During the nineteenth century, Pan-Slavism, an effort to unite all of the Slavic peoples, began to emerge. There were important political and cultural issues, however, that concerned many as the attempt was made to unify this ethnic group. The main concern for many was the difference between national identity and ethnic identity. Another issue at hand was the diversity of all the different groups of people spread throughout Europe.

There were two different approaches about political issues affecting Pan-Slavism. First was the political borders of Eastern Europe as of 1871 (Document A). The slavic people were spread all over and not merely contained to one region. Any desire to make a Slavic state would be almost impossible. Also to be considered were the populations of Central and Eastern Europe. Slavs were the minority in the German Empire and only in Russia did the Slavic population dominate the total population. Due to this fact, many countries saw this unification attempt as a way for Russia to take over during international rivalries that were taking place at the time.

Some were for the Pan-Slavic movement as a guard against Russian influence. Many nations believed that Pan-Slavism was an “invitation for the Russians to create a universal monarchy” and to “absorb and destroy” nationalities. (Document 11) Countries sought to use Pan-Slavism as an attempt to bring glory to their own nation. An Austrian editorial stated that “Austria must put itself at the head of the Slavs and promote their national development.” (Document 5) This would be sure to “destroy all illusions of a Russian Pan-Slavism” and bring favor to Austria. While noted that the author of this piece has a biased point of view due to the fact that he is looking to use Pan-Slavism as a way to gain acclaim for Austria, it is noted that he does support the movement. Meanwhile individuals in Poland believed that forming a Pan-Slav Empire would “renew an independent Poland” and “destroy the Ottoman and Austrian empires.” (Document 8) Granted the point of view of the author is biased as he is a Polish philosopher, yet there is a trend of countries using the Pan-Slavic movement as a political tactic.

However, the Russians were not so thrilled about Pan-Slavism as the rest of the nations around them. Bakunin, a Russian anarchist, stated that there was “no place for Pan-Slavic goals” as there was only “death, darkness, and slave labor” within Russia. (Document 6) He advocated that the masses did not have a say in their fate in the government. Russians saw the movement as a way to arouse Russian sympathy and believed those within the movement only used it to “complain of their sufferings and persecutions.” It was declared that “No Russian ever wanted the reunion of other Slavs with Russia” and that Pan-Slavism existed “among the weakest and most oppressed slavic peoples.” (Document 14) Russia had little desire to accommodate its masses who had pretty much no say in their government.

There were cultural issues to be concerned with when looking at Pan-Slavism as well. Proponents of Pan-Slavism argued that “humanity comes after nationality” in other nations but for the Slavs humanity was key. They sought to seek identity as “Slavs” rather than Russians, Czechs, or Poles. (Document 3) Slavs wanted unity as it ignored distinct identities and rather brought their ethnic group together as a whole. A Bulgarian
poet argued that a “small federation” of Slavs be built so that “no nationality may be wronged. (Document 9) Protecting the diversity of the Slavs from pro-Russian tendencies was a reason Beust argued for Pan-Slavism. (Document 12) Meanwhile, some Russians felt that their country was united by “faith, blood, and historical tradition” with the Slavic peoples feeling that they had similar fates and that “fraternal feelings” were present between them. (Document 13) They argued that in order to “liberate its racial brothers” Russia must embrace the spirit of independence and Pan-Slavic consciousness. (Document 10) However, not all were culturally inclined to herald this new motion. Czech journalist Karel Havlicek stated that the “Slavs are not one nation.” The name Slav rather, he argued, was and should always be a geographical name as nationality is “not only determined by language but by customs, religion, government, etc. (Document 7) Likewise, other individuals argued that there was no single Slavic language, literature or homeland as there was ignorance and hatred between different groups within the Slavic ethnicity. They saw the idea of using Pan-Slavism as dangerous as it would take the country off-topic. (Document 4) Pan-Slavism was a controversial topic as countries had political motives for embracing it and cultural inhibitions about allowing it to take place.