

# PART I

## COMPLEX CHALLENGES

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A common theme among those who study accountability mechanisms is the challenges and dilemmas these mechanisms pose for those seeking fulfillment of this promising approach to problems of governance. Accountability mechanisms can be viewed as a collection of tools sharing a common characteristic: they all rely on the use of account-giving relationships to achieve some central objectives of governance. In theory, the major task of accountability is to construct and operationalize a governance system using the appropriate mechanisms found in the accountability toolbox.

Several views of accountability challenges were presented at the Kettering-sponsored sessions. The multiple-accountabilities challenge was initially raised by Romzek and Dubnick in their 1987 examination of the diverse and conflicting expectations that emerged from several major institutional sources (i.e., legal, professional, bureaucratic, and political). In the first chapter Thomas Schillemans and Mark Bovens further elaborate on the multiple-accountability challenge by analyzing five Dutch cases. While finding that such conditions can be dysfunctional in a variety of ways, the authors also recognize the positive aspects of redundancies generated by these seemingly adverse conditions. Perhaps we have more to lose than gain by attempting to resolve the dilemmas posed by the multiplicity of expectations we have for these mechanisms.

Barbara Romzek's study of accountability in the expanding arena of outsourced and networked social services highlights the contemporary challenges of efforts to construct and sustain an effective system of accountable governance in a public sector where multiple and diverse expectations emerge from a "tangled web" of contractual and networked relationships. Central to her study is the greatly expanded role of contracting, a factor that is even more markedly problematic in the complex environment described by Trevor Brown, Matthew Potoski, and David Van Slyke in their study of the Coast Guard's Project Deepwater procurement process. While the source of complexity in the social services area is rooted in the relationships among the parties involved, it is the very nature of the "product" (or service) involved in the procurement process that generates the accountability challenges for Deepwater. Both studies help us better understand why the problem of multiple accountabilities in government proves such an elusive objective in a wide range of programs.

While multiple accountabilities pose a challenging context for those engaged in governance, not all demands for accountability are equal weight. Those linked to major regime values are perhaps the most problematic, especially when they are incompatible and create fundamental dilemmas for those being held to account. The tradeoffs between efficiency and equality in both the design and implementation of public policies and programs have been a concern in the United States where both are perceived as core values in historical waves of administrative reform. A similar dilemma faces those who administer the increasingly significant number of global governance

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organizations (GCOs) that are the focus of Jonathan Koppel's contribution to this volume. Some of these agencies (e.g., the Universal Postal Union) have been in existence for more than a century; others (e.g., ICANN) are less than two decades old. What they have in common is that today they operate within an international regime that puts a premium on both effectiveness and democratic responsiveness. The challenge of multiple accountabilities in this context requires strategic choices in order to deal with the inherent dilemma emerging from the demands for simultaneous achieving authority and legitimacy in an increasingly dynamic global setting.