



Research Article

# PRIMUS PROJECT. REFLECTIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR A THEORETICAL AND APPLIED FRAMEWORK OF LEADERSHIP BASED ON BEHAVIOURAL ANALYSIS

*English translation with AI assistance (DeepL)*

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## PRIMUS PROJECT. REFLECTIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR A THEORETICAL AND APPLIED FRAMEWORK OF LEADERSHIP BASED ON BEHAVIOURAL ANALYSIS

**Summary:** 1. INTRODUCTION. 1.1. Methodology. 2. LEADERSHIP AND BEHAVIOURAL ANALYSIS. 2.1. Assessment Validity Analysis System (SAVE). 2.2. *Rapport-Oriented* Identity Analysis and Assessment System (SAVIOR). 3. THE PRIMUS PROJECT. 3.1. *Primus or Caesar*: self-leadership. 3.2. *Peer-to-Peer or Nothing*: servant leadership. 3.3. Anti-leadership in the 21st century: Either *Cyber-Caesar* or *nadIA*. 4. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS. 5. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES.

**Abstract:** Leadership is one of the major themes of the contemporary world, approached from various disciplines, including the behavioural sciences, given that rather than merely an era of change, we are facing a shift in the era itself, reflected in the VUCA model and subsequent frameworks. The complexity faced by organisations calls for leadership that serves people, based on behavioural analysis (AdC). A broad, interdisciplinary conceptual framework is needed to provide a scientific basis for something which, although we do instinctively, benefits from a systematic approach. We propose a versatile system for BA, with a meta-protocol structure (SAVE) and an adaptation particularly useful for team leadership (SAVIOR). Building on this, we have developed a proposal for humanistic, principles-based leadership: the PRIMUS Project (Promoting *Rapport* through Identity and Leadership through Unity, using SAVIOR). It is structured in two parts: *Primus or Caesar*, to emphasise the need for leadership as a personal development project (self-knowledge and self-leadership), useful for anyone. Next, *Inter Pares or Nothing* addresses, amongst other issues, how to practise positive leadership, given that leadership cannot be neutral; ‘anti-leadership’ is a frequent phenomenon, which is provisionally defined and discussed in relation to its organisational consequences (burnout, deterioration of cohesion, loss of morale) and its prevention through PRIMUS. Finally, the functional integration of the model with the complex environments of our century is addressed. We thus draw on a long tradition and embrace the spirit of the current motto of the Department of Leadership at the Army War and Leadership School to conclude: *‘To lead is to serve’*.

**Resumen:** El liderazgo es uno de los grandes temas del mundo contemporáneo, abordado desde distintas áreas, incluidas las ciencias de la conducta, dado que más que una época de cambios, estaríamos ante un cambio de época, reflejado en el modelo VUCA y los posteriores. La complejidad que enfrentan las organizaciones demandaría liderazgos al servicio de las personas, desde el análisis de conducta (AdC). Un marco conceptual amplio e interdisciplinar para dotar de base científica algo que, aunque hacemos de manera instintiva, se beneficia del método. Planteamos un sistema versátil para el AdC, con estructura de meta-protocolo (SAVE) y una adaptación especialmente útil para el liderazgo de equipos (SAVIOR). A partir de aquí, desarrollamos una propuesta de liderazgo humanista basado en Principios, el Proyecto PRIMUS (Promoción del *Rapport* desde la Identidad y del Mando a través de la Unidad, con SAVIOR). Se estructura en dos partes; *Primus o César*, para insistir en la necesidad del liderazgo como un proyecto de desarrollo personal (autoconocimiento y autoliderazgo), útil para cualquier persona. Luego, *Inter Pares o Nada*, plantea entre otras cuestiones cómo practicar un liderazgo positivo, dado que este no puede ser neutro, siendo frecuente el anti-liderazgo, que se define provisionalmente y se discute en relación con sus consecuencias organizacionales

(burnout, deterioro de cohesión, pérdida de moral) y con su prevención desde PRIMUS. Por último, se aborda la integración funcional del modelo con los entornos complejos de nuestro siglo. Recuperamos así una larga tradición y hacemos nuestro el espíritu del actual lema del Departamento de Liderazgo de la Escuela de Guerra y Liderazgo del Ejército de Tierra para concluir, *Liderar es servir*.

**Keywords:** Behavioural Analysis, Influence, Leadership, Indirect Personality Profiling, SAVE.

**Palabras clave:** Análisis de conducta, Influencia, Liderazgo, Perfilado Indirecto de Personalidad, SAVE.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AdC: Behavioural Analysis

BANI: Brittle, *Anxious, Non-Linear and Incomprehensible*.

CNV: Non-Verbal Behaviour.

CPS: *Complex Problem Solving*.

MoM: *Mission Command*.

MACONVE: Manual of Non-Verbal Behaviour (2016).

MADEMEN: Manual on Detecting Lies and Deception (2020).

MOSAVE: SAVE Operational Manual (2021).

OSINT: *Open-Source Intelligence*.

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

PEN: Psychoticism, Extraversion and Neuroticism.

PRIMUS: Promoting Rapport through Identity and Leadership via Unity, with SAVIOR.

SAVE: System for Analysing Validity in Assessment.

SAVIOR: *Rapport-Oriented Identity Analysis and Assessment System*.

SCARF: Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, *Fairness*.

EU: European Union.

VUCA: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity *and* Ambiguity

VI<sub>3</sub> RCA<sub>2</sub> S: Evolution of VUCA, which adds (in Spanish) to VUCA: Immediacy and Insecurity, Noise, Acceleration and Simultaneity of disparities.

## 1. INTRODUCTION.

In the 21st century, the demands of the environment have changed profoundly (Díaz-Carrera, 2007). The institutional mission across various areas of public administration remains the same, but the contexts in which it is carried out have been radically transformed. This presents a clear challenge; leadership can no longer rely solely on traditional command; it must evolve towards a strategic competence: Mission-Oriented Command (MoM). This is not an optional transformation, but a necessary one. The contemporary landscape, described by the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) and BANI (fragile, anxious, non-linear and incomprehensible) models, has been made even more challenging by environments such as the VI<sub>3</sub>RCA<sub>2</sub>S model, which adds immediacy, insecurity, noise, acceleration and simultaneity to VUCA. These acronyms are not mere conceptual labels; they describe operational realities that also affect members the Guardia Civil, from the tactical to the strategic level (Diz, 2021; López, Pascual and Parrilla, 2023; Guilló, 2024; Martínez, 2025).

**Table 1**  
*Complexity in the past vs. Complexity today<sup>1</sup>*

| Dimension                        | Complexity in the past                                    | Complexity today   |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Information flow                 | Limited, slow (letters, messengers, spoken communication) | Instantaneous, overwhelming (the internet, social media, artificial intelligence – AI) |
| Decision-making time             | Longer, allowing for deliberation                         | Fast, requires immediate responses   |
| Interconnectivity                | Local or regional   | Global, highly interconnected  |
| Control and governance           | More centralised (states, empires)                        | More decentralised (multinational corporations, digital platforms)                     |
| Knowledge storage and processing | Libraries, oral traditions                                | <i>Big Data</i> , machine learning,<br>AI  |
| Technology adoption              | Slow adoption cycles                                      | Rapid and disruptive change  |

Thus, leadership would cease to be a formal role and become a cross-cutting skill. It involves exerting influence through setting an example, creating safe and emotionally sustainable environments where team members feel capable of tackling challenges, innovating and maintaining morale even in adverse situations. Leadership today is, in short, a form of service – and a particularly important one at that.

Neuroscientific studies over recent decades have provided us with essential insights into how the human brain behaves under conditions of pressure, threat or disorientation. For example, the SCARF model (*Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness*) explains how certain relational conditions affect motivation, cooperation or performance (Rock, 2008). For an operational leader, understanding these mechanisms is no longer a

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from a presentation by María Blanco, Lecturer at the University of San Pablo CEU, Department of Economics, at the CPS Live Conference (Madrid, March 2025).

luxury but a necessity. A leader who does not know how their non-verbal behaviour or decisions impact the limbic system – the emotional part of the brain – of their colleagues is, at the very least, losing their capacity to influence. Thus, Damasio’s (2001) studies have shown us the importance of the connections between the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex in decision-making, which enable us to correct mistakes and learn from them. All of this takes place within a framework that integrates emotional intelligence, building on self-awareness and emotional self-management to achieve better and more appropriate social relationships, through the development of effective social skills (Goleman, 2005; Martínez, 2025).

Of course, leadership in the Guardia Civil must not be separated from its history which, like its anthem and motto, is – from Article 1 of the first chapter of the Manual – inextricably linked to Honour. Honour, understood as the manifestation of Virtue, has clear implications for leadership, which would be an effect of virtuous actions: the social shadow cast by Virtue, without intending to do so. The Corps thus boasts a history that underpins a unique institutional narrative, with symbols, values and practices that help to sustain and enhance its prestige, moral authority and loyalty. Discipline, loyalty, austerity and a vocation for service are values that have led generations of Guardia Civil to face circumstances of high risk, threat and uncertainty (Martínez, 2019).

PRIMUS was conceived as a modest contribution to this difficult challenge. It does not aim to offer theoretical frameworks or conceptual resources beyond what is necessary, but rather to create a space for reflection applied to the practical realities of command. From emotional self-awareness to the analysis of complex operational environments, from stress management to the use of methods such as the SAVE system or the SAVIOR approach, knowledge from different disciplines is integrated with a clear focus: to improve the capacity for effective leadership in real-world contexts (Domínguez-Muñoz, López and Jiménez, 2025).

To this end, participants are encouraged to reflect on themselves, their identity and their leadership tendencies or styles, in order to identify and understand biases and blind spots (Kahneman, 2012; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974), and thereby to develop key competencies: assertive communication, building trust, decision-making under pressure, managing diverse teams, behavioural analysis in complex situations, and resilience. PRIMUS has undoubtedly grown through the experience gained so far, reinforcing our conviction that leadership today means serving with the right attitude, vision and awareness.

For all these reasons, it is not aimed solely at those who already hold or aspire to hold positions of responsibility, but at all members the Guardia Civil, based on the conviction that leadership is not an option, but a shared responsibility. In the PRIMUS Project, leadership means being at the forefront of commitment to oneself, acting as an example and a guide, striving for excellence – competence combined with ethics – without forgetting humility – understood as authenticity – and the human warmth of the MoM.

### 1.1. METHODOLOGY.

This article falls within the genre of theoretical-doctrinal reflection with a proposed applied framework. It is therefore neither an empirical study nor a systematic review, but

rather a conceptual framework that brings together three elements: a) a theoretical body drawn from behavioural analysis, forensic medicine and psychology, applied neuroscience and behavioural economics; b) a technical toolkit developed by the authors and previously published – SAVE as a meta-protocol and SAVIOR as an application to leadership; and c) a deliberative proposal for leadership – the PRIMUS Project – derived from twelve years of teaching, training and collaborative work with security and defence institutions.

There are three objectives; the main one is to present the PRIMUS Project in an integrated manner as a conceptual framework for leadership in hierarchical organisations dedicated to public service. Secondly, to operationalise this framework through an approach that combines Identity (V<sub>0</sub> in SAVE) with principles of influence (Cialdini, 2017), of direct utility to commanders and operational personnel. Thirdly, to propose and characterise ‘anti-leadership’ as a specific category, outline some organisational consequences and suggest ways to prevent it using PRIMUS.

The methodology is that typical of a conceptual study: a narrative review of selected academic and doctrinal literature on leadership, an analysis of behaviour and 21st-century environments, integration with the technical corpus previously published by the authors (López, Gordillo and Grau, 2016; Viñambres et al., 2020; Domínguez-Muñoz, 2021a) and the formulation of a framework that has been applied and discussed in professional and academic forums. This article substantially expands on a previous conference paper by the authors (Domínguez-Muñoz, López and Jiménez, 2025), incorporating, amongst other things, greater theoretical development, a discussion of anti-leadership and a connection with the institutional doctrine the Guardia Civil, which were not included in that preliminary five-page version.

The limitations of this work include, amongst others, those inherent to a proposed framework: it does not provide quantitative data on effectiveness but rather on reasoned applicability, due to its versatility and dependence on specific operational contexts, as is also the case with the SAVE meta-protocol. The empirical validation of PRIMUS in police and military leadership contexts constitutes a line of research, with avenues already open such as the recent Master’s thesis at the Guardia Civil University Centre (Martínez, 2025), which the authors hope to develop in future contributions

## **2. BEHAVIOURAL ANALYSIS WITH SAVE: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE METHOD.**

Behavioural analysis (BA) is a polysemous term, which we use here to refer to the basic scientific study of behaviour; to better understand how biological-psychological and socio-environmental factors influence behaviours, their onset, maintenance and/or modification. With a practical focus, as we shall see, it proves useful in fields such as forensics (Domínguez-Muñoz and López, 2022), security and defence.

*The word ‘method’ comes from the Latin \*methodus\*, which in turn derives from the Greek \*μέθοδος\* and means ‘the path to follow’, ‘the steps to be taken to carry something out’, or ‘the procedure or protocol’. It refers both to a well-structured and organised (systematic) way of achieving a goal or result, and to the way of thinking, acting or behaving – the skill or habit that each individual follows. The interview or other research techniques would not – in this sense – be methods in their own right, but merely*

devices or tools of the method; and the method itself is a process within its theoretical framework (Nateras, 2005), such as the clinical method (Ilizástegui and Rodríguez, 1990) routinely used in daily medical practice.

The purpose of the System for the Analysis of Validity in Assessment (SAVE, López, 2021) is to provide a framework for the flexible, logical and orderly application of the most appropriate techniques and tools for the task at hand, tailored to each specific need. It combines different perspectives and structures what, in many fields, is currently carried out individually and intuitively. As a meta-protocol (a protocol of protocols), it integrates and contextualises other evidence-based tools, already scientifically accepted for independent use, ranging from HELPT (the Holistic Protocol for the Evaluation of Witness Testimony) (Manzanero and González, 2015) to the TOMM (*Test of Memory Malingering*), including OSINT techniques (Rodrigo, 2021) or indirect personality profiling, such as ENCUIST (Halcy, González and Sotoca, 2017). It thus enables its application in diverse yet related fields; from forensic medicine or psychology (Domínguez-Muñoz et al., 2024), forensic or assessment psychology (Domínguez-Muñoz et al., 2017b), to the analysis of criminal behaviour, military intelligence (García-Rodrigo et al., 2019) and fraud in the insurance sector (Domínguez-Muñoz et al., 2018). What all these fields have in common with legal psychology is the high frequency of deception, a phenomenon that takes on particular significance in the forensic context (Muñoz, 2013).

Briefly, as this goes beyond the scope of this article, we would also like to highlight the importance of projecting leadership into Spanish security doctrine regarding external action, as part of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy, the *Mission Command* (MoM) doctrine promoted by NATO and its associated principles: command intent, subordinate initiative, mutual trust and shared understanding. This is particularly necessary in our current geopolitical environment (Rosety, Calduch and Fojón, 2026), characterised by multi-domain operations, including the cognitive and digital domains (Segoviano, 2025). However, *Sun Tzu* (2015) – a contemporary of Socrates – already asserted that *all warfare is based on deception. The supreme art of war consists in subduing the enemy without fighting.*

Today, military and police leadership no longer operates solely on the physical plane, but also in the information domain, the digital environment and the cognitive space (perception, narrative, trust). In this regard, leadership must not only bring teams together, but also manage narratives and public perception (García-Vaquero, 2026).

## 2.1. VALIDITY ANALYSIS SYSTEM IN EVALUATION (SAVE).

The Validity Analysis System in Assessment and the main scientific and technical body of work underpinning it are set out – alongside the articles referenced in the **bibliography** – in the so-called ‘Trilogy of Behavioural Analysis’ by *Behavior & Law* and *Evidentia University*, three manuals published by Pirámide (2016) and Behavior & Law Ediciones (2020 and 2021). The most recent of these, produced in line with the objectives of the *PsicInt* (Psychological Intelligence) *Group* and presented at the Academy of the National Intelligence Centre (CNI) in late 2021 (Domínguez-Muñoz, 2021a), was the SAVE Operational Manual (MOSAVE), complementing the previously published manuals (MACONVE and MADEMEN) dedicated, respectively, to non-verbal behaviour (NVB) and indirect personality profiling (López, Gordillo and Grau, 2016) and

to the detection of lying and deception, using an academic-applied approach (Viñambres, Ramos, Juárez and López, 2020).

Behavioural Analysis in Ethology, Criminology and Psychology forms the pillars of SAVE (Domínguez-Muñoz, 2021b), establishing four phases across two domains—which can be applied flexibly to scientifically examine the validity of a case and even confirm its consistency and legal standing. Originating in a clinical context (Domínguez-Muñoz et al., 2014), its four phases specifically examine the various manifestations of human behaviour; verbal discourse analysis is included in the *Plausibility* section, phase  $V_1$  (Grau, 2021). The indicators present in non-verbal behaviour and their congruence with verbal cues (Juárez, 2021) correspond to *Veracity* ( $V_2$ ). Both are closely linked within the Interview Domain. The third phase, or  $V_3$ , which is directly related to legal evidence, is *Verification* or Context (Jiménez, 2021) and involves the search for evidence external to the interview with which to confirm or refute what was recorded during the interview. It incorporates both objective elements (inspections, examinations, etc.) and subjective ones such as witness statements; in general, the various forms of evidence admissible in each field. Finally, although applicable across the entire process—hence its designation as  $V_0$  (Garrido, 2021)—there is the *Assessment* of the subject's Identity, connections, intelligence and personality (*VIP*), using indirect profiling to identify their main characteristics and adapt our actions, thereby optimising the results of the other phases.  $V_3$  and  $V_0$  form the Investigation Domain, and all of this can be reduced to a simple formula, the SAVE equation:  $X = (V_1 + V_2 + V_3)V_0$

Its application would begin upon detecting – even intuitively, using what is known as System 1 or automatic thinking, as described by Kahneman (2012) – a deviation from the pattern of behaviour, an anomaly. Before applying the validity analysis and for subsequent expert use, we must establish the factual assumption; a premise which, if fulfilled, will give rise to legal or other consequences. The scientific-technical phase follows: the Validity Analysis proper. Its core consists of the phases already explained and, as this is a science-based investigation, it must contain an initial hypothesis which, to provide greater safeguards for the subject under investigation and in accordance with the *Truth Default Theory* model (Levine, 2014), will be presumed to be true, placing the burden of proof to the contrary on the findings of the validity analysis.

Depending on the results obtained in the applied phases—which in  $V_1$ ,  $V_2$  and  $V_3$  may be presented on a Likert-type scale—conclusions will be drawn regarding the proposed factual assumption, in accordance with the unknown variable in the SAVE equation. Identity Assessment, or  $V_0$ , would be carried out transversally and based on indirect personality profiling, a technique we believe to be useful in Validity Analysis. By observing behaviour, we can infer personality traits without the need for respondents to complete a psychometric instrument for that purpose (classical or direct assessment). Specifically, drawing on a biological basis and using just three macro-traits, we highlight the PEN model – Psychoticism (P), Extraversion (E) and Neuroticism (N)—proposed by Eysenck (1967), although there are other models and aspects of personality that are specifically linked to the likelihood of engaging in criminal acts or deception – including in a clinical context – or of triggering a faster and more widespread spiral of fraud. The so-called ‘Dark Triad of Personality’ comprises narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, all at a subclinical level. These are three important sub-traits, which we could link to the macro-trait of psychoticism in the PEN model, particularly if we use the

tool known as *the 'Dirty Dozen'* (Jonason and Webster, 2010; Nohales, 2015) as a reference for indirect profiling.

It is worth highlighting the versatility offered by SAVE; from its most basic application, such as the 112 – a minimal, emergency analysis – with two  $V_1$  procedures and a single CNV channel for  $V_{(2),right}$  through to a complex, spiral, multi-level, meta-system such as SAFE, with successive cycles incorporating waves of new information and thereby increasing the accuracy of the analysis when recorded material is available or when it is possible to repeat the investigative interviews. Furthermore, MOSAVE includes other options designed for specific uses, such as SAVIOR, which we will discuss below due to its importance in PRIMUS.

## 2.2. RAPPORT-ORIENTED IDENTITY ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEM (SAVIOR).

Chapters 4 and 8 of MOSAVE (Domínguez-Muñoz, 2021a) explain how to subordinate the remaining phases of SAVE to a better understanding of Identity ( $V_0$ ), in order to foster a good interpersonal relationship (*rapport*), using the SAVIOR application, *the Rapport-Oriented Identity Analysis and Assessment System*. It enables the entire behavioural analysis (Figure 1) to be dedicated to the purpose of optimising understanding and connection in human relationships, building trust and facilitating influence.

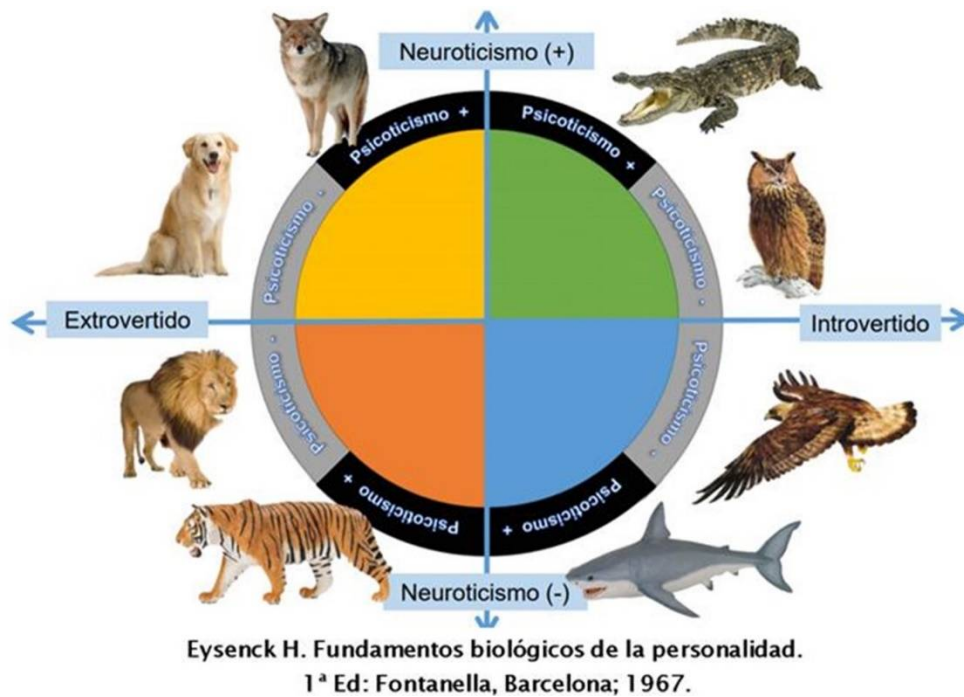
**Figure 1.**  
*Analysis of Verbal and Non-Verbal Behaviour and Context in Relation to Identity.*



One of the great challenges in the history of psychology is understanding why an individual behaves in the way they do. In an attempt to answer this question, amongst others, a multitude of personality models have been developed from different perspectives, such as the psychodynamic or biological approaches. Within the latter approach, and based on just three traits, Eysenck's (1967) PEN model—mentioned earlier—stands out for its parsimony and for the number of hypotheses that have been tested since its initial formulation. For these and other reasons, it was the model initially chosen by the Criminal Behaviour Analysis Section (SACD) to develop its indirect personality profiling (González, Sotoca and Garrido, 2015; González and López, 2016), which forms the basis of the subsequent Identity Assessment or Phase  $V_0$  in SAVE.

Figure 2.

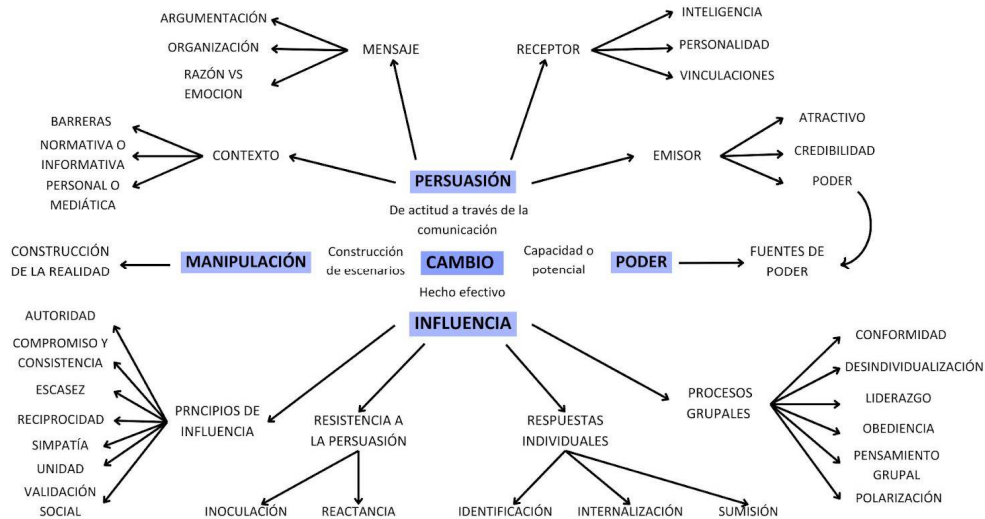
The eight personality types according to Eysenck's PEN Model.



This technique avoids the limitations that arise when assessing personality using standardised questionnaires, which yield a series of direct scores. For example, these limitations may stem from social desirability or deliberate distortion on the part of the person being assessed; that is, the natural – or, as the case may be, intentional – tendency to respond to personality-measuring items, due to social pressures or other variables, in order to present the best image, the one most favourable to others, or the one best suited to one's own interests in a given situation. Brunswick (1956) proposed his well-known 'lens' model, which explains how individuals select and create their own social environment, activities or hobbies that reinforce their own dispositions, preferences and attitudes (behavioural indicators), as well as those derived from physical environments (observable indicators). We should also highlight how other studies link the personality traits of the PEN model to vocabulary used, musical preferences (Rentfrow and Gosling, 2003), preferred types of food, sports, use of social media (Qiu, Lin, Ramsayan and Yang, 2012) or tattoos (López, García, Gonzalez and Sanchez Buró, 2017).

Based on the V<sub>3</sub>context—through observation and other analysable elements—indirect profiling would operate within this model; however, more recently, interesting proposals geared towards the policing sector have been developed, such as ENCUIST (Halty, González and Sotoca, 2017). To complete the Identity Assessment, the acronym VIP incorporates the main aspects of V<sub>0</sub>: Connections, Intelligence and Personality. SAVIOR in leadership enables a better understanding of team members, based on their behaviours, in order to serve them better and avoid conflicts. Furthermore, it helps to build the necessary trust, to inspire and to influence, so that team members can find their bearings and manage themselves, drawing inspiration from freedom of choice wherever possible. Here, we understand 'to influence' as *bringing about change* (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.**  
*Influence Map, a simplified overview<sup>2</sup>.*



Such changes can be facilitated through power – authority – or the various forms of influence outlined above. In turn, they may be directed towards the common good or individual interest, whether or not this harms the former. Insights from neuroscience and behavioural economics are useful for making better use of influence, in its various forms (Domínguez-Muñoz, 2023), and adapting it as far as possible to each individual or to our team as a whole. It is therefore best to begin by assessing our own identity – using the Johari window (Luft and Ingham, 1955), consulting others, etc. – and any other relevant factors to minimise our biases when evaluating others. The various aspects of identity can be examined individually or – preferably – by involving several analysts. Ideally, this should be combined with assessments carried out by psychology teams or other specialised professionals, although anyone acting in good faith, with a willingness to lead and a genuine interest, would benefit from knowing and applying this method rather than using none at all. Once SAVIOR has been completed, it will be easier to choose the appropriate leadership courses of action, whether at an individual or group level. Understanding the SAVE elements already embedded in one’s own identity and that of team members enables us to exert a positive influence subsequently, by creating ‘privileged moments’ and applying the seven principles of influence described by Cialdini (2017), in order to optimise outcomes and the MoM.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the map presented by Prof. Jesús María de Miguel in his paper at the 4th International Scientific Congress, organised by the UDIMA Chair in Behavioural Analysis and *Behaviour & Law* at the Canillas Police Complex (Madrid) on 31 May and 1 and 2 June 2017.

**Table 2.**  
Proposals for improving <sup>3</sup> 'influence during interviews according to identity.

| TRAIT/TYPE       | INTERVIEWER  | SITUATION  | PRINCIPLES OF INFLUENCE   |
|------------------|--|--|---|
| PSYCHOTICISM (P) | To surprise; to arouse interest.   | Balanced, safe.  | Check for narcissism. If (P) ↑, C and Au are preferable.            |
| EXTRAVERSION (E) | Multiple, (E), sex as an attractor. Active, sociable, stimulating, new.    | Active environment. Out and about, public areas; includes new experiences. | Peripheral pathway ↑↑ (impulsive); more A, S, R, Au.                |
| NEUROTICISM (N)  | Single, introverted or environmental. Same sex or female. Familiar (seen). | Safe environment, avoiding public exposure, etc.                           | Resistant to new developments. More towards E, R and S.             |
| LION (D)         | (E) Set boundaries, take the initiative. Be concise.                       | (E), avoid wasting time, but let them speak if they wish.                  | Central and/or Peripheral Path, Attraction (A) and Reciprocity (R). |
| DOG (I)          | In a friendly, natural tone. Similar. Use the mirroring technique.         | (E), let them speak.   | Central Path ↓ (slow) Impulsive. More S and R. E is useful.         |
| OWL (S)          | (N), best to proceed with caution.   | (N), <i>Humble Inquiry</i> approach.                                       | VP and VC, Au, S and R.   |
| EAGLE (C)        | Neither cold nor predictable. Direct and precise.                          | Allows for the presentation of data or arguments.                          | Central channel if possible, but sensitive to VP.                   |
| INTELLIGENCE     | Yes↑, according to PEN, preferably several.                                | Yes↑, according to PEN, or offer a choice.                                 | More difficult for VC, less for VP.                                 |
| SELF-ESTEEM      | Yes↓, like (N) or (S).   | Yes↓, like (N) or (S).   | Susceptible to influence, guilt.                                    |

### 3. PRIMUS PROJECT: PROMOTING RAPPORT THROUGH IDENTITY AND LEADERSHIP VIA UNITY.

Leadership would lie at the intersection of the main areas of knowledge within the current faculties of *Evidentia University of Behavioural and Forensic Sciences*: Behavioural Sciences, Criminal Investigation and Behavioural Economics. The interdisciplinary approach is one of the main guiding principles of our work, alongside a firm commitment to bridging the *gap between academia and applied practice*. This has been the case since

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Sánchez-Muñoz, Calcerrada, González and de Juan (2018), it integrates elements of Identity with the techniques of influence according to Cialdini (2017) and his six classic principles, grouped under the acronym CAERÁS; Coherence (C), Attraction (A), Scarcity (E), Reciprocity (R), Authority (Au) and Social Support (S). References to the Central Pathway (VC) and Peripheral Pathway (VP) of Influence are taken from Petty and Cacioppo (1986). '*Humble Inquiry*' refers to the listening approach proposed by Schein (2013), which is particularly useful for research interviews (Willis, 2016).

that first cohort, which began in 2013, organised at the Camilo José Cela University Campus in collaboration with the *Behavior and Law* University Foundation.

For this reason, over the past 12 years, we have been developing this methodology which, starting from the study of deception in the clinical setting, has led us to an analysis of behaviour that—whether basic or complex—always has a scientific basis and multiple potential applications. All of this has in common the need to work with other people; people who, in many cases, are still referred to as ‘human resources’ – a term with which we cannot agree, as the word ‘resource’ corresponds to a *means of any kind or an available element* for achieving something, according to the definition in the RAE dictionary. That is precisely why we suggest that people are not ‘managed’, nor is their talent ‘retained’, but rather – if anything – they are ‘led’ and their loyalty is ‘fostered’ or they are ‘attracted’. Admittedly, the use of words does not always need to be scrutinised under a microscope, but in this instance it allows us to highlight institutional cultures that use such terms precisely because their behaviour tends to reflect them, thereby demonstrating the considerable scope for improvement we all have in the field of leadership.

We present here – in an adapted form – a definition of leadership that we consider to be a benchmark (Hunter, 2018): it is *the ‘scienart’ of influencing people so that they act with enthusiasm in the pursuit of objectives for the common good. ‘Cienciarte’ is a discipline situated in the liminal space between science and art, simultaneously embodying a significant degree of scientific determinism and artistic inspiration*<sup>4</sup>. This is because we believe that the contributions made from the academic sphere in recent decades are fundamental to developing the skills needed to lead, as there is no such thing as neutral leadership; when we do not lead (well), we are negatively influencing the pursuit of objectives for the common good; we would be ‘anti-leading’ and becoming part of the problem, rather than contributing to the solutions. If leading is about influencing, then we must all be leaders, as we all – inevitably – influence those around us, and it is essential that we do so effectively.

In his *\*Rhetoric\**, written some 2,400 years ago, Aristotle listed the three pillars of a persuasive speech: *Ethos* (character, credibility), *Pathos* (emotion, connection) and *Logos* (logic, reason). Thus, a speaker who conveys confidence and honesty has a greater influence, inspiring credibility. In turn, the message being conveyed must incorporate emotions and take into account the psychological factors of the audience, in order to connect with and mobilise them (*Pathos*), without, of course, neglecting the use of logical arguments, reasoning, data and solid evidence (*Logos*). Leadership must therefore be built on *self-leadership*, *Ethos* or character – that part of our identity ( $V_0$ ) which we develop, particularly through habits, by exercising our will. Once this is achieved, relationships with others require communication – verbal ( $V_1$ ) and non-verbal ( $V_2$ )—that is effective, truthful and empathetic, well-suited to the context ( $V_3$ ) and, as far as possible, to each recipient ( $V_0$ ) or to the team as a whole (Domínguez-Muñoz, López and Jiménez, 2025).

For all these reasons, we shall develop the following two sections – devoted to self-leadership and interpersonal relationships – in a dichotomous manner, emphasising the idea that there is no such thing as neutral leadership. Thus, we shall use two well-known aphorisms: ‘*Primus inter Pares*’, to refer to good leadership, and ‘*Caesar or Nothing*’, as

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<sup>4</sup> Javier G. Recuenco @Recuenco, personal communication at the CPS Live Conference (Madrid, March 2026).

an example of the opposite. This latter expression, attributed to Cesare Borgia, illustrates the model of extreme leadership, based on absolute domination—the antithesis of the service-oriented paradigm we advocate and an example of ‘anti-leadership’, which we shall discuss later.

### 3.1. PRIMUS OR CAESAR: Self-leadership through personal development.

The path to sound leadership begins with self-mastery. As Seneca is said to have remarked, *the most powerful man is he who is master of himself*. This premise forms the core of the first part of the PRIMUS Project, which seeks to bring about a paradigm shift: from ‘*it’s your fault*’ to ‘*I am responsible*’. Stephen Covey (1989) puts it clearly:

*On the continuum of maturity, dependence is the ‘you’ paradigm: you look after me; you do or do not do what you ought to do for me; I blame you for the results. Independence is the ‘I’ paradigm: I can do it, I am responsible, I am self-sufficient, I can choose.*

This paradigm shift involves embracing personal leadership as a daily process, where one learns more in adversity than in comfort. Authentic charisma is not a superficial quality, but a combination of technical competence and human warmth – in other words, humility. Most mental processing is unconscious (Kahneman, 2012), which reinforces the need to implement deliberate practices of self-awareness and emotional regulation. It is not just a matter of knowing, but of training our minds through voluntarily chosen behaviours that form habits. The AdC would be a useful tool for assessing the consistency between Principles and actual actions, which is an indicator of mental health and ethical leadership (Bardera, 2022). The goal is not perfection, but sustained adherence to the Principles, even in difficult contexts. In an institutional setting, this translates into leaders who do not merely follow orders, but who act with judgement and autonomy, guided by the mission.

A useful educational metaphor, drawn from popular narrative tradition, illustrates this idea; when we are asked which of the two wolves within us will ultimately prevail – the good one or the bad one – the answer is simple: the one you feed. In this sense, PRIMUS prepares leaders to choose wisely which wolf to feed: the one that embodies responsibility, a focus on the shared mission, and honour. For this reason, self-leadership has no end, no clear finishing line. As stated in the project:

*True leadership begins with oneself, here and now. It involves knowing oneself, the world and others. It involves guiding and treating oneself with care. It never ends; sometimes you win – you lead – and other times you learn.*

If leading were a game of chess—which is a useful analogy for the MoM on many levels—it requires being fully aware that we can always choose to make the first move: *to lead is to always play with the white pieces*. In other words, we must not allow ourselves to be swept away by the difficulties of the environment and uncertainty; we have a responsibility to act proactively at all times, not reactively. By choosing our response and managing our emotions, guiding ourselves and treating ourselves with respect.

### 3.2. PEER-TO-PEER OR NOTHING: Servant Leadership.

According to Aristotle, *knowing oneself means knowing what one is good at so as to be able to help others*, thus explaining the famous aphorism inscribed on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi and expanding on the meaning of the previous section. Joseph Campbell, in his *\*The Hero's Journey\**, suggests that there is a universal narrative in which the hero goes through three main phases: *Separation* from his world of origin, *Initiation*—the core of the journey—and the *Return*, which is as complicated as the initial journey, if not more so, as demonstrated by Homer's *\*Odyssey\**. Upon returning with the *elixir*, the hero returns to his home world, sharing his gift—the knowledge he has acquired—for the benefit of his community.

**Figure 4.**  
*Stages of the Hero's Journey according to Campbell (1991).*



Thus, this second part takes us beyond *independence* – the 'I' paradigm – in search of *interdependence*, defined by Covey (1989) as the 'we' paradigm:

*We can do it, we can cooperate, we can combine our talents and skills to create something greater together.*

Here, leadership ceases to be a matter of individual power and becomes a relational skill. It involves creating collaborative networks, establishing relationships based on trust and service to build unity and a greater purpose. One of the project's key propositions is: *leading others is knowing how to lead*. But leading well is not about imposing, but about serving, inspiring and caring: *knowing how to lead is serving*.

In this final stage, PRIMUS uses SAVIOR to actively and effectively develop *rapport* – the emotional connection that enables the building of trusting relationships through active listening, empathy (with clear boundaries) and mutual respect. This is particularly relevant in hierarchical institutions, where human relationships can become highly strained due to the power structure. Leaders must take circumstances fully into

account and understand the fundamentals of complexity and systems thinking (Liévano-Martínez and Londoño-Salazar, 2012) in order to grasp the intertwined influences within organisations and better address problem-solving. PRIMUS maintains that to lead is to inspire others to be leaders, that no one is exempt from the need to lead, least of all in a MoM context. Leadership that empowers is leadership that transforms.

From a profoundly human perspective, PRIMUS proposes a vision of leadership as a vocation of service and a life's mission, in line with the search for meaning that Frankl (2015) identified as a fundamental anthropological driving force. This focus on service places purpose above personal comfort and constitutes, in our proposal, the ultimate criterion for evaluating leadership: anyone who does not direct their authority towards serving the common good and people does not fulfil the essential requirements of leadership, however much they may formally hold a position of authority.

### 3.3. ANTI-LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY: EITHER *CYBER-CAESAR* OR *NOTHING*.

One of the key concepts underpinning the PRIMUS Project is that of anti-leadership. We define it operationally as that *pattern of behaviour which, even from a formal position of authority, influences people by placing one's own interests ahead of the common good*. It therefore involves renouncing Roman *Auctoritas*—directly linked to the Aristotelian *Ethos*—in favour of *Potestas*, the raw power of coercion, as soon as the pretence of proper leadership is exposed, leading to a loss of trust and psychological security, demotivation with a progressive deterioration of cohesion, and a decline in collective performance.

Anti-leadership is not, therefore, simply the absence of leadership—the *laissez-faire* approach described in the classical literature (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939; Bass and Avolio, 1994)—nor is it equivalent to the concept, also documented, of destructive leadership (Einarsen, Aasland and Skogstad, 2007; Krasikova, Green and LeBreton, 2013). Our proposal integrates both categories and links them as an ethical stance that is the opposite of servant leadership. In other words, it is not merely a matter of actively harmful behaviours (harassment, intimidation, manipulation) nor of the mere passivity of an absent leader, but rather the display – whether deliberate or not – of a behavioural pattern that places individual interest, the preservation of status or the avoidance of personal risk above the common good, the mission, and the people with whom it is to be carried out.

This conceptualisation is consistent with the premise already set out regarding the impossibility of neutral leadership: if leading is about influencing, and we all influence those around us, then anyone who does not lead well is, to varying degrees, engaging in anti-leadership. Anti-leadership, understood in this way, would be a more widespread phenomenon than the literature suggests, which tends to treat it as an exceptional category. Our experience in hierarchical organisations suggests the opposite: low-level, everyday and almost routine anti-leadership constitutes one of the main sources of organisational decline. However, contemporary scientific evidence shows that we must not overlook the many cases of more pronounced anti-leadership, a phenomenon in which a hierarchical position ceases to be a tool for service and instead becomes a mechanism for purely personal gain. This more deviant behaviour manifests itself in two distinct ways: the systematic promotion of individuals exhibiting traits of the Dark Triad of personality, and the neuropsychological erosion of empathy in normative leaders who rise

to positions of power. However, the literature also warns that anti-leadership does not operate in a vacuum; its capacity for harm necessarily requires an ecosystem of group conformity that acts as a catalyst and validator of its disruptive behaviours, and it is here that we must remember that, in the PRIMUS Project, we all have a dual responsibility to lead, regardless of our position in the hierarchy. And if we fail to exercise this responsibility, we engage in anti-leadership at our own level and become part of the problem – indeed, a key part of it.

Firstly, anti-leadership emerges endogenously when organisations select individuals exhibiting traits of the Dark Triad: narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy. Systematic reviews (Tokunbo and Borisade, 2025) show that these profiles possess a temporary adaptive advantage in traditional selection processes. The superficial charm of the integrated psychopath, the eloquence of the narcissist and the political manipulation of the Machiavellian are often mistaken for desirable executive competencies, such as false charisma or a focus on success. Once their rise to power is secured, these anti-leaders exploit their status, prioritising their self-image by exploiting their subordinates, thereby destroying the ethical fabric and well-being of the team (LeBreton, Shiverdecker and Grimaldi, 2018).

Secondly, this phenomenon can manifest as an exogenous or environment-induced process, affecting people who, whilst lacking any prior pathological traits, undergo a profound transformation upon acquiring authority. This process, linked to *Hubris Syndrome*, is explained by cognitive neuroscience. Research using *Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation* has shown that the exercise of power affects brain circuits (Hogeveen, Inzlicht and Obhi, 2014). Specifically, states of hierarchical superiority reduce motor resonance and the activation of the mirror neuron system, diminishing the leader's ability to simulate the emotional states of subordinates, which results in a lack of perspective (Galinsky et al., 2006). As they do not need to read others' emotions to ensure their survival within the hierarchy, normative leaders gradually switch off their empathy, beginning to objectify their team in order to perpetuate their own status. Ultimately, the consolidation and effectiveness of anti-leadership depend on the psychosocial dynamics of group conformity, a mechanism of submission whereby employees modify their judgements and behaviours (Ash, 1956) to align with management directives, thereby avoiding isolation or reprisals. This abdication of individual responsibility ties in directly with Hannah Arendt's (2003) thesis on the *banality of evil*. Applied to the corporate context, the normalisation of unethical or destructive directives does not require employees to be inherently wicked, but rather functional bureaucrats who relinquish critical thinking and carry out orders as mere technical or administrative tasks. As personal responsibility is diluted within the cogs of the hierarchy, group members become passive accomplices, normalising workplace abuse and allowing the tyrannical dynamics of the anti-leader to become institutionalised without internal resistance. Thus, anti-leadership represents a critical dysfunction in today's organisational systems. Whether due to the infiltration of exploitative figures who make use of the structure, or to the erosion that power itself exerts on the empathy of promoted leaders – and both factors often come into play – the result is the same: a perverse reversal of the leadership role, in which the team comes to serve instrumentally the individual who holds power, sustained by a mass of employees whose bureaucratic compliance enables and perpetuates corporate impunity. And all this, in a context as complex as the present one, with a set of gravitational and transformative forces that are completely redefining the strategic, economic and social fabric, rendering the structures of the last century obsolete – forces

that have come to be known as the *Five Attractors of the Apocalypse*; Technological megatrends, Acceleration of everything (*Warp speed*), Hyper-personalisation (*Relevance First*), Collapse of post-Second World War agreements and Reconfiguration of the intellectual hierarchy<sup>5</sup>.

Research into destructive leadership and toxic work environments identifies a set of consistent effects that can also be attributed to anti-leadership in the sense proposed here. These include, in particular: a) burnout or occupational exhaustion syndrome (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001), which is particularly prevalent amongst middle managers or in professions subject to conflicting demands; b) the deterioration of group cohesion and interpersonal trust, leading to a decline in collective performance (Schyns and Schilling, 2013); c) an increase in the voluntary turnover of valuable staff and the retention, by inertia, of those who are less so; d) a loss of operational morale, which is particularly critical in security and defence institutions where cohesion is a doctrinal asset; and e) the erosion of institutional legitimacy and image, when anti-leadership transcends the internal boundaries of the team or becomes visible externally.

The SAVE framework enables the detection of anti-leadership by cross-referencing its four phases. In  $V_0$ , indirect profiling can identify traits associated with a high probability of anti-leadership behaviour; specific combinations within the PEN model, particularly high psychoticism with low extraversion and unstable self-esteem, as well as a significant presence of Dark Triad traits. In  $V_1$  and  $V_2$ , sustained incongruence between a leader's public discourse – focused on the mission and the team – and their private discourse, their Non-Violent Communication (NVC), or their day-to-day decisions, constitutes robust indicators. In  $V_3$ , the context provides verifiable data: staff turnover, workplace climate indicators, actual productivity, formal or informal complaints, and psychosocial health indicators. The combined application of the SAVE phases makes it possible to distinguish anti-leadership from simple maladjustment or isolated interpersonal conflict.

The PRIMUS Project tackles the prevention of anti-leadership on three levels. On a personal level, personal development work based on self-awareness ( $V_0$  personal) would be the first line of defence; those who seek to understand their traits, biases and blind spots, and have developed deliberate practices for emotional regulation, significantly reduce the likelihood of drifting towards anti-leadership patterns. At the relational level, building *rapport* through SAVIOR fosters bonds of trust that act as an early-warning system; in a team where communication is good, the first signs of anti-leadership emerge before they crystallise into a pattern. At the organisational level, the PRIMUS Project, combined with 360-degree feedback tools or peer supervision, amongst other measures, enables the organisation to detect and correct anti-leadership before its consequences become structural. The MoM doctrine, which encompasses command intent, subordinate initiative, mutual trust and shared understanding, is incompatible with anti-leadership; when these four conditions of the MoM are met, anti-leadership becomes operationally unsustainable.

Finally, with regard to the environments described as characteristic of the 21st century, the four elements of the VUCA model – Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity – demand distinct capabilities from leadership. Volatility demands agility in

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<sup>5</sup> Javier G. Recuenco, personal communication at the CPS Live Conference (Madrid, March 2026).

decision-making and the ability to adapt one's leadership style rapidly to a changing context; PRIMUS responds through the flexibility inherent in the SAVE system, which allows for everything from a 112 analysis (rapid, emergency response) to more elaborate protocols, depending on the availability of time and information. Uncertainty calls for the ability to make decisions without complete information, whilst maintaining the team's confidence; PRIMUS addresses this challenge by focusing on the ethos of self-leadership, which provides leaders with the inner confidence needed to stand by their decisions under pressure. Complexity requires systems thinking and an understanding of interdependencies; PRIMUS tackles this through interdisciplinary training and the integrated mastery of SAVE across its four phases. Finally, ambiguity demands interpretative skills and tolerance for uncertainty; PRIMUS responds by developing vision and practical judgement that combine Ethos, Pathos and Logos in proportions tailored to each situation.

BANI environments – Fragile, Anxiety-inducing, Non-linear and Incomprehensible – present an additional challenge. Systemic fragility requires the deliberate building of individual and collective resilience; PRIMUS addresses this by fostering sustained habits of self-leadership and building *rapport* as the fabric of institutional trust. The anxiety-inducing dimension of the environment – perhaps the most distinctive feature of the BANI model – directly affects the limbic system (Damasio, 2001) and impairs the quality of decision-making; PRIMUS addresses this through the neurocognitive work of the SCARF model applied to the team, transforming organisational anxiety into active attention, shared purpose and cooperation. Non-linearity requires moving away from simple cause-and-effect logic; PRIMUS embraces this systemic perspective at the core of its methodology, in which the SAVE phases are integrated in a non-linear and cyclical manner. Incomprehensibility calls for epistemic humility and a willingness to learn under conditions of partial information; PRIMUS cultivates this based on Schein's (2013) '*Humble Inquiry*', incorporated into the SAVIOR framework as a fundamental attitude for interviews and leadership interaction, whilst emphasising abductive reasoning.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS: To Lead is to Serve, Learn and Unite.**

The PRIMUS Project is not presented as a self-contained programme, but rather as a coherent framework proposal for leadership in hierarchical organisations dedicated to public service, with particular relevance for the security forces. The following proposals and areas for further development emerge from the analysis:

1. The integration of behavioural analysis with the doctrine of *Mission Command* and with 21st-century frameworks enables the formulation of leadership that is operationally applicable, rather than merely declarative. The PRIMUS Project offers concrete tools – ranging from the 112 analysis to the influence matrix in Table 2 – for commanders who need to make decisions under pressure and uncertainty, with agility and without resorting to lengthy protocols.
2. The operational definition of anti-leadership as a category distinct from *laissez-faire* and destructive leadership raises a line of research that we consider necessary. The reasoned hypothesis we put forward is that even low-level anti-leadership constitutes one of the main sources of organisational deterioration in public service institutions, and its early detection using SAVE is operationally viable. Its empirical validation constitutes an open line of research.

3. The proposed connection between the VUCA dimensions, the BANI dimensions and the specific components of PRIMUS suggests that the framework is not only applicable to complex environments but is structurally suited to them. This functional correspondence would provide the basis for further work in the future, within the PRIMUS Project.
4. Leadership, understood in this way, draws on a long tradition stretching from Aristotle to Viktor Frankl, via the founding values the Guardia Civil as set out in its 'Cartilla'. The synthesis of this tradition with contemporary contributions from neuroscience, behavioural economics and the military doctrine 'MoM' forms the core of the proposal. To lead is to serve, to learn, to inspire and, above all, to unite through authenticity and humility. The building of cohesive teams, focused on the purpose of a shared mission, proposes a form of leadership that combines operational excellence with human depth, seeking to blend Science and Art (Domínguez-Muñoz and Domínguez-Muñoz, 2025), without sacrificing genuine charisma. As the ancient maps warned when facing the unknown: *Hic sunt dracones*. Recognising one's own limits and accepting the uncertainty of the territory being explored is, in itself, a prerequisite for such leadership.
5. The empirical validation of PRIMUS and its usefulness for teams within the Guardia Civil and other law enforcement agencies is the authors' top priority. Recent research at the Guardia Civil University Centre (Martínez, 2025) points in the same direction, although we are aware of the many limitations and challenges facing the PRIMUS Project, and its need for applied development.

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