Mysticism and Military Leadership as part of the Institutional Transformation Process

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Summary
The training and development of the military is based on the values that define their ethics and conduct, both in the military and in the citizen. These virtues, such as honor, loyalty, respect, discipline, and responsibility forge the identity and character of these professionals. On the other hand, they must always be prepared to face situations of great demand and comply with the requirements that the homeland imposes, in accordance with the institutional mission. An example of this is the heroism of the soldiers who participated in the Pacific War, who demonstrated their commitment and sacrifice for national defense. In this sense, military mystique is another important area for members of the Armed Forces (A.F.), since it promotes the sense of belonging and commitment to the organization aligned with its objectives. This refers to that set of values, beliefs, customs, and traditions that are specific to the Armed Forces and contribute to the strengthening of unity in the organization. It also promotes pride and respect for national symbols, such as the flag, the anthem, and the national coat of arms. Finally, military leadership is a fundamental skill for making decisions, guiding teams in situations of adversity, and possessing a high sense of responsibility. It also drives innovation and change in the organization, which improves its efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, military mystique, ethics and morals are key elements of military leadership, whose importance is glimpsed when implementing decisions, in order to achieve success, both in the operational field and in the execution of actions.

Keywords: Armed Forces, Military Mystique, Leadership, Ethics, Morals, Resignation, National Defense, Homeland.

Introduction
From time immemorial, discipline, honor and morality have been fundamental principles for military forces fighting for the interests of their nation and their people. History shows, in different historical events, how these were essential to achieve victory on the battlefield and how they formed the basis for the creation of great empires. The sense of honor of the samurai warriors impelled them to defend their code of conduct and
their loyalty to the feudal lord. The courage to the sacrifice of the Spartans made them resist heroically before an army far superior in numbers. The devotion and faith of the Crusaders motivated them to undertake long and dangerous expeditions to recover the Holy Land. And Napoleon’s inspiring leadership, as well as his ability to make critical decisions at key moments, made him one of the most successful generals in history. These are just a few examples of how these principles formed the backbone of most of the world’s great military forces. However, they are not only important for war, but for life in society.

It should be noted that discipline and honor are fundamental to maintaining order and justice in any field. Similarly, morality is the basis for making correct and ethical decisions in any situation. According to Ostrovski, “discipline is not just doing what needs to be done, it is doing it with excellence and commitment. It’s the key to achieving any goal”. In the case of the Armed Forces, these principles take on even greater importance, as discipline and combat morale are essential for success in military operations and actions, as is inspirational leadership, which is essential for motivating troops and making critical decisions in times of crisis.

In this sense, it is important that during the process of military training the members of the Army are instilled with the concept of justice as is known in Kantian terms. In his work The Metaphysics of Morals, Kant states that “justice is nothing more than the virtue of respecting the rights of others and, therefore, one cannot cede to another person what one has a right to demand”. That is, justice requires that we treat others as autonomous subjects and not use them as means to our own ends. This scenario or approach is not part of military life. Instead, they are taught that their life is synonymous with surrender, renunciation, acceptance, and commitment to the interests of the institution and the homeland.

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Consequently, this article focuses its thematic axis on military mysticism, ethics and morality as key elements of military leadership, and their importance in proper decision-making. It will analyze how the combative morale and commitment of leaders are fundamental elements for success in military operations and actions, and how decision-making is essential for the process of institutional transformation in the Peruvian Army. All this with the aim of reflecting on the importance of these principles and values in the current context, and how they can contribute to forging a stronger, more effective land force committed to the preservation of national interests.

The Development of Military Mysticism and the Key Principle that Guides It

In the military field, discipline, honor, and combat morale are essential elements to achieve success in military operations and actions. The values are part of what is known as “military mystique”, which develops permanently over time in the members of the Armed Forces, through its stage of formation and the training of the troops, says Placido.3

Similarly, Davidson notes that Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap conceived of “morale as the main guiding force for troops in war. The leader who understands and uses this force effectively is the one who wins”.4 Therefore, if soldiers do not have high morale and are not committed to the cause, their combat performance is likely to suffer. Therefore, the military commander must infuse his troops with mystique to achieve victory. In this process of formation, one of the key principles is that of resignation, which Emch defines in his work The organizational culture in the Peruvian Army as the action of “renouncing oneself and leaving selfishness to work for a greater good”.5 In other words, this description consists of personal sacrifice

4 Davidson, P., *General Giap: político y estratega* (California, Prensa de la Universidad de California, 2010).
for the benefit of the whole constituted by the homeland and its population. Through this principle, the soldier learns to put aside selfishness to become part of a larger group, the Army, in order to serve the country.\(^6\)

Likewise, the internalization of this principle in the members of the military institutions is part of the organizational culture. Through this, it is possible to forge the cohesion and unity necessary to face the challenges that arise on the battlefield and in garrison life.\(^7\) In other words, men who take up the profession of arms submit of their own free will to a law of perpetual limitations or restrictions, according to de Gaulle.\(^8\) It is important to note that this value extends to life in society and in the daily work of soldiers, where a sense of belonging and commitment to the common good are fundamental.

Ostrovsky explained that “mysticism is not only an intellectual knowledge, but a spiritual experience; It is to feel the divine presence in all things”.\(^9\) So, this is not limited to a theoretical knowledge, but to a spiritual experience in which the divine presence is perceived in everything that surrounds us. Thus, it becomes an experience that transcends rational understanding and involves a deep connection with the divine and sacred in the world. It becomes a set of principles that guide the education and training of soldiers, which is reflected in the capacity of the Armed Forces to fulfill its mission in defense of national interests.

The Role of Leadership in Military Life

For a military operation to be successful, Army commanders must have the necessary skills and qualities to lead their subordinates effectively. For this reason, from the moment a soldier enters the institution, he begins to learn

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\(^7\) Escuela Militar de Chorrillos (Emch), *Fuerzas espirituales: ontología*, (Lima: Biblioteca básica del cadete EMCH, 1984).


the concept of leadership through his instructors.\textsuperscript{10} The actions, example, attitude and behavior of these will be permeating and developing in the future military leader all those characteristics that will allow him to stand out from his peers.\textsuperscript{11}

For his part, Powell points out that the military leader is not defined only by his grade, title, or position, but by his ability to influence, modify, motivate, transform, lead, and grow in his troops all those capabilities that make each soldier possess the necessary characteristics to fulfill their duties. In addition, it indicates that the leader must have the necessary emotional maturity to make decisions and assume responsibilities, being able to lead his subordinates to give their lives if necessary.\textsuperscript{12} That is why, especially in the Army, it must inspire and motivate rather than order; must have the ability to instill courage and confidence; it must also understand their needs and concerns, and act accordingly; You must also be proactive and make timely and efficient decisions in situations of high uncertainty and stress.

Likewise, Curtis states that military leadership involves promoting cohesion and teamwork, creating a climate of trust and camaraderie among the members of the unit.\textsuperscript{13} For their part, Kouzes and Posner (2017) propose that “trust is the foundation of leadership in any organization; without it, personal and professional relationships are weakened, and the leader’s effectiveness is compromised. Leaders must earn the trust of team members through their behavior, skills and knowledge. Trust is a prerequisite for effective collaboration, decision making and the achievement of shared goals”.\textsuperscript{14} It also implies that the leader assures his followers that his actions, decisions and intentions will be aligned with the objectives of the whole seeking their

benefit, as stated by Powell. Reference is made to a total surrender that involves the willingness to give one’s life, if necessary, as an act of honor and commitment to the cause.

Consequently, military leaders must transmit and promote the values and principles that guide the organization, being able to instill in their personnel a sense of pride and belonging towards their unity and country.

**Honor as the Base of the Soldier’s Spirit**

Honor is an essential value in the training and development of the military, since it is one of the foundations that guides their ethical and professional performance. According to the soldier “... honor is not just a word, it is a way of life, it is the rule that guides all our actions,” Ostrovsky said. To establish an analogy, if the priesthood is consecrated to God, through life in the church, the military is consecrated to the country, through the army, and both share the idea of total dedication to a cause greater than oneself.

The military spirit is characterized by a complete dedication to a purpose, which is done out of love and devotion to the homeland and its symbols; for this reason, values and principles are fundamental in military training and its ability to fulfill its duties effectively, and honor is an essential part of it. An example is the doctrine and training of the samurai. Nitobe asserts that “a true leader is loyal first and foremost to himself and always keeps his word, no matter what consequences he must face”. So, a true leader must be true to his own values and principles and be able to keep his promises even if it means facing negative consequences. You must be honest, consistent, and committed to your own convictions and demonstrate this integrity in all areas of your life.

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When a soldier loses his morale, discipline, ethics or makes a mistake, he will feel a deep shame for having failed the military spirit. This is an important catalyst that guides you not to commit actions that are contrary to your principles. Likewise, making an approach to military ethics in the Army, Eduardo states “that on many occasions the use of ethics taught and learned in the military field is contrasted by other more human interests that man may have, such as accumulating goods or exercising power. In this scenario, the critical judgment of a leader becomes of vital importance to succeed in these contradictions”.18 Thus, the relevance in the training of the soldier lies in instilling solid values and principles from the beginning of their career so that they can act with honor and be true models of integrity, commitment, and loyalty to the homeland.

Importance of Decision Making for the Institutional Transformation Process

Decision-making is key to the institutional transformation of the Army, which implies adaptation and modernization to face current and future challenges. It is important to note that, to achieve this, military leaders must make appropriate and efficient decisions, based on objective and updated information, says Lazo.19 This will allow to have an accurate vision of the present and future situation, as well as the possible options for action. Therefore, according to Kiyosaki, it is essential to have information and analysis systems that facilitate the collection, processing, and analysis of relevant data for decision making.20

Therefore, institutional transformation requires a change in the way of thinking and acting, led, and managed by the current and future institutional high command. In this context, all members of the Army must participate in

18 Eduardo, M. *Una aproximación a la ética militar en el Ejército del Perú* (Lima: El Investigador. EMCH. Vol. 8, Número 9, 2021), 43.
the identification of challenges and opportunities for improvement, as well as in the definition of strategies and actions to achieve the objectives set.\textsuperscript{21} Even the same author explains that “military leaders must have a ‘mission first, troops always’ mentality to make tough decisions and maintain the trust of their subordinates”.\textsuperscript{22} It follows that a methodical decision-making process is not only a skill, but a matter of values and principles. Therefore, military leaders must transmit their spirit and mystique to their subordinates so that they trust the decisions made and are willing to follow them to the end.

**Combative Morale and Commitment of Leaders in Military Operations and Actions**

The supreme purpose of the Armed Forces is described within their strategic roles, which are summarized in the protection of the nation, its population, and the assurance of its resources for its survival. For this reason, policymakers must be aware that capabilities are always commensurate with this sacred duty, Freedman stresses.\textsuperscript{23} Military intent must always be in tune with the political objectives that mark the precepts for the preservation of national interests. In the words of Winston Churchill (1940): “I am asked: what is our goal? I can answer with one word: It is victory. Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terrors, victory, however long and hard the road may be, because without victory there is no survival”\textsuperscript{24}

The Peruvian Army (EP) is in a moment of change and transformation, where the commitment of its leaders and the combat morale of its troops are fundamental to be consistent with its strategic roles. It should be noted that, to achieve this, it is necessary that military leaders are committed to the formation and training of their troops, fostering a culture of excellence

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 23.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Lawrence Freedman, *Estrategia: una historia* (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 2013).
\end{itemize}
and commitment to mission (CCFFAA, 2011). Consequently, the soldier “… he has to fight for his life, happiness, success and dreams, and discipline is the tool for the fight…”, emphasizes Ostrovski.

It is also important that EP commanders, at all levels, are able to transmit their military spirit and mystique to their subordinates, which will allow them to trust them, and the decisions made. This is based on the fact that combat morale is essential to maintain the cohesion and motivation of troops, which translates into greater effectiveness and efficiency in military operations. Thus, combat morale is a critical factor in the cohesion and motivation of troops, which, in turn, translates into greater effectiveness and efficiency in military operations. In other words, combative morale is essential to military success.

In this line, on the one hand, to promote this combative morale and commitment of the leaders, it is necessary to invest in the formation and training of the troops, as well as in the development of leadership and values in the military. According to the Ministry of Defense (MINDEF), combative morale is defined as “the set of values and ethical principles possessed by members of the Armed Forces to face with courage, firmness and determination the most difficult situations”. Even, in the words of Churchill (1940), “we sleep safely at night because our troops are ready to respond with momentum to those who would do us harm”. From what is understood that combative morale is necessary so that soldiers can maintain their motivation and commitment to the mission and to their companions in extreme and high-pressure situations.

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29 Ibid.
On the other hand, it is essential that leaders have a clear vision and strategy defined in terms of mitigating all types of threats and protecting our natural resources, in order to preserve the future of new generations. Therefore, according to Eduardo, “for this purpose we will have to count on the Armed Forces, which, being the “strategic card” of the Peruvian State, will allow us to face possible crises”. In the same way, Lazo asserts that “combat morale, leadership capacity and the ability to make the right decisions are critical elements for military success”. Finally, combat morale, combined with effective leadership, helps maintain discipline and respect for the chain of command, which improves the ability of the Armed Forces to meet their objectives. It should be noted that when combat morale weakens, it can have negative consequences for the effectiveness of the military. According to the Joint Command of the Armed Forces, “the lack of combat morale can lead to a decrease in effectiveness and efficiency in operations, as well as to a lack of cohesion and motivation in the troops”. Therefore, it is essential for maintaining soldiers’ cohesion, motivation and commitment to the mission and to their fellow soldiers, as well as for the formation of effective military leaders.

**Conclusion**

Discipline, honor, and morality are fundamental pillars in the Armed Forces and have been crucial to achieving victories on the battlefield and to the formation of great empires. These values are not only important in times of war, but in everyday life. Discipline and honor are necessary to maintain order and justice in any situation, while morality is essential to make ethical and correct decisions in any circumstance with the aim of protecting national interests. In this sense, within military culture, ethics and morals are key components of military leadership. It is important to

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31 Eduardo, M. *Una aproximación a la ética militar en el Ejército del Perú* (Lima: El Investigador. EMCH. Vol. 8, Número 9, 2021), 64.


33 Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas del Perú (CCFFAA), *Manual de doctrina del Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas*. (Lima: Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas, 2021), 17.
highlight the need to promote, during military training, the concept of justice and respect for the rights of others.

Military leadership is a critical element to the success of any army. Military leaders not only make decisions that can mean the difference between life and death, but also have a direct impact on the well-being and quality of life of their subordinates. Military leadership involves making critical decisions in high-pressure situations with significant risks. Military leaders must have a balanced tenacity with flexibility to adapt to changing situations. Finally, strong leadership projects confidence, which is essential to inspire subordinates to take on difficult challenges.

**About the author:**

Oscar Luis Calle Pérez, is a General Officer of the Peruvian Army, belonging to the Special Forces with the specialty of Command, with 34 years of service to the Peruvian State. He holds a PhD in Business Administration from the Universidad Alas Peruanas, a master’s degree in finance from EADA Business School in Spain, a master’s degree in public management and a master’s degree in business administration with a mention in General Management from the ESAN University, a master’s degree in military sciences from the Peruvian Army War College – EPG. He has a diploma in Defense Policies within the framework of the National Reality from the ESAN University, an International Business Diploma in Finance from the PUCP, a diploma in Human Resources from the Ricardo Palma University (URP), a diploma in Intelligence from the Intelligence School of the Peruvian Army, a diploma in Defense and National Security from the National University of Callao (UNAC) and a High Command Course of the Peruvian Army by the Army War College – EPG.