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60th anniversary of the Kennedy Assassination

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, had a worldwide impact and became a defining moment in history. For a while, JFK was the most powerful man in the country, in a matter of seconds it can all change but he will still never be forgotten. There was a dark and somber mood across the U.S. following Kennedy's death, seen in statements by former presidents and members of Congress. The loss of JFK affected not only the United States but also the entire world as I found out from my relatives who were in the Philippines at the time. Additionally, it brought forward the height of conspiracies. In fact, it was thought to have been the result of a conspiracy rather than the act of an individual, despite findings contradicted by the Warren Commission. Its aftermath played out through the newly dominant forms of mass media such as television. This made it a uniquely immediate and shocking experience for everyone around the world. Decades on, the impact of JFK's assassination is still being felt, with many describing the moment as the day America lost her innocence. Discussing the topic with my parents, JFK's death was explained and brought awareness to even in the Philippines, years after this canon event. This shows how impactful one man's death can be in history. Although I wasn't there, his death left the entire world mourning the loss of the American President, and it proved to be an event that could halt the tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The impact of JFK's assassination was everlasting, whether it was during his time as president or after his passing. His memory still evokes a profound sense of loss and resonates because contemporary American politics is dysfunctional. Kennedy may not have changed the world but his assassination may have significantly altered America's future, one thing is certain: it was a defining moment of where people were, how they reacted, and the fear of the unknown of what was to come.

The question of what would have happened if JFK had not been assassinated is a popular topic of discussion among historians and the public. One of the most significant events that would have been different was the Vietnam War.

If JFK had survived, many of the foundational elements of the current progressive movement within the Democratic Party might not have gained traction. With a potential second term, it is likely that more moderate social welfare and reform policies would have been pursued, leading to less growth in federal government bureaucracy and spending. Additionally, an earlier exit from Vietnam might have been pursued, altering the national dialogue on firearms and gun control.

It is known that JFK was a committed anti-communist. This is seen as he had already taken the world to the brink of nuclear holocaust during his face-off against Soviet counterpart Nikita Khrushchev in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. However, after the Cuban Missile Crisis, there was a shift in Kennedy's attitude, and he looked to work with the Soviets more than ever before. He was also known for his efforts to reduce nuclear weapons, it is not so much of a wild statement to say he would have worked with Khrushchev to reduce the world's nuclear weapons arsenal leading to a different approach to Cold War tensions and nuclear disarmament. This

would result in Cold War tensions de-escalating a long time before they did had Kennedy been in power. He might have sought a more diplomatic solution than his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, who escalated U.S. involvement in the war in 1964. When discussing with my ninety-two-year-old neighbor, he believed that Kennedy would have kept up the U.S. presence in Vietnam but definitely would not have escalated it to the extent that Johnson did. We discussed how he would have wanted a quicker timeframe to get out. Essentially, this would lead to a phased withdrawal strategy. Planning for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam already began while JFK was president. This indicates that there were already considerations for this withdrawal strategy.

Another significant event that would have been different if JFK had not been assassinated is the Civil Rights Act. While the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act would have eventually been signed, it is likely that the timing would have been different if JFK had survived. The assassination of Kennedy galvanized support for social legislation, and this support may have been slower in coming. Consequently, the signing of these acts might not have occurred in 1964 and 1965. The assassination of Kennedy played a role in generating momentum for the passage of these significant pieces of legislation, and the timing of their enactment might have been altered if Kennedy had lived. Johnson was ultimately able to pass it in large part by evoking the sympathy of the country for their fallen president's final wish.

On the topic of Acts, it is likely that the Gun Control Act of 1968 might never have existed. Kennedy's assassination was a key mover for the Gun Control Act. If that assassination hadn't happened then the Act would be less likely to be pushed as there would not nearly be enough awareness. There was a series of violent incidents such as the Martin Luther King

assassination to contribute. Kennedy's death perfectly represents a butterfly effect: with no Gun Control Act, the NRA would probably not have morphed into a political gun advocacy organization because they would not have needed to during the '60s and '70s time period.

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 had a profound and lasting impact, contributing to a darker legacy that has reverberated through American society. The widespread mistrust and cynicism that emerged in the aftermath of the assassination have persisted, fostering a sense of paranoia and distrust that has been unprecedented in American history. The event fueled a multitude of conspiracy theories, which cultivated a climate of suspicion and uncertainty, altering the national dialogue and shaping the trajectory of the nation.

It is impossible to answer the question of what would have happened if JFK had not been assassinated with any certainty. However, it is evident that the matter carries enormous implications for how we understand the Kennedy presidency, the fate of the war, and the course of American history itself.

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