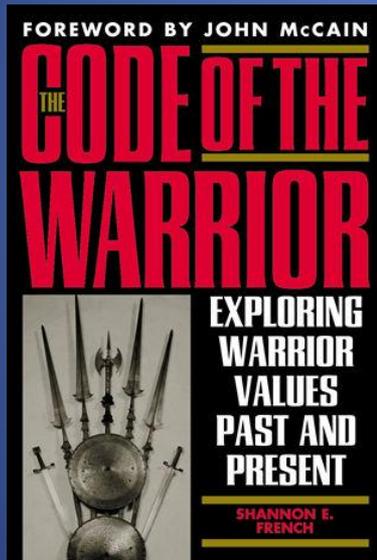


The Army Ethic and the Legacy of the Warrior's Code



October 14, 2014

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Why Do Warriors Need a Code?

From the outside, people expect answers like this:

- **Reciprocity – both sides agree to accept certain rules and restraints**
- **Preserving the hope for peace – lack of restraint prolongs conflicts**
- **Maintaining positive international judgment on the conflict**
- **Sustaining domestic support for the conflict and the troops**
- **Protecting innocents from harm and minimizing collateral damage**

BUT, none of these *really* answers the question for the individuals doing the actual fighting

The motivation for combatants to accept restraint must have enough force to overcome some or all of the following:

- **Fear of death/desire to stay alive (self)**
- **Fear of injury/pain (self)**
- **Fear of death or other serious harm to comrades**
- **Concern for the success of martial missions**
- **Need to secure the outcome of the conflict**
- **Confusion/the “fog of war”**
- **Dehumanization/hatred of the enemy**
- **Rage and the desire for revenge**
- **Feeling that war is a separate moral sphere**

The Code of the Warrior

- This motivation issue is **NOT** a new problem
- Warrior cultures have recognized it for millennia
- And there is a solution, but it doesn't come from the realms of policy or law
- Warriors have to accept restraint for their own sakes, as part of their core identity
- The code is the shield that guards their humanity
- It protects the warriors themselves and gives them a way back from the horror of combat – a lifeline back to their post-conflict lives
- It is about who *they* are; not about the nature of the conflict or their enemies



A Few Bright Lines

- There have to be some lines you never cross, regardless of the provocation or circumstances
- Restraint requires discipline and profound commitment
- Must be linked to fundamental identity, sense of honor, and trust among comrades
- Practical adjustments can be made in the conduct of war, but some options must always be off the table
- Codes take a holistic view of the warrior – everything counts, never “off the clock”

Death Before Dishonor

- This is the common theme among warrior cultures across time and around the globe
- Warriors cannot let the fear of death drive them to act dishonorably – cannot privilege safety (or anything else) over honor
- Must accept that there are things that are worse than dying - such as betraying your own values
- Must know what those values are, before the bullets start flying
- Have to recognize that showing restraint is not a weakness – takes tremendous strength
- Never let the enemy set the bar – never give them that power
- As in the past, troops of today face enemies who try to use their values and their commitment to a warrior's code against them

Seneca, a Stoic philosopher from ancient Rome, wrote:

“Never will I let concern for my flesh drive me to fear, never to a role that is unworthy of a good man. ...I will not allow any wound to penetrate through the body to the real me. My body is that part of me that can be injured; but within this fragile dwelling-place lives a soul that is free.”