CONCLUSION

Reviewing the findings of the research on "Politics of Coalition Politics: The Indian Experience", contained in the five previous chapters based on historico-analytical method, a couple of unanimities on the melting point of some remarkable conjectures may be created. There is no escaping the fact that coalition politics has taken deep roots in the political roadmap of India that is irrevocable. Over the last two decades, India has developed a distinctive party system of its own. It is neither a two-party system nor a multi-party system with three, four or even half-a-dozen of parties of the kind commonly found in continental Europe. It is a system with a multiplicity of parties. This multiplicity of parties, reflected in the size and diversity of India's fragmented socio-political order, has made coalition politics inevitable for the nation. Since 1996, India has so far experienced the working of six coalition governments at the Centre with a range of smaller and larger regional coalition partners and external supporting parties, let alone the numerous coalition governments operating in different states. Another national coalition - the Congress-led UPA-II – is left with a few months to complete its term. So, forging coalition for sharing power is not a new phenomenon in India, but what is new is the phenomenal growth of 'coalition politics' that has taken precedence over governance. The study covered not simply a detailed discussion on coalition governance as such, but has explored the politics of the jarring twists and turns between the government and the Opposition and, in some cases, between the government and its regional allies over a range of issues that complicates the situation. This maneuvering politics – politics of cynical opportunism and negativism reflected in contemporary India – is so original and multi-dimensional in its manifestation that induces us to get through the maze of coalition politics.

Coalition politics has brought in a paradigm shift in the meaning of the term 'politics' in the vocabulary of Political Science. The generic meaning of 'politics' refers to an act directed towards arriving at a consensus over dissenting forces for the attainment of some specific goal. The only way out of seemingly intractable issues in a pluralist democracy is through a political give-and-take, a robust movements forward and backward. But now in India, 'politics' reeks of the creation of leakages and loopholes in a loosely-knitted union among dissenters for subtle purposes. This subtlety of politics is the main game here to uphold cohesion and peace within the ruling dispensation for considerable units of time as designed or maneuvered. As a consequence, regional varieties grapple with the situation and try to whip up emotion for regional issues with the genesis of regional parties. Regional actors are getting more and more involved even in foreign policy decisions. The states manipulate decisions in foreign policy to their interests, thus putting forth Tamil or Punjabi or Bengali commitments rather than that of the Union. Corruption has eaten into the very vitals of the nation and has ugly manifestations in high places. Actually, the game of power politics or political equation now seems to revolve more around corruption and shielding of criminals, petty or big, involved in various scams and corruption charges to be used for vote or personal gain. The huge number of members of Parliament facing criminal charges and the despicable
actions of the Union Law Ministers to change the report of the CBI are a pointer. The investigative agencies are being used for political purpose. Politics is now not the means to an end but an end in itself.

Political parties – both regional and national – join a coalition or support it from outside to ensure the share of payoffs of the government at every level and in every respect. These include the sharing of the privileges, of the tables and the platforms of discussion to command the affairs of the government and the sharing of the credit to prop up a feeling of cohesion among the members of the otherwise unfettered coalition. Internal politics within a coalition affords sufficient space to every constituent to alienate itself from others for the formation of an alternative arrangement when a new political equation emerges or is likely to emerge within the existing coalition. This politics of alienation promotes the idea of exclusiveness instead of inclusiveness, barring only the interest of keeping intact the frail unity swirling around the terms and conditions of the power-sharing agreement.

Attention to the demands of coalition partners requires accommodation of the claims of patronage as well as personal vanity. Any action that may be construed as an affront or a slight by the leader of even a minor ally, can produce a major political disorder. The demands of this kind of political management deflect attention away from the long-term requirements of policy. Some key allies or supporting parties of the ruling combine are often found to jump on the Opposition bandwagon to jeopardize the official initiatives. A confrontationist attitude with the government only leads to repeated and continuous disruption of Parliament and deny opportunity to members to raise the pressing issues. The cynical game of stalling parliamentary affairs by demanding vote on every governmental initiative by the Opposition at the other pole of national politics, sets a terrible precedent. The legislature is meant to hold the executive to account and not regularly lasso every executive action. Overused by the Opposition, these cynical methods end up biting it right back when it returns to power. The ruling party, when in the opposition, adopts these very tactics with greater force and vengeance.

Different arrays of interests and political-cum-tactical moves that political parties across the political spectrum have been following since their involvement in successive coalition governments in India, underline a network of some peculiar features, viz., i) gross disregard for the popular mandate shown by political parties, cutting across their ideologies, policies and programmes, for sharing political power in post-electoral arrangements through hard bargaining and negotiation; ii) the distinctiveness of subtle diplomatic tie of group identities within the coalition; iii) extending outside support to the ruling combine to enjoy the largesse of the government without shouldering the responsibility for anything negative that might defame the government; vi) emergence and growth of extra-constitutional authority during the regime of the UPA being outright difficult and obstructive for the Prime Minister to exercise his/her constitutional authority; v) frequent disruption of parliamentary proceedings due to violation of order and decorum inside the House by political people to force the government to admit their extraneous demands; vi) the bizarre behaviour of a bevy of slippery politicians as manifested in the grave discrepancy between their stand and actions on the voting
provision on a policy, a confidence or no-confidence motion, censure motion, adjournment motion and in Constitution Amendment Bills; vii) regular changing of sides by regional actors between the two major national parties – the Congress and the BJP – to take maximum leverage of the volatile political situation; viii) simultaneous presence of two rival state parties as supporting parties of the same coalition; ix) the withdrawal of support to the ruling combination either by a constituent partner or by a supporting party and x) the dominance of state politics over national politics; xii) corruption and muscle power in tandem to further malign democracy etc. All of these features place the Constitution in direct conflict with the tenets of ethics and morality.

Politics is not only calculative and manipulative, but is also reflective in disposition and course of action. Consequently, political treachery will overplay a big role pertaining to a key formula for the futuristic dimension of India’s coalition politics. India is a vast society replete with a multiplicity of primordial factors like caste, creed, religion, language and even philosophical codes. Besides, party structure operating in different states varies widely, so conundrum takes place. Uncertainty obfuscates the entire process of coalition making and breaking game and regional parties swing back and forth like shuttlecock from one group to another as the derivative of this uncertain game.

Coming to the applied part, in the light of the observations made in this study, it seems certain that the country, like 2009, is going to have a hung Parliament in the next general elections, scheduled for May 2014. Therefore, it will not be out of our vision to see how politics of coalition does pan out in the Lok Sabha next year. The vote shares of major players have remained more or less constant since the Congress lost its dominance in 1996. They might have sometimes moved in a narrow band of mostly 2-3 per cent, but changes of governments have taken place more as a result of decisive local or regional turnarounds: the decimation of the BJP by the Samajwadi Party (not a constituent of the UPA) in Uttar Pradesh, and the near clean-sweep by the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Left's best ever performance in West Bengal and Kerala in 2004 brought a Congress-led UPA to power. The difference in the Congress-BJP vote share was just over 4 per cent. Power changed hands mainly because of several state-level side-shows. NDA's loss of power was also the loss of its own allies: Naveen Patnaik's BJD, Mamata Banerjee's TMC and Chandrababu Naidu's TDP, all left the NDA protesting the Gujarat killings and aggressive anti-minority Hindutva. It was these factors, more than any aam aamdi fightback, or revulsion over 'India Shining', that brought the UPA to power. In fact, the Modi factor, which consolidated minorities against the BJP and drove out allies with the hope of getting minority votes, produced a Parliament with such peculiar arithmetic that an anti-BJP Congress-led coalition became the only possibility. The final power equation has been determined either by those regional players which could electorally or ideologically go only with one side (the Samajwadi Party and the Left with the Congress) or by those with somewhat obscure ideologies (the DMK and the AIADMK).

Although there were some changes in 2009, particularly in the cities where some vote shifted from the BJP to the Congress, partly because of five years of growth and the
rise of Manmohan Singh as a middle class favourite, but essential divisions in national politics and voter preferences remained largely unchanged.

As we move closer to 2014, in every small development, one keeps finding meaningful signals that could foreshadow the contours of the story next year. State elections often provide such indications. Whenever an assembly election takes place, there is a temptation to extrapolate the outcomes and imagine what they mean for the shaping of the next Lok Sabha. This game becomes even more popular once parliamentary elections are round the corner.

To take up the states first, the assembly elections are due in eight states, including Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, ahead of the next year's general elections. The three north-eastern states, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura, went to polls in February 2013. In all three cases, the ruling parties were returned to power. The Congress retained Meghalaya, but it failed to dislodge the Left Front in Tripura or the Naga People's Front (NPF) in Nagaland. But these being smaller states, their impact in terms of strength in the Lok Sabha is bound to be limited. Together, these states represent only five seats. In 2009, the UPA had won two of these five seats, the Left Front had won two and the NDA bagged the remaining one (Nagaland). The situation has not changed much since then – except the NCP in Meghalaya has split and P.A. Sangma has formed his own party. The NCP contested in 15 assembly seats, but won only four. Sangma's National People's Party (NPP) was able to win only two of the 32 seats it contested in its debut electoral performance. So the assembly results in these states have not thrown up new patterns.

Congress stormed back to power with an absolute majority of 122 seats in Karnataka in May 2013 after seven years in its old southern bastion decimating the ruling BJP whose fate was sealed by a fractious split and corruption charges. The resurrection of the Congress in that state owed more to the suicidal politics of the local BJP leadership, than to the imagination of the Congress. The BJP faced a crushing defeat even as it struggled to come second with the JD (S). Both BJP and JD (S) won 40 seats each.

Before the election, the ruling BJP itself had spawned two other regional parties: the Badavara Shramikara (BSR) Congress floated by B. Sreeramulu, former BJP minister and loyalist of the jailed mining baron, G. Janardhana Reddy, and the Karnataka Janata Party (KJP), formed by former BJP Chief Minister and Lingayat strongman B. S. Yeddyurappa, who quit the BJP last year. The KJP and the BSR Congress won 6 and 4 seats respectively.

The ruling BJP failed to repeat its 2008 performance when it won 110 assembly seats, adding 31 to its score of 79 in 2004. It seems that the Congress benefited more from the corruption charges of the BJP leaders than its wrangling.

The most crucial assembly elections that the two major parties will face before the coming Lok Sabha elections are those of Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Of these four states, the Congress is in power in Delhi and Rajasthan, while
the BJP rules in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In Delhi, the Congress faces fatigue born out of long incumbency. The BJP had swept Chhattisgarh in the last assembly elections, while the Congress had fought back after a defeat in the assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh. In Rajasthan, the BJP was handicapped by acute internal dissensions during the assembly as well as the Lok Sabha elections.

Such state level dynamics and configuration will determine the outcomes in these five states – Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh and the winners will, in all likelihood, enjoy an advantage in these states in the parliamentary elections.

Andhra Pradesh, where assembly elections will be held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections in 2014, is assumed to be one of the weakest Congress-ruled states. Many factors, that might spoil the party's prospect in these elections can be identified as Jagan Mohan Reddy's revolt against the Congress, Telangana movement and the AIMIM's withdrawal of support to the Congress state government and the UPA.

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), promoted by YSR Jagan Mohan Reddy, son of former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy who towered over the state's politics, has made a strong dent in the share of votes of the ruling Congress and it is gradually emerging as a third force in Andhra Pradesh state politics after the main opposition party, the TDP. In the March 2012 by-elections to seven assembly constituencies, it was a total rout for the Congress and the TDP in all the constituencies. The TRS demonstrated its clout in the embattled Telangana region, winning four seats. The YSR Congress won the Kovur seat in coastal Andhra Pradesh in its first foray outside the home base of Kadapa in the Rayalaseema region of the state. In June 2012, the YSR Congress swept the by-elections to 18 assembly seats and one Lok Sabha seat. It won 15 of the 18 seats and the Nellore Lok Sabha seat in spite of its leader remaining in jail on corruption charges. The Congress, which was the repository of all these seats till December 2011, was able to retain only two seats. The TRS had expectedly won the Parkul seat in the Telangana region. The Congress was able to return to power in New Delhi in 2004 because of YSR Rajasekhara Reddy's sweeping victory in Andhra Pradesh.. Enthusing his party cadre with a padayatra across the state, YSR, as he is popularly referred to, mobilised peasant anger against the TDP and took the Congress's tally in the Lok Sabha up from a mere five in 1996 to 29 in 2004 from Andhra Pradesh of its total tally of 145 seats. In 2009, he helped the Congress return to power in Hyderabad and Delhi, improving the tally of MPs from his state to 33 out of 207 in the present Lok Sabha. Congress may now count the cost in the absence of such an influential leader like YSR.

The Telangana movement is the most problematic issue in Andhra Pradesh. Against all odds, the Union cabinet on October 3, 2013 set forth the process to create Telangana carving out 10 of the 23 districts from the undivided Andhra, two months after the Congress Working Committee gave its nod to the move. The creation of Telangana is almost a fait accompli, thanks to the muddling and opportunist thinking of the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre which rushed to put the cabinet's seal without bothering to deliberate over proposals to safeguard the legitimate concerns of
Seemandhra. The central Congress leadership's lackadaisical approach to the state's future seemed inspired by petty electoral-political calculations rather than the best interests of the Telugu people as a whole. Depending on the dominant popular mood, the UPA government has swung one way, then another, each time lacking the conviction needed to carry a difficult decision forward. The manner in which the Congress and the Central government virtually subverted the Justice Srikrishna Committee report, the duplicitous stand of so many Delhi leaders on the division of Andhra Pradesh, including of many members of the recently constituted Group of Ministers (GoM) on Telangana, the inability of the Union Council of Ministers from the state to stand up and be heard either in their own constituencies or in Delhi, and the flip flops of the Union Home Ministry, have all served to undermine the trust that the Telugus had reposed in two successive elections in the Congress. The question in mind now is whether the voters of the Coastal Andhra and Royalaseema region of the state would feel so obliged to the Congress as before after the historic decision on the dissolution of India's first linguistic state.

In fact, some of those heading out of Congress are expected to gravitate towards Jagan Mohan Reddy, significantly weakening Congress in the Royalaseema and Coastal regions that account for 25 Lok Sabha seats. But Congress has backed the formation of the new state after carefully considering the consequences in a bid to redeem its prestige after the embarrassing December 2009 volta face and to capture pole position in the Telangana region.

The Telangana option will, however, imply an alliance with the TRS's charismatic but mercurial leader K. Chandrasekhar Rao. While Congress's bargaining power has risen due to its decision to support statehood for Telangana, an alliance may be needed to ascertain its gains. For the anti-Telangana crowd, YSR Congress appears to be the only platform campaigning on the united Andhra plank and Jagan can cash in on this rising anti-Telangana feeling in the 2014 elections. As it appears, Jagan seems to be gaining upper hand in Seemandhra. The flip flop by TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, who advocated the creation of Telangana before raising his pitch for a united Andhra, seems to be helping the Reddy rebel. In this process, Congress and TDP may be squeezed out of the Seemandhra challenge.

Asabuddin Owaisi's AIMIM had severed its 13 year-old ties with the Congress in November 2012 and is coming closer to the YSR Congress to expand its base beyond Hyderabad from where Owaisi is an MP. The AIMIM and the YSR Congress are now assumed to strike a win-win deal before the assembly and Lok Sabha elections. For the AIMIM, it would help establish a foothold in Muslim pockets of Telangana and Royalaseema regions. For the YSR Congress, which already appears as the strongest contender in the next assembly elections, the expected tie-up will be an insurance of Muslim votes that had traditionally gone to the Congress.

At the national level politics, we find that the Congress and the BJP are trying to energise parties' rank and file by putting their best foot forward with focus on organisational restructuring. The Congress General Secretary and a scion of the Gandhi-Nehru family, Rahul Gandhi, has been appointed the vice-president of the Congress, and
Rajnath Singh, senior BJP leader and former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, has been brought back to the party's presidential post. But for now, it will be a wild guess to make as to who will be able to sail the ship of his party to the shore. Thus, intra-party strategy is as important as their strategies in the national politics, for both of them.

The Congress politics has fallen now in the trap of regional dynasts because it has no leader of all-India stature who can extend influence beyond his own constituency and it has no regional leaders to counter them either.

As there is correlation between state and Union politics, it should be pertinent to touch it. Currently, the Congress is running governments of its own in Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Uttrakhand. It is part of the ruling coalitions in states like Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Kerala, and is a less-than-significant force in the crucial states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. In states where it is in power, the governance record of the Congress is badly unimpressive. It looks as if the Congress governments are engaged in a holding operation rather than being actively busy with purposeful governance. Where the party is not in power, it has not been able to project itself as an effective Opposition. In some states, it only hopes to benefit from the failures of the ruling parties there. In most, the Congress suffers from organisational weakness and lack of intra-party cohesion and almost every state unit of the Congress is riddled with factions. Historically, factions have helped the Congress to hold on to different social segments, but its inability to intercede with the factions has resulted in a party without focus and direction at the state level.

It should also be mentioned here that the relations between Congress and many of its allies like the TMC, the Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajatantrik) and the AIMIM, have turned acerbic leading to their estrangement from the UPA last year. The DMK and its partner in Tamil Nadu state politics, the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), also pulled out of the UPA over the question of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The NCP has been accusing the Congress of not following coalition dharma in the backdrop of alliance between the two parties in Maharastra. It had forced the UPA government last year to set up a UPA Coordination Committee at the state level.

The Congress now feels the need for taking Maulana Badruddin Ajmal and his Assam United Democratic Front (now All India United Democratic Front) on board, considering his nation-wide clout among Muslims, ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in order to prevent the NDA from getting closer to power. Whether as an ally or as a member, Ajmal currently appears to be the best target for the Congress, because he can help the party regain at least three of the four Lok Sabha seats the BJP won in Assam in 2009. His presence may help the Congress regain a sizeable part of Muslim support that it originally had in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharastra and even in the south.
Turning to BJP, it can be seen that lack of cohesion and leadership has become prominent inside the party over supporting or decrying Bills in Parliament or other questions involving important issues.

The BJP Parliamentary Board, at the behest of the RSS, has declared Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, a staunch proponent of Hindutva, as the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate for the 2014 Lok Sabha election. There is no doubt that Modi is a highly polarized figure and he enjoys huge cadre support, the reason why the RSS wanted him named the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate in the first place. An attempt is being made to create a new social chemistry by packaging Modi as a Hindutva mascot embodying both the OBCs and upper castes in varying proportions. Modi belongs to a backward community of Ghanchis, who produce and sell edible oils. In the RSS's reasoning, he should have great appeal among the OBCs of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, constituting roughly 40 per cent of total votes. Of course, in this experiment the political plank of development is supposed to act as a catalyst. For the urban elite the party will back on his development-oriented politics to reach out to the youth.

However, contradiction runs through the BJP strategy. For example, by making Modi the main face of the party's identity, his drumbeaters have moved away from the BJP's adopted success mantra of coalition politics. The BJP has not consulted any one of the its allies before considering Modi's name for the top post. Unlike the BJP of the 90s that found its strength from cobbled up ally support as the NDA, BJP-II will struggle hard to find allies. Today the BJP has only two partners, the Shiv Sena and the Akali Dal, both in ideological sync with the party. But unlike in 1996, when the BJP was torn about being shunned, in 2013 it is glorying in being alone. The RSS is pressing the BJP to be unapologetic about its original agenda. The Sangh has also made it clear that any potential partner would come to the BJP on the party's term, the exact reverse of the 1996-1998 when the Atal-Advani pair sought partners on terms set by the latter. The truth is that there is no unified national vote today, and for all the bluster of the RSS, the BJP need allies.

It seems evident that in all probability, the real deciders will be regional forces whose support to one or the other pole, the Congress or the BJP, cannot be taken for granted. Yeddyurappa's exit from the BJP has cost the party in Karnataka, its sole trophy in the south. Similarly, Jaganmohan Reddy's breakaway YSR Congress threatens the Congress to wrest much of its turf in Andhra Pradesh. Admittedly, a post-poll alliance between Yeddyurappa's political front and the BJP is not being ruled out, nor between the YSR Congress and the Congress. Bihar Chief minister Nitish Kumar's rally in Delhi's Ram Lila Maidan in March 2013 is another reminder of the shifting calculus of smaller players that the two main national parties must remain mindful of. The demand for special status to his state sends a strong signal that the alliance game for 2014 is very much an open contest and each party will bargain to the fullest extent compatible with its core interests. Nitish Kumar has ditched the alliance with the BJP protesting against Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi's elevation as the BJP's campaign committee chief for the 2014 Lok Sabha election which was a precursor to him getting the larger role inside the party. The Congress is seeking political camaraderie with the JD (U) at this
moment. Nitish has positioned himself as a possible leader for a loose non-BJP, non-
Congress grouping. This grouping is still something of a pipe dream. But playing on a
loose alliance of Chief Ministers of backward states might create the possibility of some
bargaining power.

With the national elections looming, talk of a Third Front has been revived. But
the fledgling Third Front has ceased to exist in Indian politics and has not grown into an
adult with new levels of maturity that could take it forward. As in the past, this time also,
the CPI (M) has been central to efforts to forge a third alternative to the Congress and the
BJP. Efforts got underway towards this end in New Delhi where the 'People's Unity
Against Communalism' convention was held on 30 October 2013 under the tutelage of
the CPI (M) and other left parties. The proposed front aims at resisting the rise of
Narendra Modi, the BJP’s Prime Ministerial candidate. But it appears to be a futile
exercise. Much of the problem in giving such a motley anti-communal platform some
sense of purpose and efficacy is the low credibility of its chief motivators – the CPI (M)
and the Samajwadi Party. Indeed, it is a farcical alliance between the two parties that
seeks to sneakily suggest a third alternative. The proposed Third Front lacks a common
ideology that can hold its constituents together. Some of its constituents are already in
alliance with some other regional parties at the state level. For instance, the Nationalist
Congress Party has an alliance with the Left in Kerala and the Biju Janata Dal in Odessa.
In the past, it has been seen how personality clash among leaders of different regional
parties come to dominate any Third Front and every party leader feels that he or she is
more competent than others to lead the formation. Then there is the question of numbers.
As things stand now, a Third Front will not get anywhere near the numbers it will need to
form a government. There is at best the Congress, the BJP and a bunch of regional parties
willing to break bread with either, depending on which of the two main parties is in a
better position to form a government.

Ten regional political parties in the northeast launched a new political front – the
North-East Regional Political Front (NERPF) on October 21, 2013. The formation of the
NERPF signals that the regional parties of the northeast are ready to take on bigger roles
at the Centre. During the government formation in New Delhi in May 2014, they may be
in a position to bargain hard, as every seat may matter.

However, as before, the real battle for power will begin after the elections.
Regional parties will tilt the field, one way or the other. The 2014 general election looks
unlikely, therefore, to bring the satisfying resolution of the Modi-Gandhi choice. It will
be an aggregate of what happens in six big States – Andhra Pradesh (42 seats), West
Bengal (42 seats), Uttar Pradesh (80 seats) Bihar (40 seats), Maharashtra (48 seats) and
Tamil Nadu (38 seats). It has already been stated that in Andhra Pradesh there is every
possibility of a contest beyond old rivals, the Congress and the TDP, with uncertain
outcomes due to the emergence of Jagannohan Reddy's YSR Congress and the
increasing demand of Telangana. In Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, neither the Congress
nor the BJP has a chance to win seats by themselves. Unless something dramatic occurs
till the next general elections, it is unlikely that the NDA would concede any ground in
Bihar and it is apparent that Maharashtra would be split between both coalitions. Uttar
Pradesh, with one in every seventh seat in the Lok Sabha, is going to play a crucial role in government formation.

There seems to be a wide gap in the perception about how the 2014 election is going to be played out. Politics in India, in all its complexity and flux, cannot be reduced to a straight fight between Modi and Rahul, similar to the U.S. presidential election. But the election is for 534 different constituencies, and the electoral issues – some may be common across the nation – may widely differ from state to state. The formation of the next government will depend more on arithmetic, aggregating the state tallies, rather than the charisma of a single individual or a party as such.

There is no denying that Modi has injected some vigour into the BJP's election strategy with his aggressive campaign style. The Gujarat strongman has extended his sphere of influence well beyond his home state since he was elevated to the national stage as the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate. Notwithstanding his present avatar as 'Vikas Purush', the Man of Development, Modi does not attract allies, he repels erstwhile allies and also potential allies. The essential political truth is that just as the BJP will not be able to gain critical mass by relying on Hindutva alone, the Congress cannot hope to continue to win votes by merely targeting the BJP's communally divisive agenda. Whether it is the Congress or the BJP, the message that the voters appear to be sending to the political class is that the party which does not have a credible agenda for governance and development, is likely to perish.

It is a regret that in the thirst for power, the whole notion of governance falls a victim. In the present socio-political milieu of corruption, criminal-politician nexus, declining work culture, institutional incompetence, mutual distrust and disgrace, and a dismal economic set up have given birth to the 'two India' theory. When it is obvious that coalition will be the rule of the day, there must be endeavours to improve in order to save India. The following suggestions can be offered to make a coalition politically viable and stable:

1. Post-electoral alliances must be discouraged to avoid horse trading and other unethical activities and practices

2. Every political party or combination of parties intending to form a government must go to polls declaring the name of their Prime Ministerial candidate so that his appointment cannot be a backdoor political game.

3. Parties joining a coalition government must submit a written declaration to the President of India that they shall be bound to support the government till its full term. An amendment to this effect can be made in the Constitution of India to provide stability to the government.

4. Every constituent of a coalition must refrain from interfering into the selection and removal of Ministers. These are the prerogatives of the Prime Minister.
5. There shall be no extra-constitutional authority of any kind to dictate the terms of governmental policies.

6. Compulsory attendance of either a Minister or of the floor leader from every constituent in Cabinet meetings must be ensured so that they cannot blackmail the government on some controversial issue to gain political mileage.

7. Outside support to a government by any political party should be made illegal like defection.

8. No-confidence motion against a government can be moved by the Opposition only when they are in a position to form an alternative government of their own.

9. Routine disruption of the question hour, which is an immense wastage of time and resources, needs to be regulated. One option can be to start the day in the legislature not with the question hour, but with a zero hour designed to be a platform for legislators to give vent to their feelings.

10. Provision should be enacted for holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, which should have 'fixed tenure'. Frequent polls affect decision-making process. In the US, elections are held after every four years. In 2011, Great Britain has enacted a legislation for a fixed term of Parliament.

11. There ought to be a Common Minimum Code which concedes that foreign policy cannot be used by a coalition partner for its regional electoral agenda. It should be one area which is beyond party politics within a coalition and across all parties.

12. The recent order of the Supreme Court for the provision of "None of the Above" (NOTA) option in EVMs and ballot papers at the end of the list of contesting candidates is, in effect, not more than an "invalid" vote in the ballot paper unless the NOTA option is accompanied with meaningful electoral reform. The government and the Election Commission of India should give serious thought to making 50 per cent of the total votes plus one vote as the minimum for a candidate to get elected, and a run-off if no candidate met that requirement.

The Supreme Court, on July 10, 2013 declared ultra vires Section 8 (4) of the Representation of the People's Act, 1951, which gave immunity to the convicted parliamentarians and legislators from disqualification, provided they had appealed against their conviction before a higher court within three months of being sentenced. The Court, in its ruling, held that Parliament lacked legislative competence to enact this provision since it was in direct conflict with Articles 101 and 102, which stipulate the principles for those who want to contest elections as well as those who have been elected. RJD's Laloo Prasad Yadav and JD's Jagadish Sharma have been disqualified from the Lok Sabha in view of their conviction in the Chaibasa treasury case. Rajya Sabha member Rashid Masood has also lost his seat after his conviction in corruption case. The follow-up to the
Supreme Court judgment to disqualify tainted legislators has brought in a ray of hope towards ridding politics of criminality.

The Election Commission's recent order to bring the social media content, including print media and TV channels, within the ambit of its model code "in the interest of transparency and level playing field in elections" is an important step to cleanse politics in India from the misdeeds it suffers. According to this order to officials and political parties, all candidates would have to provide email and social media account details, get social media political advertisements certified and keep a record of new media expenditure. Although these are not totally foolproof and will require further development, at least these can be regarded as steps in the right direction to save the Indian polity from the quagmire of distorted and corrupt coalitions.

Unless and until the two national coalitions led by the Congress and the BJP are able to evolve a new political direction overcoming all the loopholes stemming from the existing system, there is no light visible at the end of the tunnel.