

Introduction



In the evolving political crisis of Cote d'Ivoire, significant preventive diplomatic efforts have been deployed both at the level of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) to end the crisis. As the political stalemate deepened following the run-off elections on 28th November 2010, the Authority of Heads of State of ECOWAS meeting in an Extraordinary Session on 7th December in the Nigerian capital Abuja, endorsed the results of the Ivorian second round elections as declared by the Independent Electoral Commission and certified by the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations in Cote d'Ivoire.

This policy brief examines the possible outcomes of the engagement of the AU High Panel in search of a peaceful end to the Ivorian political crisis. The policy brief further explores the complexity of the mediation process in Cote d'Ivoire where the underlining assumption of a peaceful settlement obliges compliance on the part of the incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo to cede power to Mr. Alassane Ouattara, the recognized winner and President Elect as declared by the Authority of Heads of State of ECOWAS. How must the AU-ECOWAS intervention facilitate a transition of political power in a peaceful manner when the key actor; the incumbent President refuses to step down or accepts the decision of ECOWAS and the Africa Union leaders backed by the United Nations? What could be the way forward in such a complicated negotiation process? Are there policy options available that can be pursued to respond to the current stalemate while at the same time recognizing that the preferred response option must deal

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