South Slav-Russian Relations in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

Intrusion, Resentment, and Mutual Naiveté

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Abstract

This article examines the myth of "eternal friendship" between Bulgarians and Russians and how their mutual failure to understand the other's motives gave way to resentment, estrangement, and mutual naiveté, straining this supposed natural affinity. The article begins by examining the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and its aftermath, which provides a case study of the ambiguous and changing relationship between Russia and the South Slavs. The second part of the article examines in greater detail the cultural and political affinities between two peoples—including Pan-Slavism, a common Orthodox religion, and similar languages—and why these commonalities still failed to overcome Bulgarian national self-interest and desires for national independence. While this article focuses on Bulgaria, many of the arguments can also be applied to Serbia and other South Slavic countries.

Article

> For nearly five hundred years, Russia has been affectionately known as *Dyado Ivan*—"Grandfather Ivan"—by the Bulgarian people, and during the long, cruel years of Turkish oppression, they looked towards Moscow with hope and longing, in the unshakable belief that their Russian elder brothers would come and liberate them.[1]

So repeats historian Mercia MacDermott the "myth" of "eternal friendship" between Russians and Bulgarians that has been sometimes accepted and sometimes rejected by both historians and the general public. The origins of this myth are many, both subtle and obvious, and will be discussed later in this article. Language certainly played an important role in the development of close ties between the two peoples, as did dissatisfaction with

[1] Mercia MacDermott, *A History of Bulgaria 1393-1885* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1962), 56.
The genesis of this paper was a course in Eastern European history taught by Professor Igor Tchoukarine. Professor Tchoukarine then graciously agreed to supervise an independent study on the paper's specific thesis. Professor Theofanis Stavrou contributed new insights on the Christian Uniate movement by his dissertation student Denis Vovchenko.

the Constantinople-based, Greek-dominated early Orthodox church. However, the basic tie between them was Pan-Slavism. Most history books comment on commonalities among Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Russia. All five share Slavic ethnicity and Orthodox Christianity, as well as having similar languages and cultural proximity. In the opinion of diplomatic historian Barbara Jelavich, these commonalities gave Russia an advantage in creating autonomous states in the Balkans not shared by any other world power.[2] In spite of these affinities, the pride and parochialism of Russian government officials and the Russian Orthodox church inhibited their effectiveness. Largely due to geography, Russia frequently intruded in the affairs of South Slavic countries, which caused people in those regions to harbor resentment towards Moscow. In many cases Russia failed to recognize that South Slavs were no less nationalistic than Russians. Likewise, South Slavs naïvely failed to understand that Russia was acting in what it perceived to be its own best interests, not necessarily those of Balkan Slavs.

While this article focuses on Bulgaria, many of its arguments are generally applicable to Serbia and other South Slavic countries.[3] The article argues that strong factors worked against "eternal friendship." The article begins by examining the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 and its aftermath, which provides a case study of the ambiguous and changing relationship between Russia and the South Slavs. While the war's direct focus was on Bulgaria, Russian diplomatic and military efforts were part of a chain of events that significantly affected not only Serbia and other South Slav countries, but also the Ottoman and Austrian empires and the Great Powers in general. In its analysis of diplomatic aspects of this question, this paper uses primary sources including government memoranda, newspapers, pamphlets, and contemporaneous writings, as well as other sources. However, Russia's involvement in the war does not fully explain the origin and "failure" of the myth. The second part of the article turns its analysis to the cultural and political affinities between the two peoples, which transformed from the myth of eternal friendship to Bulgarian resentment of Russia's actions and the mutual naiveté exhibited by both countries. This second part specifically examines the themes of Pan-Slavism; common Orthodox religion; language, culture, modernization and nationalism; and Russian autocracy and Bulgarian nationalism.

The Russo-Turkish War 1877-78 and Russian Involvement in South-Eastern Europe

Both Bulgarians and Russians demonstrated chauvinism and naivete in expressing concerns about their relationship. In 1870, seven years before the Russo-Turkish War, Bulgarian writer and revolutionary Liuben Karavelov predicted the attitude of his fellow countrymen towards Russia with these words: "If Russia comes to liberate, she will be received with great sympathy; but if she comes to rule she will find many enemies."[4]

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[2] Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements 1806-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 30.

[3] Even though the focus is Bulgaria, one cannot study Russian-Bulgaria relations in this period without considering interactions with Serbia and Austria-Hungary. Whether it is in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina or Macedonia, Russian and Bulgarian actions and reactions are greatly influenced by both Serbia and Austria-Hungary.

[4] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism: Russian Influence in the Internal Affairs of Bulgaria and Serbia, 1879-1886* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), vii.

Russia's "victory" in the war was followed within one year by national elation with the creation of an enlarged Bulgaria through the San Stefano settlement, followed by prompt disillusionment with the polity's halving by the Congress of Berlin (to which Bulgarians were not even invited). Bulgarian revolutionary-turned-statesman Stefan Stambolov bitterly stated that Bulgaria was better-off with the Ottomans before Berlin than it was after the war.[5] Expressing a different attitude towards the "Turkish yoke" in 1886, Russian Foreign Minister Nicholas Giers, in a secret communication to British Ambassador Sir Robert Morier, displayed resentment and unrealistic expectations about Bulgarian attitudes.[6] After the Russian soldier "spent his best blood and half his treasure in rescuing the Christian [Bulgarians]," they "repudiate[d] the obligations they are under to Russia."[7] As will be discussed later, expected Bulgarian gratitude towards Russia for its defeat of the Ottomans resulted instead in growing resentment and estrangement. Rather than "cruel years of Turkish oppression" and longing for Russia to liberate them, evidence demonstrates that Bulgarians were relatively successful under Ottoman rule and actually better off than they were in the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (1185-1396).[8]

Russian motivations for its involvement in Bulgaria and willingness to expend "blood and arms" for Bulgarian independence through the Russo-Turkish War are more complicated than Bulgarian gratitude. Russia's principal goal was a desire for access to Bulgaria's warm-water ports on the Black Sea, access to, or control of, the Dardanelles Straights, as well as the geographic position of the South Slavs in general.[9] Russian efforts to gain free access to the Black Sea and Dardanelles Straights dated to the time of Peter the Great.[10] Its chief goal in the Balkans was control of the Dardanelles Straights, which represented the "key" to Russia's back door, or as Charles Jelavich summarizes, "all Balkan interests were

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[5] Duncan M. Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria, 1870-1895* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 38.

[6] Edward Dicey, *The Peasant State: An Account of Bulgaria in 1894* (London: John Murray, 1894), 265.

[7] Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 193-204. Morier to Rosebery, no. 253 most secret, St. Petersburg, July 21, 1886, Public Record Office, FO 65/1260, The National Archives, UK.

[8] Karel Durman, *Lost Illusions: Russian Policies towards Bulgaria in 1877-1887,* Upsala Studies on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, no. 1 (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1988), 9-52. While acknowledging that "hope and longing" existed within the Orthodox clergy throughout the South Slavic lands, Durman contends that there was no substantial evidence of anything more than a vague feeling towards Russia. Quoted from F. Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2 (New York: George Braziller, 1954), 892. Instead of "an impoverished country exposed by the Turks to permanent, intolerable privation," Fyodor Dostoevsky reported in 1877 at the beginning of the Russo-Turkish War that Russian troops found "charming little Bulgarian cottages…cultivated land yielding almost hundredfold harvest, and…three Orthodox churches to [every] one mosque….they should be welcoming us almost on their knees. But they are not on their knees…and it even seems that they are not glad we are here."

[9] M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 227.

[10] Cyril E. Black, "Russia and the Modernization of the Balkans," in *The Balkans in Transition: Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics Since the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Charles and Barbara Jelavich (Berkley: University of California Press, 1963), 149. Along with other provisions, Russia gained from the Ottomans with the 1774 Treaty of Kutchuk Kainardji the important Black Sea ports of Azov and Kherson. By the nineteenth century, grain from southern Russia represented one-third to one-half of its exports and guaranteed water passage became a major motivating factor in its Balkan policy.

subordinated to the problem of the Straights."[11] Regardless of a perceived setback in the Congress of Berlin, Russian interests were nevertheless advanced with the Russo-Turkish War.

Russia, like many European powers in the 1860s, was grappling with the "Eastern Question": How to deal with the expected failure of the Turkish Empire?[12] Russia believed that it could improve its geopolitical position and play a key role in determining the fate of the region. Barbara Jelavich discusses three strategic options for Russia in the case of the demise of the Ottoman Empire: preservation of the Empire through dominance of the Ottoman government by Russia; partition of the area in cooperation with other powers; or, creation of autonomous national regimes, with Russia then attempting to dominate those regimes.[13] All Russian options and actions were severely constrained by Western powers, particularly Austria-Hungary.[14] The latter clearly understood the advantage Russia held, being both Slavic and Orthodox, and was convinced that independent South Slavic states would become either satellites or allies of Russia, and that the Danube could become a "Russian River."[15] The very existence of multiple ethnicities in the Catholic, German-dominated Austro-Hungarian Empire made it particularly sensitive to the possible addition of more Orthodox, Slavic subjects. The Habsburgs preferred to maintain the status quo, that the northern border of the Ottoman Empire be the Sava-Danube line as set by the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 and that no new autonomous states be established in the Balkans.[16] Russia believed that Bulgarian independence, as advanced by the Russo-Turkish War, was the initial step towards Jelavich's third option.

In addition to the constraints placed upon Russia by Austria-Hungary and other Western powers, Russia became caught in a confluence of factors beginning in 1875 that seemed to leave it with no options for maintaining its influence in the peninsula, except to favor Bulgaria over Serbia. After centuries of exploitation, non-Muslim peasants rebelled against landowning Muslim *beys* in Bosnia in July 1875, followed in 1876 by Serbia and

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[11] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism,* 3-4. While he does not disagree with this assessment of Russian orientation, it should be noted that historian M. S. Anderson considered Russia's policy towards the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire irrational, more complex and "more influenced by conflicting cross-currents, than that of any other power." Much of the blame for Russia's "irrational" involvement in the Balkans Anderson attributes to "unofficial Russia," Pan-Slav officials, societies, and newspapers. In Anderson's opinion, Russia should have placed much more importance on strengthening its Black Sea fleet and less on the Straights. He points out that the Kattegat Sound between Denmark and Sweden was in non-Russian hands and yet had always provided Russia with unimpeded commercial and military passage. See Anderson, *The Eastern Question,* 392-393.

[12] Since the mid-1850s, the imperial interests of Britain and Russia competed for the expected demise of the "sick man of Europe," the Ottoman Empire. Britain's general approach was to attempt to strengthen the Ottomans. Russia attempted to further pro-Russian sentiments to the detriment of the Ottomans through Orthodox and Slavic affinities, especially in using autonomous Serbia.

[13] Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 28-30.

[14] Anderson, *The Eastern Question,* 180.

[15] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 128-130.

[16] As has already been mentioned, Austria was concerned about its ability to compete with Russia for the loyalty of its various Slavic nationalities. If the status quo were not maintained, the Habsburgs preferred an apportionment of the Balkan countries among the great powers, thereby limiting Russia's influence.

Montenegro independently going to war with the Ottoman Empire.[17] Bulgarian revolutionaries saw an opportunity for action against the ruling Ottomans in the various futile attempts by Russian and Austrian representatives to restore peace as well as British opposition to "putting a knife to the throat of Turkey" and existing political chaos in Constantinople.[18] Bulgarian Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov, with the encouragement of factions in the Russian government (i.e. Russian Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Count Nicolai Pavlovich Ignatiev), led revolutionary activities against the Ottomans beginning in April 1876, followed by terrible Turkish reprisals conducted by Muslim irregulars (i.e., *bashibazouks* or Circassian emigrants from the Russian Caucasus).[19] These Turkish reprisals resulted in international condemnation of the Ottoman Empire. [20]

Russian Pan-Slavists encouraged Serbian hostilities against Turkey and Russian public opinion strongly favored the Serbs, but Serbia was not up to the task.[21] With the threat of a

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[17] R. J. Crampton, *Bulgaria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 90. Dennis P. Hupchick, *The Balkans from Constantinople to Communism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 257.

[18] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 178-183. In their first serious attempt to restore peace, Austrian Foreign Minister Julius Andrassy and Russian Ambassador to Vienna, Prince A. M. Gorchakov, circulated to the Great Powers the Andrassy Note in December 1875. Seen as "window-dressing," the Note provided for religious liberty, the end of tax farming, and land reform. Britain and Turkey reluctantly agreed to the Andrassy Note, but Britain refused to require written acceptance by Turkey. As the threat of hostilities between Austria and Russia increased, Andrassy and Gorchakov met a second time, which resulted in the Berlin Memorandum of May 1876 (being almost entirely the work of Andrassy). If the Ottoman Empire failed, the Memorandum called for Austria to take part of Bosnia and Russia to take southern Bessarabia.

[19] Denis Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism: Imperial Russia and Ottoman Christians, 1856-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 194. To counter the European powers' general distrust of Russian intentions in the Balkans, Ignatiev believed that international opinion would be especially important in any Russian intervention in the Balkans. Ignatiev encouraged Stambolov to take the initial steps towards revolution. Ignatiev's goals were to destabilize the Ottoman Empire and to give Russian an adequate reason for military intervention in Bulgaria, as well as to dispel the prevalent opinion that Bulgarians never had and never would fight for their independence. Crampton, *Bulgaria*, *93*. Cited in Encho Mateev, *Dŭrzhavnikŭt Stefan Stambolov* (Sofia: Letopisi, 1992), 111. To incite revolutionary actions against the Ottomans, Stambolov repeated often what he had been told by Ignatiev in 1875: "Russia can do nothing for Bulgaria now if the Bulgarians do not provide grounds for it."

[20] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 184. Stambolov and other revolutionaries had previously realized that publicity would be crucial to their efforts and effectively used Bulgarian, Romania, French, and British newspapers to ensure that any reprisals were "Europeanized" (especially in Western media). Particularly effective was Gladstone's *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, which was published in September 1876 and sold 200,000 copies within a month. This publication played upon prevalent Christian emotionalism and destroyed pro-Turkish feelings in Britain more than any other publication in the century. Investigations into the "April Uprising" were led by Russian and American diplomats and resulted in sensational photos and "lurid accounts of all sorts of violence done to helpless local Christian subjects by their cruel Muslim masters." The press coverage of these events represented an important landmark in the development of the mass circulation press in Russia and Europe. See Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 195.

[21] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 186-187. Serbia was encouraged to go to war with Turkey by Russian General Cherniaev, a leading Pan-Slav, who expected decisive Russian help for Serbia. Cherniaev had resigned his military commission and went to Serbia to lead its army against the express wishes of Alexander II who did not wish to become involved. Prayers were offered for Serbian success in Russian Orthodox churches and contributions of money to Serbia increased. In December 1876 the great Russian journalist I. S. Iksakov wrote: "All that has happened in Russia this summer is an unheard-of phenomenon in the history of any

larger war increasing and their interests at stake, Russia and Austria-Hungary were forced to immediately enter into a verbal, ambiguous Reichstadt Agreement specifying territorial annexations and spheres of influence upon the conclusion of Serbian-Turkish hostilities.[22] Disillusioned and irritated with Serbia's military weakness, Russian Pan-Slavists saw Bulgarians more firmly Russophile and more immune to Western power influences.[23] In his 1860 letter to the Serbs, Russian theologian and philosopher Aleksei Khomiakov expressed this same concern: that Serbs were renouncing Pan-Slavism and Orthodoxy and were instead following a Western path. Khomiakov specifically mentioned Austria as a "corrosive" influence.[24] While Russia's policy in the past had been to support all Orthodox peoples in the Balkans, it realized after the Crimean War that such commitments were too far-reaching and that the geographic position of Bulgaria superseded traditional Russian sympathies for Serbia.[25] Even though intervening in Bulgaria would certainly revive Western power concerns, Russia reasoned that any alternative exercise of military power in the western Balkans (e.g., Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina) would more immediately and seriously lead to conflict with its two *Dreikaiserbund* partners, Germany and Austria-Hungary.[26] Russia's plan was to agree to Austria-Hungary annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the detriment of Serbia, as compensation to Austria-Hungary for prospective Russian gains in Bulgaria.[27]

With Serbia's pending collapse against Turkey, Russia drew two important conclusions. As mentioned earlier, Russia was irritated by Serbia's military weakness against the Sublime

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country: public opinion conducted a war apart from the government and without any state organization in a foreign state." B. H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans, 1870-1880* (Oxford: Archon Books, 1937), 193, fn. 842.

[22] Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans, 1870-1880*, 185-186. Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 6-7. Gorchakov and Andrassy met at Reichstadt (German for Zákupy in the current Czech Republic) in July 1876 and verbally agreed not to engage in the fighting and to determine territorial settlements upon the conclusion of hostilities. The objective of the agreement was to prevent the formation of a single, unitary South Slav state (i.e., Bosnia and Herzegovina would in no event become one state). Far more important than demonstrating the hazards of verbal agreements, the real importance of the Reichstadt Agreement was that Austria-Hungary and Russia both desired to avoid war in the Balkans.

[23] Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans, 1870-1880*, 169-172. Pan-Slavism never had significant influence in the highest levels of the Russian government. It had little appeal for the Russian bureaucracy, including statesmen like Prince A. M. Gorchakov, nor the influential Baltic Germans. It was advocated by military commanders, educated classes and Count Nikolai Ignatiev.

[24] Peter K. Christoff, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism, A Study in Ideas,* vol. 1, *A. S. Xomjakov* ('s-Gravenhage: Mounton & Co., 1961), 247-259.

[25] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 3-4. Anderson, 187. Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 128. Telling examples of Russia's earlier preference for Serbia can be seen in the peace treaties of the Russo-Turkish wars of 1806-12 and 1828-29. While there was constant fighting on Bulgarian soil and Bulgarians assisted the Russians in fighting, neither treaty contained any provisions concerning the Bulgarians. By the same token, there was a marked difference in Russian influence among the Balkan countries after the Crimean War. Compared to Bulgaria, Serbia and the Danubian Principalities were much less favorably inclined towards Russia because of interference in their internal politics. Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 134.

[26] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 186. The *Dreikaiserbund* was initially an informal agreement from 1872 but was strengthened in a formal agreement between the three parties in 1879.

[27] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 12.

Porte and started to see Bulgaria as the more reliable supporter of its influence in the Balkans.[28] Secondly, Russia saw that military action in support of Slav inhabitants of the Balkans would help stabilize the Russian monarchy, which had been threatened by populist movements since the early 1870s.[29] "War or disorder at home, that is the dilemma," wrote a high-ranking Russian Foreign Ministry official in August 1876.[30] With the threat of war between some combination of Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary increasing, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck was forced to choose between Russia and Austria-Hungary, and Britain worried over the threat to the status quo in Turkey. The Western powers called for a conference in Constantinople at the end of 1876 to devise a series of reforms that would ensure that atrocities against Christians in the Ottoman Empire did not recur.[31] However, the Ottoman Empire had three sultans in 1876 and the Ottoman Empire had not been in such confusion in seventy years, resulting in the preliminary agreement of the conference becoming meaningless and ending in failure.[32]

With the failure of the Constantinople conference and British public opinion turning strongly against the Ottomans, Russia felt free to declare war on the Ottoman Empire, which it did in June 1877.[33] The weakened Ottomans were quickly defeated and accepted an armistice in January 1878. Historian M. S. Anderson wrote that the resulting short-lived San Stefano settlement "represented the fullest practical expression ever given in Russian foreign policy to the Pan-Slav ideal."[34] The San Stefano settlement gave the Bulgarians all

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[28] The central government of the Ottoman Empire is frequently referred to as the Sublime Porte or the Porte. This figure of speech has its origin from the earliest days of the Ottoman Empire when the sultan would make announcements from the entrance to his palace.

[29] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 187.

[30] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 187, citing Charles and Barbara Jelavich, eds., *Russia in the East, 1876-1880* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 20. There were in fact conflicting ulterior motives within Russia about a prospective war against Turkey. Pan-Slavist bureaucrats saw a war as strengthening support for the autocracy, while the intelligentsia hoped that war would make more apparent the autocracy's incompetence. Tsar Alexander II was eventually assassinated in March 1881. In any event, celebrations by the Russian people over Russia's quick victory over the Turks were reinforced by the realistic battlefront paintings of Vasily Vershchagin and the orchestral tone poem *Marche slave* by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky with its various renditions of "God Save the Tsar." Lionel Kochan and Richard Abraham, *The Making of Modern Russia*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 202-203.

[31] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 188-190. Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 92-3.

[32] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 185 and 191-192. The Porte initially accepted a compromise imposed upon it by plenipotentiaries from Britain and Russia. But British Ambassador Sir Henry Eliot purposely undermined his government's official representative and encouraged newly installed Sultan Abdülhamid II to proclaim a new constitution, thereby making the preliminary agreement of the Western powers meaningless. Abdülhamid's actions were not duplicitous, as was later alleged, but were principally the result of new forces within Ottoman society that desired to liberalize Ottoman government.

[33] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 192-194. Within three months of the failed Constantinople conference, Ignatiev achieved for Russia a watered-down pledge of Austro-Hungarian neutrality in the event of war with Turkey. At the same time, public opinion in Britain turned so strongly against the Ottoman Empire that Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli was forced to accept war against Turkey. The "price" of Austria's acceptance was receipt of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Russian recognition that Serbia fell within Austria's orbit. Hupchick, *The Balkans from Constantinople to Communism*, 264 and 192-194.

[34] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 203. The treaty ending the war was signed in San Stefano, a village west of Constantinople.

they could hope for, uniting the three historic regions of Bulgaria (Moesia, that is Eastern Rumelia, and Thrace and Macedonia) into one state and one church. Over 23,000 Bulgarian people expressed gratitude to Russia by signing a petition of thanks to Tsar Alexander II.[35] Unfortunately for the Bulgarians, the San Stefano settlement brought to the fore longstanding conflicts within the Russian government; before ambassador to the Porte Ignatiev signed the peace agreement, ambassador to the Habsburgs, Prince A. M. Gorchakov had already given Britain and Austria-Hungary effective veto power over it.[36] The treaty represented everything that Britain and the Habsburgs feared: an enlarged center of Russian influence, a threat to British routes to the Suez and India, and an enlarged Slav state that could challenge Austria-Hungary's positions in the Balkans.[37] While Britain initially acquiesced to the San Stefano settlement, Austria protested that an enlarged Bulgaria clearly violated the Reichstadt and Budapest agreements and that the compensation due it with regards to Bosnia-Herzegovina had been ignored.[38]

At the same time, Gorchakov was also agreeing with Austrian Foreign Minister Julius Andrassy to convene an international conference in Berlin to counteract the San Stefano settlement.[39] At the 1878 Congress of Berlin, Bulgaria lost its recently added territories, and newly constructed Eastern Rumelia was created "to diminish Russian influence in the Balkans by keeping Bulgaria small."[40] There was great disagreement among influential elements of the Russian public and press about whether or not Berlin represented a severe setback for Russia; yet, even if it did, the Russo-Turkish War still helped establish Russia's position in Bulgaria.[41] Russia departed Eastern Rumelia a year later, but only after it had trained 40,000 men in paramilitary "gymnastic societies." Russian actions thereby gave early impetus to the eventual union of the nation by creating the environment for Bulgarian freedom and national independence.[42] As historian Richard Crampton observes, "The April

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[35] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 91-93.

[36] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 205.

[37] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 94. Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 128. Recognizing the power of Pan-Slavism, Austria did not want to compete with Russia for the loyalties of the various Balkan Slavic states.

[38] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 6-7. The Budapest Convention was an outgrowth of the Constantinople Conference and was signed in 1877 by Emperor Franz Joseph and Russian Tsar Alexander II.

[39] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 205. Typical of the cautious, non-committal Bismarck, who rarely wanted to be associated with difficult decisions, Bismarck objected to Berlin being the site for the conference. He still believed that a partition of the Ottoman Empire between all interested powers was the best solution to all Near East problems.

[40] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 94. Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 71.

[41] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 1-16. Within a few years, Russia de facto achieved its goals for Bulgaria, but to the detriment of its interests elsewhere in the Balkans. Serbia was again (after creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate) faced with its secondary status in Russian international relations vis-à-vis Bulgaria and became a Habsburg vassal state. After providing military assistance to Russia through territorial access in the Russo-Turkish War, Romania turned from Russia and looked to the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary for future support. The Congress of Berlin also exacerbated Russian internal concerns. The reforms of Tsar Alexander II were being poorly received, the Turkish war created a tremendous financial strain on Russia, and revolutionary activities were contributing to state insecurity. (Alexander was assassinated within three years of the Congress of Berlin.)

[42] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 71.

uprising was the beginning of the birth of the modern Bulgarian state. The midwife was Russia."[43]

Russia used the Russo-Turkish War to gain approval among Bulgarians, but the war alone does not fully explain the eternal friendship myth. The second part of this article examines other factors that helped establish Bulgarian-Russian affinity and subsequent resentments and naiveté by both countries in understanding the other's needs. These include the three important affinities that served to strengthen the Bulgarian debt to Russia for furthering independence through the Russo-Turkish War: their common Slavic ethnicity, shared Orthodox religion, and similar languages.

Pan-Slavism

The importance of the Slavic ethnicity for Russian political decisions in the Balkans varied greatly over time and among the various tsars and intellectual, political and military leaders. Three major movements of Slavic nationalism before 1914 have been identified: "Slavophilism" during the reign of Tsar Nicholas I; "Pan-Slavism" under Tsars Alexander II and III; and "Neo-Slavism" from approximately 1908-1914.[44] In each case, while Russian leaders identified their shared Slavic heritage, they also approached other European Slavic peoples "as primitive people who needed firm, if friendly, guidance."[45]

In the late nineteenth century, Russian diplomats came to realize that their support of Bulgarian independence transcended Pan-Slavism and unleashed a fervor for Bulgarian nationalism that Russia could not control. After centuries of Muslim rule, Balkan peoples were initially receptive to calls to unite behind the Slavic heritage and Orthodox religion they shared with Russians.[46] Crampton points out, however, that the nascent Bulgarian democrats "had no taste for tsarist autocracy."[47] In fact, the change in Bulgarian attitudes towards Russia started with the Crimean War. After the Crimean War, and certainly after the Congress of Berlin, Russia could not promote the idea of independent Balkan countries within a framework of conservative domestic policies without stimulating nationalism and political freedom.[48] Bulgarians were further offended by Russian support for Ottoman

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[43] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 91.

[44] Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements,* 34. A complete exposition of these philosophies is beyond the scope of this study. In brief, "Slavophilism" can be idealistically viewed as the embodiment of eighteenth-century nature as seen by Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder. It is easily conflated with Orthodoxy and often led to virulent attacks on Catholic Poles. Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 93-94. "Pan-Slavism" is more closely tied to, but not synonymous with, nationalism and Russian domination, and an orientation to Orthodoxy. Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 135 and 157. "Neo-Slavism" originated in Austria-Hungary and had a short life before World War I as a reaction to Germanization. It did not attach any importance to religion, but was focused on the Balkans and Russia, putting each country on an equal basis. Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements,* 208.

[45]Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements,* 33. As an illustration of disagreement within the Russian government, it is instructive to note that only one of the three Russian foreign ministers for most of the nineteenth century was both Slavic and Orthodox (i.e., Gorchakov). Ironically, Gorchakov, tended to side with the Western powers over Balkan Slavic countries.

[46] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 3.

[47] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 73.

[48] Black, "Russia and the Modernization of the Balkans," 73.

resettlement of Circassians in Bulgaria after the Crimean War and the related settlement of Bulgarians in Crimea.[49] Subsequent Russian use of force, intimidation, and bribery only led to increased Bulgarian rejection of attempted Russian domination.[50] Russian patronization of Bulgarians ranged from the comical (e.g., putting sweets on the desks of members of the National Assembly) to the consequential (e.g., Russians holding all military ranks in the Bulgarian army above captain).[51] By the 1880s, the saying circulated in Sofia that, "Russia, though loving Bulgaria, did not love the Bulgarians."[52]

It is easy to over-emphasize the importance of Pan-Slavism in Russian actions. Faced with a choice between Pan-Slavism and its national interests, Russia would understandably choose its national interests.[53] In fact, Pan-Slavism did not originate in Russia but instead with non-Russian Western Slavs (i.e., Czechs and Slovaks) in the first half of the nineteenth century, as part of their national awakening. In the second half of the nineteenth century, it became predominantly a Russian movement "rooted in a feeling of spiritual and material grandeur and in a consciousness of historical destiny."[54] Russian Pan-Slavism did not draw its strength from the nineteenth-century conservative court and government but from the smaller, educated class of Russian radicals newly exposed to Western concepts of independence and freedom.

As already noted, Russia sacrificed both Balkan nationalism and Pan-Slavism in valuing its interests vis-à-vis the Straights and Bulgaria, thus making it easier for Austria to absorb Bosnia-Herzegovina to the detriment of Serbia. Serbia was bluntly reminded of Russian priorities when it complained about Russian positions in the San Stefano settlement. Russia told the Serbian delegation that "the interests of Russia came first, then came those of Bulgaria, and only after them came Serbia's; but that there were occasions on which Bulgarian interests stood on equal footing with the Russian."[55] Since it appeared to Russia that Serbia would inevitably fall under the influence of the Habsburgs, Charles Jelavich wrote that it was only "logical" that Serbia should not be strengthened and must be

[49] Crampton, *Bulgaria,* 73 and 38*.* Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-*1923 (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 467. After the Crimean War, the Ottomans relocated approximately 600,000 Circassians from Muslim states of the Caucasus to Bulgaria to strengthen the Ottoman northern border. Russia supported this relocation. With about one-fourth being agricultural slaves in the Caucasus, their integration in Bulgaria caused many problems. Several Bulgarian Christians responded by relocating to the Crimea, claiming that their villages were no longer safe and their agricultural land had been ruined.

[50] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 283.

[51] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 111. Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 228.

[52] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 82-83.

[53] Hans Kohn, *Pan-Slavism: Its History and Ideology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), xv-xvii.

[54] Kohn, *Pan-Slavism*, 121-22. John M. Letiche and Basil Dmytryshyn, "Križanić's Memorandum on the Mission to Moscow, 1641," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 68, no. 1 (1990): 41-68. A much earlier, albeit unsuccessful, advocate of Pan-Slavism was the Croatian Catholic missionary Juraj Križanić (Yuri Krizhanich). Križanić had two goals in his 1641 mission to Moscow, reconciliation of Eastern Orthodoxy with Roman Catholicism and unification of all Slavic peoples under the leadership of Russia.

[55] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 12-13.

abandoned: "Russia was making peace not on the basis of Balkan nationalism or the 'Slavic idea' but on that of the balance of power and national interest."[56]

Any favoritism towards Bulgaria or belief in Pan-Slavism professed by Russia, however, was not reciprocated by Bulgaria. As Bulgarian leaders (as well as those of other Slavic countries) became more exposed to Western beliefs and ideals, they increasingly sought national self-determination and independence. At the Tûrnovo Constitutional Convention, hot-headed revolutionary Stefan Stambolov rejected the Western-imposed edict of Berlin. Spurning Russia's efforts, he said, "it would have been better that you [Russia] had not come to free us when you were not strong enough to defend your creation, San Stefano Bulgaria! Under the Turks, but as one, we had greater hope for a brighter future. But now, cut into five parts, our hopes die."[57] Historian Hans Kohn understood this reaction and generalized that people become "less inclined to sacrifice" their individuality, traditions, and language, as their consciousness of them increases.[58]

An examination of the life of Stefan Stambolov illustrates Bulgarian leaders' willingness to use Russia to achieve national aspirations, but not to the detriment of efforts towards national independence. Stambolov was a Bulgarian patriot and pragmatist but also a revolutionary with autocratic tendencies. Murdered at age forty-one, his short life was full of contrasts and contradictions illustrating Bulgarian attitudes towards Russia in the late nineteenth century. Stambolov recognized Russia's efforts in gaining independence for Bulgaria but in the end was hated by Russia, because he could not be "bought, brow-beaten, or persuaded" to do Russia's bidding.[59] He played no role in the April 1879 selection of Prince Alexander of Battenberg as the first modern Bulgarian monarch, Russia's preferred candidate, but was also "heartsick" when Russia forced Alexander to abdicate.[60] While Stambolov was never a Russophile, Alexander's removal was the final step toward making him a Russophobe.[61] He worked hard to convince Alexander's successor, Prince Ferdinand, to assume the Bulgarian throne, over the strong objections of Russia; nonetheless, Stambolov's assassination in 1896 was likely related to his involvement in political disagreements between Ferdinand and Russia.[62] Neither motivated by Slavism nor Orthodoxy, Stambolov subscribed to *Realpolitik* and neo-Machiavellism, with his beliefs

[56] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 12-13.

[57] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 35-38. In accordance with Article IV of the Congress of Berlin, leaders of the newly formed Bulgaria (excluding Eastern Rumelia) met at (Veliko) Tûrnovo in a Constitutional Assembly on February 10/22, 1879. Two days before the convention convened, three-fourths of the delegates, along with many foreign diplomats and journalists, attended a meeting to discuss whether to go forward with the convention or to stage some form of protest. In an address that was well received by those in attendance, Stambolov attacked both Russia in particular and Europe in general.

[58] Kohn, *Pan-Slavism*, xvi.

[59] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 122 and 145.

[60] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 98.

[61] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 95.

[62] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 124 and 230-231.

being called by University of Zurich political theorist Josette Baer "Early Bulgarian liberalism."[63]

Common Orthodox Religion

More important than the ethnic ties between Russia and many of the Balkan peoples was their shared Orthodox Christianity. Charles Jelavich calls Orthodoxy "the principal agency" through which Russia could "reach down to the roots of Slavic national feeling and to the individual Slavic peasant."[64] By the 1830s, an increasing number of Bulgarian priests were being trained in the Slav-dominated seminaries of Russia, rather than Hellenized seminaries in the Balkans.[65] Both seminary groups opposed what they saw as long-standing corruption in the Greek-dominated Constantinople Patriarchate, and from the 1820s, serious agitation against the Patriarchate grew to the point that "the Bulgarian people no longer wanted Greek bishops, good or bad."[66] However, since Bulgaria had "always" been Orthodox Christian, it is easy to forget another cause of concern for Russia. In the early 1860s, Tsar Alexander II and Russian leadership feared Bulgarians "going Catholic."[67] Russia saw a rapidly growing Bulgarian Uniate movement that would allow Bulgarians to keep Orthodox rites but recognize Papal supremacy (i.e., "going around" the Constantinople Patriarchate). Regardless of how unlikely the development of the Bulgarian Uniate movement might be, it resulted in Russia placing more emphasis upon Orthodox unity and less upon Pan-Slavism**.[68]**

Russia was inevitably involved in Balkan Orthodox religious affairs because of the important role granted it by the Treaty of Kutchuk Kainardji. The treaty gave Russia the right to intervene diplomatically with Constantinople concerning the safeguarding of Ottoman Christians.[69] In response to extending Russian diplomatic pressure on the Porte, it persuaded the Patriarchate to recognize the autonomy initially of the Serbian Church in 1831, followed by the religious autonomy of the Greeks, Protestants, Armenian Catholics, and, finally, the Bulgarian Church in 1870.[70] In the end, Russia was able to use the Russo-

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[63] Josette Baer, "The Creation of Polity in Bulgaria, Realpolitik or Constitutionalism by Default," *East Central Europe* 31, no. 1 (2004): 3-8.

[64] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 3.

[65] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 66.

[66] Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 64-67.

[67] Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 113.

[68] Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism,* 133*.* Bulgarian nationalists employed the fear of Catholic missions again in the 1870s. They suggested that Bulgarian communities in Macedonia "would switch to the still-minuscule Bulgarian Uniate *millet*" unless they were allowed to join the Exarchate. "Indeed, average Russians remembered the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 as a religious conflict rather than as the struggle between the Slavs and the Turks." Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 321.

[69] Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 26 and 74. However, it must be noted that with Russia's defeat in the Crimean War, Russia relinquished its monopoly claim to protect Ottoman Christians to the Concert of Europe in general.

[70] Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 65-78.

Turkish War to gain enormous goodwill with Bulgarians by supporting demands for a separate Bulgarian national church (e.g., Exarchy) and canonical law.[71]

Because of the emphasis they placed upon ecclesiastical affairs, in comparison to social grievances and inequalities common with most nationalist movements, Bulgarians were late to achieve an independent church, which caused special concerns for the Porte, Russia, and Western powers. The desire for religious autonomy was a crucial component of the Bulgarian *vŭzrazhdane* (national revival).[72] Bulgarian communities outside of the "Bulgarian" lands were hugely important to *vŭzrazhdane*.[73] Because of these "outsiders," Bulgarians wanted to reverse the order by which religious affiliation was regulated in the Ottoman Empire—instead of religious affiliation determining cultural identity, the Bulgarians wanted cultural identity to determine religious affiliation. They wanted ethnic Bulgarians living in Constantinople to be under the religious authority of an Exarch living in Bulgaria, not the Constantinople Patriarchate. The Patriarchate realized that this demand could soon result in separate Bulgarian, Romanian, and other ethnically-based Orthodox organizations.[74] Bulgarians recognized that this "ethnicism" would be to their advantage, because, "at the opportune moment," Macedonia could be recognized by the Porte as part of the Bulgarian *millet* and become part of Greater Bulgaria.[75] Russia feared that Orthodox Christians leaving the Patriarchate would diminish its right to intervene under the Kutchuk Kainardji treaty. Conversely, Western powers were concerned that this change would result in increased Russian influence. The Patriarchate naturally feared that such changes would diminish its influence and income.[76] The net result was that Bulgarians articulated religious issues to further national political aspirations.[77]

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[71] Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism,* 82 and 295. Bulgaria paid greatly and permanently for its Balkan and Orthodox disunity. Already in the late 1850s, the priest of the Russian embassy in Athens reported anti-Slavic and anti-Russian feelings in Greece stemming from the Bulgarian Church Question. Archimandrite Antonin (Kapustin) predicted that the Bulgarian church would separate from Patriarchate control and that there would be continuing hostility between Greece and Bulgaria in Thrace and Macedonia. It was not until after the disastrous Balkan Wars in 1914 that Bulgaria was ready for Orthodox unity.

[72] Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 23.

[73] Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 23-24.

[74] Veljko Vujačić, *Nationalism, Myth, and the State in Russia and Serbia: Antecedents of the Dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 126-127. The precedent for an Orthodox *millet* outside of the Ottoman Empire can be seen as early as the fifteenth century in Habsburg domains, and even more obviously after the Austro-Turkish Wars of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when at least 30,000 Serbs were led into Habsburg lands by the patriarch of Peć, Arsenije III Čarnojević (the Great Migration of 1690). Čarnojević was granted wide ecclesiastical and secular powers and essentially an Ottoman *millet* system existed. Habsburg authorities used the Uniate creed in the opposite manner. They attempted to draw Orthodox Serbian frontiersmen who had initially come to Habsburg lands in the Great Migration of 1690 into Roman Catholicism through dissemination of the Uniate creed.

[75] George G. Arnakis, "The Role of Religion in the Development of Balkan Nationalism," in *The Balkans in Transition: Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics Since the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Charles and Barbara Jelavich (Berkley: University of California Press, 1963), 138-139.

[76] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 70.

[77] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 76-80. The external factors identified by Crampton include imperial devolution as an outgrowth of the Austro-Prussian war, Russia Slavophiles losing interest in Poland and substituting the Orthodox Balkans where they favored the Slavs over the Greeks, the Serbian Michael Obrenović promoting a

Language, Culture, Modernization, and Nationalism

The third affinity between Bulgaria and Russia that Barbara Jelavich identified is their linguistic proximity.[78] While this article identifies several examples of estrangement from Russia as Bulgarian nationalism developed (the life of Stefan Stambolov being one), the refinement of the Bulgarian language was a reaction against the Greek language and Orthodox Greek clergy; the result brought the Bulgarian and Russian languages and peoples closer together. Reflecting both the similarities in the languages and traditional ties between the two groups, Russian became part of the Bulgarian gymnasium curriculum in 1878.[79] After 1878, Russian literature also became more widely read in Bulgaria than in other Balkan countries, and many Bulgarian writers turned to Russia for inspiration.[80]

Books published in Bulgarian first became available in the nineteenth century. The first Bulgarian book was published in 1806 by Bishop Sofronii Vrachanski, *Kyriakodromion* (a book of precepts and sermons for every Sunday of the year), followed in 1824 by Pet'r Beron's first modern Bulgarian schoolbook, and in 1835 by Neofit Rilski's *Bulgarian Grammar* (*Bolgarska grammatika*).[81] Furthering the development of Bulgarian literature, the Ruthenian Yuri Venelin created great interest in the 1830s in Moscow and Odessa with his collections of Bulgarian folk poetry.[82] As was true in other Balkan countries, nationalism led to the creation of vernacular literature relating "an awareness of the ethnic group as a historical entity."[83] After being first seen in Greece and Serbia, a largely religious-based cultural renaissance grew in Bulgaria, particularly in the 1860s.

However, the foundation for Bulgarian pride and nationalism was laid even earlier by the most important of all eighteenth-century Bulgarian writers, Paisiĭ Hilendarski. Father Paisiĭ finished in 1762 his manuscript *Slavonic-Bulgarian History* (*Slavianob'lgarska istorija*), which represented the "landmark…of modern Bulgarian literature," and "the response to a

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Balkan alliance, separate Serbian treaties with Montenegro, Greece, and Romania and most importantly an insurrection in Crete in 1866.

[78] Ivan G. Iliev, "Short History of the Cyrillic Alphabet," *International Journal of Russian Studies,* 2, no. 2 (2013): 221-285. Slavs in Moravia, Pannonia and Bulgaria started using the Glagolitic script created by St. Cyril at the end of the ninth century. The "Cyrillic alphabet" originated in the First Bulgarian Kingdom at the beginning of the tenth century. The commonly accepted belief is that Cyrillic began in the tenth century as an enhancement of the Bulgarian *Glagolitic script*, with its creation being variously attributed to Saint Cyril (born Constantine), Clement of Ochrid, or Konstantin of Preslav. From its origin in Bulgaria with 43 letters, letters were changed or eliminated by Tsar Peter I due to the influence of Western European culture and Latin script. The first Bulgarian official orthography was imposed 1899, and then again under the Communist government in 1945, when Bulgarian was brought closer to Russian by removing two more letters.

[79] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 446.

[80] Black, "Russia and the Modernization of the Balkans," 166-167.

[81] Albert B. Lord, "Nationalism and the Muses in Balkan Slavic Literature in the Modern Period," in *The Balkans in Transition: Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics Since the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Charles and Barbara Jelavich (Berkley: University of California Press, 1963), 260-261.

[82] Lord, "Nationalism and the Muses in Balkan Slavic Literature in the Modern Period," 267-268. MacDermott, *A History of Bulgaria,*123. Venelin reproached Russia "for having forgotten the Bulgars from whom they had received baptism and the alphabet."

[83] Lord, "Nationalism and the Muses in Balkan Slavic Literature in the Modern Period," 258.

feeling that a national spirit was needed."[84] Paisiĭ's impact was long-lasting. His book was hand-copied for more than eighty years and only first printed in 1844, with its previously anonymous author finally identified in 1871. While Paisiĭ writing in the eighteenth century was focused on Greek influences, there can be no doubt, with his urging for a "national spirit" and plea for "greater self-confidence and self-assertion," that he would have likewise resisted Russian influences in nineteenth-century Bulgaria.[85]

Despite their linguistic connections, Russia was not the major channel through which Western culture, ideas, and institutions came to Bulgaria and other South Slavic countries, nor did Russia have much influence over Bulgarian efforts to modernize.[86] Ottoman rulers had undertaken modernizing reforms in their Balkan provinces, but these reforms were too limited and too late to capture the imagination of Balkan leaders.[87] Most literate people believed that independence from the Ottomans was essential to systematic modernization.[88] From the early 1700s, commercial expansion resulted in foreign capital flowing into Bulgaria, especially for the textile industry, with a resulting exposure to Western ideas.[89] Businessmen with some knowledge of German and French were traveling to Western cities such as Paris, Vienna, and Leipzig, and Bulgarian business communities grew in Odessa and Constantinople.[90] The more Bulgarians were exposed to Western beliefs and ideals, the less interest they had in Russian Pan-Slavism. Even traditional ties and Russia's military efforts with respect to independence could not counteract Bulgarian interest in an independent nation free of Russian interference. Western ideals, especially those espoused by French *philosophes* and encyclopedists, first reached Bulgaria through neighboring regions. In the first half of the nineteenth century, this exposure centered on Greek schools and translations of Western texts into Greek, while by the middle of the century, Bulgarians who could not afford to go further west were exposed to Slavic scholars at schools in Belgrade and Kragujevac.[91]

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[84] Lord, "Nationalism and the Muses in Balkan Slavic Literature in the Modern Period," 259.

[85] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 31-32. The book had two purposes, the first being "to recall and relate the greatness of the past." But looking to the future, his second purpose was to "issue a plea for greater self-confidence and self-assertion." He accused the Bulgarian people of "cultural submissiveness and their apparent inferiority complex vis-à-vis the Greeks…Rather than learning Greek, the Bulgarian should, he wrote, 'know your own nation and language and study in your own tongue' and should 'keep close to your heart your race and your Bulgarian homeland.'" Marin V. Pundeff, "Bulgarian Nationalism," in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, eds. Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 99-100. In his interaction with monks from Russia and Balkan lands in the monastery communities at Hilandar and Zograf on Mount Athos, Paisiĭ was stung by "the ridicule Greek and Serbian monks heaped on Bulgarians for being backward, ignorant, and lacking a great national past." He resolved to change their attitude and stated that he had written his work "for the ordinary Bulgarian" and for "the benefit of the whole Bulgarian nation."

[86] Black, "Russia and the Modernization of the Balkans," 162.

[87] Black, "Russia and the Modernization of the Balkans," 146.

[88] Black, "Russia and the Modernization of the Balkans," 146.

[89] Cyril. E. Black, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Bulgaria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), 25.

[90] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 162. Black, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Bulgaria*, 28.

[91] Black, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Bulgaria*, 26-7.

However, Constantinople was the most important Bulgarian center for the dissemination of Western ideas, and by the 1880s, its Bulgarian population grew to between 30,000 and 40,000 people. Initially, the "nationalism" that resulted from an increased awareness of Western ideas was not anti-Ottoman. Some leaders equated an acceptable Bulgarian accommodation with the Ottoman sultan to the situation in Hungary, in which the Austrian Emperor was also King of Hungary. A Bulgarian version of this demand was a privileged status for Bulgaria that included autonomy, a Christian governor subordinate to the sultan, a representative assembly, and the right to use their Bulgarian language for official purposes.[92]

The spread of Western thought within Bulgaria was hindered by conflicting ideas and their diverse sources (e.g., Russian Orthodox seminaries, Bulgarian businessmen traveling to the West, French *philosophes*). Beginning in 1816, Russia wished to educate Balkan leaders—first Serbian and then Bulgarian—by bringing them to Russia.[93] However, bringing Balkan leaders to Russia for their education was counterproductive, since they found their contact with non-governmental radicals more relevant to their lives and beliefs than their "education" by Russian government officials. Leaders such as Stefan Stambolov were imbued with radicalism in their youth and, later in life, became advocates of (relatively) democratic government, in opposition to Russian coercion and force.[94] Historian Cyril Black opines that the paradox of nascent Bulgarian radicals turning towards democratic inclinations was not simply a case of political moderation developing with age, but that their later political philosophies developed from that early exposure.[95] It has also been noted that most of the subsequent revolutionaries were trained either in Greek schools, or in foreign institutions, rather than at "official" Russian institutions.[96]

Peasants composed the vast majority of the Bulgarian population and were consistently portrayed by later nineteenth-century writers as passive, submissive, and far less excitable than most Slavs, living a hard subsistence life, and desiring mostly to be left alone to tend their farms.[97] To a large extent, peasant passivity was of limited concern to Bulgarian leaders. However, when Prince Alexander, with Russian support, attempted to significantly reduce Bulgarian representative democracy with a new, less liberal constitution, liberal leaders were chagrined to discover that the majority of the population "remained deeply

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[92] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 163.

[93] Crampton, *Bulgaria,* 51.

[94] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 17. Stambolov was first radicalized as a student at the Russian Orthodox seminary in Odessa, a hotbed of revolutionary ideas.

[95] Black, "Russia and the Modernization of the Balkans," 171-172. Arnakis, "The Role of Religion in the Development of Balkan Nationalism," 171-172. The paradox of South Slavic writers and politicians being exposed and receptive to Western political views of democracy and political freedom simultaneously with increasing ties between their countries and Russia, applies equally to Stefan Stambolov, as described, and Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić.

[96] Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States*, 131.

[97] Black, "Russia and the Modernization of the Balkans," 408; Dicey, *The Peasant State*, 15; Durman, *Lost Illusions,* 23; Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 2. The same is true of the Balkan peoples in general. Through the 1930s, 70-80 percent of the population of all Balkan countries, except Greece, were peasants. Their only involvement in the body politic was through war.

devoted to the Russians and would not support those *with whom the Tsar quarrelled* [*sic*]."[98]

Peasant devotion to the tsar also presented a dilemma for Prince Alexander. He opposed Russians sent to aid his government but had to tolerate them because they "served as a subtle assurance to the mass of the population that the tsar was still looking out for Bulgaria."[99] Contemporary American journalist Frederick Moore wrote in 1906 that "Bulgarians of intelligence and education put little faith in the promises of the present Russian Government. But Russia holds a fast grip on the masses of the people."[100] With a scholarly focus more on diplomacy than "common people," Barbara Jelavich discounts Russia's efforts by stating, "Neither Orthodoxy nor Slavdom could provide an effective alternative to rampant nationalism."[101] This conflict between the feelings of the people towards Russia and Orthodoxy and the views of many Bulgarian leaders would play an important role in Bulgarian politics through World War II, and perhaps to the present.

Bulgaria was originally populated by conservative peasant farmers with modest expectations, and many historians have traditionally "blamed" these peasants for the relatively slow emergence of political and revolutionary activity against the Ottomans, after the first stirring of Bulgarian national revival *vŭzrazhdane* in the 1820s.[102] However, Ottoman *Tanzimat* reforms in the mid-1820s resulted in increased economic security for Bulgarian peasants, allowing for greater acceptance of Western ideals and eventually resulting in development of an intelligentsia.[103] Bulgarian historian Petŭr Mutafchief theorized that Slavs were not "natural state formers," and others have pointed out that the Bulgarians developed many of the usual features of a state, such as forming a navy and minting of coins, later than did other groups.[104] But Richard Crampton hypothesizes that geography was the better explanation for Bulgaria's relatively late revolutionary activity. Bulgaria was located close to Constantinople, and the concentration and wealth of Bulgarians who settled in Constantinople meant that the heart of the Bulgarian national cause was located "precisely where it would be more difficult to make any realistic claim to political devolution."[105] As has already been discussed in regard to efforts for an independent Bulgarian Church, émigré organizations in Belgrade, Bucharest, Odessa, Constantinople, and elsewhere played a large role in both national and religious independence efforts. When it did emerge, Bulgarian nationalism "had an unusually weak sense of territorial nationalism," resulting in its struggles for nationalism being "cultural

[98] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 59-60. Emphasis added. Richard Crampton, *Bulgaria, 1878-1918* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1983), 40 and 57.
[99] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 61.
[100] Frederick Moore, *The Balkan Trail* (New York: Macmillan, 1906), 55.
[101] Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 195.
[102] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 2.
[103] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 41-44.
[104] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 82.
[105] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 82-83.

rather than political and territorial."[106] There was more a sense of *being* Bulgarian than *being from* Bulgaria.

Russian Autocracy and Bulgarian Nationalism

The lives of Bulgaria's two nineteenth-century monarchs clearly illustrate Russian efforts to direct or restrict Bulgarian nationalism. Prince Alexander of Battenberg, who assumed the throne as Bulgaria's first monarch of the modern era, was a German by birth and Russian Tsar Alexander II's godson and nephew who fought as a Russian officer in the Russo-Turkish War and was the Tsar's preferred candidate to lead Bulgaria as prince.[107] He was "elected" Prince of Bulgaria in April 1879, but very quickly developed serious misgivings about both the new Bulgarian constitution (Tŭrnovo Constitution) and Russian interference in his government.[108] Relations between Battenberg and Russia only worsened during his six-year reign, reaching their lowest point following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, the succession of Tsar Alexander III, and the Bulgarian monarch's decision, over the strenuous objections of Alexander III, to accept unification of Berlin-defined Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in 1885.[109] While both Russian tsars expected Bulgaria to be a "Russian satellite, a dutiful and servile 'outpost' of the Russian Empire," the autocratic Tsar Alexander III turned on his father's chosen monarch because Battenberg "refused to be a Russian stooge."[110] Prince Alexander abdicated under pressure in 1886.[111]

In contrast, Prince Alexander's successor was violently opposed by Alexander III at first but finally achieved recognition by Russia in 1896, nine years after he took the oath of office.[112] Prince Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg-Gotha was an officer in the Austrian military with both Austrian and French royal lineage and highly intelligent but also with an extravagant personality.[113] While Ferdinand was generous to his adopted country, his overarching concern was his self-interest.[114] Surviving several Russian-supported assassination attempts, the fervently Catholic Ferdinand finally achieved recognition by Russia (and Europe) only after agreeing to his son Boris's conversion to Orthodoxy.[115] Ferdinand was

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[106] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 83.

[107] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 42.

[108] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 42, 39, and 44. Count Egon Corti, *The Downfall of Three Dynasties*, trans. L. Marie Sieveking and Ian D. Morrow (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1934), 258. In fact, within three weeks of arriving in Bulgaria, Prince Alexander "had come into conflict with all the Russian officials in Bulgaria" and within the first few months had developed "a violent hatred of all that was Russian."

[109] Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 185-187.

[110] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 234.

[111] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 231-233.

[112] Crampton, *Bulgaria,* 132 and 145.

[113] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 131-132.

[114] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 149. Mateev, *Dŭrzhavnikŭt Stefan Stambolov*, 214.

[115] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 141 and 179. Crampton, *Bulgaria,* 134. Because Russia was traditionally averse to deposing a monarch, his recognition had great significance—if Ferdinand were not a legitimate ruler, any action to overthrow him was not revolutionary and thereby acceptable. Tsar Boris III ruled Bulgaria from 1918 to 1943. Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 167.

used as a pawn by various powers for their own purposes: early in his reign, even though Turkey was happy with Ferdinand, it publicly opposed him to mollify Russia; later, Austria assisted Ferdinand in assuming the title of tsar simply because it would displease Russia.[116] Ferdinand was most likely complicit in the assassination of Stambolov in 1896, resulting in him becoming more reliant upon Russia for his political survival.[117] However, he was a poor strategist who relied increasingly on constitutional absolutism and personal rule.[118] He failed to recognize that Bulgaria was a small state, barely beginning to develop a modern economy and virtually isolated internationally.[119]

Conclusion

This article has focused on repeated attempts by Russia to meddle in the internal affairs of Bulgaria in the last four decades of the nineteenth century. Russia took similar actions in Serbia as well, resulting in tangled three-way relationships extending into the First World War, if not beyond.[120] All three countries were naïve about the others' motives. While the Russo-Turkish War was also the result of Russian disillusionment with Serbia and Russia weakness from the Crimean War, it was primarily about geography and the Dardanelles Straights. Balkan nationalism and Slavism were secondary to the balance of power and Russian national interests.

Lacking another foreign patron, Bulgaria had no choice but to attempt to achieve independence through Russia.[121] This was the logical choice because of the commonalities between the peoples and polities. However, Bulgaria failed to realize that it could not pick and choose the level and form of Russian involvement in its affairs. Additionally, one could argue that Bulgaria also had the misfortune of being "attached" to Russia, which failed to develop as quickly as Western Europe, and was relatively weaker at the end of the nineteenth century than at the beginning. Whether or not this belief was justified, Bulgaria believed that Russia had failed or abandoned it after the San Stefano settlement and the Congress of Berlin. Several instances of conflict and working at cross-purposes by Russian officials Ignatiev and Gorchakov served to reinforce Bulgarian dissatisfactions. Bulgaria further failed to recognize that it was a pawn, not a player, in attempts to solve the "Eastern

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[116] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 131. Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 221.

[117] Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria*, 230-234. Ardern George Mulme-Beaman, *Twenty Years in the Near East* (London: Methuen & Co, 1898), 182.

[118] Crampton, *Bulgaria,* 173.

[119] Crampton, *Bulgaria,* 153.

[120] Indeed, one of the many tragedies of the Balkan Wars was that Russia failed to promote fairness and moderation between Serbia and Bulgaria. As a result, Russia lost any position of influence it had among Bulgaria's leaders, and instead became less advantageously bound to Serbia and inextricably involved in Sarajevo in 1914. As has been mentioned, the three-way Slavic relationship first suffered because of the San Stefano settlement. But it was irreparably damaged by the fourteen-day Serbo-Bulgarian War of November 1885, which Serbia foolishly started upon Austro-Hungarian suggestions of support, only to then be saved from serious military defeat by Austro-Hungarian intervention. This short war resulted in Bulgarian and East Rumelian unification, de facto independence from the Ottoman Empire for Bulgaria, and Serbia being drawn closer to Austria-Hungary. Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 139.

[121] Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 159.

Question," while the Serbian interests became secondary to balance of powers interests of Russia vis-à-vis Austria. Likewise, Russia did not recognize that once Western liberalism was introduced, Bulgaria would no longer be satisfied with being merely a pawn.

The "eternal friendship" between Bulgaria and Russia was largely outweighed by the pride and parochialism of Russia and the Orthodox church. The myth gave way to resentment, estrangement, and mutual naiveté. Bulgarian nationalism replaced Orthodoxy and Slavism and transcended Russian autocracy. While the causes are varied and complex, the final irony of Russian adventures in the Balkans at the end of the nineteenth century is that within fifteen years, it was Bulgaria that allied with Austria-Hungary in the First World War, while all other South Slavs (and non-Slavs in the peninsula) allied with Russia and against Austria.[122]

[122] "Thus one of the great Russian illusions of the nineteenth century, that liberated national states would provide faithful allies, was effectively shattered." Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 266.