Football as an Arena of Arab Ethno-National Identities:
The Case of Modern Israel

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ABSTRACT

Football as an Arena of Arab Ethno-National Identities:
The Case of Modern Israel

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Football in Israel, as in the rest of the world, has been inseparable from ethno-national identity. This thesis looks at the different ways in which soccer has helped to shape Arab identity in Israel in the twentieth century. It pays a particular attention to the changing position of the Israeli Arab in the Jewish state and to how being an internal enemy has played out for Israel’s Arabs on the football field. The method used here is text analysis of previous research and of newspaper accounts.

The thesis shows that soccer has been an important arena for the formation of Israeli Arab identity, and for the expression of its relationship to state institutions (Histadrut), existing Jewish sports clubs (Hapoel) and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This thesis makes two additional points: first that globalization and the accompanying
media revolution, which have led to professionalization of the game and the construction of Arab role models, have also been influential in shaping Israeli Arabs’ ethno-national identity; and, second, that the stadium, where Jewish fans have *othered* Arab players---either those who play as individuals on mostly Jewish teams or those who play on all Arab teams---have pushed Israeli Arabs to identify as Palestinians rather than as ethno-nationally neutral sportsmen. Arab footballers in Israel, then, are faced with a dilemma, for they must choose between playing in the top league and serving as role models for Arab youth, while “buying” into Zionist ideology, and playing for an Arab team of inevitably lesser status. The thesis concludes that one possible way to overcome this conflicted identity and to bridge the Jewish-Arab ethno-national divide would be to engage Jewish and Arab youth in joint football programs from an early age. Organizations like Football For Peace, for example, could help build foundations for the two sides so they can plan even in the current stalemate for a shared future.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Football\(^1\) is the world’s game. Developed in England in the 1860s, it soon spread throughout Europe and the Americas, and is now played on every continent. It has become an internationally popular sport. With local, regional, national, and global tournaments, soccer games, although started as friendly matches, have become a spectacle, the site at which local and national sentiments get expressed and identities, even masculinity, get constructed. Players and fans unite under the banner of their nation or their state\(^2\) in order to win. But such victory is not simply a sporting victory. Winning a soccer match, like winning a war, contributes to the reconstruction of national identity, for national pride is at stake.

This “war” also takes place in the stadium, on the bleachers, where spectators invest sporting ideals with ideological ones. Spectators are the extension of their teams and as such they seek a very specific outcome from the game. While the players either win or lose the game, the fans do their share in this “war”—they fight the fans of the other team with slogans, chants, and sometimes through physical means as well. They other the opposition and hope that in doing so they will weaken the fans and the players of the opposing team.

\(^1\) In this essay I use the word football in the way it is used everywhere, except the US. It is the ball game which is referred to in the US as soccer. Henceforth, football and soccer will be used interchangeably.

\(^2\) Nation and state are not the same. I use here Walker Connor’s definition. A state is a subdivision of the globe, a political unit, while the nation is a glorified ethnic group which has attachment to its territorial homeland (1994).
It is well-known that sport has been inseparable from modern nationalism. It has been one of the ways, for example, through which Germans devoted themselves to the German nation, and Zionism produced its national subject, the *Muscle Jew*. In the case of Germany, the nineteenth-century gymnastics society was of utmost importance in shaping the German Reich (Krüger 1996); and the forefathers of Zionism, specifically, Herzl and Nordau, were so impressed by German nation-building efforts and the discipline associated with sport that they too made sport clubs inseparable from Jewish nation-building (Mayer 2000a).³

The connection between nation or state and sport goes beyond the initial construction of the nation. At times, sport is viewed “as a peacetime continuation of [the] war” (Mosse 1985, p. 128), an expression of national struggle (Hobsbawm 1990, p. 143), or as an “unending succession of gladiatorial contests between persons and teams symbolizing states-nations” (Ibid., p. 142). Moreover, as national flags fly high around the stadium and anthems are sung at every match, the connection between the teams, their respective fans, and specific nation-states is reinforced regularly, further deepening national identity. This continues to happen despite the forces of globalization, which favor global over national and local scales and which privilege economic integration over political boundaries.

At the same time as the national team remains important, the power of local clubs has increased, and the definitions of nationality and locality have changed with

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³ During the second Zionist Congress in 1898, Max Nordau, the second in command in the Zionist movement, called for the establishment of sports clubs and the construction of the *Muscle Jew*. Indeed, when the delegates returned to their respective communities, many such clubs were established throughout Europe, preparing them in ideological rhetoric as well as physical fitness (Mayer 2000, pp. 287-288).
globalization. The culture and economics of international tournaments among soccer clubs from different places in the world, with the huge economic gains that are part of participating in such competitions, have increased the importance of the local soccer club to the point that sometimes it is even more important than the national team. The local club attracts players from different places in the world and the movement of players among clubs is akin to the movement of other talents and products, associated with globalization.

Migration of talented football players has strengthened local teams, which were economically strong but less competitive on the field. Rich teams have bought the best players and so we can now see well-paid Brazilian footballers, for example, playing in every continent and players from other developing countries representing teams like Chelsea and others in the English Premier League.\(^4\) Soccer provides the disenfranchised with an important venue for upward social and economic mobility and this move to play abroad has had a two fold impact on soccer: It leaves the sending team weaker and at the same time this newly arrived talent, usually of different races and ethnicities, challenges the homogeneity of the established receiving team. This reduced homogeneity, in turn, has challenged the ways local identities get constructed and at the same time has influenced the dynamics both in the club and on the bleachers. Fans no longer need to live in close proximity to the club nor do they have to be of the same nationality as the club. Further, the national or local club can be an agent of an “imagined community” even for those who once were not accepted, like for example, for players from ex-colonies who now play for their ex-colonizer.

\(^4\) A particular example is Didier Drogba of the Ivory Coast playing for Chelsea.
Soccer, like other sports, has also been important in the construction of gender identity, specifically, masculinity. Because sport is seen as “peacetime continuation of war … [and] the football team [is likened] to the wartime squad, [sport is] the best surviving test of masculinity” (Mosse 1985, p. 128). Further, just like national heroes that are born out of war, so are the soccer heroes born out of successful matches. If a nation needs heroes in order to continue, then the soccer team needs them as well. In modern time we see that soccer heroes (and other athletes) have become national heroes. According to Tara Magdalinski and Timothy Chandler, this almost religious admiration comes from the athletes themselves referring to the role of divine intervention in major victories (2002, p. 1). Many fans buy into this and regard the players themselves as religious representatives, and heroes in turn.

My thesis focuses on the Israeli Arab case. Here, I examine the role that football has had in constructing cultural identities among Arabs in Israel. I look specifically at cases where Arabs play either individually in Jewish clubs or as part of a predominantly Arab team and compete in the Israeli leagues. While we might think that because of the conflicting nationalisms (Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian) the case of Israeli Arab footballers is unique, this is hardly the case. In order to understand these dynamics and the impact on Arab communities, it is important to examine briefly other similar cases, while noting that each situation is somewhat different. I will briefly examine cases where religious, political and ethnic differences have been reflected on the football field. These

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5 Arabs in Israel, at least until the first Intifada (1987) referred to themselves as Israeli Arabs. As Palestinian national consciousness grew stronger the Arabs of Israel began to identify as Palestinians living in Israel or sometimes as Palestinian-Israelis. The way they refer to themselves is important and is connected to the extent (and intensity) of their connection and attachment to the Palestinian nation. Officially in Israel they are still called Arabs of Israel.
cases include the Catholic and Protestant religious identities of Glasgow’s Celtic and Rangers, the Spanish and Catalan political identities of Real Madrid and Barcelona, and the ethnic identities of the Serbian and Croatian teams Red Star Belgrade and Dynamo Zagreb. These cases where we see religious, political and ethnic conflicts provide different perspectives on the construction of fandom, and all three aspects will in turn be related to the case of Israel and its Arab community.

Given the history of the Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts and the inferior position of the Arabs in Israeli society, Arabs living in Israel have had very few economic, political, and educational opportunities to integrate into Israeli society, a topic that will be discussed in greater depth later on. One possibility, through which some integration has been possible, although only for the very talented, has been through sport, particularly soccer. Over the years, several Arab players have joined all-Jewish teams and have been well respected, even loved, when their team succeeded and when they have been instrumental in that success. In such situations, Arab players have been able to climb the economic ladder and integrate into Israeli Jewish society. But often when these players do not prevent a goal or play badly they are othered by Israeli Jewish fans, with ethnic and racial slurs. Therefore, to assume that soccer erases ethno-national differences and resentments is to underestimate the power of Jewish and Palestinian nationalisms and the depth of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This conflict is expressed on the soccer field even more sharply when teams with an Arab majority play Jewish teams. Because these teams represent specific Arab towns and villages, they are agents through which Arab identity in Israel is enhanced and further reconstructed. Successes and failures of these teams are perceived by fans as the
successes and failures of all of Israel’s Arabs. Games where predominantly Jewish or Arab teams play one another are like “wars,” where the memories of the 1948 war and the Arab defeat are never too far from the surface. Fans of both teams often rock the stadiums with nationalistic chants, each seeking to undermine the other.

Ultimately, because soccer culture in Israel is so pervasive, it is important to find ways to harness this interest towards a positive outcome, especially among the youth. There have already been several attempts to make young Arab and Jewish players engage with one another through a program called Football for Peace, which is supposed to help bridge the ethno-national divide. By placing young Jewish and Arab players on the same team working towards the same goal, this program aims at encouraging commonalities rather than differences. Such friendships could be the first step towards a better understanding of the other, which is the first step towards peace. Such programs also underscore the cultural significance of soccer culture and the identity politics of sport.

*       *       *

In order to better understand the importance of football to the ethno-national and cultural identities of Israeli Arabs, this thesis is divided into the following chapters. Chapter 2 presents the framework for my thesis. It examines ideas of nation, nationalism and imagined communities and discusses the role of the stadium in constructing political, ethnic, and religious identities for the cases of Spain, former Yugoslavia, and Scotland. It also discusses identities of the fans in these countries and their behavior in the stadium. Chapter 3 provides a background to the Israeli case. This chapter briefly discusses the development of sports in Israel and specifically the changes that Arab soccer in Israel has undergone during the twentieth century. It focuses specifically on the example of Hapoel
Taibe and its role as representatives of the Israeli-Arabs. Chapter 4 breaks down the different ethnic identities of fans in Israel, both Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Jewish, particularly that of Jews of Arab countries. This chapter also discusses the ways through which the identity of fandom in Israeli soccer is created. It focuses on two specific teams: that of Jewish Beitar Jerusalem and of Arab Bnei Sakhnin and their State Cup victory. This chapter concludes with a discussion of Bnei Sakhnin’s participation in the UEFA (Union European Football Association) Cup tournament as the representatives of the state of Israel. I also discuss here the role of Arab athletes as heroes and icons and their position on Israel’s national team. The last chapter serves as a three-part conclusion. Here I discuss first, globalization and Israeli soccer. Second, the different ways in which soccer has aided the already complex identity of Israeli Arabs and I suggest that in some cases soccer itself has complicated that identity even further. Finally, I use the example of Football for Peace to suggest that soccer can serve to break the ethno-national barriers that have been entrenched in the larger Palestinian-Israeli conflict and which have, at times, been present on the football field---and to think about how soccer might be used to build bridges and become a vehicle for peace and understanding in the Israeli-Arab context.
CHAPTER 2: NATION AND SOCCER

2.1 Nation and State: Avoiding Terminological Chaos

In his book, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, Otto Bauer famously asserted that “the nation is a process of becoming” (2000, p. 107, originally published in 1924). This assertion of the dynamic quality of the nation emphasizes that the nation is forever evolving. A continuous evolution of the nation depends on real or imagined threats to the nation.

While scholars still argue about whether or not the origins of nations are ethnic, as Anthony Smith has argued in *The Ethnic Origins of the Nation* (1980), most scholars agree that there are several characteristics that define the nation and distinguish it from a state. The nation consists of a group of people who believe in their common past and who have future political aspiration for autonomy or sovereignty in the territorial homeland (Kaiser 2002, Connor 1994, Gellner 1983). According to these scholars, the territorial homeland is what distinguishes a nation from an ethnic group and what helps define it. But more often than not, the territorial homeland is the homeland of more than one nation. The nation’s myths of creation, which are inseparable from the territorial homeland, help define each nation as unique. Members of the nation keep the memories

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6 A state is simply a political unit that has specifically defined, and internationally recognized, boundaries.

7 Connor (1994) has suggested that there are more than three thousand nations and only about two hundred states. Herb quoted Bernard Nietschman (1994) who argued that there are between 5,000-8,000 nations in the world (1998, p. 14)
of their past alive, they remember their struggle for survival and those heroes which made
the nation’s survival possible. Because the nation is always born out of conflict and is
often othered in the Us/Them distinction, the stories about its survival, the strength of the
bond among its members, and the power of events and the greatness of its heroes are
inseparable from the nation’s consciousness and its territorial homeland. In fact, the
landscape of the national homeland is always marked with sites that tell the national
story, and remember and celebrate the nation’s past in its land. In addition to the
geographical attachment, members of the nation are often of the same race; they share
language, customs, and culture and these help shape the character of the nation (Mayer

While Bauer defines a nation as “the totality of human beings bound together by a
community of fate into a community of character” (2000, p. 117) and the distinction
between nation and state (between ethnic and civic entities) is rather clear, some
terminological chaos still exists (Connor 1994). Liah Greenfeld’s distinction helps move
the discussion of nationalism forward and clarifies it a little more. Unlike Connor who
argues that nationalism is allegiance with the nation (and patriotism is allegiance to the
state) (1994), Greenfeld uses a different terminology. For her, there are two types of
nationalism: individualistic and collectivistic. Individualistic nationalism, she argues,
appeals to the identity of the masses (and is understood as ethnic nationalism), and
collectivistic nationalism (which could be understood as civic nationalism) serves the
interests of the ruling classes (Greenfeld 2006). In both contexts—nationalism and
patriotism, ethnic or civic nationalism, or individualistic and collectivistic—group
identity must be nourished in order to survive and this is done, as Anderson suggests,
through language, museums, and education, among others. These agents, Anderson argues, construct and maintain an “imagined community” (1991).

While scholars like Anderson, Connor and others limit the elements of national construction to common objective and subjective characteristics, they pay little attention to another aspect which is crucial in the construction of the nation and of an imagined community; they pay almost no attention to the power of sport (Hargreaves 1995, p. 3). Historically, sport has been closely tied to nationalism (Cronin 1999, p. 1) and it is important to note how sport, specifically soccer, fits within both nationalism (allegiance to the nation) and patriotism (allegiance with the state, i.e. civic nationalism). Although we distinguish between a nation and a state and between nationalism and patriotism, we must be careful not to make the distinction between them totally binary. The case of football shows that sometimes the relationship between nation and state is not so clear-cut, and that under some circumstances the sport itself can blur the distinction between nation and state. This can be seen when Israeli Arabs, for example, identify and support Jewish teams and Jews who support Arab teams, when Israeli Jews play, coach and manage Arab teams (e.g., Bnei Sakhnin) and when Arab players play on Jewish teams (e.g., Maccabi Haifa and Hapoel Tel Aviv).

At the same time, however, the deep-seated animosity between nations is also expressed on the bleachers in Israel, specifically in the all-Jewish team Beitar Jerusalem, which is known for its aggressive racism. One often hears chants in which the all-Jewish opponent team is referred to as Arab, or if there is an Arab player in the opposing team he

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8 Objective characteristics include a shared language, ethnicity, and religion, for example, and subjective characteristics include a belief in a common past and a hope for a common destiny.
is often singled out. An example of such a chant is:

\[\begin{align*}
\textit{Po ze eretz yisrael, Tuama} & \quad \text{Here is the land of Israel, Tuama} \\
\textit{Po ze medinat hayehudim.} & \quad \text{Here is the state of the Jews.} \\
\textit{Ani sone'h otcha, Salim Tuama} & \quad \text{I hate you, Salim Tuama} \\
\textit{Ani sone’h et kol ha-aravim} & \quad \text{I hate all the Arabs}
\end{align*}\]

(Lipkin 2011, p.10, translation is mine)

Israeli teams have all been plagued by racism. Some of this racism is the result of the political conflict between Jews and Arabs and some is a learned behavior; and if fans in Europe engage in this behavior it is no surprise that fans in Israel do as well, especially since they have a readily available other.

2.2 Nation and State in a Globalized Era

As scholars of the nation debated its origins, analyzed its impact in the contexts of independent and anti-colonial movements and illuminated the importance of borders, the world was experiencing cultural, economic, and technological changes that challenged the very borders that ethno-national movements tried to create. Free-trade agreements, information-sharing, and other new communication technologies have made goods and ideas travel more easily and much faster. These advances have challenged the international state system, made political borders less important, and forced a reexamination of what can be considered “national” and of how national identities get constructed. It appears that the impact of globalization on the nation has been two-fold: on the one hand, globalization has helped to strengthen nationalism by becoming a massive foreign other, igniting the deep-seated need to preserve the national against the global (Cronin, 1999, p. 6); on the other hand, it has increased the heterogeneity of the state and challenged the purity of the nation.
Many of the processes associated with globalization can be seen in soccer, both at the level of the national team and the local club. In the next sections I will analyze the international structure of soccer and illustrate the impact globalization has had on soccer with examples of the changing face of international and club tournaments through migration.

2.3 The International Structure of Soccer

Soccer, whether it is played professionally at the national team or the club level, reflects both the international political structure and the distinction between states and nations. International games are only played between the 208 recognized states under the international governing body known as The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). Club competition is divided into domestic leagues, the champions of which play each other in the prestigious Champions League tournament that is held each year. If we use Connor’s distinction between nation and state, we can say that support of an international or state team is a form of “patriotism” (“civic nationalism”) and support of a club team is a form of “nationalism” (“localism”). The community of supporters for an international team constitutes an “imagined community” because its members who often do not know one another are bound together by the fact that most members live within the boundaries of the same state. When France won the World Cup in 1998, for example, there were people of every race and every religion crowding the streets to cheer for the French team’s victory (Mignon 1998, p. 206). Support for club

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10 Each continent has its own equivalent league. The UEFA Champions League is for Europe in particular. Asia has the Asian Football Confederation Champions League; South America, the Copa Libertadores, etc. In this thesis, Champions League refers to the UEFA Champions League.
teams, however, is more directly linked to ethnic nationalist sentiments, and there are indeed many clubs in every state. These teams tend to be mostly homogenous and their supporters are often of the same race, religion, or class. When clubs compete, the Us/Them distinction which is so often inherent to nationalism plays out between two separate and mostly homogenous groups. The fight then is usually for only the pride of the nation.

No other sport is as global a phenomenon as soccer. Soccer, or association football, with its annual revenue in the billions, is played professionally around the world by 300,000 clubs and their 240 million players.\(^\text{11}\) Games of the top leagues are televised, fostering a more global interest in them; lower leagues, because of lack of funding, tend to emphasize local and regional identities. Regardless of this stratification, as we can see, no other sport has permeated all aspects of modern society and has had as global an impact as soccer. The soccer industry employs over 200 million individuals worldwide, which includes referees, coaches, medical staff, etc. (Ibid.). FIFA, soccer's governing body, currently has 208 member countries, more than the United Nations.\(^\text{12}\) In 2010, FIFA's flagship tournament, the World Cup in South Africa, was broadcast to 26.3 billion people, in 214 countries.\(^\text{13}\)

Yet despite its global structure, soccer has been intertwined with class and


\(^\text{12}\) The UN has only 192 members (it does not recognize Kosovo and Vatican City, nor does it recognize territories of other countries, like Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam and US Virgin Islands (all territories of the US), to name a few. FIFA, on the other hand, has 208 members and includes all the territories that the UN does recognize as independent states.

\(^\text{13}\) [http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/marketing/factsfigures/tvdata.html](http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/marketing/factsfigures/tvdata.html); this figure refers to the total views of the tournament, not to individuals who watched.
national identities, with nationalism and sectarianism, and has both created and affirmed social divisions. It is for precisely these reasons that the last leaders of the Ottoman Empire and the leaders of China's Cultural Revolution tried to ban the game (Goldblatt 2006, p. xiv). For soccer serves as an agent and a tool helping to define and reinforce the Us/Them distinction, what some see as the quintessential marker of nationalism: In Scotland, for example, there are soccer derbies that pitch Catholics against Protestants, and in Israel there are such matches between Jews and Muslims, to name a few. Even ticket purchases reinforce this deep divide. Unlike any other Western sport, tickets for soccer games are always purchased through the supporters’ (fans’) team office, even for away games. The team’s supporters always sit together often with police units surrounding the area and it is here, on the bleachers, where ethnic or national distinctions are really sharpened. At the same time, however, it would be incorrect to present the support as wholly binary, as the examples in the next section and in the Israeli case illustrate.

Given the proliferation of the game, the power of FIFA, the political agendas, and the billions of dollars that are involved in it, it is no surprise that soccer has been of great interest to players and fans, to club managers and politicians, and to researchers and journalists. Some are interested in revenues and others in the history and politics of the game. When one watches football or analyzes accounts of past matches, as will be discussed later in this thesis, it may appear that the game is a war and the stadium is a battlefield. While soccer has not replaced war, brought about peace, or defined borders, it has nonetheless triggered a conversation on national and local identities, pride, economic revenue, and the cross cultural interactions this thesis explores.
2.4 Globalization, post-nationalism, and football

The ease with which goods and services move across political boundaries in the current globalized world has contributed to the creation of a globally homogenized culture --- which is also visible in football. It has become common for local or regional teams that once represented a homogenous population to now allow others to join their club, and this diversity of the team also diversifies the fans. In other words, with globalization, the purity of the nation that was once reflected in the local football team (and its fans) is no longer possible and a new global sporting culture has developed (Bairner 2001, p. 1).

The fact that European football has been so visible on television throughout the world has produced greater interest in the European leagues worldwide. At the same time the potential for greater financial gains for the teams in those leagues has increased as well and this, in turn, has enabled top teams to purchase the best players, some even across national boundaries. Inevitably, in the process of purchasing championship-winning players, teams lose their local, regional and even their national identities. Many of Brazil’s top football players, for example, play for clubs outside their country of origin. Luis Suarez, a star player from Uruguay, plays for Liverpool in England, and Israel's top footballers play for Spanish, English, and Belgian clubs. It is clear that the new members of these teams may have as little a relationship to the national teams (Spain or England, for example) as they have to the local clubs and that they join them in order to maximize their economic gains as well as to test themselves at the highest level. Nothing about their move is ideological or a result of attachment to the nation or the state.
If globalization indeed flattens nationalist sentiment, as King argues (2003, p. 197), we must wonder about the future of the nation: will it be strengthened or weakened as a result of globalization? The answer is not self-evident and we can use the example of Spain’s Basque football to illustrate this. The ideology and hiring practices of Athletic Bilbao, the flagship club of the Basque region, suggest that it seeks to maintain the purity of the Basque nation. Because it hires only players of Basque origin to play for the team, the club has earned unparalleled support from much of the region because the supporters feel that they are cheering their own people rather imported talents. This policy also broadcasts the unique sense of Basque nationalism to the rest of the world, especially because the team plays in the top division, it often qualifies for the European club competitions, and its games are watched and followed in Spain, Europe and beyond. Here, football serves as an extension of the nation and as a mechanism that reinforces divisions based on national sentiments, in the face of the forces of globalization.

While globalization may erase some local differences, the example of European soccer also suggests that under some circumstances a continental/regional identity may develop. Aided by the European unification and cheap travel, the ease with which fans may move within the continent and watch the game has the potential to produce a European identity. This supranational European identity, shaped by fans who genuinely begin to see themselves as primarily European rather than as British or Italian, for example, can produce equally supranational European citizens (King 2001, p. 202). Still, the current economic crisis (including for example the need for Germany to bail out

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14 In fact, Athletic Bilbao is one of only three teams never to have been relegated from La Liga. The other two being Barcelona and Real Madrid.
Greece and Ireland) as well as deep cultural differences may mean that the likelihood of Europeans foregoing their national identities and banding together as one continent may be a long way off.

Moreover, the multiple ways through which groups of people identify themselves, and which throughout history have caused deep divisions—ethnicity, religion, class, or place of residence—could be celebrated rather than continue as a force of division. Despite globalization, there are many identities that can still be shared and thus celebrated (Sen 2006), and the development in soccer (through globalization) illustrates such possibilities. The attachment of soccer fans to their club often crosses local and national boundaries. Fans now support teams whose national and ethnic origins may be different from their own, and therefore, with globalization, soccer becomes less about geography and nationalism and more about a brand—a global brand. It is this brand and the way soccer is now played that has helped erase some of these national differences, even in a country like Israel where sport rivalry has been associated with the country’s religious, political and ethnic divides. Here, new imagined communities have developed and many (Jews and Arabs) who were once marginalized have now found their joint voice as fans, and the stadium gives them the structure for their joined community.

Before examining the connection between soccer and identity among Arabs in Israel, I will first present a brief discussion of how political, religious, and ethnic differences are reflected on the football fields in Europe. I will look specifically at the Spanish and Catalans of Real Madrid and Barcelona, the Catholic and Protestants in Glasgow’s Celtic and Rangers, and end with Serbian and Croatian teams of Red Star Belgrade and Dynamo Zagreb. Although these cases are different from the Arab-Israeli
case, they can shed useful light on the construction of fandom identity of the Arab community in Israel.

2.5 **Soccer and Political Identity** (Soccer, Politics, and Nationalism)

Constructing identity depends on at least two elements: on *othering* and on an internal dialogue among the different elements that make up that identity. This is the case for both the individual and the collective. In the case of national identity, we are interested in the identity of the collective and in the way it changes in response both to traumatic events and to mundane, banal activities (Billig 1997). For our discussion, soccer can be considered a banal agent of nationalism. Further, we know that sport was used by the British colonizing powers to enforce on the colonized notions of civility and propriety and at times religious ideas (Stoddart 1998, p. 653). As such, sport was a tool for the powerful to dominate and to enforce hegemony over others. Stoddart’s example of soccer’s reinforcement of British and Christian ideals through sport is relevant to our later argument that the British brought soccer to Palestine as a mechanism to control the locals, when they assumed their Mandate over Palestine in the years post World War One. It is also important because since Israel’s establishment in 1948, the military governance had encouraged the development of soccer among Arab youth in the hopes that it would distance them from oppositional political activity (Sorek 2011).

Indeed, the origins of many soccer rivalries lie in nationalism, and there are many examples to support this claim. The most well known example is the rivalry between Real Madrid Football Club (FC) and FC Barcelona (Barca), in Spain. The case of Spain illustrates well the significance of political identity in sport. The Spanish football league,
La Liga, was founded in 1929 and the rivalry was apparent soon thereafter. Real and Barca are Spain's two most successful teams, with Madrid winning seventy-four trophies to Barcelona’s seventy-one (Gehrmann 1997, p. 120). But the root of their rivalry lies in politics. Historically Barcelona has come to represent the nationalist desires of Catalonia while Real Madrid represents Spanish nationalism. In 1920, Real Madrid acquired the patronage of the Spanish throne. In order to better understand what this means in terms of Spanish politics, we must look at Spain's political history.

The regimes of Primo de Rivera and Franco restrained regional languages and cultures in Spain. It was during Franco's regime that Barcelona adopted its motto “mes que un club,” more than a club, in reference to its position as representative of Catalan culture and progressive politics. And the nationalist and centrist policies of the dictatorships soon began to have an impact on the politicization of Spanish soccer clubs. It would be hard for the dictatorship to resist pressuring teams, like Barcelona, known for their politics, as many of their members were the ones petitioning the government for Catalan independence.

FC Barcelona became further identified with Catalan nationalism on June 14, 1925, when they arranged to play a benefit match against a visiting British team for the Orfeo Catala, a well-known Catalan organization. The government agreed not to interfere with the match on the condition that no political statements be made. Many important figures in Catalan politics were present at the match, and the club's founders

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15 Trophy statistics from:
invited the band of the rival team, Jupiter, to play beforehand (Gehrmann 1997, p. 117). But the band, not knowing the political affiliation of the crowd, started to play the Spanish national anthem (Ibid.). In response the crowd whistled and jeered until the band played something else. The Spanish government considered the behavior of the crowd treasonous and fined and closed the club for six months in response (Goldblatt 2006, p. 212) --- further linking FC Barcelona and Catalan politics.

This combination of politics and sport created new meaning for the victories and defeats of Barcelona. A win became a political victory and defeat became a political setback. In fact, during protests against the regime of Primo de Rivera, the flag of FC Barcelona was often substituted for the Catalan flag (Gehrmann 1997, p. 118) and this practice was continued during Franco's dictatorship. At this point following the Spanish civil war, political purges occurred, and Franco tried to normalize the club by changing its name and appointing a new politically allied board (Ibid., p. 117). Franco's thirty-four year reign was very difficult on Barcelona, but the hardships faced by the club only further solidified its connection with Catalonia and its failed civil war. Thus, Barcelona became a symbol for the nationalist hardships and desires of Catalan society, beyond the bounds of what had previously been known in sport.

The Spanish Civil War itself was integrally tied with Spanish football. In the early stages of the war, the fighting took place mainly in Madrid. A former Real Madrid player and board member, General Adolfo Melendez, led the coup. His attack on the barracks was thwarted by Madrid's communist contingent, and he was forced to flee. In response, republicans arrested Madrid board member Santiago Bernabeu, until Spain's socialist ambassador to France, a Real Madrid fan, interfered on his behalf (Goldblatt 2006, p. 212).
302). Nor did the impact of the civil war on the affairs of Spain's largest clubs stop there. In 1935, Barcelona's president, Josep Sunyol, drove down the coast of a region held by Franco's troops. The reasons for his trip are uncertain, but his car was stopped and he was executed on the side of the road (Ibid., p. 302). He became a martyr for Catalan nationalism and further tied together politics and soccer. Further, Real Madrid's president Colonel Ortega was one of 100,000 republicans arrested and executed by the regime (Ibid., p. 303). Indeed, the history of soccer (and Spanish and Catalan identities) remains marred by bloodshed. And it is this martyrdom and its meaning for the sport that have shaped the identities of Spanish clubs, like Barcelona and Real Madrid.

2.5.1 Madrid's Backing—the might of politics

During Franco's regime, one particular game between Barcelona and Madrid stands as proof of the negative impact on sport that politics can have. In the 1943 Copa del Generalissimo semifinals, Barcelona was scheduled to play Madrid. Barca won the first leg of the match (3-0) (Goldblatt 2006, p. 305). The Catalan fans naturally reveled in this victory, whistling in celebration. Outraged, the Franco regime called it an insult to the state and handed out whistles for the return leg to outdo the regime’s rivals. Further, before the match, Barcelona's team was met in the dressing room by Franco's Director of State Security, Jose Escriva de Romani. Apparently, he made the intentions of his visit very clear as Barcelona lost the game (11-1) (Ibid., p. 305). These games were so politically charged that sportsmanship took a clear back seat to political threats and power struggles.

Whether through fear or pride, governments can exert their dominance over sport
in an effort to create a national image that supports their policies. The Spanish polity was so intent on forging national unity that it allowed neither regional conflict nor public disorder to get out of hand for fear of losing face. Both clubs bore the brunt of these nationalist policies. The presidents of both clubs were ousted by the regime and the clubs themselves were fined for activities that were not approved by the government, even considered to be illegal. Although now political interference in soccer is strictly monitored by FIFA, historically it was not beyond the bounds of regimes to fix games and control the sport and in so doing to send a message to those who tried to undermine the regimes. Indeed, these games were highly political.

As globalization and modernization change both the world and soccer, they also render these political associations less significant, in Spain and everywhere else. As the game becomes an economic machine and teams like Real Madrid and Barcelona spend exorbitant amounts of money on players, management, and stadia, political ideologies that were once so prominent are no longer important. Yet despite these changes, and perhaps because Spain stands out as an example of the crude politicization of the game, clubs like Real Madrid and Barcelona will forever be linked with the nationalist ideologies on which they were constructed. Regardless of whether the conflict between the two eventually died down, soccer teams would continue to act as substitutes for political identities.

The Catalan example in Spain suggests that in multinational states -- states with multiple distinct national aspirations -- where one nation has access to political power,

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16 The sanction FIFA commonly uses as punishment for political interference is expulsion from international competition, both at the club and national levels.
the game becomes a fight between two enemies on the battlefield. Indeed, because every country in the world is a multi-national, multi-ethnic, or multi-religious state, the rivalry on the field is almost always about more than the sport itself. The players themselves are often of the nation, and the club is the extension and the representation of the nation. Therefore, the team helps to keep the nation alive because as long as it plays other clubs, the Us/Them distinction is kept alive.

2.6 Soccer and Religious Identity (Patriotism, Sectarianism and Religion)

Divisions among soccer clubs are not based exclusively on national sentiments. Sometimes religion also becomes part of the mix. A case exemplifying the importance of religious identity is the Protestant-Catholic divide in Scotland. Traditionally, the two most successful Scottish teams have come from Glasgow, Scotland's largest city. As we saw in the case of Real Madrid and Barcelona, success on the field has kindled the flames of Scottish political rivalry. The rivalry between the Rangers FC and Celtic FC hinges on the traditional divide between the pro-British Protestants, and the pro-Irish Catholics. Celtic, founded by an Irish Marist priest (Goldblatt 2006, pp. 70-71), have historically fielded teams composed entirely of Catholic players. Rangers, in contrast, did the same for Protestants.¹⁷

The rancor of Scottish fans has resulted in many acts of fan violence. One of the songs sung by Rangers' Protestant fans for example praises without qualms the slaughter

¹⁷ Although religious hatred is indeed deep, in the context of national tension when the two nations are of different religions—as like in the Scottish or the Israeli/Palestinian cases—conflicts over land, education, housing, language and access to political power (which are quintessential nationalist struggles) are often constructed as religious conflicts.
of Catholics: “We're up to our knees in Fenian blood” they proudly proclaim (Foer 2004, p. 35). In their stadium, Ibrox, two colors dominate: orange shirts and orange banners commemorating the victory of the Protestant William of Orange over the Catholic English King James II, in 1688 at the River Boyne and Rangers’ traditional color of blue. (Colors, like emblems and flags, are a material expression of national identity and are extremely important non-verbal expressions of national conflicts.) It is this historical and political association that is at the root of the hatred between the two religious sects. Rangers’ fans refer to themselves as “Billyboys” in homage to William’s heroics. But in addition to the historical connotation, the term Billyboys has another association altogether. In the years between the two World Wars, a gang calling themselves the Billy Boys attacked Glasgow's Catholic contingent as well as establishing a local affiliate of the American Ku Klux Klan (Foer 2004, p. 36).

Soccer is so integral to Scottish culture that the tensions between Rangers and Celtic have spilled over into many different parts of Scottish society. It is not uncommon to hear stories about jobs being denied because of allegiances to the wrong team, or to hear news about fans being murdered for wearing the wrong team colors in certain neighborhoods. In fact, Celtic’s current manager Neil Lennon was the recipient of

18 The entire chant is: Hullo! Hullo! We are the Billy Boys! Hullo! Hullo! You'll know us by our noise! We're up to our knees in Fenian blood, Surrender or you'll die! For we are the Bridgeton Billy Boys (http://fanchants.com/football-songs/glasgow_rangers-chants/hello-hello-we-are-the-billy-boys/) accessed on December 13, 2010.
19 The Battle of the Boyne was a turning point in Irish history and thus has been resurrected in the Catholic and Protestant conflicts that began again in the twentieth century.
20 For Glasgow’s Rangers chant: http://www.glasgowguide.co.uk/wjmc/billyboy.shtml
death threats, and two bombs were sent to his house by rival fans in the past year alone.\(^{22}\)
The hatred between the groups is so deep that the respective colors, slogans, and flags mark each geographical neighborhood. It is clear that the clubs represent far deeper tensions between the Catholics and Protestants, which may be a continuation of the fight over the Protestant Reformation. As Protestants went north, following the Reformation, they attacked Catholic hotbeds and attempted to purge Catholics from Scottish society (Foer 2004). A modern recreation of this tension is now fought on the soccer field, but perhaps the evolution of these tensions have been manipulated by the clubs through modern marketing, for the sake of entertainment.

The clubs themselves have realized that their rivalry has moved beyond being adversaries in a centuries-old religious war. In response to rising rates of hooliganism and fan violence in the 1980s, the Glaswegian clubs had attempted to bridge the religious divide. But prior to this, from the end of World War I until 1989, club policies deepened the religious conflict, as the Rangers had a policy of hiring exclusively Protestant players. Graeme Souness, Rangers manager from 1986 to 1991, put it bluntly when he said that the club in the past had faced a choice “between success and sectarianism” (Foer 2004, p. 39). And although Souness worked hard to change this sectarianism when he hired the Catholic player Mo Johnston, who started his career at Celtic (Goldblatt 2006, p. 567), living in Glasgow became impossible for Johnston, and after his home was firebombed by Celtic fans and graffiti saying “Collaborators can't play without their kneecaps” appeared all over Glasgow, Johnston relocated to London and was flown up every day for

practices and matches (Foer 2004, p. 47). However, in the last twenty years, the clubs have made a conscious decision to reevaluate their hiring practices and, as a result, Rangers have fielded many Catholic players.

Still, even though these two Glasgow clubs have become institutionally and economically more similar in the last two decades, the degree of hatred between fans has risen. Despite official club statements denouncing anti-Catholic or anti-Protestant sentiment and the new non-denominational hiring policies, the fans still strongly associated their clubs with religion. And the clubs themselves are sometimes guilty of stoking the sectarian flames; in 1999, for example, Rangers chairman Donald Findley had to resign after leading fans in singing sectarian songs (Goldblatt 2006, pp. 717). Moreover, even as soccer becomes a global sport, these teams see the economic benefits of capitalizing on the religious divide. Why? It may very well be that because each team is associated with a particular group of fans, based on religion, and these fans are the economic backbone of each club, abolishing the sectarian and extremist slogans might be seen as potential losses of revenues. As Foer (2004) suggests, the Celtic and Rangers rivalry is known as the “Old Firm” since they have been seen as working together to profit from the hostilities of their fans.

In the end, despite the conflict between Rangers and Celts and their sectarianism based on religious differences, at the end, they both are Scottish teams. This means, that when the Scottish National Team competes in Europe, Rangers and Celtics fans are united in their support of their national team. This dynamic reinforces the notion that internal national conflict within a multinational state is erased (or put on the back burner) when the state is threatened from outside. And soccer is a perfect metaphor for this.
2.7 Soccer and Ethno-National Identity (Hooliganism and National Identity)

Because all states in the world are multinational it is often the case that minority nations feel slighted by the nation that holds political and economic power. Justifiably or not, often members of a minority nation feel that they are discriminated against because they are of a different ethno-national group. They respond by creating their own associations, including sport clubs, where they feel most at home. Often these clubs begin as nationally or religiously homogenous (e.g., Basques and some Arab teams in Israel Hapoel Taibe, Hapoel Kfar Kana) but over time most of them diversify. One of the few places where ethno-national rivalry can be expressed in a hostile yet relatively peaceful way is on the bleachers of a soccer game. The more the stadium rocks, the more the fans scream, yell and encourage their team to win, the more each team believes that it can crush the other team. Both fans and players use the soccer match to unleash pent up hatred of the other and they use the stadium for such performance.

2.7.1 The stadium as the space for performing the nation (and the state)

The stadium is the stage on which soccer competition is played out. It is a site replete both with memory and symbolism, and events in this space, both on the field and the bleachers, are highly ritualized. Further, because the team/club represents local or national teams the competition is a war of national pride. Here the spectator is an extension of the players: as Hobsbawm has argued, the fan becomes a symbol and an extension of the nation (1990, p. 143) and the state through what he does, what he wears, and where he performs.

Athletes and teams wear national colors, stand for a national anthem, and play
their sport under a national flag (Cronin 1999, pp. 59-60) and in so doing they reinforce symbols of the nation. Further, the stadium itself becomes a representation of the nation’s territory, of the homeland: the place where the nation can perform itself. The best example of this is Barcelona’s stadium, the Camp Nou, which had been “a defining institution of Catalan nationalism” (Foer 2004, p. 199). In this stadium, Catalans were able to yell and scream in their own banned language and to resist Franco’s military dictatorship (Ibid., p. 195). Thus the soccer stadium has helped unite people in a common community, whether real or imagined.

European soccer stadiums and the activity on the bleachers appear to be particularly nationalistic, perhaps because of the tribal behavior of European fans. They dance and chant, sing, and hug and their participation is highly ritualized, as they support both the team and the nation. When two clubs who have othered one another meet, like Celtic vs. Rangers (Catholics vs. Protestants) or Real Madrid vs. Barcelona (Pro-Spain conservatives vs. anti-Spain Catalan separatists), the tribal behavior becomes immediately apparent. As hostility is expressed not only through the arsenal of chants, songs, and profanity but through the volume that these are expressed, each group of supporters vies for dominance on the field and on the bleachers--and in so doing at once includes those who belong and excludes the other.

2.7.2 Hooligans as an extension of the nation

While the competition in the stadium is a form of entertainment and a fight for national pride, depending on the context the spectators who participate from the bleachers might be seen as “nationalists” or as “hooligans.” In some contexts, as in the case of the
former Yugoslavia, these hooligans might even be drafted as special “military” units to assist the national struggle.

During the Balkan War in the 1990s, the hooligans of Red Star Belgrade became Slobodan Milosevic's elite paramilitary units. They transitioned from being simple soccer hooligans into full-fledged soldiers who killed thousands of ethnically Muslim Bosnians and Croats (Foer 2004, p. 24). But besides the scale of the atrocities committed by this group, this example is unique and extreme among examples of fan violence. This was partly because these hooligans played an important role in internal club politics. The leadership of the Red Star hooligans was actually on the club payroll and had a say in the organization of the club (Foer 2004, p. 7). Because they also had access to weapons, these soccer fans (who were motivated by separate national and ethnic identities, not simply sport) were able to launch an almost military campaign to vilify the other and to use racist nationalist fervor as justification. The scene on the bleachers was thus an extension of deep-rooted ethnic tensions.

Following World War II, communist dictator Tito suppressed ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia by banning expressions of unrest. As a result, the country never had a chance to come to terms with the fact that Serbs and Croats had slaughtered one another during that war (Foer 2004, p. 15). With the collapse of communism, old issues of ethnic tension surfaced. War crimes on both sides were exposed and the inevitable cries for justice were heard. Serbia elected Slobodan Milosevic president based on his extremist nationalism. In Croatia, ultranationalist Franjo Tudjman, a former Yugoslav general and former director of both Partizan Belgrade and Dynamo Zagreb (soccer teams)—and Tito’s youngest general in the fight against Nazi Germany --- was elected president (Foer
Soccer and ethnic tension between Serbs and Croats peaked when Red Star Belgrade played Dynamo Zagreb in the Yugoslav league in 1990, shortly before both the elections and the referendum on Croatia’s independence. Dynamo Zagreb had come to represent Croat aspirations for independence, and Red Star Belgrade Serbia's. The tensions between fans at this game were so high that the violence between Serbs and Croats that erupted sparked a real war. A memorial inscription in Dynamo Zagreb's stadium attests to the enormity of this game: “To the fans of this club who started the war with Serbia at this ground” (Goldblatt 2006, p. 707). Significantly, the hooligans on both sides were armed as if they headed to war and not simply to a soccer match. Red Star fans brought acid and Dynamo fans brought piles of rocks, making a confrontation inevitable. Soon after the game started the dividing fences disappeared and a massive brawl broke out among fans. Biases of the police were evident as well when the police protected primarily the Serbs, in turn, Croatian defender Zvonomir Boban kicked a Yugoslav police officer as he attempted to arrest a Croat fan (Goldblatt 2006, p. 708). Perhaps Red Star would not have been so violent had it not been connected to its leadership—the bodyguard of the Red Star coach at this match was a notorious Serbian gangster and hit man for the secret police, Arkan (Foer 2004, p. 16).

Following his election as President, Slobodan Milosevic recruited Arkan to discipline and mobilize Red Star's ultra-nationalist fans. He organized them into paramilitary units, which he used to carry out ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Croatia (Goldblatt 2006 p. 709). The dramatic example of the former Yugoslavia, of Red Star and Dynamo Zagreb, demonstrates the ease with which soccer hooligans can politicize, arm
themselves, and fight in the name of their nation. It is a case where the national tensions predated the fateful game, but the game was like the first shot in a war, where the fans were the initial line of defense.

Even though soccer clubs have been central to the spread and success of the game, ultimately they are local phenomena. But in an age of globalization, local phenomena sometimes have global appeal. If we look at soccer fans around the world we can see that globalization has actually made it possible for fans to support a team from across the world. But what has globalization done to, and for, nationalism? In order to answer this question, I turn now to the example of Israeli Arabs, who refer to themselves either as Palestinian Israelis or as Palestinian citizens of Israel. Their case shows the complex nature of Arab nationalism in Israel and the power of football in a state where the Arab minority had been perceived as an internal enemy.
CHAPTER 3: NATION AND SOCCER IN ISRAEL

3.1 The pre-state years: 1920-1940s

The interest of Arabs citizens of Israel in sports, and specifically soccer, predates the establishment of the state of Israel. While the first Jewish and Arab soccer teams were founded in Palestine in 1906 and 1908 respectively (Khalidi 2010, p. 46), the proliferation of the game and its great momentum among both Jews and Arabs were the result of British control over Palestine following WWI. In Palestine, as in the rest of the Empire, Britain used soccer to transmit British culture and to maintain British control over its colonies (Harif and Galily 2003, p. 41). The British instilled their hegemony first and foremost through military and political power and only secondarily through the transmission of cultural values. By establishing football clubs in Jaffa and Jerusalem in particular (Sherman 1998), the British contributed to the institutionalization of football matches throughout the land (Harif and Galily 2003, p. 45) and provided a framework through which local teams competed.

Palestine in the first few decades of the twentieth century experienced an exponential growth in the number of football and other social clubs. But instead of

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23 The first Jewish sports club to establish a home in Palestine was Maccabi HaRishon LeTzion – Yaffo Football Club. It was founded as a branch of the International Maccabi organization.

24 Much of the Ottoman lands that remained in Ottomans hands on the eve of WWI were to be divvied up between Britain and France at the conclusion of the war. In 1922, the League of Nations granted Britain a mandate over the lands of Palestine which would last until May 1948.
British Mandate government incorporating the three populations of Palestine---British, Jews, and Arabs---into joint clubs they remained pretty much exclusive and reflected the social and national divisions that existed in Palestine (Harif and Galily 2003). While the majority of the football clubs in Palestine were nationally homogenous, there were few instances, especially in the early 1920s, where Jews and Arabs joined the British teams (e.g., in the Jerusalem Sport Club) (Sorek 2007). But joint Arab-Jewish teams did not yet exist at that time. It would take another almost thirty years before the first Arab players would join Jewish team (e.g. Rustum Bostuni would join Maccabi Haifa in 1963, Ali Othman would join Hapoel Jerusalem in 1967, and Rifaat Turk would join Hapoel Tel Aviv in 1970).

The homogeneity of these teams in the pre-state years is not surprising given the ideology of Zionism. Aimed at transforming the European Jew politically, socially, economically, geographically, and ideologically the Jewish liberation movement, Zionism, sought to create a new national subject. In order to construct the New Jew, who would be fit and strong, unlike the European Jew, the forefathers of Zionism called during the Second Zionist Congress (in 1898) for the establishment of Jewish sport clubs in every Jewish community in Europe (Eisen 1998, Berkowitz 1993). There, these leaders believed, the New Jew would be constructed, trained and prepared for the larger mission of Zionism. These clubs became hotbeds for Zionist youth activities and fit perfectly within Zionist ideology; in turn, as new Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine and opened new sport clubs, engagement both in sport and in Zionist activities continued and even intensified. Jewish flags (later adopted by the state of Israel) flew at every match, Zionist songs and chants abounded, and Hatikva (the Jewish national anthem) was
played in all international matches (Kaufman and Galily 2005). Indeed, it was impossible to separate sport from Zionism and for this reason it was unimaginable during this period to even think of Jewish sport clubs that would involve those whom Zionism marginalized, namely, the Arabs of Palestine.

Palestinian Arabs, for their part, also used sports, particularly football, as a way “to strengthen the body and enhance the spirit” (Khalidi 2010, p. 46). In response to Zionist activities in Palestine and increased fears that Britain was aiding Zionist aspirations to marginalize them, Arabs formed sports clubs that acquired a civic, social character. These, along with the new sports clubs that sprang up in Arab Palestine, were of great importance in raising national Palestinian consciousness (Ibid., p. 47). And indeed these clubs became important in resisting Zionist expansions throughout the lands of Palestine by providing Arab youth with an arena for expressing Arab national sentiments. Indeed, the Palestinian Arab flag was raised in many sport competitions; and many of the clubs were named after Arab heroes. Ultimately, as Arab youth movements paraded through the cities of Palestine expressing their separate Arab identity, they posed a threat to British authorities and to their Mandate over Palestine (Khalidi 2010, p. 57). This form of resistance became a particular challenge during the Arab uprisings of 1929 and 1936, which occurred in response to increased Jewish immigration to Palestine and the British policies that enabled it.

The proliferation of social and sports clubs in Arab Palestine was the work of the educated elite who saw the need to organize and unite its community in light of the dramatic changes which Palestine experienced with the arrival of the tens of thousands of Jews. In the 1930s and even more so during the 1940s, Arab sport in Palestine
flourished, and the number of football clubs at both the local and the national levels was on the rise. These clubs were organized in different federations throughout Palestine; and the Palestine Sport Federation of Haifa, alone, for example, included more than forty different sports teams (Khalidi 2010, p. 59). While organized soccer spread from the urban areas into the periphery, the pace of adoption was slow. The war of 1948 brought all sporting activities to an end, leaving some parts of Arab Palestine with and some without an organizational structure for the development of sport in the future (Sorek 2007).

3.1.1 Ethno-National Sentiments: Multiple Divisions in the making

In the formative pre-state years, Jewish immigration to Palestine was dominated by European Jews. Because Zionism addressed the precarious position of the European Jew and offered an exciting alternative to the life in the Diaspora, young European Jews came to Palestine in the tens of thousands during the first half of the 20th century. Once in Palestine, they sought to reclaim the land they saw as given to them by God and prepare it for Jewish habitation. They developed their own political institutions and even though they remained under British Mandate, they were given the freedom to govern their own community. Soon Jewish life in Palestine was equated with European Jews, with Zionism, and with the New Jew.

If the ethno-national division of Israel in the pre-state years involved mostly two groups (e.g., Jews and Arabs) whose hatred for one another only intensified as a result of the 1948 war and the Arabs’ expulsion from their homes and land, this division was
further complicated by the arrival of Jews from the Arab world\textsuperscript{25} who were culturally more similar to the Arabs than to European Jews. They introduced yet another ethno-national element into this highly charged mix. The number of these immigrants until 1948 was negligible yet it grew to hundreds of thousands in the post-war years.

From the outset, European Jews adopted a position of power vis-à-vis the mostly poor and uneducated Arab-Jews and dominated all state institutions (including political and economic ones). They saw themselves as the \textit{real} Zionists\textsuperscript{26} and as a result, accepted it as “natural” that they would be the ones responsible for the acculturation project of the non-European Jews, whom they saw as “old world” and whom they treated as second-class citizens (Swirski 1995). These new immigrants were either shipped to the frontier, to development towns at the edge of the country, where there were no possibilities for productive economic activity (Kemp 2000); or settled in existing Jewish towns in “abandoned” Arab housing at the edge of the city, often near the border or the “no man’s land” areas, in places that were removed from the centers of economic, political and social life. They were thus set up for failure. They would internalize their own \textit{otherness} and resent not only Arabs but European Jews as well, and this hatred would be expressed regularly on the football bleachers, especially of Beitar Jerusalem.

The 1948 War left the Palestinian community in shambles. Three quarters of the

\textsuperscript{25} These Jews upon arriving in Israel were called Sephardim, over time as they politicized they referred to themselves as Mizrahim, and by now there are many who refer to themselves as Arab-Jews. Because they have tried so hard to distance themselves from their Arab past, very few, perhaps the most radical of them, refer to themselves as Arab-Jews. I will use all three names to refer to these Jews who arrived from the Arab world.  

\textsuperscript{26} Jews from the Arab world were not introduced to Zionism until the 1940s and even when they were most of them did not choose to act on their ideology. Further, they did not participate in building the land and fighting for it. They came in large numbers when the state was already a fact (Shenhav 2003).
Palestinian population was expelled (or left of its own volition), leaving the Arabs of Palestine spread throughout the Middle East as refugees. Those who remained in the newly established state of Israel were a leaderless defeated minority whose movement was restricted from 1948 to 1966 by military rule. Even though they were citizens of a state, which was an ethnic democracy (Smooha 1997), they were excluded economically and alienated from political power, not too differently from Mizrahi Jews. They had very few opportunities to organize as a national community and most of the activities in which they engaged were local in nature (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998). Their movement was restricted and congregation as a separate ethno-national group was not allowed. They are a national minority in an ethno-national state (Sorek 2005, Ghanem 1998). And precisely because so few options were available to them to express their identity, Israeli Arabs who identified more closely with their brethren in the West Bank and Gaza turned to soccer, to the football club, as a haven to restore their old identity and to negotiate a new one.

3.1.2 The Ideological Origins of Jewish Sports Clubs in Israel

Most of the Jewish sporting organizations in Israel had their origins in Europe and were associated with the different segments of Zionism. Once in Israel they also became affiliated with Israeli political parties. Maccabi and Hapoel were affiliated with labor Zionism and later with the left leaning Labor party; Elitzur was affiliated with religious Zionism, Mizrahi, and later with the Zionist religious political parties, specifically Mafdal; and Beitar was closely affiliated with Revisionist Zionism, which gave birth to

27 Ethnic Democracy refers to the ethnic dominance of a democratic state which grants civil and political rights both the ethnic majority and minority, where all minorities are citizens and legally permitted to participate in the political process.
the hardline Likud party. Following the creation of the state, most of these clubs could be found in almost every city in Israel as political influence spread; and many of the Arab teams have been affiliated with either Maccabi or Hapoel and sometimes, as in the case of Bnei Sakhnin, with both.

In the spirit of Zionism, both Maccabi and Hapoel aimed at improving the body and spirit of the Jews. The name “Maccabi” originated from the Bar Kochba rebellion against the Roman Empire, when the Maccabim stood up against their occupiers – and such powerful ideological symbol was adopted by Zionist organizations as a way to construct the New Jew in Palestine in the image of old Jewish heroes. Hapoel, on the other hand, did not have its origins in the diaspora. It was founded in Palestine in the middle of the 1920s with the purpose of developing sports for the workers and educating young Jews in Socialist Zionism (Helman 2007, p.101). True to the socialist mission, Hapoel (the worker) aimed at strengthening both body and mind with the purpose of preparing him to defend the working class (Ibid.).

The ideological origins of these movements were played out on the field in the pre-state years. Although both Hapoel and Maccabi were associated with socialist Zionism, Hapoel was affiliated with and sponsored by the General Workers Trade Union—the Histadrut—and constructed itself in opposition to what it framed as the bourgeois character of Maccabi. It promoted collective, rather than individual achievements. But the real animosity was between Hapoel and Beitar, and it echoed the political tensions between Revisionist and Socialist Zionism in the pre-state years. This will not change much with statehood and Arab teams would choose carefully with whom they would affiliate.
3.2 Arab Soccer between 1948 and 1967: being incorporated into the state

The war of 1948 disrupted the proliferation of Arab sports clubs in Palestine and brought the well-developed sporting infrastructure to a standstill. With the loss of its educated middle class and the dispersal of the Palestinians to neighboring countries there was no leadership among the remaining Arabs in Israel who could resurrect the uniquely rich sporting experience that the Arabs of Palestine had experienced in the pre-war years.

This started to change with economic and political changes that Israel underwent in the 1950s and 1960s. On the one hand, because most Palestinian Arabs lost their lands in 1948, they had little choice but to participate actively in Israel’s economy, and Palestinian society in Israel underwent a rapid process of proletarianization (Zureik 1979, pp 130-133). And an important outcome of this process was an increase in leisure time and a renewed interest in soccer, especially among Palestinian youth. On the other hand, because they were part of the working force young Arabs were now able to rely on the Histadrut for support, especially when it came to help finance local soccer clubs in different villages (Lustick 1980). In fact, within a short period of time the Histadrut realized that some of these young men could serve its interests in Arab villages, and opened an Arab division, which would eventually enable the Labor party to develop a strong power base in Arab communities in Israel (Ibid.).

But real change arrived in 1959, when the Histadrut decided to open its doors to all Arabs in Israel, not simply to specific communities. Now they opened dozens of Hapoel clubs in Arab towns and villages, and in this way they ensured that the power of the Histadrut would no longer be confined to the Jewish electorates (Shalev 1990). The
proliferation of Hapoel (and only two Maccabi) clubs in the Arab sector served Israeli policies well. On the one hand it created an Arab dependency on state institutions like the Histadrut, and on the other it assured that there would be no independent Arab sporting events, where Palestinians could express their national identity. Over time, all-Arab teams joined the Israeli football pyramid, initially playing at the lower leagues and working their way up to the top. In all these games Jewish officials and representatives of state institutions came to show support for the Arab teams in their integration into the Israeli public sphere (Sorek 2003).

Significantly, although many Arabs identified with their local Hapoel franchise, others rejected the close attachment to state institutions and founded their own independent teams with Arab names (Sorek 2007, p. 36). There was also an attempt by Al-Ard, a banned Arab nationalist political group, to establish an independent Arab league (Ibid.). This league was carefully watched by the Israeli secret police, which more than once banned their competition, arguing that the league promoted a national opposition to Israel. Further, the secret police closed down a football club acting on information that the club harbored a Syrian spy network (Ibid.). There would be no more independent Arab football league until the 1980s, with the establishment of the Islamic league. Thus from early on through the implementation of dual leagues, soccer mirrored the emerging mosaic of ethno-national conflict in Israel, and the power and identity struggles embedded in that conflict.

3.3 Arab Soccer in the 1970s-1980s: the complex impact of market forces

The military rule under which Israeli Arabs lived after 1948 was lifted in
December 1966, six months before the start of the Six Day War of 1967. Because many Israeli Arabs were gainfully employed in the Israeli labor market and because they had lived under military rule for so long, they had had very few opportunities to define their own identity. Further, because so many of them were members of the Histadrut and involved in its activities in the Arab community there were no social spaces in which they could define themselves as a non-threatening ethno-national minority, not even on the playing field. But the war of 1967 enabled Israeli Arabs to rebuild connections with their brothers and sisters in the West Bank and Gaza, which started their process of Palestinianization.

Given the amount of sport activities in the Arab sector of Israel, it is fair to assume that much of this activity was supported, maybe even initiated, by the government (Ben-Porat 2011). Certainly, after the 1967 war and perhaps as a way to offset the Palestinianization of the Israeli Arabs, the intensity of football activity in the Arab sector grew (Sorek 2007). Arab municipalities increased their funding for local clubs and this produced a number of excellent young Arab football players (Ibid.). In addition, many of these teams (like Hapoel Shabbab al-Nasira, Hapoel Jaffa, and Hapoel Taibe) excelled on the field and ranked high in several of the minor national leagues.

However the real change in Arab soccer occurred in the more general context of Israeli soccer in the early 1980s -- when the potential of soccer as a business began to be realized, and the market began to dictate the success of a team. The ability to buy the best players possible could potentially mean winning championships, which, in turn, could mean greater exposure and with it, economic success for the club. Because Jewish teams, especially those associated with the bigger urban centers in Israel, had higher
revenues -- since their fan base was larger and therefore advertisers would pay more -- they were able to recruit the best soccer players in Israel. And it was through this recruitment that the best Arab players joined Jewish teams. These clubs offered talented Arab players economic security and fame unlike anything that they could achieve in a minor Arab team (Ben-Porat 1998).

As market forces came to so strongly shape the game it became impossible for an all-Arab team to develop and succeed. As soon as an Arab talent was discovered he was recruited to play for a Jewish team, leaving only the weaker players to play on existing Arab teams. While at the same time, weaker Jewish players were recruited to play for Arab teams, especially those who had ambitions to move to a higher league. Both these features of Arab soccer in Israel in the 1980s -- the increased importance of individual Arab footballers, resulting in their desertion of the all-Arab teams, and the importation of Jewish players into previously all-Arab teams -- prevented a flagship Arab team from developing.

Although by the early 1980s, the number of successful Arab players was small, at least two of them (Jimmy Turk and Zahi Armeli) were so good that they played for the national team, representing Israel dozens of times in international competitions (Sorek 2007, p. 49). This crystallized the contradiction of being an Arab (national) minority in an ethno-national state. On the one hand, it challenged Jewish Israeli and Arab Israeli players and fans to figure out what they had in common and what separated them (Sorek 2003, p. 430-431); on the other hand, these players became role models for young Arabs, who realized that soccer could be a vehicle to succeed economically and be accepted into Israeli society.
Arab football in Israel during this period has undergone an additional change. Since 1986 the Islamic movement in Israel has run its own soccer league (Sorek 2002, p. 445). It was created in response to the integrative and assimilative aspects of the Israeli league, to the fact that top players like Zahi Armeli and Jimmy Turk were big football stars for both Jewish and Arab youth and the fact that soccer was a vehicle for economic and even social mobility. The intent of the founders of this new league was to provide an alternative sport structure where Islamic values would be observed. They chose proper Arab names for their teams and this was a conscious decision because they rejected the Zionist names of the Arab teams in the Israeli league (e.g., Hapoel Taibe, Hapoel Kfar Kana, Hapoel Shabbab al-Nasira, to name a few) and they had hoped that they would attract top quality players. However, the reality was quite different. Most of those who played for the Islamic League were weaker players who did not have the skills to qualify for teams in the Israeli league—Arab or otherwise.

The existence of two leagues, one that represents the Jewish state of Israel and the other for the Islamic community in Israel, goes against FIFA guidelines, which allow for only one football pyramid per country. Therefore, only the Israeli league is currently officially recognized by FIFA and UEFA (the European Football Federation). Despite these guidelines, these two leagues thrive because they serve different functions and different communities: the Israeli Football League encourages integration with Israel, while the Islamic Football League promotes a separate Islamic Palestinian identity.

3.4 Arab Soccer in the 1990s: professionalization

If in the 1980s the success of Arab soccer was attributed to individual Arab
players on Jewish teams, the 1990s were marked by the proliferation of Arab teams in Israel’s top division (*Ligat Ha’al*) (See figure 1) and a great increase in the number of Arab players.\(^{28}\) This success was remarkable given the fact that most Arab teams had much smaller budgets than their Jewish counterparts, who were bankrolled by millionaires (e.g., Yaakov Shachar who brought Honda as the sponsor of Maccabi Haifa) who modernized the business aspects of their clubs to match the European model. Having an Arab team play in *Ligat Ha’al* has also meant that both Arab and Jewish players and fans would now meet regularly on the field and in the bleachers of major soccer fields. Now in the 1990s, these matches would become an arena where the political, ethnic, and religious tensions between Arabs and Jews would be transported to the field and played out on the bleachers.

![Graph showing percentages of Arab teams in the Israeli Leagues, 1977–2000 (excluding the lowest division). Source: Sorek 2005, p. 658.](image)

\(^{28}\) In 1996, the year Hapoel Taibe was promoted to the top division, Arabs constituted 19% of Israel’s population (Ben Porat 2001, p. 20) but in 1998, Arab teams constituted 42% of the clubs in the Israeli Football Association (these figures include also participation in the lower divisions (Sorek 2005, p. 658).
3.4.1 Political, religious, and ethnic tensions: the case of Hapoel Taibe

The first Arab team to play in the Israeli Premier League, *Ligat Ha’al*, was Hapoel Taibe. A member of the Hapoel Labor Organization, this club was located in the Arab village of Taibe from which most of the players (four were Jewish, two were Christians and the rest Muslim) and the entire management staff came (Ben-Porat 2001). When it was promoted in 1996/7 to the top division Hapoel Taibe became a national symbol for all of Israel’s Arabs because for the first time Arab footballers played so much better than some of the Jewish teams. But the penetration of an Arab team into the top all-Jewish national league was not simply a sporting event but rather an event of national magnitude, because it proved that Arabs no longer needed to feel as if they were the political underdogs. Winning on the soccer field became an important new way through which the once banned expression of Arab nationalism could now be channeled. In turn, the players who now became a great source of Arab national pride emerged as Arab national heroes.

Even though Hapoel Taibe was a source of great local and national pride for Israeli Arabs, the team faced hardships from the onset. Because its stadium in Taibe was ill-equipped to host major soccer matches, the team had to play home games in neighboring Jewish towns (Ben-Porat 2001, p. 26), spoiling the excitement of being the one Arab team in *Ligat Ha’al* and making Israeli Arabs dependent yet again on the Jewish sports infrastructure. The obligation to play on someone else’s field also robbed Hapoel Taibe of a possible home team advantage, and had an impact on the mood of the
fans and, potentially, on the success of the team. Another disadvantage was the heavy police presence at every one of Hapoel Taibe’s games. While police are always present in major Israeli league soccer games, the number of security forces protecting a game between Jewish and Arab teams is often four times larger than at a game between two Jewish teams (Ibid.).

As in the cases of Scotland, former Yugoslavia and Spain, major political, ethnic, and religious conflicts were evident from the start in Hapoel Taibe’s games. Hapoel Taibe played its first Ligat Ha’al game against the extreme nationalist exclusively Jewish team, Beitar Jerusalem, in Jerusalem’s Teddy Stadium. Beitar’s fans are famous for their right wing, anti-Arab sentiments and violent behavior at football matches, especially at home games. As one of Beitar’s supporters whom Amir Ben-Porat interviewed before that game said: “I came to this game to support the Jews against the Arabs” (2001, p. 29). The tension was apparent even before the first whistle, as the Beitar fans welcomed the two teams to the pitch with screams of “Death to the Arabs” (Ibid.); and as Taibe’s coach entered the field, he was harassed, bombarded with projectiles, such as bottles, and the subject of chants from the crowd that addressed him as “terrorist.” While they also engaged in profanity, Hapoel Taibe’s fans were intentionally restrained in their ethno-nationalist fervor.

Although this game ended in a goalless (0-0) draw, the outcome was a great victory for the Arabs. The excellent Jewish team Beitar was unable to score a goal against the Arab newcomers even with their home advantage, and Beitar’s failure to win was therefore seen by the Arab fans as Taibe’s victory. The zero-zero score meant that another match had to be played in order to decide the draw. Although this match was
played in Hapoel Taibe’s substitute home ground in Kfar-Saba, twenty miles from Taibe, fans of both teams came in droves to lend support to their teams. Twenty minutes before the game, the politically motivated chants began. As in the previous match, Beitar’s fans began chanting ‘Death to the Arabs’ and ‘terrorist’ and added new chants such as ‘Go to Gaza’ and ‘Baruch Goldstein.’ Taibe’s fans again were careful to stay away from slogans of ethno-national hatred, and chants by younger supporters who replied with ‘Death to the Jews’ were quickly silenced by other Taibe fans. When Beitar fans goaded Taibe’s with chants such as ‘death to the Arabs’ and ‘Mohammed, son of a bitch,’ the latter responded in kind with chants such as ‘Bibi [Netanyahu], son of a bitch’ (Ben Porat 2001, p. 30), and both groups of fans became more and more agitated -- but because they sat in different parts of the stadium, in bounded sections, this conflict did not deteriorate to a physical brawl. This game ended with a victory 1-0 to Beitar.

The fact that the chants by Beitar’s fans during the second game repeated themselves made it abundantly clear to Hapoel Taibe’s Arab supporters that despite their best efforts to remain non political, avoiding ethno-national conflict, this was not possible. With their chants, Beitar’s fans othered the Arabs and forced the perception that Jews and Arabs were enemies, even as Israeli-Palestinian tensions were briefly eased by peace talks in the 1990s between the two governments. At the same time, the very nationalistic fervor of Beitar’s fans made the players of Hapoel Taibe feel responsible for the reputation of Israeli Arabs and the bearers of their national identity (Ben-Porat 2001, p. 31).

29 Baruch Goldstein was a Jewish settler who in March 1994 attacked a mosque in Hebron, shooting and killing twenty three Muslim worshippers and wounding more than one hundred and twenty, before he was lynched by the Arab crowd.
Indeed, the stakes were high for both teams and in their last match or clash of the season dignitaries such as the mayors of Haifa and Jerusalem, Israel’s deputy minister of sport and education, the Speaker of the Knesset, and Yassir Arafat’s advisor, Ahmed Tibi, as well as journalists from around the world made it a point to be in attendance (Ibid., p. 33). And this time when, as in the previous two matches, the anti Arab chants began, Taibe’s supporters started to chant a popular Palestinian nationalist song, ‘Biladi, Biladi,’ meaning ‘My Homeland, My Homeland.’ – signifying dramatically, that Taibe fans had internalized the otherness assigned to them and accepted their identity as an Arab collective, not simply fans of their particular local club.

Singing ‘Biladi Biladi’ in response to the nationalistic chants of Beitar’s fans, forced publically open the connection between Palestinian statelessness and their beloved homeland, calling attention to the fact that Palestinian national identity was inseparable from their lost land. And because such expression of Palestinian nationalism was still banned, this burst of nationalism on the bleachers was an especially important psychological moment for Israeli Arabs. With this specific chant they sharpened their collective identity, and as Ben-Porat argues, lessened the pain of losing the last match of the season (Ben Porat 2001, p. 34).

Thus Hapoel Taibe and its players paved the way for other Arab teams in two important ways: as trailblazing role models, which other Arab teams strove to emulate and as markers of Arab identity in Israel. More than a simple sport competition, their matches with Israeli Jewish teams embodied political, religious, and ethnic conflicts, reflecting the cleavages within Israeli society.
CHAPTER 4: FOOTBALL FANDOM AND IDENTITY

The intensity of the ethnic and national hatred expressed by fans in Israeli football games is a relatively recent phenomenon, even though intense racism has been part of Israeli culture since the establishment of the state, and even before. Racist chants began to be heard on the Israeli soccer field in the early 1990s, and were directed primarily at foreign players. The first of these cases were the chants uttered by fans of Maccabi Haifa and Hapoel Tel Aviv when each of them played against Maccabi Tel Aviv and they were directed at the African footballer Cyrille Makanaky (Scheinman 2011, p. 11). Such chants against dark skinned foreign players continued through the 1990s and spread throughout Israel (Ibid.) but their focus changed with Beitar Jerusalem harassing Israeli Arabs. These racist chants towards Arabs in Israel, either as individual players or towards an entire team demonstrate that the ethno-national war between Jews and Arabs remains very much in several different forms, as this chapter will demonstrate.

Though the behavior of these fans is as violent and crass as at the games between Rangers and Celtic in Scotland, Real Madrid and Barcelona in Spain, and Dynamo Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade in the former Yugoslavia and each of these games highlighted either religious, ethnic or political tensions, the case of fans’ behavior in Israel combines all three. In Israel we find intense religious and ethno-national tensions that have political overtones in the struggles between Jewish and Arab fans. While many of the fans on both sides might not have been so quick to call attention to their personal
racist or political feelings in public, something about being in the bleachers with others who feel similarly seems to empower them to verbally abuse the opposing teams and their fans, to fight for the pride of their home team, and to express nationalist sentiments.

A survey conducted by the New Israel Fund (NIF) about the rates of fan violence and racist incidents in Israeli soccer concluded that during 2009-10 there was a 47% increase in racist incitement and a 24% increase in fan violence over the previous year (Shanan 2010). This increase was attributed to fans of three specific soccer teams: Beitar Jerusalem, Maccabi Tel Aviv and Bnei Sakhnin. NIF attributes 87% of the 91 incidents to Beitar Jerusalem and its fans alone (Ibid.). Beitar Jerusalem is the fan cohort most strongly tied to Arab-Jews in Israel.

4.1 To Be an Arab-Jew in Israel: Fandom and New Zionism

The roots of the current ethnic division among Jews in Israel lie in demography, geography, and ideology. As discussed earlier, the massive immigration to Israel after 1948 of religious and traditional Jews who came from economically weak Arab countries led European Jews who had immigrated years earlier and who were more educated, secular, and economically productive to attempt to acculturate Mizrahi Jews into life in the new land. European Jews were at the top of the social, political, and economic hierarchy with the Arab-Jews beneath them; the only group which ranked lower than Arab-Jews were the Palestinian Arabs of Israel who competed with them for the same low ranking jobs.

All new immigrants to Israel, even those who came later from the former Soviet Union or Ethiopia, have been nominally encouraged to assimilate yet at the same time
many have been positioned low in the social hierarchy where there are fewer economic opportunities, and more discrimination and isolation from power. What is interesting about the ethnic identity of Arab-Jews is the fact that because they came from different parts of the Arab world, they had distinct identities that corresponded to their places of origin. Thus the cultural similarities among Jews from Iraq and Egypt, Syria and Morocco, for example, were limited. But because all these immigrants arrived from the Arab world and experienced similar discrimination in Israel they developed a collective identity which erased many parts of their original, separate ethnic ones (Swirski 1989). In becoming Israelis they consciously rejected the specific parts of their identity that tied them back to the Arab world because living with Zionism has meant a profound and visceral schizophrenia where self pride and self-rejection had to be constantly negotiated (Shohat 1998, pp. 26-26).

Providing an excellent example of this immigration pattern--and the resulting patterns in fandom is Jerusalem, which absorbed during the 1950s and 1960s a large number of Arab-Jews. There were very few economic opportunities for these immigrants in the city and for it soon many of them found themselves relegated to the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. These immigrants and their sons became the fanbase of Beitar Jerusalem and cheering for Beitar became both a means of political protest against the hegemony of mostly European Jews (Ben-Porat 2007, p. 21) and a way to express their difference from and superiority over Israeli Arabs. For many of Beitar’s fans, anti-Arabism has become integral to the identity of the club (Ibid.) and as we know from other examples (e.g. Rangers/Celtic, Dynamo/Red Star) attachment to the football club, is always inextricably tied to the individual and group identity of the fans. In addition to
Beitar Jerusalem, this has also been the case for Hapoel Taibe, and Bnei Sakhnin.

In addition to these class issues, political sentiments have significantly motivated the fan behavior of Mizrahi Jews. At the time of Israel’s establishment, the dominant ideology was Socialist Zionism, advocated by Israel’s significant Ashkenazi (European) community. But over time, first with the upset of the 1977 election results (when the hegemony of Labor was abruptly stopped in favor of the right-wing block) and then with the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, we can see a shift into what Ofira Seliktar calls “New Zionism.” This has been represented by the political parties of Likud and later Shas. New Zionism is based on religious ideologies and is characterized by an unwillingness to compromise with the Palestinians. Seliktar writes that it is the demographic shift caused by the immigration of Jews from the Arab world that has given this new movement such immense political power. Indeed, Jews of Arab descent have tended to be vocally anti-Arab—significantly more so than their Ashkenazi counterparts (Seliktar 1984, p. 34). While low socio-economic status and education levels may influence Mizrahi anti-Arab sentiments Seliktar argues that Mizrahi hostility towards Arabs is rooted more deeply in their experiences as dhimmi, citizens of Arab countries (1984, p. 37). It could be argued that their anti-Arab mentality is indicative of past persecution and that the same frustrations are also finding expression (or fueling aggression) in the stadium. That led them to vote right wing religious political parties into office and to rewrite the Zionist narrative. It is for this reason that we hear fans of Beitar Jerusalem call “Death to the Arabs” and “Mohammad son of a bitch” from the bleachers.
4.2 To Be a Palestinian in Israel: Fandom and the Identity Crisis of the Israeli-Arab

Israeli Arabs have historically been outsiders in their own land. They are non-Jewish citizens of a Jewish State; yet, as an ethno-national minority, they remain highly conflicted about their identity. Arabs historically have not been well-represented in Israeli politics and it is on the soccer field and in the stadium that they are given an opportunity, rather than at the voting polls, to assert their equality with the rest of Israel.

Israeli-Arabs are at once Arabs, with ethnic ties all across the Middle East and Palestinians, descendants and survivors of the Nakba, the outcome of Israel’s war of independence, and members of the nationality of Israel’s arch-enemy. Religion is the next facet of their identity that transcends their Israeliiness. Islam, Christianity and Druze are vital in giving Israel’s Arab citizens a sense of pride and independence, yet the reality of their situation is that their Palestinian-Arab identity makes them “enemies within” while simultaneously being considered suspiciously Israeli by Palestinians outside of Israel (Sorek 2005, p. 638). For although they are Arabs, Palestinians, and non-Jews, they remain citizens of Israel, the Jewish State. While they are victims of discrimination as second-class citizens of Israel, at the same time they enjoy more economic opportunities and political freedoms than most citizens of Israel’s neighboring countries (Sorek 2005, p. 638). But ultimately, the experiences of the Israeli Arabs differ greatly from Arabs in the Occupied Territories (Gaza and the West Bank) due to their separate

30 Though the Palestinians of Israel have the right to vote and be elected, they have traditionally voted for Jewish parties, specifically but not exclusively Labor and for Israel’s Communist parties. In the last two decades, however, several exclusively Arab parties have gained power and the support of their constituencies (almost exclusively Arab) brought them to the Knesset. These parties, like Balad and Hadash-Ta’al, for example, are very small, part of the opposition, and their voice often is not heard.
history in 1948 and thereafter. Indeed, we can even go so far as to say that the duality of Arab-Israeli identity challenges our understanding of basic concepts of nationalism and national identity.

The war of 1967 paved the way for Arab-Israelis to redefine their identity. They started to refer to themselves as Palestinian Arabs (Smooha 1992) and continued to do so during the period of the Oslo talks and the second intifada. Refining their identity has meant a political awakening and a need for a more nuanced national identity. According to Sammy Smooha, the percentage of Israeli-Arabs that identify as both Palestinian and Israeli rose drastically from 1976 to 1995 (1999). He argues that this as a result of the gradual integration of Israeli-Arabs into Israeli society in the wake of the 1967 war; it could also be said that acknowledgement of both of these identities could be the easiest way to cope with the hardship and tensions created by the conflict. Sorek classifies the strategies of constructing identity as those of separation and of substitution. The separation strategy, he argues, consists of different aspects of Israeli-Arab identity co-existing but remaining independent and separate in different spheres (Sorek 2005, p. 639). At the same time the substitution strategy enables Israeli-Arabs to distance themselves from specific national or political identities and instead to embrace non-national identities such as communal or familial (Ibid.). And it is their status as marginalized citizens of Israel that enables this latter strategy.

To understand the importance of sport in the negotiation of self-identity by Israel’s Arab citizens, we must look to Bnei Sakhnin, or Ittihad Abna Sakhnin, the most successful team from an Arab town in the history of Israeli sport, and Hapoel Taibe’s successor as the Arab representative in the top division. This story is especially riveting
as prior to the popularity and success of Bnei Sakhnin the town was more admired for producing the most martyrs during the 1948 war, First Intifada, and in October 2000, when at the beginning of the second intifada, Israeli police killed 30 protesters, two of whom were from Sakhnin. Another major source of local pride for Sakhninians comes from the murders of three of its citizens (Israeli Arabs) by Israeli police in nationwide protests on March 30 1976 (known as Land Day), against the confiscation of Arab lands by the Israeli government for “security purposes.”

Given the connections between national pride and national martyrdom, it is interesting, then, that local Sakhninian pride has become constructed as well through the achievements and exploits of Bnei Sakhnin Football Club, including its 2004 State Cup victory. The successes of their team have given Sakhnin residents empowering access to the Hebrew media and the Israeli public in general. Following the State Cup Victory in 2004, for example, a Sakhninian woman said to the Hebrew daily newspaper ‘Haaretz,’ “Now they will no longer speak of us only in the negative – of Land Day and demonstrations. I believe this will change perceptions. We are part of the State, we want to be part of the State, to live together, but we are not always understood. Perhaps through football they will see our true face” (translated by Tamir Sorek 2005, p. 647).

Significantly, Ittihad Abna Sakhnin, or Ihud Bnei Sakhnin, was created in 1992 following the merger of Maccabi Sakhnin and Hapoel Sakhnin (Sorek 2005, p. 648). In other words, these Zionist sports clubs were adapted by the town in order to better integrate themselves into Israeli society. The successes of this unified club could be attributed to allocation of resources: in 1998, when the team was still in the second division, Sakhnin’s municipality allocated 1% of its total budget on the club, more than
other Arab and Jewish towns of the same size (Ibid., p. 649); Sorek attributes this overinvestment to the presumption that sport reduces social exclusion and crime, and thusly would be a prime focus for municipal investment (Ibid.). At the same time, the Sakhnin municipality’s desire to attract tourism, and in this case investment in Bnei Sakhnin, could be seen as a conscious decision to distance themselves from the separatism of its past in the eyes of the Israeli populace.

Ultimately the unification of Hapoel and Maccabi Sakhnin served both to unite the people of Sakhnin and to emphasize their role as the flagship team for their ethno-national ideas, much like Athletic Bilbao for the Basques of Spain. But instead of victories from the team being simply victories for Palestinian nationalism, soccer has played a more complex role, one befitting the complexities of Palestinian Israeli identity. Much as the fans of Hapoel Taibe realized a few years before, Sakhninians seized on football as one of the few opportunities that they had to earn acceptance by the Jewish majority. The football stadium has become for them a sphere for Jewish and Arab integration. The diversity of the State Cup winning Sakhnin team is proof of this. Only half of the players in the squad were Arab (most from the area of Sakhnin), with the rest being Israeli Jews or foreigners. But at the same time this did not influence the symbolism of the victory for the local community. Arabs not from Sakhnin hailed this win as a victory for all of Israel’s Arabs, and in so doing also used sport to construct and emphasize their Palestinian Arab identities.

On February 2, 1999, Bnei Sakhnin played against Hakoah Ramat Gan in the final of the second division Toto Trophy. Because their own team was to play afterwards, many Beitar Jerusalem fans were in the stadium and the chants and inter-fan tensions
were almost identical to the ones the year before between Hapoel Taibe and Beitar. Beitar fans chanted racial epithets and the Sakhnin fans replied in non-confrontational chants supporting their team. Again as in previous years, the racial and political nature of these chants escalated. Chants of “Haide Bibi,” or “Come on, Bibi” in support of right wing Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu could be heard from the Beitar fans. But at one point during the game, as the chants in support of right wing ideologies were heard, the Sakhnin fans, with a sense of humor, replied “Haide Barak” in support of the then opposition candidate Ehud Barak (Sorek 2005, p. 652) --- and this changed the atmosphere in the stadium. Rather than emphasizing an Arab-Jewish confrontation, the exchange became more about an internal Israeli political struggle, left versus right. By consciously ignoring the “Death to the Arabs” chants, the crowd instead replied with a statement that would have been supported by half of the Israeli public.

Through the construction of its two identities, football and martyrrological, the town of Sakhnin shows the possible coexistence of localism and nationalism. The people of Sakhnin embrace both, but use localism as a tool for participation in the Israeli public sphere. The example of Sakhnin proves that the stadium is very important for displaying both local and national sentiments. Since the creation of the State, Israel’s Arabs have used football as a tool for integration, with the sport serving as representative of both the state and modernity (Sorek 2005, p. 656). In the cases of FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao, football was a nationalist enclave, whereas for Bnei Sakhnin and most Israeli-Arab teams, it was an integrative one. Instead of simply representing their nationalistic desires in the stadium, Israeli-Arabs have also used it to promote their nuanced integration with the state.
In recent years, following Bnei Sakhnin’s rise to prominence through the State Cup and its subsequent run in the UEFA (Union European Football Association) Cup, funding has been secured from multiple sources. First, a new stadium was constructed in Sakhnin from funds given to the club in a joint venture between the State of Israel and the Qatari National Olympic Committee. The decision to build the Doha Stadium came after discussions between Israeli Knesset member Ahmed Tibi and the Secretary General of the Qatari National Olympic Committee, Sheikh Saoud Abdulrahman al-Thani, about the conditions of Sakhnin’s sporting infrastructure (Nahmias 2006). This commitment signified a major boost for Bnei Sakhnin’s financial stability as in addition to the funding for the new stadium, the owner of Beitar Jerusalem, Arkadi Gaydamak (coincidentally a war-criminal wanted by Interpol for selling weapons to Angola!) gave $400,000 to supplement the team’s funds and promote fair play.

Following their victory in the 2004 State Cup, Bnei Sakhnin qualified to participate in the UEFA Cup. For the first time, an Arab club would be representing Israel in European competition. What better way to integrate into Israeli society than to represent the country against elite European teams? Although Bnei Sakhnin did not make it past the group stages, the entire country watched as the team from the small Galilean town played against giants such as Spain’s Deportivo la Coruña and England’s Newcastle United, among others.

With the success of their team, several Israeli-Arab Sakhnin players were called up to represent the Israeli National Team. Sakhnin’s captain Abbas Suan, in particular,

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31 Group stages are the first parts of tournaments, before the knockout stages. Teams are put into groups and play every team in it at home and away. Every team in the group stages gets to play but only the top two teams progress to the knockout rounds.
stands out for his contributions to Israel’s undefeated run in the 2006 World Cup qualifying campaign. Suan scored the equalizer in the match against Ireland during the last minute, effectively uniting all of Israel, Jewish and Arab fans alike, in celebration. Suan, who supports a Palestinian state, said of the experience, “The goal was a miracle. It was unique because everyone was jumping together.” He went on to call the goal the “most important moment of his life.” Before the goal, Suan, one of two Israeli-Arabs to play that match, had been subjected to verbal abuse from the crowd that went so far as to rhyme his name with the Hebrew word for ‘cancer;’ but ultimately he rose above these chants to give the Israeli National Team hope for the World Cup. Unfortunately, Israel did not qualify, but Arab participation in the national team was proven to be a success in bringing Jews and Arab together. Abbas Suan did, even if for a brief moment, what politicians have failed to do.

According to Suan himself, his role as a successful Israeli-Arab footballer has made him into an ambassador to the Arab sector of society, using interviews with reporters to address topics in which the Arab sector is lacking: infrastructure, education, and housing, for example. Footballing icons hold sway over their adoring populations, and Suan is aware of his responsibilities as a hero, to promote equality and coexistence in Israel. The first Israeli-Arab footballer to play for the Israeli National Team in 1976, Rifaat “Jimmy” Turk, who later became the coach of Hapoel Taibe during the 1997 Premier League season, was such an important figure to the local community that he

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became deputy mayor of Tel Aviv-Jaffa.\textsuperscript{34} Playing for the national team is at once the greatest accomplishment for any player and an important source of national pride but it can also cause discomfort, especially if the Palestinian players are politicized. Players like Turk and later Zahi Armeli, who have had a strong Palestinian identity and who represented the state of Israel in international competitions, had to stand still when the Israel’s national anthem was played. But because this anthem focuses exclusively on Jewish hopes of being a free nation in its homeland and the Israeli flag that always flies high around the stadium when Israeli teams plays is also replete with Jewish symbolism it is hard to think that these Arab players are not conflicted.

But as far as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is concerned, the participation of Israeli Palestinians in the national team has a unifying impact even if it is for ninety minutes. Although football as a tool for peace is still imperfect, past successes can provide hope and motivation for the next generation of Israeli-Arab and Jewish Israeli footballers to promote coexistence and harmony throughout their homeland.

\textsuperscript{34}\url{http://www.jaffa-youth.org/?m=jaffa&id=en_about_us}
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

A: Globalization, Localization, and Israeli Soccer

Globalization has affected every aspect of modern daily life, and sport is no exception. As capital, labor, and cultural flows spread due to the technological capacities of the twenty-first century, boundaries become increasingly irrelevant and definitions of what is local and what is global have changed. Yet the globalization of sport is often formulated in the local setting and in the interaction between the local and the global.

Globalization has resulted in simultaneously superseding and enforcing the local. For if globalization is a restructuring of the world that ignores local boundaries in favor of interconnected economies, this redefining of borders has also given the local a reason to oppose this global spread. Therefore in order to truly understand the impact of globalization on sports, and Israeli soccer in particular, we must look to the interaction between the local and the global and estimate the effects of the interaction on the local (Ben Porat and Ben Porat 2004, p. 424).

Israeli soccer is very much affected by this local/global interaction. Indeed, as the modern Jewish state and Israeli society have adapted to capitalist economic models, so too has soccer had to adjust. A globalizing Israel is reflected in soccer with the import and export of players, although this movement is limited by the scale of capital available
in the Israeli sporting infrastructure. Amir Ben Porat and Guy Ben Porat break down the impact of globalization as the result of three distinct processes: capital, labor, and cultural flows (2004, p. 422). Capital flows are defined in terms of money invested in the club and its origin (local vs. foreign); labor in terms of the import of foreign and export of Israeli athletes; and finally culture is understood in terms of the behavior of fans, the importance they put on European competition, and their adaptation of symbols from other European clubs (Ben Porat and Ben Porat 2004, p. 425). It is apparent in looking at the case of Israel that the most significant flow is labor rather than capital (Ibid., p. 422).

Another factor restricting the flow of Israeli athletes is security concerns, which have limited Israel’s potential to attract both star athletes and capital (although there are some obvious exceptions, including Israeli basketball team Maccabi Electra Tel Aviv, who currently hold the record for most Euroleague Final appearances in Europe. The accessibility and popularity of this team, as well as the money flowing in, have made it easier for it to attract star players on lucrative contracts).

Soccer is an especially interesting example of the interaction between the local and the global in regards both to the globalization of the sport and to the impact that the game’s globalizing has had on local and national identities. After its initial spread from Britain, following colonialism, soccer was instrumental in giving the former colonies a national identity (e.g. Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil and many African countries as well). The game’s European origin allowed victories of the ex-colonies to be vengeful as the ex-colonizers were beaten at their own game. At the same time, many of

35 In leagues with higher annual revenues, it is not uncommon for elite teams to spend tens of millions of Euros on an individual player.

36 The Euroleague is European basketball’s equivalent of football’s Champions League.
globalization’s effects on soccer have been correlated. Increased labor flows, for example, have often been the result of capital inputs; and globalization has also resulted in global marketing and branding for athletes and teams, which have further solidified their importance to the periphery. These global allegiances are apparent for both Arabs and Jews in Israel, where many fans support a successful European team in addition to a local team. In this sense, global flows and local identities are frequently simultaneous.

Given the political origins of most Israeli sports clubs, it is not surprising that they have adapted to global flows. The 1980s, when Israeli sports went professional, represented a turning point. With more capital flowing into the country, sport thrived and some of the clubs, especially the Jewish one, were able to buy the best players, some of whom were Arab. In 1989 soccer clubs were finally able to purchase foreign players (non Israelis) and in the early part of the decade were able to compete in European competitions (Ben Porat and Ben Porat 2004, p. 427). Moreover, restrictions on foreign players were only relevant to non-Jewish athletes, as under the laws of citizenship, any Jew could claim his or her birthright and become a citizen of the state. In this sense, the early political model of Israeli sports clubs, which encouraged Jews from around the world to immigrate to Israel, shifted to accommodate a commercial model that was in line with the economic liberalization that the state was undergoing.

B. Football as an arena of Arab Ethno-National Identities

Football has had an important role in shaping the identity of Israeli Arabs. As this thesis has shown, we can divide the development of Arab soccer and its imprint on

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37 These restrictions include a limit of five players who hold foreign passports per team.
identity into different eras. In the early days of the state, when Arabs were seen by Jewish Israel as the internal enemy, most of the football activities were sponsored by the Zionist Histadrut, who invested in sport infrastructure in Arab villages in the hope that this would bring Arab votes to the party. In the late 1950s dozens of Hapoel clubs were established in many different Arab towns and villages and received hefty support from the government. During this period the first Arab players played for Jewish teams, and Arab supporters followed them. But government support was not predicated on sporting reasons alone: It was also a way to control the movement of Arab youth and to channel Arab youth away from subversive nationalist (Arab) activities.

The 1970s and 1980s, however, marked a real change, and intensified during the 1990s -- with the Palestinianization of Israeli Arabs and the professionalization of the sport. During this period, Arab municipalities invested in their own teams and in so doing built a strong local Arab pride. As a result the number of Arab teams (e.g., Hapoel Taibe and Bnei Sakhnin) significantly increased. In turn, with increased capital flows the development and training of young Arab players flourished, and many of them qualified to play in Jewish teams. Many of these players were also selected to play on Israel’s national team and playing for either an all-Jewish or an all-Arab team, or for Israel’s national team has meant that Arabs in Israel have had to negotiate their identity in multiple ways.

The identity of Israel’s Arab soccer players gets constructed in different ways, each with different meaning for Israeli Arab identity. When they play for a local Arab team, they are given the opportunity to represent their community; and as the successes of the team are enjoyed by all its fans, successful players bring respect and pride back to
the community as a whole. When an Arab team plays a traditionally Jewish team, such as Beitar Jerusalem, the competition escalates from merely sport to a battle between two ethno-national groups. Thus in the contest of Jews versus Arabs, the identity of the players and the fans are constructed in no small part by the opposition; in adopting politically and racially motivated chants, for example, the Beitar fans also gave fans and players of rival Arab teams a role as representatives of the Arab collective as a whole. But when an Arab team, such as Bnei Sakhnin, earns unprecedented success, (e.g. winning a national trophy), then a new type of identity is formed. Upon winning a national competition, the victors get to represent the country in European competition. This means that fans and players of Bnei Sakhnin, for the 2004-05 season, were tasked with being representatives of Israel--given the conflicted identity of Israeli Arabs and their position in society, a huge milestone for Arab football. So we can see that Arab Israeli fandom and identity are complex phenomena, both local and much broader in their representation of “nation.”

Further, Israeli Arab soccer players face a serious dilemma, and limited choices. If Israeli Arab players want to receive recognition and fame, be economically remunerated and use soccer to integrate into Israeli society, they are best served in a Jewish team. But being a minority on a Jewish team brings to the surface the very conflict with which the Arab ethno-national minority in Israel lives. With Jewish symbols like the Israeli flag with the Star of David displayed in the stadium, the players are likely to feel time and again that they play for the other side. So, while these players may indeed serve as role models to many Arab youth, in order to do so they must to some extent “buy” into Zionist ideology. At the same time, if they choose, for ideological
reasons, to play for an Arab team, because their identity as Israeli Palestinians is really important to them, the likelihood of their advancing in the sport and reaching important milestones is limited at best.

C. Crossing the Divide, Sport for Peace

Even though they have dual identities, as both Israelis and Arabs, interactions with rival Jewish teams in the stadium means that on the football field, Israeli Arab fans and players become involved in a reinterpretation of the conflict. And ultimately, despite the seeming divisiveness of these interactions, football has the potential to become the great equalizer. Sporting interactions are among the best tools for peace and reconciliation that we have developed in the modern world. Football as a sport is loved by the world; it is a language that millions speak across cultural and linguistic barriers. Perhaps as we look at ways to solve the conflict in the Middle East, sport and soccer, in particular among youth -- could help change how future generations vie each other.

As things currently stand, segregation is unfortunately ever-present in Israeli society, economically, educationally and culturally and the existence of dual soccer leagues, one for each ethno-national subset, largely reinforcing the ethno-national divide. So the peacemaking potential of sport in the region is not enabled by the leagues; rather it is at the grassroots level\textsuperscript{38} that differences in individuals’ attitudes toward one another might best be bridged.

The most well-known and successful development program is Football for Peace

\textsuperscript{38} I mean here not simply grassroots as an effort that comes from below but an effort to change attitudes first and foremost among the young members of society, before they begin to hold firm political views.
(F4P), a joint initiative by the British Embassy in Israel, University of Brighton and Arsenal Football Club, among others. Originally called the World Sports Peace Initiative, F4P was founded to use sport as a tool to foster more interaction between Jewish and Arab youth at an earlier age (Rookwood 2009). The premise that they worked under was that if the future leaders of the Palestinian and Israeli states had played soccer together in their youth, they would be less likely to grow up to be antagonists and to enact mutually antagonistic policies. The program brought professional coaches and trainers from Britain to Israel, and sought further support from the Olympic Committee.

The founders of F4P observed that coexistence was impossible when the two communities existed as detached entities. They saw sport as a tool for both sides to rise above the dehumanization of war and the media, and to admit the legitimacy of the other’s experience. F4P gave the children a politically neutral platform on which they could meet: one that transcended the cycle of strife and struggle that makes it impossible to put a human face on one another’s suffering. The goal of this program was to build a foundation for the two sides to start planning and building for a shared future, one that denounced hatred and promoted shared humanity.

The Football for Peace initiative challenged political divisions by only playing mixed groups of children, rather than Jewish vs. Arab teams. The unity that these mixed teams provided allowed the kids to look beyond what they knew about the other side, if only for a short period. The physical skills taught by the coaches also promoted sharing and interdependence, rather than emphasizing the tactical skills that risked promoting territorial dominance among the youth. The activities in which the kids were asked to participate had the express goal of breaking down personal and national barriers with the
aim of promoting a sense of understanding between the teammates.

Football for Peace gave these youth a chance to meet one another in a neutral setting, and encouraged them to set aside their differences through sport. The initiative’s organizer in Israel, an Israeli Arab, Gazi Nojidat of the Israeli Sports Authority, said that the program was “not about politics, [rather] it’s about being neutral.” (as quoted in Liebman and Rookwood 2007, p. 13) The successes of the program are clear for all to see. According to the initiative’s website, enrollment in the program has doubled each year, allowing the peaceful values to disseminate widely among Israeli and Palestinian youth.\(^{39}\) The Football for Peace initiative was recently expanded to encompass conflict resolution in Northern Ireland as well.

While the Football for Peace initiative is a welcome one, it is hard to believe that it can fully heal the deep-seated animosity between the two ethno-national groups in Israel. But ultimately, the measure of success is not solving the Palestinian Israeli conflict; rather it is in the change in attitude that results from bringing both sides together to prove that coexistence is possible. The power of nationalism is stronger than the power of the ball, especially since for so long sport has been used as a tool to promote national identity. The hope, for example, that the 2010 World Cup would help unify racially divided South Africa has already evaporated. Nothing really has changed other than a rise in economic distress (Fairbanks 2011). Nonetheless, Football for Peace remains an important attempt to bridge the ethno-national divide. And through its example, it is clear that the unifying capacities of football require a sustained effort on many levels. Football in and of itself is not a standalone solution; rather it can serve as

\(^{39}\) http://www.football4peace.eu/history.html
the first step. As seen through Football for Peace, the sport allows youth to overcome racial, ethnic, religious and political barriers, and as a result can be a positive part of any post conflict peace process.
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