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E-GOVERNMENT AND DEMOCRACY IN RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of creeping authoritarianism by the Putin administration, this paper examines whether or not Russian efforts to enact e-government are enhancing, inhibiting, or neutral towards the establishment of preconditions for democracy in Russia. Eighty official regional governmental websites in 2003 and 85 in 2004 are examined to benchmark their contents according to a set of measures related to Information, Communications / Participation, Action / Transaction, and Integration. This paper also considers the contributions of the Electronic Russia (E-Russia) program launched in 2002 as a nine-year, \$2.57B effort to bring e-government to Russia. It is concluded that the main thrust of the websites was on the Information category, with some increases in the Communications / Participation from 2003 to 2004. Almost no services were enacted. Using a detailed analysis of the E-Russia expenditures, it is concluded that this program was focused more on building infrastructure than on building up e-government websites or increasing Internet access. Most support is found for the proposition that Russian e-government efforts so far have done little to enhance the preconditions for democracy, but at the same time should not be viewed as a "Potemkin village," i.e. as a means to conceal moves away from democracy.

Keywords: E-Government, Russia, regions, democracy

I. INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of global battles against terrorism, looming proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and a host of other economic and social problems, the question of whether democracy will really take root in Russia is of no little concern to the West. A nuclear, autocratic Russia is a country that may take extreme positions [Aslund and Cohen, 2003]. While many in the Western press have trumpeted the recent demise of Russian democracy, we noted what seemed to be a striking paradox. Although it seemed that the Putin administration was gradually limiting freedoms associated with an "information society,"—a society in which free access to accurate information supports political pluralism and democracy—we observed that the Putin administration expressed symbolic and concrete support for its development. This support came in the form of a governmental resolution (#98, Feb. 12, 2003), mandating access to governmental

information via websites and other means, and through the passage of the 9-year, \$2.57B Electronic Russia (E-Russia) program.

This paper seeks to shed light on this paradox by 1) establishing what the actual levels of development of national and regional official governmental websites were during this period, and 2) examining the plans for, and realities of, the E-Russia program, which was the leading nexus of support for the development of the information society in Russia at the time. The core methodology we use is to examine these two artifacts as objects that contain within themselves evidence of the creation of, addition to, or subtraction from preconditions for democracy in Russia. In other words, while we cannot judge what the intentions are of any given official who may choose to put a feature on a website, or who may choose to initiate a tender as part of the E-Russia program, we can develop an aggregate picture of their nature. Although we suggest some explanations for why such actions have been taken, we are not proposing a theoretical model to do so. Our research is preliminary, exploratory, and may contribute to the eventual development of such theory.

In Section II we provide the evidence that caused us to observe the described paradox. From that evidence arise three propositions to be investigated. In Section III we briefly examine prior work about the relationship between various forms of democracy and applications of e-government, describing the methodologies used in this study. In sections IV and V, we examine the raw evidence related to these propositions from websites and the E-Russia program, respectively. In Section VI we evaluate how this evidence supports or rebuts the propositions, and draw conclusions about the trajectory of Russian democracy under Putin. Because our analysis rests on the examination of a large body of primary and secondary sources, we have provided extensive references and additional materials in eight appendixes.

SECTION II: PROPOSITIONS ABOUT RUSSIA AND DEMOCRACY

In this section we provide the background evidence that is necessary to support our contentions about the existence of the paradox. Three propositions are developed which emerge from these discussions.

PROPOSITION 1: MOVING TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

Throughout the 1990s, a variety of plans were drafted for major commitments to ICT development and the information society in Russia [Ellis, 1999].¹ Conceptions and plans were also adopted in

¹ Towards the end of the Soviet Union in the 1989-1991 timeframe, several proposals were put forward to develop a conception of a Soviet information society. While these proposals fell short of removing centralized planning and encouraging private, horizontal information flows, many of the goals that they supported were quite in keeping with principles of the "information age" [Faulhaber et al., 1991]. The conception put forth by the Kiev Institute of Cybernetics, for example, stated that, "Informatization must facilitate the creation of a legal state on the principles of democratization and *glasnost*, access for every member of society to the whole aggregation of socially significant knowledge, freely receiving information at the needed time, in the needed place, and in the needed form." Furthermore, informatization "opens up the possibility of perceiving personal opinions on a broad range of questions in a timely manner, with the assurance that this opinion will get to the level of analysis and decision-making in time," and "Using the means of informatization the highest levels of management can see the real state of affairs in the regions, which will make possible to optimally combine centralized management with regional self-management in the interests of society as a whole." [Confidential communication, Kiev, May, 1991]. Although the Conception was not adopted [McHenry, 1992], it represented the mindset that emerged from the *perestroika-glasnost*' years in which many in the Putin administration came of age. See [Smolyan and Chereshekin, 1998] for a continuation of this type of work in the 1990s.

a considerable number of regions [Lisitsyn, 2003].² The Putin administration continued this trend, and has ostensibly made a strong commitment to the development of an information society in Russia [Azrael and Peterson, 2002]. Russia signed the Okinawa Charter in 2000, which contained the lofty goals of using the ICTs for “creating sustainable economic growth, enhancing the public welfare, and fostering social cohesion,” working to “fully realise [Information Technology’s] potential to strengthen democracy, increase transparency and accountability in governance, promote human rights, enhance cultural diversity, and to foster international peace and stability” [G8, 2002]. This commitment to openness was reflected in Federal Government Resolution No. 98 (Feb. 12, 2003), which specified that information in more than 30 mandatory areas be put on national-level governmental websites, exempting information related to national security [Russian Federation Government, 2003].

As a “leading indicator” of this commitment, the Russian Federation government approved “Electronic Russia” (E-Russia) in 2002 [Higher School, 2003]. This was an ambitious, nine-year, \$2.57 billion³ program to eliminate Russia’s lag in ICTs and promote democracy. The program stated:

“An important result of the distribution of the information and communication technologies (ICTs) and penetration of them into all spheres of social life is the creation of the legal, organizational, and technological conditions for the development of democracy due to the real support of the rights of citizens for unhindered search, reception, transmission, production, and distribution of information” [Higher School, 2003].

The E-Russia program emerged when the Russian government was acutely aware of Russia’s ICTs lag. Estimated Russian 2003 federal IT expenditures comprised just 0.19% of GDP (\$650M) versus 0.42% (\$42B) in the U.S. and 0.41% in Germany (\$8.4B) [Reyman, 2003]. Governmental IT expenditures at the regional level for all Russian regions were about \$82M in 2002 and \$206.6M in 2003 [E-rus, 2004]. Only 19% of specialists in the central governmental staff and 1% overall of the workers in the federal government agencies were connected to the Internet in 2003 [Reyman, 2003]. One of the main goals of E-Russia was to “overcome the lag of Russia behind the developed countries in the level of the use and development of ICTs” [Higher School, 2003]. Other top-level goals were:

- “effective use of the intellectual and labor potential of Russia in the ICTs;
- provision for harmonious entry of Russia into the world economy due to cooperation and information transparency;
- provision for inclusion of Russian citizens on an equal basis in the global information society by observing human rights such as the rights for free search, receipt, transmission, production, and distribution of information;
- [provision for] the right for confidentiality of all information stored in information systems that is protected by law” [Higher School, 2003].

² As of summer, 2005, Russia was divided into 87 regions, lightly subordinated to seven larger divisions called federal okrugs. 21 regions are called republics, and were more or less formed around the ethnic identities of the majority populations in them. There are 10, mainly small, autonomous okrugs (AO), which also are defined along ethnic lines. The Jewish Autonomous Oblast’ is the only one of its type. Moscow and St. Petersburg are counted as cities “with status of region” to bring the total to 89. The rest of the regions are either called oblasts (49) or krays (6). Periodic discussions continue about reducing the number of regions, which vary in population from 18,000 in the Evenkiyskiy AO to more than 10M in Moscow.

³ For simplicity, and reflecting rates in late 2003, 30 Russian Rubles = \$1 US throughout. All translations were done by the authors unless otherwise noted.

While the official program text did not actually use the term “e-government,” it appeared regularly in program descriptions in the press, on websites, and at conferences. For example, a program Directorate member and one of its principal spokespersons, Tseren Tserenov, outlined its overarching goals:

- “Create a favorable environment for ICT application;
- Form e-government that provides services through ICTs;
- Build civil society through development of e-democracy; and
- Increase the number of Internet users through training and education” [Tserenov, 2003].

E-Russia not only included conceptions of e-government, encompassing G2C and G2B elements, but also envisioned comprehensive investments in computer and network infrastructure, IT education, and “informatization”—effective use of computers—at all levels of government. E-Russia included goals to connect all universities to the Internet by 2005, all smaller higher education institutions by 2010, and to cut the price of Internet access in half [Kulik, 2003]. (The number of Internet users in Russia rose from about 1.7M users in 1999 to about 18.7M or about 12.5% of the population by Spring, 2005; Appendix I presents this data in more detail.) E-Russia was the most prominent federal targeted program (which means essentially that it had its own budget line and management) that was ostensibly concerned with bringing democracy to Russia. E-Russia sent a powerful signal to the regions of the importance of informatization, and a number of regional informatization plans adopted its rhetoric and worldview [Lisitsyn, 2003].

The absence of Internet censorship, which one might have expected to find in Russia, also supports the idea of moving towards democracy. Internet censorship has been expressly rejected [RIA Novosti, 2005].⁴ “Dozens of newspapers and web portals have remained independent and offer a platform for political figures of all persuasions, but none of these platforms enjoys mass audiences” [McFaul and Petrov, 2004, p. 24]. Azrael and Peterson also concluded that Russians have access to a wide range of foreign and domestic news sources and opinions via the Internet [Azrael and Peterson, 2002]. In 2004, Oleg Panfilov of Radio Free Europe contrasted the mass media and the Internet in Russia this way, “television and radio are practically all controlled by the state. There is a certain newspaper industry that is independent, and there are independent newspapers that are incalculably smaller in terms of the amount of information that gets to the population. Finally, there’s the Internet, which in fact is an absolutely free territory” [Panfilov, 2004]. While the government keeps tighter reign on the mass media, Balzer asserts that so far, the Internet is part of the somewhat limited space in which elites may exercise freedom [Balzer, 2003]. It can be permitted as long as it does not become too influential [Delicyn, 2004].

Thus, there are substantial reasons to support the investigation of our first proposition:

Proposition 1: Russian e-government websites and the E-Russia program are consistent with the rhetoric of the E-Russia program, and are consistent with the idea of Russia moving towards democracy.

⁴ There is considerable disagreement about whether the Russian Security Agency (FSB) has implemented a system authorized in 1998 called SORM-2 that would allow it to monitor all Internet communications. Cnews reported in 2002 that such systems have been authorized in a number of former Soviet republics and Russia, but cannot be implemented due to the absence of equipment; ISPs say they cannot afford it, but security services have not provided it [Cnews, 2002]. Balzer contends that the SORM-2 is in place, but is not being used [Balzer, 2003]. Ostrovsky reported in 2003 that the equipment is there, but only turned on if there is a court order [Ostrovsky, 2003].

PROPOSITION 2: MOVING AWAY FROM DEMOCRACY

Recent events are troubling, and suggest a move away from democracy. After a relatively free period for the media in the 1990s, all four national independent television stations were eventually brought under state control, and many independent newspapers also stopped publishing [Aslund and Cohen, 2003]. In 2003-2004, Vladimir Putin significantly consolidated his power. The December 2003 Parliamentary elections gave him strong control over the entire governmental apparatus [Economist, 2003]. Having been re-elected by a wide margin in Spring, 2004, Putin then capitalized on the uproar created by the Beslan tragedy in September, 2004 to push through the elimination of direct election of regional governors, as well as to enact election of representatives to the lower house of Parliament (the Duma) based on voting for parties [Baker, 2004]. The state of opposition parties has been substantially weakened. In the wake of moves by the government to co-opt the remaining oligarchs and reassert economic dominance in the oil industry via the arrest and conviction of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Russia's commitment to democracy was questioned by the Bush administration.⁵ *The Economist* concluded in December 2004 that, "Far from being a political and economic reformer who runs an admittedly flawed but still recognizable democracy, Mr. Putin has become an obstacle to change who is in charge of an ill-managed autocracy" [Economist, 2004]. Additional evidence about the move away from democracy is provided in Appendix II.

Given the evidence cited of media control, how are we to understand the absence of Internet censorship? Alexander raises the possibility that authoritarian governments (including the Russian government), rather than censoring the Internet outright, may learn to dominate this channel in order to put forth self-serving propaganda and drown out contrary voices [Alexander, 2004].⁶ Katchanovski and La Porte specifically see Russian e-government websites as "Potemkin e-villages," erected to give the appearance of democracy without supporting its substance [Katchanovski and La Porte, 2005]. One does not have to ascribe malicious motives to the Russian central or regional governments to assert that they may be trying to use the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to strengthen their grip on power.⁷ We therefore formulate our second proposition as follows:

Proposition 2: Russian e-government websites and the E-Russia program pay lip service to democracy, but are, in substance, more like "Potemkin villages." Their substance is more consistent with a goal of expanding authoritarian domination.⁸

⁵ As during the February, 2005 Bush-Putin summit in Bratislava. For an opposing view about the absence of democracy in Russia, see [Brovkin, 2004].

⁶ The Internet was first used to spread compromising, probably false, materials about rivals in the 1999 campaign [Perov and McHenry, 2000]. The distribution of false information was also initiated through the Internet in a particularly vile 2002 Nizhniy Novgorod mayoral campaign [Bikmetov, 2002]. In the 2004 campaign for St. Petersburg governor, a website was created shortly before the election that spread false rumors of massive impending election fraud [Hahn, 2004].

⁷ A number of studies by researchers such as Laudon, Dutton, Kling, Kraemer, King, and others have reached such conclusions about Western governments in a literature too rich to review here (cf. [Kraemer and King, 1986; Kraemer, 1991; Peled, 2001]).

⁸ Another possibility is that e-government and the Internet will lead to bottom-up citizen activity. Rohozinski has reported about the role played by networks in the 1991 aborted August coup [Rohozinski, 1999], a view widely publicized by Press [Press, 1992]. A case study by Dányi and Sükösd illustrate the use of SMS as a means of bottom-up political organizing in the face of centralized control of other media [Dányi and Sükösd, 2003]. E-government cannot exist without the network, and the network cannot be fully controlled. However, considering the impact of any network activity outside of e-government is outside the scope of this study.

PROPOSITION 3: SIMILAR TO DEVELOPMENTS ELSEWHERE

A third proposition charts a middle course, suggesting that the developed websites resemble those in many other countries. Studies in the U.S. and the OECD countries have found that e-government has largely been oriented towards service delivery, efficiency, good management, etc. [Chadwick and May, 2003; Hale, Musso and Ware, 1999; Musso, Weare and Hale, 2000]. A new emphasis is being placed on citizen participation after finding little progress towards e-democracy in the first wave of e-government [Dalziel, 2004; MacIntosh, 2004; OECD, 2005]. However, on the basis of his extensive global survey of e-government websites, West concluded:

“With the exception of email, the limited use of interactive features that facilitate citizen feedback shows that technological change has not advanced very far on the global scene. Most countries have not embraced a vision of e-government that sees it as a tool for citizen empowerment. Instead, officials view the Internet as a billboard for one-way communications with the public. They are not taking advantage of two-way features that provide citizens with a chance to voice their opinions or personalize websites to their particular interests.” [West, 2004]

The United Nations review of global e-government websites saw slightly more progress [Hafeez, 2004]. Although these studies can be somewhat pessimistic about the state of democracy in Western countries, they do assume there are democratic processes to be enhanced. As we have suggested, Russia may be moving towards autocracy, yet the Internet seems to be a growing and open space for democracy. Against what standards should we judge Russia? As Stephen Coleman has observed, “...the Internet has a major democratic role to play in political cultures dominated by secrecy, corruption, and cover-ups.” [OECD, 2003] It may be that, for the time being, the e-government websites and E-Russia program are playing a neutral role, similar to the first steps taken in many other countries. They represent an unrealized potential. We formulate this idea as Proposition 3:

Proposition 3: Russian e-government sites and the E-Russia program are consistent with the main thrust of e-government sites and programs in other countries. They do not yet represent moves towards or away from democracy. They emphasize either services or websites as billboards rather than participatory democracy through communications / participation.

III. METHODOLOGY

The core methodology that we will use in this paper is to examine the two artifacts—official e-government websites, and the E-Russia program—as objects that contain within themselves evidence of the presence or absence of a commitment to democracy in Russia. For the websites, there is no single, accepted taxonomy of website functions, especially with labels that say “these are related to democracy, those are not.” Therefore, the first part of this section examines democracy and website metrics. We then describe how we will analyze the E-Russia program.

METRICS FOR E-GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

E-government encompasses the range of ways in which the ICTs may be applied by a government. It can be as narrow as automating some backend functions (processing tax receipts) or as broad as the transformation of government through business process re-engineering.⁹ How

⁹ Grant and Chau have used the literature on e-government to create a comprehensive framework that shows the breadth of applications subsumed within e-government. The framework links eight functional areas of e-government development to four overarching Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs). These are: Service Delivery; Citizen Empowerment; Market Enhancement and Development; and Exposure and Outreach. The “Key Functional Areas” that support them are: Infrastructure Consolidation and Standardization; Service Automation and Information Provision;

e-government may or may not promote, support, enhance, or enact democracy depends on two things: 1) how one views democracy, and 2) which e-government functions are created. Democracy can be defined in multiple ways depending on the degree of participation by the people:

- Pluralistic, in which most decisions are made as a result of competition among elite interest groups, parties and leaders;
- Representative, characterized by accountability of elected representatives to the electorate; or
- Direct, in which citizens are consulted and participate in policy-making [Norris, 2003].

Table 1. Democracy Types and E-Government

Role of E-government	Outcomes of E-Government Applications, Related to Various Concepts of Democracy		
	Pluralist democracy	Representative democracy	Direct democracy
	Elite-level competition among rival interest groups, parties, and leaders	Electoral accountability of representatives and governing parties	Citizen consultation and participation in policymaking process
Fostering good governance	Managerial efficiency in public service delivery		
	Transparent information published about major policy proposals & decision-making processes		
	Extensive interest-group consultation		
	Open pluralistic competition for government contracts and reduced corruption		
Fostering electoral accountability	Transparent information about government's record, policy proposals, administrative decisions, legislative acts		
	Efficient and transparent electoral administration		
	Opportunities for e-voting in elections		
Fostering public participation	Two-way interaction and communication between citizens and public officials		
	Extensive public consultation, information gathering, open public forums, and systematic user feedback		

Sources: [Norris, 2003, p. 20]

Interaction-based Services; CRM-Constituent Relationship Management; e-Participation and e-Democracy; Collaboration and Partnership; Marketing Electronic Government; and Global Business Development [Grant and Chau, 2005]. While this framework appears to be an attractive way for analyzing the relative policy choices that governments are making, the imprecision of its definitions and lack of empirical confirmation make it difficult to apply in practice.

Most “democratic” countries have systems that combine elements of all three. Norris related these three definitions to three roles that e-government may play: fostering good governance, electoral accountability, and public participation. Improving governance (e.g. eliminating corruption, ensuring the government does what it says it does) will enhance all three types of democracy. Greater electoral accountability improves representative and direct democracy, and more public participation is intrinsic to direct democracy. She posited a set of outcomes of e-government applications that may, in turn, bring about good governance, electoral accountability, and/or public participation [Norris, 2003]. (Table 1).

In order to evaluate how e-government may or may not be influencing Russian democracy, therefore, we need to try to determine which e-government applications are being implemented, at what levels of government, and with what intensity. Clearly, we need to focus on those that particularly support information transparency and communications.

In this paper we focus on information transparency and communications through the implementation of e-government portals at the federal and regional levels from 2003 to early 2005, and on aspects of the E-Russia program related to information transparency and communications, from its inception in 2002 to mid-2005. We put an in-depth examination of other measures directed towards managerial efficiency and other aspects of good governance outside its scope,¹⁰ while using this Norris framework to understand what balance may have been struck among them. If we were to find, for example, that the primary emphasis of Russian e-government is on service provision alone, we would be unlikely to conclude that the Russian leadership is striving to foster representative or direct democracy through e-government.

Over the past few years, a considerable number of studies have proposed and used various methods of recording the presence or absence of information and features on websites in order to evaluate and rank their relative purposes and completeness. Some of these methods presuppose an underlying ordering of stages through which these developments pass, but in practice, between an initial, limited presence on the web and the end state of “joined up” government (one-stop shopping and integration of functions and information provision across governmental levels), the sequence in which functions appear is murky. In particular, only a few authors view e-democracy as a stage that comes after the implementation of all others.¹¹

Both Norris and Hale et al. linked metrics to their conceptions of democracy and democratic renewal. Norris used Cyberspace Policy Research Group (CyPRG) data¹² and derived three spheres of metrics related to her framework (Table 1). These were information, communications, and actions. The information scale included tracking the provision of “laws, research publications, regulations and reports in easily readable form,” electronic update announcements or newsletters, and search capabilities. For communications, Norris used metrics for the presence of postal mail addresses, phone numbers below the senior official level, and emails for webmasters and senior officials [Norris, 2003]. In Norris’ view, the presence of an online forum related to action rather than just communication; we see it as participation. Her other action items were

¹⁰ See [Peterson, 2005] for an in-depth look at many information society-related issues in Russia, including some discussion of e-government and good governance.

¹¹ See: [Baum and Di Maio, 2000; Deloitte and Touche, 2001; Hafeez, 2004; Hiller and Bélanger, 2001; Layne and Lee, 2001; Moon, 2002; Siau and Long, 2004; Wescott, 2002; and West, 2004c].

¹² Her analysis was somewhat constrained by the use of available data from the CyPRG studies carried out in 1997-2000, which incorporated some concerns that now seem to be less relevant than in the earlier days of the web. However, of all the metrics created to study e-government, only the CyPRG scale was specifically oriented towards two democracy-related attributes, transparency, and interactivity [La Porte, Demchak, and Friis, 2001]. Norris used a subset of the CyPRG indicators to derive her scales.

related to services: ability to submit online forms, to be notified when a response may come, and to find out how to use government services and appeal decisions. The metrics used by Hale et al. also focused on the robustness of information and communication links, finding these to be necessary but not sufficient conditions to foster deliberation and “strong” democracy [Hale, Musso and Ware, 1999].¹³

Given the diversity of scales adopted in the many studies we reviewed, it was clear that there was no one scale we could adopt for the sake of comparability. Based on these studies, and with particular reference to Norris, we selected metrics in four web function categories:

- Information
- Communications / Participation
- Action / Transactions
- Integration.

In Table 16 (see Appendix III) we have listed the full set of metrics initially chosen to measure the Information web functions. Expanding upon Norris, we chose to divide out and track a number of different types of information.¹⁴ Table 17 lists all of the measures for Communications / Participation. As in the United Nations E-Participation index, we selected items that we were actually likely to find based on some preliminary samples of websites [Hafeez, 2003]. Table 18 shows the measures chosen for Action / Transaction. Again, there was no point in being burdened with a long list of services when most, if not all, of them would end up being absent.¹⁵ Table 19 shows the measures selected for Integration, which refers to the idea of horizontal and vertical integration of databases and applications [Layne and Lee, 2001].

Website evaluations for each of the 89 regions were carried out in two waves. The first wave was performed in October - November 2003, and the second wave roughly one year later. Each researcher was responsible for doing a set of evaluations. Each researcher spoke Russian or English as a first language and was fluent in the second. Cross-sampling was used to test the

¹³ Hale et al. also specifically tracked links to non-governmental organizations such as grass-roots organizations, charities, churches, fraternal and social organizations and government-sponsored organizations [Hale, Musso and Ware, 1999]. Wescott also proposed empowerment of NGOs through ICTs as a facilitator for development of democracy, but this is outside the realm of e-government websites per se [Wescott, 2002]. Although private and NGO use of the web is undoubtedly having a strong effective on democratic processes in a number of countries, the scope of this paper is related to what official government bodies are providing for their populations on their websites.

¹⁴ Initially we included tracking the presence of information about the history, geography, and life of the region (Nos. 2, 12, 13) and the search capabilities on the site (14, 15). We ultimately concluded that these features are less relevant to democracy, omitting them from further calculations. [McHenry and Borisov, 2006] used the same data set to examine methodological questions about e-government metrics; this paper shares a small number of descriptions of methodologies and tables of metrics with that one.

¹⁵ An analogy can be made here to data mining techniques such as decision trees. Breaking the website functions into a very large number of very small pieces is akin to overfitting the model. It may make perfect sense for a small number of websites, but will be very hard to apply to other websites where the functions are not broken out in just that way. On the other hand, having categories in which almost all websites will get the same score is akin to underfitting. For a decision tree model, it is akin to leaving the tree in a state close to what it would be if all elements were left in one node. A judicious number of reasonably specific categories are needed. Eventually it may be possible to develop an optimal metric for website functions.

level of agreement in assessments in Wave 1, where the average agreement rate was about 90%. Grey areas were discussed and a consensus reached. Any discrepancies between Wave 1 and Wave 2 where the rating went down were thoroughly investigated, with about 3% of all measures being corrected. (See Appendix IV for the list of websites evaluated.) Our results were in agreement with a limited study of regional websites performed by the Russian firm Russian Business Consulting in 2003 [RosBusinessConsulting, 2003].

During 2004, a federal government reorganization took place. This made tracking these websites more problematical. While it would have been ideal to use our metrics for the federal sites, we believe that several existing surveys have adequately covered the main aspects of what these sites are doing.

METRICS FOR THE E-RUSSIA PROGRAM

For studying the E-Russia program, our methodology was qualitative and interpretivistic [Lee, 1999]. It consisted of finding and performing content analysis on the projects and tenders that comprised E-Russia to discern what the program was actually about, rather than relying on the evaluations of other observers. The detailed database compiled includes descriptions of almost 700 tenders and projects, collected from a wide variety of published sources.¹⁶ It permitted us to examine the data descriptively from many different points of view (only some of which will be discussed in this paper). To our knowledge, no such database is publicly available. Indeed, one of the E-Russia tenders in 2005 was to create a comprehensive database of work performed to date though the program.

Some caveats about these data are in order. Not all of the reports about tenders included amounts of financing, and some reported amounts indicated an upper limit. Some may have spanned the entire time frame of the measure, while others may have referred to the first year only. Thus, the available financial information may represent intentions as much as executed projects. Nevertheless, our tallies are consistent with other aggregated data, and we do not believe there is any systematic error in our data.¹⁷

¹⁶ Data about tenders and projects were gathered and exhaustively collated from a plethora of sources on the Internet: the official publication of record for tenders (Gostorgi), various websites sponsored by and related to the E-Russia program, regional governmental websites, and press reports. Data collection ended in July, 2005. Every effort was made to ensure that the list of some 696 instances was comprehensive and included no duplicates. However, tenders were not necessarily referenced by a universal number, and following up on the extent to which announced measures were actually implemented was not always possible. Hence, these data to a certain extent represent intentions as much as actually accomplished tasks. It is also likely that any tenders and projects overtly related to military matters have not been publicized. To cite the more than 190 sources from which these data were gathered would be prohibitive.

¹⁷ The least information was available for 2002, 46.2% of the tenders included financial information. For all years, we found financial information for about 80% of the three major ministries (Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MERT), Ministry of Information Technology and Communications (Mininformsvyaz), and Ministry of Education and Science (Minobrnauki)). The percentages of financing by ministry that we found were roughly consistent with a 2002 analysis by Drozhzhinov [Drozhzhinov, 2003], and the announced percentages from Mininformsvyaz's predecessor Minsvyaz for 2003 [Ministry of Communications of the Russian Federation, 2002]. To test for the presence of systematic errors arising from the absence of financial data, we tested the null hypothesis that the presence and absence of financial data is not related to the five areas of investment listed in Table 11 and Table 12. The null hypothesis is supported ($n=696$, $df=4$, Pearson's Chi-Square=3.060, $p=.548$), and we do not find systematic error.

OUR RESEARCH STRATEGY AND LIMITATIONS

Our initial research strategy for this paper was to examine the development of e-government websites in Russia, especially at the regional level, to see whether or not they seemed to be contributing to democracy. During our preliminary research, we quickly became aware of the E-Russia program, and initially examined the question of “how do national informatization programs influence the development of e-government websites.” We found little evidence supporting a direct connection (presented in Section V), but came to believe that in general, the two phenomena could not easily be directly connected. Rather, we came to see E-Russia as something worth studying in and of itself, but at the same time being part of a larger overall climate of moving towards or away from democracy. Table 2 outlines which aspects of e-government in Russia this paper covers, and which it does not. We do not purport to cover all the uses of the ICTs that may be changing the nature and status of democracy in Russia. For example, although we reviewed aspects of the well-funded Electronic Moscow program and a handful of other extensive regional informatization programs, they are not discussed here. Since the websites are the visible manifestation of e-government, and since E-Russia is by far the most prominent program, we do not believe that the omission of other areas puts our conclusions in doubt.

Table 2. Scope of This Research

LEVEL	Official Websites	E-Russia Program	Other e-government initiatives	Other uses of the web to promote democracy
NATIONAL	Examined using secondary sources	Examined using primary research	Not considered	Not considered
REGIONAL	Examined using primary research through evaluations in 2003 and 2004	Included to extent possible, but E-Russia proved to have little impact (so far) on the regions and municipalities	Ample evidence available for a small number of leading regions, some of which we reviewed, very little available for all others	
MUNICIPAL	Not considered		Not considered	

A second limitation of this research is that we are not proposing or defending a theoretical model that might explain why the websites are at the level they are at, or why the e-Russia program has developed along the lines that it has developed. Website levels might be a function of the wealth of a region, its political structure and institutions, the presence of a “strong leader,” the ethnic composition of the region, the number of Internet users, the computer literacy of the population, their ownership of and access to computers, etc. Unfortunately, reliable data series for enough of these factors at the Russian regional level are simply not available.¹⁸ Furthermore, in this paper we are interested in observing the aggregate effect of what is going on in the regions, rather than

¹⁸ For example, there is a series available for the level of Press Freedoms in 2000. Using correlation analysis, we find that the Press Freedom Index for 2000 is significantly correlated ($p < .001$) for the 2003 website level (Pearson's correlation coefficient=.527) and for 2004 website level (Pearson's correlation coefficient=.554). However, we have no confidence that, in the presence of other variables, this correlation would hold. Website levels are defined as the sum of the percentage of features present in each category (in Section IV we use this Press Freedom Index in a somewhat different fashion).

discerning the reasons for differences among them (although we encourage further research along these lines).

In short, we believe that the information we present makes a new, substantial contribution to our understanding of democracy in Russia and to the literature on e-government, despite severe limitations in the available data.¹⁹

IV. E-GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

In this section we first summarize evidence about the level of national e-government websites. We then examine regional level websites in detail, including changes from 2003 to 2004. We end the section by considering some explanatory possibilities related only to press freedoms and information policies in the regions.

NATIONAL LEVEL GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

Almost all national-level executive branch bodies, such as ministries, committees, and administrations, had websites by 2003. Russian Government Resolution No. 98 (of Feb. 12, 2003) listed approximately 36 specific areas in which publication of information on websites by federal governmental bodies was mandatory [Russian Federation Government, 2003]. In Table 3,

Table 3. Website Areas Mandated by Resolution 98

Democracy / Outcome Type	Web Function Category	No.	Detailed Description
Pluralism - Service delivery	Information	1	Information about job positions in the government, vacancies, requirements, how to apply, etc.
	Action / Transaction	2	Declaration forms accepted by the government
		3	List of information systems of general purpose and data banks under the purview of the government and lists of information resources and services offered to citizens and organizations
Pluralism - Decision Making Process	Information	4	Agenda of the government and information about the materials for the meetings and their conclusions
		5	Information about official activities of governmental bodies (meetings, briefings, seminars, etc.)
Pluralism - Interest Groups	Information	6	Information about interactions of the government with other organizations such as political parties, NGOs, unions, including international bodies
Pluralism - Contracts	Action / Transaction	7	Information about open contests, auctions, tenders, consultations with experts and other measures, including procedures for participation and means for registering complaints
	Information	8	List and substantive conditions of contracts of civil-legal nature that the government makes with organizations
Representative - Electoral Accountability	Information	9	Information about top level and department level bureaucrats, including biographical information if authorized by the person
		10	Information about organizations that are subordinated to the government
		11	Information about composition, tasks, activities of the bodies that form the Russian government entity

¹⁹ Although the USSR broke up in 1991, many governmental officials have remained the same (cf. [Chazan, 2005]). The overarching attitude towards giving information, especially to foreigners, when it is not required, is one of extreme caution. See [McHenry et al., 1990] for a description of data gathering problems with respect to the USSR.

Democracy / Outcome Type	Web Function Category	No.	Detailed Description
		12	What federal bodies may do, territorial bodies and bodies subordinated to it
		13	Analytical presentations and overviews of an informational nature about the activities of the government; information about governmental decisions and their execution
		14	Results of audits carried out by federal bodies of themselves and other bodies
		15	Texts of official speeches and proclamations
		16	Information about official visits and working trips
		17	Information about programs and plans of the government
		18	Information about protecting the public from catastrophic situations
		19	Forecasts prepared by the government
		20	Information about the basic indicators, characterizing the situation in various branches, dynamics of their growth, execution of the budget
		21	Official statistical information collected and processed by the government
		22	Information about execution of the budget
		23	Information about Federal Targeted Programs and those under development
		24	Information about laws under development, including changes suggested by the government
		25	Other legal rules proclaimed by the federal body, including amendments and notices of those that have lost force
		26	Information about the state registration of federal normative acts by the Ministry of Justice
		27	Laws, directives, regulations about the federal body itself
		28	Legal decisions that render laws, etc. invalid
		29	Information about international programs and agreements in which the government participates and which the government has signed
		30	Information about the directions of the spending of foreign technical aid for projects in which the government participates
		31	List of international organizations, the activities in which the government participates
32	Information about participation of the government in the realization of international agreements		
Direct - Two way communication	Information	35	List of foreign offices of the Russian government with telephone, mail, email, etc.
		36	Structures of the governmental units, their tasks, phone numbers, email addresses, etc.
	Communication / Participation	33	Summaries of the requests made by citizens and organizations of the government and summary information about the results of these reviews and measures taken
		34	Telephone, mail, email of subdivisions that work directly with citizens

Source: Derived from [Sergo, 2003]

we have categorized and summarized them using the Norris framework and our four web function categories. According to one tally, at the beginning of 2003 on average about half of the 36 mandates were fulfilled on each website, but by the end of 2003, about two-thirds had been

fulfilled [Sergo, 2003].²⁰ By the mandated deadline of November, 2003, only six ministries had posted information in all 36 categories, 14 had increased the amount by 1.5-2 times, and 15 had left their sites entirely unchanged [Monakhov, 2004].

Resolution 98 made the predominant orientation of these websites Information. Thirty-one of 36 categories had to do with Information (86%), with only two for Communication / Participation (5.5%) and three for Action / Transaction (8.3%). With very little emphasis on Communications / Participation, the Resolution did little to foster direct democracy. Most of the information areas related to representative democracy, i.e. allowing citizens to learn what government is doing, which can then be used to assist in making voting decisions. Eight areas were related to fostering pluralistic democracy. Glaringly absent was any direct mandate for the provision of services in electronic form (even the items marked Action / Transaction are largely informational). Also missing was any indication of backend procedures that might lead to managerial efficiency.

Appendix V presents detailed results from several Russian and Western studies of Russian national level governmental websites. These studies are:

- Russian Association of Managers in 2003 (62 sites) [Skripkin and Pichugin, 2003]
- United Nations in 2004 (one or a few major sites) [Hafeez, 2004]
- West in 2004 (a few dozen) [West, 2004b].
- Cnews Analytics in 2004 (88 sites) and 2005 (99 sites) [Shalmanov, 2005].

Although these studies are somewhat disjointed, their message is fairly consistent. After Resolution 98 was proclaimed, most national-level bodies made a fairly strong effort to ensure that some of the basic required information was present on their sites. Until the governmental reorganization in mid-2004, the proportion of agencies that were providing higher levels of Communications / Participation was on the rise. After the reorganization with the expanded number of bodies this proportion fell. No national level bodies were interested in providing, or were yet ready to provide, on-line services (Actions / Transactions) beyond downloading forms. The Integration category was not greatly evidenced in these sites.

Thus, the federal level websites were doing little to provide for direct democracy in the form of Communications / Participation. Although email communication was possible, other forms of interaction that would contribute to direct democracy were lacking. While the information available on the sites could contribute to good governance (pluralism), with no complete services and only 15% offering tender information on-line, good governance via the websites did not seem to be a high priority goal. The information could contribute to electoral accountability (representative democracy), but many of the national level websites still provided too little depth, e.g. little or no substantive statistical or analytical materials. It seems unlikely that the national level bodies were trying to use the websites to promote democracy. With the largest emphasis of the sites on the presentation of news, they could be used to reinforce the predominant messages that the government wanted to promote. Resolution 98 may have provided cover for doing no more than the Resolution described.

REGIONAL LEVEL WEBSITES

As at the federal level, the two web function areas that received the most development at the regional level were Information and Communications / Participation. We collected the data presented here in late 2003 and late 2004, making them very comparable with what we have summarized for the national level. While the national level studies considered each agency separately, for the regions the measures were taken based on everything present on the official

²⁰ No explanation is given as to how the data were collected. For the beginning of 2003, n=39, for the end of 2003, n=48. The average number of increased areas was 26%.

regional government sites, including governmental agencies and bodies that were either hosted directly on the sites (the vast majority), or those that had direct links from the official sites. Although Resolution 98 was recommended for use by the regions, we have provided the relevant measure numbers for ease of comparison.

Information (Table 4) can be broken into two categories. First is information about what the government is doing in the form of programs, results, and plans for the future (Nos. 3, 8, 9); and laws, regulations, and legislation (Nos. 10, 11). Second is information about who is in the government and what the government structures are (Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7). The measurement results for these items are shown in Table 4. Almost all regional governments were making an effort to put basic information on their sites (Nos. 3, 4).

Table 4. Selected Results for Information Metrics

Our No.	Res. 98 No.	Categories for Information		2003			2004		
				0	1	%-1	0	1	%-1
1	n/a	Electronic presence	Found websites	9	80	89.9%	4	85	95.5%
INFORMATION ABOUT GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS									
3	20	General information about the region	Information about economic situation, economic development, branches of industry, investment activity	7	73	91.3%	6	79	92.9%
8	13, 17, 21, 22	Information about the work of the regional authority	Presence on the site of reports of the government about past budget, programs, and plans.	27	53	66.3%	22	63	74.1%
9	13, 17, 19, 21, 22		Future and present regional plans, programs, directions of governmental activities.	60	20	25.0%	47	38	44.7%
10	27	Legal and normative information	Presence on the site of texts of regional laws, resolutions, and declarations of the regional leader/government.	32	48	60.0%	28	57	67.1%
11	25-28		Broad listing of regional laws, resolutions, and declarations with texts, data base of regional jurisprudence	61	19	23.8%	67	18	21.2%
INFORMATION ABOUT THE ADMINISTRATION									
4	9, 10	Information about the upper level of the administration of the regional bodies of power	Information about the governor, his/her deputies, the head of the administration and his/her deputies, and information about a few heads of ministries and departments	3	77	96.3%	4	81	95.3%
5	9, 10		Information about all regional ministries and departments	22	58	72.5%	26	59	69.4%
6	9, 10	Information about the middle level of management, about functions and contact information of the subdivisions	Information about bureaucrats of a lower level (deputy ministers, heads of departments, executives).	35	45	56.3%	32	53	62.4%
7	9, 10, 11		Information for all ministries and departments to the level of the heads of departments and lower, with functions, tasks, and responsibilities of subdivisions	73	7	8.8%	68	17	20.0%

Around 3/5ths to 2/3rds of the governments were adding somewhat more in-depth information (Nos. 5, 6, 8, 10). Only about 1/5th posted highly in-depth or complete information (Nos. 7, 11), with the exception being the posting of complete future plans (No. 9) with 44.7%. The difficulty of

finding information (i.e. the absence of various search functions on 35-50% of the sites) detracted from the usefulness and impact of the available information. All of these categories relate to the information that could be useful for enhancing representative democracy by fostering more electoral accountability.

Communication / Participation: The results for all of these categories are shown in Table 5. About 4/5ths of websites had means to contact the government by email or form, although only about 1/5th provided a structured form to do so. While only about 15% in 2004 had email addresses for a large number of officials, 3/5ths of the sites had them for a number of officials. Two-fifths allowed citizens to post comments, while about 1/3rd provided answers from responsible officials. Especially large increases were seen from 2003 to 2004 in providing comprehensive email addresses and answers to questions. All of these categories relate to fostering direct democracy through two-way communications. Whereas one might have expected a pull-back from communications-oriented features given the changing climate in Russia in 2003-2004, these results suggest an increasing number of regions adopting more sophisticated means for ensuring communication with citizens.

Table 5. Results for Communication / Participation Metrics

No.	Res. 98 No.	Categories for Communication / Participation		2003			2004		
				0	1	%-1	0	1	%-1
17	34, 36	Presence on the site of elements of feedback	Existence of a means to contact the government, be it email or form	14	66	82.5%	18	67	78.8%
18	n/a		Structured form that has choices for any of these things: topics and/or destinations	66	14	17.5%	67	18	21.2%
19	n/a	Presence of forums for interaction with citizens	Presence of a forum or guestbook on which the citizens can write their comments for other citizens to see	56	24	30.0%	51	34	40.0%
20	33		Answers are posted from responsible officials, as well as the questions	74	6	7.5%	55	30	35.3%
21	34, 36	Interactions with officials using electronic mail	Presence of email addresses for government officials for a number of executives	40	40	50.0%	33	52	61.2%
22	34, 36		Presence of email addresses for the large majority of bureaucrats, information about which is present on the site	78	2	2.5%	72	13	15.3%

Action / Transactions and Integration: In these two categories we found essentially no examples of fully executable functions on the websites. In 2004 31.8% of the sites had downloadable forms, up from 10% in 2003. Only Moscow and St. Petersburg had any transactional capabilities. We also found no examples of integration. About 35% of the sites in 2004 had hyperlinks to the sites of regional representations of federal governmental bodies, while 52.9% had hyperlinks to lower level municipal governments.²¹

²¹ Based on extensive surveys of computerization in various regions done in 2002 and 2003, the median percentage of governmental units below the regional level (e.g. municipalities) that had websites in 2002 was 7.0% (n=30 of 89 regions). In the 2003 sample, the median percentage jumped to 59.5% (n=65) [Lisitsyn, 2002, 2003].

Changes from 2003 to 2004

A key question that we posed was whether the e-government websites provided a greater or lesser foundation for democracy as the overall political climate seemed to grow less democratic.

In Figure 1, we present the level of each regional website as a single bar comprised of parts for Information, Communication / Participation, and Services (Integration is zero across the board).²² For example, in 2003 Amurskaya oblast' had 7 of 9 Information categories fulfilled (.778), 3 of 6 Communications / Participation categories fulfilled (.5), and no Services, for an overall total of 1.278. The maximum total score is 3.0. We define the "website level" as the sum of these three measures (e.g. 1.278 for Amurskaya Oblast').

For 2003, only 34 regions exceeded a total score of 1.0, and only four exceeded 1.5. In most cases, the information category comprised the lion's share of the score. Consider how the situation changed in 2004 (Figure 2). Now 54 regions exceeded 1.0, 20 were over 1.5, and three were over 2.0. Figure 2 shows that, while some of this progress came from adding Information functions, more of it came from adding Communications / Participation functions. A relatively small amount of the growth came from Services, although they are much more visible in 2004 than in 2003.

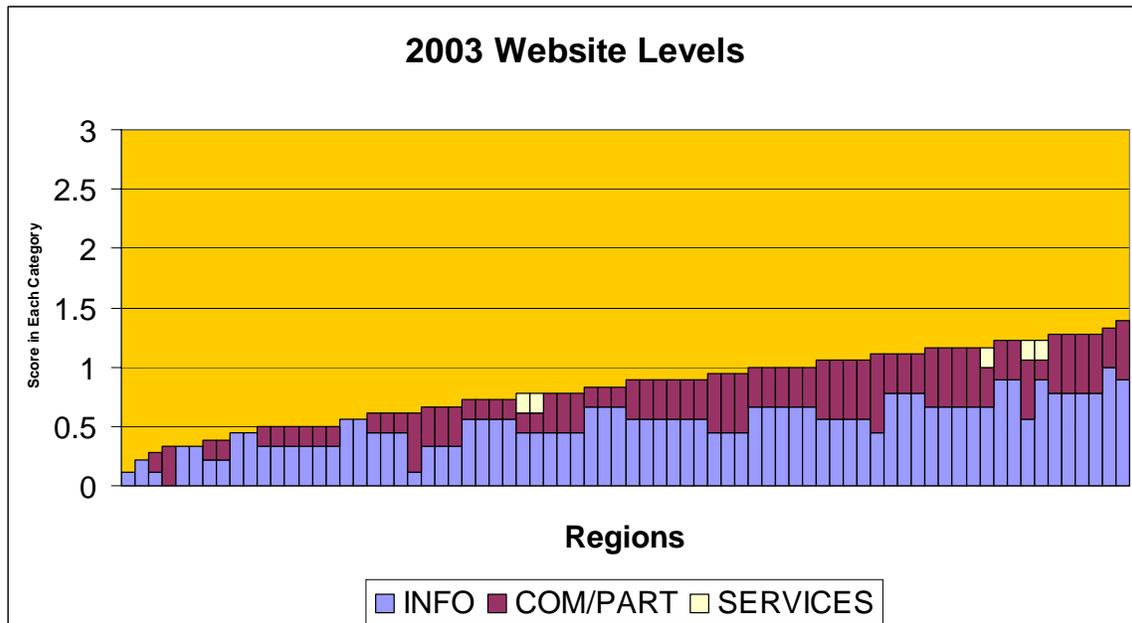


Figure 1. Composite Regional Website Scores, 2003

A gross means of aggregating the data is to add the scores for each region in each of the three categories and compare the results. The sum of the blue INFO bars in 2003 is 44.44, and with 80 regions with websites and a possible maximum score for each of 1.0 for the Information category, the percentage achieved is $(44.44/80=)$ 55.6%. Table 6 shows the percentages achieved in 2003 and 2004 for all three categories, along with the year-to-year percentage growth in each category. While the greatest percentage improvement came about in services, the size of the achieved percentages for these years is minimal. This confirms what is visible on the figures: significant growth in the website levels came from the Communications / Participation category.

²² We are not including links to higher or lower level web pages, because this is such a weak form of integration, and because we did not collect this data for 2003.

Table 6. Aggregate Achieved Level of Regional Websites

Category	Aggregate Achieved Level (%)		Percentage Growth (2003 to 2004)
	2003	2004	
Information	55.6%	64.6%	16.3%
Communications / Participation	31.7%	44.6%	40.8%
Services	2.1%	6.3%	200.0%

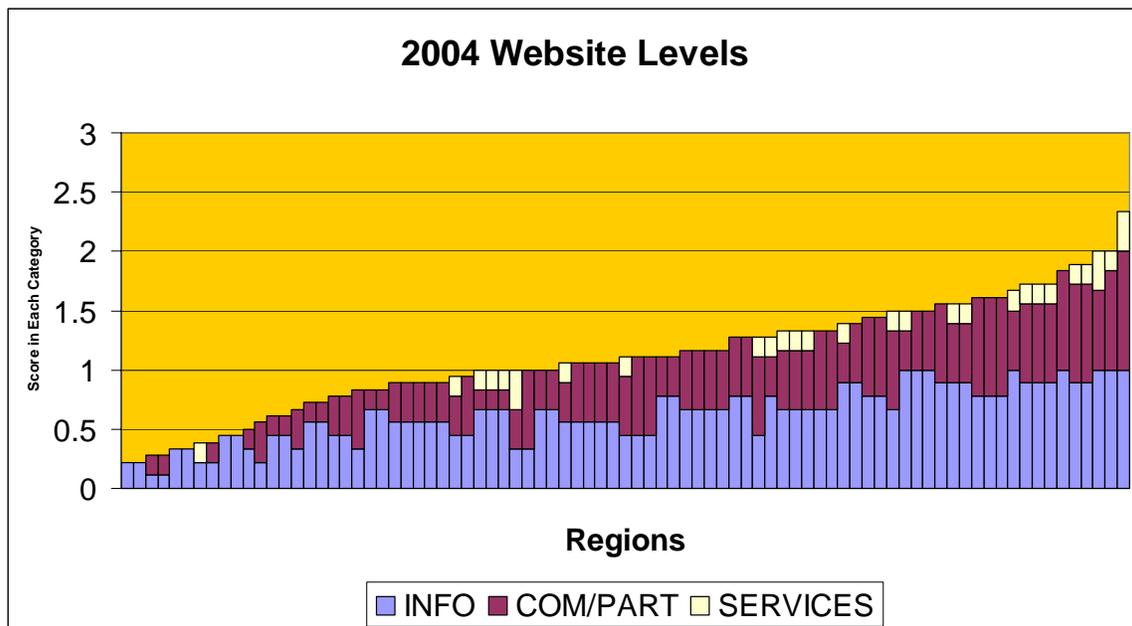


Figure 2. Composite Regional Website Scores, 2004

Overall Evaluation

In Table 7 we summarize where the regional e-government websites stood at the end of 2004. When few functions are present, we have labeled this region as one that is “going through the motions.” At the high end, we have labeled regions that are providing high levels of information, communications, and participation as those that are “striving for comprehensiveness.” The rest are more or less doing what is expected to be respectable.

Thus, at both the federal and regional levels, the official governmental websites have been oriented towards providing information. This information may help to improve electoral accountability, enhancing representative democracy. However, it is often lacking in scope and in depth. At both levels, there are some websites that provide strong feedback mechanisms that would enhance direct democracy, but these are also relatively rare. While the scope and amount of information on the federal websites essentially seemed to get somewhat worse from 2003 to 2004, the regional sites generally got better. The presence of services that could serve as a means to provide better managerial efficiency and good governance are almost nonexistent. This is true despite more than three years of rhetoric surrounding the E-Russia program about the development of electronic government.

Table 7. Summary of Regional Website Status, 2004

Category	Going through the motions	Doing what is expected to be respectable	Striving for Comprehensiveness
Information Functions	Roughly 20% of regions	Roughly 60-67% of regions	Roughly 20%, with exception for complete plans (45%)
Communication / Participation – emailing officials	Roughly about 20% are doing very little	Roughly 60% of regions	Roughly 15-20% are providing comprehensive means for routing messages to right official
Communication / Participation – online forums, questions	Roughly 25% doing very little	Roughly 40% of regions	About 35% of regions
Action / Transactions and Integration	A handful of regions, if that	None	None

Are the Websites a “Potemkin village”?

In this section we investigate two factors that are directly related to Proposition 2, i.e. whether regions might be using their websites as a “Potemkin village.” To do this, we examine how website levels may be related to broader patterns of information openness in the regions. As surrogates for “information openness,” we use the presence of information openness laws and a Press Freedom Index to study the website results.²³

Although Resolution 98 only applied at the federal level, it was recommended for application at the regional level as well. As of February 2005, 18 regions had adopted laws or resolutions that mirrored the requirements of Resolution 98. Seven regions had enacted or were about to enact their own laws that went beyond Resolution 98, or were in some ways more creative in handling government information. The rest of the republics either had no policy or one that paid lip service to openness but made no specific requirements [Sheverdyayev, 2005]. We do not have data on exactly when the policies were implemented. Table 8 shows the average website levels for each region in 2003 and 2004 by policy type. Regions that had their own policies had slightly higher levels with more features present. Both this group and the regions with explicit policies like Resolution 98 had more features than those without such policies. A one-way ANOVA test on the data in Table 8 shows a significant difference between the groups ($p < 0.05$) for 2003, but not for 2004 ($p < 0.25$). However, this is population data, so we know that the differences are real. These differences are quite small, especially for 2004. What we do not see is the reverse order, i.e. regions that have no policies in favor of information openness, then turning around and having (suspiciously) good websites.

In 2000, the Public Expertise Institute created a Freedom of the Press Index [Public Expertise Institute, 2000]. Each region was evaluated on a number of criteria and a synthetic index was created using a 1-100 point scale. Although the influence of the press situation in 2000 on websites in 2003 and 2004 may be tenuous, we have already noted that the website levels are correlated to this index (2003: Pearson's correlation coefficient=.527, $p < .001$; 2004: Pearson's

²³ In this section we have chosen to examine just two explanatory factors, without making broader claims about how they may be related to other variables. As explained at the end of Section III, we are not proposing a theoretical model to explain website differences more generally. These two variables have been selected because of their direct bearing on Proposition 2.

correlation coefficient=.554, $p < .001$). The sign of the coefficient suggests that regions with more press freedoms are more likely to have robust websites.

Table 8. Features in Regions by Information Openness Policy Type

Type of Information Access Policy in Region	2003			2004		
	N	Avg. Website Level	St. Dev. Website Level	N	Avg. Website Level	St. Dev. Website Level
Other, if any	55	0.845	0.362	60	1.032	0.493
Resolution 98-like	18	0.914	0.346	18	1.185	0.446
Own or expansive	7	1.214	0.430	7	1.294	0.520

Finally, we conjectured that we would be most likely to see high website scores in regions where there was both a strong commitment to press freedoms and either a Resolution 98-like law or a more expansive law (Table 9). A one-way ANOVA test on the data in Table 9 shows a significant difference between the groups ($p < 0.01$) for both years (although again, these are actual differences since this is population data). Table 9 indicates that having had either an explicit information openness policy, or having previously made a commitment to press freedoms (or both) is associated with regions that have made the most effort to

Table 9. Relationship of Website Levels to Press Freedoms and Laws

Press Freedom Index, 2000	Type of Information Access Policy in Region	2003			2004		
		N	Avg. Website Level	St.Dev. Website Level	N	Avg. Website Level	St.Dev. Website Level
NONE	Other, if any	2	0.361	0.118	2	0.306	0.039
LOW	Other, if any	19	0.693	0.298	22	0.813	0.488
LOW	Own or expansive	1	1.000	.	1	0.833	.
HIGH	Resolution 98-like	7	0.794	0.354	7	1.071	0.540
MEDIUM	Other, if any	19	0.898	0.364	21	1.074	0.386
LOW	Resolution 98-like	4	0.861	0.508	4	1.111	0.614
MEDIUM	Resolution 98-like	7	1.063	0.199	7	1.341	0.188
HIGH	Own or expansive	6	1.250	0.459	6	1.370	0.524
HIGH	Other, if any	15	1.037	0.332	15	1.393	0.403

Note: Because this is population data, significance measures are not relevant. The Press Freedom Index levels were divided into three equal groups to establish low, medium, and high. Two regions had a score of zero, and were grouped as "none."

put information and communications means relevant to democracy on their websites. A group with the least developed websites has made a commitment to neither a policy nor press freedoms, and is acting consistently with those choices by having marginal website content. In

the case of high press freedoms and a Resolution 98-like policy, seven regions are doing more poorly with their websites than might be expected.

What is missing from Table 9 is what we might expect to find if regions were trying to use their websites as Potemkin villages, i.e. to give false impressions about freedom of information in the region. Such regions would have a low press freedom index and no information access policy, but would have high website level scores. Thus, this evidence does not support Proposition 2.

V. THE E-RUSSIA PROGRAM

In this section we examine the parts of the E-Russia program that are most relevant to the e-government goals of providing Internet access and fostering communications and information transparency through websites. Then we put these efforts in context by considering how they relate to spending in the program as a whole.

Bridging the Digital Divide

One of the major goals of E-Russia was to increase Internet access throughout Russia. Both the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications (Mininformsvyaz) and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MERT) used some of their E-Russia allocations for projects to put computers and Internet connections in (remote) public places for access by those who would not otherwise have it. MERT's spending on this was \$200,000 in 2002, approximately \$760,000 in 2003, and \$500,000 in 2004, for a total of about \$1.4M. The most prominent of the programs was Kiberpochta ("Cyber Post Office", also spelled Kiberpocht@). Mininformsvyaz's predecessor ministry Minsvyazi started the Kiberpochta project in 2000 and transferred a portion of its funding to the E-Russia budget. By the end of 2004, 2,311 post offices in 87 regions had been outfitted with a total of 3,271 workstations and telecommunications links, for an average of about 1.4 workstations in each location. Statements in 2002 and 2003 regularly mentioned the thousands of locations at which Kiberpochta had been installed, implying these were a direct result of E-Russia. In fact, just 83 installations were actually funded by E-Russia (for about \$1.86M) in 2002, apparently one each in 83 different regions [MERT, 2002].

The same project was to receive \$10.6M in 2003 to finance 100 more centers based on post offices [Prime-TASS, 2003b], and as many as 200 more connections for other organizations (not all of which appeared to be public access points) [Prime-TASS, 2003]. For these same purposes, as much as \$10.9M was allocated for 2004 [Gostorgi, 2003]. Based on various reports about the number of workstations installed, about 1.75 workstations were added per day, on average, between the beginning of 2002 and the beginning of 2005, with an appreciable slowing of the rate in 2004. At this rate, it will be well into the next decade before the goal of 12,000 workstations by 2008 is met, let alone the goal of outfitting all 40,000 post office outposts in Russia. While these rates for the Kiberpochta program are not too encouraging, it is likely that part of these funds were additionally used for connecting libraries, schools, and other "socially accessible institutions" [Turovtsev, 2004]. A total of 203 collective access points were created in 2004, with another 230 anticipated in 2005 [E-rus, 2005].

A second area of E-Russia spending involved creating or upgrading university local area networks and connecting them to a national network. Presumably this resulted in access for faculty, staff, and students. The Ministry of Education and Science (Minobrnauki) allocated \$6.8M of E-Russia funds for this in 2002-2005, including \$685,000 for the Higher School of Economics, creator of the original E-Russia plan (MERT provided an additional \$200,000 for this university). We counted 22 separate higher educational institutions in our database of E-Russia tenders, which are located in 16 regions. Moscow had six of these institutions and accounted for 42% of the funding. This is a far cry from connecting all higher educational institutions, a goal mentioned in Section II.

Between these three ministries a total of about \$32 M or one-fifth of the E-Russia funding was allocated for all of these purposes. It is difficult to verify the impact these programs. About 3.3M

people reportedly used the Kiberpochta workstations in 2004, but we think it more likely that this refers to 3.3M sessions [Unified Federal Postal Service of Tomsk Oblast', 2005]. Assuming that the post offices were available 40 hours per week, this number of users and workstations would allow each user-session to last for a total of about two hours, which does not seem to reflect very heavy usage.²⁴ According to Public Opinion Fund surveys, the increase in the absolute number of people accessing the Internet between 2002 and 2005 from educational institutions was about 1.5M people, and from "other" places, was 300,000 (Table 10). If we assume that all of the latter is due to E-Russia, it still only accounts for 2.1% of the overall increase, and if we do the same extrapolation for educational institutions, then E-Russia accounted for an additional 9.8% of the increase. Given the number of institutions involved, however, this seems unlikely [Public Opinion Foundation, 2005].

Table 10. Change in Internet Access Places, 2002-2005

Access Place	Fall 2002		Spring 2005		Absolute Increase (M)
	Number (M)	Percent	Number (M)	Percent	
Home	2.8	32%	9.1	48%	6.3
Work	3.6	41%	7.6	40%	4.0
Educational place	1.5	17%	3.0	16%	1.5
Internet café	0.8	9%	2.3	12%	1.5
At friends	1.5	17%	3.6	19%	2.1
Other	0.6	7%	0.9	5%	0.3

Source: [Public Opinion Foundation, 2005]

There have been few changes in the demographics of the Internet users during the time of the E-Russia program (Table 15, Appendix I). The biggest change is in the percentage of users that have the highest incomes, but this change is more complicated to interpret because incomes in general were also rising during this period. Therefore, we do not see appreciable changes in the number or demographics of Internet users that can be related specifically to the goal within E-Russia of bridging the digital divide. It is important that far more Russians now access the Internet than was the case a few years ago. These users are still skewed demographically towards the elite.

Internet access for a large portion of the population is a precondition for at least two of the three major types of democracy: representative democracy and direct democracy. Pluralism, which involves elites and specific interest groups, may require only that these specific groups have access. This portion of E-Russia, therefore, has contributed mainly towards pluralism. This view is strengthened by noting how the officials have described the purpose of the Kiberpochta project. It was seen as a major means of bringing e-government services by 2008 including: submitting tax forms electronically, receiving social welfare payments, paying various fees, registering place of residence, registering changes in status (e.g. marriages), obtaining personal documents, participating in electronic voting, and submitting other declarations to social services agencies [Prime-TASS, 2003b]. These are services that we might have expected to find in regional and federal websites, but did not find. These services would contribute mainly to good governance, and have no specific bearing on representative or direct democracy.

²⁴ Never in any of the usage data reported in 2002 to 2005 is it stated that these are unique users, and it seems more reasonable to assume these are visits, rather than unique visitors.

Providing for the Development of E-Government Portals

In this category, Mininformsvyaz put its resources into bringing federal agencies to the web, spending \$1.15M on this in 2002-2005. An additional \$1.5M was allocated for the websites of the President and Parliament in 2004. Minobrnauki built up its internal and external sites with \$230,000 in 2004-2005.

MERT also directed resources to federal portals, trying to create a standard portal called "The Government Portal." To this end it spent about \$1M for the project as a whole and for the Presidential apparatus, with another \$333,000 for a portion devoted to small business. The new version of the "The Government Portal" was in testing in February, 2004 [Samoylov, 2004] and a first version of the system was presented to the press in Dec., 2004 [Cnews, 2004].²⁵ After some delays, the small business portal went live in 2005 (<http://smb.economy.gov.ru/index>). MERT spent another \$433,000 for portals for a few specific agencies (statistics, law enforcement).²⁶

MERT allocated \$133,000 for portals for regional governments. In August, 2003 MERT chose one of Russia's biggest IT firms, IBS, to develop standard portal solutions for regional governments. IBS's initial design proposed an N-tiered information architecture, with XML to bridge federal-regional incompatibilities [IBS Firm, 2003]. The design proposed an exhaustive list of information types to be included, but included services that focused only on posing questions to officials and getting answers. In essence it was a superset of functions that had already been implemented in various regions, similar to the Resolution 98 list. MERT was preparing an official regulation for standard regional government portal requirements for the end of 2003 [Lenta, 2003]. However, in our review of websites in 2003 and 2004, we saw little evidence that this standard portal had been adopted anywhere. The one exception was the Republic of Chuvashiya, which was the partner of IBS in an E-Russia pilot program to create the standard portal [Leotova, 2003]. MERT also allocated \$122,000 for development of a standard municipal portal. MERT reiterated its commitment to helping regional governments upgrade the content of their websites after an analysis it performed in late 2004 showed that many of the sites fell short across various areas of the Resolution 98 provisions, and were weak in supplying information about the course of informatization [MERT, 2005b].²⁷

At the regional level, we can find about \$480,000 that five regions earmarked for portal-related projects within the umbrella of E-Russia. Clearly this does not capture all the funds spent independent of E-Russia by all the regions on their portals. Federal portal expenditures through E-Russia amounted to about 3.5% of all funds allocated. Although the attempts to develop standard solutions are noteworthy, and undoubtedly some federal and regional sites are better off because of the E-Russia funding, E-Russia has done little to bring any degree of standardization to portals at any level of government. We cannot say that E-Russia, with its idealistic emphasis on democracy has, in practice, resulted in the widespread development of portals that foster direct democracy. If anything, the E-Russia projects have set a tone for emphasizing provision of information, and are most related to fostering representative democracy. While the information

²⁵ As of August, 2005, this portal (<http://www.government.ru>) listed its current version as 2.0 from 2002, although the functionality seems to include functions set to be implemented later with E-Russia financing. Press reports from 2002 do not project the website being finished until at least 2005.

²⁶ MERT also spent \$147,000 for portals related to business, including \$80,000 for the "Russian Portal of Development" project that was also funded by the World Bank. Besides a national site, there were development gateway sites for Moscow, for two Federal Okrugs, and five regions. MERT financed the development of a prototype for a regional segment, but the regional sites themselves were paid for by the regions. (See <http://www.russia-gateway.ru>.)

²⁷ We did not report the results of this analysis because its authors inexplicably relied on an outdated list of the sites of the regional governments, excluding many that now exist.

provided is also relevant to pluralism, these portals do not reveal underlying managerial efficiency through the provision of services or special emphases on interest groups.

Providing for the Press

As part of E-Russia, MERT provided about \$375,000 for the means by which the mass media could connect to the Internet. However, we found that many official regional government websites actually hosted electronic versions of local newspapers right on the official government site, which raises questions of influence and control. The Kiberpressa project (from Mininformsvyaz), was cited alongside Kiberpochta as a means to bringing central newspapers to remote regions at collective access points where users could then print the papers. It was supposed to be in seven regions by the end of 2003. It appears that, after two years of a small amount of financing, the idea of using E-Russia to promote the press was dropped.

Two recent E-Russia tenders regarding the press and web content give pause. One is devoted to developing methods to monitor the press on the Internet, a project for the office of President Putin worth \$200,000 in 2005. Another is to develop content filtration methods for web information, worth \$500,000, also in 2005. It is possible to see these as means to develop ways to start reigning in the Internet, or simply as modern tools that any political establishment requires.

E-Russia Transparency Applications in Context

As we noted in Section II, E-Russia is a nine-year program that has a number of different goals, including a prominent one of enhancing information access and democracy. But as we have seen, only about one-fifth of the funds allocated so far have gone to increasing the number of Internet users and to web portals. What happened to the rest of the funding? We devised a means of categorizing the original 68 measures of the E-Russia plan, and used this same categorization system to aggregate data from all of the tenders and projects from 2002 to mid-2005. In Table 11 we show what the original plan mandated for the 2002-2010 period. What

Table 11. Initial Budget Plan for E-Russia (000's US\$)

Area	Sub-Area	Budget for Entire Program				
		Federal	Regional	External	Grand Total	Percent of Grand Total
Applications and Telecom (MIS)	Telecom, Networks, Hardware, Security	\$705,967	\$311,267	\$133,400	\$1,150,633	44.7%
	Management Information Systems	\$221,733	\$153,100	\$40,167	\$415,000	16.1%
Web, E-Government	E-Procurement	\$55,067	\$203,333	\$72,667	\$331,067	12.9%
	Other E-Government	\$21,167	\$4,000	\$5,667	\$30,833	1.2%
	Web-based Portals	\$20,200	\$900	\$8,667	\$29,767	1.2%
Education		\$252,800	\$76,233	\$226,833	\$555,867	21.6%
E-Russia		\$14,700	\$1,500	\$7,000	\$23,200	0.9%
IT Industry		\$21,133	\$3,333	\$11,800	\$36,267	1.4%
Grand		\$1,312,767	\$753,667	\$506,200	\$2,572,633	100.0%

Source: Derived from [Higher School, 2003]

becomes clear from Table 11 is that a large portion of E-Russia was always directed towards more traditional applications of computers within governmental offices, and for connecting them together by networks. Furthermore, the plan relied heavily on contributions from regional governments (\$750M), and from private industry sources or grants ("external") for about \$500M.

The actual amounts allocated, based on our own exhaustive compilations of information about projects and tenders, are shown in Table 12. Unlike the original budget, a larger percentage of funds has been spent on the traditional MIS and networking applications. The management of E-Russia has taken up a larger percentage than planned. The funding within the "Web, E-Government" category has been shifted around, although the initial tenders for 2005 now favor the E-Procurement area over the others. (See Appendix VI for the complete tables of budgetary allocations (Table 22) and actual allocations (Table 23) for 2002-mid 2005.)

The most glaring difference, however, is simply the overall amounts allocated. E-Russia never received anything close to the funds that were originally attached to the plan. Because Table 12 uses the tender year to aggregate the data, the totals do not add up to the yearly budgets passed by the legislature. Table 13 presents our best judgment of what the approved budget levels were, also showing the extent to which regional and external financing were attracted to the plan. Neither of these proved to be as capacious as hoped.

Table 12 E-Russia Tender and Project Allocations for 2002-2004

Area	Sub-Area	Allocated Amounts by Year of Allocation (US\$, 000's)				Percentages of Yearly Allocation			
		2002	2003	2004	Grand Total	2002	2003	2004	Grand Total
Applications and Telecom (MIS)	Telecom, Networks, Hardware, Security	\$3,983	\$17,641	\$35,215	\$56,839	24.8%	47.1%	38.4%	39.2%
	Management Information Systems	\$2,685	\$7,626	\$37,986	\$48,298	16.7%	20.4%	41.5%	33.3%
Web, E-Government	E-Procurement	\$1,643	\$3,154	\$5,136	\$9,933	10.3%	8.4%	5.6%	6.8%
	Other E-Government	\$2,290	\$2,548	\$3,836	\$8,674	14.3%	6.8%	4.2%	6.0%
	Web-based Portals	\$1,317	\$855	\$2,669	\$4,840	8.2%	2.3%	2.9%	3.3%
Education		\$1,392	\$3,143	\$3,352	\$7,888	8.7%	8.4%	3.7%	5.4%
E-Russia		\$1,787	\$1,941	\$2,630	\$6,357	11.1%	5.2%	2.9%	4.4%
IT Industry		\$935	\$547	\$783	\$2,265	5.8%	1.5%	0.9%	1.6%
Grand Total		\$16,032	\$37,455	\$91,607	\$145,094	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Given how much the original amounts would have increased federal and regional IT budgets, the chances of their ever being allocated was probably not too realistic. The reduced 2003 federal amount still represented a 7.8% increase in federal IT expenditures, and the 2003 regional contribution of \$6.39M constituted a 3.1% increase in regional IT budgets. For the three years of 2002-2004, E-Russia may have pumped about \$144M new IT dollars into the Russian economy,

with an additional \$75M promised for 2005.²⁸ It may actually turn out to be less than \$67M [Morozova, 2005].

Table 12 shows a clear trend for the first three years of the E-Russia program. After initially earmarking more than 30% of the 2002 funding for E-Government related programs, that percentage declined to about 13% in 2004. Meanwhile, more and more funds have been allocated to networking and especially, to internal information system applications. Only 3.3% of the funds went for web portals, and most of this was at the national level. About 20% of the funds overall went to networking that could provide somewhat greater Internet access to the population, although we saw little impact from it. Other allocations for networking and information systems were precursors to being able to offer services on line, and some had implicit and explicit missions of trying to improve the way the government operates. One application, called Electronic Administrative Requirements (EAR), represented an attempt to optimize, formalize, and create in electronic form the list of responsibilities and tasks of each government bureaucrat, bringing transparency and accountability to governmental business processes [Vardul', 2004]. Applications like this may have a future impact on the question of managerial efficiency, which is another way that e-government can contribute to democracy by making government services predictable, and accountable. As a whole, E-Russia seems to have contributed to laying the foundations for e-government, and to more routine I/S expenditures by federal government bodies.

Table 13. E-Russia Spending Levels, 2002-2005 (000's US\$)

Level	2002			2003		
	Original Plan	Budget	Actual	Original Plan	Budget	Actual
Federal	\$11,700	\$20,000	\$14,368	\$251,800	\$47,667	\$46,688
Regional	\$42,000	n/a	\$1,307	\$126,400	n/a	\$6,387
Other	\$33,200	n/a	\$0	\$67,400	n/a	\$304
Total	\$86,800	n/a	\$15,674	\$445,600	n/a	\$53,380
	2004			2005		
	Original Plan	Budget	Actual	Original Plan	Budget	Actual
Federal	\$214,000	\$56,418	\$55,512	\$206,460	\$74,450	n/a
Regional	\$123,700	n/a	\$6,659	\$123,680	n/a	n/a
Other	\$66,100	n/a	\$10,593	\$70,387	n/a	n/a
Total	\$403,800	n/a	\$72,764	\$400,527	n/a	n/a

Sources: [Electronic Russia, 2004b; MERT, 2002; MERT, 2003; MERT, 2004]

VI. CONCLUSIONS: THE TRAJECTORY UNDER PUTIN

We have seen that, despite Resolution 98, in 2003-2004 there seemed to be little progress towards increased Information and Communications / Participation at the federal level. At the regional level, there was improvement from 2003 to 2004, although a good fraction of the

²⁸ Attracting "non-state" (private) contributions was difficult. In 2003 in Siberia, for example, the planned amount "would not exceed" \$333,000 [Cnews, 2003b]. Given that the entire amount of non-budget contributions for 2003 was said to be \$304,000, it is unlikely that Siberia came anywhere close to \$333,000 [Ministry of Communications of the Russian Federation, 2004].

websites still provided incomplete Information and little Communications / Participation. Regions with laws on information openness that went beyond Resolution 98, and those that had laws patterned after Resolution 98, provided slightly more information on average than those that did not. The delivery of electronic services at both levels has remained stagnant so far, and very few governmental units are ready to start offering services over the web in the near future.²⁹

The E-Russia program started with high ideals, emphasizing the protection of rights to information access and democracy. However, its potential impact was immediately diminished by allocations that fell far short of the announced plan, and were relatively small. While \$220M represented a nice infusion for research and development and many pilot projects, it did relatively little to broaden the geography and demographics of Internet access. The bulk of the funds were allocated towards enhancing the networking infrastructure and building up information systems within governmental organizations, to which increasing amounts of funding have been allocated as the program has continued. The percentage of allocations to projects and tenders related to e-government fell in 2002-2004. E-Russia raised awareness and signaled to the regions that the federal level would be taking the subject more seriously, but did not push the regions to markedly improve the services or information offered on their websites.

EVALUATING THE PROPOSITIONS

In Table 14, we have summarized key areas in which the official governmental websites and the E-Russia program have had (or have not had) an effect on the democratic situation in Russia over the last few years. The cells in the table are aligned so that the three areas of laws, websites, and E-Russia can be read across the table in each of the “pro” and “con” sections.

Given the levels of government secrecy that existed in the USSR, we should not dismiss the existence of government websites and the E-Russia program. We have not seen a marked trend away from using these sites to provide Information in the environment of increasing autocracy of the Putin regime, and in fact have seen some improvement. E-Russia did provide limited financing for portals and more Internet connections. Nevertheless, the evidence that the sites and E-Russia are actively promoting and enhancing democracy (Proposition 1) is relatively weak. Since the Internet is oriented towards the elite, the effect of the limited information transparency that is being provided may be primarily to enhance pluralistic democracy. Resolution 98 mandated that information be placed on websites about relationships with various interest groups, about contracts and tenders, and other aspects that could impact elite groups vying for influence. For the general populace, the information being provided through government websites is not likely to offset the impact of the mass media. Still, whenever information makes its way into digital form, it can be found more easily and transmitted more widely, so the existence of the sites may enhance representative democracy to a certain extent. Just having access to contact names, telephone numbers, and email addresses is a big improvement in some regions, but the relatively low levels of Communications / Participation indicate little emphasis on enhancing direct democracy.

The goals of E-Russia related to democracy, as outlined in Section II, were:

- form e-government that provides services;
- ensure rights for free search, receipt, transmission, production, and distribution of information within the limits of confidentiality;
- build civil society through e-democracy.

Based on all the evidence we have presented, we cannot agree with Proposition 1. Almost no services have been enacted. While a certain amount of governmental information is being provided, all rights for free search, etc. have not yet been secured. The websites and E-Russia

²⁹ Time lines for a number of federal backend projects are being extended [MERT, 2005].

have made a small contribution thus far to building the civil society through e-democracy. Russia may look back at these early years of the 21st Century and see that a real opportunity to use the ICTs to shore up the fledgling democracy of the 1990's was missed.

Table 14. Summary: Evidence Regarding the Propositions

Propositions	Proposition 1: Russian e-government websites and the E-Russia program are consistent with the rhetoric of the E-Russia program, and are consistent with the idea of Russia moving towards democracy.	Proposition 2: Russian e-government websites and the E-Russia program pay lip service to democracy, but are, in substance, more like "Potemkin villages." Their substance is more consistent with a goal of expanding authoritarian domination	Proposition 3: Russian e-government sites and the E-Russia program are consistent with the main thrust of e-government sites and programs in other countries. They do not (yet) represent moves towards or away from democracy. They emphasize either services or websites as billboards rather than participatory democracy through communications / participation.
In Support	Laws: Resolution 98 brought into existence, including provision about contracts & tenders, some regions have access laws	Laws: Failure (as of yet) to move Resolution 98 from a regulation to a full-blooded law	Laws: Resolution 98 requires mainly Information
		Federal, Regional websites: News as prominent feature (although many governments around the world use websites to spread their press releases, etc.)	Federal websites: only partially live up to letter of Resolution 98 with Information in many categories
	Regions: 20-35% of regions striving for comprehensiveness with websites, many websites improved, some regions moving to higher emphasis on Communications / Participation		Regions: Most going through motions with websites, i.e. emphasis on Information
		E-Russia: Argument that ALL of E-Russia is a large "Potemkin village", E-Russia funding never amounted to that much	E-Russia: efforts to bridge digital divide somewhat similar to other countries
		E-Russia: press-related initiatives could have bearing on government ability to monitor, censor	E-Russia: infrastructure emphasis is logical and necessary first step
		E-Russia: being brought into line with Putin's administrative reforms	
Not in Support		Laws: pending discussions about unified, open e-government architecture	
	Federal websites: Limited Communication / Participation, no Action / Transaction, little Integration	Federal, Regional websites: Websites are not good enough to serve as "Potemkin village," i.e. to fool anybody	Federal, Regional websites: Absence of Action / Transactions
		Regions: regions with information openness laws or press freedoms, i.e. more commitment to democracy, have better websites; Absence of low democracy regions with well-developed websites, the most indicative condition for a "Potemkin village"	
	E-Russia spending trend away from e-government applications	E-Russia: Failure to use this program as a means to institute much greater vertical integration across administrative levels	E-Russia: spending trend away from e-government applications
	E-Russia has not substantially changed profile of Internet users, though some easing of digital divide may be attributed to it		

The question then boils down to whether what has been done with these sites and with E-Russia amounts to attempts to hide creeping authoritarianism or assert more autocratic control (Proposition 2). Particularly at the regional level, we did not find patterns of regions with less commitment to democracy but high levels of official website development. In general the websites are not “good enough” to be deceptive regarding the state of democracy. Announcements for the \$2.57B funding level of E-Russia certainly gave the impression that a major push towards informatization and democratization would be made, so when the funding was not forthcoming, E-Russia could be perceived as a “Potemkin village” in the whole. But given the history of other campaigns and targeted programs in Russia, its under funding is not particularly noteworthy. Neither is it unexpected that a good deal of the funds ended up going for projects within ministries and agencies. The proposals for information openness brought forth by MERT did receive their impetus from E-Russia, and Resolution 98 was proposed and passed.

For the period under study, we must conclude that Proposition 3 is the most plausible. Russian e-government websites do look very much like those in many other countries of the world, with the exception that they have not emphasized service delivery at all. Little, if any, of the potential for enhancing direct democracy has been utilized. Some effects may be present for representative democracy. For the most parts, the effect of the sites would appear to be neutral, and the sites represent as yet untapped potential.

LOOKING AHEAD

This is not the end of the story, of course. There is some evidence in favor of Proposition 2 related to new threats that are now emerging and cannot yet be fully evaluated.³⁰ In Appendix VII, the story of E-Russia is extended somewhat beyond the cutoff point for information in this paper. E-Russia is under review, with the results not yet announced. It may be brought more into line with other “administrative” reforms of the Putin government which have moved the country away from democracy. In Appendix VIII, we examine some of the controversy in trying to move Resolution 98 to a full-blown Law on Information Openness. So far, although enjoying Putin’s apparent support, the attempts have not met with success, and the proposed law has been considerably watered down. If the Information Access Law is not passed or remains in a largely weakened form, government websites may stagnate at about the level they are now or get worse. If E-Russia funding is skewed towards enacting “administrative reforms” that are trying to enact more and more autocratic control from above, Proposition 2 may come to be correct.

On the other hand, if pilot projects for more robust portals and services can be replicated widely, if the number of Internet users and their demographics can be shifted to a broader base, and if the proposed Law on Information Openness strengthens what agencies are required to tell about their operations, particularly on the web, then there will be substantial, positive contributions to democracy in Russia from E-Russia and the government web portals. Information alone cannot remove all the impediments to strong democracy in Russia, and neither can it create strong institutions where none exist, but it can serve as a bulwark against authoritarian forces. The existence of competition among elites over the future of the E-Russia program, even if it is in the form of “managed pluralism,” is better than the total domination of discourse that existed in Soviet times. Like elections that may take on renewed meaning under changed circumstances, E-Russia and the websites represent a space in which greater democracy may be able to flourish.

VII. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our thanks to Katchanovski and La Porte for providing a pre-publication copy of their paper.

³⁰ Such are the hazards of writing about contemporaneous events.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following reference list contains hyperlinks to World Wide Web pages. Readers who have the ability to access the Web directly from their word processor or are reading the paper on the Web, can gain direct access to these linked references. Readers are warned, however, that

1. these links existed as of the date of publication but are not guaranteed to be working thereafter.
2. the contents of Web pages may change over time. Where version information is provided in the References, different versions may not contain the information or the conclusions referenced.
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APPENDIX I: INTERNET ACCESS

Despite the 1990 USSR launch of the Internet, by 2001 Russia ranked just 107th out of 204 countries in per capita Internet use [United Nations, 2003]. In May 1999, the total number of Internet users in Russia was around 1.7M [Perov and McHenry, 2000]. The total number of adult Internet users was estimated to be 8.7M in Fall, 2002, more than doubling to 18.7M by Spring, 2005 (Figure 3). This data was derived by the Public Opinion Foundation using the

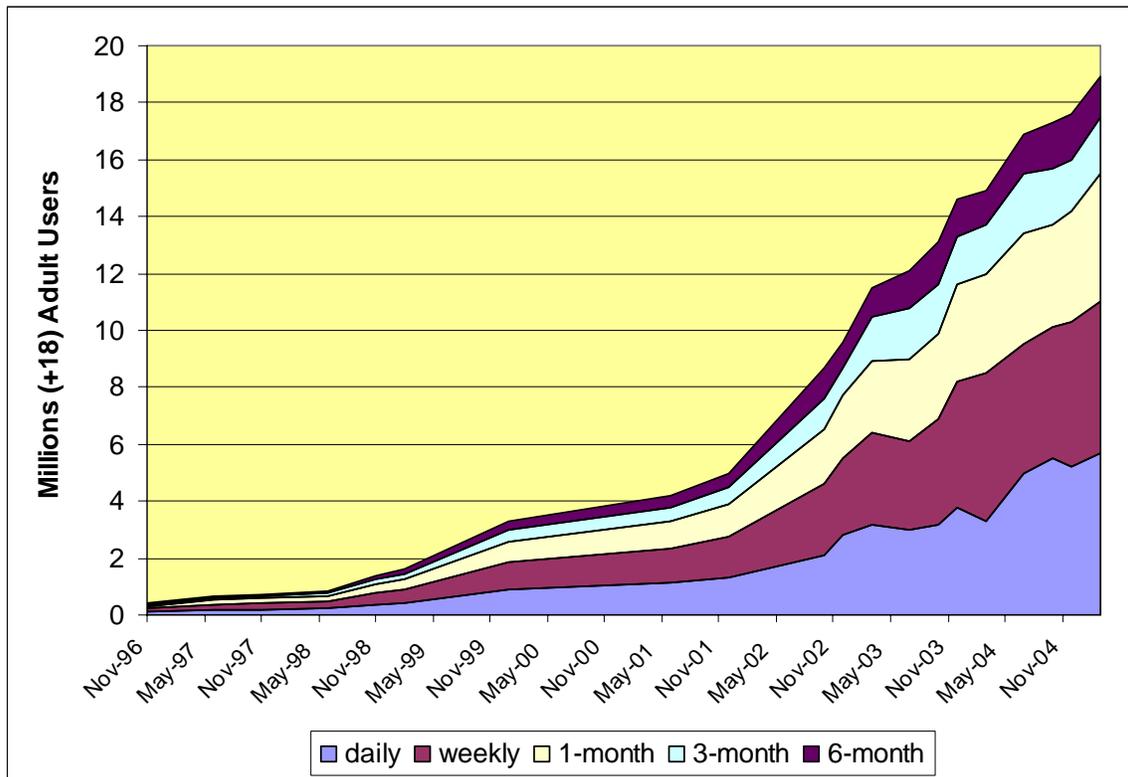


Figure 3. Russian Internet Users, 1996-2004, by Frequency of Use
Sources: [Perov and McHenry, 2000; Public Opinion Foundation, 2005]

Nielsen/Netratings methodology, but may be missing at least one million young and old users [Voiskunskiy, 2005]. Still, it represents about 15.7% of the adult population [Public Opinion Foundation, 2005]. As Figure 3 also shows, about 58% are highly active (daily or weekly) users. Using the least restrictive user definition, the Internet World Stats site claimed that, as of March 2005, Russia had 22.3M users, for a penetration rate of about 15% (18.7% of adults). Among 39 European countries with populations of at least 100,000, Russia ranked 32nd in 2005, and its penetration rate was well below the median value of 34.5% [Miniwatts International, 2005]. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MERT) has foreseen an increase from 13% Internet penetration in 2005 to 57% by 2008 [Webplanet, 2005]. On the other hand, the Ministry

of Information Technology and Communications (Mininformsvyaz) has forecast “constant” Internet users at 15% of the population only by 2015 [Cnews, 2003].

Given the way the Internet developed in other countries, it is no surprise that the demographic groups that predominate are men, the young, the well-educated, and the wealthy. The differences are more striking when compared to the 2005 distributions for the whole population (Table 15). The distribution of users in the country is also quite skewed towards Moscow and other large cities. Forty-four percent of Muscovites are Internet users, which is 20% of the overall total in the country.

While the Internet population is growing broader, it remains a somewhat elite group. Marketing firm J’son & Partners believes that growth is slowing; in the main, it says, everyone in Russia who feels the need for the Internet has taken it up and further growth will come from the younger generations. Intensity of use is growing, but the continued necessity of paying prices such as \$20-30 for each Gigabyte of traffic is also a brake on growth [St. Petersburg Business Guide, 2005].

Table 15. Demographics of Internet Users, 2002, 2005

Measure	Range	Percentage of Internet Users		Whole Population Demographics	
		Fall 2002	Spring 2005	2002	2005
Gender	Male	61%	59%	46%	48%
	Female	39%	41%	54%	52%
Age Range	Age 18-24	40%	42%	14%	15%
	Age 25-34	28%	28%	18%	17%
	35-44	20%	18%	22%	18%
	45-54	9%	10%	18%	21%
	55 and over	3%	2%	29%	28%
Education	Less Than Secondary	2%	2%	20%	17%
	Ordinary Secondary	29%	30%	34%	36%
	Specialized Secondary	29%	32%	33%	34%
	Higher education	40%	36%	12%	13%
Monthly Income Per Family Member	50\$ and less	34%	12%	66%	28%
	51-99\$	41%	27%	27%	43%
	>100\$	25%	61%	7%	29%

Source: [Public Opinion Foundation, 2005]

APPENDIX II: ABOUT RUSSIAN DEMOCRACY

Many have wondered why Russian democracy, which seemed to get off to such a promising start after the peaceful breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, now seems to be receding. After the

breakup, there followed three successful elections for Parliament and the Presidency under a new constitution (1996, 2000, 2004). However, democracy had not become fully consolidated in Russia. Russian sociologist Yuri Levada concluded that:

“During the transitional period, the institutions in charge of carrying out reforms were those that previously had upheld the authoritarian system. Institutions with such deep authoritarian ties could of course not be counted on to replace the system that had created them. The liberal reforms of the early 1990s helped to restructure the economy, but did little to bring real democrats to power. Disappointment soon set in, and democracy’s brief honeymoon ended before democratic political forces could coalesce.” [Levada, 2004]

Debate about what type of government Russia currently has revolves around the question of whether it is still possible to call it democratic, with the caveat of adding some adjective first (e.g.: managed democracy, immature democracy, etc.), or whether autocracy has returned [Shevtosava, 2004]. Hahn contends that “It is time to put an end to the use of the terms ‘managed,’ ‘illiberal,’ and ‘weak democracy’ to describe Russia’s present regime,” preferring instead the term “weak authoritarianism” [Hahn, 2004, p. 196]. Balzer argues that Russia’s system should be called “managed pluralism.” The Putin government allows a certain amount of debate and dissent within and among elite groups as long as it does not go too far. Elections give the government legitimacy, but since their outcome is rarely in question, sap the electorate’s desire to participate and do not influence policy [Hahn, 2004].³¹ Real pluralism, which could emerge if businesses were willing to challenge Putin, has been stifled [Sestanovich, 2004].

Although the trajectory of the Putin government away from certain aspects of democracy is clear, the situation in the regions is far less clear. On the one hand, the Yeltsin government sacrificed so much power in the 1990’s to the regions, that there was a serious threat the country itself would break apart. Putin has moved on a number of fronts to reassert central control. In forcing some regions to bring their Constitutions, charters, laws, and regulations into accord with national policies, some less democratic practices in the regions have been eliminated. Hahn concluded in 2003 that Putin’s reforms have led to mixed results: “The conclusion that the federative reforms have resulted in only a rollback of democracy in Russia is an oversimplified one. Although this may be true for the federal level, in many regions the reforms have led to a potential strengthening of democracy and the institutions that buttress it... especially in the 20 national republics” [Hahn, 2003]. Similarly, some regions have embraced freedom of the press to a larger extent than others [Public Expertise Institute, 2000].

On the other hand, Gel’man represents the views of many when he writes that, “Undemocratic political practices are deeply embedded in Russian history and culture, and it is hardly to be expected that they can be overcome easily, especially in the short term. There are no powerful political or societal forces, whether in the form of political parties, leaders, or citizens’ initiatives, that would like to install strong and democratic local government in Russia, either from the top down or from the bottom up” [Gel’man, 2002]. As at the national level, the courts are a weak partner and cannot be expected to overrule the regional executives in important matters [Trochev, 2004]. Businesses are co-opted as a potential rival force due to insider control and interference by regional and local governments, all of whom have vested interests in maintaining the status quo [Desai and Goldberg, 2001]. Hahn’s detailed account of the Kremlin’s hand in the 2003-2004 campaigns for the St. Petersburg legislature and governorship reads like an autopsy on the corpse of Russian democracy [Hahn, 2004]. In the 2004 Presidential election, the regional mass media paid virtually no attention to candidates other than Putin (however, this may have been

³¹ McFaul and Petrov noted in 2004 that, “In Russia today, elections have less meaning than they did several years ago, but they still occur. In a time of crisis, including the kind that might occur if a power holder were to twist the electoral process too blatantly, they could acquire an intense significance once again.” [McFaul and Petrov, 2004]

more of a business decision than censorship, because the campaign was considered to be won by Putin before it began) [Public Expertise Institute, 2004]. Scholars will continue to debate whether Russia has a historical predilection to autocracy, whether government corruption is endemic, the effects of being so dependent on petroleum (the so-called “Dutch curse”), and many other explanations regarding democracy in Russia.

APPENDIX III: SELECTED MEASURES

In the following four tables, we list all measures selected for the Wave 1 and Wave 2 data collection in late 2003 and late 2004, respectively. Three types of metrics have been devised and used for evaluating e-government website content:

- Binary – tracks the presence or absence of a certain well-defined feature, characteristic, service, etc.
- Count – counts the number of a certain type of feature or service without explicitly recording what it is
- Threshold – establishes level of completeness or intensity for a certain well-defined feature, characteristic, etc.

The United Nations Web Measure Index (WMI) and most of the measures in Darryl West’s studies at Brown University illustrate binary measures. The West studies avoid any arbitrariness in judgment by counting the presence or absence of features on a binary scale, considering a transactional capability to be present only if it can be fully completed online [West, 2004b].

The Municipality eGovernment Assessment Project (MeGAP) methodology, created by Kaylor et al. for U.S. municipal governments³² [Kaylor et al., 2001], also uses threshold measures, as do Accenture [Accenture, 2004] and Cap Gemini Ernst and Young [Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, 2003]. Both West [West, 2004b] and the Cyberspace Policy Research Group (CyPRG) [Cyberspace Policy Research Group, 2000] have used counting measures; West counted the number of complete services present, and CyPRG counted, among others, the number of downloadable forms. The United Nations uses a separate threshold scale (called the Participation Index) to track intensity or completeness of features, with a scale of zero=never; 1 = sometimes; 2 = frequently; 3 = mostly; and 4 = always [Hafeez, 2004].

Table 16. Information Measures Selected

No.	General Description	Assignment Criteria for One Point	Type of Measure
1	Electronic presence	Existence of an official site for the administration of the region	binary
2	General information about the region	Information about history, geographic situation, religions, population	threshold: sometimes
3		Information about economic situation, economic development, branches of industry, investment activity	threshold: sometimes
12	Presence of additional information about the life of	Information about news of the region, wire service of events	threshold: sometimes

³² This scale has recently been applied to Norwegian municipal governments [Flak et al., 2005].

No.	General Description	Assignment Criteria for One Point	Type of Measure
13	the region	Information about events and activities in areas such as leisure, culture, calendar of events	threshold: sometimes
4	Information about the upper level of the administration of the regional bodies of power	Information about the governor, his/her deputies, the head of the administration and his/her deputies, and information about a few heads of ministries and departments	threshold: frequently, mostly
5		Information about all regional ministries and departments	threshold: always
6	Information about the middle level of management, about functions and contact information of the subdivisions	Information about bureaucrats of a lower level (deputy ministers, heads of departments, executives).	threshold: frequently, mostly
7		Information for all ministries and departments to the level of the heads of departments and lower, with functions, tasks, and responsibilities of subdivisions	threshold: always
8	Information about the work of the regional authority	Presence on the site of reports of the government about past budget, programs, and plans.	threshold: frequently
9		Future & present regional plans, programs, directions of governmental activities.	threshold: frequently
10	Legal and normative information	Presence on the site of texts of regional laws, resolutions, and declarations of the regional leader/government.	threshold: sometimes
11		Broad listing of regional laws, resolutions, and declarations with texts, data base of regional jurisprudence	threshold: always
14	Possibility to perform a search on the site	Search functions present based on a part of the materials (news division)	threshold: sometimes
15		Search functions for all the material on the site	threshold: always
33	Freshness of Information on the Site	Freshness of News	threshold: sometimes
34		Freshness of Documents in Other Sections of the Site	threshold: sometimes

All three types of measures have minuses. Binary scales can lead to equivocation about what is yes and what is no (if just a little is present, does it qualify?). Creating a comprehensive and discrete taxonomy of all features and services is a difficult task, especially as websites can change frequently. Counting alleviates this problem, but then precludes exact comparisons. A comprehensive list may be over-fitted to current conditions. Threshold scales are generally used only in conjunction with a limited number of indicators, countries, or both. Our approach was to use binary measures when possible, and to define the thresholds with cutoff points that could be applied fairly consistently and recognized fairly easily.

Table 17. Communications / Participation Measures

No.	General Description	Assignment Criteria for One Point	Type of Measure
17	Presence on the site of elements of feedback	Existence of a means to contact the government, be it email or form	binary
18		Structured form that has choices for any of these things: topics and/or destinations	binary
21	Interactions with officials using electronic mail	Presence of email addresses for government officials, for a number of executives	threshold: frequently, mostly
22		Presence of email addresses for the large majority of bureaucrats, information about which is present on the site	threshold: always
19	Presence of forums for interaction with citizens	Presence of a forum or guestbook on which the citizens can write their comments for other citizens to see	binary
20		Answers are posted from responsible officials as well as the questions	binary

Table 18. Action / Transaction Measures

No.	General Description	Assignment Criteria for One Point	Type of Measure
16	Presence on the site of electronic forms of documents	Presence on site of possibility to download forms to be filled out and submitted "off-line."	threshold: sometimes
23	Possibility to fill out electronic forms	Possibility to fill out forms to request information about previously submitted documents and inquiries	threshold: sometimes
24		Presence of the possibility of filling out forms on the site that can be submitted, transmission of information	threshold: sometimes
25	Possibility to carry out electronic payments	Payment of municipal, transport expenditures, taxes and so forth, etc. using the Internet	threshold: sometimes
26	Business license application process	Possibility to obtain / to renew a regional and state license from the regional site	threshold: sometimes
27	Filling out of tax declarations	Possibility for citizens / organizations to solve tax problems of all levels from one regional site	threshold: sometimes

Table 19. Integration Measures

No.	General Description	Assignment Criteria for One Point	Type of Measure
31	Upwards and downwards links	Links to/addresses of federal ministries representative offices in this subject	threshold: sometimes

No.	General Description	Assignment Criteria for One Point	Type of Measure
32		Links to lower level municipalities/officials (contact or hyperlinks)	threshold: sometimes
28	Appearance of regional level databases	Unification of regional level information resources	threshold: sometimes
29	Simultaneous availability of an integrated set of services	Ability for citizens / organizations to obtain a whole set of state services from one electronic place	threshold: sometimes
30	Databases across different functional areas	Unification of databases of various different functional areas with the possibility to submit single queries	threshold: sometimes

APPENDIX IV: WEBSITES EVALUATED FOR THIS STUDY

Region	Website (late 2004)
Adygeya Republic	http://www.adygheya.ru
Aginskiy Buryatskiy Autonomous Okrug	http://www.aginskoe.ru
Altay Republic	http://www.altai-republic.com
Altayskiy Kray	http://www.altaregion.ru
Amurskaya Oblast'	http://www.amurobl.ru
Arkhangel'skaya Oblast'	http://www.dvinaland.ru
Astrakhanskaya Oblast'	http://www.astrobl.ru
Bashkortostan Republic	http://www.bashkortostan.ru
Belgorodskaya Oblast'	http://beladm.bel.ru
Bryanskaya Oblast'	http://www.admin.debryansk.ru
Buryatiya Republic	http://egov-buryatia.ru
Chechenskaya Republic	http://chechnya.dada.ru/officials/admin.html
Chelyabinskaya Oblast'	http://www.ural-chel.ru
Chitinskaya Oblast'	http://obladm.chita.ru
Chukotskiy Autonomous Okrug	http://www.chukotka.org
Chuvashskaya Republic	http://www.cap.ru
Dagestan Republic	http://www.e-dag.ru
Evenkiyskiy Autonomous Okrug	http://www.evenkya.ru
Ingushetiya Republic	http://ingushetia.ru
Irkutskaya Oblast'	http://www.admirk.ru
Ivanovskaya Oblast'	http://ivadm.ivanovo.ru

Region	Website (late 2004)
Kabardino-Balkarskaya Republic	http://www.nalnet.ru
Kaliningradskaya Oblast'	http://www.gov.kaliningrad.ru
Kalmykiya Republic	http://kalm.ru/ru
Kaluzhskaya Oblast'	http://admobl.kaluga.ru
Kamchatskaya Oblast'	no site
Karachaevo-Cherkesskaya Republic	http://www.kchr.info
Kareliya Republic	http://gov.karelia.ru
Kemerovskaya Oblast'	http://www.kemerovo.su
Khabarovskiy Kray	http://www.adm.khv.ru
Khakasiya Republic	http://www.gov.khakassia.ru
Khanty-Mansiyskiy Autonomous Okrug	http://www.hmao.wsnet.ru
Kirovskaya Oblast'	http://www.gov.vyatka.ru
Komi Republic	http://www.rkomi.ru
Komi-Permyatskiy Autonomous Okrug	no site
Koryakskiy Autonomous Okrug	no site
Kostromskaya Oblast'	http://kos-obl.kmtn.ru
Krasnodarskiy Kray	http://admkrain.kuban.ru
Krasnoyarskiy Kray	http://www.krskstate.ru
Kurganskaya Oblast'	http://admobl.kurgan.ru
Kurskaya Oblast'	http://region.kursk.ru
Leningradskaya Oblast'	http://www.lenobl.ru
Lipetskaya Oblast'	http://www.admlr.lipetsk.ru
Magadanskaya Oblast'	http://www.magadan.ru
Mariy El Republic	http://gov.mari.ru
Mordoviya Republic	http://whrm.moris.ru
Moscow	http://www.mos.ru
Moskovskaya Oblast'	http://www.mosreg.ru
Murmanskaya Oblast'	http://gov.murman.ru
Nenetskiy Autonomous Okrug	no site
Nizhegorodskaya Oblast'	http://www.government.nnov.ru
Novgorodskaya Oblast'	http://region.adm.nov.ru

Region	Website (late 2004)
Novosibirskaya Oblast'	http://www3.adm.nso.ru
Omskaya Oblast'	http://www.omskportal.ru/default.asp
Orenburgskaya Oblast'	http://www.orb.ru
Orlovskaya Oblast'	http://www.adm.orel.ru
Penzenskaya Oblast'	http://www.obl.penza.net
Permskaya Oblast'	http://www.perm.ru
Primorskiy Kray	http://www.primorsky.ru
Pskovskaya Oblast'	http://www.pskov.ru
Republic of Sakha (Yakutiya)	http://www.sakha.gov.ru
Rostovskaya Oblast'	http://www.donland.ru
Ryazanskaya Oblast'	http://www.gov.ryazan.ru
Sakhalinskaya Oblast'	http://www.adm.sakhalin.ru
Samarskaya Oblast'	http://www.adm.samara.ru
Saratovskaya Oblast'	http://www.gov.saratov.ru
Severnaya Osetiya - Alaniya Republic	http://president.osetia.ru/resp.htm
Smolenskaya Oblast'	http://admin.smolensk.ru
St. Petersburg	http://www.gov.spb.ru
Stavropol'skiy Kray	http://www.stavKray.ru
Sverdlovskaya Oblast'	http://www.midural.ru/midural-new
Tambovskaya Oblast'	http://www.regadm.tambov.ru
Tatarstan Republic	http://www.tatar.ru
Taymyrskiy (Dolgano-Nenetskiy) Autonomous Okrug	http://www.taimyr.ru
Tomskaya Oblast'	http://www.tomsk.gov.ru
Tul'skaya Oblast'	http://www.region.tula.ru
Tuva Republic	http://gov.tuva.ru
Tverskaya Oblast'	http://www.region.tver.ru
Tyumenskaya Oblast'	http://admtyumenu.ru
Udmurtskaya Republic	http://www.udmurt.ru
Ul'yanovskaya Oblast'	http://www.ulyanovsk-adm.ru
Ust'-Ordynskiy Buryatskiy Autonomous Okrug	http://www.ust-orda.ru
Vladimirskaya Oblast'	http://avo.ru

Region	Website (late 2004)
Volgogradskaya Oblast'	http://www.volganet.ru
Vologodskaya Oblast'	http://www.vologda-Oblast'.ru
Voronezhskaya Oblast'	http://admin.vrn.ru
Yamalo-Nenetskiy Autonomous Okrug	http://www.dispi.ru
Yaroslavskaia Oblast'	http://www.adm.yar.ru
Yevreyskaya Autonomous Oblast'	http://www.eao.ru

APPENDIX V: FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT NATIONAL LEVEL WEBSITES

Rather than burden the main text with all of the details from the Russian and Western studies that have appeared about national level websites, we present them here and summarize the results in the main body of the paper.

The 2003 Russian Association of Managers survey examined the content of 62 national level websites in depth [Skripkin and Pichugin, 2003] (Table 20). This survey examined roughly 60% of the Resolution 98 measures (we added this characterization to Table 20). The authors concluded that these sites most resembled electronic brochures and did little to promote direct democracy through interactivity, a result which is not at all surprising given that Resolution 98 probably provided cover for doing no more than the Resolution described. It is striking in how many cases the information itself was considered incomplete. This survey also showed that in one area strongly related to good governance—open tenders for contracts—the vast majority of websites fell short. This provision was vigorously opposed by the bureaucrats [Monakhov, 2004]. Indeed, despite Resolution 98, most information about state orders was not being published on the Internet at the end of 2004, and many officials still thought it illegal to publish information there, rather than the reverse [Gorbunov-Posadov, 2004].

Table 20. National Level Official Government Websites (n=62), 2003

Res. 98 No.	Category	Percentage of organizations' websites with this feature		
		NO		YES
4-5, 11-18	Additional information about activities of the body, current initiatives and projects	46.0%		54.0%
7-8	Information about tenders and purchases	85.0%		15.0%
24	Information about Current law and normative activity	23.0%		77.0%
24-28	Information about Normative base (laws and regulations)	7.0%		93.0%
n/a	Regularly update information	21.0%		79.0%
9-10, 35-36	Organizational Structures	Structure not shown	Only lists of structural subdivisions	Complete structure of organization including subdivisions
		16.4%	32.8%	50.8%
33	System for submitting requests	Only via ad hoc emails (not structured)	Requests via specific emails	Formalized system of submitting requests
		73.8%	18.0%	8.2%
34	Contact Information	No contact information or only postal address	Mail address, telephone, email of press service	Contact information of subdivision managers
		19.7%	57.4%	23.0%
n/a	Discussions	No social discussion, even as a forum	Forum exists	Site allows expression of opinions "in full measure"
		77.1%	9.8%	13.0%
		NO		YES
33	Officials comment on what visitors have posted to site	86.9%		13.1%
n/a	Internet "reception room"	92.0%		8.0%

Source: Modified from [Skripkin and Pichugin, 2003]. The "Res. 98 No." column refers to the items mandated by Resolution 98 as displayed by number in Table 3. For the sake of concision, this table displays all the results together. In some cases the answers were yes or no, in which case there are just two percentages. In some cases three levels were provided, in which case the smallest and middle levels appear under "No" and the highest level under "Yes," along with the full text of the level.

In the 2004 United Nations E-Government national-level website measure index, Russia was 62nd [Hafeez, 2004]. Its information-related scores were very consistent with the Russian Association of Managers' findings. Russia scored 39.3% of potential in this survey for having an Interactive presence (relating to Communications / Participation), which included downloadable forms and means to contact officials. The Russian Association of Managers' categories for Communications / Participation were much more extensive, showing that email contact was possible across the board, but that forums and comments by officials on posts were rare. In its transactional category

(related to Actions / Transactions), the United Nations found no examples (0.0%) of any services that could be carried out online. However, the survey found 18.5% presence of the features characteristic of a networked presence, which relate to integration of G2G, G2C, and C2G functions including mechanisms for participatory decision making [Hafeez, 2004].

In 2004 West found that no services could be completely executed on Russian national level governmental websites. Eighty-three percent of those sites had publications available, 78% had databases, and 39% allowed for citizen comments to be posted. This showed some improvement from 2003, when the comparable percentage allowing posting was about 23% (the same percentage found by the Russian Manager's Association). West's scale assigned points for the presence and absence of features up to a certain level, and then counted the number of services offered to bring the scale to 100. Russia ranked 129th out of 191 countries in 2004 [West, 2004b].

Another comprehensive survey of national level websites (covering roughly 20 of the 36 Resolution 98 measures) was performed by the Russian publication Cnews Analytics in October, 2004 and April, 2005 [Shalmanov, 2005]. In the middle of 2004, there was a large reorganization of federal governmental bodies. This rendered some information systems superfluous, and led to a lot of scrambling towards the end of the year. The percentages of websites with certain features actually declined (Table 21). However, the survey looked at 88 agencies in 2004 and 99 in 2005—the newly formed bodies may not have had time to populate their sites with very much content.

Almost all the measures that Cnews chose to examine have to do with the Information web function category. These agencies were doing well on presenting information about officials and organizational structures, fairly well on presenting official speeches, etc., and fairly well on presenting other forms of news. Few websites were offering comprehensive analytical materials.

Cnews' scale consisted of 10 points maximum for "Informativity," and 10 points maximum for "Use," which comprised some usability issues, but mainly interactive features such as the last three rows of Table 21 (e.g., the "simple instruments of interactivity"). One wonders why so many separate items were combined in that row, where only 54% of the sites had one or more of these features in 2005. The answer can be derived by subtracting the Informativity score from the total score for the top ten agencies. Only seven of these top ten (7.5% of all) had a "Use" score greater than 3.0, and 43 (46.2%) had a rating above zero and less than 3.0. Few Communications / Participation features were present on these sites.³³

³³ This survey was probably the source for statements made one month later by D. Milovantsev, a Deputy Minister of Mininformsvyaz. He stated that only 70% of federal level governmental bodies yet had Internet sites. Within these, 80% did not contain the full spectrum of required information, and updates were done unsystematically and irregularly [Milovantsev, 2005].

Table 21. Information Characteristics of Federal Websites, 2004-2005

Res. 98 No.	Category	Level, Year, Percentage of Federal Bodies					
n/a	Presence of federal bodies of power in Internet	Absent		Web pages on another site		Own site/portal	
		2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005
		35.0%	20.0%	15.0%	9.0%	50.0%	71.0%
4-5, 13-18	Historical information about department or branch	Absent		Present			
		2004	2005	2004		2005	
		52.0%	48.0%	48.0%		52.0%	
9	Information about officials	Absent		Insufficiently detailed		Detailed	
		2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005
		6.8%	4.8%	27.3%	25.4%	65.9%	69.8%
9-12, 35-36	Organizational structure	Absent		In list form		In graphical form	
		2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005
		22.7%	9.5%	38.6%	49.2%	38.6%	41.3%
13, 20-23	Presentation of analytical or statistical materials	None		In part		In detail	
		2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005
		30.0%	30.0%	47.0%	52.0%	23.0%	18.0%
15	Presentation of interviews of leader on website	Absent		Present			
		2004	2005	2004		2005	
		43.0%	38.0%	57.0%		62.0%	
34	Contact information	Absent		Incomplete		Detailed	
		2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005
		11.0%	6.0%	53.0%	65.0%	36.0%	29.0%
n/a	Presentation of news section	Absent		Rarely updated, not structured		Periodically updated, structured	
		2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005
		14.0%	8.0%	27.0%	40.0%	59.0%	52.0%
n/a	Presence of press releases (press dept.)	Absent		Present			
		2004	2005	2004		2005	
		61.0%	43.0%	39.0%		57.0%	
n/a	Presentation of news from the press (monitoring)	Absent		Present			
		2004	2005	2004		2005	
		48.0%	44.0%	52.0%		56.0%	

Res. 98 No.	Category	Level, Year, Percentage of Federal Bodies			
n/a	Selection of FAQs	Absent		Present	
		2004	2005	2004	2005
		77.0%	68.0%	23.0%	32.0%
2, 33	Simple instruments of interactivity, including ability to pose question to minister, head of a federal service or agency; direct a statement, announcement or complaint to other structural subdivisions of the bodies of state power; fill out electronic information forms and queries online, etc.	Absent		Present	
		2004	2005	2004	2005
		54.0%	46.0%	46.0%	54.0%
n/a	Subscription to distribution of website updates	Absent		Present	
		2004	2005	2004	2005
		80.0%	73.0%	20.0%	27.0%
n/a	Participation in thematic forums	Absent		Present	
		2004	2005	2004	2005
		77.0%	86.0%	23.0%	14.0%

Notes: Data collected October 15, 2004 and April 15, 2005. Sites under construction considered to not have that feature. 2004 n=88, 2005 n=99. Source: [Shalmanov, 2005].

APPENDIX VI: INFORMATION ABOUT E-RUSSIA, 2002-MID-2005

Table 22. E-Russia Tasks and Budget, 1000s US\$

Area of Project		Budget for Entire Program					Year 2002	
Main Area	SubArea	Federal	Regional	External	Sum	Percent ALL	Year 2002	Percent of 2002
Applications and Telecom (MIS)	Databases and DBMS	\$114,000	\$833	\$36,667	\$151,500	5.89%	\$2,517	2.90%
	Decision Support Systems	\$4,833		\$333	\$5,167	0.20%	\$453	0.52%
	Document Flow Management	\$84,467	\$116,933		\$201,400	7.83%	\$743	0.86%
	Network Connections and Telecom Investments	\$705,867	\$311,267	\$133,400	\$1,150,533	44.72%	\$40,810	47.01%
	Security measures	\$100			\$100	0.00%	\$17	0.02%
	Typical IT applications	\$18,433	\$35,333	\$3,167	\$56,933	2.21%	\$13,270	15.29%
<i>Applications and Telecom (MIS) Total</i>		<i>\$927,700</i>	<i>\$464,367</i>	<i>\$173,567</i>	<i>\$1,565,633</i>	<i>60.86%</i>	<i>\$57,810</i>	<i>66.59%</i>
Education	Educational Materials	\$252,800	\$76,233	\$226,833	\$555,867	21.61%	\$15,513	17.87%
<i>Education Total</i>		<i>\$252,800</i>	<i>\$76,233</i>	<i>\$226,833</i>	<i>\$555,867</i>	<i>21.61%</i>	<i>\$15,513</i>	<i>17.87%</i>
E-Russia	Business case development for ER projects	\$500			\$500	0.02%	\$87	0.10%
	Conferences	\$1,667	\$833	\$3,333	\$5,833	0.23%	\$510	0.59%
	E-Russia Grant Administration, evaluation	\$733			\$733	0.03%	\$50	0.06%
	Evaluation of use of IT systems	\$800			\$800	0.03%	\$50	0.06%
	Public relations for the ER program	\$5,867	\$667	\$3,333	\$9,867	0.38%	\$797	0.92%
	Taking stock of IT hardware and software inventories	\$667		\$333	\$1,000	0.04%	\$117	0.13%
	Typical IT applications	\$4,467			\$4,467	0.17%	\$207	0.24%

Area of Project		Budget for Entire Program					Year 2002	
<i>E-Russia Total</i>		\$14,700	\$1,500	\$7,000	\$23,200	0.90%	\$1,817	2.09%
IT Industry	Activities promoting the IT Sector in Russia	\$2,800	\$0	\$6,833	\$9,633	0.37%	\$990	1.14%
	Development of technoparks	\$8,000	\$3,333	\$3,333	\$14,667	0.57%	\$1,460	1.68%
	Evaluation methods, standards	\$7,167			\$7,167	0.28%	\$273	0.31%
	Law evaluation and development	\$3,167		\$1,633	\$4,800	0.19%	\$897	1.03%
<i>IT Industry Total</i>		\$21,133	\$3,333	\$11,800	\$36,267	1.41%	\$3,620	4.17%
Web, E-Government	Creation of marketing centers	\$3,167		\$6,000	\$9,167	0.36%	\$1,027	1.18%
	Creation of specific database of all citizens	\$1,667	\$3,333	\$5,000	\$10,000	0.39%	\$2,800	3.23%
	E-Government	\$18,167			\$18,167	0.71%	\$350	0.40%
	Electronic Procurement	\$51,900	\$203,333	\$66,667	\$321,900	12.51%	\$1,553	1.79%
	Use of Smart Cards with the population	\$1,333	\$667	\$667	\$2,667	0.10%	\$1,067	1.23%
	Web-based Portals	\$20,200	\$900	\$8,667	\$29,767	1.16%	\$1,260	1.45%
<i>Web, E-Government Total</i>		\$96,433	\$208,233	\$87,000	\$391,667	15.22%	\$8,057	9.28%
Grand Total		\$1,312,767	\$753,667	\$506,200	\$2,572,633	100.00%	\$86,817	100.00%

Original Source before re-categorization: [Russian Federation Government, 2002]. Note: the conversion rate of 30 rubles/one US dollar was used throughout.

Table 23. Financing of Tenders / Projects, 2002-mid-2005 (1000s US\$)

Area of Project		Scope of Project					
Main Area	SubArea	Internal to single organization	Nonspecific or involving any relevant organizations	Specifically involving federal level agency integration	Specifically involving federal and regional level integration	Regional	Total
Applications and Telecom (MIS)	Databases and DBMS	\$1,065	\$488	\$652	\$263	\$152	\$2,620
	Decision Support Systems	\$417	\$320			\$3,469	\$4,206
	Document Flow Management	\$4,958	\$7,737	\$583	\$33	\$500	\$13,811
	Electronic Administrative Responsibilities (EAR)	\$1,933	\$830	\$583	\$90	\$63	\$3,500
	Geographical Information Systems		\$562			\$1,015	\$1,577
	Hardware acquisition	\$83				\$950	\$1,033
	Network connections and Telecom Investments	\$11,878	\$8,450	\$7,877	\$733	\$29,620	\$58,558
	Security measures	\$63	\$1,652				\$1,715
	Typical IT applications	\$6,031	\$9,049	\$1,667	\$7,398	\$5,528	\$29,673
Applications and Telecom (MIS) Total		\$26,429	\$29,087	\$11,362	\$8,518	\$41,297	\$116,694
Education	Educational Materials	\$140	\$753				\$893
	Network connections and Telecom Investments	\$67				\$6,928	\$6,994
Education Total		\$207	\$753			\$6,928	\$7,888
E-Russia	Business case development for ER projects		\$230	\$267			\$497
	Conferences		\$67				\$67
	E-Russia Grant Administration, evaluation		\$692				\$692
	Evaluation methods, standards		\$67				\$67
	Evaluation of use of IT systems	\$193	\$680				\$873

Area of Project		Scope of Project					
Main Area	SubArea	Internal to single organization	Nonspecific or involving any relevant organizations	Specifically involving federal level agency integration	Specifically involving federal and regional level integration	Regional	Total
	Public relations for the ER program	\$103	\$4,957				\$5,061
	Taking stock of IT hardware and software inventories	\$110	\$117				\$227
	Typical IT applications	\$83	\$165				\$248
E-Russia Total		\$490	\$6,974	\$267			\$7,731
IT Industry	Activities promoting the IT Sector in Russia		\$1,427				\$1,427
	Development of software engineering techniques		\$167				\$167
	Development of technoparks		\$417			\$500	\$917
	Evaluation methods, standards		\$693			\$88	\$781
	Law evaluation and development		\$1,765				\$1,765
IT Industry Total			\$4,468			\$588	\$5,056
Web, E-Government	Creation of marketing centers		\$1,943				\$1,943
	Creation of specific citizen database		\$1,333		\$723	\$3,274	\$5,331
	Digital Signatures	\$613	\$7,567				\$8,180
	E-Government		\$2,542		\$213	\$352	\$3,107
	Electronic Procurement	\$423	\$6,006		\$817	\$571	\$7,816
	Use of Smart Cards with the population		\$1,500			\$1,160	\$2,660
	Web Content Filtration or Special Purpose Press Monitoring		\$700				\$700
	Web-based Portals	\$2,665	\$1,849	\$233		\$1,192	\$5,939
Web, E-Government Total		\$3,701	\$23,439	\$233	\$1,753	\$6,550	\$35,677

Area of Project		Scope of Project					
Main Area	SubArea	Internal to single organization	Nonspecific or involving any relevant organizations	Specifically involving federal level agency integration	Specifically involving federal and regional level integration	Regional	Total
Grand Total		\$30,827	\$64,721	\$11,862	\$10,272	\$55,363	\$173,045

Sources: About 190 individual websites listing tenders, competitions, budget lines, etc. from national and regional sources.

APPENDIX VII: REVISING E-RUSSIA

Towards the end of 2004, it was announced that E-Russia had been reworked, and that a new version of the E-Russia plan was being created [Electronic Russia, 2004]. As of the end of 2005, it had not been presented publicly, possibly due to lack of agreement over budget priorities or more fundamental architectural questions about the plan [Cnews, 2005; Prime-TASS, 2005b]. The draft was to be introduced at the end of March, 2006 at a government meeting [Prime-TASS, 2006].³⁴ The emphasis seems to now be on a smaller number of projects that bring E-Russia into line with the administrative reforms carried out by the Putin administration. These reforms have been interpreted as attempts to strengthen the so-called “administrative vertical,” i.e. putting more power into the hands of selected Putin loyalists at key points in the bureaucracy and making them accountable mainly to him.³⁵

Nevertheless, projects are also underway to try to design the overarching architecture of e-government for the federal government that will prevent unfocused, incompatible projects from draining away precious resources. In 2004, Microsoft Russia was given a contract by Mininformsvyaz for about \$175,000 to develop a unified architecture of electronic government. This was followed in 2005 with an allocation of \$100,000 for classifiers and standards related to the architecture. In the meantime, MERT allocated \$44,000 for an analysis of the architecture of e-government (which was not used as a foundation for standards in the E-Russia program subsequently [Danilin, 2005]), and returned to the subject with a tender for about \$175,000 in 2005 for developing the software architecture of e-government.

Based on MERT’s appendix to the tender for the development of the software architecture, philosophically MERT specifically rejects the command and control style of top-down imposition of reforms that was attempted in the USSR [McHenry and Goodman, 1986]. Mistakes of centralized planning would simply be “inevitable.” The idea is to create the right framework, and then let all of the systems arise independently within that framework:

“Electronic government will arise in Russia as a result of a self-organizing mass of technological systems and subsystems on the basis of a carefully planned architecture and interaction standards, similar to the process by which such complex systems as the Internet and mobile communications came into being. Hundreds and thousands of independent designs will be able to establish among themselves legally significant interactions in the framework of compatible electronic administrative regulations, because each of the separate and at first relatively independent systems will follow the interaction standards” [MERT, 2005].

MERT’s vision for this architecture included using object-oriented agent technology and open-source software at its foundation. It planned to submit its architecture by the end of 2005 to the

³⁴ As this paper went to press in June, 2006, we confirmed with a knowledgeable governmental official that the reworked E-Russia program will not be presented until 2007 [Private communication, Moscow, 2006].

³⁵ Other evidence also indicates a possible return to more centralization and attempts to control informatization from the top down. From 2003 on there have been a number of high level “conceptions” that have been approved or are in the process of being approved. For example, there are the “Conception of the Use of ICTs in the Activities of Federal Bodies of State Administration (Dec. 2003),” the “Conception of Regional Informatization to 2010 (under discussion in Aug., 2005),” the “Conception of the Creation of a System of Personal Accounting of the Population (SPUN) (June, 2005).” Also under discussion is the return of the concept of a “Council of Chief Engineers” for informatization, reminiscent of such bodies in Soviet times. Further discussion of these documents and trends is beyond the scope of this paper.

Russian government for adoption [Proskuryakova, 2005].³⁶ Mininformsvyaz's Microsoft approach may rely, naturally, on a more centralized architecture using more expensive Microsoft products. One of the stories that remains to be told about the E-Russia program is the influence of bureaucratic competition between these ministries on the outcomes.

APPENDIX VIII: THE PROPOSED LAW ON INFORMATION OPENNESS

In January, 2005, MERT submitted to the government a third draft of the Law on Information Openness of the Bodies of State Power [Opec, 2005]. The first version, drafted as early as October, 2003, was a direct result of measures in E-Russia for reforming the legal basis of informatization and calls for more information openness [Regnum, 2005]. Another draft was proposed in the summer of 2004, but rejected in part because it obligated agencies to provide any requested non-secret information, regardless of assembly cost [Opec, 2005]. Vladimir Putin supported the passage of a new draft of the law in April, 2005 [Rosbalt, 2005], and by June, 2005, the Putin administration had approved most of it [Webplanet, 2005b]. The third draft was expected to be voted on in the fall, 2005 Parliamentary session [Regnum, 2005].

The proposed law mandates that all government bodies have websites, and gives citizens the right to be present at national, regional, and municipal legislative sessions. It preserves almost all of the provisions of Resolution 98 (see Table 3) with some key omissions and additions as outlined in Table 24. The biggest change is disappointing and fundamental: instead of requiring agencies to publish information about certain areas, as do Resolution 98 and prior drafts of the law, the draft law now says that each level of government can define for itself what is mandatory. The draft now only gives guidance on what such definitions "may include." Self-regulation has led to marginal completeness of information for many agencies under Resolution 98 [Regnum, 2005]. One critic asks whether government bureaucrats, who can and do make money for themselves by selling state information on the side, will be willing to give it away on websites [Bautov, 2004; Kostinskiy, 2003; Kulikov, 2005].

Given that the whole list is now advisory, a particular loss is providing information about the comments and changes in laws suggested by the Government, and its meeting agenda, materials for meetings, and outcome of those meetings.³⁷ The draft expands other recommended types of information, some of which can be quite helpful to citizens and organizations.

The proposed law would go further than Resolution 98 in providing the right to citizens to request information from the government. Such a law is crucial. "The most widespread means of keeping information secret, which breaks existing law," the Public Expertise Institute has written, "is the refusal without reason of bureaucrats to present information" [Public Expertise Institute, 2004]. The proposed law embraces the principle that information about the government's activities is open to any citizen (even anonymously in some cases), unless there is justification for making it secret or confidential. However, the drafts from 2004 onwards allow the government to charge for costs of reproduction (over 24 pages) or additional costs for collecting the information. This has led to a firestorm of criticism from observers who think this will allow the government to limit access further by simply charging for any kind of access [Bautov, 2004; Kuz'min, 2004; Lashkina, 2004; Netreba, 2004].³⁸ Provisions in the previous version for providing information in a form

³⁶ MERT has also formed a working group to develop a "Conception of the Creation of Electronic Government," also part of the work of the Institute of the Architecture of Electronic Government. Cf. <http://www.iaeg.ru> and <http://www.prompolit.ru>.

³⁷ Indeed, in 2003-2004, the Government held a number of meetings that considered issues relating to E-Russia and information systems in government, including this proposed law. Reports about those meetings and materials prepared for them were important sources for this paper.

³⁸ Information given orally is free. As one critic put it, "One can expect that bureaucrats will explain orally only where you need to go in order to pay the money" [Netreba, 2004].

accessible to handicapped people and reducing and/or eliminating charges to the indigent were removed [MERT, 2005c], but the current version does obligate governments to provide public access to the Internet at libraries, post offices, and other common places. While the law mandates fairly short time frames for responses (15-30 days), agencies themselves define the processes by which the requests are initially registered (without registration of the request, nothing happens). The draft no longer says explicitly that the information provided must be “complete,” although it does say that it should be accurate and as complete as possible. Of course provisions are made to refuse requests for secret or confidential information. The draft includes changes in the Criminal Codex that would make its violation punishable by fines of 20-30 times the minimum monthly salary, or about \$66-\$100 [MERT, 2005d].³⁹

Table 24. Proposed Information Openness Law Compared to Resolution 98

Additional “Requirements” in Proposed Law Compared to Resolution 98	Requirements Found in Resolution 98 that have been Removed from Proposed Law
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information to be provided by state bodies about incoming and outgoing documents, implementation to be delayed by one year to 2007 • Information about provisions for organizations and individual entrepreneurs for discounts, tax breaks, etc. • Information about governmental bodies and responsible individuals that provide information about their activities in oral form • List of printed publications and other mass media sponsored by the federal and other governments • Information about licensing, accreditation, registration and other activities regarding state permits • List of information about educational institutions • More comprehensive information about how to reach the offices of the government that are oriented towards helping citizens • Information about judicial acts of the arbitration courts if otherwise not provided for by federal law (delayed until 2008) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omits information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ activities, creation, liquidation, and indicators of organizations subordinated to state bodies and municipal bodies ○ the daily agenda of governmental bodies, more detailed list of governmental activities, materials for meetings of the administration, decisions made at these meetings and their results ○ later stages of the legislative process, including review by the administration and its corrections ○ targeted (budget-line) programs (besides information about the drafting of them) ○ how to protest the results of tenders • Gives more specific list of statistical information, which could lead to more or less information being offered • Requirements of information about the Prime Minister and staff members, and the tasks and functions of the structural subdivisions of the Presidential staff, are no longer explicitly made, although these fall under the more general terms used in the draft

Sources: [MERT, 2005d; Sergo, 2003]

Meanwhile, Mininformsvyaz put out a \$1M tender in mid-2005 for work related in a variety of ways to the proposed Law on Information Openness. This set of tasks includes: justifying the necessity for passing an “Information Codex,” determining how to change the digital signatures and telecommunications laws, designing an anti-SPAM law and a law on technoparks for the IT industry, analyzing all laws related to information secrecy with the goal of unifying the regulatory

³⁹ There is a 1968 Soviet-era regulation on the books, still in force, that says government officials that refuse to give out information that should be made available can be fined 500-1000 rubles (\$17-\$33). It is never enforced [Netreba, 2004; E-Uryadnik, 2005].

approach to information with limited access, and investigating amending the judicial codes regarding the use of electronic communications as proof [Prime-TASS, 2005]. It could well be that passage of the MERT law will be delayed further while Mininformsvyaz carries out its investigations, or that these tasks are seen as complementary to the law itself. Independent deputies in the Duma have also put forth a version of the Information Openness Law [Latukhina, 2005].

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AO	Autonomous Okrug
C2C	Citizen to Citizen
C2G	Citizen to Government
CyPRG	Cyberspace Policy Research Group
EAR	Electronic Administrative Requirements
E-Russia	Electronic Russia
FSB	Federal Security Bureau
FTsP	Federal Targeted Program
G2C	Government to Citizen
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
ISPs	Internet Service Providers
MERT	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
Minekonomrazvitiya	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
Mininformsvyaz	Ministry of Information Technology and Communications
Minobrnauki	Ministry of Education and Science
Minsvyazi	Ministry of Communications and Information Technology
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SORM	Means of Operation Search Measures
XML	Extensible Markup Language

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Professor William McHenry specializes in the study of information systems, e-commerce, e-government, and the software industry in the countries of the former USSR. Other interests include the global diffusion of the Internet and knowledge management systems. His research has appeared in publications such as *Communications of the ACM*, *Decision Support Systems*, *Journal of the Association of Information Systems*, *Information Processing and Management*, and *Journal of Management Information Systems*. In 1999 Professor McHenry completed a large study of the Y2K problem in Russia and testified about this subject before the Senate Special

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