



POLICY BRIEF

FOR THE MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE ON A WMD/DVs FREE ZONE

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From Rio to Helsinki?

Advantages and Shortcomings of the ABACC Concept and Its Possible Application in the Middle East

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Abstract

Recent discussions around the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery vehicles (DVs) in the Middle East have been encompassed by several proposals intended to design an efficient institutional framework that could be easily accepted by all states in the region. This POLICY BRIEF provides a specific analysis of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) in order to suggest possible applications of the model to new contexts. Although seldom examined in its own evolution, the ABACC rapprochement model has been frequently read as a virtuous example of how nuclear rivalry can be turned into cooperation to ensure regional nuclear non-proliferation with a common technological benefit for both parties involved. Regarding this positive example of regional arms control and verification, this POLICY BRIEF addresses similarities and differences with the current situation in the Middle East from a practical perspective.

To this end, an interpretative matrix including multiple local variables and analytical dimensions that need to be considered when endorsing the transfer of the Argentine-Brazilian verification regime to other parts of the globe is offered. The key aspects include: a conflict- and actor-related dimension, a territorial, scientific-technological as well as legal dimension, plus other regional equilibriums (economical, cultural, religious dimensions). The reading of such a matrix allows the authors to argue that, if certain conditions are met, the ABACC concept may provide a complete framework for 'neighbor-to-neighbor' safeguards and mutual control at a regional level that negotiators can rely on when fostering new paths for the Helsinki Conference on the establishment of a WMD/DVs Free Zone. ■

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