

Unit 1: The affluent society: Britain 1951-64 under the Conservatives

Social developments

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Rising living standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-war slums cleared and new towns created (e.g. Kirby) • Population shifts away from urban centres - linked in with increased car ownership • Wages were increasing, private savings rose and farmers were also doing well • Rationing ended in 1954 • Homeownership increased - cheap mortgages - but council houses and rented accommodation outnumbered private homes
Affluence and consumerism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in consumer goods (TVs, washing machines, cars) • Growth of advertisement e.g. on ITV on the TV • Increase in new hobbies like DIY, gardening etc. • Car ownership increased 25% 1957-59 and motorway expansion occurred. • Holiday camps were popular (e.g. Butlins). Only 2% holidays were abroad in the late 1950s
Class and the 'establishment'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline in deference by the end of the 50s/early 60s • Suez Crisis exposed lying and manipulation by government • Pressure groups like the CND encouraged challenges to the government • Criticism of 'the establishment' - those who ruled • Profumo Affair - media criticised government, sex scandal shocked the nation • Satire increased e.g. <i>TWTWTW</i> and <i>Private Eye</i> • 'Angry-young men' - used the arts to attack behaviour of ruling elite
Position of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily still seen as housewives - average age of marriage 21 and 75% women was married. Only 1/5 women worked in 1951 • Family allowance - paid to women - one of few things not in husbands name • 1964 number of women working increased - not widespread and trade unions did not support growth in women working • 1957-59 increase in washing machine ownership and refrigerators. Made domestic chores easier. 
Race and immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration from Commonwealth increased racial tensions • 676,000 immigrants came to Britain - but 1.32million left Britain to live abroad • August 1958 - 'nigger hunts' in Nottingham and Notting Hill race riots - show racial tensions. British fascists like Oswald Mosley tried to incite fear against immigration • 1962 - Commonwealth Immigrants Act passed - controlling immigration
Youth culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New youth culture due to increased affluence and leisure time • Baby boom post-war increased number of teenagers • Teddy Boys in early 50s, Mods/Rockers in late 1950s - often clashes between the groups (e.g. Margate and Brighton 1964) • Rock and roll influenced music and fashion
Changing attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial tension, gang violence and sexual themes explored more in books/films (e.g. <i>A Clockwork Orange</i>, <i>Dixon of Dock Green</i>) • Drive to break down censorship and social taboos - case of Lady Chatterley's lover. • Backlash by some e.g. Mary Whitehouse and older generation

EFTA and attempts to join EEC



- Many opposed to Britain joining European Economic Community (focus on Special Relationship, burden of WW2 debts and focus on Commonwealth)
- EEC launched 1957 - dominated by France and West Germany
- 1959 Britain led formation of European Free Trade Association (EFTA) - only a moderate success and no match for EEC
- 1961 Macmillan applied to join EEC led by Ted Heath. USA keen for Britain to join as a link for them in Europe. Britain still wanted its Commonwealth and Special Relationship with USA
- Application **rejected** by Charles de Gaulle (France) - vetoed this. 5 other EEC members disappointed but could not change de Gaulle's mind

US relations in the context of the Cold war

1. **NUCLEAR DETERRENT:** US did not initially share nuclear secrets so Britain gained own bomb independently in 1952. Led to formation of CND (campaign for nuclear disarmament) who protested in marches etc. 1958 US agreed to share nuclear secrets again under Mutual defence Agreement - Britain gained US Polaris submarine system.
2. **KOREAN WAR:** Britain sent over 90,000 soldiers to support UN action in South Korea. Showed Britain's willingness to play a role in world affairs
3. **SUEZ, 1956:** Suez Canal - vital for trade with Asia. Egypt's leader Colonel Nasser nationalised the canal in 1956. Nasser had links to USSR. Britain, France and Israel secretly agreed to act to prevent this. Israel would invade Egypt and then France/Britain would intervene. Military failure and led to protests in Britain. USA angered as not consulted. Led to economic issues in Britain and the resignation of Eden. Suez showed Britain was dependent on the US, could not economically support some foreign policy desires and undermined the idea of Britain as a world power.

The 'winds of change' and decolonisation

- 1951 the retreat from the Empire began - fighting many national independence movements in Malaya, Kenya etc. Struggled to contain rebellions e.g. in Mau Mau in 1952
- After Mau Mau/Suez foreign policy changed - pace of decolonisation increased - shift signalled in the 'winds of change' speech made by Macmillan.
- Generally, a success - decolonisation completed swiftly and with less violence than other colonial powers like Belgium
- By 1964 the transition from Empire to Commonwealth seemed a significant achievement