

Vance Shapes Trump Doctrine: A Balancing Act of Force and Restraint

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JD Vance has emerged as one of the most influential voices guiding U.S. foreign policy in the second Trump administration. Once a critic of America's long wars in the Middle East, Vance now finds himself helping chart a strategy that relies on both tough military action and a desire to avoid the mistakes of the past.

As vice president, Vance played a pivotal role in supporting President Donald Trump's decision to strike Iran's nuclear facilities. While some saw this as a contradiction to Vance's realist leanings, he has long argued that preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon is

a core U.S. interest. In public appearances, he has described this approach as the “Trump doctrine”: clearly define objectives, attempt diplomacy, and, if necessary, use overwhelming force without getting stuck in prolonged conflicts.

“We’re not at war with Iran,” Vance said after the strikes. “We’re at war with Iran’s nuclear program.” His words reflected both his cautious view of military entanglements and a willingness to act when he believes American security is on the line.

Vance’s evolution has not gone unnoticed. In private meetings and on Capitol Hill, he has become a respected, if sometimes polarizing, figure. Some Republican hawks have criticized Vance’s foreign policy views as isolationist, though others see him as a realist with a strategic approach. Others see him as a leader who brings a clearer focus to foreign policy.

Despite deep skepticism of extended interventions, Vance supported the strikes on Iran as necessary and limited. He worked behind the scenes to reassure allies that the mission would not spiral into a new war. In speeches and interviews, he has also emphasized that U.S. and Israeli interests, while often aligned, are not always identical.

At the same time, Vance has continued to push for a shift in America’s global priorities. He has argued that China poses a greater long-term threat and that resources should not be drained by endless involvement in the Middle East.

Vance’s role showcases how the Trump administration is trying to balance force with restraint. His influence has helped shape a foreign policy that is assertive but also wary of the burdens of open-ended war. For Vance, it is a delicate line to walk, but one he believes is essential to protect U.S. interests without repeating past mistakes.