

Distribution of Power

SS7CG4 The student will compare and contrast various forms of government.

a. Describe the ways government systems distribute power: unitary, confederation, and federal.

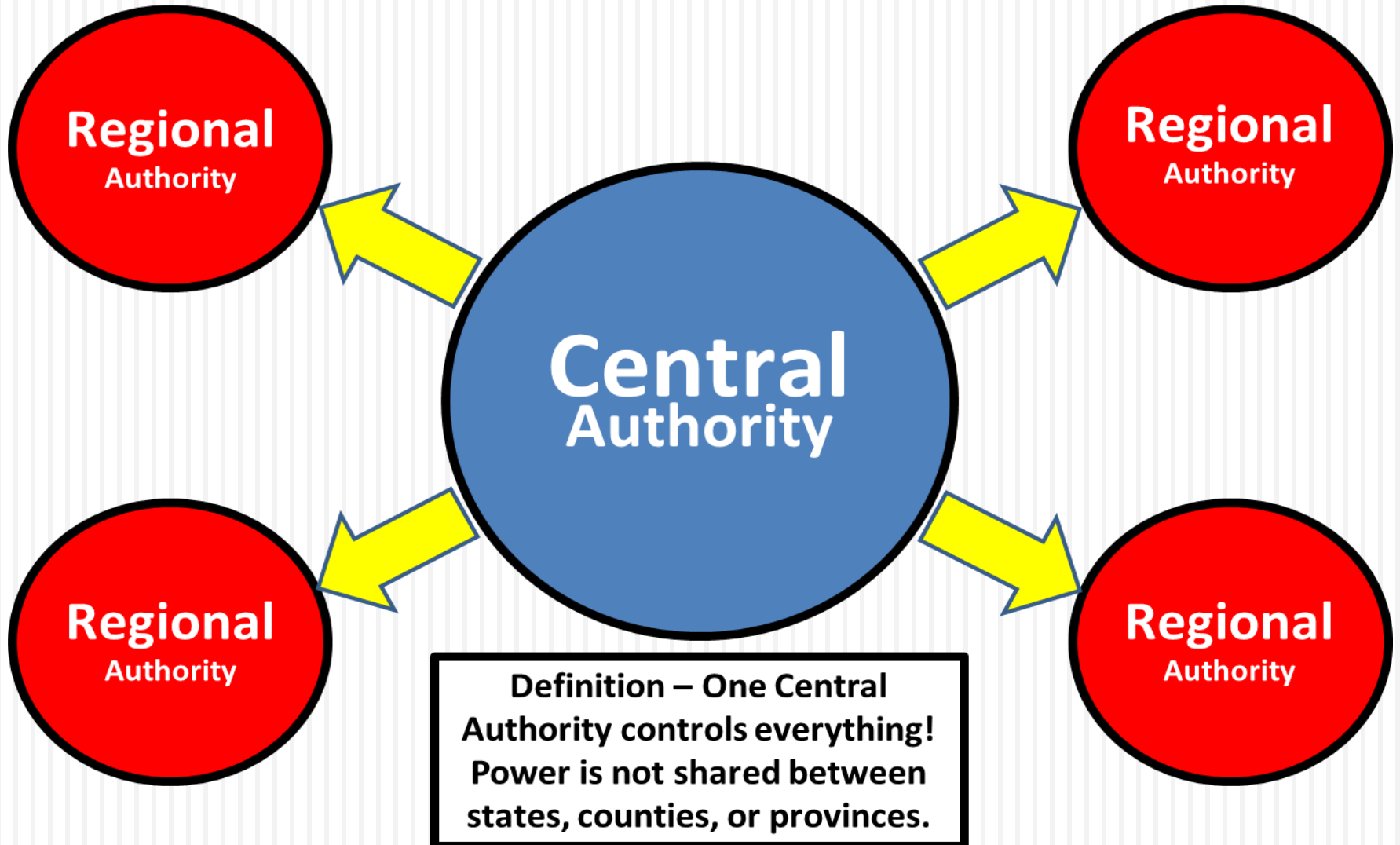
What is a Government System?

- Every country has a government that is set up in its own distinct way
- One thing that a country has to decide on is how to organize its government and distribute power
- There are 3 main ways governments spread their power:
 - ❖ Unitary
 - ❖ Confederation
 - ❖ Federal

Unitary Government

- Central government operates all levels of government in the country
- Assigns power to state & local government
 - ❖ Ex) leader might have the power to choose the governor or mayor
 - ❖ Ex) can give power to a legislature allowing the state or local government to govern itself, then the central government could decide to dissolve legislature and control region directly

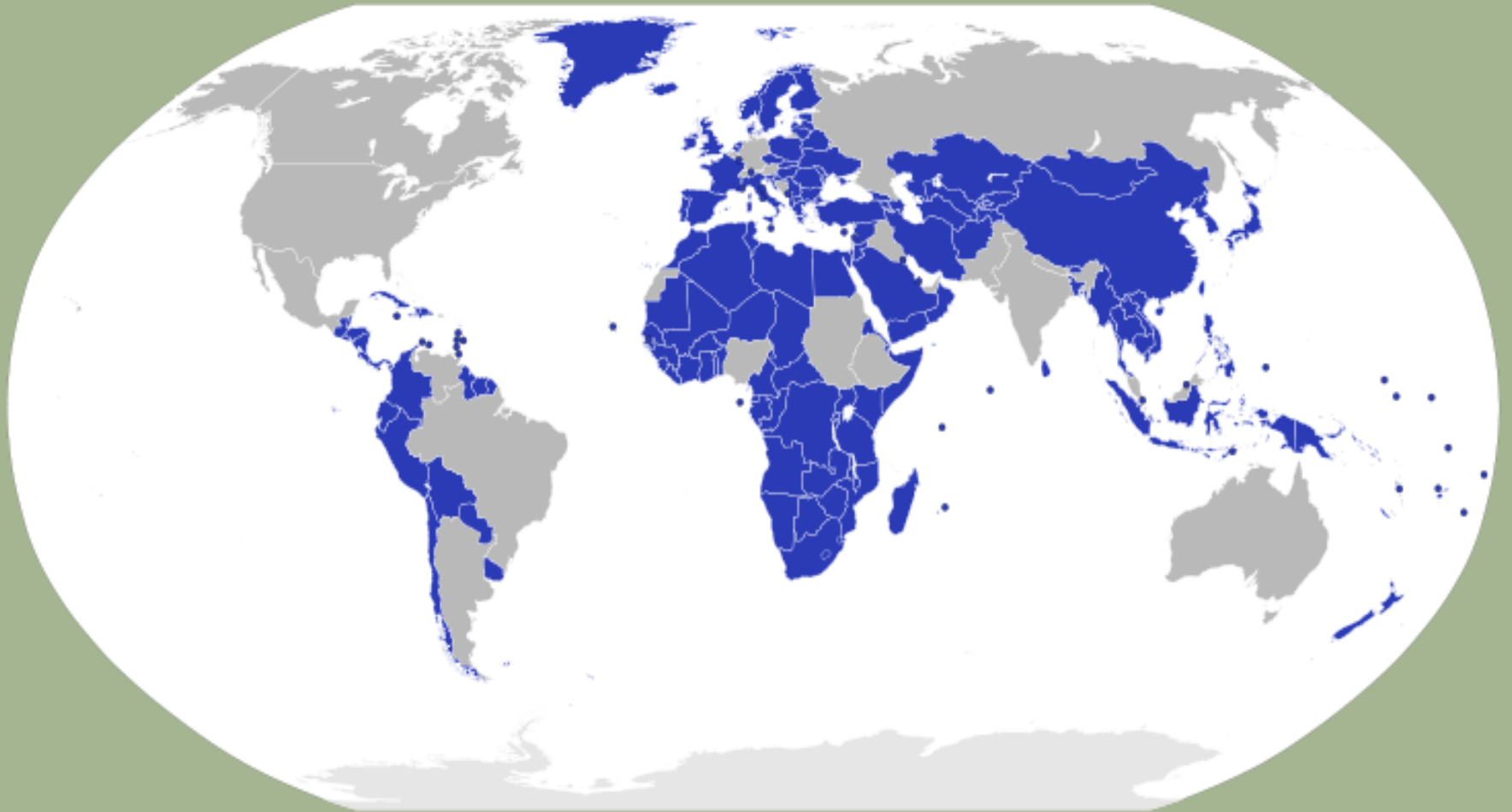
Unitary Government



Examples of Unitary Governments

- Many countries in the world are run this way
 - ❖ SW Asia – Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, etc.
- Unitary is not the structure of the US government: our Congress does not have the power to dissolve state legislatures or appoint governors

Unitary Governments of the World



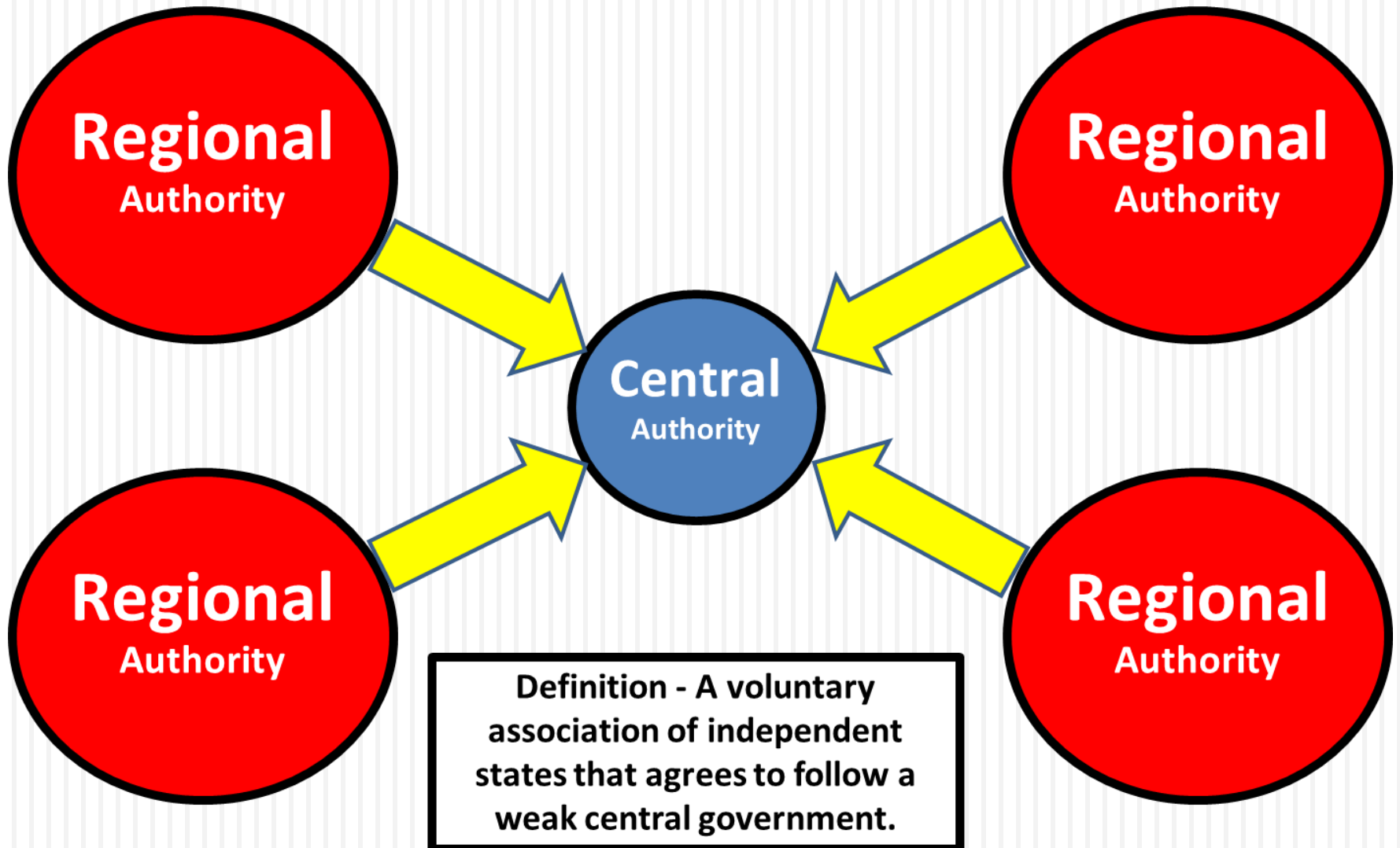
Questions to Consider...

- **Question – How is power distributed in a unitary government?**
 - ❖ Answer – A central government assigns power and duties to smaller units of government within the country
- **Question – True or False: In a unitary government, the national government could remove the governor of a state and pick a new one.**
 - ❖ Answer – True
- **Question – Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey – What do these countries have in common?**
 - ❖ Answer – All have unitary government systems

Confederation Governments

- Some countries agree that they would be better able to solve problems or provide help if they worked together
- They might sign a treaty or a constitution under which the countries agree to defend each other, trade with each other, use a common currency, etc.
 - ❖ This is called a confederation government
- Membership is usually voluntary & a country can decide to leave at any time

Confederation Governments



Confederation Governments

- Not commonly found among governments in the 21st century because there are several problems with them:
 - ❖ Often have little power because a high percentage of members must agree to decisions made
 - ❖ Individual countries can veto decisions
 - ❖ Changes in the constitution requires all members to agree
- Confederations generally have a weak central government

Examples of Confederation Governments

- US tried this type of government from 1777 to 1787
 - ❖ States considered themselves to be separate countries
 - ❖ Each had more power than the confederation government
 - ❖ Weak central government became a problem because Congress could not make decisions or laws because they had no power to enforce them
- Articles of Confederation was replaced by the Constitution, which set up a federal form of government

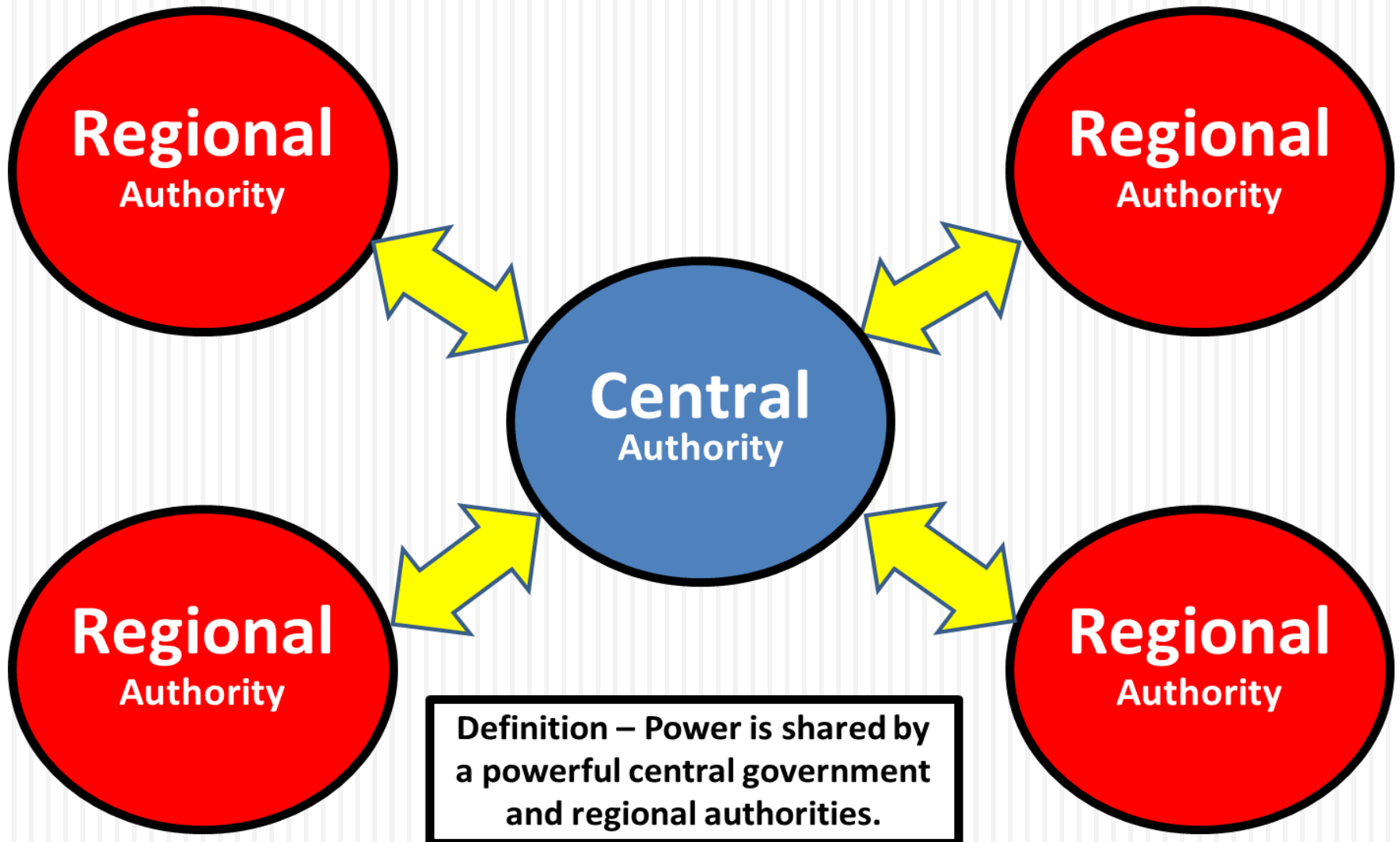
Questions to Consider...

- **Question – What is one problem with a confederation government?**
 - ❖ Answer – The central government can create laws but might not be able to enforce them
- **Question – In a confederation, government power lies with the**
 - ❖ Answer – Governments of the member countries/states

Federal Governments

- In a federal form of government, power is divided between a central government & small divisions, such as states
- A document (such as a constitution) may describe the rights, responsibilities, and duties of the central government & the states
- Central government can be powerful, but does not have the ability to dissolve states or choose state leaders

Federal Governments



Examples of Federal Governments

- Many countries use this form of distributing government power
- The United States is an example of a federal government system, where power is shared by the U.S. federal government and the individual state governments.
 - ❖ A federal system does not mean that there is more or less personal freedom for the people, it just explains how power is distributed

U.S. Federal Government

- The federal government has powers that the states do not, such as the power to declare war and sign treaties with other countries
- States have some powers that the federal government does not have, such as the power to choose the governor or to create new counties in the state

Questions to Consider...

- **Question – How does a federal system of government divide power?**
 - ❖ Answer – Between the central government and smaller units such as states
- **Question – What defines the rights, responsibilities, & duties of the central & state governments?**
 - ❖ Answer – A constitution