



# Study of George Orwell's novel 1984 in light of China's Social Credit System

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**Abstract**— This is the study of George Orwell's novel 1984 in light of China's social credit system explores the idea of Orwellian surveillance reflected in all over the world. China's Social Credit System (SCS) is a mechanism that is designed to rate every citizen based on their behaviour. According to electronic media, SCS has been given a new Direction to China. Orwell's 1984, a Dystopian novel that was published in 1949 it represent suppression of independent thoughts. It offers a keen study to analyze the extremeness and difference between SCS and the world depicted in 1984. This study sheds light on the numerous techniques used to maintain social norms and presents a framework for examining how SCS influences citizen behavior. By closely reading Orwell's novel 1984, it engages with the themes of surveillance, totalitarianism, and manipulation. Here, the meaning of surveillance is to monitoring someone closely for control purposes. Totalitarianism describes a system in which the government exerts absolute control over all aspects of life, leaving people with no political freedom or choice. These three factors—surveillance, totalitarianism, and manipulation—contribute to the creation of dystopian societies. In the present scenario, the concept of digital dystopia emerges, where technology is used as a tool for surveillance and social manipulation. This paper highlights how modern digital surveillance mirrors Orwell's nightmares. The SCS system is a digital system that can be seen as a Faustian deal, similar to Christopher Marlowe's play Doctor Faustus, in which doctor sells his soul to devil in exchange for 24 years of ultimate power. Likewise, Chinese Citizens trade their freedom and privacy with higher authorities in exchange of privileges and for good opportunities. This study identifies key features of Orwellian warnings and raise concerns about free will and democracy. To analyse, it is essential to divide it into key points and break down various stages to find the findings of rebirth and re-education in 1984 as well as in China's SCS. These stages serve as a lens for deeper exploration and help to build a corelative understanding between the two.



**Keywords**— Digital dystopia, surveillance, Faustian deal, totalitarianism, manipulation, consent, re-education and rebirth.

## I. INTRODUCTION

There are two types of people in this world: good people and bad people. Now imagine a world where the good ones are rewarded and the bad ones are punished (Zhang Zheng, Professor at Peking University and advisor for the Social Credit system).

The origin of the Social Credit System (SCS) can be traced back to the 1980s, when the Chinese government introduced a personal banking function for small businesses and individuals from rural areas who lacked official documents.

In 2004, President Jiang Zemin first introduced the concept, but regional pilot programs began implementing it in 2009. In 2014, the Chinese government fully adopted the system in its current form. It is a financial credit and social integrity system that, by 2020, was intended to become mandatory and cover all of Chinese society (Wikipedia).

George Orwell's 1984 is a Dystopian work of fiction that explores the theme of subjugation of citizens. It is a warning of the dangers posed by an omnipresent leader with an abundance of political power. Winston smith is a main

character of 1984, works for government to establish historical record to fit the party's fake version of reality. However, he secretly hates the party's rules and has a forbidden love affair with Julia. They are caught up by thought police. Winston and Julia are tortured and brainwashed until they fully submit to the Big Brother.

Hence, this study explores the historical context of South China and its implications for international law, and the broader consequences for global security. This study aims to provide a deep understanding of modern political thoughts, its significance and the discussion on privacy, truth, and freedom.

### 1. Orwellian nightmare:

It refers to a dystopian future that was depicted in George Orwell's novel 1984. It represents a society where Big Brother's control dominates citizens, even their independent thoughts.

China has the largest population in the world around 1.5 billion but there are 2 million cameras for online tracking their every single moment to monitor citizens' behaviour from social interaction to financial and online transactions. Some critics argue that this function reflects the Orwellian nightmare.

"The poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures that were so contrived that the eyes followed you when you moved. **BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU**, the caption beneath it ran." (pg:2)

"The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment." (pg:3)

In China, CCTV cameras and AI facial recognition inputs play the role of the eyes of the big brother.

### 2. Reward and punishment:

Individuals with high social credit can easily obtain loans with lower interest rates. They also enjoy travel benefits, such as fewer restrictions on ticket booking. Additionally, they have better job opportunities. These individuals are placed on a "red list" and receive preferential treatment.

"The core mechanism of the Chinese social credit system is the creation of blacklists. The government uses blacklists to punish people for various infringements of the law that fall short of being considered criminal. Commonly blacklisted subjects include people who have the means to repay the debt they owe but choose not to, colloquially referred to as 老赖 (laolai). The Supreme People's Court, the highest court in

China, assembles a national blacklist of "**judgment defaulters**," people who have not complied with court orders." (Shazeda Ahmed on the messy truth about social credit (2019))

"Your name was removed from the registers, every record of everything you had ever done was wiped out, your one-time existence was denied and then forgotten. You were abolished, annihilated: **vaporized** was the usual word." (p:19)

### Judgement defaulters: vaporized

As in 1984, loyal party members receive better living conditions as compared to "vaporized" and in China the good score citizen secures a place of trustworthiness.

### 3.False truth or Newspeak:

The Chinese government decides what constitutes bad and good behavior. Citizens agree with these rules to avoid deductions in their scores, even if they do not want to. This system is promoted as a way to build trust in society, but it seems to enforce loyalty to the State. Individuals are urged to exhibit behavior that matches government expectations to gain more credit in their scores. People demonstrate their happiness and loyalty even when inner feelings are different.

"Winston turned round abruptly. He had set his features into the expression of quiet optimism which it was advisable to wear when facing the telescreen." (pg:5)

"B-B! ... B-B! always filled him with horror. Of course he chanted with the rest it was impossible to do otherwise. To dissemble your feeling, to control your face, to do what everyone else was doing, was an instinctive reaction."<sup>4</sup> (pg:17)

"WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH" (Pg:4)

### 4. Persecution or unjust treatment:

In China who criticize the government and support democratic thoughts also express revolutionary opinions can be under blacklist. Blacklisted inhabitants are exposed online through social media by labelling them as untrustworthy citizens.

"TWO AND TWO MAKE FIVE" (Pg:277)

In Orwell's novel, the Party erases history and truth. They create their own reality by using manipulative ideas. The regime uses forcing, contradicting beliefs, newspeak, and for psychological control they physically torture them in room 101. The ruling party does not want to dominate

power but also wants people to show love towards big brother. To elaborate, this some relevant examples are as follow: the main character Winston is beaten by O'Brien until he betrays his love for Julia and confesses to crimes that he never committed and is forced to accept that  $2+2=5$ . There are groups of people called thought police or eyes of big brother who arrest people for even subtle gestures and slight facial expressions, this crime is known as face crime. Here, even the consideration or pondering of revolutionary notions is a crime that is called thought crime.

## 5. Dehumanization:

This refers to the loss of individual identity and often leads to loss of privacy, freedom and oppression.

People are treated as a part of the system rather than unique identities and they become puppets just live for increase points. People have no free will, they perform self-censorship to avoid punishments and they internalized these rules. As it is a central theme of 1984, the party suppresses individuals and also their humanity to maintain absolute control.

“The thing that he was about to do was to open a diary. This was not illegal (nothing was illegal, since there were no longer any laws), but if detected it was reasonably certain that it would be punished by death, or at least by twenty-five years in a force-labour camp.” (Pg:6)

Citizens have no privacy, they cannot even write their personal diaries. All inhabitants live in fear as a result they lose their individuality because they feel that they are being watched. People function more like programmed machines or robots than free-thinking individuals. The main agenda of Big Brother is to deprive the masses of their identity, freedom and emotions to mold them into an obedient subjects who exist only for the selfless service of B-B.

## 6. Stages of surveillance and control through SCS system

**6.1) Data collection:** Data are collected through various sources like AI facial recognition, CCTV, legal records, public behaviour and financial records.

**6.2) Classification:** Citizens and business companies are assigned a score based on their behaviour and performance. People with high scores were rewarded with good opportunities and with low scores were punished by restrictions on travel and banning their social accounts. High- score individuals come under the red list, and low-score people declared as a blacklisted.

**6.3) Loss of democracy and privacy:** Mass surveillance prevents the social gathering and the organisation of protests which is a key element of democracy. People are

motorized through cameras, leading to a lack of privacy because every single moment is captured.

**6.4) Authoritarianism and No Escape:** There is no fair way to challenge or raise voice against these rules. Rewarding systems help authorities to stay in power. People accept everything and follow rules blindly even they don't want to do, due to the fear of being watched and get punished by losing scores. At this last stage people can't opt out of this system because of ensuring total obedience. Their behaviour would be under complete control which leading to regulation of citizens' actions as well as thoughts.

## 7. Stages of rebirth and re-education in 1984

**7.1) Incarceration:** (imprisonment): -The thought police constantly watch citizens and arrest them if they find a single mistake or even a slight rebellious idea from people within a second. They isolate them in the Ministry of Love (torture place).

**7.2) Devastation:** (destruction of existence): -Here in 2nd stage the purpose is to break existence and resistance for betraying their own thoughts and feelings by torturing them physically and mentally. In this the person professes all the crimes they never did.

**7.3) Indoctrination:** (Brainwashing): - The language limitation enforced by Newspeak because, in this process, people do not have words for certain thoughts or ideas, so it's easy to prevent them from thinking something new. It is not just about punishments it is a replacement of rebellious thought with absolute loyalty to the big brother. The brutal procedure tears human emotions and minds into pieces and rejoins them according to the party's choices.

**7.4) Room 101 a worst nightmare:** (terrifying experience): - Eyes of Big Brother investigate about every single citizen closely to know what will break the person's inner spirit. As it is the final stage or phase in this mechanism, the prisoners turn into obedient and loyal party members because they face their worst nightmare or fear in this room.

“Of all horrors in the world-a rat!” (Pg:144)

Winston the lead character of the novel is shackled into a chair and O'Brien released starving rats onto Winston's face and rats will devour his flesh.

The workflow in room 101 sustains that no one can evade as themselves they leave as robots with commands fixed into their programme to follow blindly the rules of big brother. Winston at the moment of terror, he discards all his love for Julia.

“Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don't care what you do to her. Tear her to the bones. Not me! Julia! Not me!”.

He does not just surrender his body he surrenders his feelings, his mind, his soul and his love. In the end he loves big brother.

“He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.” (Pg:297)

## II. CONCLUSION

Both china's social credit system and Orwell's 1984 reveals the dangers and warning against totalitarian control, where manipulation, surveillance and fear shapes artificial society. The unjust treatment of individuals who are punished through deduction from their points, strips them to obey and accept all the rules blindly. Reward and Punishment is a technique that is used to control citizen their actions and also their thoughts. The various stages of surveillance and control in china and The stages of rebirth and re-education in 1984 – from monitoring their behaviour to absolute control create a mirror for unchecked consequences of loss of democracy as well of privacy and creation of digital dystopian society where free will is replaced by fear and control may become absolute. False truth and censorship results dehumanization where people become tool for subjugate power that distort humanity as well as reality.

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