THE RELATIONAL SHIFT BETWEEN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND

STATE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE CATALAN INDEPENDENCE

MOVEMENT BETWEEN 2017 AND 2018

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

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In an ever-evolving globalized society, international organizations have become more powerful on a global scale. The growing power of global governance has caused increased complexity in its relationship with the nation-state. The role of national sovereignty in relation to secessionist movements, such as the Catalan Independence Movement in Spain, is a primary example of these evolving relationships of power, as the European Union provides an aspect of global governance to the equation. In the context of the Catalan Independence Movement, specifically between 2017 and 2018, the relationships between the nation-state, a secessionist state, and an international organization are demonstrated in exceedingly complex and interconnected ways. This thesis explores the relational shifts in this situation and analyzes the challenges the nation-state's sovereignty faces when internal and external political entities

become increasingly involved with each other through a political, sociological, and legal analytical framework. This thesis moves away from analyzing globalization as a new phenomenon and instead considers the way it particularly affects power relationships across distances and beyond physical borders. John Allen's *Topologies of Power* provides the theoretical framework to understand the ways political power can be extended across traditional borders and territories. In particular, my analysis draws on Allen's ideas of *topological reach*, as well as *a quiet exercise of power*. Both ideas effectively describe the way the European Union exercises its power in its relationships with its members. Through the lens of Allen, this thesis addresses three major points. First, the effects of the presence of an international organization in a conflict within a single-nation state on the nation-state's sovereignty and the power relationships between the actors involved. Second, the manner in which the growing relevance of international organizations transforms the way national sovereignty is both exercised and internally challenged. And third, the way this transformation of power has created a paradoxical interconnectedness and reliance on one another between the European Union, Spain, and Catalonia. By confronting the topic of power relationships from multiple angles, overall, this thesis demonstrates the complexity of the interactions between international, national, and regional actors during a time of high uncertainty and tension.

DEDICATION

To my friends, family, instructors, and peers who supported me throughout the research process.

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INTRODUCTION

"If we let Catalonia become independent — but it's not our business — others will do it, and I wouldn't want that."

Quote by the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, head of the branch of the European bureaucracy charged with enforcing that member states live up to European rules (Birnbaum)

Globalization has created a landscape where international organizations have become increasingly relevant, resulting in a new complexity in relations between global governance and the nation-state. This relevancy stems from increased globalization and a prominent effort to create an international mechanism of cooperation politically and economically. Global governance in this case represents this movement towards political cooperation transnationally. This thesis analyzes the role of national sovereignty and global governance in relation to the Catalan Independence Movement. In this conflict, the European Union's involvement, or lack thereof, exemplifies this evolving relationship of power. In the context of this secessionist movement, specifically in the year 2017, the relationships between the European Union, Spain, and Catalonia became exceedingly complex and interconnected. This thesis analyzes these relational shifts along with the role of each of the interlocutors, including their influence over one another. I conduct this analysis by approaching Two fundamental questions which guided my research. First, how does the interference of an international organization in internal issues of the nation-state relate to the sovereignty of all the interlocutors involved? And second, how does

the growing relevance of international organizations transform the way national sovereignty is both exercised and internally challenged? To approach these questions analytically, I have applied a qualitative political, sociological, and legal framework of study.

The previous literature on this topic is extensive and covers a wide variety of specific facets within the conflict. Many studies address the secessionist movement in Catalonia from geo-political, legal, sociological, or geographical standpoint, and analyze important factors such as regional autonomy (Cashell), political climate (Romero-Vidal), or Europeanization (Bourne). However, the three main limitations that I have witnessed within previous literature are as follows: First, previous research only considers the actions and motivations of one political actor in the Catalan Independence Movement without adequately acknowledging the effects of the actions and motivations of the other two. In his study *Two temperatures for one thermostat: The evolution of policy attitudes and support for independence in Catalonia (1991–2018),* Xavier Romero-Vidal categorizes the dimensions that fuel public opinion regarding independence, while asserting that left and right wing political affiliations have recently aligned with pro and anti-independence sentiments respectively. This study analyzes pro and anti-independence support objectively based on Spanish political factors but is limited in that it does not consider the influence of the European Union beyond a brief mention of European financial markets.

Second, previous research limits itself to considering whether interference by any specific interlocutor in this secessionist movement is justified. In Maria Mut Bosque's article *Scotland and Catalonia in Twenty-First Century European Union: The Parallels and Differences*, she argues that the European Union should embrace territorial challenges and abandon their non-intervention principle by embracing its supranational dimension and promoting European cohesion. This article lays the foundation for the idea that the European Union is threatened by

secessionist states and its passivity regarding them. This foundation can be built upon, as this is only one aspect of a much bigger picture where, in addition to the European Union, Spain and Catalonia also enter into the fold. They therefore create threats and reliances on one another while propagating the interconnectedness this research analyzes.

Third, previous research seeks to consider the magnitude of power of each interlocutor as the primary factor of influence between them. Paul Anderson's *Decentralisation at a Crossroads: Spain, Catalonia and the Territorial Crisis,* and Angela K. Bourne's *Europeanization and Secession: The Cases of Catalonia and Scotland* discuss the use of autonomy as a mechanism to resolve conflict, a power held by internal actors, and the opportunities the European Union provides to facilitate pro-independence sentiments. The limitations here lie within the need to go beyond the effects of these exertions of power and to dive deeper into the transformative relations of power these influences produce. Below, I examine literature that exceeds these limitations in order to represent the effects of the actions of each interlocutor.

Elisa Roller's *Conflict and cooperation in EU policy-making: The case of Catalonia*, analyzes the burgeoning interconnectedness between regional, state, and European Union "spheres of authority," which have facilitated the challenges that intergovernmental relations present to the Spanish nation-state. Even though Roller's ideas remain applicable in the context of my research, I chose a more specific framework to analyze the means by which each actor asserts their authority. Paul Cashell also contributes to this topic, asserting that the European Union's relationship with its members has undergone a transformation where secessionist states (as an extension of Europe's regions) are denied protection and representation despite the initiatives of the European Union to facilitate intergovernmentalism (Cashell 5-6). Similarly,

Christopher K. Connolly addresses the paradoxical and contradictory relationship between the

European Union and Secessionist States throughout his narration:

> To be sure, the relationship between European integration and substate nationalism is complex and at times contradictory. While the EU provides avenues for the articulation and pursuit of nationalist objectives beyond the borders of the state, it also bolsters the significance of statehood by limiting full participation in its institutions to member states; while integration creates certain safety nets that make it easier for stateless nations to contemplate independence, the European dimension might also complicate the process of secession. (Connolly 54)

Essentially, the European Union promotes the blurring of borders and creating the

incentive of membership for secessionist states as a reason for supporting independence from a

host nation-state but undermines all of this with the threat of exclusion once independence is

obtained. This is a point that I discuss in detail in section four of this thesis. Understanding this

paradoxical relationship is the first step in my analysis of this secessionist movement, yet my

conceptual framework takes this analysis a step further. My contribution to this subject is a

critical analysis of the role of global governance and state sovereignty beyond the aspects

outlined above, where I consider the transformation and new complexities of the relations of

powers among Spain, Catalonia, and the European Union through the concept of topology.

In this analysis, I apply John Allen's *Topologies of Power* as the theoretical framework to

understand the ways political power can be extended across traditional borders and territories. As

I discuss further in the first section, my analysis draws on two of Allen's main ideas: *topological

reach*, and *quiet exertions of power*. Through these ideas, I describe the paradoxical

interconnectedness and reliance that each interlocutor has created in their relations with one

another. Specifically, I show how the involvement of the European Union in the Catalan

Independence movement, as well as the actions of the Spanish and Catalan governments, have

demonstrated the increasingly complex and transformative relationship between state

sovereignty and global governance. I do not analyze this situation by comparing the scale of the power of each interlocutor, or whether any of their actions are justified. Instead, I focus on the highly connected and interdependent relationships between the three actors involved. It is important to place emphasis on these relationships as they form the paradoxical interconnectedness this thesis argues is present between Spain, Catalonia, and the European Union.

This thesis is organized in six main sections. First, I examine John Allen's *Topologies of Power* as the lens through which I address the Catalan Independence Movement and the relationships between the three main actors involved. Next, I discuss the 2017 independence referendum and the subsequent actions that culminated in the call for the European Union to intervene. This models a topology of power in which Catalonia displays its reliance on the European Union while simultaneously exerting its own power over Spain. The third section evaluates more specifically the exertions of power from the nation-state, resulting in the first component of the interdependent relational system that this research analyzes. This section also describes in detail the position of the nation-state, examining topology's effect on nationality versus territoriality and the implication of the loss of territorial integrity in the scope of this secessionist movement. In the fourth section, I address exertions of power by the European Union, focusing on the ambiguity of its intent for action as well as its contribution to the interconnected reliance of global and state governance. Fifth, I analyze Catalonia's perspective. I focus on the regional government's call for support from the European Union in response to violent policing and suppression from Spain. I also critically analyze the motivations behind both Catalonia's bid for independence as well as the complexity of its actions in relation to both Spain and the European Union. The goal of this section is not to anticipate whether Catalonia will gain

independence from Spain and be granted membership in the European Union. Instead, the emphasis is put on the reliance of Catalonia on Spain and the European Union while they both simultaneously rely on Catalonia. Additionally, in this section I include a brief discussion of the legal aspect of the conflict, specifically focusing on the legality of the 2017 referendum for independence, a discussion of self-determination as a fundamental right, democratic legitimacy, and international mediation in an internal legal conflict of the nation-state. The final section of this thesis strengthens the argument that the important aspect of the role of each interlocutor in the Catalan Independence movement is not the magnitude of power each possesses, but rather the effect of the exertions of power on one another, resulting in a complex and paradoxical interdependence.

1.   A DISCUSSION OF TOPOLOGY

John Allen's *Topologies of Power* provides the theoretical framework to understand the ways political power can be extended across traditional borders and territories. The two most significant ideas that I draw from Allen in this thesis are *topological reach* and *quiet exertion of power*. These two concepts allow for a greater understanding of the relationship of power between global governance and state sovereignty beyond the importance of magnitude of power. Through the lens of Allen's *Topology of Power*, this thesis confronts the complex interconnectedness of multiple political actors involved in Catalonia's bid for independence. The presence of the European Union in an internal Spanish conflict provides a new angle to the question of the nation-state's sovereignty. The growing relevance of the European Union as a legitimate international political entity transforms the way national sovereignty is both exercised and internally challenged. The motivations and actions of Catalonia and Spain in the conflict also fuel the increasing complexity of the relationship of power between themselves and the European Union. By confronting the topic of power relationships from all three angles, this thesis demonstrates the way power is exerted beyond traditional means of sovereignty and across borders.

While a topographical framework provides us with an understanding of the territorial basis for Spain, Catalonia, and the European Union's exertion of authority, this geographical approach on a horizontal plane is not enough to encompass the complexities of the relationships in this situation. Instead, a topological approach in this case allows for a more well-rounded understanding of the motivations and actions that occur in the Catalan Independence Movement. According to Allen, topology and topography relate in their shared concern with boundaries, but

differ when distance is considered, since topology provides the basis to analyze power in distorted spaces in addition to across traditional borders. Topology also analyzes the transformations and continuities in relationships after the process of distortion. From a topographical viewpoint, the landscape of power is assessed only by its mappable distances and flattened surfaces, limiting the understanding of power to where it is exercised extensively without considering it intensively (8). A spatial awareness of power as it can be exercised beyond this extensive understanding is necessary in my analysis. The concept of *reach*, as Allen puts it, is understood topologically by considering the aspect of presence rather than distance, distorting the relationship between what is near and far (11). This viewpoint of *reach* in relation to *presence* is significant in specific aspects of the Catalan Independence movement, including the European Union's ability to exert power in the distant Spanish conflict by establishing its presence and importance.

In addition to topological reach, the idea of *quiet* versus *hard* exertions of power play a prominent role in my analysis. According to Allen, hard power consists of "domination, coercion, and authority." The Spanish government policing voters outside of polling stations during the 2017 Independence Referendum in Catalonia, which is discussed in the following sections, is one prominent example of hard power. Quiet power, which Allen distinguishes from Joseph Nye's "soft" power (2005), is exerted through more subtle means and focuses more on gaining and maintaining influence within a conflict. Leveraged topologically, quiet power works through suggestion with topological reach which enables it to be "folded in from afar" by reaching into spaces across distances and making it difficult for its subjects to not follow suit. In the case of the European Union, as is discussed in section five, its ambiguity in public statements and underlying threats (towards Spain the threat to intervene should the government not maintain

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control of the situation and the threat of exclusion towards Catalonia) allow it to quietly exert power over both Spain and Catalonia while simultaneously protecting its own authority (Allen 73).

Furthermore, the paradoxical figures Allen borrows from conventional mathematical topology, the *Klein Bottle*, and the *Mobius Strip*, illustrate how exertions of power from different actors can be different yet related and occupy the same space, yet not, simultaneously. The Mobius Strip, a band which appears to be two-sided, yet proves to only have one continuous side, demonstrates the process of spatial distortion that power relationships encounter. The Mobius Strip also exemplifies the main argument of this thesis, that all interlocutors, whether through state sovereignty or global governance, have an evolving relationship of powers and are in fact interconnected along the same strip, even if distorted and paradoxical in nature. As Allen puts it, the Mobius Strip "illustrates the possibility for registers of power to play across or run alongside one another," a principle idea that the European Union, Spain, and Catalonia exemplify in their relationships with one another (42).

Similarly, the Klein Bottle, another topological figure, consists of a tube that folds in on itself to create a continuous one-sided surface. The distinction of this model from the Mobius Strip, however, is its inability to provide a distinguishable inside or outside to the bottle. Once folded (rather than twisted like the Mobius Strip), what was once a single continuous space is now "bound up within itself," and extends over the same space as the presence of other actors not necessarily in the same place (Allen 43). In the context of the analysis of the Catalan Independence movement, the Klein Bottle can be exemplified when actors find themselves simultaneously inside and outside a situation, such as members campaigning for election in Catalonia while in exile or the European Union becoming bound up in itself when becoming

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involved, yet not, in Spain's internal conflict. In the following sections, I describe the aspects of these transformative relationships, and I apply a topological lens to critically analyze the complexity of the relationships through which the power exertions of each interlocutor in this context take place.

2.   SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OF THE CATALAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

The independence movement in Catalonia contains many significant events that happened simultaneously or within a short time frame. This movement by no means new, yet it seems to have received more attention due to the volatile political atmosphere fostered in the region in recent years. The acme of the conflict between Catalonia and Spain occurred in late 2017 when the Catalan Parliament approved a referendum for independence. The three principal events that subsequently occurred are the main focus of this section. First, the violent policing of the citizens attempting to vote in the referendum on October 1, 2017. Second, the consequent disbanding of the Catalan Government and exile of pro-independence political leaders. And third, the call from the Catalan regional government for support and condemnation of the Spanish government and the violence it authorized in the region.

The referendum was largely disputed in the Catalan Parliament and was immediately deemed illegal by the Spanish Government. After its occurrence, the referendum was the source of debates about legal and democratic legitimacy when faced with multiple ideas of nationhood. And even though the referendum did not directly lead to independence, it did provide a dignified collective front against repression from the Spanish nation-state. Additionally, this referendum became more significant in that it went beyond the merely symbolic vote of its predecessor, the referendum held in 2014. Nevertheless, the 2014 referendum did propel the independence movement as the subsequent 2015 regional election resulted in a pro-independence majority within the Catalan Parliament (Cetrá et al. 127).

While the 2017 referendum for independence was the catalyst for the interactions that are the focus of this thesis, the two acts passed earlier in 2017 were precursors to the heightened political conflict the region would soon face when physical action was taken to prevent the referendum. The Self-Determination Referendum Act 19/2017 was approved on September 6, 2017 with the pro-independence parties, PDeCAT, ERC and CUP, voting in favor with a total of 72 votes. There were 11 abstentions from seats held by the leftist party, CSQP. Out of 135 total seats, there were 52 votes not cast due to members of the Socialist Catalan Party, the Popular Party, and Ciutadans de Catalunya (the three major anti-independence parties) walking out of the room as a symbol of protest. From the perspective of the opposition parties, parliamentary procedure was not adequately followed, and they did not want to take part in an actively unconstitutional act of disobedience against Spain (Martí 1).

The Catalan Legal Transition and Foundational Act 20/2017 passed on September 7, 2017 with similar results. The Act 20/2017 has been widely qualified as a Transitional Constitution for Catalonia. The significance of this act lies in its inclusion of rules for a transitional process in the case that Catalonia were successful in gaining independence from Spain. Additionally, this act laid the foundation for a possible Catalan Constitution, outlining aspects such as distribution of power and the fundamental rights of the Catalan population. Therefore, leading up to the referendum on October 1, there was already political animosity and a growing distinction between Spanish sovereignty and the now established Catalan sovereignty. (Martí 2).

Another source of animosity and the contestations against the 2017 referendum within the Catalan Parliament stemmed from the number of voters who were pro-independence at this time versus the amount of parliament seats held by pro-independence party members. Although the

populations for and against independence were nearly split in half, the pro-independence parties held 6 more parliamentary seats and therefore were able to pass the approval for the referendum (*Two Catalonias* 14:50). Further discord occurred after October 1, 2017, when the voting on the referendum took place. On this day, the Spanish government sent in riot squads to impede the referendum because the Catalan government refused to order regional police to step in (2:24). The police violently prevented voters from entering polling stations and caused many injuries. In a last-ditch effort to prevent the voters from casting their ballots, thousands of policing agents used physical force, rubber bullets, batons, and tear gas, ultimately injuring hundreds of citizens.

Climactically, this day sparked animosity on both sides of the spectrum and prompted the Spanish government to take another step of action. A few weeks after the referendum, the Spanish government dissolved the Catalan regional government by dismissing all its members. The Spanish Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy enforced "direct rule" over the region and called for entirely new regional elections, which occurred in December of 2017. (Barceló 2). Catalonia at this point called for the assistance of the European Union in condemning Spain for violating their human rights (*Two Catalonias* 3:34).

Following the disbanding of the Catalan government, demonstrations for and against independence broke out in Catalan cities. Leaders were exiled, most prominently the pro-independence Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont, who fled to Brussels in the hopes that he could gain backing from the European Union. As I discuss further in section 5, the European Union responded to this cry for help with ambiguity and indifference, causing the relationship between the Catalan people and their European identities to shift. Following these events, all three actors were now involved, and the transformation in the dynamic of power relations became evident.

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3.   INTERNAL EXERTIONS OF POWER BY THE NATION-STATE

On October 1, 2017, the day of the referendum, many of those heading to the polls were violently policed and beaten in an effort to minimize voter turnout. When the previous independence referendum was held in Catalonia in 2014, the Spanish government accepted it as merely a symbolic vote. In the case of 2017, however, the goal of the Spanish government was to physically prevent the referendum by nearly any means possible. Prime Minister Rajoy publicly stated the illegality of the referendum and enacted the hard power strategy of the direct use of force to stop it. In this way, the Spanish government openly acknowledged the referendum as a "case of disobedience" and by ordering police forces to intervene sought to prevent any vote that may threaten Spain's mononational sovereignty (Cetrá et al. 128).

The need to maintain both the image of sovereign power on the national territory as well as the actual political control over Catalonia, seems to be the main motivation for the response of the Spanish Government in Madrid to the 2017 Independence Referendum. The announcement of the referendum warranted an immediate response from Madrid deeming it completely illegal. However, when Catalonia pushed back and held voting on the referendum anyway, Spain resorted to an exertion of hard power as a means to force the people of Catalonia to succumb. Furthermore, the arrest or exile of pro-independence leaders and complete disbanding of the Catalan Parliament are two more examples of Spain resorting to hard power as a temporary means to bring their population back into line (Allen 71).

The exile of pro-independence leader Carles Puigdemont led him to campaign for the December 2017 Presidential election while living in Brussels. His ability to campaign in a Catalan election without physically being within its concrete borders provides a new aspect of

distorting distance to the situation. When viewed through the lens of Allen's application of a topological view, Puigdemont's campaign in exile exemplifies the *reach of power*. It offers another scenario in which power can be exerted topologically across borders, even if in this case it is on a small scale by a single individual or political party. Essentially, Puigdemont maintained his presence within Catalonia's political sphere while physically remaining outside it at a distance. This is also a small, but significant, example of a mobius strip-like relationship, where it is difficult to discern where the 'inside' of the political sphere ends and the 'outside' begins (Allen 129).

Power was also exerted topologically through reach through the creation of a new narrative by Catalonia in response to the events outlined above. The exertion of violence as a means of controlling the narrative of the independence movement may have backfired for Spain, as it created, in a way, the ability for Catalonia to spin the narrative of a movement of collective resistance in the fight against state repression (Cetrá et al. 129). As Joan Barceló puts it in *Batons and ballots: The effectiveness of state violence in fighting against Catalan separatism*, a ¨boomerang effect¨ was created in this situation due to the nonviolent nature of the secession movement combined with the new aspect of police repression. In this, the ¨perception of government abuse¨ was a catalyst for anger towards Spain as well as an opportunity for repression to culminate in the stronger mobilization of the movement based on national identity, igniting separatism even further (2). This opens up the discussion of the right to self-determination and the extent of Catalonia's power in relation to its own sovereignty and inherent rights. The power of narrative, especially in a situation like this where multiple competing actors are attempting to solidify their own sovereignty, is significant. As we will be able to see in the following sections, the European Union also understands the power of narrative and sought to

become involved in the situation that benefits itself in the best possible way. However, this is made more complicated by the significantly interdependent system Spain, Catalonia, and the European Union have (however inadvertently) created.

4.   EXERTIONS OF POWER BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

The role of the European Union in internal conflicts of their members is often approximated to weighing the positive and negative consequences of their prospective involvement. This is no truer than in the case of the Catalan Independence Movement, where European Union leaders have gone on record stating, rather ambiguously, their intent for action (or lack thereof) in response to the growing unrest in Catalonia. It is left unresolved whether the European Union wants to get involved or not, and in what capacity. Furthermore, their intent is made as clear as it possibly could be, through analyzing the statements directly and publicly made by European Union Leaders in response to a call for action from the Catalan regional government, given their ambiguity and contradictory nature, as we will see in the following paragraphs.

Following the violence surrounding the 2017 independence referendum, Catalonia expected the European Union to step in and denounce the use of such violence. However, they were met with the disappointment of the European Union following the lead of the Spanish government. The European Union justified this decision under the pretense that the conflict was domestic and it therefore "has little right to intrude," (Birnbaum). The sub context of this, however, is that the European Union *would* intrude if the conflict became a large enough issue to challenge sovereignty beyond the nation-state and on the scale of global governance. Furthermore, by *not* intruding, the European Union shows support for the Spanish government regardless, as the Catalans were calling for the condemnation of violent policing of citizens voting in the 2017 referendum. To further complicate the question of interference, many European Union Officials, in response to the same call for assistance by Catalonia, asserted that

they had no other choice than to endorse the rule of the Spanish state, even if they were pushing against violence in private.

The question of whether the independence movement was even the concern of the European Union seemed hardly answered by the European commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, who stated that "if we let Catalonia become independent — but it's not our business — others will do it, and I wouldn't want that," (Birnbaum). The wording of this quote, which I have also chosen as the epigraph of this thesis, is incredibly vague and contradictory. On the one hand, the phrase 'if we let' alludes to the inherent power the European Union Feels it had in this situation (even if it contradicts the statement above regarding the European Union possessing 'little right to intrude'), as well as a desire to mediate the situation. On the other hand, the phrase "it's not our business" from the above quote implies a sense of detachment from the issue, furthering the inconsistencies on the public front from the European Union. Along the same lines, President Juncker also went on record stating that this conflict was an "internal matter for Spain" to be dealt with accordingly under their own constitution (Press Corner). These statements were essentially an attempt by the European Union to placate as many actors in the conflict as possible while maintaining its image and influence (Allen 73). This way, the European Union would have the ability to quietly exert power over both Spain and Catalonia and protect its own authority.

In the same press conference, the European Commission also issued a statement of exclusion which deemed that in the case Catalonia achieved independence, the territory would not be accepted as a member of the European Union (Press Corner). The clarity of this message could not be missed; independence would come at the expense of Catalonia's European identity. Despite all its vague attempts at remaining out of the conflict, the European Union had now

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declared themselves against the notion of secession. Here is another instance to apply the topological model of the Klein Bottle to the analysis of an exercise of institutional power. The ability of an international institution to have such influence over the nation-state and an autonomous region is a transformation of the relationship of power and how it is exerted. The reach of the European Union stretches beyond borders, and in this instance the power of the European Union also folded in on itself, as officials scrambled to maintain influence without really becoming involved in the conflict. Through their contradictory remarks and vague show of support followed by the promise of the exclusion of Catalonia from the E.U., a simultaneous presence both inside and outside of the conflict was created. Because the European Union is bound up in itself in this instance, it is another example of the Klein Bottle: a continuous surface that merges both inside and outside (Allen 60).

The motivation for remaining in this state of both inside and outside is a careful balance between maintaining power and correctly navigating the increasingly complex relationship between a nation-state with threatened sovereignty and a stateless nation. The European Union itself threatens state sovereignty in more ways than one, but it is also important to recognize that state sovereignty still plays an important role in international politics, thus keeping a balance with global governance. The European Union, composed of many separate nation-states, transforms the relationship between nation-states and their internal actors because of its growing relevance. However, this is not to say that one should adopt the perspective that the European Union is the most powerful actor in this scenario. Beyond that, I argue that comparing the scope of the power each of the three interlocutors possess does not matter so much as the way they interact with one another. Furthermore, Spain, Catalonia, and the European Union find themselves all reaching towards specific goals. Although their motivations may differ, to some

extent, all three interlocutors may seem as if they are working against each other while their relationship is in reality being distorted. In this way, all three parties are in fact interconnected along the same strip which functions without distinct sides, providing a real-world exemplification of the mobius strip, which will be further analyzed in the section on the Interconnectedness of Governance.

5.   FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CATALONIA

Now that the power and influence between Spain and the European Union over each other and Catalonia are understood, it is important to consider the importance of Catalonia's motivations and actions and their contribution to the interconnected relationships I analyze. In this section, I discuss the aforementioned policing of voters on the day of the 2017 referendum for independence and its repercussions from Catalonia's perspective. I then address the subsequent call for the European Union to step in and provide support to Catalonia. Lastly, I discuss the importance of Europeanism within the Catalan national identity as well as the motivations for the Catalan population pushing for independence.

As mentioned in section 3, the introduction of police repression into the conflict shifted the narrative of the entire secessionist movement. The violent policing of citizens attempting to vote in the referendum for independence on October 1, 2017 created a "democratic paradox" within the Spanish government, in which a violent event was legitimized under the pretense of protecting democracy and unity, but at the same time preventing voters from expressing their opinions (Reyes 486). For Spain, this only further facilitated the fragile interconnectedness between themselves and Catalonia.

It is easy to dismiss Catalonia as the interlocutor with the least authority and the most to lose in this conflict, yet it remains true that Catalonia is able to exert power topologically and play into the paradoxical relationship between each interlocutor. The narrative of a single nation rising up against police and government repression is a rhetoric that Catalonia has taken advantage of in order to damage Spain's democratic reputation. Some assert that this narrative is not effective and ultimately holds no power in aiding Catalonia in its bid for independence.

Additionally, some also assert that the issue of Catalan secession is a solely domestic one, and it is not of significant interest to international actors (Moceri). I argue otherwise and insist that Spain's global image is in fact an important aspect, especially when the European Union becomes involved.

Even though the European Union remained ambiguous in response to the request for intervention from Catalonia following the events that occurred on October 1, 2017, at this point the issue became more than domestic, as an international actor was now involved. This demonstrated Catalonia's ability to exert power topologically by establishing a political presence across borders and distances. The *topological reach* that Catalonia extended in this instance also allowed for an exertion of quiet power, through the structuring of the narrative of repression in order to create a specific image of a stateless nation fighting for independence from a repressive sovereign state.

However, Catalonia's relationship with the European Union must also be discussed. The motivations behind Catalonia requesting assistance from the European Union was to help validate the aforementioned narrative of repression and condemn Spain. Essentially, Catalonia wanted help, but it is also important to note that Catalonia did not want to be overpowered by the European Union in the process. The Catalan identity strongly coincides with a European identity, and therefore Catalans envision independence from Spain while remaining within the European Union (Gulmez and Buhari-Gulmez 4). As we know, Catalonia was not met with support from the European Union in the ways it was expecting, and the European Union ultimately declared that there was no need for its mediation and that it ultimately supported the territorial integrity and unity of Spain (Caplan and Vermeer 752).

In the context of this movement, Catalonia is a stateless nation seeking recognition and legitimacy and their own internal sovereignty (Calzada 2017). In a way, Catalonia juxtaposes itself because it wants to enact the help of the European Union which can undermine the nation-state in order to become one themselves. Similarly, Catalonia seeks to rely on the borderlessness of the European Union and the European identity to help gain support when ultimately secession would result in more borders and another state to play into the international politics of the members of the European Union (given Catalonia were even granted membership at all). Therefore, the importance here is not whether Catalonia will succeed in gaining independence from Spain, or even if it would be able to join the European Union, but rather the complexity of the entire situation in the scope of multiple intertwined motivations and challenges.

6.   ON THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF GOVERNANCE, GOING BEYOND CHALLENGING SOVEREIGNTY

The main goal of this thesis is not to discuss the challenges against sovereignty, but rather to analyze the way sovereignty and global governance are interconnected on a complex level, forming one large continuous system. Based on the factors mentioned above, in the case of the European Union, Spain and Catalonia, the relationship of power between the three is more complex than it appears at first glance. Global governance has established a presence in nation-state politics and has transformed the relationship of powers between itself and the nation-state.

What is most pertinent upon extensively analyzing the situation at hand in Catalonia is that all three actors force aspects of inclusion and exclusion upon each other. While there seem to be clear distinctions between an inside and an outside in each of the relationships, what can be uncovered is a continuous relationship of power that intertwines all three interlocutors and binds them in a paradoxical shape (Allen 59). At first glance, Catalonia, Spain, and the European Union seem to be completely isolated parties acting in their own best interest with little regard for the consequences to the other parties. However, this simplified view is incredibly ignorant in that it disregards the effects the governance of each of the three has on one another.

As discussed before, the European Union exercises power in multiple ways over both the nation-state and the secessionist region in the case of Spain and Catalonia. In Catalonia, many citizens have adopted a European identity just as strongly as their Catalan identity (Birnbaum). Therefore, the reliance on the European Union for support in the secessionist movement is significant. The European Union possesses this power because its very structure stimulates the climate for the inclusion of new members via the blurring of borders between nation-states and

the implementation of supra-national governmental entities. Essentially, global governance in the European Union effectively seeks to create a political community beyond the nation-state model. In theory, this context seems like the prime opportunity for a region seeking liberation from the sovereignty of its nation-state to successfully part from it. Paradoxically, however, a secessionist movement, such as the one in Catalonia, which also threatens the nation-state, seeks to create more borders and internal sovereignty for its own territory, effectively threatening the goals of the European Union as well. Therefore, while the structure of the governance of the European Union may stimulate the climate to support a secessionist movement, in practice this would be counterintuitive to its own agenda (Muro and Vlaskamp 1116).

In the case of the relationship between Spain and Catalonia, they too rely on one another in a paradoxical fashion. Specifically, in the case of succession, if the European Union were to offer the possibility of membership to the new state (although we know this is not the case with Catalonia), there would still be the major obstacle of reapplying for membership and gaining the positive vote of all current members, including the former host state (Muro and Vlaskamp 1119). Obviously, a unanimous positive vote would not likely occur, and the new state would face exclusion regardless. Therefore, even if the exertion of power of the new state succeeded in outdoing that of its former nation-state, it would *still* have to rely on the sovereignty of the nation-state in order to become a member of the very organization that defies this sovereignty. Once again, this displays the paradoxical nature of the relationship of power between all three political actors.

All three interlocutors in this situation are vying for sovereignty by exercising power on multiple scales. While they may contest each other, Spain, Catalonia, and the European Union also simultaneously balance each other in a way that intertwines them and creates one continuous

flow of power throughout the three. Therefore, the power exerted between these entities has transformed now that global governance possesses more power in relation to territorial sovereignty, but also remains the same in that all actors challenge each other's sovereignty and rely on one another simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

The issue of independence in relation to state sovereignty and global governance prompts a consideration of the interconnectedness of the power of all actors involved. In this thesis I explained that the interference of the European Union, an international organization, in an internal issue of the nation state created a paradoxical relationship between itself, Spain (a nation-state), and Catalonia (a secessionist region), in which all three were subsequently reliant and threatened by one another simultaneously. Additionally, I analyzed the actions and motivations of each interlocutor in order to understand the novel relationship between state sovereignty and global governance, describing the ways that Spain's sovereignty was both exercised and internally challenged. I addressed my research through the lens of John Allen's *Topologies of Power*, which allowed me to critically analyze all three actors - Spain, Catalonia, and the European Union - involved in this conflict. I found that the relationship created between the three is one that at first glance may appear multi-sided and complex, when in reality all three interlocutors are operating along the same line in which each exerts power and influence over one another.

My research can be taken a step further in the future by exploring whether the interconnected reliance between an international organization, nation-state, and secessionist region in this situation draws parallels to similar relationships in other secessionist movements within the European Union, and whether these relational connections go beyond secessionist movements or beyond the European Union. Additionally, there is room for further examination of topological relationships between the nation-state and its internal regions when considering the specific aspect of police violence and repression.

This thesis ultimately went beyond the extensive previous literature and research surrounding the Catalan Independence movement. By approaching the issue from a topological standpoint, I was able to not only understand the paradoxical relationship between Spain, Catalonia, and the European Union, but also take my research a step further. My contribution to this subject is a critical analysis of the role of global governance and state sovereignty beyond this paradoxical relationship, where the actions and motivations of each interlocutor involved are carefully analyzed. Viewing this topic topologically creates the beginning of a conversation where the consideration of the complexities between global governance and state sovereignty can be taken even further in the future.

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