# The 2017 Catalan Independence Referendum:

# Competing Discourses

Noah C. Wanebo

MA: International Relations

Student number: S1915347

Email: noahwanebo@gmail.com

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Lukas Milevski

Word count: 14154

# Abstract

This thesis analyses competing discourses around the 2017 Catalan independence referendum. Taking a quantitative approach, several distinct text-mining techniques are applied to political speech transcripts and newspaper opinion pieces of pro-independence and pro-union elites in order to identify broad lexical patterns in discourse. These results are then interpreted with the guidance of previous literature and within the theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism. The analysis finds that the most salient patterns are a pro-union emphasis on law and the constitution, and a pro-independence focus on the symbolic imagery produced by the referendum, such as polling stations, ballot boxes, and police violence. The results also find differing representations of the relationship between Catalonia and Spain, and to a lesser degree, the role of Europe within the dynamic. Taken together, these findings illuminate broad discursive strategies employed by both sides of the independence debate as they seek to either provoke or prevent institutional change.

Keywords: Catalonia, Spain, referendum, Puigdemont, Rajoy, content analysis, text mining, governance, independence, discursive institutionalism.

# Table of Contents

# Chapter 1. Introduction

Following years of growing tensions between Spain's central government and the north-eastern Spanish region of Catalonia, Catalan leaders organized an independence referendum for October 1st, 2017. The central government declared the referendum illegal and illegitimate, yet organizers carried forward with the plan, plunging Spain into a political crisis with little modern precedent in Western democracies.

The referendum thrust the issue of Catalan independence into the national and international spotlight, obligating political leaders and thought leaders in the press to explain the situation and justify the legitimacy of their positions. The thesis uses the crisis as a case study to map out key points of contention within these competing discourses, and discuss how these patterns reflect discursive strategies to either change or reinforce the status quo. By conducting a quantitative analysis of the lexical patterns of pro-independence and pro-union elites, key themes can be identified, summarized and interpreted within the context of the existing literature on sub-state independence movements, as well as the wider theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism, which seeks to understand the interplay between discourse and institutional change. To address this research agenda, the following interrelated research questions are posed:

*R1: What were the broad patterns in word choice of pro-independence and pro-union elites during the political crisis around the 2017 Catalan independence referendum?*

*R2: What significant themes emerge from these patterns in relation to previous literature, and how do they reflect strategies to challenge or reinforce existing institutional structures?*

Chapter 2 provides a brief background on the political crisis in Catalonia, and discusses key events surrounding the referendum. Chapter 3 provides a literature review to discuss central concepts around sub-state independence, including its institutional constraints and opportunities, as well as the existing scholarship on Catalan independence discourse. These are then placed within the theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism and placed within the context of existing literature. Chapter 4 outlines the research design and methodology used to address the research questions, and explains the corpus selection,

analytical approach of content analysis and thematic analysis, and the various text-mining techniques employed to find patterns in discourse. Chapter 5 provides the results of the quantitative analysis and the thematic analysis, highlighting key themes and drawing upon in-text examples. Chapter 6 then summarizes and synthesises these findings with regard to the previous literature as well as the broader theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism.

# Chapter 2. The 2017 Catalan Referendum: Key Events

The wealthy region of Catalonia has formed a part of the Spanish polity in some form for hundreds of years, although it maintains a distinct language, culture and political institutions (Payne, 1971). After experiencing significant cultural and linguistic oppression under the regime of Francisco Franco following the Spanish Civil War, the transition to democracy in the late 1970s brought Catalonia and other Spanish regions significant degrees of autonomy under a constitutional framework that recognizes distinct "nationalities" within a united Spain (Agranoff, 1996). Under this system, Catalonia was able to strengthen its autonomous government, the *Generalitat*, and significantly develop its own educational, health, linguistic and cultural policies (Agranoff, 1996). During these first decades of the democratic era, Catalonia was largely guided by the center-right Convergence and Union (CiU) which pushed for a "gradualist and pragmatic" form of Catalan nationalism that focused on language, culture, heritage, and greater regional autonomy (Guibernau, 2004, p. 129). During this time, political support for independence from Spain remained relatively low, never fluctuating above 21 percent (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2018).

## 2.1 Lead-Up to the 2017 Referendum

Two interlinking events played a significant role in upsetting these dynamics between Spain and Catalonia. The first was the economic crisis beginning in 2008, which resulted in recentralization and austerity measures that many Catalans blamed on Spain's ruling Popular Party (Gillespie, 2015). The second was the 2010 Spanish Constitutional Court ruling against several core statutes of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy that would have strengthened Catalonia's economic, political and cultural powers, which many Catalans saw as a politicized attack against the region—particularly the striking down of references to Catalonia as a "nation" (Elias, 2015; Calamur, 2017). These two issues, combined with a series of corruption scandals around the same time that implicated the old-guard Catalan leaders of the CiU, created the sense for many Catalan nationalists that the traditional pragmatic and gradualist approach had failed (Serrano, 2014).

These events helped move the issue of independence from the fringes to the heart of Catalan

politics (Elias, 2015; Lecours, 2018). Old political alignments also shifted around the issue, as the CiU split apart and politicians rearranged themselves around support or opposition to independence (Elias, 2015). In 2013, pro-independence leaders joined together to approve a resolution in the Catalan parliament recognizing the sovereignty of the Catalan people as a nation, as well as their right to determine their relationship with Spain (Lecours, 2018; Elias, 2015). This was followed by an independence referendum in 2014, which became a non-binding "consultation" after the Spanish central government declared it illegal (Lecours, 2018, p. 249). In 2015, the dominant nationalist parties joined together under the banner *Junts pel Sí* (Together for Yes) and declared that the parliamentary election that year would function as a plebiscite on independence—one in which their victory would constitute a democratic mandate to split with Spain (Kolçak, 2017; Lecours, 2018). *Junts pel Sí* fell short of a majority, however, receiving only 62 of 135 seats, which required them to join in a coalition with the small far-left Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP) to move the independence project ahead (Buck, 2017). Carles Puigdemont, the former mayor of Girona, became the leader of this new coalition based on his long-standing credentials as a pro-independence voice (Lecours, 2018).

Outside the political realm, other significant actors helped shape the march toward an independence referendum as well. Civil society groups like Omnium Cultural and the Catalan National Assembly helped push political leaders on the issue of independence, while also employing social media techniques to garner support from the wider public (Crameri, 2015). Media elites in the movement also played a powerful role in driving the independence cause forward, due in part to their "access to mass as well as elite forms of communication" (Crameri, 2015, p. 7). During this time, the Catalan public became increasingly polarised by the issue of independence, with popular support reaching a high of 48% in late 2013, according to Catalan government surveys (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2018). Furthermore, polls show that a majority were in favour of holding a referendum, although nearly equally divided on the question of holding one against Madrid's wishes (Guntermann, 2017). This disagreement was further complicated by the term "right to decide", which became "virtually synonymous with secessionism" in pro-independence discourse after the consultation in 2014 and plebiscite in 2015 (Lecours 2018, p. 264).

The central government in Madrid, ruled by the center-right Popular Party (PP) with Mariano Rajoy as Prime Minister, repeatedly argued that Catalonia had no right to hold an

independence referendum, which it based on the rule of law and the Spanish constitution (Crameri, 2016). Indeed, the constitution makes clear "the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards" (Spanish Const. Sect. 2). However, while the constitution considers Spain one *demos* (Guibernau, 2013), Keating (1996) notes that all Catalan parties except for the far right "generally accept the principle of Catalan self-determination, seeing Catalonia's relationship with Spain as a compact, freely entered into by both sides but needing continued assessment to remain valid" (p. 156). This core disagreement around the constitution's validity, and by extension the referendum's legitimacy, put the two opposing sides on the path to conflict.

On September 6th, 2017, the Catalan Parliament called for a binding self-determination referendum to be held on October 1st ("Referendum Law Passed", 2017). Madrid declared the referendum illegal, and several court-ordered police raids took place to seize documents and arrest senior officials involved in its organization during weeks of growing tensions (Jones, 2017a). On September 20th, a large protest trapped several Spanish Civil Guard officers inside a building in Barcelona while they conducted a raid on offices of alleged pro-independence leaders, which resulted in the arrest of prominent civil society leaders Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart (Strange, 2017). In late September and the days preceding the referendum, officials and citizens formed networks with French Catalan supporters to import and distribute ballot boxes and ballot slips while evading police control (O'Gallagher, 2018). Organizers then staged all-night "pajama parties" to prevent police from closing schools meant to serve as polling stations (Stothard & Mount, 2017).

## 2.2 The Month of October, 2017

On October 1st, 2017, the referendum was held amid significant police efforts to prevent it, resulting in instances of police violence that received widespread international media coverage (Saeed, 2017). European leaders, while cautiously condemning the use of force, maintained that the Spanish government would serve as their only interlocutor, and that the issue remained an internal matter (Henley & Mason, 2017). On October 3rd, large street protests were held across Catalonia against the police violence during the referendum (Burgen, 2017). On October 10th, Catalan president Carles Puigdemont delivered a widely-covered speech in which he issued a declaration of independence with "suspended effects,"

leaving international observers and the Spanish government confused about whether or not independence had been declared (Tremlett, 2017, p. 1). The Spanish government demanded he clarify whether or not he had declared independence, under threat of implementing direct rule over the region via Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution (Cruz, 2017). Members of the CUP within his own political coalition also requested that he declare independence "coherently" and "clearly" when responding to the central government in order to end confusion around the issue (Baquero, 2017). His calls for dialogue without clarifying the issue of independence failed to clarify the issue for Spanish leaders (Toyer, 2017). As the Spanish government began taking steps to implement Article 155 and impose direct rule, the Catalan parliament declared independence on October 27th based on the referendum results; the Spanish government replaced them with a technocratic government and called for new regional elections (Reid & Amaro, 2017). At the end of October, Puigdemont and several of his cabinet members fled to Brussels amid charges of sedition, rebellion, and misuse of public funds (Jones, 2017b).

This conflictive month of October, 2017 provides the framework for this case study. The referendum and its resulting clash of political legitimacies brought national and international attention to Catalonia, obligating political leaders and media elites from both sides of the debate to both define the conflict and legitimize their positions within it. In order to better understand these dynamics and guide this research, Chapter 3 addresses the opportunities and constraints within the wider context of sub-state independence, reviews previous literature on discursive strategies, and places this all within the theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism.

# Chapter 3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This section defines key terms and places the Catalan referendum within a broader political and institutional context. It begins with an overview of sub-state nationalism and the institutional opportunities and constraints sub-state independence movements face. It then turns to previous scholarship examining the discourse of Catalan and other sub-state nationalist movements within these opportunities and constraints. Lastly, it places this thesis into the theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism and addresses the gaps in the literature that it seeks to fill.

## 3.1 Sub-State Nationalism and Independence

Despite shifting dynamics within the international system, states continue to underpin the global order (Hurrell, 2007). The nation, in turn, forms "the key means for states to legitimate their power over people" (Sutherland, 2011, p. 9). In other words, the global order is built around states, and states are built around nations. But what is a nation? Properly defining this concept is deeply contentious, despite its centrality to modern politics (Smith, 2010). Modernist scholars focus on national identity as a 19th-Century construct—a way to build cohesion during the Industrial Revolution as uprooted workers lost ties to their former communities (Gellner & Breuilly, 2006), or as the product of "imagined communities" forged through revolutions in printing technology and education (Anderson, 2006). Anthony Smith's (2010) ethno-symbolic approach conceives the nation on a spectrum between these modernist understandings and the pre-existing cultural givens of an ethnic community, such as shared language, memories and a homeland, which provide at least a symbolic link to the public culture around which the nation is built (Smith, 2010).

Nationalism, though related to the nation, is specifically the act of "politicizing a feeling of national belonging", while sub-state nationalism, in turn, "attempt[s] to mobilise voters behind [an] alternative ideological interpretation of the nation," thus challenging the national identity on which a state seeks to build its political legitimacy (Sutherland, 2011, p. 7). Nationalism comes in distinct forms, which are frequently conceptualized between "civic" and "ethnic" variants—the former emphasizing shared laws, ideals, and an inclusive voluntary dimension, and latter emphasizing a more organic, ethnic and exclusive dimension

(Kuzio, 2002). Current Western international norms consider exclusive ethnic forms of nationalism "morally retrograde" (Coppieters, 2010, p. 248), while civic nationalism meets the "demands of contemporary democratic theory"—although at the cost of losing the strong mobilization power of ethnic and cultural themes (Máiz 2003, p. 251). In practice, however, most nationalist movements employ both civic and ethnic elements, depending on their political needs at the time (Sutherland, 2011).

At their most basic level, all forms of nationalism seek the congruency between the national unit and the political unit (Gellner & Breuilly, 2006). Yet such congruency is not the norm; political units frequently cut through national ones, or stretch beyond the homeland of one nation to form wider multinational units, resulting in far more self-identified nations than states (Griffiths, 2003). This unequal overlap between the nation and the state forms a central tension between two foundational principles at the heart of the international system: (1) the territorial integrity of the state; and (2) the right to national self-determination (Griffiths, 2003). Territorial integrity is the stronger of the two, constituting "the single most fundamental principle of international law" (Buchanan, 1997, p. 46). Self-determination, in contrast, solidified as an international norm after World War I and was reinforced in the U.N Charter after World War II, most notably in the context of decolonization (Griffiths, 2003). As Griffiths (2003) notes: "the uneven and partial fusion of these principles in the form of the nation-state has played a key role in transforming patterns of war and peace in the modern era" (p. 77).

When sub-state nationalists seek independence in a direct challenge to the central state, the international community determines the legitimacy of a potential new state by granting or withholding official recognition (Coggins, 2011, Fabry, 2012). In such cases, it strongly favours territorial integrity (Richmond, 2002; Moore, 2004). Recognition for new states is almost exclusively reserved for the conditions of consent, decolonization, or dissolution (Fabry, 2012). Decolonization and dissolution introduced the distinct waves of independent states in the 1960s and early 1990s, during the post-colonial era and the breakup of the Soviet Union respectively (Fabry, 2012, Haklai 2015)[1]. More recently, the implicitly sanctioned referendum on statehood in Quebec in 1994 and the fully sanctioned referendum in Scotland

---

[1] Fabry (2012) notes that even in the context of dissolution following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, "foreign recognition of the successor states came only once the respective central governments had agreed to the dissolution of the unions," despite maintaining strong normative pressure against the bloc (p. 664).

in 2014 have elevated consent based on democratic choice as a noteworthy mechanism, although these cases remain rare (Lecours, 2018). In addition to these three conditions, a fourth justification for statehood, defined as remedial rights, claims there can be normative justifications for independence as a remedy for grave human rights violations (Buchanan, 1997)[2].

In order to balance the territorial integrity of the state and claims for national self-determination, Western democracies increasingly turn to the solution of regional autonomy without recognizing collective rights to a separate nation-state (Haklai, 2015). Indeed, the European Union has adopted this solution as part of what Coppieters (2010) defines as its "strategic culture" regarding secession (p. 255). Within the European Union, greater regional autonomy has resulted in sovereignty being shared across the regional, state and supranational level, creating a complex system of interconnected political arenas—what Hooghe and Marks (2001) identified as multilevel governance. Such a system creates a complex power-sharing dynamic not only between the region and the central state, but also both within the wider EU, resulting in "a complex political order in which European politics are regionalized; regional politics are Europeanized; and national politics are both Europeanized and regionalized" (Keating and Hooghe, 1995, as cited in Keating, 1996, p. 61).

## 3.2 New Incentives and Opportunities

As outlined above, the international community places strong constraints on independence, with greater autonomy employed as a solution for nationalist claims both within Europe and Western democracies more generally. Yet despite greater autonomy, independence movements remain active in Europe; Catalonia and Scotland have the strongest movements (Bourne, 2014), although they are joined by the Basque Country, Northern Ireland, and a host of others—25 separatist movements in total that require at least some form of government acknowledgement (Coppieters, 2010). What might explain this continued appeal of independence?

---

[2] Buchanan (1997) explores Remedial Rights Only as one of two *normative* theories on secession, contrasted with Primary Rights, which allows groups the right to secede even in the absence of injustice.

While seeking to strike a balance between competing claims to power, the EU may unintentionally help create more opportunities for independence movements (Keating, 2001; Tierney, 2005; Lecours, 2012; Patrick, 2016). The shift of hard issues like security and the economic policies upward to the supranational level, together with a corresponding shift of socio-cultural issues like language, health and education downward to the regional level, has increasingly hollowed out the power of the central state (Jessop, 2013; Patrick, 2016). Furthermore, with greater autonomy, regional parties can strengthen their power and use it to reinforce and mobilize their minority identities (Brancati, 2006). This is done, in part, by evoking powerful narratives around identity and nationhood while raising political, historical and constitutional grievances with the state (Lecours, 2012). At the level above the state, the European Union and other institutions in the international community may inadvertently reduce the perception of risk in independence by providing an external support system (Keating, 2004; Lecours, 2012; Fazal & Griffiths, 2014). This accompanies the belief in greater material benefits and prestige that full statehood brings (Fazal & Griffiths, 2014; Duina & Bok, 2013).

## 3.3 Catalan Discourse Within These Opportunities and Constraints

The combination of strengthened regional parties, the reduced significance of the central state, and a perception of wider international conditions amenable to new states has likely played a significant role in the staying power of independence movements. Yet hard constraints on independence at the national, supranational and international level remain in place, as noted in section 3.1. Furthermore, these structural opportunities and constraints combine with the normative pressures on sub-state nationalists to espouse a more civic and democratic variant of nationalism in order to meet current Western norms. Catalonia sits within this complex web of opportunities and constraints, and its discursive strategies, along with the counter strategies of the central government, should be understood within this context. Discourse is an important part of this dynamic, not only as a way to strategically navigate these opportunities and constraints, but for its central function in the creation of the nation itself (Finlayson, 1998). The literature highlights several interlinking aspects of the Catalan independence discourse that emerges within these opportunities and constraints: an emphasis on (1) democracy; (2) remedial themes; (3) European values; and (4) externalization.

*(1) Democracy*

Kathryn Crameri (2016) argues that sub-state independence movements are "working hard to shift perceptions of the legitimacy of secession as a democratic phenomenon" (p. 1). This maps onto the central disagreement over the validity of the Spanish Constitution, as mentioned in Chapter 1. The constitution, which forms the basis of Spanish democracy, includes the "indissoluble unity" of Spain within it (Spanish Const. Sect. 2). Yet Catalan nationalists believe its legitimacy requires constant re-assessment to remain valid (Keating, 1996). Crameri (2016) traces the discourse of competing arguments around a potential democratic referendum to different emphases on democratic legitimacy: the pro-independence emphasis on the "right to decide" through a democratic referendum, versus the pro-union emphasis on the "duty to abide" to the legal and constitutional framework of Spain in its current form (p. 1).

*(2) Remedial Themes*

The right-to-decide argument is one of two broad justifications used by sub-state independence movements in Europe, together with "just cause" arguments, according to Bruno Coppieters (2010). Right to decide justifications argue that any group can choose to form a different political identity, provided that they meet certain conditions like democratic governance and respect for minorities, while just cause arguments focus on significant injustices perpetrated by the central state to justify independence (Coppieters, 2010). Coppieters notes, However, that "both types of arguments intermingle in most discourses on secession" (p. 253). Indeed, there is evidence that independence leaders in Catalonia combine themes of both democratic choice and remedial claims. In a study of Catalan discourse from 2003 to 2014, Ivan Serrano (2014) finds that arguments favouring a right to decide on independence emerged as reaction to the perception of unfair treatment by the state, evidenced in the constitutional gridlock around a push for greater fiscal and political autonomy, which resulted in a "unilateral approach emphasizing democratic and remedial arguments for self-determination" (p. 2). While normative theories on independence draw a clear line between remedial claims and right-to-decide justifications for independence (Buchanan, 1997), political leaders more easily blend the two in their discourse.

*(3) Europe*

The above-mentioned democratic and remedial claims intermingle with the usage of the European Union in discourse. Independence leaders in the EU highlight their European values and stress the civic, inclusive and democratic nature of their movements to boost their credibility within the Union (Keating, 1996; Keating, 2001; Giordano & Roller, 2002). Furthermore, independence leaders promote independence *within* the EU, which would mean maintaining the economic and political benefits of membership and lowering the perception of risk in independence (Anderson & Kiel, 2016). Elias (2008) notes that Europe can be used in such discourses across two distinct conceptualizations: the normative and aspirational *idea* of Europe, and its concrete institutional reality. This builds upon what Kopecký and Mudde (2002) refer to as the difference between *specific* and *diffuse* support—the latter emphasizing the ideas and values of the European project, and the former addressing its current policies and trajectory (as cited in Elias, 2008).

Angela Bourne (2014) focuses on these multivariate usages of Europe in her study on discursive strategies for independence in Scotland and Catalonia from 2012 to 2014; she finds that both pro- and anti-independence leaders used Europe as an idea, a forum, and a source of allies within that timeframe. Independence leaders appealed to the EU's democratic principles while arguing that Catalonia could not lose membership due to the existing EU citizenship of Catalans, as well as the region's economic strength (Bourne, 2014) Madrid countered these arguments by focusing on the uncertainty of EU ascension, as well as the potential economic and political impact of independence (Bourne, 2014). Independence leaders also engaged in significant strategies of public diplomacy to target European leaders with their messaging, while Madrid used official diplomatic channels to challenge independence claims and pressure leaders to recognize the Catalan issue as an internal matter (Bourne, 2014). Bourne argues that, given the power difference between both sides the "institutional prerogatives (…) provided anti-independence campaigners with resources not available to pro-independence counterparts" (p. 114).

*(4) Externalization*

While overlapping to a degree with usages of Europe, externalization efforts seek to project the issue of Catalan independence beyond the Spanish frontiers to garner international attention (Bourne 2014). As previously outlined, the international community is key to recognizing sub-state independence legitimacy, yet diplomatic channels are monopolized by the central state, which creates a significant challenge for sub-state independence movements (Guibernau, 2013). To circumvent this challenge, independence leaders project their claims into the international sphere through various externalization strategies and public diplomacy efforts (targeting foreign publics instead of leaders) specifically designed to garner media attention (Bourne, 2014). These have taken on creative and performative dimensions in the past, like building traditional human towers and creating long human chains that function as acts of political theatre with specific discursive purposes (Oklopcic, 2015). The Spanish government externalizes via public diplomacy to a much lesser degree, instead exercising traditional diplomatic pressure when Catalonia's efforts gain international support, although it has raised concern that it must improve its public diplomacy efforts (Bourne, 2014).

## 3.4 Theoretical Framework: Institutionalism, Discourse and Change

The above discursive strategies reflect the opportunities and constraints created by structures, norms and ideas—referred to here as institutions (Fischer, 2003)—that independence movements and counter-movements must navigate to project their claims. These institutions shape their discourses while their discourses seek to shape these institutions by either strengthening or challenging the status quo. A theoretical framework, therefore, must acknowledge this two-way interplay between institutions and discourse.

Theories of new institutionalism address the role institutions play in shaping political discourse and action. In these theories, political practices are rooted in institutions dominated by ideas, rules, organizational strategies and structures that create meaning and shape actors preferences and discourse (Fischer, 2003). Within this conceptualization, institutions are shaped by unfixed (changeable) ideas and norms, which both affect and can be affected by actors within them. The focus of new institutionalism, however, is primarily on the role institutions play in shaping the discourse of political actors, with less attention payed to the

reverse dynamic (Schmidt, 2008). To address this, Colin Hay (2008) puts forward the idea of "constructivist institutionalism" which follows the same logic of new institutionalism but shifts the focus to questions of complex institutional change, and particularly "the conditions under which such established cognitive filters and paradigms are contested, challenged, and replaced" (p. 16).

Vivien Schmidt (2008) further develops this constructivist institutional approach by emphasizing the "logic of communication" in institutional change; the resulting discursive institutionalism operates within the tradition of constructivist institutionalism, but emphasizes the role of discourse. Discourse, as defined here, is the combination of the content of ideas (the text) interactions (where, when, how and why), and agency (who said what to whom) (Schmidt, 2008). Central to this approach is the question "when does discourse exert a causal influence by promoting change—first, in terms of its representation of ideas, and second, as the discursive process by which it conveys those ideas?" (Schmidt, 2008, p. 311). This is, essentially, a question of how ideas and discourse are used to shape the institutions, while simultaneously sitting within those institutions they seek to change. In Schmidt's conceptualization, actors use their "background ideational abilities" and "foreground discursive abilities" in the process of persuasive discourse (Schmidt, 2008, p. 314). This ties back in with Hay's conceptualization, which emphasizes the "strategic interplay" of conduct and context, as well as the "crucial space granted to ideas" (Hay, 2008, pg. 7). Discursive (constructivist) institutionalism thus provides a useful lens through which to understand how sub-state independence movements and counter-movements employ discursive strategies to challenge or reinforce the system in which they are embedded.

To more concretely establish what a discursive strategy is within discursive institutionalism, this thesis borrows from Chilton (2004) who argues that "delegitimisation (of the other) and legitimisation (of the self)" forms one of the three broad overlapping strategic functions of language, together with representation and coercion (p. 47). Through the lens of discursive institutionalism, these strategic functions (choosing to representing an issue to legitimize a position and delegitimizing another) serve to either promote or prevent institutional change.

As the literature review has shown, the institutional constraints on independence are strong across multiple levels of governance within the European Union and Western democracies more broadly. Pro-union discourse seeks to strengthen those constraints, while pro-independence discourse pushes to reinterpret and change them to favour independence. Yet discursive institutionalism suggests both sides will dispute the same core institutional norms (democratic legitimacy, European values, justice) and structures (the EU institutions, the constitutional framework, multilevel governance system) in which they are embedded. The different *representations* of these norms and structures allow each side to legitimize itself or delegitimize the opposition. The previous literature supports this by showing, for example, that both pro- and anti-independence camps legitimize themselves through democratic principles, although they employ different representations of democracy—the right to decide versus the rule of law—within their discursive strategies. Similarly, both sides evoke the European Union while representing Europe in different ways—appealing to its more diffuse values or its concrete institutions—to legitimize their position or delegitimize their opponent.

## 3.5 Gaps in Literature and Research Questions

The confrontation between Spain and Catalonia during the 2017 Catalan independence referendum resulted in a unique clash of legitimacies—one that required both the pro-independence and pro-union leaders to explain the issue of Catalan independence and legitimize their positions for or against institutional change. The resulting competing discourses provide an excellent case study better understand the discursive strategies of representation, legitimization, and delegitimization employed by both sides of the independence debate. Given that both sides addressed the same core issues during the same timeframe, broad comparisons can be made to identify key differences in their discursive strategies.

In order to do so, this thesis employs a quantitative approach to highlight broad patterns in word choice—*what* was said—to find broad discursive strategies to represent, legitimize, and delegitimize during this period. While other academic work has highlighted broad discursive strategies, as noted above, there appears to be no quantitative study done on the topic, which can reveal new insights, raise new questions, and serve to strengthen or challenge previous

literature on sub-state independence discourse. Furthermore, few studies have emerged around the discourse employed during the unique clash of legitimacies that the 2017 independence referendum provoked. Therefore, in order to fill this gap, the following interlinking research questions are asked:

*R1: What were the broad patterns in word choice of pro-independence and pro-union elites during the political crisis around the 2017 Catalan independence referendum?*

*R2: What significant themes emerge from these patterns in relation to previous literature, and how do they reflect strategies to challenge or reinforce existing institutional structures?*

Taking a text-as-data approach, the texts of political and media elites are analysed quantitatively and visualized, which provides a broad quantitative overview of the discourse around the referendum. These quantitative findings are then interpreted qualitatively for key themes in relation to the literature outlined above, and these resulting broad themes are discussed in the context of the theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism. The research design and methodology used to answer these research questions are explained in Chapter 4.

# Chapter 4. Research Design and Methodology

By focusing on the Catalan referendum, this thesis follows a single-case design employing embedded analysis of competing actors (pro-independence and pro-union) within the case. The unit of analysis is discourse, analysed through the text of speeches from political leaders and the opinion articles from thought leaders on both sides of the Catalan referendum debate. As Schmidt (2008) notes, elite discourse plays an important role in discursive institutionalism: "The arrows of discursive interaction often appear to go from the top down [wherein] policy elites generate ideas, which political elites then communicate to the public [via a] master discourse [which] provides a vision of where the polity is, where it is going, and where it ought to go" (pg. 311).

## 4.1 Methods of Analysis

These texts are examined to reveal manifest lexical patterns via an exploratory form of quantitative content analysis, with the results then interpreted qualitatively in relation to the previous literature and theoretical framework via thematic analysis. These research methods are discussed below.

### Quantitative Content Analysis (CTA)

Content analysis (CTA) is a method of analysis that measures text itself through quantification and summary (Neuendorf & Skalski, 2002). Processing text through this "text-as-data" approach can aid in the evaluation of text features by identifying lexical patterns, such as differences in word choice of competing politicians, and the salience of those differences (Monroe, Colaresi & Quinn, 2009). This thesis follows this text-as-data logic, using CTA to find meaningful patterns within and between the discourses of elites. In order to do so, it uses computer-aided text analysis, which seeks to assess textual data with the aid of software, thus allowing large amounts of textual data to be processed quickly and reliably (Krippendorff, 2003). In this regard, it overlaps with aspects of text mining, which can be defined as "a process of extracting useful information from document collections through the identification and exploration of interesting patterns" (Yu, Jannasch-Pennell, & DiGangi,

2011, p. 731). Text mining has a largely exploratory dimension, as it allows categories to emerge from the data without limiting the research to pre-formed hypotheses (Yu et al., 2011). While this thesis adopts the exploratory pattern-finding aspect of text-mining, the textual analysis employed here is more aligned with computer-aided exploratory content analysis, as this thesis does not employ natural language processing or other such computer learning techniques. There are, however, significant overlaps between the ideas and techniques of content analysis and text-mining (Yu et al., 2011).

To carry out this content analysis, political speeches and newspaper articles are separated into two distinct corpuses. Each corpus containing two datasets—a pro- and anti-independence side—results in four datasets total. To find meaningful lexical patterns in the discourse, the following sub-questions are posed within this exploratory content analysis to answer *R1: What were the broad patterns in word choice of pro-independence and pro-union elites during the political crisis around the 2017 Catalan referendum?*

*CTA Q1: What are the most commonly-used words in each dataset?*
To answer this question, each dataset is run through software that counts individual words and sorts them by their frequency within the whole dataset. This reveals the most common words used by political and press leaders on both sides of the independence debate. Frequency is calculated by dividing the instances of a word by the total number of words in the dataset, which is then expressed as a decimal between 0 and 1.

*CTA Q2: What are the most common bigrams in each dataset?*
Similar to single-word frequencies, each dataset is run through software to find the most common bigrams—pairs of words occurring together and in that order—and then sorted by frequency within the whole dataset. Frequency is calculated by dividing the instances of a bigram by the total number of bigrams in the dataset, which is then expressed as a decimal between 0 and 1.

*CTA Q3: What are the most unique words among leaders when compared across the corpus?*
In this case, the words in each dataset of the political corpus are combined into a single document, resulting in two documents. Software is then used to measure these two documents against each other via the weighting technique known as term frequency–inverse document frequency (tf-idf), which highlights the most salient words in one document when

measured against a collection of documents (Monroe, et al., 2009; Miner 2012; Silge & Robinson, 2017)[3]. This technique is based on the logic that words appearing many times in one document and relatively few in others reveal significant information unique to a document (Monroe et al., 2009). In this case, it can show which words are disproportionately present in one dataset and absent in another, providing insight into the differences between topics emphasized and avoided.

An initial test showed this technique of combining a dataset's words into a single document would raise issues for the press corpus. This is due to the diversity in coverage of opinion and editorial pieces, which creates a much wider range of words and topics than political leaders, and this diversity affects the weighting results significantly. For this reason, a fourth question is posed (CTA Q4) to account for the breadth in topics in the media corpus while still finding meaningful patterns.

*CTA Q4: What word-cluster patterns emerge in the media corpus?*
This final step allows for the much larger and more diverse newspaper corpus by creating a semantic network of co-occurrences. This technique accounts for both significant *themes* as well as *topics* covered in editorials and opinion pieces; it does this by measuring instances of two words appearing together in an article against instances of these words not appearing together within other articles—applied to every combination of words across a dataset (this process is further outlined in Silge & Robinson, 2017, sect. 4.2.2). Unlike the previous steps, this design does not account for word prominence or word order, but instead provides an output focusing on the *strength of correlation* between two words. In order for such a design to show more meaningful patterns, words of low prominence (those that appear less than 20 times in each dataset, following the example of Silge & Robinson [2017]) are removed before calculating co-occurrence. The results of these calculations are then filtered for the strongest 130 correlations and visualized.

*Qualitative Thematic Analysis*

The above quantitative content analysis can say very little without a separate level of analysis

---

[3] A more detailed explanation of the math behind this technique can be found at the website http://www.tfidf.com/

to interpret the data (Krippendorff, 2003). The answers to the four CTA questions above are therefore assessed through the technique of thematic analysis. According to Braune and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis follows a more objective and descriptive analysis of data and "attempt[s] to theorise the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications […] in relation to previous literature" (p. 13). It also separates the interpretation of data from the results, making explicit where the researcher intervenes with his or her own interpretations (Braune & Clarke, 2006).

To assess the patterns for meaningful data, each CTA result is addressed and then compared to the results of other datasets in the order they are assessed, beginning with political leader speeches, to build a more complete picture of meaningful patterns between them. In order to strengthen these findings, several significant words and bigrams highlighted in the quantitative analysis are put through word-search queries draw examples on examples from the source text and strengthen the analysis. These results are then summarized and further discussed in chapter 6. Together, the thematic analysis of the data and the broad themes found can answer *R2: What significant themes emerge from these patterns in relation to previous literature, and how do they reflect strategies to challenge or reinforce existing institutional structures?*

## 4.2 Corpus Selection and Retrieval

Pre-translated English-language versions of texts were accessed to compile all the datasets. This was done for several reasons: (1) the same language allows for direct lexical comparisons, which would not have been possible if the texts were left in their original Spanish and Catalan; (2) English-language texts, particularly in the press corpus, implicitly target the international community with their messaging, as English is the current lingua franca both within the EU and the wider global community (Linn, 2016). The international community, as mentioned above, forms an important audience for these representation and legitimization efforts.

### *Political Leaders*

The first corpus consists of two datasets containing political speeches given during the month of October, 2017. One contains the speeches of the prime minister of Spain at the time,

Mariano Rajoy. The second dataset contains the speeches of the president of the regional government of Catalonia at the time, Carles Puigdemont. Rajoy's speeches are supplemented by one speech given by King Felipe VI, as both men are arguably the political leaders of the pro-union side. Furthermore, the speech given by King Felipe VI October 3rd received widespread coverage and commentary, and thus constitutes an important part of the pro-union leader discourse. A list of the resulting six pro-union and five pro-independence speeches can be found in Appendix A.

*Newspaper Editorials and Opinion Pieces*

To assess a wider range of relevant elite discourse and thus strengthen the findings of patterns in language use, this analysis incorporates a second corpus of editorials and opinion pieces published by prominent pro-union and pro-independence papers around the time of the referendum. As these papers were published daily during the month-long crisis, they can provide a snapshot of the most prevalent themes and topics to emerge in opinion and editorial commentary. Furthermore, Madrid and Catalonia-based newspapers constituted significant players as thought leaders throughout the crisis, noted for their polarized coverage of the referendum and surrounding events (Hedgecoe, 2017a).

English-language editorial and opinion pieces related to the referendum are contrasted between Spain's largest newspaper, the pro-union *El País,* and the pro-independence online newspapers *Ara* and *El Nacional*. *El País* traditionally takes a center-left position but maintains noteworthy connections to Spanish political powerbrokers (Herman, 2017). The paper also had a noticeably strong pro-union stance in its referendum coverage, which one media observer labeled "one of the most surprising subplots of the territorial crisis" (Hedgecoe, 2017b). On the pro-independence side, two newspapers are combined to allow for a comparable dataset. The first is *Ara,* which has been categorized as the *diari del procés,* or the newspaper of the independence process, by media observers (Lluent, 2015). The second is *El Nacional*, a relative newcomer to Catalan news that has become one of the most-read online publications in the region ("ElNacional.cat y Crónica Global", 2018). Both newspapers fall behind their mainstream competitors in the region, *El Periódico* and *La Vanguardia,* but they have shown to be consistent voices for the pro-independence cause and thus useful sources for analysis.

The timeframe examined for newspaper coverage is September 25th, 2017 until November 7th, 2017. Narrowing the timeframe to these six weeks allows for a wide dataset while still maintaining the focus around the referendum and thus keeping the coverage comparable enough for between-text comparison. Like the political leaders' corpus, this covers the month of October, while also including one week before and after, which allows for the inclusion of further relevant newspaper commentary in the immediate build-up to and aftermath of the referendum. A list of these newspaper pieces and their titles can be found in Appendix B.

*Retrieval*

For the political speeches corpus, documents translated into English were retrieved from the official government websites for the relevant timeframe (Oct 1 – 31). The speeches of Puigdemont were downloaded from the website of the Catalan government, the *Generalitat de Catalunya*, while the speeches of Rajoy and King Felipe VI were retrieved from the website of the prime minister's office, *La Moncloa*. In this corpus retrieval, the text "Statement by the President of the Upper House" on October 27th was not used, as it provided only short summary of an earlier speech that same day.

To retrieve the dataset For *El País,* a search within the website for "Referendum English" turned up the English-language coverage of the referendum, which was then parsed for editorial and opinion pieces during the relevant timeframe (Sept 25 – Nov 7). Several largely unrelated pieces were disregarded, such as one discussing wages of Balearic island workers, and another one exploring Spain's cheapest housing markets. "Editorials" and "opinions" were not always labelled as such, however, which meant best judgement was used to determine whether or not to include an article in the dataset. The article "Lawlessness in Catalonia", for example, was included as a clear opinion piece despite not being labelled as such. The result is 52 pieces published on the anti-independence side (see Appendix 2).

For pro-independence newspapers, keyword searches were not necessary in the retrieval process as coverage was almost exclusively related to the referendum. Instead, opinion and editorial pieces could be gathered chronologically by filtering the websites for the timeframe specified above. For *El Nacional,* articles from the "opinion" section were gathered, while for *Ara*, all articles in the timeframe were downloaded and then filtered for articles labelled "editorials" as well as those containing a black-and-white photo of the author, which denotes

an opinion piece. Both pro-independence papers published the same open letter from the arrested civil society leader Jordi Sànchez, which was only included once in the dataset to avoid identical text repetition. This results in a dataset of 61 pieces published on the pro-independence side (see Appendix B).

## 4.3 Software and Coding Methods

The content analysis was conducted with the programming environment R version 3.5.1, accessed through the integrated development environment R Studio. Because the text under investigation is unstructured, software is particularly useful to help find patterns in structure and syntax (Miner, 2012). A significant portion of the approach used in this thesis was developed around the packages, techniques, and portions of code created by Julia Silge and David Robinson in their guidebook *Text Mining with R* (2017).

To organize and extract data, the leader speeches and newspaper pieces were saved and labelled by date and type in PDFs before their texts were manually copied and pasted into plain-text files and saved into separate folders for each of the four datasets. In newspaper pieces, only the bodies of the text were included, while titles and pull-quotes were omitted to avoid repetition. This created a broadly systemic approach, although some ad-hoc decisions had to be made. For example, in the article "X-Ray of Puigdemont's speech" published in *El País*, the portions of Puigdemont's speeches in bold were considered pull-quotes and thus not included. All quotes within the body of text, however, were left in place.

Several distinct packages were used to carried out the tasks of importing, cleaning, transforming, and visualizing the distinct datasets. Their text files were uploaded to R to perform pre-processing steps and clean the data for meaningful text extraction. Punctuation and numeral digits were removed, all words were converted to lowercase, and stopwords (common words including articles, prepositions, conjunctions) were removed using a pre-defined list[4] in the 'tm' package. Words were then stemmed, which is the process of "normalizing related word tokens into a single form" by removing plurals, prefixes and suffixes (Miner, 2012, p. 47). Empty spaces were removed as well.

---

[4] The 'tm' package uses the stop words from the SMART information retrieval system developed at Cornell University.

The following steps vary depending on the area of analysis. Words must be tokenized, meaning long strings of character vectors are split into discrete units—either individual words, bigrams, or other forms, depending on the level of analysis (Silge & Robinson, 2017). These tokenized word lists can be used to conduct simple counts, bigram counts, or serve as an intermediary step for more complex text mining techniques like tf-idf analysis and word clustering. This process involves intervention by the researcher at certain points. After an initial screening of the text, "premier" and "president" were normalized into "president". Furthermore, the words "thank you very much", "dear members of congress", and "Honourable members of the house" were removed, as they are formalities in official speeches and thus not regarded here as substantive content.

The adjectives "Catalan" "Spanish" and "European" were normalized into "Catalonia" "Spain" and "Europe" as a form of manual stemming. This was done for single-word frequencies, tf-idf and word clusters in order to reduce redundancy and more clearly reveal significant patterns in discourse. It was not applied to bigrams, however, so that adjectives would remain in their natural place. It is worth noting that small differences in these terms are not neutral. For example, Catalan independence leaders show a preference for the words "Spanish State" over "Spain". Indeed, the Catalan government-backed Corporación Catalana de Medios Audiovisuales (CCMA) insists in its 2013 stylebook that "Spanish State" and "Spain" can be used interchangeably, while "terms like 'country', 'nation', 'national', 'government' and 'parliament', among others, only refer to Catalonia unless otherwise indicated" (cited in Roger, 2013, p. 1). Just as the constitution refers to regional "nationalities" instead of the more concrete concept of "nations", subtle differences in usage can have significant strategic functions in conflicts regarding sub-state independence.

## 4.4 Limitations in Design, Method, and Software

To examine discourse around the Catalan independence referendum, this thesis analyses political speeches together with opinion and editorial pieces in newspapers. However, this assessment does not take into account the significant discourse taking place beyond political leaders and legacy media through unmediated grassroots networks on- and offline. Furthermore, the agenda-setting and issue-framing powers within news coverage itself—as

opposed to explicit positions outlined by editorials and op-eds—likely plays a large role in shaping domestic and international perceptions of the events, and would thus benefit from further research.

With regard to methodology, there are drawbacks to computer-aided analysis over human coding, despite the efficiency and calculating power of the software approach. Text mining may combine different usages of the same concept that a human coder would detect (Aureli, 2017). For example, to "fire" someone or to light a "fire" would be interpreted the same by this software. Furthermore, this thesis bases the importance of themes on word counts, although a single word in an obscure part of a text "can be highly salient, if it comports with the existing schemata in a receiver's belief systems" (Entman, 1993, p. 53). The quantitative and thematic analysis do not include such key words, which would likely require a different form of discourse analysis.

Another issue is language. While all texts were downloaded pre-translated to English, there are likely discrepancies in translations (such as the difference between "premier" and "president" noted above). Furthermore, translations may obscure patterns in word choice or nuances in the original Spanish and Catalan texts.

This content analysis in this thesis strives to carry out as systematic an analysis as possible, although there are several subjective steps involved in various parts of the process. The researcher must decide which documents and text to include (the importance of large pull-quotes and other variations of text presentation) from unstructured data that is frequently formatted and labelled in an inconsistent fashion. Furthermore, the researcher must make decisions when cleaning the data and controlling for certain words. In this regard, this type of content analysis should be understood as flexible tool to explore texts for meaningful data and aid in the qualitative analysis of these texts.

Lastly, the data here by no means shows all the nuances in the arguments, nor the breadth of issues addressed within the debate around Catalan independence. Rather, by finding significant lexical patterns through quantitative analysis across various datasets, it seeks to outline broad differences that can reinforce the literature and aid further research. This breadth comes at the expense of depth, however, suggesting that each finding would therefore benefit from future research.

# Chapter 5. Content and Thematic Analysis Results

This chapter provides the results for the content analysis—the sub-questions of which can be found in section 4.1—as well as thematic analysis to interpret these results. The findings of the thematic analysis are then synthesized, summarized and placed within the broader theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism in Chapter 6.

## 5.1 First Corpus: Political Leaders

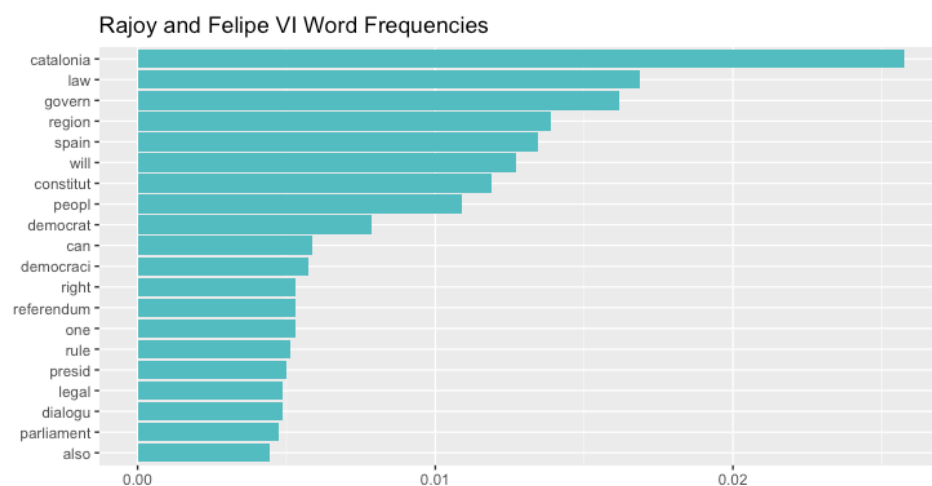### CTA Q1 Results: Word Frequencies



Figure 1: Top 20 words used by pro-union leaders ranked by their frequency (in decimal values) within the entire dataset.
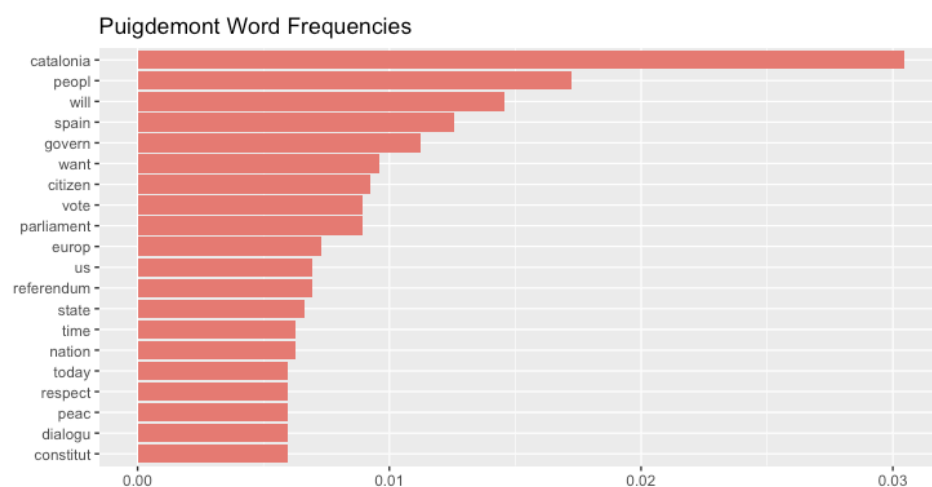


Figure 2: Top 20 words used by Puigdemont ranked by their frequency (in decimal values) within the entire dataset.

| Rajoy & Felipe VI Bigrams | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Rank** | **Bigram** | **Total** | **frequency** |
| 1 | region govern | 40 | 0.00572 |
| 2 | govern catalonia | 39 | 0.00558 |
| 3 | presid region | 20 | 0.00286 |
| 4 | region parliament | 17 | 0.00243 |
| 5 | people catalonia | 16 | 0.00228 |
| 6 | statut autonomi | 16 | 0.00228 |
| 7 | parliament catalonia | 15 | 0.00214 |
| 8 | rule law | 14 | 0.00200 |
| 9 | constitut court | 13 | 0.00186 |
| 10 | peopl spain | 12 | 0.00171 |

| Puigdemont Bigrams | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Rank** | **Bigram** | **Total** | **Frequency** |
| 1 | peopl catalonia | 9 | 0.00298 |
| 2 | self govern | 8 | 0.00265 |
| 3 | spanish govern | 8 | 0.00265 |
| 4 | ballot box | 7 | 0.00232 |
| 5 | spanish state | 7 | 0.00232 |
| 6 | will catalan | 6 | 0.00199 |
| 7 | catalan peopl | 5 | 0.00166 |
| 8 | st octob | 5 | 0.00166 |
| 9 | mani peopl | 5 | 0.00166 |
| 10 | poll station | 5 | 0.00166 |

*Thematic Analysis of CTA Q1 and CTA Q2 Results*

The most salient pattern in these speech texts appears to revolve around the legal conceptualization of democracy put forward on the unionist side. After "Catalonia", the word "law" is the most commonly-used word by unionists. It is joined by "constitution", "legal" and "rule" within the top 20 most-common words. The unionist bigrams reinforce this legal emphasis: "statute [of] autonomy", "rule [of] law" and "constitutional court" comprise three of the ten most frequent combinations. This pattern suggests pro-union leaders emphasize the legal and constitutional dimensions of democracy in their arguments. Terms searches within the dataset support this: For example, Rajoy argues that "democracy has prevailed today because the Constitution has been upheld" (Rajoy, Oct. 1)[5].

Puigdemont's most frequently-used words paint a different picture. Unlike the unionist side, "law" is absent (it sits at number 55), replaced by "people", "citizens," "vote," and "nation", as well as the words "respect," "peace" and "dialogue". The bigrams show an emphasis on "ballot boxes", "polling stations", the "[1]st [of] Octob[er]," and the "will [of the] Catalans". A term-search of "ballot boxes" within context provides an example of this theme: "The ballot boxes, the only language we understand, say yes to independence" (Puigdemont, Oct. 10). This suggests an emphasis on the symbolic imagery that emerged from the referendum,

---

[5] Note: Citations from texts analyzed here are left in their original datasets, which can be found organized chronologically in Appendix A and Appendix B.

such as ballot boxes and polling stations, in contrast to the legal emphasis of union leaders.

The data shows that both unionist leaders and Puigdemont also frequently acknowledge the concept used by their opponent to underpin their claims of democratic legitimacy—the "referendum" and the Spanish "constitution", respectively. A within-text examination shows that unionist leaders mention the word "referendum" 28 times, accompanied by the qualifying adjectives "illegal" 6 times, "fraudulent" twice, and "simulated" once. This interpretation of the referendum is addressed by Rajoy when he argues "we have not witnessed any form of referendum today, but rather a mere spectacle; one more episode in a strategy against democratic co-existence and the law" (Rajoy, Oct. 1). Puigdemont, on the other hand, references the "constitution"-based argument that underpins the unionist claims, although an analysis of the word within the text shows that he places the Catalan referendum beyond its authority. For example, he argues that "The *Generalitat* [Government of Catalonia] is not an institution that is born with the current Spanish Constitution" (Puigdemont, Oct. 21), and that "The Constitution is a democratic framework, but it is equally true that there is democracy beyond the Constitution" (Puigdemont, Oct. 10). Furthermore, a term-search reveals Puigdemont mentions "law" six times, but does so to argue that Spanish law is illegitimate based on democratic principles: he argues the government's actions are a "humiliation […] incompatible with a democratic attitude and situated outside the rule of law" (Puigdemont, Oct. 21).

"Europe" sits in the top ten most frequent words used by Puigdemont, but not those of the unionist leaders (where it comes it at number 76). A further examination of this term within context shows that he uses the term to emphasize European core values, which he suggests are under threat: for example, he claims that "It's the first time in the history of European democracies that an election day was held in the midst of violent police attacks" (Puigdemont, Oct. 10) and argues that "if European foundational values are at risk in Catalonia, they will also be at risk in Europe" (Puigdemont Oct. 21). Apart from EU values, he makes a plea to the EU institutions to acknowledge that "Catalonia is a European issue" and asks the EU to get "deeply involved and hold up the fundamental values of the Union" (Puigdemont Oct. 10). In these appeals, Puigdemont also takes an explicit public diplomacy approach by directing his message to European citizens on a whole: "I want to address a message to Europe. Not only to its political leaders but also, and especially, to all European

citizens, our brothers and sisters, with whom we share the European citizenship"
(Puigdemont, Oct. 21).

While pro-union leaders do not use the term as much, a within-text search for "Europe" shows that when it is addressed, they emphasize its institutional structures and their support of the Spanish government. For example, Rajoy says "I would […] like to highlight and thank the European Union and the international community as a whole for their unwavering support" (Rajoy, Oct. 1). He makes sure to emphasize that the illegal referendum "will not be recognised by Europe" (Rajoy, Oct. 16) and EU institutions would be closed off in the case of independence: "despite what the citizens of Catalonia were told, if [independence] were to take place, which it will not, it would lead to [an] exit from Europe, from the European Union, and from [their] institutions, with all that means" (Rajoy, Oct. 27) Values are also appealed to, as when Rajoy argues that the illegal referendum "goes against the principles and values that underpin Europe" (Rajoy, Oct. 27).
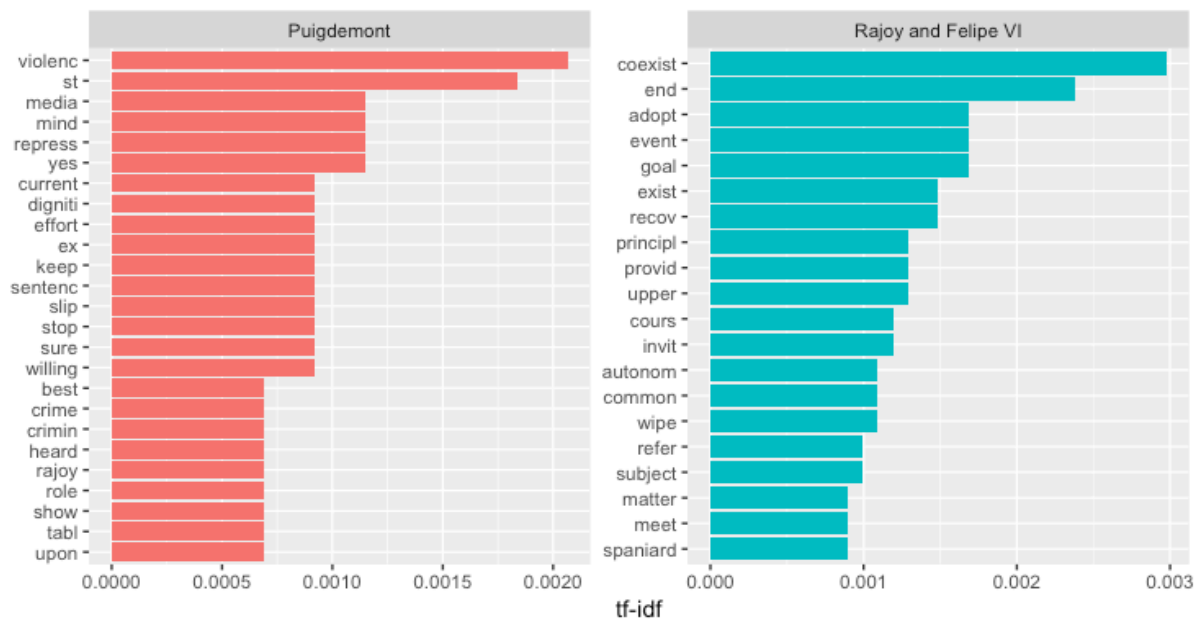
*CTA Q3 Results: TF-IDF*



*Figure 3: Results of term-frequency-inverse document frequency calculations between political leader datasets.*

Puigdemont disproportionately uses the word "violence" in comparison to pro-union speeches, where the word is conspicuously absent (a text query shows 0 instances). A within-text search provides an example: "[facing] the violence some want to bring, a violence which is inacceptable anywhere and that has been met with great concern in Europe, we must keep ourselves as one nation" (Puigdemont, Oct. 4.) He also accuses the Spanish government of "deliberately ignoring the Catalans who have been victims of police violence that struck half of the world's hearts" (Puigdemont, Oct. 4). In addition to "violence," he disproportionately mentions "repress[ion]", "dignit[y]", and the "[1]st [of October]".

On the unionist side, there is a disproportionate use of the term "coexist". Interestingly, a word query in text shows that "coexist" not only refers to Spain and Catalonia, but also to the split within Catalan society. For example, King Felipe VI argues that "They have violated the democratic principles of the rule of law and they have undermined Catalan society's harmony and coexistence" (King Felipe VI, Oct. 3). Rajoy reinforces this argument when he says "It is the ballot box - real ballot boxes - that hold the power of the law, with checks and balances, and which can lay the foundations for the necessary recovery of co-existence among the people of Catalonia" (Rajoy, Oct. 27).

The word "media" in the Puigdemont dataset needs clarification. A word query shows that the software stemmed the word "mediation" (five instances) to "media", which it then combined with other references to the "media" as such (five instances) to give it a misleading prominence in the results. However, even when examined separately, both "media" and "mediate" remain substantial and relevant in to this assessment; a word search shows that "mediation" is only addressed three times in unionist speeches, and the word "media" not at all. Calls for mediation and interactions with the media are both related to the externalization of the conflict, which challenge the unionist efforts to frame the issue as an internal affair by calling for outside support and promoting public diplomacy through media efforts.

## 5.2 Second Corpus: The Press

### CTA Q1 Results: Word Frequencies

**El País Word Frequencies**



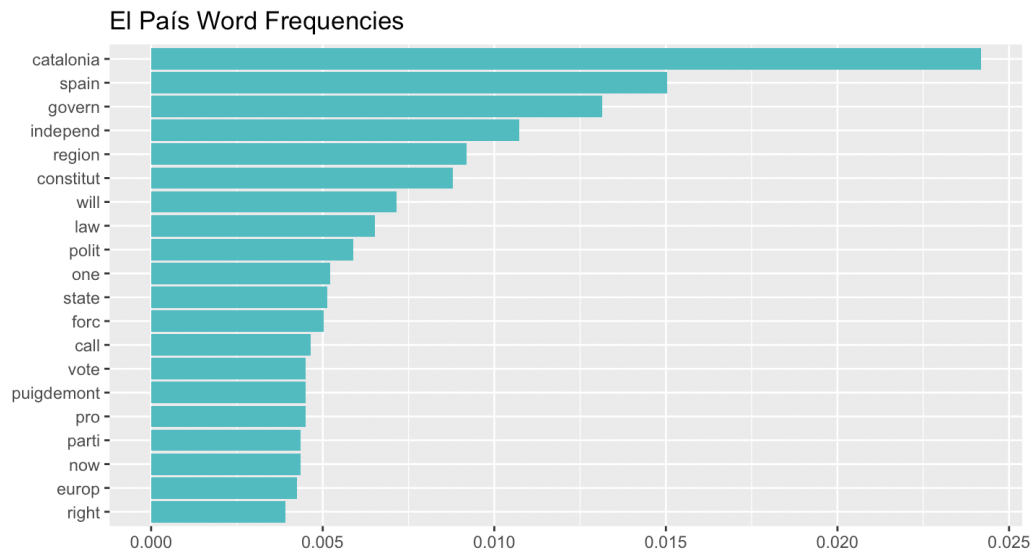*Figure 4: The top 20 words used by pro-union press ranked by frequency (in decimal values) within the dataset.*

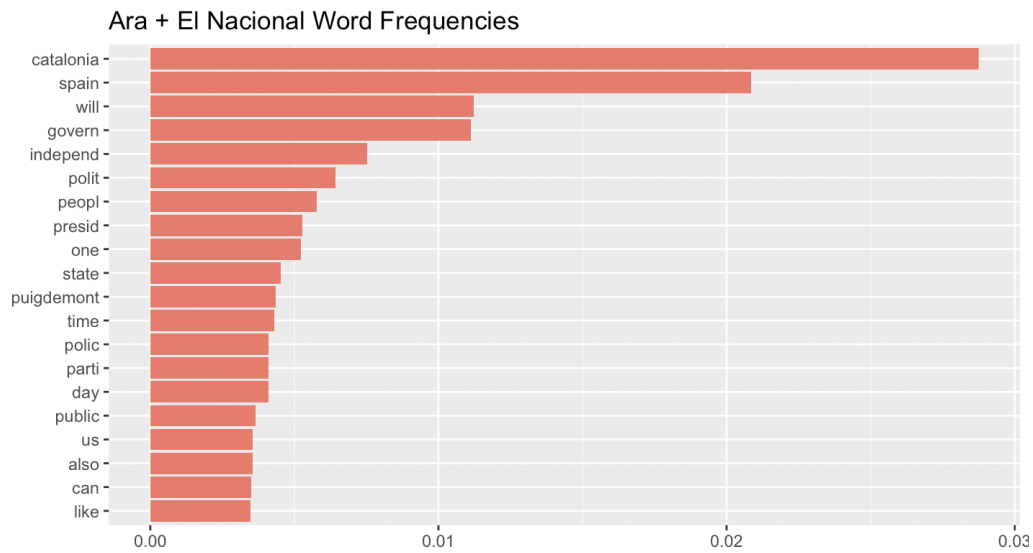**Ara + El Nacional Word Frequencies**



*Figure 5: The top 20 words used by pro-independence leaders ranked by frequency (in decimal values) within the dataset.*

*CTA Q2 Results: Bigram Frequencies*

| El País Bigrams | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Rank** | **Bigram** | **Total** | **Frequency** |
| 1 | pro indepen | 73 | 0.00353 |
| 2 | catalan govern | 39 | 0.00188 |
| 3 | declar independ | 36 | 0.00174 |
| 4 | regional govern | 34 | 0.00164 |
| 5 | central govern | 32 | 0.00154 |
| 6 | carl puigdemont | 30 | 0.00145 |
| 7 | rule law | 28 | 0.00135 |
| 8 | self govern | 26 | 0.00125 |
| 9 | presid carl | 25 | 0.00120 |
| 10 | spanish constitut | 25 | 0.00120 |

| Ara + El Nacional Bigrams | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Rank** | **Bigram** | **Total** | **Frequency** |
| 1 | spanish govern | 74 | 0.00342 |
| 2 | catalan govern | 51 | 0.00235 |
| 3 | ballot box | 35 | 0.00161 |
| 4 | pro independ | 34 | 0.00157 |
| 5 | independ movement | 33 | 0.00152 |
| 6 | spanish state | 29 | 0.00134 |
| 7 | st octob | 24 | 0.00110 |
| 8 | declar independ | 23 | 0.00106 |
| 9 | presid puigdemont | 22 | 0.00100 |
| 10 | carl puigdemont | 22 | 0.00100 |

*Thematic Analysis of CTA Q1 and Q2 Results*

As with the unionist political leader text, *El País* employs "law" and "constitut[ion]" with high frequency, while both terms are conspicuously absent from the list of prominent pro-independence texts. This strengthens the evidence of a strategy by unionists to emphasize the constitutional and legal dimensions of democracy to legitimize their position during the referendum. A word query of "law" within the dataset of *El País* supports this: "Spain is a democracy and, as the Constitutional Court has ruled in connection with the referendum law, it is in Catalonia that the government and the parliament have carried out a de facto suspension of the democratic rights of citizens, endangering their freedoms" ("Where Are We Headed?", Oct. 18).

The symbolic imagery found in Puigdemont speeches also emerges in the pro-independence press, where an emphasis is placed on "ballot box[es]" and references to the date of the referendum, the "[1]st of Octob[er]", which are not found in the pro-union press. This suggests pro-independence writers draw on the imagery of the referendum itself to a much greater degree. An in-text example highlights this usage: "The events of October 1, with the

pictures of ballot boxes, passive resistance and police brutality and intimidation, have changed the game completely" (Vera, Oct. 8).

Furthermore, there is greater prevalence of the words "us" and "peopl[e]" used by *Ara* and *El Nacional.* This strengthens the same lexical pattern found in the Puigdemont dataset. Although "us" is a common pronoun, its higher frequency across both pro-independence datasets suggests there may be a greater an emphasis on defining the Catalan people in an us-versus-them dynamic, as a united nation against the "Spanish State"—a term that, as with Puigdemont, has a high frequency in the pro-independence press dataset. A term-search for "us" provides an example of its usage: "They have arrested us, they have dismissed and detained our legitimate government, they have dissolved our parliament and prosecuted its president" (Sanchez, Nov. 7). The pro-union *El País,* on the other hand, has a higher prevalence of the term "region[al]", reinforcing Catalonia's place within wider Spain, as was found in the dataset of pro-union political leaders.

Another noticeable difference between the two newspaper datasets is the prevalence of "police" in *Ara* and *El Nacional* in the single-term frequencies, which does not have similar prominence in *El País*. This indicates a greater focus on police violence, which helps bolster themes of injustice that were also found in the tf-idf assessment of Puigdemont's speeches. A search of the pro-independence dataset supports this case; the term "police" frequently appears together in sentences with "repression" and "violence". One in-text example makes explicit usage of the imagery as symbolism: "The Spain of paella and bullfights has now gained a new symbol: a Spanish police officer removing material as dangerous as a ballot box and physically shaking Catalan voters" (Antich, Oct. 1).

## El País Word Clusters



*Figure 6: Visualization of the top 130 word correlations within articles. Word clusters are randomly arranged. The Jordi arrests and referendum are highlighted in grey and blue respectively.*

## Ara + EL Nacional Word Clusters



*Figure 7: Visualization of the top 130 word correlations within articles. Word clusters are randomly arranged. The Jordi arrests and referendum are highlighted in grey and blue respectively.*

In this word-correlation analysis, which shows the strongest patterns of words appearing together within an article [explained in more detail in section 4.1], two interesting clusters emerge across both datasets. One cluster focuses on the referendum, which has been circled in light blue, and the other on the arrest of the civil society leaders Jordi Cuixart and Jordi Sánchez, which has been circled in light grey.

In the texts of the pro-union *El País,* the word "law" forms a central node of a cluster related to "democrat[ic]" themes that include "constitute[ion]", "referendum" and "vote". This indicates that when "democratic" is mentioned in an article, there is a strong correlation that it will accompany "law" somewhere in that same article. This further supports the findings of unionists to delegitimize the referendum on Spanish democracy's legal and constitutional grounds. In the pro-independence results, the word "law" is again notably absent from this democratic cluster. Indeed, it is more closely linked with "rule" and "office[ial]" (see top right of the cluster), suggesting that when it appears in an article, it goes accompanied by some indication that it's the official explanation of the government or linked to public officials. As these show correlations within an entire article, however, simple term searches will not reveal this pattern more concretely.

The pro-independence texts show the word "democrat[ic]" most strongly co-occurs in articles with "ballot", "box", "street", "poll", and "peac[e] or peac[ful]". These patterns reinforce similar cleavages found in Puigdemont's texts of emphasizing the symbolic imagery produced by the referendum, like ballot boxes and street protests. This represents the referendum as a peaceful, grassroots and democratic phenomenon, in contrast to the police violence: A term-search of "streets" shows indications of this: "The pro-independence process is now being played out in the streets, and the reading of this Sunday's events will mark the future of Catalonia for the coming years or decades" (Vera, Oct. 2). A query of the term "ballot box" in the democratic cluster further supports this interpretation: "On one side there were ballot boxes, and on the other, weapons" (Antich, Oct. 1).

The "Jordis" constitute another significant word cluster on both sides. As mentioned in the

background on the crisis, Spanish authorities accused civil society leaders Jordi Cuixart and Jordi Sánchez of sedition after they guided Barcelona street protests where several Civil Guard police officers became trapped in a building. In the pro-union word cluster, "civil" and "guard" appear together with references to "Jordi", which suggests that, whenever the Jordis are mentioned in El País, the alleged reason for their arrest is also made clear within the same article. This is not the same case with the pro-independence coverage, which shifts the focus to their punishments, including "prison," "justice" and "prosecutor". Although less significant to the key findings of this analysis, the arrest and imprisonment of the Jordis nevertheless plays an important role in the Catalan independence discourse. In the following months, it would go on to become a cause celebre for the independence movement, symbolized by the ubiquitous yellow ribbons in support of these "political prisoners" worn by Catalan leaders (Hedgecoe, 2018)

The next chapter summarizes the key findings from across the datasets and places them within the wider theoretical framework.

# Chapter 6. Main Findings and Discussion

This section summarizes and discusses the results of the content and thematic analysis above within in the context of the previous literature and the theory of discursive institutionalism. It begins by outlining the main patterns found in the CTA and quantitative analysis across the two corpuses while discussing their significance in the context of the previous literature on the topic. It then addresses the referendum itself as an inseparable part of the pro-independence strategic discourse, as reflected in the above analysis. Lastly it discusses the findings within the context of discursive institutionalism. This section addresses the second research question: *R2: What significant themes emerge from these patterns in relation to previous literature, and how do they reflect strategies to challenge or reinforce existing institutional structures?*

## 6.1 Summarizing and Synthesizing Thematic Analysis

The content analysis (CTA) and thematic analysis show several broad patterns that indicate different discursive strategies between pro-independence and pro-union elites. Furthermore, there are several consistencies between political leaders and press, which strengthens these findings. As this research takes an exploratory overview of discursive patterns, the findings are outlined and discussed with regard to previous literature on Catalan independence discourse (which also guided the thematic analysis) while several new suggestions for future lines of academic inquiry are raised.

### (1) Rule of Law Versus Symbolic Imagery

The strongest pattern identified across all datasets is the central cleavage between different conceptualizations of the democratic legitimacy of the referendum. While both sides rest their arguments on democracy, unionist leaders and the press emphasize the legal and constitutional dimensions of the conflict to significantly greater degree than their pro-independence counterparts. This is evidenced in the analysis of word prominence, bigram prominence, and word clusters. Puigdemont and the pro-independence press, on the other hand, draw on the symbolic imagery of the referendum to a significantly greater degree,

evidenced by the prevalence of terms like "ballot boxes" and "polling stations" which are much less prominent within the pro-union discourse.

This pattern supports the previous finding of Crameri (2016) that differing emphases on democratic principles form a core point of contention within the debate around independence, as unionists rest their opposition on the "duty to abide" and pro-independence leaders arguing that they have a "right to decide". While "right to decide" verbatim does not have a significant presence within the lexical patterns across datasets, the symbolic imagery of the referendum emphasizes the underlying themes of popular will, democratic choice, and grassroots mobilization, which underscores the democracy as a bottom-up phenomenon—one either implicitly or explicitly contrasted to efforts to prevent the referendum by the central government.

This usage of symbolic imagery adds an interesting dimension to the right-to-decide legitimization effort. It raises questions about the extent to which this symbolic imagery has been evoked since the timeframe of the study, as well as its effectiveness in shaping perceptions of the conflict among national and international audiences. Furthermore, the legalistic argument of the pro-union leaders and press seems to be at a disadvantage without similarly powerful symbolic imagery to draw upon. The effectiveness of both arguments in shaping opinion would benefit from further research.

*(2) Police Violence*

A second significant pattern is the emphasis or de-emphasis of police violence in the text, which is closely linked to evocation of democratic imagery that the referendum created. Puigdemont emphasized "violence" around the referendum to significantly greater degree than his pro-union counterparts, as most strongly evidenced in the tf-idf analysis (pro-union leaders mentioned "violence" 0 times). Furthermore, among the pro-union press, the word "police" entered the top-20 most frequent words, and a term search showed that it was often paired with themes of repression and violence. There was no similar pattern within the pro-union press.

When combined with the democratic imagery of polling stations and ballot boxes, this

emphasis on police violence helps underscore the representation of the referendum and its surrounding events as one of the Catalan people engaging in a grassroots democracy against a repressive Spanish state. An editorial published in *Ara* sums this message up concisely: "The world has seen how David defeated Goliath, how the people of Catalonia, peaceful and profoundly democratic, have fiercely defended their right to decide, to live in freedom" ("The world has seen," 2017, Oct. 2). This interplay between democratic and remedial themes supports the findings of Serrano (2014) and Coppieters (2010), who note that the two concepts interact. As opposed to previous research, however, which show remedial themes couched in constitutional and historic grievances, this referendum imagery—riot police raiding ballot boxes—adds a potent new focal point to the perception of injustice for the pro-independence camp. The extent to which this imagery has had staying power in pro-independence discourse would benefit from further research.

It should be noted, however, that unlike the pro-union political leaders, *El País* acknowledged the violence. For example, in an editorial on October 9th, the editorial board argued that "The disastrous management by political officials of law enforcement officers sent by a judge to prevent a violation of the law last Sunday only added fuel to a situation that was already explosive" ("In the Name of Unity" 2017). Even in this example, however, the emphasis on the legal foundation for such actions and the illegality of the referendum are made clear. Yet the pro-union and pro-independence camps are not monolithic in belief and messaging. While the goal of this research is to find overarching discourse patterns, it must be reiterated that the arguments and positions taken can have more nuance than these numerical patterns would suggest.

*(3) Divided Region or United Nation?*

The third significant patterns in the content analysis shows disagreements in the representation of the current institutional relationship between Spain and Catalonia. Pro-union political leaders and press show a strong pattern of noting the "region[al]" nature of Catalonia, while the pro-independence side emphasizes the "Spanish State." These lexical patterns contain significance. By emphasizing Catalonia's regional nature, it seeks to ideationally fold the region Spain, while the use of "Spanish State" instead of "Spain" underscores its dimensions as a political unit—one which is either implicitly and explicitly

unaligned with the national unit of the Catalan people. Indeed, on the pro-independence side, Puigdemont specifically emphasizes the "Catalan people" and the "nation" to a significantly higher degree than his political counterparts, while both Puigdemont and the pro-independence press emphasize "us" and "people", and "Spanish state."

Both sides also show patterns of trying to delegitimize the opposition along these same lines. The pro-union leaders challenge the notion of a unified Catalan nation by emphasizing the referendum's threat to "coexist[ence]"—not just between Catalonia and Spain, but among Catalans themselves, as in-text analysis shows. Similarly, Puigdemont challenges the constitution that undergirds the legal arguments by stressing that Catalonia's right to decide precedes it historically and is rooted in democratic values that stretch beyond its confines.

*(4) Europe*

Puigdemont evokes "Europe" significantly more frequently than his political counterparts, although the unionist *El País* uses the word more than its pro-independence press counterparts, which does not create a clear pattern of usage across the datasets. A search of the term within context indicates that Puigdemont appeals to both Europe and its citizens, emphasizing EU values under threat by the anti-democratic actions of the state. In contrast Rajoy, King Felipe VI, and *El País,* all emphasize the EU's political and institutional support for the Spanish government, as well as the potential negative effects on Catalonia if it were to leave. This reinforces of Bourne's (2014) findings of opposing sides usages of Europe as an idea, a forum, and a source of allies. This interplay between Spain, Catalonia, and Europe during the referendum crisis would benefit from a more in-depth study.

## 6.2 The Referendum as Symbolic Imagery

This thesis uses the referendum debate to focus on discourse used by competing sides of the independence question. It must be emphasized, however, that the referendum was not an exogenous, neutral event, but rather deeply intertwined with the discursive strategies of pro-independence leaders—a message in and of itself. By creating an event laden with the imagery of ballot boxes, polling stations, and voting slips, pro-independence leaders were able to produce the symbolic images of democracy which were later drawn upon in their

discourse. Furthermore, the Spanish government's reaction provided a second set of imagery through instances of police violence that reinforced remedial themes, which the above content analysis also reveals were significantly drawn upon by pro-independence leaders and comparatively downplayed by pro-union elites. The extent to which such a crackdown—and specifically a violent one—was anticipated is a far less clear and much more problematic question. Nevertheless, as the New York Times Editorial Board succinctly put it on October 2nd: "Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy had the law largely on his side, but Barcelona now has the television images and the solidarity and sympathy they generate" ("Chaos in Catalonia", 2017). Furthermore, the referendum, even without police violence, served to externalize this democratic message by creating a newsworthy event—one of the central goals of independence leaders outlined by Bourne (2014). Puigdemont directly addressed the newsworthiness of the event as an opportunity to share his message with European and international audiences: "I would like to explain where we are, and especially why we are where we are. Today as the world is watching us, and indeed, today as the world is listening to us, I think it's worth going back and explaining ourselves" (Puigdemont, Oct. 10).

Both the externalizing effect of the referendum and its production of symbolic imagery suggest that that the referendum is deeply intertwined with the discursive strategy of independence leaders. Yet there is also a deep ambiguity at the heart of the referendum: it exists somewhere between the symbolic and the literal. Puigdemont, for example, repeatedly failed to clarify independence, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Furthermore, former speaker of the Catalan Parliament, Carme Forcadell, called the referendum "declarative and symbolic" when facing legal repercussions for her role in it, although her lawyer argued that this was an attempt to minimize legal liability (Keeley 2017, p. 1). In some regards, the referendum bears similar patterns to the performative mass protests organized by pro-independence leaders in the past. Yet it was the explicitly literal dimension that made the referendum qualitatively distinct in terms of mobilization, coverage, and the central government's response. This tension between the literal and the symbolic provides a useful lens for understanding and interpreting the discursive patterns outlined above, although this question of the true nature of the referendum sits beyond the scope of this thesis. It would benefit from further study.

## 6.3 Discursive Institutionalism and the Spanish Referendum

The broad patterns found in this research reveal themes best understood within the strategic functions of legitimization, delegitimization and representation outlined by Chilton (2004), within the wider framework of discursive institutionalism. Both sides are embedded in democratic norms and institutions that provide opportunities and constraints, which they use strategically. They represent democracy by either appealing to its constitutional and legal aspects, as is the case with the pro-union camp, or by evoking symbolic imagery of a grassroots effort to express the will of the people, as independence supporters do. The elevation or downplaying of police violence functions along these same dimensions. Furthermore, the nature of the relationship between Catalonia and Spain is a significant point of ideational contention; Catalonia is either represented as a region within a constitutional and democratic Spain that faces threats to its internal coexistence, or it is a nation, struggling against the Spanish state, with rights that stretch beyond the confines of the constitution. To what extent have these conflicting interpretations taken hold within Catalonia, Spain, and the wider international community?

While the results of the Catalan independence referendum had no significant success in shedding the legal and political institutions of Spain, its *ideational* impact could have far-reaching consequences. The referendum and the discourse around it—with the strategic functions outlined above—may have succeeded in laying the "ideational preconditions of institutional change" (Hay 2008, p 4.) Indeed, institutions are ultimately socially constructed, shaped and maintained by ideas that are represented and conveyed through discourse (Schmidt, 2008). Were the referendum and subsequent discursive strategies successful in shaping ideas of institutional legitimacy? If so, what might be the effects of these ideational changes? Could institutional change soon follow?

# Chapter 7. Conclusion

This thesis sought to identify competing discursive strategies employed by pro-independence and pro-union leaders around the Catalan independence referendum in 2017. To do so, it conducted an exploratory quantitative analysis of texts produced by political leaders and the press around the month of October, identified and interpreted broad themes in the patterns with the aid of in-text examples, and finally placed these findings within the theoretical framework of the previous literature and discursive institutionalism.

In order to contextualize the discourse, this thesis first outlined the events around the Catalan independence referendum, summarized its broad institutional constraints and opportunities, and reviewed current literature on themes within pro-independence discourse. These opportunities, constraints and discursive strategies were then placed within a theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism, which, seeks to understand how discourse shapes the ideas undergirding institutions. The following two research questions were posed:

*R1: What were the broad patterns in word choice of pro-independence and pro-union elites during the political crisis around the 2017 Catalan referendum?*

*R2: What significant themes emerge from these patterns in relation to previous literature, and how do they reflect strategies to challenge or reinforce existing institutional structures?*

The research and design section described how the content analysis and thematic analysis were employed to answer the research questions. It also explained the corpus selection, software, and exploratory techniques used to find term frequencies, bigram frequencies, disproportionate usage of words (tf-idf), and word clusters. The results of the content analysis were then interpreted qualitatively within the theoretical framework.

This analysis showed strong pattern on the emphasis of the "rule of law" used by pro-union political leaders and press, which aligns with the findings of previous literature. This is contrasted by the pro-independence camp, which more frequently drew upon symbolic imagery produced by the referendum, such as "polling stations" and "ballot boxes". This

reinforces the right-to-decide versus rule-of-law cleavage outlined in previous literature, while the use of imagery suggests an important new dimension within pro-independence discursive strategies that merits further academic inquiry.

Related to the use of symbolic imagery, a second significant pattern showed an emphasis by the pro-independence side on police violence that was not nearly as prominent on the pro-union side. This supports the finding of previous literature that independence leaders mix democratic and remedial themes in their discourse, while raising questions about whether or not this forms a significant new focal point of injustice within this such discourse.

The third significant pattern suggests different emphases on the nature of the relationship between Spain and Catalonia. The pro-union texts emphasizing its regional nature and presents the referendum as a challenge to the coexistence among Catalans, while the pro-independence side emphasizes Catalonia as a united people and a nation confronting the "Spanish state". Europe is also addressed in this relationship as well, although broad patterns in usage across media and political texts was not found. However, in-text examples show that the institutional realities of Europe are more strongly referenced by pro-union leaders, while values are appealed to by Puigdemont, which supports previous literature on the varying usages of Europe.

The findings provide insight into how competing sides of the independence debate employ discursive strategies of legitimization, delegitimization and representation to either reinforce or change the institutions in which they are embedded. The emphasis on the symbolism of the referendum underscores that the referendum itself is deeply intertwined with the discursive strategies, as it provided the imagery drawn upon by pro-independence leaders while also serving a discursive function. These main findings invite further research into the effectiveness of these arguments, the extent to which they are used beyond the timeframe examined, and deeper analysis of the symbolic-literal aspect of the referendum.

# References

Agranoff, R. (1996). Federal evolution in Spain (New Trends in Federalism). *International Political Science Review, 17*(4), 385-401.

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed. [with a new afterword]. ed.). London [etc.]: Verso (Originally published 1983).

Anderson, P. & Keil, S. (2016). "Minority Nationalism and the European Union: The Cases of Scotland and Catalonia." *L'Europe En Formation 379, (1)* 40-57.

Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 1). Dignity in the face of shame. *El Nacional.* Retrieved from elnacional.cat/en.

Aureli, S. (2017). A comparison of content analysis usage and text mining in CSR corporate disclosure. The International Journal of Digital Accounting Research. 17. 1-32. 10.4192/1577-8517-v17_1.

Baquero (2017, Oct. 14). La CUP exige a Puigdemont que responda "nítidamente" que declaró la independencia. *El País.* Retrieved from www.elpais.com.

Bourne, A. K. (2014). Europeanization and Secession: The Cases of Catalonia and Scotland, *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, 13:3, 94–120.

Brancati, D. (2006). Decentralization: Fuelling the Fire or Dampening the Flames of Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism? *International Organization* 60, Summer 2006, pp. 651–685.

Braun V. & Clark, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology; *Qualitative Research in Psychology 2006; 3:* 77/101

Buchanan, A. (1997). Theories of Secession. *Philosophy & Public Affairs Vol. 26*, No. 1.

Buck, T. (2017, Oct. 5). The far-left separatists who took Catalonia to the brink. *Financial Times.* Retrieved from www.financialtimes.com.

Burgen, S. (2017, Oct. 3). Thousands protest and strike over Catalonia referendum violence. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from www.theguardian.com.

Calamur, K. (2017, Oct. 1). The Spanish Court Decision That Sparked the Modern Catalan Independence Movement. *The Atlantic.* Retrieved from www.theatlantic.com.

Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (2018). *Political Context Survey* 2018 [Press Report]. Retrieved from www.gencat.cat.

Chaos in Catalonia [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 2). *The New York Times.* Retrieved from www.nytimes.com.

Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing political Discourse: Theory and practice.* London; New York: Routledge.

Coggins, B. (2011). Friends in High Places: International Politics and the Emergence of States from Secessionism. *International Organization,65*(3), 433-467.

Coppieters, B. (2010). Secessionist Conflicts in Europe. In D. H. Doyle (Ed.), *Secession as an International Phenomenon* (pp. 237-258). Athens, GA / London: University of Georgia Press.

Crameri, K. (2015). Political Power and Civil Counterpower: The Complex Dynamics of the Catalan Independence Movement. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, 21*(1), 104-120.

Crameri, K. (2016). Do Catalans have 'the right to decide'?: secession, legitimacy and democracy in twenty-first century Europe. *Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought*, 6(3), pp. 423-439.

Cruz, M. (2017, Oct. 16). El Gobierno ve inaceptable la respuesta de Puigdemont y le urge a rectificar antes del jueves. *El Mundo.* Retrieved from www.elmundo.es

Duina, F., & Bok, J. (2013). Capitalising on Regional Integration: Sub-national Movements and the Rhetorical Leveraging of NAFTA and the EU. *New Political Economy, 19*(5), 1-21.

Elias, A. (2008). From Euro-enthusiasm to Euro-scepticism? A Re-evaluation of Minority Nationalist Party Attitudes Towards European Integration. *Regional & Federal Studies*, *18*(5), 557-581.

Elias, A. (2015). Catalan Independence and the Challenge of Credibility: The Causes and Consequences of Catalan Nationalist Parties' Strategic Behavior. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, 21*(1), 83-103.

ElNacional.cat y Crónica Global se convierten en los digitales referentes. (2018, June 7). *Dircomfidencial.* Retrieved from www.dircomfidencial.com.

Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication, 43*(4), 51-58.

Fabry, M. (2012). The contemporary practice of state recognition: Kosovo, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and their aftermath, *Nationalities Papers*, 40:5, 661-676.

Fazal, T., & Griffiths, R. (2014). Membership Has Its Privileges: The Changing Benefits of Statehood. *International Studies Review, 16*(1), 79-106.b

Finlayson, A. (1998). Ideology, discourse and nationalism. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 3*(1), 99-118, DOI: 10.1080/1356931980842077.

Fischer, F. (2003). *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*. Oxford University Press.

Gellner, E., & Breuilly, J. (2006). *Nations and nationalism (Second ed., New perspectives on the past)*. Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Gillespie, R. (2015). Between Accommodation and Contestation: The Political Evolution of Basque and Catalan Nationalism, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics,* 21:1, 3-23.

Giordano, B., & Roller, E. (2002). Catalonia and the 'idea of Europe' - Competing strategies and discourses within Catalan party politics. *European Urban and Regional Studies, 9*(2), 99-113.

Griffiths, M. (2003). Self-determination, International Society and World Order. *Macquarie Law Journal, 3*, 29-49.

Guibernau, M. (2004). *Catalan nationalism Francoism, transition and democracy*. New York, NY, USA: Routledge.

Guibernau, M. (2013) Secessionism in Catalonia: After Democracy, *Ethnopolitics*, *12*(4), 368-393, DOI: 10.1080/17449057.2013.843245

Guntermann, E. (2017, Oct. 11). The myth of massive support for independence in Catalonia. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from www.washingtonpost.com

Haklai, O. (2015). From Independent Statehood to Minority Rights: The Evolution of National Self-determination as an International Order Principle in the Post-State Formation Era, *Ethnopolitics, 14*(5), 461-469.

Hay, C. (2008). Constructivist Institutionalism. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions,* Oxford University Press.
.
Hedgecoe, G. (2017a, Oct. 6). Catalonian media reflect polarised Spanish society. *BBC News*. Retrieved from www.bbc.com

Hedgecoe. G. (2017b, Nov. 21). Views trump news in Catalan propaganda war. *Politico* Retrieved from: www.politico.eu.

Hedgecoe, G. (2018, Aug. 29). Catalonia remains divided as battle of symbols rages. *The Irish Times*. Retrieved from www.irishtimes.com

Henley, J. & Mason, R. (2017, Oct. 1). Catalan referendum: muted response from EU leaders over police crackdown. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from www.theguardian.com

Herman, M. (2017, Oct. 27). Spain's most famous paper stumbles amid Catalonia independence crisis. *Columbia Journalism Review.* Retrieved from www.cjr.org

Hooghe L., and Marks, G. (2001). *Multi-Level Governance and European Integration.* Lanham, MD, USA: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers

Hurrell, A. (2007). *On global order: Power, values, and the constitution of international society.* Oxford [etc.]: Oxford University Press.

In the name of unity [Editorial] (2017, Oct. 9). *El País.* Retrieved form www.elpais.com

Jessop, B. (2013) Hollowing Out the "Nation-State" and Multi-Level Governance: Preprint of article in A Handbook of *Comparative Social Policy* (second edition), P. Kennett ed., Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 11-26, 2013. Retrieved from academia.edu.

Jones, S. (2017a, Sept. 20). Spain crisis: 'stop this radicalism and disobedience,' PM tells Catalan leaders. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from www.theguardian.com

Jones, S. (2017b, Oct. 31). Catalan leaders facing rebellion charges flee to Belgium. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from www.theguardian.com

Keating, M. (1996). *Nations against the state: The new politics of nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia, and Scotland* (2nd ed.). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave.

Keating, M. (2001). *Plurinational democracy: Stateless nations in a post-sovereignty era.* Oxford [etc.]: Oxford University Press.

Keating, M. (2004). European integration and the nationalities question. *Politics & Society, 32*(3), 367-388.

Keeley, G. (2017, Nov. 10). Catalonia independence declaration was symbolic, says Carme Forcadell. *The Times*. Retrieved from www.thetimes.co.uk

Kolçak, H. (2017). From Unionism to Secessionism: A Comprehensive Analysis of Contemporary Catalan Politics. *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics, 12*(1), 25-52.

Kopecký, P., & Mudde, C. (2002). The Two Sides of Euroscepticism. *European Union Politics, 3*(3), 297-326.

Krippendorff, K. (2003). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2nd [rev.] ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA [etc.]: Sage.

Kuzio, T. (2002). The myth of the civic state: A critical survey of Hans Kohn's framework for understanding nationalism. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 25*(1), 20-39.

Lecours, A. (2012). Sub-state Nationalism in the Western World: Explaining Continued Appeal, *Ethnopolitics, 11*:3, 268-286.

Lecours, A. (2018). The Political Consequences of Independence Referenda in Liberal Democracies: Quebec, Scotland, and Catalonia. *Polity,50*(2), 243-274.

Linn, A. (2016, July 11). English is and will be the lingua franca of Europe in spite of Brexit. *Quartz*. Retrieved From https://qz.com.

Lluent, E. (2015, sept. 7). Quién es quién en la prensa catalana. *La Marea*. Retrieved from www.lamarea.com

Máiz, R. (2003). Politics and the nation: Nationalist mobilisation of ethnic differences. *Nations and Nationalism, 9*(2), 195-212.

Miner, G. (2012). *Practical text mining and statistical analysis for non-structured text data applications* (1st ed.). Amsterdam: Academic Press.

Monroe, B., Colaresi, M., & Quinn, K. (2009). Fightin' Words: Lexical Feature Selection and Evaluation for Identifying the Content of Political Conflict. *Political Analysis, 16*(4), 372-403.

Moore, M. (2004). Sub-state nationalism and international law. *Michigan Journal of International Law, 25*(4), 1319-1340.

Neuendorf, K., & Skalski, P. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA [etc.]: Sage.

O'Gallagher, N. (2018, Aug. 19). The French connection: How Catalonia got its ballot papers. *BBC News*. Retrieved From www.bbc.com

Oklopcic, Z. (2015, Oct. 19). Why the role of international actors could be key in settling Catalonia's standoff with Madrid over independence. *London School of Economics and Political Science Blog*. Retrieved from blogs.lse.ac.uk.

Patrick, T. (2016). The zeitgeist of secession amidst the march towards unification: Scotland, Catalonia, and the future of the European Union. *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review, 39*(1), 195-226.

Payne, S. (1971). Catalan and Basque Nationalism. *Journal of Contemporary History, 6*(1), 15-51. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/259622

Referendum law passed in Parliament. (2017, Sept. 6). *Catalan News*. Retrieved from www.catalannews.com

Reid, D. & Amaro, S. (2017, Oct. 27). Catalan parliament declares independence, Madrid imposes direct rule. *CNBC*. Retrieved www.cnbc.com

Richmond, O. (2002). States of sovereignty, sovereign states, and ethnic claims for international status. *Review of International Studies, 28*(2), 381-402.

Roger, M. (2013, Oct. 9). La diferencia entre España y Estado español, según TV-3. *El País.* retrieved from www.elpaís.com

Schmidt, V. (2008). Discursive institutionalism: The explanatory power of ideas and discourse. *Annual Review of Political Science, 11*(1), 303-326.

Saeed, S. (2017, Oct. 2). How Europe's press reacted to the Catalan independence vote. *Politico.* Retrieved from www.politico.eu

Serrano, I. (2014). The evolution of the political discourse in Catalonia 2003-2014: From Self-government to Self-determination [Self-published on Researchgate]. *Retrieved from ResearchGate.com*

Silge, J., & Robinson, D. (2017). *Text Mining with R: A Tidy Approach*. Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media, Incorporated.

Smith, A. (2010). *Nationalism: Theory, ideology, history* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Spanish Const. Sect 2 (1978). retrieved from: http://www.congreso.es

Stothard, M & Mount, I. (2017, Sept 30). Catalans occupy 160 schools in bid to allow referendum. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from www.ft.com

Strange, H. (2017, Oct. 16). Two Catalan independence leaders taken into custody by Spanish national court" *The Telegraph.* Retrieved from www.telegraph.co.uk

Sutherland, C. (2011). *Nationalism in the Twenty-First Century: Challenges and Responses*. Palgrave Higher Ed M.U.A.

The world has seen it, their violence, our determination [Editorial] (2017, Oct 2). *Ara.* Retrieved from www.ara.cat

Tierney, S. (2005). Reframing Sovereignty? Sub-State National Societies and Contemporary Challenges to the Nation-State. *International and Comparative Law Quarterly, 54*(1), 161-

183.

Toyer, J. (2017, Oct. 16). Catalan leader fails to clarify independence stance in letter to Spanish PM. *Reuters.* Retrieved from www.reuters.com.

Tremlett, G. (2017, Oct. 10). Puigdemont speech gives no clarity on Catalan independence. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from www.theguardian.com

Vera, E. (2017, Oct. 2). In the hands of the people. *Ara.* Retrieved from www.ara.cat/en

Yu, C., Jannasch-Pennell, A., & DiGangi, S. (2011). Compatibility between Text Mining and Qualitative Research in the Perspectives of Grounded Theory, Content Analysis, and Reliability. *Qualitative Report, 16*(3), 730-744.

# Appendix A: Political Leader Datasets

## 1A: Pro-Union Leader Dataset

All transcripts were retrieved from the Spanish government's website at the following address: http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/presidente/intervenciones/Paginas/index.aspx. The dataset is listed chronologically.

| |
|---|
| Rajoy, M. (2017, Oct. 1) *Address Following the Intervention in Catalonia.* [Translated transcript]. |
| King Felipe VI. (2017, Oct. 3). *Address to the nation* [Translated transcript]. |
| Rajoy, M. (2017, Oct. 11) *Speech by President of the Government in Lower House of Parliament.* [Translated transcript]. |
| Rajoy, M. (2017, Oct. 21). *Speech by President of the Government following extraordinary meeting of Council of Ministers* [Translated transcript]. |
| Rajoy, M. (2017, Oct. 27). *Speech by the President of the Government at the plenary session of the Upper House of Parliament.* [Translated transcript]. |
| Rajoy, M. (2017, Oct. 27). *Statement by President of the Government following extraordinary meeting of Council of Ministers* [Translated transcript]. |

## 2A: Pro-Independence Leader Dataset

All transcripts were retrieved from *Generalitat de Catalunya's* official website, at the following address: https://govern.cat/pres_gov/government/en/president/speeches-remarks-official-statements.html. The dataset is listed chronologically.

| |
|---|
| Puigdemont, C. (2017, Oct. 4). Official Statement by the President on the political situation in Catalonia [Translated transcript]. |
| Puigdemont, C. (2017, Oct. 10). Official Statement by the President on the political situation in Catalonia [Translated transcript]. |
| Puigdemont, C. (2017, Oct. 21). Speech by President of the Government following extraordinary meeting of Council of Ministers [Translated transcript]. |

Puigdemont, C. (2017, Oct. 27) Remarks by President Puigdemont following the constitution of the Catalan Republic. [Translated transcript].

Puigdemont, C. (2017, Oct. 28) Official Statement by President Puigdemont following the Declaration of Independence. [Translated transcript].

# Appendix B: Press Datasets

## 1B: Pro-Union Press Dataset

All articles in this dataset are from *El País*. They were retrieved from www.elpais.com between Oct. 20 and 21, 2018. The Dataset is listed chronologically.

| |
|---|
| The Spanish government must take the lead on Catalonia [Editorial]. (2017, Sept. 27). |
| The Catalan police force must carry out its legal duties [Editorial]. (2017, Sept. 28). |
| With rising tensions in Catalonia, coexistence must be protected [Editorial]. (2017, Sept. 29). |
| Why citizens should not go out to vote in Catalonia on Sunday [Editorial]. (2017, Sept. 30). |
| El País, with the Estatut [editorial]. (2017, Oct. 1). |
| Dominguez, I. (2017, Oct. 2). Predictable but still a source of disbelief. |
| In the face of Catalan insurrection, the law but not just the law [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 2) |
| Using Europe in vain [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 3). |
| A Catalan government that is anti-Catalan [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 4). |
| The Catalan independence process is an economic disaster [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 5). |
| It's time for the government to act on Catalonia [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 5). |
| Alandete, D. (2017, Oct. 5). What is really happening in Catalonia. |
| Dialogue and negotiation [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 6). |
| The end of hegemony [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 9). |
| In the name of unity [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 9). |
| On the edge of the abyss. [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 10). |
| Alandete, D. (2017, Oct. 10). Independence in Catalonia – now what? |
| A new trap [Editorial] (2017, Oct. 11). |
| Crisis and opportunity [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 12). |
| The countdown to Article 155 [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 16). |
| Blanco P. (2017, Oct. 17). 'Help Catalonia' a video full of falsehoods. |
| The justice system takes action [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 17). |
| The "Jordis" are not political prisoners [Unattributed]. (2017, Oct. 18). |

| |
|---|
| Where are we headed [Editorial] (2017, Oct. 18). |
| Satrustegui, M. (Oct. 18, 2017). Most honorable premier. |
| In a black hole [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 19). |
| Alandete, D. (2017, Oct. 20). The gravity of the situation. |
| Rescuing autonomy [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 20). |
| A brake on economic growth [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 20). |
| The democratic state responds [Editorial]. (2017, Oct 22). |
| It's up to all of us [Editorial]. (2017, Oct 23). |
| Bassets, L. (2017, Oct. 23). Catalonia in the fall. |
| Marías, J. (2017, Oct. 23). Offended words. |
| A web of deception in Catalonia [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 25). |
| Pandora's box [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 26). |
| chaos and confusion [Editorial]. (2017. Oct. 27). |
| Alandete, D. (2017, Oct. 27). Lawlessness in Catalonia. |
| Democracy will prevail [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 28). |
| Aguilar, A. (2017, Oct. 29). Trapped in the clichés of Spain. |
| Cebrián, J. (2017, Oct. 28). The 1978 system. |
| The end of the "process" [Editorial] (2017, Oct. 29). |
| Catalan independence drive: Never again [Editorial]. (2017, Oct. 30). |
| Returning to stability [Editorial] (2017, Oct. 31). |
| Puigdemont on the run [Editorial] (2017, Nov. 1). |
| Vidal-Folch, X., & Marín, B. (2017, Nov. 1). An X-ray of Puigdemont's speech in Brussels. |
| Torreblanca, J. (2017, Nov. 2). Anglocondescension. |
| Serious offenses [Editorial] (2017, Nov. 3). |
| Modernizing Spain [Editorial] (2017, Nov. 6). |
| Calvo, V. (2017, Nov. 6). Five years of lies about independence in Catalonia. |
| A grotesque escapade [Editorial] (2017, Nov. 7). |
| Martinez, J. (2017, Nov. 7). My name is Justiniano Martínez, and I really was a political prisoner [Opinion]. |
| Vidal-Folch, X (2017, Nov. 7). Brexit and the Catalan 'process' [Opinion]. |

This dataset contains publications from *Ara* and *El Nacional*. *Ara* articles were retrieved from https://www.ara.cat on Oct. 19, 2018; *El Nacional* articles were retrieved from https://www.elnacional.cat on Nov. 16, 2018. The Dataset is listed chronologically.

| |
|---|
| Antich, J. (2017, Sept. 26). To this Spain that marches against Catalonia. *El Nacional.* |
| Pla Nualart, A. (2017, Sept. 26). The cries of the pactists. *Ara.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Sept. 27). Trump and the referendum of 1<sup>st</sup> October. *El Nacional.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Sept. 29). Catalonia kidnapped. *El Nacional.* |
| Bosch, X. (2017, Sept. 29). The revolution of twisted smiles. *Ara.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Sept. 30). 'L'Estaca', beginning and end. *El Nacional.* |
| Sánchez Piñol, A. (2017, Sept. 30). HELP CATALONIA! *El Nacional.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 1). Dignity in the face of shame. *El Nacional.* |
| Castro, L. (2017, Oct. 1). Catalonia is everyone's business *Ara.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 2). Catalonia says goodbye. *El Nacional.* |
| The world has seen it their violence, our determination [Editorial] (2017, Oct 2). *Ara.* |
| Vera, E. (2017, Oct. 2). In the hands of the people. *Ara.* |
| In support of the legitimate government of Catalonia [Editorial] (2017, Oct. 3). *Ara.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 3). A country at a standstill. *El Nacional.* |
| Antich, J. (2017 Oct. 4). Rajoy burns another card. *El Nacional.* |
| Vera, E. (2017, Oct. 4). The democratic switch and article 155. *Ara.* |
| Villatoro, V. (2017, Oct. 5). The King is the State. *Ara.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 5). Game of tones. *El Nacional.* |
| Harrington, T. (2017, Oct. 5) The Disingenuousness of the "Procedural Irregularities." *Ara.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 5). Prohibited words. *El Nacional.* |
| Vives, A. (2017, Oct. 6). Letter to the policeman 8U5. *Ara.* |
| Soler, T. (2017, Oct. 7). We won't hold talks with those who wield truncheons. *Ara.* |
| Galves, J. (2017, Oct. 8). The arrival of Vargas Llosa. *El Nacional.* |
| Vera, E. (2017, Oct. 8). Ten thoughts for tough days. *Ara.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 10). Casado's miserable attack. *El Nacional.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 11). Puigdemont stops the clock. *El Nacional.* |

Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 12). Rajoy suffocates dialogue. *El Nacional.*

Vera, E. (2017, Oct. 13). When negotiating means haggling. *Ara.*

Harrington, T. (2017, Oct. 15). Mario Vargas Llosa is the Perfect Poster Boy. *Ara.*

Esther, V. (2017, Oct. 16). The Reality Principle. *Ara.*

Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 17). A worrying drift and an outrage. *El Nacional.*

Cadanet, A. (2017, Oct. 17). Catalan schools, a political target since 2006. *Ara.*

Vera, E. (2017, Oct. 17). Infuriatingly peaceful. *Ara.*

Rodés, F. (2017, Oct. 17). The authority of the people of peace. *Ara.*

Sanchez, J. (2017, Oct. 17). The Road to Freedom. *Ara.*

Toro, S. (2017, Oct. 19). No, Spain is not a democracy. *Ara.*

Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 20). Spain applies Article 155 to Belgium. *El Nacional.*

Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 21). It was a coup, the constitutional cover was an excuse. *El Nacional.*

Vera, E. (2017, Oct. 22). The darkest Spain. *Ara.*

Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 23). Friday, the new date in the calendar. *El Nacional.*

Villatoro, V. (2017, Oct. 23). 27 October: Is it clear? *Ara.*

Gürtel: the trial that the PP would like to hush up [Editorial]. (Oct. 25, 2017). *Ara.*

Peral, J. (2017, Oct. 26). Let's stand up for TV3 and Catalunya Ràdio (Jaume Peral). *Ara.*

Villatoro, V. (2017, Oct 26). Is it clear. *Ara.*

Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 27). Puigdemont on the tightrope. *El Nacional.*

Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 28). Puigdemont, the president of independence. *El Nacional.*

An unequal clash [Editorial] (2017, Oct. 28). *Ara.*

Antich, J. (2017, Oct. 29). Puigdemont, the president. *El Nacional.*

Vera, E. (2017, Oct. 29). The day after. *Ara.*

Forn, I. (2017, Oct. 31). Catalonia is a TV series (and killing it). *El Nacional.*

Vera, E. (2017, Nov. 2). It's all about ballot boxes. *Ara.*

Antich, J. (2017, Nov. 3). The dignity of a people. *El Nacional.*

A disgrace, an act of revenge, an injustice [Editorial]. (2017, Nov. 3). *Ara.*

Antich, J. (2017, Nov. 4). Mobilisations are back. *El Nacional.*

Junqueras, O. (2017, Nov. 4). Let's get to work to win back our freedom. *Ara.*

Antich, J. (2017, Nov. 5). Joint list for an exceptional election. *El Nacional.*

Galves, J. (2017, Nov. 5). Spain is now very weak. *El Nacional.*

| |
|---|
| Vera, E. (2017, Nov. 5). Perplexed and outraged. *Ara.* |
| Antich, J. (2017, Nov. 6). The political jailers. *El Nacional.* |
| Antich, J (2017, Nov. 7). Belgium leads the way for Spain. *El Nacional.* |
| Sánchez, J. (2017, Nov. 7). From freedom. *Ara.* |

*Note: José Antich is the editor in chief of* El Nacional *and Ester Vera is the Editor in Chief of* Ara*. Antich publishes the editorials of* El Nacional *under his own name.*