

# Fair Observer<sup>o</sup>

Independence, Diversity, Debate

SECOND QUARTER UPDATE

# 2026



## Dear Friend of *Fair Observer*,

I started writing this on July 8, my mother's birthday. As I get older, my appreciation for my mother has increased exponentially. I cannot say that I had the maturity to appreciate her when I was younger. My mother has a temper, I was hot-headed and we clashed a wee bit too much.

Even now and then, we still clash, sometimes utterly unnecessarily. We are both strong personalities and can be mule-headed. Per an old saying, two swords cannot inhabit the same scabbard. That said, I now value the virtues of my mother a lot more than her shortcomings. Human beings are invariably complicated and highly imperfect. My mother and I are no exceptions. At this stage in my life, I am beginning to accept the imperfection of our human condition.

On my mother's birthday, I have to give her credit for me starting *Fair Observer*. I have often mentioned how my father gave me four children's history books: Indian and British, American and Soviet. This made me realize very early that all of history in some ways was mythology. I also owe a great deal to my mother too. Her love for literature and the gift of the gab gave me the ability to write and speak somewhat well. My mother comes from a business and political family but never let that get to her head. She has always carried herself with both humility and ferocity, two traits I have come to admire in greater measure over the years.

In a society defined by class and caste, my mother is one of the shining exceptions. In India, politicians and senior bureaucrats tend to have drivers and even gun-toting bodyguards who ferry them around all day and often till late at night. These lesser mortals are largely forgotten when sahibs, the word for your bosses or rather masters, do the rounds. To this day, my mother will walk out to the cars of the waiting sahibs to serve drivers and/or bodyguards tea and snacks when sahibs call on my parents. When I am back in India, drivers, policemen, soldiers and the Indian version of *les sans culottes* speak in dulcet tones about her warmth and hospitality. They often also tell me that my mother is the most eloquent, incisive and wise woman they have met in their life.

There is another trait of my mother's that I deeply respect. No one I know works harder than her. Even in her 70s, she will work all night from time to time. When she was a young mother, she worked very hard to raise my brother and I, and take care of my father. In fact, when I was a very young baby, my father had a major accident in Goa. At one point, he feared that he would not survive. My mother carried me in her arms, took a bus to the hospital and cared for him until he thankfully got better. My father is now in his 80s and is still bright as a button, and my mother deserves a great degree of credit for his good health.

It is easy to forget now that things were quite tough in India a few decades ago. My father would be posted to a new part of the country every two to three years and we would have to move lock, stock and barrel. Sometimes, the places we stayed would not even have water supply. Tankers would come around to deliver water. My mother would fill buckets as tankers stopped on the road and carry them to fill drums in front of what the military used to call our temporary accommodation. I now realize how hard my mother worked then for all of us.

Even today, my mother kills herself cooking for guests. My French friend Michel Ragnvald Maellberg sings paeans to my mother's cooking long after he has left India. The Swiss diplomat Simon Sevan Schäfer is a vegetarian and an explorer par excellence who speaks Hindi, has learnt Sanskrit and gone on to travel the length and breadth of India. He too venerates my mother's cooking. So do local boys like Colonel Hitesh Bhatnagar and top cop Kamal Nayan Choubey.

The attribute that I value most about my mother is that she speaks truth to power. When most of the country, including the likes of film star Amitabh Bachchan and billionaire Anil Ambani, were sycophantic to her brother, she had the courage to tell this charismatic politician when he was in the wrong. Suffice to say, neither he nor many others in power appreciate this attribute of hers. She is punchy, unrelenting and searingly honest. India would be a different country if there were more people like my mother.

As a founder, I have made many mistakes but the one thing almost everyone who knows me will tell you is that I work bloody hard and I speak truth to power. I learnt both these things from my mother and try my best to inculcate these attributes in our young editors.

These are ugly times when people threaten to sue us and often do worse. A while ago, we had to take down pieces because the Taliban threatened to kill the parents of one of our authors. We have been accused of being in the pay of Zionists as well as the Iranian regime. Google Gemini and ChatGPT are reducing visitors to our website. In the words of Bob Dylan: 'The Times They Are A-Changin''. In my words: 'The Times They Are A-Challengin''.

In these times, we act per my mother's advice with dignity, honesty and courage. Please find in the following pages what we have done in the second quarter of 2026. We very much look forward to hearing from you as to how we face these challenging times and keep the flag flying for independent journalism.

**With best wishes for the summer,**



**Atul Singh**

Founder, CEO & Editor-in-Chief

## FO<sup>o</sup> Editorial Update

A key focus of this quarter was (unsurprisingly) the Iran War. We could have picked many pieces for you but will restrict ourselves to three. First, we shall focus on two former diplomats: [Ashraf Haidari](#) and [Gary Grappo](#). The former represented Afghanistan in Washington, DC, New Delhi and Colombo. The latter is the former chair of our board who had an illustrious career as an American diplomat. Not only was Gary an ambassador but he was also Envoy and Head of Mission of the Office of the Quartet Representative in Jerusalem.



### Incompatible Clocks: Why US–Iran Talks Challenge Pakistan’s Mediation

By Ashraf Haidari

April 17, 2026



### The Iran Deal: A Bad End to an Unnecessary War

By Gary Grappo

April 17, 2026

We also published Afghan writer [Saboor Sakhizada](#). Saboor contributed to US stability efforts in Afghanistan through the Counterinsurgency Training Center–Afghanistan and USAID. Today, Saboor, an independent writer, researcher and editor, heads initiatives that serve veterans and amplify Afghan voices.



### America Wants Victory, Iran Wants Time

By Saboor Sakhizada

April 17, 2026



We also focused (surprisingly) on the Vatican this quarter. Three authors take center stage here. France-based Chief Strategy Officer [Peter Isackson](#) examined the moral and political tensions between three prominent Catholic figures aligned with US President Donald Trump and the Vatican. New York Contributing Editor [Anton Schauble](#), a devout Catholic based in New York, reflected on Pope Leo XIV's first year in the papacy. Mexico-based [Maciej Bazela](#), one of the leaders of the prestigious IPADE Business School, analyzed *Magnifica Humanitas*, the Vatican's latest encyclical on how humanity should approach the AI technological revolution.



## The Pope, the President and His Three Apostles

By Peter Isackson

April 17, 2026



## After Pope Francis, Pope Leo XIV Combines Continuity With Change

By Anton Schauble

May 08, 2026



## From Rerum Novarum to Magnifica Humanitas: The Vatican's Warning Against Technological Determinism

By Maciej Bazela

June 07, 2026

Obviously, we focused on other matters too. European politics attracted attention. [Elliot Neaman](#), a top professor, explained why Viktor Orbán losing the Hungarian elections is a big deal. [Stephen Day](#), an entrepreneur and one of our advisors, made a case for the UK rejoining the EU in a practical step by step way. We also continued our tradition of intellectual debate with Neaman and [Sebastian Schäffer](#) presenting two sides of the German conscription debate.



## Why Viktor Orbán's Defeat Matters

By Elliot Neaman

April 19, 2026



## A Different UK Within a Different EU in a More Dangerous World

By Stephen M. D. Day

June 08, 2026



## Germany's Return to Conscription Is Not a Mistake; It's an Obligation.

By Elliot Neaman

April 17, 2026



## Germany's Conscription Misstep Exposes a Deeper European Problem

By Sebastian Schäffer

April 16, 2026

We also published some outstanding pieces on Latin America by some very insightful authors from the region as well as one from our very own editor-in-chief. [German Peinado Delgado](#) and [Glenn Ojeda Vega](#) theorize the outcome of the Colombian elections. [Luiz Cesar Pimental](#) analyzes a helicopter disaster through the lens of Brazilian class issues. [Chris Nadal](#) discusses Bolivia's protests and its president, Rodrigo Paz. Finally, Atul takes a close look at how Guyana can profit from its oil fields following the US/Israel–Iran War.



## South America Has Tilted Right. Will Colombia Follow?

By German Peinado Delgado & Glenn Ojeda Vega

May 20, 2026



## The Congested Sky of an Unequal Country

By Luiz Cesar Pimental

June 19, 2026



## The Bolivian Crisis: Can President Paz Stabilize Bolivia and Complete His Term?

By Chris Nadal

June 25, 2026



## Donroe Doctrine Makes Guyana Key for US Latin America Policy

By Atul Singh

May 21, 2026

We will bring down the curtain on the quarter with a few pieces that caught our eye. [Vasavi Seethepalli](#) is one of our new editors. [Hollie McKay](#) is a war correspondent, [Usama Malik](#) is a brilliant business leader, [Alfredo Toro Hardy](#) was Venezuela's most famous diplomat, Jeffrey James Higgins is a retired supervisory special agent who writes bestselling thrillers and the dynamic duo — retired CIA officer [Glenn Carle](#) and Atul Singh — need no introduction.



## India's Exam System Under Fire as NEET and CBSE Controversies Grow

By Vasavi Seethepalli

June 20, 2026



## Qatar's Man in Khartoum: How Yasser al-Atta Became Doha's Most Useful General

By Hollie McKay

June 17, 2026



## Paid in Mars: How the SpaceX IPO Engineers Away Accountability

By Usama Malik

June 24, 2026



## The Dragon and the Mirror Lake: Why America and China Must Compete Without Becoming Enemies

By Masaaki Yoshimori

June 10, 2026



## China and the Historical Significance of 1979

By Alfredo Toro Hardy

June 03, 2026



## FO Podcasts: Why Narcoterrorism Still Matters

By Jeffrey James Higgins & Atul Singh

May 11, 2026



## China–Taiwan Tensions — Civil War Legacies and Geopolitical Chess

By Glenn Carle & Atul Singh

April 03, 2026



# Young Editors Program

A bright batch of new editors have joined our Young Editors Training Program. Hailing from Morocco and India to Canada and the US, our editors come from diverse backgrounds and beliefs, but all of them are highly capable and eager to learn. Each editor offers a new perspective to Fair Observer's team and content. Several of them have also written pieces and newsletters for us as well.



## Property Dispossession and the Exodus of Hindus in Bangladesh

By Sangeeta Mohanty

June 08, 2026



## Ayatollah Khamenei's Grand Funeral Projects Iranian Power

By Aliyah Omar, Alexandros Ouzounis & Casey Herrmann

July 12, 2026

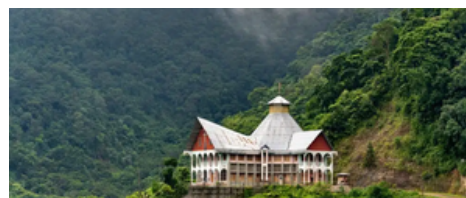
A key reason for young people to apply for our program is the education we provide them on a continuous basis. [Cheyenne Torres](#), [Kaitlyn Diana](#) and Atul conduct weekly workshops on Saturdays. Atul led a lecture on the context surrounding the US/Israel–Iran war. He delved deep into the role of economic, political, religious, historical, geographical factors in the war. Cheyenne did a few sessions on basic editing while Kaitlyn did one on various issues that come up in the editing process. Cheyenne and Kaitlyn have also been meeting with the editorial interns one-on-one to get feedback and a sense of what they need from us.

The Young Editors Training Program continues to grow. We are planning to record our workshop sessions so that those who can't attend still have access to the invaluable resources we offer. We give credit to all of our editors for their hard work, and we make sure that they develop their portfolios.

*IMPORTANT: If you know any aspiring students or recent graduates, please send them our way.*

# Outreach & Partners

Most of our readers and supporters who know [Roberta Campani](#) are well aware that she likes good stories from around the world. She has interviewed Atul's friend [Charles Chasie](#) from Nagaland, an Indian state bordering Myanmar, on his experience of the Khonoma Reconciliation process. She also found [Alix Willemez](#) through her insightful posts on LinkedIn and interviewed her on the Law of the Sea.



## FO Interview: The Khonoma Reconciliation Process

By Charles Chasie & Roberta Campani

April 02, 2026



## Who Owns the Ocean? The Hidden Law That Rules the Ocean

By Alix Willemez & Roberta Campani

June 12, 2026

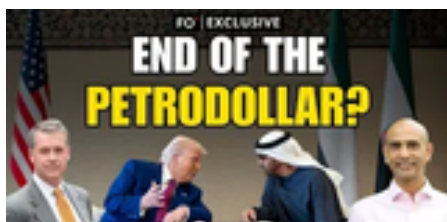
We are also regularly working with our partners. The Vienna-based *Institut für den Donaauraum und Mitteleuropa* (IDM) has been one of our oldest partners. Known in English as the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe, we rely on IDM to shine the light on a region of the world that is often overlooked in the world news space. Atul visited IDM and we thank IDM Director Sebastian Schäffer for posting this lovely photo on [LinkedIn](#).



We are also growing our relationship with IPADE, Mexico's top business school. We mentioned Maciej Bazela above and thank him for both publishing with us and being a dear friend in a country "so far from God and so close to the United States."

## FO° Events

Atul and Glenn Carle, retired CIA officer and partner at FOI, conducted three excellent FO Exclusive events this quarter. FO Exclusive, which takes place on the last Wednesday of every month, analyzes that month's most important developments. You can find the April, May and June episodes below.



### How the Iran War Is Reshaping the World Order and Economy

By Glenn Carle & Atul Singh

April 29, 2026



### How the Trump-Xi Beijing Summit Secretly Failed

By Glenn Carle & Atul Singh

May 27, 2026



### The Global Status Quo Is Shifting. What Comes Next?

By Glenn Carle & Atul Singh

June 24, 2026

# FO° Community

We also continued to host in-person events this quarter. We continued our Washington, DC and New York events on a regular basis. When Atul visited London in the middle of World Cup “it’s coming home” fever, we had a delightful meetup in this favorite city of his, which is also home to our chair Claire Whitaker.



*London: Tuesday, June 30, 2026*



*Memorial for the dead. Harvard Club, New York: Tuesday, June 9, 2026*



*Washington, DC: Friday, June 5, 2026*



*Harvard Club, New York: Tuesday, June 9, 2026*



*Washington, DC: Friday, June 5, 2026*



# FO Newsletters

Our newsletters' team continues to remain very active. Led by Roberta, we have been publishing some cracking stuff. [Liam Roman](#) announced that he will continue his education in Europe. We wish him well in the months ahead. [Casey Herrmann](#) continues to write insightful newsletters.

[Aliyah Omar](#) and [Alexandros Ouzounis](#) have joined us. They are catching up quickly and you can see we are publishing regularly on issues that matter.



**Aliyah A. Omar**  
Assistant Editor



**Alexandros Ouzounis**  
Assistant Editor

We covered investigative reporting on Palantir by Republik, Bolivia, gerrymandering, Hawaii, Somalia, Sudan and more.



## The Hat in the Square: Palantir, Republik and the Pattern of Swiss Compliance

By Roberta Campani

April 19, 2026



## Billionaires Are Buying up Media Companies — and Public Opinion

By Liam Roman & Casey Herrmann

May 24, 2026



## Washington's Growing History in Somalia

By Liam Roman & Casey Herrmann

May 31, 2026



## As Gerrymandering Spreads Across the US, Hawaii Fights Back Against Dark Money

By Casey Herrmann

June 07, 2026



## Months Pass, But Protests Remain in Bolivia

By Aliyah A. Omar, Casey Herrmann,  
Alexandros Ouzounis & Roberta Campani

June 21, 2026

# YouTube Highlights

[Rohan Khattar Singh](#) left Fair Observer this quarter and moved on to new adventures. Over the last year, he built up our YouTube channel and improved our social media presence.

We have adapted to Rohan's departure with existing and new team members stepping in to fill his shoes. We have hired three new video producer interns to help us grow our YouTube channel even further. [Luke De Cresce](#), Ben Vester and Aryan Sira are hard at work behind the scenes.



**Aryan Sira**  
Assistant Producer

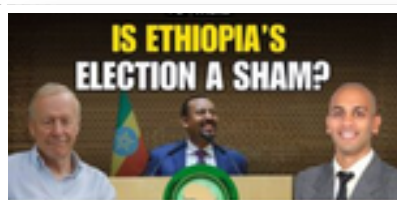


**Ben Vester**  
Assistant Producer



**Luke De Cresce**  
Multimedia Journalist

As you can see here, some of the videos have attracted thousands of views.



**FO Talks: Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Looks to Secure a Landslide Win in Ethiopia's Election**

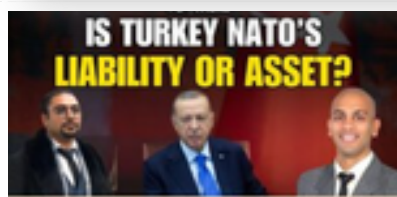
By Martin Plaut & Rohan Khattar Singh June 7, 2026



**Pakistan vs Taliban: Why is the War in Afghanistan Escalating?**

By Thomas Barfield & Rohan Khattar Singh

May 7, 2026



**FO Talks: Turkey's Eurasian Partnership with Russia and China Risks Isolation in NATO**

By Ali Omar Forozish & Rohan Khattar Singh

May 7, 2026



## Support *Fair Observer*

### *What You Can Do*

1. You can sign up for our [newsletters](#) and get others to do so, too.
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<sup>o</sup>

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, Casey and the rest of the FO<sup>o</sup> Team

