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Do they even know the national anthem? Minorities in service of the flag – Israeli Arabs in the national football team

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This study sets out to explore prevalent attitudes amongst the Israeli-Jewish majority towards Arab footballers playing for Israel's national team via an analysis of online reader comments ('talkbacks') posted by Jewish-Israeli readers to 360 online articles discussing the Israeli national football team between the years 2012–2014. Whilst some readers demonstrated a sense of support and empathy with the Arab players, the majority of Jewish-Israeli readers, however, showcased in their 'talkbacks' a persistent pattern of minimizing and underplaying Arab-Israeli footballers' contribution to the national team. Despite the fact that some readers did warm to the prospect of having 'their own Arab' play for the national team (that is to say, an Arab footballer who also plays for the domestic team they support), most Jewish-Israeli readers continued to vocalize their protest over the ever-increasing number of Arab players in the Israeli national team.

Introduction

Sport's many social roles, as well as its contribution to the lives of those who have found themselves the casualties of the prevalent social order, have been well documented in scholarly research. For countless weaker groups and minorities all over the world, sport often serves as a sole respite. It is therefore of little surprise that sport in general, and football in particular, have become a highly influential presence amongst Israel's Arab minority.

The past decades have seen a steady, systematic surge in the presence of Arab footballers playing in Israel's top divisions, not to mention the national team itself. And although not statutorily mandated to serve in the military as Jewish-Israelis are, Arab-Israeli footballers in recent years have found themselves nonetheless cast in the role of fully-fledged representatives of the State of Israel in the national sporting arena.

In the face of this complex, sensitive and often tumultuous reality, this paper analyses reader comments (from hereinafter referred to as 'talkbacks', as they are commonly known in Israel) to online articles covering Arab footballers who have been playing for Israel's national football team. This platform has become highly popular in Israeli culture since its introduction in the early 2000s. Although talkbacks are not a unique, Israeli phenomenon *per se*, its scope in this country is in fact unique; particularly when it comes to sport.¹ Notably, studies of talkbacks in the Israeli context² found that reader-comments are predominantly of

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an instantaneous, spontaneous and interactive nature; all elements that are also key ingredients of 'Israelism' as a whole; an identity synonymous with political, religious and ethnic unrest. Consequently, some will profile talkback-posting readers as direct, confident and conceited; prone to engaging in loud and aggressive discourse, highlighting patterns of unyieldingness, promoting hot-headedness and violence, and vehemently rejecting any reconciliatory points of view. Furthermore, this platform arguably also allows one a certain degree of boldness as far as expressing certain positions, opinions and sentiments that traditional media would unlikely ever tolerate.

Being an active, key agent in the construction of social reality, football has inevitably gone on to draw considerable scholarly attention. The vital role media plays in this context has also been extensively studied, with much emphasis given to representation studies.³ Recently, however, additional aspects of sport media's various roles have become the focus of scholarly interest.⁴ This current study seeks to explore and map out prevalent attitudes amongst Israeli online sport news-readers towards the Arab footballer. By offering an in-depth exploration of attitudes towards Arab players, the study will be able to venture into a discussion of the role of sport in Israeli society and whether it does in fact lend itself to the bridging of socio-political gaps or rather, their deepening.

'Let my people score' – nationalism, national identity and football

Studies of nationalism remain highlighted by an ongoing debate between two primary schools of thought: those aligned with the primordial school of thought argue that nationalism is a well-formed expression of one's ancient, ethnic identity and cultural tradition. In this context, nationalism is viewed as a breathing natural environment of loyalties and collective identities.⁵ Meanwhile, followers of the second school of thought view nationalism as a 'functional substitute for those communal hubs rendered obsolete by modernism, in addition to serving as a powerful instrument in the hands of the elites as they go about formulating new political frameworks. Nationalism deconstructs national knowledge, revealing not only how it is created but also how it operates as per present-day needs'.⁶

Gellner argues that nationalism is not the embodiment of a series of essentialist, mythical entities but rather the formulation of new units, suitable for prevalent, present-day conditions.⁷ Benedict Anderson dubbed nationalism an 'Imagined Community' of belongingness, formed artificially by means of various common denominators which make up a sum total of knowledge spanning a national language, national history, national symbols, myths and a shared culture.⁸ Sport in this respect continues to act as the proverbial glue that holds many a nation together.⁹ Hobsbawm¹⁰ illustrates the latter, arguing how 'the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people'. The individual, he adds, 'even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol of the nation itself.'

Arguably, the fates of both sport and nationalism are deeply intertwined. Highly intensive by nature, both champion values of extraordinary sacrifice which may at times even culminate in violence. And indeed, football pitches and sporting arenas have found themselves the scene of many an international 'showdown' where national struggles between countries regularly come to a head. George Orwell¹¹ too, aptly described sporting events as 'war minus the shooting'; an image which serves as a possible explanation as to why some political figures are prone to manufacture

national myths via sport so as to further empower and embolden national identity and sentiment.¹²

The roles of such symbols in creating and empowering national identity have been extensively documented in scholarly research. Owing to Anderson's study¹³ that has helped thrust national discourse into the realms of consciousness and imagination, a great many cultural enterprises have at last earned their dues for their contribution towards empowering national spirit,¹⁴ as well as for their part as vehicles for rallying the masses together.¹⁵ This point is precisely where sport plays a pivotal role in generating and elevating national sentiment.¹⁶ Having consistently channelled throughout history the achievements of individual athletes and teams towards glorifying both itself and its leaders, sport in the hands of the state has been systematically used to fan national sentiment. And even though they are showered with an abundance of prestigious individual rewards and titles, national-tier athletes are first and foremost viewed as symbols representing their country; their people.¹⁷ And indeed, from a fan's point of view, the true power of sporting events lies in the fact that they symbolize that which is beyond the match itself, making a fan's affiliation with a sporting team one of the most public statements one can make about one's own identity.¹⁸

Studies conducted in Israel have found a strong kinship between sport and nationalism. Sport in Israel has been known to perform a vital political role, from forming international friendships with other nations to spearheading political collaborations, as well as helping strengthen relations with diaspora Jewry.¹⁹ The Israeli national football team's match against the USSR in 1956 and Maccabee Tel Aviv's clinching of the 1976 European Basketball Championship title are but two instances of national-level sporting events that have long since been inducted into the Israeli nationalism 'Hall of Fame'. Ultimately, sport in general and for some countries football, in particular, make up a paramount ingredient in the process of shaping and preserving one's national identity. In a place like Israel where nationalism remains a hot topic, football too will inevitably become engrossed in the overlying nationalist discourse, with its defining moments naturally appropriated by the state as pivotal milestones around which national identity is constructed.²⁰

'Always the bridesmaid' – Arab society in Israel

The status of Arab minorities in Israel was cemented upon the founding of the Jewish State in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. Israeli Arabs were part of the Palestinian people who had considered themselves the natural, original inhabitants of the country, claimed exclusivity over it and consequently fought against the Jewish state's very existence.²¹ Those are but a few of the circumstances that had conspired to create the deep, ongoing rift between Israel's Arab minority and Jewish majority.²² Arabs as a whole are an ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural and national minority, with its own separate communities and establishments constantly subject to scrutiny and under suspicion of national disloyalty by the country's Jewish majority. This socio-political status quo is the very thing which Israel's Arab minority has been actively fighting to change over the years.²³

Israeli Arabs, who nowadays make up roughly 20% of Israeli population, do not share the national Jewish consensus as far as several fundamental ideological areas are concerned. Some Arab–Israeli sects reject what they describe as 'Israel's race to the West,' vying instead for some balance between the country's bid to fit in with

the Western world and the establishing of peace with the Middle East's many Arab-Muslim countries. These elements, along with others are the very foundations of Jewish and Arab Israelis' current relationship and according to Samucha,²⁴ serve as the underlying basis of the 'Arab fundamentalisation' doctrine, prevalent amongst large portions of the Jewish–Israeli public, policy makers, and media bosses,²⁵ According to this doctrine, Israel's Arab minority is in the midst of an historical process of alienation and separation from the rest of country and therefore, a violent uprising on their part becomes no longer a question of 'if' but rather of 'when.' Moreover, it stresses that the State of Israel has failed to perform as a democracy in that it has been unable to settle conflicts between the majority and various minority groups. Supporters of the doctrine argue that where the Jewish State should have remained neutral, it has instead repeatedly sided with the Jews, systematically discriminating against the minority group in question and failing to instil in either side, values of equality, tolerance and coexistence.

At the same time, one cannot ignore modernization and 'Israelisation' trends of recent years within Arab–Israeli community, as many of its members continued to further assimilate into Israeli society and form deeper ties to the country and its Jewish residents. Some have become bilingual and bicultural, expressing appreciation of the advantages of life in Israel, from accessibility to various modern conveniences to welfare-state services, recourse to socio-financial benefits, reliable law enforcement and protection from Jewish and Muslim fundamentalism alike. From their point of view, life as a minority in Israel is by no means the worst fate conceivable.

Upon the abolishing of martial law over Israeli-Arabs in 1966, the Arab minority was subsequently extended a statutory exemption from any and all forms of mandatory state service (be it military, reserve or civil) whilst public policy towards them took on a far less discriminatory approach. As of now, the authorities allow Arab Israelis to rally together and organize amongst themselves independently. They are also allowed to stage protests and fight towards peace and equality without running the risk of being subject to violent oppression.²⁶ That being said, instances such the October 2000 riots do come to mind where violent oppression had in fact transpired.

According to Samucha,²⁷ an evident change amongst the Jewish majority in recent years is also discernible. Samucha explains how over time, at least part of the Jewish–Israeli population has learnt to distinguish between Arab–Israeli citizens and non-Israeli Palestinians, in addition to growing increasingly conscious of the discrimination their fellow Arab citizens are in effect still very much subject to, showing a greater willingness to extend them the same kind of civil equality to which they have always been privy.²⁸ However, despite Samucha's overall positive findings, a 2011 study of the democracy index in Israel conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute revealed an altogether different image of Jewish attitudes towards local Arab minorities. It appeared that only two-thirds of Jewish Israelis view their fellow Arab citizens as 'proper Israelis.' About 77.9% of Jews surveyed have admitted to being in favour of excluding the Arab public from any decision-making processes, not just the ones that are peace and security-related but also those on the socio-economical and parliamentary system fronts (69.5%). Moreover, a total of 52.5% of the surveyed Jewish–Israelis flat-out rebuked the argument that Arabs in Israel are supposedly underprivileged and discriminated against.

‘A little “pitchy”’ – Arab football in Israel

Arab teams have been members of the Israeli football league from as early as the 1950s; the majority of which, playing in the lower divisions and subject to the then-ordered Israeli martial law. The following decade, Jewish–Israeli coaches and footballers began playing and coaching Arab teams whilst Arab footballers too were crossing over to Jewish teams in steadily-increasing numbers towards the 1980s. By the second half of the 1990s, with a large number of Arab–Israeli footballers playing for Jewish teams, whilst Arab professional teams continued to climb up the football league pyramid (primarily Hapoel Taybeh, Maccabee Ahi-Nazareth and Bnei Sachnin F.C.), one could no longer deny that Arab football had indeed taken deep root in the Israeli league.²⁹

The year 1976 was a milestone in Israeli football as it marked the first time in history that Arab footballers were asked to join the ranks of Israel’s national football team (i.e. Rifaat Turk, Ali Othman.) This crucial turning point inevitably raised the already-complex question of the Arab community’s identity. On the one hand, Arab footballers joining the national team could instil a sense of pride amongst the community, not to mention provide tangible proof that Arab–Israelis stand a chance at success as Jews do in a field where one is judged by one’s skills and efforts. On the other hand, here is a national team whose symbols are so distinctly and overtly Jewish; from the colour of the uniform to the flag and of course the national anthem, ‘Ha’Tikvah’ (The Hope), whose lyrics overtly express the Jewish-Zionist longing for an independent nation-state, thus framing Israel as first and foremost, a Jewish state.³⁰ In what some might consider a rather surprising reaction, asking Arab footballers to join the Israeli national team was met with complete acceptance by the majority of Jews, with only the very odd exception.³¹ What is more, the presence of Arab footballers in the Israeli national team has yielded an unprecedented phenomenon in Israeli society, in that it allowed the national football team to emerge in the form of an equally shared national symbol, representative of Jewish and Arab citizens alike.³²

Scholars suggest two perspectives by which one might view the role played by Arab football Israel. The first views the football pitch as an integrative force which prompts more equality whereas the latter considers the football pitch a source of conflict with only the illusion of equality. Sorek, for example, argues that the Israeli football scene is a form of enclave where full integration between Arab and Jewish footballers is a fact and where equality seems a tangible, feasible prospect. Moreover, the Israeli media’s interest and positive coverage, coupled with the support vocalized by Arab–Israeli fans, allow for the development and growth of what Sorek has dubbed ‘an integration and assimilation enclave’.³³ Hariff³⁴ argues that one of sport and specifically, football’s biggest contributions to Israeli life is most evident in the area of Arab–Jewish relations. Indeed, several scholars are of the opinion that football can act as a ‘sedative’ of sorts, calming the otherwise strained relations between both sides. The fact that Arab footballers have successfully assimilated into the Israeli national football team, donned the national uniform and stood in unison with their Jewish teammates whilst the Israeli national anthem was being played is of profound symbolical meaning as far as the experience of citizenship of Israeli-Arabs is concerned, highlighting their relative success in having achieved some form of equality, despite the many obstacles they have had to contend with along the way.

Furthermore, leading Israeli football scholar, Ben Porat,³⁵ is of the opinion that football matches in Israel serve as a solid foundation for one's sense of identification. Ben Porat adds that football has become an arena subject to the influence of outside elements such as ethnicity, nationality, status and gender. Arab and Jewish–Israelis' ongoing identity conundrum plays out in various arenas in Israel, he explains; one of which being the football stadium. Within the unique context of the stadium, Arab–Israelis encounter Jews on two levels; the first being the actual sporting match where their result is to be determined by the two participating teams and the second, having to do with the Arab and Jewish–Israeli fans coming together under the same roof, as both groups bring into the stadium their plethora of emotions, opinions and political affiliations. Consequently, an encounter of this bi-ethnic nature may at times escalate into a full-blown nationalist battlefield as was the case in matches between Bnei Sachnin F.C. and Beitar Jerusalem.³⁶

Therefore, while Israeli football can potentially act as a sedative for the otherwise strained relations between Arabs and Jews, any sense of animosity towards Arab–Israeli footballers according to Ben Porat,³⁷ will forever be subject to the influence of forces outside of football, i.e. the near-constant unrest between Israel and the Palestinians as well as the ongoing socio-economical, and political tensions between Arab–Israelis and the State of Israel. Jews and Arabs continue to clash amongst themselves over the issue of their separate identity; a clash whose echoes could not ring louder than on the football pitch for the Arab–Israeli footballer.³⁸ Within this context, considering Ben Porat's 'Protest Model',³⁹ according to which football only creates the illusion of equality within its so-called, imagined 'enclave' as termed by Sorek,⁴⁰ one might argue that the sport is in fact used as a vehicle for heightening the conflict and may even serve as a platform for protest that could in turn, push towards social change in favour of those excluded minority groups.

Ultimately, Ben Porat presents a rather bleak vision, positing that in rifted societies such as Israel where power struggles over the social allocation of resources are a daily occurrence, it is inevitable that such conflicts will eventually worm their way into football pitches, making it impossible to separate the socio-political, cultural and economic contexts in which the match takes place from the actual sporting events transpiring on the pitch itself.

And while Arab football has been studied by several leading scholars,⁴¹ the fact remains that scarce research has been dedicated to its media coverage⁴² and even less so to 'talkbacks' in this context.⁴³ This study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge in this very area.

Methodology

As said, recent years have seen the steady, systematic rise in the presence of Arab footballers playing in Israel's top divisions. Roughly 40% of all football teams officially registered in the State of Israel represent an Arab city or borough;⁴⁴ therefore, it was only a matter of time until footballers from the Arab sector too, would be asked to join the national team. With this data in mind, this study seeks to explore the Jewish majority's treatment of Arab footballers representing the country as members of the Israeli national football team.

In order to examine attitudes towards the Arab footballer playing for the national team, a content analysis of reader comments to online articles discussing the national football team was performed. The study's scope includes all articles related to the

national team that have appeared on two major online outlets – the first; popular Israeli online news outlet, *Ynet* and the second; the exclusively, sport-centric *One*.

Ynet

Ynet is an online news and media outlet that is part of Israeli media group, *Yedioth Tikshoret* (Yedioth Media). After a trial run, the website officially launched 6 June, 2000, and has over time become Israel's number one online news site.⁴⁵ The main bulk of *Ynet*'s revenues comes from advertisements featured on it. Nowadays, in terms of popularity, *Ynet* is considered on par with other, more traditional media outlets with nationwide appeal such as the highly-rated Channel Two News on Israeli television, the Galei Zahal radio station or daily tabloid, *Yedioth Aharonoth*. That being said, over the years, the website has made quite the name for itself as having tabloid-esque inclinations and is renowned for its sensationalist, melodramatic headlines.⁴⁶ *Ynet* produces a significant chunk of its news and content independently, using a massive pool of writers and editors. Additionally, it contains articles taken from Israel's most widely-circulated daily paper, *Yedioth Aharonoth*, and other magazines of the Yedioth Aharonoth group. The outlet's chief focus is news of all genres, from finance and sport to culture, entertainment, health, tech-news and so forth. Furthermore, it offers content of the non-news variety such as various tutorials, medical glossaries, op-eds, magazine-esque features, educational pieces and so on. The website also features an online community channel, complete with forums and a premium encyclopaedia service. The vast majority of articles featured on *Ynet* are enabled for readers' comments.

Seeing as *Ynet* is in fact an extremely popular news outlet, one must assume that not all online reader comments were written by football *fans per se*, and that some of these users may simply be part of a relatively small group of people whom one might dub 'serial-posters'; that is to say, people who regularly post comments on all manners of online media articles, as opposed to content exclusively related to football. Having said that, as far as this study is concerned, we *do* refer to the 'talkbackers' as football fans as most of them demonstrated a level of knowledge and familiarity with the field that identifies them as such. As for the second outlet sampled, as the website is in fact solely devoted to sport, one can thus argue with certainty that people posting on *one.co.il* are in fact, confirmed football fans.

One

One is an Israeli, online website covering worldwide sporting news and events. According to data provided by the Israeli Online Rating Committee (defunct as of 2013), *One* is currently the biggest sport website in Israel with a monthly traffic of half a million users. And whilst popular amongst users, sport journalists consider the website 'cheap', populist, unreliable, and subject to the personal and social biases of founder and editor, Ophira Asayag. The website features video recaps of Israel's premier football league, the State Football Cup, the Toto Cup (or Sport's Betting Council Cup), Israel's premier basketball division, the State Basketball Cup, the French premier football league, women's premier football league, division two basketball, the high school basketball league, US college basketball and so on. As of 2011, *One* has also been offering television broadcasts. Within the context of this study, it is

noteworthy that on *One*, unlike *Ynet*, users are in fact able to name the team which they support, as part of any ‘talkback’ comment they post.

The study’s timeline covers a little over a two-year period (2012–2014), including thousands of reader comments to a total of 360 articles discussing the Israeli national football team, from the beginning of current coach, Elie Guttman’s tenure (January 2012) and all the way to the start of the prequalifying stages of the Euro 2016 games (March 2014).⁴⁷ For the purpose of this study, ‘talkbacks’ referring to Arab footballers or the Arab sector as a whole were included in the analysis.

After a pilot phase which included about one-third of the sum total of talkbacks, five primary categories presented themselves. All talkbacks taken from both *Ynet* and *One* were coded by three judges and subsequently aligned with one of the five categories. The judges’ credibility with regard to each and every one of the ‘talkbacks’ was tested, with results placing it well above 95% in each category.

In order to ensure to the best of one’s ability, that each reader-comment sampled does in fact convey the Jewish–Israeli majority’s attitudes towards the Arab footballer, a number of explicit variables, overtly stated by the comment’s author were taken into account, i.e. first name (and at times, surname too); place of residence and team supported (applicable only to *One* ‘talkbacks’). However, one very important piece of data must be factored in to all of the above and that is the fact very few Arab readers do in fact frequent these sport websites. According to the Israeli Online Rating Committee’s statistics, compiled by *Gemius Israel*,⁴⁸ Arab readers make up a mere five percent of these online outlets’ total readership. Therefore, only in those instances where all of the above variables were in absolute, perfect sync, did the ‘talkback’ make it into the study’s sample.

‘Someone in the know’ – TalkBack reader-responses in Israel

The posting of reader comments (or ‘talkbacks’, as they are commonly known in Israel) to online articles is by no means an exclusively-Israeli phenomenon. However, whilst some Western countries have since disabled the ‘reader-comments’ option on many websites owing to the comments’ predominantly abusive nature, in Israel on the other hand since the early ‘00s, the number of websites allowing and encouraging ‘talkbacks’ has only been steadily growing and with it, as has readers’ inclination to post. Consequently, ‘talkbacks’ nowadays make up a major facet of Israeli public discourse. One need not look further than *tbk.co.il*; a website whose sole purpose is to bring readers the most ‘talkbacked’ Israeli articles of the day.

One must point out that having the option to post online comments to various texts is far more than a mere technological show of strength and is in fact a cultural product, articulating an assortment of social and national customs alike.⁴⁹ ‘Talkbacks’ within an Israeli context have already been the subject of several scholarly studies⁵⁰ which have attempted to map out the ‘talkback’s’ ‘DNA’ amongst other things. Those studies have argued that reader comments are predominantly of an instantaneous, spontaneous and interactive nature; all elements that are also key ingredients of ‘Israelism’ as a whole; an identity synonymous with political, religious and ethnic unrest. Owing to these studies, some will profile Israeli ‘talkback’ posters as being direct, confident and conceited; prone to engaging in loud and aggressive discourse, highlighting patterns of unyieldingness, promoting hot-headedness and violence, and vehemently rejecting any reconciliatory points of view. On the other hand, it has also been argued that the ‘talkback’ has quickly become a

cultural catalyst; championing the flow of ideas and sentiments between the country's centre and peripheries and allowing large portions of the population to voice their opinion in the public arena,⁵¹

Friedman⁵² for instance, who has studied readers' comments to articles covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict argues that the majority of commenters resort to an altogether rational rhetoric which is not at all harnessed towards promoting solutions for various socio-political issues. He adds that reader-comments at the same time are also made up of irrational elements which promote hatred and the delegitimizing of the 'other.' Furthermore, this platform, he argues, only emboldens one to express ideas, opinions and beliefs that would doubtfully ever be allowed vocalizing within the Habermassian public sphere. In fact, it has not once been suggested in Israel that the so-called 'Freedom of Speech' attributed to 'talkbacks' has long since morphed into the 'Freedom of Oppression' and in some instances, hate and bullying even, with various discussions having since ensued over what action one might take towards introducing some monitoring elements that would define the discourse's boundaries, placing restrictions and filters where necessary.

The keyboard is mightier than the sword – findings and discussion

On 26 March 2005, nearing the end of the Israeli national football team's match against Ireland, Abbas Suan scored a dramatic goal, saving the Israeli team from a certain defeat. Four days later, Walid Badir scored a tying goal at the same stadium where Israel was up against the French national team. Those goals scored by Suan and Badir, both footballers of Arab-Israeli descent, created for a brief period a sense that all divides separating Arabs and Jews had toppled. Israel's national football team momentarily seemed as though it were a thriving epicentre of model coexistence between Arabs and Jews in the State of Israel. That illusion however was short-lived as not long afterwards, during a domestic Beitar Jerusalem, premier division match, fans were seen holding up signs which read 'Abbas Suan does not represent us' whilst chanting fundamentalist, nationalist slurs along the lines of 'death to all Arabs.' Whatever sense of euphoria had swept through the media and the nation in the wake of the national team's match had unceremoniously been obliterated.⁵³

To date, the media, as well official state establishments like the Israeli Football Association have shied away from addressing the issue of Arab footballers' status as state representatives playing for the national team, not to mention the treatment they are subject to at the hands of Israeli-Jewish fans. With very few exceptions in recent years, it appears that for the most part, various parties choose to simply turn a blind eye to these persistent issues and leave the status quo uncompromised and intact, seeing as how the matter at hand is complex, sensitive and potentially explosive.

Within the context of this current study, reader comments to online articles covering the Israeli national football team paint a fascinating, complex picture. As a whole, the sight of Arab footballers in Israeli national team uniform brought on an array of highly emotional reactions. On the one hand, a rejection of this image and all that it implies recurred; underscored by highly nationalist and racist overtones so deep to the point of expressing actual fear of the Arab footballers. Then, on the other hand, shows of support, camaraderie and empathy with the Arab footballers playing for the national team too, were expressed. However, those also were to some extent very much underscored by distinct nationalist overtones. Jewish-Israeli

attitudes towards Arab footballers in national team uniform as they emerged in online ‘talkbacks’ can be grouped under several predominant themes: Sharing the burden/Ingratitude; Racism/The Arab footballer as an existential threat; Professional considerations/A good Arab; Empathy; ‘My Arab’ (an Arab footballer who plays for the domestic team the reader supports).

‘You’ll never work in this town again!’ – sharing the burden/ingratitude

Reviewing the ‘talkbacks’, it emerges that football fans consider being a member of the national team a privilege and therefore only those who have proven their dedication and allegiance to the country should be entitled to represent it, thus making it a challenge for many Jewish–Israeli fans to come to terms with Arab–Israeli footballers joining the national team’s ranks. One of the most recurring arguments amongst Jewish–Israeli football fans addresses the balance between civic rights and duties. Over the years, Israel’s statutory military service has become the primary index by which a citizen’s contribution to their country is measured. Now, seeing as how Arab–Israelis unlike their Jewish peers, are not mandated by law to serve in the military, in the eyes of Jewish–Israeli football fans, a major imbalance between what Arabs give to the country versus what they receive from it is created; one which they construe as ingratitude.

You wanna represent the country? Gladly. Do your duties like every other citizen⁵⁴

I don’t recall any one of the Arab footballers having served in the military or having done national service [...] you’ve got no business playing for the national team⁵⁵

Arabs advancing at the expense of Jews without giving jack to the country while Israel gives them a platform to do that is simply disgraceful⁵⁶

Minorities have become a majority in the national team; you got more Arab players than Jews. How’s it possible that someone who hasn’t served in the military can play for the team?⁵⁷

You don’t serve in the military, you don’t play for the national team, you can’t have [Arab] folks who ain’t given nothing to the country representing the national team, they always come at the expense of our own youngsters who do their time in the army and give to their country⁵⁸

Despite Jewish–Israeli footballers being statutorily required to have served in the military, only 27% of the Israeli public is of the opinion that military service must be a prerequisite for joining the national team.⁵⁹ That being said, roughly two-thirds of Israelis do believe that non-Jewish citizens must serve in the military if they wish to be eligible to represent Israel on a national level. This current study’s findings only further cement the impression that Arab footballers must pass an extremely high threshold in order to be deemed worthy of donning the national uniform.

Another expression of Arab–Israeli footballers’ so-called ‘ingratitude’ in the eyes of Jewish football fans recurs in discussions of national symbols and particularly the national anthem and flag. Jewish fans who consider the Israeli team a national symbol have voiced their protest over the fact that Arab footballers do not identify with the team’s symbols and by extension, with the country either. Football fans have made repeated references to the flag, the colour of the uniform (blue & white, as per the flag’s colours) and the singing of the national anthem. In this context,

Arab–Israeli footballers are portrayed by fans as outsiders, taunting and undermining national symbols.

Yet another theme prevalent in Jewish-fan ‘talkbacks’ is the argument that as long as the Arab footballer, chosen to represent Israel in an official capacity, remains disinclined to identify with the country’s symbols in general and the national anthem in particular, then they have no business playing for the Israeli national team. Fans feel that if an Arab footballer wishes to be part of Israeli society then he must prove where his national loyalties lie, beginning with taking on the symbols and icons of both the team and the country, despite those being predominantly and distinctly Jewish. Football fans see the national team’s players as ambassadors representing the country and the fact that Arab players refuse to sing the national anthem or identify with any of Zionist Israel’s other symbols, effectively disenfranchises them from having any claim to the national team.

It’s the Arab [sector] they want to represent, not Israel!!! For them, the Israeli team is nothing but a platform they can leverage for their own and the Arab people’s benefit; they take no pride in playing for Israel it’s [...] they won’t even sing the national anthem so they don’t deserve to play for Israel’s Jewish national team.⁶⁰

The Israeli national team and the treasonous Arab minority; if you celebrate our country’s Independence Day and join the minute silence when the Memorial Day siren is sounded, then we’ll consider allowing you on the team!⁶¹

They won’t even sing the anthem. They don’t consider themselves Israeli and are only playing for the national team for their own personal gain; believe me the last thing they care about is doing right by Israel! Bottom line they’re not part of our people [...] it’s a right and even an honour to boo at anyone who won’t sing his own national team’s anthem.⁶²

He [Arab–Israeli footballer] doesn’t even know the anthem’s lyrics by heart or who wrote it and keeps a Palestinian flag at home.⁶³

Whoever doesn’t sing the anthem has no business being on the national team. Disgraceful!⁶⁴

‘Hide your kids’ – racism/the Arab footballer as an existential threat

Acts of racism at the hands of some members of the Jewish public in general and football fans in particular, are arguably the result of two nationalist and ethnic communities thrust into neighbouring status. Within this context, since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, a ‘political culture’ has formed in which Arab–Israelis were from day one branded ‘others.’ Football therefore, being the single-most popular sport in Israel, cannot and does not exist outside this racial context.⁶⁵

As their ‘talkbacks’ suggest, a sizeable portion of Jewish–Israeli football fans view Arab–Israeli footballers as the quintessential ‘others’; portraying their loyalties, skills and even character as different if not diametrically opposite to that of the Jewish–Israeli majority and thus arguing that offering them a spot on the national football team is both abhorrent and inappropriate. Ben Porat⁶⁶ even goes as far as to describe some Jewish–Israeli football fans as ‘outright anti-Arab’. The vehement objection of fans under this category to Arab footballers’ presence is anchored in extremist, nationalist motives. These fans do not wish to see the Arab footballer playing for their national team as they pose a threat to their own identity and the

country's too. They view him as an existential threat and therefore actively push for his removal and exclusion from those sites of national strength and empowerment.

There's only one Jewish state, how about you wait till you get called up by one of the Arab countries, what d'you want? Arab countries can ask you to join their national football teams, no worries about it. You want to pollute our national team too?⁶⁷

The day Khalaila [Arab footballer] is wearing the national team's uniform, I'm emigrating; the football league's most revolting player [...] horrible personality and vile behaviour. A national team should be made up of more than just talent and skills but character too, what those [Arab] footballers don't have.⁶⁸

Why go with MahranRadi [Arab footballer] he's a traitor!⁶⁹

Guttmann [Israel's coach] is after more intelligent footballers and that's just not the Arabs' strong suit so don't let them go playing the injured party here.⁷⁰

Sick of having Arab footballers taking over our football, let them start their own league.⁷¹

We only need Jews on the national team; you live in the Jewish state, it's because of Arabs that we're the only team not playing with the national flag on our uniform. A bloody disgrace!⁷²

Racism was not bred on Israeli football pitches but was rather introduced onto them from outside, Israeli culture and politics which in more ways than one are anchored in the historic, explosive tension between Jewish and Arab Israelis having to share a land. That being said, football pitches are generally seen as a 'permissible space'⁷³, where many fans allow themselves to showcase and publically vocalize their extremist opinions. An extension of just that, one might argue, are 'talkbacks' where nationalist slurs such as 'Death to all Arabs,' 'traitors,' and 'terrorists' to name but a few, are habitually posted by Jewish-Israeli football fans who fall under this category.

'Some of my best friends are ...' – professional considerations/a good Arab

While passionate ethno-racial objections to Arab-Israeli footballers playing for Israel's national team prevail in 'talkbacks', quite a few Jewish-Israeli fans have also made a point of highlighting Arab-Israeli footballers' professional skills. The assumption that only the very best footballers would be playing for the national team should allegedly cancel out all nationalist/racial sentiment that has come into play. That being said, one must point out that even when fans did address the Arab footballers' demonstrably excellent skills and performance on the pitch, an air of disclamation and reserve in their words remained.

Quite a few 'talkback' commenters made a point of acknowledging Arab players' skills and worthiness to play for the national team 'despite being Arab.' Initially, it would appear that many fans are in fact rejecting claims that Arab-Israeli footballers are allegedly under-represented in the Israeli national football team as the result of some racial or unprofessional bias, positing that anyone who is good and worthy will eventually be asked to join the team's ranks.

However, at the same time, the vast majority of reader-comments under this category do ultimately reveal that their Jewish-Israeli authors continue to box Arab footballers in the same nationalist, ethnic discourse they themselves insist carries no weight on their professional career as footballers with the Israeli national team.

‘The Arab footballer is a fine, highly-skilled player,’ says one reader, with other ‘talkbacks’ containing sentiments ranging from ‘The Arab player is every bit as worthy,’ to ‘Whatever considerations went into deciding against summoning Arab footballers to join the national team were strictly professional,’ ‘we’re sick of Arabs moaning about being underprivileged,’ and so forth. One might therefore infer that underneath their so-called ‘professional,’ unbiased tone, a discriminatory undercurrent between Arab and Jewish–Israeli footballers does prevail in football fans’ words. Granted, there may be highly-skilled, worthy Arab footballers, however, at the end of the day, they *are* Arabs and so they shall remain. Were a footballer of Arab–Israeli origins to be called up to join the national team’s ranks, then fans would argue that it is in fact a worthy addition as the man is a good ‘*Arab* footballer.’

An Arab player should be a heck of a lot better than his peers in order for him to get asked to join the national team.⁷⁴

Wanna see an Arab footballer playing for Israel but at the same time, would be nice if their people stopped the brutal violence towards the Jewish public, not to mention their complete lack of loyalty and full show of allegiance to the Palestinian Authority.⁷⁵

Arab footballers – football players who are Arab it turns out are a lot stronger and tougher on the pitch; food must really make a difference after all; wait and see how young their next crop of players will be.⁷⁶

Excellent and important for the coexistence – Tawatha [Arab footballer] is a brilliant fullbacker. This is the right decision and a positive step for coexistence.⁷⁷

You can ask [Arab] footballers to join the team even if he [the coach] has no plans to let them open for the team and if only to allow all Arab–Israelis to feel more comfortable identifying with the national team.⁷⁸

‘Don’t be a hater!’ – empathy

Some of the ‘talkbacks’ have shown a degree of sympathy to the Arab footballers’ plight. Numerous Jewish–Israeli football fans made explicit comments against those who had protested the inclusion of Arab–Israelis in the national team. In some instances, anti-Arab arguments were refuted rationally and logically whereas in others, fans who were empathetic towards the Arab footballers showed complete, utter contempt and disregard to all arguments made against the players. A large portion of ‘talkback’ authors under this category argued that there is no reason whatsoever as to why an Arab footballer should be subject to either military or civil service, nor should they feel compelled to identify with the team’s national Jewish symbols like the flag and the national anthem (where an emphasis is placed on the ‘Jewish spirit’ lyric.) These fans seek to substitute the hate, discrimination, exclusion and alienation that have become synonymous with Arab–Israeli relations with harmony, coexistence and empathy via sport.

Ben Porat⁷⁹ has dubbed these particular ‘talkback’ authors the ‘pro’ fans who argue their positions in terms of equality and justice. One might assume that these fans also have Israel’s best interests at heart, as they do not consider an Arab footballer’s summons to join the national team as merely an upgrade to the team’s lineup but also as a means to instilling a mutual sense of kinship and prosperity between the two sides. This is a most pivotal point as it aims to challenge all nationalist/political/cultural sentiments that have dominated all previous categories. As far as the

'pro' fans are concerned, Arab-National identity does not in any way clash with Jewish nationality, unlike previous categories where perpetual feuding on so many fronts reigns supreme. According to these reader comments, national identities ought to strive for mutual understanding, order, cooperation and harmony.

And why should they sing the national anthem? Jewish spirit? The anthem is not some scared hymn. It's just a song written from a certain point of view.⁸⁰

Who doesn't play for their own best interests? Arabs are bigger opportunists than Jews, are they? And anyway, what business have you got asking an Arab to sing about the Land of Zion or the Jewish spirit anyway? Would you burst into song about Mohammed the Prophet or chant Allahu Akbar? The sheer fact of their participation helps Israel tremendously in the eyes of the international community and if you can't see that then you're no more than a petty little racist.⁸¹

Racist pricks – piss off out of my country, have you lost your minds?! You want to select a team captain based on nationality? Then why bother summoning any non-Jewish footballers to the national team, eh? Racist fascists, the lot of you! Hitler too was trying for a pure race or have you forgotten that? Piss off out of my sight, bunch of Neanderthals! I am a proud Jew who wants the national team captain to be a leader regardless of nationality! Natkho [Arab footballer] take no notice of these morons' talkbacks!⁸²

Ultimately, while the voices heard in this category do stand out as being of an altogether different mindset, the fact remains that they are that much more seldom heard in comparison to the overwhelming rejection and resentment of Arab–Israeli footballers, so prevalent amongst the majority of online, 'talkback'-posting Jewish football fans.

'Getting personal' – my Arab

This category came into being based on various national team lineups proposed on reader- 'talkbacks' towards several, then-upcoming Israeli national team matches. Dozens of would-be lineups, suggested by 'talkback' authors during the course of this study's sampled time-period have been examined; all of which were taken from One.co.il as the site allows users to identify themselves as being fans of one team or another. Reviewing the fans' many proposed lineups, several interesting trends emerged.

Firstly, in their various, proposed lineups, fans who had aligned themselves with a specific team did in fact suggest that Arabs be included too. However, the majority of Arab names brought up were of those who play for the 'talkback'-poster's favourite domestic team. Particularly interesting were the lineups proposed by Maccabee Tel Aviv fans where the name Maharan Radi, an Arab footballer with Tel Aviv was suggested time and again. Notably absent however, were the names of Arab footballers who play for other Israeli domestic teams. This pattern recurred also on national-team lineups proposed by Maccabee Haifa FC fans, where the names of Arab footballers who had played domestically for Haifa were featured prominently (Beram Kayal, Weaam Amasha and Taleb Tawatha if to name but a few), whereas names of Arab footballers playing for any other team were hardly anywhere to be found.

Moreover, fans seemed to acknowledge an actual summons of Arab footballers to the national team in their 'talkbacks' only when the players in question belonged to the same team which they support domestically. For instance, Hapoel Kiryat

Shmonah's Ahmed Abed's summons to join the national team was met with great support; however, one which came almost exclusively from Kiryat-Shmona fans alone.

All in all, the comments indicated a distinct favouring of Jewish over Arab–Israeli footballers for the national team's lineup. Moreover, the amount of proposed lineups where not a single Arab player was named far outnumbered those where at least one Arab footballer made it in. Additionally, it emerged that the majority of fans who support a domestic Israeli football team whose lineup does not include Arab footballers were disinclined to include the latter their ideal vision of the national team's lineup. Also noteworthy was the fact that in most lineups proposed by fans who had identified as Beitar Jerusalem supporters, not one Arab name was anywhere to be found.

What is perhaps best illustrated in this category is the prevalent sense of alienation and separatism⁸³ amongst Jewish–Israeli football fans towards Arab footballers. And while on the domestic front, the Arab footballer may at times be painted in a positive light, this somewhat more favourable portrayal is all but non-existent in a national context. This category has demonstrated how Jewish–Israeli fans opt to 'accommodate the Arab in their midst' who plays for their national team and who has paid his dues via association with the local identity of the Israeli, domestic team he plays for. However, when it comes to acknowledging other Arab footballers playing for teams other than their own, not only do they not recognize them, Jewish–Israeli football fans stop short of disavowing the Arab footballers' very existence.

Conclusion

The study of sport in general and sport fandom in particular serves as an ideal platform towards one's comprehension of social reality.⁸⁴ The fact that the sporting space is so very emotionally charged, thus permitting and promoting instantaneous, unfiltered discourse, offers one an opportunity to truly and authentically capture the current social zeitgeist. This study has sought to explore Jewish–Israeli football fans' attitudes towards the ever-growing presence of Arab footballers in the Israeli national team. On a far more profound level, this study to a great extent, acts as a bridge towards a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between Jewish and Arab–Israeli populations in Israel. via an analysis of fans' online talkback-responses to articles covering Arab footballers in the Israeli national team, this study has highlighted a number of practices employed by Jewish fans as a means of coming to terms with the Arab footballer's performance as a representative of the state and its nationality. In doing so, this study has aimed to contribute to the ever-growing body of work on national identities, media and sport, and, more specifically, to progress the relatively slim scholarly oeuvre on media, sport and online reader-comments.

In the course of this study, we have found that whilst some displays of empathy and support were discernible, Jewish–Israeli football fan-'talkbacks, for the most part were underscored by a persistent pattern of minimizing and underplaying Arab–Israeli footballers' contribution to the national team, opposing their very presence every step of the way. This study's findings are undoubtedly on par with the fact that a significant portion of the Jewish–Israeli public does not in fact view the country's Arab citizens as 'genuine' Israelis, with the majority of whom fully supporting their exclusion from any and all decision-making processes in the country. Having said

that, the reality that Arab footballers were for the most part, wholly embraced as fully-fledged, participating players in Israeli *domestic* football teams could in fact be the harbinger of imminent change that may go on to echo well beyond the football pitch's perimeters.

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Notes

1. Galily, 'The (Re) Shaping of the Israeli Sport Media: The Case of Talk-Back'.
2. Cohen and Neiger, 'To Talk and to Talkback: An Analysis of Talkback Rhetoric in Israeli Online Media'; Berger, 'In Praise of Delayed Reactions: Israel and the Culture of Talkbacks'; Galily, 'The (Re) Shaping of the Israeli Sport Media: The Case of Talk-Back'.
3. Farrington, Kilvington, Price and Saeed, *Race, Racism and Sports Journalism*.
4. Ludwig and Schierl, 'Sport, Media and Migration: Use of Sports Media by Turkish Migrants and its Potential for Integration', *Sport in Society*, 94–105.
5. Smith, *State and nation in the Third World: The Western state and African nationalism*, 1983.
6. Ram, *Israeli Nationalism: Social conflicts and the politics of knowledge*, 153.
7. Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*.
8. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
9. Alistair & Jackson, 'Call me loyal: Globalization, corporate nationalism and the America's Cup'; Bairner & Hwang, 'Taiwan: International sport, ethnicity and national identity in the Republic of China Representing'; Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis* (7th ed.); Rowe, *Popular Cultures: Rock Music, Sport and the Politics of Pleasure*.
10. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 143.
11. Orwell, 'The Sporting Spirit', 10–11.
12. Bairner, *Sport, nationalism and globalization: European and north American Perspectives*.
13. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
14. Althusser, *Al Ha'Idiologia* [L'Ideologie]; Hargreaves, *Freedom for Catalonia? Catalan Nationalism, Spanish Identity and the Barcelona Olympic Games*.
15. Hobsbawm, *Lemumiyut Ve'Leomim Me'AzIdanHa'Mahapecha* [Nations and Nationalism since 1780].
16. Ben Porat, *Kaduregel Ve'Leumiyoot* [Football and Nationalism]; Hariff, 'Al Migra-shHa'GaavahHa'Leumit [On the National Pride Pitch]', 2003; Poulton, 'Mediated Patriot Games: The Construction and Representation of National Identities in the British Television Production of Euro 96'; Topic & Coakley, 'Complicating the Relationship Between Sport and National Identity: The Case of Post-Socialist Slovenia'.
17. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*.
18. Polley, 'Sport and National Identity in Contemporary England'.
19. Hariff, *Ziyonut Shell Shririm: TafkidavHa'Politiyim* [Musclebound Zionism: Its Political Roles].
20. Ben Porat, *Kaduregel Ve'Leumiyoot* [Football and Nationalism], 52.
21. Gavison and Hacker, *The Jewish-Arab Rift in Israel: A Reader*.
22. Shaked, *On the Fence: Palestinians in Israel – National Radicalism*; Gavison and Hacker, *The Jewish-Arab Rift in Israel: A Reader*.

23. Samucha, *Lo ShovrimetHa'Kelim: MadadeiAravim-YehudimBeIsrael* [Not Throwing the Towel in – Arab-Jewish Indexes in Israel]; Kabha and Caspi, *The Palestinian Arab In/Outsiders – Media and Conflict in Israel*.
24. Samucha, *Lo ShovrimetHa'Kelim: MadadeiAravim-YehudimBeIsrael* [Not Throwing the Towel in – Arab-Jewish Indexes in Israel], 20–21.
25. Kabha and Caspi, *The Palestinian Arab In/Outsiders – Media and Conflict in Israel*; Shaked, *On the Fence: Palestinians in Israel – National Radicalism*.
26. Samucha, *Lo ShovrimetHa'Kelim: MadadeiAravim-YehudimBeIsrael* [Not Throwing the Towel in – Arab-Jewish Indexes in Israel], 23.
27. *Ibid.*, 24.
28. *Ibid.*, 4.
29. Sorek, *Zehuyot Bamiskhak: Kadureggel Aravi Bi'Mdinah Yehudit* [Identities at Play: Arab Football in a Jewish State]; Brandes, *MiniduyMukhlalLe'ShutafootMele'ah: Sip-uramshelArviyeh Israel BaKadureggelHa'Israeli* [From Total Ostracism to Complete Inclusion: The Story of Arab–Israelis in Israeli Football].
30. In recent years the question of whether the time has in fact come to make some revisions to the national anthem's lyrics so that all citizens feel able to identify with it, has occasionally risen, with those opposing the notion of updating the lyrics arguing that the anthem must represent the country's primary, dominant identity above all else. (See Belzen, 'The Hope – A Multidisciplinary Journey to the National Anthem', n.d.).
31. Ben Porat, *Oh, Eizo Milhama Me'Anegget! Ohadey Kadureggel Israelim* [Oh, Such a Delightful War!Israeli Football Fans].
32. Sorek, *Arab soccer in A Jewish state: The integrative enclave*.
33. Sorek, *Zehuyot Bamiskhak: Kadureggel Aravi Bi'Mdinah Yehudit* [Identities at Play: Arab Football in a Jewish State].
34. Hariff, 'Al MigrashHa'GaavahHa'Leumit [On the National Pride Pitch]'.
35. Ben Porat, 'Who are we? My Club?My People?My State? The Dilemma of the Arab Soccer Fan in Israel', 27.
36. Beitar Jerusalem is an Israeli football team whose fans are infamous for their extremist right-wing opinions and where not one Arab footballer has ever played.
37. Ben Porat, 'Who are we? My Club?My People?My State? The Dilemma of the Arab Soccer Fan in Israel', 27.
38. Ben Porat, *Oh, Eizo Milhama Me'Anegget! Ohadey Kadureggel Israelim* [Oh, Such a Delightful War!Israeli Football Fans].
39. Ben Porat, *Kaduregel Ve'Leumiyoot* [Football and Nationalism].
40. Sorek, *Zehuyot Bamiskhak: Kadureggel Aravi Bi'Mdinah Yehudit* [Identities at Play: Arab Football in a Jewish State].
41. For example, Amir Ben Porat and Tamir Sorek.
42. Bernstein and Mandelzis, 'Bnei Sakhnin through the Documentary Looking Glass: Telling the Story of Arab Football in a Jewish State'.
43. Galily, 'The (Re) Shaping of the Israeli Sport Media: The Case of Talk-Back'.
44. Sorek, *Arab soccer in A Jewish state: The integrative enclave*.
45. See <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/IL>.
46. See <http://www.the7eye.org.il/18170>.
47. Comments made by football fans who had identified as Arab were excluded from the sample.
48. See <http://gemiusisrael.co.il/>.
49. Goldschmidt, 'Mekomam shel Ha'Talkbackim' Basiakh Hatziburee BeIsrael' [The Place of 'TalkBacks' in Israeli Public Discourse]'.
50. Galily, 'The (Re) Shaping of the Israeli Sport Media: The Case of Talk-Back'.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Friedman, 'Talking Back in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Rational Dialogue or Emotional Shouting Match?'.
53. Ben Porat, *Oh, Eizo Milhama Me'Anegget! Ohadey Kadureggel Israelim* [Oh, Such a Delightful War!Israeli Football Fans].
54. On *Ynet*, 28 Feb, 2012.
55. *Ibid.*
56. On *Ynet*, 28 Feb, 2013.

57. On *Ynet*, 4 June, 2013.
58. On *One*, 7 Jan, 2014.
59. Wolek, 'Survey: 27% of the Public – Military Service Must not be a Prerequisite to Playing for Israel's National Teams', *Globes*, 2010.
60. On *Ynet*, 28 Feb, 2012.
61. *Ibid.*
62. On *Ynet*, 4 June, 2013.
63. On *One*, 7 Jan, 2014.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Ben Porat, *Oh, Eizo Milhama Me'Anegget! Ohadey Kadureggel Israelim* [Oh, Such a Delightful War!Israeli Football Fans].
66. *Ibid.*
67. On *Ynet*, 28 Feb, 2012.
68. *Ibid.*
69. On *One*, 12 Oct, 2012.
70. On *Ynet*, 6 June, 2013.
71. On *One*, 7 Jan, 2014.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Ben Porat, *Oh, Eizo Milhama Me'Anegget! Ohadey Kadureggel Israelim* [Oh, Such a Delightful War!Israeli Football Fans].
74. On *Ynet*, 28 Feb, 2012.
75. *Ibid.*
76. On *One*, 6 Feb, 2013.
77. On *One*, 3 March, 2013.
78. On *Ynet*, 11 Oct, 2013.
79. Ben Porat, *Oh, Eizo Milhama Me'Anegget! Ohadey Kadureggel Israelim* [Oh, Such a Delightful War!Israeli Football Fans].
80. On *Ynet*, 28 Feb, 2012.
81. On *Ynet*, 4 June, 2013.
82. On *One*, 7 Jan, 2014.
83. Samucha, *Lo Shovrim et Ha'Kelim: Madadei Aravim-Yehudim BeIsrael* [Not Throwing the Towel in – Arab-Jewish Indexes in Israel].
84. Sorek, *Arab soccer in A Jewish state: The integrative enclave*.

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