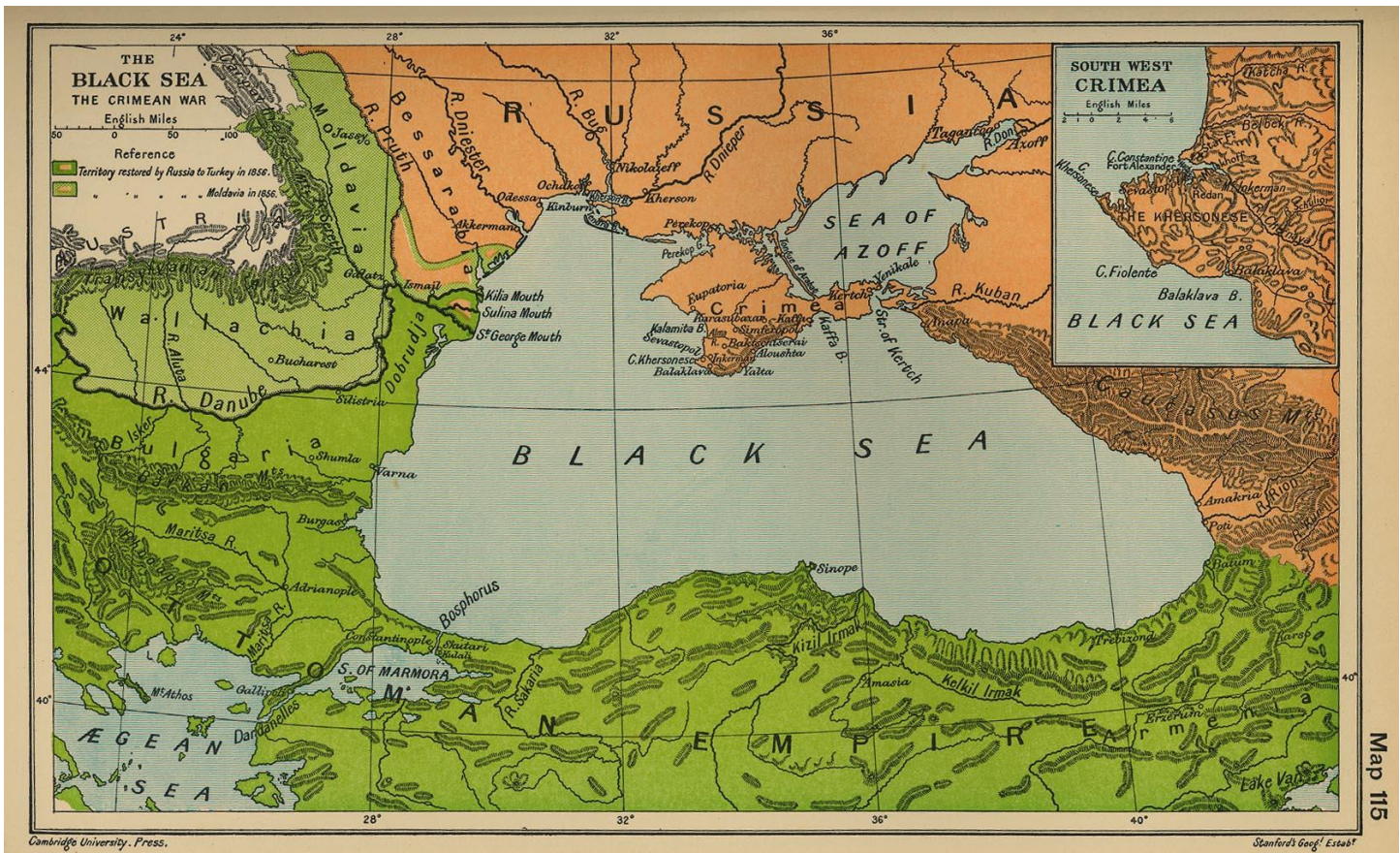


The Crimean War, 1853-1855



- At the beginning of the 19th century the weakness of the Ottoman-Turkish Empire created opportunities for European interference in support of the Christian populations.
- The new president of France, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, exploited Ottoman weakness to secure concessions for the Roman Catholic Church in Palestine, hoping to gain conservative support for his planned coup d'état. When Tsar Nicholas I of Russia retaliated, sending a mission to recover Greek Orthodox rights, the Turks simply gave way to both parties, and hoped the issue would go away.
- Having established the Second Empire, (Louis) Napoleon III lost interest, but Nicholas decided to settle the 'sick man of Europe' once and for all. Expecting support from Prussia, Austria and Britain, he planned to carve up the European part of the Ottoman Empire.
- Nicholas I was mistaken, neither Britain nor Austria wanted to see Russia controlling the Dardanelles. Sensing an opening for a useful diplomatic success France joined Britain in support of the Ottoman Empire, which rejected the Tsar's outrageous terms.

- In July 1853, Russia occupied the Danubian Principalities (Moldavia and Walachia) to pressure Istanbul, but this threatened Austria's economic lifeline - the Danube. For a 'sick man', the Ottoman Empire proved remarkably dextrous and aggressive. Outwitting Austria, Britain and France, who still favoured a diplomatic settlement, they declared war in October 1853 and attacked the Russians.
- In late November, the Russian Black Sea fleet annihilated an Ottoman squadron at Sinope. Britain, anxious to secure her trade with Turkey and access to India by maintaining the Ottoman regime, saw this as an insult and popular opinion made a vigorous response inevitable.
- Britain and France demanded that Russia evacuate the Danubian Principalities, setting their ultimatum to expire in late March 1854 - the timing determined by the break-up of the Baltic ice fields off Reval (modern-day Tallinn, Estonia) where the British hoped to annihilate part of the Russian Baltic fleet.
- Britain always saw its main instrument for the coercion of Russia to be naval force in the north. After all, Russia's capital was on the Baltic littoral, close to her other great security concern, Poland.
- The ultimatum expired and although the harbour at Reval was empty, the powerful Anglo-French fleet nonetheless took command of the Baltic, destroying the key fortress of Bomarsund in August 1854.
- At the outbreak of war, an allied army of 60,000 was already in Turkey to defend Istanbul. Austria then joined French and British demands that Russia evacuate the Danubian Principalities, whereupon Nicholas I actually agreed, thereby calling the allies' bluff.
- This forced the allied army, which had moved up to Varna on the Bulgarian coast, to change its strategy. By early August Austrian troops had created a neutral buffer between the combatants. With a powerful force in position, but ravaged by a cholera epidemic, the allies adopted a British plan to land in the Crimea, assault the naval base at Sevastopol and destroy the fleet and dockyard.
- They expected this would take 12 weeks. In the event it took twelve months, three major land battles and countless actions between two large and well equipped armies deeply entrenched just outside the city.
- The battle of the Alma on 20 September 1854 was the first in which new rifled muskets were used, although only by the British and French. This advantage, in concert with superior skill, initiative and numbers, enabled the allies to drive the Russians out of a strong position north of Sevastopol.

- They failed to follow up the blow by attacking Sevastopol directly, largely to avoid a rupture in allied command system, and marched around the city to begin a regular siege from the south. This allowed the Russians time to fortify the city, and stage two flank attacks from their field army, based in the central Crimea.



BalACLAVA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

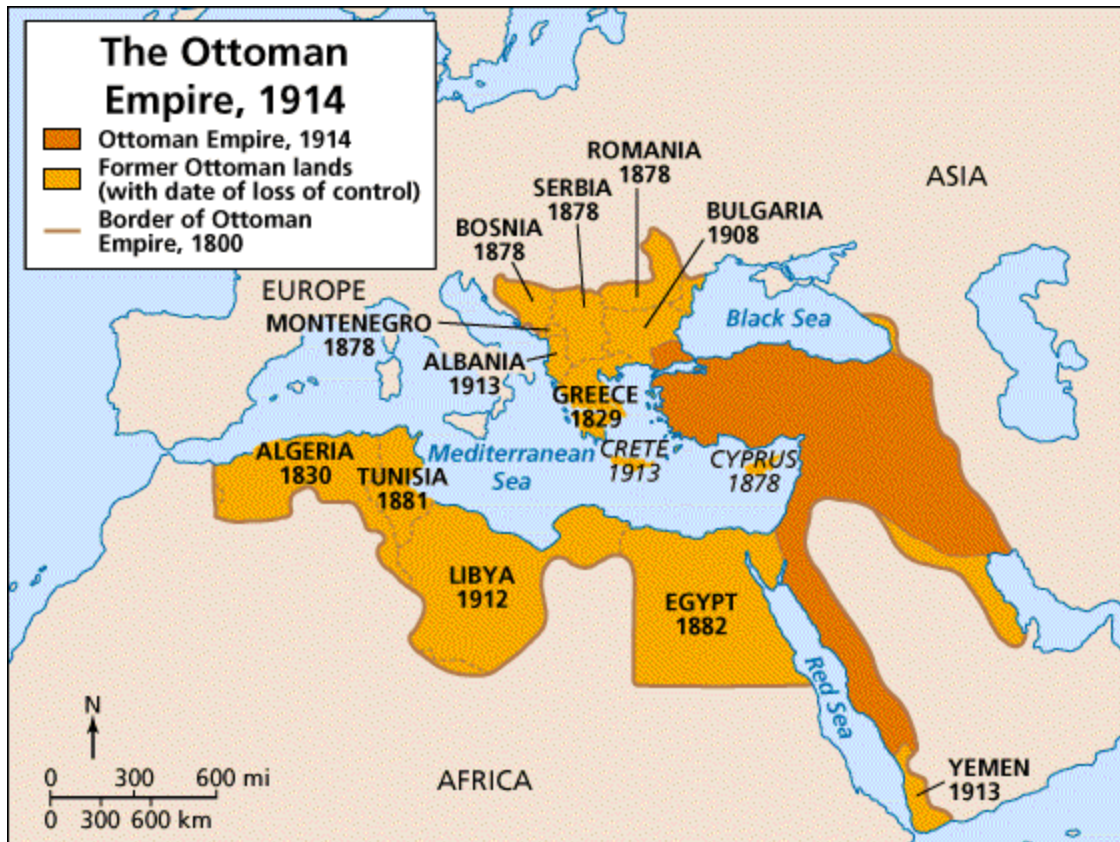
- The first, the Battle of BalACLAVA on 24 October, ended with the legendary British 'Charge of the Light Brigade', which was, although misguided, an astonishingly successful operation of war, with relatively light casualties - only 118 killed out of 620. The Russians were so frightened by the cold courage of the British troopers, they never again dared face them in the open field.
- On 5 November, a major Russian attack at the Inkerman was beaten back with massive losses by isolated British infantry units. A week later the weather broke, sinking transport ships, ruining vital roads and bringing the campaign to a standstill. Over the winter, the allies were joined by the Italian kingdom of Sardinia, which sent a useful army to secure British and French support for the expulsion of Austria from Italy.
- The human cost was immense, 25,000 British, 100,000 French and up to a million Russians died, almost all of disease and neglect. The human aspect of the conflict was recognised in Britain by the introduction of the highest decoration for gallantry. Unlike other medals, the Victoria Cross was awarded to officers and men without distinction.
- The Crimean War was a watershed in Western involvement in the Middle East. The Ottoman Empire, excluded from the Vienna settlement of 1815, was brought into the European political system.



What was the **Vienna Settlement**?:

- ❖ Napoleon Bonaparte had stormed across Europe in the early 1800s, and was defeated in 1814 (he would escape and mount a return that was ultimately crushed in 1815). A new European Order needed to be created to restore order to the continent.
- ❖ The result was the **Congress of Vienna** signed on June 9th, 1815:
 - The hope was to design a political landscape wherein no one power could dominate.
 - Borders were established that served to maintain the balance of power rather than unifying a given group that shared the same language and culture.

- At the same time, the Crimean War continued the process of dismantling the Ottoman's multi-ethnic, multi-faith Eurasian Empire, developing nationalist ambitions in various Ottoman provinces, from Bulgaria to Arabia – ambitions that would be exploited in World War One, when new nations and new boundaries would be drawn.



- On the pretext of a slight to their consul, the French invaded and captured Algiers in 1830.
- In 1881, using the pretext of a Tunisian incursion into Algeria, the French invaded with an army of about 36,000 and declared Tunisia a French Protectorate
- The British were looking for a coal depot to service their steamers en route to India via the Suez Canal (opened in 1869) and moved into Aden (in modern-day Yemen) in the 19th century.
- Italy invaded Libya in 1911, turning it into an Italian colony.
- The British occupied Egypt in 1882 (protecting their interests in the Suez canal)
- European regions of the Ottoman Empire begin declaring independence.