

mosity and arguments that underpin it, and indeed the regions of the world from which its struggle emanated.

Local groups are more likely to be effective in influencing locals and countering terrorist ideology than is the U.S. military or other international actors. It is critical to understand who holds power, whom the local population trusts, and where locals get their information—and then to target these forums. In some cases, such as in Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal areas, religious leaders and tribal elders wield most of the power. This means providing assistance to credible indigenous groups, such as Muslim clerics or tribal elders, that can effectively counter jihadist propaganda. These groups do not necessarily have to be supportive of the United States, but they do need to oppose insurgents and have credible influence among the population. Much of this funding may have to be indirect and covert to protect their credibility. Assistance could be directed to indigenous media, political parties, student and youth organizations, labor unions, and religious figures and organizations that meet at least two criteria: (1) They have a notable support base in the local population, and (2) they oppose insurgent groups and insurgent ideology. This approach has some parallels with U.S. efforts during the Cold War to balance the Soviet Union by funding existing political, cultural, social, and media organizations in such areas as Central and Eastern Europe.²⁷

In Afghanistan, for instance, mosques have historically served as a tipping point for major political upheavals. This led to a major effort by Afghan intelligence officials to focus on mosque leaders. As one Afghan intelligence report in 2006 concluded, "There are 107 mosques in the city of Kandahar out of which 11 are preaching anti-government themes. Our approach is to have all the pro-government mosques incorporated with the process and work on the eleven anti-government ones to change their attitude or else stop their propaganda and leave the area."²⁸ In addition, in July 2005, the Ulema Council of Afghani-

²⁷ See, for example, Angel Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Lowell H. Schwartz, and Peter Sickles, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-574-SRF, 2007.

²⁸ Saleh (2006, p. 8).