

August 7, 2022

Letter of Recommendation for Dr. Azadeh Momeni

I am writing in support of Dr. Azadeh Momeni's application for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto. I first met Azadeh when teaching the second half of our department's thesis proposal workshop course for PhD students in winter 2016. The course is intended to introduce PhD students to a range of methodological approaches in political science and assist them in preparing their dissertation proposal. While relatively reserved in class discussions, Azadeh was always well prepared to discuss her peers' draft dissertation proposals. She also responded well to the input I provided on her first draft proposal. Azadeh subsequently asked me to serve on the committee for her PhD dissertation on Iranian foreign policy during the Khatami era, which was supervised by my colleague Prof. Farhang Rajaee (now emeritus). While I had no particular expertise on Iranian foreign policy and international politics in the Gulf region and the Middle East, Azadeh solicited my input on the theoretical and intellectual framework of her thesis. Having witnessed Azadeh's strong work ethics as a student in the workshop course, I gladly agreed to her request.

Azadeh's dissertation "The Role of President Khatami's Belief System in Iran's Foreign Policy from 1997 to 2005" makes a case for the importance of individual-level psychological factors in Iranian foreign-policy formation. Challenging prevalent structural or institutional explanations of Iran's foreign policy, whether of realist, constructivist or poststructural provenance, Azadeh argues that President Mohammad Khatami's belief system (methodologically conceived as his "operational code" with philosophical and instrumental dimensions) played a decisive role in the opening, and the new initiatives in Iranian foreign relations in the 1997-2005 period of his presidency. She contextualizes this argument historically, biographically, and intellectually highlighting Khatami's successful initiative for a Dialogue Among Civilizations in the UN context as his signature achievement, while also noting improvements in several of Iran's bilateral relationships with European countries and its neighboring states in the Gulf region. Although the success of Khatami's initiative was more limited in the case of Iran's pivotal relationship with the United States, Azadeh's overall argument about the significance of

Khatami's leadership and its psychological and ideational dimensions was quite convincing and well substantiated empirically and methodologically.

As a committee member, my involvement in the process of Azadeh's completion of her dissertation was quite limited. However, I was quite impressed with the coherence and narrative progression of her first full draft. Azadeh also conscientiously addressed the feedback from the committee and provided a fully revised and improved version within three months. Although it had initially taken her some time to develop her thesis proposal, Azadeh completed her dissertation quite expeditiously (in four years) and successfully defended her thesis in summer 2021. As a testimony to Azadeh's wider range of intellectual interests, she also published a chapter on "Post-Development Scholars and Development in Latin America" in a volume on *Latin American Perspectives on Global Development* (edited by Mahmoud Masaeli et al. and published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing) in 2018. This adds to a number of earlier publications in Farsi as well as several translations. More recently, Azadeh has also begun to present her work at academic conferences including the annual convention of the International Studies Association in Toronto in 2019. This additional work beyond her dissertation bodes well for Azadeh's future as a scholar.

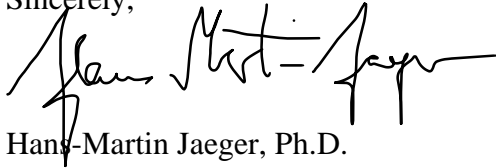
In addition to her scholarly work Azadeh has a variety of other research and professional accomplishments including work with two UN agencies prior to coming to Canada, a research fellowship with Women Living Under Muslim Laws, and volunteer work with Amnesty International in Canada. This varied experience along with her personal background and deep knowledge of Iranian politics, society, and culture makes Azadeh a very good candidate for postdoctoral studies and participation in the scholarly activities at the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute.

In revising her dissertation towards publication, Azadeh proposes to deepen one of the most interesting aspects of her dissertation, namely the intellectual influences on President Khatami's worldview and especially his initiative for a Dialogue Among Civilizations. Azadeh's dissertation put the latter into conversation with alternative Western conceptions of post-Cold War world order (specifically, Huntington's "clash of civilizations" and Fukuyama's "end of history") as well as tracing influences from German philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Azadeh now intends to further pursue her interest in comparative political thought by deepening her study of Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy and its influence on Khatami's worldview. To conduct this research and prepare her book manuscript, Azadeh would

greatly benefit from the intellectual community and extensive transdisciplinary expertise on Iranian Studies at the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute.

Overall, Azadeh Momeni has a solid record of academic achievements, a strong work ethic, and considerable further potential as a scholar in a supportive intellectual context. I therefore warmly recommend her for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Toronto.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hans-Martin Jaeger', with a stylized, flowing script.

Hans-Martin Jaeger, Ph.D.

Associate Professor

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