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Russian Officials Hopeful for Warmer Relations After Johnson Appointment

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New British Prime Minister Theresa May on Wednesday appointed key Brexit campaigner Boris Johnson as British Foreign Secretary and Russian officials have reacted to the news with optimism, hoping that the new appointment will usher in a period of warmer relations between the two countries.

Alexei Pushkov, the head of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the State Duma said on Twitter that he hoped the appointment would have a positive impact on British-Russian relations.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Boris Johnson will likely be "more diplomatic" as the head of the British Foreign Office than his predecessors, the RIA Novosti news agency reported on Thursday.

Similarly, the head of the inter-party group on Russia in the British Parliament, Sir Edward Lee believes that Johnson will most likely seek a "constructive relationship" with Russia, according to RIA Novosti.

Johnson's predecessor as foreign secretary was Philip Hammond, who repeatedly called Russia's behavior on the world stage both “a threat and a challenge.”

In a tweet later on Wednesday, Pushkov also noted that Hammond, unlike the foreign ministers of France, Germany, and Italy, broke off most ties with Russia after its involvement in the Ukraine crisis.

This resulted in London staying on the sidelines in both the Syria and Ukraine conflicts. Pushkov said that he hoped Johnson would not have the same “anti-Russian” views.

Johnson had been in the running to be the new prime minister after David Cameron’s resignation following the country's vote to leave the European Union but dropped out of the race early on.

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