

Explain why the  
chinese government  
reacted as it did to  
the tiananmen square  
mass...

[People](#), [Mao Zedong](#)



The reactions to the ' Tiananmen Square Massacre' from the ' Chinese Communist Party' were driven by a need to maintain total control of China. As Michael Lynch states in the supporting quotation, they were willing to curtail the political freedoms of the public to do so. Most modern historians, including Lynch and Zhang Liang believe the immediate reactions of the C. C. P. were motivated by China's political leaders who wanted a " violent end to the affair. " The long-term reactions from the C. C. P. were shrouded in secrecy and plagued by misinformation. These immediate and long-term reactions were justified by two core reasons; one passionate and one pragmatic. The first was a matter of revenge; Deng Xiaoping wished to punish the protestors after two months of rebellion. Pragmatically, Deng and the C. C. P., in their quest for total control, realised they had to crush their enemies and deter future threats and their reactions reflected this mentality. Deng Xiaoping and the C. C. P. acted in part in vengeance for the actions of the protestors in the months leading up to the massacre in Tiananmen. The resistance which culminated in the protests at Tiananmen Square was the boldest challenge to the C. C. P. since it was born out of the Chinese Revolution in 1949. Deng, whilst no doubt also heavily influenced by pragmatic reasons, was intent on retribution. Michael Lynch realised as much, " For their two-month defiance of the government, the protestors were to be made to atone in blood. " Tiananmen was the climax of a decade of frustration for many of the Chinese people. When Deng Xiaoping came into power in 1979 he promised sweeping reforms for China after the failures of Mao's five and seven year plans. However, high inflation, downturns in agriculture and industrial production and an uncontrolled, burgeoning

population quickly evaporated the promise felt by the Chinese. The students and the intelligentsia were the primary groups who displayed their frustration against the C. C. P. Ironically, this was partly engineered by Deng himself, who was intent on giving the intelligentsia a more important role in society. According to Craig Dietrich, " The increasing intellectual life in China led students to see a more urgent role for themselves as ... consciences for the country. " The protest movement, ignited by a decade of frustration, exploded in 1989 . Students began to rally to voice their disapproval of the Government. The death of one of their heroes, the politician Hu Yaobang on April 15 further inspired the masses. Throughout April and then into May the students continued to defy the C. C. P. and held demonstrations in Beijing, notably outside the Zhongnanhai compound. By mid May over one million students had converged on Tiananmen Square. This rebellion was said to have outraged Deng Xiaoping and senior Chinese leaders, and the response to the masses at Tiananmen was as much a ruthless act of passion, as it was pragmatism. Modern historians have often justified the theory of ' Deng's revenge' by highlighting that, because the crowd was " unarmed and far from united" and " it would not have taken long to scatter them" the use of excessive force was revealing of a revenge motive. This is partly true, though admittedly it is not conclusive. It is known that the Chinese troops were not equipped with riot-preventing weaponry. Hence all of their weapons were lethal. This in part explains the violence which highlighted the conflict between the students. Many Chinese Government sources will also tell a story of the necessity to use force against the students. One official Government document concurs with this view, " Rioters savagely beat up,

kidnapped and killed soldiers and officers. " However, even if Deng did have a motive behind the severity of the violence, it could also have been to completely crush his rivals and than deter future potential rebels (which will be covered in the subsequent paragraphs). Ultimately, Deng's fury was spawn from the pressure of succeeding Mao; a man held in God-like reverence by the Chinese. As the student rebellion began, groups in the Chinese political framework questioned Deng's ability to lead the nation. As Lynch in the reference quote points out, Deng was quick to eliminate the broad political freedoms of these students. This was due to pragmatism of course; however the issue of the emotion of revenge is also inherent in his response to the massacre. The hunger for power of the C. C. P. required it to completely crush its political and ideological rivals. In reaction to the turmoil at Tiananmen, the Government was acutely aware that it had to restrict the political freedoms of the masses to achieve a monopoly over China. This is confirmed by Michael Lynches attached quotation. Deng realised that China needed to reform, specifically in their economy and foreign relations. This ' post-Mao liberalisation' (which Lynch refers to) was predominantly based around the introduction of capitalist economic principles whilst maintaining a communist political system. The ' Open To The World' policy which aimed to open up China's economy was the backbone of this ideology. However, these changes ended at the extension of any political freedoms (let alone a potential democracy) simply because it threatened the C. C. P's power. This desperate struggle for power was the catalyst for the Government's response to the protestors. As Lynch points out, " Tiananmen was very much in the Chinese tradition of crushing opposition by the severest means in

order to emphasise the illegitimacy of the opposition itself. " The massacre at Tiananmen was not so much a riot that got out of hand as it was a very deliberate message. The leaders of the C. C. P made a conscious decision to limit the political freedoms of the protestors to maintain control of the state. The Communist Party was well aware that destroying its immediate rivals would not be effective. Hence, the violence and bloodshed of Tiananmen was without question a deterrent to future challengers of the regime. History has validated the success of this ' strategy' as the C. C. P is still in power, under the leadership of Hu Jintao. The feelings of the Government inner sanctum were reflected in the blunt words of Chen Yun, " We must not let the next generation pour a bucket of shit on our heads. " Whilst this put the Government at odds with many other world nations, Li Peng and Deng made the momentous decision to put Chinese control over foreign relations. This did invoke several sanctions and boycotts from many of China's emerging allies, including the U. S and Britain. Whatever debate remains about China's priorities, it is undisputable that the violence of the massacre was an effective deterrent to rebels for a generation. George Black and Robin Munro wrote, " the larger threat could be eradicated by brute force, terror and exemplary punishment ... Organised public unrest had to be exercised ... for an entire generation. " Returning to Lynches' argument, it is dubious as to whether the political freedoms of the Chinese have improved since Tiananmen. However, it is clear that the link between the force of the Army and the deterrence of future protests is evident from the inspection of post-Tiananmen China. In conclusion, the Chinese government reacted as it did to the Tiananmen Square massacre to protect its questioned power of the

country. It acted both passionately, in enforcing revenge against the protestors, and pragmatically in ensuring their rivals were crushed. These reasons explain why, in the C. C. P's pursuit of power, it curtailed the political freedoms of the Chinese. Bibliography Books: - Lynch, Michael, 1998, "The People's Republic of China since 1949", 5th Edition, Published by 'Hodder and Stoughton' in London, P. 61-84 - Black, George & Munro, Robin, 1993, "Black Hands of Beijing: Lives of Defiance in China's Democracy Movement", Edition Unknown, Published by 'John Wiley & Sons Inc.' in New York, P. 234-246 - Dietrich, Craig, 1994, "People's China: A Brief History", First Edition, Published by Oxford University Press, USA, Chapter 3 — The Tiananmen Square Massacre - Chu-yuan Cheng, 1990, "Behind the Tiananmen Massacre: Social, Political, and Economic Ferment in China", Edition Inapplicable (taken from Questia), Published by 'Westview Press Boulder' in San Francisco Internet Items: - The Editorial Board of The Beijing Publishing House, 1990, "The Truth About The Beijing Turmoil", Beijing Publishing House, Beijing, Viewed 20/04/07, URL: [www. tsquare. tv/themes/truthturn. html](http://www.tsquare.tv/themes/truthturn.html)