



## Dynamism and Political Change in Contemporary Communist Party of China (CPC)



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### ABSTRACT

*This study is an attempt to explore how the CPC has ruled the one country-two systems model. The finding provides that the party has a strongly centralized political structure and strongman leadership. Firstly, the party has emphasized potential constitutional change and restore power grip under Xi Jinping. Secondly, the party and Chinese society have adopted a new doctrine of Xi Jinping Thought in the frame of Chinese Characteristics. Third, it studied the organizational structure and party discipline of the CPC. Within the discussion, it also interprets the party issues, agenda and raft of challenges. The paper uses a qualitative approach based on secondary sources to review these elements, highlighting the party's growth to over one hundred and twenty-seven million members, its hierarchical structure, and anti-corruption efforts. It concludes that the party has consolidated power through centralization, modernization, and strict discipline, positioning China as a global leader. The method used in this study is descriptive analysis.*

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### Introduction

This study has to analyze the contemporary orientation of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The CPC party has traditional culture and a unique style of governance (Dang, 2025). In the contemporary world, whether in democracies or authoritarian political regimes, political parties are in crisis today. despite the numerous challenges faced by modern China, officially known as

the People's Republic of China (PRC), the strongman president, Xi Jinping, has elevated the CPC as one of the largest, longest and powerful ruling parties in the world (Kuo, 2021; Tian, 2021; Miles, 2021; Mitter and Bayrasli, 2021; Brodsgaard and Gang, 2019). Even though, the CPC has modernized China with its goal of rejuvenating the Chinese society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Lau and Zheng, 2021). Furthermore, the CPC is the

powerful representation body of modern China. The CPC has more control over all the Chinese institutions and society due to the more colossal, highly hierarchical, and regimented (Lian, 2021; Palmer, 2021) party structure. Thus, China cannot stop but continuously takes breaks to enhance their political leadership in the frame of Chinese characteristics (Huang, 2018). Therefore, every year of the CPC would grip its political power over Chinese society in the name of the Chinese dream.

In general, the PRC and CPC are synonymous with modern China. The PRC is the state of the one country-two systems. Today, the CPC political system runs within the doctrine of Xi Jinping Thought (Ringen, 2016). From Mao Zedong to Xi, the party has maintained a monopoly, termed as persona leadership (Shrik, 2018). In addition, leader of the CPC, Xi has worked to restore the party's central role in society and reclaim China's power on the world stage (Maizland and Albert, 2022). Originally, the CPC introduced in 1921 on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. The party celebrated their hundred year of anniversary in July 2021. It is the honor of Chinese vision and the Chinese style of political leadership. The history of the CPC reflects the Chinese society (Aljazeera, 2021). This occasion has regained and transformed Chinese values on the world stage. Tensions between the Communist Party and the nationalist Kuomintang, its primary rival, erupted into a civil war won by the Communists in 1949 (Maizland and Albert, 2022). In this context, the paper aims to analyze how the party has

offered its current role and impact in Chinese society and on the global stage, with a focus on the leadership of Xi Jinping.

### **Theory**

Simply, elitist means dominated ruler and ruled classes. Elite theory envisions society as divided between the mass of people and a ruling minority (Mariotti, 2022). It is composed of a small political group that controls the majority or the legitimacy of the government institutions. Pioneer theorists Gartano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto enshrined the idea of elitism. Later, the social change and structure categorized the different forms of political elite. The scholar's contribution include Raymond Aron's theory of unified (Soviet type) and divided elites (Western type) (Aron, 1950); Ralf dahrendorfs model of authoritarian, totalitarian, cartel, and liberal elites (Dahrendorf, 1967); and Putnam's categorization of consensual, competitive, and coalescent elites (Putnam, 1976). This model of elitist theory is depends upon their structural environment. In term of this, China's perform political elites were ideology-oriented/replacement type (Joo, 2013). The party mechanism of the CPC, elite theory and institutionalism is more applicable. Furthermore, Chinese politics is significantly dominated by the elite class of institutionalism. China's elite politics is ultimately unpredictable, but the party cadre system remains the most resilient political institution. In addition, institutional analysis is relevant to predict the elite politics of the CPC (Kenderdine, 2021). The political shift of modern China also reflects the elite

composition and institutional rules (Li, 2024) in the CPC. Similarly, the CPC's philosophy is that a limited number of elites should lead the nation. But if numbers continue to swell, this key tenet may be undermined (Kawase and Shimbun, 2023).

### **Methodology**

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine the contemporary development of the Communist Party of China. The research method is descriptive analysis. The method of analysis explores the CPC party structure and contemporary context of modern China. It has also critically analyzed the new doctrine of Xi Jinping Thought and the party's raft of challenges. The research sources for analysis include textbooks, novels, newspapers, political speeches, and social media (Marshall et al., 2022). In this analysis, the party structure enshrined party leadership and membership. In terms of the research gap, there have been all sorts of studies on the CPC and even scholars have done their analytical work to examine the CPC attribute in the Chinese society. However, this article discusses the contemporary condition of the CPC. In the ethical consideration, this article has used a proper citation and acknowledgement of the original ideas of the political scholars or the experts.

### **Review of Literature**

This study focused on the theoretical framework. As per this, the study of the CPC in the contemporary world has been reviewed by various political scholars, experts and academicians. The CPC is in

the hand of Xi Jinping, the most powerful leader since Mao Zedong, despite that, scholar Minxin Pei has strongly criticized his leadership and categorized it as historical nihilism (Pei, 2019). However, the party and leadership are reviewed by various scholars (Waller, 1981; Jinping, 2014; Ringen, 2016; The Economy, 2018; Khan, 2018; Jinping, 2018; Shambaugh, 2021; Wong, 2023; Rudd, 2024). In the empirical review of the party mechanism, scholar Barnett (1960) has discussed the leadership structure of the CPC in both domestic and external affairs. The primary concern is that the political, economic, and cultural factors have changed the structure of the party. Saich (2017) has examined the consolidated power of the party in the state institutions. It also explores the dominated nature of the party's Central Committee, the Politburo, and the Standing Committee in modern China. Furthermore, Walter (2022) asserted the party role in the economic growth and social dimension. It also analyzed the financial assets and liabilities of the state. Blecher et al. (2022) posited that the CPC party has impacted Chinese society. It also studies the development phase of the elite/or the dominant class in China's political economy and the party leadership. Also, Suettinger (2024) has elucidated the nature of the conscience of the communist party. Under the Xi Jinping leadership, the party changed the liberal practices. doyon and Froissart (2024) have reflected the CPC history and its continuous dominance in the

global order for the last hundred years of rise. The party trajectory has provided the unique features, organization, and ideology, which determined the structural framework of the party. Further, it also analyzed the party aspects of the modernization and reunification issue. Cheung and Tsang (2024) have studied the Xi Thought in the contemporary Chinese society. Lastly, Yongnian (2023) has examined the CPC as the leading party and differ than western political system. The party has believed in transformative theory and traditional Chinese culture.

### **Analysis**

#### **New Party Thought and Constitutional Reshuffle**

Unanimously, the CPC has adopted a new ideological blueprint. The new thought during the Xi era has reflected a massive change in modern China (Bader, 2016). The thought is more pragmatic and influential. There has been a contribution of national rejuvenation in modern China. Xi Jinping Thought expanded the party vision in the Chinese society as well as the global stage. Xi Thought has to explore the two core elements. Firstly, there is one state, one people, one ideology, one party, and one leader framework, both in the party and the Chinese society. On other hand, it reflects the championing of a vision for the Chinese dream. Inspired by the Russian Revolution (Maizland and Albert, 2022), the party is guided by the Marxism-Leninism principle. Since 1949 modern China pursued the Chinese culture and values. For this, the

party introduced Maoism, called Chairman Mao Zedong Thought. Consequently, the Chinese society incorporated later on the deng Xiaoping Theory of Collective Leadership, the Jiang Zemin Theory of Three Represents, and the Hu Jintao Theory of Scientific Outlook and development. In the contemporary world, there is a Xi Jinping Thought. The 19<sup>th</sup> party's National People's Congress (NPC) had officially endorsed it in Chinese politics. Earlier, leaders' thoughts were endorsed by the 7<sup>th</sup> party Congress (Mao), the 15<sup>th</sup> by deng, and the 18<sup>th</sup> by Hu (Peters, 2017; China daily, 2017).

The party's Central Committee (CC) reshuffled the framework of the Politburo and Standing Committee. The party has amended the constitution to address the Xi Jinping doctrine. The NPC endorsed the Xi Jinping Thought in Chinese national and global politics. Even though, it has also abolished the presidential two-term tenure provision (Fewsmith, 2018; Tsang, 2019). For this, Xi Thought has shaped China's political development and global engagements (Tsang, 2019). Thus, the new thought restores the Chinese culture and dream of national rejuvenation. It is incorporated in all the Chinese institutions, including universities, schools and media. The Xi thought respects the party supremacy, devoted Marxist principles and socialist economy (Kuo, 2023). Beside this, Xi committed to China's historical and cultural values and ideas. Later, it is the ideology of consolidation of political power (Buckley, 2018).

## **The Chinese dream**

Modern China is a complex, comprehensive and homogeneous society. The concept of the Chinese dream is inspired by philosopher Confucius, yet revitalized by strongman president Xi Jinping since 2012. The concept pursued the advance and modernization of the China. Chinese dream is the hope of national rejuvenation and a prosperous vision of China. The party enshrined the Chinese dream, called the dream of the people. The 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress introduced the idea of the Chinese dream. It is the dream of Chinese people for better lives, peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit for all (Mingzhao, 2013). It is another blueprint for China's development and institutional capacities and efficiency (China daily, 2013). Thus, the Chinese dream is the revised version of the national vision. Moreover, today, China is a well-off society since 2021 and will upgrade to a fully developed nation in 2049 (Wang, 2013). As per this, the Chinese dream plays a vital and impactful role on the global stage. The Chinese dream is the reflection of Chinese civilization. Prior, western society dominated the world; however, the 21st century is now dominated by the Chinese dream of BRI (Mingfu, 2016). The Chinese dream is almost for the Chinese society and national sentiments. The Chinese dream is all about the CPC, the motto of patriotism, and the people of China (Chugani, 2017). Thus, modern China pursued a dream of national renaissance and

rejuvenation.

## **Party Organization and Membership**

The CPC has a strong and centralized party organization. The party organization is in the communist flagship. As of late 2024, the CPC has more than one hundred and twenty-seven million members (Beijing Review, 2025). The party membership is continuously increasing. The party runs the 1.411 billion of Chinese people under their leadership. The party organization practices democratic centralism, which is a combination of centralized leadership and democracy for its members (Beijing Review, 2026). The constitution does not declare the supremacy of the CPC. However, the party exercised sole control over the government institutions. Since 2012, the party members have steadily expanded. The party provides organizational guarantees and the spirit of reform has improved the party membership. In Xi's party organization, the number of party members is higher than other leaders, who led the party as general secretary as well as president of modern China. In Xi era, most of the party members are below 40 or are 35-year-old members of the youth generation. The membership of the party is thrown open to all with the age of eighteen years or more. The members are required to safeguard the solidarity of the party mechanism (Bhagwan et al., 1984). In the contemporary phase of the CPC, it has continued to improve party organization and membership.

### CPC Party Members since leader Xi Jinping

Year	CPC	Members in Million	Year	CPC	Members in Million
2012	85.13 Million		2013	86.69 Million	
2014	87.79 Million		2015	88.76 Million	
2016	89.45 Million		2017	89.56 Million	
2018	90.59 Million		2019	91.9 Million	
2020	95.15 Million		2021	96.71 Million	
2022	98.041Million		2023	99.185 Million	
2024	100.27Million				

**Source:** Organization department of CPC Central Committee (2025); Beijing Review (2025); SCMP (2019)

In data presentation, it explores that CPC is rapidly increasing the party membership. According to the report, 2.13 million people joined the CPC in 2024. Among them, 52.6 percent were frontline workers, 25.21 percent were in professional fields and 83.7 percent of them were aged 35 or younger (Beijing Review, 2025; China daily, 2017). It enhanced the willingness and confident attributes of Chinese people who believe in the CPC

leadership. The ratio of party membership is higher in the contemporary phase. Further, the organization department of CPC (2025) reveals that the party membership also improved their leadership in the primary level of the party. There are 5.25 million primary level organizations. Among them, 306,000 are party committees, 330,000 are general party branches, and 4.614 million are party branches at the primary level in modern China.

### New CPC Party Members

Members	In Million (M)	Percent (P)	Remarks
New Members	1.784 M	83.7 %	Aged 35 and below
Junior Members	1.159 M	54.4 %	College degree or above
Female Members	979, 000	46 %	Gender
Ethnic	223, 000	10.5 %	Minority
Workers	149, 000	-	Skilled Trades
Farmers	346, 000	-	Herders/Fisherman
Professional	299, 000	-	Public Institutions
Managerial	221, 000	-	Enterprise
Staff of Party	101, 000	-	Government
Students	812, 000	-	-
Others	203, 000	-	Occupation

**Source:** Organization department of CPC Central Committee (2025); Global Times (2025)

Chinese politics has gradually increased the number of party members. The party has recruited various sectors of members. Most of the female members were recruited. The newly CPC party members were college graduates, ethnic, workers, farmers, professionals, students and other occupations. For this, it upgraded party reformation and development. Mostly, the youth generation is needed for the implication of the contemporary Chinese leadership.

### **National People's Congress (NPC)**

It is an apex body of the party and the tenure is five years. It works on party policy, reviews the party constitution, hears and examines the CC or the other organs, and elects the CC members (Bhagwan et al., 1984). The 20th Party Congress (2022) elected the new delegates of the NPC. The total delegate number is 3,000, but the 20th party congress elected to attend only 2,296 delegates (The Global Times, 2022). The NPC delegates are from all provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities and branches of the government, including the armed forces. The delegates will approve the next five-year plan. Some of the scholars and experts criticized that it is rubber-stamp national legislature. It consists of two sessions of meeting consisting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the NPC. The CPPCC works on key policy debates and has no legislative power while the NPC includes making laws, amending the constitution and approving state budgets (McDonell, 2026). However, it is the China's supreme body of China's

policy and party leadership.

### **Party Central Committee, Politburo and Standing Committee**

It represents the party's political, social and economic relations. Its role is to ratify the CPC decisions of the Politburo and its Standing Committee. It comprises Politburo members and alternates members, including ministers, senior regulatory party officials, provincial leaders, and military officials. Furthermore, the CC acts as a sort of board of directors of the CPC. In addition, it also regulates the party annual meeting (known as the Plenum) and selects the Politburo members. The party compositions of the CC members are 370. It is the most powerful committee of the party mechanism. It has full members and alternate members.

The Politburo and its Standing Committee are responsible for directing the Secretariat of the CPC. The Politburo has selected the Standing Committee members through backroom negotiation. The Politburo's initial stage consisted of 13 to 17 full and alternate members, but now there are 25 Politburo members of the CPC. In addition, the Standing Committee comprises the top leaders of the party hierarchy. It comprises seven members of the CPC. It is the topmost committee of the CPC for political power and leadership. Later on, the party is led by the general secretary, who is the supreme leader of the party. It is the topmost body of the CPC. It is run by the President of the PRC. It controls all the government institutions and the military commission of the state. Currently, President Xi Jinping is the core

leader of the CPC, who holds the headings of the president of the PRC, general secretary of the CPC, and chairman of the Central Military Commission as well.

Under president Xi's leadership, there are five new members in the Standing Committee and 15 new members in the Politburo. However, in Politburo membership, nine members were recruited from the military and civilian leaders while six members were recruited from the provincial level (Channel News Asia, 2017). Furthermore, under Xi's chairmanship, the party also reshuffled the secretariat department of the CPC. The new provision applies in the party session. Meanwhile, the 19 members of the 18th Politburo session didn't attend the 19th Politburo session. In the political dimension and reformation of the party, Chinese politics entered into Xi Jinping's path of modernization and development.

### The Party discipline

The fifth-generation leader of the CPC has

strictly applied the party discipline. President Xi Jinping believes that the discipline effectively reforms the party structure. The campaign of anti-corruption is both the challenge and the opportunity of the party discipline. Contemporary leader Xi enshrined the anti-corruption campaign in the Third Plenum of the 18th Party Congress, and it continued in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Congress sessions and upcoming as well.

According to the National Statistics report, 75 percent of Chinese people were satisfied with the anti-corruption campaign, started in 2012, and such campaign ratio rose to 92.9 percent at the end of 2016 (The Global Times, 2017). It is significant for the party reformation and accountability. The powerful leaders of the CPC Politburo, Chen Xitong (1997), Chen Liangyu (2006), and Bo Xilai (2012), and the local-level leaders (440) have faced the charged file of the anti-corruption campaign (Wedeman, 2014; Caiyu, 2018). Chinese politics has continuously reshaped party accountability and party discipline respectively.

### Anti-Corruption Campaign

Year	No. of Members	Year	No. of Members
2012/13	30,420	<b>2014</b>	71,748
2015	49,508	<b>2016</b>	57,723
2017	71,644	<b>2018</b>	68,509

**Source:** Wedeman, (2014), Zheng (2018), Caiyu (2018)

Under President Xi's leadership, the CPC has strictly exercised the party discipline. According to the department of party discipline, it has punished those CPC members or

individuals who were corrupted or against the party rule and regulations. The party discipline is for all party members, officials and the government institutions. despite that, in

the western scholar criticized that the strict party discipline is only for their opponents. It is the just the political propaganda. The anti-corruption campaign has emphasizing the Xi's political power both in the domestic and global stage. On the other hand, the anti-corruption campaign is the reformation and improvement of the party structure from the primary level to the national surrounding.

### **Challenges**

Currently, human rights and democracy is the raft of challenges for the CPC. Under Xi Jinping, China has gained both positive and negative violates outcomes especially as the western scholars, experts and countries disagree or criticize CPC leadership. Scholar Shambaugh argues that the CPC as an institution has been in a progressive state of atrophy (Cheng, 2008). According to the Human Rights Watch Report, the Chinese government should immediately end its crimes against humanity and other abuses in Xinjiang and Tibet. Hong Kong and free detained human rights defenders throughout China. It also rejected the rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and religion, and persecuted government critics (World Report, 2026). Furthermore, the comprehensively ideological control over the mass media, education and expression of freedom also challenges the party's future. Scholar Minxin Pei asserted that China's fast economic rise has not dented its dictatorship, but Xi Jinping's neo-Stalinist strategy has unleashed new challenges and tensions for the Communist Party's long-term prospects for survival (Pei, 2021). Further, the party

has faced numerous issues, factionalism and intra-party challenges. Other challenges the party faces include slowed economic growth, the COVID-19 pandemic, tension with the US and the climate crisis (Maizland and Albert, 2022). Later, the aging of population, youth unemployment, the threat of ethnic and religious minority communities is the next challenges of the CPC in the contemporary world. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, 16.9% of youth are jobless (Wu, 2025), which is another challenge for the CPC party in modern China.

### **Discussion**

In the contemporary insights, modern China is run on the path of Chinese modernization and development. It has emphasized their political development with Chinese characteristics and incorporated the Xi Jinping Thought. After 2012, the era of Xi Jinping, Chinese politics pursued the reflection of national rejuvenation and the Chinese dream. The party has changed the constitution and amended the presidential two-term limits. Furthermore, there are well-oriented technocrats in the party mechanism. It increased accountability in the party and trust in the newly recruited members. In addition to the Chinese dream, it connects the values of Chinese society, traditional culture and reformation of the political and economic factors. Similarly, the CPC is the ultimate political body of Chinese society and decision-makers in modern China (Bennett, 1960). Thus, the CPC pursued the Chinese dream and hope of better lives. The party follows democratic centralism. The

20th CC party has also adopted the advanced Chinese modernization process of BRI and connectivity (Han and Anqi, 2024). The CPC party always accepts the multiparty system, cooperation and political consultation. In terms of multiparty systems in modern China there are eight other political parties; the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the China democratic League, the China National democratic Construction Association, the China Association for Promoting democracy, the Chinese Peasants and Workers democratic Party, the China Zhi Gong Party, the Jiusan Society and the Taiwan democratic Self-Government League (Xinhua, 2021). The contemporary CPC politics changed the political dimension of Chinese society. The party increased the number of party memberships, operating the anti-corruption campaign for the reformation of the party structure.

### Conclusion

The CPC is the power institution of modern China. It controls all the aspects of state affairs. In mainland China, ruled by the one-party, termed the Communist Party of China, autonomous regions practice a multiparty system. Today, the party leadership impacts the world. The party structure also reflects the Chinese society. Moreover,

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the global stage has more attention on the party Congress session or the CC plenum meeting. Similarly, the party restores a new theory of Xi Jinping Thought with Chinese characteristics. Thus, this paper reveals that the CPC is still relevant to the Chinese society and government institutions for the advancement of the Chinese dream and national rejuvenation. Secondly, it drives the Chinese vision and traditional goals of the PRC. For this, the party revitalized with the reformation of the party structure and the development of BRI. The CPC has a powerful elite-based leadership structure and has expanded their party membership by one hundred twenty-seven million since 2024. The party organization further consolidated the monopoly of power centralization. The campaign of anti-corruption has strengthened the party discipline. However, some raft of challenges is remaining in the party including human rights violations, ethnic minorities, age populations and youth unemployment. The party has consolidated power through centralization, modernization, innovation and strict discipline, positioning China as a global leader. Therefore, the consolidation of the political leadership and traditional culture values of the Chinese society is still relevant for the contemporary CPC party.

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