

# Digital Authoritarianism

## Chapter 4: Handbook of Political Control

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### What is Digital Authoritarianism?

We define digital authoritarianism as **the practices aimed at ...**

- 1) manufacturing or improving popular support for the incumbent,
- 2) reducing the threat of existing opposition, and
- 3) preventing future opposition

**... using digital technologies.**

### The Three Goals of Digital Authoritarianism

	1) Manufacturing Support	2) Reducing Threats	3) Preventing Opposition
Practices	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Automated and manual spread of dis- and mis-information</li><li>Conducted by state actors, media, private firms, and individuals</li><li>Paired with selective censorship</li></ul></div>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Broad censorship (e.g. internet shutdowns)</li><li>Targeted censorship (e.g. blocking accounts)</li><li>Targeted surveillance</li><li>Targeted harassment</li></ul></div>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Legislation regulating online content hosts and producers</li><li>Mass surveillance</li><li>Deterrence through public awareness of surveillance</li></ul></div>
Targets	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>General population</li><li>Foreign populations</li></ul></div>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>General population</li><li>Groups or citizens governments see as threats</li></ul></div>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>General population</li><li>Marginalized groups and opposition groups</li></ul></div>

### Areas for Future Research

Based on our review of research on digital authoritarianism, we see 5 areas for future work:

- How digital practices interact with each other and traditional tools of political control
- Digital authoritarianism beyond well studied cases such as Russia and China
- Connections between practices used domestically and those applied abroad
- Intended and unintended consequences of digital authoritarianism
- Strategies for countering digital authoritarianism