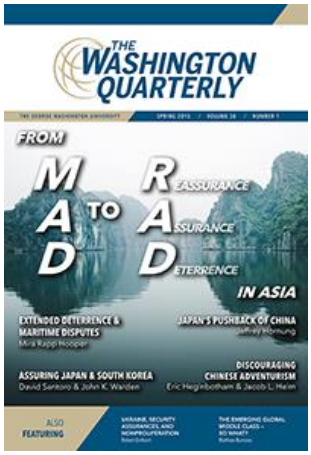

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The Saudi Nuclear Genie is Out

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A nuclear deal with Iran—Saudi Arabia's regional rival—was always going to be unwelcome news in Riyadh, as it means that Tehran receives international recognition as a nuclear threshold state. Saudi Arabia views a deal as an increase in Iran's power at Saudi expense. Even before any broad outlines for an agreement were in place, though, the negotiations themselves placed Iran on par with the world's leading superpowers. Which is exactly why Saudi Arabia made contingency plans to keep pace with Iran. In recent years, Riyadh has accelerated its own civilian nuclear development in response—a move that might undermine U.S. nonproliferation endeavors—but will make sure the Kingdom can match any nuclear capabilities Iran is allowed to maintain as part of any final nuclear deal with world powers.

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