

# Wasatiyyah as Architectural Representation: The Case of Istiqlal Mosque

## Wasatiyyah sebagai Representasi Arsitektural: Kajian atas Masjid Istiqlal Jakarta

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### **Abstract**

The principle of wasatiyyah—understood in Islam as the ethical path of balance, restraint, and justice—has been widely explored in theology, law, and moral philosophy. However, its translation into architectural practice, particularly in modern mosque design, remains insufficiently examined. This paper aims to investigate how wasatiyyah is materially and spatially embodied in the architecture of the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, Indonesia, and to demonstrate that moderation can function as a rigorous design framework rather than a purely symbolic ideal. Using a qualitative, theory-driven case study approach, this research analyzes architectural drawings, historical records, scholarly literature, and spatial configurations of the mosque. The principle of wasatiyyah is operationalized through thematic categories—monumentality and humility, tradition and modernity, local climate and technological restraint, symbolic meaning and functional clarity—which are then applied to the mosque’s urban orientation, spatial hierarchy, material choices, stylistic synthesis, and environmental strategies. The findings reveal that Istiqlal Mosque performs wasatiyyah through a carefully balanced architectural system. Monumental scale is moderated by minimalist material expression; global Islamic symbols such as the dome are integrated with local climatic responsiveness; and modern structural technologies are employed without displacing ethical restraint. Rather than relying on the visual replication of historical mosque forms, Istiqlal conveys Islamic identity through proportional balance, spatial ethics, and environmental responsibility. This study argues that Istiqlal Mosque represents a paradigmatic model of architectural moderation, where wasatiyyah is not merely represented but actively enacted through design. By positioning wasatiyyah as an analytical lens for contemporary mosque architecture, this paper contributes to both Islamic thought and architectural theory, offering a framework for ethically grounded, context-sensitive religious design in the modern world.

**Keywords:** *Wasatiyyah, Islamic Architecture, Mosque Design, Istiqlal Mosque, Functional Balance.*

### **Abstrak**

Prinsip wasatiyyah—yang dalam Islam dipahami sebagai jalan etis yang menekankan keseimbangan, pengendalian diri, dan keadilan—telah banyak dikaji dalam bidang teologi, hukum, dan filsafat moral. Namun,

penerjemahannya dalam praktik arsitektur, khususnya dalam desain masjid modern, masih relatif terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana wasatiyyah diwujudkan secara material dan spasial dalam arsitektur Masjid Istiqlal di Jakarta, serta menunjukkan bahwa konsep moderasi dapat berfungsi sebagai kerangka desain yang sistematis, bukan sekadar ideal simbolik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif berbasis teori dengan menganalisis gambar arsitektur, data historis, literatur ilmiah, serta konfigurasi ruang masjid. Prinsip wasatiyyah dioperasionalkan melalui kategori tematik seperti monumentalitas dan kerendahan hati, tradisi dan modernitas, respons terhadap iklim lokal dan pengendalian teknologi, serta makna simbolik dan kejelasan fungsi. Kategori-kategori tersebut kemudian diterapkan dalam analisis orientasi urban, hirarki ruang, pemilihan material, sintesis gaya, serta strategi lingkungan pada Masjid Istiqlal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Masjid Istiqlal merepresentasikan wasatiyyah melalui sistem arsitektur yang seimbang. Skala monumental dimoderasi oleh ekspresi material yang minimalis; simbol-simbol Islam global seperti kubah dipadukan dengan respons terhadap iklim lokal; serta teknologi struktur modern digunakan tanpa mengabaikan prinsip etika dan pengendalian diri. Alih-alih meniru bentuk historis masjid secara visual, Istiqlal menampilkan identitas Islam melalui keseimbangan proporsional, etika ruang, dan tanggung jawab ekologis. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa Masjid Istiqlal merupakan model paradigmatik arsitektur moderat, di mana wasatiyyah tidak hanya direpresentasikan, tetapi juga diwujudkan secara nyata melalui desain. Dengan menjadikan wasatiyyah sebagai lensa analitis dalam arsitektur masjid kontemporer, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan pemikiran Islam dan teori arsitektur, serta menawarkan kerangka desain religius yang berakar pada etika dan sensitif terhadap konteks modern.

**Kata kunci:** Wasatiyyah, Arsitektur Islam, Desain Masjid, Masjid Istiqlal, Keseimbangan Fungsional.

### **Introduction**

The Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta stands as a monumental landmark of Indonesian independence and a singular achievement in global Islamic architecture. Conceived by President Sukarno as the "anchor" of the newly independent nation's capital, its location was deeply intentional—situated directly across from the Jakarta Cathedral to frame Merdeka Square and the National Monument (Monas). This placement created a powerful civic and religious presence that avoided isolating the sacred from the secular city. Architecturally, the mosque was designed by Friedrich Silaban to reconcile

traditional religious requirements with modern urban planning through a unique "dual orientation" (Kusno, 2003).

This study examines Istiqlal not merely as a historic monument, but as a physical manifestation of *wasatiyyah*, or moderation. While *wasatiyyah* is often discussed in theological or political terms, this paper argues that it is fundamentally embedded in the mosque's technical and spatial systems. From its site orientation and hierarchical spatial sequence to its bioclimatic environmental design and synthesis of diverse architectural styles, Istiqlal performs moderation as a spatial practice. By analyzing these specific systems, the research demonstrates how the mosque occupies a "middle ground" between rigid traditionalism and purely utilitarian modernism.

The concept of *wasatiyyah* has been extensively documented in contemporary scholarship, yet it remains largely confined to the realms of abstract ethical discourse and theological prescription. Scholars have traditionally treated moderation as a moral attitude, an ideological position, or a framework for interfaith dialogue. While these perspectives are vital for understanding Islamic social values, they often overlook how such values are operationalized in the built environment.

A significant gap persists in architectural scholarship concerning the translation of *wasatiyyah*—the Qur'anic ethic of moderation—into operational design principles. While *wasatiyyah* has been widely theorized within Islamic theology, ethics, and social philosophy as a balance between extremes (Kamali, 2015; Hashim, 2019; Sumarlin, 2025), it has rarely been examined as a spatial or performative framework within architectural discourse. Consequently, the built environment remains largely absent from debates on Islamic moderation, despite architecture's capacity to materialize ethical values through form, space, and environmental interaction.

In the field of Islamic and mosque architecture, scholars frequently invoke abstract values such as balance, harmony, and unity to describe sacred spaces (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2000; Omer, 2016; Wazeri, 2014). However, these terms often function as symbolic descriptors rather than analytical tools. They tend to privilege metaphysical or stylistic interpretations while leaving unexplored the architectural mechanisms through which moderation is physically achieved—such as material restraint, climatic responsiveness, structural rationality, acoustic performance, daylight modulation, or spatial hierarchy. As Grabar (1987) and Hillenbrand (2000) note, Islamic architecture is frequently studied through historical typologies and decorative languages, rather than as a system of ethical or environmental performance.

Recent sustainability-oriented research has begun to bridge this gap by examining environmental strategies in mosques, such as passive cooling, daylight optimization, and adaptive reuse (Bianca, 2014; Abdelrahman, 2019). Yet, these studies remain detached from the moral-philosophical framework of *wasatiyyah*.

Environmental efficiency is discussed as a technical outcome rather than as a manifestation of ethical moderation. This separation reinforces a dualism between spiritual values and architectural practice, preventing a holistic reading of mosque architecture as an integrated ethical system.

This limitation is especially evident in the scholarship on the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta. Existing studies overwhelmingly interpret Istiqlal through lenses of nationalism, political symbolism, and modernist aesthetics (Abidin, 2017; Alam & Fanani, 2025; Kusno, 2010). The mosque is typically framed as a monument of postcolonial identity and interreligious diplomacy, emphasizing its monumental scale, rational structure, and international modernist vocabulary. While these readings are historically significant, they remain largely representational—focusing on what the building symbolizes rather than how it performs ethically in space, climate, and social life.

Even recent research on Istiqlal's sustainability and green renovation strategies (Rifdinanda & Puspitasari, 2023) treats environmental performance as a technical upgrade rather than as an extension of Islamic ethical moderation. By failing to situate these architectural strategies within the epistemology of *wasatiyyah*, current literature overlooks Istiqlal's potential as a performative ethical space—a building that does not merely signify moderation but actively enacts it through spatial discipline, material economy, and environmental balance.

This paper therefore proposes a conceptual shift: from *wasatiyyah* as a theological slogan to *wasatiyyah* as a spatial discipline. By operationalizing *wasatiyyah* as a set of architectural criteria—moderation in scale, material honesty, climatic responsibility, and social inclusivity—this study positions architecture as an ethical agent rather than a passive container of symbolism. In doing so, it offers a new evaluative framework for Islamic architecture, moving beyond stylistic authenticity toward a model of ethical performance grounded in the lived, sensory, and environmental realities of sacred space.

## **Methodology**

This paper uses a qualitative case study approach to examine how the principle of *wasatiyyah* is expressed through the architecture of the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta. The mosque is selected as a critical case because of its national importance, its modern design, and its strong symbolic role in shaping Indonesian Islamic identity. Rather than treating the building as a static object, this study understands architecture as a performative system, where ethical values are expressed through space, form, material, and environmental response.

The analysis is theory-driven. Concepts of *wasatiyyah* are drawn from Qur'anic ethics and contemporary Islamic thought, then translated into spatial categories such as balance, restraint, integration, and environmental responsibility. These categories are used as an analytical lens to read the mosque's urban position, spatial organization, architectural expression, and climatic strategy. Data for this study come from secondary sources, including architectural drawings, historical records, scholarly articles, and environmental studies on mosque architecture and

tropical design. Key references include works on *Istiqlal* by Kusno, Abidin, and Alam & Fanani, as well as theoretical writings by Kamali, Hashim, Omer, and Bianca. Environmental aspects are interpreted using bioclimatic design principles from Olgyay, Givoni, and Yeang.

The method of analysis is thematic interpretation. The building is examined through interconnected themes—urban orientation, spatial hierarchy, stylistic synthesis, and climatic performance. Each theme is evaluated based on how effectively it demonstrates moderation as an ethical and functional practice. Through this approach, the paper shows that *wasatiyyah* is not only a moral concept, but also a spatial and environmental logic embedded in architectural design.

### Wasatiyyah as Spatial Practice

Responding to the limitations identified in existing scholarship—where *wasatiyyah* remains a moral slogan rather than an operative design logic—this study advances a theoretical framework that repositions moderation as a spatial and technical practice, capable of being evaluated through architectural form, performance, and use.

The principle of *wasatiyyah* is multidimensional, encompassing corporeal, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual domains. In Islamic philosophy, it is not understood as a static midpoint between two extremes, but as a dynamic synthesis that sustains balance while allowing contextual adaptation (Kamali, 2015; Hashim, 2019; Al-Faruqi, 1982). This dynamic quality enables Islamic architecture to remain anchored in stable ethical foundations while simultaneously evolving in response to contemporary technologies, climatic realities, and regional cultures (Omer, 2016; Bianca, 2014).

For the architect or designer, *wasatiyyah* therefore functions as a deliberate spatial strategy rather than a symbolic reference. It becomes a guiding logic for organizing form, structure, materiality, and environmental systems—ensuring that a building maintains creativity and beauty while remaining accountable to social responsibility and religious norms (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2000; Wazeri, 2014). Accordingly, the conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the operationalization of *wasatiyyah* through architectural systems. Moderation is treated here not as an abstract moral claim, but as an operational principle that informs spatial, material, and environmental decisions. The framework is structured around three interrelated pillars of architectural balance, derived from Qur’anic ethics and contemporary architectural theory.

In urban and architectural contexts, *wasatiyyah* manifests as a resistance to both excessive domination of space and deficient withdrawal from the public realm. Islam’s ethical call to avoid *ifrāt* (excess) and *tafrīt* (neglect) (Qur’an 2:143) is here translated into spatial moderation—where buildings neither overpower their surroundings nor isolate themselves from social life (Kamali, 2015; Omer, 2016). This balance aligns with Grabar’s (1987) assertion that Islamic architecture historically mediates between

monumentality and human scale, creating spaces that are simultaneously symbolic and socially accessible.

Stylistically, the framework identifies a “middle path” that integrates local cultural heritage, global Islamic symbolism, and modern industrial techniques—without privileging or imitating any single tradition. This synthesis reflects what Bianca (2014) terms the continuity of Islamic values through transformation, and what Ardalan and Bakhtiar (2000) describe as the unity underlying diversity in Islamic aesthetics. Through moderation, architecture becomes a platform where identity is not frozen in historical form but dynamically re-interpreted through contextual balance (Hillenbrand, 2000; Kusno, 2010).

Technically, this framework evaluates the mosque’s “climatic honesty”, where passive strategies such as natural ventilation, daylight control, and local material use prevent the excess of energy dependence while respecting the tropical context. This reflects an ethical understanding of sustainability grounded in Islamic stewardship (*khilāfah*) and moderation (Abdelrahman, 2019; Rifdinanda & Puspitasari, 2023). Here, environmental performance is not merely a technical outcome, but a moral act of restraint, embodying *wasatiyyah* through responsible interaction with nature (Bianca, 2014; Kamali, 2015).

By applying this framework to the Istiqlal Mosque, the study demonstrates that the building does not merely represent moderation symbolically, but performs it through spatial hierarchy, material economy, environmental responsiveness, and social accessibility. This approach challenges the assumption that Islamic identity must be anchored in historical stylistic forms, suggesting instead that continuity is sustained through the moderated balance of values, functions, and environmental responsibilities (Omer, 2016; Hashim, 2019).

### **Wasatiyyah through urban alignment**

The Istiqlal Mosque is situated on one of the most symbolically charged sites in central Jakarta, directly opposite the Jakarta Cathedral and oriented toward Merdeka Square, with the National Monument (Monas) forming its principal urban axis. This placement was deliberately conceived by President Sukarno, who envisioned the mosque as a monumental anchor for the nation’s civic heart and a spatial expression of Indonesia’s post-independence identity (Kusno, 2010; Abidin, 2017). Rather than functioning as an isolated sacred enclave, the mosque is positioned within the city’s ceremonial core, establishing a continuous dialogue between religion, state, and public life (Alam & Fanani, 2025).

This civic–religious relationship is articulated architecturally through a strategy of dual orientation that mediates between Islamic ritual requirements and urban alignment. While the rectangular prayer hall is accurately directed toward the

Qibla, the overall building footprint, including the sahn (inner courtyard), galleries, and colonnades, is rotated by approximately 20 degrees to correspond with Jakarta's urban grid and the visual axis of Monas (Silaban, 1982; Abidin, 2017). Through this spatial adjustment, Friedrich Silaban resolved the tension between sacred direction and national symbolism, allowing the mosque to face Mecca in worship while simultaneously engaging the symbolic center of the Indonesian state (Kusno, 2010).

Materially, the mosque further expresses a synthesis of national identity and modern construction. Much of the interior is clad in Tulungagung marble from East Java, while the exterior employs textured plaster finishes that convey solidity and permanence (Alam & Fanani, 2025). The monumental dome, one of the mosque's most recognizable features, is constructed from lightweight stainless steel, reflecting modern engineering while recalling the symbolic language of traditional Islamic forms (Abidin, 2017; Omer, 2016). The dome is supported by twelve massive columns, widely interpreted as a symbolic reference to the twelve months of the Islamic calendar, embedding religious temporality within the building's structural system (Silaban, 1982).

Natural light enters the prayer hall through the dome's geometric perforations, creating a diffused illumination that enhances the contemplative atmosphere and reinforces the spiritual character of the space (Hillenbrand, 2000; Omer, 2016). The resulting architectural composition is both monumental and inclusive, projecting authority while remaining accessible to the public. In this way, Istiqlal Mosque stands as a physical manifestation of Indonesia's negotiation between tradition and modernity, where Islamic values are articulated through a distinctly national architectural language.

### **Spatial Discipline: Balancing Ritual Order and Community Inclusivity**

The mosque's plan is structured through a clear hierarchical spatial sequence that reflects its role as both a sacred center and an urban anchor. At the core of the composition, the main prayer hall occupies the geometric and symbolic center, prioritizing collective worship and reinforcing the communal nature of Islamic ritual (Omer, 2016; Hillenbrand, 2000). This hierarchy is legible in the building's floor plan and reinforced by its monumental section, enabling the accommodation of extremely large congregations—reported to reach up to 200,000 worshippers during major religious events—while still allowing intuitive navigation and orientation (Abidin, 2017; Alam & Fanani, 2025; Grabar, 1987).

Technically, the plan avoids excessive compartmentalization and instead relies on large, uninterrupted "spatial fields", allowing flexibility and visual continuity. Such openness corresponds with Grabar's (1987) observation that monumental Islamic spaces privilege continuity over fragmentation to foster collective experience. From the perspective of architectural moderation, this configuration achieves a balance between two extremes: it avoids the excess of spatial subdivision, which could fragment the community, and the deficiency of total openness, which would undermine ritual order and spatial discipline (Kamali, 2015; Omer, 2016).

This principle of spatial discipline extends beyond the prayer hall to include a broad range of contemporary functional zones, illustrating how the mosque operates as a “middle ground” between sacred and civic life. In addition to ritual spaces for prayer and ablution, Istiqlal accommodates administrative offices, educational facilities, and social-service departments, including the Madrasah Istiqlal and the Department of Education and Training, as well as the Department of Social and People Empowerment (Abidin, 2017; Alam & Fanani, 2025). At a more representational level, the mosque contains VVIP reception rooms and exhibition halls—such as the Imam Bukhari Room—which host international conferences, public lectures, cultural exhibitions, and interfaith dialogues, reinforcing the mosque’s diplomatic and intellectual role (Kusno, 2010; Alam & Fanani, 2025).

The mosque’s inclusivity is most visibly expressed in its open outdoor spaces, particularly the expansive inner courtyard (*sahn*). Functioning as a permeable civic square, this space accommodates daily social activities while maintaining its religious identity (Hillenbrand, 2000; Omer, 2016). During Ramadan and on voluntary fasting days, the courtyard becomes a communal gathering point for shared iftar meals, supported by the mosque’s Halal Culinary Center, which distributes food to the public (Abidin, 2017). At other times, the same space transforms into a lively bazaar where local vendors are permitted to trade, integrating the mosque into the surrounding urban economy (Kusno, 2010).

By accommodating such a wide spectrum of activities—from worship and education to commerce and cultural exchange—the mosque’s spatial organization responds to considering the complex demands of contemporary urban society. More than a sanctuary, Istiqlal functions as a comprehensive civic center, where architecture becomes a physical expression of *wasatiyyah*, mediating between spiritual devotion and public service through a moderated balance of space, function, and social engagement.

### **Monumental Humility: Balancing Grandeur and Restraint in Architectural Form**

The architectural power of the Istiqlal Mosque is defined by a deliberate tension between monumental scale and minimalist restraint, a balance that embodies *wasatiyyah* as a lived spatial ethic. On one hand, the mosque’s immense proportions affirm its role as a national monument and the largest Islamic sanctuary in Southeast Asia (Abidin, 2017; Kusno, 2010). The primary dome, measuring approximately 45 meters in diameter, symbolically references Indonesia’s independence year (1945), while the single minaret, rising to 66.66 meters, alludes to the verses of the Qur’an—transforming national memory and sacred numerology into architectural form (Silaban, 1982; Alam & Fanani, 2025). This monumentality is not designed to dominate, but to express collective identity and spiritual elevation within the public sphere (Vale, 2008).

Yet this grandeur is carefully moderated through a striking aesthetic minimalism. In contrast to mosques that rely on polychrome tiles, dense

ornamentation, or gilded surfaces, Istiqlal adopts a restrained palette of durable, honest materials—most notably cold-pressed stainless steel and Tulungagung marble—which lend the interior a timeless, unembellished character (Omer, 2016; Abidin, 2017). This approach resonates with Islamic ethical critiques of *isrāf* (extravagance or waste), which emphasize restraint, purpose, and material responsibility (Kamali, 2015; Nasr, 1996). By privileging geometric abstraction and material clarity over decorative excess, the mosque redirects attention from surface spectacle to spiritual presence (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2000).

It is within this synthesis of “the Great” and “the Simple” that architectural moderation becomes operational. A purely monumental structure might risk projecting worldly power, while an overly austere building could fail to represent the collective identity of the nation. Istiqlal mediates between these extremes through structural clarity and rhythmic repetition. The system of approximately 1,800 stainless steel columns supports the vast roof while maintaining visual permeability and a sense of lightness (Silaban, 1982; Alam & Fanani, 2025). Their exposed industrial character reflects Indonesia’s mid-twentieth-century aspirations toward modernity and technological progress (Kusno, 2010; Frampton, 1995).

Circulation and orientation further reinforce this moderated monumentality. The mosque’s seven entrance gates, named after the *Asmaul Husna*, regulate the movement of large crowds with clarity and symbolic order, ensuring that the overwhelming scale remains legible and humane (Abidin, 2017; Omer, 2016). In this way, the architecture transforms size into a disciplined spatial experience rather than an overpowering spectacle.

In conclusion, Istiqlal’s monumentality is never allowed to slip into excess, nor does its simplicity devolve into emptiness or anonymity. Instead, the building occupies what Aristotle would term the “golden mean”, here reinterpreted through Islamic ethics as *wasatiyyah* (Kamali, 2015). Grand proportions inspire collective reverence, while minimalist materials sustain humility and functional clarity. This synthesis affirms that *wasatiyyah* at Istiqlal is not merely a theological abstraction, but a physical reality—a space capable of representing a nation while remaining spiritually accessible to the individual believer.

### **Balancing Local Heritage, Global Symbolism, and Modernity**

The architectural equilibrium of the Istiqlal Mosque is further extended in the mosque’s stylistic synthesis. The same ethic of *wasatiyyah* that regulates scale and material restraint also governs how the building negotiates between cultural roots, religious universality, and technological progress. As such, Istiqlal does not merely stand as an architectural object, but as a cultural mediator between past, present, and future (Frampton, 1995; Kusno, 2010).

The synthesis of monumentality and simplicity in Istiqlal leads directly to its unique visual identity, defined by a sophisticated blend of three distinct architectural orientations: local, global, and modern. By integrating these layers, the mosque avoids the “excess” of rigid traditionalism or uncritical modernism, instead occupying

a “middle path” that reflects Indonesia’s plural and postcolonial identity (Vale, 2008; Omer, 2016).

The local Indonesian influence is most evident in how the mosque responds to its tropical environment. Rather than replicating the tiered wooden tajug roof common in ancient Javanese mosques, Friedrich Silaban translated the spirit of vernacular architecture through what Frampton (1995) terms critical regionalism—a design approach that prioritizes climate, material, and place over stylistic imitation. The mosque’s exceptionally high ceilings and approximately 1,800 open-air columns facilitate natural ventilation, directly responding to heat and humidity (Abidin, 2017; Alam & Fanani, 2025). The use of local Tulungagung marble further anchors the building within Indonesia’s material culture, reinforcing a sense of rootedness rather than imported spectacle (Kusno, 2010).

Contrasting this grounded localism is the mosque’s classical Middle Eastern symbolic language, which connects Istiqlal to the global Islamic world (ummah). The massive hemispherical 45-meter dome, together with the minaret and crescent-and-star finials, establishes visual continuity with historical mosque typologies beyond Southeast Asia (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2000; Omer, 2016). Although such forms are not indigenous to Indonesia, their inclusion ensures immediate recognizability and affirms the mosque’s participation in a transnational Islamic heritage (Nasr, 1996).

The third layer is modernism, which shapes the mosque’s structural logic and minimalist expression. Silaban’s use of reinforced concrete and stainless steel reflects mid-twentieth-century ideals of progress, rationality, and technological optimism (Frampton, 1995; Kusno, 2010). The geometric abstraction and deliberate absence of dense ornamentation align with modern architectural principles that prioritize clarity, structural honesty, and monumental form. These techniques enable wide, column-free spans in the prayer hall, maximizing functional capacity while visually reinforcing openness and unity (Abidin, 2017).

This stylistic hybridity functions as a tangible expression of wasatiyyah. While Istiqlal serves as a national symbol of independence, it does not retreat into a narrowly traditional past nor surrender to global homogenization. A comparison with Malaysia’s Masjid Negara, which emphasizes local symbolism through its umbrella-shaped roof, reveals Istiqlal’s distinct balance: climatically rooted, globally symbolic, and technologically modern (Vale, 2008; Omer, 2016). Through this synthesis, the mosque demonstrates that moderation in architecture lies in reasoned integration, not imitation—ensuring relevance for future generations while honoring both faith and nation.

### **Sustainable Design: The Harmony Between Building and Nature**

The stylistic synthesis would remain incomplete without a parallel ecological logic, for architecture, as Frampton (1995) and Omer (2016) argue, only becomes meaningful when it responds to climate, material conditions, and human comfort. At Istiqlal, wasatiyyah is not confined to form or symbolism; it is embedded in the

building's environmental performance, positioning the mosque as a model of bioclimatic and ethically sustainable architecture (Kamali, 2015; Nasr, 1996).

Building on the visual identity and structural logic discussed previously, the mosque's technical design demonstrates a sophisticated harmony between built form and the natural environment. The Istiqlal Mosque is a premier example of bioclimatic architecture, where spatial configuration, material choice, and ventilation strategies are dictated by Indonesia's tropical, humid, and monsoon climate (Olgay, 1963; Yeang, 1999). This approach ensures that the building is not merely an aesthetic landmark, but a highly functional, sustainable ecosystem that practices restraint in energy use.

The most significant feature of this environmental responsiveness is the reliance on natural ventilation. Rather than forming a sealed, air-conditioned enclosure, Silaban designed permeable façades and approximately 1,800 open-air colonnades. Together with the mosque's soaring ceiling height, these elements create a powerful stack effect, where hot air rises and is replaced by cooler cross-breezes (Givoni, 1998; Abidin, 2017). This passive cooling strategy significantly reduces dependence on mechanical systems, embodying a "middle path" between technological excess and climatic neglect.

The spatial arrangement further enhances climatic performance. The vast inner courtyard and upper terraces function as thermal buffers and as large-scale drainage fields during Jakarta's heavy rains. These open spaces, combined with surrounding greenery, mitigate the urban heat island effect by cooling air before it enters the prayer hall (Oke, 1987; Yeang, 1999). Moreover, the reflective properties of white marble and stainless steel reduce solar heat gain, preventing thermal overload during the day (Al-Tamimi & Fadzil, 2011).

Functionally, every architectural element serves a dual purpose: spiritual comfort and ecological efficiency. The deep overhanging galleries shield worshippers from sun and monsoon rain while allowing continuous airflow. This "climatic honesty" ensures durability and reduces long-term maintenance, avoiding the wastefulness associated with climate-inappropriate materials (Frampton, 1995; Givoni, 1998).

Ultimately, Istiqlal's environmental strategy represents *wasatiyyah* applied to ecology. By integrating passive ventilation, permeable boundaries, and reflective local materials, the mosque avoids both technological overdependence and environmental disregard. In doing so, it demonstrates that monumentality can coexist with ecological humility—offering a powerful model for sustainable, moderate, and future-oriented Islamic architecture.

## Conclusion

The Istiqlal Mosque stands as a profound architectural manifestation of *wasatiyyah*, demonstrating that moderation is not merely an abstract theological principle but a comprehensive spatial, technical, and ethical framework. As this study has shown, the mosque's meaning does not rest in symbolic ornament or stylistic imitation, but in the way its architectural systems operate in balance. Across its urban

siting, dual orientation, hierarchical spatial organization, monumental yet restrained form, plural stylistic synthesis, and bioclimatic strategies, Istiqlal consistently negotiates between extremes—between openness and discipline, tradition and innovation, monumentality and humility, and technology and nature.

This research advances the understanding of wasatiyyah as a spatial practice rather than a normative slogan. At Istiqlal, moderation is not declared—it is performed. It is embedded in technical decisions such as the 20-degree rotation that aligns the mosque with both the Qibla and Jakarta’s civic axis, the use of vast uninterrupted spatial fields that guide collective worship without fragmentation, and the principle of climatic honesty that prioritizes natural ventilation, permeable boundaries, and courtyards over mechanical excess. In this sense, architecture becomes an ethical agent: the building itself regulates human behavior, energy use, social interaction, and symbolic meaning through proportion, orientation, and material restraint.

A critical implication of these findings concerns the question of modern Islamic identity. While many contemporary mosques seek legitimacy through the replication of historical forms, Istiqlal offers a fundamentally different paradigm. It demonstrates that continuity in Islamic architecture can be sustained through order, balance, environmental responsiveness, and social inclusivity, even when formal expressions evolve. By synthesizing local climatic logic and materials, global Islamic symbols such as the dome and minaret, and modern construction technologies, the mosque occupies a genuine “middle ground” between rigid traditionalism and purely utilitarian modernism.

Ultimately, the Istiqlal Mosque emerges not only as a national monument, but as a performative ethical space—a civic and spiritual center that embodies the Qur’anic ideal of the “middle path” through built form. It proves that monumental architecture can remain humble, that modernity can coexist with tradition, and that sustainability can be an expression of faith rather than a technical afterthought. As cities across the Muslim world continue to grapple with issues of identity, climate, and social complexity, Istiqlal offers a powerful model: a mosque that does not merely stand for moderation, but lives it through space, structure, and daily practice.

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