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to family planning, more so than any other religious group. So they support letting families in the US decide about how many children to have, just not in Jerusalem or Israel?

This is not because they are hypocrites, it is because we have been asked too often to decide about “demographics.” At the heart of any discussion on “demographics” is a racist bogeyman. Demographic trends are almost always wrong because they don’t account for changes over time. People become more educated, family sizes shrink. People migrate, changing the long-term prediction. For instance, the moronic predictions about 20 million people living in Israel in the coming decades never take into account Israeli emigration. If Israelis have 10 million kids, some of them will go to Europe or other countries, just like Nigerians or Afghans migrate to Europe.

We are often fed racist stereotypes about communities as well, such as the constant refrain that Arabs have low labor force participation. Go to Arab neighborhoods in east Jerusalem. See a lot of unemployed people loafing around? The Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem are humming with activity. But racist “experts” keep feeding us stories about minorities not “working.”

Demographics aren’t what keeps Orthodox Jews from working, it is other policies such as state subsidies and religious education. Rather than worry about the number of kids people have, worry about the education and values those kids receive, and incentives they might have to work in a shadow economy. And if you’re really concerned about the “demographics” of Jerusalem, you can come live here. The “engaged” community abroad is welcome to move to the holy city and join a vibrant, wonderful and diverse city and stop complaining about it from 5,000 miles away. We have a very nice bar scene in the shuk, and new restaurants. Come and see.

Until then, the residents of Jerusalem will keep having children and no matter how many people think they can police the bedrooms here, they will be frustrated as Jerusalem’s residents make their own choices. Maybe instead of worrying about how many beautiful babies are being born it would behoove people outside the city to take time to get to know the residents and respect them as equals and people, not demographic chips on a board.

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SOME IN the Diaspora seem to have misplaced concern about how many children are born in Jerusalem. (Reuters)

Armchair demographers, the Diaspora, Israel and baby-counting racism



TERRA INCOGNITA
• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

A recent study by The Jewish People Policy Institute shows that Diaspora Jewish leaders and active community members are deeply connected to Jerusalem. They are also concerned about Jerusalem. They worry that Israel doesn't take into account the desires of Jewish communities around the world to determine the status of Jerusalem or run its holy sites. They are also concerned about what goes on in the bedrooms of Jerusalem residents. The ultra-Orthodox community is having too many children, according to people in New York, Palm Beach, Paris and other places.

The recent study, called "Jerusalem and the Jewish People," presents many unsurprising findings, such as that Jerusalem is "crucially important" to Jews worldwide. The study was derived from dozens of discussion groups in cities around the world, including the US, Canada and Brazil. According to the report, many felt the city was moving in the "wrong direction." Many of those who took part are in Jewish community leadership roles.

According to a report, participants were asked if "the growth of the non-Jewish and ultra-Orthodox population is a positive development because it contributes to urban diversity." Almost 50% agreed when it comes to the "non-Jewish" population, whereas only 29% agreed with regard to the ultra-Orthodox. In short, they were worried about "demographic" trends in the city.

We've heard this before. For decades the Diaspora has been fed propaganda about the bogeyman of "demographics" in Israel and Jerusalem. Ari Shavit wrote in *Haaretz* in 2013 that the "battle for Jerusalem is almost lost. Haredi [ultra-Orthodox] students currently account for 39 percent of all the capital's school children. Arab students account for 37 percent." Jerusalem will have "no secular Jewish hope," he claimed.

The Jewish Press told readers in 2016 about "Arabs in Jerusalem, the fastest growing population."

My own *Jerusalem Post* reviews a book that claims a third of Israel will be ultra-Orthodox and the country will have 20 million people by 2065.

The Arabs! The Arabs! The Orthodox! The Orthodox!

The end is nigh, or so we are told. "The ultra-Orthodox and Arabs, two groups with low labor force participation rates, are expected to comprise an increasing share of the working age (25-65) population," Arutz Sheva informs us, going on to state that "one third of [the] Jewish population will be haredi by 2059."

Now, they should put away their demographic bogeyman models for a minute and consider the simple fact that, shocking as it may sound, people in New York, Paris, St. Louis, London, Melbourne and Palm Beach don't actually get to decide who has children in Jerusalem.

Yet for years media and other organizations have fed and catered to this arrogant neo-colonialist view that somehow millions of people who don't even live in Israel or Jerusalem have some say over how many kids my neighbors in Jerusalem have, like some sort of latter-day Soviet commissars.

Why is "world Jewry" worried about how many Arabs and Orthodox Jews live in Jerusalem? Jerusalem residents don't worry about the demographics of London or New York. The same "engaged" Diaspora leaders that want to inspect the maternity wards of hospitals in Jerusalem to see who has given birth this week wouldn't dare do the same in their own cities. They don't comment on African-American demographics, or Hispanic demographics, or count the number of children of people of color in London. They don't comment on Canada's decision, reported by the CBC, to take in nearly a million immigrants in the next three years. Only in Jerusalem do they feel free to remove good sense and comment on demographics.

It's important to have a mature discussion with Diaspora leaders who keep thinking they have a say in what happens in the bedrooms in Israel and the Palestinian territories. For too long Israel's demographics have become some sort of bizarre game for people. It leads to plans like the one put forward by "Save Jewish Jerusalem" in which activists argued for "fixing the tragic mistake made in 1967 and removing most of the 28 Palestinian villages from Jerusalem's municipal area" and "returning" 200,000 Palestinian Jerusalem residents to the West Bank.

These are people's lives we're talking about, right? Not monopoly pieces. Palestinian Arabs in Jerusalem didn't arrive in the city yesterday. Who do people

think Zionist leader Theodor Herzl saw when he came to Jerusalem in 1898? Besides the Western Wall he also went to the Mount of Olives and the Old City. He saw Arabs and Orthodox Jews.

Leaders in the Diaspora are often under the mistaken impression that Orthodox Jews or Arabs are "taking over" Jerusalem and that secular Jerusalem is "threatened." Secular Jerusalem isn't threatened. Seculars have always been a minority in the city. The indigenous and native inhabitants of Jerusalem are Arabs and Orthodox Jews. That is who was in Jerusalem in 1850. Policing their birthrates and commenting on "concerns" about their "growth" feeds a mentality that pretends people abroad have any right to decide who had kids in Jerusalem.

Instead of expressing "concern" about what happens in the bedrooms of Beit Hanina and Beit Hakerem, they should acknowledge that they don't get to decide. That's a mature reaction when asked "are you concerned about birthrates in Jerusalem?"

Response: "No, it's not for me to decide."

Jerusalem may have holy sites that the world has an interest in, but the demographics of Jerusalem should be of no concern to anyone.

It's time for some pushback on this relationship. When I lived in Tucson, Arizona, I remember a rabbi saying, "the Orthodox are taking over Jerusalem." He didn't want to live in Jerusalem and didn't particularly like Israel or its policies, so why was he worried about the "takeover" of a city thousands of miles away? In his own neighborhood he wouldn't comment on the ethnicity or religion of his neighbors. They have a right to be black or white or Hispanic, Muslim, Buddhist or Jewish. Only in Jerusalem was he concerned about the "takeover."

This is because we have fed a false narrative that has encouraged the policing of everything in Israel. The Diaspora-Israel relationship needs a reset. It requires an acknowledgment that Israelis are people, equals to those in America or Australia or Canada, not playing pieces on a board. They eat and sleep and have kids just like people elsewhere. Worry about their "demographics" is tinged with racism.

Arabs in Israel will have as many kids as they want. Orthodox Jews will decide what is best for their families. A 2015 Pew Research Forum survey found that 83% of American Jews are pro-choice when it comes