

Fair Observer^o

Independence, Diversity, Debate

FIRST QUARTER UPDATE

2026



Dear Friend of *Fair Observer*,

I am writing to you from the banks of the Potomac, which is a long way away from my roots by the banks of the Ganges. Like many immigrants, I have moved to the US in search of a better life. For me, the better life was not cheap stuff at Walmart but the sense that more things seemed possible in America.

I first came to the US in the summer of 2004. I was then living in London. I had left Oxford a year earlier after a magical experience in this medieval town of dreamy spires and domes. The UK had been a welcome change from India. I had found serving in the Indian system heavy going. The “inertia, corruption and inefficiency” in the government weighed on my soul, especially when I saw soldiers dying in places like Nagaland and Kashmir. More about that another time.

The key point I want to make here is that Oxford was a magical place where I learned a lot, met incredibly bright minds and got to discover more of the world. It is at Oxford that I met Bavarians like Nicolai Leski and Julia Hieber, Brits like Thomas Baranga and Hugh Swire, and Americans like Vaughn Thomas Gray and Ben Fuller. In contrast to my fellow officer in the Government of India, the folks at Oxford had what the Chinese would call more *chi* (life force).

I moved on from Oxford to London, which was in the full flush of the Tony Blair and Gordon Brown era. I liked my time in the city, but the moment I traveled to the US, more things felt possible in this grand and glorious country. By this time, President George W. Bush had embarked on the Iraq War, which I thought, even at the time, was extremely unwise, but that did not stop America from seducing me. The national parks, the wide open roads and the can-do, will-do spirit of the people I met were refreshing. Needless to say, I found my way to the US in a few years. In 2008, I moved to Philadelphia and have been in America since.

For the last few years, I have kept close tabs on the three countries that have made me who I am today. All three are in political, social and economic turmoil. In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has [instituted](#) catastrophic economic policies and destroyed institutions, even within his own party. In the UK, political instability has become a way of life. After Falstaffian [Boris Johnson](#), British voters ushered in stolid Prime Minister Sir [Keir Starmer](#) into 10 Downing Street, but he is now living on borrowed time after Reform thrashed his party in local elections. In the US, President Donald Trump has attacked Iran and, in turn, Tehran has blocked the Strait of Hormuz, triggering inflation worldwide and increasing the risk of a [global recession](#).

In a nutshell, we are living in trying times. No country is perfect, and democracies worldwide are facing crises. Here in Washington, DC, we will be celebrating 250 years of the American experiment. I am repeating what many people say when I say that the experiment needs renewal. Democracy faces new challenges when interest groups and identity politics have been fired up by social media algorithms. Gone are the days when Fox News and MSNBC in the US, or *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian*, were homes to their party faithfuls. Now, you can go down rabbit holes on YouTube, Instagram, X, TikTok, etc. A post-truth world is a reality, and no wonder democracies suffer dysfunction.

During these times, we are flying a flag aloft with a chosen few. We run a broad church where, even during times of war, we publish diametrically opposing views. You can find Iranian [Mehdi Alavi](#) cheek by jowl with Israeli [Josef Olmert](#). In a nutshell, we are one of the few media organizations that refuse to become a monoculture. We believe there are still enough people who want to view the world through different prisms. It is these people and, if you are reading this, then it is folks like you that we are trying to reach.

In the first quarter of 2026, we have been active. We have held true to our ideals and tried to inform you to the best of our ability. Our content does not live inside a walled garden but can be accessed by anyone around the world.

We are not only publishing articles and timelines but also podcasts and videos. We have done so through sheer force of will with precious little resources. Yet we are being noticed.

In the 2025 [Report to Congress of the U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission \(119th Congress, First Session, November 2025\)](#), Japanese economist Masaaki Yoshimori’s [article](#) on China’s expanding swap line strategy found mention. My [deep dive](#) into China–Japan tensions attracted compliments from distinguished readers in many different countries. Retired CIA officer Glenn Carle and I kept doing our monthly [FO Exclusive](#), our analysis of the top issues of the month, and our signature podcast *The Dialectic*, which you can find on [Apple](#), [YouTube](#), [Spotify](#) and [Amazon Music](#). Our episode on [China–Taiwan tensions](#) was a hit in small diplomatic and military circles.

On the whole, we have been busy. We have been strengthening our community and working to improve our crowdsourced, crowdfunded model. Here in Washington, where polarization runs high, our meetups are one of the few places where Republicans and Democrats, as well as Indians and Pakistanis, meet to talk politics, economics and more. Please read further to find out more about what has been keeping us busy and how you can get involved.

My warmest regards,



Atul Singh

Founder, CEO & Editor-in-Chief

FO° Editorial Update

Leonardo Vivas, our longstanding author from Venezuela, is a noted scholar. In an [interview](#) late in December, he predicted the American military operation that captured the then-president Nicolás Maduro from Caracas, the Venezuelan national capital. As someone who has campaigned for democracy and human rights for decades, Leonardo's piece is a must-read to make sense of Venezuela through a local lens.



Beyond the Fog of War: Venezuela's Democracy is at Stake

January 9, 2026

The Hindu–Muslim faultline has defined the recent history of the Indian subcontinent. This timeline is increasingly considered essential reading for serious students of South Asia. Inspired by legendary scholar Ishtiaq Ahmed's work, the timeline has won high accolades from many scholars who specialize on this period and this region.



The Indian Subcontinent's Hindu–Muslim Divide

January 15, 2026

German economist and Editor-at-Large Alex Gloy's tour de force helps make sense of the dollar-denominated and dollar-dominated global economy. Alex explains how the dollar sucks up liquidity from other currencies and assets, much like a straw consuming a milkshake. Ironically, disturbances in the global economy strengthen the dollar further as investors fly to safety.



Dollar Milkshake Theory Is Still Useful

February 4, 2026

Elliot Neaman, a professor of European intellectual history at the University of San Francisco, started publishing with us this quarter. In a brilliant article, Elliot posits that the most recent release of the Epstein files challenges us to confront systemic abuses embedded within elite culture and demand a more honest reckoning with sex, power and accountability.



Epstein/Sade: The Philanthropist as Libertine and the Secret Life of the American Elite

February 14, 2026

Our resident sociologist and noted author, Ellis Cashmore, penned a timely piece on US President Donald Trump's defamation lawsuit against the BBC. This view from the UK examines the high stakes of this high-profile lawsuit, including its implications for press freedom and international journalism.



TRUMP vs. the BBC

February 19, 2026

Gary Grappo, the former chair of *Fair Observer* and a renowned retired American diplomat with rich experience of the region, examined this war at the beginning of March during the early days of the conflict. Gary's piece gives us a view through a diplomatic lens of a war that is proving to be historic already.



A War to End All (Middle East) Wars?

March 3, 2026

Masaaki Yoshimori, a professor at Georgetown University, has emerged as one of our most prolific authors. Not only are his articles read on Capitol Hill, but they are also read worldwide with great interest. In this article, Masaaki makes the point that the international system is not really collapsing but instead morphing into something new.



The Time Is Out of Joint: Power, Misalignment and the G1.5 World

March 7, 2026

Young Editors Program

We have welcomed more editors from a variety of geographical locations and professional backgrounds into our Young Editors Training Program. We currently have 17 editors on our team, all of whom are bright, capable and talented individuals. We have also been lucky enough to add some of our authors to our editorial team, such as Swapnarka Arnan.



Anjel Chakma's Killing Exposes India's Denial of Racism

January 22 2026



Iran, Gaza and the Politics of Conditional Solidarity Within Western Activist Circles

February 10, 2026

Of course, we encourage our editors to become authors. Some of them have published articles with us in addition to doing their editorial work. Zahra Zaman, one of our young editors, wrote a piece on how Pakistan is balancing the US and China.



Pakistan's Tightrope: Between America's Embrace and China's Shadow

February 24, 2026

People ask us about how our program works. Well, we meet every Saturday for our signature FO^o Editorial Workshops. In these workshops, our volunteer editors not only learn the tricks of the journalism trade but also history, international relations, economics and geopolitics. Participants have told us these workshops are an indispensable education and liken them to a fast-track master's program.

Besides a world-class education, our program gives our editors the opportunity to create their own portfolios of work. These young editors follow our guidelines and enable us to publish quality content. When you read an article, you will often find the name of the editor at the bottom of the piece. Because we give credit to our young editors for their work, we get many applicants to our program. If you know any aspiring students or recent graduates, please send them our way.

This quarter, Atul led an FO Live for one of the Saturday workshops. Editors were able to ask questions about the US/Israel–Iran War. Atul gave the historical, strategic and economic context for the war. You can watch the episode here:



FO Live: How the US–Israel War in Iran Could Redraw Middle East Borders

March 11, 2026

In addition, Chiefs of Staff Kaitlyn Diana and Cheyenne Torres conducted a very important workshop on how to identify pieces written by AI and what to do with them. Atul generally runs these workshops in a Socratic style, and all attendees often end up working on a single Google document together.

We continue to make those in our program better writers, editors, analysts and readers. We plan to expand the program this year.

FO^o Community

FO^o Meetups have taken off! This quarter, we hosted seven meetups in Washington, DC, and New York. Yehbin Song, one of our supporters and champions, hosted a great evening discussion on geopolitical risks to the global economy in the San Francisco Bay Area. Atul flew over from the East Coast to present on the subject and predicted with eerie accuracy the exact time the US/Israel–Iran War would start.

Bit by bit, we are forging a close-knit community that cares about issues that matter in our times. Our community is incredibly diverse and includes military officers, diplomats, hedge fund managers, investment bankers, academics, young students and retirees.

Topics have ranged from war and economics to education and culture. For instance, during the February 11 New York FO^o Meetup, we discussed the fate of the US dollar. The evening's discussion featured the work of our authors Alex Gloy, Masaaki Yoshimori and Jiahao Yuan.

Let us know if you want to host our meetups and foster our growing FO^o community. You can find future events [here](#) and see photos from our meetups below.



New York: Thursday, January 15, 2026



Washington, DC: Friday, January 9, 2026



San Francisco Bay Area: Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Media & Outreach

Outreach

Our outreach initiatives have continued at a steady pace. For instance, we published this [article](#) on the role of the middle powers by Ambassador Thomas Greminger of the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP). His article was based on a GCSP policy brief, which our communications officer, Roberta Campani, worked hard to translate into accessible language while preserving analytical rigor. One of our key goals is to bring knowledge out of silos and into the public domain.

We also want to highlight the Institute for Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM), known in German as *Institut für den Donauraum und Mitteleuropa*, who have been our trusted content partners for years. Thanks to IDM, we are able to shine the light on a region that is often neglected in European discourse, let alone the global one.



Between Putin and Brussels: Moldova Weighs the Unthinkable

January 28, 2026

FO^o Newsletters

This quarter, our newsletter team has performed brilliantly. Assistant Editors [Liam Roman](#) and [Casey Herrmann](#) have produced compelling pieces that provide context and highlight media coverage/commentary from many countries.

They have covered a variety of issues, from the firing of US Homeland Security Secretary [Kristi Noem](#) to the [M23](#) in Central Africa. They have also examined doorbell and security [cameras](#) and private [paramilitary](#) organizations. In addition, they have written a popular satirical piece on bringing back the [draft](#), i.e., compulsory military service, in America.



Casey Herrmann
Assistant Editor



Liam Roman
Assistant Editor

YouTube Highlights

YouTube saw record-breaking numbers this quarter. We had more than 400,000 views, the highest ever figures for a quarter. Our channel had 2.3 million impressions and an average view duration of 9 minutes, 13 seconds. Our audience is spread across the world, with the highest viewership coming from the US, India, the UK, Canada and Australia. Note that we are not chasing vanity metrics and our focus is on quality, not cheap popularity.

In addition to retired CIA officer [Glenn Carle](#), who does the monthly *FO Exclusive* (a recap of the most important issues of the month) with Editor-in-Chief Atul Singh, we had several other interesting guests. We spoke with American whistleblower [John Kiriakou](#), Iran scholar [Stephen Zunes](#), retired Indian foreign secretary [Kanwal Sibal](#), former Israeli peace negotiator [Josef Olmert](#) and famous educator [Esther Wojcicki](#).

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2. You can follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#) & [Instagram](#), if you use any of these.
3. You can write for or interview with us and introduce us to folks who have interesting things to say.
4. You can host a meetup, discussion or salad for us at your institution or your home.
5. You can introduce us to potential authors or young people who want to become editors with us.

Fair Observer^o

Independence, Diversity, Debate

In a world of filter bubbles, echo chambers and polarization, Fair Observer continues to be a forum for discussion, debate and dialogue across borders, backgrounds and beliefs.

Thanks to you, we are educating young authors, editors and readers, and plan to do so much more.

With gratitude,

Claire, Atul, Peter, Roberta, Laura, Kaitlyn, Lee, Cheyenne, Aniruddh, Rohan, Liam, Casey and the rest of the FO^o Team

