

Topological phases with long-range interactions

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Topological phases of matter are primarily studied in systems with short-range interactions. In nature, however, nonrelativistic quantum systems often exhibit long-range interactions. Under what conditions topological phases survive such interactions, and how they are modified when they do, is largely unknown. By studying the symmetry-protected topological phase of an antiferromagnetic spin-1 chain with $1/r^\alpha$ interactions, we show that two very different outcomes are possible, depending on whether or not the interactions are frustrated. While unfrustrated long-range interactions can destroy the topological phase for $\alpha \lesssim 3$, the topological phase survives frustrated interactions for all $\alpha > 0$. Our conclusions are based on strikingly consistent results from large-scale matrix-product-state simulations and effective-field-theory calculations, and we expect them to hold for more general interacting spin systems. The models we study can be naturally realized in trapped-ion quantum simulators, opening the prospect for experimental investigation of the issues confronted here.

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Since the discovery of topological insulators [1–3], there has been tremendous interest in exploring various topological phases of matter, both theoretically [4,5] and experimentally [6–8]. Topological phases are generally associated with—and derive much of their presumed utility from—stability against *local* perturbations. But precisely what constitutes “local” in this context is a subtle issue; power-law decaying ($1/r^\alpha$) interactions, which are present in many experimental systems, do not necessarily qualify [9–11]. Recent theoretical advances have begun to elucidate the conditions under which long-range interacting systems maintain some degree of locality [12,13], potentially providing some insight into effects of long-range interactions on topological phases of matter. And recently, explicit theoretical evidence of topological order has been found in a variety of long-range interacting systems, including dipolar spins [14] or bosons [15], fermions with long-range pairing [16] and hopping [17,18], and electrons with Coulomb interactions [19]. These results notwithstanding, a complete understanding of how topological phases respond to the addition of long-range interactions is still lacking.

The stability of topological phases to small local perturbations is intimately connected to the existence of a bulk excitation gap [20,21], and the introduction of long-range interactions to a short-range Hamiltonian supporting a topological phase poses several potential challenges to this connection. First, even if the gap remains finite, long-range interactions can change the ground-state correlation decay from exponential to power law [16,18,22,23]. Thus topological phases with local interactions are, at the very least, subject to qualitative changes in their long-distance correlations. Second, the gap can in principle close in the presence of long-range interactions, even when they decay fast enough that the total interaction energy remains extensive [20,24]. Third, long-range interactions have the ability to change the effective dimensionality of the system [25,26], and thus might

change the topological properties even if the gap does not close [16,18]. We emphasize that the understanding of these issues is not of strictly theoretical interest. Many of the promising experimental systems for exploring or exploiting topological phases of matter, e.g., dipolar molecules [27–29], magnetic [30] or Rydberg atoms [31], trapped ions [32–37], and atoms coupled to multimode cavities [38], are accurately described as quantum lattice models with power-law decaying interactions. The unique controllability and measurement precision afforded by these systems hold great promise to improve our understanding of topological phases [39–42], but first we must reliably determine when—despite their long-range interactions—they can be expected to harbor the topological phases that have been theoretically explored for short-range interacting systems.

To address these general questions, in this Rapid Communication we study a spin-1 chain with antiferromagnetic Heisenberg interactions, which is a paradigmatic model exhibiting a symmetry-protected topological (SPT) phase [43,44]. Specifically, we consider two extensions of the short-range version of this model by including long-range interactions that decay either as $\mathcal{J}_\alpha(r) = 1/r^\alpha$ or as $\mathcal{J}'_\alpha(r) = (-1)^{r-1}/r^\alpha$, which could be simulated in trapped-ion based experiments for $0 < \alpha < 3$ [45,46]. Based on a combination of large-scale variational matrix-product-state (MPS) simulations and field-theory calculations, we establish and explain a number of important and potentially general consequences of long-range interactions. The $\mathcal{J}'_\alpha(r)$ interactions are unfrustrated, being antiferromagnetic (ferromagnetic) between spins on the opposite (same) sublattice. In this case, numerics and field-theoretic arguments suggest the destruction of the topological phase for $\alpha \lesssim 3$, accompanied by a closing of the bulk excitation gap and spontaneous breaking of a continuous symmetry in one dimension (1D), consistent with other recent findings on the relevance of long-range interactions for $\alpha < D + 2$ in D -dimensional quantum systems [47,48]. The $\mathcal{J}_\alpha(r)$ interactions are frustrated, and, remarkably, do not close the bulk excitation gap for any $\alpha > 0$. In addition, two key properties of the

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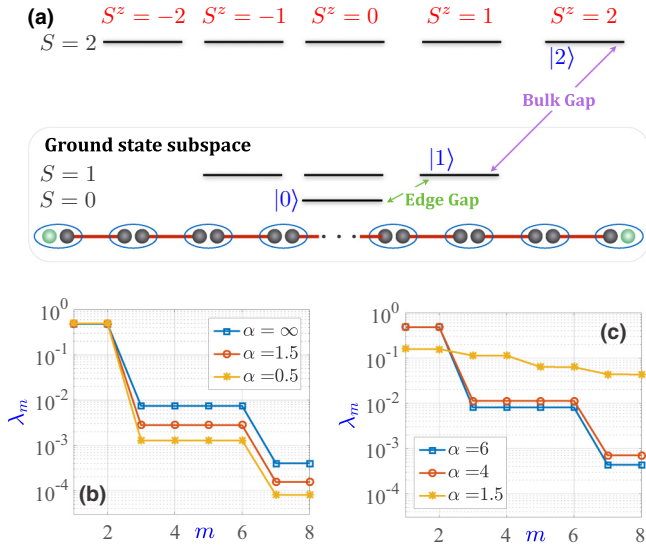


FIG. 1. (a) Low-lying energy levels of the Haldane chain for even L . The entanglement structure of ground states is shown at the bottom. The ground states in the total $S^z = 0, 1, 2$ subspace are named $|0\rangle, |1\rangle, |2\rangle$ and have energies E_0, E_1, E_2 . (b), (c) The m th largest value λ_m ($m = 1, 2, \dots, 8$) of the ground-state entanglement spectrum for H_α (b) and H'_α (c) using finite-size MPS calculations with $L = 200$. We choose the $|1\rangle$ state to avoid extra entanglement between edge spins. For H'_α , the entanglement spectrum for $1.5 \leq \alpha \leq 4$ will exhibit a smooth crossover between the $\alpha = 1.5$ and $\alpha = 4$ cases due to the finite system size, but we expect a sharp transition at some $\alpha_c \lesssim 3$ in the thermodynamic limit. The exact pair degeneracies in $\{\lambda_m\}$ are a result of the spatial-inversion symmetry protecting the topological phase [44,49].

SPT phase, a doubly degenerate entanglement spectrum [49] and a nonvanishing string-ordered correlation [50], are both preserved. However, because of the long-range interactions, spin-spin correlations and the edge-excitation amplitudes only decay exponentially within some intermediate distance scale, after which they decay algebraically. We expect these qualitative changes to be quite general, occurring in other long-range interacting systems in which the topological phase survives.

Model. We consider a spin-1 chain with either frustrated or unfrustrated long-range Heisenberg interactions:

$$H_\alpha = \sum_{j,r>0} \mathcal{J}_\alpha(r) \mathbf{S}_j \cdot \mathbf{S}_{j+r}, \quad H'_\alpha = \sum_{j,r>0} \mathcal{J}'_\alpha(r) \mathbf{S}_j \cdot \mathbf{S}_{j+r}. \quad (1)$$

With only nearest-neighbor interactions ($\alpha \rightarrow \infty$), $H_\infty = H'_\infty$ is usually called the *Haldane chain*, which has been extensively studied theoretically [51–53], numerically [54–58], and experimentally [59,60]. The low-lying states of the Haldane chain are shown in Fig. 1(a) for an open boundary chain with even size L . The unique ground state has total spin $S = 0$. The first set of excited states has $S = 1$ ($\hbar = 1$), contains spin excitations only near the edge of the chain, and is separated from the ground state by an energy gap (*edge gap*) that is exponentially small in L and topologically protected. Consequently, these excited states belong to a degenerate ground-state subspace in the thermodynamic ($L \rightarrow \infty$) limit. The second set of excited states all have $S = 2$, contain spin excitations in the bulk of the chain, and have an energy gap

(*bulk gap*) that converges to a finite value when $L \rightarrow \infty$. The entanglement structure of the four ground states is close to that of the Affleck-Kennedy-Lieb-Tasaki (AKLT) states [61] shown at the bottom of Fig. 1(a), where each spin-1 is decomposed into two spin-1/2's, pairs of spin-1/2's on neighboring sites form singlets, and the system is finally projected back onto the spin-1's. The four quasidegenerate ground states correspond to the four states formed by the two unpaired spin-1/2's at the edge.

We use variational MPS calculations [62–65] to determine the ground-state entanglement structure of H_α and H'_α in Figs. 1(b) and 1(c). For $\alpha > 0$ ($\alpha > 3$), the ground-state entanglement spectrum of H_α (H'_α), defined as the eigenvalues of the left/right half chain's reduced density matrix, is dominated by the two largest degenerate eigenvalues $\lambda_1 = \lambda_2 \approx 0.5$. This can be understood heuristically as the result of cutting a spin-1/2 singlet in the AKLT state, and suggests the survival of the topological Haldane phase. For H'_α with $\alpha \lesssim 3$, the entanglement spectrum has an entirely different structure, and we will study the related ground-state properties below.

Effective field theory. The low-energy physics of the Haldane chain can be understood via field-theoretic analysis due to Haldane [52] and Affleck [66]; here, we build on their work to provide a field-theoretic treatment of the long-range interacting model. We begin by decomposing the spin operators into staggered and uniform fields, $\mathbf{n}(2i + \frac{1}{2}) = (\mathbf{S}_{2i} - \mathbf{S}_{2i+1})/2$ and $\mathbf{l}(2i + \frac{1}{2}) = (\mathbf{S}_{2i} + \mathbf{S}_{2i+1})/2$. The intuition behind this decomposition is that the classical ground state of both H_α and H'_α is Néel ordered for any $\alpha > 0$, with $\mathbf{n}^2(x) = 1$ and $\mathbf{l}(x) = 0$. We therefore expect that in the quantum ground state $\mathbf{n}^2(x) \approx 1$, while $\mathbf{l}(x) \approx 0$ represents small quantum fluctuations in the direction of $\mathbf{n}(x)$. Importantly, we expect that only long-wavelength fluctuations of $\mathbf{n}(x)$ and $\mathbf{l}(x)$ will be important at low energy. In momentum space, we can write $H_\alpha \approx \int dq [\omega(q)|\mathbf{n}(q)|^2 + \Omega(q)|\mathbf{l}(q)|^2]$ and $H'_\alpha \approx \int dq [\Omega(q)|\mathbf{n}(q)|^2 + \omega(q)|\mathbf{l}(q)|^2]$ [67], with

$$\omega(q) = 2 \sum_{r=1}^{\infty} \mathcal{J}'_\alpha(r) \cos qr, \quad \Omega(q) = 2 \sum_{r=1}^{\infty} \mathcal{J}_\alpha(r) \cos qr. \quad (2)$$

For any $\alpha > 0$, $\omega(q)$ is analytic at small q and can be expanded as $\omega_0 + \omega_2 q^2 + O(q^4)$, whereas $\Omega(q)$ is nonanalytic at small q with an expansion $\Omega_0 + \Omega_2 q^2 + \lambda |q|^{\alpha-1} + O(q^4)$. The coefficients $\omega_{0,2}$, $\Omega_{0,2}$, and λ depend on α , but their exact values are not important for the following analysis. Physically, the analyticity (nonanalyticity) of the spectrum arises because the long-range interactions interfere destructively (constructively) for the staggered field. Keeping only the lowest nontrivial order in q for the dispersion of both $\mathbf{n}(q)$ and $\mathbf{l}(q)$ turns out to be sufficient for obtaining qualitatively correct behavior of the excitation gap. Therefore, we keep only the 0th-order term in the dispersion of $\mathbf{l}(q)$, and the next-leading term in the dispersion of $\mathbf{n}(q)$ [for $\mathbf{n}(q)$, the 0th-order term only adds a constant to the Hamiltonian due to the constraint $\mathbf{n}^2(x) = 1$]. Thus for $\alpha > 0$ ($\alpha > 3$) the Hamiltonian H_α (H'_α) is approximately given by (ignoring the order-unity coefficients) $H_\alpha \sim H'_\alpha \sim \int dq [q^2 |\mathbf{n}(q)|^2 + |\mathbf{l}(q)|^2]$. When the zero-temperature partition function is expressed as a coherent-spin-state path integral, the action is quadratic in the field \mathbf{l} and it can be integrated out [68,69]. The remaining path

integral over the staggered field \mathbf{n} is a (1+1)D $O(3)$ nonlinear sigma model, with Lagrangian density [nonlinear constraint $\mathbf{n}^2(x) = 1$ implied]

$$\mathcal{L}(x) \approx \frac{1}{g} (|\partial \mathbf{n} / \partial t|^2 - v_s^2 |\partial \mathbf{n} / \partial x|^2). \quad (3)$$

Here, g is an effective (α - and short-distance-cutoff-dependent) coupling strength, and the spin-wave velocity v_s is also α dependent. This model is gapped and disordered [51].

To investigate the ground-state properties of Eq. (3), we can remove the constraint $\mathbf{n}^2(x) = 1$, while phenomenologically introducing a mass gap Δ_α and a renormalized spin-wave velocity v_α (the parameters Δ'_α and v'_α will be used to describe the Lagrangian for H'_α) [57,58]. Transforming to momentum space, we thereby arrive at a free-field Lagrangian density

$$\mathcal{L}(q) \propto |\partial \mathbf{n} / \partial t|^2 - (\Delta_\alpha^2 + v_\alpha^2 q^2) |\mathbf{n}(q)|^2. \quad (4)$$

This Lagrangian leads to ground-state correlations $\mathcal{C}_{ij} = \langle S_i^z S_j^z \rangle_0$ [where $\langle \dots \rangle_m$ denotes the expectation value in the state $|m\rangle$ defined in Fig. 1(a)] that decays as

$$\mathcal{C}_{ij} \propto (-1)^r \int \frac{e^{iqr} dq}{\sqrt{\Delta_\alpha^2 + v_\alpha^2 q^2}} \propto (-1)^r K_0(r/\xi_\alpha). \quad (5)$$

Here, $\xi_\alpha \equiv v_\alpha / \Delta_\alpha$ (or $\xi'_\alpha \equiv v'_\alpha / \Delta'_\alpha$ for H'_α) defines the correlation length, and $K_0(x)$ is a modified Bessel function, which behaves as $K_0(x) \sim \exp(-x) / \sqrt{x}$ for large x .

For $\alpha < 3$, the nonanalytic $|q|^{\alpha-1}$ term in H'_α dominates the dispersion of $\mathbf{n}(q)$ at small q , and Eqs. (3) and (4) are not valid. To analyze this case, we write down the renormalization group (RG) flow equation for the coupling strength g under the scaling transformation $x \rightarrow x e^{-l}$ to one-loop order [68,70],

$$\frac{dg}{dl} = \frac{\alpha - 3}{2} g + \frac{g^2}{4\pi}. \quad (6)$$

For $\alpha < 3$, an unstable fixed point appears at $g^* = 2\pi(3 - \alpha)$, and for a bare coupling $g < g^*$ the RG flow is towards a weak-coupling ordered state at $g = 0$ [68]. The bare coupling, and therefore the value of α at which this phase transition occurs, is difficult to determine *a priori*. But we nevertheless expect (and confirm numerically) that for $\alpha < \alpha_c$, with $2 < \alpha_c < 3$, the gap will close as the system spontaneously breaks the continuous $SU(2)$ symmetry of H'_α [48,71].

Comparison with numerics. Using finite-size MPS calculations, we have obtained the bulk excitation gap $E_2 - E_1$ and the correlation length [fitted using Eq. (5)] for both H_α and H'_α . As shown in Figs. 2(a) and 2(b), we see consistent results with the field-theory predictions. For H_α , the gap remains open for all $\alpha > 0$, and the correlation length decreases together with α due to both an increase of the bulk gap, and a decrease of the spin-wave velocity (as a result of a weakened Néel order for longer-range interactions). To the contrary, for H'_α , the gap decreases quickly as the interactions become longer ranged, and the correlation length diverges when α decreases to around 3, suggesting the disappearance of the topological phase at $\alpha \lesssim 3$ [72]. Calculation of the string-ordered correlation $S_{ij} \equiv \langle S_i^z S_j^z \prod_{i < k < j} (-1)^{S_k^z} \rangle_0$ of both H_α and H'_α at $\alpha = 1.5$ [Fig. 2(c)] provides further evidence that the topological phase survives for H_α , but not for H'_α , for $0 < \alpha \lesssim 3$.

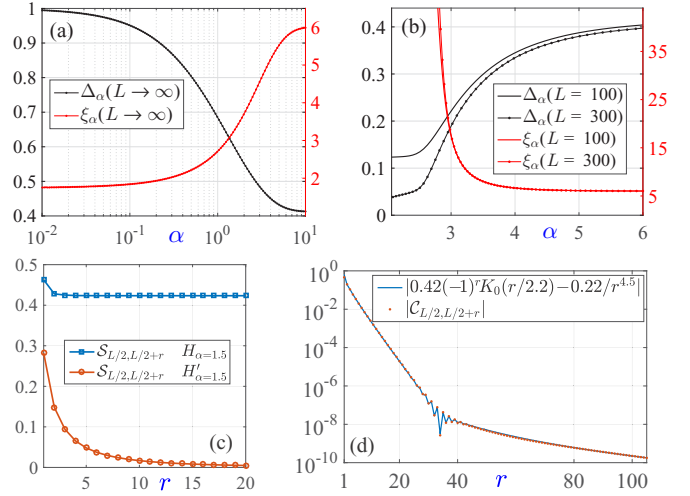


FIG. 2. (a) Bulk gap Δ_α and ground-state correlation length ξ_α in the $L \rightarrow \infty$ limit, obtained by finite-size scaling for $200 \leq L \leq 500$. (b) Bulk gap Δ'_α and ξ'_α with $L = 100$ and $L = 300$. (c) Ground-state string-ordered correlation function S_{ij} for H_α and H'_α with $\alpha = 1.5$ and $L = 300$. For various α and $200 \leq L \leq 500$, we consistently find that S_{ij} quickly saturates to a finite value for H_α at all $\alpha > 0$, but vanishes at large distance for H'_α at $\alpha \lesssim 3$. (d) Ground-state spin-spin correlation \mathcal{C}_{ij} for $\alpha = 0.5$ and $L = 500$. This choice of $\alpha = 0.5$ is arbitrary, but assists in a clear presentation of the coexisting exponential and $1/r^{\alpha+4}$ power-law decays.

We now analyze the effects of terms beyond leading order in q that have been ignored in our field-theory treatment. Including the higher-order analytic terms, such as the $O(q^4)$ term, will result in negligible corrections to the correlation functions that decay in distance faster than Eq. (5) [57]. However, even for $\alpha > 3$, inclusion of the nonanalytic $O(|q|^{\alpha-1})$ term will add a power-law tail to the correlation functions, which will dominate over Eq. (5) at long distance. In the Supplemental Material, we show by a more involved field-theory calculation that, for H_α , \mathcal{C}_{ij} decays as $1/r^{\alpha+4}$ at large r . Our MPS calculations using $L = 500$ spins [Fig. 2(d)] show remarkable agreement with the field-theory predictions, even capturing the oscillations in $|\mathcal{C}_{ij}|$ occurring at intermediate distance where the short-range and long-range contributions to the correlation functions are of comparable magnitude and interfere. A power-law tail in \mathcal{C}_{ij} should also exist for H'_α , but the increased correlation length prevents us from observing its existence clearly for $\alpha > 3$.

Edge-excited states. We expect the influence of long-range interactions on the edge- and bulk-excited states to be strong at small α ; because the topological phase of H'_α does not survive for $\alpha \lesssim 3$, we will focus on H_α from now on. Edges can be introduced into the field theory by replacing the two end spin-1's with spin-1/2's, represented by τ_L (τ_R) for the left (right) edge, resulting in an edge-bulk coupling Hamiltonian $H_c = \sum_{i=2}^{L-1} S_i \cdot [\tau_L / (i-1)^\alpha + \tau_R / (L-i)^\alpha]$ [57]. For the edge-excited state $|1\rangle$ [Fig. 1(a)], $\tau_{L,R}$ are polarized in the $+z$ direction, and we expect $\langle S_i^z \rangle$ to decay away from the ends. Solving the free theory defined by Eq. (4) and treating H_c using standard first-order perturbation theory [57], we find that $\langle n^z(x) \rangle_1 \propto \int dq \{ \exp[iq(L-x)] - \exp[iq(x-1)] \} / (\Delta_\alpha^2 + v_\alpha^2 q^2) \propto$

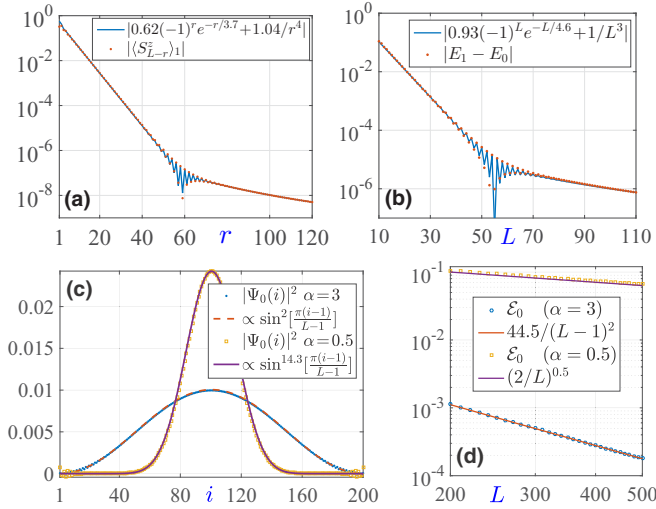


FIG. 3. (a) Distribution of an edge excitation in state $|1\rangle$ for $L = 500$ and $\alpha = 2$. (b) Edge gap $|E_1 - E_0|$ as a function of the chain size L for $\alpha = 3$. (c) Lowest-energy magnon probability density distribution for $L = 200$ and $\alpha = 3.0, 0.5$. (d) The finite-size correction to the lowest magnon excitation energy [see Eq. (7)]. For $\alpha = 3$, we obtain $v_\alpha = 2.18$ and $v_\alpha/\Delta_\alpha \approx 4.51$, in good agreement with the $\xi_\alpha \approx 4.55$ obtained in Fig. 2.

$\exp[-(L-x)/\xi_\alpha] - \exp[-(x-1)/\xi_\alpha]$ for even L . In addition, $\langle I^z(x) \rangle_1$ contributes a power-law correction $1/(x-1)^{\alpha+2} + 1/(L-x)^{\alpha+2}$ for x far away from both ends [73]. Our numerical calculation of $\langle S^z(x) \rangle_1$, shown in Fig. 3(a), agrees well with a sum of these two contributions, clearly exhibiting an exponential followed by $1/r^{\alpha+2}$ decay.

The edge gap $|E_1 - E_0|$ can be obtained by using a path integral to integrate out the \mathbf{n} field [57], resulting in an effective edge-edge Hamiltonian $\propto (-1)^L \exp(-L/\xi_\alpha) \boldsymbol{\tau}_L \cdot \boldsymbol{\tau}_R$. This scaling is confirmed, at relatively small L , by the numerical results in Fig. 3(b). However, the numerics also reveal that at large L the edge gap receives a long-range correction given by $1/L^\alpha$. This remarkably simple result, including the unity prefactor, can be understood as follows. The edge-excited states behave differently from the bulk-excited states due to *correlations* between the orientations of $\boldsymbol{\tau}_1$ and $\boldsymbol{\tau}_2$, and therefore $\langle S_i \cdot S_j \rangle_1 - \langle S_i \cdot S_j \rangle_0$ is very small unless i and j are very close to 0 and L , respectively. Thus we have $E_1 - E_0 \approx L^{-\alpha} \sum_{i < j} (\langle S_i \cdot S_j \rangle_1 - \langle S_i \cdot S_j \rangle_0) = 1/L^\alpha$, where the last equality is a sum rule following from the total spin of the ground ($S = 0$) and edge-excited ($S = 1$) states.

Bulk-excited states. As in the short-range Haldane chain, the elementary bulk excitations of H_α are spin-1 magnons [55–57]. Physically, the magnon represents fluctuations in the staggered magnetization, and, from Eq. (4), these fluctuations have a dispersion relation $\epsilon_\alpha(q) = \sqrt{\Delta_\alpha^2 + (v_\alpha q)^2} \approx \Delta_\alpha + q^2 v_\alpha^2 / (2\Delta_\alpha)$ (valid at small q). The lowest-energy magnon wave function $\Psi_0(x)$ can be extracted from the numerics

using the relation $|\Psi_0(i)|^2 \approx |\langle S_i^z \rangle_2 - \langle S_i^z \rangle_1|$. The presence of long-range interactions gives the magnon an additional potential energy due to the edge-bulk coupling Hamiltonian H_c , and $\Psi(x)$ can be approximately described by the following Schrödinger equation (with Dirichlet boundary condition at $x = 1, L$),

$$\frac{v_\alpha^2}{2\Delta_\alpha} \frac{\partial^2 \Psi(x)}{\partial x^2} + \frac{1}{2} \left[\frac{1}{(x-1)^\alpha} + \frac{1}{(L-x)^\alpha} \right] \Psi(x) = \mathcal{E} \Psi(x). \quad (7)$$

The kinetic (potential) energy always scales as $1/L^2$ ($1/L^\alpha$); therefore, for $\alpha > 2$ and large L , the potential energy can be ignored. The ground-state energy $\mathcal{E}_0 \approx v_\alpha^2 \pi^2 / (2\Delta_\alpha L^2)$ and probability density $|\Psi_0(x)|^2 \approx (2/L) \sin^2(\pi x/L)$ are then identical to those of a particle in a box, as confirmed numerically in Figs. 3(c) and 3(d). The relation $E_2 - E_1 \approx \Delta_\alpha + v_\alpha^2 \pi^2 / (2\Delta_\alpha L^2)$ allows us to obtain both v_α and Δ_α through finite-size scaling [Fig. 2(b)], and we confirm that the correlation length determined by $\xi_\alpha = v_\alpha / \Delta_\alpha$ agrees with that obtained by fitting C_{ij} using Eq. (5). For $\alpha < 2$, the potential energy dominates the kinetic energy for large L , and the potential can be approximated as harmonic around $x = L/2$. Thus $|\Psi_0(x)|^2$ resembles a Gaussian [Fig. 3(c)], and a simple scaling analysis predicts a width $\gamma \propto L^{1-\alpha/2}$. In the large- L limit, $|\Psi_0(x)|^2$ becomes sharply peaked at $x = L/2$ and, from Eq. (7), we expect the bulk gap to scale as $\Delta_\alpha + (2/L)^\alpha$, which is clearly observed in Fig. 3(d). Since $E_2 - E_1 = 2$ when $\alpha = 0$, it follows that $\Delta_{\alpha \rightarrow 0} = 1$, consistent with Fig. 2(a).

Outlook. The stability of the topological Haldane phase to $1/r^\alpha$ interactions for all $\alpha > 0$ is favorable for trapped-ion based experiments, as stronger couplings can be achieved for smaller α [36,37]. Moreover, because the correlation length *shrinks* for longer-range interactions, a relatively small number of ions will suffice to suppress finite-size effects. Probing the topological phase by measuring both C_{ij} and S_{ij} with single-site resolution is nearly impossible in typical condensed-matter systems, but is quite straightforward in ion traps [74]. Based on the generality of our field-theory analysis, we speculate that for generic lattice models, the tails in the power-law interactions can possibly destroy the topological phase only when long-range interactions are unfrustrated and $\alpha < D + 2$. Experimentally, unfrustrated long-range interactions can be easily implemented by generating a $1/r^\alpha$ ferromagnetic interaction [71]. We hope that our work can serve as a springboard for future studies on how distinct topological phases behave in the presence of long-range interactions.

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