

Framing and Visualising Nationhood: Istiqlal Mosque and the Interiority of the Independence Square, Jakarta

Tutin Aryanti,¹ Amanda Achmadi²

¹Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
Indonesia

²University of Melbourne
Australia

Abstract

Studies on interiority have profoundly shifted the perspective of looking at urban space as a socially constructed architectural product. This study examines the meanings invested by Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia and the patron of the mosque, in Istiqlal Mosque (1962) and the Independence Square using the lens of interiority. Rather than looking at the mosque as a single monument, this study considers the mosque and its time and spatial contexts as an architectural unity to make Sukarno's vision of nationhood manifest through the interiority of the Independence Square area in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital city. This study employed an architectural survey and documentation of Istiqlal Mosque and its surrounding built environment and analysed them using Derrida's (1978/1987) centre and margin theory. It is found that the Istiqlal Mosque was designed as part of the frame that reinforces the meaning of the interior of Independence Square, where the National Monument (1964), Sukarno's major monumental project, stands. Istiqlal Mosque was constructed to claim the newly established nation as the world's most populous Muslim country and to communicate Sukarno's idea of uniting Indonesia's diverse cultural and religious backgrounds through religious tolerance while declaring his firm standpoint in the 1960s Cold War.

Keywords: architecture and power, urban interiority, modern architecture, monument, nationhood, state mosque

Introduction

Studies on Islamic architecture typically employ a typological approach to see how communities of different regions, nations, and sub-national locations design buildings and places to facilitate religious activities and teachings of Islam in different climatic settings and historical periods (Budi, 2006; Budi & Wibowo, 2018; O'Neill, 1994; Pijper, 1947; Wiryomartono, 1995, 2009). Other studies also collectively propose that local climatic conditions and social-cultural context are determinant factors behind regional specificities of Islamic architectural landscape (Grabar, 1987; Tajudeen, 2017). Such an approach focuses on the formal elements of architecture, classifies and essentialises them into an architectural type that describes the commonalities and patterns of different models (Gombrich, 1956), yet has not considered the contributions of social aspects to mosque architecture.

The lens of interiority is useful to connect Istiqlal Mosque, Indonesia's state mosque built in 1962, with its social context and to understand the social meanings of the architectural forms through immaterial aspects of the urban space where it is situated. Urban interiority has emerged as a discourse in which the urban interior is discussed as a manifestation of the intermingling social, economic, cultural, and political constructs (Atmodiwirjo & Yatmo, 2021; Hadjiyanni, 2018). Moving beyond the duality of the interior and exterior or the public and private, McCarthy (2005) and Poot et al. (2018) suggest that interiority should be critically seen beyond architectural definitions. "Interiority categorizes and stereotypes," controls and limits space through boundaries and other spatial attributes (McCarthy, 2005, p. 113).

In his philosophical piece of deconstruction, Derrida (1972/1982) challenges the traditional Western notion of language, meaning, and knowledge that often privilege certain meanings and interpretations and establish them as the centre while marginalising the others as the margin. Further, Derrida (1978/1987) problematises the *parergon*, which refers to the framing elements of a work of art, or the margin. Derrida (1978/1987) suggests that the parergonal elements are not merely decorative or incidental but are integral to the work of art itself, serving to both support and undermine its meaning.

While Derrida (1978/1987) did not explicitly develop a theory on architecture, his theory of *parergon* can be applicable to interrogate the interiority of Independence Square, where the National Monument is located at the centre of the square and Istiqlal Mosque is on its margin. Just as a painting has a frame that surrounds it, a building or space can also have a frame that shapes our understanding. The frame

can be physical, such as the walls or façade of a building, or it can be conceptual, such as the social, cultural, and political contexts in which the building is situated. Employing the method of deconstruction, Derrida (1978/1987) attempts to de-centre power because the centre collects power while marginalising the other(s), resulting in binary opposition (e.g., centre vs periphery). What deconstruction does is expose this binary to generate the consciousness of difference. Derrida proposes using the word *parergon*, a Greek word for 'frame' and argues for the 'lack' or a void or emptiness in relation to the frame (Derrida, 1978/1987). All objects use what they lack to frame themselves. Derrida sees that a frame controls how people see at the centre vis à vis the periphery. It is authoritative and forceful to make the centre appear more dominant than its surroundings (Derrida, 1978/1987). Both Derrida's *frame* and McCarthy's *boundary* in defining interiority address a similar apparatus; both terms control and limit what they enclose (Derrida, 1978/1987; McCarthy, 2005) and further guide how we see the interior of the frame or boundary—in this case, Sukarno's National Monument.

Building his argument upon Derrida's (1978/1987) theory, Tagg (1995) provides a more detailed analysis of the frame and the discourse. He re-enacts the picture where the centre is missing or puts it in Derrida's term, "the lack" (Derrida, 1978/1987, p. 43). Using photos as media to investigate the frame of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., Tagg (1995) removes the centre to generate the sense of looking (at the frame). He argues that what is in the frame has attracted most of our attention, so we never bother to see the frame itself. In the case of the museum, we come to observe the exhibition, yet never see or question what is excluded from it because we consider it natural. We are distracted from paying attention to the museum curator's authority, which is the frame in Derrida's (1978/1987) and Tagg's (1995) term.

In looking at the spatial arrangement of the Independence Square area, spectators mostly focus on the soaring National Monument as the centre of the area and overlook Istiqlal Mosque as a structure connected to the area. We argue, instead that the mosque should be seen as embodying a series of "signs" or visual narratives and markers whose meanings are conceived and, as such, inseparable from its social context (Bryson, 1983, p. xii). Thus, the socio-political landscape where a mosque is situated should also be included in the analysis when one investigates the mosque's meanings. Kusno (2003) has demonstrated how the mosque architectural vocabulary has been strategically utilised and devised by the succession of political regimes in postcolonial Indonesia, the Sukarno regime (1945–1967)

and the Suharto regime (1967–1998). For the two regimes, mosque architecture is an important tool to carefully craft messages of the identity of Indonesian Islam and progressive nationhood to the large Muslim population.

Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia, constructed the Istiqlal Mosque as the state mosque of Indonesia in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital city, in 1962 as part of his nation-building project. In addition to the national state mosque, Sukarno also built Hotel Indonesia (1962) designed by Abel Sorensen and Wendy, Bung Karno Stadium (1960–1962) designed by F. Silaban, and Conefo Building (1965–1983) designed by Soejoedi (Kusno, 2000). As a revolutionary leader and first president of the newly independent nation and once an architect himself, during his presidency, Sukarno was a dominant figure within and a patron of the Indonesian architectural community. Historians and architectural scholars have since analysed the mosque as an embodiment of the nation's identity and its inherent unresolved tension between the traditionalist and the pan-Islamic architectural styles (Kusno, 2003; Sarram et al., 2019; Tafliha, 2020). Other scholars argue that the mosque symbolises the rise of nationalism in Indonesia (Fawaid et al., 2019; Khan, 1990) and is expressed through modern architecture (Idham, 2021; Setiadi, 2015; Wiryomartono, 2009). These studies focus on the architectural quality of the building but have not considered Istiqlal Mosque as part of the larger Independence Square, an important historical area where the President's Palace and the National Monument are situated. Scholars of visual theory have suggested that a study of an art and architectural object should consider the context from where the object emerged and is situated. An art object is a sign or an object containing meaning that is inseparable from the world outside its internal system and its "embodiment in its *context*" (Bryson, 1983, p. 131).

This article employs visual theory to investigate the meanings that Sukarno invested in the architecture of Istiqlal Mosque, as part of the frame, in connection with the Independence Square and its interior, where the National Monument stands at the centre. Visual theory provides a tool for examining vision, visual objects, and their meanings in architecture by arguing that an art object, or in this case architecture, is not located in itself but rather emerges from a multifaceted range of cultural, political, and economic circumstances (Harris & Ruggles, 2007). In her important piece, Sontag (1977) demonstrates that visual objects—in her case, photography—are a medium, similar to language, that is frequently used to promote societal norms. This article uses visual theory as a means of unpacking how social-political constructs are visualised through

buildings and their contexts (Mirzoeff, 2023). Using the visual theory, centre-margin, and interiority perspectives, we examine how Istiqlal Mosque, in connection with the National Monument, becomes a critical part of representing the state's power. More than representing, the construction of Istiqlal Mosque can be seen as an act of the state's power declaration and how the state's power is enacted and imposed on the citizens in managing the religious identity of its large population.

The Independence Square: The Site of Investigation

Twentieth-century postcolonial capital cities, such as Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore, are urban formations burdened with the task of representation. Anderson (2006) has described national monuments in Jakarta as a mode of political communication, a form of symbolic speech to shape the collective awareness of the citizens. These monuments played a crucial role in ensuring the nation's unity and in justifying the authority of the state, a crucial aspect of the early decades of postcolonial nation-building. Urban forms and formations are powerful mediums through which a succession of state authorities narrate and visualise certain ideas of nationalism to their citizens and the rest of the world.

As part of the postcolonial nation-building strategies, Sukarno imagined and led the construction of Jakarta as a capital city dominated by monumental buildings and urban spaces to articulate and narrate his vision of nationhood for Indonesia. As Kusno (2000) and Sopandi (2009) have previously examined, Sukarno used architecture and urban forms as a medium to synthesise selected aspects of distant pre-colonial classical Hindu Buddhist past and aspired modern national characteristics in his attempt to both formulate a unifying urban symbolism for the newly independent nation and to present the new Nation to the international world.

Sukarno was fully aware of the strategic impact of architecture and urban forms as a medium to speak to both its citizens and the rest of the world. As expressed in his speech,

[b]uild up Djakarta as beautifully possible, build it as spectacularly as possible, so that this city, which has become the centre of the struggle of the Indonesian people, will be an inspiration and beacon to the whole struggling mankind and all the emerging forces. If Egypt was able to construct Cairo as its capital, Italy its Rome, France its Paris, and Brazil its Brasilia, then Indonesia must also proudly present Djakarta as the portal of the country. (as cited in Kusno, 2000, p. 54)

The resulting urban forms and socio-spatial characteristics thus visualise, combine, and enact a certain imagined collective past and future, involving a layering of abstraction of pre-Islamic cultural symbolism and the more universal architectural expression of progress and modernism, as showcased in other postcolonial capital cities. Sukarno's active role in the establishment of the Non-Aligned Afro-Asian Movement through the 1950s further illustrates his field of reference. Symbolical urban forms and architectural monuments tower over pre-existing indigenous urban forms and in many instances replace older monumental structures and urban forms associated with the colonial era, as in the case of the transformation of the Independence Square area, which is the context of the inquiry of this paper.

The area is located in the centre of Jakarta, surrounding the Independence Square on which the National Monument stands. The square, covering a large area of approximately one square kilometre, had existed since the 17th century when Jakarta was still named Batavia. It was opened as a field of military training in 1809 by the Dutch colonisers (1600s–1811 and 1814–1945), who called it *Buffelsfeld* which literally means buffalo field. When Batavia was returned to the Dutch colonisers after the short British occupation (1811–1814), the square's name was changed to *Koningsplein*—meaning the king's square. It was then developed into the centre of the colonial government (Wiryomartono, 1995).

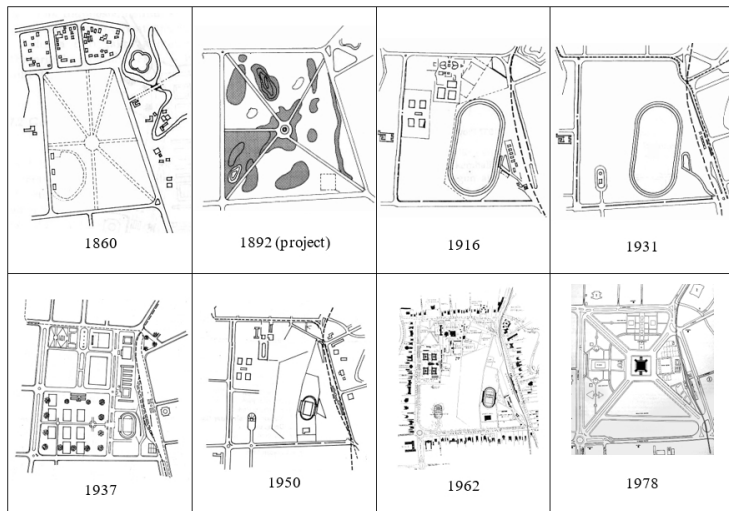


Figure 1
The development of
the Independence
Square from the
Dutch colonial period
to the Sukarno
era (Image by
Wiryomartono)

There were several designs applied to the square (Figure 1) before its name was changed to the IKADA Square under the Japanese

occupation (1942–1945) (Kusno, 2000; Wiryomartono, 1995). IKADA is an abbreviation for *Ikatan Atlit Djakarta* or the Association of Athletes of Jakarta. Sukarno's National Monument project has profoundly changed the appearance and spatial characteristics of the square from an organic, informal space into a formal, disciplinary one (Figure 1). The name Independence Square or *Medan Merdeka*—literally means the field of independence—was declared by Sukarno after delivering his political speech to celebrate the nation's Independence Day on 17 August 1950 in front of a vast Indonesian mass of people in the square. The two colonial forces—the Dutch and British colonials—had centred their control of authority on the square; thus, by giving such a name, Sukarno underlined his intention to claim Indonesia's ownership of the space while reminding people of the national struggle for the nation's independence and appropriated that power for the postcolonial era.

The National Monument as the Centre of the Square and Its Surrounding Buildings

The National Monument was Sukarno's largest project among his other projects, such as Istiqlal Mosque (1962), Parliament House (1967), Hotel of Indonesia (1960), and Bung Karno Stadium (1962). These projects are in Jakarta and situated along Jalan M.H. Thamrin and Jalan Sudirman, the city's main corridors. Sukarno obtained the basic design of the monument from a national design competition held in 1955–1956, although there was no first winner out of it. The plan was then developed by architect Sudarsono and Rooseno, a building structure engineer—both were Sukarno's building advisers.

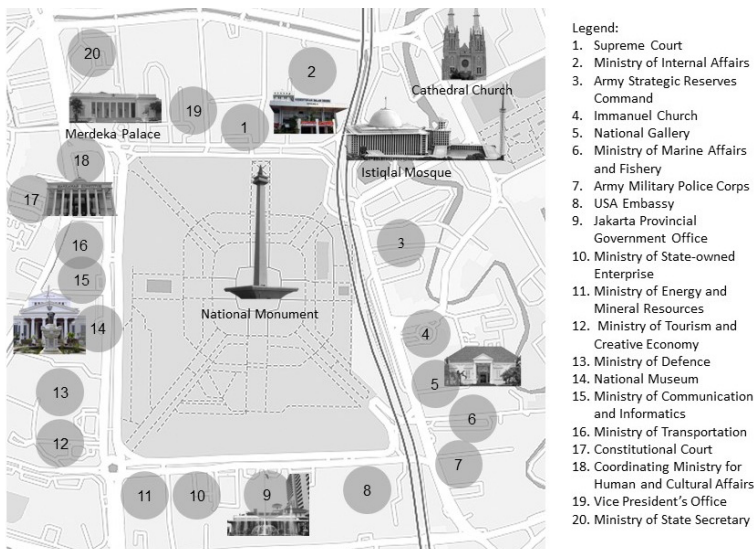


Figure 2
The Independence Square area under Sukarno (Image by authors, adapted from Google Maps)

The National Monument comprises a 127-metre tower on a semi-basement covering 1,600 square metres. The building was built from concrete and covered with marble. The tower stands at the very centre of the square, where the axes of the enormous square meet (Figure 3). The monument was designed to stand out from its surroundings, consisting of important state offices (Figure 2). The tower, covered with white marble with a golden flame on its top, is 132 metres high, and encapsulates the well-known traditional Hindu philosophical form of *lingga-yoni*, symbolising harmony and balance (Sunoto, 2017; Wiryomartono, 1995). By using this ancient symbol, which most Indonesian people are familiar with, Sukarno intended to connect the monument with the shared past while expressing the idea of sustainability and harmony (Aryanti, 2007).

Sukarno's idea of investing the national identity in the monument is clear. In the *Laporan Lengkap Lukisan Sedjarah Visuil Museum Sedjarah Tugu Nasional: Laporan Umum* [Complete Report on Visual Descriptions of the History Scenes for the National Monument: General Report], the Committee of the National Monument History (1964) quotes Sukarno, who said:

A nation does not need material goods only, but it also has spiritual needs... Because of this, although I am still criticized, I continue my efforts with all your help to build a national monument as a symbol of the greatness of the Indonesian nation. (as cited in McGregor, 2003, p. 96)

Figure 3
National Monument
stands at the
very centre of
Independence
Square, surrounded
by Istiqlal Mosque,
Merdeka Palace,
and other important
governance buildings
(Photograph by
Ramayoni)



The monument represents Sukarno in the absence of his physical body. Such a representation is commonly found in visual culture. Although Humayun's Tomb in India is a classic example, Ruggles' (1997) examination of it perfectly explains how the authoritative

leaders were represented in the tomb and the landscape they built. Ruggles (1997) finds that the caliph's centrality in every aspect of his kingdom's life was symbolised by his central position in the pavilion, the palace, and the garden, despite the caliph's absence. Similarly, Sukarno made the National Monument his perpetual representation and his vision of nationhood, even long after he died in 1970. This fact shows that monuments are more than mere public arts; they also have commemorative, social, political, religious, and marketing functions (Cudny & Appelblad, 2019).



Figure 4
The National Monument as seen from the open courtyard of Istiqlal Mosque (Photograph by authors)



Figure 5
The exterior of Istiqlal Mosque (Photograph by authors)

In visualising and spatialising his political idealism, Sukarno made the Independence Square area one of his displays of power and vision of nationhood. The built forms are not neutral and passive but actively frame social interactions. The practice of power can be subtly inserted into spatial structures and the representations of space (Dovey, 1999).

Why did Sukarno not locate the palace at the centre of the square instead? The first possible answer is that as the president's residence where each succeeding office holder will live, the palace is temporarily attributed to the incumbent rather than to Sukarno himself. By selecting a commemorating tower, instead of a palace, Sukarno wanted to reserve the National Monument to be his everlastingly. In his speech, Sukarno stated that the historical square would support the monument he built, and the monument would be surrounded by magnificent buildings (McGregor, 2003). It is essential to underscore that the monument is the tower with its supporting surroundings instead of merely the tower. Therefore, the interior of the Independence Square area is part of the monument.

Istiqlal Mosque and the Framing of the National Monument's Interior

Through the perspective of interiority and Derrida's parergon, the frame—defined as a boundary surrounding a visual object—plays a critical role in shaping viewers' understanding and perception of the object (Derrida, 1978/1987; McCarthy, 2005). As one of Sukarno's major projects situated within a similar area to the National Monument, Istiqlal Mosque (Figure 5) needs to be investigated as the monument's frame to understand Sukarno's vision of Indonesia. The mosque project began in 1962 and was completed in 1984 and became one of Sukarno's monumental projects during his presidency (1945–1966) to construct the national identity of the newly established nation, which had been under colonisation.

Istiqlal Mosque sits on a site to the northeast of the Independence Square. Like the National Monument, the mosque project was initiated by Sukarno and designed by a Christian Indonesian architect, Friedrich Silaban (1912–1984). The design was solicited through an open national design competition in 1955. Silaban was the second winner, but he was appointed to develop the design because there was no first winner. Through this unusual design process, in which architects and architecture students from across the country were invited to participate and a non-Muslim architect was appointed for the final design, Sukarno delivered a message of unity, democracy, and religious tolerance for the multiethnic nation.



Figure 6
The interior of Istiqlal Mosque (Photograph by authors)

The name *istiqlal* is an Arabic word for independence as a symbol of Indonesia's struggle for independence from Dutch colonial rule. The use of the Arabic language to name the mosque is particularly striking because, until the early 1960s, Indonesian mosques were mostly known by their local names, showing their geographical location and scope of service level. On the other hand, Sukarno was famous for his great efforts in promoting the Indonesian language in place of Dutch, the colonial language (Anderson, 2006). By taking an Arabic name, Sukarno aimed to appeal to Indonesian Muslims—who were the majority of the population—and to recognise their contribution to the nation's struggle for independence. This demonstrates Sukarno's awareness of the use of language as a tool for nation-building and shaping the national identity (Anderson, 2006).

Sukarno intended to display the newly independent nation's greatness and its identity as a modern nation, in which Muslims are the majority, through the architecture of Istiqlal Mosque. Sukarno delivered his message in a strong remark at the mosque's groundbreaking on 24 August 1961 that the Istiqlal Mosque would be made of durable materials instead of timber, a common material in Javanese traditional mosques. Sukarno also boldly stated that the mosque would be built in a modern Islamic architectural style to make it stand out among the other existing mosques worldwide (Salam, 1990).

The competition required that the mosque was designed to accommodate 100,000 worshippers. The number was enormous for a mid-twentieth-century work of public architecture. It has a five-floored prayer mezzanine surrounding a domed main prayer hall with an area of 36,980 square metres, a domed entrance porch of 5,000 square metres, and a connecting gallery surrounding a large courtyard of 29,000 square metres (Figure 6). In addition to the prayer spaces, the mosque complex accommodates diverse education, social, and cultural activities for the congregations and society's activities (Holod & Khan, 1997).

The main structure of the mosque is made of concrete. Other materials used are marble and steel. In the early 1960s, those materials were considered new in Indonesia. The international style—dominated by the clean, white wall with glasses—and the enormous white "pan-Islamic" dome reflected a "modern" architecture as imagined by Sukarno (Kusno, 2003, p. 63). The 45-metre diameter concrete dome was not typical in Indonesian mosque architecture. The style might refer to Ottoman architecture (Holod & Khan, 1997; O'Neill, 1994) and the monumental socialist-realist architecture of the Soviet Union rather than traditional Indonesian architecture, which was heavily rooted in the tiered-pyramidal-roofed Javanese mosques. The style orientation was made sense by Sukarno's political tendency toward the Communist Bloc (Holod & Khan, 1997). The architectural mimicry of the international style is commonly found as a strategy applied by postcolonial nations to state cultural modernisation and their departure from the colonial tradition (Batuman, 2016).

The mosque's floor plan incorporates two orientations. The prayer hall is oriented toward Mecca, an obligatory direction in Islamic prayer, while the connecting galleries are oriented toward the National Monument (Figure 7). The mosque visitors can easily spot the monument from the open courtyard of Istiqlal Mosque. This spatial layout implies the attempt to unite the national state mosque as a worship space for the Indonesian population and the National Monument as a state monument (Holod & Khan, 1997). More interestingly, as visitors turn around to the northeast, they will see the Cathedral Church across the mosque. These visual connections between the National Monument and the icons of the two largest religious communities of Indonesia—Istiqlal Mosque and the Cathedral Church—embody Sukarno's vision of national identity and religious tolerance while at the same time show his appeal to people's support to his leadership.

In an era when aerial photography is no longer a luxury, the crooked axis ignites a question. In his seminal work on the Javanese mosque, Kusno (2003) writes that mosque orientation is a complex issue, particularly on the island of Java, where Islam was an imported ideology mingling with the pre-existing Javanese Hindu Buddhist practices. Orienting the mosque toward Mecca means "to obey" and shifting the universe's centre from Java to Mecca (Kusno, 2003, p. 60). In dealing with the orientation, Sukarno chose to incorporate both directions: Mecca and the National Monument (Figure 7).



Figure 7
Istiqlal Mosque incorporates the qibla orientation and the orientation toward the National Monument (Image by authors, adapted from Google Maps)

The next question is, what is the National Monument? Why is it so crucial that the galleries of Istiqlal Mosque are oriented toward the monument? Here is a critical point where we will shift the discussion to the significance of Istiqlal Mosque. The importance of the centre has overwhelmed the viewers so that the surrounding space is "diffused and dependent," in contrast to the "empowered" centre (Ruggles, 1997, p. 177). In other words, the soaring monumental National Monument has made its surroundings less visible and less important to visitors. But Tagg (1995) and Derrida (1978/1987) have inspired us to see the monument as the centre; the surrounding state's departmental offices and Istiqlal Mosque as the frame. Orienting the mosque gallery and opening visual access toward the monument allows the mosque visitors to directly see the monument from the mosque area. This visual connection is a strong statement of the unity

of the two structures within the urban interior of the Independence Square area.

Derrida's (1978/1987) theory is relevant to our examination of the National Monument because the surrounding buildings contain critical functions that the monument does not accommodate. They fill out the lack that the National Monument, or the interior, misses while positioning the monument as the most superior over the others. Using a method similar to Tagg's (1995), we attempt to shift the focus to the surroundings, or in Derrida's (1978/1987) term, the *parergon*, which is commonly seen as subordinate and ornamental (Duro, 2019).

In Figure 8, the centre of the Independence Square (the National Monument) is erased to allow viewers to focus on the frame or the periphery of the square. At the periphery are Merdeka Palace (the President's Palace), Istiqlal Mosque, the state's departmental buildings, the city mayor's office, and several main offices. Except for the company offices and Istiqlal Mosque, these offices are always featured with the state's attributes, such as the state's flag. In Indonesia, the state's flag is always hoisted in any state's offices, yet only hung in people's houses during the state's Independence Day. Additionally, buildings like Merdeka Palace are also attributed with a barricade of wire fences and military guards, who stand at the entrance to the site for security. Attached to the state's offices, these attributes symbolise the presence of the state's authority. Istiqlal Mosque stands at the northeastern corner of Independence Square. Its orientation, colour, and form differ from the other buildings along the periphery. With the enormous white dome and a crescent star antenna on the top of it and the minaret, one will quickly perceive its function as a mosque. But why did Sukarno place a huge, monumental mosque adjacent to his palace and monument on this periphery?

Referring to Bryson's (1983) idea of "sign" (p. xii), the Istiqlal Mosque is a 'dual sign' in this context. First, investigated within its social and cultural context, it is a sign to symbolise the state's major religion, although the state is formally not an Islamic one. As Sukarno stated, he would like Indonesian Muslims to be proud of who they were and the national state mosque should be part of the pride. It is also important to note that the spatial constellation consisting of Independence Square, Merdeka Palace, and Istiqlal Mosque replicates traditional Indonesian cities (Wiriyomartono, 1995). In this layout, the palace and the sultanate state mosque typically surround the *alun-alun* or city square.

Additionally, the selection of the mosque as one of the principal buildings in the constellation shows an intention to represent the Indonesian people, the majority of whom are Muslims. By reminding his people of the spatial tradition and representing the majority of his people through the building, Sukarno wished to legitimise power from them. If we put it in Derrida's (1978/1987) words, Sukarno utilised the periphery of the National Monument to fill the lack in the monument, representing his presence. Or, to reverse the statement, the frame, of which the Mosque is part, helps the National Monument to be legitimate as both the representation of the state's authority and the national property.

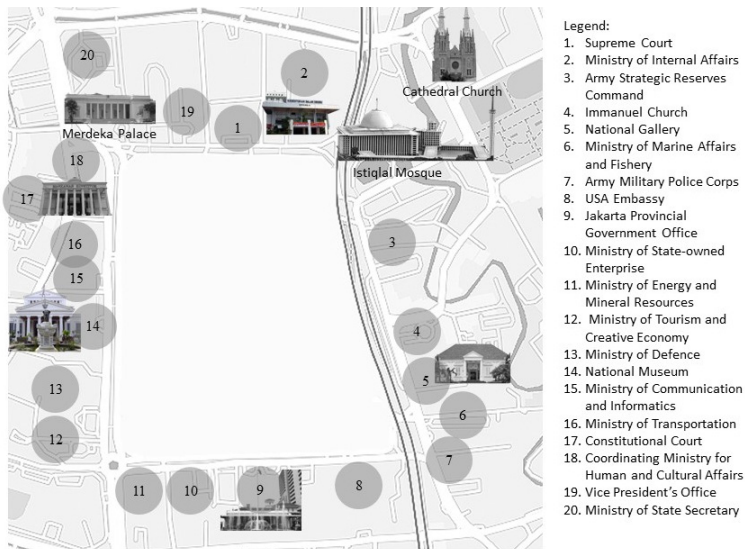


Figure 8
The Independence Square area (Image by authors, adapted from Google Maps)

By situating Istiqlal Mosque at its current point, visitors who arrive from the Sudirman–Thamrin corridor will see the mosque as the background of the National Monument (Figure 9). Standing between the dome and the minaret of the mosque, the National Monument can be seen as framed by the mosque. Viewers will also easily relate the two structures to their similar colours and materials. This view implies that the mosque supports the monument or more straightforwardly, the Muslim community endorses the state (or Sukarno).

In Figure 8, where the National Monument as the centre is missing, the mosque would become the first structure that appears to the visitor's eyes when they reach the square. Diagonal axes, rather than a cross-axial pattern as the primary circulation to reach the monument, accommodate this consideration. So that, at the point where Jalan M.H. Thamrin meets the monument axis, viewers will experience

the spatial continuity of the main city corridor, the monument, and ultimately, the mosque (Figure 9). This connectivity highlights the two structures, the interior of the contemporary city centre—which is continually developing—are united and related. The interiority underlines the mosque as a national monument parallel to the monument (Holod & Khan, 1997).

Figure 9
The National Monument with Istiqlal Mosque and the Cathedral Church in the background as seen from Jalan M. H. Thamrin (Image by authors, adapted from Google Maps (left); Photograph by authors (right))



Second, the Istiqlal Mosque is a sign to denote what Sukarno described as an 'Islamic nation.' For him, Islam as a 'global religion' should disperse within the Indonesian cultural framework. His selection of the international style, manifested through a dome and flat-roofed mosque combined with steel, bronze, marble, and concrete, seeks to represent the pan-Islamic style to respond to globality (Kusno, 2003). By including the elements widely used as symbols of a mosque worldwide, Sukarno departed from a local to a global pan-Islamic mosque to claim the international recognition of the nation he led (Kusno, 2003). Sukarno's dome strategy was similar to what the Dutch colonial employed when it developed the mosques in Indonesia. The traditional tiered roofs were considered representative of a "less-developed" civilisation (Kurniawan & Kusumawardhani, 2012, p. 1).

Sukarno designed the National Monument as a viewing tower from where visitors can observe Istiqlal Mosque from an unusual point of view beyond the human perspective. This sight simultaneously embraces the Cathedral Church at the mosque's background and implies the unity of the monument, the mosque, and the church (Figure 10). By locating the mosque close to the church, Sukarno sent an important message of religious harmony in Indonesia indicating both the inter-religious complexity and the religious tolerance (Emmett, 2009). By adding the mosque to the previously Dutch-

occupied area, Sukarno attempted to redefine the very centre space of the capital city of the newly independent nation as a representative of the largest Muslim country. Sukarno intended for the mosque to serve as a new symbol of the emerging nation's capital city to represent a dignified centre (Salim & Kombaitan, 2009).

The interiority of Indonesia's Independence Square was arranged by Sukarno in such a way as to subtly represent his authoritative power and ideal imagination of Indonesia (Dovey, 1999). The spatial constellation encompassing the National Monument as the centre framed by important state buildings, including the Istiqlal Mosque, is Sukarno's language of power (Anderson, 2006) in articulating his vision of nationhood in postcolonial Indonesia. It is a vision of a modern nation where people of diverse religions and ethnicities live together in harmony. Simultaneously, Sukarno claims his legitimacy as an authoritative leader of the big nation. In Anderson's (2006) terms, Sukarno's monument is a language of power that is used to reinforce the existing power structures by celebrating Sukarno's position as the holder of authority.

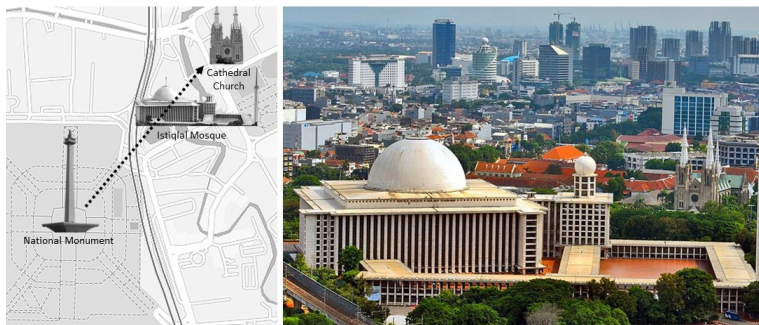


Figure 10
Istiqlal Mosque
and the Cathedral
Church in the
background, seen
from the top of the
National Monument
(Image by authors
(left); Photograph
by Musnahterinjak
(right))

Conclusion

Through the lens of interiority, architecture should be seen as a product inseparable from its social context. This article examines the interiority of the Independence Square as one of Sukarno's political projects to articulate the identity of the newly established nation. Using interiority as a lens to frame the interior of the Independence Square area and connect it with its context where Istiqlal Mosque stands, this article discusses the role of Istiqlal Mosque in representing Sukarno's vision of modern Indonesia. Adopting Tagg's (1995) theory of the frame and discourse, we removed the National Monument as the focal point of view of the Independence Square to allow readers to shift their attention from the centre to the periphery, where the Istiqlal Mosque is situated. This visual strategy helps us to focus and comprehend the Istiqlal Mosque's significance in framing the National

Monument at the centre. Such a spatial organisation mediates the state's power to operate through urban spaces (Dovey, 1999).

Istiqlal Mosque, as both an individual building and an element of the interior of the Independence Square area, plays a critical role in Sukarno's political project to construct the national identity. It is related to the National Monument, the largest project of the first president. Although the mosque is off-centre, it helps to define the discourse of Sukarno's Indonesia and its national identity that the state (or Sukarno) would like to produce through the square. As an individual building, the Istiqlal Mosque represents the Islamic identity of Indonesia as the world's most populous Muslim country while emphasising religious tolerance among the diverse community. As a leader of the newly emerging nation after prolonged colonisation, Sukarno utilises the pan-Islamic International Style design of Istiqlal Mosque as a political visual statement of modern Indonesian Islam.

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