

Cultural Imperialism and Sport: The Americanization of Israeli Basketball

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There is much debate in the literature about the relationship between Americanization and globalization. It is not our intention here to get embroiled in that debate. Rather, we intend to use the example of Israeli basketball to suggest that, in this instance, the term Americanization is more suitable for explaining developments in that sport than the more general term 'globalization'. Israel and America enjoy a very close and interdependent relationship. This is expressed at a variety of levels: economic, military, social and cultural, as well as in close ties and identifications between Jews in Israel and those in America. Although our approach is influenced by the figurational sociology of Norbert Elias and, whilst acknowledging and accepting the particular contribution of Elias to the study of globalization and Maguire's elaboration of that position, we would argue that Israel represents a society where, despite the importance of 'the Jewish vote' in American politics, the influence of the one society, America, over the other, Israel, is predominantly one-way. The 'Americanization' of Israeli basketball, we feel, provides a particularly strong example of this one-way influence.

Like so much in Israel, sport has historically been intertwined with both religion and politics. Israel represents a unique case of an immigrant society formed on the basis of an ideological movement.¹ This has had a profound impact on the development and organization of sport and has led to the institutionalization of sport within a highly politicized framework. The Hapoel organization, involved in all sports, is associated with the Labour party and the Histadrut Federation of Labour. Beitar sports clubs are associated with the right-wing Herut faction of the Likud Party, while Elitzur, the religious sports movement, is associated with the National Religious Party.² The largest sports organization in Israel is the non-affiliated Maccabi movement. The development of Israeli basketball in its early years, and its ongoing Americanization, has to be seen as interdependent with the broader political economy of Israel and in conjunction with the close relationship between the developing sports organizations, religion and the Israeli state.

The desire of Israelis to develop successful domestic teams and to compete in the international arena has introduced constraints, as in many other societies, to employ 'outsiders', particularly in this case, Americans. Inevitably this raises the issue of the 'naturalization' of players in the international sports arena³ and related debates about the dilution of national identity that often accompany this process. This, the implications of the employment of more and more American players for the career chances of native born Israeli players and the personal satisfaction of Israeli basketball spectators and enthusiasts is what most concerns us here.

For a small country, Israel has been remarkably successful in the international arena. For example, in 1977, 1981 and 2001 Maccabi Tel Aviv won the European Club Championship, while in 1979 the Israeli national team finished runners-up to the Soviet Union in the European National Championship. However, Israeli basketball is a unique case: it is located geographically in Asia, competes in the European arena, and is dominated by imported American players. The success of Israeli basketball, and a growing interest in the American basketball league in Israel, can be mostly attributed to the influx of American players who have dominated Israeli basketball almost since its inception. Consequently, Israeli professional basketball may be used as a prism to reflect the Americanization process occurring within the society as a whole. The influx of American basketball players to Israel since the 1960s formed part of an ongoing process of interdependent relations between Israeli and America. While the growing numbers of Americans playing basketball in Israel (including Jewish-American players who came primarily for Zionist reasons) boosted the development of basketball as a professional sport, it also led to increasing concerns about the effects of this influx upon the development of indigenous talent, as well as upon the broader culture of Israeli society. Questions were asked about the 'Jewishness' of some of the American players as well-documented stories circulated about 'quickie' conversions to Judaism. These conversions, encouraged by team managers desperate to qualify their new players as new Jewish immigrants, were designed to take advantage of the 'Law of Return' which guaranteed all Jews the right to immigrate to Israel and granted immediate Israeli citizenship to them, thus allowing these American players to compete in Israel.

The Americanization of Israeli Basketball, 1978–96

The first influx of American players to the Israeli basketball league, which occurred from about 1967 to 1977, were mostly Jewish-American. These players were 'hunted' by Israeli managers across the United States and their primary reason for immigrating to Israel (at least according to their

managers) was that they were Zionists. During the second phase, which started after Maccabi Tel Aviv won the European Cup in 1977, the characteristics of the players, as well as their reasons for coming to Israel, started to change.

Maccabi Tel Avi's success in the European arena, along with growing rivalry in the Israel domestic league, especially between the Hapoel and Maccabi teams, led to what many analysts at the time described as 'worrisome phenomena'.⁴ As the number of American-born players entering Israel grew, voices were heard not only questioning their presence but, more pertinently, the legality of the process allowing their entry to Israeli teams. Rumours about the Jewishness of some of the players, and abrupt conversions to Judaism performed in small communities in the United States, led to what Rosenblum,⁵ among others, called 'the conspiracy of silence in Israel'.⁶ Rosenblum recognized that many first wave American immigrants were 'real Jews', motivated by a belief in Zionism, but believed that later immigrants were mercenaries, motivated mainly by money and that, after completing their basketball 'work', they returned to America.⁷ Whatever the reason, the growing numbers of Americans playing basketball in Israel had the effect of increasing the pool of full-time professional players.

Moreover, the increasing salaries paid to American players started to cause concern for basketball managers. While the financial managers were mostly concerned about finding sources to pay the foreign players, the professional staff (coaches and trainers) faced a situation where Americans were being paid five to six times more than local players. Gershon Dekel, coach of Hapoel Tel-Aviv at the beginning of the 1980s, explained how these growing disparities sometimes led to uncomfortable situations, going far beyond financial considerations:

You cannot really treat all players alike in this kind of team. ... It is not just that they are better players with different standards. ... In a way, they are not expendable, as most players are ... If a local player behaved inappropriately, I would have punished him without blinking. However, if an American player acted the same way I was in serious trouble. Even if I wanted to act according to my standards, I knew that the team was very much dependent on the player and therefore I had to think twice ... It is definitely not healthy for the team ... You can almost talk of two classes of players on your team, after all, they got paid much more than all the local players.⁸

But it was not only the local Israeli players who were treated differently from the Americans; coaches were also constrained as it could be more cost effective to fire the coach than the player.⁹

Thus, money was a big issue in the new era of professional basketball, and not just so far as the Americans were concerned. The relatively small amounts paid to local players before the arrival of the Americans were no longer considered enough. Israeli players started to demand salaries that would increase their status to that of the Americans, and there developed widespread bitterness among top Israeli players who felt discriminated against financially.

Networks of Interdependency

The problems raised by the employment of American players were more complicated than merely discrepancies in salaries. Another complicating factor was the bureaucratic conflict between teams competing in both Europe and the Israeli league and the Israeli Basketball Association (IBA). While the Federation Internationale Basketball Association (FIBA) allowed one foreign player to play on each team participating in one of the European Cup competitions, the IBA did not allow any foreigners at all. Although the IBA is a member of FIBA, each of FIBA's 202 members could decide on certain local issues as they saw fit and the inclusion of foreign players was such an issue. Since half the Israeli league's 12 teams were participating in three different European Cup competitions (Champion's Cup, Cup-holders Cup and Korac Cup), all had signed American players to help them compete in this arena. However, since these players could not participate in the Israeli league, team managers contended that there was no economic justification for employing American players who could only play in Europe, especially if the team lost in the early rounds. Under intensifying pressure from the teams, the IBA's professional committee had to decide whether American players would be allowed to play in the Israeli league as well as in Europe. Such a decision was not at all simple. It had to take account of the vested interests of several power groups and the struggles between them. The groups involved were the sport centres: Hapoel and Maccabi; the teams' chairmen; the Israeli players; the American players; the Israeli national team staff; sections of the Israeli public; the media and FIBA.

According to Shlomo Luzki,¹⁰ a member of the IBA professional committee at the time and the current manager of the Israeli national team, there were conflicts of interest even within the groups involved. For example, within both the Hapoel and Maccabi centres, not everyone saw eye-to-eye. While the formal decision in both centres was to support the inclusion of one foreign player, some of the less prominent teams that did not participate in any European Cup felt that the inclusion of Americans would devastate their team. The teams were committed by the centres'¹¹

decisions and had to act in accordance with them because of (*inter alia*) the funding system that channelled money to the centres first and then to individual teams. However, the voices of policy-makers from bigger and more established teams such as Hapoel Tel Aviv and Hapoel Ramat-Gan were much more influential than those from Hapoel Afula, for instance, and the Hapoel Centre decided to support the inclusion of Americans. In the Maccabi Centre, the same arguments were raised by the small teams that did not compete in Europe. However, the conversion to Judaism of Maccabi Tel Aviv's two top American players, Aulsey Perry and Jim Boatright, who until then had played only in Europe, gave the team an advantage in case the decision was to include another American player. At the same time, Maccabi Tel Aviv managers had to defend themselves from criticism from the media and from the general public regarding the growing percentage of foreigners in their team. Moreover, religious groups were increasingly concerned that Judaism was being sold cheap and articles and cartoons (such as one showing three rabbis climbing on top of one another to bless and convert a black American player) started to appear in local papers. The professional committee also had to take into consideration the potential damage to the status of Israeli players when American players replaced them, while at the same time considering the interests of teams competing in Europe and the reputation of Israeli basketball as a whole. Not allowing American players to play in the league would impinge upon their performance levels since they could only play a few games a season.

In order to understand decision-making at the professional committee level, one must be familiar with the composition of the IBA. The IBA is comprised of 33 members who represent the teams in the top national league. The Hapoel, Maccabi, Beitar and Elizur Centres are represented proportionally to the number of their teams in the highest division. Traditionally, both Beitar and Elizur, with only one team (out of a dozen) in the league, joined the Maccabi Centre to serve as a balancing bloc to the Hapoel Centre, which was that with the greatest representation.

Decisions reached by the professional committee reflect complicated power struggles between all the teams and individuals involved in Israeli basketball. In this instance, it took the committee some time to decide on a matter that redefined the sport's boundaries and which was an important social issue with potentially serious consequences. It was only during the following season, 1979/80, that the professional committee decreed that for the first time non-Israeli players would be allowed to take part in the Israeli league.¹² Indeed, not only would one foreign player be allowed to participate on each team playing in European competition but, more significantly, each team would be able to include on its roster one additional player in the process of becoming a naturalized Israeli. Following its decision, the IBA

declared that the status of the Israeli players 'would be maintained as the leading players in the league'. However, by deciding in favour of the inclusion of one foreign player the professional committee reached a significant turning point and Israeli basketball took an important step in an ongoing process of Americanization. The decision also favoured the interests of the teams competing in Europe since it helped them to cope better with the growing demands of the European arena.

Nevertheless, the decision reached by the IBA in 1979 was not regarded as sufficient by the teams competing in Europe. Team managers, through their representatives in the IBA, continued to demand that their foreign players be allowed to compete in the local league. As pressure mounted, it only took the IBA one season to concede to the teams' demand. Consequently, the 1980/81 season opened with four different types of player status: an Israeli player; a Jewish player immigrating to Israel and undergoing naturalization processes; a non-Jewish naturalized player and a foreigner. By 1981, every team could include one foreign and one naturalized player in addition to their Israeli squad (which could accommodate Israeli players who had completed the naturalization process and had thereby changed their status to Israeli). The immediate result of the decision was the importing of another dozen foreign players to join the American players already in Israel. However, this continuing Americanization process in basketball cannot be adequately understood without taking into account other processes involving Israel in the 1980s and 1990s. Two such processes were especially important for the development of basketball: the military threat to Israel and her deteriorating economic position.

In March 1978, after a series of clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon, Israeli forces crossed into Lebanon. After the passage of Security Council Resolution 425, calling for Israeli withdrawal and the creation of a United Nations peacekeeping force, Israel withdrew its troops. In July 1981, after further fighting between Israelis and the Palestinians in Lebanon, America helped broker a cease-fire between the parties. However, in June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon to fight the forces of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Significantly, the war in Lebanon was the fifth war Israel was involved in since its establishment in 1948. In August 1982, the PLO withdrew its forces from Lebanon. With US assistance, Israel and Lebanon reached an accord in May 1983 that set the stage for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon. The instruments of ratification were never exchanged, however, and in March 1984, under pressure from Syria, Lebanon cancelled the agreement. In June 1985, Israel withdrew most of its troops from Lebanon, leaving a small residual Israeli force and an Israeli-supported militia in southern Lebanon in a 'security zone', which Israel considered a necessary buffer

against attacks on its northern territory.¹³ The years of fighting on Israel's northern border demanded an increasing number of Israeli soldiers to protect their homeland. Due to the demands of military service, many local basketball players aged 18–21 were unable to practice at this crucial stage in their sporting careers. Furthermore, many other Israeli players were called up for reserve duty during these years in order to relieve the pressure on other units serving on Israel's northern border. Consequently, basketball managers were constrained to look elsewhere for sufficiently talented recruits and it is not surprising that, given the wealth of talent available in the United States, and the close military and affective bonds between the two societies, that America should be the first port of call.

The second process which intertwined with Americanization, and which affected Israeli basketball both directly and indirectly, was the deterioration of the Israeli economy. At the end of the 1970s, early 1980s the shares of almost all banks on the Israeli stock market collapsed, resulting in tremendous financial losses throughout the country. Local authorities also experienced grave financial difficulties. Towards the end of the tenth Knesset (Israeli parliament), in 1980, the rate of inflation reached three figures and the 'dollarization plan' was proposed. This recommended fixing the Israeli currency rate to the American dollar. The plan indicated not only how fragile the economic situation was, but also how Israeli policy makers regarded the alliance with the US. The argument of those who favoured the dollarization plan was that, since most transactions in real estate and other major commodities since the late 1970s had been made in dollars, the one thing the Israeli market needed was a stamp of approval to stop speculators in the currency markets. Opponents of the plan voiced concerns that Israel might just as well become the fifty-first state. Certainly, the dollarization plan can be seen as another element in the Americanization of Israeli society. At the same time, a wave of American commodities was beginning to inundate Israeli stores. An increasing proportion of the annual American aid to Israel was being given in the form of American products. In fact, at the beginning of the 1980s, American products sold at lower prices than similar Israeli products. The phenomenon was so worrying that the Ministry of Trade launched a massive campaign explaining the importance of buying 'blue and white' products (the colours of the Israeli flag) for both Israel's economy and industry.

The economic crisis did not fail to impact on basketball in Israel. Under what was to prove the false contention that adding more American players would attract more spectators, team managers assembled rosters based on these expectations. However, since teams had to pay American players in American dollars, most of them could not balance their budgets, in great part because the expected crowds did not materialize. Even the few teams

that did attract more spectators had to convert their income from Israeli shekels to American dollars to pay their players, and with rampant inflation there was just not enough money.

Several elements combined to precipitate the economic crisis in basketball. Many basketball fans had difficulty identifying with the strangers dominating their teams. American players came one season and left the next. Other fans could not generate interest in a league where most of the results were foregone conclusions. The league hegemony of Maccabi Tel Aviv created a situation in which all other teams were left fighting for second place. This hegemony was not just attributable to the employment of foreign and American players, but Maccabi was instrumental in pressing the IBA to relax its controls over the employment of outsiders.

The Ascendancy of Maccabi Tel Aviv

Maccabi Tel Aviv was the first club to be established in Israel and became the most successful basketball club in Israel, if not in Europe. Maccabi became Israel's first champion when the national league started in 1954. Since then it has won the championship 38 times, including a run of 24 consecutive titles (2000). It was also the first team to win the State Cup in 1956. Overall, it has won the Cup 28 times. The club's records show that it has scored a 'double' – championship and Cup in the same season – 25 times so far (2000), a record unmatched by any other club in Europe or, indeed, the world.¹⁴

Consequently, one can appreciate why many basketball enthusiasts in Israel believe that there is little genuine competition in Israeli basketball. According to Aviv Lavy,¹⁵ journalist and basketball analyst, there are many reasons for Maccabi Tel Aviv's dominance. The primary reason is financial. Maccabi Tel Aviv was the first club in Israel to become commercialized. Its executives, taking their lead from successful American models, were quick to grasp the importance of sponsorship. At a time when many teams could not afford to pay their players, Maccabi Tel Aviv signed an agreement with the premier food manufacturer in Israel – 'Elite'. The Elite deal provided Maccabi Tel Aviv with both long-term financial security and the bedrock on which its hegemony could be built. The money from the deal was used to ensure Maccabi Tel Aviv's domination of the Israeli league by providing the resources to sign top Israeli players, in addition to the Americans mentioned above. No other Israeli basketball club could match Maccabi's financial ability to attract local talent, a fact that affected and still affects the Israeli basketball league.

Hanan Keren, an ex-Maccabi Tel Aviv player and reputedly one of the most talented ever to play in Israel, admits that he transferred to Maccabi

Tel Aviv from Hapoel Ramat-Gan, mainly because Ramat Gan could not offer even half of what Maccabi Tel Aviv was willing to pay. Keren told us that:

The main reason Maccabi Tel Aviv signed me was because they thought I was a threat while playing for Ramat-Gan. They had the best players, even in my position on the basketball court, but still ... insisted that I join them.¹⁶

Keren was the first, but not the last, player Maccabi Tel Aviv signed in order to try to safeguard its hegemony over the Israeli league.

Moreover, by winning the Israel championship year after year, Maccabi Tel Aviv ensured its appearance in the European arena. According to Lavy, most of Maccabi Tel Aviv's income derived either directly or indirectly from its appearances on the European circuit. Winning the Israeli championship was the 'bread and butter', but undoubtedly playing in the European league was considered the 'crème de la crème'. Since Maccabi Tel Aviv was the only representative in the European Cup Winners tournament, and since the basketball league in Israel did not provide the competition basketball fans hoped it would, Maccabi Tel Aviv's games in Europe were 'the best show in town'. Their home games attracted 10,000 fans every other Thursday night by offering the opportunity to watch the best continental teams. In a league where spectator numbers averaged 250, Maccabi's European games were hugely significant for ticket sales. However, according to Ofer Shelach,¹⁷ a senior basketball journalist, Maccabi Tel Aviv's attendance advantage was 'peanuts' compared to their advantage from the revenues derived from Israel's only television channel. Maccabi Tel Aviv has enjoyed a guaranteed revenue from television every year since 1976 (Maccabi's first European final in Israel's television era) irrespective of its success. These television revenues created a gap that grew larger with every success Maccabi Tel Aviv achieved in Europe.

The support of Elite and Israel television lent Maccabi Tel Aviv a status enjoyed by no other team in Israel. To many, Maccabi Tel Aviv was the 'State Team'; to others, Maccabi Tel Aviv *was* the state. When American coach Rudi D'Amico joined them as head coach in 1980, people tried to explain to him how deep the bond was between Maccabi Tel Aviv and the State of Israel. However, he did not really understand the depth of this bond until he won the European Championship in 1981:

Nothing I had experienced or seen until then was even close to what I saw in Israel in 1981 ... Since that year I have seen and been part of champion teams, I have seen states standing behind their team but never have I seen such total enslavement to basketball as I saw in

Israel in 1981 ... [E]verybody was infected with Maccabi-fever. I think that Maccabi Tel Aviv players, Mizrahi, Shamluk and myself, were more popular than the prime-minister ... Our star, Micky Berkowitz, was so popular that he could easily have run for office. I have never faced such a flood of love.¹⁸

The Greening of Israeli Basketball

The Americanization of Israel basketball reached a turning point in 1984. The growing numbers of American players who came to reinforce the local teams were faced with an ongoing financial crisis that threatened the existence of the local basketball league, as it did many other businesses in Israel at the time. The 1984/85 season was one of the most difficult teams had faced since the establishment of the Israeli league. In *The Greening of Israeli Basketball*, Reva Garmise¹⁹ tried to explain the road along which Israel basketball was headed:

Israel's ... teams now have about 40 Americans on their rosters. For the first time, second-division teams are also in the grab-bag, reinforcing themselves with Americans in the hope of winning promotion to the top league. Salaries run from a basic \$15,000 to a high of at least \$50,000, with top teams reportedly spending as much as \$300,000 a year in salaries alone. Other major expenses may include international play, which means trips abroad and hosting visiting teams for the various cup games. While speculation used to centre on the exact sums paid to top stars, today another question is paramount: How long will Israel's basketball teams be able to continue paying top dollar salaries in an era of 300% inflation? The answers are already forthcoming. The Hapoel, Maccabi, Elitzur and Beitar sports centres have recently instructed their teams not to sign any more contracts in dollars, and to convert all current contracts into shekels [at an exchange rate of IS 65 per dollar, 50% lower than the current rate] ... The question remains: Where does the money come from? Basketball Association secretary-general Abraham Zaif maintains that only one team approaches self-support and that is Maccabi Tel Aviv. Team manager Shmuel Macharovsky says that Maccabi's income is based on the support of its sponsor and on gate receipts for the European cup games. ... But Maccabi Tel Aviv seems to be in a class by itself. For the remaining teams, ticket sales are negligible [prices can run as low as \$3.00 a ticket and game attendance as low as 150]. Some teams have sponsors who contribute uniforms such as the familiar bright yellow Elite shirts which flash

across TV screens during each televised Maccabi Tel Aviv game. These sponsors pay for the advertising value of the uniforms ... and other companies pay for the ads adorning the baseboards around the court, also seen on television.²⁰

The other teams in the Israeli league did not enjoy such benefits. According to Garmise, one indication of the other teams' rickety financial structures was the comedy of errors involving the Maccabi Ramat Gan basketball team and their participation in that year's Korac Cup competition. With no apparent warning, and without informing the basketball association, Maccabi Ramat Gan informed FIBA that 'for lack of funds' they were dropping out of the competition, after having won a place in the quarter-finals. The uproar that followed seemed to end happily enough as the basketball association, the Ramat Gan municipality and other organizations involved in basketball scraped together \$60,000 to assure the team's continued participation in the cup games. This, however, was not the end of the story. First, one of the contending European teams refused to readmit Ramat Gan, then the promised \$60,000 failed to materialize and then the players, who had not received their salaries for three months, threatened strike action. Ramat Gan was not alone in its financial plight. Many other teams were in equally dire straits.²¹

The gloomy financial situation of most teams at the beginning of the 1980s led the IBA to reopen the debate regarding the inclusion of American players in the Israeli league. Simultaneously, realizing that the American players in most of the teams cost unaffordable, increasing amounts of money, IBA administrators insisted on severe measures to protect the league from probable disaster. The immediate step was to 'freeze' promotion to, and relegation from, the top national league. Since most teams invested funds to avoid relegation or win promotion, IBA administrators and the professional committee members believed freezing the league table would ease pressure on the teams. This 'freeze' was meant to give the IBA and the team representatives a 'time out' while resolving the financial crisis. Another step taken by the IBA administrators was to establish a committee to ensure a 'payment codex' within the basketball league. One purpose of such a codex was to force the teams to pay their players in shekels and consequently to give more credit (as in playing time) to their native-born players. Garmise asserted that the effect of the decision to pay only in shekels – if it could be maintained – might be to signal the beginning of the end for the near total American domination of Israel's basketball scene: 'Today's economic situation may in the end do more to put native-born Israelis in the court than rules and regulations could do when money was easily at hand.'²²

However, not all team representatives in the IBA agreed to the IBA administrators' actions. According to Naftali Goshen,²³ IBA's league secretary, the representatives of Maccabi, Beitar and Elizur centres could not find common ground with the most powerful centre, Hapoel, which had the largest number of representatives in the IBA. Because of this lack of agreement among the sport centres representatives, two big blocs were created: the Hapoel bloc headed by Eithan Hefer, chairman of the professional committee, and the Maccabi-Beitar-Elizur bloc led by Shimon Mizrahi of Maccabi Tel Aviv. The two blocs did not agree on three main points:

1. The legal status and rights of the naturalized players;
2. The number of foreign players who would be allowed to play in the Israeli league and cup games; and
3. The setting down of a 'payment codex', with its regulations, if any.

In order fully to grasp the nature of the disagreement between the sport centres, one should be aware of their internal dynamics. While Maccabi Tel Aviv representatives demanded the inclusion of another foreign player to the league, other members in the Maccabi-Beitar-Elizur bloc were not convinced that this was the best move for their teams. The case of Maccabi Ramat Gan, mentioned above, was an example of a Maccabi-affiliated team that could not afford another American. However, the power of Maccabi Tel Aviv as the leading team and thus the policy leader, forced them to join the Maccabi Tel Aviv stand. The Hapoel representatives, on the other hand, argued that, at a time when teams could not afford to pay their players, it would not be wise to add another foreign player to each team and thus increase the teams' constantly inflating debts.

Unable to reach an agreement acceptable to both blocs, the Maccabi-Beitar-Elizur bloc threatened to ban its members from playing in the forthcoming season. Furthermore, according to Kaufman,²⁴ Maccabi Tel Aviv, ignoring IBA rules, signed two American players in July 1985, in order to be prepared for the imminent European competition. This irregular move led to the most severe crisis in the history of Israeli basketball. While the Hapoel bloc was determined not to allow any more foreigners into the Israeli league, Maccabi Tel Aviv was just as determined to add another. When in the summer of 1985 the two bloc representatives, Hefer and Mizrahi, failed to reach a compromise, the Maccabi-Beitar-Elizur bloc announced that they were leaving the league and considering establishing an alternative league. In late summer 1985, they moved from talks to action. Maccabi, Beitar and Elizur set up a new basketball league named after the three centres: the MBE league. According to Goshen, when the Hapoel bloc

representatives realized that the MBE league was threatening to become a reality, they proposed that they and the MBE bloc go to arbitration. In August 1985, the MBE bloc agreed to Ovadia Raziel, an advocate, arbitrating between the two sides.

Prior to the 1985/86 season, Raziel submitted his ruling on the case, which had been handed to him just three weeks earlier, to the IBA. Raziel's ruling, covering eight pages, was one of the most explicit and detailed documents on the state of Israeli basketball at that time. Raziel²⁵ was determined to put a stop to the abuse of naturalized-player status, particularly that involving bogus conversions to Judaism and false marriages, and decreed that three years had to elapse before 'naturalized' players became eligible for Israeli teams, and then only after having fulfilled their civic obligations, such as military service. He further ruled that teams would be allowed to play two foreign players in the Israeli league and Cup games. He concluded:

As to the status of the local Israeli players, who undoubtedly suffer from the arrival of both naturalized and foreign players, I hereby permit clubs to transfer from its ranks to lower leagues young local players who might have lost their position on their teams because of the inclusion of another foreign player.²⁶

Raziel's ruling demonstrates how intended actions by various groups can lead to unpredictable outcomes or to unintended consequences. Raziel meant to eliminate the naturalized-player phenomenon, especially given the pressure from the general public and religious groups, such as the National Religious Party,²⁷ which did not appreciate the 'shameful' conversions and the 'Marriages of connivance [and convenience]'²⁸ that enabled foreigners to play basketball in Israel. On the one hand, Raziel's decision prevented new foreigners from seeking naturalization but, on the other, it did not solve the problem of the many existing naturalized players. Thus, the most clearly unintended consequence of Raziel's ruling was that, at least in the short run, the pool of naturalized players became smaller and hence more expensive. Furthermore, Raziel's decision, favouring the interests of teams competing in Europe over the interests of local Israeli players, was probably an indication of the power of the MBE bloc, and especially of Maccabi Tel Aviv's power in the IBA. Allowing two foreign players meant giving Israeli teams, and especially Maccabi Tel Aviv, a better chance in their international games.

Raziel's decision also added to the deteriorating status of the Israeli basketball players. With the inclusion of a second foreign player many local players lost their place in the starting five and sometimes even on the bench. One such was Avi Shiller who played in his youth for Maccabi Tel Aviv. However, the influx of American players lowered his status in Israel

basketball. Talking about his and his colleagues' professional status as basketball players, Shiller explained that:

I was one of the leading players in Maccabi Tel Aviv's youth team. [W]e were the best team in Israel up to the age of nineteen. However, since we were all drafted into the army, and since many American players started coming to Israel at the time I should have bloomed, I could not achieve my full potential. At first I thought I would be able to get along with the Americans. After all most of them did not play at the same position that I did. However, it become crowded on the team and since I was one of the youngest players I thought it would be better for me to find another team that would appreciate my talents and let me play. I found [such] a team ... but the ... Americanization of the league reached a point where all the teams had to sign two Americans in order to survive in the first league so we became casualties ... From the team ... that represented Israel in the under 19 European championships, only three of us played on a regular basis for teams in the first league. Most of us were demoted to substitute positions and a lot of Israeli players who could have played had the Americans not come, retired from professional basketball very young. [T]he first Americans who came here were usually tall players who came to help the teams competing in Europe to perform well. At the time, I and a lot of my colleagues, believed that they would help our basketball and lead us to success, which they did, at first. However, as the great influx of Americans started ... instead of teams based on Israelis with a little help from Americans, most of the teams were based on Americans with one or two Israelis.²⁹

Ironically, while most of the local talents suffered, there were some Israeli players who benefited from the process. Although it seemed that the imported players would damage all Israeli players, some of them were to benefit in the long run. The case of Tomer Steinhower, the tallest native-Israeli player in the league, was such an instance:

I am the tallest Israeli player in the league, along with another four or five guys who are over 2 meters tall. At first, it looked like the Americans would take our place since most of them ... were playing in my position but all of a sudden, teams were trying to import 'little guys' [guards] and they needed tall players like myself. Bringing Americans to fill other positions was what created a demand for tall Israeli players. Sure, some claim that our [tall Israeli players] salaries were blown out of proportion but to me it is a .simple case of supply and demand.³⁰

TABLE 1
THE TOP TEN PLAYERS IN THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT
CATEGORIES OF THE GAME

Year	Points			Assists			Rebounds		
	A	N	I	A	N	I	A	N	I
1977*	0	3	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1982	7	1	2	1	1	8	8	2	0
1987	8	1	1	3	2	5	5	4	1
1992	7	2	1	2	3	5	5	3	2

Notes: A = Americans

N = Naturalized

I = Israeli

N/A = not available

* In 1977 the only statistics found consisted of the top-five scorers.

Steinhower's case indicates that some Israelis, such as naturalized players, took advantage of market forces and improved their position. However, the American players still dominated the Israel league.

Table 1 indicates how dominant American players became in Israeli basketball (1977–92). As we have seen, this American dominance did not occur overnight. The process of importing American players started when Americans were brought in mainly to compensate for the Israeli players' lack of height. Most American players in the first wave were tall and played mainly in position four or five ('centre' or 'forward', both positions which require the team's tallest players to play close to the basket and take 'rebounds'). However, owing to the escalating process allowing increasing numbers of American players, coaches and managers started signing Americans who played in other positions as well. The dominance of American players in the league in the late 1970s and early 1980s was mainly in the rebounds part of the game since most of the 'big men' were Americans. However, with the increasing numbers of American players who proved to be more skilful, dedicated and competitive and had a different attitude towards the game, other positions on the court were also taken by Americans. To Zvika Sherf, former coach of Maccabi Tel Aviv and Israel's national team, this phenomenon was not at all surprising. Sherf tries to explain how he saw the process unfolding:

In the middle 1980s, Israeli basketball moved forward ... because of the integration of American players in certain positions. ... [T]he American players gave Israeli basketball a boost that was shown mostly in the attitude towards the game. The American players pushed aside the old-style coaches and promoted new young coaches. The young coaches changed the perspective of the game: more hours were dedicated to practices, more work off the court, in weight rooms, etc.

The one thing you can ascribe directly to the American players, other than their contribution to our European career, is the tremendous improvement of the defense part of the game ...

Two more significant things have happened ... since the American influx. First is the attempt by some teams to challenge Maccabi Tel Aviv's hegemony and second, the Americans created a situation where there were eight or nine good teams and it made the league tougher and more attractive. The American players have definitely caused progress, as far as some elements of the game are concerned. They brought their basketball college education that stresses the importance of victory above all ... and ... were role models to the young Israeli players. Their influence was felt on the other side of the court lines too, since they forced the local coaches to get better, to learn more and become worthy of coaching some very good American players.³¹

Another effect of the American influence was the decline of 'English'³² values relating to the importance of taking part, fair play and amateurism, as some of the American players brought with them manners that did not fit Israeli notions of basketball and, as Sherf explains, 'socially did more harm than good'.

The way the game changed was an important part of the Americanization process influencing the increased competitiveness of basketball in Israel. On the threshold of the 1985/86 season, some 40 American players were signed to play in the dozen teams in the first national league. However, a few weeks before the opening game, it looked as though only 11 teams would be able to play, as Hapoel Afula became the first 'casualty' of the process of commercialization that developed in the late 1970s and gained momentum in the 1980s. The Afula managers could not afford to pay the salaries the American players demanded and decided to fold. Other managers did not surrender so quickly. While attempting to make their teams profitable enterprises, they looked upon the American and naturalized players as important elements in turning their teams into attractive 'commodities' that would draw fans to the games. In order to raise the necessary funds, managers solicited support from local mayors as well as from private entrepreneurs.

In order to understand the process of commodification of Israeli basketball fully, one needs to be aware of the state of Israel's economy at the time. By the mid-1980s, the Economic Stabilization Programme initiated by the government had led to a significant increase in economic activity. Increased certainty brought about by the programme stimulated growth in income and productivity. Between July 1985 and May 1988,

productivity increased cumulatively by ten per cent. The 1987 cuts in personal, corporate, and employer tax rates and in employer National Insurance contributions stimulated net investment during the same period. The freeze on public sector employment occasioned by the programme lessened the role of government in the economy and increased the supply of labour available to the business community. This is why successful businessmen, such as Neil Gilman and Yaacov Schlezinger, decided in the 1985/86 season to invest in Israeli basketball teams. The first, Gilman, invested in the new promotion to the upper league, Elizur Netanya, and the second, Schlezinger, in Hapoel Haifa. Both Gilman and Schlezinger regarded the foreign players as the basis of their future teams and therefore signed as many American players as they could. To their way of thinking, making their product (team) as attractive as possible was the most important factor in marketing it (selling tickets, bringing in fans and generating publicity), as for every good commodity. Their predominantly financial perspective did not take into account the image of the local Israeli basketball team or the centre to which the team belonged. Gilman of Netanya, for example, signed five American players, four of them black, in what seemed to symbolize the exact opposite of the ideals believed in by the national-religious sport centre, Elizur. This power shift from the sport centres to private holdings was a central part of the commercialization process. The Israeli sport centres that could not support their teams any more created a void into which the new entrepreneurs and business groups stepped. Although these groups and persons did not have full control, the extent to which the power balance had shifted from the centres to private hands became increasingly noticeable in the league.

The 'Chasing Maccabi' Syndrome

However, the process through which basketball became a holding of private persons did not seem to go according to plan, at least not the plan foreseen by the people and groups who had invested money in their teams. Some of them, especially Gilman and Schlezinger, apparently did not have the required patience and sound business foundations to challenge Maccabi Tel Aviv's hegemony. Aiming so high proved to be overly ambitious, especially without the experience needed to challenge the long-standing champion of the Israeli league. The two previous teams who tried to challenge Maccabi Tel Aviv, Hapoel Tel Aviv and Hapoel Ramat Gan, did not prevail and one of them, Ramat Gan, even shut down. Both Netanya and Haifa also tried to challenge Maccabi Tel Aviv and ended up bankrupt. It took Gilman from Netanya two seasons to reach second place, but that was not close enough.

At the end of the 1989 season, Gilman left the country leaving debts that had a deleterious effect on his team. The same fate was shared by Yaacov Schlezinger who survived one year longer but eventually fled the country like Gilman. The cases of Netanya, Haifa, Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan would appear to indicate that teams that tried to challenge Maccabi Tel Aviv's hegemony not only failed to do so, but also collapsed professionally and financially. To many people, the problem was mainly one of management since some of the teams came extremely close to beating Maccabi Tel Aviv. Sherf offers this explanation for the continuing success of Maccabi Tel Aviv team:

Maccabi Tel Aviv's advantage was not just professional and financial. One must give credit to the Maccabi Tel Aviv executives who succeeded year after year in securing their hegemony. While many basketball journalists claim that [their] financial advantage gave them a huge head-start, one cannot ignore the years when people with financial abilities tried to threaten Maccabi Tel Aviv and win the championships, but could not succeed. As a coach who was on the other side in Israel and in Europe [as coach of Hapoel Ramat-Gan and of a team in Greece] I have to say that there is no comparison between the management of Maccabi Tel Aviv and the management of the other teams. It is totally different league. Maccabi Tel Aviv wins the championship year after year mainly thanks to its management team.³³

According to Sherf, and others, it would seem that the management skills of the teams attempting to compete with Maccabi were less impressive than their level of play on the court. The cases of Gilman and Schlezinger indicated that money was not enough and that good management skills were essential. In an era of professional basketball, long-term planning was required to build a team with 'healthy' foundations. The teams challenging Maccabi Tel Aviv did not have the time to wait and signed on players (mostly Americans) who, like all mercenaries, were concerned mainly with money and not always with the success of the club they represented.³⁴

The collapse of some of the teams in the first national league led to another crisis in Israeli basketball. The scope of the crisis led the Labour MP, Micha Goldman, an ex-chairman of one of the teams in the first league, to raise the problems of the basketball league in parliament. On 24 January 1990, Goldman opened a debate about the deterioration of Israel's basketball situation by complaining about the effect of American imports on the career prospects of young Israelis who 'were pushed to the end of the bench and sometimes completely out of top level basketball'. Moreover,

club chairmen went into debt in order to afford American players and, because of a mixture of official inertia and poor management, their players found themselves 'running after their money in the courts. They leave the country and tell stories ... about the low ethical level in terms of payment in Israel'.³⁵

Following Goldman, MP Pinchas Goldstein (from the right-wing party Likud), added:

The crisis is serious ... Most ... teams are on the verge of collapse ... Everybody understands that the only stable team is Maccabi Tel Aviv and the rest of the teams are in a fragile situation. Since we do not have a minister in charge of sport in this country, not even a deputy-minister, the Minister of Education must do something about it. He should do something before it's too late.³⁶

Another MP, Yigal Bibi from the National Religious Party, added that he found it impossible to identify with Maccabi Tel Aviv in a recent match against the Yugoslav champions because of the presence in the Israeli team of four foreigners. Money was being spent 'unprofessionally and unreasonably' not only by club executives and the sports centres but by mayors 'who wish to build themselves up on the success of their basketball teams [but] have lost millions of the tax payers' money'. He concluded:

I would stop the import of foreign players and let our young Israeli players play. One of the reasons why people are not coming to the games is because they cannot identify with what should be their teams. Instead they see a bunch of players who play for money, with no enthusiasm at all.³⁷

However, there are many in Israel who would disagree with Bibi. The crowded Yad Eliahu stadium every Thursday – following the success of Maccabi Tel Aviv in the European arena – serves as an example of a process in which local ties and identities are being replaced by something broader, and in which basketball fans do come to identify with success. These fans are not put off by the nationality of the players who bring that success.

Following press and parliamentary criticism over the gathering momentum of the Americanization process of the Israeli league, IBA officials set up a meeting at the end of the 1991 season to discuss the financial deficits of most of the teams. According to Goshen,³⁸ one of the paradoxes confronting the IBA officials was the fact that, owing to tax regulations in Israel, it was cheaper for the teams to hire American naturalized players and to pay less tax than to sign an Israeli player who, because of Israeli tax laws, was much more expensive. However, all the association members were determined to try to eliminate the *de facto*

naturalization process of foreign players, since the Raziel decision (1985) had eliminated the phenomenon only *de jure*. The association leaders were certain that appropriate legislation permitting teams to sign only one naturalized player, in addition to the two foreigners, would stabilize the league and improve the local Israeli players' status at the same time. Yet, while trying to advance from thought to deeds, IBA leaders faced two main obstacles. The first was legal. According to the IBA's legal advisor, restricting the number of naturalized players was discriminatory and therefore not 'legal-proof'. The legal status of naturalized players was identical to other citizens in the country, and therefore they could not be discriminated against on such grounds. The second obstacle facing the IBA serves as an example of how global processes occurring many miles away affected Israeli basketball and led to unexpected consequences. The collapse of the communist regime in the former USSR and the ensuing 'perestroika' allowed thousands of Jews to immigrate to Israel. At the same time, suitable political conditions³⁹ in Africa allowed similar numbers of Ethiopian Jews to immigrate to Israel. In order to understand the process of immigration to Israel, especially from the former Soviet Union, one must be familiar with the history of the process. Between the Six Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973) the number of Soviet immigrants to Israel reached 100,000. This changed dramatically after the Yom Kippur War. In 1974, Israel for the first time encountered the phenomenon of people 'bypassing' Israel. About 21,000 Jews obtained exit visas from the former USSR to Israel, but only 17,000 came on *aliya* (immigration); the remainder waited at the Vienna transit point for entry visas to Western destinations. This trend was to become more marked in subsequent years, with the number of people 'dropping out' *en route* to Israel by the 1980s actually exceeding the number who came on *aliya*. In 1987, 90 per cent of those who left the former USSR decided not to come to Israel, arousing great controversy in Israel. Indeed, it only receded from the public eye with the increasingly severe Soviet restrictions on *aliya* from the early 1980s and there was little change in *aliya* figures under early 'perestroika' in the mid-1980s until liberalization of the economy and regime was implemented at the end of the decade.

Thus, in 1990, when it had long been presumed that the era of *aliya* from the Soviet Union was over, the picture was again transformed, in a totally unexpected manner. In spring 1990, the monthly figures for Soviet *aliya* topped the 10,000 mark and by mid-year over 50,000 *olim* (immigrants) had arrived in Israel. Over the next six months, another 135,000 *olim* arrived. The tally for one weekend alone in December that year was 5,000. Out of the 200,000 peak *aliya* figures, Soviet *olim* accounted for 185,000.⁴⁰

For more than a century of *aliya* and half a century of statehood in Israel, *aliya* has been, and continues to be, a phenomenon among the Jewish people with no parallel in the history of modern migrations. The Zionist character of the state of Israel demanded the welcoming within Israel of the many distinctive and diverse communities which were formed, flourished or foundered in the diaspora. This was why the IBA leaders could not stop some of the new *olim* arriving from the former Soviet Union from playing basketball in the Israeli league. According to the Raziel decision in 1985, 'new' naturalized players could not play basketball in Israel until the end of a three-year waiting period. Therefore IBA leaders asked advocate Raziel to change his ruling to take into account the new reality Israeli society was facing. Consequently, in 1991, Raziel recognized the changed circumstances and distinguished between the new *olim* and the basketball-seeking *olim* and, after a check by a legal committee, allowed them to play professional basketball in Israel only a year after their immigration and after completing their civic obligations such as those included in the Military Service Act that required them to be drafted into the army.

Another global event occurring at the same time, which also affected basketball, was the outbreak of the Gulf War in early 1991. When allied coalition forces moved to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait in January 1991, Iraq launched a series of missile attacks against Israel. Despite the provocation, Israel's government refrained from entering the Gulf War directly, accepting US government assistance to deflect continued Iraqi missile attacks. However, the attacks over Tel Aviv brought a halt to all IBA games. Most of the foreign players left Israel, as did some of the American naturalized players. The majority of naturalized players, however, took the opportunity to prove that they had come to Israel not just to play basketball, but to become 'real' citizens and they stayed.

Conclusion

These two examples demonstrate how global interdependencies affected the Israeli basketball league both directly and indirectly. Attitudes towards foreign players and naturalized players changed partly as a consequence. Although still controversial, American players experienced a greater degree of acceptance, especially if they were able to demonstrate a degree of loyalty and commitment to the Israeli state. However, if there was less resistance to Americans playing basketball in the Israeli leagues the increasing number of potential 'outsiders' emphasized the importance of establishing 'Who is a Jew?' The problem of defining a 'Jew' is still one of the most controversial issues in Israel today.⁴¹ The growing importance of

sport in general, and the increasing popularity of basketball in particular, led to many people, among them basketball managers, attempting to take advantage of a complex situation. The conflicts within Israel among traditional religious groupings, and the disparate origins and religious commitments of recent immigrants, helps with understanding why team managers attempted to take advantage of a volatile situation and tried in every possible way to qualify Americans as 'Jewish' in order that they might play in the Israeli basketball league as Israeli citizens.

However, the recruitment of non-Jewish, non-Israeli players – especially those of American origin – has had repercussions for Israeli sport and Israeli society probably only shared by societies such as Japan. The international migration of elite sporting labour has been recognized as dislocating for the migratory players, deskilling for both the donor country and the host, and as also responsible for increasing hostility towards foreigners within the host society. Questions of attachment to place, notions of self-identity and allegiance to a specific country are all raised by such migrations.⁴² However, in Israel, as in Japan, these problems – especially those relating to identity – are often exacerbated. Foreign players are 'invading' many sports in Japan where many segments of the population view them as 'out of place' and 'not belonging' because of the obvious ethnic differences between hosts and visitors. However, where it is possible to speak of the 'Japanization' of East Asia, for example, there is very little sense in which one can speak of an 'Israelization' of American basketball. The interchange, and the influence, has been predominantly one way, a fact which is given ironic expression in the slogan to be found on many Israeli T-shirts: 'Don't worry America, Israel is behind you!'

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NOTES

1. N.R. Paltiel and J. Paltiel, 'Partisanship and Sport: The Unique Case of Politics and Sport in Israel', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 6 (1989), 305–18.
2. Y. Galily, 'The Americanization of Israeli Basketball – A Figurational Analysis' (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Leicester University, 2000), Ch.8, pp.155–69.
3. J. Maguire, 'Sport and Globalization', in J. Coakley and E. Dunning (eds.), *Handbook of Sport Studies* (London: Sage, 2000), pp.356–69.
4. M. Rosenblum, 'The Agreed Lie in Israel', *Ma'ariv*, 12 Dec. 1978, C2.
5. Ibid.
6. In Hebrew it is called the 'agreed-upon lie'.
7. Ibid.

8. The interviews and quotations originally written in Hebrew have been translated for use in this article. Although not always verbatim, the attempt has been made to ensure that the translations accurately reflect the original intent of the Hebrew source.
9. Gershon Dekel, Basketball Coach, ex-Hapoel Tel Aviv coach and player (1999, interview).
10. M. Luzki, Manager and ex-member of the Israeli national team (1999, interview).
11. Throughout the early years of the State of Israel, sports were inextricably linked to political parties, with the exception of Maccabi. Consequently the Hapoel movement, supported by the Labour Party, flourished in comparison to the other sporting bodies. By 1970, Hapoel boasted 300 branches with 85,000 members, while Maccabi had 75 branches and 18,000 members, Elitzur had 80 branches and 10,000 members and Beitar had 74 branches and 5,000 members. See Shaul Griver, *Sport in Israel* (Israel: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999), p.3.
12. Unpublished Israeli Basketball Association committee report (1979).
13. H. Metz (ed.), 'Israel – A Country Study' (Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1988).
14. Maccabi Tel Aviv won the Israeli basketball championship throughout 1954–55, 1957–59, 1962–64, 1967–68, 1970–92 and 1994–98. They won the Israeli cup throughout 1956, 1958–59, 1961, 1963–66, 1970–73, 1975, 1977–83, 1985–87, 1989–91, 1994 and 1998.
15. Aviv Lavy, Journalist/Basketball commentator (1999, interview).
16. Hanan Keren, ex-Hapoel Ramat Gan, Mac Tel Aviv and Israel player (1999, interview).
17. (1998, interview).
18. S. Dvir, 'The Perfect Year of Rudi D'Amico', *Shem Hamisehak*, Feb. 1998, 15.
19. R. Garmize, 'The Greening of Israeli Basketball', *Israel Economist*, Feb. 1984, 32–3.
20. Ibid., 32.
21. Ibid., 33.
22. Ibid.
23. N. Goshen, League Secretary of Israel Basketball Association (1999, interview).
24. R. Kaufman, Journalist (Haa'retz)/Basketball commentator (channel 1) (1999, interview).
25. O. Raziell, Unpublished Israeli Basketball Association committee report (1985).
26. Ibid., pp.2–5.
27. The National Religious Party (NRP) is also known as Ma'afdal – an acronym for HaMiflagah HaDatit-Leumit – and was formed in 1956 with the merger of two Orthodox parties: Hapoel HaMizrahi and Mizrahi. From the founding of the state in 1948 to 1977, the NRP (or its predecessors) was the ally of the Labour Party (or its predecessors) in forming Labour-led coalition governments; in return the NRP was awarded control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.
28. Rosenblum, 'The Agreed Lie', 23.
29. A. Shiller, ex-Mac Tel Aviv player (1999, interview).
30. T. Steinhower, Mac Raa'nana and Israel national team player (1999, interview).
31. Z. Sherf.
32. According to J. Lucas (1976), quoted in S. Figler, 'Sport on the American Campus' (Centre for Research into Sport and Society, University of Leicester [1994], Module 1, Unit 1: CRSS), the English must take the credit (or blame) for grafting values and outcomes of the highest order onto play and placing compulsory participation in school competitive games among its highest priorities. See J. Lucas, 'Victorian Muscular Christianity', *Report of the 15th Session of the International Olympic Academy* (1976), 66.
33. Z. Sherf, ex-coach of Mac and Hapoel Tel Aviv, Israeli national team, PAOK and A. Saloniki (Greece) (1999, interview).
34. Ibid.
35. M. Goldman, *Words of the Knesset* (Jerusalem: Israeli Parliament, 1990), p.1825.
36. P. Goldstein, *Words of the Knesset* (Jerusalem: Israeli Parliament, 1990), p.1827.
37. Y. Bibi, *Words of the Knesset* (Jerusalem: Israeli Parliament, 1990), p.1828.
38. N. Goshen (1999, interview).
39. In exchange for war supplies provided by the Israeli government, the Ethiopians allowed Jews to leave Ethiopia for Israel.
40. In fact, the massive new influx from the former USSR resulted from a number of concurrent

factors, including: Perestroika and glasnost under the Gorbachev regime; the deterioration of the former USSR economy; ethnic and political conflicts in the outlying republics of the former USSR; and threats of anti-Semitism. Soviet Jews left the former USSR *en masse*. With the new limitations on immigration to the USA, the growing flux of Jews selected Israel as their destination. See N. Kadary, *Russian Immigration to Israel* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1996), p.10.

41. Galily, 'The Americanization of Israeli Basketball', 181–8.
42. J. Maguire and R. Pearton, 'Global Sport and the Migration Patterns of France '98 World Cup Finals Players: Some Preliminary Observations', in J. Garland, D. Malcolm and M. Rowe (eds.), *The Future of Football: Challenges for the Twenty-First Century* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), pp.175–89.