

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk LLLL

Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas Schoenbaum

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SCHOENBAUM: This is another in a series of interviews on postwar period focus. Today will primarily be on colonialism; we'll touch on a few other subjects. Present doing the interviewing are Rich Rusk and Tom Schoenbaum.

I'd like to start off with a general question. Since in the immediate postwar period there was the momentous task of birthing many new nations, some of which were colonies of the enemies that the United States fought during World War II, and others were colonies of friendly countries. This was a momentous task and involved the rivalry between the United States and other countries, and the Soviet Union as well. I want to ask this from your view as an insider. Host Americans, as I understand it, did not realize the rivalry with the Soviet Union was going to take place until maybe after the Fulton-Missouri speech of Churchill, and even after that. As an insider in the policy-making process, was there a moment or moments when it suddenly came to you forcefully or very gradually that the United States was going to have a great deal of trouble with the Soviet Union in the postwar world? And it must have occurred to you that the rivalry would be very bitter, was liable to be very bitter at least. Was there a time in middle 1945 during Potsdam or anything that you remember distinctly, that this really hit home?

DEAN RUSK: Those of us who were in the American military knew during the war that cooperation on the part of the Soviet Union with us during the war was very, very limited. We had difficulty getting them to open up their airfields to us, even for the war against Germany, for planes making deep penetrations into Europe that might need to get to Russian airfields rather than to get back home. And, of course, we got no cooperation from them in the war against Japan. For example, [James Harold] Doolittle's planes were not permitted to land on Russian fields, where that would have been very helpful. But, nevertheless, the weight of their effort against Hitler was of extraordinary importance. One shudders to think what might have happened if Hitler had not made that great mistake of attacking Russia, if we had to face the possibility of defeating Hitler on a single front. But, in his last months in office, Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt was aware that there were troubled times ahead in our relationship with the Soviet Union. There were issues like Poland, other such issues. And, at the time of the German surrender, we immediately ran into severe problems with the Russians in regard to the occupation of Germany and issues of that sort, so that there were those like Averell Harriman who had become very doubtful about the possibility of real cooperation between ourselves and the Russians. Then came the immediate postwar incidents such as their attempt to keep their troops in Azerbaijan at the end of the war.

SCHOENBAUM: That was 1946.

DEAN RUSK: Their demand for the two eastern provinces of Turkey, their support for the Greek guerrillas, the coup d'etat in Czechoslovakia, their blockade of Berlin, things of that sort.

And it was quite clear that we were in for a period of real strain with the Soviet Union. We had gotten no interest on their part in serious negotiations over the Baruch plan to eliminate nuclear weapons. They walked out of a meeting of European governments that met to consider the European response to the invitation to the Marshall Plan, and they broke off talks with the United States for a billion dollar postwar loan.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, do you remember the purpose for that loan?

DEAN RUSK: It was a postwar rehabilitation loan very much like the loan we made to Britain and to France just after the war. Professor Eugene [Victor] Rostow of Yale was one of the negotiators on the American side for that about billion dollar loan, and it was quite clear from his account that it was the Russian side that walked out. And then [there was] the frequent use of vetoes in the United Nations Security Council, and so it was known very early that there would be rough times ahead.

SCHOENBAUM: When did it dawn on you, though, personally? Did you have a personal gut feeling that--was it over Berlin, or--

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was somewhat insulated from the Russian problem while I was out in China-Burma-India theatre with General Stilwell, but when I came back to the operations division of the War Department general staff in early summer of '45, I became involved in a lot of issues in which it was clear that we were going to be in stormy weather as far as the Russians were concerned.

SCHOENBAUM: So you knew then, really June of '45?

DEAN RUSK: Right.

SCHOENBAUM: When it hit home in a personal sense?

DEAN RUSK: Right.

SCHOENBAUM: And then moving into colonialism: There seemed to be no question that the United States opposed colonialism coming out of the war, and this was a very strong pillar of U.S. policy. Why was this never questioned except perhaps in certain areas, and why was there such a strong policy?

DEAN RUSK: Well, part of it was the American ethos, the American tradition. After all, we were the first colonial area to become an independent nation. You look at the present membership of the United Nations, there are at least ninety members of the United Nations today who emerged in one form or another from out of a western colonial system. And we were the first of those. As a matter of fact, at one time when I was in the State Department, I thought about the possibility of having a world conference of nations who had emerged out of a western colonial situation, but we would be the host because we were the first one. But, we decided that that might be too offensive to some of our good friends, and so we didn't do that.

RICHARD RUSK: You were serious about such a conference?

DEAN RUSK: Well, let's say I gave it some thought. But we didn't go ahead with it.

RICHARD RUSK: What purpose did you have in mind for it?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, maybe some suitable occasion to celebrate some bicentennial or some other occasion which might make it suitable to do that. But anti-colonialism was pretty much in the American tradition. But also, there were some very practical considerations involved. When you looked at places like the Indian subcontinent and Burma and Malaya and Indonesia, Indochina, things like that, it seemed clear that with the surging demand for independence in those areas that these western colonial countries simply had no means of maintaining their colonial rule. The United States had moved immediately after the war to give full independence to the Philippines. It had been our policy before the war to move them toward independence, and so it was just a part of the American political tradition. Now come back to the question of means. If Churchill had remained in office after the war and had tried to maintain British rule in India--Britain simply did not have the power to do that with hundreds of millions of Indians insisting upon their independence. Britain didn't have the manpower, didn't have the force, didn't have the power. I remember a very dramatic conversation which George Marshall had with the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, when George Marshall simply told him that the Netherlands did not have the power to remain in Indonesia, that they would bleed themselves to death and still not be able to hold Indonesia, and that no one else would come to their assistance in holding Indonesia, therefore they had no choice but to get out. I think that made a deep impression upon the Prime Minister of the Netherlands at that time.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember who that might have been at that time?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I'd have to dig it out. But, our weight in this entire postwar period has been in favor of decolonization. Now, decolonization--I think I mentioned this earlier--in the British Empire was, in my judgment, inevitable, because the British were the great inventors of constitutional democracy, and when they established their empire they took these ideas along with them in their own knapsacks. There was no way in which the British could be democrats at home, believing in liberty at home and playing the role of tyrants abroad. So, in the British areas, the independence movements were able to use Britain's own ideas in support of their own demands for independence. As a matter of fact, our own American Revolution started with a demand for the rights of Englishmen on the American soil, and it was not until very late that our founding fathers moved toward the idea of independence.

RICHARD RUSK: In that sense Britain was not really a very good colonial power because they had a conscience about these matters.

DEAN RUSK: Well, they had ideas that were destructive of the British Empire, of the notion of empire. But, we've gone through this postwar period at which future historians will look back with some awe at the amount of power that was laid down by the colonial powers, given up to the colonial powers, with relatively little violence. There was some fighting in Indonesia, a little

fighting in Kenya, some demonstrations in India; but by and large, these some ninety independent nations have emerged to full independence with relatively little violence.

SCHOENBAUM: In connection with India, reading over the history of that period and the documents, India does not seem to be one that the United Nations or the United States were particularly involved in. I suppose that was because of the defeat of Churchill and the--

DEAN RUSK: Well, during the war, Franklin Roosevelt sent some special missions out to India in support of Indian independence: the [William] Phillips mission and some certain others. He and Churchill were at loggerheads on this. I think eventually FDR abandoned that effort because he got tired of butting his head against Winston Churchill on such an issue. But those of us who served in India during the war could see that with that vast country and its hundreds of million people, there was simply no way in which the British could maintain their raj in India if the Indians didn't want it.

SCHOENBAUM: Should they have, in retrospect, waited longer and tried to hold things together and avoid a partition?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I have some regret that Lord Louis Mountbatten, whom I greatly admire, did not take a little longer time to at least settle the Kashmir question between India and Pakistan. Now, I gather--and this you'd have to check on--that at the time of partition, [Mohammed Ali] Jinnay, who was assisting him on a separate Moslem state, was deathly ill, and that Lord Louis Mountbatten did not know that. If he had known it, he might have taken more time and perhaps explored further the possibility of India emerging as a unified nation. But partition came and left behind the legacy of the Kashmir question between India and Pakistan, which caused us great difficulty and grief because enmity between India and Pakistan was a burden upon us, and yet it was extraordinarily difficult to find any solution. I spent a lot of time trying to find some formula in which the Kashmir question could be settled, but was never able to find one that the two sides out there would agree on.

SCHOENBAUM: I see that there are some documents in the Foreign Relations series, discussions of memos from [Warren Robinson] Austin, January 8, 1948, about a Security Council order. Austin says, "It is extremely important for the United States to pursue a course that will stop the present fighting as quickly as possible. There may be elements of an agreement between Pakistan and India permitting a decision by the U.N. Such a decision should be firm and promptly made. They [referring to a couple of British people, [Philip John] Noel-Baker and Lord Ismay [of Wormington]] believe both sides would obey an order by the Security Council, since each wishes to avoid the responsibility of yielding to the other." Why didn't the Security Council, in the light of that memo, play a role in the stopping of the fighting? As I understand it, they did not.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I'm very skeptical about this idea that if some outside agency or body or nation demanded that quarreling parties do *x* and *y* in order to settle the dispute that somehow that would do it, on the theory that neither of the parties could themselves make the concessions necessary to reach an agreement. We've been told that on a number of occasions, between the Israelis and the Arabs for example. And so, on occasion we've tried to accommodate them by

telling them what they ought to do, and both sides would then just kick us in the nuts--excuse me--kick us in the shins. So, I'm skeptical of that idea. But the U.N. did call for a plebiscite in Kashmir, but [Jawaharlal] Nehru wouldn't have it. See, the Kashmir question was complicated because there was a Hindu leader head of Kashmir where the population was overwhelmingly Muslim, and Nehru I think had some ancestral connection with Kashmir, personally. But, he simply would not permit a plebiscite to occur. We tried that on him many times.

SCHOENBAUM: I was going to say, the British seemed to have wanted the United States to take the initiative in the Security Council and there was some talk of the entry of Pakistan troops. This is a memo of February 27, 1948, of a meeting. Mr. Dean Rusk was there on behalf of the United States and U.N. affairs. There was talk about introducing Pakistani troops into Kashmir to help bring about a better psychological situation both for withdrawal of the tribes and for the holding of an impartial plebiscite. But there were some reservations on the use of Pakistani troops because it would exacerbate--

DEAN RUSK: Well, under certain circumstances, that could have led to general war between India and Pakistan. The pity of it is, you see, that the new leaders of India and Pakistan had served together in the Indian civil service, in the army in India--had all been comrades serving together. Somehow, they simply could not sit down together and work out some agreeable solution between themselves even though many of them were friends and former colleagues. It was very distressing. I think religion played a very important role. After all, there were millions of casualties at the time of the separation of India and Pakistan, and communal rioting between the Hindus and Muslims.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, evidently you weren't involved in that particular issue of Indian independence but you had quite a number of British friends, Leighton and Lord Louis Mountbatten among others, who were at the heart of it. Did you have any talks, discussions with these fellows? It was a very dramatic moment in history.

DEAN RUSK: When [Richard] Clement Attlee won the election in August '45 replacing Churchill, it became clear that the British were going to move toward Indian independence, that they saw the handwriting on the wall. It was a part of Labor party's policy and that there was no need for us to be, ourselves, immediately and intimately involved in something that we knew was going to happen anyhow. And we also had good reason to believe that what happened in India would then be followed by similar steps in places like Burma and Malaya.

RICHARD RUSK: We weren't trying to encourage the British to move toward Indian independence?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, yes, but I don't think we had--

RICHARD RUSK: We were more or less neutral in the matter, knowing what was going to happen?

DEAN RUSK: I don't know that we took much initiative in the matter, but the British knew that we supported Indian independence.

SCHOENBAUM: So there was relative harmony between Britain and the United States on that issue?

DEAN RUSK: And on decolonization throughout. You see, one thing that the British did, in contrast to the other colonial powers, was that they prepared their territories for independence with a civil service, with trained people, with institutions of higher education. They had provided something that the newly independent nations could inherit. That was not nearly the case with French territories, Belgian territories, Dutch territories, Portuguese territories.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, we've talked about this. The British were perhaps unique in this respect, but why did they help prepare their colonies, whereas the other colonial powers did not?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think it came out of their own political experience. After all, it took them several centuries to impose constitutional restraints upon the exercise of the raw power of the state. And some kings lost their heads along the way. No, this development of the idea of constitutional restraints on government has been a great British contribution to the entire world, including the United States. And I think it was just in their system, in their political tradition, to take these things into account. Now, one early sign of this difference was that before World War II the Rockefeller Foundation, which had a charter to promote the well-being of mankind throughout the world, found itself welcome in British colonial areas, but unwelcome in French, Belgian, Dutch, Portuguese areas. I think that these other countries sort of sensed that although the Rockefeller Foundation was not a political institution and was not active in political matters that nevertheless they carried with them the little virus of freedom wherever they went. And so the Foundation was not welcome in some of these other areas. But the British territories welcomed anything that the Rockefeller Foundation wanted to do.

SCHOENBAUM: Going back to the memos in the file, there's a very interesting memorandum to Rusk from [George Crews] McGhee involving a trip that he took to Africa and the discussions that were held. This was February 17, 1950, and this is sub-Saharan Africa. There was at that time apparently some discussion of the future of Africa and U.S. objectives in Africa in the memorandum. And at that time, McGhee's memorandum says that, reflecting conversation with Rusk and others, that it was generally agreed that the real basic objective of our policy in Africa is to accelerate its development. And then it goes on through Point VI and through the ECA [Economic Cooperation Act]. And then there was also discussion about whether to introduce large numbers of displaced Europeans in Africa to assist in technical and economic cooperation, and that was thought to be a bad idea because of the problems it would raise with the native population. I think they're talking about large-scale settlements.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: Before World War II, the United States had a relatively small presence in Africa. After all, in those days, if you talked to Liberia, Ethiopia, and then about four European countries, you'd covered the continent of Africa. Firestone had early established rubber plants in Liberia. There was some American business in Africa, but not very much. A good many missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, went from the United States to Africa, but they

carried with them very little political impact. So when we looked at Africa at the end of the war, feeling that the colonial empires would be liquidated, on our side we hoped that Africa would emerge with a number of viable states. We thought of an East African confederation, a West African confederation. But, that didn't happen. Africa broke up into forty-five to fifty relatively small countries. Of course there were some big ones like Zaire. But, a lot of them broke up into fragments, which made national life very fragile. And so even when that happened we tried to encourage a more regional cooperation in areas such as west Africa and east Africa, but these tribal and other rivalries, and personal rivalries, made that very difficult. But, throughout even the sixties when I was Secretary of State, we tended to look upon ourselves as the junior partner as far as Africa was concerned. We thought it was natural for the former colonial powers like Britain, France, and so forth to take the principal share or the principal burden of relations with Africa because they knew Africa and had continuing relations with their former colonies. And Europe tended to concentrate its foreign aid on Africa, whereas they did almost nothing in Latin America or in Asia. And so there was a kind of an informal division of labor as far as foreign aid was concerned. We took a junior role in Africa and took the major role in other parts of the world. Now, there have always been some who thought that we ought to try to play the role of Mr. Big in Africa. That would include some American ambassadors that we sent out to various African countries.

RICHARD RUSK: Was [G. Mennen] "Soapy" Williams one of these?

DEAN RUSK: Well, Mennen Williams was perhaps a little more ambitious for an American role in the continent of Africa than most of us back in Washington thought was very feasible. We did not want to supplant French and British and other efforts to help Africa by our trying in any way to take their places as the predominant western influence on that continent. In retrospect, I think that policy was probably right, both in terms of our own resources, which are not all that large, and because of our encouragement to continuing friendly relations between the newly independent African countries and their former colonial masters.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember specifically that McGhee trip and what--

DEAN RUSK: No, quite frankly, I don't.

SCHOENBAUM: Turning to northern Africa: There the situation after the war was more immediate. You had northern Africa a major theatre of World War II, and also the site of some Italian colonies. And immediately after World War II, as I understand it, the United Nations became involved in considering trusteeships for northern African areas. There was a U.S. trusteeship proposed for Tripoli or Tripolitania. I guess that was Tripoli and the surrounding area Tripolitania. It seemed strange that a U.S. trusteeship would have been proposed for northern Africa. What was at stake there? Why did the U.S., through the United Nations, want a directorial in northern Africa?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we didn't work very hard at that idea. You see, at the time of the drafting of the U.N. Charter, the notion of trusteeship was clearly a stepping stone to independence. That was very clear in the Charter itself. But we found in several places at the end of the war that the idea of even a temporary trusteeship as a stepping stone to independence was anathema to the

peoples of the territories involved. And so the concept of trusteeship was simply unacceptable to those who were expecting full independence. It just didn't work. It would not have worked. And we were certainly not going to impose an American trusteeship on anybody. So, that was an idea that was looked upon as a stopgap measure but it's an idea that didn't fly, so we didn't press it.

RICHARD RUSK: Let me try one, Tom. I know it's impossible to make the world over, but if things could have been handled differently, could decolonization have taken place in a way that may have led to a more successful result, say, in Africa, where things really did go to hell?

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BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: Well, it's always difficult to know what might have been, but I think that if the colonial powers had started earlier in preparing their territories for self-government, independence, or if a little more time had been taken for the granting of independence, that might have given everybody a chance to establish some of the infrastructure that was needed for running an independent nation. The kind of infrastructure that the British left behind in India, for example, or in Kenya. For example, when the vast Belgian Congo became independent, I think there were only twelve university graduates among the Congolese in the entire country. In Indonesia, the number was around seventy-five, with a population of a hundred million people. Now, theoretically, it might have been wiser to take a little more time to get these colonial areas ready for independence, but the peoples involved there in the colonial areas were not prepared to spend that kind of time, and so you did have a large number of independent nations arriving on the scene ill-prepared to assume the responsibilities of an independent nation. For example, almost none of them had anyone trained for foreign affairs and diplomacy. When I was at the Rockefeller Foundation in the fifties, we set up training programs for diplomats of the newly independent countries, a program that was very well received. These newly independent nations did not even have any kind of working library for the foreign office, not as much of a library as I have in this office. And the Rockefeller Foundation put together about six hundred carefully selected books in English and French, and we gave these care packages of books to twenty-five or so of these newly independent nations. And that was well received. I don't know where those books are today, but--

RICHARD RUSK: Probably still in their packages.

DEAN RUSK: But they just had nothing with which to start.

SCHOENBAUM: The record shows that you were chairman of the international working group formed to determine the fate of the former Italian colonies after World War II. There was some mainly, well, the British and French representatives. This resulted in independence and the creation of Libya and Somaliland, and also Eritrea was considered for independence, but

ultimately was attached to be part of Nigeria, except for a slice of the East which was joined to Egypt.

DEAN RUSK: Nigeria? No.

SCHOENBAUM: No, Eritrea. A slice of Eritrea was joined to, I think, Egypt, the eastern part? The Arab part.

DEAN RUSK: Part of it.

SCHOENBAUM: What was your role in being chairman of this group? Was it primarily to coordinate, smooth out the British and U.S. positions which seemed to be the most important positions in determining the--

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I forget the details. But we found that tribal and religious barriers made it very difficult to work out a rational map of these areas, because these groups cut across the lines of the old colonial territories and the newly independent nations did not want to make significant boundary adjustments to take into account these religious and tribal factions. I think the principal thing that came out of that was the notion of an independent Libya. But then you had the other Arab countries across the north of Africa, and on the whole these came out pretty well. Algeria and Morocco had some boundary problems, and they had some shooting for a time. But, look at the long sweep of history. On the whole it didn't come out too badly, although there has been continuing fighting involving Eritrea and Eritreans across other boundaries, and Somalis and people like that.

SCHOENBAUM: Did we put any pressure on the French, or did we try to put any pressure on the French to, for instance over Algeria at that time--

DEAN RUSK: Oh, we clearly were favoring an independent Algeria.

SCHOENBAUM: Even then?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, but, you see, one of the problems was that a succession of weak French governments were simply not in a position to give independence to Algeria. It took a Charles [Andre Joseph Mario] de Gaulle finally to give independence to Algeria, and he almost got thrown out of office by a military coup for having done so. But, no, we didn't always press it to the limit, but the weight of American influence was in favor of the emergence of independent nations strongly from within the colonial empires.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, African nationalists tend to argue that African problems with independence very much stem from the colonial experience itself, that colonialism had a very damaging effect on African life, African customs. Do you subscribe to that theory?

DEAN RUSK: I had a long talk with Mr. Nehru on this subject. During the struggles for independence, the leaders of those struggles made the point very strongly that the misery, illiteracy, poverty of these colonial areas was due to the presence of a colonial master, and that

once they got rid of the colonial master that these things would change. Well, when they became independent, they discovered that these things didn't change. And yet, they had built up these expectations among their own peoples. And so the leaders of these newly independent nations have the hounds of Hell barking at their heels to get on with improving the conditions of the peoples concerned, and that led to great difficulty. Mr. Nehru spoke to me at some length once about how easy it is to lead a revolution, how difficult it is to build a nation. And many of the leaders of these newly independent nations ran into that.

SCHOENBAUM: Turning to Indonesia now: In connection with the Indonesian independence, that, it seems to me, is a real success story for American policy and for Indonesia. One of the impacts there that comes home is the wonderful and constructive role that the United Nations played. And of course, you were a central part of that. One of the first steps that the U.N. took, apparently, after the Dutch police action started the situation to get out of hand, was that a commission was formed under the auspices of the U.N. And apparently there were some wranglings with the Russians, and it was ultimately decided that a commission would be formed with representatives whose name in French didn't begin with a U. Do I detect the fine hand of Dean Rusk in that? (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: No, I don't remember that particular part of it. But, you see, we started from the basic premise that the Dutch simply did not have the power, whatever the policy might be. But the Dutch simply did not have the power to maintain control in Indonesia, and therefore independence was inevitable; had to be done. And so, our diplomacy during that period was to facilitate the independence of Indonesia, hopefully with a continuation of important ties between Indonesia and the Netherlands. But there were some of those in the Netherlands who found that very difficult to take, difficult for them to face the hard facts in which they found themselves. So if you look at the work of that U.N. commission and of American diplomacy during this period, you'll see that it was motivated by the necessity for Indonesian independence.

SCHOENBAUM: I was going to say, that Good Offices Commission, a successor to the U.N. Commission--well, the American representative was Frank Porter Graham of the University of North Carolina who is a legendary figure there. But you must have had something to do with the creation of the Good Offices Commission.

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes, I was a principal backstop in the Department of State for Frank Graham's role in that commission. He and I came to be very good friends. But this was a very difficult thing for the Dutch to take. One amusing little incident was the famous so-called "second police action." When this occurred, the Dutch officially told us that they were surprised by the military action taken by the Indonesians, and that this second police action was simply a response to that. Well, I mentioned that to my dear wife Virginia one day, and she said, "Oh? Didn't you know, a week ago I was at a party with some Dutch ladies from the Dutch Embassy here, and they told us there was going to be a second police action in a week's time." (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: That's what you get for freezing Mom out of policy events.

DEAN RUSK: So it wasn't a surprise at all to the Dutch. But, I remember being in the Dutch Embassy in Washington one night to see a film of the handing over of sovereignty from the

Netherlands to Indonesia, a ceremony that was held in Indonesia. And when the film was over and the lights came back on, most of the Dutch in the room were crying.

RICHARD RUSK: Is that right?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. This was hard for them to take.

SCHOENBAUM: [Philip C.] Jessup, in his book, *The Birth of Nations*, has an interesting account of that. Of course, he was our representative and you were backstopping him at that point. And he says that the Dutch were very upset with Foreign Minister [Dirk] Stikker, but that twenty years later, Jessup says, that the Dutch thanked him and said that you saved us from--we realize that you were right. And Jessup then brings in the parallel of Vietnam, which is there. And in retrospect, should this have been done in Vietnam? How close is the parallel? Jessup really brings it in as a parallel. At that time, if we had--

RICHARD RUSK: If we had gone to the French and said, "You simply have to go."

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, it was the same thing, was it not, that the Dutch were fighting: some nationalists who they were saying had some communist backers, and may well have had some communist backers. But the nationalists did ultimately take over and were able, after the [Achmed] Sukarno experience, to create a viable state. Is there a parallel there? How close is it to--

DEAN RUSK: Well, within limits there may be some parallel. But again, we were faced with a series of weak French governments who were not able, as a political matter in France, to disengage from Indochina. And then we soon were caught up in the building of the Marshall Plan and NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] in which France was to play a major role. We knew that some of our Marshall Plan aid to France was being used in Indochina. We continued to furnish Marshall Plan aid to France, but we also, behind the scenes, pressed the French to come to a political settlement in Indochina.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you involved in those discussions with the French?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall any specifics on that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, not really in detail, but, there was again a limit on the amount of pressure we could put on France, because we didn't want France to reach the point where they said, "Okay, we're getting out, it's now your baby," and in effect turn Indochina over to us. Well, we didn't want that responsibility. And so we tried to put as much pressure on the French as possible without squirting them out of Indochina in a point where it would just leave chaos behind.

RICHARD RUSK: Why would we have had to substitute for the French in Indochina, had France washed its hands of it?

DEAN RUSK: Well, there would have been a lot of bloodshed in Indochina among the different factions out there and, you see, there's been real enmity among the Laotians, the Vietnamese, and the Cambodians, and the Thais for centuries and centuries.

RICHARD RUSK: Was that point a matter of debate within government, do you recall?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, some, some.

RICHARD RUSK: There were some who were saying, "Look, let's wash our hands of this and encourage France to do the same?"

DEAN RUSK: But you see, bear in mind, just as we gave first priority to the war against Hitler in World War II, there was a very strong priority given to our relations with our Western European allies during the period of the Marshall Plan and NATO and so forth.

RICHARD RUSK: That didn't stop us from pressuring the Dutch toward independence for Indonesia.

SCHOENBAUM: So we could put pressure on the Dutch. We really didn't hesitate to tell the Dutch just exactly what they should do, we could do that. We just didn't dare do that to France?

DEAN RUSK: Well, it wasn't quite the same with France, because France, at least, perhaps could have mobilized the power to maintain their position in Indochina if they had been willing to do it. But, in fact, they weren't willing to go that far, and yet they weren't willing to just create three independent states in Indochina. We gave various assistance to those states out there before they became fully independent, when they had some sort of status within the French union.

RICHARD RUSK: I suppose we were able to push the Dutch harder because either they were a less important member of NATO, or they, themselves, were more securely within NATO.

DEAN RUSK: Well, no, they were a much smaller country, had less manpower; there are just limits to the powers of the burghers of Amsterdam to do a job on a hundred million Indonesians. Whereas at least the French were a much larger nation with more resources, more manpower, and it's theoretically conceivable that they might have been able to establish firm rule in Indochina if they were willing to pay the price. But in the end they weren't willing to pay the price and weren't willing to give Indochina its independence. So, that resulted in the very untidy and unsatisfactory situation.

SCHOENBAUM: In connection with that second police action, there is a very interesting "eyes only" telegram from Rusk to Jessup, dated December 23, 1948, giving Jessup instructions from Washington. Jessup was in Paris at that time. And just to read a paragraph of it, "The U.S. must act in good faith as a member of the U.N., and particularly as a permanent member of the S.C. [Security Council] in support of U.N. action." [This is a telegram, so the verbiage is abbreviated].

RICHARD RUSK: S.C. is the Security Council?

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, S.C. "[I]n support of U.N. action in maintaining peace. This does not mean that U.S. can or should assume responsibilities of S.C. itself, if other leading members of that body are unable or unwilling to act in concert. As for the other permanent members, Soviet Union will not act in support of Charter to speed genuine settlement of Indonesian question, whatever its short-range attitudes on non-specific actions or resolutions might be. China is, under present circumstances, totally incapable of sharing responsibility and can contribute nothing but a voice and a vote at the council table itself. Neither U.K. nor France is apparently willing to act jointly with other members with the speed and decision required to bring quick solution to Indonesian situation. U.S. cannot accept role of world policeman either in military or political sense. If other permanent members refuse to join in S.C. action as envisioned by charter, S.C. therefore unable to act." And you go on talking about the danger of a U.S. unilateral action and the importance of not bringing about a general break with the Dutch over Indonesia, and then some specific U.S. objectives about Indonesia. But that basically ended happily when the Dutch really gave in, did they not?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, they finally just decided that they had no choice but to give Indonesia its independence. And so all that came beside the point. But you see, I'd had experience in India and China during the war. And I knew that it would take vast forces to impose anyone's will upon large numbers of people, and that was true in Indonesia. I think at one point the possibility of U.S. forces maybe taking some role in Indonesia, well, that was just out of the question. In the first place, we didn't have the forces at that time. We had demobilized after V-J [Victory in Japan] day. But, secondly, it would have taken an enormous force if the Indonesians themselves were unwilling. And so--I mean, the Dutch couldn't provide such forces. I was, myself, strongly of the view that under no circumstances should we involve U.S. forces out there, except perhaps to give a little logistic support to the U.N. commission, which I think we did.

SCHOENBAUM: Jessup makes the point that the U.N. was so valuable because United States unilateral action couldn't have accomplished what the U.N. accomplished.

DEAN RUSK: I think that's probably true. I think that's true, and I think also that the U.N. role helped to prevent our making bitter enemies out of the Dutch over the Indonesian question. But a somewhat similar range of problems came up later with the disposition of West New Guinea. Now, the people of West New Guinea are not Malays, they are not Indonesian by culture or race or anything else. But Indonesia insisted that since West New Guinea had been a part of the Dutch East Indies that it should be a part of Indonesia. The Dutch were still present in West New Guinea, and that came to be a serious problem at one point. Sukarno was threatening to move Indonesian forces into West New Guinea. Well, at that point, the Dutch Foreign Minister, my old friend Joseph [M.A.H.] Luns, at one point, in effect, said to us, "Now, we're putting eight thousand of our troops into West New Guinea, the rest is up to you." Well, we took the view that we were not going to mobilize the farm boys out of Kansas and steelworkers out of Pittsburgh to do a job that the burghers of Amsterdam were not prepared to do for themselves. They had not declared national mobilization. They had not made a serious commitment to hold West New Guinea. As a matter of fact, a member of Joseph Lun's own cabinet told us that they were not going to do anything about West New Guinea. And so we simply refused to go down that line.

And then the U.N. played a useful midwife's role in facilitating the transfer of West New Guinea to Indonesia.

SCHOENBAUM: Indonesia is also called West Irian?

DEAN RUSK: West Irian, that's right.

SCHOENBAUM: That was in the sixties wasn't it?

DEAN RUSK: Now, I have no doubt myself that in terms of normal colonialism, that this is Indonesian colonialism in West New Guinea. Because these are entirely different people, different culture, different race, and that the Indonesians were just as foreign to West New Guinea as the Dutch were. But, anyhow--You know, speaking of all this colonial business, there is one curious thing. If you look at the world today, the principal remaining colonial empire is that run by the Soviet Union in eastern Europe. There is real colonialism. But it's been almost impossible over the years to get any interest whatever in the United Nations in that situation as a colonial issue. That's partly because the people in the United Nations know that the Soviets aren't going to do anything about it. Secondly, there's no important racial differences between the Russians and the people in Eastern Europe, and perhaps because there is no blue water in between Russia and these countries of Eastern Europe. But whatever the reason, it's been very difficult to get the situation in eastern Europe thought of as a vast colonial area, which indeed it is.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you encourage the U.N. to approach it in those terms, as Secretary?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we spoke of that at times in the U.N., but it fell on deaf ears.

SCHOENBAUM: Another question I wanted to ask you is the role of Mr. [Carlos P.] Romulo of the Philippines. He, in these documents, seems to have played a very important role in the forties in wanting the creation--even at that time, this was before SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization]--he called for the creation of a Pacific NATO, basically, an Asian NATO, which as you pointed out in previous tapes, the Truman Administration resisted. But did Romulo, in talking about the necessity of containing communism, have an impact in Southeast Asia that was not present in connection with Indonesia and Indonesian independence? What role did Romulo play in this?

DEAN RUSK: Well, Romulo was a very eloquent spokesman among the newly independent nations during the early period of the U.N. I think he was, one time, president of the U.N. General Assembly, highly articulate and well thought of. But I think his concern at that time was as much with the possibility of a revival of Japanese military power as with anything else. I think that his commitments were not limited to the fear of communism. Now, when the communists seized power on the mainland of China, that created a good deal of nervousness among some of the smaller countries of Asia, including the Philippines. But, I think that the prospect of a new Japanese threat was very much on his mind. And we took care of that when, at the time of the Japanese peace treaty, we signed a treaty of alliance with the Philippines, a bilateral, mutual security treaty, as we did with Japan and with Australia and New Zealand.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. And you were responsible for--

DEAN RUSK: But, it's interesting that you'll find that during the creation of a NATO across the Atlantic, there was considerable interest in the Congress in a NATO in the Pacific. And we looked at that pretty hard. But when we looked at it at the staff level in the Truman administration, as I've indicated earlier, we thought that such a thing would be a mistake, particularly if we went into Southeast Asia with such a treaty. And I've spelled out the reasons for that elsewhere.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. Just an interesting question that Jessup brings up. Jessup tells a story that Marshall--It'd be interesting to have your perspective on this--Marshall, the way he ran the United Nations in Paris was that everybody would sit around a table, according to Jessup, and Marshall would have some pre-designated person give a briefing on an issue. And then Marshall would go around the table and ask each person his opinion. And then Marshall would summarily announce, say, that the position of the United States on this matter is such-and-such. Do you remember that? (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: Well, yeah, that was broadly true. Marshall did not like to announce his own position until he had heard from the rest of us. And in those conferences he would usually start with the junior person present, just as they used to do in the military, start with the junior person present, and go around and have everybody speak. Otherwise, if the senior people spoke first, the juniors wouldn't dare to speak up.

RICHARD RUSK: That reminds me of a vote that [Abraham] Lincoln had in his cabinet. Everyone voted no and Lincoln was the only one that voted aye. And he announced, "The ayes have it."

DEAN RUSK: But, Marshall would not do that without considering in his own mind whether this is a matter that should go to the President. He was very careful to touch base with the President on important matters of policy, but he had extensive authority delegated by President Truman, and he used it. But he liked to have the benefit of other people's advice first.

RICHARD RUSK: Was Marshall as reluctant to show blue sky between himself and his President as you later were?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes.

RICHARD RUSK: He was reluctant?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: You never did know where Harry Truman and George Marshall may have differed on policy, with the exception of the Israel problem.

DEAN RUSK: Well, with the exception of the Palestine question, I think the answer is yes. But on the Palestine question, we knew that some of Marshall's advice had not been approved by the President, had not been agreed to at least by--

RICHARD RUSK: But you don't recall other instances of differences between Marshall and the President that you junior staff people were aware of?

DEAN RUSK: No, I don't really recall any.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, that's something you didn't--

SCHOENBAUM: Marshall told you that one story that he had told Truman, that he would vote against him [the President] but he wouldn't resign.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, well, you see, how Marshall voted was his own business.

RICHARD RUSK: You mean he would have voted for Eisenhower?

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, that's the story. Over Israel.

DEAN RUSK: Marshall had a profound sense of constitutional propriety, and he really did understand that it is the President that was elected by all the people to give direction to the executive branch of the government within the laws of the Constitution.

SCHOENBAUM: Another point that was brought up in these documents is that in connection with this Pacific NATO, or Pacific Association, as it was called, I guess, in those days, that [John Foster] Dulles apparently disagreed and apparently wrote a memorandum. You say the Truman staff level people examined this and concluded--

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