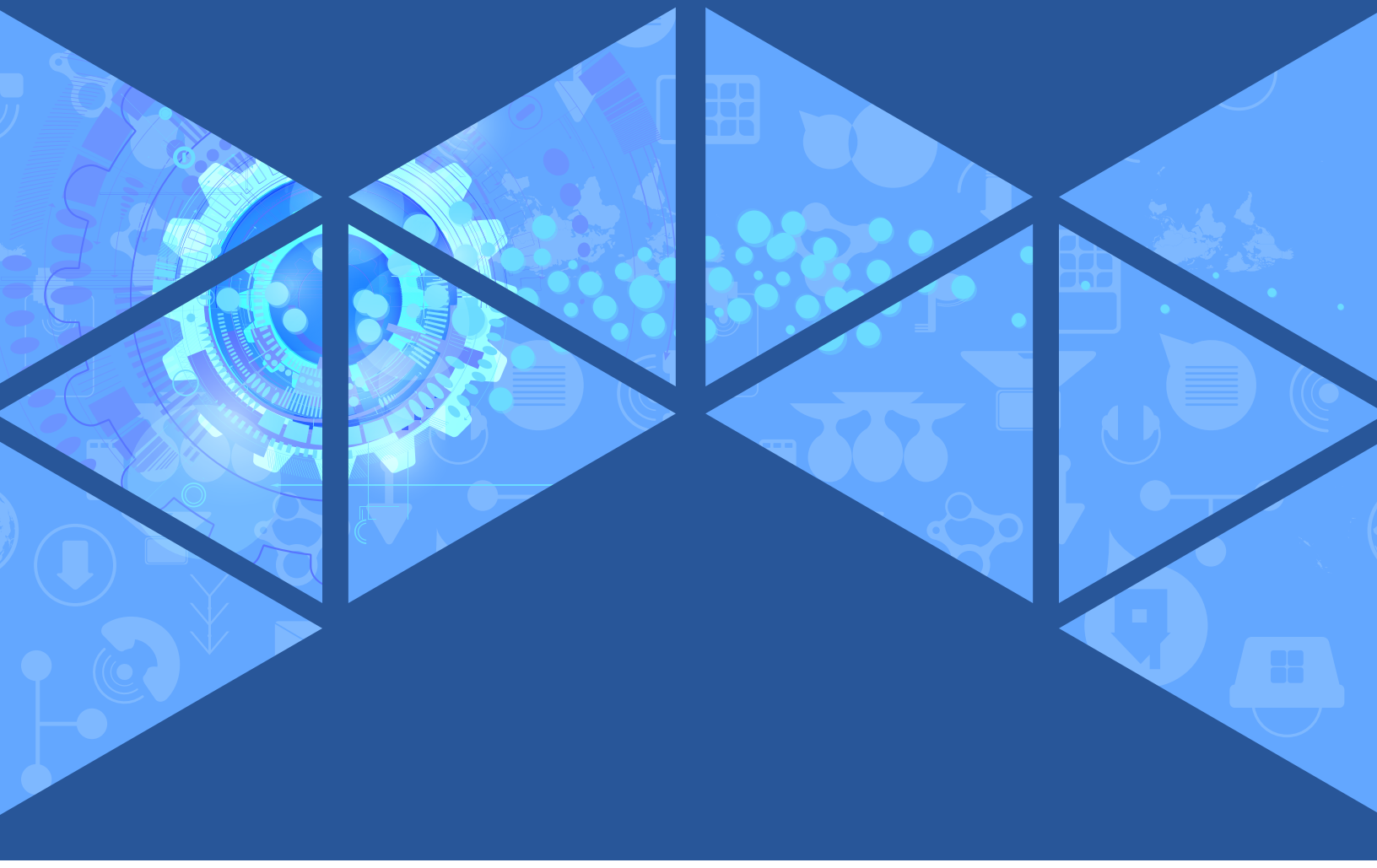
Welcoming the Dragon

The Role of Public Opinion in Russian Internet Regulation

Gregory Asmolov



CENTER FOR GLOBAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES

INTERNET POLICY OBSERVATORY

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1. *The Russian Internet under regulatory attack*

Russian internet policymakers and regulatory authorities had a busy year in 2014. Among other things, new regulatory initiatives this past year included a requirement for the registration of popular blogs and a law that prohibits keeping data on Russian citizens on servers outside Russian territory.[1] This was followed by a discussion around creating an independent national segment of the Internet. The idea of establishing a "sovereign Internet" appeared on the agenda before a meeting of the Russian Security Council dedicated to the Internet and led by President Putin.[2] President Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov explained that the discussion was needed because "crazy voices may demand the disconnection of Russia from the Internet" as part of sanctions against Russia, particularly in light of the fact that "the major administrator of the World Wide Web is the U.S."[3]

Later, officials denied that there was any intention to disconnect Russia from the global network, although they argued that there is a need to prepare for possible aggression against Russian information infrastructure and to make this more independent of external actors.[4] According to the Russian Ministry of Communication, one of the organizations that could possibly isolate Russia from the Internet is ICANN.[5] Russian minister of communication Nikolay Nikiforov promised to protect Runet from external aggression.[6] Following this statement, Russian media revealed that the ministry is planning to develop an autonomous Internet

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[1] Kulikova, A., (2014, May 19). The 'Balkanisation' of Russia's internet. Retrieved from https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/alexandra-kulikova/%E2%80%98balkanisation%E2%80%99-of-russia%E2%80%99s-internet

[2] Голицына А., (2014, September 19). Суверенные Интернет. *Ведомости*. Retrieved from http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/33610271/suverennyj-internet?full#cut

[3] Райбман., Н. (2014, October 1). Песков: «Безумные голоса» могут потребовать отключить Россию от интернета. *Ведомости*. Retrieved from http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/34094991/peskov-ne-isklyuchaet-trebovaniya-bezumnyh-golosov

[4] Путин пообещал не ограничивать доступ к глобальному интернету. (2014, October 1). Retrieved from http://www.interfax.ru/russia/399699

[5] Рункевич Д., Малай Е. (2014, October 15). Минкомсвязи признало возможность блокировки Рунета со стороны ICANN. *Izvestiya*. Retrieved from http://izvestia.ru/news/577486

[6] В Минкомсвязи успокоили испугавшихся отключения интернета Пользователей. (2014, October 4). Retrieved from http://lenta.ru/news/2014/10/04/dontworry/

infrastructure including Russia-based root Domain Name System servers and a Russian national Routing Information system.[7]

Despite the welcome news that Russia has not yet disconnected itself from the global network, many experts point out that Runet is becoming more and more regulated. Prominent blogger and Internet entrepreneur Anton Nosik suggested that new Russian legislation might soon bring "the last day of the Russian Internet."[8] KremlinRussia, a well-known political satire blog, published "Runet's will" in preparation for the death of the Russian Internet.[9]

While Runet is not yet dead and people can still express their opinions online, the authorities have at their disposal a broad menu of tools and a legislative framework that allows them to censor almost any type of content, ban websites, or prosecute Internet users. In addition, some of the major Internet companies like Yandex and Vkontakte (whose founder, Pavel Durov, has left Russia) have experienced changes in their leadership and ownership which can be considered part of the authorities' efforts to gain more control over the major actors in this field.

2. Russian public opinion on Internet regulation

Most of those concerned about the increasing limitations on Internet freedom in Russia have dedicated special efforts to monitoring the activities of the Russian authorities. Initiatives to protect Internet freedom and oppose regulation are focused on the institutions that are introducing this regulation, whether they are the President's administration, parliament, or the courts. Some are speaking out against the new regulation, but there are limited measures against the Russian regulation juggernaut.

Is attention to these regulatory institutions helping to curtail the assault on Internet freedoms, or, at least, to slow it down? Are state institutions the core of the problem? Many discussions around Internet freedom suggest an inherent assumption that Internet regulation, censorship, or any repressive measures aimed at online spaces happen against the will of the people in general and against Internet users in particular. This argument, however, requires further analysis and consideration.

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[7] Совбез России поручил создать автономную инфраструктуру Рунета. (2014, October 28). Retrieved from http://lenta.ru/news/2014/10/28/inet/

[8] Nosik, A. (2014, May 15). I Helped Build Russia's Internet. Now Putin Wants to Destroy It. *New Republic*. Retrieved from http://www.newrepublic.com/article/117771/putins-internet-crackdown-russias-first-blogger-reacts

[9] Завещание Рунета. (2014, April 30). *Kremlin Russia.* Retrieved from http://kermlinrussia.com/zavieshchaniie-runieta/

A recent poll by the Levada Center suggests that 54% of the Russian population supports the opinion that the Internet includes many dangerous websites and therefore should be censored, while 32% argue that the threat is overestimated and there is no place for censorship. In response to a question about attitudes on a law that will limit the access of Russian users to the global network, 37% expressed varying degrees of negative feelings, 15% were supportive, while 38% were neutral and expressed no interest in the issue.[10]

Recently, the Annenberg School's Center for Global Communication Studies' Internet Policy Observatory (IPO) together with Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM), released a survey of 1,601 respondents that probed deeper into the attitudes of Russian users toward Internet regulation.[11] According to the survey, 59% of Russian Internet users saw no association between Internet regulation and their own personal freedom, while 41% thought Internet regulation negatively impacted their freedom. Additionally, 48% percent of Internet users believed that shutting down the Internet for a limited period could be justified in a case of a national emergency and 9% in a case of mass protests, while 43% opposed such a temporary shut-down.[12] The IPO's survey also includes an investigation into what type of online content is considered by Russian respondents to be undesirable. While only 5% thought that information threatening political stability should be censored, 45% argued that foreign news-media websites should be censored. When questioned about more specific examples, however, 59% said that websites with content concerning homosexuality should be blocked, 46% supported blocking social networking groups organizing anti-government protests and 43% supported blocking personal blogs that call for regime change.[13] In addition, 70% of respondents supported the idea that all personal websites should be registered with the Ministry of Communication. Interestingly, the security services, followed by the Russian government, were considered the most trusted institutions that should be responsible for regulation and censorship.[14]

In light of the substantial support for political censorship, it should come as no surprise that people in Russia were not ready to actively oppose regulation. Only 9%

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[10] Интернет-цензура. (2014, October 14). Retrieved from http://www.levada.ru/print/14-10-2014/internet-tsenzura

[11] Nisbet, E. (2015). *Benchmarking Public Demand: Russia's Appetite for Internet Control*. Philadelphia. Center for Global Communications Studies.

[12] Ibid, p. 25

[13] Ibid, p. 20

[14] Ibid, p. 24

of Internet users said they would consider participating in protests against Internet restrictions.[15] Furthermore, the only type of Internet censorship that a sizable number of Internet users said would mobilize them to participate in protests was a complete ban on the use of the Internet such as exists within the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (i.e. North Korea).[16] The prohibition of online political activity and the total prohibition of anonymity were each considered a reason for protest by 7% of Internet users.[17] In other words, the potential for protest on these issues is extremely low.

3. Public opinion and multistakeholderism in Internet governance

One of the dominant approaches in Internet governance suggests that if institutional actors try to increase the degree of regulation in accordance with their own interests, the community of users will exercise its voice in order to prevent this. In other words, the possibility of a balance of power between the different actors involved in Internet governance is suggested. The idea of multistakeholderism as a governance framework relying on the involvement of various actors is based on this assumption, which also suggests that the public is one of the stakeholders in Internet governance. Accordingly, the clash between the public interest and the interests of governments should lead to a compromise-based policy.

In this light, we should ask two questions. The first is whether users are able to exercise their voices in general and within authoritarian environments in particular. The second is whether the user community has any independent voice to exercise. The data from Russia suggests that an independent user voice scarcely exists, and based on this data, one might not expect the community of users to oppose Internet regulation in Russia. State governance of the Internet is not balanced by a separate and sometimes oppositional voice of the public in the Russian case: it is largely supported and empowered by the public.

For instance, recently, the Russian ministry of communication suggested moving the management of .ru domains from the relatively independent Coordination Center for TLD RU (http://www.cctld.ru/en/) to the ministry itself.[18] Some experts have suggested that this could be another step (although only one among many)

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[15] Nisbet, E. (2015). *Benchmarking Public Demand: Russia's Appetite for Internet Control*. p. 24
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Новый В., Черненко Е., Лавицкий В. (2014, September 23). КЦ и точка. *Коммерсантъ*. Retrieved from http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2572991

toward stricter Internet regulation and part of a Russian policy to ensure that the authorities have full control of the communication infrastructure. According to IANA's "Delegating or redelegating a country-code top-level domain (ccTLD)" rules, those who ask for redelegation must demonstrate "that the request serves the local Internet community's interest."[19] This requirement, which is a reflection on ICANN's multistakeholderism policy, assumes the existence of a "local Internet community" and its capacity to communicate its interests independently from state institutions. In light of the data outlined above, it should be no surprise that there has been no expression of opposition or protest against this move by the user community.

That said, there are some actors in Russia who vigorously oppose Internet regulation. The Russian Pirate Party launched a special website, *Roskomsvoboda* (http://rublacklist.net), to monitor new restrictions on Internet freedom and expose the blacklist of banned websites managed by the Russian Ministry of Communication. There is also an Association of Internet Users (http://freerunet.ru), as well as some vocal independent bloggers, experts, software developers, journalists and managers of online projects. All of these voices, however, have had very little impact on Russian policy on Internet regulation, and, it seems, little impact on Russian public opinion. In a small amount of cases, the Russian Association of Electronic Communication (RAEC), which lobbies on behalf of Russian Internet companies and includes some of the leading commercial actors in Runet, has tried to oppose some of the most radical initiatives which may pose a significant threat to the business interests of Internet companies. These efforts, however, also remain marginal, and RAEC avoids any conflict with the Russian authorities. The surveys mentioned above underscore this conclusion: those who oppose Internet regulation are marginal because they are in opposition not only to the authorities but also to the majority of public opinion. The Russian government feels free to introduce more and more initiatives to regulate the Internet not just because there is little opposition, but because it is supported by the public.

Even an authoritarian government such as Russia's[20] seeks legitimacy and support from its citizens, and would not wish to run the risk of acting against strong

[19] Delegating or redelegating a country-code top-level domain (ccTLD). (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.iana.org/help/cctld-delegation

[20] Russia is approached as an authoritarian state on the basis of the Economist's Democracy Index 2012. The report says: "Although the formal trappings of democracy remain in place, today's Russia has been called a 'managed' (or 'stage managed') democracy."

public opinion. One possible implication is that those seeking to block radical initiatives for Internet regulation should shift from exclusive attention on monitoring the authorities and lamenting new restrictions and turn towards efforts to shape public opinion and engage users about the protection of Internet freedom. A primary way to slow regulation is by attempting to disturb the government's perception that it has full public support. To this end, it is important first to understand why the majority of the public are loyal supporters of Internet regulation and of the idea that these efforts should be led by the government.

4. Factors in public support for Internet regulation

While the data from the survey conducted by the IPO and VCIOM contradicts the assumption that the public will automatically oppose restrictive Internet regulation and online censorship, the question that needs to be asked is why the public supports such interventions. How is the legitimacy of regulation achieved? Is the positive attitude toward online censorship associated with people's education, age, gender, where they live, or the scale of their Internet usage?

The IPO survey provides some insights that may help us to respond to these questions. On the one hand, one can argue that there is an association between the scale of Internet usage and the attitudes toward censorship. According to the data, 76% of heavy Internet users and 61% of light Internet users thought that the Internet had a positive effect on people's lives, while only 21% of non-users shared this attitude. Meanwhile, 55% of non-users thought that the Internet had a negative impact, and only 23% of light and 15% of heavy Internet users agreed with this perspective.[21]

Both surveys that are discussed in this article provide some data that complicates the commonly held belief that urban populations, youth, and those with higher education levels are more likely to oppose censorship and regulation. For instance, the data from the Levada Center demonstrates that while the difference in attitudes between different age, education, and location demographics is not substantial, higher support for Internet censorship can be found among those living in big cities (except Moscow), the younger group of respondents (18-24) tend to support censorship more than the older group, people with higher education support

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[21] Nisbet, E. (2015). *Benchmarking Public Demand: Russia's Appetite for Internet Control*. p. 15

regulation more than those with only school education, and woman support regulation more than men.

The data from the IPO survey illustrates that there was little to no significant difference between respondents from more urban and rural areas in their opposition to the Internet's temporary shutdown.[22] In other words, the data from both surveys suggest that demographic characteristics do not necessarily provide a good explanation for differences in attitudes toward the Internet and the regulation of cyberspace. That said, one of the most remarkable findings of the survey by the Levada Center is a decline in support for Internet censorship over time. While in 2012 censorship was supported by 63% of respondents, the 2014 results showed only 54% expressed the same opinion. Meanwhile, agreement with the idea that the threats linked to the Internet are overestimated and there is no place for censorship grew from 19% to 31%.[23] One can argue that the latter effect can be associated with increases in the number of Internet users. Director of the Sakharov Center, Sergey Lukashevsky, pointed out in an interview with Dozhd TV that support for censorship was particularly significant among non-users. "I think it would not be audacious to suggest a hypothesis that the decrease in support for censorship can be associated with the increase in the number of advanced Internet users in Russia," Lukashevsky argued.[24]

Nonetheless, alongside the arguments that suggest an association between the scale of usage and the attitude toward Internet regulation, an alternative view suggests that more substantial reasons for support for Internet censorship are related to Russian political culture. Freedom of speech, Lukashevsky said, was not valued by the majority of Russians. According to Aleksey Levinson of the Levada Center, most Russians did not share the negative attitude toward censorship that can be found among liberal intellectuals.[25] Moreover, he argued that Russians did not link the banning of "dangerous" websites with a restriction of human rights, concluding, "A very high number of people think that on the Internet, people can see things that they

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[22] Full demographic information was not included in the report but can be made available upon request.
[23] Интернет-цензура. (2014, October 14). Retrieved from http://www.levada.ru/print/14-10-2014/internet-tsenzura
[24] « Свобода слова, в принципе, не *в* приоритете». Михаил *Козырев* обсуждает с экспертами свежий опрос Левада-центра о предпочтении россиянами цензуры. (2014, October 14). *Kozyrev Online*. Retrieved from http://tvrain.ru/articles/svoboda_slova_v_printsipe_ne_prioritete_mihail_kozyrev_obsuzhdaet_s_ekspertami_svezhij_opros_levada_tsentra_o_predpochtenii_rossijanami_tsenzury-376619/
[25] Kichanova, V., Больше половины россиян одобрили введение цензуры в интернете (2014, October 14). Retrieved from http://slon.ru/fast/russia/bolshe-poloviny-rossiyan-odobrili-vvedenie-tsenzury-v-internete-1170875.xhtml

shouldn't see and therefore welcome censorship. But in general Russians support freedom of speech."[26] According to a sociologist from the Levada Center, respondents tended to express a higher degree of opposition to political censorship.[27] At the same time, the data from the IPO survey demonstrates that various forms of political censorship online were supported by pluralities of respondents, with support for censorship greatest for online content depicting homosexuality or suicide.[28]

The picture derived from the data and the expert opinions is controversial. On the one hand, the data allows us to argue that we are witnessing a positive development associated with the increase in the number of the Internet users. In this case, if adopting the hypothesis that more active users tend to be more opposed to regulation and censorship, one can be relatively optimistic since various sets of data demonstrate that older people and those living in rural areas in Russia are going online in higher numbers than in the past. We can argue, however, that the problem is not related to the number of Internet users, but to the normative dimension of a Russian society that is less sensitive to censorship. In other words, frequency of Internet usage is associated with attitudes about censorship, but Russian political culture attenuates the impact of Internet usage on censorship attitudes.

One might suggest that the contradictions seen in the data are actually the most valuable information contained in these surveys. The contradictions demonstrate the degree of confusion and lack of knowledge about the role of the Internet among the Russian population (and this is not necessarily directly or significantly associated with Internet usage). Citizens in general, and Internet users specifically, do not have strong views about the role, threats, or regulation of the Internet. In this state of confusion and even ignorance, public opinion about the Internet can easily be manipulated.

Lukashevsky points out that both the authorities and various social organizations that are interested in control over society will continue to manipulate the issue of banning child pornography to justify Internet censorship. Like any other technology, the Internet is the subject of social construction by different actors. Those who follow the development of the Internet in Russia can see a continuous policy of constructing the

[26] Kichanova, V., Больше половины россиян одобрили введение цензуры в интернете (2014, October 14).
[27] Ibid.
[28] Nisbet, E. (2015). *Benchmarking Public Demand: Russia's Appetite for Internet Control*. p. 20

Internet as a threat and the Internet itself as a technology responsible for a variety of social problems.

The social construction of the Internet in Russia includes linking it not only to the problems of pornography and crime, but also to the increase in suicide attacks and to "sexual minority propaganda" that poses a threat to family values. The Internet is also framed as a technology that is used by foreign agents seeking to cause social and political instability in Russia, and this is supported by the conspiracy theories mapped by Andrey Soldatov, as well as in the results of the IPO survey itself.[29] [30]The recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine has contributed to the framing of the Internet as an instrument of psychological and information warfare.

One of the phenomena that can be associated with the Russian construction of the 'Internet as Threat' is the relative balance between the degrees of usage and trust in traditional and new media. With regard to usage, central Russian TV dominates as the number one source of information for 60% of all Russians and one of the three top sources of information for 84% of all Russians. In comparison, online news sites were selected as the primary source of information for only 10% and in the top three sources of information by just 29% of Russians.[31] Regarding trust, the IPO survey also shows that, even amongst internet users, the degree of trust in television as a source of information (88% trust TV news) is higher than the degree of trust in Internet publications (75% of internet users).[32]

The Internet is not only a technology that can be used to introduce alternative framings and to challenge state-affiliated discourses, but also something that has been constructed and framed. It both constructs and is constructed. The statistics about trust in different media suggest that TV will continue to dominate the framing of a variety of topics, including the Internet, for Russian citizens. As long as the authorities control the majority of TV stations in Russia, the way these stations construct the Internet will contribute to shaping public opinion, including the opinions of Internet users. There is a double advantage to this tactic for the traditional media in Russia, particularly TV. Complicit with the state, they propagate the 'Internet as Threat'

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[29] Soldatov, A. (2014, April 29). Putin, the Internet, and Popular Conspiracies. *The Moscow Times*. Retrieved from http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/putin-the-internet-and-popular-conspiracies/499189.html

[30] Nisbet, E. (2015). *Benchmarking Public Demand: Russia's Appetite for Internet Control*. p. 17

[31] Ibid, p. 13

[32] Ibid, p. 14

narrative and legitimate its regulation, which keeps trust in the Internet low and maintains the traditional media's monopoly on shaping public opinion.

This dynamic between new and old media brings us back to the question of whether the increase in the number of Internet users, and in particular the expansion of Internet usage in rural areas and among older populations, can lead to substantial change in public opinion toward the Internet. We continue to see more and more Internet users, but the opinions of these users about the Internet are still shaped by the traditional media and not necessarily by their own usage experience, and we should not necessarily expect substantial change in attitudes toward Internet regulation as a result of continuing Internet proliferation, but perhaps even an increase in support for Internet regulation.

5. Bringing users back to the scene: Reframing of the Internet and alternative imaginaries

While the increase in the number of Internet users is not expected to lead to substantial changes in public opinion, there is another process that may be more significant. This is the change not in the number of users, and not even in the frequency of usage, but in the purpose and the practices of usage.

The IPO survey demonstrates that the most popular ways in which the Internet is used by Russian respondents included searching for information for personal use (63%), communicating in social networks (62%), downloading videos (37%) and music (38%), reading national news (45%) and corresponding by e-mail (39%). Far fewer respondents used the Internet in order to search for friends and people with similar interests (15%), downloading/purchasing software or apps (15%), manage finances online (12%) or to look for employment (10%). Only 1% of responders wrote a blog.[33]

One should differentiate between the more instrumental, consumptive functions of the Internet and more substantial, productive functions. The instrumental functions support the everyday activities of users (for example, communication or leisure) without significant change to their way of life. The substantial functions include online production skills and activities such as writing a blog, posting videos,

[33] Nisbet, E. (2015). *Benchmarking Public Demand: Russia's Appetite for Internet Control*. p. 10

coding, or organizing new groups and identities online. These online activities allow for the possibility of new forms of self-realization, skill acquisition, social mobilization, as well as various forms of political activism. The framing of the Internet only as a set of instrumental tools and resources for leisure coupled with the narrative of the Internet as a significant threat to security, morals and stability, should be challenged by what has been conceptualized by Mansell as alternative imaginaries of the Internet.[34] In her earlier work, Mansell applies Amartya Sen's notion of freedom as a realization of the individual's own capabilities to the online world. She argues for "the rights and entitlements of individuals to the opportunity to acquire capabilities for effectively using the electronic spaces created by the new media to strengthen their own freedom to decide between alternative ways of living."[35]

In order to challenge the current framing of the Internet in Russia, we must seek to promote an alternative imaginary that allows for the realization that the Internet may have substantial, life-changing value for individuals, and this imaginary should be used to balance the framing of the 'Internet as Threat,' with the realization that Internet regulation is not only a way to address threats, but also something that limits people's opportunities. If users do not realize what they need the Internet for, their understanding of the Internet will be dominated by the perception of the Internet as a threat, and therefore in need of regulation. Challenging the current imaginaries of the Internet should also be reflected through the practices of how people use the Internet. Decreasing the degree of public support for regulation and understanding that further regulation could erode public support may act as a bulwark against new restrictions on cyberspace.

There are currently some examples of global initiatives to promote imaginaries of the Internet that are focused on user empowerment. One of these projects is the "Web We Want," initiated by Sir Tim Berners Lee. According to the project's statement, it seeks to "connect and strengthen local groups, especially in the developing world, building a movement to empower citizens to make, claim and shape the Web they want both nationally and globally, so as to achieve the world we want."[36] The vision of the project relies on "the UN Declaration of Human Rights and

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[34] Mansell, R. (2012). *Imagining the Internet: Communication, innovation, and governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[35] Mansell, R. (2001). New Media and the Power of Networks [pdf]. Retrieved from http://www.c3l.uni-oldenburg.de/cde/OMDE%20626/Module%202/Mansell_lecture.pdf
[36] Web We Want. (n.d.) About. Retrieved from https://webwewant.org/about_us

the goals of social justice."[37] This type of project can provide an opportunity for challenging state-sponsored framings of cyberspace and changing public opinion about the role of the Internet. It is important to note, however, that this type of initiative should not transform into the "Web We Don't Want" when discussion is structured around threats that can be associated with the Internet (for example to privacy or security).

6. It's not only about Russia: International dimensions of internal public opinion

While this analysis is focused on Russia, the role of the Internet in shaping public opinion and in justifying regulation goes far beyond any specific region or type of political system. The Russian authorities would like the 'Internet as Threat' narrative to work externally on an international stage, just as it functions domestically, [38] and Russian initiatives for institutional reforms (for example the relocation of Internet governance from ICANN to ITU) are structured as a response to a variety of threats. The internal model described here is also applicable in other places around the world. Even most democratic states have actors and institutions promoting a threat-driven framing of technologies in general and of the Internet in particular, seeking to manipulate or increase public support for the introduction of new forms of regulation. One problem with the multistakeholder model of Internet governance is that the community of Internet users is one of the major stakeholders, but not necessarily an independent or powerful one. A security-driven framing of the Internet seeks to exclude the community of users even further.

Russian writer Evgeny Shvarts argues in his play *The Dragon* that it is not enough to kill the Dragon in order to free people from his totalitarian rule--the "dragon" has to be killed in each of the people who lived under the dragon's rule.[39] The struggle for Internet freedom is often focused on the institutional "dragons" responsible for new forms of regulation. It also assumes that the public can actively participate in protecting its own freedoms and act as a counterbalance to institutional actors in the multistakeholder ecosystem. The data from Russian public opinion

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[37] Web We Want. (n.d.) About.

[38] Asmolov G. (2013, December 16). A Shift in International Information Security: The Story of a Diplomatic Oxymoron. *CGCS Mediawire*. Retrieved from http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/a-shift-in-international-information-security-the-story-of-a-diplomatic-oxymoron/

[39] Schwarz, E.L. (1944). The Dragon. Retrieved from http://a7sharp9.com/dragon.html

surveys contradict these assumptions and demonstrate that one of the fundamental issues in Internet governance is the public support for Internet censorship.

This article has tried to argue that protecting Internet freedom is not possible without a shift in public opinion. It requires both opposition to the state-sponsored framing of the Internet and the expansion of Internet imaginaries beyond the focus on security threats and leisure. Accordingly, the core struggle is not a struggle around Internet regulation, but a struggle around the construction of the Internet's role in the everyday life of its users.