

Syrian President Bashar Assad [praised](#) the US Baker-Hamilton report today, which demands that Israel withdraw from the Golan Heights, as "objective" and "positive". The controversial report, drawn up by US senators, examines where US policy has failed in Iraq and proposes what should be done in order to rectify it. President Bush has stated the report gives a "tough assessment" of the situation in Iraq, and its findings will be taken seriously. But Prime Minister Olmert has [rejected](#)

the idea that violence in Iraq is related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and stated that he believed President Bush would agree with him on that. Prime Minister Blair echoed those sentiments

[last month](#)

when he said solving the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians would calm the situation in the wider region. One of the proposals of the Baker-Hamilton report is for the US to launch a major diplomatic initiative that would begin on December 31st 2006, and would work towards a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Quote: *"The committee recommended Bush to initiate a **diplomatic offence**, rather than a military one, which would be **launched as of 31 December and would include, among other things, a move towards peace between Israel and the Arab world.***

"Our most important recommendations call for new and enhanced diplomatic and political efforts in Iraq and the region, and a change in the primary mission of US forces in Iraq that will enable the United States to begin to move its combat forces out of Iraq responsibly," committee members wrote.

Friends, we know that the EU, and specifically the leader of the European Union, will be the ones to confirm the covenant between Israel and many nations. But with the US now forced to press for "peace" through party demographics, perhaps Prime Minister Olmert will have to start listening to what the EU has been saying or he'll soon find himself politically isolated. And the European leaders are also pressing President Bush to work towards the goal of a [regional peace agreement](#).

Quote: *"Like the panel, Blair is expected to urge Bush to embrace a **wider Middle East peace policy** to help resolve the Iraq crisis in what White House spokesman Tony Snow predicted would be a "very freewheeling" conversation.*

I don't know whether we have a covenant in the form of the European Neighbourhood Policy or not, though the fact that it is an agreement for seven years is very interesting. If it turns out to be not, I believe we can expect some sort of covenant to appear sooner or later. Both the

EU and US will now be pressing for peace. The ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians is "holding", despite Kassams continuing to land in Israel. Hamas is expected to announce a "tahdiah" for 2007. There's not much left needs to happen before we see a covenant of peace.

Source [YNet News](#) , [YNet News](#) , [Reuters](#) , [Jerusalem Post](#)