Advocacy in Action? Assessing the Effectiveness of UNPO's Efforts for Uyghur Rights in East Turkestan

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Abstract- This study assesses the effectiveness of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization's (UNPO) advocacy efforts on behalf of the Uyghur community in East Turkestan (Xinjiang), China. The UNPO, along with other organizations, has sought to raise awareness of human rights abuses - including mass detention, forced labor, and cultural repression of marginalized communities such as the Uyghurs - and to influence policy in support of this cause. Using quantitative survey data from 416 participants, comprising UNPO staff and Uyghur activists, this research evaluates the perceived effectiveness of UNPO's transnational advocacy strategies across key areas: global awareness-raising, political representation, policy influence, and collaboration with other organizations. The results indicate that while UNPO's efforts to raise awareness of human rights violations affecting marginalized communities are acknowledged, particularly through media and public relations activities, its ability to drive substantial policy changes or international legal actions remains limited. Significant discrepancies were observed between the perceptions of UNPO staff, who rated their advocacy efforts positively, and Uyghur activists, who expressed more critical views on the organization's overall impact.

Keywords: human rights, unrepresented nations and peoples organization, transnational advocacy, advocacy effectiveness, political representation, marginalized communities.

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I. Introduction

The ongoing human rights violations against the Uyghur people in East Turkestan (Xinjiang), China, have garnered increasing international attention in recent years. Reports of mass detention, forced labor, and cultural repression of the Uyghur population have prompted international organizations and advocacy groups to rally for their cause (Amnesty International, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2021). In response to these alarming developments, numerous international organizations and advocacy groups have mobilized to challenge China's actions and advocate for the rights of the Uyghur community. UNPO has been at the forefront of these advocacy efforts, working alongside the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) and other organizations to bring global attention to the plight of the Uyghur people.

While UNPO's efforts to advocate for the rights of the Uyghur community are commendable, assessing the effectiveness of these advocacy strategies is significant for understanding their impact on global awareness and policy change. This paper presents a quantitative analysis of survey data to evaluate how UNPO's advocacy efforts are perceived by different stakeholders, including UNPO staff and Uyghur activists. By analysing key indicators such as the effectiveness of UNPO in raising awareness, influencing policy, and collaborating with other organizations, this study provides insights into the organization's role in advocating for the Uyghur cause.

II. Methodology

This study presents a quantitative analysis to assess the effectiveness of UNPO's advocacy for the Uyghur community. A total of 416 participants were included in the study, divided into two main groups: UNPO staff members and Uyghur activists.

The data were collected through a survey designed to measure perceptions of advocacy effectiveness. Survey methods are a widely used approach in evaluating transnational advocacy, particularly when capturing subjective perceptions and opinions. According to Fowler (2014), surveys are effective tools for collecting data from large groups of participants, especially in cases where subjective insights on attitudes and experiences are required.

The survey employed a Likert scale (ranging from 1 = not effective to 10 = very effective), allowing participants to quantitatively assess various dimensions of UNPO's work. The Likert scale is a widely used method to gauge subjective attitudes and is known for its reliability in social science research (DeVellis, 2017).

The survey was distributed through online platforms, making it accessible to participants regardless of their geographic location. Online data collection has been recognized for its efficiency in

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reaching dispersed populations, as discussed by Wright (2005). This was particularly relevant for this study, which aimed to reach both the Uyghur diaspora and international activists.

The sample was selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals with direct knowledge and experience of UNPO's advocacy efforts for the Uyghur community. Purposive sampling is a technique that allows researchers to focus on participants who are particularly knowledgeable about the topic being studied. As Patton (2015) suggests, this method is highly effective in obtaining rich, context-specific data from informed individuals.

To ensure a diverse and representative sample, demographic information such as age, gender, and professional background was collected. This approach follows the recommendations of Creswell (2013), who argues that diverse sampling increases the generalizability of results and enhances the robustness of conclusions.

The survey explored six key dimensions of UNPO's advocacy strategies:

1. Overall effectiveness of UNPO in advancing Uyghur interests.
2. UNPO's role in raising global awareness.
3. Contribution to Uyghur political representation.
4. Understanding and representation of Uyghur issues.
5. Effectiveness of collaboration with other organizations.
6. Influence on policy changes regarding Uyghur rights.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including the calculation of means (x) and standard deviations (s) to evaluate perceptions of effectiveness across different advocacy areas. Creswell (2014) points out that descriptive statistics are essential in summarizing the central tendencies and variability in participant responses. Additionally, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine differences between UNPO staff and Uyghur activists. Field (2013) argues that ANOVA is a robust method for detecting statistically significant differences between groups in social science research.

A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was adopted to identify meaningful differences between the groups. This standard threshold for statistical significance ensures that the observed differences are not due to chance, as emphasized by Field in his work on statistical methodologies in social research.

This study faces several limitations:

Sampling Limitations: The use of purposive sampling means that the results reflect the perceptions of a specific group, which may limit the generalizability of findings. As Bryman (2016) notes, purposive sampling is well-suited for studies focusing on expert opinions, but it limits broader generalization.

Self-Reported Data: The reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, as participants' responses are based on their subjective perceptions rather than objective measures. Podsakoff et al. (2003) highlight this as a common issue in survey-based research, which can lead to inflated or deflated evaluations.

Scope of the Survey: The survey focused specifically on certain aspects of UNPO's advocacy efforts, such as awareness-raising and collaboration, and may not fully capture the entire range of the organization's activities. Importantly, this research is centered exclusively on the effectiveness of UNPO's advocacy for the Uyghur community in East Turkestan. Advocacy efforts for other UNPO member groups were not considered in this study. Therefore, the results primarily reflect perceptions related to these focal areas and should not be generalized to all of UNPO's advocacy work.

These methodological steps were carefully designed to ensure the scientific rigor of the study. As Bryman and Creswell argue, careful sample selection, appropriate data collection techniques, and rigorous analysis methods are key to producing reliable and valid research findings.

III. Findings

This section presents the findings from the quantitative survey conducted with 416 participants, comprising both UNPO staff and Uyghur activists. The results offer insights into how different stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of UNPO's advocacy efforts across several key areas, including raising global awareness, political representation, collaboration with other organizations, and policy influence. The analysis focuses on participant responses to key dimensions of UNPO's work, revealing both the strengths and challenges of the organization's advocacy strategies for the Uyghur community. The subsequent tables summarize these findings, beginning with a detailed examination of participants' views on the overall effectiveness of UNPO's initiatives.

Table 1: Participants' views on UNPO

	$\underline{x}$	s
Belief in UNPO's effectiveness for Uyghur interests in East Turkestan	6,44	1,85
UNPO's role in increasing global awareness of Uyghur issues	6,61	1,82
UNPO's contribution to Uyghur political representation in East Turkestan	6,50	1,79
UNPO's understanding and representation of Uyghur issues	6,52	1,84
Effectiveness of UNPO's cooperation with other organizations for the Uyghur cause	6,51	1,85
Influence of UNPO's initiatives on policies regarding Uyghur rights	6,54	1,84
UNPO's effectiveness in raising international awareness on Uyghur issues	6,71	2,14
Impact of UNPO's efforts on international legal protections for the Uyghurs	6,80	2,02
Effectiveness of UNPO's media and public relations efforts	6,78	1,95
Quality of UNPO's tracking and reporting on its progress and results	7,50	1,99

Perceptions of Overall Effectiveness

In Table 1, participants gave UNPO a mean score of 6.44 for its overall effectiveness in advancing Uyghur interests in East Turkestan. This moderate rating indicates that while UNPO is perceived as somewhat effective, there is still room for improvement. The score suggests a mixed sentiment regarding UNPO's strategic impact, aligning with Keck and Sikkink's (1998) argument that transnational advocacy organizations often face challenges in transforming high-level initiatives into tangible results on the ground.

Awareness-raising Efforts

UNPO's role in increasing global awareness of Uyghur issues received a mean score of 6.61. This aligns with Sikkink (2011), who emphasizes that awareness campaigns are an essential first step but need sustained political pressure to lead to concrete outcomes. The moderate score reflects that while participants acknowledge UNPO's efforts to raise awareness, there is a sense that more could be done to turn this awareness into actionable change.

Influence on Policy

UNPO's influence on policy regarding Uyghur rights was rated 6.54, indicating a reasonable level of recognition for its policy-related advocacy. However, this score also suggests limitations in UNPO's ability to effect meaningful policy changes, a challenge discussed in Clarke (2008), who notes that organizations advocating against powerful states like China often face obstacles in policy-making arenas.

Collaboration with Other Organizations

The effectiveness of UNPO's collaboration with other organizations for Uyghur advocacy was rated 6.51 in Table 1, showing moderate success. This score suggests that while UNPO has established some partnerships, these collaborations may not yet be perceived as fully effective. Keck and Sikkink emphasize that successful transnational advocacy requires strong, results-driven collaborations that go beyond symbolic partnerships. The moderate score may indicate room for improvement in fostering deeper, more impactful alliances.

Effectiveness in Media and Public Relations

Participants gave a relatively high score of 6.78 for UNPO's media and public relations efforts, suggesting that the organization is perceived as effective in raising global awareness of Uyghur issues through media channels. Finnegan (2020) discusses the critical role media plays in highlighting human rights abuses, and this score reflects UNPO's success in leveraging media for awareness campaigns.

Human Rights and Legal Impact

The highest score in Table 1 is for the impact of UNPO's tracking and reporting on its progress, with a mean of 7.50. This reflects the organization's strength in monitoring its efforts and communicating them to the public, but it also suggests that participants see more value in UNPO's ability to report on progress than in its direct influence on human rights outcomes. As McConnell (2016) argues, while reporting is important, translating advocacy into legal protections and human rights improvements remains a significant challenge for organizations like UNPO. In addition, the impact of UNPO's efforts on international legal protections for the Uyghur community received a moderate score of 6.80, indicating that while some progress has been made, significant challenges remain.

Table 2: Comparison of Participants' Views on UNPO according to Role

	Role	n	$\bar{x}$	s	Min	Max	F	P	Dif.
Belief in UNPO's effectiveness for Uyghur interests in East Turkestan	UNPO staff	134	8,25	0,92	5	10	180,113	0,000*	a-b
	Uyghur activist	145	5,78	1,47	1	9			
UNPO's role in increasing global awareness of Uyghur issues	UNPO staff	134	8,34	0,94	5	10	166,919	0,000*	a-b
	Uyghur activist	145	6,06	1,46	1	9			
UNPO's contribution to Uyghur political representation in East Turkestan	UNPO staff	134	8,24	0,89	6	10	175,502	0,000*	a-b
	Uyghur activist	145	5,92	1,40	1	10			
UNPO's understanding and representation of Uyghur issues	UNPO staff	134	8,35	0,91	6	10	189,459	0,000*	a-b
	Uyghur activist	145	5,86	1,48	1	9			
Effectiveness of UNPO's cooperation with other organizations for Uyghurs	UNPO staff	134	8,33	0,90	6	10	182,625	0,000*	a-b
	Uyghur activist	145	5,83	1,48	1	10			
Influence of UNPO's initiatives on policies regarding Uyghur rights	UNPO staff	134	8,33	0,93	6	10	175,344	0,000*	a-b
	Uyghur activist	145	5,83	1,53	1	10			
UNPO's international awareness-raising on Uyghur issues	UNPO staff	134	8,87	0,85	6	10	207,690	0,000*	a-b
	Uyghur activist	145	6,05	1,63	2	10			
Impact of UNPO's efforts on international legal actions for Uyghurs	UNPO staff	134	8,88	0,64	5	10	236,872	0,000*	a-b
	Uyghur activist	145	6,21	1,50	1	9			
Effectiveness of UNPO's media and public relations efforts	UNPO staff	134	8,73	0,71	6	10	207,484	0,000*	a-b
	Uyghur activist	145	6,23	1,37	2	8			
Quality of UNPO's tracking and reporting on its progress and results	UNPO staff	134	9,46	0,68	7	10	258,822	0,000*	a-b
	Uyghur activist	145	7,26	1,12	2	10			

* p<0,05

Perceptions of Overall Effectiveness

Table 2 shows a notable difference in how UNPO staff and Uyghur activists perceive the organization's overall effectiveness. UNPO staff gave a mean score of 8.25, while Uyghur activists rated it significantly lower at 5.78. This gap in perception reflects what Keck and Sikkink describe as a common challenge for transnational advocacy networks, where internal actors may have a more optimistic view of their strategic impact, while those affected by the advocacy may feel that these efforts have not sufficiently translated into concrete outcomes.

Awareness-raising Efforts

In terms of awareness-raising, UNPO staff rated their efforts very highly (mean score: 8.34), while Uyghur activists were more critical, with a score of 6.06. This difference suggests that although UNPO has successfully raised international awareness through events like the Brussels Demonstration (UNPO, 2018), Uyghur activists may be concerned that these efforts have not resulted in significant on-ground changes, a common issue discussed by Chen (2014) in the context of advocacy for marginalized communities.

Influence on Policy

The influence of UNPO's initiatives on policies regarding Uyghur rights was also rated significantly higher by staff (mean score: 8.33) than by activists (mean score: 5.83). Keck and Sikkink argue that while international advocacy can influence global discourse, achieving actual policy changes, especially against powerful states like China, is difficult. This gap reflects the broader challenge of translating international advocacy into tangible policy reforms.

Collaboration with Other Organizations

UNPO staff rated the organization's collaboration with other groups at 8.33, while Uyghur activists gave a lower score of 5.83. This suggests that while UNPO values its partnerships with organizations like the World Uyghur Congress, Uyghur activists may feel that these collaborations are not achieving the necessary impact. Bob (2005) highlights that symbolic partnerships are often not enough to bring about meaningful change.

Effectiveness in Media and Public Relations

The effectiveness of UNPO's media efforts was rated highly by staff (8.73) but less favourably by activists (6.23). While UNPO has succeeded in gaining media attention, as noted by Finnegan, the lower rating from activists suggests that these efforts have not yet translated into real change for the Uyghur community, reflecting Keck and Sikkink's assertion that media campaigns need to be followed by sustained advocacy for tangible outcomes.

Human Rights and Legal Impact

UNPO staff rated the organization's impact on international legal actions with a high score of 8.88, while activists provided a more modest rating of 6.21. This discrepancy highlights the challenge of achieving meaningful legal outcomes, especially in cases involving powerful states like China. As Sikkink discusses, legal advocacy often takes time, and while UNPO may be making progress, Uyghur activists may not yet see the results on the ground.

Table 3: Participants' views on the Impact of UNPO's Efforts on Human Rights in East Turkestan

Impact of UNPO's initiatives on human rights in East Turkestan	n	%
No observed impact	38	9,13
Increased global awareness of human rights violations due to UNPO's efforts	155	37,26
Policy changes or international support resulting from UNPO's initiatives	226	54,33
Direct support to affected communities from UNPO's actions	118	28,37
Improved visibility and representation in international forums through UNPO's advocacy	95	22,84

Note: Participants were allowed to select up to two options in this question.

Perceptions of Overall Effectiveness

In Table 3, 54.33% of participants believed that UNPO's efforts led to policy changes or international support, which is a positive indication of the organization's overall effectiveness. However, 9.13% of respondents saw no observed impact, suggesting that while UNPO is making some headway, its efforts may not be as widely felt as intended. This is consistent with Keck and Sikkink's findings that international advocacy can sometimes struggle to create on-the-ground impact in challenging political environments.

Awareness-raising Efforts

A significant portion of participants (37.26%) credited UNPO with increasing global awareness of human rights violations in East Turkestan. This finding supports the notion that awareness-raising has been one of UNPO's key strengths. However, Pils (2022) argues that awareness alone is insufficient without concrete legal and political actions, and this is reflected in the fact that only 22.84% of participants saw improved visibility in international forums.

Influence on Policy

The data from Table 3 shows that 54.33% of participants acknowledged that policy changes or international support resulted from UNPO's initiatives. This is a promising figure and suggests that UNPO has had some success in influencing policy, despite the challenges outlined by Clarke in advocating against a powerful state like China. However, the remaining 45.67% of participants did not observe significant policy outcomes, indicating that there is still work to be done in this area.

Collaboration with Other Organizations

The effectiveness of UNPO's collaborations was not explicitly highlighted in Table 3, but the overall sense of progress in terms of policy changes suggests that these collaborations may be yielding some results. However, the limited visibility reported by participants (only 22.84% seeing improved representation) suggests that UNPO's partnerships with other organizations might need to be strengthened for greater impact. Tarrow (2005) highlights that successful transnational activism relies on strong and focused partnerships that prioritize common goals and tangible outcomes.

Effectiveness in Media and Public Relations

Although media and public relations were not the primary focus of Table 3, the fact that 37.26% of participants recognized UNPO's role in raising awareness suggests that the organization's media efforts have been somewhat effective. This aligns with Keck and Sikkink's argument that media visibility is an essential component of advocacy, but as only 22.84% saw improved international visibility, it indicates that media efforts alone are not enough to create significant policy changes.

Human Rights and Legal Impact

The fact that 54.33% of participants observed policy changes or international support as a result of UNPO's efforts is a strong indicator of its positive impact on human rights. However, 9.13% noted no observed impact, reflecting the ongoing challenges in achieving real-world legal protections, as highlighted by Sikkink. While the advocacy efforts may be effective in raising awareness and building international support, translating this into legal protections for Uyghurs in East Turkestan remains a challenge.

IV. Discussion

The findings of this study provide insights into the perceptions of both UNPO staff and Uyghur activists regarding the effectiveness of UNPO's advocacy efforts. While UNPO has made notable progress in several

areas, the results indicate significant challenges that the organization faces, especially in translating its advocacy strategies into tangible outcomes on the ground. The following discussion interprets these results in the context of existing literature, considering the methodological findings from the study.

Perceptions of Overall Effectiveness

The disparity between the perceptions of UNPO staff and Uyghur activists regarding the organization's overall effectiveness is one of the most striking findings. Table 2 highlights a significant gap, with UNPO staff giving an average score of 8.25, while Uyghur activists rated the effectiveness much lower, at 5.78. This gap reflects a common challenge in transnational advocacy organizations, where internal actors, such as staff members, may have a more favourable view of their impact due to their involvement in strategic planning and decision-making. On the other hand, those who experience the outcomes of these efforts directly, such as the Uyghur activists, may have more grounded and critical perspectives, particularly if they do not perceive immediate or tangible improvements in their situation.

This finding is consistent with broader challenges faced by transnational advocacy organizations, as noted by Keck and Sikkink, who argue that while advocacy networks can shape global norms and awareness, translating these efforts into meaningful policy changes often proves difficult, especially when opposing powerful state actors like China. Clarke similarly notes that geopolitical constraints frequently limit the ability of advocacy organizations to achieve substantive political outcomes, a challenge that is evidently present in the case of UNPO's efforts for the Uyghur community.

Awareness-raising Efforts

UNPO's efforts in raising global awareness about the human rights violations in East Turkestan were generally rated positively, particularly by UNPO staff, who gave an average score of 8.34 (as shown in Table 2). This suggests that the organization has been successful in bringing international attention to the plight of the Uyghur people, a vital first step in any advocacy campaign as noted by Sikkink. However, the more moderate score from Uyghur activists (6.06) indicates that while awareness has been raised, this has not yet resulted in meaningful changes on the ground.

This finding aligns with Chen, who argues that awareness campaigns must be followed by sustained political action to effect change. The lower scores from activists suggest that the global attention brought to the Uyghur issue through UNPO's media and public relations efforts has not yet translated into concrete actions that address the human rights violations in East Turkestan.

Influence on Policy

The influence of UNPO's advocacy on policy regarding Uyghur rights presents one of the most critical areas of analysis. The study shows a notable difference in perception between UNPO staff (mean score: 8.33) and Uyghur activists (mean score: 5.83). This gap highlights the challenges of achieving policy change, particularly when advocating against a powerful state like China. As Keck and Sikkink and Clarke suggest, while transnational advocacy networks can successfully raise awareness and exert pressure, achieving policy changes in international contexts, especially those involving influential states, is a complex and often slow process.

The findings from Table 3 reveal that only 54.33% of participants felt that policy changes or international support had resulted from UNPO's efforts, suggesting that while there has been some success, there is still significant work to be done. The fact that 45.67% of participants did not observe substantial policy changes highlights the difficulty UNPO faces in securing concrete policy outcomes. This challenge is exacerbated by the geopolitical and economic power of China, which has stymied efforts by advocacy organizations to achieve substantive international action.

Collaboration with Other Organizations

UNPO's collaboration with other organizations was perceived as moderately effective by both staff and activists. The moderate score of 6.51 in Table 1 suggests that while UNPO has established some partnerships, these collaborations may not yet be yielding the level of impact needed to effect real change. As Bob points out, symbolic partnerships are often insufficient in generating meaningful outcomes; effective collaborations require deeper engagement and more sustained, results-oriented efforts.

Moreover, the lower score from Uyghur activists (5.83 in Table 2) indicates that the current level of collaboration may not be meeting the expectations of those directly affected by the advocacy efforts. Strengthening these partnerships, particularly with organizations like the World Uyghur Congress and other international human rights groups, could help UNPO enhance its capacity to address the specific needs of the Uyghur community.

Effectiveness in Media and Public Relations

UNPO's media and public relations efforts received relatively high scores from both staff (8.73) and activists (6.23). This suggests that the organization has been successful in utilizing media to raise awareness about the Uyghur issue, as discussed by Finnegan. However, as Keck and Sikkink argue, while media visibility is important, it must be accompanied by sustained advocacy efforts that push for tangible outcomes. The lower rating from Uyghur activists

suggests that while media attention has been effective in raising global awareness, it has not yet led to significant policy changes or on-the-ground improvements for the Uyghur people.

Human Rights and Legal Impact

The most significant area where UNPO's efforts are perceived positively is in its ability to monitor and report on its progress, with a mean score of 7.50 in Table 1. This suggests that participants value UNPO's transparency and communication of its advocacy efforts. However, the more modest ratings on the organization's impact on international legal protections (6.80) reflect the broader challenges in converting advocacy into legal outcomes. As Sikkink points out, legal advocacy often takes time, especially when dealing with entrenched state interests and complex international legal frameworks.

The fact that only 9.13% of participants in Table 3 reported 'no observed impact' from UNPO's efforts suggests that while progress has been slow, there are signs of movement in the right direction. However, the overall challenge remains: how to turn increased awareness and international support into concrete legal protections and human rights improvements for the Uyghur people.

V. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive quantitative assessment of the effectiveness of UNPO's advocacy efforts for the Uyghur community. The findings offer a nuanced understanding of how UNPO's strategies are perceived by both internal stakeholders (UNPO staff) and external stakeholders (Uyghur activists), highlighting several key strengths and areas for improvement.

Firstly, the results show that UNPO has been successful in raising global awareness of the human rights violations faced by the Uyghur people. Both UNPO staff and activists recognized the organization's ability to attract international attention to the Uyghur cause. This finding aligns with the literature on transnational advocacy, which emphasizes the importance of awareness-raising as a foundational step in human rights campaigns.

However, while awareness has been successfully raised, the study reveals significant challenges in translating this awareness into concrete policy changes. The disparity between the perceptions of UNPO staff and Uyghur activists - particularly regarding the effectiveness of policy advocacy - highlights the difficulty of achieving meaningful outcomes, especially when advocating against a powerful state like China. Only 54.33% of participants reported seeing policy changes or international support as a result of UNPO's efforts, suggesting that there is still considerable work to be done in this area.

Moreover, collaboration with other organizations has been identified as an essential but moderately effective aspect of UNPO's advocacy. While partnerships have been established, the findings indicate that these collaborations may not yet be fully optimized for impact. Strengthening these alliances, particularly with key stakeholders such as the World Uyghur Congress and other international human rights organizations, will be essential for advancing more impactful advocacy outcomes.

The media and public relations efforts of UNPO were generally rated positively, reflecting the organization's success in leveraging media platforms to amplify the Uyghur cause. However, as noted by both activists and staff, media efforts alone are insufficient without sustained political action. As Keck and Sikkink argue, while media visibility is an important tool for advocacy, it must be accompanied by strategic actions aimed at achieving tangible legal and policy outcomes.

One of the most significant challenges highlighted by the study is the gap between awareness and legal impact. While participants appreciated UNPO's transparency and ability to track and report on its progress, there is a clear need for the organization to focus more on converting advocacy efforts into concrete legal protections for the Uyghur community. As Sikkink discusses, legal advocacy often requires time and persistent effort, particularly when facing entrenched state interests. UNPO must continue its efforts to push for international legal actions that hold China accountable for its human rights violations.

Based on the findings, several key recommendations can be made for UNPO's future advocacy strategies:

Strengthen Collaboration: UNPO should prioritize building deeper, more results-driven partnerships with other organizations, particularly those with the political influence and resources to advocate effectively at the international level. While UNPO has already established important relationships with organizations like the World Uyghur Congress, other human rights groups, international institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), its collaboration efforts should be enhanced.

The current focus should shift toward fostering partnerships that are action-oriented and strategically designed to achieve tangible, long-term outcomes for the Uyghur people. Collaboration with international bodies like the UN and EU offers the opportunity to shape global discourses, but greater coordination and joint action with other transnational actors are essential for converting advocacy into measurable policy impacts.

Additionally, effective collaboration requires aligning with partners who possess the necessary political leverage to influence decision-making processes within institutions like the UN Human Rights

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Council and the EU Parliament. For instance, these collaborations should aim to advocate for stronger human rights resolutions, push for international investigations, or impose sanctions on violators of Uyghur rights. UNPO should work to cultivate alliances with international legal organizations, policy-makers, and influential governments that are in positions to implement meaningful diplomatic or economic pressure on states like China.

A key aspect of improving collaboration is also setting clear, measurable objectives with each partner organization. These goals may include specific policy shifts, initiating legal proceedings against human rights violators, or strengthening media and public relations efforts to sustain international pressure. UNPO's work in the UN and EU provides a foundation, but there is room for deeper, results-driven partnerships that not only raise awareness but also lead to political representation, sanctions, and legal protections for the Uyghur and Tibetan populations.

Focus on Policy and Legal Advocacy: While UNPO's awareness campaigns have been effective in bringing global attention to the human rights violations in East Turkestan, there remains a significant need to translate this awareness into concrete policy and legal outcomes. Raising international consciousness is only the first step; to bring about lasting change, UNPO must intensify its efforts to influence policy at both the national and international levels. This requires a strategic shift towards engaging more deeply with international legal frameworks, as well as advocating for the implementation of binding resolutions, sanctions, and other enforcement mechanisms against states violating human rights.

To achieve this, UNPO should prioritize working more closely with international legal experts, human rights lawyers, and policymakers who are positioned to push for stronger legal actions. Partnering more effectively with organizations such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and human rights bodies like the UN Human Rights Council, UNPO could advocate for legal cases that hold perpetrators accountable for crimes against humanity, such as the reported mass detentions, forced labor, and cultural erasure of the Uyghur people. Strategic litigation, combined with a robust international legal campaign, could pressure states and international bodies to adopt tougher measures against those committing rights violations.

Additionally, UNPO should focus on securing political support for international sanctions, including economic and diplomatic measures, targeting those responsible for human rights abuses in East Turkestan. Working with sympathetic governments, especially those within the European Union and other democratic coalitions, could enhance the chances of introducing sanctions or legal mechanisms such as Magnitsky-style laws[1] that target individuals and entities involved in the repression of Uyghur population. These efforts should be aimed at applying sustained pressure on China, urging it to comply with international human rights norms and potentially altering its policies through economic and diplomatic consequences.

Align Strategies with Uyghur Activists' Needs: The disparity between the perceptions of UNPO staff and Uyghur activists, as indicated by survey data, highlights a critical gap in how advocacy efforts are experienced and evaluated by those on the ground. While UNPO staff may view their work in international forums and awareness campaigns as effective, Uyghur activists often express concerns that these efforts do not sufficiently address the urgent and practical needs of the Uyghur community. This discrepancy highlights the importance of ensuring that advocacy strategies are more closely aligned with the real-world concerns and priorities of Uyghur activists, who face the direct consequences of China's repressive policies.

To bridge this gap, UNPO must strengthen its communication channels with Uyghur activists and community leaders, ensuring that their voices are central to the development of advocacy strategies. One way to achieve this is by establishing regular consultations with Uyghur activists to gather feedback on the organization's priorities, messaging, and tactics. These consultations would allow UNPO to adapt its advocacy to better reflect the immediate needs and demands of the Uyghur community, such as amplifying calls for the release of detainees, halting forced labor, and protecting Uyghur cultural identity.

Additionally, by integrating the lived experiences and first-hand knowledge of Uyghur activists, UNPO can make its campaigns more contextually relevant and impactful. Activists on the ground often have a clearer understanding of the challenges faced by their communities and can offer practical insights into how international advocacy can support local resistance efforts. Strengthening this collaboration would ensure that advocacy is not only conducted in international arenas but is also grounded in the everyday realities of Uyghurs facing repression.

UNPO could also consider co-developing specific campaigns or initiatives with Uyghur organizations, such as the World Uyghur Congress, to ensure that its strategies are better attuned to the community's evolving needs. This joint effort could involve working on projects such as documenting human rights abuses, providing legal support to Uyghur refugees, or amplifying Uyghur voices in international

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[1] Magnitsky-style laws refer to legal frameworks that allow governments to impose sanctions on foreign individuals and entities responsible for human rights abuses and corruption. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnitsky_Act

media. By directly involving Uyghur activists in the design and execution of these initiatives, UNPO can help foster a sense of ownership and agency within the community, while ensuring that the organization's efforts have the greatest possible impact.

Expand Political Alliances: Given the significant geopolitical challenges of advocating against a powerful state like China, expanding UNPO's network of political allies is critical to advancing the cause of the Uyghur people. China's economic influence, strategic partnerships, and political leverage within international organizations present formidable barriers to advocacy efforts aimed at addressing human rights abuses in East Turkestan. To counter these challenges, UNPO must broaden its alliances by actively engaging with a wider array of sympathetic governments, international organizations, and key UN bodies capable of exerting meaningful diplomatic and political pressure on China.

To achieve this, UNPO should strategically identify and cultivate relationships with governments that have a demonstrated commitment to human rights and are willing to challenge China's policies, even at the risk of economic or political repercussions. Countries that have already taken a stand on human rights violations, such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and members of the European Union, are natural allies in this effort. These nations have imposed sanctions or taken diplomatic actions in response to China's treatment of the Uyghurs, and further collaboration with their governments could help amplify pressure on Beijing. UNPO could work closely with these governments to coordinate joint advocacy efforts, such as presenting unified resolutions at international forums, applying economic sanctions, or supporting legal actions against Chinese officials implicated in human rights abuses.

Additionally, UNPO should seek alliances with other countries and regional blocs that have a growing interest in human rights advocacy but have not yet taken a strong stance on China's actions. This includes engaging with countries in the Global South that might have historical ties to anti-colonial movements or a strong record of supporting self-determination, as they could become valuable advocates for the Uyghur cause within multilateral organizations. By diversifying its base of political support, UNPO can build a more global coalition that spans different regions and political systems, thereby increasing the legitimacy and scope of its advocacy.

Beyond national governments, UNPO should also focus on building stronger partnerships with key international organizations and human rights bodies. The United Nations Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights are essential platforms where the plight of the Uyghurs can be raised at the highest levels of global diplomacy. By working more closely with these bodies, UNPO can push for stronger investigations into human rights violations, support fact-finding missions, and advocate for urgent international responses. Furthermore, UNPO should advocate for the appointment of special envoys or rapporteurs dedicated to investigating and reporting on the human rights situation in East Turkestan. Such efforts can help increase the visibility of the issue and maintain international pressure on China.

In addition to working with sympathetic states and international bodies, UNPO must also engage with non-state actors and global advocacy coalitions. Building alliances with global NGOs, think tanks, and civil society organizations that focus on human rights, international law, and minority rights can further amplify the Uyghur cause. These organizations often possess the expertise and influence needed to mobilize public opinion, generate media coverage, and support legal actions in international courts. By forming coalitions with these groups, UNPO can ensure that the Uyghur issue remains on the global agenda and that advocacy efforts are coordinated, comprehensive, and effective.

Moreover, engaging with diaspora communities and leveraging their international networks can provide additional support to UNPO's political strategies. Uyghur diaspora communities, along with Tibetan and other marginalized groups represented by UNPO, can serve as powerful advocates, helping to raise awareness and influence public policy in their host countries. Coordinating with these communities to launch advocacy campaigns, participate in international conferences, and engage with policymakers can help solidify political alliances and increase the global impact of UNPO's work.

In conclusion, this study highlights both the strengths and limitations of UNPO's advocacy for the Uyghur community. While the organization has made significant strides in raising awareness and collaborating with international actors, its impact on policy and legal outcomes remains limited. Moving forward, UNPO must focus on strengthening partnerships, aligning its strategies more closely with the needs of Uyghur activists, and pushing for more concrete policy changes at the international level. By addressing these challenges, UNPO can enhance its effectiveness and continue its vital work in advocating for the rights and freedoms of the unrepresented people.

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