

# Comparative essay to north korea



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A Big Brother society seeks to control the hearts and minds of its citizen in order for many to be subject to the few. Three particular methods this society employs has no other purpose than to control how people think and behave: propaganda, censorship, and surveillance. Totalitarian states have employed these methods effectively in the past. Today, North Korea stands as a model of the dystopian society that George Orwell wrote about in his novel, Nineteen Eighty-Four. With a third generation leader now in ascendancy, North Korea is a testament as to how effective mind-control methods can be as Orwell warned us they would.

Propaganda can be used to instill constant fear on people to control their behavior. In Orwell's Big Brother society, posters were designed to be imposing and intimidating. "The poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran" (Orwell 1). If somebody looked at you intensely, you would be uncomfortable. Make that face bigger and the effect is even more intense. Add a very specific message and you generate a very specific fear.

This was the same technique used in North Korea today where they used large posters of their leader Kim Jong IL, to generate the same feeling of fear. In addition to designing large intimidating posters, there was no escaping the propaganda in Orwell's Big Brother society. They were everywhere. "There seemed to be no colour in anything, except the posters that were plastered everywhere. The blackmoustachio'd face gazed down from every commanding corner. There was one on the house-front

immediately opposite. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption said, while the dark eyes looked deep into Winston's own" (Orwell 4).

This message-everywhere technique was meant to condition the mind. Fear or any desired emotion has to be reinforced constantly and at every possible moment. It has to be repeated. Again, North Korea is an example of how to repeat an intimidating message. They have the image of their great leader everywhere for people to see. Indeed, propaganda is a very effective tool for controlling people's minds. It cannot be underestimated. For the North Korean leadership, designing fear into posters and placing them everywhere worked well for them because they are now under a third generation of that dynasty.

As one American tourist puts it, " The average North Korean is indoctrinated to believe that the average American has some vested interest in keeping the peninsula divided" (Burdick 159). Censorship is a way to control people by preventing them from developing their faculties for independent thinking and distorting their sense of reality. In Orwell's Big Brother society, there were people whose work was devoted to erasing people from records to deny their existence. The main character Winston performed his work as a censor in eliminating references to an enemy of the state. " Withers, however, was already an UNPERSON.

He did not exist: he had never existed" (Orwell 58). Revising history is meant to control people by making them forget. If they can't find information about something then it probably doesn't exist. North Korea is just as ruthless in dealing with the enemies of the state. They disappear and public records of

their existence even photographs are altered to make it seem they did not exist. Even tourists experience censorship as one American narrated in a recent visit, “ I knew the contents of each card (postcard) would need to pass the inspection of censors, so I kept my words brief and dripping with flattery” (Burdick 286).

But censorship doesn't stop in just removing information because in the same act, new and false information are also introduced thereby creating false memories in people's minds. Winston in Orwell's story did just that. “ What was needed was a piece of pure fantasy. Suddenly there sprang into his mind, ready made as it were, the image of a certain Comrade Ogilvy, who had recently died in battle, in heroic circumstances. [...] It was true that there was no such person as Comrade Ogilvy, but a few lines of print and a couple of faked photographs would soon bring him into existence” (Orwell 59).

Such blatant lies control people's minds by distorting their sense of reality. Done in a much bigger scale, people can be made to believe in anything. This is so in North Korea. Their great leader is not only portrayed as possessing so much virtue, public records show him as having done things in the past that were simply not true. They complete fabrication. The presence of surveillance in everyday life is a subtle way of controlling people, by taking away their freedom to do whatever they like. In Orwell's Big Brother society, there were surveillance devices all around. The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously.

Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it, moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment" (Orwell 5). Knowing that you are being watched is a great demotivator and a real constraint on our freedom. You become over cautious to the point of paranoia.

North Korea exemplifies this kind of society. Foreign visitors especially are given the extra treatment by having " minders" or escorts to follow them around inside the country. One such tourist narrated, " Surrounded as I was by minders, I was struggling to keep a grasp on reality; in a situation where everyone around me seemed to be lying, it was a challenge even to know what that reality was" (Harrold 114). But having surveillance devices monitoring your every move in a Big Brother society is not enough. It has to have informants.

In Orwell's Big Brother society, " People were encouraged to be fond of their children, in almost the old-fashioned way. The children, on the other hand, were systematically turned against their parents and taught to spy on them and report their deviations. The family had become in effect an extension of the Thought Police. It was a device by means of which everyone could be surrounded night and day by informers who knew him intimately" (Orwell 168). Such is the nature of life under constant surveillance. You cannot trust anyone even your family members.

In North Korea, the interest of the state is above that of the family. A Big Brother society is indeed about controlling the hearts and minds of people. It achieves this primarily through the abundant use of propaganda, censorship and surveillance. And the desired outcome, a state ruled by a privileged few with the majority of the citizens forced to live in perpetual austerity. The people in this society have no minds of their own and they have no desires of their own. Whatever the people believe, they were forced to accept from some central authority.