

From Reactive Activism to Deliberative Strategy

A Scientific Decision-Making Protocol for UK-Based Lion and Sun Civic Organisations

Prepared as a neutral governance framework for diaspora organisations supporting a peaceful transition from the Islamic Republic towards secular democratic choice, followed by a free ballot on constitutional form.

Scientific question	How can politically diverse diaspora organisations make legitimate, transparent, risk-aware collective decisions under uncertainty without drifting into reactive factionalism?
Primary output	A reproducible decision protocol combining brainstorming, Nominal Group Technique, Delphi-style revision, Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis, risk review, and recorded voting.
Intended users	Civic groups, activists, local committees, campaign organisers, communication teams, and umbrella councils.
Normative boundary	The protocol does not decide ideology. It decides process: how proposals are heard, scored, amended, approved, paused, or rejected.

Abstract

This paper addresses a recurrent problem in diaspora political mobilisation: the gap between the unifying aspiration of a national transitional figure and the reputational effects produced by decentralised activist behaviour. The case considered is the UK-based Lion and Sun movement and the broader support for Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi as a transitional figure who remains outside party politics while advocating a secular democratic transition and subsequent ballot-box determination of constitutional form. The paper does not adjudicate political ideology. Instead, it develops a scientific and operational framework for collective decision-making by civic organisations. The proposed model combines structured brainstorming, the Nominal Group Technique, Delphi-style anonymous revision, Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis, risk matrices, documented dissent, conflict-of-interest declaration, and transparent voting thresholds. The objective is to replace impulsive action, factional purity tests, and informal dominance with deliberation, auditability, proportionality, and organisational discipline. The proposed protocol is especially relevant when groups must decide whether to attend rallies, endorse public events, display national symbols, issue statements, cooperate with other organisations, or respond to media narratives. The paper concludes that mature political organisation requires not merely enthusiasm or loyalty, but a repeatable institutional method through which disagreement is made visible, risks are scored, decisions are recorded, and participants accept the procedural legitimacy of outcomes.

Keywords: diaspora politics; consensus methods; Delphi method; Nominal Group Technique; MCDA; risk matrix; democratic governance; constitutional transition; Lion and Sun movement; organisational legitimacy

1. Introduction: the problem of political decision-making under reputational risk

Political movements often fail not because their stated destination is unclear, but because their operational choices become inconsistent with that destination. A national movement that aspires to secular democracy, national reconciliation, and constitutional choice must also embody democratic procedure in its own internal behaviour. When decision-making is informal, rapid, emotional, or dominated by the loudest actors, movements may become vulnerable to strategic drift: actions taken by decentralised supporters can redefine the public image of the whole movement, even when the central figure or leadership has not authorised those actions.

The Lion and Sun movement contains a wide spectrum of Iranian national, liberal, conservative, monarchist, republican, secular, human-rights, and anti-Islamic-Republic sentiments. This diversity is a potential strength only if it is governed by process. Without process, diversity can become noise; grievance can become factionalism; historical anger can pull the movement away from the political centre; and symbolic acts may produce reputational consequences disproportionate to the original intention.

The immediate lesson is institutional: decisions about public attendance, coalition, slogans, flags, speakers, media engagement, and alliance-building should not be made through spontaneous social-media pressure or individual enthusiasm alone. They require a reproducible decision architecture.

2. Scientific question and working hypothesis

2.1 Scientific question

What structured decision-making protocol can enable Iranian diaspora civic organisations in the United Kingdom to make transparent, inclusive, risk-aware, and procedurally legitimate decisions about public

political action while preserving the broad, non-party, national-reconciliation role of Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi as a transitional figure?

2.2 Working hypothesis

A hybrid protocol that combines structured idea generation, anonymous scoring, facilitated deliberation, explicit risk-benefit calculation, supermajority voting for high-risk decisions, and recorded dissent will reduce reactive behaviour, improve legitimacy, and increase compliance with collectively agreed outcomes.

3. Background: disparity between leadership ambition and activist behaviour

Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi has repeatedly been positioned by supporters as a unifying national figure rather than as the leader of a narrow party faction. In that framing, his political value lies in convening a broad coalition for transition, secular democratic institutions, and eventual public determination of constitutional form. The organisational challenge is that supporters can unintentionally reframe such a figure through their own public associations. If activists who support him repeatedly appear within highly polarised contexts, media observers and opponents may attribute that polarisation to the wider movement.

This creates a gap between strategic intent and visible behaviour. The strategic intent is centre-building, national reconciliation, and preparation for democratic transition. The visible behaviour may sometimes be anger-driven, identity-driven, or reputationally high-risk. The danger is not simply ideological disagreement; it is loss of control over public meaning.

The proposed solution is not to silence activists. It is to organise disagreement. A mature movement allows dissent, but it does not allow high-risk collective action to emerge without due process, documentation, and accountability.

4. Literature-informed decision-making tools

4.1 Brainstorming

Brainstorming is useful at the earliest stage when the group needs to generate options without premature judgement. Its weakness is that unstructured brainstorming can be dominated by confident speakers, hierarchy, charisma, or emotional momentum. Therefore, brainstorming should be used only as the opening stage, not as the decision itself.

4.2 Nominal Group Technique

The Nominal Group Technique is a structured consensus method that usually includes silent idea generation, round-robin sharing, clarification, and voting or ranking. It is particularly useful when participants have different power, confidence, or rhetorical ability, because the method creates space for each participant to contribute before the group converges. Published methodological guidance describes NGT and Delphi as consensus methods for generating ideas and determining priorities among expert or stakeholder groups [1].

4.3 Delphi method

The Delphi method was developed at RAND and is used to build expert or stakeholder consensus through repeated questionnaires, anonymised feedback, and revision across rounds. RAND describes Delphi as a process in which participants answer questionnaires, receive group-response feedback, discuss or

reconsider, and revise their answers toward possible consensus [2]. In political and civic settings, a Delphi-style approach can reduce personality conflict because the first scoring round can be anonymous.

4.4 Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis

Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis is useful when decisions involve competing objectives, such as visibility, moral clarity, safety, coalition-building, media impact, legal risk, reputational risk, and strategic alignment. MCDA requires the group to state criteria explicitly, assign weights, score options, and compare alternatives. A major advantage is that disagreement becomes numerical and inspectable rather than merely emotional. ISPOR guidance notes that structured explicit approaches can improve complex decisions involving multiple and conflicting objectives [3].

4.5 Risk matrix and red-team review

A risk matrix separates likelihood from impact. This matters because some risks are unlikely but catastrophic, while others are likely but tolerable. A red-team review is a structured challenge exercise in which a subgroup asks how a proposed action could fail, be misunderstood, be exploited by opponents, or harm the movement's legitimacy.

4.6 Voting methods and legitimacy

Voting is not merely a count; it is a legitimacy mechanism. International democratic practice recognises multiple direct-democratic mechanisms, including referendums and initiatives, in which the public votes directly on constitutional, legal, treaty, or policy questions [4]. Civic organisations cannot replicate a national referendum, but they can learn from democratic design: define the electorate, define the question, publish the threshold, protect minority expression, and record the result before action is taken.

5. Proposed protocol: the Lion and Sun Deliberative Decision Framework

The proposed framework has ten stages. It is designed for decisions such as whether to join a demonstration, cooperate with another political group, issue a public statement, use a specific slogan, display symbols at an event, invite a speaker, or respond to a media controversy.

Stage	Purpose	Method	Output
1. Proposal registration	Prevent informal decision drift	Written motion submitted on a standard form	A defined decision question
2. Conflict declaration	Protect legitimacy	Members declare personal, financial, organisational, or reputational interests	Conflict log
3. Information pack	Create a common evidence base	Collect factual claims, legal context, media risk, stakeholder map	Briefing note
4. Brainstorming	Generate options	Silent notes plus facilitated sharing	Option list
5. NGT prioritisation	Reduce dominance bias	Round-robin clarification and preliminary ranking	Shortlist
6. Delphi round	Allow anonymous reconsideration	Anonymous scoring, feedback, revision	Consensus map
7. MCDA scoring	Quantify trade-offs	Weighted criteria and option scoring	Benefit-risk score
8. Red-team review	Identify failure modes	Challenge assumptions and public interpretation	Risk register
9. Vote	Decide with threshold clarity	Simple majority, qualified majority, or supermajority depending on risk	Adopt / amend / pause / reject
10. Publication and compliance	Ensure discipline	Decision record circulated to members	Minute, rationale, dissent note, action plan

6. Scoring model: calculating whether benefits outweigh risks

The scoring model should be simple enough to use in a meeting but robust enough to prevent impulsive decisions. Each option is scored against benefit criteria and risk criteria. Benefit criteria are scored positively. Risk criteria are scored negatively after multiplying likelihood by impact. The group should agree the weights before scoring the options.

6.1 Benefit criteria

- Alignment with the movement's declared objective: secular democracy, national unity, and future constitutional choice.
- Ability to broaden support beyond the existing activist base.
- Compatibility with Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi's non-party, unifying role.
- Positive media clarity: the public can understand the message without reputational confusion.
- Protection of Iranian national symbols from being absorbed into unrelated polarised narratives.
- Safety and legal compliance for participants.
- Coalition-building value across monarchists, republicans, liberals, conservatives, secular activists, and human-rights groups.

6.2 Risk criteria

- Reputational capture by far-right, far-left, sectarian, foreign-state, or extremist narratives.
- Confusion between Iranian national-democratic aims and unrelated domestic political conflicts in the host country.
- Internal fragmentation and accusation cycles after the decision.
- Media mislabelling of the Lion and Sun movement as an ideological fringe rather than a broad national-democratic movement.
- Legal, safeguarding, public-order, or professional consequences for participants.
- Loss of confidence among moderate Iranians, host-country institutions, or international allies.
- Contradiction between the public act and the declared goal of national reconciliation.

6.3 MCDA scoring formula

For each option, calculate a weighted benefit score and a weighted risk score. A decision should proceed only if the net score is positive and no red-line risk is triggered.

$$\text{Net Decision Score} = \Sigma(\text{Benefit Score} \times \text{Benefit Weight}) - \Sigma(\text{Risk Likelihood} \times \text{Risk Impact} \times \text{Risk Weight})$$

Suggested scoring: each criterion is scored from 0 to 5. Weight is scored from 1 to 3. Likelihood and impact are each scored from 1 to 5. A red-line risk includes credible association with violence, racism, sectarian hatred, illegal conduct, intimidation, or a context that predictably destroys the movement's central democratic message.

6.4 Example scoring table

Criterion	Type	Score	Weight	Weighted value	Comment
Strategic alignment	Benefit	0-5	1-3	Score x weight	Does the action support national reconciliation and democratic transition?
Public clarity	Benefit	0-5	1-3	Score x weight	Will observers understand the Iranian message?

Criterion	Type	Score	Weight	Weighted value	Comment
Coalition breadth	Benefit	0-5	1-3	Score x weight	Does it include or alienate moderates?
Reputational capture	Risk	L x I	1-3	Likelihood x impact x weight	Could the symbol or message be absorbed by another political agenda?
Safety/legal risk	Risk	L x I	1-3	Likelihood x impact x weight	Are there public-order, employment, or safeguarding risks?
Internal fracture	Risk	L x I	1-3	Likelihood x impact x weight	Will the decision create avoidable division?

7. Voting thresholds and decision rules

A single voting rule is insufficient. Different decisions require different thresholds. Low-risk administrative choices can be made by ordinary majority. High-risk public-symbolic decisions require qualified majority or supermajority because the whole movement may carry the reputational consequences.

Decision category	Examples	Required threshold	Reason
Routine	Meeting time, internal task allocation	Simple majority: >50%	Low external risk
Public communication	Statement, interview line, social media campaign	Qualified majority: >=60%	Moderate reputational risk
Coalition or event attendance	Joining rallies, co-branding, joint platforms	Supermajority: >=70% plus red-team clearance	High reputational risk
Use of national symbols in contested spaces	Lion and Sun flag, Crown Prince image, national slogans	Supermajority: >=75% plus safeguarding and media plan	Very high symbolic risk
Emergency response	Rapid rebuttal to media or security incident	Delegated crisis committee with retrospective ratification	Time-sensitive, but must be recorded

For high-risk decisions, abstentions should be recorded separately from votes against. A decision should not proceed merely because opponents abstained in frustration. Where participation is below quorum, the decision should be postponed unless there is a genuine emergency.

8. Minority protection, dissent, and compliance

A mature organisation distinguishes between dissent before the decision and compliance after the decision. Before the decision, dissent is a duty: members should identify risks, contradictions, and alternative strategies. After a procedurally legitimate decision, members should either comply, record conscientious objection, or step aside from implementation without sabotaging the agreed action.

The decision record should include: the motion; participants; declared conflicts; evidence considered; options; scores; dissenting arguments; amendments; vote totals; final decision; implementation owner; review date; and communication line. This protects both majority and minority positions. It also creates institutional memory so that future activists can learn from consequences rather than repeat disputes.

9. Application to public rallies and host-country political events

Attendance at host-country rallies requires special scrutiny because the symbolic meaning of Iranian flags and portraits may be interpreted through the host country's political categories. Even when participants intend to express support for Iranian freedom, media and public observers may interpret attendance as endorsement of the rally organiser, slogans, crowd behaviour, or ideological framing. Therefore, such decisions should be treated as high-risk public-symbolic decisions.

Before attending any external rally, the organisation should ask: Who called the event? What is the primary message? What previous public reputation does the organiser have? Will Iranian symbols be visually separable from the host-country political message? Can the group issue a clear independent statement? Are there safety or professional risks for participants? What headline would an adversarial newspaper write the next day?

This does not mean all external participation is wrong. It means the decision must be procedurally defensible. The movement should be able to say: we considered the benefits, measured the risks, heard dissent, voted according to a published threshold, documented the rationale, and accepted the result.

10. Proposed standing structures

To avoid repeating emergency improvisation, UK-based civic organisations can establish the following standing bodies:

- Decision Secretariat: receives motions, prepares agendas, circulates evidence packs, records minutes.
- Facilitation Panel: trained neutral moderators who run NGT and deliberation sessions.
- Evidence and Verification Cell: checks factual claims, legal context, media reports, and reputational risks.
- Red-Team Committee: stress-tests proposals and drafts risk registers.
- Electoral Officer: manages anonymous scoring, ballots, quorum, and vote records.
- Ethics and Conduct Panel: handles conflicts of interest, harassment, intimidation, and procedural complaints.
- Communications Committee: drafts public explanations after decisions are made.

11. Standard operating procedure for one decision cycle

1. A member submits a written motion using the decision template.
2. The Secretariat classifies the motion as routine, public communication, coalition/event, symbolic high-risk, or emergency.
3. An evidence pack is circulated at least 48 hours before deliberation unless an emergency threshold is met.
4. Participants declare conflicts of interest and confirm whether they have decision rights.
5. The facilitator conducts silent idea generation and round-robin sharing.
6. The group clarifies options without advocacy speeches.
7. Participants complete anonymous preliminary scoring.
8. The Secretariat shares anonymised score distributions and main reasons.
9. Participants deliberate and may amend the motion.
10. The red-team presents the risk register and red-line concerns.
11. Participants complete final MCDA scoring and vote.
12. The decision is recorded, circulated, and reviewed after implementation.

12. Decision template for immediate use

Field	Required entry
Motion title	Clear title of the proposed action
Decision question	Example: Should the organisation attend Event X with Lion and Sun flags?
Proposer and seconder	Names and roles
Decision category	Routine / communication / coalition-event / symbolic high-risk / emergency
Evidence considered	Links, documents, statements, legal advice, media context
Options	Proceed / proceed with conditions / issue statement only / postpone / reject
Benefit criteria and scores	Attach scoring sheet
Risk criteria and scores	Attach scoring sheet and red-team note
Red-line risks	State whether any red-line risk is triggered
Threshold required	Simple majority / 60% / 70% / 75% / delegated emergency
Vote result	For / against / abstain / absent / invalid
Dissent note	Summary of main objections
Final decision	Adopted, amended, paused, or rejected
Implementation owner	Named person or committee
Review date	Date for post-action evaluation

13. Discussion: from loyalty performance to institutional maturity

A national movement cannot rely only on emotional loyalty, historical grievance, or symbolic intensity. These may mobilise supporters, but they do not substitute for governance. Institutional maturity means that activists can disagree without betrayal, criticise without fragmentation, and comply with procedures even when they lose a vote.

The central political lesson is that national reconciliation requires procedural reconciliation first. If the movement cannot reconcile monarchists, republicans, liberals, conservatives, secularists, former leftists, and non-aligned citizens inside its own meeting rooms, it cannot credibly claim to prepare a democratic transition for a whole country.

The Lion and Sun symbol can function as a national-democratic emblem only if its use is disciplined. Symbols do not speak by themselves; they are interpreted through context. Therefore, decisions about symbols must be treated as strategic decisions, not merely emotional acts of identity.

14. Limitations

This paper proposes a governance protocol rather than an empirical evaluation of a specific organisation. The framework should be piloted, audited, and revised after real meetings. It also assumes good faith among participants; no procedure can fully protect an organisation from deliberate sabotage, disinformation, intimidation, or external manipulation. Finally, the scoring system improves transparency but does not eliminate judgement. It makes judgement visible, challengeable, and revisable.

15. Conclusion

The lesson from recent Lion and Sun activism is not that political passion should be suppressed. The lesson is that passion must be institutionalised. A movement that seeks to help Iran move from authoritarian rule to secular democracy must practise democratic decision-making in exile. The proposed protocol offers a practical method: register the proposal, gather evidence, brainstorm, prioritise, score anonymously, deliberate, red-team, vote with the correct threshold, record dissent, and comply with the

outcome. This is how a diaspora movement can demonstrate maturity, protect its symbols, preserve the unifying role of a transitional figure, and prepare itself for the discipline required by constitutional democracy.

References

1. McMillan, S. S., King, M., & Tully, M. P. (2016). How to use the nominal group and Delphi techniques. *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*. Available via PubMed Central.
2. RAND Corporation. Delphi Method topic page and methodological guidance for conducting and reporting Delphi studies.
3. ISPOR. Multiple Criteria Decision Analysis for Health Care Decision Making - An Introduction.
4. International IDEA. Direct Democracy: The International IDEA Handbook and Constitution-Building Primer on direct democracy mechanisms.
5. Arakawa, N., Bader, L. R., & Laing, R. (2022). Consensus development methods: considerations for national and global frameworks and policy development.
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Evaluation Briefs: Gaining Consensus Among Stakeholders Through the Nominal Group Technique.

Appendix A: one-page meeting checklist

- Has the decision question been written clearly?
- Has the decision category and voting threshold been declared before debate?
- Have conflicts of interest been recorded?
- Has evidence been circulated to all participants?
- Have options been generated before advocacy begins?
- Has every participant had equal opportunity to speak?
- Has anonymous scoring been completed?
- Has reputational risk been assessed from the viewpoint of neutral observers and hostile media?
- Has a red-team review been completed for high-risk decisions?
- Has the dissent note been included in the final record?
- Has the final decision been communicated in one disciplined public line?
- Has a review date been set?