



# Prescription Politics:

How Foreign-Trained Doctors Are Bankrolling America's Most Radical Lawmakers

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Politics makes strange and sometimes very dangerous bedfellows. The recent combination of far-left and Islamist movements into what is called the Red-Green Alliance has been sweeping through Europe and is beginning to form in the United States. It is hard to imagine what progressive groups championing the rights of gender ideology have in common with those seeking to instill Islamic teachings into law and culture, but their shared antipathy to Western liberal democracy and capitalism seem sufficient to bring their coalition together.

This study examines campaign contributions to a group of progressive members of Congress known as “the Squad” to see how the political project most in line with the Red-Green Alliance derives its funding in the U.S. We observe some unusual patterns that reveal mechanisms by which this project may be gaining strength. In particular, we observe that an unusually high share of campaign dollars given to Squad members comes from medical doctors and that most of those doctors received their training outside of the United States. Because the U.S. imports a quarter of its newly starting doctors each year from abroad,<sup>i</sup> this analysis suggests that high-skilled immigration in medicine may be fueling the Red-Green Alliance.

## Background

The Brookings Institute observes that Islamism is a belief that “Islamic law or Islamic values should play a central role in public life. They feel Islam has things to say about how politics should be conducted, how the law should be applied, and how other people—not just themselves—should conduct themselves morally.”<sup>ii</sup>

Of course, many adherents of Islam are not Islamists and practice their faith in ways that are entirely compatible with Western values. Still, millions of Islamists have immigrated to the West such that their aspirations represent a political force that deserves to be taken seriously. A 2016 study revealed that “more than 40 percent of young Muslims (aged 15-25) consider Islamic Sharia law more important than the secular law of France.”<sup>iii</sup> Sharia refers to laws in Islamic religious texts. Similarly, a recent poll of British Muslims found that nearly one-third support the implementation of Sharia.<sup>iv</sup>

Affection for Islamist ideology might be less prevalent in the United States than in Europe, but the seeds of it are clearly germinating. At an April 2024 rally in Dearborn, Michigan, protestors chanted “Death to America.”<sup>v</sup> In Texas, Senator John Cornyn has requested a Department of Justice investigation into a planned community called EPIC (East Plano Islamic Center) City for discrimination against non-Muslims. “The Center is designed as an exclusive religious settlement where Islamic principles govern not only daily life and education, but commerce.”<sup>vi</sup>

While Islamists do not represent a majority in any Western country, they can be organized in ways to maximize their political potency. A recently leaked report commissioned by the French government observed that the Muslim Brotherhood (a leading agitator for political Islamism) is deliberately subverting French secular values and institutions. The report concludes that “the reality of this threat, even if it is long-term and does not involve violent action, highlights the risk of damage to the fabric of society and republican institutions.”<sup>vii</sup>

Islamist objectives can also be advanced through forging alliances with broader political movements. One particularly popular pairing that spans decades is alignment with Marxist forces and other far left groups. As a 2013 study in the academic journal *Terrorism & Political Violence* notes, the two ideologies share enough ideological overlap to allow for collaboration.<sup>viii</sup> Specifically, both embrace the importance of the collective over the individual, claim to be a universal solution, and represent “an absolute truth that would lead to the salvation of mankind.” They also share an “eschatological view of history that includes the inevitability of a final battle between good (Socialist progress/Dar al-Islam) and evil (capitalist reaction/Dar al-Harb), and both can justify violence to achieve this goal.”

More importantly, “the master frames of anti-globalization/anti-capitalism and anti-colonialism/anti-imperialism have provided a common cognitive framework which has justified joint action for the sake of the working and Muslim masses. By adopting these master frames, radical Leftists and Islamists can be part of a larger effort to fight against globalized capitalism and Western imperialism.”

The study in *Terrorism & Political Violence* offers a chilling and prescient warning: “When Islamists start talking about globalization and global warming, it is time to pay attention.” Clearly, the time to pay attention is now. As Lorenzo Vidino of the Hudson Institute observed in 2022:ix

Most of these young Islamist actors rarely use Islamist references and if they do so, it tends to be done in somewhat veiled terms. Instead, they speak the language of discrimination, anti-racism, internalized oppression, intersectionality and post-colonial theory. Several of the causes they embrace, such as the environment or lowering university fees, have nothing to do with Islamism. Others can be seen as overlapping with Islamism’s traditional grievances but are framed in typically progressive terms and with no apparent Islamist undertone. For example, Western Islamists’ recent adherence to calls to “de-colonize” school curricula fit the ideology’s inherent anti-colonial nature but are formulated adopting the phrasing commonly used in progressive circles.

This strategy, recently on display at the enormous intersection of the protest movements against immigration enforcement and Israel’s war against Hamas, is paying dividends.x

These approaches have allowed the new generation of Western Islamists to make inroads in political, media and civil society circles in ways their predecessors could only hope. By largely shedding Islamist tropes and adopting progressive frames and causes, young Western Islamists have forged strong alliances in mainstream society and have come to be widely accepted in Western establishment circles. Many of them have therefore come to run as candidates in political parties, pen op-eds for and appear in debates on mainstream media; forge alliances with a broad array of progressive organizations and thought leaders.”

The “Squad”—an informal Congressional group that originally consisted of Democrat Representatives Jamaal Bowman, Cori Bush, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib—represents the most logical political vessel for the Red-Green Alliance to metastasize. Though affiliation is informal, the common threads include revolutionary disruption of the status quo, rejection of capitalism, rejection of American exceptionalism, and apologism for the most virulent strains of political Islam.

For example, Rep. Omar referred to 9/11 as an event in which “some people did something”xi while Rep. Bowman asserted that the attack was an inside job.xii In the immediate days

following the Hamas atrocities of October 7th, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez said that “Christian fundamentalism” is largely responsible for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>xiii</sup> Several months later her squadmates Reps. Tlaib and Bush were the only two members of the House who voted against a bill that banned Hamas members from immigrating to the U.S.<sup>xiv</sup>

Donors to the Squad have diverse reasons for doing so, and indeed most are not (at least wittingly) doing so in service of the expansion of political Islam. However, most Islamists would surely view the Squad as a political project worthy of financial support given the stances they take on both domestic and foreign policy issues. Identifying financial patterns of support for the Red-Green Alliance offers hope for countering this alliance.

## **Data and Analysis**

When the Squad was formed in 2019, it consisted of Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib, who were joined by Reps. Jamaal Bowman and Cori Bush in 2021. We obtained information on campaign contributions to these original six members of the Squad during the 2024 election cycle from the Federal Election Commission. We restricted our analysis to contributions where information on the individual’s occupation was available, excluding instances where occupation was left blank or where the listed occupation was not informative, such as “self-employed” or “retired.”

We then identified all contributors who were doctors. Since there was no standard way for people to describe their occupation, we captured all the variants of “doctor” we could find, such as “surgeon,” “physician,” “cardiologist,” and so on. The percentage of campaign dollars coming from doctors for each representative was the sum of contributions from doctors divided by the total contributions for which occupation information was provided. Because the amount raised by each representative varied considerably, the average percentage of contributions from doctors to the Squad is based on the total contributions received by each individual representative, not the total dollars contributed across all six members.

More than 2,100 doctors contributed to the Squad during the 2024 election cycle. To identify where these doctors obtained their medical degrees, we examined a representative sample of 400 of them. In almost all cases, the name of the institution from which doctors earned medical degrees could be found through Google searches for their name and state of residence. Multiple websites compile online profiles of doctors that make such information about medical training readily available.

To gauge whether the patterns of campaign contributions to the Squad were atypical, we also collected the same information for a comparison group of six ideologically average representatives, as ranked by GovTrack based on their 2024 voting records. The six representatives whose voting records placed them at or near the ideological median were: Reps.

Henry Cuellar (D-TX), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Jared Golden (D-ME), Jim Jordan (R-OH), Susie Lee (D-NV), and Celeste Maloy (R-UT).

In total, 312 doctors contributed to the campaigns of these six comparison representatives. We examined a random sample of 100 of those doctors to identify where they obtained their medical degrees.

## Results

Members of the Squad receive an unusually large portion of their campaign funds from doctors out of individual contributions that provide occupation information. Rep. Ilhan Omar gets 27% of her money from doctors, followed by Rep. Rashida Tlaib at 25%, Rep. Cori Bush at 22% and Rep. Jamaal Bowman at 19%. Rep. Ayanna Pressley and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez differ from the others in the Squad and receive 6% of their campaign funds from doctors. Across these six representatives, the average is 18% of their campaign contributions from doctors.

		Percent of campaign funds from doctors	Total
<b>Squad</b>	Ilhan Omar (D-MN)	27%	18%
	Rashida Tlaib (D-MI)	25%	
	Cori Bush (formerly D-MO)	22%	
	Jamaal Bowman (formerly D-NY)	19%	
	Ayanna Pressley (D-MA)	6%	
	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY)	6%	
<b>Comparison Group</b>	Henry Cuellar (D-TX)	6%	3%
	Jared Golden (D-ME)	4%	
	Susie Lee (D-NV)	4%	
	Jim Jordan (R-OH)	2%	
	Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)	1%	
	Celeste Maloy (R-UT)	0%	

No one in the comparison group received more of their financial support from doctors as even the lowest rate for the Squad. The highest was Rep. Henry Cuellar, who matched Reps. Pressley and AOC at 6% only because of rounding. Representatives Golden and Lee each received 4% of their campaign funds from doctors, Rep. Jim Jordan got 2%, Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick 1%, and Rep.

Celeste Maloy 0%. Across these six comparison representatives, the average is a little less than 3% of their campaign contributions from doctors.

The rate at which doctors provided campaign funds was more than six times higher for members of the Squad than for the comparison group of ideologically average representatives among individual contributions with occupation information provided. It is also clear even without counting the exact number of contributions from other occupations that doctors were the single largest occupation supporting the Squad. Doctors play an unusual and significant role in funding the Squad.

The Squad is not only exceptional in its reliance on doctors for campaign contributions, but also in the proportion of those doctors educated abroad. Based on the sample of Squad campaign contributors who are doctors, 66% of them received their medical degrees outside of the United States of which 85% were medical schools in the Middle East or South Asia. Almost a third of the doctors with foreign medical degrees who contributed to the Squad received their training in Pakistan, followed by Syria with 16%, Jordan with 13%, and Egypt with 10%.

	<b>Share of doctor donations from foreign-trained doctors</b>	<b>Share of foreign-trained doctor donors who received degrees in Middle East or South Asia</b>
<b>Squad</b>	66%	85%
<b>Comparison Group</b>	21%	62%

For the comparison group of representatives, only 21% of their doctor campaign contributors came from those who received their medical degrees outside of the United States, 62% of whom were trained in the Middle East or South Asia. Nationwide, about 20% of U.S. doctors were trained overseas, which is consistent with the rate for the comparison group but more than three times less than the rate for the Squad.

## Discussion

Most of the concerns associated with immigration tends to focus on lower-skilled immigrants, raising issues about economic competition with vulnerable American workers. Insufficient attention has been paid to the risks that might be associated with high-skilled immigrants, including doctors. Instead, we tend to emphasize the economic benefits while downplaying or ignoring broader cultural and political ramifications. Given that education systems are typically designed to inculcate the values of the countries that built those systems, foreigners who enter the U.S. after completing their formal education are more likely to hold the political values of their home country.<sup>xv</sup> As more immigrants arrive from countries with vastly different value

preferences, the values imported doctors bring with them may begin to differ substantially from those traditionally held in the U.S.

In addition, because foreign-trained doctors tend to come from elite families within their societies, they are unlikely to be fleeing political persecution or economic deprivation back home. Instead, they are often seeking even better opportunities without necessarily embracing the values of the U.S. or denouncing those of their home country. They may wish to earn a better living while hoping that the U.S. might more closely resemble the political and moral values of where they came from.

Because doctors are generally high-status people with relatively high salaries, those who arrive from abroad also have greater capacity to act upon any desires to alter U.S. political values to more closely resemble those back home. Foreign medical residents have advantages in becoming citizens and gaining the full ability to vote and contribute to campaigns given that their skills are in high demand and are more likely to receive job offers that facilitate naturalization. Given their wealth and social standing, foreign-trained doctors can then be effective in pursuing their political goals.

There may be even greater political risks associated with foreign-trained doctors relative to other professionals coming from abroad. Obtaining a visa to enter the country is typically accomplished quickly and without significant vetting because matches are made late in the spring and residents must start work in the middle of the summer. The process for getting visas in the tech industry, by comparison, is much more time-consuming and challenging.

In addition, the medical profession has an unfortunate propensity toward political radicalism at a higher rate than other professions. Terrorism scholar Walter Lacqueur observed that an unusually high proportion of terrorist leaders have been doctors. Our own recent work documents the unusually high representation of doctors among public traffickers in antisemitism.<sup>xvi</sup> Of the 702 individuals profiled by the organization StopAntisemitism since October 7, 2023 for virulent antisemitism doctors were 26 times more likely to be featured than would be expected given their share of the workforce.

Scholars endorse competing theories to account for this alarming pattern of doctors drawn to radical movements, but they seem to agree that the phenomenon is a real cause for concern. After seven doctors and medical students were arrested in 2007 for a plot to detonate car bombs in London and Glasgow, the dangers that foreign-trained doctors posed in forming Red-Green alliances and advancing extremist goals was the topic of considerable angst in the *National Health Service*<sup>xvii</sup> and medical journals.<sup>xviii</sup> As Simon Wessely described it in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, “an Al Qaeda leader in Baghdad [threatened] that ‘those who cure you will kill you.’ Whether that has any relevance remains to be seen, but there was a palpable sense of shock that our own NHS could harbor as many as eight people apparently bent on mass murder.” While no doctors have been arrested in the U.S. on terrorism charges, there has been a

disproportionately high percentage of antisemitic incidents involving doctors documented in the United States.<sup>xix</sup>

The pattern of campaign donations from foreign-trained doctors to the Squad also suggests that there is at least some coordination of this effort. Of the more than 2,100 doctors who contributed to the Squad, 437 gave to more than one Squad campaign. In addition, the clustering of the dates recorded for the contributions suggests that the money was bundled or contributed at events at the same time as many other doctors.

To be clear, most doctors trained abroad haven't donated to the Squad and most espouse views entirely compatible with traditional Western values.

Moreover, not everyone who donates to the Squad conspires toward the entrenchment of political Islam within American institutions, and the same goes for the foreign-trained doctors who have funded Squad campaigns. Still, the Squad represents a perfect convergence of the Red-Green Alliance in its shared "strategic goal of ending capitalism, free speech and individual rights."<sup>xx</sup> Some supporters of the Squad have nefarious motivations, and recent history demonstrates that foreign-trained doctors play a disproportionate role in political and religious extremist movements. The outsized role of foreign-trained doctors in funding the Squad is a phenomenon that warrants serious concern.

## **Policy Solutions**

Thankfully, there are reasonable steps we can take to manage the concerns raised in this report.

First, the United States can reduce its dependence on foreign-trained doctors by significantly expanding medical education in the United States. This will require breaking accreditation cartels and ensuring a sufficient supply of clinical teaching opportunities, but the demand from American citizens clearly exists. It has become more difficult to be accepted to a U.S. medical school over time given that rejection rates have risen, along with the average MCAT and GPA measures for those who are admitted.<sup>xxi</sup>

Second, we can be more careful in vetting which foreign-trained doctors are granted visas, giving preference to those who come from democratic societies whose values more closely resemble those traditionally found in the United States.

Of course, foreign-trained doctors who become citizens are entitled to their political preferences and have every right to make campaign contributions as they please. The question is whether we should be concerned about how our open-door policies on foreign-trained doctors may be admitting to the U.S. a critical mass of people who bring political risks to the medical profession and the American political system.



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