

Li Hongzhong 李鸿忠

Born 1956

Current Positions:

- Party Secretary of Tianjin (2016–present)
- Full member of the Central Committee of the CCP (2012–present)



Personal and Professional Background

Li Hongzhong was born in August 1956 in Shenyang, Liaoning Province. His ancestral home is Changle County, Shandong Province. Li joined the CCP in 1976. He was a “sent-down youth” at an agricultural commune near Shenyang City, Liaoning (1975–78).¹ He received his bachelor’s degree in history from Jilin University in Changchun City, Jilin Province (1978–82); attended a mid-career training program at the Central Party School in Beijing (1996–97); and attended a month-long program for “Future Leaders” at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University (1999).

Li’s early career consisted primarily of service as a personal assistant (*mishu*). Li began his career as *mishu* to his patron-mentor, Li Tieying, in the CCP Municipal Committee of Shenyang City and later in the CCP Committee of Liaoning Province (1982–85). Li Hongzhong continued to work as a *mishu* for Li Tieying when the latter moved to Beijing to serve as minister in the Ministry of the Electronics Industry (MEI) (1985–88).

In 1988, Li Hongzhong was transferred to Huizhou City, Guangdong Province, where he served as vice-mayor (1988–95), deputy party secretary and mayor (1995–2000), and party secretary (2000–01). Li was promoted to vice-governor (2001) and then executive vice-governor (2003) of Guangdong Province. Li went on to serve as mayor of Shenzhen (2004–05) and party secretary of Shenzhen (2005–07). In 2007, Li was appointed acting governor and deputy party secretary of Hubei Province. He served as governor and deputy party secretary of Hubei Province (2008–10) before he was promoted to party secretary of Hubei (2010–16). He was first elected to the Central Committee as an alternate member at the 16th Party Congress in 2002.

Family and Patron-Client Ties

Li Hongzhong was a protégé of three leaders, namely Li Tieying, Huang Liman, and Jiang Zemin. As mentioned above, Li Hongzhong worked as a *mishu* for Li Tieying, who served as party secretary of Shenyang, minister of the MEI, and, later, as a member of the Politburo and a vice-chairman of the National People’s Congress. It is widely believed that Li established a patron-mentor relationship with Huang Liman when both worked in the MEI (1985–88). Likewise, Li Hongzhong’s patron-client relationship with Jiang Zemin emerged through Huang Liman’s strong ties to Jiang. (Huang built her own patron-mentor relationship with Jiang Zemin starting in 1981, when Jiang Zemin was party secretary of the MEI.) No information is available about Li Hongzhong’s family.

Political Prospects and Policy Preferences

Li Hongzhong is a dark horse for membership on the 19th Politburo Standing Committee. Given the fact that Li Hongzhong was appointed party secretary of Tianjin in 2016, he seems to have strong support from Xi Jinping on the eve of the 19th Party Congress. Li’s recent public support of Xi’s “core” status in the CCP leadership has been widely visible to the Chinese public. If Li enters the PSC at the 19th Party Congress, he could also serve as executive secretary of the Secretariat or chairman of the

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The most likely scenario is that Li will obtain a Politburo seat rather than enter the PSC this fall. In that case, he will either retain his current position as party secretary of Tianjin or move to Beijing and become vice-premier of the State Council. Li has considerable experience in leading economic development at both the municipal and provincial levels.

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

Notes:

¹ “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.