**Organisation of the Communist Party of China:**

The Communist Party of China is a well structured party organised on the basis of the principle of democratic centralism. The party admits ‘democracy’ by providing for the election of all party organs, as well as by accepting the principle of free discussions before decisions are taken.

Further, each lower level party organ participates in the election of its higher level organ. ‘Centralism’, however, also stands incorporated by the adoption of the principle that all obey the decisions of the Communist Party, and each lower organ carries out the commands of its higher organ. The party is a disciplined party and each person obeys the decisions of the party even over and above the decisions of the state.

**1. Membership of the Communist Party:**

The membership of the Communist Party is open to all citizens of China who have attained a minimum age of 18 years. However, securing of party membership is a difficult and complex affair. A person wishing to become its member has to submit an application for this purpose. This application has to be endorsed by two regular members who know the candidate, his ideology, character and personal history.

In case the application is found complete and fit, the candidate is put on probation for one year. Thereafter if he is found to be capable, he is admitted as a member. In case he is found deficient, his probation can be extended by one year and in case he still fails to satisfy the party, he is rejected and the party membership is denied to him.

The qualities of the probationers are judged by their work, by their acceptance of the party programmes and ideology, by their devotion towards the party work assigned to them, by their willingness to pay membership dues and by their faithfulness in carrying out the directives of the party.

A member can at any time resign his membership, but this is never done by him for it can mean an end to his political ambitions and career. The party can expel any member on charges of violating the ideology or policies of the party or on grounds of anti-party and counter­revolutionary activities.

Now rich businessmen can also become members of the CPC. It has been decided to make it an all—people party representing all ethnic groups.

**2. Organisational Structure of the Communist Party:**

The Communist Party of China is a tightly organised party. It stands organised on the basis of the principle of Democratic Centralism.

**Cell or Primary Party Organisations (PPOs):**

At the lowest level of party organisation are Cells or Primary Party Organisations which are located in factories, offices, schools, streets or bazaars. A cell generally consists of 20 members. The PPOs work for cementing the ties of the workers and peasants with the party and its leading bodies.

They do the propaganda work among the masses. They organize study circles for understanding and propagating properly the ideology of Marxism-Leninism as interpreted, applied and supplemented by Maoism.

A PPO with a membership of 100 or above, and acting with the consent of the next higher level committee, can hold a general membership meeting for electing a primary party committee which manages the activities of the concerned PPO.

**3. Party Congress at the County Level:**

All the PPOs of a county, or autonomous county or municipality work under the supervision of a Party Congress (PC). The Party Congress is elected by the general meeting or delegate meeting of all PPOs which are at work in a county.

The PC is elected for a term of two years. It meets once a year for discussing policy matters of local nature. It elects the delegates to the next higher level body-the Provincial Party Congress. It also elects its Party Committee which acts as its executive committee.

**4. The Party Congress at the Provincial Level:**

At the provincial/autonomous region or municipality (directly under the central control) level, there is the Provincial Party Congress (PPC). It is elected for a period of three years by the Party Congresses working within the province.

It meets thrice a year for discussing and deciding matters of regional importance. It supervises and guides the Party Congresses the province or region. It elects delegates to the National Party Congress. It also elects its party committee which acts as its executive.

**5. National Party Congress:**

The National Party Congress is the highest organ of the Communist Party of China. It is elected by the principal/regional party congresses for a term of five years. It is expected to meet at least once a year. In actual practice, its meetings are held after long intervals.

It determines the party policies and line of action. To receive and examine the reports of its Central Committee and other central organs of the party is its important function. It alone can amend or revise the party constitution. It carries out its work through its central committee.

**6. Central Committee:**

The Central Committee is elected by the National Party Congress for a term of five years. It has 198 full members and 158 alternate members (November 2002). It is continuously at work because of the rule that a Central Committee goes out of office only when a new central committee succeeds it.

It has the responsibility to carry out the party work during the interval between the two sessions of the National Party Congress. The Central Committee has the responsibility to elect the chairman and other officials of the Communist Party of China. It also appoints various central organs of the party.

The Party constitution states that the Central Committee guides and supervises the work of the various branches of the Central Government **“through leading party members’ groups within them.”** It conducts relations between the Communist Party and other mass organisations and democratic parties operating in China.

It directs the work of the party units in the armed forces. All provincial and regional party organisations are responsible before the Central Committee.

**7. Politburo and Standing Committee:**

In the hierarchy of the Communist Party, the really powerful organ is the Politburo which is appointed by the Central Committee in its plenary session. It has now 24 members. Along with it, a Standing Committee, a General Secretary (initially called the chairman), a Central Commission and the Secretariat are also appointed by the Central Committee.

When the Central Committee is not in session, its powers are exercised by the Politburo and the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee is the real centre of power because it always consists of the top ranking seven leaders of the Communist Party. It is always in session and takes all decisions, which, however, are subject to the approval of the Politburo and the Central Committee.

The General Secretary is the top leader and his ideology/views/ideas always have a big influence on the decisions of the Standing Committee. During his life time, Mao remained the Chairman of the Party and wielded supreme power in the Chinese political system.

However, after the emergence of the concept of collective leadership in the Post-Mao period, other members of the Standing Committee also started playing an active role.

After the political leadership upheavals of the post-Mao years, Mr. Deng Xiaoping emerged as the top leader and continued to be at helms of the affairs of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) till his death on February 20, 1997.

After his death Jiang Zemin emerged as his successor and controlled the party till 2002. In November 2002, the 16th National Congress unanimously elected Hu Jintao as the General Secretary of CPC and it meant the retirement of Jiang Zemin.

**8. The Central Commission and the Secretariat of CPC:**

The Central Commission has the responsibility to maintain discipline among the members. It has 17 regular and 4 alternate members and it works through several Control Commissions. The Secretariat looks after the routine work of the party administration and works under the direction of the Politburo, the Standing Committee and the General Secretary.

The Communist Party of China is a well organised political party. We can call it a tightly organised party-organised on the basis of the principle of Democratic Centralism. Its structural organisation reflects an arrangement of wheels within a wheel. Further, the governmental organisation also follows closely its pattern of organisation.

Despite the separation made between the Party and the Government by the 1982 Constitution, the Communist Party of China continues to be fully involved in the working of the government. The decisions are definitely first made at the party level and then got legalized from the Government which again is under the thumb of the party.

**Role of Communist Party of China:**

**(A) Role in the Making of Revolution:**

Originating in 1921 as a very small group of just thirteen members who held their first meeting in Shanghai, the Communist Party of China registered a spectacular rise, particularly after 1935 when Mao emerged its leader. From 1921 to 1935, the Party had to live with a weak structure and a limited role. In 1927, it received a big setback when the Soviet representative Borodin was expelled from China and Chiang-Kai-Shek decided to control firmly the growing ‘Communist menace’ in China.

However, the march of events resulting from the Japanese threat to the sovereignty, independence and integrity of China, and the outbreak of the Second World War created conditions in which Chinag’s Kuomintang accepted ‘Cooperation with the Communists’ for safeguarding Chinese national interests and integrity.

Further, the emergence of Mao-Tse- Tung as the undisputed and dynamic leader of the Communist Party, helped the party not only to revitalize its organisational network but also to capture the attention and support of the Chinese people, particularly the peasants working in the rural areas. Mao’s strategy of first spreading ‘Communism’ in the rural areas and then surrounding the cities through guerilla tactics paid rich dividends. The whole-hearted support that the (erstwhile) Soviet Union gave to the Communist Party enabled Mao to be in a position to challenge Chiang’s regime.

By the time the Second World War ended, Mao was successful in bringing China to the verge of socialist revolution through a war of people’s liberation which finally broke out in 1945. Within four years, the ‘liberation’ was achieved. Chiang-Kai-Sheik, along with his followers was forced to flee to Formosa.

The mainland China came under the Communists and on October 1, 1949, China came to be the People’s Republic of China. A People’s Democratic Dictatorship was established by the Communist Party under the leadership of chairman Mao Tse-tung. Thus, within fourteen years of his leadership, Mao was successful both in revitalizing the Communist Party as well as in staging through it a successful socialist revolution in China.

**(B) Role of the Communist Party of China After the Revolution (1949-1954):**

After 1949, the Communist Party of China, acting as the highest form of class organisation, started playing a core role in every aspect of country’s life. Its leadership of the people as the vanguard for securing the gains of the revolution in the post-1949 period, was acknowledged by one and all.

On the one hand, the Communist Party started acting as the defender of the revolution, the leader and guide of the people, the supreme educator and the body responsible for initiating the process of nation-building in China.

On the other hand, it began exercising all power and authority on the basis of a common programme and the organic law as formulated by the party under the supreme guidance and direction of Mao.

Between 1949-54, China was governed by a provisional government with one organ-the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. This body consisted of 662 delegates who represented all the political parties including the Communist Party, several mass organisations, the People’s Liberation Army and the overseas Chinese.

It was, however, dominated by the Communist party and it worked on the basis of the Organic Law for realising the ‘Common Programme’ as conceived and formulated by Mao Tse-tung.

**1. Role of the Communist Party under the 1954 Constitution:**

**The organisation and role of the Communist Party of China in the post-1954 period can be discussed either by dividing it in two parts—**

(i) Role and organisation in the Mao period, and

(2) Role and organisation in the Post-Mao period or by analysing its positions under different constitutions.

For the sake of an in-depth study, we shall follow the latter course and discuss in detail these two aspects under all constitutions of India.

In 1953, a committee headed by Mao Tse-Tung was constituted for drafting a constitution for the People’s Republic of China. The Communist Party played a key role in drafting the constitution. This Constitution came into force in 1954.

The Constitution of 1954 did not give constitutional recognition to the Communist Party. Nevertheless, its role was clearly recognized in the deliberations held in connection with the drafting of the constitution.

Liu Shah-Chi clearly stated in his report before the drafting committee that the leadership of the Communist Party was essential not only for the Chinese people’s democratic revolution, but also for the realization of socialism.

Its leadership and core role in the Chinese political system was accepted by one and all. Its ideology-Marxism- Leninism as defined and supplemented by Maoism was adopted as the ideology of China. The Communist party continued to work as an extra-constitutional supreme decision-making and directing body.

Its success in overthrowing the Chiang-regime and in securing a socialist revolution provided it with a huge credibility.

Its success enabled it to work as “the highest form of class organisation committed to play a disciplined, dedicated and core leadership role in the Chinese political system.” All governmental institutions, all constituent party organs, all other organisations obeyed the commands of the Communist Party.

**2. Role of the Communist Party under the 1975 Constitution (1975-78)-Communist Party as the only Constitutionally Recognized Party of China:**

The 1975 Constitution accepted the supreme reality of the Chinese political system by giving constitutions’ recognition to the Communist Party. It declared: **“The Communist Party of China is the core of the leadership of the whole Chinese people”**, and “The working class exercises leadership over the state through the vanguard of the Communist Party of China”.

Even the highest organ of state power-the National People’s Congress (Chinese National Parliament) was placed under the leadership of the Party. All key power holders of the state were nominated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the state power merely legalized the appointments thus made.

The control over the Chinese Armed Forces – the People’s Liberation Army was also exercised by the party.

The Preamble of the 1975 constitution narrated the achievements of the Communist Party during the past 20 years and committed the People’s Republic of China to ‘the continuing revolution’ under the direction of the party. It was reaffirmed that China was committed to eliminate all enemies at home and abroad through national efforts as organised, guided, directed and controlled by the Communist Party of China.

**3. The Communist Party under the 1978 Constitution and Role of the Communist Party in the Post-Mao Years:**

In 1978, China adopted a new constitution and this new constitution did not make any change in the status and role of the Communist Party in the Chinese political system. It maintained the constitutional status of the party. Its Preamble recounted “the heroic struggle of the Chinese people led by the Communist Party and headed by our great leader and teacher, Chairman Mao Tse-Tung.”

The party was again given credit for ushering China into an era of prosperity and all-round development. It called upon the people of China to support whole heartedly the Communist Party and its policies.

Article 2 of this constitution once again described the Communist Party as **“the core of the leadership of the whole Chinese people and that the working class exercised leadership over the state – through the Communist Party of China at its vanguard.”**

Under this constitution, the state authority was exercised in accordance with the decisions and recommendations made by the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

**4. The Communist Party under the 1982 Constitution or the Communist Party in the Contemporary times:**

After Mao’s death, a review of the working of the Communist Party was undertaken and it was found that under Mao, the party organisation had come to be a centralized organisation in which a small group of Mao loyalists-‘the Proletariat headquarters’-had become all powerful.

The Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and the post- cultural revolution changes created a situation in which revolutionary committees were given all powers and the former party organs, central and local commissions were abolished. The Eleventh Party Congress held in September 1977, which met for the first time without Mao and Chou, decided to overhaul the party and restore the traditional organisational set up of the party.

It led to the revival of the central and local commissions. It involved a qualified rejection of some principles and policies of Mao. The power struggle between the Maoist conservatives arid the liberal factions of the Communist Party became a reality. The new need for socio- economic development in all spheres gave rise to a demand for liberalisation.

The 1982 Constitution, while accepting the importance and utility of ‘the thoughts of Mao’, introduced several subtle changes. The Preamble, while upholding Marxism-Leninsm and Mao Tse-Tungs thought, also talked of ‘upholding truth, correcting error and overcoming numerous difficulties and hardships’.

This Constitution secured a separation between the Communist Party and the government and did not make any mention of or gave any constitutional recognition to the Communist Party. Article I of the Constitution says: “The People’s Republic of China is now a socialist state under the people’s democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants”.

Article 2 of the 1978 constitution which gave constitutional recognition to the Communist Party got dropped. Further, the provision for the control of the party over the Armed forces was also abolished. The Chinese Premier was now not to be nominated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

He was to be chosen by the National People’s Congress on the basis of the nomination made by the President of the Republic. The party constitution now recorded that the party is to work in accordance with the Constitution and the Law.

However, despite this separation and scaling down of the status, the Communist Party still continues to be the leader of the people and their vanguard in the march towards the national goals. The Communist Party continues to be the ruling party, and all decisions of the government are designed to carry out the commands of the party.

The role of the Communist Party in the Chinese Political System has been, continues to be, and is destined to continue in future as a formidable role as the core of leadership and vanguard of the people in their struggle to develop further in accordance with the socialist objectives that stand accepted by the principle of collective leadership in the Post-Mao period.

It continues to be a monolith-a single all dominant party (other parties can exist only as its satellites), whose members accept Marxism- Leninism-Maoism as interpreted and applied by its leaders.

It is the governor and the guide, the preacher and the teacher and the decision-maker, the pleader and the executor of all decisions. The power struggle within the Communist Party in the Post-Mao period has not materially changed or nor can it change its dominant position.

The Communist Party continues to lead the Chinese in their march towards securing of their development objectives and the unity, integrity and strength of the country. It provides top leadership to the country. It governs both directly and indirectly- directly by capturing power in the state and indirectly by maintaining its popularity as the party of all the people and workers.

Even while demanding democracy and decentralization, the people do not question or challenge the role and status of the Communist Party as the maker of modern China and as the vanguard of the people in their march towards progress even in this 21st century.

China continues to be a single party system. However, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping (1978- 97), the party underwent several changes in respect of its economic policies, and these even continue today.

These changes acted as a source of economic liberalisation of China. The leadership of Ziang Zemin also subscribed to economic liberalisation, but he preferred to describe it as socialism with Chinese characteristics or socialist-market economy. At present Hu Jintao has been controlling the affairs and policies of the party.