



## Let's go beyond the training issue.

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Valeurs de l'Armée de Terre

**There is a specifically military ethic on which the soldier's commitment to combat is based; it is by nature intended to apply in wartime. It results from the compelling operational need to control the use of armed force by the warrior who has been made the holder.**

**And then there is a peacetime ethic, which the soldier wants to believe must prefigure the wartime ethic, if only because one must prepare for combat, be trained, have thought about it, before committing oneself to action. The military therefore has a natural tendency to put in place in peacetime, and in his organic tasks, the behaviour, rules and modes of relationship that he will need in order, one day if need be, to maintain the required ethical level in the act of war...**

**The exercise of command** is emblematic of this disposition of mind. Every one of his subordinates, especially the young soldier who is responsible for educating and leading, is a potential fighter, a man or woman with whom we will have to fight tomorrow. A potential comrade-in-arms.

So there are a number of **moral steps to be taken towards him** :

- You don't "manage" him like in a company, you command him;
- You don't humiliate him, because then how do you face the enemy with a subordinate whose trust you've betrayed?
- You don't lie to him; You tell him plainly what you think of him;

- You just stay in every decision you make about him;
- You trust him to do the job at his level;
- We demand obedience, loyalty, righteousness, a sense of duty, intellectual discipline, which alone guarantee a good collective functioning when the situation becomes critical;
- He is sanctioned (in both senses of the word: reward and punishment)...

In fact, and very simply, we establish with him in peacetime a mode of relationship inspired by that which one must have in combat.

In fact, and very simply, a mode of relationship is established with him in peacetime, inspired by the one he will have to have in combat. This mode, these rules, all common sense, put end to end, form the substratum of an **accepted, shared, codified** ethic of **command**, based on common values of respect and dignity. This ethic needs to be periodically recalled to remain anchored in people's minds; and periodically revisited so as not to lose its relevance and topicality. It is put into practice on a daily basis, in ordinary times, to become a reflex when the extraordinary occurs.

But is this operational source the only one that should guide "everyday" military morality? It must be admitted that there is now another form of ethics for peacetime; out of obligation, out of the demand for legality and conformity; because the garrison soldier is a citizen bound by the same laws as his compatriots. It is a **complementary ethic**, "of purely civil **inspiration**", of legal source, of regulatory duty.

The example of the rules **to be adopted in commercial and financial practices is particularly** illustrative.

The public procurement code, provisions relating to the keeping of accounts, the ethics commission, the "SAPIN 2" law, etc. are all texts that set out a set of very strict practices to be respected:

- How to spend the funds you have been allocated? How are they spent? What type of expenditure are they used for?
- Accepting a gift or refusing it? To be invited to a restaurant or to pay your share?
- Favouring a supplier or enforcing free competition? Buying over-the-counter or putting out a call for tenders?
- Influence a decision-maker, to what extent? What forms of commercial lobbying are acceptable or incorrect?...

Until now, these questions have concerned very few military personnel, who are well identified and trained in very specific professions: purchasers or project managers, stewards or commissioners... Yet recent experience shows that more and more leaders within the military are confronted with these potentially destabilizing situations.

Numerous other examples testify to this **growing involvement of the military in (legal)**

**fields that it may have believed to be reserved for civilian activities, outside its own ethical field:** safety at work, traffic regulations, harassment provisions, management control, social equity, protection of personal data, etc. The provisions relating to these areas, whether the soldier likes it or not, are binding on him. And in so doing, they determine, through successive sedimentations, new forms of moral requirements and rules; they thus define the perimeter of a peacetime ethic whose content is much broader and much more binding than the military of the last century would have imagined...

**The peacetime ethic (and in part the wartime ethic) is de facto torn between:**

- Its primary vocation, which is to train minds and hearts to respect strong moral values in combat situations; it is very specific;
- Its progressive drift towards a formal legalism, in all directions, with regard to a sum of texts that govern daily organic activity; it is a source of trivialisation.

It is up to each military leader to know how to maintain the right balance between these two aspects of what can only be a single ethic of the military profession. For ethics cannot be divisible, compartmentalized... And if it is based on two objective sources of values and standards, apparently very distant, it cannot be divided into two separate parts. And if it is based on two objective sources of values and norms, apparently very distant, it is nevertheless the unique reference frame of values, made available to the soldier, to enable him to carry out his job in all conscience, whatever the circumstances.

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