

Heading in One Direction

Non-communist political parties work with the Communist Party of China for national progress By Lu Yan

Wu Weihua has two personas. With a doctorate from Rutgers University, he is an eminent plant biology professor at Beijing's China Agricultural University. The 62-year-old is also the chair of the Central Committee of the Jiu San Society, one of the eight non-communist parties on the Chinese mainland that began as a group of intellectuals interested in science and technology.

"Since it was founded 72 years ago, the Jiu San Society has been collaborating with the Communist Party of China (CPC) with a shared commitment to national independence, prosperity, and well-being," Wu said, after his election in December 2017.

In Chinese, "jiu" means nine and "san" means three. Together, they refer to September 3, a date that commemorates a milestone in China's history. The party's founders had originally named their organization Democracy and Science Forum, but the name changed to celebrate the hard-won victory over Japanese invaders in 1945.

Today, the more than 167,000 members of the Jiu San Society are mainly professionals in science and technology, culture, education, and medicine. Some are affiliated with the country's top scientific associations, such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering, and some civil servants at organizations of state power at various levels. Many are also lawmakers or members of political advisory bodies at local and central levels.

Wu, like many Chinese political leaders, had a grassroots beginning. He spent his childhood in a village in north China and did farm work after finishing high school. He developed an interest in biology and earned his doctorate. Since returning home, he has been involved in research to improve crop production in China.

The Jiu San Society and the other seven non-communist parties are working with the CPC to strengthen socialism with Chinese

characteristics, to serve China's development goals. Unlike in many countries, where the political system consists of the ruling party and the opposition, the political party system in China is one of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC.

China's political party system was born out of the revolutionary struggles in the 20th century. Under this system, the CPC and the eight non-communist parties not only work together but also supervise one another. The CPC is the ruling party, and other parties participate in state affairs.

Small but heard

In 2007, China's State Council Information Office published a white paper detailing the country's political party system. The document describes the eight non-communist parties' role in state affairs: The parties will be consulted when state policies, laws, and regulations are formulated and implemented. They will also be consulted when candidates of state leaders are chosen and regarding administration of the state. Their status and rights are protected by law.

The annual sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC), the national legislature, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which is China's top political advisory body, demonstrate the important role these parties play. Held in March almost concurrently, these gatherings are commonly known as the Two Sessions. The eight non-communist parties have a sizable number of deputies to the NPC and submit policy proposals to the CPPCC National Committee.

During the Two Sessions in 2017, the parties, together with the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, submitted more than 300 proposals to the CPPCC National Committee. The proposals pertained to a wide range of issues, including economy and finance, environmental protection, poverty

alleviation, social services, and science and technology.

One proposal was to strengthen a major initiative that would enhance connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road trade routes. The China Democratic League suggested boosting cultural exchanges within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, saying they were as important as economic development. The initiative, put forward by President Xi Jinping in 2013, comprises the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road. In addition, the party stressed the importance of dialogue among high-caliber personnel.

The Jiu San Society alone submitted more than 400 proposals to the CPPCC National Committee from 2013 to 2017, and some of them were adopted into government policies. Notably, its report on the environmental impact of hydropower projects on the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze, the third longest river in the world, contributed to the government's formulation of a development strategy. In the Yangtze River Economic Belt, priority is given to protecting the environment and curbing excessive development projects.

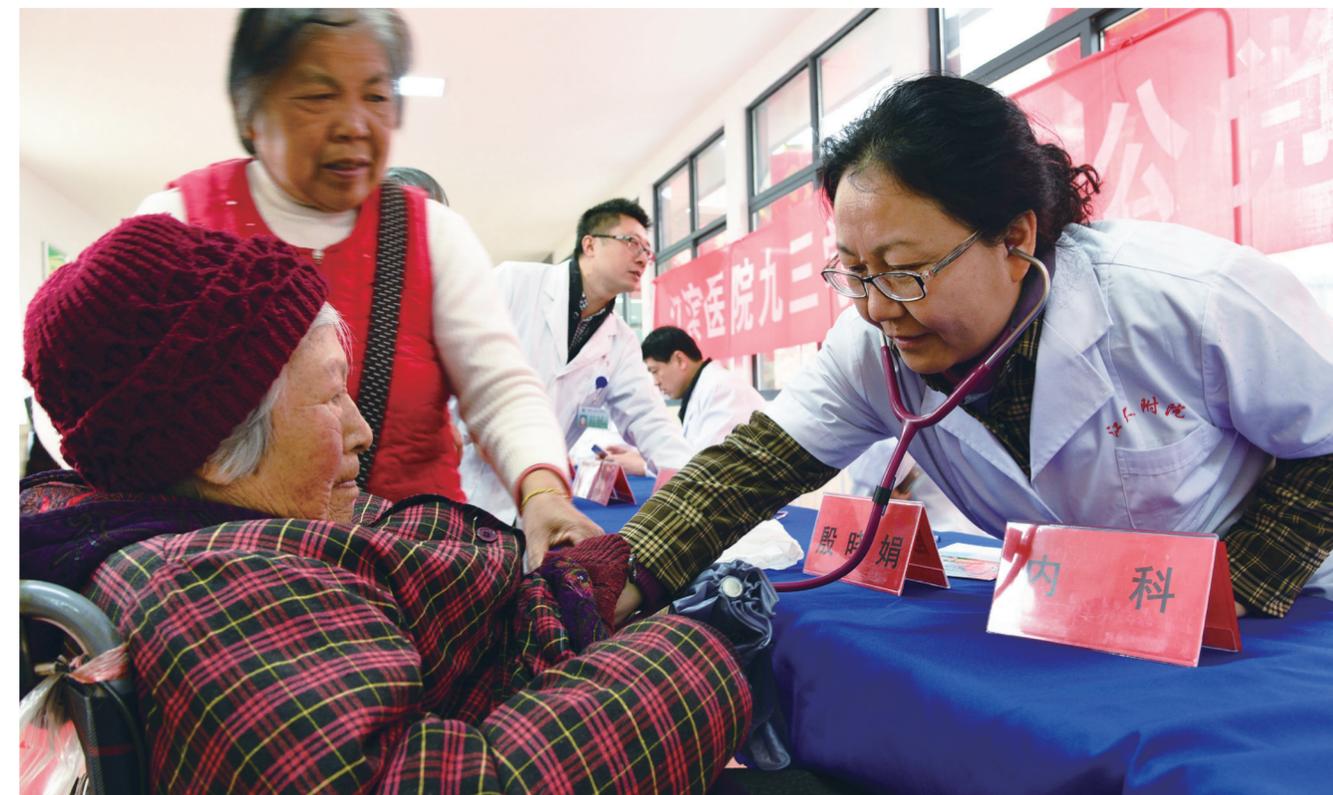
Non-communist party members also take part in local governance and hold key positions in government and judicial agencies. For instance, Wan Gang, Chairman of the Central Committee of the China Zhi Gong Party, is minister of science and technology.

A natural choice

Most of the eight non-communist parties were established in the 1930s and the 1940s, when they formed an anti-imperialist and patriotic force.

The CPC, founded in 1921, developed close relations with the eight. Together, they resisted the Japanese and later fought against the Kuomintang regime. The CPC established its leadership over various revolutionary forces and steered the revolution to victory.

In September 1949, days before the



A doctor examines a woman in Zhenjiang, east China's Jiangsu Province, on April 9, 2017, during a charity program launched by the Jiu San Society and the China Zhi Gong Party

founding of the People's Republic of China was proclaimed, the First CPPCC was convened, marking the formal establishment of the multiparty cooperation system under the leadership of the CPC. It was at this point that the CPC, non-communist parties, and pro-democracy individuals without any party affiliation began to work in concert to build the People's Republic.

Xi, also General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, described the relationship between the CPC and the other eight parties at the 19th National Congress of the CPC in October 2017:

"In handling its relationships with other Chinese political parties, the CPC is guided by the principles of long-term coexistence, mutual oversight, sincerity, and sharing the rough times and the smooth," Xi said. "It supports these parties in performing their duties in accordance with the requirements of the Chinese socialist system for their participation in governance."

Like the National Congress of the CPC, the national congresses of the eight non-communist parties meet every five years to elect new leadership, assess reports made by their central committees on the work done in the past five years, and review and amend their party constitutions if necessary.

At their national congresses last year,

the eight agreed to continue their cooperation with the CPC to promote the ongoing reform in China and the opening up of more sectors to the outside world, as well as modernization guided by socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Future efforts

Considering their respective features and focuses, the eight also came up with plans. For one, the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, which has been working to strengthen ties between Chinese people living on the mainland and in Taiwan, has resolved to forge further links. Central Committee Chairman Wan Xiang said his party would facilitate Taiwan residents' coming to the mainland to study, work, or start businesses. It would also promote exchanges between people across the Taiwan Strait.

The China Zhi Gong Party, another of the eight parties that originated overseas, will step up its services for overseas Chinese returning home, Wan Gang told Xinhua News Agency.

The China Association for Promoting Democracy, which focuses on education and culture, will conduct research on major social and economic issues, such as inadequate and imbalanced development, Central

Committee Chairman Cai Dafeng said.

Building a strong team of competent people is the priority of the eight parties and the ruling party. Wu said the Jiu San Society would recruit not only senior experts and scholars but also young and middle-aged people with ability and potential.

The eight non-communist parties are also important for China to realize a crucial aspiration, known as the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation. One aspect of the dream is that by 2020, in time for the CPC's centenary, China will become a moderately prosperous society in all respects, with a per-capita income double that of what it was in 2010. Another is that by the mid-21st century, when the People's Republic of China celebrates its centenary, China will have become a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful. Xi has been calling for increased cooperation with the eight non-communist parties to jointly achieve the Chinese dream. ■

