

The People's Republic of China has been ruled by the same single political party since 1949.

The Communist Party of China, often referred to as the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP.

Led by Chairman Mao, the CCP took total control of the country and everyone had to work for the common good.

Since Mao's death in 1976, China has introduced quite a few capitalist changes to its economy.

For example, a return to private ownership without making significant political changes.

But the CCP still controls almost all aspects of Chinese social, economic, and political life and the CCP's leadership is central to the Chinese constitution.

The party is structured like a pyramid.

At the base are over 95 million party members.

That may sound like a lot, but it's only about 7% of China's total population.

Of those members, around 2,000 are selected to be delegates of the National Party Congress.

Now, that's only one in every 10,000 people, and for within their ranks, about 350 are chosen to become members of the Central Committee.

Selected members of that committee then make up the Politburo.

With around 25 members, the Politburo controls the State Council, the Cabinet, which oversees the government, the National People's Congress or Parliament, and the Central Military Commission, which oversees the Armed Forces.

From the Politburo, a select group of 7 to 9 are chosen to serve on the Standing Committee.

These seven or so people are the most powerful individuals in the party and effectively decide how China is run.

And finally, at the very peak of the party power pyramid sits the leader of the standing committee, the General Secretary.

This pyramid structure of power should create a collective leadership where the party elects its leadership from the bottom up.

But in practice, it's the other way round. The purpose of the election process is to allow the Chinese people to have influence in decision making at various appropriate levels within the Chinese political system.

But behind closed doors, the General Secretary chooses members of the Standing Committee and the Politburo and can give top jobs to his favourites and those most loyal to him.

This takes place all the way down the pyramid.

The Central Committee is shaped privately by the Politburo and the Standing Committee and the election of delegates to the National Party Congress is also regulated by more senior members of the party.

Now, the CCP is a political party, but it exists within a larger political structure.

The National People's Congress is the supreme state power that makes China's laws just like the UK or Scottish parliaments.

The National People's Congress has nearly three thousand seats.

In theory, other parties can influence decisions in Parliament, but the CCP holds about two thirds of the seats.

So, in reality, the CCP has total control.

The other third are mainly filled by members of eight other, much smaller political parties.

Yet those eight parties themselves are tightly controlled by the CCP to guarantee their support.

In fact, if their members disagree with the CCP, they risk being imprisoned.

So, you could say that, in fact, there is no real opposition to the CCP.

The National People's Congress effectively acts as a rubber stamp for whatever the Communist Party want to do.

One party, the CCP, controls the state.

Decision making is dominated by the Chinese Communist Party, meaning the majority of Chinese citizens have few opportunities to influence how the country is ruled.