The Crimean War was fought between 1853 and 1856. In the war, Russia fought an allied force consisting of the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, and France. The Crimean War is important to the study of history because it was a different type of war. The diplomacy before the war was distinctive. The Russians were able to defeat the French under Napoleon, causing resentment from the French. The control of Christian shrines in the Holy Land became an issue. The Ottomans did not care about these shrines, but both the French and Russian governments became involved. Each government supported her respective church (i.e. France - the Catholic Church; Russia - the Orthodox Church).

In 1740, the government of the Ottoman Empire promised the French government the right to be the sovereign power that controlled the Holy Land Christians. However, in 1757 the Ottoman Turks also guaranteed the rights of the Greeks to control the Holy Land. The Ottomans continued to give away the same rights, finally promising Russia the right to protect the Christians in the territory controlled by the Ottoman Turks. The Russians, on the other hand, planned to use this issue to weaken the Ottoman Empire, possibly gaining land from them. Also, more French influence in the Ottoman Empire would not facilitate the Russian takeover of Constantinople, a goal of Russia.

Besides the quarrel between France and Russia over control of the Ottoman Christians and shrines in Holy Land, another major reason that led to the Crimean War was the conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire over certain territories bordering both nations. This led to the Russian activation of forces near the Danubian provinces. Additionally, the Russian Black Sea fleet was activated.

To obtain peace, the Russians sent a mission (under a Russian general, Alexander Menshikov), but this mission arrived after the Austrians had reached a peace agreement with the Ottoman Empire. This had far-reaching consequences, for a previous Austrian threat to join with the Russians against the Ottoman Turks gave the Tsar the false belief that Austria was prepared to support Russia in any attempt to attack and defeat the Ottoman Empire.
After the Russian mission returned to St. Petersburg, the Russian government began planning for an attack on the Ottoman Empire. Prince M. D. Gorchkov, the Russian commander of the Russian 4th and 5th Corps (stationed on the border of the Ottoman Empire) was given orders to prepare his force for an attack on Moldavia and Wallachia. If the Ottoman Empire did not give in to the Russian demands after that, then the Russian government was prepared to recognize the independence of all of the occupied states, the beginning of the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire. Both the British and the French were warned that the Russians were serious about threatening war over these rights by Nicholas I. On 5 July, the Russian 4th and 5th Corps marched into Moldavia and Wallachia with 50,000 Russian soldiers. The Ottoman Empire did not stop the Russians, but rather allowed the Russians to maintain possession of these two Danubian provinces.

To attempt to repair this divide, the powers of Western Europe issued the Vienna Note. It did not fully protect the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. However, Russia was not given full control of the Ottoman Christians. Additionally attempts at compromising over the Vienna Note were not successful, and it seemed that the Russia and the Ottoman Empire were headed towards war. The Ottoman Empire delivered an ultimatum to the Russians on 4 October 1853 that demanded that the Russians withdraw from Wallachia and Moldavia. If they did not withdraw within two weeks, then a state of war would exist between the Ottoman Empire and the Russians.

Russia passed an official act of war on 20 October 1853. Additionally, the Turkish fleet was to be destroyed if it came out of port in defense of the army of the Ottoman Empire. The Russians were counting on internal rebellion in the Ottoman Empire as well.

Around 23 November, a fleet of Turkish warships was found near the Black Sea port of Sinope by a small squadron of Russian ships. The Russians requested support from their naval base at Sevastopol. This Russian fleet completely destroyed the Ottoman fleet, killing thousands and taking hundreds prisoner. This enraged the nations of Western Europe, because the Russians had completely defeated an Ottoman fleet within the sailing range of a combined Anglo-French fleet. After the defeat at Sinope, the European nations realized that the Crimean War would be a serious war that would take time, well-trained men, and skill to win.