

# Historical parallel to george orwell's 1984 term paper



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The novel explores the various aspects of totalitarian governments through the dismal life that Winston Smith, a character in the novel goes through. He is constantly frustrated through suppression.

Perhaps that is clearly illustrated by the quote that presupposes that whoever can control the past, has power to control the future; while whoever has the ability to control the present, wields the right to control the past. In this novel Winston is actually unable to get off the big brother's watch who constantly monitors every action undertaken by him on telescreens.

Winston's resentment for the party eventually grows in enormity (Howe and Geoge 83).

The book presents various vagaries of totalitarian states, where a single entity rules over everybody's daily life without any opposition. Just like in many present totalitarian states, government control can be spotted almost everywhere in this book. This is highly reflected in Winston and many other characters that have no control over their families, aspects of history and even own sex life.

To make it even worse, the government has managed to even interfere in family affairs (Steinhoff 53). For instance, it turned children against their own parents, compelled patrons into doing undignified jobs, control history by completely wiping people out of existence, as well as exploring a determined desire to completely remove all sexual desires from different individuals.

All the things that take place in the book have their own parallels in history. For example, the Cuban missile crisis is a potent example that occurred after

the publication. There has also been the Korean War, the division of Germany by the Berlin Wall, and its eventual destruction.

Through the Holocaust, about 11 million lives were brought to an abrupt end; not through any wrong they did, but basically through what they were. The Nazis persecuted groups such as homosexuals, members of Jehovah's witnesses, the handicapped, Catholics, political dissidents and many others (Dieterle 25)

One could see that the Nazis persecuted them due to their physical orientations and even religion inclinations. In actual sense most were persecuted due to their failure to suit the Aryan perceived ideal. Adolf Hitler, who was born in 1889, is the one who led the Holocaust. He later died in 1945, the same year that the United Nations was established by several countries committed to the pursuit of peace through cooperation.

Today, most nations of the world belong to United Nations, which is faced with the duty of maintaining international peace and security as well as making sure that friendly coexistence among nations is promoted (Rodden 47). Protection of human rights also falls under its mandate as well as harmonization many other actions of nations. Though faced with these enormous responsibilities, the UN has been accused of imposing the will of the West on other States. This is exactly what we see in Orwell's 1984.

There is another organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which is an alliance of countries from North America and Europe. These countries are committed to fulfilling the wishes and goals of the North

Atlantic Treaty that was signed in 1949. Actually, the initial fundamental goal <https://assignbuster.com/historical-parallel-to-george-orwells-1984-term-paper/>

of NATO was to safeguard the security and freedom of its member states. However, lately its mandate has been seen to be expanding including intervention in external conflicts bedeviling others for fling countries across the globe (Rodden 50).

Compared to the Orwellian '1984' one can see that both NATO and UN have far reaching influence on the rest of the world just like the party in '1984'.

Totalitarianism has also been exhibited in States like China and even Korea. Though both are totalitarian, the Chinese government has proved less totalitarian with time; its systems of government still wield a great influence. First of all, its system is highly politicized with no clean distinction between the state and society. The citizens have no freedom and live under constant surveillance from the state, which acts as the big brother over its citizenry.

Just like the big brother in "1984", in these two states there is a single rule by powerful dictatorship. For instance, in North Korea the leader is feared and considered the absolute holder of the truth and actually the one who "protects" and saves his people. The masses are brainwashed through constant propaganda and to some extent there is some indoctrination. These components of totalitarianism create a culture of paranoia among the citizens' psyche.

Usually, the leader is not selected through popular mandate. In most cases the leaders emanate from several hereditary monarchies. Decent is usually brought down with military might. The government has planted spies to point out any person considered to be exhibiting dissident view (Rodden 66).

Though the American citizens may not have experienced such situations, the novel clearly warns how the totalitarian states smother its citizens. For instance, in the book, we are told of how the Party put stringent control on the people by planting Junior Spies.

These junior spies are children who report to the party and they spy against their parents should they identify any element of "disloyalty to the party". For instance, Winston's neighbor becomes the victim of this arrangement when his own children turn him in. In Nazi Germany we are told how Hitler controlled children and these children were called Hitler's Youth.

Winston is forced to adjust his movement for fear of constant surveillance from the state. Telescreens were stationed to simultaneously transmit individual actions and intentions. By these, individuals were constantly brainwashed into believing that they were being watched.

Winston, we are told, was even fearful of the posture that he took for he feared what a wrong posture could portend. He also lives in constant fear of revealing his hatred for the government. We are told, "...the smallest thing could give you away. A nervous tic, an unconscious look of anxiety, and a habit of muttering to yourself anything that carried with it a suggestion of having something to hide," could put one in trouble. (Orwell 54)

In China and North Korea we have heard of great interference with the electronic media. The state does not allow freedom of information. In fact, the state controls almost all types of information that are submitted to the masses. Indeed, there have been cases of visiting journalists being arrested and accused of spying for their foreign governments.

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The party exercises both physical and psychological control over its citizens by instilling fear through this surveillance and psychological terror. The party also uses propaganda to confuse the masses into believing that recent failure is in fact a success. For example, when the party announces an increase of the chocolate in their daily meal, Winston discovers that in actual sense, it was a reduction from the previous day, though many people receive the news with no suspicion.

To further advance the psychological warfare, there are large writings on the streets with the writing, "Big Brother is Watching You" which this serves as a reminder to every body that they do not have freedom.

This idea of surveillance cameras has come under great use all over the world lately. For example, in large avenues in the US and even England there are surveillance cameras all over monitoring everything that people are doing. This is also replicated in countries like China and even North Korea where individuals are spied upon by the government until they no longer feel free in their own country.

Orwell has in first chapters of his work stressed on surveillance. This constant hammering by Orwell is a strategy used to enable him to make the reader see the importance of freedom. Actually one wonders what life would be if one were to be in such a situation. We are exposed to a situation where Winston is forced to associate his movement with awareness that he could be watched by someone.

We are told, "...he set his features into the expression of quiet optimism which was advisable when facing the telescreen" (Orwell 8). The story well <https://assignbuster.com/historical-parallel-to-george-orwells-1984-term-paper/>

demonstrates that facial expressions, body movements and posture are all controlled by the government; the government is exploiting the masses through unfair exercise of its disciplinary power. The suggestion here is that ironically the state is the one that fears the individuals otherwise there is no need why it should so wish to tame the individual through such antics.

The other aspect that Orwell reveals through surveillance is to identify "thought-crimes". In the book, merely entertaining dissenting views could land one into great trouble. In fact we are told that such thoughts were more punishable than crimes such as murder and even theft.

Orwell achieved this by presenting Winston at the beginning of the book writing hateful thoughts about the government in a personal diary. We are further told that even if he did not write down his thoughts or not he would still have committed them. So he went on and wrote "DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER" (Orwell 19)

Thought-crime in Orwell's work is punished because it goes against the grain and aspirations of the ruling class. So, Orwell showed that brain processes can be a threat to rogue regimes.

Perhaps, it could be against this understanding that we see the government employing propaganda to make sure that the thought processes of individuals do not reach their implementation stage. Winston is in great conflict as he wonders what to put down in his diary and what to leave out. This also shows the very extent to which state terror has percolated the mind of the population.

In countries such as China and North Korea, the educated are closely monitored by the powers. Idea generation is highly skewed, as there is no medium through which individuals can express their thoughts freely.

Orwell comes into the league of dystopian novelists by appreciating the failure of physical control. He shows that for one to control fully then the mind should be the target. Total control by most totalitarian states has gone to great heights. Faced with the urge to control the mind, most totalitarian governments have employed various schemes to do so.

For example, in North Korea the regime has managed to brainwash the citizens and even the external world that it has the greatest arsenal in its possession. It does this by holding public military parades for the whole world to see. So, Orwell in his work shows that the wish for control by the rulers of these states does not rest at the individual level, but also spreads up to the external world. This is perhaps meant to create an illusion of control since it is not easy to control the external world.

The Marcos regime in the Philippines was full of scandals. First of all, Marcos perpetuated himself in power together with his son and wife by taking control of both political and economic resources of the country.

The kind of power Marcos wielded helped him and his family control the country as he managed to suppress open dissent for a time. It is argued, for instance, that it is this illegitimate hold on to power that pushed him to exercise terror. He capitalized on propaganda, too. It is recorded that Mijares, was Marcos' chief media propagandist.



This is in line with Orwell in Nineteen Eighty Four presents. Marcos wanted to control the mind and other things; and by this, he employed propaganda to achieve this selfish end (Moustaki 97). We are in fact told how Marcos' agents plundered copies of a book that had exposed his dealings. He set out to bribe the writer, a former media propagandist, not to publish the memoirs but this could not work. But after being tricked to come back to Phillipines, Mijares was killed in a bizarre incident.

Even the support that opposition got was discreet since it would have been met by the full force. Just like in the book, Marcos dreaded dissident from the party. The ruling party was the vehicle through which Marcos managed to execute his political machinations.

Marcos also employed the use of propaganda like the one "guns, goons and gold" to his advantage. He used state resources as he wished. A crisis would arise out of poverty. This has its parallel in Orwell's book. For example, in Nineteen Eighty Four there is intimidation and the threat to punishment.

In Nineteen Eighty Four the party uses psychological control over the members of the society through propaganda and intimidation. The party denied people to have sex so as they could later channel this pent up sexual desire towards fighting those opposing the Party and the Big Brother.

Ironically, it is the very Party that created the very enemies it is trying to fight. Actually in the three nations, the war will not be won since it is difficult for two allied nations to beat the third. Oceania has enemies so that the citizens are united against a common enemy and in essence make them love the Party even more.

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The Big Brother does go further and even employ physical control. Winston says that a person's nervous system could prove the worst enemy to that person. The party makes sure that its citizens are constantly occupied so that they do not have time to engage in any dissent.

This in essence makes them totally exhausted that they do not have time to engage in any dissent (Moustaki 99). To achieve this, people are made to participate in morning exercises referred to as "morning jerks" and afterwards they are made to work strenuously in the government agencies.

There is a very big parallel with what has been taking place in most communist states. In the Soviet Republic people had to work in timber industry and on the government owned farms. Private ownership of land was prohibited and so people had to rely on government for subsistence. This perhaps explains why to date citizens in the runaway states have detested communism. The same happens in China.

Most people work on farms and industry at low wages and dissent is completely detested by the government. Media is controlled by the government and even some sites are blocked on the internet. Recently there has been an altercation between Chinese authorities and the search engine.

Winston is subjected to physical torture after he defies the party. At last he confesses that nothing can prevent one from stopping physical pain. He feels that physical pain is so powerful that even his deep love for Julia and his hatred for the party could surpass what pain he endured while being

tortured. As he was being tortured he was made to believe that even "two plus two equals five".

Another aspect that is used is the ability to control history. Through controlling the past, the Party manages to control all the information available to the people. Later on, Orwell uses Winston to adjust all the historical records (Rodden 46). This means that through this it could not be established if certain dissidents ever existed.

The Party can justify each action it commits. Citizens are prohibited from keeping past records or documents. Even photographs were not to be kept. This puts the citizens into a very vulnerable position since they do not have reliable records for any reference. They are susceptible to the government propaganda. In most totalitarian countries there is control of information. Media is controlled by state agents who are told what to write.

Orwell also shows how governments set out to control the external world so that their power may be seen to be acceptable.

One way of achieving this is through constant warfare as seen in Oceania. Orwell exposes us how constant warfare kind of psychologically assures the citizens of the power the party has over them. We see Oceania always at war with Eurasia and Eastasia.

Winston Smith helps the reader understand the regime he lives in. Winston lives in an authoritarian regime as a citizen of Airstrip One, in Oceania.

According to Reed and Michael (33), Winston lives a cruel and limited life; he is monitored, and forced to submit to the party in all aspects of his life.

In Oceania, individuals who do not embrace the party “suffer the wrath of the Thought Police”. Orwell’s illustrations of the treatment and totalitarian rule that Winston encounters in Oceania parallels the totalitarian regimes right from the early twentieth century to the present. During the twentieth century, the Nazis in Germany and Stalin in the Soviet Union espoused much control and restricted their citizens in exercising their rights and freedom (Reed and Michael 44).

Orwell illustrates that the Party monitored and controlled its citizens by using telescreens that could transmit constant streams of propaganda such as the Two Minutes Hate and Hate Week, and instilling fear by invoking the Thought Police. Hence, the party employed these strategies so as to stay in power by using extensive psychological manipulation (Plank 17).

Winston views the regularities of his world that is the telescreen, the dilapidated residence complex, the Big Brother and the sad reality of his neighbor and the die-hard party supporters with contempt and sadness (Reed and Michael 54). He has deep reservations about the party and feels there must be hope for a better future, in which personal freedom is guaranteed.

However, children’s strong devotion to the Party makes him worry a lot. In his view, he sees the Party has indoctrinated the young children through strategies such as the Youth League and the Spies, which motivate children to report anyone they perceive as a criminal, even their parents (Brodeur 63).

These influence and control over the young children of Oceania shows the significant degree of control the Party leverage over its citizens. It also provides an analogous situation to similar fascist organizations of the twentieth century such as Hitler's Youth. Besides, the communist rule in Germany illustrates the issues raised by Orwell in his book (Moustaki 73). The communist rule in most parts of Eastern Europe dampened down hostility and increased violent incidents among the populations.

Besides, the slaughter in Yugoslavia suggested the replacement of the repressed in the same way as elections in former Soviet Union were. In this case, Orwell was an auspicious novelist; the human spirit is strong, spirited and downright recalcitrant (Moustaki 97). This illustrates, people can create laws or instill fear to make others silent; people can also enact laws which impel love with a neighbor.

Orwell is underpinning a psychological and political reality, which represent the majority embracing the authorial effect that arises as a result of Nazism and Stalinism. When the 1984 was authored, it coincided with political depressions happening across the world. The world was at the stage of fascist and authoritarian regimes that were condemned because of the evil acts of Stalin and Hitler.

Orwell in his work was hilarious. He illustrated that government can trigger fanaticism. Perhaps, it can achieve this for a short- time; however, people evolve to their original form (Orwell and Harold 34). In the present world, fundamentalism has arisen in opposition to the government, not as a result

of it. Like capitalism and democracy, government of any nature and fundamentalism trend different rulebooks.

Fundamentalism, akin to capitalism demonstrates a mean to an end; fundamentalism trusts the heavenly kingdom; in whatever case it is represented to them, they will conquer the world, or they think the millennium will come and accomplish everything and will domicile in heaven. However, all states or governments including the oppressive governments, embrace the doctrine of permanence contradicting all fundamentalisms.

Once fundamentalists succeed or conquer, as the case in Iran, the pragmatists and bureaucrats emerge. Orwell, in his book shows the world of constant, organized diversions and trials, shows trials and other challenges to keep people frightened, diverted and obedient. However, experiences learned from governments such as Russia, China and Iran confirm that this is a short term strategy since not all people are convinced, but the instigators or the "leaders tire and cannot continue further".

The 1984 sees government being managed by corrupt leaders which deprive its citizens of their natural freedom. Hence, Orwell demonstrates the hazards of how unchecked power can be a significant issue in western democracies (Orwell and Harold 74).

In conclusion it can be said that it is only through radical despair that the citizenry of the totalitarian states manage to emancipate themselves. Otherwise the ruling class of such regimes will continue to maintain a stranglehold of the societies they are in rule of.

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