

Reading Donald J. Trump and JD Vance on Iran

written by David M. Weinberg | 28.06.2026

Given US President Trump's sterling record in confronting Iran - no other US president has actually gone to war against the radical Islamist regime and repeatedly backed Israel's wars of defense against Iran - one wants to give Trump the benefit of the doubt now too when he seeks to defang Iran diplomatically.

But the trash-talking about Israel by Trump and especially by his Vice President, JD Vance, makes this hard to do.

Dr. Michael Doran of the Washington-based Hudson Institute argues, almost convincingly, that Trump is buying time, not surrendering to Iran.

The ceasefire agreement Trump signed with Iran is minimally meant to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and immediately bring down oil prices, he says. Convincing the Iranians to reopen the strait required many US concessions. But with midterm elections looming, the political math was unforgiving. Trump calculated that American retreat, however inelegant and unfortunate, was preferable - for the meantime.

But according to Doran, that does not mean Trump has gone wobbly. The agreement does not mark a definitive and permanent surrender leaving Iran free to behave as it pleases.

If Iran seeks to revitalize its nuclear program and protect it with a shield of ballistic missiles, or aggressively ride herd on Arabian Gulf oil shipping, Trump's record suggests that he will strike Iran again - Doran insists.

Note, for example, that Trump is not withdrawing US forces from the region (including Israel), and the US Mideast military footprint remains massive. So, the credibility of an American military threat remains strong.

This sunny analysis could be correct, especially if one accepts the premise that domestic politics is the main driver of Trump's ceasefire gambit. It is also possible that the US military needs an interregnum to rearm and reorganize (just as the IDF and IAF need time to bulk-up and restock for the confrontations likely ahead

in 2027).

But Trump is prone to conjuring-up huge and historic “peace” deals, believing his own rhetoric even when it flies in the face of reality, and then moving on - leaving allies on their own to deal with messy, very warlike, aftermaths. See Ukraine and Gaza, and now perhaps Lebanon and Iran too.

Moreover, the concessions given by the US to Iran - such as accepting as “understandable” Iran’s ballistic missile array aimed at Israel and Arab allies of America, and the hundreds of billions of dollars of oil sales revenue and Western investment in Iran now allowed or promised by Trump - legitimize the Ayatollahs and strengthen IRGC hold on the country for the long term.

And linking Hormuz to Israeli operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon is a cardinal sin. What will come next? Iranian demands that Israel withdraw from Jerusalem, dismantle settlements in Judea and Samaria, and facilitate establishment of a Palestinian state - or else Iran will re-shutter Hormuz and strangle Western economies?

Thus, in the real world - not an imaginary world of grand civilizational peace and a “new era of US-Iranian relations with some very nice and responsible Iranian leaders” who whimsically reflect “regime change” in Tehran, according to Trump - America’s “temporary concessions” to Iran are not easily reversible.

Nevertheless, one could and should give Trump the benefit of the doubt. As I wrote in early June, working with him over the next 30 months to complete the campaign more decisively against Iran remains the right and necessary exigency.

His style is irritating, and apparent dithering is dangerous, but Trump continues to show basic understanding of the need to reshape the global strategic architecture by eviscerating Iran. For Israel, bobbing and weaving with Trump on all key regional issues is hard but remains necessary.

WHAT CASTS A DARK SHADOW over the above assessment, and which suggests darker influences at work, is the gushing embrace by the Trump Administration of nefarious players like Qatar, Turkey, Pakistan, and Syria (under its new ISIS-in-a-suit leader). Trump does not yet comprehend that these are the governments who make-up the next anti-American and anti-Israel regional strategic syndicate that will pose real peril.

These are America's new best friends? The emir of Qatar, whose Al-Jazeera broadcast network backs Iran and Hamas and continues to agitate for the slaughter of Americans across the Mideast, and who funds the worst Islamic armies in the region? The president of Turkey, who hosts and sponsors Hamas terrorist leaders and talks openly about nuclear annihilation of Israel, and who has thrown a monkey wrench into every Western effort against Iran?

Worse still are a series of gratuitous and unjustified comments by Trump and Vance that castigate Israel.

Does the prime minister of Israel, leading his country across seven confrontation fronts against genocidal assaults and acknowledged by Trump as a "great wartime leader," deserve derision as a "hothead," as the most irresponsible regional actor? On what basis does Syrian president Ahmed Al-Sharaa deserve greater respect as someone who can get better handle Hezbollah "if Israel can't do the job without killing everyone else"?

Channeling the sinister tales against Israel spread by his podcaster friend Tucker Carlson, JD Vance went further, suggesting that Israelis and Americans critical of the US "concession" to Iran which has handcuffed IDF operations against Hezbollah - are simply being bloodthirsty.

"You're a country of (only) nine million people. You can't just kill your way out of solving every single national security problem that you have," Vance said.

These are monstrous comments, especially regarding Lebanon, where Israel has gone to enormous lengths to target Hezbollah with precision attacks that minimize civilian casualties, just as Israel did against Hamas in Gaza!

And just to be sure that everybody understands Israel's vassal status in his eyes, Vance scolded specific Israeli critics of the ceasefire deal, adding that "Donald J. Trump is the only head of the state in the world who is sympathetic to the nation of Israel at this moment in time, and he happens to be the head of state of the world's superpower. (So) If I was in the cabinet of the Israeli government, I might not be attacking the only powerful ally that I have left in the entire world."

The contempt for Israel evident in Vance's comments; his seeming glee at Israel's isolation; his nasty dismissal of the legitimacy of dissent from the current policy direction - is unnerving.

He seems to revel in highlighting and amplifying divergence in interests between Washington and Jerusalem: “We can get to a long-term settlement to Iran’s nuclear deal. Now, Israel may like that, they may not like that. But fundamentally, we think this is in the best interest of the United States of America.”

There is no appreciation here of an ally, Israel, which fought heroically side-by-side with American forces and who were essential, indeed primarily responsible, for the success that America achieved against Iran. We hear no understanding whatsoever for Israel’s critical need to crushingly destroy the Iranian terrorist armies, Hamas and Hezbollah, still attacking Israel across its southern and northern borders.

Instead, we hear this: You Israel and your “[expletive-deleted] crazy” leader should just shut-up. America has decided to call off the war/s, and you had better play ball or else.

Coming from Trump, Israel can chalk-up the rebuke to his vainglorious and imperious style and then move past this to cooperate with him on many indeed-shared future challenges. Coming from Vance, the slam down sounds much more menacing, and patently prejudicial.

Published in The Jerusalem Post 26.06.2026.

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