

## **CHAPTER– IV**

### **THE ELECTIONS IN THE BTAD, 2004-2016: AN OVERVIEW OF THE STATE AND BTAD**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the first half of this chapter, the Assam Legislative Assembly Elections, Parliamentary Elections in the entire State of Assam and BTC Legislative Assembly Elections from 2004 to 2016 have been analyzed in general with a bird's eye view. In the second half of this chapter, the whole scenario of 40 BTCLA, 12 Legislative Assembly Constituencies and 1 (one) Parliamentary (No. 5, Kokrajhar HPC) which are falling fully under BTAD area have been analyzed in particular. Before attempting a comprehensive analysis about the phenomena of elections, its outcome and political development in all the three levels- Parliamentary, State Assembly and BTC elections of the entire Constituencies falling partly and fully under the BTAD, it is desirable to throw a light on the past elections of the State to understand the dynamic nature of politics and its changing trends over the decades. Keeping this view in mind, the researcher has attempted to throw a light in all the formats of election in the State with a bird's eye view from the base year 2004 to 2016.

#### **4.2 ASSAM PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS (1952 TO 1999): AN OVERVIEW**

For the purpose of elections, the States of India are divided into geographically compact areas, known as Constituencies. There are two types of Constituencies- Parliamentary Constituencies (Lok Sabha Constituencies) and Assembly Constituencies (State Legislative Assemblies). The first Parliamentary election in Assam was held in 1952. This marked the era of new beginning of Assam in the modern polity of India. This event mark Assam's formal political integration with the land of the biggest Republican Democracy and host of the greatest festival of democracy. In the first decade, the State of Assam had 12 Parliamentary Constituencies which were increased to 14 by the year 1967. At present the State comprises of 14 Parliamentary seats.

Generally, the voting patterns of the people in the elections are quite enigmatic to understand. Understanding of the voting behavior of the people is a difficult task to

fathom as it involves the process of taming the dynamism of political behavior of the individual, groups and political community. The researcher had thrown a light in the past polity of Assam to understand the complexity and dynamism of political trends in Assam. The table- 4.2 highlights the level of political participation of the people and the performances of the Political Parties in Assam Parliamentary elections since 1952 to 1999.

**Table: 4.2 Performances of Political Parties and Level of Political Participation in Assam Parliamentary Elections, since 1952 to 1999.**

Year	PERFORMANCES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN ASSAM PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SINCE, '1952-2014'											% of Voters Turnout
	INC		Opponent Parties			OTHERS & INDEPENDENT						
	Seat	% of Vote	Party	Seat	% of Vote	Party	Seat	Party	Seat	Party	Seat	
1952	11	45.74	SP	1	19.15	--	--	--	--	--	--	63.92
1957	9	51.68	PSP	2	19.96	HLC	1	--	--	--	--	51.00
1962	9	45.16	PSP	2	19.16	HLC	1	--	--	--	--	52.75
1967	10	45.84	PSP	2	33.04	CPA	1	IND & Others	1	--	--	54.99
1971	13	56.98	AHL	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	50.69
1977	10	50.56	BLD	3	35.78	--	--	IND & Others	1	--	--	54.88
1980	2	51.01	INCU	0	31.08	--	--	IND & Others	12	--	--	53.73
1985	4	23.43	ICS	1	6.13	PTCA	1	IND & Others	8	--	--	77.40
1991	8	28.49	AGP	1	17.62	BJP	2	IND & Others	3	--	--	75.25
1996	5	31.64	AGP	5	27.17	BJP	1	IND & Others	2	CPM	1	78.50
1998	10	38.97	BJP	1	24.47	UMFA	1	IND & Others	2	--	--	61.06
1999	10	38.42	BJP	2	29.84	CPIML	1	IND & Others	1	--	--	71.26

**Source: Statistical Reports on Assam Lok Sabha Elections  
(Published by Election Commission of Assam)**

Significantly, the increasing participation of voters and political parties is quite visible in the electoral process, election after elections; whether' be it a Parliamentary or State Assembly elections. Over the last few decades like other parts of India, the participation of political parties- national, regional and others have increased proportionately in the State. Over the years, the political mobilization has also substantially increased by leap and bound in the State with the growing numbers of political parties. Subsequently, the nature of political participation has gradually widened as it incorporates activities such as contesting in the election, seeking information, attending election meeting, participation in election campaign etc. This

demonstrates the faiths of voters in democracy and proved wrong about voter's apathy.<sup>134</sup>

It is widely known fact that the Indian polity has been Congress dominated for long years. For many years, Assam had been the Congress dominated State. Apparently, Assam has been safe abode for Congress for more than five decades. From the first general election to till 1977, the party has been undisputed in Assam as the party had continuously maintained its political hegemony in the Parliamentary elections.

In 1952 Parliamentary election, the Indian National Congress won 11 seats in 12 Constituencies with formidable 45.74% vote share against the major opponent of the time 'Socialist Party's 19.15% vote share. The first election registered a total poll percentage of 63.92%. Likewise, the trends of Congress domination in Assam continued almost without any major political resistance and opposition parties until 1980s. The Indian National Congress able to maintained its winning position almost without any drastic falls in the winning figures in successive elections from 1952 to till 1977. Rather, during these periods the percentage of vote share of Indian National Congress saw inclined against the major political parties of the time in Assam.

During the elections of subsequent years of 1957, 1971 and 1977 the Indian National Congress crossed the 50% figures in popular vote share against the major political parties of the time. In 1971, the Indian National Congress able to grabbed 13 Parliamentary seats out of 14 with overwhelming 56.98% of popular vote share in the State. While the percentage of total poll across the State remain just above 50% figures more or less similar with no trends of drastic falls and gain.<sup>135</sup>

Till 1978, the regional parties were not well organized and in a position to dislodge the Congress domination in the State. Meanwhile in 1980's Assam experienced a political turbulent in the form of popular Assam Movement. The popular Assam Movement was launched by the AASU in 1979. This was a popular movement against illegal immigrants in Assam. In other way it was a movement of the people of Assam against the Congress government's policy of Muslim appeasement politics in Assam. After all, the Congress has been accused of settling the illegal immigrants of Bangladeshi origin in the name of vote bank politics at the cost of indigenous

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<sup>134</sup>Gitanjali Baruah, "Voting Behaviour Analysis of Lakhimpur Parliamentary Constituency, Assam (1985- 2009) (A PhD Thesis submitted to Gauhati University- 2012) p- 30

<sup>135</sup>Gitanjali Baruah (2012): Ibid, pp- 32-33

Assamese. In no time, the resentment against the policies of the Congress government took a political overtone giving impetus to the feeling of regionalism a streamline politics for the first time in Assam. This movement tarnished the great image of Congress in Assam. During this period of political unrest the Congress experienced a nightmare downfall in the Parliamentary election of Assam. The party managed to retain only two seats; while as many as 12 seats were grabbed by the 'Independent and Other' candidates originating out of the strong regionalism feeling and Assamese sentiment stimulated from the political atmosphere in Assam of the time. In 1985, a historic Assam Accord was signed between the Government of India and the AASU. Consequently, this event marked the end of Assam Movement but it gave birth to the strong regional based political party of the time fondly known as Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in 1985. This party was born out of Assamese sentiment and around the leadership of the movement.

Beginning of 1980s sowed the regionalism politics in Assam steadily got its peak and momentum in 1985 with the rise of AGP in the State politics. The rise of AGP in the State politics greatly harmed the political hegemony of Congress in the State. In this election the Congress managed to capture 4 Parliamentary seats; whereas, ICS and PTCA managed to grabbed 1 seat each; while majority of the seats were shared by the Independent candidates and Other parties born out of the regionalism sentiment. In this election the voters' turn outright anti-Congress to wipe away the Congress dominated politics in Assam as was apparent from its reeled down to the all time lowest 23.43% of vote share in Assam contrast to that of higher percentage of total poll turnout of 77.40%.<sup>136</sup>

Onward 1990s, the Parliamentary election in Assam witnessed the rise of not only the mass participation in elections but the entry of political parties like BJP and AGP in Parliamentary elections of Assam. In particular, the BJP had no solid mass base in Assam until 1990s. BJP's inroad to politics of Assam was the result of declining popularity of the Congress both in the National politics and State politics of Assam in particular. Though the Congress managed to win 8 seats in 1990's election but BJP's win of 2 seats in Assam was assumed to be the arrival of major political rival in the State. By the time, the BJP had already started mass mobilization and political

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<sup>136</sup>Gitanjali Baruah (2012): Ibid, pp-43-47

campaign in pocket areas in view of rooting in Assam. Meanwhile, in 1996 election, AGP registered an unprecedented 5 seats win in the Parliamentary elections, though Congress also managed to win 5 seats; BJP and CPI 1 seat each and Independent winning 2 seats was an indication towards trending of multi-polarity in Assam. The United Front government formed in 1996 collapsed when the Congress withdrew their support from the coalition partner after the alleged link of DMK by an investigative panel to Sri Lankan separatists blamed for the killing of Rajiv Gandhi. This period witnessed a political instability and the end of an era of single party domination in the centre.

This led to a fresh election in 1998 in which no single party got a majority to form the government. Although, BJP under the leadership of A.B. Vajpayee regain a position to form the government when AIADMK extend their support. But soon this government also collapsed on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1999 when the BJP's coalition partner AIADMK withdrew their support. Amid, this political instability and leadership crisis in the centre the Congress fared considerably well in Assam with 10 seats win in each of the fresh elections held aftermath of two consecutive failed government. It also marked the first time since independence that India's long time-ruling party the Indian National Congress failed to win majority in two consecutive elections.<sup>137</sup>

#### **4.3 VOTING PATTERN OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, ASSAM (2004, 2009 & 2014): AN OVERVIEW**

The analytical view point of the above electoral performances of political parties and level of political participation in Parliamentary elections since 1952 to 1999 give a glimpse of historical background towards understanding the political adventures of several political parties, the nature of changing political trends, political mobilisation, mass participation and electoral events of the time in Assam. This background analysis brought to light- the political dominance of Congress party in Assam during the first three decades of its political adventures, changing political trends and the rise of regionalism in Assam during and after the Assam Movement followed by the natural consequences of political shift towards multi-polarity in politics of Assam.

Here, voting pattern of Parliamentary election for the base year 2004 to 2016 was sought for background understanding of elections in Assam. The table 4.3 (a)

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<sup>137</sup>Gitanjali Baruah (2012): Ibid, pp- 48-65

indicate 14 Parliamentary constituencies of Assam. These are- Karimganj (SC), Silchar, Autonomous District (ST), Dhubri, Kokrajhar (ST), Barpeta, Gauhati, Mangaldoi, Tezpur, Nowgong, Kaliabor, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur. It includes 11 general constituencies, 2 seats reserved for Schedule Tribes and 1 seat reserved for the Schedule Caste. It also indicates the data of total electors, voter turnout and poll percentage of each Parliamentary Constituency in year wise- 2004, 2009 and 2014.

**Table: 4.3 (a) Electors Data Summary of Parliamentary Elections of Assam break-up in Constituency Wise- 2004, 2009 & 2016.**

Name of the Constituency	Year 2004			Year 2009			Year 2014		
	Total Electors	Voter Turnout	% of Vote	Total Electors	Voter Turnout	% of Vote	Total Electors	Voter Turnout	% of Vote
1. Karimganj (SC)	979105	671065	68.54	1066730	686686	64.37	1164231	886307	76.13
2. Silchar	879243	607884	69.14	975147	688454	70.6	1055627	799705	75.76
3. Autonomous District (ST)	579284	401612	69.33	692888	480616	69.36	701585	543390	77.45
4. Dhubri	1149939	863463	75.09	1371290	1046274	76.3	1547868	1369674	88.49
5. Kokrajhar (ST)	1216553	966915	79.48	1375247	1014119	73.74	1502199	1215887	80.94
6. Barpeta	1075749	762614	70.89	1237190	899998	72.75	1426924	1205734	84.50
7. Gauhati	1441360	881696	61.17	1722545	1108568	64.36	1921827	1505483	78.34
8. Mangaldoi	1209839	848741	70.15	1414607	989539	69.95	1513515	1233451	81.50
9. Tezpur	1006389	720182	71.56	1207117	842312	69.78	1256100	980655	78.07
10. Nowgong	1149244	785885	68.38	1408480	999180	70.94	9431481	7757894	82.26
11. Kaliabor	1153483	763617	66.20	1346550	959735	71.27	1455620	1165764	80.09
12. Jorhat	1078149	667973	61.96	1180914	761915	64.52	1187798	930814	78.36
13. Dibrugarh	969905	631416	65.1	1113415	749801	67.34	1122387	890884	79.37
14. Lakhimpur	1126632	800101	71.02	1331497	910599	68.39	1429592	1111902	77.78
<b>Sum of State</b>	<b>15014874</b>	<b>10373164</b>	<b>69.09</b>	<b>17443617</b>	<b>12137796</b>	<b>69.58</b>	<b>26716754</b>	<b>21597544</b>	<b>80.13</b>

Source: Statistical Reports on Assam Lok Sabha Elections  
(Published by Election Commission of Assam)

#### 4.3.1 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION ASSAM- 2004

In 2004 Parliamentary election, Assam had a figure of total elector 15014874 of which 10373164 are turnout voter. This year Assam recorded 69.09% of poll across the State. In this election the ruling Congress (I) fielded a candidate in all the Parliamentary

seats. Remarkably, the BJP and AGP' each contested in 12 Constituencies but the parties managed to victory only 2 seats each with 22.94% and 9.95% vote share. While the Congress party grabbed 9 seats with 35.07% of valid votes polled.

**Table: 4.3 (b) Performances of Political Parties and Level of Political Participation in Assam Parliamentary Elections of 2004, 2009 & 2014.**

Year	PERFORMANCES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN ASSAM PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SINCE, '2004-2014'											% of Voter Turnout
	INC		Opponent Parties			OTHERS & INDEPENDENT						
	Seat	% of Vote	Party	Seat	% of Vote	Party	Seat	Party	Seat	Party	Seat	
2004	9	35.07	BJP	2	22.94	AGP	2	IND & Others	1			69.09
2009	7	34.89	BJP	4	16.21	AUDF	1	BPF	1	AGP	1	69.58
2014	3	29.61	BJP	7	36.51	AIUDF	3	IND & Others	1			80.13

**Source: Statistical Reports on Assam Lok Sabha Elections  
(Published by Election Commission of Assam)**

The distinctive feature of this election was that- although AGP had relatively higher vote share of 19.95% against 11.92% of previous election but their performance remained more or less unimpressive; rather it failed to woo the Assamese electors on marginal plank. On the other hand, BJP repeated its tally of 1999 Lok Sabha election with slightly better vote share than AGP. Although, the Congress party grabbed majority 9 seats but its vote share fell by 3.35% against previous election. This section of supporter switched to AGP's favor in the Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh Constituencies where the Congress suffered a major setback. These two Constituencies are dominated by the tea garden labourers. And remarkably, these Constituencies were traditionally Congress dominated Constituencies since 1952, but for the first time the Congress lost to the AGP. These Constituencies are majorly concentrated by the tea tribe communities mostly belong to the tribal groups which have been playing a decisive role in these Constituencies for many years. This community is largely concentrated in 10 districts of Assam and constitutes a deciding force for around 30 Assembly Constituencies. This community has been a traditional vote bank of the Congress party. However, the voting pattern took a new course when this community lean their support to AGP instead of Congress. As a result, the Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur Constituencies slipped from the Congress hold for the first time and came under the occupation of AGP- a non-Congress party.

Muslim vote bank politics has been one of the prominent features of electoral politics in Assam. Muslims population constitute considerably large group with 31.9% of the total population of Assam. Traditionally, the Muslim voters have been loyal supporters of the Congress. Time and again, the community has supporting the Congress' election after elections and not surprisingly their support leaned towards the Congress in this election also. Their support to the Congress remained intact. As a matter of fact, the Congress candidates A. F. Golam Usmani and Anowar Husain emerged victor from the Muslim dominated Constituencies with 35% vote share in Barpeta and 43.6% vote share in Dhubri respectively.

The tribal population of the plain region constitutes large part of the demography of Assam and it has been a decisive force in the course of politics in Assam. The Congress had a considerable support base among the tribal groups also. The Mongoldoi Constituency has a sizeable tribal voters and it was under Congress domination in 1999 also slipped to BJP in 2004. In this Constituency the tribal votes played a decisive role.<sup>138</sup> The news paper reported that- the votes of Karbi tribes may get polarized to different parties while the Mising tribe voters were assumed to support the Congress party. It was because the Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK) and the Mising Mimang Kebang (MMK) had expressed their satisfaction with the step taken by the State government to form a Mising Autonomous Council under the provision of the Sixth Schedule.<sup>139</sup> Moreover in this election, the ethnic issue such as autonomy to the different communities under Sixth Schedule, ethnic clashes and the protection of Tribal Belt and Block in particular, the issue of Scheduled Tribe status to the Koch Rajbanshis and the issue of BTAD occupied a central place in the poll campaign in the Tribal Belt and Block areas.

In this election the Common Minimum Agenda with burning issues like the Infiltration, Border fencing, IMDT Act, and Special financial packages for the development of Assam as well as welfare incentives remain the top agenda of this election campaign.<sup>140</sup> The Congress party stood opposed to the repeal of IMDT Act and assured Permanent Land pattas and status of OBC to 'Char' dwellers in Assam. The Congress policies of Muslim appeasement politics have seemingly endeared itself

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<sup>138</sup>Gitanjali Baruah (2012): Ibid, p- 66

<sup>139</sup>Sentinel, April 7, 2004

<sup>140</sup>Sentinel, March 27, 2004



among the minority people. As such, major portion of the minority votes remained intact with the Congress as indicated by the party's victory in the Muslim dominated pocket areas and Constituencies at large.<sup>141</sup>

The Congress set their electoral campaign with popular slogans like- Unity, Amity, Trust, Growth and Development. Some other poll promises the party has set out in this election were- employment generation, industrialization, restart of Assam Gas Cracker Project at Lepetakota, construction of roads and two bridges over the Brahmaputra connecting Jorhat, Majuli and Lakhimpur, implementation of the Employment Guarantee Scheme in the State and to convert the Meter-gauge lines of the railways into Broad-gauge in Assam. It also emphasises to solve the insurgency problem, safeguard of minorities and upliftment of living standard of the tea laborers through the reformation in the Assam Tea Labour Plantation Act, 1951.

For BJP' the issue of perennial influx from Bangladesh, repeal of Illegal Migrants Determination Tribunal (IMDT) Act and detection of foreigners remain the top political issues in their electoral campaign. While, the regional party' Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) staged to fight for greater autonomy and decentralization of power to the State. The core agenda' AGP had set to fight this election were- 100% job reservation for the locals in grade III and IV of the Public Sector Industries in Assam, transfer of Tea Head Office from Kolkata to Guwahati, convert the loan component from the Centre for flood control in the State to a 100% grant, State control over Natural Resources including crude oil, petroleum product, natural gas, coal specially the crude oil from which the Centre had been collecting oil development tax from Assam and had benefited the Central Government nearly Rs.850 Cr. but instead of spending this amount for the development of Assam the whole amount is transferred to the consolidated fund of Central government.<sup>142</sup>

Above analyses of the 14<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary election result present a mixed scenario of the electoral politics in Assam although the Congress party emerged a dominant party by securing 9 seats out of 14 seats. It also witnessed the fall of percentage in vote share, defeat in traditional Congress dominated seats, shifting voting pattern among different tribes and groups in different Constituencies.

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<sup>141</sup>Gitanjali Baruah (2012): Op. Cit, p-67

<sup>142</sup>Gitanjali Baruah (2012): Ibid, p- 68

### 4.3.2 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION ASSAM- 2009

The 2009 Lok Sabha election brought a new equation in the electoral politics of Assam. The Congress party won seven seats with 34.89% votes. The party suffered a minor loss of two seats with marginal loss in vote share.<sup>143</sup> The voter turnout in this election stood at 69.60% which was 4.9% higher than the previous Lok Sabha election. Besides, the voter turnout among women was also notable in this election. Undoubtedly, it was a significant political development towards narrowing down the gender gap in voter turnout. However, among 158 contesting candidates only 11 were female candidates.<sup>144</sup> In this election, the AGP and BJP came into pre-poll agreement after poor performances in previous elections. The AGP-BJP duo set their electoral venture together for the second time. However, this electoral understanding seemingly failed to dispel the apprehension among religion minorities about the political ideology and agendas of BJP. This time the BJP performed well and managed to grab four seats against two seats of previous election although its vote share fell to 16.21% against 30.8% of previous election. On the other hand, the AGP managed to retain a lone seat from six contested candidates with 14.60% of total vote share.<sup>145</sup>

This election introduced the Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF) in the electoral fray for the first time. The party contested 9 seats and was able to grab one seat with 16.1% votes. Needless to say that, this party in a very short period had able to grabbed the support base among the Muslim voters. Their Muslim card politics further strengthened when it started polarization among Muslims in the line of “Immigrants and the Domicile”. In particular, the party consolidated its base in the Bengali Muslim dominated areas of Assam posing a great challenge to AGP- a party offspring of popular Assam movement. In a significant electoral event, the AGP-BJP ally duo suffered electoral debacle when a sizeable tea garden votes shift to the Congress party. In this election the tea garden community and immigrant Muslims in some Constituencies had seemingly played a decisive role. In particular, the tea garden community dominated areas of upper Assam like Dibrugarh, Jorhat, and Lakhimpur the Congress party made its presence felt. In a major event of political switchover, the Chief of Chah Mazdoor Sangha, a Congress candidate Paban Singh Ghatowar defeated

<sup>143</sup>Gitanjali Baruah (2012): Ibid, p-69

<sup>144</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2009): Op. Cit. p-159

<sup>145</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2009): Ibid, p-160

Sarbananda Sonowal of AGP in Dibrugarh Constituency- a Chief protagonist to scrap IMDT Act. In Lakhimpur Constituency the Congress party returned after a defeat in pervious election also able to retain the Jorhat Constituency.

Not surprisingly, the AGP-BJP alliance failed to catch the imagination of the Muslim voters. In a significant poll battle in Barpeta Constituency' AGP suffered a massive erosion in a percentage of vote share in the Muslim dominated pocket areas like- Baghbor (3.13%), Jonia (5.92%) as well as in Dhing (4.62%) under Nagaon Lok Sabha Constituency. Significantly, the Congress party also failed to stand in their expectation in Muslim dominated segment as the party suffered and had relatively lower percentage of vote share than previous election. The party could advance only in 4 seats against 15 seats of previous election in 24 Assembly segments. Not surprisingly the AUDF emerged a massive gainer in Muslim dominated regions as the party opposed tooth and nail against the scraping of IMDT Act. Though, the party got only one seat out of nine seats contested but the party was able to raised the eye balls of other parties and the Assamese intellectual and the voters in particular by successfully mobilizing the Muslim voters against the like of Congress party and grabbing the highest percentage of votes in 15 Assembly segments. The rise of AUDF in the Muslim dominated areas was alarmed not only to the Congress in particular but for the politics of Assam in general.<sup>146</sup> National Election Survey's post-poll survey revealed that- the Congress party virtually lost the supports from their traditional Muslim voters who were immigrant Muslims and around 78% of these voters found a new trust upon AUDF. However, the Congress party could able to win the trust of Assamese Muslims. The figures of 32% of Muslim votes swing in favor of Congress and 60% towards AUDF is quite indicative towards shifting voting pattern among Muslim voters. In contrast, the AGP-BJP combined could secure only 5% of Muslim votes against 19% fall of previous election.<sup>147</sup> Amid, the division of Muslim votes between the Congress and AUDF' the AUDF seemingly was a gainer as the Congress hold weakens in many of the Constituencies where Muslim voters constitute sizable number. As a matter of fact the Congress lost three Muslim dominated seats because of the division of Muslim votes; while the AUDF captured the Dhubri Constituency which was under the Congress in

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<sup>146</sup>Gitanjali Baruah (2012): Op.cit, p-70

<sup>147</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2009): Op.cit, p- 161

2004. Hence it can be said that in the Muslim dominated Constituencies the voting behavior of the voters is certainly decisive.

In the ST reserved Constituency of Autonomous district and Kokrajhar Constituency the election verdict clearly indicate an emerging trend of ethnic polarization. In the Autonomous district the Congress returned to the Constituency after a gap of five terms by 14.75% of vote poll. In Kokrajhar Constituency, Mr. Sansuma Khungur Bwiswmutiary of the BPF- the Congress ally regained seat with highest margin of votes.

From the above analyses it may be argued that- although the Congress party still assumes key player in the politics of Assam but the post Assam Movement saw the decline of Congress dominance especially after the emergence of regional party like AGP and AUDF in recent times and other ethnic based political parties and organizations.<sup>148</sup>

#### **4.3.3 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION ASSAM- 2014**

The 2014 Lok Sabha election brought a landmark political switchover in the political history of Assam. The long history of Congress dominated politics of Assam has been taken over by the new political force- the BJP after the Congress lost its prominence in 2004 Lok Sabha election in Assam. In this election, the BJP won overwhelming 7 seats with 36.5% vote share; while the Congress and AIUDF bagged 3 seats each with 36.5% vote share to Congress party and 14.8% vote share to AIUDF. In a significant development the AGP suffered a major debacle in this election. The AGP failed to grab even a single seat and managed to secure barely 3.8% vote share losing 11% vote share against previous election. In contrast, the BJP gained 20% vote share against the loss of 6% of Congress party. Interestingly, the AIUDF gained two seats at the cost of just 1% vote share.<sup>149</sup>

The 2014 Lok Sabha election was marked by four major trends towards political shift in Assam. First, the Congress party dominance in politics of Assam was challenged and their political ground was reduced in the State. Secondly, the AGP- a major regional party seemingly sank in the political wave caused by Modi magic that shook

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<sup>148</sup>Gitanjali Baruah (2012): Op.cit, p-72

<sup>149</sup>H. Bhattacharyya, KKS Hausing and J. Mukherjee (2017): Indian Federalism at the Cross roads: Limits of the territorial management of the ethnic conflict, India Review, Vol. 16, No. 1, p-66

nationwide during the election. Thirdly, the AIUDF remains regionally concentrated and draws major electoral dividend in a polarized contest. In fourth, the BJP gained its dominance across the regions in the State. The election result clearly indicates that other than the BJP the major opposition parties have remained weak and divided. In contrast, the AGP's electoral base witnessed continuous shrinking; while the AIUDF's political adventure has remained limited to the Muslim dominated regions.<sup>150</sup>

**Table: 4.3 (c) Seats and Percentage of Vote Share of different Political Parties in the following Elections in Region Wise- Barak Valley, Lower Assam and Upper Assam**

YEAR	REGION	SEATS AND VOTE SHARE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE REGIONS IN THE FOLLOWING ELECTIONS							
		INC		BJP		AGP		AIUDF	
		Seats	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share
2009 LOK SABHA ELECTION	Barak Valley	2	35.5%	1	26.6%	0	0	0	24.5%
	Lower Assam	1	28%	2	15.9%	0	10%	1	20%
	Upper Assam	4	41.4%	1	12.8%	1	24.2%	0	9.4%
	Total	7	41.4%	4	16.2%	1	14.6	1	16.1%
2014 LOK SABHA ELECTION	Barak Valley	2	34.8%	0	33.7%	0	20.1%	1	0.6%
	Lower Assam	0	28.8%	2	29.1%	0	3.6%	2	18.3%
	Upper Assam	1	33.9%	5	45.2%	0	5.2%	0	9.3%
	Total	3	31.8%	7	36.5%	0	3.8%	3	14.8%
2011 ASSEMBLY ELECTION	Barak Valley	18	47.8%	0	17.4%	1	4.8%	1	17.4%
	Lower Assam	16	30.4%	3	8.4%	3	15.9%	13	17.1%
	Upper Assam	44	45.5%	2	12.6%	6	20.6%	4	8.4%
	Total	78	39.4%	5	11.5%	10	16.3%	18	12.6%

Source: CSDS Data Unit.

(\*AGP–BJP had a pre-poll electoral alliance. The BJP contested on eight seats while the AGP fought on six seats. \*In 2014 it was a Congress–BPF alliance.)

The variation in physiographic of Assam- Barak Valley, Lower Assam and Upper Assam also varies in composition of demographic pattern in terms of religions, language, caste and cultures has been determinant factors of voting pattern and are considerably significant in molding the nature and pattern of electoral competition in the State. They are really vital to understanding the contours of the political shift in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections in Assam. The result of 2014 Lok Sabha election present an

<sup>150</sup>Sandhya Goswami and Vikas Tripathi (2015): "Understanding the political shift in Assam: Withering Congress dominance" Published in Economic and Political Weekly, September 26, 2005, VOL. I, NO. 39, p-67

interesting pictures of politics in Assam if understood regionally. The BJP's 5 seats win with 45.2% vote share in Upper Assam was a notable political event and a vivid indication of the rise of the BJP in Upper Assam; while the defeat of Congress in 3 seats with 7% vote share in the region was the major reason for the downfall of Congress in the State in general. However, the Congress could roughly maintain its vote share in Barak Valley and Lower Assam. Similarly, the AGP also suffered the same fate in Upper Assam, losing 19% vote share and one seat. Interestingly, the AIUDF roughly retained its vote share in all the three regions. A conclusive comparison drawn of the 2009 and 2014 Lok Sabha election shows a considerable gain in all the regions and its gain in Upper Assam in particular were the most phenomenal.

The BJP's gain in Assam reflects its organizational preparedness and strategic regional alignment in recent times. Traditionally, the BJP has been relatively strong in terms of seat share and vote share in Lower Assam and Barak Valley against Upper Assam. Since 1998, the BJP seemingly had a relatively greater share of seats and votes in the region than AGP in all Lok Sabha elections against that of AGP's greater share of seats and votes in all State Assembly elections since 2001. It may be observed that the anti-incumbency sentiment against the long time ruling Congress in the State and electoral stagnation of AGP on the other end paved the way for BJP's political inroad to Upper Assam which constitutes most number of Lok Sabha and State Assembly Constituencies in the State. An even performance by the BJP across regions in Assam is most disturbing for other parties. The shift of political landscape in favor of BJP not only reflects the party's changing social base but also determined its potential to further weaken the regional party like AGP- a party which traditionally had a dominant social base in Upper Assam.

The most significant challenge in this election was to understand the pattern of the performance of AIUDF. The party improved its tally with two seats gained as compared to 2009 but the party also suffered a marginal lost 1.27% of vote share. The party won three seats, as many as the Congress did but with just 14.8% vote share as noted in previous election.<sup>151</sup> Interestingly, the Congress managed to retain three seats with 31.8% vote share which is double the size of AIUDF's vote share. Although the vote share of both the AIUDF and the Congress had declined but the Congress support

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<sup>151</sup>Sandhya Goswami and Vikas Tripathi (2015): Ibid, p- 69

remain evenly spread across the regions with greater social base and apparently have a considerable ground to be a major player in the regions. Notably, the Congress suffered the most both in terms of seat share and vote share especially in Upper Assam; while the party was able to retain its vote share in Lower Assam and Barak Valley. On the other end, the AIUDF's marginal loss of 1.2% vote share but the gain of two seats demonstrate its limited base. This shows the fact that the party had higher propensity to convert its vote share into seat share as is evident from the 2011 Assembly election results. In matter to this fact the AIUDF won 18 seats with 12.6% vote share; while the AGP and BJP had 10 seats and 5 seats each with 16.3% and 11.5% vote share respectively. For the Congress, despite of its evenly spread across the regions the major challenge remained of converting the vote share into seat share. In particular, the AIUDF poses a stiff challenge to the Congress's electoral fortunes in Lower Assam.

A comparison of the 2014 Parliamentary election results with the 2011 Assam Assembly and 2009 Parliamentary election results clearly hints the political shift. The result indicates the rise of BJP in Upper Assam was apparently at the cost of the Congress and AGP. In a more profound sense, the result indicates the changing social base of the BJP and its acceptance among the Assamese-speaking in Upper Assam. Traditionally, the BJP have a strong base among Hindu Bengali-speaking in Barak Valley and Lower Assam regions and this linguistic transcendence of the party clearly points towards its new strategy of political realignment in Assam. In this sense, this new political development has upset the Congress electoral dominance in Assam.

The peculiarity about the present political scenario of Assam however is "the Opposition Dilemma." The AGP once regarded to be a strong regional force seems to have declined, while the emergent Gana Mukti Sangram Asom (GMSA) led by Akhil Gogoi have a dilemma whether to oppose the ruling Congress government or to stall the deeper nationalisation of politics by opposing the BJP. The party intends to present itself an alternative party in the State but also draws upon the "consolidation of opposition unity" at the national level. It presents a distinctive vision of development and draws heavily upon social movement politics. It also opposes the ideology and politics of the BJP. Broadly speaking, it seeks to be a credible regional alternative aligning itself with the opposition politics at national level. Although, the party have

shown its visible presence in Upper Assam but the lack of its organisational base and movement-centric politics might mar its electoral prospects.<sup>152</sup>

**Table: 4.3 (d) Result of Parliamentary Elections, Assam  
in year wise-2004, 2009 & 2014**

NAME OF THE CONSTITUENCY	SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL PARTIES IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION' ASSAM- 2004, 2009 & 2014		
	2004	2009	2014
1. KARIMGANJ (SC)	INC	INC	AIUDF
2. SILCHAR	INC	BJP	INC
3. AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT (ST)	INC	INC	INC
4. DHUBRI	INC	AUDF	AIUDF
5. KOKRAJHAR (ST)	IND	BPF	IND
6. BARPETA	INC	INC	AIUDF
7. GAUHATI	INC	BJP	BJP
8. MANGALDOI	BJP	BJP	BJP
9. TEZPUR	INC	AGP	BJP
10. NOWGONG	BJP	BJP	BJP
11. KALIABOR	INC	INC	INC
12. JORHAT	INC	INC	BJP
13. DIBRUGARH	AGP	INC	BJP
14. LAKHIMPUR	AGP	INC	BJP

**Source: Statistical Reports on Assam Lok Sabha Elections  
(Published by Election Commission of Assam)**

#### 4.4 LANDSCAPE OF ASSAM ASSEMBLY ELECTION

In 1952, Assam was divided into 94 Legislative Assembly Constituencies for 108 members. And of these' the single member Constituencies were 80 and the remaining 14 were double member Constituencies. Again, among 108 seats, 77 were open and the remaining 31 seats were reserved for ST and SC- 9 seats for ST (P) and 5 seats for SC and 17 for ST (H). The 1957 Assembly election also continued with the same number of Constituencies. Following the abolition of double member Constituencies in 1961 the Assembly election of 1962 was held exclusively based on single member Constituencies. Under the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Act 1961 the number of Constituencies was reduced to 105 seats in Legislative Assembly of which 14 seats were reserved for ST (H), 9 seats for ST (P) and 5 seats for SC. It may be mentioned that the strength of the Assembly seats was reduced to 105 from 108 after the separation of Naga Hills from Assam. Following this event 15

<sup>152</sup>Sandhya Goswami and Vikas Tripathi (2015): Ibid, p-70



seats were allotted to the Autonomous Hill Districts of Assam. It may be mentioned that the Delimitation Commission which came into effect after the publication of 1961 census recommended to increase the strength of the Assam Assembly from 105 to 126 seats with a provision of reservation- 8 seats for SC and 26 for ST Constituencies respectively.

After the North-Eastern Areas Re-organisation Act, 1971, the State of Meghalaya and the Union Territory of Mizoram were carved out of Assam. This again resulted in reduction of seats from 126 to 114 seats in 1972 Assembly election. Since most of these carved out regions fell under ST reserved Constituencies it was again reduced from 26 in 1967 to 14 in 1972. Again, the revised Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituency order of 1976 restored 126 seats for the State Assembly of which 8 seats were reserved for SC and 16 for ST. Since then, there was no further change in the number of Constituencies for General election till date.<sup>153</sup>

#### **4.4.1 ASSAM ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS (1952 TO 2001): AN OVERVIEW**

The patterns of electoral results of the Legislative Assembly in Assam demonstrate little change in the first five Assembly elections. The era was dominated by the Congress party. The Congress party had been an undisputed campaigner in the State almost without strong rival since 1952 to 1972. The party enjoyed popular embracement in the Assamese society since pre-Independence period had an underlying fundamental fact that it championed the cause of the “Assamese national Identity” by playing a central role in safeguarding the Assamese language and culture. This historical fact, in some way was responsible for the uninterrupted dominance of the Congress party in the electoral history of Assam. To this fact, the Congress evidently had never lost more than three to four seats in Lok Sabha elections till their sixth electoral venture. Even in 1977, when the voters in most parts of India had rejected the Indira Gandhi led Congress party due to its responsible for National Emergency, the electorate in Assam surprisingly gave a clear mandate to the party in Assam Parliamentary election with 10 seats of 14 with commendable 50.6% vote share. It was only in the 6<sup>th</sup> Assembly poll that the Congress monopoly was challenged. This era marked the beginning of shrinking popularity of the

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<sup>153</sup>Bhupendra Talukdar (2004): “Electoral Politics and Voting Behaviour in Assam Legislative Assembly Elections”, 1952-2001, A PhD Thesis Submitted to Gauhati University, Year- 2004, p-34

Congress party and declining of social base in Assam for the first time to a considerable extent. This manifested in the subsequent Assembly election of 1978 when the Congress seats was reduced to least followed by the end of an era of single party dominance in Assam.

**Table 4.4.1 Shows the party position and poll verdicts in terms of percentage of votes secured in different Assembly elections**

<b>PERCENTAGE OF VOTES SECURED BY MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN ASSAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (1952-2001)</b>						
<b>ELECTIONS</b>	<b>INC/ CONGRESS</b>	<b>JANATA</b>	<b>INC (I)</b>	<b>AGP</b>	<b>BJP</b>	<b>CPI</b>
1952	43.9	--	--	--	--	2.8
1957	52.35	--	--	--	--	9.41
1962	48.25	--	--	--	--	7.58
1967	43.6	--	--	--	--	8.68
1972	53.19	--	--	--	--	10.04
1978	22.74	26.69	8.51	--	--	11.58
1983	--	--	52.53	--	--	7.72
1985	--	--	23.47	34.54	1.07	5.47
1991	--	--	28.98	18.07	6.42	6.33
1996	--	--	31.4	30.66	10.42	4.11
2001	--	--	36.96	20.15	12.85	2.85

**Source: Statistical Reports on Assam Lok Sabha Elections  
(Published by Election Commission of Assam)**

During this period the Congress domination in Assam was seemingly fade but not to the extent it could substitute the Congress party with other political alternative. In this backdrop some regional political parties did emerged. In particular, the “All Party Hill Leaders Conference” (APHLC) that majorly concentrated to the ethnic support base began to do fairly well; though, their influence was confined to the Hill areas that were later carved out of Assam. Similarly, the “People’s Democratic Party” and “Ujani Assam Rajya Parishad” was formed in the plain Asomiya concentrated areas with an attempt to challenge the Congress also failed to make any mark in the electoral politics of Assam. In this respect, the Assam movement for the first time was a political watershed towards the foundation of regional forces and consolidating its electoral significance in Assam.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>154</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Op. Cit. p-224

The first major setback for the Congress came when the Janata Party defeated Congress at the centre. In the wake of defeat the Congress party further split into- the Congress (I) led by Indira Gandhi and Congress (U) led by Devraj Urs. Assam was one of the few States where the Congress (U) astonishingly emerged stronger than the Congress (I). The 1978 Assembly election brought the two rivals into electoral battle where the Congress (I) was reduced to a single digit both in terms of seats and votes share. While the Congress (U) surprised with their modest performance by grabbing 26 seats with 24% share of votes. The split of Congress and among their supporter benefited the non-Congress parties. This split benefited the Janata Party which emerged the single largest party with 53 seats and 27% share of votes. The change of government in the centre also brought a new political equations leading to corresponding changes in the political alignment in the State.

The subsequent years was marked with full of political instability and upheaval. In one of the major political setback, the Janata government collapsed in Assam even before the 1980 Parliamentary election giving way to a short lived Congress Ministry. All this political drama of the time occurred when the Assam movement already had reached its zenith. The State of political turbulent resulted into imposition of President's rule in Assam. After few years the Congress again returned to power at the Centre and began various abortive attempts to install Congress ministries in the States. In one of the political move Mrs. Gandhi anxiously tried to gamble by holding the Assembly election in the State against the teeth of popular resistance. To this consequent the 1983 Assembly election proved to be a political disaster. This election registered the lowest turnout with just 32.3%; in particular the figure was even lower in the Asomiya dominated areas. The Congress again formed the Government in a State under the leadership of Hiteswar Saikia despite it lacked popular legitimacy. The political impasse was broken after Mrs. Gandhi's death by her son and the new Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who entered into an accord with the agitating students. This Accord paved the way for the dissolution of the Assembly and holding of fresh elections.

The 1985 election was a 'critical' election for Assam, for it led to a reconfiguration of the party system and a durable realignment of social groups with political parties. In the post Accord one of the major political developments of the time was the birth of regional political party. The principal actors of Assam Movement recast

themselves into a new political party fondly known by the name- Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). This election saw public enthusiasm and a very high popular participation. The turnout stood as high as 79% which was relatively 12% higher than the turnout of 1978 elections. It is noteworthy to mention that the foreigner issue remained the centre stage in this election. It was in this issue that the AGP rode on a wave to power. The party drew the support of an indigenous voter upon the popular perception of a threat to the Assamese identity due to large scale immigration. Even in this historic win the AGP notably secured less than 35% votes with barely crossing the magic figure. On the other hand, the victory of Congress (I) in 25 seats with 23% vote share and UMF in 17 seats with 12% votes demonstrated that though the AGP emerged the most popular non-Congress party in this election but at the same time its figure also underline the limitations of its catchment area. Part of the reason behind the AGP's victory was that during this election the pro-Asomiya nationalist votes remained solidly behind the AGP but the votes of the forces inimical to the movement got divided. The CPI (M), CPI and RCPI who performed fairly well in 1978 Assembly election were almost wiped out in 1985 election due to their anti-Assam movement stand. The Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) won 3 seats in Bodo dominated areas while another Tribal Party "United Tribal National Liberation Front" (UTNLF) won a single seat. The Congress (S), the historical continuity of Congress (U) won 4 seats.<sup>155</sup> Analogy of the result drawn on the basis of social background are analyzed into four category of Constituencies- Bengali immigrants dominated seats, ST preponderant seats, tea tribes dominated seats in Upper Assam and the seats dominated by the dominant Asomiya community. The analysis of this election result in category wise reveals high turnout in the Bengali immigrant areas; while the Congress dominated tea garden areas had a lowest turnout. The PTCA exclusively outperformed in the Tribal dominated areas. The AGP also demonstrated its strength and presence in the Asomiya dominated areas including tea garden areas. Meanwhile, the Congress met a serious setback as it suffered a humiliating defeat. Squeezed from all side the Congress votes shrink including its stronghold areas. It could save its face only in the tea growing areas by winning 9 seats with 34% votes.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p- 225

<sup>156</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p- 226

The 1985 election was significant from the point of view that it brought an end to the era of Congress monopoly in the politics of Assam. The Assam Accord seemingly had divided the social bases of Congress as different social groups which have previously stood behind the Congress solidly got alienated in the line of socio-ethnic groups following the awakening of sub-nationalism Asomiya identity. This sub-nationalist movement set a stage for the rise of regional forces in the State. Initially, the electoral battle was predicted to take a bipolar contest between the Congress and AGP. But, the result shows otherwise as the two big parties failed to garner even 60% of votes put together. Following the poor performance of Congress in the poll, its rainbow coalition also came into apart. Significantly, this election was characterized by a high mobilization in the name of sub-nationalist identity and competition among different sub-nationalist groups and fragmentation.

The next trial of electoral strength could not be held on time in Assam due to political turmoil. But, the 1991 Assembly election gave a surprising mandate to the Congress. At one point of time, the Congress defeat of 1985 election appeared that the Assam agitation had completely dethroned the Congress from the State politics. But the return of Congress to power in 1991 Assembly election had a different tale contrasting to the ideas of the Congress political death in the State' aftermath Assam Movement. The Congress return to power was remarkable not only from the view point of its victory with clear majority of 65 seats but the recovery it has made in its social bases after the Assam agitation was an event of significant political turnover. Notably, the Congress in spite of winning majority seats have somewhat garnered relatively lower percentage of poll with only 29% vote share. This victory seemingly does not reflect the resurgence of Congress; rather, a depth analysis of the Congress victory determines the split of AGP and its support base into two factions- AGP and NAGP and unprecedented rise of BJP as underlying factors. The AGP did relatively very poor than previous poll. It secured only 17.7% vote share practically only a half of its previous poll. It also did win less than one third seats than previous Assembly poll. The breakaway faction NAGP won 5 seats with 5.5% votes. The BJP, which have never been a significant force in Assam, had a descent winning figure of 10 seats with 6.4% of votes. The BJP strategically sliced the anti-migrant voters in the migrant dominated areas gave BJP edge over the AGP. To the other end, NAGP and BJP's candidature against AGP played

a spoiler for AGP in the Asomiya dominated Constituencies including the tea garden areas. As a matter of fact it greatly affected the electoral prospects of the AGP. Analogically, the trio's vote share when put together had more votes than the Congress but this fact was of no more than a statistical consolation. The declining figures of leftist party CPI 4 seats and CPI (M) 2 seats victory in this election suggest that their continuous downfall in the State was not a temporary phenomenon. Among the parties of ethnic groups, the newly formed ASDC of Karbi Anglong district won 4 seats with 1.6% votes. Other such parties drew a blank.<sup>157</sup> The Constituency-wise analysis of the Congress Party's performance reveals that their performance was better among the Constituencies dominated by the non-Assamese speaking population. The Congress won 40 seats from these areas out of their 65 seats victory. It's regain in the Muslim immigrant areas and the tea growing areas was the biggest gain in this election. Not surprisingly, the Congress not only benefited but also doubled its figure in the Asomiya dominated areas was largely due to the split of AGP. As such the Congress outperformed in this election in its traditional stronghold areas and came back to power in 1991. Even though, the Congress returned to the power but not as a party representing rainbow social coalition of all major communities of Assam. It failed to win the confidence and grabbed the electoral support of the larger population of the dominant Asomiya community. Rather it was compelled to forge a coalition with several minority groups when put together constitute a majority in the State. Electoral politics in Assam was thus becoming more regional centric where Asomiya sub-nationalist and other ethnic-nationalist force began to challenge the Congress domination.<sup>158</sup>

The 1996 Assembly poll once again brought AGP to power. The AGP and its ally left and others have together secured majority in this Assembly election. Thus, AGP and its ally partner won majority 71 seats together. On its own, AGP won 61 seats, fell just a little short of magic figure 64, while the left allies CPI and CPI (M) including the ASDC together won 10 seats giving them a clear majority. The party not only recovered from the previous election debacle but also dramatically improved its vote

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<sup>157</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p-227

<sup>158</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p-228

share. Seemingly, AGP's inclusive strategy in this election paid off to great extent in mobilizing different social groups. In contrast the Congress found itself in a difficult situation due to their alienation with large section of Asomiyas and other traditional support bases. Meanwhile, the NAGP's merge back to AGP gave a respite and much needed political strength to AGP. The return of NAGP helped the AGP to recover their 6% lost of previous election. Although, the party able to catch 30% vote share, a 12% higher than previous election but eventually the performance was relatively lower than its historic win in 1985.

In a wise move, the AGP knowing their inherent limitations of social bases it forged into social coalition with some minority groups. This event was followed by the surprising new social coalition between the AGP with the left parties- CPI, CPI (M) including ASDC in Tribal areas. This new social coalition came in the wake of corruption and indiscriminate use of repressive State machinery by the Congress government. These allies secured another 6% votes share. This united opposition erected against the Congress able to reduce the tally of Congress into half, despite the party made an improvement in its vote share. To the other end the insurgency problems and extremist politics of ULFA and BrSF groups further complicated the politics of Assam.

In early 1995, most of the political analyst assumed that the issues of corruption and violation of democratic rights would occupy the center stage of this election. Alive to this possibility, the Congress tried to divert these issues towards the politics of ethnicity. In such attempt, the Congress in the backdrop of Statehood movements by the Bodos and Karbi ethnic groups cleverly tried to mobilize and lure these ethnic groups by making poll promises ensuring political autonomy. But, the articulated sections of the Bodos, Mishings and the Karbis by the time had not only successfully mobilized their people in ethnic line but also had already filled an anti-Congress perception.<sup>159</sup> As such, the game plan did not favor the Congress due to their lack of credibility. At the same time the united opposition party was also able to keep the issue of violation of democratic rights and corruption alive among the commoner. It is also noteworthy to mention that the civil organizations like Ganatantrik Adhikar Surakhya Samiti (GASS)

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<sup>159</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p- 229

and the Committee for the Protection of Freedom of Expression (CPEE) formed by several influential press club members, intellectuals and non-Congress parties also played their part to dilute the position of Congress. Again, the anti-Congress stands by the extremist groups have also caused problems for Congress.

This election was fought by almost all the major non-Congress parties in similar electoral manifesto. The issue of ethnic identity, State repression and corruption remained the major electoral manifestos of almost all non Congress parties. AGP set their adventure on the electoral manifesto promising good governance, action against corruption and mal- administration and to solve the ethnic identity crisis by giving autonomy if voted to power. The CPI and CPI (M) too campaigned against the Congress accusing it of corruption, repression, abuse of democratic rights in the name of controlling extremists and creating ethnic conflict among the Tiwa, Mishing and Rabha in the name of autonomy.<sup>160</sup> The BJP highlighted the issue of violation of democratic rights and corruption in Congress regime in its manifesto. The Bodo political party Peoples Democratic Front (PDF) blamed Saikia Government of atrocities, corruption and of complicating ethnic problems.

Interestingly, none of the parties including AGP picked the agenda of detection and deportation of 'foreigners' except the BJP. The AGP's game to down play this issue was reasonable from the view point that it has already forged a social coalition with minorities to keep their votes united. The silence of AGP over this issue indicated the strategic social engineering to enhance their political prospects in this election. The Congress politics of ethnicity failed to harness ethnic votes when sizeable ethnic populations of Mishings, Rabhas, Lalungs and other tribes alienated from the Congress due to the lack of credibility of the party and its leadership. In Bodo dominated areas also even the Congress ally BPP (P) failed to convince the people with their manifesto. It was to be noted that the ethnic issue remained live in the areas dominated by the Bodos and Karbis but the issue was successfully monopolized by the anti-Congress UDF and ASDC.<sup>161</sup> The AGP was also aware of the fact that the alliances were critical to the possibility of defeating the Congress. Meanwhile, the regional newspapers and press also played their part in developing anti-Congress perception among the people. Since the beginning of 1994, the news report also began to float that the non-Congress

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<sup>160</sup>AK Baruah and Sandhya Goswami (1999): Op. Cit. p- 2495 (<https://www.epw.in>)

<sup>161</sup>Ibid, p-2496



parties had team up against Congress in Assam on the issue of State repression. The anti-Congress wave across the State brought all the major non-Congress party towards political understanding. Later, this understanding culminated into alliance between AGP, CPI (M), CPI, Bodo Peoples Party (Sansuma) [BPP (P)] and the Autonomous State District Committee (ASDC). The efforts were also made to bring the UMF and Janata Dal into the front.

In the meantime, NDFB' the ban organisation directed the Bodo political parties to unite so that the anti-Congress Bodo votes remain united. Following this dictate the Bodo political parties like BPP (S), UDF and PTCA came together except BPP (P) faction which remained with the Congress. The UPPA, a party representing minority too arrived at political agreement with the AGP. But, the BJP and Janata Dal remain isolated from this pre-poll alliance formation of non-Congress parties. Thus, the Congress was left without major ally in this election. But, the most interesting part of this political coalition was the alliance of the AGP, CPI (M) and CPI because these parties had been at logger-head due to their ideological differences since the time of Assam Movement. Moreover, the AGP has been often alleged of being anti-Muslim and anti-Bengali due to its anti immigration stand by these left parties. Learning from their past experience of political blunder the AGP realized that it is not possible to rule Assam alone without the support of non-Assamese voters. Thus, AGP adopted an inclusive strategy which involves three major components- uniting AGP faction, political coalition with the left and social coalition with the non-Assamese population.<sup>162</sup>

The analysis of the result in category-wise shows the anatomy of this election. The AGP made a principal gain in Assamese dominated Constituencies along with the tea garden areas; whereas the Muslim support for AGP remained sizable in the immigrant areas. It did not gain any significant support in the tribal concentrated Constituencies. The AGP's gain was spread out evenly in all other seats except in the tribal concentrated seats. The alliance ensured a genuine presence for the AGP in all the areas of the State since it had built up a rainbow coalition cutting across ethnic lines.<sup>163</sup> The defeat of Congress in some of its traditional seats in the tea garden areas came as a major setback. The Congress had marginal edges over the AGP allies in terms of vote

<sup>162</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Op.cit, p-230

<sup>163</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p-231

share in the tea growing areas but it trailed in all other seats. In the tribal dominated seats the Independent candidates got edge over all other parties. The Congress retained its support among the immigrants though it won only 4 of the 15 seats in these areas. The pre-poll coalition against Congress party by the AGP, ethnic groups and leftist played a decisive role to outcast the Congress in the tribal Constituencies which traditionally had been the Congress bastions till 1985. But in this election the Congress lost its grip in the tribal Constituencies like Baithalangsua Halflong, Diphu, Gossaigaon Sidli and Udalguri. The Congress lost its ground in the Karbi Hills region also as it lost all the five seats to ASDC. The defeat of Congress with high margin to ASDC appeared that the former had lost its electoral significance among Karbis. In the Bodo belt also the Congress fared very poorly. In this area as many as seven seats were grabbed by the Independents owing allegiance to the Bodo groups while the AGP managed to capture two seats. However, the margins of Congress defeat in Bodo belt were relatively lower because of the division of tribal votes. This election result exposed the myth about the overwhelming influence of Congress over tribals in Assam. The alliance did well in the Congress dominated immigrant areas also. Out of 15 seats in immigrant areas the alliance together grabbed 11 seats while the Congress managed to retain 4 seats. In these areas the parties individually gave an equal fight. The Congress and AGP did equally well both winning 4 seats each with more or less equal vote shares. Perhaps, the experience of previous regime of AGP government which passed without riots and inaction against illegal immigrants must have been motivating factor for the immigrants to lean their support to this new front. It is well known fact that the tea garden area has been the Congress bastion. In a significant electoral shift the Congress lost its traditional support base in this area. Remarkably, INTUC has been the organizational strength for the Congress and have been able to maintain its strong foothold among the tea laborer community. The AGP, BJP and CPI have been trying to set their political ground in this region. Similarly, the AGP have also created an organisation called the Assam Chah Shramik Parishad to counter the INTUC. On the other end, the AASU too had been trying to influence the Tea Tribal Student Organisation. In a subsequent Assembly election of 1996 the AGP, Congress and CPI won 11 seats, 16 seats and one seat each out of 29 in the tea laborers dominant Constituencies. As such the AGP could inroads into the Congress bastion. The post-poll survey data of the CSDS throws a light on

other dimensions of the voting behavior of this election. The survey revealed that—among the younger voters the AGP did substantially better than Congress. The Congress suffered the most among 26-35 age groups, i.e. those born in 1960s and who have just initiated their public life when the Assam movement had already reached its peak. The gender-pattern also varies from that of the all India picture.<sup>164</sup> In this matter, the Congress lagged behind by 6% among women voters against the AGP and BJP which did much better among women voters. However, in terms of class profile and among educated voters, the pattern conformed to the all India picture. The survey revealed that the Congress did better among the voter with lower level of education. AGP fared better among the voters with intermediate level of education while the BJP had already established itself a favorite among the highly educated middle class. The survey also confirmed that the exclusivist strategy of AGP was successful in splitting the Muslim voters and securing a good chunk of the Dalit and Adivasi vote for the AGP and its allies.<sup>165</sup>

The Assembly Election of 2001 returned the Congress to power in the State. The one-sided electoral mandate to Congress in 1999 Lok Sabha election was an indication for the forthcoming Assembly elections of 2001. Meanwhile, the AGP had already suffered serious setback when its popularity began to shrink due to its poor performances. The party was alleged of involvement in rampant corruption and secret killings. The AGP government did all sorts of strategy to win the public supports just before the poll schedule. In particular, the government announced several schemes like Chief Minister's Self-employment Scheme, recruitment in Assam Electricity Board and teachers under operation blackboard etc. to muster the support of the unemployed youth. These schemes failed to impress the public rather it came under sharp criticism. The allegation of rampant corruption in all levels of government and anomalies in the implementation of schemes and recruitments further alienated the AGP from public. Again, the government's soft stand against terrorist organisation ULFA-SULFA and towards curtaining its conflict tarnished the image of AGP. It looked as if the AGP want to keep this conflict alive for serving its political purposes.

The indulgence of ULFA in large-scale violence in the run up to the election created turmoil in the State. This vengeance and political violence took many lives

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<sup>164</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p-232

<sup>165</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p-233

untimely in the State. Since 1997-2000, the ULFA had killed as many as 1,548 civilians including 333 security personnel in the State. In a barbaric incident, ULFA massacred 109 Hindi speaking people between October and December in different parts of the State. This violence met with sharp reactions and thousands of people took to the streets to protest shows the displeasure with the government's soft stand towards ULFA.<sup>166</sup>

The election scenario took a significant turn when BJP and AGP forge an alliance in the State. The party forged alliance despite of strong opposition from respective State units. The AGP's doubtful of its victory on its own was the reason for AGP-BJP alliance.<sup>167</sup> Though, this alliance brought a new political equation in the State politics but it also flared up dissatisfaction, anger and conflict within and among the BJP leaders. In particular, this alliance did not go down the throat well among the youth wing of State BJP leaders. This decision met with violent attack and wrath of youth BJP leaders. The BJP head office in the State came under attack for several days. In case of AGP, the resentment was less violent and subdued. Following this resentment some senior BJP leaders including Hiranya Bhattacharya resigned from the party and formed a new party called Asom BJP.<sup>168</sup> On the other end, AGP's alliance with BJP had also alienated from its former ally CPI, CPM and UPP. Meanwhile, the AGP-BJP front came into poll understanding with the ABSU and the Haliram Terang led faction ASDC. But, the public had doubts as to how much influence this ally would yield in their troubled and divided communities. The Congress took advantage of political fragmentation and forged an ally with UMF. On the other end, another front came into forged when the Nationalist Congress Party made an electoral understanding with other seven smaller parties- Asom Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP), Asom Jatia Sanmilan (AJS), Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad (PLP), Janata Dal (Secular), Asom Labour Parry (ALP) and Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI). This third front was formed with the name Regional Democratic Alliance as an alternative to the AGP-BJP alliance and the Congress. Notably, the pre-election period witnessed less enthusiasm among the electors. Moreover, the ULFA perpetrated violent activities before election induced fear among the electors.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p- 239

<sup>167</sup>Kalayan Chaudhuri (2001): An Alliance of Convenience, Frontline, Vol. 18 - Issue 08, Apr. 14-17

<sup>168</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Op.cit, p-240

<sup>169</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2001): Assam: Changing Electoral Trends, Published in Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 36, Issue No. 19, May 12, 2001, p- 1584 (<https://www.epw.in>)

The campaign was marred by violence and insurgencies. The campaign was by and large echoed with the issues like corruption, illegal migration, law and order, nexus between militants and politicians, secret killings, economic development, unemployment, scraping of IMDT Act and other local issues. The manifesto of Congress promised to resolve peace process and political dialogue with insurgent groups and to bring an end of secret killings. The party also promised to hold Panchayat elections which the previous government failed during their tenure and also promised to foil any attempt of scraping IMDT Act.

The AGP's electoral compulsions were clear and were seemingly motivated from the previous experienced of Lok Sabha elections. It was evident from the previous Lok Sabha election that the AGP had already lost the Muslim and tea garden votes which had swing to the Congress. Looking into the Congress social base, the AGP-BJP front made the foreigners issues and IMDT Act as a major poll plank. Thus, the AGP and BJP in their manifesto echoed the issues of demographic changing and its threat to security and safety of indigenous and its impact on development. The AGP-BJP promised to resolve this issue with an active co-operation of the Government of India.

Not surprisingly, the Congress made a landslide victory of 70 seats with 36.95% vote share. While the AGP-BJP and its allies won 40 seats. Although, the Congress could advanced in terms of seats with higher margin but in terms of vote share both the parties had a neck to neck contest. The AGP and BJP won 20 and 8 seats with a vote share of 20.15% and 12.85% respectively; while the left parties were completely wiped out in this election. Smaller parties like ABSU-BPAC, ASDC (U), NCP, Samata Party, Samajwadi Party (SP) and Independents together won 27 seats with around 30% vote poll. The ABSU-BPAC, an ally of AGP-BJP, overwhelmingly won 10 seats. Apparently, this election boosts the smaller regional parties along with the Congress gain. This was the consequence of the fragmentation of political space in Assam. The Assam movement led to Asomiya nationalism also awakened various sub-regional and ethnic aspirations was found expression through the smaller parties.<sup>170</sup> The Congress mostly gained in Lower Assam from the seats dominated by the AGP. In the Upper Assam the party won 37 seats giving 14 seats gained against previous Assembly election. The Congress this time did a balanced performance in these two regions. The

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<sup>170</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Op.cit, p-241

AGP-BJP alliance was adversely affected due to unpopularity of the AGP led Mahanta government. The AGP's alliance with BJP was seemingly driven by the strategic of AGP to avoid humiliating defeat. However, far from receiving supports and well wishes from their workers this alliance was opposed and undermined by their own party workers. These parties failed to solve their internal discontent which further resulted to alienation from their party supporters. The parties failed to persuade their well wishers and supporters to vote their alliance.<sup>171</sup>

The vote share of Congress saw relative increase to 10 % against previous election. The party won 20 out of 29 seats in traditional stronghold tea growing areas. While the AGP-BJP alliance suffered a setback in these areas and could retain only 8 seats with 35.8% of votes. In Asomiya dominated areas the Congress established a clear lead over the AGP-BJP alliance. The party secured 35 seats against 15 seats victory of AGP-BJP combine. Although, the AGP-BJP alliance could managed an edge over the Congress among the upper caste Hindu but this 10% advantage was wiped out among other communities including the SC, ST other than Boros, OBCs, and 'others' ethnic minorities and social groups giving an advantage to the Congress. As expected, the BJP fared well among the Hindu upper caste, but the AGP failed to garner supports in this section. In terms of caste, the AGP vote was fairly evenly distributed. The party also managed a fair bit of the tribal support following the poll ties with the Bodo groups.

In the immigrant areas AGP seems to have secured substantial portion of support from the Muslim voters but there are clear indications of Congress regaining the Muslim votes in this election as the party won 8 seats of the 15 seats. The AGP-BJP ally failed to neutralize the suspicion and apprehension of Muslim about the BJP's agenda and political ideology. Seemingly, the AGP's decisions to ally with BJP have cost AGP, the Muslim voters. This decision seems to have affected the AGP all over the State. The state-wide post-poll survey of CSDS shows that the Congress gained an overwhelming 59% of votes among the Muslim respondents against 14% of AGP and BJP. A detailed analysis of the survey data and electoral result shows that the counter mobilization of Congress against the AGP-BJP alliance yielded in 10 seats like Dhubri, Gauripur and Hojai. Apparently, the Muslims leaned on the Congress; while the indigenous people and the Hindu immigrants supported the BJP. The polarization of Hindu voters in this

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<sup>171</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p- 242

election invariably consolidates Muslim votes in a more organized way. The Congress regain among Muslim with huge 40% votes played a decisive role in the Congress victory and defeat of AGP. The election results proved again that any deviation from a policy of social inclusiveness costs the AGP very dearly.

The tribal belt areas also witnessed high turnout of around 80% votes which can be attributed as the political upsurge among the tribal in support of their ethnic identity. Although, the Congress failed to advanced a major chunk of the tribal votes but their poll understanding with the non- Bodo areas considerably helped the party to pick 8 seats with 30.3% vote share which was relatively a bigger gain than that of 1991 and 1996 Assembly election. The Independent candidates secured as many as 40 % votes in the tribal seats including the ABSU-BPAC candidates allied with the AGP but contested as Independents. The AGP also performed a little better following the poll understanding with the tribal in these seats otherwise the AGP would have suffered worst electoral performance.<sup>172</sup> An analysis of the voting pattern by other social variables indicates repeat in the pattern of previous elections, except in the matter of age. Significantly, the sharp differences in the age profile of the supporters of the two major parties notably have disappeared in this election. When observed the voting by class and education the Congress outbid among the under privileged and poorer sections of the society.<sup>173</sup>

The Congress (INC), AGP and the BJP were the major contenders in the Assembly election of 2001. None of the other parties contesting the election could challenge and capable to form the government in the State. Neither the Left nor the NCP could project themselves before the electorate as another viable alternative to the Congress Party. Not surprisingly, the Congress secured an absolute majority in this Assembly election. The Congress which won only 36 seats in the previous election took a big leap with 71 seats victory in this election. On the contrary, the figure took a reverse as the ruling AGP could win only 20 seats. The AGP-BJP alliance managed to win only 28 seats together with BJP winning only 8 seats. The NCP could return only 3 seats out of 62 contesting candidates. The Left parties were completely wiped out in this election. As regards, the Independent candidates only 7 out of 390 were elected to the Assembly. The ABSU-BPAC fielded 15 candidates out of which 10 of them emerged

<sup>172</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p-243

<sup>173</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p-244

victorious. In the Hill districts the ASDC (U) could return only 2 out of 5 candidates while the ASDC (P) failed to win even a single seat.<sup>174</sup>

#### 4.4.2 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION, ASSAM (2006, 2011 AND 2016)

The social background of any State assumes a determining factor of voting behaviour and the electoral process. Understanding the distribution of social background is utmost important to understand the pattern of voting behaviour and the electoral mandate. The social pattern gives an ample scope to draw the electoral ideas and visions to the voters, political parties and the political analysts about the trends and patterns of political environment of the States. The pattern of social background of the State is given below.

**Table: 4.4.2 (a) Distribution of social background in gender wise and break-up of Constituencies into General, SC and ST**

"ASSAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION'- 2006, 2011 & 2016"									
GENDER WISE VOTERS DISTRIBUTION IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONSTITUENCIES (GEN, SC & ST CONSTITUENCIES) VOTERS TURNOUT & PERCENTAGE OF POLL									
Year	Constituency		Gender Wise Votes Distributions			Gender wise Voters Turnout			% of Poll
	Types	Nos.	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
2006	GEN	102	7200152	6725436	13925588	5496731	478833	905427	75.56
	SC	8	623513	592547	1216060	5025955	444937	849026	75.96
	ST	16	1171948	1120424	2292372	10522686	923770	1754453	76.53
	Total	126	Total Voters of GEN, SC & ST Constituencies		17434020	Total		13200909	75.72
2011	GEN	102	7533194	6998130	14531324	5790587	5241622	11049756	76.04
	SC	8	652400	614789	1267189	503023	460128	963963	76.07
	ST	16	1216192	1173564	2389756	931477	882603	1816865	76.03
	Total	126	Total Voters of GEN, SC & ST Constituencies		18188269	Total		13830584	76.04
2016	GEN	102	8277867	7700237	15978115	7003417	6532551	13563518	84.89
	SC	8	736446	683370	1419816	626117	579809	1208107	85.09
	ST	16	1327193	1265631	2592824	1091773	1057475	2155336	83.13
	Total	126	Total Voters of GEN, SC & ST Constituencies		19990755	Total		16926961	84.67

**Sources: Statistical Report of Assam Assembly Election**

<sup>174</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2003): Ibid, p-245



The Assam Assembly Elections was held on March, 2006. The 2006 Assembly election saw a rise in political participation both in terms of voters and political parties. In 2001 Assembly Elections, 27 parties including independent candidates contested elections, which rose to 30 in 2006 Assembly Elections. This shows the increase of 11% in the number of political parties in Assam from 2001 Assembly Elections to 2006 Assembly Elections. In this election a total of 997 candidates contested Assembly poll in 2006 against 916 of previous election. This shows a growth of 9% in the number of contested candidates in 2006 Assembly Election.<sup>175</sup>

The 2006 Assam Legislative Assembly election result introduced a new era of the Congress-BPF coalition politics in Assam. The BPF in its first Assembly election made a commendable entry into the State politics by sweeping the Bodo dominated region in Lower Assam. The party won 11 seats and become a Kingmaker when the Congress felt short of majority to form the government. The verdict of Supreme Court to repeal IMDT Act caught the eyes of voters and the political parties in this election. More or less, this issue assumed a prominent electoral agenda which played a significant part in the outcome of this election. The scrap of IMDT Act did not go well among the Muslim voters and their leaders in particular. The Congress won 53 seats in this election suffered 18 seats loss in compared to previous election due to strong resentment among the Muslim voters which accused the Congress for not resisting the Act. As a result, the Congress had to pay a price at the expense of their traditional Muslim supporters. Similarly, a major chunk of tea tribe population which are traditional Congress supporter also alienated as the party did not heard their demand for inclusion in the ST list. On the other hand, the entry of the AIUDF in State politics with overwhelming 10 seats victory in this election not only polarised the Muslim supporters of Congress but also brought a new equation to the State politics. The emergence of these powerful regional parties in the State politics affected the Congress social base in this election. As a result, the Congress which won 71 seats in previous election was forced to forge an alliance to retain the power.<sup>176</sup> The party formed a coalition government with the new partner BPF. BPF which extended their support to the

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<sup>175</sup>A report by "Assam Election Watch & Association for Democratic Reforms; "Analysis of Criminal and Financial Details of Candidates and MLAs from Assam, based on 2006 Assembly Elections. [www.adrindia.org](http://www.adrindia.org), <http://www.myneta.info>

<sup>176</sup>Sandya Goswami (2012): Changing trends of electoral politics, Retrieved from the [http://www.india-seminar.com/2012/640/640\\_sandhya\\_goswami.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2012/640/640_sandhya_goswami.htm). p-6

Congress with 11 MLAs are entrusted with three Cabinet Minister in Turun Gogoi led Congress government. The AGP and BJP' the main political rivals of the Congress retained only 24 and 10 seats each. In compared to the previous election' though, the AGP and BJP gained 4 seats and 2 seats each in this election but the party continued giving more or less similar performance with very little improvement. The left parties like CPI and CPIM which were wiped out in the previous elections this time have managed to secure one and two seats each have had continuously underwhelming performances' elections after election.

This election results introduced the newly formed BPF in the map of regional political party. The party succeeded to capture the Bodo dominated Constituencies in Lower Assam. Significantly, the BPF which fielded 18 candidates managed to triumph in 11 seats had a bare 3.72% vote share. Notably, the other rival Bodo organizations of BPF were virtually sidelined in this election.<sup>177</sup> AGP' the torchbearer of regional politics continues to suffer setback. As expected, the mandate of the party was subsided to 24 seats of 100 Constituencies and had underwhelming 20.39% vote share. Part of the reason for the poor performance of the party was the split into AGP and AGP (P). The split led to a major break away among the traditional supporters of the party. The tally of Congress also witnessed a fall in compared to previous election. The party could advance in 53 seats of 120 contested seats with 31.08% vote share. It may be mentioned that the decline of Congress vote share and seat share was mainly due to the entry of AIUDF which polarized a sizable section of Muslim voters especially the immigrant Muslims. The party able to mobilised a large section of immigrant Muslims against the Congress by accusing the party of failure to resist the IMDT Act. However, the indigenous Muslims support remained intact with the Congress. The party in its first election had a fascinating 10 seats victory with 9.03% vote share. The tally of BJP also gained by 2 seats in compared to the previous election which managed to grab 10 seats in this election with 11.98% vote share.<sup>178</sup> The BPF also succeeded to send Biswajit Daimary to Rajya Sabha in 2007 from Assam. Besides being the ruling party in BTC, the party was a coalition-partner in the Congress government in the State and had one each MP in the two Houses of Parliament.

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<sup>177</sup>Subungcha Mwshahary (2015): Op. Cit. p.203

<sup>178</sup>Sandya Goswami (2012): Op.cit, p-6

The 13<sup>th</sup> Assam Assembly Election held in the 2011 witnessed higher than average participation. The State recorded a higher voter turnout at 76%, was marginally higher than the previous Assembly election. But the number of contestants were declined to 981 registered a dropped by marginal 1.6% against the previous Assembly election. In this election, all the dominant parties decided to went into the election on their own despite of extended discussions about poll ties and electoral understanding between the major parties. The Congress fielded the candidates in all the seats. The AGP and BJP also put-up their candidates in most seats, while the smaller parties like-AIUDF, BPF and the Leftist contested in their predominant areas of influence.

In the final outcome of the 2011 Assembly election the Congress made a decisive victory for third consecutive terms. This victory of Congress was seen as a surprise because the victory was way above a simple plurality it had managed in 2006 and also surpassed the figure of 71 seats victory of 2001. The party's landslide victory with higher vote share was a result of the continued fragmentation of the opposition. The party won 78 seats with 39.4% not only gained 25 seats but also gained 8% vote share in compared to the 2006 Assembly elections. The AGP performed worst and won only 10 seats with 16.3% vote share. The BJP's tally also declined to 5 from 10 seats it had won in 2006. Not surprisingly, the AIUDF emerged second largest party with 18 seats and secured 12.6% of vote share. The Congress ally- BPF which contested on its own in 29 seats was the other gainer with 12 seats.

This election witnessed significant changes in the regional pattern of voting. The Barak Valley registered biggest shift with the Congress winning 18 of 20 seats gaining 8 seats at the expense of BJP. The party also swept Karimganj, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hill districts. In Upper Assam also the party performed well in its traditional stronghold areas by winning 44 of 56 seats. The party also made a clean swept in Dhemaji, Golaghat, Jorhat, Morigaon and Sibsagar districts. However, the party had a marginal improvement in Lower Assam. The AIUDF which won 18 seats was the real gainer against the 10 seats of the last election. An analysis of the results shows that in Muslim majority 21 seats' the turnout votes were higher and the AIUDF had an edge over the Congress have relatively higher gain than the 2006 Assembly election. The Congress fared well in ST dominated seats where the party grabbed 9 of 10 seats. In tea growing areas also the party did overwhelming result by grabbing 23 of

29 seats but the party lost to AIUDF in the immigrant majority seats. However, the BPF retained its political domination in the BTAD.

Survey based estimate of the voting pattern by social background reveal variation on the caste-community lines but not on the variables like gender, age, class and education. The Congress gain varies among the major castes and communities. The party had a maximum gain among the Assamese Muslim and Assamese Hindu in compared to the Assembly election 2006. Notably, the AGP which retained its major vote share among Assamese Hindu had a lost among others everywhere else. The AIUDF which made a substantial gain among Bengali Muslims also lost a significant part of Assamese Muslim votes. The BJP's strength remained consolidated among Bengali Hindus but lost elsewhere. The Congress did well across various age groups with the highest 11% gain coming from age groups between 18-25 years. In significant, the Congress gained most among the poor. The Congress also did proportionately well amongst both the gender as well as the rural and urban voters.<sup>179</sup> The AGP and BJP did slightly better in urban areas than rural. Interestingly, the swing among educated section towards the Congress was highest. The mandate of this election was decisively determined by the performances of the Congress in previous terms was clearly revealed in the post-poll survey when the incumbent CM Tarun Gogoi was acknowledged with positive rating for the governance. Notably, the Congress government was rated higher than that of 2006 on the basic issues such as conditions of road, education, drinking water, supply of electricity, medical facilities and law and order. Besides, the popularity of CM Tarun Gogoi also remained high and above all other competitor as it was in 2006. Peace, improvement and all round development in Assam appeared to be the central reason for the Congress victory. The Congress initiatives of peace talk with the pro-talk NDFB and ULFA groups was largely acknowledged by the people as a significant step towards bringing perpetual peace in Assam.<sup>180</sup>

The mandate of 2016 Assembly Election introduced new era in the State politics of Assam. This election marked BJP's historic inroad to State politics of Assam for the first time with overwhelming performance. The BJP with regional party BPF and AGP forged a coalition to form government for the first time in Assam. In this Assembly

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<sup>179</sup>Sandya Goswami, (2011): Op. Cit. p-13, <http://www.jstor.org>

<sup>180</sup>Sandya Goswami (2011): Ibid, pp- 132-133

election, BJP which won five seats only in 2011 election made a historic 60 seats victory was the major gainer. The pre-poll ally AGP also improved their seat share as the party managed to win 14 seats after electoral debacle of 2011 Assembly election. Another, ally partner the BPF also made a convincing 12 seats victory in the Bodo dominated BTAD areas. With high turnout of 84.72% this election also noted recovery of some seats by AGP which was the major opposition party till 2011. The BJP's gain came in the expense of Congress rule for 15 years which was characterised by the high anti-incumbency, mal-governance and popular desire for change. Perhaps, the long regime of Congress and their misdeeds in the later part of their governance left the people with bitter experience and looked for alternative have turned the people outright pro BJP to expel the Congress government.<sup>181</sup> Another cause of Congress debacle in this election was the internal rift which began to fuel within the party due to internal differences among the members. Further escalation of this internal rift split the party into CM Gogoi led faction and Himanta Biswa Sharma led faction during their last quarter of its tenure completely wricked the backbone of the Congress in Assam. Following this internal squabble within the State Congress unit Himanta Biswa Sarma left the party and merged with BJP in 2013. Aftermath this political earth quake within Congress, the BJP was benefited the most. Another dead blow hit the Congress when the Congress-BPF alliance also fallout due to the internal differences. Following this events, the former ally alleged the Congress government of negligence towards BTAD areas resulted to withdrawal of support from the Congress government. In a wise move the BPF forged a pre-poll understanding with the BJP in 2016 Assembly election in the backdrop of Modi wave across the country including Assam. The party has been in a coalition with the State government besides being a ruling party in BTAD since its inception. In the wake of BJP-AGP-BPF alliance, the Congress also came into poll understanding with the United People's Party (UPP) in BTAD. The party was created just before the election by former ABSU leader U.G. Brahma with the support of influential Student organisation ABSU to battle against the BPF in BTAD region. The Congress supported the party in four seats in BTAD in lieu of UPP's support outside

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<sup>181</sup>Swler Basumatary (2018): BTAD, Electoral Politics and BPF, Retrieved from IJRESS <http://euroasiapub.org>, p- 222

BTC areas. However, the party failed to mark any significant footprint in their political quest.<sup>182</sup>

The 2016 Assembly election verdict clearly indicate the downfall of Congress. The Congress debacle in 2014 Lok Sabha election continued in many States including Assam as the party suffered a humiliating defeats. Notably, the seat share of the party in this election was irreparably huge in compared to 2011 election as the party suffered unprecedented fall of seats from 78 seats in previous election to 26 seats in 2016 Assembly election. The BJP's unprecedented 60 seats win came as a major gain both in terms of seat share and vote share as the party recorded a historic 55 seats gain with 29.51% vote share which is way above by 18.04% than previous election. While the BJP ally, AGP and BPF also gained a marginal seat share but the parties suffered a fall in the vote share. The AGP which grabbed 14 seats with 8.14% vote share gained four seats but also suffered as high as 8.15% fall in its vote share than previous election. The AIUDF retained 13 seats with 13.5% vote share also suffered seat share by five seats but made a marginal gain in vote share. Whereas, the BPF an ally of BJP retained the same number of seats (12 seats) with 3.94% vote share also suffered 2.19% fall in vote share than previous election.<sup>183</sup>

Electoral manifesto of BJP compounded with the central issues of development and "Jati, Mati and Bheti" caught the attention and consensus of the indigenous people of Assam. This strategic manifesto brought the trio BJP-AGP-BPF into pre-poll consensus. This election witnessed a pre-poll conjunctional between BPF-BJP in BTAD and AGP-BJP outside BTAD areas. The Modi wave was also felt presence in Assam when the masses were seen participated enthusiastically in the public rallies and electoral campaign of BJP. The party's anti-foreigner stand and promise on update of NRC if come to power to detect and deport the illegal infiltrators largely fascinated the indigenous people of Assam. The party also mobilised the people against Congress failures, political exploitation and their long legacy of minority appeasement and vote bank politics at the expense of indigenous people. The party also alleged the Congress of corruption, mal-governance and the arrogant attitude towards indigenous people.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup>Susanta Talukdar (2016); Assam poll 2016: BPF on shaky turf as Congress picks UPP as new partner in Bodo heartland. Retrieved from the ' First Post' <http://www.firstpost.com>, May 18, 2016 .p.2.

<sup>183</sup>Assam Assembly election results 2016- StatisticsTimes.com, <https://statisticstimes.com>

<sup>184</sup>Swler Basumatary (2018): Op.cit, p-222

**Table: 4.4.2 (b) State Assembly Election 2006, 2011 & 2016**

YEAR WISE RESULTS AND PERFORMANCES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN ASSAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY									
POLITICAL PARTY	2006			2011			2016		
National Parties	Contested	Won	% of Vote Share	Contested	Won	% of Vote Share	Contested	Won	% of Vote Share
INC	120	53	31.08%	126	78	39.39%	122	26	30.96%
BJP	125	10	11.98%	120	5	11.47%	89	60	29.51%
CPI	9	1	1.02%	17	0	0.52%	15	0	0.22%
CPM	16	2	1.43%	17	0	1.13%	19	0	0.55%
NCP	45	1	2.13%	35	0	0.43%	12	0	0.27%
State Parties	Contested	Won	% of Vote Share	Contested	Won	% of Vote Share	Contested	Won	% of Vote Share
AGP	100	24	20.39%	104	10	16.29%	30	14	8.14%
AGP(P)	93	1	2.51%	--	--	--	--	--	--
AIUDF	69	10	9.03%	78	18	12.57%	74	13	13.05%
BPOF	20	11	4.90%	29	12	6.13%	13	12	3.94%
ASDC	5	1	0.89%	1	0	0.07%	--	--	--
AITC	--	--	--	103	1	2.05%	13	0	0.16%
IND	296	11	12.10%	263	2	9.17%	496	1	11.04%
OTHERS	99	1	2.17%	87	0	0.74%	181	0	1.19%

**Sources: Statistical Report of General Election, to the Legislative Assembly of Assam**

The downfall of Congress at the Centre due to strong leadership crisis compounded with the factors like corruption, scam and many other factors paved the way for BJP's rise across the country including Assam. Role of media in mobilizing anti-Congress also played its part. Major reason for the party's down fall in Assam can be credited as a result of factionalism within the party. Besides, the party's failure to maintain law and order situation following the outbreak of riots in BTAD in 2014 completely exposed the party's weak administration. These political trajectories devastated the Congress saw the beginning of new era into the Assam politics with the introduction of BJP's regime in 2016.

#### **4.5 A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VOTING PATTERN IN BTC ELECTIONS**

After the BTC Accord, the interim Council was formed in the backdrop of urgent need to govern the newly created District Autonomous Administration under the Sixth Schedule. The ad-hoc body of 12 members Interim Executive Council was created

from amongst the Bodo leaders on 7 December, 2004. The 12 members comprises of Mr. Hagrama Mohilary as Chief and Mr. Chandan Brahma as Dy. Chief along with ten other Executive Members. This ad-hoc body of 12 Executive Members administered BTC till the first election was held in 2005. The Accord marked the end of arms struggle by the BLT and helped in restoration of peace and normalcy in the region. The ABSU also temporarily suspended the separate State movement in mark of respect to the Bodo Accord. The Accord paved way for the formation of politico-administrative setup designed in the model of Autonomous Territorial District Council with the features like Council election and government within its territorial jurisdiction.

#### **4.5.1 ELECTIONS IN BTAD: AN OVERVIEW OF ‘LOK SABHA - 2004, BTC-2005 AND ASSAM ASSEMBLY ELECTION-2006’**

Meanwhile, the election for Lok Sabha was held in 2004. The 2004 Lok Sabha election in No. 5 Kokrajhar Constituency was mainly battled between two Independent candidates SK Bwiswmuthiary and Sabda Ram Rabha. Remarkably, SK Bwiswmuthiary was supported by the most influential Bodo Student organisation of the region- the ABSU and the national political party BJP. The SK Bwiswmuthiary secured the highest share of 71.32% vote against the rival candidates and retained the Bodo dominated Kokrajhar Constituency with the highest margin of votes in the State.<sup>185</sup> In subsequent years, the first Council Election was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2005. Meanwhile the political party was formed with the name Bodoland People’s Progressive Front (BPPF) just before the Council election on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2005 by the erstwhile ABSU-BPAC and former BLT leaders with Mr. Rabiram Narzary as President, Hemendra Nath Brahma as General Secretary and Kampa Borgoyary as spokesman of the party. This new political party brought new hopes and expectation among the people of BTAD because the administrative structure of newly created provides an ample scope of political autonomy to articulate various socio-economic and political problems and aspiration of the people. But soon after the formation, the internal trouble started brewing regarding the selection of candidate in the first Council Election of 2005.<sup>186</sup> The high expectation and aspiration of the Bodos after the creation of BTC soon shattered when the ex-BLT

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<sup>185</sup><http://affidavitarchive.nic.in>

<sup>186</sup>Nirjoy Brahma (2008); Socio-Political Institution in Bodo Society, Gauhati University, Unpublished thesis, p-209



leaders fell out with the ex-ABSU leaders in their bid to control the Bodo politics. The newly formed BPPF in 2005 at the behest of influential student organisation ABSU soon underwent a sudden split on the eve of first Council election. The split came mainly when Mr. Hagrama Mohilary lean his support to some ex-BLT cadres who contested as an independent candidate in this first Council election against the official candidates of the BPPF.<sup>187</sup> Another, significant political event that boiled the political scenario of BTAD amid government formation in the Council was when the members of newly floated BPPF started tussle for leadership. This tussle started when the former ABSU leader Mr. Rabiram Narzary himself tried to grabbed the Council Chief by sidelining the Chief architect of BTAD, Mr. Hagrama Mahilary. This political event created a rift within the party leading to split into BPPF (H) faction led by former-BLT Chief Mr. Hagrama Mahilary and his co-cadres and BPPF (R) faction led by former-ABSU leader Rabiram Narzary. This event also created a state of political chaos in the region during the Council election.

In this first Council election, the BPPF (H) made a landslide victory with almost no resistance from the rival. The BPPF (H) most of whom were ex-BLT cadres won 39 seats. Interestingly, the BPPF(R) President Mr. Rabiram Narzary and his party failed to make any mark in this Council election as the party embarrassingly failed to secure even a single seat. Following the leadership crisis within the BPPF (R) all other MCLAs also leaned their support to Mr. Hagrama Mohilary led BPPF (H). On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2005, the BPPF (H) was dissolved and formally a new party with the name 'BPF' was founded under the vision and mission of BTC Chief Mr. Hagrama Mahilary. Mention may be made that Mr. Keshab Deka, the AGP candidate became the lone non-BPF winner from the Mudwibari Constituency.<sup>188</sup>

The BPF debut their first Assam Assembly fray in 2006. In this election as many as eight political parties mainly AGP, AGP (P), AUDF, BJP, BPF, BPPF, Congress and CPI (M) contested in 12 Assembly constituencies falling fully under BTAD area. Many Independent candidates were also in the fray. The BPF campaigned successfully their first session with 11 seats win. The number of BPF MLA went up to 12 when Mr.

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<sup>187</sup>Kamal Kr. Brahma (2019): Electoral Politics in BTAD: A study of the 2016 Assam Assembly Elections, Retrived from Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary, volume 04, Issue-04, p-301

<sup>188</sup>Swler Basumatary (2018): Op. Cit, p-222

Maheswar Baro, a lone winner Independent candidate from Kalaigaon Constituency merged with the party. The party became a Kingmaker when the Congress felt short of majority figure 64 of 126-members Assembly. However, none of the parties other than BPF failed to make any presence felt in BTAD region. Even the BPPF, the main rival of BPF which had a support of influential student organisation “All Bodo Students Union” (ABSU) failed to make any mark in spite of seat adjustment with the AGP because the party is influential only in small pockets of the State. The BPF was the only party which emerged single biggest winner from the BTAD region in this election was a historic achievement for a newcomer in the main stream State politics.<sup>189</sup>

The INC which secured 53 seats a few short of majority’ partnered with BPF and formed a coalition government in the State. Following this political ties the party earned three Cabinet Ministerial berth in the Gogoi led Congress-BPF coalition government. AGP and BJP, the old rival of Congress which won 10 seats and 24 seats each in the State election have a very little influence in BTAD. Neither of the parties have a strong social base in the BTAD. Though, the AGP had once a strong support base among indigenous population outside BTAD have also underwent fast eroding after a decade. The party’s continuous fall in the elections clearly indicate their shrinking support caused mainly because of discontent among well wishers of Assam Accord as well as the arrogant attitude towards indigenous tribal communities from which the party once had enjoyed sympathy.

The entry of AIUDF to the State politics had further fragmented the composite society of Assam into communalism by introducing a minority politics vote bank. The surprise 10 seats victory in debut election of Assam Assembly was a clear indication of it. Their debut with surprise figure in State politics generally could be looked upon as a major political development and especially a major challenge to the Congress support base among immigrant Muslim voters in Assam as well as in the region falling partly in BTAD in particular. Though, the party at present have a limited base in BTAD but its rising popularity among Muslim voters in BTAD is assumed to play an influential role in the future. For many political analyst and experts, the phenomena is seemingly proof and to this notion that the politics of illegal immigration in Assam is not a myth rather it is an utter truth have a link with the visible growing bases of AIUDF under the

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<sup>189</sup>Kamal Kr. Brahma (2019): Op. Cit, pp-301, 302

immigrants shadow. The party has also played a central role to vanguard the immigrant Muslims in State politics. The left parties like CPI, CPI (M), NCP and others have failed to demonstrate their strong presence in State politics as well as in the BTAD.<sup>190</sup>

#### **4.5.2 ELECTIONS IN BTAD: AN OVERVIEW OF “LOK SABHA - 2009, BTC-2010 AND ASSAM ASSEMBLY ELECTION-2011”**

In 2009 Lok Sabha election, the Congress party despite of apprehension of a slide got away with a minor loss of two seats from its tally of nine in the 2004 elections. Moreover, the party managed to retain more or less its vote share. In this election also the Congress-BPF alliance continued as in the previous Assembly election. Following the alliance, the BPF contested in the ST reserved No. 5 Kokrajhar Constituency with the Congress support. In Kokrajhar Constituency, Mr. SK Bwiswmutiary of BPF defeated the rival ABSU backed Mr. Urakw Gwara Brahma with big a margin. The party also fielded a candidate in Mangaldai Constituency in which the coalition partner engaged in a friendly contest. The party could grab only Kokrajhar seat with total 5.41% vote share. The region-wise analyses of the voting pattern in the Constituencies dominated by various communities like ST, tea tribes, Hindu caste and immigrant Muslims gave a clear indication of an emerging trend of ethnic polarization.<sup>191</sup>

The 2010 Council Election saw the rise of participation with several national, regional parties and large number of Independent candidates in the electoral fray. Several National and State political parties taking kin interest in the Council election could be seen as a strategic to expand their social bases. Other than the BPF and the BPPF, none of the parties have strong enough social bases to make any presence in the Council election. These two contemporary rivals were the only strong contenders in the Council election. Many times the political rivalry of these parties also took a violent course during election between the supporters. In this election, BPF put up candidates in all the Constituencies and emerged victorious with overwhelming 31 seats and formed the government for second terms in BTC. The rival BPPF also fielded as many as 26 candidates but failed to make any mark as assumed during pre-poll. The Congress also fielded as many as 23 candidates despite being alliance with BPF in the State also managed to capture three seats. Since the Congress-BPF was coalition partner in the

<sup>190</sup>Swler Basumatary (2018): Op.cit, p-220

<sup>191</sup>Sandhya Goswami (2009): Op. Cit, p-160

State government, Mr. Santiuse Kuzur of the Congress was given a berth of EM in the Bodoland Executive Council. The voter turnout in this election was 77%. Interestingly, the UDPF also fielded as many as 24 candidates but the party won only single seat. Astonishingly, the Independent candidates shared second most number of seats than any other influential parties of the region.<sup>192</sup>

The ruling party BPF' campaign their electoral venture on 38 point manifesto. These manifesto include the total implementation of Bodo Accord, setting-up an International Airport in Bodoland areas, withdrawal of the pending cases related to Bodoland movement, setting-up Central University, Veterinary College, Ayurvedic College, Agriculture College, Physical Training College and Pharmaceutical School in Bodoland areas, steps for food security to ensure public health, steps for solution of unemployment problem, setting-up a hundred bedded hospital in each sub-divisional headquarter, setting-up industries in Bodoland areas, strengthening and development of local and traditional garment industry, transfer of SSA Mission as well as relief and rehabilitation department to Bodoland, phase-wise financial assistance to venture schools and gradual steps of provincialisation and reinstatement of the teachers of Rabha, Garo, Nepali and Santali languages earlier appointed by the State government. The party also promises of continuing pressure on the State as well as Central government for according Hills tribe status to the Bodos living in Karbi Anglong, extensive irrigation, use of modern instrument and technology in agriculture, conservation of forest and steps for aforestation in denuded areas, flood and erosion control, rehabilitation of the victims of Bodoland movement, drinking water supply, total electrification and better health services besides many other welfare steps.<sup>193</sup>

The election to State Assembly was held in 2011. In this election, a large number of political parties and Independent candidates were contested the elections in 12 Assembly Constituencies of BTAD. The parties contested in this election were AGP, AIUDF, BJP, BPF, BPPF, Congress, CPM, All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), Janata Dal (United), Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI) and a large number of Independents. The BPF and Congress despite of coalition partner put up their candidates in some seats against each other fought the election on

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<sup>192</sup>Swler Basumatary (2018): Op. Cit, p-218

<sup>193</sup>BPF releases 38-point election manifesto, Retrieved from [www.assamtribune.com/](http://www.assamtribune.com/) March, 25, 2010

their own. The BPF fielded candidates in 18 LACs. The party had no electoral alliance with the ruling Congress except tacit understanding in some seats. In many Constituencies the party contested against Congress whereas in some seats it canvassed for the Congress candidates. Both the coalition partner in the State government fielded candidates independently and engaged in friendly contest. The AGP-BPPF also arrived an electoral understanding. Following this poll understanding the AGP did not field any candidate in the Bijni, Kokrajhar East, Kokrajhar West, Majbat, Paneri, Sidli and Udalguri Constituencies. However, the parties engaged in friendly contest in other Constituencies. This Assembly Election gave a landslide 78 seats victory to the Congress. The BPF in a historic win swept all the 12 seats in BTAD region with 25.16% vote share. Although, the party gained in terms of seat share but the party lost opportunity to become a Kingmaker this time as the Congress had exceeding majority of their own. Despite being a single largest majority, the Congress-BPF ally once again came together and formed a government in the State but this time the Congress gave only single Cabinet berth to BPF. Among three sitting Cabinet Ministers of previous term the two had to resign and Mr. Chandan Brahma was given the charge of Transport, Tourism and WPT (BTAD part) in the Gogoi led Congress government. A decisive victory of the BPF was credited to Mr. Mohilary's personal popularity among the people and because of its pro-people initiatives for development of basic infrastructure such as construction of rural roads and connectivity, hospitals, RCC bridges etc.<sup>194</sup>

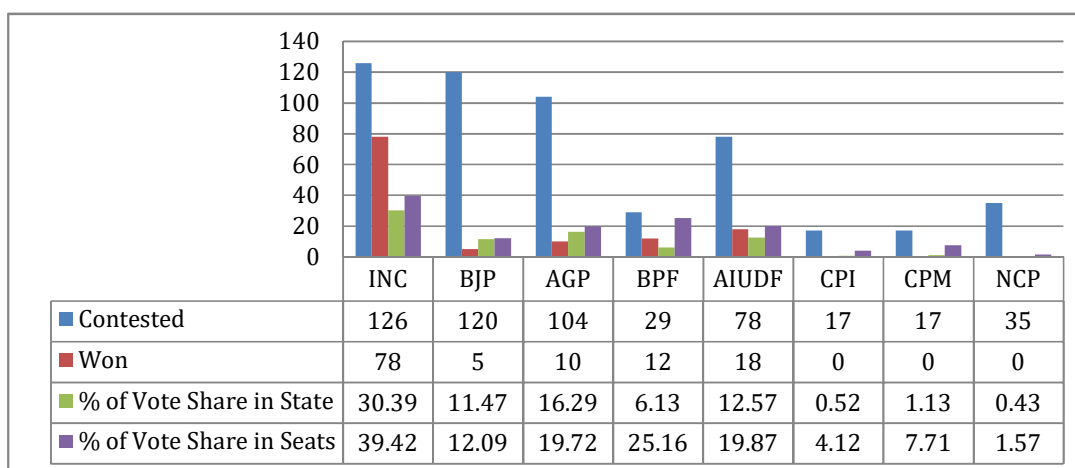
However, amid the Congress-BPF regime, an internal rift occurred within the Congress towards their late term led to split the party into two factions- CM Tarun Gogoi led camp and Hemanata Biswa Sharma led camp. Soon, a rift occurred between the Congress-BPF also because of some internal differences with the State Congress leading to withdrawal of BPF from the Congress government. In addition the party was also compounded with many scams and corruption allegation. By the time, a large chunk of population in Assam had already developed an anti-Congress perception due to anti-incumbent Congress government. Again, the failure of Congress to curb the communal tension in BTAD and its continuous failing at National politics had also largely weakened the party in the State.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup>Kamal Kr. Brahma (2019): Op. Cit, p-302

<sup>195</sup>Swler Basumatary (2018): Op. Cit, p-220

**Figure: 4.5.2 Assam Assembly Election- 2011 (Performance of each Political Party in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election)**



**Source: Assam State Election Commission**

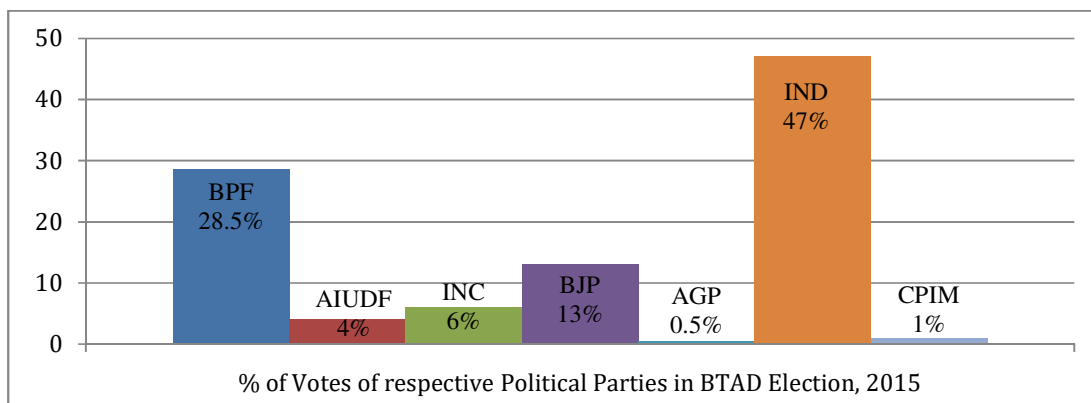
### **4.5.3 ELECTIONS IN BTAD: AN OVERVIEW OF “LOK SABHA - 2014, BTC -2015 AND ASSAM ASSEMBLY ELECTION-2016”**

The 2014 Parliamentary election mark a watershed in Indian politics. Elections in No. 5 Kokrajhar Constituency of Assam have been marked by inter-ethnic violence fuelled by the issues of ‘illegal’ migration and indignity. This Constituency has been labelled as hotbed for ethnic conflict is the heart of Bodo politics. In this Constituency, 23 non- Bodo groups came under the banner of Sanmilita Janagostiya Aikkyamancha (SJA) and together supported an Independent non-Bodo candidate Mr. Naba Kr. Sarania’ a former dreaded ULFA leader. The non-Bodo candidate by a huge margin of votes won the Kokrajhar Constituency with an impressive 51% vote share. This electoral outcome may be viewed as the polarisation of existing ethnic cleavage between the Bodos and non-Bodos in the region. Victory of a non-Bodo in the Bodo dominated Constituency was viewed as the outcome of a history of inter-group conflict in the region as well as the intra-group rivalry among various factions of the Bodo leadership and result of split of the Bodo votes in this election. Such factionalism within the Bodo groups had direct implication not only in terms of election result but also to their politics of ethnic homeland. The non-Bodo candidate won this election because of the strong alliance between the diverse non-Bodo communities. The result was an

indication of total polarization between the Bodos and non-Bodo group in the atmosphere created by ethnic violence and administrative apathy.<sup>196</sup>

Electoral campaigns were floored mainly based on local issues- the issues of separate State for the Bodos and the security for non-Bodos in the region against recurring episodes of ethnic violence. Other communities living in BTAD have resented against the BTC however have been demanding for its scrap. This electoral contest was dominated by the support for a separate Bodoland of one group and the political representation and protection of minorities within the Council areas for the other group. This has been a particular kind of ‘homeland politics’ in the region and a product originated out of intra-group as well as inter-group competition. The Bodo candidates failed to capture votes even in those Assembly segments reserved for Scheduled Tribes based on their proportion of the total population in the State.<sup>197</sup>

**Table- 4.5.3 (a) BTAD Election 2015 (% of votes scored by each party)**



**Source: Assam State Election Commission**

The Council election was floored in 2015. By the time, the course of electoral politics in BTAD had undergone changes with the growing influence of the ABSU and polarization of Bodo and non-Bodo in the Council election too. ABSU in particular have been a pioneer for the emergence of strong political opponent “PCDR” since the time of pre-poll. Although, the 2015 election gave a hat-trick to the ruling BPF in the Council election but the party also suffered a major setback as it could retain only 20 seats and somehow managed to get support from two Independent candidates and

<sup>196</sup>Smitana Saikia, (2015): General elections 2014: Ethnic outbidding and politics of ‘homelands’ in Assam’s Bodoland, Contemporary South Asia, King's India Institute, King's College London, London, UK, Published online: 07 May 2015. p-2

<sup>197</sup>Smitana Saikia (2015): pp-8,9

formed the government. The party faced stiff competition mainly from the rival PCDR' a conglomerate organization of ABSU, BPPF, UDPF, and Pro-talk NDFB (Gobinda). The party was created by the ABSU and former Rajya Sabha MP U.G. Brahma in August, 2015 at Dotoma by uniting five organizations to fight against the ruling BPF's widespread corruption and dictator governance.

The party floored their electoral campaign mainly on the issue of corruption, development and hegemony of the ruling BPF. In this election PCDR put up a strong fight and emerged victorious in seven seats. This election for the first time gave a strong political opponent to the Council government. It may be mentioned that the ABSU and various other Bodo organisations have played a pioneering role in the emergence of strong counter opponent of ruling BPF in BTAD.<sup>198</sup> Meanwhile, the non-Bodo had also successfully mobilised the non-Bodo population for political unification to articulate their political interest in BTAD. In this matter the SJAM, the non-Bodo political party assumed a pioneering role to backlash the BPF's political supremacy to considerable degree. As such the long time ruling BPF suffered a serious downfall as their winning seats continued to fell from 31 seats in previous election to 20 seats in 2015 election. Although, the party became single party securing highest vote share with 28.5% but the electoral verdict indicate the continuous declining popularity of the ruling BPF.

It may be observed that the party of MP-Naba Kr. Sarania, who won 2014 Lok Sabha election with overwhelming support of non-Bodo voters failed to keep the non-Bodos under the banner of SJAM. The party failed to perform well due to split into- Oboro/Onabaro Suraksha Samiti (OSS) and SJA. In this election the non-Bodo groups SJA and OSS also won four seats and two seats each but the Congress which won three seats in previous election failed to win even a single seat. The BJP also tried to set a ground in BTC through high voltage campaign. But the party failed to live up to their expectation as the party managed just a single seat with 13% vote share. AIUDF surprised everyone by winning 4 seats with just 4% vote share. Interestingly, all the four MCLA of AIUDF' later quit the party and joined the ruling BPF.<sup>199</sup>

The 2016 Assam Assembly election was significant from the point of view of changing trend in politics of Assam. This election brought a major shift in State politics

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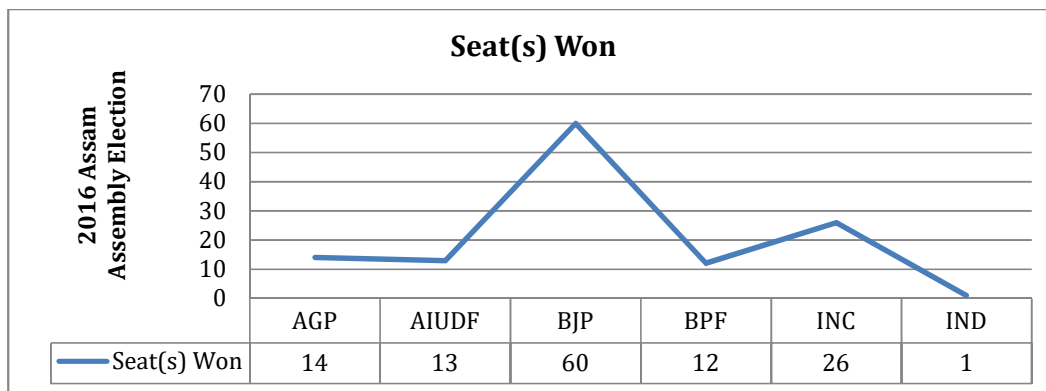
<sup>198</sup>Bodoland Territorial Council Election 2015, <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

<sup>199</sup>Syeda Ambia Zahan (2015): Assam: BPF makes hat-trick, wins 20 seats in BTC poll, Retrieved from <http://www.inditoday.in/india/story/assam-bodoland-btc-poll>



of Assam when the Congress government which ruled the State for three consecutive terms was trounced by BJP. The rise of BJP in Assam which began with the 2014 Lok Sabha election continued its wave across the State in the 2016 Assembly election. Cashing in on the anti-incumbency wave, the BJP spread loud noises State wide against the Congress before election. The party's promised for Gujarat model of development, promised to address the ongoing issue of illegal immigration and protections of "Jati (Community), Mati (Home) and Bheti (Hearth)" have mainly voted the BJP to power. AGP's continuous fall in popularity and anti-incumbency wave against Congress policies of Muslim appeasement politics was precisely their inability to find a solution to this complex issue have worked in favour of BJP in 2016 Assembly election.<sup>200</sup>

**Table- 4.5.3 (b) Assam Assembly Election Result- 2016**



**Source: Assam State Election Commission**

Unlike the earlier elections the 2016 Assembly election in BTAD region was peculiar. It was peculiar because the two major pre-poll alliances were formed in BTAD. The BPF which have been ruling the BTAD for more than a decade was optimism to become the Kingmaker in this Assembly election. As a result the BPF forged a pre-poll alliance with the AGP-BJP in view of the ongoing nationwide Modi wave. As per the poll agreement the AGP-BJP alliance extended their support to the BPF and did not field any candidates in BTAD. Another, poll understanding between UPP and incumbent Congress was ink in BTAD to counter the BPF and its ally AGP-BJP. As per the poll agreement the Congress did not contest in four Constituencies of BTAD i.e. Chapaguri, Kokrajhar East, Kokrajhar West and Sidli but the parties had a

<sup>200</sup>Smitana Saikia (2015): General Election 2014: Will BJP's Gains Polarize Assam Further? SAGE Publications, <http://inp.sagepub.com>, p-7

friendly contest in other Constituencies. The AIUDF which have sizable social base among immigrant Muslims in lower Assam and Sanmilita Janagosthiya Aikyamancha an umbrella organisation of non-tribal groups which won the 2014 Lok Sabha from Kokrajhar Constituency were also in the fray along with Independent candidates and other regional parties. This election hints the fragmentation of electorate on ethnic line as many ethnic groups were seen fighting for representation and political space in the BTAD region.

The AGP-BJP-BPF alliance worked fine in overthrowing the 15 years long Congress regime. The party suffered a humiliating defeat as its strength reduced to 26 from 78 seats in compared to 2001 election. The alliance emerged victorious and altogether won 86 seats with BJP winning 60 seats, AGP 14 seats and BPF 12 seats each. The BPF which was coalition partner in Congress government since 2006 severed with Congress government in 2014 because of inadequate concern being shown towards BTAD. In the backdrop of Modi wave across the country, although not much palpable in BTAD region the BPF had left little choice but to partner with the BJP, a 'National Party' to ensure its throne which is also crucial from the strategic point of view in order to ensure the voices of the Bodos to be heard. The Congress which suffered from the malaise of dissidence, defection and unchecked corruption during its rule heightened the anger of the electorate, especially the young generation, which resulted in the decisive mandate for a "change". Its poll-partner UPP which was backed by influential student organisation ABSU and NDFB-(Progressive) a pro-talk insurgent group seemingly have lost both the tribal and non-tribal votes in BTAD. It is noteworthy to mention that the BPF faced a stiff competition from both the UPP and SJA. The UPP fought the election mainly on the issue of separate State Bodoland. The SJA contested the election against the Bodo hegemony. Notably, the BPF's inclusive manifesto which was emphatic towards social development, address the issues of reservation for Koch- Rajbongshis, Adivasis and Kalitas worked fine in favour of BPF. All these factors led the monopoly of BPF with an overwhelming victory in BTAD region. In addition, the monopoly mandate for BPF could also be attributed as a result of alliance with the BJP and split of non- Bodo votes.<sup>201</sup> The AGP which has been in a constant state of political peril itself has found a helping hand in BJP had a little to bestow the BPF. The Congress debacle in

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<sup>201</sup> Kamal Kr. Brahma (2019): Op. Cit, p-302

national politics which have repercussion in many States including Assam became a political blunder for its ally UPP' a brain child of former Rajya Sabha MP' Mr. UG Brahma and a principal opposition of BPF' as the party met a sharp criticism from several Bodo intellectuals and well wishers especially among the young Bodo voters. In this backdrop, the UPP was also rejected by the people in BTAD region in the name of annihilating the Congress in Assam. The AIUDF however falls apart this election was mainly due to the fraction among minorities in central and lower Assam including the BTAD region. The traditional voters of AIUDF fractured in this region switched to the Congress and a sizeable indigenous Assamese Muslim to the BJP and its ally. But, the party's vote remained intact in Barak Valley following the anti-Congress wave in the region.

Thus, the 2016 Assembly election introduced a new political equation of BJP-AGP-BPF in the State, a combination of nationalism, sub-nationalism of ethnic Assamese. It may be stated that this election was mainly grounded with the paramount issues of development and "Jati, Mati and Bheti" which brought the diverse ethnic indigenous in a political consensus against the immigrant's vanguard AIUDF and the Congress' immigrant appeasement politics and wide spread corruption.<sup>202</sup>

#### **4.6 EXAMINING THE FACTORS FOR SHIFTING VOTING PATTERN IN BTAD**

BTAD is known as the heart of Bodo politics. The No. 5 Kokrajhar Lok Sabha Constituency is reserved for Schedule Tribe has been dominated by the Bodo ethnic group until the political switchover took place in 2014 Lok Sabha election. From the above analysis, least peculiarity in the voting pattern of the people were noted from the 2004 to 2011 elections as the voting pattern remained more or less similar with no major power shift taking place. This clearly indicates the Bodo hegemony in BTAD area of lower Assam as majority of the seats in this region are mostly occupied by the Bodo candidates and Bodo political parties. It is also noteworthy to mention that this part of Lower Assam has been a hub of Bodo politics even prior to the formation of BTC and BPF. With the creation of BTC and BPF, the politics in BTAD region became more inclusive in nature and voting pattern' as the party enjoyed supports from the

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<sup>202</sup> Swler Basumatary (2018): Op. Cit, p-223

cross section of communities in each election since its inception. The Bodo candidate SK Bwiswmuthiary who was elected with the highest margin in 2004 and 2009 Lok Sabha elections from the Kokrajhar Constituency for the fourth consecutive terms point towards Bodo centrism in the region. The advent of BPF with inclusive ideologies marked the emergence of strong regional party in BTAD region. The victory of BPF in Council election with absolute majority as well as a landslide victory in the Assembly election from the region with support of diverse communities indicates towards its popularity not only among Bodos but also among non-Bodos. Because of its inclusiveness the party have been able to control the Council politics and also played a Kingmaker role in State politics. But, the party in recent times have faced stiff competition from other regional political groups chiefly from the Bodo political parties like PCDR, UPP supported by the influential student organisation ABSU. In addition, the emergence of SJA and OSS with their divisive politics of “Bodo” and “non-Bodo” in recent time has also challenged the political hegemony of BPF. It is also a matter of fact that most of the seats in Western Assam covering BTAD areas are reserved for the Schedule Tribes. As such, the non-Bodos in this region have a limited political space for competition. Therefore, the nature of power struggle in BTAD region by and large is intra-community centre around quest for outbidding mostly within Bodo groups. These bids to control over each other have caused many violent confrontations among the Bodo political parties.

#### **4.6.1 POWER STRUGGLE WITHIN INTRA-COMMUNITY AND FRATRICIDAL WAR IN BTAD**

As stated above, in the early 2005, a new political party BPPF underwent split into two rival factions- BPPF (H) which later renamed as BPF, led by former BLT Chief Hagrama Mohilary and BPPF(R) led by former ABSU President Rabiram Narzary. This political development led to chaotic situation in BTAD during the elections when the fratricidal killing between former BLT cadres and ABSU began to outdo the others to fulfil their political ambitions. Their bitter rivalry and competition to outbid the others set the political turf with moderate violence during the first Council election when the two parties came into violent confrontation. This Council election was marred by widespread clashes between the two parties. Similarly, the 2010 Council

elections also witnessed fights between the BPF and the BPPF in which the BPF won hands down. Violence became a regular feature during elections in BTAD area. The split between the BPPF and the BPF widened in the subsequent Legislative Assembly elections in 2006 and 2011 and in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections in which around 200 people were killed in four districts of BTAD.<sup>203</sup>

Likewise, the area had also witnessed series of similar communal clashes in the yester years- 1996 Bodo-Santali clash which left more than 50 deaths, the 2008 Bodo-Muslim clash in Udalguri district which left few dozens of death.<sup>204</sup> But seemingly these incidents did not affect much on the electoral politics of the BTAD as the Bodo candidate in 2004 and 2009 Lok Sabha was elected with the biggest margin securing from the cross section of communities. Likewise, the BPF won the support of diverse communities in the Assembly election of 2006 and 2011 and dominated the electoral politics in the region.

#### **4.6.2 FACTORS FOR POLITICAL SWITCH OVER AND CHANGING VOTING PATTERN AFTER 2011 ELECTIONS**

The political climate began to change after the 2011 Assembly election with a series of violent events recurring in the BTAD region. The course of politics in BTAD began to change when the biggest tragedy of communal clash took place in 2012 between the Bodo and Bangladeshi immigrant Muslims. The horrifying violence spread like a wildfire in no time which had higher intensity in nature and consequences leaving more than 100 death and largest number of displacements of both the Bodo and Muslim group. The government failed to prevent it promptly though it was preventable. This violence had a greater implication in the socio-economic and political life of the people of BTAD region. Then, another BTAD Massacre in 2014 which left 39 dead for various reasons shook the political climate of the BTAD region. Besides, the occurrence of unwanted incidents in the territory like extortion, threatening, kidnapping, looting and murdering have threat to the security of life and property in BTC area and it has created doubt and misunderstanding among people.<sup>205</sup> The series of horrific Communal clashes between the Bodo-Santali and Bodo-Muslims in the region created more alienation

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<sup>203</sup> Kamal Kr. Brahma (2019): Op. Cit, p-302

<sup>204</sup> Firstpost Daily Newsletter, 12 July 2012

<sup>205</sup> Rustam Brahma "Violence in BTAD: History, Reasons, Effect and Measures" www.academia.edu p-1,

socially and politically when the more advanced and opportunist section of the Assamese intellectuals and political lobby started giving political overtone to exploit the situation. Ethnic polarization of Bodo and non-Bodo became more contrast and sharp in BTAD after the 2012 clash had a direct bearing in the 2014 Lok Sabha election result.

Simmering tensions in BTAD have exploded when allegation was floated that the State forest officials had employed former BLT cadres to evict Muslim immigrants from the edge of a reserved forest in Kokrajhar.<sup>206</sup> The tensions further escalate when unidentified assailants shot two activist of the ABMSU on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2012. Followed by the incident- the Home Minister in the Parliament on 8th August 2012 made it very clear that the militant group of the Koch-Rajbongshi community, the KLO was involved in the incident of 6th July 2012.”<sup>207</sup> Despite the clearance from police administration mob of over thousand Muslims gathered in Joypur few km away from Kokrajhar town and dragged four Bodo youths they believed to be former-BLT cadres from a police van and then brutally killed in presence of police personnel. This incident was followed by the burning down of Bodo villages and schools in Gossaigaon sub-division. There was no counter-attack from the Bodo community for days but there was no response from the authority also to prevent the escalation of clash in the initial stage. This riot was geared by the Immigrant Muslims as they started by brutally killing the four ex-BLT cadres at Joypur encouraged them to prove their existence, strength and power. The opponent came for counter attack much later. As a result the situation turned to worse.<sup>208</sup> The clash left 109 persons dead and 5000 houses were set ablaze in 244 villages displacing more than 4 lakh people into relief camps. As pointed out by a minority activist that- “the incident in 2012 have gone a long way in shaping the electoral choices of voters in the BTAD in the 2014 election”.<sup>209</sup> Further the formation of Ona-Bodo Saruksha Samiti and ABMSU made the situation grimmer with their anti-BTAD activities, conspiracy and hate speech. Aggressive behaviour and explosive comments of these organizations inspired the immediate outbreak of 2012 Bodo-Bangladesh Immigrant Muslim clash in Kokrajhar. Mr. Promod Boro’ the ABSU

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<sup>206</sup>Smitana Saikia (2015): Op. Cit. p-4

<sup>207</sup>Manjil Basumatary (2012): “Conflict between the Bodos and the Immigrant Muslims in Kokrajhar and Rehabilitation Issues”, Dialogue July-September 2012: 01, English, Volume 14 No.1 viewed on 4 May 2014 ([http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia\\_Jul%20012/man.htm](http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Jul%20012/man.htm))

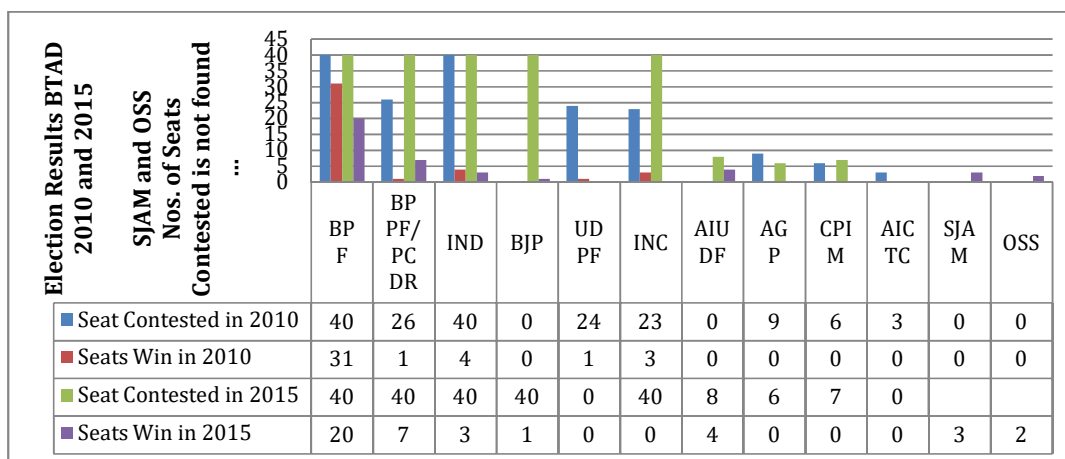
<sup>208</sup>Rustam Brahma: Op. Cit. p-7

<sup>209</sup>Smitana Saikia (2015): Op.cit, p-4

President also pointed out, “New non-Bodo organisations coming out in BTAD areas were a matter of concern.” This conflict was actually steered by some non-Bodo militants and then blame was shifted to Bodos that was later proved the involvement of KLO by investigation agency.<sup>210</sup> CBI investigation of the 2012 clash also proved the involvement of a Muslim man, a suspended police constable in this political conspiracy who was carrying illegal firearm with him on 19 July accidentally shot a bullet in his leg and latter blamed two motorcycle-borne Bodo youth of trying to killed him.<sup>211</sup>

Another, reason for the political switchover in 2014 election was the division of the Bodos. Political bickering among Bodo groups was out in open just before the election when the rival parties accused each other of indulging in violence and electoral malpractices. The ABSU and its ally accused the BPF of threatening voters and ‘selling out’ to the Assam government; while, the latter accused the ABSU of intimidating voters. The ABSU even met the Chief Election Commissioner and complaint against ruling BPF of misusing the government machinery in the election campaign. Violence triggered during the peak of campaign when the BPF and ABSU supporters clashed in Baksa around the issue of setting up campaign offices. In another incident the BPF youth leader’s house was set on fire in Baksa and few group clashes across the BTAD region triggered when the blame game between the ABSU and the ruling BPF continued during the election campaign.<sup>212</sup>

**Table- 4.6.2 Seats Won by Political Parties in the BTAD Elections**



**Source: Assam State Election Commission**

<sup>210</sup>Rustam Brahma: Op. Cit. p-7

<sup>211</sup>Assam Cop triggered Bodoland riots: CBI (Times of India, <http://m.timesofindia.com>)

<sup>212</sup>Smitana Saikia (2015): Op. Cit, p- 6

The fall of seat share of BPF in 2015 Council Elections clearly indicate the shrinking non-Bodo votes to BPF. The BPF lost mainly in two districts of BTAD i.e. Baksa and Chirang because the ABSU had successfully mobilized the Boro voters through the Bodoland Movement. Alienation of a senior member of BPF, former EM of the Council and MLA Mr. Hitesh Basumatary further weakened the BPF in Baksa. Emergence of non-Bodo organisation SJA and their divisive politics turned the non-Bodo voters against BPF.<sup>213</sup> Another setback for BPF in the Council election was the lost of Muslim and Adivasi supporters after the tragic incident of 2012 Communal violence and 2014 Massacre which further widened the divisive politics in BTAD when their social harmony was disturbed by “Bodo and non-Bodo” sentiment. The massacre against Adivasi community was perpetrated just few month before the 2015 Council election when a splinter group led by I.K. Songbijit popularly known as NDFB(S) indiscriminately fired on the night of 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2014 in the Adivasi villages in Kokrajhar, Chirang and Sonitpur districts of Assam which killed as many as 80 Adivasis and injuring number of people. Again, the failure to rehabilitate the victims and displaced persons in BTAD region became another burning political issue. The issue becomes political hotcake election after elections for many political parties’ but remain unaddressed. According to report of Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) there were over 3,00,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Assam, the highest in the world during 2014. Lack of effective measures and policies for rehabilitation had also frustrated the long time affected and victims. Many such problems have been the determining factors of changing voting behaviour in BTAD.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

From the above analyses, it may be stated that- over the three decades since Independence of India the politics in Assam have been predominantly a Congress dominated. Assam was among the States that have been under the rule of Congress for long years. For many years Assam has been safe abode for the Congress as the party had won both the Lok Sabha and State Assembly almost without any strong resistance for more than three decades. Voting behaviour of the people also remains more or less similar with no major changes taking place during the era. But the hegemony of

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<sup>213</sup>Swler Basumatary (2018): Op. Cit, p-219



Congress in Assam began to face a challenge during 1980s with the launch of popular Assam Movement in 1979 in the State. The movement can be seen as a movement against the Congress government's policy of Muslim vote bank politics in one way and to dispel the illegal Bangladeshi immigrants from Assam in other way. After all the Congress has been accused of playing Muslims vote bank politics. Regionalism also began to grow around Assamese nationalism in Assam originating out of movement also substantially gave birth to sub-nationalism among different ethno-linguistic groups at the same time. In 1985, a historic Assam Accord was signed with the Congress government and agitating group paved the way for the birth of regional political party fondly known as AGP' a political party formed around the Assamese nationalism. Formation of regional party came in the wake of Congress policies of Muslims appeasement politics began to challenge the Congress hegemony also introduced the alignment politics in Assam. The party rode to power in the wave of Assamese nationalism ruled Assam during its initial stage but alienated soon from its social bases due to its misrule, arrogant attitudes towards the indigenous tribals of Assam. Onwards 1990s, the politics of Assam became more complex with the interplay of issues like insurgent activities, ethnic assertion for autonomy and Statehood, law and order, development, peace and security etc. These issues made the politic of Assam more dynamic and complex as the voting behaviour of the people began to change on many counts inspired by the major issues like ethnic aspiration for homeland in Bodo Belts, Hills Autonomous Districts, illegal immigrants and Muslims politics, peace and development etc.

Demand for Bodoland in the Bodo belts was especially very significant from the point of view of political development in Assam after the creation of BTAD. The Bodoland movement has been very significant in changing the entire politics in BTAD and voting behaviour of the people in many ways. Formation of BTAD in 2003 gave a new course to the Bodo politics with the signatory arms group BLT coming to the mainstream politics. Peace and normalcy began to restored in the region with dismantle of arms group. Many new local political parties also emerged after the creation of BTAD. Among such local parties BPF, BPPF and ABSU backed PCDR became prominent and played determining role in the Council politics. Election politics in Western Assam especially the BTAD region are mostly dominated by the Bodos. It may

be stated that the Bodo political parties have strong influence in Western part of Assam. Especially, the Kokrajhar Parliamentary Constituency is known for the heart of Bodo politics and have been under Bodo domination for long time. The BPF' a dominant political party of the region has been ruling the Council administration since 2005 to till date. Time and again, the party have shown its popularity in the Assembly election since its inception. It became a Kingmaker in 2006 Assembly Election and has been alliance partner of the government in the State for three successive terms. The Constituency of Western part of Assam especially the Bodo belt is dominated by the BPF party. But, the politics in BTAD began to change since 2014 Lok Sabha Election when the Bodo candidate lost the Kokrajhar Constituency to the non-Bodo candidate. Part of the reason for the changing voting behaviour was the Bodo-Muslims violence in 2012 and 2014 massacre against Adivasi community just before the election. This created a social division between the Bodo-Muslim and Bodo-Adivasi and since then the politics of Bodo and non-Bodo became sharp and contrast. Alienation of non-Bodo votes from the BPF caused them the Kokrajhar Constituency. On the other end, the division of Bodo votes between the BPF and the ABSU backed candidates down played the Bodo domination in the region. Emergence of united opposition of non-Bodo organisation also greatly challenged the hegemony of BPF. All these factors have affected the social base of BPF in the Council election held in the subsequent year. Thus, it may be stated that the politics in BTAD region have become more complex with continuous changing social behaviour and interplay of various factors. Nevertheless, the voting behaviour of the Bodos and non-Bodos is largely motivated by their contentious politics for domination, space and representation- the former group is motivated by the separate State Bodoland for safeguarding their identity and the latter group emerged around opposition to the former.

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