

Opinion **Elon Musk**

## Letter from the editor on the FT's Person of the Year

Elon Musk has revolutionised an auto industry that was sceptical about Tesla's electric vehicles

**ROULA KHALAF**



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**Roula Khalaf** 5 HOURS AGO

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For someone who has garnered so many headlines in 2021, Elon's Musk's real accomplishment has been the actions of others.

This has been the year when the car industry [staked its future](#) on electric vehicles, with a series of companies unveiling [new multibillion-dollar investments](#). There are many reasons for this change of course, including pressure from governments and consumers. But most of all, they have been trying to catch up with Tesla.

Despite the doubts from rivals and the predictions of imminent collapse that have shadowed Musk's company for years, Tesla has demonstrated that electric vehicles can replace cars fuelled by petrol. In doing so, Musk has revolutionised an industry. And now he is starting to do the same thing in space exploration.

There have been other public figures who have made their mark this year. Janet Yellen at the US Treasury and [Jay Powell](#) at the Federal Reserve have calmly unpicked significant parts of a four-decade orthodoxy about macroeconomic management — while Christine Lagarde has performed a similar feat at [the ECB](#). However, next year will sorely test their fragile new consensus.

Under the ever-more personalised and autocratic leadership of Xi Jinping, China was the only major economy not to shrink in 2020 and has continued its [powerful rebound](#) from the pandemic this year.

Divided by a number of generations, [Vanessa Nakate](#) and [David Attenborough](#) have been tireless advocates for the environment.

In the US, Georgia secretary of state [Brad Raffensperger](#) withstood ferocious pressure from some fellow Republicans in the early days of 2021 and upheld the integrity of the state's — and the country's — election. And to the irritation of many of his Democratic colleagues, [Joe Manchin](#) has been one of the most influential US senators in a generation, at times acting as a de facto prime minister of the Biden administration.

But it is Musk who is the standout figure. For all the eccentric and provocative tweets that strike some as childish, he is one of the most transformational business figures of the era. For that reason, the FT is making him its [Person of the Year for 2021](#).

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