

ARTICLES

Israel's Migration Balance

• • • *Demography, Politics, and Ideology*

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ABSTRACT: As a state founded on Jewish immigration and the absorption of immigration, what are the ideological and political implications for Israel of a zero or negative migration balance? By closely examining data on immigration and emigration, trends with regard to the migration balance are established. This article pays particular attention to the ways in which Israelis from different political perspectives have portrayed the question of the migration balance and to the relationship between a declining migration balance and the re-emergence of the “demographic problem” as a political, cultural, and psychological reality of enormous resonance for Jewish Israelis. Conclusions are drawn about the relationship between Israel’s anxious re-engagement with the demographic problem and its responses to Iran’s nuclear program, the unintended consequences of encouraging programs of “flexible aliyah,” and the intense debate over the conversion of non-Jewish non-Arab Israelis.

KEYWORDS: aliyah, demographic problem, emigration, immigration, Israel, migration balance, yeridah, Zionism

Changing Approaches to Aliyah and Yeridah

Aliyah, the migration of Jews to Israel from their previous homes in the diaspora, was the central plank and *raison d'être* of classical Zionism. Every stream of Zionist ideology has emphasized the return of Jews to what is declared as their once and future homeland. Every Zionist political party; every institution of the Zionist movement; every Israeli government; and most Israeli political parties, from 1948 to the present, have given pride of place to their commitments to aliyah and immigrant absorption. For example, the official list of ten “policy guidelines” of Israel’s 32nd

government, installed with Benjamin Netanyahu at its helm in March 2009, included the following commitment, with phrasing similar to that used by all previous governments: “The Government will place the issue of immigration and immigrant absorption at the top of its list of priorities and will work vigorously to increase immigration from all countries of the world” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009).

A glance at the modern history of Jewish immigration into Palestine/ the Land of Israel suggests two striking facts. First, a very large number of immigrants, both Jews and non-Jews (those authorized to be treated as eligible for immigration benefits without being Jewish) have arrived in the country since its establishment, especially if calculated as a proportion of the already settled population. Second, the overwhelming bulk of these immigrants arrived in three large spurts associated with upheavals outside the country: the rise of Nazism in the 1930s; the immigration of displaced persons from Europe and from Muslim countries in the years immediately following the establishment of the state; and the mass movement of immigrants from the former Soviet Union following the end of the Cold War.

In most years immigration levels have been low; meaning that the migration balance of Jews has been in significant measure a function of fluctuating levels of emigration. In this context it is striking, especially when compared to the deluge of literature on immigration and immigration absorption—in demography, anthropology, sociology, education, and political science—how very little public attention has been given to emigration from the country, especially Jewish emigration. This is striking, though not surprising, given the insult emigration represents to Zionist ideological positions and bureaucratic interests of ministries charged with funding research on immigration as well as the intrinsic difficulty of studying people who have left compared to those who remain. For example, a recent search for “immigration” on the home page of the Web site of Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) produced thirty-five hits. A search for “emigration” produced zero hits.

Indeed, ever since the mid-1920s, when Jewish emigration from the Land of Israel exceeded immigration, the Zionist movement has been extremely sensitive to the departure of Jews from the country. *Yeridah* was an ideological betrayal of the community by what in 1976 the then-prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, famously described as the “leftovers of weaklings.” More profoundly, the voluntary departure of Jews from the Land of Israel posed the frightening suggestion that the Zionist-sponsored return of Jews to the Land might not end the historical attractiveness of Jewish diaspora life and that the Zionist homeland, and even the Jewish state, might be as transient as previous Jewish political projects in the

Land of Israel. The foreboding associated with this chronic concern was dramatically expressed in Yitzhak Laor's ominous poem, written during the 1982 Lebanon War.

See Under ...

In the lexicon it will be written.

Israel. A state. Established toward the end of the previous century.

An ancient people of shepherds in its wanderings crossed through Palestine. It gave birth to sons and they were gathered to their fathers.

The sons traveled from there in ships and in planes.

Following a festival of blood.

This article shifts the analytic angle of approach to questions about Israeli immigration and emigration by exploring the ideological and political implications of a migration balance that is demographically negligible and possibly trending toward the negative. It is motivated by the contrast between the intensity of concerns about emigration and what it might represent, on the one hand, and an antiseptic and highly technical approach that has dominated discussion of the issue, on the other hand. Indeed, most treatments of the topic have come from demographers and statisticians who report Central Bureau of Statistics information, using standard economic and demographic models to evaluate trends and make projections. Rarely do these treatments discuss the extent to which politics or ideology may be in play, either as explanations for trends, or as domains that might be affected by them. Rather discussion of the migration balance, insofar as it is addressed at all, is presented as more or less determined by the implications of globalization and the natural exercise of economic rationality by skilled Israelis and diaspora Jews with high standards of living.

In order to identify the trends and gauge their importance, it is necessary to discuss the challenges of establishing recent rates of immigration and emigration, both for Israel as a whole and for Jews in particular. Indeed, there are substantial limits to the confidence and precision attainable with respect to these questions given existing data sources and certain intrinsic difficulties associated with counting the movements of people who themselves may not know whether their departure or arrival is "permanent." Nonetheless, the article establishes that the Israeli migration balance has reached historically low levels. It shows how in the context of sharpened concerns about solidity of the Jewish majority in the State and Land of Israel and the increasing isolation of the country, this trend

has affected the tone and substance of debate over demography and its political implications. It also shows how efforts to respond to the problem have produced new concepts and sharpened disputes in a range of issue areas pertaining to conversion, guest workers, Arab family reunification, Israelis living abroad, and the meaning of aliyah. The article's objective is to open a substantive discussion of the political meaning and potential importance of current migration trends.

The “Demographic Problem” Redux

As a result of the influx of nearly 1 million immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) since 1990 and the 2004 Israeli disengagement from Gaza, Israeli concern with the “demographic problem” faded. But concern with the solidity of Israel's Jewish majority never disappeared. Indeed, less than a decade after the effective end of the massive FSU immigration, and only five years after the evacuation of Gaza, it has become apparent that these two developments did not “solve” the demographic problem.

A crucial element here is the large proportion of non-Jews among these immigrants. Estimates vary, but it appears that between 330,000 and 350,000 of the immigrants and their families from the FSU who now live in Israel are not Jewish (CBS 2010: 83). Between 1995 and 2001, the proportion of non-Jewish immigrants was particularly high. By that time the overwhelming number of FSU Jews who wanted to leave for Israel had already done so even as the pool of non-Jews able to claim rights to immigrate into Israel by virtue of a Jewish relative remained substantial. Although a portion of this population will be recognized as Jews, eventually, the annual rate of conversion is significantly below the rate of natural increase among this population. Under prevailing and strictly enforced rules against conversion for all except those willing to adopt a highly observant life style, this pattern is likely to continue.¹

With these facts in mind we can understand the pattern shown in Figure 1, presenting data on the proportion of non-Jews in Israel. Immigration from the FSU, concentrated in the early 1990s, did affect the demographic balance inside the state, but only temporarily. For one year, at the height of the FSU immigration, the percentage of non-Jews inside Israel proper (including expanded East Jerusalem and the Golan) declined from 18.15 percent to 18.07 percent, but within one more year it had risen to 18.35 percent. Indeed, between 1995 and 2001, when the proportion of non-Jews among FSU immigrants was highest, the trend line turned rather sharply upward before resuming more or less the rate of increase prior to the FSU immigration. Using these categories, the non-Jewish percentage of the

FIGURE 1 The Effects of Avoiding Double Counting of Jews in the West Bank/Gaza and of Excluding Foreign Workers on Calculations of the Percent of Non-Jews in Israel

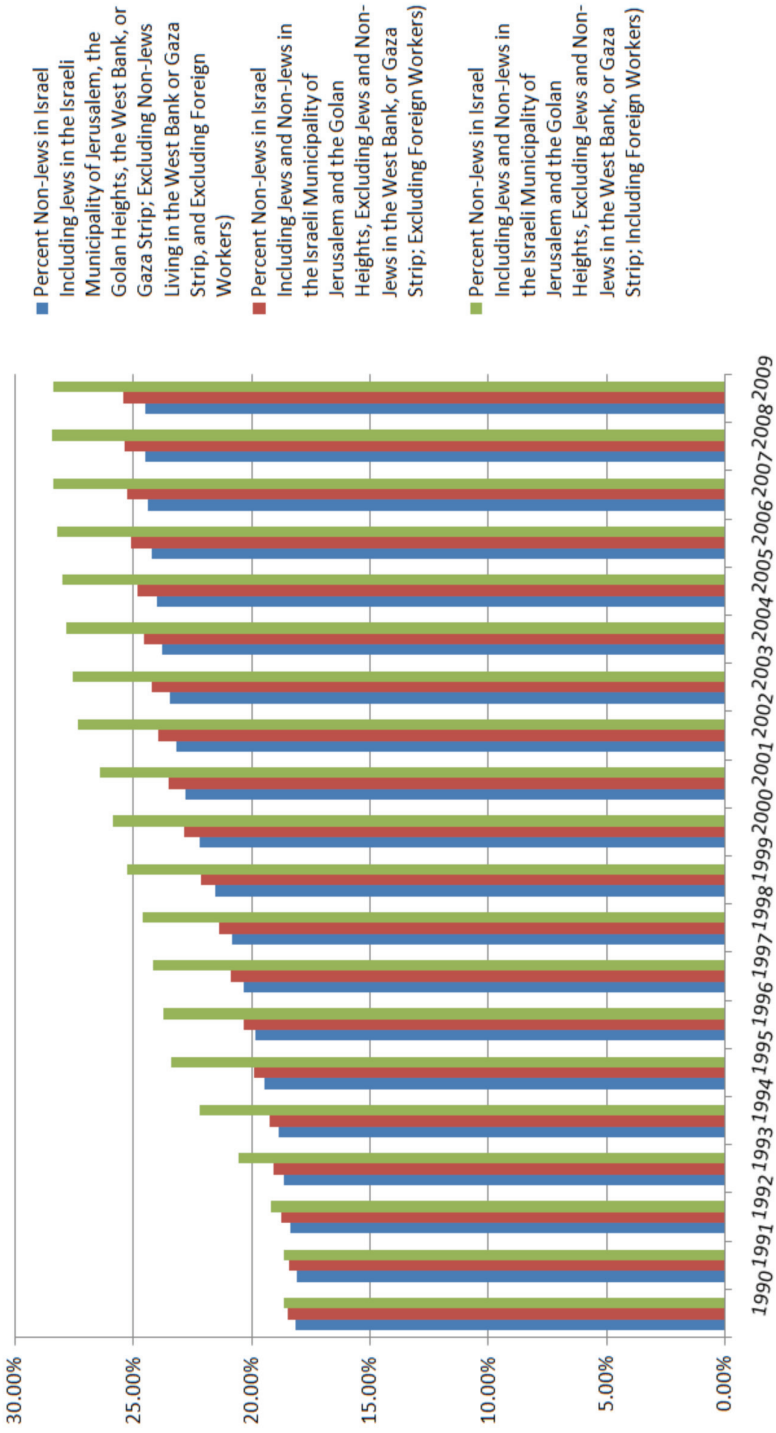
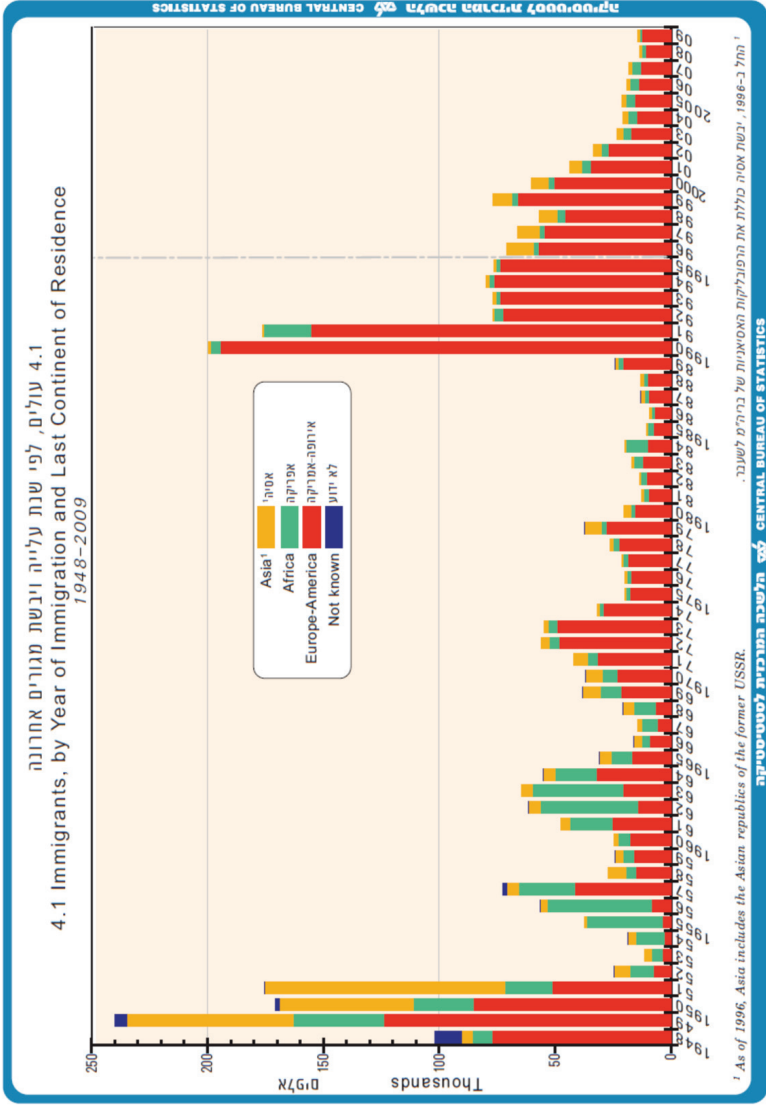


FIGURE 2 Immigrants by Year of Immigration and Last Continent of Residence



population was 24.47 percent at the end of 2009, having risen 34.8 percent since the beginning of large-scale immigration from the FSU in 1990.

However, as Figure 1 indicates, standard categories for these calculations used by the CBS do not accurately capture the lived demographic realities of contemporary Israel. Because of the categories used by the CBS, two important factors that affect the impressions Israelis have of the “Jewishness” of their country are ignored. One is the standard practice of double-counting Israeli settlers in the West Bank and (before 2005) in the Gaza Strip, as if they both lived in Israel (for purposes of calculating demographic proportions “in Israel”) and in the West Bank or Gaza (for purposes of establishing how many Israelis had moved into those territories and with what demographic effect on their populations). A second factor is the exclusion of data pertaining to resident migrant workers, whether legal or illegal. The first series of data displayed in Figure 1 use standard categories based on a double counting of Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza and on the exclusion of resident foreign workers and their families. The second series excludes Jews if they live(d) in the West Bank or Gaza but excludes foreign workers and their families. The third series excludes Jews living outside Israel, the city of Jerusalem, or the Golan Heights and includes foreign workers and their families.² The proportion of non-Jews in the population actually living in Israel was approximately 18.6 percent at the beginning of the large immigration from the FSU, and 28.35 percent in 2009—an increase of over 50 percent.

It is in the context of the sharply rising profile of non-Jews in the country that Israel’s anxious re-engagement with the “demographic problem” can be understood, and within which the question of the migration balance can take on political and not just demographic significance. To appreciate trends in the migration balance, let us first consider immigration. The steep decline in immigration following the end of the FSU immigration is apparent in Figure 2.³ In recent years the annual absolute number of immigrants has been near the lowest Israel has ever experienced since the mid-1980s. Indeed, as a percent of the total Israeli population, the annual flow of immigrants into Israel between 2007 and 2009 was the lowest of any three year period in Israel’s history. To an extent, it is becoming difficult to regard Israel as an “immigrant-absorbing” state in any meaningful sense, a reality reflected in reports circulating during the Olmert government of how difficult it was to find politicians willing to accept the Immigrant Absorption portfolio (Hoffman 2007).

Two other factors combine with annual immigration rates to determine the migration balance: emigration of Israelis and return of Israelis who were deemed to have emigrated.

Estimating Emigration from Israel and the Annual Migration Balance

Exact numbers are difficult to establish for emigration. Technicalities abound. Statistics can vary, for example, depending on whether children of Israelis living abroad and entering Israel are counted (“immigrating citizens”); whether those who convert to Judaism while in Israel are counted; whether only those entering as immigrants or potential immigrants are counted; whether Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem who become citizens are treated as immigrants or included under the category of natural increase; or whether those changing their status at the Ministry of Interior after their arrival are taken into consideration.

To these difficulties must be added the inherent challenge of knowing when to count someone as having left the country for another place to live on a permanent or semi-permanent basis, as opposed to knowing when a person has arrived in a country with the intention of remaining permanently.⁴ The CBS (2003: 27) has acknowledged “errors in the recording of border movements [and that] data on persons staying abroad for more than 12 months, and on persons who returned after an extended stay, have been based on estimates only.”⁵ The upshot of these considerations is that it is not possible to be precise about the numbers for emigration, and hence for the migration balance. Still the scale of the flows can be assessed reasonably well.

Figure 3 shows data up to and including 2008. The line marked with diamonds indicates the number of returning Israelis by year. The line marked with rectangles indicates, by year, the “emigration balance,” meaning the number of returning Israelis subtracted from the number leaving that year. The line marked with triangles indicates the number of Israelis judged to have emigrated in that year (CBS 2010).⁶ Considering the upper line we can observe that emigration from Israel remained near or above 20,000 annually between 1990 and 2008 while between 7,000 and 10,000 have returned each year during that same time period. The “emigration balance” is indicated by the line connecting the diamonds.

Although the delay associated with the identification of emigrants means the migration balance can only be calculated with a two-year lag, it is possible to trace the trend line by combining figures for immigration and returning Israelis, and then subtracting the number of emigrants counted for that year. See Figure 4 for the result of this calculation procedure using CBS figures from 1990 to 2008.

Of particular interest is the Jewish migration balance. One method for separating this information from data about migration patterns of all Israelis is to use the *Statistical Abstract* on “sources of population growth”

FIGURE 3 Israelis Leaving and Returning after Staying Abroad for a Full Year (in thousands)

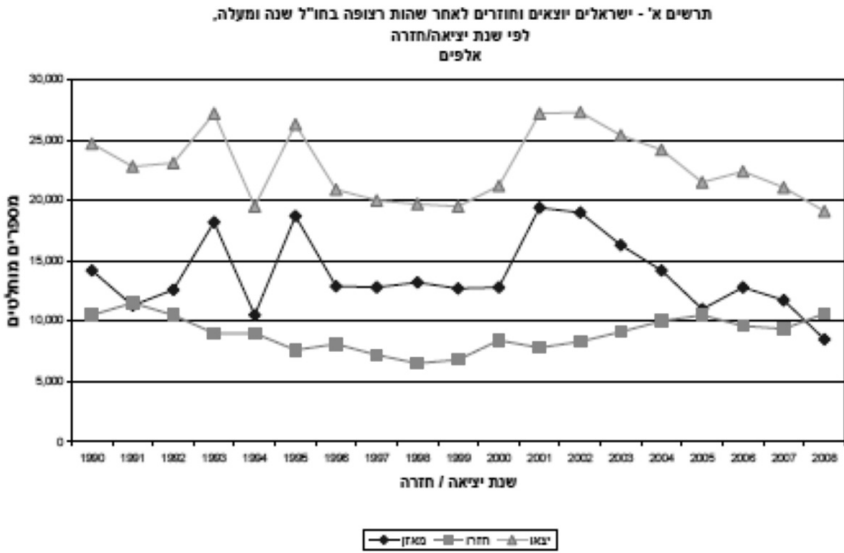
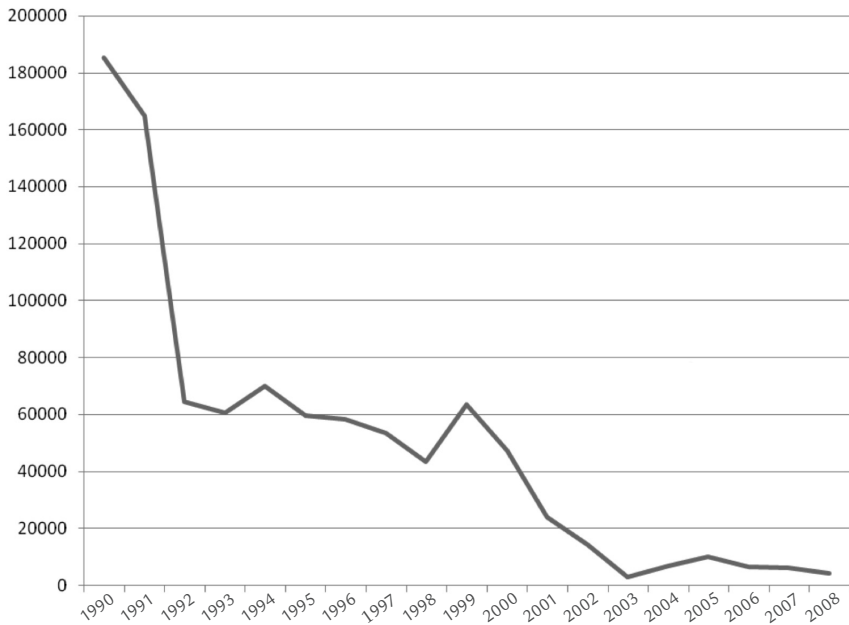


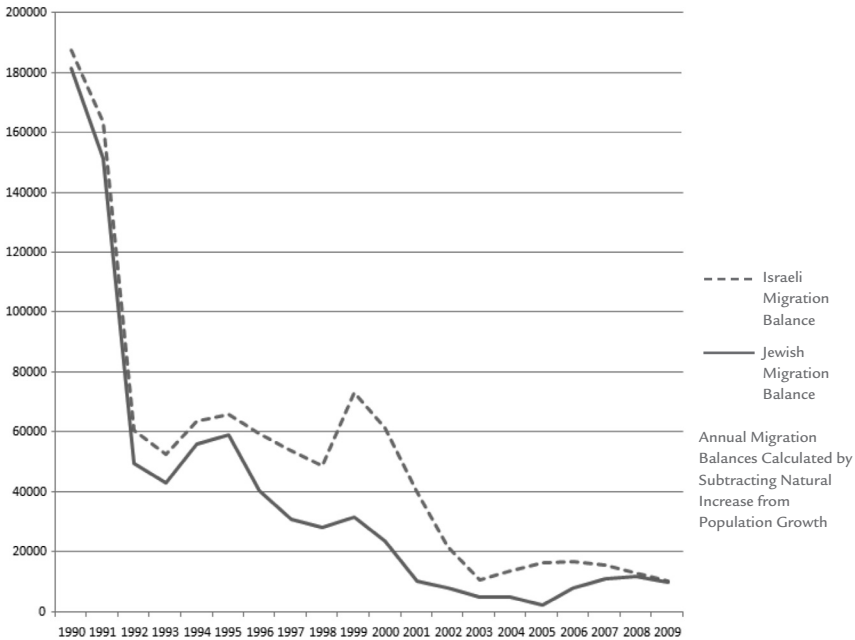
FIGURE 4 Migration Balance: Returning Citizens + Immigrants – Emigrants



(see CBS 2003: Table 2.2). By subtracting natural increase for each year from total growth, the annual migration balance can be calculated, both for all Israelis and for Jews only (see Figure 5). Comparison of the data displayed in Figures 4 and 5 shows some differences in the overall migration balance produced with these different approaches. This is unfortunate, and difficult to explain, but is perhaps not surprising in light of the technical difficulties involved. In any event, the trends displayed are quite similar. Regardless of which calculation method is used, CBS figures show a dramatic drop in the migration balance in the early 1990s, and then again between 2000 and 2003. By the first method, a total migration balance (Jews and non-Jews) is registered as 4,199 in 2008, compared to 12,700 by the second method. In that same year the migration balance for Jews was 11,900. Data for 2009 are available by the second method. The Jewish migration balance for that year fell to 10,000, compared to 10,200 for the total Israeli migration balance, suggesting that the emigration of non-Jews now closely balances the greatly reduced but continued immigration of non-Jews.

Using the second method for calculating the migration balance, which permits separation of Jews from non-Jews, we can see that in 2005 that balance came extremely close to zero. Indeed, in its assessment of Israel's

FIGURE 5 Migration Balances: Israeli and Jewish



overall migration index (the number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants per thousand residents), the Nationmaster Web site listed Israel's index as "0" for each of the years 2005, 2006, and 2007.⁷

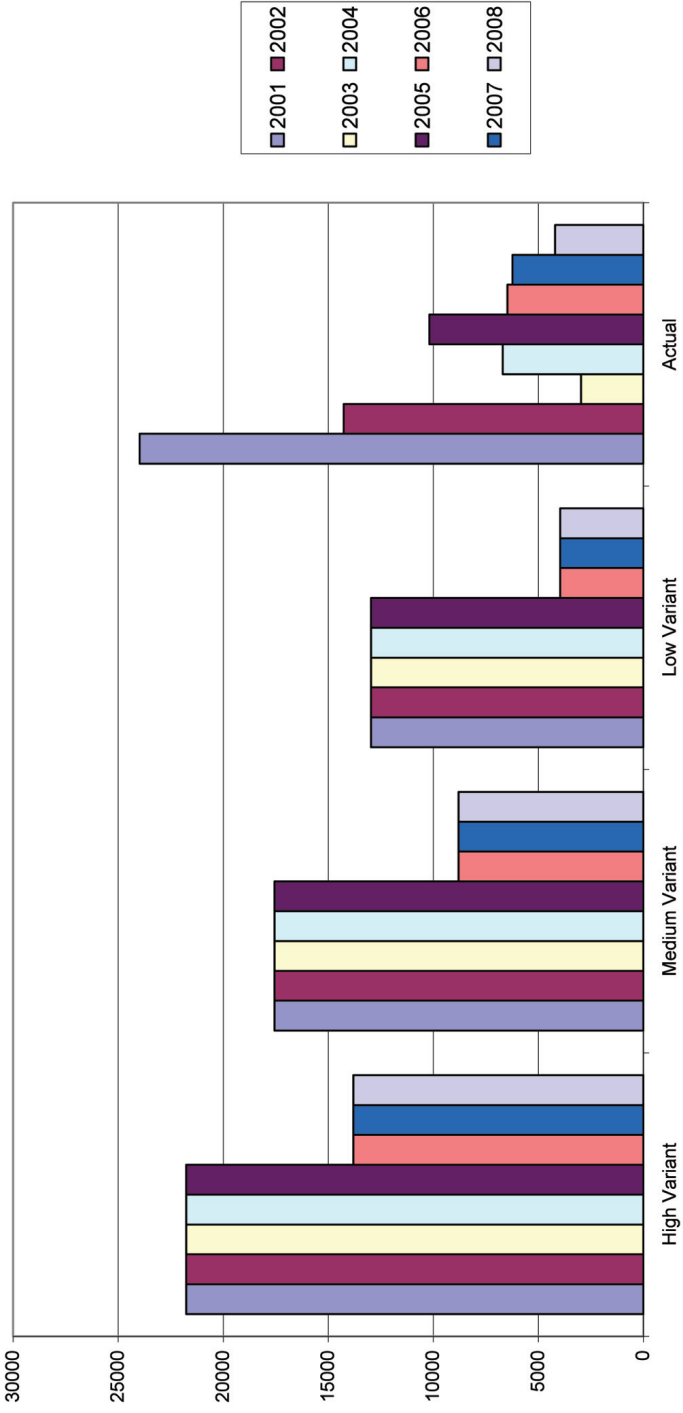
Given the very small absolute values involved, and the confusion and technical difficulties surrounding data production and reporting processes, we cannot know for certain that Israel's migration balance, especially with respect to Jews, has not dipped to or below zero in recent years. We can say, however, that Israel's overall migration balance, and its Jewish migration balance, have been at levels that contradict the assumptions of CBS demographers. In 1995 the CBS offered three projections of Israel's population in 2020 based in part on different assumptions about the migration balance in the intervening years. For this purpose it projected three scenarios, with "low," "medium," and "high" migration balances. The number of immigrants assumed under the low version was 745,000, or an average rate of 29,800 per year vs. 975,000 or an annual average rate of 39,000. The "high" assumption made for the years between 2001 and 2010 included an expectation of a positive Jewish migration balance of 26,000 for each year of the decade; their medium assumption was 23,000. The low assumption was 19,000 (CBS 2003: 28).

Figure 6 compares actual Israeli migration balances (first method of calculation) to these CBS projections. The migration balance in 2001 exceeded even the high variant as projected in 1995. However, by 2003, with non-Jewish immigration from the FSU slowing significantly, actual migration balance rates began falling to levels significantly below (2003, 2004, 2005) or slightly above (2006, 2007, 2008) projections included within the low variant. Interestingly, the low variant projections of the CBS anticipated the possibility of a negative migration balance that would begin for "Jews" sometime between 2011 and 2015 and for "Jews and others" sometime between 2016 and 2020.

Contending Figurations of Recent Migration Trends

So far it has been established that the massive immigration from the FSU did not eliminate the basis for Israeli concerns about the demographic problem, namely, the threat to the cultural or political paramountcy of Jews and Jewishness in the State of Israel associated with a declining Jewish proportion of the population. We have also seen that in addition to on-the-ground realities often hidden by various statistical conventions, the migration balance, especially as it involves Jews, has declined so sharply as to accentuate anxieties about this issue. These demographic, migration, and psychological realities have had a range of consequences in Israel.

FIGURE 6 Actual Migration Balance Compared to High, Medium, and Low 1995: CBS Projections for 2001–2008



One of the most apparent has been to intensify professional and semi-professional debate over demography and migration and the explicitness with which existential, political, and ideological factors are considered.

Overall this discourse can be divided into analyses that

- emphasize political or ideological factors and the potentially critical importance of the issue;
- downplay the migration balance by emphasizing other techniques for addressing demographic concerns;
- highlight the significance of the migration balance question, while interpreting it in terms of economic variables or standards of living in Israel and abroad.

Treatments Emphasizing Political Factors

Elsewhere I raised questions about a possible link between fluctuating levels of violence against Israelis by Palestinians and subsequent fluctuations in emigration rates (Lustick 2004). By doing time series analysis of Israeli emigration data, data on the arrival of Israeli immigrants elsewhere, and numbers of Israeli fatalities inflicted by Palestinians, it was concluded that during the years of the most intense violence by the Palestinians against Israelis, from 2001 to 2003, there was both a significant rise in Israeli emigration and a significant fall in the rate of Israeli emigrants returning to Israel. This pattern was evident not only in Israeli data, but in the data gathered from Australian, Canadian, and US sources about the annual numbers of Israelis applying for immigration visas or arriving as new immigrants. I analyzed data for Israeli per capita domestic product and private consumption to evaluate the counter-hypothesis that changing economic conditions rather than security-political issues were primarily responsible for increases in Israeli emigration, concluding that “security concerns appear to have been a more potent driver of Israeli emigration patterns in the last eight years or so than have economic factors (Lustick 2004: 17).”⁸ In a follow-up study of the effects on Israel of an end to prospects for peace, I detailed the increased salience of emigration for worried Israeli elites and the trend toward connecting that emigration to understandings of Israel’s long-term viability (Lustick 2008).

This analysis was supported by a raft of articles, reports, and interviews focused on emigration in the Israeli press during and after the second Intifada. In mid-2003 the head of manpower for the Israel Defense Forces reported that 34 percent of Israelis of conscription age were not serving in the army. Five percent of those, he noted, were Israelis who “left the country

prior to their recruitment and lived abroad.”⁹ Wide attention was paid to the departure of 1,000 of the 7,000 Argentine immigrants who had come to Israel since 2001 as part of an emergency rescue program.¹⁰ In *Ha’aretz*, Aluf Benn (2003) reported sharp increases in Israelis applying for citizenship papers at the German, Polish, Czech, Austrian, and Slovakian embassies in Israel in 2002 and 2003.¹¹ A Market Watch poll commissioned by the newspaper *Ma’ariv* in January 2002, found that 20 percent of adult Israelis had recently considered living in a different country and that 12 percent of Israeli parents “would like their children to grow up outside Israel” (Foa 2002).¹² Other articles have included reports that dozens of children of leading politicians and ministers were living abroad, that school registration figures for American Israelis are dropping and moving sales of their property proliferating (Chabin 2003), and that Israelis were moving substantial savings into foreign bank accounts, and buying up property abroad (Israeli 2002).

In November 2003, *Ha’aretz* published a lengthy interview with Avraham Burg, former speaker of the Knesset, chairman of the Jewish Agency, and a leading candidate for the head of the Labor Party prior to the last elections. Burg, son of the late National Religious Party (NRP) leader and Minister of the Interior Yosef Burg, had shocked many Israelis with an article he published in the *International Herald Tribune* titled “A Failed Israeli Society is Collapsing.” In this interview (Shavit 2003), Burg expanded on his blunt assessment of the country’s prospects and the propensity of many upper class Israelis to leave the country.

When you ask Israelis today whether their children will be living here 25 years down the road you don’t get an unequivocally positive answer. You don’t hear a booming yes. On the contrary: Young people are being encouraged to study abroad. Their parents are getting them European passports. Whoever can checks out possibilities of working in Silicon Valley in California; whoever has the wherewithal buys a house in London. So that slowly but surely, a society is developing in Israel which isn’t certain that the next generation will live here. A whole society is living here that has no faith in its future.

What is actually happening is that the leading Israeli class is shrinking, because it is no longer ready to pay for the caprices of the government. It is no longer willing to bear the burden of the settlements and the burden of the transfer payments. But what we’re getting in the meantime is not a revolt in the streets, it’s a quiet revolt of people leaving, getting out. It’s a revolt of taking the laptop and the diskette and moving on. So if you look up and look around, you will see that the only people who are staying here are those who have no other option. The economically weak and the fundamentalists are staying. Before our eyes Israel is becoming ultra-Orthodox, nationalist and Arab. It is becoming a society that has no sense of a future, no narrative and no forces to maintain itself.¹³

In a series of studies, Arnon Soffer and Evgenia Bystrov have offered an extreme interpretation of the trend illustrated, or at least suggested, by these reports. In their analysis, emigration trends reflect political, security, and cultural forces at work in Israeli society, which weaken the attachment of large numbers of Jews to the country and highlight the attractiveness of leaving for Europe, America, or Oceania. Indeed, they argue that powerful demographic trends, poor planning, and a failure to appreciate how drastic is the threat of national collapse has, amid tenacious Arab resistance, pushed Israel rapidly into a decline toward Third World status.

Among other things we have noted the ever dwindling Jewish majority in Palestine; the periphery, including Jerusalem, being abandoned by the Jews; the haredim and the Arabs who are multiplying and suck the marrow from the bones of the shrinking middle class; and the lack of action on the part of the state planning system ... we have drawn attention to the third world symptoms evident in Israel in every matter and concern; the unending Arab-Israel conflict, which will continue for decades more; immigration, now showing signs of halting, and the swelling departure of the best of the land; the draining of national vigor and belief in the Israel Defense Forces; the worsening of relations of Jews and Arabs inside Israel; the awful social situation; the intolerable gulfs between rich and poor; the low and still dropping education level ... the dearth of a value-laden and cultivated political leadership; the shocking political and geopolitical reality. (Bystrov and Soffer 2006: 69)

According to Bystrov and Soffer, with highly educated, skilled, wealthy, cosmopolitan, and mobile Jews crowding into the country's coastal center, a way station for mass emigration has been created, which they dubbed "The Tel-Aviv State," an entity they contend "threatens Israel's existence." Without drastic, almost dictatorial measures to reverse current trends these authors predict that ten years from now

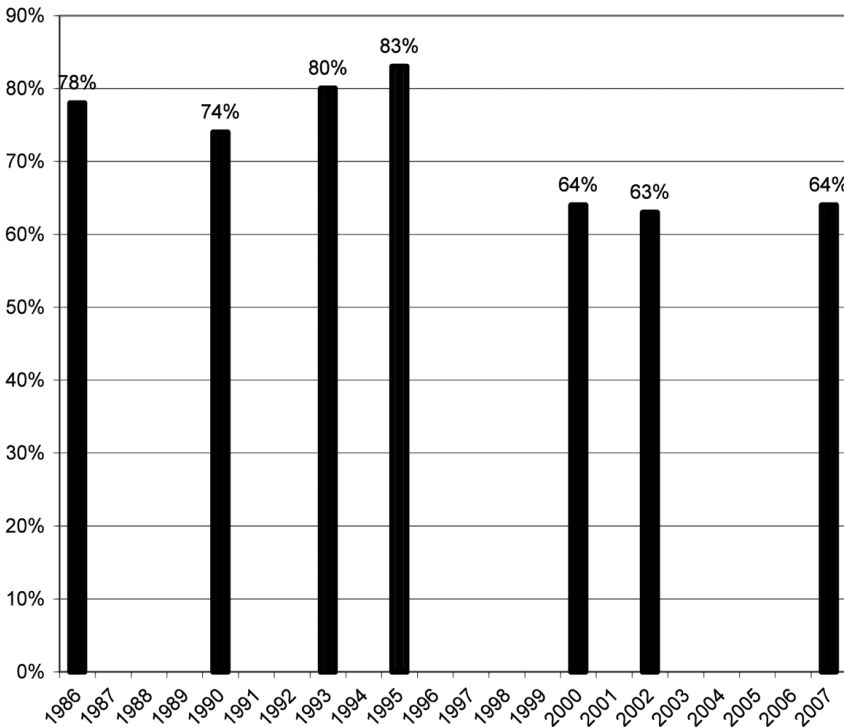
we are liable to encounter in Israel a relatively weak population, composed of a group of relatively young Jews with an affinity for religion, with many children and poor, a group of adults, and also elderly people in need of support, and an Arab population with many children. Will there be enough breadwinners and taxpayers among them? Will there be the workforce for conscription to the IDF and afterwards for reserve service? Will the young, the educated, and the excellent people wish to live in Israel? Who are the immigrants who in such circumstances will want to move to Israel? (Bystrov and Soffer 2006: 55)

Bystrov and Soffer see fundamental cultural implications of these socioeconomic and infrastructural trends: "*If the dominant narratives in Israel in 2020 are the Palestinian-Arab narrative and the haredi-Jewish narrative, which of the majority groups today will want to belong to Israeli society?*" (2006: 61; emphasis in original).¹⁴

Another recent study, led by the veteran student of Israeli public opinion Asher Arian, focused on weakening commitments to remaining in the country evinced among respondents from different segments of the Israeli population. The study directs unprecedentedly explicit attention to the motivations, beliefs, and fears animating widespread interest in emigration as a personal possibility, an attractive option, or as a likely development for survey respondents and their families. In their “audit” of Israeli democracy published in 2009, Asher Arian, Nir Atmore, and Yael Hadar reported that the proportion of Jewish respondents indicating they were “sure they would be living in Israel” rose from 74 percent in 1990, in the middle of the first Intifada, to 83 percent in 1995, during the Oslo process and before Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination (see Figure 7).

With the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000, that percentage dropped to the low 60s. In 2002 it was reported that one-third of Israeli Jews between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four wanted to leave the country.¹⁵ In April 2010 a Telesaker poll showed that 60 percent of young Israelis said

FIGURE 7 Jewish Israelis Convinced That They Want to Stay in Israel over the Long Term



they would emigrate to the United States if the opportunity to do so were readily available (Eldar 2010). Research by public opinion experts show that the commitment to stay in the country, and the belief that respondents' descendants will stay in the country, is weaker among immigrants than among "veteran" Israelis and weaker among the young than among the old. In these and other related studies, Arian and his research team have found stronger commitments to stay in Israel among the religious than among the secular and among the center and right than among the dovish left. Majorities of both veteran and immigrant Jewish respondents who were contemplating leaving the country cited economic motives as well as security concerns. Among veteran Israelis, the emphasis on economic motivations was stronger than security concerns (65 percent vs. 60 percent), while among immigrants the relationship was reversed, though higher for each category (78 percent economic motivation, 88 percent security concerns) (Arian, Atmore, and Hadar 2009: 77).

In a working paper focused on this survey material, one of Arian's associates, Michael Philippov (2007), delved more deeply into the pattern of responses to this question. He prefaced his analysis by noting that "in the context of the political reality of a small state such as Israel" it was unnecessary to explain the importance of the question of Jewish commitment to remain, since "emigration from the country is liable in a very short time to change absolutely the socio-demographic balance." His analysis of the data collected by Arian and colleagues revealed that in 2007 approximately half of Israelis between the ages of eighteen and thirty-one were unpersuaded that they wanted to live in the country over the long run—a drop of approximately 25 percent in this age group from responses gathered in 2003. All in all, wrote Philippov, "45% of Israelis whose parents were born in Israel were not convinced they wanted to stay in the country. While 87% of the haredim and 74% of the traditional religious described themselves as sure they wanted to stay in Israel, only 59% of secular Jews answered in this way."

Treatments Downplaying the Migration Balance as a Key Aspect of the Demographic Problem

Many analysts associated with Israel's political right have ignored the migration balance question (for Israelis or Jews), in part out of their aspirations to resist demographic arguments on behalf of territorial compromise. One aspect of this approach is to emphasize and even exaggerate the extent of Arab emigration from the Land of Israel/Palestine even while ignoring or distorting information about Jewish migration patterns. For example, in one oft-quoted publication it is argued that widely accepted

estimates of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and projections for its growth are substantially inflated by a failure to adequately consider the negative Palestinian migration balance, including a large net-outflow, and by the practice of counting Palestinians living abroad but with residency rights in the West Bank as if they were living there (Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise 2006).¹⁶ Regardless of the quality of this analysis in its own right, what is striking about it, and the way it is quoted regularly to “debunk” the demographic problem, is the absolute absence of any consideration of the Jewish migration balance in relation to Israel.

Another researcher writing in this vein is Yaakov Faitelson, whose work has been published under the auspices of the Institute for Zionist Strategy, founded by Yisrael Harel, a long-time leader of *Yesha* (Organization of Jewish Local Councils in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza District). Faitelson’s (n.d.) study *Demographic Trends in the Land of Israel* argues that Jewish demographic dominance, not only in Israel proper, but throughout the Land of Israel is secure and will remain so for the next forty years. He concludes his study by saying that “calculations based only on present data indicate that to the extent that the emigration of Arabs from the Land of Israel reaches 50,000 per year from 2007 until 2050, the overall ratio of Arabs in the Land of Israel is likely to drop to only 31.2%. In this case, the ratio of Jews in 2050 may be 65.2%; with their relatives, it is likely to reach 68.8% of the total population of about 15.3 million in the Land of Israel West of the Jordan River” (n.d.: 69; see also Faitelson 2010).

This is quite an amazing claim, as it includes Gaza and imagines a firm Jewish majority well into the twenty-first century, not only in Israel proper, but within the entire “western” Land of Israel. The technique for generating this projection requires not only more or less standard, and “optimistic” estimates of changes in Jewish and Arab rates of natural increase, but a systematic effort to treat the migration of Arabs in one way and the migration of Jews in another. Thus, Faitelson emphasizes what he says are extremely high Arab rates of emigration and predicts that this rate will continue, even absent any systematic policy to encourage emigration, for the next forty years. At the same time, he not only fails to engage with available data about Israel’s migration balance, but in fact projects a positive balance of 10,000 immigrants into Israel every year until 2050. Just as important for engineering his conclusions is his interchangeable use of the term “Jews” and “Jews and their relatives” so that the large influx of non-Jewish non-Arabs from the FSU, and their descendants, can be counted in the “Jewish” column.¹⁷

These are influential but unprofessional treatments of the question. Considerably more scholarly gravitas is associated with arguments that tie Israeli propensities to remain in the country to the level of physical and

economic satisfaction available and that are optimistic enough to downplay the threat of demographically or politically significant changes in the migration balance. For example, Sergio DellaPergola, Uzi Rebhun, and Mark Tolts (2005) attribute the possibility of a significant rise in emigration from Israel to the rational response of Israeli utility maximizers operating in a context of a globalized world where mobility is rewarded with higher standards of living and against a background of sharp declines in Israel's economic potential. Indeed, they argue rather explicitly against the view that emigration from Israel by Jews should be interpreted as having any particular ideological or political significance.

The data for 2001 position Israel emigration frequency quite exactly at the level that might be expected for *aliyah* rates from a country having exactly the same level of human development as Israel's. Given the emotion that usually accompanies the debate about Israeli emigration—and even the sometimes wild and unsubstantiated evaluations of its quantitative volume—this is a sobering finding. It indicates that decision-making concerning migration is strongly and similarly affected by rational considerations about quality of life, constraints, and opportunities. (DellaPergola, Rebhun, and Tolts 2005: 74).

Overall, the tone of the analysis offered by DellaPergola and his collaborators is calm and reassuring, despite a concluding observation that the scale of the emigration problem could be poised to increase substantially. Indeed, much contemporary writing about the migration balance continues to feature the traditional technique of either contextualizing developments to minimize their importance or employing counting techniques to obscure or even suppress knowledge of “negative trends.” In her extended consideration of the status and role of the Law of Return published by the Metzilah Center for Zionist, Jewish, Liberal and Humanist Thought, Ruth Gavison (2010) repeatedly notes the low level of immigration into Israel, but avoids any mention of emigration or even the migration balance.

In a 2009 study published by the same institute, Uzi Rebhun and Gilad Malach adopt the traditional focus of Israeli demographers—the status and future prospects for a continuing Jewish majority in the country big enough to preserve Israel as both “Jewish and democratic”—but do give some attention to the migration balance question. Their overall assessment is that the Jewish majority is eroding, but can be preserved at satisfying levels. They advise that hysteria is unwarranted regarding the imminence of a bi-national state, but neither is a complacent belief that no policy changes are necessary to preserve this state of affairs. For our purposes, the study is particularly instructive because its emphasis is on Jewish and Arab fertility rates, on former Israelis as the main recruiting ground for

new immigrants, the idea that the “economic crisis” afflicting Western countries could, over the long term, help Israel “retain its residents and attract citizens who are living elsewhere” (Rebhun and Malach 2009: 72), and advocacy of policies to strengthen the Jewish majority by Israeli withdrawal from Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and by ending Arab reunification of families.

Although the report does not devote systematic attention to emigration or to its causes, it does mention the “migration balance.” But the study’s projections of Israel’s population profile for 2026–2030 suggest how little serious attention the authors have given to this issue. The study’s “medium scenario” projects an Israeli population in 2030 comprised of 72.1 percent Jews (excluding “others”). The Jewish migration balance assumption incorporated into projection is simply that it will “gradually decrease” (Rebhun and Malach 2009: 41). It is specifically assumed that from 2006 to 2010 the Jewish migration balance will be positive and above 10,000 per year. As we have seen, that expectation has been met only once in the five year period between 2003 and 2008. The somewhat Pollyannaish aspect of this report is also reflected in the addition of a “quite reasonable” “New Scenario” that anticipates a 73.2 percent Jewish majority in 2030, but only by assuming increases in the Jewish fertility rates, a drastic decrease in the Muslim fertility rate, and an even more “moderate” decline in the Jewish migration balance than was used to produce the already overly sanguine “medium scenario” (Rebhun and Malach 2009: 42–44).

In the context of his population projections for Israel to the year 2050 the senior Israeli demographer Sergio DellaPergola treated the migration balance similarly. Although he emphasized the historical impossibility of accurate projections of the Israel/Palestine demography without including the effects of international migration, and despite taking note of the likelihood of a “sharp decline of net migration to Israel,” DellaPergola indicates that for his 2001 study “the role of international migration [was] ignored or assumed to operate at moderate and declining levels.” His assessment was that a “sharp decline” in net migration to Israel would result in net positive migration of “a few thousands a year over the first half of the 21st century” (2001: 10, 15–16).

Treatments That Emphasize the Migration Balance as Important, but Economically Driven

Some researchers have treated the issue of the migration balance as an important concern, while arguing that Israeli emigration rates are low, either in absolute terms, or in comparison with other developed countries. For example, according to Yinon Cohen (2008: 7) “the rate of emigration

from Israel is not high relative to emigration rates in other immigration countries," a claim for which evidence is not provided.¹⁸ The tone of other researchers, especially those emphasizing a "brain drain," is considerably more urgent, though still not phrased in the nearly apocalyptic terms employed by Bystrov and Soffer, and reluctant to attribute political significance to the etiology or the consequences of the changing migration balance. Two years after the DellaPergola, Rebhun, and Tolts study (2005), Eric D. Gould and Omer Moav published an article in the *Israel Economic Review* about Israel's brain drain, which argued that "the problem of *yeridah* is far more severe than what has been suggested by prior research." They reported that in a sample of twenty-eight Western or developed countries, the average "index of emigration, i.e. the number of émigrés per 10,000 residents, is 33.36, with the index for Israel being nearly three times as high: 95.51" (2007: 1, 4).

As do DellaPergola, Rebhun, and Tolts (2005), Gould and Moav (2007) attribute the increase in emigration to a globalized world that offers highly educated individuals more incentives to consider and more opportunities to exploit cross-national living and employment opportunities. Their main conclusion is that the flow of emigrants out of Israel is disproportionately talented and well-educated—a true "brain drain" that can only be addressed by government implementation of policies that would make Israel more attractive to these utility-maximizing emigrants, policies including lower taxes, improved public services, a higher quality environment, a more systematic use of merit as a criterion for career advancement, and a more equitable distribution of responsibilities of citizenship across all sectors of the Israeli population (*ibid.*: 18 ff.).

A particularly sharp version of the brain drain argument, emphasizing its threat to Israeli competitiveness on the world market rather than to Israel's long-term political or cultural viability, has been offered by Dan Ben-David (2008). Ben-David focuses attention on the emigration of Israeli academics, particularly economists, emphasizing the sector where emigration rates appear to be highest and where sensitivity to discrepancies in career opportunities between Israel and the United States are sharpest. According to his figures, the rate at which Israelis could be found teaching in US universities was the highest of any other country in the world, 50 percent higher than the second highest country—South Korea, and four times as high as the average of the next twenty countries (*ibid.*: 5). Indeed, he reported that in 2003 and 2004 one-quarter of all Israeli academics were actually living in the United States. As do other researchers, Ben-David downplays the significance of political, psychological, cultural, or security concerns as factors,¹⁹ and instead emphasizes that Israel has been losing and will completely lose its worldwide leadership position in

economic theory because it imposes a strict egalitarianism on promotions and compensation in academia rather than allow the free market to operate. According to Ben-David, half of the top economists produced by Israel in the last fifty years, “have chosen to live abroad” (*ibid.*: 19).²⁰

Conclusion

The massive immigration from the FSU changed Israel in many ways, but it did not remove the “demographic problem” from its national agenda. The new arrivals were numerous, but only two-thirds of them were Jewish and among the Jews were a high proportion of older people, beyond their reproductive years. Moreover, as with all immigrant populations, FSU immigrants are more inclined to leave the country, and indeed have been emigrating in substantial numbers.²¹ In addition, the rates of natural increase of Arabs, both in Israel and in the West Bank, have remained high. In combination with the absence of demographically significant sources of immigration, even the withdrawal from Gaza with its large Palestinian Arab population has not prevented a renewed fear that demographic trends are jeopardizing Israel’s future.

Reinforcing the effect of these trends is evidence that substantial proportions of young, skilled, and economically mobile Jews (“high-quality material” in traditional Zionist parlance) are not strongly committed to staying in Israel and/or do not expect that their children or grandchildren will live in the country.²² These segments of the population are also more secular, liberal, and cosmopolitan than the average Israeli. Accordingly, their departure, or their increasing openness to emigration, can aggravate the very conditions of life liable to encourage other highly skilled and liberal Israelis to consider emigration options more favorably and more urgently. Indeed, surveys increasingly find that the political and security situation in Israel, and general dissatisfaction with the performance of Israeli government institutions, are important motivators for emigration, along with traditional economic incentives.

To be sure, worries about the demographic problem are not unfamiliar to Israelis. Nor are low rates of immigration. However, in the current context, featuring a growing movement to delegitimize Israel and isolate it, Jewish emigration and a migration balance hovering near zero touch on the country’s competitiveness and long-term viability.²³ In dozens of interviews conducted in Israel in November 2010, Israelis from political positions across the spectrum found themselves unable to describe a future for the country that they found appealing and believed was possible. The gloom and unease afflicting Israelis of late, intensified by bloody

and unsuccessful wars in Lebanon and Gaza, is given shrill expression in the leadership's focus, and the population's growing obsession, with the threat of annihilation said to be posed by Iran's budding nuclear capacity. Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior ministers and respected ex-intelligence leaders regularly portray President Ahmadinejad as Hitler, Iran as Germany on the eve of World War II, and Jews in Israel as facing the possibility of a second Holocaust. In a population as traumatized by the Holocaust as are Israeli Jews, this creates a significant psychological threat. Indeed, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and former deputy defense minister Efraim Sneh are just two of the Israeli politicians who have identified the Iranian threat as a factor encouraging Jewish emigration from the country (Goldberg 2010: 7).

In such stressful circumstances, it is not surprising that Israel's anxious re-engagement with the demographic problem and the existential questions associated with it have given impetus to the recommendations of experts and policy-makers who deal with immigration and absorption. One set of initiatives to stem the "brain drain" include large-scale grants to relocate laboratories and research programs for scientists teaching abroad in prestigious universities and the offer of generous tax exemptions for wealthy diaspora Jewish businessmen and investors (Sofer 2010). These programs can provide opportunities for immigration and absorption officials to portray their bureaucracies as relevant under post-Zionist conditions, but they are unlikely to have a substantial demographic impact. Those Israelis who leave the country are typically those most agile at exploiting available incentives programs and will be at high risk of enjoying their aliyah incentives and then departing the country a second time.

In this connection, what is of particular importance is the recognition of which Israeli Jews have options to leave the country. The percentage of Israelis and, in particular, Israelis of European or American descent who hold foreign passports is unknown, but estimates range as high as 70 percent.²⁴ The recent decision of the Interior Ministry to withhold immigration benefits from returning Israelis unless they have been abroad for two full years reflects concern regarding the exploitative practices of particularly "agile" migrants. This phenomenon is also reflected in the behavior of Israelis who spend 80 percent to 90 percent of their time out of the country, even as they return for holidays every twelve months for legal and economic reasons related to the interests of their families. Data on the scale of this phenomenon—of emigrants whose "center of life" has shifted outside of the state but who are not counted as emigrants—are unavailable. According to information from the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, only 8 percent of FSU immigrants are counted as having emigrated (approximately

75,000), but it has been estimated that 147,000 holders of Israeli passports are living in Russia and the Ukraine.²⁵

The cost of other immigration-related innovations is paid ideologically and politically rather than economically. Leaving Israel, wrote Shlomo Maital (2006), should no longer be seen as a “betrayal of Zionism” because in a globalizing age “*where* on this planet you live matters less than *how* you think and act toward Israel.”²⁶ In the view of two established authorities on immigration and demography, the traditional Zionist analysis of a Jewish world that would be recentered from the diaspora to Israel must be abandoned. “Despite the ideology of ‘ingathering of exiles,’” wrote Chaim Waxman and Sergio DellaPergola (2007), “the probabilities of mass immigration to Israel, or aliyah, are negligible to nil.” Consistent with the view that the Zionist mission is now focused primarily on Israelis rather than world Jewry, is the fact that Israel’s immigration machinery now identifies the population of Israeli citizens living abroad—those who have emigrated—as the single most promising recruitment pool for maintaining a positive migration balance. With support from Israel’s Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, a new organization devoted to strengthening relationships between Israel and former Israelis, Mishelanu, held a major conference in Toronto in January 2011 on “Israelis Abroad.”²⁷

The decision in the 1990s to bring as many non-Arabs to Israel as possible (from the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and elsewhere) was a major departure from the principles of Zionist ideology (Lustick 1999). Adjustment of another key element of Zionist ideology as a technique for responding to the migration balance problem is reflected in the idea of partial aliyah. It is based on a radically new conception of Jewish immigration to Israel, and reflects an acceptance, even celebration, of the idea that neither aliyah nor prevention of yeridah necessarily imply exclusive residency in Israel.²⁸ Traditionally, aliyah entailed a permanent and life-changing experience; a physical expression of Zionism’s rejection of the state of exile (*galut*) as an acceptable form of Jewish life. This was made official and personal by the Hebraicization of names and the full engagement of the *oleh* with Hebrew and the practical and material tasks of working in and on the Land of Israel. By fostering the principle of partial aliyah, or “multilocal attachment,” the country’s immigration apparatus, the World Zionist Organization, and associated experts have effectively abandoned these traditional principles of Zionism in order to encourage Israeli emigrants, as well as diaspora Jews who identify with Israel, to reside in the country as citizens for at least some of their lives.²⁹ The objective is to lower the psychological and economic bar to immigration while helping to persuade Israelis who have departed to consider the possibility of remaining attached to the country via transoceanic commuting (Gil and Wilf 2010).

However, this change in policy will not be without its political and even diplomatic costs. By legitimizing ideas of partial or “flexible” aliyah, the immigration bureaucracy may unintendedly legitimize the idea of flexible or partial yeridah, lowering even more the psychological and economic barriers keeping Israelis with options to leave from exercising those options. With Palestinians turning with increasing vigor to the “right of return” for stateless refugees, the image of hundreds of thousands of Israelis blessed by the state for enjoying citizenship without residing in the country as their center of life will sharpen the argument over who most deserves to live there.

From a post-Zionist perspective these ideological developments are unsurprising; the fundamental principle of post-Zionist analysis being that the world has changed so dramatically that not only the imperatives of Zionist ideology, but the theories and categories of Jewish life it is based on, are anachronistic. What is remarkable is that although most Israelis still identify as traditional Zionists, very little criticism is heard of these breaks with Zionism’s bedrock principles. Two factors may help explain this silence. The first is mundane. If it is necessary to bend or even break ideological principles in order to maintain the public importance of the immigration mission, we should not be surprised to see the large immigration and absorption bureaucracies doing just that, especially when confronted with the absence of enough “kosher Jews” (Sheleg 2004: 9) or enough diaspora Jewish interest in traditional aliyah to justify their budgets. A second factor, as emphasized in this article, is the sharpening demographic problem, which discourages scrutiny of either the Jewishness of immigrants (as long as they are not Arabs) or of the commitment by Jews to Israel as their “center of life.”

Thus has the migration balance question pushed Israelis back to an anxious engagement with the demographic problem and with the fundamental precariousness of their country’s future. This anxiety manifests itself in many different domains, but in radically opposing ways depending on whether or not Jews or potential Jews are involved, as opposed to Arabs. With respect to the first category, we observe significant trends toward liberalization regarding standards for allowing non-Jews seen as potential Jews to immigrate, “sociological” or non-Halachic routes to conversion,³⁰ voting rights for diaspora Jews, benefits for returning emigrants, and attitudes toward citizens who only peripatetically reside in the country. The opposite is the case in any issue area dealing with Arabs or populations otherwise considered unfit to be treated as Jews or potential Jews. Thus, demography and the threat it is deemed to pose to the survival of the Jewish state are used as justifications for increasingly rigid rules developed for blocking entrance of illegal immigrants into the country, construction

of a fence along the Negev border, and aggressive enforcement of residency rules against foreign workers or their children. In recent years the government has severely limited entrance or citizenship for Palestinian spouses and entertained proposals to require loyalty oaths of naturalized (i.e., Arab) citizens and to exclude heavily Arab areas within Israel proper from the State of Israel. On the diplomatic level this increased sensitivity to the problematic status of Israel as a Jewish state is reflected in demands that Arab states and the Palestinians declare their acceptance of Israel as a Jewish state, or as the national state of the Jewish people, as a condition for peace. It is ironic, but understandable in the context of this analysis, that just when the meaning of “Jewish” is being diluted to bolster the character of the state by attracting and absorbing non-Jewish immigrants, enemies and the world at large are being required to legitimize its increasingly tenuous “Jewish” status.

Precisely because the demographic issue is so politically fraught in Israel, and in light of the increasing weight of the migration balance in demographic calculations, it is difficult to expect Israeli scholars to produce analytically dispassionate efforts to weigh the long-term political significance of emigration. Should it be considered a minor problem that cannot be interpreted as having long-term implications, or is emigration the sign of a massive and virtually inevitable failure of Zionism, leading to the disappearance of the country as we have known it?

Answering this question means adopting a comparative perspective on developed political systems like Israel, that are seen, or were seen prior to their demise, as having question marks over their future. Such a perspective would entail comparing Israel and its prospects with a set of countries and regimes of states that did not survive, such as the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Pahlavi Iran, Czechoslovakia, and South Africa, but also those that have survived—Cuba, Pakistan, Belgium, and Taiwan. How did emigration and the migration balance in these countries interact with their national and international predicaments? In this context the political meaning of emigration becomes a part of a much larger analytic agenda. Its animating questions would not be focused on how Israel could change in shape or character in order to survive, but on what is or could be meant by Israel’s survival, what an end to the state as we know it would look like, and what leading indicators could be identified for either adaptation or radical transformation in the way the country and the populations that inhabit it are governed.

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NOTES

1. CBS data indicate that, in 2007, 4,200 Israelis were reclassified as Jews and 5,100 were reclassified as Jews in 2008 (data for various years are available at <http://www.cbs.gov.il>). Those rates of reclassification can be compared with an annual rate of natural increase in the “other” or “not classified by religion” category of nearly 9,000 per year (see CBS 2009: Table 2.3). It is important to note that not all of these reclassifications were due to conversions. According to available data, only 8,000 immigrants from the FSU converted to Judaism between 2000 and 2007 (Gavison 2010: 84). In 2005 the CBS released data indicating that Israelis of Ethiopian descent comprised 3.6 percent of the “others” category (Kruger 2005).
2. Experts agree that official CBS figures significantly undercount the migrant worker population, especially the portion that is illegal. Data reported here are estimates compiled from a variety of sources. To avoid double-counting Israelis living in the West Bank and (prior to 2005) in the Gaza Strip, the number of Jews and those “unclassified by religion” (meaning non-Jewish, non-Arabs) living in those territories was subtracted from the annual reports of Jews and “unclassified by religion” living inside Israel.
3. The light green colored tips of columns over the last decade reflect immigration from Ethiopia, including the Falash Mura—who are counted within the “other” category of non-Jewish non-Arabs.

4. Proposals to address this problem by requiring departing Israelis to indicate the purposes of their departure and their intent to return would require use of the concept of “usual residence”—a concept that has not been employed within the context of the regulations that produce these statistics (Paltiel 2002). The concept of “center of life” as established where someone is actually considered to be a resident, has been used by Israel to constrain Palestinian access to residency rights and, in the past, to determine income tax liability for Israelis earning some portion of income abroad. But the concept has not been used to collect emigration statistics. It may be speculated that the political problems associated with requiring Jewish Israelis to specify their “usual residence” or their “center of life” would be quite substantial.
5. For details on the scale and multiple causes of errors in Israeli records used to produce emigration and population figures, see Sheps and Hleihel (n.d.). See also Kamen (2005: 3–4, 7), who has reported that 7 percent of the population registry contains names of emigrants, ensuring inaccuracy of emigration estimates.
6. The CBS uses United Nations norms to define an emigrant as an Israeli who has been out of the country for at least twelve continuous months and who previous to that sojourn had resided in Israel for at least ninety days continuously. Israeli emigrants, under this definition, who return to Israel are considered “returnees,” though they could, of course, leave again after ninety days and again be considered as emigrants. The Interior Ministry, concerned about when to treat returnees as eligible for various benefits, counts emigrants only as those who have been abroad for at least twenty-four months.
7. In its ranking of countries by this index, Israel’s position was right between Swaziland and Madagascar, neither of which, in contrast to Israel, entertains a self-image as an immigrant-absorbing society. Israel’s ranking by Nationmaster rose significantly for 2008, from 0 to 2.52 (ranked between Denmark and the Netherlands). See <http://www.nationmaster.com>.
8. Although characterizing Zionism as able, both in the past and in the contemporary period, to respond effectively to demographic challenges that could threaten its integrity, Yinon Cohen (2007) acknowledged that political and security concerns since the outbreak of the second Intifada had produced a substantial shift toward more emigration.
9. Reported on 24 January 2003 by *Israeline*, a daily electronic newsletter published by the Consulate General of Israel in New York City.
10. *Jerusalem Report*, 12 January 2004.
11. Benn (2003) reported, for example, that from an annual baseline of approximately 1,300 citizenship applications per year, the German embassy dealt with 2,366 in 2002 and had dealt with 1,622 in the first half of 2003.
12. See also a report on surveys done of Arab and Jewish students in Israel at Oranim College (Mittelberg and Lev Ari 2002).
13. On this theme, see also David Horowitz’s editorial (2003) in the *Jerusalem Report*, which stated that “A stream of veteran Israelis ... is flowing overseas.”
14. See also Soffer (2003), Soffer and Bystrov (2006), and Bystrov and Soffer (2006).
15. See the report by Orna Kazin in *Ha’aretz*, dated 2 April 2002.

16. See also Ettinger (2007). On the political uses to which these arguments are put, see Elitzur (2006).
17. A strange but fascinating terminological aspect of Faitelson's work is that although he acknowledges the large number of immigrants from the FSU who are not Jewish (and therefore native to Russia, Ukraine, etc.), he still labels them as "repatriates," meaning, in his parlance, that they are to be considered people whose ancestors lived in the Land of Israel, left, and who are now "repatriating" to their original homeland (2010: 3). The identical usage is also found in Khanin (2010).
18. Nor is evidence provided for the related claim that "rates of return to Israel are higher than to most other sending countries" (Cohen 2009a: 120, 123). Elsewhere, Cohen acknowledged a high rate of emigration from Israel between 2002 and 2006. For similarly rosy but unsubstantiated claims, see Inbar (2006: 41) and Khanin (2010: 14).
19. "National and personal security concerns no doubt play a role in the decision by some Israelis to leave and to remain abroad. This was the case in the past and this has been the case in recent years. However, it is difficult to see how this issue might explain the increase in the flight of academics from the country in recent years. The threat to the country's physical existence was much greater in the sixties and seventies" (Ben-David 2008: 10n).
20. For a critique of the "brain drain" argument advanced by Ben-David (2008) and Gould and Moav (2007) as "exaggerated," see Cohen (2009a).
21. Philippov (2008) reported that 48 percent of those emigrating from Israel were FSU immigrants.
22. On the highly skilled and educated profile of Israeli emigrants, see Cohen (2009b).
23. US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has repeatedly cited demographic, technological, and other trends as casting doubt on Israel's future. See the interview with Clinton on ABC's "This Week," 7 June 2009 (<http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/Politics/story?id=7775502&page=1>) and the speech delivered by Clinton to the 2010 AIPAC Policy Conference (<http://blogs.jta.org/politics/article/2010/03/22/1011273/hillary-clintons-aipac-speech>).
24. In a survey of Israelis by the Begin Heritage Center, 59 percent of respondents (not just Ashkenazim) indicated they "had approached or intended to approach a foreign embassy to ask for citizenship and a passport" (Alpher 2008). Israeli entrepreneurs even established a company named Hagira to facilitate all the bureaucratic, legal, and economic aspects of emigration for Israelis. The company's solicitation began as follows: "It has been a long time since emigration was a dirty word. In a globalized world borders are blurred making it easier to explore opportunities to leave the country." For details on Israelis applying for and securing foreign passports, see Lustick (2008: 44–46).
25. Interview with official of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, November 2010. In 2006 50,000 Israelis were living in Moscow despite the official emigration to Russia of only 28,500 those who had immigrated into Israel from the FSU (Eichner 2006).

26. Maital is academic director of the Institute of Management in Tel Aviv or the Technion, Israel's leading science and technology institute.
27. Among the participants slated to participate in this conference were Minister of Diaspora Affairs Yuli Edelstein and Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency Natan Sharansky. The goal of the conference is to lay the basis for a "World Council for Israelis Abroad" (Pupko, personal communication, 2010).
28. In 2008 it was reported that approximately 10 percent of recent British and American immigrants were "commuting" ("Jewish Agency May Create" 2008). Regarding transcontinental commuting, see Leichman (2007), Tobin and Waxman (2005), and Waxman and DellaPergola (2007). In 2010, the cabinet approved a plan to spend large sums to persuade 300 former Israeli scientists to return to the country (Kashti 2010). On economic incentives to recruit immigrants from among former Israelis, see *Ha'aretz*, 10 December 2007 and Chabin (2008). Regarding the need to facilitate "multi-residence aliya," see Maital (2008). For an overall view of Israel's changing policy discourse relating to aliyah, see Frucht (2008).
29. For an extended treatment of this topic, see Pupko (2009).
30. Concerning the relationship between the non-Jewish FSU immigrants and the controversy over changing the conversion laws, see, for example, Jaben-Eilon (2010) and Wagner (2010).

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