ICT plays a crucial role in the facilitation of socio-economic development and political engagement. To better exploit technological advancements governments tend to play a primarily role as policy-maker and implementer, and occasionally, as an investor such as the case of China. With the world’s largest subscriber base and a unique institutional setting, the Chinese case warrants focused scholarly investigation.

Since 1994 a sequence of reforms has underpinned the development of China’s telecommunications industry. The four rounds of industry restructuring (1994, 1998, 2002, and 2008) were typically concurrent with the implementation of wider government reforms. In structuring the 2008 reform and the 2009 3G rollout, China’s government attempted to create a ‘level playing field’ via a balanced approach. This approach has resulted in the reduction of the number of major service providers from six to only include China Mobile, China Unicom, and China Telecom.

The licensing of 3G spectrum to China Mobile, China Unicom, and China Telecom in early 2009 required that China’s government decide on the timing, number, and standards to license. The state of the domestic TD-SCDMA standard had been a major consideration in these deliberations.

Despite the awarding of 3G licenses, the full deployment of 3G (and beyond) services will take some time. Factors that are likely to impede rapid deployment include switching costs, substitution effects from 2.5G, the availability of compelling applications. These economic, technical, and institutional constraints will jointly determine the efficacy of the 2008 industry reform and China’s 3G strategy and frame the evolution path toward and beyond 3G. Currently
China has been taking initiatives in the deployment of 4G, particularly the domestic-labeled TD-LTE Advanced, since the turn of 2011.

Moreover, after the 2008 restructuring, the telecommunications still co-exist with the cable network, a network now in the process of being incorporated and separately regulated by the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT). In January, 2010 the State Council of China issued a notice on the general planning regarding market convergence between the telecommunications, Internet, and cable networks, according to which, convergence should be accomplished within five years from 2010 to 2015. Understandably, presently if China’s emergent mobile industry has already exhibited some uncertainties, the execution of the impeding market convergence can add even more.

Given current situations, China is probably posited in a critical juncture in re-examining its industry policies as well as technological strategies for a sustainable development, and hopefully leapfrogging, in the era of 3G and beyond. This special issue is intended to serve as a platform to examine these issues. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses are encouraged. Specific topics may cover, but are not limited to:

- industry structure and market access;
- standards and intellectual property rights;
- licensing and spectrum allocation;
- network evolution and convergence;
- technological diffusion;
- competition and business strategy;
- regulatory reform and governance;
- institutional analysis;

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