

UTMUN



Tiananmen Protests, 1989

State Council

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Steve Zhu

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Martin Concagh

CRISIS ANALYSTS

Jenny Dong

Tony Xun

Wei (Leo) Sun

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Aadithya Thulasingham

CRISIS MANAGER

Anas Usman

Contents

Content Disclaimer	2
UTMUN Policies	3
Equity Concerns and Accessibility Needs	3
Historical Context and Challenges	4
The Unitary System of Government and Delegation of Powers in Chinese Politics	4
Factionalism: Contention Over Containment	4
Questions to Consider	5
The People's Liberation Army	6
History and Hierarchy	6
Modernization and Management	6
Questions to Consider	7
International Relations	8
Economic Open-Door Policy	8
Sino-US Relations	8
Gorbachev's Overtures and Rapprochement with the USSR	9
Military Relationships	9
Questions to Consider	10
Bibliography	11

Content Disclaimer

At its core, Model United Nations (MUN) is a simulatory exercise of diplomatically embodying, presenting, hearing, dissecting, and negotiating various perspectives in debate. Such an exercise offers opportunities for delegates to meaningfully explore possibilities for conflict resolution on various issues and their complex, even controversial dimensions – which, we recognize, may be emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage with.

As UTMUN seeks to provide an enriching educational experience that facilitates understanding of the real-world implications of issues, our committees' contents may necessarily involve sensitive or controversial subject matter strictly for academic purposes. We ask for delegates to be respectful, professional, tactful, and diplomatic when engaging with all committee content, representing their assigned country's or character's position, communicating with staff and other delegates, and responding to opposing viewpoints.

The below content warning is meant to warn you of potentially sensitive or triggering topics that are present in the formal content of this background guide, as well as content that may appear in other aspects of committee (e.g., debate, crisis updates, directives), so that you can either prepare yourself before reading this background guide or opt-out of reading it entirely:

Given the sensitivity of current events in the People's Republic of China and the suppression of previous attempts at democratization in China, delegates may find the contents of debate to be unsettling. If at any time the delegate finds the need to step out or talk to a staff member, they are encouraged to do so; necessary accommodations will be made. Subject matter such as racism, police brutality, general violence, state sanctioned massacres and death are included in accordance with historical context. We trust that delegates will approach these topics with the necessary solemnity and respect.

If, because of this committee's content warning, you wish to request switching committees and you registered with UTMUN as:

- a) part of a group delegation, please contact your faculty advisor and/or head delegate with your concerns and request.
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We ask for your cooperation in maintaining order, both inside and outside of committee session, so that we may provide a professional, safe, inclusive, and educational conference.

Throughout the conference, please note that delegates shall only:

1. Wear Western Business Attire (i.e., no costumes, no casual wear)
2. Embody their assigned country's/character's position, not their mannerisms (e.g., no accents, no props)
3. Use laptops or electronic devices during unmoderated caucuses to draft paperless resolutions/directives (subject to their committee director's permission)
4. Opt for diplomatic, respectful, and tactful speech and phrasing of ideas, including notes (e.g., no foul language, suggestive remarks, or obscene body language)
5. Make decisions that contribute to a professional, safe, inclusive, and educational space for debate

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Furthermore, delegates' efforts to contribute to a culture of collaboration, inclusivity, and equity at our conference, both inside and outside of committee session, will be considered by the dais and Secretariat when determining conference scholarships and committee awards.

In cases of failing to adhere to any of UTMUN's policies, the Secretariat reserves the right to take any action it deems necessary, including rendering delegates ineligible for awards, taking disciplinary action, and prohibiting delegates from participating further in the conference.

Equity Concerns and Accessibility Needs

UTMUN 2020's Secretariat and Staff are committed to ensuring every attendee has an enjoyable, comfortable, and safe experience and is able to participate fully and positively at our conference.

If you have any equity concerns (e.g., concerns about barriers to participation) or accessibility needs now or during the conference, please do not hesitate to contact your committees' dais and/or our Equity Officer at equity@utmun.org.

Historical Context and Challenges

The Unitary System of Government and Delegation of Powers in Chinese Politics

China operates under a unitary system of government, a far more centralized form of power distribution compared to federal states like Canada, the United States, Germany and other Western Liberal Democracies. While federal states vest powers of government like primary infrastructure provision and services (i.e. healthcare) down to provincial and municipal governments, unitary states like China or France assign responsibilities down to lower levels of government. This difference is important to note, as this means that provincial and municipal governments are more easily overruled by national governments on policy decisions in a unitary state.

In practice, significant responsibilities and powers are vested in subnational levels of government in unitary states. China maintains a vibrant palette of ethnicities, geographic features and economic activities across its vast territories, which necessitates a degree of subnational sovereignty over regionally specific issues. Provinces with significant minority ethnicities like Guangxi, Ningxia and Tibet are given special administrative privileges as autonomous regions, this is done to accommodate its diverse cultural compositions comparative to the majority Han heartland provinces. Nominally, provincial, prefectural and municipal officials acted as agents of the central government, but due to the closer connection that local officials have with the population and their more intimate knowledge of the daily socio-economic affairs of their area of responsibilities, they are given discretion in operationalizing core party doctrines as subject matter experts. In almost all occasions save states of emergency, Beijing practises the delegation of responsibilities down to the local levels with oversight and cooperation from the National level, and officials in subnational levels of government frequently participate in decision-making on macro scale decisions in an advisory capacity. All in all, despite the nominal inability for provincial, prefectural and municipal officials to overrule their superiors, they are vested with a great deal of responsibilities and are essential to the daily function of the Chinese government.

Factionalism: Contention Over Containment

Chinese society experienced drastic change and upheaval as a result of the influx of Western ideologies, social and market liberalization that disproportionately benefited the elites while soaring inflation was affecting the living standards of middle and working class citizens. People of various ethnic and social backgrounds rose in protest of increasing economic and social inequality attributed to factors from cronyism in the government and stagnating wage growth in response to inflation, to ending single party rule in China. Popular movements that first sprang up in cities like Beijing in 1987 have gained traction in China's economically vital urban centres due to the close proximity that students and intellectuals; the primary instigators of these protests, have to the rest of Chinese society. Their ranks also include a body of disgruntled working class citizens, motivated primarily for a desire in improving labour laws and reducing economic inequality.

The Chinese leadership remains divided on approaching the unrest caused by these demonstrations, but some commonalities remain clear between the feuding factions within the CPC; that relinquishing unitary control of the Chinese government and allowing escalations in social unrest are unacceptable outcomes of any future actions.

Hardline Faction

The hardline faction, led by Vice-Premier Li Peng generally follows a neo-authoritarian agenda and approaches the violent suppression of the demonstrations. Hardliners view Deng's social liberalization policies as a mistake, as allowing criticisms of the government to be made public weakens the party propaganda apparatus and destabilizes Chinese society to the detriment of the economy and the legitimacy of the Communist Party. Hardliners also view excessive liberalization of the economy to be negative, tying into the destabilizing social effects of a transition towards an export-oriented industrial economy from inflation and a loss of jobs being supplanted by the manufacturing sector.

Moderate Faction

The moderate faction, led by General Secretary Zhao Ziyang generally tolerates the social liberalization policies, viewing it as a complementary aspect of economic liberalization as allowing for more diversity in perspective and academic freedoms will allow for a more developed intellectual base that serves to benefit China's economy and society. Moderates view economic liberalization to be the way that Chinese industries could grow and remain competitive with the rest of the world, by allowing FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) partnerships with international partners, Chinese industries could gain their knowhow and develop their own capabilities, bolstering China's technological base and making the economy more competitive. Hu Yaobang's removal from Premiership for failing to act on the campus protests across the country set an authoritarian precedent for the discourse on calming the protests, but Hu is replaced by Zhao Ziyang, another prominent moderate.¹ Zhao took a conciliatory tone towards the protestors, often defending the protests as a sign of the students and workers' "patriotism" and filibustering attempts to brand the protestors as rioters. Although Deng Xiaoping was indifferent as to which approach the CPC leadership took to calm the protests, the precedent was that Tiananmen square must be clear of any protestors by the anticipated start date of the upcoming Sino-Soviet summit on May 15, 1989.

Questions to Consider

1. Is there a way that the moderates and hardliners could work out a compromise?
2. Given the degree of international media attention on the protests, is it practical to openly crack down on the protests?
3. Could there be a degree of foreign influence/support for the protests?

¹ Andrew J. Nathan. "The Tiananmen Papers." *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 1 (2001): 2-48. doi:10.2307/20050041.

The People's Liberation Army

History and Hierarchy

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is nominally the People's Republic of China's armed forces, but its loyalty is strictly to the Communist Party of China. Founded on August 1st, 1927 as the People and Worker's Red Army, the PLA had a historically significant role in the PRC's founding and a respected reputation from fighting the UN coalition and forcing an armistice against all odds in Korea. Its chain of command incorporates both military and political commissars, intended to enforce the PLA's strict loyalty to the Communist Party.

But given the military's paramount importance in Chinese policy and close relations that Generals and high-ranking officers have with civilian leaders, the PLA maintains unprecedented influence on all aspects of Chinese policy. Chinese military leaders often hold key positions within the government outside the CMC and agencies directly related to command of the military (i.e. The CPC central committee). It is important to note however, that the PLA remains largely subordinate to the will of the paramount leaders and their immediate aides, who thus far (with few exceptions) expressed great appreciation for the former².

Modernization and Management

With the death of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and the ouster of the Gang of Four in 1976, came an end to the primacy of the Maoist faction within the CPC and the rise of a new generation of reform-minded Chinese leaders who sought to refit the PLA for new realities. Although Deng Xiaoping was known more for his reputation as a civilian leader that had a revolutionary idea for domestic economic reform, he was well-connected to the PLA leadership from his days as a political commissar in the revolution, giving him an esteemed reputation among the military.

While the PLA and national defense remained a key focus for government policy as per the Four Modernizations, Deng's dictum of "Hide your strength, bide your time" meant that the PLA was to have a more subdued role in the public eye. The PLA's technical and doctrinal obsolescence in the midst of an RMA (Revolution in Military Affairs) in the 1980s was a pressing policy concern for the CPC. The 1983 military reforms commenced both structural and doctrinal reforms which called for the bureaucratic reorganization of the PLA and the modernization of its equipment and strategy. The PLA Railway Corps and Capital Construction Corps were civilianized while the People's Armed Police (PAP) and Militia were constituted to add a reserve and paramilitary element to Central Military Commission Control.

As of 1983, the PLA comprises of over 3.2 million service personnel; remaining the

² Ellis Joffe. The Military and China's New Politics: Trends and Countertrends. Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies, 1997.

world's largest although it was downsized by 1 million members³. Following the Soviet pattern of military leadership, the PLA is also organized into field/group armies at the macro level and divided into military regions, ostensibly for a logical arrangement of forces to deal with potential domestic unrest or against threats along its borders with the Soviet Union, India and Vietnam. Although numerically superior, the PLA is less sophisticated in technological and doctrinal terms, compared to its Soviet and Western counterparts, often operating with equipment decades behind its potential adversaries and outfitted to fighting a "People's War" as late as the mid 1980's. Despite the PLA's technical and doctrinal obsolescence, it remains fully capable of suppressing riots and internal dissent and remains nominally loyal to the CPC's command.

Questions to Consider

1. As the world watches the domestic situation unravel in China, how will you reassure foreign countries that the CPC has the situation under control?
2. Do you think that Deng was justified in diminishing the role that the PLA plays in Chinese politics?
3. Deng rolled back policies politicizing the intelligentsia and the scientific community. Should the PLA be depoliticized as well?

³ David Shambaugh. "The People's Liberation Army and the People's Republic at 50: Reform at Last." *The China Quarterly*, no. 159 (1999): 660-72. www.jstor.org/stable/655760.

International Relations

Economic Open-Door Policy

The encouragement given to foreign companies to trade with and invest in the country brought about the much-needed stimulus to the previously autarkic economy⁴. But this success also presented several ideological and political challenges that had to be overcome. The most fundamental one was the inherent contradiction between China's commitment to socialist doctrine and its newfound appreciation of market capitalism⁵. The reform-minded power holders within the Politburo believed that retaining political power trumped ideological inconsistencies. And in 1985, the seventh five-year plan (1986-1990) opened the doors for economic diplomacy even further⁶. Senior leaders such as Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang and Premier Zhao Ziyang went on state visits to Australia, Britain and West Germany that year to further expand trade relations. The scope of these diplomatic missions ranged from supplies of wheat and iron ore to cooperation in nuclear energy⁷.

Sino-US Relations

Bilateral relations between the US and China in early 1989 were fraying, and both parties needed to find common diplomatic ground established under Nixon. Premier Zhao Ziyang and President H.W. Bush's conversation on February 26th, 1989 was depictive of the direction that both parties wanted to take in their diplomatic and economic cooperation. Both Bush and Zhao Ziyang agreed that fostering a better environment for trade and investment in China would be mutually beneficial, but that was where the similarities ended and the differences began.⁸ The US expressed concern over China's apathetic attitude towards mounting tensions between India and Pakistan, of which India was a Chinese rival and Pakistan a Chinese ally⁹. Bush also pressed Zhao about attempting to use Chinese influence to moderate North Korean escalations to stabilize the tense relations on the Korean peninsula while Zhao warned that US support for the mounting demonstrations in China would lead to further socio-economic destabilization in China, which contributes negatively to bilateral relations.¹⁰ These differences in foreign policy and China's concern over foreign interference in its domestic affairs drove a wedge in Sino-US relations, and could prove to be a barrier to improving bilateral trade and investment.

4 Kwan Ha Yin, *China Under Deng* (New York: Facts On File, 1991), 215–17.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Wilson Center Digital Archive. "Memorandum of Conversation between George H.W. Bush and Zhao Ziyang." Wilson Center Digital Archive, March 26, 1989. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/133956>.

9 Wilson Center Digital Archive. "Memorandum of Conversation between George H.W. Bush and Zhao Ziyang." Wilson Center Digital Archive, March 26, 1989. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/133956>.

10 Ibid

Gorbachev's Overtures and Rapprochement with the USSR

After Brezhnev's death in office, the two Soviet paramount leaders that preceded Gorbachev, Andropov and Chernenko had a consistent policy of a "friendship offensive" to ease tensions with both the West and China. Chernenko showed a great willingness to mend Sino-Soviet relations, and concluded a trade agreement with China in 1984, a reasonable first step to normalizing relations with China. Gorbachev, like his predecessors has displayed a similar willingness to approach rapprochement, proclaiming in 1986 that nothing was off the table in discussing ways to repair the Soviet Union's relations with China.¹¹ At the same time, the Soviet Union was revising its position on its militarized border with China, which has already seen numerous skirmishes and a border war between the Chinese and Soviet troops stationed along it.¹²

In 1988, the Soviet Union agreed to the terms set out by the Geneva agreement on Afghanistan, which set the deadline for a complete Soviet withdrawal from the country in February 1989. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a major source of tension between China and the Soviet Union due to the Chinese perception that it was being surrounded on all sides by Soviet satellites, and the Soviet intent to withdraw was internationally applauded. What remains on the table for Sino-Soviet relations is finalizing the state of the border, Soviet influence in Vietnam and settling the dispute of withdrawing Soviet military forces in Cambodia.

Military Relationships

China had been able to develop a largely self-sufficient arms industry as a result of its isolation from any sort of industrialized allies after the Sino-Soviet Split, but its technological base was severely lacking comparative to the Soviet Union and certainly to the West. Improving diplomatic relations with both the Soviet Union and the United States gave China the option of technology transfers and imports from these new partners to give both the Chinese arms industry the necessary technical know-how and the PLA the much-needed equipment to keep pace with its peers. In 1983, The US loosened its export restrictions on sales of military hardware, making China eligible for the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, which gives recipients access to purchases from American Arms Manufacturers¹³.

China also negotiated technology transfers for various critical defense technologies from avionics and aircraft/ship engines to guns and munitions as a part of this change in US policy, China was also offered partnerships in joint US arms development projects from

11 Peter Zwick. "New Thinking and New Foreign Policy under Gorbachev." PS: Political Science and Politics 22, no. 2 (1989): 215-24. doi:10.2307/419599.

12 Ibid

13 Eden Y Woon. "Chinese Arms Sales and U.S.-China Military Relations." Asian Survey 29, no. 6 (1989): 601-18. doi:10.2307/2644755.

1987 onwards¹⁴. Europe and Canada were similarly forthcoming with its willingness to export or cooperate with China on defense technologies. Britain gave China avionics and radars for early warning aircraft, Italy provided torpedoes and autocannons for Chinese ships, Germany exported diesel engines for use in Chinese armored vehicles, France sold Dauphin helicopters, various defense electronics, Exocet and Crotale missiles to China and Canada provided China with blueprints for light attack aircraft¹⁵.

Questions to Consider

1. How will the response of the State Council to the Tiananmen Crisis affect different aspects of China's diplomatic relationships with democratic states ?
2. If certain democratic states were to reassess diplomatic relations with China, citing displeasure with the Council's response to the crisis, will it seek to mend fences or retaliate in equal measure ?

¹⁴ Bates Gill and Taeho Kim. "China's Arms Acquisitions from Abroad: A Quest for Superb and Secret Weapons." SIPRI RESEARCH REPORT 11, no. 1 (1995)

¹⁵ Ibid.

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