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***‘Democratic Tsunami’ versus  
‘blowback’<sup>1</sup>: US reform policy and the  
calamity of power without  
responsibility in Middle East***

by

**Nhamo W. Samasuwo**

and

**Siphamandla W. Zondi**

**Introduction**

Since George Bush came to power in 2000, neo-conservative hawks that back his administration have been working hard on unleashing what some have dubbed a democratic ‘tsunami’ (Ottaway et al, 2002). Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States has constructed an ambitious plan to export American democracy to the Middle East as a panacea to terrorism. Various referred to as the Great Middle East Initiative (GMEI) or Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) the plan was officially announced in a speech delivered at the Heritage Foundation by the then Secretary of State, Collin Powell in December 2002.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, while dismissing accusations of oil as the motive and touting ‘the righteousness of the American democratic model’ (Burbach and Tarbell, 2004), some of the neo-conservative hawks or ‘neo-cons’ in President Bush’s administration have even clearly indicated the latter’s preparedness to ‘force-feed’ (Mbeki, 2003) democracy to countries where resistance will be encountered. However, following Colin Powell’s announcement, the MEPI ran into a storm of criticism, with the media and Arab intellectuals alike questioning the US’s motives and credibility in preaching democracy to the world. Also, since the official announcement was made, there have been indications that the

Institute for Global Dialogue

Block 12, Thornhill Office Park,

Bekker Street, Vorna Valley

Midrand, South Africa

P O Box 32571, Braamfontein 2017

Tel +(11) 315-1299

Fax +(11) 315-2149

e-mail: [info@igd.org.za](mailto:info@igd.org.za)  
[www.igd.org.za](http://www.igd.org.za)

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<sup>1</sup> According to Johnson Chalmers, the term ‘blow-back’ was invented by the Central Intelligence Agency for their own internal use. It refers to the unintended consequences of the US policies that were kept secret from the American people.

<sup>2</sup> Colin Powell, ‘The U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building hope for the Years Ahead,’ Speech delivered to the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., 12 December 2002; available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2002/15920.htm>.