**Biden’s SOTU on Ukraine & Gaza**

**If the Ukraine opening fell flat, the President’s closing treatment of Gaza hit with a thud.**

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President Joseph Biden faced a heady task as he deliv­ered this year’s State of the Union address to Congress. He had to confront concerns about his age, anxiety about the economy, the dysfunctional environment creat­ed by Republican hyper-partisanship, and the ongoing threat to our democratic processes posed by a feared replay of the January 6th, 2021 insurrection.

As expected, commentators had differing views as to how successful he was at meeting the chal­lenges before the country and his presidency, with partisan Democrats reading from Biden cam­paign talking points and Republicans glibly finding fault with the President’s every word. An honest assess­ment, however, would suggest that Mr. Biden gave Demo­crats what they needed to campaign for his reelection, but did little to heal the partisan divide or advance any legis­lation currently blocked in Congress. Given the magnitude of the domestic challenges that comprised the bulk of the President’s State of the Union address, it was strange that he chose to open and close his remarks with two foreign policy issues - both of which were dealt with quite unsatisfactorily.

[IHC rejects plea seeking immediate removal of Nawaz Sharif's picture from Ramazan ration bag](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Mar-2024/ihc-rejects-plea-seeking-immediate-removal-of-nawaz-sharif-s-picture-from-ramazan-ration-bag)

He opened with the war in Ukraine comparing challenges facing the West’s democracies with the situation in Europe in the lead up to World War II. At best, this was an extreme over­statement. Russia’s Putin is no Hitler and the war in Ukraine is most certainly not a threat to the US and poses no serious challenge to any of Europe’s NATO countries. Russia has a particular grievance with regard to Ukraine, and while it has been important to defend that country’s territorial integri­ty, it can be done without exaggeration or making overblown inaccurate historical comparisons. And excessive rhetoric about how democracies are confronting authoritarianism is off-putting and more than a little disingenuous, since the Eu­ropean “democracies” in question were colonial powers in the 1940’s and among the world’s worst violators of rights.

It’s been two years now that the President has been using Churchillian or Reaganesque flourish to describe his recre­ation of the Cold War conflict with Russia and China. It may sound good to some in his inner circle, but it isn‘t register­ing with voters - with a significant percentage of both Dem­ocrats and Republicans not in support of sending more bil­lions to fight a war in Ukraine.

[Donald Lu expresses concerns over election irregularities in Pakistan](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Mar-2024/donald-lu-expresses-concerns-over-election-irregularities-in-pakistan)

If the Ukraine opening fell flat, the President’s closing treat­ment of Gaza hit with a thud. While Mr. Biden’s reelection ef­fort will not be harmed by his support for Ukraine, results in some of this year’s early primaries are making it clear that his continued arming of Israel and refusal to condemn its geno­cidal policies in Gaza may cost him votes in November. As a re­sult, he felt compelled to address the issue, but his approach was, at best, confusing. His problem: he tried to square a cir­cle. On the one hand, he pledged total support for Israel and its reputed “right to defend itself,” while also calling on Israel to demonstrate more concern for Palestinian civilians - calls which Israel has acknowledged but ignored for months. De­spite Mr. Biden noting Israel’s responsibility for the humani­tarian crisis created in Gaza, instead of calling for a ceasefire and demanding that Israel pull back its forces, he pledged to build a floating port to bring needed supplies into Gaza.

[Sindh's most development initiatives now pivot on PPP mode](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Mar-2024/sindh-s-most-development-initiatives-now-pivot-on-ppp-mode)

For the most part, this proposal drew scorn. It was seen as unnecessary, since the problem of getting supplies into Gaza could be solved by joining the calls for a ceasefire. Ad­ditionally, it has been noted that in the two months time it would take to get the port operational, thousands of Pales­tinians will have died of starvation.

Final assessment: regrettably I’m joining the camp of those who want to end this annual ritual. The State of the Union neither honestly describes the state of our nation, nor does it serve to unify us to confront the challenges we face. Rath­er it’s become a patently partisan affair complete with heck­ling or a campaign event with repeated and unnecessary ap­plause. It does more to deepen the partisan divide, than to unify the country to serve the common good. Seen in this light, President Biden’s address probably served him well with some in his party but did little to unify the nation.

[Senate Polls: Appeals against nomination papers can be filed till Thursday](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Mar-2024/senate-polls-appeals-against-nomination-papers-can-be-filed-till-thursday)

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