

## **Framing Catalonia**

The coverage of the Catalan secession movement in the German and British press

Student Name: Sergio Geerlings  
Student Number: 579173

Supervisor: Sergül Nguyen, MA

Master Media Studies - Media & Business  
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication  
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master's Thesis  
*June 2021*

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### ABSTRACT

In October 2017, years of discontent with the Spanish central government erupted in a Catalan wish for secession that was followed by a regional referendum for seceding from Spain. Shortly after announcing the referendum, it was declared illegal by the central government in Madrid, thereupon provoking a clash between the secessionists and the central government. The EU decided not to intervene in the issue and treated it as an “internal matter” of Spain. Nevertheless, the issue was extensively covered in European media, thereby employing certain news frames.

This comparative study looks into the framing practices that were used by German and British newspapers in their coverage of the Catalan secession between September 2017 to October 2019. As Germany and the United Kingdom traditionally have different opinions on the functioning of the EU, this study seeks to compare the media’s agenda-setting by analysing framing practices in both countries. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the research questions *“to what extent are generic news frames about the Catalan independence movement present in German and British newspapers?”* and *“how does news framing around the Catalan secession differ in German newspapers when compared to British newspapers?”*. To answer these questions, this study employs a mixed-method approach, thereby combining deductive quantitative content analysis followed by inductive qualitative content analysis.

The findings of this study confirm previous theories on European framing. Whereas British newspapers focussed more on conflict-oriented coverage, German newspapers employed a more moderate approach in which displaying different scenarios took a central role. Moreover, German newspapers used a more negative tone to approach Catalan secession as compared to British newspapers. Also, the study found inaccuracies in the British coverage of the Catalan conflict in which there was a unilateral contribution of the data that only related to one of the two sides involved in the conflict. More than their German counterparts, British newspapers made frequent use of the human-interest frame to condemn the actions of the Spanish state. Lastly, whereas British media presented a uniform set of opinions as being factual, German media more frequently quoted primary sources and provided a wider variety of perspectives on the issue.

**KEYWORDS:** News framing, Agenda-setting, Catalonia, Germany, United Kingdom

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## **List of abbreviations**

ANC: The Assemblea Nacional Catalana (ANC), also called Moviment per la Independència (Independence Movement), is a Catalan pluralistic umbrella association that strives for the formation of an independent Catalan state.

EEC: The European Economic Community (EEC) was an international organisation created by one of the two Treaties of Rome of 1957 with the aim of creating a common European market. The treaty established a common market and external tariffs, a joint policy for agriculture, common policies regarding labour and transport, and founded common institutions for economic development.

FAZ: The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, abbreviated FAZ, is a national German daily newspaper published in Frankfurt am Main.

SZ: The Süddeutsche Zeitung, abbreviated SZ, is a German left-liberal newspaper, published in Munich.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Context and Research Questions

Decades before the creation of the European Union, the European Economic Community (EEC), founded in 1957, formed one of the first multinational alliances that sought to bring economic integration among its member states. Nowadays, the EEC is considered to be the predecessor of the European Union. The founding members of the EEC (France, (West) Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands) still have influential roles in the modern-day EU. Eventually, exactly 16 years after the creation of the EEC also the United Kingdom, the country with one of the biggest European economies, joined the alliance in 1973 (*About the EU*, n.d.). But even within these early stages of European collaboration, the integration process of the UK into the EEC was characterized by reciprocal mistrust between the UK and the founding members of the EEC (1967: *De Gaulle Says “non” to Britain - Again*, 1967). Even after the UK became a member of the EEC, division within the UK government caused in 1975 a referendum on whether to remain in the EEC. However, in this referendum, the British public voted to remain a member of the EEC.

Subsequently, in 1992, with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union was created. However, even within the member states, the lack of a shared identity caused and continues to cause social and political upheaval and tension that, in turn, can affect the public opinion about Europe as a union. One of the most prominent and recent examples of this was the 2017 Catalan referendum for independence, where at one point, years of discontent with the central Spanish government erupted in a fight for an independent Catalonian state. Thereupon provoking strong police action from the central government. Spain is one of the youngest European democracies that since 1978 consists of 19 autonomous regions. Most of these regions enjoy a substantial degree of autonomy to prevent separatism from the Spanish state (Barton, 2009). However, due to the economic inequality between the relatively wealthy region of Catalonia and the poorer regions in the south and inland, Catalans felt aggrieved because of the higher taxes that they paid in comparison with other regions (Real Instituto Elcano, 2019).

For many, this was considered to be a national matter that needs to be resolved in Spain. However, there were also some dissenting opinions stating that what happened in Catalonia, concerns the entire European Union. At the moment of the referendum and in its aftermath, the faith in the European Union was being tested. European institutions were blamed for not intervening in the issue and Eurosceptics used the Catalan case as proof for conflict of interests within the European Union.

One year earlier, in 2016, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union by holding a referendum. As stated earlier, the relationship between the UK and the European Union had been difficult for decades. Already in 1975, the UK held a referendum on whether to remain in the EEC. In contrast with the situation in 1975, however, in contemporary society, the increasingly influential role of the media on society is recognized and has been studied on a larger scale. Especially when looking at the current tendency of the spread of misinformation, the power of the media should not be underestimated.

In the case of Brexit, the media played a major role in framing the European Union in such a way as to influence British public opinion (Rawlinson, 2019). Framing events and institutions in a certain way can influence public opinion through agenda-setting. For example, research showed that the British tabloids have been sceptical towards the European Union in the years preceding the referendum (Rawlinson, 2019). This sceptical approach could have had major framing effects that resulted in Brexit.

As influential agenda-setters in one of the wealthiest regions on the planet, the power of European media should, again, not be underestimated. For this reason, comparing the same event in the outlets of different European countries can give insightful information on the use of framing. As two of the most influential and wealthiest countries of the European continent, both the United Kingdom and Germany have a long tradition of disparity in terms of policy and attitude towards the functioning of the European Union. Rawlinson (2019) already demonstrated the distinct framing techniques that were used by British media to cover European institutions when compared to other European media outlets. As both countries have different opinions of the European Union, something that was reinforced even more after the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, it is expected that European politics around secession from a central power will be framed in a different way.

Therefore, this study focuses on the coverage of the Catalan independence movement in British and German newspapers from September 2017 to October 2019. By conducting a quantitative content analysis on 175 articles this study seeks to answer the research question:

**RQ1:** To what extent are generic news frames about the Catalan independence movement present in German and British newspapers?

By combining quantitative content analysis with its qualitative, more context-bound, counterpart, this study seeks to answer the second research question:

**RQ2:** How does news framing around the Catalan secession differ in German newspapers when compared to British newspapers?

Expectations are that the British media will treat the Catalan issue as a foreign matter and German media will treat it as a European matter. Research showed that Germans have a relatively positive attitude towards the European Union (Wike et al., 2019). As a consequence, it is expected that more empathy and involvement is employed for the central Spanish state and the approach of European institutions in German media as compared to British media. Furthermore, in order to allow comparison of both countries, this study will make use of generic frames as created by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000). It is expected that, in British newspapers, the issue will be framed as a distant matter compared to German media.

## 1.2 Academic & Societal Relevance

Answers to the previously mentioned research questions can play an important role in understanding the European public opinion about independent movements as news agencies oftentimes provide a major source of information for the public (Kiousis & McCombs, 2004), thereby using certain media frames in their discourse (De Vreese et al., 2001). Furthermore, newspapers serve as the most influential agenda fixers of all media (McCombs, 2004) and thereby are highly involved in a country's socio-political development. Because of their major influence on public opinion (de Vreese, 2005), comparing the power of framing between the national news outlets of two countries can play an important role in understanding the functioning of, and interaction between societies (De Vreese et al., 2001).

Also, while writing this study, recent socio-political developments have caused a major distrust of the public in the media because of supposedly biased coverage of certain issues (Schudson, 2019; Thorbjørnsrud & Figenschou, 2020). Especially in a time in which the variety of news outlets is rapidly increasing, framing analysis can form an important point of interest to reveal the dynamics behind agenda-setting and the actors involved in the framing process. Also, as the spread of misinformation is becoming an important topic in public debate, this study can uncover the different ways of framing by different outlets by comparing them with each other. This study can, therefore, give an insight into the framing practices that are being used by media when covering the same issue.

Furthermore, there is a political tendency going on in which societies are highly polarized (Wilson et al., 2020). Several studies have shown that the polarization of public debate is partly caused by an echo chamber effect in which political ideas are being emphasized and a certain tunnel vision is being created (Barberá, 2020). Even though this echo chamber effect oftentimes occurs online, this effect can also happen in traditional media. As newspapers traditionally form an important provider for news content and are oftentimes built around a political character, their approach to news coverage can have a major impact on public opinion and, thus, the dynamics in society (Cardenal et al., 2019).

Also, the Catalan independence movement is not an isolated cultural phenomenon that limits itself to the Spanish borders. Instead, there is a significant worldwide tendency in which regions want to secede from a country or a union (Universitat de Lleida, 2020). As stated earlier, the power of the media should not be underestimated regarding their influence on public debate. After Euroscepticism rose in the United Kingdom, British newspapers started writing about the European Union in a more critical way (Rawlinson, 2019). In this way, they reinforced Eurosceptic feelings that could have influenced the British' public vote. By using a generic frame analysis followed by an issue-specific frame analysis, this study can contribute to gain insights into the framing of European politics and the representation of the European institutions in the media. In turn, this can help to understand the interplay between media, politics and public opinion.

Furthermore, as most studies on Catalan nationalism are outdated and don't include recent developments (Perales-Garcia & Pont-Sorribes, 2018), analysing recent developments in news media outlets of different countries can give insightful information

on both Catalan nationalism as well as its representation in foreign media. Especially in the case of the Catalan independence movement, recent developments in European and Spanish politics have shaped and influenced not only public opinion on governmental institutions but also the way of how those institutions are being framed in the media. Therefore, as this study focuses on media framing, this study will also look into the latent meaning-making process that is used by newspapers through agenda-setting (Semetko et al., 2000).

Furthermore, the study will look into how media framing is used to present certain issues that are considered to be newsworthy. Thus, this study contributes to understanding the agenda-setting function of traditional media and gives insight into the interplay between policymakers, the media and the public.

Lastly, this study will be using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis. This mixed-method approach allows both generalizability of the results as well as constructing a deeper understanding of news framing around the Catalan secession. Using a mixed-method approach in this study can help to detect tendencies within the data by analysing a relatively large dataset. A total of 175 articles will be analysed using a deductive approach. In turn, these tendencies will form the base for the second, qualitative part of the study. In this part, the study uses issue-specific frame analysis to explain and comment on the tendencies that were found in the initial phase of the study.

### 1.3 Structure of the study

This study is structured in several parts. As stated earlier, this study is making use of a mixed-method approach. This means that the study consists of two analyses that follow each other. As both analyses focus on the use of framing in the coverage of the Catalan secession, Chapter 2 will discuss the concept of framing as part of the theoretical framework. Subsequently, the study looks at the agenda-setting theory. Then, the Catalan secession will be put into a greater socio-political and socio-historical context after which the German and British media will be described by placing it within the European media landscape.

In the methodology part of this study in Chapter 3, first deductive quantitative content analysis will be discussed. Afterwards, qualitative content analysis using issue-

specific framing will be explained. In the part that follows, the chosen data sources and the inferential procedures will be explained.

After that, in Chapter 4, the findings of both analyses will be shared in the results section. First, the quantitative part of the study will be discussed as it will form the base for the qualitative part, which will be discussed subsequently. In the discussion section of Chapter 5 that follows, the results will be linked to the hypotheses and further implications of the results will be shared. The study will consider the limitations of the approach and will make suggestions for future research, to finally end with the conclusion in Chapter 6.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Conceptualising framing

#### *What is framing?*

According to the academic literature on the topic, there is no consensus about what should be understood by framing and frame in the field of communication. However, academics agree on the fact that its origins can be traced back to interpretive sociology where three currents stand out that contributed to generating the basis of the framing theory: symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and ethnomethodology (Helle & Eisenstadt, 1985). For the current study, it is not essential to explain all three currents but more important is the interpretation that Bateson (1955) gave to it from his field of social sciences (Vliegenhart & van Zoonen, 2011). Bateson was the first scholar that spoke of interpretation frameworks that are being used by the receiver of a message. This means that a user's preconceptions on certain topics have an impact on the way they evaluate and interpret certain messages and topics. This concept would later be complemented by Goffman (1974), who placed Bateson's interpretation framework in a social dimension (Helle & Eisenstadt, 1985). Subsequently, Tuchman (1978) acknowledged news content as frames through which individuals perceive a part of reality. In his theory, he dived into the function of framing in information media. He was the first scholar that acknowledged the media's political agenda-setting function in which some aspects are more salient than others. This causes that especially this news content is perceived as more important compared to others (Tuchman, 1978). Gitlin (1980) went even further and started from a conception of the media as distributors of ideology, hereby bringing the concept of framing to the field of the effects of the media and the reception studies (Gitlin, 1980). He linked framing directly to the creation of news content because news organisations tend to process big amounts of information about a certain event or issue and simplify it to then transmit it to a big audience (Gitlin, 1980). In 1989, Gamson and Modigliani argued that the creation of certain frames can be explained by the interaction between journalists' practices and norms and the influence of interest groups (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

In the second half of the nineteen-eighties, Iyengar published several works around the effects of media frames in news coverage and the effect it has on the perception of

political issues. He argued that, in general, people tend to be highly influenced by television frames when determining the importance of certain political issues (Iyengar & Kinder, 1989).

In the current study, however, American scholar Robert Entman (1993) and his theory on framing will be used as a framework for analysing Catalan independence. His theory connects the previously mentioned theories and is one of the most commonly used theories in framing research. Entman (1993) established a working definition of framing which states that framing is: “to select some aspect of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

This definition is shared by Amadeo (2008), who points out that the framing theory studies the process of transmission of meanings, signs, symbols and values from society to the media and vice versa. That means that the framing process does not only take place within texts. Entman (1993) furthermore explains that, among others, there are also the journalists who produce and organize the news, the receivers who are capable of understanding them, the texts that hide them and finally the culture in which they are created. This means that framing processes are defined by both the creator and the audience. To understand this interplay Entman (1993) explains the interactive feature of the framing process in which the knowledge schemes of journalists may not always coincide with those of the recipients, which contributes to the media’s agenda-setting function. This key concept of the “schema” (or schemata) of the audience are pre-existing structures that influence and guide the processing and interpretation of information. (Entman, 1991; Scheufele, 1999).

To sum up everything that has been stated so far it can be concluded that frames can intensify perspectives, reveal particular understandings about events and influence the way that the public thinks about certain issues (Entman, 1993). Reese et al. (2001) go beyond that and adapted the following definition for frames: “Frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world.” (Reese et al., 2001, p. 11).

In this study, news framing will mostly be analysed by looking at the bigger socio-political context in which it takes place. This means that the focus of this study is news framing itself. In turn, these framing practices can have an effect on both the public agenda through agenda-setting, and the interplay between the media agenda, the public agenda and public policy (Protess & McCombs, 1991).

### *Types of frames*

De Vreese et al. (2001) explain the differences between generic news frames and issue-specific news frames. The former, which will be used in this study, is applicable to a variety of news topics and is neither time nor culture-bound. The latter portrays typical aspects of the events or themes, and allow them to be addressed in detail, with a high degree of specificity (De Vreese et al., 2001).

The issue-specific frames are also described by Gamson et al. (1992). They identify the frame event as one that is circumscribed to a single event. Because of the high degree of specificity, events can be more profoundly analysed than by using its generic counterpart.

In contrast, generic frames can be applied to a wide range of news topics. Based on interviews with audiences, Neuman et al. (1992) identified five types or structures of frames that audiences use to agree, interpret and evaluate (political) information. These are the economic frame, conflict frame, defence frame, human impact frame and morality frame. Based on these frames, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) developed a typology for the analysis of news content: the conflict frame, economic consequences frame, human interest frame, morality frame and attribution of responsibility frame.

It should be mentioned that the typology of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) is focused on the structures of texts, i.e., being more concerned with finding patterns of journalistic production. This does not automatically mean that this method excludes the possibility of analysing the meaning-making process. Chong and Druckman (2007, p.107) emphasize that within each type, it is possible to analyse how meanings are being constructed by editorials.

### *The 5 generic frames*

The 5 generic frames that will be used in the quantitative part of this study were taken from Semetko & Valkenburg (2000). The incidence of the different generic frames within news content can affect public opinion through agenda-setting (Protess & McCombs, 1991).

#### *Conflict frame*

The conflict frame prioritizes the opposition and the dispute between two or more ideas, people or institutions (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In the presentation of the facts, the elements that divide and separate the social actors are highlighted instead of those factors that unite them. The actors are presented as in a dispute between who wins and who loses (Håkansson, 2000). It has to be taken into account that it does not necessarily refer to conflict events, such as fights, violence or wars.

#### *Responsibility frame*

The angle from which this frame is structured emphasizes the attribution of responsibility to people rather than conducting a systemic analysis (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The texts are constructed around the identification of the culprits, those responsible or those involved in the events (Iyengar, 1996). Usually, it is sought that the editorials identify them and that they specify their degree of involvement. Some news includes a symbolic sanction tone in the construction of the frame.

#### *Human interest frame*

This is one of the most used frames because it prioritizes the emotional dimension, the impacts on people, on their living conditions, both on a personal as on a family level. For example, priority is given to the testimony and opinion of those affected by the events, usually resorting to the victimization of the actors. For this, it is very common that sorrow and pain are emphasized (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

On certain occasions, this frame tends to individualize the facts, presenting them as personal matters, unrelated to public issues. In a competitive context, many editors and journalists use this frame to capture the largest audience and retain it. The same happens in

the coverage of the elections, when they present the candidates, their families, their habits or their hobbies.

#### *Morality frame*

This frame is constructed with the qualification, moral or ethical judgment of the facts or the actors. The angle or salience usually presents opinions, comments or adjectives that imply such judgment (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Certainly, there are some topics such as sexual freedom, the decriminalization of marijuana use, etc., that generate more moral judgments on the part of the media. Sometimes it is present as conclusions or morals that news readers make about some content presented in the report (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The opinion of expert groups is also used to announce moral judgments about the candidates or their behaviour with the aim of delegitimizing them.

#### *Economic consequences frame*

Originally this frame was presented by Neuman et al. (1992) as the emphasis that the media makes on the economic consequences of some problem or public event (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Commonly, the media highlights the economic losses, the impacts on the taxpayer's pocket, the effects that certain candidacies or proposals would have on the country's economy, or the distancing of investments etc.

## 2.2 Agenda-setting theory

Reese et al. (2001) explain the overlap between the agenda-setting theory and the framing theory. In their work, they refer to framing and framing effects as a practice to construct an agenda, with a limited amount of thematically related concepts to form a consistent idea. As more scholars in the field of communication, they describe framing as a process that forms part of the agenda-setting theory. In this process, framing takes place between what is considered to be important according to the media agenda and what is considered to be important according to the public agenda (Reese et al., 2001).

Furthermore, it is oftentimes said that both framing and agenda-setting is about presenting certain aspects of issues in a more salient way. McCombs & Shaw (1972) explain that agenda-setting is about the efforts by the media to decide which issues will be

discussed in the media. This is the first level of agenda-setting. Framing goes beyond that and takes place on the second level of the agenda-setting theory (Wu & Coleman, 2009). On this level, rather than deciding what to think about, framing answers the question of how to think about certain issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In turn, the framing effects then influence public opinion in the way that they decide which moral choices people make about the issue (Wu & Coleman, 2009). This is in line with what Price & Tewksbury (1997) stated about the differences between framing as a so-called applicability effect and, agenda-setting as an accessibility effect. In their theory, they refer to framing as an applicability effect because of the way the outcome of certain (news) messages might make connections between different concepts that, in turn, are accepted by their audience (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). In contrast, the accessibility effect of agenda-setting is more about memory-based models on whether an audience is able to recall certain issues during a certain temporal sequence. Agenda-setting is therefore more about information processing and forming attitudes on certain issues based on their accessibility (Price & Tewksbury, 1997).

Ghanem (1997) explains the different components in which news framing occurs. He makes a distinction between four dimensions of framing. These are the topic of the news item, the presentation (location and size), cognitive attributes (connotation of the frame) and affective attributes (the tone of the item) (Ghanem, 1997). These four dimensions construct a framework that allows comparative analysis of framing. In his study, a distinction is being made between formal and reasoning dimensions on one side (the topic and its presentation) and substantive and affective dimensions on the other side (cognitive and affective attributes) (Ghanem, 1997). The substantive dimension addresses the salient aspects of people, topics or objects mentioned by the public or highlighted in the coverage. Meanwhile, the affective dimension refers to the evaluative tone with which the media coverage of a topic is carried out and, in addition, it analyses the emotional responses of public opinion (Ghanem, 1997). This study will be mainly focused on the substantive and affective dimensions of framing as it analyses the salience of news topics and their tone in a more profound way.

In the current study, it is relevant to understand all the nuances in the construction of media content to understand the interplay between media and public opinion. This means

that, in order to understand journalistic practices in the coverage of the Catalan independence movement in respectively British and German media, it is important to recognize the different levels that come into play in the construction of a media message. In other words, the differences in cultural practices in both countries decide the content of the media agenda which, in turn, decides how the Catalan independence movement is framed and what moral judgements the public makes in both countries (Wu & Coleman, 2009).

### 2.3 Background of the Catalan independence movement

To fully understand the news framing around the coverage of the Catalan independence movement, a basic understanding is needed of the context of this socio-political conflict. Spain and Catalonia share a long history in which Catalonia oftentimes remained to have some degree of autonomy or privilege in comparison with many other Spanish regions (Barton, 2009). Although there is some controversy among historians about when Catalonia lost its autonomy to the Spanish crown, generally historians agree on the year 1714 (Barton, 2009). In this year Catalonia officially lost its privileges to the Spain crown. In modern history, two important events in the history of Catalan nationalism must be mentioned: in April 1931 and in October 1934 Francesc Macia and Lluis Companys respectively proclaimed the Catalan Republic within the Spanish Federal Republic, which was later banned by the central government (Barton, 2009). From the Francoists, there was very strong pressure on Catalonia that was reflected in the dictatorship on all freedoms in general and on Catalan culture and the Catalan language, in particular (Barton, 2009). During Franco's regime, the use of Catalan was prohibited in public places and Catalans were forced to speak Spanish as an official language. The Franco regime discredited the feeling of unity in Catalonia.

What has happened in the last 30 years has been a very rapid revolution that spreads the nationalist ideas of the past, but in a more radical way, becoming the ideological basis for the creation of an independent Catalan state (Barton, 2009). Contemporary independence grew due to cuts by the constitutional court to the new statute approved in 2006 (Real Instituto Elcano, 2019). Another reason for the intensification of the conflict was the refusal of the government of Mariano Rajoy to introduce the fiscal pact, the electoral promise of Artur Mas, which implied ending the fiscal deficit suffered by

Catalonia (Real Instituto Elcano, 2019). In January 2016, as a result of the agreement between the Junts pel Sí party and the CUP (Popular Unity Candidacy), Artur Mas was replaced by Carles Puigdemont as president of the Generalitat (Real Instituto Elcano, 2019).

The most important event that marked his activity as president was the celebration of the independence referendum on October 1, 2017. Almost 2.2 million citizens participated in the vote (Real Instituto Elcano, 2019). The number of people who voted for the independence of Catalonia reached more than 90% of the votes. But it is important to mention that Catalonia has a population of more than 7.5 million inhabitants (INE, 2021) and the majority of the citizens were against or simply did not participate in the referendum, which was declared illegal and unconstitutional by the Spanish state. The Spanish government declared that a referendum in which only the inhabitants of Catalonia participated is not legitimate, because for the results to be valid it is necessary to ask all Spaniards (Real Instituto Elcano, 2019). As a result, violent clashes took place between the Catalans and the national police that caused more than 893 injuries (El País, 2017).

Important to understand in this context is that Catalonia is one of the richest autonomous regions in Spain with a GDP of more than € 224 million (Instituto de Estadística de Cataluña, 2020). Catalan dissatisfaction, in this case, is explained by the need to act as a donor region for the poorest territories, which is why the Catalans assure that they would live in greater prosperity if they did not have to transfer their benefits to the rest of Spain (Real Instituto Elcano, 2019). But despite the fact that Catalonia is a very important industrial community and renowned for its academic institutions, this region will probably not be able to function as an independent economic entity. Currently, many emblematic companies do not support the idea of independence, expressing their protest with the threat of leaving Catalonia and moving their headquarters to other communities (Garijo, 2017). In particular, this refers to the financial sector, without which the community will not be able to develop economically, because this will mean a drain of capital and, as a consequence, weakening of economic power (Real Instituto Elcano, 2019).

However, the main reason consists of a great desire of the *independentistas* to demonstrate that Catalonia has the right to have its own state with its language and culture, to be a “nation”, which is contradicting the Spanish constitution of 78 (Real Instituto

Elcano, 2019). In other words, with its secession, the Catalan government tries to demonstrate that it can develop independently and thereby influence the political processes inland. However, it must be taken into account that to avoid serious consequences and preserve the unity of the country, the only way out is through political dialogue and respect for the constitution of Spain, a country united in its political, cultural and linguistic diversity (Real Instituto Elcano, 2019). This is why, in the context of political dialogue, it is important to look at the portrayal of this issue in a cross-national context.

## 2.4 Germany and the United Kingdom within the European context

As the United Kingdom and Germany traditionally have different opinions on topics like the functioning of the European Union, this study investigates whether those differences are traceable in how the news media outlets in these two countries frame the Catalan independence movement. The United Kingdom and Germany are two of the most important actors in Europe, occupying first and second place when looking at their GDP (Statista, 2021). However, the United Kingdom is traditionally more focused on its independent position within Europe whereas Germany is more focused on the functioning of Europe as a whole (Simms, 2013). For example, the Greek government-debt crisis caused an increase in Euroscepticism in the UK, which eventually contributed to the Brexit, while Germany tried to keep the union together (Eppink, 2015).

Furthermore, the Catalan referendum took place in the same year as in which Theresa May formally announced the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union (European Council, 2017). This event could have had an effect on the way the Catalan independence crisis was framed in British media. This is because it has to be taken into account that Brexit had a big impact on the British-Spanish bilateral relationship because of the consequences for the communities in and around Gibraltar (Torrico, 2020). According to two referenda, the majority of the Gibraltarians voted to stay part of the UK but were mostly against Brexit as most Gibraltarians still depend a lot on Spain (Dittmer et al., 2019). After the UK announcing cutting ties with the EU, as happened with the Brexit itself, the Catalan crisis could either be described as a foreign event, and therefore be globalized, or as an internal issue that has an interest for the Brits themselves, and therefore be domesticated (Ridge-Newman, 2018). Ridge-Newman (2018) describes these

differences as diversification and homogenization of news content. Describing events as either domestic or foreign, and framing them in such a way, reveals the uses of the agenda-setting function of the media. As during the coverage of the Catalan secession the UK found itself in the middle of the Brexit negotiations, it is interesting to see whether British news outlet either choose to domesticate or globalize the issue.

In turn, as Germany tends to be Europhilic in nature (Ridge-Newman, 2018), it is expected that the Catalan crisis is framed differently in German news media. As previously demonstrated by Galpin & Trenz (2018), German media tend to adopt a relatively positive attitude with regard to the assessment of legitimacy of EU polity. Even though the Catalonian secession, according to the European Parliament, is considered to be an internal matter of Spain, it is in fact a topic of debate within Europe (Gulmez & Buhari-Gulmez, 2020). As political attitudes among countries differ, as is the case with Germany and the UK, news framing is expected to be different in both countries due to a difference in the schemata of the audiences (Entman, 1993). Therefore, this study focuses on the media frames that were applied by the British and German newspapers in the coverage of the Catalan secession.

As British newspapers tend to be more Eurosceptic in their coverage and have no direct interest in stabilizing the European Union, it is expected that their coverage of the Catalan secession is more focused on the conflicting parties involved. In contrast, as a founding member of the EEC, Germany does have a strong interest in a stable European Union, and it is expected that German newspapers are less likely to focus on conflicting parties. Instead, it is expected that German newspapers will focus more on the negative consequences of secession in an attempt to keep the union together. As Germany has one of the biggest economies within the EU, a possible Catalan secession will have a major impact on the European (and German) economy. Therefore, it is expected that German newspapers will use this argument more often to demonstrate the negative consequences of secession. Furthermore, in an attempt to create support for the EU and show the benefits of being a part of a union, it is expected that German media will employ a more personal perspective on the case. This includes the use of interviews and columns in which people, for example, tell how they were negatively affected by the upheaval around the Catalan secession. In

contrast, as British newspapers tend to be less connected to a shared European identity, it is expected that their coverage of the issue will be less personal.

As previous studies imply, the use of the various generic frames differs per country. As generic frame analysis allows comparison of data, the hypotheses in this study are based on the incidence of those earlier mentioned generic frames. Therefore, based on the findings of previous research and the earlier mentioned arguments, the following hypotheses will be tested by employing quantitative content analysis.

**H1:** British newspapers use the conflict frame more than German newspapers.

**H2:** German newspapers use the economic consequences frame more than British newspapers.

**H3:** German newspapers use the human-interest frame more than British newspapers.

Furthermore, as the schemata of British and German audiences differ, their attitude towards secessionist movements will differ as well. As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the UK and the EU has always been difficult. As an influential agenda-setter on public opinion regarding the EU, British media have a long tradition of being Eurosceptic in nature (Harmsen & Spiering, 2016). This means that, in comparison with their German counterparts, British newspapers are expected to portray European institutions and their governments with a more critical tone. Additionally, as the UK in the year preceding the referendum already voted to leave the EU, their support and understanding for secession from a central power is expected to be greater than in Germany. This means that it is expected that British newspapers are more likely to choose the side of the Catalan secessionists instead of the side of the Spanish government. In contrast, as a founding member of the EEC and the EU, it is expected that in Germany newspapers are more likely to condemn secessionist movements as a possible Catalan secession has direct consequences for Germany. Thus, it is expected that British newspapers use a more positive tone to describe the Catalan secessionist as compared to German newspapers. Therefore, the following hypothesis will be tested:

**H4:** British newspapers approach the Catalan independence movement with a more positive tone than German newspaper.

To test the previously mentioned hypotheses, the top 3 newspapers with the highest national circulation in Germany and the UK will be taken for analysis. For Germany, this is Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung and Bild. For the UK, Daily Mail, Metro and the Sun will be analysed. In the following chapter, all newspapers in this study will be briefly discussed.

## 2.5 Europeanisation of discourse: a societal view

In recent years, several studies have been done on the Europeanisation of public discourse within the European Union (Bourne, 2020; Bourne, 2014; Horsti, 2008). Horsti (2008) analysed the framing of the African migration to Spain in Finnish and Swedish media. In her study, Horsti noticed the different ways in which the illegal migration flow from Africa to the Canary Islands was framed in the Finnish and Swedish media. She found out that Finnish media applied more of a European perspective to the matter and domesticated the issue, while Swedish media applied a more distant approach in which the issue was treated as a typical foreign matter (Horsti, 2008). Furthermore, differences were found in the way the illegal migrants were framed. The Finnish and Swedish media related the migrants to criminality, control and victimisation. In turn, African media tended to use more of a human-interest frame to describe the illegal migrants in which their actions were described as heroic (Horsti, 2008). This research shows the effects of framing in European media and the interplay between the media agenda and the public agenda through European agenda-setting.

Moreover, Bourne (2014; 2020) focused on the Europeanisation of the Catalan independence conflict in particular. These studies showed that the Catalan fight for independence is oftentimes internationalized by the different actors that are involved in it (Bourne, 2020). This means that oftentimes comparisons are being made with other (European) independence movements like, for example, the Scottish independence movement. Bourne (2020) explains that those references to other foreign contexts do not limit themselves to political discourses but are omnipresent in all aspects of the Catalan conflict.

The Catalan *independentistas*, as the pro-independence movement is being called, oftentimes compare the Spanish state with European illiberal or quasi-democracies like

Turkey and Hungary (Bourne, 2020). Especially within the context of the European Union, the comparison with countries like Hungary (alongside Poland) are highly relevant due to the fact that Hungary and Poland face political sanctions within the European Union as a result of illiberal measurements relating to the judiciary and the media (European Parliament, 2020). This raises the question of whether the Catalan conflict should be treated according to the same measurements or not.

On the other side of the conflict, the former prime minister of Spain Mariano Rajoy declared that the Spanish constitution is similar to those of other European countries (Bourne, 2020) and rhetorically asked what countries like France and Germany would do if parts of their countries would disobey legislative orders.

Portos (2020) demonstrated the challenging relationship between the EU and the Catalan independence movement and what effect this had on the predominant discourses within the movement. It showed that due to the lack of European intervention within the Catalan independence conflict, Euroscepticism has taken overhand within the Catalan secession movement (Portos, 2020). Oftentimes, it referred to the role of the European Union as a guarantor of the status quo rather than an accommodator in territorial disputes. For this current study, Portos (2020) shows the importance of the Catalan secession within the bigger context of the European Union. In turn, the lack of European intervention in the Catalan independence crisis can be partly explained through the role of the European media agenda and the European institutions through agenda-setting (Semetko et al., 2000).

## 2.6 The Catalan independence movement and framing

The Catalan independence movement is a widely discussed topic in media studies (Perales-García & Pont-Sorribes, 2018; Martínez-Solanilla, 2019; León-Solís & O'Donnell, 2021). However, most of this research is merely focused on a single method to analyse media coverage, thereby oftentimes omitting cultural nuances that explain certain phenomena.

Perales-García & Pont-Sorribes (2018) compared major newspapers of France, Germany and the UK. The study used a set of 6 variables to analyse news framing in multinational news outlets. A codebook was constructed that examined the author, genre, hierarchisation, headline details, actors and the dominant frame of the article. Thus, the

study used quantitative content analysis to see which generic frame was most salient in each article. An interesting finding of their study is the overrepresentation of the conflict frame in the British newspapers as compared to the coverage in other countries. However, in the research process, no previously made coding rules were set to analyse the different variables. Furthermore, the absence of an intercoder reliability test in the preliminary phase of the analysis might have caused possible biases in the results. Especially when determining the dominant generic frame of the article, a possible researcher bias can come into play as a certain degree of interpretation of the data is needed. Especially in content analysis, it is therefore important to conduct research in a highly systematic way according to a set of previously made coding rules to minimise researchers' biases (Flick, 2014). Also, by focussing on one single dominant frame, other less salient frames are excluded from analysis which can cause a possible availability bias when drawing conclusions. The mixed-method approach that was applied in this study used an additional ethnographic study in which four in-depth interviews with foreign correspondents were conducted to give insight into the journalistic production of news frames. As the study's goal was to examine the coverage of the Catalan conflict in foreign media, it can be argued that the study's reliability would benefit more from conducting an additional qualitative content analysis using a highly systematic approach. Rather than using additional in-depth interviews with foreign correspondents, examining less salient frames could have been analysed to investigate latent meanings within the news frames.

The study of Martínez-Solanilla (2019) contributes insightful information as it does look into the deeper latent meaning of news framing. In order to reveal latent meanings, the study looks at the lexical and semantic structures of the news content. However, this study conducts critical discourse analysis (CDA) on merely one article per newspaper per country on the day of the Catalan referendum. Given the wide variation in newspaper identities and journalistic practices, analysing solely one article per country does not allow the generalizability of the results for the respective countries. As described earlier, countries and newspaper do significantly differ in their socio-political identity and do therefore differ in framing news. Furthermore, the study used an approach that is highly data-bound. This means that linguistic variables like over-lexicalisation, the use of pronouns, quoting verbs and lexical choices formed the main pillars of the news frame analysis. Merely focussing

on the linguistic characteristics of a small dataset can lead to concerns regarding the representativeness of news framing as a whole. Lastly, this study only focused on one single article on the day of the referendum itself. It has to be taken into account that there is a risk of losing the bigger socio-political picture and of the different nuances being lost in the analysis. Therefore, adding a more context-bound approach would not only increase reliability but would also add value to the linguistic findings of this study as latent socio-political concepts can be explained more profoundly.

In addition to the work of Martínez-Solanilla (2019), León-Solís & O'Donnell (2021) studied the coverage Catalan referendum from a more socio-political point of view in which they explained their results by placing it in the British journalism landscape. In their work León-Solís & O'Donnell used a set of different variables varying from narrative structures, (il)legitimacy of the referendum to the portrayal of the different conflicting parties as tools to analyse news framing around the Catalan secession. As this is one of the most recent and complete studies on the Catalan independence movement, it includes the aftermath of the referendum and its political consequences. Also, further explanation of the socio-historical developments that lead to the referendum is included in the analysis. However, the study is built around the idea of segmentation of the actors and the two opposing camps. This means that the conflict frame is one of the leading factors of segmenting the different newspapers. Less emphasis is put on other factors that might influence the news framing. Furthermore, the study lacks a systematic approach to analysis and is oftentimes based on findings that result from interpretation.

Therefore, based on the findings of the previously mentioned studies on framing the Catalan secession, it is expected that newspapers of both countries condemn the Catalan independence movement as trust in the central government in Germany is fairly high (Edelman, 2021), and the United Kingdom is currently confronted with the Scottish independence movement in their own country. However, based on the findings of Pont-Sorribes et al. (2019), it is expected that German newspapers employ a more European perspective rather than treating it as a foreign matter and are more involved in the presence of repercussions of Catalan politics.

Furthermore, when looking at the incidence of the different generic frames, it is expected that within the human-interest frame, a lot of focus is being put on the emotional

aspects of the story. Therefore, it is expected that to present the issue as a shared European issue, latent emotional connotations are presumably more present in the German newspapers as compared to the British ones.

### 3. Methodology

This chapter will look into the research design and the methodology that was applied in this study. The first part of this chapter explains the research questions with their rationale and touches upon the background of both research questions. The chapter continues with an explanation about the use and importance of a mixed-method approach to answering the research questions. Subsequently, the chapter describes the methodology of the study, in which it first focuses on quantitative content analysis and its processes and continues with its qualitative counterpart. Lastly, it explains the process of data collection and which tools were used to process and analyse the data.

#### 3.1 Research Design and Argumentation: Mixed method approach

So far, most studies have focused on a single method of analysis. This method is oftentimes a qualitative content analysis that does not allow generalizability of the results. For this reason, it is chosen to use a mixed-method approach using both quantitative as qualitative content analysis. This study will be primarily using the framing theory as mentioned by Entman (1993), De Vreese et al. (2001) and Reese et al. (2001).

Krippendorff (2004) explains content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use.” (p.18). Thus, a content analysis must be carried out in relation to the context of the data, as it serves as a frame of reference where messages and meanings are developed. Ultimately, the researcher can explain the meaning of a frame by placing it within the social context of the situation in which it occurred.

For this study, a mixed-methods approach was applied. Thereby combining results from quantitative content analysis and use qualitative content analysis to find explanations for the findings. In a mixed sequential method, the procedure starts either with a quantitative study succeeded by a qualitative study (explanatory sequential design) or a qualitative study succeeded by a quantitative study (exploratory sequential design). The latter will be used in this study (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

In the first deductive quantitative phase, data was collected using a pre-made codebook in which the incidence of possible generic frames was analysed (de Vreese et al., 2001). In the second inductive phase, a link was created between the quantitative data and a

qualitative approach. This means that all data, and especially tendencies within the data, were used to guide the development of the qualitative phase. Furthermore, this study benefits from a mixed-methods approach as, in this phase, it looks into more latent concepts that are not quantifiable, like the disposition of the human-interest frame that uses emotions or the use of socio-historical references.

In this phase, the study sought to answer the second qualitative research question employing a purposeful sampling procedure. This means that both procedures are connected in the way that the qualitative part strongly relies on the findings of the quantitative part. In other words, the results of the qualitative content analysis were used to explain the findings in the quantitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

### 3.2 Methods: Quantitative & qualitative content analysis

The following section of this study focuses on the procedures that were applied in this study to answer the research questions. It presents an overview of mixed-method research that is based on the framing theory that was explained in the previous section of this study.

#### 3.2.1 Quantitative Content Analysis

It is possible to analyse news framing from a deductive or inductive approach. In this work, first, a deductive quantitative approach was chosen: the texts were studied from a theory perspective, with clearly defined concepts within the codebook (see Appendix). To reveal the frames from the aforementioned theoretical perspective, this study sought to identify the generic frames (de Vreese et al., 2001) suitable to a variety of news topics, applying the frames as mentioned by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000).

In the first place, through content analysis, the researcher analysed the incidence of the different generic frames to see which generic frame was most salient. Subsequently, the sentiment about the causal agent was approached by using the tone of the article as a variable to operationalise whether the issue was treated as a domestic or foreign issue. This was done by looking at the positive or negative wording that was used to approach the Catalan independence movement. This five-point ‘tone’ scale was based on Evers (2016) and ranges from very negative (-2) to very positive (+2) (Kuttschreuter et al., 2011).

To analyse the use of the five generic frames 'conflict', 'attribution of responsibility', 'human interest', 'economic consequences' and 'morality', the study used a theory-based codebook. The coder answered yes (1) or no (0) to the questions in the codebook to determine the incidence of a frame. Again, the incidence of the frames are variables for comparing the representation of the Catalan independence movement as generic frames allow recognizing temporal, cultural and political differences in news articles (Guendez et al., 2016). Especially the incidence of the conflict frame, the economic consequences frame and the human-interest frame are important variables for revealing differences, as their agenda-setting function is supposedly closely related to the bigger socio-political context in which the text was written (McCombs, 2004; Horsti, 2008). This means that to treat the issue as a shared European responsibility, rather than merely focusing on conflicting parties, newspapers will use the economic consequences frame and human-interest frame to involve the reader's interest in the issue through agenda-setting (Semetko et al., 2000; Horsti, 2008).

### 3.2.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

For the second part of this mixed methods research, a qualitative content analysis was conducted. The method was approached in an inductive way. The selection for the qualitative sample was done by looking at the salience of generic frames in combination with references that make use of unquantifiable socio-historical data.

Qualitative content analysis is known for revealing latent concepts that are oftentimes omitted when conducting quantitative content analysis. By applying qualitative content analysis, the researcher identifies, analyses and reports on patterns within the data (Krippendorf, 2004). This method is known for reducing and categorising data which requires the researcher to merely select the data that plays an important role in answering the research question. This means that oftentimes the units of analysis are taking to a higher level of abstraction than with quantitative content analysis in order to categorise the data more efficiently.

The coding process in this qualitative content analysis is done in an inductive, and thus data-driven, way in which the process starts with the data and categories are being created. Next, codes are being grouped together into main categories that, in turn, can

explain the theory-based research questions (Flick, 2014). This highly systematic way of analysing texts is a key characteristic of qualitative content analysis. This means that the first step in the entire process starts with getting familiar with the data and its relation to the research question. This methodology allows the analysis to be closely related to the objectives of the study, which is analysing how framing is expressed, instead of making assumptions (Flick, 2014). Even though the research question and data might differ among studies, the research process within qualitative content analysis remains always the same. This includes making the coding process iterative by double coding the data in order to assure unambiguous categorisation (Flick, 2014).

In the current study, it is chosen to use a data-driven approach in which the coding frame is based on the findings of the quantitative content analysis. As previously stated, when constructing a coding frame for qualitative content analysis, the research question and its theory always provide the base for analysing the data. This means that the four frame elements as mentioned by Entman (1993) formed the base for the coding frame of the qualitative content analysis. Thus, using qualitative content analysis, this study focused on the four elements of framing that were mentioned by Entman (1993). The researcher first looked at how the problem is defined and what causal link formed the basis of the problem. Subsequently, the researcher looked at the moral judgement of the problem and how the data recommended a treatment for the problem. In the coding frame, which forms the base of the analysis, those 4 elements as mentioned by Entman (1993) form the concept-driven main categories under which the different data-driven subcategories can be placed (Flick, 2014). Furthermore, during the analysis, it is possible that within one article, multiple subcategories emerge under the same concept-driven main categories (e.g., a news story can provide two problem definitions).

One of the main reasons to choose a mixed-method approach is to provide, in the qualitative part of the study, a detailed and context-bound description of the findings of the quantitative part. To adapt the coding frame in an accurate way to the data, it is, therefore, necessary to create a coding frame that is partly data-driven (coding inductively) and partly concept-driven (category creation) (Flick, 2014). As described in (Kozman, 2016) issue-specific frames are functional descriptions of a certain issue, in this case, the Catalan

independence movement. In contrast, the generic frames of the quantitative content analysis focus more on the outer packaging of the issue (Kozman, 2016).

### 3.2.3 Data Collection

#### *Unit of analysis*

175 articles that covered the Catalan independence movement from September 2017 (the month of the referendum) to October 2019 (the month in which the Catalan separatist leaders stood for trial) were taken as units of analysis for the quantitative content analysis. In the second, qualitative, phase, a selection of 42 news articles was made out of the quantitative sample. This means that for every newspaper 7 articles were analysed using a quantitative approach.

#### *Sampling strategies*

For the first part of the analysis, a selection of 175 newspaper articles was made for the newspapers of Germany and the United Kingdom with the highest circulation. For Germany this is Bild, Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Schröder, 2020). For Germany, these 3 newspapers together count for 48,6% of the circulation of national newspapers which equals approximately 1.8 million printed national newspapers per day in total (BDZV, 2020). In the following part, the German newspapers that were used in this study will be shortly discussed according to their identity and their characteristics.

#### *Bild*

Bild is the biggest tabloid newspaper in Germany (Schröder, 2020). It is owned by the biggest editorial of Germany named Axel Springer AG and has its headquarters in Berlin and Hamburg (Hellack, 1992). Bild has the highest circulation of printed press in the country and their articles are characterised by the use of big headings, direct and easy to understand language use and a populist writing style (Aalberg et al., 2018).

#### *Süddeutsche Zeitung*

Süddeutsche Zeitung is a Munich based newspaper that is considered to be centralist and social democratic (Embassy and General Consulates of Germany, 2016). The newspaper was founded shortly after the end of WWII after which it received as one of the first German newspapers its license from the allies to print (Hoser, n.d.).

### *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) is a Frankfurt-based newspaper that officially calls itself politically independent. However, in general, the newspaper is considered to be moderately conservative (Embassy and General Consulates of Germany, 2016). Of all German newspapers, FAZ is the one with the most circulation outside of Germany (Schröder, 2020). It used to be characterized by its sober front page without illustrations but since 2007 the newspaper changed its appearance and did include coloured images on its front page (Jakobs, 2012).

The earlier mentioned German newspapers will be compared to 3 British newspapers with the highest national circulation, these are Metro, the Sun and the Daily Mail (Mayhew, 2020). These 3 newspapers together count for 34,6% of the circulation of national newspapers in the country (Firmstone & Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture & Science, n.d.), which equals around 2.8 million printed newspapers per day in total (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2020). As was done before with the German newspapers, in the next part, every British newspaper will be briefly discussed.

### *Metro*

Metro is a London based free newspaper with the highest circulation in the United Kingdom (Mayhew, 2020). Metro publishes from Monday to Sunday and is owned by Daily Mail and General Trust (Bond, 2017). Although it is owned by the same company as the conservative Daily Mail, Metro claims to be politically independent (Bond, 2017).

### *The Sun*

The Sun is a London based tabloid that used to have the highest circulation in the UK, but it was overtaken by Metro in 2018 (The Economist, 2018). The Sun is published by News Group Newspapers, which is part of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. The newspaper is oftentimes involved in controversies in which it takes a strong conservative political stance (Johansson, 2007).

### *The Daily Mail*

The Daily Mail is a London based tabloid that is, like Metro, owned by Daily Mail and General Trust. It has a strong conservative character and is mostly read by a right-wing middle-class audience (Aalberg et al., 2018). This newspaper is oftentimes involved in controversies because of inaccuracies in its reporting (Johansson, 2007).

After the newspapers were selected, a selection was made of around 30 articles from each newspaper using the LexisNexis database. This was done through purposeful sampling, thereby filtering out duplicates and articles that did not relate to the context of the Catalan secession. In this process keywords as “Catalonia”, “Referendum” and “Independence” were used. The final sample consisted of 175 articles (90 German articles; 85 British articles). As not every newspaper provided enough suitable articles, concessions had to be made which resulted in the final distribution of articles as shown in Table 1. The sample for the quantitative part was put together through the use of the following selection criteria:

- 1) the article mentions “Catalonia/Katalonien”
- 2) mentions “referendum”
- 3) mentions “independence”
- 4) counts more than 120 words
- 5) was published between the 1st of September 2017 and the 31st of October 2019.

**Table 1**

*Number of articles per newspaper*

<b>Germany</b>		<b>United Kingdom</b>	
Newspaper	No. of articles	Newspaper	No. of articles
Bild	24	Metro	27
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	31	The Sun	24
Süddeutsche Zeitung	35	Daily Mail	34
<b>Total</b>	90		85

In the second part, tendencies within the findings of the first part of the analysis formed the base for the qualitative content analysis. Therefore, a selection of 42 news articles was made employing purposeful sampling. This selection was partly based on the overrepresentation of certain generic frames within the data. For example, if an article made extensive and one-sided use of the responsibility frame, it was selected for further analysis. But more importantly, the presence of certain unquantifiable concepts, like emotion and socio-historical developments, guided the selection of the qualitative data. This means that from each newspaper, a selection of the 7 most noticeable articles was used for further analysis. Examples of these concepts were, for example, articles that referred to Catalan culture in Francoist Spain or that used interviews with protesters.

### 3.2.4 Inferential procedures

The reliability of this study's finding was assured through the extensive number of articles that were coded. This allows the generalizability of the findings. To exclude possible biases within the process of coding, an SPSS inter-coder reliability test was conducted (Ivankova & Stick, 2006). This involves multiple coders coding the same texts using the pre-made codebook. As a general agreement, 10% of the original sample will be coded for the intercoder reliability test. This means that to test the codebook, 18 articles were coded by a second coder that was given clear coding instructions in the codebook. Subsequently, this study looked at percent agreement and Krippendorff's Alpha as a measure for assuring intercoder reliability. For the codebook to be reliable, the

Krippendorff's Alpha value needs to have a minimum of .67 and a percent agreement of at least 75%. After conducting a first intercoder reliability test that resulted to be unreliable, some of the coding instructions were adapted. The final intercoder reliability test showed the results as presented in Table 2. After conducting the intercoder reliability test, it is chosen to exclude the morality frame from further analysis as the test proved the variable to be unreliable.

**Table 2**

*Percent agreement and Krippendorff's Alpha scores*

Variable	Percent Agreement	Krippendorff's Alpha
Responsibility	87%	.68
Human Interest	91%	.81
Conflict	95%	.88
Economic consequences	93%	.84
Morality	78%	.56

In the second, qualitative, part of the analysis, it is important to keep in mind the role of the researcher when analysing the data. Acknowledging the reflexivity of the researcher can play an important role in the meaning-making process of qualitative studies (Goldblatt & Band-Winterstein, 2016). Furthermore, the reliability of this more context-bound part was increased by complementing it with a quantitative content analysis, which is known for its replicability (Creswell & Clark, 2017). In this way, a mixed-method approach contributes to the reliability of the findings of this study as both parts complement each other.

Lastly, it is important to mention that the researcher of this study is a non-native speaker of both the English and German language. Therefore, the English and German articles were both coded from a non-native perspective which prevents an unequal treatment of the data.

### 3.3 Data processing tools

In the initial phase of this study, data was collected from the LexisNexis database. After collecting the data, 10% of the entire dataset was coded by 2 different researchers using the pre-made codebook. Subsequently, using SPSS, the intercoder reliability test was conducted to pre-test the codebook. After the quantitative coding process, statistical tests were conducted using SPSS to assure the reliability of the study's findings.

Next, in the qualitative phase of the study, a software program for qualitative research called Atlas.ti was used to code the articles according to the coding frame based on Entman (1993). Atlas.ti is a widely used tool in qualitative content analysis research that allows structuring large datasets. Problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral judgement and treatment recommendation were used as main categories under which data-driven subcategories as “fear for separatism” and “role of Europe” were placed.

## 4. Results

The following section of this study will elaborate on the findings of both conducted analyses. Firstly, the results that derived from the quantitative content analysis will be presented in section 4.1, section 4.2 and section 4.3. Subsequently, in section 4.4 the findings of the qualitative part of the study will be presented.

### 4.1 Generic news frames (quantitative)

The generic frames that were being analysed in this study are presented in Table 3. Within the dataset, in Germany, the total number of different news frames per article ( $M=2.7$ ,  $SD=.804$ ) is slightly lower as compared to the number of news frames in British newspapers ( $M=2.8$ ,  $SD=.669$ );  $t(170.31) = -.597$ ,  $p=.551$ . In the German newspapers, the Catalan secession was most frequently framed in terms of conflict (93%; of which 94% reflected the disagreement between both sides and 85% emphasized one party reproaching the other), followed by the responsibility frame (83%, of which 94% suggests that some level of government is responsible for the issue and 86% suggests that some level of government has the power to alleviate the issue). Subsequently, the issue was mostly framed in terms of human interest (79%; of which 81% emphasized how individuals and/or groups were affected by the issue and 76% provided a human example on the issue) and the economic consequences (18%; of which 22% mentioned financial losses or gains and 22% referred to the economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action).

In the British newspapers, the issue was also most frequently framed in terms of conflict (95%; of which 96% reflected the disagreement between both sides and 95% emphasized one party reproaching the other), followed by the human-interest frame (89%; of which 93% provided a human example on the issue and 87% emphasized how individuals and/or groups were affected by the issue). Thereupon the issue was framed in terms of responsibility (85%, of which 93% suggests that some level of government is responsible for the issue and 92% suggests that some level of government has the power to alleviate the issue) and the economic consequences (11%; of which 14% referred to the economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action and 12% mentioned financial losses or gains).

**Table 3***Use of generic frames in German and British newspapers*

	I. Germany	II. United Kingdom	I vs. II
Conflict	93%	95%	n.s.
The story reflects disagreement between two parties	94%	96%	n.s.
One party/individual/group/country does reproach another	85%	95%	4.73*
The story refers to two sides of the problem	70%	57%	n.s.
The story refers to winners and losers	18%	12%	n.s.
Responsibility frame	83%	85%	n.s.
The story suggests that some level of government has the ability to alleviate the issue	86%	92%	n.s.
The story suggests that some level of government is responsible for the issue or problem	94%	93%	n.s.
The story suggests solution(s) to the problem/issue	76%	66%	n.s.
The story suggests that an individual (or group of people in society) is responsible for the issue/problem	31%	25%	n.s.
The story suggests the problem requires urgent action	5%	8%	17.20**
Human-interest frame	79%	89%	n.s.
The story provides a human example or 'human face' on the issue	76%	93%	9.83**
The story emphasizes how individuals and groups are affected by the issue	81%	87%	n.s.
The story employs adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy, sympathy or compassion	58%	74%	5.18*
The story goes into the private lives of the actors	35%	32%	n.s.
Economic consequences	18%	11%	n.s.
The story mentions financial losses or gains in the past, present or future	22%	12%	n.s.
The story mentions the costs/degree of expenses involved	16%	10%	n.s.
The story refers to the economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action	22%	14%	n.s.
Total number of news frames	246	238	n.s.
Number of news frames per article	2.7	2.8	

\* $p < .05$ .\*\* $p < .01$ .

In the dataset, the general use of certain generic frames did not differ significantly between German and British newspapers. This means that no significant results were found for the incidence of the four generic frames. Thus, the results imply that **H1**, **H2** and **H3** are all rejected.

However, additional Chi-squared tests for all the separate variables that measured the incidence of the generic frames in both countries did show significant differences between

the contents of those generic frames. When looking at the content of the responsibility frame, German and British newspapers differed significantly ( $\chi^2(1, N = 175) = 17.20, p < .001$ ), indicating that the Catalan secession was significantly more frequently framed suggesting that it required urgent action in British newspapers (8%) as compared to German newspapers (5%). Furthermore, concerning the human-interest frame, results differ significantly, indicating that British newspapers provide more frequently a human example in their coverage (93%) as compared to German newspapers (76%;  $\chi^2(1, N = 175) = 9.83, p < .001$ ). Additionally, British newspapers employ significantly more adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy, sympathy or compassion (74%) when comparing it to the findings of the German newspapers (58%;  $\chi^2(1, N = 175) = 5.18, p < .05$ ). Ultimately, a Chi-squared test revealed significant differences between German and British newspapers when looking at the content of the conflict frame. British newspapers report significantly more on one party reproaching another party (95%) as compared with the German newspapers (85%;  $\chi^2(1, N = 175) = 4.73, p < .05$ ).

## 4.2 Tone of voice

An independent sample t-test was conducted to measure the tone of voice regarding the Catalan independence movement in German newspapers and British newspapers. The test showed that British newspapers employ a significantly more positive approach toward the Catalan independence movement ( $M = 0.44, SD = 0.92$ ) as compared to German newspapers ( $M = -0.28, SD = 0.79$ ),  $t(166.21) = -5.48, p < 0.001$ . H4 stated that British newspapers approach the Catalan independence movement with a more positive tone than German newspaper. The results of the analysis confirm this hypothesis, so **H4** is accepted.

## 4.3 Length of the articles

Within the database, the length of the articles that covered the Catalan secession differed considerably. Generally, the length of the German articles was longer with an average word count of 701 words per article ( $SD = 367.7$ ). British newspapers, in contrast, used an average word count of only 298 words per article ( $SD = 277.19$ ).

**Table 4***Issue-specific news frames on Catalan secession*

Category	Subcategory	Definition
<i>Problem definition</i>	Catalonian secession	The Catalan secession itself is seen as the main problem of the story.
	Illegitimate referendum	The story implies that the referendum was illegal and, therefore, caused trouble.
	Fear for separatism	The story negatively shows how separatism is provoked by the Catalan independence movement.
	Role of Europe	The story reflects either the lack of involvement or the influence of political entities within the issue as a major problem.
	El procés Catalan	The story shows how the trial against the Catalan separatist leaders forms a judicial dilemma.
	Gibraltar	The story uses bilateral relations over Gibraltar to demonstrate Spanish involvement in other territories.
	Police force	The story reflects how excessive police force forms the main problem of the story.
<i>Causal diagnosis</i>	Francoist Spain and foreign regimes	The article claims that the remains of Francoist Spain and other regimes form the biggest cause for the problem.
	Russian involvement	The story blames Russian involvement in the Catalan secession as a major initiator of secession.
	Spain as a decentralized state	The story explains how the Spanish decentralized political system in autonomous regions causes the problem.
	Spanish economy	The story points out the Spanish economy as the main reason for the issue.
	Royal family	The story reflects on the role of the Spanish royal family as the initiator of the issue.
<i>Moral judgement</i>	Catalan sympathy	The story speaks positively about the Catalan separatists.
	Condemn EU & Spain	The story condemns Spain and, thereby, the EU (as they share the same opinion on the issue).
	Undemocratic	The article describes the practices as being undemocratic.
	Condemn Catalan secession	The article condemns the Catalan secessionist movement.
	Link with UK/Scotland	The article uses similar situations in the UK and Scotland to provide a moral window to compare the issue.
<i>Treatment recommendation</i>	Dialogue Spain & Catalonia	The article states that a dialogue between the governments of Spain and Catalonia can solve the issue.
	Secession as solution	The article claims that the only solution for the issue is secession from Spain.
	Remain in Spain	The story claims that the best solution for the issue is to remain in Spain.
	External intervention	The article calls for a mediator to calm tensions between the two parties.
	New elections	The article describes how new elections in Catalonia can help to solve the issue.

## 4.4 Issue-specific news frames (qualitative)

The current section of the study will comment on the results that were found in the qualitative part of the analyses. This section is divided into several parts that explain the different functions of framing as stated by Entman (1993) under which the data-driven subcategories were found. The codes derived from the data using qualitative content analysis are presented in Table 4. As stated before, the selection of the articles of this part of the analysis is based on the findings of the quantitative part. Therefore, the current analysis focuses on the significant differences of the quantitative part and analyses how (latent) meanings were constructed by framing. This part of the study seeks to answer the research question:

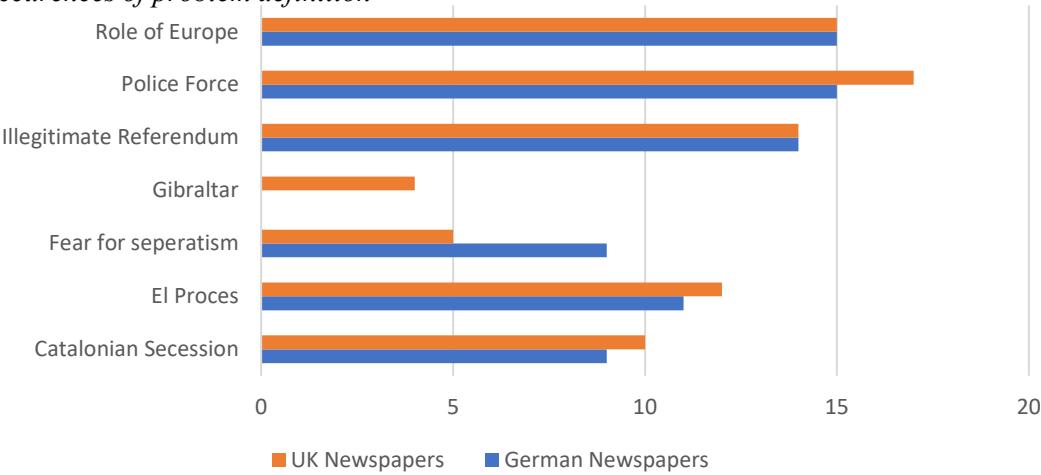
**RQ2** “How does news framing around the Catalan secession differ in German newspapers when compared to British newspapers?”

Firstly, section 4.4.1 will focus on the problem definition in the coverage of Catalan independence. Secondly, section 4.4.2 will focus on the diagnosis of the cause. Subsequently, in section 4.4.3 the moral judgement on the issue will form the basis of the analysis. And lastly, section 4.4.4 will look at the recommended treatment that is proposed by the different articles in the dataset.

### 4.4.1 Problem definition

Entman (1993) describes the framing element of problem definition as “determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values.” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Within the dataset, there are several differences when looking at the incidence of the different codes (see Table 5).

Firstly, when looking at the general use of problem definition as a framing element, there is only a minor difference in the frequency by which both countries define the problem. However, there are considerable differences in how the newspapers in both countries used the codes to define the issue.

**Table 5***Occurrences of problem definition*

The most salient code that defined the problem was the one regarding the (mis)use of police force. Especially, in the articles written around the date of the referendum on Catalan independence, the code on the police force was widely used both in the UK as well as in Germany. However, whereas German newspapers employed a more objective approach explaining the rationale of the issue, British newspapers used this code oftentimes in combination with a condemnation of the Spanish state and the lack of European intervention, thereby continuously using the conflict frame and the human-interest frame to illustrate the clash between unarmed civilians and the police: "I never imagined I would see the police sent in by the Spanish government to beat up old people for voting,' he tells me.". Furthermore, both countries used this code to explain the dynamics within the Spanish decentralised system in which the Catalan Mossos d'Esquadra form the regional police of Catalonia and the Guardia Civil serves as the national police. Especially in those articles that covered a strong police force, in both countries, the responsibility frame was used to demonstrate the urgency of finding a solution.

Another widely used problem definition that was present in most data was the one regarding the role of Europe. Both the British as the German newspapers used this code frequently in their coverage. This code was mostly found in combination with the conflict and responsibility frame. Oftentimes, the British newspapers used this code to refer to their own political situation regarding the Brexit negotiations and to illustrate the (lack of) European responsibility and intervention in national politics: "This Europe dances to the

sound of the Spanish state, which prevents the representatives of more than two million European citizens from sitting the European Parliament.”. In other words, the conflict frame was being used by British newspapers to reproach the EU for not taking action and/or condemn excessive police force. Furthermore, the role of Europe was frequently mentioned in articles that compared the Catalan secession with the Scottish secession. It also commonly suggested that a form of conflict of interest took place within the European institutions in favour of the Spanish state, thereby using the conflict frame to reproach the EU. German newspapers, however, employed a rather moderate approach and used this code most frequently when talking about the European warrant against Catalan president in exile Puigdemont after German police captured him. In this way, German newspapers depicted the (judicial) processes involved in the case of the Catalan secession, thereby explaining both sides of the conflict, rather than assessing the role of Europe. In line with the before mentioned argument, a major difference was found in how the role of Europe was depicted in the framework of the human-interest frame. British newspapers oftentimes employed adjectives and personal vignettes to blame the EU and Spain. Yet, German articles used a more neutral approach and less frequently referred to the role of Europe as part of the human-interest frame. Instead, they acknowledged the problem but did not reproach the EU as much.

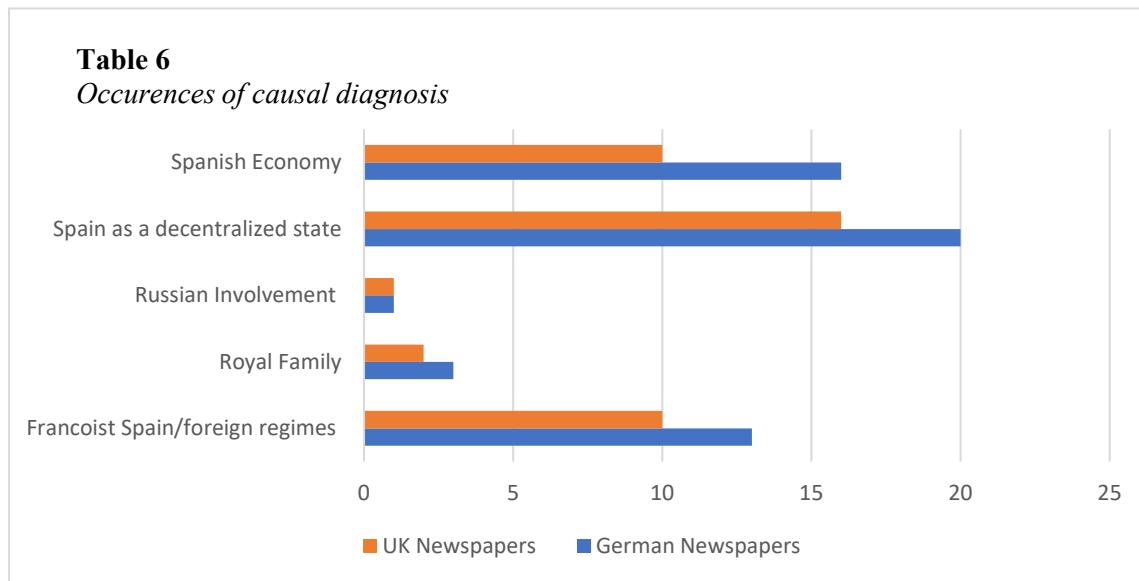
Another important difference can be found when looking at the occurrence of the code around the fear for separatism. German newspapers oftentimes used this code in combination with the human-interest frame, in which people who were negatively affected by the issue shared their concerns regarding a possible Catalan secession. In contrast, UK newspapers employed this code to globalize the issue, thereby shifting their focus more towards the conflict frame instead of the human-interest frame. By doing so, UK newspapers employed a more distant approach in which they polarised the issue while unilaterally focussing on the negative consequences of separatism for the European Union.

What is remarkable about the coded data is that the Catalan secession itself was not as frequently discussed as being the main problem compared to the earlier mentioned codes. Instead of the secession itself being the main issue, oftentimes the actions and statements of the actors involved in the issue formed the main problem. British newspapers oftentimes focused on the police force and bilateral relationships, thereby frequently

describing events from the personal perspective of the secessionists. German newspapers, however, focused more on the judicial processes behind the secession and used to conflict frame to illustrate the complexity of the issue from both sides.

#### 4.4.2 Causal diagnosis

According to Entman (1993) diagnosing the cause is “identifying the forces creating the problem” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Within the dataset, German newspapers tended to identify the cause of the Catalan secession more frequently than the British newspapers. This tendency is also represented in the distribution of the individual codes, in which the German newspapers more frequently report on separate causes (see Table 6).



The code that, both in the UK and Germany, repeatedly occurred in articles as a cause for Catalan secession is Spain as a decentralised state. In almost all analysed German articles (20 out of 21) this code was used to diagnose the cause of the issue. It is important to realise that the causal diagnosis is oftentimes presented as a latent message within the coverage of events. In this case, for example, the causal diagnosis was mostly found when the article discussed the interplay between the national government in Madrid and the regional government in Barcelona or when explaining Catalan culture. Also, it was frequently described when discussing the role of the different police forces within Catalonia and their hierarchical structures within the Spanish state. The human-interest frame played

a major role in diagnosing the cause of the problem in both countries. Especially when referring to the three most frequent codes (Spanish economy, Spain as a decentralised state & Francoist Spain/foreign regimes), human examples and anecdotes were used to describe the impact of those causes on individuals. Findings of the analysis showed that British newspapers oftentimes described Spain as a decentralised state in combination with the conflict frame. Articles repeatedly explained the excessive police force of the Spanish national police by looking at Spain as a decentralised state, thereby depicting a polarized image between Catalonians and Spaniards. German newspapers, however, employed a more political approach and used Spain as a decentralised state to explain the political and judicial processes behind the secession. In other words, to illustrate Spain as a decentralised state, German newspapers used the responsibility frame rather than the British approach of using the conflict frame.

Another important cause that was mentioned in both countries was the Spanish economic situation. Both in Germany and the UK, the Spanish economy was pointed out as one of the most important causes for Catalan secession, thereby using the economic consequences frame when mentioning expenses involved. However, the tone by which the countries approached this code varied. UK newspapers generally employed a moderately understanding approach towards the economic situation as a reason for Catalan secession: “As citizens of Spain's richest region, Catalans have long been resentful at seeing so much of their taxes disappear to Madrid to subsidise', as they see it, the rest of the country.”

Whilst German newspapers condemned the economic situation of Spain as a cause for Catalan secession: “Aber viel häufiger nennen die Menschen rein egoistische ökonomische Gründe für eine Abspaltung.” [But much more often people cite purely selfish economic reasons for a split]. These examples actively demonstrate the use of adjectives within the human-interest frame when framing the Spanish economy as a cause for secession. The difference lies within the content of this human-interest frame. Whereas UK newspapers create feelings of sympathy for Catalan secession, German newspapers more frequently condemn this cause as a reason for secession.

Less frequently discussed as causes for Catalan secession were the remains of Francoist Spain in contemporary Spanish society. In both countries, this code was used to refer to Catalonia as a traditionally republican stronghold in the Spanish Civil war that

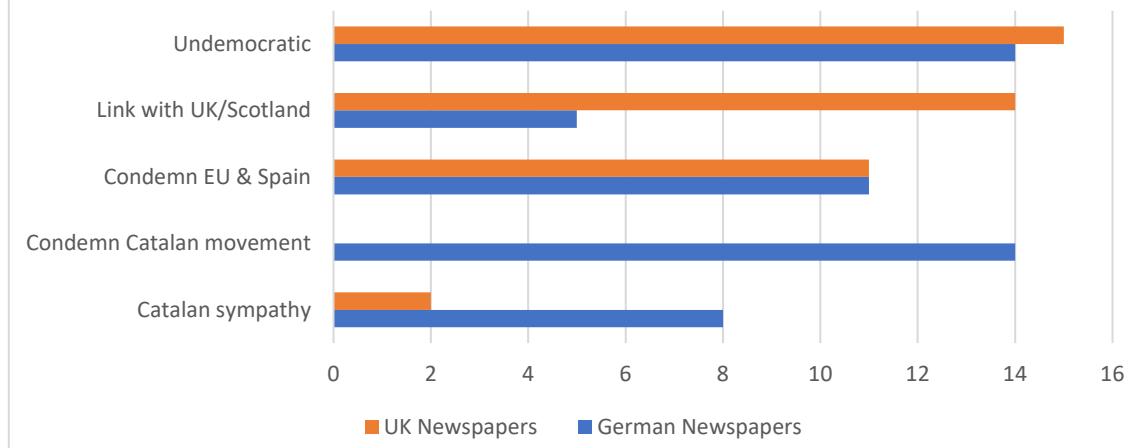
fought against the nationalists in Madrid. As stated earlier, when referring to this socio-historical data, oftentimes human perspectives of interviewees were used. References were made to the oppression of Catalan culture during the regimen of Franco. In British newspapers, the Spanish actions were oftentimes linked to other totalitarian regimes like Nazi Germany and Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro, thereby provoking condemnation amongst readers. Rather than merely presenting it as the truth as happened in British media, German newspapers mostly quoted people that linked the Spanish government with the governments of China & Turkey. This seemingly minor nuance in the coverage is what sets apart the use of the human-interest frame in both countries.

A remarkable cause that was present in both German and British news articles was Russian intervention in the issue. One German article was even completely dedicated to Russian involvement in the issue. The article insinuated that Russia would benefit from destabilising Europe and that they would therefore incite secession wishes using hackers and bots. Furthermore, it was stated that Russian web domains were used to hold the referendum as banning access to these domains was challenging. It is one of the few codes found in the German data that actively reproached another party using the conflict frame. In contrast, British media only briefly touched upon Russian involvement as a cause for Catalan secession when Catalan president in exile Mr Puigdemont was a guest in a Russian state-funded tv show.

#### 4.4.3 Moral judgement

Entman (1993) describes the framing element of moral judgement as “evaluate causal agents and their effect” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). In general terms, it can be said that the German newspapers covered a wider variety of moral judgements as compared to their British counterparts. However, even if the same code occurred with the same frequency in both countries, their content and use differed. By looking at the use of these codes within the framework of the analysed generic frames, the following results were found (see Table 7).

**Table 7**  
*Occurrences of moral judgement*



The code that occurred most in this category is undemocratic. Even though this code was used to evaluate the actions of the Spanish state, it is different and more nuanced than a mere condemnation of Spain as it touches upon the democratic principles in society. In the first place, in Germany it was mostly used in the framework of the human-interest frame by citing sources to describe the supposedly undemocratic processes within the Spanish system: "Cladera vergleicht Spanien mit einer Diktatur, in der "Menschen aufgrund ihrer Meinung eingesperrt werden"." [Cladera compares Spain to a dictatorship in which "people are locked up because of their opinions."]. Furthermore, both in the UK as in Germany this code was used to refer to harsh police actions on the day of the referendum. What distinguishes both countries, however, is the way the articles point out the institution to blame for undemocratic practices by using the responsibility frame. This interplay between the human-interest frame and the responsibility frame is salient in most British data. In this data, the European Union is oftentimes pointed out as one of the main contributors in enhancing the undemocratic processes in the Catalan issue: "Brussels panjandums are happy to lecture Britain on the inalienable rights of EU citizens in a future post-Brexit Britain, but they have shown no concern at all for the rights of Catalans in this very awkward bit of Spain.". An important difference between the two countries is that German newspapers use the human-interest frame to quote opinions instead of presenting their judgement in the form of a column.

Subsequently, another important code within the data regarding a moral judgement was the link with the UK and Scotland. This code was most often found in British

newspapers and less frequently in German newspapers. British newspapers oftentimes employed a certain attitude towards the issue as if the issue was about Brexit or the Scottish secession. The sequences in which this code was found actively used the human-interest frame to provoke feelings of outrage and the conflict frame to reproach the Spanish government. Quotes like: "When parts of the UK, such as Scotland, fancy a bit of independence, we don't arrest Nicola Sturgeon and shove her in prison for 13 years." formed the base of this code. Oftentimes this code was used in British newspapers with a negative connotation concerning the Spanish state and its actions, but it was too subtle to fully condemn the Spanish state. Under this code, also links with the British overseas territory of Gibraltar were made: "Oh, señor - no wonder Gibraltar wants to stay British!".

German newspapers, however, used this code to demonstrate the negative consequences of secession: "Ich glaube, wir müssen nach dem Austritt Britanniens und der instabilen Lage in Italien versuchen, einen Schritt nach vorne zu tun." [I believe that after Britain's exit and the unstable situation in Italy we must try to take a step forward.]. This code was, therefore, used to demonstrate how a certain government can alleviate the issue in the framework of the responsibility frame. As stated earlier, passages in this code were oftentimes latent and subtle moral judgements that insinuated a certain vision on the matter.

Lastly, another remarkable result within this category is the distribution of the unnuanced condemnation of either the secessionists or the central government side (e.g., "What happened in Catalonia on Sunday was shaming and shocking in a modern European state"). Even though British articles choose to condemn Spain and the European Union in the same number of articles as their German counterparts, they are not represented in the code that condemns the Catalan secession. Furthermore, the overrepresentation of German articles under the code Catalan sympathy can be explained by the various interviews that were included in the qualitative dataset that showed a Catalan perspective on the issue, thereby using the human-interest frame.

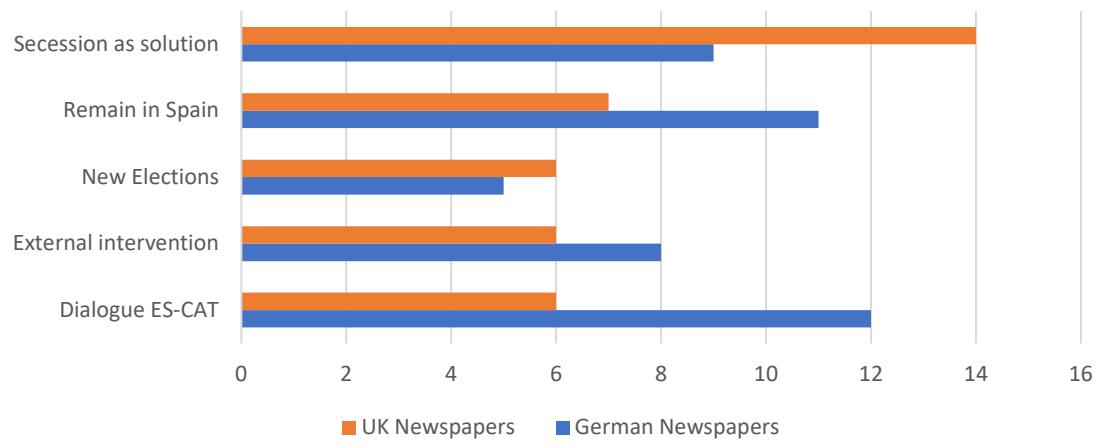
#### 4.4.4 Treatment recommendation

According to Entman (1993), treatment recommendation is to “offer and justify treatments for the problems and their likely effects.” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Within the dataset, the distribution of the offered treatments substantially differs per country (see Table 8).

Firstly, two of the most frequently suggested treatments for the issue are either secession from Spain or remain in Spain. Thus, depending on the country, the recommended treatment differs. Whereas the British newspapers steer towards secession as being the solution for the problem, whilst oftentimes referring to Brexit as an ultimate example of self-determination, Germany recurrently mentions the benefits of being part of a union and expresses the negative side effects of secession. In other words, UK newspapers employed more frequently the human-interest frame to support their argument and German newspapers focused more on the economic consequences.

Furthermore, the most salient solution in German articles stated that both parties needed to discuss and solve the situation together as Spain is a decentralized state. Thus, the German articles steered towards dialogue between the two parties as being the solution to the problem, thereby oftentimes using the economic consequences frame to prove the benefits of unification. British articles used this code less frequently. Also, differences were found in the frequency of external intervention as being the solution to the issue. Whereas German newspapers suggested that external intervention, by for example the EU, could

**Table 8**  
*Occurrences of treatment recommendation*



solve the issue, British newspapers did not use this treatment as frequent. This

demonstrated the different use of the responsibility frame in which British newspapers were not convinced of the alleviating capabilities of the EU. Instead, British newspapers employed a different approach in which their two most frequently mentioned treatments are characterised by picking a side for one of the two conflicting parties, thereby depicting a polarised image by making use of the conflict frame.

To sum up everything that has been stated so far, it can be concluded that when looking at the tendencies within the data, the German newspapers provide a wider variety of treatment possibilities to the problem. They oftentimes use a wider variety of generic frames to support their argument while also offering multiple treatments in one article. In contrast, British newspapers show a clear preference in the proposed treatment of the issue, which is secession from Spain as the ultimate solution. Oftentimes, these articles forgot to mention the low turnout of an estimated 46% on the referendum on independence and at the same time claimed that 90% of the Catalan population made clear that it wanted to secede from Spain. In the framework of the human-interest frame, sentiments of infringement on democracy were oftentimes used to support their proposed treatment. However, in the German newspaper Bild, this unnuanced image of the issue was also present: “In Katalonien gibt es seit längerem Spannungen mit der spanischen Regierung. Ein großer Teil der Bevölkerung der autonomen Region will unabhängig werden.” [In Catalonia there has been tension with the Spanish government for a long time. A large part of the population of the autonomous region wants to become independent.]. However, one article of Süddeutsche Zeitung and one of the Sun was attentive to the fact that the Catalan secession movement was being framed by some media outlets to create a black-white image of the issue: “Most of the images used by international media involved elderly people being pushed, shoved or beaten by police. This was designed by the secessionists to maximise levels of outrage and generate sympathy for their cause.”. This example actively demonstrates the use of the conflict frame to shine a light on both sides of the story. These differences in the way of covering the issue were also found within each dataset. Especially when comparing the German newspapers, differences were found in the representation of the issue in Bild when compared to FAZ and SZ. Bild oftentimes used a simplified and unnuanced coverage of the issue that included data that was misleading, like the earlier mentioned quote on the low turnout, thereby focusing more on the conflict and not on the

solution. In contrast, FAZ and SZ covered the story from multiple sides and interviewed both Catalan ANC members as Spanish ministers to cover the different facets of the issue.

## 5. Discussion

This chapter will discuss the most noticeable and most important findings that resulted from both analyses of this study. In this chapter, the results of both analyses will be discussed by looking at the literature on the socio-political and socio-historical situation of Catalonia and by looking at the previously discussed theories on framing. Subsequently, the limitations of the study will be considered and recommendations on future research will be provided.

### 5.1 Generic frames in the academic context

The first part of this study consisted of a quantitative content analysis in which the incidence of the generic frames in the coverage of the Catalan secession was analysed in British and German newspapers. The research question for this part of the study was:

**RQ1** “To what extent are generic news frames about the Catalan independence movement present in German and British newspapers?”.

By conducting a quantitative content analysis on 175 articles, this study tested 4 hypotheses. As was previously stated in the results section, **H1**, **H2** and **H3** were rejected, while **H4** was accepted. The following section will discuss the hypotheses more profoundly.

**H1.** British newspapers use the conflict frame more than German newspapers.

It was expected that British newspapers would use the conflict frame significantly more often than German newspapers in their coverage of the Catalan secession. And even though, within the dataset, a minor difference was found between the general use of the conflict frame (UK, 95%; Germany, 93%), this difference was not proven to be significant after conducting a Chi-squared test. However, one of the variables that measured the conflict frame did show a significant difference in both countries when looking at the way they covered the secession in terms of conflict. British newspapers report significantly more on one party reproaching another party (95%) as compared with the German newspapers (85%;  $\chi^2(1, N = 175) = 4.73, p < .05$ ). The use of the conflict frame in terms of reproaching another party is in line with Perales-Garcia & Pont-Sorribes (2018) as their study already showed criticism in the British press towards the EU and Spain. However, as

mentioned before, in the quantitative part of this study no significant differences were found in the general use of the conflict frame.

**H2.** German newspapers use the economic consequences frame more than British newspapers.

The use of the economic consequences frame was expected to be more frequent in German newspapers as compared to British ones. Within the dataset, minor differences were found in the incidence of the economic consequences frame (UK, 11%; Germany, 18%). Nonetheless, those differences were proven to be not significantly relevant after conducting a Chi-squared test.

**H3.** German newspapers use the human-interest frame more than British newspapers.

It was expected that German newspapers make more frequent use of the human-interest frame as compared to British newspapers. However, the analysis showed a contrasting result in which British newspapers used the human-interest frame in 89% of the cases and German newspapers only used it in 79% of the cases. Nonetheless, the relationship was proven to be not significant. Still, significant differences were found in the content of the human-interest frame. I.e., the analysis showed that British newspapers more often provide a human face or a human example on the story (93%) as compared to German newspapers (76%;  $\chi^2(1, N = 175) = 9.83, p < .001$ ). Furthermore, British newspapers employ significantly more adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy, sympathy or compassion (74%) when comparing it to the findings of the German newspapers (58%;  $\chi^2(1, N = 175) = 5.18, p < .05$ ). These findings confirm León-Solís & O'Donnell (2021), that described the use of the human-interest frame in British media to portray Europe as suffering from an identity crisis of which Spain's situation forms the epicentre.

**H4.** British newspapers approach the Catalan independence movement with a more positive tone than German newspaper.

To test this hypothesis, the tone by which the Catalan independence movement was covered was compared. The analysis showed significant differences in the way both countries presented the movement. It showed that British newspapers employ a significantly more positive approach toward the Catalan independence movement ( $M = 0.44, SD = 0.92$ ) as compared to German newspapers ( $M = -0.28, SD = 0.79$ ),  $t(166.21) = -$

5.48,  $p < 0.001$ . These results confirm previous research on the differences in tone to approach the Catalan independence movement depending on the location of the newspaper (Perales-Garcia & Pont-Sorribes, 2018), in which British newspapers tend to approach the Catalan independence movement with a more positive tone as compared to German newspapers.

## 5.2 Implications

This study looked at the use of both generic as issue-specific frames in the coverage of the Catalan independence movement between September 2017 and October 2019. After comparing previous research with the results of this study, several tendencies and implications are presented in this subsection. This subsection is structured into 3 parts. In the first part, framing the other party will be discussed by looking at, amongst others, the use of the responsibility frame and the human-interest frame to create support for a cause. This part describes framing as a process in which roles are being assigned to certain groups in society which are, in turn, represented and distinguished as an in-group and an out-group. The second part will look at the general representation of secession movements within the analysis and what effect this could have on the second level of agenda-setting (Wu & Coleman, 2009). Framing in this part takes the most prominent place on a national level. In the last part, the agenda-setting function on an international level will be discussed and will be related to this study by looking at the role of the European Union.

### 5.2.1 Framing the out-group

Firstly, in line with the previously discussed agenda-setting theory, this study sought to compare the content of the different frames. Even though the use of the responsibility frame in terms of frequency was not significantly different, the qualitative part of the study showed deviant results that assigned contrasting roles to the actors involved. This was especially salient in the way the in-group was represented. British media oftentimes employed a more critical tone to describe the Spanish state as an out-group in which it used adjectives and emotions to create support for the Catalan case. They assigned the Spanish state and the Spanish system the role of culprits of the crisis. In turn, German media was more moderate with framing the “culprit”. It covered multiple stories that each differed in

attributing responsibility for the issue to certain actors. Martínez-Solanilla (2019) already demonstrated inaccuracies in the presentation of the data around the Catalan conflict in which there was a unilateral contribution of the data that only related to one of the two sides involved in the conflict. Therefore, the current study confirms previous research on the topic.

One interesting result in German newspapers that was barely found in British ones, was the involvement of Russia in the Catalan crisis. In this article, Europeans were described as the in-group and Russia was described as the out-group. This is in line with the agenda-setting theory as both Germany and the United Kingdom have different interests and different public agenda's that influence their media agenda (Protess & McCombs, 1991).

Furthermore, one of the FAZ articles mentioned that article 155, which allowed the central Spanish government to strip the regional government of its powers, was based on the German constitution. In this way, the German federated states system works similarly to the Spanish autonomous region system. Therefore, German newspapers have an interest in maintaining support for the Spanish constitution and, thus, inherently their own constitution. This could also explain the approach that German media employed when describing the issue and the relatively stronger condemnation of the Catalan secession from the Spanish state, thereby describing the Catalan *independentistas* as an out-group.

### 5.2.2 Secession movements in Europe

This study looked at the framing of the Catalan independence movement in two European countries. Even though most of the stories evolved around the developments on the Catalan secession, many comparisons with other movements were found in the framing of the Catalan case. As discussed earlier, in British media, the link with Brexit was oftentimes made in which British media created sympathy for Catalan secession by pointing out the, presumably, negative effects of a centralist government on democratic practices. By framing the Catalan secession in such a way, British media are presenting the centralist governments as undemocratic. This approach of framing did not only happen around the Spanish government, but it also happened around European governments. One of the articles made a controversial comparison between Carles Puigdemont and Lluis de

Companies. Both Catalan men were being captured by Germans. The difference is that Puigdemont was captured after an international warrant while Lluis de Companys, Catalan president in the 1930s, was captured by Nazi officers and extradited to Spain under the regime of dictator Francisco Franco. Therefore, British newspapers used the human-interest frame to present unnuanced information that merely contributes to one side of the two conflicting parties (León-Solís & O'Donnell, 2021). This portrayal of the Catalan secession movement and the European central governments have implications in terms of framing effects and may contribute to the rise of Euroscepticism in Europe. Furthermore, it could increase the gap between centralist governmental institutions and the public, which could incite secessionist feelings.

### 5.2.3 Agenda-setting and the role of the European Union

As was already stated by Bourne (2020), within the coverage of the Catalan independence, oftentimes references are being made between the Catalan independence movement and other secession movements around the world. The results of this study showed that oftentimes a link was being made between Catalan secession and Brexit. This link was more frequently made in British media than in German media. As previously stated in this study, the referendum on Catalan independence took place in the same year in which Theresa May formally announced the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union. Furthermore, the most popular news outlets from the United Kingdom that were analysed in this study have a strong conservative character (Aalberg et al., 2018; Bond, 2017; Johansson, 2007). This explains the strong negative sentiment towards the centralist European Union and its lack of intervention in the conflict. British newspapers oftentimes gave an unnuanced image of the conflict in which the Spanish state and the European Union were being accused of undemocratic practices and conflicts of interest. In contrast, German newspapers used a less critical approach towards the European Union in which it covered both sides of the story by explaining the different facets and problems involved in the issue. As stated before, the German dataset consisted of articles from a populist, centralist and conservative newspaper (Aalberg et al., 2018; Embassy and General Consulates of Germany, 2016). By looking at the political identities of these newspapers, their attitude towards the European Union can be explained. Furthermore, the German

media system is characterised by being partly influenced by politics (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The use of the agenda-setting function within the coverage around the European Union can be traced back to the newspapers' media agenda (Protess & McCombs, 1991). I.e., as with Horsti (2008), this research demonstrated differences in framing in European media and the interplay between the media agenda and the public agenda through European agenda-setting.

### 5.3 Theoretical implications

An important theoretical implication of this study is that most of the findings of this study are in line with the findings of earlier studies on Catalan nationalism and European framing. This means that the findings of this study can be regarded as a partial validation of previously conducted academic research (Sousa, 2014). As was analysed by of Martínez-Solanilla (2019), media outlets report differently depending on their location. This study actively demonstrated that the media agenda and the framing approach is indeed influenced by the location of the media outlet (Reese et al., 2001). As stated before, this approach of information treatment can potentially cause harm to the social stability in Europe and incite radicalisation. However, as in line with the findings of Perales-García & Pont-Sorribes (2018), this study demonstrated that the issue in both countries was framed as a conflict between the governments of Catalonia and Spain. Nevertheless, the results of the current study did show important differences in the way the proposed treatment was presented. Whereas the British newspapers most frequently mentioned secession as a solution, German newspapers were steering towards dialogue. Thus, the results are largely in line with previous research. However, the mixed-method approach of this study gave a more nuanced image of the framing practices than was reported in Perales-García & Pont-Sorribes (2018).

### 5.4 Societal implications

When focussing on the societal implications of this study, the following can be concluded. Firstly, comparing the news outlets of both countries, there was a considerable difference between the length of the articles in both countries (Germany, 701 words per article ( $SD = 367.7$ ); UK, 298 words per article ( $SD = 277.19$ )). This result is in line with

the work of Godulla & Wolf (2017) that analysed the reception of long-form journalism in the German market. Their study showed an overall positive attitude towards long-form journalism as a form of storytelling. Therefore, the greater length of the German articles found in the current study may be interpreted as news media organisations' attempt to cater to their audiences' preferences. Furthermore, market research showed a fairly high consumption of paid news in the German market as compared to the United Kingdom (Newman et al., 2020), which indicates that the German consumer is more willing to pay for journalism and the overall trust in news media is generally high.

Lastly, this study demonstrated the differences in journalism practices in an increasing converging journalistic working culture across Europe. Especially in the qualitative part of this study, when looking at the nuances and latent meaning of the coverage in both countries, the tone by which governmental institutions were described and the variety of proposed treatments differed considerably. Even though the quantitative part of the study did not show significant differences in the general use of, for example, the conflict frame, the qualitative part revealed latent and nuanced differences in the way British articles depicted the issue in a polarising and conflict-oriented manner. In contrast, in the qualitative part of this study, the German articles steered more towards dialogue and presented a broader image of the issue. Therefore, by looking at the latent meanings and the connotations in the coverage, the qualitative part of this study actively demonstrated the conflict-oriented journalistic culture of British media and the consensus-oriented journalistic culture of Germany (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2010). These results are in line with Galpin & Trenz (2018), that demonstrated a strong negativity bias towards EU polity in British media as compared to a positivity bias in German media. Therefore, this study confirms the still existing divergence of journalistic practices in the European media landscape.

## 5.5 Strength of the study

As previously stated, the current study has shown notable differences in the use of framing between Germany and the United Kingdom. Also, the findings of this study are in line with previous studies and theories on framing in European media. However, the strength of this study lies in the applicability of both quantitative as qualitative content

analysis to recognize patterns and assure generalizability and, subsequently, explain these patterns by using qualitative content analysis. By using this method, important nuances in the framing practices can be detected while at the same time assuring the reliability of the framework by using a quantitative approach. Furthermore, the fact the study uses a multidisciplinary approach using both humanities as social studies, makes the study easily transferable across and applicable to other academic environments. Therefore, the overall strongpoint of this study lays in its multi-disciplinarity and its mixed methodology approach.

## 5.6 Limitations and future research

It is important to mention that the findings of this study are affected by some limitations that can form an interesting starting point for future research. In the first place, due to the fact that the LexisNexis database does not include images, it was decided to exclude visual material from the analysis. However, the visual representation of news content does contribute to the framing of certain issues. Especially in the analysed British tabloids and the German Bild (literally translated image), the visual representation plays a key role in the agenda-setting process (Miller & la Poe, 2016). Therefore, for future research on framing in European media, it could be considered to include visual representations in the analysis by, for example, conducting a multimodal discourse analysis. This allows analysing tendencies between textual representations and visual representations to reveal patterns in latent semiotic meanings in the framing process.

Secondly, even though this study made use of a mixed-method approach and used reliability testing to minimise possible biases, it has to be taken into account that researcher biases can always have an effect on the analysis. Therefore, the reflexivity of the researcher is of major importance. This means that, even though an intercoder reliability test was conducted, it is important to keep in mind that most of the analysis was conducted from a European perspective. Also, the fact that the researcher of this study was an employee of the political department at the Embassy of the Netherlands in Madrid during the aftermath of the Catalan crisis in 2019, could have had an effect on the analysis as some level of interpretation of the texts needed when doing content analysis. However, it is sought to

minimise possible biases in the analysis by making the process iterative and by including other researchers in the process.

Lastly, it is important to keep in mind that this study was conducted around the idea of comparing two media systems. However, there are important differences between the British and the German media system. As for both countries, the ones with the highest national circulation were taken for analyses. Yet, newspaper circulation in Germany is characterised by the vast majority being regional editions (Wilke, 2012). In order to compare the outlets of both countries, however, it was necessary to analyse national outlets. It is, however, possible that regional outlets differ in their use of framing. For future research, this could form an interesting starting point.

## 6. Conclusion

This study sought to analyse the use of framing in different media outlets by doing a comparative analysis of two of the most influential, yet politically different, European countries, the United Kingdom and Germany. This study sought to analyse and compare framing by looking at the coverage of one single event, the Catalan secession. Therefore, it sought to find answers to the following research questions:

**RQ1:** To what extent are generic news frames about the Catalan independence movement present in German and British newspapers?

**RQ2:** How does news framing around the Catalan secession differ in German newspapers when compared to British newspapers?

By using a mixed-method approach, thereby combining qualitative and quantitative content analysis, this study compared 6 news outlets and their framing of the Catalan secession between September 2017 and October 2019.

The results of this study did not show significant differences in the general use of the various generic frames. However, the results did show significant differences in the content within the various generic frames.

Regarding the conflict frame, it can be concluded that British newspapers significantly more often reproached other groups and institutions. Oftentimes the coverage was Eurosceptic in nature and it openly condemned Spanish actions. German media used a more moderate approach in which they less frequently reproached other parties but, instead, covered the issue by depicting the various facets involved. Also, the qualitative results showed a more polarized image of the issue in British articles as compared to their German counterparts, which was oftentimes presented as latent connotations.

Furthermore, British newspapers tended to use the responsibility frame significantly more often to express the urgency of finding a solution for the issue. However, the qualitative part of the analysis showed that the British newspapers more frequently provide secession from Spain as a possible solution to the issue as compared to other treatments. In contrast, German newspapers displayed a wider variety of possible treatment options that were more equally distributed over the data.

Lastly, significant differences were found in the use of the human-interest frame. British newspapers used significantly more primary sources (e.g., interviews) and unnuanced columns than German newspapers. Minor nuances in framing techniques differentiated both countries in the use of the human-interest frame. Whereas British media presented a uniform set of opinions as being factual, German media more frequently quoted primary sources and provided a wider variety of perspectives on the issue. Results around the tone of voice around the Catalan independence movement also confirmed stronger support for secession in British media.

In conclusion, the British newspapers and the German newspapers differed considerably in their coverage of the Catalan independence. Whereas British newspapers focussed more on conflict-oriented coverage, German newspapers used a more moderate tone in which displaying different scenarios took a central role.

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## 8. Appendices

### A. Codebook

**Table A1**

*Generic frames*

Code	Frame	Item	Explanation	Option
1	Responsibility	1	Does the story suggest that some level of government has the ability to alleviate the issue? (eg. EU, Spanish State or Catalan government)	0 = no 1 = yes
		2	Does the story suggest that some level of government is responsible for the issue or problem?	0 = no 1 = yes
		3	Does the story suggest that an individual, or a group of people in society (politicians, Catalan people etc.), is responsible for the issue?	0 = no 1 = yes
		4	Does the story suggest solution(s) for the problem or issue?	0 = no 1 = yes
		5	Does the story suggest that the problem requires action? (eg. European intervention, change of policy etc.).	0 = no 1 = yes
2	Human interest	1	Does the story provide a human example or “human face” on the issue? (Either a personal perspective or a personification of the institutions involved)	0 = no 1 = yes
		2	Does the story emphasise how individuals and groups are affected by the issue?	0 = no 1 = yes
		3	Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy or caring, or sympathy or compassion?	0 = no 1 = yes
		4	Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors?	0 = no 1 = yes
3	Conflict	1	Does the story reflect disagreement between parties?	0 = no 1 = yes
		2	Does one party reproach another?	0 = no 1 = yes
		3	Does the story mention the two sides of the problem? (The Catalan secession side vs. the Spanish side)	0 = no 1 = yes
		4	Does the story mention winners and/or losers? (Does it assign roles to at least one of the two sides?)	0 = no 1 = yes
4	Economic consequences	1	Does the story mention financial losses or gains in the past, present or in the future?	0 = no 1 = yes
		2	Does the story explicitly mention costs or the degree of expenses involved (expressed in currency)?	0 = no 1 = yes
		3	Does the story refer to the economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?	0 = no 1 = yes
5	Morality (Excluded from analysis)	1	Does the story contain any moral messages? (Eg. a conclusion on what is right or wrong)	0 = no 1 = yes
		2	Does the story offer specific social prescription on how to behave?	0 = no 1 = yes
		3	Does the story make a reference to morality, God and other religious tenets?	0 = no 1 = yes

*Note.* Original general table note. Adapted from “Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News” by authors H.A. Semetko & P.M.V. Valkenburg, 2000, *Journal of Communication*, 50(2), p. 100.

**Table A2***Tone Scale*

	Tone	
-2	Very negative	The words that are used to describe the Catalan secession evoke very negative associations and include expletives. For instance: worthless, spreading fear, polarizing or hateful.
-1	Negative	The words that are used to describe the Catalan secession evoke negative associations. The movement is exposed in a bad way. For instance, misbehaving, unthankful, unsatisfied, causing troubles or unethical.
0	Neutral	The Catalan secession is described in an objective manner and the story is based on facts. <sup>[1]</sup> The words used to describe the Catalan secession evoke no specific positive or negative associations
1	Positive	The words that are used to describe the Catalan secession evoke positive associations. The movement is exposed in a good way. For instance: helping, honest, satisfied or (suggesting) solutions.
2	Very positive	The words used to describe the Catalan secession evoke very positive associations and include expletives. For instance: fantastic, heroes, dream chasers or amazing.

*Note.* Original general table note. Adapted from “*The Content and Tone of the Media Coverage with regard to the Refugee Crisis in Dutch Popular and Quality Newspapers over time*” (Master Thesis, Twente University, Enschede, the Netherlands) by author F.L.A. Evers, 2016.

## B. Coding frame

**Table B1**

*Issue-specific news frames on Catalan secession*

Category	Subcategory	Data example
<i>Problem definition</i>	Catalonian Secession	Doch von nationaler Einheit war Spanien zuletzt weit entfernt. Der ungelöste Katalonien-Konflikt ist zur größten Bewährungsprobe der 40 Jahre alten Demokratie geworden. <sup>1</sup>
	Illegitimate referendum	Sadly I know I don't speak for everyone but I welcome the scenes from Spain over the weekend. The referendum vote was banned yet separatists pressed ahead and attempted to defy the ban.
	Fear for separatism	But switching to sympathy for Catalan separatism risks opening another can of worms. Not only would that infuriate Madrid, but also the governments of many European countries that face similar discontentment from regional breakaway movements.
	Role of Europe	Brüssel hat bestätigt, dass ein unabhängiges Katalonien vorerst nicht der EU angehören würde. Die großen Unternehmen kündigen für diesen Fall ihre Flucht aus der Region an. <sup>2</sup>
	El Procés Catalan	Meanwhile, two of the most senior officers from the Catalan police force have been arrested for siding with the people and are accused of 'sedition'. They face up to 15 years in jail.
	Gibraltar	Spain has never forgiven us for taking control of Gibraltar, nor abandoned attempts to snatch it back.
<i>Causal diagnosis</i>	Police force	Katalonien ist nicht das Problem, es ist die Lösung. Spanien benutzt Waffengewalt um Katalonien aufzuhalten. <sup>3</sup>
	Francoist Spain and foreign regimes	Der Diktator Franco, der 1939 nach einem Bürgerkrieg an die Macht kam, muss derzeit oft als Referenz herhalten in der Debatte; was wäre Katalonien ohne sein Feindbild? <sup>4</sup>
	Russian involvement	Bald wurde der Einsatz der Cyber-Fahnder der Guardia Civil zur Sisyphos-Arbeit: Kaum ist eine Seite geschlossen, tauchen neue Kopien in immer weiter entfernten Ländern auf, in denen Spanien keine Chance auf eine schnelle Sperrung hat, wie in Russland. <sup>5</sup>
	Spain as a decentralized state	Madrid quickly responded by saying it would hold a special cabinet session tomorrow to trigger the process to activate article 155 of Spain's 1978 constitution, allowing the central government to take over the semiautonomous powers of any of the country's 17 regions.
	Spanish economy	Above all, they say, their region has for too long contributed more to Spain than it has received - by almost 10billion euros a year - making it one of the most highlytaxed parts of Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Translated to English: [But Spain has recently been far from national unity. The unresolved Catalonia conflict has become the greatest test of the 40-year-old democracy.]

<sup>2</sup> Translated to English: [Brussels has confirmed that an independent Catalonia would not belong to the EU for the time being. In this case, the big companies have announced that they will flee the region.]

<sup>3</sup> Translated to English: [Catalonia is not the problem, it's the solution. Spain uses armed force to stop Catalonia.]

<sup>4</sup> Translated to English: [The dictator Franco, who came to power in 1939 after a civil war, is often used as a reference in the debate; what would Catalonia be without its enemy?]

<sup>5</sup> Translated to English: [Soon the use of cyber investigators of the Guardia Civil became Sisyphus work: hardly a page is closed, new copies appear in more and more distant countries, in which Spain has no chance of a quick blockage, as in Russia.]

	Royal family	Wie kann es sein, dass katalanische Aktivisten, die subjektiv eine bessere Gesellschaft, nämlich eine ordentlich verwaltete Republik, anstrebten, in U-Haft gekommen sind oder mit ruinösen Geldstrafen belegt werden, während der Schwager des Königs mindestens sechs Millionen Euro an öffentlichen Geldern veruntreut hat, aber weiter auf freiem Fuß ist und ein Luxusleben führt? <sup>6</sup>
<i>Moral judgement</i>	Catalan sympathy	One cannot praise highly enough the calmness, humanity and bravery of the Catalan people when faced with such acts of violence.
	Condemn EU & Spain	As for the EU, it has shown itself grotesquely insensitive to the interests of small regions with local concerns, and their peoples feel ignored and suffer from a so-called democratic deficit'.
	Undemocratic	But the Spanish, and the EU cannot bear political freedom. The former Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont is holed up in Brussels.
	Condemn Catalan secession	Die Frage der Rebellion hat auch in Spanien unterschiedliche Meinungen hervorgerufen. Aus unserer Sicht besteht jedoch kein Zweifel daran, dass Herr Puigdemont und seine Unterstützer gegen die spanische Verfassung und die Rechtsordnung Kataloniens verstößen haben. <sup>7</sup>
	Link with UK/Scotland	I am not sure that Catalan independence is a good idea any more than Scotland's breakaway from the UK might be, but the choice is surely for the people affected.
<i>Treatment recommendation</i>	Dialogue Spain & Catalonia	[...] the Spanish government needs to act quickly to initiate a dialogue with Catalan leaders to try to negotiate a peaceful solution.
	Secession as solution	The nationalist leader - facing possible charges for sedition - promised to continue working to build a free country.
	Remain in Spain	Vor der illegalen Abstimmung am Sonntag hatte die EU-Kommission noch eher die Position Madrids eingenommen. Das ließ etwa die Bemerkung von Kommissionssprecher Margaritis Schinas vermuten, die Kommission respektiere den spanischen Verfassungs- und Gesetzesrahmen. <sup>8</sup>
	External intervention	Puigdemont hat es geschafft, das große Deutschland hineinzuziehen in seine Sache. Er hat Europas zentrale Macht zum Akteur, ja zum Schiedsrichter in der Innenpolitik des abgelegenen, zerstrittenen Spanien gemacht. <sup>9</sup>
	New elections	On top of firing Catalonia's government, Rajoy dissolved its parliament and also called December 21 elections for the region.

<sup>6</sup> Translated to English: [How can it be that Catalan activists who subjectively wanted a better society, namely a properly administered republic, have been arrested or given ruinous fines, while the king's brother-in-law has embezzled at least six million euros in public funds but is still at large and leading a luxury life?]

<sup>7</sup> Translated to English: [The question of the rebellion has also aroused different opinions in Spain. From our point of view, however, there is no doubt that Mr Puigdemont and his supporters have violated the Spanish Constitution and the legal order of Catalonia.]

<sup>8</sup> Translated to English: [Before the illegal vote on Sunday, the EU Commission had tended to take Madrid's position. This suggested, for example, the remark by Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas that the Commission respects the Spanish constitutional and legal framework.]

<sup>9</sup> Translated to English: [Puigdemont has managed to draw the great Germany into its cause. He has turned Europe's central power into an actor, even an arbiter, in the domestic politics of remote, divided Spain.]