Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East Conflict: A Political, Religious, and Historical Analysis from a Christian Perspective

Executive Summary

This paper examines the Israeli–Palestinian conflict through three essential lenses: political dynamics, religious motivations, and historical foundations. It argues that the conflict cannot be understood—or resolved—without acknowledging Israel's ancient covenantal claim to the Holy Land, the long-standing presence of Palestinians in parts of the Holy Land, and the influence of regional powers such as Iran. The paper concludes that Gaza should be recognised as a Palestinian state, the West Bank should remain under Israeli sovereignty with provisions for coexistence, and long-term peace requires demilitarisation, regional cooperation, and respect for biblical principles. The recommendations presented are personal opinions intended to contribute to broader discussions on peace and stability.

Introduction

The most recent war between Israel and Gaza (7 October 2023– 10 October 2025) has dominated global attention. The conflict resulted in the deaths of approximately 70,000 Palestinians—many of them civilians, women, and children—following Hamas's invasion of southern Israel, which killed over 1,200 Israelis and led to the taking of around 250 hostages.

The war brought immense suffering to Gaza and provoked widespread international condemnation of Israel's military response. Some world leaders have recognised the State of Palestine, isolated Israel diplomatically, and renewed calls for a two-state solution. Others have advocated for a return to the pre-1948 status quo. Many now describe the Middle East as a region of "endless wars."

I am inclined to believe that these wars will continue. Ceasefires may occur, but only temporarily. A lasting solution remains distant. In my view, three key questions must be answered:

- To what extent are the recurrent wars political?

- To what extent are they religious?

- What historical factors and complexities drive the conflict?

Christians must consider these questions through the lens of Scripture and seek guidance from the Holy Spirit in discerning where our voices should stand.

1. To What Extent Are the Wars Political?

Nations often seek a "balance of power," and political friction among global powers is not unusual. In the Middle East, countries such as Israel, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Qatar compete for regional influence. The relationship between Iran and Israel is particularly volatile, rooted not in rivalry but in existential hostility.

Iran funds and arms a network of proxies—the "Axis of Resistance"—including Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and groups in Syria and Iraq. Their stated objective is the destruction of Israel. Israel, surrounded by hostile armed groups, faces constant threats from multiple fronts making the country to be in a heightened position for war.

Diplomacy is undermined when weapons are controlled by non-state actors who disregard international law and embed themselves within civilian populations. Iran's sponsorship of terrorism remains a major obstacle to peace.

Israel can coexist peacefully with its neighbours if its territorial integrity is respected. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan have demonstrated that peaceful relations are possible. Israel's responsibility before the God of Avraham, Isaac, and Jacob is to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

2. To What Extent Are the Wars Religious?

Religion plays a central role in shaping the conflict. Israeli politics is deeply rooted in Judaism, while Palestinian politics is strongly influenced by Islam. Groups such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and the Houthis frame their struggle as a religious duty—jihad against Israel.

Examples of religious influence include:

- Many Muslim-majority countries condition recognition of Israel on a two-state solution.

- Muslims worldwide have marched in solidarity with Gaza, often motivated by shared religious identity rather than personal ties.

- Calls to "globalise the Intifada" reflect a religiously charged call for uprising against Jewish people worldwide.

- Extremist groups justify violence through Islamic ideology.

This does not imply that all Muslims support violence. Millions are peaceful and committed to coexistence. However, it is undeniable that many extremist groups use Islamic theology to justify violence against Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims.

Thus, the conflict is both political and religious.

3. Historical Context and Factors Behind the Endless Wars

Israel's Ancient Claim

Israel's claim to the Holy Land is rooted in God's covenant with Avraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The land—including modern Israel and the West Bank—was given as an "everlasting possession." Jewish presence in the land spans nearly 4,000 years.

The Palestinian Context

Some compare the situation to Apartheid South Africa, but the comparison is limited. Palestinians feel oppressed due to land disputes, home demolitions, and settler violence. South Africa has taken a leading role in supporting the Palestinian cause.

However, unlike colonised African nations, the Palestinian claim to the land is not rooted in ancient sovereignty. Their presence in the region spans roughly 1,500 years—significant, but not equivalent to Israel's biblical claim.

Decline of Jewish Communities After 70 AD

Roman persecution, culminating in the Bar Kokhba revolt, led to mass Jewish emigration. Emperor Hadrian renamed the promised land "Syria Palaestina" to erase Jewish identity. The name persisted through Islamic and British rule.

Present-day Palestinians are not descendants of the Canaanites; Philistines or Samaritans; they are largely of Arab origin.

Rise of Islam

Islam's expansion in the 7th century reshaped the region. Jerusalem was conquered in 636–638 AD, and Arab populations settled in the land. Islamic dominance continued until the 20th century, during which the ancestors of modern Palestinians emerged.

Modern Israel After 1948

Following the Holocaust, Jews returned to their ancestral homeland. British policy shifted from supporting a Jewish state to advocating a majority-Palestinian state, eventually handing the issue to the United Nations.

Why International Bodies Like the UN Are Part of the Problem

The UN has often approached the conflict without fully considering its political, religious, and historical dimensions. Many nations pressure Israel to cede the West Bank to a Palestinian state, while sympathising with groups such as Hamas.

The question is not whether Palestinians should have a state, but where that state should be. Gaza is the most viable option—if demilitarised.

Leaders from Christian-majority nations must ensure their decisions align with biblical principles. Dividing Israel's land without God's approval risks opposing the will of the LORD.

Recommendations

1. Recognition of Israel's Historical and Biblical Claim

Israel's covenantal inheritance is affirmed by the Bible, the Torah, and the Quran.

2. Recognition of Gaza as a Palestinian State

Gaza should be recognised as a Palestinian state under strict demilitarisation.

3. West Bank Realities

Palestinians have lived there for 1,500 years, but the land remains part of Israel's biblical inheritance.

4. Practical Steps

- Maintain the current administrative structure (Areas A, B, and C).

- Encourage voluntary migration for Palestinians unwilling to coexist.

- Establish international funding for relocation.

- Allow Israel to exile convicted terrorists.

- Encourage Muslim-majority nations to host Palestinian communities.

- Promote non-violent Islamic initiatives.

- Explore the possibility of a second Palestinian state elsewhere.

- Convene a multi-faith panel to address the Temple Mount issue.

Demilitarisation of Gaza and the West Bank

Peace requires the complete demilitarisation of Palestinian territories. Only basic policing weapons should be permitted. Israel retains the right to defend itself but must work with the Board of Peace and the UN.

Israel must also prevent settler violence and prosecute offenders to build trust.

The Arab League and Muslim community should encourage peaceful political and religious leadership among Palestinians.

Conclusion

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is deeply rooted in history, religion, and politics. Israel's ancient covenantal claim to the land is undeniable, yet Palestinians have lived in parts of the country for centuries. Peace requires acknowledging both realities.

A sustainable solution must honour Israel's divine inheritance, provide dignity and security for Palestinians, and reject extremism. International bodies must approach the conflict with greater sensitivity to its biblical and historical foundations.

Peace is difficult but not impossible. With honesty, courage, and a principled approach, the cycle of conflict can be broken, offering hope for a more stable Middle East.