

# *On the Prospect of Impeachment*

By Dorene ZPilapandet and Juhi Tanniru, 10/13/2019

---

## **Impeachment from the other Side: *The Ukrainian Perspective***

The announcement of an impeachment inquiry into United States President Donald Trump late last month has undeniably disturbed the already polarized political climate of the United States. The inquiry, which has begun to investigate President Trump's alleged leverage of foreign influence to investigate one of his potential political opponents, has saturated the American news. According to the US representative and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, the phone call between Trump and Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, in which Trump requested that Zelensky investigate Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden's son on his behalf, is grounds for impeachment.

The analysis of this scandal will be integral in projecting the political climate and US-Ukraine affairs in the coming years. The people of Ukraine are debating how the publicity of this scandal will affect the nation. The conversation appears to be focused on the conflict with Russia that has afflicted Ukrainian society for several years, rather than on political corruption.

The reactions of the Ukrainian population in regard to the scandal have been varied. The former Ukrainian prime minister Nikolay Azarov, encouraged an investigation into Joe Biden and his son, while others have gone as far as to refer to the scandal as "Trump's Monica Lewinski" (Simonova 2019). Some are upset with the way the Zelensky has been handling the situation, although many sympathize with his struggle and acknowledge the precarious situation that he has been placed in. For example, businessman Vitali Oplachko suggested the Zelensky had Ukraine's best interests in mind (Shuymeko and Givetash 2019). Nonetheless, President Zelensky has been under much scrutiny following the whistleblower complaint and amongst these new revelations.

However, what seems to overshadow the impeachment scandal and clear implications of government corruption in the eyes of many Ukrainians, is the build-up of political and military tensions between Ukraine and Russia over a disputed land territory. In 2014, Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean peninsula after a local referendum resulted in the vote of a majority of the region's inhabitants to become a Russian territory. Many of the people in the region identified more with the Russian ethnic identity, which explains the overwhelming vote to become part of the Russian republic and the strong separatist sentiment. Russia subsequently launched a series of armed attacks in Eastern Ukraine, which claimed upwards of 13,000 lives. Years of fighting and political tension ensued (McKew 2019). The aspect that many Ukrainian nationals, especially those who are diametrically opposed to the separatist movement that proliferates within the Crimean territory, are fixated on was the fact that the US has thus far withheld essential military aid and funding from Ukraine. This aid was heavily implied to be used as the incentive within this impeachment inquiry for investigating the Bidens. The exchange, if proven to be valid, would be grounds for impeachment according to the philosophy of "quid pro quo," which is doing a favor with the expectation of getting a favor in return (Al Jazeera 2019).

Many Ukrainians believe that their country depends on the reported \$400 million US military aid to stand a chance of withholding Russian military forces in the East (Shumeyko and Giveta). Recently however, an event sparked major backlash amongst the Ukrainian people. President Zelensky earlier this year had announced a plan to resolve the conflict with Russia, and despite his reassurance that he will only agree to compromises that are in accordance with Ukrainian law, many remain unconvinced. Ten thousand people have gathered in the capital to protest what they call “capitulation” to Russia. Many eastern European leaders will gather at a Summit to discuss the terms of this compromise, which will decide the fate of the Russian-seized territory (Ayers 2019).

“I will never betray Ukraine,” asserted President Zelensky in a press conference following his announcement of the new plan. His confidence in the cooperation of Russia and the will of the people who are vehemently separatist to adhere to Ukrainian law is notable in the face of scandal of corruption. It calls into question his validity amidst these events coming to light, and reflects a bleak compromise of a several years-long conflict that will potentially reach conclusion at the end of this month

## **A Nation Divided**

On September 24th, United States Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, boldly announced the launch of a formal impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump. The basis for the removal of Trump lies in the dialogue exchanged during a July call between President Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. During this conversation, Trump urged the Ukrainian leader to open an investigation on 2020 Democratic Presidential candidate Joe Biden. Before the call proceeded, Trump ordered his chief of staff to put a hold on releasing military aid to Ukraine that was already formally approved by Congress. Pelosi condemned this by declaring that it was a “betrayal of his oath of office, betrayal of our national security and betrayal of the integrity of our elections” (New York Times). The people of the United States are divided on the matter of impeachment.

A significant portion of those who support an impeachment inquiry are Democrats, with around 226 Representatives in the House who support the movement (New York Times). They maintain the stance that President Trump exhibited a clear abuse of power, by overextending his executive status. Furthermore, the attempt by the White House to hide the phone call from the public raised red flags. Democrats in Congress have found the White House to be uncooperative regarding the inquiry, with obstruction of justice. Since Speaker Pelosi’s announcement, support for President Trump’s impeachment has become a near majority. Approximately 48.8% of the American population are in agreement with the measures taken, with only 43.6% who disapprove (FiveThirtyEight). The statistics of those in favour include Democrats and Republicans alike. Former Republican Senator Jeff Flake states that “that conversation, just from the transcript, not descriptions of the transcript, but the transcript itself, is damning enough to launch an inquiry” (PBS News). He goes on to analyze that the involvement of the State Department and the Attorney General greatly demonstrates an abuse of power.

Those who oppose the impeachment have a different mindset. They believe that the information provided by the “whistleblower” (the secret identity that developed evidence regarding this case) is false, and was only brought forward in an attempt to hurt President Trump as he seeks re-election in the 2020 campaign.

Chris Buskirk of American Greatness discusses how in any situation the phone call between Trump and Zelensky is justified because what “Joe Biden did while he was vice president is highly questionable” (PBS News). Trump reaffirmed his actions as appropriate, given his belief that Biden engaged in misconduct while Vice President of the United States.

The Democratic majority in the House of Representatives will likely succeed in its behalf of impeachment proceedings, but because the Senate has a Republican majority, the decision to remove President Trump from office will likely not be passed. Regardless of the outcome, this is only the fourth time in American history where an impeachment inquiry has been raised, and will hence be a massive setback for Trump and his administration.

---

(1)

Al Jazeera. “Ukraine's Nationalists Rally against President over Peace Accord.” Ukraine News | Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera, 2 Oct. 2019, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/ukraines-separatist-east-plans-elections-improve-russia-ties-191002055201612.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/ukraines-separatist-east-plans-elections-improve-russia-ties-191002055201612.html).

Ayres, Sabra, and Sergei L Loiko. “Entangled in Trump Scandal, the Ukrainian President Faces Challenges at Home.” Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Times, 6 Oct. 2019, [www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-10-06/embroiled-in-trumps-impeachment-the-ukrainian-president-faces-challenges-at-home](http://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-10-06/embroiled-in-trumps-impeachment-the-ukrainian-president-faces-challenges-at-home).

Mckew, Molly K., et al. “What Putin Got From the Trump-Zelensky Phone Call.” POLITICO Magazine, 6 Oct. 2019, [www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/10/06/putin-trump-zelensky-phone-call-229243](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/10/06/putin-trump-zelensky-phone-call-229243).

Shumeyko, Taras, and Linda Givetaash. “Ukraine's Zelenskiy Avoids Backlash at Home over Trump Call.” NBCNews.com, NBCUniversal News Group, 27 Sept. 2019, [www.nbcnews.com/news/world/ukraine-s-zelenskiy-avoids-backlash-home-over-trump-call-n1058921](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/ukraine-s-zelenskiy-avoids-backlash-home-over-trump-call-n1058921).

Simonova, Masha. “Recent Ukrainian Perspectives on the Trump-Ukraine Scandal.” Lawfare, 6 Oct. 2019, [www.lawfareblog.com/recent-ukrainian-perspectives-trump-ukraine-scandal](http://www.lawfareblog.com/recent-ukrainian-perspectives-trump-ukraine-scandal).

(2)

“How Republicans See the Impeachment Inquiry.” 2019. PBS NewsHour. PBS NewsHour. October 2, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-republicans-see-the-impeachment-inquiry>.

“Impeachment Briefing: What Happened Today.” 2019. Nytimes.Com. 2019. [https://messaging-custom-newsletters.nytimes.com/template/oakv2?uri=nyt://newsletter/b63c1d9c-3ac2-495b-8193-2c147c939cdc&te=1&nl=impeachment-briefing&emc=edit\\_ib\\_20191008?campaign\\_id=140&instance\\_id=12936&segment\\_id=17701&user\\_id=b894d9284313b70e99ac48d99f727de2&regi\\_id=87293388](https://messaging-custom-newsletters.nytimes.com/template/oakv2?uri=nyt://newsletter/b63c1d9c-3ac2-495b-8193-2c147c939cdc&te=1&nl=impeachment-briefing&emc=edit_ib_20191008?campaign_id=140&instance_id=12936&segment_id=17701&user_id=b894d9284313b70e99ac48d99f727de2&regi_id=87293388).

Rakich, Nathaniel. 2019. “Two Weeks In, Impeachment Is Becoming More Popular.” FiveThirtyEight. FiveThirtyEight. October 9, 2019. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/two-weeks-in-impeachment-is-becoming-more-popular/>.

The New York Times. 2019a. “Complete List: Who Supports an Impeachment Inquiry Against Trump?,” May 31, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/us/politics/trump-impeachment-congress-list.html>.

———. 2019b. “Nancy Pelosi Announces Formal Impeachment Inquiry of Trump,” September 24, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/24/us/politics/democrats-impeachment-trump.html>.

Tillett, Emily. 2019. “Impeachment Inquiry Latest: White House Won’t Cooperate with Impeachment Inquiry, Letter to Pelosi, Congress — Live Updates.” Cbsnews.Com. October 9, 2019. <https://www.cbsnews.com/live-news/trump-impeachment-inquiry-latest-white-house-wont-comply-2019-10-09/>.