

## Istiqlal Mosque: Bridging Tradition, Modernity, and Muslim Societies

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**Abstract:** This study examines the integration of tradition and modernity in Muslim societies through the lens of the Istiqlal Mosque, the largest mosque in Indonesia, located in Jakarta. As a symbol of national pride, Islamic identity, and communal unity, the mosque represents a unique blend of architectural heritage, contemporary design principles, and the social dynamics of Muslim communities. The research employs qualitative methods, analyzing the mosque's architectural elements, design philosophy, and functional aspects to investigate how traditional Islamic values harmoniously coexist with modern technological advancements. Through a comprehensive review of design documents and site observations, the study highlights the mosque's role as a reflection of Indonesia's diverse cultural and religious landscape and a space that nurtures the collective identity and practices of Muslim communities. The findings reveal that the Istiqlal Mosque is a model for merging historical traditions with modern innovations and societal needs.

**Keyword:** Istiqlal mosque; tradition and modernity; identity; societies

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini mengkaji integrasi antara tradisi dan modernitas dalam masyarakat Muslim melalui perspektif Masjid Istiqlal, masjid terbesar di Indonesia yang terletak di Jakarta. Sebagai simbol kebanggaan nasional, identitas Islam, dan persatuan, masjid ini merepresentasikan perpaduan unik antara warisan arsitektur, prinsip desain kontemporer, dan dinamika sosial masyarakat Muslim. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan menganalisis elemen arsitektur, filosofi desain, dan aspek fungsional masjid untuk menyelidiki bagaimana nilai-nilai Islam tradisional dapat berpadu secara harmonis dengan kemajuan teknologi modern. Melalui tinjauan mendalam terhadap dokumen desain dan observasi langsung di lokasi, penelitian ini menyoroti peran Masjid Istiqlal sebagai cerminan keberagaman budaya dan lanskap religius Indonesia, serta sebagai ruang yang mendukung identitas kolektif dan praktik keagamaan masyarakat Muslim. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Masjid Istiqlal berfungsi sebagai model untuk mengintegrasikan tradisi historis dengan inovasi modern serta kepentingan sosial.

**Kata kunci:** masjid Istiqlal; tradisi dan modernitas; identitas; sosial

### A. Introduction

Throughout its history, the mosque has been an essential component in cultivating the values of its congregation. It is a location where the expression of faith via worship rituals takes place. In addition to its original function of encouraging devotion, it has developed

into a center for various activities associated with the community. This development has positioned the mosque not only as a place of worship but also as an educational institution, a hub for social interaction, and a vital contributor to preserving cultural traditions.<sup>1</sup> The mosque plays a significant role in forming the ethical and social fabric of its community, fostering a sense of connection and pride in its members through the preservation of cultural traditions.

Jakarta's Istiqlal Mosque exemplifies the seamless fusion of tradition and modernity, reflecting Indonesia's rich cultural tapestry. It is the largest mosque in Southeast Asia, and as such, it serves as a symbol of national pride and religious veneration.<sup>2</sup> The grandeur of its architecture is a combination of Islamic design and Indonesian cultural themes, resulting in a space that appreciates ancient heritage while embracing contemporary aesthetics. The modern facilities at Istiqlal support various activities, from religious lessons to social gatherings. These facilities exemplify the dynamic interplay that exists between the preservation of traditional values and the fulfillment of current requirements.

The Istiqlal Mosque exemplifies a significant trend in urban religious settings: integrating tradition with modernity. By incorporating advanced technology and contemporary practices within its traditional framework, the mosque plays a crucial role in meeting the evolving needs of the community it serves. The rise of digital platforms and modern conveniences enhances educational outreach and promotes community engagement, making the mosque more accessible and relevant to today's audience. As a result, the worship experience at Istiqlal becomes more meaningful due to this harmonious blend of tradition and innovation. Additionally, it strengthens the mosque's vital center of spiritual and communal life in Indonesia.<sup>3</sup>

Indonesia's historical and cultural landmarks eloquently depict the complexity of national identity through the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta. The mosque is located in Jakarta. Despite its construction during President Sukarno's reign, the mosque is a testament to the nation's freedom and unity. Indonesia's struggle for sovereignty led to its construction. The architectural design of the Istiqlal Mosque deliberately combines modernist features with traditional Indonesian motifs. In addition to effectively communicating a nation's identity through its architectural structures, which carry essential cultural and historical implications, this fusion of styles embodies Indonesia's ideal of harmoniously bringing together progress and cultural legacy.<sup>4</sup>

The Istiqlal mosque, originally conceived as a place of worship, has evolved into a potent symbol of Indonesia's diverse yet unified identity. During the critical phase of nation-building, the political regime strategically aimed to encapsulate and project a cohesive

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<sup>1</sup> Rahmatunnisa Nur Salikha, Djoko Sihono Gabriel, and Rahmat Nurcahyo, 'Utilization Scheme of Ablution Water as an Alternative Water Resource: A Case Study of Istiqlal Mosque, Jakarta', *Journal of Advanced Research in Dynamical and Control Systems*, 12.3 Special Issue (2020), doi:10.5373/JARDCS/V12SP3/20201341.

<sup>2</sup> Arman Sarram and others, 'Mosque in Compact Cities: Impact of Urbanization on Planning and Design of Contemporary Mosques in Nusantara', *Article in International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 8.1 (2019).

<sup>3</sup> Imran bin Tajudeen, 'Mosques and Minaretes: Transregional Connections in Eighteenth-Century Southeast Asia', *Journal* 18, 4, 2017, doi:10.30610/4.2017.4.

<sup>4</sup> Fahrur Fauzi, Misnal Munir, and Rizal Mustansyir, 'Symbolism in the Aesthetics Architectural of Plosokuning Mosque Yogyakarta', *Research, Society and Development*, 9.11 (2020), doi:10.33448/rsd-v9i11.10058.

national identity.<sup>5</sup> The construction of this grand structure, a testament to the regime's foresight, was a deliberate and strategic move in this direction. The mosque's grandeur and unique design elements reflect the diverse Indonesian cultural traditions it represents, symbolizing the country's extensive diversity. The mosque, in its essence, embodies Indonesia's motto, 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' (Unity in Diversity), harmonizing multiple artistic elements into a single, monumental structure.<sup>6</sup> This strategic use of architecture underscores the role of political regimes in constructing and articulating an all-encompassing national identity that is representative of all its citizens.<sup>7</sup>

Understanding the Istiqlal Mosque within this more comprehensive framework underscores the importance of adopting a multifaceted approach when researching national identity. This approach, which considers historical, cultural, political, and social elements, highlights the complexity of the concept. The Istiqlal Mosque, as a manifestation of this complexity, demonstrates how architecture can serve as a vehicle for expressing and strengthening a nation's beliefs and values. It underlines that to comprehend the essence of a nation's identity truly, one must consider the complicated interaction of numerous characteristics, each of which contributes to the overarching story that characterizes a country.<sup>8</sup> The mosque is a testament to the successful integration of these aspects, and it embodies Indonesia's journey and vision as a nation.

The distinctive architectural design of the Istiqlal Mosque is what makes it stand out from other mosques. It seamlessly combines contemporary features with classic Islamic symbols, as noted by Rahil.<sup>9</sup> This blend reflects a purposeful attempt to bridge the gap between the past and the present, creating a space that is both culturally meaningful and relevant to the architectural landscape of today. It not only honors Islam's architectural history but also embraces ongoing architectural innovations.

The design of the Istiqlal Mosque is not just aesthetically pleasing but also a symbol of the continuous development of Islamic architecture. The mosque, by integrating present-day needs with traditional architectural features, plays a crucial role in preserving the essential features of Islamic architectural traditions.<sup>10</sup> This approach showcases a progressive perspective that values historical continuity and modern functionality. The mosque's design is a testament to how architectural techniques can evolve while maintaining reverence for their cultural origins, evoking a sense of respect and appreciation.

The Istiqlal Mosque, a critical cultural and religious center, is not merely a place of worship but an emblem of historical continuity and contemporary adaptation. It stands out with its unique architectural design that integrates elements from Indonesia's rich Islamic

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<sup>5</sup> Bagoes Wiryomartono, 'Tradition and Intervention in Indonesian Mosque Architecture: Islam, Colonialism, and Local Culture', in *Historical Mosques in Indonesia and the Malay World*, 2023, doi:10.1007/978-981-99-3806-3\_3.

<sup>6</sup> Prili Diana Rosa and Gagih Pradini, 'Persepsi Wisatawan Terhadap Fasilitas Wisata Religi Masjid Istiqlal Di Jakarta', *Media Bina Ilmiah*, 17.6 (2023).

<sup>7</sup> Achmad Fawaid, Zamroni, and Hasan Baharun, 'Contesting Sacred Architecture: Politics of "nation-State" in the Battles of Mosques in Java', *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 7.1 (2019), doi:10.21043/qijis.v7i1.4365.

<sup>8</sup> Hanni Adriani and others, 'The Mosque as a Hybrid Space: A Place for Worship and Tourism', *KnE Social Sciences*, 2022, doi:10.18502/kss.v7i8.10772.

<sup>9</sup> Rahil Muhammad Hasbi and Wibisono Bagus Nimpuno, 'Pengaruh Arsitektur Modern Pada Desain Masjid Istiqlal', *Vitruvian*, 8.2 (2019), doi:10.22441/vitruvian.2018.v8i2.005.

<sup>10</sup> Bülent Batuman, 'Architectural Mimicry and the Politics of Mosque Building: Negotiating Islam and Nation in Turkey', *Journal of Architecture*, 21.3 (2016), doi:10.1080/13602365.2016.1179660.

heritage with modern influences. This fusion, which is a result of a dynamic interplay between the preservation of traditional values and the embrace of modernity, creates a historical and contemporary space. The mosque's magnificent structure is a testament to Islamic culture's enduring legacy and evolving identity, as it combines traditional Islamic motifs with contemporary architectural techniques.

Moreover, the Istiqlal Mosque is a vital community center that fosters spiritual development and social unity. Its significance extends beyond its architectural splendor, as it hosts a wide range of religious, educational, and cultural activities. This inclusivity bridges the gap between the past and present, ensuring a sense of continuity and belonging among its congregants. The mosque's ability to preserve tradition while adapting to contemporary needs makes it a vibrant and essential part of urban life in Jakarta. It is a dynamic institution that mirrors the ongoing dialogue between tradition and modernity in the Islamic world, serving as a monument of religious significance.

By skillfully blending modern design components with traditional Islamic architectural themes, Jakarta's Istiqlal Mosque stands as a potent emblem of Indonesia's national identity. This fusion transforms the mosque into a living, breathing entity that embodies the nation's cultural legacy and the spirit of modern progress, enabling it to thrive in the contemporary city. The mosque is more than just a house of worship; it is also a center for social, cultural, and educational events that unite its members and help them feel connected. The mosque's varied nature exemplifies its role in embracing modernity and cultural traditions, reflecting Indonesia's motto of "Unity in Diversity."

The Istiqlal Mosque, a shining example of the balance between tradition and modernity in Indonesia's urban life, symbolizes the nation's identity and holds significant architectural, religious, and socio-cultural value. This research explores how Istiqlal integrates contemporary innovations, particularly technology and digital platforms, to enhance educational outreach and community engagement. A central focus is its architectural impact on national identity perceptions. The mosque, not just a building but a sacred worship site, also serves as a repository of cultural narratives, providing insights from analyzing its design and stakeholder feedback. The study employs qualitative methods, including fieldwork, interviews, and content analysis, to gather perspectives from visitors, administrators, urban planners, and Islamic scholars. It also includes discussions with Islamic scholars on the theological implications of technology in religious settings, aiming to understand how Istiqlal harmonizes tradition and modernity while remaining a significant cultural anchor in Indonesia's urban landscape.

## **B. Blending Tradition and Modernity in Muslim Societies**

The Istiqlal Mosque, the largest mosque in Indonesia, is a grand symbol of the country's cultural and religious amalgamation. Constructed in 1978 and located in Jakarta, the mosque serves as a religious site and a symbol of Indonesian autonomy and Islamic heritage.<sup>11</sup> The design of the building showcases a deep fusion of traditional Islamic architectural components with contemporary design principles, resulting in a distinctive architectural balance. This study explores the complex details of the architecture of the

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<sup>11</sup> M. M. Pujalte and N. Navarra, 'Places of Faith: A Reflection on Landscape of Manila Cathedral Plaza de Roma and Istiqlal Mosque Sacred Grounds of Jakarta', in *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 2017, xci, doi:10.1088/1755-1315/91/1/012027.

Istiqlal Mosque, emphasizing the preservation and expression of traditional values through modern innovations.

The grand dome of the Istiqlal Mosque stands out as a prominent element of Islamic design, symbolizing the celestial vault. Twelve circular columns uphold the 45-meter-diameter dome, symbolizing the twelve months of the Islamic calendar. The choice of this structure is not solely for visual appeal but carries significant symbolism by connecting the mosque's architectural design with Islamic cosmology principles.<sup>12</sup> Contemporary engineering techniques ensured the dome's structural integrity and impressive visual presence during construction. This combination highlights the mosque's architectural coherence.

The mosque's minaret, standing at a height of 96.66 meters, exemplifies the integration. Historically, minarets have served as the focal point for proclaiming the call to prayer. The Istiqlal Mosque's minaret design combines contemporary aesthetics with its original purpose, preserving its historic function. The minaret's height symbolizes Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945, bridging national pride with religious devotion. Advanced building materials and techniques reflect the mosque's function in the modern urban environment, combining traditional symbolism with contemporary aesthetics.

The interior parts of the Istiqlal Mosque exemplify the seamless blending of different components. The architectural design of the prayer hall, with its enormous and open area, reflects the Islamic principle of unity in worship, seating up to 200,000 attendees.<sup>13</sup> The utilization of contemporary materials, such as stainless steel and reinforced concrete, enables the creation of a commodious and unimpeded interior, thus augmenting the spiritual encounter. Elaborate geometric designs and calligraphic inscriptions decorate the walls and ceilings, showcasing traditional Islamic creativity. These design decisions not only improve the visual attractiveness of the mosque but also establish a practical and emotionally inspiring space.

The Istiqlal Mosque is a testament to architectural harmony, blending traditional Islamic ideals with contemporary design concepts. The mosque's grand dome, tall minaret, and spacious prayer space showcase a unique fusion of historical customs and modern advancements. This synthesis enriches Jakarta's architectural environment and provides valuable insights into the broader implications for mosque architecture and urban development in Indonesia.<sup>14</sup>

The Istiqlal Mosque's role in preserving cultural heritage in a modern setting by combining traditional components with contemporary approaches is a source of pride. This architectural masterpiece not only preserves the past but also inspires future initiatives in the field, fostering a deep appreciation for its historical significance.

The Istiqlal Mosque, the largest mosque in Indonesia, is not just a place of worship but a beacon of architectural influence. Its design, a blend of classic Islamic architectural forms and contemporary elements, highlights the profound influence of religious ideas and

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<sup>12</sup> Vitara Ridesta and others, 'Moderasi Beragama Berbasis Masjid: Analisis Konten Kanal Youtube-TV Masjid Istiqlal Jakarta', *Academic Journal of Islamic Principles and Philosophy*, 3.2 (2022), doi:10.22515/ajipp.v3i2.5556.

<sup>13</sup> Rosa and Pradini.

<sup>14</sup> Ojak Pasu P Simamora, Bedriati Ibrahim, and Bunari, 'Biografi Friedrich Silaban Perancang Arsitektur Masjid Istiqlal', *Jurnal Online Mahasiswa (JOM) Bidang Keguruan Dan Ilmu Pendidikan*, 5.2 (2018).



architectural theories on its design and function. The mosque's use of several architectural typologies is a testament to the integration of historical and regional styles in contemporary architectural approaches, making it a must-see for architecture enthusiasts and students alike.

Socio-cultural and geographical factors have traditionally classified mosques into many typologies. The prominent architectural styles include the Iranian or Central Asian style, known for its intricate tile work and large domes; the Anatolian or Turkish style, characterized by grand domes and slender minarets; the Indian or South Asian style, distinguished by elaborate decorations and expansive courtyards<sup>15</sup>; the Chinese or East Asian style, featuring distinct pagoda-like roofs; the Spanish or North African style, which incorporates elements such as horseshoe arches and intricate stucco work; and the Southeast Asian style, recognized for its more modest and functional designs. Each typology in question reflects their respective locations' cultural and theological contexts. However, the Istiqlal Mosque stands out as it does not adhere to a singular style but incorporates aspects from other traditions.

The Istiqlal Mosque's design features a substantial singular dome, a characteristic often linked to Anatolian mosque architecture.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, it includes a portico encircled by colonnades, evoking the architectural style of South Asian mosques. This combination results in a visually impressive and highly functional room that combines traditional shapes with contemporary needs. The expansive dome, characterized by its semi-spherical form, creates a magnificent and spacious arena for prayer. The adjacent colonnades and portico give supplementary space for congregation and communal activities, showcasing a harmonious integration of ancient influences adapted to modern requirements.<sup>17</sup>

Islamic theology views domes in mosque design as a tertiary feature. Mubah categorizes it as acceptable but not compulsory. Historically, mosques, especially those built during the Rashidun Caliphate, generally lacked domes.<sup>18</sup> Dome adoption grew widespread throughout the Ottoman Empire, influenced by Greco-Roman architectural traditions. The Istiqlal Mosque features two distinct domes: a prominent central dome that exhibits an Ottoman-influenced semi-spherical structure and a smaller dome that embodies the South Asian or Mughal architectural style, characterized by its nearly spherical shape.<sup>19</sup> The dual-domed design combines historical influences, blending traditional aesthetic principles with contemporary structural requirements.

The minaret of the Istiqlal Mosque is a prime example of the combination of classic and contemporary components. The Arabic word "nur," meaning "light," is the source of the term "minaret." Originally, minarets served the purpose of acting as beacons to provide guidance and illumination. Gradually, their function evolved to indicate the commencement of the call to prayer (adhan). The Istiqlal Mosque's minaret adheres to the Ottoman Empire's

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<sup>15</sup> Agus S Ekomadyo, 'Architectural Representation of Islamic Modernism in Indonesia Case Study: Architecture of Achmad Noeman', *Nakhara : Journal of Environmental Design and Planning*, 7 (2011).

<sup>16</sup> Eva Evita Chatharina Josephine, 'The Study of Geometric Forms, Proportion and Scale of Heritage Buildings Due to Architectural Theory', *IPTEK Journal of Proceedings Series*, 0.3 (2017), doi:10.12962/j23546026.y2017i3.2455.

<sup>17</sup> E. D. Zilivinskaya, 'Islam and Survivals of Pre-Islamic Beliefs in the Golden Horde on the Materials of Architectural Funeral Structures', *Zolotoordynskoe Obozrenie*, 11.4 (2023), doi:10.22378/2313-6197.2023-11-4.758-783.

<sup>18</sup> Hatem Ahmed, 'The Influence of Fatimid Architecture Heritage on Sustainable Design of Contemporary Architectural Facades', *International Design Journal*, 13.1 (2023), doi:10.21608/idj.2023.280085.

<sup>19</sup> Batuman.

architectural style, yet it has undergone a streamlined design to align with modern design preferences.<sup>20</sup> Initially, Southeast Asian mosques did not have minarets. However, they eventually incorporated them under the influence of the Ottomans, as seen by the Demak Mosque. The minaret's inclusion in the Istiqlal Mosque demonstrates a combination of reverence for traditional customs and a contemporary adaptation of their implementation.

The mosque's colonnades and portico set its design apart from traditional Southeast Asian Mosque typologies, which typically lack these characteristics. In Southeast Asian design, porticos are often disconnected from the main structure. However, the Istiqlal Mosque stands out by incorporating a unified portico (shuffah) and colonnades, improving both practicality and aesthetic harmony.<sup>21</sup> This design offers a flexible and adaptable area for big gatherings and special religious occasions. What's more, it respects ancient rituals, fostering a deep connection to its cultural significance while also meeting modern needs. Including these features demonstrates a deliberate method of merging ancient typologies with present-day requirements, presenting a blueprint for future mosque building.

Architectural design, especially in the context of Islamic mosques, involves differentiating between necessary and non-essential features based on their religious and symbolic importance. Tertiary elements, characterized by their non-essential and symbolic nature, lack significant relevance in Islamic theological beliefs. Islamic practice categorizes elements like the crescent and star symbols, domes, calligraphy, muqarnas (stalactite-like ornaments), and maqsurah (a screened space for the ruler) as *mubah*, meaning they are permissible but not required.<sup>22</sup> Their function in mosque buildings is primarily ornamental and symbolic rather than serving a practical or spiritually necessary purpose.

At first, the Istiqlal mosque had very few tertiary elements. The initial design showcased solely three prominent calligraphic inscriptions exhibiting the words "Allah," "Muhammad," and a phrase from the Quran (Surah Ta-Ha:14). These inscriptions, serving as a visual representation of Islamic beliefs, were a significant part of the mosque's design. Furthermore, they employed a recurring *brise soleil* as a barrier for the colonnaded space. However, after multiple modifications, a 2012 renovation featured floral and geometric carvings in the Middle Eastern style on the qibla wall.<sup>23</sup> Despite their addition, the sculptures did not play a prominent role in the mosque's design or appear in any other part of the mosque. The incorporation of domes and the general architectural design of the mosque, including its minaret and colonnaded portions, exhibit influences from regions beyond the Indonesian archipelago and East Asia, demonstrating a stronger affinity with Middle Eastern architectural traditions.

Religious obligations and recommendations in Islamic theology influence the design principles of the Istiqlal Mosque, including its alignment with the qibla, the shape of the minaret, and the layout of the colonnades. These elements are considered mandatory (*wajib*) or recommended (*sunnah*) based on religious teachings. Conversely, socio-cultural influences, rather than religious requirements, primarily shape the architectural structure of

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<sup>20</sup> Tammy Gaber, 'Recasting the Religious Architecture of Islam', *American Journal of Islam and Society*, 40.1–2 (2023), doi:10.35632/ajis.v40i1-2.3239.

<sup>21</sup> Hana Aljawder and Hala A. El-Wakeel, 'Architecture and Privacy in Islam: an Analytical Review', in *WIT Transactions on the Built Environment*, 2022, CCXI, doi:10.2495/IHA220101.

<sup>22</sup> 'Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture', *Choice Reviews Online*, 39.09 (2002), doi:10.5860/choice.39-4975.

<sup>23</sup> Mohamad Tajuddin, Mohamad Rasdi, and Nangkula Utaberta, 'Mosque Architecture in Malaysia: Classification of Styles and Possible Influence', *Journal of Southeast Asia*, 2007.

the dome, the arrangement of carvings on the qibla wall, and the use of calligraphy. Although still acceptable within Islamic theology as *mubah*, these aspects primarily demonstrate a stronger cultural and historical connection, a testament to the mosque's rich heritage, rather than a theological obligation. Therefore, while religious principles influence the mosque's main architectural characteristics, the secondary aspects reflect a blend of cultural influences and artistic tastes.

### **C. Symbol of Unity: Istiqlal Mosque and Indonesia's Diversity**

The Istiqlal Mosque, located prominently in downtown Jakarta, is more than a religious structure; it symbolizes the essence of harmony and variety that defines Indonesia. It is the most expansive mosque in Southeast Asia and a prominent representation of Indonesia's commitment to embracing cultural and religious diversity<sup>24</sup>. The mosque's design embodies the nation's fundamental values, establishing a physical and spiritual connection between traditional and contemporary elements.

President Sukarno initiated the mosque's construction in the early 1960s, symbolizing Indonesia's post-colonial identity and its desire for national unity. The mosque's name, "Istiqlal," which translates as "independence" in Arabic, highlights its significance in representing Indonesia's autonomous position and its commitment to fostering a unified national identity.<sup>25</sup> The founding of this institution was a significant turning point in Indonesia's history, symbolizing a shared desire to reconcile and integrate various cultural and religious influences within the nation.

The Istiqlal Mosque combines traditional Islamic aesthetics with contemporary design concepts in its architecture. Traditional Islamic design inspires the mosque's enormous dome and spacious prayer hall, which are constructed using modern materials and methods. This combination symbolizes Indonesia's endeavor to pay tribute to its Islamic legacy while embracing contemporary advancements, mirroring the country's intricate socio-cultural environment.

An essential characteristic of the mosque is its embrace of diversity and inclusiveness. The Istiqlal Mosque serves as a deliberate representation of the all-encompassing essence of Islam in Indonesia. The mosque's substantial capacity highlights the significance of collective worship and represents an inclusive environment for Muslims from all origins, further emphasizing the mosque's position as a cohesive influence in a multicultural community.<sup>26</sup>

The mosque's placement next to Jakarta's Cathedral reinforces the concept of togetherness. The strategic positioning of the monument represents the unity between Indonesia's predominantly Muslim population and its Christian minority, emphasizing the country's dedication to fostering interreligious dialogue and peaceful coexistence.<sup>27</sup> The proximity of these two places of worship is a compelling testament to religious tolerance and mutual respect.

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<sup>24</sup> Merve Artkan, 'The Use of Ottoman Architecture and Islamic Heritage as A Consumption Object in Contemporary Practices', *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 6.4 (2021), doi:10.18860/jia.v6i4.11811.

<sup>25</sup> Simamora, Ibrahim, and Bunari.

<sup>26</sup> Abdul Rosyid Teguhdin Hamid, 'Studi Kasus Model Pendidikan Masjid Integratif Di Masjid Istiqlal', *Ta'dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11.4 (2022), doi:10.32832/tadibuna.v11i4.7992.

<sup>27</sup> Ridesta and others, 'Moderasi Beragama Berbasis Masjid: Analisis Konten Kanal Youtube-TV Masjid Istiqlal Jakarta'.



The mosque's design is a unique blend of conventional Javanese patterns and indigenous materials, serving as a vibrant celebration of Indonesia's rich and varied cultural history. This architectural value not only showcases a deep respect for native artistic skills and expertise but also symbolizes the appreciation of Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage and complex identity within a larger Islamic framework.

The mosque, serving as a central hub for religious instruction, is a testament to its unwavering commitment to unity and knowledge. It provides a wide range of courses and materials that aim to deepen the understanding of Islam among individuals of diverse backgrounds in Indonesia. These initiatives, which foster understanding and solidarity, align with the mosque's mission of promoting knowledge and unity among community members.

Furthermore, the Istiqlal Mosque's architectural magnificence and historical importance draw tourists from all over the globe, establishing it as a central hub for cultural interchange and global discourse. Indonesia's greater ambition of serving as a bridge between many cultures and religions worldwide is exemplified by the Istiqlal Mosque. Its role in promoting cross-cultural understanding is not just about its physical structure, but also about the values it represents and the conversations it fosters. The mosque's open doors and welcoming spirit make it a beacon of tolerance and acceptance, attracting visitors from diverse backgrounds.<sup>28</sup>

The Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta is a significant religious structure that spans over 23 acres (9,5 HA). It is characterized by its five levels, each representing one of the fundamental principles of Islam. The mosque's construction incorporates East Javanese marble, which enhances its magnificence. The project's main feature is a colossal 45-meter dome, accompanied by a single minaret that stands at a height of 6,666 meters. This purposeful choice of height directly alludes to the 6,666 verses in the Quran.<sup>29</sup>

The primary prayer chamber of the mosque is a remarkable architectural feat, embellished with an opulent crimson carpet and partitioned into distinct areas for males and females. Arabic calligraphy adorns the expansive hall, prominently showcasing the names of Allah and Muhammad. A spacious courtyard next to the prayer hall contains numerous rectangular prayer areas facing Mecca. The mosque's sizable drum, fashioned from a combination of bull and cowhide, is a notable feature. According to the public relations representative's statement, this drum plays a critical role in the call to prayer. The fact that the mosque has welcomed numerous dignitaries, including former U.S. President Obama, underscores its global importance, instilling a sense of pride and connection in all who visit.

The Istiqlal Mosque's association with the adjacent Cathedral of Jakarta is a shining example of its role in promoting interfaith harmony. Christians use the mosque's parking facilities during important religious occasions like Easter and Christmas, while Muslims use the same area during Eid. This act of sharing resources between the two religious communities serves as a powerful demonstration of their collaborative and cooperative nature, inspiring hope for a harmonious future.

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<sup>28</sup> Abidin Kusno, “‘The Reality of One-Which-Is-Two’ - Mosque Battles and Other Stories: Notes on Architecture, Religion, and Politics in the Javanese World”, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 2003, doi:10.1162/104648803322336593.

<sup>29</sup> Hasbi and Nimpuno.

A subterranean passage, fondly referred to by President Joko Widodo as the "Brotherhood Tunnel," links the mosque to the cathedral. The tunnel, situated beneath the street that divides the two buildings, represents religious tolerance and unity. Currently, efforts are underway to adorn the tunnel with artistic creations, enhancing its function as a bridge between various religious beliefs and fostering interfaith communication.

The tunnel will create a concrete connection between the cathedral and the mosque, fostering mutual respect and collaboration between these establishments. Through the establishment of physical spaces designated for communal use, this endeavor exemplifies Indonesia's commitment to promoting religious harmony and tolerance.<sup>30</sup>

The Istiqlal Mosque symbolizes Indonesia's diverse society, embracing individuals from different religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds. The artwork's design combines various aspects of Javanese, Indian, and Islamic art, resulting in a harmonic fusion that represents the country's abundant cultural past.

The Istiqlal Mosque is not just a place of worship, but a symbol of Indonesia's unity and diversity. It showcases a harmonious blend of ancient and contemporary architectural features, skillfully incorporating Javanese, Indian, and Islamic design elements. This integration emphasizes the mosque's role as a representation of unity and diversity, reflecting Indonesia's intricate cultural environment. The mosque's design is a celebration of the country's rich cultural heritage, a testament to the unity that can be found in diversity.

Diverse architectural traditions influence the mosque's design elements, like a dome and minaret, creating a distinctive and all-encompassing religious environment. The utilization of conventional materials and current design ideas displays a dedication to safeguarding cultural heritage while embracing modern aesthetics. In addition, the mosque's spacious prayer rooms and symbolic elements, such as the prominent drum and detailed calligraphy, heighten its visitors' spiritual encounters. The artisans meticulously craft these pieces to fulfill the worshippers' practical and symbolic needs.<sup>31</sup>

The Istiqlal Mosque, a significant cultural and architectural symbol of Indonesia's pluralistic society, goes beyond its primary function as a place of worship. Its design and features, a blend of ancient and modern elements, serve as a powerful testament to its role in fostering harmony and interfaith collaboration.<sup>32</sup>

The Istiqlal Mosque, with its architectural design and proximity to the nearby cathedral, is a testament to Indonesia's dedication to honoring its diverse cultural legacy. It promotes communal cohesion and facilitates meaningful conversations, fostering mutual reverence among many religious groups. The mosque's architectural and symbolic components underscore this dedication, commanding respect and reverence.

The Istiqlal Mosque, a prominent symbol of Indonesia's unity and diversity, is a marvel of architectural magnificence. Its strategic positioning and significant involvement in public and educational domains contribute to its national symbol status. The mosque's exceptional

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<sup>30</sup> Ridesta and others, 'Moderasi Beragama Berbasis Masjid: Analisis Konten Kanal Youtube-TV Masjid Istiqlal Jakarta'.

<sup>31</sup> Sarram and others.

<sup>32</sup> Bagoes Wiryomartono, 'Contemporary Mosques in Indonesia: Cultural Intervention, Contestation, and Syncretism', in *Historical Mosques in Indonesia and the Malay World*, 2023, doi:10.1007/978-981-99-3806-3\_5.

capacity to assimilate and honor diverse cultural and religious identities is embodied in its Islamic tradition and contemporary values, inspiring awe and admiration.<sup>33</sup>

#### **D. Istiqlal Mosque: A Symbol of Muslim Identity and Urban Development in Contemporary Societies**

The phrase "Islamic Modernism" emerged as a movement for change during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in Arabia and India. The movement, *tajwid*, aimed to rejuvenate and cleanse Islamic customs. Notable reformers led this initiative, such as Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Arabia and Qutb al-Din Ahmad Syah Wali Allah in India. The authors criticized the widespread mystical rituals (*takhyul*) and unquestioning loyalty to religious traditions (*taqlid*), which they claimed had caused the collapse of Muslim civilizations, especially in response to Western colonialism.<sup>34</sup>

The early reformers sought to adhere to the fundamental sources of Islam, including the Qur'an and Sunnah while eliminating traditions they deemed harmful. They aimed to cleanse religious rituals and confront the obstacles presented by Western colonial forces.<sup>35</sup> During this time, Muslims became increasingly conscious of the progress made by the Western world in industrialism, technology, and science. This stark contrast with the perceived lack of development in the Muslim world was not lost on the reformers.

They recognized that logical and analytical reasoning, indispensable for addressing contemporary issues, was the only path to advancement. Subsequent generations of Muslim intellectuals redirected their attention towards integrating contemporary science and knowledge in response to the shortcomings of solely reformist approaches. Prominent figures such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, and Muhammad Iqbal advocated for a logical interpretation of Islamic literature and broadening access to contemporary knowledge.<sup>36</sup> The proponents emphasized *ijtihad*, which refers to the use of independent thinking to reconcile Islamic teachings with the demands of the modern world.

The influence of Islamic modernism on the architecture of state mosques in the Muslim world is evident as the international style of contemporary architecture gained prominence. This architectural style, with its emphasis on rationality, simplicity, and a commitment to structural and material integrity, starkly contrasts the elaborate and symbolic designs typically found in conventional mosques, sparking intrigue and curiosity. Notable instances include the King Faisal Mosque in Islamabad, the Malaysian State Mosque in Kuala Lumpur, the Capitol Complex Mosque in Dhaka, and the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta.<sup>37</sup>

President Sukarno of Indonesia, with his visionary leadership, employed modernist architecture to represent both national identity and the process of modernization. Under his guidance, Jakarta, the capital city, underwent a significant transformation with the addition

<sup>33</sup> Yuke Ardhiati, 'Mosques without Dome (as a Tourist Attraction): A Religion Journey', *International Journal of Global Tourism*, 3.1 (2022), doi:10.58982/injogt.v3i1.168.

<sup>34</sup> Ekomadyo, 'Architectural Representation of Islamic Modernism in Indonesia Case Study: Architecture of Achmad Noeman'.

<sup>35</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Pergolakan Politik Islam: Dari Fundamentalisme, Modernisme Hingga Post-Modernisme*, Jakarta: Paramadina (Paramadina, 1996)  
<[https://scholar.google.co.id/scholar?start=30&q=AZYUMARDI+AZRA&hl=id&as\\_sdt=0,5#3](https://scholar.google.co.id/scholar?start=30&q=AZYUMARDI+AZRA&hl=id&as_sdt=0,5#3)>.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Freeman, Katherine Ellena, and Amina Kator-Mubarez, 'Islamism in Indonesia', *The Global Spread of Islamism and the Consequences for Terrorism*, 2021, pp. 23–56, doi:10.2307/j.ctv1bjc3n6.6.

<sup>37</sup> Jale Nejdert Erzen, 'Reading Mosques: Meaning and Architecture in Islam', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 2011, doi:10.1111/j.1540-6245.2010.01453.x.

of contemporary architecture and sculptures. This transformation was a manifestation of Sukarno's desire for a fresh and distinct Indonesian identity. One of his significant projects was the commissioning of the Istiqlal mosque, designed by Indonesian architect Friedrich Silaban, to symbolize modernity for Indonesian Muslims.<sup>38</sup> The mosque's design aimed to represent the emerging national identity of Indonesia.

Silaban, a graduate of the Academic van Bouwkunst in Amsterdam with a background in architecture, initially presented a design for the Istiqlal Mosque that followed the principles of the International Style. The initial design, with its horizontal roof, was a testament to the modernist principle of 'Form Follows Function.' However, the Muslim officials' opposition to this design, due to their belief in the dome as a crucial symbol of mosque buildings, led to a fascinating evolution. The design was modified to incorporate a spacious dome supported by six internal columns, successfully blending traditional symbolism with modernist aesthetics.

The Istiqlal Mosque, a testament to the fusion of modernist concepts and traditional Islamic symbolism, is deeply rooted in contemporary values. Its blend of modernist principles with conventional religious and cultural components not only exemplifies the prevailing patterns in Islamic architecture throughout the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century but also connects us to its relevance in the modern world.

The mosque's architecture, a dedication to contemporary values, combines modern elements with traditional architectural aspects, acknowledging tradition's symbolic significance. The Istiqlal Mosque's design approach is a significant contribution to the field of Islamic architecture. It successfully merges contemporary architectural techniques with enduring religious symbols, creating a space that harmonizes modern goals with ancient tradition. This approach, as showcased in this study, underscores the potential of architectural expressions to bridge different cultures and periods, providing valuable insights for future advancements in Islamic architecture.<sup>39</sup>

During the postcolonial period in Indonesia, mosque architecture underwent significant transformations. The author categorizes these changes into three distinct eras, each representing a unique shift in political power and cultural identity. Using a Cartesian historiographical methodology, this analysis delves into how various regimes influenced architectural trends. It also highlights the pivotal role of political figures in shaping the nation's architectural style, providing the reader with a deeper understanding of the socio-political dynamics of the time. President Sukarno's architectural choices during the early postcolonial period, which marked a departure from both colonial and traditional forms, signaled a new era of modernism and national identity. This departure continued throughout national independence.<sup>40</sup>

Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia, was a visionary leader who sought to redefine the country's architectural identity. He was not bound by the architectural traditions of pre-colonial Indonesia or the colonial influences that had shaped the nation. His ambition was to present a contemporary and monumental picture of Indonesian architecture, distinct from

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<sup>38</sup> Ashadi, Antariksa, and Purnama Salura, 'Syncretism in Architectural Forms of Demak Grand Mosque', *J. Appl. Environ. Biol. Sci.*, 5.11 (2015).

<sup>39</sup> Alice Sabrina Ismail and Nurul Syaheera Aziz, 'Macma Islamic Ideology in Chinese Muslim Mosques Towards Universalizing Islam in Malaysia', *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 7.2 (2022), doi:10.18860/jia.v7i2.15777.

<sup>40</sup> Wiryomartono.

the historical forms of the Dutch colonial period and the Javanese traditionalism that existed at the time.<sup>41</sup> Sukarno's primary goal was to establish a new, universal, and contemporary national identity for Indonesia, uniting the country's diverse ethnic and regional groups. This perspective was shaped by his background in civil engineering, which was influenced by the academic standards of the Netherlands, and his exposure to Western architectural practices during his travels.<sup>42</sup>

The modernist architecture that Sukarno encountered in Western countries served as a significant source of inspiration for his architectural philosophy. In particular, the urbanization and architectural works of Oscar Niemeyer in Brasilia were highly influential. In Sukarno's approach, which prioritized grandeur and modernism over traditional forms, it was clear that Niemeyer's daring and forward-thinking designs significantly impacted the design aesthetic, showcasing the power of innovation in architecture. Posts that Sukarno's rejection of the conventional three-tiered roof style in Javanese mosques reflected his intention to shift away from precolonial aesthetics and adopt a new, universal modernism that aligned with his vision of a unified Indonesian identity.

During the postcolonial era, several countries that had recently gained their independence sought to establish their national identities through architecture. Architects frequently adopted the International Style, a significant architectural movement, to design buildings in these countries, emphasizing strong structures, significant architecture, and inventive materiality. This architectural style provided a method for transforming modernity and nationalism into contemporary forms that also mirrored the tropical temperatures of their construction sites. Cites the Istiqlal Mosque as one of the most prominent examples of this architectural technique.

The Protestant architect Friedrich Silaban's construction of the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta is a striking departure from traditional mosque architecture, exemplifying Sukarno's application of the modernist concept. Sukarno sponsored a competition in which Silaban chose the design that expressed the grandeur and modernity that Sukarno had envisioned. The mosque's design, with its vast dome and minimalist shapes, stands in stark contrast to traditional mosque architecture, embracing a new, colossal aesthetic that is in line with Sukarno's objectives.<sup>43</sup>

Sukarno's visionary quest to shape a modern national identity that transcends colonial and traditional norms was the driving force behind the construction of the Istiqlal Mosque. This architectural masterpiece, a departure from the traditional mosque design in Indonesia, is a symbol of the nation's postcolonial modernity. Its use of contemporary materials and design concepts, inspired by international modernism,<sup>44</sup> is a source of national pride and connection. In the postcolonial era, this architectural evolution underscores the trend of using architecture to foster national unity and convey new political and cultural narratives.

Constructed during Indonesia's early modern era, the Istiqlal Mosque stands as a testament to the grandeur of religious symbolism and architectural designs. The mosque's

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<sup>41</sup> Ekomadyo.

<sup>42</sup> Natalie H. Shokoohy, 'Architectural Diversity in South Asian Islam', in *South Asian Islam: A Spectrum of Integration and Indigenization*, 2023, doi:10.4324/9781003439530-12.

<sup>43</sup> Yusof.

<sup>44</sup> Josephine, 'The Study of Geometric Forms, Proportion and Scale of Heritage Buildings Due to Architectural Theory'.



imposing minaret and the crescent emblem crafted from metal, along with its hemispherical dome that symbolizes its sacred nature, all contribute to its awe-inspiring presence. The Istiqlal Mosque, with its spiritual significance and architectural magnificence, is a sight to behold.<sup>45</sup>

Sukarno's vision for the Istiqlal Mosque was not just about creating a prominent mosque in Southeast Asia. He deliberately advocated for the incorporation of Middle Eastern and European architectural elements into Indonesian mosque design. This deliberate approach aimed to situate Indonesian mosque architecture within a broader international framework, demonstrating the mosque's global influence. Sukarno's leadership demonstrated how political power may stimulate architectural ingenuity by harmoniously integrating cultural and religious components with modernist ideals. His design of the Istiqlal Mosque was motivated by ideology, demonstrating the potential of architecture to convey political messages.

The Istiqlal Mosque's design and construction significantly affect modern urban development in Indonesia. As metropolitan areas progress, incorporating modern architectural styles with cultural and religious emblems becomes more significant. The mosque exemplifies how urban areas may integrate ancient and contemporary components, fostering a feeling of cohesion and individuality in the face of swift urban development.<sup>46</sup>

The architectural principles of the Istiqlal Mosque serve as a significant guide in current urban development and effectively blend cultural tradition with contemporary requirements. The mosque's architecture, which skillfully integrates religious symbols with modernist shapes, serves as a prime example of how urban landscapes can be simultaneously inclusive and significant. Urban planners can create places that blend history and modernity by integrating symbols like the crescent and dome, which hold deep spiritual meaning, with contemporary structural advancements.<sup>47</sup>

The equilibrium between cultural preservation and modernity is especially significant in today's rapidly urbanizing globe. The Istiqlal Mosque's design philosophy is that urban areas can achieve contemporary usefulness without sacrificing historical continuity. By skillfully incorporating both historical and modern aspects, urban developments have the potential to produce venues that function as significant cultural landmarks for a wide range of groups. This method not only enhances the city's physical structure but also reinforces social connections by creating communal areas that honor and mirror the diverse identities of the people who live there.

Furthermore, a wide range of urban developments, such as public parks, community centers, residential complexes, and commercial hubs, can implement these ideas. Urban planners, as the key implementers, can significantly enhance the livability and relevance of urban places by focusing on designs that connect with cultural heritage and meet modern societal needs. The Istiqlal Mosque serves as a symbol of how architecture can represent and honor cultural variety while also embracing innovation. It provides a blueprint for urban development that respects the past while being forward-thinking.

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<sup>45</sup> Endang Setyawati and others, 'Developing A Virtual Reality Application of Pathok Negoro Mosque for Digital Conservation', *Journal of Architectural Design and Urbanism*, 2.1 (2019), doi:10.14710/jadu.v2i1.5517.

<sup>46</sup> Yusof.

<sup>47</sup> Josephine.

Ultimately, the Istiqlal Mosque is a prime example of how design can effectively connect and unite many cultural, political, and religious aspects. Sukarno's visionary conception of the mosque as a grandiose emblem of Indonesian national identity continues to inspire and shape contemporary urban planning. The Istiqlal Mosque's ideas provide excellent guidance for developing urban environments that respect tradition while embracing modernity as cities expand and evolve.

## E. Conclusion

The Istiqlal Mosque, a monumental embodiment of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and Islamic identity, skillfully integrates tradition and modernity to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving society. Its architectural design, while reflecting the influence of historical Islamic elements, also incorporates modernist principles, demonstrating a deep respect for progress while honoring cultural roots. Located adjacent to Jakarta's Cathedral, the mosque symbolizes interfaith harmony, underscoring Indonesia's dedication to fostering unity amidst diversity. More than just a grand structure, the mosque is a hub for religious, educational, and cultural activities, bridging past and present to create an inclusive and dynamic communal space.

Guided by President Sukarno's vision of a contemporary national identity, the Istiqlal Mosque is a model for integrating cultural heritage into urban development. Its design emphasizes the interplay between cultural preservation and modern functionality, offering a framework for creating inclusive urban spaces that honor tradition while embracing innovation. The mosque's enduring significance lies in its ability to inspire architectural ingenuity, promote interfaith dialogue through [specific ways it promotes interfaith dialogue], and strengthen Indonesia's national identity. As a symbol of Indonesia's journey toward unity and progress, the Istiqlal Mosque reflects the nation's historical legacy and aspirations for the future.

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