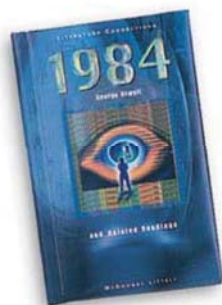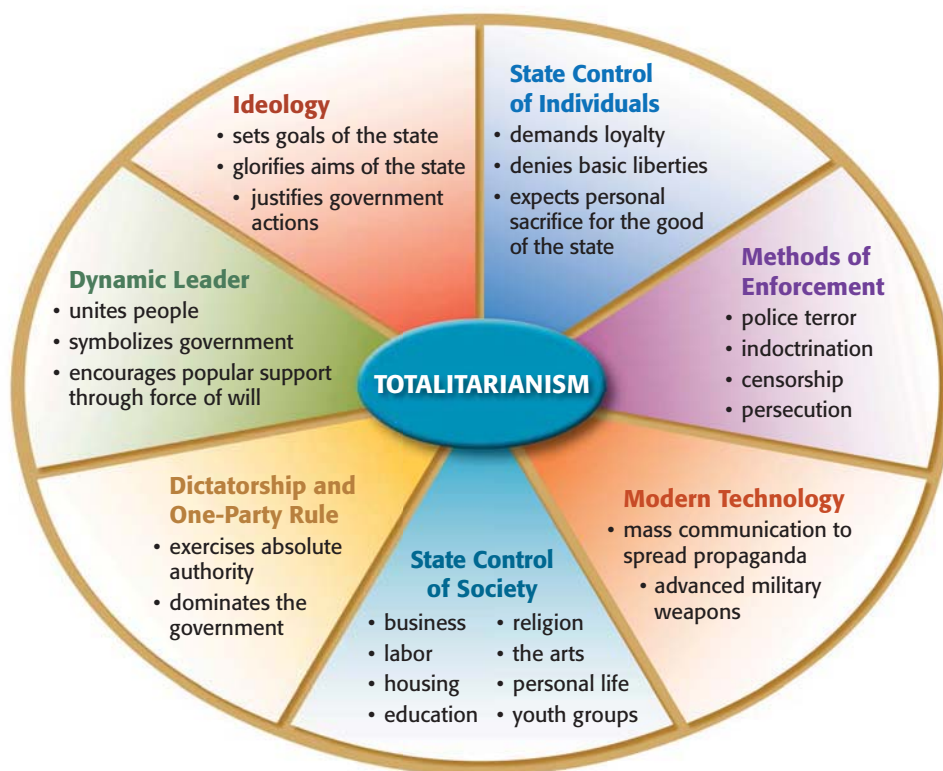# Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism is a form of government in which the national government takes control of all aspects of both public and private life. Thus, totalitarianism seeks to erase the line between government and society. It has an ideology, or set of beliefs, that all citizens are expected to approve. It is often led by a dynamic leader and a single political party.

Mass communication technology helps a totalitarian government spread its aims and support its policies. Also, surveillance technology makes it possible to keep track of the activities of many people. Finally, violence, such as police terror, discourages those who disagree with the goals of the government.

Key Traits of Totalitarianism

Ideology
• sets goals of the state
• glorifies aims of the state
• justifies government actions

State Control of Individuals
• demands loyalty
• denies basic liberties
• expects personal sacrifice for the good of the state

Methods of Enforcement
• police terror
• indoctrination
• censorship
• persecution

Dynamic Leader
• unites people
• symbolizes government
• encourages popular support through force of will

TOTALITARIANISM

Dictatorship and One-Party Rule
• exercises absolute authority
• dominates the government

State Control of Society
• business   • religion
• labor   • the arts
• housing   • personal life
• education   • youth groups

Modern Technology
• mass communication to spread propaganda
• advanced military weapons

Fear of Totalitarianism

George Orwell illustrated the horrors of a totalitarian government in his novel, *1984*. The novel depicts a world in which personal freedom and privacy have vanished. It is a world made possible through modern technology. Even citizens' homes have television cameras that constantly survey their behavior.

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

RESEARCH LINKS For more on totalitarianism, go to **classzone.com**

Connect to Today

1. **Synthesizing** How does a totalitarian state attempt to make citizens obey its rules?

   See Skillbuilder Handbook, page R21.

2. **Hypothesizing** How would your life change if you lived in a totalitarian state?