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'Tillerson is Not Pro-Russian', but Unlikely to Seek 'Confrontation' With Moscow

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On Thursday, Rex Tillerson was sworn in as the new United States Secretary of State. In relations with Moscow Tillerson is likely to embrace a pragmatic approach, according to Grigory Yarygin, a political analyst and specialist in American politics.



[Tillerson's Nomination Puts Both Russia and the US 'in a Safer Place' / © REUTERS/ Kevin Lamarque](#)

The new US state secretary was sworn in by Vice President Michael Pence. The official ceremony took place in the White House, in the presence of President Donald Trump.

In a congratulatory telegram to Tillerson, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed hope for a constructive dialogue between Moscow and Washington.

"[The telegram] reads: Russian-US relations continue to play a special role in the modern world, remaining a key factor for ensuring the strategic stability and security. I am hoping for a constructive dialog with you on the whole range of the issues on bilateral and international agenda," Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova said at a press briefing on Friday.

[Tillerson, Day One: Secretary of State Reassures Allies of US Support / © AFP 2016/ BEN STANSALL](#)

Tillerson is the former CEO of Exxon Mobil, one of the world's largest energy companies. He was harshly criticized by US political establishment for his close business ties with Russia and alleged friendly relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Rex Tillerson is expected to have a pragmatic foreign policy approach, independent from US Congress, according to Grigory Yarygin, a lecturer at the Department for American Studies, the St. Petersburg State University.

"We can say that Tillerson will act independently, just like Donald Trump. They owe Congress nothing. They will act independently despite demands from congressmen. As for his foreign policy, it is likely to be realistic, non-militarized and pragmatic," Yarygin [told](#) Radio Sputnik.

The expert suggested that Tillerson is likely to concentrate on Washington's economic interests and commercial relations.

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[Russia Ready for Contacts With Tillerson, Meeting Possible - Foreign Ministry / © Sputnik/ Mikhail Klimentyev](#)

"He doesn't have a diplomatic experience, but he is a responsible team player. He also has leader skills. So, I think he will be a good US State Secretary," Yarygin said.

According to him, in building ties with Russia, Tillerson will adhere to a pragmatic approach.

"His starting point will be the fact that Russia acts rationally. There will be no provocations with sanctions. At the same time, he has a hardline view of sanctions and Russia's foreign policy. I think he will run a deterrence policy towards Moscow, including no criticism and no confrontation," the expert pointed out.

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Yarygin's assumption was echoed by Konstantin Kosachev, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Russian upper house of parliament.

"Tillerson's rationalism and his commitment to practical results will make the US foreign policy more pragmatic and less ideology-biased," Kosachev told [RIA Novosti](#).

The senator regards the new US State Secretary as a "reliable partner" for Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to start a substantial dialogue on the future of US-Russia bilateral relations.

"Of course, Tillerson is not that pro-Russian, as some of his opponents have portrayed him. He also made a series of harsh statements about Russia during hearings in Congress. But this is not what he really thinks," Kosachev concluded.

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