Republic leading up to the 1998 presidential elections. His platform emphasized his desire to end corruption, return oil to state control, and eliminate poverty (Marcano and Tyszka 2004, p. 31). This platform earned him political victory in 1998 with 56 percent of the vote, in 2000 with 60.3 percent, and in 2006 with 63 percent (Canache 2002, p. 69; Marcano and Tyszka 2004, p. 31; Political Database of the Americas). Chávez's popularity has grown since he shifted from the military to the political stage.

Chávez's mass appeal remains debatable. Scholars and journalists attribute his success to his emphasis on the country's poor through health and education programs (Canache 2002, p. 70; Fukuyama 2007, p. A18). Francis Fukuyama writes that Chávez maintains local appeal because of his social agenda, in which he “has opened clinics staffed with Cuban doctors in poor barrios throughout Venezuela” (2007, p. A18). The rise in oil prices on the world markets has allowed the government to increase social spending despite the country's external debt (Guevara 2005, p. 36).

However, critics argue that the statistics contradict the myth. Francisco Rodríguez argues that social spending in Venezuela decreased from 31.5 percent prior to Chávez's administration to 29.3 percent by 2004. The reduction of illiteracy dropped slightly, from 1.1 million before Chávez became president to 1.0 million illiterate Venezuelans over the age of fifteen during his tenure (Rodríguez 2007, p. 2). The percentage of poor families increased from 42 percent in 1999 to 60 percent in 2004, and unemployment levels reached 15 percent in both 1999 and 2004 (Marcano and Tyszka 2004, p. 390). Instead, Chávez's popularity is based on the country's double-digit economic growth, according to Rodríguez.

Chávez's opponents have threatened his grasp on power. In April 2002 rebel military officers staged a failed coup, which some Venezuelan officials believe was backed by the U.S. government (Morsbach 2006). Two years later, the opposition conducted a failed recall referendum, in which 59 percent of Venezuelans voted to allow Chávez to complete the remainder of his term (BBC News 2004).

As of 2007, Venezuela's economy remained stable while a large number of Venezuelans lived in deep poverty. Nevertheless, Chávez's support surpassed that of his critics.

SEE ALSO Coup d’État; Left Wing; Nationalization; Petroleum Industry; Populism; Poverty; Social Movements; Socialism

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Sarita D. Jackson

CHECKS AND BALANCES

Although scholars dispute the precise origin of the phrase checks and balances, the basic idea of limiting political power through various institutional means is both ancient and modern. In the ancient worlds of the Greek city-state and the Roman Republic, a mixed constitution of the one, the few, and the many provided checks on governmental power, whether in the form of a monarchy (the rule of one), an aristocracy (the rule of the few), or a democracy (the rule of the many). This scheme of balancing and checking power, particularly as expressed in the works of Aristotle, Polybius, and Cicero, was a powerful influence in early modern Europe during the period of the Renaissance as expressed in the works of Niccolo Machiavelli, James Harrington, and Algernon Sydney. This ancient and Renaissance concept of a mixed constitution may also be found in the eighteenth-century works of Charles de Montesquieu, Francis Hutcheson, and William Blackstone. All of these works influenced the founders of the United States, notably John Adams, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson. The classic literary study of the political dynamics in this scheme is William Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar.

The modern concept of checks and balances derives primarily from a mechanical view of the universe made popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton, among others. For Alexander Hamilton, in Federalist No. 9, a concept of “legislative balances and checks” was among the modern
improvements in the science of politics. According to the modern view—as reflected in the United States Constitution—the legislative, executive, and judicial functions of government must check and balance each other in order to prevent any one branch of government from dominating the others. In the American scheme, for example, presidents may veto acts of Congress, but Congress has the power to override presidential vetoes by a two-thirds majority vote of both houses. Similarly, as established in the U.S. Supreme Court case of Marbury v. Madison (1803), federal judges may rule acts of Congress unconstitutional as occurred in the cases of City of Boerne v. Flores (1997) and Clinton v. City of New York (1998).

Checks and balances also refers often to issues of federalism, or the relationship between the national and state (or regional) governments. In the United States, for example, the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution grants “reserved” powers to the states. This has meant, according to the courts, the power of state governments in the United States to regulate health, safety, and morals. But the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, checks this power by asserting that no state may deny any person “life, liberty, or property, without due process of law,” nor may a state deny “equal protection of the laws.” In a number of recent cases, the U.S. Supreme Court has interpreted these constitutional provisions so as to limit state prerogatives in such areas as capital punishment, affirmative action, privacy rights, and voting rights. For some, checks and balances also refers to modifications in American political practice outside of formal constitutional change or judicial interpretation. Among these modifications are the rise of national political parties, the expansion of presidential power, the creation by Congress of independent regulatory agencies (such as the Environmental Protection Agency), and changing technologies, particularly as these technologies make possible the more rapid exchange of information, such as through widespread access to the World Wide Web.

SEE ALSO Aristocracy; Constitution, U.S.; Democracy; Machiavelli, Niccolò; Monarchy; Separation of Powers

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Timothy Hoye

CHERNOBYL

SEE Disaster Management; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

CHEROKEES

The Cherokees have been one of the most historically significant indigenous cultural groups in the southeastern United States. There were three federally recognized Cherokee Indian nations at the beginning of the twenty-first century: the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) in North Carolina, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and the United Keetoowah Band in Oklahoma. In addition, more than fifty other organizations in at least twelve states, as well as many individuals, claim Cherokee descent. The question of who is legitimately Cherokee and how many individual Cherokee Indians exist in America is a point of contention, and the distinction between individual claims to cultural or biological identity, on the one hand, and legal membership or citizenship in federally recognized tribes or sovereign tribal nations, on the other, is an important one.

Other issues facing Cherokee communities in the early twenty-first century include development and refinement of mechanisms for self-governance, political factionalism, increased economic development of tribal communities (including gaming, tourism, and natural resource management on tribal lands), cultural preservation, and the implementation of tribal programs and services for media, education, health, mental health, and social services. Like many other Native American communities, the Cherokees face high rates of drug and alcohol dependency, suicide, and health issues such as diabetes, and communities are particularly concerned about their at-risk youth.

Cherokees and their ancestral culture, believed to be related to the Iroquois, have lived in the southeastern region for at least 12,000 years. Lands once occupied by the Cherokees—before European contact in the 1500s and then forced removal in the 1830s to Oklahoma—encompassed parts of what are now nine states, including most of the Southern Appalachian mountain and foothill region. From original lands that covered 250,000 square miles, the Eastern Band maintained its culture on approximately 56,000 acres in western North Carolina as of 2007; the tribal assets of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma include about 66,000 acres.

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