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## Peculiarities of German-Norwegian Cooperation in the Military-Political Sphere (Late 2010s — First Half of 2020s)

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**Abstract.** At the beginning of 2020s, Germany has faced with the crisis of its strategic presence at the global level: primarily to the east and to the south of NATO zone of responsibility. The possibility to compensate the losses is to ensure powerful positions in the Arctic. Germany has tried to do it through cooperation with Norway. Other NATO member states also show interest in Norway as a potential “bridge” for strategic penetration to the Arctic Ocean. The article examines the security relations between official Berlin and Oslo since the second half of the 2010s, the quality and scope of cooperation. The preservation of Norway’s value in German foreign policy planning in the context of Finland’s (2023) and Sweden’s (2024) accession to NATO is explained. A high level of trust was characteristic of the dialogue at the highest level, remaining unchanged both under Angela Merkel and Erna Solberg and under their successors Olaf Scholz and Jonas Gahr Støre (since 2021). The Bundeswehr Mountain Brigade acquired the functions of Arctic troops as a result of its use in NATO exercises in Finnmark, Norway. The joint use of frigates in the Arctic and the prospects of unification of submarine fleets are considered. The main tracks of cooperation between Germany and Norway in the issues of NATO grouping, arms supplies to Ukraine and training of its armed forces personnel are revealed.

**Keywords:** *Germany, Norway, Arctic, NATO, political dialogue, Arctic armed forces, Bundeswehr, exercises, military-technical cooperation, “deterrence” of Russia*

### Introduction


The dialogue between Germany and Norway was an example of full-fledged cooperation between a large and a small state, with difficult historical background in modern history. In 1940–1945, the Third Reich occupied Norway, used it to carry out aggression against the USSR, and kept a very large (up to 400 thousand military personnel) inter-military grouping here [1, p. 20]. The Nazi regime relied on a very strong collaborationist movement in Norway: it is no coincidence that the name of its leader V. Quisling was used to call the accomplices of Hitler’s regime in different countries of Europe [2, Komarov A.A.].

In modern realities, both the FRG and the Kingdom of Norway are among the states that are striving to significantly strengthen their influence in the international arena. The number of such actors within the camp of “Western democracies” is not so great, since the foundations of its internal configuration were formed at the beginning of the previous “cold war” [3, Braterskiy M.V.,

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p. 22]. Moreover, both countries have been organically integrated into the Euro-Atlantic community<sup>1</sup> since its foundation. Norway has been a member of NATO since its foundation (1949). West Germany made the most active efforts to join the Alliance and, upon its accession, carried out a large-scale remilitarization under the auspices of the bloc.

Among the most influential “liberal democracies”, Germany is almost the only “rising” power. Taking into account its historical responsibility as the main aggressor in World War II, the natural temporary loss of statehood (1945), the FRG began to secure leadership positions on the world stage much later than other “Western powers” (USA, Great Britain and France). In essence, the process was fully launched only after the resolution of the “German question” (1990) in accordance with the maximum consideration of the interests of the Bonn Republic (and the United States). At the same time, in the late 2010s – early 2020s, Germany faced a crisis of strategic presence in the international arena. Germany was losing a significant part of the military and political positions that it had been building since the 2000s away from the Euro-Atlantic community: primarily in Asia and Africa. It is logical that official Berlin was actively looking for ways to compensate for this. Germany smoothly and consistently increased its contribution to the “containment” of the Russian Federation, which in the early 2020s had already become quite large-scale in military and practical terms. At the same time, Germany tried to find new areas outside NATO’s area of responsibility for strategic penetration. For this reason, the creation of military-political positions in the Arctic with its enormous natural resources was of particular value to Germany: the Arctic Ocean basin was adjacent to NATO’s area of responsibility, and four of the five Arctic countries were member states of the Alliance (all except Russia: Denmark, Norway, Canada, the United States). At the doctrinal level, this task was relatively clearly formulated in the “Germany’s Arctic Policy Guidelines” of August 2019. On the one hand, there was still a limited focus on direct political-military issues<sup>2</sup>, but more than in the first such document of 2013<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, it was from the late 2010s that the intensive use of the Bundeswehr in the region began, especially in Norway, increasingly presented in the context of “containing” the Russian Federation.

A wide range of NATO and EU member states, including the entire tetrarchy of “Western powers” headed by the United States (although the latter also had extensive possessions of its own in the Arctic) [4, Kuchinskaya M.E.; 5, Konyshev V.N., Sergunin A.A.], also demonstrated increased interest in deepening cooperation with official Oslo. Norway’s geostrategic value has led to a noticeable increase in its influence in the Euro-Atlantic community since the second half of the 2010s. Taking into account the prospects for the dynamic development of the “potential race”

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<sup>1</sup> In the article, the Euro-Atlantic Community refers to the totality of NATO and EU member states, and they themselves as institutions.

<sup>2</sup> Leitlinien deutscher Arktispolitik. Berlin: Bundesregierung, 2019. S. 22–25. URL: <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/resource/blob/257426/0c93a2823fcff8ce9f6bce5b6c87c171/arktisleitlinien-data.pdf> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Leitlinien deutscher Arktispolitik. Berlin: Auswärtiges Amt, 2013. 24 S. URL: [https://www.arctic-office.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/www.arctic-office.de/PDF\\_uploads/Leitlinien\\_deutscher\\_Arktispolitik.pdf](https://www.arctic-office.de/fileadmin/user_upload/www.arctic-office.de/PDF_uploads/Leitlinien_deutscher_Arktispolitik.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2024).

in the Arctic [6, Bhagwat D.], Oslo's importance for many other "Western democracies" will increase even more. For Germany, Norway has another huge advantage as a partner: the presence of large hydrocarbon reserves (including on the Arctic shelf). Germany's interest in importing them has increased sharply due to its rejection of inexpensive Russian energy sources.

*The objective of the article* is to study the causes and peculiarities of the development of relations between official Berlin and Oslo in the field of security and defense in the late 2010s – first half of the 2020s. Domestic and foreign experts have paid increased attention to the intensification of competition in the Arctic as a whole, increasingly trying to fit it into the study of the formation of a new world order [7, Arzamanova T.V.]. It is logical that increased attention was paid to the strategies and tactics of the Arctic states (Russia, as well as Denmark, Canada, Norway and the USA) [4, Kuchinskaya M.E.; 5, Konyshov V.N., Sergunin A.A.; 8, Raikov Yu.A.; 9, Paul M.]. The issues of their cooperation with most countries without direct access to the Arctic Ocean are covered much less. Gaps in the study are also characteristic of the dialogue between Germany and Norway [10, Trunov F.O.]. Moreover, since the turn of the 2010s – 2020s, Germany has been showing military activity in the Far North, the intensity of which has gradually but consistently increased. This tendency was part of a more general trend – a noticeable increase in the proportion of the use of military instruments in the foreign policy of official Berlin. The main reason was the unwillingness to accept failures in ensuring a presence at the global level, the desire to restart the process, which was presented in the information context of "containing" Russia and, in general, the most active non-Western powers (China, Iran). The article uses the provisions of the theory of the development of armed forces [11] in studying the progress of the creation of Arctic troops in Germany and the development of cooperation with the Kingdom of Norway in this regard.

### ***Importance of Norway as an Arctic partner for Germany***

Of the five states that had direct access to the Arctic Ocean, four were "Western democracies". What is the reason for the special value of the Kingdom of Norway for Germany? Firstly, compared to Canada and Denmark, Oslo's policy specifically in the northern strategic direction is more predictable (although Norway was not a member state of the European Union), and the volume and quality of interstate dialogue with Germany in the sphere of security and defense are significantly higher. Secondly, the Norwegian territories facing the Arctic Ocean (from Narvik to Kirkenes) had a number of geostrategic advantages for Germany over similar possessions of other Arctic countries. The United States was hardly ready to allow the forces of its European NATO partners to enter the territory of Alaska. A similar position was taken by Canada, as well as by Denmark, which has key possessions in the Arctic Ocean – Greenland and the Faroe Islands. The Arctic territories of all the countries mentioned are located several thousand kilometers away from European states, and the size of the specialized infrastructure and climatic conditions make it very difficult to deploy any large contingents from external players (except the United States). The north of Norway is a single whole with the rest of the country in various respects; there are fairly

well-equipped bases located here. No less important is the fact that unlike Oslo's Arctic possessions, those of Canada and Denmark are located at a great distance from the Kola Peninsula. The main forces of the joint strategic command "Northern Fleet" of the Russian Federation are located here, including almost all motorized rifle and marine infantry formations of the Arctic troops<sup>4</sup>. For this reason, the "Western democracies" de facto regard the build-up of the grouping in the Norwegian province of Finnmark as a very effective element of "containing" the Russian Federation: the increased military-strategic activity there is evidence in favor of this.

The question arises: to what extent will Norway's geostrategic value for Germany change in the context of the accession of previously conditionally neutral Finland (since April 4, 2023) and Sweden (since March 7, 2024) to NATO? The increase in Germany's strategic attention to Northern Europe, already quite noticeable since the late 2010s, will grow even faster. The intensification of the use of the Bundeswehr in maneuvers on the territory of former conditionally neutral countries will inevitably occur. With a high degree of probability, official Berlin may agree to a rotational (and eventually permanent) presence of the Armed Forces in NATO multinational formations — along the lines of those that have existed since 2017 in Eastern Europe (primarily in the Baltic countries and Poland). All these will be steps towards toughening the confrontation with the Russian Federation. In the author's understanding, this task was very important for Germany in the Northern European direction, but still took second place in the unofficial hierarchy. The main task was to ensure full penetration and consolidation in the Arctic Ocean. This will preserve Norway's value in specific terms for the activities of the FRG in the international arena as a whole. It seems that Sweden and Finland, with their small but well-organized military potential, will, under the auspices of the Alliance, provide Norway with extended strategic cover<sup>5</sup> as a "springboard" for the penetration of "Western democracies" into the Arctic.

### ***The nature of political dialogue at the highest level***

Chancellor G. Schröder (1998–2005) characterized interstate relations as a kind of pun: "the problem with German-Norwegian dialogue is that it has no problems"<sup>6</sup>. Although somewhat idealistic, the assessment was close to the actual situation in terms of the level of mutual trust. At the same time, the practical volumes of cooperation, especially on security and defense issues, were small. Both of these features were inherent in German-Norwegian relations in the first decade of the "era" of A. Merkel (2005–2021). However, since the mid-2010s, the second position —

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<sup>4</sup> The Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command celebrates its eighth anniversary. Russian Defense Ministry. 15 December 2022. URL: [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12448609@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12448609@egNews) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>5</sup> NATO-Beitritt von Schweden und Finnland Bedeutung für die euro-atlantische Sicherheit. BMVg. 12 October 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/weitere-bmv-g-dienststellen/zentrum-innere-fuehrung/nato-erweiterung-um-schweden-und-finnland-5493288> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>6</sup> Von Misstrauen (bis) zur zuverlässigen Interessengemeinschaft. 19 December 2014. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/themen/deutschlandarchiv/197834/von-misstrauen-bis-zur-zuverlaessigen-interessengemeinschaft/> (accessed 17 March 2024).

the volumes of cooperation — has begun to noticeably change in favor of a significant increase. What is the reason for this position of the FRG?

The start of the confrontation with the Russian Federation had certain significance, but this determinant should not be overestimated: it was an important pretext rather than a cause. Germany's transition to a system of "containing" Russia only made a problem that had existed for a long time more pronounced. This is the insufficient influence of the FRG (in terms of compliance with its ambitions) in many countries and regions of the Euro-Atlantic community as a result of the relatively limited volumes of use of German political-diplomatic and especially military instruments. The start of the confrontation between the West and Russia (since 2014) aggravated this "bottleneck", but at the same time provided Berlin with additional opportunities to overcome it. By playing up the thesis about a certain "Russian threat" in the informational sphere, the establishment of a number of small and medium-sized countries from among the "Western democracies" began to show interest in the emergence of a foreign presence under the auspices of NATO, the basis of which was made up of contingents from large member states of the Alliance. Potentially, this provided particularly great opportunities for geographical expansion of the Bundeswehr deployment, allowing the FRG to partially retouch the historical memory of Germany as the key aggressor in World War II.

In comparison with the countries of Eastern Europe, and in the early 2020s — also with Finland and Sweden, Norway was less active in declaring its desire to ensure a permanent foreign presence on its territory under the auspices of NATO<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, official Oslo showed high interest as a recipient of military exercises, including large-scale ones, under the auspices of the Alliance. Norway's desire to host the largest Trident Juncture 18 exercises (2018) and its full support for the internationalization of the previously national Cold Response exercise since the turn of the 2010s–2020s are indicative. The Kingdom did not follow the path of any noticeable increase in the number of armed forces (20–23 thousand military personnel in 2014–2023<sup>8</sup> with a population of 5.4 million people, or about 0.4%), but kept military spending per capita at a very high level. According to this indicator, Norway confidently occupied the second place in the ranking of Alliance member states, behind only the United States. The Kingdom's military spending per citizen in the late 2010s – early 2020s ranged from 1.2 to 1.5 thousand dollars per person, while for Germany this figure was from 0.5 to less than 0.7 thousand dollars<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> See: Norwegian Armed Forces in transition. Strategic defence review by the Norwegian chief of defence. Abridged version. Oslo, 2015. 24 p. URL: [https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/\\_attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf](https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/_attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>8</sup> Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2023). 7 July 2023. Brussels: NATO, 2023. P. 12. URL: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230707-def-exp-2023-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230707-def-exp-2023-en.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

These tactics of Norway together with its exceptionally favorable geographical position as a “springboard” for a full-scale “strategic breakthrough” of the bloc’s member states into the deep waters of the Arctic Ocean since the mid-2010s provided Oslo with great political weight in NATO. It far exceeded the potential that the Kingdom’s resource capabilities provided in modal (absolute) terms. One illustration of this is the ten-year (2014–2024), a very long term by NATO standards, tenure of the Norwegian J. Stoltenberg as Secretary General of the Alliance. This is even more illustrative given that he replaced the Dane A. Fogh Rasmussen (2009–2014). For this reason, it can be argued that there is a 15-year “Northern European era” at the level of the NATO Secretary General, with a predominant “tincture” of Norway.

Germany made a significant contribution to achieving this. It was A. Merkel who came up with the initiative to nominate J. Stoltenberg for the post of Secretary General of the Alliance<sup>10</sup>. Thus, Germany secured two winning positions in the dialogue with the leadership of Norway. In addition to a more than noticeable increase in the Kingdom’s influence in the Alliance, the prime minister’s main competitor from the Conservative Party, E. Solberg, was out of national domestic politics for a long time. She became head of the cabinet of ministers of the Kingdom in November 2013, replacing J. Stoltenberg (2000–2001; 2005–2013), who simultaneously headed the Labor Party. For this reason, A. Merkel’s initiative was doubly valuable for E. Solberg, contributing to the formation of their negotiating tandem.

In the second half of the 2010s, high-level negotiations were held every 1–1.5 years. Not being represented in the G7 and G20, Norway delegated the representation of some of its interests (in particular, on the energy agenda) to Germany at these venues. A. Merkel informed E. Solberg in detail on all the issues raised, emphasizing her readiness to defend not only her position, but also that of her partner<sup>11</sup>. As the leading (along with France) participant in the Normandy format (2014–2022) from the West, Germany regularly informed Norway about the situation in eastern Ukraine, “synchronized watches” to ensure Kyiv’s rapprochement with the EU and the Euro-Atlantic community as a whole.

The rapprochement of the parties became even more noticeable in the late 2010s. Oslo viewed the increased use of the Bundeswehr in Norway and adjacent waters as an investment in its defense and security, demonstrating its readiness to support Berlin in its efforts to ensure strategic penetration into the Arctic. The negotiations between A. Merkel and E. Solberg on the eve of the large-scale Trident Juncture 18 maneuvers in Norway are illustrative, and the summit itself

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<sup>10</sup> Von Misstrauen (bis) zur zuverlässigen Interessengemeinschaft. 19 December 2014. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/themen/deutschlandarchiv/197834/von-misstrauen-bis-zur-zuverlaessigen-interessengemeinschaft/> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und der Ministerpräsidentin des Königreichs Norwegen, Solberg in Berlin. Bundeskanzleramt. 8 November 2016. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-und-der-ministerpraesidentin-des-koenigreichs-norwegen-solberg-843592> (accessed 17 March 2024).

took place in Berlin<sup>12</sup>. This reflected Germany's role as a senior partner in the dialogue, without the Kingdom disputing it. It provided assistance to Germany in launching the "N5+1" format, i.e. a platform for high-level contacts between the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden) and Germany. The first meeting in the "N5+1" format took place in Reykjavik, Iceland, in August 2019. The negotiations were almost entirely devoted to environmental issues<sup>13</sup>. The precedent of launching the format as a symbol of a noticeable strengthening of Germany's position in Northern Europe is noteworthy.

By the end of 2021, Germany and Norway had undergone chronologically almost parallel leadership changes. Moreover, in both cases, the government changed from center-right to center-left. Following the parliamentary elections on October 14, 2021, E. Solberg (the head of the Conservative Party) was replaced as head of the Norwegian government by I.G. Støre, who headed the Labor Party (after the resignation of its leader J. Stoltenberg in 2014). On December 8, 2021, O. Scholz, who headed the SDPG, became Chancellor of Germany instead of A. Merkel (who had previously announced her resignation from the top post in the cabinet and the CDU) [12, Basov F.A., p. 278]. The governments in both countries were coalition: in Norway, the Center Party became the "satellite" of the Labor Party; in Germany, the role of junior partners of the SDPG was taken by the Alliance 90/Greens and Free Democrats.

The "change of milestones" at the highest level did not affect the development of the interstate dialogue — moreover, it continued to develop dynamically. This trend was closely linked to the preservation of continuity of the parties against the backdrop of a personal change in leadership in matters of "containing" the Russian Federation: both Norway and Germany took the path of toughening. Germany sought to play up the growth of its contribution to the confrontation with the Russian Federation as much as possible for the sake of further rapprochement with its Nordic partners. Thus, in 2022, O. Scholz and I.G. Støre held three personal negotiations, two of which were organized in Berlin; in November 2022, the Norwegian Prime Minister attended a security conference organized here<sup>14</sup>. The second "N5+1" meeting was held in Oslo a little earlier, in August 2022, with a focus on political and military issues. Increased attention was paid to the refusal of Finland and Sweden of their conditionally neutral status; however, cooperation with Norway remained Germany's top priority<sup>15</sup>. This was demonstrated not only by the venue of the "N5+1", but also by the dynamics of O. Scholz's bilateral meetings at the highest level. The intensity of his

<sup>12</sup> Pressestatements von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und der Ministerpräsidentin des Königreichs Norwegen, Erna Solberg im Bundeskanzleramt. Bundeskanzleramt. 16 October 2018. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/bregde/suche/pressestatements-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-und-der-ministerpraesidentin-des-koenigreichs-norwegen-erna-solberg-1538950> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>13</sup> Pressestatements von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und der Ministerpräsidentin Islands, Katrín Jakobsdóttir im Bundeskanzleramt. Bundeskanzleramt. 19 March 2018. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/bregde/aktuelles/pressestatements-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-und-der-ministerpraesidentin-islands-katrin-jakobsdottir-845270> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>14</sup> Norwegen — ein „für uns ganz besonderer Partner“. Bundeskanzleramt. 30 November 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeskanzler.de/bk-de/suche/scholz-empfaengt-store-2146560> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>15</sup> Bundeskanzler besucht Norwegen. Bundeskanzleramt. 15 August 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeskanzler.de/bk-de/aktuelles/bundeskanzler-besucht-norwegen-2071538> (accessed 17 March 2024).

negotiations with I.G. Støre was so high in 2022 that not a single summit meeting was held in 2023: the key issues were considered to have been sufficiently worked out. In order to avoid even formal hints of stagnation in the dialogue, the Norwegian royal couple visited Germany in August 2023, and the monarchs were received by both Chancellor O. Scholz and Federal President F.-W. Steinmeier<sup>16</sup>. The dynamics of cooperation in the Armed Forces became an indirect confirmation of the truly favorable situation with the political dialogue in interstate relations.

### ***Evolution of the forms of using the Bundeswehr on Norwegian territory***

Until the late 2010s, Germany did not send any significant ground contingents to participate in exercises in Norway. The transition to “containing” the Russian Federation (since 2014) for Germany was naturally accompanied by a gradual refocusing of the Bundeswehr from ensuring a presence away from NATO’s area of responsibility (primarily in the conflict-prone countries of Asia and Africa) to intensifying efforts within it.

Germany began to implement relevant measures deep inside the Alliance member states since 2014–2015 (under the auspices of the Rapid Reaction Forces, RRF; NATO Response Force, NRF), in Eastern Europe — since 2016–2017 (through the Forward Presence, FP). In 2018, this activity of the Bundeswehr fully started in Northern Europe: Germany sent a joint contingent of 8 thousand military personnel, 2 thousand units of combat and support equipment to participate in NATO maneuvers Trident Juncture 18. Taking into account the transport forces, these figures were even higher: more than 9 thousand personnel and 4 thousand vehicles of various purposes<sup>17</sup>. The Trident Juncture 18 exercises (October 25 – November 7, 2018) became the largest for NATO since the beginning of the confrontation with the Russian Federation: in total, about 50 thousand military personnel, 250 aircraft and 65 ships took part in them<sup>18</sup>, i.e. the use of an analogue of a reinforced joint group of army level in late autumn in subarctic conditions was practiced. Germany’s contribution in most key parameters amounted to 20%, second only to the United States and the host country. The transportation of the Bundeswehr ground and auxiliary forces was carried out by a combined route: by air and by sea (mainly to the port in Fredrikstad) and then by rail to the camp in Rena. The FRG even considered the issue of temporarily relocating the Bundeswehr transport department to Norway. In this way, the Bundeswehr worked out the transfer of a large group of forces to the Kingdom, i.e. in practice, building a military-logistics chain that connected the two countries.

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<sup>16</sup> Bundeskanzler empfängt den norwegischen Kronprinzen Haakon und Kronprinzessin Mette-Marit. Bundeskanzleramt. 09 November 2023. URL: <https://www.bundeskanzler.de/bk-de/aktuelles/bundeskanzler-empfaengt-den-norwegischen-kronprinzen-haakon-und-kronprinzessin-mette-marit-2234920> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>17</sup> TRIDENT JUNCTURE 18 — Germans deploy to Trident Juncture 18. DVIDS. 20 October 2018. URL: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/634371/trident-juncture-18-germans-deploy-trident-juncture-18> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>18</sup> Trident Juncture 2018. NATO. 29 October 2018. URL: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/157833.htm> (accessed 17 March 2024).



During the exercises, a scenario of a powerful counterattack from deep inside (central Norway) against a simulated enemy was played out. The key role in the counterattack group was assigned to the Very High Readiness Task Force (VJTF). The role of the “core” of its ground component was performed by units of the 41st Motorized Infantry Brigade (MIB) of the 1st Tank Division (TD) of the Bundeswehr<sup>19</sup>. They were actively supported by contingents from other participating countries, primarily Norway. The noticeable contribution and role of Germany was also explained by the fact that from January 2019, it assumed the functions of the “framework state” for the VJTF for a year<sup>20</sup>, and not only for the duration of important, but relatively short (2 weeks) exercises. Germany made the decision on the VJTF for 2019 in addition, out of turn, and was the only large and medium-sized member state of the Alliance to do so in the 2015–2022 cycle. It is interesting that during Trident Juncture 18, the Bundeswehr deployed one of its brigade (41st Motorized Infantry Brigade) to perform the functions of the VJTF “framework nation”, and in 2019 — another one (9th Tank Training Brigade; both formations from the 1st Tank Division). The increased burden of the FRG in staffing the most significant and largest multilateral NATO groups was aimed, among other things, at demonstrating an increasing willingness to contribute to ensuring the security and defense of Norway.

Indeed, the scale of the Bundeswehr’s participation and activity during Trident Juncture 18 stimulated political dialogue. However, at the very end of the 2010s, Germany’s contribution to the exercises on Norwegian territory and adjacent waters again became relatively limited in scale. The pandemic factor was important, but still by no means of primary importance. During the long-term reductions in the armed forces of the FRG in the 1990s–2010s, the ground forces (army) were subject to the largest reductions (both in absolute and specific terms). Thus, between 1989 and the mid-2010s, the number of divisions in their composition decreased: from 12 to 3 formations, and brigades — from 36 to 7.5 formations<sup>21</sup>. The growth in the number of the armed forces, which began in the late 2010s, was initially carried out at a slow pace: no new brigades were created until 2023 inclusive. For this reason, it was difficult for the FRG to determine those units, especially from the army, that were intended for active use in Norway.

The contribution to Trident Juncture 18 was rather an exception in this case: these were very large NATO exercises, and they did not last long, which made it possible to use the main forces of the brigade (41 MIB) for a short time, which was not intended for use in the North in terms of profile and equipment. Thus, since 2021, the 41 MIB has been used to staff the multinational FP battle group in Lithuania.

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<sup>19</sup> Panzergrenadierbrigade 41. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation/1-panzerdivision/panzergrenadierbrigade-41> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>20</sup> Germany steps up to lead NATO high readiness force. NATO. 1 January 2019. URL: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_161796.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_161796.htm?selectedLocale=en) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>21</sup> See: Weißbuch 1985 zur Sicherheit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und zur Entwicklung der Bundeswehr. Bonn: Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, 1985. 417 S.; Heer. Organization. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation> (accessed 17 March 2024).

The 23rd Mountain Rifle Brigade (MRB), the only formation with such a profile in the Bundeswehr, was assigned from the German Army for use in Norway. This decision was finally made in 2023, when the 23 MRB was transferred from the 10th TD to the rapid reaction forces division<sup>22</sup>. The 1st and 10th Tank Divisions of the Bundeswehr were responsible for general-purpose tasks and were used primarily within NATO's area of responsibility, becoming increasingly involved in staffing the Alliance's multinational groups (NRF and FP). The Response Force Division included formations designed for specific tasks in terms of distance from NATO's area of responsibility (primarily the 1st Airborne Brigade, ABB) and natural and climatic conditions. Norway and its coastal waters belonged to the NATO's area of responsibility. However, unlike most other Alliance member states that were located on or near the bloc's eastern borders (the Baltic states, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria), there were no multilateral FP formations on the territory of the Kingdom. Potentially, such forces could be deployed in the northern part of Norway, primarily in the county of Finnmark, which is adjacent to the territory of the Russian Federation. The presence in the north of Norway allowed the creator state to establish a foothold or even a geostrategic "springboard" for penetrating into the deep regions of the Arctic Ocean in cooperation with the Kingdom. The White House kept a contingent in Finnmark in 2017–2020<sup>23</sup> (since 2018, 700 servicemen from the Marine Corps, MC, i.e. the "core" of the battalion tactical group). In June 2022, the Storting ratified an interstate agreement with the United States, according to which they received access (the possibility of using together with the Kingdom) to four military bases, including two in Northern Norway<sup>24</sup>. At the same time, the United States actively participated in NATO-led exercises in this sub-region, i.e., turned to chronologically intermittent (fragmentary) forms of presence.

Official Berlin chose them in the early 2020s to create strategic influence in Finnmark and the surrounding provinces of the Kingdom. Since its formation (1949), the FRG has traditionally preferred to implement steps using the Bundeswehr in the paradigm of multilateralism [13, Arzamanova T.V., pp. 261–262]. This commitment was due to the historical responsibility of Germany as the main aggressor in World War II, the desire to avoid critical perception of the expansion of the geography of the use of the Armed Forces, doing this under the auspices of international structures.

German ground units and subdivisions were sent to northern Norway primarily to participate in the regularly scheduled Cold Response exercises, which became known as Nordic Response in 2024 after Finland and Sweden joined the Alliance. Two A400M transport aircraft from the 62nd

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<sup>22</sup> Division Schnelle Kräfte. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation/division-schnelle-kraefte> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Pulls 700 Marines Out of Norway. 7 August 2020. URL: <https://www.lifeinnorway.net/u-s-pulls-700-marines-out-of-norway/> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>24</sup> New Norway — USA Defense Agreement Allows Extensive US Authority in the North. 8 June 2022. URL: <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/new-norway-usa-defense-agreement-allows-extensive-us-authority-north> (accessed 17 March 2024).

Air Force Squadron <sup>25</sup>, sappers and the 232nd Mountain Ranger Battalion from the 23rd Mountain Rifle Brigade were allocated for the Cold Response 20 (March 2020) <sup>26</sup>. In specific terms, the contribution of the FRG amounted to less than 1.5% (150 mountain riflemen and a little more than 30 flight and maintenance personnel out of a total of 15 thousand military personnel <sup>27</sup>). At the same time, the Bundeswehr demonstrated its ability to quickly reinforce the only “North” Brigade in the Norwegian army with units equipped for the conditions of Finnmark.

Germany practiced this task again during the Cold Response 22 (March 2022) involving 27 participating countries. Using military transport aircraft, Germany sent units of the reconnaissance companies of the 26th and 31st parachute regiments from the 1st ABB <sup>28</sup>, a company of the 232nd battalion of the 23rd MRB <sup>29</sup> (a unit different from the one involved in similar exercises in 2020) to the north of Norway. The exercises involved ground robotics manufactured in Germany, the capabilities of which (cross-country ability, operation without failures) were tested in conditions of high snow cover and very low temperatures <sup>30</sup>.

The fact that the 1st ABB, which had been part of the rapid reaction division since its creation, and the 23rd MRB were used in parallel in Cold Response 22, played an important role in the transfer of the second of these brigades to the division from 2023. Compared to 2020, the volume of Germany’s involvement has increased (more than twofold), but the total number of participants has also increased sharply — from 15,000 military personnel during Cold Response 20 to 30,000 in Cold Response 22 <sup>31</sup>. For this reason, the specific contribution of the FRG remained just as small (about 1.5%). However, its practical value for Norway was still significant: the Bundeswehr worked out the reinforcement of the Royal Forces Brigade “North” along the line of two of its brigades at once.

In November 2022, at the Berlin Security Conference in the presence of Prime Minister J.G. Støre, Chancellor O. Scholz summarized the interim results of the cooperation accumulated during

<sup>25</sup> Cold Response — die „kalte Antwort“ aus dem Norden. BMVg. 26 March 2020. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/luftwaffe/aktuelles/cold-response-die-kalte-antwort-aus-dem-norden-230516> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>26</sup> Gebirgsjäger zurück aus Nordnorwegen. BMVg. 3 April 2020. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/aktuelles/gebirgsjaeger-zurueck-aus-nordnorwegen-247746> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>27</sup> Cold Response — die „kalte Antwort“ aus dem Norden. BMVg. 26 March 2020. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/luftwaffe/aktuelles/cold-response-die-kalte-antwort-aus-dem-norden-230516> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>28</sup> Fernspäher allein im Eis. BMVg. 31 March 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/aktuelles/fernspaeh-allein-im-eis-5384618> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>29</sup> Gebirgsjäger bei Cold Response 2022. BMVg. 1 April 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/aktuelles/gebirgsjaeger-bei-cold-response-2022-5385872> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>30</sup> Infanterieroboter besteht Test im Schnee. BMVg. 4 April 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/aktuelles/infanterieroboter-besteht-test-im-schnee-5386348> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>31</sup> Fernspäher allein im Eis. BMVg. 31 March 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/aktuelles/fernspaeh-allein-im-eis-5384618> (accessed 17 March 2024).

the exercises in northern Norway. The military personnel of the two countries worked out the creation and operation of a joint (from the army, air force, and support from the sea) bilateral grouping of 1.2 thousand servicemen (equivalent to a reinforced BTG)<sup>32</sup>.

This practice was repeated during the Nordic Response 24 in March 2024. They took place in the northern regions of Norway (primarily), Finland and Sweden, which had recently joined the Alliance. The Nordic Response 24 exercises were part of a complex of exercises under the auspices of NATO, which took place primarily in the Atlantic (the transfer of US troops to the territory of continental allies in the bloc), in Northern, Central (primarily in Germany) and Eastern Europe<sup>33</sup>. Germany played a significant role in almost all of them<sup>34</sup>, cooperating quite closely with Norway. 20 thousand military personnel (from 13 NATO member states) were directly involved in Nordic Response 24, of which 10 thousand were from the ground forces<sup>35</sup>. The core of the Bundeswehr contingent was made up of units from the 233rd Battalion of the 23rd MRB<sup>36</sup>.

By 2024, the 23rd Mountain Rifle Brigade consisted of a training center and 6 battalions. One of them was a sapper/engineer battalion (about 600 servicemen), and another was a support battalion (over 750 personnel)<sup>37</sup>. Accordingly, the four remaining battalions were military: the 230th reconnaissance battalion (over 450 servicemen) and mountain ranger units: the 231st (over 850 personnel), the 232nd (over 850 servicemen), and the 233rd (about 800 personnel)<sup>38</sup>. Of these, during three Cold Response/Nordic Response exercises, Germany led a third of the 230th, 232nd and at least half of the 233rd battalions, with the participation of engineers and support

<sup>32</sup> Rede von Bundeskanzler Scholz anlässlich der Berlin Security Conference am 30. November 2022 in Berlin. Bundeskanzleramt. 30 November 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeskanzler.de/bk-de/suche/rede-von-bundeskanzler-scholz-anlaesslich-der-berlin-security-conference-am-30-november-2022-2149770> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>33</sup> Steadfast Defender 24. NATO. 2024. URL: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/222847.htm> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>34</sup> Deutschland: Drehscheibe für NATO-Großmanöver. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/weitere-bmvg-dienststellen/territoriales-fuehrungskommando-der-bundeswehr/uebungen-territoriales-fuehrungskommandos/drehscheibe-fuer-nato-grossmanoever-steadfast-defender> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>35</sup> Nordic Response 2024. Forsvaret. 2024. URL: <https://www.forsvaret.no/en/exercises-and-operations/exercises/nr24> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>36</sup> Was passiert am nördlichsten Punkt Europas? BMVg. 4 March 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/aktuelles/schwerpunkte/quadriga-2024-nato-landstreitkraefte-ueben-buendnisfall/was-passiert-am-noerdlichsten-punkt-europas-5752476> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>37</sup> Gebirgspionierbataillon 8. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation/division-schnelle-kraefte/gebirgsjaegerbrigade-23/gebirgspionierbataillon-8> (accessed 17 March 2024); Gebirgsversorgungsbataillon 8. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation/division-schnelle-kraefte/gebirgsjaegerbrigade-23/gebirgsversorgungsbataillon-8> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>38</sup> Gebirgsaufklärungsbataillon 230. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation/division-schnelle-kraefte/gebirgsjaegerbrigade-23/gebirgsaufklaerungsbataillon-230> (accessed 17 March 2024); Gebirgsjägerbataillon 231. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation/division-schnelle-kraefte/gebirgsjaegerbrigade-23/gebirgsjaegerbataillon-231> (accessed 17 March 2024); Gebirgsjägerbataillon 232. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation/division-schnelle-kraefte/gebirgsjaegerbrigade-23/gebirgsjaegerbataillon-232> (accessed 17 March 2024); Gebirgsjägerbataillon 233. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation/division-schnelle-kraefte/gebirgsjaegerbrigade-23/gebirgsjaegerbataillon-233> (accessed 17 March 2024).

forces, through the natural and climatic conditions and mountainous terrain of northern Norway. This allows asserting that, as a result of cooperation with the Kingdom, the 23rd MRB is undergoing a gradual “test run” as an Arctic troop unit. Given the speed that Germany has gained, it is reasonable to expect that most units of the 23rd MRB will have developed the skills to operate in the conditions of Northern Norway by the end of the 2020s. In addition, reconnaissance (i.e., strike vanguard) units of the 1st ABB have also acquired this experience. Accordingly, in the current realities, the FRG has a part of the Arctic forces' calculation brigade in the line of ground forces, and in the medium term it will have a full one (or even strengthened, taking into account the component of the 1st ABB).

How large is this figure for the Arctic forces, taking into account the capabilities of other players? The Norwegian Army itself has only one brigade of profile troops (“North”, permanent deployment location in Finnmark<sup>39</sup>). The United States decided to create a specialized 11th Airborne Division (ABD; stationed in Alaska) only in June 2022 [14, Zhuravel V.P., Timoshenko D.S.]. It had two brigades: the 1st infantry (former strikers) and the 2nd airmobile. Both of them were transferred from the 25th Infantry Division<sup>40</sup>, which is located in the Hawaiian Islands, i.e. in completely different natural and climatic conditions than Alaska. At the same time, both of these US brigades will become real Arctic troops by the end of the 2020s, i.e. in the medium term. Taking this into account, Germany, which did not have direct access to the Arctic Ocean, was not far behind the United States, despite the huge difference in military power as a whole: thus, in 2023, the Bundeswehr had only 7.5 brigades of ground forces, the United States Army (excluding national guard formations) — 32 brigades<sup>41</sup>. It is significant that the training of the 11th ABD (as well as the specialized units of the USMC since 2017) took place largely in the north of Norway: in the spring of 2023, units of the 2nd Airmobile Brigade of the division were transcontinentally transferred here<sup>42</sup>. The attractiveness of the Kingdom as a partner for the United States is due to two factors: the opportunity to adopt the experience of the “North” Brigade, which has been a front-runner in the use in the coastal zone of the Arctic Ocean, and the desire to have a bridgehead here (in addition to Alaska) for a full-fledged consolidation in the Arctic. These reasons also determined the interest of Germany. Thanks to Oslo’s support, it received the opportunity to transform its

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<sup>39</sup> Norwegian Armed Forces in transition. Strategic defence review by the Norwegian chief of defence. Abridged version. Oslo, 2015. P. 15, 23. URL: [https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/\\_attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf](https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/_attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>40</sup> Army Forms 11th Airborne Division Amid Focus on Arctic Warfare. Military.com. 6 June 2022. URL: <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/06/06/army-forms-11th-airborne-division-amid-focus-arctic-warfare.html> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Army. US.gov. 2024. URL: <https://www.usa.gov/agencies/u-s-army> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>42</sup> Statement of general Christopher G. Cavoli, United States Army. United States European Command. DoD. 26.04.2023. URL: <https://armedservices.house.gov/sites/republicans.armedservices.house.gov/files/04.26.23%20Cavoli%20Statement%20v2.pdf> (accessed 17 March 2024).

mountain rifle troops (permanently stationed in the Alps, i.e. in the south of Germany) into Arctic troops.

### ***Cooperation of the parties in the northern direction through the Navy and Air Force***

In comparison with the Navy army, the FRG was able to determine those forces that could be used in the Norwegian direction. What is the reason for this? The Navy, in comparison with other types of troops, was better prepared for use away from NATO's area of responsibility. First of all, this is due to the presence of two squadrons (2nd and 4th) of frigates in the 2nd operational flotilla: this type was considered the most suitable for presence in the World Ocean. Another reason is also important: the classes of ships that were sent to cooperate with the Norwegian Navy — frigates and submarines — were the only ones that were not involved in NATO's permanent maritime and countermeasure groups to the north and south of Eastern Europe.

Since the end of the 2010s, in addition to large-scale exercises, the FRG began to send frigates individually for paired patrols and joint small but intensive maneuvers with ships of the Royal Navy of the same class. Most of these activities were carried out in the Norwegian Sea<sup>43</sup>. This cooperation was all the more valuable to the Kingdom because one of the frigates was wrecked (hit the rocks) during Trident Juncture 18, leaving Oslo with only 4 of these ships<sup>44</sup>, the most valuable in various ways. In the short and medium term, we should expect an intensification of cooperation between the frigates of the two countries in the Barents Sea in conjunction with the increased activity of the ground forces of the parties in Finnmark. At the same time, scientific and technical cooperation has also developed in this area: in July 2021, it was decided that three German frigates (F124, F125, F126) would be equipped with NSM Block 1A anti-ship missile systems of Norwegian-German development<sup>45</sup>.

At the same time, since the end of the 2010s, cooperation between submarine fleets has been developing very dynamically under a similar scheme. In 2019, the U36 submarine of the Bundeswehr's specialized squadron (part of the 1st operational flotilla) was sent for almost six months to conduct various exercises with the Norwegian side<sup>46</sup>. The main objective was to demonstrate the high technical characteristics (especially low-noise and stealth capabilities) of the

<sup>43</sup> „Sachsen“ erhält Nikolaus-Preis in Sonderform. BMVg. 18 March 2019. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/marine/aktuelles/sachsen-erhaelt-nikolaus-preis-in-sonderform-5022470> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>44</sup> Calculated on the basis of: Norwegian Armed Forces in transition. Strategic defence review by the Norwegian chief of defence. Abridged version. Oslo, 2015. P. 15. URL: [https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/\\_attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf](https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/_attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>45</sup> Deutschland und Norwegen kooperieren bei der Beschaffung von Seeziel-Lenkflugkörper. BMVg. 8 July 2021. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/resource/blob/5109088/35bcd4aa8b507eacd49c9f995495ac0d/21-ruistungskooperation-zwischen-deutschland-und-norwegen-data.pdf> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>46</sup> Deutsch-norwegische Kooperation: „U36“ läuft aus. BMVg. 24 January 2019. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/marine/aktuelles/deutsch-norwegische-kooperation-u36-89960> (accessed 17 March 2024).

German Project 212A submarines in order to encourage the partner to purchase them. Norway's plans for the development of the Armed Forces in the mid-2010s, specifically in terms of submarines, were very uncertain<sup>47</sup>. As early as 2017, the Kingdom began to consider the possibility of a solution through purchasing samples from Germany<sup>48</sup>. The final decision was made in July 2021. Berlin and Oslo decided to order a batch of Project 212CD submarines from German manufacturers: the first — 2 submarines, the second — 4 submarines<sup>49</sup>. Project 212CD submarines had improved tactical and technical characteristics compared to Type 212A submarines (all 6 submarines of the 1st submarine squadron of the FRG in 2023 were of this type<sup>50</sup>). Thus, the tonnage was increased from 1.4 to 2.5 thousand tons, which, together with other innovations, made the Project 212CD submarines more suitable for use in the distant sea zone, including the waters of the Arctic Ocean. Norway was supposed to receive the first of the ordered submarines in 2029, Germany — in 2032, and by 2035 all submarines should be delivered<sup>51</sup>.

The implementation of this project gave Germany great commercial (financial) and military-strategic advantages. The Norwegian submarine fleet (the equivalent of one submarine brigade) was tied to maintenance and repair by German companies for the long term. In turn, Germany provided its partner with access to its advanced developments; moreover, it was considered one of the world leaders in the field of creating diesel submarines. The German side exported submarines to many countries around the world, but these were mainly ships of a different type (Project 212 of various modifications) than those used by the German Navy itself — with simplified tactical and technical characteristics. This rule did not apply to Norway, although it received the lead submarine of Project 212CD much earlier (by 3 years) than Germany itself. These facts reflected the desire of Germany to emphasize the particularly trusting nature of cooperation with Norway in the field of security and defense, not only in the past and present, but also in the future at a chronologically “long” step. Official Berlin realized the benefits of the bilateral submarine initiative and in turn met its partner's demands for the purchase of anti-ship systems for frigates primarily of its

<sup>47</sup> Norwegian Armed Forces in transition... P. 15, 24. URL: [https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/\\_attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf](https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/_attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>48</sup> Deutsch-norwegische Marine-Kooperation vereinbart. BMVg. 8 December 2017. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/marine/aktuelles/deutsch-norwegische-kooperationsvereinbarung-unterzeichnet-5032428> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>49</sup> Rüstungskooperation zwischen Deutschland und Norwegen. Beschaffung zweier U-Boote für die Bundeswehr unter Vertrag. BMVg. 8 July 2021. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/resource/blob/5109066/e3a362cf0b87ca7cb68b3f8a41e607ff/20-beschaffung-zweier-u-boote-fuer-die-bundeswehr-unter-vertrag-data.pdf> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>50</sup> Ubootgeschwader. BMVg. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/marine/organisation/einsatzflottille-1/1-ubootgeschwader> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>51</sup> Rüstungskooperation zwischen Deutschland und Norwegen. Beschaffung zweier U-Boote für die Bundeswehr unter Vertrag. BMVg. 8 July 2021. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/resource/blob/5109066/e3a362cf0b87ca7cb68b3f8a41e607ff/20-beschaffung-zweier-u-boote-fuer-die-bundeswehr-unter-vertrag-data.pdf> (accessed 17 March 2024).

own (de jure bilateral) design. Both agreements were signed on July 8, 2021, thereby representing a package deal.

Two strategic agreements made it possible to unify the fleets of the parties in a number of specialized weapons (for some frigates) and, most importantly, submarines. This dramatically expanded the opportunities for practical cooperation, including the formation of temporary (for the duration of exercises or for any significant specific event) and permanent naval groups of bilateral manning. First of all, we could talk about a joint group of submarines (2–3 submarines), as well as frigates. At the NATO level, by the mid-2020s, there were no multinational formations of ships of these classes, i.e. such bilateral initiatives of Berlin and Oslo, if implemented, could become precedent-setting and even breakthrough. Moreover, in practice, taking into account the planned speed of receipt of submarines, such a unit can be created only in the first half of the 2030s.

The FRG is likely to use the issue of protection of critical infrastructure (primarily various pipelines and cables) located underwater as an information reason for launching and implementing such an initiative. Germany used the disruption of the Nord Streams in a modal (“pure”) form, i.e. without discussing the involvement of a specific party in this, to sharply intensify its naval cooperation with Norway<sup>52</sup>.

Coordination between the air forces of the two countries was much less in volume and quality. A partial change in this situation is possible as Norway<sup>53</sup> (instead of the F-16) and Germany<sup>54</sup> (in addition to aircraft developed by EU member states) purchase American F-35s. In this case, the unification of combat vehicle fleets will also have an effect, but much less than in the case of the Navy. The F-35 is a US-made technology, which is one of the reasons, and most importantly, an indicator that the cooperation between the two countries in the Air Force will be through US coordination, but mostly not directly.

### ***Coordination of the parties in the issue of NATO grouping and support for official Kyiv***

By the mid-2010s, Germany and Norway (as well as the Netherlands) belonged to one group of the Alliance member states when staffing groups. The Royal Army, as an ordinary member state, was involved in staffing the VJTF as the “spearhead” of the NRF in all the turns of the Bundeswehr as a “framework nation”. In 2015 and 2023, this happened at the beginning of each load-

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<sup>52</sup> Deutsche Marine beteiligt sich am Schutz der kritischen Infrastruktur Norwegens. BMVg. 4 November 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/marine/aktuelles/schutz-kritischer-infrastruktur-norwegens-5519846> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>53</sup> Norwegian Armed Forces in transition... P. 23. URL: [https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/\\_attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf](https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/_attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>54</sup> Rede von Bundeskanzler Scholz anlässlich der Berlin Security Conference am 30. November 2022 in Berlin. Bundeskanzleramt. 30 November 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeskanzler.de/bk-de/suche/rede-von-bundeskanzler-scholz-anlaesslich-der-berlin-security-conference-am-30-november-2022-2149770> (accessed 17 March 2024).



sharing cycle between the European member states; in 2019 — additionally<sup>55</sup>. In the third case, Norway's active contribution is most indicative: official Oslo demonstrated its reliability as a junior partner in the context of a noticeable increase in the frequency of Germany's acceptance of the load when staffing the forces of NATO's II strategic echelon. Moreover, the Kingdom's ground forces were small (a brigade, a guard, small reserve-type formations<sup>56</sup>), and an increase in the workload by even several hundred military personnel was noticeable for Norway, especially since almost all combat-ready battalions were located in Finnmark and adjacent areas<sup>57</sup>, i.e. in the north of the country.

However, official Oslo did not refuse to bear the burden in various multinational NATO forces to the south of its territory, including in Eastern Europe. Thus, since 2017, Norway has participated in staffing the Alliance's multinational FP combat tactical group on the territory of Lithuania, with Germany acting as a "framework state" for this formation. In 2017–2021, the Bundeswehr's contribution was 500–550 military personnel, the Royal Armed Forces — about 120 personnel<sup>58</sup>. In January 2022, i.e. even before the start of the Russian Special Military Operation, Germany increased its contingent by 350 soldiers and officers, Norway — by 60 military personnel<sup>59</sup>, i.e. the parties again acted symmetrically, constantly coordinating plans.

The latter trend was emphasized by O. Scholz, when on June 7, 2022, at the meeting with the leaders of the Baltic states, he announced plans to gradually reorganize the battalion group into a brigade group<sup>60</sup>. At the time of the announcement of these plans, in June 2022, out of a total of 1,632 military personnel, Germany accounted for 1,031 soldiers and officers (63.2%), and Norway — for 188 military personnel (11.5%)<sup>61</sup>. If such a specific contribution were to be maintained, the transition of the multilateral FP formation from a battalion to a brigade would require Norway to deploy 500–600 servicemen at a time, and taking into account the rotation principle, to reserve a total of about 2–3 thousand, or at least 10% of the total number of the Royal Armed Forces. Such a load was extremely difficult for them to implement. This situation became one of

<sup>55</sup> Germany steps up to lead NATO high readiness force. NATO. 1 January 2019. URL: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_161796.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_161796.htm?selectedLocale=en) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>56</sup> Norwegian Armed Forces in transition. Strategic defence review by the Norwegian chief of defence. Abridged version. Oslo, 2015. 24 p. URL: [https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/\\_/attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf](https://www.forsvaret.no/en/news/archive/chief-of-defence-presents-strategic-defence-review/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf/_/attachment/inline/90fb5ae7-58c0-4bd5-ada4-5af212697044:f86eb1b8d34497ac7770386572795f1c6afa0671/Strategic%20Defence%20Review%202015.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence. NATO. October 2020. URL: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/10/pdf/2010-factsheet\\_efp\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/10/pdf/2010-factsheet_efp_en.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>59</sup> NATO-Staaten verstärken Nordostflanke des Bündnisses. BMVg. 2 March 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/aktuelles/nato-staaten-verstaerken-nordostflanke-des-buendnisses-5364278> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>60</sup> „Russland darf und wird diesen Krieg nicht gewinnen“. Bundeskanzleramt. 7 June 2022. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/bundeskanzler-in-litauen-2047754> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>61</sup> Calculated on the basis of: NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence. NATO. June 2022. URL: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/2206-factsheet\\_efp\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/2206-factsheet_efp_en.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2024).

the reasons for the decision of the FRG, which was announced in November 2023. All newly deployed battalions of the brigade, except for the already multilateral one, should be single-national (i.e. only from Bundeswehr servicemen), and be stationed on a permanent basis. One half of the brigade and the headquarters were to be deployed in Lithuania by the end of 2024, the other — by 2026 inclusive<sup>62</sup>. This decision was in the interests of the Kingdom: official Berlin was noticeably increasing and making permanent the German presence in one of the Baltic countries (the situation in which the Northern European states traditionally paid increased attention), Oslo was maintaining its politically significant contribution, but without incurring excessive military costs.

Coordination of efforts of the parties also took place in the matter of providing support to the armed forces of Ukraine. Firstly, Germany and Norway were actively involved in the activities of the Ramstein format. Under its auspices, “Western democracies” created “coalitions of the willing” to supply specific types of weapons and military equipment, especially heavy ones, to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Official Oslo was interested in Berlin’s agreement to the supply Leopard 2 tanks, which were available both to Germany and to NATO partners, including Norway. The FRG authorities made this decision on January 25, 2023. The Government of I.G. Støre allocated eight Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine already in March 2023<sup>63</sup>. O. Scholz’s cabinet carried out deliveries less quickly; by the summer of 2023, it had allocated eighteen Leopard 2 and thirty Leopard 1 tanks<sup>64</sup>. Taking into account the volume of military reserves in specific terms, Norway’s contribution looks noticeably larger than that of Germany.

The Kingdom also took part in the EU military training mission EUMAM UA to train the personnel of the Ukrainian Armed Forces: for 2023, the main task was to train troops and units and then replenish them for the “strategic reserve” brigades of Ukraine's forces. Thus, a group of Norwegian instructors was sent to EUMAM UA training centers in Germany. In total, at least 5 thousand military personnel were trained here in 2023<sup>65</sup>. First of all, these are the personnel of the 47th Mechanized Brigade of the AFU “Magura” and specialists of technical branches of the armed forces (tank, mechanized, artillery) for other units. The 47th Brigade unsuccessfully attacked in the Zaporozhian direction in the summer and autumn of 2023, and was then transferred to the Avdiivka and Artemivka directions, suffering heavy losses and repeatedly receiving numerous reinforcements of people and equipment. The fact that Norway participated in the activities of EUMAM UA, without being an EU member state, did not seem an anomaly. As in the case of the Permanent

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<sup>62</sup> Drei bewährte Bataillone für die neue Panzerbrigade 42. Deutscher Bundeswehrverband. DBWV. 6 November 2023. URL: <https://www.dbwv.de/aktuelle-themen/blickpunkt/beitrag/zwei-bewaehrte-bataillone-fuer-die-neue-panzerbrigade-42> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>63</sup> Norske stridsvogner mottatt av Ukraina. Forsvaret. 20 March 2023. URL: <https://www.forsvaret.no/aktuelt-og-presse/aktuelt/stridsvogner-ukraina> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>64</sup> See: Diese Waffen und militärische Ausrüstung liefert Deutschland an die Ukraine. Bundeskanzleramt. 2024. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/schwerpunkte/krieg-in-der-ukraine/lieferungen-ukraine-2054514> (accessed 17 March 2024).

<sup>65</sup> Norwegen: Starker Partner in der Ausbildung. BMVg. 19 July 2023. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/weitere-bmvg-dienststellen/territoriales-fuehrungskommando-der-bundeswehr/aktuelles/norwegen-partner-ausbildung-5654686> (accessed 17 March 2024).

Structured Cooperation (PESCO) under the auspices of the European Union, Norway contributed in those specific areas that were of interest to it. It is logical that Germany, as the unofficial leader of the EU and an actor very interested in deepening cooperation with the Kingdom, was satisfied with the facts of its cooperation with the EU as an association. In turn, official Oslo, within the framework of EUMAM UA, chose Berlin as the main counterparty for coordinating efforts. Moreover, Norway participated in the training of the Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel not only under the auspices of the EU mission, but also under the auspices of Interflex, where the role of the main organizer was assumed by Great Britain in its national capacity<sup>66</sup>. London has only recently (2021) completed the Brexit, which hit the interests of Germany hard [15, Ananyeva E.V., pp. 111–112]. For these reasons, we can talk about Norway's readiness to provide assistance to Ukraine in various issues, but not always choosing Germany as a key partner.

### *Conclusion*

With a rather limited military resource base, Norway was active not only in its "home" regions (Northern Europe, the Arctic), but also in the forward part of NATO's area of responsibility in Eastern Europe and in supporting the Ukrainian Armed Forces. In the latter two cases, the practical scope of Norway's activities was not so large (within the FP group in Lithuania, the Kingdom's Armed Forces were represented by less than 200 servicemen; in terms of tanks, Kyiv received from Oslo a fleet for a partial company), but the frequency of measures and the exclusive attention to each of them from Germany and other partners are indicative.

Official Oslo demonstrated a readiness to act on the specified wide range of tracks, and this ability was ensured by the nature of support from the partner states of the Alliance. It was based on an increased interest in the Kingdom as a focal ally for penetrating the Arctic Ocean. Norway itself did not accelerate the issue of deploying troops of other "Western democracies" on its territory and adjacent sea areas; NATO powers demonstrated an increased desire to implement this, which is clearly evident in the example of the FRG.

Based on cooperation with the Royal Armed Forces in Finnmark, Germany began to create Arctic troops for the first time since the end of World War II, preparing the forces of the 23rd Mountain Rifle Brigade and individual units of the 1st Airborne Brigade in this capacity. At the same time, the German Navy began to operate in the seas to the west and north of the Kingdom, i.e. also as Arctic forces. Here, the main cooperation would be in the area of frigates and diesel submarines, which confirmed the features of advanced military-technical cooperation. Military cooperation is framed by advanced political dialogue, including at the highest level. A high level of political trust in the dialogue was achieved already in the mid-2010s, thereby ensuring a "spill-over effect" in the military sphere approximately five years later, by the beginning of the 2020s. In addition to the rapid development of cooperation in the Armed Forces and the development of special-

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<sup>66</sup> Operation Interflex. Forsvaret. 2024. URL: <https://www.forsvaret.no/en/exercises-and-operations/international-operations/interflex> (accessed 17 March 2024).

ized equipment, it is also indicative to supplement bilateral contacts with cooperation in the “N5+1” format, as well as the invariability of the progressive development of cooperation against the backdrop of a change in the leadership of each of the countries. This reflected the role of Norway as a focal partner for Germany in matters of not only strategic penetration in the Arctic, but also strengthening its position in Northern Europe as a region.

Germany is extremely interested in ensuring significant military-political positions in the Arctic Ocean. The main reasons are the desire to emphasize successes in gaining full-fledged global subjectivity, as well as to gain access to the vast natural (primarily energy and marine) resources of the Arctic Ocean due to the limited availability of such at Germany’s own disposal.

Both official Berlin and Oslo prefer the increasing use of NATO’s aegis in the Arctic. Germany’s military activity in Norway and adjacent waters, especially in the northern part of the country, is a significant contribution to the system of “containing” the Russian Federation. The threat to its security and national interests is all the more significant because unfriendly military measures are directed against the main forces of the joint strategic command “Northern Fleet” — at present, first of all, against the ground forces (Arctic motorized rifle and coast guard), and in future — against the Navy.

In general, de jure and partly de facto, German-Norwegian relations have strived for the ideal. However, it is still hardly possible to recognize them as sufficiently harmonious as of the early 2020s. The interest of official Berlin in Oslo was greater than the other way around: first of all, due to the growing desire of the FRG to ensure a full-fledged strategic presence in the Arctic Ocean. This created an increased practical dependence of Germany on Norway. Moreover, its open negative manifestations in the near and medium term will be minimal, given the growth of the military resource base that the FRG was ready to allocate for cooperation with the Kingdom.

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