

Ding Xuexiang 丁薛祥

Born 1962



Current Positions

- Director of the General Office of the CCP Central Committee (2017–present)
- Member of the Politburo (2017–present)
- Director of the Office of the General Secretary (2013–present)
- Director of the Office of the President of the People’s Republic of China (2013–present)
- Head of the Central Party and State Organs Working Committee (formerly Head of the Central Work Committee for Organs of the CCP Central Committee) (2017–present)
- Head of the Central Confidential Commission of the CCP Central Committee (2017–present)
- Director of the Office of the National Security Committee (2018–present)
- Member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CCP (2017–present)
- Full member of the Central Committee of the CCP (2017–present)

Personal and Professional Background

Ding Xuexiang was born on September 13, 1962, in Nantong City, Jiangsu Province. He joined the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1984. Ding enrolled in college at the age of 16 and received a bachelor’s degree in engineering from the Department of Machinery Manufacturing at the Northeast Institute of Heavy Machinery in Qiqihar City, Heilongjiang Province (1978–82).¹ Ding also received a master’s degree in science and management from the Fudan University School of Management (via part-time studies, 1989–94).

Ding advanced his early political career in Shanghai. After completing his undergraduate studies in 1982, Ding began working at the Shanghai Research Institute of Materials, where he served as a research fellow (1982–84); deputy director of the General Office and, concurrently, secretary of the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) (1984–88); director of the General Office and director of the Propaganda Department (1988–92); and director of the No. 9 Department (1992–94). He was then promoted to be deputy director of the institute (1994–96). Finally, he was promoted to act concurrently as director and deputy party secretary (1996–99).

After that, Ding served as deputy director of the Shanghai Municipal Science and Technology Commission (1999–2001); deputy party secretary and head of the Zhabei District of Shanghai (2001–04); and deputy director of the Organization Department of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee and, concurrently, director of the Personnel Bureau of the Shanghai municipal government (2004–06). In 2006, Ding was appointed deputy secretary-general (deputy chief of staff) and, concurrently, director of the General Office of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee. In 2007, he was promoted to be secretary-general (chief of staff), primarily assisting the party secretaries of Shanghai: Chen Liangyu (2006–07), then Han Zheng and Xi Jinping (2006–07), and finally Yu Zhengsheng (2007–12). Ding served as a member of the Standing Committee of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee (2007–13) and as secretary of the Political and Legal Committee of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee (2012–2013). He then served as executive deputy director of the General Office of the CCP Central Committee (2016–17). He was first elected to the Central Committee as an alternate member at the 18th Party Congress in 2012.

Family and Patron-Client Ties

Ding comes from a humble family background and has no special political connections in Beijing. Although he only worked for Xi Jinping for a few months in 2007, Ding appears to have gained Xi's trust. While Ding was director of the General Office and deputy secretary-general of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, he reportedly impressed Xi with his administrative skills, political counsel, and low-profile, humble personality.² Within two months, Xi promoted Ding as secretary-general and standing member of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee.

In May 2013, a few months after Xi Jinping became general secretary of the CCP, Ding was transferred to Beijing. There, Ding served as deputy director of the General Office of the CCP Central Committee and, concurrently, director of the Office of the General Secretary, becoming Xi's principal *mishu* (personal assistant).³ Ding is married, and his wife previously worked in the education sector. The couple has a son who works at the China Development Bank in Beijing.

Policy Preferences and Political Prospects

Ding is known for his writing skills, sharp memory, and ability to effectively carry out the will of his boss.⁴ Ding's extraordinary administrative capacity and political shrewdness are illustrated by his ability to not only survive politically but also further his career after his former boss, Chen Liangyu, had been purged. Having served primarily as a *mishu* (personal assistant) or chief of staff, Ding has revealed little about his policy preferences. Partly due to his over two-decade-long experience in a research institution focused on science and technology, he has often emphasized the crucial role of technological innovation in China's domestic development and international competition.

As one of the three current Politburo members born in the 1960s, and as one of Xi's most trusted confidants, Ding is expected to gain a seat on the Politburo Standing Committee at the 20th Party Congress. Given that Ding has neither served as a provincial or municipal Party secretary nor as a minister in the State Council, he will likely assume either the position currently held by Wang Huning as Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee or the position of Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI).

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

Notes:

¹ The university is now known as Yanshan University.

² https://commondatastorage.googleapis.com/letscorp_archive/archives/53105.

³ Cheng Li, *Chinese Politics in the Xi Jinping Era: Reassessing Collective Leadership* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), p. 345.

⁴ "Xi names low-key outsider as personal secretary," *South China Morning Post*, July 25, 2013, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1290050/xi-names-ding-xuexiang-personal-secretary>.