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## EUROPE

# Greek Conservatives Trounce Opponents in Elections, Buoyed by Economic Upturn

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's center-right party performs strongly, but with no outright majority a repeat national vote is expected

By *Yannis Palaiologos* and [Marcus Walker](#) [Follow](#)

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ATHENS—Greece's governing center-right resoundingly beat its left-leaning opponents in national elections Sunday, as voters rewarded Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis for a robust recent economic performance.

But with Mitsotakis falling just short of a majority in Parliament, Greece is expected to hold another national vote in late June or early July, under a different electoral system that is likely to help his New Democracy party win an outright victory.

New Democracy, which has governed Greece since 2019, won 41% of the vote, with the main left-wing opposition party Syriza garnering 20%. The center-left Pasok party, which once dominated Greek politics, won 11.5% of the vote.

Mitsotakis's advantage on Sunday was far larger than opinion polls had predicted, showing that Greek voters want him to continue to steer the country's economy toward recovery and that opposition parties failed to offer a convincing alternative vision. The results left New Democracy only five seats short of a majority.

Greek stocks and bonds jumped on Monday. The benchmark Greek stock index, the Athex Composite, surged 6.7% to its highest level since 2014.

Addressing New Democracy supporters in Athens, Mitsotakis described Sunday's results a "political earthquake" and called for a quick second election. "A government is needed which believes in reforms, and is able to implement them. And this cannot come from fragile numbers or uncertain parliamentary relationships," he said.

Sunday's result represents a crushing defeat for Syriza, whose support fell far below expectations, and is likely to put pressure on its leader, former Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, to resign.

Sunday's vote was held under a proportional system, whereas a repeat election will use a different system that gives up to 50 bonus seats to the biggest party. New Democracy would likely need around 37% to 38% of the vote to reach a majority in the 300-seat Parliament in the repeat vote.



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis speaking outside his party's headquarters after the election. PHOTO: LOUIZA VRADI/REUTERS



Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras arriving at party headquarters. PHOTO: LOUIZA GOULIAMAKI/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

Greece is finally beginning to emerge from its deep economic depression of the 2010s when its debt crisis shook the eurozone. The Greek economy remains nearly a quarter smaller than before the financial crisis began in 2008.

But economic growth has resumed, from a low level, with exports and investment improving, helped by an inflow of European Union funds and a pro-business government that has improved the country's image among investors.

In his re-election campaign, Mitsotakis touted the recent economic growth rate, his government's record of tax cuts, and its extensive aid to families and businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic and last year's energy-price spike triggered by the war in Ukraine.

New Democracy has also campaigned on its tough immigration policies, which have sharply cut the inflow of asylum seekers. The government continues to dismiss copious evidence of extrajudicial deportations of migrants.

Mitsotakis also sought to remind voters of the chaotic events of 2015 when Syriza, with Yanis Varoufakis as finance minister, led Greece to the brink of exiting the euro. Varoufakis now leads a small left-wing party, MeRA25, which New Democracy has warned could team up with Syriza in a new leftist alliance. Varoufakis fell out with Syriza and has said he would never form a coalition with it.

Greek voters didn't punish Mitsotakis for a festering scandal involving the wiretapping of politicians, journalists, business people and military figures. Nor did New Democracy pay an electoral price for a train crash in February that killed 57, including many students, which exposed problems of mismanagement and patronage in Greece's public sector and led to an outpouring of anger in the country.



Greek residents in Athens voted amid a backdrop of economic growth. PHOTO: PETROS GIANNAKOURIS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gerassimos Moschonas, a political scientist at Athens's Panteion University, said the Mitsotakis government has won widespread approval for its handling of foreign policy, defense, the digitization of public services and the economy, notwithstanding discontent over inflation.

Mitsotakis's ability to appeal to educated centrist voters has "broadened the appeal of New Democracy beyond its conservative base," Moschonas added.

New Democracy's electoral strength "is indissolubly linked with the significant weaknesses of the opposition," he said.

Mitsotakis's appeal is also a function of a changed electorate. After the turbulent crisis years, many voters want a period of normalcy and don't want to undermine stability, said Nikos Alivizatos, emeritus professor of constitutional law at Athens University and a former Greek interior minister. "This is the reason for the inconceivably mild [voter] response to the surveillance scandal," he said.

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