

AHMAD SHAH MASSOUD AND THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN

Cambridge Conference



CONVENORS: DR. JOHN CASEY GONVILLE & CAIUS COLLEGE,
THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE IN COOPERATION WITH
MR. ZALMAI NISHAT OF MASSOUD FOUNDATION.

DATES: 24 SEPTEMBER 2021
LOCATION: GONVILLE & CAIUS COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Table of Contents

CAMBRIDGE CONFERENCE ON AHMAD SHAH
MASSOUD AND THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN

01	Conference Programme
02	Ahmad Massoud's Message
03	Guest Speakers
04	Participants
05	Concept Note
06	Upcoming Conference

01

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DATES: 24 SEPTEMBER 2021
 LOCATION: GONVILLE & CAIUS COLLEGE,
 UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Opening:

Enter Hall 08:45 09:00	09:00	09:10	09:15	09:25	09:40
	09:10	09:15	09:25	09:40	09:55
	Welcoming All — <i>John Casey</i>	Audio Address to the Conference — <i>Ahmad Massoud</i>	Opening Remarks — <i>Ahmad Wali Massoud</i>	Reminiscence After 20 years — <i>Viscount Cranborne</i>	Key Note Speech — <i>Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles</i>

Session I:

The Life and Legacy of Ahmad Shah Massoud

Panel-1
Chair:
Timothy Nunan

Panel-1 Chair: Timothy Nunan	09:55	10:10	10:25	10:40	10:50
	10:10	10:25	10:40	10:50	11:00
	Michael Barry	Carlotta Gall	Peter Tomsen	Q&A	Coffee Break

Book Launch & Introduction

Sandy Gall and Carlotta Gall — <i>The Afghan Napoleon: Biography of Commander Massoud</i>	11:00	11:30	11:45	12:00
	11:30	11:45	12:00	13:00
	Abdullah Anas — <i>To the Mountains: My life in Jihad, from Algeria to Afghanistan</i>	Sir Christopher Clark — <i>Supporter of the Conference</i>	Lunch break	

Panel-2
Chair:
Kamal Alam

Panel-2 Chair: Kamal Alam	13:00	13:15	13:30	13:45
	13:15	13:30	13:45	14:00
	Bernard Henri Levy	Steve Coll	Milton Bearden	Q&A

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Session II:

Afghanistan, the
Region, and Islamic
Scholarship

Panel-3

Chair:
Dagikhudo
Dagiev

14:00

14:15

Sir Nicholas
Barrington

14:15

14:30

Nasir Ahmad
Andisha

14:30

14:45

Tim Winter

14:45

15:00

Q&A

15:45

15:15

Coffee

Online

Online

Online

Panel-4

Chair:
Shivan
Mahendrarajah

15:15

15:30

James Pickett

15:30

15:45

Thomas
Barfield

15:45

16:00

Chris
Alexander

16:00

16:15

Q&A

Online

16:15

16:30

Closing
Remarks

Rory Stewart

16:30

16:40

Thanking and
Ending

Zalmai Nishat

End of
Conference

02 AHMAD MASSOUD'S MESSAGE TO THE CONFERENCE

It is my honour to welcome distinguished participants to this conference on Ahmad Shah Massoud and the future of Afghanistan. Thank you to the conference participants of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. On behalf of the organisers of the conference and on behalf of the Massoud Foundation, I would like to thank you for your commitment and your support during this very difficult time for Afghanistan. Three years ago my colleagues and I spoke about the importance of holding a conference on the life and legacy of Ahmad Shah Massoud at Cambridge. Since then, many have contributed to making this a reality. And I would like to sincerely express my gratitude to them. We have invited leading academics, journalists, politicians and former military personnel who have devoted their work to Afghanistan and we are grateful for their involvement. Today I would like to reflect on the past to help us situate the current crisis that continues to unfold in Afghanistan. My hope is that some of the lessons of history can help us formulate a better and clearer vision for a peaceful future. If we take the emergence of modern Afghanistan as a starting point, what comes to light is a process of state formation that proved to be costly. As a buffer state between British India and Tsarist Russia, Afghanistan became important for imperial interests. This model of nation formation dictated a highly centralised political and administrative system. We believe that this longstanding model is not constructive to a country that is home to diverse communities, each of which is rich in its own history, languages, and cultural heritage. History has proven that nation state formation that has sought to construct a homogenous and single character for entire populations of people is impractical. Since the early 1900s when this system was institutionalised, Afghanistan experienced several breakdowns of the state system, the most salient of which we see from the events of this last month. These breakdowns come at a great cost to the people of the country. A realistic and pragmatic approach is necessary and we believe that a decentralised political and administrative system is the best way forward. Based on this model, local communities will have the power to elect their local leaders and hold them accountable. People will also have the ability to take an active part in policy making at a local community level.

AHMAD MASSOUD'S MESSAGE TO THE CONFERENCE

This model has existed in Afghanistan over the last century in varying degrees. My father, the late Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, also pushed for this alternative vision to ensure social justice, dignity and recognition for all, in a stand against any colonial, neo-colonial or pretensions in the garb of extremist groups such as the Taliban. Since taking over Kabul on the 15th of August, the Taliban, through acts of terror and destruction, are once again engaged in ongoing atrocities against different communities. They are standing against the fundamental rights of women and of our girls receiving their education. The Taliban have made our country a refuge for international terrorism and one that is isolated and regressive. Alongside the men and women of Afghanistan, we stand firmly against the Taliban's foreign ideology. We have seen women leading the opposition on the ground and standing up for their rights. We want an Afghanistan that is inclusive, one that preserves and promotes the rights of women, one that is not isolated but connected; a country that has productive relationships with the region and with the world. We have formed the National Resistance Front to continue the path of our forefathers and realise the aspirations of the people of Afghanistan. The goal of our resistance is the liberation of our land and the preservation of our rights in safeguarding our heritage and culture. Honouring the legacy and lessons of my father, there is indeed no cause more noble than fighting for justice, for truth, for freedom; freedom from oppression, from those who impose their rule and occupy our land. Through this series of conferences inaugurated today on the life and legacy of Ahmad Shah Massoud, we can be better informed in ways we can formulate a vision for an alternative future, where the will of the people will serve as its foundation. Let us use our time today to discuss and plan the important work for tomorrow and every day after. Until we arrive at our ultimate goal, which is a free and prosperous Afghanistan. Thank you.

GUEST SPEAKER AND PANEL CHAIRS



AHMAD WALI MASSOUD

Politician, Diplomat, and Chair of Massoud Foundation

Ahmad Wali Massoud is the chairman of the Massoud Foundation in Afghanistan and is the younger brother of the late commander Ahmad Shah Massoud. Massoud obtained a degree in diplomatic studies from The University of Westminster, London in 1989. He has served as Afghan ambassador to the UK, special representative of Ahmad Shah Massoud in Europe, and the representative of the Jamiat-e Islami Party in London.



SIR SHERARD COWPER-COLES

Diplomat

Sir Sherard Louis Cowper-Coles is a British former diplomat. He was the Foreign Secretary's Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2009–2010. After leaving the Foreign Office, he worked briefly for BAE Systems as an international business development director. He left BAE Systems in 2013 and is now a Senior Adviser to the Group Chairman and the Group Chief Executive of HSBC.



MICHAEL BARRY

Scholar, Lecturer

Michael A. Barry is a Princeton University professor and historian of the greater Middle East and Islamic world. He is an established authority on Islamic art and the history and culture of Afghanistan, on which subjects he has written extensively in both French and English. Barry's works include a standard French-language history of Afghanistan and a biography of the late commander of the Afghan Northern Alliance, Ahmad Shah Massoud, which won France's Prix Femina in 2002.

CAMBRIDGE CONFERENCE ON AHMAD SHAH MASSOUD AND THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN



VISCOUNT CRANBORNE

Son of the Marquis of Salisbury

Viscount Cranborne is the son of Robert Michael James Gascoyne-Cecil, the 7th Marquess of Salisbury and a British Conservative politician.



TIMOTHY NUNAN

Author, Scholar, Lecturer

Timothy Nunan is a scholar of international and global history. His work looks at how actors from the former Soviet Union, Iran, and Afghanistan have sought to challenge the Western-dominated world order. Since October 2016, he has worked as an Assistant Professor (Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter) at the Center for Global History at the Free University of Berlin. In 2020, he was awarded the Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize, the major prize for early-career researchers of the German Research Foundation.



CARLOTTA GALL

Journalist

Carlotta Gall is the Istanbul bureau chief for The New York Times, covering Turkey. Her recent work has also included investigations into Saudi Arabia's influence on the post-conflict societies of Kosovo and Afghanistan, as part of a series on the Gulf kingdom, and another on growing Iranian interference in Afghanistan, as part of a series on Iran. She was part of a team that received a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2009.

GUEST SPEAKER AND PANEL CHAIRS

CAMBRIDGE CONFERENCE ON AHMAD SHAH MASSOUD AND THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN



PETER TOMSEN
Diplomat

Peter Tomsen is a retired American diplomat and educator, serving as United States Special Envoy to Afghanistan from 1989 to 1992, and United States Ambassador to Armenia between 1995 and 1998. Ambassador Tomsen's thirty-two-year diplomatic career covered South and Central Asia, Northeast Asia, and the former Soviet Union.



SANDY GALL
Author, Journalist

Sandy Gall is a British journalist, author, and former ITN news presenter. His career as a journalist spans over fifty years. Sandy Gall has written several books about Afghanistan and made three documentaries about the country during the Soviet War (two of which were nominated for BAFTA awards).



ABDULLAH ANAS
Politician, Scholar

Abdullah Anas is an Algerian Politician and scholar. In the 1980s he joined Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud to fight the Soviet invasion. He runs Almagharibia, an Akgeruan channel in the UK. He is also son in law of former Palestinian politician Abdullah Azzam. Anas is written a memoir, *To The Mountains: My Life in Jihad*, from Algeria to Afghanistan which is published by C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd.



SIR CHRISTOPHER CLARK
Historian

Sir Christopher Munro Clark is an Australian historian living in the United Kingdom and Germany. He is the twenty-second Regius Professor of History at the University of Cambridge. In 2015, he was knighted for his services to Anglo-German relations. Clark received his PhD at the University of Cambridge, having been a member of Pembroke College from 1987 to 1991 and is the author of 'The Sleepwalkers'.



FAUSTO BILOSLAVO
Journalist

Fausto Biloslavo (born in Trieste, 13 November 1961) is an Italian journalist. As a correspondent and freelance journalist, he witnessed conflicts from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to the Balkans and Africa. Most recently he reported from Iraq and the Middle East.



BERNARD HENRI LEVY
Philosopher, Journalist, Filmmaker,

Bernard-Henri Lévy, byname BHL, is a French philosopher, journalist, filmmaker, and public intellectual who was a leading member of the Nouveaux Philosophes (New Philosophers). He is the author of over 30 books, including works of philosophy, fiction, and biography. He was appointed by French President Jacques Chirac to head a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan in 2002 in the wake of the war against the Taliban, a war that Lévy supported.



STEVE COLL
American Journalist

Steve Coll, a staff writer, is the dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University and reports on issues of politics and intelligence. He was the managing editor of the Washington Post from 1998 to 2005, having earlier been a feature writer, a foreign correspondent, and an editor there; in 1990, he shared a Pulitzer Prize. Coll is the author of several books, including Directorate S and Ghost Wars: The Secret History of C.I.A.



TIM WINTER
Scholar, Researcher, Academic

Abdal Hakim Murad (Tim Winter) is an English academic, theologian and Islamic scholar who is a leading proponent of Islamic neo-traditionalism. He is the Founder and Dean of the Cambridge Muslim College, Aziz Foundation Professor of Islamic Studies at both Cambridge Muslim College and Ebrahim College, Director of Studies at Wolfson College and the Shaykh Zayed Lecturer of Islamic Studies in the Faculty of Divinity at University of Cambridge. His work includes publications on Islamic theology and Muslim-Christian relations.



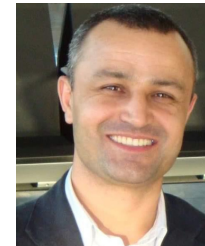
NASIR AHMAD ANDISHA
Diplomat

Dr. Nasir A. Andisha PR and Ambassador. Prior to his appointment as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN in Geneva, Dr Andisha served as the Deputy Foreign Minister for Management and Resources for over three years. Earlier he was the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Fiji. (2011-2015).



PATRICK GRADY
Politician

Patrick John Grady is a Scottish National Party (SNP) politician. He was elected at the 2015 UK general election as the Member of Parliament (MP) for Glasgow North. He was re-elected for the same constituency in the 2017 general election on 8 June 2017, and in the 2019 general election on 12 December 2019.



DAGIKHUDO DAGIEV
Scholar, Lecturer

Dr Dagikhudo Dagiev is a Senior Research Associate in the Department of Academic Research and Publications. He obtained his PhD in the Department of Political Science from the University College London (UCL). His PhD thesis was entitled The Process of Transition in Post-Soviet Central Asia and its Challenges. His research area includes contemporary societies in post-Communist Central Asia, their history and religion, the re-emergence of Islam as a faith, the appearance of Islamist ideologies, and nationalism.



SIR NICHOLAS BARRINGTON
Diplomat

Sir Nicholas Barrington was a career diplomat for 37 years prior to his retirement in 1994. He has served in a variety of posts overseas including Afghanistan, Iran, Egypt and Pakistan, where he ended as High Commissioner. He also served in Japan and Brussels. His home postings included three and a half years as a private secretary to two British Foreign Secretaries. In retirement, he has been active in building bridges between East and West. He is the author of A Passage to Nuristan: exploring the mysterious Afghan hinterland, an account of his travels to remote areas of Afghanistan in the 1960s. He has also published two books of memoirs, including Envoy covering his diplomatic career and periods dealing with Afghanistan.



SHIVAN MAHENDRARAJAH

Historian

Dr. Shivan Mahendrarajah, FRHistS, is a Research Fellow (2021-24), School of History, University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Shivan has traveled throughout the Islamic world, from Morocco to Malaysia. He was educated at Columbia University and the University of Cambridge (Ph.D. in Middle Eastern & Islamic History). He studied Persian at the University of Tehran and Arabic at Damascus University. Before August 2021, Shivan traveled regularly to Afghanistan.



THOMAS BARFIELD

Author, Lecturer

Thomas Barfield is a social anthropologist and Professor of Anthropology at Boston University, who conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork among pastoral nomads in northern Afghanistan in the mid-1970s. Barfield is the author of several books, including, Afghanistan: A cultural and political history.



RORY STEWART

Academic, Diplomat, Explorer, Soldier and Politician

Rory Stewart was an independent candidate for Mayor of London and was Member of Parliament for Penrith and The Border – the largest geographical constituency in England – between 2010 and 2019. In May 2019 he was appointed Secretary of State for International Development, having previously been the Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice, Minister of State for Africa in both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID) (June 2017-January 2018), and Minister of State in DFID (June 2016-June 2017) and, prior to that, Minister for the Environment and Rural Affairs at DEFRA (May 2015-June 2016).



JAMES PICKETT

Author, Historian, Lecturer

James Pickett is an assistant professor of Eurasian history at the University of Pittsburgh. He holds a PhD in history from Princeton University, an MA from Georgetown University, and a BA from Carleton College.



CHRIS ALEXANDER

Diplomat

Christopher A. Alexander, PC is a former diplomat and former Conservative Party of Canada politician. He served as Canada's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration from 2013 to 2015. He represented the riding of Ajax—Pickering, in Ontario, in the House of Commons of Canada from 2011 to 2015. He was defeated by his Liberal predecessor Mark Holland in the 2015 election. Alexander spent 18 years in the Canadian Foreign Service and served as Canada's first resident Ambassador to Afghanistan from 2003 to 2005.

04 PARTICIPANTS

CAMBRIDGE CONFERENCE ON AHMAD SHAH
MASSOUD AND THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN

PARTICIPANTS:



Ambassador Ahmad Wali
Massoud
Ambassador Zalmay Rasoul
Lord Cranborne
Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles
Dr John Casey
Sir Nicholas Barrington
Prof Rob Miller
Dr Nikita Shentsev
Mr Hasan Cuthbert
Dr Ruadhai Dervan
Dr Ehab Bdawi
Mr Alex Parton
Mr Chalmers
Mr Peter Tomsen
Mrs Kim Tomsen
Mrs Nasrin Gross
Dr Max Gross
Ms Carlotta Gall
Dr Tim Winter
Dr Dagi Dagiev
Mr Olivier Weber
MP Patrick Grady
Prof Brendan Simms
Mr Hameed Hakimi
Mr Tam Hussein
Mr Abdallah Anas
Mr David Game

Mr Iradj Bagherzada
Dr Siddhart Saxena (Munto)
Prof Magnus Marsden
Mr Abdul Jabbar Ariyae
Ms Zainab Homam
Dr Khushal Nabizada
Mr Adul Bostani
Mr Abdullah Paymon
Mr Abdullah Khenjani
Mr Zalmai Nishat
Ms Serpil Yilmaz
Mr Sandy Gall
Ms Michaela Gall
Ms Fiona Gall
Ms Charlotte Bonhoure
Mr Shakib Sharifi
Mr Lais Saad
Mr Zaid Saad
Mr Fazel Beria
Mr Zia Shahreyar
Mr Hasan Heydari
Mr Rasul Khamosh
Mr Benedict Archer
Mr Abdul Hai Wakili
Ms Sara Wakili
Mr Muslim Hayat
Mr Karim Karim
Haji Moqbil

Dr Ehsan Ahmadi
Dr Said Akbar Zewary
Dr Asli Shah
Dr Alidad Shereenbeg
Dr Firuza I. Abdullaeva-Melville
Dr Charles Melville
Ms Mitra Sarwary
Mr Karim Kouhyar
Mr Frotan Kohestani

PARTICIPANTS

CAMBRIDGE CONFERENCE ON AHMAD SHAH
MASSOUD AND THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN

ONLINE PARTICIPANTS:



Mr Steve Coll
Dr Michael Barry
Mr Bernard Henri Levy
Dr Timothy Nunan
Mr Milton Bearden
Mr Kamal Alam
Sir Christopher Clark
Dr Shivan Mahendrarajah
Dr James Pickett
Dr Thomas Barfield
Ambassador Chris Alexander
Mr Ali M. Nazary
Dr Rohullah Amin
Mr Emal Ismail
Ms Nina Hjelmgren
Terrence white
Mr Anthony Davis
Mr Joris Verstig
Ms Salmaz Dabiri
Mr Paul Castella
Mr John Jennings
Mr Aral Kuskon
Mr Abdul Rahman Shekib
Mr Tabish Frough
Mr Bilal Sangi

Mr Yusuf Nazar
Mr Yousuf Massum
Mr. Reza Deghati
Mr Fausto Biloslavo
Mr David Cecil
Mr Tabis Frough
Dr Richard Fotz
Ms Munazza Ebtikar
Mr Kawe Kerami
Dr Kambaiz Rafi
Mr Ahmad Sadiq Farin

05 CONCEPT NOTE

CONFERENCE ON AHMAD SHAH MASSOUD AND FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN

Twenty years after his assassination, Ahmad Shah Massoud's legacy remains potent and central in the politics of Afghanistan. His reputation in the West probably rests far more on his genius as a commander and guerrilla fighter than on how his ideas might contribute to Afghanistan's future development and welfare. And it is true that he achieved astonishing military successes against the Red Army and that his campaigns were perhaps the most important single factor that led to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Furthermore, some have argued that the Soviet failures in Afghanistan were a major contributory factor in the demise of the Soviet Union itself.

Within Afghanistan, as well, Massoud's rise to fame came with his military achievements. He is seen as the greatest symbol of national resistance – comparable to De Gaulle in France. After his assassination in 2001, Massoud was officially named as the 'National Hero' of Afghanistan, and September 9th, the anniversary of his murder - Martyr's Day – is a national holiday.

Massoud's legacy should not, however, be reduced to his military and strategic genius. He had a coherent set of political, ethical, and religious beliefs, and neither his character nor his career can be understood without taking these into account. If he is important for Afghanistan's future as well as its past, this will be because his ideas and loyalties have value.

In fact, Massoud's legacy is not uncontroversial within Afghanistan. Although he has indeed become a symbol of sacrifice, national independence, and resistance for many, to others, his legacy is contested, for he not only fought against a foreign enemy - the invading Soviet Red Army along with its client regime in Kabul – but he later opposed the conglomerate of the Taliban and Al-Qaida other extremist groups (also known in Afghanistan as the Black Army.)

CONCEPT NOTE

Massoud always insisted that he was fighting for an independent and free Afghanistan, allowing its citizens to freely agree on the democratic arrangements under which they will govern themselves. For Massoud, this idea was not at all as truisitic as it might sound, for he related it firmly to Afghanistan's history and its geopolitical position (one might even say, 'predicament.')

Afghanistan lies at the intersection of West Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia. Externally, neighboring powers (the British Raj, Imperial and then Soviet Russia, Pakistan) have often sought to treat Afghanistan as a client or a buffer state. There was, therefore, the danger that the country's sovereignty might exist in name only.

Internally under, first, a centralising monarchy, then under Communist client regimes, and even after the fall of Communism, there has existed a tightly centralised state with different ethnic groups, where the temptation is for one ethnic group to use this centralising tradition to assert a claim to hegemony. So both external and internal forces combine to make Massoud's vision of a free and independent country difficult to realise. In other words, Massoud rejected both foreign domination and an internal 'factional domination' and his grounds for these rejections are to be found in his convictions about social justice and harmony which both stem from his understanding of Islam and history of region. Thus an emphasis on context is as important as the man, and hence the title of this seminar.

As mentioned, in the eyes of detractors and harsh critics Massoud never achieved a national leadership above the fray of ethnic communal politics. Massoud and his followers stand accused of human rights abuses during the 1992-1996 conflicts in Kabul. In addition, that period is known for some as above all the era of ethno-regional conflict, while proponents of Massoud argue that they were fighting against several proxy forces of countries in the region, which had plans to install a friendly (or puppet) regime in Kabul and promote sectarian agendas in the country.

CONCEPT NOTE

THE KEY PHASES OF MASSOUD'S CAREER:

First, his early formative years as a young student in Kabul and his escape to Pakistan. This escape to Pakistan was primarily motivated by Massoud's religious convictions, especially by his belief that Islam was under serious challenge from Communist power in Afghanistan. It is vital – especially for Westerners – to understand the place of religion on Massoud's life, and not to downplay it. At the time of his flight to Pakistan it would be reasonable to describe him as an Islamist. It might be easier in the West to understand him as a liberal or progressive – and indeed he espoused democracy, pluralism and the rights of women. But all of this was within an embracing religious faith. He was devout – praying the prescribed prayers even in the heat of battle. His humanitarianism – as shown for instance in his treatment of captured Soviet soldiers – sprang also from religious convictions. He was a Sufi and also a passionate lover of poetry – in which he encouraged his soldiers to join him. In the past people in the West have understood and respected the idea of an Islamic warrior: in the Middle Ages Saladin was actually a hero in Europe despite being also seen as an opponent. It would be a pity if current experience of Islamist extremism were to obscure that very important aspect of Massoud's life and character.

Secondly, his role in establishing and leading an effective guerrilla resistance movement against the invading Soviet forces for ten years (1979-1989), strategically cutting the landlines between the Soviet forces in Kabul and the Hindu Kush Salang Pass.

Thirdly, his role in overthrowing the Najibullah regime after the Soviet withdrawal and ensuring the independence of Afghanistan (1989-1996).

Finally, his establishment of the National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, which is also mistakenly labelled as the 'Northern Alliance,' in order to fight against the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida forces, groups whose chief support was from Pakistan. It is important to mention that after the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban; only three countries recognised the Taliban regime: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The aim of this conference is to reflect on and discuss the life, legacy and thought of Ahmad Shah Massoud and the context in which he arose – Afghanistan and its geo-political situation. Numerous English, Russian, French and Persian works on Afghanistan have provided historical assessments of Massoud as a political and military commander, but insufficient attention has as yet been paid to his political and religious philosophies.

CONCEPT NOTE

His remarkably successful governance strategy in the communities under his control will also repay study, along with the question of whether this strategy contributed to his legitimacy as both commander and political leader.

This conference is the first of its kind, and it will provide an opportunity to encourage further study of Massoud's vision, his role in the thirty-year struggle for the independence of Afghanistan, and his legacy. The Massoud Foundation has started work, with relevant organisations and personalities, to release manuscripts of over a dozen personal diaries of Massoud, along with a treasure trove of other archives related to his struggles. This might further stimulate scholarly study of Afghanistan from a new perspective.

We invite submissions from researchers across disciplines, activists, politicians and journalists from a wide range of fields who have focussed on Massoud in Afghanistan, and beyond its borders. The areas of enquiry addressed in this conference will include:

1. The religious, political and strategic views of Ahmad Shah Massoud as well as his warfare strategy;
2. The creation, structure, and leadership of the resistance movement under Massoud throughout the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the interwar period;
3. The local, regional, and global ideological influences on the political thought of Ahmad Shah Massoud and the resistance movement;
4. Ahmad Shah Massoud's influence regionally and globally, including his cross-border ethnic and religious ties;
5. Local governance structures and engagement with communities within the territory Ahmad Shah Massoud controlled in North-East Afghanistan. This would include an exploration of his model of basic service delivery and participatory governance models; The decision of Ahmad Shah Massoud to form the National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, also known erroneously and popularized as the Northern Alliance, and the latter's decision to fight against the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida extremists with their violent and extremist interpretation of Islam.
6. The contested legacy of Ahmad Shah Massoud in present-day Afghanistan and beyond.

06

Upcoming conference



CAMBRIDGE CONFERENCE
Ahmad Shah Massoud and the Future of Afghanistan

NEXT SERIES 2022/23:
EXACT DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED

CAMBRIDGE CONFERENCE ON AHMAD SHAH
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