

Bush, Scowcroft, and the U.S. Response to Tiananmen Square

Diplomacy in Difficult Times

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Introduction:

President George H.W. Bush, Brent Scowcroft, and his team of advisors crafted a national security decision to maintain a relationship with China after the Tiananmen Square Massacre, setting the standard for future U.S. policy towards China. This was done by effective and impressive leadership from President George H.W. Bush who drew upon past experiences and both diplomatic and personal relationships with Chinese leaders, especially Deng Xiaoping. Using Breslauer's definition of 'effective' and 'impressive' leadership in his work building off of Sidney Hook's 'The Hero in History' this essay examines President Bush's leadership in the early months of his presidency regarding his reaction to the Tiananmen Square incident.¹² Drawing upon Breslauer and Hook's work, we examine Bush's degree of difficulty in his goal achievement and collateral costs, and whether the President would have been able to achieve more with different policies, if a different leader could have achieved more, and if he averted potentially worse outcomes overall. "Now Beijing and Washington found themselves in a world in which Chinese domestic practices, broadcast on television, could have a profound effect on American public opinion"³

Political Climate Before and After Tiananmen

On June 4th, 1989, close to five months after George H.W. Bush was elected into office, the Chinese People's Liberation Army enforced martial law upon student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in a violent, unprecedented way that shocked the world. It is necessary to review the events leading up to the Tiananmen Square massacre to understand the ramifications of this moment, President H.W. Bush's reaction, and the rippling effects it had on Sino-American relations.

1989 saw Hu Yaobang, the General Secretary and highest ranking Party member in China at the time, somewhat marginalized due to his stances on reform and change.⁴

¹ George W. Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

² Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 1943) 151-175.

³ Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin, 2011) 420.

⁴ Kissinger, *On China*, 409.

Unfortunately, on April 15, 1989, Hu suffered a heart attack and died in the hospital. The Chinese social norm after the death of a leader at that time involved public mourning. This reaction to the death of Hu Yaobang also carried undercurrents of political unrest that evolved into an increasingly public voice of political opposition from students. The murmurings were heard all across China, but the strongest area of unrest was in Beijing. These students came of age in a time when “the restriction on permissible speech had been relaxed” resulting in this generation being more outwardly critical of the government and the government’s right to rule.⁵ Eventually, this unstable situation created an environment where students and members of the Beijing working class began to gather in protest. Initially the general population gave passive support, but in time the protest effort began to receive active support from the masses.

On May 4th (the anniversary of another movement in 1919 against unequal treatment of Chinese interests at Versailles), students began to mobilize to demonstrate against the government. The Chinese Party leaders were concerned about the uprising. They feared an overthrow of the government similar to the May 4th movement from years ago. This fear was one reason which eventually led the divided Chinese government to side with the group proposing that the People’s Liberation Army be brought in to restore order.

Internationally at this time, the Soviet Union was under new leadership in Mikhail Gorbachev and implementing a major policy shift to create a sense of transparency in the government. In China this policy would be unheard of. In Germany, initial stirrings to take down the Berlin Wall were occurring (culminating in November 1989). Although these situations of unrest were happening, Chinese relations with the world and especially the United States were at the best “since the Communist victory in 1949.”⁶ This manifested in trade and economic growth, open cooperation and a larger role for China on the world stage, and an easing of tense Sino-Soviet relations with Mikhail Gorbachev who was planning a visit to Beijing for the first time in years⁷. The hope was that a visit by Gorbachev to China would ease the historically tense relations between the countries. With their attention focused internationally, particularly with Sino-Soviet relations, it was not surprising that the Chinese leadership did not request PLA involvement and, in effect, they were blindsided by Tiananmen and the uprising.

⁵ Kissinger, *On China*, 409.

⁶ Kissinger, *On China*, 408.

⁷ Ibid.

Sino-American relations had been shaped in part by President George H.W. Bush during his time abroad in China. While in China in the 1970s, President Bush expressed frustration that he lacked access to the higher ranking members of the Party such as Mao Zedong. Fortunately he did have strong relationships with those in power such as Deng Xiaoping which was “Very valuable during my presidency, especially during the Tiananmen Square protests.”⁸ Because relations with China were so vital to the future success economically and strategically of the U.S., President Bush made an effort to maintain those relations when he was President and through the events surrounding the events at Tiananmen Square. Before June 4th at Tiananmen, Sino-American relations were stronger and more solid than they had been in years. The economy was thriving in China, creating positive effects on the business economy for the United States as well. Additionally, international security was prominent as Soviet-American relations were just beginning to thaw. In fact, President Nixon had “reestablished relations with the PRC [in the hope of using those ties for] better relations with China to balance the rising power of the Soviet Union.”⁹ This situation was especially important in the lead up to Tiananmen because up to this time before Gorbachev’s visit, Sino-Soviet relations were not strong, and had been virtually non-existent for years. Gorbachev’s proposed visit was a major focus of the Chinese government to move them forward in more solid international relations.

One of the early demands from the students that was approved was relaxing the controls on the press. This led to cameras and news agencies from around the world having access to the upcoming visit by Gorbachev as well as the events unfolding at Tiananmen Square. The students occupation of the Square interfered with Gorbachev's trip there, resulting in the Chinese leadership changing the location of the visit. With Gorbachev’s visit approaching and the relation of China internationally at stake, the uprising at Tiananmen Square became a more urgent matter. Deng, as the main leader of government power, eventually made the decision to shut down the student protests at Tiananmen Square. He did so by enforcing martial law and giving authority to the PLA to do so by whatever means necessary. This included the use of violence. This declaration by a government to use such force against its own people was shocking to the

⁸ George H. W. Bush, *The China Diary of George H. W. Bush: The Making of a Global President*, ed. Jeffrey A. Engel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), xiv-xv.

⁹ Dean Cheng. The Heritage Foundation, *The Complicated History of U.S. Relations with China*. October 11, 2012. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/10/the-complicated-history-of-us-relations-with-china>

world. It also came as a surprise because the world had witnessed other Chinese Party leaders making efforts to work with the protesting students, particularly during the hunger strike. However, the media was still at Tiananmen Square and the world watched as China's internal tensions culminated in the June 4th rioting and massacre of Chinese citizens and the students.

The international impact was devastating. World leaders and citizens alike were confronted with the harsh reality of China's domestic politics being vastly different than Western policies. In America there was encouragement, support and hope for the path of democracy as leaders would speak with the students and workers who were protesting in hopes of ending the hunger strike. Then harsh reality appeared as the soldiers and tanks rolled into Tiananmen Square killing China's citizens.¹⁰ This act of violence ended the West's 'honeymoon' phase with China. The Chinese Party was concerned with domestic security and its need to ensure that internal affairs were not managed by external powers. They underestimated the impact the decision to use force at Tiananmen Square would have on foreign relationships, particularly with the United States, with apparent violations of human rights. Deng himself applied pressure on liberalized reform in order to maintain the Party's integrity and control. Essentially, "The violent unrest started as a demand for remedies to specific grievances. But the occupation of the main square of a country's capital, even when completely peaceful, is also a tactic to demonstrate the impotence of the government, to weaken it, and to tempt it into rash acts, putting it at a disadvantage."¹¹

International and U.S. Reaction: Constraints and Degree of Difficulty

Some difficulties and constraints President Bush faced during this time (June 4-December 1989) were the views of the American people towards China, the issue of Fang Lizhi seeking asylum in the United States, and the proposed harsh sanctions from Congress. By facing this opposition head-on and tackling these constraints, President Bush showed true leadership.

The American people before Tiananmen viewed China as a positive and unique country. They were intrigued and wanted to learn more. When the protests were first starting to erupt across China, many people around the world, especially in the Western part of the world, watched with rapt attention and hope at the potential liberalization that was happening, that could lead to democracy. The world then watched in horror as those potential buds of diplomacy were

¹⁰ Bush, *The China Diary*, 456-460.

¹¹ Kissinger, *On China*, 411.

literally crushed by the Chinese government. The international world's view, and especially those of Americans, changed almost overnight from positivity and intrigue to an extreme dislike and even fear of what China had done to its citizens. Those images were burned in their minds forever.¹² American voices were part of the group calling for harsher sanctions against China.

An additional issue was Fang Lizhi who had sought asylum in the U.S. Embassy in China. Fang had a history of being on the wrong side of the table with regards to Chinese politics (he got kicked out in the Anti-Rightist campaign, imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution, and reprimanded in 1986) and the ideals he espoused were similar to the ones the students in Beijing and across China were calling for.¹³ Because he had been on the wrong side of history in China so many times, him and his wife sought asylum in the U.S. embassy. Unfortunately, the embassy took him in due to international law, and they couldn't make him leave after China discovered he was there and issued a warrant for his arrest. Since there was the potential that Fang could be hurt, the U.S. couldn't let him go. Which didn't sit well with China. This further strained Sino-American relations. To the extent that Bush, in a letter he wrote to Deng, talked about Feng and asked for not only understanding, but recognition that the United States couldn't do anything until they were sure he wouldn't be hurt (since they had granted him asylum).¹⁴

After the media broadcast of the violence at Tiananmen Square throughout the world, Chinese leaders were met with harsh international criticism, including from the United States. However, "At the crucial moment, when critics across the American political spectrum demanded a harsh response, he [President Bush] sought instead a quiet policy. He cut high-level political and military ties between the two capitals and endorsed other sanctions."¹⁵ Contrary to what many Americans believed should happen (i.e. major sanctions and reforms of relations in China), Bush held his ground and limited the amount of harsh sanctions that the U.S. imposed on China. President Bush's reaction to opposition and the large degree of difficulty in this decision was a key moment in the H.W. Bush administration, and the central reason that Sino-American relations continued throughout his presidency and into the future.

The world was shocked and outraged at the events in Tiananmen Square, and the Chinese leadership continued to resist any outside influence or interference in their state affairs; these

¹² Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 67-80.

¹³ Kissinger, *On China*, 429.

¹⁴ Bush, *Letter to chairman Deng Xiaoping*, OA/ID 91134

¹⁵ Bush, *The China Diary*, 461.

conflicting and opposing views put President Bush in a critical and tense situation. The general U.S. population and Congress called for harsher sanctions against China, and essentially a drastic decrease in Sino-American relations. However, when Congress imposed punitive measures on Beijing, President Bush softened some of the edges. However, on June 5th and 20th, to express his convictions, “He suspended high-level government exchanges; halted military cooperation and sales of police, military, and dual-use equipment; and announced opposition to new loans to the People’s Republic by the World Bank and other international financial institutions.”¹⁶ This suspension of sales and visits was also accompanied by a “Sympathetic review of requests by Chinese students in the United States to extend their stays,” as well as humanitarian assistance to people in China “injured by the assault.”¹⁷ While President Bush was severely criticized for his leniency on China in America, many other countries around the world recognized and praised his reaction and adopted similar sanctions against China.¹⁸

President Bush’s decision to maintain the relationship with China was, at the time, controversial. Bush stated, “We could not look the other way when it came to human rights or political reforms; but we could make plain our views in terms of encouraging their strides of progress (which were many since the death of Mao) rather than unleashing an endless barrage of criticism....The question for me was how to condemn what we saw as wrong and react appropriately while also remaining engaged with China, even if the relationship must now be ‘on hold’”.¹⁹ The reasoning behind Bush’s actions was to ensure continued diplomatic ties between the U.S. and China. Bush was aware that the American people wanted harsher sanctions on China. However, he also knew that “the United States’ relationship with China served vital American interests independent of the People’s Republic’s system of governance”.²⁰ Bush clarified further that “What I certainly did not want to do was completely break the relationship we had worked so hard to build since 1972. We had to remain involved, engaged with the Chinese government, if we were to have any influence or leverage to work for restraint and cooperation, let alone for human rights and democracy.”²¹

¹⁶ Kissinger, *On China*, 415-416.

¹⁷ George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998) 90.

¹⁸ Robert Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen: the Politics of US-China Relations 1989-2000* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003) 41-88.

¹⁹ Kissinger, *On China*, 415.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 89.

Bush Reaction, Goal Achievement & Collateral Costs

President Bush had a reputation for fostering close, personal ties with world leaders. Bush revealed that his time as US Ambassador to the UN (where he worked to maintain close ties with the Chinese UN representative Huang Hua while negotiating the fragile situation of China and Taiwan), and also as the chief of the United States Liaison Office in Beijing “Gave me a deep and lasting appreciation for this extraordinary people, who make up a fifth of the world’s population.”²² This in-depth understanding of Chinese culture and government helped the President make difficult decisions in the aftermath of Tiananmen.

While outwardly condemning the attacks and calling for sanctions (even though they were less strict than the ones the American people and Congress would have preferred), President Bush recognized that the potential for greater collateral costs would be significantly higher if a line of communication to China was not kept open. “I took some hits for not being tougher on the Chinese, but my long history with Deng and the other leaders made it possible for us to work through the crises without derailing Sino-American relations, which would have been a disaster”²³ Thus, he wrote a letter on June 20th, 1989 to Deng Xiaoping three weeks after the events at Tiananmen. In this letter he wrote as a friend and reminded Deng of the lack of American meddling in China’s domestic affairs, and also expressed his desire to maintain ties.²⁴ “I have great reverence for Chinese history, culture and tradition. You have given much to the development of world civilization. But I ask you as well to remember the principles on which my young country was founded. Those principles are democracy and freedom....It is reverence for those principles which inevitably affects the way Americans view and react to events in other countries.”²⁵ The careful craftsmanship of this letter to Deng by President Bush revealed Bush’s powerful leadership and thorough evaluation of goal achievement (maintaining ties with China-economically, politically, and internationally). The letter also demonstrated the position Bush held as President of the United States and the stance taken to condemn the violence at Tiananmen Square. The United States could not and would not disregard the violations of human rights.

²² Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 90.

²³ Bush, *The China Diary*, xv.

²⁴ George Bush. President George H.W. Bush letter to Chairman Deng Xiaoping, June 20, 1989. OA/ID 91132 (Bush Library Archives).

²⁵ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 101.

The need to effectively maintain ties while condemning the attacks was a precarious position for President Bush to be in. It is vital to recognize that “Bush’s personal ties with China’s senior leadership were never likely to have prevented their crackdown on the pro-democracy protesters scattered through their country. This was never Bush’s hope”.²⁶ Bush instead used those ties to diffuse a potential elimination of all ties between the United States and China. This act of leadership (evaluation of collateral costs and effective goal achievement-to maintain political ties with China) is, without question, one of the most vital legacies of his presidency. “When asked in 2005 if his personal relationship with Deng helped ease the crisis of 1989, Bush answered, ‘Had I not met the man, I think I would have been less convinced that we should keep relations with them going after Tiananmen Square.’”²⁷ President Bush’s time spent in China was essential to not only the Bush Administration, but also to the continued and future relations with China. In this instance, using Breslauer’s evaluation of the “Cost of goal attainment [being] either acceptable or unacceptable,”²⁸ and the collateral costs (lack of security, potential economic downturn, international climate with relation to Russia) compared with goal achievement (maintaining ties to prevent lack of security in the rise of international sentiment condemning the attacks), President Bush led in both an effective and impressive manner.

Preservation of Diplomatic Ties: Did President Bush Avert Potential Far Worse Outcomes?

Shortly after the events at Tiananmen Square, and with international pressure building, President Bush realized that additional efforts to maintain ties with China that could not be done simply by outward statements or through personal letters. He decided that an emissary should be sent to Beijing and stated this request in the letter he sent to Deng.²⁹ Within 24 hours Deng had accepted the proposal all that remained was for President Bush to decide who should be sent. The current Ambassador in China, Jim Lilley, was not a good choice because the embassy had opened its doors to asylum for a dissident in China (Fang); Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon were too high profile to send. In the end, President Bush went with Brent Scowcroft, his National Security Advisor who had prior relations with Deng. “Both Bush and his National Security Advisor, General Brent Scowcroft, had served in the Nixon administration. They had met Deng

²⁶ Kissinger, *On China*, 460.

²⁷ Bush, *The China Diary*, 47.

²⁸ Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders*, 265.

²⁹ George Bush, *All the Best: My Life in Letters and Other Writings* (New York: Scribner 2013), 431.

when they were in office...they admired his economic reforms, and they balanced their distaste of the repression against their respect for the way the world had been transformed since the opening to China. With his long career in U.S. politics, he also had an astute understanding of American domestic political realities”.³⁰ Scowcroft took Deputy Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger with him and the mission was “So secret that their plane was almost shot down when it entered Chinese airspace unannounced.”³¹

“Scowcroft’s visit to Beijing was itself deeply personal, in that he carried Bush’s personal assurance that-despite the glare of public scrutiny, despite public calls for condemnation and reprisal, and despite the fact that there would inevitably be a political fallout-this particular president was committed to China for the long term.”³²³³ The main goal of this meeting was to “Convey to the Chinese how serious the divide was between us but also how much we respected our friendship. It kept the door open.”³⁴ This high achievement with relatively low cost (only one plane, although there was potential for high cost as it was a secret mission), is another testament to the effectiveness of President Bush’s relationship with Chinese leaders and the ability he had to recognize how to keep collateral costs low (clapback from the American public, scrutiny from the International community) while maintaining high achievements (preserving relations with China).

President Bush arranged this meeting between Scowcroft and Chinese leaders because he wanted to keep ties between US and China open. However, the backlash that could potentially occur made him decide that this would be better as a secret meeting. The main goals were: China would recognize the differences in how events should have transpired, the United States desires to maintain ties with China would be reaffirmed, and that the position of the U.S. on blatant human rights violations could not be ignored.. While there, even though the idea of maintaining ties was solidified, Deng actually pushed some of the international criticism of China towards the United States by complaining of too much Chinese domestic involvement from the United States. He said, “This was an earthshaking event and it is very unfortunate that the United States is too deeply involved in it....We have been feeling since the outset of these events more than

³⁰ Kissinger, *On China*, 412.

³¹ Bush, *All the Best*, 431.

³² Bush, *The China Diary*, 61.

³³ Bush, Letter to Chairman Deng, OA/ID 91132

³⁴ Bush, *All the Best*, 431.

two months ago that the various aspects of US foreign policy have actually cornered China.”³⁵ Deng conveyed that the sanctions would not have much of an impact on China, and that they would overcome western meddling. Additionally, the goal that had been set to have Chinese leaders take accountability for the deaths at Tiananmen Square and express remorse for human rights violations was not met. Instead Deng said, “For its part, Beijing would not waver in punishing those instigators of the rebellion...Otherwise how can the PRC continue to exist?”³⁶ While the diplomatic ties were retained, the two sides did not reach a final agreement due to the lack of remorse expressed by Chinese leaders. Ultimately what Scowcroft and Eagleburger achieved was to “‘Keep open the lines of communication’ between the U.S. and China...Emphasizing [that the] president, ‘Wants to manage short-term events in a way that will best assure a healthy relationship over time.’”³⁷ As Scowcroft later remembered, “The purpose of my trip ... was not negotiations--there was nothing yet to negotiate--but an effort to keep open the lines of communication.”³⁸

Overall, by employing a calculated evaluation of collateral costs and goal achievement, President Bush averted potentially detrimental outcomes. For example, Russia was a threat to the United States security at that time (the Berlin Wall did not come down until November of 1989), and President Bush was aware of the issues that could occur from ostracizing China when Sino-Soviet relations has just begun to improve. In this way he was effective by not cutting ties from China, while sticking to what he knew would be best - keeping those relations with China open. The main concern for President Bush, especially so early in his administration, was to maintain stability both internationally and abroad.³⁹ Bush maintained stability by pushing for sanctions on the World Bank in loaning money to China, while continuing diplomatic ties.

Second Meeting and Lasting Impact

³⁵ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 106.

³⁶ Kissinger, *On China*, 419.

³⁷ National Security Archives (NSC). *The U.S. “Tiananmen Papers” New Documents Reveal U.S. Perceptions of 1989 Chinese Political Crisis*. National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 47. Published June 4, 2001. Edited by Michael L. Evans.
<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB16/index.html#d33>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Between Scowcroft's first visit⁴⁰ and subsequent meetings with Chinese leaders,⁴¹ many additional and complicated issues arose. Congress and the American public (as well as the media) were continually pushing for further sanctions against China, while President Bush was working behind the scenes to maintain ties and limit the possibility of conflict. Between these two meetings, President Bush had also worked to limit the negative consequences of human rights violations in China, and the differing views that each nation had. One instance where President Bush worked to strengthen ties between the two nations was by vetoing "Legislation permitting Chinese exchange students to remain in the US until the Chinese government improved its human rights record."⁴²

When Brent Scowcroft attended a second meeting in December (which was not secret but kept low profile) they found that while there were distinct differences in their countries views of the world, there had been some progress made. It was somewhat discouraging, but there had been steps taken. For example, "The Chinese, for their part, had lifted martial law, gave vague assurances on missile sales, accredited a Voice of America correspondent, and had released a small number of detainees."⁴³ However, this meeting, while showing the strength of ties between the two nations, also revealed the divide between the two cultures. This signaled a long and difficult road ahead for not only the administration but also future American leaders.

The lasting impact of Tiananmen Square, as well as how President Bush and his team handled the aftermath, indicates the difficulty of upholding American ideals while striving to maintain an awareness of security issues that arise if you cut ties from a country that is vital to your nation's security, but that also violates your own nation's moral values. "The administration of George H.W. Bush chose to advance American preferences through engagement; that of Bill Clinton, in its first term, would attempt to pressure."⁴⁴

Due to the personal and political ties President Bush had with Deng and other leaders in China before 1989, his knowledge of the government and culture of China, and his belief in the

⁴⁰ Brent Scowcroft and Deng Xiaoping on First Meeting, George Bush Presidential Library Archives, OA/ID 91134

⁴¹ Brent Scowcroft meeting with China's Ambassador Zhu Qizhen August 1989, George Bush Presidential Library Archives, OA/ID 91134

⁴² National Security Archives (NSC), *Tiananmen Square, 1989: The Declassified History*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 16. Edited by Jeffrey T. Richelson and Michael L. Evans, Published June 1, 1999

⁴³ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 178-179.

⁴⁴ Kissinger, *On China*, 426.

importance of maintaining the ties between the two, Bush elected to impose lesser sanctions and managed to keep diplomatic ties open.⁴⁵ Bush's "Past experiences gave him significant experience in foreign affairs, and he relied on the many contacts within the international community he formed as ambassador to the United Nations, U.S. envoy to China, director of Central Intelligence, and Vice President."⁴⁶ It is vital to view these accomplishments, the goals that were set, and the collateral damage possibilities that were viewed in light of President H.W. Bush's personal ties. For example, Bush was referred to by Deng as a 'lao pengyou, an old friend of China' with not "just the usual flattery, but a recognition that I understood the importance of the US-China relationship and the need to keep it on track."⁴⁷ This important connection allowed future administrations such as the Clinton administration, as well as the American people who distrusted China after viewing the violence in Tiananmen, to accept that China and the United States needed to retain a strategic partnership.

Conclusion: Was Bush Effective and/or Impressive? Would a Different Leader Using a Different Approach have Achieved More?

In conclusion, President H.W. Bush was impressive in his handling of relations with China. By de-escalating the conflict he was able to maintain U.S. ties with China. This was a very important economic and strategic accomplishment. Bush used his ties to Chinese leaders, as well as his understanding of Chinese domestic politics to achieve this. Any other leader may have done a similar thing to retain ties with China. The "Evaluation of a leader's effectiveness in attaining his goals at a proportionate price hinges also on one's image of the strength of the constraints facing the leader at the time."⁴⁸ President Bush faced many constraints (Congress, International Community, the American people) and yet he maintained that the U.S. must keep their ties to China. This is due in part to Bush's relationship with Deng, but also because of his history with Chinese diplomacy. Overall "Bush believed in the importance of preserving the long-term relationship between the United States and China. But he was obligated to respect 'the feelings of the American people,' which demanded some concrete expression of disapproval from its government. Sensitivity by both sides would be required to navigate the impasse."⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 92-93.

⁴⁶ Miller Center, *George H.W. Bush Foreign Affairs*, Presidential Biographies.
<http://millercenter.org/president/biography/bush-foreign-affairs>.

⁴⁷ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 94.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Kissinger, *On China*, 420.

President Bush approached the Tiananmen incident with the same approach he held throughout his career in foreign affairs, with his, “Characteristic conservative and pragmatism.”⁵⁰

As Breslauer states, “A leader who manages to stretch (but not obliterate) the constraints in his environment, and thereby to initiate substantial movement at an acceptable cost, is typically deemed both effective and impressive.”⁵¹ By November 30, 1990, President Bush was more optimistic that, while there were difficulties to navigate between China and the United States, there had been improvements and would continue to be improvements as the U.S. was considering an, “Array of options,” in moving forward.⁵²

Thus, President Bush’s actions after Tiananmen were both effective as well as impressive. Effective in the fact that he was able to achieve goals, keep collateral costs down, and navigate the various constraints of his environment. Impressive because he recognized the differences in how China and America operated both culturally and politically, and still worked to maintain ties and promote humanitarian intervention while imposing sanctions and holding true to American values of human rights and democracy. The main goal was not to promote democracy in China; it was to maintain ties that were both strategic and in the best interests of the United States at the time.

⁵⁰ The Miller Center <http://millercenter.org/president/biography/bush-foreign-affairs>.

⁵¹ Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders*, 267.

⁵² Memcon. 11/30/1990, President Bush and Qian Qichen. <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1990-11-30--Qichen.pdf>.