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# Putin Wants 'Constructive' Ties with Scholz, Praises Merkel

By AFP

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Germany's new Chancellor Olaf Scholz. **Sandro Halank (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday he wanted "constructive" ties with Germany's new leader Olaf Scholz and thanked the outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"I look forward to establishing constructive dialogue with you and joint work on pressing matters on the bilateral and international agenda," Putin said in a congratulatory telegram to Scholz, the Kremlin said.

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Doing so "would undoubtedly meet the fundamental interests of Russians and Germans, and would contribute to the strengthening of stability and security at the regional and global levels," Putin added.

In a separate telegram to the 67-year-old Merkel, Putin thanked her for cooperation over the past 16 years and readiness for "mutually respectful dialogue," using the familiar "ty" form of address in his message rather than the formal "vy."

"We were constantly in contact and tried to find ways out of even the most difficult situations," Putin said. "We will of course continue our friendly interaction."

On Wednesday, the German parliament elected Scholz as chancellor as a new center-left-led coalition takes the wheel of Europe's top economy.

The incoming government has pledged a tougher line with authoritarian states such as Russia after the business-driven pragmatism of the Merkel years.

Despite their bitter differences, Merkel and Putin, who speak each other's languages, managed to keep talking throughout the outgoing German leader's years in office.

Merkel was a proponent of direct talks with Putin and her ambivalent stance on Russia also frequently alienated partners, particularly in eastern Europe.

She angered them especially with the controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline set to carry Russian gas to Germany, which several eastern European countries believe will embolden Moscow at their expense.

Germany imports around 40% of its gas from Russia and is set to receive even more via Nord Stream 2, a project that has raised U.S. concerns, divided Europe and angered EU ally Ukraine.

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