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The Talented Mr. Putin: International Judo

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Abstract. This article describes the successful foreign policy style of Vladimir Putin, President of Russia.

In the foreign policy arena, a very common instinct to manage conflict with an adversary or competitor is to engage in a straight-ahead, toe-to-toe struggle at every point of contention. However, this instinct often must be managed and then attenuated because few political entities have the capabilities necessary to successfully actualize it. A second common instinct is to implement the straight-ahead, toe-to-toe approach only at specific points of contention. However, this instinct--if actualized--may be problematic if points are unwittingly chosen that favor the adversary or competitor or are insignificant in the context of the overall conflict. A third rarer instinct is to react to the opportunities wittingly or unwittingly provided by one's adversary or competitor. This instinct--analogous to aspects of the martial arts of aikido and judo--seems to be successfully implemented by the current president of Russia, Vladimir Putin in conflict with the United States (US).

Some representatives of the US Government (USG) publicly and implicitly discredit the current reality of US military forces in Bosnia and Kosovo and of the European Union's planning to develop its own rapid deployment force. Russia tries to strengthen its bonds with Europe.

Some representatives of the USG publicly and explicitly threaten to impede trade relations with the People's Republic of China. Russia tries to open new trade links with Asia.

Some representatives of the USG publicly and explicitly devalue a primary role in nurturing peace between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel. Mr. Putin announces that he would like to undertake a peace mission to the Middle East and invites the Egyptian president and Syrian foreign minister to visit Moscow.

Some representatives of the USG publicly and explicitly seek to reinforce sanctions against Iraq that seem to have little effect in impeding Iraqi efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction. Mr. Putin pushes for an end to United Nations (UN) sanctions against Iraq in return for greater Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions bearing on weapons inspections.

The Bush administration temporarily withdraws from active diplomacy with North Korea. Mr. Putin is now expected to meet the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il, along with representatives of the European Union.

Is it Mr. Putin's own training in the proaction and reaction of judo in contrast with the US president's acontextual training with running and weight machines? The talented Mr. Putin--with a very fragile economy, deteriorating military, and discredited political ideology--may yet give the new US president more than he can handle. (See Dolle, J-M., & Barbot, A. (1979). Learning judo and cognitive development: Understanding the laws of physics through judo. *Psychologie Francaise*, 24, 97-109; Gleser, J., & Brown, P. (1988). Judo principles and practices: Applications to conflict-solving strategies in psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 42, 437-447; Gleser, J., & Lison, S. (1986). Judo as

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