

comparison of Bush to Hitler (even as Cohen insists that the two men are not "in the same category," just similar in their approach and temperament). But most wrong-headed is the idea that while Bush may be correct about Saddam Hussein, he should equivocate more, express more doubts, engage in more public brow-beating.

Cohen holds up Clinton as the exemplar of this sort of politics -- which actually isn't quite correct. In the Kosovo campaign, for example, Clinton was assuredly confident that Milosevic would surrender after two days of bombing, and didn't at all foresee a more protracted engagement. When he did exhibit "nuance," as when Clinton attended the WTO meeting in Seattle, but expressed support for the protesters, it was a [full-scale disaster](#). One should hasten to add the nuanced response to the bombings of the Khobar Towers, the U.S. embassies in Africa, and the USS Cole. Osama bin Laden is on record calling Americans "weak, impotent and cowardly." What would have given him that idea?

Bush may have doubts or worries, but keeping them to himself is sensible leadership. Cohen misses "the quality that once, especially in the days following Sept. 11, 2001, commended Bush to people like myself -- the absence of rigidity and shrillness, an open-faced easiness." Actually, the quality Bush exemplified then was more like "moral clarity," and Bush's religious beliefs were the [needed counterweight](#) to the facile relativism and Western self-recriminations that made us vulnerable in the first place. It's lucky that we can muster at least some certainty about ourselves, given our enemies' certain resolve.

As evidence of Bush's unsophistication, Cohen asks, "Is Iraq so pressing a menace that the imminence of a North Korean bomb can be put on the back burner?" Here, Cohen betrays his own lack of sophistication. In the State of the Union, Bush said, "Our nation and the world must learn the lessons of the Korean Peninsula and not allow an even greater threat to rise up in Iraq." The North Korean problem only reinforces the imperative of disarming Iraq before the development of its arsenal makes such an action prohibitively costly. Cohen, however, can't see a threat unless it's immediate and already out of hand, and he thinks each element of our foreign policy is mutually exclusive. Not very nuanced, especially for someone who isn't even from Texas.

Steven Menashi :: [2/11/2003](#) ::

Neo-environmentalism: [Tod Lindberg](#) points toward a new innovation in environmental thinking on the right: "humanist environmentalism." The mantle of environmentalism has lately been marred by some [neo-Malthusian hysteria](#), which invariably turns out [not to be true](#). But precisely because proclamations of limits to growth and predictions of global collapse have proved fatuous, we know that there are solutions to environmental problems, and while we've done a good job of stumbling upon them, we might as well seek them out. You have two choices, explains Lindberg: "You can either incur the direct and indirect costs mandated by Kyoto, with the result of slowing global warming by several years a century hence, or you can innovate your way out of the problem over the course of the century and, in the meantime, devote the resources you would otherwise spend on saving lives in the here and now."

The Bush administration's answer to Kyoto is \$1.2 billion for research into hydrogen-powered cars. In the meantime, we can [save actual lives](#) instead of ignoring their needs to focus on reducing carbon emissions. Environmentalism doesn't need to be synonymous with "saving the planet"; it can be about

saving people, acting as stewards of the earth with that end always in mind. When people talk about "saving the planet," after all, who do you think they want to [save it from](#)?

Humanist environmentalism owes its existence to Bjorn Lomborg and his [The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World](#). You should read it.

Steven Menashi :: [2/11/2003](#) ::

"Unique Legitimacy": Kofi Annan, appearing at the College of William and Mary yesterday, once again [warns Bush against going it alone](#), insisting that "there is no substitute for the unique legitimacy provided by the United Nations." Annan has [sounded this note before, several times](#), and it's absurd. For one thing, the United States is "going it alone" along with [Britain, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Poland, Denmark and the Czech Republic](#) as well as [Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia](#). "Alone," it turns out, really means "without the United Nations."

It should be noted, of course, that the United States does enjoy the full sanction of the UN, most recently in the form of Resolution 1441. Adopted unanimously last November, 1441 found Iraq in material breach of its commitments and reaffirmed the Security Council's earlier authorization of the use of force to effect compliance.

The more compelling question, apart from the debate over which side the United Nations is on, is why it matters at all. Recently, we have had occasion to witness the perverse dysfunction of the United Nations on display in the [ascendency of Iraq and Iran](#) to co-chairmanship of the Conference on Disarmament and the [election of Libya](#) to head the Human Rights Commission. The lesson of such spectacles should be that the United Nations is fundamentally a political institution whose decisions, far from expressing some unique moral voice, result from the respective political calculations of its individual members. The UN embodies no special mandate apart from the interests of a majority of its various member states, and there's some reason to question whether those interests are congruent with America's. William F. Buckley, for one, who once served as a delegate to the UN, called it "the most concentrated assembly of anti-Semitism surely since Hitler's Germany."

"It is not a United Nations," observed Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "but a United Governments, in which those freely elected and those imposed by force and those which seized power by arms are all on a par. Through the mercenary bias of the majority, the UN jealously worries about the freedom of some peoples and pays no attention to the freedom of others." It is striking to observe how deeply the vision of the United Nations stands opposed to the Bush doctrine, under which the character of a regime -- not the mere fact of its power -- makes the normative difference.

"America will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere," President Bush said in his [State of the Union](#) address. "No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them... America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the power of the state; respect for women; private property; free speech; equal justice; and religious tolerance." Now there's a unique legitimacy.