

Biden Hasn't Given an Iran Speech, State of the Union is His Opportunity

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President Biden has made a mainstay of his foreign policy standing up for democracy around the world and supporting U.S. partners fighting against aggressive authoritarian states, mentioning these topics in nearly 50 speeches over the last two years. Except when it comes to Iran. Unlike his predecessors, two years into his tenure the president has never given a speech dedicated to Iran, neither supporting the democratic demands of protesters in Iran, helping America's Middle East partners defend themselves against Iranian attacks, nor addressing the nuclear talks.

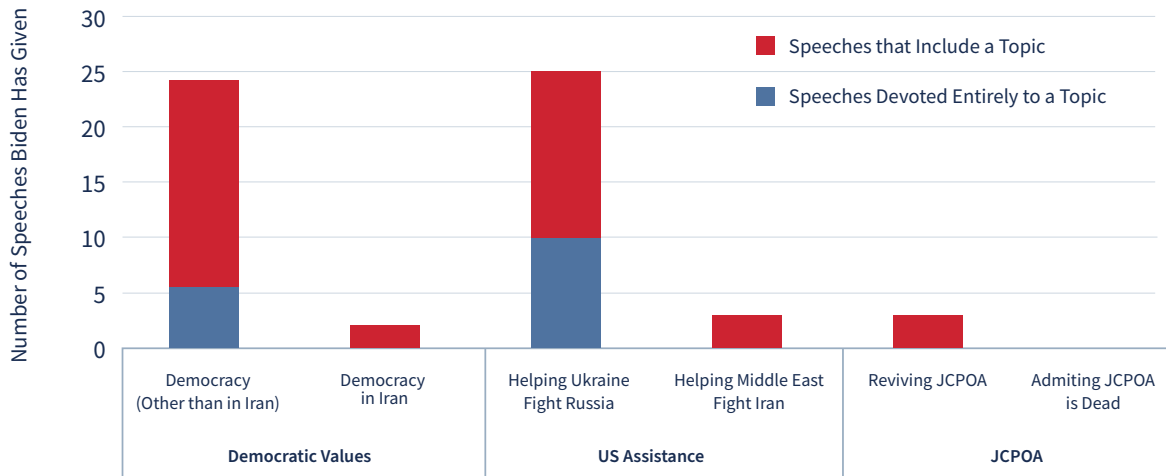
His State of the Union address on February 7, 2023, presents the perfect opportunity to rectify this oversight. President Biden should use the State of the Union to announce a Plan B Iran policy that provides greater support for anti-regime protests in Iran, strengthens the U.S. commitment to America's partners in the Middle East, and moves past the "dead" JCPOA by exerting greater pressure on the regime. The American people deserve to know where the president stands on one of the most pressing national security issues of the day.

What Happened?

- During two years in office, President Biden has not given a single speech dedicated to his administration's Iran policy.
- Biden has made democratic values and restoring America's support for its partners a cornerstone of his [national security strategy](#) and given multiple speeches in which he applies these principles.
 - » He has given five speeches directly about democracy promotion in general and mentioned it in 19 other speeches.
 - » Biden has also delivered 10 speeches specifically about helping Ukraine fight Russia and referred to it another 15 times.
- But President Biden has never applied these principles of democratic support and standing with U.S. partners to one of the major threats to global security: Iran.

- » Biden has not given any speeches entirely devoted to Iran, whether his administration’s diplomatic strategy for reviving the JCPOA, supporting democratic protests in Iran, or helping the Middle East fight Iran.
- » He has given just two speeches that mention the democratic movement in Iran, three about helping the Middle East fight Iran, and—despite saying privately that the [JCPOA is dead](#)—has so far refused to say so publicly.

Biden’s Missed Opportunities on Iran

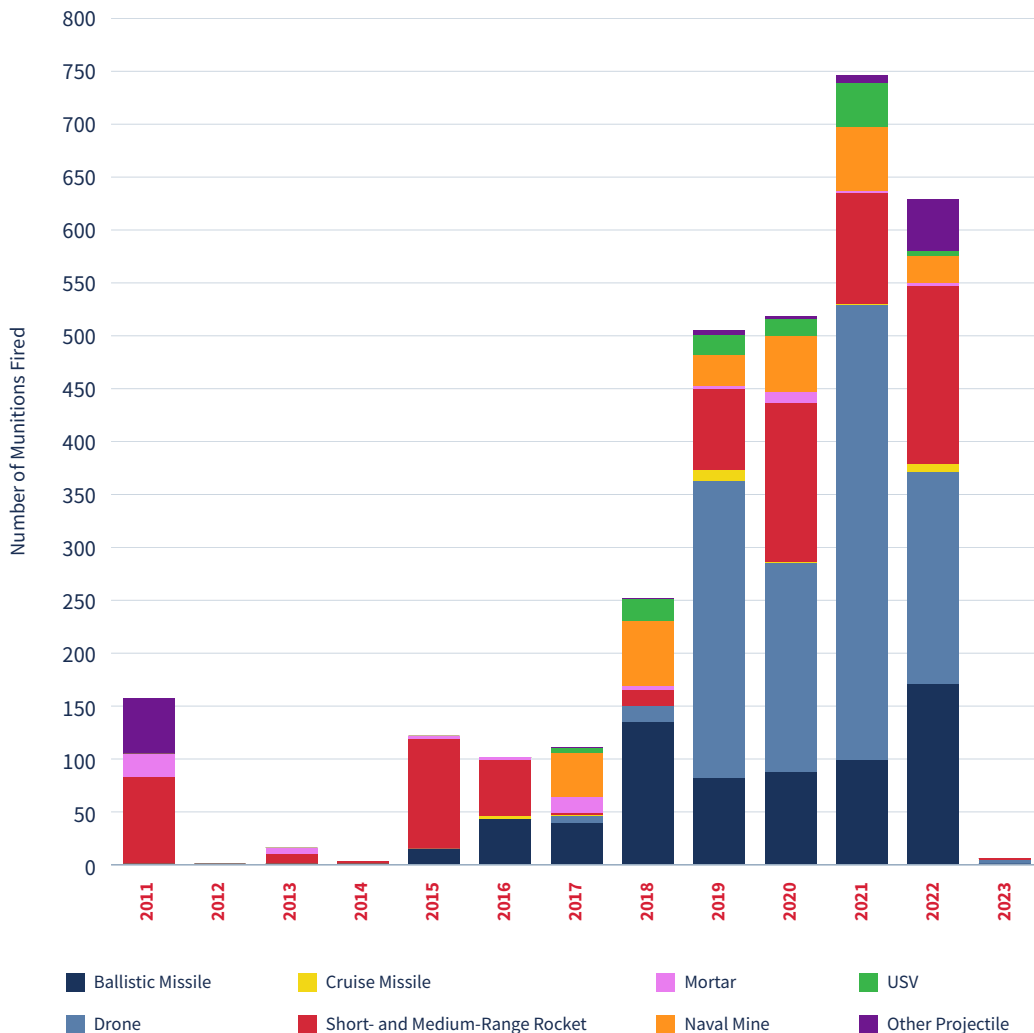


Why Is It Important?

- President Biden’s State of the Union is an important opportunity to rectify his lack of a major foreign policy address on an urgent topic that conforms to the principles of his foreign policy: Iran and the need to support democratic protesters and assist U.S. partners.
 - » Biden’s repeated speeches on democracy around the world and his accurate portrayal of the urgent assistance the United States must provide Ukraine stands in stark contrast to his near absence of remarks about Iran.
 - » President Obama and President Trump each gave several speeches on Iran policy during their tenure in office.
- U.S. Iran policy is at a cross-roads. Iran is refusing to re-enter the JCPOA, brutalizing protesters who have been demanding an end to regime, and attacking U.S. forces and partners, rendering the administration’s policy of negotiating a “longer, stronger” nuclear deal with Tehran pointless. Failure to acknowledge these new realities and adapt U.S. policy accordingly will make it more likely that the Iranian regime stays in power, attains nuclear weapons capability, and continues attacking U.S. partners.

- » Biden has not announced the end of his pursuit of reviving the JCPOA, [despite](#) it being eighteen months since his administration first said that its indirect talks with Iran over reentering the JCPOA cannot go on forever and fifty-eight weeks since the administration said it was weeks away from getting a deal with Iran. Indeed, the president has privately acknowledged the JCPOA is “dead,” although administration officials have appeared to contradict him.
- » The murder of Iranian-Kurdish woman [Mahsa Amini](#) by the morality police for allegedly improperly wearing her hijab sparked protests demanding the removal of the Iranian regime. Biden and his [administration](#) have spoken out in favor of the protesters, but Biden has not given a speech directed at signaling America’s support for the anti-regime movement.
- » Since Biden took office in 2021, Iran and its proxy militias have launched over 1,380 projectiles at U.S. service members, partners, and key interests in the Middle East. U.S. partners need assistance to help [defend](#) against Iranian-backed [attacks](#) or support that better enables their ability to stop them from occurring.

Iranian-linked Munitions Launched Per Year Against U.S. Personnel, Partners, and Interests in the Middle East 2011-Present



What Should the United States Do Next?

- President Biden should use the upcoming State of the Union, or a subsequent speech, to signal a new, strong [Plan B](#) U.S. policy on Iran. This strategy should include:
 - » An acknowledgement that the JCPOA is dead and a commitment to using the full extent of all diplomatic, economic, and military tools of U.S. power to prevent a nuclear Iran;
 - » Full support for the anti-regime protests in Iran, including helping provide internet access through systems like [Starlink](#), fully enforcing and adding sanctions on the regime, and publicly revealing the corrupt finances of Iranian officials;
 - » Leading an effort to implement an integrated air and missile defense (IAMD) architecture in the Middle East to neutralize Iranian-linked rockets, missiles, and drones;
 - » Utilizing U.S. military force to preemptively strike those responsible for attacking American troops, including their Iranian benefactors;
 - » Expediting delivery to Israel of the weaponry that would make a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities as effective as possible, including [KC-46A aircraft refueling tankers](#) and [F-15-EX fighter aircraft](#);
 - » Renewing the [obsolete and recently depleted stockpile](#) of American weaponry in Israel, called WRSA-I, so that it includes precision-guided munitions (PGMs) that Israel could draw upon in an emergency if there is a war with Iran or Hezbollah.