

Minorities and Soccer in the Middle East: Yelling From the Touchline

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Abstract : We draw on insights from theories of group threat and identity to explore how soccer rivalries can decode the relationship between ethnic minorities and local societies. How ethnic minorities used soccer, in the Arab countries of the Middle East, to express their racial-ethnic heritage is the main question that this paper grapples with at its most general level. The rhetoric around soccer and minorities in the Middle East show that ethnic minorities' soccer clubs have faced varying degrees of discrimination. The paper relies on an analysis of 4 ethnic minorities' soccer clubs, namely, Circassians in Jordan, Kurds in Syria, Sahrawis in Morocco, and Amazighs in Algeria, focusing on previous and current performance of these clubs. Ethnic minorities' soccer clubs were the pinnacle in the Middle East region a few decades ago. Nonetheless, these soccer clubs, currently, fighting for not only their place in their countries' local competitions but also for their existence as soccer clubs. Minorities' soccer clubs have been plagued with challenges related to the change in political and social contexts in these countries.

Keywords : minorities, rivalries, soccer, middle east

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