

Making of Peace: A Case Study of Geneva Accords

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Abstract

On August 15, 2021, Taliban completed the occupation of Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. Since two decades, American forces were deployed in Afghanistan with the objective of promoting democracy, eliminating terrorism and securing peace in the South Asian region. After spending more than \$ 2 trillion in Afghanistan and losing 0.15 millions of human lives with the aim to purge South Asian region from radicalism, America had to retreat to its home by seceding to the extremist forces. International agencies have frozen its aid and Afghanistan is at the cusp of socio-economic collapse. Human development indices is at the lowest. Mortality rate is high. Unemployment is at a record high. Education is no longer a fundamental right of girls. Hijab and burqa have become mandatory for women and basic freedom has been denied to Afghan women. The fall of democracy and the occupation of Afghanistan by a non-state extremist actor does not augur well for the South Asian region. The region that's already a host to the fragile Pakistan State where military and non state actors rules the roost; an aggressive and expansionist China, a military State Burma, a constitutionally weak Nepal and an economically muddled Sri Lanka, the entry of Taliban has already made situation worse for India. In such a grim scenario, it becomes significant to study the reasons for the failure of political agreements that caused the fall of Afghanistan to extremist forces. The paper is based on a qualitative study that will deploy interpretative analysis to study why the peace making failed in Afghanistan. The case study is Geneva Accords signed in 1988. The paper will be largely helpful in understanding the causes for the fall of peace-making agreements namely Geneva Accords and the collapse of democratic institutions in Afghanistan. It will also analyse why the Geneva Accords could not bring conflict to an end in Afghanistan. The paper will aid in policy formulation required by the international community to grapple the Afghanistan crisis and open the doorway to further research on ending conflict in Afghanistan. The paper is divided into following sections: Peace making: Its definition, prospects and challenges; analysis of Geneva Accords and its failure.

Introduction

Democratic authority institutionalization should remain at the centre of peace building strategy, because it facilitates the conditions necessary to mediate competing domestic interests and to address root causes of a conflict peacefully. (Ponzio, 2007)

Richard J. Ponzio in his article Transforming Political Authority: UN Democratic Peace building in Afghanistan argued in favour of building democratic institutions to resolve conflict peacefully. Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World emphasised that the stable and democratic governing institutions are necessary for consolidating peace in fragile

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states.(HDR, 2002) Institutions play a significant role in conflict resolution and peace building. But building of institutions requires impartiality, transparency, accountability, mediation and negotiation by the international or regional community to contribute in State building.

The event of 17 July, 1973 when Daoud, in response to the unpopular reforms under New Democracy, master-minded the bloodless coup on Zahir Shah which proved to be a game changer in Afghanistan's politics. Daoud after its arrival on the national stage wanted to reduce the presence of communists and this angered the Soviet Union who then sent a 'limited military contingent' on 27 April, 1978 to eliminate Daoud and his entire family. (Khalidi, 1991) Soviet invasion costed very dearly to Afghanistan which was already one of the poorest countries in the world. The invasion left the country in tatters. Official estimates of Afghan civilian deaths stood at 850,000 to 1,500,000.(Kaplan, 2001) 5-10 million fled to Pakistan and Iran and 2 million were displaced.

In 1980s, half of all refugees in the world were Afghans. (Kaplan, 2001) 1.2 million Afghans were disabled and 3 million were maimed and wounded. Irrigation systems which are important to Afghanistan's arid climate were destroyed in bombing and strafing. Population of Kandahar, second largest city of Afghanistan, was reduced from 200,000 to 25,000 due to carpet bombing and bulldozing by Soviet and Afghan communist forces in 1987. (Hilali, 2005) Planting of land mines caused great deal of damage to civilians. Afghanistan ranked 170 out of 174 in UNDP's Human Development Index due to the prolonged conflict. It had the lowest life expectancy at 42 years, literacy rate of 24% and highest Infant Mortality Rate of 168 per 1000 births in 1986-87.(HDR, 1990) Basic necessities of life were unavailable. Only 9% had access to safe drinking water. Geneva Accords were signed to bandage the 'bleeding wound'. But the conflict continued in the form of civil war and the Taliban rule further isolated the country from progress and development. And then came September 11, 2001 when the twin towers came crashing down and along with it the hopes and aspirations of Afghans to live a peaceful life. Turbulence encompassed the country once again. And on October 7, 2001 America marched its troops in Afghanistan with the objective to destroy the terrorist bases in the country. 13 years of protracted war brought further agony and despair to Afghans. Afghanistan is again at the ladder of lowest Human Development Index. It stands at 175 amongst 187 countries in the 2013 Human Development Report. Life Expectancy is at 49.1. (HDR, 2013) Human Development Index has increased marginally from 0.209 in 1980 to 0.374 in 2012. UN initiated Bonn agreement was signed in 2002 to resolve the ongoing conflict and help in peace building. But not much break through has been achieved. Olivier P. Richmond has placed great significance in liberal peace building and is also highlighting peace as governance model for the holistic and inclusive development. But before embarking upon liberal peace building and emancipatory peace, it is important for the international, State and non-State actors to converge and outline the fundamental ideas and principles on which conflict resolution and peace building will occur. In this chapter, regional and international initiatives, I will be discussing Geneva Accords that played a significant role in crafting the destiny of Afghanistan. Before that, let us talk about peace making.

Peace Processes

Diplomacy is a continuation of war by other means UN defines Peace Making as an action to bring hostile parties to an agreement, essentially through peaceful means of negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration or through international law provided by international courts. It is an extension of parties own effort to manage their own conflict. John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty define peace processes as peace initiatives involving the main antagonists in a protracted conflict. (Darby & Ginty, 2003) They can be formal or informal, public or private, or subject to popular endorsement or restricted to elite level engagement. They can be sponsored by United Nations or external parties or internal parties. Darby and Ginty acknowledge that most peace processes are fragile and they are bound to fail sooner than later. In 2000, they suggested five criteria for successful implementation of peace accord: protagonists should be willing to negotiate in good faith, key actors to be included in the process, negotiations address key issues in dispute, force is not used to achieve disputes, and

negotiations are committed to sustained process. And besides these criteria, pre-negotiations contacts may be used, constitutional and political outcomes at the outset is not necessary but is important in the long run to complete the peace process.

John Campbell says that peace processes happen when the time is ripe. 'You have to do the right thing at the right time'. (Campbell, 1976) Henry Kissinger supported Campbell by saying that 'stalemate is the most propitious condition for settlement'. (Zartman, 2001) Mutually Hurting Stalemate (MHS) is a concept when the warring parties are neither winning nor ready to surrender but the costs of the sustained war is hurting them economically, socially and psychologically. At this point, the situation is ripe for the mediation and negotiation. But Zartman says that it is only a condition necessary but not sufficient for the initiation of negotiations. It is not self fulfilling or self implementing. Opportunities must be seized by the mediator or directly by the parties to reach a conclusion. They have to make use of predictions to find elements necessary for productive inauguration of negotiations. (Darby & Ginty, 2003) Stedman and Lieberfeld believe that the presence of strong leadership recognized as representative of each party and that can deliver compliance to the agreement is necessary for the mediation or negotiation to be successful. Itamar Rabinovich appreciates the usefulness of the concept but criticizes as less valuable at operational level. Firstly, there may be hurting stalemate situations when increasing pain increases resistance. John Darby and Roger MacGinty opines that reinforcement is the normal response to opposition: 'don't give up without a fight', 'no gain without pain', 'hold the course, whatever the cost', 'when the going gets tough, the tough gets going', and 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try again'. Secondly, MHS is dependent on conflict. The concept itself rules out any pre-emptive conflict resolution and preventive diplomacy. Even Lederach associates Zartman's 'ripeness' with rear view mirror. He also says that ripeness is in the eye of beholder. Thirdly, Darby and Ginty say that ripeness can be a fleeting opportunity which if missed can be a lost opportunity. Fourthly, MHS is concerned with the initiation of negotiation but does not talk about the successful conclusion of it. Lederach gives alternative ways for peace making to happen. One, Cultivation of long term relationships which implies deep respect for and connection to the context is critical for sustaining a change process that is moving from deadly conflict to increased justice and peace. Two, naivety - the art of possible is an art which seeks a way to reach towards a deeper source of what is possible and needed to keep a constructive change process alive and healthy. Following are listed the benefits and disadvantages of having a peace agreement:

Benefits of Peace Agreement

Bernard Mayer in 'Staying with Conflict' lists benefits and disadvantages of a peace agreement.

Benefits of a Peace Agreement are:

a. Containing Conflict

Agreements lay down behavioural guidelines for disputants which aid in preventing the sustenance or escalation of conflicts.

b. Focus the conflict

When certain parts of conflicts have been addressed, the actors can focus on the other important areas of conflict.

c. Creating new Platforms or Processes for Conflict

Conflict Management offers opportunities to focus on more productive conflict process or arena.

d. Establish relationships and promote dialogue

Sometimes, it is more important to engage the disputants in dialogue which helps in establishing relations rather than to have an accord.

e. Create a new conflict frame

During the process of creating an agreement, the fundamental conflict may be redefined. This is also known as conflict transformation. It might happen in some circumstances that conflict may have been

diverted from real issues or the real issues might never have been thought/discussed over. The process helps in surfacing the real issue and redefining conflict.

f. Protect Rights

The formation of an agreement might not reduce/contain tensions but it might help in protecting rights of vulnerable and marginalized sections of society.

g. Deal with immediate problems that demand attention

An agreement deals with immediate problem that is causing unrest and conflict.

h. Reflect and memorialize progress

Agreement is a measure of the progress achieved in a conflictual society. It shows the consensus or the dissent amongst disputants and to rework on it further.

Disadvantages of a Peace Agreement

a. Sap energy

Drawing up a peace agreement is an energy intensive process and exhausts the actors involved.

b. Disempower Disputants

Focusing on long term agreements can isolate the disputants and shift the attention from the main concern.

c. Cloud the essential issue

Agreements do help in crystallizing an issue but it obfuscates or sweeps the real concern.

d. Damage relationships

An agreement where on one side builds relations also facilitates in damaging relations because a party might be coerced in an agreement or the terms of the agreement might be biased or partial to the other side. It can also set up long term expectations which when unfulfilled can mar the relations.

e. Encourage destructive behaviour

“You don’t make peace with friends. You make it with unsavory enemies.” Yitzhak Rabin once said negotiating with terrorists. An agreement engages with parties who have been part of conflict or instigated conflicts to extract their interests.

Geneva Accords

Continuity in foreign policy has nothing in common with a simple repetition of what has been done; especially in tackling the problems that have piled up...there is a need for an orientation of dialogue and mutual negotiation rather than confrontation. (CIA Historical Program, 2014)

With this ostentatious reasoning, Gorbachev wanted to band aid the ‘bleeding wound’ of Afghanistan. Matin-ur-Rehman Murtaza explains the fundamental issues in ‘Afghanistan problem’ to stable peace and restoration of Afghanistan’s sovereignty, independence and Islamic status. He adds that that “it is with reference to this problem that effectiveness and practical utility of the Geneva Accords are to be examine. (Noorani, 1988)

UN launched the Geneva process in 1981 and the talks formally started on 16 June, 1982 which culminated to Geneva Accords on 14 April, 1988. The Accords were signed between Afghanistan and Pakistan under the auspices of United Nations. And USSR and Washington adopted the role of observer status.

From Confrontation to Cooperation: Reasons behind Geneva Accords

The Geneva Accord is another major significant development in the history of international relations, indicating a subtle shift in superpower's stance from confrontation to cooperation. (Ali, 1988)

From 'The Great Game' in Afghanistan, it became a 'The Dirty Game' with two superpowers fighting to attain influence in the region. Ten years of long Soviet 'limited military contingent' presence was finally to be ended with the Geneva Accords. But what are the reasons for this turn around? In this section, we will deal with why the superpowers decided to abandon Afghanistan?

a. Realist policy of US

US involvement in Afghanistan was solely based on realistic intentions. Initially, Washington along with Islamabad benefitted from Soviet's intervention. United States portrayed herself as a global leader and started criticizing Soviet Union on international forum. USA projected USSR as a militant aggressive power who has breached sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country. Mehrunnisa Ali says that Washington relished diminishing Soviet image in the Third World, particularly in the Muslim countries, on account of its military action in Afghanistan. President Reagan described USSR as an 'evil empire'. The loss of Soviet men, money and prestige added to US's happiness. Ali further adds that since the intervention has helped Washington to make out a case against Moscow in the comity of nations, it was in no haste to expedite the process of settlement. But this policy of laughing at somebody's fall could not sustain for long. Reagan got mired in his international dealings which affected the image of United States. The ruling of International Court of Justice against US intervention in Nicaragua, Salvador's refusal to accept US commandos to provide training to the Contras in El Salvador and Panama, and the US Congress refusal in February 1988 to approve fresh military supplies for the Contras were political setbacks for the Reagan administration. Moreover, Reagan administration was exposed for secretly dealing with Iran in context of negotiating the release of American hostages in Lebanon in exchange for arms and spare parts and reported diversion of Iranian money paid for the purchase of arms to the Contras caused uproar inside and outside the Congress. President Reagan's National Security Adviser, Poindexter was made to resign and a staff official, Oliver North was dismissed who had organized the arms deliveries to Iran. United States also has to face severe criticism for its support to racial regime in South Africa. Therefore, the settlement of long drawn war in Afghanistan would have given the much required fodder to improve the image of United States.

Another issue which was vexing United States was the growing insecurity to the Western shipping in the Gulf and Iran-Iraq's threat to the Western oil supply lines. Mehrunnisa Ali says

President Reagan could not penalise Teheran economically by enforcing an embargo against that country. Any resolution in the Security Council in this regard was likely to be vetoed by the Soviet Union. By letting the Soviet Union to withdraw honorably from Afghanistan, Washington perhaps hoped to minimise the chances of Soviet intervention in the Gulf in the event of a US show of strength or use of force against Iran. It is significant that four days after the signing of Geneva accords, the US navy destroyed Iran's oil platform and struck six Iranian civilian planes, killing all 290 persons on board. The United States, however, admitted that this incident was a mistake. Moscow denounced the incidents but took no concrete measures to checkmate the US designs in the Gulf.

Pakistan was also one of the factors responsible for change in US's attitude. The influx of refugees was burdening the already poor economy of Pakistan. Teeming refugees were making a serious political, social and economic impact on Pakistan. The increasing incidents of sabotage in Pakistan by the agents of Khad, frequent bombing of Pakistan territory by Afghan planes, and involvement of some Afghan refugees in drug trafficking and gun running in the country were matters of grave concern. Pressure was mounting on General Zia to find a quick solution to the problem of Afghanistan.

b. Détente in Sino-USSR relations

The political scenario in Asia was changing with improvement in China-USSR relations. China's modernization policy was looked with respect by Gorbachev. They were also cooperating in economic and nuclear energy fields. Border talks were resumed after 8 years in 1987. Chinese officials visited Mongolia for the first time in last twenty years to discuss border issue and Soviet also reciprocated

by reducing troops strength on the Mongolian and Chinese border. So USA was under this impression that Soviet's disengagement from the region will lead to diversion of aid by China to armed resistance groups in Afghanistan. And this may also reduce influence of Sino-US strategic ties.

c. Soviet Union's house is not in order

None has a monopoly of the truth, the two sides declare that they have no intention of imposing their notions about social development on anyone, and that both recognize socialist parties inalienable right to choose their ways of social development independently.

18 March, 1988 issuance of Soviet-Yugoslav declaration indicated the irrelevance of Brezhnev Doctrine in the changing international situation.

The involvement of USSR in neighbor's trouble was costing USSR very dearly. The Russians were paying \$3 million a day subsidy to finance the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, and \$1.8 billion a year aid to Vietnam. The Russian economic assistance to Afghanistan stood about \$220 million a year. Despite such heavy investment of superior military power and resources in Afghanistan, the victory to Soviets was still eluding because of the consistent aid to resistance groups. Also, the revival of ethnic disturbances in Azerbaijan and Armenia perturbed Soviet authorities.

Shortcomings in Geneva Accords

Geneva Accords were signed on 14 April, 1988 and since then neither war has stopped, even for a single day, despite partial withdrawal of Soviet armed forces nor the conditions conducive to safe and sound repatriation of Afghan refugees has been created.

Zain Noorani's words aptly sums up the post Soviet withdrawal condition in Afghanistan. The war did not abate. Instead, the fighting which till now was confined to the polygamic rivalries now got spilled to the societal level where different ethnicities fought each other for wresting power. Taliban imposed strict *Shariah* law which caused serious violations of human rights. The question is why the Accords, initiated by UN, and under the observation of two superpowers USA and USSR failed? The reasons are many. Matir-ur-Rahman Murtaza says that "neither the real parties at war were correctly identified and made to sit across the negotiation table nor a complete and total solution to the Afghanistan problem was set as a goal for the talks. Mohammed Ahsen Chaudhri says that "an Accord is a process not a goal".(Chaudhri, 1988) Zain Noorani complements Chaudhri and says "the accords could not be expected to bring peace to Afghanistan by themselves, but they will lead us to the achievement of our goals".(Noorani, 1988) To quote A.S. Abraham, an Indian analyst "...altogether the Soviet offer to leave Afghanistan is not so much an end of an 8 year old conflict as only the beginning of an end". Therefore, to presume that Afghanistan's conflict will end with the signing of an agreement was a wrong notion. (Abraham, 1988)

Secondly, we will now be critically analyzing the objectives set in the Accords.

a. Bilateral agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the principle of mutual relations, in particular on non-interference and non-intervention. Matin-ur-Rahman Murtaza criticizes that it looks more like an accord of non-interference rather than a peace treaty. (Noorani, 1988) It further implies that it is a protocol agreed upon by two neighboring countries to harmonize strained relations and to respect each other's sovereignty with a clear understanding that they will not a. interfere in each other's affairs b. will not challenge each other's political system. Most importantly, the accord was signed between Afghanistan and Pakistan which gives a distorted picture of reality. The conflict emerged due to the invasion of Soviet in Afghanistan. But the reality was obscured so as to salvage a superpower's image.

Ironic though it may sound, the Soviet Union, a major party to the conflict, has been given the status of a guarantor to the Geneva Accords. A question arises that if the Soviet Union can be a guarantor in this dispute then what was the dispute? As is well known, dispute arose on the induction of Soviet armed forces into Afghanistan. The Soviet Union is the principal accused in the dispute, an invader. How the principal accused party could be accepted as a guarantor for her own good conduct.

Murtaza opines that an immediate ceasefire and negotiations should have been arranged between the parties at war in Afghanistan which was overlooked and ignored.

The second instrument in the Geneva Accords which was not realized is the issue of phased withdrawal. The Accords had provisioned “an agreement on inter-relationships for the settlement of the situation relating to Afghanistan signed by Pakistan and Afghanistan and by the Soviet Union and the United States as guarantor-states. This instrument provided for a phased withdrawal of the foreign troops starting 15 May, 1988.” (Bokhari, 1991) But the withdrawal of troops was not achieved. Instead, the superpowers agreed on ‘negative symmetry’. It means that the superpowers will continue to supply arms to their respective friends- the Najib Regime and the Afghan Mujahedeen. The Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, has made it clear that the Soviets would continue to supply arms to Kabul under 1921 treaty of friendship (the first international agreement signed by Afghanistan with any nation since declaring independence in 1919). So it was more of a peace treaty for Russians and the continuation of war for Afghans. No abatement of violence and conflicts was in sight under this Accord. Murtaza comments that “the Soviet insistence on her right to continue the supply of arms to the Najib regime is a negation of the Accords”. (Noorani, 1988) He further states “the problem of Afghanistan has not yet been resolved. The only option left for the Afghans is to continue their war of liberation till a victory is achieved”. Rossane Klass says that there was no mention of non-uniformed personnel.

It makes no mention of the thousands of other, non uniformed Soviet forces and personnel in Afghanistan-military, civilian and KGB, who control all agencies of the Afghan government. According to official Soviet and Afghan statements, these categories are in fact specifically excluded from this clause. At a news conference on April 28, the Afghan regime's leader, Dr. Najibullah, said that even Soviet military advisers were permitted to stay under the terms of the accords, and would remain. (Klass,1988)

Also it talks about withdrawal about does not mention restoration of order and peace in Afghanistan which is the need of an hour. Secondly, the supply of arms by the two superpowers will result in dumping of arms in the South Asian region and this will aid in providing impetus to the booming arms industries in their countries.

The third objective of recognition of the inalienable right of Afghan people to design and formulate their own socio-economic and political system without any foreign intervention was also swept under the carpet. Clause 1 of Article 2 reads:

To respect the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity, national unity, security and non-alignment of the other high contracting party, as well as the national identity and cultural heritage of its people.

But a contradictory Clause 4 and 5 of Article 2 forbids the parties from raising any question with regard to socio economic and political system of each other. This implicitly implies and endorses the alignment and client status of Afghanistan. This status quo in socio economic and political system also violates other related provisions in the Geneva Accords. Firstly, the restoration of independent, non aligned and sovereign status of Afghanistan. To Afghanistan, non aligned means not being aligned to any country opposed to Islam and Islamic movements. And such concept will not be liked by superpowers, so they have continued occupying Afghanistan. Also, Soviets have penetrated deep inside the Afghan society and it was difficult to grant them an independent status. Since 1978, and especially since 1986, hundreds of agreements, treaties and protocols have been concluded between the Afghan regime and the U.S.S.R. and Eastern-bloc countries, particularly East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria and, in the last year or so, between individual Soviet republics, cities and their Afghan counterparts. These give the Soviets and their allies total control of Afghanistan's economy, its rich natural resources, education, media and other social and political institutions. Political and economic structures are being set up to control and possibly detach the mineral-rich provinces north of the Hindu Kush ranges from the southern areas which have been so devastated by the war.(Klass, 1988) The second provision violated is of voluntary repatriation of refugees. Since the Soviet troops are still present in Afghanistan, and the superpowers are continuing with the supply of arms and the socio economic and political system remains unquestioned, there is no hope for the

situation to change. So the repatriation of refugees was a distant possibility. Rossane Klass says that though accord said that the return was voluntary but it envisaged the return to be completed within 18 months and makes no provision for refugees who may not choose to return. Also, majority of the refugees are farmers and villagers and the land to which they would have returned would have been a ruined and deserted wasteland. Klass also mentions

Out of 22,000 villages in pre-war Afghanistan, an estimated 15,000 have been destroyed and another 5,000 made uninhabitable. Most refugees will have no homes to return to only heaps of rubble and no money with which to reconstruct their lives. Millions of farm animals have been deliberately slaughtered. The millenia-old irrigation systems on which farming depends have been destroyed, the orchards and vineyards cut down, the fields strewn with an estimated five million mines. Water supplies, health care, educational systems, road networks all have been wiped out, especially in the belt south of Kabul.

The fourth major point is that it does not specifically mention the formation of interim government. Najibullah controlled 20 percent of Afghanistan and Mujahedeen was occupying 80%. And since the real actors involved in the conflict including Mujahedeen were not brought to the tables of Geneva Conference, so the notion of forming an interim government seemed baseless. Najib also did not show any intention of stepping down and was banking on 80,000 KHAD personnel, secret police of Russians, to keep himself in power. Najibullah convened *Loya Jirgah* in 1987 was non-representative of large sections. Mujahedeen, five million Afghan refugees and people unsympathetic to Kabul regime were not represented.

Despite the shortcomings, Cordovez remarked “the documents have made very useful contributions to peace”.(Novosti Press Agency, 1988) Mehrunnisa Ali states that “Notwithstanding the shortcomings, the Afghan peace package would not have been possible without a prior understanding and willingness on the part of the superpowers to accommodate one another’s point of view”(Ali, 1988). Soviet government pointed out that the dialogue in Geneva succeeded "owing to both sides' readiness to take account of one another's interests”.

Conclusion.

Will Rogers once remarked,

Take the diplomacy out of the war and things would fall flat. (Mayer,2009)

But things also fall flat when fair diplomacy is not carried out efficiently. And this is what happened in Afghanistan’s case. The agreements in Afghanistan violated the fundamental tenets of peace making. First, in both the agreements, the protagonists in the conflict were not involved. In Geneva, the blame was shifted on Pakistan and Afghanistan and the main players USSR and USA in the game became the guarantors in Geneva Accord. It’s akin to the culprits becoming the judges. And the agreement which was drafted had the entire rules of the game changed. Geneva Accords did nothing to nip in bud the forthcoming ethnic tensions.

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