

**More Than “International Royalty”: Jacqueline Kennedy’s
Celebrity, Culture, and Cold War Diplomacy in Paris**

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At the Palais Chaillot, opposite the Eiffel Tower, President John F. Kennedy introduced himself at a 1961 press conference: “I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris, and I have enjoyed it!”¹ While those in attendance laughed and applauded, this remark reveals the significant influence Kennedy had on her husband’s foreign policy. During her tenure as First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy didn’t travel much, but when she did, it was to “near universal acclaim.”² Whether she traveled on her own to India and Pakistan for a goodwill tour or accompanied President Kennedy to Latin America and, most notably, France, she managed her celebrity, leveraged her multilingual skills, and presented herself in specific ways to further US interests abroad. However, her contributions haven’t always been fully recognized, particularly in American history textbooks. In George C. Herring’s monumental historical narrative, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776*, Jacqueline Kennedy is mentioned only once and only in connection to her husband: “He and his stylish wife, Jacqueline, had assumed a position akin to international royalty.”³ To Herring’s credit, he implies her use of celebrity, but he omits her active role in personal diplomacy while abroad. Although often portrayed as a ceremonial figure, Jacqueline Kennedy functioned as an influential agent of American soft power; her 1961 trip to France specifically highlights how historians such as Herring have overlooked the substantive diplomatic impact of her cultural and personal diplomacy.

Raised as Jacqueline Bouvier, made famous as Jackie Kennedy, and remembered as Jackie Onassis, the former First Lady of the United States is known by many names, but is best remembered for her charm and mystique. Born on July 28th, 1929, in East Hampton, Long

¹ “News Conference 12, June 2, 1961.” *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, June 2, 1961, [\[WEB\]](#).

² Karen O’Connor, Bernadette Nye, and Laura Van Assendelft. “Wives in the White House: The Political Influence of First Ladies.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1996): 845. [\[JSTOR\]](#)

³ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 727.

Island, New York, Jacqueline Bouvier was the daughter of John Bouvier, a wealthy stock trader, and Janet Lee, an accomplished equestrian. She was raised in high society, and as a result of her family's social status, she occasionally appeared in newspapers. Almost as if hinting at her future disposition and duties as First Lady, one columnist reported that “Little Jackie Bouvier... was a charming hostess at her second birthday party.”⁴ Beyond her toddler years, Jacqueline was a self-described tomboy, writing, “I hated dolls, loved horses and dogs, and had skinned knees.”⁵ She was also an avid reader and lover of language, learning French and Spanish in school. In her mother’s pursuit of perfection, her childhood interest in French transformed into a contest to further her fluency: “The person who uttered the most English words during supper lost the game.”⁶ However, her childhood wasn’t idyllic. In 1936, her father’s “infidelities and financial irresponsibility resulted in his separation and later divorce” from her mother.⁷

The most influential moments of her youth occurred in quick succession: 1949 and 1951. At Vassar College, Jacqueline majored in French Literature, the perfect combination of her childhood interests. In 1949, this led her to study abroad in Paris, France, through Smith College, which had the oldest American abroad program in Paris.⁸ Studying in postwar Paris began Jacqueline’s political connection to France, and it proved transformative. She lived with a host mother, Comtesse Guyot de Renty, and studied at the Sorbonne, completing a six-week language immersion program and taking classes in Art History and Literature. De Renty, a French aristocrat who served as a resistance member during World War II and survived a German concentration camp, was a particularly important connection.⁹ The two often visited art museums

⁴ Mary Van Rensselaer Thayer. *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1961), 12. [\[WEB\]](#)

⁵ Perry, 21. [\[LIBRARY\]](#)

⁶ Perry, 23. [\[LIBRARY\]](#)

⁷ Richard Bradley. *Onassis, Jacqueline Kennedy*. American National Biography, 2000. [\[ANB\]](#)

⁸ Ann Mah. "After She Had Seen Paris: As a College Student, Jacqueline Bouvier Spent a Year in the City, and it Became One of the Greatest Influences on Her Life." *New York Times* (1923-), Jun 30, 2019, 2. [\[PROQUEST\]](#)

⁹ Mah, 2. [\[PROQUEST\]](#)

together, providing an opportunity for Jacqueline to improve her French and deepen her understanding of French culture.

After graduating in 1951, Jacqueline met John F. Kennedy (JFK), then a Congressman, at a dinner party. Although the two didn't formally connect until another dinner, after Jacqueline called off her brief engagement to Wall Street Banker John Husted in 1952.¹⁰ Their private courtship mostly "consisted of private evenings spent playing parlor games with...Jack's brother Bobby and his wife Ethel, or double-dating with them to see a movie."¹¹ The two eventually married on September 12th, 1953, right before JFK's election to the Senate, in which his first speech included French translations by Jacqueline.¹²

As the wife of a senator, the now Jacqueline Kennedy, and her husband faced personal struggles. The senator's work schedule induced loneliness, so she filled her time by taking classes at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. During this time, JFK was unfaithful in his marriage and his health deteriorated to "the point of requiring him to walk with crutches."¹³ The couple's distress continued when Jacqueline miscarried in 1955 and delivered a stillborn baby in 1956. Regardless of their hardships, JFK announced his presidential campaign in 1960, where Jacqueline's "beauty, poise," and multilingual skills "were substantial political assets."¹⁴ Jacqueline wrote a weekly newspaper column titled "Campaign Wife," where she detailed "personal stories about everything from child-rearing to shopping with information on campaign policies."¹⁵ These efforts added a personalized voice to the campaign, which

¹⁰ Perry, 32. [[LIBRARY](#)]

¹¹ Perry, 35. [[LIBRARY](#)]

¹² Perry 35. [[LIBRARY](#)]

¹³ Perry, 43. [[LIBRARY](#)]

¹⁴ Bradley, 2. [[ANB](#)]

¹⁵ "Jacqueline Kennedy's 'Campaign Wife' Columns to be Posted on Twitter - 50 Years Later." *The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, 17 Sept. 2010. [[WEB](#)]assassination

Jacqueline further used in ads targeting Hispanic voters; speaking in Spanish, she described “these dangerous times when world peace is threatened by Communism.”¹⁶

On November 8th, 1960, JFK was elected President of the United States, with Jacqueline becoming the country’s First Lady. In this role, she traveled abroad as a global ambassador and turned the White House into a cultural hub. Notably, she restored the White House to reflect American history and hosted a renovation tour “viewed by 80 million people” with ease, providing “the public's most extended view of their new first lady.”¹⁷ Her public role also became inseparable from tragedy. On November 22nd, 1963, she accompanied JFK to Dallas, Texas, as part of the President’s reelection campaign. During this trip, JFK was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald. After this traumatic experience, Jacqueline Kennedy became “the most famous woman in the world,” guiding a grieving nation.¹⁸

Following her husband’s death, she withdrew from public life, focusing on her children. After the later assassination of Robert Kennedy, she married long-time acquaintance and Greek billionaire Aristotle Onassis. While “large segments of the American public felt personally hurt and betrayed by her remarriage,” it provided Jacqueline with the security and privacy she desired.¹⁹ Unfortunately, Onassis passed away in 1975, dying from respiratory failure in Paris. Interestingly, she “declined to travel to his deathbed” and later fought with his daughter over how his estate was divided.²⁰

Keeping the Onassis name, Jacqueline moved to New York, where, despite negative publicity, friends said she went from seeming “bored and restless” to living her “happiest and

¹⁶ “(Citizens for Kennedy-Johnson, 1960).” *Alexander Street*, 1960. [\[WEB\]](#) [Translated by Jack Scantland]

¹⁷ Norah O’Donnell. “Jackie Kennedy's devotion to White House revealed.” *CBS News*, 14 Feb. 2012. [\[WEB\]](#)

¹⁸ Bradley, 2. [\[ANB\]](#)

¹⁹ Bradley, 3. [\[ANB\]](#), Madeline Luckel. “The Most Memorable Moments From Jackie O’s Marriage to Aristotle Onassis.” *Vogue*, 20 Oct. 2017. [\[WEB\]](#)

²⁰ Bradley, 3. [\[ANB\]](#)

most fulfilling” years.²¹ Intruding on her private life, news outlets like the *National Enquirer* influenced public opinion, fixating on Jacqueline’s reputation as a high spender and falsely claiming that she stole “a number of precious art objects from Greece.”²² In response to the unfavorable and relentless press, she allegedly tried to change the narrative: crafting a deliberate and “new image of purposefulness and seriousness,” working as book editor.²³ While her sister, Lee Radziwill, said, “[Jacqueline] doesn’t even think about projecting an image,” her friends noted that she was “deliberately presenting herself in a way she never ha[d].”²⁴ She worked as a book editor for the last fifteen years of her life and lived with diamond trader Maurice Tempelsman, whom she never married. Tempelsman and Jacqueline’s children later sat by her side when she died of lymphoma at age sixty-four in 1994.

Even after her death, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis remains an enigmatic figure whose legacy resists any single, fixed interpretation. She “left no published memoir or diary of her White House years,” deepening public fascination and allowing multiple, sometimes conflicting images of her to endure.²⁵ Biographer Richard Bradley characterizes her as “preffer[ing] to avoid active involvement in politics,” while White House counsel Clark Clifford praised her personal diplomacy, writing in a letter addressed to her that “you have rendered the most magnificent service to your country.”²⁶ Others questioned the authenticity of the carefully constructed public image she presented. Writer Norman Mailer compared Jacqueline’s character to a “wooden horse,” saying she had a “manufactured” voice, yet she was so convincing that

²¹ Stephen Birmingham. “The Public Event Named Jackie.” *New York Times* (1923-), June 20, 1976, 13. [PROQUEST](#)], Perry, 199. [LIBRARY](#)]

²² Birmingham, 10. [PROQUEST](#)]

²³ Birmingham, 13. [PROQUEST](#)]

²⁴ Birmingham, 20, 13. [PROQUEST](#)]

²⁵ Perry, 15. [LIBRARY](#)]

²⁶ Bradley, 2. [ANB](#)], Clark Clifford. “Correspondence with Jacqueline Kennedy, 1961-1965.” *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, 1961. [WEB](#)] [Image 12]

“Pakistan declared the day of her arrival a national holiday.”²⁷ At once intensely private and globally visible, carefully controlled yet seemingly effortless, she cultivated a persona that was never entirely transparent.

While Jacqueline Kennedy (Kennedy) endured challenges and championed triumphs throughout her life, her most influential contribution to American diplomacy marked her first return to Paris since her study-abroad days, when she accompanied JFK on a state visit to France.²⁸ The visit occurred in 1961, specifically weeks after the disastrous Bay of Pigs Invasion, amid the intensifying Cold War. The failed operation damaged JFK’s credibility abroad, with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev concluding the American president was “weak and could be pushed around.”²⁹ As tensions with the Soviet Union rose ahead of the Vienna Summit, France, under President Charles de Gaulle, asserted a more independent foreign policy, including pursuing a nuclear program. De Gaulle was skeptical of US dominance in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): “he will not participate in any multilateral force under the NATO umbrella which he regards as a mere disguised version of American control.”³⁰ Given the circumstances, JFK visited de Gaulle in Paris before the Vienna Summit to establish a personal relationship and strengthen the Western front against Communism. However, his wife's presence proved most influential during the visit.

The Kennedys arrived in Paris at 10:30 a.m. on May 31st. President de Gaulle and his wife, the private Yvonne de Gaulle, received the couple at Orly Airport, before a motorcade took them throughout Paris, including the Latin Quarter, where Kennedy studied abroad. It quickly

²⁷ Norman Mailer. “An Evening with Jackie Kennedy.” *Esquire Magazine*, July 1, 1962, 3. [\[ESQUIRE ARCHIVES\]](#), Madison Jones McAleese. “Jackie Kennedy: The Public Diplomacy of Camelot.” USC Center on Public Diplomacy, Nov 22, 2016. [\[WEB\]](#)

²⁸ Mah, 2. [\[PROQUEST\]](#)

²⁹ Herring, 707.

³⁰ Charles E. Bohlen. “268. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State.” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XIII, Western Europe and Canada*, 16 Feb, 1963. [\[WEB\]](#)

became clear that “interest in [Kennedy] and what she was wearing often overshadowed interest in [JFK],” with Parisian crowds shouting “Vive Jacqui!” and referring to her as “La Présidente” and “La Reine.”³¹ These nicknames particularly foreshadow and highlight the influential and political role she played during the trip.

While JFK spoke with de Gaulle beforehand, Kennedy’s first main event during the trip was a luncheon in honor of her husband and herself. During state functions, she had the opportunity to converse with and listen to the French officials around her, later impacting how future, private conversations went: “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.”³² The most notable figures she connected with at state functions included de Gaulle and André Malraux, Minister of State for Cultural Affairs. After lunch, Kennedy met the Minister of Health at a training facility for pediatric professionals, showcasing her independent ability to act as a cultural ambassador. The day concluded with another opportunity for Kennedy to utilize her knowledge of the French language, culture, and history: a dinner at the Élysée Palace at 8:30 p.m., followed by a reception.

June 1st proved to be a day of further cultural exchange. JFK and de Gaulle spoke again, before an excursion to City Hall. Afterward, the Kennedys hosted the de Gaulles at the American embassy. In reverse of the prior day’s events, lunch was in honor of the French President and First Lady. After lunch, while her husband spoke with de Gaulle, Kennedy threw a “party” for women journalists.³³ French reporter Claude Sarraute described how Kennedy, who had a “Snow White” smile and spoke in a “melodious” voice, invited fifty journalists to the US Embassy’s

³¹ Bradley, 2. [\[ANB\]](#), Perry, 86. [\[LIBRARY\]](#)

³² Frank Sieverts. “Duke, Angier Biddle: Oral History Interview - JFK #3, 7/10/1964.” *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, 10 July. 1964, 48. [\[WEB\]](#)

³³ Claude Sarraute. “When Mrs. Kennedy throws a “party” for the press.” *Le Monde*, Jun 3, 196. [\[WEB\]](#) [Partial Access, Translated by Google Translate]

salon.³⁴ Kennedy had “a casual, informal chat” with the reporters, answering their various questions for over an hour.³⁵ While her day was filled with conversation, Kennedy’s evening was filled with art and history, evoking themes she studied in college. Dinner tonight was hosted in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles, an event “nothing could ever compare [to],” according to JFK’s Chief of Protocol.³⁶ Throughout the trip, Kennedy wore French clothes and had her hair done by a French stylist, but while “view[ing] an exhibit in the Palace,” her silk-and-embroidered Givenchy dress caught the eyes of those in attendance. Even de Gaulle commented on her look, saying, “Madame, this evening you look like a Parisienne.”³⁷ After dinner concluded, the Kennedys and de Gaulles ended the evening attending a ballet performance, a spectacle enjoyed by the art-loving Kennedy.

June 2nd was the final and shortest day of the Parisian visit. JFK met with de Gaulle from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., holding private talks one last time. The world leaders discussed a variety of topics, ranging from the role of the US in Latin America to Western intervention in Laos, but the most important points of discussion concerned Europe, NATO, and US-French relations moving forward. While de Gaulle disagreed on several topics, particularly saying “integration can no longer satisfy France,” concerning France’s role in and expectations of NATO, he did say “the two Presidents had been in agreement” about Berlin.³⁸ Ultimately, talks ended with de Gaulle expressing that “the Franco-American alliance is fundamental to the French people...Never have the common destinies of the two countries been closer.”³⁹ While the final meeting happened, Kennedy attended an informal luncheon in her honor. Later in the day, at

³⁴ Sarraute. [\[WEB\]](#) [Partial Access, Translated by Google Translate]

³⁵ Sarraute. [\[WEB\]](#) [Partial Access, Translated by Google Translate]

³⁶ Sierverts, 47. [\[WEB\]](#)

³⁷ Suzy Menkes. “Hubert de Givenchy Talks Jackie, Audrey, And The Duke Of Windsor Counting His Cash.” *British Vogue*, 19 June. 2017. [\[WEB\]](#)

³⁸ McBride. “230. Memorandum of Conversation.” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XIII, Western Europe and Canada*, 2 Jun, 1961. [\[WEB\]](#)

³⁹ McBride. [\[WEB\]](#)

4:30 p.m., she and JFK “exchange[d] farewells with President and Madame de Gaulle and members of the French Cabinet,” before preparing to depart the next day.⁴⁰

During her state visit to Paris, Kennedy charmed the French with her charismatic personality and innate understanding of language and culture. Her actions were intentional, but they weren’t new to the art of personal diplomacy. While engaging with the French, Kennedy built upon an established tradition of soft power in US-French relations. In Herring’s book, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776*, he details “one of the most extraordinary episodes in the history of American diplomacy,” Benjamin Franklin’s years-long mission to Paris.⁴¹ In France, he worked to secure a formal alliance, military support, and financial aid for the American Revolution, using tactics that were strikingly similar to those of Kennedy nearly 180 years later. Like Kennedy, Franklin “was already an international celebrity” during his diplomatic episode.⁴² He charmed the French, presenting “himself to French society as the very embodiment of America’s revolution,” wearing a tattered coat and occasionally a fur hat on top of his hair, which he “refused” to powder.⁴³ Herring capstones Franklin’s success, describing how “by displaying his affection for things French...he made the American Revolution more palatable and even fashionable.”⁴⁴ Whereas Franklin used the French perspective on him to achieve his goals, personifying America’s emerging national identity, Kennedy placated the French by wearing French clothes, having her hair styled by a French dresser, and demonstrating her knowledge and wit through her proficiency in their native language, thereby strengthening US-French relations.

⁴⁰ “President’s trip: Europe, 1961: May-June: De Gaulle briefing book: Volume I (3 of 3 folders).” *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, 2 June. 1961. [[WEB](#)] [Image 11]

⁴¹ Herring, 19.

⁴² Herring, 19.

⁴³ Herring, 19.

⁴⁴ Herring, 20.

The similarities between their styles of personal diplomacy are striking: both presented themselves purposefully, displayed interest in their host's culture, and ultimately played to their audiences. It should be noted that the audience of Franklin's salon diplomacy was a historic French aristocracy, whereas Kennedy's audience was the world; her diplomacy was photographed and filmed, involving encounters with government officials, journalists, and the general public. The number of eyes on her and the opinions formed about her, based on her heavily documented actions, make her success even more impressive. Kennedy utilized her skills and interests, which had previously been perceived as deficits, and turned them into incomparable assets.

During JFK's presidential campaign, *Life Magazine* made a point to note that Kennedy once wore an expensive Givenchy suit, but in Paris, de Gaulle complimented her Givenchy gown at a state dinner.⁴⁵ Her purposeful fashion, created and curated by a French-American designer, combined American designs with "French standards," helping to manufacture the "Jackie Look," which consisted of pillbox hats, bouffant hair, and minimal jewelry.⁴⁶ Her style became widely adopted and adored by both French and American audiences, with one French magazine describing Kennedy as having the "appearance of a Parisian woman [and] the soul of an American woman."⁴⁷ Similarly, her French was labeled "too exotic for average Americans," but in Paris, her fluency was essential in easing tensions with de Gaulle.⁴⁸

Kennedy's efforts strengthened US-French relations during her visit, and the impact of her diplomacy was felt for years afterward. Her established personal connections with de Gaulle and Malraux led to a remarkable cultural exchange. When Malraux visited Washington in 1962,

⁴⁵ "That Fancy Fashion Fuss." *Life Magazine*, 26 Sept. 1960. [\[GOOGLE BOOKS\]](#)

⁴⁶ Whitney Walton. "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and Early 1960s." *French Politics, Culture & Society* 31, no. 2 (2013), 39. [\[JSTOR\]](#).

⁴⁷ Walton, 41. [\[JSTOR\]](#)

⁴⁸ Walton, 39. [\[JSTOR\]](#).

Kennedy “broached the subject of loaning the *Mona Lisa* to the United States.” Despite objections from the Louvre director and the French public, Malraux and Kennedy arranged for the painting to be displayed in Washington and New York, where “a total of 1,751,521” visitors witnessed the painting. This moment marked the first time the *Mona Lisa* had left the Louvre since it was briefly stolen in 1911, and demonstrated an act of cultural acceptance, with the French embracing the Kennedy Administration and American public opinion.⁴⁹ Another example involving Malraux occurred after the *Mona Lisa*’s display, when he ordered a four-year renovation of the Grand Trianon. “By receiving Kennedy as no head of state had ever been received before,” the French government reflected on the need to create a residence fit to host its guests.⁵⁰

Ultimately, Kennedy’s success in Paris was not simply the product of charm or circumstance, but the continuation and modernization of a longstanding American diplomatic strategy rooted in cultural fluency and personal appeal. Like Franklin, she understood that influence often depended less on formal negotiation than on perception, presentation, and connection. Yet Kennedy elevated this tradition to a new global stage, where media amplification transformed personal diplomacy into an instrument of international influence. By blending American identity with French cultural sensibilities, she eased political tensions with de Gaulle and, to an extent, reshaped how the US was perceived abroad. In doing so, Kennedy demonstrated that soft power, when executed with awareness, can leave a tangible and enduring diplomatic legacy.

When discussing Kennedy’s role during the 1961 visit to Paris, many scholars and biographers use JFK’s quote, “I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris, and

⁴⁹ Brigit Katz. “The ‘Mona Lisa’ May Leave the Louvre for the First Time in 44 Years.” *Smithsonian Magazine*, 9 Mar. 2018. [\[WEB\]](#)

⁵⁰ Fabien Oppermann. “Quand la République dîne chez le Roi-soleil: Versailles, lieu du pouvoir diplomatique contemporain.” *Revue de géographie historique*, 20 Nov. 2024, 9. [\[OPEN EDITION JOURNALS\]](#) [Translated by Google Translate]

I have enjoyed it!”⁵¹ with some reducing it to a quip. Instead, it may be more appropriate to use the following JFK quote when referring to Kennedy’s Parisian success: “My preparation for the presidency did not include acquiring first-hand knowledge of France through diplomatic experience. I acquired it through marriage instead.”⁵² This interpretation of Kennedy’s role during the Paris visit reframes her from a major, but general presence, to an involved diplomatic participant; it acknowledges that her cultural fluency and personal diplomacy were not secondary details, but active components of how the administration engaged with France during the Cold War.

Yet even with this acknowledgment, broader historical narratives continue to minimize the significance of Kennedy’s contributions. As one study focused on American government textbooks and upper division textbooks on the Presidency notes, “on average, the books devote only 2.09 pages to first ladies,” a statistic that reflects the tendency within diplomatic history to understate their roles.⁵³ George C. Herring’s *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* participates in this pattern, gesturing toward Kennedy as a “stylish” figure “in a position akin to international royalty,” ultimately leaving little space to analyze her as an actor in her own right.⁵⁴

Rather than functioning as a symbolic companion, Kennedy’s role in Paris shaped the tone and reception of the entire state visit. Her ability to move between linguistic and cultural barriers, to embody both American modernity and French refinement, and to navigate high-level diplomatic settings with grace contributed to an atmosphere in which political conversation was

⁵¹ “News Conference 12, June 2, 1961.” [\[WEB\]](#).

⁵² Perry, 86. [\[LIBRARY\]](#)

⁵³ Anthony J. Eksterowicz and Robert P. Watson. “Treatment of First Ladies in American Government and Anthony J. Eksterowicz and Robert P. Watson. “Treatment of First Ladies in American Government and Presidency Textbooks: Overlooked, Yet Influential, Voices.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33, no. 3 (2000), 593. [\[LIBRARY\]](#)

⁵⁴ Herring, 727.

consistently “warmed up” by her presence and rapport.⁵⁵ In this sense, the visit partially operated on an influential layer of interpersonal diplomacy facilitated through Kennedy’s visibility and engagement. Re-examining the visit through this lens reinforces the broader significance of her contribution to US diplomacy. The success of the Paris visit was not only the product of presidential policy or institutional diplomacy, but also of carefully managed perception and cultural performance. Kennedy’s role reveals how cultural prestige carried political weight in the Cold War era, particularly with allied nations.

Ultimately, the 1961 Paris visit stands as a clear example of how Jacqueline Kennedy’s presence operated within and subtly expanded the boundaries of personal diplomacy. Even if traditional historical frameworks have often failed to fully account for that influence, Kennedy “captured the imagination of people all over the world,” and that proved to be “an incredibly important asset to this nation.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Sieverts, 48. [[WEB](#)]

⁵⁶ Clifford. [[WEB](#)] [Image 12]