

Han Zheng 韩正

Born 1954



Current Positions

- Member of the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) (2017–present)
- Party Secretary of Shanghai (2012–present)
- Member of the Politburo (2012–present)
- Full member of the Central Committee of the CCP (2002–present)

Personal and Professional Background

Han Zheng was born in April 1954 in Shanghai. His ancestral home is Cixi City, Zhejiang Province. Han joined the CCP in 1979. He was a “sent-down youth” at a collective farm in Chongming County, Shanghai, during the Cultural Revolution (1972–75).ⁱ Han attended a two-year college program at Fudan University in Shanghai (1983–85), studied for his undergraduate degree (via part-time studies) in politics at East China Normal University in Shanghai (1985–87), and graduated with a master’s in international political economy from East China Normal University (1994–96).

Throughout the early part of his career, Han worked at the grassroots level, including as part of a lifting installation company’s warehouse in Xuhui District, Shanghai, and as a clerk in the supply and marketing division of the same company. He served as deputy secretary of the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) (1975–80) and as a clerk of the Shanghai Chemical Equipment Industry Co., Ltd (1980–82). After that, he was secretary of the CCYL committee of the Chemical Industry Bureau of the Shanghai municipal government (1982–86), deputy party secretary of the Shanghai School of Chemical Engineering (1986–87), party secretary and deputy director of Shanghai No. 6 Rubber Shoes Factory (1987–88), and party secretary and deputy director of the Dazhonghua Rubber Plant in Shanghai (1988–90).

Subsequently, Han served as deputy secretary (1990–91) and secretary (1991–92) of the CCYL Shanghai Municipal Committee. He was next appointed deputy party secretary and head of the Luwan District in Shanghai (1992–95) and was eventually promoted to deputy secretary-general (chief of staff) of the Shanghai municipal government, in addition to director of the City Planning Commission and director of the Securities Management Office (1995–97). He became a member of the Standing Committee of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee while continuing to work as deputy secretary-general (1997–98).

He continued to advance his career in Shanghai, serving as vice-mayor (1998–2003), deputy party secretary (2002–12), mayor (2003–12), acting party secretary (2007), and finally party secretary (2012–present). He also served as deputy head of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo Organizing Committee and head of the Executive Committee (2004–11). He was first elected to the Central Committee as a full member at the 16th Party Congress in 2002.

Family and Patron-Client Ties

Han has spent his entire career working in Shanghai, where he met five of his patron-mentors, namely Huang Ju, Wu Bangguo, Zhu Rongji, Zeng Qinghong, and Yu Zhengsheng, all of whom later served as members of the Politburo Standing Committee.ⁱⁱ Han has been widely recognized as a member of the Jiang Zemin-Zeng Qinghong “Shanghai Gang.” Although Han served as a top CCYL official in Shanghai, his promotions have been more closely aligned with Jiang’s Shanghai Gang than with the Hu Jintao-Li Keqiang CCYL faction.ⁱⁱⁱ Han also developed a good relationship with Xi Jinping when Han

served as Xi's deputy in Shanghai in 2007, before Xi moved to Beijing to serve as a member of the Politburo Standing Committee. Han apparently earned Xi's support, obtaining a Politburo seat after Xi became general secretary of the CCP in 2012.

Not much information is available about Han Zheng's family. According to an unverified source, Han Zheng's wife, Wang Ming, previously served as vice-chair of the Shanghai Charity Foundation. The couple has one daughter.

Political Prospects and Policy Preferences

As a top administrator of China's pacesetter city for the past two decades, Han Zheng has emerged as a top economic decision-maker in the national leadership following the 19th Party Congress. In addition to winning a seat on the Politburo Standing Committee, he is likely to become executive vice-premier of the State Council in March 2018, the position filled by his mentor and predecessor in Shanghai—Huang Ju. Han's reputation as a competent, seasoned financial and economic technocrat, as well as his market-friendly policy orientation in Shanghai, will likely be well received in business communities both in China and abroad.

Compiled by Cheng Li and the staff of the John L. Thornton China Center at Brookings

Notes:

ⁱ "Sent-down youth" (插队知青) refers to young, educated urbanites who left their home cities to serve as manual laborers in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution.

ⁱⁱ In 1988, for example, Zhu Rongji, then mayor of Shanghai, visited the city's Dazhonghua Rubber Plant, where Han Zheng was employed. During the visit, Zhu lauded Han's work. See Xu Yanyan, "Han Zheng recalls Zhu Rongji's visit to factory" [韩正回忆朱镕基下工厂], *China Business Network*, August 14, 2013, <http://www.yicai.com/news/2939288.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cheng Li, *Chinese Politics in the Xi Jinping Era: Reassessing Collective Leadership* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2016), p. 281.