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The Logic Behind the Geneva Accord

by
Menachem Klein

Introduction

There are three ways in which the Geneva Accord differs from previous documents dealing with an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. First, this is a model for a permanent status agreement that puts an end to the conflict and to all mutual claims. Prior to the signing of the Geneva Accord in Jordan on 13 October 2003, no such model existed, given that the talks held by Israel and the PLO in 1999-2001 on a permanent status settlement came to naught. Second, this is a detailed model. Prior to the publication of the Geneva Accord, several joint Israeli-Palestinian declarations on the principles of a permanent agreement were prepared. Some of these documents were prepared in the official negotiations track, and others were prepared by academic experts and civil society activists through unofficial (Track 2) talks. Before the Geneva Accord, however, there was no detailed model that included a precise map of the proposed permanent arrangement. Third, as opposed to earlier documents, the Geneva Accord is a signed agreement. The very fact of the signatures creates a personal commitment that differs from a document published by a host institution. Furthermore, the accord was not signed by a few individuals but by more than 20 persons on each side.

The composition of the signatories is also extraordinary. Among the signatories on the Palestinian side are ministers and deputy ministers, Fatah representatives to the Palestinian Legislative Council, senior officials, and academics. Those Palestinians who hold official office declared that they are signing the accord as private individuals. The public, however, understands that without the approval of the Palestinian leadership, these individuals would not have been able to take such a dramatic step or even to have engaged in the Geneva negotiations. On the Israeli side, the signatories include Knesset members from the opposition parties, peace activists, writers, security personnel serving in the reserves, economists, and academics. Appended to the Geneva Accord is a cover letter which emphasizes that the reference is to a model for an arrangement, not a binding document; to a document that complements the road map, not one meant to replace it; to a private initiative, not one that is representative—even in the case of those

individuals who hold public office; to an appeal to public opinion on both sides in order to show that a permanent arrangement is attainable, not a pretense meant to create the impression of an accord between governments.

The Geneva Accord is formulated like a legal agreement between two states. In this way, it gives tangible expression to the idea of a permanent arrangement. The text is complex, lengthy, and, as a legal text, is not friendly to the average reader. In the following pages, I will outline the principles behind the formulation of the main articles in the agreement.

Acceptance of “the Other” as Legitimate

For many years, Israel and the PLO denied each other’s right to statehood. Israel denied the very existence of a Palestinian people and its right to a state, while the PLO saw Judaism as a religion and not a national identity. The sides have moved closer to one another since the late 1980’s and now recognize the existence ‘the other’ as a fact. In the Geneva Accord, the sides take an additional step forward by granting legitimacy to ‘the other’ based on how ‘the other’ defines itself. The accord includes the right of the Jewish people to a state and the right of the Palestinian people to a state. In addition, the sides recognize that these states constitute a national homeland for their peoples. They also emphasize that the fact that the states are founded on an ethnic-historical basis shall not infringe on the rights of the citizens. In other words, recognition of Israel as a Jewish state (i.e., a state with a Jewish majority) does not legitimize discrimination against Palestinian Israelis.

Security Arrangements

The guiding principle in this chapter is security for Israel without occupation of the Palestinians. The negotiations on the security arrangement were the relatively easy part of the Geneva talks. This is because the parameters of the security arrangements have not changed significantly since the official talks at Camp David and in Taba. What has changed is the context in which the security arrangements are to be applied. The deeper the withdrawal Israel is prepared to execute and the broader the Palestinian sovereignty it is prepared to accept, the greater the Palestinian readiness to accommodate Israel on security matters.

The Palestinians have come to terms with Israel's pursuit of almost 100 percent security, although in the course of the talks they could not understand how it is that this regional superpower perceives such a deep threat to its security. After all, the Palestinians are the weak side in the conflict and have suffered at the strong arm of Israel over the years. As the side that has incurred the heaviest losses, they were amazed by Israel's deep-rooted sense of an existential threat to its security. They did not try to convince Israel that it is making a mountain out of a molehill but rather met Israel halfway on this issue.

Palestine will be a non-militarized state, and no armed force that is not mentioned in the accord will be deployed on its territory. The two sides are committed to an ongoing struggle against terrorism (including acts of terrorism against property, land, and institutions). Neither side may desist from this struggle on the pretext of a disagreement with the other side. Given the strong opposition expected from the enemies of a permanent arrangement and on the basis of the experience garnered during the Oslo years, during which extremists on both sides succeeded in torpedoing the interim agreements, it was determined that the very existence of illegal, armed organizations contravenes the accord and that such organizations must be disarmed. The Palestinians agreed to far-reaching security arrangements that include high-altitude Israel Air Force training flights in the airspace of the West Bank, the maintenance of two early warning stations, and an Israeli military presence in the Jordan Rift Valley. This Israeli military presence, however, shall be subject to the authority of a multinational force. This force will defend Palestine against invasion by external forces and oversee the security arrangements. The external supervision of the security articles will ensure the end of the occupation and of the humiliation of the Palestinians at the hands of Israel. The security arrangements will be open to reassessment after a number of years. In the end, the Palestinians understood that they must show consideration for Israel's psychological needs in the security sphere. By responding to this need, the Palestinians both won full territorial sovereignty and put an end to Israel's use of the security issue as a pretext for continuing the occupation.

Territory

THE STARTING POINT FOR THE TERRITORIAL DISCUSSIONS was the 1967 borders as the lines that enjoy international legitimacy and beyond which lie land and people under Israeli occupation. The 1967 lines represent a

historic compromise in which Mandatory Palestine will be divided between the two national movements.

From the territorial aspect, it was clear to both sides that neither the State of Israel nor Palestine—each for its own reasons—can live with the settlements. The 160 settlements and approximately 100 additional outposts that are spread out over the West Bank prevent the Palestinians from establishing a viable state on the 1967 lands. As far as Israel is concerned, the national settlement enterprise is no longer tenable. There is a huge demographic disparity between the two populations: 200,000 settlers as opposed to more than 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This tough demographic reality caused Israel to tighten the control of the settlements over the Palestinian population through domination of the roads, land, water, and main arteries and by means of Israel's military strength and technological superiority. This, of course, led the Arab majority to launch an uprising.

By mid-January 2004, 2,648 Palestinians had been killed and 24,407 wounded in the intifadah, and Israel had set up 608 roadblocks and 56 manned barriers on Palestinian land, totally disrupting the daily lives of the Palestinians. All of these measures failed to suppress the Palestinian uprising; rather, they drove the Palestinians to seek revenge and liberation from the Israeli stranglehold by means of low-tech but highly motivated combat and vile acts of terrorism. In 2003, the ratio of settlers to soldiers defending them was 4:1, not counting the Israeli General Security Service personnel and soldiers within the Green Line held hostage to the defense of the settlements. In economic terms, the maintenance of the settlements comes at the expense of the citizens of Israel. In 2001, each settler received approximately NIS 8,600 (about \$2000) more than each Israeli living within the Green Line. It is worth noting that most settlers cannot be classified as low income and that the preceding calculation does not include benefits received from the Education and Defense Ministries and government support for settler associations.

While the settlers (excluding those in East Jerusalem) comprise only 3 percent of the Israeli population, more than half of the country's citizens support them. After close to 40 years of occupation, it is impossible to evacuate all of the settlements, despite the fact they are all illegal under international law. In the Geneva Accord, the sides agreed that no settler will remain within the boundaries of Palestine and that Israel will not annex even one Palestinian. The Geneva map proposed a border that annexes only some 2 percent of the West Bank on which 110,000 Israelis live in 21 settlements (excluding Jerusalem.) In other words,

approximately 50 percent of the settlers living in some 140 settlements will be evacuated. Their homes and the existing infrastructure will be handed over to Palestine. Israel will compensate Palestine for the territory it will annex in the West Bank with lands from its sovereign territory that are quantitatively equal and qualitatively similar. The Gaza Strip will expand eastward by 25 percent, and cultivated Israeli lands will be annexed to it. This will allow the population of the Strip to export agricultural produce and increase its income. The remaining territorial compensation will be made from lands to the southwest of the West Bank. Palestine will receive lands on which lie the remnants of about ten Palestinian villages destroyed in the 1948 war, and it will be able to turn these areas into sites of commemoration and return.

Refugees

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not revolve around the 1967 lands alone but also the 1948 lands. Israel's War of Independence in 1948 was a catastrophe for the Palestinians. Approximately half the Palestinian population became refugees, and the State of Israel took over their homes, lands, and property. The attempt of the Palestinian nationalist movement to create a state under the control of the Arab majority ended in disaster. The war turned the demographic ratio of Jews and Arabs on its head and left a solid Jewish majority in Israel.

The two national entities viewed 1948 as a defining event whose overturn would lead to the collapse of the Zionist structure. In order to preclude any subversion of 1948, Israel denied its role in the creation of the refugee problem and denied the existence of a Palestinian national identity, while in order to negate 1948, the Palestinians rejected Israel's existence and denied the Jewish people's right to self-determination. They turned their traumatic defeat into the sweet dream of return. This ideal Palestinian dream became the Israeli nightmare of the end of a state with a Jewish majority.

The two sides learned the lesson of the failure of the official negotiations to reach agreement on a joint narrative regarding the events of the 1948 war. The Geneva understandings leave this task to the two civil societies, with the two governments showing them the way. After all, a diplomatic accord cannot heal national traumas, suddenly change deep-rooted memories, and destroy national and historical myths. A diplomatic accord can outline and map them, defuse them, and ensure that they will not destroy the operational mechanisms. Reconciliation and openness toward

the narrative of one's fellowman are the result of long-term processes that take place within civil society. Diplomatic mechanisms can promote reconciliation processes but not dictate them. Therefore, the Israeli partners to the Geneva Accord did not present their Palestinian counterparts with an unequivocal demand that they renounce the right of return to areas within the State of Israel. In effect, the accord leaves this to the consciousness of each individual.

The classic understanding of the Palestinian right of return is that each individual refugee and the Palestinian national collective have the right to return to their homeland and to a specific place of residence. This right is unassailable. Israel must accept it and comply with it. The Geneva Accord is not based on this approach but rather on UN General Assembly Resolutions 194 [December 1948], UN Security Council Resolution 242 [November 1967], and the Arab League peace initiative [April 2002].

UN General Assembly Resolution 194 calls upon Israel to allow refugees who are willing to live in peace with it to return to Israel at the earliest practicable date. For years, the PLO claimed that this resolution grants every refugee the right of return. Israel, on the other hand, claimed that there is no such term in the language of the resolution; moreover, General Assembly resolutions are not binding. Pursuant to this, the Geneva Accord also refers to Article 2B of the Arab League peace initiative, which speaks of a solution to the refugee problem "to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194." As opposed to the PLO's classical concept of the right of return and Resolution 194, the Arab states accept the principle of the need for Israel's consent.

The Geneva Accord illustrates how this will be implemented. The choice of the State of Palestine as one's permanent place of residence is a right granted to every Palestinian refugee by virtue of being Palestinian, while the possibility of taking up permanent residence in the State of Israel may be granted by Israel. Thus, the refugee is free to believe that he is returning to his homeland, but this has no legal or institutional expression or backing in the accord. According to the Geneva Accord, the State of Israel is a country to which the Palestinian refugee may immigrate. This will prevent the realization of the Israeli nightmare: the return of a mass of refugees as a means of reversing the outcome of the 1948 war. All of the mechanisms for dealing with the refugee problem in existence since 1948 will cease to exist, and the legal status of refugeehood will be terminated. The refugee who seeks to deviate from the accord and

demand the right of return in the classical sense will find no institution that supports his claim and will have no legal standing.

The determination of the refugee's permanent place of residence will not be made by him alone but by a Technical Committee to be established by the International Commission appointed to oversee the implementation of the accord. The Commission will include an Israeli representative who will submit to the Committee the number of refugees Israel is willing to accept. In determining this number, Israel will take into consideration the average number of refugees who will immigrate to countries outside the region. Any Israeli administration that seeks to act in a manner contrary to the spirit of the accord may formally rest its case on this article and fix a low number based on the claim that this article does not commit Israel to a high number. The article was formulated in this way not to deceive the Palestinians but rather to show that, contrary to the classic right of return, the reference is to willingness on Israel's part. The parties to the Geneva Accord hope that the administration that will be in power in Israel when the time comes will wish to resolve the refugee issue and that there will be no need for international pressure to this end.

There is a legitimate argument under way in Israel with regard to the country's identity as a Jewish state, the nature of its citizenship, and its characterization as a liberal democracy. The Geneva Accord does not settle this argument. It contains recognition of the right of the Jewish people and the right of the Palestinian people to their own state and rejects any infringement on civil rights. Anyone who seeks to tip the scales through the return of huge numbers of Palestinian refugees would in effect be destroying any chance of a permanent settlement. Anyone who seeks to punish Israel for the establishment of a state on the land of another nation by changing Israel's ethnic character would in effect be destroying the chance of a different kind of future for the sake of the past. The same holds true for anyone who claims that Israel must recognize the right of return as a basic principle and must leave it to each individual refugee to choose whether or not to exercise this right. In the absence of mechanisms that would limit the implementation to a model similar to that outlined in the Geneva Accord, the Israeli nightmare of the end of the Jewish state would become real. This actualization of the Israeli nightmare is the surest way to prevent an agreement.

The Geneva Accord does not contain an Israeli apology for its role in the creation of the 1948 refugee problem. In the past, Israel denied having played any role whatsoever in the creation of this problem, placing full responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the leaders of the Arab states

and the heads of the Palestinian national movement. Today, given the findings of research into the subject, it is difficult to deny the fact that the Israeli establishment played a part in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. Historical research into the period in question has been conducted largely by Israeli researchers and is based primarily on Israeli archives. The academic debate is no longer over the question of whether Israel engaged in acts that created refugeehood in 1948 but over the scope of such activities, the motives behind them, and the level of central planning and control over them. Yet in Israel it is only the academics and intellectuals who are grappling with the conclusions of this historical research. The findings have not been absorbed by all levels of society and have not been accepted by the main bodies in the Israeli political system. The dominant narrative of the latter has been that Israel was founded in 1948 by the strength and will of the people and that Israel's War of Independence was pure and untainted. In their eyes, any admission that the Israeli forces committed war crimes in 1948 or that central state mechanisms took part in turning many Palestinians into refugees would mean that the State of Israel was founded on the perpetration of a great injustice, and this would divest Israel of the legitimate and moral basis for its establishment and existence. In the dominant Israeli narrative, this then lays the ground for invalidating Israel's right to exist. In order for the popular Israeli narrative to change and conform with the findings of academic research, Israel needs reassurances with regard to its fear that the outcome of the 1948 war will be overturned. Only when Israel is confident that its darkest nightmare will not come true will the time come for it to apologize for its role in creating the refugee problem. In this way, Israel will be able to compensate the Palestinian refugees morally and symbolically for what its forces did to them in 1948.

Furthermore, as long as Israel feels a real or imagined threat to its very existence, it will be difficult for Israeli society to shift from the concept that Israel was founded on the basis of its might and victory in 1948 to the concept that its foundation rests on the Jewish people's right to self-determination in its historical homeland. In other words, it is difficult for the majority of Israelis to make the change from the narrative of power and the concept of an existence based on the use of might against outside forces to a concept based on every nation's right to self-determination.

The PLO faces a similar difficulty. The majority of the Palestinian public finds it difficult to admit to the war crimes perpetrated by its forces in the course of their struggle for national liberation and to apologize for the terror its organizations used and are continuing to use against Israelis and foreigners. Only the educated elite among them is ready to recognize the

immorality of Palestinian terror and war crimes. The common people are focused on securing the establishment of a viable Palestinian state through the struggle against the Israeli occupation. In addition, they fear that an admission that the national movement engaged in war crimes and terrorism during the national liberation struggle will cancel the recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. The time for a Palestinian apology will come when Palestinian sovereignty over the 1967 lands is guaranteed and they will no longer fear that Israel will exploit this apology to undermine the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Jerusalem

ISRAEL HAS CONTROLLED JERUSALEM LONGER THAN THE BRITISH and twice as long as Jordan. The Jewish-Israeli city in the west rules over approximately 200,000 Arab Palestinians (approximately 10 percent of the inhabitants of the West Bank) living in the eastern side. The Palestinian city developed because of and in spite of the development of Israeli Jerusalem. From a historical perspective, Israel has scored quite a few accomplishments in Jerusalem, the most prominent being the fact that it is impossible to revert to the reality that existed in the city prior to the Six-Day War.

The fact that some 50 percent of the Jewish residents of Jerusalem live on former Jordanian territory makes it impossible to evacuate the Jewish neighborhoods there. The option of leaving them in place under Palestinian sovereignty is no less problematic. What would be the nature of the Palestinian capital if approximately half of its population were to be made up of Israelis?

While it is impossible to return to the reality of 4 June 1967, it is also impossible to turn the annexation lines of 27 June 1967 into the permanent border. Palestinian construction has turned these lines into a virtual border. In many locations, the annexation line crosses neighborhoods, streets, and homes. Palestinian villages that were not included in the annexed territory for demographic reasons have become suburbs of the city. East Jerusalem operates as a metropolitan, religious, and political center and provides services and a source of income to a large population that resides beyond the municipal boundaries. In a nutshell, both of the June 1967 lines have been eroded, and the borders of the city must be redrawn.

Demographic considerations have shaped Israeli policy toward East Jerusalem since 1967. The Israeli establishment invested vast resources in an effort to maintain the demographic balance which, it believes, will cement the annexation: 75 percent Jews to 25 percent Arabs. Paradoxically, the annexation momentum increased the Palestinian presence in East Jerusalem. The demographic balance stands today at 68 percent Jews to 32 percent Arabs. Israel's attempts to change this by confiscating identity cards, revoking residency rights, and demolishing illegally built structures in the eastern part of the city and the metropolitan area have failed. As of 1999, Israel had confiscated from the Palestinians only some 4,000 identity cards out of a possible 50,000-80,000, and demolition orders were actually executed in the case of only some 4 to 8 percent of the building violations identified by Israel.

The Arabs of East Jerusalem are not citizens of Israel but rather residents. In other words, approximately one-third of the population of the capital of Israel does not recognize it and rejects Israeli citizenship. In the absence of a permanent agreement, the East Jerusalemites are perceived as a threat to Israeli sovereignty and, as a result, have been the victims of organized and ongoing deprivation at the hands of Israeli Governments in terms of allocation of resources, laying of infrastructures, and provision of services. Only a small amount of the meager Israeli investments in East Jerusalem met the needs of the Palestinian population. Most of them were allocated to tourism and to strengthening Israeli control and annexation.

Today, Jerusalem consists of two cities positioned back to back. Jewish-Israeli Jerusalem faces westward, to the State of Israel's natural home front, while Palestinian Jerusalem faces the West Bank. The divide between the two cities runs deep, and only a small number of Palestinian workers cross the ethnic lines for a few hours a day. It is in the interest of both the Israelis and the Palestinians to partition the city in order to allow both cities to develop in their natural space.

The Geneva Accord proposes the division of Israeli Jerusalem and Palestinian Jerusalem into two separate entities with controlled crossing points to the other side. The division provides for the maximum preservation of the current municipal functions and protects the interests of both sides. Coordination on matters of common interest will be handled by a committee made up of an equal number of representatives from each side. A multinational force will oversee the implementation of the agreement and will intervene in any dispute between citizens or agencies of the two countries. The division of Jerusalem is not virtual. A

fence will run between the two cities, but it will be both user and environmentally friendly, as opposed to the chain of brutal fences and walls being erected today as part of an enterprise that will lead to nothing short of the destruction of both the western and the eastern parts of Jerusalem. The Arab neighborhoods will be connected by a series of roads, just as all the Jewish neighborhoods will be connected by roads, and every citizen of Israel or Palestine will be able to move freely within the territory of his sovereign country. The Geneva negotiating team is working on appendices that deal with a number of issues such as the gradual separation of infrastructures, planning of border crossings, and administration of the border areas, but has not yet completed this task. It is clear that the transition from the current reality to that which we are proposing must take place gradually, and the negotiating team has begun to address this issue as well.

The Old City shall be a free and open city. Sovereignty will be divided, with the Jewish Quarter under Israeli sovereignty and the Christian, Armenian, and Muslim Quarters under Palestinian sovereignty. The border will be clearly marked, but there will be no physical barriers between the two sovereign areas of the Old City except out of security concerns and for a limited time only. Lion's Gate, Herod's Gate, Damascus Gate, and New Gate, which face the Palestinian city, will be under Palestinian sovereignty. Zion Gate and Dung Gate, which serve the Israelis, will be under Israeli sovereignty. Citizens of each side will enter and exit freely via the gates under their sovereignty. An Israeli who wishes to exit the Old City via a Palestinian gate will have to present an entry permit to Palestine, and the same applies to a Palestinian wishing to exit via an Israeli gate. Jaffa Gate will operate as an Israeli gate and will continue to be used by Israelis as the main gate of entry from the west, although it will be under Palestinian sovereignty. As there are no Israeli residences or commercial facilities around Jaffa Gate or along the road that leads from it to Zion Gate, this area will be under Palestinian sovereignty, but Israel will be responsible for the security of those entering or exiting Israel along this route. The same applies to the Jewish Cemetery on the Mount of Olives, which will be under Palestinian sovereignty but under Israeli administration and security. In return, the understandings guarantee the Palestinians the continued use of the Christian cemeteries in Israeli Jerusalem.

David's Tower is no less an Israeli and Zionist symbol than Rachel's Tomb or the Wailing Wall, despite the historical truth that the actual ruins of David's Citadel are located somewhere else. Furthermore, David's Tower overlooks western Jerusalem and serves Israel as a

municipal museum, an archaeological garden, and a reception hall. The Geneva understandings preserve the existing Israeli administration of the compound under Palestinian sovereignty.

The Geneva Accord does not ignore the place of the Temple Mount as a holy site and a national symbol. In this regard, it is important to note that the sanctity of the Temple Mount is not derived from state sovereignty. The Temple Mount was a Jewish holy site even when it was under the control of the Crusaders or the Persians, and it remains a Muslim holy site even under Israeli sovereignty. The state and the political regime need the Temple Mount as a rallying symbol that grants them legitimacy. The Geneva Accord divides the Temple Mount Compound in accordance with each side's national and symbolic usage and its religious role as a site of active ritual observance: the Temple Mount under Palestinian sovereignty and the Wailing Wall under Israeli sovereignty. The Palestinian side to the Geneva Accord recognizes the sanctity and religious and cultural importance of the Temple Mount for world Jewry. Accordingly, the Palestinians agreed not to excavate under or build on the Mount without Israeli authorization. In other words, the agreement replaces symbolic Israeli sovereignty with recognition of the symbolism the site holds for Judaism. Israel's approval of excavation or construction is solely residual, while Palestinian sovereignty over Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock will grant Palestine a status in the Arab and Muslim world that is second only to that of Saudi Arabia. One cannot exaggerate the importance of this symbolic resource for Palestine, which is short of territory, natural resources, and infrastructure but has a vast population and is rife with social and economic distress.

Both sides are committed to respecting the existing division of administrative functions and traditional practices at the holy sites. In order to assist them in this and to promote interfaith dialogue, the sides will establish a body comprising representatives of the three monotheistic faiths.

Conclusion

THE GOAL OF THE GENEVA ACCORD IS TO SHOW PUBLIC OPINION on each side that there is a partner for peace and a way to reach the end of the historical conflict. The Geneva Accord constitutes an alternative to the policies of the central regime in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, to the ongoing deterioration resulting from the violent conflict, and to Israel's plan for unilateral disengagement from the occupied territories.

The Geneva Accord was widely publicized immediately after it was signed and has become a focal point in the public debate on the diplomatic process both in the Middle East and beyond.

The formulation of a detailed accord such as Geneva necessitates tough decision-making. We cannot shirk this responsibility and leave it to the leaders and to the hope of future negotiations that are nowhere in sight. At the same time, we cannot avoid decisions by taking refuge in some theoretical or ideal model that will be impossible to implement. To the same extent, we cannot reach an agreement that will fail to pass the political and public test. Political and marketing considerations are part of the package deal and the compromises each side must make in order to help the other side. In the past, channels of communication between Israeli and Palestinian experts limited their talks to professional matters and avoided political issues. They opted for expert solutions that were impossible to implement from the political point of view. The political, the public, and the professional aspects must meet, however, when two countries are negotiating a peace accord. In this respect, of all the academic and political “Track 2” channels, it is the Geneva Accord that is closest to “the real thing.”

In order to reach an agreement, each side must see the interests, sensitivities, and point of view of the other. This proved to be Israel's Achilles' heel in the official talks between Israel and the PLO. Israel saw only its own interest. Even when considering the Palestinians' desires, Israel did so from the point of view of its perception of what those desires are. Israel repeatedly argued that only its interests and its bottom line will determine what the other side will receive. Unfortunately, the official talks on the permanent arrangement failed to produce a win-win situation. On the other hand, from its inception the Geneva channel was based on the win-win concept and the text, formulated from the point of view of both sides, is equal and balanced.

By its very nature as a compromise, the Geneva Accord cannot constitute the embodiment of absolute justice, especially in a situation where each side feels that it is totally in the right and that every concession is a blow to the justness of its cause. Yet neither does the Geneva Accord constitute a dictate on the part of powerful Israel, as it incorporates Palestinian achievements as well and rests on the international legitimacy of a state on the 1967 lines. It is an agreement that will enable the two peoples to live in honorable and fair coexistence.

In the short time that has elapsed since it was signed on 13 October 2003, the Geneva Accord has become the term of reference in every political and expert debate on the parameters of a permanent status agreement. Furthermore, the Geneva Accord has become an alternative to the current policies of the Israeli and Palestinian Governments. The incumbent Israeli Government is vehemently opposed to it and, in reaction to the support the accord has won in Israel and abroad, the government is planning to take unilateral steps in an attempt to ease its plight. The Palestinian Authority, on the other hand, has refrained from formally endorsing the Geneva Accord because of the Israeli Government's failure to do so and because such a step means grappling with internal political struggles and making decisions which the Palestinian Government feels are premature. Apparently, the road to the adoption of the Geneva Accord must pass through the failure of the alternatives, including Israel's plan for "unilateral disengagement" by means of a wall and fences. Once Israel comes to realize that there is no way to avoid concessions and that an agreement, with its advantages and disadvantages, is preferable to the ongoing conflict that does only harm, the Geneva model will cease to be an alternative plan and will become policy.

Beyond the question of what chances the Geneva Accord has of being implemented lies the question of whether the model it proposes is durable. Will the accord stand the test of time? After all, the Geneva model does not create equality between Israel and Palestine. In terms of territory, Palestine will extend over only 23 percent of the lands of Mandatory Palestine which the national movement sees as the homeland of the Palestinian people. Palestine will be a young state, laden with social and economic problems and home to strong currents of Islamic fundamentalism. What, therefore, will prevent it from striving in the future to correct the "historical injustice" and cancel the agreement it was forced to accept out of a position of weakness?

In fact, the Geneva Accord is not an agreement between two sides that are equal militarily. Israel's military might is far superior to that of the Palestinian national movement and, according to the accord, will remain superior to that of the State of Palestine. The Geneva Accord, like the historic compromise the PLO has proposed to the State of Israel since 1988, is based on the recognition that the Palestinians and the Arab states do not have the military capability to wipe Israel off the map and will not have such a capability in the future. Nonetheless, the Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular have the international legitimacy to demand the end of the Israeli occupation that has existed since 1967. Every Arab

peace initiative has rested on these foundations and on the decision to transfer resources from the confrontation with Israel to domestic needs. The Palestinians who signed the Geneva Accord have adopted this approach. They opted for the establishment of a state on the 1967 borders and the realization of its human and touristic potential instead of dreaming of the destruction of Israel and paying the heavy price this entails. The situation in the economic sphere is similar to that in the security sphere. The economic articles of the Geneva Accord have not yet been written, but they are not expected to create economic equality between Israel and Palestine. Any Israeli-Palestinian agreement will regulate the economic relations between the two states but will not put them on an equal footing. Equality between Israel and Palestine will be anchored in the legal status of the two states. In brief, the large economic and military gap between Israel and Palestine will remain. Even if the radical Islamic forces come to power in Palestine, they will be unable to realize their dream.

The Geneva Accord does not outline the path to realization of the Israeli or Palestinian dreams of national expansion and exclusive control over what is the shared homeland of two nations. The Geneva Accord rests on the recognition of the need for a historic compromise. The Palestinian dream about the 1948 lands is unrealistic and has taken a heavy toll on the Palestinians. The perpetuation of the occupation of the 1967 lands is beyond Israel's capability and is destroying it. Instead of a lose-lose situation, the Geneva Accord offers a win-win alternative.

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