

**PKB**  
**Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa**  
**National Awakening Party**

If the PDIP might lay claim to being, in part, the spiritual heir to the old PNI, the PKB would seek that mantle from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) of the 1950s.

When NU leadership decided in the mid-1980s to remove itself from active (electoral) politics it was in part due to the stifling political conditions that existed during the New Order. With the collapse of the New Order in the wake of the Asian financial crisis, NU leaders – indeed many the very same people as had argued in support of withdrawal from electoral politics, now argued that there was an historic opportunity for political pluralism to again take hold in Indonesia and that NU should be an active participant to the process. Unlike in the 1950s, this time leaders decided to establish a dedicated party, but with the voting power of NU behind it. This party was the PKB. There were other parties seeking to represent the “NU vote” but there can be little doubt that nationally the NU were behind the PKB.

It is also incorrect to assume that the PKB – or indeed even NU – holds the same views, policies and positions as back in the 1950s. Indeed the party claims and seeks the active support of non-Muslims within its organisation and as party leaders. It also seeks the active support of NGO activists and other decidedly “secular” players into its fold. In terms of the key historical ideological lightning rod known as the Jakarta Charter, PKB has argued vigorously against its application arguing instead the need to ensure equality of citizenship with no special positioning of Islam within the Constitution. This was a significant evolution of thinking from the NU of the 1950s.

The party contested the 1999 and 2004 elections. Despite the extraordinary and prolonged internal divisions, some faction of the PKB will participate in the 2009 elections.

In 1999, the party polled 12.6% of the popular vote, coming third – behind PDIP and Golkar. Some 75% of this vote came from just two provinces, Central and East Java, which collectively housed only 35% of total voters. With a further 15% of the vote coming from elsewhere on Java, a mere 10% of the party’s national vote came from off the key Island of Java (and Madura).

In terms of the urban-rural divide PKB demonstrated itself to be a party with a strong rural base.

The party’s most powerful sources of support came from the very same regions within East Java that gave it strength in the 1950s and in 1971, suggesting a very solid continuity of “traditional” electoral support to this NU based electoral vehicle.

Following these elections the party produced its most stunning success by putting together a successful coalition of parties in support of this party’s preferred presidential candidate, KH Abdurrachman Wahid, on the floor of the National Assembly outmaneuvering the larger parties

on the left (PDIP) and right (Golkar) of the political divide in terms of the nation's electoral verdict on the fate of the New Order.

This victory for Abdurrahman Wahid (known popularly as Gus Dur) also represented the peak of the party's success. The party has been witness to a succession of internal machinations and splits and factional squabbles that has ensured that it punches below its electoral weight.

In the 2004 elections, the party lost some support in its heartland of Central and East Java from 27% to 23%. Its vote also fell in most other areas where it has a reasonable vote in 1999, that is above 5%. Interestingly the attempts by the party's key ideological inspiration, Gus Dur, to spread the party's support base to a wider electorate did begin to show some success, albeit beginning from a very low base. In the Christian majority provinces of eastern Indonesia, the party's vote increased. In Papua the party increased its vote to over 5% from the 1.7% gained in 1999 and the vote more than doubling in East Nusa Tenggara and North Sulawesi.

Overall the party was successful in maintaining its position as the largest party in East Java, albeit after suffering an almost 5% loss swing against it, notably to PPP in the eastern parts of East Java.