

## Press release

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Research projects, Research results  
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## Which state is the best in the world?

**Theresa Paola Stawski, a political scientist from Würzburg, has investigated how well the states of the world function. Germany just made it into the top ten.**

The state is not only the federal government, the states and the municipalities. "We can see the state in everything that surrounds us, for example in the streets, the courts, the police or the schools," says Theresa Paola Stawski. But how well do the states of this world function? This is what the political scientist with a doctorate has been investigating over the past few months. In her ranking, which is available on the internet, Germany is in tenth place out of 173 countries in 2022. Singapore takes first place. Stawski is a research assistant at the Department of Comparative Politics and Systems at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg (JMU).

The fact that a patient who needs an X-ray examination receives a doctor's appointment promptly, that there are schools all over the country and that electricity flows day and night, all this constitutes a well-functioning state. Quite a few people in this world can only dream of this. Citizens in South Sudan, Yemen and Libya are doing particularly badly. "These are collapsed states," explains Theresa Paola Stawski. In fact, there is no productive state work there any more. Yemen has at least improved minimally. This can be read in the 2022 report on the "Stateness Index" (StIx) on the website [www.stateness-index.org](http://www.stateness-index.org).

A functioning state does not have to be democratic

According to the Stateness Index, a Cypriot currently lives in a "defective" state, just like a Moroccan or an Indian. Citizens from Luxembourg, Norway or Belgium, on the other hand, are lucky enough to live in a highly functional state, just like Germans. "Whether a state functions well or not does not always have something to do with democracy," says Theresa Paola Stawski. Singapore, for example, is not a democracy. Nevertheless, the political scientist's analysis showed that this country is at the top in terms of statehood. The United Arab Emirates is also in the field of highly functional states.

In a country where, for example, there is no freedom of speech, people can still be well provided with all the essentials of life. State research, Theresa Paola Stawski emphasizes, is not identical of democracy studies: "State research is even more fundamental." Nevertheless, it still forms a niche topic within political science. Theresa Paola Stawski has specialised in state research. The DFG research project "The Statehood Index StIx" under the direction of Professor Hans-Joachim Lauth, holder of the Chair of Comparative Politics and German Government, in which she was intensively involved, builds on her dissertation. In it, she dealt with the question of how states develop when democracies become autocracies. And vice versa.

Study over more than 70 years

The new Stateness Index covers a long period of time: the development of the various states since 1950 can be traced via the homepage. The homepage itself is in English, the German side follows later this year. Nevertheless, interested citizens can use it relatively easily. For example, the menu item "Online Analyses" leads to a page with "Settings". If you click on it, you can easily select all years between 1950 and 2022.

Classically, the analysis of states focuses on the state's monopoly on law, violence and administration, but that is by no means everything that constitutes a state. "We did not only measure the formal state, but we also looked at the informal side," explains Theresa Paola Stawski, who cooperated closely with Lukas Lemm from the Institute of Political Science in her research. This informal side concerns, for example, the topic of "corruption". The measuring system and the overall very innovative approach to measuring stateness distinguishes the project, which started in October 2021.

#### Changes of government have little effect

In some countries, you have to reckon with the fact that the law enforcement agencies are bribed. There may be enough police officers. But when police officers act in a biased way, it is bad for citizens. Well-done reforms can improve governance, according to Theresa Paola Stawski. Mere changes of government, on the other hand, often have little effect. This becomes clear when you go to "Online Analyses" and click on "Country": a graph appears showing Germany's stateness since 1950. There was a jump upwards after reunification. Since 1990, however, the curves have been relatively stable. Regardless of who was in power at the time.

Currently, there is a lot of loud complaining about the German state, but according to Theresa Paola Stawski, this should not mislead citizens. According to her analyses, Germany remains one of the world's best states. "Elsewhere there are famines, epidemics and serious diseases, and almost no medical care," she says. A lot of things that the German population takes for granted are not available at all or no longer available in many countries of the world. Which does not mean, according to the scientist, that citizens in this country should sit back and relax. Further improvements are possible through democratic participation.

#### Germany ahead of the USA

Incidentally, according to the index, Joe Biden, the President of the USA, is at the head of a state that functions very well, but nowhere near as well as Germany. The United States is only 23rd in the ranking. Ahead of the USA are, for example, Malta, Spain, France and Japan. Directly behind the United States are the Czech Republic, Austria, Canada and Barbados. Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands perform even better than Germany. But Germany could also learn from the Baltic state of Estonia.

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