MAGAZINE EUROPA **Catarina Domingues**
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I.
In Catalonia, the Citizens wins elections and independentistas have a parliamentary majority. The separatist leader Carles Puigdemont says that the Catalan republic defeated the Spanish monarchy.

The European Union accuses China of being a "distorted economy" and adopts new rules to protect itself against cheap imports. Beijing reacts, says these are "careless comments".

And still in this Europe Magazine, the last edition of 2017, we take stock of the year with our commentator Victor Ângelo.

II.

Welcome to the Europe Magazine

King Felipe of Spain appealed this Sunday to the Catalan Parliament to abandon separatism. The monarch warned that Catalonia can not resume the path of confrontation and exclusion after the elections last Thursday.

Felipe VI, King of Spain
Spain is now a mature democracy, where any citizen can think, defend and contrast freely and democratically their opinions and ideas, but not put their own ideas ahead of the rights of others.

In the elections last week, the independentistas parties conquered the absolute majority in the parliament of Catalonia. The three forces that form the previous Catalan government, add up to 70 seats in parliament. The Junts per Catalunya (Together for Catalonia), by Carles Puigdemont, elected 34 deputies; the Left Republican, of Oriol Junqueras, 32 deputies, and CUP 4 deputies.
From Brussels, where he is in exile, the deposed president of the regional government, Carles Puigdemont, says that the Catalan republic defeated the Spanish monarchy.

Carles Puigdemont, deposed President of the regional government of Catalonia
"The Catalan Republic won the monarchy of 155. Take note, the Spanish state was defeated.Rajoy and his allies lost and took a slap from the Catalans. We lost the legitimacy they sought for the 155 coup.

The party that had the most votes at the polls was the Citizens. However, together the parties that are pla union with Spain have only 57 deputies. Inés Arrimadas, the leader of the Ciudadanos party, defends the union of Spain.

Inês Arrimadas, leader Citizens
The political situation in Catalonia is not the one they wanted to sell to the world. Catalonia is diverse, Catalonia is plural, Catalonia is all of us and the first political force in Parliament is called Citizens of Catalonia.

With us on the phone, we have Victor Ângelo, Magazine Europe's resident commentator and international consultant based in Brussels

Victor, he began by asking, these were the expected results. I do not think so. I believe that both sides thought they would have a loose victory, and particularly the constitutionalists, that is, those who are for the unity of Spain. I think they were relatively disappointed with the results obtained, especially the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party which was expecting a much more significant result than the result it had and also the fact that the party of Mariano Rajoy, the Popular Party, has greatly reduced the number of votes obtained in Catalonia. The regional parliament continues to be dominated mainly by parties in favor of the independence of Catalonia.

What can happen from now on?
We have a region completely divided in the middle, a region full of tensions and emotions and at this moment the only possible recipe would be of dialogue and common sense. But I think that neither side nor the other at this moment is willing to start a dialogue and to go by common sense, that is, we will have an unsolvable situation for some time and it is even likely that if there is not one new government of Catalonia within two or three months, until April 2018, new elections are likely to emerge and

further elections are needed. All this, apart from dividing the population, has a huge economic impact under the situation of the Catalan economy.

III.

China has criticized the European Union, saying it made "negligent comments" on Beijing. This after Brussels has taken new steps to protect itself against overly cheap imports from China, a country it has called a "distorted economy".
Brussels has named China as the first country to violate the new European anti-dumping rules, which came into force recently.
"We call on the European Union to adhere strictly to the rules of the World Trade Organization and to avoid abusing commercial measures," said Hua Chunying, a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, admitting that Beijing will take the necessary measures to protect its rights.

Victor, what impact can this episode have on the relationship between EU and China, economic but also politically?
It can have a major impact. The truth is that there is now at the level of European leadership the deep conviction that it is necessary to defend business and European employment. And there is also the conviction that the way in which China does international trade and the way in which China is dumping products produced in China, this calls into question economies, businesses and jobs in Europe, that is, European leaders have to be seen by Europe's citizens as defending European economies and Europe's employment. This will of course have some impact on how the trade relationship with China will be developed and, on the other hand, will also have an impact at the political level. The truth is that the Europeans took advantage of the Chinese government's arguments to declare China to be a state-controlled economy. Europeans say that it is an economy of a socialist country, that is, an economy in which the means of production are controlled by political power and the state, is not recognized in Europe at the moment as a market economy. All European political leaders think that Chinese companies enjoy political treatment and this of course gives them arguments to create some barriers to the continuation of Chinese economic penetration in Europe.

And how can the European Union then deal with a partner like Beijing, who is a very competitive partner?
First you need to look at areas where there are major difficulties in the relationship. These areas have to do with aluminum, steel, chemicals, building materials, above all, and also with the purchase by Chinese investors of strategic European companies. These things have to be negotiated one by one, piece by piece, that is, the question of steel will have to be discussed, the question of aluminum and all other issues will have to be discussed, as well as the question of regulation or regulation of investment Chinese in Europe. It is obvious that, on the one hand, and on the other, one is going to try to get the maximum, but the normal thing is for these negotiations to take place and I think that in the future, both sides need to maintain a good relationship and will seek to find a solution so that, on the one hand, the European economy continues to benefit from the advantages that Chinese articles produce them, they will also continue to try to benefit from the investments, but all with a more restrictive framework .

Victor, in this last program of the year we will balance 2017. First of all I asked him. In your opinion, what European personality has stood out the most this year?
I think that the European personality who stood out the most in the course of 2017 was Emmanuel Macron, the French president, for various reasons, for the way he won the elections, so Macron's election represents in terms of fighting right-wing extremism and also by the fact that Macron represents a new way of seeing things, that is, a much younger generation in a Europe that tends to be controlled by old politicians.

Does Macron's voice, compared to Angela Merkel, for example, already heard in Europe, respected?
Not yet, not yet, not least because it actually brings a very innovative way of looking, it is a younger generation, too, as I said, and will obviously encounter obstacles on the part of traditional European politicians. But the truth is that, for example, as the European Union is currently dealing with political issues with Poland at the moment, this way is very much influenced by the support the European Union is receiving from Paris and particularly from President Macron. In other words, we have also begun to notice at the level of the European institutions a much more assertive way of handling the issues and probably because they know that a person like President Macron is behind and will support them.

And now a moment that has marked Europe in this ending year ?
One moment, I think that the most important moment was the speech of the President (of the European Commission, Jean-Claude) Juncker in the European Parliament about the state of Europe. And why do I say that? Because in this speech the first time arose an extremely optimistic view of the European future after several years of crisis. And I emphasize that speech, because in reality it was the culmination of a very important change to which it was witnessed in 2017, that is, the passing of a pessimistic attitude, let's say, for a very positive vision, a very optimistic view of what could be the European space. In other words, the year 2017 was a transitional year from a vision of crisis to a vision of progress and optimism and the speech of Jean-Claude Juncker, and September in the European Parliament marked, so to speak, the high point of this transition.
I would also like to recall here a few moments: we have, for example a growth of the far right in Europe. Austria and Poland are some examples. I gathered here a sound from the leader of the Austrian People's party Sebastian Kurz who announced a coalition with the extreme-right, and has already warned that changes are coming, notably in migration policy. Let's hear it:
Sebastian Kurz, leader of the Austrian People's Party
My aim is that we do not waste time at European level with discussions on the distribution of refugees, because we know that this does not work. In recent years, this issue has been discussed in almost every internal administration meeting of Foreign ministers and government leaders. They made plans. And the result was the relocation of about 2000 refugees.

Victor, what insight can be seen from this European right-wing growth?
The far right, in fact, won votes, won votes in Austria, won votes in Poland, won votes in Germany. With the alternative to Germany for the first time represented in the German Federal Parliament. And he certainly won votes in France and in other European countries. There is now an effective growth of the far right positions and the positions of the very conservative right, as is the case of the Polish right, in the different European countries. But it is also true that this rise in the extreme right positions did not lead to the extreme right to win any elections and that was the great fear, with the exception of this new phenomenon which is the Austrian phenomenon, in which the coalition in power is a coalition that brings to power not only the Austrian conservatives, but also a party that has many aspects that make even a certain Nazism and this is evidently troubling, has not been much talked about. If this had happened 10 or 15 years ago, you would have heard a fuss across Europe. It has not been much talked about, because right now the far right weighs more within European public opinion and there is so much desire to make that kind of fuss, but the truth is that we must denounce the kind of government that was constituted in Vienna.

The migration was undoubtedly one of the hot topics in debate this year, and it will certainly pass to 2018. We also have negotiations for the Brexit. The referendum took place in 2016, 2017 was reserved for the negotiations for the departure of the United Kingdom of the European Union. What other moments marked then 2017?
Another important event beyond the Brexit and migrations, which are two themes that remain on the agenda and that are two themes that can create great tensions within Europe... Another great theme is the division between European countries, notably between East and west Europe, between what some would call the old European Union and the new European Union. We have been watching progressively-and in recent weeks this has been noted in a sharp way-to a division between the French, the Germans, the Belgians and all the countries traditionally in the centre of Europe, on the one hand, against the new acceding countries to Europe such as Poland , for example, Hungary, the Czech Republic, etc., and this east-West Division is a division that has a tendency to worsen and is a division that can call into question, so to speak, the harmony of European positions, and particularly in relation to Brexit, it may be that the British try to explore This division between the two parts of Europe to achieve some allies with the countries of the East and the fact that Theresa May visited Poland last week has already been to some extent an attempt to remove Poland from the single bloc and to put Poland in a more favoráve position L in relation to the United Kingdom.

And how Portugal pass to 2018? This year we returned to live in the fires and to discuss international support, which is soon to come. We also have some positive moments-the question of Mário Centeno, who was elected to the Eurogroup? What can be seen from the general situation in Portugal in 2017?

I think Portugal finishes the year 2017 on a very positive note. Portugal has regained the confidence of the markets. Portugal is now seen as having a growing economy and a promising economy. The interest rates of the Portuguese Treasury bonds are at this time very low compared to what they were traditionally, moreover, they are very close to the Italian and very distant rates, for example, of Greek rates. In other words, the markets consider that Portugal is no longer a major investment risk. From a political point of view I also think that yes, the election of Mário Centeno for the Eurogroup is a testament to the political confidence in the Portuguese Government and the functioning of the Portuguese institutions and also the fact that other important Portuguese, notably António Guterres, to appear ahead of the United Nations, all this contributes to an extremely positive image of our country... Despite many difficulties. And the difficulties had to do with the fires, which is a problem that remains unresolved, the difficulties that had to do with the unemployment of young people, which is also a problem to solve. But it also has to do with climate change and the fact that in Portugal right now is going through a period of prolonged drought and this will have a lot of impact on water management in Portugal and that is one of the issues that remains absent from the political debate, that is, it will certainly be necessary in 2018 to speak more in Portugal about the impact of climate change and also on the issue of water management in Portugal. We will have very serious problems in the future if we do not begin to deal with this issue.
We were with Victor Angelo, resident commentator for the Magazine Europa. This was the last program of 2017. We'll be right back next week. Good New Year!

(Technical sheet)
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