

# Historic Peace in the Middle East

by Michael Curtis



**The dogs may bark, the caravan moves on.** Is it an earthquake or simply a shock.?

News from the Middle East is usually cast in gloom and doom in a dark picture. What a delight that a positive image has emerged with the information that, with the help of the United States, a peace deal to normalize relations has been agreed between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, UAE. The UAE is a kingdom comprising seven small entities called Emirates, possessing oil and natural gas reserves. Its capital Dubai is an important economic center, the most populous city and the business hub of the area.

A three-way phone call on August 13, 2020 announced an Abraham

accord, salam Aleykum v'shalom aleynu, (peace unto you and peace unto us) between the two countries. This accord, involving direct flights, exchange of embassies, and sets of bilateral agreements, will advance peace in the Middle East region, though it leaves the Palestinian issue unresolved. It affirms the validity of the remark by Abba Eban, "History teaches us that men and women behave wisely once they have exhausted all other alternatives."

This accord is the third agreement reached by Israel with an Arab country: peace was achieved with Egypt on March 26, 1979, after the Camp David Accords and with Israel's withdrawal from Sinai, and with Jordan on October 26, 1994 with adjustment of land and water disputes. Otherwise, the Arab states, since 1948, have remained technically at war with Israel. President Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu joins Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Rabin as an Israeli peace maker.

The historic diplomatic break-through, brokered by the U.S. has two crucial elements: the UAE agrees to negotiate to a condition of full normalization and diplomatic relations with Israel, and to strengthen trade and technology, while Israel is committed to suspend any plans to "annex" any physical property in the West Bank. Already, there is cooperation between the countries in the delivery of coronavirus test kits, and collaboration between the two sides on technological matters. The countries, which face many common challenges, will mutually benefit from this historic achievement, which is intended to improve the region, spur economic growth, and introduce technological innovation.

The arrangement does not transform the Middle East, which remains a setting of tribalism, religious animosities, and sectarianism, but it is an important step for new opportunities in the area and particularly understanding of two factors: the benefits of collaboration; and the danger of Iran that has ambitions to disrupt and control the region. There have already been months of recent economic and social

collaboration between Israel with some Arab countries, particularly in coping with Covid-19 and other medical affairs, health care and medical innovation. At least one UAE dignitary was treated in the