

## America's Dysfunctional Politics Underlines the Difficulties for the Secular Establishment

### News:

After successive rounds of voting to get the Republican Kevin McCarthy to become speaker of the US House of Representatives, 20 hardline Republican doggedly remain opposed to his bid. The tussle in the Republican Party has brought Washington to a standstill and the situation bears all the hallmarks of the worst constitutional crisis for over a hundred years. [*The Guardian*] Observers are already debating whether this rebellion is a sign of worse things to come for American politics.

### Comment:

This is not the first time the far right of the US Republican Party has threatened the GOP establishment. The rise of the Tea Party followed by the Trump presidency have both tested the resolve of the Republican establishment. But perhaps the most strenuous event was the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection on Capitol Hill in 2021. This not only revealed deep fissures between Republicans and Democrats but also fueled tensions amongst the rank and file of both parties.

For the Republican establishment the far right fed by the ultra-Christian conservative base has made life very difficult to keep a united front. The twenty or so Republicans opposed to McCarthy hail from the House Freedom Caucus—the most right-wing faction of the Republican Party.

This faction is opposed to immigration and gun reforms, preaches conservative fiscal policies, subscribes to Christian values, is against big government and has close ties to big oil and the military industrial complex. Some of its adherents espouse QAnon beliefs, vehemently oppose same sex marriages and are loyal Trump supporters.

These rebels believe that McCarthy is not strong enough to counter the Biden administration and fear that he will bestow the Democrats an unfair advantage heading into the general election in 2024. McCarthy has made several concessions to placate the far-right rebels, but the impasse has brought the legislative process to a halt, and this severely impacts government business.

The Democratic Party is also prone to its extreme left faction that is driven by a materialist agenda under the guise of post-modernism. The establishment of the Democratic Party continues to concede ground to the extreme left over issues like LGBTQ+, identity politics, and anti-religious values like pro-abortion. This faction has close ties to Silicon Valley and big tech.

What we are witnessing in American politics today is that the establishment (centre) of both parties is constantly compromising with the far right and the extreme left to pass through legislation that is unlikely to stick and will be overturned when the

next party is in power. This power struggle between the far right, the extreme left and the establishment is not new. It is a product of a bitter feud between religion and materialism that started in Europe a few centuries ago.

In 17<sup>th</sup> century England, the ruling elites used establishment philosophers to strike a compromise between religious forces acting under the auspices of the clergy and the monarchy, with materialist underground forces represented by atheist philosophers. Eventually, a historic compromise was reached in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and religion was divorced from temporal matters in life. This later became widely known as secularism and continues to define Western politics to this day.

The compromise architected in England was intended by Western establishments to put an end to the materialist agenda and preserve equilibrium between religion in the private sphere and a moderated form of materialism in life. However, the materialists felt cheated by the compromise, which only accepted a watered down of their materialist agenda. Subsequently, the materialists continued their struggle against Western establishments to eliminate Christianity and secularism, and replace it with the supremacy of materialism in all walks of life.

Over the centuries the passiveness of Christians enabled the materialists to extract greater concessions from Western establishments. So much so, that the establishments (centre) appeared godless to many observers of Western politics.

Today, this very same struggle continues in America, and is between the far-right conservative Christians and the extreme left post-modernists. The secular establishment of the GOP and the Democratic Party are constantly making concessions with their extreme factions to uphold secular America. McCarthy's election as Speaker is unlikely to stop such battles and it won't be long before the American establishment is overwhelmed by these forces. Both the Christian far right and materialist extreme left despise modernity and seek to upend it.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by  
Abdul Majeed Bhatti**