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SPORT AND SOFT POWER:
The Case of Sport as a Tool of Immigrant Integration in Sweden

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This research examines whether and how the idea of Sweden as a multicultural society and the image of sport as a tool of integration have been used to increase the power of attraction of Sweden in international relations. Do sportspeople with an immigrant background constitute a form of Swedish soft power? There are different initiatives in Sweden aiming to facilitate integration of newly arrived immigrants and refugees into the Swedish society, and sport, reportedly, is becoming a relevant social platform for integration as it breaks down ethnic barriers. These initiatives are also attracting international attention, which is the focus of this research. There is previous research about sport as soft power tool but not much studies concern integrative sports projects or sportspeople constituting a form of soft power. The research on sport as a form of Sweden's soft power is also limited.

Methodologically, this thesis relies on qualitative content analysis of primary data. In order to get a comprehensive knowledge about the image given about Sweden through sport integration projects and perceptions of outstanding Swedish sportspeople of immigrant background this study used the method of triangulation in data collection. The research analyzed articles published in international English-language media during the period of 2014–2018, four personal interviews conducted in January 2019 with immigrants and officials involved in a sport integration project, and the documentary film *Trevligt Folk*.

The analysis of chosen primary data showed that although there is no explicit agenda on the part of the Swedish state, the government and its departments, to employ sportspeople of immigrant background in Sweden to promote soft power in international relations, there are elements of soft power in the examined phenomenon. Sportspeople with an immigrant background and various integration projects associated with them are able to attract positive international attention and can thus be said to constitute a form of Swedish soft power. In the analyzed case, soft power is constituted through seven themes which emerged from the analysis of data: sport as a tool of soft power, sport as a tool for integration, New Swedishness, representing Sweden, transnational belonging, personal development for change, and racism and anti-racism.

Keywords: Sweden, soft power, sport, immigration, integration, content analysis

List of Abbreviations

EU – European Union

FA – Football Association

FBK – Fotbollsklubb

FIB – Federation of International Bandy

FIFA – Fédération Internationale de Football Association

IMDb – Internet Movie Database

IOC – International Olympic Committee

ISCA – International Sport and Culture Association

SF – Svensk Films

SSC – Swedish Sport Confederation

UEFA – Union of European Football Associations

UK – United Kingdom

US/ USA – United States/ United States of America

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WADA – World Anti-Doping Agency

Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Research Rationale	1
1.2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review	2
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Data Collection and Methodology	5
1.5 Thesis Structure	7
2. Theoretical Framework	9
2.1 Evolution of Sports Studies in Political Science and International Relations	9
2.2 Perceptions of Sport in Theories of International Relations	10
2.2.1 <i>Sport in the Context of Realism</i>	10
2.2.2 <i>Sport in the Context of Theory of Globalization</i>	11
2.2.3 <i>Sport in the Context of Neoliberalism</i>	12
2.3 Neoliberalism in International Relations and Concept of Soft Power	13
2.4 Sports Diplomacy as a Tool of Soft Power in International Relations	16
3. Previous Research on Sport as a Tool of Integration (in Sweden)	19
3.1 Research on Sport as a Tool of Integration	19
3.2 Research on Sport as a Tool of Integration in Sweden	21
4. Data Collection and Methodology of Analysis	24
4.1 Data Collection	24
4.2 Qualitative Content Analysis as Data Analysis Method	27
5. The Role of Swedish Sports Figures with Immigrant Roots in Promoting Values of Soft Power in International Relations	33
5.1 Sport – a Tool for Integration	34
5.1.1 <i>Integration as Creation of Mutual Understanding</i>	35
5.1.2 <i>Integration as Creation of Coherent Society</i>	36
5.2 New Swedishness	39
5.3 Personal Development for Change	40

5.4 Representing Sweden.....	43
5.5 Transnational Belonging.....	46
5.6 Racism and Anti-racism.....	49
6. Somalia Bandy Team as an Example of Sport Integration in Sweden	54
6.1 Sport – a Tool of Soft Power	55
6.2 Sport – a Tool for Integration	57
6.2.1 <i>Integration as Creation of Mutual Understanding</i>	57
6.2.2 <i>Integration as Creation of Coherent Society</i>	58
6.2.3 <i>Being a Good Immigrant</i>	59
6.3 Personal Development for Change	60
6.4 Transnational Belonging.....	62
6.5 Racism and Anti-racism.....	65
7. Discussion of Content Analysis	67
8. Conclusion.....	73
Bibliography	75
Appendix	84

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Rationale

Nowadays international migration has become one of the most relevant trends. Several European states have a friendly and propitious environment to adapt migrants in society, and Sweden is one of the European leaders in this field. According to the *US News & World Report's* list of “Best Countries for Immigrants” in 2018 Sweden was ranked the third best country after Canada and Switzerland with high rankings in education, income equality and quality of life (Best Countries for Immigrants, 2018).

The process of active migration is not a new phenomenon for Sweden. Over the last century and a half, Sweden has met several waves of population flow-out as well as its influx. “The great emigration” from Sweden refers to the end of XIX and the beginning of XX century, when almost every year over 20 000 Swedes left the country. “The great emigration” has reached the peak in 1887, when more than 50 000 people moved from Sweden primarily to the USA due to internal poverty, religious persecution and political constraints, and this number accounted for 1% percent of the Swedish population (Sweden and Migration, 2018). The situation started to change after the World War II. Sweden was lacking labor force, and the reigning Social Democratic Party promoted the idea that new coming immigrants may become an integral part of Swedish economy. Thus, during the late XX century Sweden started to provide its open-door immigrant policy and is continuing nowadays. During the second half of XX century Sweden has been taking refugees mostly from Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Eritrea, Somalia and several Latin countries such as Chile (Sweden and Migration, 2018). Nowadays refugees from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan fulfill this list (Statistics Sweden, 2017).

Over the last five years, Sweden has been facing a significant challenge concerning immigration policy. During that time, the number of immigrants seeking for residence permit and asylum has not dropped below 100 000 each year. The peak number was recorded in 2015, when over 163 000 immigrants applied for residence permit (The European Migration Network, 2017: 4). The Swedish Migration Agency approved over 115 000 applications in 2015 and over 150 000 in 2016, which represented the highest figure ever (Swedish Migration Agency, 2017). Thus, according to Eurostat survey, by 2016 there were 16.4 immigrants per 1000 inhabitants in Sweden which is the fifth highest rate among the EU member states after Luxembourg (39.2), Malta (38.1), Cyprus (20.4) and Ireland (17.9) (Eurostat, 2018).

Although the immigrants' acceptance is hard as well as their further integration into society, Sweden continues to take immigrants and provide them with propitious living

conditions. The issue of equality in a multicultural society has always been a matter of particular concern for the Social Democratic Party, and that is fixed in ongoing party program. The Social Democrats treat the Swedish policy for equality as “a policy for integration based on an open attitude to the opportunities provided by plurality and on mutual respect between immigrants and native Swedes” (Party program of the Social Democratic Party, 2001: 21). However, back in 2001, Social Democrats recognized that “Sweden is a multiethnic society but with visible inequalities that are related to people’s ethnic backgrounds” (Party program of the Social Democratic Party, 2001: 15). In modern times, this challenge of multicultural policy has only increased. The question of immigration has been put into the focus of Swedish politics in new ways also with the rise of the nationalist Sweden Democrats Party which has been strengthening its positions in the Swedish parliament, *Riksdag*, for the last three elections with 18% of votes in 2018 heavily influencing immigration politics (“Sweden Democrats”, 2018, September 25).

In order to keep the status of welfare state, Sweden provides different initiatives aiming to facilitate immigrants’ integration into society, and sport, hypothetically, seems to be one of the instruments of Sweden’s integration policy. Sport is becoming a relevant social platform for immigrants and refugees to integrate into society as it breaks down the ethnical barriers. While research has been done on the role of sport as a tool of migrant integration (Smith, Spaaij, McDonald, 2018; Hertting, Karlefors, 2013), in this research I turn attention to a less examined phenomenon: I examine how the idea of Sweden as a multicultural society and sport as a tool of integration has been used to increase Swedish soft power in international relations. No diplomat can produce attraction better than outstanding sportspeople. In this regard, Stuart Murray claims that “sportspeople act more like celebrity diplomats, using their star power to draw the world’s attention to international, global issues” (Murray, 2012: 585). Sweden has a lot of outstanding sportspeople representing the country in different kinds of sport, and some of them seem to have become Swedish agents of soft power. Sportspeople with a migrant background play a particularly effective role as producers of attraction as they transmit a message about a well-functioning, integrated society. One of the most obvious examples of this is Zlatan Ibrahimović, a famous Swedish footballer with immigrant roots, often seen to represent “New Sweden” and give a positive image of Sweden – i.e. to promote the values of soft power. This research also pays attention to such examples of successful sport integration as football club Dalkurd, Sweden’s national team in cricket, and Somalia national bandy team.

1.2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

As this research is an inquiry into Swedish soft power, it is conducted under the prism of the neoliberalism theory in International Relations in particular conceptualizations of Joseph Nye

and Robert Keohane. Neoliberalism takes into consideration the diversity and multiplicity of actors, including the institution of sport, which allows to emphasize the significance of research in this area. The neoliberal paradigm fits this research as it pays attention to cooperation and encouragement as the major elements of international relations, rather than force and coercion. This foregrounds the role of a set of private methods in relationships between actors, for instance, sports diplomacy. Neoliberalism thus seems to explain better the phenomenon of the figure of an integrated immigrant supporting the soft power pursuits of the Swedish state in the context of “complex interdependence” – the state of world politics, in which all actors, including state and non-state, are dependent on each other (Keohane, Nye, 1977: 8). The concept of soft power makes a valuable contribution to this thesis as well. Nye coined this term in the academic field and provided a further description for it (Nye, 1990: 167). Soft power is a tool of influence on the international arena, which implies voluntary attraction of attention rather than the use of forced military and economic force. Soft power possesses such three key resources as culture, political values and foreign policy of a state (Nye, 2008: 94). In this regard, I suppose that sport, notably the idea of sports as a tool for migrant integration, is one type of resource and is worth further studying in the context of soft power.

In previous research, connections between sports and politics, sports and international relations, sports and diplomacy have been explored. Such authors as Barrie Houlihan (Houlihan, 1997; Houlihan, 2008; Houlihan, Zheng, 2015), Veronica Pasyukova (Pasyukova, 2014) and Stuart Murray (Murray, 2012) have made significant contributions to studies in these fields. Houlihan argues that it is appropriate to study sport in international relations through such theoretical approaches as realism, the theory of globalization and neoliberalism (Houlihan, 2008). Houlihan also proves that different states use sport as a tool of soft power in both domestic and foreign policy (Houlihan, Zheng, 2015). Pasyukova studies sport through the theory of neoliberalism and believes that its entry into the international arena was due to a number of trends, including the rapid growth of actors in international relations and growing interdependence between them (Pasyukova, 2014). Murray turns to sports diplomacy as a developing tool of cooperation between states which is aimed to improve image of one’s state on the international arena (Murray, 2012).

Moreover, there is also research on sport as a tool of integration. Thus, Andreia Soares e Castro defines sport as a tool of public diplomacy and a tool of integration (Soares e Castro, 2013). Robyn Smith, Ramón Spaaij and Brent McDonald find that integration of immigrants, in the sport context, considers social change and adaptation of migrants in a society (Smith, Spaaij,

McDonald, 2018). Krister Hertting and Inger Karlefors believe that sport is a platform where representatives of different national cultures may meet, and competitive sport at the mass or grassroots level is used as a tool for integration of minorities into society (Hertting, Karlefors, 2013). Hertting and Karlefors (2013) also describe sport as a context for integration in Sweden within authentic research based on the analysis of pictures drawn by newly arrived immigrant children in Sweden. Herbert Hartmann describes the effectiveness of integration through the institute of sport and admits the challenges of its implementation as this opportunity is underestimated (Hartmann, 2018). There is also literature describing Swedish policy actions applying to sport as a tool for integration since 2000s. Thomas Peterson devoted studies to sport as an arena for integration (Peterson, 2004), and to discussing the high role of youth and school children, with immigrant roots in particular, involvement in sport activities (Peterson, 2008). The key ideas of Peterson are that sport may prevent social discrimination in the society due to skillful performance (Peterson, 2004) and that Swedish sport clubs and associations should attract more school children and reduce costs on trainings (Peterson, 2008).

Another piece of research that was interesting for the purposes of this work is Cecilia Stenling and Mike Sam's (2017) study of strategic representations and legitimacy of sport policy advocacy in Sweden. The study is based on data from the public hearings with representatives of six parties from the Swedish parliament. Stenling and Sam claim that Sweden is lacking a governmental agency, which could make up the whole state's sport policy, while it is conducted rather by the Swedish Sport Confederation, non-governmental organization, which they call an "extended arm" of the Swedish government (Stenling, Sam, 2017: 695). Stenling and Sam suggest that the Swedish political parties seem to underestimate the potential of sport as a tool of politics (Stenling, Sam, 2017: 701).

While literature on the connections between the image of a well-integrated sportsperson and soft power seem to be lacking, one source of inspiration for this research was Christine Sarrimo's analysis of the construction of Zlatan Ibrahimović brand in media. Sarrimo argues that a biography book *I am Zlatan Ibrahimović* has contributed a lot to strengthen his image, but notes that his brand has been registered in the EU long before the release of the book (Sarrimo, 2015). She claims that Ibrahimović shares his ghetto experience with the world and gives a rare insight about ghetto life in European suburbs, which attracts wide audience. Sarrimo also pays attention that the Swedish car manufacturer Volvo contributed to emphasize Swedishness of Ibrahimović (Sarrimo, 2015). However, she does not make connections to Swedish soft power. All in all, although it is possible to find connections between sport and the Swedish politics and between sport and Swedish soft power, previous literature on the research problem is limited.

1.3 Research Questions

The research question of this thesis is formulated as follows:

Do sportspeople with an immigrant background constitute a form of soft power for Sweden? The following sub-questions specify it:

- How outstanding Swedish sports figures with immigrant roots are used to promote a positive image of Sweden?
- How do immigrants in Sweden view the role of sport as a tool of integration?
- What image of Sweden in terms of sport integration of immigrants do international English-language sources create?

In order to answer these questions, the following research design was constructed: Firstly, defining connections between sport and politics within the theoretical framework of international relations; Secondly, proving whether or not the theory of neoliberalism fits this research – what are its benefits and drawbacks; Thirdly, discovering how sport is a relevant tool for integration policy; Fourthly, analyzing the role of teams composed of immigrants and outstanding Swedish sports figures with immigrant roots in promoting values of soft power in international relations; Fifthly, analyzing the role of Somalia bandy team, as a successful example of immigrant integration in Sweden, in promoting values of soft power in international relations within case study.

1.4 Data Collection and Methodology

Data for this research was collected using triangulation in order to obtain comprehensive and reliable research materials. Triangulation is a method designed to combine different techniques or methods to explore research questions from different angles. Triangulation allows a researcher to collect data from a set of multiple sources and then use diverse methods, investigators or theories to make the analysis. As it is argued, triangulation gives the potential to make new and alternative explanations (Arksey, Knight, 2011: 22–23).

Following the idea of data triangulation, this research is based on the analysis of primary sources which could be divided into three groups. The first group of primary data consists of media articles on immigrant sports in Sweden published in English-language international media. This set of articles helps to get acquainted with the international representation of different successful sport initiatives in football (Douglas, 2018, October 26; Tivemo, 2017, October 9), cricket (Schofield, 2016, August 22; Edwards, 2016, February 1), and bandy

(Shearlaw, 2016, January 4; Majendie, 2014, January 24). Hypothetically, international exposure of these more or less successful projects aiming to integrate immigrants into Swedish society is connected to the promotion of Swedish soft power. Several articles recognize the impact of sports and the Swedish sports figures as drivers for promotion of soft power. In this regard, media talks about the “role model” of Zlatan Ibrahimović (“Zlatan”, 2016, June 6) and points out the “Zlataner Effect” on Europe (Fallahi, 2018, May 23; Syvänen, 2015, March 12). Media also describes the case of Jimmy Durmaz, a Swedish footballer of national squad with Turkish roots, who faced a racist message during the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia but gained support from the Swedish officials (Christenson, 2018, June 24; Edwards, 2018, June 26; Rhys, 2018, July 4). The main criteria for collecting the materials amounted to their novelty and quality. Generally, the first group of primary data covers the period from 2014 to 2018.

As the second group of primary data, this research exploited semi-structured interviews conducted with two players of Somalia national bandy team and two questionnaires conducted with the Head of Integration of Borlänge and with the representative of Somalia bandy team board of management. The purpose of semi-structured interviews with the players and questionnaires with the officials was to learn more about the peculiar case of Somalia bandy team and discover whether and how the image of Somali players residing in Sweden but representing Somalia demonstrates Swedish soft power.

The third part of primary data is represented by the Swedish documentary film *Trevligt Folk*, which is translated in English as *Nice People*. The film was presented in 2015. Directed by Anders Helgeson and Karin af Klintberg, the film describes the process of creation of the Somalia bandy team which is composed of Somali immigrants living in the Swedish town Borlänge. The documentary was shot between 2013 and 2014 following the preparations of the team to the Bandy World Championship in Irkutsk, Russia. The movie is also about the process of integration of the Somalis who are involved in sport activities in Borlänge. It contains views and interviews of the players, the Borlänge officials, the Borlänge bandy managers, and opinions of local citizens. The movie is interesting for a soft power inquiry as it has been screened across Sweden and presented in different international film festivals. Moreover, it is available for watching in international video streaming services *Netflix* (Trevligt Folk, 2015) and *Vimeo* (Nice People, 2017), which makes safe to suggest that the film has become a provider of Swedish soft power as it is available for wide international audience.

Moreover, the research includes different background data — primarily, statistical sources. For instance, *Swedish Migration Agency* provides information on the number of

immigrants coming to Sweden, on number of approved residence permits as well as on their categories (Swedish Migration Agency, 2017). Online *Statistics Sweden* engine gives a deep insight on immigration figures by grounds for settlement, country of citizenship and sex (Statistics Sweden, 2017).

As for methodology of data analysis, this thesis is based on qualitative content analysis. In my research I rely on Philip Mayring's approach. According to the definition given by Mayring, qualitative content analysis is "an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification" (Mayring, 2000, para. 20). It helps to develop a systematic and theory-guided approach designed to apply a category system to text analysis. Qualitative content analysis fits this research as it is aimed to provide a context and further analysis of such primary data as media articles, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and the documentary film *Trevligt Folk* as well. Mayring defines four major points that characterize the advantages qualitative data interpretation. First, it fits the material into a model of communication by determining the text context and background. Second, analysis of the material is conducted step by step. Third, a researcher may create categories of analysis depending on research questions, which is a significant step of text interpretation. Finally, qualitative data interpretation is creating the criteria of reliability and validity of analysis, which may be verified and estimated by trained professionals only. In addition, the criteria of reliability and validity of analysis may be achieved by applying to triangulation of methods in data collection, which is used in this study (Mayring, 2000).

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into eight chapters including the introduction. The second chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework of this research, where I define connections between sport and politics within the theoretical framework of international relations and prove whether or not the theory of neoliberalism fits this research. The third chapter presents previous research on sport as a tool for integration policy, emphasizing studies on Sweden. In the fourth chapter I explain in detail which data I chose for analysis and describe the method of qualitative content analysis and coding technique.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 are analytical and present results of qualitative content analysis of chosen primary data. Chapter 5 reveals the role of outstanding Swedish sports figures with immigrant roots in promoting Swedish soft power in international relations. Chapter 6 reveals

the value of Somalia bandy team, as a successful example of immigrant integration in Sweden, in promoting Swedish soft power in international relations within case study.

In Chapter 7 I summarize all important findings of this research applying to extensive discussion. Finally, the conclusion will sum up the results of this study, elaborating on its limitations, and present the answer for the research question of the thesis.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Evolution of Sports Studies in Political Science and International Relations

In the modern world, sport has become a global phenomenon that affects different spheres of life, including world politics, business and social environment. In this regard, today it is permissible to say that sport, sports institutions, sports movements and events have become a part of the international relations system. One of the significant factors in the development of world sports is the formation of various social movements associated with it. For example, the Olympic movement that is under the command of the Supreme authority of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and “encompasses organizations, athletes and other persons who agree to be guided by the Olympic Charter” (Olympic Charter, 2015: 17). In this light, in many scientific studies on international relations the term “sport” refers to the sphere of activity of high achievements, a complex social phenomenon that has its own institutions, the potential for sustainable development and social movements, which has an opportunity to attract wide attention of the public and the world community.

Nevertheless, for a long time the scientific community considered relevant the thesis of apolitical sports. Thus, the relationship between sport and politics was denied. However, following the growth of the Olympic movement, this thesis was challenged in terms of the sports development as a potential mechanism of political ideology. According to Veronica Pasyukova, Olympic sport has become an important component of the struggle between opposing national communities. At the same time, athletes become the third force that is able to defend the prestige of their state, not speaking on the battlefield and not sitting at the negotiating table, but achieving success in the international sports arena in conditions of fair competition (Pasyukova, 2014: 33).

Towards the end of the XX century, the thesis of the relationship of sport, politics and diplomacy started to rise in science. Thus, the first analytical works on this problem appeared in the 1980s–1990s. Lincoln Allison (1986), Barrie Houlihan (1991), and Roger Levermore (2004) were among the first who addressed the issue of relationship between sports and politics, and Stuart Murray (2012) was one of the first who examined the relationship between sports and diplomacy. In general, the authors believe that the institute of sport can play a significant role in security research and conflict resolution if it is beyond the control of the institutions of international law. In one of his recent articles, Houlihan explains that plenty of states use sport as an instrument of soft power in both domestic and foreign policy (Houlihan, Zheng, 2015: 337). He believes as well that in the context of domestic politics sport contributes to the formation of statehood, nation building and cohesion of the population, social integration and social control.

External or “diplomatic” motives include the ability to express support or dissatisfaction with the actions of other States (for example, through the boycott of the Olympic games), to build a national image in the international arena, and to establish close diplomatic ties with other states (Houlihan, Zheng, 2015: 337).

At the same time, most of the authors note the lack of research in the field of sports, and Murray clarifies that this also applies to research in the field of the relationship of sports and diplomacy (Murray, 2012: 577). Allison believes that the lack of attention to sport in the scientific community may be explained by the fact that initially sport was not included in the circle of the traditional agenda, outlined by the theories of liberalism and realism (Allison, Monnington, 2005: 7). However, as the modern world community entered the era of complex interdependence, characterized by cooperation through state and non-state channels, sport studies entered the framework of several theories of international relations (Levermore, Budd, 2004: 8).

2.2 Perceptions of Sport in Theories of International Relations

In this section I turn to the basic theoretical approaches that allow analyzing sport and its impact on world politics, and then determine one of the theories, which will be most appropriate for this study. In one of his books, Houlihan put forward the idea that such theoretical approaches as realism, the theory of globalization and neoliberalism are the most appropriate to study sport in international relations (Houlihan, 2008: 29–30). Following the logic proposed by Houlihan, it is possible to consider the phenomenon of sport through these three theories in the context of this study, and after that it is necessary to choose the most relevant approach for this thesis.

2.2.1 Sport in the Context of Realism

Consider sport through the theory of realism, one may find a vivid example of relationship between sport, politics and diplomacy in studies of Raymond Aron. He tries to draw a parallel between the rules of the game on the football pitch and the rules at the negotiating table. Aron explains that both the theory of international relations and the theory of football can be abstract and discursive. For example, for ordinary spectators football consists of a clear system of rules that must be followed to achieve the result. However, on the football pitch, there are situations that deviate from the regulated abstract rules (for example, undeserved removal from the field or a goal scored from the offside), that is, players or judges sometimes deviate from the abstract rules – violate them. Therefore, the coaching staff strives to prepare the team as much as possible to achieve the result under any circumstances. To do this, each player is given a

certain function on the pitch, and from there the whole playing scheme emerges. When players start playing on the pitch, the theory of football acquires a discursive character, since the functions of players are clearly separated by lines, flanks and point positions. Each player has his own discourse of the game. Aron proposes to use this approach in international relations as well in order to analyze strategy and diplomacy as typical behavioral types of actors in international relations, to consider a set of goals and methods of achieving them, as well as to determine typical behavioral patterns of actors in the system. According to Aron, foreign policy goals are more abstract than in football, and actors in international relations can more often break existing rules when they can benefit from that. Therefore, the author identified three characteristics of football, which contribute to a better understanding of international relations. First, presence of strictly regulated rules and objectives of the game creates a functioning system. Second, there is a limited space and a set number of players (actors), regardless of the environmental conditions. Third, the actions of the players are regulated by decisions of the referee, who operates the rules of the game (Aron, 1981: 10–11). Thus, from the point of view of the theory of realism, sport is the relationship of actors, which is regulated by an established set of rules. The advantage of an actor is determined by his power, which does not go beyond the established rules – otherwise, there is an institution that will establish sanctions for violation of the rules.

2.2.2 Sport in the Context of Theory of Globalization

According to the following theory of globalization, sport has a significant impact on the development of transnational corporations, which, in turn, have an impact on the states of the periphery and semi-periphery. The theory of globalization considers international relations as an interconnected system, which is based on economic relations of exploitation. By the 1980s the world has divided “into three great regions, or geographically based and hierarchically organized tiers” – developed and powerful center, periphery and semi-periphery (Robinson, 2007: 129). The exploitation model may be proved in the fact that the capitalist countries of the center started to turn to the states of the periphery and semi-periphery in search of markets, new sources of raw materials and cheap skilled labor. Sport in this context can be one of the instruments of economic exploitation of the periphery, providing the countries of the center with the resources necessary for their successful development. The naturalization of athletes, who play for European clubs and get the opportunity to play for national teams which has become more frequent in recent decades, can serve as evidence for that. For example, the final application of the Russian national team for the 2018 FIFA World Cup included a naturalized Brazilian player Mario Fernandez (FIFA, 2018). In addition, researchers of globalization believe that sport has become one of its most widespread trends (Levermore, Budd, 2004: 9). Moreover, as sport fits the “golden

triangle” (athletes, journalists, sponsors), modern conditions of globalization give sport unlimited opportunities for the dissemination of information and the formation of norms and values in the international community (Nixon, 2008: 151).

2.2.3 Sport in the Context of Neoliberalism

The theory of neoliberalism in International Relations allows researchers to study sport in international relations from the other side – the most suitable for this thesis. From the point of neoliberal paradigm, international relations are a process of negotiations and deal with problems in the spheres of economy, culture, ecology and any other issues that go beyond military force and state security. Thus, Houlihan writes that, on the one hand, the neoliberal paradigm pays less attention to the opportunities of actors, however, on the other hand, pays more attention to the institutionalization of their interests and institutions that regulate these interests (Houlihan, Zheng, 2015: 337). Neoliberalism recognizes the diversity of actors in international relations, including non-governmental organizations and transnational corporations, which influence the political agenda. Houlihan also considers that non-governmental sports organizations such as the international Olympic Committee and international sports federations have begun to influence the political agenda (Houlihan, Zheng, 2015: 337). In addition, he claims that, according to neoliberalism, states are encouraged to achieve national interests not only within the framework of inter-state relations (Houlihan, Zheng, 2015: 337).

Pasynkova, considering sport through the theory of neoliberalism, believes that its entry into the international arena was due to a number of trends. Firstly, the growth of English sports clubs and associations in the early XX century led to the expansion of sport first in the English colonies, and then in the rest of the world. Secondly, the formation of international sports organizations ensured compliance with the established rules in various sports around the world. Thirdly, organization and conduction of international sports competitions began to attract wide attention of representatives of politics, economics and science (Pasynkova, 2014: 107–108). Thus, international sports organizations should be given the status of important actors in international relations. Pasynkova adds that the approach of neoliberalism allows researchers to consider the activities of Olympic institutions in the international arena, in particular, to consider the features of the interaction between the International Olympic Committee and such international organizations as the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations (Pasynkova, 2014: 109). In addition, IOC activities are related to international sports federations for anti-doping policies and policies aimed at suppressing violence in sports.

After three different approaches to sport through the theories of international relations have been reviewed, I suppose that the theory of neoliberalism seems to be the most relevant in the context of this study. Firstly, the theory of neoliberalism takes into account the multiplicity of actors, including the institute of sports, which allows to emphasize the relevance of research in this area. Secondly, neoliberalism admits cooperation and encouragement as its major elements, rather than force and coercion, which allows to use a set of private methods in relationships between actors, for instance, sports diplomacy. Thirdly, new instruments of cooperation involve the active participation of various actors in the decision-making process. For example, international sports organizations, such as the IOC, are able to participate in discussions of the political agenda. Fourthly, neoliberalism may better explain migrants' integration into new societies in the context of complex interdependence – the state of world politics, in which all actors, including state and non-state, are dependent on each other.

2.3 Neoliberalism in International Relations and Concept of Soft Power

The theory of neoliberalism in International Relations is represented by Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane. Nye and Keohane coined the term “complex interdependence”. They try to draw a difference between “dependence” and “interdependence”. Nye and Keohane state the following: “Dependence means a state of being determined or significantly affected by external forces. Interdependence, most simply defined, means mutual dependence. Interdependence in world politics refers to situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries” (Keohane, Nye, 1977: 8). The authors identified three main characteristics of interdependence in the context of neoliberalism. First, three types of communication determine the interaction of communities: domestic, intergovernmental and interstate. Second, there is no hierarchy in foreign policy issues; the division of issues into internal and external ones also loses its importance. Third, states have virtually ceased to use military force against each other, especially in situations where the interdependence of states is extremely high or where they are located in the same region (Keohane, Nye, 1977: 25–28).

In the context of interdependence, there is a need to create new international institutions and organizations that would help to regulate relations in various areas where disputes arise. In the field of sports, for example, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was established in 1999. It follows that the growing relationship between transnational and intergovernmental bodies blurs the boundaries between domestic and foreign policy and creates a political process that is difficult to predict if nation states dominate on the international arena (Keohane, Nye, 1989: 11). In modern days, there are more than 200 international and regional non-governmental

organizations, the purpose of which is to ensure the sustainable development of global and regional sports cooperation both between countries and between citizens within states. For example, the Federation of International Bandy (FIB), which promotes the interests and values of the sport around the world (FIB, 2018). These organizations contribute to the development of sports in the regions, the formation of international contacts between athletes and national federations that represent them.

It seems reasonable to assume that sport forms part of the system of international relations, as well as it has evolved into an independent “complex social system” (Stolyarov, Barinov, Oreshkin, 2009: 21), which includes international sports competitions, communications and associations. The institutionalization of sport in international relations has enabled various organizations to perform an integrative function, in particular because “the system of long-term bilateral and multilateral agreements has become firmly established in the practice of international sports contacts, which helps to make the process of international integration in the field of sport manageable and planned” (Stolyarov, 2015: 229).

After I determined that the theory of neoliberalism in International Relations has the most appropriate basis for this research, now it is significant to pay special attention to the concept of soft power, which is one of the key elements of the neoliberal paradigm. Nye coined the term “soft power” in the scientific field in 1990 (Nye, 1990: 167). Against the background of the international relations bipolar system destruction, Nye developed other ways of interaction between states and drew out other methods of national interests achievement that are not based on the use of traditional military force. He believes that by the end of the Cold War the structure of international relations has gradually transformed due to the fact that the risk of using military force, or hard power, has increased the role in international relations of other non-material types of force, in particular, culture, ideology and institutions in different spheres of activity. Thus, Nye writes that a state is able to achieve its national interests through cooperation with other countries that want to participate in this cooperation in different forms. In this context, it is also important to define the political agenda and structure relations in world politics so that different actors can participate in cooperation. According to Nye, “cooperative” or “soft power” is an aspect of power that arises when one state pursues a policy that makes other states want what it wants (Nye, 1990: 166), or “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” (Nye, 2004: 8). At the same time, Nye acknowledges that it is not possible to abandon completely the use of hard power. According to him, nation states should reduce its use and reconsider their attitude in favor of soft power, which in modern realities should be used at any opportunity (Nye, 1990: 167).

Thus, it seems possible to distinguish clearly between coercive hard power and voluntary soft power. When the former is used, a state may impose its rules of the game on the international scene and forcibly influence the conduct of other actors in order to achieve the desired result, and when the latter is used, a state may attract other actors to its side so that they themselves give the desired result. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Nye also considered a possible combination of the use of hard power and soft power by a state. This combination, which, on the one hand, implies the ability to adapt to the interests of other actors and manipulate them competently, and on the other – the ability to use force coercion in a smart way, he calls “smart power”. However, for this research it is crucial to consider the soft power because its presence in modern nation states and other actors is one of the important components of success on the international arena (Nye, 1990: 167).

Consequently, nation states use soft power to exchange experience and share universal values in various spheres of activity, in particular, in sports, in order to attract the attention of the public of other nation states and their population. Soft power is an instrument of influence on the international arena, which implies voluntary attraction of attention instead of the use of forced military and economic force. According to Nye, soft power possesses such three key resources as culture, political values and foreign policy of a state (Nye, 2008: 94). In relation to Nye’s assumption, I suppose that sport fits one of the proposed types of resources as a cultural component.

In this light, the promotion of a positive image of a state among the other actors in the era of information technologies has become possible through the implementation of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy is an instrument of soft power that actors implement to spread the values of a state or organization to attract the population of other states and actors. Public diplomacy attracts to values through mass broadcasting and international cultural exchange (Nye, 2008: 95). The role of public diplomacy increased after the end of the Cold War, when traditional diplomacy faced new, transnational security threats that could not be prevented by using only traditional methods (e.g. negotiations). The range of global threats has expanded to include issues such as climate change, terrorism and global financial crises. Some of the current problems could not be solved by the use of hard power, and therefore diplomatic institutions were forced to adapt to the modern environment and resort to soft power. According to Murray, as the information revolution developed in the last quarter of the XX century, the process of democratization of diplomacy was developing, as the population demanded transparency in international relations. As a result, the emergence of new diplomatic actors – non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, transnational corporations and even individuals of

influence – has transformed diplomacy into multilateral and multidimensional practice with vertical and horizontal networks of interaction. Thus, the evolution of diplomacy was designed to cope with the responsibility that a nation state and its diplomatic officials were unable to cope with (Murray, 2012: 578–579).

Sport as an institution of mass interaction of people and often representatives of different cultures has become one of the platforms for public diplomacy. Thus, Murray was among those who proposed to allocate a separate form of public diplomacy – sports diplomacy. Sports diplomacy is able to transmit and reproduce cultural values and help to improve international image of a state, which makes it another separate instrument of soft power. With implementation of sports diplomacy, a state or other actors in international relations may demonstrate both their advantages and disadvantages as well as encourage or discourage other people and actors.

2.4 Sports Diplomacy as a Tool of Soft Power in International Relations

According to Murray, sports diplomacy is “a panacea, a neglected yet powerful diplomatic tool that can reduce estrangement, conflict, and poverty and promote greater development and dialogue” which now is lauding by governments (Murray, 2012: 577). Being a part of public diplomacy, sports diplomacy involves the participation of athletes and sports organizations in events in order to create a favorable image among the foreign public and organizations that can contribute to the implementation of foreign policy objectives of a state (Murray, 2012: 581). Institutes of sports diplomacy are “global in scope and nature and, working in tandem, they can disseminate positive values such as mutual respect, comity, discipline, tolerance, and compassion amongst both established and acrimonious diplomatic relationships” (Murray, 2012: 577). In addition, sport diplomacy may serve as a low-cost but effective method of expressing a position on a global problem or in relation to a country. A famous example is the sports diplomacy of the USSR and Canada, expressed in the conduct of the hockey Super Series in the 1970s, when the competition was a confrontation between the two ideologies, the victory in which raised international prestige (Pasyukova, 2014: 115). At the same time, sport and sports diplomacy may be not only a tool for the implementation of foreign policy, but also a tool for nation building in nationalist-oriented states as well as a tool for the integration of migrants into society (Pasyukova, 2014: 91–92).

It seems that we may divide the impact of sports diplomacy into two levels. The first – official or state level – involves the use of sporting events, for example, to arrange informal political meetings, discuss the interests of the parties and describe activities within the framework of, as a rule, bilateral relations. The second – informal or public level – involves the

use of the main function of public diplomacy – influencing the foreign population. In this context, sport acts as a psychological factor in demonstrating the strength and success of a state not only in the competitions themselves, but in their preparation and conduct as well. Thus, the achievements of a state and athletes attract the sympathy of the world community.

There are several reasons the hybrid of sports and diplomacy has eventually emerged. Murray proposed seven major reasons. First, the transformation of the diplomatic environment has led to the adaptation and experimental features of diplomacy in the new environment. Second, sport and sport institutions have acquired new dimensions, strength and actors (e.g. non-governmental sports organizations). Third, modern sport calls for the fight against cruelty and racism. Fourth, due to the above-mentioned reasons, sport is becoming a global sphere of activity and it attracts the broad masses of society. Fifth, sports and diplomacy are converging on representation, as sport and diplomacy are peaceful institutions that contribute to relationships, and this means that their representatives are, as a rule, tolerant and liberal person. Sixth, as a result, the role of both a modern diplomat and an athlete is changing in the context of globalization. Finally, sports diplomacy can serve as a soft tool for establishing relations between states, a striking example of which is the “cricket diplomacy” between India and Pakistan in 2011 (Murray, 2012: 581–583).

Sports diplomacy may involve several groups of actors. First, it is necessary to allocate nation states, which at the expense of sports reach their foreign policy purposes. In addition, in modern times, international sports organizations, such as the IOC and the International Football Association (FIFA), have received the unconditional status of actors providing sports diplomacy. For example, Gianni Infantino, the head of FIFA from 2016, joined the High Level Group of Sports Diplomacy established by the EU in 2015 in particular to develop integration projects and programs in sport. International governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in the regulation of sport may be among the actors in some cases as well. Another group of actors – transnational corporations – may be involved in financing global sporting events. In addition, as actors one may allocate sports movements, private clubs and individuals, who are able to influence public opinion, which may draw an attention of a government of a state. Another group of actors is the population that participates in sports events under the auspices of the actors that arrange these events (Murray, 2012: 579–581). Thus, it seems safe to conclude that sports diplomacy actually intends to have an impact on population and spread some sports and cultural values through the institute of sports.

To sum up this chapter, it should be said that this research is conducted under the prism of the neoliberalism theory in International Relations, in particular the kind of neoliberalism based on the concepts of Nye and Keohane. Neoliberalism takes into consideration the diversity and multiplicity of actors, including the institute of sports, which allows to emphasize the significance of research in this area. What is significant for this research, neoliberalism seems to explain better the phenomenon of how the figure of an integrated immigrant hypothetically supports the soft power of Sweden in the context of “complex interdependence” – the state of world politics, in which all actors, including state and non-state, are dependent on each other (Keohane, Nye, 1977: 8). The concept of soft power makes a valuable contribution to this thesis as well. Soft power possesses such three key resources as culture, political values and foreign policy of a state (Nye, 2008: 94). In this regard, we may assume that sport, notably the idea of sports and sports diplomacy as a tool for immigrant integration, is one type of resource and is worth further studying in the context of soft power.

3. Previous Research on Sport as a Tool of Integration (in Sweden)

The present chapter discusses previous research on sport as a tool of integration. In particular, this chapter helps to understand the features of sport as a tool of integration, and how sport as a tool of integration is regarded in Sweden.

3.1 Research on Sport as a Tool of Integration

Taken that sports diplomacy is a part of public diplomacy, in a set of secondary sources it is argued that sport has a potential to facilitate integration of figures with immigrant background and refugees. For example, Andreia Soares e Castro defines four major roles of sports as a tool of public diplomacy: “sports as a tool for development; sports as a tool for soft power; sports as an instrument to promote closer dialogue and integration in multicultural societies; sports as a tool to promote peaceful relations at the international level” (Soares e Castro, 2013: 29–30). Krister Hertting and Inger Karlefors believe that sport is a platform where representatives of different national cultures may meet, and competitive sport at the mass or grassroots level is used as a tool for integration of minorities, especially children, into the majority society (Hertting, Karlefors, 2013: 35).

However, there are also disputes about the effectiveness of integration through the institution of sport. It happens that the effectiveness may be estimated only through personal communication with people who participate in the sports life of their local community or who are involved in a sports club. The history of each individual is unique and has its own original background. In this regard, Herbert Hartmann, the professor at the University of Darmstadt and Vice-president of International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA), says that integration of ethnic minorities has become one of the most important social and political challenges for modern Europe (Hartmann, 2018: 1).

In his article for the ISCA, Hartmann notes that modern science is lacking extensive researches that are able to estimate integration of migrants involved in sports, as well as to estimate the degree of sport impact on their integration. Hartmann recognizes that most running sports programs developed to help migrants yield positive results. He claims that still very few studies have cited credible information on how the proposed integration through sport justifies initial expectations of a project (Hartmann, 2018: 1). However, it should be noted that institutions which estimate sport and sports as a tool of soft power and analyze pros and cons of sport integration projects do exist. For instance, in 2015 the EU has established the High Level Group of Sports Diplomacy composed of 15 scientists, sport officials and former sports figures.

The main aim of the group is to define the role of sport for internal and external affairs of the EU and to make policy recommendations in the field of sport for the European Commission. Thus, in 2016 the High Level Group presented a report where it assumes that sport “disregards both geographical borders and social classes”, “plays a significant role as a promoter of social integration and economic development in different contexts” and “is a powerful tool to strengthen social ties and networks, and to promote the ideals of peace, inclusion, fraternity, solidarity, non-violence, tolerance and justice” (European Commission, 2016: 8). In the last chapter of the report one may find project examples of the EU development policy in sport in Europe, Asia and the rest of the world (European Commission, 2016: 42–51).

Christina Boswell offers a classification of four dimensions through which migrants may integrate into society. Among them, the author highlights, firstly, cultural dimension – knowledge of the national language, understanding of society, respect for the norms and rules of society. Secondly, social dimension which implies participation in the education system and possession a right to get social benefits. Thirdly, economic dimension – demand in the labor market and employment. Fourthly, political dimension which is formally the last stage of integration, when an individual receives the right to obtain citizenship and participate in elections (Boswell, 1999: 75). According to this classification, Hartmann suggests considering integration through sport more through the social dimension, since it is mainly about the integration of ethnic minorities, including refugees (Hartmann, 2018: 2).

Why could sport be an effective tool for the integration of minorities into society? Hartmann suggests five factors that can justify the effectiveness of this method of integration. First, joint sport activity brings people together, gives common experience and impressions. Second, sport encourages participants to follow certain rules and regulations. Third, for example, during a football game, knowledge of a language becomes less important. In some sports, participants may communicate without it, and ignorance of a language will not create an obstacle for the game process. Fourth, joint experience of victories, defeats and emotions creates a sense of unity, regardless of nationalities of actors. Fifth, respect of fair play as major sports value and international recognition create an atmosphere of mutual understanding (Hartmann, 2018: 3).

However, as Hartmann suggests, it is necessary to take into consideration that the above-mentioned characteristics of sport in the context of integration are not established automatically after launching of a project. Individuals who are trying to integrate into society should seek to achieve these characteristics themselves. The events, in turn, should be carried out methodically and under control of experienced instructors in order to prevent such “negative racialist effects”

as “hate, violence and xenophobia” (Hartmann, 2018: 3). Hartmann affirms that sport has a high potential to accelerate integration. He argues that local projects are highly valued, but “good practice demand a binding umbrella in kind of campaigns and long lasting programmes, guided by a strong civil society organization on national or international level” (Hartmann, 2018: 4). Thus, integration through sport requires better institutionalization, as well as a systematic and continuous approach to its development as otherwise it does not fulfill its potential.

Robyn Smith, Ramón Spaaij and Brent McDonald (2018) also expose integration of immigrants through sport. They assume that sport and physical activity are (re)producing and changing cultural capital in different ways. However, Smith, Spaaij and McDonald foreground that despite attracting immigrants to sport activities, very often these sporting structures “do not meet their diverse needs” (Smith, Spaaij, McDonald, 2018: 14). Nevertheless, they admit that sport activities may facilitate adaptation of migrants in a society (Smith, Spaaij, McDonald, 2018).

Integration of immigrants and refugees through sport is on the agenda of ISCA. This non-governmental umbrella organization has recently issued an *Implementation Guide for Integration of Refugees through Sport (IRTS)*, which contains chapters on challenges, barriers and solutions for IRTS. Funded by such European programs as *Nordplus Adult* and *Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnerships*, the guide provides factors on successful integration and gives indicators to evaluate inclusiveness of a project (International Sport and Culture Association, 2018). This indicates that in recent years the issue of sport integration has become a matter of particular concern at least in Europe.

3.2 Research on Sport as a Tool of Integration in Sweden

Research on sport as tool of integration in Sweden is limited. Nevertheless, as immigration is not a quite new phenomenon for Sweden, there is a set of sources which describe Swedish policy actions applying to sport as a tool for integration since 2000s. Thomas Peterson devoted studies to sport as an arena for integration (Peterson, 2004), to discussing the high role of youth and school children, with immigrant roots in particular, involvement in sport activities (Peterson, 2008). The key ideas of Peterson are that sport is part of society which may prevent social discrimination as if one may not succeed at school but be a champion on sport arena (Peterson, 2004) and that, thus, Swedish sport clubs and associations should receive much more support to attract more school children and reduce costs on doing sports (Peterson, 2008).

Hertting and Karlefors (2013) describe sport as a context for integration in Sweden within quite authentic research based on the analysis of pictures drawn by newly arrived immigrant children in Sweden. They claim that Sweden has shifted its traditional multicultural approach to integration to language and labor market integration as it was caused by political agenda when the government of Sweden moved from social democratic to right-wing (Hertting, Karlefors, 2013: 35). They also focus on sport as a matter of multicultural discourse and insist that experience of children with immigrant roots should be taken into account when developing sports new programs in Sweden (Hertting, Karlefors, 2013: 35). The authors claim that competitive sport, which is highly valued in Sweden, “is a global phenomenon and, as such, is recognized and used as a place for integrating the minority population in majority societies” (Hertting, Karlefors, 2013: 35). Assuming that Sweden is facing a challenge in integration policy with increased immigration, Hertting and Karlefors underline that the Swedish government, along with other initiatives, established projects in the field of sport aimed at integration of minorities in particular. Since 2003, the Swedish government launched two big projects – *Handslaget (Handshake)* and *Idrottslyftet (Lifting sports)* – in order to attract more kids and youth in club sports, “especially girls and children with an immigrant background” (Hertting, Karlefors, 2013: 37). Peterson reveals that the government, with the help of the Swedish Sport Confederation, has been implementing *Handslaget* in 2004–2007, having invested over 950 million euros, and since 2007 it continued the implementation of the program under new name – *Idrottslyftet* (Peterson, 2008: 83).

However, as Cecilia Stenling and Mike Sam argue, “Sweden lacks a government agency that deals exclusively with sport policy, such as Sport Canada, UK Sport, the Australian Institute of Sport or Sport New Zealand” (Stenling, Sam, 2017: 693). Stenling and Sam devoted their study to make analysis of strategic representations and legitimacy of sport policy advocacy, basing on data from the public hearings with representatives of six parties from *Riksdag*. They assume that sport policy is conducted rather by the Swedish Sport Confederation, non-governmental organization, which is an “extended arm” of the Swedish government (Stenling, Sam, 2017: 695). Although the SSC and the Swedish government, being partners, determine the Swedish sport policy as the government annually invests approximately 200 million euros in it and the SSC distributes these funds to federations or projects (Stenling, Sam, 2017: 693; Swedish Sport Confederation, 2012: 24), Stenling and Sam claim that the state’s sport policy seems to lack coordination (Stenling, Sam, 2017: 701). Stenling and Sam claim that the Swedish political parties seem to neglect sport as a tool of politics (Stenling, Sam, 2017: 701), that gives a

point to suggest that the Swedish government also may neglect sport as a tool of soft power in foreign policy.

Within the framework of this research, I suppose that the study on how outstanding sportspeople are able to attract large audience of people is limited. However, this thesis applies to the study of Christine Sarrimo who dips into studying the phenomenon of Zlatan Ibrahimović's brand and celebrity construction in media. As a starting point for analysis, the author takes a biography book *I am Zlatan Ibrahimović*. In this book the sportsman describes his route from grassroots to world class, pointing out that he was an outsider with Balkan roots growing up in Malmö's suburb Rosengård, but became a symbol of New Sweden (Sarrimo, 2015). Sarrimo tries to explain hugely growing popularization of the footballer story noting that "the performance of excitable speech acts is crucial in the mediatization and branding of mass market literature and celebrities such as Ibrahimović" (Sarrimo, 2015: 3). Sarrimo tells that the image and brand of Ibrahimović has been registered in the EU long before the release of his autobiography, but it also contributed to empowerment of his cult. She states that Ibrahimović shares his ghetto experience with the world and gives a rare insight about ghetto life in European suburbs attracting wide audience. Sarrimo also pays attention that Swedish car manufacturer Volvo contributed to emphasis of Ibrahimović's Swedishness, as he was acting in Volvo's commercial doing such national things as hunting and fishing (Sarrimo, 2015). Therefore, Volvo, along with Swedishness of its cars, promoted Swedishness of Ibrahimović as well. Sarrimo also claims that "the unique individual is always presumed to transcend social and cultural restraints to fight his way to freedom and professional success, be it in the field of sports or of culture" (Sarrimo, 2015: 13).

All in all, there is a lack of literature on the issue of sport as a tool for integration of immigrants as well as on integration through sport as a tool of Swedish soft power. Although it is possible to find connections between sport and Swedish politics in the study of Stenling and Sam (2017), and between sport and Swedish soft power in the study of Sarrimo (2015), literature on the research problem is limited. In this regard, my thesis is supposed to contribute to the knowledge of sport as a tool of integration in Sweden and sport as a tool of Swedish soft power in international relations.

4. Data Collection and Methodology of Analysis

4.1 Data Collection

In order to answer the research question I applied to triangulation of data collection which Hilary Arksey and Peter Knight describe as combination of “different techniques to explore one set of research questions” (Arksey, Knight, 2011: 22). Following the idea of data triangulation, the materials for my research are collected from various sources. Triangulation of data collection is relevant for my research as it is designed to combine a set of diverse techniques or methods to explore research questions from different angles. The core idea of triangulation is that a researcher may collect data from a wide row of diverse sources and then use different methods, investigators or theories in order to analyze them. Triangulation proposes the potential to invent new and alternative explanations (Arksey, Knight, 2011: 22–23). Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that a variety of data allows to take into account different views on observing issues in order to make more comprehensive conclusions on research questions. Applying to triangulation of data collection allows to compare views of different stakeholders, which is able to make the present research more objective.

This research is generally based on the analysis of primary data. It should be noted that the research also includes different background data — primarily, statistical sources. For instance, *Swedish Migration Agency* provides information on the number of immigrants coming to Sweden, on number of approved residence permits as well as on their categories (Swedish Migration Agency, 2017). Online *Statistics Sweden* engine gives a deep insight on immigration figures by grounds for settlement, country of citizenship and sex (Statistics Sweden, 2017). Background data helps to understand what amount of immigrants Sweden has to deal with and how many Somalis now live in Sweden, concerning the case study.

Primary data which is analyzed in this research could be divided into three groups. In the first group of primary data I include articles from international English-language press which are devoted to immigrant sports in Sweden. Several articles deal with migrant sport initiatives in Sweden in such sports as football (Douglas, 2018, October 26; Tivemo, 2017, October 9), cricket (Schofield, 2016, August 22; Edwards, 2016, February 1), and bandy (Shearlaw, 2016, January 4; Majendie, 2014, January 24). Media exposes that projects in these sports aim to integrate immigrants into Swedish society, which seem to promote Swedish soft power. Several articles recognize the impact of sports and Swedish sports figures as drivers for promotion of soft power. In this regard, media talks about role model of Zlatan Ibrahimović (Zlatan, 2016, June 6) and points out the impact of Ibrahimović in Europe (Fallahi, 2018, May 23; Syvänen, 2015, March

12). Media also describes the case of Jimmy Durmaz, a Swedish footballer of national squad with Turkish background, who challenged racial abuse during World Cup in Russia, however, media shows that he gained support from the Swedish officials and his teammates, who delivered a powerful message against racism (Christenson, 2018, June 24; Edwards, 2018, June 26; Rhys, 2018, July 4). The main criteria for collecting the materials amounted to their novelty and quality. Generally, the first group of primary data covers the period from 2014 to 2018. Most of the materials were accessed from reliable English-language sources such as *The Local*, *The Guardian*, *The Associated Press*, *Al Jazeera*, *BBC*, *The Irish Examiner* as well as sport oriented *ESPN*, *Eurosport*, and *These Football Times*.

As the second group of primary data, this research collects two semi-structured interviews conducted in English with the players of Somalia national bandy team and two questionnaires conducted in English with the officials from Borlänge town where most of Somali bandy players live and train. The purpose of semi-structured interviews with the players was to study this peculiar case and discover whether and how Somali players exploit and change the image of immigrant integration both in Sweden and in Somalia while living in Sweden and presenting Somalia on World Championships. The purpose of questionnaires with the Borlänge officials was to reveal whether this project gets support from the Swedish government on a state level as well as to recognize if this project, hypothetically, represents Swedish soft power. The purpose of analysis of personal communications with the respondents is to discover whether and how the image of Somali players demonstrates Swedish soft power.

Table 1 presents the list of respondents, their positions and method of data collection.

Table 1. List of respondents

Name of a Respondent	Position	Method of Data Collection
Anwar Hared	Somalia Bandy Player	Semi-structured interview
Mohamed Mire	Somalia Bandy Player	Semi-structured interview
Hans Grandin	Borlänge Bandy Official	Questionnaire
Jan-Olof Lundberg	Borlänge Head of Integration	Questionnaire

When I was selecting the interviewees I used the following criteria. First of all, I decided to contact with people who are somehow involved into the life of Somalia bandy team as far as the media articles are lacking answers for my research question. Interviewing several

respondents allows to fulfill my case study with authentic data obtained in accordance with my research question from which I developed the lists of questions for interviews (see Appendix 1, Appendix 2 and Appendix 3). Second, I visited the Somalia Bandy official website where I found the email of Hans Grandin, one of the Managers of Borlänge Bandy. I presented him the concept of my research and asked about the possibility to interview him, some Somali players and Jan-Olof Lundberg, the Head of Integration of Borlänge, whose name I learned after watching the documentary film *Trevligt Folk* about Somalia bandy team. Third, I conducted questionnaires with Hans Grandin and Jan-Olof Lundberg, and then I conducted two semi-structured interviews with Somali players Anwar Hared and Mohamed Mire.

Before sending questions for questionnaire or starting semi-structured interviews I asked the respondents if I am allowed to mention their names in the research and to record the conversation in case of semi-structured interviews. All of the respondents affirmed that I am allowed to mention their names and to record the interviews. The questions for questionnaire I sent via email and received the answers back the same way. One of the semi-structured interviews was conducted by FaceTime call in loudspeaker mode and was recorded by a smartphone voice recorder application. Another interview was conducted by Skype audio call and was recorded by inner Skype recorder. Modern Internet technologies facilitate communication with people living abroad. Face-to-face or phone interviews seem to give a researcher more data than questionnaires because during a speaking conversation open-ended questions provoke further discussion and new specifying questions. Thus, I was asking questions straight from the prepared list of questions, but in several cases the respondents touched upon the issues which I asked to specify before asking further questions. After I had recorded the conversations, I transcribed recordings verbatim and sent transcribed texts to the respondents as they have a right to review the transcript of their interviews (Gillham, 2005: 14).

The third part of primary data is represented by the Swedish documentary film *Trevligt Folk*, which is translated in English as *Nice People*. The film was presented in 2015. Directed by Anders Helgeson and Karin af Klintberg, the movie follows the creation of the Somalia bandy team which gathers Somali immigrants residing in the Swedish town Borlänge. The film has been shot between 2013 and 2014, starting from the early stage of team's development and ending with its performance at the Bandy World Championship in Irkutsk, Russia. The movie is also about the process of integration of the Somalis in Borlänge. The documentary includes interviews with the players, the officials of the town, and the representatives of the team management board and allocates perceptions of local citizens (Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015). Given that this movie has been presented in different film

festivals such as 19th European Union Film Festival, Hamburg Film Festival 2015 and Budapest International Documentary Festival 2016 (Nice People, 2019) and is available for watching in international video streaming services *Netflix* (Trevligt Folk, 2015) and *Vimeo* (Nice People, 2017), it seems safe to assume that the film has become a provider of Swedish soft power because it has been demonstrated to wide international audience and is available in the Internet open space.

4.2 Qualitative Content Analysis as Data Analysis Method

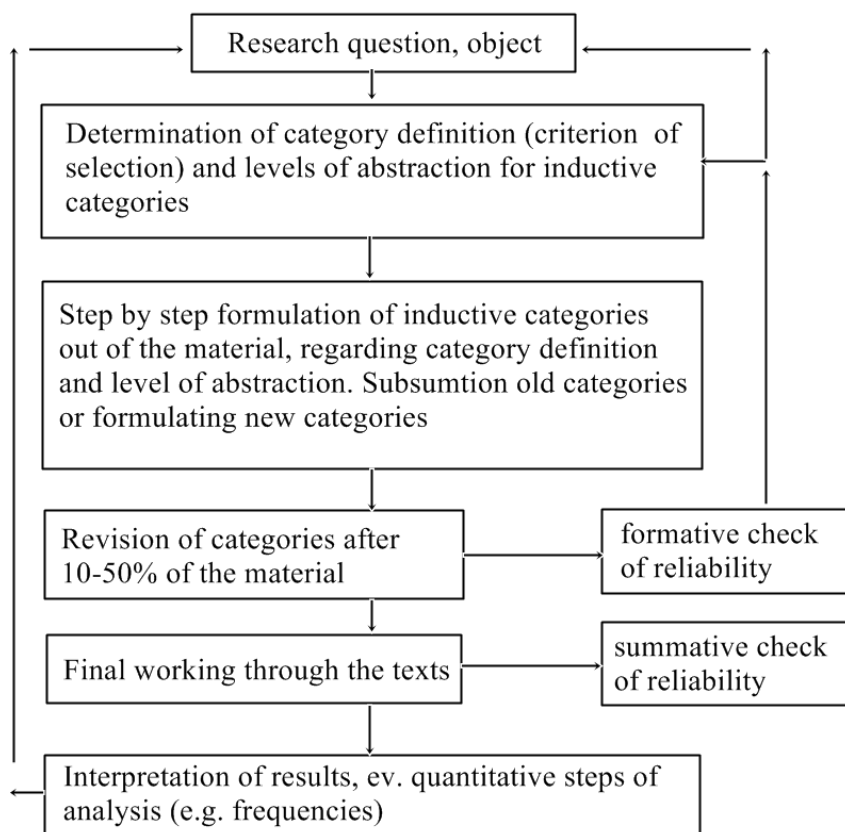
In general, this research is based on qualitative content analysis. In order to justify that this methodological strategy is relevant for this research, it is essential to give a definition of qualitative content analysis as proposed by Philip Mayring. According to Mayring, qualitative content analysis is “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification” (Mayring, 2000, para. 20). Another definition is given by Alan Bryman who states that qualitative content analysis is an approach to documents analysis, which helps to construct the sense of the text by inventing categories, taken into consideration the context in which data is analyzed (Bryman, 2004: 542). Qualitative content analysis fits my research, the data of which consists of various kinds of primary sources: media articles, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and a documentary film on the case study. Mariette Bengtsson states that content analysis is applicable for qualitative studies and “can be used on all types of written texts no matter where the material comes from” (Bengtsson, 2016: 10). Bengtsson also claims that a researcher is able to apply qualitative content analysis to visual data such as films (Bengtsson, 2016: 10). Klaus Krippendorff mentions that film scripts have been largely analyzed under qualitative content analysis within different surveys in the late XX century (Krippendorff, 2004: 43), which allows to analyze the scripts from separate episodes of the movie *Trevligt Folk* in this research. Therefore, qualitative content analysis seems to become an efficient method to answer the research question of the present research. In particular, qualitative content analysis of primary data obtained from different angles is designed to make more comprehensive conclusions towards the international image of Sweden as a provider of soft power in international relations as a driver for sport integration through chosen case study.

Developing the ideas of content analysis, Mayring marks four points that characterize the advantages of qualitative data interpretation. Firstly, it fits the material into a model of communication by determining the text context and background. Secondly, analysis of the material is conducted step by step, following some rules of analysis. Thirdly, a researcher may create categories of analysis depending on research questions, which is a significant step of text

interpretation. Finally, qualitative data interpretation is creating the criteria of reliability and validity of analysis, which may be verified and estimated by trained professionals only. In addition, the author claims that the criteria of reliability and validity of analysis may be achieved by applying to triangulation of methods in data collection (Mayring, 2000), which is applied in the present research.

Mayring proposes two approaches of qualitative content analysis: inductive category development and deductive category application (Mayring, 2000). For this research the inductive category development is more relevant as in common sense it is conducted from particulars to generals. It allows to invent categories in the process of reading and analyzing data, taken theoretical approach as the major criterion of selection. As Mayring admits, the major purpose of inductive category development is to interpret the material in accordance with chosen theoretical framework and defined research question (Mayring, 2000). Mayring also proposes a step-by-step model of conducting inductive category development, which demonstrates the stages of material interpretation and may be applied to invent the categories within qualitative content analysis. His inductive category development model has the following concept given in the Figure 1:

Figure 1. Inductive category development (Mayring, 2000)



Inside the inductive category development approach Mayring emphasizes such steps of qualitative content analysis as determination of category definition, step by step formulation of inductive categories, revision of categories, summative check of reliability of invented text and interpretation of results (Mayring, 2000). In my research, following inductive category development scheme, determination of categories may be achieved by applying to conventional approach to qualitative content analysis. Conventional approach, as Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shannon determine, “is generally used with a study design whose aim is to describe a phenomenon” and lets a researcher avoid “using preconceived categories, instead allowing the categories and names for categories to flow from the data” (Hsieh, Shannon, 2005: 1279). Hsieh and Shannon claim that conventional qualitative content analysis fits the inductive category development model as a researcher dips in word by word reading of data at first, and then determines codes which build categories further (Hsieh, Shannon, 2005: 1279).

Coding is a technique of qualitative data structuring. According to Johnny Saldaña (2013), a code in qualitative data analysis is “a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytic processes” (Saldaña, 2013: 4). Saldaña also advocates that coding is rather an act of interpretation than a precise science in general (Saldaña, 2013: 4). It means that a chosen code — a word or short phrase that generally describes a summative meaning of a piece of data — depends on ideas which come to a researcher’s mind. In other words, representatives of different branches of science may invent different codes for a certain piece of data. The same situation may occur within one branch of science if a researcher interprets a piece of data through different theoretical approaches. In this regard, Saldaña argues that in an act of coding perception and interpretation of data depends on what type of theoretical framework or “filter” is implemented in a research (Saldaña, 2013: 7). What is more, Saldaña recommends inventing 80–100 codes and reducing them further to 15–20 categories in order to give a shape for analysis (Saldaña, 2013: 24). In my research, as it is based on the neoliberalism theory in International Relations, I focus on the issues which reflect soft power of Sweden in connection with my research questions and invent codes which describe chosen pieces of information relevant for my research.

For example, I can take a small paragraph of Siavoush Fallahi’s article *The Zlatan Effect: How Ibrahimović Changed Europe for Ever*, which is included in my list of primary data. Below I will make a conventional qualitative content analysis within inductive category development using coding. The paragraph below one can look at presents a short abstract from the article. I give an example how I do coding. Basically, I underline key words or short phrases which I find

relevant for my research question and theory, and then I give them an index in order to facilitate further grouping and transformation into categories. In general, I prefer to analyze hard copies of texts as I find it easier to operate with underlining and writing foot-notes, but machine coding is also possible as it is given below.

Text: “Zlatan stands for a new Swedishness,” says Aftonbladet journalist Johanna Franden. “There were many generations of immigrants before him, but he became the symbol for people¹ with an immigrant background². He represents a big group², who are raised in Sweden, who speak other languages² than Swedish at home and who had problems identifying themselves³ with Sweden prior to Zlatan’s breakthrough⁴. Zlatan, even though he was born in Sweden, has become the immigration story⁴ in Sweden; his success⁵, personality⁵ and charisma⁵ have made him the symbol for many things¹ in Swedish society and this is the most important legacy that he leaves behind” (Fallahi, 2018, May 23).

Codes

1. New symbols
2. Immigrant background
3. Mixed identity
4. Role model of Ibrahimović
5. Criteria to advance in integration

When reading this paragraph, I have invented the following five codes: new symbols, immigrant background, mixed identity, role model of Ibrahimović, and criteria to advance in integration. I see them the most reflective for the content of this paragraph which is generally about the role of Zlatan Ibrahimović in adopting people with immigrant roots in Swedish society. At the same time, the developed codes are designed to have connections with soft power within my theoretical framework of neoliberalism in International Relations. For instance, the codes “new symbols” and “role model of Ibrahimović” reflect a significant role of such sports figure as Zlatan Ibrahimović for people with immigrant background, and that corresponds to Stuart Murray’s assumption that in sports diplomacy “sportspeople can act more like celebrity diplomats, using their star power to draw the world’s attention to international, global issues” (Murray, 2012: 585).

Coding also helps to follow the second step of Mayring’s model of inductive category development and create categories of analysis. Saldaña writes that “to codify is to arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorize” (Saldaña, 2013: 9). When a researcher applies codes to qualitative data, the process of codifying

allows data to be “segregated, grouped, regrouped and relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation” (Grbich, 2007: 21, as cited in Saldaña, 2013: 9), assumes Saldaña citing Carol Grbich. Saldaña advocates that qualitative codes, combined together by similarity and regularity, are essential elements of a research as they help to develop categories and analyze links between them (Saldaña, 2013: 8–9).

For example, we can take recently invented codes and build a category which reflects the content of the taken paragraph. Then the scheme will be the following:

Code: New symbols

Code: Immigrant background

Code: Mixed identity

Code: Role model of Ibrahimović

Code: Criteria to advance in integration

Category: New Swedishness

To be honest, the name which I took for this category has already been mentioned in the paragraph, and it was clear that the content of the paragraph is devoted to the issues which I presented as codes. When we take as a code a word or a short phrase given in an authentic text as it is, it is called “In Vivo Coding” (Saldaña, 2013: 91). However, in this case we took this word combination as the name of the category as “New Swedishness”, to my mind, encompasses all of the codes I invented. Thus, after coding I can make an assumption what is “New Swedishness”. Before I interpret results of the analysis of this paragraph, in accordance with Mayring’s model of inductive category development, it is necessary to make revision of invented category by checking reliability of material. According to Nahid Golafshani, reliability in qualitative research is aimed at “generating understanding” (Stenbacka, 2001: 551, as cited in Golafshani, 2003: 601). Golafshani argues that reliability in qualitative research is less reliable than in quantitative research as it is not based on quantitative data. Therefore, he assumes that “to ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial” (Golafshani, 2003: 601). Under criteria of “trustworthiness” which will help to check quality of data he understands such terms as credibility, neutrality, dependability, and applicability (Golafshani, 2003: 601). In my research the data, I suggest, generally fulfills these criteria, and the respondents I interview, I consider, are unbiased. In particular, the article, which paragraph has been chosen to give an example of conventional qualitative content analysis, is published in Eurosport UK media source. Eurosport UK seems to be one of the most reliable world sport media.

After checking reliability, according to the model of Mayring, a researcher may interpret and summarize results of analysis. Saldaña (2013) as well as Hsieh and Shannon (2005) recommend to write an analytic memo based on invented categories after analyzing each of piece of data, which would be the end of the first cycle of analysis, according to Saldaña (2013). Turning to my example, a short analytic memo may look as follows.

Memo: I can make an assumption that the phenomenon of “New Swedishness” is constructed in a way that connects to a big group of people with immigrant background, who can have mixed identities as they meet new culture, learn Swedish language and social norms, but at the same time keep their roots. Nevertheless, successful image of such outstanding figures (as Zlatan) from this big group may, fixed in the Eurosport article, demonstrates to the world that integration through sport in Sweden is possible, which seems to promote Swedish soft power.

According to Saldaña (2013), after analyzing pieces of data and writing analytic memos, we may do the second cycle of analysis, when we find the core categories in memos developed previously and create 5–7 major concepts (Saldaña, 2013: 24). When doing the same with all memos, we also have an opportunity to write new second-cycle memos preparing the final report which would be presented as findings of the research. Thus, invented category “New Swedishness” aligned together with other categories and developed the following way, hypothetically, will help to answer my research question as it seems to be strong. The further results of analysis will be presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

5. The Role of Swedish Sports Figures with Immigrant Roots in Promoting Values of Soft Power in International Relations

This chapter presents an analysis of how international media takes up examples of successful integration of immigrants and challenges they face in Sweden. I suggest that it is important to analyze articles from international media for this research as far as media has an ability to influence the image of Sweden on international arena, to construct a positive image about the Swedish society and demonstrate to wide international audience whether Sweden is good in integration of immigrants through sport in particular.

In order to create a preliminary understanding of how the international, English-language media portrays Swedish sportspeople with immigrant background, a qualitative content analysis of 16 articles was conducted. The articles have been published in such international media sources as *The Local*, *The Guardian*, *The Associated Press*, *The Irish Examiner*, and *BBC* as well as in such sport oriented sources as *Eurosport*, *These Football Times*, and *ESPN*. The analyzed articles deal with immigrant sports in the context of the football club Dalkurd, Sweden's national team in cricket, as well as Swedish football players of immigrant background, notably Zlatan Ibrahimović and Jimmy Durmaz. Applying to inductive category development in qualitative content analysis by Mayring (2000), I invented six categories. Each paragraph of this chapter is devoted to each of the categories.

The football club Dalkurd has developed from a grassroots team into a professional club. The team was created in 2004 in Uppsala after several Kurdish players had to leave IK Brage, the football club from Borlänge. Thus, Dalkurd was at first composed of only people of Kurdish background. Since 2004, Dalkurd has gone through the all tiers of Sweden's football system starting from the lowest and promoting to the highest – Allsvenskan. Throughout its 15 years history, Dalkurd has become “the big symbol for the Kurdish people”, as Steve Douglas from *The Associated Press* cites Dalkurd's player Peshraw Azizi (Douglas, 2018, October 26). In an article published in *The Guardian*, one of the club's founders Ramazan Kizil is portrayed as “the Gustav Vasa of Dalkurd” (Tivemo, 2017, October 9). The creation of such a squad in such an area as Dalarna is symbolic as Dalarna was the place where in the XVI century Gustav Vasa started the resistance for Swedish independence from Denmark. Arguably, Joel Tivemo means that Kizil now contributes to Kurds, a stateless nation, in Sweden as much as Vasa contributed to Swedes, when they were a stateless nation as well (Tivemo, 2017, October 9).

As to the Swedish national cricket team, it is notable to remind that Sweden accepts migrants of different backgrounds. Thus, Sweden takes a lot of immigrants from Asian states

which in the past have been a part of the British Empire and their neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan. For instance, in 2018 Sweden accepted 8093 Afghans (3rd rang of total), 7311 Indians (4th rang of total) and 2586 Pakistanis (11th rang of total) (Statistics Sweden, 2019). As in the past the British cultural traditions spread to Asia, many Afghans, Indians and Pakistanis consider cricket as their national sport, and today immigrants spread this kind of sport in Sweden and stand as the main driver of its development as cricket has been on the run in Sweden for the several past years.

However, no projects and no sportspeople of immigrant background are paid as much attention in international media as outstanding Swedish football player Zlatan Ibrahimović. Media primarily gives credit for merit of Ibrahimović in changing the Swedish society. He is portrayed as a powerful and arrogant individual who remains an outlier but has “created a new way of being Swedish” (Fallahi, 2018, May 23) and has become “a symbol of the multi-ethnic nature of the country” (Syvänen, 2015, March 12). Ibrahimović has gained pretty much attention primarily due to his performance for clubs in Europe and international games for Sweden. He conquered Europe having won titles in almost each of played seasons and scoring many goals. Now Ibrahimović who is 37 years old moved to conquer the United States, joining Los Angeles Galaxy, but he left rich legacy in Europe and in Sweden.

However, there are cases when a sports figure with immigrant roots, though born in a particular state, may face racial abuse playing for his national team. The recent 2018 FIFA World Cup has shown that Sweden indeed faces problems on immigrant racism as Jimmy Durmaz, a national team’s player (FIFA, 2018) with Assyrian background, has become a victim of racial abuse from his fellow citizens. The context of the abuse lay in Durmaz’s fault when by the end of the second half he fouled Germany’s Timo Werner on the edge of the Swedish box. Toni Kroos scored a late 95th minute winner, and Germany won the game with the score 2:1. Bad performance on the pitch caused large criticism on Durmaz in the social media, but he, his teammates, several Swedish officials and the Swedish Football Association (FA) stood behind his honor. This public defense has been transmitted through international media.

5.1 Sport – a Tool for Integration

The category “Sport – a Tool for Integration” was identified in the materials that discuss in particular the football club Dalkurd, Sweden’s national team in cricket and Zlatan Ibrahimović. In the process of analysis I defined two subcategories which interpret integration through sport as creation of mutual understanding and as creation of coherent society.

5.1.1 Integration as Creation of Mutual Understanding

In the analyzed materials, it is mentioned that Dalkurd has not only been established as the club which represents Kurdish nation. As it is mentioned in an article published in *The Guardian*, Dalkurd has proved that “integration is not mission impossible” (Tivemo, 2017, October 9). The name of the club is the very first thing which draws attention. In fact, it is the combination of two areas names which the club is devoted – Swedish Dalarna county and Kurdistan. An *Associated Press* article puts forth an interpretation that this name emphasizes that the club’s founders and its Kurdish employees share both identities and put an aim to integrate into the Swedish society through football.

They called the team Dalkurd — a fusion of the name of the locality, Dalarna, and the founders’ Kurdish roots (Douglas, 2018, October 26).

In an article published in *The Guardian*, a founder of the Dalkurd club Ramazan Kizil foregrounds mutual dialogue through sports as a perfect way of integrating as it helps to learn to establish mutual understanding. He suggests that sport and football in particular is an effective tool of integration into society as he, his colleagues and Dalkurd players had their own experience in that. Kizil claims that football supports communication between people even if they do not speak the common language.

“Through football you can integrate immigrants into society, we have experience of that. We struggled to get Swedes as coaches and board members at first, but now half of our board are Swedes.” (Azizi, as cited in Tivemo, 2017, October 9).

“Football doesn’t have a language,” Azizi says. “When you are out there on the pitch, you don’t need Swedish to pass or shoot. The words you need, you learn in a minute.” (Azizi, as cited in Tivemo, 2017, October 9).

In an article released in *Eurosport*, Siavoush Fallahi puts a strong emphasis on the fact that Ibrahimović also had a tough background, though he was born in Sweden. His parents have Balkan roots, his father is Bosnian and his mother is Croatian. He grew up in Rosengård, Malmö’s working-class suburb, which is settled primarily by Yugoslav immigrants and until 2015 has been recognized one of the most problematic suburbs in Sweden and regarded as “a hotspot for crime and social problems” (Fallahi, 2018, May 23). Zlatan’s family was poor as many others, and from the early age this experience shaped his struggling attitude to life. Therefore, Fallahi states that the autobiography of Ibrahimović *I am Zlatan Ibrahimović* established a sense of understanding among Swedes who did not recognize before what is life in a Swedish suburb settled by people of immigrant background (Fallahi, 2018, May 23). He also

cites *Aftonbladet* journalist Johanna Franden, who gave a point that the story of Ibrahimović “made it easier for people from the Swedish suburbs to become part of society” (Franden, as cited in Fallahi, 2018, May 23).

“His circumstances in Rosengård were explained to people who weren’t familiar with that environment before,” says Franden. “This knowledge has helped employers to understand people from the Swedish suburbs better, which has made it easier for people from the Swedish suburbs to become part of society.” (Franden, as cited in Fallahi, 2018, May 23).

5.1.2 Integration as Creation of Coherent Society

The category of “Sport – a Tool for Integration” in the sense of creation of coherent society was identified in *The Local*’s interview with David Williman, the Head of Development for Swedish Cricket and Assistant Coach to the National Team,¹ who is an immigrant from Britain. In the interview, Williman argues that after moving to Sweden in 2015, he started to play cricket at a local club feeling that it would help him to integrate, and soon he proved to be a professional in cricket governing and took employment in this field. Williman developed a cricket program for refugees based on a successful scheme in London. He calls cricket “a vehicle” for integration, which can also give players different values, including such soft value as “respect”.

“I want to use cricket as a vehicle to bring disadvantaged young lads together in a safe environment,” he explains. “It can help them integrate and teach the values they will be expected to follow in their new country, like respect and timekeeping.” (Williman, as cited in Edwards, 2016, February 1).

The Swedish Cricket Federation, indeed, dedicates parts of the governmental funding to a position which is dedicated to integrating newly arrived immigrants into the Swedish society. Cricket is framed as a way to abandon thoughts and troubles at least for a while. Thus, playing cricket allows immigrants and asylum seekers to “have fun” which could one of the first steps for integration.

¹ Cricket in Sweden has grown recently. Officially, the Swedish Cricket Federation joined the Swedish Sports Confederation in 2015, which meant that the cricket federation encompassed at least 25 member clubs and 1500 members, which is a requirement to join the SSC in accordance with its policy paper (Swedish Sport Confederation, 2012: 15). By 2018, as it is mentioned in *The Local*, there have been at least 65 clubs and more than 2000 players (Dauschy, 2018, June 18). The membership in the SSC means that the cricket federation gained an access to governmental funding which annually amounts to approximately 130 000 euros (Schofield, 2016, August 22).

“The youngsters miss their families and are worried about their asylum process. But when they play cricket, there is nothing else on their mind than having fun,” said federation chairman Zuwak (Zuwak, as cited in Dauschy, 2018, June 18).

According to Jack Schofield from *The Local*, “a key side effect” of cricket’s rise in Sweden “has been helping to integrate new arrivals from Asian countries” (Schofield, 2016, August 22). However, for the immigrants who joined cricket clubs sport is not only about integrating into Swedish society, it is, as Helene Dauschy from *The Local* says, also about avoiding “being cut off from their roots” (Dauschy, 2018, June 18). Doing sports together with people of the same background seems to facilitate their adaptation to new society and culture as far as cricket is a national kind of sport in Afghanistan, India, or Pakistan and in Sweden it is coached primarily by adult coaches with roots from these countries. For instance, Dauschy cites Ahmed, a young player of Afghan background, who tells that due to cricket he “made friends here who also come from Afghanistan” (Dauschy, 2018, June 2018). Meanwhile Schofield cites Azam Khalil, the Swedish national squad player of Afghan background, who claims that he makes Afghan players talk Swedish with him as far as it should be easier for them because Khalil shares their background. Moreover, Williman told *The Local* that cricket, which is the national sport game of the UK, also helped him to make friends quite soon in the new society. Arguably, these examples are taken up as a proof that in the Swedish society a sport such as cricket is successfully used to alleviate possible problems of immigrant integration. It can help to establish relations both with other players who share the same background or at least share the same sports interests.

That does not discourage Khalil and the other leading cricket players from helping the refugees' integration into Swedish society: “Many of them are from Afghanistan and I am too, so it's really easy for them to try to talk Swedish with me. I force them to talk to me in Swedish so they can learn, and I'm very open with them...” (Khalil, as cited in Schofield, 2016, August 22).

Cricket has helped Williman personally to integrate in his new nation. “I turned up at the club, and within three days I had 12 new mates. It has helped me meet all sorts of different people.” (Williman, as cited in Edwards, 2016, February 1).

In terms of creation of coherent society I have also found that in two articles devoted to Dalkurd in *The Associated Press* and in *The Guardian* the authors noted that the very first aim of this initiative was “to get misbehaving kids off the street” (Douglas, 2018, October 26) and “help a troubled group of young footballers” (Tivemo, 2017, October 9). Moreover, as the club’s youth academy has been recently established, Dalkurd attracts new teenagers of Kurdish background to change their lives through playing football in Sweden. Dalkurd is also popular in social media,

which helps to attract new supporters and players. Therefore, I suggest that media draws the image that sport in Sweden helps to sustain discipline and order in the society as well.

From next year, Dalkurd will have six affiliated youth teams in Uppsala, covering ages 6-16. Kurds from all over the world are contacting Azizi, seeking tryouts. The club's Facebook page has nearly 1.5 million followers (Douglas, 2018, October 26).

What is more, in an article in *These Football Times* Luyang Syvänen claims that Ibrahimović contributes to establishment of coherent society as he is the person “who can promote cultural cohesion and community stability” because his image is influencing people's perception of immigrants in Sweden (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

If there is one person who can promote cultural cohesion and community stability by changing people's attitudes to become more permissive towards immigrants, it is he (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

Admitting the impact of Ibrahimović, Syvänen also mentioned that in the Swedish media and public discourse Ibrahimović is called a “national hero” and “The King of Sweden” (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

Zlatan Ibrahimović, the “punk” from Rosengård, is rightly heralded by the Swedish media and public discourse as a national hero and ‘The King of Sweden’ (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

Indeed, in the Swedish English-language media source *The Local* Ibrahimović is portrayed as “The King of Sweden” and “a role model” for people of immigrant background. In *The Local's* article there are quotations of respondents, who describe Ibrahimović as a positive example for immigrant youth. Therefore, the author of the article states that the role of Ibrahimović in integrating minorities is extremely high.

“Everyone knows who Zlatan is. By contrast, not everyone knows who the king (of Sweden) is!”, joked Milosević (Zlatan, 2016, June 6).

“For the kids and youth of Malmo, he is proof that you can rise to the top echelons, that you can become someone in life,” said Ibrahim, a 26-year-old Rosengård resident (Zlatan, 2016, June 6).

For kids in this neighbourhood, where unemployment is high, Ibrahimović is a role model: the son of migrants who grew up in difficult conditions and managed to make it to the top ranks of the football world (Zlatan, 2016, June 6).

To conclude, it seems reasonable to say that dealing with the category “Sport – a Tool for Integration” the international media in the chosen articles from *The Guardian*, *The*

Associated Press, The Local, Eurosport, and These Football Times represents Sweden as a successful story of immigrant integration and emphasizes the high role of sports in it. On the basis of analyzed data I can also add that in these articles integration through sport is described in a different way as it is portrayed what I called “creation of mutual understanding” and “creation of coherent society”. In the first case sport is considered to support communication between Swedes and people of immigrant background, while in the second case sport is seen to facilitate adaptation of immigrants and refugees of same background to new society if they do sports together. In the analyzed materials Sweden is given a positive image as a state where immigrants have an opportunity to come closer to the Swedish society through sport, and Zlatan Ibrahimović, an outstanding Swedish footballer with Balkan roots, is portrayed as the main symbol of sport integration in Sweden.

5.2 New Swedishness

The category of “New Swedishness” was identified in particular from the analysis of the articles which take up Zlatan Ibrahimović as the symbol of New Sweden. By contrast to the category of “Sport – a Tool for Integration”, this category suggests that the Swedish society is also changing. It is articulated as a response to the fact that the country is facing a generational shift with more immigrants who become new Swedish citizens (Roden, 2017, February 14). However, at first we should look what Swedishness is. Danielsson Malmros defines five major narratives of Swedishness: “neutrality”, “welfarism”, “the stranger”, “the role model country of democracy”, and “the most gender equalised country” (Malmros, 2012, as cited in Thomasson, 2015: 752). Swedishness reflects the long way which Sweden has gone through to recognize who are “us” and who are “them”. According to Pew Research Center, in Sweden the majority of people (66%) still think that being able to speak Swedish is the main criterion for being truly Swedish, with just 2% saying that it is not significant (Roden, 2017, February 14). However, the percentage rate of people who define speaking language as a key to get national identity in Sweden is lower than the European median – 77%, with the highest rate (84%) in Netherlands, while the Swedish rate takes overall 11th place (Roden, 2017, February 14).

In a set of articles portraying Ibrahimović as the best symbol of this modern multicultural society that fact that Sweden has accepted a lot of immigrants for the past years is linked to the fact that the way to be Swedish also seems to be changing over time. For instance, in an article in *Eurosport* Fallahi states that “as well as redefining the horizons of Sweden’s immigrant population, Zlatan has also changed the very nature of what it means to be Swedish” (Fallahi, 2018, May 23). Explaining what stands for new Swedishness, Fallahi cites *Aftonbladet* journalist

Franden who claims that Ibrahimović, a man of immigrant background, “represents a big group, who are raised in Sweden, who speak other languages than Swedish at home and who had problems identifying themselves with Sweden prior to Zlatan’s breakthrough” (Franden, as cited in Fallahi, 2018, May 23).

“Zlatan stands for a new Swedishness,” says Aftonbladet journalist Johanna Franden. “There were many generations of immigrants before him, but he became the symbol for people with an immigrant background. He represents a big group, who are raised in Sweden, who speak other languages than Swedish at home and who had problems identifying themselves with Sweden prior to Zlatan’s breakthrough. Zlatan, even though he was born in Sweden, has become the immigration story in Sweden; his success, personality and charisma have made him the symbol for many things in Swedish society and this is the most important legacy that he leaves behind.” (Franden, as cited in Fallahi, 2018, May 23).

Ibrahimović’s devotion to Sweden, his belonging to multiethnic Swedish society and his representation of “the new Sweden” (Ibrahimović, as cited in Fallahi, 2018, May 23) have become one of the main points exposed in his biography book *I am Zlatan Ibrahimović* written by David Lagercrantz which has become a “bestseller”, as it is mentioned in an article in *The Irish Examiner* (Kelly, 2016, June 8). I consider this fact important because the book, translated in over 30 languages including English, French, German, Italian, and Russian (Swedish Agency for Accessible Media, 2016), can tell a successful story of Ibrahimović to wide international audience, which, I suggest, is able to display Swedish soft power. In an article in *Eurosport* it is mentioned that the book has become a bestseller in Sweden as well because there were sold more than a million copies (Fallahi, 2018, May 23).

“The impact and significance is hard to measure, but it’s big,” Professor Olsson added. “His autobiography has been a best-seller. He sells Volvo cars and inspires young people all around Sweden and in Europe.” (Olsson, as cited in Kelly, 2016, June 8).

Taken in consideration his successful story, I suggest that Ibrahimović, standing for new Swedishness, increases Swedish soft power in international relations. Ibrahimović is described in media as the best symbol of modern Swedish multicultural society. The fact that Sweden has accepted a lot of immigrants for the past years is linked to the fact that the way to be Swedish also seems to be changing over time, and Ibrahimović is seen the best symbol for that.

5.3 Personal Development for Change

The category of “Personal Development for Change” relates to instances where the players of Dalkurd as well as Zlatan Ibrahimović are described as athletes who had strong

ambitions and, regardless of their background, worked hard to develop themselves to the effect they could achieve successful results in their careers.

I found the codes of development also in the characterizations of the Dalkurd team, which started from the grassroots level but has then become a top-level team. At first, it was rather a social club than a football club, but later the team obtained high ambitions to achieve something good and professional. The club started from amateur leagues, but eventually developed into a top-flight club having reached in 2017 the Allsvenskan – the highest league in Sweden. The analyzed article in *The Associated Press* suggests that the first aim of Dalkurd was to get people off the streets, though very soon the club obtained strong ambitions as a motivation to strive for success which is not taken by granted.

“We took away their free time, made them believe they could achieve something good with either their football or their lives,” said Adil Kizil, who was a member of that initial Dalkurd squad because his father, Ramazan (Kizil, as cited in Douglas, 2018, October 26).

Dalkurd has become popular across the world not only due to its story of foundation, but also due its skillful football performance. *The Associated Press* article published about it tells stories about players who worked hard to reach higher levels and spent a lot of time training and playing. This resulted in high performance in lower tiers over five years when Dalkurd was promoting every season.

In that lowest tier, Dalkurd trained for 2½ hours every night, taking a much more serious approach than their rivals (Douglas, 2018, October 26).

Though Dalkurd in 2017 reached Allsvenskan – the highest tier in Sweden – and the year after relegated back to the second-tier Superettan, the club does not lose motivation to train and strive for better results. In the analyzed materials there is an emphasis on the fact that its supporters rank Dalkurd at the same level with Real Madrid and Barcelona (Douglas, 2018, October 26) and that its new investors “would love to see Dalkurd in the Champions League” (Junad, as cited in Tivemo, 2017, October 9). Therefore, Azizi tells in an article in *The Guardian* that the club and its players “want to achieve more” (Azizi, as cited in Tivemo, 2017, October 9).

The category of sport as personal development strongly emerges in the materials that describe Zlatan Ibrahimović as a talented yet troubled youngster. While he started his youth career playing in the suburb’s club Malmö BI, at the age of 10, Ibrahimović moved to another suburb’s team Fotbollsklubb (FBK) Balkan. The club has been established in 1962 by Yugoslav immigrants and it remains one of the best known football teams with immigrant nature in

Sweden created in XX century along with Assyriska FF and Syrianska FC from Södertälje, which encompassed Swedish Assyrians. Joining FBK Balkan, Ibrahimović became a teammate of teenagers and coaches who shared his background. However, as he had gotten used to struggling against other people, Ibrahimović made his first steps there being a “troublemaker”.

A former FBK Balkan coach Hasib Kličić has similar memories. He remembered Ibrahimović as “a troublemaker. Not very good but he always wanted to play” (Klisić, as cited in Zlatan, 2016, June 6).

At first he was not a very good player, but the aspect of personal development is emphasized in the fact that the materials emphasize that he always had a strong desire to play and “the only thing he wanted was to score goals, so sometimes he listened to the coaches but sometimes he just did what he wanted” (Milosević, as cited in Zlatan, 2016, June 6). At the age of 13, Ibrahimović moved to the youth team of Malmö FC, where he developed into a stable striker after four years of trainings, and then he started professional career there. Journalists from *These Football Times* and *The Local* claim that his tough childhood and challenging youth career built his character, taught how to keep both his roots and motivation to win and succeed. Rosengård, the “Ghetto of Sweden” (Syvänen, 2015, March 12) is argued to have developed the personality of Ibrahimović.

Therefore, from an early age, the invaluable lesson for Zlatan was that only hard work, discipline and perseverance can lead one to success, and that there is no one out there to lend a helping hand (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

The stubbornly single-minded perseverance was the key to Ibrahimović's success (Zlatan, 2016, June 6).

Playing football in the streets of Rosengård was not only about demonstrating skill; it was all about developing character – a tough, powerful, and unbreakable appearance, both mentally and physically – in order to stand up for himself and take responsibility for his own actions (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

Crucially, whenever he went, he always carried his personality and attitude with him, never forgetting where he came from and what he has been through, and always stayed true to his roots and values (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

The category of personal development is not limited to Zlatan Ibrahimović. In the materials describing the Swedish national cricket team I also learnt that it provides a setting for personal development for people of immigrant descent. While some of them have a right to play for the national team of Sweden as they have already become Swedish citizens, cricket attracts

newly arrived immigrants to join local clubs. The captain of the squad Azam Khalil, who has Afghan background but already gained Swedish citizenship, tells *The Local* that each year the team deals with several dozens of teenager refugees who contact the team's board seeking tryout. He adds that they have relationships with some charitable organizations, for example Project Playground, which help to introduce a lot of refugees to play in the Youth Under-19s League. Khalil's discussion revolves around the notion of talent as he argues that these "talented players" and other teenagers are "the real future" of cricket in Sweden (Khalil, as cited in Schofield, 2016, August 22).

"We have refugees who are part of our teams and clubs in Division 3. We have very talented players from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh." (Khalil, as cited in Schofield, 2016, August 22).

"They are the future, they are the real future of Swedish cricket." (Khalil, as cited in Schofield, 2016, August 22).

To summarize, I can say that the international media representation of how immigrants are developing their skills through sports refers to Swedish soft power in a way that English-language press demonstrates to international audience that immigrants and refugees are able to succeed in Sweden. The media gives a point to suggest that developing personal skills through sports could be a starting point for integration. Sweden in this regard is portrayed as a state which accepts talented and developed sportspeople of immigrant background.

5.4 Representing Sweden

The category of "Representing Sweden" was identified in the article devoted to Sweden's national team in cricket *The Local*. Schofield mentions that the representatives of Sweden's cricket are immensely grateful to the Swedish authorities and the Swedish Sport Confederation, which contribute to the development of national team and youth clubs promoting sport as a tool for integration. Khalil, on behalf of the national team, praised the government of Sweden, the Swedish Sport Confederation and the Swedes.

Both the national captain and federation chairman praise how much the national sporting confederation and local authorities are now embracing the sport, with Khalil stating: "I would just like to thank the Swedish government, the Swedish people, and the Sports Confederation, who helped us to make it to this point..." (Khalil, as cited in Schofield, 2016, August 22).

Though the Swedish Cricket Federation today receives annual investments from the government, as Williman admits in *The Local*, cricket "is still very much a minority sport, and

not enough native Swedes are playing” (Williman, as cited in Edwards, 2016, February 1), but the aim of federation is to attract more native Swedes to this kind of sport. Thus, Sweden’s national team in cricket is described in *The Local* as an initiative which encompasses people of different backgrounds, Swedish or non-Swedish. Sweden in international cricket competitions is represented by multiethnic national team, and this kind of cultural diversity in cricket, arguably, improves the image of Sweden.

Moreover, the category “Representing Sweden” strongly emerges in the articles which describe Zlatan Ibrahimović. At the age of 19, he played his first international game for the Swedish national squad. Though he could play for Bosnia and Herzegovina or Croatia, Ibrahimović chose Sweden, the country where he was born. Eventually, he played 116 international games and scored 62 goals for Sweden (Fallahi, 2018, May 23). In articles in *Eurosport* and in *These Football Times*, I found that Ibrahimović tells that he represents Sweden and “the new Sweden” (Ibrahimović, as cited in Fallahi, 2018, May 23), which is important because this can be considered as a driver to increase Swedish soft power in international relations through media as Ibrahimović presents his story of success and links it with Sweden.

“Whenever I go, I represent Sweden but I also represent Rosengård. You never forget where you come from.” (Ibrahimović, as cited in Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

“I represent the new Sweden. I put Sweden on the map. That’s not arrogance, those are facts.” (Ibrahimović, as cited in Fallahi, 2018, May 23).

Fallahi in an article in *Eurosport* calls Ibrahimović “global voice and face of his country” and “the superstar” (Fallahi, 2018, May 23). He suggests that Ibrahimović is able to bridge professional football with youth football across the world, in particular attracting teenagers of immigrant background in Sweden.

Zlatan, the young player from Rosengård who became the global voice and face of his country. Zlatan, the superstar who brought the great European stadiums closer to the suburbs and transformed dreams into tangible realities for a whole generation (Fallahi, 2018, May 23).

Fallahi in *Eurosport* also cites Henok Goitom, a former (2005–2006) player of Eritrean background of Under-21 Swedish national squad, who stated that “after Zlatan’s performances people with an immigrant background have had an easier way into the Swedish national team” (Goitom, as cited in Fallahi, 2018, May 23). Goitom’s statement that Ibrahimović positively influenced the younger generation of immigrants in Sweden could be proved by the fact that, indeed, more often we see that young professional football players of immigrant background

receive call-ups to the Swedish national team. In this regard, Fallahi reminded in an *Eurosport* article that the Swedish national team, which won the 2015 European Under-21 Championship, included players of immigrant descent and “was built in the image of the man [Ibrahimović] who changed Swedish football, and Sweden, forever” (Fallahi, 2018, May 23)². Having won the title, this young squad emphasized that sportspeople with immigrant background can be a part of a national Swedish collective and can play a big role to achieve a positive result on international arena. Fallahi called this generation, inspired by Ibrahimović, “confident and multicultural” and stated that “the importance of Zlatan for the country’s immigrant population is even more significant” than his impact on the Swedish society (Fallahi, 2018, May 23).

I found one more code of how Ibrahimović represents Sweden. He is known for not singing Swedish national anthem “Du Gamla, Du Fria” (“Thou Ancient, Thou Free”) before international matches of Sweden³. However, in 2014 he recorded its alternative version, which was sponsored by Volvo and used for its XC70 commercial. As it could seem at the first sight, in the commercial Ibrahimović is telling some story about being Swedish as Volvo added a description that “The Swedish wilderness is our heritage and it is here we find our strength. Just like Zlatan Ibrahimović. This is our celebration of Sweden” (Volvo Cars, 2014, January 25). Indeed, this is a spoken word version of the Swedish anthem. A listener who is not Swedish or does not know Swedish language, arguably, would not notice this fact. When the Volvo

² Indeed, according to UEFA record, 7 Swedish players of immigrant background (Isaac Kiese Thelin, Abdullah Khalili, Alexander Milošević, Oscar Lewicki, Robin Quaison, Joseph Baffo and John Guidetti) capped for Sweden in the final game at the 2015 European Under-21 Championship (UEFA, 2015, June 30), while 4 more players (Pa Konate, Arber Zeneli, Branimir Hrgota and Mikael Ishak) were a part of the squad on the tournament (UEFA, 2015). In fact, 11 of 23 players of that team were of immigrant descent.

³ The gesture of not singing national anthem gives a point for some people as Jimmie Åkesson, the leader of the Sweden Democrats, to consider Ibrahimović a marginal, as it is mentioned in an article in *SVT* (Kapadia, 2012, November 28). Refusal to sing national anthem could be considered in public discourse as total disrespect for a nation state a sports person represents and for national squad he plays for. For instance, in 2016 there was a scandal over the US player of American football Colin Kaepernick, who refused to stand for national anthem for several times, which is described in an article in *The Washington Post* (Payne, 2016, August 27). He explained that he cannot show pride to a state which oppresses people of mixed colors, and very soon American people, whose patriotic values Kaepernick offended, started bullying him in social media. The club he plays for neither supported, nor criticized Kaepernick, having stated that in general singing an anthem is not obligatory (Payne, 2016, August 27). However, for many people it is a social norm they expect to perform from sportspeople who represent a country.

commercial has been released, Ibrahimović explained that the original Swedish national anthem is “boring” for him, but its new version is quite good and represents new image of multicultural Sweden of 2014, which is mentioned in an article in *The Guardian* (Guardian Sport, 2015, October 12).

“I am proud to be Swedish, absolutely, and I am proud to be the captain of the national team. When I go out on the pitch I want to give everything. But when it comes to the national anthem it hasn’t clicked for me to say or sing these words. Until now. This new national anthem is exactly what we need. The old was boring. This goes straight in. I hope this will become the new one.” (Ibrahimović, as cited in Guardian Sport, 2015, October 12).

“This is what Sweden looks like in 2014. I do not speak perfect Swedish, but that is how it is. Mixtures everywhere.” (Ibrahimović, as cited in Guardian Sport, 2015, October 12).

To sum up, I can suggest that international press is able to improve the image of Sweden in international relations by picking up stories of successful initiatives in developing professional multiethnic teams, as the Swedish national teams in cricket and football, and statements of such outstanding sports figures of immigrant background as Zlatan Ibrahimović who links his success with Sweden. Media also pays attention to the fact that Ibrahimović represented one of a state’s symbols – the Swedish national anthem, which seems to strengthen the idea that people of immigrant background are able to represent Sweden in international relations.

5.5 Transnational Belonging

The category “Transnational Belonging” was identified in the materials that discuss in particular the football club Dalkurd and Zlatan Ibrahimović. The success of the Dalkurd team is described as a great success not only for the club but for the whole Kurdish population: Dalkurd is said to have become a new symbol that unites this population of different language and authority. There is no such state as Kurdistan, but people of Kurdish background share same traditions, and Dalkurd has become an inherent part of them. Peshraw Azizi, the club’s captain who obtained Swedish citizenship, claims in an article in *The Associated Press* that Dalkurd is a major symbol for Kurds that represents their nation.

“We are like the big symbol for the Kurdish people. We are their national team.” (Azizi, as cited in Douglas, 2018, October 26).

Now, it has grown into a top-flight soccer team that has given the Kurdish minority — scattered and ravaged by war for decades — something to cherish as its own (Douglas, 2018, October 26).

Despite Dalkurd relegated from the Allsvenskan in 2018 after just one season at the highest tier, it is establishing a good working club's infrastructure, and minorities and refugees are welcome to join it. However, the welfare of Dalkurd depends on sponsors which support the club. The club functions mostly on private funds, not investments from the Swedish budget. Dalkurd is popular among Kurds in and out of Sweden. That is why the club's performance in 2016 attracted private investors, Sarkat Junad and Kawad Junad, who are Kurdish entrepreneurs, active in the telecom and media business (Tivemo, 2017, October 9). Thus, an article in *The Guardian* demonstrates that club's performance attracted not indifferent investors of the same background.

In February last year, two Kurdish brothers bought 49% of the club in what Swedish media termed a multi-billion sponsorship deal. "I would love to see Dalkurd in the Champions League," Sarkat told Dalarnas Tidningar. "If we can help with the funding, the club will become even better and advance faster." (Sarkat, as cited in Tivemo, 2017, October 9).

As it is displayed in *The Guardian* and in *The Associated Press*, Azizi often goes to his motherland for humanitarian aims, contacts with refugees and helps to run projects in displacement camps (Tivemo, 2017, October 9; Douglas, 2018, October 26). Once he was on the frontline of the war against the Islamic State, he met several soldiers who recognized him telling that they are proud of Dalkurd, follow the team and want it to continue playing. Therefore, the analyzed articles show how big the club has grown up. Moreover, Tivemo in an article in *The Guardian* compares Dalkurd with the symbol of Kurdish resistance – Peshmerga, the military forces of the federal region of Iraqi Kurdistan, which fight for independence and against the Islamic State (Tivemo, 2017, October 9).

Dalkurd are, just like the Peshmerga soldiers in Kurdistan, fighting on several fronts (Tivemo, 2017, October 9).

"He recognised me and asked: 'What are you doing here?'," Azizi says. "I was shocked. Do I know him? Is he a friend of my dad's? 'What are you doing here, Pasha? I've been following you for three years. You play for our team and you are the best football player. You shouldn't be here. Go home and make us happy through football'." (Azizi, as cited in Tivemo, 2017, October 9).

"Imagine that! They are in the war, the front line, they are fighting against the terrorists, and they are talking about us. I was totally in shock." (Azizi, as cited in Douglas, 2018, October 26).

Articles in *The Guardian* and in *The Associated Press* also cite Azizi who states that today Dalkurd's performance motivates Kurdish people to change their football preferences in favor of Dalkurd. Indeed, the club used to play a double role both being an unofficial national

team of Kurdistan, as there is no Kurdish national team officially recognized by FIFA, and a Swedish football club of Kurdish genius (Douglas, 2018, October 26). Though, as today the club, following professional trends, signed players of mixed backgrounds with several Kurds left, I can suggest that now Dalkurd is not a squad composed of Kurds only, but it remains a Swedish club with Kurdish genius of fight and resistance.

“Today, people in Kurdistan support Real Madrid, Barcelona or Dalkurd.” (Azizi, as cited in Tivemo, 2017, October 9).

“‘I’m a Barcelona fan, I’m a Real Madrid fan,’ Azizi said. ‘Now they say, ‘I’m a Dalkurd fan.’ That’s how big we are.” (Azizi, as cited in Douglas, 2018, October 26).

There is no Kurdish national soccer team recognized by soccer’s world organizing body, FIFA (Douglas, 2018, October 26).

The category “Transnational Belonging” was also identified in the articles that describe the image of Zlatan Ibrahimović. For instance, Syvänen in an article in *These Football Times* draws attention by describing dominative influence of Ibrahimović in France when he played for Paris Saint-Germain. The author mentions that the first name of the footballer has been listed in the French media as a verb, due to his dominative performance at Paris Saint-Germain, and then this verb was borrowed for the Swedish national dictionary (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

Such is his influence that his first name is now officially listed as a verb in the Swedish national dictionary to mean ‘to dominate’, derived from what the French media has termed ‘Zlataner’ (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

I have also found codes of “Transnational Belonging” in an article in *The Guardian* devoted to the success of Volvo commercial with Ibrahimović performing the Swedish national anthem. It is reported that Ibrahimović has received a golden record award after the video with his version of the anthem has been streamed 3 million times, arguably having become the most streamed national anthem ever (Guardian Sport, 2015, October 12). What is more, as the Volvo commercial is streamed on *YouTube*, I looked through the most recent comments for the video and noticed that Ibrahimović and Volvo gain primarily positive reactions, at least in English, though there are also comments in Swedish. Video released in a streaming service has a powerful advantage: it is possible to see how many people have watched a video. The Volvo commercial by 2019, March 6 has been watched 6 985 271 times. Almost 7 million views with almost 4 thousands comments along with 33 thousands likes and only 2.1 thousands dislikes make this commercial perfect and really attractive for international audience (Volvo Cars, 2014, January 25).

To summarize, I can say that international English-language media gives examples of transnational belonging of Dalkurd and Zlatan Ibrahimović which is significant in terms of soft power. Media shows that Dalkurd is also significant for Kurds living outside Sweden as well as Ibrahimović attracts international audience by his performance on the pitch and in the Volvo commercial. Media puts emphasis that Dalkurd, though it is of Kurdish origin, is the Swedish club and Ibrahimović, being attractive abroad, is Swedish.

5.6 Racism and Anti-racism

The category of “Racism and Anti-racism” strongly emerges in articles devoted to the case when Jimmy Durmaz challenged racial abuse. After his fault in the game against Germany, Durmaz has faced a lot of racial abuse in social media, including death threats. However, Durmaz immediately gained support from different sides. The most powerful support came from the national squad, which united the efforts of the Swedish teammates and the Swedish FA to show the world that Sweden stands against racism. This support resulted in the organizing of the meeting with international press invited, where Durmaz delivered a powerful speech in Swedish which has been videoed by several sources. The video of the speech has been downloaded to the official website of the Swedish FA (Swedish FA, 2018, June 24) as well as to *The Guardian* with English subtitles (Christenson, 2018, June 24). An article in *ESPN* provides parts of the script of Durmaz’s statement (ESPN Soccer, 2018, June 24).

Marcus Christenson in an article in *The Guardian* cites Durmaz who admits that being criticized “is part of the job”, but “there are limits and that limit was passed” (Durmaz, as cited in Christenson, 2018, June 24). In the same article Christenson put Durmaz’s words that he has challenged the abuse primarily concerning his background and his family has also suffered threats (Christenson, 2018, June 24).

“I am a footballer at the highest level so I have to accept that I am criticised for what I do on the pitch. That’s part of the job – and I am always willing to accept that. But there are limits and that limit was passed yesterday.” (Durmaz, as cited in Christenson, 2018, June 24).

“When someone threatens me, when they call me darkie, bloody Arab, terrorist, Taliban ... then that limit has been passed. And what is even worse, when they go after my family and my children and threaten them ... who the hell does that kind of thing?” (Durmaz, as cited in Christenson, 2018, June 24).

At the end of the statement Durmaz emphasized that he is proud of being Swedish and playing for the national team and underlined that Sweden stands united, which is mentioned in

an article in *ESPN* (ESPN Soccer, 2018, June 24). However, the most powerful message has been given by his teammates who were standing on the background during the whole statement. The whole team yelled “F--- racism!” (ESPN Soccer, 2018, June 24). This immediate reaction of the squad showed that the national team of Sweden brings together different cultures and ideologies, creating positive climate for playing good football and defending multicultural Sweden.

“I am Swedish, and with pride I wear our shirt and our flag. I want to thank the fine, wonderful people who spread joy. It warms us all. We stand united, we are Sweden.” (Durmaz, as cited in ESPN Soccer, 2018, June 24).

The statement concluded with the entire squad shouting “F--- racism!” before applauding and jogging out to begin their workout (ESPN Soccer, 2018, June 24).

As articles in *The Guardian* and *BBC* display, a set of the Swedish officials and teammates of Durmaz consider unacceptable such treatment of people of immigrant background. For instance, as Christenson mentioned in *The Guardian*, the Swedish FA general secretary Håkan Sjöstrand said that the FA is upset “to see the treatment that Jimmy Durmaz has had to put with” (Sjöstrand, as cited in Christenson, 2018, June 24). As it is mentioned in an article in *BBC*, the head coach of the Swedish national squad Janne Andersson and the team’s player of immigrant background John Guidetti added that the whole team stands for the delivered statement, and Durmaz was unlucky to challenge the abuse after not successful performance at the game (BBC Football, 2018, June 24).

“A number of complaints have been made with the Swedish FA as the plaintiff so that Jimmy can concentrate on what he is here to do — play football,” Sjöstrand said in a statement. “But Durmaz is fully behind the complaints. We do not tolerate a player being subjected to threats or abuse. It’s uncomfortable and very upsetting to see the treatment that Jimmy Durmaz has had to put up with. Completely unacceptable.” (Sjöstrand, as cited in Christenson, 2018, June 24).

Coach Janne Andersson added: “We in Sweden's national team, players and leaders, stand 100% behind this statement.” (Andersson, as cited in BBC Football, 2018, June 24).

“It was unlucky,” said fellow Sweden substitute John Guidetti. “It's completely idiotic to subject him to hate for that.” (Guidetti, as cited in BBC Football, 2018, June 24).

Moreover, in an article in *The Local* it is pointed out that the Swedish Sports Minister at that time Annika Strandhäll has posted a photo of her in Instagram and Facebook wearing a Durmaz football jersey after he challenged racist attacks “in a show of solidarity” (Swedish Sports Minister, 2018, June 27). Strandhäll’s gesture shows that the Swedish government is

strongly against racism and is ready to support those who suffer from the attacks. In other article in *The Local* it is also pointed out that racial abuse of Durmaz concerned the leader of the Centre Party Annie Lööf, who also expressed her support in social media (Edwards, 2018, June 26).

In a show of solidarity, Strandhäll posted on Instagram and Facebook a photo of herself wearing a blue and yellow jersey bearing Durmaz's name and number 21, and wrote the hashtag #viärsverige ("we are Sweden") (Swedish Sports Minister, 2018, June 27).

Centre Party leader Annie Lööf wrote on Instagram that "we need to take Sweden back from the racists and the haters" as a response to the abuse (Edwards, 2018, June 26).

Jimmy Durmaz also gained support from people who share his Assyrian background. His cousin David Durmaz is also a football player and plays for already mentioned Assyrisk FF from Södertälje which is composed primarily of immigrants of Assyrian background. David Durmaz emphasized in the interview to *Al Jazeera* that in case of Jimmy Durmaz the mission is to show the world that racial attacking is not the right way to criticize people of immigrant background (Rhys, 2018, July 4).

"It is a good thing when you see that all the people in the world show the support. I was born here in Sweden, I feel Swedish, but when the things like this with Jimmy happen it means a lot for us and that's why we need to show that this is a wrong way." (Durmaz, D., as cited in Rhys, 2018, July 4).

In an article in *The Local* Catherine Edwards cites the Swedish historian David Lindén who states that such all-embracing support, including support from the Swedish officials, contributes a lot to anti-racism rhetoric in comparison with previous times when this issue could be ignored. He says that, despite having such social problems, Sweden, however, now is "much more tolerant" (Lindén, as cited in Edwards, 2018, June 26).

"Sweden has become much more tolerant in the last 30 to 40 years; we're more used to people who don't look like Pippi Longstocking or a Viking", Lindén noted, pointing out that the huge response to the comments is a positive sign, showing progress from earlier decades when bigoted attitudes might be ignored or brushed aside (Lindén, as cited in Edwards, 2018, June 26).

In the same article in *The Local* Edwards presents Lindén's opinion towards biased treatment of immigrants by local natives in Sweden, which also relates to the case of Jimmy Durmaz. The main idea of Lindén is that most of people could remain neutral or tolerant even if they have biased attitude towards people of foreign background. When they succeed and do positive things for the society, native people can support them, but when they fail and do something bad, "race comes into it" (Lindén, as cited in Edwards, 2018, June 26).

“You can have prejudices and be very tolerant most of the time towards people of colour, and it's only when they do something you don't like that race comes into it” (Edwards, 2018, June 26).

The same thing, as Lindén suggests in *The Local*, has happened with Durmaz, as he made a fault during the serious game and disappointed a lot of supporters of the Swedish national team. Thus, Lindén claims that people have already forgotten that in 2017 Durmaz actually took Sweden to 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia⁴. Lindén states that Durmaz was the “hero Swede” before he made an error in the game against Germany, but after making a mistake he became “the other” (Lindén, as cited in Edwards, 2018, June 26).

“When he [Jimmy Durmaz] took us to the World Cup, he was great, he was this hero Swede, but now when he makes a mistake suddenly he's the ‘other’⁵; people say ‘he should go home’, blah blah blah.” (Edwards, 2018, June 26).

The code of racism is also displayed in an article in *These Football Times* devoted to Zlatan Ibrahimović. Syvänen reports that Ibrahimović started his youth career playing in the suburb's club Malmö BI, where he had to deal with racial abuse because of his background as Malmö BI was composed primarily of native Swedish players (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

But because of his immigrant background, his ‘ghetto’ attitude and his fascination for Brazilian style tricks and flicks, Zlatan was never accepted nor appreciated by the parents of his teammates

⁴ Jimmy Durmaz scored a goal in the second game against France in the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualification in Group A. His goal equaled the score and contributed to overall win with the score 2:1. His goal helped to get two more points. Otherwise Sweden would have taken the third place instead of the second in Group A and would have finished behind Netherlands out of the first two promoting places. Indeed, Durmaz's goal has helped to take Sweden to the second round of qualification where Sweden eventually beat Italy and entered the final stage of World Cup.

⁵ It is notable that Durmaz is not the only one player who has faced abuse within these circumstances. We can also remember the recent scandal over German football players Mesut Özil and İlkay Gündoğan, both of Turkish descent, who in May, 2018 met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and took joint photographs. As an article in *BBC* displays, these photographs have been interpreted as a form of political support for Erdoğan and his policies, and launched racial tensions in Germany, which made Özil to make a decision to quit the national team of Germany (BBC News, 2018, May 15). Moreover, we can remember the challenging story of Romelu Lukaku, a Belgian striker of Congolese background, who faced racial abuse in the Belgian society, which is mentioned in an article in *USA Today* (Rogers, 2018, July 10).

as a teenager when playing for the native, Swedish-dominated Malmö BI (now known as FC Rosengård). “Who let the immigrant in?” could often be heard whenever he featured (Syvänen, 2015, March 12).

To conclude this paragraph devoted to the category of “Racism and Anti-racism”, it seems reasonable to say that international English-language media displays that, though there are racist messages in Sweden against sportspeople of immigrant background, a lot of the Swedish officials and sportspeople united to strongly support Jimmy Durmaz and delivered a striking message against racism. Media also shows that Zlatan Ibrahimović has also gone through racial abuse but eventually is accepted in the society. International press thus transmits the message to international audience that Sweden is against racism and stands for people that live in the multiethnic state, which, arguably, could positively influence the international image of Sweden.

6. Somalia Bandy Team as an Example of Sport Integration in Sweden

By 2017, there were approximately 63 000 Somalis in Sweden, and over 36 000 yet have not gained Swedish citizenship and are recognized as foreign citizens in the Swedish database (Statistics Sweden, 2017). Somalis leave Somalia as a result of long civil war which lasts for over thirty years. According to Pew Research Center, among all states that house Somali diaspora, Sweden takes the ninth place and the second place in Europe after the UK (Connor, Krogstad, 2016, June 1). Somalis in Sweden live in different municipalities, and approximately 3000 of them live in Borlänge, which total population accounts for over 52 000 people (Borlänge, 2019). It means that 1 person in 17 people is a Somali in Borlänge, and not everybody supported this situation in the municipality, local natives have been seriously concerned (Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015). That is why Patrik Andresson, a famous public speaker from Borlänge, suggested an alternative mechanism to help Somalis integrate into the local society (Majendie, 2014, January 24).

Eventually, the idea of integration through bandy proved to be successful in Borlänge⁶ and the team's story gained international attention. This chapter presents an analysis of how the example of successful integration of immigrants through bandy in Sweden is able to contribute to Swedish soft power. In this chapter I applied to triangulation of data collection in order to have deeper insight in case study of Somalia bandy team. Therefore, in this section I present the qualitative content analysis of two articles from such international English-language media as

⁶ As Matt Majendie tells in an article in *CNN*, Patrik Andresson once recognized that Somalis enjoyed playing football. Somalis in Borlänge have already had the local amateur football club Swesom supported by the municipality. Taken into account that Somalis love doing sports, Andersson got an idea that it would be exciting to create a bandy team of Somalis, which, in case of success, would bring benefits to all of the sides involved into this initiative (Majendie, 2014, January 24). Bandy is a winter kind of sport, more often associated with states where winter brings a lot of snow and cold temperatures. Before Somalia team, there was no bandy squad of any African nation (Falun Borlänge, 2014). However, Borlänge people Patrik Andersson, Hans Grandin and Mursal Isa, a Somali-Swedish politician in Borlänge, lobbied this project to the City Hall of Borlänge, in particular to Jan-Olof Lundberg, the Head of Integration in Borlänge. At first, the municipality recognized this initiative "crazy", but finally agreed to provide possible support (Majendie, 2014, January 24). Paying tribute to Somalis background, Maeve Shearlaw in an article in *The Guardian* called Somalia bandy team "Cool Runnings 2.0" applying to the world famous film *Cool Runnings* devoted to Jamaica bobsleigh team of 1988 Winter Olympic Games (Shearlaw, 2016, January 4).

The Guardian and *CNN*, personally gathered interviews with team's players and officials of Borlänge, and documentary film *Trevligt Folk (Nice People)*. I suggest significant to analyze the movie *Trevligt Folk* as far as today it seems to be the most effective tool of attraction to Somalia bandy team and integration in Sweden within the context of soft power. "Trevligt Folk", or "Nice People", is the slogan of Borlänge (Lundberg, personal communication, 2019, January 23), which already gives a hint that the film is going to promote such values as tolerance and equality. As distinct from media, the film shows the audience a lot of feelings and emotions and reveals the comprehensive story of the bandy project. When I was studying background information about the movie, I found that it has been screened in cinemas all over Sweden (Falun Borlänge, 2014). Moreover, as the film has English subtitles, it has also been presented at different international film festivals such as *19th European Union Film Festival, Hamburg Film Festival 2015* and *Budapest International Documentary Festival 2016* (Nice People, 2019). What is more, the movie is available for watching and distribution in international pay-per-view video streaming services *Netflix* (Netflix, 2015) and *Vimeo* (Vimeo, 2017). Furthermore, the film's trailer is available for watching on the official *YouTube* channel of *Svensk Films Studios* and now it has more than 110 000 views (SF Studios, 2014). The movie has a profile in the *Internet Movie Database* with high rate 7.6 out of 10 (IMDb, 2019). These facts introduce the film as a powerful tool of Swedish soft power which is able to have influence on international audience. Applying to inductive category development in qualitative content analysis by Mayring (2000), I invented five categories. Each paragraph of this chapter is devoted to each of the categories.

6.1 Sport – a Tool of Soft Power

The category "Sport – a Tool of Soft Power" was identified in the semi-structured interview with a Somali bandy player Mohamed Mire and in the documentary film *Trevligt Folk*. Mire highly appreciates the role of sport in international relations. He tells that "sport is for peace" and "can improve a lot of things in the world", and that sport competitions are conducted "to build relationships" (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27). Moreover, Mire suggested that bandy could be on the agenda of enhancing relationships between Sweden and Somalia. Mire once had a conversation with the Prime Minister of Sweden Stefan Löfven, who said that he is going to present the film *Trevligt Folk* to the Somalia President in the next meeting. In this regard, Mire suggested that we can witness "the relationship between two countries improves" (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27). However, it should be said that this assumption is limited as this code did not emerge in international press or in the movie, which could deliver this message to the audience.

“Then you see a lot of times that sport is for peace [between states]. A lot of competitions are held just because to build relationships. Of course sport can improve a lot of things in the world.” (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27).

“I once met the Prime Minister of Sweden, Stefan Löfven, back in few years ago. The first thing he said to me: ‘I met with the Somalia President. I am going to show him the movie [Trevligt Folk], when he comes back to Stockholm’. So I think you see already the relationship between two countries improves.” (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27).

I also identified codes of sport as a tool of soft power in the film *Trevligt Folk* in terms of attraction of international media sources. There is a scene in the movie where Andersson has a phone call and lists out the international and local media sources that contacted him in order to take interview or to make news stories about the project. Media hype emerged primarily due to such international sources as *CNN*, *BBC*, *The Guardian*, *Al Jazeera*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Channel 4*, and such Swedish sources as *Aftonbladet*, *Expressen*, *SVT* and *TV4* (Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015)⁷.

“We’re breezing along right now. CNN has been in touch. The BBC and Al-Jazeera have been in touch. And Wall Street Journal and Channel 4. Dutch media and newspapers have been here. Aftonbladet, Expressen, SVT and TV4, too. A Spanish radio channel and, let’s see... Who else? The Web of course.” (Andersson, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

To sum up, I can say that establishing peaceful relationships between states through sport and attraction of international media refer to soft power. I suggest that the kind of relationships mentioned by Mire in the interview fits to call it a display of sports diplomacy between Sweden and Somalia, though this perception is limited as this code did not emerge in international press or in the movie, which could deliver this message to the audience. In terms of international

⁷ In the film it is argued that media played a great role to tell the world what Somalia bandy team is. The team’s management board set a goal not only to teach the team of 17 Somalis to skate and play bandy, but also to qualify for 2014 Bandy World Championship in Irkutsk, Russia. This ambitious goal required to attract international media. Team’s financial support was small and limited by municipality funding. As playing international bandy implies paying a lot of costs, the squad needed funds to have necessary equipment and cover transport costs. Andersson strived to attract local business, such as local pub Engelska Puben, and create international media hype to attract side sponsors which could invest in team. Indeed, this hype emerged as Somalia bandy was evaluated by a FIB commissioner and allowed to participate in 2014 World Championship in Group B (Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

media attraction I consider that media is able to enhance the image of Sweden on international arena and demonstrate to wide international audience that Sweden is successful in integration of immigrants through bandy in particular.

6.2 Sport – a Tool for Integration

The category of “Sport – a Tool for Integration” was identified in media articles in *CNN* and in *The Guardian*, in personal communications with Mire, Hared and Grandin, as well as in the film *Trevligt Folk*. In the process of analysis I defined three subcategories which interpret integration through sport as creation of mutual understanding and as creation of coherent society and reveal perceptions what means to be a “good immigrant”.

6.2.1 Integration as Creation of Mutual Understanding

Integration in terms of creation of mutual understanding is discussed in interview with Hared and in media articles in *CNN* and in *The Guardian*. Hared admitted that today in worldwide kinds of sport we have sportspeople from different backgrounds as far as “sport is an incredibly unique opportunity to build relationships” and “it can bind everyone regardless of one’s religion, skin color, race, or culture (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22). Hared also claimed that the bandy project was initiated in order to “bridge Somali culture and Swedish culture together” and create a sense of mutual understanding as “in Sweden there is a lack of understanding” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22).

“They [Andersson, Grandin, Isa] decided to bridge Somali culture and Swedish culture together [through bandy], because in Sweden there is a lack of understanding as many refugees have been coming to Sweden.” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22).

Actually, media reports that the very first aim establishing of bandy team composed of Somali immigrants stemmed from the idea to integrate them easier into Borlänge society, bring them to play sports and get closer to Swedish culture. In press I found supporting quotations of Andersson, Grandin and Isa, who stood behind the idea of bandy integration at the beginning. In a *CNN* article Majendie cites Andersson who considered that “integration in sport was a good way to work” (Andersson, as cited in Majendie, 2014, January 24). In an article in *The Guardian* Shearlaw cites Grandin who considered that bandy integration would demonstrate “how political language changes and how people’s hearts change” (Grandin, as cited in Shearlaw, 2016, January 4). In the same article Shearlaw cites Isa claiming that bandy is significant “for Somalis to show themselves doing good things for their host country” (Isa, as cited in Shearlaw, 2016, January 4).

“I thought integration in sport was a good way to work. It’s something everyone has in common. If we could just do something that everybody could get together around, it would help.” (Andersson, as cited in Majendie, 2014, January 24).

For Grandin, the litmus test of the success the project will be shown in how “political language changes and how people’s hearts change”. (Grandin, as cited in Shearlaw, 2016, January 4).

The team’s chairman, Mursal Isa, a 34-year-old who has lived in Sweden since 2002, said it’s an important way “for Somalis to show themselves doing good things for their host country.” (Isa, as cited in Shearlaw, 2016, January 4).

6.2.2 Integration as Creation of Coherent Society

I found codes of sport integration as creation of coherent society in personal communications with Lundberg, Grandin and Mire, as well as in the film *Trevligt Folk*. The analyzed materials show that local society softened attitude to Somalis after bandy integration started. After Somali players started to play bandy, they also started to learn how Swedish society is functioning. As Lundberg admits, the example of bandy integration is a strong argument against the Sweden Democrats who stand against immigrant policies in Sweden. Lundberg considers that “when different cultures meet each other society changes over time” (Lundberg, personal communication, January 23, 2019). It is notable that such sport, from one side, and social, from other side, initiative is significant not only for Somalis but also for Swedes as they can “reflect of its own culture background in the meeting with other cultures” (Lundberg, personal communication, January 23, 2019).

“Bandy is a very white sport which is often played in industrial community, where the Sweden Democrats are very strong. Some of the people who voted for the Sweden Democrats did not like it at all. However, when different cultures meet each other society changes over time. It is important that all Swedes can reflect of its own culture background in the meeting with other cultures.” (Lundberg, personal communication, January 23, 2019).

Grandin and Mire also claim that the Borlänge society is accepting Somalis after bandy team was created. Grandin states that “people in Borlänge seem to stand up for the team” (Grandin, personal communication, 2019, January 8) while Mire assumes that “the picture of immigration or the picture of Somalis in Borlänge has changed over the years” (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27).

“Over the years bandy has grown to more of a national interest. And people in Borlänge seem to stand up for the team.” (Grandin, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

“The picture of immigration or the picture of Somalis in Borlänge has changed over the years after we started to play bandy.” (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27).

The movie *Trevligt Folk* shows that, as the bandy team is developing, more and more Borlänge people get acquainted with the players and with other Somalis. In the one of the ending scenes we may notice how many local Borlänge people have come to the city square to the official meeting to meet, greet and cheer Somali players who have reached their first ambitious aims. In the film it is displayed that Somalia bandy team changed mind of local population. There was a speech delivered by the host of the meeting in which he praised Andersson, stating that he is “the man who’s helped Swedes and immigrants to inch a bit closer together” (Host, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015). Thus, the directors of the movie put in the plot the process of how perception of Somalis in Borlänge is changing through their sport performance. The movie shows that in the end the team satisfied its expectations, though at the beginning not a lot of people believed in it but finally started to support.

“The man who’s helped Swedes and immigrants to inch a bit closer together... The driving force behind all this: Patrik Andersson!” (Host, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

6.2.3 Being a Good Immigrant

The subcategory “Being a Good Immigrant” was identified in the movie *Trevligt Folk*. In the film there are several interviews with Borlänge people where they reveal what they expect from Somalis to consider them “good immigrants”. Actually, the interviews have been taken at the very beginning of bandy integration, before the Somali players reached the aim to participate in the World Cup. Thus, in the interviews respondents mostly criticized Somali immigrants, often biased. Indeed, they did not tell what features they appreciate to consider them as good immigrants. However, if make critics reversed, it becomes clear that local people expect immigrants to work, to follow social norms and rules, to integrate, do not hang around, do not cause havoc. I invented these codes of being a good immigrant on the basis of pieces of interviews from the film presented below.

“I have no friends of Somalis. We don’t even say ‘hello’. Never. See these youngsters? Where they come from they’ve been throwing stones and causing havoc. And they bring that here! They will never do a decent day’s work. Not even one in ten.” (Unknown respondent 1, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

“I like it. It’s good that they find something to do. It’s better they do something than hang around and steal bikes.” (Unknown respondent 2, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

“Well, it actually affects me personally a lot. Schools deteriorate. Children suffer. Are Somalis a problem? Yes. They don’t adjust. They aren’t interested in integrating.” (Unknown respondent 3, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

Moreover, in the film there is a scene where Isa motivated players who applied to the team to work hard as it was a chance for them to show that they are not a burden for their local community and can achieve results. Isa claimed that “pride and dignity need to be earned” (Isa, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

Pride and dignity need to be earned. You must give something to the world. If you don’t, do you know what you are? You’re a burden. (Isa, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

To conclude this paragraph, it is to say that the analyzed materials demonstrate that the large part of local population supports the team regardless of the political tensions, though the Sweden Democrats by 2014 were quiet popular in Borlänge. It seems that establishment of Somalia bandy indeed has helped to facilitate integration of Somalis and improve their image in the local society, though before bandy, as the film *Trevligt Folk* shows, local population treated Somali immigrants cold and biased. What is necessary for this research, the picture of changing society in Borlänge is naturally displayed in the movie *Trevligt Folk*. Taking in consideration that the film is available on *Netflix* and *Vimeo*, I assume that it delivers a message to international audience that Sweden is accepting immigrants and refugees and gives them an opportunity to become a part of the Swedish society.

6.3 Personal Development for Change

The category “Personal Development for Change” appeared in personal communications with Grandin, Lundberg, Mire and Hared. Grandin admitted that players soon recognized that “they got into society easier as players in Somalia bandy” (Grandin, personal communication, 2019, January 8), while Mire said that bandy helped him to enter the university and find employment (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27). However, as Hared suggested, there are limitations of integration into society through sport as success “depends on a character” of a person. He considered that sport gives “a key” to integrate, but not everybody is able “to turn the key” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22). Therefore, it gives a point that

sport can be an effective tool for integration if a person is able to make an effort to become a part of society.

“After some time the players found out that they got into society easier as players in Somalia bandy.” (Grandin, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

“I do not know how I could describe my life without bandy now. Maybe without bandy I would have not started to study at the university. Bandy made it easier. Now I work as a sports consultant.” (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27).

“Sport is an important key to integration, but that is not only a key – you have to turn the key. If you do not turn the lock then the door does not open.” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22).

Hared admitted, that since the first for Somali team Bandy World Championship “the main goals went to compete” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22). Hared acknowledged that Somalia bandy team “has difficulties in past few years winning international matches”, but players do bandy to win (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22)⁸. On the one hand, it is a social victory that players have passed through a long way to achieve such result as qualifying and playing on international competition, which made them “stars” in Borlänge and in Somalia and attracted international media as well (Lundberg, personal communication, January 23, 2019).

“The media has had a big influence on the players. They are now “stars” and the people of Borlänge know who they are. I also think that the players have grown as individuals.” (Lundberg, personal communication, January 23, 2019).

Hared views bandy as a chance to develop own personalities, to show that the team is progressing and developing Somalia “not athletically” but “socially” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22). He suggests that the team took a chance given by Borlänge and soon would show the world that “Somalia is changing” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22). Hared suggests that the team gives an example for international audience that the teammates “are the players of a single and united Somalia, not a tribal Somalia” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22).

⁸ After the first international experience team’s management board and players continued to work to improve performance in future. There has been reached an agreement between existing Borlänge bandy club Peace & Love City, which is supported by the municipality, and Somali National Bandy Association that Somali players would have an opportunity to train and play for the club in order to gain more competitive experience (Lundberg, personal communication, January 23, 2019).

“Having international bandy team shows that we are progressing, that people are trying to improve and develop our country not only athletically but socially. I think that goes to show how Somalia is changing and soon the world will see this as well.” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22).

“There are many difficulties tribally, but we are the players of a single and united Somalia, not a tribal Somalia.” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22).

I also found codes of personal development through sport in an article in *CNN* and in the film *Trevligt Folk*. Majendie in a *CNN* article mentions Hussain, a Somali bandy player, who was going to become a doctor or architect (Majendie, 2014, January 24). Majendie also cites Hussain claiming that the Somali players “want to show the world that everything is possible” (Hussain, as cited in Majendie, 2014, January 24). In the final titles of the film *Trevligt Folk* it is mentioned that after 2014 Bandy World Cup 10 Somali players entered bandy college to get specialized education (Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

All in all, Somali players enjoy new experience in the second highest Swedish bandy league Allsvenskan, where Peace & Love City, the club they play for between international competitions, stands for today. Somali players train hard to improve their sport results, which, hypothetically, would attract more international attention in future. However, today there are messages in *CNN* and in the film *Trevligt Folk* that players strive for success and work hard. I suggest that international performance of Somalia bandy team is already a proof that the players are developing themselves for positive change. Though Somalia bandy team represents Somalia, not Sweden, the analyzed materials demonstrate that Somali players develop themselves in Sweden, and their efforts result in local integration and international recognition. In this regard Swedish soft power creates a positive image of Sweden as a state where immigrants are able to succeed integrating into the Swedish society and keep their roots at the same time.

6.4 Transnational Belonging

The category “Transnational Belonging” was identified in personal communications with Grandin, Lundberg, Mire and Hared, in an article in *CNN*, and in the film *Trevligt Folk*. This category is based on codes which reveal that the Somalia team attracts large audience and support in and outside of Sweden and portray it as a role model for other immigrants to do sports. It is notable that the project of Somalia bandy team in Borlänge became a role model for the city of Karlstad, where the bandy team of Afghan immigrants has been created a few years ago, as Grandin reported (Grandin, personal communication, 2019, January 8). Hared revealed that the example of Somalia team also attracts Somali and Turkish children in Sweden to do

sports (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22), while Mire shared that the team has plans to go to Somalia “to do some workshops, to show the movie, to show bandy videos, to show the sports” (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27).

“There are other initiatives inspired by our bandy team. In Karlstad for instance, they work with a team for Afghan refugees.” (Grandin, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

“Young children from Somalia community⁹, Turkish kids are attracted to do sports, Afghanistan as well has built their bandy team last year or the year before.” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22).

“We can do projects or workshops. We always talk about going back to Somalia to do some workshops, to show the movie, to show bandy videos, to show the sports, but these are only plans we have.” (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27).

Support for the Somalia bandy team comes from different sides. As Hared pointed out, during 2019 World Championship which took place in Vänersborg, Sweden people of different backgrounds, “Swedish, Somali, all cultures”, came to games to support the Somalia team (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22). Hared also noted that a lot of people support Somali players in social media and that a lot of kids come to games as they see the team as a role model (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22), while Mire told that the supporters “always say nice things” and “are very loyal” (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27).

“Last evening for example many people came: Swedish, Somali, all cultures – people are supporting us.” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22).

“Definitely, many kids come to us to watch our games and they say: “We are proud of you” or “I like to play bandy as well”. (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22).

“We have many-many people who send us messages on social media saying “we are proud of you”, “continue to train”, “continue to compete.” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22).

⁹ Hared admitted that “in the years to come, people of the next Somali bandy generation will be the contenders to win” (Hared, personal communication, 2019, January 22). Indeed, I can assume that the team is renewing and accepting new players from younger generation. For instance, according to FIB protocols of Somalia games at the World Cup, in 2019 two teenagers of 15 years old and one teenager of 17 years old were a part of the squad during the Bandy World Championship (Elitrapport-api, 2019).

“They always say nice things. Mostly they do not focus on how many goals we lose in games. They just say “keep going” and “keep doing” what we do. They are very loyal.” (Mire, personal communication, 2019, January 27).

Majendie in a *CNN* article puts emphasis on the fact that the Somalia bandy team is quite popular in Somalia, citing a Somali player Ahmed Hussain who says that Somalia and Somali people “are proud” of the team (Hussain, as cited in Majendie, 2014, January 24). In the context of the category of “Transnational Belonging” I consider significant to repeat suggestion of Grandin that “people in Borlänge seem to stand up for the team” (Grandin, personal communication, 2019, January 8) and suggestion of Lundberg that the players have become “stars” in the city and “the people of Borlänge know who they are” (Lundberg, personal communication, January 23, 2019).

“It has made us so proud. I explain it to my family and friends in Somalia. They don't understand bandy completely but they are so proud of us, the country is proud of us,” Hussain says (Hussain, as cited in Majendie, CNN, 2014, January 24).

“Over the years bandy has grown to more of a national interest. And people in Borlänge seem to stand up for the team.” (Grandin, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

“They are now “stars” and the people of Borlänge know who they are.” (Lundberg, personal communication, January 23, 2019).

I also found codes of transnational belonging in the film *Trevligt Folk* where it is displayed that during matches the Somalia team enjoys support from a crowd of Russian supporters cheering for the team and yelling “So-ma-li, So-ma-li!” (Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015). This episode is enforced with a short interview with a Russian supporter who, answering the question why he supports Somalia, tells that “they are strong, like Russians, like Siberians” and that “they have big hearts” (Unknown respondent 5, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

To summarize, I can assume that the analyzed materials show to audience that the Somalia bandy team is supported in Sweden, in Somalia and by other supporters of different backgrounds. A *CNN* article and the film *Trevligt Folk* demonstrate that the development of Somali players they came through in Sweden is highly appreciated by supporters who cheer for the team during its matches. Though Somalis do not represent Sweden playing in jerseys of Swedish national colors, media and the film give a point that they represent Sweden training and developing in this country which finds support among people of different backgrounds in different states, which is significant in terms of soft power.

6.5 Racism and Anti-racism

The category “Racism and Anti-racism” was identified in the media article by Shearlaw in *The Guardian*, in the film *Trevligt Folk*, and in the semi-structured interview with Mire. Shearlaw in an article in *The Guardian* argues that “the rising number of refugees has exacerbated tensions across the country” and some refugees “experienced face death threats and arson attacks” (Shearlaw, 2016, January 4).

The rising number of refugees has exacerbated tensions across the country. Some new arrivals have been forced to live in camps, others have experienced face death threats and arson attacks (Shearlaw, 2016, January 4).

In the same article Shearlaw also considers that Sweden due to these tensions was forced to terminate its open door policy (Shearlaw, 2016, January 4). The author cites the Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven who claimed by the end of 2015 that Sweden “simply cannot do it anymore” (Löfven, as cited in Shearlaw, 2016, January 4). Shearlaw also introduces the opinion of the Somali bandy player Mohammed Ahmmed, who is concerned that “it was always racists and other extremists who used to say ‘stop immigration’ and now it’s the government” (Ahmmed, as cited in Shearlaw, 2016, January 4).

“It was always racists and other extremists who used to say ‘stop immigration’ and now it’s the government. You start thinking ‘what will happen next?’ ‘Will I become a citizen or they will send me home?’” Ahmmed says (Ahmmed, as cited in Shearlaw, 2016, January 4).

However, Shearlaw draws attention that one of the team’s chairmen, Isa, believes that “the majority of the people are very welcoming” (Isa, as cited in Shearlaw, 2016, January 4). Moreover, Shearlaw admits that the Somali players continue to progress “regardless of the political tensions” (Shearlaw, 2016, January 4).

I also found codes of racism in the movie *Trevligt Folk*. The film introduces an interview with Patrik Andersson’s girlfriend of immigrant background, Damayanthi Lundin, who tells that her children faced racial abuse in Borlänge. Lundin suggests that before a lot of immigrants came to Borlänge local “people were respectful, but not anymore” (Lundin, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

“I was taking my children swimming when a man, a Swede with two children of his own, came and threw sand at my boys. ‘F----- n----- kids,’ he said. I was so angry. Before, when we came, people were respectful, but not anymore. They think there are too many of us.” (Lundin, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

The film *Trevligt Folk* introduces one more interview with a local respondent, unknown woman, who seems to be against refugees in Borlänge and says that “sometimes it feels like we’re being replaced” and that “it’s gone too far” (Unknown respondent 4, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

“I don’t know how many cultures live here but go to Tjärna Ängar, and you’d be lucky to see a white face. There’s too much black. Sorry to say. Sometimes it feels like we’re being replaced. It’s gone too far.” (Unknown respondent 4, as cited in Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015).

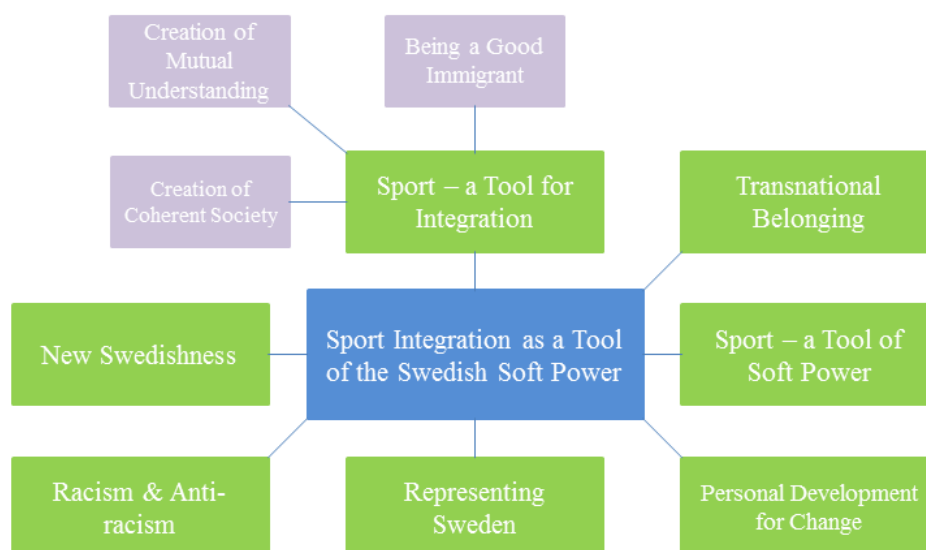
To conclude this paragraph, it should be emphasized that the abovementioned interviews from the movie seem to be conducted before Somalia bandy team reached 2014 World Cup. These interviews are represented at the beginning of the film, when bandy project has just started. As the film followed the team’s development throughout a year, at the end the movie demonstrates only positive reactions of local population to Somalia bandy team. The film shows to the audience that the society of Borlänge is changing after the Somali immigrants started to represent Borlänge on sport arena, while Shearlaw in an article in *The Guardian* displays that despite having tensions the majority of the Swedish population is welcoming. These materials, arguably, draw overall positive image of Sweden in taking and integrating immigrants as they show that the Swedish society is able to change for better.

7. Discussion of Content Analysis

In order to answer research questions of this thesis that are aiming to describe whether and how immigrant sports figures constitute a form of Swedish soft power in international relations and what image Sweden is given in international English-language media sources in terms of sport integration of immigrants, inductive category development in qualitative content analysis of primary data was applied. In the Chapter 5 I presented the analysis of how international media takes up examples of successful integration of immigrants and challenges they face in Sweden. I applied to analysis of international English-language press as far as it has an ability to influence the Swedish image on international arena and demonstrate to wide international audience whether Sweden is good in integration of immigrants through sport in particular. In the Chapter 6 I applied to triangulation of data collection to have deeper insight in case study of Somalia bandy team, and in that section I presented the analysis of articles from international English-language media, personally gathered interviews, and documentary film *Trevligt Folk*. Therefore, in this section I compare and summarize findings from both chapters and evaluate this study in comparison to the results of previous studies on research problem.

In this study, on the basis of qualitative content analysis, seven themes emerged – *sport as a tool of soft power*, *sport as a tool for integration*, *New Swedishness*, *representing Sweden*, *transnational belonging*, *personal development for change*, and *racism and anti-racism*. I have organized them in a scheme illustrated in the Figure 2 in order to demonstrate the perception of integration through sport as Swedish soft power based on the analyzed primary data.

Figure 2. Scheme of Categories: Sport Integration as a Tool of Swedish Soft Power



However, I obtained one more distinct finding that suggests that *the Swedish government seems to underestimate the potential of sport integration* as a tool of soft power in foreign policy, which is presented in this section. The findings of this research are discussed by order below.

In the analyzed materials, in particular in a semi-structured interview with Mire, in a set of media articles, and in the film *Trevligt Folk*, I found that sport is, indeed, portrayed as *a tool of soft power*. Sport gains an image of an instrument that is able to contribute to establishing peaceful relationships between states and people as sport is considered to transcend borders. Similar findings were also articulated by Murray who portrayed sport “as a soft power overture, as a means bringing estranged peoples, nations, and states closer together or a way of demonstrating the collegiality of a relationship” (Murray, 2012: 581). In this sense, the results of my analysis also support the findings of Soares e Castro who defined sport as “a tool for soft power”, “a tool for development”, and “a tool to promote peaceful relations at the international level” (Soares e Castro, 2013: 29–30).

Analyzed data foregrounds that sport contributes to the power of attraction by way of being recognized an effective *tool for integration* of immigrants in Sweden. Articles from such international media sources as *The Guardian*, *The Associated Press*, *The Local*, *CNN*, *Eurosport*, and *These Football Times*, interviews and the movie *Trevligt Folk* represent Sweden as a successful story of immigrant integration through sport, in particular through football, cricket and bandy. Here, the finding that sport is a tool of integration in Sweden coincides with findings of Hertting and Karlefors who argue that “sport is a valuable arena for integration of children and youth with different background” in Sweden (Hertting, Karlefors, 2013: 42). On the basis of analyzed data three key elements of sport integration emerged. Sport is seen and represented as a tool for integration able to create mutual understanding in the Swedish society, make it coherent and improve image of immigrants doing sports. Thus, analyzed materials showed that sport initiatives in Sweden are considered to support communication between Swedes and immigrants, and facilitate adaptation of immigrants and refugees of same background to new society. In the analyzed materials Sweden is given a positive image as a state where immigrants have an opportunity to come closer to the Swedish society through sport.

Issue of *New Swedishness* was strongly highlighted in articles in *Eurosport* and in *The Guardian* which introduce Zlatan Ibrahimović as the best symbol of modern Swedish multicultural society. The fact that Sweden has accepted a lot of immigrants for the past years is linked to the fact that the way to be Swedish also seems to be changing over time, and Ibrahimović is seen the best symbol for that. The finding that Ibrahimović stands for

representation of changing Swedish society coincides with findings of Sarrimo as she claimed that Ibrahimović “contributes to globalizing the Other, the province Malmö and its suburb Rosengård to an immigrant’s tale well suited to both a national and an international public” (Sarrimo, 2015: 13). This research also demonstrated that the international image and Swedishness of Ibrahimović are emphasized by his biography book *I am Zlatan Ibrahimović* and Volvo commercial, which was also emphasized by Sarrimo (Sarrimo, 2015). This research suggests that Ibrahimović, being portrayed in media and digital files as the symbol of *New Swedishness*, increases Swedish soft power in international relations and demonstrates that the image of Sweden and Swedishness is changing at the same time.

This research suggests that the issue of *representing Sweden* is displayed in international press which creates overall positive image of Sweden in international relations by picking up stories of successful initiatives in developing professional multiethnic teams, as the Swedish national teams in cricket and football, and statements of outstanding sports figures of immigrant background such as Zlatan Ibrahimović. These examples concerning outstanding and professional Swedish sports figures deliver a powerful message to international audience as their success is linked with Sweden. Media, in particular an article in *The Guardian*, also pays attention to the fact that Ibrahimović represented one of a state’s symbols – the Swedish national anthem, which seems to strengthen the idea that people of immigrant background are able to represent Sweden in international relations. The present finding seems to be consistent with Murray’s perception that “sportspeople act more like celebrity diplomats, using their star power to draw the world’s attention to international, global issues” (Murray, 2012: 585).

However, the previous finding about representing Sweden is complicated by another significant finding, which concerns the *transnational belonging* of athletes from Dalkurd and Somalia bandy team as well as Zlatan Ibrahimović. The analyzed materials demonstrate that these athletes enjoy support and become role models not only in Sweden, but also outside of Sweden and among people of different backgrounds. Also, at the same time as they perceive themselves as representatives of Sweden, their role as representatives of a political unit is not limited to this: Dalkurd is highly valued among Kurds in and outside of Sweden, while the Somalia bandy team enjoys great support in Borlänge and in Somalia, attracts supporters of different backgrounds and has become a role model for Afghan immigrants in Karlstad. Ibrahimović attracts international audience by his performance on the pitch – and in the Volvo commercial, which brings in transnational commercial dynamics. Media puts emphasis that Dalkurd, though it is of Kurdish genius, is the Swedish club and Ibrahimović, being attractive abroad, is Swedish, while the film *Trevligt Folk* gives a point that Somali team, representing

Somalia but developing in Sweden, finds support among people of different backgrounds in different states. This is significant in terms of Swedish soft power but complicates, in an interesting manner, the idea of soft power being tied to a specific state or nation.

One unanticipated finding concerns how international media, interviews and the film *Trevligt Folk* display *personal development* of immigrants doing sports. The analyzed materials give a point to suggest that developing personal skills through sports could be a starting point for integration, but success requires making personal efforts to enjoy benefits in life in the Swedish society doing sports. The representation of how immigrants are developing their skills through sports refers to Swedish soft power in a way that international press and the film *Trevligt Folk* demonstrate to international audience that immigrants and refugees are able to succeed in Sweden. Sweden in this regard is portrayed as a state where immigrants are able to successfully integrate into the Swedish society and keep their roots at the same time.

One specific finding concerns issues of *racism and anti-racism* which are strongly displayed in international media concerning the case of Jimmy Durmaz who challenged racial abuse in Sweden and in the film *Trevligt Folk* concerning attitude of local Borlänge population to Somalis before bandy project started. The image of Sweden as a racist society would, indeed, posit a challenge to the hypothesis of representations of immigrant sportspeople as a form of soft power. In case of Durmaz, international media shows to its audience that, though there have been racist messages in Sweden against the footballer, a lot of the Swedish officials and sportspeople united to strongly support Durmaz and delivered a striking message against racism. Media also shows that Zlatan Ibrahimović has also gone through racial abuse but eventually was accepted in the Swedish society. Therefore, the international press transmits the message to international audience that while racist instances occur, Sweden is against racism and stands for people that live in the multiethnic state. This, arguably, positively influences the international image of Sweden. As for the case of the Somalia bandy team, the film *Trevligt Folk* shows to the audience that the society of Borlänge is changing after the Somali immigrants started to represent Borlänge on sport arena, while an article in *The Guardian* displays that, despite having tensions, the majority of the Swedish population is welcoming. These materials, arguably, draw an overall positive image of Sweden in taking and integrating immigrants as they show that the Swedish society is able to change for better. This finding seems to be consistent with perception of Peterson that sport is a part of society which is able to prevent social discrimination (Peterson, 2004).

There is one more distinct finding which emerged on the basis that this research has not found codes in international media and in the film *Trevligt Folk* whether the Swedish government exploits successful integration initiatives in sport as a tool of soft power in foreign policy. This finding assumes that *the Swedish government seems to underestimate the potential of sport integration as a tool of soft power in foreign policy*. Moreover, *the Swedish government seems to underestimate the potential of sport as a tool for integration policy*. As found in the case study of Somalia bandy team, the Swedish government does not give support to the project, which is developing on municipal and private investments. In this regard, Lundberg claimed that it is hard to find financial support “for a special project from the government” (Lundberg, personal communication, January 23, 2019) while Grandin argued that the team has “no support from the Swedish government and just a small sum from the municipality for marketing” and that “private sponsors pay” (Grandin, personal communication, 2019, January 8). Moreover, as the film displays, the team’s management board was searching for private sponsors to cover training, transport and equipment costs (Hammar, Wikingsson & Helgeson, Af Klintberg, 2015). This finding coincides with perceptions of Stenling and Sam who claimed that Sweden is lacking a government agency which could make up the whole state’s sport policy as it is in the UK, Canada or Australia (Stenling, Sam, 2017: 693). Though, it does not mean, that the Swedish government ignores sport politics as, according to Stenling and Sam, annually it invests approximately 200 million euros in sport, while the Swedish Sport Confederation, being a partner of the government, distributes these funds to federations or projects (Stenling, Sam, 2017: 693; Swedish Sport Confederation, 2012: 24). Moreover, as Hertting and Karlefors emphasize, in 2003 the Swedish government launched a massive project, *Handslaget (Handshake)*, aimed in particular at integration of kids and youth of immigrant background through sport, which continued with another project – *Idrottslyftet (Lifting sports)* (Hertting, Karlefors, 2013: 37).

To summarize, in the analyzed materials I have not found codes which could describe Sweden as an actor in international relations which implements sports diplomacy and exploits initiatives in sport integration as a tool of soft power to improve its image in foreign policy, though studied examples cannot be generalized. This is interesting vis-à-vis the theory of soft power and the role of state agency in it. However, there is an arguable exception as in the interview Mire described hypothetical relationships between Sweden and Somalia in terms of sports diplomacy based on the movie *Trevligt Folk* about bandy integration, though this assumption is limited as this code did not emerge in international press or in the movie, which could deliver this message to the audience.

It seems reasonable to assume that sportspeople with an immigrant background constitute a form of Swedish soft power, however, basing on this research, the question whether the Swedish state exploits this phenomenon to promote values of soft power in international relations cannot be confirmed. However, as the analyzed materials reflected, there are elements of soft power, but they emerge through actions that are not directly related to the state. There are successful initiatives of immigrants' integration through sport into the Swedish society, and international English-language press, the movie *Trevligt Folk* along with strong performance of such outstanding sports figures as Zlatan Ibrahimović draw overall positive image of Sweden in international relations, demonstrating that Sweden is accepting immigrants and refugees in its society, that they are able to succeed in integrating in Sweden after starting doing sports.

8. Conclusion

In this study, the aim was to reveal whether and how sportspeople with an immigrant background constitute a form of Swedish soft power and whether Sweden exploits sports figures with immigrant backgrounds to increase its power of attraction. In the research, I have demonstrated what image of the Swedish society in terms of integration through sport is given in international English-language media, in interviews and in the movie *Trevligt Folk*. The empirical findings seem to provide a new perception of how Swedish soft power is described in international press and digital files. The present research seems to be the first that summarizes findings on different initiatives in sport integration and perception of sportspeople of immigrant descent developing in Sweden. This research confirms previous findings on the issues that sport can be a tool of soft power as well as a tool for integration, that outstanding sportspeople have an ability to present a state in international relations acting as informal diplomats and that in Sweden there are initiatives in sport integration. However, this happens largely without evident participation of the government in their development, which, from the point of the neoliberalism theory in International Relations, could be explained by increased spectrum of actors in international relations that include, for example, non-governmental organizations.

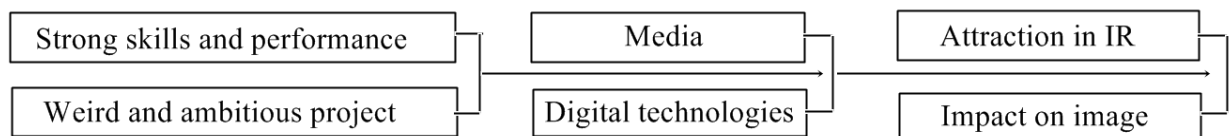
This research has provided a new understanding of how projects of sport integration through sport and outstanding Swedish sportspeople can contribute to promote Swedish soft power and enhance the image of Sweden on international arena. Stories of successful integration through sport and success stories of strong and skillful athletes are attractive not only for international press, but also for non-sport and non-governmental organizations which take up these stories and invent something which attracts international audience. For example, Volvo has made a commercial with Zlatan Ibrahimović in the lead role and the SF Studios has shot the film *Trevligt Folk* available in such international video streaming services as *Netflix* and *Vimeo*.

Returning to the research question of this thesis, I can claim that although there is no explicit agenda on the part of the Swedish government and its departments to employ sportspeople of immigrant background in Sweden to promote soft power in international relations, there are elements of soft power in the examined phenomenon. That is, while the research does not support the claim of Sweden exploiting immigrant sportspeople to increase its power of attraction, these sportspeople do constitute a form of Swedish soft power. The international English-language media sources as well as such Swedish non-governmental actors as the Swedish Sports Confederation, Volvo and SF Studios demonstrate to the world that the Swedish society is changing and accepting immigrants also with the help of sport as a tool of

integration. What is also interesting is the fact that also linked to Sweden, this is a form of soft power that is not exclusively Swedish but rather transnational.

As this thesis has shown, the power of attraction is at work as various sport integration initiatives attract Swedish local and international media, which show to the world that Sweden has become a home for these immigrants, where they are able to progress and succeed, and lets them be equal with local natives. Such values of soft power as equality, teamwork and cultural diversity are demonstrated to the world thanks to international media and digital technologies that are making positive image of Sweden, and this reputation seems to be well-earned, even taking into account that social problems still remain in place. In this regard, the mechanism of attraction to Sweden seems the following:

Figure 3. Attraction of international attention to Sweden within sport integration context



However, the results of this research may be limited as probably there are other perceptions of the research problem in other materials. More research would be required to understand whether and how Sweden exploits the broader phenomenon of sports diplomacy as a tool of soft power and how this is connected to its foreign policy. Future studies can also provide a more extensive analysis of Swedish sources and sources in other languages as well as gather interviews with the Swedish officials from the government or from non-governmental sport organizations.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Questions for Semi-structured Interviews with Somalia Bandy Players

1. How do you see the role of sport in the world and in international relations?
2. In your view, why is it important for Somalia to have a national team in bandy?
3. Why is it important for you to represent your country on the international arena?
4. Why it makes sense for Somalia to have a Sweden-based bandy team?
5. Is the team, in your view, more about representing Somalia or more about integrating to the Swedish society? Or both?
6. In your opinion, what values do you promote while training and playing for club in Sweden and playing for national team on international arena?
7. In your opinion, does your example attract more immigrants in Sweden to do sports?
8. How people in Somalia react to your performance? Does bandy unite population in Somalia? Does it unite population in Borlänge?
9. How did you feel yourself among the society before you started to play bandy?
10. What has changed since you started to play?
11. Do you think that sport helps you and your teammates as well as other migrants and refugees to integrate into the Swedish society?
12. Do you feel integrated into the Swedish society? To what extent and in which ways?
13. What is the role of sport in your process of integration?
14. Do you feel any support from the Swedish government or from your local town municipality? What kind of support?
15. In your opinion, is sport an effective tool of integration policy in Sweden?

Appendix 2. Questionnaire. Questions for Hans Grandin

1. How do you see the role of sport in the world and in international relations?
2. In your view, why is it important for Somalia to have a national team in bandy?
3. Why it makes sense for Somalia to have a Sweden-based bandy team?
4. Is the team, in your view, more about representing Somalia or more about integrating to the Swedish society? Or both?
5. In your opinion, what values do the players promote while training and playing for club in Sweden and playing for national team on international arena?
6. In your opinion, does the example of Somalia bandy team attract more immigrants in Sweden to do sports?
7. In your opinion, does bandy unite population in Somalia? Does bandy unite population in Borlänge?
8. Do you get any support from the Swedish government or from your local town municipality? What kind of support?
9. In your opinion, do players feel integrated into Swedish society?
10. In your opinion, is sport an effective tool of integration policy in Sweden?

Appendix 3. Questionnaire. Questions for Jan-Olof Lundberg

1. How do you see the role of sport in the world and in international relations?
2. In your view, why is it important for Somalia to have a national team in bandy?
3. Why it makes sense for Somalia to have a Sweden-based bandy team?
4. Is the team, in your view, more about representing Somalia or more about integrating to the Swedish society? Or both?
5. In your opinion, what values do the players promote while training and playing for their club (Peace & Love City) in Borlänge and playing for national team on international arena?
6. In your opinion, does the example of Somalia bandy team attract more immigrants in Sweden to do sports?
7. How did the municipality of Borlänge treat the bandy project first run in 2013? And did the position change through the last 5 years?
8. What kind of support does the municipality of Borlänge give to the Somalia bandy team?
9. In your opinion, does bandy unite population in Somalia? Does bandy unite population in Borlänge?
10. How do you think, do players feel integrated into the society of Borlänge?
11. Are there any other sport initiatives aimed to integrate immigrants in Borlänge society? What are they? How many immigrants are approximately involved?
12. Do you think that it would be possible to receive support from the Swedish government to finance and promote any other local immigrant sport projects in Borlänge?
13. Are there any Swedish outstanding sportspeople (except Per Fosshaug who coached the Somali bandy players) in Borlänge who, hypothetically, promote values of soft power?
14. How could you describe New Swedishness?
15. In your opinion, is sport an effective tool of integration policy in Sweden?