The Defence Innovation Accelerator of the North Atlantic (DIANA)

The new NATO initiative and what it will take to succeed

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Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has served for decades as the defensive power-stabilizer in various regions of the world. NATO currently faces a multitude of challenges stemming from environmental and health threats, increased economic and global food insecurity, and, of course, the real military threat posed by Russian adventurism. Other less direct attacks have emerged from various state and non-state actors who exploit non-conventional (non-kinetic) warfare, leveraging technological vulnerabilities or weaponizing information to sow chaos in the target. One typical manifestation within authoritarian regimes today is the use of cyber-attacks and disinformation. These more subtle attacks contribute to social disorder, disinformation, and skepticism for institutions that can have harmful and pernicious outcomes. Of course, the war in Ukraine represents an explicit and contemporary example of how authoritarian regimes can weaponize technological vulnerabilities to cause direct and subversive harm.

These challenges have forced NATO and its global security partners to try and identify new ways to preserve security and peace. The Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) is the new NATO initiative that prioritizes the development of disruptive technologies to strengthen the innovation ecosystem, while also reinforcing transatlantic partnerships and digital defense mechanisms.

In this paper, we seek to provide an overview of NATO's purpose and core principles, introduce the DIANA initiative, and detail strategies for multi-stakeholder engagements that will beget long-lasting partnerships and increase the likelihood for NATO to realize its mission.

NATO's Core Principles

After World War II, Europe struggled to rebuild their economies and manage simmering tensions brought on by the Soviet Union's adventurism. This challenge began with their annexation of several neighboring states and actively expanding their influence over other Eastern European nations. The result of regional political destabilization and perceived security weaknesses led to the formation of NATO in 1949, to serve as a collective defense and security organization between Europe and North America. The primary commitment of NATO members, also referred to as "the Alliance," is enumerated in Article 5 of the membership, which calls for the support from member states in the event of an attack on a

fellow NATO member[1]. Today, the world's largest military alliance consists of 30 European and North American member states, promoting democratic values and providing multinational crisis management through various diplomatic measures.

Though the existence of NATO might have dissuaded countries from imposing their military might on others, the advent of modernity brought with it new challenges. One significant example is the use of cyber warfare and technological manipulation by its adversaries. While technological advancements have positively contributed to economic growth, facilitated business sector transformations, and reduced boundaries between people across the globe, the drawback has been the deployment of digital warfare tactics that now fundamentally endangers global economies and democracies. In a real way, these technologies are pushing back against the very progress it was intended to accelerate.

For certain nations, employing technological interferences have become somewhat of a modus operandi to achieve their hegemonic aspirations. One such example is the latest cyberattack by Iran on Albania which caused significant destruction of government data and digital infrastructure which are crucial in providing public services. The attack on the NATO member has been identified as "state aggression," leading Albania to sever diplomatic relations with Tehran[2]. Similar incursions have only increased in number – particularly against smaller, more vulnerable nations that support or are part of the Alliance – by aggressive nations hoping to exert power and carve out their own spheres of influence. The new era of emerging powers and technological competition has increasingly become hostile to NATO's provisions of security and stability, and changed what resources dictate a state's influence and power. Thus, it is imperative that NATO remains at the forefront of innovation to ensure its technological advantage to prevent both kinetic and non-kinetic warfare.

Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic

Prior to DIANA, the NATO Communication and Information Agency (NCIA) served as the Alliance's sole information technology and cyber hub. Now in partnership with the NATO Innovation Fund and Human Capital Innovation Policy, DIANA will lead transatlantic cooperation to innovate Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDT) by bringing together scientists, researchers, start-up and mature technology companies, and military organizations with the aim of addressing potential security challenges and enhancing overall defense capabilities. The program will seek to manage a venture capital fund that invests in the production of EDT through enhancing interconnectivity between innovators, stakeholders, hubs, and tests centers. Additionally, while overseeing technological developments and implementations, the program will also seek to provide value-based and

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[1] United States, Office of the Historian, Milestones: 1945-1952, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 1949, https://history.state.gov /milestones/1945-1952/nato#:~:text=The%20North%20Atlantic%20Treaty%20Organization,security%20against%20the%20Soviet%20Union. &text=NATO%20was%20the%20first%20peacetime,outside%20of%20the%20Western%20Hemisphere.

[2] The White House, "Press Briefing by NSC Spokesperson Adrienne Watson on Iran's Cyberattack against Albania," September 7, 2022, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/09/07/statement-by-nsc-spokesperson-adrienne-watson-on-irans-cyberattack-against-albania/

responsible innovation in Artificial Intelligence (AI) to ensure trustworthiness and transparency.[3]

Nine key EDT priority areas include:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI),
- Data,
- Autonomy,
- Quantum-Enabled Technologies,
- Biotechnology,
- Hypersonic Technologies,
- Space,
- Novel Materials and Manufacturing, and
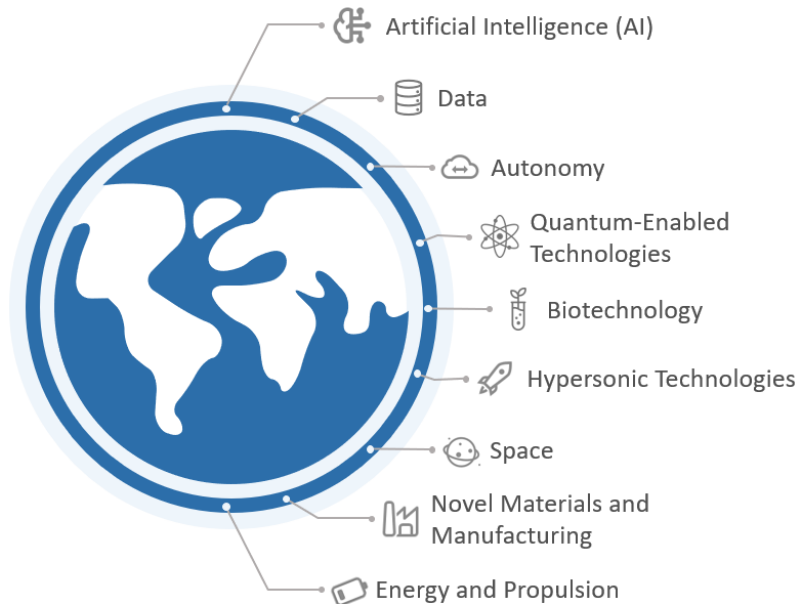- Energy and Propulsion[4].

Figure 1: Nine key EDT priority areas

These nine technological areas will be tested and delivered through a network of 63 geographically dispersed centers across Europe, the U.S., and Canada where technologies will then be evaluated and validated. The nine accelerator sites will work together in sharing expertise, providing mentorship and financing, coordinating and supporting start-up activities related to the mission, and identifying other business opportunities[5]. Ultimately, covering such a large swath of innovation through the global partnership will buttress defense-readiness and tap the different specialties of international partners.

Key Challenges

The DIANA program comprehensively seeks to strategically adapt and counterbalance the ever-changing geopolitical environment and address external threats. Moreover, NATO recognizes the utility of stronger partnerships, particularly as some members have grown weary of member responsibilities and have contested NATO's relevance in recent years, with some even deeming it "obsolete."[6] These sentiments are only further complicated when NATO advocates are attempting to engage member-states from different regions with differing domestic and geopolitical pressures and interests.

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[3] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Emerging and disruptive technologies" July 15, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_184303.htm.

[4] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Emerging and disruptive technologies," July 15, 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_184303.htm.

[5] Vivienne Machi, "NATO unveils tech accelerator footprint, with plans for over 60 sites," *DefenseNews,* April 6, 2022, https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2022/04/06/nato-unveils-tech-accelerator-footprint-with-plans-for-over-60-sites/

[6] David Wellna, "As It Turns 70, Is NATO Still Necessary?" National Public Radio, April 3, 2019, https://www.npr.org/2019/04/03/709573932/as-it-turns-70-is-nato-still-necessary.

These difficulties are exacerbated when accounting for the range of stakeholders - nation-states, academic institutions, and leaders of private sector institutions (e.g., SME's, investors, and startups) – and how they must navigate disparate national defense budgets, domestic policies, and common funding pools. Operational and funding delays may also occur stemming from galvanizing members with varying domestic approval processes or time-sensitivities. DIANA must also take into consideration diplomatic, geopolitical, and economic factors when making investments, as it may conflict with priorities of members or their downstream stakeholders.

For DIANA to be successful, all stakeholders involved must ensure they are in alignment with the ever-changing goals and needs of the Alliance, which will take continued collaboration, calibration, and mutual understanding. Acknowledging these issues is the best way to start developing that alignment.

Successful Implementation Strategy

To address potential challenges, a focus should be placed upon optimizing communication and collaboration amongst cross-sector partnerships. Consideration should be made to leverage consulting firms who have in-depth knowledge of the roles and responsibilities that guide successful partnerships. Team McBride recognizes the importance of this type of relationship-capital, and its influence on the long-term success of an organization. As leaders in the consulting industry, we offer guidance and support in navigating multiple cross-sector partnerships through understanding objectives, goals, and requirements, and offering customized solutions. The following section provides strategic advice and practical guidance in fostering successful partnerships in a multistakeholder environment.

Multistakeholder Engagement

For the DIANA mission to be successful, it must outline all possible stakeholders and develop a comprehensive engagement strategy. The communication should consider strategic risk mitigation solutions for possible conflicts between stakeholders and differentiate the short- and long-term goals being sought.

The requirements for stakeholder engagement follow a similar planning phase as other business projects, including sufficient analysis, planning, execution, reporting, assessment, and follow-up.[7] The approach for DIANA necessitates considering the existing multilateral network and the disparate global governance and policy positions of different stakeholders to yield a more targeted decision-making process, ensure accountability and identify potential risks. Equally imperative is the trust instilled between different stakeholders, particularly in times of crisis management and response.

The McBride Team's five-step action plan ensures multistakeholder engagement and program success. This process is vital in laying the groundwork for the efficient development

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[7] Niel Jeffrey, Stakeholder Engagement: A Road Map to a Meaningful Engagement, (The Doughtry Center for Corporate Responsibility, Cranfield School of Management,2007), 15, https://www.fundacionseres.org/lists/informes/attachments/1118/stakeholder%20engagement.pdf.

of NATO's EDT capabilities from the initial stages to ultimately assessing its outcomes. The five steps include the following:
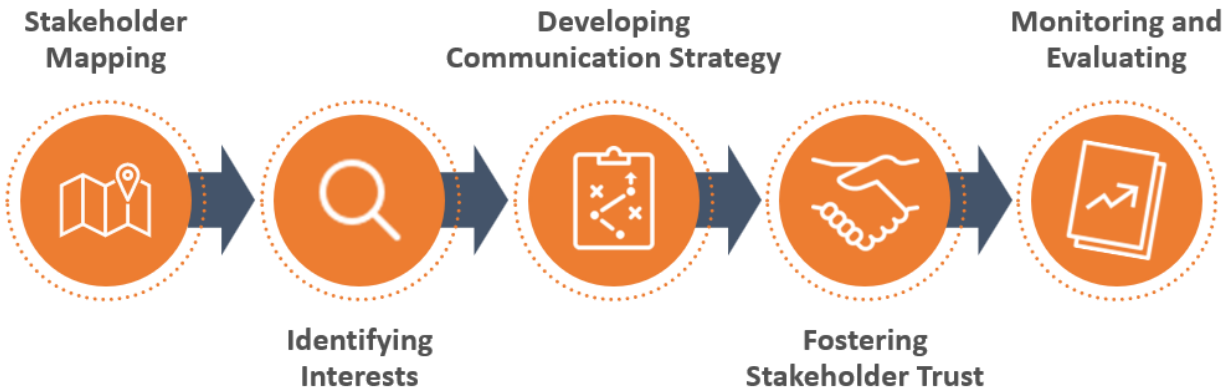

Stakeholder Mapping • Identifying Interests • Developing Communication Strategy • Fostering Stakeholder Trust • Monitoring and Evaluating

Figure 2: Steps of Multistakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Mapping:

Stakeholder Mapping involves identifying all stakeholders, levels of influence and their potential impacts on the collective mission. First, consider each current NATO member and their sub-stakeholders. Some key stakeholder groups could include NATO member states, the NATO Innovation Fund, technology companies, scientific researchers, as well as private sector and non-governmental entities. Other stakeholders that may be directly or indirectly impacted by the program's area of influence include citizens of member states, countries in the process of ratifying NATO memberships (e.g., Sweden and Finland), and "aspirant" states such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia. Of equal importance is recognizing external stakeholders who are not part of NATO membership or may not appear to possess significant power or legitimacy, but who can still have an impact. DIANA itself confronts these external stakeholders by seeking to resolve critical defense and security threats posed by non-NATO stakeholders.

Leveraging the Salience Model of Stakeholders Identification can help DIANA in understanding their stakeholder landscape. In the model below, stakeholders are characterized and placed into one or multiple attributes, depending on where they arise within the diagram. For example, the three intersecting diagrams can be described as dormant, discretionary, and demanding stakeholders, and they fall into one or two of the following attributes: power, legitimacy, and urgency. The Venn diagram depicts the intersection of the main types of stakeholders within these attributes, creating five more classifications of stakeholders: dominant, dangerous, dependent, definitive, and non-stakeholders. While all actors have a role to play in this model, it is the definitive stakeholder at the center who holds the most power, is viewed by important peers as legitimate, and controls the sense of urgency within the group. For DIANA, this includes the Board of Directors for DIANA, the principal country members, and the head of delegation to

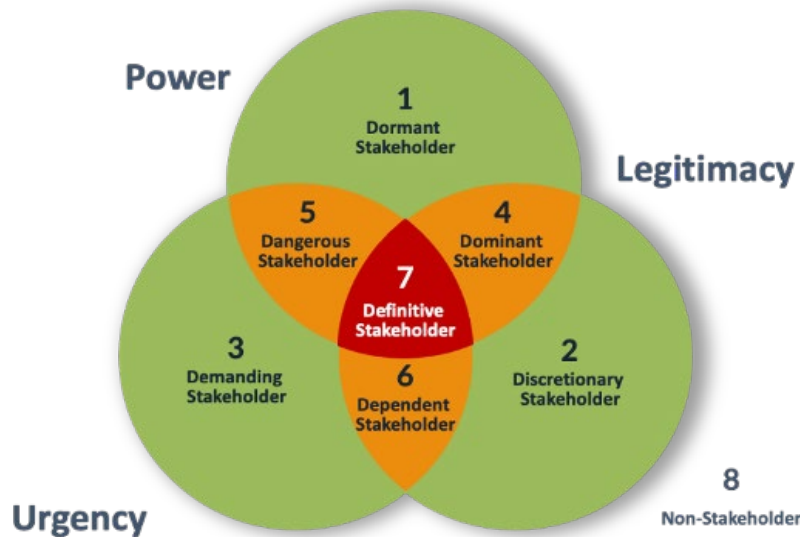NATO Science and Technology Board. Other classifications of stakeholders are described in more detail below.

Figure 3:Stakeholder Mapping

1. **Dormant Stakeholder:** Investors, private sector, citizens
2. **Discretionary Stakeholders:** Intergovernmental organizations, citizens and domestic politics influencing member states' decisions
3. **Demanding Stakeholder:** Pending NATO members and 'aspirant' states
4. **Dominant Stakeholders:** NATO Member States, particularly states with higher total defense expenditure amounts, NATO Innovation Fund, investors
5. **Dangerous Stakeholders:** Non-aligned NATO states (i.e., foreign policy is anti-NATO)
6. **Dependent Stakeholders:** NATO member states with a significantly lower defense spending contribution, smaller nations in Southeastern and Easter Europe
7. **Definitive Stakeholders:** Board of Directors for NATO DIANA Initiative, country principal member and head of delegation to NATO Science and Technology Board
8. **Non-Stakeholders:** Non-NATO member states with neutral foreign policy

Identifying Interests:

Following the identification of key and secondary stakeholders, we continue to identify interests which may vary among members due to differing domestic and geopolitical realities and priorities. For example, regional security and safety may be paramount for Eastern and Southeastern European countries currently, whilst a coastal city might be focused on climate change and an inland nation on economic matters. Although differences can pose challenges to coalescing resources and focus on a single issue, NATO's core principle of decision-making through consensus and consultation methods can be applied to the DIANA program where members are given the opportunity to voice their positions to land on the most important issue. Including member states' varying interests would also further affirm the program's credibility and effectiveness.

Developing Communication Strategy:

An effective communication plan and engagement must take into consideration the multicultural setting as well as the vast professional and academic backgrounds of all stakeholders. For example, a politician must demonstrate the utility of testing a prototype satellite sensor for stakeholders to agree to fund that technology. For this reason, communication materials must be coherent, accessible, and appealing to a wide audience with differing interests. Another equally important component in the communication strategy is leveraging precedent to guide what works in "selling" stakeholders and what implementation and measurement strategies have proven more successful than others. Thus, showcasing how progress will be measured is necessary in the stakeholder engagement process so that they know accountability will be a priority, and that any adaptations can be made in the future, if need be.

Stakeholder Power and Interest

High Power, High Interest
States whose objectives are to counterbalance geopolitical environment, technological advancements, and provide regional and global security

High Power, Low Interest
NATO member states willingness for expansion

Low Power, High Interest
States whose primary concerns are regional security and safety

Low Power, Low Interest
Neutral non-member states, such as Switzerland, and non-stakeholders with minimal influence

Figure 4: Power and Interest graphic

Fostering Stakeholder Trust:

DIANA proponents must remember that trust is hard to gain and easy to lose. This fragility is even more apparent when factoring in the complexities of a multicultural setting, in which members' priorities shift and the endemic uncertainties all partners must navigate. There is no way of predicting whether a crisis could bring inter-conflict between parties at critical moments, or prompt interests to diverge. To build trust among stakeholders at a country and international level will require clear, ongoing and open communication between members, and instilling patience incrementally.

One way of building trust is by completing several short-term activities which require collaboration among members. In other words, identifying some easy wins would enable countries to begin fostering that trust early. Additionally, distinguishing the *high* and *low* influences that each party carries is pertinent to the overall partnership. For example, smaller, less-developed nations with budget constraints are likely to make lower contributions to NATO's collective budget and programs which consequently may grant them a *low* level of influence and input. In comparison, wealthier nations with a higher percentage

of contributions on shared defense play a more significant role, enabling them to have a *high* influence. Therefore, counterbalancing this type of disparity within the partnership would require a well-developed plan that achieves both granting members a seat at the table, but recognizing the disparate contribution levels of each member. This ensures that trust is cultivated, each stakeholder contributes proportionally, and that treatment is equitably administered.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Lastly, monitoring and evaluation is a process that continuously assesses the cooperation among diverse stakeholders and the effectiveness of its strategies. While both steps assess outcomes of programs or projects, each have different fundamental aims and time horizons. In the monitoring stage, data is collected and tracked during the program with key performance indicators (e.g., economic, social and political progress), while also monitoring the changing relations and propensities for collaboration between members. In the evaluation process, however, a retrospective outlook uses the insights from the monitoring activities to determine whether the desired outcome was achieved and whether any corrective measures are necessary.

These evaluations should leverage quantitative and qualitative datapoints that are established through mutually agreed upon goals and initiatives of members. Agreeing on the metrics used will allow for all members to provide input and help bridge the varying priorities with universally approved assessment tools.

Conclusion

At first glance, the five-step process for a successful multistakeholder engagement and partnership may appear intuitive. But building and maintaining relationship-capital and strategic partnerships can be challenging, especially as organizations navigate the prioritization of their own duties and interests alongside the collective mission. At its very core though, strategic multistakeholder engagement stands as one of the most significant intangible assets required to secure the critical long-term success of NATO's DIANA program.

Contact Us

For more information about McBride's approach (people, process, data, technology), if you're interested in developing greater multistakeholder engagement capacity, and/or would like to talk about how our team of experts leverages their consultative capacities to address real-world challenges and can advance progress for you and your organization, send us a note at: info@mcbrideconsulting.net.

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