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ELECTORAL REALIGNMENT IN SIXTH SCHEDULE GOVERNANCE: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE 2025 BODOLAND TERRITORIAL COUNCIL ELECTION

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ABSTRACT:

The Bodoland Territorial Council is the largest autonomous institution under the Sixth Schedule administering five districts of Assam. The fifth general election held on 22 September 2025 marks a decisive realignment with the return of Bodoland People's Front to power with 28 of 40 seats. The study is based on the official vote share report of the 2025 election comprising 40 constituencies, 3359 polling stations, 26,57,153 voters and 316 candidates. Five major patterns emerge from the data. First, first female-majority electorate in BTC history with 13,34,521 females. Second, severe vote-seat distortion where UPPL and BJP together polled 53.03 percent but got only 12 seats. Third, 13 constituencies decided by less than 1000 votes. Fourth, BJP failed to win any ST seat in Kokrajhar core. Fifth, micro parties and independents polled over 1.2 lakh votes as spoilers. The study contributes to understanding of tribal governance in Northeast India.

Keywords: Bodoland Territorial Council, BTR, BPF, UPPL, Female Electorate, Vote-Seat Distortion

1. INTRODUCTION: WHY THE 2025 BTC ELECTION IS A LANDMARK:

The Bodoland Territorial Region comprising Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Tamulpur and Udalguri districts is governed under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The Bodoland Territorial Council was created under the BTC Accord of 2003 and further strengthened by the BTR Peace Accord of 2020. It exercises powers over 40 subjects including land settlement, forest, agriculture and village administration.

The council has 40 elected members with reservation of 30 ST, 5 Non-ST and 5 Open seats. It governs a mixed demography where Bodos are 30 percent and 70 percent are Bengali Muslims, Bengali Hindus, Koch-Rajbongshis, Adivasi tea tribes and Assamese. The 2020 election produced a hung council where BPF got 17 seats but UPPL with 12, BJP with 9 and GSP with 1 formed government under Pramod Boro. The 2025 election was therefore framed as an incumbency test for UPPL and a comeback test for BPF led by Hagrama Mohilary who ruled for 17 years. The Assam State Election Commission announced schedule on 26 August 2025 with polling on 22

September and counting on 26 September. This election is widely seen as semi-final before the 2026 Assam Assembly election.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH GAP:

- Basumatary in 2021 analysed BPF dominance from 2005 to 2020 as product of Bodo sub-nationalism and patronage network.
- Bhattacharyya in 2022 argued UPPL's 2020 victory represented generational shift from militant legacy to student movement leadership.
- Sarma and Daimari in 2023 studied role of non-Bodo voters as decisive, arguing no party can win without 70 percent non-Bodo support.
- Saikia in 2024 highlighted gender dimension but lacked data on female-majority roll.

No study has calculated vote share, margin analysis or vote-seat distortion for 2025 election. Present study fills gap using constituency-wise valid votes cast in favour of candidates.

3. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES:

Objectives of the study are:

- To analyse electoral participation, turnout and demographic composition.
- To examine party-wise performance in seats and vote share.
- To identify new patterns including gender composition, margin analysis and vote-seat distortion.
- To assess implications for Sixth Schedule governance and 2026 Assembly election.

Hypotheses are that female-majority electorate correlates with BPF sweep in Kokrajhar-Chirang, that UPPL-BJP split created artificial majority for BPF, and that competitiveness increased despite landslide as average margin fell.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES:

The research design is descriptive and analytical with quantitative analysis. The study is based on the official vote share report of BTC Election 2025 containing candidate-wise valid votes.

The report shows detailed data such as Parbatjhora ST with 92 polling stations and 69,955 voters where Moon Moon Brahma of BPF polled 23,451 votes, Prasen Kumar Brahma of UPPL polled 16,301 votes and Banendra Kumar Mushahary of BJP polled 12,733 votes. Similarly, Guma open with 82 polling stations and 63,666 voters where Md Antaj Ali of BPF polled 24,272 votes, Sajal Kumar Singha of BJP polled 16,630 votes and Mursida Begum of UPPL polled 5,594 votes. Srirampur Non-ST with 63 polling stations and 47,159 voters where Wilson Hasda of UPPL polled 20,435 votes and Mokhleswar Rahman of BPF polled 17,847 votes.

Total valid votes tabulated is 20,24,725. Total electors as per report is 40 constituencies, 3359 polling stations, 26,57,153 voters. Data analysis tools include percentage, margin calculation defined as winner votes minus runner-up votes, and cross-tabulation by constituency type and district.

5. FINDING ONE: HISTORIC GENDER SHIFT - FIRST FEMALE-MAJORITY ROLL:

Demographic finding:

Polling was held peacefully on 22 September 2025 from 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM across 3359 stations with no repoll ordered, unprecedented for BTC. By 4:30 PM, 72.61 percent polling was recorded. Final turnout was estimated at 77.75 percent. District-wise turnout was:

- Kokrajhar 77.08 percent, highest among all districts.
- Chirang 76.69 percent.
- Tamulpur 72 percent.
- Udalguri 68.32 percent.
- Baksa 66.87 percent.

The election was described as first zero-violence council election in Assam history. The most significant shift is female electors exceeding males for first time:

- Female electorate is 13,34,521 constituting 50.20 percent
- Male electorate is 13,23,399 constituting 49.79 percent
- Others 17 voters
- Female excess of 11,122 voters concentrated in Kokrajhar and Chirang where BPF swept 11 of 12 and 3 of 5 seats

The increase of 2,70,891 voters over 2020 is largely due to female registration. BPF's manifesto focused on Self Help Group funds and market sheds for women, which converted this shift into votes.

6. FINDING TWO: THE GREAT VOTE-SEAT DISTORTION - 53% VOTES, 30% SEATS:

Statistical finding :

Tabulation of the official vote share report of BTC Election 2025 shows:

- BPF secured 28 seats with 38.90 percent vote share comprising 7,87,552 valid votes, increase of 11 seats from 2020.
- UPPL secured 7 seats with 30.44 percent comprising 6,16,364 votes, decrease of 5 seats.

- BJP secured 5 seats with 22.59 percent comprising 4,57,407 votes, decrease of 4 seats.
- INC secured zero seats with 2.07 percent comprising 41,945 votes, averaging only 1,048 votes per constituency.
- Independents secured zero seats but polled 3.96 percent comprising 80,151 votes, more than Congress.

Others including AITC 10,741 votes, GSP 10,025 votes, VPI 8,335 votes together polled 2.04 percent. The critical insight is that UPPL and BJP together polled 53.03 percent comprising 10,73,771 votes, significantly more than BPF's 38.90 percent, but got only 12 seats constituting 30 percent while BPF got 28 seats constituting 70 percent. This is classic First-Past-The-Post distortion due to split of anti-BPF votes.

In 14 seats, BPF's victory margin was less than combined UPPL plus BJP vote:

- Fakiragram Non-ST: Azamul Hoque of BPF 20,085 votes, Arup Kumar Dey of BJP 18,721 votes and Afjal Hoque Sarkar of UPPL 7,416 votes. Combined total 26,137 exceeding BPF.
- Guma open: Md Antaj Ali of BPF 24,272 votes, Sajal Kumar Singha of BJP 16,630 votes and Mursida Begum of UPPL 5,594 votes. Combined anti-BPF vote 22,224.
- Dotma ST: Prakash Basumatary of BPF 15,441 votes, Pramod Boro of UPPL 15,163 votes and Manaranjan Brahma of BJP 11,729 votes. Combined BJP plus UPPL vote 26,892, almost double of BPF.

7. FINDING THREE: MICRO-MARGINS - ELECTION DECIDED BY 278 VOTES:

Calculated margins show average margin across BTR in 2025 was 4,812 votes compared to 6,340 votes in 2020, showing more competitive election than seat tally suggests. Ultra-close contests defined as margin less than 1000 votes were found in 13 seats constituting 32.5 percent of total seats.

Key micro-margin seats from the report of BTC Election 2025:

- **Dotma ST:** Prakash Basumatary of BPF 15,441 votes vs Pramod Boro of UPPL 15,163 votes, margin only 278 votes, 0.9 percent margin, biggest upset where sitting CEM lost home turf.
- **Chirang Duars ST:** Kampa Borgoyari of UPPL 18,885 votes vs Hagrama Mohilary of BPF 18,440 votes, margin 445 votes, BPF president lost second seat despite winning Debargaon ST with 28,398 votes.
- **Fakiragram Non-ST:** Margin 1,364 votes between BPF and BJP.
- **Srirampur Non-ST:** Wilson Hasda of UPPL 20,435 votes vs Mokhleswar Rahman of BPF 17,847 votes, margin 2,588 votes.
- **Jamduar ST:** Willium Narzary of BPF 14,570 votes vs Saranjit Basumatary of UPPL 13,237 votes, margin 1,333 votes.

- **Soraibil ST:** Mritunjay Narzary of BPF 17,192 votes vs Raju Kumar Narzary of UPPL 13,500 votes.

Out of 13 ultra-close seats, BPF won 9, UPPL won 3 and BJP won 1, indicating superior booth management by BPF in border villages along Bhutan foothills.

8. FINDING FOUR: CORE-PERIPHERY DIVIDE AND COLLAPSE OF NATIONAL PARTIES:

ST-reserved seats numbering 30 were dominated by BPF which won 22, UPPL won 5 and BJP won 3, but BJP won zero ST seats in Kokrajhar district for first time since 2015.

Non-ST seats numbering 5 showed split verdict:

- Srirampur Non-ST won by Wilson Hasda of UPPL with 20,435 votes.
- Fakiragram Non-ST won by Azamul Hoque of BPF with 20,085 votes.
- Nagrijuli Non-ST won by Diganata Barua of BJP with 18,932 votes against Jagadish Sarkar of BPF with 18,408 votes, margin 524 votes.
- Mwdwibari open seat won by Jouysrang Baro of BJP with 15,242 votes against Daobaisa Boro of UPPL with 16,998 votes.
- Nowni Serfang Non-ST won by Charan Boro of BPF with 34,795 votes against Nilut Swargiary of UPPL with 28,735 votes.

Open seats were mostly won by BPF including:

- Dihira open where Diganta Gayary polled 29,546 votes.
- Thuribari open where Khalilur Rahman won with 19,783 votes against Ajoy Kumar Ray with 15,695 votes.
- Mathanguri open where Akhtar Ahmed won with 24,812 votes.

BJP's victories came only from Non-ST and open seats where Bengali Hindu, Adivasi and Koch Rajbongshi votes dominate. INC secured zero seats with 2.07 percent vote share, with candidates like Sahen Chandra Brahma in Parbatjhora polling 4,022 votes, Abu Bakkar Ali in Guma polling 3,075 votes, many polling less than 500 votes. AAP polled only 77 votes in Fakiragram and 61 votes in Guma, total 157 votes in whole BTR.

9. FINDING FIVE: SPOILER EFFECT OF MICRO PARTIES:

Micro parties polled decisive spoiler votes in Tamulpur and Baksa:

- Voters Party International polled 8,335 votes across 15 seats averaging 555 per seat. In Bhergaon ST, VPI got 599 votes while winning margin was 1200.

- Gana Suraksha Party polled 10,025 votes. In Darangajuli ST, GSP candidate Ghanashyam Das polled 3,720 votes exceeding BJP's winning margin.
- AITC polled 10,741 votes, CPI-M 3,037 votes, NRMPI 732 votes, AJP 337 votes, SP 1,884 votes together.
- Total votes of independents were 80,151 votes constituting 3.96 percent.

Examples of independents:

- Jagadish Basumatary independent in Parbatjhora polling 2,036 votes
- Dilip Kumar Barman independent in Fakiragram polling 7,358 votes
- Raju Dhakal independent polling 7,283 votes

This micro-party ecosystem is new to BTR since 2020 Accord gave political space to smaller tribal groups.

10. DISTRICT-WISE REALIGNMENT: NEW POLITICAL MAP:

District-wise analysis shows new north-south divide:

- **Kokrajhar** district with 12 seats: BPF win 11 and UPPL win 1, 91.6 percent strike rate. Kokrajhar is BPF's ideological capital. Wilson Hasda of UPPL is only non-BPF survivor because Srirampur has 60 percent Muslim and Bengali voters.
- **Chirang** district with 5 seats: BPF win 3 and UPPL win 2. Chirang Duars upset shows anti-Hagrama pocket in Bengali-dominated riverine area.
- Baksa district with 6 seats: BPF win 3, UPPL win 1 and BJP win 2, most balanced district.
- **Tamulpur** district with 6 seats: BPF win 3, UPPL win 1 and BJP win 2, BJP strong due to Adivasi tea tribe vote. Baganpara ST with 108 polling stations and 89,239 voters where Rekha Rani Das Boro of BJP polled 22,280 votes and won with Adivasi consolidation.
- **Udalguri** district with 11 seats: BPF win 8, UPPL win 2 and BJP win 1.

This creates new north-south divide where northern Bhutan foothill ST seats are solidly BPF and southern border Non-ST open seats split between BJP and UPPL.

11. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The 2025 BTC election marks restoration of BPF but with new structural features. The female-majority electorate, micro-margins and spoiler parties indicate BTR politics is moving from hegemonic to competitive clientelism.

The pre-poll split of UPPL and BJP despite being partners in state government was electorally irrational and gifted BPF super-majority. Since all 40 seats are now held by NDA constituents, council remains within NDA. This is unique case of NDA versus NDA fight where opposition is

absent. However, BPF will demand lion's share of 12 Assembly tickets in BTR for 2026 Assembly election.

For Sixth Schedule governance, BPF's absolute majority provides stability to implement land digitisation, where BTR is first tribal council to digitise land records. However, low vote-share of 38.90 percent mandates inclusive governance for 70 percent non-Bodo population, especially Muslims, Bengalis and Adivasis.

The 2025 verdict is thus both a comeback and a warning, a comeback for Hagrama Mohilary and a warning that Bodo politics is now more competitive, gendered and fragmented than ever before.

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