

Putin Congratulates Tokayev on 'Convincing Mandate' in Kazakh Poll

By [AFP](#)

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Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday congratulated Kazakhstan's incumbent president, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, on his landslide victory in a snap presidential poll held months after deadly unrest in the oil-rich Central Asian country.

"You have received a convincing mandate of trust from fellow citizens, which opens up new opportunities for the implementation of the course of national development that you are advancing," Putin said in a statement released by the Kremlin.

Historically close ties between Russia and Kazakhstan have been strained since the launch of Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine, with the ex-Soviet country seeking to balance ties with the West and Moscow.

Tokayev publicly clashed with Putin on a visit to St. Petersburg in June, criticizing Moscow's

move to recognize Ukrainian separatist regions that the Kremlin has since claimed to have annexed.

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Putin in his message Monday praised the "strategic partnership" and "alliance" between Russia and Kazakhstan, which he said were grounded in "friendship, neighborliness and mutual respect."

"We will continue to work together to improve them," Putin added, according to the Kremlin.

According to preliminary results released on Monday, 69-year-old Tokayev was leading the election with over 81% of the vote.

The results were expected and none of his five little-known opponents scored double digits in the vote.

Rich in natural resources and located at the crossroads of important trade routes, Kazakhstan sank into chaos during protests over high living costs in January, which left 238 dead.

Tokayev — once a steady hand, if generally considered lacking charisma — showed a ruthless side earlier this year by violently suppressing protests.

He gave "shoot to kill" orders against demonstrators and called on Moscow to send in "peacekeeping" troops to help.

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