***N.B.: THESE ARE ONLY POSSIBLE PLANS – THEY ARE USEFUL FOR YOU TO CHECK STRUCTURE AND SOME IDEAS, BUT YOU CAN DISAGREE!***

***1. To what extent was Germany responsible for the outbreak of W W I?***

*(Structure: It is a "to what extent question. It means that you have to write two parts in the essay. One showing German responsibility, and one showing "other factors‘).*

**Germany's responsibility:**

1. **The Schlieffen Plan** aimed to eliminate France first, taking advantage of the slow Russian mobilization and then turn on Russia. Germany had signed a treaty where she promised to respect Belgium‘s neutrality. By invading Belgium, Germany made Britain enter the war = general war.

2. **The 'Blank Cheque'** Germany promised to support Austria whatever policies she chose. Germany had backed up Austria firmly since the Bosnian crisis in 1908. This support was unconditional. Examples:

a) During the Bosnian crisis in 1908, the German Kaiser wrote a letter to the Russians where he demanded that Russia should accept the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and end her support for Serbia. Otherwise "events would run their course = Wilhelm threatened with war.   
b) During the Balkan Wars the German Kaiser gave unconditional support to Austria in her attempts to block Serbia from the Adriatic Sea: "Whatever comes from Vienna is for me a command the Kaiser said.   
Many argue that the Blank Cheque, given in the critical situation that existed in 1914, is evidence that the Kaiser wanted a general war.

3. **'Weltpolitik'** = an aggressive German foreign policy: Bismarck had limited Germany‘s role in Europe after the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. He was not interested in colonies, nor navy, but in status quo. Kaiser Wilhelm‘s Weltpolitik starting in the 1890‘s, was something different: the Kruger Telegram, colonialism, the building of the Baghdad-Gulf railway, the building of a German fleet, the Moroccan Crisis 1905, the support of Austria, the Agadir Crisis 1911, The Zabern Affair 1913, The Schlieffen Plan, are all examples of Wilhelm‘s Weltpolitik.

Germany‘s and Wilhelm‘s desire for an empire and a world role disrupted and threatened the international status quo. Britain sided with France as a result of the German naval build up.

4. **The rise of militarism** in Germany during the rule of Kaiser Wilhelm II contributed to the outbreak of World War I. The best evidence for this military power overriding the political decision makers, is the Potsdam War Council. Fischer has shown how German generals and the Kaiser were prepared to declare war on Britain without consulting the government

5. **Domestic consideration and the Fischer thesis** i. e. how to escape the threat from socialists and liberals. Germany deliberately planned for World War I and the best evidence is the Potsdam War Council. Why did Germany want a war?

**A:** Economic change had created a middle and working class wanting to change the constitution and giving the Reichstag political power. The economic and social development in this growing state, unbalanced its political system. The junkers and the generals had considerable influence in Wilhelm‘s Germany. During Wilhelm‘s rule there was a "rise of militarism i.e. military leaders and the Kaiser became more powerful at the expense of the civilian government. But the growth of socialism challenged the conservative political power and German leaders feared revolution. Germany had been united through a war in 1870/71 and there was a tradition that the country could be united through nationalism. The Kaiser deliberately chose war to escape domestic problems. Germany was responsible, according to Fischer, for World War I.

**B:** The second reason for Germany wanting a war "sooner than later was Russian rearmament. Russia had been rearming since the Russo-Japanese war in 1904/05 and the Bosnian crisis in 1908. Within a few years, Russia would be much stronger.

6. **Germany** went through Belgium when she attacked France. This dragged Britain into the war.

7. It was Germany who first declared war on both France and Russia.

8. **The September Programme** from 1914 showed the German war plans. It outlined aggressive growth both in the West and in the East.

**No, the war was not a result of Germany’s policies:**

1. **Industrialization** led to a) tension in many countries i.e. new groups wanted power which led to domestic tension and b) it affected the international balance of power

2. **The power vacuum in the Balkans** due to the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

3. **Nationalism** and imperialism in many countries led to the war. In Russia Pan-Slavism i.e. the idea to unite all Slavs, had a lot of support. France wanted revenge for the 1870/71 defeat. Balkan nationalism was very strong.

4. **Austria-Hungary** wanted a war against Serbia no matter what the consequences would be.

5. **The mobilization race** went out of control.

6. **The alliance system** led to a war that no one had prepared for.

**C. Conclusion:**

Summarize your main points and base your answer upon them. It is possible to answer that the war was to some extent caused by Germany but there were other factors as well, and there is no "absolute‘‘ answer. What you have to do is to support your answer in the conclusion.

## *****2. Was W W I a result of miscalculations and misunderstandings?*****

## Europe really did stumble into this conflict because (support Turner‟s view):

1. It can be argued that few expected the Russians to support Serbia. Why? They did so neither in 1908 nor during the Balkan Wars. So perhaps the Russians would back off again. Both Austria and Germany had good reasons for believing that it would be a "local Balkan war.

2. Russia was not aware of how her mobilization affected Germany. The Schlieffen Plan gave no alternatives for Germany: she could not just stand and watch Russian mobilization – because she needed to defeat France before she defeated Russia. The result was that Germany declared war on Russia and France.

3. Germany didn't expect Britain to defend Belgium.

4. Was Germany aware of the crucial importance of her naval build-up and her aggressive foreign policies? It turned a potential ally, Britain, into an enemy.

5. It was a naïve thought that "successful little wars‘ would ease domestic tensions. Berlin, Vienna and St Petersburg misjudged this policy and it finally led to the collapse of the three empires.

## No, Europe did not stumble into this conflict:

1. Industrialization: changed the balance of power/domestic problems.

2. The decline of the Ottomans.

3. An era of colonialism/imperialism/nationalism/Pan-Slavism.

4. The alliance system.

5. The arms race/naval race.

6. The growth of Germany/the aggressiveness of Germany and the Kaiser/the Fischer Thesis.

7. The problems in Austria with different nationalities.

8. The humiliation of Russia: in 1878 (Congress of Berlin after the Russo-Turkish War), 1904/05 Russia was defeated by Japan, 1908 the Bosnian Crisis when Russia did not get access to the Dardanelles and lastly in 1912/13, when Russia could not give any support to Serbia at the time of the Balkan Wars.

It was the long term causes which turned the assassination into such a critical deed.

## Conclusion:

Summarize the main points of the essay. As you may know by now it is impossible to give you "the answer" to this question, but my personal opinion is that it was not only an accident that the Balkan question erupted again in 1914 and that the Great Powers were involved in this conflict. The policies of several key states are a little too clear cut for us to consider the outbreak of war a misunderstanding.

***3. Was W W I caused by problems in the Balkans?***

## Yes:

1. The decline of the Ottoman empire led to a **power vacuum** in the Balkans. This was the only area in Europe at the time, where there was major uncertainty about the borders. The Ottoman regime was referred to as the "sick man of Europe".

2. Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria had gained independence after the Russo-Turkish War which ended in 1878. These states were newly "born" and very **nationalistic**. The peace treaty after the war, signed at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, also decided that Austria should be given the administration of Bosnia. This was the beginning of the**Bosnian problem**.

3. The Balkans was a multi-cultural area. Austria-Hungary, the leading power in the region, was made up of at least 13 different nationalities. The **Austrian desire to control Balkan nationalism** is absolutely one of the main reasons for W W I. In Bosnia alone there were approximately 3 million Serbs. Nationalism can be defined here as when one ethnic group wants to form an independent state. At a time when nationalism was probably the most important political idea, this would result in rising tensions.

4. About 60 % of Russian export trade was shipped out through the **Dardanelles**. This made the Straits a strategically important area to Russia – and her enemies. There was strong support for **Pan-Slavism** in Russia, i.e. that all Slavs should be united under Russian leadership. This would of course affect an area where there were many Slavs.

5. Many historians describe the **Bosnian Crisis** of 1908 as the single most important event leading to war. Austria-Hungary made a secret agreement with Russia. If they could annex Bosnia, Russia would gain access to the Dardanelles. Russian access to the Dardanelles was a violation of the Straits Convention of 1841, which prohibited foreign warships in the Dardanelles. Britain and France opposed the idea of the Russian Black Sea fleet in the Mediterranean. The result was that Austria- Hungary took Bosnia but that Russia did not get access to the Dardanelles. The Serbs were furious over the annexation of an area with millions of Serbs, and Russia mobilized to support Serbia. The German Kaiser wrote a letter to the Russian Tsar and demanded that Russia should accept the annexation or "things would run their course. The threat made Russia accept the annexation, but she had been humiliated, and from 1908 an extensive Russian rearmament programme started.

6. **The Balkan Wars**. In the Balkan Wars a league of Balkan states were able to conquer land from the Ottomans. The result was that Serbia more than doubled in size. Even though she was still blocked from the Adriatic Sea by Austria-Hungary, Serbia turned into a Balkan great power. To Austria- Hungary this was the worst possible scenario. It is normally said that from then on, Austria-Hungary was looking for a good excuse to attack Serbia.

## No, this conflict was not only a Balkan conflict:

1. Write about the consequences of industrialization in Europe.

2. This was an era of nationalism, which was not only a Balkan phenomenon.

3. Imperialist ambitions of the Great Powers which can be regarded as "nationalism‘, are not only linked to the Balkan states.

4. The growing strength of Germany and Weltpolitik is normally considered a very important cause of W W I.

5. The alliance system was not a Balkan phenomenon.

6. The arms race and the naval build-up was not a Balkan phenomenon.

7. Miscalculation concerning domestic problems, the mobilization race, the invasion of Belgium, had nothing to do with the Balkans.

8. That the Russians had been humiliated and that the Tsar felt pressure to act in 1914, was not due to Balkan problems.

9. The problems that arose after the Franco-Prussian war in 1870/71 (the French desire for revenge), were not a Balkan problem.

## Conclusion:

Summarise your main points to support your answer. It is probably correct to argue that the problems in the Balkans were part of the reasons for W W I. But it cannot be argued that other problems were without importance. The Balkan problems alone were not sufficient for the conflict to expand into a general war.