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7 Things British PM Boris Johnson Has Said About Russia

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Johnson will be tasked with navigating British-Russian relations, which have been fraught since Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine and a former Russian spy was poisoned on British soil. **Jess Taylor / UK Parliament**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party has secured a majority in a landslide election victory, results showed on Friday.

In addition to leading Britain through its withdrawal from the European Union, Johnson will be tasked with navigating British-Russian relations, which have been fraught since Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine and a former Russian spy was poisoned on British soil.

Prior to Thursday's victory, Johnson's opponents accused him of delaying publishing a report on alleged Russian meddling in British politics to hide embarassing revelations about himself and his party.

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Here's a look at what Johnson has said about Russia in the past:

On interacting with Russia as Foreign Secretary (September 2018)

"When I became foreign secretary I thought there was no objective reason why we should be quite so hostile to Russia."

"Yes, there were lots of reasons to be suspicious, lots of reasons to be wary. But I thought it was possible — I made the classic, classic mistake of thinking it was possible to have a 'reset' with Russia."

On President Vladimir Putin (December 2015; June 2019)

"He [Putin] is allegedly the linchpin of a vast post-Soviet gangster kleptocracy, and is personally said to be the richest man on the planet. Journalists who oppose him get shot. His rivals find themselves locked up. Despite looking a bit like Dobby the House Elf, he is a ruthless and manipulative tyrant."

"I don't want to put too fine a point on it, Vladimir, but there are some countries where capitalism is believed to be in the hands of oligarchs and cronies, where journalists are shot, and where 'liberal values' are derided, and where according to the Russian statistics agency Rosstat, a third of the country cannot afford to buy more than two pairs of shoes per year; where 12% of the population still has to rely on an outdoor toilet, and where real incomes have declined for each of the past five years."

"It is a matter of economic fact that, when Vladimir Putin says that liberalism is obsolete, he is talking the most tremendous tripe. Liberalism is alive. It is well. It is delivering prosperity on a scale unimaginable to previous generations."

On Russian interference in British politics (November 2019)

"There's absolutely no evidence that I've ever seen of any Russian interference in UK democratic processes... And as for that particular report I saw no reason whatever to change to timetable for publication just because there was a general election going on."

On his attitude toward Russia (December 2019)

"I am a Russophile, a committed Russophile... And I believe — I'm certain that I'm the first foreign secretary in the history of my office to be called Boris."

On the Skripal poisoning (March 2018)

"No matter how exactly it came to be done, the pathway, the chain of responsibility seems to me to go back to the Russian state and those at the top."

On Russian oligarch donations to the Conservative Party (November 2019)

"All donations to the Conservative Party are properly vetted, properly publicized. ... I'll leave it to your teams of researchers to bring that fact before us. It's all there in the public."

On Russia's involvement in the Syrian conflict (September 2016)

“The world’s attitude towards Russia has been hardening and I think people now believe that Russia is in danger of becoming a pariah nation… If they continue like this they will forfeit any sympathy and any admiration in the world at all, and I think they do care about that.”

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