

DSA Affirms It Is a Subsidiary of the Democratic Party

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Jacobin is virtually the house magazine of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Staff writer Branko Marcetic has poured out almost 4,000 words in an attempt to revive enthusiasm for the Squad, the handful of “progressive and socialist House members” headed by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.¹ It seems that a critical article in *New York* magazine by Freddie deBoer had some impact. Marcetic links to the piece but does not give his readers the title: “AOC Is Just a Regular Old Democrat Now.”²

Marcetic is at pains to distinguish AOC and the Squad from Democrats in general. He claims reforms won:

- AOC pushed a “successful 2019 amendment [that] cut \$5 million from the Drug Enforcement Administration budget and redirected it to treatment programs for the opioid crisis.” Yup, five million dollars. That is a grand \$1.25 for every nonmedical user of prescription opioids in the United States.³
- The Squad helped block renewal of the Patriot Act’s Section 215, which authorizes a wide range of surveillance without a warrant. From now on the NSA, CIA, FBI, etc. will have to break the law (keeping it quiet, of course) when they decide to watch someone in certain situations.
- Marcetic calls on Erik Sperling of the group Just Foreign Policy for help. Sperling testifies, “With the entire Squad and their allies, you have a core of about a dozen members that will sign many of the most principled foreign policy letters on a wide range of issues, which is a big change from the past when the more centrist voices on the foreign affairs subcommittees would speak out on these topics.” The “socialist” legislators are holding a paper fort abandoned by centrist legislators – although it is not obvious how this advances the fight for socialism.

- The victories keep coming. “I have her [AOC's] chief of staff on my cell phone,” says deputy director of Food and Water Action Mitch Jones. “We’ve found her office to be responsive when we need them to be.”

Marcetic sums up: “The process of political transformation is messy and chaotic. Disparate actions add up little by little and then suddenly, building up pressure on those in power, expanding the bounds of what’s possible and creating momentum for change. It’s undeniable that the Squad, by virtue of their work in Congress and acting as a conduit for outside groups, has been integral to this.” The kinetics of gases makes a nice metaphor, but it proves nothing.

Reformism holds that capitalism can be changed into socialism within the political processes of capitalism itself. The leaders of DSA adhere to an especially narrow version of reformism. They insist that we must work within the Democratic Party, forbidding the alternative reformist path of electing our way to socialism by means of a working-class party.

For all his celebration of the Squad, Marcetic cannot avoid crying, “Left-wing scrutiny of the Squad and particularly Representative Ocasio-Cortez has steadily veered from constructive criticism and needed pressure to a kind of caricaturish vitriol.” This, he tells us, “is a recipe for despair, apathy, and in the end, demobilization ... that threatens to undermine socialist gains.” Yes, the tiniest gestures and reforms are “socialist gains.” By this accounting, FDR with his New Deal must have been the socialist that the DuPonts and Morgans alleged him to be.

Sorry, DSA. There is no socialism without a communist party⁴: a party that uses elections in certain conditions as one tool with which communists organize fellow workers ... for revolution.

Charles Andrews is the author of [The Hollow Colossus](#).

¹ “AOC and the Squad’s List of Left-Wing Accomplishments Is Quite Long,”

<https://jacobin.com/2023/08/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-aoc-the-squad-left-criticism-policy-accomplishments>

² <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2023/07/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-is-just-a-regular-old-democrat-now.html>

³ Mohammadreza Azadfard et al, “Opioid Addiction,” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK448203/>

⁴ Charles Andrews, “There Is No Socialism Without a Communist Party,” <https://mltoday.com/communication-no-socialism-without-communist-party/>