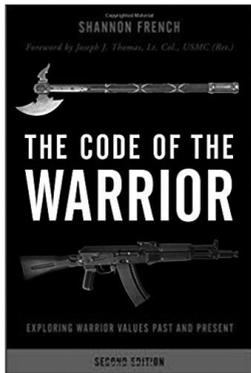


Book Review



The Code of the Warrior: Exploring Warrior Values Past and Present. (Second Edition)

Shannon E. French

Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, 298 pp.

Reviewed by John Mark Mattox

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In contemporary America, the word “profession” no longer is confined to the classically acknowledged professions: medicine, law, the clergy, and the profession of arms. Rather, one frequently hears of “professional” golfers, “professional” carpet cleaners, “professional” musicians—and on and on. Indeed, the word “profession” has come to be associated with anyone who holds full-time employment. However, if everything is a “profession”, then nothing is a profession; the concept loses its semantic content. That is not to say that anyone should object to clean carpets, uplifting music, or even golf. But a true “profession” is distinguished, inter alia, by its practitioner’s observance of a code of conduct, the violation of which has a decidedly corrosive effect on the proper and essential function of society. In her newly revised second edition of *The Code of the Warrior*, Professor French reminds the reader that the professional status of “warrior” is vouchsafed by the fact that those worthy of that title are bound by a code of conduct that circumscribes their choices and their conduct. While dozens of books argue this point, French’s unique and important contribution is to demonstrate that warriors worth the title have always been thus bound; and that this is true whether they are products of western or eastern, ancient or modern, primitive or developed cultures.

French draws important examples from Homeric heroes, Roman legionnaires, Arthurian knights, Vikings, aboriginal Americans, Chinese warrior monks, Japanese samurai, and the warriors of classical Islam. In each case, she identifies both warriors and murderers—both ostensibly belonging to the profession of arms—and effectively argues for what distinguishes warriors (the true professionals) from murderers (the worst kind of armed impostor). Her historical survey reveals that codes of honor seem “to hold the warrior to a higher ethical standard than that required for an ordinary citizen within the general population of the society the warrior serves”. (This may explain, not completely but in part, why, according to the U.S. government’s own 2013 study, less than 1/3 of the nation’s youth are qualified for military service. Perhaps it also should give pause to an electorate

thoroughly conditioned by the charade of so-called political correctness and bombarded with phony arguments about absolute equality as it considers whether it really wants an armed warrior class that exactly mirrors society at large.)

“[T]he essential element of a warrior’s code”, says French, “is that it must set definite limits on what warriors can and cannot do if they want to be regarded as warriors, not murderers, cowards, or monsters”. While “[a] warrior’s code may cover everything from the treatment of prisoners of war to oath keeping to table etiquette, . . . its primary purpose is to grant nobility to the warriors’ profession”, thus enabling “warriors to retain both their self-respect and the respect of those they guard” (and, it may be added, the respect of those warriors whom they fight). Thus, French makes clear that nobility does not arise from claims of membership in the profession of arms but from strict, undeviating adherence to the codified standards expected of members of the profession. While these standards surely include the competent performance of the technical and tactical tasks of warriorship, they far transcend these visible tokens of professional practice. Indeed, the task–condition–standard model that works so well to hone technical and tactical proficiency is far from adequate to every situation. For, sooner or later, the true warrior (as for the true practitioner of any profession) is certain to encounter unforeseen, unforeseeable, and unavoidable choices of moral import. It is at these junctures that, if the warrior has not internalized a principle-based code of conduct, right will give way to expediency, courage will give way to fear, and self-sacrifice will give way to self-security if not outright self-aggrandizement. French demonstrates that the risk of missteps like these is so high precisely because the line between them is so thin (in a way that it simply is not for the golfer, the carpet cleaner, or the musician). Indeed, warriors may have to choose between death and dishonor in circumstances for which no plausible golfing, carpet-cleaning, or music-performing corollary can be found. French provides case study-length examples of Greek and Roman stoics, knights of King Arthur’s Round Table, and Japanese samurai faced with such choices. These and similar case studies reveal that moral success or failure often hinges on something not accounted for by rules of engagement drawn up by the legal office. The innumerable permutations of war and the nuances therein require a subtle sense, nurtured by introspection and moral reflection, for what is right and what is wrong. As a result, warrior codes throughout history are not quite as “codified” as one might suppose. Sometimes, as French observes, they must be teased out of traditions and legends or reversed-engineered from examples of professional practice and malpractice: The rules, as St. Paul notes and as French echoes, are not always written “in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart”.

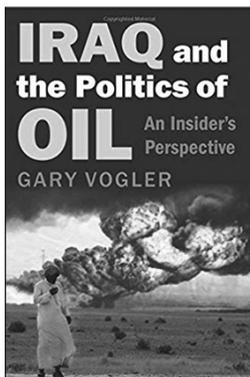
Because of this, the Golden Rule is a lot more golden than sometimes acknowledged in practice: “Perhaps your enemy tortures”, French notes. “This does not mean that you can with moral impunity torture him. The reasons for you not to torture are tied to your values, not his. The issue is not what the enemy does or does not do, but what your own code demands.” This imperative is not lessened by asymmetric warfare: “It is easier to remain a warrior when fighting other warriors. When warriors fight murderers they may be tempted to become the mirror image of the evil they hoped to destroy. Their only protection is their code of honor”. That protection is literal: The code may be the only thing standing between the warrior and a choice that will leave him or her with a life-long burden of PTSD or life-shortening ideations of suicide. These codes focus one’s attention not on the myriad exceptional cases but on the invariants that one finds—in morals as in mathematics—when one is perceptive enough to see through the clouds of exceptions.

Finally, French argues that emerging disruptive technologies “do not disrupt the traditional

ethics of war at all. As long as death and destruction are occurring, regardless of the means, the same questions arise—such as, whom can you kill, what can you destroy, where, why, and when?” Hence, what is needed is not a new warrior code but rather, warriors committed to acting properly with respect to these timeless questions.

French imparts a fresh reality to her discussion of always difficult and sometimes esoteric questions by inviting us into her own classroom to witness interactions with her U.S. Naval Academy students, hear their discussions, and read their written responses. As the students wrestle with what it means to be a warrior worthy of the title, the reader may indeed feel himself or herself cheering on those students—and hoping that both that they will get the hard questions right and that, when push comes to shove, they will find the right balance between courage and restraint.

In sum, *The Code of the Warrior* is in its second edition because it is an enduringly valuable work that can be profitably read by thoughtful, reflective members of the profession of arms and by other true professionals as well. **IAJ**



Iraq and the Politics of Oil: An Insider's Perspective

Gary Vogler

University Press of Kansas, 2017, 318 pp.

Reviewed by Courtney M. Rittgers

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Just when you thought you had a handle on the Middle East crisis, with all its permutations, along comes a chronicle of political intrigue, danger, and the gutsy resolve of dedicated Americans showing another side to the conflict that had our country's best fighting units engaged in combat for eight years.

In author Gary Vogler's latest book, *Iraq and the Politics of Oil*, we learn that in late 2002, a small group of U.S. government officials, senior retired military officers and private sector experts, gathered in Washington, D.C. to do contingency planning for the rehabilitation of Iraq's collapsed oil industry. Vogler was included in the planning group because of his having a highly desirable combination of qualifications: a retired U.S. Army Reserve lieutenant colonel, and a 1973 West Point graduate, with 21 years' experience in the oil industry.

Later, when a coalition of allied forces attacked Iraq, Vogler saw another opportunity to serve our country by volunteering to deploy in Iraq with the first contingent of civilians. While most of his allied colleagues served short tours, Vogler was to become the longest serving member.

Overview

His book is based upon that extensive experience, his family's personal sacrifices, and his ultimate conclusions about the justification for the entire enterprise. So, it's not just a trip down memory lane, it is a well-documented, fully-footnoted account of the triumphs and tragedies of the