

Voodoo Demographics

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Demography has always been a driving force in the 120-year-old Arab-Jewish conflict. Indeed, modern Zionism's dream of restoring the Jewish nation to its ancestral homeland seemed feasible in part because the region was then so sparsely populated. When modern *aliya*, or Jewish immigration, began in 1880, fewer than 500,000 people lived in the corner of the Ottoman Empire that would become the Palestine Mandate. And while the mix of ethnic groups collectively referred to as Arabs, or "Orientals," formed the bulk of the Mandate's population at the time, Jews were already the majority in Jerusalem. With the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 and the waves of immigration that followed, Jews indeed quickly became the majority between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Today, however, many believe that the demographic pendulum is swinging the other way. A "demographic time bomb" is ticking, it is said, in which Arabs will soon outnumber Jews in the areas under Israel's control. Indeed, when the Palestinian Authority's (PA) reported 2004 population of 3.83 million is added to the 1.3 million Israeli Arabs, the new total—5.1 million Arabs—rapidly approaches parity with Israel's 5.5 million Jews.

This number, coupled with PA claims to the world's highest growth rate and a high Israeli Arab birthrate, as well, has led to the widely held conviction that the Jews will soon become a minority west of the Jordan River—and that the idea of a Jewish state with an enduring Jewish majority will be severely undermined.

This perception of the region's demographic situation has had a profound effect on recent Arab and Israeli strategies vis-à-vis the determination of Israel's final borders. Historically, it has been in the minority's interest to accept the partition of territory, while the majority lays claim to the entire land. Accordingly, the Jewish minority during the Mandate period acquiesced to the excision of three-fourths of the Mandate to create the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan in 1922, and, after the Arabs had persuaded the British to limit Jewish immigration to restricted areas in the remainder of Palestine, agreed to the 1937 and 1947 partition proposals. In contrast, the Mandate's Arab majority all along demanded a one-state solution. Only in 1988, after the Arabs had become the clear regional minority, did the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leadership finally acquiesce, at least provisionally, to a two-state solution.

Today, the existential threat posed to the State of Israel by the specter of an Arab majority has resulted in a decisive policy shift on the part of the Jews. Portraying the high growth forecasts for the Palestinian and Israeli Arab populations as an inexorable force of nature poised to engulf Israel and doom the Zionist enterprise, then-Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert warned in 2003 that "Above all hovers the cloud of demographics. It will come down on us not in the end of days, but in just another few years."¹ Also in 2003, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told the Likud Central Committee, "The idea that it is possible to continue keeping 3.5 million Palestinians under occupation... is bad for Israel, and bad for the Palestinians, and bad for the Israeli economy."² Today, while both Prime Minister Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni maintain that Israel has historic and security rights to the West Bank, they are nonetheless committed to further unilateral disengagement,

couching their argument less in terms of Palestinian rights than basing it on demographic grounds.

For their part, the 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."

These deep-rooted assumptions about a demographic time bomb, however, are wrong. A careful review of the data behind these forecasts reveals that Israel does not, in fact, face an imminent demographic threat from any combination of Arab population groups. Rather, the source of much of Israel's anxiety may be traced to inaccurate numbers issued by the Palestinian Authority and taken for granted by the rest of the world—numbers that paint a very different picture.

In *The Million Person Gap: The Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza*, we undertook an exhaustive investigation of the sourcing and methodology of the PA's numbers as compared to other records issued by Palestinian and Israeli agencies.³ These records, when carefully corroborated against each other, suggest that the mid-year 2004 population in Gaza and the West Bank was 2.49 million, and not, as reported by the PA, 3.83 million. This gap of 1.34 million persons—an artificial inflation of more than 50 percent—can be traced to the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), which conducted its only census in 1997, and has since used those results to develop a forecast for each year from 1998 to 2015. It is, in fact, these *predictions* that the PA has released each year as its population size, although they have never been adjusted to account for actual, changing demographic events.

How is this possible? The million-person gap stems from two major flaws in accounting: First, in the PCBS's method of establishing the Palestinian Arab population base when it first began counting the population; and second, the PCBS's method of predicting birth, emigration, and immigration rates among the relevant Arab groups, on the basis of which the current data was determined. These errors began when, as part of the implementation of the 1993 Oslo accords, responsibility for tracking demographics was transferred from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) to the PCBS. In 1997, the PCBS reported an astonishing 648,000-person increase in the Arab Palestinian population—about 30 percent—over the number reported internally by the ICBS the previous year.⁴ How did the PCBS find so many new people? The answer is simple, and telling. First, the PCBS counted the 210,000 Jerusalem Arab residents that were already counted in Israel's population surveys. Although the Palestinian Authority seeks to incorporate Jerusalem's residents into its future state, in fact they are living within the city limits of Jerusalem, under Israeli civilian rule, and rely heavily on Israeli infrastructure and government services; more importantly, the Oslo accords left the ICBS, not the PCBS, in charge of counting the Jerusalem Arabs.

Second, the PCBS, by its own admission, included at least 325,000 Palestinians, fully 13 percent of the PCBS total, who were living outside of the PA. Although the agency claimed it was performing a *de facto* census (defined by demographers as counting only people physically present), it made an exception for non-residents who had received identification cards during Israel's Civil Administration, regardless of how long they had been absent. (Israel, by comparison, removes people from its population counts after they have been abroad for a year.) The inclusion of non-residents with identification cards is not an uncommon practice for Palestinian agencies: The Palestine Central Election Commission (CEC), for example, noted in 2004 that 13 percent of its base of eligible voters lived abroad.⁵ Thus, by double-counting the Jerusalem Arabs and including Palestinian Arabs living abroad in their total, the PCBS managed to add 535,000 people to their population total.

When the twice-counted Jerusalem Arabs and those residents living abroad are subtracted from the PCBS population base, it turns out that there are only 113,000 more Arabs than documented by the ICBS. This new disparity bodes far better: Considering the contentious nature of demographics, such a small difference between the Israeli and Palestinian counts underscores that the disparities between the two counts were the result of changes in definition, not changes in actual numbers of people. The lower ICBS figure was further corroborated by Palestinian voting records: According to the CEC, there were 1.3 million adults physically living in the territories and eligible to vote in 2004 and 2005. That figure exactly matches the ICBS age grouping predictions, which indicated that there would be 1.3 million residents over the age of 18 and eligible to vote in 2004, as opposed to the 1.85 million predicted in the pcbs forecast. Thus when projecting Palestinian population figures for 2004—the last year for which official data has been released—the PCBS began with a significantly inflated base number for 1997.

The PCBS then took its artificially inflated population base and predicted that it would grow at an average of 4.75 percent per year from 1997 to 2004—the highest rate in the world—as a result of high birth rates and massive immigration. Yet official data from Palestinian and Israeli agencies has since revealed that these PCBS birth and immigration expectations were not met for *even one year* between 1997 and 2004.

The first explanation for the lesser growth rate is the lower observed rate of natural increase—that is, births minus deaths. From 1997 through the end of 2003, there were 308,000 fewer births than the PCBS had predicted, according to the PA Ministry of Health (MOH), which kept detailed birth records by district, hospital, and type of delivery.⁶ PA Ministry of Education records on the number of children entering first grade corroborate the MOH's lower figures.⁷ With regard to deaths, the numbers are also lower, with the PCBS projections of deaths from 1997 to 2003 exceeding MOH statistics by some 32,000. The PCBS birth and death rate predictions were not significantly off, but when they were applied to a large number of

individuals not living in the West Bank and Gaza, they caused the PCBS forecast to significantly overstate births and deaths. In the area of natural population growth, therefore, the Palestinian projections were artificially inflated by some 276,000.

The second explanation has to do with the movement of Palestinians into and out of the territories. The PCBS predicted that a net 236,000 Palestinians would move into the territories from abroad between 1997 and 2003, when in reality Israeli border police records show that a net 74,000 moved *out*—yielding a net error of 310,000 people. In addition, according to an Israeli Ministry of the Interior report, in the same period 105,000 Palestinians moved to pre-1967 Israel from the territories under family reunification programs—Palestinians whom the PCBS continued to count, but who were now being counted as Israeli Arabs as well—bringing the total inflation of Palestinian figures as a result of faulty accounting of immigration and emigration to 415,000 people. It is a fact that Palestinian Arab emigration is one of the most important untold stories behind the conflict, playing as it does a critical role in reducing the Palestinian growth rate. For instead of a large number of Palestinians moving into the territories as the PCBS anticipated, a much larger number of Palestinians fled to neighboring countries and to democracies such as Australia, Europe, the United States, Canada, and their destination of first choice, Israel. Over 100,000 have entered Israel legally—plus an uncertain but substantial number who entered Israel illegally and are not counted in any of the data in question. One reason for this Palestinian exodus is the uprising that erupted in the fall of 2000: Since then, many concerned Arab parents have sent their children out of the country to escape the influence of a society that encourages its young to volunteer for suicide missions. Many of these parents, moreover, were not certain their children would return, or indeed, whether they would join them abroad.⁸ This phenomenon, as Palestinian human rights activist Bassem Eid observed in 2001, was a “well-kept secret”: Journalists were forbidden to report on it, since the PA believed it would be “detrimental to the national interest.”⁹

In sum: By double-counting the Jerusalem Arabs and counting Arabs living abroad, the Palestinians inflated their base data for 1997 by 648,000. By predicting unrealistically high rates of natural population growth, the number was inflated by an additional 276,000; and by falsely predicting massive immigration to Gaza and the West Bank, and ignoring the significant net emigration of Palestinians from the territories, the PCBS further inflated the numbers by another 415,000. If we add these figures together, by 2004 the PCBS figures had managed to inflate the population in the West Bank and Gaza by some 1.34 million people—more than 50 percent. When the PCBS' numerous errors are corrected, the Palestinian Arab population for Gaza and the West Bank drops to 2.49 million people, with 1.42 million in the West Bank and 1.07 million in Gaza in mid-2004.

We should emphasize that these corrected figures are not simply based on alternate, and in our view superior, demographic assumptions; they are based on the Palestinian authority's own government records from ministries outside the PCBS, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, agencies that tracked actual demographic activity since 1997. The figures cited here should thus be considered far more reliable in all discussions of Palestinian demography—decisively so. The PCBS predictions of 4.4 and 4.9 percent growth rates for the West Bank and Gaza, respectively, are also dramatic overstatements in comparison to the observed rates of 1.8 and 2.9 percent.

Beyond the question of the Palestinian population living in the West Bank and Gaza, however, there is a no-less-important question of the number of Arabs living within pre-1967 Israel. Many Israeli Arabs identify as Palestinians; and it is the combined total of Arabs living on both sides of the pre-1967 border that forms the basis for the “demographic time bomb” theory. Here too, however, we discover a number of fundamental errors in describing the growth rate of this population, and where it stands in comparison to that of the Jewish population.

During the years 1997-2003, while the overall Jewish growth rate (including both natural growth and net immigration) was 2.1 percent per year, the Israeli Arab growth rate was significantly higher, at 3.3 percent—the highest for any group in the present study—partly a result of immigration from the West Bank and Gaza. Indeed, the Israeli Arab population grew from 10.5 percent of the regional total in 1967 to 14 percent by 2004, which is the main cause of the Jewish majority's falling during that time from 64 percent to 59 percent. Yet even these numbers are subject to manipulation: Some demographers, for example, have artificially lowered Israeli Jewish figures even further by removing some 300,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are not halachically recognized as Jewish from the "Jews and Others" category, despite the fact that many of them identify with Jews and Israel, have Jewish familial links, or consider themselves Jewish.¹⁰ (The ICBS, by contrast, places them in the "Jews and Others" category, and reserves the "Arabs and Others" category for groups such as the Druze, who are of similar ethnic and geographical origin to their Arab Muslim neighbors.)¹¹ It is clear that Israel has become more demographically complex and multicultural, but not necessarily more Palestinian Arab. The demographic results from the Territories were mixed: While Gaza's ratio increased from 9.5 percent in 1967 to 11.5 percent by 2004, the West Bank's share fell from 16 to 15 percent.

Taken together with the corrected Palestinian figures for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, it emerges that while both Arab *and* Jewish population groups have grown markedly during the past four decades, their relative ratios have not changed all that dramatically. In fact, Jews remain in a fairly strong majority position: In the combined territories of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, the ratio of Jews to Arabs is 3 to 2. If we discount the Gaza Strip—which is no longer under any kind of Israeli rule, and therefore is of questionable relevance when speaking of a demographic threat—then the proportion is 2 to 1. And in pre-1967 Israel including Jerusalem, the ratio is 4 to 1.

While many demographers and commentators are inclined to downplay the significance of these corrected figures, saying that they merely delay the date when Arabs will outnumber Jews, this is often the product of habituated thinking rather than a hard look at the numbers. They argue that as the disproportionately young Arab population reaches childbearing age, its demographic momentum will propel it to majority status. But that scenario, too, is somewhat far-fetched, particularly as the demographic outlook for Israeli Jews has begun to improve. Indeed, while the number of children a woman is likely to bear over her lifetime (known as the Total Fertility Rate, or TFR) has been steadily rising in the Jewish sector, it has been dropping among the Arabs. Between 2000 and 2005, the Jewish TFR gradually increased to 2.7—the highest rate in any advanced industrialized nation—and the number of Jewish births grew from 80,000 per year in 1995 to 96,000 in 2000 to more than 104,000 by 2004.¹²

By contrast, Arab fertility rates have been declining. Within Israel, the overall fertility figure for the Arab grouping (including Muslims, Christians, and Druze) declined from 4.4 in 2000 to 4.0 in 2004. Meanwhile, the number of total births, which has increased among the Jews, has been stabilizing among Israel's Arabs: While births among Israeli Arabs grew from 36,500 in 1995 to 41,200 in 2000, they have leveled off over the past five years. In fact, the absolute number of Israeli Arab births fell for the first time in 2004, possibly the result of new government policies affecting high-fertility sectors of the Israeli population, notably the reduction of child allowances.¹³ And in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well, there has been a similar lack of momentum in Arab births. In the West Bank the fertility rate has dropped from 5.7 in 1999 to 5.0 in 2003, and in the Gaza Strip from 6.6 to 5.7, respectively.¹⁴

One of the pitfalls of predicting population sizes is that demographers often apply yesterday's or today's fertility rates to tomorrow's forecast. By assuming Israeli Arab fertility rates from the 1960s (which averaged between 9 and 10 births per woman), Israeli demographers projected that Israeli Arabs

would overtake Israeli Jews before 1990. When the Israeli Arab fertility rate dropped to 5.4 in the early 1980s and to 4.7 in the second half of that decade, demographers applied the new rate to their next series of forecasts. However, by 2005, the Israeli Arab rate had dropped even further, to 4.0, reflecting the progressive economic development in the Arab sector, and echoing the more dramatic drops reported throughout the Middle East. To date, however, Israeli demographers have not readjusted their forecasts in light of changes in fertility level. This consideration—the forward-reaching effects of changing cultural attitudes or economic conditions—is vital to any demographic forecast.

Adding to the demographic pessimism, moreover, most forecasters have dismissed the possibility of significant future Jewish immigration. In this, they repeat the errors of the 1980s, when a leading Israeli demographer maintained that Soviet Jews would never come to Israel in significant numbers—just one decade before almost one million did.¹⁵ After all, the American Jewish community—the largest outside Israel—has a burgeoning Orthodox sector that is deepening its ties with Israel and has markedly increased its rate of immigration to Israel, in part as a result of improved economic conditions in Israel. Furthermore, rising hostility toward Jews in Western Europe is fueling immigration to Israel, as well, especially among French Jews, for whom the desire to move to Israel has never been more acute. Finally, among those consistently excluded from Israel's census are hundreds of thousands of Israelis who live abroad, many of whom possess a powerful loyalty to Israel and end up returning when economic times improve. For instance, when Israel's economy resumed its high annual growth in 2003, the rate of returning Israelis jumped 20 percent in 2004 and 50 percent in 2005.¹⁶

What, then, does a more factual approach to demographic trends portend for Israel's demographic security?

In a further study undertaken by the authors, *Forecast for Israel and West Bank 2025*, we used corrected population data for the West Bank to update the forecasts provided for both Israeli Arabs and Jews recently released by the ICBS for 2000-2025.¹⁷ It is important to take note of a methodological shift we undertook in considering forecasts into the distant future. For the purposes of calculating the past and current populations of the region, it was important to expose the faulty demographic figures widely cited with regard to the entire region—Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Yet it is still the case that Israel has withdrawn from the Gaza Strip, rendering its population figures of questionable relevance when considering the “demographic time bomb” theory. After all, if Israel no longer rules over Gaza, and has no intention of ever ruling over it again, then the very inclusion of Gaza's population into the “demographic question” is itself an act of distortion: Whether Israeli democracy is compromised by the prospect of a minority ruling over an Arab majority, for example, only matters in the area in which Israel is ruling today or may be ruling tomorrow. And whereas the political arrangements which will govern the West Bank in the long run are still very much an open question, it seems that those regarding the Gaza Strip are not, at least as far as Israel is concerned. Thus, the entire “demographic time bomb” theory must be re-examined in light of the respective long-term demographic prognosis for Israel and the West Bank, to the exclusion of Gaza. More significantly, with no reliable border data available since Israel transferred the Rafah border crossing to the Palestinians, a Gaza forecast based on recent demographic events would lose relevance against any, even dramatic, changes in population that might accompany recent political changes.

The study used corrected population and growth figures for Israel and the West Bank, and postulated a range of scenarios of possible growth in

all the respective population groups. In the mid-growth scenario developed in the study, Israeli Jews maintain the current fertility rate of 2.7, and net immigration (*aliya* plus returning Israelis, minus Israelis who leave) stays at its recent 2001-2004 average of a net 20,000 per year.¹⁸ Likewise, Israeli Arab fertility rates continue their downward trend from the current 4.0 to 3.0 by 2025. Even if we use United Nations data, which show fertility rates above those issued by the PCBS, the fertility rates of Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank still fall gradually from 5.4 to 3.24.¹⁹ Within these parameters, in 2025 the Jewish population would form a 63 percent majority in Israel and the West Bank—down slightly from the current level of 67 percent. Moreover, in a scenario adjusted for greater Jewish immigration and fertility rates boosted by rising Orthodox birthrates, the proportion of Jews would instead *grow* to a 71 percent majority of the total population. This situation is hardly unfeasible: Jewish fertility rates over the past five years are now *above* the highest level predicted by the ICBS, while the Israeli Arab sector is approaching the *lowest* fertility levels of the ICBS forecast. The only possible challenge to the Jewish position, barring unforeseen events, would be from large-scale Arab immigration into a provisional West Bank Palestinian state from the Gaza Strip or abroad.

It is true that Israel has always depended on some level of immigration to maintain or improve its demographic position in relation to the Arab population, a dependency that will likely continue. Without immigration, long-term demographic stability will require a convergence of birthrates between the Jewish and Arab population groups. In this regard, it is instructive to note the different fertility rates of Israel's various Arab subgroups. Among Christian Arabs, fertility rates have fallen to 2.1, barely replacement level. The Druze, who once boasted high fertility rates, are now holding steady at 2.66, just below the current Israeli Jewish fertility rate of 2.7. The reason for this drop is likely linked to the modernization of the Druze community and its integration into Israeli society, including its participation in Israel's military and increased educational opportunities for women, which in turn

led to delayed marriage and fewer childbearing years. Today in Israel it is widely advocated that in the interests of equality, Israel should adopt similar policies for the Muslim sector, including national service and enhanced educational opportunities for both men and women. If these were adopted, their high but declining fertility rates might decline even further, and eventually approach Jewish levels.

The conclusions from all this seem overwhelmingly clear: The Arab demographic time bomb is, in many crucial respects, a dud. It is the product of a dramatically inflated account of the actual number of Palestinians living in the territories, combined with obsolete assumptions about future growth. The question must now be asked: Why is it that Israel has relied on PA population projections as starting assumptions in envisioning the future contours of the Jewish state? And why have these statistical errors gone unnoticed? The official answer is that when Israel turned over administration of the territories to the new PA agencies in 1994 and 1995, no Israeli agency was charged with monitoring the accuracy of the PCBS figures. Recently, when the Knesset's Operations Committee summoned members of the ICBS for three inquiry hearings devoted to this question, the ICBS maintained that monitoring the Arab population in the West Bank and Gaza was beyond its jurisdiction, both for budgetary reasons and because the Oslo accords explicitly barred Israeli agencies from doing so. Furthermore, the original divergence between PCBS and ICBS numbers occurred in 1997, when the political process between Israel and the PA was proceeding smoothly and there was little interest in questioning the figures.

In some cases, simple negligence contributed to reports about a dwindling Jewish ratio. Though it is generally known that both Israeli and PA surveys include Jerusalem's Arabs, many international and government agencies, including, for example, the U.S. State Department and the CIA, simply add the two surveys together to get their totals, thus double-counting

the 220,000 Jerusalem Arabs. Yet an additional reason, it seems, relates to the intense politicization of the subject in Israel and the PA, and the way that Israelis have come to assume the inevitability of Arab demographic dominance. Prominent Israeli academics who addressed demography were committed to the separation of Jewish and Arab populations, and their policy recommendations were inseparable from their “demographic time bomb” warnings. Arnon Soffer’s widely distributed *Israel Demography 2004-2020: In Light of the Process of Disengagement*,²⁰ for example, accepted PCBS population claims for the West Bank and Gaza, exaggerated Jerusalem Arabs by nearly double, removed religiously unclassified Soviet immigrants from the ICBS “Jews and Other” category, included foreign workers in the “Arabs and Other” category (not included by the ICBS in Israel’s population), and included illegal immigrants to Israel from the PA without removing the same persons from the PCBS count, thereby arriving at a Jewish minority west of the Jordan River.

Moreover, the PCBS numbers continue to be widely cited by national and international organizations, lending them further credibility. International aid to the territories, for example, is based in part on PA population figures. On March 15, 2006, pleading for continued American aid to Palestinians, U.S. Quartet representative James Wolfensohn told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee there was a humanitarian crisis developing for 4 to 4.5 million Palestinians in the territories.²¹ Surprisingly, no senators questioned his numbers or their provenance, although his casual reference was higher than even those claims made by the PCBS or Israeli demographers. There are signs that this automatic acceptance of inflated figures may well be on the wane, however: Since the Oslo accords, the U.S. has granted the Palestinians \$1.5 billion, most of which has gone not to the PA, but rather to humanitarian programs whose budgets are often calculated on a per capita basis. While it is difficult to backtrack on a decade of aid calculations, in the wake of Hamas’ recent victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections, various government agencies are reassessing aid programs to the

Palestinians. The Middle East and Central Asia Subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee, for example, chaired by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, invited the authors of this article to present evidence of the inflated population figures issued by the PA. As a result, the U.S. and other donors may decide to recalibrate their support, given the significantly smaller number of people in the territories.²²

Yet the deeper answer to why the incorrect figures were unquestioningly accepted may lie in history itself: For more than a century, Jews have been locked in a demographic battle with Arabs. As such, many are predisposed to believe the worst-case scenarios—and a chorus of scholars ready to confirm their worst fears is always waiting in the wings.

Do the Jews of Israel face a demographic threat? The answer is still a qualified yes—but the threat has been greatly exaggerated. As the real numbers make clear, Arab population growth is not an overwhelming force that is destined, sooner or later, to relegate the Jews to minority status. On the contrary: With a greater understanding of demography and the specific forces that drive it, Israeli policymakers can develop a range of choices to affect the long-term demographic trends in the region—from the encouragement of Jewish immigration to the fostering of economic and social equality between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens. More important, Israel must realize that it has time, demographically speaking, to evaluate these choices, and to make the right decisions.

What is clear, however, is that the corrected data neutralizes a major psychological weapon in the Arab-Jewish propaganda war. Palestinians have wielded their supposed demographic strength to threaten Israel and inspire confidence in the inevitability of victory; but the Jews, it must now be declared openly, are *not* a vulnerable majority whose foothold in the land is weak. On the contrary, the Jews remain a clear-cut majority with robust demographic features. This moment in Israel's history is, therefore, a pivotal

one: It must undertake the kind of bold new thinking that will ensure that the Jewish state remains a reality, even as the rights and welfare of Palestinian and Israeli Arabs are addressed. And this can begin only with good, reliable data.

Bennett Zimmerman, Roberta Seid, and Michael L. Wise are the authors of The Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza: The Million Person Gap, recently published by the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies in Israel. Population Forecast for Israel and West Bank 2025 debuted in Israel at the Herzliya Conference and in the United States at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington D.C.

Notes

1. Nahum Barnea, "Olmert Calls for Unilateral Disengagement from Majority of Territories," *Yediot Aharonot*, December 5, 2003.

2. Bradley Burston, "The Fight of Sharon's Life: His Place in History," *Haaretz*, May 27, 2003.

3. Bennett Zimmerman, Roberta Seid, and Michael L. Wise, "The Million Person Gap: The Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 65 (February 2006), www.biu.ac.il/Besa/MSPS65.pdf.

4. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, "The Million Person Gap," pp. 12-13.

5. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, "The Million Person Gap," pp. 14-15; Palestine Central Election Commission, "Central Election Commission Registers Over 67% of Eligible Voters," press release, October 14, 2004.

6. Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Demographic Indicators of the Palestinian Territory, 1997-2015"; PA Ministry of Health, "Health Status in Palestine," Annual Reports 1997-2003.

7. PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education, *Statistics About General Education in Palestine*, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 reports, www.mohe.gov.ps; Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, "The Million Person Gap," pp. 20-21.

8. Inigo Gilmore, "Hebron's Middle Classes Choose America Rather than Martyrdom," *Telegraph News*, September 5, 2004.

9. Uriah Shavit and Jalal Bana, "The Secret Exodus: Palestinian Emigration," *Haaretz*, magazine section, October 5, 2001.

10. Arnon Soffer and Evgenia Bystrov, *Israel Demography 2004-2020: In Light of the Process of Disengagement* (Haifa: Reuven Chaikin Chair in Geostrategy, 2005).

11. But here, too, the argument can be made that since Israeli Druze do not identify with the Palestinian national identity, serve in the IDF, and generally support their country and its institutions, it might be misleading to include them in Israeli Arab or Palestinian figures.

12. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS), *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2005*, 56 (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2005), pp. 140-141.

13. ICBS, *Statistical Abstract*, p. 140; "Changes in Amount of Child Allowances," National Insurance Institute of Israel, January 8, 2005, www.btl.gov.il/English/whats_new/children_1_05.htm. This change in policy coincided with an immediate drop in pregnancies, for example, among Bedouin families.

14. Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, "The Million Person Gap," pp. 12-13. Fertility rates were calculated for each year from 1997 through 2003 on the basis of births recorded by the PA Ministry of Health, "Health Status in Palestine: Annual reports," and a residents-only population base for the West Bank and Gaza.

15. Charley J. Levine, "Interview: Sergio DellaPergola," *Hadassah Magazine* 87 (June/July 2006), www.hadassah.org/news/content/per_hadassah/archive/2006/06_jun/interview.aspxhttps://www.hadassah.org/news/content/per_hadassah/archive/2006/06_jun/interview.aspx. DellaPergola stated, "Very few forecasters saw the influx of one million Russian Jews even a few years before it started to happen in the 1990s."

16. Ruth Eglash, "Persuading Israelis Abroad to Come Back Home," *Jerusalem Post*, March 23, 2006. Article cites figures released by the Israel Ministry of Immigrant Absorption for 2003, 2004, and 2005.

17. "Population Forecast for Israel and West Bank 2025," Presentation at the Sixth Herzliya Conference, Bennett Zimmerman, Roberta Seid, and Michael L. Wise, January 23, 2006, www.pademographics.com/Forecast%20for%20Israel%202025.ppt; ICBS, "Projections of Population in Israel for 2010-2025," *Statistical Abstract*, pp. 105-109; ICBS, Ahmad Hleihel, "Demographic Trends in Israel," Presentation at the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology, June 8, 2005.

18. Net immigration was 86,200 from 2001 to 2004, ICBS, *Statistical Abstract*, Table 2.2, p. 31.

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19. "Fertility and Mortality Assumptions," *United Nations World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision*. Fertility figures correspond to PCBS reference noted in note 101 of our BESA report. Slide no. 5.
 20. Soffer and Bystrov, *Israel Demography 2004-2020*, pp. 12-17.
 21. www.senate.gov/-foreign/testimony/2005/WolfensohnTestimony050630.pdf.
 22. wwwa.house.gov/international_relations/109/zim030806.pdf.