

# GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY & PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

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A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in a teal color, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

# Presentation Outline

- ◆ What do we mean by accountability?
  - ◆ Challenges to parliament's supremacy in overseeing government
  - ◆ Opportunities for Parliaments
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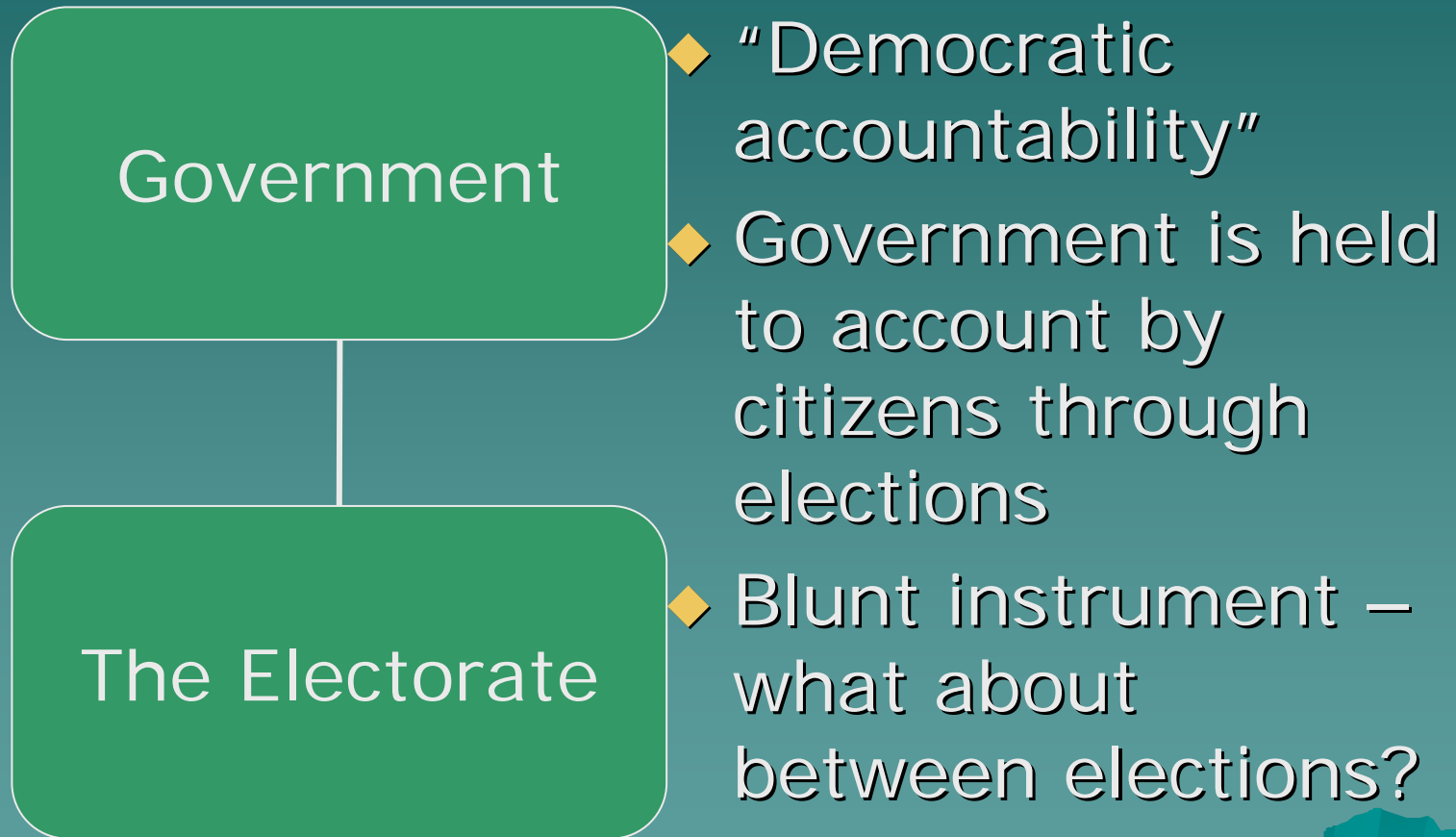
# Accountability - Origins

- ◆ In 1085, William I required all property holders in his kingdom to render *a count* of what they possessed (the "Domesday Books").
- ◆ By the 12th. Century, this notion of giving an account (and simultaneously swearing allegiance to the king) had evolved into a highly centralized administrative kingship that ruled through centralized auditing and account giving".
- ◆ Since then, the accounting relationship has reversed; no longer sovereigns holding their subjects to account, but rather the authorities themselves who are being held accountable by their citizens.

# Accountability – What does it mean?

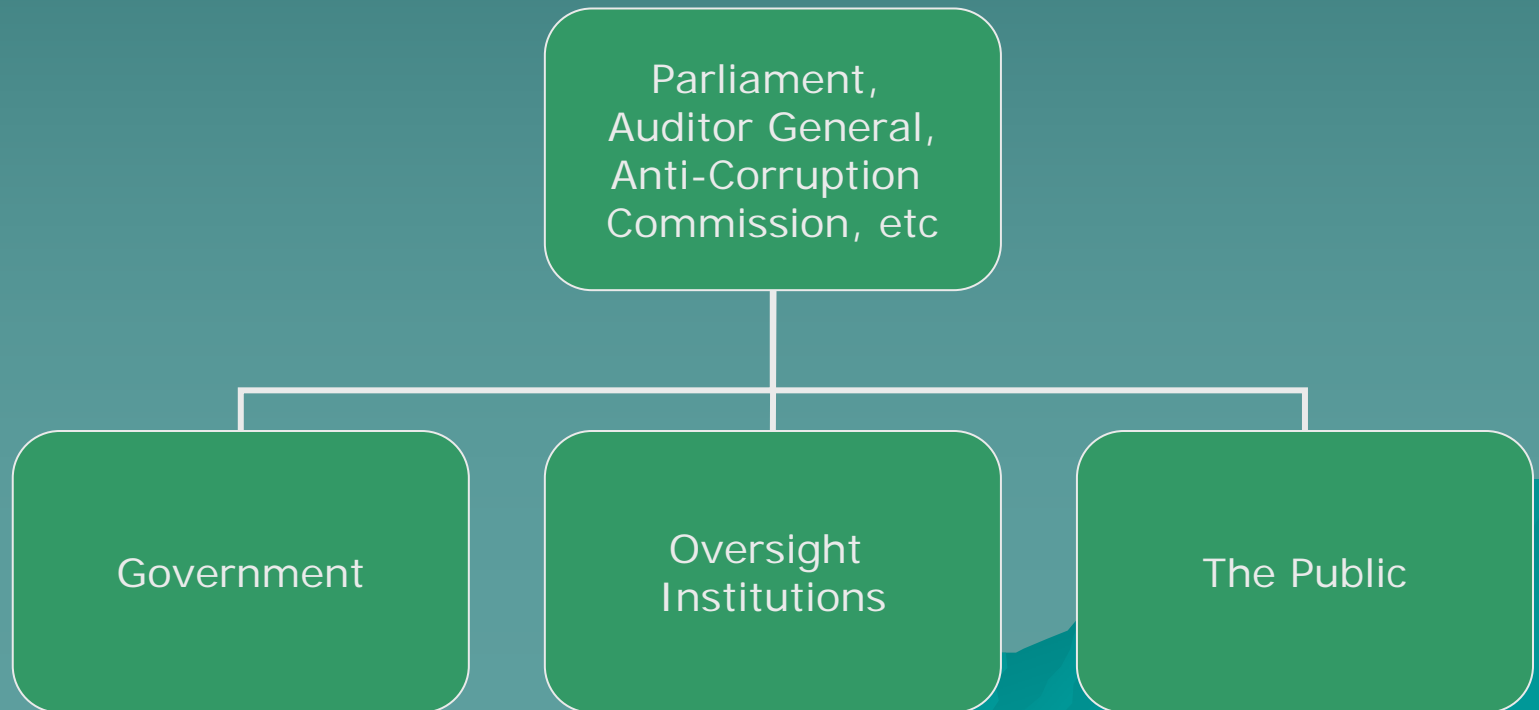
- ◆ Core concept : “...a relationship in which a person or institution feels an obligation to explain and justify his/her/its actions to some significant other.” It is based on a mutual understanding of rewards & sanctions and the conditions under which they will applied.”
- ◆ Implies the right of superior authority of the accountee over the accountant, the right to demand answers and to impose sanctions

# Two Types of Accountability – 1 “Vertical”



# Two Types of Accountability – 2 “Horizontal”

- ◆ State institutions which are charged to oversee government
- ◆ Problem : many of these institutions do not work well



# Parliamentary Oversight

- ◆ Executive selected by legislature
- ◆ Notion of “confidence” in executive as a whole and in ministers
- ◆ Cabinet is collegial; acts collectively
- ◆ Concept of “ministerial accountability”

# “Traditional” Parliamentary Oversight Tools

- ◆ Vote of confidence
- ◆ Question Time
- ◆ Public Accounts Committees



# “New” Parliamentary Oversight Tools

- ◆ Committees
- ◆ Ombuds
- ◆ Confirmation of some appointments

# Congressional Oversight

- ◆ Separation of powers
- ◆ Executive chosen by voters
- ◆ Cabinet is advisory, appointed by Executive

# “Traditional” Congressional Oversight Tools

- ◆ Strong committees
- ◆ Confirmation of appointments
- ◆ Impeachment
- ◆ Special inquiries

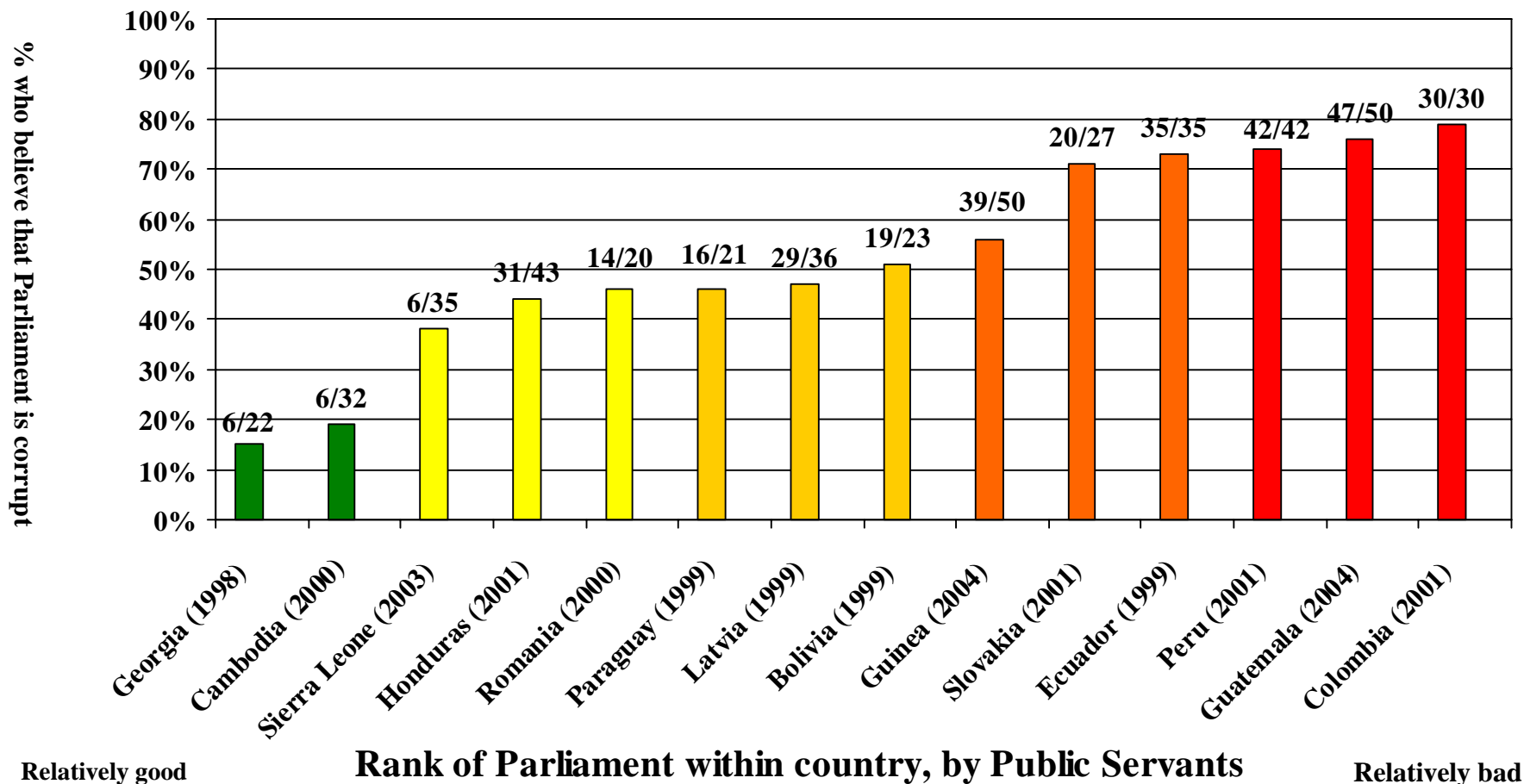
# Dilemma for Parliaments

- ◆ As the world democratizes, citizens are demanding more accountability from government
- ◆ “Vertical accountability” isn’t working – electoral fraud; political corruption
- ◆ “Horizontal accountability” isn’t working – state institutions are “captured” by elites or starved for resources
- ◆ Parliaments are being sidelined, as both governments and civil society seek to develop alternative accountability mechanisms

# Dilemma for Parliaments (2)

- ◆ Governments often ignore parliament (“Executive domination”)
- ◆ Citizens distrust politicians
- ◆ To whom is Parliament accountable to?

# Parliaments: Misgoverned or Honest Institutions?



Source: WBI diagnostics and survey data; various countries; 1998-2004. Paraguay figure comes from the first governance diagnostic 1999. <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/>

Note: The chart shows percentage of respondents reporting that Parliament is dishonest institution. The number at the top of each bar reflects the ranking of Parliament relative to other government institutions.

# New accountability mechanisms

- ◆ Citizen scorecards ("PAC")
- ◆ Citizen budget tracking exercises
- ◆ Citizen's charters
- ◆ Special Agencies
- ◆ Industry regulatory bodies
- ◆ etc., etc.

# But risk also yields opportunities

- ◆ **Vertical accountability.**
- Uganda, British Columbia have recall mechanisms
- Many parliaments have instituted codes of ethics + codes of conduct, to regain public trust (UK, Australia, others)
- Other parliaments are “opening up” parliamentary procedures, in an effort to make parliament itself more accountable



# But risk also yields opportunities (2)

## ◆ **Horizontal accountability.**

- Some parliaments are ensuring that oversight institutions are independent of government
- Many are strengthening their committee systems (Australia, UK)
- Others are opening up committee hearings & actively seek input from civil society groups (Gautang)
- Re-invigorating parliamentary oversight of the budget (Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria)

# Two Questions to You

- ◆ Are you facing some of the challenges that I have just mentioned?
- ◆ Are you implementing parliamentary reforms to make your parliament “the main game?”