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Renan Viguié, *La traversée électrique des Pyrénées. Histoire de l'interconnexion entre la France et l'Espagne*. Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2014. 190 pp. Maps, tables, figures, pictures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$49.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-2-87574-182-0.

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Electrical energy is a key factor for the working of contemporary economies. Because of its multiplier effects on mass production and consumption, it is closely linked to economic growth. Since the mid-twentieth century, electricity has been the object of active international trade between neighbouring countries, helping to adjust for imbalances between supply and demand, and ensure greater security, stability and efficiency in power supply. Relations between France and Spain experienced moments of major tension in the last century, resulting from political-ideological clashes and the distance in the level of socio-economic development between the two countries. Very early on, electricity became one of the main axes of bilateral cooperation, in view of the technical and financial extent of the projects, and the number, variety and relevance of the actors concerned. Indeed, electrical cooperation between the regions closest to the Pyrenees (the poorest--agricultural--communities in France, and the richest--industrial--communities in Spain) had a nationwide reach in both countries, directly involving Paris and Madrid, and contributing to the improvement of Franco-Spanish relations as a whole.

This book, by Renan Viguié, examines the history of electrical interconnection between Spain and France from its beginnings right up to the present day, a history encouraged by the geographical contiguousness and the seasonal complementarity of electrical (hydroelectrical) production in the two countries. The analysis, essentially chronological, is structured into two main parts, with the 1960s serving as the dividing point. The 1920s and 1930s were years of experimentation, when technicians and engineers realised the first projects and the public authorities studied their viability. However, in spite of the mutual desire for entente, the interconnection encountered political, administrative and financial difficulties, which ultimately put an end to all operations planned at that stage.

After the interruption of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the harshest years of autarky and isolation of the Franco regime (1940-1949), the first bilateral agreements on electricity exchange were signed, beginning with that concluded in 1949 for the localities of Biarritz and San Sebastián. Many other such agreements were to follow during the 1950s and 1960s. They gradually widened the geographic extent and time frame of the cooperation, and increased the number of companies participating in the exchanges. France and Spain each became one another's main providers of electrical energy--even overtaking Switzerland and Portugal. On the part of France, the state-owned company *Electricité de France* (EDF), nationalised in 1946, had the monopoly on the negotiations. Spain's part, on the other hand, included numerous producers and distributors, both public and private. The multiplicity, dispersion and disorganisation of the Spanish side represented a real headache for EDF, whose repeated requests to deal with one unique interlocutor had a decisive influence on the eventual concentration of Spanish companies registered in the 1940s and 1950s (e.g., in 1944, Unidad Eléctrica SA--UNESA--was formed from a total of 18 private companies, and in 1955, Hispanelec brought together three of the largest: Iberduero, Saltos del Sil and Fuerzas Eléctricas del Noroeste SA--FENOSA). In the 1960s, a cross-border association was established in order to coordinate the exchanges in accordance with the

agreements: the Franco-Spanish Union for Electricity Production and Transport (UFEPTTE), which, when Portugal joined, changed its name to the Franco-Iberian Union. This was the most distant ancestor of the modern-day French-Spanish Electricity Interconnection (INELFE), made up of 50 percent shares held by the electrical grid operators in Spain and France—respectively Red Eléctrica de España (REE) and Réseau de Transport d'Électricité (RTE).

The electrical connection agreements of the 1950s and 1960s, known as “winter-against-summer agreements,” were based on the cession of energy delivery to France during the winter, when its hydraulic production fell because of freezing, in exchange for the delivery of energy to Spain during the summer, a period of surplus in France because of the thaw and the deficit in Spain because of drought. On occasion, France accompanied its exports of energy with foreign currency which was used by Spanish companies to buy electrical infrastructure equipment from French suppliers. These contracts helped to address the tight clearing margins that then regulated Franco-Spanish trade. The contracts, the exchange of equipment, and the variety and importance of the actors involved (engineers, ministers, diplomats, to large enterprises and electrical companies, etc.) helped to strengthen bilateral relations, not just in terms of the energy industry, but Franco-Spanish relations in general.

The balance of French-Spanish exchanges of electrical energy remained in Spain's favour until the 1980s, when France began to massively export electricity generated using nuclear power. The trans-Pyrenean connection projects undertaken in that decade were, for the first time, subject to popular opposition because of the damage they caused to the landscape. The pylons and electrical cabling installed in fields and on mountainsides, which had been at first almost unnoticed and later exhibited with pride as a symbol of progress, now faced growing rejection.

The Environment Ministries, ecological organisations, populations and local representatives became key players in subsequent negotiations, some because of conviction and others because of electoral goals. This opposition, far more widespread and visible in France than in Spain, clashed with major governmental and industrial interests in the style of “David and Goliath,” managed to paralyse lines so emblematic as Aragón-to-Cazaril (central Pyrenees) and Baixas-to-Bescano (east Pyrenees), thus making themselves a model for “anti-HV-lines” movements all over France. As never before in the history of electrical interconnection between Spain and France, aesthetic and environmental criteria took precedence over economic ones (such as obtaining a profit), technical ones (such as the viability of the innovations) and political ones (such as the improvement of Franco-Spanish and European relations). EDF had to compensate its Spanish interlocutors with payments and discounts for the buying electricity from France, as well as undertake the construction of entirely subterranean connections, which were much more costly than aerial lines.

The strengthening of the trans-Pyrenean connections, combined with the success of Spanish renewable energy sources, have caused another change in the bilateral electrical balance. Since 2006, despite the fact that Spain's exports to France are far lower than those to Portugal and Morocco, the France-Spain balance has shifted back into Spain's favour. Increasing the capacity of interconnection between those two countries is, today, one of the priorities for the European Union, which will inevitably have to take account not only of the technical and financial possibilities of the projects, but also their social acceptability.

Viguié's book constitutes an excellent starting point for studying the history of electrical relations between Spain and France. It is an earnest book, well-organised and enjoyable to read, which accurately solves the difficult mix of economic, political, social, cultural and technical history surrounding the subject. Nevertheless, its analysis is incomplete and partial. Why is this? The author closely analyses the documentation kept in EDF's historical archives, along with technical reports, local press cuttings and a certain amount of bibliography. However, he fails to make any reference to other archives, either Spanish or French. Consequently, the book defends each and every one of the decisions taken by EDF,

including those that were manifestly erroneous or counterproductive, but which are here presented as being the best possible alternative. It is impossible to relate a history of bilateral relations if we only listen to a single actor from only one of the parties, no matter how relevant the actor may be. In that sense, it is absolutely crucial to supplement the information gleaned from EDF with the documentation from other historical French and Spanish archives.

Among the French sources, this would include the Centre des Archives Contemporaines de Fontainebleau (files from the Ministry of Industry) and the Centre des Archives Économiques et Financières de Savigny-le-Temple (Ministries of Economy and Finances). Among the Spanish sources, the Archivo General de la Administración (Francoist Ministries), the Archivo Histórico del Instituto Nacional de Industria (the major public holding company), and dossiers from private leading companies such as Iberduero and FENOSA would be crucial. Finally, it would be advisable to deepen the analysis of the Spanish electrical sector, and its main historical milestones, using Spanish literature and press. It would undoubtedly enrich the work and expand our knowledge about the subject.

From here, we encourage the author to delve deeper into this line of research, extending his range of sources (French, Spanish and even those from outside countries and international institutions), and thus furthering our understanding of a poorly explored, but key element in French-Spanish relations.

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