## Concept Paper: “Access and influence? US and Chinese military presence and popular support in host countries”

## Background

* What are you proposing to do? Formulate this section based on your past and current work and research.

We aim to study how major powers use different forms of influence to lay the groundwork to establish military basing and/or access in third party states. We focus on the cases of the United States and China.

The United States relies heavily on foreign military bases to project power abroad. As host countries democratize, the consent of the host country population, who may have concerns about the infringement of sovereignty they represent, along with concerns about crime, noise, and pollution. At the same time, China has until recently largely eschewed foreign military bases, but it has a substantial foreign economic footprint thanks in part to its Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure projects abroad. This economic engagement could produce more goodwill and less resentment than a military presence, but in China’s case its economic footprint has itself generated controversies about sovereignty as many recipient countries become indebted to China.

This project studies how social and economic contact with citizens of foreign countries can build the influence needed to establish a foreign military presence or access. We do so through the lens of great power foreign military basing by conducting a comparative analysis of US and Chinese efforts to build influence in current and prospective base-host states. This analysis not only compares US and Chinese efforts, but also examines their interaction in competitive environments where both rivals seek access. The project thus focuses on the effects of two sets of independent variables—economic versus social contact, on the one hand, and military versus nonmilitary contact, on the other—on two main outcome variables—public and elite perceptions of the foreign powers (China and the US) and support for hosting a foreign military presence from those countries.

1. **Rationale and Significance**

* Describe the overarching goal(s) of your project. Why is the issue you are investigating important?

The overarching goals of this project are threefold. First, it sets out to understand how social and economic contact with foreign military forces shape perceptions of the sending country and support for its military presence in the host country. Second, it aims to assess how the effects of such contact are moderated by the competing effects of host country contact with rival third party countries. Third, it compares the effects of military contact to nonmilitary contact in order to see whether nonmilitary contact is more or less effective in building goodwill and support for hosting a foreign military presence.

Achieving these goals would be important for three reasons. The first is that doing so would contribute to the literature on foreign basing. While there is an extensive body of work on the domestic politics of bases, including on the effects of interpersonal contact on support for foreign bases, none of these studies have provided a comparative basing power perspective. This is an increasingly important question in an environment where China’s main form of international engagement is through its large Belt and Road infrastructure projects.

Second, research on great power competition for overseas bases focuses on the United States and the USSR (Harkvay 1989; Nieman et al 2021). Though a valuable starting point, it would be a mistake to overly rely on this Cold War model to understand the dynamics of Sino-American competition. This new competition occurs in a world characterized by strong norms of sovereignty and democratization. In this environment, understanding the mechanisms governing the consent of domestic populations towards foreign military basing and deployments is necessary to understand how great powers build international and domestic orders. This project highlights the unique characteristics of the China-U.S. relationship and presents new hypotheses on how democratic and autocratic powers interact as they face a future in which they compete for international influence.

Third, the project’s findings will provide a better understanding of the microfoundations of power and influence by evaluating how publics and elites view and respond to different instruments of influence by the United States and China. It will further emphasize how major powers find themselves in an increasingly democratizing world where they need to build support among both the elites and publics of minor powers.

* Describe the measurable objectives that will help you meet your project goals.
  + Survey completion
* What project activities will help you achieve your objectives?
  + Annual in-person research team meetings
  + Regular video conference team meetings
  + Presenting preliminary results at academic conferences and workshops

## Project Methods and Workplan

* Specify how you will carry out the proposed project. What methodology will you use? How will this work as a collaborative project?
  + Surveys and interviews in Djibouti, Kenya, Solomon Islands and Cambodia
  + Rationale for case selection
    - Cases where great powers have, don’t have, and/or seek military presence
      * Djibouti: both US and China have military presence
      * Kenya: US has military presence; China does not
      * Cambodia: neither country has military presence, but China might be seeking
      * Solomon Islands: neither country has military presence, but both (?) might be
  + Rationale for choice of methods
  + Division of labor across project team members
    - All team members will participate in survey design, data analysis, and writing.
    - Each fieldwork trip will include 2-3 researchers
* Provide a timeline for the proposed project activities.
  + Year 1: finalize survey questions and design survey experiments. Hold a survey design workshop and pre-test the survey experiments
  + Year 2: case-focused work in Djibouti and Kenya. Field surveys in person in each country, and present interim findings at academic conferences
  + Year 3: case-focused work in Solomon Islands and Cambodia. Field surveys in person in each country and present findings at academic conferences

## Project Team

* Who will serve as the project director? Describe their qualifications.

Renanah Miles Joyce (Brandeis University) will serve as PI, and therefore as the default project director, though all co-PIs will assist with administrative tasks as well.

* Who will serve as project team members? How will the background and experiences of the project team members benefit the project?

Michael Allen (Boise State University), Brian Blankenship (University of Miami), Michael Flynn (Kansas State University), and Carla Martinez Machain (University at Buffalo) will serve as co-PIs.

## Budget

* What are your estimated project costs?
  + Estimated project costs including survey work, conferences and workshops, research assistant salaries, faculty summer salaries, and university indirects come to approximately $1.15 million USD

## Evaluation

* Explain how you will determine whether the project is meeting expected objectives. Describe the benchmarks for evaluating ongoing activities and the criteria for assessing the impact of the project.
  + Surveys will be evaluated by completion by a representative sample of the country’s population
  + Fieldwork will be evaluated by the completion of target number of interviews in country
  + Deliverables will include a series of journal articles and a publicly available data dashboard that makes all gathered data available to other researchers within a year of the project’s completion.

## Dissemination

* How will you disseminate project findings? Dissemination activities might include the publication of journal articles, presentations at conferences, or workshops with colleagues.
  + Publication of journal articles
  + Presentations at conferences
  + Publication of policy-oriented articles and blog posts
  + Presentations to practitioners