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Features and Perspectives of NATO's Strategic Penetration into the Arctic: The Norwegian Dimension

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Abstract. Military-strategic penetration into the Arctic is becoming one of the key attributes of global capability for influential international players. The point applies not only to the most powerful states, but also to NATO as main keeper of military tools of the West. The article tries to identify and explore the scheme of NATO's strategic penetration into the Arctic Ocean. It is noted that the role of its support is assigned to Norway, the reasons for the consensus on this issue between the United States and the leading NATO member states in Western Europe are identified. The paper assesses the strengths of Norway's armed forces and identifies the bottlenecks that require support from NATO partners as they attempt multilateral penetration into the Arctic. Functionally, the Alliance's anchoring scheme consists of three main elements. The first one is a section of the Russian Federation's "containment" system in Finnmark. Here, the key role is assigned to the main forces of Norwegian troops with the practice of their operational reinforcement by the troops of NATO partners. In turn, the latter are ready to take an increased load in strengthening the second element. This is the coastline from Trondheim in the south to Tromsø, with the support of bases on which the strategic penetration into the Arctic Ocean (the third element) is carried out. This is ensured by the growing co-operation between the Norwegian Navy and interested NATO member states.

Keywords: *Arctic, Norway, North Atlantic Alliance, USA, UK, Germany, Finnmark, military exercises, military groups, Norwegian sea*

Introduction

The growing interest in the Arctic Ocean (AO) on the part of a growing number of players is one of the main trends in the development of the world in the 21st century. The reasons include not only the presence of huge reserves of various natural resources in the Arctic and its logistical value, especially in the context of global warming. The strategic, i.e. military component, penetration, and even more so, a strengthening in the Arctic is becoming an increasingly mandatory attribute for the most influential states to realize their power ambitions. This situation increasingly applies to NATO, a full-fledged military bloc representing the most influential and institutionally well-established mechanism of "liberal democracies" in the field of security and defense.

The North Atlantic Alliance was conceived, created and developed during the previous Cold War as a structure aimed at building confrontation with the participation of the West in a paradigm beneficial to the latter. In the 1990s – early 2010s, the new main meaning for the trans-

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formed NATO was the fight against threats and challenges of instability. This was accompanied not only by the active expansion of the Alliance in using its potential beyond the area of responsibility (primarily in the Middle East), but also by movement along the path of globalization of activities. The full return of the West to building systems of “containment” of influential opponents [1, Braterskiy M.V.] — primarily the Russian Federation (since 2014), as well as the PRC and Iran ¹ — had very noticeable consequences for NATO. The organization’s role in the strategic planning system of “liberal democracies” has once again increased dramatically, which was naturally accompanied by a sharp increase in the Alliance’s resource capabilities. The focus of increased attention on “containing” the Russian Federation, coupled with the impossibility of accepting the role of security provider for the unstable states of the Near and Middle East (as the case of Afghanistan clearly showed [2, Novikova O.N., pp. 221–226]) created a significant difficulty for NATO — the search for geographically and functionally new options for the globalization of activities. These were the Alliance’s involvement in the “containment” of the PRC, already carried out by the USA and a group of its partners in the Indo-Pacific region, and the strategic penetration into the Arctic under the auspices of the bloc. However, if in the first case (the issue of countering the PRC) the use of NATO was met with the actual unpreparedness of a number of participating countries for this (primarily Germany and France) [3, Arzamanova T.V.], then in the second, on the contrary, there was a broad consensus.

The ratio of military-strategic potentials and the influence of players in the Arctic Ocean is becoming one of the important indicators of the paradigm of the newly formed world order. Its nature will be fundamentally determined by the relationship between the West and non-West countries. The second community is still at the initial stage of its structuring. The first one (as the camp of “liberal democracies”) was formed a long time ago, but is now undergoing a phase of partial internal restructuring. One of its components is ensuring multi-aspect multilateral coherence of the actions of NATO member countries in the Arctic, including at the level of the Alliance as an organization.

The factor of the special military operation (SMO) of the Russian Federation temporarily reduced the Alliance’s military-strategic attention to the Arctic in informational, but not in practical terms. Thus, half of the 6 largest (involving at least 15 thousand military servants, i.e. the equivalent of a full division) single and dual ² exercises were conducted in Norway and adjacent waters. These are *Trident Juncture 18* (involving 50 thousand soldiers and officers) ³, *Cold Response 22* (30 thousand participants) ⁴, *Joint Viking 23/Joint Warrior 23* (20 thousand military

¹ NATO 2022 strategic concept. Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Madrid 29 June 2022. Brussels: NATO HQ, 2022. Pp. 3–5.

² Two (or more) exercises, chronologically parallel, conducted in the same direction and to practice a single task, for which a general indicator of the number of troops is given.

³ Trident Juncture 2018. NATO. 7.11.2018. URL: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/157833.htm> (accessed 05.05.2023).

⁴ Cold Response 2022. Forsvaret. 17.11.2022. URL: <https://www.forsvaret.no/en/exercises-and-operations/exercises/cr22> (accessed 05 May 2023).

servants involved)⁵. It should be emphasized that all of the above-mentioned 2022–2023 exercises were conducted after the start of the Russian Federation's SMO. The scale of each of these maneuvers is significant not only in comparison with other significant NATO exercises and taking into account the significantly reduced number of national armed forces since the previous West-East confrontation, but also with regard to natural and climatic realities. The complexity of support and the combat value of engaging a single soldier in the harsh subarctic and arctic environment is much higher than in Eastern Europe or the Mediterranean.

The purpose of the article is to reveal the features and prospects of NATO's military-strategic penetration into the Arctic in relation to the realities of the late 2010s – early 2020s. Foreign and domestic researchers are paying more and more attention to the situation in the Arctic in relation to security and defence in general, the policies of Russia [4, Zhuravel V.P., Timoshenko D.S.], NATO member states, primarily those having access to the Arctic Ocean [5, Paul M.] — primarily the USA [6, Paul M.; 7, Kuchinskaya M.E.; 8, Raikov Yu.A.] and Norway [9, Dzyuban V.V.; 10, Konyshov V.N., Sergunin A.A.; 11, Zhuravel V.P.]. At the same time, it is the multilateral activities of the Alliance member countries, especially with its involvement as an organization, that have not yet found such detailed coverage, particularly in relation to modern realities. When building the methodological basis of the work, the author relied on the provisions of the theories of alliances [12, Istomin I.A.] and the construction of the armed forces [13]. The comparative and event analysis methods were used in the work.

Choosing Norway as NATO's springboard for Arctic penetration

In the second half of the 2010s, an informal consensus within NATO on the issue of assigning Norway the role of the main recipient of the Alliance's multilateral military capabilities in the sub-Arctic and Arctic zones became apparent in practice. What explained the agreement on this issue between the North American and European participating countries, especially the leading ones?

The United States was not ready to provide military access to Alaska for its Alliance partners. For official Washington, such a step would not strengthen its position in NATO, but would demonstrate a certain dependence on the European member states of the Alliance. This issue was all the more sensitive for the White House at a time when it was striving to strengthen its position within the "collective" West and especially the Euro-Atlantic community. This was the common denominator for the administration of D. Trump in his desire for hard hegemony and of J. Biden with his characteristic movement towards soft hegemony. It is indicative that the United States has always made a noticeable (often determining or directing) contribution to almost all significant NATO military exercises in Europe, but official Washington itself has almost never involved partner contingents in organizing maneuvers on its own territory.

⁵ Major exercises demonstrate NATO Allies' readiness. NATO. March 13, 2023. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_212791.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 05 May 2023).

The White House was interested in such an ally from the NATO member countries located on the coast of the Arctic Ocean, with which there would be no noticeable disagreements on the Arctic as a whole and which would be ready to participate in “containing” Russia in the Far North in close agreement with the United States, recognizing its leading role and taking into account the peculiarities of its resource capabilities. Since the formation of the camp of “Western democracies” (in the late 1940s), official Washington has had fairly strong and extensive ties in the field of defense and security with Canada and Denmark. In particular, there are US military units on the Greenland Island belonging to the latter (first of all, at the Thule base). At the same time, the quality and volume of official Washington’s co-operation with both Ottawa and Copenhagen on the Arctic track is significantly lower than the potential volume. Canada was very sensitive to the US probing of the issue of the internationalization of the Northwest Passage, Denmark — to D. Trump’s idea of purchasing Greenland in August 2019⁶. It is significant that the initiative of the 45th President of the United States, without taking into account the most characteristic manner of presentation, did not cause any noticeable condemnation from the opponents of the country’s establishment.

Such problems were absent in US relations with Norway of the second half of the 2010s. The latter met the above criteria to the greatest extent in geostrategic terms. While Alaska (as part of the US possessions) “bordered” Russia’s possessions in the Arctic on the eastern side, Norway was on the western side. This created the basis for countering the Russian Federation in the Arctic from two sides — in the Western and Eastern hemispheres, respectively. When building a system of “containment” of Russia (as well as of the Soviet Union earlier), the US has traditionally sought to ensure the closest cooperation with the most eastward NATO partners: the closeness with Germany in the previous West-East confrontation and with Poland and the Baltic States in the present-day confrontation is indicative. Compared to the 1950s–1980s, since mid-2010s, there has been a noticeably higher US interest in rapprochement not only with Norway, but also with Sweden and Finland, gradually growing into support for the latter’s entry into NATO. This was due to a wide range of reasons. Firstly, compared to 1989, the border of NATO’s zone of responsibility has sharply moved eastwards. The expansion of the Alliance to an array of Eastern European states, especially Poland and the Baltic republics, led to a “spillover effect”: the strengthening of the positions of the USA and the Alliance in conditionally neutral Sweden and Finland was perceived as a necessity to cover NATO’s new forward zone of responsibility from the north — as a result, the territories of the official Helsinki (de jure from April 4, 2023⁷) and Stockholm became part of it. Secondly, unlike the previous confrontation with the USSR and its allies, in the conditions of the new confrontation (with the Russian Federation since 2014), the USA and the leading

⁶ Trump confirms he is considering attempt to buy Greenland. August 18, 2018. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/18/trump-considering-buying-greenland> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁷ Press statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg with the President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö. NATO. April 4, 2023. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_213464.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 05 May 2023).

“Western democracies” were confident in greater controllability of the process, i.e. in their ability to regulate the level of tension, control escalation in case of its occurrence [1]. One illustration of this is the supply of arms and military equipment by the participating countries to official Kyiv, which is increasing in terms of the number of units and their striking power, especially against the backdrop of the SMO. This confidence (largely illusory) in controlling the course of the confrontation in the most dangerous areas (Ukraine and Eastern Europe) meant the possibility of greater attention to other areas, including the Arctic. Thirdly, this is the already noted noticeable increase in the geostrategic value of the latter in conjunction with the enhanced capabilities to operate military resources there compared to the 1950s–1980s.

It is very important that in Norway, unlike Greenland or Canada’s northern possessions, it was logistically relatively easy and quick to transfer large multimodal, including ground contingents from other European NATO members, especially Germany, Great Britain, and France. They, primarily official London and Berlin, had very trustful relations with Oslo. Moreover, in the case of Germany, the factor of historical memory (the defeat and occupation of Norway by the Third Reich in 1940–1945) did not become a noticeable spoiler on the path to building an advanced alliance even during the previous West-East confrontation. Accordingly, for the leading Western European NATO member states, which were the most ready and interested in coordinated progress in the Arctic, Norway seemed to be a more valuable partner than Denmark and Canada. Thus, in the field of security and defense, official Copenhagen, being an EU member state, refrained from participating in the PESCO platform (Permanent Structured Cooperation, PSC) — almost the key mechanism to ensure the “strategic autonomy” of the European Union [14, Nikitin A.I.]. The PSC was launched in 2017, with project committees as its main structural unit; their number increased noticeably, and the range of topics has been significantly expanded. All project committees can be divided into two groups: technical-technological (development and launch of production of new types of weapons and military equipment) and functional (increasing the operational and tactical capabilities of specific branches or types of armed forces, the armed forces as a whole in specific segments). Moreover, Norway (along with the USA and Canada)⁸ began to show interest in cooperation through a number of PESCO project committees in 2021, although it is not an EU member state. Canada has traditionally been “special” in its contribution to strengthening the European part of NATO’s area of responsibility. During the previous Cold War, the official Ottawa contingent here was small (one reinforced brigade) and was the first to withdraw. Canada’s acceptance of the role of a “framework nation” in the functioning of the Alliance’s multinational Forward Deployment Forces (FDF) battle group in Latvia (since 2017)⁹ was rather an exception that only confirmed the general rule. In this case, official Ottawa showed solidarity with its Anglo-Saxon part-

⁸ PESCO: Canada, Norway and the United States will be invited to participate in the project Military Mobility. The EU. May 6, 2021. URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/06/pesco-canada-norway-and-the-united-states-will-be-invited-to-participate-in-the-project-military-mobility/> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁹ NATO’s military presence in the east of the Alliance. NATO. December 21, 2022. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm (accessed 05 May 2023).

ners (Washington and London), essentially being forced to play the role that France did not agree to take.

Finally, another reason was the core military capabilities of NATO member states with national sectors in the Arctic Ocean. By the beginning of the 2020s, the United States, while generally possessing a very strong “military machine”, did not have any significant Arctic troops, i.e., forces and means equipped and adapted for use in the conditions of the Far North. Of those classified in this category, Denmark had separate small units in Greenland; Canada — a somewhat larger force, the key military unit of which was the 1st Ranger Patrol Group (equivalent to the “core” of a battalion tactical group, BTG)¹⁰. Norway had the largest and best-organized Arctic troops: their basis was the North brigade (9 battalions, including 6 combat ones)¹¹.

Historical experience of using Norway as a springboard for military-strategic penetration into the Arctic Ocean

In practice, the value of Norway's geostrategic position was clearly demonstrated for the first time during World War II. After the defeat (1940) from the Third Reich, disproportionately large Wehrmacht forces (taking into account the size of the civilian population and natural and climatic conditions) were stationed in the occupied Norwegian territory. Moreover, in fact, it was a question of two large groups. One of them was deployed over the most part of the country (except for Northern Norway) and was multi-service, i.e., composed of naval, army, and air force units. Large forces of surface ships (all classes up to battleships) and submarines, and naval aviation were intended primarily to fight allied convoys heading to the USSR, its Northern Fleet and the British Navy¹². Accordingly, relying on Norwegian ports, the Kriegsmarine repeatedly visited the waters of the Arctic Ocean, even very remote from the continent. Large ground forces were stationed along the coast of Norway, gradually expanding as the risk of an allied landing increased: if in the summer of 1940 there were 7 divisions [15, p. 319], by 1944 there were already 13 divisions [16, p. 20]; that is, the local coast was covered in many ways better than the occupied one in France. It is indicative that of all the groupings of Hitler's troops, the one in Norway was the last to surrender, de facto, after the signing of the act of unconditional surrender. Another grouping was the army “Norway” (since 1942 — “Lapland”), initially (by June 22, 1941) concentrated in the north of Norway (in Finnmark) and the north of Finland. This grouping (6 divisions) generally unsuccessfully tried to attack on the Kola Peninsula, with the main goal of capturing Murmansk and Polyarnyy¹³. The defeat of this group by the Red Army during the Petsamo-Kirkenes operation (October 7–29, 1944) led to the liberation of part of the Norwegian Finnmark [17, Shtemenko

¹⁰ Canadian Armed Forces sharpen cold weather skills above the Arctic Circle, alongside NATO Allies and partners. NATO. March 17, 2019. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_165265.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 05 May 2023).

¹¹ Norwegian Armed Forces in transition. Strategic defence review by the Norwegian chief of defence. Abridged version. Oslo, 2015. P. 15, 17.

¹² Atlas ofitsera [Atlas of an officer]. Moscow, Military Topographical Directorate of the General Staff of the USSR Armed Forces, 1974, p. 276

¹³ *ibid*, pp. 252–253.

S.M., pp. 408–411]. The offensive of the Red Army on the remaining parts of the kingdom's territory was not carried out not only due to political circumstances (delimitation of zones of strategic responsibility of the USSR and Western allies). Another reason is the exceptional difficulty of “turning around” from Finnmark to the south across Norway in the sense of using and supplying troops in the mountainous terrain of the Far North, moreover, in conditions of the polar night and the destruction of almost the entire infrastructure by the Wehrmacht. In addition, the Red Army would have to conduct combat operations with a very strong multi-species enemy group (Wehrmacht, SS units and local collaborators) on the main part of Norwegian lands.

Thus, the autonomy of the latter (in the sense of reduced probability of ground attacks from the north) from the array of forces and assets that operated in the northernmost regions of Norway (and Finland) was demonstrated in practice. In 1940–1945 (more precisely, in 1941–1944), a triune scheme was developed for using Norway as a springboard for military-strategic penetration into the Arctic Ocean, the elements of which are:

- deployment of a group in the Norwegian Finnmark (preferably with an additional grouping in the northern regions of Finland) to counter the USSR;
- building a reliable system for protecting the long coastline (primarily port infrastructure) in the main part of Norway, especially in the Trondheim-Tromsø section as the main support for the “strategic throw” (in both cases, the main burden fell on the ground forces and the air force);
- use of large naval forces with air support in the waters of the Arctic Ocean — primarily the Norwegian, Barents and Greenland seas.

In purely military terms, this triune scheme has proven to be in demand for NATO in current realities.

***Features of the deployment of the Norwegian Armed Forces:
“gaps” that require filling by NATO partners***

Already at the initial stages of the confrontation between the Euro-Atlantic community and the Russian Federation (since 2014), Norway almost completely curtailed the previously limited military cooperation with the Russian Federation [10, pp. 353–354] (in particular, the annual Pomor exercises since the early 2010s were stopped). Already in the mid-2010s, among NATO member states, official Oslo became one of the most active supporters of “containment” of the Russian Federation, promoting the development of NORDEFECO (Nordic Defense Cooperation) and supporting the idea of Sweden and Finland joining the Alliance [10, pp. 353–354]. Such a step was seen as helping to increase the effectiveness of military-strategic positions in the Norwegian province of Finnmark and, in general, significantly helped in countering the “Russian threat.” The change of government (the Norwegian Labor Party coming to power following the 2021 elections instead of the Conservative Party) had no effect on the official Oslo approach to “containing” the

Russian Federation. Taking into account the volume of the available resource base, it became actively involved in providing the authorities in Kyiv with military support under the conditions of the SMO. Thus, by the end of March 2023, shortly after the NATO member countries made the decision to transfer tanks to Ukraine (from January 25, 2023), Norway sent 8 Leopard 2 tanks¹⁴, while their manufacturer Germany — 18¹⁵ (with a huge difference in terms of the number of military equipment in favor of the German Armed Forces), which reflected the toughness of Norway's position. This was also manifested by the most active support of official Oslo for the suspension of Russia's membership in the Arctic Council and the Council of the Baltic Sea States since March 2022. At the same time, there was an extreme restriction of political and diplomatic contacts on a bilateral basis, accompanied by the expulsions of Russian diplomats: in April 2022 — 3 members, and in April 2023 — already 15 representatives of the Russian Foreign Ministry¹⁶. It is logical that this was complemented by the growing contribution of Norway to "containing" the Russian Federation in the Arctic, especially in cooperation with NATO partners.

The "war machine" of official Oslo does not face the problem of underfunding. In 2014–2022, among NATO member states, Norway occupied 11th position in terms of total annual military spending (from more than 5.8 to almost 8.1 billion dollars in constant 2015 prices¹⁷)¹⁸. Basically, it was inferior to partners with large armed forces (from 100 thousand military servants or more — the USA, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Turkey, Spain), as well as Canada and the Netherlands. In the case of Canada, another Arctic NATO member country, the range of annual military spending ranged from 15.6 to almost 22.8 billion dollars¹⁹, i.e. it was 2.7–2.8 times more than that of Norway; however, the number of personnel in the official Armed Forces of Ottawa (65.9–71.8 thousand soldiers and officers)²⁰ is approximately 3.5 times higher than this figure for Oslo. In other words, the latter allocated more funds per payroll serviceman, including costs for the modernization of arms and military equipment (AME). It is noteworthy that by 2022, the share of the latter section for Norway was more than 29%, while for Canada it was only 13%²¹. Even more indicative is the fact that in terms of military expenditures per capita, official Oslo con-

¹⁴ Ukraina poluchila ot Norvegii tanki Leopard 2 [Ukraine received Leopard 2 tanks from Norway]. URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/64189bbf9a79472ad7448ca0> (accessed 05 May 2023).

¹⁵ Liste der militärischen Unterstützungsleistungen. Bundeskanzleramt. 2023. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/krieg-in-der-ukraine/lieferungen-ukraine-2054514> (accessed 05 May 2023).

¹⁶ Sluchai vysylki rossiyskikh diplomatov iz Norvegii [Cases of expulsion of Russian diplomats from Norway]. URL: <https://tass.ru/info/17517435> (accessed 05 May 2023).

¹⁷ Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2022). Brussels: NATO, 2022. P. 7.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 7.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 12.

²¹ Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2022). Brussels: NATO, 2022, p. 13.

sistently ranked 2nd among NATO member countries (from 1141 to 1497 dollars in constant 2015 prices), behind only the United States and significantly ahead of the United Kingdom, which was in third place ²².

Against this background, the value of such an indicator as the share of military expenditures from GDP at the level of 1.55 to 1.8% (except for 2019–2020) ²³, i.e. less than 2% as a target for NATO member countries by 2024, did not have a noticeable impact on the capabilities of the Norwegian “war machine”. Official Oslo was ready and able to consistently finance the development of infrastructure and, especially, the renewal of AME, while having a reserve (by approaching the target of 2% of GDP) to increase the pace even further.

By the mid-2010s, the share of modern AME varied significantly between types and branches of the armed forces. In the interests of the Royal Air Force, a program was launched (since 2012) to replace the F-16 fighters with the F-35: by 2025, it is planned to purchase 52 such machines from the United States in batches with a large supply of weapons (especially missiles) for them ²⁴. This will completely renew the fleet of the three main (combat) squadrons of the Air Force. F-35 purchases were the largest cost item for technical and technological modernization of the aircraft as a whole: 32% of the total allocations for 2018–2025 ²⁵.

The Royal Navy had a modern fleet of corvettes (6 Skjold-class vessels) and frigates (4 Fridtjof Nansen class vessels ²⁶, another one was damaged and sank during the Trident Juncture 18 exercise). Approaching the maximum service life with decommissioning was typical for submarines (de facto 4 submarines in 2015 ²⁷). In 2021, official Oslo decided to purchase 4 diesel submarines of Project 212 CD (the latest modification 212A) of German production: deliveries are to start in 2029 ²⁸. The harmonization of the composition of the Air Force with the United States and of the submarines with the FRG clearly showed which armed forces of NATO member countries were considered the main partners for the respective type and branch of the Royal Forces.

In the case of the ground forces, the problem was considered to be the lack of heavy armored vehicles, especially those intended for use in the Far North. First of all, the reorganization of motorized infantry units into mechanized ones was to be carried out as part of units of the Sever brigade ²⁹.

²² Ibid, p. 11.

²³ Ibid, p. 8.

²⁴ Norway swaps in its F-35s for NATO quick-reaction mission in the High North. January 6, 2022. URL: <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2022/01/06/norway-swaps-in-its-f-35s-for-nato-quick-reaction-mission-in-the-high-north/> (accessed 05 May 2023).

²⁵ Future acquisitions for the Norwegian Defence Sector 2018–2025. Oslo: Forsvardepartement, 2018. P. 6.

²⁶ Norwegian Armed Forces in transition... Oslo, 2015. P. 15.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Neue U-Boote und Seeziel-Flugkörper für die Marine. BMVg. July 09, 2021. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/ausrustung-baainbw/aktuelles/deutsch-norwegische-u-boote-und-seeziel-flugkoerper-5109534> (accessed 05 May 2023).

²⁹ Norwegian Armed Forces in transition... Oslo, 2015. P. 15, 24.

The Armed Forces of Norway were generally characterized by the high combat effectiveness of their personnel and the ability to operate effectively in single and small units, including in the Far North. The key difficulty was the limited military human resources: while in 2014 there were 21.0 thousand soldiers and officers in the Armed Forces, then in 2022 — 22.6 thousand, i.e. the overall increase was minimal (moreover, the number even decreased in 2015–2019, dropping to 19.2 thousand people³⁰). Considering the size of Norway's population as a whole (5.4 million people), the armed forces already employ 0.4% of it. It is difficult to expect that the Kingdom, even taking into account military service for women, will increase the armed forces significantly above the mark of 0.5% of the country's population (27 thousand military servants). Since the end of the 2010s, the Norwegian "war machine" was characterized by slow growth; with a high degree of probability, this dynamic will continue in the medium term.

In addition to regular troops, Norway also had reserve corps of 30 thousand people³¹. Some of them were involved in the exercises. Volunteers from the reserve corps will be more actively recruited for military service as contract soldiers. This decrease in the trained reserve will be compensated by its slight increase as a derivative of the increase in regular troops, i.e. the reserve corps will remain approximately the same size.

Limited human-military resources required non-trivial solutions in improving the organizational and staff structure of the Armed Forces. Thus, the creation of each new military unit forced to think about the need to redistribute personnel within the corresponding type or branch of the Armed Forces; and the deployment of an additional unit — already between the latter as a whole.

According to the 2015 plans, it was envisaged to disband the administration of the only brigade in the Norwegian army "Sever", one of the three motorized infantry battalions, as well as all those with specializations other than reconnaissance — engineering, artillery (combat), communications, support and medical (auxiliary)³². A number of their smaller units were to be retained as separate ones. In addition, part of the troops of the Finnmark province that were not part of the Sever brigade was also subject to disbandment — first of all, a separate mechanized battalion³³. The planned abolition of the brigade level in the Norwegian army would mean the transfer of all units and subunits (from the battalion and below) to the direct subordination of the command of the ground forces. The released personnel (both on their own and in their places) were supposed to be sent to strengthen other branches of the army. Such a drastic reduction of Norwegian troops in Finnmark, i.e. in the province bordering the Russian Federation, indicated that the Norwegian leadership in 2015, a year after the outbreak of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, did not perceive the hypothetical "Russian threat" as existential.

However, in the second half of the 2010s, all plans to disband the brigade and military units at lower levels were canceled — moreover, preparations for the creation of new combat units (in-

³⁰ Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2022). Brussels: NATO, 2022. P. 12.

³¹ Norwegian Armed Forces in transition... Oslo, 2015. P. 15.

³² Ibid, p. 15, 24.

³³ Ibid.

cluding by redirecting some of the personnel from the auxiliary ones) began. It seems that in the revision of the initial decision, perhaps the key role was played by the positions of Norway's NATO partner states, interested in strengthening the "containment" of the Russian Federation and at the same time covering the strategic penetration into the Arctic Ocean with the support of the bases of the south and center of Norway by the group in Finnmark. Leading NATO partners were ready to build up (mostly temporarily) military forces in Finnmark, but it would be in their interests if the Norwegian forces themselves formed the basis of the grouping here.

Meeting the wishes of its partners, Norway has maintained the configuration of the deployment of its armed forces, especially ground forces, that was present by 2015. This is the maximum concentration of ground units (within the Sever brigade and troops outside it) in the Finnmark province. In the rest of the (main) part of the country, there remained mainly cadre units and training centers for recruits and reservists, units of a relatively small rapid reaction force (3250 military servants), as well as a battalion of the Royal Guard in Oslo³⁴. Accordingly, here, especially in the vast area between Trondheim and Tromsø, the Norwegian army potentially needed reinforcement — but only in a situation where, under the auspices, a multilateral military-strategic penetration into the Arctic began.

The modernized Norwegian Air Force focused approximately equally on covering the northern regions and the rest of the country, thereby supporting the plans of partners in all major areas.

Finally, the Norwegian Navy (with the exception of coast guard and logistics support units) could naturally become one of the main backbones of the NATO groupings directly supporting the presence in the Arctic Ocean. Based on its modern equipment (primarily in terms of frigates — a class of ships intended for use in the ocean zone), the Norwegian surface naval forces were earlier than other branches and branches of the armed forces and were better prepared to provide practical support to NATO partner states in their intentions.

Features of the military presence of NATO countries in Norway

The author's assumption that Norway's own need for military support from its Alliance partners was just potential, i.e. it was not needed to ensure the security and defense of the kingdom in "ordinary" realities, without NATO's strategic penetration into the Arctic, is proven by the line of behavior of official Oslo itself. During the years of the previous Cold War, Norway was free from the constant presence of allied forces: the northern NATO army group was stationed in Germany [18, Lautsch Z., pp. 80–101], but not on the geographically eponymous flank of the Alliance's forward zone of responsibility in Europe. At least in the first decade (2014–2023) of the current confrontation between the West and the Russian Federation, official Oslo did not turn to NATO partners with a request to station an allied military presence on its territory. Thus, this did not happen either in July 2016, when the decision was made to establish multilateral combat battalion

³⁴ Norwegian Armed Forces in transition... Oslo, 2015. P. 15.

tactical groups (BTGs) in Poland and the Baltic countries (actually deployed since January 2017), or in March 2022, when they were created in the southern part of Eastern Europe (in Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria), or in June 2022, when the smooth transformation of the “old” BTGs into brigades began³⁵. Geographically and chronologically, the US national presence was developed synchronously — one brigade in Poland and to the north of it (since 2017), another one — in the countries of the region to the south³⁶. At the same time, other components of the conventional (non-nuclear) military presence — primarily sea and air — were being built up, and the system of headquarters at various (up to corps) levels was expanding. It is indicative that Norway itself has taken part in recruiting the multinational BTG in Lithuania (the “framework state” is Germany) since its creation, supporting the decision (2022) to reorganize this unit into a brigade. As of June 2022, the contribution of the royal forces was 188 military servants (11.5% of the total BTG strength of 1632 soldiers and officers and almost 2% for the BTG FDF as a whole, which had 9641 people³⁷) or about 0.9% of the Norwegian Armed Forces. It should be emphasized that participation in the acquisition of the BTG FDF was not strictly mandatory for all member states of the Alliance: for example, Greece, Turkey and Portugal were not involved in this process at least in 2017–2022³⁸. Official Ankara preferred to focus on the Middle East and North Africa as its key areas of interest, Lisbon — on the latter. Norway was “tied” to the Arctic, participated in the “containment” of the Russian Federation as a border state, but official Oslo did not see this as an obstacle to making a full contribution to the acquisition of NATO’s strategic missile defense system in Eastern Europe. This provision reflected the country’s self-sufficiency in the field of security and defense.

While in Eastern Europe, *de jure*, the initiative to deploy FDF military units came from the regional players themselves, in the case of the Kingdom of Norway, other (in relation to the official Oslo) NATO member states — primarily the United States, Great Britain and Germany — had to come forward with a corresponding proposal, requesting and receiving approval from the Norwegian side. On the one hand, the leading players of the Alliance demonstrated a certain dependence on the relatively small (especially in terms of population) Norway, on the other hand, this scheme allowed them to approach the use of their troops, especially ground forces, much more flexibly than in Eastern Europe, which in practice was very important.

³⁵ NATO’s military presence in the east of the Alliance. NATO. December 21, 2022. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm (accessed 05 May 2023).

³⁶ Fact sheet — U.S. Defense Contributions to Europe. The US Department of Defence. June 29, 2022. URL: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3078056/fact-sheet-us-defense-contributions-to-europe/> (accessed 05 May 2023).

³⁷ NATO’s Forward Presence. NATO. June 2022. URL: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/11/pdf/221128-factsheet-efp_en.pdf (accessed 05 May 2023).

³⁸ See, for example, NATO’s Forward Presence. NATO. November 2022. URL: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/11/pdf/221128-factsheet-efp_en.pdf (accessed 05 May 2023).

In the 1990s – early 2010s, the armed forces of NATO member states underwent massive reductions: for example, between 1989 and 2015, the number of servants of the US Armed Forces decreased from 2241 to 1314 thousand soldiers and officers (1.7 times), Great Britain — from 318 to 141 thousand (2.3 times), Germany — from 503 to 177 thousand (2.8 times)³⁹. Since the second half of the 2010s, the restorative growth of these armed forces has been small (usually within 1% per year; until 2018, there was even a reduction in inertia) and at the same time lagged sharply behind the increase in multilateral forces under NATO's command. Thus, at the Madrid summit of the Alliance (June 28–30, 2022), a decision was made to directly use the bloc as part of the groupings, reserving 800 thousand soldiers and officers for this (including 300 thousand with ability to bring full combat readiness up to 1 month)⁴⁰, which accounted for more than 40% of the number of armed forces of all European NATO member countries (1.96 million)⁴¹. Taking into account the fact that they, and not the USA, bear the overwhelming part of the burden of practical strengthening of the military potential under NATO subordination, there is an obvious interest in searching for the most convenient (flexible) forms of appropriate use of national troops. Therefore, both the rapid reaction forces (the powerful II strategic echelon of the Alliance forces) and the forward deployment forces were staffed on a rotational basis, i.e., with the temporary provision of specific forces and assets necessary to fill the declared national quota. While making increasingly clear (in terms of numbers) commitments to NATO partners in Eastern Europe, the US and especially the Western European powers sought both to avoid this in the case of Norway and to ensure strategic penetration of the Arctic with Norway's support.

There were two ways out of this contradiction. The main one was the intensification of military training activities under the auspices of NATO in Scandinavia and the Arctic (in terms of large maneuvers, which surpassed the indicators for Eastern Europe). This made it possible to practice the deployment of a mass of troops of various types of armed forces in subarctic and arctic climates, i.e., to gain experience for a large number of military servants, moreover, redirecting them from solving other (more standard) tasks only for a short time — usually several weeks. Another way, which had rather an auxiliary significance, was the deployment of an allied presence on Norwegian territory, formally within the framework of NATO, but de facto in a national capacity, i.e. on a bilateral basis. Moreover, such agreements could be more easily renegotiated, i.e. the presence could be curtailed or transformed in the short term. It is logical that the second option was carried out by the United States, which implemented it in parallel in Eastern Europe.

³⁹ Financial and economic data relating to NATO defence. Press release M-DPC-2(91)105. Brussels: NATO, 1991. P. 7; Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2022). Brussels: NATO, 2022. P. 12.

⁴⁰ New NATO force model. NATO. June 30, 2022. URL: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/220629-infographic-new-nato-force-model.pdf (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁴¹ Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2022). Brussels: NATO, 2022. P. 8.

Contribution of NATO partners to strengthening the grouping in Finnmark

Although the NATO air defense system and associated troops of countries located in the forward part of the zone of responsibility (as was the case with the armed forces of the Alliance member states in Eastern Europe), the de jure grouping of forces and assets in the province of Troms og Finnmark was not included, de facto it was part of this category. This is confirmed by the chronological synchronisation of the measures taken by the United States and NATO member states to build up the grouping in Northern Norway with the increase of the FDF capabilities in Eastern Europe in 2016–2017 and 2022.

Against the backdrop of the decision to create their first BTGs in Poland and the Baltic countries (July 2016), in October 2016, the Obama administration announced a decision to send 330 marines to Finnmark⁴² — in both cases the forces were actually deployed since January 2017. In June 2018, the D. Trump administration, with the consent of Norway, decided to increase its presence to 700 Marine Corps (MC) servants⁴³, i.e., the “core” of the BTG. This was significant in the High North, increasing the Royal Forces’ combat power in Finnmark by 20–25%. However, the United States itself benefited much more. They gained an opportunity to work out the scheme of creating their own Arctic troops in close cooperation with Norwegian units (repeatedly transferring their units to their commanders for training on a temporary basis) and their well-established infrastructure. Another advantage was the acquisition of practical skills in the area geographically adjacent to the Kola Peninsula — the deployment zone of the main part of the Russian Northern Fleet. It is indicative that the rotating (every 6 months) US contingent was planned to be stationed here for at least 5 years⁴⁴.

However, in reality it was already withdrawn by September 2020⁴⁵. What are the reasons for such a noticeable change in approach? This cannot be explained by the pandemic factor, i.e. during the first, most difficult, waves of it, USMC units remained in northern Norway. Considering the approach of the Trump administration (with its business thinking) to foreign policy, especially relations within NATO, it is appropriate to highlight three main reasons. Firstly, this is a requirement for Norway to increase the level of military spending to 2% of GDP: while in 2016–2018, they were at the level of 1.72–1.74%, then in 2019 they were increased to 1.86%, and in 2020 — to 2.0%⁴⁶. Moreover, this mark was reached in the year of the first waves of COVID-19, which had the greatest “freezing” effect, when there was a decrease in GDP (in the case of Norway — from 406 to 404 billion dollars)⁴⁷ — in other words, in practice, military expenditures hardly grew at all.

⁴² Some 330 U.S. Marines to be temporarily stationed in Norway in 2017. October 24, 2017. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-norway-usa-military-idUSKCN12O2DM> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁴³ US to double number of Marines in Norway amid Russia tensions. June 12, 2018. URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/12/politics/us-marines-norway-russia-tensions/index.html> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁴⁴ US to double number of Marines in Norway amid Russia tensions. June 12, 2018. URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/12/politics/us-marines-norway-russia-tensions/index.html> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁴⁵ U.S. Pulls 700 Marines Out of Norway. August 7, 2020. URL: <https://www.lifeinnorway.net/u-s-pulls-700-marines-out-of-norway/> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁴⁶ Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2022). Brussels: NATO, 2022. P. 8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 10.

Already in the early 2020s, their share of GDP fell back below 1.8%⁴⁸. Thus, official Oslo took into account the demands of D. Trump at the NATO level, but reduced its readiness to maintain the US military presence in Finnmark, which was primarily needed by the latter themselves. Secondly, the 45th President of the United States was precisely trying to emphasize the White House's lack of any dependence on NATO partners. Thirdly, D. Trump was very sensitive to the fact of Norway's advanced relations with Germany (in particular, the presence of a full-fledged negotiating tandem of the two countries E. Solberg – A. Merkel) — the main object of criticism and pressure from the United States within the Euro-Atlantic community. This was symbolized by the choice of Germany as the supplier of new submarines for the Norwegian Navy.

However, the White House decision in 2020 turned out to be purely tactical. Strategically, the United States needed to ensure a full-fledged military-strategic presence in northern Norway, which was confirmed by the course of the Biden administration. Compared to its predecessor, it managed to find more convenient for both sides, especially for the USA itself, forms of this: areas of joint military use (“agreed areas”) as specialized objects with adjacent territories/waters, where both the USA and Norwegian military were freely allowed to enter⁴⁹. In the latter respect, these areas differed from the classic overseas military bases of the United States (usually under the exclusive jurisdiction of the latter), which was a step towards the interests of official Oslo. Like its predecessors since the 1950s, the government of J.G. Støre did not agree to completely transfer part of Norwegian territory to accommodate a permanent Allied presence. At the same time, the creation of these areas was a huge step towards the United States, which received “all-season” access to the military (and dual-use) infrastructure of Norway, i.e., “insurance” for the US long-term military presence.

On June 8, 2022, the Storting approved the agreement with the United States by a majority vote, including the Norwegian Labor Party and the Conservative Party, but with strong criticism from the ultra-left. The document envisaged the creation of two joint military-use areas: at the naval bases in Ramsund (Finnmark) and the air force base in Evenes (Tromsø, near Narvik) as the main locations for the corresponding types of troops in Northern Norway⁵⁰. In the first case (Ramsund), the United States was able to deploy units of the Marine Corps, in the second — the Air Force, interacting with the Royal Air Force, which was being re-equipped with the F-35⁵¹. Moreover, the White House could freely vary the number of personnel and AME units, unlike the situation in 2016–2020.

The experience of that time and gaining in cooperation with the Norwegian Armed Forces allowed the United States to move on to creating its own full-scale Arctic troops. On June 6, 2022,

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 8.

⁴⁹ New Norway — USA Defense Agreement Allows Extensive US Authority in the North. June 8, 2022. URL: <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/new-norway-usa-defense-agreement-allows-extensive-us-authority-north> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

the 11th airmobile (airborne) division of the “Arctic Angels” was created as part of the US Army based in Alaska, consisting of 12 thousand soldiers and officers [4, p. 120]. The basis of the formation was formed by two brigades: the 1st Infantry (formerly the 1st Striker Brigade) and the 2nd Airmobile (formerly the 4th Airmobile of the 25th Infantry Division)⁵². The 11th Division became the first formation of this level created for the first time in the US Army since the 2010s (as of spring 2022, there were 10 divisions, without consecutive numbering), showing a noticeable increase in the White House’s attention to the Arctic. Taking into account the MC units and other branches of troops used in cooperation with the 11th division, the US Arctic troops in Alaska constituted at least 1% of the total number of armed forces (almost 1350 thousand military servants) in mid-2022⁵³, no longer inferior in the number of military personnel in the Norwegian Armed Forces group in Troms og Finnmark. At the same time, the latter, at least in the medium term, will retain an advantage in terms of the efficiency and level of training of an individual soldiers and small units.

The chronological coincidence of the establishment of the 11th Division in Alaska in early June 2022 and the ratification (and immediate start of implementation) of the agreement on joint military-use areas in Northern Norway is not at all coincidental. Thus, with the leading participation of the White House, there was a parallel construction of segments of “containment” of the Russian Federation in the Arctic to the east and west of its borders. At the same time, NATO member countries as a whole were working on strengthening the group in Finnmark: for example, the largest (30 thousand military servants) NATO exercise Cold Response 22 (March 14–31, 2022) with the participation of 26 member countries of the Alliance, Sweden and Finland⁵⁴. The core of the German contingent was a battalion of mountain riflemen, supported by military transport aviation⁵⁵. The United States, together with the Netherlands and Great Britain, focused on using marine units to fight the “enemy”, which was the tank and mechanized units of Sweden and Finland⁵⁶. The latter were most actively involved in building a system of “containment” of the Russian Federation in Northern Norway. After official Stockholm and especially Helsinki joined the Alliance, the troops stationed in the corresponding part of the countries had to strive to merge into a single operational-tactical whole with the Norwegian Sever brigade and the forces of other NATO member countries temporarily stationed here. The maneuvers were aimed at practicing the deployment, including after the start of hostilities, of a multilateral formation at the division level, the “core” of which was the Norwegian brigade “Sever” — in other words, it was about its opera-

⁵² Army Forms 11th Airborne Division Amid Focus on Arctic Warfare. 6.06.2022. URL: <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/06/06/army-forms-11th-airborne-division-amid-focus-arctic-warfare.html> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁵³ Calculated on the basis: Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2022). Brussels: NATO, 2022. P. 8.

⁵⁴ Cold Response 2022. Forsvaret. 2022. URL: <https://www.forsvaret.no/en/exercises-and-operations/exercises/cr22> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁵⁵ Gebirgsjäger bei Cold Response 2022. NATO. April 01, 2022. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/aktuelles/gebirgsjaeger-bei-cold-response-2022-5385872> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁵⁶ Dispatch from the field — exercise Cold Response 2022 wraps up in Norway. NATO. April 5, 2022. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_194434.htm (accessed 05 May 2023).

tional “addition” by troops of other member countries of the Alliance and debugging the supply of all these forces in the conditions of early spring in the Far North.

Cold Response maneuvers began to be conducted since 2006 twice a year (usually in spring and autumn; were not organized in 2020) as a national exercise for the Norwegian Armed Forces. By agreement with the organizer, contingents of NATO partners took part in them (primarily from the USMC in Finnmark in 2016–2019). In this regard, the Cold Response 22 case documented the trend of internationalization, i.e., the transformation of the aegis from a purely national one to NATO, of the most important exercises in Norway. A similar situation was observed with the Joint Viking 23 maneuvers, which took place in Tromsø with the participation of 12 thousand participants in March 2023⁵⁷. Naturally, this manifested itself primarily in Northern Norway — the east-facing zone of “containment” of the Russian Federation, which provided a system of strategic Alliance penetration into the Arctic from the north.

Trondheim –Tromsø: military reinforcement from NATO

Full-scale testing of the deployment of Alliance forces to cover its support — a network of ports and airfields from Trondheim to Tromsø — was carried out for the first time during the Trident Juncture 18 exercises. They took place from October 25 to November 7, 2018 in the provinces of Trøndelag (Central Norway), and Hedmark and Oppland (merged into the province of Innlandet since 2020; Eastern Norway) involving 50 thousand military servants, 65 ships, 250 aircraft and 10 thousand units of ground equipment⁵⁸. Contingents were allocated by almost all NATO member countries, as well as Sweden and Finland. Unlike Cold Response, the Trident Juncture cycle of maneuvers has traditionally (since the first one in 2002) been held under the auspices of NATO, and these exercises have usually stood out among others for the Alliance for their scale (in particular, Trident Juncture 15 in Southern Europe). Specifically, Trident Juncture 18 stood out in this row, being the largest for NATO in the first two decades of the 21st century. Thus, the bloc's enormous interest in providing cover for Central and Eastern Norway to gain a foothold in the Arctic was demonstrated. Apart from the host country, the largest contingents were provided by the USA (20 thousand soldiers and officers)⁵⁹ and Germany (over 8 thousand servants)⁶⁰, i.e., in total more than 50% of the total number of personnel involved. Increased attention was paid to military logistics aspects: the transfer from Western Europe (primarily from the British Isles and Germany) and transatlantic (from the USA) of large masses of troops, equipment and ammunition. The land part

⁵⁷ Joint Viking 2023. Forsvaret. 2023. URL: <https://www.forsvaret.no/en/exercises-and-operations/exercises/jv23> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁵⁸ Trident Juncture 2018. NATO. 2018. URL: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/157833.htm> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁵⁹ U.S. Joins NATO's Trident Juncture Exercise. US Department of Defence. October 18, 2018. URL: <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1666272/us-joins-natos-trident-juncture-exercise/> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁶⁰ Bundeswehr bei NATO-Übung „Trident Juncture 18“. September 17, 2018. URL: <https://www.truppendienst.com/aktuelle-artikel/bundeswehr-bei-nato-uebung-trident-juncture-18> (accessed 05 May 2023).

of the maneuvers involved 6 brigades (i.e., the equivalent of two full divisions) and significant USMC forces⁶¹. The movement from the south of Norway of a large group of rapid deployment forces (NRF) — the “spear” of multilateral NATO troops — was worked out. Its “spearhead” was considered the high-readiness brigade (VJTF), the basis of which at the Trident Juncture 18 exercises was the elite 9th Tank Training Brigade of the Bundeswehr⁶². Carrying out a chain of counterattacks against the “enemy”, the NRF group tested covering the network of Norwegian ports and building an enhanced security system along the coast. The exercises clearly showed the consensus of NATO member countries on the issue of the most active use of NRF to support not only (and even not so much) the Eastern, but also the Northern European member states. The construction of a single military logistics corridor between the northern ports of Germany and the southern ports of Norway was tested. Among the leading players in the Alliance, following the United States, Germany showed increased interest in cooperation with Norway for military-strategic penetration into the Arctic.

Expansion of NATO's naval activity in the North Atlantic and the Arctic Ocean

The naval component of Trident Juncture 18 included not only the adjustment of the functioning of multilateral task forces to the south and southwest of Norway, their subsequent covering of ports from Trondheim to Tromsø, but also the practice of moving from them into the Norwegian Sea⁶³. As part of Trident Juncture 18, for the first time since 1991, the United States sent its aircraft carrier to the Arctic Ocean and deployed control of the 6th operational fleet [5, p. 30]. The increased activity was continued at the turn of the decade, especially during exercises involving two or more NATO member states: in addition to the United States (and Great Britain), the Federal Republic of Germany was again significantly engaged⁶⁴. This mainly involved the use of ships and submarines at relatively short distances from the Norwegian coast (usually several dozen, less often 200–300 km). At the same time, the boundaries of multilateral naval activities under the auspices of the Alliance gradually expanded towards the Greenland and Barents Seas. Progressively unfolding by the mid-2020s, this activity represented the “core” of NATO's strategic penetration into the Arctic Ocean. In this regard, Norway's own naval activity in the area of Spitsbergen Island is more than likely to be increased, as well as its strategic importance in the Alliance's plans [19, Todorov A.A., p. 135–140].

The Joint Viking 23/Joint Warrior 23 combined maneuvers are indicative in this regard. The land component of the former took place in Tromsø⁶⁵, representing the testing of the “coupling”

⁶¹ Germany steps up to lead NATO high readiness force. NATO. January 1, 2019. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_161796.htm (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ See: Trident Juncture 2018. NATO. 2018. URL: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/157833.htm> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁶⁴ See, for example, „Sachsen“ erhält Nikolaus-Preis in Sonderform. BMW g. March 18, 2019. URL: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/marine/aktuelles/sachsen-erhaelt-nikolaus-preis-in-sonderform-5022470> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁶⁵ Joint Viking 2023. Forsvaret. 2023.

of the segment of “containment” of the Russian Federation in Northern Norway and the land cover of its ports southwards to Trondheim. The naval one took place in the north-eastern part of Norwegian in unified connection with the Joint Warrior 23 maneuvers. In their case, the organizer was Great Britain, and the key role in the conduct, in addition to the official London Navy, was played by NATO's 1st constant (in fact of existence; in composition — rotational) NATO naval group⁶⁶.

Conclusion

In the late 2010s and early 2020s, Norway's practical importance in NATO's planning and activities and the integration of the royal “war machine” into the Alliance's joint capabilities increased significantly. An illustration of this is the combination of block maneuvers, quite large ones at that, carried out on the territory of Norway, in the waters near it (Trident Juncture 18, Joint Warrior 23) with its national exercises, the management of which was transferred under the jurisdiction of NATO (Cold Response 22, Joint Viking 23). Moreover, the partners tried to make maximum use of the Royal Armed Forces to gain practical combat experience in Arctic and sub-Arctic conditions, especially in spring and autumn. The Norwegian Brigade “Sever” de facto became part of the forward deployment forces of the Alliance (in this regard, it is actively supported, especially by the United States), and its rapid reaction forces have made Norwegian (and generally Scandinavian, Arctic) forces one of their most important areas of use. Moreover, both Norway and NATO and other participating countries considered it convenient for themselves that there were no Alliance groups deployed on the territory of the kingdom on a long-term basis with a clear definition of the number and geography of deployment (similar to cases in Eastern Europe).

The national strategies of specific NATO powers to develop military cooperation with Norway varied, reflecting the traditional features of foreign policy: the United States (and to a lesser extent Great Britain) combined bilateral (generally larger in volume) and multilateral cooperation; Germany, on the contrary, quite organically integrated its dialogue with official Oslo into the latter. At the same time, the subject of unofficial consensus was a scheme for strategic penetration under the auspices of NATO into the Arctic, relying on the Kingdom of Norway, which was developed in purely military terms back in 1940–1944. This is the construction of a powerful segment of “containment” of the Russian Federation in Finnmark, i.e. facing east (with the northern part of Finland and Sweden being added here) as cover for a system of bases in Central and Eastern Norway, already westward-facing. Finally, the main instruments of penetration are multilateral naval groups (with the support of the Air Force and special operations forces) in the Norwegian, Greenland and prospective Barents Seas, i.e. westward-facing, but with a turn to the east. The construction and testing of each of the elements of this scheme started in 2017 (for the first one) and in

⁶⁶ NATO Ships Take Part in Exercise Joint Warrior 23-1. NATO. March 15, 2023. URL: <https://mc.nato.int/media-centre/news/2023/nato-ships-take-part-in-exercise-joint-warrior-231> (accessed 05 May 2023).

2018 (for the other two), respectively, and received very dynamic development at the beginning of the next decade.

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