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1. Wilsoncenter: Tiananmen Can Happen Here / BY [RUI ZHONG](https://foreignpolicy.com/author/rui-zhong/) /  JUNE 4, 2020

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/04/tiananmen-massacre-lessons-george-floyd-protests-china/#>

June 4, 1989, 31 years ago this month, is a pivotal moment in Chinese history. Memory, ideology, and state violence intermingle even after three decades. Tiananmen’s true legacy, which encompasses both the glory of the palace and the blood and hopes of the students who demonstrated on the square, will be something that Chinese people like myself continue to grapple with as long as our history ticks on.

Hong Kong’s research institutions and bookshops, some of which have shuttered, are threatened with restrictions if noncompliance with Beijing’s law stands. Underneath their helmets and umbrellas, protesters in Hong Kong fear the future even as they push on. They have remembered, and they have learned from the bones of Tiananmen.

In 1990, Donald Trump told Playboy magazine: “When the students poured into Tiananmen Square, the Chinese government almost blew it. Then they were vicious, they were horrible, but they put it down with strength.” Blunt as this observation was, it treated Tiananmen as not just a moment but a lesson, one from which Trump learned the lessons of power. Among the foreign-policy community, however, Tiananmen is too often a dusty relic behind glass, not a lesson about blood, strength, and sacrifice for today.

It has been 31 years. In the United States, young protesters pour water into their eyes to clear out tear gas and tend to their wounds, inflicted by police and a military that demand acquiescence. Black Americans, restless from the unending burdens of systemic racism, demand that their lives matter. As I see Americans marching, singing, dancing, and asking the nigh impossible from their leaders, I think back to young people in a square doing the same many decades ago.

But the weight of Tiananmen is received in the United States not as a warning to treasure civic society but as a relic of another place that lost a piece of it irreparably. In America’s places of power and knowledge, where Tiananmen is studied most, the lesson is cleanly and precisely unconnected to U.S. governance. It is a matter for China, not for the aftermaths of Rodney King’s beating, Michael Brown’s shooting, and the cold-blooded killing of George Floyd. In choosing to advocate for military intervention on the streets of Washington, D.C., and other cities where protests have taken place, politicians like [Sen. Tom Cotton](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/03/opinion/tom-cotton-protests-military.html) miss opportunities to apply Tiananmen’s bitter lessons to the United States.

Tiananmen in the American imagination is something fantastic and distant, deliberately placed far away and long ago. It is otherized in a collection of stories of crushed overseas rebellions that can’t happen at home. It is a black mark against the Chinese state alone, rather than a possibility in America itself. Only under a dictatorship could such things happen, we say, forgetting [Ocoee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ocoee_massacre), [Opelousas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opelousas_massacre), [Tulsa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulsa_race_massacre), or [Kent State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kent_State_shootings).

1. The Heritage Foundationt: Why We Commemorate Tiananmen Square / by [Olivia Enos](https://www.heritage.org/staff/olivia-enos) /  JUNE 4, 2020

<https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/why-we-commemorate-tiananmen-square>

This iconic image has become a symbol of the resilience of the Chinese people during the Tiananmen Square massacre. Hundreds to thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators were killed by communist troops from June 3 to June 5, 1989.

It is a visual representation of the Chinese people’s fight for freedom, and the great lengths that the Chinese government will go to in order to quash it.

This June 4 anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests is especially ominous.

It comes during the [growing collapse of the “one country, two systems” framework](https://www.forbes.com/sites/oliviaenos/2020/05/22/hong-kongs-worst-case-scenario-is-happening-before-our-very-eyes/#3bed7c757da5) that preserved liberty and prosperity in Hong Kong since 1997. Vigils commemorating the events of Tiananmen Square have even been [outlawed](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/01/world/asia/Hong-kong-Tiananmen-vigil-banned.html).

It’s being commemorated against the backdrop of the Chinese Communist Party’s [gross mishandling of the response to the COVID-19](https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/holding-the-chinese-communist-party-accountable-its-response-the-covid-19-outbreak) pandemic.

It’s happening while [at least 1 million Uighurs](https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/responding-the-crisis-xinjiang) are languishing in political reeducation facilities in China’s Xinjiang region. Other religious minorities face persecution as well.

The oppression of the Chinese people is evident. Perhaps there has been no greater threat to freedom in China since Mao than Xi Jinping.

Xi has further tightened his grip on the levers of control. Widespread use of surveillance tracks ordinary Chinese citizens’ every move. Tracking is deployed for the purpose of measuring a person’s “social credit” to determine how well their personal behavior aligns with the Chinese Communist Party’s priorities.

The party is also undertaking efforts to Sinicize religion, making Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and all other religions conform to Chinese characteristics—replacing the sacred with the secular.

All private life is considered public, therefore falling under the party’s control. This we know well from the now famous whistleblower Dr. Li Wenliang.

His attempts to sound the alarm about the novel coronavirus resulted in him being called in for questioning by Chinese authorities, being forced to recant his statement, and eventually, succumbing to death by the very virus he tried to alert the public about.

It is for the Chinese people that we commemorate the anniversary of Tiananmen Square. We mark their fight for freedom—recognizing it as a battle that has not yet been won. We remember their plight because it is a poignant reminder that freedom is not free and that it is absolutely worth fighting for and defending where possible.

There is a battle over values being waged in Asia. One model suppresses and undermines freedom while the other seeks to preserve and promote it. One system blurs the lines between public and private, while the other keeps those lines distinct. One embraces authoritarianism where the other embraces liberty.

The U.S. must stand on the side of values. That means standing unwaveringly with the people of China wherever freedom is under threat—whether in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, or in the People’s Republic of China.

1. The National Interest: The Covert Art of China’s Military Activity in the East China Sea / by [Michael Auslin](https://nationalinterest.org/profile/michael-auslin) /  June 8, 2020

<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/covert-art-china%E2%80%99s-military-activity-east-china-sea-161776>

China is contesting for control, not of the high seas like Germany in World War I or Japan in World War II, but of the marginal seas and skies of Asia, even while the United States remains dominant on the high seas of the Pacific.

Faced with [China’s expansion](https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/how-coronavirus-crisis-exposed-false-promise-iran-china-partnership-161396) in East Asia over the past decade, U.S. policymakers have attempted to reassure allies over American commitments, maintain a constant presence in the waters of the Indo-Pacific region, and ensure a superiority of U.S. force in the region should an armed conflict break out. Yet bedeviled by distance, global commitments, and an increasingly capable Chinese military, Washington risks being forced over time into a predominantly reactive stance, attempting to still the shifting tides of the balance of power until the dangers associated with maintaining its traditional position become too onerous to accept.

America now faces a credible challenger for local control. This challenger may not yet be able to defeat the full force of U.S. power today, but it is gaining in power. More importantly, that challenger has identified control of the Asiatic Mediterranean as its goal and is acting to permanently change the geopolitical balance, such as through the island-building campaign. Thus, Washington is at risk of failing to meet this challenge in two respects: in ensuring that its commitments and its power in the region are in balance, and in appropriately recognizing the full scope of the challenge and its holistic nature.

The concern in Washington over China’s capabilities and [intentions](https://nationalinterest.org/feature/chinas-path-self-destruction-starts-hong-kong-156641) is a belated recognition of these facts. Policymakers are now increasingly worried that American power is not commensurate to U.S. commitments, especially if the commitment is understood as the continued stability of the marginal seas and ensuring that no one power controls them. From that perspective, Washington’s alliance structures ironically may be secondary to the primacy of control of the marginal seas; losing that control would make fulfilling alliance commitments even more difficult or costly.

Effectively responding to China’s challenge requires adopting a larger geostrategic picture of the entire Indo-Pacific region and America’s position in it. To do so, it is useful to exhume a concept discussed briefly during the 1940s: that of the integrated strategic space of East Asia’s “inner seas,” or what was called the “Asiatic Mediterranean.” The utility of this concept will make clear that the geopolitical challenge the United States and its allies and partners face is an emerging struggle for control for the entire common maritime space of eastern Asia. It is helpful briefly to review the evolution of geopolitical thought in relation to this region if Washington is to adopt such an approach.

Acknowledging this fact not only clarifies our understanding of Chinese military activity in the region, but it also maps out the area under risk: the Asiatic Mediterranean. The integrated waters of the Sea of Japan, the Yellow Sea, and the East China Sea and [South China Sea](https://nationalinterest.org/feature/us-must-beat-china-its-own-game-south-china-sea-153716), are as vital to the history, identity, and trade of eastern Asia as the Mediterranean is to Europe. While it is geographically a stretch to connect the Asiatic Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, the passageways between the two remain among the world’s most vital waterways, through which one-third of global trade passes in the form of over seventy thousand ships per year moving into the Asiatic Mediterranean. The great factories and workshops of China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam and others, on which the global trading network depends, are located along the littoral of the Asiatic Mediterranean. It forms the hinge between maritime Eurasia and the entire Western Hemisphere. To return to Spykman’s formulation, control of the Asiatic Mediterranean means control of Asia.

The challenge posed by China is thus two-fold. It threatens the maritime freedom of the Asiatic Mediterranean, and thus ultimately of Asia’s productive and trading capacities. It also is positioning China to have a preponderance of power that can be brought against Asia’s rimlands, as well as against what Spykman called the “outer crescent,” which, in Asia, includes Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Australia. These rimlands and the outer crescent, it should be remembered, are uniquely comprised of continental, peninsular, and archipelagic landforms. Japan’s control of Korea and Formosa (Taiwan) in the 1930s facilitated its invasion of China, which found its greatest success in the rimland, and only became enmeshed in a quagmire when it attempted to extend towards China’s heartland or out into the trackless Pacific.

China today is attaining the capability to threaten Japan and Southeast Asia, not solely from the homeland, but from its expeditionary bases in the inner seas. From this perspective, the air defense identification zone that Beijing established in the East China Sea in November 2013 is another element in its attempt to establish control over the inner skies of Asia. Only by conceiving of the strategic environment in this expansive, integrated sense—as the Asiatic Mediterranean—can we fully understand, appreciate, and respond to China’s [long-term challenge](https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-virus-no-not-one-153201).

America needs to recover its appreciation of the strategic importance of Asia’s inner seas and rimlands if it is to come up with a realistic strategy to preserve both its power and its influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Losing one part of the Asiatic Mediterranean will certainly cause allies and partners in other parts to consider either severing ties with the United States or declaring neutrality, so as to preserve their own freedom of action. A geopolitically isolated United States is an operationally weakened United States. Being pushed out of one sea will require the U.S. military to expend national treasure to fight its way back in. The better course of action is to keep the Asiatic Mediterranean whole, balanced, and stable. Only then can America be certain that the vital rimlands of Asia will remain free from conflict. To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, the Asiatic Mediterranean must certainly hang together, or it will assuredly hang separately.