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Chapter 2 reflection

In this chapter, the author focuses on giving the reader a solid base of what is going on within the country over the span of the entire book so that the reader can gain a greater level of comprehension from the following chapter. Specifically, the chapter gives an overview of the socioeconomical, political, geographical and environmental aspects of the country and how their relationship with the rest of the world from the 1970s-2000s. The two major factors that drive outside forces are the level of biodiversity and the abundance of petroleum.

In terms of the country's socioeconomic state it was not very strong. Ecuador is very similar to Latin American and Caribbean countries in terms of GDP per capita, population growth, poverty levels, and debt ratios. The author detailed specific statistics comparing Ecuador to the various other Latin America and Caribbean countries (LAC) such as the GINI index which, measures overall inequality where 0 is perfect equality and 100 is perfect inequality. Ecuador had a score of 47 in 2012 and a score of 49 in 2010, this shows that this value is on the downward trend which shows a glimmer of promise to the nation. Through the evolution of the country it has been on the steady up rise in almost every category which shows promise and hope for the future. For example, in 1982 the country's GDP was valued at 19,929 million USD and in 2012 that same value increased to 84,039 million USD. From 2002 to 2012 the % of people below the poverty line went from 55.2% to 27.3%. Overall Ecuador is a country that has struggled immensely in terms of their socioeconomics but as we move forward they are a nation that is showing progress and promise that they will become a better overall nation.

For a point of reference, the country of Ecuador is about the size of the state of Colorado. It is actually the fourth smallest nation in Latin America, yet it is extremely unique and valuable in many aspects of the word. The country consists of four main identifiable regions, **The Galapagos Islands**, the coast, the Andes, and the Amazon. The Galapagos is home to one of the most if not the most biodiverse area on the planet. Charles Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species*, was inspired by these groups of islands that are located off the coast of Ecuador. Currently the islands are a popular ecotourism destination which creates some concern and attention to the effects of ecotourism on the biodiversity of the area. On **the Coast** of the country is its largest city, Guayaquil, which serves as a port for exports and imports to flow in and out of. Leading exports within the country are, bananas, shrimp, cut flowers, coffee, wood, and fish are major exports that leave the country through Guayaquil. Other than petroleum bananas are the next major export the Ecuador produces, the country is the world's largest provider of bananas in terms of its output. However, there are some issues that arise through banana trades, "Between January 2012 and February 2013, the banana-producing area fell from 200,000 hectares to 171,000 hectares, according to a survey from the country's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fishing. The drop was attributed to production difficulties linked to black leaf streak, competition from cheaper fruit and issues with the country's banana farm legalization process." (Vezina). While disease can be a limiting factor in terms of production the country still has other options to fall back on in case of lower than expected yield, however fall back options tend to have more adverse effects on the environment. 37 percent of the country's exports are going to the United States and 28 percent of the countries imports are coming from the state. In the later chapters of the book the author highlights various other ways how the United States is involved within the Ecuadorian society. It can be

argued that without the presence and overlook of the United States Ecuador would be now where near where it is as a country today. The third primary region of the country is the **Andes Mountains** within this region, located among active volcanos, is the capital of the country Quito. Quito is home to the subsequent environmental movement that shows a rich and extensive progression from the 1970s to today. The weak Ecuadorian state conducts operations out of this city as well. The last region of the country is the **Amazon**. This region is home to a vast, dense rainforest, and abundance of biodiversity and rich ecosystems, as well as various groups of indigenous people. However, the area is also rich in petroleum which is one of the biggest natural resource demands in the whole world. Almost all the machinery that make life livable and keep things up to standard need petroleum fuel to operate. The fuel is burned and emits very harmful gases which increase the rate of climate change. The extraction of oil is also very harmful to the surrounding ecosystem, deforestation is a common factor that comes into play with oil extraction. Natural resource contamination is also one extreme factor. Not all oil companies are efficient/responsible as they may preform negligent acts which may cause an oil spill which can further contaminate water supplies, kill off certain plants of animals, thus lowering the overall biodiversity of the area. Therefor you can see why petroleum extraction is negatively looked at from the eyes of environmentalist and citizens. However, from the governmental side and the business side extraction is fantastic. With an abundance of petroleum come an abundance of monetary reward for both the state and private companies. The state then uses the money to build up infrastructure to continue the path of progression that the country has established.

Ecuador is known as a “megadiverse” country containing over 20,000 plants a fifth of those plants being endemic. The area contains 10 percent of the world’s plant population and about 17 percent of the bird population all within about .2 percent of the worlds land area. For a comparison the state of New York has 3,899 plant species, the state being larger than the country of Ecuador only has a fraction of their plant species. The abundance of biodiversity attracts many environmentalists looking to conserve the are to prevent the disruption of the ecosystems and overall abundance of biodiversity. Most funder came from international channels, from 1990 to 1997 Ecuador received over \$96 million for 163 biodiversity projects. This shows the overall level of importance that this issue had among environmentalist organizations and agendas.

The other major factor driven by outside sources is the petroleum industry. In 1967 the American privatized organization Texaco found oil in the Ecuadorian Amazon and became a lead extractor of the resource which sparked the beginning of the environmentalist movement within the country. For the most part, around 50% of the government’s income came from petroleum extraction. It is like a double-edged sword, yes, it is extremely harmful to the environment, however with a government and infrastructure that is weak the monetary income is a big positive. Petroleum exports have grown from 1970 where they exported about 4,100 barrels a day where as in 2012 Ecuador exported 503,600 barrels of petroleum per day. The dramatic change in number of barrels exported per day is pretty alarming. To think that each day 503,600 barrels of oil are leaving Ecuador is mind blowing. What happens if that container ship wrecks, or if the oil is mistreated, or is the pipeline leaks. All lead to serious consequences especially in an area that is so environmentally rich. From 1972-1990 Texaco and a state-owned organization pumped more than two million barrels of oil from the region. I honestly don’t even know how we still have petroleum available in our world today. As the industry progressed through time it became more regulated and controlled to show an attempt that there was a sense of care toward the environment but in reality, there was not. For example, the state established national

parks in which petroleum drilling was prohibited except under certain circumstance in which case drilling may only be carried out by the state. As stated the petroleum industry is a driving factor for environmentalist organizations within and as well as economic prosperity in the eyes of the state.

The chapter then goes into detailing and giving a brief overview of each of the major time period within Ecuadorian history that will be examined by the book. First being the Origins (1978-1987) In which the environmental movement first showed itself with the formation of the organization Fundación Natura. The next time period was, the Neoliberal Boom (1987-2000) which was highlighted by the influx of transnational funding toward the Ecodependent organizations which lead to the completion of many conservation projects which included debt-for-nature swaps. Following every boom there is a bust, the Neoliberal bust occurred from 2000-2006. Within this time period everything interally took a turn for the worst, animosity among environmental organizations created an overall division in the sector causing the quality and impact of work to go down, weather conditions limited crop growth which hurt export levels, and dollarization occurred due to the weak economy and state. The citizens needed something/ someone to bring them out of the dark and into the light. Rafael Correa defined the last time period, the Citizens' Revolution (2006-2015) This time period highlights the election of president Rafael Correa who promised the citizens of Ecuador what they needed, a revolution. He was planning on restructuring infrastructure and bettering the country as a whole all while taking better consideration in terms of the environmental aspect of things. Correa has been one of the first trustworthy and responsible presidents that does not carry an aura of corruption or shadiness.

Ecuador is a very unique and biologically rich country. I can understand why there is such a movement to conserve and preserve as much of the country as possible moving forward. In a world of constant industrialization and development Ecuador is an area that these principles and ideas should not exist. The more educated people are on the issues and situations within the country and how effects the global community the more support, traction and attention can be made to the environmental issues that surround the country so that one say we can ensure that the ecosystems of the Ecuadorian country are for the most part left intact to continue to grow and flourish.

Works cited:

Vezina, A. (2016, September 13). Ecuador. Retrieved September 28, 2017, from <http://www.promusa.org/Ecuador>