

P-ISSN: 2338-8617

E-ISSN: 2443-2067

Jurnal Ilmiah

PEURADEUN

Vol. 12, No. 2, May 2024



JIP
The Indonesian Journal of the Social Sciences
www.journal.scadindependent.org
DOI Prefix Number: 10.26811

INDEX COPERNICUS
INTERNATIONAL



Accredited "Sinta 1" by Decree No. 72/E/KPT/2024
Valid Until the May 2027 Edition



Scopus®

ELSEVIER

Clarivate
Analytics

WEB OF SCIENCE™

Cultural Barrier in the Regeneration Process of Islamic Political Party in Indonesia

**Muhamad Nastain¹; Irwan Abdullah²; Zuly Qodir³;
Hasse Jubba⁴; Bambang Cipto⁵**

^{1,3,4,5}*Politik Islam-Ilmu Politik, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

²*Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

Article in Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun

Available at : <https://journal.scadindependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun/article/view/1104>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v12i2.1104>

How to Cite this Article

APA : Nastain, M., Abdullah, I., Qodir, Z., Jubba, H., & Cipto, B. (2024). Cultural Barrier in the Regeneration Process of Islamic Political Party in Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 12(2), 717-740. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v12i2.1104>

Others Visit : <https://journal.scadindependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun>

Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun (JIP), *the Indonesian Journal of the Social Sciences*, is a leading peer-reviewed and open-access journal, which publishes scholarly works, and specializes in the Social Sciences that emphasize contemporary Asian issues with interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches. JIP is published by SCAD Independent and published 3 times a year (January, May, and September) with p-ISSN: 2338-8617 and e-ISSN: 2443-2067. JIP has become a CrossRef member. Therefore, all articles published will have a unique DOI number. JIP has been accredited Rank 1 (Sinta 1) by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, the Republic of Indonesia through the Decree of the Director-General of Higher Education, Research and Technology No. 72/E/KPT/2024, dated April 1, 2024. This accreditation is valid until the May 2027 edition.

All articles published in this journal are protected by copyright, licensed under a Creative Commons 4.0 International License (CC-BY-SA) or an equivalent license as the optimal license for the publication, distribution, use, and reuse of scholarly works.

JIP indexed/included in Web of Science, Scopus, Sinta, MAS, Index Copernicus International, Erih Plus, Garuda, Moraref, Scilit, Sherpa/Romeo, Google Scholar, OAJI, PKP, Index, Crossref, BASE, ROAD, GIF, Advanced Science Index, JournalTOCs, ISI, SIS, ESJI, SSRN, ResearchGate, Mendeley and **others**.



CULTURAL BARRIER IN THE REGENERATION PROCESS OF ISLAMIC POLITICAL PARTY IN INDONESIA

Muhamad Nastain¹; Irwan Abdullah²; Zuly Qodir³;
Hasse Jubba⁴; Bambang Cipto⁵

^{1,3,4,5}Politik Islam-Ilmu Politik, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia

²Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

⁴Correspondence Email: hasse@umy.ac.id

Received: September 19, 2023	Accepted: February 13, 2024	Published: May 30, 2024
Article Url: https://journal.scadindependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun/article/view/1104		

Abstract

This research aims to describe the cultural barriers of the National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa or PKB) in promoting its members as candidates in direct presidential and vice-presidential elections. In the four general elections from 2004 to 2019, PKB failed to place its members as candidates. This condition is presumed to be due to cultural barriers embedded within the party's internal dynamics and the cadre system. The research method employed in this study combined qualitative descriptive approaches by integrating literature studies with Focus Group Discussions (FGD) involving seven (7) competent informants comprising three media editors, two academics, one activist, and one politician. The data obtained from the FGD is the primary guide to trace document data. The data presentation involves triangulation of FGD data, document data, and field observation results. The data findings revealed three main pieces of evidence for cultural barriers: first, egocentrism of leaders and personal dependence, which refers to the positions of Kyai and Islamic Boarding Schools (pesantren) in the PKB cadre system; second, obedience that erases critical thinking, and third, the presence of the "green blood" identity, which holds privileges in the PKB's cadre ship system. These three cultural barriers are not unique to PKB but are shared by most Islamic political parties in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Cultural Barrier; Regeneration; Direct Presidential Elections; Political Party; PKB.*



A. Introduction

The cultural barriers within the National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*, abbreviated as PKB) in the national elite cadre regeneration process in direct presidential and vice-presidential elections have stagnated. Since the leadership era of Muhaimin Iskandar, who succeeded Gus Dur in 2005, until the 2019 elections, no PKB cadre has been officially endorsed as a candidate for president or vice president (Fionna & Tomsa, 2020). Nevertheless, this does not mean that PKB did not play a role in the political dynamics throughout this period. The real anomaly is that PKB, the most prominent Islamic political party with a mass base, had not dared to field a candidate from its internal cadre. PKB had been trapped in pragmatic politics by only supporting candidates endorsed by other party nationalists (Mietzner, 2013). The issue of cadre formation is identified as a cultural barrier leading to the absence of PKB cadres in four presidential election periods. Oligarchic political practices based on lineage persist within the Islamic political culture (Adiputri, 2018; Hatherell & Welsh, 2021; Yakub & Armunanto, 2022; Faisal et al., 2023).

This research examined the cultural barriers faced by the PKB in promoting its cadres in direct presidential and vice-presidential elections from 2014 to 2019. The main objective is to understand and analyze descriptively and reflectively the phenomenon of PKB's failure to nominate its cadres in three consecutive presidential elections. It was also purposed to focus on cultural barriers that have been a significant factor in this failure. There were three primary considerations guide the study: First, the failure of the Islamic party (PKB) in three consecutive direct presidential and vice-presidential elections in a majority Muslim country like Indonesia is a significant political anomaly, but it has been under-studied and underexplored academically (Power, 2018).

Second, PKB's willingness to nominate its cadres in the future would reshape Islamic politics, especially in Indonesia, but cultural barriers must be identified and overcome first (Aspinall et al., 2022; Hariyanto et al., 2024). Third, cultural barriers were a contextual phenomenon that affected PKB and was a chronic issue for almost all Islamic-based political parties,

necessitating careful and in-depth analysis (Bush, 2002). These three approaches form the foundation of this study, focusing on providing a descriptive and reflective analysis of PKB, the most prominent Islamic party in a majority Muslim country, Indonesia.

Politically calculated, what PKB had done can be analyzed as a strategy to maintain power by strengthening party supporters. PKB's political stance has indeed positioned it as the party with the most ministerial positions as a supporting party (Lay, 2017). In President Jokowi's 2014 cabinet, PKB occupied four ministerial seats, with Hanif Dhakiri as the Minister of Manpower, Marwan Ja'far as the Minister of Villages and Disadvantaged Regions Development and Transmigration, Imam Nahrawi as the Minister of Youth and Sports, and M Nasir as the Minister of Research and Higher Education (Asrinaldi et al., 2021). This number is far greater than that of other Islamic parties like *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP), which only received one ministerial seat. It is equivalent to the number of ministerial seats held by *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (PDIP), the main winning party, and its cadres.

Political culture and cultural barriers have played a vital role in shaping the system. The *pesantren* culture heavily influences the cadre ship mechanism within PKB due to its close relationship with *Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama* (PBNU) (Arifianto, 2021; R Bush, 2009; Fealy, 2007; Menchik, 2019). Ideological political culture still has a strong foothold in Indonesia's political dynamics (Herdiansah et al., 2019; Syatar et al., 2023).

PKB's presence with a cultural approach to NU constituents demonstrates how identity politics still has room as a preference. Public acceptance of partial issues based on religious sect (*madzhab*) will support sectarian politics that only cater to the "green blood" identity and potentially be counterproductive to the quality of democracy (Argenti et al., 2022; Haris et al., 2020; Niam, 2020). As Argenti et al., (2022) stated in their article, the anomaly in Indonesian democracy is due to the persistence of identity and sectarian politics as the foundation for Islamic political parties (including PKB) to gain votes. This cultural strategy is



used because the vote acquisition of Islamic parties has remained stagnant in recent elections (Argenti et al., 2022).

This research aims to complement previous studies that have overly generalized political issues on a macro scale, using national political dynamics as a reference. This research will reveal and explain the cultural barriers within PKB in promoting its members as presidential and vice-presidential candidates from 2004 to 2019. These cultural barriers will be linked to the history of the PKB establishment, which cannot be separated from the interests of PBNU, which did not have political party representation. As the main barrier, the proximity to *pesantren* has brought about another aspect: the *pesantren* culture adopted in PKB's political activities. The culture of "*ngestoaken dawuh*", or obedience to the orders of *Kyai*, has led to egocentrism among political leaders and the loss of critical thinking among cadres, from elites to grassroots. The consequences of rejecting "*dawuh*" are seen as political defiance and as "*su'ul adab*", or the loss of ethics and morality. Loyalty based on orders provides a particular space for identity politics based on "green blood", which, in the long run, will lead to extreme right-wing oligarchy.

This research is based on the argument that political issues are not just about power struggles or being on the winning side of five-yearly electoral contests. The existence of cadres as vital organs of political parties must also receive an ideal share to grow and develop. Political cultural practices based on sectarian politics emphasizing *madzhab* egocentrism must be evaluated. Furthermore, identity politics that provide particular space for specific identities are not in line with the spirit of democracy (Platzdasch, 2009; Tamma & Duile, 2020; Djawas et al., 2022). Modern political parties must have a forward-looking vision that recognizes their role as vehicles for the hopes of the nation's youth. Political parties have a heavy responsibility as suppliers of national leaders. They are the "*kawah candradimuka*" (figurative language: a place for personal self-training to be strong, trained, and agile) in shaping and molding young generations with the capacity for wisdom and national integrity.

B. Method

This research used a qualitative approach. It was a descriptive qualitative research relying on primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was obtained through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) involving experts in the field of politics, including journalists, academics, political observers, politicians, and social and political activists. The FGD lasted for 3 hours and focused on the cultural barriers faced by PKB in promoting its cadres' indirect presidential elections. There were seven (7) participants in the discussion, consisting of three senior journalists who are editors-in-chief at their respective media online (Sergah from CNN Media, Wanpur from Mojok.co and Ipang from *Tempo*), an academic represented by Didik (Doctor of Politics and Dean of Communication Faculty), social and political activists represented by Prisma, and Nugroho (Doctor and Political Observer from *Data Politik Indonesia*), and Filo (Politician and PKB Legislative Candidate). Each member mapped the discussion of findings and answers into several categories. Findings that were out of the category of cultural barriers were excluded and not used as data for analysis. FGD data findings were strengthened with secondary data from credible sources documented from relevant institutional websites. Media data served as secondary data to support the main findings.

Data analysis in this research follows a step-by-step process, focusing on three stages: First, the stage of data collection and systematic data organization based on data classification. The research sources (informants) can present their data and findings. Confirmed data will be obtained from each speaker and used as findings. Second, the data findings must be completed with valid and representative evidence from secondary data, and the process must be validated through data triangulation methods.

Third, the process continues by presenting data analysis descriptively. Interpretation is done by connecting primary data findings and reinforcing them with secondary data based on relevance to the issues and categories. Data is reflected in line with patterns and conditions supported by media data. This process identifies three significant cultural



barriers that have made it difficult for PKB to nominate its cadres as direct presidential election contestants for three consecutive periods.

C. Result and Discussion

The cultural barriers within PKB in promoting its cadres to become presidential and vice-presidential candidates in elections become fascinating when viewed as an internal party system and cadre system. An intriguing political reality is connected to the anti-mainstream oligarchic relationship patterns different from those in other parts of the world. Oligarchy within Indonesian Islamic political parties tends to combine monarchy and economic interests. These cultural barriers are also attributed to practices of identity politics based on lineage, as will be detailed in the following research results.

1. Result

PKB has struggled to find competent and suitable cadre figures to contest in direct presidential and vice-presidential elections from 2004 to 2019. Since the failure of Gus Dur in 2004, primarily due to health reasons, practically no PKB cadre has received the party's support to be nominated as presidential or vice-presidential candidates. The scarcity of elite figures is attributed to the political-cultural practices that have eroded the PKB's cadre system. The young generation of PKB has never emerged or captured public attention and widespread support because only one figure has consistently represented PKB, Muhaimin Iskandar, as the party's chairman.

The presence of Muhaimin Iskandar as the central figure of PKB has hindered the emergence of potential elites who could enliven the national Islamic political scene. Since the era of Amin Rais from PAN, Yusril Ihza Mahendra from PBB, and Hamzah Haz from PPP, who contested in the 2004 elections as national Islamic figures from party cadres, no one has garnered massive public support. Some names were occasionally put forward, but often as bargaining strategies by political parties without accurate calculations of electability. This political cultural practice cannot be separated from the history and ideology that shaped political parties, including PKB.



Based on FGD results, as stated by Sergah from CNN and Nugraha, Muhaimin's prominence in the early period was still unable to represent the Islamic party's image like the leadership of Gus Dur and Amin Rais. Sergah adds that in direct presidential elections, the strength of a figure becomes the primary key to victory because voters consider not only the party but also the figure's leadership. Consistent with this, Didik reveals that Muhaimin's character in the early days still needed to be tested for credibility and competence. Muhaimin's position as a young figure at that time was not yet able to gain public trust.

Every political party has characteristics that differentiate it from others. PKB, as a political party born from the womb of NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), has a strong cultural bond with Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and is an integral part of the party's journey from its inception to the present day. As a party closely associated with and advocating NU values and the vehicle for the struggle of *Nahdliyin* (NU followers), cultural values are indirectly embedded within the party. Political culture, besides having positive aspects, also has negative aspects. On the positive side, a closely associated political culture becomes a political identity that forms a cultural bond between the party and its members. The emotional closeness between the party and constituents becomes a complement to ideological masses that are partly born from shared culture. However, the negative aspect of political culture traps the party in a traditional pattern that tends to struggle with the challenges of changing the political system. There are three indicators of cultural barriers that potentially hinder PKB from nominating its cadres as direct presidential candidates from 2004 to 2019.

a. Egoism of leaders and personal dependency

The political culture, which is a convergence of Islamic boarding schools and PKB, includes the implementation of the "*dawuh Kyai*" principle. From the beginning, it emphasizes the belief that any directive from *Kyai* (Islamic clerics) has undergone careful consideration of religious and state regulations. As such, directives should be evaluated based on logical thinking rather than mindlessly obeyed out of loyalty. This pattern



gives rise to a cult of personality, where personal dependency and egocentrism revolve around Muhaimin Iskandar as the party's chairman and icon. Throughout Muhaimin's political career, since assuming the chairmanship after Gus Dur, his figure has been irreplaceable and the sole representation of PKB.

According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), the meaning of *dawuh* is an order (<https://kbbi.web.id/dawuh>). In contrast, in practice, it is a form of obedience to orders due to a hierarchical relationship. *Sendiko dawuh* is usually practiced in the palace or kingdom when the king orders it. In Islamic boarding school traditions, this tradition occurs when receiving orders from *Kyai*, *Gus*, or *dzurriyah Kyai*/descendants of the *Kyai* (*ndalem*).

Table 1. Muhaimin's discourse on presidential and vice presidential candidates

Politic Year	Nick name	Bargaining Position	Result	Source
2004	Gus Dur Era			
2009	Cak Imin	The National Leadership Conference decided Muhaimin as Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's vice presidential candidate	Failed	https://news.detik.com/berita/d-1035102/cak-imin-siap-jadi-capres-pkb https://news.detik.com/peMilu/d-1127477/pkb-pilih-cak-imin-sebagai-cawapres-sby-secara-aklamasi
2014	Cak Imin	Jokowi's candidate for vice president	Failed	https://www.tribunnews.com/pemilu-2014/2014/04/12/wasekjen-pkb-cak-imin-cocok-jadi-cawapres-jokowi https://www.liputan6.com/indonesia-baru/read/2036272/cak-imin-saya-jadi-cawapres-jokowi-bisa-bisa-saja
2019	Cak Imin	Vice Presidential Declaration	Failed	https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1113251/ini-alasan-cak-imin-pede-jadi-cawapres-jokowi https://www.antaraneWS.c

Politic Year	Nickname	Bargaining Position	Result	Source
2024	Gus Muha min, Gus AMI	Presidential Candidate Declaration	Negotiat ion process	om/berita/693093/pkb-ingin-cak-imin-jadi-cawapres-jokowi https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/04/11/09040211/ngototnya-cak-imin-ingin-jadi-cawapres-jokowi https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20230723172229-4-456558/cak-imin-maju-capres-2024-pkb-kami-belum-lupa-cara-menang https://www.detik.com/sumut/berita/d-6857025/hasil-ijtima-ulama-di-sumut-dukung-cak-imin-jadi-capres

Moreover, Muhaimin figure has been projected as a presidential or vice-presidential candidate for the direct presidential election since 2009, the second one to accompany Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who ran for the second time. Since then, Muhaimin, better known as Cak Imin, has been the only name from within PKB consistently put forward as a presidential or vice-presidential candidate every five years. External names like Rhoma Irama and Mahfudz MD briefly emerged in 2014, but in reality, PKB joined the coalition to support Jokowi, who ran with Jusuf Kalla.

Muhaimin's egocentrism as a representation of PKB can be observed through his branding efforts, including changing his nickname. In political propaganda, the name-calling strategy is usually consistent in establishing itself in the public's "top of mind". Muhaimin's name-calling strategy, transitioning from Muhaimin to Cak Imin, then to Gus Muhaimin and Gus Ami, demonstrates a lack of clarity about his identity and how he wants to be perceived. Nevertheless, despite his shifting identity, PKB's consistency in supporting Muhaimin is evidence of the chairman's strong egocentrism within the party system. Filo, an active PKB cadre currently in the process of running for legislative membership, states that Muhaimin's position is highly dominant within the PKB's structure. It is attributed to Muhaimin's



ability to place his loyalists in strategic positions as party chairman. According to Ipang, Muhaimin's egocentrism is reinforced by the lack of equivalent competitors in the PKB. Few sons of *Kyai* (*Gus*) possess political skills and experience as complex as Muhaimin.



Figure 1. Billboards featuring Muhaimin Iskandar with various “nicknames”

However, within the party system, it has become a consequence that the party chairman's name is put forward as the best cadre in national leadership contests. Muhaimin's leadership has no rivals and tends to stifle the emergence of competent potential young cadres. The centralization of the party chairman as the representative of PKB is reflected in the party's meetings with opposing parties or political and religious figures, and Muhaimin never misses these. Cak Imin's “one-man show” political culture reaffirms his leadership and the party's dependence on a single figure, preventing the emergence of competent elite cadres. Muhaimin implements his social power in the form of a significant “lineage” identity from the founders of NU and his role as a political activist, making him a significant force within the internal PKB. With his social capital, Muhaimin can control every organ within the PKB in line with his interests tied to the party.

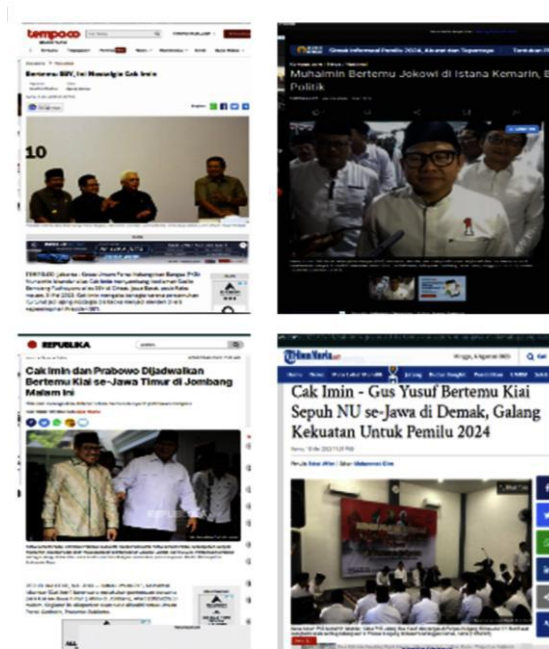


Figure 2. News about Cak Imin in various activities as the representative of PKB

b. Blind obedience suppressing critical thinking

Implementing “*sami’na wa atho’na*” as the highest loyalty caste in the *pesantren* culture embedded in PKB’s political culture has stifled critical thinking. Not every political moment can be generalized to reflect this obedience, but this spirit has massively influenced even at the grassroots level. Muhaimin’s failure as the party chairman for 18 years to produce party cadres with national competitiveness did not receive sharp internal criticism. This acceptance is also reflected in the absence of cadres attempting to present themselves to the public and seek the spotlight. This situation seems to be an acknowledgment by potential cadres that their positions are not highlighted or contested as national figures. Cadres face difficulties concerning party policies that revolve around the interests of the chairman as the central figure and in penetrating the structural barriers to effect political policy changes. This is because strategic positions within the structure are usually filled by the chairman’s loyalists, aligning with the chairman’s interests.



The absence of figures other than Muhaimin within PKB can also be analyzed due to the direct presidential election system. Leadership is no longer measured by integrity but by popularity. Due to the ideological culture of *Nahdliyin* within PKB, integrity in leadership and religious integrity have been replaced by popularity as a prerequisite for electability. In the party system, no one can be more popular than the chairperson. Therefore, there is a need for willingness and a system to promote the popularity of potential cadres.

Muhaimin's political style, which tends to be a "one-man show", indicates that systemically, there is no goodwill to promote the emergence of other cadres as representatives of PKB. PKB's best cadres are trapped in a "Bonsai Cadre" system where they possess significant competence and capabilities but cannot grow and develop in national political contests. Young cadres like Hanif Dhakiri, who once served as the Minister of Manpower in the 2014-2019 Working Cabinet, faded into obscurity after leaving office. Former Minister of Youth and Sports in 2014, Imam Nahrawi, suffered a similar fate after being implicated in a corruption case related to KONI's grant funds in 2018. Today, only the name Khofifah Indar Parawansa remains, more known as the leader of *Muslimat* NU and the Governor of East Java than a PKB cadre.

Blind obedience that suppresses critical thinking will block the capability and courage to provide constructive criticism for comprehensive party systems. Competence and integrity are prioritized in such systems, and potential cadres are valued. Instead, the system should not be subservient to the interests of party oligarchy relying on specific organs within political parties. A comprehensive party system would allow cadres to develop, offering opportunities to participate in the highest political contests. Didik, in his presentation, criticizes Islamic political parties for being exclusive, not open to external parties, and always reserving a special place for those with a lineage from influential *Kyai* and large *pesantren*. However, Wanpur, in the same context, provides a different narrative, suggesting that PKB's cultural strength is indeed a force in building stability within Islamic political parties.

c. "Green blood" identity

Another cultural barrier in PKB politics is the closeness to Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), Islamic clerics (*Kyai*), and the offspring of *Kyai* (*Gus*). The initial closeness arose due to ideological alignment and the political history of *Nahdliyin*. During the early days of independence, NU was a major political party with the power to influence government. Over time, NU returned to its original role as a mass organization, committed solely to Islamic affairs without direct involvement in politics. However, NU's presence as the largest mass organization in Indonesia, representing the majority of Muslims, remained a focus of government attention.

Table 2. Team-of-Five positions at PBNU

Team-of-Five		
Name	Position at PBNU	Position at Team of Five
KH. Ma'ruf Amin	Rais Syuriah/ daily coordinator of PBNU	Chairman
KH. Dawam Anwar	Katib Aam PBNU/ Secretary-General for Syuriah (legislative board) of PBNU	Member
Dr. H. Agil Sirajd, MA	Vice Katib of PBNU	Member
H. M. Rodhi Munir, SE	Chairman of PBNU	Member
H. Ahmad Bagja	Secretary-General of PBNU	Member

Table 3. Team-of-Five assistants

Team-of-Five Assistant	
Name	Position
Drs. Junaidi MBA	Chairman
H. Muchidin Aburusman	Member
H. M. Fachri Thoha Ma'ruf	Member
H. M. Fachri Thoha Ma'ruf	Member
Drs. H. Andi Muarli Sunrawa	Member
H. M. Nasihin Hasan,	Member
H. Lukman Saifuddin Zuhri	Member
Drs. Said Amin Husni	Member
Drs. Muhaimin Iskandar	Member



After the Reform Era, the resurgence of NU's political enthusiasm was implemented with the birth of PKB, initiated by NU figures in a Team of Five (*Tim Lima*) led by KH. Ma'ruf Amin, with members KH. Dawam Anwar, Dr. KH. Said Aqil Siradj, H. M Rozy Munir, and Ahmad Bagja declared on July 23, 1998. Given this proximity, it is unsurprising that the "green blood" identity holds a strategic position within PKB. Their presence not only connects a long history but also signifies the stakeholders behind the establishment of PKB, but more crucially, they serve as an "electoral magnet".

In a democratic political system with direct elections, electability is vital to victory. Mobilizing masses or constituents relies not only on ideology or political promises but also on the charisma of religious figures. PKB took this potential seriously, enabling it to have strongholds in regions with influential Islamic boarding schools, such as East Java's Tapal Kuda and Central Java's Pantura areas.

Table 4. Politicians and Kyai in PKB

No.	Name	Position	Pondok Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools)
1.	Muhaimin Iskandar	Chairman	PP Mambaul Ma'arif (Jombang)
2.	M. Yusuf Chudhori	Chairman of the Central Java DPW (Regional Leadership Council)	PP API Tegalrejo Magelang
3.	Hadi Zainal Abidin	Chairman of the Probolinggo DPC (Branch Leadership Council) and Mayor of Probolinggo	PP Riyadlus Shalihin (Probolinggo)
4.	KH. Nurudin Amin	Vice Chairman of Jepara Regency DPRD (<i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah/</i> Regional Legislative Council)	PP Hasyim Asy'ari (Bangsri Jepara)
5.	H. M Basari	Vice Chairman of Semarang Regency	PP Al Mas'udiyah (Bandungan, Semarang)

The ability to co-opt religious figures becomes an effective strategy for mobilizing large masses. Their charisma serves as a guarantee for constituents to base their choices on their religious guidance. Social and religious integrity provide assurance and a sense of moral and spiritual responsibility in providing political support. The general public often has high trust, believing that these figures have conducted in-depth studies based on their extensive knowledge, validating their choices and support academically and religiously. The general public often does not realize that *Ulama*, *Kyai*, and *Gus* are still human beings with partial interests related to themselves and their groups.

The identity of “green blood” is an implementation of an oligarchy based on lineage or descent. This oligarchic system provides more significant opportunities for the sons of *Kyai* (*Gus*) to access the political stage. With the social power and capital they possess, coupled with the loyalty of the ummah, they can occupy elite political positions without undergoing an extensive hierarchical cadre process. The democratic system with direct elections provides more significant opportunities for famous figures, including religious figures and their families. According to Ipang in the FGD, sons of *Kyai* are sometimes complacent about their special status, leading to a potential lack of academic balance.

2. Discussion

PKB’s failure to produce and promote potential cadres in the highest political contests as presidential or vice-presidential candidates is a fact based on political outcomes from 2004 to 2019. It can be confirmed that during this period, starting from Gus Dur’s era in 2004, no PKB cadres were considered by coalition parties as potential candidates. Muhaimin Iskandar, who won the internal turmoil within PKB and became the chairman since 2005, could not nurture these elite cadres. Some investigations revealed that this failure was not disappointing as it had become a party strategy to consolidate internal solidarity, which was fragmented at the beginning of PKB’s leadership. Cultural barriers in the form of blind obedience that



eliminates rationality and the centralization of leadership can be read in both positive and negative perspectives in the political party's strategy. In a cultural approach, the above issues undoubtedly create an imperfect competition map and open the possibility of hindered cadres due to insufficient social capital.

One of the PKB's challenges in Indonesian politics is breaking free from religious stigma and evolving into a modern and pluralistic party (Chamankhah, 2022; Fox & Menchik, 2023; M Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2020) as a prerequisite for acceptance among diverse backgrounds. It would allow diverse potential cadres with varying characteristics and competencies to enter. The inclusivity of a political party would create space for the public to join and contribute, bringing fresh perspectives to the party's internal system. Traditional political culture with the chairman's egocentrism and "bonsai" practices is no longer relevant in future political systems. Political parties in modern democracies must provide maximum opportunities for potential cadres to find their main stage without interference (Mauk, 2022; Yuda & Kühner, 2023; Zainuddin, 2015). As the most prominent Islamic party, PKB must change its culture to become a modern and open party that allows all cadres to obtain positions based on their competencies.

Reflecting on previous processes, for 18 years under Muhaimin Iskandar, PKB only endorsed its chairman as a presidential or vice-presidential candidate. In some election periods, efforts were made to consider potential figures, often external ones rather than internal party cadres. Unfortunately, in almost every election period, PKB was merely a driving force for candidates from other parties. Popularity and electability became vital issues, with no post-2004 Islamic figures having the popularity and electability to compete with other candidates. In power politics, pragmatism often prevails (Li, 2019; Ufen, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2023). It may be better to support a potentially winning candidate than stand with one who is likely to lose. Political defeat in a democratic system should be seen as a public test, not a sports arena that only remembers one champion. Political losses should be evaluated to formulate new strategies, including



re-evaluating the exclusivity of Islamic boarding schools and the “green blood” identity (M Mietzner, 2020; Nurjaman et al., 2018; Yuda, 2021; Zada et al., 2022).

Becoming an inclusive modern party will stimulate a comprehensive competence-based cadre system. Professionalism in career advancement will force the “green blood” identity to enhance its capacity to compete with other cadres. Without competence and vital skills, their privileges will not significantly aid their political careers. Consequently, cadres will be compelled to assess figures based not just on lineage or cultural identity but on the quality of the cadre (Gueorguiev, Ostwald, and Schuler 2018; Yahya, Kasnawi, and Fahmid 2016). The party’s policy favoring equal opportunities for all cadres will create a conducive internal competitive climate, positively impacting the cadre quality. Simultaneously, improved quality will correlate with cadre products accepted by the public and competitive in terms of electability (Berenschot & Mulder, 2019; Elizabeth et al., 2023; Fox & Menchik, 2023).

Internal party dynamics do not always prove that the emergence of young cadres indicates an ideal internal party system. In various situations, poor management can threaten the stability of a political party. The PPP experienced internal turmoil in the past decade, starting with the party chairman’s loss of integrity and prestige. Surya Dharma Ali in 2014 was declared a suspect by the Anti-Corruption Commission (KPK) in a corruption case related to Hajj funds, was dismissed, and replaced by Romy Romahurmuzy, who was implicated in a corruption case involving the sale of positions in the Ministry of Religion in 2019. Since then, PPP’s internal situation has been unstable, marked by two changes in the chairman within three years: Soharso Monoarfa succeeded Romy Romahurmuzy in 2019 then was replaced by Muhamad Mardiono in 2022 through the national congress. Political leadership plays a crucial role in maintaining party stability. Leadership styles emphasizing religious integrity, organizational abilities, and pluralism will enhance leadership and exemplariness (Hudson et al., 2020; Shah & Taylor, 2021; Fariana, 2021). However, it cannot be



denied that the potential for “plutocracy” may arise in highly esteemed figures (Arlen & Rossi, 2021; Giglioli, 2020).

Cultural barriers that shackle PKB require an evaluation of the cadre recruitment process. Even more pressing is the need to develop an objective, comprehensive, and just cadre system, enabling cadres to find room for competition. A conducive internal competitive environment will stimulate cadre productivity and produce high-quality outputs. Internal system reforms should be considered a choice so that the spirit of improvement can be continued at the elite level and among the lowest constituents. It is hoped that serious efforts to reshape practices of cultural politics will boost cadre integrity and loyalty. The ultimate result of internal system reform is the constituents’ confidence in becoming part of the party because they feel they have equal opportunities for a political career. Oligarchy political practices and identity politics practices existing in the traditional party culture must gradually shift so that the cadre system can operate effectively. Cadres must be convinced that a political career should follow an organizational and step-by-step method based on the competencies they build.

D. Conclusion

Cultural barriers within PKB have hindered the emergence of competent cadres in national political contests. Three key findings in this study highlight this issue. Firstly, PKB is trapped in a *pesantren*-style political tradition that emphasizes the “*sami’na wa atho’na*” principle, leading to the egocentrism of the leader (chairman) as an undisputed central figure. Secondly, an overly dominant and deterministic leadership undermines the critical thinking of cadres. Competent top cadres tend to be drowned in the egocentric system. It is evident in the “one-man show” political practice of Chairman Muhaimin Iskandar. Thirdly, “the one chosen” in PKB’s political tradition creates a particular space for the “green blood” identity, potentially stifling a comprehensive cadre system. All three findings prove that cultural barriers within the PKB’s political tradition have hindered the emergence of competent cadres in national political contests.

The findings in this research complement earlier studies that mainly focus on politics and democracy in Indonesia. This descriptive research can provide critical answers to the research questions posed. The findings in this research are expected to address cultural barriers specific to PKB. They can be duplicated to apply to Islamic political parties as a whole because the political and cultural practices of Islamic parties tend to follow similar patterns. Furthermore, the results of this research are expected to serve as a foundation for future research, particularly on the cadres of political parties, where the focus will be on the internal structure of political parties within a democratic system.

This research has limitations in primary data collection, as it relies solely on focus group discussions and is supplemented with secondary data from websites and media information. The data presented represent external perspectives and lack substantial confirmation from internal party members. Nevertheless, these limitations can serve as a bridge for further in-depth investigations involving those directly involved, particularly in studying cadre systems within Islamic political parties. Such investigations are expected to present more comprehensive data and offer fresh insights for political parties and cadres in managing political parties.

Bibliography

- Adiputri, R. (2018). The Empowerment of Parliament in the Transition from an Authoritarian to a Democratic Regime: Indonesian Experiences and Problems. *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 38(1), 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02606755.2018.1427319>.
- Ahmad, J., Firmanda, H., & Wafi, M. H. (2023). Models and Political Attitudes of Fundamentalist Groups in Indonesian Presidential Elections. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 11(2), 569–590. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v11i2.903>.
- Argenti, G., Paskarina, C., Darmayanti, N., & Deliarnoor, N.A. (2022). Post-Islamism in Indonesia: Analysis of Islamic Political Party Programs in the 2019 National Elections. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 11(1), 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2022-0011>



- Arifianto, A.R. (2021). From Ideological to Political Sectarianism: Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the state in Indonesia. *Religion, State and Society*, 49(2), 126–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2021.1902247>.
- Arlen, G., & Rossi, E. (2021). Must Realists be Pessimists about Democracy? Responding to Epistemic and Oligarchic Challenges. *Moral Philosophy and Politics*, 8(1), 27–49. <https://doi.org/10.1515/mopp-2019-0060>.
- Aspinall, E., Weiss, M. L., Hicken, A., & Hutchcroft, P.D. (2022). *Mobilizing for Elections: Patronage and Political Machines in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Asrinaldi, Yusoff, M.A., & Karim, D.Z.A. (2021). Oligarchy in the Jokowi Government and its Influence on the Implementation of Legislative Function in Indonesia. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2057891121995564>.
- Berenschot, W., & Mulder, P. (2019). Explaining Regional Variation in Local Governance: Clientelism and State-Dependency in Indonesia. *World Development*, 122, 233–244. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.05.021>.
- Bush, R. (2009). Nahdlatul Ulama and the Struggle for Power within Islam and Politics in Indonesia. In *Nahdlatul Ulama and the Struggle for Power within Islam and Politics in Indonesia*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Bush, R. (2002). *Islam and Civil Society in Indonesia: The Case of the Nahdlatul Ulama*. University of Washington.
- Chamankhah, L. (2022). From Political Islam to Civil Religion: The Possibilities of a Pluralistic Constitution and its Impact on Human Rights in Post-Revolutionary Iran. *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam*, 12(1), 125–144. <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2022.12.1.125-144>.
- Djawas, M., Hasballah, K., Devy, S., Kadir, M. A., & Abda, Y. (2022). The Construction of Islamic Inheritance Law: A Comparative Study of the Islamic Jurisprudence and the Compilation of Islamic Law. *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)*, 21(2), 207–219. <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v21i2.7495>.
- Elizabeth, M. Z., Safitri, R. M., Sholihan, S., & Arikhah, A. (2023). Gender-Based Conflicts in Political Parties: Male Domination in Central Jawa's Politics. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 25(4), 1-13. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol25/iss4/15>.

- Faisal, A., Saidah, S., Mukrimin, M., Zakirah, Z., & Darwis, R. (2023). Sociological and Political Constraints of Islamic Sharia Enforcement in South Sulawesi Indonesia. *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)*, 22(1), 159–169. <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v22i1.8604>.
- Fariana, A. (2021). Legal politics as a catalyst in forming sharia economic legal system in the Indonesia's new order and reform era. *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan*, 21(2), 197–212. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v21i2.197-212>.
- Fealy, G. (2007). The Political Contingency of Reform-mindedness in Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama: Interest Politics and the Khittah. In *Islamic Legitimacy in a Plural Asia*. pp. 154–166. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203933404>.
- Fionna, U., & Tomsa, D. (2020). Changing Patterns of Factionalism in Indonesia: From Principle to Patronage. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 39(1), 39–58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419896904>.
- Fox, C.A., & Menchik, J. (2023). Islamic Political Parties and Election Campaigns in Indonesia. *Party Politics*, 29(4), 622–635. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688221091656>.
- Giglioli, M.F.N. (2020). Plutocratic Leadership in the Electoral Arena: Three Mitteleuropean Cases of Personal Wealth in Politics. *Comparative European Politics*, 18(3), 309–329. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-019-00187-0>.
- Gueorguiev, D., Ostwald, K., & Schuler, P. (2018). Rematch: Islamic politics, Mobilization, and the Indonesian Presidential Election. *Political Science*, 70(3), 240–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00323187.2019.1584733>.
- Haris, M., Yuwanto, Yuwono, T., & Sardini, N.H. (2020). The Dynamics and Existence of Islamic Party in 2019 General Election: Case Study of Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 10(2), 409–432. <https://doi.org/10.18326/IJIMS.V10I2.409-428>.
- Hariyanto, E., Cahyani, N., Susylawati, E., Long, A. S., Qudsy, S. Z., & Supraptiningsih, U. (2024). The Resistance of Madurese Muslim Society to the Development of Non-Muslim Tourism Objects. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 12(1), 27–50. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v12i1.1108>.
- Hatherell, M., & Welsh, A. (2021). *The National Narrative, Indonesian Domestic Politics and Grand Strategy BT - The Struggle for the National Narrative in Indonesia* (M. Hatherell & A. Welsh (Eds.)). pp.



- 109–150). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-3811-4_5.
- Herdiansah, A.G., Djuyandi, Y., & Sumadinata, W.S. (2019). Extending Aliran Politics in Electoral Contest: An Insight of Indonesia's Democracy in the Post-2014. *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, 13(4), 518–545. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338536784>.
- Hudson, D., McLoughlin, C., Margret, A., & Pandjaitan, Y. (2020). Leadership, Identity and Performance: The Nature and Effect of 'Prototypicality' in Indonesia. *Politics and Governance*, 8(4), 201–213. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v8i4.3553>.
- Ishomuddin, I. (2014). Continuity and Change of Political Culture: Study on Scientific Insights and Political Understanding on Politicians of Political Parties in Indonesia. (2014). *Asian Social Science*, 10(16), 61–70. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n16p61>.
- Lay, C. (2017). Political Linkages between CSOs and Parliament in Indonesia: A Case Study of Political Linkages in Drafting the Aceh Governance Law. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 25(1), 130–150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185377.2017.1297243>.
- Li, T.M. (2019). Politics, Interrupted. *Anthropological Theory*, 19(1), 29–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499618785330>.
- Mauk, M. (2022). Stable Support for Democracy in East and Southeast Asia? Examining Citizens' Trust in Democratic Institutions. *East Asia*, 39(3), 239–257. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-021-09381-y>.
- Menchik, J. (2019). Moderate Muslims and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia. *Asian Studies Review*, 43(3), 415–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2019.1627286>.
- Mietzner, M. (2020). Authoritarian Innovations in Indonesia: Electoral Narrowing, Identity Politics and Executive Illiberalism. *Democratization*, 27(6), 1021–1036. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1704266>.
- Mietzner, M., & Muhtadi, B. (2020). The Myth of Pluralism: Nahdlatul Ulama and the Politics of Religious Tolerance in Indonesia. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 42(1), 58–84. <https://doi.org/10.1355/cs42-1c>.
- Mietzner, M. (2013). *Money, Power, and Ideology: Political Parties in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia*. NUS press.
- Niam, K. (2020). Between Unity and Diversity Resketching the Relation

- between Institutional-Affiliated Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals and the Government (1990-2001). *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 14(2), 477–498. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2020.14.2.477-498>.
- Nurjaman, A., Suprpto, B., & Masmuh, A. (2018). Nationalist VS Islamic: The Dynamic of Politik Aliran in Post-Suharto Indonesia. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 26(3), 2009–2020. <http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/pjssh/browse/regular-issue?article=JSSH-2225-2017>.
- Platzdasch, B. (2009). *Islamism in Indonesia: Politics in the Emerging Democracy*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Power, T.P. (2018). Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 54(3), 307–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2018.1549918>.
- Shah, T.S., & Taylor, C.H. (2021). The “Ashoka Approach” and Indonesian Leadership in the Movement for Pluralist Re-Awakening in South and Southeast Asia. *Review of Faith and International Affairs*, 19(2), 56–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2021.1917149>.
- Syatar, A., Imran, M., Ilham, M., Kurniati, K., Marilang, M., & Marjuni, K. N. (2023). Examining Call for the Dissolution of Indonesian Ulema Council: Siyāṣah Syar'īyyah Perspective. *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)*, 22(2), 199–211. <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v22i2.6678>.
- Tamma, S., & Duile, T. (2020). Indigeneity and the State in Indonesia: The Local Turn in the Dialectic of Recognition. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 39(2), 270–289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420905967>.
- Ufen, A. (2018). Party Presidentialization in Post-Suharto Indonesia. *Contemporary Politics*, 24(3), 306–324. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2017.1413499>.
- Yahya, M., Kasnawi, M.T., & Fahmid, I.M. (2016). Involution Politics (Study of the United Development Party (PPP) on Electoral Legislative Reform Era in South Sulawesi). *Social Sciences (Pakistan)*, 11(22), 5434–5439. <https://doi.org/10.3923/sscience.2016.5434.5439>.
- Yakub, A., & Armunanto, A. A. (2022). Under Family Control: The Trend of Sole Candidate Elections in Indonesia. *International Area Studies Review*, 25(4), 303–321. <https://doi.org/10.1177/22338659221120972>.
- Yuda, T.K. (2021). The Complementary Roles between Clientelism and Familism in Social Policy Development. *Social Policy and Administration*, 55(7), 1370–1392. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12738>.



- Yuda, T.K., & Kühner, S. (2023). Bringing Indonesia into the Global Welfare Regime Debate: A Literature Review and Future Research Agenda. *Asian Social Work and Policy Review*, 17(2), 103–114. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aswp.12275>.
- Zada, K., Suparta, M., Ruswadi, B., Dahri, H., & Sahid, M. M. (2022). Constitutionalizing Sharia: Identity and Independence of Islamic Politics Among Students. *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)*, 21(2), 195–206. <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v21i2.6954>.
- Zainuddin, M. (2015). Plurality of Religion: Future Challenges of Religion and Democracy in Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 9(2), 151–166. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2015.9.2.151-166>.