

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez at the DNC: The pro-imperialist politics of the DSA

Jacob Crosse
22 August 2024

The role of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and DSA-backed candidates in defending the pro-capitalist and imperialist policies of the Democratic Party has emerged as a significant element of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

On Monday, DSA-backed Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the most prominent member of the DSA in Congress, both delivered speeches in support of leading Democratic politicians, including President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz.

Johnson, a former Cook County Commissioner and legal representative for the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), was the first major politician to speak at the convention, while Ocasio-Cortez was afforded a coveted prime-time slot. The New York Congressperson spoke after UAW President Shawn Fain and before war criminal and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton delivered her remarks. Like Johnson and Ocasio-Cortez, Fain has been supported and endorsed by the DSA.

The prominence of DSA-backed politicians and bureaucrats at the convention is of objective significance. Under conditions of escalating global war, including the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza, the DSA and its members are being used to provide a “left” cover for the warmongering policies of the ruling class. In a comment on Ocasio-Cortez’s prominent role at the DNC, the *New York Times* wrote that she is “the future” of the Democratic Party.

Prior to endorsing Harris Monday night, Ocasio-Cortez was one of “Genocide Joe” Biden’s most ardent defenders and campaign surrogates. Beginning in January, she demanded her supporters, many outraged over the mass murder in Palestine, to “be adults about the situation” and vote for Biden.

Eight months later, with the death toll officially over 40,000—although the British-peer-reviewed medical journal the *Lancet* estimated in July the real figure could be 186,000 or more—Ocasio-Cortez delivered her fulsome support for Harris, Biden’s partner-in-crime, Monday night.

In a blatant lie, Ocasio-Cortez declared that Harris, “is working tirelessly to secure a ceasefire in Gaza and bringing hostages home.” In reality, the Biden-Harris administration has worked “tirelessly” to provide Israel with all the weapons it needs to not only annihilate Gaza, but go to war against Iran as part of a broader US military campaign targeting Russia, and soon North Korea and China.

AOC’s lying statement was met with thunderous applause by those in attendance. The Harris campaign quickly clipped Ocasio-Cortez’s comments and shared them across social media platforms.

Ocasio-Cortez’s ever more open role as an apologist for imperialism has prompted DSA members to try to distance themselves from her. This, however, is completely fraudulent. The current role of Ocasio-Cortez expresses the politics of the DSA itself.

When Ocasio-Cortez defeated incumbent New York Rep. Joseph Crowley on her way to Congress six years ago, the DSA hailed her ascension as proof that the Democratic Party was capable of being

“pushed” to “the left.” The election of Ocasio-Cortez was presented not only as a major historical event, but the spearhead of a “democratic socialist” takeover of the Democratic Party.

In statement headlined “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, The Political Revolution Continues!” dated June 27, 2018, the DSA National Political Committee declared the soon-to-be legislator “will continue the political revolution” by becoming a “champion for the abolition of ICE, Medicare for All, a federal jobs guarantee, tuition-free public colleges and universities, and equal rights and freedoms for all Americans.”

The WSWS explained at the time that this was an exercise in political falsification. In a Perspective published on June 28, 2018, Patrick Martin wrote:

the politics of Ocasio-Cortez and the DSA offer no way forward for the working class. There is not a hint of socialism in her program (the word itself does not appear on her web site), and both the candidate and the DSA have sought to downplay their connection. Anyone who suggests that her victory marks a shift to the left by the Democratic Party should be told, in no uncertain terms: Curb your enthusiasm!

The article added, in words that apply fully to Ocasio-Cortez’s role at the DNC:

The DSA is not fighting for socialism, but to strengthen the Democratic Party, one of the two main capitalist parties in the United States, which shares responsibility with the Republican Party for all the crimes committed by American imperialism around the world and against the working class at home.

This diagnosis was confirmed repeatedly in the further evolution of Ocasio-Cortez and the DSA.

Upon being sworn in to Congress, Ocasio-Cortez used her background to posture as a defender of immigrants, even performatively weeping at a border detention facility during the Trump presidency. However, once the Biden-Harris administration came to power Ocasio-Cortez dropped her insincere call to “Abolish ICE” and attacked the socialist analysis presented on the WSWS for being “privileged” when we correctly pointed out that the Biden administration was continuing many of the same anti-human and anti-immigrant policies deployed under Trump.

The interview with Ocasio-Cortez denouncing socialist opposition to Biden was published in the Democratic Socialists of America’s magazine *Democratic Left*.

When asked by the interviewer why she joined the DSA, Ocasio-Cortez

replied that the DSA did not advocate “class essentialism” and was not engaged in “more socialist than thou” rhetoric. In other words, that the DSA was a faction of the Democratic Party.

The WSWS exposures of Ocasio-Cortez were read by tens of thousands, including many DSA members, prompting the defenders of the Democratic Party, such as Briahna Joy Gray, former press secretary for Bernie Sanders’ 2020 presidential campaign, to denounce the WSWS as “bad faith actors.”

This was followed by a right-wing campaign by leading DSA members that coupled praise of the assassination of Leon Trotsky with threats against members of the Socialist Equality Party. Leading members of the DSA spent weeks sharing images of ice picks and other Stalinist filth.

Responding to these attacks, the WSWS wrote:

The Democratic Party is once again threatened by a growing movement of the working class. It recognizes and fears that the radicalization of youth and the working class can lead, unless diverted, toward a break with capitalist politics and, therefore, a serious movement for socialism.

The Democratic Party employs the DSA to prevent this development.

In response to this violent campaign, WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North sent an Open Letter to then-National Director of the DSA Maria Svart calling on the DSA to denounce celebrations of Trotsky’s assassination and repudiate the violent Twitter posts published by DSA members. Svart never replied.

In 2022, Ocasio-Cortez joined Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and the rest of the DSA Democrats in voting to fund the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

Commenting on this vote, the WSWS wrote (in “Ocasio-Cortez, Sanders and the DSA vote for war”):

The vote marks a crossing of a political Rubicon. It is an endorsement of the US/NATO war against Russia. It takes money out of the hands of working people confronting inflation and poverty at home and directs it toward death and destruction abroad. It dramatically increases the possibility of a world war between nuclear powers.

Ocasio-Cortez and Sanders have risen to national prominence by promoting themselves as representatives of the “anti-war” and “left-wing” sentiments of masses of people. The DSA similarly calls itself the “largest socialist organization in America.” But their pro-imperialist actions speak louder than words. They are nothing more than petty-bourgeois lackeys of the most ruthless imperialist power in the world.

After voting for war in May, in November, Ocasio-Cortez voted alongside fellow DSA Democrats Cori Bush (Missouri), Jamaal Bowman (New York) and a majority of Democrats and Republicans to block railroad workers from striking after workers rejected a White House-imposed pro-company contract.

Throughout 2023 and 2024 she continued to ingratiate herself to the Democratic Party elite and Pentagon. After luring children back into COVID-infested schools in the fall of 2021 with the promise of backpacks, in 2023 the phony socialist brought military recruiters to Bronx high schoolers in an attempt to enlist children for the war machine.

Absent the tremendous support she receives in the capitalist press,

Ocasio-Cortez the individual is of little significance. She is a typical middle-class careerist who has found a role serving as an apologist for imperialism.

She is important, however, as a representative example of a whole type of politics, the politics of the pseudo-left, which is expressed in different forms in different countries.

In the forward to *The Frankfurt School, Postmodernism and the Politics of the Pseudo-Left: A Marxist Critique*, WSWS Editorial Board Chairman David North summarized the political role and social character of these tendencies:

- The pseudo-left denotes political parties, organizations and theoretical/ideological tendencies, which utilize populist slogans and democratic phrases to promote the socioeconomic interests of privileged and affluent strata of the middle class...

- The pseudo-left is anti-Marxist. It rejects historical materialism, embracing instead various forms of subjective idealism and philosophical irrationalism associated with existentialism, the Frankfurt School and contemporary postmodernism...

- The pseudo-left is anti-socialist, opposes class struggle, and denies the central role of the working class and the necessity of revolution in the progressive transformation of society...

- The pseudo-left promotes “identity politics,” fixating on issues related to nationality, ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality in order to acquire greater influence in corporations, the colleges and universities, the higher-paying professions, the trade unions and in government and state institutions, to effect a more favorable distribution of wealth among the richest 10 percent of the population. The pseudo-left seeks greater access to, rather than the destruction of, social privilege.

- In the imperialist centers of North America, Western Europe and Australasia, the pseudo-left is generally pro-imperialist, and utilizes the slogans of “human rights” to legitimize, and even directly support, neo-colonialist military operations.

These tendencies—the DSA in the United States, the Syriza government in Greece, Podemos in Spain, or the “Bernie Sanders” of the UK, Jeremy Corbyn, and others—serve a similar function. They have worked to block opposition to the policies of the ruling class and channel it back into the political establishment. In doing so, they have helped shift the whole framework of politics ever further to the right.

The development of a movement against imperialism, and against the genocide in Gaza, requires a ruthless exposure of the politics of these tendencies, an absolutely necessary component of the fight for the political independence of the working class and the building of a genuine socialist movement.



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