

Persian Gulf oil supplies is simply far less significant than was the case at the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

These changes in the strategic picture, which represent improvements from the US perspective, are predicated on future Soviet challenges to Washington's interests in the region. However, if the Carter Doctrine served notice on the Soviets that the United States would tolerate no more Afghanistans, surely the Soviet retreat from Kabul signals that Moscow does not want any more either. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan generated US responses which presented opportunities for confrontation at both the local and the super-power level. However, the responses do not correspond to the reality of the threats to Western interests in the region. If the Soviets could not defeat the Afghan resistance, then their chances of successfully subjugating Iran are obviously nil. Hence, there is no legitimate conventional Soviet military threat to the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, the energy supplies of the Gulf are not at risk from maritime interdiction, in particular not from Soviet naval forces in the Indian Ocean. In fact, history demonstrates that the real threat to the Gulf comes from instability in Southwest Asia. The United States needs to develop policies and strategies to meet threats of a lower order--insurgencies, terrorism and sabotage--against its friends in the Gulf region. Naval battle groups are ill-suited for such tasks and their presence in the region is unnecessary.