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Abstract: The chapter describes the political and economic history of Ecuador. The Incas ruled Ecuador for approximately 100 years. The height of their rule was in the late 15th century. At that point, the Incas controlled over 12 million people and 350,000 square miles of land. Their way of life came to an end after the 1530s when the Spanish, led by the famed conquistador Francisco Pizarro, conquered them. By 1572 the Incan Empire was completely destroyed. After Pizarro conquered the Incas, Ecuador became a colony of Spain. On July 24, 1822, a historic meeting between Venezuelan leader Simon Bolívar and Argentinean rebel leader José de San Martín took place in Guayaquil. Bolívar convinced San Martín and other leaders to establish the Republic of Greater Colombia. It included what are today Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Panama. The Republic of Greater Colombia did not last very long. Ecuador pulled out of the republic and adopted its own constitution on September 23, 1830. In the last part of the 19th century, the country flourished economically. This was mainly due to exports of cocoa. After World War II, Ecuador's economy prospered as a result of a different crop: bananas. The country experienced a period of peace from 1948 to 1960. During this time, Ecuador's leaders were democratically elected. The 1980s were hard years for Ecuador. The collapse of world oil prices in 1986 reduced Ecuador's oil export revenues tremendously. An earthquake in March 1987 wrecked a long section of Ecuador's oil pipeline. In the fall of 2002, voters went to the polls to elect a new president. After the first wave of balloting, two candidates advanced to a runoff election. By a sizable margin, Ecuadorian voters chose Lucio Gutiérrez, a former army colonel. Ecuadorians hoped he could offer solutions to their country's lingering economic problems and help sustain its fragile democracy. (Copyright applies to all Abstracts)

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Chapter 2: Incas, Independence, and Oil

THE REGION THAT IS now Ecuador has been inhabited for at least 5,000 years. Archaeologists believe that at one time at least 50 different tribes of Native Americans lived along the coast, in the Sierra, and in the Amazon rain forest. These tribes were often at war. This left them vulnerable to conquest from outside groups. In the 15th century A.D., that is exactly what happened. The Ecuadorian tribes were conquered by

the Inca, a powerful group of Native Americans from the highlands in present-day Peru. They added Ecuador to their huge empire.

The Incas ruled Ecuador for approximately 100 years. Their civilization was very advanced. They built great cities, temples, and pyramids throughout Ecuador. The height of their rule was in the late 15th century. At that point, the Incas controlled over 12 million people and 350,000 square miles (900,000 sq km) of land. They collected taxes, built roads and bridges, and practiced a formal religion. Their way of life came to an end after the 1530s when the Spanish, led by the famed conquistador Francisco Pizarro, conquered them. By 1572 the Incan Empire was completely destroyed.

[The Colonial Period](#)

After Pizarro conquered the Incas, Ecuador became a colony of Spain. It remained under Spanish rule for almost three centuries. Scholars, geographers, and mathematicians came to Ecuador to study and work in the New World. Two such men were Charles Marie de la Condamine, a French geographer and mathematician, and Alexander von Humboldt, a German geographer.

The Spanish set up large plantations and began growing a variety of crops. They forced the Native Americans to work on these plantations. They soon needed more workers and began importing black slaves from Africa to work the fields, too.

Around the turn of the 19th century, a mestizo named Eugenio Espejo was preaching revolution and independence. Espejo founded the country's first newspaper, *Primicias de la Cultura de Quito*. He is considered one of Ecuador's national heroes.

Espejo's ideas soon caught on. Other colonies in South America wanted independence from Spain, too. A Venezuelan leader, Simón Bolívar, successfully fought the Spanish and gained independence for Ecuador and other neighboring areas.

On July 24, 1822, a historic meeting between Bolívar and Argentinean rebel leader José de San Martín took place in Guayaquil. Bolívar convinced San Martín and other leaders to establish the Republic of Greater (Gran) Colombia. It included what are today Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Panama. Simón Bolívar was the republic's first president.

[The Republic of Ecuador](#)

The Republic of Greater Colombia did not last very long. The different regions soon began arguing. Ecuador pulled out of the republic and adopted its own constitution on September 23, 1830. This was also the year that Simón Bolívar died. He was only 47 years old. Ecuadorans mourned his death greatly.

The first years of the Republic of Ecuador were marked by power struggles and constant change. The first president was General Juan José Flores. He used the military to maintain his power. After he was overthrown in 1845, Ecuador experienced years of turmoil.

José María Urbina eventually became president in 1851. He was from the city of Guayaquil and represented business owners there who wanted to gain power at the expense of longtime landowners in the Sierra. These business owners formed a political group known as the Liberals. Urbina abolished slavery in 1852.

By 1859 Ecuador was almost falling apart. Some areas were in rebellion, and troops from Peru had invaded. In 1861 Gabriel García Moreno united the country and defeated the Peruvians. He would rule Ecuador for years. Moreno, who belonged to a political faction known as the Conservatives, favored the white ruling classes and increased the power of the Catholic Church. Although he was a dictator, Moreno improved education and transportation in Ecuador. He was assassinated in 1875.

In the last part of the 19th century, the country flourished economically. This was mainly due to exports of cocoa, which is made from cacao beans. During this time, the government changed every few years. It continued to be unstable throughout the early 20th century. The Liberals and Conservatives were constantly fighting for power. Although some presidents were legally elected, others gained power through coups d'etat. During the 1920s and 1930s, life in Ecuador took a turn for the worse when the cocoa trade fell on hard times.

Modern Ecuador

After World War II, Ecuador's economy prospered as a result of a different crop: bananas. The country experienced a period of peace from 1948 to 1960. During this time, Ecuador's leaders were democratically elected. This period of stable democracy ended along with the banana boom in the early 1960s. A military junta led the country from 1963 to 1966. Presidential elections were held in 1968, and longtime politician José María Velasco Ibarra was elected for the fifth time. But by 1972, the commander-in-chief of the army, General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara, had removed Velasco from office.

The 1970s saw a return to economic prosperity. Ecuador became a major exporter of oil. Still, the government remained unstable. Other members of the military forced Rodríguez Lara to resign in 1976. Ecuador struggled to return to democracy.

The 1980s were hard years for Ecuador. The collapse of world oil prices in 1986 reduced Ecuador's oil export revenues tremendously. An earthquake in March 1987 wrecked a long section of Ecuador's oil pipeline. It seemed the economy and Mother Nature were working against Ecuador.

Throughout the 1990s, Ecuador suffered from corruption and incompetence in government. Sixto Duran, president from 1992 to 1996, lost the presidency after a corruption scandal. In 1996 Abdalá Bucaram was inaugurated. He spent only a short time in office. A general strike turned into a national protest in February 1997. It won the support of organized labor, business and professional organizations, and most of the Ecuadorian people. Congress declared Bucaram to be "loco," which means mentally unstable, and removed him from office.

Beginning in 1995, Ecuador began fighting with Peru over a border dispute dating back to colonial times. On October 26, 1998, the conflict finally ended when the president of Ecuador, Jamil Mahuad, and the president of Peru, Alberto Fujimori, signed the Peace Agreements of Brasilia.

The economic situation in Ecuador grew dramatically worse in the late 1990s. Oil prices dropped. A particularly strong El Niño caused heavy rains and coastal flooding that killed nearly 200 people. To make matters worse, the national currency, the sucre, fell to an all-time low. On January 9, 2000, President Mahuad announced a radical plan to help the economy. He changed the legal currency of Ecuador from the sucre to the U.S. dollar, a process he called "dollarization." Over a six-month transition period, Ecuadorans traded in their sucres for U.S. dollars at a rate of 25,000 sucres per dollar.

The "dollarization" program angered many people, as did corruption in Mahuad's administration. On January 21, 2000, indigenous Ecuadorans, supported by the military, forced Mahuad out of office. Vice President Gustavo Bejarano Noboa was sworn in as president.

In September 2001, Luis Maldonado was sworn in as minister of social welfare. Maldonado became the first Ecuadorian Indian to hold a cabinet post not dealing solely with the affairs of native people.

Ecuador was forced to declare a national emergency in March 2002. Winter storms raged for over a month, dumping heavy rains upon the nation. Thirteen people were killed and

the storms caused millions of dollars in property damage. The areas hardest hit by the winter storms were the coastal provinces of Esmeraldas, Guayas, Manabi, El Oro, and Los Rios. In the mountains, Bolívar and Cotopaxi were also hit hard.

In the fall of 2002, voters went to the polls to elect a new president. After the first wave of balloting, two candidates advanced to a runoff election. By a sizable margin, Ecuadorian voters chose Lucio Gutiérrez, a former army colonel. Ecuadorans hoped he could offer solutions to their country's lingering economic problems and help sustain its fragile democracy.

PHOTOS (COLOR): (Opposite) The Inca ruins of Ingapirca are located near Cuenca. They are the only Inca ruins in Ecuador. (Right) A man buys dollars from a street money changer in downtown Quito, January 2000. The "dollarization" plan was intended to stop rampant inflation that had led to the devaluation of the national currency of Ecuador.

PHOTO (COLOR): Simón Bolívar (1783-1830) is one of the most famous figures in South America's history. Under the general's leadership, Ecuador and other parts of South America were freed from Spanish control. Bolívar was the first president of the Republic of Greater Colombia, which included Ecuador from 1822 to 1830.

PHOTO (COLOR): Farmers hold up placards during a 1968 protest march in Quito. The farmers were angry about the death of rural workers at the hands of police.

PHOTO (COLOR): Gustavo Bejarano Noboa became president in 2000, after a coup toppled unpopular president Jamil Mahuad from office.

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By Colleen Madonna

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Source: Ecuador