

# Bertelsmann study: Developing world faces more conflict, more repression

Democracy is being chipped away in many countries across the world, according to a new study by Germany's Bertelsmann Foundation. The study, which looks at 129 developing nations, warns autocracies are on the rise.



The quality of democracy and market-economy systems in developing nations and emerging economies has dropped to its lowest level in 12 years, Germany's nonprofit Bertelsmann foundation said in its so-called Transformation Index 2018.

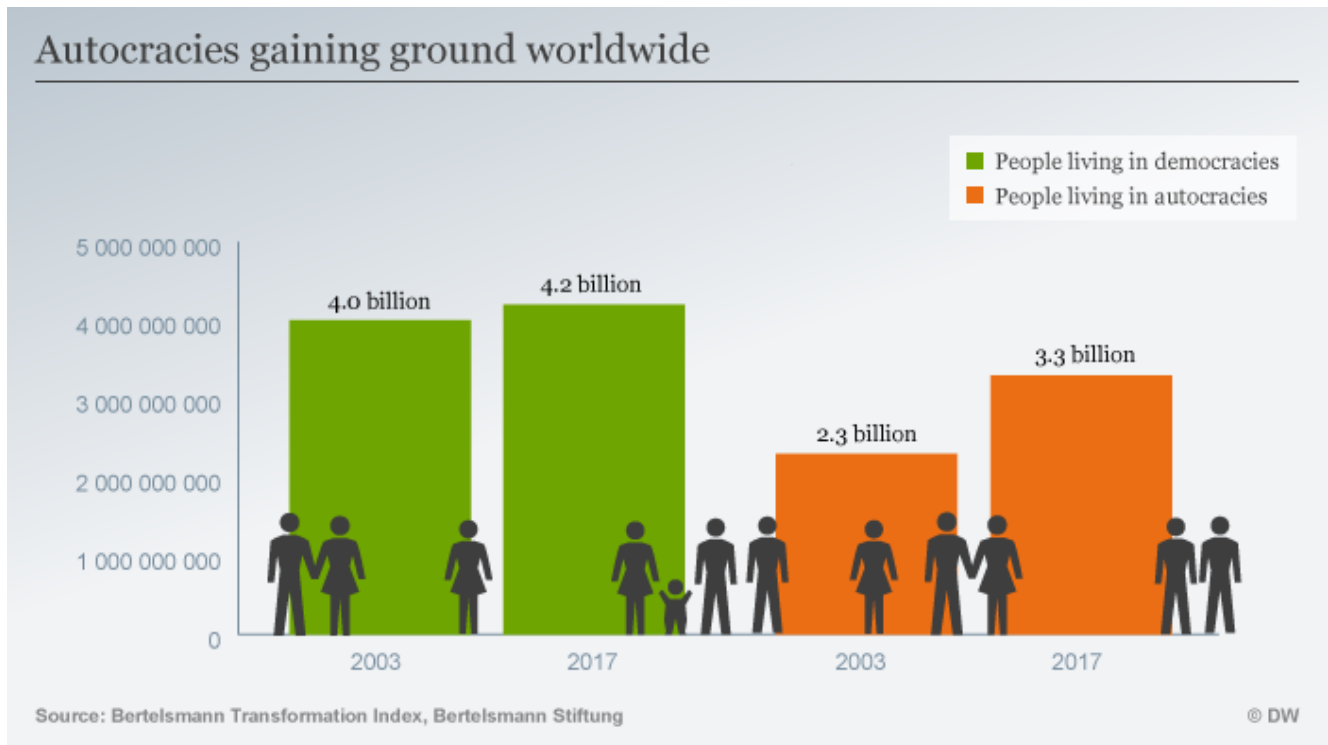
The report tracks the progress of 129 nations across the world in areas such as democracy, economy and governance.

Bertelsmann's researchers warn that democracy is "under pressure" and that repression and polarization within societies are on the rise.

"More and more people are living not only in less equal, but also in more repressive environments," the foundation says.

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According to the foundation, some 3.3 billion people in the world currently live under autocratic regimes, while 4.2 billion live in democracies. In 2003, only 2.3 billion lived in nondemocratic countries. Also, the number of autocracies among the 129 nations probed in the report rose from 55 two years ago to 58 today.



The report also notes that the level of development dropped in 22 countries within the last 10 years, notably in Venezuela, India and South Africa.

## **Hollowing out checks and balances**

Conflicts between various social groups have been on the rise “clearly and continuously” in recent years, according to the report. However, many governments are no longer offering solutions for the growing tensions in their respective societies.

Additionally, regimes in an increasing number of countries are undercutting institutions meant to provide checks and balances on their power, the researchers say.

However, “it is by no means just autocrats who have been tightening the screw of repression.”

“Governments in democracies have also increasingly been trying to govern with a

hard hand,” the report said on Thursday.

Notably, the report points to nations such as Brazil, Turkey, and even the EU member Poland.

“Many rulers are trying to cement their leadership through repressive measures,” said the head of the Bertelsmann Foundation Aart de Geus.

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### **Autocrats don’t care about corruption**

The reports emphasizes that democracies are much better in fighting corruption, ensuring equal opportunities, and providing a functioning market economy. According to the report, rulers in “defective democracies” such as Turkey and Hungary often pledge to fight corruption during election campaigns, but eventually fail to implement policies.

“Leaving aside the lip service, most autocrats think little of fighting corruption and abuse of power, and instead secure essential support by giving away official posts or public contracts,” the report says. “The large majority of autocracies are not efficient or professional systems; they are generally characterized by corruption, kleptocracy and arbitrary decisions,” the researchers added.

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Source: <http://www.dw.com/en/bertelsmann-study-developing-world-faces-more-conflict-more-repression/a-43079308>

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