

Totalitarianism in George Orwell's 1984

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Abstract

This study discusses the representations of totalitarianism in George Orwell's 1984. Totalitarianism refers to a political system when regimes (political systems) control all public behaviour and as much of private behaviour as they can. No elections are held, or if they are, candidates must be approved by the ruling group. Physical force and/or arrests and detentions are used on people who protest against the regime. There are events such as parades or rallies. These suggest to the people that the ruling group is in complete control.

Big brother and other work for George Orwell refers a lot to totalitarianism. He represents the concepts in most of his works and this is because he suffers a lot from this fact.

Keywords: Totalitarianism, representation, literary works. George Orwell.

Theoretical part of the study

Totalitarianism: Introduction

Totalitarianism is a type of government and a political system that forbids all opposition parties, criminalizes individual and collective defiance of the state and its claims, and imposes a draconian level of control and restriction on both public and private life. It is viewed as the strictest and most comprehensive type of authoritarianism. Autocrats, such as dictators and absolute monarchs, frequently hold political power in totalitarian nations, using all-encompassing propaganda operations to sway the populace through the use of state-run mass media. During the Cold War, the idea significantly influenced Western political discourse (Nicholas, 2005: 30)

Totalitarianism is a particularly modernist phenomenon and a political ideology with deeply nuanced historical roots. Although Popper's definition of totalitarianism has been questioned in academia and is still very contentious, he traced its origins to Plato, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's theory of the state, and Karl Marx's political philosophy. According to other philosophers and historians like Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the Age of Enlightenment, particularly the anthropocentric notion that "Man has become the master of the world, a master unbound by any links to nature, society, and history," is where totalitarian doctrines first emerged. Italian fascists developed the concept of absolute state power first in the 20th century, and concurrently in Germany by a jurist and Nazi academic named Carl Schmitt during the Weimar Republic in the 1920s (ibid).

The Soviet Union's founder, Vladimir Lenin, is regarded by academics and historians as one of the pioneers in the effort to create a totalitarian state. The father of Italian fascism, Benito Mussolini, referred to his government as the "Totalitarian State," where "everything in the State, nothing outside the State, and nothing against the State." In his landmark 1927 book *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt adopted the term *Totalstaat* (lit. "Total state") to characterize the legal foundation of an all-powerful state (George, 2005; (Abeche et al., 2021; Akçay & Akçay, 2020)

Totalitarian regimes are different from other authoritarian regimes, as the latter denotes a state in which the single power holder, usually an individual dictator, a committee, a military junta, or an otherwise small group of political elites, monopolizes political power. A totalitarian regime may attempt to control virtually all aspects of social life, including the economy, the education system, arts, science, and the private lives and morals of citizens through the use of an elaborate ideology. It can also mobilize the whole population in pursuit of its goals (ibid).

What Is Totalitarianism?

Totalitarian regimes are frequently characterized by extreme political repression, often to a greater degree than authoritarian regimes, under an undemocratic government, widespread personality cultism around the person or group in power, complete control over the economy, extensive censorship and mass surveillance systems, limited or nonexistent freedom of movement (the freedom to leave the country), and the widespread use of state terrorism. Other characteristics of a totalitarian state include the widespread use of internment camps, a pervasive secret police, acts of religious persecution or racism, the imposition of theocratic rule or state atheism, the frequent application of the death penalty and show trials, rigged elections (if elections are held), the potential for the development of WMD, the possibility of state possession of WMD, and the possibility of state-sponsored terrorism state-sponsored mass murders and genocides, and the possibility of engaging in a war, or colonialism against other countries, which is often followed by the annexation of their territories.

A totalitarian regime, according to historian Robert Conquest, is one that recognizes no boundaries on its control in any area of public or private life and expands that authority as far as it deems practical (Brooke, 2007: 64).

Authoritarianism and totalitarianism are contrasted. An authoritarian regime is "just concerned with political power, and as long as it is not questioned, it gives society a certain degree of liberty," according to Radu Cinpoes. Authoritarianism "does not aim to modify the world and human nature," according to Cinpoes. Richard Pipes, on the other hand, believed that the formally proclamation of an ideology "cutting into the deepest levels of societal structure, and the totalitarian government strives to entirely control the minds and behaviors of its subjects."

Carl Joachim Friedrich said in a writing "The three characteristics of totalitarian governments that set them apart from previous autocracies are [a] totalist ideology, a party strengthened by secret police, and monopolistic control of industrial mass society (ibid).

The Topic's Background

By describing Italian Fascism as a system that was fundamentally distinct from traditional dictatorships, Giovanni Amendola developed the idea that totalitarianism is the exercise of all political authority by the state in 1923. Later, in the writings of Giovanni Gentile, the most well-known philosopher and foremost fascist theorist in Italy, the phrase was given a positive connotation. When describing the structure and objectives of the new state, which was to provide the "complete national representation and total guidance of national goals." He described totalitarianism as a society in which the ideology of the state had influence, if not power, over most of its citizens.

Benito Mussolini claimed that this system turns everything moral and human into a political issue: "Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state." (David, 2010: 95).

The Austrian author Franz Borkenau, who noted that totalitarianism united rather than separated the Soviet and German dictatorships, was among the first to use the phrase in English in his 1938 book *The Communist International*. Winston Churchill twice referred to Nazi Germany as totalitarian in his statement to the House of Commons on October 5, 1938, in opposition to the Munich Agreement, which allowed France and Great Britain to approve Nazi Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland. Backbencher MP for the Epping constituency at the time, Churchill. Speaking on the radio two weeks later, Churchill again employed the term, this time applying the concept to "a Communist or a Nazi tyranny." (David, 2010: 56)

The founder of the historical Spanish reactionary party known as the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right (CEDA), José Mara Gil-Robles y Quiones, announced his intention to "Give Spain a true unity, a new spirit, and a totalitarian polity, he continued, adding that democracy is merely a tool for establishing the new state. Parliament will either submit when the time comes, or we will get rid of it." In order to prevent rival right-wing parties from existing in Spain, General Francisco Franco dissolved CEDA in April 1937. Gil-Robles later left for exile (Karl, 2013: 50).

In numerous writings published in 1940, 1941, and 1942, George Orwell frequently used the word "totalitarian" and its cognates. Orwell wrote "Why I Write" in his essay: "'The Spanish war and other events in 1936–37 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it."

In a piece titled "If You Want a Vision of the Future, imagine a Boot Stamping on a Human Face—Forever," he expressed his concern that future totalitarian regimes might use technological advancements in surveillance and mass media to establish a permanent and global dictatorship that would be impossible to overthrow (ibid).

The British historian E. H. Carr stated in a 1945 lecture series titled "The Soviet Impact on the Western World" that "the trend away from individualism and towards totalitarianism is everywhere unmistakable" and that Marxism-Leninism was by far the most successful form of totalitarianism as evidenced by Soviet industrial growth and the Red Army's role in overthrowing Germany. Carr claimed that only those who were "blind and incurable" could disregard the trend towards totalitarianism (John, 1964: 67).

Karl Popper developed a significant critique of totalitarianism in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945) and *The Poverty of Historicism* (1961). Popper argued that totalitarianism is based on the idea that history progresses toward an irreversible future in line with knowable laws and compared it with the "open society" of liberal democracy (Karl, 2013: 89).

Hannah Arendt argued in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that the Nazi and Communist regimes were entirely new forms of government, not just improved iterations of the previous tyrannies. Arendt claims that the ideology of totalitarian regimes, which offers a consoling and unifying solution to the mysteries of the past, present, and future, is the root of their widespread appeal. History is history for the Nazis of race struggle and for Marxism-Leninism all history is the history of class struggle. Once that premise is accepted, all actions

of the state can be justified by appeal to nature or the law of history, justifying their establishment of authoritarian state apparatus (Ronald, 1970: 20).

Along with Arendt, numerous academics from various academic disciplines and ideological stances have carefully analyzed totalitarianism. Raymond Aron, Lawrence Aronsen, Franz Borkeuau, Karl Dietrich Bracher, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Robert Conquest, Carl Joachim Friedrich, Eckhard Jesse, Leopold Labedz, Walter Laqueur, Claude Lefort, Juan Linz, Richard Löwenthal, Karl Popper, Richard Pipes, Leonard Schapiro, and Adam Ulam are some of the most well-known commentators on totalitarianism (ibid).

They all agreed that totalitarianism involves repression or state control of business, labor unions, non-profit organizations, religious organizations, and small political parties in order to mobilize entire populations in support of an official party ideology and tolerating activities that are not directed towards the party's goals.

At the same time, a large number of academics from various fields and ideologies opposed those who advocated authoritarianism. Louis Althusser, Benjamin Barber, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre were among the most well-known. Totalitarianism, in their view, was linked to Western ideals and was associated with evaluation as opposed to analysis. During the Cold War, the idea gained popularity in anti-communist political rhetoric in the West as a means of transforming prewar anti-fascism into postwar anti-communism (Max, et al, 2002: 67).

Carl Joachim Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, political scientists, are chiefly responsible for broadening the term's usage in academic social science and professional study in 1956 and reformulating it as a paradigm for both the Soviet Union and fascist government:

1. Describe your guiding philosophy.
2. One big party, usually under a dictator.
3. Terrorist organization that makes use of violence and the secret police.
4. Weapons monopoly
5. Communication channels are monopolized.
6. Through governmental planning, the economy is centralized and directed.

French scholar Raymond Aron outlined five requirements for a government to be deemed totalitarian in his book *Democracy and Totalitarianism* (1968):

1. A state where there is just one political party, and it controls all political activities.
2. A state ideology that is supported by the in-power party and is acknowledged as the only authority.
3. State-controlled information monopoly that directs media outlets to disseminate official information
4. A state-controlled economy where the state controls the major economic actors
5. Ideological horror that makes professional or financial decisions illegal. Infringers are subject to legal action and ideological persecution (ibid).

The chaos that followed World War I, in this theory, gave rise to totalitarian regimes in Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union. This chaos allowed totalitarian movements to seize power, and the sophistication of modern weapons and communications allowed them to successfully establish what Friedrich and Brzezinski called a "totalitarian dictatorship." Social scientists have disputed Friedrich and Brzezinski's totalitarian approach, saying that the Soviet system was actually better understood in terms of interest groups, rival elites, or even class, employing the concept of the nomenklatura as a vehicle for a new ruling class (new class).

These opponents contend that there is proof of the widespread distribution of authority among sectoral and local authorities, at least in terms of policy implementation. However, supporters of the totalitarian model claimed that the failure of the system to survive showed not only its inability to adapt but also the mere formality of supposed popular participation. For some supporters of this pluralist approach, this was evidence of the regime's ability to adapt to include new demands (Ondrej, 2020: 60).

Karl Dietrich Bracher, a German historian whose work primarily focuses on Nazi Germany, asserted that the "totalitarian typology" created by Friedrich and Brzezinski is an overly rigid model that neglects to consider the "revolutionary dynamic" that Bracher believes is at the core of totalitarianism.

According to Bracher, what separates the totalitarian "closed" understanding of politics from the "open" democratic understanding is the total claim to control and remake every aspect of society in conjunction with an all-encompassing ideology, the value of authoritarian leadership, and the pretense of a shared identity of state and society. Walter Laqueur, an American historian, argued that Bracher's concept appeared to suit reality better than the Friedrich-Brzezinski definition because it stated that totalitarian regimes did not need a single leader and could operate with collaborative leadership. Werner Conze and other historians criticized Bracher's typologies, claiming that he "lost sight of the historical material" and employed "universal, ahistorical notions" (ibid).

According to Eric Hoffer's 1951 book *The True Believer*, mass movements like fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism all portrayed Western democracies and their values as decadent, with people being "too soft, too pleasure-loving, and too selfish" to give their lives in service of a higher good. This, in their eyes, implied an inner moral and biological decay. According to Hoffer, those movements gave disgruntled individuals the hope of a great future, allowing them to escape the lack of personal accomplishments in their current lives (Francisco, 2019: 23).

The next step is the incorporation of the individual into a small collective body, after which "fact-proof screens from reality" are built. This viewpoint might be related to a religious aversion to communists.

After the rise of Hitler, many European Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike, are said to have developed a fear of Communist governments, according to Paul Hanebrink, who wrote: "For many European Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike, the new postwar 'culture war' crystallized as a struggle against communism. Christians in interwar Europe condemned the Communist government in Russia as the pinnacle of secular materialism and a militaristic threat to the social and moral order that Christianity had established. Hanebrink, who characterized Europe in the early Cold War, believed that Christians saw Communist regimes as a threat to their moral order and intended to guide European states back to their Christian roots by establishing an anti-totalitarian census (ibid).

According to Laure Neumayer, the idea of totalitarianism "made a powerful resurgence despite the disagreements about its heuristic value and its normative implications." to the political and academic fields at the end of the Cold War." In the 1990s, François Furet made a comparative analysis and used the term totalitarian twins to link Nazism and Stalinism. Eric Hobsbawm criticized Furet for his temptation to stress the existence of a common ground between two systems with different ideological roots (Tzvetan, 2016: 23).

General Augusto Pinochet's arrest had a "exceptional liberating effect," according to author Slavoj Žižek in *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?: Five Interventions in the (Mis)Use of a Notion*, as "the fear of Pinochet dissipated, the spell was broken, the taboo subjects of torture and disappearances became the daily grist of the news media; the people no longer just whispered, but openly spoke. Saladdin Ahmed quoted Hannah Arendt as saying that General August Pinochet's Chile "was the case in General August Pinochet's Chile, yet it would be absurd to exempt it from the class of totalitarian regimes for that alone," adding that "the Soviet Union can no longer be called totalitarian in the strict sense of the term after Stalin's death."

Although there was no "official ideology" in place in Chile under Pinochet, according to Saladdin, one man was in charge "behind the scenes": Milton Friedman, the originator of neoliberalism and the Chicago Boys' most important professor. Friedman also served as Pinochet's advisor. Saladdin opposed the totalitarian idea in this sense because it was only applied to "opposing ideologies" and not to liberalism (*ibid*).

Richard Shorten, Vladimir Tismăneanu, and Aviezer Tucker proposed that totalitarian ideologies can take various forms in various political systems, but they all center on utopianism, scientism, or political violence. This was in the early 2010s. They contend that both Nazism and Stalinism highlighted the importance of specialization in contemporary society and viewed polymath as a threat thing of the past, and they also stated that their claims were supported by statistics and science, which led them to impose strict ethical regulations on culture, use psychological violence, and persecute entire groups (Lennard, 2013: 11).

Other academics have attacked their ideas for being biased and out of date. The idea of "modern despotism," in Juan Francisco Fuentes's opinion, is a "reverse anachronism," and he views totalitarianism as a "invented tradition." According to Fuentes, "the anachronistic use of totalitarian/totalitarianism involves the will to reshape the past in the image and likeness of the present." (*ibid*)

Other studies attempt to connect authoritarianism with advances in modern technology. According to Shoshana Zuboff, the economic forces of contemporary surveillance capitalism are causing an increase in online connection and surveillance, as well as the opening up of social spaces to corporate actors who are interested in maximizing profit or controlling behavior.

Toby Ord thought that Orwell's concerns about totalitarianism served as an important early model for contemporary ideas of anthropogenic existential risk, the idea that a future catastrophe could permanently wipe out the possibility of Earth-originating intelligent life due in part to technological advancements, resulting in a perpetual technological dystopia. Ord claimed that Orwell's writings demonstrate that his worry was genuine rather than merely an incidental element of Nineteen Eighty-four's story. "[A] governing class which could defend against (four previously mentioned causes of risk) would remain in power eternally," wrote George Orwell in 1949. In the same year, Bertrand Russell stated that "totalitarian nations have completely utilized the prospect of a new intensity of governmental control, made available by modern means." (Michael, 2016; (Bomfim et al., 2021)

The Economist labeled China's Social Credit System, which was designed under Chinese Communist Party general secretary Xi Jinping's leadership and is used to screen and rank its residents based on their individual conduct, as dictatorial in the late 2010s. A one-

party state can use the ranking system in China to further its goal of population control, according to critics who claim it is intrusive. The cult of personality and philosophy of Xi Jinping, the paramount leader of China, have been compared to those of Mao Zedong during the Cold War by The New York Times. It will make China a more civilized and law-abiding society, according to supporters. Instead of being dictatorial, Shoshana Zuboff views it as instrumentarian. Brain-reading, contact tracing, and other cutting-edge technology could enable future totalitarian regimes.

Practical side of the study

1984: Totalitarianism and Its Use

The word "totalitarianism" itself captures the essence of the type of government that seeks to maintain "total" control over society, including all facets of citizens' public and private life (Klatzo, 2012: 32).

Totalitarian regimes share a number of traits, including the following:

- One party in power
- Complete command of the armed forces
- Complete control over all communication channels, including media, propaganda, etc.
- Terrorism used by police as a method of control
- Economic management

Let's analyze totalitarianism and how George Orwell's renowned book 1984 examines it. After witnessing the devastation of World War II and the awful tyranny of the time, George Orwell penned 1984 in 1949. Totalitarian nations that existed in the early 20th century include Adolph Hitler's Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union under Josef Stalin, Benito Mussolini's Italy, and subsequently China under Mao Tse Tung. When he remarked, "All within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state," Mussolini encapsulated the mentality of totalitarian regimes.

According to this description, totalitarian nations like North Korea and Eritrea exist today, but totalitarianism can also be found in wealthy, liberal democracies. When discussing totalitarianism in George Orwell's 1984, and by extension totalitarian states, there are certain elements and tactics these states use to control citizens.

Totalitarianism in Orwell's work

Big Brother is the primary manifestation of dictatorship in Orwell's 1984. Big Brother, the government's representative, is present everywhere. Big Brother has almost complete influence over your daily activities, including everything you do, think, consume, and even feel. Everything is under Big Brother's control, including knowledge, history, and the demands of the body and mind. He is your enemy's enemy and also your friend. You will be saved and protected by him.

As a means of gaining total control, emerging communist countries afflicted the world with manipulation and persecution. No one has freedom in totalitarian nations when the government controls everything.

George Orwell's political novel 1984 serves as a warning about the potential consequences of a totalitarian regime. In order to develop this oppressive world set in 1984, Orwell used observations gained from communist countries that were already in existence in

the 1940s. The totalitarian society of Oceania is designed to represent a potential future. The Party controls all facets of language, expression, and individual behavior across Oceania. Winston Smith makes an effort to rebel against the Party and its leader, Big Brother, but he is unaware of how much influence he is subjected to. The nightmare society criticizes totalitarianism and dictatorial governments while also shedding light on them as the struggle for freedom and independence becomes more and more difficult to achieve. Within the bleak future of the year 1984, Oceania is ruled by the Party. The Party maintains complete control over its citizens by heavily monitoring them with surveillance and by tapping into conversations.

Big Brother, the Party's central figure, is emblazoned all across the country on posters and serves as a constant reminder to the public that they are under constant observation. Oceania's quality of life and level of living are horrifyingly poor, which makes it difficult for citizens to access basic government services and supplies. He describes the Party members' canteen as having "a low ceiling, crowded room, its walls dirty from the contact of numerous bodies; battered metal tables," as he surveys the area. There was a constant sort of revolt in your skin and in your stomach. 59) (Orwell). Given the poor living conditions, it is clear how little they have and how desperate they must be for anything better.

The more power the government has over its citizens, the more inclined they will be to comply with all rules and regulations, hopefully resulting in a more comfortable life for them. Oceania is kept in order and able to maintain its leadership thanks to the four ministries inside the Party. Even though Oceania is devoid of laws, many offenses carry the death penalty. For survival, fidelity to the Party is essential. The way of life in Oceania is similar to that of both the current and previous totalitarian regimes, which hinders the welfare of every citizen there.

Winston Smith serves as the narrator for the entirety of the book. The information coming through Winston's eyes is scant. The Party has such a strong hold on its citizens' life. Winston was tricked and ensnared by the Brotherhood because he believed that the group's motivations for overthrowing the Party and betraying Oceania were sincere. Once everything was known, "O'Brien silenced him with a motion of the hand. We have power over matter because we have power over the mind. The brain is where reality is created, and nothing is impossible (Orwell 265). Because Winston is kept in the dark about his duping into betraying the Party over the majority of the book, the betrayal and revelation of the Brotherhood's and O'Brien's true intentions gives more of a shock effect. Winston first belittled everyone around him for failing to recognize the Party's lie, but he gradually discovers that he himself was subject to the influence of them without even realizing it. No one can be trusted, including Winston, because he may be fed false information to mislead himself and others for the Party's purposes.

As there are various accounts of what happens, there is never a true story being recounted. Because of regular propaganda feeding and the elimination of any elements that do not adhere to the government's values, people in totalitarian nations lack common sense. Totalitarian administrations are adept at exploiting their own people to strengthen their hold on power.

Conclusion

The depictions of totalitarianism in George Orwell's 1984 are discussed in this work. Totalitarianism refers to a state in which governmental systems have complete control over

both public and, to the greatest extent possible, private behavior. Elections are not held, or if they are, the ruling party must approve the candidates. People who protest the dictatorship are subjected to physical force, arrests, and detentions. Parades and rallies are examples of events. These give the populace the impression that the ruling group is fully in charge.

Totalitarianism is a frequent theme in George Orwell's writing, particularly in *Big Brother*. He portrays concepts in the majority of his works since he suffers greatly as a result of this fact.

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