

SUMMARY

The Australian Labor Government and the Creation of the United Nations: Discussions over the Criteria for Electing Non-Permanent Members of the Security Council

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It is well-known that leaders of the Australian Labor government in the 1940s attempted to participate in the creation of the United Nations. This attempt is often regarded as an expression of their desire to protect the interests of middle and small countries and to lay restraint on the Great Powers. This article reexamines this attempt, with a particular focus on the criteria for electing non-permanent members of the Security Council which was considered to be a dominant organ in the early United Nations. Many middle and small countries attached importance to this issue, because it was an important factor in determining the composition of the Security Council. Australia was no exception.

Based upon an analysis of primary sources published by a variety of actors, this article reveals that although the then Australian government at first regarded geographic distribution as the most important criterion for electing non-permanent members of the Security Council, this criterion was eventually overshadowed by 'the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security'. This shift in the Australian government's emphasis took place against the background of its concern over the potential threat posed by the enormous voting power of the Latin American bloc. Thus, the Australian delegation became partly responsible for Article 23 of the United Nations Charter as it argued that 'the contribution' should be recognized as the most important criterion.

So, how did the leaders of the then Australian government define 'the contribution'? Examination of primary sources shows that they regarded 'the contribution' as contribution to the Allied war efforts during WWI and WWII, which, they publicly asserted, would provide good proof of the willingness of each member state to cooperate with the United Nations in the future. By pressing for this definition, based on the assumption that Australia's war efforts during the both World Wars were outstanding among middle and small Allied countries, they tried to establish wartime contribution as a tool for discriminating against countries which were not active belligerents in both World Wars, in the hope of laying the foundation for an institutionalized hierarchy which would promote Australia's international standing.