between the Israeli and Palestinian experience.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates conclusively that the US media takes Salam Fayyad and his policies far more seriously than does the UK media. British journalists have shown little interest in the Palestinian Prime Minister and the tone of their reporting of him suggests a number of reasons for this.

First, the UK broadsheets are most concerned with the points of contention between Israel and the Palestinians rather than points of agreement. The Jewish settlement issue is faithfully cited in the vast majority of articles whereas journalists seem unwilling to make space in their narrative for good news in other areas. Furthermore, an ingrained hostility towards Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seems to have resulted in suspicion among British journalists towards his emphasis on improving the Palestinian economy irrespective of this same approach having been adopted by the Palestinian Prime Minister.

The US media, on the other hand, has embraced so-called Fayyadism, not out of any affection for Netanyahu but simply because it is yielding real, tangible results for Palestinians in the West Bank. Salam Fayyad was even listed in Time Magazine's 2010 poll of the world's 100 most influential people.<sup>11</sup> Unlike UK journalists, US reporters seem to view the settlements as a central but not all-encompassing aspect of the conflict and are more open than British journalists to the possibility that Palestinian leaders are capable of improving Palestinian lives outside the framework of Israeli concessions.

'And along came Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority... He pleaded for an end to settlement building – he did not use the word 'colonisation' – and to Israeli "incursions" and he did not – once – mention the word ' Hamas'. An obedient man, Fayyad, a good guy, someone with whom the Israelis could 'do business' because – as Barak and his friends in the Israeli government keep telling us – "it takes two to tango."

**Robert Fisk on Salam Fayyad in The Independent  
on 11 February 2010.**

## Methodology

This report is a comprehensive survey of coverage of Salam Fayyad and his state-building programme in the West Bank between 1 August 2009 and 30 April 2010 in the following news outlets: The New York Times, The Washington Post, Time Magazine, Newsweek, The Guardian, The Independent, The Times, The Daily Telegraph and Financial Times. Online and in print articles were included. Articles containing passing mentions of Fayyad or the state-building programme were not included.

### Articles Analysed:

**New York Times:** Thomas Friedman, 'Green Shoots in Palestine' 5 August 2009.

**New York Times:** Thomas Friedman, 'Green Shoots in Palestine II' 8 August 2009.

**New York Times:** Isabel Kershner, 'Palestinian Leader Maps Plan for Separate State' 26 August 2009.

**The Washington Post:** 'The Mideast impasse' 5 November 2009.

**The Washington Post:** 'The Fayyad Plan' 5 December 2009.

**The Washington Post:** David Ignatius, 'Ramallah's road map to statehood' 19 November 2009.

**The Washington Post:** Howard Schneider, 'Palestinian premier speaks at Israeli conference' 3 February 2010.

**Newsweek:** Lally Weymouth, 'Salam Fayyad: Building a Palestinian State' 24 October 2009.

**Newsweek:** Kevin Peraino, 'How Salam Fayyad Will Save Palestine - Or Not' 4 September 2009.

**Newsweek:** Fareed Zakaria, 'Bibi is Undermining Israel's Security' 19 March 2010.

**Time Magazine:** Joe Klein, 'How Obama Could Earn His Nobel Prize' 15 October 2009.

**The Independent:** Ben Lynfield, 'Nablus: a template for peace, or Netanyahu at his most cynical?' 25 August 2009.

**The Independent:** Donald Macintyre, 'Why Palestinians have lost faith in Obama' 15 October 2009.

**The Independent:** Robert Fisk, 'State of denial: Robert Fisk searches for peace in Israel' 11 Feb 2010.

**The Independent:** Lorna Fitzsimons, 'Israel faces a battle for credibility. But it's winnable' 4 February 2010.

**The Times:** James Hider, 'Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad says time is running out for peace' 25 August 2009.

**The Times:** 'Road Maps' and Roadblocks' 26 August 2009.

**The Guardian:** Rory McCarthy, 'Barak: make peace with Palestinians or face apartheid' 3 February 2010.

**The Daily Telegraph:** Ron Prosor, ' Hamas is leading Palestine down the road of carnage' 25 August 2009.

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1 Salam Fayyad submitted his resignation on 7 March 2009 and was reappointed to the post on 19 May 2009.

2 International Monetary Fund, 'Macroeconomic and fiscal framework for the West Bank and Gaza: Fifth review of progress,' 13 April, 2010.

3 Akiva Eldar, 'Palestinian PM to Haaretz: It's not our business whether Israel is Jewish,' Haaretz, 14 August 2009.

4 Akiva Eldar, 'Palestinian PM to Haaretz: We will have a state next year,' Haaretz, 2 April 2010.

5 Haaretz Service, 'Report: Hamas wants to try Fayyad over Haaretz interview' 3 April 2010

6 Michael Oren, 'West Bank Success Story,' Wall Street Journal, 13 August 2009.


7 'Palestine: Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State,' Palestinian National Authority, August 2009.

8 Donald Macintyre, 'Why Palestinians have lost faith in Obama,' The Independent, 15 October 2009.

9 'Israel opens door to West Bank compromise,' (26 August 2009) and 'Palestinians pay the price for Israel's illegal settlements,' (27 August 2009).

10 Fareed Zakaria is editor of the International edition of Newsweek.

11 Time Magazine: 'The 2010 Time 100 Poll,' 1 April 2010.



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