

FORUM

When Scholarship Disturbs Narrative

• • • *Ian Lustick on Israel's Migration Balance*

Comment by Sergio DellaPergola



ABSTRACT: In response to Ian Lustick's article on Israel's migration balance in the previous issue of *Israel Studies Review*, I question the author's (lack of) theoretical frame, data handling, and conclusions, all set up against a robust narrative. I show that, until 2010, Israel displayed a positive, if weakened, migration balance and that immigration trends continued to reflect conditions among Diaspora Jewish populations more than Israel's absorption context. Emigration rates from Israel, while admittedly difficult to measure, were objectively moderate and proportionally lower, for example, than those of Switzerland, a more developed country of similar size, or those of ethnic Germans returning to and then again leaving Germany. The main determinants of emigration from Israel—namely, 'brain drain'—consistently related to socio-economic changes and not to security. I also reject Lustick's assumptions about the ideological bias of Israel's research community when dealing with international migration. Scholarship about Israel should not ignore global contextualization and international comparisons.

KEYWORDS: *aliyah*, economy, emigration, immigration, Israel, Lustick, security, *yeridah*, Zionism

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth—i.e., the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking, in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question.

—Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*

Don't confuse us with your data: we know the situation.

—O.Y., an Israeli politician, to the author, ca. 2000

A frequently heard complaint in academic circles is that a good piece of scholarship can be spoiled by its underlying narrative. The scientific apparatus and all of the empirical evidence may be admirably in place, but there seems to be some ulterior motive in the author's reading and interpretation of the data that somewhat biases his conclusions. A similar but reverse thought occurs when reading an essay by Ian S. Lustick (2011), "Israel's Migration Balance: Demography, Politics, and Ideology," which appeared in the previous issue of *Israel Studies Review*. In this article, the main thrust is Lustick's continuing concern about the contemporary viability, legitimacy, and perhaps desirability of the current State of Israel (see also Lustick 2007; Mueller and Lustick 2008), and the reader's disappointment begins when the author seeks to superimpose his narrative on a scholarly argument about Israel's international migration trends.

In a nutshell, Lustick's article starts from the postulate that immigration—which from the outset he calls *aliyah*—is the main *raison d'être* of classical Zionism and of Israel's existence. In the absence of significant Jewish immigration and, worse, in the presence of growing Jewish emigration (*yeridah*), Israel's viability would be lost and the state might cease to exist. Since he believes that, indeed, immigration to Israel is steadily diminishing while emigration is rapidly increasing, Lustick (2011: 58) asks rhetorically: "Is emigration the sign of a massive and virtually inevitable failure of Zionism, leading to the disappearance of the country as we have known it?"

Such a narrative, if somewhat unpleasant to the ears of the normative *Homo Israelensis*, nonetheless deserves a fair hearing. A serious analysis of the diminishing impact of international migration on Israel's population balance—and, more broadly, on Israeli society—may usefully challenge the validity of long-standing assumptions or even expose the weaknesses of existing socio-demographic patterns and their relationship to political systems and other societal arrangements. Such a critique can potentially provide a refreshing stimulus, leading to a better understanding of those patterns or even to new policy interventions that might redress whatever has gone wrong. In the Israeli case, a strong connection exists between policy decisions emanating from above and spontaneous societal patterns unfolding from below, namely, migration.

Social and demographic trends—including fluctuations in migration frequencies—to some extent reflect cultural, economic, and other changes that occur unavoidably at the macro-social level of the global system outside of Israel and subsequently percolate down to the micro-social level of daily life inside the country. But migration flows are also largely motivated by the rational choices of many independent actors and significantly reflect their perceptions, as well as the implications of crucially important governmental and other institutional choices. In this respect,

Israel's paramount features—such as the continuing involvement in an unresolved military and political conflict, as well as other social class, economic, religious, cultural-ideological, and gender gaps and tensions, all of which may negatively impact both incoming and outgoing migration—do bear a wealth of critical scrutiny.

The paradox is that, within his critical framework, Lustick seemingly adopts a normative perspective that is supportive of a highly conventional and ethnocentric State of Israel. In his discussion of migrations, Lustick adopts the classic—if quite old-fashioned—approach of *aliyah* and *yeridah* as purely normative phenomena. For example, Lustick does not devote much attention to the conspicuous volume of labor immigration (partly legal, partly not) that, since the mid-1990s, has resulted from Israel's great leap forward on the economic development scale. He also ignores the more recent growing influx of refugees from African countries, including Sudan and Eritrea, which is a matter of interest due to the humanitarian, legal, political, and demographic consequences. These population movements definitely affect Israel's international migration balance. They not only allow a number of immigrants but also, in sharing the burden with most other contemporary developed societies, point to Israel becoming more similar to other countries.

Here, in his representation of Zionism, Lustick chooses to ignore the second half of the Zionist postulate, namely, the aspiration to 'solve' the Jewish problem by returning the Jews to the role of actors of their own history, empowering them with a sovereign state, like other actors. The role of ideology in such a state, even under the Herzlian paradigm, would not be unlimited, and other priorities would come to the fore, including legal arrangements, social justice, foreign relations, and—prominently—economic development. Being inherent in the Zionist project, the 'normalization of the Jews' cannot be neglected when discussing the past, present, and future fate of Israel, including its migration balance.

But it is not Israel's migration balance as such and its relation to the country's growing economic development, increasingly complex social structure, and normalization that seem to constitute Lustick's focus. Rather, it is the *Jewishness* of that migration balance and its ideological import. Lustick seems to be ostentatiously concerned with an Israel that should absorb large quantities of *Jewish* immigrants, should not feature *Jewish* emigration at all, and should maintain the *Jewishness* of its society vis-à-vis the dangers of ceasing to be a *Jewish* and democratic state, becoming instead a bi-national state under the momentum of the more rapid increase of its Arab minority. Actually, this fundamentally Jewish-core approach does not do justice to Lustick's latent post-Zionist agenda. It appears to be a sort of *reductio ad absurdum*, the true gist of which is that if Israel cannot keep to its own normatively biased,

inherently unstable, historically improbable mission, it has little proper value and is unavoidably destined to fade away soon from the Middle Eastern and global scene—and from social discourse, for that matter.

In his article, Lustick (2011) also seems to attribute a somewhat conspiratorial character to Israeli social scientists. He develops a three-fold typology of “treatments” in migration research that allegedly emerged from his survey of the Israeli literature: “emphasizing political factors” (ibid.: 45), “downplaying the migration balance as a key aspect of the demographic problem” (ibid.: 45), and emphasizing “the migration balance as important, but economically driven” (ibid.: 52). The term ‘treatments’, unlike the more neutral ‘theories’ or ‘hypotheses’, implies a more active intervention by the researchers to demonstrate—or manipulate—what they perceive as *their* truth. Indeed, Lustick tersely declares that no neutral, objective research has been performed, or can be performed, on migration by Israeli investigators—be they part of academia or of the Israel government’s Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)—because of their emotional involvement with the topic and its untreatable taboos. He writes: “It is difficult to expect Israeli scholars to produce analytically dispassionate efforts to weigh the long-term political significance of emigration” (ibid.: 58). In the face of such an indictment, the interested specialist or layman who also happens to be an Israeli has no choice but to keep silent.

Lustick, who does not suffer from that bias, can instead proceed to build a comprehensive potpourri of the prevailing migration discourse. He gives equal hearing to serious researchers—whose work was peer-reviewed through the usual academic procedures—and to political activists and publicists, whose work does not need to meet any professional standards. He reviews and cumulates the findings of people who are separated by huge analytical differences and, more importantly, by profound mutual disrespect. According to this non-selective approach, in the best-case scenario, Lustick’s innuendo is that the Israeli writers hide behind a curtain of technicalities aimed at making the argument impenetrable. The worst-case scenario is that scientists and non-scientists alike should be considered suspect, the implication being that they are positivist and biased, defensive and shrewd manipulators of data engaged in calculating how best their research conclusions would serve the establishment in facing Israel’s ‘demographic problem’. Such crafty construction of a seamless Israeli ‘discourse’ on migration, to be sure, generates a collective scenario quite close to demonization.

But Lustick’s real problems begin when he strives to cover his narrative with a coat of scholarship. If his is a study of international migration, the expectation is that his article on Israel would, if not systematically, at least selectively draw from the general literature on and theory about international migration, including, for example, Massey et al. (1993), Zlotnik (1994),

and Kivisto and Faist (2010). We find no hint of this in his bibliography. One would also expect to see him referring to some of the fundamental descriptive and analytic texts that have been published over the years about Israel's population trends with special reference to international migration, such as Sicron (1957), Bachi (1977), Friedlander and Goldscheider (1979), and Goldscheider (1996). But none makes Lustick's list. Neither have we found any of the more serious attempts to create an analytic conceptual framework for Israel's emigration patterns, such as in Ritterband (1977), Blejer and Goldberg (1980), and Lamdany (1982), and, more recently, in Gold (2002) and Rebhun and Lev Ari (2010). Nor do we find any suggestion of the more current theory-oriented and critical literature about Israel's migrations and their transnational meanings, which can be found, for example, in Leshem and Shuval (1998) and Ben-Rafael and Sternberg (2009). Thousands of pages of serious data- and theory-based works about Israel's incoming and outgoing migrants have been omitted in Lustick's review.

Likewise, we do not find any mention of journals such as *International Migration Review*, *International Migration*, or *Population and Development Review*. Instead, Lustick abundantly delves into such scholarly sources as *Arutz Sheva*, the *Forward*, *Ha'aretz*, the *International Herald Tribune* (reporting an interview with Avrum Burg), the *Jerusalem Post*, the *Jerusalem Report*, *Jewish Week*, *Nekuda*, the *New Jersey Jewish Standard*, the *Village Voice*, *Yediot Aharonot*, and *Ynetnews*. These sources are particularly problematic because they infiltrate an otherwise journalistic tale with 'data', or rather 'factoids' (such as the 50,000 returning Russian immigrants in Moscow, or the 40,000 Israelis in Berlin, or the 300,000 in Los Angeles), devoid of any control, reliability, or basis whatsoever. But these factoids, once a source has been mentioned, in a way become part of a more respectable argumentation.

When dealing with the specific forces that have generated immigration to and emigration from Israel and the respective net migration balance, it is not responsible to escape a serious review of the fundamentals of the global Jewish migration system over the last several decades. Since Lustick fails to deliver the goods, here is a much needed short summary (based on DellaPergola 2011). In the course of the last century and a half, dramatic ups and downs in the volume of Jewish migration globally reflected the changing incidence of push forces in the main regions of emigration under conditions of rapid geopolitical change and real or expected disruption of the relationship between the larger society and Jews. Changing opportunities in the available countries of immigration were also a decisive driver of the volume of Jewish migrations.

In the aftermath of World War II and the Shoah, the two moments of peak migration intensity occurred, first, with the end of World War II, the crisis of the British Empire, and the independence of Israel after May 1948

and, second, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. These circumstances, along with others of no less significance, albeit of somewhat less intensity, such as the end of French colonization in North Africa and the post-Six Day War revival of Jewish identity and anti-Israeli hostility across the Diaspora, point to the crucial dependency of significant developments in Jewish society—namely, large-scale migrations—on major transformations of the global geopolitical system and its Jewish Diaspora correlates.

Over the last 60 years, Israel has been the main recipient of Jewish international migrations, absorbing 63 percent of the total, while the Western countries absorbed 37 percent, 14 percent of which were generated by Israel itself. Israel received 65 percent of the total migration from Eastern Europe and 74 percent of the total from Asian and African countries. Israel continued to be the destination of a plurality of Jewish migrants in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Several major immigration waves occurred over time, deeply impacting the growth and socio-demographic structure of Israel's population. Each wave had a different composition, based on the countries of origin.

As noted, the earlier major wave occurred immediately after the independence of the state and included survivors from the Shoah and massive transfers of Jews from Islamic countries. The later wave was dominated by Jewish emigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU), together with the nearly complete transfer of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. Most of the intermediate waves were directly or indirectly related to major political or economic crises or perceived risks in the countries of origin. Rates of immigration relative to the number of inhabitants in Israel tended to diminish, reflecting the constant growth of the absorbing population.

During the more recent period, as the result of the massive emigration of Jews from the poorer and least democratic societies, which traditionally displayed high emigration propensities, the Jewish Diaspora became overwhelmingly concentrated in Western societies that were economically more developed and more prone to offer equal civil rights to their Jews. Emigration propensities from these countries have been traditionally low. Moreover, the rapid growth of Israel's population generated another large center whose emigration propensities will be described below in greater detail but which, in the meantime, we shall classify as rather low. In light of the concentration of Jews in the more developed and politically free countries, the frequency of Jewish international migration worldwide has tended to decrease and, short of major changes in the world system, will continue to be moderate in the foreseeable future.

A strong negative relationship exists between the propensity of Jews from a given country to migrate and the level of development in that same

country. The frequency of *aliyah* (i.e., immigration) per 1,000 Jews from 73 countries—assessed year after year, most recently in 2009—stands in significantly negative relationship with the ranking of countries by the Human Development Index (HDI), which is based on an assessment of national educational attainment, health, and income in US dollar purchase parities (UNDP 2010). This foreshadows rather low future migration intensities, provided that the current conditions continue to prevail without major ruptures and dislocations. The frequency of emigration from Israel per 1,000 inhabitants, too, is highly consistent with the level of human development of the country, now ranked fifteenth-best in the world out of about 180 countries (*ibid.*)—a respectable rating by all means—and is appropriate to the emigration frequency of a country of equal human development in international comparison.

These findings evidently contrast with the assumption that the volume and timing of immigration to and emigration from Israel would be unusually high and that it would be primarily motivated by ideational and not by socio-economic determinants, by crisis and dislocation and not by explainable gradualism. To be sure, the very preference of Israel over possible alternatives as a country of destination is indeed significantly ideational, if we refer to the individuals making such a choice. However, other migration patterns point to the prevalence of conventional rational choices.

In this respect, Lustick's mode of data presentation commands attention. He deliberately displays Israel's immigration data—and the international migration balance that mostly reflects immigration—beginning with 1991 (see Lustick 2011: 41, fig. 4; 42 fig. 5). The graphical result shows endless and rapid decline, which provides good grounds for his bleak data-based interpretation. One of the suggestions that teachers of quantitative social research methods give their beginning students is never, ever to display data by truncating the time series at the cusp or at the nadir. For example, if I display data on the number of New York City firefighters killed in service beginning with September 2001 through September 2010, I will show a sharply declining graph, which evidently offers a certain basis for interpretations. When the peak is the exception rather than the rule, it is sounder to show the more extended period of time in which the peak is a significant moment. Specifically, the explanatory event of Jewish migration in 1991 was the dismemberment of the USSR—the kind of circumstance that cannot be expected to recur often or to be the basis for business as usual. Lustick's display of a striking diminishing migration balance over time easily creates data-based alarmism. Had he shown the complete time series, starting in 1948, the visual effect, and probably his analysis, would have been different.

The overall comparison of immigration to and emigration from Israel between 1947 (the year before Israel's independence) and 2010 is described

in figure 1. The data do not include Israeli immigrant citizens. The wave-like unfolding of *aliyah* and the much lower and relatively stable level of *yeridah* (i.e., emigration from Israel) are quite evident.

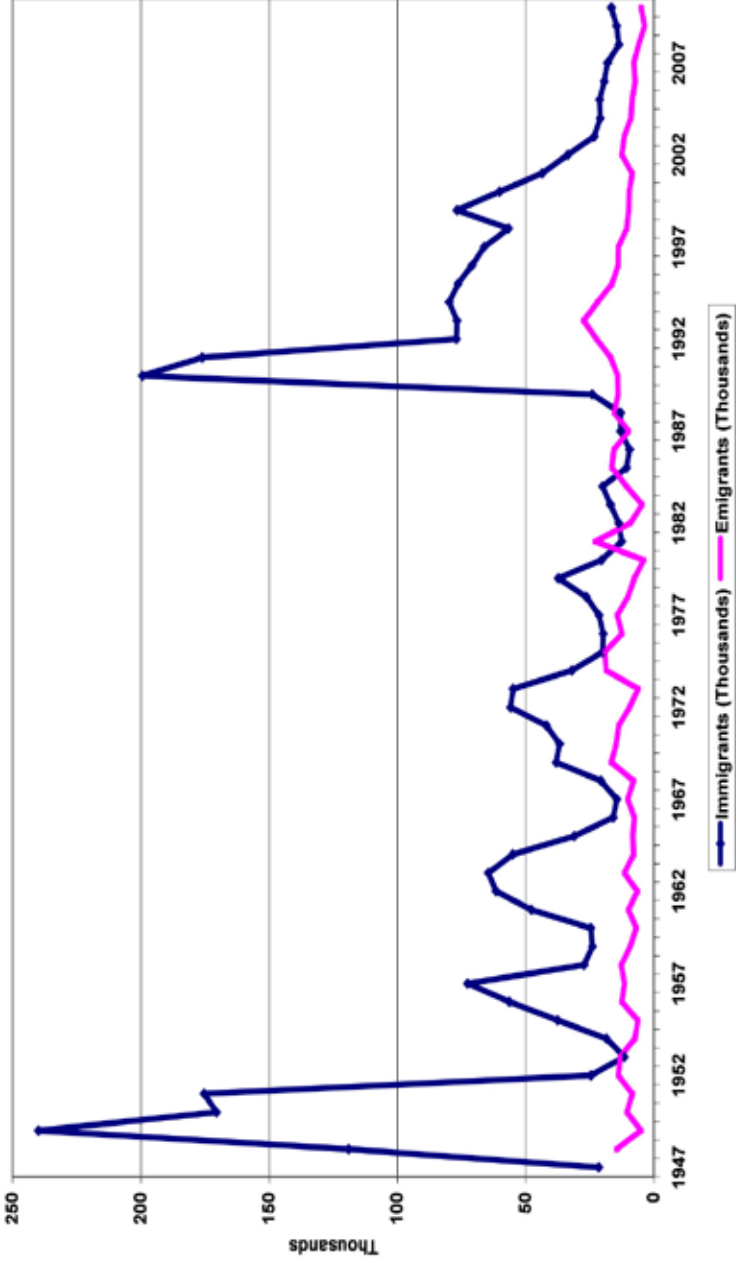
As to *yeridah*, it should be defined in the first place. The question, who is an Israeli abroad? is quite complex, since the whole pool may be composed of four different groups: (1) persons born in another country who, after a stay in Israel, returned to that same country; (2) persons born in another country who, after a stay in Israel, moved to a third country; (3) persons born in Israel; and (4) foreign-born children of Israelis of each of the preceding categories. By ignoring these distinctions and working with an amorphous pool of data, Lustick's article displays a major weakness, because each of these groups responds to different causal mechanisms and elicits different meters of judgment. Clearly, the designation 'Israeli emigrant' increasingly applies to the first three types, the first two typically referring to an immigrant who did not integrate and is not really an emigrant and the third being an individual who was fully socialized in Israel. Over time, the emphasis has been gradually shifting from the first and second types to the third (and fourth), a fact that represents the more significant and pressing subject of discourse about emigration.

The processes that shape Israel immigration and emigration operate at both macro and micro social levels. The latter are easier to envisage and more likely to produce immediate returns, but the effects of the former tend to be more massive and long-lasting. The more obvious mechanisms that may reduce emigration from Israel operate through the general level of economic development, job opportunities, stability, security, and satisfaction with Israeli society. However, more specific mechanisms relate to the peculiar circumstances of emigration and the characteristics of Israelis abroad. These include (1) comparatively high levels of education, which is especially relevant in a small market like Israel; (2) the widespread prevalence of immigrants (i.e., being foreign-born or the children of immigrants); (3) the persistence of family links and continuing emotional attachment to Israel; and (4) significant social networks that link Israelis living abroad.

Higher education and family networks abroad provide incentive for more frequent emigration from Israel. Family and social networks in Israel may provide incentives to return. Further aspects to be considered are the dynamics of acculturation and the absorption of Israeli emigrants in their new countries of residence, both in the general societal framework and within the Jewish community framework. These features, which provide indispensable clues for any serious analysis of emigration from Israel, are unfortunately ignored in Lustick's article.

Yeridah is admittedly difficult to measure. There are no direct data on the yearly number of Israelis explicitly declaring their intention to emigrate

FIGURE 1 New Immigrants and Emigrants, Israel 1947–2010



Source: Author's processing of yearly data from the CBS's *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, <http://www.cbs.gov.il>.

since the discontinuance in the 1960s or early 1970s of a form that was routinely submitted to passengers at Israel's exit ports, inquiring about the reasons for their trips. One of the options on the form was 'emigration'. The CBS had long known that those declarations had little reliability. In fact, the number of declared emigrants appeared to be consistently lower than the number of Israelis actually missing for prolonged numbers of years. Be it for reasons related to the psychology of the respondents or to their evolving travel plans, many emigrants tended to conceal their actual intentions and preferred to report 'study abroad' or 'business trip' or the like. The truth is that a large share of the Israelis abroad, even those who stay for extended periods of time, do not intend to become permanent emigrants but rather see themselves as expatriates for a limited amount of time. Indeed, the data on returning Israelis point to significant numbers actually making it back home after living abroad for 5, 10, or even 20 years.

The scarcity of direct records in the domain of emigration renders it necessary to use alternative means for assessing the volume of emigration. After exploring other more conjectural techniques, Lustick replicates a technique that others have used before him: knowing from Israel's population register how many people were added to the total pool during a given year, and knowing how much of the increase was generated by the natural increase (the difference between the number of births and deaths), the remainder must reflect the international migration balance (immigrants minus emigrants). In turn, the number of immigrants is constituted by new immigrants (known in Hebrew as *olim hadashim*), returning Israelis, and immigrant citizens. The foreign-born children of Israeli citizens who enter Israel for the first time in their lives but who hold an Israeli passport cannot be defined as new immigrants. Now, having the migration balance and its immigrant component, the residual emigrant component is easily computed. It is not an ideal procedure, but it is much better than having to rely mostly on intercensal estimates of population change, as does, for example, the United States, where no central population register exists and where the recording of movements across national frontiers is quite incomplete.

The available evidence on components of population growth allows for the provision of an overall estimate of the volume of 'missing Israelis' since the state's inception. Between May 1948 and the end of 2010, Israel's population grew by a total of 6,889,500, of which 4,318,700 was due to natural increase. Allowing for a total inter-census adjustment of 77,900,¹ this makes for a total net migration increase of 2,492,900. Knowing that total immigration amounted to 3,149,400, the total number of emigrants was 656,500. Relative to the Jewish population only, the total increase was 5,153,300, of which 2,208,900 was due to the net migration balance. Given a total of 2,860,100 immigrants, the estimated number of Jewish emigrants

was 651,200. The fact that the emigration figure for Jews is very close to that for the total population is explained by a more positive migration balance among non-Jews: both members of other religions (mostly Arabs) and non-Jewish members of Jewish households immigrated under the Law of Return. Of these estimated numbers of emigrants, over 100,000 were cumulated between 1948 and 1960.

When trying to estimate the total number of former Israeli residents now living abroad, one should consider that some of them have died since leaving. This must reduce the total pool of the above-mentioned first three types to probably around half a million persons, to which the fourth type of the born-abroad must be added. A total of three-quarters of a million can thus be (conservatively) reached, which represents about 10 percent of Israel's current population and stands against the myth of the 'million missing Israelis' (Chamie and Mirkin 2011). The latter nicely couples with the myth of the 'million missing Palestinians' (Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise 2005)—the high profile 'demographic' argument put forward against Israel's possible withdrawal from the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Returning to current migration trends, because of what Lustick views as diminishing *aliyah* and increasing *yeridah*, "we cannot know for certain that Israel's migration balance, especially with respect to Jews, has not dipped to or below zero in recent years" (Lustick 2011: 43). The truth is embarrassingly simple: we *do* know if we only take care to access the information in table 2.3 of the *Statistical Abstract of Israel* at the CBS's Web site.² In the table, we learn that over the years 2001–2009 Israel had a total positive migration balance of 160,700 persons, of which 75,500 were Jewish by the definition of the local rabbinate. Immigration exceeded emigration year after year. These figures do not include foreign workers and refugees.

As to 2010, the latest year on record, the CBS's *Statistical Monthly*³ shows that Israel's total population grew by 145,300, of which 126,915 was due to an excess of 166,255 births over 39,340 deaths, and 18,385 was due to an international migration net balance. The Jewish population grew by 99,400, of which 86,684 was due to 120,673 births minus 33,989 deaths, and 12,716 due to a positive migration balance. This last figure should actually be corrected downward to take into account Jewish population growth generated by a positive balance of conversions to and from Judaism. Given the stringent conversion policies followed by Israel's rabbinate, any such correction should involve only a few thousand, leaving a clear surplus of immigrants over emigrants in 2010.

These figures were quite accurately predicted by a team of Israeli demographers, who, in the year 2000, outlined the long-term future of the Jewish population in Israel and in the Diaspora (DellaPergola, Rebhun, and Tolts 2000). Noting that the mechanisms governing Jewish international

migration (in particular, immigration to Israel) respond to the variable conditions of Jewish communities worldwide, within the context of general political and socio-economic change at the global, national, and local levels, the projection suggested a total positive balance of 109,000 Jews for Israel in its migration exchanges with Diaspora Jewry over the years 2000–2010. This is a respectable performance in view of the actual figures just reported of Israel's total positive migration balance of about 180,000, of which about 85,000 were Jewish by the stricter definitional criteria in 2001–2010. In the above-mentioned projection, expectations for Israel's positive net migration balance in subsequent 10-year periods through 2050 were lower, and the future will tell.

The volume of this consistent and continuing prevalence of immigration over emigration in Israel is appreciably lower than in the two major peaks of the late 1940s and the early 1990s. However, it is not so much lower than in many other years of Israel's existence, and the migration balance has remained positive nonetheless. The last year on record with a negative migration balance was 1988—a year that joins 1926 (during the British Mandate), 1953, 1981, 1985, and 1986 as the rare occurrences of a migration deficit in Israel's history since the end of World War I. It is true that what in the past was a predominantly Jewish net migration balance has now gradually become a migration balance that is about half Jewish and half non-Jewish (again, by the strict definitions of the Israeli rabbinate). Having in any case established the clear fact of a continuing, although diminished, positive impact of migration on Israel's total and Jewish population growth, several striking facts are omitted (or perhaps censored) in Lustick's article.

One crucial fact forgotten by Lustick is that over the course of time the rate of emigration from Israel has been significantly declining. While the absolute number of emigrants was relatively stable in the long term—although with frequent short-term fluctuations—the total population size has steadily and consistently grown. The 5,000–15,000 annual emigrants of the early 1950s generated a much higher rate of emigration per 1,000 population than the 5,000–15,000 yearly emigrants of the late 1990s and of the first decade of the twenty-first century. This is evident in the data that Lustick (2011: 41) himself chooses to represent in his figure 3, which configures a horizontal (stable) pattern, although he seemingly is unaware of the implications. In the context of a growing population, stable data on emigration and returning migration of former immigrants to Israel clearly imply a declining relative incidence of the feature itself.

Contrary to Lustick's ideological and security-linked hypotheses, Israel's emigration fluctuations are predominantly and persuasively explained by changes in Israel's socio-economic standing. In effect, unlike the major

periodic immigration waves, emigration from Israel was contained within a relatively narrow range of variation and principally reflected short-term and relatively minor variations, mostly related to the business cycle and the status of the Israeli economy. High correlations exist between the level of emigration from Israel and measures of unemployment, income, foreign investment, and price stability. The fact that sometimes security problems and crises may have contributed to temporary slowdowns of the economic process does not detract from the fact that emigrants were primarily reacting to unemployment and career impairment rather than to terrorism or wars as such.

Overall, emigration from Israel can be seen as responding to six main determinants: (1) as a response to periodic changes in the main economic indicators, such as employment levels, price stability, and foreign investment, as in any other developed society; (2) as the return or circular migration of former immigrants who did not sufficiently integrate in the country or had, beforehand, decided to move to Israel for a short stay, as in any other society affected by large-scale immigration; (3) as a response to the closeness of correspondence between the immigrants' characteristics and the available pool of opportunities, mainly in the socio-economic and employment spheres; (4) as a response to the availability of employment opportunities abroad as against occupational bottlenecks in Israel; (5) as a response to events affecting security in the country; and (6) as an expression of the level of cultural and/or emotional identification with the State of Israel and its society.

No serious assessment of emigration from Israel can ignore these distinctions, and, as already noted, the social scientific literature has provided persuasive answers as to the relative weight of each factor in the overall picture. Economic drivers provide far better explanations than generic ideological or security-related variables, when facing the time-bound fluctuations in the volume of emigration from Israel. But one issue that should never be omitted when examining Israel's particular case is how different it is from other cases that might plausibly be taken for comparison. Lustick makes frequent reference to *high* and *low* levels of migration to and from Israel, but how high is *high* and how low is *low*, if compared with another country that has also experienced a significant level of international mobility?

To begin with, addressing the level of new immigrant retention is a fundamental prerequisite for understanding the overall meaning of migration in a given society. Israel's retention rate of new immigrants has been unusually high for a country that has absorbed large-scale immigration. For example, at the end of 2009, there lived in Israel 1,141,290 residents who had immigrated since 1989, as against a total number of 1,248,712

people who had immigrated under the Law of Return—mostly from the FSU—during the same period (CBS 2009). This means that the total of those who remigrated or died was 107,422, or 8.6 percent of the total number of immigrants. A relevant comparison is provided by ethnic Germans who immigrated to Germany between 1954 and 1999, also within the framework of a law providing special advantages to ‘repatriates’ to the motherland (or, in this case, the ‘fatherland’). In the case of ethnic Germans, the rate of attrition represented by those who left Germany after immigration was above 60 percent (Münz 2002)—seven times higher than new immigrants leaving Israel.

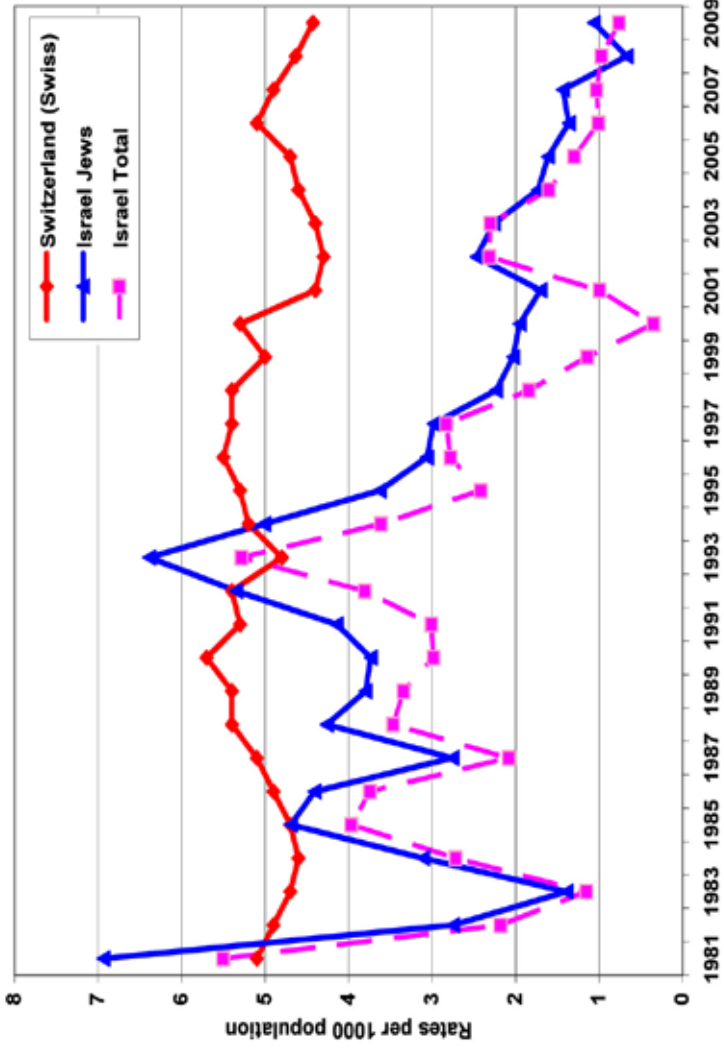
Another requisite that is missing in Lustick’s analysis is a serious effort to compare and contextualize—among the fundamentals in any serious scholarship. Actually, Lustick uses ‘contextualization’ in the negative, as if it were a device to manipulate and obfuscate the ‘true facts’, whereas in reality it is the essential tool to avoid manipulation. But he does recognize the need for comparison when it comes to viewing Israel as one example in a class of countries that have question marks about their future—or that actually did not survive. Particularly intriguing in this respect is his mention of Yugoslavia, which, in addition to suffering a dreadful civil war with hundreds of thousands of victims, some the consequence of ethnic massacres, also experienced hundreds of thousands of emigrants. But again, after raising the question of comparison, Lustick does not deliver the goods by showing empirical realities regarding migration patterns from any of these countries vis-à-vis Israel.

Let us, then, provide a relevant example of what should be done, namely, comparing the rate of emigration from Israel with that of another country with plausible similarities, such as similar population size, equal or higher socio-economic development, and sensitivity to the ethnic factor in defining national identity. For the sake of argument, one such country is Switzerland, often associated in the collective imaginary with idealized images of cleanliness, efficiency, technology, and wealth. True or false, in 2010 Switzerland was ranked thirteenth-best in the world according to the already mentioned HDI—the same year, as noted, in which Israel was ranked fifteenth.

Despite the enormous image gap separating Switzerland and Israel, one might expect, given that the two countries have such close HDIs, that the respective emigration rates should also be very similar. Figure 2 shows the actual emigration rates per 1,000 inhabitants between 1981 and 2009 for Israel’s total population, Israel’s Jewish population, and Switzerland’s Swiss citizens. The Swiss data displayed here refer only to Swiss citizens because they are more relevant for comparison with Israel.

Note that the emigration rates for non-Swiss citizens, if shown, would be about 10 times higher. Switzerland indeed features a rather consistent

FIGURE 2 Emigration Rates per 1,000 Inhabitants for Switzerland (Swiss citizens) and Israel (total and Jewish population), 1981–2009



Source: Statistik Schweiz (2010); see also CBS data at <http://www.cbs.gov.il>.

yearly immigration surplus by continuously attracting foreign immigrants, most of whom re-emigrate after a given number of years. This is the classic international migration pattern that affects the more developed contemporary countries. As to the Swiss citizens, over the last nearly 30 years their emigration rate has been rather stable, around 5 per 1,000, while the net migration balance of Swiss citizens—after allowing for returnees—has been close to zero overall, yet slightly negative since 1992.

Emigration rates per 1,000 for Israel's Jewish population are slightly higher than for Israel's total population, including Arabs, although the trend over time is about the same. What is remarkable here is that during most of the years between 1981 and 2009 the emigration rate was lower for Israel than for Switzerland, especially during the more recent years when the Israeli economy has been performing relatively better than that in many Western countries. The only years with a higher or equal Israeli emigration rate were 1981, when an Israeli treasury minister notoriously said "ein li" (ain't), meaning that he had no money left for public spending to avoid painful cuts in the standard of living; 1985, at the end of several years of hyperinflation that had put the Israeli economy on its knees; and 1992–1993, which, as already noted, reflected the normally expected absorption (or non-absorption) adjustment after the massive immigration of 1990 and 1991.

If Israel can have consistently lower emigration rates than Switzerland, the popularly perceived exemplar of a desirable country (relative to the latter's veteran and more adjusted population), something in Lustick's crisis-oriented explanation of alleged mass emigration from Israel seems to be unconvincing. As the assumed collapse of Zionism cannot explain the Swiss migration patterns or the Swiss-Israel migration differential, it should plausibly be dismissed as the chosen explanatory paradigm for the comparatively less frequent Israel emigration.

Another weakness in Lustick's article is his litany of statistics about the high percentage of Israelis declaring that they contemplate emigration in the future or do not believe that they will stay in the country in the long run. Unless comparable data can be presented for other countries, these statistics are valueless. For such data to be usable, we need to know how many in Germany or in Belgium or in the United Kingdom would like to stay or to leave, given the choice. In any case, such opinions about a certain potential action (emigration), even if sincerely expressed, cannot be construed as the equivalent of actual action.

Quite the contrary, an overall optimistic mood appears to be documented among Israelis in recent years. One should take notice of the consistently high and recently increasing levels of personal satisfaction and optimism expressed in Israel's annual Social Survey.⁴ The percentages of persons satisfied with life are highest among the younger adults, who, besides actually

being more mobile, are also those who allegedly, more than others, would consider emigration for good. Moreover, in an international comparison, the New Economics Foundation's Index of Personal Satisfaction (IPS) ranks Israel thirtieth out of 143 countries (NEF 2009). The happiest country in the world appears to be Costa Rica, followed by Norway, Denmark, Canada, and Finland, while on the HDI scale Norway is first, followed by Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Ireland.

Israel's placement on such international indicators (fifteenth on the HDI and thirtieth on the IPS) is not so dramatically negative as to justify immediate concern about the collapse of normative foundations and the forthcoming departure of its society through massive flight. The overall social patterns that emerge from widespread satisfaction, improved standards of living, and uniquely stable if slightly increasing fertility rates among Israel's seculars and the moderately traditional—currently the main engine of Israeli population growth (DellaPergola 2009)—help to place Israeli migration trends in appropriate context.

Following these clarifications, a final comment on migrations in Israel is in order to avoid any risk that the present review might appear to be tainted with apologetics. Certainly, the influx of high-quality human resources that arrived over the years in Israel's immigrations has crucially determined Israel's takeoff in the process of economic development and growing sophistication and competitiveness over the last decades. Unquestionably, the issue of brain drain is a prominent and worrying feature on the agenda. Here, not unlike Switzerland and other societies of similar size and quality, Israel faces the dilemma of providing efficient training facilities, including highly developed higher education systems. Such countries tend to produce talented individuals whose numbers are appreciably larger than the absorption capacity of the respective local markets. Since one would not suggest closing a few universities so as to produce fewer professionals, or lowering the level of training so that the locally produced professionals would be less competitive internationally, the problem needs to be matched by expanding the local capacity for the handling of goods, services, and information through the development of transnational hubs that are oriented toward much broader markets. This is indeed a challenge that Israel is urgently called to meet in order to preserve and enhance its future.

More broadly stated, the urgent challenge to be met by Israel's Parliament and executive is the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive migration policy that will coherently handle the different types of migration now separately administered under different regulatory regimes. These types of migration include Jewish and non-Jewish migration under the Law of Return, labor migration, refugees and displaced persons, other temporary residents, family reunions, long-term sojourning

tourists, and others. The boundaries between these different categories tend to become increasingly blurred and require centralized monitoring and handling. Such a comprehensive and coherent policy does not exist today, is badly missed, and cannot be postponed.

At the end of this review, we should note that Lustick's article is fraught with several minor inaccuracies that we shall pass over here for lack of space, with the exception of one. He mentions the 2004 Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, which of course occurred in August 2005, a mistake that should have been caught.

All in all, which of the two is bound to generate the lesser damage—the demographer who deals with political issues or the expert on political issues who deals with demography—is a question that may never be answered. A better arrangement would involve collaboration between scholars in different fields and shared authorship. Once the choice is made to operate alone—in the present case, a leading American political scientist offering a critical perspective on Israel's migrations—judgment must cope with the plausibility of the demographic enquiry no less than with the acumen of the ideational critique. Ian Lustick's heavily value-laden narrative is sufficiently acute and provocative enough to deserve wide and attentive readership, but his scholarly effort to document Israel's migration patterns does not meet the threshold in the field.

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NOTES

For further information, see the 2010 publication of the CBS, *Israeli Society*. See also the CBS's annual *Statistical Abstract of Israel* and its *Statistical Monthly of Israel*.

1. Following the 2008 integrated census, a new system of calculating population estimates was introduced. Therefore, as of 2009, total growth is not the sum of the components of growth. Until 1995, the balance of migration also included the balance of changes and corrections of religion. As of 1996, those changes are included only in total growth. See http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/templ_shnaton.html?num_tab=st02_03&CYear=2011.

2. http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/templ_shnaton.html?num_tab=st02_03&CYear=2010.
3. Tables can be downloaded at the following sites: http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/yarhon/b1_h.xls; http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/yarhon/c1_h.xls; http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/yarhon/c2_h.xls.
4. See the recent data for the CBS's annual Social Survey at <http://surveys.cbs.gov.il/Survey/surveyE.htm>.

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