

television coverage was superficial. Gore lost because of his own failings, not the limitations of his office. He did not make good use of his advantages, particularly the economic successes of the Clinton presidency. Dover himself seems to agree: “Gore needed to link his promises for the prosperous future with the successful policy record. . . . Instead, he all too often spoke as if he were simply another Democratic congressman running for president” (p. 179).

Beyond these valuable perspectives, the book’s quality is severely damaged by its information overload, a numbing accumulation of excessive detail. Dover lengthily repeats academic studies of such topics as the evolution of the vice presidency, largely relying on a single source. Most of the book consists of summaries of television broadcasts, virtually day-by-day, repetitiously recounting television’s emphasis on polls and personal combat and annoyingly repeating the correspondents’ first names in every paragraph. These media reports could be easily summarized in as little space as one table on the content of the broadcasts and one graph of trends in voter preferences. Although the chapters abound in statistical reports, there is not a single table or chart in the entire book. Recounting the election of 2000 is painful, if necessary. Living through its television coverage was agony. But repeating the trivialities of broadcasts and polls is cruel and unnecessary punishment.

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**Rethinking Democratic Accountability** by Robert D. Behn. *Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2001. 317 pp. Cloth, \$44.95; paper, \$18.95.*

This book takes an in-depth look at the issue of democratic accountability. The book goes through various understandings of the term “accountability” from its traditional definition in public administration to the present day usage in the new public management paradigm. The author declares that an individual is either a “holder of accountability or accountable holdee.” These terms are then transcribed into the definition of accountability as Behn defines it to be focused in three areas: finances, fairness, and performance. Behn openly states his thesis that the traditional public administration paradigm places too much emphasis on finances and fairness, and not enough on performance. There is more emphasis on rules than results; consequently what is meant by democratic accountability must be reexamined.

Behn begins the book by briefly defining the three terms of accountability: financial accountability, which may be dictated or implied by law, regulations, or agreement; accountability for fairness, when government organizations are held accountable to the norms of democratic governance through a fairness procedure by applying rules with fairness and equity; and accountability for performance, which involves fulfilling expectations of the citizens in a satisfactory manner and being accountable to the entire citizenry. However, the au-

thor adds a fourth dimension: accountability for personal probity, because he believes that the accountability for finances, fairness, and performance are not enough. While the traditional public administration paradigm emphasized efficiency, hierarchical authority, professional accountability institutions, and competition, the emergence of the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm has brought a greater emphasis on accountability of performance and cooperation.

In Chapter Two, Behn examines the notion of NPM's impact on the public administration field. He discusses the history of public administration as a discipline and how people like Woodrow Wilson saw a separation between politics (meaning policy making) and administration could prevent personal favoritism and patronage from meddling in administrative decisions about personnel, procurement, finance, and service delivery. Behn also contends that the new public management paradigm is in direct response to the inadequacies of traditional public administration, especially the performance sector. Consequently, the new public management is designed to improve performance and produce results.

Chapter 4 raises four questions. The first is who decides what results are to be produced? In answer, the author recognizes that while civil servants are not supposed to make policy, they nevertheless do. He believes that although in the traditional public administration, this role of civil servants is not recognized, the new public management does think seriously about the relationship between the effectiveness of the management strategy and the need for democratic accountability. The time has come to recognize the policy role for civil servants while preserving the requirements for democratic accountability. The second question relates to who is accountable for producing results? Behn's view is that instead of blaming any individual, one should consider the failures of performance as a collective failure of everyone, including those superior officers and managers who were supposed to provide the necessary cooperation, collaboration and resources. From Behn's perspective, a failure in performance to produce the results expected by citizens is collective. The third question raised is about who is responsible for implementing the accountability process. Behn reminds us that in a traditional public administration system, there is a hierarchical chain of accountability from civil servants to political appointees to elected officials to the electorate. However, this does not occur systematically, since individuals are unable to devote time to comprehensive oversight. Consequently, this further supports Behn's contention that civil servants end up making policy decisions. He notes, for example, that members of Congress in the United States spend little attention, time, and energy on oversight duties and leave it up to the civil servants. The fourth question is how will that accountability process work. Behn notes that elected officials are supposed to perform the oversight role in implementing policy, although this does not occur in practice; the accountability process works primarily out of the constitutional framework that fails to incorporate the broad interests of all the citizens.

Chapter 11 effectively ties in the main argument of this book by revisiting the issue of democratic accountability. The concept of “360-degree performance feedback” means that people are not merely evaluated by their hierarchical superior; rather, they are evaluated by their subordinates, peers, and people with whom they have worked. “360-degree feedback” is about performance and improving performance. It gives leaders a picture of what they need to do to improve organizational performance for effective team and individual performance. Consequently, the author expects that the 360-degree feedback will result in 360-degree (that is, complete and full) accountability.

Overall, the book presents a sophisticated and insightful discussion of improving performance and accountability by challenging those who are the managers of the public sector. It also deals with differences between the traditional public administration and new public management paradigms, and offers an incisive analysis of the flaws of the traditional school. Behn makes a powerful claim that accountability of performance will increase collective responsibility. However, if he could have offered some personal insights and examples from various countries this book would have been an invaluable addition to the literature of comparative public policy and administration. The book does provide thoughtful discussion of the problems with current public service accountability practices and suggests ways and means to bring improvements in the new public management paradigm. In sum, the main merit of this book lies in presenting a coherent account of democratic accountability. It is well written and ought to be assigned to public administration students, though mostly for senior undergraduates and graduates. More importantly, Behn succeeds in his mission of provoking the reader to think seriously about the fundamental issue of democratic accountability, rather than remaining obsessed with the procedural and financial domains of public accountability. Finally, this book will be equally useful for leaders of business seeking to understand the changes sweeping the world of public sector management.

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**Gun Violence in America: The Struggle for Control** by Alexander DeConde. Boston, Northeastern University Press, 2001. 394 pp. \$29.95.

Three decades ago, the political historian Richard Hofstadter famously observed that the United States was the quintessential “gun culture,” clinging with “pathetic stubbornness” to outdated laws that helped criminals and terrorists, rather than enacting tough firearms-control policies as other Western nations had. Ironically, polls conducted before and since have consistently found that most Americans are deeply concerned about gun violence and favor stricter firearms laws. Yet, not much has been written about what Alexander DeConde