

Organisational Structure

The Communist Party of China, like the Soviet Communist Party, is a pyramidal, hierarchical organisation. There is a high degree of organisational articulation and the party strives for a high degree of control from the centre. From its apex in the central party organs, the party spreads out on a geographical and industrial basis through the regions, provinces, counties to the basic level units established in communes, factories, enterprises, offices, schools, residential areas and People's Liberation Army units.

1 Role and Functions of the Communist Party

The Communist Party of China is the organ of decisive power in the country. It is the **life-spring of China's social and political system**. The Chinese Constitution of 1975 and 1978 recognised the Communist Party as the sole governing body of the country. The 1978 Constitution further stated that the Chinese citizens "must support the leadership of the Communist Party of China." The new (1982) Constitution however does not give such formal recognition to the position of the Communist Party. Nowhere in the body of the Constitution there is any reference to the Communist Party. It is only in the Preamble of the Constitution that reference has been made to the party. The Preamble states that "the Chinese people led by the Communist Party of China with Chairman Mao Zedong as its leader overthrew the rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism" in China and "won great victory of the new democratic revolution and founded the People's Republic of China in 1949. Thereafter the Chinese people under the leadership of the Party has transformed China from a new democratic to a socialist society step by step". The Preamble then proclaims that it is under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, the Chinese people will "turn China into a socialist country with a high level of culture and democracy."

To achieve this goal the Party provides leadership in all spheres of national life, improving socialist institutions, developing socialist democracy, and modernising industry, agriculture and technology.

Thus the new Constitution attempts to separate party from the government. But in practice the two are so interlocked that sometimes it becomes difficult to distinguish one from the other. Such interlocking is a necessary consequence of the Chinese state. The Preamble categorically states that the **Chinese citizens must adhere to the "people's democratic, dictatorship under the leadership of the Communist Party of China."** Article 1 of the Constitution says that the PRC "is a socialist state led by the working class." And the new Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party declares the party as "the vanguard of the Chinese

working class." Consequently, the functions of the Party are comprehensive and that explains its role.

In the first place, **the Communist Party steers the ship of the Chinese State.** As helmsman of the ship of the state, the party under the guiding ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought formulates the principles of state policy and directs all the state and mass organisations, the whole people, towards the successful building of socialism in the country. It indicates the goals and means of achieving it; it sees that all governmental institutions accurately follow the declared policy. The Party's guiding instructions lie behind all economic, social and cultural plans. Party decisions and directives adopted at Party National Congress, at plenary meetings of the Party Central Committee and at Politburo meetings, are given legal form in laws and decrees.

Secondly, the **Party conducts intensive socialist education in order** to speed up socialist economic development and make China a modern, powerful socialist country. It explains party policies to the people and unites them against the forces and elements that are hostile to China's socialist system and try to undermine it. It guides the people to concentrate their efforts on socialist modernisation.

Thirdly, the **Party has complete control over the whole state administration, all state bodies and the armed forces.** The Chinese People's Liberation Army is led by the Communist Party. Most members of the National People's Congress and lower people's congresses are communists. All important posts in and at every level of government—from the Central Government to the local governments—are occupied by leading party members at that level. The National People's Congress appoints the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the President of China but, in reality, on the recommendation of the Party Central Committee and other ministers are appointed by the National People's Congress on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. There are leading party groups in all autonomous areas within the Chinese unitary state. It is the party which causes trade unions and management to unite in fulfilling the economic plans and ensures the unity of purpose between the National People's Congress, the Standing Committee, State Council, President and other organs of government. The vast party machine ensures political and ideological uniformity even though the decentralised structure of the State may provide for cultural diversities.

Fourthly, the **Party unifies, coordinates and implements the work of all governmental and non-governmental organisations.** As the sole governing party of China, the Communist Party determines the policies and programmes of people's congresses at all levels. It directs the selection, distribution and training of personnel in Chinese state apparatus and checks

upon the implementation of party and Government decisions.

In short, as the sole ruling party of China, the Communist Party frames all domestic and foreign policies of the country and makes high level decisions. Not a single important decision is taken by the state organs of China without preliminary directions and advice from the party. It is the organ of decisive power in the country, the lifspring of the Chinese social and political system. This leadership position of the Communist Party is a fundamental constitutional principle of the People's Republic of China. Hence it would not be incorrect to state that the **Communist Party is the real Government of China**. But the Party does not exercise State power itself. As the key institution responsible for the overall maintenance and detailed working of the Chinese political system, the Party carries out its decisions through people's congresses within the framework of the Constitution. The Party tries to direct the activities of people's congresses, but not to substitute for them.