

sional feathers,” Starr says, and have so often voiced contradictory opinions that they have been dubbed “the Montessori cabinet.”

The Fox administration has had “little legislatively to crow about.” Its top priority in its first year was a bill to increase the autonomy of indigenous people, intended to bring the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas to the peace table. Opposed by Fox’s own party and festooned with amendments, the law failed to achieve its underlying purpose.

The relationship between Fox and his own party’s leaders has never been easy. As a candidate he built his own campaign organization, appealed to voters directly, and forced his candidacy on the party. As president, he “named a

cabinet virtually devoid of traditional PAN politicians.”

The long-ruling PRI holds a majority in the Senate, the largest plurality in the Chamber of Deputies, and more than half the nation’s governorships. Although the party “lost its bearings” when it lost the presidency, Fox needed the PRI’s help to do much legislatively. But the opposition party was in no shape to negotiate—at least not until Roberto Madrazo was elected president of the party this year.

The PRI remains intent upon regaining power, and Starr sees “a growing likelihood” that the still largely unreconstructed party will succeed, retaking full control of the national legislature next year and the presidency in 2006.

## *India’s New Federalism*

“New Dimensions of Indian Democracy” by Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, and “India’s Multiple Revolutions” by Sumit Ganguly, in *Journal of Democracy* (Jan. 2002), 1101 15th St., N.W., Ste. 800, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Despite violent flare-ups of religious intolerance and political corruption scandals, the world’s largest democracy has lately proven resilient, these authors point out. India is becoming a more “federal” republic, as political and economic power shifts from the national government to regions and the 28 states.

Ever since 1989, when the long-ruling Indian National Congress party lost its parliamentary majority, India has been ruled by coalition governments, a trend that is likely to continue, says Ganguly, a professor of Asian studies and government at the University of Texas at Austin. “A national party—typically Congress or the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]—is at the core, with regional parties acting as crucial makeweights in a fragile multilateral marriage of political convenience.”

In the case of the BJP, which is the core of the current coalition, the necessity of relying on smaller, regional, caste-based and interest-based parties has forced it to curb its extremism, note the Rudolphs, who are political scientists at the University of Chicago. “Key coalition partners, especially secular state parties from south India, care little for anti-Muslim ‘communalism.’”

Accentuating that moderating trend is the veritable social revolution of recent decades.

Lower-caste Indians, acutely distrustful of the BJP and its Hindu nationalist agenda, have discovered the power of the ballot box. “Political power in the states, and to a significant extent at the center,” write the Rudolphs, “has moved from the hands of the so-called twice-born upper castes into the hands of lower-caste groups,” who make up about two-thirds of the population.

Indeed, the lower castes’ rise in status has been so rapid that it “seems to have palliated much discontent with the relatively slow pace of economic growth,” they observe.

The antistatist economic reforms begun in the early 1990s under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh now appear irreversible, says Ganguly. The Indian economy, which enjoyed an average annual growth rate of six percent over the last 10 years, is “far more competitive today.” And poverty has decreased.

A decade after the turn toward economic liberalization, note the Rudolphs, newspapers and magazines in India focus not on the bureaucrats and experts of the command economy and “permit-license raj” of yore, but on the chief ministers of various states who “are traveling the world to meet with business leaders, woo investors, and [talk up the prospects] of Kerala, Karnataka, or Tamil Nadu.”