In the first years after the founding of the UN, the secretariat was decentralized from New York to regional centres in Geneva, Bangkok, Addis Ababa and Santiago de Chile. In addition, a number of activities became semi-independent of the UN secretariat, such as UNICEF, which was set up in 1946. The UN’s first experience with peacekeeping came in 1949 in the Middle East; one year later, peacekeepers intervened in the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan.

East-West antagonism during the 1950s prompted the Soviet Union to demand organizational reforms with a political overtone. At that time, the United States and its Western allies constituted an overwhelming majority within the UN. The socialist states charged that the independence of the secretariat should be ensured by replacing the post of Secretary-General with a troika of one representative each from the socialist states, the Western military alliance and the non-aligned states. They further argued that peacekeeping operations were staffed one-sidedly with persons from NATO countries only. Moreover, candidates from socialist countries were rejected for technical co-operation projects with developing countries to preserve the influence of the Western industrialized nations. The situation escalated when the Soviet Union and its allies refused to share in the cost of peacekeeping operations. Demands to curtail the independence of the Secretary-General were finally rejected in the early 1960s, and agreement was reached by providing a greater share of secretariat posts for persons from socialist countries, while new arrangements were introduced to fund the cost of peacekeeping operations.

Decolonization created rapid growth in UN membership, and by 1965 it stood at 118, twice as many as at the Organization’s founding. With states from Africa and Asia joining the UN, development issues became increasingly important, resulting in the expansion of the technical co-operation programmes. This led to the establishment of new bodies, particularly the UNDP in 1965, which was to provide the framework for technical co-operation with developing countries. Mandated by the Governing Body of the UNDP, Sir Robert Jackson proposed to build up the UN system’s management capacity in order to facilitate the delivery of technical co-operation. The UNDP was given a co-ordinating role, with all funding for development projects to be channelled through it to the specialized agencies. The lack of global planning and priority setting was to be addressed by developing ECOSOC into a central forum for economic questions. The specialized agencies, however, rejected the curtailment of their independence and member states showed very little interest in centralization.

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Some headway was made in improving the work of the UNDP itself by the introduction of country programme planning and the setting up of UNDP offices in developing countries.

Towards the mid-1970s, the UN increasingly became the forum for global negotiations on issues involving development. Whereas technical co-operation remained of highest importance for developing countries, development was to be achieved by addressing new issues such as trade, energy, a common fund for raw materials, industrialization, the transfer of technology, a code of conduct for transnational corporations, the Law of the Sea Convention and the establishment of a New International Economic Order. Negotiations on these issues between developing states, organized as the Group of 77 (G77), and the industrialized countries took place within the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). At the insistence of the developing countries, the General Assembly established a group of 25 experts to adapt the UN system’s governance and organizational structure so it could address the economic and social problems of developing countries.\(^3\)

Under a compromise reached in 1977, the role of the General Assembly was strengthened as proposed by the G77, however without addressing the key demand to vest in the Assembly control over the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The post of Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation was created, albeit without the powers and means that had been wished for by developing countries. In ECOSOC and UNCTAD, things remained the same. The G77 blocked any reduction in the number of ECOSOC committees demanded by industrialized countries, while the latter prevented any upgrading of UNCTAD. The Soviet Union supported the call for a New International Economic Order, whereas the United States argued for a reform in management, planning and co-ordination.

Thereafter, political confrontation became all-pervasive. Disappointed third-world countries deplored the ‘ignorance of the minority’, while the industrialized countries deplored the ‘tyranny of the majority’. From the beginning of the 1980s, the Reagan Administration and the United States Congress levelled accusations of politicization and mismanagement at the Organization. Specifically, the United States called for a change in UN budget practices. The UN budget is approved by a two-thirds majority of all member states, with all votes having equal weight. The countries making the largest financial contributions, including the United States, were often outvoted on budget questions. The United States reacted by withholding payments and demanded voting power in the approval of the budget proportionate to its contribution.

The financial withholding resulted in a budget crisis. The General Assembly responded by mandating a group of 18 experts to review the UN’s administrative and financial efficiency.\(^4\) Recommendations were approved by the General Assembly in 1986, including a new two-tier budget process. The concept of a budget outline was introduced, drafting priorities and appropriations one year prior to approving the de-
