

## Chapter 11: Towards an Uncertain Future

Chapter Eleven considers some of the critical questions that confront the Latin American future, including weak but functioning electoral systems, high levels of popular mobilization, a rejuvenated left, increasingly vociferous indigenous rights groups, and a global context in which commodity exports from Latin America represent a fundamentally important source of economic well being. Drawing inspiration from Albert Hirshman's *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, the chapter begins with a consideration of the final breakdown of the authoritarian yet inclusive era of Import Substitution Industrialism by looking at the effects of Mexico's 1985 earthquake, and concludes with an analysis of the Left Turn in the context of the commodities boom of the early 2000s.

The documents for this chapter are drawn from the Lago Agrio case, a lawsuit filed by a group of Ecuadoran indigenous activists against Texaco (and later Chevron) over the environmental damage done by the American oil company in the Amazon between the 1960s and 1990s. In the past several years there have been significant rulings in this case in both US Federal Courts and a courtroom in rural Ecuador. The rulings offer sharply divergent views of the legal process and the underlying facts, and speak to ongoing struggles over the reach of both the US courts and multinational corporations.

### Questions to Consider when Reading the Documents

Having read the documents, where do your sympathies lie, and why?

Where do you see the lines between rhetoric and substance here?

Does one legal setting seem somehow more fair than the other? Why?

What are the principle challenges we face in trying to glean a sense of the world through court rulings and other legal filings?