



SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

The ISA RC22 Sociology of
Religion's official newsletter

Highlights of the Month

RC22 Midterm Conference

Global Flows and
Reconfigurations of the Sacred

The Myth of Middle East Exceptionalism Unfinished Social Movements

Mojtaba Mahdavi

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Happy to have you here for another issue of the RC22 Sociology of Religion Newsletter.

To all RC22 Members,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 30th edition of the RC22 Sociology of Religion Newsletter. Reaching this milestone is both meaningful and deeply encouraging, and it would not have been possible without the steady participation, commitment, and intellectual generosity of our community throughout the year. As we look back at 2025, we are grateful for the many contributions that have enriched our shared work: conference engagements, publications, collaborative initiatives, and the ongoing conversations that continue to strengthen RC22 across regions and disciplines.

Your engagement is what gives life and purpose to this Research Committee. Whether through presenting your research, sharing updates from your institutions, attending meetings, or simply staying connected, your involvement sustains a vibrant international network dedicated to advancing the sociology of religion. On behalf of the RC22 team, thank you for your presence and for everything you bring into this collective space.

As we close this year and prepare for the next, we hope to continue working closely with all of you. There is much ahead for RC22, and we look forward to fostering even more opportunities for exchange, collaboration, and scholarly growth in the coming months. Your ongoing participation will continue to shape the direction and strength of our global community.

Thank you for being part of RC22, and thank you for joining us in celebrating this 30th issue. We are delighted to share it with you.

Warm regards,

Daniel Valdez Márquez
Online Communication Manager
ISA RC22 Sociology of Religion

RC22 Midterm Conference – New Delhi

Global Flows and Reconfigurations of the Sacred

A Message to Our Members

The ISA RC22 – Sociology of Religion is pleased to share an important update with all our members. All materials for the upcoming Midterm Conference, organized in collaboration with the Department of Sociology at South Asian University in New Delhi, have now been successfully submitted. With this milestone achieved, RC22 is moving forward with renewed energy and great anticipation for the event ahead.

We are truly excited to meet our community in New Delhi. This conference will be a valuable space for reconnecting with colleagues, engaging in meaningful scholarly dialogue, and exploring diverse perspectives within the sociology of religion. We greatly look forward to an enriching program filled with thoughtful presentations, vibrant discussions, and opportunities to strengthen our international academic networks.

As preparations continue, we strongly encourage all members to visit the official conference webpage, where you will find the latest information on themes, scheduling, practical logistics, and ongoing updates about the meeting. The webpage will remain the central source of information as we approach the event.



South Asian University – A SAARC Initiative, New Delhi

IMPORTANT REMINDER

REGISTRATION FEE SUBMISSION DEADLINE:
20th of December, 2025

We kindly ask all participants to take note of this deadline. Timely submission of the registration fee is essential for confirming your participation and ensuring smooth coordination as we finalize organizational details. Please make this date a priority in your planning.

For all conference information, including registration details, please visit:

<https://midtermconference3.wordpress.com/>



Thank you for your continued engagement with RC22. Your contributions and participation are what make our community dynamic and intellectually vibrant. We look forward to welcoming many of you in New Delhi and sharing a memorable, inspiring conference together.

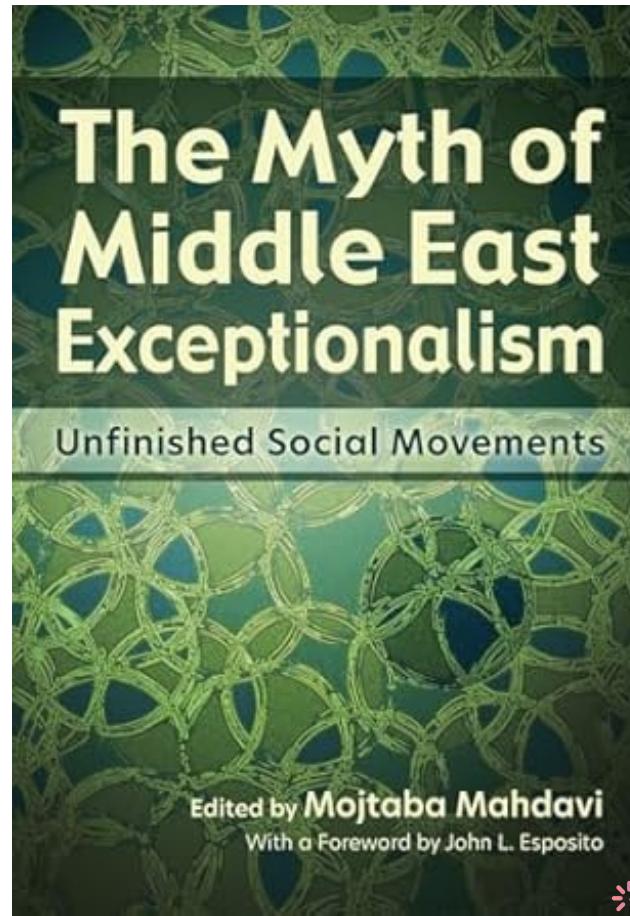
Recent Research and Works from Our RC22 Community

THE MYTH OF MIDDLE EAST EXCEPTIONALISM UNFINISHED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Edited by Mojtaba Mahdavi

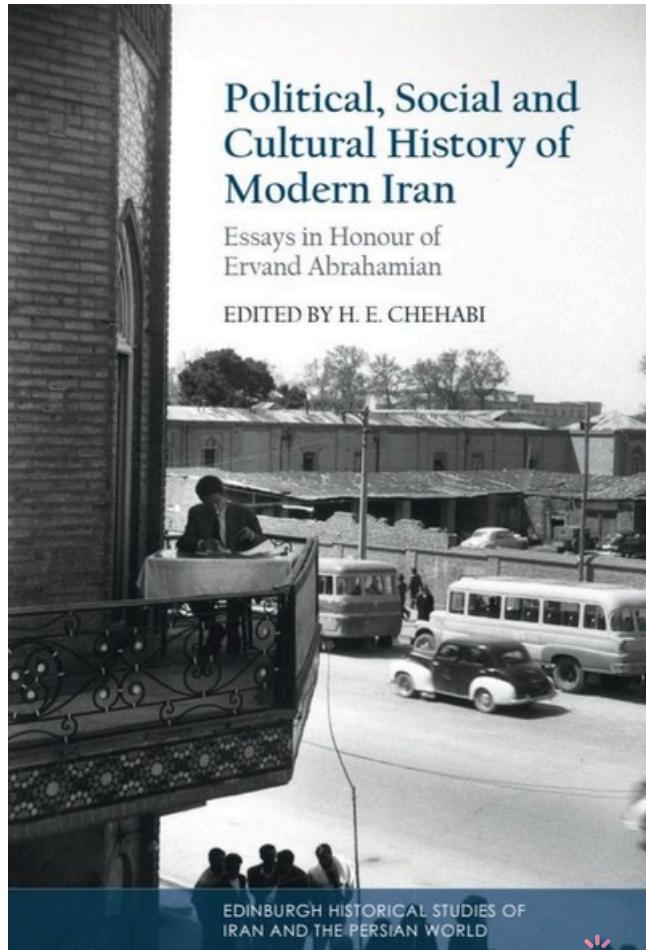
More than a decade after the birth of contemporary social movements in the Middle East and North Africa scholars are asking what these movements have achieved and how we should evaluate their lasting legacies. The quiet encroachments of MENA counterrevolutionary forces in the post-Arab Spring era have contributed to the revival of an outdated Orientalist discourse of Middle East exceptionalism, implying that the region's culture is exceptionally immune to democratic movements, values, and institutions. This volume, inspired by critical post-colonial/decolonial studies, and interdisciplinary perspectives of social movement theories, gender studies, Islamic studies, and critical race theory, challenges and demystifies the myth of "MENA Exceptionalism". Composed of three sections, the book first places MENA in the larger global context and sheds light on the impact of geopolitics on the current crises, showing how a postcolonial critique better explains the crisis of democratic social movements and the resilience of authoritarianism.

The second section focuses on the unfinished projects of contemporary MENA social movements and their quest for freedom, social justice, and human dignity. Contributors examine specific cases of post-Islamist movements, the Arab youth, student, and other popular non-violent movements. In the final section, the book problematizes the exceptionalist idea of gender passivity and women's exclusion, which reduces the reality of gender injustice to some eternal and essentialized Muslim/MENA mindset. Contributors address this theory by placing gender as an independent category of thought and action, demonstrating the quest for gender justice movements in MENA, and providing contexts to the cases of gender injustice to challenge simplistic, ahistorical and culturalist assumptions.



DID PROGRESSIVE MUSLIMS PAVE THE WAY FOR THE HEGEMONY OF “KHOMEINISM”? PUBLIC RELIGION AND THE 1979 REVOLUTION

Mojtaba Mahdavi



The piece titled “Did Progressive Muslims Pave the Way for the Hegemony of ‘Khomeinism’? Public Religion and the 1979 Revolution” (included in Political, Social and Cultural History of Modern Iran, Essays in Honour of Ervand Abrahamian) examines the intellectual and political role of progressive Muslim thinkers and activists during the transformative period leading up to the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The work argues that the emergence of a modern form of public religion, shaped by progressive Muslim discourse, helped create the social and ideological conditions that later allowed for the rise and consolidation of Khomeinism.

Instead of viewing the Revolution solely through the authority of the clergy, the analysis emphasizes the complex interaction of modern political aspirations, reinterpretations of religion, grassroots mobilization, and competing visions of justice and liberation. By situating these developments within broader debates about Iranian modernity and political culture, the study shows how progressive Muslim actors contributed, often unintentionally, to the very hegemony that would ultimately overshadow their own reformist goals.

This contribution appears in the volume Political, Social and Cultural History of Modern Iran, edited by Houchang E. Chehabi, which gathers interdisciplinary perspectives on the political, social, and cultural forces shaping modern Iran.

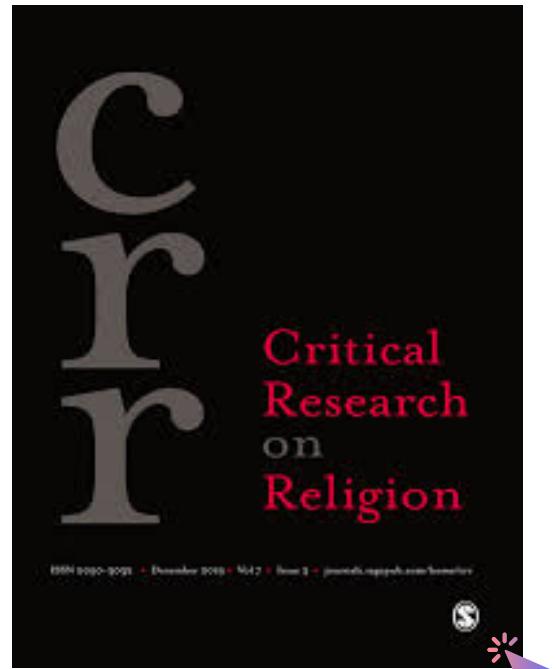
For access to this work and additional publications by Dr. Mojtaba Mahdavi, please visit www.mojtabamahdavi.com

POST-SECULARISM AS THE SECULARISM OF THE EXIT OF SECULARISM: AUSTRALIA AS A CASE STUDY OF PASSÉ SECULARISM

Adam Possamai

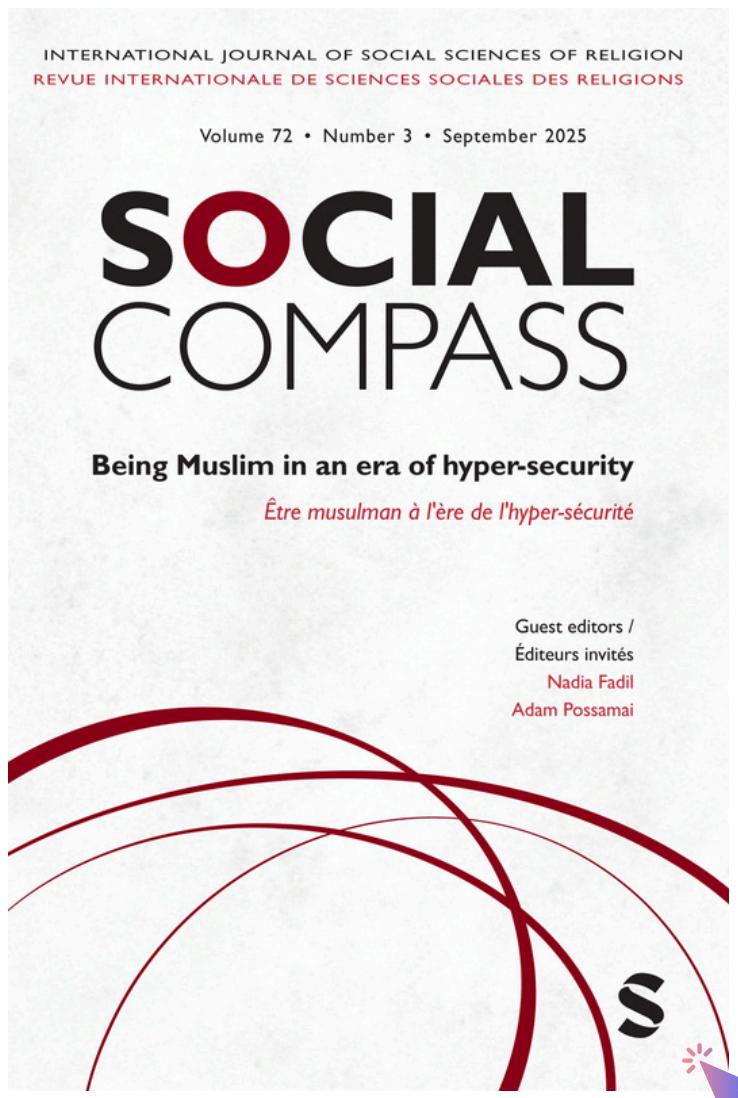
Data from western countries tells the narrative that religion is in decline in terms of both attendance and identification. Yet, drop of religious attendance and identification does not prove the end of religion. Noting the ever-return of the sacred, this article argues there is a growth of a newly perceived religious minority in the public sphere promoting their understanding of religious freedom. Their presence puts in question the hegemony of the use of secular reason as the lingua franca of the public sphere. Following Gauchet's reading of Christianity as being the religion of the exit of religion, this article presents post-secularism as the secularism of the exit of secularism. Using Australia as a case study, the new phase of passé secularism is introduced.

This contribution appears in *Critical Research on Religion*, a leading journal dedicated to innovative and critical perspectives in the sociology of religion. The article forms part of Volume 13, Issue 2, offering readers an opportunity to explore current debates and emerging discussions within the field. We encourage our members and colleagues to visit the journal, browse the issue, and engage with Possamai's work along with the broader set of articles featured in this edition. It is an excellent opportunity to stay informed about recent scholarship and ongoing conversations shaping the study of religion today.



MUSLIM IDENTITIES IN AN ERA OF HYPERSECURITY: INSIGHTS FROM TWO CONTRASTING AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES

Adam Possamai, Farida Fozdar, David Tittensor, Gerhard Hoffstaedter and Rhonda Itaoui



More than two decades on, the shadow of 9/11 and the Bali bombings continues to linger over Australia and its small Muslim population. We posit this is due to an existential fear of both Islam and Muslims in the Australian imaginary, an imaginary that continues to be cast as Judeo-Christian. This has led to the hyper-securitisation of an entire religious community which has had several effects on the ways Muslims navigate a sense of belonging in and to contemporary Australia. This article analyses interviews with members of two specific and different ethnic groups in different locations in Australia, to explore similarities and differences in their lived experience resulting from this securitised environment. The comparative analysis between Indonesians in Perth and Lebanese in Sydney demonstrates strong mixed cultural identities are common, but finds tensions expressed about how the high levels of securitisation manifest in starkly different and novel ways. While the Lebanese participants are critical of the securitised and challenging socio-political context, the Indonesian participants interpret experiences of hostility and micro-aggressions as not necessarily directed towards all Muslims, but as focused on particular ethnic communities. Our data suggest that one outcome of the securitised environment is that the 'good Muslim' and the 'bad Muslim' distinction has become internalised.

THE THREE STAGES OF RELIGIOUS DECLINE AROUND THE WORLD

Stoltz, Jörg, Nan Dirk De Graaf, Conrad Hackett, and Jean-Philippe Antonietti

Religiosity tends to decline across generations. However, religious decline is more pronounced in some countries and the diminishing aspects of religion vary by context. To explain such variation, we extend the general secular transition model, which proposes that countries undergo a similar process of secularization beginning at different points in time. We explain that secular transition happens in three steps: first, public ritual participation declines; second, the importance of religion to individuals declines; and third, people shed religious affiliation. We test this model using datasets from surveys in 111 countries (Pew Research Center), 58 countries (World Values Survey and European Values Study (WVS/EVS)), and a subset of 17 countries measured in at least five WVS/EVS waves. We show the model fits countries with Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist pluralities. While Eastern post-Soviet countries deviate from this pattern, traditionally Muslim countries appear to follow its early stages. However, we recommend caution in interpreting longitudinal claims, due to limited data.





ICSOR Grant 2026

The ICSOR Grant offers an academic residency in Rome designed to support high-quality research in the sociology of religion. The program provides scholars with the opportunity to deepen their work in a focused and well-resourced environment, benefiting from both dedicated time and access to specialized materials. Awardees are hosted in the ICSOR apartment for a period ranging from one week to a maximum of two months, with accommodation provided free of charge (excluding food and insurance). During their stay, researchers also have full access to the ICSOR library, which serves as a valuable resource for advancing theoretical, methodological, and empirical aspects of their projects.

Eligibility for the grant requires that the proposed research be directly relevant to the sociology of religion and that applicants be affiliated with an academic or research institution. Private individuals or companies are not eligible. Recipients must agree to share the results of their work either through a presentation at the end of their stay in Rome or by submitting a report or publication within one year of completing the residency. This ensures that the grant contributes meaningfully to ongoing scholarly discussions and strengthens the field.

Applications must include specific documents such as a scientific abstract, research design, hypothesis and specific aims, a short statement about the contribution of the project to the sociology of religion, a CV, a biographical sketch, references, and two letters of recommendation. Proposals must respect the requested page limits and formats; incomplete submissions or those exceeding the limits will not be processed.

The ICSOR Grant represents a valuable opportunity for scholars seeking a supportive and enriching environment in which to advance their research. With clearly defined expectations, access to resources, and a structured timeframe, the program is designed to foster both individual scholarly development and broader contributions to the discipline.

Application deadline: March 30, 2026

Announcement of awards: Late April 2026

Earliest project start date: May 1, 2026

For more information, go to:

<https://www.icsor.it/424-2/>

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