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# The Death of Queen Elizabeth, the Death of the British Empire

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**ABSTRACT:** *The life of Elizabeth Windsor famously known by her title Queen Elizabeth the second, is one of mixed realities she is the longest reigning British Monarch in history having set on the throne for 70 years. The reign of Elizabeth was born from the greatest times of the British Empire with many colonies and a great reputation of the empire after the defeat of the Germans in World war 2. Queen Elizabeth has been credited in overseeing the end of colonisation from the British empire by many African states who were under British colonial rule. She facilitated for negotiations in some cases between liberation war movements and the colonial governments on peaceful ways of transferring power. Her Queen's government even went on to sanction Ian Smith regime in Rhodesia when it declared independence from Britain, the sanctions were as a result that her majesty's government would only accept independence if it was given to the majority black africans of Rhodesia. The British economy under her rule had prospered beyond unimaginable doubt with the British pound being the most powerful currency, the attractiveness of the pound attracted great minds from across the globe which helped improve the British economy and advanced its technological base. The common wealth of nations an organisation the Queen championed has had success in cooperation between Britain its former colonies and other countries that were not British colonies have since joined the organisation because of its successes. This paper seeks to show how the British economy, social base and its political prowess has suffered from the days that the Queen became sick to her subsequent death and the aftermath. Policies like the Brexit that was carried out during her old age and its impact of Britain will be visited upon in this article, the Irish referendum, the removal of the British Monarch as heard of state by caribbean nations that belonged to the British realm. The paper seeks to show how Elizabeth Windsor was the glue that bonded British modern society and the survival of the British monarch without her is under threat. In her life Queen Elizabeth worked with 15 British Prime Ministers from diverse parties sharing different ideologies this showed her to be a democratic monarch. This paper will expand on the front of the death of monarchs and empires in the modern era and Elizabeth Windsor being the last great monarch.*

**KEYWORDS:** colonies, economy, monarch, realm, referendum, reigning

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## INTRODUCTION

Like every empire in history the curtain always comes down, the British empire though having an ugly reputation because of its role in colonisation of Africa and other continents. The British economy has been one of the most attractive in the modern day due to its policies and success and this has been hailed on the stability that Queen Elizabeth 2 has brought on the British realm, this is evident as in her reign 15 Prime Ministers came and went but the one thing that remained making Britain great was the Queen. The London Bridge as she was referred too did not take well to her husband's death in 2021 as she suddenly become sick though she had seen her greater days passing, her sickness and eventual death did not smell good news to the British people and there future because for 70 years the woman had stand as beckon of hope and the most powerful feminist in a world where people are pushing for gender equality. In a dominantly patriachal world Queen Elizabeth 2 walked with her sholders above the rest bringing peace and stability in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the United Kingdom and beyond, a woman controlling the common wealth nations a grou with many patriachal head of states is on its on a marvel and something to admire for the girl child, she proved being female was a gender role not a bar for one's perfomance. In her late years Britain through a referendum walked out of the European Union a move that has since weakened the pound and seen the country experience job shortages as most workers from the EU bloc left Britain. After her death some colonial skeletons were provoked as the demanding back of the Kimberly diamond that was part of her crown, on his coronation day King Charles her son did not wear the crown which has the diamond.

The statues of Benin that were in British museums and other artifacts that the British had stolen from lands they had conquered during the height of the British empire have also been demanded back by their respective countries. Britain during Queen Elizabeth 2's last days experienced political challenges that saw every Prime Minister after Tony Blair not finishing their terms in office, the British political arena seemed to have been dying as the Queen became older something that not experienced at her prime. The rise of the South South partnerships also has had effect on the British dominance at the global stage as the world is fastly becoming anti-Western due to the failures of the United States of America to realise the new realities in today's world, Britain due to its policy of following America like a puppy following its master has lost out on many partnerships it had created through the Common Wealth of Nations among other policies. The move by Barbados to remove the British monarch as head of state a move that may influence other countries where the monarch is seen as head of state. The queen's death came at a time the British economy was suffering an economical turmoil something that has worried investors economic commententors who view the Queen as a symbol of British prosperity. Britain suffered during the times of an old and fragile Queen and her death may smell the end of the empire, with socio-economic and British global dominance under threat especially from the South South bloc and the brink of war in Europe that has been brought by the Russia invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent war sponsored by the West.

### **British Economic turmoil**

The reign of Elizabeth Windsor had seen the British pound being the strongest currency in the world and the British economy flourishing but in recent years things have begun to fall apart something that can be attributed to changing times in Geo-politics and the aging of the Queen. The UK central bank in 2022 a month before the death of the Queen delivered its biggest rate hike in 27 years, raising the benchmark to 1.75% in an bid to bring down inflation (Gilchrist K 2022). On the Queen death day the then British Prime Minister Lizz Truss said in a speech outside number 10 Downing street, "Queen Elizabeth 2 was the rock on which modern Britain was built." With the coming in to office of Rishi Sunak as the British Prime Minister a stability was brought to the economy with a recovery in the inflation rate but like a ship whose Captain who has sailed the toughest currency has died the trajectory has not changed as seen with the annual inflation rate in the UK unexpectedly rose to 4% in December 2023 from a nearly low of 3.9% in November of the same year (Trading Economics 2023).

The high cost of living in the UK has made the country who was once an attractive destination for job hunters to loose job seekers to the European Union countries, as they view the UK as an expensive destiny. The British economy have been one of the most stable economies in the world for a long time but the after effects of the COVID 19 that saw the collapse of many economies around the world, it has stargered to bring itself back to its former glory and the untimely death of the symbol of modern British society that Queen Elizabeth 2 had become brings fresh wounds to the economy as investors face speculation on what the monarch will be like in the long run. The ordinary British especially the poorest households have suffered a £4,500 hit to their finances since the start of Covid pandemic according to a report those with the lowest income have borne the brunt of the high cost of living crisis (Partington R 2024). The high cost of living has eroded salaries in the UK and the effects have been felt among immigrant populations in an interview I conducted with a friend of mine who is a caregiver who migrated to the UK on a sponsored Care visa, "life is not what people back home in Africa think when they hear someone has travelled to the UK, we are failing to serve upto USD\$800 a month equivalent, though the remuneration is high compared to most countries", this my friend attributed to the high cost of living from the rents, electricity and food prices. Migrants who used to send money monthly back home now suggest it is easy that spouses join them in the UK so that one works for rents and upkeep whilst the other one works for savings so that they can able to build back home and take care of loved ones. During the times of Queen Elizabeth 2 the very thought of migrating to the UK for work brought envy among many as the remuneration were worth a while and someone who worked in the UK would be able to do great investments back home as seen in most affluent suburbs in Zimbabwe urban areas which were built by diasporans in the UK. Most conversation with people that leave in the UK mainly relatives who migrated more than ten years ago they will tell you that the UK of yesteryear has gone the cost of living is weighing heavily on the population despite government intervention.

### **The Commonwealth of Nations and Geo-Politics**

Founded in 1887 at the peak of colonisation the Commonwealth of Nations was meant to serve the interests of the British crown. In 1926 when the British empire was in a state of repair it was settled that each member of the organisation was to be treated equal and pledge allegiance to the Queen (Millar W2022). The Commonwealth of Nations has since become modern from a colonial club that was ruled by the British crown to a group of countries cooperating in environmental, democracy, trade, support of small states and developing society and the young. They are 56 countries within the Commonwealth bloc and the expansion and success of the bloc can be credited to the visionary leadership of Queen Elizabeth who in her 70-year reign oversaw the end of British colonialism in to cooperation with the former colonies, her death however has thrown many questions as far as the future of the Commonwealth. In November 2021 Barbados officially removed the Queen as it heard of state replacing her with Dame Sandra Mason who was sworn in as President and new heard of state this was influenced by nation`s desire to move from its painful past where Britain had influence for centuries from the days of the transatlantic slave trade (Relph D 2021).

The move by Barbados has been seen as a trojan horse in the next wave of countries that make the British realm become republics. Jamaica in 2022 also brought new light when they were protests during the visit of the now Prince of Wales Prince William and his wife Princess Kate visited the island nation during Jamaican independence celebration that considered with the date of coronation celebration of Queen Elizabeth 70 years ago, many Jamaican political leaders have written a letter demanding that Britain should apologise and offer reparations to its former colony for slavery. A banner from one of the protesters read, “Kings, Queens, and Princesses and Princes belong in fairytales, NOT in Jamaica!” (Associated Press 2022). The protests signify a growing content on the British royalty who many accuse for promoting slavery and colonisation. Australia is one country that is a monarchical democracy having the British crown as the head of state, After the death of Queen Eliabeth they has been talk of Australia holding a referendum to become a republic. In September 2022 Matt Thistlethwaite, Australia`s assistant minister for the republic told the TIME, “The Elizabethan era is now over and it`s time for us to move in to the Australian era.” After the death of Queen, the Prime Minister Antigua and Barbuda said the island nation was considering a referendum on becoming a republic in the next three years and Jamaica looks to follow suit (Gunia A 2022). The future of the British realm seems to be bleak without the Queen that has been a glue and a leader to the realm. Many young Australians do not resonate with the idea of a monarch which they feel is outdated Adam Bandt, the leader of the Australian Green party gave his condolences after the death of the Queen but was quick to point that Australia must move forward and they needed a treaty with the First Nation as they need to be a Republic. The Prime Minister of New Zealand Chris Hipkins has admitted he supports the idea of New Zealand becoming a republic though in the immediate time they are committed to the monarchy (McClure T 2023). The role however of the monarch has been ceremonial in most of the afore mentioned countries. The future of the realm without its Queen is one of optimism and not clear but from the way things

are moving the glory days of the British empire wither daily since the death of its longest monarch, Elizabeth Windsor as statesman I would put her in the same hall as the Talleyrand of this world. She was a mother to the British realm a light that may never shine on the British island again her legacy is one that may never be matched.

**Geo-politics:** The invasion of Ukraine by Russian has brought many changes to the geopolitics of Europe as a continent and Britain has not been left behind in feeling the effects of the war which has put pressure on prices of food and energy. The war has exposed the UK and its European allies who have shown much dependence on the United States of America when it comes to the support of Ukraine in financial and weapon aid. The King has not been too much vocal on the war which is not like his mother that would mediate and have her voice heard in such situations. Britain has shown that it is no longer the leader in global politics but a cheerleader of the United States of America, the death of the British empire can be clearly connected in the Chinese dominance in trade across Africa a continent that the British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes envisioned the Cape to Cairo dream. In the peak years of the Queen British Africa trade was very strong but now the South-South trade led by the Chinese is the in thing.

The Queen has been a symbol of British soft power something that has been favourable to the country in International Affairs this she sustained by state visits to man countries, the Queen has been respected by many heads state as was apolitical and did not interfere in state affairs of other countries (Reis L 2023). When Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain, she sends her son Prince Charles to the ceremony and even congratulated the new Prime Minister Robert Mugabe whom she even went on to Knight. The way the Queen navigated the waters of international relations was that of a skilled statesman her funeral saw a record attendance of high-profile leaders from across all divides of life from politicians to business people a sign of honour to her legacy which many doughty her son King Charles 3 will fulfil writers have suggested he lacks the elegancy and touch of her mother. Her soft power can be seen with how she grew the Common wealth of Nations to include even countries that were not British colonies and protectorates, the educational scholarship that have taken many students to learn in British universities and the influence that the English language has grown to have across the world through music and arts. The English premier league has even become the biggest and most watched football league in the world and that is the legacy of Elizabeth Windsor.

### **Northern Ireland Future**

Northen Ireland is one of the countries that put together make up Britain alongside Scotland, Republic of Ireland, Wales and United Kingdom. The Northen Ireland has before been involved in sectarian fighting which saw the death of 3000 people. Sinn Fein the former political wing of the Irish army in May 2022 secured the largest number of seats in the regional parliamentary for the first time and this has horrified the loyalists (Humphries C 2022). Northern Ireland in its 100 years of history has seen Queen Elizabeth 2 as its head of state for 70 years and the death of the Queen was met with anxiety as the society is divided among the Loyalists who are

loyal to the monarchy and the other side which is made up of the republicans who are part of Sinn Fein. They have been cases of bombings in England by the Irish republic Army( IRA) a lawsuit has been underway against Former Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams which happened over 50 years ago (Melley B 2024), the win by Sinn Fein has brought worry to the British especially after the loss of the symbol that had brought peace after the secular killings, Elizabeth Windsor was not just a leader but a symbol to the Irish something political commentators and British royal historians have expressed that it may be hard for King Charles to emulate. The unity of the British kingdom is under threat as the Sinn Fein party has suggested that a referendum should be brought forward for the unity of Ireland, which will mean the end of the role of the British monarchy as head of state of Ireland.

The referendum will likely be in favour of the republicans as most of the youth in Northern do not connect to the idea of a monarch which they see as celebrities that are just burdening the tax payers as their role does not have a bearing in modern society. Brexit also has helped in gaining support of a republic as Ireland want to remain in the European Union which is vice-versa the British pull from the organisation. The loyalists viewed the Queen as the last link between the Empire and World War 2 victory central to their identity (Ferguson A 2022). The Queen in a world of deceit and lies was seen by the Northern Irish as a constant amid perceived betrayals by the British government – from the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985 that gave Republic of Ireland a say in Northern Ireland affairs, the pledge also to accept an Irish sea trade border was abandoned by then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in 2019 (Humphries C 2022). The Queen `s symbolic stature in Northern Ireland was sealed in her 2011 visit where she spoke a few words in Irish in her speech taking from the handbook of Nelson Mandela who said, “if you speak to someone with the language, he understands you speak to his mind, but if you speak to someone in his language you speak to his heart”. She laid a wreath in honour of the Irish people killed fighting for independence from Britain and went on to shake the hand of the IRA commander Martin McGuinness Sinn Fein Northern Ireland leader something that never happened before. The death of Queen Elizabeth has left a huge shoe to fill for the British crown to retain Northern Ireland in its realm though King Charles did visit Northern as his first gesture as king a spoke in Irish. Time will tell if Northern Ireland will remain under the monarchy but the youth which are the future see the republic as the future and unity if the Irish may be a reality in the next ten years.

### **The King`s Sickness**

The death of Queen Elizabeth the longest serving British Monarch ended with her son taking the reigns as King Charles 3. King Charles became the oldest British monarch to succeed to the British throne aged 73. From his coronation one would see that the new King was not in a health state as his hands were on camera and they were swollen and shaking. The mere sight of the state of the king came with uncertainty to many who had looked at the royal family as a symbol of the wealth of the Britain. The King`s past has left him unpopular especially after the revelations of infidelity in his marriage to Prince Diana with now Queen

Consort (Waxman O 2022). The past of the king has led to some skeptical commentators suggesting that it will define his reign. The British royal family is beyond a monarch in the sense that it represents a democratic monarch which is the centre of British community. It was revealed in February 2024 that King Charles 3 had been diagnosed with an unspecified cancer (Lamontagne K 2024), the announcement has brought much speculation as seen with the pressing by TV Show Personality Piers Morgan for the King to disclose what kind of cancer he has. The world needs to know as what happens within the British monarch has a direct effect on many countries including those in the Commonwealth of Nations. The politics of Britain has a close link to the monarch hence an unhealthy King may mean an unhealthy nation as the King the gatekeeper of British heritage.

The king also suspended his public events although he clearly stated he will carry out his constitutional mandate as the head of state and will also do his paperwork as required. Social media has been abused with rumours of William who is heir to the throne taking over control of some of his father's duties at this trying time. The uncertainty will have a bearing on the British economy which remains wounded since the times of COVID 19 and the subsequent death of its longest ruler Queen Elizabeth 2. It has been two years in the reign of King Charles 2 and the British economy had begun to stabilise, the chaos of government had cooled down after Liz Truss' shortest Prime Minister reign in office. The issue of the King's health has drawn many lines with other historians stating that in the eventuality of a worse situation and William is to become king will he be ready at 41 and what effects will it have on Britain since it is still recovering from the loss of Queen Elizabeth who had ruled for 70 years. The King previously had prostate cancer and now having 2 cancers is a huge worry especially for a country experiencing a changing times in geo-politics in Europe which is threatened by Russia's expansion. In the Middle East Britain's ally Israel has been executing what has been referred to as a genocide on Gaza, the stance of Britain which is a super power has not been convincing as in the days of Queen Elizabeth who was hands on character who have made her voice heard in these kinds of situations, King Charles 2 due to his battles with sickness has not been much vocal.

### **Social Welfare**

The British society once any envy of modern society has suffered much due to shortage of labour, higher energy prices, higher bills and a near extinct social life. The NHS has suffered greatly from the times of COVID and post Brexit, the NHS is said to need a large injection of homegrown doctors, nurses, GPs and dentists to avert recruitment crisis that could leave it with a shortage of 571000 workers by 2036 according to an internal document seen by the Guardian (Campbell D 2023). The second half of 2022 saw an increase in energy price in Europe as gas supply from Russia to Europe was disrupted by the Ukraine invasion by Russia and the Nord Stream 1 that saw prices markets go high (Roberts L 2024). It has been predicted that the price cap of energy will increase by £94 this year though we have seen rates drop by 50% wholesale prices. The failure by the British government to address the energy crisis is a reflection of the

whole British fall that's begun from the days of the weakening and the death of the island's Queen. They have been efforts to curve the social welfare crisis especially the shortage of workers in the NHS by sourcing labour from Africa but this effort has come at a price as bogus fraudulent recruitment agencies have increased, I for one has a cousin brother that was recruited by one of the agencies and migrated to the UK only to realise after a few weeks the agency has been blacklisted due to its bogus operation of charging job seekers money which is against the policies of employment in the UK. The migrants that have been brought by these agencies have found it difficult to switch the sponsored visas in order to stay and work in the UK. These situations may hinder the UK government in its efforts to bring labour as people fear they can be exploited and trafficked to the UK to later be dumbled there as what has happened with my cousin.

The multi-cultural society of the UK is set up in way that it promotes diversity though racism still exist with the high profile being of Princess Meghan the wife of Prince Harry who shared her ordeal in an Oprah Winfrey show in March 2021 she even went on to allergy that when she was pregnant one of the royals had approached Prince Harry to ask how darker the skin colour of their child would be, the couple went on to sight that the reason they separated from the royal family was for the security of their son who they believed was in danger because of his skin colour and were willing for him not to be called by the title of Prince. The Meggan case is a dark shadow to Britain a country that wishes to continue having relationships with African states that are the common wealth as the issue of racism has no place in the pan Africanism ideology. But the appointment of Rishi Sunak as Prime Minister has helped the nation with an image of inclusiveness as Sunak is a son of an Indian migrant and the first Hindu Prime Minister of Britain and ties with India have been strengthened at a time Britain seeks an alternative after the BREXIT and the sanctioning of Russia. The lifestyle in Britain however is more expensive than ever and they are a need of change in policies regardless of hardships that may be faced.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The death of Queen Elizabeth 2 was not just a moment but an event some dubbed it the fall of London bridge, it signified the end or near end of an empire she had served from the age of 26 to 96 years of age. Many things surrounding the rule of the Queen the long reigning monarch of Britain overseeing the Empire from post-World War 2, liberation of colonial Africa, independence of African states and the technological revolution of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Viewed by some as soft diplomat who was apolitical. Her soft power helped the British to become a darling of international relations offering education in its universities to students across the world. The Queen's reign offered opportunities to migrants who made something for themselves in the island nation some becoming Prime Minister like Rish Sunak, the legacy of Elizabeth Windsor is unmatched bringing together 56 states in the Commonwealth of Nations. The influence of the Anglican church where she set as the head can not be underestimated. Britain in Queen Elizabeth did not lose a monarch but the last glue that joined the realm with her gone the realm



has begun to tear as seen in Barbados, Jamaican protests, referendum suggestions in Northern Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and even Scotland. The coming in to power of his old son who became the oldest British monarchy to be coronated and now diagnosed of two cancers has brought uncertainty to those within the island and beyond. The death of the Queen has propelled a sudden demise to a wants glorious empire which reached beyond the horizon at its peak. The next ten years without the Queen will be vital to determine my opinion that the death of the Queen is the death of the British empire.

- Britain should develop a policy that would allow for the states that are under the crown`s rule to become independence therefore to return them as allies in the ever-growing international system, as forced withdraw from the relationship may become sour grape to future relations.
- The crown on itself must itself downsize like what happened with Dutch monarch in order to reduce the burden of tax-payers to fund the upkeep of a group of people whose role dwindles as the day goes by and become celebrities.
- The King has been transparent to the public by disclosing his cancer diagnosis though not stating which cancer, it will be welcome if full information is disclosed to the public so as to stop rumours that may affect the kingdom by creating speculation on the monarchy`s next moves.
- The British government on the hiring of immigrants should have agency that they directly work with and the job seekers would get these from home office website so as to avoid situations where people are trafficked and dumbered in the UK waiting to be deported.
- The British government must develop a political framework that promote partnership with its Commonwealth members weather big or small that will benefit everyone rather than benefit the big nations within the group.
- Trade should be promoted between Britain and the South states and these trade agreements must be inclusive to the parties involved rather than on British terms.
- Racism should be given a stiff punishment so that the British community will promote cultural diversity.
- Reparations for colonialism and slavery should be prioritised by the British government in order to fix past wrongs.

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