



Containing Balkan Nationalism: Imperial Russia and Ottoman Christians, 1856-1914 (Religion and Global Politics)

Denis Vovchenko

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Containing Balkan Nationalism focuses on the implications of the Bulgarian national movement that developed in the context of Ottoman modernization and of European imperialism in the Near East. The movement aimed to achieve the status of an independent Bulgarian Orthodox church, removing ethnic Bulgarians from the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This independent church status meant legal and cultural autonomy within the Islamic structure of the Ottoman Empire, which recognized religious minorities rather than ethnic ones.

Denis Vovchenko shows how Russian policymakers, intellectuals, and prelates worked together with the Ottoman government, Balkan and other diplomats, and rival churches, to contain and defuse ethnic conflict among Ottoman Christians through the promotion of supraethnic religious institutions and identities. The envisioned arrangements were often inspired by modern visions of a political and cultural union of Orthodox Slavs and Greeks. Whether realized or not, they demonstrated the strength and flexibility of supranational identities and institutions on the eve of the First World War. The book encourages contemporary analysts and policymakers to explore the potential of such traditional loyalties to defuse current ethnic tensions and serve as organic alternatives to generic models of power-sharing and federation.

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