

# Imperialist complications in the Philippines and the Panama Canal

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The United States pre- World War I

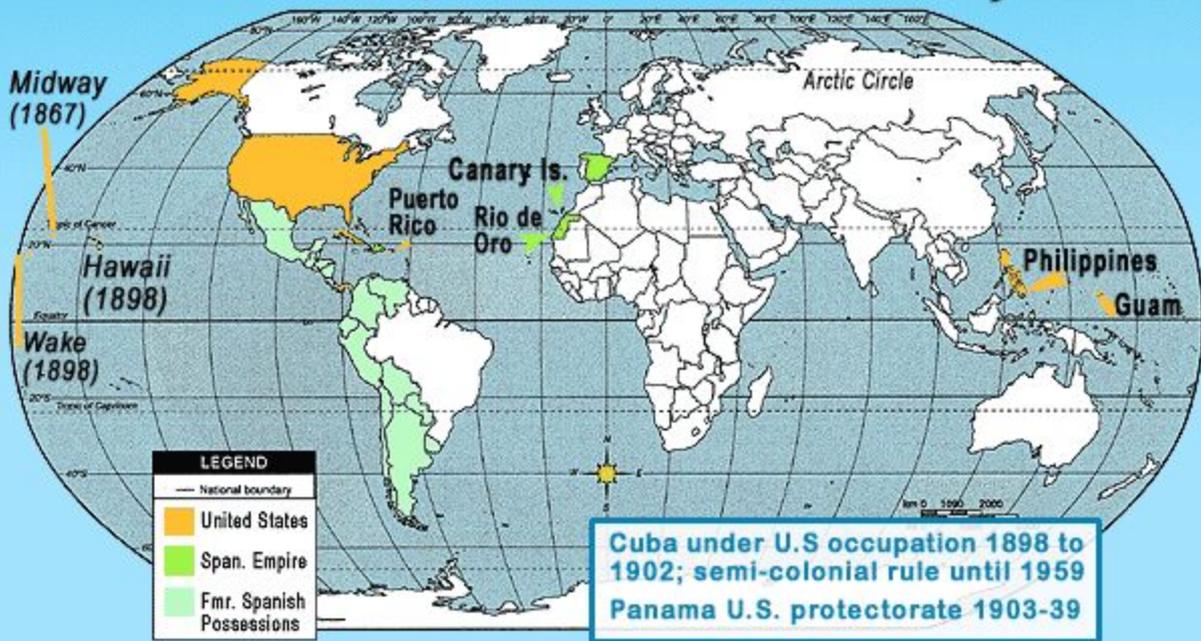
# Today's Learning Goals

1. Understand the position of the Anti-imperialist League
2. Identify the role economics (money) plays in Imperialist goals
3. Describe the American-Filipino conflict
4. Identify the outcome of the conflict
5. Identify the Panama Canal on the map
6. Explain the purpose of the Panama Canal
7. Describe the complications and challenges of building the Panama Canal

# The Philippines

Lost by Spain, gained by the United States

# THE AMERICAN EMPIRE IN 1903





# The Anti-Imperialist League

On June 15, 1898, the Anti-imperialist league formed to fight U.S. annexation of the [Philippines](#), citing a variety of reasons ranging from the economic to the legal to the racial to the moral. It included among its members such notables as Andrew Carnegie, [Mark Twain](#), William James, David Starr Jordan, and Samuel Gompers with George S. Boutwell, former secretary of the Treasury and Massachusetts, as its president. Following the signing of the [Treaty of Paris](#), the league began to decline and eventually disappeared.

THE  
CHICAGO LIBERTY MEETING

HELD AT  
CENTRAL MUSIC HALL  
APRIL 30, 1899

"No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent. When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government—that is despotism."—*Abraham Lincoln, Speech of October 16, 1854.*

"Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men in all lands, everywhere. Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves, and under a just God cannot long retain it."—*Abraham Lincoln, Letter to H. L. Pierce, April 6, 1859.*

"IF THIS BE TREASON, MAKE THE MOST OF IT."—*Patrick Henry.*

PUBLISHED BY  
CENTRAL ANTI-IMPERIALIST LEAGUE  
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1899

# Background

In April 1898 the United States went to war with Spain for the stated purpose of liberating Cuba from Spanish control. Several months later, when the war had ended, Cuba had been transformed into an American protectorate, and Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines had become American possessions.

When the US government decided not to grant independence to the Philippines, Filipino rebels led by Emilio Aguinaldo determined to resist American occupying forces. The result was a brutal guerrilla war that stretched on for years. Some 200,000 Filipinos lost their lives, either directly from the fighting or as a result of a cholera epidemic traceable to the war.

# They weren't always popular, and they weren't heeded...

Some were in fact quite hostile to the league and its mission. According to the commander of the New York chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic, all league members should have their citizenship stripped from them and be "denied the protection of the flag they dishonor." Teddy Roosevelt described the anti-imperialists as "simply unhung traitors, and ... liars, slanderers and scandalmongers to boot."

That American forces were engaged in a colonial war to suppress other people's independence led to a great deal of soul-searching among important American thinkers, writers, and journalists. What eventually became the American Anti-Imperialist League began at a June 1898 meeting at Boston's Faneuil Hall, where people concerned about the colonial policy that the US government may choose to adopt in the wake of the war gathered to speak out against the transformation of the United States into an imperial power. The League was formally established that November, dedicating its energies to propagating the anti-imperialist message by means of lectures, public meetings, and the printed word.

George E. McNeill put it more simply: "Wealth is not so rapidly gained by killing Filipinos as by making shoes." Andrew Carnegie even offered to purchase the independence of the Philippines with a check for \$20 million — the amount the US government had paid Spain for the islands. The New York Times denounced the offer as "wicked." McKinley turned this particular offer down, at which point Carnegie then turned to the anti-imperialists and began to finance the anti-imperialists. The anti-imperialists reached a peak of their influence in the early part of 1900.

# Review: what is Imperialism?

im·pe·ri·al·ism

im'pirēə,lizəm/

*noun*

1. a policy of extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force.
2. "the struggle against imperialism"

# War breaks out in the Philippines

After its defeat in the [Spanish-American War of 1898](#), Spain ceded its longstanding colony of the Philippines to the United States in the Treaty of Paris. On February 4, 1899, just two days before the U.S. Senate ratified the treaty, fighting broke out between American forces and Filipino nationalists led by Emilio Aguinaldo who sought independence rather than a change in colonial rulers. The ensuing Philippine-American War lasted three years and resulted in the death of over 4,200 American and over 20,000 Filipino combatants. As many as 200,000 Filipino civilians died from violence, famine, and disease.



# Americans as Foreign Invaders?

After the [Spanish-American War](#), while the American public and politicians debated the annexation question, Filipino revolutionaries under Aguinaldo seized control of most of the Philippines' main island of Luzon and proclaimed the establishment of the independent Philippine Republic. When it became clear that U.S. forces were intent on imposing American colonial control over the islands, the early clashes between the two sides in 1899 swelled into an all-out war. Americans tended to refer to the ensuing conflict as an “insurrection” rather than acknowledge the Filipinos' contention that they were fighting to ward off a foreign invader.

# Escalation and End to Conflict

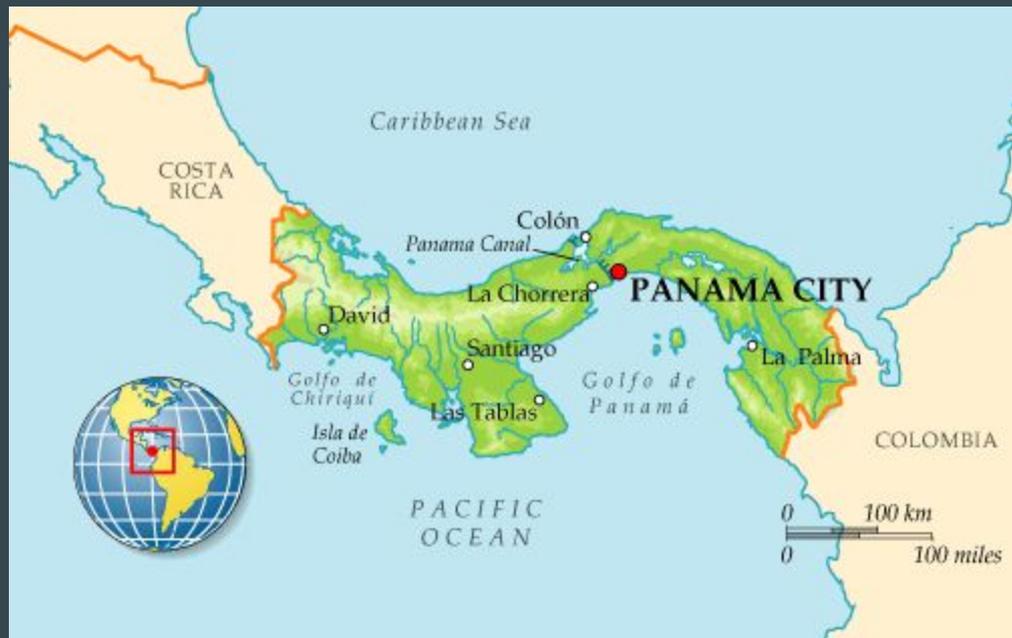
The war was brutal on both sides. U.S. forces at times burned villages, implemented civilian reconcentration policies, and employed torture on suspected guerrillas, while Filipino fighters also tortured captured soldiers and terrorized civilians who cooperated with American forces. Many civilians died during the conflict as a result of the fighting, cholera and malaria epidemics, and food shortages caused by several agricultural catastrophes.

Even as the fighting went on, the colonial government that the United States established in the Philippines in 1900 under future President William Howard Taft launched a pacification campaign that became known as the “policy of attraction.” Designed to win over key elites and other Filipinos who did not embrace Aguinaldo’s plans for the Philippines, this policy permitted a significant degree of self-government, introduced social reforms, and implemented plans for economic development. Over time, this program gained important Filipino adherents and undermined the revolutionaries’ popular appeal.

In 1907, the Philippines convened its first elected assembly, and in 1916, the Jones Act promised the nation eventual independence. The archipelago became an autonomous commonwealth in 1935, and the U.S. granted independence in 1946.

# The Panama Canal

What is it, then?



# First Attempts

To that end, in 1850 the United States and Great Britain negotiated the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty to reign in rivalry over a proposed canal through the Central American Republic of Nicaragua. The Anglo-American canal, however, never went beyond the planning stages. French attempts to build a canal through Panama (province of Colombia) advanced further. Led by Ferdinand de Lesseps—the builder of the Suez Canal in Egypt—the French began excavating in 1880. Malaria, yellow fever, and other tropical diseases conspired against the de Lesseps campaign and after 9 years and a loss of approximately 20,000 lives, the French attempt went bankrupt.



WILL HE DIG IT HIMSELF?

—Edgren in *New York World*

# America Gets Involved

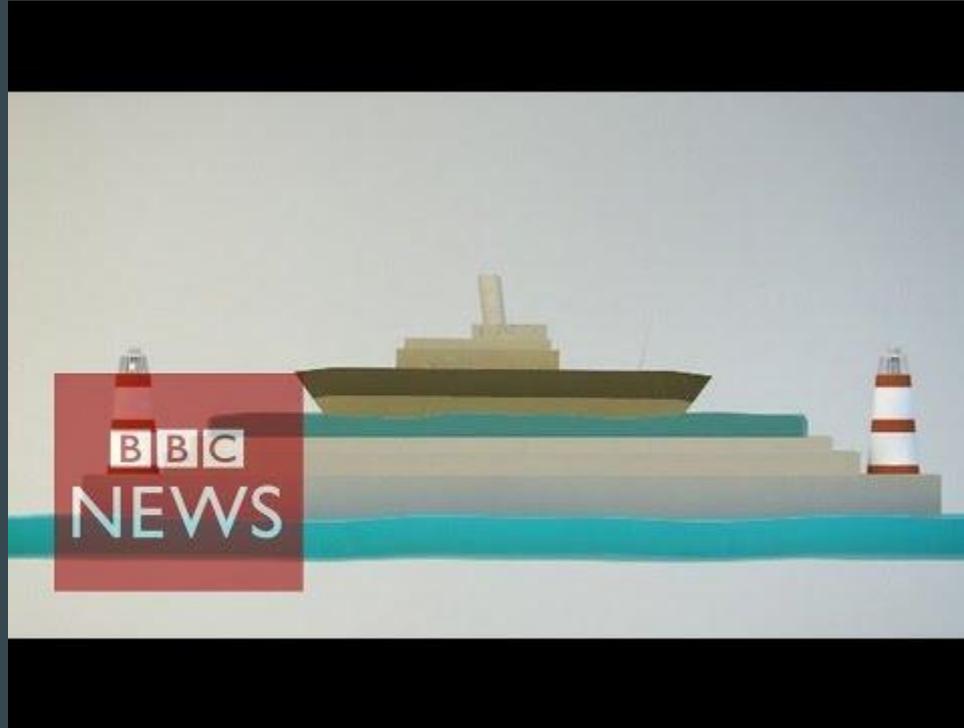
In spite of such setbacks, American interest in a canal continued unabated. The Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of 1901 abrogated the earlier Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and licensed the United States to build and manage its own canal. Following heated debate over the location of the proposed canal, on June 19, 1902, the U.S. Senate voted in favor of building the canal through Panama. Within 6 months, Secretary of State [John Hay](#) signed a treaty with Colombian Foreign Minister Tomás Herrán to build the new canal. The financial terms were unacceptable to Colombia's congress, and it rejected the offer.

# The Agreement is Finalized

President Roosevelt responded by dispatching U.S. warships to Panama City (on the Pacific) and Colón (on the Atlantic) in support of Panamanian independence. Colombian troops were unable to negotiate the jungles of the Darien Strait and Panama declared independence on November 3, 1903. The newly declared Republic of Panama immediately negotiated the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty of 1903, which provided the United States with a 10-mile wide strip of land for the canal, a one-time \$10 million payment to Panama, and an annual annuity of \$250,000. The United States also agreed to guarantee the independence of Panama. Completed in 1914, the Panama Canal symbolized U.S. technological prowess and economic power. Although U.S. control of the canal eventually became an irritant to U.S.-Panamanian relations, at the time it was heralded as a major foreign policy achievement.



# Watch BBC Mini-Documentary



# The Human Suffering

The building of the Canal by the French Compagnie Universelle du Canal Interocéanique was plagued from the start with the problems inherent in building a structure of its kind in a tropical country. It has been said that five hundred lives were lost for every mile (about fifty miles) of the length of the Canal, or a total of 25,000 deaths.

The tropical diseases inherent in cutting through dense, virgin jungle, and working in the uniquely hot and humid climate of Panama, not to mention boring through a particularly difficult isthmian terrain to enable the joining of the two oceans were the first factors in elevating the death tolls. There was a period of time when Panama gained the dubious distinction as a tropical pest hole and a “white man’s grave” from which any white man in his right mind should steer clear. Malaria, Yellow Fever, dysentery, typhoid, dengue, not to mention the difficulties of adapting to the tropical heat took a grand toll on the lives of the few hardy souls from France and the Caribbean islands that dared to venture to Panama.



The greatest price was paid by the laborers who came by the boatloads to the isthmus to work on the building of the waterway. The racial disparities, as we will see, became a flagrant reminder that “Panama was four times more deadly for the black man than it was for the white.” The black laborers, who were generally West Indian, if they survived, would remember the many wondrous and worthwhile things about their Canal experience. Throughout their reminiscences, however, they would recall the “tremendous physical exertion and...the constant fear of being killed,” since their deaths filled the fatality statistics by a large margin.

Death by violence was probably even more feared than disease since, particularly during the French Period, train derailments, falls from trains (dirt cars etc.), being crushed under land and mud slides, and suffocation from noxious gases was commonplace. Sudden death in too many cases would probably have been preferable to survival after violent dismemberment as a consequence of being caught under the wheels of a train and a life of pain and feelings of uselessness.



With the entrance of the Americans into the Canal construction in 1904 the Yankee's reliance on dynamite to quickly blast away layers of soil and rock from the Cuts to carve out the Canal route the ever present possibility of being blown to pieces became a new worry for especially the black workers. The "powder men," those extremely daring souls who transported the thousands of fifty pound boxes of dynamite on their heads or shoulders, along with the men who drilled the charge holes into the side of rocky precipices were often the victims of accidental or "premature" explosions. Most of the men who actually handled the dynamite and the charge boxes, in fact, were black West Indians as you will note in the image of the period and they disproportionately paid any false move or mistake in timing on the part of their bosses or co-workers. In understanding the nature of dynamite even the "sweat" produced by this highly unstable material is liable to set off an explosion if not handled delicately.

# Final Count

The numbers offered in our modern historical accounts seem to represent only a minor detail in calculating the cost of modernizing our present technological world, and yet they are only a glimpse of the great price paid by our black Caribbean ancestors. It is estimated that 22,000 laborers died between 1881 and 1889, the French period, and the American death toll was officially 5,609, bringing the total estimated human cost to 27,609. However, our world today is indebted to an infinitely larger number of men who braved the hardships and perils of working on the construction of the Panama Canal.



# Panama Canal Notes Review