**President Elizabeth Mountbatten Windsor**

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In a brilliant piece on the legacy of Queen Elizabeth II, the Marquess Robert Lord Salisbury wrote about the role of the crown as head of state. Of particular interest in his column were the comparisons made between the crown and elected heads of state, namely presidents. That raised an intriguing question: suppose Queen Elizabeth had been a president and not a monarch?

Consider this thought experiment. Britain does not have an elected president. Comparisons require a suspension of belief. So assume Elizabeth was born in the US to a future president and, like her father, chose politics as her calling. President George Windsor VI would die in office. His vice president would take his place, not his daughter.

Elizabeth would have attended a first-rate university. From there she would have matriculated into her father’s political party. As a teen in the White House, she would have learned the huge responsibilities of the office. Perhaps as the princess did during World War II serving as an automotive mechanic, she would have taken up an equivalent role possibly as a teacher or someone highly invested in her country’s future.

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When George died, Elizabeth and her family would have left the White House for other endeavours. However, could she not have attempted to assure his legacy as John Quincy Adams and George W. Bush did for their fathers? Could she have achieved that purpose by playing the non-partisan role of a queen?

Pursuing this leap of faith, suppose President Windsor had served during the war and distinguished himself in ending it. Further, assume America persisted with its follies in Afghanistan and Iraq as Elizabeth came of age. Elizabeth might have emerged as a candidate expressing many of the traditional values of America that had been diluted over time.

How would aspirants and competitors for the presidency have dealt with Elizabeth? The visit of Donald Trump and his wife to Windsor Castle to have tea with the Queen in 2018 was badly reported and still instructive. Trump was criticized for walking ahead of the Queen to inspect the honour guard when she gestured to him to do so. When Trump was about to board the Marine One helicopter to depart Windsor, he asked the Governor and Constable of Windsor Castle, a retired Royal Navy four-star admiral, to tell the Queen what a remarkable lady she was. Then, before boarding, he turned to the admiral and again repeated the request. That compliment would not have happened with Elizabeth as a presidential candidate.

Dealing directly with fifteen heads of government could not be replicated in US politics. Still, Elizabeth would have known from her father the general rules of engagement as president. Marriage would have been an important matter.

Prince Phillip was an experienced naval officer who came from Greek royalty giving up his career to marry a future queen. No equivalent consort exists in America. Perhaps Elizabeth would marry an American Mountbatten equivalent. And, like Phillip, he would subordinate himself to his wife’s aspirations.

The biggest leap is how Elizabeth would have become president. Here are where the story ends and reality sets in. All the qualities and virtues HM Elizabeth possessed as Queen would have been largely disqualifying as president. First and foremost, she was apolitical and remained above the fray and the nasty sides of politics. Second, she always carried herself with dignity and grace. Third, she had wisdom, knowledge and experience accumulated over decades of service. Not all presidents do.

Fourth, she was beholden to no one for financial support. The only fundraising she ever solicited was to aid legitimate charities. Fifth, Elizabeth had an aura in part based on ten centuries of monarchy. Sixth and perhaps most importantly, she had only one sworn aim and one duty: to serve the people of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Her other strengths would also prove detrimental if she had been elected president.

HM Elizabeth would not have been president. Yet, she has received tributes and praise exceeding those bestowed on any American president in death including John Kennedy whose assassination shocked the world. Yes, she served as Queen for seventy years. Presidents are limited to a maximum of eight years in office.

But it was more than longevity and a global platform that explained this outpouring of goodwill. Elizabeth had a persona that transcended politics, geography and nationality. She was not only Britain’s queen. She was the queen of the world as well.

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