I. Research Question

In 1948, during the height of the Berlin Blockade, the United Kingdom offered to host US Air Force B-29's. Recognizing the strategic opportunity, the United States happily accepted and established a relatively large post-war military presence within the United Kingdom. As the Cold War intensified, both governments focused on the benefits of US military presence abroad and scant notice was paid to how the addition of US bases to the British landscape might effect domestic politics. This might be seen as understandable considering the dire ramifications of the Cold War, a period in which maintaining security was paramount. However, now that the Cold War has concluded the question remains largely unconsidered: How do US forces within the UK influence domestic politics?

A qualitative exploratory study is required to find an answer. The proposed research would attempt to identify the different ways the US bases effect the local, regional, and national levels of domestic politics. To trace the connection it would make use of interviews with officials as well as government and civil papers and debates. To determine the size of the influence this study would use content analysis on parliamentary and local government papers.

The implications of an exploratory study into this question are vast. The most obvious is the transferability of the understanding gained in this study to other situations. The context of the Cold War enabled both the US and UK to see stationing US forces on British soil as necessary. New contexts such as the war on terrorism have led to similar conclusions by other states such as the Philippines and several of the former Soviet Republics. Exposing the political stresses endured by the most willing of allies would
expose the fundamental conflicts likely to occur in future host states, especially as future
states do not share the same historical relationship and may be less inclined to ignore
potential tensions arising from the arrangement.

The ability to identify potential conflicts would be critical to decision-makers in
the US, UK and other host nations. With the greater awareness that this will bring,
nations will be better able to calculate possible effects and adjust their policies
accordingly. This could lead to a new sensitivity to domestic politics which will
probably enhance the efficiency of military operations as well as improve the quality of
relations between the military and the host nationals. Nations would also be able to make
better decisions regarding the restriction or barring of US military presence if they
foresaw an unacceptably high risk of tension. For its part, the US may use this
information when deciding whether to use domestic bases or naval assets instead of
foreign basing where possible.

The proposed study would analyze a significant factor in US-UK relations which
has been largely, and surprisingly, neglected by the academic community. As revealed
by the following literature review past research on this topic has been cursory at best.
Not only can this information be used to explain international and domestic political
actions, it can also allow for a more rounded assessment of their appropriateness and
success. Further, it will be useful in giving other academic researchers new material on a
wide range of issues from British defense planning to East Anglia’s choice of
parliamentary representatives.
II. Literature Review

The response to the question of how US bases in the UK influence domestic British politics is quite simple: we do not know. A search of PAIS, The Social Science Index, World Cat, The MLA Bibliography, OVID, Proquest Direct, Expanded Academic ASAP, JSTOR and USC’s Homer reveal no detailed studies on the subject. The topic has been only vaguely explored in previous works, generally in the following four contexts: US-UK relations, UK defense, UK politics and US Forces based in other nations. Although the proposed question is related to all of these categories, it falls outside each one’s direct sphere of concern and has been neglected by all. While a possible exception may be perceived in the research of Simon Duke, who has discussed the history of US bases within the United Kingdom, he does not elaborate on their influence on domestic politics.

Simon Duke’s 1987 work *US Defence Bases in the United Kingdom: A Matter For Joint Decision?* recounts the history of US bases in post-war Britain. The study takes a chronological progression from their establishment in 1948 to the time of its writing in 1986 and attempts to redress the lack of literature about and understanding of US bases in Britain. It focuses primarily on the ambiguity and informality of the arrangements between the US and the UK and the question of whether or not the UK has joint authority
over their use. Duke was especially concerned with the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons from the UK without the consent or consultation of the British government.

Simon Duke’s work is the closest related literature to the proposed research question but it does little to answer it. In discussing the “development and the problems associated with US bases in the United Kingdom” Duke’s attention remains on UK relations and agreements with the US and their implications for the United Kingdom. Only briefly are issues relevant to domestic politics mentioned. These include protests by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament during the cruise and Thor missile deployments and the Labour party’s anti-US base stance during the 1980’s. In only mentioning these issues Duke reveals that a connection between US bases and domestic politics does exist but he does not explore this further. We are still left wondering about the size of the influence and whether there are more ways in which the bases affect politics. How do US bases politically affect the officials of the counties and towns which host them? How often do US bases appear in political discussions and debates in Parliament?

Although it does not answer these questions, *US Defence Bases in the United Kingdom* is an invaluable resource for the proposed research. In his account of the US bases Simon Duke offers several possible events/areas to focus the research on. The two aforementioned areas (The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Labour Party) are joined by others which include the F-111 air strikes on Libya in 1986, the Soviet threat to the UK after shooting down a US RB-47 based in the UK and the alert of US nuclear forces in the UK without consultation during the Korcan war.

Other literature regarding US-UK relations makes mention of the US bases in Britain but does not connect them to domestic politics. Hedley Bull’s *The Special*
Relationship, which describes the beginnings and progression of the close post-war relations between the United States and the United Kingdom, is a good example. While US bases are mentioned in the context of US-UK relations their domestic effect is not considered. The proposed topic remains on the periphery of this category of research and so has not been directly engaged.

The second category, literature regarding UK defense, often includes US bases in discussions of UK defense policy. Michael Clarke and Rod Hague edited a volume of Fulbright papers entitled *European Defence Co-operation: America, Britain, and NATO* which made mention of US forces. It even described the contentions over the deployment of cruise missiles and the F-111 strike of Libya but, again, only in its relevance to the trans-Atlantic alliance. David Capitanchik and Richard Eichenberg’s Chatham House Paper *Defence and Public Opinion* relates defense issues to public thought. In its chapter on the United Kingdom they discuss what British public opinion was regarding NATO, the nuclear deterrent and the US forces involvement in both. However it did not go further to translate that into an effect on domestic politics. In Ritchie Ovendale’s *British Defence Policy Since 1945* the reader occasionally comes across how US forces in the UK factored into British defense planning. In their relation to domestic politics it only mentions the split in the Labour Party over the nuclear deterrent and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The connection between US forces and domestic politics is on the periphery of the focus of this category of literature as well and so remains unanswered.

The third category is studies dealing with UK politics. The appearance of US bases in this literature has only been in regard to the anti-nuclear movement in the UK.
during the 1980's when the stationing of US nuclear weapons in Britain made it a possible first strike target. As described in John Peter's *America and the British Labour Party: The Special Relationship At Work* this movement held a high degree of influence within the Labour Party. It alluded to the idea that this movement within Labour partially motivated a potential liberal/social-democrat alliance. This is a substantial connection between US forces in the UK and domestic politics but it is only one small section of the picture. Bruce George's Washington Paper entitled *The British Labour Party and Defense* makes a similar discussion. In the text US nuclear bases, like the US Polaris submarine base at Holy Loch, are brought up in relation to the Labour Party’s proposed “non-nuclear defense policy.”(44, 47) It describes how US bases were even included in a party platform. However, this is still a narrow consideration of the relation between US bases and domestic politics.

The final category of literature is work covering US forces’ influence over the politics of other states. Although I have not read any of these texts yet I have come across them and plan to use them as a guide to help direct the focus of this study. In Japan, for example, researchers have looked into how the unpopularity of US forces in Okinawa has been incorporated into party politics. Studies into the US military presence in South Korea have observed how crimes committed against South Korcans by US military personnel effect public opinion.

The question of how US bases in the UK influence British politics fits outside the focus of all of the literature discussed in this review. Most describe connections to events or decisions at the international political level leaving domestic events, decisions and
workings a mystery. If conducted, the proposed research would expose the many
different ways in which US bases are connected to British politics at all levels.

III. Research Goals and Strategy

My main goal in this research is to identify the ways in which the presence of US
forces on British soil influence UK politics at the local, regional and national levels. In
addition I will attempt to determine the size of this influence. I chose to focus on US
bases in the United Kingdom because as the closest of allies, the UK provides the most
insight to the political workings and stresses exposed by military presence. This could
easily project into a wider understanding of the effects of US bases in other states.

This study will be conducted primarily on a qualitative basis using four cases I
have listed below. In order to draw the necessary links from US bases in the UK to the
domestic politics I plan to analyze a variety of sources. Most important, I believe, will be
parliamentary papers and publications of the lower levels of government. I also plan to
conduct interviews of local and possibly regional officials as they are most readily
available and could offer the most specific insight. The national and local media will also
be reviewed. Newspapers such as the socialist “Daily Worker” are good sources as they
are heavily political and have focused much attention on US bases in the UK. Analyzing
these sources will allow me to determine the ways in which US bases are connected to
domestic politics in the UK.

To gain better insight as to the amount US bases are involved in domestic UK
politics I plan to use content analysis. For instance, I can search the electronically
published parliamentary papers during Operation Allied Force to see how often RAF
Mildenhall (a USAF base in Suffolk utilized in the operation) is mentioned. I can then compare this to the number of times health care or taxes were mentioned. This will give a rough idea of how involved US forces are in British politics.

The focus of this research will be placed on where the influence would be most apparent. This, I believe, would be during times when the public was most aware of the US bases. I have chosen four such periods which to focus on: 1. The Berlin Blockade of 1952; 2. The deployment of ground launched cruise missiles (GLCM’s) in the 1980’s; 3. The 1973 Yom Kippur nuclear alert; and 4. Operation Allied Force over Kosovo in 1999. I chose these four because the contexts of each situation are very different which allows varying aspects and variables to be considered in the study thus creating a broader view of the US forces’ effect on domestic politics. Allow me to explain further:

I selected the Berlin Blockade because it was during this time that US planes were first invited and stationed in the UK. US-UK relations were at their height in the post-war time-frame. However, the ambiguity of the arrangements which allowed US aircraft into the UK and of US intentions after the Berlin Blockade led to great uncertainty with British officials. Information would be more abundant during this time and the US forces’ influence on politics in this context would differ significantly than that of the other time-frames.

The deployment of GLCM’s brought greater attention on the fact that US bases made the UK a likely nuclear first strike target and massive anti-nuclear protests followed. Because of the prominence and popularity of the protests information for this period would be readily available. In addition the US forces’ would influence politics in a far different manner during this time than the others.
The nuclear alert of US forces in Britain during the Yom Kippur War was chosen because of the stir it created within parliament. The alert was given without prior consultation with the British government. This led to fears of nuclear strikes being launched from the UK without the possibility of British veto or even consultation. The implications of this event led to many debates and recorded political activity which would be available for research. Again, the US forces would influence politics differently during this time than the others.

Operation Allied Force was chosen for several reasons. Having taken place in 1999, it is a more current example and may offer a comparison as to how the contemporary outlook has evolved. There is also a wealth of information on the topic that has yet to be considered in-depth. There were many protests in the UK and frequent debates were staged within Parliament, both of which have left plenty of research material. Thirdly, as Operation Allied Force was a joint US-UK operation, the public sentiment may have been different than other actions which were conducted solely by US forces using British soil. Fourthly, I was stationed in England with USAF Special Operations during this time and I am familiar with the people involved and the events that occurred. As such, I have a more concise view of this period and thus it would be easier to identify and narrow the scope of research.
Bibliography

Literature Review Category #1: Anglo-American Relations


Literature Review Category #2: UK Defense


Literature Review Category #3: UK Politics


Literature Review Category #4: US bases in Other States


Sources Outside the 4 Categories:
