

NATO'S CAPABILITY TO REACH TO THE INDO-PACIFIC

Capt. (Navy) Daniel Chaluleu interviews
Commodore (RCN) M.J.M. Hallé, OMM, CD,
Deputy Chief of Staff Plans (MARCOM)

Commodore Marcel Hallé joined the Canadian Forces as a Direct Entry Officer in 1985 and has broad experience in leadership and project management in naval materiel readiness in support of fleet operations, as well as leading maritime operational and joint logistics policy, planning and exercises while serving the past six years with NATO. He completed his operational tours in submarines and served on the staff of the Commanders of the First Canadian Submarine Squadron and Maritime Operations Group Five. While serving as the Squadron Technical Officer, he was also appointed as the last Commander of the First Canadian Submarine Squadron Headquarters.

Cmdre Hallé's positions ashore included tours in the Fleet Maintenance Facility in Halifax, the Class Manager for the Oberon and Victoria Class, project manager for the Submarine Capability Life Extension project and interim director of the Submarine Directorate in Ottawa. He served two years in the Australian Defence Material Organization in support of the Collins Class. He also served as Chief of Staff within DGMEPM, and during that period fulfilled the duties of Branch Advisor for the naval technical occupations. He was appointed Base Commander CFB Esquimalt in 2008.

Promoted in 2012 to the rank of Commodore, he was then appointed as Director General Maritime Equipment Program Management and double-hatted as the Chief Engineer of the Royal Canadian Navy. From July 2015 until July 2018, he was appointed to NATO as the Assistant Chief of Staff - J4 at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) HQ in Mons, Belgium; and double-hatted as the Commander of the interim Standing Joint Logistics Support Group headquarters, and stood-up this Logistic Theatre Component Command at the operational level at the end of his tour. Cmdre Hallé served as NATO's maritime planner as the Deputy Chief of Staff Plans at the Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM), Northwood, UK in which he led policy, planning, exercise and partnership divisions.

A graduate from the University of Saskatchewan, he obtained a BSc in Mechanical Engineering and a Master of Defence Studies from Royal Military College of Canada. He retired in September 2021.

Interview

As NATO's framework was originally designed for the Euro-Atlantic theatre, what are the primary logistical challenges in maintaining a persistent naval presence in the Western Pacific, so far from traditional European bases? This question is based in NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept, in which the People's Republic of China is mentioned as an actor with "ambitions and coercive policies" that "challenge our (NATO's) interests, security and values".

Overview: In response to this question, understanding NATO's evolution since the end of the Cold War, the rise of China and warfare's trajectory are key.

The abrupt end of the Cold War witnessed NATO's expansion as a result of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Since then, the Alliance has struggled with getting the enablement / logistics piece right in the European theatre, let alone elsewhere.

This is due in large part to the peace dividend sought by nations, as well as the size of NATO growing. This dividend windfall led to the overall decrease in military capability, reduced spending that led to less investment. While the increased number of NATO members exacerbated the need to integrate, train, build and deal with a vast new terrain that did not have same support and basing structures.

It can be argued that theatre enablement (largely focused on logistic support) was significantly and more disproportionally effected than the other war fighting categories; exacerbated not only by much of this capability being contracted out to the private sector, but things like infrastructure in the new NATO member countries needed to be modernized and/or developed (NATO pipeline in Europe being a key example).

Russia's illegal invasion of Crimea in 2014 was somewhat of a wake up call for the Alliance. The Wales Summit that shortly followed this invasion reaffirmed the importance of collective defence that would eventually lead to changes in NATO's Command and Force Structure, resulting in the stand up of a logistics command at the operational level (Joint Support & Enabling Command in Ulm, Germany) in 2018. Importantly, this recognized the complexity of NATO's logistic challenge and a means to better address it.

The Cold War "Collective Defence" task eventually morphed into its current core tasks, emerging from the strategic concepts adopted at the 2022 Madrid Summit. Noteworthy is the cooperative security task primarily focused on NATO partner nations.

As part of the changes to the NATO Command Structure, Joint Force Headquarters Norfolk was stood up in 2018. A key role for this headquarters is to secure the Atlantic Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) enabling sealift capability in support of delivering reinforcements into the European Theatre.

Indo-Pacific region and the Chinese threat:

Though there is in essence no NATO forward bases in the Indo-Pacific region to assist with the logistic problem set, the four NATO partner nations in the region work closely to enhance cooperation in support of security in the Indo-Pacific region. Ongoing dialogue and participating in regional activities, such as the U.S. led RIMPAC exercise, occurs regularly, enhancing interoperability with NATO member and partner nations, as well as the invited nations. Ergo, in the event of a regional conflict, likely triggered by China as the aggressor, NATO nations, with the invariable support of IP4 nations, would be familiar in working with each other having exercised NATO's operations and tactics.

The U.S. military, NATO's largest member nation, currently has permanent basing through bi-lateral agreements in most of the IP4 nations; examples being the crew rotations and maintenance that occurs in West-

ern Australia with U.S. personnel based there to facilitate aircraft carriers and submarine deployments, as well as U.S. bases located in both South Korea and Japan.

However, the sufficiency of current logistic supplies being pre-positioned in these basing areas would likely fall short of what would be required to support any conflict scenario. Nevertheless, given political will, it represents a stop-gap measure until the supply lines to replenish are opened.

Unlike the Atlantic, the Pacific SLOC are much longer, exacerbating the challenges of resupplying the region. It would behoove the IP4 nations, in collaboration with NATO, to determine and acquire the necessary sealift capability and protective forces required to safely ensure a resupply capability in the region.

Positive movement in looking to create this capacity is occurring amongst some NATO and IP4 nations looking to build industrial resilience in the Indo-Pacific region. There is a move to assign existing vessels to a sealift fleet, allowing for quick mobilization in a time of conflict. In addition, there is an aim to manufacture modern sealift ships within these partner nations to increase current inventories.

Considering the vital role of interoperability in NATO operations, do you think that logistical protocols and technical standards are well adapted to work with IP4 partners (Australia, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand), or with other nations like the Philippines, to counter grey-zone tactics or other military activities in the East / South China Seas?

Cooperative Security is one of NATO's three core tasks. Inherent in this task is the capacity building that it undertakes within its partnership program. Capacity building covers a wide range of initiative, which includes imparting logistic protocols and technical standards.

Through ongoing interaction with NATO and its capacity building program, partner nations are developing tailored capacity building programs that include these protocols and standards. A large part of being interoperable includes achieving commonality among the warfare categories - include logistics.

Emanating from the 2024 Washington Summit IP4 nations agreed to bolster cooperation on logistics interoperability. Projects included strengthening maritime security and industrial capacity that are key to logistic supply chains. These nations have or are in the process of adopting NATO standards as they step closer to being more interoperable.

The Philippines, though not a NATO partner nation, is designated as a Major Non- NATO Ally pursuing broader cooperation with NATO in building maritime deterrence capability to counter Chinese aggression. They have solidified partnerships with individual NATO countries, with the U.S. by far being the largest and most important partner. One should not underestimate the importance of these initiatives, and look to this effort as being an example for other non-aligned nations in the region that are concerned with China's expansion.

China's Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities challenge conventional supply lines. What logistic measures would you suggest NATO could explore to maximize efficiency for NATO operations, particularly at critical chokepoints like the Straits of Malacca?

Sanitizing contested areas is a must prior to forces entering any denied space, be it to move goods through supply routes or deploying troops. Taking down sophisticated and embedded A2/AD systems requires a huge effort in defeating such capability. Tackling this can take a prolonged period of time to clear and demands a large expenditure of munitions to do it.

Alternatives need to be created. Pre-conflict, in a region where hostilities are expected to escalate, NATO and its allies could create staging areas/forward operating bases in anticipation of choke points materializing that could potentially cut off supply line. Another option is to look for other routes in, be it via land or air in the event a sea-lines being cut.

Should an Indo-Pacific conflict require the U.S. to shift assets away from Europe (as it may very probably happen, as it is happening now in relation with Iran), how do you think NATO European allies can fill that gap without compromising Atlantic security, particularly in the GIUK gap?

This scenario is playing out somewhat today. Not only is the United States shifting some of its military resources to deal with Iran, but the rhetoric from the U.S. president denigrating NATO with threats of leaving has forced the remaining member nations to reconsider options with a focus on enhanced securing having to come from within themselves without the possibility of the U.S. being there.

I would surmise the question of European NATO nations, including Canada, filling the gap has led to heated debate in Brussels in recognition that the remainder of member nations need to do more to fill what might be a potential gap. This is occurring as NATO are now pledging more as a result of the current U.S. president then what was witnessed post Cold War. Canada for one, has achieved the 2% GDP target and has committed to achieving the new 5% target in next few years. This will all take time. Can NATO fill the gap without the US? I would argue that they would have to. Would they succeed? I'm not sure, but I wouldn't bet against them failing.

The United States shifting to the Indo-Pacific had traction under President Obama's second term with limited success. Harkening back to the Cold War, where NATO support was arguably at a gold-standard with equipment and logistics being pre-staged in theatre, and being replenished as necessary, was an era well behind us. Today's reality is that current capabilities fall short of where nations would prefer it to be if a major conflict were to happen. Some would argue that a "just in time delivery" approach that has been adopted by many nations, exacerbated by an industrial capability that is challenged in its ability to ramp up at the speed of military relevance, exposes a vulnerability.

Having said that, the nature of warfare continues to change. The planet has not seen a global war since 1945. Up to that point, major wars were a recurring phenomenon over the past 300 years. Impressively, since World War II, all conflicts have been regional in nature with significantly fewer casualties and less damage. I would suggest that the advent of nuclear capable nations has been key to achieving a relatively long period of global stability.

Despite the growing military might of today's hegemonies (USA and China), the ongoing rhetoric and threats of a major conflict occurring has yet to materialize. For if one did, they know that no one side would win. Nothing prior to 1945 represented such an effective deterrent.

The current regional conflicts, in particular what is playing out in Russia/Ukraine and between the United States and Iran, certainly have global ramifications from an economic stability perspective. However, the likelihood of either of these going global is slim to non-existent. Noting that both these conflicts were triggered by leaders with misogynistic egos, ignorance and delusions of grandeur; whereas one instigator leads a failing state, and some will argue the other is following suit that will lead his country down a similar rabbit hole.

If there ever was a time for China to invade Taiwan, it would be now - but they haven't do so and I sense they won't.

With the rise of agreements like the Japan-Philippines ACSA, do you foresee an urgent need for similar multilateral logistical frameworks involving NATO members to facilitate logistics in Southeast Asian ports?

Forming agreements such as the Japan-Philippines Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement is an important step towards the enhancement of collective security. It spreading further to other like-minded nations in the Indo-Pacific nations and beyond would be a positive development.

To that end, many security agreements currently exist, like: United States (several bi-lateral agreements with several Indo-Pacific nations), Canada (Comprehensive Strategic Roadmap with Japan, the Defence MOUs with Indonesia and the Philippines), the United Kingdom (Five Power Defence Arrangements and the ASEAN Dialogue Partnership), and European Union nations (EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific). All have some form of security agreements in the Indo-Pacific region.

Similar to an early response, such agreements opens the door to diplomatic discussions on security that has increased interoperability through various military exercises and defence co-operation, including the enablement of logistic support activities.

As a Canadian officer who served within NATO's command structure, how do you think Canada could balance its domestic logistical commitments in the Arctic, which is seen as one of the theatres that will have an intense increase of military and commercial activity, with the growing demand for naval presence in the East / South China Seas?

This is a timely question given the increased priority being placed on the Arctic. The recent U.S. president's rhetoric in wanting to take over Greenland and Canada becoming the 51st state is loosely underpinned by an element of American intent that speaks to the growing recognition of the importance of this region from a security perspective. Sparsely populated, the Canadian Arctic is a vast region that is isolated in an extremely harsh environment. The military of most nations are ill equipped to effectively operate in this region.

Driven by climate change, the Arctic has become a focus of much discussion concerning its security, as non-Arctic nations look to its vast resources and growing accessibility and the promise of shorter global transits routes as the ice melts.

When I served with NATO from 2015 to 2021, the Alliance did not have an Arctic strategy per se. However, with a warming climate and the growing presence of non-Arctic nations in this region, in particular China, the Alliance increasingly placed greater focus and priority on the far north.

To that end, prioritizing Canada's domestic logistical commitments in the Arctic is off to a good start. The Canadian Prime Minister, Mark Carney, has recently made enabling and securing the north a fundamental tenant in Canada's new Arctic Foreign Policy. Its dual benefits are the nation-building projects that will facilitate increased presence and access, leading to both domestic growth and stronger military presence aimed at bolstering Canada's sovereignty and security in the region. The Prime Minister has encouraged NATO to invest and be involved in this ambitious initiative.

Modern warfare demands rapid industrial output. The drones used in Ukraine and Russia are an example of that necessity. How do you evaluate Canadian and European NATO members defence industrial base, in terms of sustainment of high-intensity consumption of elements like ammo, spares or drones required for a distant Pacific theatre scenario?

The Russia/Ukraine conflict has, to a great extent, drastically changed the approach to warfare. Many would agree that the Ukrainian military has become a front runner in drone warfare; not only in its ability to rapidly produce highly capable drones at a reduced cost, but its ability to disproportionately dominate the battlespace using this technology.

Appreciating the Russia/Ukraine conflict is primarily a land/air battle, a conflict in the Indo-Pacific theatre would look much different, with a greater focus being in the maritime domain and fought over large geographic distances.

Open-source information on American ammunition expenditure resulting in reduced stockpiles due to its current conflict in the Straits of Hormuz is somewhat cause for concern, in particular given the short duration of the intensive bombing campaign having only lasted a few short weeks prior to the current ceasefire.

Recent headlines state that American contracted delivery of weapon systems to European allies have been put on hold as a result of the Iranian conflict; pointing to supply concerns. With the U.S. being the globe's largest military, for them to have supply and stockpile concerns doesn't bode well for lesser capable nations given a similar circumstance.

A conflict in the Indo-Pacific region would most likely mean going up against China, a military that has significantly more capability and depth than Iran.

As reflected in an earlier question, the end of the Cold War saw a significant decrease in NATO's military industrial base which today still falls well short from where it once was prior to 1989.

In my opinion, the likelihood of a high-intensity conflict with China occurring is very low; however, if it did however occur, Alliance members coming to the aid of Indo-Pacific partner nations would need to rapidly increase their industrial base to maintain any semi-prolonged engagement. There would be significant challenge given the extended supply lines that would need to be protected, in addition to the intensity of sustaining the fight in theatre.

It would require significant commitment on the side of Allied and partner nations to expend the resources necessary to be ready in the early onset of a conflict. If it occurred today, these nations would be hard pressed to endure a high intensity and prolonged conflict should they be in a position where they don't have the luxury of ramping up.

Modern logistics heavily rely on data, and that the activities of "grey" fleets produce damage to undersea cables. What steps do you think should NATO be taking to protect maritime supply lines from interference with undersea cables in the Indo-Pacific?

When I served in NATO, the need to protect the undersea cables was deemed critical to safeguard. Protecting them factored into some NATO exercise scenarios. Granted, the effort to protect undersea cables is a herculean task given the natural vulnerability of this capability as it extends across a vast ocean. NATO has not necessarily come up with an iron-clad solution to protect it.

Critical in any battlespace is that the uninterrupted flow of information in order to successfully prosecute the war. How information is delivered is immaterial, what is critical is that the information gets to where it needs to reach in the time that it needs to be there.

Not that long ago much consternation emerged from an undersea cable being cut in the Baltic Sea as a result of Russian aggression against the Ukraine. Though the event was widely reported, I am unaware of the impact it had in prosecuting the conflict, as little mention of it was found in media sources.

With advance of technology and the emerging capabilities being fielded, reliance on undersea capable will somewhat diminishing with time. The Star-link capability has been a huge enabler in the Russia/Ukraine conflict. Its impact, when this capability was interrupted during this conflict was quickly and significantly felt. More cost effective then laying/fixing undersea cables, as more Star-link like capability is deployed and greater redundancy is fielded, the reliance on these cables will be less importance.

Rising sea levels are altering navigation charts and port infrastructure across the Indo- Pacific, particularly in small island nations (e.g. Tuvalu) and dense populated low-lying areas (e.g. Jakarta). How do you think this will influence long-term logistical planning for both combat operations and HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) in the region?

The reality of sea level rising is currently being acutely felt in these strategic low lying areas, inevitably reducing the capacity to forward base. This adds greater pressure on the nations reliant on these low level land masses, where mitigating alternatives become more costly with increasing vulnerability due to longer deployment distances that lengthen shipping timelines.

It means nations must invest more to increase their sealift capability. In a combat related scenario, force protection requirements will be an added burden to keep this capability safe.

Given the increasing melting of the ice and the opening of new sea lines of communication (SLOCs) in the Arctic, do you think it will create an opportunity for Canada to increase its importance, both military and industrial within NATO? Could these changes in climate and geography turn Canada's northern coasts more vulnerable, as they are less populated and / or protected than the Atlantic and Pacific coasts?

This reality is occurring today. As discussed in question 6, Canada's newly minted Arctic Policy is aimed at addressing both the military challenges and industrial opportunities. The attractiveness and ergo the vulnerability of the Canadian Arctic will increase as more nations look to exploit Arctic resources, dispute Canada's territorial claims, putting more pressure on the freedom to navigate this global passage as shorter routes open. All combined, these present a security challenge for Canada and by extension the NATO Alliance.

A timely and positive step in the Canadian Arctic is the current Canadian government's recognition of both the vulnerability and opportunity when they created the new nation-building plans, that followed Canada's Arctic Foreign policy. These a huge initiatives in tackling the emerging security and economic threats in Canada's far north.

Arctic governance plays a key role through the Arctic Council. It provides a venue for diplomacy and dialogue.

The U.S. has not ratified the UNCLOS, and the Arctic maritime activities increase due to ice melting. Do you think that a conflict of interests could arise regarding the EEZ projected to the Arctic from Alaska and Canada?

The conflict of interest or more accurately the disagreement between the United States and Canada over Arctic passage rights already exists. The two nations continue to agree to disagree regarding the status of the Northwest Passage. Seen as internal territorial waters from a Canadian perspective, the U.S. sees it as

an international strait connecting two large bodies of water. Like the U.S., both China and Russia, aligned with the U.S. position, also contest Canada's claim.

It behooves the two North American countries to come to some agreement in the near future, waiting to resolve this matter will be more difficult as the planet continues to warm. Achieving agreement between Canada and the U.S. would act as a stronger counterweight against its adversaries. As pressure accelerates to exploit the Arctic where outside nations vying for access, perhaps pragmatism will come to pass between the Americans and Canada in coming to some unified agreement as a counter to any non-North American threat being posed.

As the U.S. moves toward a greater reliance on un-crewed systems and drones, how do you think NATO could plan to integrate standards for the maintenance and logistics of these autonomous platforms across such a vast area of operations?

The U.S. is not alone in employing greater un-crewed military capability into the battle plans. As outlined earlier, the advances coming out of the Ukraine and their impressive progress made in this domain makes for a formidable opponent.

Deploying un-crewed systems simplifies the logistics burden for no other reason than it takes the requirement of sustaining humans on the battlefield out of the equation and reduces human casualties. Just feeding and sheltering alone and med-evacuating personnel unloads a huge burden on the support system.

NATO's processes and standards sit on a solid foundation. It is a robust capability area that has endured and strengthened over the more than 75 years NATO has existed. Well versed, NATO members and to some extent partner nations are well experienced when introducing new capabilities, in creating the standards and maintenance procedures that underpin effectiveness. Un-crewed capabilities would be similarly treated. Being ready and maintaining combat superiority starts with capable systems operated by well trained personnel.

What perspective do you foresee in an hypothetical scenario like the United States no longer being a NATO member, under the leadership of the current Administration?

The likelihood of the United States leaving the NATO Alliance is assessed as being extremely low. The situation with the current president is analogous to a bully who continually makes threats and seldom acts on them. The American president has threatened to leave NATO on multiple occasions, too numerous to count, in both his first and current term in office. His rhetoric hit a crescendo recently calling out NATO nations that won't step up to assist the United States in the ongoing conflict with Iran, and yet the U.S. has yet to leave the Alliance.

The recent National Defence Authorization Act enacted in 2024, prevents the U.S. president from unilaterally withdrawing from NATO. As a founding member of NATO and its biggest funder, the ability for the current president, and arguably future presidents, in getting a two-thirds Senate majority needed to approve a withdrawal from the Alliance is highly unlikely.

Thank you very much Commodore Hallé, on behalf of the crew and the students at UNDEF I want to let you know that we appreciate very much the time you dedicated to this interview, and the accurate, updated and priceless concepts that you shared with us.

Commodore (retired) Marcel Hallé, Royal Canadian Navy, served with NATO as:

Assistant Chief of Staff J4 (2015 to 2018) Supreme Allied Headquarter Powers Europe

Deputy Chief of Staff Plans (2018 to 2021) NATO Maritime Headquarters Northwood

Interviewer's conclusions

Since its creation in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been a model of strength, cooperation, and efficiency, as well as a guarantee of security for its member states. Initially designed to address the challenges of the bipolar world that emerged after World War II, it adapted and evolved as history dictated. Originally comprising twelve nations facing the expansionist threat of the former Soviet Union, the number of member states gradually increased—primarily following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989—to the current thirty-two. In addition, one must consider like-minded nations such as those in the “IP4” group mentioned by Commodore Marcel Hallé, as well as the members of the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) programs. Unilaterally on the part of the U.S., there are also the “Major Non-NATO Allies” (MNNA), one of which is the Argentine Republic.

In colloquial terms, NATO became a “club” or an insurance policy whose membership attracted other nations, including some that, at the time of its founding, were members of the opposing alliance. Its original sole purpose of “collective defense” was also expanded following the 2022 summit to include three core tasks that complement it: deterrence and defense, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security.

Conceived for a theater of operations centered on the North Atlantic Ocean, its area of interest—like its member or partner states—has expanded over time. So much so that in its strategic concept published in 2022, it asserts that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is an adversarial actor that challenges its interests, security, and values. The document also accuses China of “malicious hybrid and cyber operations”, “confrontational rhetoric and disinformation”, and “subverting the rules-based international order, including in the space, cyber, and maritime domains”.

Such a forceful statement implies the need, if necessary, to conduct military operations in theatres far from the North Atlantic, which poses logistical challenges that have been clearly addressed by Commodore (R) Marcel Hallé of the Royal Canadian Navy.

In response to the investigative inquiry, Commodore Hallé was unequivocal in stating that to undertake large-scale operations in the Pacific Ocean, where maritime lines of communication (through which logistical assets transit) are much more extensive than those in the Atlantic, NATO must strengthen its relationship and interoperability with regional allies (IP4, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand). Added to this inherent challenge are other factors that, at the time of this interview, would hinder adequate logistical support in a hypothetical conflict in the China Seas. These are:

The U.S., NATO's largest member state, is deploying significant resources to the Middle East to support (operationally and logistically) the war effort in Iran. This will continue for a period that, for now, appears indefinite.

The thaw caused by global warming in the Arctic is creating—and will increasingly create in the future—the need to deploy and logistically sustain military assets in that theater of operations, whose importance will inevitably grow in the future. Canada has already addressed this situation by implementing a gradual increase in its defense spending, which will reach 5% of its GDP in the near future.

President Donald Trump’s rhetoric regarding the potential withdrawal of the U.S. from NATO does nothing but undermine mutual trust among historic allies. In fact, as these conclusions are being drafted, the U.S. has just announced the withdrawal of 5,000 troops previously stationed in Germany, as “retaliation” against its European allies for not intervening more forcefully in the military operations currently underway in Iran.

Fortunately for the strength of the Atlantic Alliance in the medium to long term, and as CM Marcel Hallé rightly pointed out, a hypothetical U.S. withdrawal from NATO would require a two-thirds vote by the U.S. Senate—a scenario that seems unlikely to occur.

Additionally, Commodore Hallé emphasizes the need to create logistical alternatives. Prior to a conflict, in a region where an escalation of hostilities is anticipated, NATO and its allies could establish staging areas or forward operating bases in anticipation of critical points that could disrupt supply lines. Another option is to seek alternative access routes, whether by land or air, in the event that maritime lines are disrupted. All of this should be done steadily and methodically, considering that the U.S. has abundant resources and troops in the Indo-Pacific, pursuant to bilateral agreements with countries in the region.

Regarding data flow—a critical capability in contemporary military operations, and even more so in a distant theater of operations such as the Western Pacific—the interviewee highlights the introduction of data management via Starlink, to avoid reliance on vulnerable undersea cables, which can—and often are—targets of overt attacks or “gray zone” operations.

Finally, it is also worth noting that Commodore Hallé emphasizes that in modern warfare, where the use of drones has become vital, NATO is not lagging behind. As in other areas, its technical and operational standards have been proven over more than 75 years. The use of drones in NATO, whose vital importance has recently been demonstrated by the Ukrainian armed forces, is not unique to the U.S., but is advancing as yet another capability that will be available—like so many others—in accordance with the highest global standards. The deployment of unmanned systems simplifies logistical operations simply by eliminating the need to maintain troops on the battlefield, and it also reduces casualties. Just feeding, sheltering, and evacuating personnel places an enormous burden on the support system—a burden that is eliminated by unmanned systems.

As a final thought, one might argue that NATO’s history of expansion, from its founding to the present, appears to be giving way to a cycle of contraction. On the one hand, this is because, with China’s rise as a superpower, the Indo-Pacific is emerging as a theatre of greater importance than the North Atlantic. Also because the Arctic is emerging as an area of interest and a future theatre of operations that will pose new and unique logistical challenges. On the other hand, due to the declining involvement of the Alliance’s most powerful member, the United States -a trend magnified by the rhetoric of that country’s current president-.

However, the concepts put forth by Commodore Marcel Hallé put this situation into perspective, framing it more as an adaptation to a new reality than as a decline in NATO’s influence. It is up to each reader to interpret the situation.