



MI6: Integrity is the Transformation that Makes an Organization Credible

Published on 21/12/2025

There are phrases that, said in different contexts, end up illuminating each other. On one side, Gen. Carmine Masiello, speaking of a world that has become harsh and unstable again, warns that **“peace is a parenthesis between two wars”** and that the Army must change without losing its identity. On the other, MI6 chief Blaise Metreweli – leading an organization that by nature thrives on secrecy – argues that **transparency is not “telling everything,” but making values, purpose, and responsibilities clear**, because *accountability* and trust are the foundation of public legitimacy.

The parallel is powerful: two institutions representing “hard power” in democracy reach the same point. **Transformation does not hold if it is not held together by integrity.** And integrity is not an ethical slogan: it is the mechanism that prevents force from becoming arbitrariness, modernization from becoming a facade, and command from slipping into entitlement.

Between Peace and War: The Time We Live in Admits No Pretenses

Metreweli describes a country operating “**in a space between peace and war**”, a gray area made of cyber, sabotage, disinformation, technologies that accelerate conflict and consume trust.

Masiello, for his part, calls everyone to acknowledge: hoping for stability is not enough; it is necessary to **prepare mentally, organizationally, industrially**. Because ignoring reality – the return of conventional warfare, hybrid and multidomain threats – exposes to greater risks.

This is where the first link with integrity arises: **clarity**. Integrity, even before being moral, is *intellectual*: calling things by their name, without rhetorical anesthetics. An institution that tells itself a world simpler than the real one prepares its own defeat.

Transforming Without Giving Up Identity: Integrity as a Compass

Masiello insists on a point: transformation is not belligerence, it is readiness; like firefighters, you prepare *before* the fire. And true change is not just new means: it is **organizational culture**, fighting bureaucracy that erodes training, valuing young people, meritocracy.

Metreweli, in an opposite context (intelligence), says something surprisingly similar: action must remain **anchored to values**, and explicitly cites **integrity** and **accountability** as the foundation of trust.

The common point is this: **identity is not nostalgia**. It is a grid of coherence. Integrity is what prevents “transformation” from simply meaning changing tools while leaving vices unchanged: favoritism, opacity, irresponsibility, accommodating silences.

The “Frozen Middle”: When Change is Blocked by Entitlement

Masiello recalled a phenomenon that exists everywhere: the “**frozen middle**”, the intermediate layer that slows innovation due to inertia or fear of losing acquired positions. But here **integrity** returns central: because often the freezing is not only organizational; it is

ethical.

- If the advancement system rewards those who do not disturb the driver, prudence becomes opportunism.
- If “never making mistakes” counts more than “doing well,” no one takes risks, no one innovates, everyone covers up.
- If important decisions are made based on belonging and not merit, change becomes theater.

And then transformation is reduced to a cosmetic exercise: technologies are bought, organizational charts are rewritten, vocabulary is changed... but **the dynamics remain the same**.

Technology and Innovation: The Test of Integrity is in Responsibility

Metreweli emphasizes that MI6 must be “fluent” in technology and that AI must **enhance** human capabilities, not replace them.

Masiello, in the speech you recall, defends a similar principle: technology does not replace humans; and the decision on the use of force must remain human.

Here integrity ceases to be abstract: it is **governance of choice**. In an era where data, drones, and algorithms multiply power, integrity is what prevents efficiency from becoming inhumanity or shortcuts from becoming practice.

“Smart” Transparency: The (Paradoxical) Lesson of MI6

It is easy to misunderstand Metreweli's phrase. If a head of secret services says that transparency is not revealing what must remain secret, someone might hear a loophole. In reality, the message is more severe: **if you cannot show operational details, you must be even more rigorous in making purpose, principles, controls, and responsibilities verifiable**.

This is a huge lesson for any institution, and especially for armed ones:

- **Transparency is not “publishing PDFs”**: it is making criteria and decision chains understandable.
- **Transparency is not spectacle**: it is trust built on controls and coherence.
- **Transparency without integrity is marketing**: lots of information, little truth.

<https://youtu.be/dUr3fPg2TEc?si=3RgozCEltwZVePYN>

When the Line of Integrity is Not Pursued: The Chain of Shortcuts (and the Operational Price)

And here we are at the point to emphasize: what happens when in every organization **integrity standards are bent**?

It happens that meritocracy becomes a play and trust corrodes from within. For example, when:

- **those close to the boss are favored** for prestigious courses, coveted commands, sensitive assignments, instead of using verifiable criteria;
- **complacency is rewarded** (yesman/yeswoman) and not competence;
- **nepotism enters through the back door**, and “impossible” careers suddenly become normal;
- **rankings are manipulated** and merit is rewritten after the fact;
- **serious mistakes** (even with dramatic consequences) are covered with recognitions instead of being analyzed with seriousness, responsibility, and – where necessary – consequences;
- **toxic command style** (humiliation, bullying, domination, threat) is mistaken for “character” and, instead of being corrected, is rewarded;
- **rules apply only to some**: “ad personam” transfers, administrative shortcuts, preferential lanes;
- **standards are lowered** to let in those who “must” enter;
- **cliques replace evaluation**, and elite paths become lines of loyalty more than excellence;
- **foreign and representation assignments** are given based on relationships, not specific preparation.

These are not just injustices. They are **operational risks**.

Because a military organization lives on three invisible capitals: **trust, competence, cohesion**

. If the base perceives that the rule is rigged:

1. **trust collapses** in the chain of command (“what you do doesn’t matter, who you are does”);
2. **competence is polluted** (key positions are occupied by those poorly selected);
3. **cohesion breaks** (cynicism, silences, flight of the best grow).

And when real pressure arrives – that of hard training, sudden crisis, operational theater – that is when the bill is paid.

Integrity as Organizational Policy: Seven Concrete Choices

If the theme is integrity, then practical “antibodies” are needed, not sermons. A credible agenda could include:

1. **Public and stable selection criteria** for courses, commands, assignments: few clear, traceable, defensible indicators.
2. **Mixed commissions and rotation** where needed: reduce concentrated discretionary power and chains of favor.
3. **Evaluations that also measure leadership style**: results yes, but also how you achieve them (climate, safety, development of subordinates).
4. **Serious and protected After Action Reviews**: good faith errors are analyzed; serious faults are not covered. The goal is to learn and protect lives, not save faces.
5. **Real protection for those who report issues**: without protection, everyone remains silent; and silence is the fertilizer of degenerations.
6. **Non-negotiable standards**: if you lower the bar for someone, you lower it for everyone.
7. **“Metreweli-style” transparency**: do not reveal what cannot be revealed, but make controls, criteria, responsibilities, and value culture verifiable.

Conclusion: The Hardest Transformation is the One You Don’t See

Masiello talks about transformation to stay ready in a changing world; Metreweli talks about trust and legitimacy in a world where the line between peace and war has frayed.

The meeting point is clear: **strength without integrity loses credibility; modernization without integrity loses meaning; command without integrity loses its soul.**

And here lies the most uncomfortable truth: buying means is difficult, yes. But the hardest transformation is another: **refusing shortcuts**, breaking the culture of entitlement, preventing merit from becoming an administrative fiction.

Ultimately, **integrity is what holds when no one is watching**. And for those who serve the State – in uniform or in the shadows – it is the only way to truly be, every day, up to the mandate received.

News link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lkx1PY4VPw&t=1564s>