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A Dazzling Détente: Exploring the Cultural Facets of the Kennedys' 1961 Visit to Paris and the Instrumental Role of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy

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A Dazzling Détente:
Exploring the Cultural Facets of the Kennedys' 1961 Visit to Paris
and the Instrumental Role of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies and
The Division of Languages & Literature
of Bard College

by

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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Dedication

To Grandpa and Leelee, the greatest historians of all.

And to Mom, Dad, and Jenna, whose steadfast love sustains me always.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
I. The Significance of the Cultural Angle	1
II. Contextualizing Franco–American Relations in the Early 1960s	5
III. The Kennedys’ Visit	9
Chapter I: Looking the Gift Horse in the Mouth	14
I. Overview	14
II. The Presidents’ Gifts to Each Other	16
III. Charles de Gaulle’s Gift to Jacqueline Kennedy	24
IV. The First Ladies’ Gifts to Each Other	26
V. Conclusion	28
Chapter II: Jacqueline Kennedy, the Upper Hand	33
I. Overview	33
II. Jackie Captures the French People’s Admiration	34
III. A Mutual Reverence	38
IV. Conclusion	45
Chapter III: Considerable Influence and Self-Actualization	49
I. Overview	49
II. Wednesday: Jackie at l’École de Puériculture	51
III. Thursday: Museum Visits, Press Conferences, and Versailles	53
IV. Conclusion	59
Conclusion	62
I. Post-Summit Convictions	62
II. Another Side of Jackie Kennedy	63
III. Consciously Influential, or Not?	65
Bibliography	67
Appendix A: Maps	76
Appendix B: Timeline	79

Introduction

I. The Significance of the Cultural Angle

“I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris, and I have enjoyed it,”¹ declared the American president during his 1961 state visit to France. In the late spring of 1961, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917–1963), four months into his first term as president, embarked on a state visit to Paris, the second one of his presidency.² Departing from New York on Wednesday, May 31 alongside his wife, advisors, select cabinet members, and his mother and sister, the president arrived in Paris for three days of discussion with his French counterpart, the staid General Charles de Gaulle (1890–1970). In addition to his *entretiens* with President de Gaulle, President Kennedy delivered remarks, took part in various ceremonies, held press conferences, and attended a state dinner at the Palace of Versailles.³ Diplomatic productivity aside, the visit was a major public relations success.⁴

When examining the Kennedys’ visit to Paris, contemporary scholars often analyze said sojourn through a diplomatic lens—that is, seeking to answer just how diplomatically and geopolitically productive or advantageous the visit was. The short answer is virtually always *not very* or *not at all*, but scholars will often seek to determine *why* this was the case—that is, did some reasons play more of a role than others in determining the outcome of the visit?⁵ Yet, this analytical framework often glosses over a key facet of the Kennedys’ visit—the cultural angle.

¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (London, UK: Andre Deutsch, 1965), 356.

² The President’s first state visit was his journey to Ottawa, Canada, from May 16–May 18, 1961.

³ See various agendas in Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files. Subjects. Trips: Paris, France, 1961: 31 May–2 June. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/107/JFKPOF-107-010>.

⁴ Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe: De Gaulle, les Etats-Unis et l'Alliance atlantique 1958-1969* (Paris, France: Ed. Plon, 1996), 76.

⁵ Charles Williams, *The Last Great Frenchman: A Life of General De Gaulle* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014), 417; Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe*, 76–77; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 357; Erin Mahan, *Kennedy, De Gaulle, and Western Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2002), 45.

Cultural happenings—and figures, such as Jacqueline Kennedy—present throughout the brief state visit offer various insights into the true consequences of the Kennedys’ time in Paris.

In any state visit, leaders involved will invariably exchange gifts with one another. These gifts often take many forms—Chinese premier Zhou Enlai gifted President Nixon a pair of pandas following the latter’s state visit,⁶ Bulgarian president Georgi Parvanov gifted the Bush family a puppy,⁷ and a city council in Ireland presented President Obama with an antique calligraphied scroll.⁸ The gifts exchanged between President de Gaulle and President Kennedy during the latter’s 1961 visit, although not as grandiose as the aforementioned benefactions, are still, however, quite telling, in that they suggested how each leader perceived the latter’s visit to Paris and the holistic international stage. Kennedy gave his French counterpart an authentic eighteenth-century letter from President George Washington to Philippe de Noailles, in which the former thanked the latter for his assistance during the American Revolution. The American president was ostensibly hopeful that the two nations could work together—just as they had one hundred and seventy-eight years prior—with France not clinging to an idea of more unilateral sovereignty in a postwar Europe.⁹ The French president gifted his American counterpart a chest of drawers (*une commode*), alongside a set of office supplies that would remain on Kennedy’s desk until the end of his term. De Gaulle’s unapologetically French gifts alluded to the president’s allegiance to his homeland and belief in its preeminence.

The exchange of gifts between leaders implied the existence of a diplomatic tension between France and the United States, and it was so. What, then, was the salve that would heal

⁶ Alexander Burns, “When Ling-Ling and Hsing Hsing Arrived in the U.S.” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), February 4, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/07/nyregion/the-pandas-richard-nixon-obtained-for-the-us.html>.

⁷ Olga Oksman, “The Gifts of the Presidents.” *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company (Washington, D.C.), February 15, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/02/the-unusual-gifts-given-to-presidents/462831/>.

⁸ Daniel McConnell, “Obama to Receive Gift of Special Monastic Scroll.” *Independent*. Independent.ie (Dublin, Ireland), November 30, 2012. <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/obama-to-receive-gift-of-special-monastic-scroll-26735401.html>.

⁹ Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance since World War II* (New York, NY: Twayne, 1992), 121, 124–125.

this rift? Enter American first lady Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy (1929–1994). The American first lady was of French blood, being descended from the Bouviers, a prominent mid-Atlantic family of the French Empire tracing its American roots to the early nineteenth century.¹⁰ In her undergraduate years, Mrs. Kennedy studied abroad in Paris, where she “experienced a personal transformation of self-discovery, a deep appreciation for French history and culture, and greater international awareness.”¹¹ Once her husband acceded the presidency, Mrs. Kennedy soon became an internationally renowned fashion icon, fancying French designers such as Cassini and Givenchy.¹² As a result of these attributes that rendered the first lady distinctly American but substantially French, Jackie Kennedy was able to charm President de Gaulle during the Kennedys’ Paris visit. The two interfaced gaily at state dinners and scheduled cultural outings, in which endearing compliments were exchanged as the French president took note of the American first lady’s—a woman forty years his junior—intelligence, charisma, and refinement. Jackie’s influence over the French president would lead him to declare to Kennedy his renewed faith in the United States at the end of the visit.¹³

Outside of her charming of the French president, Jacqueline Kennedy had multiple experiences during the three-day visit that were of vital importance, a handful of which were notably significant in that they produced an independent, *en vogue* first spouse. There were two preeminent consequences involving Jackie Kennedy. Firstly, the Paris visit functioned as the outlet where Mrs. Kennedy effectively “came into her own” as first lady. She demonstrated this in numerous ways, such as during the visit, Mrs. Kennedy fostered the rudimentary causes she

¹⁰ Whitney Walton. “Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s.” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 31, no. 2 (2013): 35.

¹¹ Whitney Walton, “Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relation in the 1950s and Early 1960s,” 37. See also Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French: The Paris Years of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Susan Sontag, and Angela Davis* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 47.

¹² Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 60–61; Elizabeth Jody Natalie, “France, Austria, and England: Personalities and Cold War Threat,” in *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2018), 63.

¹³ Nancy Kegan Smith, Mary Ryan, and Mary Ann Watson, “An Enduring Fascination: The Papers of Jacqueline Kennedy,” in *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy* (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1989), 103.

would propel as the wife of the president, including her notable promotion of cultural refinement. Ornamentally, Jackie's ensemble at Versailles—notably her accessories—functioned as the apogee of her self-actualization, in which she seemed to openly realize that she held consequential popularity, just as she had done similarly during a press conference earlier that day. Mrs. Kennedy, thus, realized her ability and significance during the Paris visit.

Secondly, as stated, the Paris visit allowed Mrs. Kennedy to solidify what she would advocate for as first lady, and, effectively, begin to further. First ladies' causes have historically had varying degrees of success, from Eleanor Roosevelt to Melania Trump, but Jackie's cause invariably ranks highly. It was Jackie's cause for culture and the arts, especially, that was undeniably emphasized following the Paris trip. It was during the visit that Mrs. Kennedy met a French cabinet member with whom she would form a timeless friendship—Minister of Culture Georges André Malraux (1901–1976). This first meeting was far-reaching, for it was out of this affability that Jackie Kennedy would secure, two years later, the loan of French-interred Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* to the United States. In this action, Jacqueline Kennedy effectively strengthened the intercultural tie of two nations beleaguered by bitter geopolitical differences, while, as mentioned, concurrently coming into her own and realizing her own potential. This *Mona Lisa* climax of Mrs. Kennedy's cause, thus, can be directly correlated to an experience during her Paris voyage. This strengthening of the intercultural tie endured into 1962—prior to *La Joconde*'s arrival—when Malraux paid a noteworthy visit to the United States and was treated to a visit to the National Gallery of Art and a state dinner at the White House.

In this project, I will analyze three important facets of the Kennedys' trip to Paris in 1961, outside of definitive politics. My stance, in essence, is that by reconsidering aspects of the Kennedys' trip that are normally not considered substantial or particularly relevant—that is,

aspects outside of the political sphere—one can reveal a considerable message behind the appearance of the visit. The presentation of gifts during the Kennedys' visit confirmed the existence of a diplomatic tension between the two nations, with each principal, in their gifts to each other, propounding their different approaches to world affairs and each other. Said diplomatic tension would begin to be healed by the person of American first lady Jacqueline Kennedy, who delighted the French president with her penchant for—and knowledge of—French culture, history, art, and the language, among other things. In addition to her meaningful rapport fostered with President de Gaulle, Mrs. Kennedy effectively strengthened the Franco–American intercultural tie, and she concurrently began to realize her potential as both a dedicated first lady and a confident modern icon.

II. Contextualizing Franco–American Relations in the Early 1960s

Prior to the Kennedys' arrival in Paris, the relationship between France and the United States in the mid-twentieth century was rather circumspect.¹⁴ In 1961, a myriad of world affairs occupied the minds of each nation's leader, and polarization arose from predominantly two reactions—each leader's unwillingness to yield their positions, and each leader's awareness of just how antithetical their counterpart's approaches were to their own. As such, in the present day, an immaculate classification of a perennial Franco–American relationship is not entirely truthful. Although both countries have proven their allyship to one another at different points in history, the Franco–American alliance has never been a steady friendship; it has never been immune to conflict. It was in the mid-twentieth century, out of the embers of World War II, that the relationship between these two countries saw its nadir.

¹⁴ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and De Gaulle: How America and France Failed in Vietnam, 1961-1963* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2019), 82.

The upset relations between the two countries were identifiable in three key sources of disagreement, all interrelated: each nation's perception of the postwar role and structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Europe, each nation's nuclear policy, and each nation's foreign policy. Contrasting approaches to these three points, among others, formed the chasm that divided France and the United States ideologically. Said division was present and palpable in the months—and years—leading up to the Kennedys' visit to Paris at the end of May, 1961. This disjuncture was exacerbated by the starkly different natures of Kennedy and de Gaulle. Washington-based journalist Joseph Alsop wrote two days into the summit, "What, then, is this gulf that divides De Gaulle and Kennedy? Perhaps the best way to put it is to say that the older man is full of antique, even outmoded certainty, while the younger man lacks this certainty as yet."¹⁵

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded in 1949, twelve years prior to Kennedy's arrival in Paris. The structure of NATO was multilateral; it was viewed as both an alliance and an organization—the latter of which de Gaulle had a gripe with. It was an alliance, in that its multiple member nations promised military support to one another, and an organization, in the sense of its hierarchical structure. It was this pecking order that was de Gaulle's source of contention. NATO was borne out of a mutual defense guarantee—and, post-World War II, the United States' possession of nuclear weapons inevitably put them at the top of the chain of command in international defense. President de Gaulle's suggested remedy was a "tripartite proposal," in which he opined, "It appears necessary to it that on the level of world policy and strategy there be set up an organization composed of: the United States, Great Britain and France."¹⁶

¹⁵ Joseph Alsop, "Kennedy's Search," *New York Herald Tribune* (New York, NY), June 2, 1961. <https://bibnum.sciencespo.fr/s/catalogue/ark:/46513/sc1rp16>.

¹⁶ Sebastian Reyn, *Atlantis Lost: The American Experience with De Gaulle, 1958-1969* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 41.

President Kennedy's balking at such an idea—originally proposed in 1958—was evident in the first months of his first term in office.¹⁷ The American president's view of NATO aligned with his administration's idea of America as the “leader of the free world,”¹⁸ who saw the destinies of Europe and the United States as the same, with the latter leading the charge.¹⁹ As such, in Kennedy's eyes, France had no business seeking more sovereignty from—or a more appreciable role within—the NATO infrastructure.²⁰ At the beginning of his term, President Kennedy appeared to admire and wish to emulate the General's foresight, but such admiration did not last long.²¹ This deadlock between the two leaders over the role of NATO was an impasse that necessitated a conversation.²²

During their talks in Paris that June, de Gaulle would insist that “the world had changed,” and the fact that the United States was no longer the only country to possess nuclear weapons “reduced the value of the American nuclear sword.”²³ De Gaulle noted that French forces—and, presumably, European forces—would feel no fidelity to their governments with the United States at the helm.²⁴ Kennedy remained staunch in his understanding of the organizational role of NATO. To the American president, Article V of the NATO charter was a boon—America would defend her European allies in the wake of a Soviet attack.²⁵ Kennedy hoped that his stance would mollify the French president, in that an attack on French forces—implicitly, in Berlin—would be, by nature of the charter, an attack on American forces. It was best, according to Kennedy, to have America's nuclear arm at the helm.

¹⁷ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and De Gaulle*, 84–87.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Erin Mahan, *Kennedy, De Gaulle, and Western Europe*, 47.

²⁰ Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 121, 124–125.

²¹ Maurice Vaisse, *La grandeur: Politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958–1969* (Paris, France: CNRS éd., 2013), 139.

²² Erin Mahan, *Kennedy, De Gaulle, and Western Europe*, 44, “...satisfy de Gaulle's demands...”

²³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 353.

²⁴ Erin Mahan, *Kennedy, De Gaulle, and Western Europe*, 55. See also Michael J. Brenner and Guillaume Parmentier, *Reconcilable Differences: U.S.-French Relations in the New Era* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2002), 12.

²⁵ Article V of the NATO charter is known as the “collective defense” clause, and states that members will assist other members militarily if need be. It was first invoked in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. See also Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 353.

The question of nuclear policy was intrinsically linked with the question of the role of NATO; in essence, who held control over nuclear weapons in the Western alliance. France was persistent in wanting to develop—and eventually developing—her own nuclear arsenal, having exploded her first atomic bomb one year prior.²⁶ Both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, however, insisted that NATO’s arms would be sufficient in defending France in the wake of any attack, and the American response to France’s intention rested on a directive of, according to French historian Maurice Vaïsse, “ne pas aider la France à acquérir la capacité nucléaire américaine en Europe.”²⁷ Ahead of his visit to Paris, a memorandum in President Kennedy’s files entitled “What We Want From Paris” lists five items under Nuclear Policy, notably, “We intend to maintain in place the very large U.S. nuclear power which is now deployed in Europe, and would use this power in case of Soviet nuclear or massive conventional attack.”²⁸ France’s desire for an independent nuclear ordnance and America’s aversion to this,²⁹ combined with each nation’s disagreeing opinions on autonomy within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, created a stalemate that Kennedy’s visit to Paris could—at least it was believed—remedy.³⁰

In addition to contentions over NATO and nuclear policy, the United States and France clashed over their starkly different foreign policy frameworks. The two nations’ policies repeatedly butted heads in all corners of the world—including Africa and Germany, among other regions—but this disharmony was perhaps best illustrated by the two nations’ dissimilar approaches to the Vietnam War. In 1961, the United States was six years into the conflict, and

²⁶ Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 122, 253.

²⁷ Maurice Vaïsse, *La grandeur*, 142.

²⁸ “Memorandum: What We Want From Paris,” May 30, 1961. President’s Office Files, France – General, Excerpts from the Paris Briefing Book, 5/61, Box 70. JFK Library.

²⁹ Such an aversion was more or less a continuation of the reactions of the previous presidential administration, under General Dwight David Eisenhower, President of the United States from 1953–1961.

³⁰ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and De Gaulle*, 82.

President Kennedy's enthusiasm for a military solution was growing stronger as the war progressed. In 1958, under Communist leader Hồ Chí Minh, North Vietnam successfully invaded Laos, spreading their influence westward. Saigon saw a coup attempt against Ngô Đình Diệm—a US-backed leader—in 1960.³¹ One month later, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam was officially organized, uniting with the armed forces of North Vietnam.³² To President Kennedy, time was of the essence, and an increased military presence in Southeast Asia on the part of the United States was an advantageous next step, not an act of folly.³³

Conversely, President de Gaulle wished for a pacifist, politically-centered solution to the Vietnam conflict, arguing that the American approach—particularly, the idea that American military presence was a silver bullet—“avoided the central issue: countering the political appeal of the enemy with a pluralistic political system in South Vietnam.”³⁴ In the eyes of France, the United States' foreign policy framework was credulous and too eager to paint itself as brawny rather than astute.³⁵ The distance created between the United States and France by their disagreements on NATO, nuclear policy, and Vietnam, warranted the conversations that would come about during the Kennedys' visit to Paris in 1961.

III. The Kennedys' Visit

Departing from New York on Wednesday, May 31, the Kennedys arrived in Paris. President de Gaulle wrote in his memoirs, “Le 31 mai 1961, il arrive à Paris, débordant de dynamisme, entouré par une atmosphère de vive curiosité, formant avec son épouse brillante et

³¹ President Kennedy was a strong admirer of Diệm. See Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and De Gaulle*, 76.

³² Philippe Devillers, “La politique française et la seconde guerre du Viêt Nam.” *Politique étrangère* 32, no. 6 (1967): 579 <https://doi.org/10.3406/polit.1967.6045>.

³³ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and De Gaulle*, 124–125, “Kennedy accepted...” See also Erin Mahan, *Kennedy, De Gaulle, and Western Europe*, 32.

³⁴ Marianna P. Sullivan, *France's Vietnam Policy: A Study in French-American Relations* (Westport, CT: Conn., 1978), 72. See also Arthur M. Schlesinger. *A Thousand Days*, 351, “The French experience had been...”

³⁵ Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 140.

cultivée un couple rempli de charme. De la part du public, l'accueil est sympathique au plus haut degré."³⁶ Indeed, the young American president and his wife elicited major admiration from the people of Paris. After landing at Orly, the two presidents processed through the bedecked streets of Paris via motorcade, wreathed by members of France's *Garde républicaine* on horseback. The American president met an audience of, according to *The New York Times*, at least over 500,000 Parisians,³⁷ who stood—many with makeshift signs and banners—in teeming rain to greet the dashing young president³⁸ and his wife, who trailed behind in a separate vehicle with Madame de Gaulle. For the president, Wednesday later brought a press conference and luncheon, the first two one-on-one discussions with General de Gaulle, a wreath-laying ceremony, and a white tie state dinner, and for Mrs. Kennedy, Wednesday brought a visit to a French children's hospital, and multiple conversations with French dignitaries, including the president.³⁹ The Kennedys—charismatic, glamorous, and accustomed to being in the limelight—had arrived. A gaggle of students cheered from the Latin Quarter, “Kenne-un, Kenne-deux, Kenne-trois... Kenne-dix!”⁴⁰

Thursday, June 1, was the President and Mrs. Kennedy's first full day in Paris. After delivering a morning press conference, the president arrived at the Élysée for his third conversation with President de Gaulle, with Edmund Glenn and Constantin Andronikof serving as interpreters.⁴¹ The presidents' two Thursday conversations would come to be the most significant tête-à-têtes of the summit, for it was in these conversations that opinions on global

³⁶ Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoire d'espoir: Le renouveau 1958–1962* (Paris, France: Librairie Plon, 1970), 267.

³⁷ Robert C. Doty, “Kennedy and de Gaulle Agree to Defend Berlin; Discuss Asia and Africa: Presidents Meet,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 1, 1961. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/kennedy-de-gaulle-agree-defend-berlin-discuss/docview/115463050/se-2?accountid=31516>.

³⁸ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and De Gaulle*, 110–111.

³⁹ See various agendas in Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files. Subjects. Trips: Paris, France, 1961: 31 May–2 June. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/107/JFKPOF-107-010>.

⁴⁰ “The Nation: ‘Daughters of Europe’.” *Time* LXXVII, no. 24, June 9, 1961, 10.

⁴¹ “President's Visit to General de Gaulle, May 31–June 2, 1961: Order of the Day, Thursday, June 1,” Papers of John F. Kennedy. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/107/JFKPOF-107-010>.

affairs were propounded directly.⁴² The leaders discussed NATO, Kennedy's upcoming visit to Vienna—where he would meet with Soviet General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev—and the impending Berlin crisis, and diplomatic affairs in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. As a result of these conversations, Thursday saw a change in French press coverage, transitioning from Wednesday's fawning over the American president to, on Thursday, a critique of his diplomatic framework—not necessarily a critique that maligned Kennedy, but a critique of Kennedy's policy positioned against the policy of General de Gaulle. An ideological “gulf”⁴³ between the two leaders set the stage for a “faible marge d'accord” on Berlin, and differences of opinion on “armes atomiques et OTAN.”⁴⁴

That evening, the De Gaulles hosted a white tie dinner for the Kennedys at the Palace of Versailles, about thirty minutes west of the American couple's apartment on the Quai d'Orsay. Following the reception, Kennedy, de Gaulle, and their wives departed for Versailles' Théâtre de Louis XV, where they were to see a ballet. The night at the ballet was a mesmerizing occasion; this mesmerism can be likened to the magnetism felt during the Kennedys' arrival. The official French agenda noted that the ballet was performed in honor of the American president and first lady,⁴⁵ and following the group's arrival and performance of the national anthems, the Kennedys received a standing ovation from the audience.⁴⁶ Jackie's accoutrements enchanted the press, who were enthralled by “...sa robe blanche au corsage assez curieusement brodé de fleurs aux couleurs vives, [et] un léger diadème sur le haut chignon qu'elle s'était fait faire pour la circonstance.”⁴⁷ It was a jocund evening, complemented by glitz, glamor, and press attention.

⁴² François Gross, “De Gaulle-Kennedy: Bon climat pour les entretiens délicats,” *Gazette de Lausanne* (Lausanne, Switzerland), June 2, 1961. <https://bibnum.sciencespo.fr/s/catalogue/ark:/46513/sc1rmxk>.

⁴³ Joseph Alsop, “Kennedy's Search,” *New York Herald Tribune* (New York, NY), June 2, 1961.

⁴⁴ François Gross, “De Gaulle-Kennedy: Bon climat pour les entretiens délicats,” *Gazette de Lausanne*, June 2, 1961.

⁴⁵ “Voyage en France de Monsieur le Président des Etats-Unis d'Amérique et de Madame Kennedy,” Papers of John F. Kennedy. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/107/JFKPOF-107-010>.

⁴⁶ “Le séjour en France du Président Kennedy s'achève,” *Le Monde* (Paris, France), June 3, 1961. <https://bibnum.sciencespo.fr/s/catalogue/ark:/46513/sc1rqvh>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Friday, too, would prove to be a day replete with diplomatic matters. Following an early morning visit to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (S.H.A.P.E.), the two leaders sat down for their fifth conversation at the Élysée come midmorning. This conversation was unique, in that it was not private; it was held with both leaders and “such advisors as may be invited” present.⁴⁸ Although other topics were flecked throughout the colloquy, this fifth tête-à-tête was predominantly centered around the subject of—or rather, the question of—Berlin. *La Croix* reported that the two leaders reached an “accord général” on the topic of maintaining a presence in Berlin, but they were divided on the intricacies of said maintenance, including political, diplomatic, and militaristic strategies.⁴⁹ Earlier in the day, at S.H.A.P.E., Kennedy defended his opinion that Allied forces should remain in Berlin with “un ton de grande fermeté.”⁵⁰ However, one can see that Kennedy and de Gaulle’s shared opinion that Allied troops should remain stationed there had different justifications and reasonings from each leader—most notably, on the question of nuclear weapons, and their presence in East Germany.⁵¹ Nuclear weapons, a pervasive conversation topic in the Cold War era, proved to be a topic that entwined each leader’s opinions on NATO, Berlin, and the Western bloc, and impacted why each leader felt a continued presence necessary.

Following this fifth conversation, a grand press luncheon was held at the Palais de Chaillot, attended by members of both the French Diplomatic Press Association and the Anglo-American Press Association.⁵² It was at this conference that Kennedy uttered the immortal line of his visit—“I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris, and I have

⁴⁸ “President’s Visit to General de Gaulle, May 31–June 2, 1961: Order of the Day, Thursday, June 1,” Papers of John F. Kennedy. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/107/JFKPOF-107-010>.

⁴⁹ François Roussel, “Nous maintiendrons et même renforcerons nos troupes en Europe,” déclare le président US.” *La Croix* (Paris, France), June 3, 1961. <https://bibnum.sciencespo.fr/s/catalogue/ark:/46513/sc1rp4f>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 355.

⁵² “President’s Visit to General de Gaulle, May 31–June 2, 1961: Order of the Day, Thursday, June 1,” Papers of John F. Kennedy. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/107/JFKPOF-107-010>.

enjoyed it.”⁵³ The following chapters will examine the extent to which this line proved veracious, as evidenced by Jackie’s demonstrable charm and impact. Jackie, however, was not present to hear this line; she was visiting Malmaison at the time with the wife of Prime Minister Couve de Murville, also named Jacqueline. The two also visited La Celle St. Cloud, where Madame Couve de Murville gave a lunch in honor of Mrs. Kennedy—the woman whose impact would not only begin to mend a rift, but subsequently reverberate through the City of Lights during those three days in 1961.⁵⁴

⁵³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 356.

⁵⁴ “Program for the Visit of Mrs. John. F. Kennedy to Paris, May 31–June 2, 1961,” Papers of John F. Kennedy. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/107/JFKPOF-107-010>.

Chapter I: Looking the Gift Horse in the Mouth

I. Overview

Amidst the diplomatic conversations and ceremonies that occurred over the course of the Kennedys' visit to Paris, many gestures—some subtle, some conspicuous—were visible throughout the three days. Said gestures included physical displays of affection or affability, toasts, gift-giving, and press conference quips, among others. One of the most appreciable gestures of comity among these was the exchanging of gifts that occurred between the Kennedys and the de Gaulles. Each gift exchanged, whether between the two presidents, their wives, or a combination, offers an insight into how each leader regarded the Kennedys' visit and its stakes. An ideological cat and mouse was present in these gifts and the exchanging of them, with each gift suggestive of the involved leaders' political viewpoints that were fated to clash. This chapter serves to present and analyze this tension—borne from the two leaders' fundamentally different conceptions of the West and inharmonious opinions on world affairs—and explore how each principal brought different conceptions of the Franco–American relationship to the table, as evidenced by the benefactions they presented to each other.

President Kennedy's gift to President de Gaulle, a leather-bound eighteenth-century letter from George Washington to a cousin of Lafayette at the conclusion of the American Revolution, was an homage to the American–French relationship. In the twentieth century, this homage was framed against contrasting policy choices of the two countries. Some of President Kennedy's most appreciable policies included his nuclear policy and positions on Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, such as “we intend to maintain in place the very large U.S. nuclear power which is now deployed in Europe,” and “the proposed build-up of NATO non-nuclear

forces makes sense.”⁵⁵ The offering of this gift, thus, suggests that Kennedy performatively expected to mend some sort of diplomatic rift, since President de Gaulle did not share these opinions. Conversely, President de Gaulle’s gift to Kennedy—an eighteenth-century commode and a set of alligator leather office supplies—seemed to suggest that the French president did not have the utmost confidence in the visit’s outcome, nor a sense that the stakes of the visit were high. We will see later how this lack of confidence was boosted through the person of Jacqueline Kennedy—a renowned Francophile for whom President de Gaulle rented several paintings from the Louvre to serve as décor for the American couple’s apartment during their stay in Paris.⁵⁶

If the presidents’ exchange of gifts reveals how the two leaders perceived the stakes of the Kennedys’ Paris visit, then the same logic applies to their spouses. Jacqueline Kennedy’s gift to Yvonne de Gaulle, a painting of a street in Paris rendered by an American artist, honored the cultural tie between the two nations—as her husband’s gift to the French president did. The fact that Jacqueline Kennedy—a woman who was described in the French media as, “très américaine sans doute, mais un peu française et surtout très < internationale >,”—was the giver of this gift only made her interculturality more noteworthy and her presence in France more revered.⁵⁷ Madame de Gaulle, however, gifted a box of toys and a dollhouse to John Kennedy, Jr., and Caroline Kennedy, respectively. Her gifts were presumably purposefully inconspicuous, as they came from a woman whose purpose was once described as, “...to make her husband as comfortable as possible and to shield him from petty annoyances,”⁵⁸ and whose eternal saying

⁵⁵ “Kennedy Gives Letter: Presents to de Gaulle Missive of Thanks by Washington,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 2, 1961. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/kennedy-gives-letter/docview/115269979/se-2?accountid=31516>. See also “Memorandum: What We Want From Paris,” May 30, 1961. President’s Office Files.

⁵⁶ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 111.

⁵⁷ Bernadette Godet, “Jacqueline KENNEDY: ou un démenti à la doctrine Monroe,” *Le Combat* (Paris, France), May 31, 1961. <https://bibnum.sciencespo.fr/s/catalogue/ark:/46513/sc1rqv>.

⁵⁸ Hotchkiss, Christine, “The Frenchwoman Nobody Knows,” *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), April 17, 1960. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1960-04-17/ed-1/seq-109/>.

was, “The presidency is temporary—but the family is permanent.”⁵⁹ Gifts for the Kennedy children reinforced Yvonne de Gaulle’s unassuming maternal status as “Tante Yvonne,” not so much her role as a political tool à la Mrs. Kennedy.⁶⁰

II. The Presidents’ Gifts to Each Other

Thursday, June 1 began with a ceremony and remarks by President Kennedy at the Hôtel de Ville.⁶¹ Following this, a luncheon was held at the residence of Ambassador James Gavin in the *seizième*, given by the Kennedys in honor of their hosts, President and Madame de Gaulle. The first lady’s official schedule notes, “Presentation of gifts by President and Mrs. Kennedy to President and Madame de Gaulle” taking place at 2:35pm, during the luncheon.⁶² As previously mentioned, President Kennedy’s gift to President de Gaulle was a letter penned by George Washington to the Count de Noailles, a cousin of Lafayette, in 1783, one month after the end of the Revolutionary War.⁶³

This letter—selected by Jacqueline Kennedy as a gift for the French president⁶⁴— is then-General Washington’s expression of gratitude toward de Noailles for assisting the Continental Army during the American Revolution.⁶⁵ Prior to the Kennedys’ estival diplomatic tour, Mrs. Kennedy’s impact was already present in that she was the selector of the gifts

⁵⁹ “de Gaulle, Yvonne (1900–1979),” Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia. *Encyclopedia.com*. February 28, 2022. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/de-gaulle-yvonne-1900-1979>.

⁶⁰ Frank J. Prial, “Yvonne De Gaulle, Widow of French Leader, Dead.” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), November 9, 1979. <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/11/09/archives/yvonne-de-gaulle-widow-of-french-leader-dead-undergoes-operation.html>.

⁶¹ “Program for the Visit of Mrs. John F. Kennedy to Paris, May 31–June 2, 1961,” Papers of John F. Kennedy. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/107/JFKPOF-107-010>.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ “KN-17931. First Page of a Letter from George Washington to Count de Noailles,” Robert Knudsen. White House Photographs. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.

⁶⁴ Betty Beale, “Mrs. Kennedy’s Originality Keeps Washington Astir,” *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), July 2, 1961. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1961-07-02/ed-1/seq-31/>. See also Elizabeth Jody Natale, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 65.

⁶⁵ George Washington, “From George Washington to Philippe de Noailles, Duc de Mouchy, 15 October 1783,” *Founders Online*, National Archives. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-11946>. [This is an Early Access document from *The Papers of George Washington*. It is not an authoritative final version.]

European leaders were to receive from the American couple. *The Evening Star* noted, “If you have the wherewithall [*sic*] and you want to get something original for the person who has everything, you could take a cue from Jacqueline Kennedy,” and of the Washington letter, “She and the President together then persuaded the friends who supplied the gift for Gen. de Gaulle to part with it.”⁶⁶ Jackie Kennedy, thus, had a direct impact on the sentiments that were to be conveyed during her and her husband’s visit to Paris. Given that the President and first lady had to “persuade” the original owner of the Washington letter to part with it, the missive undoubtedly carried an important symbolic meaning and significance.⁶⁷

The Washington letter is a brief memorandum—totaling only six sentences—yet it contains rich remarks honoring the Franco–American tie:

Princeton Octr 15th 1783

Dear Sir,

Within these few days, I have had the honor to receive your favor of the 25th of April from Paris. My heart will do me greater justice than my Pen, when I attempt the expression of my sensibility for your polite congratulation on the happy termination of the War; and for the favorable sentiments you have expressed of my instrumentality in effecting the Revolution.

It is to the magnanimous Sentiments of your Prince—the generous aids of your Nation—& to the gallantry of yourself, and the rest of her Sons, that we are to ascribe, in a very great degree, the happy Revolution which is to fill an important page in history. As you have acted a conspicuous part on the American theatre, let it be an inducement to you, to visit the rising Empire which your own endeavors have assisted to bring into existence—And let me in that case, express to you how happy I should be to see you at my Cottage in Virginia—there to repeat to you the assurances which I now give, of the sincere esteem, regard & consideration with which I have the honor to be Dr Count Yr Most Obt & most Hble Servt.

*Go: Washington*⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Betty Beale, “Mrs. Kennedy’s Originality Keeps Washington Astir,” *The Evening Star*, July 2, 1961.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ George Washington, “From George Washington to Philippe de Noailles, Duc de Mouchy, 15 October 1783,” *Founders Online*, National Archives.

In an homage such as this, the letter possesses a dual significance. Firstly, the gift of the letter reaffirmed Kennedy's outlook and foreshadowed his approach to what he would discuss tête-à-tête with the General in their meetings, such as NATO and defense policy. Secondly, in addition to complementing Kennedy's outlook on matters of the Western alliance and nuclear policy, the letter, holistically, was symbolic of the Franco-American unity that the American president perhaps wanted to strengthen. These two significations suggest that the offering of a gift was, in a way, a mechanism through which Kennedy's summit goals could be propounded—how the American president was, in real time, thinking about the visit. Whether or not his intentions were genuine, President Kennedy, in trying to appeal to a commonality—that is, the aforementioned Franco-American unity—via this gift, suggests that there was an ideological dissonance that needed to be reconciled during his visit.

In the second paragraph of his letter to the Count de Noailles, General Washington writes: “It is to the magnanimous Sentiments of your Prince—the generous aids of your Nation——& to the gallantry of yourself, and the rest of her Sons, that we are to ascribe ... the happy Revolution which is to fill an important page in history.”⁶⁹ In this, Washington seems to credit the success of the American Revolution to the French, at least in part, due to the indispensable aid which they provided to colonial troops. Washington's gratitude is quite profound; he notes, “My heart will do me greater justice than my Pen.”⁷⁰ He describes the Revolution as one that will undoubtedly be immortalized in history, and he offers an indescribable appreciation for the French.⁷¹

This gratitude was also reflected in President Kennedy's remarks during his trip. Whereas Washington pays homage to a recently concluded event—the Revolutionary War—President Kennedy's remarks in Paris possess the same appreciation, but for the future. The President

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid. See “and the rest of her Sons.”

paralleled such homage in remarks made over the course of his three-day trip. An excerpt from the text of Kennedy's arrival speech states, "I come not merely because of the past but because of future associations in the defense of the West— . . . It is right that my first trip across the seas as President should be here to France, for I have neither held nor planned any talks that are more important."⁷² President Kennedy's arrival remarks complement Washington's letter in multiple ways. Firstly, each leader stresses the grandeur of France and Franco-American unity. Whereas Washington notes the "gallantry" of the French people,⁷³ Kennedy lauds France as "the well-spring of Western philosophy and ideas."⁷⁴

Similarly, where Washington praises de Noailles himself, Kennedy praises de Gaulle, noting that France is "under her great captain."⁷⁵ The motif of the West throughout Kennedy's remarks reinforces the President's vision of a united Western alliance and nuclear policy rooted in mutual defense.⁷⁶ At the beginning of his remarks that evening, Kennedy spoke of early American leaders' interactions with France and noted, "So that sentiment and friendship which come and go are not sufficient to explain the enduring ties which exist between France and the United States. It is something more substantial."⁷⁷ This substance, one can deduce, was what the American president sought to preserve—at face value. His remarks reinforced his priorities, but also the presence of a discord between France and the United States that necessitated preservation.

⁷² "Kennedy Notes Common Goals," *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), May 31, 1961. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1961-05-31/ed-1/seq-9/>.

⁷³ George Washington, "From George Washington to Philippe de Noailles, Duc de Mouchy, 15 October 1783," *Founders Online*, National Archives.

⁷⁴ "Kennedy Notes Common Goals," *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), May 31, 1961.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, eds. "Toasts of the President and President De Gaulle at the Formal Dinner in the Elysee Palace." The American Presidency Project, May 31, 1961.

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/toasts-the-president-and-president-de-gaulle-the-formal-dinner-the-elysee-palace>.

Thus, it is significant that President Kennedy gifted this letter to his French counterpart, in that its eighteenth-century words corresponded to the American–European unity that Kennedy wanted to see strengthened in his time.⁷⁸ The gift was a harbinger of ensuing dialogue and ostensibly desired results; it was an item that symbolized a needed healing—in the twentieth century—by paying homage to a time when the United States was beholden to France. The letter paralleled Kennedy’s sentiments, but also his specific international viewpoint. “For the United States, he [Kennedy] said, the defense of Europe and America was the same,” noted Schlesinger.⁷⁹ Kennedy and de Gaulle discussed NATO and nuclear defense one-on-one after the luncheon in which gifts were exchanged, and the concept of reciprocal defense would be reflected later that evening in Kennedy’s remarks at Versailles, where he stated, “I believe that we [France and the United States] are one body. It is my hope that on this visit we can contribute to the uniformity of view....”⁸⁰ The concepts of “one body” and “uniformity of view” are embodied in a letter that was itself borne from the successful alliance of France and the (future) United States that saw victory for the colonists in the American Revolution. Kennedy’s idea of a homogenous destiny between the Western Alliance nations surely had some precedence in this letter, which made its way to the French president’s hands that Thursday afternoon. Perhaps the American president wished to express, through this gift, the ideals he believed would mend the diplomatic rift.

It is likely, however, that the gift was not *purely* a display of goodwill, but rather a platitude, as is sometimes necessitated by summit diplomacy.⁸¹ General Washington’s sentiment

⁷⁸ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 353–354.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ “Addresses at Dinner.” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 1, 1961.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/addresses-at-dinner/docview/115472450/se-2?accountid=31516>.

⁸¹ See Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 109, “...there was some hope that he [Kennedy] could at least take an important first step toward restoring some of the cordiality in Franco–American relations that had been lost during the later years of the Eisenhower administration.”

of unity was similar to that of President Kennedy, but the latter was not necessarily as much of a straight arrow as his office's inaugural holder.⁸² Presidential historian David Greenberg writes of Kennedy, "Few presidents were so skillful in evading or even misleading the press whenever secrecy required."⁸³ Additionally, one can see that President Kennedy's promise of nuclear consultation—reaffirmed during his Paris visit—would not be kept at the outbreak of the Cuban Missile Crisis one year later.⁸⁴ Thus, the gift of the missive itself to his French counterpart may have been a performative object of flattery.⁸⁵ Such flattery does not necessarily imply duplicity. As necessitated by the circumstances of Franco–American relations in the early days of the Kennedy presidency, a gesture of goodwill was likely requisite during the Kennedys' visit. Superficially, the Washington letter propounded an example of bilateralism that Kennedy may have wanted to reestablish. Whether or not the establishment of a "common Western strategy" and consequent discussion of "the General principles that should govern worldwide use of nuclear weapons" was successful; the missive functioned, at least in part, as an olive branch, with the gift-giving process characterized by flattery and platitudinous sentiment.⁸⁶ The role of the Washington missive in early American diplomatic history, coupled with its discernible nods to Franco–American bilateralism and military allyship, made the gift a profitable item in the press—more so than de Gaulle's presents, which I will explore next.⁸⁷

The French president's gift to his American counterpart was not a discernible expression of comity. The American president and first lady were presented with multiple gifts from the

⁸² The diplomatic positions of George Washington in American history and memory are nuanced. Whereas he was not afraid to seek foreign support for the Continental Army during the American Revolution against the British, his diplomatic approach during his presidency (1789–1797) was generally characterized by neutrality.

⁸³ David Greenberg, *Republic of Spin: An Inside History of the American Presidency* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), 346.

⁸⁴ Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe*, 76 and Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 128.

⁸⁵ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 111.

⁸⁶ "Memorandum: What We Want From Paris," May 30, 1961. President's Office Files. See also "Memorandum for the President: Mendes-France on de Gaulle," May 23, 1961. President's Office Files, France – General, 5/19/61–5/29/61. Box 70. JFK Library.

⁸⁷ "Presidents, Wives in Gift Exchange," *The Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, California). June 1, 1961.
<https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/342983771>.

President and Madame de Gaulle, all of which were either comestible or decorative.⁸⁸ Regardless of category, no gift given by the General connoted a sense of Franco–American allyship.

On their first day in Paris, the Kennedys were presented with a “large inlaid mahogany commode, of [the] Louis XVI period” for the president, and “a vanity case and a silver-framed photograph” for Mrs. Kennedy.⁸⁹ According to a memorandum from the Office of the Minister of Cultural Affairs regarding the commode:

This piece bears the stamp of the famous cabinet-maker François Reizell who received the credentials of craft in Paris, February 29, 1764, when he was living at rue Traversière Saint-Antoine. From 1773 on he carried out numerous orders for the Prince of Condé, especially for his residences at the Palais Bourbon and his chateaux of Chantilly and Vilgénis.⁹⁰

President Kennedy’s gift to President de Gaulle—the Washington letter—acknowledged both nations. The General’s gift to Kennedy, however, did not. The commode gifted to the American president was solely a French object. It was designed and constructed by a notable French cabinet maker who crafted furniture for eighteenth-century nobility, and it was completed in Bourbon-era Paris just over twenty years before the watershed event in French history—the Revolution.⁹¹ As President Kennedy’s gift embodied the bilateral relationship the American president supposedly wanted to revive at the summit, President de Gaulle’s gift, although given to an American, was an homage to his homeland of France—the summit’s venue. The embodiment present here was not bilateralism, but a preservation of France’s command. Aside from the commode, de Gaulle’s other gift to President Kennedy—a set of desk and office supplies crafted from real alligator leather—was also of French origin, having been made by

⁸⁸ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 111.

⁸⁹ See “Presidents, Wives in Gift Exchange,” *The Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, California), June 1, 1961 for “vanity case” et. al. See also “Description of President de Gaulle’s Gift to President Kennedy,” Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President’s Office Files. Gifts, Photographs, Autographs: Exchanged with Foreign Dignitaries: Africa-Laos. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/023/JFKPOF-023-003>.

⁹⁰ “Description of President de Gaulle’s Gift to President Kennedy.” Papers of John F. Kennedy.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Hermès.⁹² Just as President Kennedy’s gifts suggested the presence of a diplomatic dissonance, so did General de Gaulle’s—to the latter, this rift would not be alleviated through the United States taking the charge.

Gift-giving Kennedy a present such as the commode suggests that, at face value, perhaps President de Gaulle wanted his American homologue to appreciate the ritzy allure and cultural significance of comprehensive French décor—just as he wanted Kennedy to appreciate his belief in the primacy of the Fifth Republic in the Western Alliance and world affairs of the time.⁹³ The aforementioned homage to France, as vested in gift-giving, was consistent with President de Gaulle’s political outlook at the time, that of a leader who felt a deep alignment—a perennial homage, in a way—with his motherland. De Gaulle’s goal of preserving France’s prerogative was further expounded upon in items discussed in his tête-à-têtes with President Kennedy

This alignment was most evident on the subjects of NATO and nuclear policy. Whereas Kennedy was a proponent of a unified alliance and destiny between the United States and western Europe, President de Gaulle argued for the primacy of Europe—particularly, France—in managing Germany and, more specifically, Berlin.⁹⁴ For de Gaulle, the United States was an auxiliary to the happenings of Europe—“the United States was to constitute a ‘reserve’ or an ‘arsenal’ that the Europeans could draw upon in case of need.”⁹⁵ The French president did not see the two countries’ destinies as unified; France was forging—and was meant to forge—her own path. De Gaulle would write in his memoirs, “What he [Kennedy] heard from me in reply

⁹² “MO 63.297d. Desk Pad,” Gifts from Heads of State. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKSG/JFKSG-MO-1963-297d/JFKSG-MO-1963-297d>.

⁹³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Years*, 353, “...meant that the integrated defense under American command was no longer acceptable.”

⁹⁴ Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From “Empire” by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 117.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

was that Paris was by all means disposed to collaborate closely with Washington, but that whatever France did she did of her own accord.”⁹⁶

As such, his gift to President Kennedy reinforced a type of French grandeur in the form of furniture, whereas his expressed opinions reinforced French grandeur in the form of political and diplomatic agency. There were parallels between President Kennedy’s ostensible ideals⁹⁷ and those expressed in his gift to de Gaulle, so, too, were there parallels between President de Gaulle’s ideals and the piece of Louis XVI furniture he gifted to the American president—gifts from a leader who “regarded the whole thing as simply an elaborate ceremony, in which the appropriate noises and gestures had to be made,”⁹⁸ and whose view his American counterpart was that he was “fumbling and over-eager.”⁹⁹

III. Charles de Gaulle’s Gift to Jacqueline Kennedy

As I will discuss later, first lady Jacqueline Kennedy was instrumental in transforming Charles de Gaulle’s germinal opinion of her husband. During the Kennedys’ visit, the rather stodgy General de Gaulle was charmed by Mrs. Kennedy, an American woman fluent in French and well-versed in French history and cultural trends.¹⁰⁰ Prior to the Kennedys’ arrival, the French people and press were transfixed by the 32-year-old first lady.¹⁰¹ Parisian denizens

⁹⁶ Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavour*. Translated by Terence Kilmartin. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 255. President de Gaulle was a proponent of tripartite leadership between France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, but not to the point where one power had more of a say over the others, as was his concern with the United States.

⁹⁷ Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe*, 73, “Dans l’immédiat...”, suggests that America was pretending to be in consultation, but their ostensibly productive dialogue was more of a diplomatic formality. See also Sebastian Reyn, *Atlantis Lost*: 67, “The truth was that the Kennedy administration was even less inclined than its predecessor [Eisenhower] to accommodate de Gaulle’s tripartite demands.”

⁹⁸ Charles Williams, *The Last Great Frenchman: A Life of General De Gaulle* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014), 417.

⁹⁹ Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, 254.

¹⁰⁰ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 350–351. See also Donald Spoto. “Part Two: Mrs. Kennedy – 8. 1961,” in *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life* (Rockland, MA: Wheeler Pub., 2000), 181.

¹⁰¹ Raland Fauré, “3 jours a Paris: Kennedy offre a sa femme.” *L'Aurore* (Paris, France), April 4, 1961. <https://bibnum.sciencespo.fr/s/catalogue/ark:/46513/sc1r08h>.

greeted her with cries of “Vive, Jacqui!,”¹⁰² with, “beaming Frenchmen and women . . . chattering voluble compliments and welcoming Jackie in their own way.”¹⁰³ De Gaulle, having reservations about the American president, felt noticeably different toward Mrs. Kennedy and echoed the French people’s sentiment toward her. Such admiration was set forth in one of the General’s gifts—or, gestures—to Mrs. Kennedy. Prior to the American couple’s arrival in Paris, President de Gaulle had a series of paintings—Renoir, Lancret, and Chardin works—shipped over from the Louvre to decorate the presidential couple’s apartment on the Quai d’Orsay.¹⁰⁴ Given the French public’s excitement in anticipating Jackie’s arrival that occurred before the Kennedys’ arrival, coupled with knowledge that Mrs. Kennedy’s diplomatic focus would be on the arts; it is likely that President de Gaulle, echoing the public’s feeling of affection, sought to offer the first lady something that would make her feel at home—French artwork.

L’Aurore painted Jackie’s visit to Paris as a “pèlerinage,” and decorations from the Louvre thus rendered the American couple’s apartment a shrine.¹⁰⁵ Although the shipment of paintings was not a gift proper, it was an offering given by the French president to a member of the Kennedy coterie that he esteemed highly.¹⁰⁶ Jacqueline Kennedy was a proponent of the arts—it was her key cause as first lady—with a great fondness for French art, and this delicate attention reflected the General’s apparent knowledge of that.¹⁰⁷ Said knowledge suggests a

¹⁰² Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 180.

¹⁰³ Robert Musel, “Parisians Storm Lines to Greet La Belle Jackie,” *The Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, California), June 1, 1961. <https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/342902566>.

¹⁰⁴ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 111.

¹⁰⁵ Raland Fauré, “3 jours a Paris: Kennedy offre a sa femme.” *L’Aurore* (Paris, France), April 4, 1961.

¹⁰⁶ President de Gaulle and Jacqueline Kennedy were not strangers when the Kennedys arrived in Paris in 1961. The two had met one year prior in Washington, D.C. (Natalle 66), and Jacqueline Kennedy was a hot ticket item in the French press prior to her arrival on May 31. She interviewed with a French journalist mere weeks before the Paris visit (Smith et. al. 103, Natalle 61), and appeared in French magazines throughout the spring of 1961 (Walton 40), invariably depicted as glamorous and affable. General de Gaulle undoubtedly knew who his American counterpart’s wife was, and just how much of a Francophile she presented as—and was perceived as.

¹⁰⁷ Whitney Walton, “Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s,” 37. Jacqueline Kennedy’s love of French art and appreciation for the culture was borne from living in Paris and studying at the Sorbonne during a semester of her undergraduate years. See Elizabeth Jody Natalle, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 66; Nancy Kegan Smith, Mary Ryan, and Mary Ann Watson, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy*, 103; Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 182.

conscious effort on the part of de Gaulle,¹⁰⁸ which was not discernible in the French president's gifts to the American commander-in-chief—the rather lackadaisical present of a chest of drawers and desk supplies. De Gaulle's gift to Mrs. Kennedy established a rapport even before Air Force One landed at Orly. In her identity as a dazzling first lady with a penchant for French culture, Mrs. Kennedy's eliciting of admiration from the French president—as expressed by these paintings—suggests that she could prove to be instrumental in reshaping de Gaulle's perception of President Kennedy and ameliorating the diplomatic dissonance present.

IV. The First Ladies' Gifts to Each Other

If President Kennedy and President de Gaulle's gifts to each other were suggestive of how they felt about the former's visit to Paris, then the same logic can be applied to their spouses. Jacqueline Kennedy's gift to Yvonne de Gaulle was a painting entitled "Boulevard des Capucines," by Maurice Prendergast.¹⁰⁹ The painting, depicting the hustle and bustle of the titular boulevard in the *neuvième*, possessed a strong intercultural significance for two discernible reasons. Firstly, the painting was originally rendered by French artist Claude Monet in 1873, but the edition gifted to Madame de Gaulle was painted by an American artist of the Ashcan School—the same epoch that Monet was active in.¹¹⁰ According to the inscription on the painting, it was originally a "souvenir [*sic*] affectueux" from Prendergast for artist Roy Lichtenstein.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 111, "...de Gaulle himself..."

¹⁰⁹ "KN-17929 - Painting, Boulevard Des Capucines by Maurice Prendergast, First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy's (Jbk) Gift for Mme. Yvonne de Gaulle," Robert Knudsen. White House Photographs. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.

¹¹⁰ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. "Impressionism." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 13, 2020.

<https://www.britannica.com/art/Impressionism-art>.

¹¹¹ "KN-17929 - Painting, Boulevard Des Capucines by Maurice Prendergast, First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy's (Jbk) Gift for Mme. Yvonne de Gaulle." Robert Knudsen. White House Photographs. Although gifted to a fellow American, Prendergast writes the inscription in French.

Thus, the painting was a nod to the cultural tie between the United States and France, being a cultural object itself. It is this tribute that reveals the second significance—gifting the painting reinforced Mrs. Kennedy’s status as a “daughter of France” and a cultural icon.¹¹² Mrs. Kennedy, whose agenda as first lady focused on the arts, had an appreciable penchant for French artwork.¹¹³ It was Jackie who was the selector of the presents and their recipients,¹¹⁴ thus suggesting that her gift to Madame de Gaulle served not only to promote interculturality through an artistic medium, but to reinforce the American first lady’s predilection that would gain her public support. President Kennedy, through his gift, expressed an homage to the age-old relationship between France and the United States. Mrs. Kennedy’s gift did likewise, but through an aesthetic lens—appealing to a commonality in the face of dissonance.

Whereas Jacqueline Kennedy’s gift to Yvonne de Gaulle was a reinforced expression of interculturality, Madame de Gaulle’s was not—it was a reinforcement of the latter’s identity in France. The American press regarded Madame de Gaulle as a spouse who “preferred to remain on the sideline,” and as one who held “the old French view that the world is a man’s world.”¹¹⁵ As such, Yvonne de Gaulle’s gifts were most likely meant to be inconspicuous. I have been unable to find any record of Madame de Gaulle’s gift to Jacqueline Kennedy, but the noticeable gifts given by the French first lady were to the Kennedy children, Caroline and John, Jr. Upon the Kennedys’ arrival in Paris, *The New York Times* reported,

¹¹² Cap Kenny. “‘Cap’ Kenny Calling,” *The News-Herald* (Franklin, Pennsylvania), June 14, 1961.

<https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/346335403>.

¹¹³ Whitney Walton, “Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s,” 37.

¹¹⁴ Betty Beale, “Mrs. Kennedy’s Originality Keeps Washington Astir,” *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), July 2, 1961.

¹¹⁵ George McArthur, “Mrs. de Gaulle Prefers to Remain on Sideline,” *The Eugene Guard* (Eugene, Oregon), May 31, 1961. <https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/109301976>.

A massive cardboard box was delivered this afternoon to the French foreign ministry. ... Inside the box was a collection of stuffed blue and rose-colored toy animals. ... They were a gift from Mme. Charles de Gaulle to John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Jr., the 6-month-old son of the President and Mrs. Kennedy.¹¹⁶

Madame de Gaulle's gift to the youngest Kennedy child suggests two ideas. Firstly, the gift served as a mechanism through which the French first lady's identity—that is, as a maternal figure who placed an enduring emphasis on the importance of family—could be reinforced. Additionally, offering this gift suggests how Madame de Gaulle saw Mrs. Kennedy—as a mother. One can infer that although Jackie Kennedy was a proponent of the arts on the national stage and a notable Francophile with a knowledge of the culture of the Republic, among other identities, Yvonne de Gaulle's gift served to remind the newly acceded American first lady that she was a mother above all.¹¹⁷ This same sentiment would be echoed a month later, when a dollhouse for Caroline Kennedy arrived in Washington.¹¹⁸ General de Gaulle's gift to President Kennedy suggested a reinforcement of the status of an exclusive France. Madame de Gaulle's gift did similarly—it reinforced her status in France as Tante Yvonne.

V. Conclusion

The gifts exchanged during the Kennedys' visit to Paris offer an initial glance into the tensions surrounding the summit. Within this exchange of gifts and the presents themselves, one can recognize how the involved parties conceived of the international landscape—including the Franco-American relationship—and midcentury world happenings. Just as General Washington

¹¹⁶ "Gift for Kennedy Baby: Mme. De Gaulle Sends a Big Box of Stuffed Animals," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 1, 1961. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/gift-kennedy-baby/docview/115472551/se-2?accountid=31516>.

¹¹⁷ Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s," 46, "...she enhanced her husband's career through her beauty and emphasis on her role as wife and mother."

¹¹⁸ "Doll House at White House," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), July 6, 1961.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/doll-house-at-white/docview/115398890/se-2?accountid=31516>. See also "And because of all the gifts Caroline..." in Betty Beale, "Mrs. Kennedy's Originality Keeps Washington Astir," *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), July 2, 1961.

expressed the importance of Franco–American bilateralism, so, too, did Kennedy, in both his public acclamations, and in offering this gift to General de Gaulle. The offering of this letter suggests that a rift was present between American and French leadership that Kennedy ostensibly wanted to heal.

Whereas President Kennedy’s gift honored French–American relations, General de Gaulle’s gift was not an homage. In offering gifts that were comprehensively French from conception to creation, President de Gaulle reinforced his diplomatic viewpoint to President Kennedy—the Fifth Republic acted on her own volition in regards to nuclear policy, and was unyielding in her perception of NATO.¹¹⁹ As such, de Gaulle’s opinions did not necessitate the bilateral homage that Kennedy conveyed with his gift. De Gaulle’s gift to Kennedy was imbued with the French president’s Gaullist perspective.¹²⁰ Thus, the gifts exchanged between these two leaders offer an insight into how each of them regarded the stakes of Kennedy’s visit and conceived of the state of world affairs in the early 1960s. Consequently, each leader brought different conceptions to the table in diplomatic conversation, and “the American understanding of de Gaulle’s intentions—or of the options that were in his mind—was not advanced in any great measure by the visit of the President and Mrs. Kennedy to Paris from 31 May to 2 June 1961, important though it was cosmetically.”¹²¹

Although President de Gaulle’s gift to President Kennedy was not conversely suggestive of allyship, the former’s gift to Mrs. Kennedy was an appreciable gesture of admiration. Prior to the Kennedys’ visit, “President Charles de Gaulle ... ordered several famous paintings from the Louvre hung in the apartment Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy and her husband, President Kennedy,

¹¹⁹ See Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 353–354. See also Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 123 for foreign policy perspective.

¹²⁰ Douglas Brinkley and Richard T. Griffiths, *John F. Kennedy and Europe* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 35.

¹²¹ Charles Williams, *The Last Great Frenchman* 417.

will occupy in the Quai d'Orsay."¹²² Just as the French public exhibited voracious admiration of the American first lady, so did the French president, albeit to the more reserved degree that reflected his personality. Although the Louvre paintings were not a gift proper for Jackie Kennedy, the fact that President de Gaulle personally ordered them lent suggests that he aligned with the French press' opinion that Mrs. Kennedy's accompanying her husband to Paris rendered their visit "pèlerinage," with Mrs. Kennedy the *pèlerine* making her homecoming.¹²³ Additionally, as a nod to Jackie, the French president was "believed to have inspired an alteration in the usual route of bringing dignitaries from Orly airport to the center of the city," in which the American couple was, "taken instead along the Boulevard St. Michel., where Mrs. Kennedy used to wander when she was a student here 10 years ago."¹²⁴ As I will examine in the next chapter, this extolling perception of the American first lady would prove to be consequential in reshaping the General's perception of his untried American counterpart.

Just as the presidents' gifts to each other reinforced their broader outlooks, so, too, did the first ladies' gifts to each other. Jacqueline Kennedy gifted Yvonne de Gaulle a painting entitled "Boulevard des Capucines," interpreted by a Francophone American artist but based on a Monet painting.¹²⁵ Whereas her husband offered a gift that paid tribute to a diplomatic relationship, Jackie's gift to Madame de Gaulle was cultural, reaffirming Mrs. Kennedy's perennial appreciation for the arts—which was also her official cause as first lady—that was borne from her days in Paris ten years earlier. Similarly, the Washington missive that President Kennedy gifted emphasized the endurance of the Franco–American tie. "Boulevard des Capucines" allowed for said emphasis through a cultural lens rather than a diplomatic one.

¹²² "Kennedy Flies to Paris," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923–1963)* (Chicago, IL), May 30, 1961. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune. Scan provided by Bard College Interlibrary Loan (ILLiad).

¹²³ Raland Fauré, "3 jours a Paris: Kennedy offre a sa femme," *L'Aurore* (Paris, France), April 4, 1961.

¹²⁴ "Kennedy Flies to Paris," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923–1963)* (Chicago, IL), May 30, 1961.

¹²⁵ "KN-17929 - Painting, Boulevard Des Capucines by Maurice Prendergast, First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy's (Jbk) Gift for Mme. Yvonne de Gaulle," Robert Knudsen. White House Photographs.

In lieu of a gift to the American first lady, Yvonne de Gaulle offered gifts to the Kennedy children, Caroline and John, Jr., who were three and less than a year old at the time of the summit, respectively. A box of stuffed animals, “a large donkey and rabbits and dogs,” was gifted to six-month-old John, Jr., and Caroline received a dollhouse from Madame de Gaulle one month after her parents’ visit to France.¹²⁶ Yvonne de Gaulle’s handsels to the Kennedy children suggest how she saw her American counterpart, Jackie Kennedy—first and foremost, as a mother.¹²⁷ This paralleled Madame de Gaulle’s ideology that “the presidency is temporary—but the family is permanent.”¹²⁸ In gifting items that were not reflective of interculturality, Madame de Gaulle reinforced her status as a woman who preferred to remain out of the limelight—including the inherent cross-cultural limelight of the Kennedys’ visit; her gifts were simultaneously unobtrusive while reinforcing her taciturn, maternal status as first lady of France.¹²⁹

The exchanging of gifts during the Kennedys’ Paris visit, a seemingly sedate act, was nevertheless instrumental in emphasizing the tensions present between the United States and France in the mid-twentieth century. The presidents’ gifts to each other, in implying each patron’s political viewpoints, alluded to fundamental differences on international matters which would later crystallize in their tête-à-tête meetings as issues pertaining to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, nuclear policy, and third world affairs, among others. The gift exchange of the Kennedys’ visit was, then, a cat and mouse, with de Gaulle affirming the Gaullist legacy he envisioned for the Fifth Republic, and Kennedy intimating an ideological “gulf” that could—potentially—be mended with an amiable working relationship not unlike that of George

¹²⁶ “Gift for Kennedy Baby: Mme. De Gaulle Sends a Big Box of Stuffed Animals,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 1, 1961.

¹²⁷ “de Gaulle, Yvonne (1900–1979),” *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia*. *Encyclopedia.com*.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ George McArthur, “Mrs. de Gaulle Prefers to Remain on Sideline,” *The Eugene Guard* (Eugene, Oregon), May 31, 1961.

Washington and the Kingdom of France after the American Revolution.¹³⁰ Said cat and mouse also ensued between the first spouses, with Mrs. Kennedy offering a gift that reinforced the intercultural dynamic between the two nations and gave a nod to her cause for the arts, and Madame de Gaulle giving gifts to the Kennedy children, thereby reaffirming her family-centric French worldview and maternal identity. The silver bullet to mending the presidential rift, as one will come to see, was the American first lady. Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, a fresh-faced woman of refinement and an inveterate Francophile, would come to charm General de Gaulle and lead him to reassess his opinion of his fledgling American counterpart.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Joseph Alsop, "Kennedy's Search," *New York Herald Tribune* (New York, NY). June 2, 1961.

¹³¹ Nancy Kegan Smith, Mary Ryan, and Mary Ann Watson, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy*, 103.

Chapter II: Jacqueline Kennedy, the Upper Hand

I. Overview

If a geopolitical tension was expressed within the gifts offered between leaders at the Paris summit—in that each gift was suggestive of what each leader propounded regarding diplomacy and world affairs—then the assuaging of said tension was achieved through the American president’s wife, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy. John F. Kennedy was the youngest man ever elected President of the United States, inaugurated at age 43. His wife—who was the second youngest first lady—was twelve years her husband’s junior.¹³² When the couple arrived in Paris in 1961, they were 44 and 31, respectively.¹³³ Such youthfulness was a rather foreign concept to the French, whose leaders since the beginning of the twentieth century were over sixty years old at the beginning of their terms.¹³⁴ Not only was this a rather foreign concept to the French people, as reflected in the press, but to President Charles de Gaulle, as well. General de Gaulle was, fortuitously, the first French president to engage with America’s youngest leader. Twenty-seven years Kennedy’s senior, de Gaulle was fighting in World War I when Kennedy was born in the spring of 1917.

The role that John and Jacqueline Kennedy’s youthfulness played during their visit to Paris was both conspicuous and consequential. Culturally, the American couple’s fresh-faced and glamorous aura plainly captivated the French people, who probed an attribute they never before saw in their own luminaries.¹³⁵ The French seemed to admire the Kennedys for ushering in a new

¹³² The youngest first lady was Frances Folsom Cleveland, who was 21 years old at the start of her husband Grover Cleveland’s first term in 1883. President Cleveland was 27 years his wife’s senior.

¹³³ Kennedy had just celebrated his 44th birthday on May 29, thus temporarily augmenting the age difference to 13 years.

¹³⁴ With the exception of Raymond Poincaré, who was 53 at the beginning of his first term in 1913.

¹³⁵ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 110–111. See also Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe*, 76.

era in which members of the Greatest Generation were at the helm.¹³⁶ However, the Kennedys' youthfulness, particularly that of President Kennedy, was not as well received by President de Gaulle, who saw his American counterpart's age—among other factors—as kryptonite to any veritable improvements in international diplomacy.¹³⁷ Although having its benefits, de Gaulle equated such youth with a lack of experience and a naïveté on world affairs.¹³⁸

In the context of their visit to Paris, the Kennedys' aura had a sizable impact on both the French people collectively, and President de Gaulle's perception of his American counterpart. Each of these impressions, which I will expound upon in this section, were both elicited and improved upon, respectively, by the person of first lady Jacqueline Kennedy.¹³⁹ Between her husband and herself, Mrs. Kennedy possessed the ultimate allure, and she would prove to be instrumental in both engendering French appreciation for American leadership, and winning over President de Gaulle's endorsement of President Kennedy.

II. Jackie Captures the French People's Admiration

*"The Parisians cheered the President, but it was now apparent that, as much as they liked him, it was his wife whom they adored."*¹⁴⁰

Unlike her husband, Jacqueline Kennedy was a product of France.¹⁴¹ A woman of culture, it was known that the first lady was a polyglot, speaking fluent French as well as Spanish and Italian. She studied in France during her undergraduate years at Smith College, living first in Grenoble and then in Paris, where she was a student at the Sorbonne.¹⁴² Born a Bouvier, Jackie

¹³⁶ "Comment les Parisiens ont accueilli le film de la première journée," *Le Figaro* (Paris, France), June 1, 1961. <https://bibnum.sciencespo.fr/s/catalogue/ark:/46513/sc1rq8>.

¹³⁷ Sebastian Reyn, *Atlantis Lost*, 69. See also Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, 254.

¹³⁸ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 89–91.

¹³⁹ Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s." *French Politics, Culture & Society* 31, no. 2 (2013): 34–57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24517605>.

¹⁴⁰ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 352.

¹⁴¹ Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s," 49.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 37, 39.

was intrinsically linked to France. A few weeks preceding the Kennedys' state visit, a French journalist interviewed Mrs. Kennedy in Washington, in which "she playfully, almost flirtatiously, banters in French with the handsome questioner."¹⁴³ In addition to her linguistic abilities and charm, Jackie frequently wore French-designed clothing and jewelry, including on the campaign trail and at her husband's inauguration—often designs by Hubert de Givenchy.¹⁴⁴ Her time in both Grenoble and Paris in 1949 gave the 20-year-old Jackie an appreciation for French literature, history, and art; she enthusiastically brought this back with her to the United States.¹⁴⁵ This enthusiasm would be just as alive twelve years later, when her husband acceded to the presidency.

As an established Francophile, it is not surprising that Jacqueline Kennedy captivated the French people even prior to the Kennedys' arrival in Paris in the spring of 1961. In April, when the Kennedys' state visit was officially scheduled, *La Croix* soon reported on potential discussion topics between de Gaulle and Kennedy, as well as "des problèmes sans solution depuis trop longtemps."¹⁴⁶ This article contained a photograph not of President Kennedy, but of him and his wife in Palm Beach a few days prior, where they had celebrated Easter on April 2. The caption read, "Jacqueline Kennedy accompagnera son mari à Paris du 31 mai au 2 juin. On la voit ici, avec le président."¹⁴⁷ While the intricacies of President Kennedy's visit were expounded upon in the article, it was Jackie who caught the reader's eye and was the focus of the caption. So highly regarded was the person of Jackie that the editors of *La Croix* wished their readers to know that she, too, would be arriving in Paris at the end of May.¹⁴⁸ She was the poster girl of the trip.

¹⁴³ Nancy Kegan Smith, Mary Ryan, and Mary Ann Watson, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy*, 103. See also Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 65.

¹⁴⁴ Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s," 39. See also "Comment les Parisiens ont accueilli le film de la première journée," *Le Figaro* (Paris, France), June 1, 1961.

¹⁴⁵ Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s," 37–38.

¹⁴⁶ "La visite de Kennedy à Paris," *La Croix* (Paris, France), April 5, 1961.
<https://bibnum.sciencespo.fr/s/catalogue/ark:/46513/sc1r45s>.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

L'Aurore also published a Jackie-centric issue on the Kennedys' impending visit, entitling their publication, "3 jours à Paris: Kennedy offre à sa femme son premier voyage de présidente," with a subheading, "Jackie retrouvera les quais de la Seine."¹⁴⁹ The headline frames the visit not as a diplomatic meeting, but as the President's perhaps inadvertent gift to his wife. The text painted the upcoming Kennedy–de Gaulle summit as a homecoming—or, a pilgrimage—for Mrs. Kennedy, who would return to the country she relished in over a decade prior:

Car, pour Mrs. Kennedy, ce voyage officiel—le premier que lui offre son mari—sera aussi un pèlerinage. ... A part une visite à Versailles et la traditionnelle soirée de ballet à l'Opéra où, dans une somptueuse robe du soir, elle prouvera qu'elle peut effectivement figurer parmi les femmes les plus élégantes du monde, Jacqueline Kennedy espère n'être assujettie qu'à fort peu d'obligations, mais combien d'invitations vont pleuvoir avant le 31 mai sur la Maison Blanche?¹⁵⁰

This edition places Mrs. Kennedy as the center of the visit. The Kennedys' state visit to Paris, according to *L'Aurore*, was not expected to be awash with political and diplomatic conversation for the first lady, but, rather, it was an opportunity for the established Francophile to make her homecoming.¹⁵¹ Within this homecoming, Jacqueline Kennedy would come to be considered "parmi les femmes les plus élégantes du monde" as a result of the cultural outings her and the President would partake in during their visit.¹⁵² Jackie's glamor, coupled with her penchant for France and its history, elicited appreciation from the French even prior to her and the President's arrival. It was Mrs. Kennedy who possessed the ultimate allure.

These two issues of both *La Croix* and *L'Aurore* published prior to the Kennedys' visit gave deliberate nods—the former more slight, the latter more obvious—to the first lady. The most preminent, however, was an edition of *Paris Match* that was released just prior to the Kennedys' visit. Whereas the magazine contained an article on the president, the cover was of

¹⁴⁹ Raland Fauré, "3 jours à Paris: Kennedy offre à sa femme," *L'Aurore* (Paris, France), April 4, 1961.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* See also "Le berceau" line.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* See also Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 65.

his wife's face, with an inconspicuous title declaring, "Jacqueline Kennedy Retrouve La France."¹⁵³ The allure is similar to the issue of *La Croix*: the text focuses on the president, but Jackie is what attracts the reader's attention. Ten days later, a successive issue of *Paris Match* declared, "Jack et Jackie : triomphe « bon enfant » à Paris." The cover photo puts Jacqueline Kennedy at center, in the pale yellow suit and pillbox hat she wore on arrival day.¹⁵⁴ Her husband is to her right, over her shoulder and looking in a different direction—the first lady occupies the limelight.

In an article from *Le Combat* published on the day of the Kennedys' arrival, Jacqueline Kennedy is described as "un démenti à la doctrine de Monroe."¹⁵⁵ Whereas the Monroe Doctrine, crafted by President James Monroe in 1823, expostulates European intervention in American affairs, Jacqueline Kennedy exemplified a concomitance of both French and American cultures, thus establishing herself as a "démenti" to this doctrine.¹⁵⁶ So strong was Jackie's tie to Paris and France that, as this article claims, she was not seen by the French as solely American. Journalist Bernadette Godet continues, "Pour Jacqueline Kennedy il en va autrement: elle n'est pas spécifiquement < made in USA. > Elle est très américaine sans doute, mais un peu française et surtout très < internationale. >"¹⁵⁷ As is evident, Jackie's countenance, coupled with her distinctive French ties, discernible appreciation for the culture, and flawless command of the language, made her a hot ticket item in the French media during the Kennedys' visit.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s," 40. See Figure 1.

¹⁵⁴ Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s," 41. See Figure 2.

¹⁵⁵ Bernadette Godet, "Jacqueline KENNEDY: ou un démenti à la doctrine Monroe," *Le Combat* (Paris, France), May 31, 1961.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. See also "Monroe Doctrine (1823)," National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, January 28, 2022. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/monroe-doctrine>.

¹⁵⁷ Bernadette Godet, "Jacqueline KENNEDY: ou un démenti à la doctrine Monroe," *Le Combat* (Paris, France), May 31, 1961.

¹⁵⁸ See Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 64, "—of which there were none."

The cheers and shouts that the Kennedys were greeted with upon their arrival in Paris were ostensibly whooped for the handsome young president.¹⁵⁹ Yet, given the prior comprehensive press coverage and extensive French background of the first lady, the sheer excitement from which the ovation originated was due to the person of Jacqueline Kennedy. Whitney Walton, a professor of history at Purdue University who specializes in twentieth-century cultural, social, gender, and international history, writes, “...And much as the press and the public commented favorably upon the president, it was his wife who captured the French imagination.”¹⁶⁰ It can be reasoned, then, that it was indeed the first lady who was the reason for the hurrahs that pealed through the streets of Paris on May 31, herself an example of refinement, glamor, and Francophilia.¹⁶¹

III. A Mutual Reverence

*“The glacial Charles de Gaulle promptly melted.”*¹⁶²

Jackie Kennedy was a delight to the French people, who were ecstatic at the American first lady’s homecoming. Jackie, however, did not function as a mere accessory to President Kennedy on one of his first state visits, nor was she solely a one-dimensional subject of public affection.¹⁶³ She would prove to play a much more significant role during the visit—winning over endorsement from the French president, and helping to mold his views on the nascent Kennedy administration.

¹⁵⁹ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 111.

¹⁶⁰ Whitney Walton, “Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s,” 41. For Walton’s vita, see <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/directory/profiles/a.-whitney-walton.html>.

¹⁶¹ Ann Mah. “A Year in Paris That Transformed Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 24, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/23/travel/paris-jacqueline-bouvier-kennedy-onassis-college.html>.

¹⁶² “The Nation: La Présidente, Alexandre & Nathalie.” *Time* LXXVII, no. 24, June 9, 1961, 14.

¹⁶³ Nancy Kegan Smith, Mary Ryan, and Mary Ann Watson, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy*, 103.

In order to establish Jacqueline Kennedy's role as an upper hand, it is necessary to first explicate the foreign policy landscape that surrounded the Paris visit. In essence, the general rapport between Washington and Paris during the first months of the Kennedy administration was rather tepid.¹⁶⁴ President de Gaulle held many concerns with the United States and its leaders, from Roosevelt to Eisenhower.¹⁶⁵ In 1961, the French president was uneasy over the tripartite presence in West Berlin, particularly the legitimacy of the defense pact of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, who each held a third of West Berlin.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, de Gaulle held reservations over the infrastructure of NATO and its nuclear policy.¹⁶⁷ The French government did not hold out hope that Kennedy would usher in any improvements or resets—the mindset of de Gaulle and his advisors seemed to suggest that, to them, President Kennedy did not have a sense of the gravity of world affairs.¹⁶⁸ His age, in part, was a factor in this perceived insouciance.¹⁶⁹

When Jacques Chelban-Delmas, President of the National Assembly, left for a visit to Washington just three months prior to the Kennedys' visit, President de Gaulle instructed him, “Vous me direz qui est ce jeune homme.”¹⁷⁰ Adjectivally, the American president was perennially *jeune*, and also an enigma. This attribute, combined with de Gaulle's established opinions on his American counterpart's worldview and misguided policy goals, suggests an equating of youth

¹⁶⁴ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 82.

¹⁶⁵ Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, 115. See also Theodore J. Lowi and Martin A. Schain, “Conditional Surrender: Charles De Gaulle and American Opinion.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 25, no. 03 (1992): 498–499.

¹⁶⁶ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 87.

¹⁶⁷ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 353. See also Sebastian Reyn, *Atlantis Lost*, 69.

¹⁶⁸ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 90, 111, 122.

¹⁶⁹ Kennedy's predecessor was General Dwight David Eisenhower (1890–1969). There was an age gap of twenty-seven years between the two presidents. General Eisenhower served as the 34th president from 1953 until 1961, when Kennedy succeeded him as the youngest president ever inaugurated. The transition from Republican Eisenhower, who served as Supreme Allied Commander and had extensive military experience, to the fresh-faced Democrat Kennedy, whose background was predominantly Congressional, undoubtedly reverberated not just domestically, but in foreign policy, as well. See Sebastian Reyn, *Atlantis Lost* 67; Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe*, 77; Thomas G. Paterson, *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), 31.

¹⁷⁰ Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe*, 73. See also Sebastian Reyn, *Atlantis Lost*, 65, and Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 124.

with naïveté. Historian Sarah Bradford writes, “For the young American President visiting the towering General de Gaulle on his home ground was somewhat akin to Daniel stepping into the lions’ den.”¹⁷¹ Ergo, the two leaders, regardless of any personal opinions that may have existed, were quite polarized in their conceptions of the state of the world and international diplomacy, with said polarization existing both before and after Kennedy’s election. Amidst the



Figure 1. Jackie Kennedy and President Charles de Gaulle greet each other outside the Élysée Palace on May 31, 1961.

“Jacqueline Kennedy, Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy,” *Bonjour Paris*, September 29, 2011, <https://bonjourparis.com/archives/jacqueline-kennedy-history-conversations-life/>.

intricacies of foreign policy and diplomatic opinions that would be expounded during Kennedy and de Gaulle’s tête-à-têtes, a medium through which the “gulf” could be mended emerged—Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy.¹⁷²

Jacqueline Kennedy first met French president Charles de Gaulle at the American embassy in April of 1960 while campaigning for her husband, during the latter’s state visit to Washington, D.C. to meet with President Eisenhower.¹⁷³ One year later, the two were reunited upon the Kennedys’ arrival in Paris—this time, Jacqueline’s husband was now the American commander-in-chief. With preliminary anxieties already high, the presence of Mrs. Kennedy was a boon. Her first conversation with the General was on Wednesday, at a luncheon following the

¹⁷¹ Sarah Bradford, *America’s Queen: The Life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*. (New York, NY: Penguin, 2001), 196.

¹⁷² Joseph Alsop, “Kennedy’s Search,” *New York Herald Tribune* (New York, NY), June 2, 1961.

¹⁷³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 349.

American party's arrival at Orly.¹⁷⁴ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., special assistant to the President, recorded:

Jacqueline sat by the General and engaged him in animated conversation in French about French history—Louis XVI, and the Duc d'Angoulême and the dynastic complexities of the later Bourbons—until de Gaulle leaned across the table and told Kennedy that his wife knew more French history than most French women. . . . It was a gay occasion.¹⁷⁵

This was the first instance over the course of the summit in which Jacqueline Kennedy discernibly charmed the French president. Her love of French history, as well as art, architecture, and culture, dated back to her time in France twelve years prior.¹⁷⁶ The first lady's appreciable Francophilia enraptured General de Gaulle.¹⁷⁷ It was significant for the French president to acknowledge that his American counterpart's wife was perhaps more well-versed in French history than "most French women," for de Gaulle was a fierce proponent of French nationalism and the primacy of the Republic and her citizenry.¹⁷⁸ Thus, at this moment, one can deduce that the General saw the well-rounded first lady as an honorary *française*—this would prove to be a consequential perception.¹⁷⁹ Kenneth O'Donnell, another special assistant to President Kennedy, remarked that, "de Gaulle turned back to Jackie and did not take his eyes off her for the rest of the meal."¹⁸⁰ Jackie Kennedy's charm would pervade throughout the rest of the three-day sojourn, all the while augmenting the French president's confidence in the Kennedy administration.

¹⁷⁴ "Programme du Voyage du 31 mai au 2 juin 1961," Papers of John F. Kennedy. See 6, "Déjeuner intime au Palais de l'Élysée."

¹⁷⁵ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 350–351. See also Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 181.

¹⁷⁶ Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s," 37–38. See also Nancy Kegan Smith, Mary Ryan, and Mary Ann Watson, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy*, 103.

¹⁷⁷ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 108.

¹⁷⁸ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, Schlesinger 351.

¹⁷⁹ Just as Jacqueline Kennedy captivated the French people even prior to her arrival, she captivated President de Gaulle, too, prior to the visit. See McLaughlin 111; President de Gaulle had famous paintings sent over from the Louvre to bedeck the Kennedys' apartment—after hearing that the first lady hoped to visit a museum while in Paris. See also Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 177.

¹⁸⁰ Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 181.

Following the luncheon and state dinner on Wednesday, Thursday evening would prove to be the next occasion in which Jackie discernibly charmed the French president. This evening included a state dinner in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles, as well as a ballet performance at the Théâtre de Louis XV—at Mrs. Kennedy’s suggestion, who wanted to make



Figure 2. President de Gaulle escorts Jacqueline Kennedy to Versailles’ Hall of Mirrors for a state dinner on Thursday, June 1. Mrs. Kennedy wore a silver-white Givenchy gown embroidered with a floral pattern.

“The Kennedys at Versailles,” Palace of Versailles, June 1, 2021, <https://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover/history/key-dates/kennedys-versailles>.

sure the Kennedy party was exposed to some *lieux de culture*.¹⁸¹ The state dinner included a six-course meal on gilded china, with guests coming from far and wide.¹⁸² Mrs. Kennedy enchanted everyone present, including President de Gaulle.¹⁸³ She wore a cream-colored gown designed by French designer Hubert de Givenchy, complemented by a bodice embroidered with an elaborate floral pattern.¹⁸⁴ *Time* called the wearing of this gown a “stunning gesture to the

French.”¹⁸⁵ Her hair, a bun styled by Alexandre and held together with gleaming diamond brooches, turned heads.¹⁸⁶ Schlesinger noted that the first lady “glittered.”¹⁸⁷ Upon seeing the first lady, President de Gaulle remarked, “This evening, Madame, you are looking like a Watteau.”¹⁸⁸ Given the rapport that Jacqueline Kennedy and the French president demonstrated

¹⁸¹ Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 65.

¹⁸² Lisa Waller Rogers, “Jackie and De Gaulle,” Lisa’s History Room, January 11, 2010. <https://lisawallerrogers.com/tag/jackie-and-degaulle/>.

¹⁸³ Sarah Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 196.

¹⁸⁴ Lisa Waller Rogers, “Jackie and De Gaulle.” See also Sarah Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 196.

¹⁸⁵ “The Nation: La Présidente, Alexandre & Nathalie.” *Time* LXXVII, no. 24, June 9, 1961, 13.

¹⁸⁶ Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 66; Sarah Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 196.

¹⁸⁷ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 354.

¹⁸⁸ Sarah Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 196.

with each other the day before, one can infer that this was not mere flattery or fawning. President de Gaulle appreciated the first lady's semblance—attire that was a product of French designers, and worn by a veritable Francophile.

The Thursday dinner was yet another occasion where Jackie could further enchant de Gaulle. *The Evening Star* captioned a snapshot of the duo, “Mrs. Kennedy, wearing the Givenchy ball gown, engages in a rapt conversation with President de Gaulle.”¹⁸⁹ The fact that this caption was printed in *The Evening Star* suggests an even larger impact on the first lady's part, for her rapport with the French president was intimated not only in France, but in the United States—her home country—as well. Thursday's dinner at Versailles allowed for the initial rapport fostered between President de Gaulle and Jacqueline Kennedy—as exhibited at Wednesday's luncheon—to blossom. After dinner, the Kennedys and de Gaulles, along with their respective diplomatic cadres, attended a ballet performance at Versailles' Théâtre de Louis XV. According to Bradford, this was the American first lady's “crowning moment” of the visit.¹⁹⁰ The affinity between President de Gaulle and Jacqueline Kennedy was alive and well at the ballet. Angier Biddle Duke, President Kennedy's Chief of Protocol, said in a later interview:

I can recall some impressions, sitting in the President's box behind the President and General de Gaulle and Mrs. de Gaulle and Mrs. Kennedy, the communication between Mrs. Kennedy and General de Gaulle—the mutual admiration that was obvious to us all. I couldn't help but think that this was contributing to the warmth and the fine atmosphere of the visit. . . . The tone of those talks and conversations must have been helped along—must have been warmed up a good deal by the rapport that Mrs. Kennedy had with General de Gaulle.¹⁹¹

The woman whom the French president compared to a Watteau that evening provided for continuous animated conversation and engagement.¹⁹² Even when not engaged in active

¹⁸⁹ “Jacqueline's Parisian Chic,” *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), June 4, 1961. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1961-06-04/ed-1/seq-59/>.

¹⁹⁰ Sarah Bradford, *America's Queen*, 197.

¹⁹¹ Angier B. Duke, recorded interview by Frank Sieverts, July 10, 1964, 47–48, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

¹⁹² Sarah Bradford, *America's Queen*, 196.

conversation with the General, Jackie acted as a translator between the two presidents, including at both dinner and the ballet.¹⁹³ The press, too, appreciated the first lady's Thursday presence. One newspaper remarked, "For a few hours, a queen reigned again at Versailles."¹⁹⁴ *Le Monde* wrote extensively on the first lady's presence at the theater, reporting,

...Elle entra dans la loge médiane du Théâtre Louis-XV, resplendissant d'ors et de lumières que réfléchissaient à l'infini les glaces du balcon. 'Je me serais crue au ciel,' devait-elle dire un peu plus tard lorsqu'on lui présenta le corps du ballet.¹⁹⁵

Le Monde also noted the French public's attempts at getting a glimpse of the first lady, describing, "Après l'entracte et les efforts généralement vains du public pour apercevoir dans les couloirs la *first lady*, ..." ¹⁹⁶ In the end, *L'Aurore's* predictions came true. Extensive attention from the French public, coupled with the success of her interactions with de Gaulle, augmented Jackie's confidence.¹⁹⁷ Not only did her allure strengthen the French president's perception of his American counterpart, but such universal admiration informed the first lady that she was, indeed, a diplomatic asset.

The evening at Versailles—a sumptuous meal complemented by a night at the theater and unbroken interfacing between President de Gaulle and Mrs. Kennedy—was a jocund occasion. The synergy between Jacqueline Kennedy and the French president was not as heavily documented on Thursday as it was on Wednesday, but President Kennedy's words at the end of the night verified said synergy. That evening, President Kennedy—whose back had been in pain since his arrival in Paris—took a hot bath.¹⁹⁸ While soaking, he reportedly said to advisors

¹⁹³ Elizabeth Jody Natalle, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 68.

¹⁹⁴ Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s." 41.

¹⁹⁵ "Le séjour en France du Président Kennedy s'achève," *Le Monde*. June 3, 1961.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 181.

¹⁹⁸ Sarah Bradford, *America's Queen*, 195.

Kenneth O'Donnell and Pierre Salinger, “de Gaulle and I are hitting it off all right, probably because I have such a charming wife.”¹⁹⁹

IV. Conclusion

Prior to the Kennedys' visit to Paris, the areas in which the new American president and his French counterpart were not in accord were rather legion.²⁰⁰ In addition to fundamental differences on nuclear strategy and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, among other issues, there were underlying confounding variables to personal rapport—not just on the side of President de Gaulle's concerns over his counterpart's inexperience and naïveté, but on the side of President Kennedy, as well.²⁰¹ The American president held rather Francophobic opinions, which shaped his perceptions of France as well as Charles de Gaulle—some on his own volition, others that were fed to him by his advisors prior to coming to Paris.²⁰² Going into the summit possessing such prejudices may have precluded Kennedy from forming a constructive association with President de Gaulle, just as the latter's worries about Kennedy may have done the same. Enter the American first lady—Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy. Mrs. Kennedy would prove to be the visit's saving grace.²⁰³ In his memoirs, President de Gaulle described Mrs. Kennedy as “dazzling and cultivated.”²⁰⁴

The mutual wariness—even aversion—between the two leaders that set the stage for the Kennedys' visit soon faded due to the person of Jacqueline Kennedy. During the farewell ceremonies on Friday, June 2—the Kennedys would depart early for Vienna the next morning—President de Gaulle stated to President Kennedy, “I now have more confidence in

¹⁹⁹ Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 182.

²⁰⁰ Sebastian Reyn, *Atlantis Lost*, 70.

²⁰¹ See also Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 90, “Mr. Kennedy had never been the man of Europe.”

²⁰² Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 11, 107, 128.

²⁰³ Elizabeth Jody Natalie, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 68–69.

²⁰⁴ Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, 255.

your country.”²⁰⁵ This augmented confidence was directly correlated to first lady Jacqueline Kennedy, who “created a relaxed atmosphere conducive to frank conversation.”²⁰⁶ Mrs. Kennedy charmed President de Gaulle on multiple occasions throughout the three day visit, including at a luncheon on arrival day and at the Thursday evening festivities at Versailles. In addition to these concentrated moments, Jacqueline Kennedy’s allure captivated the French people—her youth, her fashion sense, and her command of French culture. These were the qualities that President de Gaulle appreciated and contributed to the development of his rapport with his American counterpart, *le jeune garçon*.²⁰⁷ Just as the French press took note of the first lady’s magnetism, the American press, too, acknowledged this. *Time* noted, “Thanks in large part to Jackie Kennedy at her prettiest, Kennedy charmed the old soldier into unprecedented flattering toasts and warm gestures of friendship.”²⁰⁸ It was the person of Jackie Kennedy who improved the rapport between her husband and the French president—a relationship that was icy before the American couple’s sojourn.

Following the Paris visit, Jackie penned a letter to the General, in which she wrote, “Everyone has his hero in history. But they are almost always in the past—like Louis XI, Louis XIV, Napoléon—about whom you spoke to me. I had the privilege and honor and the good fortune of meeting mine.”²⁰⁹ At face value, this public admiration, then, was clearly mutual. Jacqueline Kennedy not only charmed her husband’s American counterpart—she met her hero. Whereas General de Gaulle benefited from Mrs. Kennedy’s presence in that his view of John F.

²⁰⁵ Nancy Kegan Smith, Mary Ryan, and Mary Ann Watson, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy*, 103. See also Elizabeth Jody Natalie. *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 62, “...the fact that at our sides is the gracious Mme. Kennedy.”

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ “Le président Kennedy à Paris : la visite du jeune garçon,” *Gazette de Lausanne* (Lausanne, Switzerland), May 30, 1961. <https://bibnum.sciencespo.fr/s/catalogue/ark:/46513/sc1qz29>.

²⁰⁸ Sarah Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 197.

²⁰⁹ Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 64.

Kennedy improved greatly; Jackie, in like fashion, was able to bask in the presence of her idolon while concurrently bettering his opinion.

Whether or not Mrs. Kennedy knew just how instrumental she was in improving the General's opinion is an enigma. It is clear that, especially during the evening at Versailles, the first lady stepped into her power with growing confidence and sociability—she underwent “an unmistakable transformation in the eyes of Europe,” which I will explore later.²¹⁰ However, after the visit, the first lady posed, “I mean, I don't know what his [De Gaulle's] opinion was, but obviously, everyone thought, who is this young President?”²¹¹ Thus, the first lady did not consider the French president's opinion of her husband to have necessarily been altered during their visit to Paris.²¹²

The consequential status of Jacqueline Kennedy during the Paris trip would reverberate one year later. The first lady's charm upgraded President de Gaulle's opinion of President Kennedy so much so that the General, for all intents and purposes, came to consider his and Kennedy's talks to be a productive display between possible tripartite allies—rather than simply talking into the wind, or mere displays of advice from an avuncular figure that would go unheeded by a more inexperienced counterpart. In his memoirs, de Gaulle recounted:

Kennedy left Paris. I had been dealing with a man whose ability, whose age and whose justifiable ambition inspired immense hopes. He seemed to me to be on the point of taking off into the heights, like some great bird that beats its wings as it approaches the mountain tops.²¹³

By the end of the summit, the General now viewed President Kennedy as prepared for the magnitude of what his office required of him, as noted in his memoirs. In addition to the ideas

²¹⁰ Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 181.

²¹¹ “In Her Voice: Jacqueline Kennedy, the White House Years.” John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. Accessed March 13, 2022. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/visit-museum/exhibits/past-exhibits/in-her-voice-jacqueline-kennedy-the-white-house-years>.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, 258.

expressed in his memoirs, post-summit, de Gaulle saw a more credible President Kennedy when considering the question of nuclear weapons. This was formalized when, at the end of June, “Kennedy écrit à de Gaulle pour lui confirmer formellement que dans le cas d’une situation impliquant une tension accrue ou un danger de guerre, les États-Unis ont l’intention de se consulter avec la France.”²¹⁴

This perception of a principled Kennedy was borne from the person of Jacqueline Kennedy during the couple’s 1961 trip to Paris, as Jackie was instrumental in molding President de Gaulle’s perception of her husband. The first lady possessed an unassailable allure and charisma, and her impact on the French people was palpable. This allure also captivated the French president, who gelled wonderfully with his American counterpart’s wife. With de Gaulle’s perception of President Kennedy shaped by his glamorous and appreciably Francophilic wife, the French president’s understanding of the summit’s outcome was, at least in part, erroneous. Perhaps his experiences with Jacqueline Kennedy rendered the French president’s worldview momentarily rose-colored. The allure of Jacqueline Kennedy, thus, can be said to have been that of both a saint and a siren—both a saving grace, and a political weapon. De Gaulle acknowledged being led up the garden path, writing in his memoirs after the visit, “Kennedy listened to me. But events were to prove that I had failed to convince him.”²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l’Europe* 76–77.

²¹⁵ Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, 256.

Chapter III: Considerable Influence and Self-Actualization

I. Overview

Throughout the Kennedys' sojourn in Paris, ceremonial moments were marked by the participation of both President Kennedy and President de Gaulle, as is and was customary for diplomatic visits.²¹⁶ These moments of ceremony—in structures that created limited room for any personal agency—invariably connoted an appreciation for the venerable Franco–American bond, with each principal echoing such sentiments on these occasions. By the capacious nature of the office of the American first lady, however, Jacqueline Kennedy was not fettered to participating in diplomatic ceremonies of this type, at least not the majority of them. Although the items on Mrs. Kennedy's agenda were planned ahead of time—as was the case with her husband's agenda—her status as first lady allowed her more freedom in paying visits, delivering remarks, and attending events.²¹⁷ Consequently, Jacqueline Kennedy's far-reaching influence—outside of wooing the French president for her husband's benefit—shone through in varying instances.

Whereas President Kennedy regularly found himself at various instances of formal diplomatic ceremony, I argue that the first lady's less restrictive agenda and more capacious role led to the fostering of distinct intercultural impacts outside of de Gaulle—most notably her international commitment to the welfare of children and securing the significant loan of the Mona Lisa to the United States two years later. Outside of her presidential influence, Jackie was able to utilize her role in both traditional ways and new ways, respectively, the latter bringing about an important long-term consequence. Concurrently, the Paris visit offered an outlet where

²¹⁶ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 108, “Summit diplomacy...”

²¹⁷ For the pre-planned agenda, see “Program for the Visit of Mrs. John. F. Kennedy to Paris, May 31–June 2, 1961,” Papers of John F. Kennedy. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/107/JFKPOF-107-010>.

the first lady could realize this influence and self-actualization. These are the additional consequences of Jacqueline Kennedy's presence on the Paris visit.

The moments of formality that President Kennedy and President de Gaulle took part in were legion. Some notable instances included Wednesday's wreath laying ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe, and the presidents' face-to-face conversations that served as the diplomatic crux of the visit. During each of these instances—foils that functioned as moments that conveyed tributes to age-old Franco–American bilateralism and future potential—Mrs. Kennedy's acts behind the scenes continuously reinforced the breadth of her impact.²¹⁸ On Wednesday afternoon, while her husband took part in the wreath laying ceremony, Jackie Kennedy visited the École de Puériculture, a French children's hospital in the *quatorzième*.²¹⁹ The next day, during her husband's tête-à-têtes with the French president, Mrs. Kennedy would accompany Minister of Culture André Malraux to the Louvre and the Jeu de Paume, initiating an enduring friendship that would eventually lead to the Mona Lisa being lent to the United States one year later.²²⁰ That same day, she held a press conference and laid bare her sentiments on her visit to Paris, consequently reinforcing her cultural impact in the process.²²¹ Thursday night's festivities at Versailles—the hallmark of the visit—would not only reinforce Jackie's role as a fashion icon, but would prove to be the first lady's distinct moment of self-actualization over the course of the visit. Within the first lady's visits, remarks, and attendances, Mrs. Kennedy reinforced her influence beyond the Élysée, but also emanated influence herself.

²¹⁸ Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 181, "...an unmistakable transformation in the eyes of Europe." See also Sarah Bradford, *America's Queen*, 197–200.

²¹⁹ "Mrs. Kennedy Visits Paris Baby School," *The Ogden Standard-Examiner* (Ogden, Utah), June 1, 1961. <https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/600155216>.

²²⁰ Robert Musel, "First Lady Visits French Museum; Kennedy's "Moved" by Gala Event," *Medford Mail Tribune* (Medford, Oregon), June 2, 1961. <https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/96666485>. For Mona Lisa lending, see Elizabeth Jody Natale, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 66, and Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 182. For *Whistler's Mother* lending, see Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 67–68.

²²¹ "First Lady Holds Press Conference: Interviewed By Newspaperwomen." *The Bee* (Danville, Virginia), June 1, 1961. <https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/45781824>.

II. Wednesday: Jackie at l'École de Puériculture

When asked about her role in an interview in March of 1961 with Sander Vanocur, Mrs. Kennedy replied, “I would hope that when I leave here I will have done something to help ... in the arts, in which I’m so interested. Anything to do with children.”²²² During her husband’s stoic ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe on Wednesday, the American first lady paid a visit to the École de Puériculture, a French teaching hospital for infants and “the most modern baby care school in France.”²²³ Mrs. Kennedy, who “tickled the toes of a six-month-old baby girl and pressed her nose against the glass to look at a baby boy three months premature,” was accompanied by Madame de Gaulle.²²⁴ Although not necessarily considered momentous by Mrs. Kennedy’s official agenda, the visit of the two first ladies was quite the spectacle, with the first ladies being greeted by “some 50 young student nurses”²²⁵ in the main corridor, who presented the first lady with a bouquet of flowers. The American first lady was deemed “so sweet, so nice!” by Dr. Suzanne Lemaire, a resident at the hospital.²²⁶

The first lady’s visit to the École de Puériculture—the first visit on her agenda—suggested an impact beyond charming General de Gaulle. As evidenced by her École visit, Mrs. Kennedy played an important PR role during the Kennedys’ trip, as it reinforced French admiration and trust of the American first lady in a structured setting—that is, one of the visits she paid. “About 800 people gathered outside the center and they cheered and applauded for Mrs. Kennedy,” reported one American newspaper, under the headline, “Cries of ‘Vive

²²² HelmerReenberg. “March 24, 1961 - New First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy interviewed by Sander Vanocur.”

²²³ “Mrs. Kennedy Visits Paris Baby School,” *The Ogden Standard-Examiner* (Ogden, Utah), June 1, 1961.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

Jacqueline!’ Greet the First Lady in Paris.”²²⁷ From the moment the Kennedys’ arrived in the City of Lights, Parisian denizens sought to get a glimpse of the glamorous American first lady and, as a result of her presence, significantly augmented the size of the crowds lining the streets. Beyond charming General de Gaulle, the American first lady demonstrated on her École visit that, within her traditional role as Kennedy’s spouse, she was an important player in solidifying public approval for the United States—not just from the French president, but from the general public.

Additionally, the École visit was consequential in that it began to shape one of Mrs. Kennedy’s self-driven causes as first lady. Although her promulgation and preservation of the arts and culture was her most discernible campaign, Mrs. Kennedy showed a keen interest in the treatment of children, and as a result of the École visit, a stop at a children’s hospital would become a requisite item on Jackie’s agenda for almost all state visits thereafter. By the end of her husband’s term, Mrs. Kennedy had paid visits to children’s hospitals during state visits to Colombia, Mexico, and India, among other nations. On these occasions, she “gathered crowds of many thousands”—in Bogotá—and “received a bouquet of roses from two child heart patients . . . and handed candy to children in the hospital ward”—in New Delhi.²²⁸ These impressions abroad can be traced back to this substantial moment at the École de Puériculture, a moment that so moved the first lady that she wished to continue this tradition in her visits to other nations, incorporating her maternalism in the process.²²⁹ The Paris hospital visit was the source from which one of Mrs. Kennedy’s nascent agendas—her interest in the care of children—would

²²⁷ Frances Lewine, “Cries of ‘Vive Jacqueline!’ Greet the First Lady In Paris,” *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* (Richmond, Virginia), June 1, 1961. <https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/616013639>.

²²⁸ Frances Lewine, “1st Lady Taking Pre-Holiday Rest After Successful Trip,” *The Daily Republic* (Mitchell, South Dakota), December 18, 1961. <https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/5585559>,” and “First Lady Visits Indian Med Center,” *Johnson City Press* (Johnson City, Tennessee), March 14, 1962. <https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/585660619>.

²²⁹ Similarly, the state dinner at Versailles Thursday evening would give Jacqueline Kennedy inspiration when it came to hosting foreign dignitaries. See Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 182–183.

spring forth, and subsequently reinforce her acclaim abroad. Mrs. Kennedy's influence reverberated and was clearly not limited to the Western nations. While her husband was mostly restricted to methodical diplomacy, seemingly uneventful moments on Jackie's agenda in Paris were rudiments of her legacy as first lady.

III. Thursday: Museum Visits, Press Conferences, and Versailles

While the conversations between the two presidents at Élysée continued on throughout Thursday, Jacqueline Kennedy paid visits to the Musée du Louvre and the Jeu de Paume, the former “an addition to her schedule for which she had specifically asked.”²³⁰ This visit, predominantly a gallery walk through the works of the Impressionists,²³¹ was a substantial occasion, in that it planted the seeds of Mrs. Kennedy's friendship with French Minister of Culture André Malraux.²³² Jackie's appreciation for the French minister was perennial, existing both before and after the Kennedys' visit. Before their arrival, Mrs. Kennedy had expressed a desire to be seated next to Malraux during a meal—her fondness emanating from having read his works²³³—and one year later, she held a dinner in Washington in honor of him and the friendship they had formed.²³⁴ It was this moment in 1961—Mrs. Kennedy's visit to the Louvre alongside Malraux—that established an enduring friendship that would have a far-reaching impact.

While at the museum, “[Malraux] conducted the First Lady through the Jeu de Paume and she expressed her condolences to him over the recent tragedy,”²³⁵ following their first

²³⁰ Robert Musel, "First Lady Visits French Museum; Kennedy's 'Moved' by Gala Event," *The Medford Mail Tribune* (Medford, Oregon), June 2, 1961.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 182.

²³³ Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 65; Elizabeth Jody Natale, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 65–66.

²³⁴ “AR7229-B. President John F. Kennedy Attends Dinner for Minister of State for Cultural Affairs of France, André Malraux,” Abbie Rowe. White House Photographs. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.

²³⁵ Robert Musel, "First Lady Visits French Museum; Kennedy's 'Moved' by Gala Event," *The Medford Mail Tribune* (Medford, Oregon), June 2, 1961.

meeting the day prior.²³⁶ Eight days prior to the Kennedys' arrival, Malraux's two young sons—Pierre-Gauthier and Vincent—were killed in a car accident. Even in the wake of such circumstances, Jacqueline Kennedy's visit to the Louvre was not viewed as an obligation in the eyes of Malraux—it was a salve.²³⁷ Mrs. Kennedy noted afterward, “It was a great privilege for me to visit it and especially to have Mr. Malraux conduct me,”²³⁸ and that her favorite painting was Manet's *Olympia*.²³⁹ The first lady would opine in a 1964 interview with Schlesinger, “The next day Malraux took me to the Jeu de Paume... and then he was fine. And I think it gave him in a way, it made him... I don't know, I suppose it's good to have something to do after something like that [referring to the automobile accident].”²⁴⁰

The aforementioned impacts of this experience and friendship, the latter borne from the museum visit, were considerable. Jacqueline Kennedy's foremost cause as first lady—advocating for the arts and culture, and restoring the White House—would come to be shaped by French influence and Malraux.²⁴¹ Most notably, in 1963, da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* arrived from Paris on loan to the United States.²⁴² This idea was posed by Mrs. Kennedy during the Paris visit, to which Malraux “whispered a promise that he would try to persuade the Louvre to loan it.”²⁴³ One year later, during Malraux's state visit to the United States in 1962—a significant excursion in itself, for the ceremonies of state visits were often reserved to foreign executives, not cabinet

²³⁶ Jackie Kennedy and André Malraux fostered an affable rapport from their first meeting. According to de Stabenrath, when Malraux asked Jackie, “Que faisiez-vous avant de rencontrer John Kennedy?,” the first lady's response was, “J'étais pucelle.”

²³⁷ Bruno de Stabenrath, “Gauthier et Vincent: La tragédie des Fils Malraux.” *La Règle du Jeu* (Paris, France), December 14, 2018. <https://laregledujeu.org/2018/12/14/34676/gauthier-et-vincent-la-tragedie-des-fils-malraux/>. See “Il lui avait promis une visite privée au Louvre. Bouleversée par le deuil d'André, elle annule, mais le ministre insiste et l'emmena.”

²³⁸ Robert Musel, “First Lady Visits French Museum; Kennedy's ‘Moved’ by Gala Event,” *The Medford Mail Tribune* (Medford, Oregon), June 2, 1961.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Schlesinger, Arthur M., and Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy*. The Sixth Conversation. HyperionAudio, 1964. CD 6, Track 01.

²⁴¹ An appreciable demonstration of Jacqueline Kennedy's commitment to culture and refinement would come on Valentine's Day of 1962, when she gave the first televised tour of the White House. See Whitney Walton, “Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s,” cited in this project.

²⁴² Nancy Kegan Smith, Mary Ryan, and Mary Ann Watson, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy*, 103.

²⁴³ Lisa Fayne Cohen, “How Jacqueline Kennedy Brought the Mona Lisa to America.” *Galerie* (New York, NY), February 28, 2018. <https://galeriemagazine.com/how-jacqueline-kennedy-brought-the-mona-lisa-to-america-and-captivated-a-nation/>.

members—Mrs. Kennedy “mentioned to Malraux that it would be wonderful if Americans could see the Mona Lisa.”²⁴⁴ The loan of the painting avowedly mattered to Mrs. Kennedy, who took an interest in French artifacts as part of her campaign of restoring the White House, a feat that “marked the Kennedy years as a period of aesthetic achievement.”²⁴⁵ The painting would not hang in the presidential residence, but it would hang in a museum—a venue where Mrs. Kennedy’s French-tinged impact could be appreciated publicly, hereby fulfilling her wish that



Figure 3. Jacqueline and John F. Kennedy, at right, welcome André Malraux and his wife, Madeleine, to the White House in 1962. Vice President Johnson stands behind Mrs. Kennedy.

“Americans could see the Mona Lisa.”²⁴⁶

Lisa Fayne Cohen, “How Jacqueline Kennedy Brought the Mona Lisa to America.” *Galerie* (New York, NY), February 28, 2018.

Her tireless commitment to this originated during the Paris visit. Between the Kennedys’ visit and arrival of the Mona Lisa in January of 1963, Jackie and Malraux communicated to one another via letters, an instrumental process in the American first lady achieving the loan of the world famous painting.²⁴⁷ In the early days of 1963, after a year and a half, the painting arrived in New York on the *SS France*, to be installed at the National Gallery of Art and, after that, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ John Kelly, “Remembering That Time in 1963 When the Mona Lisa Went on a U.S. Road Trip.” *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), WP Company, April 2, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/remembering-that-time-in-1963-when-the-mona-lisa-went-on-a-us-road-trip/2018/04/02/e792967-2881-11e8-bc72-077aa4dab9ef_story.html.

²⁴⁵ Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 68–69.

²⁴⁶ John Kelly, “Remembering That Time in 1963 When the Mona Lisa Went on a U.S. Road Trip.” *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), WP Company, April 2, 2018.

²⁴⁷ Jackie Kennedy’s letters to André Malraux were characterized by a certain degree of informality, suggestive of a friendship. See Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 65–68.

²⁴⁸ Lisa Fayne Cohen, “How Jacqueline Kennedy Brought the Mona Lisa to America.” *Galerie* (New York, NY), February 28, 2018.

Jackie Kennedy, thus, had a direct impact outside of winning over the French president—her cultural goal was achieved.²⁴⁹ Mark White, Professor of History at Queen Mary, University of London, writes of the extent of this interculturality, and how the move served to benefit not just Jackie's image, but her husband's, too:

In the end, more than 1.5 million Americans saw the *Mona Lisa*; and the way this connected JFK with Da Vinci's masterpiece strengthened the idea that Kennedy was a leader who occupied not only the grubby and and at times morally compromising terrain of American politics but also the loftier, edifying realm of artistic appreciation and the life of the mind.²⁵⁰

The lending of the *Mona Lisa* was significant, thus, because it brought about a sense of astonishment to the Kennedy administration that was not yet there before. It was a gesture between the two nations that simultaneously functioned as the zenith of Jackie's campaign, one that "marked the Kennedy years as a period of aesthetic achievement."²⁵¹ This apogee was borne from Jackie's influence outside of the General—it was borne from her influential friendship with Malraux, one that had been first fostered in Paris in 1961. Malraux noted that the loaning of *La Joconde* was not given "as a tribute to the American people, but to their First Lady."²⁵²

Following her outings on Thursday, the American first lady gave a press conference in the salon of the Gavin residence, welcoming both French and American reporters.²⁵³ This was the culmination of Mrs. Kennedy's visits that day and the day prior, and a moment that suggests Mrs. Kennedy's transition from fomentation to realization—that is, moving from the fostering of her self-driven campaigns, to grasping the true extent of her potential. Jackie's press conference was characterized by somewhat pithy responses on the part of the first lady.²⁵⁴ Answering the

²⁴⁹ Nancy Kegan Smith, Mary Ryan, and Mary Ann Watson, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy*, 103.

²⁵⁰ Mark White, "Apparent Perfection: The Image of John F. Kennedy." *History* 98, no. 2 (330) (2013): 234. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24429654>.

²⁵¹ Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 68.

²⁵² Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 182.

²⁵³ "First Lady Holds Press Conference: Interviewed By Newspaperwomen," *The Bee* (Danville, Virginia), June 1, 1961.

²⁵⁴ Elizabeth Jody Natalie, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 62.

reporters present—all women, totaling about fifty—in both English and French, Mrs. Kennedy responded, “I have more important things to do,”²⁵⁵ when asked about her fashion choices or designers she would visit. In like fashion, she replied, “I hate spoiled children,”²⁵⁶ when asked about her rearing of Caroline and John, Jr., and “I just don’t have time,”²⁵⁷ when asked if she would buy Caroline a new dress while in Paris. The first lady’s responses even bordered on inconsiderate at some points—when asked by a reporter from *Women’s Wear Daily* if she still read the fashion magazine, Mrs. Kennedy answered, “I try not to anymore.”²⁵⁸

Although these responses were rather brusque, and the American first lady’s relationship with her country’s press was less than ideal,²⁵⁹ Jackie’s responses were telling—they suggested the first lady’s recognition of her own impact outside of the traditional one-dimensional effects ascribed to her. As Mrs. Kennedy experienced an increasing amount of cultural exposure and presence in Paris, she began to consequently experience an “unmistakable transformation in the eyes of Europe” due to the major public relations success of the visit.²⁶⁰ By the time of her press conference on Thursday, Mrs. Kennedy had paid visits to multiple museums, each visit functioning as a touchstone in which *la présidente Jacqui* reinforced her commitments to art, culture, and youth, among other initiatives.²⁶¹ Her press conference, thus, can be considered a changeover moment in the first lady’s awareness.

In responding, “I have more important things to do,” Jackie Kennedy alluded to these important causes that were undertaken most perceptibly at her *École de Puériculture* and museum visits.²⁶² Her responses to reporters may have been terse, but they served a purpose of

²⁵⁵ “First Lady Holds Press Conference: Interviewed By Newspaperwomen,” *The Bee* (Danville, Virginia), June 1, 1961.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Elizabeth Jody Natalie, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 62.

²⁶⁰ Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 181.

²⁶¹ Elizabeth Jody Natalie, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 62.

²⁶² “First Lady Holds Press Conference: Interviewed By Newspaperwomen,” *The Bee* (Danville, Virginia), June 1, 1961.

obliquely suggesting that the press pay more attention to the “important things” the first lady was carrying out behind the scenes, rather than the cosmetic aspect of the first lady or the adoration she received as a result of this.²⁶³ Mrs. Kennedy’s willingness to answer in such a manner, deviating from the customary “baby doll” Jacqueline Kennedy, perhaps suggested an augmentation in confidence and knowledge of the fact that what she was doing was important.²⁶⁴

The crowning moment of Thursday—and the Kennedys’ visit—was that evening’s dinner at Versailles’ Hall of Mirrors, and subsequent night at the ballet. As evidenced by her Wednesday and Thursday outings to various *lieux de culture*, Jackie Kennedy was fostering connections and coming into her own, all while charming the French—and their leader—in the process. While her husband was kept busy by ceremony and official state business, Mrs. Kennedy proved herself to be consequential. The climax of this—the moment of Jackie’s self-actualization—came amidst the dazzle of Thursday night at Versailles. In addition to her causes as first lady regarding children, culture, and the arts, Jackie Kennedy was renowned for her fashion sense. By the beginning of the 1960s, the “Jackie look” was already prevalent beyond the United States, including in France.²⁶⁵ At Versailles, such admiration of the American first lady’s ensemble—in this case, not her typical pillbox hats and wool dresses, but a chic Givenchy dress—was palpable. Mrs. Kennedy’s gown turned heads, as well as her accessories.²⁶⁶ Her tiara was a particularly eye-catching embellishment, for during state visits, especially, diadems were only acceptable accessories for royalty.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 181, “Her confidence also grew.” [Referring to Versailles]

²⁶⁵ Whitney Walton, “Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s,” 40.

²⁶⁶ Lisa Waller Rogers, “Jackie and De Gaulle,” Lisa’s History Room, January 11, 2010. See also Sarah Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 196.

²⁶⁷ Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 182.

Jackie's wearing of this accessory is telling. Not only did the accessory complement her gown and additional diamond and emerald jewelry,²⁶⁸ but by wearing an accessory typically reserved for sovereigns, Mrs. Kennedy demonstrated, even within the pre-arrangement of her wardrobe and the setting of Versailles, that "elle s'en tient"—she could get away with it.²⁶⁹ Just as during her press conference, Mrs. Kennedy's responses were suggestive of the "more important things"²⁷⁰ she was carrying out and, inferentially, wanted the press to pay attention to, her ensemble at Versailles reinforced her status as an audacious and intercultural fashion icon whose influence extended well beyond the walls of the Élysée or the White House, even within strictures.²⁷¹ That evening, President Kennedy would note in his toast, "My preparation for the Presidency did not include acquiring first-hand knowledge of France through diplomatic experience. I acquired it through marriage instead."²⁷²

IV. Conclusion

*"Merely by being herself, Jacqueline Kennedy sailed across thresholds that would have tripped most women. But, armed with her femininity, beauty, and bold fashion instinct, she did not miss a step—having correctly chosen as the scene of her triumph the world's capital of haute couture and womanly allure."*²⁷³

Previously, one saw how it was American first lady Jacqueline Kennedy who, through her charm, glitz, and extensive knowledge of French culture, proved to be instrumental in transforming President de Gaulle's opinion of President Kennedy. However, Mrs. Kennedy's impact during the Paris visit was not limited to her role in charming France's leader. Whereas President Kennedy's agenda restricted him to predominantly diplomatic ceremonies and

²⁶⁸ Elizabeth Jody Natalie, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 64.

²⁶⁹ Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 182.

²⁷⁰ "First Lady Holds Press Conference: Interviewed By Newspaperwomen," *The Bee* (Danville, Virginia), June 1, 1961.

²⁷¹ Donald Spoto, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life*, 181–182.

²⁷² Elizabeth Jody Natalie, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy*, 65.

²⁷³ "The Nation: La Présidente, Apotheosis at Versailles." *Time* LXXVII, no. 24, June 9, 1961, 14.

tête-à-tête conversations with President de Gaulle, this was not the case for the first lady. The two presidents' similar agendas were mainly—but not wholly—dedicated to predetermined occurrences that incorporated France and the United States, including a ceremony in which the American president laid a wreath at France's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and the two leaders' continual—and highly publicized—conversations. However, Mrs. Kennedy's agenda was much more flexible, in that the first lady was able to pay visits to various Parisian cultural institutions and sites—she was not fettered to participating in prescribed diplomatic spectacle.

Consequently, Mrs. Kennedy's impact was felt beyond General de Gaulle. In paying a visit to Paris' École de Puériculture on Wednesday, Jackie set a precedent that a visit to a children's hospital would be included on her state visit agendas thereafter, consequently reinforcing her acclaim abroad—that had been felt so tangibly in Paris, in that very first hospital visit. Following this, Mrs. Kennedy visited multiple Parisian museums with Minister André Malraux, whom she greatly admired. These museum visits—Jackie and Malraux's first face-to-face interactions—established an abiding friendship that would eventually lead to the American first lady, with Malraux's assistance, securing France's donation of the *Mona Lisa* to the United States in 1963, an apotheosis of Franco-American cultural relations and appreciation. Concurrently, just as Mrs. Kennedy's visit to the École de Puériculture paid tribute to the first lady's interest in the care of children, her visit to the Louvre and Jeu de Paume paid tribute to her interest—and influence—in the arts and culture, her most noticeable campaign as first lady.

After these visits, Jacqueline Kennedy gave a press conference to a group of French and American journalists, in which she expressed sheer enjoyment upon discussing how she felt to be in Paris. Her responses to reporters' questions—characterized as brusque, but honest—suggested that the American first lady was not solely an object of fashion or glamor, but a dedicated first

spouse with substantial intentions and objectives, all exercised under a considerable degree of influence. “I have more important things to do”²⁷⁴ was not necessarily an ad lib. Following the afternoon of questioning, Jacqueline Kennedy dazzled all present at Versailles that evening with her Givenchy ensemble, accompanied by a diamond tiara and her own gemstone accessories. Just as her remarks at the press conference were suggestive of a degree of influence, so was her appearance that evening—in particular, her tiara, which suggested a high degree of importance. Jacqueline Kennedy’s ensemble at Versailles reinforced her status as an international fashion icon, while concurrently hinting that the first lady knew of her prestige.

All of the moments from which the American first lady exerted influence were borne from intimacy. Taking advantage of her agenda—in contrast to her husband’s inflexible and methodical schedule—Jacqueline Kennedy was hard at work in Paris, reaffirming her commitments as first lady to children, art, culture, and fashion. Such reaffirmations would, consequently, come to reinforce her acclaim abroad, enhance her friendship with France’s Minister of Culture—in turn securing the loan of the world’s most famous painting to her home country—and establish, through both verbal exchanges and in appearance, a self-aware first lady, both influential and intercultural. Mrs. Kennedy’s impression was ubiquitous and extended beyond enchanting the French president—regardless of how the Kennedys’ Paris visit turned out geopolitically, the person of Jacqueline Kennedy bridged the two nations culturally.

²⁷⁴ “First Lady Holds Press Conference: Interviewed By Newspaperwomen,” *The Bee* (Danville, Virginia), June 1, 1961.

Conclusion

I. Post-Summit Convictions

“I think de Gaulle was very impressed by Jack.”²⁷⁵

“I now have more confidence in your country,” spoke President de Gaulle to President Kennedy as the latter departed from Paris.²⁷⁶ An event that would take place one year following the Kennedys’ visit would prove that the General’s confidence was amiss. Several weeks after his visit, President Kennedy penned a letter to his French homologue, reiterating his promise that the United States would promptly consult France before any nuclear decisions were made thereafter.²⁷⁷ One year later, however, the Cuban Missile Crisis broke out, bringing the world to the brink of nuclear war as the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a standoff. In response to the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, Kennedy only consulted with his domestic committee of security advisors—the ExComm—in making the decision to issue a naval blockade and, eventually, prepare an invasion force five days after his televised address to the nation.²⁷⁸ No Western alliance nation was consulted in the process,²⁷⁹ but the American president kept in close contact with the British government in particular.²⁸⁰

De Gaulle, although still rather wary, seemingly expected Kennedy to follow through on this promise, for not only had the French president received written reaffirmation, but he was consequently chagrined that he had not been consulted in the matter by the United States, stemming from the promise made by Kennedy in Paris. Pre-summit memos indicated the US’

²⁷⁵ Schlesinger, Arthur M., and Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy*. The Sixth Conversation. HyperionAudio, 1964. CD 6, Track 01.

²⁷⁶ Nancy Kegan Smith, Mary Ryan, and Mary Ann Watson, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy*, 103.

²⁷⁷ Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe*, 76–77, “Lorsque, fin juin...”

²⁷⁸ Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, 155.

²⁷⁹ Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 128.

²⁸⁰ Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, 155.

intent clearly: “We are prepared to give de Gaulle the same assurances about consultation on worldwide use of nuclear weapons.”²⁸¹ On October 22, 1962, Secretary Acheson arrived in Paris to inform the General of the Kennedy administration’s decisions, to which the General frankly replied, “I understand that you have come not to consult me but to inform me.”²⁸² Kennedy’s false pretense succeeded in “definitively shattering any residual French hopes for tripartism.”²⁸³ The original dissension between the two leaders, as evidenced by their gifts to each other one year prior in Paris, was revived in this moment, and concurrently revived the truth that “politically there was little movement” during the Kennedys’ 1961 visit.²⁸⁴

II. Another Side of Jackie Kennedy

“...and I said I wouldn’t land in Paris—I never wanted to go near the French again. But Jack said, ‘No, no, you mustn’t be like that; don’t you see, you’re the one avenue that’s open. And they think I’m a so-and-so but they think you’re nice because you like France, and you must always leave an avenue open.’”²⁸⁵

Yet, this source of President de Gaulle’s post-summit faith—regardless of how large it was—that Kennedy may follow through on his promise can be correlated to the person of Jacqueline Kennedy, because it was Mrs. Kennedy’s charm and affability that augmented the French president’s faith in the United States, and thus gave him a temporary sense of hope regarding the country’s motivations. This impact was most discernibly demonstrated during the Kennedys’ 1961 visit. Evidence suggests that Mrs. Kennedy was acutely conscious of her instrumentality and key role during the visit. She was clearly aware of her status as an influential and renowned beauty, as evidenced by her privileged French ensembles such as her tiara at

²⁸¹ “Memorandum: What We Want From Paris,” May 30, 1961. President’s Office Files.

²⁸² Erin Mahan, *Kennedy, De Gaulle, and Western Europe*, 128; Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, 156.

²⁸³ Sean J. McLaughlin, *JFK and de Gaulle*, 166.

²⁸⁴ Charles Williams. *The Last Great Frenchman*, 417.

²⁸⁵ Schlesinger, Arthur M., and Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy*. The Sixth Conversation. HyperionAudio, 1964. CD 6, Track 01.

Versailles, and also her status as a first spouse who could foment important campaigns and network advantageously—for it was during the Paris visit that she posed the idea to Minister Malraux of loaning the Mona Lisa to the United States. These suggest that Mrs. Kennedy may have had a knowledge of just how important her presence—especially on the Paris trip—was.

Additionally, recently released interviews paint a different side of Jackie Kennedy. Recorded with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in 1964, less than one year after her husband’s assassination, Mrs. Kennedy revealed her contrary-to-popular-belief opinions on President de Gaulle, describing him as an “damn troublemaker” and brazenly declaring, “I loathe the French.”²⁸⁶ She continued, referring to de Gaulle’s policy toward Britain and the Common Market as “...so unchristian of de Gaulle, and Jack gave so much, and that spiteful man gave so little.”²⁸⁷ Thus, this other side, illustrating a more audacious Mrs. Kennedy, suggests that her actions in Paris may have been performative—that is, a knowledge of her instrumentality as manifested in delicately prepared and crafted conversation topics and *dernier cri* wardrobe items that would effectively win over the French leader and people.

A parishioner at my church, Andrea Daniels, once worked alongside Jacqueline Kennedy during the latter’s post-White House career in book editing in New York City. Andrea had an office across the hall from Jackie, and was friendly with her assistant. Of Jackie, Andrea wrote to me, “Tweed pants, turtle neck [*sic*] and blazer. No glamour. And no baby doll voice either; that was a White House PR invention, I think. She had a loud, husky voice.”²⁸⁸ Andrea’s mention of a “White House PR invention” leads me to consider the presence of such inventions during the Kennedys’ 1961 trip to Paris and during Jackie’s tenure as first lady.²⁸⁹ In the wake of the

²⁸⁶ Schlesinger, Arthur M., and Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy*. The Seventh Conversation. HyperionAudio, 1964. CD 7, Track 05.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ Toth, Maxwell, and Andrea Daniels. Personal interview, February 28, 2022.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

visceral diplomatic tension present between the United States and France in the early 1960s—as vested in the gifts presented during the Kennedys’ Paris visit—the first lady’s French allure was requisite, even if artifactual or a public relations stunt. As a result, Mrs. Kennedy’s noticeable Francophilia and refinement in her interactions briefly mended this tension, as suggested by President de Gaulle’s subsequent expectation—albeit, reserved—of a fulfillment of the promises of the visit, and comment to President Kennedy at the latter’s departure. Jackie’s impact extended beyond the Élysée, and her time in France established her identity, whether manufactured or genuine, as an urbane first lady whose mission was one of interculturality.

III. Consciously Influential, or Not?

To what extent, then, was the American first lady aware of her substance? Was she *wholly* conscious of it, or partially? Jackie Kennedy’s influence on this trip—and the motivations behind said influence—are rather nuanced. In my project, I argue that the person of Jackie fortified the French president’s opinion of the United States and effectively established herself as a consequential figurehead and first lady while in Paris, with a less strict agenda enabling her to cultivate campaigns and allies. This is undeniable, but the nuance rests in whether or not she had a knowledge of her degree of influence. Jackie’s considerable French tastes were rooted in at least partial veracity—she was indeed a French literature student, and opined in the Schlesinger interview that, “De Gaulle was my hero when I met Jack.”²⁹⁰ Additionally, she was the subject of stylists who sought to display French flair, including Givenchy and hairstylist Alexandre de Paris, implying that the consequences of her ensembles—and the evident self-actualization they brought about—were borne from the agency of other individuals.²⁹¹ Lastly, even in wake of

²⁹⁰ Schlesinger, Arthur M., and Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy*.

²⁹¹ Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 66.

disliking the French, so, too, did Mrs. Kennedy demonstrate an intimate, lasting friendship with Malraux, as evidenced by their warm missives back and forth.²⁹²

Yet, with her deliberate behind the scenes work on *La Joconde*, her candid replies during the Schlesinger interviews, and Andrea Daniels' commentary painting Jackie in quite a different light, a nuance remains. The extent to which Jacqueline Kennedy knew of her instrumentality—and how much of this knowledge was reflected in her comportment in Paris—remains obscure, but an amalgam of legitimate agency and pre-arranged captivation seems to be a veritable answer. What is clear in the end, regardless, is that in examining aspects of the Kennedys' visit that are not often put in the limelight—that is, not unequivocally political—one can reveal true extents of the visit's ramifications, and the ostensibly true intentions and perceptions of the visit's key players, whether President Kennedy, President de Gaulle, or Jackie O.

²⁹² Alice Y. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French*, 68.

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Appendix A: Maps

I. Europe in 1961



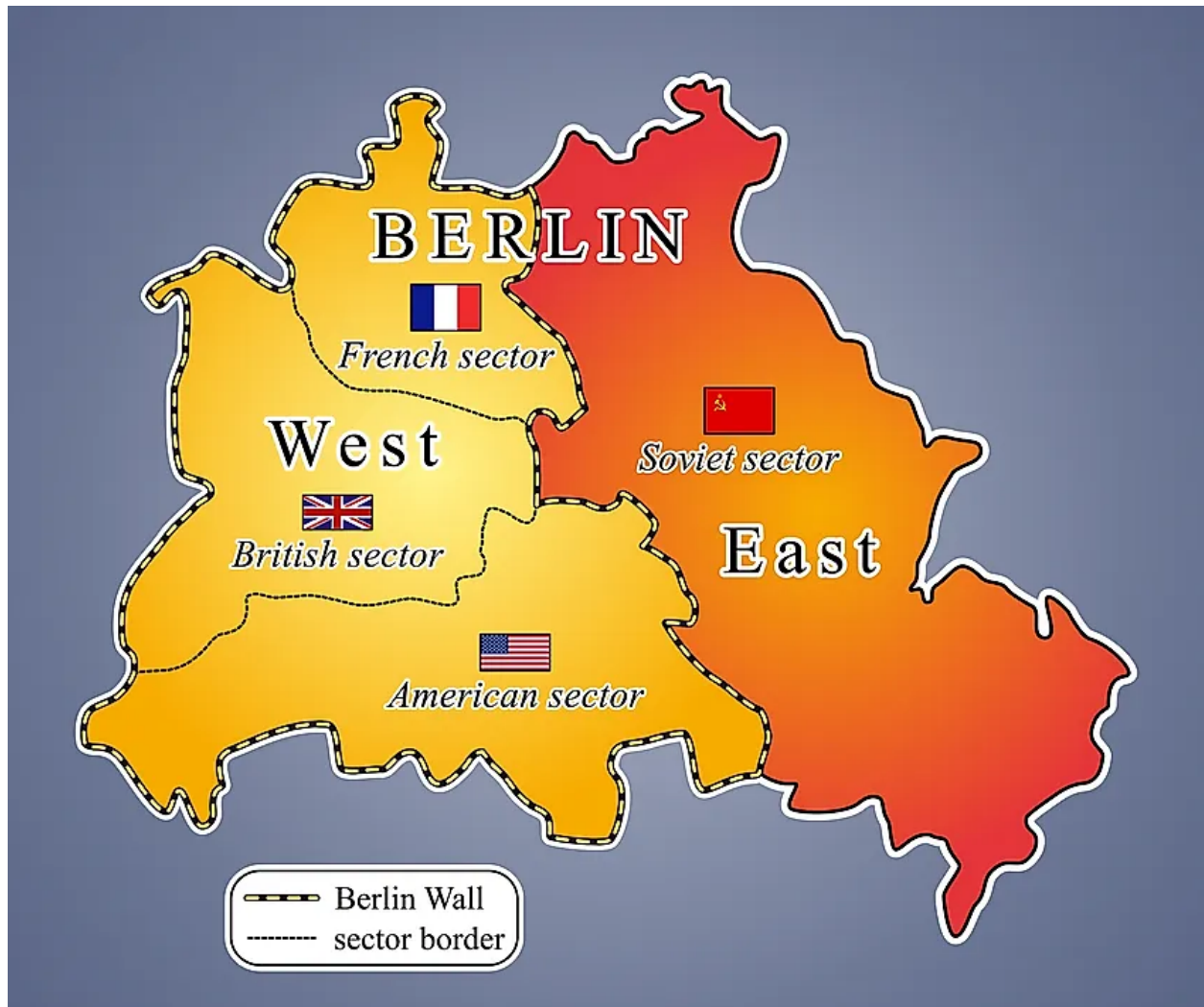
Source: IEG-MAPS, Institute of European History, Mainz / © A. Kunz, 2004. https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/map.cfm?map_id=330.

II. Germany and Berlin in 1961



Source: "East German Border Claimed 327 Lives, Says Berlin Study."
BBC News. BBC, June 8, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40200305>.

III. Sectors of Berlin, 1961



Source: Shvili, Jason. "Berlin Wall." WorldAtlas. *WorldAtlas*, June 21, 2021. <https://www.worldatlas.com/geography/berlin-wall.html>.

Appendix B: Timeline

Year	Timeline of the World	Timeline of the Life of the Kennedys and the United States of America	Timeline of the Life of Charles De Gaulle and France
1889	Following an outbreak in Russia, the influenza virus soon spreads worldwide, leading to the 1889–90 influenza pandemic.	North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington are admitted to the Union as the 39 th , 40 th , 41 st , and 42 nd states, respectively.	The Eiffel Tower is erected in Paris.
1890		Rose Fitzgerald, who will become the mother of John F. Kennedy, is born on July 22 in Boston, Massachusetts, the eldest of six children.	Charles André Joseph Marie de Gaulle is born on November 22 in Lille, France. The son of Henri de Gaulle and Jeanne Maillot, he is the third of an eventual five children.
1901	Queen Victoria dies at age 81. Her eldest son succeeds her and is crowned King Edward VII one year later.		
1914	World War I begins after Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated in Sarajevo, Bosnia, by a Serbian nationalist	Following the outbreak of World War I, the United States issues a proclamation of neutrality, which will remain in effect until April of 1917.	De Gaulle is deployed to Belgium following the beginning of World War I. He will be wounded during the Battle of Verdun two years later.
1917		Under President Wilson, the United States declares war on Germany and officially enters World War I.	Former Minister of the Interior Georges Clemenceau becomes Prime Minister of France under President Raymond Poincaré.
1918	The Spanish flu pandemic infects millions of people worldwide within two years.	John Fitzgerald Kennedy is born on May 29 in Brookline, Massachusetts. The son of Joseph and Rose Kennedy, he is the second of an eventual nine children.	The Armistice of November 11 is signed, effectively ending World War I in Europe.
1921			Marries Yvonne Vendroux on April 7 in Calais. They will have three children: Philippe (born 1921), Elisabeth (1924–2013), and Anne (1928–1948).
1929	In October, the New York Stock Exchange crashes, a day that will come to be known as “Black Tuesday.”	Jacqueline Lee Bouvier is born on July 28 in Southampton, New York, the daughter of John Vernou Bouvier and Janet Lee Bouvier.	
1939	Germany invades Poland. World War II begins.	Films <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> and <i>Gone With the Wind</i> premiere and generate massive box office revenue.	Two days after the invasion of Poland, France and Britain declare war on Germany.

Year	Timeline of the World	Timeline of the Life of the Kennedys and the United States of America	Timeline of the Life of Charles De Gaulle and France
1940	Hitler invades Denmark and Norway in April. Italy enters the war in June. The Battle of Britain begins in July, with bombing campaigns continuing into 1941.	In November, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt becomes the first US president to be elected to a third term, defeating Republican Wendell Wilkie.	France falls to Germany in June. De Gaulle flees to London, where he delivers his June 18 and June 22 speeches, respectively, by radio broadcast. They will come to be considered among the greatest orations in French history.
1944	Switzerland hosts the 1948 Winter Olympics, with opening ceremonies in St. Moritz. NATO is created when the United States, Canada, and ten European nations sign the North Atlantic Treaty.	Kennedy's sister, Kathleen—known as “Kick”—dies in a plane crash at the age of 28, while flying through southern France.	French and American forces liberate Paris, and General de Gaulle arrives back in France, taking up control of the provisional government.
1948	Switzerland hosts the 1948 Winter Olympics, with opening ceremonies in St. Moritz.	Kennedy's sister, Kathleen—known as “Kick”—dies in a plane crash at the age of 28, while flying through southern France.	De Gaulle's daughter Anne, who lived with Down's syndrome, dies of pneumonia at the age of 20. This death deeply impacts Charles de Gaulle.
1949	NATO is created when the United States, Canada, and ten European nations sign the North Atlantic Treaty.	Kennedy's sister, Kathleen—known as “Kick”—dies in a plane crash at the age of 28, while flying through southern France.	De Gaulle's daughter Anne, who lived with Down's syndrome, dies of pneumonia at the age of 20. This death deeply impacts Charles de Gaulle.
1952	In February, King George VI dies at the age of 56. His daughter Elizabeth succeeds him, and is crowned one year later at Westminster Abbey. Queen Elizabeth II remains on the British throne to this day.	John Kennedy and Jacqueline Bouvier are married on September 12 in Newport, Rhode Island. They will have three children, two of whom reach adulthood: Caroline (born 1957), and John, Jr. (1960–1999).	In November, Cambodia ratifies the Declaration of Independence from the French Empire.
1953	Soviet leader Joseph Stalin dies in March after suffering a stroke and is succeeded by Georgy Malenkov.	Former Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower is inaugurated as the 34 th US president, having defeated Democrat Adlai Stevenson.	In November, Cambodia ratifies the Declaration of Independence from the French Empire.
1954	Representatives of France and Indochina meet in Geneva, Switzerland, for the signing of the Geneva Accords, which lay out the processes of decolonization and partition of the subcontinent. In October, West Germany joins NATO.	In May, the Supreme Court rules unanimously in <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> that segregated schools are unconstitutional. <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> is overruled.	Việt Minh forces united under Hồ Chí Minh decisively defeat General Christian de Castries' forces at the Battle of Điện Biên Phủ on May 7, effectively ending the First Indochina War. More months after the end of the First Indochina War, the Algerian War begins on November 1 after members of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) carry out a series of attacks in French Algeria. This decolonization war—one of the bloodiest in French history—will last until 1962.

Year	Timeline of the World	Timeline of the Life of the Kennedys and the United States of America	Timeline of the Life of Charles De Gaulle and France
1958	Nikita Khrushchev is sworn in as the seventh Premier of the Soviet Union.	Kennedy is elected President of the United States, defeating Republican Richard Nixon with a popular vote margin of less than one percent.	The French Fourth Republic collapses under President René Coty. Following a constitutional referendum, Charles de Gaulle is elected the first president of the Fifth Republic. He soon after proposes his tripartite proposal to President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Macmillan.
1960	In November, civil war breaks out in Guatemala, and will continue for thirty-six years until the signing of a peace treaty in 1996.	The Bay of Pigs debacle occurs in April, a little over a month before Kennedy arrives in Paris. The invasion is an abject failure, with American troops largely outmanned by Castro's forces.	During the Algiers putsch, four French generals, led by General Maurice Challe, attempt a coup in an effort to halt de Gaulle's withdrawal from Algeria.
1961	The Cuban Missile Crisis occurs in April, instigating a month-long standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union.	On Valentine's Day, Jacqueline Kennedy gives a televised tour of the White House.	
1963		President Kennedy is assassinated on November 22 in Dallas, Texas, at the age of 46. He dies hours later and, three days later, is interred at Arlington National Cemetery. Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson is inaugurated as the 36 th US president.	In a speech in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, President de Gaulle decries the United States' presence in Vietnam.
1964	Austria hosts the 1964 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck.	The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is passed, outlawing various forms of discrimination. It is signed into law by President Johnson on July 2.	De Gaulle withdraws France from NATO.
1966	Indira Gandhi is sworn in as the 3 rd Prime Minister of India, the only woman to hold the office to date.	Twenty-two years after the death of Franklin Roosevelt, the Twenty-Fifth Amendment is ratified, limiting the number of presidential terms to two.	At a speech in Montréal, President de Gaulle declares, "Vive le Québec libre!" ostensibly indicating his support for the Quebecois sovereignty movement. This remark is met with mixed reviews in mainland France.
1968	In March, United States soldiers in Vietnam gun down over 300 civilians in the My Lai massacre.	Kennedy's younger brother and presidential candidate, Robert Kennedy, is assassinated on June 5 in Los Angeles, California, at the age of 42. Jacqueline Kennedy marries Aristotle Onassis, a Greek shipping tycoon and one of the world's richest men, on October 20. He is twenty-four years her senior.	In May, student protests break out in Paris, triggering national unrest and widespread economic fluctuation.

Year	Timeline of the World	Timeline of the Life of the Kennedys and the United States of America	Timeline of the Life of Charles De Gaulle and France
1969		Richard Nixon is elected President of the United States, defeating Democrat Hubert Humphrey and Alabama governor George Wallace.	Following a failed referendum of a series of proposed amendments to the Constitution, de Gaulle resigns the presidency on April 28.
1970			President de Gaulle dies at the age of 79, thirteen days shy of his 80 th birthday. He is interred in the town of Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises, alongside his daughter, Anne.
1974	Argentinian president Juan Perón dies at the age of 78 and is succeeded by his wife, Isabel.	Facing near-certain impeachment following the Watergate scandal, Richard Nixon resigns the presidency on August 9. Vice President Gerald Ford is inaugurated as the 38 th US president.	
1979	The 1979 oil crisis occurs as a result of interrupted oil production and exportation.		Yvonne de Gaulle dies in Paris at the age of 79. She is interred alongside her husband and daughter.
1981	The Iran hostage crisis comes to an end after 444 days.	Ronald Reagan is inaugurated as the 40 th President of the United States, having defeated incumbent Jimmy Carter.	François Mitterrand is elected President of France, defeating incumbent Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.
1989	In November, the Berlin Wall falls, uniting the city that had been divided for almost thirty years.	Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait in August, prompting the United States, France, and Saudi Arabia to jointly invade in Operation Desert Shield.	
1994		Jackie Kennedy dies in New York City at the age of 64. She is interred alongside her first husband in Arlington National Cemetery.	

