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‘Democratic will’ or ‘illegal referendum’? – Media Coverage of the 2017 Catalan Independence Referendum in South America

The 2017 Catalan independence referendum was a highly controversial political event, sparking significant international media coverage. The purpose of my study is to analyze how the different media outlets based in South American countries portrayed the unconstitutional referendum, focusing on key narratives and framing strategies. Through content analysis of news articles, this research examines whether coverage was predominantly sympathetic to the Catalan independence movement, supported Spanish unity or perhaps aimed to maintain a balanced, neutral stance. Recurring themes in news articles will be explored, such as the steps taken by the Generalitat and by the Spanish government in light of the referendum. The findings of the study suggest that the coverage varied significantly between nations and political affiliations, with some media outlets framing the referendum as a legitimate expression of the Catalan people's will, while others emphasized its illegal, unconstitutional nature that could lead to the fragmentation of the Spanish State. The framing of the event was affected by South American political contexts, particularly by the ties of countries to Spain and the countries' specific experience with separatist movements. The results demonstrate how the coverage of specific international events is shaped by the media.

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