

Institutional Resilience and Democratic Continuity in India: A Comparative Governance Analysis

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Abstract

Democratic systems are increasingly evaluated by their capacity to withstand stress without institutional breakdown. Institutional resilience—rather than emergency authority—has emerged as a key determinant of democratic continuity. This paper examines institutional resilience in India up to 2021 through a comparative governance framework. Using the Democratic Resilience Assessment Model (DRAM), the study analyses institutional continuity, adaptive capacity, and accountability preservation.

The paper argues that democratic stability in India is sustained through resilient institutions embedded within constitutional and administrative frameworks rather than reliance on exceptional governance measures.

Keywords: Institutional resilience, democratic continuity, governance, comparative politics, India

1. Introduction

Contemporary democracies operate under conditions of persistent stress, including economic volatility, administrative complexity, and societal diversity. The ability of democratic systems to absorb shocks while maintaining institutional integrity has become central to political analysis.

By 2021, political science scholarship increasingly emphasised resilience rather than crisis response as the key to democratic survival. This paper situates India within this comparative debate.

2. Institutional Resilience in Comparative Politics

Institutional resilience refers to the capacity of political institutions to adapt to stress while preserving core functions. Unlike emergency governance, resilience emphasises continuity, learning, and accountability.

Comparative studies demonstrate that resilient democracies rely on institutional depth rather than concentration of authority. Procedural continuity and oversight safeguard legitimacy.

3. Analytical Framework: Democratic Resilience Assessment Model (DRAM)

The DRAM evaluates democratic resilience across three institutional dimensions:

- ❖ Institutional Continuity (IC) : Ability to maintain constitutional and administrative functions during stress.
- ❖ Adaptive Capacity (AC) : Flexibility in governance processes and administrative coordination.
- ❖ Accountability Preservation (AP) : Maintenance of oversight, review, and transparency mechanisms.

4. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative comparative-institutional approach involving:

- ❖ Review of democratic resilience literature
- ❖ Institutional analysis of governance continuity
- ❖ Comparative reference to other large democracies
- ❖ Examination of accountability structures

5. Institutional Continuity and Governance Stability

Continuity of institutions ensures predictability and legitimacy. In India, constitutional structures and administrative hierarchies have enabled sustained governance functionality.

Continuity mitigates uncertainty and preserves public confidence during periods of stress.

DRAM Assessment: Institutional Continuity — High

6. Adaptive Capacity and Governance Flexibility

Resilient institutions demonstrate flexibility without abandoning norms. Administrative coordination and procedural adaptation enhance governance effectiveness.

Adaptive capacity allows institutions to respond dynamically while retaining accountability.

DRAM Assessment: Adaptive Capacity — Moderate to High

7. Accountability Preservation and Democratic Legitimacy

Oversight institutions play a critical role in resilience by preventing norm erosion. Judicial review, legislative scrutiny, and administrative transparency preserve democratic legitimacy.

Accountability distinguishes resilience from authoritarian response.

DRAM Assessment: Accountability Preservation — Moderate

8. Discussion

The Democratic Resilience Assessment Model shows that democratic continuity is an institutional achievement. Resilience emerges from continuity, adaptation, and accountability working together.

This perspective reframes democratic survival as a governance outcome rather than a political strategy.

9. Conclusion

This paper concludes that democratic continuity in India up to 2021 has been sustained through resilient institutions embedded within constitutional governance. Institutional resilience provides a durable foundation for democratic stability.

Democracy endures not through exceptional authority but through resilient institutions.

References

Boin et al. (2010); Levitsky & Ziblatt (2018); OECD (2020); Skowronek (2011)

