

## COMMENTARY

# A Commentary on the Tiananmen Incident (1989)

by George Koo  
for *The Pacific Times*

As a business consultant, I go to China regularly. I am constantly amazed by the dynamic and dramatic changes occurring there—not just the economic transformation that everybody is now talking about but also the degree of political reform since the tragic and bloody student protest at Tiananmen in the summer of 1989.

Today, people in China go wherever they want, and there is no big brother watching over their shoulders. Farmers leave for a better life in the cities, and city folks job hop for better pay. Anyone in China can apply for a passport for any reason or no reason. Some have even taken on the local government in court, and they win often enough to make litigation increasingly popular. At an international conference in Shanghai two weeks ago, a Chinese speaker poked fun at Jiang Zemin's doctrine of "three represents." This would have been unthinkable when Mao Zedong was alive and unheard of when Deng Xiaoping was around.

In the fifteen years since the Tiananmen tragedy, China has seen two orderly transfers of power. True, no free popular election, but no hanging chads either. Critics in the West have paid scant attention to the positive changes taking

place but continue to push for a form of democracy more like ours. For the critics, the heroic image is the one young man standing in front of a column of tanks. We all know that paramount leader Deng Xiaoping gave the order to troops that led to the killing of civilians in Tiananmen. We saw at least one soldier in the lead tank who knew the difference between right and wrong and did not choose to run over the bold young man.

Recently we see new images from Abu Ghraib in Iraq that horrify us. The blame has been pinned on a handful of soldiers who apparently did not know right from wrong. So far, the United States, the model of democracy, has yet to give a transparent account of what happened in that prison.

Will it take Washington as long to explain these new atrocities as it is taking Beijing to explain Tiananmen?

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