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Sonoran race may portend

First in a series

HERMOSILLO, Sonora — There is a governor's seat at stake here — and much more.

Sonorans will vote July 7 to choose their leader for the next six years. All of Mexico awaits the result.

Will the country show that it can tolerate more than token political sentiment?

Or will the government try to "steal" the election — and risk the widespread violence that many think is sure to follow?

The answers to those questions hold massive implications for the country's political future.

On one side is PRI — the incumbent Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or Institutional Revolutionary Party.

PRI rules Mexico.

On the other side is Partido Acción Nacional, PAN, the National Action Party, a party founded in 1945 by a coalition of church and business interests.

Since PRI was born in 1929, there have been more than 200 gubernatorial elections across Mexico.

PRI has won them all.

During that time, no president or senator has been elected from any other party either. Stingily, PRI has permitted a few congressional and mayoral seats to go to the opposition — with virtually no impact on the government.

But this time, with Sonora's gubernatorial election less than six months away, many experienced political observers believe that PAN has a chance to win.

The state's political scene is dominated by two major parties: the PRI and the PAN.



PRI candidate Rodolfo Félix Valdés speaks at a rally in downtown Guaymas on Feb. 2.

Elección '85

The campaign for Sonora

sized state of 2 million people.

All that is certain, whispered about — and very far from certain — are rumors of PAN support on the part of, variously, the Catholic Church, private U.S. citizens, and even the CIA.

witty engineer who, after mayor of Ciudad Obregon's second-largest city to pursue the governor's product of the ever-growing Mexican private sector.

Breaking with the short campaigns, PAN's first gubernatorial campaign years ago, walking for