

FRAMING IMPEACHMENT:
HOW US DIPLOMACY AND ETHNO-NATIONALIST
CONFLICT INFORMED IMPEACHMENT COVERAGE IN
IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

by

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In the past two decades, relations between Northern Ireland, Ireland, and the United States have gradually weakened, as has the Irish media's coverage of US events. President Bill Clinton's diplomatic intervention in the decades-long sectarian conflict known as the Troubles, and his work in moderating the Good Friday Agreement, made his impeachment trial some of the top news in Ireland at the time. The outcome of the trial would have impacted Ireland directly, and newspapers had the task of reporting on an impeachment process that could spark conflict at home if Clinton were removed. When President Donald Trump was impeached twenty years later, his administration did not have a serious seat at the table in ongoing Irish peace negotiations threatened by Brexit, and Irish media coverage had shrunken and conglomerated. This thesis will examine agenda-setting techniques used by three newspapers in Ireland and Northern Ireland during the Clinton and Trump impeachment trials, to determine how the sociopolitical context in Northern Ireland and its diplomatic relations with the US affected media framing.

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Introduction

My great uncle Jack is a very quiet man, but when he does speak his Ulster accent is so thick that most Americans would have trouble understanding him. Jack has lived in the rural area outside of Belfast, Northern Ireland for his entire life and spends most of his time reading. When I visited in February of 2020, we spent a long family dinner seated next to each other, eating steak pie, where I only received one-word answers and nods from him, though he smiled encouragingly. So, I was shocked when he lit up at the mention of a certain US president. He later ushered me into his living room, which smelled of the coal he still burns for heat despite my family's insistence he upgrades, and picked up a photograph of himself shaking hands with the one and only Bill Clinton. He beamed as he told me about how he ran into the man while at work on the factory floor, and ended up getting an official candid picture mailed to him from the White House photographer.

The Clintons still maintain a positive reputation throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland, because his administration played an essential part in negotiating the Good Friday Agreement. The treaty brought a peaceful resolution to The Troubles, a three-decades-long ethno-nationalist conflict that killed at least 3,636 people. Everyone in Northern Ireland, including my family, has personal stories about near-escapes or lost loved ones. My grandfather passed away last year, and only then did I find out he once narrowly escaped an IRA bomb by — completely on-brand — ignoring the local authorities and getting a pint at the pub instead of waiting in the designated “safe” area. The Clinton administration helped the residents of Belfast take a breath for the first time

in years by serving as the moderator between the ten different parties from Northern Ireland, Ireland, and the UK negotiating the deal. For many, he represented peace and the strength of American diplomacy. His US Envoy to Northern Ireland, George Mitchell, was also integral to the negotiations and respected by all parties.

In the two decades following, the United States became less involved in Irish affairs. The position of US Special Envoy to Northern Ireland lost its prestige in American politics, and Trump left the position vacant for three years before giving it to former White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney (McCurry, 2020). Some described the appointment as an alternative to being fired after Mulvaney admitted to withholding aid to Ukraine by Trump's request, directly contradicting the White House defense, and angering the President (Keith, 2020; Plott, 2019). While Clinton's politics considered the needs of the three nations, Trump's diplomacy leaned toward an alliance with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The difference in reputation shows; when Hillary Clinton ran against Donald Trump in 2016, 82% of Irish people supported her campaign, and 6% supported Trump (Collins, 2016). In February of 2020, a poll by *The Times* of London found that 8 out of 10 Irish people thought that Trump was doing a "bad or very bad" job (Early, 2020).

Coincidentally, both Clinton and Trump faced impeachment during their presidencies. The impeachment process involves an initial inquiry into accusations of high crimes and misdemeanors by the House Judiciary Committee, who then present the articles of impeachment to the House of Representatives whose members vote to officially impeach the president. This vote sends it to the Senate for a trial to determine if the President will be removed from office. The Senate ultimately acquitted both

Clinton and Trump, but the impeachment process provided journalists with months of opportunity to report on arguments supporting and criticizing their work. The impeachment of both presidents also served as the only time public opinion could feasibly result in their removal from office, meaning strong media framing could affect the president's chances. I will be conducting a media framing study to examine how US diplomacy and the local sociopolitical contexts of two different time periods affected the Irish media's portrayal of the Clinton and Trump impeachments. This thesis concerns Trump's first impeachment in 2019, not his second in 2021.

During the Clinton trial, did the Irish media choose the greater good of supporting the man essential to ending conflict, even if it meant sacrificing objectivity? Are they better journalists because of it? The comparison will also show a foreign perspective on US diplomacy, and will demonstrate the impact of declining relations over time. The Trump administration marks a new low-point for relations between the US and Ireland since Clinton, giving the media little motivation to protect his reputation. The two impeachments were also reported by two different media landscapes, with the latter providing far less local coverage due to media conglomeration.

Research Questions

RQ1: How did the Irish media portray each president during their impeachments, when their credibility and jobs were most at stake?

RQ2: How do current events affect media framing?

RQ3: How does weakening diplomacy affect media coverage?

RQ4: How did media conglomeration impact the Irish media's US news coverage?

Literature Review

In the realm of contextual background, readings can provide insight into possible motivations of Irish journalists, especially during the Troubles, where they overwhelmingly took a humanitarian approach in their reporting (Henderson). Previous scholars have analyzed their active role in conflict resolution by focusing on human stories first and bringing attention to the community impact of violence (Vincent). For local journalists, the conflict was between neighbors and put their loved ones at risk. During the Troubles, the journalists did an extraordinary job of reporting the personal stories of the victims, demonstrated in the book *Reporting the Troubles* where journalists Deric Henderson and Ivan Little asked dozens of reporters to reflect on one victim's story and the personal impact it had on them. Additionally, the 1999 book *Lost Lives* by several journalists led by Belfast reporter David McKittrick tells the story behind every single death in the war, which took 7 years to research and write. Some of these journalists had lost their own children, and many in their reflections of their career said they hoped their work humanizing the victims would help end the conflict. The journalists of the war were traumatized and exhausted. For example, in *Reporting the Troubles*, *The Times* Belfast correspondent Robert Fisk wrote "If death was an institution, it came brutally and often suddenly... and, for us reporters, it was another day done and dusted, make the deadline at 6 p.m., update an hour later. I found that when some of my own acquaintances were killed — not many, for this was a small war — I would write 'died' over their names in my contacts book, as if they had made an exit at the end of a play. Their theatrical role was over" (Henderson, 2018). Though the media framing study will focus solely on the content of the articles, this background

provides an important perspective of what may have motivated the journalists to frame the stories in a particular way. Fisk also wrote “I would subconsciously thank Northern Ireland for teaching me to stand up to people with power. I was threatened by the UVF and the Official IRA – in a single joint visitation to my office at the Europa Hotel – and I was constantly harassed and abused and lied to by the British Army” (Henderson, 2018). From his words, and those of other journalists, they were impartial because they felt threatened on all sides, and they only wanted what was best for the people: an immediate ceasefire. Knowing peace was on the line if negotiations fell through, did the Irish media seek to protect Bill Clinton’s reputation during his impeachment trial? With his limited role in Northern Irish diplomacy, did Donald Trump lose that protection?

I selected three newspapers: *The Belfast Telegraph*, *The Irish Times*, and *The Irish Independent*, the first based in Belfast, Northern Ireland and the other two in Dublin, Ireland. I accessed the Clinton-era *Belfast Telegraph* on microfilm at the Newspaper Library in Belfast, and I accessed *The Irish Times* on the newspaper’s website. *The Irish Independent* is archived by the British Newspaper Library provided online through a partnership between the British Library and Findmypast. All of the articles from 2019 and 2020 were accessed with digital subscriptions to the newspapers.

The Irish Times, based in Dublin, is a widely respected news source that was essential reading during the Troubles. Established in 1859, it was run by Irish-Protestants for the majority of its publication but began to diversify its staff and leadership in the 20th century. It is now considered “an internationally respected and progressive commentator on world affairs” (O’Reilly, 2015). In 1998, the newspaper

had a readership of 286,000 and in 2019 a daily circulation of 79,021 (Foley, 1998; Burke-Kennedy, 2019).

In Northern Ireland, *Belfast Telegraph*'s office is located within walking distance of some of the most bombed sites of the Troubles and would have directly benefited from a peaceful resolution to the conflict. In 1999, the *Telegraph* had a circulation of 124,000, and in 2017 a readership of around 155,000 (Unsworth, 1999; (Belfast Telegraph, 2017) .

The Irish Independent, based in Dublin, is currently the most popular newspaper in the country, and was outspoken against the nationalist IRA during the Troubles. Former *Irish Independent* feature writer Justine McCarthy described the paper as “thunderously anti-Sinn Féin/IRA” (Henderson, 2018). In 1998, the newspaper had a readership of 589,000, and in 2018 a circulation of 83,900 (Foley, 1998; Thanks, 2019).

All three newspapers occasionally used reporting from publications in the UK throughout the Clinton impeachment. One Irish reporter working with London's *Daily Telegraph*, Sean O'Neill, claimed he struggled with reporting the conflict in Northern Ireland because “London news desks don't like complications - the story has to be black and white, good and evil” (Henderson, 2018). British reporters also described their difficulty reporting on such deep and multifaceted divisions in Ireland. The use of reprints from British newspapers increased substantially by the Trump administration, but by then most of the White House coverage came from American journalists via the *Associated Press*, even further removed from Irish interests.

To analyze these publications, I will be evaluating agenda-setting techniques used by the newspapers, using standards set by experts in media studies. One of the

leading voices in media framing is Robert Entman, and I will be using his works including *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* and “Framing Bias: Media in the distribution of power.” Entman defines framing as the media identifying an issue and endorsing a particular solution, which he divides by issues, events, and political actors (Entman, 2003). For the application to my research, I will be determining whether each presidential administration is defined as an issue or a remedy to an existing issue within the article. Further, Entman defines bias as either distorting reality (distortion bias), favoring one side without equivalent treatment (content bias), or motivation-based bias (decision-making bias) (Entman, 2007). He ultimately proposes a holistic definition of content bias as “consistent patterns in the framing of mediated communication that promote the influence of one side in conflicts over the use of government power” (Entman, 2007).

I will also be using Maxwell McCombs book, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion* in my research. McCombs defines agenda-setting as a pattern of news coverage that emphasizes particular issues, which leads the public to care more about those issues than they otherwise would have. (McCombs, 2014).

Methods

I will be examining agenda-setting techniques used by newspapers in Ireland and Northern Ireland during the Trump and Clinton impeachments to learn how context and foreign policy affect objectivity in reporting. Though objectivity in journalism has no set definition — and is widely believed to be unachievable due to internalized biases — it at least means that articles are fact-based without heavily endorsing a particular perspective. This does not necessarily mean that each side is given the same amount of

space, but reasonable counterpoints must be addressed and fact checked. I will be evaluating whether the Irish media framed Bill Clinton in a positive light during his impeachment trial, as he simultaneously worked to negotiate the agreement, and whether they depicted Trump negatively due to media framing that hopes to keep the peace on the border as Brexit threatens the Good Friday Agreement. This will also show how diplomacy affects foreign framing of the United States, and what happens when those ties weaken.

The newspapers I chose to evaluate are *The Irish Times*, *Belfast Telegraph*, and *Irish Independent*. These are non-tabloid national newspapers of record which vary in political leanings while still adhering to high journalistic standards of integrity including fact-based reporting and use of corrections.

With three newspapers to cover, it is important that I narrow the scope of the articles I am reviewing in my research. I have decided to reduce the date range of my analysis to the start of impeachment proceedings for each president through their acquittals, and will be reviewing articles that directly reference impeachment. I will also only be evaluating dates where all three newspapers published original reporting, or reprints from a source in the UK, rather than articles reposted from publications in the US. This comes out to 120 articles written during the Clinton impeachment, and only 28 from the Trump impeachment trial. The drastic drop in samples will be addressed later, but are a result of media conglomeration and the loss of Irish Washington DC correspondents.

The data will be analyzed, in part, using framing techniques described in *Projections of Power* by Robert Entman, who writes, “frames in the news are typically a

part of the reporting process for three classes of objects: political events, issues, and actors” (Entman, Projections 25). His style defines the function of framing as 1. Defining problematic effects/conditions 2. Identifying cause/agent 3. Endorsing remedy 4. Conveying moral judgment. These criteria are then divided by issues, events, and political actors. This technique will not be explicitly cited in every instance but provided the framework for my analysis.

The Clinton Impeachment

By the time President Clinton was impeached, he had already established himself as an important moderator in the peace negotiations between Northern Ireland, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. In a move to appeal to voters in New York and Boston, Clinton initially committed to creating a special envoy during his candidacy in 1992. In a letter to Irish-American Congressman Bruce Morrison, he emphasized the contributions of the Irish-American community and called for sanctions against “those who seek to gain their goals by violence” (The Decision). With that, Clinton positioned himself to be the middleman working to thaw frozen negotiations between the parties.

He was entering a complex and deeply divided conflict. Tensions between the groups had built for centuries before the Troubles began, from when Britain first colonized the region of Ulster, to its official separation from Ireland in 1921 when it gained its own parliament for self-governance under the rule of the UK (Newark, 1940). Around Two-thirds of residents in Northern Ireland were Protestant, and one-third Catholic, many in the minority coming from Ireland for work. Protestant residents were given preferential treatment in employment and housing and had control of local politics, in-part due to a law that allowed multiple votes for people who owned homes in different wards. On several occasions in 1967 and 1968, police beat protestors from the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and Derry Housing Action Committee (McGreevy, 2019). There were several more violent conflicts between protestors and loyalists in Derry throughout 1969 that the Royal Ulster Constabulary, or police force, allowed. That year, violence spread throughout Northern Ireland. Formed in 1919, the Irish Republican Army, or IRA, aimed to reunify Ireland and Northern Ireland, a

preference called republicanism. Sinn Féin was the political wing of the IRA, having many leaders in common. In 1970 the IRA launched a terror campaign consisting of bombings and assassinations that killed over 1,800 people throughout the conflict (Arthur, 2019). On the loyalists' side, there was the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force formed in 1966 aiming to remain with Britain. With affiliated loyalist groups, they killed 547 people mostly through bombings (Who, 2011). British intervention, under the direction of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher from 1979 to 1990, furthered the conflict. The administration was connected to arming loyalist paramilitary forces through third parties, and the republican cause gained sympathy after continual arrests without trial and the death of 10 prisoners during a 1981 hunger strike (Watt, 1999; Arthur, 2019). According to the UK Parliament's Historical Enquiries team, the British Army, and its now-disbanded Military Reaction Force, account for at least 10% of the conflict's murders (The Historical, 2017). By the time Clinton was elected in 1992, each group hoped for a diplomatic and political solution as the violence continued, but they struggled to agree on the details.

One of the first things the Clinton administration did was include Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Féin, into negotiations and pressured the British government to publicly accept his role (The Decision). Senator George Mitchell, the United States Special Envoy for Northern Ireland, chaired the talks leading to the Good Friday Agreement. The agreement called for a new, inclusive assembly in Northern Ireland, the creation of the North-South Ministerial Council, and the creation of the British-Irish Council. It also required the decommissioning of armed paramilitary groups, the release of prisoners, and an independent commission to oversee the RUC and other police

forces (Agreement, 1998). Signed on April 10, 1998, the agreement then passed with a joint referendum in May. It was approved with 94% of the vote in Ireland and 71% of the vote in Northern Ireland. The agreement is considered to be the end of the Troubles, but notably only 52% of Protestants in the North voted in favor while 96% of Catholics did (The Editors, 2016). Three months later, on August 15th, the Omagh Bombing by republicans claimed 29 lives, and was the single deadliest attack of the war (Omagh, 2018). The Good Friday Agreement did not guarantee peace.

During the final negotiations of the Good Friday Agreement, Clinton was facing a growing crisis at home. In 1995, he began an affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky, who was 22 at the time. Lewinsky often confided to her colleague Linda Tripp, who began secretly recording their conversations. Two months after an anonymous tip in October of 1997, Lewinsky was called as a witness in the Paula Jones sexual harassment lawsuit against Clinton. In the following months, Clinton repeatedly denied having sexual relations with Lewinsky. News of the affair broke in mainstream newspapers in January of 1998 (Time, 1998). In early 1998, Lewinsky's legal team negotiated for immunity while Clinton publicly denied their relationship. In those same months, the parties signed the Good Friday Agreement, Independent Counsel Ken Starr led an inquiry into the affair, and called witnesses including Lewinsky and Tripp. On October 8, the House of Representatives launched an impeachment inquiry. Clinton settled the Paula Jones settlement in November of 1998, paying \$850,00 (Brooklyn). At that point the case against him for an impeachment trial was insurmountable.

Given Clinton's close ties with the Northern Ireland peace process, *Belfast Telegraph*, *Irish Times*, and *Irish Independent* each ran dedicated sections covering his

impeachment. *The Times* had its own Washington DC correspondent, Joe Carroll. *The Belfast Telegraph* used both its own journalists at home and articles wired from London-based *PA News*. *Irish Independent* covered the trial with journalists at home, and also collected articles by DC correspondents from *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* of London.

Early December 1998: Impeachment Incoming

By early December, the Clinton administration was putting pressure on the IRA to decommission, for Sinn Féin to begin disarming, and was also working on the formation of the North-South Ministerial Council to promote political and economic cooperation between North and South (Institute, 2020). The president's attention, however, was becoming increasingly torn as Congress indicated it was moving toward impeachment.

On **December 2**, *Belfast Telegraph* reminded its readers about the Clinton administration's important role in cross-border negotiations, and ran a feature about his pet cat, Socks. The article "Mitchell warns of attitude to peace process" was a rewrite of Mitchell's upcoming Richard Dimbleby Lecture. In it, Mitchell emphasized the hard but necessary work of maintaining the Belfast Agreement, and specifically warned lawmakers in London and Dublin to not get complacent. The article provides Mitchell's opinions on their contributions, and his evaluation of the people of Northern Ireland as learning from their mistakes. This article emphasized the ongoing role of US diplomacy in cross-border negotiations and emphasized George Mitchell's newsworthy expertise of Irish and UK politics. Meanwhile, "All the President's pets" ran in the features section and was a lighthearted piece about the pets of various presidents. It describes

Clinton's cat, Socks, as popular and, via a quote from comedian Wayne Cavanaugh, as having good judgement of character in a hypothetical negotiation with Saddam Hussein. In contrast, George H.W. Bush's dog Millie would supposedly not have the same good judgement. With this, a lighthearted piece showcasing the celebrity of US presidents in Northern Ireland becomes a space to project opinions about their owners. The coverage depicts Clinton as a good negotiator and a necessary component of the ongoing peace process.

That same day, *The Irish Times* in Dublin ran a short article summarizing a statement 95 theologians published in *The Wall Street Journal* that characterized Clinton as a serial manipulator who mistreated his faith and his family. The article frames Clinton's behavior as morally dubious at best. Also in *The Times*, is "Democrats block move to widen inquiry" which leads with the White House perspective on the impeachment inquiry. The article provides the perspective of Clinton's defense team, and describes the Republicans' decision to widen the investigation as "puzzling." While it includes a quote from the prosecution toward the end accusing the president of evading the committee, the article favors the White House perspective. *The Times'* coverage of the day depicts Clinton as a bad husband, but not a president worthy of impeachment.

Irish Independent, given the same subject, writes "White House fury as inquiry is widened." This article, from British correspondent Mary Dejevsky, emphasizes the issue of partisan conflict that only worsens as impeachment looms. The article puts a special focus on the watchdog recommendation that both Clinton and his election opponent Robert Dole return money that they "illegally benefitted from advertisements"

during their campaigns. This prefaces the same information given by the *Times*: that Clinton has been accused of perjury in the Paula Jones deposition and that the impeachment inquiry interviewed Pam Parsons and Barbara Battalino. This article frames Clinton in a less sympathetic light, and supports the decision to widen the inquiry.

On **December 8**, *The Belfast Telegraph* covered the Profile in Courage award ceremony for eight Good Friday leaders, making them the first non-Americans to receive the award. The article emphasized the growing tension between the Unionists and Sinn Féin, caused by David Trimble's refusal to let them in the new government until they began to disarm. US Senator George Mitchell gave a speech, and is quoted as saying one day, "there will be no talk of peace, for peace will be taken for granted," and Edward Kennedy said there is hope for the future of Northern Ireland. This framing depicts US intervention in a positive light, and the nation as eager to receive recognition from an American award. At this point in time, however, peace is characterized as an unstable work in progress.

Irish Independent's coverage of the event also emphasized Clinton's role, which noted he was praised for his negotiation skills "to produce a maximum of consensus and a minimum of conflict among parties with deep and entrenched differences." The *Independent* published another article that day about the possible impeachment of President Clinton from *Independent News Service*. Titled "Clinton's lawyers attempting to avert impeachment vote," it depicts the vote as increasingly likely, and the other options such as censure or reprimand unlikely. The kicker, or the closing statement for the story, details his accusations of perjury and reminds the reader that "Mr Clinton

himself has admitted to lying to the American public and to his staff. But he has never admitted to lying under oath.” While technically true, the framing is a form of distortion that gives the impression that he has lied under oath but will not admit it.

The next day, **December 9**, *Belfast Telegraph* reminded its readers, through a *PA News* reprint, of the Clinton administration’s important role in the Good Friday Agreement. “Clinton in appeal for progress on Agreement” focuses on the president’s speech at the awards ceremony, where he spoke optimistically about the future of cross-border policy. However, David Trimble and Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams were notably on icy terms. With increasing pressure to make progress before Christmas, both men are shown meeting with Bill and Hillary to improve negotiations. *The Irish Times* also noted Clinton’s meetings with both leaders without detailing the tensions. Both newspapers characterized Clinton as a levelheaded diplomat finding compromise between the two sides. That same day, *The Irish Times* published an article about Clinton working to appease the opposition in his own country. The article focuses on the arguments of White House Special Counsel Greg Craig, including “Repeatedly stressing that Mr Clinton's conduct in the Monica Lewinsky affair was immoral rather than illegal, Mr. Craig said that the US constitution demanded "proof of official misconduct and abuse of high public office for the drastic remedy of impeachment to be appropriate.”” Craig’s reasoning and consultations with historians and constitutional experts are not given a second opinion, and the quotes all advocate that he remains in office.

Unlike the other two papers, *Irish Independent* did not include coverage of Clinton’s speech on Northern Ireland. Their article for that day highlights his “last ditch

strategy” to “prevent himself being put in the dock of the senate,” which included arguing that the trial would be illegal. It frames impeachment as Clinton’s personal problem to wiggle out of, instead of a constitutional or nationwide danger as the other papers framed it.

Focus on US diplomacy and awards continued for a third day, **December 10**, when David Trimble and John Hume received the Nobel Peace Prize. *Belfast Telegraph* writes that “The stubborn rhetoric of party political point-scoring... stands against the hope engendered by the second visit of President Clinton.” The article recognizes the work of Trimble and Hume, and recalls the day the Good Friday Agreement was passed with 70% of the vote, but ends on the grim note of the Omagh bombing that came a few months after. The article ends with a quote from Clinton speaking on the frailty of the peace, saying “It may not come again in our lifetime.” Though Trimble and Hume are the stars of the day, Clinton takes the spotlight in this article, which promotes his influential role in the peace agreement and emphasizes the delicate nature of the arrangement. A second article about the event titled “Without John and David, no accord’ centers on the two Nobel laureates but mentions that Mitchell and Clinton made significant contributions.

That same day, *The Irish Times*’ article “Clinton assures visiting leaders from North of his continued involvement” begins with a lede, or brief opening paragraph, that “President Clinton was either unable or unwilling to offer any new proposals to solve the problems of decommissioning and cross-Border bodies when he met Northern Ireland political leaders here, but he assured them of his continued involvement.” The body of the article, however, puts Clinton in a more positive light by including quotes

from multiple parties about the importance of his speech for the continuing peace process and encouraging his continued involvement. Impeachment coverage also made it into *The Times* that day, and discusses the Democrats' motion of censure as a viable alternative. "The language in the motion is harshly critical of Mr Clinton's behaviour over his affair with Ms Monica Lewinsky," Joe Carroll writes. The kicker warns that a trial in the senate could last for months, "and paralyse the public life of the country." This is the second article from *The Times* that favors the censure. The first instance occurred the previous week on December 5th, which noted that one of its drafters, Peter King, "is a strong supporter of President Clinton's role in the Northern Ireland peace process." *The Times* appears to be endorsing the censure compromise from Democrats as a fast solution to hold Clinton accountable, but keep him in office so the peace agreement remains stable.

On the 10th, *Irish Independent* via *Independent News Service* continued to focus on the unstable nature of congress as impeachment approached, and described Clinton as searching for a way out. It ends with a suggestion of compromise from William Weld, the first senior Republican to testify on Clinton's behalf, asking for a written report and admission of wrongdoing.

By **December 12**, it was evident Clinton fought a losing battle to avoid an impeachment verdict from the house. *Belfast Telegraph's* headline read "Crunch day for Clinton in battle for survival," and gave Clinton the active voice in the advancing proceedings that were, in reality, largely out of his hands. For example, the lede says "Bill Clinton last night moved a crucial step closer to facing impeachment." The short article from *PA* emphasizes Clinton's apology by including three different versions of

it, which were the only quotes in the article. *The Irish Times* also wrote about Clinton's apology, but in a less sympathetic light. It reads, "His hope clearly is that this self-humiliation will sway enough moderate Republicans in the 435-member House to ensure the impeachment articles will not be passed and they will be satisfied with a harsh censure instead." It also describes the president as "looking pale but composed." While both papers acknowledge that Clinton is in trouble at this point, *The Times* acknowledges the President's actions got him at least partly to that point.

By **December 16**, impeachment was inevitable. *The Belfast Telegraph* wrote of "unrelenting gloomy news for the White House," and ended with imagery of Hillary giving him the cold shoulder by refusing to take his arm at the grave of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The article also included Republican perspectives, with the first quote from Nancy Johnson being "No one is above the law, not even the President." Others floated the idea of alternative measures, and guessed the likely scenario would be an acquittal.

The Irish Times wrote about the destabilizing nature of the trial, headlined "Americans wake up to a crisis of democracy." The article described a nation blindsided by the sudden reality of the first impeachment trial since Andrew Jackson, and included a slew of quotes from leaders such as Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, Toni Morrison, and Irish Novelist Mary Gordon against impeachment. Referring to the poll numbers with 70% of Americans against impeachment, *The Times* writes: "On the matter of Clinton, the polls were clear; Americans thought he was an adulterous liar and a good president and wanted him to remain in office." The second article about Clinton that day also reports the poll numbers in his favor and includes the line: "Irish-American

organisations have been lobbying members of Congress to remind them of the President's importance to the Northern Ireland peace process.” This is one of the only instances throughout the impeachment process that *The Times* directly connects impeachment to endangering the peace negotiations. In emphasizing the Democrat’s argument that impeachment is too extreme, *The Times* has revealed some motivational framing, hoping to keep the peace between the political parties in their own country as the aisle widens in the US.

Irish Independent ran three articles on impeachment, the first headlined “Moderate Republicans change tune on impeachment” pulled from *The Times* in London. While the other papers wrote that most Americans did not want to impeach Clinton, this article included another data point that they wanted him to resign if he was impeached. The concluding paragraph reads “Americans have long since indicated that they are heartily sick of the whole Monica Lewinsky affair and they would apparently prefer the President to fall on his sword than endure a Senate trial that could last several months.” This article takes a decidedly different stance on the opinion of the American public using the same polls, and depicts Clinton as overstaying his welcome. The other two *Independent* articles that day were written in-house rather than pulled from the wire, and were kinder to Clinton. One gave a recap of a rally of feminist leaders defending Clinton for his work on child care, domestic violence, pay equity, and Social Security. It mentions the widespread support of Clinton as a defender of women, and notably excludes mention of his history of sexual harassment allegations. The third article, “Hillary freezes out Bill while Sexgate hots up,” summarizes a New York Post

article from the Rabin funeral where Hillary wouldn't take his arm, which shows he is not as popular with the most important woman in his life.

From December 1 through 16, the three newspapers were mostly on Clinton's side with varying degrees of criticism. *The Belfast Telegraph* emphasized the fragility of the Good Friday Agreement, and Clinton's important role in maintaining the peace. Its articles largely characterized Clinton as a good man and good leader, who was being put under stress for personal mistakes he had already apologized for. *The Irish Times* promoted the censure option, characterizing Clinton as a bad husband but an important and competent leader too important to international policy to lose. *The Irish Independent* was the most critical of Clinton, describing him as a president desperate to hold together a hyper-partisan congress after his lies caught up to him.

Mid-December 1998: Impeachment begins, but airstrikes cloud Clinton's reputation

By mid-December, Clinton was overwhelmed and losing support, making a House vote to impeach inevitable. His administration's controversial decision to bomb Iraq in a joint attack with the UK — the same week as the impeachment vote on December 19 — would damage his reputation, causing the newspapers in a war-torn Ireland to depict him in a less positive light.

December 18 marked the day before the impeachment vote and the second day of airstrikes on Iraq.

The Belfast Telegraph via *PA News* shifted into a more critical tone of the president in “Crunch day for Clinton in battle for survival.” The article also highlighted the Republican incoming house speaker Bob Livingston’s admission of infidelity. It reads, “Democrats had no immediate comment on Livingston, but objected to the scheduled debate on grounds that US forces were at danger in skies over Iraq.” Most of the article focuses on Livingston and the Republican plan for impeachment, as well as a straightforward explanation of the charges Clinton is likely to face. Notably, it also describes Livingston’s comment that he had not been with an employee or lied under oath as “an obvious attempt to contrast his own case with that of the president.”

The Irish Times ran three articles tying the airstrikes to the impeachment vote, and a fourth providing perspectives for the upcoming trial. The first article, “Blair defends continuing air raids and denies US politics is the reason for attack,” focused on British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s justification of the bombing, with only two paragraphs mentioning the headline-earning Clinton connection. It describes Blair as “fiercely” rejecting an impeachment connection, with a quote that it was his duty as president to carry out the airstrikes. With the first article providing the justification, the second provides the counter argument from Irish human rights groups and politicians. The article is a string of criticisms from Irish leaders, including Taoiseach leader Bertie Ahern, Minister for Foreign Affairs David Andrews, John Bruton of the Fine Gael party, Proinsias De Rossa of the Democratic Left, Joe Murray of AFRI, Labour leader Ruairi Quinn, activist Kieran Allen, both Patrician McKenna and John Gormley of The Green Party, Joe Higgins of the Socialist Party, Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein, The Workers Party, and finally Mary Lawlor of the Irish branch of Amnesty International.

That's 13 influential Irish sources, Protestant and Catholic, quoted in a single article condemning the US and British airstrikes, compared to the one quote used in Blair's defense. The article included strong quotes connecting it to the Clinton impeachment, such as "innocent lives are being sacrificed to save the political hide of the President of the most powerful country on earth," from Joe Higgins, and "It's quite sick that people have to die just to divert attention from a minor squabble within the US political establishment," from Kieran Allen. In juxtaposition with the British perspective, the verdict at home presented by the *Times* was that Clinton was sacrificing innocent Iraqi lives to postpone an impeachment vote. In this case, Ireland aligned with the civilians of Iraq and heavily criticized Clinton.

The third article from the *Times* directly connected the airstrikes with impeachment in its headline, "New waves of air strikes hits Iraq as impeachment vote looms." Internal debate over this connection was the news of the day, and therefore not framing by the *Times* itself. Whether this connection was valid however, is subject to framing, and the *Times* opted to follow a quote from Clinton saying "I don't believe any serious person would believe any president would do such a thing" directly with the paragraph, "However, the military action has not been greeted with universal approval; rather, opinion has been polarised." Though the beginning of the article clarified that the strikes were subject to congressional approval and supported by the American public, the rest included criticism from world leaders and Irish politicians. The kicker also highlighted human suffering in Iraq against Clinton's impeachment, by following the death count of 25 with "In Washington, Mr Clinton insisted that the impeachment debate would not undermine his authority to pursue the air strikes." This

framed Clinton as apathetic to the deaths. Overall, the article left the impression that the airstrikes directly related to impeachment.

The fourth article from *The Irish Times* on the 18th is more focused on impeachment coverage, but with a lede implying the airstrikes were a success for the Democrats. “The air strikes against Iraq are expected to continue during some of that time,” Joe Carroll writes, “However, opposition from Democrats could still succeed in further postponing the debate.” However, two paragraphs in, impeachment is also framed as extreme by the phrase “more so-called moderate Republicans announced they would vote for impeachment.” There are quotes from both-sides regarding the decision to continue despite airstrikes, but the article ends with polling suggesting the majority 57% of Americans support a censure resolution, while 36% would like him to resign. This article is more balanced than the others *The Times* ran that day.

Irish Independent had one impeachment-related article on December 18th, headlined “Defiant Clinton at war on two fronts” from *London Daily Telegraph’s* Washington correspondent. It more explicitly accused Clinton of using the airstrikes to postpone the impeachment vote. It opens with imagery of smoke over Baghdad while Congress debated, and includes that “it was reported” that Clinton had jumped the gun before the UN’s weapons inspector, Richard Butler, confirmed that Saddam Hussein was non-compliant. An additional “Pentagon source” said Clinton grew more eager to bomb Iraq as impeachment approached, and that “It has sparked criticism not seen since Vietnam” from senior US politicians. The final two paragraphs following a quote from Clinton are worth reading in their entirety: “But everyone now wonders whether Mr. Clinton has “wagged the dog,” a reference to a recent film in which aids of a rascally

President engineer a foreign conflict to deflect attention from a White House sex scandal. Four-fifths of the public supports the bombing, but many are believed to be suspicious about the timing.” The article unabashedly frames the bombing as an immoral and desperate move from a threatened president. No reader would leave the article with enough context of Clinton and the UK’s justification for the attack to make an informed decision about their true motivation.

On **December 19**, Clinton was impeached. *The Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* ran later in the day and reported on the impeachment vote, while *Belfast Telegraph* published earlier in the morning and wrote of its inevitability.

In “Clinton faces fight on two fronts,” the *Telegraph* continued to portray the political tension between impeachment and the Iraq airstrikes. The article notes the alignment with the bombing and the beginning of Ramadan, and that the “ferocious attack” had killed 50. The article mentions that Ulster experts on the Middle East described the raids as “inevitable,” but gives substantial quote space to Kate Gormley of the Initiative on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity who said the risk to civilian casualties was too high. Tom Fraser, A professor of Middle Eastern Politics at Ulster University, is given the remainder of the article space with the perspective that the bombings were a last resort given nearly a decade of failure to control Iraq’s weapons. This coverage demonstrates that the sympathy which *The Belfast Telegraph* previously framed Clinton during the impeachment process does not extend to international relations decisions that harm civilians.

Irish Times ran five articles about the impeachment vote itself, the first being “Vote to impeach Clinton expected today.” The lede highlights opinion polls, showing

that 60% of Americans preferred censure. This article also mentioned the airstrikes were during Ramadan, but counted targets hit instead of casualties. The four perspectives on impeachment in the article came from Hillary Clinton, Vice-President Al Gore, White House press secretary Joe Lockhart, and Republicans Christopher Shays and Peter King who all were either against impeachment entirely or suggested a censure as an alternative. This shows content framing, without providing any arguments for impeachment, and emphasizing censure as a potential compromise.

After impeachment was announced, the *Times* printed the official articles of impeachment in full and without editing, as well as an explainer section about the impeachment process and timeline. This demonstrates the invested interest the Irish media had in the Clinton trial, and an unbiased presentation of the proceedings. The next article, “House of Representatives debates first impeachment since 1868,” included the context of the impeachment vote, describing a “bitter and bipartisan” atmosphere. The first quote from Hillary Clinton asked for reconciliation, and the second was from Republican Henry Hyde declaring that no man is above the law. Throughout the article the Democrats in the chamber are described as booing, and making “derisive noises,” but the ending points to the hypocrisy of the Bob Livingston revelation with a quote from Maxine Waters. Though the article itself is fairly balanced, it focuses on the issue of a bipartisan chamber, and the direct cause of that issue is the impeachment itself which Democrats within the article describe as unfair and hypocritical.

Also on impeachment day, *The Times* ran a short article stressing the close relationship between Clinton and the Northern Ireland peace process, titled “Northern

Style.” It recapped the previous week’s dinner honoring Northern politicians, where Clinton charmed the room by joking about David Trimble’s sharp outfits.

On voting day *Irish Independent* unleashed an arsenal of 10 articles in a special “Clinton’s Crisis” section, two of which were explainer pieces about the impeachment process and the voting schedule. Two focused on Hillary Clinton’s statement, including “Republicans after blood as impeachment nears,” from *Independent News Service* which wrote that the party was “baying for blood and in no mood for compromise.” While the *Times* depicted the Democrats booing and hissing, the *Independent* recalled Republicans interjecting while the Democrats pleaded for mercy. The article was not fully sympathetic to Clinton, however, describing the “The only White House intervention was the half-hearted deployment of its weapon of last resort, the First Lady, Hillary Clinton... the choreography was significant.” Hillary Clinton is described as intelligent, and “a respected lawyer,” and this is the first article to mention her participation in the Nixon investigation. In this instance, Hillary is framed as the solution to Bill’s bad image. Another article, “Hillary speaks out in defence of embattled husband,” further promotes this. This article written by *Irish Independent* reporter Steve Holland is more of a recap of her statement, but does provide the context that the statement came at a strategic time where impeachment was likely and moderates were still deciding how they would vote.

President Clinton himself did not get as much favorable framing from the *Independent*. Coverage by Rupert Cornwell at *Independent News Service* portrayed the president as a smooth talker, but of questionable morals, with the quip “twice he has told what any normal human being would consider whoppers.” The kicker, however, is

Peter King's perspective that bad behavior doesn't warrant impeachment. Another, "President in near total denial," depicted Clinton as desperate, with aides saying he was avoiding impeachment preparations. Other publications, and the White House, had depicted this schedule as being too full to shrug any presidential duties to deal with impeachment. Another article reprinted from *The Daily Telegraph*, "Who's running America as Clinton faces trial," also framed Clinton as clinging to power despite the toll impeachment would take on the nation. It compares the crisis to Watergate, and describes a toxic, polarized environment. It also recaps a *New York Times* op-ed suggesting that Clinton resign, and writes "Even Democrats on Capitol Hill privately acknowledge Mr Clinton might soon be forced to consider resignation to save America from a trial in which Monica Lewinsky would again recount details of her Oval Office sex sessions with him." The article does not mention the censure option, and it presents Clinton's resignation as the only solution to the partisan conflict. Another article, "Call off the war plea to Monica" reports on Clinton's reputation falling internationally, with Russian MPs considering a motion to appeal to Monica Lewinsky to control an emotional president, and ends with a quote from Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov blaming the bombing of Iraq on Clinton avoiding impeachment. Throughout the newspaper, the articles on Clinton depicted a careless president losing control of a partisan congress.

Two articles from *The Independent* on voting day dealt with incoming speaker Bob Livingston's admission of having an affair, and compared his conduct with Clinton's. One recounts the standing ovation he received in a closed-door meeting after a "sensational disclosure." The article specifies that Livingston only confessed after

word leaked that *Hustler Magazine* had evidence for his affairs with at least four women. An article about the admission on the same page by correspondent Mary Dejevsky for the *Independent News Service*, posits that after four Republicans have been accused of sexual misconduct since the House of Representatives received the prosecutor's report for Clinton, "the answer to the question: 'Who benefits from such allegations?' was clear." This claim appears to be the reporter's own, and draws suspicion upon the White House's claim that they had nothing to do with the allegations coming to light. This is a form of distortion that supports the Republican claim of "sexual McCarthyism" by the Clinton defense team. Finally, in the bottom left corner of the last page on the impeachment proceeding is the recap of Al Gore's defense of Clinton, where he said Clinton will not be resigning.

By the following Monday, **December 21**, the US and UK had ceased their bombing of Iraq, Bob Livingston announced his resignation, and impeachment had begun.

Belfast Telegraph, in "Clinton team may move on 'lame duck' Congress" wired from *PA News* wrote that Clinton "came out fighting." It presented the Clinton defense plan and wrote that the president had "the weight of public opinion behind him." It also specifically mentions that Senator George Mitchell, who chaired the Northern Ireland peace talks, was involved in the Clinton defense strategy. Another article depicted an unorganized senate, torn between choosing either a speedy trial or a censure. From this, the *Telegraph* framed Clinton as likely to be acquitted from the first day of trial, and through Mitchell reminded its readers of Clinton's commitment to the Good Friday Agreement.

From its headlines alone, *The Irish Times* had a much different take on Clinton's chances, with "Wounded and humiliated Clinton promises he will fight to the end," which provided a first-person account from the paper's DC correspondent, whose byline was not preserved by the *Times* archive. At the official impeachment, they describe a feeling of sadness: "Here is a president who, incidentally, has worked hard for peace in Ireland, now facing the disgrace of a trial in the Senate arising from a sexual affair with a White House intern. What a humiliation for a man who is steeped in the history of his country and had such high hopes for his own presidency." The article is highly critical of Clinton's personal behavior, depicting it as selfish and detrimental to his work as president. Noting that Bob Livingston's resignation has put pressure on Clinton to follow suit, the article notes that "40 per cent of Americans believed the president should resign if impeached." While this may be following the framing of the poll itself, the data could have also been phrased as 60% wanting him to stay. It also paraphrased Rep. Peter King by saying a "damaged president" would be detrimental to the Irish peace process. The article argues that it would have been best for the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland if Clinton was never impeached in the first place. Because he was impeached, the author is inclined to blame Clinton's behavior for any future issues in the peace talks.

In another article about trial preparation, the *Times* anticipates a partisan mess, and writes that 40% want Clinton to resign if impeached. After recounting the charges and how the trial will proceed, it focuses on Clinton's refusal to resign and effort to "show the country and the world that he can carry out his Presidential duties." The article concludes with the paragraph: "President Clinton said on Saturday after being

impeached that ‘we must stop the politics of personal destruction.’ His own threatened destruction gives him a vested interest in this but his words will resonate across a country which now sees a pornography publisher, like Mr Larry Flynt of Hustler magazine, becoming a power broker.” The *Times* continually presents quotes from both sides with the political strategy behind them. Another article that day recounts Hillary’s public pledge of love and support for her husband, specifically at the request of the House minority leader. This provides more context for readers than just recounting practiced statements from politicians by explaining their intended purpose. While this article overall frames Clinton as being steadfast in his role, it does not pretend that he makes these statements of reconciliation purely on principle.

Though the previous two *Times* articles framed polling in terms of the minority opinion that wanted resignation, another article specified that he had hit record high approval ratings, reaching 72%. It also says that “34 per cent believed he should resign following impeachment but this was a drop of 10 percentage points compared with four days earlier.” According to the *Times*, “some believe it indicates resentment at what is seen as a Republican and media witch-hunt.” In contrast with the previous article, this one frames impeachment as an overreaction to Clinton’s behavior, and shows Clinton as more open to compromise than his Republican colleagues. The suggestion of resignation from Livingston is followed in the same paragraph by a quote from White House Chief of Staff John Podesta that it would be “the wrong thing for America.” This article has distinctly different framing from the correspondent’s, depicting impeachment as a result of Republican overreaction rather than Clinton’s poor personal choices.

Two articles from the *Times* deal directly with Livingston's resignation. The first, "Aberrant adventures drag nation to political paralysis" focuses more on describing Larry Flint, the magazine publisher who offered \$1 million to anyone who came forward with proof of a congressional affair. It specifies that Clinton asked Livingston to change his mind about resignation specifically with the intention of thwarting rumors that the White House was responsible for his exposure. It also says there is more pressure to resign to avoid a prolonged trial, with two Democrats joining. The second article focuses on the moment he announced his resignation, directly following hecklers from the Democrats during a speech. It also quotes several upset Republicans who wished he would not step down, and others who said it was the right thing to do. At this point, *The Times* has presented just two potential choices for Clinton: resignation or surviving a damaging trial, though compromises such as a censure were being considered at this time. Both choices would hurt Ireland, the first removing one of the key Good Friday moderators and the second weakening his influence and dividing his attention.

Irish Independent covered Livingston, Hillary, and resignation that day too. An article from Damian Whitworth at *The Times*, London, describing the following disarray in the capitol. The article describes the reaction to Livingston's announcement, including "grown men" fighting back tears, and stated that Flynt of *Hustler* had "provoked fury and despair" in both parties. The article promotes the argument of "sexual McCarthyism" harming US political processes. The article taking up most of the Clinton section for the day, however, is "It's Hillary the saviour: Defiant wife once again stands by her man" via the *Daily Telegraph* in London. The article depicts a

“defiant” and politically savvy first lady. “Hillary is having to set the ‘survival’ agenda because her husband has lost all his old advisers and has made the fatal mistake of developing few friends on Capitol Hill,” Hugh Davies writes. “There is a feeling that many Senate Democrats may not mind seeing him walk the plank.” In a subhead titled “smartest,” he writes that “she is a calculating woman who in a crisis always puts the politics of the situation ahead of her marriage - and is loved by Democratic leaders for it.” It also credits her for recruiting George Mitchell, who has invested interest in the Irish peace process, to Clinton’s defense. Through the reporters’ assertions and the included quotes, the content framing promotes Hillary as a strong negotiator, and the most competent person on Clinton’s defense team.

On **December 23**, a censure became the popular option for a compromise that would hold Clinton accountable in some way but prevent a lengthy trial.

Belfast Telegraph, via *PA*, framed it as a bipartisan compromise, with Republicans voting for it too. Quotes from Democrats described it as a way to heal the divide in the country and allow congress to return to more important matters. It also presents a censure as more logical: “Senior Republicans have done their homework and the figures do not add up,” because the Senate would not reach two thirds majority to remove Clinton especially given his high public approval ratings. Every presented quote is in support of the censure, which is framed as the solution to partisan conflict. It also happens to be the best-case-scenario for Clinton, who would be hastily guaranteed to remain in office where he could continue his work in Northern Ireland.

Irish Times also reached the conclusion that Clinton was unlikely to be impeached. In “Republicans who voted against Clinton urge options short of removal,”

which described the censure option as a “compromise effort” given that Republicans would not have the votes. This again framed censure as the best option for all parties.

Irish Independent also ran with a pro-censure framing. Via Mary Dejevsky of *Independent News Service*, “Comeback kid Clinton could avoid Senate trial,” pointed to Robert Byrd’s change in position as the leading driver of the censure option. From there, a group of Republicans officially announced support of a censure. This revelation being the news of the day means that the article would not inherently be a pro-censure framing, however there is no inclusion of Republicans still seeking to convict the president.

In the latter half of December, the airstrikes caused all three newspapers to become more critical of Clinton. Located in one of the most at-risk areas of the war, the *Belfast Telegraph* had previously been the most supportive of the president; but its coverage that focused on the killing of Iraqi civilians showed that their sympathy had its limits. All three papers questioned the airstrikes’ correlation with the impeachment vote, with the *Irish Independent* supporting the claim that the administration used the bombings to delay the trial. After the impeachment process began, the *Telegraph* was quick to assume that Clinton would be acquitted, while the *Times* promoted the censure option and the *Independent* flirted with the idea of a resignation. All three highlighted George Mitchell, a well-liked political figure in Ireland, joining the defense team. The *Independent* depicted Hillary Clinton as more capable than her husband, and the *Times* consistently provided more balanced coverage by explaining the political aim of public statements from both sides of the impeachment debate.

January 1999: The Senate trial begins

Following the House vote to impeach Clinton, the trial commenced in the senate with no guarantee of its outcome. Each newspaper depicted Clinton in a different degree of danger and questioned how the trial would impact Congressional relations and the president's ability to work.

The censure solution did not come to fruition, and the Senate trial began on **January 7.**

The *Belfast Telegraph* ran a straightforward account of both-sides' expectations for the trial, with Republicans seeking witnesses and Democrats hoping to force an early vote with confidence that there would not be the two-thirds majority to remove the president from office.

Irish Times ran a longer article about the trial opening, which leaned more toward an anti-impeachment sentiment. The third paragraph quoted CBS News polls that the majority of Americans did not want a full trial, believing it would harm the nation. It frames impeachment as "paralysing the work of Congress," with senior Republicans hopes of censure being "rejected by the conservative Republicans." Unlike the *Telegraph*, the *Times* concluded that witnesses were almost certain, and did not state that he was unlikely to be convicted. The rest of the article explains the impeachment process, and notes that the senators "will swear to act impartially, but inevitably they will be influenced by their views as Republicans and Democrats." Though the assertion about the Senate's political bias is true by all indications, it is still an assertion. The *Times* was not as confident in Clinton's ability to survive a senate trial, but depicted the trial as an issue preventing congress from getting real work done.

Irish Independent bought into the partisan drama, with an entire section titled “Capitol Hill Chaos.” The section included explainers about the rules and procedures of impeachment and mentions that there is a “general agreement” that there would not be the votes to convict him. The central article reads, “Chaos reigned in Washington as Republicans and Democrats struggled to agree on a way to avoid a long trial that could paralyse the capital for months.” There was also an article about the Bonnie Anne Williams paternity scandal, from a woman awaiting a DNA test for her son who she believed was fathered by Clinton. As a whole, the newspaper depicts the trial as a partisan affair putting pressure on a president with questionable character.

The next day, **January 8**, coverage of the senate trial’s commencement continued.

Belfast Telegraph, via *PA*, emphasized the unprecedented nature of the trial. It also stated Clinton’s charges more frankly than previously before, saying that the allegations “stem from his long campaign to cover up a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky.” It also follows the explanation of the two-thirds vote by stating Clinton had strong support in the Senate. The article presented even-handed coverage describing the atmosphere of the room, but still ended with the framing that Clinton would likely survive impeachment.

The Irish Times ran three articles, one a straightforward explainer about the impeachment process. The others dealt with the senators’ deliberation over how to proceed given imprecise directions by the constitution. The newspaper consulted several constitutional experts and visited historical impeachments against senators and judges. It concludes with a quote from political scientist Ross Baker that a condensed

trial, such as the one the White House sought, could harm congressional relations after the House spent considerable time and energy making the case. The article's framing suggests that a long impeachment trial may not be as debilitating as previous coverage indicated, even if it was clear at that point Clinton would be acquitted. The second article addresses the debate over bringing in witnesses, mentioning that Clinton's approval rating has gone down 10 points. It is the only paper to highlight the urging from eight major Protestant and Jewish leaders to pursue a censure, saying a prolonged trial would have "deleterious international consequences." The mention of Protestant leaders and international issues is significant, given the conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. A long trial distracting the president would not be beneficial for the continuing peace negotiations in the country.

Irish Independent ran two explanatory pieces about the impeachment trial's procedures and a timeline of the scandalous events of the previous year. Dejevsky, via *Independent News Service*, wrote that it would not just be a trial of Clinton, but of the United States' capability to conduct itself professionally. It highlighted Chief Justice Rehnquist, described as a "consummate professional," and a conservative with a reputation for fairness. The article concludes with a sense of danger for Clinton, stating that whatever the trial finds, he was still subject to possible punishment in federal court after his term ends. The article promotes Rehnquist's level headedness and is not confident in the Senate's promise to impartiality. The United States and Clinton himself, according to the *Independent*, are in hot water.

Nearly two weeks later, on **January 14**, Congress continued to debate whether to allow witnesses.

The *Belfast Telegraph*, via *PA* news, wrote about the possibility of Clinton himself testifying in the Senate. The article frames this as being a partisan attack from the Republicans, with quotes from White House spokesman Jim Kennedy, who said that Clinton's team was the only one following the rules. The *Telegraph* also described a group of Republicans asking the House to establish procedures for witnesses as "Another sign that the Senate's hoped for bipartisan stance is not holding." After describing the likely witnesses, it depicts Clinton as seeking to distance himself from the trial. Overall, the article frames the White House and Clinton as being accommodating during the trial, and Senate Republicans as being overzealous.

The Irish Times covered Clinton's statement that he would be focusing on his presidential duties, and that the impeachment process would be left to the Senate. It also highlighted the confirmation from Lockhart that George Mitchell was advising the lawyers, and the article discloses that Clinton wrote a \$850,000 check to Paula Jones for a sexual harassment case. It ends by summarizing a briefing from the White House calling the impeachment "unwise and unwarranted," and claiming that constitutional, legal, and historical scholars are against impeachment. The Clinton argument is given more attention in this article, seemingly supporting his opinion that impeachment was a distraction from more important duties. The inclusion of George Mitchell's assistance serves as a form of endorsement for getting impeachment over with.

While the other two papers buried the Jones settlement within coverage of Clinton's statement, *Irish Independent* put it in the headline. Dejevsky at *Independent News Service* explains how the Clintons' insurance policy and blind trust paid for it, and says the release of the information by the White House "seemed designed to convey

several messages,” including that the Clintons have resources, and that Hillary was financially supporting her husband. Dejevsky also described Paula Jones’ allegation, and wrote “The timing of the payment seemed designed to ensure that the Paula Jones case was closed before the Senate impeachment trial begins today.” The framing emphasized that the Clintons are skilled politicians, and the article notably evaluates possible ulterior motives of the White House without quoting the statement itself.

The next day, **January 15**, the newspapers covered the previous day’s opening statements from the prosecution.

The *Belfast Telegraph* ran another story about the possibility of Clinton testifying, also via *PA News*. Unlike the day before, this article provided more content from the Republican perspective given its coverage of the prosecution’s opening statements. It quotes Don Nickles, James Rogan, and Trent Lott as supporting a senate invitation for the president to testify. This article provided a summary of the events of the day and did not seek out dissenting statements from Democrats after the event itself.

The *Irish Times* wrote a more colorful description of the event itself headlined “Little nuggets you have not heard before,” referring to a statement from Rep. James Sensenbrenner. It describes the rules the senators must follow and wrote that “The senators were settling in for an impeachment trial which will go on for weeks and possibly months. They are going to find it an ordeal,” and later, “some of the senators are pretty old.” It also included a quote from a spectator waiting outside, and that the journalist’s taxi driver found it “boring.” The article framed the event as both a “fun” spectacle and an endurance test for American politics. The lede reads: “Republican prosecutors accusing President Clinton of ‘serial lying under oath’ called for his

removal from office and told the Senate that its job was to excise the ‘cancer’ that existed in the body politic.” It quotes arguments from the prosecution, but also includes a quote from Lockhart that the last-minute request for Clinton to testify “illustrates that this is really about politics.” The article provides a run-down of the upcoming procedures and presents opinions from the prosecution against the White House perspective.

Irish Independent ran three articles on the 15th, the first from the *Independent News Service* and a departure from the usual depiction of a chaotic capitol with “Clinton rides out the storm,” exploring the causes of Clinton’s high approval rating. It says that “the United States is not only calm, but almost uninterested.” It does, however, write that “Clinton’s authority as a national leader is still remarkably intact,” but that a group of political analysts concluded that the institution of the presidency was weakened. The article summarizes the potential explanations with “In other words: a lot of Americans like him, despite his faults, and he is a highly adept politician.” The final line of the article states that “He hurt the institution less than he hurt himself and his family.” While backhanded at times, this coverage portrays Clinton as a popular and successful leader. The next article, from *The Times*, describes the opening proceedings and — contrasted with the *Irish Times*’ “blockbuster” description — this article describes a “lack of courtroom theatrics.” It compares the senators to schoolboys, gossiping and “keeping half an ear out for when the speaker shuts up and they can take their turn at the microphone.” While many viewers may have come to the same conclusion, it still depicts the Senate as immature and potentially incapable of being impartial jurors.

The third *Independent* article highlights the friendship between Hillary Clinton and Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam. It describes the two's relationship and interest in promoting women in politics, but ends with the news that Bill Clinton will be visiting the New York Stock Exchange where he "might well receive a more sympathetic ear from the corporate leaders than he would from his wife after a day in the Senate that highlighted his sexual peccadilloes." The article promotes Hillary's ability to connect with prominent Irish politicians, while her husband's failures are on national display.

On the third and final day of the prosecution's opening statements, **January 16**, the pressure against Clinton heightened.

The *Belfast Telegraph* ran an article with a distorting pro-Clinton headline, "Clinton: I'll make the most of more White House years," with the body of the article from *PA News* being more of a recap. The lede, featuring the quote from the headline, provided the context that he said it at a fundraiser for the Democratic National Committee costing \$25,000 per couple. It notes that "No mention was made of the Senate impeachment trial." It portrayed the influence Clinton still has in American politics, and his plan to make the State of the Union address despite Republican criticism.

Irish Times published two articles about the trial itself, both empathetic toward Clinton. Both addressed the debate over calling on Clinton to testify, with perspectives from the Republican prosecutors seeking it. In contrast to the trial, the newspaper set the scene of the New York conference where Clinton "basked in praise from bankers and businessmen and suggested with a smile that reports of his political demise were greatly

exaggerated.” It depicts Clinton as carefree and charismatic, even cracking jokes. The second article showed the amount of trouble Clinton faced, with more pressure to allow witnesses and a 10% decrease in his public approval rating. The article also discusses criticism from Democrats about a group of Republican senators secretly meeting with the prosecution, but includes the Republican perspective that witnesses could help establish if the president lied under oath.

Irish Independent portrayed the witness argument as detrimental to the Democrats’ plan, and a destabilizing move by Republicans. In “Pressure on Clinton to present evidence,” via the *Daily Telegraph*, Hugo Gurdon and High Davies write that calling Clinton to the witness stand “could cause a constitutional explosion and would have incalculable consequences on public opinion.” It described Asa Hutchinson “the most effective prosecutor, who argues that “The President is becoming more entrenched in his denials, and that makes the case that he should give a more full explanation.” It then quotes another prosecutor, Henry Hyde, who said that Clinton should have no qualms testifying if he is innocent, and that 63% of Americans want to hear from the president. From the anti-witness perspective, the White House “angrily dismissed the suggestion,” and noted that over 60% of Americans want him to stay in office. The article ends in support of calling witnesses, calling it “the simplest way out,” and including a quote from James Rogan that claims witnesses are the only way to know the truth. Though the other newspapers include the arguments for calling witnesses, *Independent*’s coverage makes a more compelling case for it and does not portray Clinton as winning the battle. Their second article of the day, from Davies, titled “Justice Team set to probe Flynt,” frames the prosecution as succeeding in their opening

statements. He wrote, “Democrats appeared resigned yesterday to losing their fight to stop witnesses,” but said that they would argue the live testimony would be too distasteful. To prove their point, the reporter followed that up with a count of how often prosecutor Bill McCollum said the words genitalia, oral sex, and breasts during his speech, and described the body language of uncomfortable senators lowering their heads and shrinking in their seats. It also points out potential ulterior motives for wanting to block witnesses, stating that “Democrats fear that a vulnerable Miss Lewinsky could provide exact details of a cover-up.” The *Independent*’s coverage leaned in favor of calling it witnesses as a possible solution to a lengthy trial with dishonest people on both sides.

By the start of the Senate trial, all three newspapers informed their readers about the process ahead. The *Telegraph* wrote with confidence that Clinton would not be removed, and often quoted the White House, but also covered the prosecution’s arguments without Democrat rebuttal. The *Times* questioned the institutional damage a lengthy trial could cause, and promoted a quick end as a way to minimize impact given the likelihood of Clinton’s acquittal. The *Independent* promoted the Republican argument that witnesses and a longer trial could reveal more information, but characterized it as a way to get to a vote faster. All three newspapers acknowledged that Clinton was too popular to be removed.

Late January: Clinton’s defense team and the State of the Union to the rescue, and the battle over witnesses continues

Acquittal seemed certain after a strong presentation from Clinton’s defense and a well-received State of the Union address. After that, all three papers began to question the point of Republicans prolonging the trial.

January 20 included coverage of the first of three days of the defense from Clinton’s legal team, which began January 19. The defense began the same day as Clinton’s much anticipated State of the Union address.

Belfast Telegraph ran two articles that framed the Clintons in as popular and triumphant following the State of the Union address. The newspaper titled the coverage of the event, pulled from *PA*, as “Bill wins standing ovation.” The article leads by saying he got applause from both sides for a “confident and animated speech that belied the fact that he is on trial in the Senate.” The article notes that he “made no mention of the sex-and-lies cast that led to his impeachment and imperils his presidency,” and commented on the booming economy. The article ends the pro-Clinton recap by stating that the speech came hours after his lawyers defended him on the senate floor, “arguing he was innocent of perjury and obstruction of justice and ‘must not be removed from office.’”

The second article from the *Telegraph* covers a group of women politicians from Ulster visiting Hillary Clinton in the US as part of the “Northern Ireland Political Leadership Opportunity for Women seminar.” And includes a quote from the Social Democratic and Labour Party member Patricia Lewsley that she hopes they will “be able to bring some of that knowledge back home and tap into women’s votes.” The

short article highlights the Clintons' continual investment in developing leadership in Northern Ireland, despite the impeachment trial which is not mentioned in the article itself.

Irish Times' coverage focused more on the defense team's argument of the day than the *Telegraph*, by having an article that was a straightforward recap of their argument, but ends on a quote from Trent Lott that the outcome is still up in the air. The other two articles analyzed the State of the Union address and depicted Clinton as victorious. Both were written by Joe Carroll, the first about what to expect from the upcoming address including anticipated remarks on Northern Ireland, and the second was coverage of the speech itself. Carroll writes that the speech "highlighted US diplomatic efforts in Northern Ireland which helped to achieve 'the landmark Good Friday agreement.' He reaffirmed his support for the full implementation of the agreement." He writes that Clinton's approval ratings have survived impeachment and included Democrat's objections to the calling of witnesses. The article relied heavily on Charles Ruff's opinion, including that the prosecution had a "witches' brew of charges." It ends with polls showing Americans want him to stay in office, and that the trial had not changed their minds. With the mention of Northern Ireland and the lack of effectiveness from the prosecution, the article frames impeachment as an unnecessary distraction for Clinton from the more important matters that would help Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Irish Independent's coverage diverged by depicting Clinton as a president in trouble, with the article "It's the fightback kid" from Dejevsky of *Independent News Service* summarizing the arguments by his defense. It does not detail the defense's

arguments as the other newspapers did, aside from writing that the team “set out to dissect and discredit the small-print of the charges, that Mr. Clinton perjured himself before a grand jury and schemed to deprive Paula Jones of her recourse to justice.” The strong choices of scheming as verbiage and the insinuation that Jones was shorted justice gives the argument an anti-Clinton slant despite being a summary of his defense’s argument. It also states that the team seeks to argue that the charges could not be substantiated. Dejevsky writes that the State of the Union laid out a stronger case against his removal than his legal team and included job approval ratings and public support. The article ends by stating that “If politics can trump the law in a constitutional process that meshes the two, the President has won. If not, the odds are more even.” This is an editorialized statement that explicitly claims that Clinton would be guilty under the law if he were not popular and powerful. This frames the process as being more of a spectacle than a real trial, and condemns Clinton’s decisions while acknowledging his skill in charisma.

The Clinton defense team continued their arguments on **January 22**, and by then every newspaper acknowledged the tide was in Clinton’s favor.

Belfast Telegraph, referring to a quote of the day, ran the headline “Clinton ‘should not be ousted.’” Recapping Senator Dale Bumpers' argument, the short article frames impeachment as a moral lapse in judgement not worthy of impeachment. They quote Bumpers in saying “You can censure Bill Clinton. You can hand him over to prosecutors. But you cannot convict,” and said that his quote summed up opening presentations “by both sides.” Bumpers' pro-acquittal argument is the only perspective in the piece, framing it as the only fair solution to the turmoil caused by impeachment.

Irish Times ran a story that gave the impression impeachment was unlikely, and that the evidence was on Clinton's side to end the trial quickly. Joe Carroll writes that Democrats believe the State of the Union, poll ratings, and the defense presentation have effectively convinced more moderate Republicans, as well as the encouragement from Pat Robertson, an influential TV evangelist. It also quotes US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright saying impeachment was interrupting important foreign policy goals, and while Ireland was not explicitly mentioned in the article the connection is implied given the audience of the newspaper. The article ends by quoting Clinton's lawyer David Kendall in saying there is no evidence for obstruction of justice. While the *Times* and Carroll typically get quotes from both sides, this article provides the Democrat's argument without rebuttal, supporting the argument that impeachment is a waste of time and detrimental to foreign policy, especially because the votes are already in Clinton's favor.

Irish Independent, on the other hand, came off as very critical of the White House defense. In "President's legal team give final flourish" by Gurdon and Davies at the Daily Telegraph, the lede says that "the White House turned up the volume and injected extra sarcasm into its attack." They quoted a good amount of Kendall's defense, but also described it as "scathing," and a "last fling at persuading the Senate." Unlike the other two papers, the *Independent* gives more room to doubt an acquittal, saying the Democrat's "fear" what witnesses might say, and "plan to force" the final vote. While the other papers framed the same defense as logical, this article framed the defense as one side of a political argument. This coverage depicts it as far from the final word on Clinton's innocence.

On **January 25**, the newspapers covered the prosecution's recorded interview with Monica Lewinsky, which all three framed as being unnecessary.

The *Belfast Telegraph* gave a straightforward recap of the interview, and said that it revealed new information that contradicted Betty Currie's testimony. "The interview triggered partisan convulsions even before it was held," the newspaper writes, and adds that "even" three Republicans now want to end the case. It includes the perspective of Lewinsky's lawyer Plato Cacheris who believes nothing was added, but adds, "yet all three House managers who participated in the interview called the session productive." The ending provides accusations and explanations for the gift retrieval from both sides, and finishes by saying the prosecution concluded Clinton instructed Currie to do it, but that "Currie could not recall who had initiated it." The article was pretty evenhanded, but leaned toward the argument that the interview was unnecessary.

Irish Times ran two articles about Lewinsky's testimony, both with more information than the *Telegraph* supporting the argument that the interview was unnecessary and partisan. The first, "Protests as prosecutors question Lewinsky again," opens with her lawyer's perspective, and then notes that Clinton "refused to comment." It includes more about the testimony itself, with both sides complimenting Lewinsky's professional conduct. The article also states the Democratic argument that the interview circumvents the upcoming vote to call witnesses, and that Lewinsky was already interviewed 22 times. It balances this with the Republican argument that the interview was allowed under her immunity deal. The article ends with a statement from George H.W. Bush, speaking about it for the first time, saying the current events showed a lack of respect for the presidency. The framing of this article seems to favor the Democrats'

argument more, if only because they had presented more logical reasons not to interview Lewinsky. The second article focuses more on the partisan spectacle, but concludes that Clinton is likely to be acquitted. It begins by describing a Senate whose “attention was already shifting” to the vote given that “nothing new was emerging” from the arguments and further encouraged by the strong State of the Union address to vote to end the trial early. Then, things got exciting when Republican prosecutors demanded to interview Lewinsky as compelled by the immunity deal, which Democrats then “bombarded” with questions about the point so close to the witness vote, and after already having detailed testimony on the record. It also concluded that the White House refused to interview Lewinsky separately as part of their strategy to keep her “as far away as possible from the trial of Mr. Clinton,” and that the idea of her testifying on the Senate floor gave them “shivers.” It concludes, however, that despite Lewinsky returning to the spotlight “the odds are still on President Clinton surviving.”

Unlike the *Times*, *Irish Independent* framed Lewinsky as reluctant to testify. Ian Brodie of the *Times London* described Lewinsky arriving with a baseball cap pulled low over her eyes, as “Democrats and Republicans were at each other's throats.” After describing the turmoil on both sides, he includes the “crusty but widely respected Democrat” Robert Byrd’s argument that there are not the votes to convict Clinton and it is time to move on. While the other newspapers described Lewinsky as cooperative, the *Independent* notes that she only flew in under the orders of a federal judge. Though this article is more critical of Lewinsky’s conduct, it still concludes that the interview was unnecessary given that the votes to remove Clinton were not achievable.

On **January 26**, the Senate prepared to vote on calling depositions from Lewinsky and other witnesses, while Democrats prepared to push to end the trial early.

The *Belfast Telegraph* ran an article from *PA News* that described the Republican request to find Clinton guilty without removal as “face-saving.” At this point, *PA* writes that “it is widely believed” the Senate does not have the votes to remove him. The article describes the plan of compromise as giving the republicans “cover with constituents who believe Clinton should be ousted.” This is an assertion; however, it is based on the Republican’s change of behavior once acquittal became more likely. The article includes the prosecution’s perspective that the trial should continue with a shortened list of witnesses, against the recommendation of Robert Byrd. It ends with a word from Clinton’s defense lawyer Nicole Seligman that there was no longer a case to convict, and it is time to end the trial. The article, in astutely recognizing the Republican’s motivation to prolong the trial, frames it with a pro-Clinton slant through one-sided content.

The Irish Times ran three articles on the 26th, all framed in support of a quick end to the trial and depicting Clinton as in a strong position to succeed. Their DC correspondent Joe Carroll wrote two of them. The first recaps the closed-door debate of Byrd’s motion to end the trial the next day but states, correctly, that the Republican majority is likely to reject the motion despite 67% of Americans wanting the trial to end. It then moves on to the more uncertain debate of calling witnesses, with the closing paragraph being a quote from Lewinsky’s lawyer that she would like to avoid ““what cannot be anything but an unseemly circus.”” The article is mostly a straightforward recap, but the polls and logic of ending impeachment given the unlikelihood that 12

Democrats will flip gives it the framing of seeking a speedy end to the trial. Carroll's second article of the day blames Republicans for breaking down the compromise plan over wanting to call witnesses. A quote from White House Spokesman Joe Lockhart criticizes the Republicans for refusing to work with the other side of the aisle. It also quotes Trent Lott in saying the American people do not want to hasten the due process and writes that Republicans "have been insisting" that witnesses are needed. Rather than support the Republican hope that they can sway 12 Democrats to remove the president, the article notes that there have been "increasing signs" they will lose some Republican support for the calling of witnesses. The article concludes with a quote from potential Dick Morris as saying Clinton felt like a victim, who "honestly believed he was telling the truth," and that "you can't be both delusional and perjurous." Overall, while the coverage provides perspectives from both sides, the Republicans are depicted as unnecessarily prolonging the trial with the hopes of milking political clout.

The third article in the *Times* comes from Martin Kettle, who writes that the trial has unified the Democratic party behind their president, calling it "one of the most remarkable outcomes of the crisis." It described Byrd's motion as the "climactic moment," because of his independence and previous criticism of Clinton that rallied any wavering Democrats. It also covered Ernest Hollings' announcement that he would vote for dismissal. He writes that the president is likely to emerge unscathed, and that "The Democrats have managed to have the best of both worlds, placing themselves on the side of the voters by wanting to end the process, while enjoying the spectacle of the Republicans struggling to keep it going." The article frames Clinton and the Democratic Party as likely to succeed and coming out of impeachment stronger than before.

Irish Independent also ran three articles, two from the *Daily Telegraph* and one from *The Times London*, and their selected coverage began to be more critical of Republicans than before. In “No quick fix as senators dither,” Hugo Gurdon writes that the senators were hoping for a way to end impeachment soon. He writes they are still stuck on the question of witnesses, and that “This question, shirked by the Senate two weeks ago amid ‘bipartisan’ self-congratulation, raised its ugly head. Senators desperately want to give the impression that they are dispensing impartial justice, but equally desperately want to avoid being sullied by the details of alleged presidential criminality.” It describes the turmoil as prosecution “begged” them not to acquit and the jury “wrangled over” the case. It also said that despite the prosecution putting forth a solution to include Lewinsky to testify that Clinton “masterminded a criminal cover up,” the senate was confused over how to proceed. It also said that the Republicans rejected a “political fix” to dismiss the case, because it was not a serious compromise. The framing of the article shows that the Senate is weighed down by partisanship, but unlike the other newspapers this coverage promotes calling witnesses to help clarify the situation.

The second article from the *Independent*, written by Hugh Davies for the *Daily Telegraph*, is a lot less sympathetic to Lewinsky than the other two papers, depicting her as media savvy and attention seeking. It describes first class flights and \$1 million dollar book deals, and that “she swiftly circulated a story that she was still in some agony,” by telling a friend she cried herself to sleep, and that friend relaying it to reporters. The paper asks “There was some wonder that if Miss Lewinsky was in such private pain, why didn’t she enter the Mayflower [hotel] through the backdoor? Instead,

she chose to push her way through a mob of photographers in the lobby, with bodyguards elbowing people aside.” Followed by a quote from Lucianne Goldberg that she just wanted attention. This article blatantly pushes the idea that Lewinsky is personally profiting from the impeachment trial, which makes her appear to be less of a victim. There is little to no newsworthiness in the article that notes the *Washington Post* even chronicled her breakfast order, and its sole purpose is to cast doubt on Lewinsky’s character.

The third article published in the *Independent*, written by Andrew Marshall for *The Times London*, is headlined “Republicans in a cleft stick,” and leads with “The Republican party is courting disaster by continuing to pursue impeachment, opinion polls show.” It writes that the “more hard core” Republicans “Amongst the party’s religious conservatives” want to pursue impeachment. This depicts the impeachment trial as extreme. The article states that “it is the Republicans, and only the Republicans, who can end the impeachment saga this week, by deciding against having any witnesses.” Unlike the first article from the *Independent*, this perspective does not support the continued pursuit of witnesses and asserts that Republicans are only doing it to satisfy the “best organised” and wealthy part of their party.

By the end of January, all three newspapers depicted the Republican motivations for pursuing impeachment as strictly partisan. The *Telegraph* showed Clinton as a popular and unfairly treated president, still working to help the people of Northern Ireland and almost guaranteed to be acquitted. The *Times* more cautiously acknowledged Clinton’s likely acquittal and noted Clinton’s use of The Good Friday

Agreement in his own defense. It framed impeachment as a distraction from more important presidential duties, such as diplomacy. The *Telegraph* wrote that Clinton was guilty but would be acquitted due to politics and it was time to move on from the trial. All three newspapers criticized the conduct of Senate Republicans, who at that point were grasping at straws.

Mid-February: The Senate acquits Clinton

The next date when all three newspapers reported on the Clinton impeachment was a few weeks later, when acquittal became the most likely outcome for the trial.

On **February 9**, the vote to acquit seemed likely, but not guaranteed.

The *Belfast Telegraph* once again reminded its readers of Clinton's involvement in the Northern Ireland peace accords, with "Officials play down Clinton talks role." Desmond McCartan writes that while the local parties "sought to dampen speculation of an imminent intervention by President Bill Clinton" over the issue of arms decommissioning, while "behind-the-scenes signals" showed they would be asking Clinton for help. Sources told the newspaper that they hoped the parties themselves would reach a solution, but that "they did not rule out" Clinton would be called if they could not reach an agreement within the month. Describing ongoing meetings Clinton had with Tony Blair, and states that officials did not want to publicly confirm his likely intervention. Two anonymous quotes from a Downing Street spokesman and a London source said that Clinton was standing by and "ready to help" in any capacity. The article frames Clinton as being the solution to the impasse between the local party conflict and being a positive and necessary influence on the debate in Northern Ireland.

The *Irish Times*' coverage that day from Joe Carroll reported that the trial would go behind closed doors, but that "there is now no doubt that the President will be acquitted... because there will not be the required two-thirds majority of 67 votes." It included coverage of the final presentations by Republican prosecutors, including lengthy quotes from Congressman James Sensenbrenner saying that "a lie is still a lie." It also gave the White House argument that there was not sufficient evidence to prosecute. By describing the arguments as "by now familiar," and quoting another senator saying he was tired of the proceedings, the article frames the Republicans as prolonging the trial and threatening to filibuster in their desperation to cling to a sinking ship.

Irish Independent zeroed in on the possibility of a censure in "Clinton set to slip off the hook as trial nears end" by Hugo Gurdon of *Times London*. He, too, writes that the Senate is "already sure to acquit" for the charges of perjury and obstruction. It also quotes Sensenbrenner on "a lie is still a lie." It also prefaces Henry Hyde's comment that "It isn't over yet." as coming from a man "facing defeat." It does, however, state that Democrats "desperately want to censure him," for his behavior, a motion the paper claims "ignores the question of whether the President committed crimes in covering up the affair." It notes that Republicans see censure as "a Democratic ploy to get 'political cover' for letting a guilty man off the hook." The article entertains the idea of a censure but depicts it as solely a political move which holds no true accountability. The headline supports the idea that Clinton is a guilty man who has succeeded in escaping punishment.

On **February 12**, the newspapers covered the beginning of Clinton's victory lap for a guaranteed acquittal that was still incoming at the time of publication in their time zone.

The *Belfast Telegraph* ran the headline "Upbeat Clinton plans Congress revenge," and wrote that the president was "supremely confident" and that an acquittal was certain. They wrote that press secretary Joe Lockhart said Clinton would be working hard to return Congress to Democratic control but would not be targeting the 13 Republican house managers. It then states that Trent Lott "blasted" talk of revenge, calling it deeply troubling. The article ends by stating two-thirds of Americans think he should not be convicted and removed. The article focuses more on the positive White House attitude than the criticism for unsightly political revenge plans.

Irish Times framed the same story differently from the headline, by saying "Clinton accused of plan for revenge." The shorter article does not include Lockhart's statement, but says Republicans "reacted angrily" to a *New York Times* report that Clinton had vowed to win back the house. This was more of a straight news article, setting up expectations for future events.

Meanwhile, *Irish Independent* ran two articles about the upcoming acquittal. The first, "Clinton's elite defense team," is frankly a sexist mess from correspondent Damian Whitworth of *The Times London* beginning with the subhead "the women who seduced the Senate." It described the lawyers as enjoying themselves and "giggling," comparing them to schoolgirls, and taking the time to describe their "striking figures" and complexions. The first mention of their performance as lawyers comes over halfway through the article, as arguing Clinton as a defender of civil rights in a speech

that deeply moved at least two senators. It describes the pair as “indisputably brilliant,” but the article’s focus on their gender implies that their greatest asset is being women defending a man accused of sexual misconduct. The second article from the *Independent* reported that Clinton was expected to win on all counts, exceeding “even his most optimistic imaginations.” By Dejevsky and Marshall of *Independent News*, it describes the president’s triumph after three Republicans defected, and reports that the move for a censure was unlikely. Unlike the *Telegraph* and *Times*, this article reports that the White House has pledged to be a “gloat-free zone,” even though he will use the momentum to regain Democratic control of Congress. It writes that the president plans to meet with Republican leaders “to stress the need to work together and let bygones be bygones.” This article is more accommodating to Clinton, framing the decision to retake Congress as savvy political strategy rather than revenge. It does not mention the Republican objection to the statement.

Finally, on **February 13**, Clinton was acquitted, and the impeachment trial ended.

Belfast Telegraph led with a headline quoting Clinton: “I’m profoundly sorry.” It depicted Clinton as presidential in his victory, speaking with “plain, sober words.” The subhead said that he was “contrite” after his acquittal, a word choice in direct opposition to the popular suggestion that he had not learned from his mistakes. The article recounts his speech responding to the verdict, and focuses on a moment where a reporter asked him if he could forgive and forget to which Clinton replied, “I believe any person who asks for forgiveness has to be prepared to give it.” It ends looking forward to Hillary Clinton’s potential run for Senate. The article depicts Clinton as

presidential and does not include any quotes dissenting the decision to acquit. It distorts the acquittal as closing the book on the trouble of impeachment and makes no mention of the partisan divide it has left behind.

The Irish Times also depicted Clinton's speech as sober, in "Clinton's apologies avoid any note of triumph." Carroll opens with "President Clinton put a horrendous year behind him by apologising to the American people." It describes him as standing alone, "pale and strained looking," showing no signs of triumph or vindication. It also quoted the response about forgiveness. It reports that the President did not watch the verdict, but Lewinsky did. It quotes Lockhart saying that Clinton is "relieved, but there is really nothing to celebrate." Carroll notes that Clinton was "spared a toughly-worded motion of censure," because Republicans felt it would give the Democrats "political cover." The article follows suit with the White House in depicting Clinton as relieved but drained and wanting to move on, but that the whole ordeal left Congress divided.

Irish Independent ran four articles, in a section titled "Clinton: His greatest comeback." One article is a straightforward recap of the investigation and affair leading to the impeachment. In another article, Daniel Jeffreys wrote about the "devastating" damage Lewinsky's upcoming book could still inflict on Clinton, in an article that seemingly supports it. It states that she is writing the book "presumably so the world would not see her as a slut, but as an intelligent woman wronged by a man who claimed she had won his heart and changed his life." It relies on sources who say it will be affectionate toward Clinton, "even when she is describing the cynical manipulations that she says broke her heart," and that it will show Clinton lied to her about wanting to divorce Hillary Clinton. Through unnamed sources and insiders, the article promises a

book that will make Clinton look like a driveling manipulator, but pivots at the end to say the entire spectacle is proof of “the modern American disease” of attention seeking. He reports that Lewinsky forgives him in the book, as did Congress, and “None of them are doing so based on Clinton’s innocence. They are just acquiescing in his lies.” This article reads like a gossip column, though it appears in the features section. It is very critical of the president’s conduct, and sides with the Republican argument that he is emerging from the impeachment trial having hurt everyone except for himself.

In another article, Marshall and Dejevsky of *Independent News Service* break down the winners and losers of the impeachment trial. Of the winners, who gained popularity or did their jobs effectively: Hillary Clinton, Cheryl Mills, and Matt Drudge. They list the losers as Kenneth Starr, Newt Gingrich, and Paula Jones for hurting their public image or losing money. They note that Jones did not receive the apology from Clinton she had set out to get. They call Hillary Clinton “her husband’s most effective weapon against his feminist critics.” Those who stand by Clinton are the winners, as well as Matt Drudge who profited from the spectacle. The article depicts a net loss for Republicans, and a gain for Democrats who are stronger than ever.

Finally, the *Independent* covered Clinton’s acquittal, calling it “the greatest triumph of his turbulent political career.” Bronwen Maddox writes that Clintons “voice trembled and his eyes were red,” and noted the forgiveness comment. This article includes a quote from Henry Hyde saying he had no regrets for prosecuting him, and that the issue was that the public did not care enough. The *Independent* calls the vote a “decisive end to the 13-month sex-and-lies scandal that paralysed the White House and Congress and riveted the world.” The article does not exaggerate Clinton’s humbleness,

and includes a Republican quote, but also says that impeachment had come to a clean end.

When Clinton was sure to be acquitted, the *Belfast Telegraph* focused on the positive influence he has had over the Northern Ireland peace process, and depicted him as humble and presidential. *The Irish Times* showed a tired but triumphant leader, spared from the worst but now forced to recon with the divisions the impeachment trial left. *The Irish Independent* saw the acquittal without censure as Clinton escaped all accountability for his actions, continuing a lifelong pattern of doing whatever he wanted. The newspaper supported both Hillary Clinton and Lewinsky in their post-impeachment endeavors, but did not find comfort in the future of American politics.

The Clinton Era: Key findings

During the Clinton impeachment, people in Northern Ireland and Ireland had three factual, dependable, and thorough newspapers to get their information from; but these newspapers framed the trial, and Clinton himself, in distinctly different ways.

The *Belfast Telegraph* was located in the center of the conflict, a city where the IRA once detonated 22 bombs in one day, and with an office within walking distance of The Europa Hotel, hit 36 times and called “the most bombed hotel in the world” (Horror, 1997). Its readers were living the direct consequences of the Troubles, and dared to hope for peace as the Good Friday Agreement formed. This, I believe, motivated the newspaper’s defense of Clinton throughout his impeachment trial. His removal from office would have untold consequences on the ongoing negotiations. The newspaper often emphasized his role in the peace process, and assured its audience from an early date that he was likely to be acquitted. Clinton was not guaranteed

positive coverage, however, as shown when he bombed Baghdad, killing dozens of civilians during Ramadan. As the trial continued, the *Telegraph* highlighted George Mitchell's support of his defense, which provided an endorsement from a universally appreciated American politician in Ireland. When Clinton was acquitted, the *Telegraph* anticipated his future work on behalf of Northern Ireland.

The *Irish Times*, located in Dublin, depicted Clinton as a morally questionable character, but a levelheaded diplomat who should remain in office. Its coverage often provided thorough context and political intentions behind statements it provided from both sides and followed quotes with in-text fact-checking. Its coverage was the most objective of the three, because it provided both sides of the initial impeachment argument. As the trial continued, however, it stopped giving equal space to Republicans who it suggested did not have a strong case for impeachment and were prosecuting on a partisan basis. The *Times* questioned the effect the trial would have on Clinton's ability to perform his duties, specifically diplomacy in Northern Ireland, and supported the censure option to bring the trial to a speedy conclusion. Like the *Telegraph*, it took a humanitarian stance when Clinton bombed Iraq, criticizing the US and UK for hurting civilians on the eve of the impeachment vote. The *Times* also depicted Clinton more as a politician than as a friend, explaining the strategy behind statements from him, the White House, and Hillary.

Irish Independent, based in Dublin but getting most of its coverage from London-based outlets, was the most critical of Clinton. It initially supported the decision to widen the impeachment inquiry and was the only newspaper to suggest resignation as a quick solution to the crisis impeachment would cause at home and

abroad. It explicitly connected the airstrikes with an attempt to delay the impeachment vote, and described Clinton as in deep trouble for most of the trial. While depicting President Clinton as incompetent, it praised the First Lady for her ability to organize his defense and continue the Irish diplomatic process while her husband floundered. When Clinton was acquitted, the newspaper gaged at his personal conduct going unpunished, but recognized that Republicans lost the plot long before the vote came in.

The newspapers, influenced by their locations and motivations, provided three different depictions of the trial. None of their characterizations were necessarily false, and together provide a very accurate summation of events: it is simultaneously true that Clinton behaved poorly and that the Republicans were not prolonging the trial for the good of the country. It is true that Clinton gave a stirring State of the Union speech in his own defense, but would have been in trouble without Hillary's support. The vast differences in covering the same information show the power that framing can have over time. Readers of the *Telegraph* would likely have a much different opinion of Clinton than the *Independent*.

Framing does not automatically equal bad or misleading journalism. The newspaper closest to the conflict, the *Belfast Telegraph*, served an audience that would benefit most by Clinton staying in office, and where the consequences of his removal could cost lives if the negotiations dissolved. The *Telegraph*, in its critical lens of Clinton, brought up important and otherwise unchecked questions about his spending and frequent sexual misconduct. Having coverage that approached the same story with obviously different questions and critiques provided readers in the area with a more thorough understanding of the impeachment process. In a healthy journalism industry

with multiple localized newspapers, fact-based framing can provide compelling narratives and new approaches to coverage. Readers and sources in the area also read the newspaper knowing its established reputation of leanings, with reporting embracing the fact that all people, journalists included, have biases informed by their environment. This may have built more trust through transparency unseen in outlets that practice false balance.

Throughout the trial, Clinton also relied on generating positive coverage in Ireland and Northern Ireland. While facing criticism at home, he pointed to his work on the Good Friday Agreement during his State of the Union address, and continued to hold functions promoting the work there. He described the negotiations as one of the “great passions” of his presidency, but it was also one of his only successful interventions, and a peaceful one at that (The Decision; Riley, 2021). It showed that his administration, and further the US, could still do some good for the world through diplomacy.

The Trump Impeachment

Though a historic compromise, The Good Friday Agreement did not completely solve sectarian tensions in Northern Ireland. Over 20 years, the terms of the agreement have been incrementally implemented with ongoing resistance and debate between groups. The Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin are the two most popular parties in the country, in-part due to Catholics now being 45% of the population. Protestant and Catholic communities and schools remained largely segregated, and there are 80 walls dividing neighborhoods across the country (McClements, 2019). After prominent Sinn Féin leader Martin McGuinness resigned in March of 2017, the parties reached an impasse and Northern Ireland's government did not meet until January of 2020. While the parties were split over several issues, the most pressing was the UK's recent choice to leave the European Union. In 2016, the DUP supported the vote to leave, but around 56% of Northern Ireland voted to remain, which Sinn Féin supported (Landow, 2021). The decision to leave has escalated existing tensions, now throwing funding and the currently open border between North and South into question. According to *The Irish Times*, "Neither side wants the return of border checks because of the risk to peace whereby a physical border infrastructure would be considered a potential target for paramilitaries" (Brexit, 2021). The negotiations have continued and, as of May 2021, the parties are still debating how to manage Northern Ireland's position in Brexit, and many Unionists believe that the UK has sidelined Northern Ireland in the process, a fear dating back to the Good Friday Agreement which they believe gave Republicans the better deal (PA, 2021). That contributed to violent riots breaking out in Belfast in for the first time in years in April of 2021 (Castle, 2021).

One anecdote demonstrates the vast difference between Clinton and Trump’s knowledge of the conflict in Ireland. In June of 2019, Trump met with Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, and said “Probably you will ask me about Brexit because I just left some very good people who are very much involved with Brexit, as you know. I think that will all work out very well, and also for you with your wall, your border.” Trump followed the gaffe — which Vardkar quickly corrected — with “I’m sure it’s going to work out well” (Reuters, 2019). The Trump presidency, following two decades of less frequent relations between the US and Northern Ireland, marked a low point. While the Clinton administration accommodated all parties — but was more inclined to draw hard lines when it came to Britain — the Trump administration often sided with the UK and Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is disliked by both North and South for his political ostracizing of Ireland during Brexit (Lippman, 2019; Gordon, 2021). Trump publicly supported Johnson’s political career and called Brexit a “blessing for the world” (Elliott, 2017).

While the Clinton impeachment closely aligned with diplomacy in Northern Ireland, the two subjects only crossed paths for Trump when he needed somewhere to send ousted White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, who admitted to withholding aid to Ukraine by Trump’s request, contradicting the President. Mulvaney took the position of US Special Envoy to Northern Ireland in March of 2020, once held by George Mitchell, which the Trump administration had left vacant for three years.

On July 25, 2019, President Trump called Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky and asked him to investigate his opponent Joe Biden’s son’s business dealings as a “favor.” Following his decision to withhold aid to Ukraine, an anonymous

whistleblower filed a complaint in August that Trump was “using the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 election” (Naylor, 2019). House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi then announced a formal impeachment inquiry on September 24. The House Intelligence Committee held public impeachment hearings with witnesses Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, former Ukraine ambassador Marie Yovanovitch who Trump discussed in the phone call, and EU ambassador Gordon Sondland. The Judiciary Committee then began hearings on December 4 and would soon vote to impeach the president (Naylor, 2019).

As of 2019, *The Irish Times* was the only newspaper to have retained a White House Correspondent, Suzanne Lynch, who wrote about one or two articles per day during Trump’s first impeachment trial. The *Belfast Telegraph* and *Irish Independent* both relied heavily on the *AP News* wire for their White House reporting, and as a result there were only six days in the entire three-month impeachment process where all three newspapers ran localized accounts of the trial, four times fewer days than during the Clinton trial. Of those days, the *Telegraph* and *Independent* often ran the same story from the *PA* wire. The once dynamic perspectives have been replaced by conglomerate coverage. Though Trump was not as closely involved in Irish diplomacy as Clinton, it demonstrates a troubling gap in coverage for Irish readers wanting to know how the US president’s impeachment could affect them at home.

December 2019: The House impeaches Trump

December 11 marked the day after Jerry Nadler, Nancy Pelosi, and other Democrat judiciary leaders revealed the two articles of impeachment for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

Irish Times ran two stories by Lynch that described the announcement and upcoming vote on the articles of impeachment. In the first, she quotes Nadler promising to defend the constitution while standing in front of a row of American flags and a portrait of George Washington. The article includes quotes from Trump's Twitter and the White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham saying it was a "witch hunt," but follows those quotes by writing that Democrats argue he pressured Ukraine. The article explains the source of the charges coming from the phone call when "Mr Trump asked his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky for an investigation into former Vice-President Joe Biden, a potential challenger for the presidency next year." While the article quoted Grisham in full the first time, the second quote is introduced as "An indication of the bitter partisan battle ahead if Mr Trump is impeached and the process then moves to the Senate as set out in the constitution, Ms Grisham predicted that Mr Trump would be "fully exonerated" by the Senate "because he did nothing wrong." It ends by stating that because Republicans control the Senate, Trump is not expected to be convicted. The pairing of these two quotes forms a subtle claim that the president will be exonerated because of political control, not innocence. The article depicts the Democrats as measured and constitutional, and Trump's team as reactionary.

The second article from *The Times* explains the preparation before the vote on impeachment terms. It describes the current charges and focuses on the "busy schedule" the House simultaneously faces under threat of another shutdown. The first and only quote comes from Trump at a campaign rally, where he called it a weak impeachment. This is followed by polling showing that 45% of Americans believe he should be impeached, only a 1% increase from the month prior. The article ends with an update

from the Department of Justice inspector general Michael Horowitz, that there was no political bias in the FBI's Russian interference investigation "despite suggestions by Republican members of the panel that significant elements in the agency were biased against Mr Trump." The article is mostly summative and explanatory, but gives the impression that the Democratic party is adding impeachment to an already long to-do list that could lead to another government shutdown if not resolved.

On the 11th, the *Belfast Telegraph* and *Irish Independent* ran the same short article from *PA's* Los Angeles Entertainment Correspondent, about Jim Starlin, the creator of Marvel super villain Thanos, responding to Trump's use of an edited gif putting his head on the character's body. It notes that the tweet came a few hours after the articles of impeachment were announced, and the quote from Starlin called Trump a "pompous fool," who "enjoys comparing himself to a mass murderer." The writer also said, "Fortunately all things, even national nightmares, eventually come to an end." Though this is more entertainment news than impeachment coverage, It's the only coverage by a more local reporter the newspapers ran and shows Trump as a villain who fantasizes about turning Democrats into dust, "similar to Thanos's victims."

On **December 19**, the newspapers reacted to the previous day's impeachment vote, where the House of Representatives charged Trump on both counts.

The Irish Times wrote that "Washington was plunged into a political standoff," and "in a sign of the political battle ahead, House speaker Nancy Pelosi suggested that she could delay transferring the articles of impeachment to the upper chamber if it did not guarantee a fair process." It then recounted Senate majority leader Mitch

McConnel's "scathing attack" on Democrats, followed by Pelosi's response calling him a rogue leader in the Senate. It ends by giving Pelosi's criticism of Trump's recent "disparaging comments" about Congresswoman Debbie Dingell's husband. The article provides both sides of the impeachment debate and frames the argument as deeply partisan.

Belfast Telegraph and *Irish Independent* both ran two articles from *PA*, one from the City Editor and one from the entertainment reporter. The first, "Trump impeachment fails to excite the markets," leads with "The impeachment of a US president should be the kind of news that sends markets into a panic. But Donald Trump is no ordinary president, so, most traders simply shrugged and carried on." The article then reviews notable stocks in the UK, and notes that "The pound continued to sink against the dollar since Prime Minister Boris Johnson said legislation would be passed to block any future extensions to the transition period after Brexit." Though brief, the article frames the Trump presidency as hectic enough that historical events such as a presidential impeachment do not warrant market panic as they once would.

The second article from *PA* reviews a handful of American celebrity reactions to the impeachment announcement to the impeachment trial, which the article states comes from "enlisting a foreign ally to investigate a political rival ahead of the 2020 election." Each celebrity reaction is celebratory, from outspoken critics such as Alyssa Milano and Rob Reiner. It ends with a quote from Trump saying the impeachment is "political suicide" by Democrats, and notes that it is expected he will be acquitted. By only including celebrities in favor of impeachment, the content is framed that the president is unpopular, despite the likelihood of his acquittal.

Irish Independent's news desk ran two original articles as well, one an explainer of the impeachment process and the other announcing his impeachment. The first describes impeachment as a political trial, which describes the president “allegedly” asking Zelensky for a favor, and “allegedly” seeking information on Biden, then that he is “alleged to have used military aid and the promise of a White House meeting as leverage.” The *Times* coverage did not preface the phone call with allegedly. Though using the word alleged, the article then describes Zelensky’s precarious situation which supports the factual basis of the allegation. It also states that “The allegations made during Mr Trump's call against Mr Biden and his son have since been discredited,” which plainly dismisses the basis of Trump’s defense. The article also includes sections for the Democrat and Republican responses. The article is evenhanded, and in this case the facts being behind the Democrat’s argument lends support to the framing that Trump should be impeached.

The second article from the *Independent* more blatantly criticizes Trump, calling the impeachment “an indelible mark on a purposely disruptive presidency.” It follows by saying of Democrats, “many framed [impeachment] as their duty to protect the Constitution to uphold the nation's system of checks and balances.” Of the Republican response, they write that “Republicans stood by their party's leader, who has frequently tested the bounds of civic norms.” Again, Trump is framed as being a rogue president, and the article supports the claim that he should be checked by congress. It also leans toward the claim that Republicans are voting along party lines, and not with the law.

The coverage of the start of impeachment continued to the next day, **December 20.**

Irish Times correspondent Lynch wrote two articles about the impeachment trial. She describes Trump as “defiant” and that he “hit out at Democrats.” The article focuses on the Republican response, including Jeff Van Drew’s flip to the Republican Party. It includes several repetitive quotes from Trump about the trial being a hoax, and from Mitch McConnell calling it unfair. These support the article’s closing perspective from Chuck Schumer that they had “not put forward ‘a single defense of the President of the United States on the merits’ of the case.” The second article reports on the partisan Congress and Pelosi’s “surprise move” to delay the articles being moved to the Senate. The first quote comes from Mitch McConnell, who spoke of the two-step process previously used in the Clinton trial. Lynch writes that Pelosi and the Democrats are seeking witnesses. The article then describes a “worrying development for Mr Trump,” when *Christianity Today* called for his removal. It includes the magazine’s statement that Trump had immorally violated the constitution, and the article ends with Trump’s response claiming that the publication was failing and radically left-leaning. This article depicts McConnell as more reasonable and more in control of the process than Trump, who conflicted with the majority leader by preferring an immediate trial without witnesses while also claiming the Democrats were not giving him due process.

The *Belfast Telegraph* and *Irish Independent* ran the same *PA* article, “Donald Trump continues to rail against impeachment.” It reported that “Mr Trump has seen a Senate trial as his means for vindication, viewing acquittal as a partial antidote to the impeachment’s stain on his legacy,” followed by an explanation of Pelosi’s decision to delay the trial. After stating that a White House official “mused” that the delay would serve to help the President, the paper wrote that “Such messaging has been effective in

driving outrage among the president’s core supporters, which Mr Trump’s campaign hopes will help propel him to reelection next year.” It then fact-checks Trump’s statement that the delay was unconstitutional, by stating that “There is no constitutional requirement for the Democrats to transmit the articles swiftly, or at all.” The article depicts Trump as reactionary and unprofessional, and at one point states “Meanwhile, Mr Trump insisted on Thursday that he has not been bothered by the whole impeachment episode, despite all evidence to the contrary.” The coverage does not shy away from correcting Trump, and the straight news article again frames the Democrats as facing backlash for strategic and constitutionally allowed process decisions. *Irish Independent* also ran a news brief from *Telegraph* reporter Rozina Sabur, reporting that “Donald Trump branded Democrats "anti-American" yesterday as he attempted to turn his impeachment into a political advantage” by launching a fundraising drive. It also reported “a concerted effort to shape the narrative, he tweeted a picture of himself pointing at the camera saying: ‘In reality they're not after me, they're after you.’” Though brief, the article calls out the president’s blatant use of the impeachment trial to scare and manipulate his base out of millions of dollars.

During those three days in December of 2019, all three newspapers portrayed the impeachment trial as a constitutionally valid decision to check a President abusing his power. *The Irish Times* focused on the hyper-partisanship in the Capitol and predicted that the Republicans would vote along party lines regardless of the evidence. The *Belfast Telegraph* and *Irish Independent* ran many of the same articles, including celebrity reactions to the trial. Of the limited news coverage, Trump was portrayed as

unpredictable, and using the trial to stir up his base in time for the reelection campaign. The *Independent* ran a few original articles about the impeachment trial, which framed Trump as disruptive, and leaned toward the Democrats' arguments. Though all three papers depicted Trump in a poor light, there was a noticeable lack of localized coverage.

January 2020: The Senate Trial

On **January 15**, the House of Representatives voted to impeach Trump and send the articles of impeachment to the Senate for a trial.

The Irish Times ran an article explaining the results, mostly along party lines, and the next steps in the trial. Trump is given a single-worded quote from a speech, that he called the trial a "hoax," while Pelosi is given two paragraphs of comments on the trial, including that he "tried to use the appropriations process as his private ATM machine." One section focuses on Adam Schiff's role in the trial and explains the current evidence supporting the claim that Trump pressured Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden. Lynch writes that "the White House indicated it will take a bullish approach" to the trial. Through content framing, the article gives more credence to the Democratic argument than Trump's defense.

Belfast Telegraph and *Irish Independent* ran the same article from *PA* about the impeachment trial judge Chief Justice John Roberts using the phrase "OK, Boomer" in the supreme court for the first time while debating age discrimination. The article has nothing to do with impeachment, though the headline and lead identify Roberts as the impeachment trial judge.

The coverage on **January 21** anticipated the commencement of the trial in the Senate.

The Irish Times published two articles by Lynch, the first giving readers five things to look for. These were the debate over witnesses, Trump's legal argument, details about Ukraine, the Senate's questions, and indications on how long it will last. The article is a straightforward explanation of key players and the indicated arguments from both sides. It anticipates that information from Lev Parnas about the surveillance of former US Diplomat Marie Yovanovitch could "unsettle some Republicans." Unlike previous coverage, it does not state that Trump is likely to be impeached, but suggests that questions from Senators may lead some Republicans to break rank. The second article from the *Times* gives descriptions of a lone protestor outside the Senate building, and school children wandering the halls on field trips as drama unfolded in the main chamber. Lynch writes that the Senate considers itself more "austere" than the House, and that it operates with "the notion that the Senate is a more deliberate, considered body that operates at a higher plane than the feverish antics of the House." It follows this with recalling that 21 years earlier, "virtually all senators committed to keeping a discussion of the president's sex life off the Senate floor" during the Clinton trial. The article mostly sets the scene for the upcoming trial, describing the behavior of key players, such as "familiar faces from the last presidential primary race such as Republican senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, who have transformed from never-Trumpers to staunch defenders of the president." The article frames the Senate as taking impeachment seriously and presents a calm-before-the-storm atmosphere for the incoming trial.

Belfast Telegraph and *Irish Independent* ran the same article from *PA* instructing readers on what to look for during the trial. The lead writes that “The usually dignified US senate could see rising tensions along party lines.” Most of the article describes the rules for the trial and introduces the prosecution and defense teams. It states that “Donald Trump has cast some big personalities in his defence team,” who are “less experienced in the senate than the house prosecutors as a whole.” The article is a relatively straightforward explainer piece. The *Independent* also ran a brief from *The Telegraph* that Trump’s legal team asked for a quick rejection of the impeachment case, via a 171-page legal brief. It explains that his lawyers argued “he cannot be guilty of abuse of power... because he is not accused of violating any law, unlike past presidents who have faced impeachment.” The brief explains Trump’s legal strategy before the trial.

Throughout the month of January, there were only two days where all three newspapers ran impeachment coverage written in Ireland or the UK. The *Irish Times* gave more space to the Democrat argument for removal than the Trump defense, and questioned if the strong case against the president could cause him to break rank. The *Belfast Telegraph* and the *Irish Independent* used a *PA News* article explaining the upcoming process. The *Times*’ thorough coverage provided Irish readers with an Irish perspective of the trial, though it did not relate the events directly to its potential impact on international affairs.

February: The Senate acquits Trump

On **February 5**, the day after Trump delivered his State of the Union Speech, the Senate acquitted Trump on both counts.

The Irish Times combined coverage of the address and the Iowa caucus in “Pelosi tears up copy of Trump’s State of the Union speech as tensions flare in Washington.” It recounts the incident as a retaliation for Trump’s behavior, with “As the president entered the chamber shortly before 9pm, he was swamped by well-wishers and Republican members clamoring to shake his hand. Ms Pelosi appeared to offer her hand as he approached the dais, but Mr Trump turned away as he handed her a copy of his speech. As he concluded his address 90 minutes later, she slowly and deliberately tore up her copy of the speech.” It then quotes sections of Trump’s speech and claims on job growth, and quotes his exaggerated claims about crime in sanctuary cities without refuting them. The article ends, however, by stating that “The Democratic National Committee disputed many of the claims made in Mr Trump’s speech. It noted that black unemployment had actually fallen by 9 per cent under the Obama administration compared to only 2 per cent under Mr Trump. It also queried Mr Trump’s claims about falling prescription drug costs, noting that drug prices ‘have continued to skyrocket under Trump’s watch.’” The article begins and ends with the Democrat’s rejection of Trump, but it still gives a lot of space to Trump’s claims. Unlike the coverage of Clinton’s State of the Union Address 21 years earlier, however, the speech is not depicted as a huge triumph on the eve of acquittal.

The second article from the *Times* covers the acquittal, and focuses on Romney’s departure from party lines despite facing backlash. Romney is given the first

few quotes, saying that Trump was guilty. The next section notes the “Democratic unity,” even from Doug Jones of Alabama, and contrasts Trump’s tweet of a video stating “Trump4EVA” with solemn statements from the Democrats. It also includes a statement from McConnell claiming the case was incoherent, directly followed by a paragraph explaining that it was the quickest trial in history and the only not to include witnesses because of Republican intervention “despite calls from Democrats to allow a full trial.” It also states that “the outcome of the trial was never in doubt, given that a two-third majority was needed in the senate to convict him.” The article then transitions to the State of the Union address, saying Trump’s speech was “overshadowed” by Nancy Pelosi ripping up the speech. Again, the acquittal is not depicted as a victory for democracy and the President, rather a continuation of the failure to hold Trump accountable.

Despite the acquittal verdict, the only story from non-American reporters that the *Belfast Telegraph* and *Irish Independent* ran came from *PA*, titled, “Mike Pompeo’s attempt to troll Nancy Pelosi with Simpsons meme backfires.” It describes online “ridicule” directed at the Secretary of State after he responded to Pelosi ripping up the speech with a picture of Lisa Simpson crying and ripping up an essay. Because the scene came from Lisa witnessing political corruption and losing her faith in government, *PA* writes, “some drew comparisons with Mr Trump’s impeachment trial, in which the President was accused of attempting to pressure Ukraine to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden.” The article has little to do with impeachment, aside from depict the unpopularity of the Trump administration within celebrity circles.

Again, *The Irish Times* provided the only local coverage of Trump's acquittal. Its coverage depicted the verdict as purely political and gave the impression that the President was guilty. Its coverage focused on Romney and Pelosi's perspective, while Trump retaliated with an air of professionalism. There was a far cry from the descriptions of a triumphant and unifying Clinton from 20 years before, though Trump himself publicly celebrated the verdict.

The Trump Era: Key Findings

All three newspapers depicted President Trump's impeachment trial as a doomed attempt to hold an immoral president accountable for his actions. *The Irish Times*, through its retention of a White House correspondent, provided high-quality coverage throughout the trial, that provided readers with a localized perspective of the event. Presented by a non-American journalist, the coverage leaned heavily toward the Democrat argument. This is a more objective presentation than falling into the constructed both-sidesism encouraged by the Republican Party throughout the trial, where reporting could have catered to false equivalencies with unequal evidence. The newspaper provided the White House's defense and statements, but fact-checked their claims and did not give air to repetitive quotes. The coverage explained the process and the partisanship within Congress, but unlike the coverage from the Clinton trial it did not take as much time analyzing the political strategy behind Democrat statements.

The most startling finding of the Trump impeachment coverage in Ireland is that *Belfast Telegraph* and *Irish Independent*, once on vastly different sides of the Clinton trial, had identical coverage. Both papers outsourced most of their US Political coverage to *AP News*, and most of the relatively local coverage came from *PA News* based in

London. In March of 2000, the *Independent News and Media* acquired the *Belfast Telegraph*, bringing it under the same ownership as *Irish Independent* (Independent, 2000). Belgian media group Mediahuis bought the newspaper group in 2019, which is Ireland's largest with half the daily market (Sweeney, 2019). *The Irish Times*, alternatively, is self-published by The Irish Times DAC (Hamilton, 2018). The coverage demonstrates the adverse effect media conglomeration has on diverse international news coverage. Irish readers were given limited information about how the Impeachment trial could affect them or what their local leaders thought of it. Additionally, the heavy reliance on *AP News* lacked the outside perspective on US partisanship and political choreography provided by all three papers 20 years before. As shown during the Clinton era, international coverage of US affairs can provide an important tool for self-defense that the Trump administration did not have access to in Ireland.

The lack of localized Trump impeachment coverage in Ireland likely comes from a combination of media conglomeration and a reduction in US diplomatic investment. Though Brexit has caused tumultuous times in Northern Ireland, no one was looking to the Trump administration for guidance, and his removal from office would not affect the peace process to nearly the same degree as Clinton's would have.

Conclusion

In 1999, the Clinton Administration's ongoing work with the Good Friday agreement meant that his removal, or even a lengthy trial, could derail the peace that the parties worked so long to achieve, and the peace the people of Northern Ireland ached for. This sociopolitical context meant that the Irish media was highly invested in covering the process, and those closest to the conflict depicted Clinton in a more positive light. The framing by the *Belfast Telegraph* showed motivational bias, often reminding its readers of Clinton's essential role in Northern Ireland while promoting the option to acquit as quickly as possible and depicting him as a successful president. Surrounded by explosions themselves, however, their humanitarian motivational framing bias showed when they chose to criticize Clinton for his airstrikes on Iraq, focusing on the violence and loss he inflicted on civilians. Their otherwise unwavering support of him during his impeachment was an effort by the journalists on behalf of their community. *The Irish Times* praised Clinton's political skill and work in Ireland and advocated that he remain in office while condemning his immoral personal conduct. It was the biggest supporter of the censure option, and from an early date hoped for a speedy compromise to the partisan conflict in Congress. The newspaper explained the political processes, individual motivations, and context of the impeachment in detail to its readers. It provided in-text fact-checking of quotes from both sides of the debate, and as the trial continued unnecessarily without new, compelling evidence, it pointed to Republican politics as an issue for the country. The publication, though leaning toward the Democratic argument with fact-based emphasis, relied on fact checking and gave the prosecution a chance to make a compelling case to the readers. *Irish Independent*,

using mostly articles from British publications, was the most critical of Clinton, and early on advocated for his resignation, then later for the calling of witnesses to get more evidence. It depicted the president as manipulative, but when it became clear he would be acquitted the newspaper criticized the Republicans for prolonging the trial and keeping the president from his diplomatic duties. The *Independent* reminded its readers that Clinton had, in fact, lied and wanted to see some accountability for it. The further away from the conflict the newspapers got, the less sympathetic to Clinton they became.

Positive coverage of Clinton in Ireland served him during his impeachment trial and helped protect his legacy. While the impeachment trial raged, the Good Friday Agreement got international praise including Nobel Peace Prizes for David Trimble and John Hume, and Clinton hosted highly publicized meetings between the parties. He pointed to his work in Northern Ireland during his State of the Union Speech, and Hillary Clinton used the process to support her husband from a distance by recruiting George Mitchell and hosting guests from Northern Ireland and the UK. The Clintons are still well-liked in Ireland, and it added a positive section to a legacy of international relations otherwise marred with controversy.

Trump, due to his administration's neglect of the relationship, his support of Britain, and the loss of local news coverage, squandered any hope of positive impeachment coverage from the Irish media. The newspapers framed his impeachment trial as a necessary check on an unpredictable and unprofessional president who had abused his power. The *Irish Times* provided the most thorough and localized coverage and supported the Democrat argument by giving it more space on the page, but also by

testing the President's own disjointed, reactionary quotes against their measured statements. From a perspective outside the trenches of American politics, the articles were fair in their evaluation of Trump's abuse of power and use of the impeachment trial to rile up his base. The newspaper still quoted the White House defense, but fact-checked their statements and did not match every Democratic statement with a repetitive or untrue quote from the static Republican defense strategy.

The *Belfast Telegraph* and *Irish Independent* ran very limited coverage of the Trump impeachment trial, but its articles also depicted a partisan Congress and a rogue president. The newspapers, once on opposite sides of the Clinton trial, often published identical coverage due to shared ownership. The coverage failed to give readers in Ireland and Northern Ireland a full understanding of how Trump's impeachment related to them or to Brexit. This demonstrates the loss of important perspectives in media as a result of conglomeration, a pattern that is not exclusive to Ireland's foreign correspondence. The decline in quality and breadth of coverage as newspapers shrunk demonstrates the necessary role of protecting local coverage with diverse framing that centers the needs of the people. As time goes on, fewer and fewer voices both at home and abroad have the means to check the President of the United States.

Twenty years ago, three newspapers in Ireland and Northern Ireland covered the impeachment of Bill Clinton in a way that catered to the needs and interests of their communities, and reflected the strong diplomatic relationship between the nations. The journalists of the time were hardened, empathetic, and critical due to a sectarian war at home, and that motivated their framing. As of the Trump administration, many perspectives were replaced by a few, and the US has lost its foothold in the Peace

Negotiations. As tensions flare in Belfast and Brexit pushes the parties apart, the Biden administration could benefit from rebuilding the ties that time and Trump weakened. How the Irish media will receive him depends on what he does for the people.

My great uncle Samuel, the youngest of my grandmother's four siblings, is more of a conversationalist than my great uncle Jack. I stayed with Samuel and his wife Loraine for three months. They brought me to see historical sites weekly, and out to the village pub nightly. When the couple enters a room, the energy shifts to accommodate for their orbit, and I quickly learned that I could make a friend anywhere in town by introducing myself as Samuel's niece. I suppose that Samuel and Jack adapted to the challenges of living in a war differently. Jack takes time to open up, offering glimpses of his extraordinary life through clipped comments, keepsakes like an Orange Order Protestant sash, and photographs with American presidents. Meanwhile if Samuel falls silent, it's an open invitation to ask what's on his mind. He took me and his grandchildren to the Ulster Museum once, and as the kids raced ahead to the dinosaurs, I lingered in the Troubles. I followed the timeline painted on the walls of the room but stopped as I saw Samuel studying some portraits of the victims, silent. I asked if he knew anyone there. He pointed to neighbors and rugby teammates, sharing what he remembered of friendships cut too short. I nodded, and let the silence stretch as I imagined the stories left untold. We went to look at dinosaurs.

Later we were the last two in the local pub, and I let my beer go flat as I ruminated aloud about writing a thesis concerning journalism in Northern Ireland. I was reading a lot of news at the time, given that Trump was being impeached. I had also

read a book by the journalists of the Troubles, who wrote about knocking on the doors of grieving mothers and IRA members alike, respected by all despite working for newspapers with established editorial slants. These journalists were welcomed inside under the expectation that they served the people of Northern Ireland, not the interests of the governments and paramilitary groups waging war in the streets.

Samuel listened intently for a while, and recalled some of the reporting that made an impression on him. As he rose to start clearing the table, he said “I recon we had the best journalists in the world.”

I recon we can learn from them.

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