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INTRODUCTION:
Global networks for multimedia communications based on digital transmission and switching technologies are becoming the most important component of the rapidly evolving National Information Infrastructure (NII) in the United States and the Global Information Infrastructure in the world. Although the concept of information infrastructure is being hailed as one of the "greatest scientific achievements of our age," its multidimensional requirements and wide implications are not sufficiently understood by its potential beneficiaries [Benhamou, 1994; Eid, 1995]. Comparisons of information infrastructure of a country are often made with its transportation infrastructure based on national highways. High speed digital communications networks are being implemented by governments, multinational corporations, and common carriers around the world to provide the transport facilities for GII. The implementation and growth of GII is being influenced by two major forces - technology convergence and market divergence. While the computer, communications, and content technologies are coalescing in a "digital convergence," global telecommunications markets are diverging into specialized services provided by numerous small competitors spread around the world. Digital networks, as the foundation of GII, require coordination of services offered by numerous service providers in different countries with divergent social, political, economic and legal frameworks. Therefore, a coherent policy framework agreed upon and implemented by a large number of countries at the same time becomes an indispensable condition for the successful implementation of Global Information Infrastructure.

In this study, a survey of the published literature and documents available from the government sources on telecommunications policy was conducted to identify the important landmarks in the development of the telecommunications policies of the selected countries. A detailed analysis of the important decisions made by the governments and regulatory agencies in these countries was undertaken to isolate the emerging guiding principles of these policies. Representative countries are selected from Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America, based on the importance of the telecommunications sector in the economies of these countries and the importance of the national telecommunications sectors of these countries to the global economy.

A SURVEY OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICIES FOR GLOBAL INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE:
Important landmarks in the evolution of the telecommunications policies of six countries selected from different regions of the world are listed in the survey contained in this section. Two countries are selected from North America, two from Europe, one from Asia and one from Latin America. Some of these countries, such as the U.S. and Japan, have implemented the most advanced global networks in their regions. Others, such as Argentina, have rapidly expanding telecommunications sectors representing the future direction of the telecommunications policies in their regions. From a comprehensive review and evaluation of these policies, five guiding principles of a regulatory framework are isolated. These principles are: coherent regulatory framework, flexible competitive environment, open network access, private international investment, and equitable universal service. The section after the survey discusses these principles in detail.

UNITED STATES:
The telecommunications regulatory environment has been evolving in the U.S. for more than a century. The following are some of the landmarks in the evolution of the U.S. regulatory policy in this century:

1934 Communications Act of 1934 establishes Federal Communications Commission
1964 Computer Inquiry I begins to address the issues of interconnection, pricing, and separation between data processing and telecommunications services
1968 Caterfone decision allows interconnection of equipment from non-Bell sources; MCI is permitted to offer microwave based inter-state services between Chicago and St. Louis
1971 Computer Inquiry I concludes by requiring carriers to offer data processing service through independent subsidiaries
1980 Computer Inquiry II establishes "basic" (regulated) and "enhanced" (competitive) data communications services; Customer Premise Equipment(CPE) deregulated
1984 Divestiture of AT&T; 22 Bell Operating Companies (BOC) reorganized into 7


331
Regional Bell Operating Companies

1996  Telecommunications Act and Communications Decency Act passed
1997  Communications Decency Act declared unconstitutional by the supreme court.

UNITED KINGDOM:
With revenues of $17 billion in 1996, the United Kingdom is the third largest telecommunications market, after Germany and France, in Europe [Bright, July 1997]. The U.K. controls 70% of Europe’s Value Added Networks and 50% of its Electronic Date Interchange market through British Telecom [Hudson, 1997]. The regulation of the telecommunications industry and the privatization of British Telecom, the U.K.’s largest common carrier, are considered responsible for the dominance of the U.K. in these services. A series of postal strikes in the 1970’s created the climate of deregulation in the country, according to industry experts [Law, 1998]. The following developments took place in rapid succession to make the U.K. one of the most competitive and open telecommunications markets in the world:

1981: British Telecommunications Act of 1981 enacted; British Telecom (BT) is separated from the Post Office department and becomes a public corporation
1983: Mercury Communications and BT allowed to operate as DUOPOLY.
1984: BT transformed into a private corporation; Office of Telecom [OFTEL] created
1987: Private cable companies allowed to provide local telephone service

GERMANY:
Until 1989, Deutsche Bundespost Telecom (DPT) was Germany's primary telecommunications carrier, mandated in the 1949 constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany to provide the telecom services for the country. Consequently, the liberalization of Germany's telecommunications policy and the opening up of German markets to competition have progressed more slowly than in the United Kingdom. In 1987, following the policy changes in the United States and the United Kingdom, the Commission for Telecommunications recommended the breakup of DPT into three government owned companies to provide telecommunications (TELEKOM), postal services (Postdienst), and postal banking services (Postbank). These entities were to be regulated by the Post and Telecommunications Ministry. The recommendations of the commission were accepted by the government, and a telecommunications reform law was enacted. Consequently, telecommunications policy reforms have accelerated in Germany and the unified country is now moving rapidly towards the realization of a modern national information infrastructure. The following are the important developments that have occurred in Germany's telecommunications policy during the last ten years.

1989: Deutsche Bundespost divided into Telecom, Postal Service, and Bank; All non-voice services opened to private companies; Voice services can be offered by private companies to other companies; PCN offered through competitive carriers
1993: Corporations allowed to use their private networks to provide voice and enhanced services internally and to trading partners
1996: Telekom made semiautonomous
1998: European Commission requires opening of all telecommunications services to competition

JAPAN:
Telecommunications began in Japan in 1871 when Great Northern Telegraph Company of Denmark connects Nagasaki to Vladivostok and Shanghai. Great Northern left Japan in 1930 and the Japanese government assumed the responsibility of providing telephone services as a direct monopoly until 1952 when first major policy changes occurred. [Hudson, 1997; Tomita 1984]. The following are the landmark events in the recent history of the Japanese telecommunications policy:

1952: Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications established; NTT (Nipon Telegraph and Telephone) created for domestic telecom services and KDD (Kokusai Denshin Denva) for International services
1953: Telecommunications Law enacted; NTT and KDD given monopoly on services
1971: NTT's monopoly on CPE abolished; Interconnection of private networks to NTT facilities permitted
1982: Public Telecommunications Law amended to permit unrestricted interconnection; resale of circuits for basic message switching prohibited
1985: NTT's monopoly on services abolished; Policy of gradual deregulation adopted
1985: Telecommunications Business Law enacted; Barriers to entry in the CPE market are lowered.

ARGENTINA:
It was in Buenos Aires, Argentina that Vice President Gore, in his remarks to the plenary session of the International Telecommunications Union on March 21, 1994, declared the vision of a Global Information Infrastructure. According to this vision, the GII, based on the information superhighway, is a "prerequisite to
sustainable development, for all members of the human family." Argentina, with a teledensity of 14.4 in 1996, is one of the most advanced telecom markets in Latin America, and a good example of the successful national implementation of privatization policy. Until 1989, Argentina's national telecommunications carrier, ENTel, provided very poor quality service at very high prices to its customers and high cost to the national exchequer. To redress the recurring grievances, the government of Argentina embarked on a policy of deregulation and privatization in 1989. The following is the summary of policy development since 1886 in Argentina:

1886 Union Telefonica del Rio de la Plata created with British capital.
1929 ITT purchases the telephone company and runs it as a monopoly service.
1946 Argentine government purchases the telephone company from ITT.
1948 Argentina creates its national telecommunications carrier, ENTel.
1974 ENTel starts transferring installation operations to private sector.
1982 Privatization of data transmission and mobile telephony services begins.
1989 ENTel is privatized

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF GLOBAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY:**
The analysis of the evolving telecommunications policies of six countries indicates that some broadly accepted basic principles are being assimilated in the policy framework in the international environment. The five most common principles are: (a) Coherent Regulatory Framework, (b) Flexible Competitive Environment, (c) Open Network Access, (d) International Private Investment, and (e) Equitable Universal Service. These principles are discussed in detail in the full paper.

**REFERENCES:**
Available upon request.