10.5.1 Analyze the arguments for entering the war presented by leaders from all sides of the Great War and the role of political and economic rivalries, ethnic and ideological conflicts, domestic discontent and disorder, propaganda and nationalism in mobilizing the civilian population in support of total war
International events, such as the first modern Olympic games in 1896 and the First Universal Peace Conference in 1899, were steps toward keeping the peace. However, while peace efforts were under way, powerful forces were pushing Europe towards war.
Spurred by distrust of one another, the great powers in Europe—Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Britain, France, and Russia signed treatise pledging to defend one another. These alliances were intended to promote peace by creating powerful combinations that no one would dare attack. In the end they had the opposite effect and would lead a regional conflict to a full out world war.
The Triple Alliance

• Had its origins in Bismarck’s day. He knew that France longed to avenge its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Sure that France would not attack without help, Bismarck signed treatise with other powers. In 1882, he formed the Triple Alliance with Italy and Austria-Hungary. In 1914, when war did erupt, Germany and Austria-Hungary fought on the same side. They became known as the Central Powers.
The Triple Entente

Tribe Entente or Allies
France  Great Britain

Russia

- A rival block took shape in 1893, when France and Russia formed an alliance. In 1904, France and Britain signed an entente, a nonbinding agreement to follow common polities. Through not as formal as a treaty, the entente led to close military and diplomatic ties. Britain later signed a similar agreement with Russia. When the war began, these powers became known as the Triple Entente or the Allies.
Other Alliances were also formed. Germany signed a treaty with the Ottoman Empire and Britain signed one with Japan.

The European powers jealously guarded their status. They competed for position in many areas. Two old empires, Austria-Hungary and The Ottoman Empire, struggled to survive in an age of nationalism.
Economic rivalries helped sour the international atmosphere. Germany, the newest of the great powers, was growing into an economic and military powerhouse. Britain felt threatened by its rapid economic growth. Germany, in turn, thought the other great powers did not give it enough respect. Germany also feared that when Russia caught up to other industrialized nations, its huge population and vast supply of natural resources would make it an unbeatable competitor.
Overseas rivalries also divided European nations. Imperialism, or the domination by one country of the political, economic, or cultural life of one country or region was that its height. The great powers felt that ruling a global empire increased a nation’s prestige around the world. Colonies provided sources of raw materials and ready markets for finished goods. The only problem was that most areas of the world were already claimed so they fought for control of the remaining parts.
In 1905 and in 1911, competition for colonies brought France and Germany to the brink of war in Morocco, then under France's influence. Although diplomats kept the peace, Germany did gain some territory in central Africa. As a result of the two Moroccan crises, Britain and France strengthened their ties against Germany.
Arms Race and Militarism

- With international tensions on the rise, the great powers began to build up their armies and navies. The fiercest competition was the naval rivalry between Britain and Germany. To protect its vast overseas empire, Britain had built the world’s most respected navy. As Germany began acquiring overseas colonies, it began to build up its own navy. Suspicious of Germany’s motives, Britain in turn increased naval spending. Sensational journalism dramatized the arms race and stirred national public opinion against rival countries.
• The rise of Militarism, or a policy of aggressive military preparedness along with glorification of the military, helped feed the arms race. The militarist tradition painted war in romantic colors. Young men dreamed of blaring trumpets and dashing calvary charges—not at all the sort of conflict they would face.
After 1900, the size of armies throughout Europe grew at an alarming rate and this heightened existing tensions in Europe. Because of the huge armies it was obvious to all that if war came it would be highly destructive. To add to this the Industrial Revolution had given nations much more destructive guns and weapons than ever. These would included such things as improved artillery, machineguns, airplanes, tanks, and poisonous gas.
Nevertheless, many politicians and generals expected a war that would be like the last one fought in Europe—Bismarck's war against the France that unified Germany. That war was quick, decisive, and the causalities were relatively light. The two sides thought they could take the offensive and win a quick victory.
In the years before 1914, conscription, a military draft, had been established as a regular practice in the west. Only the U.S. and Britain did not practice conscription. Because of conscription, armies expanded significantly between 1890 and 1914. Many armies doubled in size.

The Russian army had about 1,300,000, The Germany army had about 1,800,000, and the, The British, Italian and Austro-Hungarian armies had between 150,000 and 500,000 soldiers each.
• As armies grew, so did the influence of military leaders. Generals drew up complex plans for quick mobilizing millions of men and enormous quantities of supplies in case of war. Generals spent years planning how to win the war, not avoid one.

• Military leaders feared that any changes in their plans would cause chaos in the army. Thus they insisted that their plans would not be altered. In the 1914 crisis, this left Europeans political leaders with little leeway. They were forced to make decisions for military rather than political reasons.
Aggressive Nationalism

- Aggressive nationalism also caused tensions. Nationalism was strong in both Germany and France. German's were proud of their new empire’s military power and industrial leadership. The French were bitter about their 1871 defeat in the Franco Prussian War and yearned to recover the lost border province of Alsace and Lorraine.
In Eastern Europe, Russia sponsored a powerful form of nationalism called Pan-Slavism. It held that all Slavic peoples shared a common nationality. As the largest Slavic country, Russia felt that it had a duty to lead and defend all Slavs. By 1914, it stood ready to support Serbia, a proud young nation that dreamed of creating a South Slav state.
Two old multinational empires particularly feared the rising nationalism. Austria-Hungary worried that nationalism might foster rebellion among the many minority population within its empire. Ottoman Turkey felt threatened by nearby new nations such as Serbia. It realized, Serbia’s dream of a Southern Slav state could take territory away from both Austria-Hungary and Turkey.
In the Early years of the 20th Century, a series of crises tested the alliances. Especially troubling were the crises in the Balkans between 1908 and 1913. Tensions rose in 1908 when Austria annexed the Ottoman province of Bosnia— the Austrians had already been administering it according to an international treaty. Then in 1912 and 1913, different Balkan groups—Serbs, Romanians, Greeks, and Turks—fought one another for more territory and influence.
These events brought emotions to a boiling point. By 1914, the Balkans were called the “powder keg of Europe” – a barrel of gunpowder that a tiny spark might cause to explode. European states were angry at each other, Especially Austria and Russia. Each state was guided by its own self-interest and success. They were willing to use war to preserve the power of national state.

The growth of nationalism in the 19th century had yet another serious result. Not all ethnic groups had become nations. Slavic minorities in the Balkans and the Hapsburg Empire, for example, still dreamed of creating their own nation states. The Irish in the British Empire and the Poles in Russia had similar dreams.
The Outbreak of War.

- Alliances, economic competition, imperialism, nationalism, the arms race, and militarism all played a role in starting WWI. But, the crisis in the Balkans in the summer of 1914 lead directly to war. States in Southeastern Europe had struggled for years to free themselves from Ottoman rule. Austria-Hungary and Russia both wanted control these new nations. By 1914, Serbia supported by Russia, was determined to create a large Slavic state in the Balkans. Austria Hungary was determined this would not happen. Many Europeans anticipated war.
On June 28, 1914, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife Sophia visited the Bosnian town of Sarajevo. Members of the Black Hand made plans to kill him. The Black Hand was a Serbian terrorist organization supported by the Serbian Military that wanted Bosnia to be free of Austria-Hungary. An attempt with a bomb was unsuccessful. Later in the day, however, Gavrilo Princep, a 19-year-old Bosnian Serb, shot and killed both the archduke and his wife.
The news of the assassination shocked Francis Joseph. Still he was reluctant to go to war. The government in Vienna, however, saw the incident as an excuse to crush Serbia. In Berlin, Kaiser William II was horrified at the assassination of his ally’s heir. He wrote to Francis Joseph, advising him to take a firm stand toward Serbia. Instead of urging restraint, Germany gave Austria a “blank check,” or a promise of unconditional support no matter what the cost.
• Austria sent Serbia and ultimatum, or final set of demands. To avoid war Serbia must end all anti-Austrian agitation and punish any Serbian official involved in the murder plot. It must even let Austria join in the investigation. Serbia agreed to most, but not all, of the terms of Austria’s ultimatum. The partial refusal gave Austria the opportunity it was seeking. On July 28, 1914, Austria declared war on Serbia
After Austria’s declaration of war, Serbia turned to its ally, Russia. Tsar Nicholas II telegraphed Kaiser William II asking the Kaiser to urge Austria to soften its demands. But it was too late. War had already broken out between Austria and Serbia.
After the plea failed, Tsar Nicholas II ordered partial mobilization of the army. Mobilization is the process of assembling troops and supplies and making them ready for war. At the time this was seen as an act of war. Russian military leaders told the czar that they could not partially mobilize because their plan was based on a war against both Germany and Austria-Hungary. Based on this the tsar ordered full mobilization of the army on July 29. The German Government warned Russians that they must stop the mobilization. When Russia refused, Germany declared war on Russia on August 1.
• Germany also has a military plan. One of its generals, Alfred von Schlieffen, had drawn up a plan that called for war against both Russia and France. Under the Schlieffen Plan, Germany could not go to war against Russia only. As a result, Germany declared war on France on August 3. It also issued an ultimatum to Belgium, which it demanded the right of German troops to pass through Belgium, even though Belgium was a neutral nation.

• On August 4, Great Britain declared war on Germany, officially for violating Belgium Neutrality. In fact, Britain was concerned about maintaining its own world power. Not all European powers were at war.