Recognition of Palestine as an indicator of loss of European powers' influence in the Middle East[1]

ARVAK Center comment, October 3, 2025

Summary

ARVAK's comment examines the wave of recognitions of the State of Palestine by a number of Western countries in September 2025, including permanent members of the UN Security Council, the United Kingdom and France. It analyzes both the symbolic significance and the practical insignificance of these acts in the context of ongoing Israeli occupation. It argues that these decisions were driven not so much by a desire to stop the humanitarian catastrophe as by domestic political factors, particularly pressure from the Islamic electorate. The main thesis is that the recognition of Palestine is not a manifestation of strength, but a reactive step demonstrating the loss of real influence in the Middle East by the UK and France. This loss occurs against the backdrop of a deliberate policy by the United States and Israel to displace European interests from the Levant region, including through alternative projects to the Suez Canal (e.g., the Ben Gurion Canal). The comment concludes that this démarche has not only failed to restrain Israel but has untied its hands, potentially accelerating a crisis at the UN, which undermines the very foundations of the global status of the European powers themselves.

Keywords: *Palestine, Israel, recognition, geopolitics, Middle East, United Kingdom, France, USA, UN, Suez Canal, Ben-Gurion Canal, Levant.*

During the September session of the UN General Assembly, several Western countries, in keeping with their previous commitments, officially recognized the independence of the State of Palestine. On September 21, 2025, the United Kingdom and Canada made such an announcement. The following day, they were joined by France, Andorra, Belgium, Australia, Portugal, Malta, Monaco, and San Marino.

Thus, a slight numerical majority of supporters of Palestinian sovereignty has emerged in Europe. Among the European states that have not yet recognized Palestine are Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Denmark, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Germany. A significant contribution to the new disposition of the Western community on the Palestinian-Israeli issue was the joining of the pro-Palestinian camp by Canada and Australia. It is evident that these states acted in unison with London, guided by the commitment to adhere to a unified position of the British Commonwealth on the most significant issues of the global agenda.

At first glance, from an international legal perspective, this wave of recognitions has become a significant event for the Palestinian people, ensuring an overwhelming superiority of supporters of the "*two-state solution*" in the global balance of power. It should be particularly noted that even before these acts of recognition, approximately two-thirds of the 193 UN member states had already recognized Palestinian sovereignty. However, the most significant change now is the accession of two permanent members of the UN Security Council. This has thus led to the *de facto* isolation of the United States on this issue within the Security Council, as Washington has nominally lost the traditional support of the permanent members of the UN Security Council — the United Kingdom and France.

[1] The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 02.10.2025.

On the other hand, many experts express skepticism regarding the practical significance of recognizing Palestinian statehood. Recent declarations do not specify the borders of the new state entity, which, moreover, lacks capital and an army. Moreover, according to *BBC* analysts, it is impossible to formulate what exactly governments mean by the term "recognition" if the Israeli army is practically completing its takeover of Gaza and the West Bank, triggering the mass deportation of their residents. At the same time, there are no established mechanisms for halting this process, nor any prospects for effectively forcing Tel Aviv to accept the "*two-state solution*". In this light, the recognition of Palestine is predominantly symbolic and will not affect the situation on the ground.

A debate has erupted in British and French societies about the belatedness of this step. In both countries, the most vocal critics of the government have come from left-wing forces, who claim that the authorities deliberately waited until there was practically nothing left of the Palestinian autonomies but new Israeli settlements. In this regard, many analysts are inclined to conclude that London and Paris's motivation was determined not so much by the need for real intervention to stop the genocide in Gaza (on September 16, 2025, an independent UN commission classified Israel's actions as "*genocide*"), but rather due to domestic political circumstances. The decision was made under pressure from the Islamic populations of these countries and the left-liberal political forces that support them.

It is noteworthy that the traditionally strong Jewish lobby in the United Kingdom and France was unable to influence the governments' decisions. According to the *BBC*, the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, Sir Ephraim Mirvis, repeatedly called on Downing Street to "postpone" the act of recognition. However, the UK authorities are apparently experiencing unprecedented pressure from the Islamic factor, which is strengthening its positions both in government and in the electoral field.

At the same time, there is an opinion that the political decision of the United Kingdom and France to recognize Palestine was significantly influenced by the United States's Middle East policy aimed at radically reshaping the region's geopolitical landscape.

Washington, in practice, provides comprehensive support to Israel in its initiatives to finally dismantle the Palestinian Authority, fragment Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, and provoke tensions in the Red Sea region, which undermines Europe's trade relations with Asian countries. After the "*Arab Spring*", the United Kingdom and France have been losing their influence in the Levant, a region where their sway was established since the mandates defined at the San Remo conference in 1920. The actions of the U.S. and Israel have facilitated the displacement of Franco-British capital from the region, which had allowed Paris and London to significantly influence the internal and external policies of these countries even after they gained sovereignty. At present, Washington and Tel Aviv are purposefully working to permanently remove the Levant from the zone of traditional political and economic interests of the European powers.

A significant blow by the American-Israeli tandem to the interests of leading Western European countries was the incitement of the Houthis to blockade the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. This effectively paralyzed European-Asian maritime trade through the Suez Canal and redirected major cargo flows around Africa, sharply increasing the prices of energy resources and other goods in Europe.

A number of experts believe that the reluctance of Washington and Tel Aviv to reach peace with the Houthis is not rooted in the Iranian problem. Doubts are also expressed about the inability of the U.S. and Israel to support the "legitimate" government of Yemen and the Arab coalition in a campaign to lift the blockade. According to these assessments, the true reasons for the tandem's passivity lie in the desire to ensure the final decline of the Suez Canal's role in world trade before Israel can build the Ben Gurion Canal, which will connect the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean Sea through its territory.

This scenario assumes that upon completion of the new waterway, Yemen's Houthis will either be forced to peace, or their regime in Sana'a will be eliminated by forces of the internationally recognized government with the full military support of the United States and Israel. Implementation of this plan will allow Tel Aviv to secure a significant share of cargo traffic, which before the Houthi blockade accounted for 12% of global maritime trade and approximately 40% of container shipping. In turn, Washington will gain strategic control in the Eastern Mediterranean and the western Indian Ocean, complicating China's economic development in Africa and expansion into Europe.

In such a configuration, London and Paris risk being excluded from the processes of shaping the future of the Middle East, which particularly undermines their global ambitions, given their historical role in the creation of the Suez Canal.

Another factor that prompted the two European nuclear powers to recognize Palestine was Israel's unprecedented escalation in Lebanon and Cyprus. France, traditionally considered the architect of Lebanese statehood, is now witnessing a disruption of the country's domestic political balance. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom perceives a threat to its military presence in Cyprus (the *Akrotiri* and *Dhekelia* bases) and its strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean in light of the growing escalation between Tel Aviv and Ankara.

It was expected that the initiative of London and Paris would be counterproductive and would likely push Tel Aviv towards even greater radicalization of its actions. The problem lies not so much in Israel's plans to sever diplomatic relations with the EU and the UK, but rather in the fact that Tel Aviv could boycott the UN and announce its withdrawal from the organization. Israeli authorities have repeatedly stated this, arguing that such a decision is justified by the UN's ineffectiveness. The acts of recognition of Palestine, the report on genocide in Gaza, and the incident involving the heckling of Benjamin Netanyahu's speech at the General Assembly have sharply increased the likelihood of such a measure. Perhaps at another time, analysts would have been skeptical of such a forecast, but now, with Donald Trump in power in the U.S., such a development is highly anticipated.

D. Trump's disdain for the UN is well known. The U.S. President took the opportunity to criticize the organization at the September General Assembly, accusing it of incompetence and helplessness in resolving crises and preventing wars. As for the recognition of Palestine, the American leader described it as a short-sighted move that strengthens the position of Hamas.

Thus, there are sufficient grounds to expect that the United States and Israel could jointly announce their withdrawal from the organization, after first demanding radical reform, which most member states are clearly not prepared to accept. This primarily concerns the United Kingdom and France, whose global status is largely ensured by their permanent membership in the UN Security Council. Currently, an increasing number of states are calling for reforms

and expansion of the number of permanent members of the Security Council. London and Paris could therefore lose their key positions.

Given the Trump administration's comprehensive support for Tel Aviv, it's difficult to imagine what outcome London and Paris were hoping for by orchestrating their anti-Israel *démarche* at the UN. According to several Russian experts, the recognition of Palestine deprived Britain and France of their last remaining trump card that allowed them to influence Israeli policy. The threat of recognition was a more effective tool than the actual act. Tel Aviv then declared Europe's hostility and the loss of legitimacy of the UN, which, in its opinion, no longer had the right to demand that the Jewish state comply with its resolutions. Thus, London and Paris have only untied Tel Aviv's hands and brought closer the moment when the UN will either collapse or be fundamentally reorganized under pressure from the U.S. and Israel.

The recognition of Palestine only increased the number of casualties in Gaza and intensified IDF's operations. It plunged British-Israeli and French-Israeli relations into a severe crisis. According to experts, the only gains for the British and French governments were the prospect of Islamic electoral support in future elections (France) and the loyalty of Islamic groups to the state's foreign policy (United Kingdom). However, the question is whether the loyalty of the Islamic environment can be considered a "gain", or whether it is a rejection of traditional national interests.

Recent events demonstrate that the Greater Middle East region has entered a new era of reorganization, and the traditional European powers are losing the remnants of their former influence here. This trend is particularly painful for France, given that it is part of the global process of the decline of its post-colonial dominance. The United Kingdom may still be holding on to control over most of its traditional zones of influence, but in the Middle East, the paradigm of American-Israeli interaction is increasingly displacing traditional Anglo-Saxon geopolitical cooperation. A new order is being formed here, which is intended to serve the *IMEC* trade and energy route project, described by Donald Trump as "*grandiose*". The process of its creation will be accompanied by the reorganization of the UN, aimed not only at containing China and Russia but also at devaluing the leading role of Europe in the new world order, which, in Trump's conviction, has long been played out in human history.