

# In a Presidential Tone, Calderón Rejects Recount

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MEXICO CITY, July 13 — [Felipe Calderón](#), the man electoral officials say won a razor-slim victory in [Mexico's](#) presidential election, dresses in sober blue suits, wears rimless glasses and is comfortable speaking the language of lawyers and economists.



Dario Lopez-Mills/Associated Press

Felipe Calderón, poised to be Mexico's next president, says the vote was "absolutely legitimate."

His opponent, [Andrés Manuel López Obrador](#), has stirred popular protests with fiery denunciations of fraud in last week's election. But Mr. Calderón is already making every attempt to act presidential.

In an interview on Thursday, he offered a legal defense of his apparent victory, along with a coolly logical view of the political standoff polarizing this country. He said that a recount of all votes was not necessary under the electoral law. The law had been followed to the last jot on election night, he reasoned, and the Mexican Constitution's test of "certainty and legality" for the polling had been met.

"It's absolutely legitimate," Mr. Calderón said. "The legitimacy comes from the law, and the democratic way in which the election was carried out."

Electoral officials have determined that Mr. Calderón, 43, a conservative former energy minister, received 243,000 more votes than his leftist rival, who has asked for a complete recount from an electoral court that has yet to approve the results.

Mr. Calderón suggested that Mr. López Obrador had tried to undermine the credibility of Federal Electoral Institute and the Electoral Tribunal in a way that could lead the country to ugly protests and confrontations on the streets.

“Mexico wants to live in peace,” he said. “We don’t want hate. We don’t want confrontation. Much less do we want violence. And it seems to me a mistake and irresponsible to attempt to exacerbate passions to generate hate and violence.”

Mr. Calderón, who holds degrees in law, economics and public policy, said the official documents certifying the vote, known as *actas*, were drawn up in each of 130,000 polling places the night of the election and solemnized there. Citizen poll workers, chosen randomly, had witnessed the counting and signed the documents, he pointed out.

As a legal matter, he argued, those documents, not the ballots, provide the basis for the official results. Indeed, the ballots may be recounted only if *actas* are missing or incorrectly filled out. Election officials recounted ballots in about 3,000 polling places during the official tally three days after the vote, and found human errors in most of the counts.

“It’s not that I imagined I won,” Mr. Calderón said. “The votes have already been counted, and according to this count I won the election.”

Still, Mr. Calderón said he would abide by whatever the seven-member Federal Electoral Tribunal decided. Some legal scholars say the court could order a recount, but Mr. Calderón asserted that the law did not allow it.

“I will respect what the tribunal if the tribunal finds legal cause and sufficient motive to recount the votes of a polling place,” he said. “What is not possible legally is to do a general recount as they are proposing. This is not possible legally.”

While the dispute continues, Mr. Calderón is preparing himself for the slate of issues that will confront the next president.

On illegal [immigration](#), he said the key to stopping the flow of migrants to the United States was to attract more foreign investment to Mexico and create more factory jobs. For decades, he said, Mexico had discouraged foreign investment and was still paying the price, even 12 years after the free trade agreement with the United States and Canada.

“Because there was not enough investment, our labor force went to look for the capital,” he said. “They went to look where there were jobs available, and what one has to do is reverse that process. One must make Mexico an attractive place worldwide for investment.”

Mr. Calderón acknowledged that the cost of labor in Mexico was higher than in countries like China and India, but said he planned to make other changes to make the country more attractive to investors, chiefly cutting taxes and reducing the cost of energy.

The conservative, who carried the banner for President Vicente Fox’s National Action Party, also said he would crack down on crime and curb violence between drug cartels that have ravaged border cities like Nuevo Laredo and tourist centers like Acapulco.

He said the country’s myriad police forces needed to be revamped from top to bottom to root out corruption. “My big worry is that there are chains of corruption that have involved police forces at every level of government,” he said.

He also said he intended to create a new federal anti-narcotics agency along the lines of the [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) in the United States to go after drug dealers, who control entire cities here. The agency would recruit better-educated and more motivated people than those who currently fill the ranks of local police forces. The state would pay them enough to counter the temptation of corruption, he said.

Mr. Calderón said he would like to use more high-technology devices, from spy planes to computers, to track criminals, watch the border and monitor the movements of drug dealers. For instance, he promised to

link several law enforcement and social databases to create a giant computerized bank of fingerprints, criminal histories, vehicle registrations, addresses and other information for law enforcement officials.

“It’s a battle that we can confront and my objective as president is to take back control of the streets,” he said.