

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection
Rusk PPPP: Part 1 of 2
Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum
circa 1985

The complete interview also includes Rusk QQQQ: Part 2.

RICHARD RUSK: Rich Rusk and Tom doing the interviewing. This interview is about the American Constitution. We've developed some questions based on my dad's Phinizy Lecture of 1983 to the University of Georgia. It's called "In Praise of Consensus: Reflections on the American Constitution." Let's follow along with the flow of the article in terms of the sequence of these questions. Tom has some additional questions as well.

DEAN RUSK: Okay.

RICHARD RUSK: In the introduction, Professor [Billups] Phinizy Spalding talked about you and Mom [Virginia Foisie Rusk] showing up at Athens local city council meetings.

DEAN RUSK: On occasion. On occasion, but not really very often.

RICHARD RUSK: What were the issues?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, some local issue--usually a zoning problem or something like that.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay. That's noncommittal. Did you take part in any of the observances on the American bicentennial?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. But you'd have to look at my 1976 calendar. Ann [S. Dunn] will help you get to that to see just which ones. But I think the bicentennial of the Constitution coming up in '89 will be far more significant an event because the Constitution had much more meaning, not only for us, but for the entire world than did the Declaration of Independence.

RICHARD RUSK: On your first page you say that "the most powerful and explosive political idea [sic] to be found in the world are those ideas embodied in the Declaration."

DEAN RUSK: I had particularly in mind the notion that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. You see, our founding fathers had read the literature of the subject from ancient Greece to eighteenth century Britain. And I suppose that philosophers can find some false with this notion that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. But when you look at the alternatives, what would seem to be better? The divine right of kings? The dictatorship of the proletariat? Class rule? So I'm inclined to think that this simple notion is deeply imbedded into the very nature of man himself. And in the longer run this idea continues to emerge. [Mohandas Karamchand] Gandhi pointed out during his lifetime that there have been many tyrants and despots in history, but they've all fallen. And here we've had two

hundred years under our Constitution and it is still a living reality, without having been deeply injured at any point.

SCHOENBAUM: Would you go so far as to say this is in the nature of mankind, or would you stop short of that in terms of political philosophy and say that it may be the best thing to do from an ethical standpoint? But is it really a part of the nature of mankind in that sense?

DEAN RUSK: I think in general and in the long run, I personally think it is. Of course one cannot prove that. Well, [Thomas Babington] Macaulay pointed out once that the worst thing you can do to me is to kill me. Well, I'm going to die anyhow, so I'm a free man. But I've just seen this at work in so many different places over a long period. Now there are various devices which governments use to obtain and maintain what we might call the consent of the governed. But I have great faith in this simple notion at the end of the day.

RICHARD RUSK: I think Tom raises a valid point. Democracies had one heck of a hard time getting established elsewhere in the world, such as Africa and Latin and South America.

DEAN RUSK: Well it took several centuries of struggle in Great Britain to impose constitutional restraints upon the exercise of the power of the state. And some kings lost their heads along the way in connection with that issue.

RICHARD RUSK: That's right. We've got a lot of your comment about the British constitutional system and their own history and their traditions. But you think there's nothing in the experience in your times regarding democracy and the difficulty with which that system has had taking hold in other countries to suggest that perhaps it's not really in accordance with man's true nature?

DEAN RUSK: Well the largest democracy in the world today is India with, what, six hundred and fifty or seven hundred million people? We can't say that democracy is incompatible with non-western cultures. Japan is a pretty good example of a democracy. But I think what happened in a good many of these newly independent countries that started off on a democratic basis was that during their struggle for independence their leaders promised them that, or told them that, their misery, poverty, illiteracy, disease, was due to the presence of a colonial master, and that when the colonial master left things would improve. Well when the colonial masters did leave things did not improve. So these leaders of the newly independent countries have had the hounds of hell barking at their heels to get on with it and improve their conditions. Well now there's a superficial attractiveness about socialism or communism in terms of moving fast on some of these things. But in fact, these systems simply don't work economically, socially to a considerable extent. So I think that there may well be a revival of interest in democratic institutions, although today there are at least fifty military dictatorships in the third world, and it's not going to be easy. I don't suggest that our own particular constitutional arrangements are necessarily suited to any other people.

RICHARD RUSK: You're talking about this theory?

DEAN RUSK: I'm talking about the broad notion of a government based primarily upon the attitudes of its own people.

RICHARD RUSK: What does the Chinese experience suggest to you? Does it more or less confirm your thinking, or perhaps challenge it in a way? China has made enormous strides in important fields: productivity, public health education, better standard of living for its own people.

DEAN RUSK: The elimination of flies.

RICHARD RUSK: What does that suggest in terms of what we've been discussing?

DEAN RUSK: My guess is, and I don't know this first hand. Tom, you might have a better appreciation of it than I. My guess is that despite the rigors of a centralized political system headquartered in Peking, that when you look at those hundreds of thousands of villages all over the country, that in those villages there's a high degree of village autonomy where the peoples in the village by and large run their own villages.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah that's true.

DEAN RUSK: Now this was true in Vietnam where there was a very considerable degree of village democracy at work on the part of villagers who didn't really care very much about what was going on in Saigon and Hanoi. So I think you'll find a good deal of that. I think you'll find a lot of that in India. But these things are evolving. I would have to say that today, when you look around the world, being a little generous in your judgments, there are probably about thirty constitutional democracies in the world. The other one hundred and thirty or so nations have varying degrees of dictatorship, ranging all the way from a completely totalitarian system where every sixty people have a local watchman to keep tabs on them, all the way around to situations where dictatorship amounts to not much more than political monopoly at the top, where the man in the street does not feel the heavy hand of a totalitarian system.

SCHOENBAUM: There's an interesting question left hanging in the Phinizy lectures that I'd like to ask; and that is that, as to the form of democracy--I remember you said at one point in the Phinizy lecture that when it came to the presidential system versus the parliamentary system, you were opposed to a halfway parliamentary solution such as restricting cabinet members to members of Congress and that kind of thing. But it was very intriguing that you said--I think your words in the Phinizy lecture [were], "It may be advisable to go to some kind of full-blown parliamentary system." You seemed to think that you wouldn't be as opposed to that as you would a halfway solution compared to our presidential system.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I personally believe that our system has worked at least just as well, and perhaps better, than the other parliamentary systems that we know of. One cannot make a case that they have somehow governed their countries better than we have over the past two hundred years. I value the notion of separation of powers in the federal government, partly because that forces us to seek a consensus. Otherwise we reach an impasse. And that pressure toward consensus, I think, is a very healthy thing in our system. Now what I did not like was somehow

going halfway. I would prefer, if we're not going to continue with our present system, we go all the way to a parliamentary democracy. But we are large, diverse, turbulent people and I'm not sure that a parliamentary system would be better for us. Remember that we became a nation only because some major compromises were made by the founding fathers, such as between the larger colonies and the smaller colonies in establishing two senators for each state regardless of size, and then the Electoral College process for actually choosing a President. So our founding fathers put considerable limits on what might be called 'pure democracy,' the passing whims of the people; and indeed wrote into the Constitution a good many things which a majority simply cannot do in this country enforceable by the courts about rights.

RICHARD RUSK: On page eight of that Phinizy lecture you quote Earl Warren has having said that "Impasse is the greatest threat to our constitutional system." And you have said that enormous amounts of time and efforts in communication and compromise are needed to make the system work. We've had a series of one-term Presidents--[Ronald Wilson] Reagan is an exception--a lot of crippling fights in the Congress over important matters, federal budget, a host of problems that remain unresolved. We've had lack of consensus over foreign affairs. Are we facing impasse now?

DEAN RUSK: We're always facing impasse. Earl Warren made those remarks in a private session with a small group here in our Law School on that visit. And I think there's reality to it. You see, the possibility of the impasse turns up almost literally every day. The President has significant powers, but fewer powers than many people think. If you make a list of the things that a President can do all by himself it's a very short list. Almost everything he does requires legislation or appropriations or both. The Senate and the House are independent bodies in relation to each other, except with regard to treaties and nominations which are especially assigned to the Senate. One must constantly adjust one's own view in the interest of a consensus. Now some people call that wheeling and dealing. Well I suppose there are instances of wheeling and dealing which would be reprehensible. But unless there is a readiness on the part of everybody who takes part to take account of the other fellow's view and try to find some central theme of policy which most can support, then I think our system would not work very well.

RICHARD RUSK: You make the point that impasse is always a problem. But isn't it true that impasse is more of a problem today than, say, earlier periods in our history, back in the thirties?

DEAN RUSK: There have been times when we have had a President of one party in the White House and one or both houses of Congress dominated by the other party. That was true for six of [Dwight David] Eisenhower's eight years. It was true for Harry Truman in the Eightieth Republican Congress. It's now true for Reagan as far as the House of Representatives is concerned. Well now, we have to suppose that all these people are trying to do the right thing as they see it, that they are trying to do what is good for the country. But they really have to spend a good deal of time with each other and put their heads together and try to work out some common ground on which the government can act at the end of the day. Now, there's a little danger in that, and that is that we come out with the least common denominator. It may be that the least common denominator is the worst of the alternative solutions. But I think the record shows that on the whole, over time, our system has worked very well.

RICHARD RUSK: We've got a lot of comment on other tapes about congressional relations and press relations and these other things that are brought out in the Phinizy lectures; and I don't see any need to repeat any of that. Hopefully we can skirt the edges of what we already have and yet get some new material. You make a point that government officials need to spend enormous amounts of time just to make the system work. If they do this, is that really a case where the system is working? If they have to devote that kind of energy to making the system work, what does that time come at the expense of? You know, you have said that twenty-five to thirty percent of your time was spent with congressional affairs. George Marshall made a statement in World War II after having gone before several of these congressional committees: "Well gentlemen, do you want me to appear down here every day or conduct the war?" or something along those lines.

DEAN RUSK: That's right.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall exactly what he said?

DEAN RUSK: I think that was essentially what he said. He said, "Do you want me to fight the war or spend my time down here before committees of Congress?" Then they began to let up on him.

RICHARD RUSK: If this enormous amount of time and energy is truly needed to make the system work, is the system workable?

DEAN RUSK: Well I think the record shows that the system is workable. It has worked for almost two hundred years in one way or another, except for that short period of the Civil War. But what else would a fellow be doing? Pondering his navel? Dean [Gooderham] Acheson used to say that you could only think in action. There's no point in going off in a corner and pretending just to think. You've got to think about a real situation and what you do about it. Well this process is very much a part of that. And also bear in mind that, for example, there's a lot of experience in the Congress, a lot of experience in foreign affairs on some of those key committees of Congress. And when a new administration comes in, they should tap that experience, listen to it, and get advice from it. And in the process they will find that they will be working toward a consensus on which both sides can agree. But it is a difficult system. But it was deliberately made difficult, complicated by our founding fathers in the interest of putting restraints on the use of power. And it has served to do that and it has forced us always to seek a consensus. Now sometimes there will be a President who will not be very amenable to consultation with members of the other party or with leaders of Congress. Mr. Reagan once challenged Congress to 'make my day' and that sort of thing. Well, I think that is basically the wrong approach. They should really recognize that they are working for the same country and they should try to find out what is best for the country as a whole, and in that process to take account of each other's views.

RICHARD RUSK: Incidentally, how was Harry Truman in his relations with Congress?

DEAN RUSK: Well, he was a little feisty at times in his public attitude. But he got almost all the legislation he wanted through Congress. Curious thing about Harry Truman in this respect,

the Eightieth Republican Congress, under the leadership of Senator Arthur [Hendrick] Vandenberg, was a great Congress in terms of foreign relations. This was the period of the creation of the Marshall Plan and of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and of launching of the United Nations and things of that sort. And Truman worked very well with Arthur Vandenberg. So did George Marshall, and later Dean Acheson. Well then, when Truman ran in '48, he very naughtily ran against 'that do-nothing Congress', when it was a great Congress in foreign relations. Of course, he was focusing his attention on domestic matters. But sophisticated politicians understand that when election time comes that sort of thing happens. And I don't know how many Republicans bitterly resented Harry Truman's doing that. But he took time out to be a Democrat.

SCHOENBAUM: Now Truman had four Secretaries of State. Isn't that right? [Edward R.] Stettinius [Jr.], [James Francis] Byrnes--

DEAN RUSK: Marshall and Acheson.

SCHOENBAUM: Marshall and Acheson. That's interesting. I don't know that a President has had four different Secretaries of State. Maybe this President will wind up with four. And over a period of a relatively short time. How would you contrast the workings of Truman--well you've said a lot with Marshall and Acheson about relations between them. But how would you compare those four? Four different personalities between Secretaries of State.

DEAN RUSK: Well that was partly accidental. Ed Stettinius was a very decent fellow, but not a very intelligent fellow. And Harry Truman came to see that. And he called in Ed Stettinius and said that "the post of the United Nations was the most important post I have at my disposal in my administration, so I want you to leave the job of Secretary of State and take that job at the United Nations." And Ed Stettinius did. Now when Ed Stettinius got up there, we in the State Department had to write verbatim every speech he made because he simply wasn't able to do what an Adlai [Ewing] Stevenson [III] could do, or something like that. So Jimmy Byrnes succeeded Stettinius. Well now Jimmy Byrnes was very bitter about not being President because he thought he ought to have been FDR's [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] Vice President and he expected to be FDR's Vice Presidential candidate in 1944. So Byrnes kind of looked down his nose at Truman and tended to forget who was President. And Harry Truman was the wrong man to be forgetful about on that matter. And so they--

SCHOENBAUM: Can you give a couple of specific examples? For instance, I was reading that-

DEAN RUSK: Well, Byrnes would go off to Europe or to Moscow and conduct high-level negotiations with those capitals and would not report accurately in detail back to the President, would not keep the President informed about what was going on. And Truman didn't like that. In any event, Harry Truman believed, and I share this belief, that George Marshall was the greatest living American. And so Truman decided to call on George Marshall to be Secretary of State. And George Marshall accepted. He didn't seek the post, but he did what the President asked him to do and proved to be a great Secretary of State. But George Marshall ran into some health problems. He had some spots on a kidney or something like that and had an operation and so.

Well then, in the campaign of '48 when everybody thought that Harry Truman was going to be defeated, Dean Acheson remained loyal and publicly loyal to Harry Truman. There was one occasion I remember when President Truman came back from one of his barnstorm whistle-stop campaign trips, came back into Union Station there in Washington, and Dean Acheson was the only person on the platform to meet him. Well Truman didn't forget that sort of thing.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you there too?

DEAN RUSK: No I wasn't there. I was a professional officer and it wasn't my job to be political. But Dean Acheson was there. And so when Marshall became ill Truman turned to Acheson.

SCHOENBAUM: I read that Byrne--

DEAN RUSK: There's an S on it. Byrnes.

SCHOENBAUM: Byrnes. I'm sorry. Byrnes on his own agreed that the United States would recognize Bulgaria and Romania on the Russian promise that they would give free elections and that Truman was terrifically upset about this.

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall that. I wasn't involved in that. I don't recall that incident.

SCHOENBAUM: Another one that Byrnes overruled [William Averell] Harriman's advice in September of '45. Harriman's advice was that Truman should go and explain to the American people what the Soviet Union was doing publicly, to explain this publicly. And Byrnes overruled this advice because it--

DEAN RUSK: Well I don't know. There were a number of differences between Jimmy Byrnes and Harry Truman. You see, if there are differences of view between a President and his Secretary of State, at the end of the day the views of the President must prevail. And Jimmy Byrnes wasn't ready for that.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, let me continue with some questions about this Phinzy lecture. And you more or less took the position in that lecture that the Constitution is a pretty good system and it's worth preserving. And you defended it. There's been a number of critics of our constitutional system and I am asking these questions as a critic, more or less to draw you out on your own theme.

DEAN RUSK: Okay.

RICHARD RUSK: You have made the point that the Presidency is a license to persuade. And my question is, in light of all these one-term Presidents we've had recently, are the American people perhaps less persuadable now? Are the American people willing to follow presidential leadership? And a related question would be, have we lost sight of important national goals?

DEAN RUSK: To begin with, you must never expect anything approaching unanimity among our people. Bear in mind that almost any President knows that almost half of the people who

voted wanted somebody else to be President, voted against him in the last election. Sometimes Presidents and people around them tend to forget that. But I think also that the impact of television, not only in terms of how public figures appear on television, but what the television community itself does with respect to public policy issues has made some difference. The arts of persuasion have changed somehow. For Harry Truman it was a whistle-stop campaign. For Ronald Reagan it's television. And there's considerable difference between those two. I can regret it and prefer the good old days, but that doesn't do any good. No, I think you'd probably find that there's a kind of backlog, maybe what, thirty percent, forty percent, among the American people for supporting your President, almost regardless of the direction in which he wants to go. There's a kind of readiness to respond to the President's leadership. But a lot of these questions are extraordinarily complicated, involving dozens and dozens of secondary and tertiary questions, and some of them requiring on-balance judgments and razor edges decisions. And on those, honest men and women can disagree. But you see, our structure is set up in such a way that we resolve these differences through constitutional process and somehow find a way to act at the end of the day. And that's what the democratic process is all about: a way to resolve the differences among ourselves by peaceful means.

RICHARD RUSK: Have there been other developments in modern times that have complicated presidential leadership, national leadership, and the ability to form consensus on policy? You mentioned television. What about the influence of these special interest lobby groups, the industrial military complex?

DEAN RUSK: I don't want to sound insufferably conservative or old-fashioned, but the intrusion of the federal government into more and more issues has complicated this process. What in the world would our founding fathers think if they were told that the Constitution is going to be used to require that men and women be in the same gym classes in colleges and universities? You see, if you count the first ten amendments to the Constitution as a part of the original Constitution and then knock out the two prohibition amendments which cancel each other out, we've amended our Constitution only fourteen times. And if you look at those amendments, they have all been about process: eighteen-year voting age, votes for women, the succession to the Presidency, issues of that sort. We have not cluttered up, thus far, our federal Constitution with a lot of things on which action could be taken by legislation. Now our state constitutions have become a jungle, because we've been putting into our state constitutions a lot of things which could be done by legislation. When people talk to me about abortion and prayer in schools and a balanced federal budget and things like that; well these are things that could be done by legislation, so I'm rather allergic to putting a lot of that kind of crap into the Constitution.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, in researching your story I'm struck by the times in which you grew up as a child. They definitely were different times. They were certainly simpler times. Patriotism was a living force then, more of a force than today. Do you think the American have people lost some sense of commitment to these national visions and national goals embodied in the Declaration?

DEAN RUSK: I don't really think so. We don't have very many occasions in which a citizen decides whether or not he loves his country. They happen from time to time. World War II was

such an occasion. Even during Vietnam we had pretty strong support at the grass roots for the first six or seven years of that struggle. No I think that there's a sense of patriotism around. Unfortunately some of it gets drawn off into jingoism, some of it drawn off into isolation and xenophobia [fear of the foreigner], but I think it's still there. You know I think, maybe I've commented, that during the Cuban Missile Crisis we were rather interested that the people around the country seemed to be so calm. There were not large-scale riots and there was some buying up of food in grocery stores, but by and large the country was calm. And we wondered at the time whether that meant that the people around the country did not understand how serious a crisis it was. Well as I have traveled around the country and talked to people since then, I'm convinced that they did understand that it was a serious crisis and were nevertheless calm. Now that itself is a kind of patriotism.

RICHARD RUSK: Well it's good to hear you say that.

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SCHOENBAUM: --Constitution and the relationship in the Constitution between the foreign affairs power of the President and the foreign affairs power of the Congress. As you know, that's one area that the President and Congress, specifically in the terms of the Constitution, share power. And it's never been a very comfortable sharing, especially in the days of undeclared wars and covert operations and things like that. Have you thought through as consistent theory of how this power should be shared? And are you satisfied with the present arrangement which involves, as you know, the War Powers Act?

DEAN RUSK: Well we think of the President as having very extensive powers in foreign policy, and in some respects he does. He is the chief diplomat; he is the one who gives instructions to our ambassadors abroad even though the Secretary of State gives most of them on his behalf; he is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces; and he's symbolic head of the nation. But if you look at the powers of Congress that affect foreign relations, you find vast powers that reside on Capitol Hill, things like budgets and appropriations, the approval of treaties, the very organization of the executive branch of the government, all those things. Now I don't see any possibility of our getting on with our public business unless there is genuine cooperation between the President and the leaders of Congress of both parties. And I mean on both sides. A President must be ready to listen to and take the advice of people on Capitol Hill and vice versa. Now Lyndon [Baines] Johnson undoubtedly holds the record for Presidents who have spent the most time with Congress. And he was in touch with congressional leaders all the time, several times a day by telephone on a typical day. And he had them down to the White House frequently. In two successive years in the late sixties he invited every senator and every member of the Congress to come down to the White House in the afternoon in groups of about thirty, have a drink and listen to short briefings, and then to put their questions, make their comments, observations. And he was directly in touch with every member of the Congress in those meetings at the White House.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you also present at those meetings?

DEAN RUSK: I usually went. [Robert Strange] McNamara and I usually opened up with a few remarks, a little talk, and then--

RICHARD RUSK: Were those meetings held at your suggestion?

DEAN RUSK: No. This was President Johnson's idea. Well I remember sitting at--I forget now just who it was--sitting at dinner at the White House one night in the Johnson years, sitting next to a Republican senator who had been in the Senate throughout the Eisenhower administration. And that evening was the first time that he and his wife had ever been invited to the White House.

RICHARD RUSK: Is that right?

DEAN RUSK: And he was very much impressed with that. But I think I said somewhere else that Henry [Alfred] Kissinger once called me when he was Secretary of State and said that he had studied the time that Secretaries of State spent with the Congress and that I was the champion. That doesn't surprise me, because it's just an essential part of the conduct of our public business.

SCHOENBAUM: In terms of the relationship between the President and the Secretary of State, it seems to me to be that you were perhaps the last Secretary of State historically that had what I think most people would call a special relationship with his President. Others, of course Marshall with Truman, John Foster Dulles with Eisenhower, you with President Johnson certainly, had that special relationship. Is that a sine qua non for good performance? Do you think that special relationship--how does that help, and how does it perhaps hurt the--

DEAN RUSK: Well the complete confidence of the President is essential to a Secretary of State, and there are many threads in that relationship. This sounds self-serving, but I have a clear impression that both President Kennedy and President Johnson valued my relations with Congress. They had good reports from the Congress as to me and my relations with Congress. And I spent a lot of time at it and did so on a nonpartisan basis. And I think President Kennedy, particularly, was impressed with my relations with Congress. But that confidence of the President in a Secretary of State is something that a Secretary of State just can't do without. And if he senses that he does not have it, then he should get out. Now that's manifested in many directions. If somebody comes up with a damn fool suggestion about foreign policy and the Secretary of State overruled it or objects--well if the Secretary of State loses too many of those to a President, then he knows that he does not have the full confidence of the President.

SCHOENBAUM: Can a Secretary of State be too close to the President, in the sense that is it perhaps not advisable in some respects that the President and the Secretary of State not be too closely identified? Not that the President does not have absolute confidence in the Secretary of State, but the Secretary of State can operate by testing the waters on the Hill and can toss in the air trial balloons or that kind of thing.

DEAN RUSK: Well I don't think a Secretary of State should float trial balloons in the Congress or with the press. Now, if you're sitting down with an individual senator or a congressman in his office, just chewing things over, you might bring up some off-beat ideas to see what the senator or the congressman might think about them, or maybe he might interject some ideas of that sort. But I think it would be an abuse of the process for the Secretary of State to use the Congress to float trial balloons.

RICHARD RUSK: What about from the point of view that the Secretary of State represents not only the President but also his own constituency, and that's the State Department, Foreign Service, and what's in the best national interest of the United States in foreign affairs? And is it possible for a Secretary of State to truly represent not only that constituency but truly, you know, fight for what's in the best national interest if he's too closely identified with the President?

DEAN RUSK: Well the principal constituency of the Secretary of State, which is largely unrecognized and unspoken, is the American people. He's working on things that affect the life and death of the nation. Now he doesn't have a political constituency in the usual sense, but in his own thinking he must look upon the entire country as his constituency. Now that's true of a President. A President at least has got to try to be the President of all the people, not just those who put him in office. And those who depart from that find themselves in trouble and do a disservice to the position.

SCHOENBAUM: I've always been struck by that statement that George [Wildman] Ball made in his memoirs. I can paraphrase it as to when Johnson was President and you were Secretary of State that at a certain point, as of about 1966-67, George Ball put it that Dean Rusk, subject to the, I think he said, the general supervision of the President exercised and carried out the foreign policy of the United States. He made that statement, which I thought was an unusual statement that certainly would not be made of George [Pratt] Schultz today. It might have been made about John Foster Dulles, but certainly would not have been made about many Secretaries of State in American history. Can you shed some light on that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I did have pretty extensive authority under both of my Presidents, probably a little less so with John F. Kennedy because he himself personally was curious about and interested in so many details. So I had to keep an eye over my shoulder to be sure that I touched base with him on a good many things. But Johnson believed in using the chain of command. And so I had considerable authority under Johnson to get on with the business. But even so, I think there ought to be a little bit of an arm's length relationship between a President and a Secretary of State. The responsibilities are too great to have any of these things be affected by purely personal relationships.

SCHOENBAUM: That's an interesting point. If we can probe that. I'm just repeating what I think some people have said, that there was perhaps too close a relationship between you and President Johnson, too close maybe even a personal relationship, that you were maybe too much on the same wave length, you were both from the South, both with a similar background. In other words, were you aware of the dangers of perhaps too close a relationship at the time? And what would that enter into in retrospect?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I'm not aware of it. You see one thing a Secretary of State must do is to be sure that the President is aware of the choices open to him, the alternatives, the lines of action which might be possible. And if a Secretary of State just concentrates on talking to the President about his own recommendation, then he badly serves the President. He must point out to the President that there are those who think something else, and something else, and something else. But it's true that President Johnson called me by my first name, whereas President Kennedy always called me Mr. Secretary; but that's partly because we came out of the same background, and also because we occupied a good many foxholes together where the grenades were being tossed at us. And you get to know somebody in a foxhole pretty well. But I think there needs to be a kind of arm's length relationship among people who are carrying high responsibilities. George Marshall felt that very strongly.

RICHARD RUSK: So you never told Lyndon Johnson, "It's Mr. Secretary, Mr. President."

DEAN RUSK: No I didn't. No I didn't. No I didn't. (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Tom, unless you've got one or two other questions on that particular line of inquiry--Pop, you make the general point that there's really no alternative to reaching consensus in our system, that, I think you would say, there are no structural ways of sort of working around this or changes in the Constitution that can work around this. You proposed something specific, I think, after you left Washington. Perhaps you did it while you were there. And that is in response to this proliferation of congressional committees that would be involved in foreign affairs, I believe you asked, you suggested, that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Relations Committee could have sort of broad oversight responsibilities.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Well you see, at the present time almost literally every committee of Congress finds itself involved in foreign relations.

RICHARD RUSK: We've got that down on other tapes. My only question was--

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, but the--

RICHARD RUSK: --how far did you--Go ahead.

DEAN RUSK: The point is that with these foreign relations powers in the Congress spread over an entire committee structure, I have felt for some time that it would be useful that there be one place where some committee could look at each item in relation to foreign policy as a whole, because each committee has its own particular fish to fry. And I felt that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee ought to be able, under the rules of their respective bodies, to call before themselves any matter pending in any other committee for the purpose of looking at it and at least commenting on it from the point of view of our foreign relations as a whole. I don't think those two bodies will do that because there's too much jealousy among the committees. But there's no committee in the Congress which has a responsibility for foreign relations as a whole.

RICHARD RUSK: What did you do with that idea?

DEAN RUSK: Well I've suggested it to members of Congress. I think I've written it on one or two occasions. But I just don't think it's one of those ideas that will take root because, even though it may be a very good idea. Now once in a while, I should say that, when something important comes up that it affects in a very important way, say, two different committees of Congress, they'll have either joint hearings or they'll have hearings in both committees on those issues. For example, as between the Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate and the Senate Armed Services Committee. And that's all right, but there have been times when the Foreign Relations Committee would invite members of the Armed Services Committee to come in during discussion or hearings on a particular topic.

SCHOENBAUM: That reminds me of something that's related. As you say, almost every committee of Congress treats foreign affairs to some degree and there should be some coordination. And by the same token, almost every agency in the executive branch gets into foreign affairs.

DEAN RUSK: That is correct.

SCHOENBAUM: I understand that in 1966, President Johnson tried to do something about that and adopted a very similar, a closely analogous policy and did designate the State Department as in charge of all overseas foreign affairs, state-head leadership of all overseas activities.

DEAN RUSK: Well almost every department and agency of government finds that in carrying out its own statutory responsibilities it has to go beyond our national frontier. This is not just State, it's Treasury, and Commerce, and Defense, and Labor, and Agriculture, and the Social Security Administration, the Veterans' Administration, everybody. Well, one thing we did in the Kennedy years was to send a letter to every ambassador naming him as the head of the American official presence in his particular country. He was responsible for whoever might be there from any other department or agency.

RICHARD RUSK: The activities of the CIA?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Including--

RICHARD RUSK: He could dig into any of those activities?

DEAN RUSK: Including communications from the CIA out from his post. Now I'm sure that some ambassadors did not exercise that full responsibility; some of them just let it go by. But I know that others did. And then bear in mind that in the usual sense the State Department, Secretary of State, controls communications with our embassies and with foreign governments. Now there were times when I would use that in order to get on with the job despite some picayune objection that somebody in some other agency might have about it. And I would simply say, "This is the cable we're going to send," and leave it up to them to try to get to the President to hold it up. So that power of controlling communications is a very important power. So is, by the way--if any bureaucrat ever listens to this: So is the power of the first draft. The department

or agency that puts in the first draft for consideration already has a running start because it is that draft that becomes the topic of conversation. And the State Department should try never to relinquish that to some other department or agency.

SCHOENBAUM: As you say, during the sixties it was necessary for a Presidential directive to go out specifically giving state leadership overseas.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I think you'll find that letter in the Presidential papers of John F. Kennedy.

SCHOENBAUM: Did he do this on your advice?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I'm not sure you want to use this, but during the fifties--

RICHARD RUSK: That only confirms that we do want to use it.'

DEAN RUSK: During the fifties when the head of CIA was the brother of the Secretary of State, some rather bad habits developed, and those tended to extend on into the sixties. For example, back in the fifties the local CIA station chief would report through CIA channels on the performance of the American ambassador. Then Allen [Welsh] Dulles would send these over to John Foster Dulles. Well that's just not the way to run a railroad, and we put a stop to that.

SCHOENBAUM: Did J. [John] Edgar Hoover keep doing that during the Johnson years?

DEAN RUSK: J. Edgar Hoover? No.

SCHOENBAUM: Not J--I mean--

DEAN RUSK: No, no. We stopped that.

SCHOENBAUM: Allen Dulles, wasn't he--

DEAN RUSK: He was for a time.

SCHOENBAUM: Allen Dulles was for a time in the sixties. Yeah. So you put a stop to that? That's interesting because--and that can be said as to people that are--As you know some people have criticized the management of the State Department during the sixties and I'm glad we have that on the record that that was your recommendation. Did you make that? Can you tell us more about the circumstances of that recommendation? How you made it? And whether Kennedy accepted it or whether he had to be talked into it?

RICHARD RUSK: You were the author for that letter, is that right?

DEAN RUSK: Well I think it flowed naturally out of that letter putting the ambassador in charge of everybody, every official, in his country. Well when David [Kirkpatrick Este] Bruce went to London as our ambassador for President Kennedy he learned almost immediately that there were more officers in the embassy in London than there were in the British foreign office.

And he found that only twenty-three percent of them were from the State Department. The rest of them were from some forty-four different departments and agencies of government because it gets to be a matter of prestige to have somebody serving overseas for you, you see. And it's that kind of thing that just tends to grow and grow and grow. The military attache motorpool in London at that time was larger than the motorpool for the rest of the anbassy combined. And it just didn't make any sense.

RICHARD RUSK: You got a follow-up on that?

SCHOENBAUM: Well, just maybe one more. What about the NSC [National Security Council] staff and the State Department staff? How does that--

RICHARD RUSK: My question pertains to this interest group business. And there are people who say that American democracy has been changed somewhat by the influence of these special interest groups and these very effective and powerful lobbying techniques that they have developed. A lot of money is involved in this and there are permanent representatives of these lobbies in Washington. They're meeting in Congress. They meet constantly with Congress, administration officials. Was this a big factor for you as Secretary? Obviously there were some very powerful lobbies that have always been involved with government: the China lobby, the Jewish lobby in Israel, and some of those. But just as a general thesis, do you subscribe to this idea that American democracy has been at least damaged by this special interest group representation back there and how did it affect you as secretary?

DEAN RUSK: Who would you put on your list of special interest groups? If you started listing them one by one you'd include almost everybody before you got through. We are a nation made up of diverse groups and with diverse interests. Now I must say that the--

RICHARD RUSK: That is true. But, by golly, these interests, these groups, have really organized, and they have permanent representatives and budgets and big money to plow into this. And that is a different step.

DEAN RUSK: You're talking very largely, though, about domestic matters rather than foreign policy, except for Israel.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, I need to know that.

DEAN RUSK: And these lobbies do their work in Congress. You may be surprised to hear me say this, but I do not recall one occasion while I was Secretary of State that any top businessman or group of businessmen came in to see me urging one point of view on foreign policy rather than another. Now I did meet more than once with the presidents of the Organization of Jewish Organizations. Now let's see, who else might have been in to see me. I invited the student body presidents of some eighty student bodies who had signed a joint letter to me about Vietnam. I invited them to come in to talk to me about it. But this lobbying activity--

RICHARD RUSK: That's the one where they had their draft reply ready before they walked in?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. But these lobbying activities you have to be aware of because you'll feel their impact on Capitol Hill. You know that there's a farm lobby; you know that there's a textile lobby; you know that there's a steel lobby, a shoe lobby, a glass lobby. You're aware of all that. And you know that you have to be aware of that when you talk to committees or individual senators and congressmen.

RICHARD RUSK: But they were really not involved with you?

DEAN RUSK: They didn't come at me, you see, because so many of these powers really are constitutionally for the Congress to decide. At the present time there's a good deal of huffing and puffing between the President and the Congress on the budget and on taxes and on tax reform. Well, the constitutional power to adopt a budget, the constitutional power to decide on taxes rests with the Congress. A President can make his proposals and the Constitution anticipates that. He can propose, but it is for the Congress to dispose, as some would put it. And therefore I think a President is well advised to treat with respect the constitutional power of the Congress on these issues. Otherwise he gets into real trouble. It's for the Congress to provide an army and a navy: Article I, Section 8--enormous powers there. And a President must always be aware of those powers. Lyndon Johnson was always fully aware of them because he had been on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue for many years.

RICHARD RUSK: Would these lobbies have been involved in lower levels administration in ways that perhaps you weren't aware of?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, it's possible that if some company ran into an Arab boycott because they were doing business with Israel that one of their representatives might come to talk to the Assistant Secretary of State about that just to see what the situation is and what, if anything, could be done about it.

RICHARD RUSK: But there just wasn't very much of that?

DEAN RUSK: But there's just very little of that. Another curious thing about this, and this may sound a little surprising to you. The responsibility for the initiative for consultation between the two branches of government really rests with the President and the executive branch. It's just turned out that way. In my eight years I can't recall more than a half a dozen occasions, in eight years, when a senator would pick up the phone and say, "Dean, I'd like to come by at the end of the day today and talk to you about something." Or, "Would you, next time you're down here, will you drop in my office?" Now some of that is simply consideration for the time pressures on a Secretary of State, but the initiative for consultation--Now some of the committees will call you quite frequently when they want to talk about something. But the initiative for consultation really rests with the executive branch.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay, you don't subscribe to this theory and you've learned from practice that these lobbying groups didn't have much effect upon you or the executive branch necessarily, but do you--

DEAN RUSK: A very considerable effect, indirectly through the Congress.

RICHARD RUSK: That's right. But do you see a threat to American democracy or complications for our system? And again we're trying to talk about these things in the context of constitutional issues.

DEAN RUSK: I don't believe there's any way that--

RICHARD RUSK: Let me finish.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Go ahead.

RICHARD RUSK: Due to the fact that special interests, the individual interests are so well represented and so effective in making their views known on Capitol Hill and yet when that happens, who's arguing the national interests? If these congressmen are deceived by these special interest groups, and I think they probably are, what happens to the national interest?

DEAN RUSK: Well, it's up to people in government to cut through all that and keep working on discovering and applying the national interest. But let me point out that you'll never get rid of these various lobbying groups because the Constitution provides that citizens have a right to petition the Congress. And the answer, in my judgment, would be to have more rather than fewer lobbying groups: people who lobby for the consumer interest and lobby for education and lobby for things are of concern to the people as a whole. But they're short of money whereas these business interests can at least put up the money to establish offices: trade associations in Washington who are key lobbyists.

SCHOENBAUM: The money part of it must be more severe now than it was in the sixties. With the development of the PACs [political action committees] and large campaign contributions, do you see severe, moderate, or no danger in that? Do you think something should be done, beyond what we already have in election campaign laws; anything can be done about the contributions to political campaigns which, in effect, some people think, buy votes?

DEAN RUSK: Well I'm concerned about the greater and greater amounts of money required to run for political office. Here in Georgia it takes three and one half million dollars to run for the Senate in a genuinely contested election: Once through the primaries and once through the general election. Well, when somebody thinks about having to raise three and one-half million dollars it's a pretty appalling prospect.

RICHARD RUSK: What do you give up to have to raise that kind of money?

DEAN RUSK: It depends on who you are. My guess is that Sam Nunn does not have to yield any of his views on principle in exchange for campaign contributions. But he has been able to rise above that; he's untouchable in that respect. Some others, though, are very beholden.

RICHARD RUSK: Brother David [Patrick Rusk]? (laughs)

DEAN RUSK: When my son David was the mayor of Albuquerque, various and sundry people talked to him about running for statewide office. But he faced the prospect of having to raise somewhere between one and two million dollars to make such a race in a state which didn't have a million people in it. It's pretty appalling. And I think one of the unhappy things about television is that television has added enormously to the costs of running for political office.

RICHARD RUSK: You made reference to several of the constitutional amendments that have been proposed: a constitutional convention six-year presidential term--

END OF SIDE 2

