

SEE OUR NEW WEBSITE

I just read your article by Michael Brendan Dougherty called “Suicide of Brewster” (Sept. 11), and I am amazed that he is so obviously unaware of many pertinent facts. Especially troubling is his apparent ignorance about the village’s many new and unprecedented efforts to enforce resource, traffic, housing, and parking laws. At least inform him that no village in America has the power or the authority to enforce federal immigration laws.

Here are just some of the concrete measures that the village has already accomplished to enforce what we call quality-of-life codes: we have hired a force of unarmed constables to enforce our local laws on littering, illegal parking, improper trash disposal, and dangerous driving; spent nearly a third of our total tax revenue on legal action to enforce our zoning and building codes; negotiated a \$4 million renovation of our train station; created the village’s first-ever website and newsletter to keep residents up to date; and completed a four-year, \$40 million overhaul of our sewer and water pipes.

I understand that Mike’s article is designed to persuade your readers that illegal immigration has destroyed Brewster Village, and by extension the nation, and that it’s all the fault of the liberals. My point is that a strong argument against illegal immigration is easily made by using facts without the use of a fantastic straw man, in this case my village.

Spend a few bucks on fact checkers before you publish snide, derogatory articles about my community, my constituents, and my neighbors.

BILL BANKS, Trustee
Village of Brewster, N.Y.

Michael Brendan Dougherty replies:

Not even my mother calls me Mike, Bill. And I’ve had Brewster’s illegal-parking laws enforced on me. Good showing there. But on my Labor Day visit to Brewster, I saw shops with

signs in foreign languages and men with whom I cannot have a conversation populating the pool hall, grocery store, and sidewalks. The website and newsletter, the renovations and sewer money, and all the bureaucratic happy talk of “unprec-edented efforts” have not reversed the process of transformation I described. How could they? I do not blame you personally or liberals alone despite your best guesses. Neither snide nor derogatory, my article was an elegy for a place I love.

KNOW THINE ENEMY

I found Andrew Bacevich’s “The Islamic Way of War” (Sept. 11) a welcome antidote to the administration’s calumny against its critics who are “appeasing” the “Islamic fascists.” Bacevich cuts through the fog of Bush’s war propaganda to see the real and counterable tactic of terrorism for what it really is (or is not).

“What many Westerners dismiss as ‘terrorism,’ whether directed against Israelis, Americans, or others in the West, ought to be seen as a panoply of techniques employed to undercut the apparent advantages of high-tech conventional forces,” he writes. “The methods employed do include terrorism—violence targeting civilians for purposes of intimidation—but they also incorporate propaganda, subversion, popular agitation, economic warfare, and hit-and-run attacks on regular forces, either to induce an overreaction or to wear them down. The common theme of those techniques, none of which are new, is this: avoid the enemy’s strengths; exploit enemy vulnerabilities.”

To this list of techniques and methods Bacevich should have added one more. As Edward Cody and Molly Moore recently wrote in the *Washington Post*, “The [Hezbollah] fighters’ Islamic faith and intense indoctrination reduced their fear of death ... giving them an advantage in close-quarters combat and in braving airstrikes to move munitions from post to post. Hezbollah leaders

also enhanced fighters’ willingness to risk death by establishing the Martyr’s Institute, with an office in Tehran, that guarantees living stipends and education fees for the families of fighters who die on the front.”

By beginning to identify the tactical and operational components of the Islamic Way of War—be they known techniques of asymmetrical warfare like terrorism or, as in Lebanon, a religiously inspired death-fearlessness—Bacevich can be credited for demystifying the enemy and revealing the threat for what it really is: radicalized Muslims adapting tactically to Western military occupation of Muslim land.

GREG GAMMON

via e-mail

SOUTH AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE

I know that you are directed to the North American public, but all the same I want to state my congeniality with your views in general and on Mideast issues in particular.

Once a week I check out your website and read the free articles you have available for any Internet user. You have become one of my favorite sources and sadly needed in these days when guys like Charles Krauthammer keep shouting their support for butchery that happens far away but ruins the lives of people surrounding even me. Yes, these matters affect the whole continent in a way hard to describe.

I wanted to declare my appreciation for your work and the pleasure I find in it as a higher version of Western stances.

ATTORE CASTELLO

Río Negro, Argentina

The American Conservative welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to letters@amconmag.com, by fax to 703-875-3350, or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit all correspondence for space and clarity.

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[JUSTICE]

TORTURED LOGIC

Last week's East Room speech was a tale of two Bushes: the stalwart defender of the rule of law and the War President who claims privilege to suspend it.

The headline didn't surprise—suspected terrorists have been held in secret prisons outside the United States. Bush argued the necessity of this prerogative, complete with case studies. We would be less safe had he not ... done what he's no longer doing.

But in a dizzying turn, prisoners for whom he authorized indefinite, often anonymous, detention without counsel or charges, will now "be presumed innocent."

Then he was back. Steel-spined again, Bush said of the detainee interrogations, "I cannot describe the specific methods used. ... But I can say the procedures were tough, and they were safe and lawful and necessary."

Again a twist: "The United States does not torture. It's against our laws, and it's against our values. I have not authorized it—and I will not authorize it."

Unfortunately, this was more likely one of those "depends what the meaning of 'is' is" moments than a reversion to the rule of law. Recall that Bush DOJ memo ruling that pain "must be equivalent in intensity to ... serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death" to qualify as torture.

Moreover, the Pentagon did little to affirm the president's disavowal by releasing a revised Army Field Manual prohibiting certain harsh interrogation techniques—a de facto admission that they were being employed. And will be still: under legislation drafted by the White House, the CIA will be permitted to keep using what Bush delicately called "an alternative set of procedures." His proposal also sanctions the use of



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"secret evidence" and contains no rules for testimony gained through torture—which theoretically shouldn't exist since the administration never authorized it, though retroactive immunity will be offered to anyone who engaged in it.

Bush wants it both ways. He understands Americans' fidelity to our ancient codes but deems his times outside normal experience and his executive judgment exceptional. Yet in this case, American moral authority, basic practicality—seasoned interrogators discount intelligence extracted under extreme duress—and popular consensus weigh against his will to rule above the law. Much as we fear the Khalid Sheik Mohammeds of the world, we also retain a healthy distrust of kings.

[IDEAS]

BEWARE: BLUE EYES

The pace of efforts to smear University of Chicago professor John Mearsheimer and Harvard's Stephen Walt has picked up, an indication that the pair's influence continues to grow. Six months ago, the two published a *London Review of Books* essay analyzing the amorphous but highly influential Israel lobby's grip on America's Mideast policy.

Judging by the frequency and vitriol of the attacks the piece has generated, it touched an extremely sensitive nerve. When the essay first appeared, Abe

Foxman, on constant watch against those who question America's tie to Israel, counseled the lobby to keep its powder dry, hoping the piece would be quickly forgotten. But if Walt and Mearsheimer appeared to be gaining traction, said Foxman, "we will have to attack it with greater vigor."

Evidently they have been attracting enough attention to bring out the knives. Last month, when the two spoke at a D.C. forum, the *Washington Post* covered the event with a bizarre smear: the *Post*'s Dana Milbank insinuated that they were anti-Semites, describing them as "blue eyed with Germanic surnames," a racist warning that a very large segment of Americans had best stay away from questioning the wisdom of their government's Mideast policies.

Now the *Wall Street Journal*'s op-ed page has run a piece by Bill Kristol, an advocate of war against all Muslims all the time, who tries to tie Walt and Mearsheimer in with Iran's Ahmadinejad and some Norwegian anti-Semite no one has ever heard of under the supposedly shared rubric of "anti-Judaism." According to Kristol, the two claimed that several Jews in the administration have special attachments in the Middle East due to "their religious belief." A more honest article might have acknowledged that the neocon ties to Israel that Walt and Mearsheimer allude