The BBC brand name is now considered to be the "second most famous in the world after that of Coca-Cola"

- It could be argued that the BBC produces a product that is as internationally persuasive and pervasive as any other global corporation. It has certainly been responsible for producing a form of cultural hegemony that has helped to dictate and form British public opinion and social attitudes for nearly a century.

- In particular, the BBC has played a crucial role in conceiving and cementing notions of "Britishness" (both at home and abroad), intent on constructing a deep sense of national consciousness and consensus.

This "national consensus" was aided by the highly centralized structure of the BBC.

- (1930's) A National Programme from London was introduced, accompanied by regional programs from five centers in the Midlands, North, South West, and Scotland (Wales and Northern Island were only introduced later).

- (Regional programs) "did not produce an equitable balance of forces between London and the rest of the country. . . . The National Programme was, in every sense, the senior service".

- "One general policy" could "be maintained throughout the country and definite standards promulgated".
“Internal Colonization”

• “It is occasionally indicated to us... that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need—and not what they want—but few know what they want and very few know what they need”

  - George Reith (BBC Director, 1924)

“In the Name of National Unity”

• “Monopolizing the channels of public discussion and debate in the society, television also centralized the power to make its images of social life stick. It communicated, at rapid speed, highly selective, if not distorted, images of one community or section of society to another”

“In the Name of National Unity”

• Channel Four was set up in 1982,
  • Channel Four was, as a whole, bound by the Independent Broadcasting Authority to “find new ways of serving minority and specialized audiences.” While the channel was welcomed by many, some critics felt that it was too little too late, an attempt to maintain hegemony in a period of cultural fragmentation by offering a small space to “marginalized” voices.
  • Welsh speakers, for instance, felt virtually ignored by a TV network that did little to represent or reflect their particular language, culture, or concerns.
Recent findings from the Broadcasting Standards Commission suggest that British television is still dangerously unrepresentative of its ethnic communities.

- Monitoring speaking Asian roles in a "composite week," the commission found that four appearances of the same Asian character in a soap opera accounted for 40 percent of all Asian men on ITV. Likewise, an Asian news reader accounted for 30 percent of all Asian-language-speaking women. The worst performance of all the six channels monitored was BBC2, where 97 percent of the characters in speaking roles were white, 2 percent were black, and only 1 percent (five people) were Asian.

Reconstructing Home

The inability of British terrestrial television to satisfy minority needs has meant that certain sections of the audience are now increasingly turning to cable and satellite for the majority of their viewing.

- There are now around twelve dedicated Asian channels in the United Kingdom providing Asian language news, film, and music. One such channel is ZeeUK/World Europe (a subsidiary channel of Zee Asia) that has a potential audience of 2 million Asian viewers in Britain and a further 8 million across mainland Europe.
- A wholly owned subsidiary of the Indian company Zee Telefilms Ltd. based in Bombay, it took over from its predecessor Asia TV in March 1995.

For many Asian viewers, this channel provides their main source of non-English programming, broadcasting in languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, and Tamil. As well as screening many Bollywood films, the channel provides several movie quiz shows and celebrity gossip about film stars and directors.

It also transmits "high-quality" Pakistani dramas while making its own lifestyle and children's programs. This sort of TV clearly plays an important role in cementing relations between Asian families and communities, providing a "common culture" for those viewers who do not fit easily into any neat definition of British citizenship.
Reconstructing Home

- The recent report from the Runnymede Trust (a sponsored commission into the future of multiethnic Britain)... the very idea of one-nation broadcasting is now at best anachronistic, at worst racist.
  - "More and more people have multiple identities— they are Welsh Europeans, Pakistani Yorkshire women, Glaswegian Muslims, English Jews"
  - Satellite television may shrink the world, but it also allows smaller communities to speak to and for themselves, to bypass or challenge larger and more powerful nation-states and their omnipotent ideologies.

Despite the doom-laden prophets of globalization, there is much evidence to suggest that home-produced programming in Europe is still strongly favored against foreign imports.

- In "Western Europe, the top-rated TV programmes are nearly always domestically produced, and there is widespread recognition that audiences often prefer home-grown programmes, if these have the resources to compete with Hollywood productions."

- It is a tendency also replicated in parts of Brazil and Latin American countries.

Conclusion: From “Big Brother” to “Little Sister”

- Perhaps the age of television is not over, but the age of a centralized, state-run media monopoly is. We might lose a little (enforced) common ground, but what we might gain is a complex multichannel system that better reflects the multicultural society Britain is today.

- Of course, digital television will not instantly produce a democratic network of “glocal” communication, but it might just help challenge centralized notions of national identity previously upheld and maintained by large, powerful conglomerates like the BBC.
Conclusion: From “Big Brother” to “Little Sister”

- It is no secret that much of George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four (1948) (particularly the ironically named “Ministry of Truth”) was based partly on his experiences of working for the BBC.

- The very notion of Big Brother is one of a centralized, monopolistic power that attempted to inflict a totalitarian uniformity on all its citizens, regardless of their individual identities. As such, it seems strangely appropriate that a country like China has recently given e-mail the nickname “little sister,” as a result of a similarity in pronunciation. Whatever the reasons for its coinage, it seems a surprisingly suitable name for a form of technology that, in some cases, actually allows subversive discussion to take place away from the prying eyes of a ruling elite.