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Gregory Feifer

Journalist and Associate of Harvard University's Davis Center for Russian Studies

Journalist **Gregory Feifer's** book, *Russians: The Power Behind the People* (Twelve, 2014) "explores the seeming paradoxes of life in Russia by unraveling the nature of its people and what it is in their history, desires, and conception of themselves that makes them baffling to the West."

A former NPR Moscow correspondent who reported from Russia for almost a decade. Before joining NPR in 2005, Feifer lived in Paris and New York and has written for numerous outlets, including *The New Republic*, *The Washington Post*, and *World Policy Journal*

He is the son of a Russian mother and American father, George Feifer, one of the few Western journalists to really dig under the surface of Soviet life during the Cold War.

Subject Area/Topic: What Does Russia Really Want?

Highlights: Feifer believes that Russians in the 1990s had largely accepted the loss of the empire "...as a price for prosperity and individual freedom." Putin's chance rise to the presidency allowed him to return Russia's political culture to its traditional roots. He could do this because "...Russians don't support Western aims (and) Russian values and motives are different from ours."

"Putin runs a vast kleptocracy." For example, a company solely owned by a childhood friend of his earned more than seven billion dollars from the Sochi Olympic Games.

There is no immediate threat to Putin and we can expect him to be around for a while. Nevertheless, "...he is failing to modernize Russia or to build its infrastructure and intellectual capital." Instead, he is presiding over a massive brain drain.

In the long run, the current level of coercion and corruption cannot be maintained. In the short run, the threat to his neighbors and the West will grow.