

Mohammad Amir Ahmad Khan



My most recent specialisation has been on Muslim South Asia, including its corresponding networks and connections in the wider Muslim world. However I continue my research interests in the greater Middle East/ West Asia. I conduct research in a number of languages including Arabic, Persian and Urdu. I have consistently written for newspapers and magazines in English and Urdu for the past 6 years and have occasionally appeared on television and radio, as I believe that a wider public engagement is of paramount importance in order to try and spread ideas beyond the academy. In particular, I have focused on matters of religious identity, democracy, culture and politics of both South Asia and the Middle East. I write under the pen-name Ali Khan Mahmudabad. For the past five years I have also been privileged to be a part of various civil society groups both in the UK and in India. Many of these have focused on the role of religion in democracy, individual and human rights, the rights of minorities, terrorism and security related questions as well as many other issues that have a direct bearing on public policy. In these *fora* I have had the opportunity and privilege of meeting and working with people from very different backgrounds, including civil society activists, bureaucrats, politicians and journalists, thus enabling me to identify ways in which to seek common ground and facilitate dialogue between people and group interests that otherwise might seem to have disparate interests.

My PhD at Cambridge focused on the formation of Muslim political identity in North India between 1850-1950. In particular the thesis presented a history of the public space of poetry (the *mushā'irah*) and a genealogy of the idea of homeland (*watan*) over these hundred years. Some of the other subjects relevant to my thesis are ideas of citizenship, patriotism, global Muslim identities and their relevance in the articulation and configuration of Muslim ideas of selfhood. Although I explore these primarily in the context of South Asia, most of these ideas are increasingly relevant in all parts of the Muslim world and a prominent part of debates around political reforms and public policy. Previously, I undertook an MPhil in Historical Studies, also in Cambridge, and wrote a thesis on trans-national Shi'a Muslim networks in the early 20th century between South Asia and the Middle East.

Before my Mphil, I studied Arabic at the University of Damascus in Syria. In addition to attending classes at the university, I wrote extensively about Syria for various print and online newspapers and magazines and I travelled widely not only in Syria but also in Lebanon, Egypt and Yemen. Since then I have undertaken research and travelled more extensively in the wider region and have spent substantial time in Pakistan, Iran and Iraq amongst other places. I completed my undergraduate degree from Amherst College (MA, USA) with a double major in History and Political Science.