

NAAIMS 42<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
[Formerly the Association of Muslim Social  
Scientists of North America (AMSS)]

“Constitutions and Islam”

Cosponsored By:  
Department of Near Eastern Studies  
&  
Program in Near Eastern Studies  
Princeton University, NJ

Saturday, September 28, 2013

---

**ABSTRACT ONLY – WORK IN PROGRESS**

“Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘a, Siyasa Shar‘iyya, and al-Azhar:  
Understanding the New Islamist Debate”

By: Usaama al-Azami  
(Ph.D. Candidate, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ)

Since the emergence of governments led by Islamists in wake of the Arab Spring, the writings of leading Arab Islamists have taken on new significance. Theoretical writings are now potentially a source of guidance for practice, and understanding them has taken on a sense of urgency. The three main scholars whose works are evaluated in this study are Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī, Rashid al-Ghannushi, and Muḥammad ‘Imara. Each has written (and spoken) extensively on Islamic governance in light of *shari‘a* norms, and continue to do so, but with limited academic attention afforded these aspects of their work. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and a proud graduate of al-Azhar, has written extensively on how *shari‘a*-based norms apply to the democratic state. Rashid Ghannushi is the leader of the Tunisian Ennahda Party which forms the largest contingent of the current Tunisian parliament. Finally, Muḥammad ‘Imara is perhaps the most prolific Islamist thinker alive today, a graduate of Al-Azhar, a member of its Islamic Research Center, and the current editor-in-chief of its monthly academic journal. He has written at great length on the nexus of religion, politics, and governance from an Islamist perspective. This paper explores the writings, before and after the Arab Spring of this constellation of often mutually referential but particularly influential Islamist scholars. It will explore their ideas of the Shari‘a’s role in democratic governance, and the implications for liberal norms.