Telecommunications Reform in India

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Telecommunications reform in India is complete, according to policymakers there. They have done everything correctly in their efforts to transform a state-run monopoly into an independently regulated sector in which private companies compete with government-owned and operated providers. And yet, India lags behind nations whose telecom sectors provided comparable levels of service a decade ago. What went wrong? Dossani and his contributors argue that the classic textbook solutions are insufficient to produce a healthy telecom industry in India, which needs to improve regulatory design, introduce competition in a single phase instead of gradually, implement innovative funding models, and choose appropriate technologies in order to improve access to universal service. Containing valuable lessons for the telecommunications industries in Mexico, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other countries taking formerly state-run industries private, this book constitutes a valuable resource for policymakers, regulators, practitioners, scholars, and overseas investors.

Policymakers and regulators will learn that cookie-cutter solutions derived from rich-country experience do not always work in countries that are poor, yet democratic and pro-market. Practitioners will be interested in the sections on universal service, technology convergence, and the implications for reducing costs and improving the quality of both basic telephone services and IT-enabled services. In particular, Indian technology workers in Silicon Valley should find this book indispensable. Investors will gain valuable knowledge about this potentially huge market. Scholars' preconceived ideas may be nudged aside as their knowledge base is enhanced and their research agenda expanded. Whereas some of the book's conclusions support current thinking, such as the need to begin a sequence of reform with a regulatory system in place and the need for dominant-carrier regulation, other conclusions challenge the conventional wisdom. Contributors make a cogent case for reformulating the balance of power between regulators and policymakers, introducing competition at the local level rather than through large franchises, and replacing public subsidies with cross-subsidies of universal service. Provides a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the problems of telecommunications reform in all their complexity.

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