

Title: “Input, Process and Output: Successful Professional Reintegration of Former Military Volunteers as the Final Step in a Systemic Approach to Military Service.”

Author: Maria de Lurdes Santos Antunes da Fonseca, Ph.D. Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (Technical University of Lisbon).

Date: 2009-01-26

Abstract:

The Portuguese Military were forced into voluntarization after the drastic 1991 cut on draft duration, from an average 18 months to just 4. Unable to adequately operate under such conditions, particularly due to the “territorial coverage philosophy” inherited from the Colonial War days, it was necessary to rely increasingly on another 1991’s creation: the volunteer recruit.

1997 witnessed the deconstitutionalization of conscription and the consolidation of a clear political intention to fully voluntarize the Portuguese Armed Forces. Nonetheless only in 2004, 7 years later, was the intention translated into the actual abolishment, by law, of compulsory military service, since, until then, volunteer recruitment, particularly in the Army, was insufficient to meet the demands and relied mainly on draftees.

This study shows that from 1991 to 2009, two major changes occurred in the self-referential model used by the Portuguese Military to interpret their place in both the social and economic systems.

The first major change (1997-2007) replaced a **closed, self-centred military**, typical of compulsory and mixed models, with a **semi-open, recruiter military** engaged in excelling in two new roles: the role of a competitor for quality human resources in the market, focused mainly on reaching human sustainability; and the subsequent role of a human resources manager, focused on avoiding the economic and organizational costs of employee dissatisfaction and rotation.

A second major change is underway (2007-present) and is replacing a semi-open, recruiter military with a **fully-integrated, systemic military** focused both on inputs and outputs, after recognizing the considerable negative impact that the high unemployment rate of former military volunteers has both on the recruitment and retention of new ones. Both political and military decision-makers are, therefore, increasingly assuming the responsibility not only for recruiting and maintaining, but also for the retraining and reintegration of outgoing volunteers.