

Fox criticizes 'extremist' politics

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MEXICO CITY - President Vicente Fox said Tuesday that Mexicans do not support "extremist" and "messianic" politics, a thinly veiled slap at a leftist candidate who has launched street blockades to press for a full recount of last month's presidential election.

Fox's comments came a day after he told foreign journalists that his ruling-party ally Felipe Calderon was the "clear winner" of the disputed July 2 vote - his strongest statement yet about the political crisis that has gripped Mexico for weeks.

Supporters of leftist candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador have snarled the capital since for weeks with round-the-clock protest camps, blocking streets and launching demonstrations to protest what they claim was electoral fraud that gave Calderon a narrow lead in official vote tallies.

"What we Mexicans want is stability, order and harmony," Fox said Tuesday. "Society rejects extremist solutions, and messianic or apocalyptic visions that belong to the political culture of the past."

Analysts have frequently used the term "messianic" to describe Lopez Obrador, citing his followers' fervent devotion and the leftist's belief in his own personal sense of mission.

Fox broke weeks of silence about the election on Monday, saying, "There is a clear winner - Mr. Felipe Calderon." Mexican presidents are limited by the constitution to a single, six-year term, and Calderon ran as the candidate of Fox's conservative National Action Party.

Fox backtracked somewhat on Tuesday, acknowledging that there can be no president-elect until Mexico's top electoral court has weighed challenges from both sides.

According to tallies released the week after the election, Calderon received about 240,000 more votes - about 0.6 percent of the ballots cast - than Lopez Obrador, a

former Mexico City mayor. The election is now in the hands of the Federal Electoral Tribunal, which has until Sept. 6 to declare a president-elect or annul the vote.