By focusing on international dimensions of developments in the former Soviet polity, Rex Wade has performed a distinct service. Like all politics, this sphere of international politics can be categorized as the art of the possible. Professor Wade has outlined an admirable prospect for the attainment of a more peaceful, more democratic world. He is properly concerned that achievement of such a world requires strenuous efforts. Most of us share his aspiration as a Maximum goal. Yes, we should like to see Russia and Ukraine become stable democracies and thriving market economies, respecting each other's independence and that of smaller republics. The entire international order would be transformed by the addition of such reliable partners. Wade believes that this maximum goal justifies immense efforts on the part of the United States: “We must recognize that the US, and especially President Clinton, has to take the lead in formulating Western policy toward Russia and the new republics.” The US must “take leadership” in “a coherent strategy for economic reconstruction which links together all parts of economic assistance.” Wade also advocates that the US and Europe “constantly insist upon the importance of these matters,” i.e., political systems and values, including civil rights — in short, that the United States should also assume a leading role in creating democracy in Russia and Ukraine.

The questions I raise are these:
1) Is any conceivable effort by Western countries likely to produce the degree of economic success and democratization that constitutes the maximum desiderata for the former Soviet republics?
2) What are the material and political limitations of such an “interventionist American foreign policy”?
3) If such intervention under American leadership is tried but fails, or is only temporarily successful, what will be the costs for the international system?
4) Are there more modest, but useful steps that are less likely to contribute to maximum goals but entail far lower costs and risks?
The extent of a Western effort to bring the former Soviet territories up to Western economic standards is suggested by recent German experience. Although less than one-fourth of the national population is in East Germany, the disappearance there of the institutional and psychic prerequisites for a market economy has almost overwhelmed efforts to bring East Germany up to national standards of pay and productivity. Yet the Russian and the Ukrainian Republics alone — with far less residual elements of liberal democracy and capitalist enterprise — contain 180 million people, one-third as many as the EC, Canada and the US combined. Recent debates among economists like J. C. Breda and Peter Murrell (see the spring issue of Post-Soviet Affairs) suggest that there are no reliable formulas for East European transition to market economies; hence, regardless of external aid, one cannot be sure that this goal will be attained in the proximate future.

So far, in fact, between two-thirds and three-quarters of all assistance to Eastern Europe has come from a single country — Germany, not the United States. At the end of 1992 $35 billion of $68 billion of debts incurred by the former Soviet regime, and formally assumed by Russia, were owed to German commercial banks and the Bonn government. During the year following the abortive putsch of August 1991, the successor republics borrowed $18 billion more abroad, including $4 billion from the US Department of Agriculture but only $100 million from American banks, in contrast to a continuing flow of German commercial loans. Of course, this aid was designed to attain German objectives, notably Soviet military withdrawal from East Germany, as well as to maintain the momentum of trade with the erstwhile Soviet lands. Apart from German financial predominance, German contacts and know-how concerning Eastern Europe are far stronger than American; as early as 1963, from interviews of Europeans I discovered German middle-level executives who were actually conducting management seminars for the Soviet officials they dealt with.

At the political level, Wade recognizes that other democratic experiences may be more relevant for the Community of Independent States (CIS) than is American experience, particularly the more centralized, bureaucratic French way. Indeed, one Soviet report suggests that Yeltsin has taken De Gaulle as his role model. I believe that CIS leaders will and should draw upon a variety of democratic models, especially in the legal realm, where swarms of American lawyers appear to be overly solicitous in emphasizing Anglo-American forms of civil rights protection.

There are additional weighty reasons for doubting how far American leadership can or should prevail. According to The New York Times (8 March 1992), a Pentagon plan called for perpetuating unique US super-