

# Chinks in the armour

Public facing systems around the world must tighten security and put together disaster recovery plans



QUANTUM LEAP  
DEVANGSHU DATTA

Baltimore in Maryland, USA, is becoming a test case for cyber-ransom. The Baltimore municipality has a population of about 600,000 and it's the hub of a metropolitan con-

glomeration of 2.8 million. On May 7, hackers took control of municipal computer systems. They seized control of 10,000-odd municipal computers and encrypted access to the servers.

Hence, government email systems are down, payments to the city departments can't be made except by cash, real estate transactions, birth and death certificates, and so on, can't be processed. The city has been forced to resort to paper transactions to keep municipal services running.

The hackers demanded 13 bitcoin — worth roughly \$100,000 — to give the city access via a digital key that will unlock three key servers. Since the municipality has refused to pay on principle, it will take millions to get systems up and running again and of course, the disruption has caused mas-

sive loss as well.

This is the 20th detected cyber-ransom attack on municipal systems in the US alone, in 2019. Baltimore was hit earlier, in March 2018 by an attack, which knocked the 911 emergency responses offline for a day. That same month, Atlanta, Georgia, suffered losses of \$17 million and took several months to recover from a cyber-attack.

The concept is simple. The hackers enter a network, and encrypt data on it. They may use various means to gain access, and various types of programmes to do this. Then, they ask for money (payable in bitcoin, or some other cryptocurrency) to decrypt the network.

The victim must take a call on the costs of reloading from scratch, versus paying up, (assuming the attacker will decrypt the data). If there's a disaster

recovery plan in place, with full backups, it may be possible to ignore the cyber-attack. But that in itself costs money.

Initially, cyber ransom attacks focussed on businesses and any business is of course, still at risk. But hitting a municipality, or some other public service, has become much more popular. There are several reasons while municipalities are tempting and soft targets.

Businesses often have high security and backups in place. Municipal systems are, by definition, designed to interface with the public and usually have lower security. They are often accessible from thousands of machines used by under-trained clerical staff. Gaining access is easier. It's hugely politically embarrassing for a municipal system providing critical services, to be knocked offline. This makes pay-offs more likely.

Encrypting is a relatively easy task. It is gaining access that's difficult. Encryption utilities often come pre-loaded with modern operating systems, for the legitimate user's security and privacy. It's also possible to create malware that does the job. It may be plain

impossible to decrypt data locked up with a well-designed encryption programme.

Baltimore has been hit by "RobbinHood", which encrypts servers running a system and require a digital key to access the servers. RobbinHood uses a combination of public and private keys to do the encryption. The user receives a message with details of how to contact hackers for payment, and decryption "services". Bitcoin-style cryptocurrencies are hard to trace and easily converted into multiple currencies.

In Baltimore's case, the hackers threatened to escalate the demand by \$10,000 for every additional day and also claimed data would be unrecoverable after 10 days. That deadline has long passed. The city will have to rebuild networks and figure out how malware was introduced.

There's a lesson here for municipalities around the world. Not only must security be tightened. Disaster recovery plans must be introduced as well, as a contingency measure. Public facing systems, accessed by millions, will inevitably have gaps in security.

## CHINESE WHISPERS

### DMDK builds muscle

Actor-turned-politician Vijayakanth's party, Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK), an ally of the National Democratic Alliance, might have missed the mark this election, but it has grabbed the No 2 spot in another ranking. A report prepared by the Association for Democratic Reforms on donations received by 48 regional political parties during FY18 shows the party's income during the financial year has grown 93 per cent, just behind the YSR-Congress' 95 per cent. It has overtaken the donation growth of the DMK (40 per cent). The same survey shows 14 regional parties registered a decline in overall donations received. These include Goa's Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party, the Shiv Sena and the Rashtriya Janata Dal. Tamil Nadu's ruling party All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam did not declare the donations it received this fiscal year.

### No room for fakes

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has just made the job a bit more difficult for corporate boards. It has mandated that every corporate director must have his photograph clicked standing next to a signage that mentions the name of the company with its address. The signage, in turn, should be on an outside wall of the building that houses the firm's headquarters. These photos must then be uploaded on the MCA website. In case a company has more than one subsidiary, it has to click separate photos for each subsidiary and upload them on the website. This move, say MCA officials, is aimed to weed out shell companies. They complain they have often found "several thousands of companies" operating from a single room.

### Dual celebration



BSE, formerly Bombay Stock Exchange, announced a cake-cutting ceremony on Thursday after Sensex topped 40,000 in opening trade after early trends made it clear that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was set for a landslide victory. The Sensex, however, failed to close above 40,000 amid profit-taking and ended below 39,000. The exchange routinely celebrates Sensex milestones; however, it typically considers the index's closing levels. The sharp fall in the market at day's end didn't deter the exchange from going ahead with the cake-cutting ceremony, which seemed more like a victory celebration for the PM, with many present showing up in "Namo Again" t-shirts.

# Modi reigns supreme. Now, economy awaits



ANDY MUKHERJEE

If Narendra Modi's 2014 popular mandate was India's biggest in three decades, his 2019 re-election is an even bigger feat.

It's a remarkable demonstration of voters' faith in Modi's carefully crafted strongman image. What he has pulled off in the world's biggest democracy could give some pointers even to the United States President Donald Trump. That the Indian leader has cruised to victory amid agrarian distress, youth unemployment, high income inequality, anemic growth, a broken financial system and the promise of a basic income for 50 million of the country's poorest families by the Opposition Congress Party, makes the win all the more momentous.

In a UK-style parliamentary democracy, people voted for Modi as though he was their de facto president. He may well

govern like one. The members of parliament that actually got elected won't count for much anyway, given how heavily their campaign leaned on Modi's charisma. As for the party and its ideology, the BJP's identification with Modi is now complete. He has a clear five-year runway to shape the national agenda, and his ministers will have to back him to the hilt.



Shiv Sena supporters in Thane celebrate NDA's lead during the counting of votes

Analysts will have many questions after this week's euphoria in stock markets has calmed down. For one thing, the composition of the new economics team, a particularly weak point of the Modi administration's first five years, will be keenly awaited. Institutions such as the central bank and the statistics department, which have seen their independence and credibility come under attack, will also be watched —

for signs of repair or further degradation.

Investors will want to know if Modi still has an appetite for arbitrary action, such as his overnight ban on 86 per cent of the country's cash. The state of the economy offers zero scope for more ill-conceived experimentation. Consumption is slowing because of poor wage growth in villages and unfavourable prices of food commodities. Private investment is expected only in select areas like road construction, and not in things like power and telecom. Shadow lenders are retreating, amplifying a funding crunch for India Inc.

Now that the elections are out of the way, the government's own budget deficits will need more honest accounting. Big-ticket privatisation, a missed opportunity of Modi's first term, will need a determined push. Decimation of a credible opposition in parliament opens up the possibility of muscular action minus the usual constraints of a noisy democracy. The next five years will determine to what extent Modi uses the policy space, and what he makes of it.

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# This is his India now

This election was fought and won over identity — the identity of the country and the identity of Indians



MIHIR SHARMA

After a long and arduous election, with months of campaigning and voting spread over seven phases, India's 879 million voters have spoken. And, if not with one voice, then close to it. The Bharatiya Janata Party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been handed another historic mandate.

Modi's 2014 victory was already record-setting — the first time a single party had attained a parliamentary majority in three decades. To win once at that scale was astounding, a black swan event. To win twice means that Indian politics, and India itself, has changed beyond recognition.

For the first decades after independence, India was a democracy but nevertheless a one-party state. The Indian National Congress that spearheaded the independence movement dominated most states and had a stranglehold on power in New Delhi. It was voted out once in 1977. Still,

not until the 1990s did the party enter a permanent decline.

Modi's successive victories mark another era of Indian politics. No other political chieftains are holding the balance of power; only Modi matters. Back in the days of one-party rule, a sycophantic Congress politician said of his leader: Indira is India. That was hyperbole. But no politician since Indira Gandhi has had as powerful a claim to be identified with India's conception of itself as Modi now does.

How has he earned that claim? Multiple explanations for the BJP's victory have already been trotted out: The organisational strength of the party, its vast advantages in money and resources, the covert and overt backing of supposedly independent institutions — all hallmarks of democratic strongmen globally. Others will point to the weakness of the Opposition and its crisis of leadership, or to Modi's reputation for incorruptibility, his muscular foreign policy and the popularity of some of his welfare schemes.

All these, of course, are factors. But they didn't determine this election. This election was fought and won over identity — the identity of India and the identity of Indians.

Modi is the perfect representative for the young, aspirational, majoritarian, impatient Indians who have put him into office twice now. An over-

whelming number of these 400 million voters see in him a self-made man, one who has every intention of asserting India's centrality to world affairs. More, he appears strong and decisive, and wishes to impose a unity and uniformity on Indian politics. This clarity is comforting for most of his core voters.

The India of the past saw itself as a patchwork of competing identities, represented by the multiple powerful satraps of the coalition era and by the many factions within the umbrella tradition of the Congress prior to that. The BJP, under Modi, permits no such balancing. India is strong if it is united, Modi's voters feel, and unity requires the welding of these multiple identities into a single one.

The BJP's electoral logic has long been incredibly simple: Over four-fifths of India is Hindu and the BJP is the party that best represents Hindu interests. If most Hindus vote for them out of religious solidarity rather than on economic, class or caste interests, then the BJP will win.

The truth is that this is increasingly what Modi and the party have achieved. Their triumph isn't merely a product of political management. It is a rhetorical and ideological battle, a culture war, which they have won.

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## INSIGHT

# Dilemmas of community participation

A return to community norms and cultural visions, without encouraging exclusivity and barriers, is an extremely delicate task, says the author in the concluding part of a series



PRANAB BARDHAN

From the point of view of a liberal democracy there is a dilemma in social insurance against risks and financial crunch at the community level. On the one hand, kinship groups in traditional communities often provide to their members scarce credit as well as emotional support at times of emergency need, and help in small loans for regular business or job referrals for migrating members and insure against idiosyncratic risks — these useful functions and reciprocal obligations make such group ties quite resilient (and help some ethnic business groups to succeed in conditions of scarcity of entrepreneurial opportunities and capital).

Group obligations can serve even better than market or government contracts, since the latter ultimately depend for contract enforcement on costly third-party (legal-judicial) verification and arbitration, whereas in the case of within-group arrangements breaches are more easily observable and negotiable within the group. There are many stories of how Chinese lineage-based business families negotiate billions of dollars' worth of real estate deals in Hong Kong (or how caste-based Gujarati migrant families have captured the motel business in large parts of the US) without any formal contracts for

raising money from inside those groups and police any potential breaches mainly internally.

On the other hand, for the individual members of such groups the benefits of community bonds come with a palpable cost. The price of social help and insurance is the group's authority over individual members' freedoms. Traditional extended families or kinship groups can be quite authoritarian in their treatment particularly of younger and female members. The latter, for example, have to accept many restrictions on their choice of work associates and marriage partners, sanctions on departures from due deference to the aged leaders, and injunctions on sharing the benefits from individual efforts and innovations.

Take the case of old age support. In traditional communities children have the social obligation to look after their parents in their old age. The community keeps a watchful eye that as the children grow up they do not stray too far out of community controls. A liberal may actually prefer the state and market alternatives (social security plus financial market products like annuities) to the community-provided support system obligating children. More generally, in such societies even when democratic, group rights often take precedence over individual rights: your freedom of expression can be restricted if some group claims offence at your expression or speech. As liberalism emphasises individual rights, these may sometimes violate community norms — in this sense 'liberty' and 'fraternity' may be in serious conflict. One can see this conflict in complex thinkers like Gandhi, who as an ardent champion of the local community was less warm to liberalism (particularly if it comes without serious

limits on competition and on the individual's autonomy of desire and needs) and egalitarianism.

Another such conflict arises in the context of two different aspects of liberal democracy — the "procedural" and the "participatory" aspects. The former has to do with due process and respect for minority rights which majoritarian communities often tend to ride roughshod over. The latter in their impatience with institutional rules and procedures are often explicit in their leaders' illiberal undermining of the institutional insulation or independence of the judiciary, police and the civil service particularly in developing countries where these institutions are already weak. The emphasis is on winning elections through majoritarian mobilisation.

Of course, the enthusiasts for participatory politics often complain about the failures of representative democracy, as the representatives tend to come to them only at election time and meanwhile delegate vital issues to the unelected elite experts or an insulated technocracy. If both the procedural and participatory aspects of liberal democracy are to be given their due weight, one clearly has to strike a balance between the need for evidence- and knowledge-based governance indispensable in many complex situations and the need for frequent and meaningful checks ensuring accountability to the people. In poor countries even when there are vigorous local governments, one financial problem for local accountability is that many local areas are too poor to have elastic sources of revenue. So even if they have some political power it is limited by their dependence on money coming from above. Accountability is thus separated from financial responsibility. In such a context the standard presumption of the

economic literature on fiscal federalism that people can 'vote with their feet' in the face of different bundles of tax and public expenditure in different areas does not quite apply. In any case residents of rural communities of poor countries are often face-to-face, and social norms sharply distinguish 'outsiders' from 'insiders' especially with respect to entitlement to community services.

The recent experience of community participation in developing countries has also shown only limited gains in many areas, particularly in those with entrenched inequality. Lending institutions like the World Bank have long emphasised participatory programs like Community-Driven Development in public goods projects. While several such programmes have delivered moderately successfully to the poor, it is not always clear that in the process the local institutional set-ups deficient in empowerment of the poor have measurably or durably changed. Yet there is now scattered evidence of local deliberative democracy sprouting in different parts of the world, and showing results, if not always in terms of policy outcome, at least in the process of claims to dignity and discursive demands for accountability — the evidence is not just from the town halls of rich countries or participatory budgeting in progressive Brazilian cities, but even from high-inequality low-literacy villages of India (as a recent book, *Oral Democracy*, by P Sanyal and V Rao shows for a fairly large sample of village assemblies in south India).

On expertise, while there are issues where local expertise or indigenous knowledge is enough, this is clearly not the case always. When someone in the village is seriously ill the community leaders may send for the traditional healers in the neighbourhood, but you

may be safer in the hands of experts in the hospital in the nearby town (provided by the market or the state). On an administrative level providing for street cleaning or garbage collection may be easy to organise for the municipal authority, but for power generation and transmission, bulk supply of clean water and public sanitation or developing school curriculum or digital connectivity it will often need outside help and expertise (from the upper levels of the state and the market).

Beyond administrative accountability to the grassroots the case for community, however, ultimately depends on the salience of common cultural bonds and norms for a healthy liberal society. The cultural gap here between the blue-collar workers and the liberal professional elite has become particularly wide in recent years. Labour organisations, instead of serving only as narrow wage-bargaining platforms or lobbies, can play a special role here in bridging this gap. They may take an active role in the local cultural life, involving the neighbourhood community and religious organisations, as they used to do in some European and Latin American countries, and thus tamed and transcended some of the nativist passions.

A return to community norms and cultural visions, without encouraging exclusivity and barriers is, of course, an extremely delicate task. Success in this will vary from one area to another, often depending on organisations and leaders. It is often the case that dislocations due to market or technological disruptions and the consequent job-related despair and sense of insecurity for those who find it difficult to adapt and adjust to the changes make them turn to faith- or identity-based communities for solace or anchor and alternative sources of pride, which are sometimes not very inclusive. The populist demagogues in different parts of the world who have rallied communities for the cause of 'taking back control', apart from being rabidly exclusivist, have, however, rarely devolved power to the local com-

munities. While fulminating against supra-national organisations and regulations, they have, if anything, centralised power at the national level. Paradoxically, in such attempts to strengthen the nation-state the right-wing populists are sometimes in the uncomfortable/unwitting company of state socialists and other anti-globalists on the left, and ideologically pitted against them are the motley bunch of anarcho-communitarians, small-is-beautiful Gandhian thinkers, and Hayekian libertarians, as well as pro-global separatists (like those in Catalonia or Scotland).

Take this larger imagined political community of the nation. Citizens may legitimately feel pride in their national autonomy and cultural history, but one has to be careful that such pride does not derive its oxygen from the majoritarian ethnicity, marginalising minorities or demonising immigrants. One can try to advocate a kind of 'civic nationalism,' which combines pride in one's cultural distinctiveness (and maybe local soccer teams) without giving up on some shared universal humanitarian values, including tolerance for diversity (as evident sometimes in the composition of those soccer teams).

The state, the market, and the community are all robust coordination mechanisms, each important in its own context in potentially fortifying liberal democracy and each in many ways complementary with the others, but one has to remain vigilant that their excesses or dysfunctions do not undermine the foundations of a liberal society.

**(Concluded)**  
(The article was first published in the international blog 3 Quarks Daily)

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## High-fives for Mr Modi

The question is what Mr Modi has learnt from his first term, and whether that will make him more reformist in the second

Thirty years ago, the transition from a Congress-centric political system began as Hindu *qua* Hindu mobilisation got under way. The quarter-century that followed was an interregnum that saw the birth of new caste-based and regional parties, and a succession of coalition governments. Now the transition is complete, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) virtually embedded in the northern heartland and in the western states, and spreading its reach east and south to become a truly national party. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party president Amit Shah have formed an impressive team, and should congratulate themselves on a comprehensive victory that carries with it more-than-usual significance.

Few had thought it possible during the campaigning that the BJP would increase its vote share as well as seats tally. Many believed that the party's 2014 victory, emphatic as it was, was a fluke since a fragmented Opposition gave the BJP a single-party majority on the back of just 31 per cent of the vote. The party's string of setbacks in recent Assembly polls and by-elections, plus some coalescing of Opposition parties, had led them to conclude that 2019 would see some slippage in the BJP's performance. As it has turned out, the combination of high-touch government programmes, demonstrative leadership, effective oratory that drilled home key themes, overwhelming financial muscle and mobilisation of ground troops has worked seamlessly to deliver even better results than before, while blunting the Opposition's attacks on economic under-performance and corruption.

Mr Modi's role has of course been pivotal. This is manifest in the big difference in voting for Parliament and Assembly — not just in the four states where the party performed sub-optimally a few months ago in Assembly elections, and where it has performed so impressively now, but also in Odisha, where Assembly and Parliament elections were held simultaneously. Voters are willing to look at alternatives when it comes to state Assemblies, but vote more for the BJP when they look for national leadership. We are back to the overarching presence of a dominant political figure with nationwide appeal, reminiscent of Indira Gandhi.

Indira Gandhi hard-wired a kind of unproductive state socialism into the country's thinking process, from which it is still to free itself. What will Mr Modi do? On the economic front, he has merely tinkered so far, while on the social and political planes he has already changed much of the country's DNA. As he steps out triumphantly for a second innings, the majoritarian impulse has gone from being politically incorrect to aggressively respectable, even as the Left and liberals resist ineffectively. Though *de jure* institutional arrangements may be immediately attempted, a long-delayed resolution of the Ramjanmabhoomi dispute is awaited, and the Kashmir Valley is in tense limbo. What action-reaction sequence awaits on these issues remains hidden in the pregnant folds of the future.

**The dynastic illusion that throwing Priyanka Gandhi into the fray might achieve something has been properly exposed, most emphatically and embarrassingly at Amethi**

Meanwhile, Rahul Gandhi's unconvincing leadership of the Congress has left it where it was, as a rump, falling short of 10 per cent of the seats in the Lok Sabha and therefore unable once again to formally claim leadership of the Opposition. The dynastic illusion that throwing Priyanka Gandhi into the fray might achieve something has been properly exposed, most emphatically and embarrassingly

at Amethi. If anything, her induction gave more grist to the Modi mill as he hammered away at entitlement politics. It is hard to see how the Congress can extricate itself from its predicament. It can't survive without its dynastic leadership, and won't prosper with it.

The smaller parties feel the squeeze even more than the Congress in West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana, Bihar and Maharashtra. Once important entities like the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Nationalist Congress Party have been all but decimated, and the Telugu Desam will be lucky to get a single seat in the House. Others, like the Trinamool Congress, the Biju Janata Dal and the Telangana Rashtra Samithi, can feel the BJP closing the space available to them. These single-leader or single-family parties, born mostly in the 1990s, may be an endangered species if the BJP continues its juggernaut journey. Already, the country is back to being a single-dominant party democracy. Indeed, a two-thirds majority for the BJP-led alliance is almost within reach and, given the party's everything-goes approach to buying support, could well be engineered in the coming months.

The stock market has given a high-five response, first to the exit poll numbers and now to the actual vote and seat tallies. Guaranteed government stability is a matter of relief for investors, but profit-booking is also in evidence — as should be expected at current valuations. Expectations of further bullishness should be tempered by the knowledge that difficult economic challenges lie ahead. Expect a cold shower when the January-March numbers for quarterly gross domestic product get published next week. The Budget, when it is presented, will be an eye-opener on how little wiggle room the government has for tax cuts to stimulate flagging consumption. The government also has little money to sustain its push for infrastructure investment, while private investment is hobbled because many leading companies and their promoters are still focused on deleveraging. Salvation could come from the Bimal Jalan committee, which is considering how much of the Reserve Bank's reserves should be transferred to the government.

As for policy change, the question is what Mr Modi has learnt from his first term, and whether that will make him more reformist in the second — pushing for privatisation and market-oriented change. The stagnation in exports and the failure of the manufacturing initiative need to be addressed. Agriculture needs special attention, the challenge being how best to deal with the growing surpluses that have depressed prices and farmers' incomes. The proposed codification of multiple labour laws needs to be pushed through, even as the financial sector's problems are not over. In the wake of the shadow-bank crisis, both the availability and cost of credit have become issues for small and medium enterprises.

Cabinet formation will be watched keenly. If there are question marks over Arun Jaitley's health, and he seeks a lighter portfolio, the choice of finance minister will be the most important decision to make. Amit Shah is serving an extended term as party president and may wish to play on new turf, in the Cabinet. Tested stalwarts like Piyush Goyal will look for meatier portfolios. Three experienced chief ministers have been put out to pasture; since the party is now brimming with talent, they may need to be inducted via the Rajya Sabha.



## The 'pro-incumbency' factor

The election results are anything but a failure of the Opposition

What a terrific election this has been. The first in 50 years that returned a government with two consecutive majorities. This is what the word mandate means. It means endorsement and acceptance and ratification from the voter of the agenda you lay out and the achievements you boast of.

The last person to achieve two consecutive majorities was Indira Gandhi and this was five decades ago. It shows how totally dominant Narendra Modi has been in the contemporary politics of India. He was careful to say through the campaign that he was witnessing "pro-incumbency" and that he would again win a majority. He has done that.

This result gives him the mandate to pursue his ideas of transforming India. We can quibble over whether or not some of these ideas — say in economics and national security in particular — have produced the results they were meant to, or might be the right thing to do.

However, all of it stands endorsed and approved by our people, and overwhelmingly. We should expect that such things will be more forcefully implemented.

The Opposition will be attacked for being incompetent and unable to put up a fight. But it is not easy to see what else they could have done differently and what they could have done more.

Uttar Pradesh became the critical state early on, and it was here that we saw the Opposition swallow its pride and align against the ruling party. It would have been difficult to get two parties as the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party to align. They settled the question of who would be the bigger partner and divided the 80 seats.

The difficulties at the level of the worker and the candidate can only be imagined. For the Dalit of northern India, oppression comes not from the Brahmin or the Baniya but the Other Backward Classes that they deal with in their daily lives.

For them, to get together and fight an election shows that they realised the strength of the coming storm and did what they could. If they have lost to a phenomenon they are not to be blamed.

In West Bengal, a tough and fresh Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was held to an honourable draw by Mamata Banerjee. Honourable, that is, for the BJP. Banerjee did the best she could. Bengal is the cauldron where the majoritarian ideology and the BJP have their birth: Syama Prasad Mookerjee and all that. That land has not seen the sort of politics that the BJP is capable of introducing and the churn in society that comes with it.

There will be bigger and better results for the



REPLY TO ALL

AAKAR PATEL

## Modi-Shah outwit Congress, and the rest

Here are a dozen quick takeaways from me on the 2019 verdict as the trends become clear:

1. The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress fought with fundamentally different strategies. The BJP wanted to make it a national presidential-style contest. The Congress and its allies tried to make it 543 individual elections. They failed. The BJP succeeded spectacularly in making it a presidential election, and with only one candidate: Narendra Modi.

2. The Congress walked into the trap deeper. They didn't bother offering even a notional alternative and also decided to focus their attack entirely on Narendra Modi. It is hard to fight to your adversary's strength. It can also be foolhardy if you do not have a convincing message. Of the one-and-a-half planks the Congress built its counter on, *Chowkidar chor hai* (Modi is corrupt) and Rafale (the half) failed to excite anyone except the committed Congress voter. Confusing the *chor* echo at Rahul's rallies with a change in the larger public mood, especially when you begin with a 10-15 per cent negative gap from 2014, is like taking retweets for votes.

3. "Love and tolerance" sound wonderful and heart-warming, but in a congregation of the faithful. Voters need a positive offering. For Congress-Rahul, it was NYAY. It was too complex, too late. In 10 weeks of travels across India during the campaign, I did not find one likely beneficiary who had even heard of it. Happens when you have a scheme designed with incredible clumsiness — happens also when you ask French-Left economists to gape the poorest Indian voter. Data shows that nearly half the voters did indeed hear about NYAY, but they were the upper half. So those who were to get NYAY, knew nothing about it. Those who were to pay for it, mostly did. You can add it up.

4. Amit Shah and Narendra Modi (putting Shah first is deliberate), did an enormously better job of building alliances. To be fair, the front-runner is a stronger magnet. But they also showed much greater large-heartedness. The clearest example is the space given to Nitish Kumar in Bihar. Compare it with the Congress cussedness. In UP, Delhi and Haryana. In short, the BJP built alliances looking at the future, the Congress stayed obsessed with its glorious past.

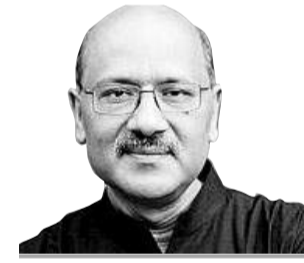
5. With the exception of Kerala and Punjab, the BJP march has only been stopped by regional parties. This includes Tamil Nadu. Kerala is early days for the BJP,

though the devastation of the Left is opening up that space. In Punjab, you see a stark truth play out that Congress usually detests: A state leader who can win by himself, even stop a wave. This makes the BJP's strategy easy: Target directly the states where the Congress is the main rival. Go, sign up regional forces elsewhere. Watch out for YSRCP in Andhra and KCR in Telangana going ahead. Naveen Patnaik in Odisha is a deal already half done.

6. You can blame the media with much justification. The BJP has used political power brilliantly to build or buy its own media, and to put down what remains, or aspired to remain, objective. But, having accepted that, what story did the Congress offer them? Even Rahul's big media interviews came in the last phases of the polls. To anybody watching this closely, it was evident that the Congress was blundering into delusion over impact on Twitter and applause of the faithful.

7. Modi critics will never give him the credit for it, but his government was incredibly efficient at the delivery of key welfare programmes. I had written two articles recently: One on the five areas on the economy/infrastructure where BJP had done phenomenally better than UPA-II, and the second on the four reasons that put it ahead of the competition. Two among these are the electoral equivalent of killer apps: A pan-national upper caste vote bank that counters lower-caste/minority combinations and very low inflation, which anaesthetised joblessness and individual economic distress in the short term.

8. In the past five years, the Congress Party's high point wasn't so much its wins in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan as running Modi so close in Gujarat in the winter of 2017. It made two things evident: One, that rural and farmer distress were hurting BJP voters. And two, that since Modi had no quick fixes, he will switch to a three-point campaign of nationalism, Hinduism and corruption-busting, with the first as the central prong. This is where his challengers failed. I can write a whole article on this and may be some of you an entire thesis. But you cannot fight the still young Indian nationalism with the woolly-headedness of the European Left. I bet you a meal anywhere, including in Khan Market (sorry Modi ji, if it's a copyright violation), that too many of the geniuses who inserted those promises to repeal the sedition law, dilute AFSPA and Aadhaar live in another country, if not another planet. Indira or



SHEKHAR GUPTA

## Cook who made Apple great again



### BOOK REVIEW

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That Tim Cook was a somewhat surprising and unnatural choice to succeed Steve Jobs as CEO of Apple is a fairly well-known fact. The move seemed all the more astonishing simply because Mr Jobs, in ill health and fighting cancer at the time, had handpicked Mr Cook for the role. The consternation was understandable: Mr Cook was clearly devoid of the trailblazing qualities that had made Mr Jobs a global tech phenomenon. He possessed none of Mr Jobs' disruptive talents, nor was he blessed with the kind of maverick person-

ality that had helped his predecessor garner the respect and adulation of zillions of Apple loyalists across the world.

In fact, when Mr Cook was appointed CEO in August 2011, industry insiders were so sceptical that some of them even predicted that without its iconic founder, Apple was doomed — it would soon go from a pioneer in innovation to just an average enterprise that would invariably suffer a downturn in growth and revenue. Some of the most fabulously successful companies of the 20th century — Sony, Disney, Ford, Polaroid — all stumbled after the departure of the leaders who built them, and critics feared that Apple was headed down the same road.

Leander Kahney's *Tim Cook: The Genius Who Took Apple to the Next Level* is essentially the story of how an unassuming man from a town of 5,000 people in Alabama crushed such doubts and defied all expectations, and succeeded in not only furthering Mr Jobs' legacy, but also making

Apple the first company to cross the trillion-dollar mark in market cap. Having covered the company for over two decades, Mr Kahney is the ultimate Apple insider. He previously authored a book on Mr Jobs, as well as one on Jony Ive, Apple's long-running chief design officer, who was, incidentally, among the front-runners to replace Mr Jobs for the top post.

Mr Kahney's work is an interesting read, partly because this is the first comprehensive account of Mr Cook's life. The bulk of it is based on his time at Apple, but equally delightful is the lowdown on Mr Cook's childhood — how a deeply private but well-liked boy won admirers at school and developed an early moral compass centred on teachings from two of his heroes, Martin Luther King Jr and Robert F Kennedy. In fact, much of what Mr Cook has implemented at Apple — equal rights, greater focus on the environment, new charitable endeavours — had its roots in his childhood.

For instance, Mr Kahney mentions a shocking encounter Mr Cook had with the Ku Klux Klan while riding his bicycle as a young boy in the 1970s. "The Klansmen Cook witnessed had assembled their flaming cross on the property of a local black family," he writes. The veracity of the incident has been questioned by some locals, but Mr Cook in years since has maintained that the experience had a lasting impact on him and the business practices he would later employ.

Taking over from Mr Jobs was never going to be easy, and Mr Cook got a taste of the challenge fairly quickly. Within months of taking charge, Apple shares plummeted on the back of missed iPhone sales forecasts. Worse, there was buzz that Samsung phones were overtaking Apple in some markets. Around the same time, Mr Cook had to get rid of Scott Forstall, the executive behind Apple Maps, a colossal failure for which the CEO had to eventually apologise.

Mr Jobs would have never made such an apology, notes Mr Kahney. Such comparisons are a recurring motif in the book. A lot of Mr Kahney's premise is based on how Mr Cook's more humane style of man-

agement is the antithesis of Mr Jobs' tenacious nonconformist approach, and such a strategy is more suited to Apple's culture in the long run. Mr Jobs, in fact, is likened to a "chief product officer", whereas Mr Cook is portrayed as the real deal — a man who has his finger on the pulse of everything happening at his company, right from production to marketing.

Mr Kahney is an unapologetic Apple enthusiast and such glowing praise for Mr Cook lends itself to hagiographic tendencies. At times, Mr Cook comes across as a super-human boss seemingly with no limitations. Which isn't to say that Mr Cook hasn't improved Apple. Under him, the company, with a special emphasis on user privacy, racial diversity and women empowerment, has set a sterling example for other corporations to follow. Even as the likes of Facebook and Twitter have been engulfed by privacy concerns in recent times, Apple has remained largely unscathed in that respect. The book, in fact, has a fascinating passage on how Mr Cook denied the Federal Bureau of Investigation access to an iPhone that belonged to Syed Farook, a suspect in the

San Bernardino shooting of 2015.

Mr Kahney concludes with the tendentious argument that Mr Cook could be the best CEO Apple has ever had. That is a difficult comparison because Mr Jobs was the man who built the company and then rebuilt it when it was on the verge of bankruptcy in the late 1990s. Also, Mr Cook will still be judged by the innovations he makes. The Apple Watch and the Apple AirPods are breakthroughs that Mr Cook perhaps doesn't get enough credit for, but he is yet to come up with something that can rival the astronomical success of the iPhone. Moreover, with the company launching a slew of new services to make up for sliding iPhone sales, Mr Cook's legacy is far from certain. What is certain, though, as Mr Kahney so ably explains, is that Mr Cook has made Apple — and the world — a significantly better place.

**TIM COOK: The Genius Who Took Apple to the Next Level**

Leander Kahney  
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