

Digital Coup: The Conspiracy to Thwart Global Democracy

Darin Johnson

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Law professor and Washington veteran Darin Johnson's urgent political science book *Digital Coup* calls for action against information warfare and foreign election interference.

Here, the digital coup represents attempts to “undermine, thwart, or overthrow democratic institutions, processes, or elections through digital means.” The book identifies authoritarian governments including Russia, China, and Iran as the main perpetrators of information warfare, the goal of which is to destabilize democracies like the United States. It also traces the origins of the digital coup, defines its tactics, examines pertinent examples, and issues proposals for democratic nations to fight back.

The sobering, provocative claim that authoritarian governments seek to weaken democracies by sowing division and casting doubt on democratic elections is well supported. Documented cases of digital warfare, including Russia's interference in the 2016 US presidential election and the misinformation campaign surrounding COVID-19, add credence to the book's central premise. In addition, the book engages with more controversial theories, as with assertions that Kamala Harris won the 2024 presidential race—a claim the book admits may or may not be true. Johnson details the “citizen-led investigation” in depth nonetheless.

The structural framework is logical, with the book first exploring the origins of the digital coup before examining such coups in action. It ends with Johnson's recommendations for democratic responses. However, internal jumps between timelines and events make the book somewhat episodic. Still, the book ably establishes information warfare as a formidable threat, building toward a clear call to action as it beseeches democracies to respond to digital coups as they would any other act of war.

Digital Coup is an urgent, eye-opening political science book about how authoritarian governments weaponize social media to attack democracies.

HANNAH PEARSON (May / June 2026)

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