

Conscription in Europe: the effect on educational and career advancement among youths

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Conscription in Europe

The effect on educational and career advancement among youth.

Charlene Smith

Conscription, or drafting, is the compulsory enlistment of people in a national service, most often a military service. Currently, only 5 of the European Union's 28 member countries require national service, while the rest either do not require any or offer it as a voluntary option for citizens. The purpose of this paper is to develop a real and unique perspective on how conscription affects European young adults and their transition to higher education and career development. There is little consensus in the academic literature about the impact of conscription on education, career development, and even crime. Proponents of conscription argue that conscription educates young citizens with basic skills, provides them with valuable work experience, teaches them national and civic values, and fosters nation building and unity. On the other hand, critics insist conscription not only demotivates youth and creates an ineffective military and public service workforce, but can also be viewed as a violation of individual rights. After thorough investigation of present research and conducting independent interviews with a variety of today's youth, this paper will attempt to arrive at new conclusions about the effects of conscription on the career and educational attainment of young men.

INTRODUCTION

Young men in more than 60 countries around the world face the prospect of mandatory military conscription. Militaries across Europe are downsizing and eliminating conscription in favor of all-volunteer forces. Conscription typically occurs for men between the age of 18 and 25, a critical juncture in life when decisions are being made about higher education and entering the labour market. Being called to service heavily intrudes on this phase of their lives. In Europe, conscription remains a hotly debated topic. A number of European countries have recently chosen to abolish conscription; however, Austrians recently voted to retain it.

Conscription is controversial for a range of reasons including individuals' objection to military engagements on philosophical, religious, or political grounds, and a perceived violation of individual rights. Conscripted individuals sometimes evade service by leaving the country; however, some selection systems accommodate objectors by providing alternative service outside combat operations roles or civil service roles outside the military. Conscription theoretically provides the government with cheap labour but its economic effectiveness is questionable as it ignores the principle of comparative advantage. Different people are good at different tasks, however not everyone would be equally good at being a soldier.

Proponents of conscription argue it gives youth from disadvantaged backgrounds access to training and employment and, thereby, better integrates them into society. Compulsory service has also been defended and criticized as a way to educate young citizens, to teach them national and civic values, and to foster nation building and unity. Historically, conscription was believed to be the most effective way of compiling an inexpensive military presence. (Poutvaara & Wagener, 2007)

This research paper will reveal the differences in opinions about conscription between cultures. Specifically, it will focus on how different cultures view the effect of conscription on youth and their career and educational advancement. Currently, there is very little research, most of which is inconclusive, that discusses the differences in conscription between cultures. There is even less that discusses how conscription may affect youth attainment. Through the compilation of current research and collecting data from interviews with a variety of today's European youth, this paper attempts to provide new insights on these topics.

HISTORY

Conscription dates back to ancient times and continues today in some countries where men at a certain age must serve anywhere from 6 months to 8 years on active duty and then transfer to the reserve force. In its inception, conscription was the basis of large and powerful militaries.

Modified forms of conscription were used by Prussia, Switzerland, Russia, and other European countries during the 17th and 18th centuries. The first nationwide system was instituted following the French Revolution and was institutionalized by Napoleon after he became emperor in 1803. Between 1807 and 1813, Prussia developed a conscription system based on the principle of universal service, which eventually became the model for the rest of Europe. During the 19th century, the conscript system of recruiting troops became common throughout Europe and many other countries including Japan, China, and the USA. Canada enacted forms of conscription in both world wars, creating sharp divisions between Anglophones, who tended to support the practice, and Francophones, who generally did not. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2016)

The end of the Cold War and the emergence of high-tech weapons systems have combined to encourage the end of conscription and the professionalization of European armies. New global environments and new military strategies reduced the need to conscript the large majority of the draft-age men to meet the force size requirements. Additionally, some countries found that conscription led to a military that looked far stronger on paper than it actually was. The Economics of Peace and Security Journal article titled *Conscription: Economic Costs and Political Allure* argues compulsory service is likely to lead into an inefficient organization within the military and an army of inexperienced and poorly trained draftees, which is bound to suffer more casualties and inflict more human suffering than a professional army. (Poutvaara & Wagener, 2007)

Conscription currently exists in 64 countries across the world (approximately 33%), with 8 other countries having selective conscription and 13 with conscription in case of emergency. Norway is the only European country that has mandatory service for women.

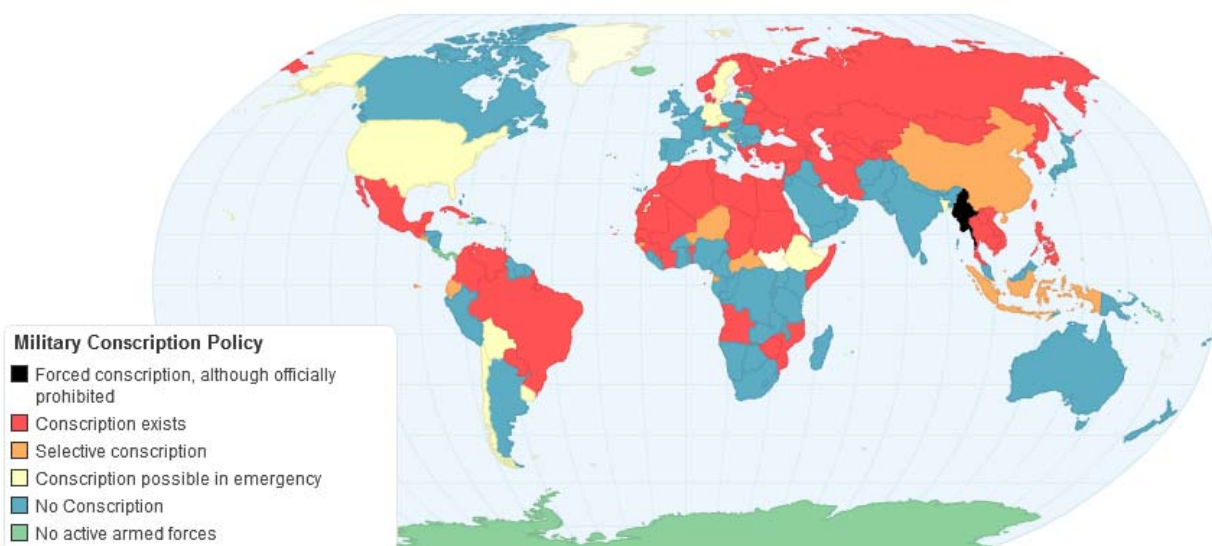


Figure 1: Military Conscription Policy by Country (Chartsbin.com, 2011).

CURRENT SITUATION IN EUROPE

In recent years, European Union (EU) armies have been reduced in size to adapt to new military strategies and smaller defense budgets, thus lessening the need for recruits. Only 5 of the European Union's 28 member states require national service (17.9%), while the rest either do not require any or offer it as an option for citizens (ChartsBin.com, 2016).

It has not been that long since the draft was the norm in Europe. During the Cold War and into the 1990s, compulsory military service existed in nearly every European country. Even after the constant threat of the Cold War subsided, several European states did not immediately move to strike conscription. Below is a graphic that indicates the current state of military service in Europe.



Figure 2: Military service in Europe (Chartsbin.com, 2013).

Most of the EU states that retain conscription can be explained under two categories. First, there are those states that are involved in territorial disputes or perceived territorial threats. This applies to Greece, Cyprus, Finland and Estonia. In these cases, the particular security situation still acts as a justification for maintaining the draft.

A second category are the neutral states with conscription, which now only includes Austria. Interestingly, in 2013 Austrians passed a referendum to maintain conscription. For the neutrals, conscription appears to be evaluated more strongly from a civic service and unity perspective, rather than strictly military strength and protection. During the referendum it was argued that the draft allows young men to opt out and perform alternative community service, such as working in hospitals, and some feared that these 14,000 short-term workers a year would be missed (Deutsche Welle, 2013) The table below provides further information about the EU countries where conscription still exists.

It is generally believed that global strategic change and, most notably, the end of the Cold War was the single most important driver of conscription reform in Europe. The long-term prospect of peace in Europe undermined the Cold War rationale of a large conscript army as a cornerstone of national security. Mass armies were no longer required as a deterrent for a potential Soviet attack and European states began to move away from the concept of territorial defence as the prime purpose of the armed forces (Bieri, 2015; Poutvaara & Wagener, 2007).

However, without conscription many countries experience difficulty finding enough recruits to fill their military. Another problem with getting rid of the draft is that professional armies are more expensive than those with conscripts. Many states that have abolished conscription therefore still reserve the power to resume it during wartime or times of crisis. See the table below for further information on EU countries where conscription has been suspended, but circumstantial policies still remain.

Country	Status	Details
Austria	Conscription exists	18-35 years of age for compulsory military service; 16 years of age for male or female voluntary service; service obligation 6 months of training, followed by an 8-year reserve obligation; conscripts cannot be deployed in military operations outside Austria (2009)
Cyprus	Conscription exists	18-50 years of age for compulsory military service for all Greek males; 17 years for voluntary service; women may volunteer for a 3-year term; length of normal service is 25 months (2009)
Estonia	Conscription exists	Obligation for compulsory service ages 16-60, with conscription "likely" ages 18-27; service requirement 8-11 months (2009)
Finland	Conscription exists	18 years of age for male voluntary and compulsory - and female voluntary - national military and non-military service; service obligation 6-12 months; mandatory retirement at age 60 (2008)
Greece	Conscription exists	19-45 years of age for compulsory military service; during wartime the law allows for recruitment beginning January of the year of inductee's 18th birthday, thus including 17 year olds; 17 years of age for volunteers; conscript service obligation - 1 year for all services; women are eligible for voluntary military service (2008)

Table 1: EU Countries with Active Conscription (Chartsbin.com, 2013).

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Country	Status
Croatia	Conscription suspended, but legally possible in in cases of emergency or war, or if the Armed Forces cannot carry out their duty.
Czech Republic	Conscription suspended, but legally possible in national emergency or state of war
Germany	Compulsory military service suspended in 2011, conscription still remains part of the constitution and available in the case of an emergency.
Lithuania	Conscription suspended in 2008, the laws governing conscription and conscientious objection are still in place.
Sweden	Compulsory military service abolished 2010, but the Total Defence Service Act remains in force and can be applied if required by military preparedness

Table 2: Countries where conscription is suspended but legally possible (Chartsbin.com, 2013).

INTERVIEW RESULTS

In order to accurately assess how youth are affected by mandatory military and public service, and what their views are on the past and current situation, a number of interviews were conducted with people from five different countries. The interview question template found in Appendix 1 was used for all of the interviewees, but slightly modified depending on each person's specific experiences and the discussion that developed during the interviews.

Austria

In Austria, all male citizens between 17 and 51 are required to do either compulsory military or public service. If they choose to do the military service, they must complete six months of basic training before the age of 35. There is an alternative service called "Zivildienst" men can choose instead of military service that lasts nine months. Further, the Austrian government does provide a twelve-month Foreign Service option and a two-year Development Aid Service option as alternatives to military service. (AFM, 2016)

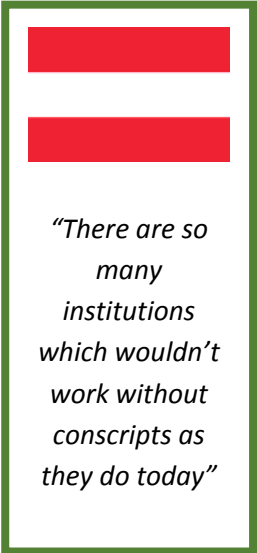
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The interviewee from Austria is a 20-year-old mechatronics student. He chose to "conscientiously object", as they call it in Austria, to military service and take part in a civil service position. His public service took place at an retirement home where he had many tasks including serving the elderly food, helping with events, office work, and spending quality time with the residents. The Austrian found his service very enlightening. He learned that there are a lot of people who are in need and it is important to respect older people and cherish the friends and family he has. He indicated that initially he did not want to do the mandatory service, however in hindsight he would take part in it once again.

This Austrian man knew what route he wanted to take educationally before his mandatory service and indicated that the service did not change his original plan. With the field of engineering being much different to health care, he has not seen many skills from his service transfer over. He has however seen the skills he learned transfer into his everyday life. For example, he stated his team work, social skills, organizational skills, and housework abilities improved tremendously due to his public service. Additionally, he explained that his time working at the retirement home confirmed his desire to work in engineering and not health care, and also developed a new level of respect for those who do choose professional careers in similar fields.

The interviewee mentioned he has friends who extended their community service for a few extra months before they found a new job and others that chose to continue a professional career in the public sector. Moreover, he mentioned his father was conscripted and chose to take part in the military service. The service moved him to a new city, which he chose to stay, as well as study, in after he had finished his required time with the military. His father found the athletic aspect of military service the most beneficial, however stated if he was able to choose again he would have chosen the civil service over military service.

Overall, the Austrian student feels that conscription can be positive for a country if used in peaceful, rather than hostile conditions. He said that both the military and public service provides the country with stability and disaster control. In regard to young people, he thinks there are a lot of life lessons to learn. However, mentioned that it truly depends on the assignment. Providing opportunities to explore potential careers or interests was also mentioned. He believes that people who have been conscripted often have a clearer view of their career goals. The interviewee feels conscription works in Austria. While there are always policies that could improve, overall



"There are so many institutions which wouldn't work without conscripts as they do today"

the system in place is good. Some things he would change about conscription are to increase the wages and to include women in community or military service.

When asked if he would voluntarily enrol in the case of another World War he responded that he would not voluntarily apply to the military service, but instead would be willing to take part in some form of civil service to support the country.

Germany

Up until 2011 Germany had compulsory military or public service very similar to that of Austria. Over the years the duration of service changed and the alternative options varied. The recent abolishment of conscription in Germany was motivated by hopes to develop a more modern and professional armed forces. Now, military conscription is still part of the constitution and available in case of emergency.

Post-Abolishment Generation Interviewee

The first interviewee from Germany is a 21-year-old student who came of age after the abolishment of compulsory service and therefore never had to serve. While he never experienced military service first hand, his father was conscripted. The interviewee explained that his father did nine months of basic military service and never spoke negatively or positively about the experience. Although, he was glad that it was abolished before his sons had to do it. This German student was happy he did not have to serve. He feels that being able to defend his country is unnecessary in these times and that being another half-trained civilian would not make a huge difference for himself or the country as a whole.

The German student does not believe the lessons of discipline and respect that young people learn during their service are worth the year they lose when they aren't even interested in military careers. Overall, he insisted that military conscription does not promote education and career advancement, or help young people discover their interests. He considers work ethic to be the only real personal benefit. He believes the countries that kept conscription likely kept it for its behavioural correction, basic skills, and societal benefits over military relevance.

When asked if he would voluntarily enrol in the case of another World War he responded that he would not. His reasoning for this was that he does not believe conscription or drafting will be necessary again with the types of online wars the world is having, and the modern technology militaries have. He believes soldier count is not as important as it once was. Regardless, he could not find a reason that would prompt him to enrol voluntarily.

Pre-Abolishment Generation Interviewee

The next interviewee is a 40-year-old German man who took part in military conscription in Germany before it was abolished. His experience in the German military involved two months of basic training and then eight months of specialized work. His specialization was mountain patrol where he hiked throughout the mountains in lower Germany with donkeys carrying weapons and supplies. His work also involved mobilization of mock wars where they would stage practice fights. For his last month he did office work and gained experience handling confidential information. He indicated that he was impartial to doing the service because everyone had to do it. There was never a thought to consider conscientious objection to do the alternative service or not do the service at all.

In regard to career and educational goals, he mentioned that his diverse experiences allowed him to realize what type of work he enjoyed. Additionally, he was given opportunities to get certifications during his service, such as



“Some countries kept conscription to teach discipline and general behavior, but it is just an outdated method to train the public in case of war”

his truck driver's license. Further, it provided him with organizational skills, teamwork skills, work ethic, and many other life skills. What he found most interesting was learning about German strategy and history and gaining a military perspective on the country. While he did not continue with the professional military, he did have many friends that chose to continue after their mandatory service.

This German interviewee feels that it is important for a country to have a good, professional, and organized military. He insisted that especially right now with the current terrorism threats, it is important that people and countries are prepared. Having people from all over the country and throughout different hierarchies trained and educated in government and military actions is important and beneficial for a country. On a personal level he feels that citizens knowing how to defend themselves is valuable. Moreover, understanding what the military stands for, what they are really doing, and what the needs of the military and public service are is important for all citizens.

Specifically, for young people and their educational and career goals, he thinks that there are a lot of both hard skills and soft skills to learn from military or public service. Some of the ones he mentioned include appropriate behaviour, respect for seniority, teamwork, and the value of hard work. He expressed that there was a lot of teaching throughout his training about what careers were possible in the future and a lot of resources to help young people with their career and educational search. At the time he was enlisted in Germany, young people could request to be in certain departments such as food, technical, labour, etc. that related to their future interests. This helped young people gain valuable experience they may not have been able to acquire outside the service. Another interesting fact about the Germany military service he revealed was that if a young person had to leave a job because of their military requirement, by law the employer had to take back the person after their required service was complete. Of course, there would be extenuating circumstances that would cause re-hiring to be impossible for the employer. In these cases, the military would have to offer them training and help them get re-introduced into the job market again so that the young man would not be without a job after his conscription.

Overall, in the current state of the world he considers more wars to take place on the internet – war of economies, currencies, etc. War is different now than in the past, it is not so much held on the ground. He mentioned there are obviously still places all over the world that war takes place on the ground every day, however in countries and civilizations like Germany it is different and more modernized, and perhaps that is why conscription is considered not as necessary anymore. He concluded by stating that military conscription could be good if implemented in a new way. As the world is changing, conscription has to adapt as well.

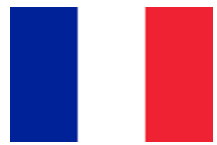


France

France was actually the first modern nation state to introduce military service as a condition of citizenship. However, France no longer has mandatory service. After World War II it was considered irrelevant and began to phase out, eventually completely dissolving in 1996. Currently, France has Service Civique, which is a voluntary service for young people between 16 and 25.

The interviewee from France is a 20-year-old business student who was not of age before conscription was abolished in France, however he did have parents that did compulsory military service. His father worked as a waiter in the military. While he did not enjoy his job and chose to not to have any similar occupations after his service, he did find value in the experience and believed in the system. Similar to the military in Germany, the military in France offered many opportunities for young people in regard to their skills, education, and certificates they could obtain during their service. Further, this interviewee had friends who took part in the voluntary service France has now, who found the experience very enlightening and beneficial to their resumes and skills.

This French man feels that it is a good thing for a country to have mandatory military or public service. From his experience and understanding, it provides a lot of opportunities to solve social problems. This is reflected in both helping young people, who don't have any skills or direction, gain experience and discover interests. At the same time, it provides resources to the military and other public organizations that may not have had sufficient employment to operate effectively. He mentioned specifically in times like these, with the recent terrorist attacks, mindsets have changed a lot and countries and citizens feel the need to be prepared for potential conflicts. In fact, he revealed that this past year had the highest record of voluntary registrations for the military in France.



"It can provide training and skills young people need for the future."

Regarding career and educational advancement for young people, the French interviewee feels that military or public service has a positive effect. He elaborated by explaining that it exposes young people to a variety of social issues, races, cultures, social classes of people. Moreover, young people often are unsure what to do after they graduate high school and he thinks the service can provide youth with a sense of direction, skills and training they need for future jobs, and time to contemplate and consider their options. It offers a first real job for many people and influences their willingness to continue working after their requirement. Additionally, the public service reduces negative stereotypes around certain public service jobs and the professional military. An interesting point of view the interviewee provided was about the high levels of voluntary unemployment in France. He recognizes that a lot of people take advantage of the good public system in France by receiving money without working. He believes that voluntary and compulsory public service of some form provides an alternative and prompts people to figure out their career paths.

When asked if he would voluntarily enrol in the case of another World War he responded that he would. His reasoning was interesting compared to other interviewees, stating that he would not want his father to fight for the family, but instead he would volunteer as he is in better health. He also specified that his willingness would depend on the context of the war and what role France was playing in it.

Netherlands

Until 1996, the Netherlands had conscription that required all men to complete compulsory military service once they turned 18 years old. Their legislation allowed for men to postpone their service for educational purposes or take part in an alternative civil service. Nowadays, like many countries, the Netherlands has kept the laws and systems in place for conscription so that it can be enacted in the case of war. Every Dutch man receives a letter when they turn 17 enlisting them in "non-active duty" in which he is registered and can present himself for duty, but is not required to.



"It is better for a country to have people who want to fight for the country in the military, rather than people who are forced to fight for their country"

The Dutch interviewee is a 22-year-old student who was not of age before conscription was abolished in the Netherlands. In fact, the only person he knows who was conscripted is his grandfather. His grandfather was a Morse code encrypter. He never shared many experiences from his time served with his family, however he did teach his children and grandchildren Morse code. Regardless of the lack of experience this Dutch man has had with conscription, he did have a number of opinions to share on the topic. He insisted that he does not feel that conscription is a particularly positive system for a country. This perspective was validated by the opinion that it is better for countries to have a smaller selection of people enlisted that want to fight for their country, versus a large mass of people enlisted who do not. Additionally, he mentioned there is no immediate need in the Netherlands for a strong military or combat-ready citizens. On the topic of young people, he expressed that he was conflicted to whether conscription was positive or negative. On one hand, he feels that young men aged 18 – 30 are in their best physical and mental condition to be trained

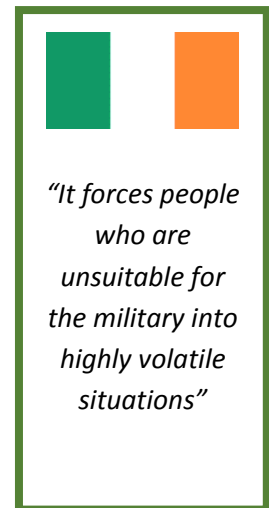
and to learn. However, he recognizes that military and public service are not everyone's industry of choice, therefore conscription consumes a young man's year that could be spent pursuing his passions.

In conclusion, he articulated that he is happy with the way the current system is set up in the Netherlands. When asked if he would voluntarily enrol in the case of another World War he responded that he would. However, his response was contingent on the war taking place in the Netherlands, as he does not believe fighting in other countries is effective.

Ireland

Ireland has always had a volunteer-based military. During the First World War, Britain attempted to impose their conscription laws onto Irish citizens. Ireland remained neutral and in a state of emergency during both World Wars and since has continued to maintain their volunteer military system.

The final interviewee is a 20-year-old Irish student who also works at a private dog kennel. Coming from a country that has never had conscription, he does not know any friends or family members who have been conscripted, nor has he been conscripted himself. Regardless of his lack of experience with the topic, it was interesting to hear the perspectives of a young man who has never been affected by conscription. Unsurprisingly, he believes that conscription is not a positive thing for a country and something that should only be used in times of extreme emergency, as it forces people who are unsuitable for the military into highly volatile situations they may not be able to handle. Further, he stated that conscription is more likely to develop overflows of unfit soldiers, rather than adequately prepare a country for war. Similarly, he expressed that conscription is not positive for young people as it takes time away from educational or work goals. Interestingly, when asked if he would voluntarily enrol in the case of another World War he responded that he would and he would not be opposed to Ireland implementing a draft.



In the Case of Canada and Austria

With the premise of this research being based on my knowledge and interest in the conscription systems in both Canada and Austria, the interviewees were asked the following two additional questions specific to these countries.

Question 1

Canada has only ever used conscription in the form of drafts during World Wars. Do you think this is more or less effective than having compulsory conscription at all times?

Overwhelmingly, most interviewees thought that drafting was less effective than compulsory conscription at all times. The opinion was if a country was to have mandatory military service in any form, it should be consistent. This maintains a mindset and ensures there are always readily trained soldiers available in case of emergency or war. Additionally, pertaining to both military and public service, it is good for both the country and the citizens to have a constant stream of people to rely on for less desirable community service positions and disaster relief that is covered by the military.

Interestingly, this opinion seemed to be based on an overall opinion of conscription worldwide. Whereas, when the interviewees focused on Canada specifically, their opinions were altered slightly. It was mentioned that in Canada there is a lack of extreme nationalism that is becoming more and more present in other countries, specifically in Europe. Moreover, there is less fear, voluntary unemployment, and an overall different mindset in Canada than in Europe. Geographically, Canada also does not have any immediate potential threats along their borders that would influence their need for a large military presence. These factors, among others, compelled the

interviewees to suggest that while consistent conscription may make sense in a lot of ways for a lot of countries, for Canada a professional voluntary military may be more suitable. However, the opinion on selective drafting stayed consistent, in that it was not an effective defence system in any circumstance.

The overall consensus resulted in two options for countries in the case of conscription. The first is to not have conscription in any form and to develop a fully professional army. This is thought to provide an overall more effective and dedicated armed forces for a country and allow young people to focus on their actual career and educational goals and aspirations without delay. The second option that was presented is to maintain consistent military and public service conscription that provides young people with more options for job types and training opportunities that relate to their specific interests. It was also suggested this be applied to both men and women. This would provide useful experiences and skills for young people, while also supplying the country with a steady flow of community service workers and keeping the country prepared for sudden states of emergency with a trained armed forces.

Question 2

Why do you think Austria has continued to be one of the only countries in the European Union to keep conscription, especially when it does not border with any other countries who also have maintained their mandatory military service or pose any immediate threats?

It is important to note that many of the interviewees were not aware prior to their interview that Austria still had conscription. Similarly, many interviewees were not aware of which other countries within the EU do or do not still use conscription.

As a country that has been declared neutral since World War II, many interviewees were confused by Austria's perceived need for conscription. One of the most interesting and commonly mentioned reasons for Austria continuing to implement conscription was their traditional-style culture. The Austrian interviewee stated that because conscription worked well in the past and has proven useful for military and public service problems, there has been no reason to abolish it. Specifically, the community and public service systems would not be as successful or effective throughout Austria without conscripts.

Other comments that were made by the non-Austrian interviewees included Austria's past involvement in all of the wars and the idea that Austria may possess some fear that leads them to maintain conscription for their protection. Additionally, the suggestion was made that Austria maintains conscription to reduce youth unemployment, provide work experience, and instill basic skills and behaviours in young Austrian men. While each of the perspectives were very diverse in the specific reasoning, all correlated to the high uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation that Austrian culture exemplifies.

COMPARISON AND DISCUSSION

Many of the differences between the opinions and perspectives displayed by the interviewees can be explained by evaluating them using Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions. For example, the acceptance of conscription in Austria can be explained by factors such as their high masculinity, indicating that they are driven by competition and have a "live to work" attitude (Hofstede, 2016). This quality makes mandatory work more acceptable. Further, Austria's high uncertainty avoidance reflects their need for structure, systems, and traditions. This was evident in the Austrian interviewee's responses. He expresses the need to maintain consistent rules and regulations that have proven to work in the past.

Another culture that exhibits high uncertainty avoidance, which ultimately affects the way they view conscription, is France. French people do not like surprises and prefer structure and systems. They have a strong need for laws, rules, and regulations (Hofstede, 2016). Another cultural dimension that impacts their perceptions is their high individualism. The French interviewee elaborated on this point, explaining that while French people are highly

dependent on the government due their high uncertainty avoidance, they are also very individual in their own ambitions and search for success. This is interesting because it creates a need and desire for the institution of conscription, however not an interest or willingness for involvement.

The Netherlands is another country that demonstrates high individualism. They also display low levels of masculinity. This indicates that they prefer a “loosely knit social framework” (Hofstede, 2016). At the same time, they are focused on maintaining a high quality of life and substantial work-life balance (Hofstede, 2016). Together, these factors can explain much of what caused conscription to be abolished in the Netherlands. In general, Dutch people are much more focused on themselves and their families’ well-being, rather than the well-being of society as a whole. These cultural factors are made clear throughout the Dutch interviewees’ opinions on conscription, specifically when he spoke about the government taking a year of people’s lives away from them.

Ireland is another country where it is not surprising that they do not employ the use of conscription. With a low long-term orientation and low uncertainty avoidance, the Irish people are not concerned by ambiguity or problems that may happen in the future. The Irish focus more on traditions than preparing for the future (Hofstede, 2016). Ireland never used conscription in the past and it worked for them, therefore there is no reason to use it nowadays. The Irish interviewee was generally uninterested or convinced by the concept of conscription, which would be the expected response for someone from his culture.

Germany’s stance on conscription in comparison to their cultural dimensions is fascinating. Germans tend to exhibit low indulgence, which means they are more likely to control their impulses and desires to focus on more serious matters. Additionally, it implies that they are restrained by social norms. In the German interviews, both men indicated that they never questioned the importance or idea of conscription because it was mandatory and something that everyone did. This cultural dimension would alone suggest Germans would have wanted to maintain conscription. However, taking into consideration other cultural dimensions, this assumption is made less valid. For example, Germans also display high long-term orientation, which “show an ability to adapt traditions easily to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results.” (Hofstede, 2016) This perspective is also made clear in both the interviews with the German men. Both discussed a need for a strong military and a potential need for some form of conscription; however, both also indicated that the systems cannot remain as they used to be and need to be adapted for modern forms of war and the youth of today.

Effect of conscription on higher education and career development

There is little consensus in the academic literature about the impact conscription on education, career development, and even crime. Multiple studies have found Military service increases the likelihood of crime (Hjalmarsson & Lindquist, 2016). Some research has found that compulsory military service decreases the probability of men obtaining a university degree. In the same study, the effect of military service on earnings was also found to be negative and long-lasting (Hubers & Webbink, 2015).

Remarkably, these studies do not provide a consistent picture of the effects of military service. One quote from *“The long-term effects of military conscription on educational attainment and wages”*, truly explains the inconclusiveness of recent studies on this topic:

Military service seems to decrease educational attainment in the UK (Buonanno 2006) and Italy (Cipollone and Rosolia 2007) but increase completion of tertiary education in Germany (Bauer et al. 2014), France (Maurin and Xenogiani 2007) and in the US (Card and Lemieux 2001) because of draft avoidance behaviours. In addition, military service seems to reduce wages in the US (Angrist 1990; Angrist and Krueger 1994) and in the Netherlands (Imbens and van der Klaauw 1995), but in Germany (Bauer et al. 2012), there is no effect on wages. In the US, the negative effects seem

to fade away over time (Angrist et al. 2011). Moreover, the importance of education as a mediating channel for the long run effects on earnings remains unclear (Bauer et al. 2012). (Hubers & Webbink, 2015)

A diverse range of opinions on this topic were also presented throughout the interview results. The perspectives ranged between both extremes. Some of the men felt very strongly that conscription substantially improves the behaviour, organization, ethics, and respect of young men and is vital to the 'growing-up' process. These improvements to young men's value system was assumed to ultimately improve their future career and educational motivation and decisions. Moreover, it was argued that mandatory service provides more time for young people to discover themselves and supplies them with otherwise unattained work experience.

On the contrary, other interviewees were adamant that conscription would have negative effects on the motivation of young men to return to education or their career search. It was the assumption of some of the interviewees that mandatory service can be perceived as a human rights violation through an unjustified interruption of young men's lives. The maltreatment by the government was suggested to have the potential to motivate future rebellion by the conscripts. Ultimately, this could lead them to a life of crime. It was implied by interviewees that young people are the most motivated to return to school directly after high school and that the government should support that, instead of potentially hindering ambition.

Similarly to the interview results, I would argue that much of the inconsistent and inconclusive results can be attributed to cultural differences. Further, the effect of conscription on a young man's educational and career advancement will always ultimately be dependent on the individual. Some generalizations can be made about nationalities as a whole, however it is important to note that within nationalities there are numerous regional sub-cultures that exists and results will vary between each of them.

To draft or not to draft?

The cost to a society of drafting someone to be a soldier or a nurse is not what government chooses to pay him or her. Rather, it is the value of his or her lost production elsewhere, as well as the potential disutility arising from any inconveniences related to the service. Conceptually, the cost of drafting someone is the amount for which he or she would be willing to join the army voluntarily (Poutvaara & Wagener, 2007).

Most national armies in the EU have shrunk to leaner, professional armies, and these do carry several advantages. Professional soldiers are generally better trained, more specialized and far more efficient than conscripts. They are also easier to deploy on overseas missions. Alternative forms of selective conscription have been proposed. With selective conscription, key challenges are: Who shall serve, how many should be drafted, and how should they be selected? With conscription being fairly unpopular, it has been easier for political leaders to simply eliminate conscription rather than successfully modify the current conscription systems. Ending the draft is generally politically popular; whereas, alternative more selective conscription systems, would alienate some voters. This separates the people who are put at a disadvantage relative to their peers who were able to immediately enter into higher education, find exemption-worthy employment, or otherwise avoid conscription (Jehn & Selden, 2002).

Interestingly following terrorist attacks last year, 80 percent of all French and 70 percent of Swedes said they would support a return of conscription (Noack, 2016). When European Union countries decided to abandon conscription in the past decade, few of today's EU problems were predictable. In many ways, the current demands to bring back conscription reflect a wide range of different issues EU countries are faced with (Noack, 2016). This was also an evident trend in the interview results. Most interviewees felt that recent events in Europe have increased their own, as well as other citizens' acceptance of conscription and willingness to participate.

It appeared unanimous throughout my interviews and research that on the surface conscription seems like a good, cheap way to develop a strong, prepared, powerful army. However, in this day and age that is not inherently true. With technology, war has become very different than it once was. This does not mean that conscription is obsolete, but rather that it needs to be implemented in a new way. Interview results revealed that, if introduced in an alternative manner, conscription has the potential to increase unity in a society and improve the lives of young people. Specifically, a conscription system that is more civil service oriented and provides more options and opportunities for skill development for youth has yet to be completely and effectively tried. This alternative system could provide direction, experience, new abilities, and have overall positive behavioural effects on young men and women. Moreover, it could have positive effects on countries' present societal issues and public service systems.

However, if implemented using the wrong methods, conscription has the potential to create many of the problems suggested by interviewees. Forcing young, ambitious, passionate men into positions they are unenthusiastic about, with no ability to choose their roles based on interests, can result in demotivation of youth and an ineffective military and public workforce. Young men may feel that the government does not respect their life or individuality and conscripts may even choose to take action against the government, creating the potential for societal problems. Ultimately, conscription, in its innate and current form, may produce only negative effects for both the country and the citizens. This brings us back to the question of what the real costs and benefits of conscription are.

Initially, I assumed conscription in its entirety was an unethical abuse of a citizen's rights. However, after thorough investigation of research and conducting independent interviews with a variety of today's youth, many of my opinions have changed. I maintain that the historical and current conscription system in many countries is ineffective. At the same time, I no longer believe Canada is operating on the best system either. I would argue that conscription could be used to the benefit of both countries and their citizens if implemented in the right way. Additionally, I would insist conscriptions systems need to be developed and assessed on a country to country basis. After analyzing interview results using Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions it became clear how significant culture is to the impact of conscription on young men. I think that if a conscription system was established on the basis of addressing societal issues through civil and public service, in addition to developing the skills, abilities, and behaviours of youth, it would be much more widely accepted. I believe in this form, the effects of conscription on the career and educational advancement of young men would also be generally more positive. It will be interesting to see, depending on the current state of the world and as the modernization of war continues, how conscription evolves or devolves in the future.

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APPENDIX 1

1. Does your country currently have conscription or public service?
 - ➔ **IF NOT:** Has it ever and when was it abolished? What does your country have now?
2. Have you ever been conscripted?
 - (The following questions only apply if answer to this question is yes)**
 - a. What was your experience? (what did you do, day in the life)
 - b. Did you want to do the public service?
 - c. How did it affect your career goals?
 - d. How did it affect your educational goals?
 - e. Did you develop skills through your experience being conscripted that you have been able to transfer to your business or education experience to find opportunities (i.e. work experience, meeting course requirements, etc.)?
 - f. Has your experience being conscripted affected the industry you would like to work in (i.e. public vs private company)?
 - g. Did you develop a network during conscription and are you still in contact with any of your former colleagues (looking to see if there are any further connections to capitalize on when looking for business opportunities)?
3. Do you know any family members or friends who have been conscripted?
 - a. Why were they conscripted?
 - b. What did they do?
 - c. How did it affect them?
 - d. What do they do for work now?
 - e. How do they feel about conscription now?
4. Do you think that conscription is a positive thing for a country and why?
5. Do you think that conscription is a positive thing for young people and why?
 - ➔ Additional questions if not already answered in the previous responses:
 - a. Does it improve their work ethic?
 - b. Does it help them discover themselves?
 - c. Does it promote education and career advancement after the required public service term?
 - d. Do you notice any difference in the approach to career goals between young people who have been conscripted and young people who were not conscripted?
6. Canada has only ever used conscription in the form of drafts during World Wars. Do you think this is more or less effective than having compulsory conscription at all times?
7. Why do you think Austria has continued to be one of the only countries in the European Union to keep conscription, especially when it does not border with any other countries who also have maintained their mandatory military service or pose any immediate threats?
8. If there was another World War would you be with or against conscription? Would you voluntarily enrol in military service?
9. Any final thoughts on conscription in your countries or other countries?