The Use of New Media by the Palestinian Diaspora in the United Kingdom

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GLOSSARY

Al-Quds *(القدس)*: A Jerusalem-based Arabic-language daily newspaper, published in print and online.

Al-Quds Al-Arabi *(القدس العربي)*: A London-based Arabic-language daily newspaper, published by Palestinian expatriates, in print and online. Founded in London in 1989, the newspaper is distributed in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and America.

Al – Watan *(الوطن)*: Fatherland, Homeland.

A Blog: An online platform that has an autonomy from authoritarian and governmental control. There are distinctive types of blogs, such as, activist blogs and public-sphere blogs (El-Nawawy and Khamis, 2013).

Diaspora: " 'Diaspora' is widely used today to refer to populations of refugees, migrants, guest workers, expatriates, and the exiled and self-exiled without much concern for the existence of common features or contextual applicability" (Moghissi, Rahnema, and Goodman 2009).

Fake News: "News articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers" (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017, 213). Media bias and mistrust in the media are not new phenomena, but in the New Media Age, the problem has been intensified, as Social Media features ease the ability to publish misleading content.

Fatah *(فتح)*: A Nationalist secular Palestinian movement, part of the PLO umbrella group. Fatah's current chairman is the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. In 2007, a conflict between Hamas and Fatah erupted. As a result, the two Palestinian National Authority areas are run by the separate factions - the West Bank by Fatah, and Gaza by Hamas.

Ghurba **(غرباء)**: "The experience of being a stranger separated from one's familiar home" (Peteet 2007, 639).

Haaretz: An Israeli daily broadsheet newspaper (founded in 1918). The newspaper is published in Hebrew and in English, both the print edition

and *Haaretz* website. The English edition is published in Israel, together with the *International New York Times*.

***Hamas* (حركة المقاومة الاسلامية)**: The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas's Arabic acronym) was founded in 1987 at the beginning of the First Intifada, as a Palestinian offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2006, Hamas won the legislative elections in Gaza. In 2017 Hamas chose as its new leader, Ismail Haniyeh, who lives in Gaza, unlike the former leader, Khaled Meshaal, who lived in Qatar.

Intifada: The Palestinian popular uprising. The first Intifada broke out in December 1987. In May 1994, As part of the Gaza-Jericho accord, Israeli military forces withdrew from the areas of Gaza and Jericho, in coordination with a newly established Joint Israeli - Palestinian Security Coordination and Cooperation Committee.The Second Intifada, the Al-Aqsa Intifada, broke out at the end of September 2000 and is named after the Jerusalem mosque complex where the violence began.

Jihad: The literal meaning of *Jihad* is struggle or effort. This term has a few interpretations in the Islamic context, such as, conversion of unbelievers, the struggle to build a good Muslim society, and *Holy War*: the struggle to defend Islam, with force if necessary.

Multimedia Messaging Service: "Multimedia messaging service (MMS) is emerging as a natural but revolutionary successor to short messaging. MMS allows personalized multimedia messages containing content such as images, audio, text and video to be created and transferred between MMS-capable phones and other devices" (Ghaderi and Keshav 2005, 198).

***The Nakba, Al Nakba* (النكبة)**: The literal meaning of *Nakba* is catastrophe. The Palestinians refer to the *Nakba* as the "catastrophe of 1948, when the State of Israel was created … " (Matar 2011, preface page). The Palestinians were dispersed, and the Palestinian refugees' problem was created.

New Media: Computer based media: Internet websites, mobile phone applications and more. In contrast *to New Media*, "*Old Media"* refers to print, television and radio.

The Palestinian Authority (the Palestinian National Authority): The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was established in 1994 as an outcome of the Oslo Accords as the elected government of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In January 2006, Hamas won the

legislative elections in Gaza, indicating the end of the Palestinian National Authority rule there. Clashes between Fatah and Hamas factions led to Hamas seizing power in Gaza in June 2007. The two Palestinian National Authority areas run by the separate factions- the West Bank by Fatah, and Gaza by Hamas. In 2017 Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation deal.

PLO: The Palestine Liberation Organization (**منظمة التحرير الفلسطينية**) was formed in 1964 to represent refugees who were scattered around the Arab world. It is an umbrella organization comprised of Palestinian national movements with the Fatah party being the biggest movement within the organization.

Political Islam: A socio-religious phenomenon that represents both popular discontent and stable political order (Milton-Edwards 1999, 2).

Semites: People who speak Semitic languages. The most prominent Semites today are Arabs and Jews. In a Biblical sense, Semites are people whose ancestry can be traced back to Shem, Noah's eldest son.

Smart Phone: A smartphone is a mobile phone with advanced features which includes a phone, Internet connection, digital music player and more. It supports mobile phone applications such as WhatsApp and and Snapshot, that allow delivering messages and pictures to various groups. The messages are encrypted and there is no problem of censorship.

Social media: "All web based applications which allow for creation/exchange of user-generated content and enable interaction between the users. This could be in the form of social networking sites (Facebook, Google Plus), Blogs, Internet forums sites etc" (Taprial and Knwar 2012, 8).

Tahadiya (تَهُدِنَة): A short-term calming period, **ceasefire,** during a conflict in which differences are put aside. A Tahadiya stopped most of the violence between Hamas and Israel over the course from June to December 2008. In 2014, following Operation Protective Edge, Israel and Hamas, brokered by Egyptian mediators, agreed to a ceasefire which is still effective. Between 2014 and 2018 there were some violations of this ceasefire.

Umma (أمة): The worldwide community of Muslims.

PREFACE

One of the most commonly used tactics of dehumanization in cases of conflict is denying the existence of the "Other" party, through relegating it to a position of nonexistence, or, at best, invisibility. This othering of the "Other" is meant to erode the very essence of their existence, through denial and negation. In an effort to counter these negative and unproductive tactics, Amira Halperin embarks on a challenging ethnographic journey of deep digging and persistent exploration of a highly complex topic, involving a highly volatile population, when she sets off to explore the use of new media technologies by members of the Palestinian diaspora in the United Kingdom. Fully aware of her own position as an "outsider" to her studied group, and all the limitations and challenges that come along with this position, she exerts extra effort to paint a rich, deep, and holistic picture of the dynamic, volatile population she chose to focus on, as well as the highly complex and multifaceted subject she decided to investigate in her research study.

In doing so, she is fully aware, and is keen to make her readers equally aware, of the multilayered and multifaceted complexities of her studied topic, by revealing the intersections, overlaps, cross-cuttings, and sometimes the divergences and tensions, between diametrically opposed spheres, such as the online and the offline, the old and the new, the private and the public, the Arab and the Western, the political and the apolitical, as well as the local and the global, which sometimes results in the birth of new, hybrid middle-ground spheres, such as the "glocal," for example.

This book reveals how the complexity, hybridity, fluidity, and dynamism of Palestinian identities in the diaspora, which are both shaped by and shaping their media exposure, consumption, and production patterns in parallel, result in a constant state of in flux and transition, politically, socially, and communicatively, as the tug of war and the push and pull mechanisms between all of these forces remain to be at play, whether locally, globally, or "glocally."

This ethnographic longitudinal study is a brave attempt to unpack the multiple layers of invisibility which cloud Palestinian identities in the

diaspora, as they continue their acts of resistance(s) against multiple forces, both at home and abroad, whether politically, socially, economically, or communicatively, or on all of these levels simultaneously, in search of new meanings, new identity markers, new adaptive mechanisms, and new survival techniques.

In undertaking this challenging mission, the focus of this book, and its author, remains to be how and why new means, tools, and modes of communication are being deployed to make meaning out of these acts of struggle(s) and resistance(s) on multiple levels and in diverse forms, and how and why they are being effectively utilized, despite various challenges and numerous limitations, to create, integrate, or negate negotiated identity positions for a stateless population, which remains strongly determined to survive, thrive, and remain visible.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE DIGITAL INFORMATION REVOLUTION AND LINKS WITH THE HOMELAND

Introduction

This book describes my research of the Palestinian diaspora in Europe, which is relevant to a recent major phenomenon—the unprecedented immigration waves from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe. Overall, regardless of religion or immigration status, there were an estimated 7 million migrants to Europe between mid-2010 and mid-2016, not including 1.7 million asylum seekers (Pew Research Center's 2017 Survey).

Linked to this wave of immigration is the high usage of social media by the new immigrants. This research explores the Palestinian diaspora in Europe and the significant changes in the Palestinian society resulting in the new media revolution.

This research explores a period of over a decade, from 2006 until 2017. It encapsulates the major changes that occurred in this period in the Palestinian society. The major change is the increased use in Information and Communication Technology. In Gaza the usage in communication technology is still lower than in the West Bank, as a result of the socio-economic situation (see table 2).

The second change that occurred in this decade is the change in the inner Palestinian politics: in 2006, Hamas won the legislative elections in Gaza, indicating the end of the Palestinian National Authority rule there. Clashes between Fatah and Hamas factions led to Hamas seizing power in Gaza in June 2007 and President Mahmoud Abbas dismissing the government.

The two Palestinian National Authority areas run by the separate factions-the West Bank by Fatah, and Gaza by Hamas. In 2017 Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation deal as part of an effort to end the decade-long rift.

The successful implementation of this deal should be observed in the next few years.

Palestine is a "stateless" nation, its place of origin being a conflict area (from within). "Palestine" is still not recognized as a state, and there is no territorial continuity in the Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Since the Oslo Accords of September 1993, few of the conditions for state building have been fulfilled.

There is an interim Palestinian self-government authority, and the Palestinian National Authority has the autonomy to govern its people. The Fatah party (the Palestinian National Authority) rules the West Bank, whereas the Hamas party rules the Gaza Strip. In 2012, the United Nations General Assembly voted to upgrade the status of the Palestinians to that of a "non-member observer state". Until recently, the Hamas leadership was based in the diaspora. In the February 2017 elections, Hamas elected a new leader, Yahya Sinwar, who operates from within the Gaza Strip.

The conflict with Israel is a major obstacle to the full implementation of the process and the resumption of the peace talks. The Palestinian immigration phenomenon is linked to "stateless" diasporas. The Palestinian diaspora's case demonstrates that a "Stateless Diaspora" has a genuine and definite interest in news from the homeland and is highly engaged in homeland politics.

This "stateless" condition has a direct impact on Palestinians' media consumption and media production. Conflicts within and without prevent journalists from operating freely. It is in this point that the problem lies: the Palestinians' need for information is pressing, but as it is a conflict area there are major obstacles that impede the distribution of news that would answer the demands for consistency, accuracy, and, most importantly, real-time updates. As the findings show, the revolution in new technology has answered the Palestinians' demands for the reception of news and media usage for political purposes.

The availability of hundreds of news websites has eased the diasporic Palestinians' ability to access information, a fact that is highly important in times of major news events. The Palestinians in the diaspora are an active audience. They create and use websites, blogs, social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), and mobile phone apps (e.g. WhatsApp) to disseminate their personal stories to global audiences, as well as receive updates from family members and friends in Gaza and the West Bank. The

new technologies are bypassing geographical distance and editorial guidelines. The story of the Palestinian people is being told by the people themselves, overcoming problems of space in the mainstream media. Palestine current affairs have become part of the global news agenda.

The changes in the last decade are dramatic. When I started my research in 2006, the participants talked about the major difference between the period before the technological revolution of the media, and the period that followed. Following the emergence of the Internet, the Palestinians have disseminated, from their own perspective, personal stories, the Palestinian history narrative, and news events. It was the first time that Palestinians could deliver their issues of interest to global audiences on a large scale.

When I completed my research, technology has developed further. During the period of the research, only few of the participants had mobile devices with Internet access. They used the Internet mainly in working places, Internet cafes, and at home. In recent years, most of the Palestinians and new immigrants to Europe have mobile phone devices with Internet access.

Mobile Messaging Services became an efficient tool, which includes features that the Internet is lacking. Using Multi Media Messaging allows contacts with different groups by texts, pictures and video clips. The distinct advantages of Mobile Phone Applications such as WhatsApp and Snapshot, is the fact that there is no problem of censorship as it is evident in blogs and news websites. In addition, the content is encrypted. A major challenge in the digital era is fake news, which became a concern in November 2016 right after the United States Presidential election (see chapter two).

Keywords: New Media, Social Media, Fake News, Information Technology, Internet Regulation, Digital Activism, Deliberative Democracy, Palestinians, Immigrants, Diaspora, Muslim Communities in Europe, Middle East, Politics, Conflict Resolution.

About this Book

This study fills an existing gap in knowledge in the field of diaspora studies, relating to those diasporic groups that strive for independence and live in conflicted spheres, and in the fields of new media and Arab media through Palestinians' utilization of new media for political ends, and the

expansion of their social networks that serve as transnational meeting places.

The book explores the political role of the Palestinian community in Europe and its links with the Palestinian community at "home," i.e. Gaza and the West Bank. The research provides an insight into Palestinians daily life, political activism, links with the host states, and the increasing role of new technologies in the life of the Palestinians in the diaspora. The new media has changed the media consumption practices of Palestinians as well as their global visibility. Whereas in the past the Palestinians' state aspirations were a local story that took place in a remote area, today this story is being told to audiences worldwide by professional media outlets, and most importantly by the Palestinians themselves, using thousands of different social media websites, blogs, and mobile phone applications for this purpose.

This research is a testimony of the Palestinian community members talking about their dreams, feelings, politics, past and present links with Israel, problems within the Palestinian society, media usage for consumption and political mobilization, and global networks. The place of origin for most of the interviewees is Gaza and the West Bank, and they are from a broad spectrum of the Palestinian society. The research sheds light on the perceptions of the first and second generations relating to the main issues influencing the Palestinian society, in and outside the diaspora, which are the right of return and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The main themes are Immigration and Diaspora, Refugees, New Media, Technology and Politics, The Palestinian Diaspora, Middle East, and Muslim Communities in Western countries.

My research is a pioneering effort in the area of old and new media in the life of the Palestinians, both in the Middle East and in the Diaspora. According to Abdelal (2016):

> While the literature on the development of the Arab media is more extensive, there is relatively little on the Palestinian media, its history and role. Ahmad Abu al-Said and Husain Abu Shanab wrote two books in which they sought to historicise the Palestinian media/press over the last century. The books differ in the sense that Abu Shanab, who used to be one of the PLO journalists, presents a critical assessment of the role of the media in the Palestinian revolution through his experience in the PLO and

in the Diaspora, while Abu al-Said focuses on the Palestinian media within the Palestinian Territories.

In the context of democracy and nation building, Amal Jamal and Dov Shinar also examine the Palestinian media. However, Jamal examines it differently from Abu Said and Abu Shanab. He argues that all Palestinian media, including those affiliated with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, played a role in shaping the political developments in the occupied Palestinian Territories. Shinar has approaches his study differently by examining the impact of the media on nation building prior to 1987. (Abdelal 2016, 8)

Wael Abdelal (2016) has also recently conducted research on Hamas media, presenting historical contextualization of the development of its media strategy.

According to Hammer:

"There is no research that investigates the impact of the Internet on the Palestinians in the diaspora and that explores trends in media usage. No study has yet been conducted on Palestinian representation on the Internet" (Hammer 2005, 7).

According to Shiblak:

There is a shortage of studies on the Palestinian diaspora, despite the large number of important works written mainly on the political context and on specific Palestinian refugee situations. In fact, Palestinian refugees were often looked upon through the prism of a political perspective. Their existence as a transnational community, their civic status in host societies and their personal narratives were rarely examined. (2005, 7)

Since Shiblak and Hammer wrote their accounts of Palestinian Diaspora studies, two major works have been published. The first is Matar's research on the Palestinian people, *What it Means to be Palestinian: Stories of Palestinian Peoplehood*. This research on Palestinians' personal narratives tells the personal stories of the Palestinian people both in and outside Palestine, since Matar refers chronologically to the main historical events of the "Palestinian national struggle" (2011, 1). The second work is Aouragh's research, which discusses the ways Palestinians and pro-Palestinian solidarity activists try to achieve political demands via the internet to create a Palestinian politics of resistance (Aouragh 2011). In this context, Aouragh investigates Palestinians in the diaspora in Jordan and Lebanon, as well as in Palestine.

> Little research has been done on the Arab Diaspora and its media consumption. There are only three publications, all of which concentrate on the Arab Diaspora in the United Kingdom. The first is Noureddin Miladi's study (2006), which investigated how the Arab Diaspora in Britain uses and interprets Arab satellite television broadcasts in comparison to their response to the BBC and CNN. The second is the study of Zahera Harb and Ehab Bessaiso (2006) on the Arab Muslim Diaspora audiences in the United Kingdom, in regard to television after September 11th. The third is Dina Matar's (2006) study on the Palestinian diaspora in the United Kingdom and their reactions to the September 11th attacks and media reports on the event. The main conclusion of the three studies is that the Diaspora's members have heavily consumed Arabic satellite television since its inception, particularly since they mistrust the local British and Western television programmes, because they perceive them to be biased and one-sided against Arab and Islam. (Rinnawi 2010, 267)

Research on Palestinian refugees was conducted by Robert Bowker (2003).

Encompassing history, politics, and political culture, Bowker explores the impact of Palestinian refugee mythologies on the potential settlement of conflict with Israel.

This book seeks to contribute to this ongoing research into the Palestinian diaspora by providing a focused analysis of an area that has been comparatively neglected, which is the use of new technologies by the Palestinians in Britain and the impact of technology development on the media and the political and social arenas.

The research compares the use of traditional and new media. In putting it to the test, I interviewed Palestinians who reside in the United Kingdom. The research is audience research, with a new focus of investigation. The current research focus is the influence of the media in general on either Palestinians' identity as individuals or the influence of news on the notions of "belonging, community and social action" (Matar 2005, 66). This subject was investigated by the scholar Dina Matar in *News, Memory and Identity: The Palestinians in Britain* (2005). In addition, Aksoy and Robins published research about the influence of satellite television on the Turkish community in London (2000). There is also research about the rising power of the new media in the Arab world (Alterman 1998). However, Alterman did not interview Arab media users, and instead talks about the influence of the new media on the audiences in Arab countries in general.

A recent study of the Arab Diaspora in Europe and transnational media (Rinnawi 2012) explores the media consumption of members of the Arab minority in Germany. The majority of Arabs in Germany are of Palestinian or Lebanese origin and came from Lebanon during the civil war between 1973 and the mid-1980s (Rinnawi 2012, 1452). The main claim of the study is that the access of minority members to Arab satellite media in the 1990s has strengthened their sense of belonging to their Arab homelands and their identity (Rinnawi 2012, 1451).

Sakr (2001) investigates satellite television as the medium with the potential to free viewers from government control of national media. My research focus on the internet shows that its substantial growth started at the same time—the 1990s—and its widespread use began in the last decade. As Sakr claims, satellite television did not remove governmental restrictions. For the owners of the private Middle Eastern satellite channels, "Television ventures could be seen to oil the wheels of business as television programmes provided an additional medium of exchange with investment partners and allies worldwide" (2001, 206).

The broadcasting of satellite television entailed limitations to governmental influence, for example the Qatari television network Al Jazeera. Decisions on agenda setting are carried out by professional editors, who hold the power to determine content. In contrast, the internet allows unprofessional individuals to create websites for the dissemination of news without governmental control. As Hanieh states, multimedia formats help break the domination of mainstream media by choosing which images of Palestine are presented, and how (Hanieh 1999, 41).

According to Georgiou, "the development of Diasporic global media spaces that are beyond state control and the gate-keeping of mainstream media are some of the major developments in globalisation" (Georgiou 2006, 133). The owners of websites can invite policymakers to participate according to their own editorial decisions. What is more, a major problem relating to mainstream media is audience trust. In recent years, audience trust in the institutions of the mainstream media has been fading in many developed countries, according to a study exploring the impact of news media scepticism on audience news patterns (Bennet, Rhine, and Flickinger 2001; Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Kiousis 2001; Kohut and Toth 1998).

The concept of mistrust in the media applies to the particular context of audience relations with the news media. It is the feeling that the mainstream

media is neither credible nor reliable, and that the news media get in the way rather than helping society (Tsfati 2010, 23). Hegemony is a central concept in understanding the potential influence of media in society. In the version of Marxist theory inaugurated by Antonio Gramsci, hegemony is the name given to a ruling class's domination through ideology and the shaping of popular consent (Gitlin 1980, 9).

The theory of hegemony argues that since elites control the mainstream media, it is their perspectives that are given prominence. Hegemony is a central component to the conceived historical divides between the alternative and mainstream press, as many would argue that it is the fundamental reason that the alternative press exists (Kenix 2011, 10).

The advantage of the internet over television is significant: as a result of the political and security situation in Palestine, television stations are being closed and this affects Palestinians in the United Kingdom who would like to watch Palestinian channels on satellite television. One important alternative to the mainstream media is found in online news sources (Tsfati 2010, 22).

Many of the features of the internet—connectivity, boundlessness, lack of control—do not sit easily with traditional news values. Online current-affairs audiences are offered more diversified news items and increased control over the news flow. As there is a significant development in the online environment, internet credibility has changed as well. According to Johnson and Kaye, credibility scores increased considerably from 1996 to 2000, but then declined in 2004. In 1996, online media was still a new phenomenon and the internet was perceived as an unregulated outpost where anyone could express their views, but in the period after this the internet came to be considered as at least as credible as the mainstream media. As online credibility dropped after this, researchers suggest that as people are becoming more savvy internet users they are better able to distinguish reliable sources from unreliable ones (Johnson and Kaye 2010, 71).

In her research on the media representations of British Muslims, Poole says that it is evident that the media reproduce the dominant ideologies of the society they are a part of. She argues that the media also constructs its own "meanings" through signifying practices: "Representation is not then a transparent process of re-presenting an objective reality. There is always a mediating effect whereby an event is filtered through interpretive frameworks … News, then, provides its audiences with interpretive

frameworks, ways of seeing the world and defining reality" (2002, 23). Poole's hypothesis is that images of Islam will form a "particular symbolic universe, a relatively stable and recognisable world of (TV) news" (Dahlgren and Chakrapani 1982, 45).

> Recent research about new media in the Arab world was published by Mohammed el-Nawawy and Sahar Khamis. In their book, the authors shed light on the growing phenomenon of cyberactivism in the Arab world, with a special focus on the Egyptian political blogosphere (el-Nawawy and Khamis 2013). In their previous research, el-Nawawy and Khamis analysed the discourses and deliberations in the discussion forums of three of the most visited Islamic websites: IslamOnline.net, AmrKhaled.net, and IslamWay.com (el-Nawawy and Khamis 2009).

In recent years, there have been significant developments in media usage by the Palestinians. A growing number of Palestinians use the free chat application WhatsApp. Currently, seventeen media outlets in Gaza are using WhatsApp as a news service *(Al-Monitor*, August 24, 2015). The Palestinians in the diaspora and at "home" use this application for its clear advantages: the low cost, the fact of its being an uncensored media device, its global reach, the social media, and the ability to interact with selected interest groups.

Chapter Summary

Chapter two, "New Media: New Horizons," elaborates on the influence of new technologies on global politics. This chapter provides a thorough understanding of the Palestinian community in the diaspora and its media usage practices, as the internet is the main medium the Palestinians use for news consumption and production, as well as an understanding of the gap between the Palestinians in their place of origin—Gaza and the West Bank—and the Palestinians in the United Kingdom, in terms of their accessibility and usage of new technologies.

The shift from traditional to modern media came with the publication of the first Arab newspaper during Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt (1798–1801). This was the first appeal to the masses from the ruling power. It was only in the 1990s, with the launch of satellite television and the development of the internet, that media that does not act as a mouthpiece for governmental actors developed. There has been a rapid development of new technologies since the 1990s. Currently, mobile phone applications are being used as major tools for professional and non-professional local and global news and current affairs.

The third chapter, "The Palestinian Expatriates," contributes to the understanding of diaspora discourse and the Palestinian diasporic community's motivations in the light of technological changes and globalization. This chapter explores the problem of the Palestinian refugees, linking this issue to the current immigration wave from the Middle East to Europe. The chapter refers specifically to the Palestinians, and generally to the influences of immigration on Muslims residing in European countries.

The personal stories of the research participants are detailed in the fourth chapter, "The Personal Stories of the Research Participants." This chapter reveals the non-replicable advantages of the individual interview method chosen in this research. In an era of emails and electronic communication, as far as this research is concerned there is still no substitute for face-to-face meetings with people. The meetings with the participants for the purpose of interviewing revealed a whole world to me, a revelation that enriched my research accessibility for its readers. It started from my ability to see and sense the Palestinians' customs, eating manners, working places, gathering places, and more. It also encompasses my ability to view the Palestinian media consumption practices by looking at news websites and chat rooms, and the opportunity I had to ask for clarifications when needed. The meetings were especially important in this research, since they comprised a learning process for both the participants and myself. It goes without saying that individual interviews might lead to problems of information reliability and so on—problems that are being discussed in this chapter. Most importantly, the chapter highlights the interviewees' reasons for immigrating to Europe.

In chapter five, "News from Home and Israeli Media," I discuss one of the main findings of this research, that is that the Israeli media, and more specifically Israeli news websites, serve as the main source of information for Palestinians residing in Britain. One of the interesting findings indicates that more than half of the participants routinely use the Israeli media. At times of breaking-news events, almost half of the participants use Israeli media.

This chapter highlights the importance that participants attribute to the news. Most of the participants have more interest in Palestinian news than UK news, regardless of the length of their stay in the United Kingdom, age, gender, occupation, and socioeconomic status. It also shows that the main medium for their news consumption is the internet. The fact that Israeli media is the major source of information leads to the question of

the role of the Arab and Palestinian media in the daily life of the participants. This question is discussed in the next chapter.

The sixth chapter, "Palestinian and Transnational Arab Media Usage," explains the problems affecting the professionalism of the Palestinian media and the reasons for the usage or non-usage of Palestinian political websites for news. This chapter discusses the use of the transnational Arab media, and actually helps the readers to understand the implications of the satellite and Internet revolutions for the media usage practices of Palestinian audiences in the diaspora.

The concluding chapter, "Virtualization and Daily life in Palestine," raises the issue of the political role of the diaspora in the light of political developments in Gaza and the West Bank. The chapter's starting point is that the Palestinians are a conflict-generated diaspora. They are therefore highly interested in news and politics and use the new media for news consumption and political purposes on a large scale. Additional topics that the chapter discusses are the methodological advantages and disadvantages of the research.

It is important to comment on the time frame of my research. The fieldwork period was between May 2008 and January 2009. Until December 2008, there was no significant violence as a result of the Tahadiya period. In December 2008 the Gaza War—or, as it is called in the Arab world, the Gaza Massacre—broke out. The war ended in January 2009. During the process of interviewing, in July 2008 there were two terror attacks in Jerusalem.

My research was actually conducted in a period that included two major conflicts between the Israelis and the Palestinians. During the period of my fieldwork, on December 27, 2008 Israel started Operation Cast Lead, hitting targets across the Gaza Strip. According to Israel Defence Forces (IDF) officials, this was to combat the increasing launch of rockets from Gaza into Israel. This operation ended on January 17, 2009 when IDF troops withdrew from the Gaza Strip. Almost four years after the end of the Gaza War in November 2012, while I was engaged in writing up my research, Israel launched Operation Pillar of Defence in Gaza. After eight days of intensive fighting, the two sides in the conflict agreed on the implementation of a ceasefire. The conflicts discussed above are very important in demonstrating the research arguments. The analysis of the interviews refers to the period during which the fieldwork was carried out

(if further interviews were to be carried out they would have been analysed in other research). Having said that, I continue researching the field.

The primary language of the majority of the interviews was English, although Arabic and/or Hebrew were occasionally also used. In these cases, the interviews have been translated by the author.

CHAPTER TWO

NEW MEDIA:
NEW HORIZONS

New Technologies and Politics

New technologies have dramatically changed both the politician's working environment and the public conception of politics. Politicians now do not need the mediation of journalists in order to approach the public. People in power invest time and resources in studying how to strengthen their political influence via social media networks. Over the past ten years, social media applications (such as Facebook and Twitter) have become the channels for citizens' engagement with world leaders (for example, US President Donald Trump has about thirty million followers on Twitter). Whereas in the past the public was involved in the political process on a lower scale, following the new technologies revolution the public have become a major factor in the media and political arenas through their extensive use of social media applications.

This vision of new media technologies' influences on society is dual, being both utopian and dystopian. The cyber-optimists perceive the new technologies as promoting liberal democracy and economic and educational freedom, and providing human rights on a global level. The establishment of democracy is mostly evident in totalitarian regimes in which oppositional campaign groups operate in the online space (Storsul and Stuedahl 2007, 10). The optimistic school of thought sees in the possibility of visualization as the major achievement of the new technologies—the ability to see things without actually being in certain places, and also to learn about developments and places that it was otherwise impossible to learn about.

In contrast to this approach is the cyber-pessimist approach. According to this, new technologies support terror and radicalization as they support liberalism (Morozov, 2012). Enthusiasts emphasize how convergence will improve the quality of life and create new means for democracy, citizenship, and participation, whereas the less optimistic are concerned

with how a converged media can be perfidious, and services are used for gambling, cyber-criminality, and surveillance.

Fake News

In many countries, the reasons for mistrust are political polarization and mainstream media bias. The internet and social media have exacerbated low trust and fake news.

"Social media are powerful tools connecting millions of people across the globe. There exist entities with both strong motivation and technical means to abuse online social networks—from individuals aiming to artificially boost their popularity, to organizations with an agenda to influence public opinion" (Varol et. al 2017, 1).

According to Allcott and Gentzkow, social media platforms may be especially conducive to fake news. First, on social media, the fixed costs of entering the market and producing content are vanishingly small. Second, the format of social media—thin slices of information viewed on phones or news feed windows—can make it difficult to judge an article's veracity. Third, Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic (2015) show that Facebook friend networks are ideologically segregated and people are considerably more likely to read and share news articles that are aligned with their ideological positions (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017, 221).

World leaders (Hillary Clinton, Angela Markel, and others) are the targets of fake news. In September 2017, *The New York Times* published on its first page a story titled: "To sway vote, Russia used army of fake Americans." The article refers to the Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton 2016 presidential election campaign in the United States.

According to the writer, an investigation by *The New York Times* and new research from a cybersecurity firm have revealed some of the mechanisms by which suspected Russian operators used Twitter and Facebook to spread anti-Clinton messages and promote the hacked material they had leaked.

Governments try to exert more control online. In recent years, events as varied as the Arab Spring and elections in France have awakened governments as to how they have lost some control over online speech, commerce, and politics. Even in the United States, technology giants such

as Facebook are facing heightened scrutiny from the government (*The New York Times*, September 8, 2017).

Social media platforms and advertising networks have faced some pressure from consumers and civil society to reduce the prevalence of fake news on their systems (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017, 232). For example, both Facebook and Google are removing fake news sites from their advertising platforms on the grounds that they violate policies against misleading content (Wingfield, Isaac, and Benner 2016). Furthermore, Facebook has taken steps to identify fake news articles, flag false articles as "disputed by 3rd party fact-checkers," show fewer potentially false articles in users' news feeds, and help users avoid accidentally sharing false articles by notifying them that a story is "disputed by 3rd parties" before they share it (Mosseri 2016).

In 2017, Facebook launched a new tool to combat fake news. Facebook closes more than one million accounts every day, with most of these being created by spammers and fraudsters. However, the company still faces problems with enforcement. Monitoring terror organizations and incitement is one of its major challenges (*Mail Online*, August 25, 2017). The new program Facebook has launched to combat extremist material online, will not let spies read encrypted messages on WhatsApp, which is owned by Facebook (*Mail Online*, June 23, 2017).

Middle East and North Africa Immigration to Europe: Social Media Usage

A total of 4.7 million people immigrated to the European Union during 2015. Germany reported the largest total number of immigrants, followed by the United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Italy. It is considered to be the world's largest wave of mass-migration since the end of the Second World War, meaning that Europe is facing the worst refugee crisis since that time. Amongst the immigrants are a high number of Palestinians from Syria, Gaza, and Lebanon. Since the conflict in Syria erupted in 2011, about four hundred thousand Palestinian refugees from Syria have been displaced (eurostat website, 2017).

A significant new social phenomenon associated with the immigration wave is the refugees' usage of new media applications. Smartphone applications became vital tools for the refugees. The following quote from Patrick Witty published in the technology section of *Time* magazine demonstrates this phenomenon:

> Refugees fleeing war-torn territories have come to rely on their phones to
> make a passage to a better life. They use messaging apps such as
> WhatsApp, Viber and Line to communicate with loved ones back home.
> They navigate border crossings via Google Maps and Facebook
> Messenger. Their travails are documented on Instagram. A smartphone is
> often the only item they carry. (Witty 2015)

The New Phase: Mobile Messaging Services

The internet of the 1990s marked a new era in the media and
communication industry. In the last few years a new phase has begun: the
phase of mobile phone applications, which enable instant multimedia
messaging. The main application being used by millions worldwide is the
smartphone application WhatsApp, which has distinct advantages.

First, the distribution of messages via WhatsApp enables pluralism and
liberal discourse and thus promotes democratization, which is mainly
significant in non-democratic public spheres. The internet has created a
revolution, but it is still a medium with many limitations.

The dominant aspects of the internet demonstrating these claims are:
censorship (including self-censorship), cyber security threats, the
legitimacy of information, and information control. Internet bloggers,
mainly in non-democratic countries, have been censored, and in extreme
cases sentenced to death. Social networks such as Facebook face problems
of enforcement. In contrast to states, the abilities of Facebook to achieve
order are limited. It can close groups or deport users, but even those steps
can be bypassed.

The problem of government censorship and self-censorship in the
Palestinian National Authority, as evident in non-democratic countries, is
an obstacle to a democratic media market. In the Palestinian National
Authority there is a severe problem of press freedom as websites are being
removed and journalists are being accused of criticizing the regime.
WhatsApp has promoted the democratization process one step further by
bypassing censorship problems. The messages and pictures, and the
responses to them, are being transmitted in seconds to selected groups, and
opponents cannot access them.

Using WhatsApp doesn't require any knowledge or effort, compared to the
maintenance of blogs and websites. Blogs and social websites need
constant maintained interaction with respondents and updating. WhatsApp
users' actions are much simpler: they have to create a group or join an