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USA

Primary Electoral Victories of DSA and Progressives Lead to

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President Donald Trump's war on Iran and his tariff wars with other countries—both leading to higher prices—and his Republican Party's cuts in taxes for the rich and cuts in social programs for the working class, and his violent and vicious attacks on immigrants, together with the Democratic Party's failure to mobilize to stand up to Trump, have created fertile ground for the Democratic Party's left wing, especially for the Democratic Socialist of America (DSA). [1]

The victory of Zohran Mamdani of DSA in the New York City mayoral election, sparked the recent series of victories that have led to increased tensions in the Democratic Party and in DSA itself. DSA is not itself an electoral political party but proposes and endorses candidates within the Democratic Party. DSA candidates' victories in congressional primaries in New York, Colorado, Michigan, and Florida, that is, in every region of the country and in both Democratic and Republican states, defeated more moderate Democrats backed by the party's leadership. The DSA has been winning by calling for taxing the rich, Medicare for all and an end to the U.S. funding of Israel's military. These DSA victories have had an enormous impact on the national political consciousness where socialism is now part of the debate.

So now some Democratic politicians want to crush DSA. The Democratic Party establishment argues that while these leftists may win in the primaries, they will be too far left for the general elections where they must compete not only with moderate Democrats, but also with Republicans and Independents, the latter now making up 43% of all voters—suggesting that the left's success may bring about a Republican victory. DSA's threat to the establishment led 15 centrist Democrats to issue an anti-socialist manifesto called Promise to America in which they defend capitalism, the police, and "fiscal discipline." It is a Democratic Party centrist faction's declaration of war against DSA. Of course, the right delights in this since Trump and the Republicans now characterize not only DSA but the entire Democratic Party as "Communists."

At the same time that it is under external attack, there is also an internal struggle within DSA. DSA, which calls itself a "big tent" organization, is a congeries of caucuses, more than a dozen, not all of which support the party's electoral strategy of running in the Democratic Party. Some of these caucuses, which call themselves Communist, Marxist-Leninist, argue that supporting the Democrats, a capitalist party, is contrary to DSA's socialist goals. Some of these groups argue for building a revolutionary socialist party instead. Other caucuses hold that the key to social change is not electoral success, but powerful labor and social movements.

Often at the center of these debates is Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez who is seen as a possible candidate in the Democratic Party's presidential primary election in 2028. While she has not yet said if she will run, that possibility polarized DSA members. Many DSA members would be excited to see her run, while the anti-electoral caucuses argue that she has been transformed into a centrist Democrat—though her record in Congress does not show that. They fear electoral victories will draw DSA further into the Democrats' capitalist and corrupt world. The critics of the electoral strategy point to a real problem, the Democrats are a capitalist party dominated by the corporate oligarchy. But their alternative seems to be to run socialist candidates with little possibility of winning many votes.

Whether these electoral victories and the accompanying change in consciousness in the country can contribute to the kind of massive labor and social movement that might propel real social change remains to be seen.

30 August 2026

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