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## **JAPAN MAKES MAJOR SHIFT IN MIDDLE EAST POLICY**

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Kazuto Suzuki

*A recent visit signals a major policy change.*

Over a three-day period from July 16 to 18, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio paid visits to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar. Typically, when Japanese leaders travel to the Middle East, their aim is to stabilize the energy supply, always a top priority given Japan's heavy reliance on the region for oil and natural gas. However, Kishida's visit was different. Indeed, it should be seen as historic, since it marks a major shift in Japan's Middle East diplomacy, reflecting a keen sense of the drastically changing international situation and changes within the Middle East itself.

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