‘If 1066 is said to be the most important date in English history, what is the equivalent in another country’

1066 marked the beginning of Britain as it is today. The Norman’s successful invasion of England instituted a new language, culture and leadership for medieval Britons. For Israel, their seminal date was the declaration of the State of Israel on the 14th May 1948. Following a long history, including ancient civilisations, wars and liberations, historical figures such as King David, and its status as a religious homeland, Israel became what it is today with its deceleration as a state. This date in history marked an obvious victory for many of its inhabitants, however it also inspired numerous wars and widespread violence, sparking and consolidating tensions across multiple countries, in addition to incredible pain and suffering for many people over many years. The most prominent date in any country’s history cannot be a pure celebration or exuberance, as importance is not synonymous with success. War and conflict was exacerbated in Israel post 1948, indicating the incredible significance to the country. 1948 was the most crucial date in this country’s history, the deceleration of a State of Israel altered the geographical, political, and social standing of Israel, shaping it into its modern day form.

To understand the significance of 1948 for Israel it is imperative to examine the history of Zionism and its links to Israel, and furthermore the country’s interlinked history of Palestine. The Zionism movement began to emerge among Jews in the late 19th century. As a movement, it aims to create a Jewish homeland, and views Israel and the holy city of Jerusalem’s its rightful location. Tensions between Arabs and Jews, originating in ancient times, was aggravated by the Zionist movement. Each group had proclaimed the city of Jerusalem holy to their religion, and pre 1948, Jerusalem was located in British Mandated Palestine. Zionism had begun to grow since it establishment as a political organisation in 1897, and this inspired increased movement of Jewish people to Palestine. During WW2 many Jews in Europe chose to flee to their proclaimed homeland to escape anti-Semitic movements and persecution. Although Britain had been made responsible for establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine in 1923, escalating violence between the Arabic population and Jewish settlers, and the underground Zionist paramilitary campaign, forced Britain to bring the question of Palestine before the United Nations.

The partition plan, a four part proposal attached to resolution 181 was adopted after two-month debate by the General Assembly on the 29th November 1947. The proposal included the termination of the mandate, withdrawal of British troops from Palestine, and the delineation between Arab and Jewish states, and Jerusalem. Palestine was divided into eight parts, each group would have 3, and the town of Jaffa became an Arab enclave within Jewish territory. The reaction of the Jewish people to this resolution was mainly celebrated, with Zionist leaders looking towards the building of a modern Jewish State, and on the 14th May 1948 the State of Israel as a Jewish state was declared, just as the British Mandate over Palestine ended. Immediate and fierce hostilities broke out between the Arab and Jewish states. It was this declaration that changed the course of Israel’s modern development, equivalent to 1066’s significance to Britain.

Arab league members of Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan and Syria refused to accept the UN’s partition plan, marching their forces into Israel in May 1948 immediately after the deceleration. This begun the first Arab-Israeli war, with the heavily armed Arabic states on the offence. The events of the war included the September 22nd Areas of Jurisdiction and Powers Ordnance, annexing all territory already captured, and any further captures, to Israel. This formally disrupted the Partition Plan and land capture became a prominent force of the war, still ongoing in today’s Israel/Palestine climate. The deceleration of the State of Israel, the outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli war, and the subsequent battles, suffering and development of Israel as a country indicates the significance of the year in Israel’s history.

The most important date in Israel’s history, based on the events contributing to its modern creation and future cultures, geography, leadership and politics is 1948. Israel’s deceleration as a State changed the course of its history as the Norman victory of 1066 changed Britain. The leadership of Britain’s complete upheaval is mimicked in the events of 1948, as Israel became a Jewish Homeland, with new geographical borders and council leadership. The year also held significance in the form of violence and hostility. The successes for the Israelis in 1948 were dwarfed by the suffering caused as a religious, geographical and cultural war begun. This additionally laid the foundations for the ongoing conflict that has not yet been solved, 72 years on. If it weren’t for the events of 1948, Israel would not be the country it is, shaped by religion, Zionism, conflict and geography.

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