



### The Tsar

Many people believe that Tsar Nicholas II was incompetent and weak as a leader, and it was his poor decision-making that caused Russia to perform so poorly during the war.

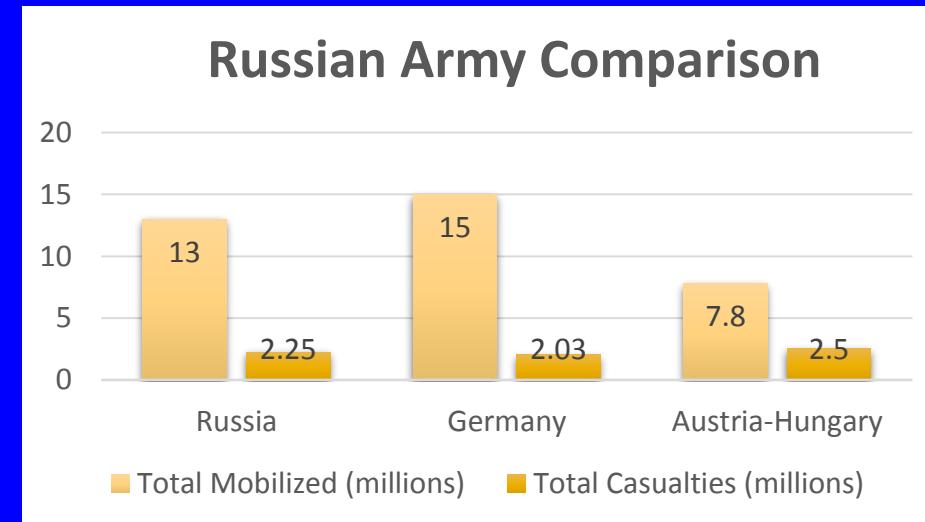
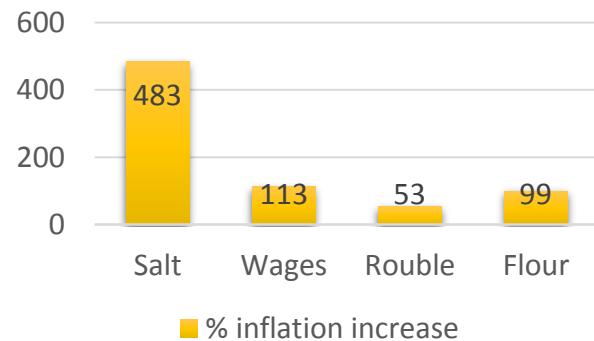
For example, in 1915, Nicholas himself went into battle with troops, leaving the throne behind to his wife, Tsarina Alexandra, and Rasputin, a peasant who allegedly had healing powers. Naturally, nearly everyone was unhappy with this decision – peasants saw him as an ‘old-believer’, and nobles saw him as an upstart. Nicholas’ aim was to boost the spirits of the military by fighting alongside them as a divine figure, there to give them hope in a time of hardship, but the result was the opposite. This, in turn, painted the Tsar as an incompetent ruler, and made the public question whether he was an able leader, and whether he could win the war or not.

## SHOULD RUSSIA HAVE GONE TO WAR IN 1914?

Despite the win, were they prepared to cope with the long-term consequences of war?

By Shobhit Piasa

### % inflation increase



### Economics

- Russia was on par with Germany, in terms of their army, but it was the economy that let them down: the economic progress that Russia had been making pre-WW1 had been undone by the war.
- Russia saw the rapid development of an interconnected railway system, which should have been useful during the war, but instead stopped them from making any real progress. The trains were being used to transport weapons to the frontlines, meaning they weren't being used to transport food to the cities, causing mass starvation in industrial areas, another factor contributing towards unemployment. Poor distribution of food and equipment, also meant that it didn't always reach the frontlines or cities. This made the army wholly inefficient, and rendered the cities useless in terms of producing goods. Productivity had slumped, when it was really needed to be high.
- Spending increased from 1.5bn roubles in 1914, to 14.5bn in 1918, which wasn't accommodated for through a steady stream of income, due to naval blockades in the Black Sea and Baltics which prevented trades.

### Military

- On the surface, it seems like the Russian military was efficient in their efforts to win the war: they were expected to mobilize and be ready for war in approximately 1 ½ months – they mobilized in 18 days, and this was all the minister of war, Vladimir Sukhomlinov's, efforts. However, the problem lied within the army itself. On paper, Russia's army was one of the largest in the world, but it consisted mainly of untrained peasants.
- There were also many other faults with the military, but it must be seen that they were all caused by Russia's poor economy, which then had a knock-on effect on the military. Eg:
  1. In 1914, there weren't enough weapons – there were 2 rifles for every 3 soldiers → this was caused by the low productivity and poor railway performance (more on that in the 'economic' section)
  2. In 1915, Russian artillery was limited to 2-3 shells → again caused by low productivity due to railways.
  3. Supplies weren't reaching soldiers in time, rendering them largely inefficient → unemployment in cities caused low productivity.

From the chart above, it is clear that Russia was quite on par with Germany, and was even larger than Austria-Hungary in terms of their military, and so if there weren't any other factors in question (namely, the economy), Russia may have lost fewer soldiers, and thus economics was the most important factor.