

Box 6.1 SOVIET LESSONS LEARNED (*Continued*)

Despite marginal improvements in convoy security, when Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985, it was becoming increasingly clear that victory was impossible, and Gorbachev soon made ending the conflict a top priority. The result of the invasion, he later said, was “the opposite of what we had intended: even greater instability, a war with thousands of victims, and dangerous consequences for our own country. . . . The greatest mistake was failing to understand Afghanistan’s complexity—its patchwork of ethnic groups, clans and tribes, its unique traditions and minimal governance.”^{vii} By the time of the Soviet withdrawal, the war had officially claimed 15,000 Soviet and 1 million Afghan lives, although many experts believe that the conflict took many more lives than officially reported.

i. Mikhail Gorbachev, “Soviet Lessons from Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, February 4, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/05/opinion/05iht-edgorbachev.html>.

ii. Ibid.

iii. Lester W. Grau, “Convoy Escort in Guerrilla Country: The Soviet Experience,” *Military Police* (Winter 1995), <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/convoy/convoy.htm>.

iv. Ibid.

v. Graham H. Turbiville Jr., “Soviet Combat Engineers in Afghanistan: Old Lessons and Future Wars,” *Military Engineer* 80, no. 524 (1988); “Mine Clearing and Movement Support,” <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/sovcombat/sovcombat.htm>.

vi. Ibid.

vii. Gorbachev, “Soviet Lessons from Afghanistan.”