



ONE TRADITION, TWO VOICES: RELIGIOUS REASONING BEHIND INDONESIA'S MINING DEBATE

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Abstract: *Recent debates on mining governance in Indonesia have intensified discussions among Muslim intellectuals regarding environmental ethics and natural resource management. While previous studies have examined religion as a source of moral legitimacy or resistance to extractive industries, little attention has been paid to the epistemological processes through which Islamic normative concepts are interpreted in constructing religious reasoning. This article investigates how Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Ahmad Suaedy develop religious reasoning in Indonesia's mining debate during 2024-2025. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) informed by a maqāṣid al-sharī'ah perspective, the study analyzes eight purposively selected texts, including opinion articles, public statements, social media posts, and digital discussions. The findings demonstrate that both intellectuals draw upon a shared Islamic normative tradition but construct distinct forms of religious reasoning by prioritizing different objectives of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Ulil develops a maṣlaḥah-oriented justification that emphasizes public welfare, contextual ijtihād, and policy accommodation, whereas Suaedy advances a justice-oriented justification grounded in equality, accountability, and distributive justice. Based on these findings, the article proposes the concept of dual religious justification to explain how different epistemological priorities within the same Islamic interpretive tradition produce distinct yet internally coherent forms of religious reasoning. The study further argues that maqāṣid al-sharī'ah functions not only as a normative framework but also as an epistemological resource for contemporary Islamic ethical reasoning.*

Keywords: *Religious Reasoning; Dual Religious Justification; Islamic Epistemology; Mining Governance.*

Abstrak: *Perdebatan mengenai tata kelola pertambangan di Indonesia dalam beberapa tahun terakhir telah memperkuat diskusi di kalangan intelektual Muslim tentang etika lingkungan dan pengelolaan sumber daya alam. Meskipun berbagai penelitian sebelumnya telah mengkaji agama sebagai sumber legitimasi moral ataupun sebagai bentuk resistensi terhadap industri ekstraktif, perhatian terhadap proses epistemologis yang menjelaskan bagaimana konsep-konsep normatif Islam ditafsirkan dalam membangun penalaran keagamaan masih relatif terbatas. Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana Ulil Abshar Abdalla dan Ahmad Suaedy mengembangkan penalaran keagamaan dalam perdebatan pertambangan di Indonesia sepanjang 2024-2025. Dengan menggunakan Analisis Wacana Kritis (Critical Discourse Analysis/CDA) yang diinformasikan oleh perspektif maqāsid al-syarī'ah, penelitian ini menganalisis delapan teks yang dipilih secara purposif, meliputi artikel opini, pernyataan publik, unggahan media sosial, dan diskusi digital. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua intelektual tersebut sama-sama berangkat dari tradisi normatif Islam yang sama, tetapi membangun bentuk-bentuk penalaran keagamaan yang berbeda melalui prioritas yang berbeda terhadap tujuan-tujuan maqāsid al-syarī'ah. Ulil mengembangkan justifikasi yang berorientasi pada masalah dengan menekankan kemaslahatan publik, ijtihād kontekstual, dan akomodasi kebijakan. Sebaliknya, Suaedy mengembangkan justifikasi yang berorientasi pada keadilan dengan bertumpu pada kesetaraan, akuntabilitas, dan keadilan distributif. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, artikel ini mengajukan konsep justifikasi keagamaan ganda (dual religious justification) untuk menjelaskan bagaimana perbedaan prioritas epistemologis dalam tradisi interpretasi Islam yang sama dapat menghasilkan bentuk-bentuk penalaran keagamaan yang berbeda, namun tetap koheren secara internal. Lebih jauh, penelitian ini berargumen bahwa maqāsid al-syarī'ah tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai kerangka normatif, tetapi juga sebagai sumber daya epistemologis bagi penalaran etika Islam kontemporer.*

Kata Kunci: *Logika Keagamaan; Justifikasi Keagamaan Ganda; Epistemologi Islam; Tata Kelola Pertambangan.*

A. Introduction

Contemporary debates on environmental governance have generated new forms of religious reasoning through which Muslim intellectuals reinterpret Islamic normative principles in response to ecological and political challenges. These developments have expanded the scope of contemporary Islamic thought beyond the conventional concerns of classical jurisprudence, encouraging new forms of interpretation grounded in changing social realities.¹

This transformation has become particularly visible in Indonesia following the enactment of Government Regulation No. 25 of 2024, which opened opportunities for granting mining concessions to religious organizations. The policy has stimulated extensive debate over the relationship between religion, the state, and natural resource governance.²

¹ Lucas F Johnston, *Religion and Sustainability: Social Movements and the Politics of the Environment* (Routledge, 2014); Camil Ungureanu and Paolo Monti, *Contemporary Political Philosophy and Religion: Between Public Reason and Pluralism* (Routledge, 2017).

² Maria Sagrado and Vincent Ariesta Lie, "Mining and Energy Law in Indonesia," in *Routledge Handbook of Indonesian Law* (Routledge, n.d.), 616–31; Alik Maulidatin, Nur Chanifah,

More importantly, it has exposed competing interpretations of Islamic normative principles in assessing extractive development. Concepts such as *maṣlaḥah*, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, justice (*ʿadl*), and public responsibility have become central interpretive resources through which Muslim intellectuals justify, negotiate, or challenge mining policies. Consequently, debates over mining have evolved from a predominantly economic and environmental issue into a site where Islamic religious reasoning is actively reconstructed.³

These contestations have become increasingly visible within digital public spaces, where religious authority is no longer produced exclusively through formal institutions such as councils of scholars, fatwa bodies, or religious organizations.⁴ Opinion articles, social media platforms, podcasts, and online discussions have emerged as influential arenas for producing, circulating, and contesting Islamic arguments. Digital media therefore function not merely as channels of communication but also as spaces in which contemporary forms of religious reasoning are negotiated in real time.⁵ This development raises an important question: how are Islamic normative concepts reinterpreted and mobilized when Muslim intellectuals engage with contemporary debates on mining governance?

This article addresses that question by examining the public interventions of Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Ahmad Suaedy during the mining controversy of 2024–2025. Although both figures draw upon Islamic ethical traditions, they differ significantly in the epistemological assumptions underlying their arguments. Ulil develops a *maṣlaḥah*-oriented mode of reasoning that emphasizes contextual *ijtihād*, moderation, and policy accommodation. In contrast, Suaedy advances a distributive reading of Islamic ethics that prioritizes justice, equality, and structural responsibility in natural resource governance. These contrasting perspectives should not be understood simply as competing political positions; rather, they represent different ways of interpreting the objectives of the *sharī'ah* within contemporary policy debates.⁶

Previous scholarship has examined Islam and environmental governance through the lenses of eco-theology, environmental *fiqh*,⁷ Islamic environmental ethics, and critiques of

and Indah Dwi Qurbani, "Legal Conflicts in Granting Mining Permits to Religious Organizations in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ius Constituendum* 11, no. 2 (2026): 264–85.

³ Uthman Mehdad Al-Turabi and Jasser Auda, "Toward a Maqāṣid-Based Legal Reform: Systemic Thinking for Social Transformation in the Modern Muslim World," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Law* 8, no. 2 (2025): 209–28; Maszlee Malik, "Constructing an Alternative Concept of Islamic Governance: A Maqāṣidic Approach," *KEMANUSIAAN: The Asian Journal of Humanities* 26 (2019): 89.

⁴ Shaheen Amid Whyte, "Islamic Religious Authority in Cyberspace: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Religious Actors in Australia," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022): 69.

⁵ Masruha Masruha et al., "Digitization of Fatwas and Religious Authority: A Study on the Role of Social Media in the Interpretation of Islamic Law," *Journal of Mujaddid Nusantara* 2, no. 2 (2025): 99–113.

⁶ Basma I Abdelgafar, *Public Policy: Beyond Traditional Jurisprudence: A Maqasid Approach* (International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 2018).

⁷ Abdul Mannan Cheema, "Exploring the Islamic Eco-Theology to Address Environmental Crisis: A Pathway to Global Sustainability," *Al-Tabyeen*, 2025.

extractive capitalism.⁸ Other studies have explored the role of religious organizations in environmental activism and mining governance in Indonesia.⁹ Nevertheless, most of this literature continues to frame religion either as a source of moral legitimacy or as a form of resistance to extractive industries. Far less attention has been devoted to the epistemological processes through which Islamic normative concepts are interpreted, negotiated, and translated into public arguments within digital spaces. Consequently, existing scholarship has yet to explain how *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* functions not merely as a normative doctrine but as a competing epistemological framework through which contemporary Muslim intellectuals construct religious arguments on the same policy issue.

Against this background, this article argues that debates over mining governance are better understood as contestations between competing forms of *maqāṣid*-based religious reasoning than as a simple binary between support for and opposition to extractive policies. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis informed by a *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* perspective, the study examines how Islamic legal and ethical concepts are reinterpreted within contemporary public discourse.¹⁰ In this study, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* functions not only as a normative reference but also as an epistemological category for analysing how religious arguments are constructed, justified, and contested. Building on this perspective, the study ultimately develops the concept of dual religious justification as an analytical explanation of how different epistemological orientations within the same Islamic normative tradition produce contrasting forms of religious reasoning in responding to mining governance: pragmatic justification, which prioritizes public benefit and policy accommodation, and critical-distributive justification, which emphasizes justice, equality, and ethical critique of unequal resource distribution. By repositioning mining debates within the epistemology of contemporary Islamic religious reasoning, this study advances a broader understanding of how *ijtihād* and *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* function as epistemological resources in the construction of Islamic ethical reasoning in response to contemporary public issues.

Religious reasoning constitutes the central analytical perspective of this study. Rather than viewing religion as a fixed body of doctrines or a source of predetermined legal conclusions, this study understands religious reasoning as the epistemological process through which Muslim intellectuals interpret, negotiate, and communicate Islamic normative values in response to contemporary public issues. Religious arguments are therefore approached not simply as theological claims or political preferences, but as forms of knowledge production shaped by particular interpretive traditions, ethical commitments, and social contexts. From this perspective, disagreement among Muslim intellectuals reflects differences in epistemological orientation rather than merely divergent

⁸ Muhamad Bisri Mustofa et al., "ECOLOGICAL DA'WAH UNDER EXTRACTIVE CAPITALISM: A CRITICAL READING OF RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS:(META-ANALYSIS)," *KOMUNIKE: Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam* 17, no. 2 (2025): 213–30.

⁹ Taufik Hidayatulloh, Ahmad Sunawari Long, and Theguh Saumantri, "Eco-Theology in Islamic Thought: Religious Moderation and Organizational Roles in Mining Management in Indonesia," *Progresiva: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam* 13, no. 03 (2024): 385–98.

¹⁰ Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Routledge, 2023), 11–22; Al-Turabi and Auda, "Toward a Maqāṣid-Based Legal Reform: Systemic Thinking for Social Transformation in the Modern Muslim World."

political positions or legal opinions. This understanding provides the foundation for examining how Islamic concepts are mobilized to construct competing ethical responses to debates on mining governance.¹¹

Religion is not simply a collection of fixed doctrines or immutable legal prescriptions; it is an interpretive tradition through which Muslims continuously engage with the meaning of revelation in changing historical and social contexts¹². Within the broader Islamic intellectual tradition, religious understanding emerges through an ongoing process of interpretation that connects scriptural authority with lived experience. From this perspective, religious reasoning is best understood as an epistemological practice through which Muslim intellectuals interpret normative values, formulate ethical arguments, and respond to contemporary public issues. Differences among Muslim scholars, therefore, should not be reduced to competing political preferences or theological positions. Rather, they reflect distinct interpretive approaches to understanding how Islamic values ought to inform public life.¹³

Seen from this interpretive perspective, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* functions less as a fixed legal doctrine than as a set of epistemological resources that shape religious reasoning. Concepts such as *maṣlaḥah*, *mafsadah*, justice ('*adl*), and public welfare provide intellectual resources through which Muslim scholars interpret emerging social realities that cannot be addressed adequately through literal readings of scriptural texts alone. Instead of prescribing a single normative conclusion, *maqāṣid* offers a flexible interpretive horizon that enables religious actors to negotiate ethical responsibility, public values, and the common good in response to increasingly complex contemporary challenges, including environmental governance and natural resource management.

The interpretive character of *maqāṣid* makes it possible for different forms of religious reasoning to develop from the same normative tradition.¹⁴ Because Islamic normative concepts function as interpretive resources rather than predetermined legal formulas, they remain open to multiple forms of religious reasoning. Muslim intellectuals may therefore draw upon the same Islamic vocabulary while assigning different ethical priorities to the objectives of the *sharī'ah*.¹⁵ As a result, disagreement arises less from divergent commitments to Islamic sources than from different epistemological orientations in interpreting their significance within particular social and political contexts. Debates surrounding mining governance illustrate this dynamic. While participants frequently

¹¹ Rajiv Maher, Francisco Valenzuela, and Steffen Böhm, "The Enduring State: An Analysis of Governance-Making in Three Mining Conflicts," *Organization Studies* 40, no. 8 (2019): 1169–91.

¹² Kocku Von Stuckrad, "Discursive Study of Religion: Approaches, Definitions, Implications," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 25, no. 1 (2013): 5–25.

¹³ Taufik Hidayatulloh, "FROM SANAD TO ALGORITHM: AUTHORITY, RATIONALITY, AND PARTICIPATORY INTERPRETATION OF UŞŪL AL-DĪN IN CYBERSPACE", *Ilmu Ushuluddin* 12, no. 2 (2025): 183–205.

¹⁴ Yasir S Ibrahim, "An Examination of the Modern Discourse on Maqāṣid Al-Sharī 'A," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 5, no. 1 (2014): 39–60; Necmeddin Güney, "Maqāṣid Al-Sharī 'a in Islamic Finance: A Critical Analysis of Modern Discourses," *Religions* 15, no. 1 (2024): 114.

¹⁵ Al-Turabi and Auda, "Toward a Maqāṣid-Based Legal Reform: Systemic Thinking for Social Transformation in the Modern Muslim World."

invoke concepts such as *maṣlahah*, justice, responsibility, and public welfare, these concepts are translated into contrasting ethical and political arguments concerning environmental protection, economic development, and distributive justice. Such differences are therefore better understood as competing modes of religious reasoning than as competing claims to religious authenticity.

Drawing on this framework, the present study approaches religious arguments as forms of interpretive reasoning rather than expressions of political preference or theological orthodoxy.¹⁶ The analysis focuses on how Islamic normative concepts are interpreted, prioritized, and mobilized to construct different forms of public justification in debates over mining governance. This perspective provides the conceptual basis for examining the arguments advanced by Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Ahmad Suaedy and for explaining how distinct epistemological orientations give rise to different modes of religious reasoning in response to the same public issue. Building on the preceding theoretical discussion, this study conceptualizes religious reasoning as an interpretive process through which Muslim intellectuals negotiate the relationship between Islamic normative values and contemporary public issues. Within this framework, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is understood not as a fixed legal doctrine but as an epistemological resource that informs the construction of ethical arguments. This perspective enables the study to examine how Islamic normative concepts are interpreted, prioritized, and mobilized in responding to debates over mining governance.

Accordingly, the analysis is organized around four interrelated analytical dimensions: 1. religious reasoning as a mode of interpretation; 2. the epistemological role of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* in shaping ethical judgement; 3. competing interpretive orientations reflected in the deployment of concepts such as *maṣlahah*, *mafsadah*, justice, and public responsibility; and 4. the forms of public justification that emerge from these different modes of reasoning. These analytical dimensions provide the conceptual lens for examining the public arguments of Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Ahmad Suaedy. Rather than evaluating the normative validity of either position, the study explores how different epistemological orientations within a shared Islamic tradition generate distinct understandings of public welfare, justice, and environmental responsibility. It is through this analytical framework that the concept of *dual religious justification* is developed as a way of explaining the coexistence of contrasting, yet internally coherent, forms of religious reasoning in contemporary debates on mining governance.¹⁷

B. Methods

These four analytical dimensions guided the coding and interpretation of the selected texts throughout the discourse analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is employed because the primary concern of this study is not the factual accuracy of public statements but the epistemological processes through which religious arguments are constructed and

¹⁶ Taofeeq Olamilekan Sanusi, "Maqasid Al-Shariah as an Evaluative Framework for the Digitalisation of Islamic Education:(Contemporary Hermeneutic Approach Study)," *Permata: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 6, no. 1 (2025): 49–63.

¹⁷ Kevin Vallier, "In Defence of Intelligible Reasons in Public Justification," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 66, no. 264 (2016): 596–616.

circulated in contemporary public discourse.¹⁸ From this perspective, discourse constitutes the arena in which Islamic normative concepts are interpreted, negotiated, and translated into ethical positions concerning mining governance. CDA therefore provides an appropriate methodological approach for examining how different forms of religious reasoning are articulated through language, argumentative structures, and public communication.¹⁹ Combined with a *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* perspective, the method enables the study to analyse not only what religious actors argue, but also how Islamic normative concepts are mobilized to produce competing forms of public justification.²⁰

The corpus consists of eight purposively selected texts representing the principal public interventions of Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Ahmad Suaedy during Indonesia's mining controversy between 2024 and 2025. The selected materials include opinion articles, public statements, social media posts, and online discussions published across different digital platforms. Table 1 provides an overview of the research corpus and its analytical focus.

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Analytical Focus</i>	<i>Dominant Religious Concepts</i>
GU-01	Opinion essay	The Conversation	2024	Mining policy after PP No. 25/2024	Maṣlaḥah, moderation (al-iqtiṣād), public welfare
GU-02		NU Lampung	2024	Religious justification of mining	Maṣlaḥah, public responsibility
GU-03	Social media post	X, Facebook, YouTube	2025	Public debate on mining	Maṣlaḥah, mafsadah, governance
GU-04	Public discussion	YouTube	2025	Energy transition and mining	Public necessity, collective welfare
AS-05	Opinion article	Media Indonesia	2024	Mining governance and democracy	Justice, equality
AS-06		CiOS Gontor	2024	Post-secular democracy	Justice, public accountability
AS-07		NU Online	2024	Religion and social transformation	Equality, public responsibility

¹⁸ M Khai Hanif, Yuli Edi, and Lukman Nul Hakim, “RECONSTRUCTING ‘NASIONALISME’ WITHIN QUR’ANIC EXEGESIS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF AHMAD HASSAN’S TAFSIR AL-FURQAN” *Ilmu Ushuluddin* 12, no. 2 (2025): 130–48.

¹⁹ Fairclough, “Critical Discourse Analysis.”

²⁰ Sanusi, “Maqasid Al-Shariah as an Evaluative Framework for the Digitalisation of Islamic Education:(Contemporary Hermeneutic Approach Study).”

AS-08	Public discussion	Facebook / YouTube	2024	Natural resource governance	Justice, distributive responsibility
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Table 1. Research Corpus and Analytical Focus

The corpus was selected through purposive sampling because the chosen texts represent the most significant public interventions made by both intellectuals during the mining controversy. Data adequacy was established through analytical saturation, as no substantially new patterns of religious reasoning emerged once the selected corpus had been fully examined. This process ensured that the dataset was sufficiently comprehensive to capture the main epistemological patterns of *ijtihād* and religious reasoning developed by both actors.²¹

The analysis was conducted in four stages. It began by examining how each intellectual problematized mining governance within the contemporary Indonesian context. The second stage explored how Islamic normative concepts—particularly *ijtihād*, *maṣlaḥah*, justice, and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*—were interpreted in responding to these issues. The third stage investigated how different priorities within *maqāṣid* shaped distinct forms of religious reasoning. Finally, the findings were synthesized to formulate the concept of dual religious justification, which constitutes the article's principal theoretical contribution.

C. Result

1. *Maṣlaḥah*-Oriented Religious Justification

The first mode of religious reasoning identified in this study is characterized by a pragmatic interpretation of *maṣlaḥah* as the primary epistemological resource for approaching mining governance.²² Rather than asking whether mining is intrinsically permissible or prohibited, this mode begins by problematizing the socio-ecological realities generated by extractive industries. The central concern is how Islamic normative values should respond to the competing demands of public welfare, environmental sustainability, energy security, and economic development. Religious reasoning therefore unfolds as an interpretive process that relates Islamic ethical commitments to the complexity of contemporary public life rather than to predetermined legal categories.²³

This orientation is consistently reflected in the public interventions of Ulil Abshar Abdalla. Across his opinion essays, public statements, and social media discussions, Ulil reframes mining not as an issue requiring an immediate legal verdict but as a contemporary challenge that calls for contextual *ijtihād*. His reasoning does not begin with abstract legal

²¹ Sarah Elsie Baker, “How Many Qualitative Interviews Is Enough? Expert Voices and Early Career Reflections on Sampling and Cases in Qualitative Research,” 2018.

²² Yusuf Wibisono and Femmy Roeslan, “The Concept of Maqāṣid Al-Sharī ‘ah and Maṣlaḥah in the Classical and Contemporary Tafsīr,” *International Journal of Islamic Economics and Business Sustainability (IJIEBS)* 1, no. 2 (2025): 4.

²³ Ezieddin Elmahjub, “Islamic Jurisprudence as an Ethical Discourse: An Enquiry into the Nature of Moral Reasoning in Islamic Legal Theory,” *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 10, no. 1 (2021): 16–42.

formulations alone.²⁴ Instead, it starts with an assessment of empirical realities, including Indonesia's dependence on energy resources, the continuing demand for electricity, and broader considerations of public necessity. These conditions do not displace scriptural authority; rather, they provide the context within which Islamic normative principles are interpreted. In this sense, *ijtihād* emerges as a process of mediation between revelation and social reality, allowing ethical judgement to develop through engagement with changing circumstances rather than through the mechanical application of established legal rules.²⁵

Within this interpretive process, *maṣlahah* functions not as a retrospective justification for mining but as the horizon through which contemporary realities are evaluated before ethical judgement is reached. Ulil's repeated references to public necessity, institutional responsibility, and national energy needs suggest that mining is first examined in terms of its contribution to collective welfare. At the same time, his engagement with *maṣṣadah* does not seek to classify mining as inherently harmful or beneficial. Instead, it reflects an effort to weigh competing forms of benefit and harm in light of their wider social consequences. The emphasis consequently shifts from assigning a fixed legal status to identifying the course of action that most effectively advances public welfare while minimizing collective harm.²⁶

This pattern of reasoning also illustrates how *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* operates within Ulil's *ijtihād*. Rather than functioning as a source of predetermined legal conclusions, *maqāṣid* provides the normative horizon that orients ethical judgement in the face of changing social realities. Public welfare, responsibility, moderation (*al-iqtiṣād*), and the prevention of greater harm are treated as interconnected ethical considerations through which mining governance is evaluated. Within this framework, *maqāṣid* does not eliminate moral tension; instead, it offers an interpretive basis for negotiating competing interests while remaining attentive to the broader objectives of the *sharī'ah*. The recurring appeal to *al-iqtiṣād* is therefore significant not merely as an ethical exhortation but as an interpretive principle that resists rigid polarization between unconditional acceptance and absolute rejection.²⁷

The result of this epistemological process is a pragmatic form of religious justification. Its pragmatism should not be understood simply as policy accommodation or political compromise. Rather, it reflects a particular mode of *ijtihād* in which Islamic normative values are interpreted through the concrete conditions of contemporary society. Ethical judgement emerges from a continuous dialogue between empirical realities and the objectives of the *sharī'ah*, making the legitimacy of mining contingent upon its capacity to promote public welfare, reduce collective harm, and remain consistent with the ethical purposes embodied in *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Pragmatic religious reasoning thus represents

²⁴ Ulil A. Abdallah, "No Title," n.d. <https://nu.or.id/nasional/ketua-pbnu-kritik-soal-konsesi-tambang-adalah-sesuatu-yang-baik-m3E9L>

²⁵ Holis Holis et al., "Bridging Istinbāṭi and Taṭbīqī: An Integrative Ijtihād Model for Halal Fatwa Governance and Regulatory Compliance," *Nusantara: Journal of Law Studies* 5, no. 1 (2026): 691–727.

²⁶ Ulil A. Abdallah, "No Title." <https://www.kompas.id/artikel/isu-tambang-antara-ideologi-dan-fikih>.

²⁷ Kamali, M. H. *Maqasid al-Sharī'ah, ijtiḥād and civilisational renewal*, International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). (Vol. 20). (2012).

the epistemological outcome of a contextual process of interpretation rather than a departure from Islamic normative tradition.²⁸

2. Justice-Oriented Religious Justification: Justice as an Epistemological Resource

The second mode of religious reasoning identified in this study is characterized by a critical-distributive interpretation of justice as the primary epistemological resource for evaluating mining governance. Unlike the pragmatic mode discussed in the previous section, this orientation does not begin with the question of whether mining is religiously permissible or impermissible. Instead, it problematizes the structural inequalities embedded in extractive development, particularly the unequal distribution of economic benefits, political authority, and ecological risks.²⁹ From this perspective, the central issue is not the legal status of mining itself but whether existing systems of natural resource governance remain faithful to the ethical objectives of Islam. Religious reasoning therefore unfolds through a process of interpretation in which contemporary socio-political realities become the starting point for ethical reflection rather than the mere application of predetermined legal categories.³⁰

This orientation is consistently reflected in Ahmad Suaedy's public interventions. Across his opinion essays, public statements, and digital discussions, Suaedy approaches mining not simply as a matter of resource extraction but as a manifestation of structural injustice within Indonesia's political economy. His reasoning begins with empirical realities rather than abstract legal formulations. Unequal access to natural resources, asymmetrical distribution of economic benefits, environmental degradation, and the disproportionate burdens experienced by local communities become the point of departure for his religious reflection. These realities do not replace revelation as the source of religious authority; instead, they shape the context through which revelation is understood. In this respect, *ijtihad* operates as a dynamic process that reconnects Islamic normative principles with lived social realities. Rather than moving deductively from established legal conclusions to contemporary issues, Suaedy's reasoning proceeds in the opposite direction, moving from concrete experience toward ethical interpretation. Through this process, Islamic normative commitments are continuously rearticulated in response to structural injustice.³¹

Within this process, justice functions not merely as an ethical aspiration but as the interpretive horizon through which empirical realities acquire moral significance. Suaedy consistently asks who controls natural resources, who benefits from extractive development, who bears its ecological costs, and whether public institutions fulfil their responsibility to ensure a fair distribution of benefits and burdens. These questions are not

²⁸ Ulil A. Abdilah, <https://theconversation.com/ulil-abshar-dan-wahabi-lingkungan-rasionalisasi-atau-pembenaran-tambang-259000>.

²⁹ Ahmad Sueady, <https://epaper.mediaindonesia.com/detail/demokrasi-post-secular-dan-agenda-kesetaraan-kasus-tambang-untuk-ormas-keagamaan>, 07 Juni 2024.

³⁰ Paul Billingham, Religious Political Arguments, Accessibility, and Democratic Deliberation, *Notre Dame Law Review*. Volume 98-isu 4 (2023). 1596-1622

³¹ Masruha, Masruha, Sofyan Munawar, Fadhli Zulmi, Asnawi Abdullah, and Husaini Husaini. "Digitization of Fatwas and Religious Authority: A Study on the Role of Social Media in the Interpretation of Islamic Law." *Journal of Mujaddid Nusantara* 2, no. 2 (2025): 99–113.

secondary moral reflections but constitute the analytical lens through which mining governance is first understood. Justice therefore becomes the epistemological basis upon which ethical judgement is constructed. The discussion consequently shifts away from determining the formal permissibility of mining toward examining whether existing governance arrangements fulfil the ethical demands of fairness, equality, inclusion, and collective responsibility.³²

This sequence of reasoning also demonstrates how *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* functions within Suaedy's *ijtihād*. Rather than providing predetermined legal conclusions, *maqāṣid* offers the normative architecture that brings justice, equality, accountability, and public responsibility into a coherent framework of interpretation. Through this framework, empirical observations concerning unequal resource distribution are translated into questions of Islamic moral responsibility. *Maqāṣid* therefore guides the movement from social reality to ethical evaluation, allowing structural inequality to be understood not merely as an economic or political concern but as a challenge to realizing the higher objectives of the *sharī'ah*. In this way, *ijtihād* becomes an ongoing process of reinterpreting Islamic normative principles in response to changing socio-political realities.³³

The outcome of this mode of reasoning is a critical-distributive form of religious justification. Its critical character does not arise from opposition to mining as such, nor from a principled rejection of state policy. Rather, it is the epistemological consequence of a particular process of *ijtihād* that begins with structural inequality, interprets those conditions through the horizon of justice, and evaluates them within the normative framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Ethical judgement is therefore shaped by the extent to which mining governance promotes distributive justice, protects vulnerable communities, and fulfils broader obligations of public responsibility. Critical-distributive religious reasoning thus represents not simply a moral critique of extractive development but a distinctive way of interpreting Islamic normative values through the lived realities of social inequality and ecological injustice.³⁴

D. Discussion

1. Competing Religious Reasoning: Negotiating *Maqāṣid* in Mining Governance

The preceding analyses suggest that contemporary religious reasoning on mining governance does not emerge through a single interpretive pathway. Although Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Ahmad Suaedy draw upon the same Islamic normative tradition and invoke a common repertoire of concepts—including *ijtihād*, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *maṣlaḥah*, justice, and public responsibility—they ultimately develop different forms of religious reasoning. This divergence does not stem from competing understandings of Islam, nor from opposing positions on the legitimacy of mining itself. Rather, it reflects different ways in

³² Ahmad Sueady, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2jAe6GU4is> menit 50-56

³³ Nasrullah, Nasrullah, et al. "Reconstructing Mining Governance through Maqasid al-Sharia: Towards Natural Resource Management Public Welfare Oriented." SYARIAH: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pemikiran 25.1 (2025): 97-112.

which the process of *ijtihad* relates empirical reality to Islamic normative concepts and ultimately shapes ethical judgement.³⁵

The findings indicate that religious reasoning is produced through a shared epistemological mechanism rather than through the direct application of religious doctrine.³⁶ The process begins with the problematization of a particular social reality, continues through the interpretation of empirical conditions in light of Islamic ethical concepts, and proceeds by prioritizing certain objectives of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* before arriving at an ethical judgement concerning mining governance. Religious reasoning is therefore best understood as an interpretive process in which revelation, empirical realities, and normative priorities continuously inform one another.³⁷

Within this common mechanism, different forms of religious reasoning emerge because *ijtihad* begins from different readings of reality. When mining is approached primarily as a matter of public necessity, energy security, and institutional responsibility, *maṣlaḥah* becomes the principal interpretive horizon through which the objectives of the *sharī'ah* are understood. Ethical judgement is consequently directed toward realizing collective welfare while minimizing potential harm. By contrast, when mining is approached primarily through the realities of structural inequality, ecological vulnerability, and unequal access to natural resources, justice becomes the dominant interpretive horizon. In this sequence, *maqāṣid* is interpreted through the ethical demands of distributive justice, accountability, and equitable governance. The resulting form of religious reasoning therefore focuses not on rejecting mining as such, but on defining the ethical conditions under which mining governance can be regarded as consistent with the objectives of the *sharī'ah*.³⁸

These findings suggest that the diversity of religious reasoning originates not from different scriptural foundations or competing religious authorities, but from different epistemological priorities operating within the same tradition of *ijtihad*. The same Islamic concepts perform different interpretive functions because they are organized around different ethical priorities throughout the reasoning process. In this sense, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* does not function as a fixed doctrinal formula leading to a single normative conclusion. Instead, it serves as an epistemological resource through which Muslim

³⁵ Andrew Williams, "Postsecular Geographies: Theo-ethics, Rapprochement and Neoliberal Governance in a Faith-based Drug Programme," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 40, no. 2 (2015): 192–208; Maher, Valenzuela, and Böhm, "The Enduring State: An Analysis of Governance-Making in Three Mining Conflicts."

³⁶ Bell, Russell. "The Specificity Problem: Why Reformed Epistemology Cannot Justify Particular Religious Tradition. Available at SSRN 5727565, 2025.

³⁷ Alexandre Caeiro, "Facts, Values, and Institutions: Notes on Contemporary Islamic Legal Debate," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 34, no. 2 (2017): 42–74; Abdul Sattar et al., "Event Contextualization in Hadith Interpretation: A Framework for Reassessing Problematic Hadith Narratives," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 27, no. 1 (2026): 127–54.

³⁸ Kamali, Mohammad Hashim. *Maqasid Al-Shari'ah, Ijtihad and Civilisational Renewal*. Vol. 20. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 2012.

intellectuals negotiate the relationship between revelation, empirical reality, and ethical responsibility.³⁹

From this perspective, competing religious reasoning is best understood as a negotiation over the interpretation and prioritization of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, rather than as a disagreement over whether mining is religiously legitimate. The central issue concerns how the objectives of the *sharīʿah* should be ordered when Muslims respond to complex socio-ecological realities. Religious reasoning thus emerges as the epistemological outcome of *ijtihād*, while its plurality reflects the diversity of interpretive pathways through which Islamic normative principles are translated into ethical judgements concerning mining governance.

2. Theorizing Dual Religious Justification

The preceding discussion points to a broader theoretical implication that reaches beyond the Indonesian mining debate. Rather than simply identifying two different positions on mining governance, this study demonstrates how religious reasoning is produced within the epistemological dynamics of the Islamic interpretive tradition. The diversity observed in the two modes of reasoning is not rooted in competing religious doctrines or conflicting theological commitments. Instead, it arises from different interpretive processes through which Muslim intellectuals relate revelation to changing social realities. From this perspective, religious reasoning is better understood not as the direct application of doctrine, but as the outcome of an ongoing process of *ijtihād* in which Islamic normative principles are continuously interpreted in light of empirical conditions.⁴⁰

Viewed in this way, the diversity of religious reasoning reflects differences in epistemological orientation rather than differences in religion itself. Although Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Ahmad Suaedy draw upon the same Islamic normative vocabulary, they assign different priorities to the objectives of the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*. Those different priorities shape the trajectory of *ijtihād* and ultimately lead to different forms of ethical judgement. The plurality of religious reasoning, therefore, should be understood as the consequence of multiple epistemological pathways operating within a shared Islamic interpretive tradition, rather than as evidence of competing religious authorities or incompatible scriptural foundations.⁴¹

This perspective also invites a broader understanding of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*. Within the framework developed in this study, *maqāṣid* functions not merely as a doctrine concerning the objectives of Islamic law or as a methodological tool for legal derivation. More fundamentally, it serves as an epistemological resource that organizes the interpretive

³⁹ Jasser Auda, *Re-Envisioning Islamic Scholarship: Maqasid Methodology as a New Approach* (Claritas Books, 2022); Mohamed Fouz Mohamed Zacky and Md Moniruzzaman, "Islamic Epistemology in a Modern Context: Anatomy of an Evolving Debate," *Social Epistemology* 38, no. 4 (2024): 511–25; Ali Farsimadan, Seyed Ali Ahrari, and Seyyed Ali Bathai, "Genealogy of an Intellectual Duality: A Comparative Examination of the Characteristics of Traditional Islam and Religious Intellectualism," *Classical and Contemporary Islamic Studies* 8, no. 2 (2026): 297–313.

⁴⁰ March, Andrew F. "Rethinking Religious Reasons in Public Justification." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3 (2013): 523–39.

⁴¹ Grube, Dirk-Martin. "Justified Religious Difference: A Constructive Approach to Religious Diversity." In *Philosophical Perspectives on Religious Diversity*, 47–55. Routledge, 2018.

process itself. Through *maqāṣid*, Muslim intellectuals identify ethical priorities, interpret empirical realities, and formulate religious reasoning in response to complex public issues. Conceiving *maqāṣid* in this way extends its role beyond legal methodology and highlights its significance as a framework for understanding how Islamic ethical knowledge is produced in contemporary contexts.⁴²

These three theoretical implications provide the foundation for what this study conceptualizes as dual religious justification. The concept explains how two distinct forms of religious justification may legitimately emerge from the same Islamic normative tradition because they are generated through different epistemological pathways of *ijtihād*. One pathway gives priority to *maṣlaḥah* as the principal interpretive horizon, producing *maṣlaḥah*-oriented religious justification. The other gives priority to justice, resulting in justice-oriented religious justification. The distinction, therefore, does not lie in whether mining is accepted or rejected, nor in different understandings of Islam itself. Rather, it lies in the different ways the objectives of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* are prioritized throughout the interpretive process. Dual religious justification thus captures the epistemological plurality of contemporary Islamic reasoning: a plurality grounded not in multiple revelations, but in multiple interpretive pathways through which shared Islamic normative principles are translated into ethical judgement.⁴³

Accordingly, the principal contribution of this study lies in repositioning religious reasoning as an epistemological process and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as the interpretive resource through which that process is organized. The findings suggest that the diversity of Islamic ethical reasoning is better understood through the epistemology of interpretation than through binary distinctions such as legitimacy versus resistance or orthodoxy versus heterodoxy. From this perspective, the Indonesian mining debate reflects a broader transformation in contemporary Islamic thought, where *ijtihād* serves as the epistemological mechanism that enables a shared Islamic normative tradition to generate multiple, yet internally coherent, forms of religious reasoning by assigning different priorities to the objectives of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

E. Conclusion

The analysis undertaken in this study demonstrates that contemporary religious reasoning on mining governance in Indonesia is more appropriately understood as an epistemological process than as the direct application of Islamic doctrine to public affairs. Examining the arguments of Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Ahmad Suaedy reveals that both intellectuals draw upon the same Islamic normative tradition while arriving at different forms of religious reasoning. These differences do not arise from competing interpretations of Islam or opposing attitudes toward mining itself. Rather, they emerge from different processes of *ijtihād* through which empirical realities are interpreted, ethical priorities are established, and the objectives of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* are translated into religious

⁴² Ramdhani, M Tri, Akh Fauzi Aseri, Karimuddin Abdullah Lawang, and Muhammad Fahmi Al Amruzi. "Law Politics Of People's Mining Based On Maqashid Syariah's Welfare And Social Justice Viewpoint." *Russian Law Journal* 11, no. 3S (2023): 269–79.

⁴³ Bardon, Aurélia. "Two Misunderstandings about Public Justification and Religious Reasons." *Law and Philosophy* 37, no. 6 (2018): 639–69.

judgement. Religious reasoning, therefore, is best understood as an interpretive practice that continuously mediates between revelation, social realities, and ethical responsibility.

From this perspective, the principal contribution of the study lies in theorizing dual religious justification. The concept explains how different forms of religious justification may legitimately emerge within the same Islamic interpretive tradition because they originate from different epistemological pathways of *ijtihād*. One pathway prioritizes *maṣlaḥah*, giving rise to *maṣlaḥah*-oriented religious justification, while the other gives priority to justice, producing justice-oriented religious justification. The distinction between these two forms of reasoning does not rest on different religious commitments or conflicting views of mining. Instead, it reflects different ways of prioritizing the objectives of the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* when interpreting the same empirical reality.

This perspective also repositions *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* beyond its conventional understanding as the objectives of Islamic law. The findings suggest that *maqāṣid* should also be understood as an epistemological resource that structures the interpretive process through which Islamic ethical knowledge is produced. Viewed in this way, the plurality of religious reasoning is not a sign of doctrinal inconsistency but an expression of interpretive plurality within a shared Islamic normative tradition.

More broadly, this study suggests that differences in Islamic ethical reasoning are better understood through the epistemology of interpretation than through binary distinctions such as legitimacy versus resistance or orthodoxy versus heterodoxy. The Indonesian mining debate illustrates a wider transformation in contemporary Islamic thought, where *ijtihād* operates as the epistemological process through which shared Islamic normative principles are interpreted in different ways, giving rise to multiple yet internally coherent forms of religious reasoning. Rather than producing a single ethical conclusion, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* provides an interpretive framework within which different epistemological priorities shape religious judgement on the same public issue. Future research could extend this analytical framework to other contemporary issues—including climate change, bioethics, digital technology, and Islamic economic governance—to examine how different epistemological priorities within *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* continue to influence Islamic ethical reasoning across diverse contexts in contemporary Muslim societies.

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