**text: Britain from 1945 onwards**

*By Professor Jeremy Black in http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/overview\_1945\_present\_01.shtml  
, 2011-03-03*

Britain and the British have changed profoundly[[1]](#footnote-1) since 1945.

In line with a general trend around the developed [[2]](#footnote-2)world, life expectancy [[3]](#footnote-3)has risen greatly for both men and women. This has meant that the average age [[4]](#footnote-4)has risen, the birth rate has remained static.

Furthermore[[5]](#footnote-5), large-scale immigration, particularly[[6]](#footnote-6) from the West Indies and South Asia, but also from other areas such as Eastern Europe, has made the population ethnically[[7]](#footnote-7) far more diverse, with important cultural consequences. In 1970 there were about 375,000 Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in Britain. By 1993 the figure was about 1,620,000, with the rise in the number of Muslims being particularly pronounced.

Social and cultural change has also reflected the extent [[8]](#footnote-8)to which the population has become more individualistic and less deferential[[9]](#footnote-9).

The moral code that prevailed in 1945 broke down, a process formalised by legal changes in the 1960s. Abortion [[10]](#footnote-10)and homosexuality became legal, capital punishment [[11]](#footnote-11)was abolished[[12]](#footnote-12), and measures [[13]](#footnote-13)were taken to improve the position of women.

These changes were linked to shifts in religious practice. By the 1990s, only one in seven Britons was an active member of a Christian church, although more claimed[[14]](#footnote-14) to be believers[[15]](#footnote-15). But for most believers, formal expressions of faith [[16]](#footnote-16)became less important.

More generally, the authority of age [[17]](#footnote-17)and experience were overthrown and, in their place, came an emphasis [[18]](#footnote-18)on youth and novelty. This was seen in politics with, for example, the lowering of the voting age to 18; in the economy, with the rise of the youth consumer; and in culture, with marked changes in popular music.

The 1960s destroyed a cultural continuity that had lasted since the Victorian period. In the 1960s, pop music - not least that of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones - the Liverpool Sound, the Swinging Sixties, and the London of Carnaby Street created a new image of Great Britain.

In 1945, Britain still had the largest empire in the world. This empire had largely been granted[[19]](#footnote-19) independence by 1964, beginning with independence for India and Pakistan in 1947. The most populous[[20]](#footnote-20) of Britain's remaining[[21]](#footnote-21) colonies, Hong Kong, was only handed over[[22]](#footnote-22) to China in 1997.

As empire receded[[23]](#footnote-23) fast, Britain seemed a diminished[[24]](#footnote-24) power. Nonetheless[[25]](#footnote-25), it became the third state in the world to gain the atom bomb in1952, followed by the hydrogen bomb in 1957. Defence in the post-war era largely consisted of the protection of Western Europe against the threat of Soviet invasion, and Britain played a key role in this confrontation which became known as the Cold War.

Britain became an active member of international organisations, not least the United Nations, of which it was a founder member and held a permanent seat on the Security Council. Britain was also a founder member of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949, and sent a contingent of troops to take part in the Korean War (1950 - 1953) against Communist North Korea.

Closer to home, troops were deployed [[26]](#footnote-26)in Northern Ireland from 1969 in response[[27]](#footnote-27) to an outbreak of sectarian[[28]](#footnote-28) violence, which rapidly became a major terrorist challenge. In the 1990s, a peaceful end to the 'Troubles' was negotiated[[29]](#footnote-29), but tension continues. In contrast to the situation in Northern Ireland, Welsh and Scottish nationalism remained essentially[[30]](#footnote-30) non-violent, and in 1997 each gained an assembly [[31]](#footnote-31)exercising a considerable amount[[32]](#footnote-32) of local control.

At times, Britain itself appeared to be going the same way, as entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) - later European Union (EU) - in 1973 led to a marked erosion of national sovereignty[[33]](#footnote-33) and to a transfer of powers to Europe.

Uncertain public policy in the post-war period played a role in the marked relative decline[[34]](#footnote-34) of the British economy. There was a sense[[35]](#footnote-35) of national malaise[[36]](#footnote-36) in the 1970s, which also owed [[37]](#footnote-37)much to very high inflation and to a sense that the country had become ungovernable, as strikes by coal miners led to the failure of government policies on wages[[38]](#footnote-38).

Spending became a major expression of identity and indeed a significant activity in leisure time[[39]](#footnote-39). The move to 24-hour shopping and the abolition of restrictions [[40]](#footnote-40)on Sunday trading were symptomatic of this shift. Shopping patterns also reflected social trends in other respects with, for example, a major change in the diet, as red meat declined in relative importance, while fish and vegetarianism all enjoyed greater popularity. So too did products and dishes from around the world, the British had become open to non-British influences.

Increased foreign travel and intermarriage were other aspects of a relatively un-xenophobic [[41]](#footnote-41)and continually-changing society - trends that continue to this day.

(764 words)

Tasks:

1. Summarize the changes from the 1940s till today.
2. Comment on the statement: England loses its culture.

1. profoundly - zutiefst [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. developed - entwickelt [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. life expectancy- Lebenserwartung [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. the average age - Durchschnittsalter [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. furthermore - außerdem [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. particularly - besonders [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ethnically - ethnisch [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. the extent - Umfang [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. deferential - ehrerbietig [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. abortion - Abtreibung [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. capital punishment - Todesstrafe [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. to abolish - abschaffen [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. measures - Maßnahmen [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. to claim - behaupten [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. believers - Gläubige [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. formal expressions of faith – formelle Bekenntnisse zum Glauben [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. the authority of age – Autorität des Alters [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. an emphasis -Betonung [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. to grant - gewähren [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. populous - bevölkerungsreich [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. remaining - verbleibend [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. to hand over - übergeben [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. to reced - zurücktreten [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. diminished - vermindert [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. nonetheless - dennoch [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. to deploy - einsetzen [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. response - Antwort [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. sectarian violence – religiöse Unruhen [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. to negotiate - verhandeln [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. essentially – im Wesentlichen [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. an assembly - Versammlung [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. amount - Menge [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. sovereignty - Souveränität [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. decline - Verfall [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Sense – Sinn, Gefühl [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. malaise – Krankheit, hier strukturelle Schwäche [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. to owe - verdanken [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. wages - Verdienst [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. leisure time - Freizeit [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. the abolition of restrictions – Abschaffung der Regulierungen [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. un-xenophobic – kulturell offen, nicht ausländerfeindlich [↑](#footnote-ref-41)