

What Counts is the Counting: Statistical Manipulation as a Solution to Israel's "Demographic Problem"

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Seven years ago, heightened anxieties in Israel about an Arab threat to Israel's Jewish majority triggered an influential campaign to change perceptions of who is winning the demographic battle. Proposals to annex 60% or more of the West Bank are based in part on its success in persuading many Israelis and others of the nonexistence of 1 to 1.5 million "missing" Palestinians. This campaign's estimates of Arab and Jewish population for 2004 and beyond are subjected to close scrutiny, revealing complex but systematic manipulation of data and exposing the political objectives and drastic distortions of the campaign.

When political affiliations in a democracy are associated with ethnic or communal attachments, what "counts" is not simply votes, but "ethnic demography."¹ Nowhere are the implications of ethnic demography closer to the surface of political life than in Israel/Palestine, where political implications of changing estimates of Jewish and Arab populations are central to the thinking, anxieties, and hopes of both communities. For Israeli Jews, "*ha-ba'aya ha-demografit*" (the demographic problem) is the fear that an Arab population in the country will become bigger than the Jewish population. It has exerted a powerful influence on Israeli policies and preferences concerning the future of the West Bank and Gaza, the incorporation of East Jerusalem, immigration, emigration, education, and employment.

Ever since July 1967, when Yigal Allon proposed dividing the West Bank to preserve Israel's Jewish character, the fear of a too-large Arab minority or even a potential majority has been a distasteful but valuable resource for Israeli Jews favoring separation between Israel and the territories occupied in June 1967. That view, epitomized by the slogan of a "two-state solution," predominated in Israel in the 1990s. In the last decade, however, that idea has faded from its status as "probable" to perhaps merely "possible" today. It has been replaced by a growing sense in Israel that its rule of the West Bank will never end. This has led to a new campaign among those advocating annexation of "Judea and Samaria." Realizing that most Israeli Jews fear, suspect, or loathe the Arabs, leaders of the newly invigorated "annexationist"

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1. Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007). On the potent political effects of state policies concerning the "counting" of populations, see Evan S. Lieberman and Prerna Singh, "Measuring the State's Institutionalization of Ethnic Categories across Time and Space," *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 2009), pp. 29–35.

camp have sought to prove that keeping the West Bank would entail absorbing many fewer Palestinian Arabs than is suggested by information reported by both official Israeli and Palestinian Authority statisticians. Their efforts have convinced most of the settler and right-wing blocs in Israel, and many among its supporters abroad, that there are at least a million fewer Palestinians in the West Bank than is widely believed, and that insistent reports to the contrary are politically motivated falsifications produced by media, statisticians, and politicians opposed to Israeli rule of the West Bank. Despite outraged and blanket denials by established experts, this campaign, by partially erasing the image of a “demographic time bomb,” has succeeded in laying the basis for new proposals to annex most or all of the West Bank. My purpose here is to evaluate this claim by subjecting to close analysis the arguments and evidence made in support of it.

ISRAEL'S “DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEM” AND ETTINGER'S SOLUTION

While the core objective of classical Zionism was to create a Jewish majority in Palestine, the core objective of Arabs in the country, from the outset, was to prevent that from happening. Whereas Zionists have promoted unlimited Jewish immigration, opposed the return of Arab refugees, and advocated higher fertility rates among Jews to accomplish their goals, Arabs have opposed unlimited Jewish immigration, advocated unlimited return of Arab refugees and their descendants, and encouraged “*sumud*” (steadfastness), meaning a commitment to resist temptations to emigrate despite hardships associated with living under Israeli rule.

The destruction of the great reservoir of potential Jewish immigrants in Europe during World War II confronted Zionist leaders with a terrible demographic challenge. Their response was to exploit opportunities to expel and prevent the return of up to three quarters of a million Palestinian Arabs from the territory that became the State of Israel in 1948. The Zionist leaders also reversed the longstanding resistance to the mass immigration of non-European Jews and to their transformation into “high quality material” for the building of the national homeland. Still, even with the influx of displaced persons from Europe and heavy waves of immigration from Romania, Iraq, Morocco, and Yemen, and even with an Arab minority amounting in the early 1950s to no more than approximately 12%, high emigration rates of Jews and the high rate of natural increase among Arabs spurred demographic anxieties. Aggressively pronatalist policies were adopted and oriented, as much as possible, toward Jewish Israelis.

By the mid-1960s, these concerns were moderating. However, the demographic problem reappeared in its contemporary form with the acquisition of the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 War and the escalating demands of religious Zionists, some Labor activists, and Revisionists to annex the areas. For the annexationist right, objecting to the incorporation of core areas of the Land of Israel because of fear that Arabs might become a majority in the country was a symptom of a lack of the kind of Zionist faith and devotion that led Herzl and the founders of the movement to believe that “if you will it, it is no dream.” While anti-annexationists urged land-for-peace formulas to save Israel from an Arab majority, or an Arab minority too large to control, annexationists promoted images of large-scale Jewish immigration to a state ready to fulfill its destiny

in as much of the national patrimony as the IDF was capable of acquiring.²

This is the context within which even religious Zionists fought hard for unlimited immigration from the former Soviet Union, despite knowing that large numbers of the immigrants that would flow into Israel would not be Jewish. Meanwhile dovish politicians, usually steadfast in their opposition to enforcement of restrictive answers to the question “Who is a Jew?” were the public figures raising objections to the mass immigration of non-Jews into the country. The odd position of each side in this debate, waged mainly in the early 1990s, was determined by their calculations as to how the massive immigration of non-Arabs (Jewish or not) from the former Iron Curtain countries would affect the integrity of the demography-related arguments they made for or against permanent incorporation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Nearly one million immigrants did arrive from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, but much to the surprise of many Israelis, their arrival did not fundamentally change the contours of the debate over ethnic demography. Fears about the long-term integrity of Israel’s Jewish majority were invigorated by the disappearance of credible images of large-scale departures or transfers of Arabs from Israel or the West Bank, the rate of Arab natural increase that continued to outstrip the Jewish rate by a wide margin, the higher than imagined proportion of arriving immigrants who were not Jewish, the number of former Soviet Union immigrants who subsequently emigrated, and a sharp drop in immigration. A new factor adding to Jewish demographic anxieties was the arrival, legally and illegally, of hundreds of thousands of “foreign workers” and their families, and the success that many of them had in finding ways to stay in the country more or less permanently.

Citing the contribution “disengagement” from the Gaza Strip’s swelling Arab population would make to the solution of the demographic problem, Prime Minister Sharon was able to mobilize considerable support, even on the right wing, to evacuate the area in 2005. It is evidence of just how nervous Israeli Jews are about the demographic problem, that even with the disengagement from Gaza, and the removal of its 1.7 million Palestinians from direct Israeli rule, debate over the issue continued to intensify. One result was new legislation and policy pronouncements concerning the inviolability of the principle of Israel as a “Jewish and democratic state” or as the “national state of the Jewish people.” These policies, combined with an international campaign questioning Israel’s democratic credentials, directed increasing attention to the question of exactly how close Israel, the territory under Israel’s control, or the land west of the Jordan River, was to losing its Jewish majority.

In this context, right-wing politicians and publicists came to see it as vitally important to push these points as far into the future as possible or to deny that Jews would ever be a minority in the country. Proving that Jews are and will remain a majority in the land, however that land is defined, means challenging the way Jews and non-Jews have been and are currently counted. Following the second Intifada, and the spike in Jewish emigration and demographic anxieties associated with it, a group of right-wing activists launched an intensive effort to do just that. Their aim was to discredit proposals for territorial conces-

2. For an account of the Israeli debate over the future of the West Bank and Gaza in the first 25 years of the occupation, see Ian S. Lustick, “Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Disengagement or Incorporation?” in *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 7–25.

sions by countering impressions that Israel was losing the demographic contest. The leader of this group was Yoram Ettinger, former Israeli diplomat and head of the Government Press Office, who had begun a post-government service career as a consultant, blogger, and activist. Ettinger drew support from like-minded analysts and consultants in both Israel and the United States, where Ettinger had served as Consul-General in Houston and as Director of the Office of Congressional Relations in Israel's Washington Embassy.

Although challenged repeatedly by established Israeli demographic scholars,³ the argument promoted by Ettinger and his associates has proven extraordinarily attractive to supporters of permanent Israeli rule of the West Bank. Their claims, that the demographic problem is a myth foisted on Israelis by left-wing enemies of Israel, that there are at least a million fewer Palestinians in the West Bank than is standardly reported, and that the Jewish majority over Arabs in the country is increasing, have established themselves as truth in right-wing discourse in Israel and among right-wing supporters of Israel abroad. Israel faces, as Ettinger put it at the end of 2011, a demographic "challenge." But, repeating an image he has used often, there is "no demographic time bomb and no demographic machete at the throat of the Jewish State."⁴

The success of Ettinger's effort is apparent in the prominent invocation of work by him and his associates in right-wing Israeli or Israeli-affiliated blogs, commentators, and news outlets. In addition to "debunking" hitherto prevailing beliefs about demography in Israel/Palestine, the claims of Ettinger and his associates have also emerged as the premises for increasingly influential calls for Israel to annex most or all of "Judea and Samaria." The dominance of his efforts in right-wing circles is exemplified in the writings of Caroline Glick, an influential blogger and columnist for the *Jerusalem Post*; the commentaries of Bernard J. Shapiro, whose Freeman Center hosts the *Maccabean Online* website — an extraordinarily comprehensive archive of right-wing Israel related online articles and commentaries; the blogs featured by *Israpundit*, a well-established collection of right-wing blogs with approximately 30,000 page visits per month; and *Israel National News (Arutz Sheva)*, a radio station and website organized by and for the community of West Bank settlers and their supporters. For Caroline Glick, a Google search yielded 1,220,000 hits for her name combined with "Yoram Ettinger" compared to 110,538 for her name combined with Israel's leading demographic expert, Sergio DellaPergola. For Bernard J. Shapiro, a Google search yields 2,860 hits when his name is combined with Ettinger, compared to 10 when combined with DellaPergola. Searches of the *Israpundit* site yielded 1,970 hits for "Yoram Ettinger" and 13 for "DellaPergola." Searches of the *Israel National News* site yielded nine pages of hits for "Yoram Ettinger" compared to 2 pages for "DellaPergola."⁵ The direct connection between intensified calls for unilateral Israeli annexation and invocation of Ettinger's claims is illustrated in the following representative quotations:

3. See below regarding the comments of Sergio DellaPergola. Regarding the reactions of both DellaPergola and Arnon Sofer, a geographer and demographer at Haifa University, to Ettinger's arguments, see Gadi Taub, "Back to Unilateralism," *Yedioth Ahronoth*, August 25, 2010, available on the author's blog at <http://www.gaditaub.com/eblog/back-to-unilateralism/>.

4. Yoram Ettinger, "A Palestinian Civil Intifada," *Israel Hayom*, December 28, 2011, http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=1096.

5. Most recent searches performed on November 25, 2012. "DellaPergola" hits include those for "Della Pergola."

Part of this problem (opposition to annexation) is...apparent unquestioning acceptance of the myth of a demographic time bomb...The truth is that if Israel applied its laws to Judea and Samaria tomorrow and all the Palestinians in those areas received Israeli citizenship, Israel would still retain a two-thirds Jewish majority. Moreover, all the demographic trends for Israel, including increasing birthrates and positive immigration rates, are positive. And all the demographic trends for the Palestinians, including decreasing birthrates and negative immigration rates, are negative. According to Israeli demographic researcher Yoram Ettinger, by 2030, Jewish [sic] will likely comprise 80% of the population of Israel, Judea and Samaria.⁶

There is a two-thirds Jewish majority when Israel and the territories she controls are combined; and based on increasing Jewish and declining Arab population trends, the Jewish majority is likely only to increase in the future. Moreover, the Jewish population in Israel proper is growing as well. As noted by demographer Bennett Zimmerman in a *Jerusalem Post* interview back in 2007: “for the first time since 1967, Israel has a stable 2–1 Jewish majority . . . [and] a two-thirds Jewish majority in Jerusalem.” The demographic threat appears therefore to be nothing more than politically motivated propaganda, particularly as it relies on conjecture, surmise and doubtful census statistics that overstate the Palestinian population by as much as half.⁷

In June 2012, the “Conference for the Application of Sovereignty over Judea and Samaria” held in Hebron attracted hundreds of attendees. Yoram Ettinger was a featured speaker.⁸

This remarkably (if still partially) successful campaign to transform public perceptions of the “demographic problem” began with Ettinger’s organization of the American-Israel Demographic Research Group (AIDRG). Its work first surfaced in January 2005 as a presentation at both the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation. In 2005 and 2006, somewhat different slide presentations were made at the high-profile annual national security affairs conferences in Herzliya, Israel. Responding to criticism that a slide presentation could not be considered a serious treatment of the demographic issues it raised, Ettinger and his associates arranged for publication of a footnote-studded policy paper in the *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* series of the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University, the only religiously affiliated university in Israel. The study was titled “The Million Person Gap: The Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza.”⁹

6. Caroline B. Glick, “Column One: Let’s embrace our friends,” *The Jerusalem Post*, May 17, 2012, <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Article.aspx?id=270472>.

7. Matthew M. Hausman, “Annexation Wins Hands Down over a Two-State Solution,” *Israel National News*, July 4, 2012, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/11863#.US5NL6I3tqx>.

8. “Conference on Annexing Judea and Samaria Draws Big Names, Big Turnout,” *JewishPress.com*, July 16, 2012, <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/israel/conference-on-annexing-judea-and-samaria-draws-big-names-big-turnout/2012/07/16/>. See also Arlene Kushner, “Israeli Sovereignty over Judea and Samaria,” *Israpundit*, June 21, 2011, <http://www.israpundit.com/archives/37123>.

9. Bennett Zimmerman, Roberta Seid, and Michael L. Wise, “The Million Person Gap: The Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza,” The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies [hereafter BESA], *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* No. 65 (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University, 2006), <http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/MSPS65.pdf>.

Ettinger's efforts, supported by the primary authors of these studies — Bennett Zimmerman, Roberta Seid, and Michael Wise — had a major impact, if not on policy, then certainly on the debate over the implications of demography for the peace process. Scores of their articles and interview transcripts have appeared in Israeli, American, and European journals — all focused on “debunking” demographic fears that inhibit Israel and Israel's supporters from contemplating permanent control of the West Bank with equanimity.¹⁰ As noted, their own publications and interviews were then quoted and cited by a multitude of bloggers and editorialists and carried prominently by Jewish community newspapers throughout the world.

Neither Ettinger nor any of the three authors of the powerpoints and BESA study are demographers by training. The biographical note appended to the BESA study describes them as follows:

Mr. Bennett Zimmerman, a former Strategy Consultant with Bain & Company, holds an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and has conducted numerous due diligence audits on business and governmental organizations. Roberta P. Seid, PhD, is a historian and former lecturer at the University of Southern California. She is a researcher and consultant on Israeli history, particularly on events surrounding Israel's War of Independence. Dr. Michael L. Wise, PhD, a physicist and expert in mathematic model techniques, is the founder and director of a wide range of public and private companies in the United States and Israel.¹¹

10. For a partial but illustrative list of such articles, see “Media Coverage,” *Israel Demography*, <http://www.israeldemography.com/news.html>.

11. An internet search provided no further information on Wise, but it is noteworthy that both Zimmerman and Seid are active in “defend Israel” lobbying and educational organizations, including EMET (Endowment for Middle East Truth) and StandWithUs. Zimmerman is on the Advisory Board of EMET, which describes itself, in part, as follows:

EMET is the first unabashedly pro-Israel and pro-American think tank and policy shop on Capitol Hill. ...We emphasize Israel's unique role as being the eastern outpost of Western democratic values, holding down the fort against a rising tide of radical Islam, ...We believe that Israel serves as the “canary in the coalmine”, and that in the eyes of the radical Islamist, each piece of land ceded simply whets their appetite for more in his quest for Islamic hegemony. We believe that what confronts Israel today, will confront the rest of Western civilization tomorrow. (“About EMET,” *EMET: Endowment for Middle East Truth*, <http://www.emetonline.org/about.html>)

Seid serves as the education-research director for StandWithUs, which describes itself as:

dedicated to informing the public about Israel and to combating the extremism and anti-Semitism that often distorts the issues....StandWithUs was founded in 2001 in response to the misinformation that often surrounds the Middle East conflict, and the inappropriate often anti-Semitic language used about Israel and/or the Jewish people worldwide. (“Our Mission,” *StandWithUs*, <http://www.standwithus.com/ABOUT/>)

The author wishes to thank Dr. Seid, and the staff of the American Enterprise Institute, for assistance in locating copies of the various presentations she and her coauthors made. For a collection of a number of the studies cited in this paper, see *Israel Demography*, <http://www.israeldemography.com/>.

The authors acknowledge assistance from a team of Israeli researchers, headed by David Shahaf, “former Head of the Civil Administration in the West Bank who co-led Israel’s last demographic survey of the West Bank in 1990.” They also thank a number of well-known right-wing politicians, journalists, and others in the United States and Israel for their assistance, including John Bolton, the US ambassador to the United Nations under the George W. Bush Administration; Yuval Steinitz, a leader of the Likud Party in Israel who served as finance minister; and Caroline Glick, the prominent right-wing columnist for *The Jerusalem Post* and *Makor Rishon*.

The only trained demographer prominently associated with the project is Nicholas Eberstadt. He was not an author or a contributor to the analysis, but the authors of the BESA study did single him out for a special expression of gratitude. Eberstadt is thanked for having invited the group to “debut our findings at the American Enterprise Institute.” Described as “one of the USA’s leading demographers,” Eberstadt’s comment on the powerpoint at the Herzliya Conference, repeatedly quoted by Ettinger, included the statement that the authors of the study had “caught the demographic profession asleep at the switch.”¹² Although Eberstadt is indeed a trained demographer, his focus is on global population trends and on the Far East. He has never published scholarly work on Israel-Palestine or any Middle Eastern population. Nonetheless, his politics with respect to the region are clear. He was closely associated with the Project for a New American Century, which has a strong pro-Likud orientation. Eberstadt has also partnered at the American Enterprise Institute on projects with pro-Israel hawks such as John Bolton and Danielle Pletka.¹³

Eberstadt’s comments at the Herzliya Conference on the efforts of Zimmerman, *et al.*, emphasized the straight-forward approach of the authors, arriving at answers to demographic questions by relying “upon rigorous logic and simple, but very powerful, arithmetic to reach its results. And because this arithmetic offers internally consistent reconstructions of overall trends the findings look not only defensible, but really quite robust.” In other words, Eberstadt praised Ettinger, Zimmerman, and their colleagues for making simple logical inferences from numbers computed with the uncomplicated and unproblematic counting method of “arithmetic.” This is an excellent expression of the common sense idea of what a number stands for: an answer to a direct and precise question arrived at through a simple process of counting. But a number can also be a known quantity, requiring discovery of a counting procedure capable of producing it. I now turn to an analysis of the work of these researchers to evaluate the extent to which the numbers they report are the result of the counting they did or whether the kind of counting they did was the result of the numbers they needed.

12. Bennett Zimmerman and Roberta Seid, “2/3–1/3 Rov Yehudi: Hitpotsetsut ha-Bu’a ha-Demografi; mi-Fatalizem Demografi-Mufrakh, le-Optimism Demografi-Meto’ad” [2/3–1/3 Jewish Majority: Popping the Demographic Bubble; From Refuted Demographic Fatalism to Documented Demographic Optimism], (American-Israeli Demographic Research Group, 2005), slide 31.

13. For more on Eberstadt, see “Nicholas Eberstadt,” *Right Web: Tracking Militarists’ Efforts to Influence US Foreign Policy*, Institute for Policy Studies, 2007, http://rightweb.irc-online.org/profile/Eberstadt_Nicholas.

AN ANALYSIS OF "THE MILLION PERSON GAP"

Analysis of the Ettinger project will focus primarily on the BESA study, which is the project's most elaborate and fully documented presentation of its analysis and findings. Published in February 2006, it was entitled *The Million Person Gap: The Arab Population of the West Bank and Gaza*. Indeed the title of the study is the first element that bears analysis. The original version of this study, as presented at the American Enterprise Institute on January 10, 2005, and as published on the web, was "Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza: The Million and a Half Person Gap."¹⁴ The change in title was a choice made by the publishers, presumably to help with marketing by simplifying the message. In any event, it is clear that neither title was wholly determined by the data, since in neither version did the data presented match the title. The exact "gap" identified in the BESA study amounted to 1.34 million.¹⁵ In the earlier version, the comparable gap was 1.4 million.¹⁶

Bennett Zimmerman, Roberta Seid, and David L. Wise (hereafter, ZSW) began their study by declaring that "The formula for measuring population is straightforward." It involves combining a figure for the population prior to the gathering of new information (the base population); the rate of natural increase (births minus deaths); and the migration balance (immigration minus emigration). One begins with an established "base population." To that number is added the number of births, minus the number of deaths. After subtracting natural increase (births minus deaths) from the base population, immigrants are added and emigrants subtracted. The result is a number, the count of the population. The authors of the study emphasize that instead of using extrapolations or trend lines from a previous census, they relied on "demographic events" (within the categories listed — base population, natural increase, and migration balance) to establish "actual growth rates."¹⁷ Again, this explication of their methodology is designed to emphasize a "Joe Friday" approach: "Just the facts, ma'am, nothing but the facts." In the original study, dated January 10, 2005, ZSW, plus Ettinger and some others identified as contributors, listed these ingredients to the formula for determining population and added, "No other factors affect growth. The measurement of any population requires accurate recording and verification of each of these factors."¹⁸

This is a clear statement of a procedure for counting in order to arrive at a number that is unknown prior to the count. I will consider the degree to which the authors were able to honor this commitment, as opposed to choosing counting techniques for each component of this "formula" so that, by counting, they could arrive at the judgment that established estimates are substantially and systematically erroneous.

14. Bennett Zimmerman and Roberta Seid, "Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza: The Million and Half Person Gap," at the American Enterprise Institute [hereafter AEI], January 10, 2005, Washington, DC, http://www.aei.org/files/2005/01/10/20050114_zimmerman.pdf.

15. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, "The Million Person Gap," BESA, p. 4, fig. 1.1.

16. Zimmerman and Seid, "Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza," 2005, slide 29.

17. Zimmerman and Seid, "Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza," 2005, slide 6.

18. Zimmerman and Seid, "Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza," 2005, slide 29.

BASE POPULATION

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) used its census conducted in 1996 to establish the base population used in its original estimates of West Bank and Gaza populations for subsequent years. The West Bank was defined, as per established international usage, as all of the territory acquired by Israel in the 1967 War lying between the Green Line (the 1949 Armistice Line) and the Jordan River. The number was arrived at as a result of an actual count of 2.602 million Arabs present in the West Bank or Gaza in mid-1996, when the enumeration was conducted, plus an extrapolation of trends to produce a base figure for mid-1997 of 2.783 million.

Documenting a “1 million person gap” between Palestinian claims, as they are commonly quoted and relied upon around the world, and what ZSW eventually assert was the true population of the West Bank and Gaza in 2004, required a search for missing persons (i.e., Palestinians who did not exist but have been treated as if they did by demographers). ZSW do this in three ways with respect to “base population.”

First, ZSW assert that the PCBS figure was inflated by including within the population of the West Bank the Arabs who live in a greatly expanded district of East Jerusalem. Following the 1967 War, this area was demarcated and designated by Israel as part of the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem. Israeli agencies were instructed to count people living in this area as if they were living in Israel, and they were given identity documentation that was different from the identity cards distributed to Arabs living in other lands occupied by Israel in 1967. Israeli efforts to gain international recognition for this action, and to treat the area as a part of the Israeli capital, have largely failed. As a result, from the perspective of international law, and from the perspective of the Palestinian Authority, the Arabs living in this area of approximately 72 square kilometers are just as much a part of the population of the West Bank as Arabs living in Nablus or Ramallah. Nevertheless, a key element in ZSW’s effort to find a million missing persons is to treat the 210,000 Arabs living in the area of expanded East Jerusalem in 1997 as actually not in the West Bank, but in Israel, and therefore improperly included by the PCBS in their base population figure.¹⁹

Secondly, ZSW assert that the PCBS included within its population base for 1997 325,000 Arabs who were not, at that time, actually in the West Bank and Gaza, but who, although they possessed the documentation allowing them to return, were currently living elsewhere, as students, visitors, temporary workers, or potential emigrants. As evidence that this population was included in the PCBS base population, ZSW quote the head of the PCBS as saying during a news conference in 1998, “We counted 325,000

19. ZSW, as well as Ettinger himself, have repeatedly characterized Palestinian inclusion of Arab residents of expanded Jerusalem as part of the population of the Palestinian territories as “double counting” (*sfira kfula*). That would be understandable only if Palestinians offered estimates of Arabs in Israel that also included the Arabs of East Jerusalem, which they have not done. For examples, see Yoram Ettinger, “*Lo Badku, Lo Yad’u, Lo Hitri’u: ha-Sheker ha-Demografi*” [They Did Not Check, They Did Not Know, They Did Not Alarm: The Demographic Lie’], *Nekuda*, January 2007, pp. 18–20; Yoram Ettinger, “Demographic Optimism in the New Year,” *Israel Hayom*, September 28, 2011, http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=569; and Yoram Ettinger, “The Power of Aliyah,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, August 11, 2010, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3934006,00.html>.

people living outside of the Palestinian Lands for more than one year, who carry Palestinian ID cards and can return at any time.”²⁰

ZSW interpret this statement as meaning not just that the PCBS had counted 325,000 West Bank and Gaza Arabs living abroad temporarily (which it indeed had done), but that this population had been enumerated as part of the census and that it had been used as part of the base population of these territories in 1997 for purposes of projection forward (which it had not done). By this interpretation, ZSW produce 325,000 of the 1 million person “gap” they claim exists. In its formal response to the ZSW study, the PCBS was categorical on this point:

The population projections of PCBS are constructed upon the 1997 census data as a base enumeration of the population after excluding the foreign visitors and those living abroad on regular basis.... [T]he Palestinian estimates of the population provided by PCBS are for the Palestinian people living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; they exclude Palestinians living abroad even if they carry Palestinian identity cards.²¹

ZSW justify their critique of supposed Palestinian practices regarding non-residents by emphasizing their preference for a “de facto” count of the Palestinian population, rather than a “de jure” count. A “de jure” estimate is an estimate of the number of people usually resident in the country or officially listed as living in the country by the authorities. A “de facto” count, according to ZSW, means only including people actually living in the West Bank and Gaza at the time of the census. This would exclude anyone traveling abroad, or living abroad, temporarily, for whatever amount of time, thereby lowering the population estimate. This decision is justified by citing the Israeli practice during Israel’s rule of the West Bank and Gaza in the 1990s of estimating the “de facto” number of “residents actually present in the Territories at any given time;”²² and by citing a fifty-year-old United Nations document to the effect that “For purposes of international comparisons, the *de facto* definition is recommended.”²³ However, although ZSW note that census figures for Israel itself include residents not actually present in Israel (those absent for less than one year), they do not make this allowance for Palestinians. Nor do they report the fact that neither the Israeli census of 1995 nor the most recent census in 2008 were based on enumeration of people actually living at the time of the census in Israel.

In other words, while using Israeli Census Bureau statistics and practices to justify low estimates of the Palestinian population, ZSW avoid using current and standard Israeli practices of census-taking and population estimation as guides for how Palestin-

20. Quote is from then-head of PCBS, Dr. Hasan Abu-Libdeh, quoted in Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “The Million Person Gap,” BESA, p. 14. Dr. Abu-Libdeh’s citing of the figure is corroborated at “Update: PA Census,” *al-Majdal*, March 1998, <http://www.badil.org/es/al-majdal/item/1220-update-pa-census>.

21. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Population and Social Statistics Directorate (PSSD) Demographic Statistics Department, “Comments on ‘Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza: the Million and a Half Person Gap,’” 2006. Emphasis added. Note that the target of this response is the January 2005 AEI published study, with the “million and a half” person gap in the title.

22. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “The Million Person Gap,” BESA, pp. 13, 46.

23. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “The Million Person Gap,” BESA, p. 84, n. 31.

ians should properly use data to produce population estimates.²⁴ The fact is that Palestinian descriptions of the 1997 census use almost exactly the same language used by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics to distinguish those “residents” who were counted from those who were not. As noted, the ICBS standard is to include as residents Israelis who are abroad but who have not been abroad for more than one year.

Thirdly, ZSW support their figure for the base population that is considerably lower than the PCBS number of 2.783 million by challenging PCBS projection and counting procedures. ZSW argue that the real population base in 1997 for the West Bank and Gaza should be treated as 648,000 persons lower than the number used by the PCBS. They seek to support this argument in two ways: by extrapolating Israeli estimates for West Bank and Gaza Arabs in 1995 forward to 2004; and by extrapolating other Palestinian data for adult and child populations in 2004–2005 — data taken from school registration and electoral registers for 2004–2005 and from Palestinian Ministry of Health Data from 1997.

They justify their procedures by arguing that they are counting real things — registered births or voters or school children — rather than relying on samples and projections. Their use of Israeli statistics based on *extrapolation* suggests, however, that ZSW did not apply this principle consistently. They may or may not be justified in treating extrapolated Israeli estimates from 1995 as reliable, but aside from trying to protect the quantification process which will lead to the conclusion they favor, it is difficult to understand why they would not report the significant doubts that the ICBS has expressed about the accuracy of its estimates concerning the Arab population in the West Bank and Gaza during this period. The fact is that the 1995 ICBS projection that ZSW rely upon was an extrapolation of the last official estimate made by the ICBS, the estimate it produced in 1993. But even that 1993 estimate was not an “enumeration” of the sort ZSW make much of endorsing. According to the ICBS itself, its 1993 estimates were themselves “based on the census of population which was conducted in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Area in September 1967” — i.e., an Israeli enumeration which had occurred 26 years earlier.²⁵ In particular, from the beginning of the first Intifada onward, the ICBS reported significant obstacles to gathering reliable information, including within expanded East Jerusalem. For example, in the *Statistical Abstract of Israel* for 1993, the ICBS noted that “[s]ince the end of 1987, the enumerators of the survey could not do their work in East Jerusalem as planned, so only households which could be contacted by phone were surveyed. Consequently, data on non-Jews in East Jerusalem should be approached with caution.”²⁶ Elsewhere it observed that “[d]ue to the events in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Area, there are difficulties from the beginning of 1988 in collecting statistical data. As a result, the quality of the data is poorer in a number of respects than in previous years.”²⁷ In fact, in 2005, the head of the Demography Department at the Israel Central

24. For a thorough discussion of the effective impossibility of conducting the kind of actual dated enumeration of a “de facto” population of the type ZSW insist should be the standard for the PCBS, see Charles S. Kamen, *The 2008 Israel Integrated Census of Population and Housing: Basic Conception and Procedure*, Central Bureau of Statistics, February 2005, http://www.cbs.gov.il/mifkad/census2008_e.pdf.

25. Central Bureau of Statistics (hereafter CBS), *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1993, p. 108.

26. CBS, *Statistical Abstract*, 1993, p. 23.

27. CBS, *Statistical Abstract*, 1993, p. 108.

Bureau of Statistics, praised the PCBS data and projections as “conducted according to accepted international procedures and the census process was correct.”²⁸

The selectivity of ZSW’s use of data extends to both Israeli and Palestinian sources. They neither endorse all ICBS findings, nor reject all Palestinian data. The pattern in their argument is that if the data (whether Israeli or Palestinian) support their argument, they include them, and if the data do not, they reject them as invalid. For example, PCBS surveys and projections are treated with extreme skepticism and even ridicule, while some statistical outputs of other branches of the Palestinian Authority are endorsed as accurate, specifically data provided by the Palestinian Ministries of Health and Education and the PA’s Central Elections Commission. These data, especially for births and school enrollment, help produce the lower base population number their argument requires by automatically excluding all those births, deaths, and school-age children not registered with the Palestinian Ministry of Health or officially enrolled in Palestinian schools.

Their argument also benefits from what appears to have been a propensity to round numbers in directions beneficial to their argument. For example, ZSW cite figures provided by the Palestinian authorities in January 2005 showing 1.523 million eligible voters (i.e., Arab adults) in the West Bank and Gaza not including those living in expanded East Jerusalem. From this number they subtracted the 200,000 residents eligible to vote but living abroad, producing an estimate of 1.323 million Arab adults living in the West Bank and Gaza, excluding expanded East Jerusalem. This figure is rounded down by ZSW to 1.3 million. They then cite a Palestinian figure to the effect that 50% of the Palestinian population was comprised of adults to produce a “maximum” estimate of 2.6 million Palestinians present in the West Bank and Gaza in 2005, excluding those living in expanded East Jerusalem.²⁹ However, we can see how much work was done to massage these figures into this low number, by noting three choices they made:

- 1) ZSW used a January 2005 Palestinian statement for a registration extrapolated estimate of the adult population of 1.623 million rather than the December 31, 2004 Palestinian statement which registered the figure of 1.7 million.
- 2) They rounded down from 1.323 million to 1.3 million after subtracting residents living abroad from the lower January figure.
- 3) They rounded up the Palestinian estimate for the adult proportion of the population from 47.5% to 50%.

The number resulting from these choices is their estimate of 2.6 million as a “maximum” estimate for the total Arab population in 2005 of the West Bank and Gaza excluding expanded East Jerusalem. But if we take away these rounding decisions, the number resulting from the same arithmetic operations is 3.15 million — a difference of 21%. This figure is considerably closer to 3.43 million — the official Palestinian estimate of the 2004 population of the West Bank and Gaza, excluding expanded East Jerusalem — than

28. Shahar Ilan, “Demographically Correct,” *Haaretz*, June 7, 2005, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/demographically-correct-1.160632>.

29. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “The Million Person Gap,” BESA, p. 67.

it is to ZSW's assertion that the population of those areas in mid-2004 was 2.49 million.³⁰

Leaving aside these problems with their methods, we can nonetheless note that ZSW's treatment of the base population element in the formula for arriving at the West Bank and Gaza Arab population in 2004 reduced, or appeared to reduce, the expected population of these areas in 2004 by only 648,000. This was still far short of the dramatic one million plus gap their argument required.

NATURAL INCREASE

Next we consider ZSW's treatment of the second ingredient in their population calculation formula: natural increase. The question is how ZSW distill information about fertility and death rates among Palestinian Arabs between 1997 and 2004, and how their analytic choices affect their calculations. A key decision they make is to reject the PCBS technique (standard among professional demographers) of using surveys of births and deaths among sample populations to establish fertility, death, and natural increase rates. Instead, they adopt the practice of counting Arab births as only those registered with the Palestinian Ministry of Health. They then corroborate this lower count by citing school registration figures that were lower in the early 2000s than would have been consistent with the size of a cohort based on higher fertility rates. These choices did reduce the number of Palestinian births and, therefore, young children present in the West Bank and Gaza in 2004 by 238,000. However, this procedure entailed ignoring Palestinian births not registered with the PA's Ministry of Health as well as many Palestinian children not registered in schools under the violent and unstable conditions prevailing in the Palestinian territories during those years.³¹

The ZSW study has very little to say about Palestinian death rates, although the authors charge that PCBS figures for Palestinian deaths are, along with births, higher than they should be. Interestingly they refrained from "auditing" those figures. If such an audit had been carried out, and if ZSW's hunch about Palestinian overestimation of death rates were found to be correct, that would have eliminated some of the missing persons ZSW needed for their argument. A pattern is clearly visible in ZSW's treatment of Palestinian data. Figures that produce high numbers — PCBS census figures, fertility rates, and projections — are treated to extreme skepticism and subjected to elaborate "audits" to seek evidence of inflation. By contrast, ZSW treat the work of Palestinian agencies that produce low numbers — Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and figures for voter registration — as unproblematic. No questions are asked about possible reasons for underestimates or incomplete assessments these statistics may represent.³²

From their treatment of the PCBS base population figure for 1997 and of PCBS fertility statistics, ZSW claim to have identified 886,000 missing Palestinians. We turn next to their consideration of Palestinian migration patterns as a way to increase that number up to and over the one million mark.

30. PCBS, PSSD, "Comments on 'Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza,'" paragraph 11; Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, "The Million Person Gap," BESA, pp. 3, 67. I have been unable to locate a ZSW estimate for the Arab population of the West Bank and Gaza in 2005.

31. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, "The Million Person Gap," BESA, pp. 16–17, 67, and 74–76.

32. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, "The Million Person Gap," BESA, p. 25.

MIGRATION BALANCE

In their study published at BESA, ZSW begin their treatment of the contribution of migration to the population of the Palestinian territories in 2004 by providing a four paragraph critique, supported by a graphic display of the inclusion by the PCBS in their calculations of high estimates for Palestinian immigration into the West Bank and Gaza for the years 1997 to 2003. Based on Israeli Border Patrol data suggesting that approximately 15,000 Palestinians immigrated annually into these territories in these seven years, and taking into account emigration of Palestinians that they say occurred in greater numbers on average than immigration during these years, “the total overestimate of the PCBS totaled 310,000 between 1997 and 2003.”³³ What is striking about this section of their study is the emphasis they put on this high Palestinian estimate of Palestinian immigration, despite their acknowledgement that the PCBS made changes in its own immigration estimates to take account of the abrupt halt to Arab immigration into these territories following the collapse of the Oslo process in 2000.³⁴

Responding to the revised Palestinian figures, ZSW present their judgment that instead of 310,000, the real PCBS overestimate based on migration was 131,000. In support of this judgment, they refer to unsubstantiated newspaper articles and Israeli Border Patrol reports of Palestinians entering and leaving the territories. Serious questions have been raised about the reliability and completeness of Israeli Border Patrol data on Palestinian immigration and emigration, though these are not mentioned by ZSW.³⁵

Another category of data used by ZSW under the general heading of migration is Arab immigration from the West Bank and Gaza into Israel. ZSW treat Arabs who left the West Bank and Gaza to live in Israel as a special case of emigration, worthy of separate treatment. Just as they accuse the PCBS of “double-counting” Arabs who live in expanded East Jerusalem because Israel counts those Arabs in its totals, so too do they accuse the PCBS of double-counting Arabs who live in Israel. As will be recalled, the PCBS *does* count expanded East Jerusalem Arabs, but rejects the idea that this entails any double-counting because the PCBS does not count how many Arabs are living in Israel proper. PCBS has rejected this migration-related accusation of double-counting as well. Not only does the PCBS not count Arabs who have left the West Bank and Gaza for Israel twice, it claims to not even count them once. Indeed, any Arab who receives an Israeli ID card is automatically removed from the West Bank and Gaza population registry.³⁶

A somewhat related group that ZSW studied under this heading are Arabs who immigrated into the West Bank between 1997 and 2000, but into areas still ruled by Israel (“Area C”). Again, although accused by ZSW of “double-counting” these people, the clear response of the PCBS is to point out that whether or not Israel counts them does

33. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “The Million Person Gap,” BESA, p. 26.

34. ZSW note this change in the Palestinian data only after they analyze the replaced data to report a 310,000 overestimation of the Arab migration balance.

35. DellaPergola makes the important point that Border Patrol data are not collected for demographic purposes and are intrinsically unreliable if used without cross-checking. He notes the odd fact of these data reporting an exactly equal number of Palestinian males and females crossing from Israel into other countries. Sergio DellaPergola, response to “Voodoo Demographics,” *Azure*, No. 27 (Winter 2007), p. 12. See also Kamen, “The 2008 Israel Integrated Census of Population and Housing.”

36. PCBS, PSSD, “Comments on ‘Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza,’” paragraph 6.

not affect the fact that they are Arabs living in the West Bank as a result of their immigration, and by counting them “once,” the PCBS cannot be seen as double-counting them.

It is instructive to analyze how ZSW use this category to produce another 73,697 “missing persons.”³⁷ First they cite Israeli Interior Ministry Population Registrar figures to the effect that 105,000 Arabs were added to the registry under the family unification program between 1997 and 2003. This figure, used to produce a net migration balance of Arabs into Israel from “the early 1990s” until 2003, is much larger than the more established Israeli figure of 25,000. The much larger number is used, despite the well-known inaccuracy of the population registry, as a basis for knowing who is actually alive and in the country of Israel.³⁸ ZSW then further inflate their estimate in two ways.

1) They contradict their own “de facto” rule by including Arabs as “double-counted” who have not yet arrived in Israel by adding those 21,303 Arabs in the Interior Ministry’s administrative “pipeline.”

2) They attribute 100% of the Arabs reported as immigrating in this way to immigration from the West Bank and Gaza, as opposed to Arabs arriving from Lebanon or elsewhere.

In sum, the choices and assumptions ZSW make to produce a total figure of 105,000 “missing persons” from the category of immigrants into Israel are best understood not as a process of counting to discover a valid number, but as elements in a carefully crafted quantification effort designed to produce a particular number already more or less “known.”

FEWER ARABS, BUT MORE JEWS: THE POLITICAL PAYOFF OF THE ETTINGER PROJECT

Having established for their audience that the Arab population in the West Bank and Gaza is considerably lower than most Israelis believe, the authors proceed to the political payoff of their work. That payoff is cast as a reassurance to Israelis who favor permanent rule of the West Bank but fear that incorporating “Judea and Samaria” will bring an end to its Jewish majority:

This study leads to several general conclusions about population dynamics in the region. Israeli concerns about demographic pressure from the West Bank and Gaza have evidently been exaggerated. The demographic threat to Israeli society has not quantitatively changed since 1967. All population groups experienced large-scale growth...Although this study does not make forecasts, it offers important cautions and insights for those who create demographic projections for the West Bank and Gaza. Given the magnitude of the errors in the PCBS Model — its 2004 population was inflated by over 50% — demographers and state agencies would be wise to correct figures for the current population and growth rates before continuing to make any forecasts about future population size.³⁹

37. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “The Million Person Gap,” BESA, pp. 29–30.

38. Kamen, “The 2008 Israel Integrated Census of Population and Housing,” pp. 3–4, 7.

39. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “The Million Person Gap,” BESA, p. 71.

For ZSW to make this argument requires reversing their analytic tactics. Instead of deciding among assumptions, categories, and sources of information in such a way as to minimize the number of people (Arabs) estimated to be, or projected to be, inhabiting the country, the authors shift to assumptions, categories, and sources of information to maximize the number of people (Jews) estimated to be, or projected to be, inhabiting the country. I turn now to a brief examination of these arguments. They are, for the most part, not included in the BESA study, but rather feature prominently in other publications and presentations made by ZSW, as well as by Yoram Ettinger himself.

One important and explicit decision made by the “Team,”⁴⁰ as the entire group of analysts and writers associated with these studies has referred to itself, pertains to their definition of the category of “Jewish.” The fact is that approximately 330,000 of the nearly one million immigrants who arrived in Israel from the former Soviet Union, are not Jewish by Israel’s definition of the term. There are likely more immigrants who are not Jewish but who claim to be legally, but the figure of 330,000 refers only to those who arrived without contradicting their categorization as non-Jewish. They did not need to, because a relationship to a Jewish grandparent, or a spouse of a Jew, rendered them eligible to immigrate into Israel as citizens without being Jewish. This is a demographically significant proportion of the large ‘*aliya* (immigration wave) from the former Soviet Union.

The Israel Central Bureau of Statistics treats this population as “non-Jewish,” including them within categories such as “other,” “unclassified by religion,” or “Christians.” Instead of following ICBS practice, Ettinger, *et al.* include this population *en masse* as part of the “enlarged” Jewish community, or as within a category of “Jews and their affiliates,” or as those who “wish to be called Jews.”⁴¹ Since non-Jews of this sort comprised a substantial majority of new immigrants into Israel during the late 1990s and early 2000s, this move is particularly helpful to their argument that projections of Jewish immigration to Israel made by the ICBS and outside experts are significantly lower and more “pessimistic” than they should be. This generosity toward calculating a larger Jewish population reflects the overall *volte face* of the authors. Toward data about Arabs, they adopted a rigorous and vigilant attitude regarding the possibility that more Arabs might be included in estimates of the West Bank and Gaza population than is warranted. With respect to Jews, they treat questions about whether individuals should or should not be actually counted as Jews as “splitting hairs.” After all, they assert that the “heart of the matter” is the impact they will have “on the Arab proportion of the total population.”⁴²

40. Zimmerman and Seid, “Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza,” (AEI, 2005), slide 1.

41. ZSW response to Sergio DellaPergola, *Azure*, No. 27 (Winter 2007), p. 27. For an analysis of the substitution of “non-Arabs” for “Jews,” see Ian S. Lustick, “Israel as a Non-Arab State: The Political Implications of the Mass Immigration of Non-Jews,” *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Summer 1999), pp. 101–117.

42. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, response to DellaPergola, p. 27. For recent polling data suggesting that a majority of Israeli Jews do not view non-Jewish immigrants to Israel as Jewish, no matter what their self-images, see Ayala Keissar-Sugarmen, *A Portrait of Israeli Jews: Beliefs, Observance, and Values of Israeli Jews, 2009* (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2012), pp. 68–78, http://en.idi.org.il/media/1351622/GuttmanAviChaiReport2012_EngFinal.pdf.

As we have seen, ZSW repeatedly accuse the PCBS of inflating population estimates by “double-counting” Arabs living in Jerusalem or in Israel as if they are living in the West Bank or Gaza. As part of this (unwarranted) critique, ZSW stress that the proper way to estimate a population is via the enumeration of individuals actually residing at the time of the census in the districts whose population is being assessed. In this regard, they have invoked, as the “normal definition” of a census, as “based on the enumeration of individuals according to their existence in the area of enumeration at census moment, regardless of their usual place of residence.”⁴³ This is what they require for the counting of Arabs, but when it comes to their counting of Jews they do not follow this rule. For example, as part of their argument that Jews produce more babies than Arabs by an increasing margin, they display longitudinal data for Israel which not only include births of non-Jewish non-Arabs (as was just noted above), but also births of Jews located in the West Bank and Gaza, not in Israel. Although ZSW argue that West Bank Arabs living in Israel should not be counted in population estimates of the West Bank, they themselves use Israeli Jews living in the West Bank and Gaza as if they were living in Israel. This can be proven by noting that in their display of a rising curve of Jewish births, 92,600 Jewish births are registered as having occurred in Israel in 1999.⁴⁴ This figure is a rounding upward of the 92,572 figure for the ICBS’s total number of “Jews and others” born in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza in 1999 — including 86,607 babies born in Israel proper and 5,965 babies born in the West Bank and Gaza.⁴⁵

Yoram Ettinger and ZSW, in their various publications and presentations, put special emphasis on two factors to justify their argument that there are, and will be, more Jews in the country than is generally believed: fertility and migration. They seek to establish that Jews already in Israel are reproducing at an increasing rate, contrary to notions that Jews have a substantially lower rate of increase than do Arabs. To support this contention, they offer data on absolute numbers of babies born and on fertility, but not on natural increase — i.e., not on births minus deaths. The results are distortive of demographic realities.

As an example of this technique, consider a typical piece published by ZSW on *Israel National News*, a feature of the ultranationalist, settler-oriented website *Arutz Sheva*. In an op-ed entitled “Jewish Demographic Momentum,” ZSW seek to debunk the idea of an Arab demographic threat to Jewish predominance serious enough to justify Israeli withdrawal from parts or all of the West Bank. First they state that

Jewish births grew rapidly, from 80,000 per year in 1995 to 96,000 in 2000 and to over 105,000 in 2005. The first three months of 2006 already show Jewish births running at an annual rate of 107,600 births.

ZSW then compare this “rapid” growth to what they described as sluggish growth in the number of Arab babies born in Israel.

In contrast, the absolute number of births in the Israeli Arab sector grew from 36,500 births in 1995 to 40,800 in 2000 and has stagnated at the 41,000 level for

43. Zimmerman and Seid, “Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza,” AEI, 2005, slide 101.

44. Bennett Zimmerman, Roberta Seid, and Michael L. Wise, “Population Forecast for Israel and West Bank 2025,” at Herzliya Conference, January 23, 2006, slide 7.

45. CBS, *Statistical Abstract*, 2000, tables 3.9 and 3.13

five straight years. In 2005, the number of Israeli Arab births fell markedly to 38,800. The overall Israeli Arab fertility figure (which includes Israeli Muslim and Christian Arabs, and Druze) declined from 4.4 in 2000 to 4.0 in 2004 and will likely show another drop when the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics releases its fertility calculation for 2005. The first three months of 2006 show that Arab births are occurring at an annualized rate of 36,000 births, a figure now below 1995 levels.⁴⁶

An increase of 16,000 in the annual number of Jewish babies born, over ten years, compared to a decrease of 2,200 Arab babies in the same time interval, may seem significant. But by failing to note how many more Jews there are in the country than Arabs, ZSW obscured the higher birth rate of the Arabs. Furthermore, by focusing only on babies born (fertility) and not on natural increase, which would include deaths, the implications of the much younger profile of the Arab population is hidden. Taking all these figures into account, we see, for example, that according to the ICBS, the Arab natural increase rate was 23.5 (per every 1,000 residents) in 2010 and 2009, down from 31.9 in the 1996–1999 period compared to a Jewish natural increase rate of 14.9 in 2010, up from 11.7 in the 1996–1999 period. In other words, despite a downward trend in Arab fertility and an upward trend in Jewish fertility, the Arab rate of natural increase in Israel remains 58% higher than the Jewish rate.⁴⁷

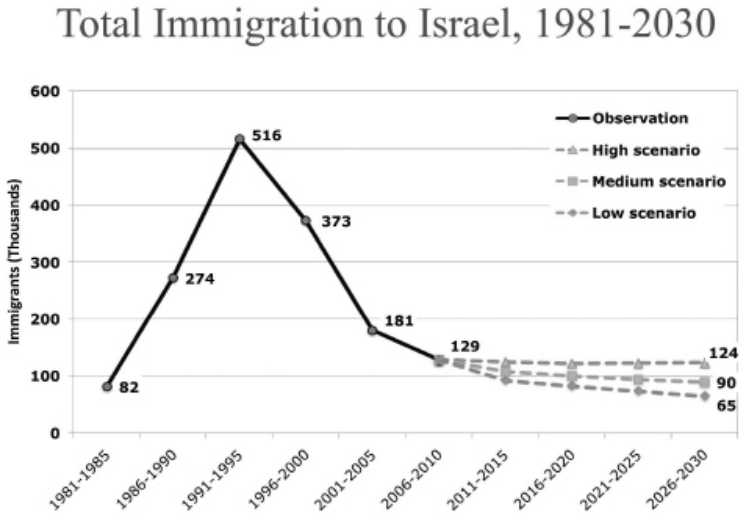
Nevertheless, ZSW criticize ICBS population projections for the way they treat Jewish fertility. ZSW report that the Jewish fertility rate reached 2.7 (average number of children born per woman over her lifetime) in 2005. ZSW criticize the ICBS for using a Jewish fertility rate of 2.6 for its “high” scenario projection for 2025. The ICBS medium projection used 2.4, while its “low scenario” used 2.1. These rates were employed based on underlying socio-economic trends and standard relationships between those trends and fertility rates in countries similar to Israel. Such procedures are faulted by ZSW because they do not treat the future with sufficient optimism — by imagining, as ZSW do, that a peak of Jewish fertility will continue or even increase because of what they term “demographic momentum.”⁴⁸ But their use of this concept in a rhetorically powerful, but metaphorical, sense ignores the real meaning of the term in demography theory. The technical meaning of “demographic momentum” is attached to the implications for the future of bulges in age cohorts that will come to be in their child-bearing years in the period covered by the projection. This well-understood meaning of “demographic momentum,” however, would contradict the impression ZSW sought to create, for it would direct attention of readers to the probable surge in Arab babies, not Jewish babies, based on the substantially younger profile of the Arab population.

46. Bennett Zimmerman, Roberta Seid, and Michael L. Wise, “Demographic Momentum,” *Israel National News*, July 31, 2006, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/6424#.US56j6I3tqy>.

47. The marginal rise in Jewish fertility rates in the early 2000s seems due mainly to a phenomenally high fertility rate among ultra-orthodox Jews. A recent study confirms this pattern, but also considers it as driven by social welfare and other incentives that are *not* to be considered stable determinants of this rate for the future, see Charles F. Manski and Joram Mayshar, “Private Incentives and Social Interactions: Fertility Puzzles in Israel,” *Journal of the European Economic Association*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 181–211.

48. See Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “Two-Thirds–One Third Jewish Majority, Exploding the Demographic Scare;” and Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise “Jewish Demographic Momentum: Update 2006,” *Israel Demography*. <http://www.israeldemography.com/Jewish%20Demographic%20Momentum%20Update%202005.doc>.

In addition to taking the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics to task for not highlighting what they characterize as a “surge” in Jewish fertility, Ettinger and his collaborators also severely criticize the ICBS projections for their low estimates of the contribution the migration balance (immigration of Jews minus emigration of Jews) is likely to make to the future population balance between Jews and Arabs. The following figure was used by the ICBS to illustrate its immigration projections for the year 2030.⁴⁹



We can observe that the ICBS’s projections of immigration as a boost to Israel’s population are low. Indeed, taking into consideration emigration patterns and the Jewish/non-Jewish ratio among immigrants, it can be argued that the Jewish migration balance has not been, and will not be, reliably positive.⁵⁰ Ettinger and his associates, however, fault the ICBS for its lack of faith in the possibility of unanticipated events triggering increased levels of Jewish immigration into Israel, as has happened in the past.⁵¹ Specifically, and in sharp contrast to their “only the facts ma’am” attitude to-

49. Nitzan Peri and Sofia Phren, “Prospective Immigration to Israel Through 2030: Methodological Issues and Challenges” at Joint Eurostat/UNECE Work Session on Demographic Projections, April 28–30, 2010, Lisbon, Portugal, <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.11/2010/wp.21.e.ppt>, slide 11. It is important to note that the data and projections displayed do not include emigration of Jews (or non-Jews), but do include among immigrants Jews, non-Jews qualified to immigrate into Israel under the Law of Return, and Arabs (mostly within the unification of families program).

50. Ian S. Lustick, “Israel’s Migration Balance: Demography, Politics, and Ideology,” *Israel Studies Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Summer 2011), pp. 33–65; Evgenia Bystrov and Arnon Soffer, *Israel: Demography and Density, 2007–2020* (Haifa, Israel: University of Haifa, 2008), p. 27, http://web.hevra.haifa.ac.il/~ch-strategy/images/publications/demography_2007_en.pdf.

51. Yoram Ettinger, “Israel Central Bureau of Panic,” *Yedioth Aharonoth*, March 26, 2008, <http://theettingerreport.com/Demographic-Scare/Israel-Central-Bureau-of-Panic.aspx>.

ward counting Arabs, they take professional Israeli demographers to task for not using Jewish Agency (World Zionist Organization) *plans* for rates of immigration between 20,000 and 50,000 per year as inputs to their models.⁵²

To bolster their “demographic optimism,” ZSW cite a study by Ezra Zohar, a scholar associated with a think tank based in the West Bank settlement of Ariel, the Ariel Center for Policy Research.⁵³ In their 2005 AEI slide presentation, ZSW quoted Zohar’s 1988 projection of an annual Jewish immigration rate of 50,000 to 100,000 (an estimate that proved to be five to ten times higher than the actual net rate of Jewish immigration in recent years). According to Zohar, high levels of Jewish immigration to Israel are to be expected based on past spurts of immigration, including during times of security stress. It is worth considering just how weak a reed this argument is, and yet how firmly it is grasped by ZSW. Zohar says that even heightened security risks do not reduce or threaten Jewish immigration. “Aliya has defied security risks, as evidenced by the 1957–1966 wave of Aliya, in spite of escalating Palestinian terrorism, and by the 1968–70 wave, despite the War of Attrition with Egypt.”⁵⁴ However, between 1957 and 1966, not only was the average annual rate of Jewish immigration below 50,000, but there was in fact virtually no terrorism during that period. On the other hand, Zohar ignores the precipitous drops in Jewish immigration following the bloodletting of the 1973 War and even more dramatically following the outbreak of the second Intifada.

Without acknowledging their own apparent “pessimism,” Ettinger and ZSW actually abandoned Zohar’s benchmark of 50,000–100,000 annual Jewish immigrants. They instead based their projections on a figure of 15,000 as the annual net migration of Jews into Israel — the average of the ICBS’s “high” and “medium” variants.⁵⁵ Yet even these lower claims are difficult to justify. Because of very low immigration rates and steady emigration rates, the annual net migration of Israelis (including non-Jews) has registered near or below 10,000 ever since the year 2000.⁵⁶ Indeed, in contrast to their criticism of ICBS projections as unduly pessimistic, the actual migration balance for the period 2002–2008 corresponded quite closely to the ICBS’s “low variant” scenario for that period as published in 1995.⁵⁷

52. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, response to DellaPergola, p. 27.

53. A reviewer of Zohar’s recent book described him as “a leader in Israel’s national camp. In the past he fought for ‘greater Israel’ against defeatism and against those who endanger the future of Israel.” Gad Nahshon, “Ezra Zohar: Is Israel Uncle Sam’s Concubine!” *Jewish Post*, <http://www.jewishpost.com/archives/news/dr-ezra-zohar-is-israel-uncle-sams-concubine.html>.

54. Zimmerman and Seid, “Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza,” AEI, 2005, slide 98.

55. Bennett Zimmerman and Roberta Seid, “Arab Population in the West Bank & Gaza: The Million Person Gap,” at AEI (February 23, 2006), slide 20. See also Zimmerman and Seid, “Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza,” 2005, slides 108–109. The number of net *Jewish* migrants into Israel is assumed to be 15,000 for each year between 1997 and 2003. Changing realities did not change this projection. In 2007 Yoram Ettinger asserted that “Net-immigration of Jews (*aliya* less emigration plus returnees who were away for over a year) has been around 15,000 annually in recent years.” Email correspondence with the author, April 12, 2007. These figures are important because if they were reduced, projections of levels of Jewish fertility would also have to be lowered. Elsewhere, ZSW adopt 20,000, the “high” ICBS projection for immigration, as their basis for forecasting. See Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “Population Forecast for Israel and the West Bank,” 2006, slide 16.

56. Lustick, “Israel’s Migration Balance,” pp. 42–43.

57. Lustick, “Israel’s Migration Balance,” p. 44.

CONCLUSION

Members of the Ettinger team have at times abandoned their official posture of scientific probity, justifying their project as a political imperative to combat “Demographophobia” among Israeli politicians that has contributed to the “entrenchment of the Two State Solution.” Justifying the efforts he and his associates have been making, Ettinger asks the following:

How would a transformation from baseless demographic-fatalism to well documented demographic-optimism impact the morale of the Jewish People and the Jewish State? How would it affect Aliya, Israel’s national security and posture of deterrence, its economy and the confidence of overseas investors in the Jewish State?⁵⁸

Thus ZSW identify not demographic conditions, but Israeli beliefs about them as immensely dangerous. For ZSW, the threat is not so much an Arab majority, but the *image* of an Arab majority — “the existential threat posed to the State of Israel by the specter of an Arab majority.”⁵⁹ The image is of concern, not because it is true or false, but because Palestinians have come to believe it, giving them strength for a long struggle.

[T]he Palestinians have consistently seen the demographic time bomb as a weapon guaranteeing Palestinian victory in the century-long struggle with the Jews. Alongside the claim of Palestinian rights, *it is the belief* in the eventual Arab demographic dominance that has continued to sustain the Palestinian will to fight at a time when much of the Arab world has reconciled itself to Israel’s existence. “The womb of the Palestinian woman,” Yasser Arafat was fond of saying, “will defeat the Zionists.”⁶⁰

Meanwhile, that same belief, adopted by Jews, has severely weakened their will to struggle over the long term for the entire Land of Israel. Accordingly, it is that belief in Arab demographic dominance that must be destroyed. The purpose of this paper has been to identify a weapon of choice in this battle — not a number, per se, or a set of numbers, but a way of counting that produces the numbers needed to animate an image of Jewish demographic dominance.



58. Yoram Ettinger, “Bursting the Demographic Bubble: From Baseless Demographic Fatalism to Well-Documented Demographic Optimism,” *Viewpoint Magazine* (Spring 2009).

59. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “Voodoo Demographics,” *Azure*, No. 29 (Summer 2006), p. 62.

60. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, “Voodoo Demographics,” p. 63, emphasis added.