

# **The Predictions of George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four from the Perspective of Our Time**

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Bachelor's Thesis  
2019



**Tomas Bata University in Zlín**  
Faculty of Humanities

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Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně

Fakulta humanitních studií

Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Akademický rok: 2019/2020

## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

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Osobní číslo: **H170108**  
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Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**  
Forma studia: **Prezenční**  
Téma práce: **Předpovědi románu 1984 George Orwella z pohledu naší doby**

### Zásady pro vypracování

Shromáždění materiálů k tématu  
Studium odborné literatury  
Formulace cílů práce  
Analýza zvoleného primárního zdroje  
Vyvození a formulace závěrů práce

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **Tištěná/elektronická**  
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

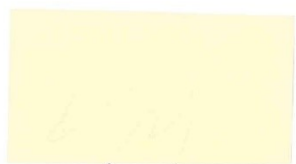
**Seznam doporučené literatury:**

Bloom, Harold. *George Orwell's 1984*. Updated ed. New York: Chelsea House, 2007.  
Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 1992.  
Lynskey, Dorian. *The Ministry of Truth: The Biography of George Orwell's 1984*. New York: Doubleday, 2019.  
Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000.  
Nussbaum, Martha Craven, Jack Goldsmith, and Abbot Gleason. *On Nineteen Eighty-Four: Orwell and Our Future*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Ewald Mengel**  
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **8. listopadu 2019**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **11. května 2020**



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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato práce je zaměřena na analýzu dystopického románu *1984* od George Orwella. Analyzuje román samotný a porovnává predikce díla v oblastech, technologie, politiky a jazyka se stavem světa a reálnými událostmi od druhé poloviny dvacátého století až po současnost.

Klíčová slova:

Britská literatura, George Orwell, 1984, sci-fi, science fiction, dystopie, budoucnost, sledovací systémy, technologie, totalita, propaganda, jazyk.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis analyses the dystopian novel *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* by George Orwell. Its aim is to analyse the novel itself and compare its predictions in the fields of technology, politics, and language to the state of the world and real-world events from the second half of the twentieth century to the present day.

Keywords:

British literature, George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, sci-fi, science fiction, dystopia, future, surveillance systems, technology, totalitarianism, propaganda, language.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank professor Ewald Mengel for all the help he provided me during the course of writing this thesis as well as for his expert advice. I would also like to thank my family for supporting me during my studies.

I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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## INTRODUCTION

Orwell's writings have had an impact on several generations by now. His novels have been a part of the secondary or even primary education for many students all across the world. The two of his most prominent novels, the allegorical *Animal Farm* and the dystopian *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, are still being presented as a warning against the regimes of the 1930s and 40s Germany and later Stalinist Russia and totalitarian communism. When we compare both of the novels, *Animal Farm* is a clear allegory to the rise of the communistic ideology in Tsarist Russia and its gradual transformation into the Stalinist totalitarian regime.

If we look at *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, we can see different kinds of contextual circumstances. It was not just a warning against one totalitarian regime but against all of them, those that existed at the time and those that will come in the future.

There are voices claiming that since Thomas Morus' first use of the word utopia, the inventions predicted in utopian and dystopian literature have always come to pass—from Da Vinci's tank and flying machine, Bacon's half mile high buildings to Foster's internet. In the thesis, I will try to assess the accuracy of these claims in relation to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Also, I will argue the novels' timelessness and relevance even today. I will discuss parallels between the events and the state of the world as depicted in the novel and examples from the real world, specifically, the similarities in the fields of technology, language and politics. This includes technological and other similarities between Orwell's world and our own as well as resemblances of the dystopian political system and some of today's nations. I plan to do this by gathering the sources at my disposal in both electronic and physical forms and use them to my best knowledge by analysing them and interpreting the information contained within them.

## 1 REFLECTIONS ON THE NOVEL

In this chapter I am going to provide a brief analysis of selected factors, starting with the history of the novel's release and gradually moving to the individual elements that may be compared with today's realities, such as geopolitical distinctions, political and technological similarities, matters of privacy and the historical and current presence of regimes comparable to the Orwell's imagined one.

### 1.1 Background of the novel's release

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a novel written in the middle of the 20th century. Most of the time it is portrayed as a dystopian sci-fi novel, although according to some it can also be described in several different ways such as “a satire, a prophecy, a warning, a political thesis, a work of science fiction, a spy thriller, a psychological horror, a gothic nightmare, a postmodern text, or a love story.”<sup>1</sup>

The novel was fairly popular after its release in 1949—selling over 50,000 copies in its first two years, but it wasn't until the year 1954, that it became truly a bestseller. This year BBC's “Nineteen Eighty-Four” television play was released. With 28 sets, 28 actors and innovative pre-recordings it was the most expensive and ambitious television film in Great Britain yet.

On the day of its release on December 12, 1954, seven million homes tuned in to the movie.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, with the fame also came controversy. Television in the 1950's United Kingdom was a much more conservative matter than it is today. It used to be a social event where a whole family would sit in front of the TV in the evening and sometimes you would even invite your neighbours. And so, it was not a big surprise that the movie's daring depictions of violence and torture in the halls of the “Ministry of Love” caused uproar among the British public. The BBC received a number of complaining letters labelling the play as “not fit for ordinary decent-minded human beings” or “only suitable for sadistic viewers” and Orwell himself was labelled a horror-monger. Despite the criticism, some reviewers and even politicians reviewed the television play as “brilliant” or even “visionary”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *The Ministry of Truth: The Biography of George Orwell's 1984*, (New York, Doubleday, 2019), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Lynskey, *The Ministry of Truth*, 204.

<sup>3</sup> John Rodden, “The “Orwellian” Night of December 12,” *Society* 52, no.2 (2015): 160–65.

This was accompanied by media attention with media articles titled like The Daily Express's "A Million NIGHTMARES". There were even concerns about the play causing a rise in criminality. The play found its way even to the British Parliament where it also was a subject of controversy, on the one hand praised as a "valuable insight into totalitarian methods" but on the other belittled as "BBC's tendency pander to sexual and sadistic tastes". The British Communist Party labelled the play as "the lowest essence of commonplace Tory anti-Socialist propaganda". According to the Marxist historian Isaac Deutscher, the novel was turned into an ideological superweapon.<sup>4</sup>

This controversy led to a severe rise in popularity and sales of the novel and Orwell himself became famous. It was followed by a parody called *Nineteen Eighty-Five* featuring aptly named "Big Brother Corporation" or BBC.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, between the years 1950 and 1954 words influenced by the novel entered the language and began to be used independently from the novel. Words like Newspeak, Big Brother, doublethink, thoughtcrime, unperson or an adjective Orwellian, derived from the author's name and meaning "sinister," "nightmarish," "oppressive" or even "totalitarian"<sup>6</sup>, entered the British dictionary.<sup>7</sup>

Over the course of time the novel became more widely accepted as a warning against totalitarianism as Orwell originally intended and found its way into educational systems all over the world. It became a symbol of what the reality could turn to if we succumb to the totalitarian systems of Soviet Union and communistic movements.

## 1.2 Historical inspiration

Orwell never experienced totalitarianism at first hand. Despite of this, his writings are considered to be most prominent when it comes to warnings against totalitarian regimes. Closest he got to the totalitarianism was when he fought in the civil war in Spain. This experience inflamed his passion for historical objectivity and anti-propaganda fighting.

Later, after the war, he wrote about his experience in Spain:

Early in my life, I had noticed that no event is ever correctly reported in a newspaper, but in Spain, for the first time, I saw newspaper reports which did not bear any relation to the facts, not even the

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<sup>4</sup> Lynskey, *The Ministry of Truth*, 205-6.

<sup>5</sup> Lynskey, *The Ministry of Truth*, 205.

<sup>6</sup> Rodden, "The "Orwellian" Night of December 12," 159.

<sup>7</sup> Lynskey, *The Ministry of Truth*, 207.

relationship which is implied in an ordinary lie. I saw great battles reported where there had been no fighting, and complete silence where hundreds of men had been killed. I saw troops who had fought bravely denounced as cowards and traitors, and others who had never seen a shot fired hailed as the heroes of imaginary victories; and I saw newspapers in London retailing these lies and eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that had never happened.<sup>8</sup>

Orwell witnessed the rise of ideological lying and that inspired him to begin the fight for objective truth. The usage of propaganda in order to shape reality into whatever governments wish horrified Orwell. He imagined a society in which the ruling class was able to deceive their subjects by deforming reality and making them believe in carefully constructed lies. Orwell was afraid that totalitarianism would take over in Europe and create societies in which it is not only impossible to express individual beliefs, but the only valid opinions are the ones imposed by the government. During the Second World War he criticized the lack of empathy and the war propaganda. He feared that the war propaganda has caused British people to deteriorate and enter the stage of pre-totalitarianism. He criticized the media's focus on politics rather than reporting objectively and telling the truth.<sup>9</sup> He expressed his concerns about media manipulation in one of his letters towards the end of the war: "If Hitler wins the war, the Jews will be the ones who started it."<sup>10</sup>

His pursuit of the objective truth even went so far that he called some of his earlier texts on the Spanish Civil War "unconscious falsifications" and proclaimed that he wrote them because he only saw one corner of the events that happened. He also warned about any other texts from this period, which may be suffering from the same problem.<sup>11</sup>

He sensed his limitation in terms of objectivity, but always strove to be as truthful and objective as possible. This ongoing fight has led him to publish many works focused on denouncing totalitarianism including the *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the *Animal Farm*.

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<sup>8</sup> George Orwell, *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, vol. 13, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1998), 503.

<sup>9</sup> Abbot Gleason, "Puritanism and Power Politics during the Cold War: George Orwell and Historical Objectivity," in *On "Nineteen Eighty-Four"*, ed. Martha Craven Nussbaum, Jack Goldsmith, and Abbot Gleason, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005) 74-76.

<sup>10</sup> Orwell, *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, vol. 16, 191.

<sup>11</sup> Abbot Gleason, "Puritanism and Power Politics during the Cold War," 77.

### 1.3 Dystopia

In the Merriam-Webster dictionary you will find that a dystopia is “an imagined world or society in which people lead wretched, dehumanized, fearful lives,”<sup>12</sup> but for George Orwell it was much more than just an imagined world. With the rise of nationalism in Germany, fascism in Italy and Spain and communism in Soviet Russia he believed that what we once considered fantasy could become a reality sooner than we would expect. Orwell considered even communism to be a form of a nationalistic ideology. His view was that a communist is no one other than a Soviet nationalist that feels that it is his duty to justify Russian policy and advance Russian interests at all cost.<sup>13</sup>

That’s why he decided to write his novel which he did not consider a mere entertainment, but he regarded his dystopia as a realistic prediction of what would happen in a totalitarian world. What he wanted was to create a window into the future if regimes like the communistic Russia or Nazi Germany gained in power. These beliefs are supported by the essay he wrote on fascism in 1936:

If you pretend that it is merely an aberration which will presently pass off of its own accord, you are dreaming a dream from which you will awake when somebody coshes you with a rubber truncheon.<sup>14</sup>

He believed that every tyranny in the past was overthrown because of human nature but the new emergence of totalitarianism could disrupt the continuation of this so-called human nature by “controlling the mind”.<sup>15</sup>

#### 1.3.1 Subdivision of the genre

Some authors like Moylan further subdivide the genre. To the original concepts of “utopia” and “dystopia” are then added specific subgenres as eutopia, anti-utopia, critical utopia, utopian satire, or the Foucault’s heterotopia, the difference being in the prefix.<sup>16</sup>

The term Utopia is changed to just a non-existent society located in an unspecified time and space, without any positive or negative connotation. This is the neutral term that is further changed by replacing the prefix. For example, the prefix eu- (Eutopia) refers to

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<sup>12</sup> “Dystopia,” Merriam-Webster, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dystopia>.

<sup>13</sup> George Orwell, *George Orwell Essays*, (London, Penguin Books, 2000), chap. 24, ePub.

<sup>14</sup> Lynskey, *The Ministry of Truth*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Lynskey, *The Ministry of Truth*, 208.

<sup>16</sup> Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, 74.

the original meaning of Utopia—a visionary system of political or social perfection. It is used when an author tries to create a better society than the present one, therefore it replaces the original term used for positively conceived future fictional societies.<sup>17</sup>

Utopian Satire takes a humorous point of view on the genre. In this subgenre, an author creates a fictional society whose purpose is to mimic and parody the utopian society. It is intended to be viewed as a criticism of the contemporary society.

Critical utopia is perhaps the most complicated of the subgenres. It is a vision of a utopian society which is located in a time and place which is viewed positive by the reader but suffers from serious problems, which may or may not be solved by society.

Heterotopia was introduced by the French philosopher and literary critic Michel Foucault. Unlike the other concepts, heterotopia is not the world itself but a particular place within it. It can be either a real place like a colony, prison, ship, churchyard or a psychiatric asylum or it can be parallel to a utopia (eg. a prison that is inhabited by undesirables to make the utopia possible). Heterotopia is a place that hosts individuals whose behaviour is outside the norm.

Like Orwell, Foucault also criticizes the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union. In the conclusion of his essay *Des Espace Autres (Of Other Spaces)*, he compares ships to an isolated place that provides a respite from authoritarianism and repression. Referring to Stalinism he says:

Brothels and colonies are two extreme types of heterotopia, and if we think, after all, that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens, you will understand why the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development, ...The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.<sup>18</sup>

Moving on to the more negative forms of utopia, it is necessary to mention dystopia and anti-utopia. Dystopia is a non-existent society that the author intends to be viewed as con-

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<sup>17</sup> Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 2000), 74.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Foucault, and Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 27, <https://doi.org/10.2307/464648>.

siderably worse than the society in which he lives. The last-mentioned type of the imagined future societies is the anti-utopia. The difference between anti-utopia and dystopia is that anti-utopia is meant to be viewed as a criticism of utopian societies, not just a society which is worse than the current one.<sup>19</sup> The reason why Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is sometimes viewed as an anti-utopia is that it is considered a criticism of the utopian society Karl Marx imagined in his book *Das Kapital*. However, to avoid confusion, I will continue to regard Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as dystopia for the purpose of this thesis.

#### 1.4 Setting of the novel

The novel is set in the despotic state of Oceania that spreads from the American continent to the British Isles and along with two other superpowers struggles over the control of the world.

The two main protagonists Winston and Julia are workers of the ministry of truth and are living their lives in the city of Airstrip One (formerly known as London). They can consider themselves members of the ruling party, but this does not mean that they are living in luxury. Contrary to the rest of the population they live in Party apartments and have access to a sparse quantity of goods reserved only for Party members, but all this is at the cost of their freedom. They are living a prison-like life where every single one of their steps is being closely watched by the surveillance equipment and Party officials. The rest of the population of Airstrip One is known as proles (short for proletariat), they live in a wretched environment of the city slums. They are only considered useful as a source of manual labour and are not even regarded as human by the members of the Party.<sup>20</sup> One could even describe them as slaves of the system, albeit not watched by the telescreen cameras, they are always distracted by the state lottery and constant propaganda. Those people are just common workers with no access to education or other benefits that are provided to the members of the Party. The inhabitants of Oceania never hear any mention of other parts of the world, apart from the often fraudulent news of the victories in the war. This gives the world the cramped atmosphere of the futuristic capital where information in and out stopped to flow or only reaches the selected few and is censored for everyone else.

On the other hand, the Party members are somewhat educated, live in decent apartments and have access to "luxuries" such as gin, coffee or cigarettes. In spite of having

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<sup>19</sup> Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, 74.

<sup>20</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 61.

access to these goods their quality is not up to par and the products are described as not very appealing. For example, the Gin is described as “a bottle of colourless liquid with a plain white label marked VICTORY GIN. It gave off a sickly, oily smell, as of Chinese rice-spirit,”<sup>21</sup> the coffee as “filthy tasting”<sup>22</sup> and the cigarettes so badly rolled that the tobacco falls right out of them.<sup>23</sup> In spite of all of these flaws the supply of goods is suffering from constant shortages and their rations are never sufficient. Although the gin, coffee and cigarettes being described as weak imitations, the proles are not supplied with these goods at all.<sup>24</sup> However, this does not mean that quality goods are no longer existent, instead, they are reserved only for high ranking party members.<sup>25</sup>

It could be argued that Orwell just wanted to give his world a more desperate and hopeless feeling, however, we can also deduct that he was criticizing the ineffectiveness of central planning that many autocratic and totalitarian regimes all over the world commonly did and still use. When this system is run on a large scale, it is prone to ineffectiveness and it tends to have more and more shortcomings.

Yet in the narrative these constant shortages are purposefully devised by the Party. The scheme behind this is the constant war that is raging in Orwell’s world. It is held between the three superpowers and is destroying any surplus of goods that the economy manages to create. He explains it in form of the writings of Emmanuel Goldstein - a revolutionary whose book gets into the hands of the main protagonist Winston Smith.<sup>26</sup>

Emmanuel Goldstein was one of the founders of the regime, but currently he is viewed as a heretic and a rebel. This can be seen as a reference to the events from the real world before the novel’s release when the Soviet Union distanced itself from some of its founding members and tried to remove them from history or turn them into traitors as it was the case with Leon Trotsky.<sup>27</sup> Goldstein was used as a scapegoat for the Party’s problems and turned into a hated figure by the Party-organized and mandatory events, as the “Two Minutes Hate” which was a routine event in which pictures of Goldstein were showed on a TV screens and viewers encouraged to shout hateful remarks at the screen in a

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<sup>21</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 69.

<sup>23</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 101.

<sup>25</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 201.

<sup>26</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 213-247.

<sup>27</sup> “Leon Trotsky,” The British Library, last modified January 13, 2016, <https://www.bl.uk/people/leon-trotsky>.



cult-like manner. Goldstein was considered a fugitive on the run leading the mysterious group of rebels known as The Brotherhood.<sup>28</sup>

Orwell in his words gives context to the world he built and expands it to a global scale, talking about the two other nations, geopolitical situation, the reason for war, etc. He explains that the three superpowers are constantly at war and that the war is not held for any ideological purpose. Not even because of natural resources or human workforce, which is useful only for the support of continuous war but nothing else. The reason behind the fighting in this dystopian world is to reduce the surplus of manufactured goods and therefore keep the inhabitants of the three states in poverty. His reasoning for this is that the masses that struggle in poverty to make ends meet and are not educated enough will never be able to initiate any kind of uprising against the ruling party.<sup>29</sup>

It was possible, no doubt, to imagine a society in which WEALTH, in the sense of personal possessions and luxuries, should be evenly distributed, while POWER remained in the hands of a small privileged caste. But in practice such a society could not long remain stable. For if leisure and security were enjoyed by all alike, the great mass of human beings who are normally stupefied by poverty would become literate and would learn to think for themselves; and when once they had done this, they would sooner or later realize that the privileged minority had no function, and they would sweep it away. In the long run, a hierarchical society was only possible on a basis of poverty and ignorance.<sup>30</sup>

The other reason for the stability of the system is the psychological burden war delivers to the inhabitants of the country, both for the members of the Party and the proletariat. The sense of danger alone, coming from the fact of being in war, suppresses any thought about uprising and the atrocious conditions people live in. That's why the economical surplus cannot be spend or destroyed in any other way.<sup>31</sup>

One could even argue that the divisions of population into Inner Party, Outer Party and the proles in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a criticism of the capitalist classism whereas the upper class being the inner party, middle class the outer party and proles the working class. In comparison to the United States, the "prole" class, although it refers to the communistic proletariat, can also be understood as an envisioning of American (or any other) working

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<sup>28</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 12-20.

<sup>29</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 215-20.

<sup>30</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 219.

<sup>31</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 220-21.

class, which was and still is, constantly distracted by television, heavy labour, children, beer and gambling.

## 1.5 Political system

Totalitarian regimes in contrast to authoritarian systems try to control not only people's actions but all aspects of their life including their views and opinions.<sup>32</sup> According to this definition Orwell's Oceania is without any doubt totalitarian. One of the slogans of the regime in Orwell's novel is: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past."<sup>33</sup> This is a reference to the state owned media and the restriction of information and use of news as an ideological tool rather than an informative service.

As it was mentioned previously Orwell found inspiration for the novel when he participated in the Spanish Civil War. Yet, it could be also argued that another source of his inspiration lay in the Soviet regime and the manipulation of opinion by the state-owned media.

Although widely interpreted as a warning against totalitarian notions of the Soviet Union and its allies we could argue that Orwell's warning was not only intended against them. Judging from the geopolitical segmentation of the dystopia we can deduce that Orwell did not consider socialism a foreign enemy but also an inside threat. As is suggested by the name of the leading ideology in Oceania—Ingsoc, which means English socialism.<sup>34</sup>

## 1.6 Geopolitical distinctions

As it was already discussed, the world is divided between three superpowers—Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia. The origins of these three superpowers are the United States of America, Russia and China. China is never mentioned specifically in the novel, but we can deduct it is this nation due to it being a main world power in the Eastern Asian region and by the ideological system having a Chinese name translated as the Death-Worship or the Obliteration of the Self. All of continental Europe was occupied by Russia and Eastern Asia and Japan fell under the control of China. USA is said to have annexed Canada and

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<sup>32</sup> "Totalitarianism," Merriam-Webster, accessed April 29, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/totalitarianism>.

<sup>33</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 284.

<sup>34</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 46.

occupied the whole American continent, as well as Australia, South Africa and the British Isles. By this Oceania was formed, which is the place where the novel takes place.<sup>35</sup>

All of these three countries are permanently at war with each other fighting over territories in Africa, Middle East, Indonesia and India. With no definitive victory in sight, all the powers are fighting for is to destroy the economical surplus to keep the population struggling and too occupied with their own survival to even think about rising against their overlords.<sup>36</sup>

The ideologies of all of the superpowers are almost indistinguishable: in Eurasia it is called Neo-Bolshevism, in East Asia The Death Worship or The Obliteration of the Self and in Oceania the Ingsoc—English Socialism. The word English is quite peculiar due to the country's American origins. The ideologies claim that they are entirely different when in fact they bear only slight differences.<sup>37</sup>

Another peculiar thing about the novel is the geopolitical division of this vision of the future. Airstrip One seems to be the capital of the whole Oceania, whereas in Goldstein's book it's stated that USA annexed Canada and later also the British Isles along with the former territories of the British Empire (eg. Australia and parts of Africa).<sup>38</sup> However due to the descriptions of the state system in the novel, it seems more like Britain being the centre of the government. One clue might be that all of its ministries are located in Air Strip One (London). Of course, we could consider England to be an autonomous region inside of Oceania, but this goes against the basic idea of centralized totalitarian government and even the sole name of the ideology—Ingsoc (English Socialism) which in and of itself suggests that it originated in England.

## 1.7 Censorship

There are many ways in which the totalitarian system in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* keeps its population on a short leash. One way is the alteration of the past depending on what is currently useful for the Party. The main protagonist—Winston Smith as a member of the Outer Party works for a state institution called the Ministry of Truth which deals with those alterations. His job is to rewrite the past depending on the current issues. This could be

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<sup>35</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 214-15.

<sup>36</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 217-20.

<sup>37</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 226.

<sup>38</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 214-15.

something as small as changing a newspaper report about ration sizes, making it appear as if it the ration increased, whereas the opposite is true. Or it can come to extremes as is the removal of a troublesome person from all the records—both the historical and the contemporary. This is called vaporizing. In the novel, Winston deals with rewriting newspaper articles so they fit the Party's plans.

One example of this is the deletion of any mention of a cigarette supplier organization FFCC whose prominent member—a certain Comrade Withers was first given the Order of Conspicuous Merit and was commended by the state, but later for an unknown reason disbanded, and it was necessary for the Party to delete both him and the organization from all records.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 51-52.

## 2 COMPARISON OF SELECTED FIELDS TO THE REAL WORLD

This chapter is dedicated to the comparison of the three major players in the fields of population control with Orwell's dystopian world. The contemporary form of the three major countries that play a role in his novel are the United States of America, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. Those countries are transformed into the superstates of Oceania, Eastasia and Eurasia. These three realms conquer and divide the world among themselves. Their constant urge to conquer new territories ends at a point when all three superstates reach a military stalemate.<sup>40</sup>

This chapter provides an overview and comparison of technology, surveillance, language, and ideology in these three nations. Furthermore, this chapter provides the reader with the comparison of the technology used worldwide, as well as countries' specific usage of technology which is comparable to the novel. This concerns mostly surveillance technology such as the smart CCTV systems in China or the Prism program in the United States.

### 2.1 Technology and surveillance

Thirty-five years ago, when the 1984 prophecy had not come into existence, everyone let out a sigh of relief. It seemed that the threat of the totalitarian world Orwell had depicted was over. There was no "Big Brother" watching our every step, no altering of historical facts and a few years later even the totalitarian USSR, which largely inspired Orwell in the writing of his novel, began to crumble. It appeared like Orwell was entirely wrong and the novel is just a piece of fiction written for entertainment.

Nonetheless, to this day, technology has advanced enough for the world of Big Brother to be possible. And not just in theory, as we can clearly see when we look at the current world powers, where the west is focused on the rising problem of privacy intrusion and usage of private data for profit by individual corporations. However, in the east concerns about personal privacy are lower.

One of the main perpetrators of personal surveillance is the private sector where the monitoring is happening perhaps on a bigger scale than at the governmental level. Almost all big corporation participate in the collection of big data. The collected personal data and

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<sup>40</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 216.

user activity is being used for marketing and advertising purposes and also to gain insight into customer behaviour.

It is no secret that every digital service we use, handles and utilizes our personal information with various levels of care for their customers' privacy. The information is often being sold or used in questionable ways. But what we see in the novel is the annihilation of privacy with the government as a perpetrator. So, for the time being, let us switch focus to the big players of the world politics.

### 2.1.1 China

Now in the twenty first century with the advancement of technology and new information-based societies, like the regime in China, it seems that it is more relevant than ever. The rise of surveillance and smart cities in China could be described as Orwellian in nature. This is at the very least troubling. The Chinese communist regime is known for human rights violations and the repression of the population. The recent introduction of the surveillance-based "smart cities" all across china is seen as a preventive measure for the regime to keep its population in check. Although the pretence of building smart cities is that they should be helpful to its inhabitants, vast privacy concerns exist. "Smart cities" are controlled by the three major Chinese telecommunication companies, all of which are state owned.<sup>41</sup> In spite of the fact that the interconnectedness of devices can be helpful on the day to day basis, it also offers the government the ability to track the location of the citizens at all times, and not only retrospectively but also in real time. Utilization of data such as GPS location, CCTV face recognition records or purchase history can be used to predict future actions based on behavioural patterns. One of the most controversial parts of the Chinese smart cities program is the Sesame Credit Social Inclusiveness Score System, which was introduced to enforce positive behaviour by checking and analysing their payment history. However, critics of the system say that the notion of what is positive behaviour and what is not can be largely decided by the government in the future.<sup>42</sup>

All smartphones with enabled GPS capabilities give telecom providers detailed information on the location of the users and various technological advancements are being used and misused at the government's whim at the expense of the opponents of the regime

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<sup>41</sup> Fan Yang and Jian Xu, "Privacy Concerns in China's Smart City Campaign: The Deficit of China's Cybersecurity Law," *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 5, no.3, (2018): 536.

<sup>42</sup> Fan Yang and Jian Xu, "Privacy Concerns in China's Smart City Campaign," 537–38.

and undesirable racial and religious minorities. These technologies include mainly, but not solely, artificial intelligence, surveillance and advanced predictive analytics.<sup>43</sup>

All of these can be compared to the technologies that George Orwell depicts in his novel - surveillance cameras to the telescreens, artificial intelligence takes the role of the operators of the telescreens and predictive analytics the role of the thought police.

Although the combination of the television and a camera never took off, standard CCTV cameras are more than sufficient to take the place of a telescreen. Despite the fact that people living in China are not being watched at home, as soon as they step out of their apartment, they can be sure that they will soon get on the government's radar. Under the premise of making living easier by utilizing the smart cities concept, Chinese government has formed a monopoly on citizen surveillance and, through the interconnected systems, even control over them. In the same way the protagonists (and all other inhabitants of the novel's world) are constantly watched by the telescreens, the citizens of China are being watched by the omnipresent security cameras.<sup>44</sup>

Artificial intelligence is not specifically mentioned in the novel. By artificial intelligence in terms of surveillance we mean systems designed to use security camera footage to identify people by scanning their facial or other features, recording it and evaluating the next course of action based on their location or behaviour.<sup>45</sup> In the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* this was done presumably manually by government employees who are watching the camera footage and evaluating everyone's actions. But the concrete methods are never specified in the novel. In this case reality has proven itself to be much more effective at creating dystopian scenarios.

Predictive analytics can be best compared to the activities and actions of the thought police in the novel. Predictive analytics are based on the previously mentioned technologies—the camera surveillance and the artificial intelligence evaluation. Based on this, data analysis can be done with the purpose of determining behavioural patterns and probability of reoccurring behaviour of the observed individual. Therefore, effectively determining

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<sup>43</sup> Daniel Power, "Big Brother Can Watch Us," *Journal of Decision Systems* 25, no. S1, (2016): 578.

<sup>44</sup> Fan Yang and Jian Xu, "Privacy Concerns in China's Smart City Campaign," 537–38.

<sup>45</sup> Power, "Big Brother," 581.

daily schedules, behaviour, traits and much more which can be almost as effective as reading the mind.<sup>46</sup>

During the recent Covid-19 virus outbreak, this technology was used to by the government to track hundreds of millions Chinese smartphones for the purpose of tracking the movement of the infected. These data patterns were then used to identify whom the infected person talked to and whom did he or she meet, based on the geographical location of their smartphone. The purpose was to identify more potentially infected people. The data was used as a means of calculating the probability that a person is infected. The government used the GPS location data of individual users to determine the probability whether they were infected by the virus. Apart from the location-based surveillance China also tracks electronic records of flu medicine purchases to find potentially infected people trying to stay out of quarantine. Extensive testing was directed toward the individuals that may have been infected. This was followed by quarantining the selected high-risk individuals. If we accept the truthfulness of the official statements, the usage of these measures proved to be effective and the numbers of newly infected dropped dramatically.<sup>47</sup>

During the virus outbreak China showed its exceptional capability to track its citizens and the ability to identify and control selected individuals. One can only speculate in what other ways this technology may be used in the future.

### 2.1.2 Contemporary USA

However, practices like this are not restricted exclusively to China. With the rising influence of big data and marketing in the world we are beginning to see the emerging risks connected to technology and privacy protection coming from the western hemisphere. The western governments are also not innocent in the matter of invasion of privacy. One prime example of this was revealed by the Edward Snowden affair in 2013. It has shown us that not only China but also its western counterpart is heavily invested in personal surveillance.

In 2013, *The Guardian* reported on an existence of a top-secret project called the PRISM. It was created for the purpose of accessing private information of the users of Google, Facebook, Apple and other telecommunication and internet giants. Telecommuni-

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<sup>46</sup> Power, "Big Brother," 582.

<sup>47</sup> David P. Goldman, "China Suppressed Covid-19 with AI and Big Data," *Asia Times*, March 3, 2020, [https://asiatimes.com/2020/03/china-suppressed-covid-19-with-ai-and-big-data/?fbclid=IwAR2BzS4NCK76\\_JzGA1F2cRV3pCbenNbGCIihbgipzvbxxw54lZ2e2jpSYyIg](https://asiatimes.com/2020/03/china-suppressed-covid-19-with-ai-and-big-data/?fbclid=IwAR2BzS4NCK76_JzGA1F2cRV3pCbenNbGCIihbgipzvbxxw54lZ2e2jpSYyIg).



communication companies such as Verizon were giving the US government access to all of the phone calls going through them and not only that it was discovered that tech giant companies such as Facebook, Google, Microsoft or Apple have let the US governmental agencies to access their users' private data, not excluding confidential emails or messages. It allowed NSA employees to collect personal data such as emails, contents of live chats or file transfer data. This was revealed to *The Guardian* by the former NSA operative Edward Snowden. The journal also acquired top-secret documents and a confidential training presentation for the NSA operatives. This was scandalous not just for the US government but also the corporations which provided the data to the government. Allegedly, the companies in question gave the government consent in accessing the data. Although the companies themselves deny it, the government accessing the data of their clients without their previous knowledge is highly unlikely, if not impossible. In a press statement Google stated: "Google cares deeply about the security of our users' data. We disclose user data to government in accordance with the law, and we review all such requests carefully"<sup>48</sup> Apple and Microsoft also denied any large-scale participation in government programs such as Prism.<sup>49</sup>

This affair has shown us how far the governments can reach to obtain private data. In addition, the reach of the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and National Security Agency (NSA) does not end at the US borders but it extends much further. Various surveillance systems such as the previously mentioned PRISM, or other systems such as the XKeyscore and Tempora are used to obtain private information from people all around the globe.

### 2.1.3 Russia

Russia was an inspiration for many of Orwell's novels to begin with, but despite Orwell's fear it has never deteriorated into a dictatorship based on technological repression and terror, as he had imagined. Despite this fact, it still has its methods of censorship and tracking of the internet or other communication activities. Russia's significance in comparing it to Orwell's novel also lies in its Soviet history. During Stalin's reign the state censorship and

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<sup>48</sup> Glenn Greenwald, "NSA Prism Program Taps in to User Data of Apple, Google and Others," *The Guardian*, June 7, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/us-tech-giants-nsa-data>.

<sup>49</sup> Greenwald, "NSA Prism Program."

control was at its peak and arguably it was this era that was the original inspiration for writing the novel.

Russia's surveillance capabilities may not be comparable with its Chinese and American counterparts, but they are most certainly sufficient for the monitoring of the internet activities of their citizens. Seven Russian security agencies have the right to intercept and access private phone calls and emails. Most prominent of those is the FSB (Federal Security Service) which is the successor to the former KGB.

In most Western countries intelligence agencies or law enforcement needs a court warrant before they can wiretap a person. This warrant must be then submitted to the phone operators or Internet providers, which in turn are required to provide the necessary access to information to the state. Whether these directives are properly followed is a question that was raised several times before, most notably concerning the American National Security Agency (NSA) with regard to the Edward Snowden affair.

However, the Russian approach is a bit more straightforward, due to lesser law restrictions. Although Russian FSB must obtain a warrant as well, the telecom providers have no right to see the court order. It is only available to the agency's directorate. The private companies also have to pay for the surveillance equipment but are denied access to the surveillance boxes.<sup>50</sup>

Apart from the ability to obtain data from the telecom and internet providers, Russian authorities also targeted social networks. After the series of revolutions in the Middle East known as the Arab Spring in 2011, Russian government tried to determine what role social media networks did play in the organization of these revolutions. New methods were introduced, which were supposed to prevent the same thing happening in Russia.<sup>51</sup>

In 2011 mass protests against Putin's re-election broke out in Moscow. But at the time, the Russian secret services did not have the means to stop the spread of anti-governmental groups over social media. The only thing they managed was a fax addressed to Pavel Durov, a founder of the Russian social network VKontakte. The message con-

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<sup>50</sup> Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, "Russia's Surveillance State," *World Policy*, September 12, 2013, <http://worldpolicy.org/2013/09/12/russias-surveillance-state>.

<sup>51</sup> Soldatov and Borogan, "Russia's Surveillance State."

tained instructions, requiring him to delete the profiles of the protest groups. Despite of the message, Durov refused to fulfil these requirements.<sup>52</sup>

Later, on March 27, 2012, former chief of the FSB Sergei Smirnov attended the meeting of the regional anti-terrorist group within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. He admitted there that Russia has failed to control the protesters over the social media:

New technologies [are being] used by Western special services to create and maintain a level of continual tension in society with serious intentions extending even to regime change. . . . Our elections, especially the presidential election and the situation in the preceding period, revealed the potential of the blogosphere.” Smirnov stated that it was essential to develop ways to react to such technologies and confessed that “this has not yet happened.”<sup>53</sup>

Subsequently, Russian secret services launched several programs focused on improving the national cyber security by restricting what is said and read on social media. New FSB software has been developed to control what is published on the internet. This has allowed the FSB to monitor activities on Russian social networks like Odnoklassniki and VKontakte and also, but only to a various level of success, on Facebook and Twitter due to the fact that these websites are not being hosted in Russia.<sup>54</sup>

In November 2012 Russia managed to create a nationwide internet filtering system which allowed them to block access to any website accused of extremism. Which was an improvement to the previous system which was region based and not centrally organized (eg. the website blocked in one Russian region could be accessible in another). Since 2012 Russian authorities can make internet providers block any website they wish. Hundreds of websites have been blocked since then. The internet monitoring law is enforced by regular governmental checks of libraries, schools, and other public internet access points to check if any illegal software has been installed which allows access to the blocked websites.<sup>55</sup>

After the Edward Snowden affair Russia strove to reduce the American secret service influence, as well as empowering their own. They managed to enforce the movement of Facebook, Gmail and other internet platforms under Russian jurisdiction by forcing them

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<sup>52</sup> Soldatov and Borogan, “Russia's Surveillance State.”

<sup>53</sup> Soldatov and Borogan, “Russia's Surveillance State.”

<sup>54</sup> Soldatov and Borogan, “Russia's Surveillance State.”

<sup>55</sup> Soldatov and Borogan, “Russia's Surveillance State.”

to host their services on the Russian territory, effectively protecting them from foreign espionage and making them more transparent to their own.<sup>56</sup>

This surveillance system is called SORM. It was later adopted in other post-soviet countries by the local security agencies. Most of these agencies were transformed from the local branches of KGB after the fall of the Soviet Union and still follow in its footsteps. Countries like Belarus, Ukraine or Kyrgyzstan imported and adopted the Russian surveillance system.<sup>57</sup>

## 2.2 Language

Another characteristic of the dystopian world is the artificial language that is created by the government of Oceania. It is a modified version of the English language that is supposed to limit free thought by drastically removing any aspects of the language that could convey independent thought. At the time when the plot of the novel is supposed to take place, this artificial language is not yet fully implemented, and nobody speaks it on the day to day basis. For the benefit of the reader the novel is written in standard English, presumably since it would be completely incomprehensible if it was written in the artificial language. This language is called the “newspeak”.

In the novel the governing party expects that the language will be fully implemented by the year 2050. Meaning that about 65 years after the events in the novel there will be no one that speaks the old version of English except the proletariat who are not even considered human. The official language and the only language of both the inner and outer Party members will be “newspeak.”<sup>58</sup>

The principle of the formation of the “newspeak” language is not the creation of new words, but the destruction of the old ones. A vast corpus of the language is being stripped down. Nouns, adjectives and verbs alike, destroyed to create a simplified version of English that does not have any potential to transfer free thought. Destroying any means of communicating free or rebellious thought should make the party immortal without the regime ever falling. This does not concern just the communication but also the mere act of thinking anything that goes against the Party’s wishes becomes impossible.

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<sup>56</sup> Soldatov and Borogan, “Russia's Surveillance State.”

<sup>57</sup> Soldatov and Borogan, “Russia's Surveillance State.”

<sup>58</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 343.

Apart from the language being stripped down to its bare essentials, it is also simplified in the terms of grammar. For example, grading of adjectives—good, better and the best becomes good, plusgood and double plusgood. The negative form of the adjective would then be ungood.<sup>59</sup>

### 2.2.1 Linguistic Determinism

The existence of newspeak proves that Orwell was well acquainted with the linguistic theory of determinism which is claiming that the language we use determines who we really are, and our world views are formed based on the language we think in. The theory binds language and thought in such a way that the language we are born with affects our ability to conceptualize, think, interact and express ideas. It forms a direct relationship between human language and thinking.<sup>60</sup>

By transferring this theory onto the twisted world of Oceania, Orwell created a perfect tool of limiting thought by reducing our capacity to express ourselves. The newly created bureaucratic language has nothing in common with a language that would be created naturally, in fact it resembles the early managerial, office speak. One may argue, that it was the emergence of terms such as asap (as soon as possible) or attn (For the attention of) that inspired Orwell in his creation of this artificial language. The shortening of words creates a sense of authority, urgency, and importance for the writer. This language is used always downwards in the chain of command. It makes the job easier for the writer, but the act of deciphering the contents of the message is left to the reader. It is hardly imaginable for an employee to be sending his superior a message constructed of a handful of abbreviated phrases.<sup>61</sup>

The abbreviated messages are always in the form of orders in the novel. This means going downwards in the state hierarchy. Winston gets his orders in abbreviated forms of the newspeak with no syntax, interpunction or sentence structure.

*“times 17.3.84 bb speech malreported africa rectify”*<sup>62</sup>

*“times 14.2.84 miniplenty malquoted chocolate rectify”*<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 59-61.

<sup>60</sup> Alvino Fantini, “Theory Reflections: Linguistic Determinism/Relativism,” *NAFSA*, May 17, 2010, <https://www.nafsa.org/professional-resources/browse-by-interest/linguistic-determinism-linguistic-relativism>.

<sup>61</sup> Harold Bloom, *George Orwell's 1984*, Updated ed. (New York: Chelsea House, 2007), 97-99.

<sup>62</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 45.

These are two examples of the orders given to Winston by his superiors. Loosely translated: “Correct the misreported Big Brother’s speech about Africa in *The Times* from March 17, 1984.” And “Correct the misquoted Ministry of Plenty report about chocolate rations in *The Times* from February 2, 1984”

In newspeak we see abbreviations such as “bb” = Big Brother (‘s) and “mini plenty” = Ministry of Plenty. Orwell uses these abbreviations as a tool to transfer the sense of importance, urgency and authority to the recipients of the orders. The language is also used in such a way to convey judgement by the usage of jargon-specific terms such as “malreported”, “malquoted”, or “doubleplusungood”. Although almost comical in some way, these terms are clearly not used to point out grammatical mistakes in the text. Instead, they are instructions to alter historical records. This includes changing the previously established goals of a failed year plan to suddenly make it a successful year plan, or the name of a war enemy if the conflict moves to another military front.

### 2.2.2 Doublespeak in the US

Orwell’s criticism of the simplification of the language may have its roots in the American exceptionalism, as some authors point out. American exceptionalism is an American worldview in which they see themselves as superior to other nations. This also includes propaganda claims, stating that every war the US participates in, is in fact defensive. Whether it be for the purpose of defending freedom and democracy or as a result of somebody else’s provocation. A specific example of American exceptionalism is the renaming of the US Ministry of War to Ministry of Defence in 1949—the same year the novel was released. Orwell’s Ministry of Peace may be a direct reference to this change.<sup>64</sup>

The United States are the birthplace of modern advertising and public relations. The usage of advertising methods was apparent even in political decisions. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century during the Cold War the USA was distributing propaganda and disinformation much more effectively than its rival—the Soviet Union. The renaming of the ministries went hand in hand with renaming “jails” and “prisons” to “correction facilities” and the civilian casualties of war started being referred to simply as “collateral damage” and “friendly fire”, giv-

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<sup>63</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 45.

<sup>64</sup> Edward S. Herman, “From Ingsoc and Newspeak to Amcap, Amerigood, and Marketspeak,” in *On “Nineteen Eighty-Four”*, ed. Martha Craven Nussbaum, Jack Goldsmith, and Abbot Gleason, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 112.

ing way to the moral acceptability and righteousness of war. Another example of the “rectification of war” is the 2002 war in Afghanistan which was initially called “Infinite Justice” but later altered to “Enduring Freedom” both of these names exploiting the notion that the war is nothing but righteous.<sup>65</sup>

One could argue that a form of double think propaganda played a crucial role in the creation of the United States as we know them today. Contrary to the Soviet regime, the United States could not control its populace by the application of brute force. Therefore, they were forced to rely more heavily on other means just to retain their position of power. The challenge the US government faced was how to manufacture public consent from the apathetic masses. The answer was television and radio propaganda.

In contrast to Oceania, the USA doesn’t have a centralized system of propaganda. Instead, it is divided into the hands of a handful of responsible individuals, who may or may not always agree on the methods used, but bear a significant advantage over the Orwellian propaganda system—they truly and sincerely believe in what they advocate and accept untruths and double think as impressive as anything Orwell mentioned in his books.<sup>66</sup> This form of blind patriotism is the biggest advantage of the American propaganda.

The US methods remained the same, even after Orwell’s death. The renaming of the Ministry of War to the Ministry of Peace is not the only notable example of the American doublespeak, as we can see on the US Office of Public Diplomacy, which was created in 1983 with the purpose of justifying the war against Nicaragua. This was done by, among other things, spreading disinformation in a program called “Operation Truth.”<sup>67</sup>

In another showcase of propagandistic movement, US decided to support the government of El Salvador. It highlighted the high voter turnout during the elections, completely oblivious to the local legal requirement to vote, as well as the state repression, the inability for some candidates to enter the elections and the elimination of two independent newspapers. At the same time Nicaragua held elections. In a decision to deny local government legibility, the US decided to ignore high voter turnout and focus on the harass-

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<sup>65</sup> Herman, “From Ingsoc and Newspeak,” 113.

<sup>66</sup> Herman, “From Ingsoc and Newspeak,” 114.

<sup>67</sup> Herman, “From Ingsoc and Newspeak,” 114.

ment of local newspaper offices and the voluntary refusal to participate by one of the oppositional candidates.<sup>68</sup>

The principle of liberty and democracy is being used as a convenient shield. It can be used as a declaration of war if needed but can be hidden out of sight when it is against American interests, as we can clearly see by the US support and alliances with the middle eastern, non-democratic, autocratic regimes until they become inconvenient. Then democracy comes into play and the threat to freedom must be eliminated. One prime example of this is the US war on terror in Afghanistan.<sup>69</sup>

The tradition of American doublespeak still persists until today. The US agency widely known for spreading disinformation is aptly named “Office of Strategic Influence”, military alliances are “Partnerships for Peace”, missiles “Peacekeepers” and many other terms like “humanitarian bombing” or “rogue states” are still being widely used and invented according to the techniques of doublethink.<sup>70</sup>

### 2.2.3 Possibilities of an “Orwellian” Future

Some authors argue that Orwell’s totalitarian regime is no longer possible due to the fact that the perfect political system has been already found. According to Fukuyama, liberal democracy has become the final form of government. Therefore, there will be no more political shifts, no more wars, and therefore no more history as we know it. He takes his ideas from the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel who defined history as the humanities’ progress towards higher levels of rationality and freedom which supposedly has already reached its peak. In his book, *The End of History and the Last Man* Fukuyama proclaims that history has ended. He considers liberal democracy a perfect system that has conquered monarchy, fascism, and communism and is supposedly spreading to the entire world until one day the whole world will be democratic. He considers liberal democracy the end of the ideological evolution of humanity and the final form of human government. Although he does not deny that notable events that will have its place in history will still happen.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Herman, “From Ingsoc and Newspeak,” 115.

<sup>69</sup> Herman, “From Ingsoc and Newspeak,” 117-20.

<sup>70</sup> Herman, “From Ingsoc and Newspeak,” 123.

<sup>71</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), xi.



Despite of his claims, one may argue that Fukuyama has fallen victim to the very own American exceptionalism which was mentioned in previous chapters. The author extensively uses what one may call American Doublespeak (eg. defence by bombing). About World War II he wrote:

There have of course been many bloody tyrannies before the twentieth century, but Hitler and Stalin put both modern technology and modern political organization in the service of evil. . . . To defend themselves from this threat, liberal democracies were led to adopt military strategies like the bombing of Dresden or Hiroshima.<sup>72</sup>

### 2.3 Ideology

The Oceania's ideology is called Ingsoc (Short for English Socialism). The name itself represents the ideological simplification of the language as was mentioned previously.

The principles of Ingsoc rest on the shoulders of a technique referred to as “doublethink”. It is a method that is used by Party members to accept whatever the Party is saying whether it is in conflict with their memories and thoughts or not.<sup>73</sup> Everything the Party says must be true and even thinking that it is not is considered a “thoughtcrime”—a crime of thinking about any criminal behaviour, which includes any thoughts questioning the party's integrity or even rebellious thoughts against the Party.<sup>74</sup>

The compliance with the “law of doublethink” is enforced by a security force called the thought police. The police can persecute anyone who commits thoughtcrime. After Winston Smith, the novel's protagonist, commits a “thoughtcrime” by scribbling down anti-governmental ideas in his notebook, he fears of the thought police:

The Thought Police would get him just the same. He had committed—would still have committed, even if he had never set pen to paper—the essential crime that contained all others in itself. Thoughtcrime, they called it.<sup>75</sup>

The police have at its disposal technologies which allow them to watch people at all the time. One could never be sure if he was being watched and that was enough to dissuade people from committing “crimes”. This is also expressed by the protagonist Winston:

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<sup>72</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 6.

<sup>73</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 44.

<sup>74</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 24.

<sup>75</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 22.

There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized.<sup>76</sup>

### 2.3.1 Soviet Union and the Thought police

During the first half of the twentieth century in the Soviet Union operated a secret police troop called the NKVD (which later transformed into KGB).<sup>77</sup> It was most likely an inspiration for the novel's thought police. Same as in the novel, it inspired fear in the people who never knew when and where they could be listened to or watched. Same as in the novel, it inspired fear in the people who never knew when and where they could be listened to or watched which was also the reason why it was so effective. Same as the thought police it heavily relied on surveillance and its purpose were among other things to search for and get rid of the regime's political opponents.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Winston participates in the deletion or “vaporization” of many of the regime's political opponents by working on the erasure of any written records about them.<sup>78</sup> One might argue that Orwell based this idea on the cases of censorship known from the Soviet Union. During Stalin's reign it was common to “delete” inconvenient Party members and Stalin's political opponents from historical records. The most interesting case of this is the falsification of photographs which is very sophisticated for its time. In the event known as The Great Purge Stalin and his administration participated in the vaporization of many Party members who crossed Stalin in any way or were just considered a threat to his reign. One of the most famous examples of this is the deletion of the NKVD (secret police) boss Nikolai Yezhov.<sup>79</sup>

### 2.3.2 Putin's Russia

In spite of the fact that Russia did not advance technologically to the level of the novel's ideas about novel-writing machines and floating fortresses, ideologically, Russia has

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<sup>76</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 5.

<sup>77</sup> “Secret Police,” Library of Congress, last modified August 31, 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/archives/secr.html>.

<sup>78</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 54-56.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Conquest, “Inside Stalin's Darkroom,” *Hoover Digest*, April 30, 1998, <https://www.hoover.org/research/inside-stalins-darkroom>.

hardly changed. Although it distanced itself from its totalitarian past, it still remains an authoritative state.

Nowadays Russia proclaims itself democratic, but from a foreign perspective it still does not appear as one. One of the facts undermining the legibility of this claim is the rule of Vladimir Putin, which was for a long time enforced by the pact between him and Dmitry Medvedev. This pact consisted of Putin and Medvedev switching positions between prime minister and the president of the federation, effectively bypassing the rule of no more than two consequential presidential terms. This pact has kept Putin in power since 1999. However, recently Medvedev has resigned as a prime minister. This has forced Putin to change strategy in order to keep power.<sup>80</sup>

The solution was presented by the 2020 alternations of the Russian constitution, which allowed Putin to run for president two more times, possibly until the year 2036.<sup>81</sup> In the light of these changes, we can predict that Putin continues in the Russian history of Tsarism and will be the ruler of Russia until the end of his lifetime or until he finds a suitable successor.

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<sup>80</sup> Tatsiana Kulakevich, "Medvedev's Resignation: The End of Tandemocracy in Russia?" *The Globe Post*, January 22, 2020, <https://theglobepost.com/2020/01/20/tandemocracy-russia/>.

<sup>81</sup> Andrew Roth, "Putin Backs Proposal Allowing Him to Remain in Power in Russia beyond 2024," *The Guardian*, March 10, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/10/vladimir-putin-amendment-power-russia-2024>.

## CONCLUSION

The first part of this essay is dedicated to the definition of the genre as well as a close look at the dystopian world in question.

The analysis of the novel's launch takes a close look at the circumstances surrounding the novel's release as well as inspirations Orwell took which shaped the novel itself. The focus is laid on his experience from the Spanish civil war, which had a great impact on the novel's final form.

The second chapter consists of the analysis and the comparison of Orwell's dystopian powers to their parallels in the real world. The analysis has shown us that Orwell's predictions in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* still remain relevant until this day. It has proven that Orwell follows in the shadows of other great utopian and dystopian writers. His novel is a realistic prediction of events that may happen and to some degree have happened during the twentieth-century pinnacle of world communism. Some of the Orwellian predictions are applicable even to a world we live in, as is the case with the omnipresent security cameras.

Furthermore, Orwell's division of the world between the three superpowers—Eurasia, Eurasia, and Oceania closely resembles the current major players in world politics. Their real-world parallels still survive until today as the Chinese communist regime, the Russian quasi-democracy, and American self-assured system.

Some of the inventions Orwell predicted began to be used by governments in order to track the activities of their citizens and are used on a daily basis. Emphasis is put on Orwell's concept of "telescreens." Most importantly, the usage of closely related CCTV cameras for political objectives and population control, as was shown by historical examples from throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As well as examples from the contemporary setting.

Finally, language simplifications depicted in the novel in the form of newspeak bear striking similarities to the top-down structured office jargon which has its roots in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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