

“Geneva” as a brand: conventions, accords and summits

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In the twentieth century the name of Geneva became a brand of international law and diplomacy. The Geneva Conventions of 1949, which form the foundation of contemporary international humanitarian law, bear the name of the city in which they were negotiated and signed. The Geneva Accords of 1954 on Indochina, the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, and the meetings between American and Soviet, later Russian, leaders in 1955, 1985 and 2021 made the city the venue for negotiations that the parties wish to hold on neutral ground.¹ This brand has a value for the financial centre that the following chapters examine: it associates the name of the city with neutrality, law and negotiation, qualities that wealth management, arbitration and commodity trading all claim for themselves.

The brand also has its constraints. A city whose name evokes humanitarian law does not easily tolerate affairs that link its financial centre to dictators, trafficking or corruption, a contradiction that the critics of the centre, traced in Parts E, H and I, have often invoked. International Geneva and the financial centre thus share a common reputation, and each may fall victim to the failings of the other. This interdependence, which Chapter II of this Part describes, is one of the reasons why the umbrella organisations of the financial centre support International Geneva, and why the international organisations expect the centre to conduct itself in accordance with the standards they produce.

1 Notes

1. Wikipedia (en), “Geneva Conventions”: four conventions adopted by the Geneva diplomatic conference (21 April – 12 August 1949), in force on 21 October 1950, ratified by 196 States, supplemented by the Additional Protocols of 1977 and 2005; Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Geneva Accords”: conference from 26 April to 21 July 1954, ceasefire line at the 17th parallel; Wikipedia (en), “Geneva Summit (1955)”: summit opened on 18 July 1955 (Eisenhower, Bulganin, Eden, Faure), “Open Skies” plan; Wikipedia (en), “Geneva Summit (1985)”: Reagan–Gorbachev meeting of 19–21 November 1985 (villa Fleur d’Eau, Maison de Saussure). ↩

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