

Li Qiang 李强

Born 1959



Current Positions

- Party Secretary of Jiangsu (2016–present)
- Chairman of the Jiangsu Provincial People’s Congress (2017–present)
- Alternate member of the Central Committee of the CCP (2012–present)

Personal and Professional Background

Li Qiang was born in July 1959 in Rui’an City, Caocun County, Zhejiang Province. Li joined the CCP in 1983. He received an undergraduate education in agricultural mechanization at the Zhejiang Institute of Agriculture’s Ningbo campus in Ningbo City, Zhejiang (1978–82). In addition, he attended a graduate program in management engineering at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, Zhejiang (via part-time studies, 1995–97); a year-long, full-time training program for young and middle-age cadres at the Central Party School (CPS) in Beijing (2001–02); and a part-time graduate program in world economics at the CPS (2001–04). He also received an MBA from Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hong Kong (via part-time studies, 2003–05).

Li began his career as a worker, first at an electromechanical irrigation and drainage station in Mayu District, Rui’an County (1976–77), and then at the No. 3 Tools Factory in Rui’an County (1977–78). He served as a clerk and an official of the CCYL Committee of Xincheng District, Rui’an County (1982–83), and as secretary of the CCYL Committee of Rui’an County (1983–84). He also served as deputy division head and division head of the Rural Relief Division of the Zhejiang Provincial Civil Affairs Department (1984–91), then as director of the Personnel Division of the Zhejiang Provincial Civil Affairs Department (1991–92), and finally as deputy director of the Zhejiang Provincial Civil Affairs Department (1992–96). Following those roles, he served as a member of the Standing Committee of Jinhua City, Zhejiang, and as party secretary of Yongkang City, Zhejiang (1996–98). Next, he served as deputy director of the general office of the Zhejiang provincial government (1998–2000), and then as director and party secretary of the Bureau of Administration for Industry and Commerce in the Zhejiang provincial government (2000–02). After that, he was appointed party secretary of Wenzhou City, Zhejiang (2002–04). He then became secretary-general (chief of staff) of the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee (2004–12). Finally, he served as secretary of the Zhejiang Provincial Commission of Politics and Law (2011–12), as deputy party secretary of Zhejiang (2011–16), and as governor of Zhejiang (2013–16). He was first elected to the Central Committee as an alternate member at the 18th Party Congress in 2012.

Family and Patron-Client Ties

Li is one of Xi Jinping’s most trusted protégés. From 2004 to 2007, he worked directly under Xi as his chief of staff in the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee. His recent appointment as party secretary of Jiangsu, an extremely important province that has been beset by various scandals involving top provincial leaders, reflects Xi’s intention to help Li bolster his leadership credentials. No information is available about Li’s family.

Political Prospects and Policy Preferences

Li Qiang is a dark horse for membership on the 19th Politburo Standing Committee. He not only has strong ties with Xi Jinping, but also leadership experience across two important provinces. Because of his relatively young age, he is considered a member of the sixth-generation cohort, alongside rising stars such as Hu Chunhua and Chen Min'er. If Li enters the PSC at the 19th Party Congress, he could also serve as executive vice-premier of the State Council. More likely, however, is that Li will obtain a Politburo seat rather than enter the PSC. In that case, he will either take over Li Zhanshu's post as director of the General Office of the CCP Central Committee, and thus directly serve his former boss Xi Jinping again, or he will serve as party secretary in one of the country's most important province-level administrations (e.g., Guangdong, Chongqing, or Shanghai).

Li Qiang has been strongly supportive of private sector development. He is particularly interested in innovation in the areas of information technology and artificial intelligence.

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