Chapter 4
Regional–National ICT Strategies

Melih Kirlidog
Marmara University, Turkey

Stephen E. Little
The Open University Business School, UK

ABSTRACT
An overwhelming majority of developing and industrialized countries have developed national Information and Communication Technology (ICT) strategies. Developing countries hope to leapfrog towards social and economic progress, modernization, and wealth, and industrialized countries do not want to be left behind in the race for ICT capabilities. While industrialized countries have distinct advantages in formulating and realizing these strategies, some developing countries’ objectives are too ambitious, seeking to achieve an information society by these strategies alone. An important reflection of today’s globalization on this issue is the cross-country aspect of “national” ICT strategies. Japan’s ICT strategy is increasingly outward oriented, sub-Saharan African countries are developing their strategies with the support of international agencies and non-government organizations, and Caribbean countries have established a common regulatory framework for the telecommunications sector. The aim of all these efforts is to develop a regional synergy for fostering ICT. This chapter is an exploratory analysis of the internationalization of national ICT strategies.

INTRODUCTION
The effectiveness of national and regional policies depends on the freedom of action and the effectiveness of governance enjoyed by the policy makers. Camilleri and Falk (1992) analyze national sovereignty in the context of the mesh of intentional undertakings restrictions and commitments which have developed from international conflict and cooperation. Page (1999) argues that regional economic alignments such as NAFTA and Mercosur are either short-lived or become a means to ultimately closer integration. In Europe, Delamaide (1994) has identified what he describes as “super-regions” with, for example a re-emergence of the characteristics of the Han-
seatic League in developments around the Baltic since the end of the cold War and the expansion of regional associations such as NATO and the European Union.

Post-colonial Africa is faced with regional realignments of even greater complexity. The Cold War concept of “Third World” identified the bulk of humanity through its exclusion from either superpower camp. The end of the Cold War has meant reduced attention from the former blocs. In some respects this has been beneficial, as major power confrontations are less frequently played out with third party proxies. However, there was also a reduction in the flow of resources and technology, albeit often related to militarization and its requirements; in many areas attention has returned to post-colonial infrastructures whose orientation may owe little to regional needs or potential synergies.

Many African countries face a task made even harder by a colonial past as contributors of raw materials, whether from primary and extractive industry, or through migration of labor. Infrastructure, both for physical transport (Headrick, 1981) and for science and technology, has been developed around the needs of the external consumers of locally produced resources, rather than for coherent and balanced internal development. Such legacies limit the capacity to absorb or develop the capabilities necessary to negotiate a national space within an emerging global order. With the rise of China and India and the subsequent resources boom, a renewal of interest has brought the same concerns of distorted development (Shaxson, 2007) and an argument that the emergence of new manufacturing super-powers constrains prospects of an industrial development pathway for African and other less developed economies (Kaplinsky & Morris, 2007).

This international order is increasingly dependent upon information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the term “digital divide” has come to encapsulate the imbalance of infrastructure and capability between the developed and less developed regions. However, the divide is equally one of knowledge and power. Science and technological capabilities lie at the centre of the knowledge divide described by Chataway et al. (2003).

Despite the diverse problems of the mid 1990s, the East Asian development model retains its allure for much of the world (Thorpe & Little, 2001). The fact remains that in 1960 Ghana had a higher per capita Gross Domestic Product than South Korea but that by 1997 Korea had broken the US$10,000 barrier and the country had embraced manufacturing successfully and moved into key fields of high technology and innovation. There are, however, both internal and external dimensions to the development trajectory pursued by the nations of East Asia.

This example shows that some countries can perform better than the others in the race for development. Further, given that not only Korea, but many of the countries in Southern and Eastern Asia have been in fast-track development over the last few decades, it can be argued that the economic and social development of an entire region has an important effect on the development of individual countries within that region. The perceived importance of ICT on development and on the formulation of national ICT strategies has become closely intertwined with regional development goals. This chapter is an exploratory analysis of the extension of individual national ICT strategies to the regions surrounding the countries.

Perhaps the most notable regional ICT strategy is the “Lisbon strategy” of the European Union (EU) that was launched in 2000 “to make EU the world’s most dynamic and competitive economy by 2010.” Given the current economic climate, the achievement to this target seems doubtful. Excluding this example due to that fact that it involves mainly industrialized countries, three cases are used in this chapter as examples of cooperation in formulating and implementing national ICT strategies for development. Thus, this chapter employs a case study approach to