

ABSTRACT

The European Union (EU) has entered in an era of transformation where the European political leaders, policy makers and academicians have been trying to find answers to the challenges of democratic deficit and declining democratic legitimacy. The inability of the Union to solve the contemporary intra-regional problems like the 2009's European debt crisis, Euroskepticism, Brexit, the rise of populism or far-right politics etc. has led many observers to infer that the organization has been experiencing some serious functional glitches. As these politico-economic events have increased doubts over the viability of the very nature of the EU, the looming legitimacy crisis thus compels us to investigate the causes of these crises and then to sort out some recommendations that can ultimately enhance the EU's democratic legitimacy.

In the EU, member states have been given massive political representation in its different institutions and bodies; however, democratic norms, ideals and behaviors are still constantly in decline. This declining trend in the democratization of the union has thus brought about a severe legitimacy crisis in the region. While going through the available literature on the topic and analyzing the reaction of the EU to the prevailing crises, it can be deduced that most of the issues of legitimacy are linked with the state-centric policies of national political parties and their representative leaders. Ever since the start of 21st century, political leaders of the EU have mostly preferred their states' interests over the collective benefits of the union. They have been busy in developing their individual responses and policies to deal with the challenges of migration, religious intolerance, freedom of speech, judicial and media reforms, minority integration etc. Therefore, such constant preferences of individual policies over the collective good of the union has shown an increased right-wing populism in the region.

The individual member states and their political leaders are sometimes compelled by distinct ground realities and exposures to certain prevailing issues. This situation ultimately pushes them to devise their individual policies to address their problems while ignoring the inputs of the other member countries of the EU. In such circumstances, issues of legitimacy arise and cast negative effects on the whole

integration mechanism of the union. It is, hence, contended that the prevalent democratic deficit is either due to the inability of European political parties to exert control over the EU's governing bodies or due to the failure of these parties to demonstrate wishes of the majority of their citizens across the Europe.

This is a qualitative research which is based on secondary sources of data collection. In this research the researcher has selected the Normative Political Theory as he talked about the democratic norms, ideals and behaviors, that had earlier transformed many individual European states into a political whole – the European Union. But as soon as these norms and standards began to wither away, the union started facing problems like democratic deficit and legitimacy. It is also observed that in the absence of general democratic traits and qualities, the member states sometimes drift away from the integrated EU political model and speak only for their states and popular rhetoric of their masses. The curtailing of judicial and media freedoms in Hungary and Poland, Spain's individual response to increased migration and rising indifference of certain states to islamophobia are some recent examples of democratic deficit in the EU. This theoretical approach is quite suitable to understand the increasing issues of democratic legitimacy in the EU and its institutions despite having immense political representation. This paper also evaluates the normative criteria of the EU's political system with relation to the normative political theory.

Key Words: European Union, Political Representation, Issues of Democratic Legitimacy, Democratic Deficit, Normative Political Theory