1984 Through the Contemporary Lens

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Abstract:

This research paper aims to analyze the book 1984 published in 1949 in the contemporary lens, to examine the book which is set in a dystopian future where the world is divided into three super states: Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. The world dystopian world of Orwell was set in the totalitarian state where there is totalitarian regime that exercises complete control over its citizens' thoughts and actions, employing techniques such as constant surveillance, propaganda, historical revisionism, and the suppression of individuality. The aim is to observe the aspects of the novel that can be correlated in the contemporary period.

Key words: contemporary view, dystopian

Introduction:

1984, published in 1949, has become a phenomenon and stands out as one of the most significant works not just of the 20th century but also in contemporary literature. Numerous critics interpret the novel as a response to the post-World War context. However, since it was penned during the time between World War II and the Cold War, it can also be considered a link to that era of conflict.
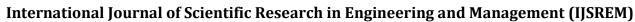
When examining this book from a contemporary perspective, one can identify the criticisms and themes, especially the depiction of technology as a tool for political purposes and the representation of a technological disaster. As we transition from a technologically advanced society to a digital one and the role of AI in the 21st century emerges, one reads this text in the current era; it raises questions about what elements are pertinent to today's digital and AI landscape.

Surveillance in the digital age:

The monitoring capabilities and information technology have progressed significantly in the early 21st century. The theme presented in 1984, illustrated by the slogan "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU," has evolved within the contemporary digital realm. In 1984, written in 1949, concepts of surveillance, privacy, and individuality were merely speculative. Yet, in today's world, surveillance through gadgets such as microphones, smart phones, and miniature devices is prevalent, reflecting a profound absence of privacy.

The methods, mediums, and forms of surveillance have expanded and evolved beyond what was observed in the 20th century. With technological advancements, surveillance has heightened through cameras, CCTV, mobile phones, and microscopic devices, among others. Monitoring in the present time includes diverse forms of observation, from conventional CCTV surveillance to digital tracking via smartphones and online platforms. This extensive monitoring generates serious concerns regarding privacy, security, and possibilities for misuse.

This encompasses CCTV cameras, which are increasingly widespread in both public and private areas. Numerous modern surveillance technologies have become routine elements of everyday life that are inescapable. Such oversight also includes monitoring via smartphones, social media, online behaviors, and various digital gadgets. Geospatial surveillance involves the utilization of technologies such as GPS tracking and satellite imagery to observe locations and movements. Biometric surveillance incorporates facial recognition, fingerprint scanning, and other biometric methods to facilitate identification and enhance security. Mass surveillance pertains to the large-scale monitoring of entire populations, typically by governmental organizations, for purposes of security or intelligence. Corporate surveillance refers to businesses collecting and tracking data about their customers and employees for various objectives.

When we consider all of this, we notice that the techniques, tools, and methods of surveillance have evolved to an entirely new degree. For many individuals and organizations, all information and data about anyone is just a few clicks away. The breach to privacy has escalated to a level that seems almost unattainable. As one can see in the book, surveillance was politically regulated and served as a tool to carry out various political agendas, such as control and obedience, suppression of dissent, enforcing conformity, maintaining authority, and engaging in manipulation and propaganda. However, contemporary surveillance serves a variety of functions and has been employed in both authorized and unauthorized ways, not only for political ends but also for commercial and personal purposes. Surveillance encompasses not just privacy issues but also cybersecurity threats, the risk of misuse, a deceptive sense of security, and ethical challenges. The collection and manipulation of data is becoming the primary tool utilized across all fields in diverse ways. One of the methods for gathering data is through surveillance instruments. Ultimately, while the objectives and methodologies of surveillance may differ slightly from those depicted in the book, can we assert that the outcomes are the same?

Liberty:

The emergence of the industrial enlightenment and the modern age gave rise to the call for liberty. With this shift, we observe changes in how liberty is perceived and pursued, including the nature of the struggles involved. The combat against the overwhelming forces of historical kings or religious authorities has evolved into battles concerning political factions, industrial interests, or human rights, demonstrating a continuous theme.
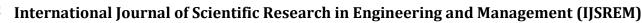
As depicted in "1984," the ongoing struggle is for liberty and freedom, manifested in a regulated atmosphere with the aid of various modern technologies. While we recognize its significance in the 20th century, the dynamics of controlled power and liberty have entered an entirely new phase in the early 21st century.

- Orwell's book illustrates a society under constant surveillance via telescreens, paralleling present-day anxieties about data collection and surveillance technologies.

-"1984" delves into how those in authority can dictate language and perception, with terms like "doublethink" and "Newspeak" serving as reflections of current issues surrounding information manipulation, misinformation, and the prevalence of "fake news."

- The dread surrounding thoughtcrime and the suppression of personal expression in "1984" echoes contemporary worries about the stifling influence of online censorship, social media distortion, and the growing division in political conversations.

- Orwell's narrative acts as a warning about the risks associated with unchecked authority and the threat of authoritarianism in societies where citizens fail to safeguard their liberties.

-"1984" underscores the necessity for critical analysis and the importance of scrutinizing the narratives issued by those in power, stressing the need for individuals to stay alert against potential power abuses in today's world.

Power in the digital age:

The Party wields complete power, infiltrating every element of life within Oceania. They govern history, language (via Newspeak), information, and even the thoughts of their populace. This domination is upheld through steady surveillance (telescreens), propaganda, and instilling fear.

The Party psychologically controls the populace through propaganda, contorting facts and historical accounts to fit their objectives. This is illustrated by their use of phrases such as "War is Peace," "Freedom is Slavery," and "Ignorance is Strength," which serve to manipulate the narrative and silence opposition. In "1984," language itself is wielded as an instrument of power. Newspeak, a simplified language aimed at constraining thought, exemplifies how linguistic tools can be used to govern and limit individual expression and creativity.

As a symbol of the Party, Big Brother embodies the all-encompassing and powerful essence of the government. His image, along with the incessant surveillance through telescreens, instills a sense of fear and compliance. O'Brien, an influential member of the Party, reveals that power is not merely a tool for achieving goals but is, in fact, a purpose in itself. This implies that the party's primary aim is to uphold and increase its dominion, regardless of the suffering it inflicts.

The Party employs psychological tactics, such as the torture in "Room 101," to dismantle individuals and compel them to love Big Brother. This illustrates the Party's capacity to dominate not just physical actions but also the thoughts and feelings of its populace. Although the Party oversees every aspect of life, it also fabricates the illusion of choice. This is seen in the encouragement of citizens to engage in hate campaigns, even though true freedom of choice is absent.

The various forms of power dynamics depicted in the book can be seen in today's world, manifested in new and subtle ways that may not fully illustrate the play's power struggles but certainly capture the essence of the pervasive propaganda and psychological influence exerted over individuals.

Subtle Manipulation: In contemporary society, power is exercised more discreetly through the manipulation of information, algorithms that create echo chambers, and the sway of both media and social media.
• Government and Corporate Influence: Both governmental entities and private companies play a part in shaping public opinion and controlling the flow of information.
• Widespread Surveillance: While not as overt as depicted in "1984," widespread surveillance through various technologies fosters a similar feeling of being overseen and monitored.
• Disinformation and False Narratives: The proliferation of misinformation and fake news online erodes trust in institutions and can be utilized to sway public opinion.
• Political Divisiveness: The decline of trust in institutions combined with heightened polarization can create a climate of fear and division akin to the society portrayed in "1984."
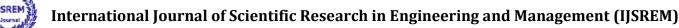
Data and Control:

In George Orwell's "1984," the Party in Oceania exerts authority over citizens through manipulation of information and historical narratives, including language and propaganda. They achieve this by revising historical accounts, censoring media, and introducing a simplified language known as Newspeak to regulate thought. This manipulation cements the party's control and stifles dissent.

Control of information and its presentation is illustrated as one of the Party's mechanisms of control in the novel. Instances such as the ongoing war, the narrative of victories, and the broadcast of misdeeds are all controlled to reflect the Party's agenda.

The idea that knowledge equates to power has long been the principle emphasized in educational institutions, and the book conveys a similar idea. Information, or data as we've come to understand, serves as one of the influential instruments employed to steer and mold the beliefs of the public in the story.

From this perspective, data stands as the paramount tool in contemporary warfare. With technological progress, one may never discern what kind of influence data algorithms might have had on their thoughts. What you consume visually and audibly each day will mold you as an individual. In this digital age, the proliferation and influence of social media, along with its reach over the mass population and the unprecedented connectivity it offers, have never been witnessed before. The mind and the controlling algorithms that curtail the content and information are beyond the human brain's comprehension throughout a lifetime, as supercomputers execute this task continuously.

The system managed and controlled the population of Oceania through various techniques. However, in today's world, data and technology have emerged as one of the most powerful weapons for winning any conflict, whether political, business, or personal. The increase in the volume and accessibility of data is unprecedented. Not only is the amount at issue, but so is the spread and rotation, the legalization of the usage, the spread, and the collection itself, as well as the

matter of authorization for use. All of this ubiquitous and useful knowledge may be inaccessible to many ordinary consumers. Therefore, how far can one go in controlling the data and its impact on netizens?

Advance Manipulating tool:

In Orwell's '1984,' the Party employs the Ministry of Truth to modify records and rewrite history to align with its propaganda. This enables them to rationalize their actions and obliterate inconvenient facts. By controlling historical accounts, the Party seeks to ensure that citizens accept whatever the Party asserts, making it impossible to dispute their authority. The Party's distortion of history also affects individual memories, as citizens are discouraged from maintaining personal records such as photographs or documents.

The Party utilizes various propaganda methods, like the telescreen and the "Two Minutes Hate," to sway public opinion and foster loyalty. Continuous surveillance through telescreens guarantees that citizens are under constant watch, and any dissent is promptly punished. The Party also regulates the dissemination of information, censoring literature, newspapers, and even private discussions.

The Party uses telescreens to watch and control citizens, creating a constant sense of fear and self-censorship. Modern surveillance technologies, like security cameras, data collection, and online monitoring, replicate the "Big Brother" concept, raising concerns about privacy and freedom.

Propaganda and Information Control:

The Party manipulates language through Newspeak, rewrites history, and uses propaganda to control citizens' thoughts and emotions. Fake news, echo chambers on social media, and state-controlled media replicate the Party's control over information, influencing public opinion and limiting access to diverse perspectives.

Language and Mind Control:

Newspeak, the official language of Oceania, limits vocabulary and thought, making it harder to express dissent or rebel. The manipulation of language in political discourse, marketing, and social media can create emotional dependency, shift thought processes, and confuse individuals.
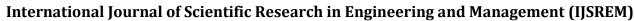
Psychological Manipulation:

The Party uses propaganda, surveillance, and psychological warfare to break down individual resistance and enforce conformity. Modern social media algorithms can create echo chambers, reinforce biased viewpoints, and influence users' behaviors, potentially leading to mental health issues and a loss of individuality.

Technological manipulation:

In contemporary context, while data manipulation may not be as overt, the practices of rotating and manipulating information reflect significant parallels to those depicted in the book. Issues such as black market data, stolen privacy, and various other concerns have emerged. The increasing methods of using data and acquiring it have become more prevalent, giving rise to new fields related to the data market of dataism—both officially and unofficially. The digitalization occurring even in the most remote areas of the world has created vast opportunities for individuals to access information with ease, whether through legitimate or illegitimate channels. All these transactions and events have considerable effects on **"1984":**

Conclusion:

 George Orwell's "1984," a dystopian novel set in an imaginative and technologically advanced world, published in 1949, stands as one of the most significant politically pioneering works of the century. However, as previously mentioned, we have noted its parallels to today's world. "1984" continues to hold relevance in our contemporary society, serving as a warning regarding the threats posed by totalitarianism, pervasive surveillance, and the distortion of

language. The book's themes of extensive surveillance, propaganda, and control over personal thought are significant in an age characterized by escalating government oversight, the impact of social media, and the proliferation of misinformation.

The narrative focuses on the implications of totalitarian regimes, widespread surveillance, and the oppressive regulation of individuals and behaviors within society. "Nineteen Eighty-Four" has established itself as a foundational literary work in the realms of political and dystopian fiction. It also popularized the term "Orwellian" as a descriptor, with many phrases from the novel entering everyday language, such as "Big Brother," "doublethink," "Thought Police," "thoughtcrime," "Newspeak," and the notorious assertion that "2 + 2 = 5." Connections have been made between the book's themes and real-world examples of totalitarianism, mass surveillance, and infringement on freedom of expression, among other subjects. Orwell characterized his work as a "satire" and a demonstration of the "perversions to which a centralized economy is liable," while also asserting his belief that a scenario similar to it could potentially occur.

As previously discussed, the aspects of surveillance, privacy, psychological manipulation, information, data, and the concepts of liberty or individuality are all elements that can be examined from a modern viewpoint. The advancements in surveillance technology, the boom in information technology, the rise of dataism, and the shifting dynamics of power and control across various sectors are topics that invite comparison between the Orwellian universe and the current reality.

Orwell's work carries significant implications and presents extensive opportunities for future exploration across multiple fields. Its examination of totalitarianism, surveillance, propaganda, and the manipulation of language raises important inquiries about the decline of personal freedoms, the misuse of authority, and the vulnerability of truth within society. Ongoing research into "1984" can enhance our awareness of the risks of authoritarianism, the necessity of protecting individual rights, and the intricacies involved in navigating the changing landscape of power and control in today's world.

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