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en so virulently
book examines why.

social democrat, for that matter) is to be brutally honest, the left's chances of gaining power are small given the economic and propaganda resources ranged against it; the real hope is in having a degree of influence on policy and the political agenda.

A leftist critique can ask pertinent questions when capitalism in all its raucous vulgarity appears triumphant. The end of history thesis, as promulgated by Francis Fukuyama and the odious neocons, is surely a call to action by all those who worry about the sustainability of unconstrained capitalism, rampant globalism and accelerating inequality between rich and poor. But what unites these disparate critics and malcontents other than the vague rubric of the left?

Whether socialism is dead is beside the point. The lack of a program, which Cohen derides despite, to all appearances, still retaining his leftist mindset - albeit tempered by a healthy intellectual (and moral) scepticism - is not confined to the left.

One has only to look at Iraq and Afghanistan and the fraying loose ends of American policy to see there is no program there either, coherent or otherwise. Did the Americans really expect democracy, US-style, to immediately take root in Baghdad and Kabul and beyond?

All we have heard is a platitudinous wish to bring democracy (undefined) to the Middle East, but if this were truly the goal of American foreign policy one might have expected some effort to be applied where the US is genuinely influential, in the authoritarian regimes in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, for example.

Conservatives like John Howard and even Tony Blair have wedged the left, divided as it is between what remains of its working-class base and the middle-class radicals. It remains a potentially potent coalition but has never been less influential. This is the wake-up call.

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The Sydney Morning Herald

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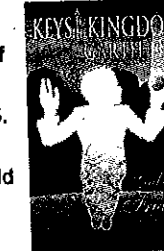
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