

Arab, Iranian, and Turkish Responses to President Trump's Impeachment

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Brief Analysis

A survey of how regional media outlets discussed the congressional impeachment process and its potential ramifications on the 2020 presidential election.

Across the Middle East, the story of President Trump's impeachment and subsequent acquittal received second-tier coverage compared to regional or local issues. Many Arabic-language websites and newspapers translated and republished Western articles as opposed to creating their own content on the issue, such as [Al Jazeera](#) (<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/politics/2019/12/20/%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B9%D8%B2%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A8-%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B5%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%8A%D9%86>) publishing a translated version of a [Guardian editorial](#) (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/19/the-guardian-view-on-trumps-impeachment-a-tale-of-two-courts>). Moreover, the bulk of the articles just explained the facts or process of impeachment rather than expounding on its significance. [Some](#) (<https://arabic.cnn.com/world/article/2019/12/22/america-trump-impeachment-oped>) celebrated the idea that there is a mechanism for peaceful removal of a leader. Most commented on the unlikelihood of Trump's removal and how America is facing [unprecedented polarization](#) (https://url.emailprotection.link/?b1wn15ymEtPUPXXRG9mxc_lb6YeoJX5RsH1HbYRBXuewIHnfZ5LWGjmXNO6WX-09-Bxr8rAXM5bCuRIZQYGx3c7oQTgd7BOaXaqVrKOHlG7kzQnNjMf9nMxsNpfzjBK9).

Those articles that did offer their own editorial content were split on whether impeachment will help or hurt Trump's election campaign. Publications in the Gulf states tended to portray impeachment as an act of "political vengeance" by Democrats against Trump, "who won despite their opposition" ([Sky News Arabia](#) (<https://www.skynewsarabia.com/blog/1316150-%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%94%D9%8A%D8%B3>)). Most Gulf papers posited that Trump will ultimately benefit in the 2020 election "after proving his innocence before the Senate" ([Al Seyassah](#) (<https://al-seyassah.com/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a%d9%85%d9%82%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%b7%d9%8a%d9%88%d9%86-%d9%88%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%a8%d8%a9-%d8%b9%d8%b2%d9%84-%d8%aa%d8%b1%d8%a7%d9%85%d8%a8/>)). Yet Qatari coverage deviated from the general Gulf trend. For example, one [Al Jazeera article](#) (<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/politics/2019/12/20/%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B9%D8%B2%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A8-%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B5%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%8A%D9%86>) asserted that the impeachment case against Trump "is simple, and established not only by officials speaking under oath, but by his own words and actions."

Egyptian newspapers were more split on how impeachment will affect the election. Anti-American outlets in Syria suggested it will hurt him, with [Al Baath](#) (<http://newspaper.albaathmedia.sy/2019/12/19/%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B2%D9%84-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%82%D9%88%D8%B7/>) noting "all data indicate that Trump's hope for a return to the White House have faded." Lebanese publications tended to take a more neutral view. The Hezbollah-controlled newspaper [Al Akhbar](#)

<https://al-akhbar.com/Opinion/277206/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%AA-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AF%D9%89-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%B2%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A8>) wrote that the prospect of impeachment weakening Trump’s electoral campaign “is similar to that of his potential main rival,” arguing that Joe Biden was also tainted by the process.

Most Iranian media tended to copy Western sources, but two themes prevailed among outlets offering original content: portrayal of impeachment as a scandal that has tainted Trump’s presidential legacy, or neutral analysis of how impeachment may or may not harm his reelection chances. A few analytical pieces suggested that he might be able to transform the scandal into an asset for his campaign, since it may “lead to more popularity among the middle class.” While most Iranian articles leaned against Trump, few appeared to praise Democrats.

Turkish articles generally depicted impeachment as a “gift”

<https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/perspektif/talhakose/2019/10/05/azil-sorusturmasi-trumpa-secim-hediyesi-mi>) to Trump’s campaign. SETA (<https://www.setav.org/kazanan-trump-olacak/>), a think tank that supports President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, claimed that what “hasn’t killed Trump will make him stronger.” Sabah News (<https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/perspektif/talhakose/2019/10/05/azil-sorusturmasi-trumpa-secim-hediyesi-mi>), another pro-Erdogan source, wrote that impeachment will “unite Republican senators and members of the House of Representatives around him.”

ARABIC MEDIA

United Arab Emirates:

Sky News Arabia (<https://www.skynewsarabia.com/blog/1316150-%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%94%D9%8A%D8%B3>), “The Trial of a President...!,” Ahmad al-Farraj, 1/27/20

- Argued that the free media became an arm for the Democrats and leftists in general, instead of being a “fifth column” looking for truth with honesty and intentionality.
- Argued that the Democrats’ focus on getting revenge against Trump became even clearer after impeachment, when they criticized the assassination of Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani: “For they are mad that Trump scored a point in his popular appeal and quantified Soleimani’s death in that regard, rather than his national security risk.”

Al Bayan (<https://www.albayan.ae/opinions/articles/2020-01-25-1.3760355>), “Impeachment of Trump Is Not the Goal,” 1/25/20

- Noted that the impeachment trial was happening in a more polarizing climate than previous impeachment trials
- “Many of the Democrats elected in 2018 place the protection and implementation of the constitution as a top priority at the expense of electoral interests.”

Gulf365 (<https://gulf365.co/world-news/6451052/%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D8%B2%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A8-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%B1%D8%A9.html>), “Trump’s Impeachment Decision and Expected Consequences,” 12/26/19

- “The majority of Americans are rooted in the narrative that Democrats seek to impeach Trump for political rather than legal reasons, and therefore the process of isolation appears to be opportunistic, misleading, and widely unreliable to voters, potentially damaging Democrats’ chances in the 2020 elections.”

Saudi Arabia:

Al Arabiya (<https://www.alarabiya.net/ar/politics/2019/12/09/%D8%AE%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%B6%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A8>), “The Dangers of the Plot Against the President,” Najet al-Saeed (Emirati author), 12/9/19

- “This shows that American politics, even in the domestic scene, has changed and will never be the same. So how will the countries of the region, and especially Gulf countries, react to this tense political situation?”

Lebanon:

Al Akhbar (<https://al-akhbar.com/Opinion/277206/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%AA-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AF%D9%89-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%B2%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A8>)

[%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A8](#)) (Hezbollah organ), 10/3/19

- Argued that the rise of Trump marked the rise of the populist right in Europe, and that the possibilities of undermining the structure of the European Union itself have increased.

Egypt:

[Shorouk News \(https://www.shorouknews.com/columns/view.aspx?cdate=02012020&id=f08511dc-b222-4b75-b8e6-0f69486a50df\)](#), “Trials, Crises, and Elections...A Tough Year Ahead for Trump,” 1/2/20

- “2020 is going to be a tough year for Washington, but nobody is more worried than Trump.”
- “Even though the investigation will probably not bring Trump down, it will undoubtedly weaken him and the Republicans.”

[Al Masry Al Youm \(https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1452656\)](#), “Politics with American (Sauce),” Muhammad Kamaal, 12/16/19

- “In short, what we’re observing in Washington is not a legal battle seeking to remove the president, but a political betting match dealing with the upcoming election, and it is most likely that the Democrats will lose this bet.”

Regional Outlets:

[Arabic CNN \(https://arabic.cnn.com/world/article/2019/12/22/america-trump-impeachment-oped\)](#), “Bashar Jarrar Writes About the Third Dismissal of a President in American History,” 12/22/2019

- “This is a historic moment that can only be a source of pride for Americans, and this is an event that incites respect and appreciation by any watcher of the U.S. political scene...The fact that the representatives of the people are able to impeach an elected president through a mechanism built on an effective and detail-oriented process is in itself a testament to the greatness of the founding fathers of the new world.”
- “Many people, and I include myself as one of them, believe that Trump will likely win a second term, especially with the repeated failures of the Democratic Party, starting with the Mueller report and its impeachment deliberations, and ending with what might be a decision to not submit the articles of impeachment to the Senate. This is American democracy, readers, and it has a special taste unlike any other in the world.”

IRANIAN MEDIA

[ISAL \(http://www.isalnews.ir/fa/note/6588/%D8%B1%D9%88%DB%8C-%D8%B3%DA%A9%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%DB%8C%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%BE\)](#), “Trump’s Impeachment: The Other Side of the Coin,” Ahmad Amini, 12/19/19

- Argued that even if Trump is not removed from office, the impeachment has made it less likely he will get reelected.
- Argued that Trump and Republicans think they have secured centrist voters who are seeking a third choice.
- Excoriated Trump while showing broad skepticism toward both parties.

[Raja \(http://www.rajanews.com/news/328591/%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%DB%8C%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%BE-%DA%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%9F\)](#), “What Are the Consequences of Trump’s Impeachment?” (republished translation of *National Interest* article), 10/13/19

- “When trust turns into a dead letter among government branches, it paralyzes America’s foreign policy.”
- “Lack of a centralized/powerful presidency in the United States makes the country more fragile to domestic backlash, which will weaken it globally.”

TURKISH MEDIA

[SETA \(https://www.setav.org/kazanan-trump-olacak\)](#) (pro-Erdogan think tank), “Trump Will Win,” Hasan Yalcin, 12/21/19

- “It looks like the Democrats, who acted in rage, will end up damaging themselves.”
- “Once the outcome absolves Trump rather than ousts him, he will have won a great victory.”

This article was compiled by Elise Burr, Zied Bouchlaghem, Mohammad Elokda, Deniz Yuksel, and Jonathan Sameyach, all research assistants or interns at The Washington Institute. ❖

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