

# At Munich conference, AOC accuses Trump of insufficient commitment to war against Russia, refuses to rule out war with China

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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America and Democratic congresswoman from New York, this weekend addressed the Munich Security Conference—the annual gathering of NATO officials, defense ministers and arms industry executives that has served as the premier forum for Western military strategy since the Cold War.

Ahead of her appearance, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote that Ocasio-Cortez would “make her debut as an imperialist strategist.” She lived up to this prognosis.

Speaking at a conference sponsored by Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and BAE Systems, Ocasio-Cortez accused the Trump administration of insufficient commitment to the US-NATO war against Russia, echoed the Trump administration’s accusations that Iran has killed “tens of thousands of protesters” and refused to rule out sending American troops to fight China over Taiwan.

Ocasio-Cortez’s method throughout the conference was to portray Trump’s “authoritarianism” as aligned with that of Russian President Vladimir Putin, thereby seeking to subordinate widespread popular opposition to Trump into support for the war against Russia. She warned that Trump and Rubio are “looking to withdraw the United States from the entire world so that we can turn into an age of authoritarianisms, ... where Putin can saber rattle around Europe and try to bully around our own allies there.”

Opposing any peaceful settlement of the Ukraine war, she declared: “We shouldn’t reward imperialism, and I don’t think that we should allow Russia to continue, or any nation, to continue, violating a nation’s sovereignty and to continue to be rewarded.”

Speaking as a representative of the world’s greatest imperialist power, which has been perpetually at war during her entire lifetime, Ocasio-Cortez wielded the epithet of “imperialism” to designate those the US would target for conquest and subjugation. In her accusation that Trump is enabling Putin’s “bullying,” she was demanding the

continuation of a war that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and brought the world closer to nuclear conflict than at any point since the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Her solution to the supposed threat of “authoritarianism” was the Trans-Pacific Partnership—Obama’s trade deal designed to isolate China. She called for “our global alliances” to serve as “a hard stop against authoritarian consolidation of power, particularly in the installation of regional puppet governments.” This is the program of the Democratic Party: not opposition to war but a different strategy for waging it—not opposition to imperialism but a return to the multilateral framework through which the US waged war in Iraq, Libya and Syria.

Asked at a panel Saturday whether the US should commit troops to defend Taiwan if China were to invade, Ocasio-Cortez refused to rule it out. “This is, of course, a—uh—a very long-standing policy of the United States. And I think what we are hoping for is that we want to make sure that we never get to that point,” she said.

This is a question about war between the world’s two largest economies—both armed with nuclear weapons. That Ocasio-Cortez could not bring herself to say “no” is an expression of how deeply the Democratic Party is committed to military confrontation with China.

Ocasio-Cortez spoke at Munich as the US military is carrying out the largest concentration of firepower in the Middle East since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Reuters reported Friday that the Pentagon is planning “sustained, weeks-long operations” against Iran, targeting “Iranian state and security facilities, not just nuclear infrastructure.” Approximately 50,000 US troops are now deployed to the region. Trump told troops at Fort Bragg that regime change in Iran would be “the best thing that could happen.”

Under these conditions, Ocasio-Cortez made only the most token, tactical criticisms of the Trump administration’s handling of the regime change drive against Iran—while effectively supporting it in practice.

Asked whether she supports further US strikes on Iran, she gave a statement that effectively supported the Trump administration's goals of regime change while adding minor tactical quibbles. "There's still so much runway," she said. She repeated the administration's own regime change talking points: "Right now, what the Iranian regime is doing, particularly with respect to protesters, is a horrific slaughter—some estimates have tens of thousands of people now." She took the unsubstantiated claims presented by the administration to justify its plans for regime change as good coin.

She spoke at a conference that on January 16, under pressure from the German Foreign Ministry, withdrew its invitation to Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. In his place, the conference offered a platform to exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, son of the Shah overthrown in 1979, who called for "humanitarian intervention" and declared that "help is on the way" from Trump. On January 29, the EU unanimously designated Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist organization—with all 27 member states voting in lockstep with Washington's escalation. Ocasio-Cortez said nothing to oppose any of this.

Ocasio-Cortez's performance at Munich is the continuation of a career backing and enabling US imperialism. In September 2021, she voted "present" on a measure providing \$1 billion in funding for Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system—weeping on the House floor after switching her vote from "No" under pressure from Democratic leadership. When Israel launched its assault on Gaza in October 2023, she condemned pro-Palestinian demonstrations in Times Square as displays of "bigotry and callousness" and called for them to be "shut down." She waited more than two weeks to call for a ceasefire—while other members of her own caucus called for one immediately.

In May 2022, Ocasio-Cortez voted to provide \$40 billion in weapons to far-right forces in Ukraine—a vote shared by every DSA-backed member of Congress. In December 2022, she voted to legalize a strike by 100,000 railroad workers and impose a contract the workers had rejected.

Ocasio-Cortez did not vote for the \$839 billion Consolidated Appropriations Act that passed the House on January 22 by a vote of 341 to 88. But 149 of her Democratic colleagues did—including Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Whip Katherine Clark and Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar. Republicans on the House Appropriations Committee hailed the legislation as "America First, Fully Funded." The Democrats supplied the votes to pass it by an overwhelming margin.

In the Senate, the bill passed 71 to 29, with 23 Democrats voting for it, including Minority Leader Chuck Schumer,

Minority Whip Dick Durbin and Vice Chair Mark Warner. The \$839 billion Pentagon allocation was \$8.4 billion more than the military's own budget request. The Trump administration has since proposed a \$1.5 trillion military budget for fiscal year 2027. Ocasio-Cortez has said nothing to oppose it.

She is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, an organization whose political lineage runs through Max Shachtman—the former Trotskyist who broke with the Fourth International in 1940 and ended his career as a supporter of the Vietnam War and an adviser to AFL-CIO President George Meany. Shachtman's pupil Michael Harrington founded the DSA in 1982 on the basis of total subordination to the Democratic Party. In a 1984 interview, Harrington declared: "When I criticize American foreign policy ... I do that in the name of the national security of the United States." His co-founder Irving Howe added: "And you speak of the national security because you recognize that there is a totalitarian enemy out there which needs to be met."

This is AOC's political heritage. Ocasio-Cortez's appearance at Munich is not a betrayal of the DSA's politics but fundamentally in line with them. Seated at a conference founded by a former Wehrmacht officer, sponsored by the world's largest arms manufacturers, she presented the program of the Democratic Party as the more effective strategy for American global dominance—Condemn Putin, contain China, restore the "rules-based order" that is the order of American hegemony.

The working class cannot look to any faction of the political establishment—whether Trump's "America First" nationalism or the Democrats' multilateral imperialism—to oppose war. The same Congress that is preparing to devastate Iran voted to hand the Pentagon \$839 billion, while millions of American workers cannot afford healthcare. Opposition to war must be built from below, through the independent mobilization of the international working class against the capitalist system that produces war, dictatorship and social inequality.



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