**Project Summary**

A fundamental basis of great power competition has long been the overseas deployment of military personnel. Since the end of World War II the United States has had a virtual monopoly on military basing through its own network allies and overseas facilities. However, with the rise of China and a resurgent Russia that monopoly is eroding as competitors seek to expand their own overseas military presence. This project explores the social, political, and economic nature of the interactions between host-state populations and foreign military personnel. We compare the efforts of the United States and China in building influence in current and prospective base-host countries. Across regime types, local populations—which may have concerns about crime, pollution, and infringement on sovereignty—can be highly influential in shaping the scope of foreign military access. This project proposes a three-year plan of elite and mass opinion surveys in four countries where basing access is increasingly the subject of great power contestation: Djibouti, Kenya, Cambodia, and The Solomon Islands. Year 1 involves refinement of survey and interview instruments, Year 2 deploys surveys and conducts field work in Djibouti and Kenya, and Year 3 does the last round of field work in the Solomon Islands and Cambodia.

**Intellectual Merit**

The proposed research project focuses on three basic science research aims that will result in major insights in international relations theory, criminology, political economy, international security, and data:

1. Explore how elite and mass perceptions of foreign military basing in host states respond to economic incentives and contact with U.S. and Chinese military personnel.
2. Explore the social, economic, and political effects of great power military deployments in lower-income and lower-middle-income states, building on previous research that has focused overwhelmingly on deployments in upper income states.
3. Understand how elite and mass attitudes and interests affect security policy in host states and shape the environment of great power competition.

Current research treats great power competition as the province of states and their elite decision-makers. However, previous research demonstrates that the public has an important say in states’ security choices. How a great power’s military personnel behave within a host state can limit or broaden a that power’s operational environment, as host governments become more or less permissive. The four countries we chose vary in how much influence each major power has and allows our research design to use both observational and experimental questions to gauge how major power influence is conditional on existing public perceptions. Our data will enable scholars in international relations, political science, economics, psychology, and sociology to answer questions about how state behavior affects, and is affected by, mass attitudes and interests.

**Broader Impacts**

The project has scholarly and policy impacts. First, it enhances scholarly understanding of influence in the security domain. The use of soft power to motivate other states to do what one wants has been neglected in security studies, which tend to focus on coercion and use of force. This project explores the interpersonal and economic underpinnings of influence over foreign basing access, which is central to projecting military force beyond a state’s borders. Second, this project provides new theory and evidence on the effectiveness of economic incentives in securing access as well as their effects on host societies. Third, by examining the effectiveness of US and Chinese strategies for gaining military access to other countries, this project informs US national security debates over US-China competition. Finally, the research team represents a diverse range of career levels, backgrounds, and expertise. The research team members will use their expertise and the findings from this project to provide a series of teaching events on their respective campuses to impart methodological training to students and disseminate research findings and lessons learned to the general community.

The research team is composed of a diverse set of career levels, backgrounds, and expertise. The team is purposeful in including diverse and underrepresented voices in the project. There is gender and ethnic diversity among the investigators, and our recruitment of a research assistant will target NSF defined groups of underrepresentation in the sciences by advertising we will take such status into primary consideration when hiring for the position. The project includes mentoring plans for research assistants. Additionally, we will use this project to host two events on Boise State’s campus that will target graduate and undergraduate students: a workshop on experimental design in surveys that will use our research to exemplify how to get meaningful causal survey data, and a research presentation for the general community that helps to disseminate our results, lessons learned, and methodological insight for the community. This research also reaches across borders, demonstrating how members of the U.S. and Chinese military interact with local civilian populations in multiple settings, with a goal of using this information to minimize the occurrence of these adverse interactions.