

The New York Times. – 20.05.2020

By Volodymyr Zelensky

Mr. Zelensky is the president of Ukraine.

## **Expected War. I Didn't Expect Trump's Impeachment or a Pandemic**

*Очікувана війна. Я не очікував імпичменту Трампа чи пандемії*

*Президент України відповідає на питання щодо підсумків першого року своїх повноважень.*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/opinion/volodymyr-zelensky-ukraine-coronavirus.html>



President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine at a parliamentary session on March 31. Credit...Pool photo, via EPA/Shutterstock

KYIV, Ukraine — Last year on May 20, I was surrounded by crowds of people shaking hands, high-fiving and leaning in for selfies as they gathered to watch my inauguration. Ukrainians had elected me with 73 percent of the vote, pinning their hopes on me to clean up a corrupt government and bring stability.

I never thought being president would be easy. My previous job was as a comedy writer and producer; the team that I brought in was full of smart, energetic, capable and dedicated people, but many lacked political experience. We had high hopes

and a fierce commitment to improving our embattled country, both at home and on the world stage.

Then the past year happened.

Let's start long before "coronavirus" was a familiar word. Remember President Trump's impeachment? After chasing higher ratings for most of my life in the entertainment business, it took only one phone call to become truly world famous. The impeachment story was not comfortable for me. It took American and international attention away from the issues that mattered most to Ukraine and turned our country into a story about President Trump.

The other major challenge of my presidency is one that I inherited: For six years, the part of the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine has been occupied by Russian-backed illegal armed groups. Millions have lost their homes in the fighting, tens of thousands have been seriously wounded, and around 14,000 lives have been lost. When I came to office, the war was stuck in a stalemate, with more lives lost nearly every day.

That all may sound like ancient history because in March, I was forced to face yet another major crisis, though one that I share with every other leader in the world: the coronavirus pandemic. Ukraine has had more than 19,000 Covid-19 cases and, sadly, nearly 600 deaths. We have been forced to restructure our budget planning to cope with the global economic crash.