In this essay Rex Wade lays a Wilsonian vision before his readers by assigning the United States the special role of leading the Republics of the Soviet Union into the world community of democratic, market-driven states. He reaffirms thereby the historic US mission to expand the area of liberal democracy by adding to it the goal of reconstructing Russia and the other Republics in accordance with American political and economic principles. For him the welfare, stability and security of that vast region, no less than that of the United States and the Western world, require nothing less; As he concludes:

Assisting Russia and the Republics is in our own interest. We should remember that point ourselves, and tell the Russians frankly that it is so. We should assure them that our actions spring not only from traditional American humanitarian impulses and from traditional American interest in the spread of democracy, but also from the fundamental awareness that our own interests as a country, as well as theirs, are served by helping stable, peaceful, prosperous and democratic societies develop where formerly stood the USSR.

Undoubtedly such a prescription for American policy is appealing, especially to those who have little interest in weighing the ends and means of policy in a highly complex and resistant world.

In his opening pages the author traces the decline of the old order in the USSR and the emergence of those problems that now haunt the region and comprise the challenge to the external world that he accepts. The Soviet economy had become dysfunctional by the early 1980s. The heavily centralized Communist structure could no longer support the country's pretensions or satisfy its public expectations. The declining quality of life, always far below Western standards, created a sullen disillusionment, gross absenteeism, reduced productivity and drunkenness. The end of the Cold War after 1989 ushered in the promise of a new era of peace and prosperity, based on a pluralistic system of government and a free-market economy. At the same time nationalism, as an expression of self-determination, challenged Russia's imperial structure. By
1991 it appeared essential that Russia recognize the independence of the republics in the interest of regional peace and stability.

Scarcely had the pressures for change emerged before the incipient reform program began to unravel. Mikhail Gorbachev managed to undermine the old economic order but failed to replace it with something new. With the object of achieving economic and political reform through the agency of the Communist Party and the established power structure, Gorbachev's gradualist approach could not meet the demands of the people or prevent the rise of Boris Yeltsin's more democratic and market-oriented reform movement. Confronted by insurmountable barriers to effective action, the victorious Yeltsin, in early 1992, raised prices despite lagging productivity, sending inflation into orbit. By 1993 the failure of reform had created an economic and political crisis that threatened to disrupt the vast region of the former USSR. Yet, as the author properly observes, Russia remains militarily the second most powerful country in the world. What happens to it politically and economically, how it controls its conventional and nuclear capabilities or deals with its neighbors, comprises the major concern confronting the Western world and a special responsibility for the United States.

Still, the author's presumption that the US interests have demanded a world of democratic nations (perhaps because they appear less dangerous than those which lack a liberal democratic order, and can contribute more to world trade and investment) has little relationship to the ends that this country has traditionally pursued. These have, for good reason, seldom encompassed the advancement of democracy. Whatever the moral or economic means employed, such purposes comprise massive infringements in the internal affairs of other nations, and so the world has judged them. What the United States has sought the world over are stable governments, whether democratic or not, whose policies serve the economic and security interests of the United States. It has supported countless autocracies and dictatorships in Latin America and elsewhere that appeared more reliable as partners than the more democratic, often radical and anti-American, forces that opposed them. Not even the Cold War challenged such choices.

Democracy, furthermore, is no guarantee of peaceful intent. Democracies, like all other nations, fight for their interests however they choose to define them. Great Britain, Mexico, Spain, Germany and Japan can all recall times when the democratic United States was scarcely peaceful. The great democracies of the Western world have been generally pacific in the present century because they, unlike Germany, Japan and Russia, entered the century with their empires and their primary international rankings established. Thereafter they desired nothing except the privilege