

# Geographic Regions and the Population Census

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# Partitioning

- A *partition* of national territory consists of two or more geographic units, defined by lines drawn on a map, which are *mutually exclusive* and which collectively cover the entire national territory
- National territory is *partitioned* in many different ways for many different purposes

# Politico-Administrative Partitioning

- Governments typically partition their territory into a hierarchy of units; this is *political geography*
- E.g., China is divided into 30 *provinces*, approximately 350 *prefectures*, 3,000 *county-level units*, and 30,000 *township-level units*
- Each level partitions the level beneath it; prefectures partition provinces, counties prefectures, and so on

# Political Geography and the Population Census

- The census is a government enterprise, carried out through and by local governments at various levels
- Most census *enumeration districts (blocks, areas)* are formed by partitioning the lowest level administrative units
- When census-takers think of ‘sub-national’ geographic units, they naturally tend think in terms of political geography

# Geographic Regions

- Regions based on physical geography; drainage basins, soil or hydrological characteristics, earthquake prone regions
- Regions based on climate, susceptibility to flooding, or other natural disasters
- Regions based on human structures, activity and behavior; linguistic regions, ethnic minority regions, religious regions

# Geographic Regions and the Population Census

- Any geographic region may be closely approximated by aggregating small administrative units or enumeration districts
- Population census data is an invaluable source of data for *defining and analyzing* geographic regions
- Create a data base of tabulations for every enumeration district or low level administrative unit

# Value of the *Small Area Tabulation Data Base*

- Most generally it *exploits the comparative advantage* of the population census as a complete enumeration
- Local governments at all levels want and can make use of data *for their area*; data for larger units isn't much use to them
- Data for small areas may be *aggregated up* to approximate *any geographic region*
- Use small area data for national and regional analysis with *geographic information systems (GIS)*; relate population data to environmental, other information

# Producing Data for Large Numbers of Small Units

- Cost of **processing** *per se* is not an issue; all records must be processed anyway, and by the smallest administrative units
- Cost of **storage** of the results was a constraint for the 1990 round; *it will not be for the 2000 round*
- Costs of **organizing, archiving** and **delivering** data; significant, but *much lower than in the past*
- *Remember the 15 year time horizon over which the 2000 round data will be used!*
- The main requirement is *advance planning*

# Key Points in Review

- Political geography *vs* geographic regions
- Population census can provide data for *any* geographic region; it is the *only* such source
- Population census data a valuable resource for *defining and analyzing* geographic regions
- To realize this potential, *create a small area tabulation data base*

Questions?  
Comments?  
Discussion?