From opposing sides: the duality of citizens' and their government's views on town squares

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FROM OPPOSING SIDES: THE DUALITY OF CITIZENS' AND THEIR GOVERNMENT'S VIEWS ON TOWN SQUARES

HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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APRIL 2005
From Opposing Sides: The Duality of Citizens' and their Government's Views on Town Squares

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Honors History
2005
Acknowledgements

"I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by."
--Douglas Adams

My advisor, Dr. John Gordon, for his advice, guidance, and especially his patience in dealing with me and with my particular "love" of deadlines.

Dr. David Brandenberger for his aid in my research on Red Square and sorting out historical incongruence.

Dr. Tong Lam for his amazing insight and guidance, without whom I would not have settled on this topic.

Rose Lee Yong Tan, for her encouragement and help in finding primary sources on Tiananmen Square.
Abstract

The purpose of my paper is to explore how the State’s and the people’s views concerning town squares come together. I will focus mainly on the duality between these two views: one the one hand, the State uses these spaces to display its power and for physical security. On the other side, the populace sees these spaces as theirs, as central to their community as citizens. Furthermore, they see it as a place to confront their government. Where else would be better than the place where the government seems to take on physical form?

I will explore this duality in three distinct regions: first, the United States, specifically the National Mall in Washington, D.C. I find this space to be representative of the Enlightenment-influenced view, as not only was it, and indeed the entire city of Washington, laid out with an Enlightenment aesthetic in mind, but it is also a place where the Enlightenment views on individual rights, and therefore protest, come into play.

Second is Red Square in Moscow, Russian Federation. In this case, the thinking was more security-oriented and pragmatic, but the consideration was there nonetheless. That far less protest has taken place on Red Square than the National Mall I attribute more to far greater governmental control in the case of Russia, and differing political and social cultures.

Third, I look at this issue in the case of Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China. I pay particular attention to the demonstration and subsequent suppression that occurred in the spring of 1989, and how the issues discussed above (security, urban planning, and the people’s confrontations of the government) interact during this time.

Finally, I give a background, both in terms of thought and actual events. First, I explain the Enlightenment aesthetic of order (and the associated concern with security), and then address the Chinese concept of space, order, and urban planning. I also then give a short history of the planning and development of each square and then some of the major events that led to their being seen as places of protest and demonstration by the people.
Introduction

“Tiananmen Square is ours, the people’s, and we will not allow butchers to tread in it.”

--Wuer Kaixi, addressing student demonstrators, June 3, 1989

Cities have long been a sign of power. Since the beginning of organized human civilization, cities have been a sign of prosperity and the power of those that rule them. Rulers have recognized this, and have shaped the cities of their domains to reflect their power and control their populace.

Public squares, in turn, are an integral part of a city’s effect on those that live in it. They are at the same time places of expression and places of control; places of freedom and places where the rule of law is most easily able to exert itself. The state has long known of the use squares have in maintaining its power and influence in the cities under their control.

At the same time, these places take on a different shape for the populace. They are places of deep significance. They are centers of commerce and the social network of their cities. They represent a citizen’s sense of national identity, and this too is often a deliberate act on the part of the state (take for example, the mausoleums of Lenin and Mao in Red Square and Tiananmen, respectively).

The role of public squares in the social and political dynamic of their host cities is hard to understate. They are a place of gathering in times of crisis.

They are a connection between the citizen and the greater powers that influence his or her life. They are common places for governmental displays of power, as well as the citizenry’s demonstration of their own influence.

It is this duality between governmental and public power, embodied in public squares, that I seek to explore. I will focus specifically on this idea in a variety of geographical contexts, both western and eastern. The first example I will explore is Tiananmen Square in Beijing, People’s Republic of China. This location has held a significant place in China’s history and the minds of the Chinese people. Second is Red Square in Moscow, Russia, which has had a similarly prominent role in the lives of Russian citizens since the Middle Ages.

The National Mall in Washington, D.C., USA took many of its cues from the Enlightenment sensibilities pervading Western thought at this time (discussed below). In addition, the newly formed nation was extremely conscious of symbolism and the need to project it. The duality I am discussing is especially prevalent in this space, as the ability of the populace to demonstrate is protected in the United States to a much greater degree than in the other nations studied. This in and of itself is a method of control, but this issue is out of the scope of this particular essay.²

Tiananmen Square is at once a reflection of the power of the Chinese Communist Party and a location that belongs solely to the people. It has long

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been the place for residents of Beijing to gather in response to any significant event, from the death of a leader to full-out revolution. It was here that the Communist revolution began and ended, and it was here that one of the only significant challenges to its control also began and ended.

Red Square holds a similar position in the Russian mindset, and was used to similar effect by the Russian state (both under the tsars and the Soviets). It is a common place of protest, religious observance, and at the same time a great symbol of state power. The Communists especially used Red Square as a symbol of their power and as an embodiment of the communist state.

The City as a Tool of the State

The idea of deliberately organizing and planning a city has been around as long as civilization itself. Lois Craig puts it most succinctly, saying, simply, "Buildings and landscapes express subjective values."3 Extending from this, the State has often been concerned with security and the display of power: "To achieve the maximum appearance of order and power on parade, it is necessary to provide a body of soldiers either with an open square or a long unbroken avenue."4

The Italian architects of the fifteenth century were concerned with what one of them, Leon Battista Alberti, called "viae militares," or military streets.

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Andrea Palladio continued this line of reasoning during the following century:

"...that is to say, that there be no place in them where armies may not easily march."

Louis Napoleon is a prime example of this knowledge in action. He ordered the redevelopment and rearrangement of Paris between 1853 and 1869. This Herculean task fell to the Prefect of Seine, Baron Georges-Eugene Haussmann. The purposes of this redesign were multifold: to make for more regular streets and property divisions, increased public works, and also to remove sources of unrest and opposition to his rule.

As Mumford describes, Napoleon III's aim was to use the city itself as a way to control the people that dwell within it. "Were not the ancient medieval streets of Paris one of the last refuges of urban liberties? No wonder that Napoleon III sanctioned the breaking through of narrow streets and cul-de-sacs and the razing of whole quarters to provide wide boulevards: this was the best possible protection against assault from within. To rule merely by coercion, without affectionate consent, one must have the appropriate urban background." Scott mirrors this argument, quoting Haussmann himself: "At the center of Louis Napoleon’s and Haussmann’s plans for Paris lay the military

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5 Citied in Mumford, 369.
7 Mumford, 369-370.
security of the state. The redesigned city was, above all, to be made safe against popular insurrections."\(^8\)

Another significant aspect of this planning was the streets themselves. The avenue, specifically, is of the utmost importance for the maintenance of order in a city. "Not always was it possible to design a whole new city in the baroque mode; but in the layout of half a dozen new avenues, or in a new quarter, its character could be re-defined."\(^9\) Furthermore, as has already been stated, this precedent goes back much further than Napoleon.

The more strategic aspects of large, open streets are as valid today as they were in the nineteenth century. While military tactics have changed drastically to match advances in technology, the difficulty of urban warfare is something that military tacticians have not been able to surmount.

The tactics of the nineteenth century required getting as large a body of troops as possible in one place in order for them to be effective. While this is no longer as necessary today due to technological advances, urban warfare is still extremely difficult and costly. For example, the Soviets lost hundreds of thousands\(^{10}\) taking Berlin in 1945, and this was against a force that was hardly more than old men and Hitler Youth.

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\(^8\) Quoted in Scott, 59-61.
\(^9\) Mumford, 367.
\(^{10}\) A figure for the battle itself could not be found, but Moynahan cites the Soviet casualties from April 16\(^{th}\) until the fall of Berlin on May 2\(^{nd}\) at 304,887. From Brian Moynahan, CLAWS OF THE BEAR (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 205.
In addition, many of the changes made were for simply aesthetic reasons as well. Some of these aesthetic values carry over into the strategic realm; as Mumford explains, "the unswerving line of march greatly contributes to the display of power, and a regiment moving thus gives the impression that it would break through a solid wall without loosing a beat. That, of course, is exactly the belief that the soldier and the Prince desire to inculcate in the populace...."\textsuperscript{11}

In a more general aesthetic sense, the Enlightenment carried with it a need for more orderly spaces. René Descartes outlined this feeling well:

Thus also, those ancient cities which, from being at first only villages, have become, in course of time, large towns, are usually built ill laid out compared with the regularly constructed towns which a professional architect has freely planned on an open plain; so that although the several buildings of the former may often equal or surpass in beauty those of the latter, yet when one observes their indiscriminate juxtaposition, there a large one and here a small, and the consequent crookedness and irregularity of the streets, one is disposed to allege that chance rather than any human will guided by reason must have led to such an arrangement.\textsuperscript{12}

Moving farther east, a more recent example occurred in Ukraine. During the Orange Revolution there, the large market square in Kiev, called the \textit{Naidan}, was a gathering point for hundreds of thousands on both sides of the political spectrum to demonstrate. To wit, "...I saw a million people and not a single cop, I saw surprised eyes, thirsty for the truth. Of course not everyone there in the square was for Yushchenko; everyone simply wanted justice."\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Mumford, 369.
\textsuperscript{12} Yuri Shevchuk, "When is the Year of the Human?", interview by Alla Geraskina, \textit{Novaya Russkaya} (January 10, 2005). Translation is my own.
While this certainly explains the Western approach, what of the Eastern? In China, for example, cities were undertaken with even more planning, even in ancient times, than those of the West. In one text, the Shi Jing, written during the Zhou period (1100 – 255 B.C.), the doctrine of imperial city building is described in detail. Since the emperors were seen as a link between Heaven and Earth, it was important that their capitals be built in places of harmony with Heaven. Therefore such methods as consulting tortoise shells were used to determine the correct places to build:

The plain of Zhou was very fertile,
Its celery and sowthistle sweet as rice-cakes.
"Here we will make a start; here take counsel,
Here notch our tortoise."
It says, "Stop," it says, "Halt.
Build houses here."
So he halted, so he stopped,
And left and right
He drew the boundaries of big plots and little....

Further documentation from the same period gives us an excellent idea of the structure with which these cities were planned. A passage in the Kaogongji ("record of trades")¹⁵, a section of the Zhou Li ("Rituals of Zhou") which is believed to have been added late in the first millennium B.C., records the process by which Luoyi, the capital city of the emperor Cheng Wang, was planned:

The jiangren builds the state, leveling the ground with the water by using a plumb-line. He lays out posts, taking the plumb-line (to ensure the posts' verticality), and using their shadows as the determinators of a mid-

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¹⁴ Quoted in Nancy Steinhardt, CHINESE IMPERIAL CITY PLANNING (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 32.
point. He examines the shadows of the rising and setting sun and makes a circle which includes the mid-points of the two shadows.

The *jiangren* constructs the state capitals. He makes a square nine *li* on each side; each side has three gates. Within the capital are nine northsouth and nine east-west streets. The north-south streets are nine carriage tracks in width. On the left (as one faces south, or, to the east) is the Ancestral Temple, and to the right (west) are the Altars of Soil and Grain. In the front is the Hall of Audience and behind the markets. 16

This same book was used in the construction of Beijing in 1267. 17

The consciousness of space is even older in China than even in the West, and in a much more detailed, symbolic fashion. Indeed, there was a system of cosmoogy, relations between elements and colors, geographical symbolism, and later on numerology as well as the concepts of *yin* and *yang* (outlined by Confucius in the fifth century B.C.). All of these and more are intertwined into what is known as *kanyu* or *fengshui* (literally "wind and water"). 18

Even in later times, this system still had weight. The first of a major series of road building projects undertaken during the Chinese republic, Xinhua Street, caused no small amount of controversy. Proposed in 1914 (although not finally opened until 1926), Xinhua Street (one of the most important north-south roads) would have required a new gate in the walls of the Imperial City. The project was opposed by merchants from the area around the Zhengyang Gate, as they feared a loss of business from people no longer having to walk through that

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16 Steinhardt, 33. *A Jiangren* (literally, "craftsman") was, according to Steinhardt, an official title in the Zhou dynasty, who worked "on construction projects in a capacity ranging from builder to craftsman" (Ibid.). *A li* is an ancient Chinese measurement, equal to about one-third of a mile.

17 Dong, 24.

gate. They argued, however, on the grounds of *fengshui*, and Yuan Shikai, the president of the Chinese Republic, was convinced that their reasons were valid.¹⁹

**The Gate of Heavenly Peace**

Tiananmen Square is located at the southern edge of the Forbidden City, next to the *Tiananmen*, the Gate of Heavenly Peace, which leads into the Forbidden City itself. It measures approximately 90 acres, and is bordered on all sides by monuments to the Chinese state, from the National People’s Congress to revolutionary museums. In an American context, "one might think of the Mall in Washington, D.C., bordered by the White House on one side, the Lincoln Memorial on another, and running approximately from the Washington Monument to the Capitol."²⁰ The square is very much a part of the Chinese identity, appearing on the emblem of China, on postage stamps, etc.²¹

The square itself came into being when the Ming Dynasty returned the capital of China to Beijing in 1403. Built on the axial line running through the old part of Beijing from the northernmost to the southernmost walls of the Imperial City, the square was from that point on of major significance for the government of China.²² Just north of the square runs a major thoroughfare, Chang’an Avenue, divided into West Chang’an and East Chang’an at the Gate. This road was opened in 1914 as part of a project to increase ease of transportation. It

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¹⁹ Dong, 41.
²⁰ Fairbank, et. al. 18.
²² Ibid., 62.
was also part of a major undertaking which redefined the spatial order of the city around the road system instead of the city walls.\textsuperscript{23} The significance of this road and its name will be explored below\textsuperscript{24}.

The Square was originally a walled, T-shaped courtyard directly in front of the entrance to the Forbidden City, called the \textit{Qianbulang} ("thousand pace corridor"). There were two gates in the wall separating this space from the Imperial City, the \textit{Chang'an Left} and \textit{Chang'an Right}.\textsuperscript{25} It is from these gates that Chang'an Avenue, which now runs east-west just north of Tiananmen Square, gets its name. (See Appendix 2, figure 1 for a map of the Square circa 1400.) It has been suggested that the size of both the \textit{Qianbulang} and the \textit{Tiananmen} were very deliberate, and designed to impress: "the length of the Thousand Step Way and the breadth of the front of the Gate of Heavenly Peace are the boldest spatial stroke one could imagine, effectively highlighting the keynote structures."\textsuperscript{26}

Since the government's return to Beijing it has played a significant role in government control. It was surrounded by the offices of the military and government agencies of all kinds. Second, the Gate was adorned with mythical animals on the roof to protect the inner palace from fire, to the large stone

\textsuperscript{23} Dong, 40-41.
\textsuperscript{24} Unless otherwise noted, all street names and geography are from a map of Beijing produced by Weller Cartographic Services, Ltd. See Appendix 2, figure 3 for a copy of the map.
\textsuperscript{25} Steinhardt, 4.
\textsuperscript{26} From Liang Sicheng, "Beijing: Duishi jihua de wubijiexuo" (Beijing: A peerless masterpiece of urban planning). Translated and quoted in Dong, 27.
pillars on both sides adorned with mythical creatures whose purpose was to watch over the Chinese rulers to ensure good conduct.\textsuperscript{27}

Furthermore, there was from the beginning a strong link symbolically to the exercise of governmental power itself. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, imperial edicts were transported on elaborate platters, protected by yellow umbrellas down the axial line and to a platform above the \textit{Tiananmen}, where they were read to the kneeling minor government officials.\textsuperscript{28} This gate could only be used by the Emperor\textsuperscript{29} (and, by extension, because of the aforementioned imperial edicts).

The Gate’s symbolic significance in the political life of China has continued ever since it was established by the Ming Dynasty. When the Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1912, a constitutional republic was established. After the first president, Sun Yat-sen, capitulated to Yuan Shikai, an extremely powerful general, Yuan had his troops amass in front of the \textit{Tiananmen} and he held his inauguration there.\textsuperscript{30} Yuan’s funeral also took place there in 1916 and it was, despite the humiliation he had suffered earlier when he attempted to proclaim himself emperor and was rebuffed, “a grand event, a true public spectacle.”\textsuperscript{31}

The second major event was when General Zhang Xun tried to stage a coup and restore the boy emperor Puyi during this same year. His troops

\textsuperscript{27} Fairbank, et. al. 18.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Dong, 27.
\textsuperscript{30} Fairbank, et. al., 22.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
occupied the square for several days until they were chased out by armies loyal to the republic. The square was “nationalized and turned into tourist sites, staff offices, and museums, and the courtyard became a true public square.”

The Communists, when they took power, capitalized on the place the Square holds in the mindset of the Chinese citizen. Mao announced the creation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 from atop the Tiananmen. The symbolism of this is certainly powerful: this was the same exact location where imperial edicts were read for hundreds of years. Furthermore, the square was host to many patriotic celebrations. See Appendix 3, figure 1 for an example (a photograph of the celebration of the third anniversary of the foundation of the People’s Republic of China).

It was during the beginning of the twentieth century that Tiananmen Square became a “natural forum for rallies and debates over national policy....” The offices for the Department of Justice, the new Parliament, and the campuses of more than a dozen colleges and universities (including the three campuses for Beijing University) were all close-by. Since the founding of the republic, these universities have seen a large increase in the size of their student bodies.

The first political rally to take place here happened on May 4, 1919, when 3,000 students protested the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. This treaty gave the German concessions in China to the Japanese, which greatly angered the

32 Ibid.
33 Dong, 299.
34 Fairbank, et. al., 22.
Chinese, who had sent more than 100,000 laborers to support the British and French armies. This demonstration would later be echoed, as protestors in Tiananmen during the large-scale uprising of 1989 (discussed below) would hold a demonstration to commemorate this event.

After British police in Shanghai killed more than 40 Chinese citizens during a rally in that city on May 30 1925, the citizens of Beijing responded by having a sympathy rally, and Tiananmen Square was "the natural, chosen location to hold it." Political slogans adorned the walls and paper signs covered the trees. The protest was orderly, and the police and military "kept their distance."

Another example of the sanctity of the Square in public eyes comes from events surrounding the start-up of the trolley system in Beijing. Funds (half government, half private) were collected beginning in 1921, and the system went on line after much controversy in 1925. Part of the controversy involved the destruction of people's houses to make way for tracks, as well as proposed inroads into public spaces. One citizen, Qin Zizhuang, said in a letter that he believed there should still be some "pure" land left; he also thought the Tiananmen area "fairly close" to Paris or London. I interpret this to mean he thought it comparable to or being in a similar vein with these cities, which is, perhaps, another link between urban planning in the East and West. He added

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35 Ibid., 22-23.
37 Ibid., 23.
that, "if this can be tolerated, the annihilation of the country can also be tolerated; if one does not fight for this, one would not fight for one's own person." 38

The first outbreak of violence in the Square took place on March 18, 1926. A group of some 6,000 people, mainly students, were protesting the government's agreeing to increasingly audacious Japanese demands. As the crowd moved towards the cabinet offices of the government, troops opened fire. Around 50 people were killed and 200 wounded. 39

Tiananmen Square then lost much of its political significance, as Chiang Kai-Shek moved the capital to the city of Nanjing in 1928. The only significant event in the Square for some time after this was another anti-Japanese protest on December 9, 1935, when police turned fire hoses on the students. The "December Niners" would become symbols of the anti-Japanese movement in China. 40

Later on, the Square would be a place for people to mourn the death of popular political leaders. These demonstrations also took on the forms of protests against government policies. For example, in April of 1976, demonstrators took to the square to mourn the passing of Zhou Enlai (the Prime Minister), as well as protest against the government. 41

38 Quoted in Dong, 70-71.
39 Fairbank, et. al., 28.
40 Ibid., 28.
41 Zhao, xxiii.
The most famous event in this vein without a doubt is the large-scale demonstration and its suppression in the spring of 1989 (see Appendix 4 for a more detailed chronology). What started as a demonstration to mourn the passing of Hu Yaobing, a member of the Chinese politburo (and former General Secretary) would become one of the largest movements in Chinese history. It began with a couple thousands students in mid-April and eventually swelled to several hundred thousand students and close to a million other citizens of Beijing.

So, while it is clear there is precedent for demonstrations here, what of the state and military's side of the issue? First, it is interesting to note the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) strategy for suppressing the demonstrators. Their plan was to surround them and envelop them, which was exactly the purpose Napoleon envisioned for a town square when he remade Paris.

Moreover, they would use Chang'an Avenue, the major east-west thoroughfare as well as the ring roads, all reminiscent of the *viae militares* envisioned by the Renaissance Italian architects, to do it. Even with modern technology and tactics, it still came down to a matter of space. The PLA was blocked at every turn during their initial attempt to enter the city, but were able to make more progress in their approach from the south because of the wider roads.

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43 Ibid., 117.
This is also a prime example where the State’s attempts at control break down to an extent. Were it not for the Chinese military’s willingness to use force on unarmed civilians, the demonstrations in the spring of 1989 would have had very different results. The people of Beijing proved to be surprisingly adept at stopping the flow of troops, even through nonviolent means. While the troops made the most progress initially in those places with the widest streets, they were not wide enough to contain the outpouring of support for the students. So, while the State designed its capital with security in mind, the people were still able to overcome these provisions. Thus, urban planning alone cannot totally secure a government from attacks from below.

It is safe to say, therefore, that Tiananmen Square plays an extremely significant role in the mindset and perceptions of both the government that controls it (be it Imperial, Republican, or Communist) and the people of Beijing. Not only that, but the parallels between its layout and those of other cities where security was a primary concern (cf. the example of Paris discussed above) combined with the deeply-engrained Chinese sense of space and the use thereof, and one cannot but take notice of the almost diametrically opposed viewpoints held by the government and its citizens about the Square.
The Beautiful Square

*Red Square is a giant page, on which has been recorded and is being written the most striking and thrilling events of our history.*

-- Boris Polevoy

Red Square (красная площадь, krasnaya ploshchad) in Moscow, Russia, has been the center of public life in Russia since the Middle Ages. The city of Moscow is very old; its first mention by chroniclers is in 1147 AD, although archaeological evidence has thus far been unable to posit a date of settlement.45

The current site of Red Square was a market square prior to its naming as such; Ryabchikov, for example, refers to it simply as the "market square" when talking about it prior to the seventeenth century. It has gone through several name changes since then: Troitskaya Ploshchad' (Trinity Square), then Torgovaya Ploshchad' (Trade Square), and then Pozhar (literally, "the burned out place") around the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth centuries.46 It received its current name sometime in the seventeenth century. It should also be noted that, at the time, the word krasnaya in Russian meant "beautiful," and did not take on the meaning of "red" until later.47 The Square was not open like it is now, but rather was covered with "houses of peasants,

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44 Quoted in Sergei Bubenshchikov, ed., *NASHA KRASNAYA PLOSHCHAD'* (Our Red Square) (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1966), 10. See Appendix 1 for a biography of Polevoy.


46 P. V. Sytin, *PO STAROJ I NOVOJ MOSKVE* (About Old and New Moscow) (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Detskoi Literatury, 1947), 29.

47 Ibid., 27.
merchants’ stalls, and wooden churches and their graveyards, where they buried the dead. In 1493 a huge fire devastated the area of Moscow around the Kremlin, including the market square. In response, Prince Ivan III ordered that all subsequent construction next to the Kremlin complex leave a distance of no less than "one hundred and nine stazhen [approx. 763 feet]." In addition to preventing fire, this allowed the ground surrounding the Kremlin to be visible for some distance, and thus susceptible to gunfire from its walls. This distance was approximately the distance a bullet could travel from the wall. It was then that the Square’s first official name, Torgovskaya, appeared.

The next big change for the square would come under Peter I in 1698. Then all the merchants’ huts, stalls, workbenches, and stores were moved to another part of the city. The only trade allowed on the Square after this was food and drink. Finally in the seventeenth century a large section of the wooden buildings near the Kremlin walls were replaced with stone. These were restored towards the end of the eighteenth century and remained until 1887, when they were replaced with modern buildings.

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50 Quoted in Ryabchikov, 50. A *STAZHEN* is equal to approximately seven feet.
51 Ibid., 51.
52 Ibid., 51.
54 Ibid.
During this restoration, new rows of two-story buildings for trade were built in the ditch that had served as the Kremlin's moat. Trade languished, however, due to local weather conditions: deep mud in the spring and fall, extremely cold wind and snowdrifts during the winter, and large amounts of dust during the summer. Finally, Moscow merchants moved to another part of the city in 1804.55

These buildings were damaged when the Russians burned the city during Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. They were repaired and restored in 1815, and a new art gallery “in the classical style” (with columns, porticos; and the like) was built next to them.56 Finally, a monument to Minin and Prince Pozharsky (sculpted by I. Martos) was dedicated in 1818, “accompanied by a parade of guards and rejoicing by thousands of people who gathered on Red Square.”57

Most major events or processions in Moscow were held on Red Square. For example, the processions held to celebrate Palm Sunday and Epiphany were both held there.58 In the seventeenth century it was the sight of “uprisings and the wholesale executions of 1698.” Voyce adds that, “it was also the central

55 Ibid., 32.
56 Ibid.
market place not only of Moscow but of the whole country...."59 During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the square was full of people "from morning until night," and not only a place of commerce, but the place where people got their news. It was also here that edicts from the tsars were declared.60

Furthermore, it has been the site of major historical events. It was the site of several battles with the Tartars in the fourteenth century. After the battle of Kulikovo in 1380, it was to the market square (which would later become Red Square) that the victorious Russian troops went immediately upon their arrival in the city on October 1, 1380.61 It also saw uprisings and the "wholesale executions of 1698" (discussed below).

The Square holds great symbolism in times of war. The bells on Red Square called up the citizen militia to repel Lithuanian and Polish invaders in 1612, and they welcomed General Mikhail Kutuzov's army when it liberated Moscow from Napoleon in 1812.62 Troops marched through the Square to celebrate the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, only to then proceed immediately to the front against the Germans in 1941.63 They were welcomed home in 1945 in the same place.64

59 Ibid., 76.
60 Sytin, 29.
61 Ryabchikov, 21.
62 Moscow Kremlin State Historical and Cultural Museum Sanctuary, "Red Square."
63 Moynahan, 114.
64 Moscow Kremlin State Historical and Cultural Museum Sanctuary, "Red Square."
Red Square was the common site of executions through the end of the seventeenth century. There was "the mass slaughter of the boyars and their retainers" that took place after a popular uprising against them in 1547. Voyce tells of a traditional story about the square, which says that it was there that, after this uprising, "Ivan the Terrible bewailed his misrule, confessed the sins of his youth, and promised amendment."\(^{65}\) He also addressed fire-prevention, as there was another huge fire that devastated Moscow during this time.\(^{66}\) Under Peter I the Great (1682-1725), the famous mass execution of the mutinous streltsy took place in Red Square.\(^{67}\)

Few things could be a greater example of the State showing its power. Michel Foucault addresses this, saying of the public execution that, "it belongs, even in minor cases, to the ceremonies by which power is manifested." He adds that since the law is the will of the sovereign (this can be expanded to include any type of government), breaking the law is therefore a crime against the government as well, and as a result the government seeks retribution.\(^{68}\)

In addition to the uprisings discussed above, there were others to take place in Red Square. Two large riots occurred in 1648 and 1662, both as a result of, "unjust economic ruling on the part of the government relating to the

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\(^{65}\) Voyce, 76.

\(^{66}\) Posokhin, 29.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 73. Posokhin gives two separate incidences: one in 1689 and one in 1698 (pg. 31).

sale of salt, the distribution of copper money, and the [overall] worsening condition of the working people.  

The Square from the beginning had an association of power with the Bolshevik state. At the beginning of the revolution (October 27th by the old calendar; November 9th by the modern one), a group of Bolsheviks, attempting to aid the Moscow Soviet, were fired upon by military cadets loyal to the Russian government. Forty-six were killed, including their commander, but in the end they overcame the cadets. The next day, more than 250 officials were executed and put into two common graves on the Square.  

The Communists would take full advantage of the symbolism of the Square. A famous painting has Lenin addressing a crowd from above the Square (see Appendix 3, figure 2), and the Communists held rallies there constantly (see Appendix 3, figure 3 for a photograph of one such event). The most famous of these is the annual May Day (celebrated May 1) parades. May Day was nominally a holiday honoring the world's workers, but Soviet leaders often used the holiday to show off Soviet military power. 

While there have been some more contemporary (i.e. since the fall of the Soviet Union) demonstrations on Red Square, these have been few and far

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69 Posokhin, 31.
70 Ibid., 33.
between. Some of this might be simple tradition: the average Russian citizen is
still accustomed to dissent being ruthlessly crushed, and so is still loathe to
attempt it. Furthermore, a majority of Russian citizens approve of current
president Vladimir Putin, despite his recent anti-democratic undertakings.²²
While this is not to say that the Russians are necessarily in favor of an
authoritarian government (although it is interesting to note that another poll,
also conducted in March, found that 61 percent of Russians disapprove of
perestroika²³), this does suggest that most Russians have a different view of how
the practice of governance should be conducted, and how, then, those practices
should be opposed (if at all).

In short, the Square has an undeniable place in the mind of the Russian
citizen:

Of course, these figures [measurements of the Square] do not allow knowledge
of the most important square in the country. Red Square is not, for any of us,
merely a paved urban space; in our consciousness it takes the form of a
sovereign symbol of the fatherland. In this symbol are a history of many
centuries, the stormy life of the people, their struggles, conflicts, their dreams
for the future.²⁴

The National Mall

²² As of the beginning of March, Putin’s approval rating was at 64 percent. From The Russian Journal,
http://www.therussiajournal.com/index.htm?obj=47600&sidi7120983111502307608427202,
accessed April 19, 2005.
available at:
Accessed April 19, 2005.
²⁴ Ryabchikov, 18.
The Mall in Washington, D.C. (hereinafter "The Mall") is one of the most recognizable spots in the United States. It is every bit as symbolic for residents of the United States as Tiananmen Square is for the citizens of China or Red Square is for the Russians. It is home to a plethora of national memorials (the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial) as well as those remembering falling soldiers (the Vietnam Memorial, Korean War Veteran’s Memorial, and the DC War Memorial). In addition, some of the most famous protests and demonstrations in the history of the United States have taken place here.

The planning and layout of Washington stem in many respects from European aesthetics and ideas. First, Pierre L’Enfant (1754-1825) was French, and would therefore bring a European view to the design of the city. Second, Thomas Jefferson, who was also instrumental in the city’s planning, was influenced by European thought (he was, after all, U.S. emissary to France) as well as Enlightenment thought, specifically the need for Order and Reason. As Craig explains, “The linking of form and meaning, of form and moral standards, was made to order for his sensibility and his perception of the need in his fledgling country for a unifying order and vision, for a national identity.”

In addition, it is clear that L’Enfant’s designs were influenced by existing European cities. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson in 1791, he requests, “whatever may fall within your reach — of any of the different grand city now existing such

75 Craig, et. al., 4.
as for example — as London — Madrid — Paris — Amsterdam — Naples — Venice — Genoa — Florence....", although it should be noted that L'Enfant makes it clear that he does not intend to totally imitate these cities' designs, but rather hopes to be inspired by them. L'Enfant's final plan, submitted in August of 1791, would display this mixture of old and new. It combined "the radiating avenues of his native French tradition with the grid of streets currently favored in American planning," in addition to integrating the Enlightenment love of order.

In fact, the plan for Washington consists of an interesting contradiction: first, it is a mixture of diagonal streets and a grid of rectangular ones. The second is, according to civic planner Elbert Peets, "a central controlling axis scheme or organization, intended primarily to give the Capitol and President's residence effective places in the design and to enable them to dominate it." Thus the idea of governmental dominance clearly played a role in the design of the city.

Along these lines, it is important to take notice of the newly formed United States government's concern with the symbolism and iconography of their new country. They knew that the capital city reflects the power of the government, and therefore the symbols therein must be chosen with the utmost

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77 Craig, et. al., 20.

delicacy. L’Enfant’s plan embodied the principles of the new government. For example, naming streets for the several states, and including large public buildings on these streets (rather than relegating them to less central roles) is a symbol for the federal government’s serious concern with decentralizing power.  

I have already discussed the European (and especially French) propensity for large avenues, as well as the thinking behind them: the desire for security and their use as a display of power. What is now the Mall, under L’Enfant’s plan, would be the wide Grand Avenue. According to the plan he submitted in 1791, it would be, “400 feet in breadth, and about a mile in length, bordered with gardens, ending in a slope from the houses on each side.” It was changed by the Commissioners in 1901 into its current form because, according to Peets, “L’Enfant, when the site of Washington was a forest, dreamed of the Mall as a fashionable Parisian avenue, while the Commission of 1901, with a big city spreading all about them, dreamed of the Mall as a quiet sanctuary from the city’s noise and bustle.”

The Mall is also the natural place for protest. First, in purely practical terms, it is the only space large enough in Washington to allow a large-scale

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protest, short of literally taking to the streets. Since the Mall represents the State, both due to it holding a central location within the nation’s capital, as well as being surrounded by other buildings that also represent the State (especially the Capitol), it is only natural that those seeking to confront the government would do so at the place where the government takes on tangible form.

The United States, compared to the other countries surveyed, has the government which is by far the most accepting when it comes to the dissent of its citizens. The right of its citizens to assemble and demonstrate freely is a part of its very constitution. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that there are a much greater number of examples of demonstrations in the National Mall in Washington than in the other squares I have discussed.

The first of these marches took place in 1894, and would set the precedent for every demonstration in Washington to come. The 1890s saw a major economic depression in the United States; businesses and banks closed (nearly 400 banks nationwide had closed by July 1893), the stock market fell, and unemployment was rampant. Politics began shifting towards the workers’ needs, and labor unions began to from to defend themselves against their employers.82

Jacob Coxey, who had worked his way from a worker in a steel mill to the owner of a quarry, along with co-organizer Carl Browne, set about organizing a

march on Washington. They and 500 others travelled from eastern Ohio to Washington, D.C., where Coxey and Browne were arrested. At the time, any political action around the Capitol was illegal.\textsuperscript{83}

This is perhaps the most significant of all the protests in Washington, as it had never been done before. Coxey’s Army, as it was called by outsiders, would force a debate on the nature of protest in Washington. Politicians dubbed it an “invasion.” Coxey argued that the space around the Capital building is “the property of the people.”\textsuperscript{84} While Coxey’s Army never got the reforms they wanted, they did set the precedent for public protest in Washington. The authorities in Washington never forbade protest anywhere other than the grounds of the Capital itself, so this first demonstration marks the beginning of a tradition.

The next successful march would not occur until 1913, when a group of women’s suffragists, led by Alice Paul marched on the capital. This demonstration took a less confrontational approach than Coxey’s before it. They marched the day before the presidential inauguration. This was deliberate: they sought to, in essence, hijack all the attention and symbolism of the inauguration for their own cause. The Supreme Court ruled in 1897 (discussed below) that it was constitutional for a city to require protesters to get permits to march. Paul

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{84} Quoted in ibid., 12.
was granted "unprecedented access" to government and public spaces for her protest.\textsuperscript{85}

The March on Washington on August 23, 1963 was one of the most significant in United States history. More than 250,000 people filled the Mall, centering on the Lincoln Memorial, from which the major speeches were given. Included among these was the now famous "I Have a Dream" speech given by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. The organizer of the march, A. Phillip Randolph, had tried to organize another march on Washington in 1941, but then-president Franklin Roosevelt feared violence, so he convinced Randolph to call it off. As one journalist puts it, "In the last 40 years, the March on Washington has taken on a golden halo in the nation's memory. It's now the prime example of Americans peacefully petitioning their government for change."\textsuperscript{86}

These are two of the earliest examples of large-scale demonstrations in the National Mall, but they are hardly the only ones. Several more of note include the Bonus March by World War I veterans in 1932, a planned civil rights march in 1941 (which was cancelled), and a large anti-war protest march in 1971. I will not go into more detail on the rest of these; see \textit{Marching on Washington} by Lucy Barber for summaries and analyses of these events.

This tradition is still very much alive in the United States, and these contemporary examples see much more support from federal officials. The Mall

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 50, 53.
has seen several significant protests in recent years. One of the largest was the Million Man March in October of 1995, in which "hundreds of thousands of African-American men" came to raise money and address their status in American society.\(^8^7\)

Another significant demonstration was the Million Mom March in 2000, which drew, according to the organizers, more than 500,000 people to the Mall to ask Congress for tighter restrictions on the sale and storage of guns.\(^8^8\) This demonstration received praise from then-Attorney General Janet Reno, who said, "I think what these mothers are doing is an example of what we must do when we see something wrong."\(^8^9\)

Finally, in the largest anti-war protest since Vietnam, hundreds of thousands marched against the war in Iraq in 2003. The first march took place on January 18 of that year, with between 100,000 and 500,000 people attending (the former was the official police estimate; the latter the organizer's). A second march on October 25 drew between 40,000 and 100,000 for the same cause.\(^9^0\)

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There is some significant legal precedent on this issue in the United States. The Supreme Court in 1897 ruled in *Davis v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts* (167 U.S. 43) that the government could, indeed, control public spaces. In this case, the plaintiff made a speech in a public park in Boston without a permit. He was arrested, as this violated section 66 of the Revised Ordinances of the City of Boston (1893), which states:

No person shall, in or upon any of the public grounds, make any public address, discharge any cannon or firearm, expose for sale any goods, wares or merchandise, erect or maintain any booth, stand, tent or apparatus for the purposes of public amusement or show, except in accordance with a permit from the mayor.

The Court upheld his arrest, saying that:

There is no evidence before us to show that the power of the legislature over the common is less than its power over any other park dedicated to the use of the public, or over public streets, the legal title to which is in a city or town. As representative of the public, it may and does exercise control over the use which the public may make of such places, and it may and does delegate more of less of such control to the city or town immediately concerned. For the legislature absolutely or conditionally to forbid public speaking in a highway or public park is no more an infringement of the rights of a member of the public than for the owner of a private house to forbid it in his house. When no proprietary rights interfere, the legislature may end the right of the public to enter upon the public place by putting an end to the dedication to public uses. So it may take the less step of limiting the public use to certain purposes.91

This was modified in 1939, when the Court upheld this decision, but added that officials could not deny permits arbitrarily.92 Other than this, no other rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court have changed the precedent set by *Davis*.

This, combined with the intentions of the city planners and architects of

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91 *Davis v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, 167 U.S. 43 (United States Supreme Court, 1897).
Washington, clearly sets the framework for the governmental control and influence over the space.

This is then juxtaposed against the demonstrations there. The symbolism in the public's mind has already been established (see above), and this therefore is a prime example of the two, almost diametrically opposed, viewpoints of this space. The nature of the United States government, which places by law a large emphasis on individual expression and the right to assemble, while mitigating the "control" aspects of this duality, does not dismiss it. In the end the government still maintains control over the use of these spaces.

Conclusion

It is clear, therefore, that this duality is not isolated to one geographical area. Wherever they may be found, public squares are used by their citizenry for similar purposes: a place to commune, a place to band together in times of crisis, and a place to show their solidarity. And, in just as many places, the governments in power see what these spaces represent for their countries and how they can serve their ends. From the "viae militares" (discussed above) of the early Italian architects to the grand avenues of nineteenth century Paris, to the building of the tombs of Mao and Lenin, the State has done everything possible to shape these spaces their meaning to the citizen.

Because of this, this is the natural site of confrontation between the citizen and his or her government. Where else should one seek to fight the government, than the place where the government almost manifests physically?
In addition to simply being a place where large numbers of people physically can gather, these are also places where such groups are more likely to be seen. Their visibility, and therefore their influence, has only increased with the speed of communication. While in the past, demonstrations would be long finished before anyone outside the immediate area knew they had even been there, now people all over the country, and even the world, become aware of these events as they happen.

Few would take note of a large group congregating in some large open area in, say, southeastern Maryland or in the fringes of Moscow, but such a group organizing in the symbolic heart of the entire country cannot but be noticed. As Norma Evenson says in her essay regarding the National Mall, “As the symbolic locus of government, the Mall provides an appropriate site for symbolic confrontation between the people and their representatives.” This phenomenon is true regardless of the space in question, and regardless of country. It is also important to note that many protestors see themselves as nationalists. Looking at it in this way, it then makes sense for them to make their demonstrations in the symbolic centers of their country.

It is ironic, then, that the spaces that are the most reasonable and seemingly effective sites of protest are also the spaces where the State can be most effective in quashing such dissent. One of the primary purposes for these spaces, as I have already said, is security. Groups of people, even very large

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93 Evenson, 33.
ones, are easily contained and dispersed, arrested, or massacred. The example of the massacre in Tiananmen Square in 1989, discussed above, is a prime example of how effective troops attempting to control these spaces can be.
Appendix 1: Biography of Boris Polevoy

(1908 – 1981)

Boris Polevoy (born Boris Nicolaevich Kampov) was born March 17, 1908 in Moscow to a family of lawyers. In 1913 his family moved to Tver’. After public schooling and technical school, he worked in the “Proletariat” textile factory in Tver’.

A craving for journalism appeared in Kampov early on. In 1922, while in sixth grade, he wrote his first article in the newspaper Tverskaya Pravda. From 1924 on his notes and articles about life in the city were regularly published in the pages of the Tver’ newspaper.

In 1928 Polevoy left his job at the textile factory and began a career in journalism in the Tver’ newspapers Tverskaya Pravda, Proleterskaya Pravda, and Smena.

In 1927 Polevoy’s first book, Memoirs of a Lice-ridden Person, about the lives of people “of the day,” was published in Tver’. This was his only published work written under the name of Boris Kampov. The pseudonym Polevoy came from the request of one of his publishers that he “translate from Latin” the name Kampov into Russian.

In 1939 his first story came out, titled Metallurgy Shop, written about the people of the first Five-Year Plan, specifically workers in the Kalinin train factory.

During World War II Polevoy was on the front-lines as a reporter for Pravda, including the Kalinin front (1942). Events of the war were reflected in his reports during these years. He wrote many excellent commentaries within the walls of Rzhev.

Many of his impressions and experiences on the front were the basis for several of his books: From Belgorod to the Carpathians (1944), A Story about the Contemporary Person (1946), We Soviet People (1948), and Gold (1949-50).

1 Capital city of Tver’ Oblast’ (administrative region) in northeast Russia, approximately mid-way between Moscow and St. Petersburg.
2 By Russian reckoning: not the equivalent of sixth grade in the U.S.
3 Literally, “Tver’s Truth,” “Proletariat’s Truth,” and “Change,” respectively.
4 His birth name, Kampov, relates to the Latin word CAMPUS, meaning “field,” which in Russian is POLYE, hence Polevoy.
In 1949 his story *I Returned* came out. From notes made while at the construction site of the Volgo-Donskii Canal came the series of stories *Contemporaries* (1952).

In 1958 his novel *Deep in the Rear*, about the selfless toil of the citizens of Kalinin during World War II was published.

A large part of his works were travel diaries: *American Diaries* (1956), *On the Other End of the World* (1956), and *30,000 Lis to a New China* (1957).⁵

While a correspondent for major newspapers, Polevoy traveled much through the country. The results of these trips were two travel-diaries about construction, *The Angara Reports* (1959) and *The Sayan Records* (1963). He wrote the documentary novel *On the Wild Breguet* (1962) using previously written notes.

Writing and journalism are only one part of Polevoy's accomplishments. He was seen as a public figure, he was interested in literary-organizational work, and for many years (1962-1981) he was the chief editor of the youth newspaper *Yunost*⁶ He died on July 12, 1981.

http://tvergov.library.tver.ru/person/tv-015-polevoj.htm

The website in question is "a joint project of the legislative assembly of Tver' Oblast', the Records Office of the administration of Tver' Oblast', the Alexander Mikhailovich Gorky Provincial Library, and the University of Tver' Internet Center."

Translated from the Russian by Zach Powell.

⁵ The *li* is an ancient Chinese unit of length, equivalent to about one-third of a mile.
⁶ Literally, "youth."
Appendix 2: Maps

Figure 1: Map of Tiananmen Square, circa 1400 AD¹

1. West Hua Gate
2. East Hua Gate
3. Forbidden City
4. Wu Gate
5. Altars of Soil and Grain
6. Ancestral Temple
7. Duan Gate
8. Chengtian Gate
9. Imperial-City Wall
10. Chang’an Right Gate
11. Chang’an Left Gate
12. West Gongshen Gate
13. East Gongshen Gate
14. Official Bureaus
15. Qianbulang ("Thousand Pace Corridor")*
16. Hospital
17. Da Ming / Qing Gate
18. Inner-City Wall
19. Zhengyang Gate

* becomes Tiananmen Square

¹ Steinhardt, 4.
Figure 2: Map of Tiananmen Square from 1958 until the 1980s².

1. Duan Gate  
2. Tian'an Gate  
3. Sun Yat-Sen Park  
4. Workers' Cultural Palace  
5. Great Hall of the People  
7. Monument to the People's Heroes  
8. Former site of Zhengyang Gate  
9. Mausoleum of Chairman Mao

² Steinhardt, 5.
Appendix 3: Photographs

Figure 1: Celebration of the 3rd anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China

Fairbank, et. al, 25.
Figure 2: Painting of Lenin Addressing a Crowd in Red Square²

² Painting by A. Gerasimov, found in Sytin, 13.
Figure 3: Celebration on Red Square\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{3} From Ryabchikov, 238. The signs read, from left to right. "Lenin Lives" and "Lenin Will Live."
Appendix 4: Chronology of the Tiananmen Square Incident

1989

April 15  Hu Yaobing, former General Secretary of the Chinese politburo, dies of a heart attack.

April 16  Wreaths and elegiac couplets appear in Tiananmen Square. Hu’s family, students, and intellectuals demand Hu’s rehabilitation from his disgrace of 1987.

April 17  Several hundreds students from the University of Political Science and Law march to the Square to lay wreaths. That night, approximately 2,000 students from Beijing University also march on the square. Protests will be continuous from this time until their suppression on June 3. The focus begins to move away from Hu’s death.

April 20  First incidence of violence: students clash with police at the Xinhua Gate (this would be called the “Xinhua Gate Bloody Incident” by students). Some university students begin to boycott classes.

April 22  Funeral of Hu Yaobing at the Great Hall of the People, at the west of the Square. Around 50,000 students participate in the funeral. Three students kneel on the steps of the Great Hall for about 40 minutes and attempt to get a meeting with Premier Li Peng and deliver a petition.

April 26  An editorial in The People’s Daily criticizes the demonstrators, labeling the movement “a planned conspiracy” and “turmoil.”

April 27  Approximately 100,000 students march on the Square in response to the editorial. The State Council agrees to a dialog with students.

April 29  Meeting between members of the State Council and 45 students. Officials allege editorial was only directed at a few “black hands.” Students question the dialog's procedures and the selection of student representatives, as some were from official student unions.

May 13  300 students begin a hunger strike in the Square, a number which eventually reaches 3,000. A “huge number” of students begins to occupy the Square.

May 14  Chaotic talks between students and the government (different students have different agendas). Eventually called off in the evening. Hunger strikes continue.

May 17  Over one million citizens of Beijing march through the streets to express support for the students and concern for the hunger strikers.

May 19  Martial law is declared, but troops are blocked by students and citizens of Beijing. Students from universities in other parts of the country arrive in Beijing.

June 3  Beginning of suppression. Hundreds killed in the violence.

June 4  The end of the movement: only 4,000 students remain, and they leave the Square after being encircled by government troops.
Works Cited


*Davis v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts*. 167 U.S. 43 (United States Supreme Court, 1897).


