

Wang Yang 汪洋

Born 1955



Current Positions

- Member of the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) (2017–present)
- Vice Premier of the State Council (2013–present)
- Member of the Politburo (2007–present)
- Full member of the Central Committee of the CCP (2007–present)

Personal and Professional Background

Wang Yang was born on March 12, 1955, in Suzhou County, Anhui Province. He joined the CCP in 1975. He attended a program in political economy at the Central Party School (CPS) in Beijing (1979–80), received a bachelor’s degree in public administration from the CPS (via correspondence courses, 1989–92), and received a master’s in management science from the University of Science and Technology of China in Hefei City, Anhui (via part-time studies, 1993–95). Wang also twice pursued mid-career cadre training at the CPS (in 1997 and 2001).

Wang began working as a manual laborer and then served as manager in a food factory in Suxian County, Anhui (1972–76). He advanced his career first through the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL), serving as CCYL deputy secretary of Suxian County (1981–82), propaganda director of the CCYL Anhui Provincial Committee (1982–83), and deputy secretary of the CCYL Anhui Provincial Committee (1983–84). He served as deputy director and then director of the Anhui Provincial Sports Commission (1984–88); as mayor and deputy party secretary of Tongling City, Anhui (1988–92); and, concurrently, as chairman of Anhui Province’s Economic Planning Commission and assistant governor of the province (1992–93).

At the age of 38, Wang was appointed executive vice-governor of Anhui Province (1993–99). He was then transferred to the central government, where he served as vice-minister of the State Development Planning Commission (SDPC) (1999–2003) and then as deputy secretary-general (chief of staff) of the State Council (2003–05). He next served as party secretary of Chongqing (2005–07) and then Guangdong (2007–12). Wang was first elected to the Central Committee as an alternate member at the 16th Party Congress in 2002.

Family and Patron-Client Ties

Wang was born into a family of humble means.ⁱ His father died when he was a young boy. As the eldest child, he began working at the age of 17 to help his mother support the family.ⁱⁱ Wang is widely considered a protégé of Hu Jintao, with whom he developed strong patron-client ties in the early 1980s, when Hu was head of the CCYL and Wang was deputy secretary of the Anhui Provincial CCYL Committee. Some PRC journalists have reported that Deng Xiaoping “discovered” Wang Yang in 1992 when Deng visited Anhui and met the 37-year-old Wang, who was then mayor of Tongling City. Deng was quoted as saying: “Wang Yang is an exceptional talent.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Wang’s wife, Zhu Mali, was the daughter of a local leader. Her father, Zhu Jiayuan, was deputy head of Shuxian Prefecture. Wang and his wife have one daughter, Wang Xisha, a graduate of Peking University’s Guanghua School of Management and of Tufts University, where she received a master’s degree. She previously served as a senior manager at Deutsche Bank in Hong Kong. Her husband, Zhang Xinliang (Nicholas Zhang), is the grandson of former minister of defense Zhang Aiping. Zhang Xinliang received his bachelor’s degree in international economics from Georgetown University. Zhang

has worked for a number of foreign investment banks, including UBS, Goldman Sachs, and Soros Fund Management.

Political Prospects and Policy Preferences

Wang possesses broad leadership experience in both the central government (the SDPC and State Council) and in major provincial and municipal posts (in inland Chongqing and coastal Guangdong). Given his relatively young age, Wang is the only one among the four vice-premiers in the State Council who need not retire from the position after the 2018 National People's Congress. As a two-term Politburo member, Wang was seen as a strong candidate for the current Politburo Standing Committee. He may also assume the position of either executive vice-premier of the State Council or chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

Wang's primary policy interests include transforming China's economy from being driven by exports and reliance on cheap labor to an innovation-led model powered by domestic consumption; strengthening the private sector and foreign trade; promoting intra-party democracy and village elections; increasing media transparency; and implementing bolder political reforms.

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

Notes:

ⁱ According to one unverified source, Wang's father served as party secretary of a food company in Shuxian County.

ⁱⁱ For more information about Wang Yang's family background and his early experiences, see Du Zijia 窦梓稼, *Biography of Wang Yang: That "Wolf" in China's Political Arena* [汪洋传: 中国政坛那匹“狼”] (New York: Mirror Books, 2009), and Wang Yaohua 王耀华, *Competition among Provincial Chiefs* [诸侯争锋] (New York: Mirror Books, 2009), pp. 13–58. For Wang's recent views on and efforts toward political and economic reforms in Guangdong, see Cheng Li, “Hu's Southern Expedition: Changing Leadership in Guangdong,” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 24, Spring 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Earth Week* [大地周刊], No. 23, 2009; also see <http://news.hexun.vnet.cn/2010-01-02/122228741.html>.