Tiananmen Square (1989)
Historical Security Council

Overview
Following the Chinese Civil War in 1949, shortly after World War II, Mainland China was controlled by a single-party government, the Communist Party of China (CPC). Since then, many people of China, especially the younger citizens, have begun to resent their government for the lack of freedom that their government has allotted to them. From this need for more freedom arose a series of protests that grew larger and larger, with more people protesting every day. As the protest’s crowds grew larger so too did the tensions between the people and their government, until it exploded in a mass military show of strength in which the Chinese military fired upon large crowds of civilians, that were supposedly unarmed. This incident is sparking controversy around the world as countries are racing to choose sides, while others are choosing their sides more carefully- cautious of their current relations with China.

Historical Context/Background
In the year 1945, two political forces waged war against each other for control over the Chinese Government: the Communist Party, and the National party. This was known as the Chinese Civil war, with Red China and White China fighting against one another. When the Communist party eventually won and forced the nationalist party to flee to Taiwan, the CPC took charge. Under their rule, it was made illegal under the punishment of death to criticize the
Chinese Government. This restriction of freedom is where the significant protests came from, and they lack what the Western World considered ‘basic human rights,’ which began to become known to the people as young adults headed off to college in other countries. These students saw how many rights the western world had given its people, and they wanted to introduce these concepts back home. These young adults wanted China to become more democratic, for the power to belong to the people.

All of these demonstrations began to seriously develop in the year 1989 when the most massive protest in all of Chinese history took place. The build-up to this protest began on April 15th, 1989, when Hu Yaobang, a former leader of the CPC who advocated for reforms and changes to China, changes that led him to be removed from his position as the Chairman of the CPC, died of a heart attack, and a mix of mourners and protestors filled Tiananmen Square. These protesters were unhappy about how little progress had been made in terms of reforms. From the 15th to the 21st of April, there were several protests, protesting the agonizingly slow pace of reform in China and calling for the end of what they call the “dictatorship” (BBC News). These protests would continue to grow in size and gain more attention from the Chinese Government, who had threatened strict and harsh punishment should the protests continue. This threat of punishment, however, did not deter the people, for on April 22nd during the memorial for Hu Yaobang protesters gave the Chinese government a series of demands and reforms. Unfortunately for the protesters, the government rejected the petition which only sparked more protests. After the petition was rejected, the protests continued to grow larger and started to spread covering five different cities, and particular protests were held on May 4th. This coincided with the anniversary of the May 4th Movement, which was a series of anti-imperialist protests concerning individual rights and social reform. These particular protests, however, had no real impact, and several Chinese Bureaucrats claimed that these protests would die out and the whole ordeal would fade away (BBC News).
This did not happen, for the protests turned into hunger strikes that only increased the amount of public support these protesters received. Shortly after the hunger strikes began, the Chinese government suffered a huge embarrassment when the leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, came to visit and was unable to be greeted in Tiananmen Square where a vast public welcome was planned. Tiananmen Square is the largest town square in the world, and home to the tomb of Mao Ze Dong, the founder of Communist China. Also, it leads to the entrance of the forbidden palace, the home of Chinese Emperors for thousands of years. However, this could not happen due to the hunger strikes filling the Square. After this embarrassment the current General Secretary of the Chinese Government came to the Square in order to try one last time to reach a compromise with the protesters; however, he was unable to reach one, and the Chinese Government felt as if they had no choice but to upgrade their offense to control the protesters.

On the 20th of May, martial law was imposed upon the city of Beijing, and soldiers were placed around the city, most heavily in the city center around Tiananmen Square, the ground zero for protests. These troops were met by political protesters at every turn, some protesters worked in larger groups to form blockades and worked to undermine the authority of the military at every turn. Even though the protesters blocked the military and continued protesting, the Chinese military was told not to fire upon the citizens. Over the next week, tensions remain heightened due to the continuation of the protests despite military presence. While these protests continue, the Chinese government is attempting to form a new offensive against the protesters, a plan that would increase the amount of violence allowed by the military. This aggressive plan was approved on June 2nd. This plan now allows the military to put down the protesters and end the protests using extreme violence (BBC News). This plan of extreme violence would be placed into action the following day, June 3rd when protesters would flood Tiananmen Square in an attempt to block military movements. The military responded with extreme force by killing and injuring large amounts of protesters in the most extensive internal massacre in Communist Chinese History. The day after the night of bloodshed, June 4th, the Chinese government carefully cleaned the Square, however as the remaining protesters returned from their state of shock, they began to block once again the military movements which sparked day long firing on the civilian population. Once the firing finally ceases, the government attempted to cover the whole situation by claiming that no one had been killed. They spread this news through “radio
broadcasts, and all but one station passed on that message, the “Peking Radio's English language service” had passed along a different message stating that the Chinese military had fired on mass crowd of unarmed civilians in what they called, “a gross violation of human rights and a barbarous suppression of the people.” (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-27404764). During this brief period since the events of Tiananmen Square no official number on how many people were killed throughout June 3rd and 4th. (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-27404764)

Current situations/ Recent Developments

The protest continues onto June 5th where a supposedly unarmed man stood in protest in front of Chinese tanks. This man stood alone, and his fate is widely unknown; however, some claims report that people in the surrounding crowd pulled him out of the path of the tank. Shortly after this one-person protest, the leader of the Chinese people, Deng Xiaoping, appears and gives a speech praising the actions of the military against the volatile protesters, and blaming the whole incident on those protesters.

In response to this massacre, several world nations have publicly stated their responses, which can be viewed in the next section. This situation is currently ongoing, and no official report nor actions have come from the United Nations. (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-27404764)

Involved Actors

Throughout the world, nations have responded in different ways to the events in China. Some are appalled at the use of violence against peaceful and unarmed protesters, while some nations have recognized the need to exert control by any means necessary. Detailed below are different responses to the events of June 3th and beyond.
Poland, Hungary, Great Britain, France, Japan, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Hong Kong (LINK)

In response to the events unfolding in China, several nations have expressed their displeasure at the course of action that China has undertaken. Japan issued formal statements declaring that they would like to put sanctions on China. Britain and France are preparing to freeze business accounts that China maintains in their countries. Poland has expressed their severe indignation at China as several protests have sparked in response to the massacre. Hong Kong, which is still under British control, according to the Treaty of Nanking, has formally condemned the actions of the Chinese government during the protests at Tiananmen Square. The Republic of Korea has officially declared that they will immediately pull their people out of China, and halt all investments and dealings in China until the matter is resolved.

Soviet Union, East Germany, Vietnam, Australia (LINK)

These nations have decided to stand by the actions of China, claiming that their responses were necessary to uphold law and order in China. These nations claim that the actions of the Chinese government were not unnecessary or cruel, for China had to preserve peace in their streets. Even though the Soviet Union is not condemning China for its actions, they did say that in these situations determining what is right and wrong is always tricky (LINK). The Soviet Union also believes that this was an internal affair and that the rest of the world has no authority to interfere. Vietnam believes that the actions of the Chinese government are wholly justified and necessary, and Vietnam stands behind China at this time. Eastern Germany also stands behind the Chinese government, claiming that "use of the state's full might against elements hostile to the constitution. " is not only necessary but encouraged (LINK). Australia is supportive of the communist party leaders of China; however, they are also allowing Chinese exchange student to stay in Australia as asylum seekers.

Thailand, United States, Western Germany (LINK)

Thailand has decided to stay neutral at this time and wishes to not comment on either side of the issues as to preserve its good standing with China. The United States has decided not to condemn nor praise the actions of the Chinese Government until further investigations are allowed, however, in the meantime, the USA is willing to provide asylum for its population of Chinese exchange students. Western Germany has a complicated reaction to this incident,
almost as if it had divided the country, some of the companies working out of China had pulled out while others stayed unaffected by the recent incidents.


**Questions to Consider**

1. Where does your country stand in relation to China, and how does your country interpret what happened between the Chinese Government and the student protesters on June 3rd 1989?
2. Does your country believe that this incident was an act of a government ending an uprising/revolt, or is this a case of mass and gross human rights violations?
3. Should sanctions be imposed on China as a form of punishment for their actions that violated the human rights of their own people?
4. Can the actions of the Chinese government be at all justified on the basis of trying to uphold the peace of the capital city and attempting to rectify the actions of the protesters that undermined the authority of the military during martial law?

**Further Resources/Cited Sources**

- [https://www.britannica.com/event/Tiananmen-Square-incident](https://www.britannica.com/event/Tiananmen-Square-incident)
- [https://www.history.com/topics/china/tiananmen-square](https://www.history.com/topics/china/tiananmen-square)
- [https://www.nchrd.org/2019/06/why-we-are-calling-on-the-united-nations-to-act-over-the-tiananmen-massacre/](https://www.nchrd.org/2019/06/why-we-are-calling-on-the-united-nations-to-act-over-the-tiananmen-massacre/)
- [https://www.britannica.com/event/May-Fourth-Movement](https://www.britannica.com/event/May-Fourth-Movement)
Images In order of Appearance:

Highlighted Timeline of Events

China

1949:

The Comunist Party, under the leadership of Mao Zedong wins the Chinese revolution and has control over the government of Mainland China. While the defeated party, escaped to Taiwan where they claim to be the proper government of China, regardless that they lost control over Mainland China.

1989:

April 15th Hu Yaobang’s Death
April 18th- 21st Demonstrations are Spreading
April 26th Hu’s Memorial
April 22nd Inflammatory Editorial
May 4th Rise in Numbers
May 13th Hunger Strike
May 15th Gorbachev’s State visit
May 19th Zhao appeals for a compromise
May 20th Martial Law is declared
May 24th- June 1st Tensions fly high
June 2nd Military is given permission to use force against protesters
June 3rd “Night of Bloodshed”
June 4th aftermath
June 5th “Tank man”
June 9th Deng Xiaoping gives a speech