

## “The sun never sets on the British Empire”

At its height in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the British Empire was so massive that it spanned the globe. Because its territories covered virtually every time zone, there was literally never a moment where the sun wasn't shining on at least one piece of British-controlled land. [Wikipedia +2](#)

The logistical milestone of the sun never setting on the empire was a reality for roughly 200 years. This came to an end due to the following historical milestones: [Popular Science](#)

- **Global Decolonization:** Following World War II, the empire rapidly fractured as nations—most notably India in 1947—demanded and won independence.

- **The Economic Crisis:** Severe international condemnation and financial market panic caused a run on the British Pound. The UK was forced to accept a United Nations-backed ceasefire and withdraw its troops in humiliating defeat. [Wikipedia +6](#)

### Long-Term Impact

- **End of Empire:** The failure of the operation definitively proved that Britain was no longer a premier global power, and that its military actions required American approval.
- **Political Fallout:** British Prime Minister Anthony Eden's health and political career were ruined; he resigned in early 1957.
- **Geopolitical Shift:** The US effectively assumed the leading Western role in the Middle East, while Egypt cemented its sovereignty and control over the canal. [National Army Muse... +1](#)

In 1956, Britain—along with France and Israel—invaded Egypt after President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company. The humiliating military withdrawal forced by the United States and the United Nations marked the end of the British Empire's status as a global superpower. [Wikipedia +3](#)

### Key Events

- **The Nationalization (July 26, 1956):** After the US and Britain withdrew funding for the Aswan High Dam, Egypt seized the Suez Canal. The canal was a crucial route for Middle Eastern oil and a vital asset for the British and French economies.
- **The Tripartite Invasion (October 1956):** Britain, France, and Israel launched a coordinated attack on Egypt. While the initial military campaign effectively secured the canal, the Egyptians sank ships to block the waterway.
- **International Pressure:** The United States (led by President Dwight D. Eisenhower) vehemently opposed the invasion, fearing it would alienate Arab nations and push them toward the Soviet Union. The USSR also issued threats of military intervention.