

NAAIMS 44th ANNUAL CONFERENCE
[Formerly the Association of Muslim Social
Scientists of North America (AMSS)]

“Sectarianism in Islam and Muslim Communities”

Cosponsored By:
Middle East Studies
Brown University, Providence, RI

Saturday, September 19, 2015

ABSTRACT

“Human (In)Security and Social Identity Group:
The Case of Jihadi Terrorism in Africa”

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Sunni-based jihadi activity in Africa appears on the rise. The continent has been plagued with terror attacks in Kenya, Nigeria and several North African states. This presentation seeks to investigate the role of human insecurity on the formation of social identity groups in Africa as a way to explain the rise in militant activity. It describes the social, economic and political conditions in Kenya, Nigeria and Mali so as to highlight the pervasive insecurity faced by people in these countries. The choice of the three countries stems from the fact that all have experienced Islamic (Sunni) based terrorism, but each country offers a glimpse at different elements of human insecurity. Kenya allows one to explore the marginalization of Muslims and the role of foreign entanglements in facilitating terrorist activity. Nigeria and Boko Harm offer a look at the economic aspect of human security, as northern Nigeria is poor and underdeveloped; whereas Mali seems to encapsulate both elements, political discrimination and economic poverty, on the one hand, and ethnic marginalization that causes civil, political and economic underdevelopment, on the other. The second section examines what is social group identity and what factors lead to the emergence of such a group. The third section begins with a historical review of Islamic militancy as laid out by Core Al-Qaeda in the 1990s, when the group was based in the Sudan before shifting attention to analyze the messages of al-Sahaab, Boko Haram and al-Qaeda of the Maghreb and how they use human insecurity to attract recruits and defend their actions. This presentation concludes by arguing that only by ending the marketplace of identities can one challenge the Islamic militancy in Africa.