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Digital Government Implementation: A Comparative Study in USA and Russia

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ABSTRACT

Although e-government comparative studies are relatively new, there exist a number of approaches to conducting comparisons of e-government development. In this article we employ one of these approaches to study a well-defined topic, e-government, in two contexts at the national level. Our goal is to identify both similarities and differences in problems, challenges and solution approaches in e-government development at the national level of governance. We use a case study method to describe the objects of comparison – the national e-government systems of USA and Russia from qualitative perspective.

Keywords

E-governance, E-government, E-government strategy, E-government project

INTRODUCTION

Although the idea of government, and therefore digital government, is usually linked to a specific geographic location, it is becoming common to find jurisdictional overlaps when government agencies work together to solve public problems (Helbig, Dawes, Mulki, Hrdinová, & Cook, 2009). These jurisdictional overlaps are increasing the complexity of efforts to respond to public problems, in particular, when the jurisdictions are from different sides of a national border. Cross-border interoperable information systems in this context, for example, have become critical in a number of policy domains such as public health, environmental management, border control and crisis management (Hosein, 2006; Kada & Kiy, 2004; Koslowski, 2005; Muhren, Jaarva, Rintakoski, & Sundqvist, 2008). To ensure that information can be effectively shared, governments require high levels of interoperability of policy, management and technology systems including standardization. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) stand at the center of these efforts and as a consequence it has become increasingly important to identify and understand similarities and differences in the use of information and ICT across nations. Accordingly, important studies of these efforts are underway in Europe, but very few similar efforts can be found among two of the largest and most visible countries in the world, USA and Russia.

As a research discipline and professional field, digital government currently has a global reach. In a recent review of international research in the discipline of electronic government, Helbig and her colleagues (2009) discovered that there are very few international studies in Digital Government before 2001, but their number has been increasing since that time. They also identified six different approaches to digital government research: comparative studies, benchmark reports, regional studies, fundamental issues, best practices studies, and transnational studies. Comparative research seeks general theories and transferable practices by studying a well-defined topic in several contexts, typically at the national or municipal level. In general there are two different approaches to comparative studies. The first approach focuses on comparing different practices and models across countries. The second is focused on developing a better understanding of how contextual factors such as culture, political structures and social norms pose challenges or extend existing frameworks. In this work the first approach based on North America Digital Government Working Group (NADGWG) framework for crossboundary e-government comparison is applied to national e-government systems in USA and Russia (Luna-Reyes, et.al., 2010, Luna-Reyes, et.al. forthcoming).

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Digital government research is a very young area of inquiry. As such, there is not yet an agreement in terms of a leading methodological approach (Scholl, 2007). The lack of comparative research in digital government may be a consequence of the lack of a tradition in comparative research in other associated areas such as public administration, information science, or computer science; the only digital government-related field with a long tradition of conducting comparative research is political science (Eglene & Dawes, 2006). Moreover, there are many practical challenges related to the research process such as “selecting a topic, sampling, translation, measurement, instrumentation, administration of the research, data analysis, and interpretation” (Adler, 1983 in Eglene & Dawes, 2006).

Attending to the tradition of Comparative Politics, we understand comparative research as one of the basic scientific methods focusing on discovering relationships among variables (Lijphart, 1971). Given that the comparative method is usually applied to few cases, it shares strengths and weaknesses with the case study method. The particular approach we use in this article is compatible with most of the work on comparative politics, mainly descriptive and inductive (Mahoney, 2007; Munck & Snyder, 2005).

The descriptive information presented for each country proceeds from the analysis of government websites and government documents and information reported in the communications media, particularly newspapers. Following the recommendations of researchers in comparative politics (Lijphart, 1971), we have limited our analysis of the digital government agenda of these two countries to five main themes, objectives, strategies, main projects, budget priorities and governance structures. We based our research design on comparative e-government studies framework proposed by NADGWG (Luna-Reyes, et.al., 2010, Luna-Reyes, et.al. forthcoming). After a brief overview of the digital government strategies and actions of the two countries, the following sections describe and compare the two countries for each of these themes.

COUNTRIES OF COMPARISON

Selected countries as objects of comparison should have partly comparable and partly incomparable attributes (Satori, 1994). Table 1 provides information as a background about the two countries in support of our focus on the USA and Russia (UN E-readiness index, World Bank Statistics, 2008).

Country	Territory (sq.km.) (thousands)	Population (millions)	GNI per capita (US\$)	Levels of Governance	Human Capital Development Index	National ICT development index	Integral UN e- readiness place
USA	9,632.0	304.1	47,580	3	0,97	0,66	4
Russia	17,098.2	141.8	9,620	3	0,96	0,25	60

Table 1. Economic context of countries comparison

E-government goals. The aims of e-government for both countries coincides in many aspects even though cultural and traditional approaches to governance differ greatly: for example, the business approach in USA vs the post-soviet bureaucratic or typically administrative philosophy in Russia (Gaidar, 2007). Nevertheless strategic aims seem to remain the same: to create effective and efficient service-oriented interactions with citizens.

The size and complexity of the chosen countries. The complexity of the problems in developing e-government can be explained in part by the large scale of governmental IT solutions (databases, registers, etc.), information sharing and integration between multiple levels of government, and inertia between decision making and implementation processes. Large territory and population of compared countries create more complexity for e-government project implementation than for the small countries including ICT-infrastructure development.

Concept of governance. In the USA, project management together with a “contract out” philosophy dominates the functional division of labor while in Russia a program administration approach to e-government is more common, and public private partnership mechanisms remain ill-defined. Approaches to monitoring and evaluation of e-government development progress appear to differ according to managerial philosophies.

Governance levels. For both countries the problem of information sharing and collaboration between different levels of governance remains important. There is a certain balance between centralization and decentralization of power and resources between levels of governance. Balance exists in administrative functions and points of responsibility for e-government projects among governance levels in each of the two countries, although they vary in the specifics.

COUNTRY DESCRIPTIONS

USA

“E-government” initiatives in the United States can be traced back to the 1993 Clinton-Gore administration’s “reengineering through information technology” efforts that aimed at reforming administration to enable government to be more customer-oriented and responsive to societal needs (Homburg, 2008). The reform focused on improving efficiency, accountability, and performance in the federal government through the use of information systems. The “reengineering through information technology” report provides thirteen recommendations for using ICTs to reform government. The reengineering effort fueled the development of several national and inter-governmental information systems, such as International Trade Data System, a

national law enforcement network, intergovernmental electronic tax filing capability, and a national environment database index (Fountain, 2001).

The Bush administration adopted the concept of e-government and identified e-government as a critical element in the management of Government ("E-Government Act of 2002," 2002). The President's Management Agenda between the years 2001 and 2002 outlined fourteen different areas of improvement in federal government. The fourth of those areas is "Expanded Electronic Government" (Executive Office of the President Office of Management and Budget, 2001). The E-government strategy claimed a focus on cross agency integration and interoperability to achieve performance and efficiency gains. A task force of agency personnel was charged with the responsibilities of identifying E-government projects that could deliver significant improvement to the quality of services to citizens, businesses, governments and government employees, as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of the federal government. In response, the task force identified a group of twenty four projects that constituted the so called "quicksilver initiative". These 24 projects were intended to simplify and integrate agency process and information flow, streamline information collection and reuse, and provide one-stop services to citizens (Executive Office of the President Office of Management and Budget, 2002).

Having successfully leveraged Web 2.0 technology during the election, the Obama administration is focused on building a new Internet infrastructure and using new information technology to improve openness and transparency of government operation. President Obama stated on April 25, 2009, "To help build a new foundation for the 21st century, we need to reform our government so that it is more efficient, more transparent, and more creative" (The White House, 2009). On January 21, 2009, the president delivered a Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Department and Agencies, in it he stated, "My Administration is committed to creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government. We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration. Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government" (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2009). The memorandum also requires the Federal Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Administrator of General Services (GSA) to draft an Open Government Directive to implement the key principles set forth in the memorandum.

Prior to the election of President Obama the World Economic Forum 2008-09 *Networked Readiness Index* ranks the US 3rd out of 134 economies. The Economist 2007 *e-Readiness Index* ranked the US 2nd out of the 69 economies and finally, the US ranks 4th in the UN *e-Government Readiness Index*. The impact of the Obama administration on these rankings is not yet clear, but expectations for change are quite high.

Russia

After Russia signed the Okinawa Charter of the Global Information Society at the summit of G8-countries the Federal Grant Program "e-Russia" became one more step on the path to an info-communication infrastructure in this country (Okinawa Charter, 2000).

Like any other Federal Grant Program (FGP) "E-Russia" was seen as an instrument for complex and holistic modernization of the Russian Government. Russia as the Charter signatory took on the responsibility for promoting ICT initiatives and bridging the digital divide to with a goal to enhance social and economic inequality.

The strategy recognizes the significant role the ICT sector has come to play in Russia's economy and politics. Russia's mainstream information channels are seen as part of the global info-communication circuit. On the other hand, more efforts were seen as necessary to urge e-government development through partnerships with transnational manufacturers of info-communication products, services and solutions.

Admittedly, in some aspects of ICT infrastructure development Russia is similar to developing rather than G8 member countries (UN E-Readiness Survey, 2008). At the initial stage the FGP "E-Russia" was actually a government policy aimed at implementing e-government projects. The "E-Russia" policy formulators made it their aim to identify the potential of ICT to become a key factor for enhancing public administration efficiency. In other words E-Russia program's goals describe future vision of Russian government after realization of e-government projects ("AS TO BE" Model). However, much less attention was paid both to the analysis of the current ICT state and to building "As it is" model. As Singapore government officials put it "a shift from tips on implementation to actual program implementation is very hard to make" (Yong, 2003).

Nevertheless the federal government was not ready to initiate a program implementation mechanism that addressed both the federal and regional and municipal government needs. During the period from 2002 through 2005 a great number of projects aimed at developing ICT infrastructure in the fields of education, healthcare and government administration on federal and regional levels in particular were launched.

E-Russia remained an initiative to better understand what openness, transparency of administrative procedures, more effective integration in the public sector meant both for government and society.

In 2010 a strategic decision to concentrate efforts in e-services model development on federal level was made. Federal Ministries are now obliged to integrate their most valuable e-services (such as passport exchange, vehicle registration, customs declarations, etc) through a new federal one stop shop portal launched in the end of 2009 (www.gosuslugi.ru).

“We have to free people from standing in lines to obtain basic documents from hospitals, housing departments, social security agencies...That is why we need to build completely new e-services system in nearest future” said Russian Prime Minister V. Putin (Governmental Body on regional ICT development, February 2010)

OBJECTIVES

In the case of the United States, the Bush administration passed the first E-Government Act in 2002 and formulated the first e-government strategy. The general objectives of the Bush administration’s e-government expansion are largely citizen oriented. These include: “make it easy for citizens to obtain service and interact with the federal government; improve government efficiency and effectiveness; and improve government’s responsiveness to citizens” (Executive Office of the President Office of Management and Budget, 2002). These general objectives are further articulated as value creation in the following areas: simplifying delivery of services to citizens; eliminating layers of government management; making it possible for citizens, businesses, other levels of government and federal employees to easily find information and get service from the federal government; simplifying agencies’ business processes and reducing costs through integrating and eliminating redundant systems; enabling achievement of the other elements of the President’s Management Agenda; and streamlining government operations to guarantee rapid response to citizen needs.

Besides the objectives of service delivery, efficiency and effectiveness of government management, the new Obama’s administration has outlined objectives of transparency, participation, collaboration, and improving innovation, efficiency and effectiveness. Creating a transparent and connected democracy to enhance citizen participation, solving the nation’s pressing problems, such as health care cost, clean energy development, and public safety improvement, by deploying modern information technology infrastructure and innovation are all seen as part of these objectives of the new administration.

The potential of ICTs and the Internet to simplify administrative procedures, save time and decrease employees burden in government routine operations came to Russia primarily at the Federal Government level. The Russian Government considers e-government and IT-solutions (e-mail servers, Office software, document management systems, e-signature) as main tools for implementing a service oriented model of interaction between Government and external actors.

ICTs are now seen as one of the means for public administration reform together with concepts from New Public Management including: privatization, results oriented governance, and public private partnerships creation. Another objective is to solve the problems of vertical information sharing with regional governments by establishing IT standards of interaction and requirements to quality of information processed.

Electronic services delivery will let citizens track service execution and will sufficiently eliminate human factor from interaction with government. This is very important outcome in the light of the efforts on effective control on financial spending, corruption resistance and results quality (Corruption Perception Index Report, 2008).

STRATEGIES

Looking at the US case, the past two presidential administrations have had important but very different strategies in the area of digital government. The Bush Administration focused primarily on technology as a tool to improve services and performance of federal agency operations and programs. The Obama Administration appears to be focused more broadly on the enhancement of national technology capability in addition to the transformation of US Federal government agency operations.

During the Bush Administration, then OMB Director Mitchell E. Daniels initiated an interagency E-Government Task Force to develop a road map for implementing the President’s E-Government initiative. In outlining the road map, the Task Force made recommendations for the highest payoff cross-agency initiatives that could be quickly developed, identified barriers to the federal government achieving a citizen-centered E-Government, recommended actions in implementation in overcoming these barriers, and recommend the development of a technology framework for the integration of government services and information (Executive Office of the President Office of Management and Budget, 2002)

The E-government Strategy further focused on transforming the service delivery on four groups: Individuals/Citizens or Government-to-Citizens (G2C), Businesses or Government-to-Business (G2B), Intergovernmental: Government-to-

Government (G2G), and Intra-governmental or Internal Efficiency and Effectiveness (IEE) (Executive Office of the President Office of Management and Budget, 2002).

While President Obama's strategy is still emerging, a number of strategies are beginning to form in Presidential speeches and other communications. One area where President Obama has broken new ground is in the appointment of the first U.S. Federal Government CIO. Mr. Vivek Kundra is now in charge of the development of information resource management strategic plan (Touchstone Consulting Group, 2009) drawing on the guiding principles for technology issued by White house (The White House, 2009). This strategic plan will be organized around the six guiding principles:

- Innovation in the Economy.
- Innovation in Science.
- Innovation in Public Administration.
- Restoring a Culture of Accountability through Openness and Transparency of Government Operations and Information.
- Moving Toward Unprecedented Openness.
- Making Critical Government Information Available.

"E-Russia 2002-2010" was a very ambitious Program which was going to implement ICT-solutions in all areas of social and governmental activities. E-Russia provided the first valuable feedback on possible problems and pitfalls in technology enactment process in Russia. The new Federal Program "Information Society 2011 – 2018" to be approved in May 2010 continues this tradition. The vision is to improve citizens' quality of life by creating complex (with participation of managing public and private companies) e-services infrastructure (including digital TV, public access to Internet, creating national system of Educational resources, bridging digital divide among the regions, creating digital cities, improving the IT-skills and education of the people). The program is also designed to concentrate on information resources integration among federal agencies. The new e-government strategy is closely connected to two other important strategies of innovation and modernization of the country called "Strategy 2020" and Information Society Strategy (Strategy 2020, ITU, 2008). In Strategy 2020, ICTs are considered as an industry which will provide future economic growth creating new jobs and increasing social mobility. Whereas Information Society Development Strategy underlines the key role of IT in improving education, health and social systems, increasing material and spiritual quality of citizen life, giving the Russian response to competitiveness with other countries in the information age.

Administrative procedures redesign as well as structural changes of institutions on Federal level governance in Russia were key issues of Administrative Reform Conception (2003-2005). E-services creation requires continuous process of agencies' internal administrative procedures improvement. The key challenge for the Russian Government is to tighten the above mentioned strategies to provide a holistic approach to governance when change implementation based on ICT potential is well monitored and evaluated.

PROJECTS

In the case of the United States, from 2001, federal agencies identified 24 Presidential E-Government initiatives that promised to delivery high impact, common technology solutions such as tax filing, rulemaking, and electronic training. A few noted examples among these initiatives include GovBenefits.gov, which provides a single entry for citizens to locate information and determine potential eligibility for government benefits and services, Grants.gov, the federal one-stop online portal to reach and apply for over 1,000 grant programs from 26 grant making agencies and other federal grant-making organizations, and the Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE), which provides a secure environment for cost-effective acquisition of goods and services by agencies.

A new set of projects being pursued by the Obama administration is generally framed in a \$7.2 billion stimulus funds; \$4.7 billion will be distributed through a program by the commerce department and \$2.5 billion will fall under the jurisdiction of the agriculture department, giving particular emphasis to broadband deployment in rural areas. The funds are to be distributed before September 30, 2010, to projects that can be completed within 2 years. A set of projects are discussed below to illustrate the current focus of effort.

National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). Targeted towards developing the underserved and unserved areas, BTOP, a program authorized by The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is packed with programs to improve broadband access for public safety agencies, improve the broadband access and stimulate the economy to create new jobs (<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants/>). In particular, NTIA will join hands with the Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service, which received \$2.5 billion for

broadband loans, to implement the broadband development program. BTOP will provide competitive grants to states, non – profit organizations and broadband service providers and require a 20% matching investment from the organization which takes the loans from NTIA. The office of Inspector General has statutory oversight responsibilities for each of these similarly structured programs.

In addition to the recovery act related projects President Obama has launched a number of projects in support of his commitment to transparency and accountability. Recovery.gov, for example, is a new federal government web site that provides easy access to data related to Recovery Act spending and allows for the reporting of potential fraud, waste, and abuse. Additional examples can be found in efforts to use technology to create new online communities such as Business.gov, enabling conversation and online collaboration between small business owners, government representatives and industry experts in discussion forums relevant to starting and managing a business.

The key role in e-government projects implementation in Russia is played by regions. E-Russia 2002-2010 strategy launched pilot projects in more than twenty regions of Russia. Regions were competing for pilot projects funding which comes from E-Russia budget so that the regional administration with highest capacity could implement the project. The next step was to scale the pilot project implementation on all the regions. Role of Federal Center in this process was limited due to the autonomy of each region. That is why leadership, resources availability, IT-infrastructure, social capital become crucial factors of regional e-government success but in the same time the comparative values of these factors (considered as indicators) dramatically vary among all the regions (Fountain, 2001). The e-government projects implemented by regional governments fall generally in line with the mainstream e-government course as set in the Federal Grant Program “Electronic Russia”. Government initiatives implemented on Federal level in terms of e-government projects portfolio coincide with regional priorities. The Program key projects are:

1. Portals – the integrated aggregate municipal and regional government web-sites, with one-stop shopping site for citizens and business community, providing the specific information they need as well as delivering interactive and transactional services.
2. Regional information analytical system (RIAS) - the aggregate Internet data-base (integrated through the local net) as well as a range of program tools for generating informative text-, graphic- and multi-media- based documents.
3. Integrated Government Information Resources (IGIR) – uniform information environment for facilitating access to and exchange of information between social security agencies, registration authority, entry and public utility services.
4. Electronic Document Management Systems (EDMS) – information systems facilitating storage, transmission and modification of various e-based documents accessible to government officials through mandate control.
5. Geographic Information System (GIS) – analytical databases integrating electronic geographic maps and information about any map- designated objects of strategic state interest.

BUDGET PRIORITIES

In the Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies issued on August 4, 2009 in the US (Director of OMB and Director of Office of Science and Technology Policy, 2009), the director of OMB and Director of Office of Science and Technology Policy provided guideline for the agencies to build science and technology priorities for FY 2011. Four priority areas are identified. They include:

- Applying science and technology strategies to drive economic recovery, job creation, and economic growth.
- Promoting innovative energy technologies to reduce dependence on energy imports and mitigate the impact of climate-change while creating green jobs and new businesses.
- Applying biomedical science and information technology to help Americans live longer, healthier lives while reducing health care costs.
- Assuring we have the technologies needed to protect our troops, citizens, and national interests, including those needed to verify arms control and nonproliferation agreements essential to our security.

The overall financing of E-Russia in 2010 on federal level governance (not including budgets of regions and municipalities) can reach 100 million dollars and become thrice as more to the end of 2011. During 2002-2009 approximately 2 billion dollars were spent in support of E-Russia. The costs of E-Russia is hard to estimate, the financial accounting takes quite a long time because key e-government players have independent financial resources which they can spend due to their

understanding of what is future of e-government. One of the key issues is to improve the mechanisms used to select which projects are supported. Another key issue of the financing process is how to optimize the budget process to increase the sustainability of long term projects (which last more than one fiscal year) happen as well as to create an acceptable system of financial spending and effectiveness evaluation (E-Russia Federal Program, 2002-2010).

GOVERNANCE

In the United States, the Federal Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council serves as the principle interagency coordinating body (Federal Chief Information Officers Council, 2009). Its existence was codified into law in the E-Government act of 2002. The Council is made up of the CIOs and Deputy CIOs from the Federal executive agencies, and chaired by the Deputy Director for Management for the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The Council intends to improve the design, use, sharing and performance of the Federal Government agency information resources through developing recommendations for information technology management policies, procedures, and standards; identifying opportunities to share information resources; and assessing and addressing the needs of the Federal Government's IT workforce .

Another important advisory body for Federal e-government is the Interagency Management Council (IMC). The voting members of IMC consists of an IT Senior Executive or senior official from 14 Cabinet-level department and representatives from the legislative and judiciary branch agencies as well as sub-Cabinet and independent agencies. IMC plays important role in the planning and oversight of the GSA's development and implementation of information technology and network services programs. The Council provides inputs representing the agencies' and stakeholders' requirements and interests, and recommends interagency strategies and initiatives to GSA (Interagency Management Council).

The IMC communicate with other Federal entities, Boards, and Councils (e.g., OMB, NIST, and the Federal CIO Council) as necessary, and provide support to these entities when requested. On December 12, 2008, the Administrator of GSA delegated the Chairmanship of the IMC to the GSA Assistant Commissioner for Integrated Technology Services, who also provides the secretariat.

Not only is there governance bodies created to promote the interagency integration, an information technology management and planning approach, enterprise architecture (EA) planning, has been implemented to improve cross-agency collaboration at the Federal level (Seifert, 2008). Started in 2002, the Federal Enterprise Architecture (FEA) was initiated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The FEA includes five reference models: Performance, Business, Service, Data, and Technical. These reference models provides a common platform for agencies to use in reducing duplicate development and collaborating on shared technology solutions (Federal Enterprise Architecture Program Management Office, 2007).

Since the very start of E-Russia there were five agencies able to invest resources in the program. The coordinator of the Program, on the Federal level is the Ministry of Information and Media Communications. Still the role of Ministry of Economic Development has always been important. This arrangement created competition for leadership in E-Russia Program governance. A lack of coordination, monitoring and control over suppliers and government proprietors made E-Russia executives unable to ensure implementation of FGP activities on a regular basis. Another entity called the Regional CIO Council consisted of federal and regional CIOs and was responsible for recommendations on e-government policy and future development at the regional level. One of the tasks for the Council was to organize best practices exchanges in e-government projects among the regions. The role of this Council was limited throughout the E-Russia initiative However, due to the limited power and influence of the CIO position at the regional governance level.

Strategic initiatives of E-Russia were discussed by the President's State Council on Information Society which consists of Federal and Regional Government Representatives, business and expert's community. The last changes in the E-Russia governance structure occurred in 2009 when ten working groups responsible for ICT usage in specific areas such as development of the regions, education, culture, health, and industry, were created. Each group consists of civil servants who work on the initiatives. The next step is the expertise of the Expert Council consisting of academic research and practice community representatives: experts, scientists, consultants. If the Expert Council approves any initiative it can be a candidate for inclusion in the short term Orders to Government given by President. The row of initiatives created by working groups are then included in the new Federal Program "Information Society 2011 – 2018". The key approach for e-government development was always program management comprising strategic goals, key players responsibility, financial resources, steps and activities, success evaluation indicators.

CONCLUSION

For both countries e-government is a very important area of activity supported by serious investments (both public and private). E-government is expected, in both countries, to support a service oriented interaction paradigm between government

and society. In the USA, e-services systems for citizens and businesses have already been through several generations, whereas in Russia they have yet, in most cases, to be implemented (the first 60 services should become available in fully or partially electronic form during 2010 -2011). Different from Russia, the Federal Government in the USA has focused leadership in this area, as well as a wide range of specific initiatives underway. Still for both countries successful e-government implementation at the state (in USA) or regional (in Russia) levels means the overall progress in creating virtual state. Support for federal e-government development in this USA is provided by Government Services Administration (GSA) whereas in Russia this role is shared between two main participants (Ministry of Economic Development and Ministry of Communications and Media). Budget rigidity in financing e-government projects remains a challenge for both countries. A more decentralized financial model is applicable for USA whereas in Russia it is more centralized. The main project for Russian Federal Government remains one-stop shop e-services portal www.gosuslugi.ru whereas for USA it is possible to demonstrate projects reflecting e-governance ambitions as well (Recovery.gov – is a project demonstrating to the American citizens the level of transparency in Federal Government as well as the measures taken for economic growth). E-government development is an endless process of government's interaction with citizens in the sense that it serves to respond to the changing demands of society. For both the USA and Russia such issues as federalism and power redistribution, serving citizens demands, enacting new more powerful technologies of governance, improving internal business processes remain “persistent challenges”.

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