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**REPUBLIKA E MAQEDONISË DHE NATO
(1991-2000)**

**РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА И НАТО
(1991-2000)**

**THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA AND NATO
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Abstract:

The Republic of Macedonia, from the 90's in the 20th century, more precisely from the very beginning of the constitution of its independence, has had aspirations for EU and NATO membership. After gaining its independence, the Republic of Macedonia started to manage its autonomous, independent politics in all spheres of socially-political life, as an equal, international legal subject in the international community. The Republic of Macedonia has been focusing towards building its own principles in foreign politics, and analogously, in this framework, has been building principles in the defense and safety system as an inseparable feature in realizing its national interests. NATO and the European Union are two completely separate international subjects. NATO is an association concerned with defense and safety, or a collective safety system of states which comprises, at least for now, the majority of member states of the European Union. Sweden, Finland and Ireland are not the only members.

The NATO alliance is a defense and safety association of states from the Euro-Atlantic region, with evident aspirations to expand onto other territories in the world. The leading role in the NATO alliance belongs to the USA, as a dominant and main force of the alliance. Using

its leading role, USA uses the military potential of the NATO alliance to accomplish its own political goals in the context of global politics. It is evident that the political purposes of the USA are in dialectic relation with its economic purposes of the American funds, of which the ones engaged into military-industrial strategic purposes are in the foreground. These interests are often hidden behind the veil of peacekeeping operations of NATO, executed with or without the permission of the Security Council, as operations fighting terrorism, which quite often, immediately or not, are the result of the American defense politics; the USA has been presenting itself as a global force with the main purpose of establishing world domination. It is clear that the NATO alliance is becoming the instrument of American global politics.

The European Union is a politically-economic association of states which belong to the European continent territory-wise, as a specific economic, political and cultural milieu. The final purpose of the Union is to build its unique European economic and political system, based on unique constitutional fundamentals, which shall have all the characteristics of a state alliance of a confederation type, and eventually of a federation type (federal state). The European Union, as a union of states has its own specific economic and political interests which, in a large number of cases are more or less different from the interests of the USA, and are often opposed. However, it is evident that the specific economic and political interests of the European Union are dialectically connected to the purposes of defense. This is not to be debated. The member states of the Union defend not only their own political and economic accomplishments and acquisitions, but defense interests as well. As a result, it is evident that the defense interests shall ensue from the specific and economic interests of the European Union.

The priority of the politics of the Republic of Macedonia is its determination for membership in the EU and NATO. The Republic of Macedonia is aware that this process is not easy – that it is a lengthy, difficult and complex, but it hopes it is feasible, acceptable and the best of all alternatives available to it.

With the goal of realizing its strategic goal of becoming a member of the NATO alliance, it gradually takes the necessary measures.

Key words: Republic of Macedonia, NATO, European Union, USA, defense system.

INTRODUCTION

The end of the 20th century was a turning point for many states of the Eastern Bloc, where the process of disintegration was manifested. On the other hand, Germany underwent reunification, and the European Union expanded its membership and promoted its foreign and safety politics. It was a time when the NATO alliance managed politics of accepting new states.

For the Balkans, the 1990s were a period of transitional processes, inevitably different from the transitional processes in the other countries from Eastern and Central Europe. As a result of the global movements in Europe, in this period the Balkans were caught by the storm of turmoil and conflicts.¹ Instead of the processes of democratization, modernization and Euro-Atlantic integrations, the Balkans faced strengthening of the nationalistic movements and the dramatic issues of minorities. The Yugoslav federation did not escape the process of its disintegration. In the process of transition, Yugoslavia fell apart, its republics became independent and protected its national interests.²

The Republic of Macedonia, which formed part of the Yugoslav federation (1944-1991), with the promulgation of the Constitution from 1990 decided to use the right of self-determination and the right of seceding from Yugoslavia. From the 1990s onwards, the Republic of Macedonia entered transition through building its own domestic and foreign politics.³ The Republic of Macedonia, after its constitution as an autonomous and independent state brought many significant documents of crucial importance, among which is the Declaration of accepting Macedonia as a sovereign and independent country (December 19, 1991) and the Decision of entering the UN (July 29, 1992). During its transitional process, the Republic of Macedonia not only should have undergone economic transformation, with the goal of adjusting its economy to the newly created situation, it also had external problems. As a result of its peacekeeping politics, the Republic of Macedonia managed to avoid the war that raged across many territories of former Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s. In this period, Macedonia was known as a country with a civilized approach in solving the burning

¹ Ричард Кремптон, Балкан после Другог светског рата, Београд, 2005, 356.

² Виктор Габер, Колатерална штета, Матица македонска, Скопје, 2007, 86-90.

³ Тодор Атанасовски, Чекорење по кризата, Книгоиздателство „МИАН“, Скопје 2002, 54-56.

problems, leading amicable politics and with pro-European orientation. In 2001, the Republic of Macedonia faced a military conflict that took human lives and disturbed the peace in the country. This situation surely had negative influence on the developmental processes in the country, as well as the processes of bringing Macedonia closer to the Euro-Atlantic structures. After the 2001 crisis, the Republic of Macedonia strove to accelerate the processes that lead to EU and NATO membership. There has been advancement in many segments of the socio-political life in Macedonia. There have been changes in the important segments of society, which represent a guarantee of stability and prosperity of the Republic of Macedonia and its approach towards NATO and the EU. There are certain professional teams from NATO and EU working on reforming the defense system and advancement towards NATO and EU.⁴ On the basis of the directions of NATO and EU, the Republic of Macedonia insists on building a new safety architecture with the purpose of securing greater stability and safety in the country. It decided that its politics should not create divisions, but peaceful relations with the countries from its region and beyond.

THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP

NATO's role in all aspects of modern life is very significant. Immediately after gaining its independence, the Republic of Macedonia found itself in a difficult situation in the area of defense. According to the agreement signed by Macedonia's president, Kiro Gligorov and the *chargé d'affaires* of the Federal secretary of national defense, the general-colonel Blagoje Adzic, the Yugoslav National Army peacefully retreated from the territory of the Republic of Macedonia without a single incident, during which it took all its weapons from Macedonia.⁵ The Republic of Macedonia was supposed to create its own army, supply professionals and so on. Macedonia realized that with a small army, if someone attacks its territory, it would have difficulties defending on its own.⁶

⁴ Трајан Гоцевски, Колективната безбедност и одбраната на Македонија, „Просвета“, Куманово 1994, 67-69.

⁵ Државен архив на Република Македонија,(ДАРМ), Фонд: Претседател на Република Македонија (1386), к.4, ае. 25.

⁶ ДАРМ, фонд: 1386, к.4, ае. 28.

It was considered that, in order to preserve the safety of its borders and keeping its sovereignty and integrity as a small country, Macedonia should be annexed to the collective safety systems – NATO (North-Atlantic Treaty Organization).⁷ The foreign politics of the Republic of Macedonia is oriented towards integrating the country into the EU and NATO with the purpose of its protection from military-political and economic aspects.

Intending to create transformation according to NATO standards, the Ministry of Defense and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia started important, capital projects as the following: border security, real dimensioning of the active and backup component of the Army in accordance with safety threats, but also with the economic potentials of the country, demilitarization of the borders etc. For the accomplishment of these reforms, experienced people were included in the army, top military experts from this area, but also to be supported from all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the political subjects in the country.

The Republic of Macedonia has shown initiative for joining NATO. For this reason, president Gligorov, in one of his speeches, among other things said: “The safety of our country is essential for us, and it can only be secured by NATO, and only if we direct our army to function according to the standards of the NATO alliance, with the goal of becoming its member as soon as possible”.⁸

One of the strategic goals of the Republic of Macedonia is a fully entitled membership in NATO. This membership of Macedonia in NATO should produce stability, peace etc. The fixed determination of Macedonia to be a NATO member has been transferred to several documents by the citizens and state institutions and several practical steps have been made in that direction. For this reason, on June 11 1992, the Minister of defense of Republic of Macedonia, Vlado Popovski sent a letter to NATO and the neighboring countries, where he explained the principles upon which the defense of the Republic of Macedonia would be built, as well as the aspirations for integrating Macedonia into NATO. On May 26 1993, said in a statement that Macedonia would ask

⁷Североатланскиот пакт бил формиран на 4 април 1949 година во Вашингтон, САД. Денес седиштето се наоѓа во Брисел, Белгија. Главната цел била колективна безбедност на земјите-членки во случај на воена агресија од земја која не е членка на НАТО.

⁸Киро Глигоров, Македонија е сè што имаме, Три, Скопје, 542.

for acceptance into NATO. During the visits of the Macedonian Minister of foreign affairs in Brussels, on June 8 1993, and in December that same year, the necessity of cooperation between Macedonia and NATO was emphasized in the conversations with the assisting Assistant Secretary General of NATO Gebhardt von Moltke.⁹

The determination of the Republic of Macedonia for joining NATO began two years after it gained independence, when the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, at the session held on December 23 1993 brought a Decision for entering the Republic of Macedonia into membership of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization – NATO.¹⁰

The process of assimilating the Republic of Macedonia into the NATO alliance was understandably connected to establishing and promotion of Macedonia's relations with NATO's member states, primarily with the USA, both generally and specifically on a military and safety level. However, it can be said that even back in the summer of 1993, American soldiers participated in the peacekeeping mission of the UN in Macedonia. The cooperation with NATO became more noticeable after the Republic of Macedonia established diplomatic relations with a number of member states of the European Union (December 1993), and especially after the acceptance of the Republic of Macedonia by the USA on February 8 1994, and above all with the establishment of complete diplomatic relations between the Republic of Macedonia and USA (September 13 1995).

In January 1993, a meeting was held by NATO's leaders, where its member states presented the program and expressed its preparedness for joining the program. The Macedonian Minister of Defense, Blagoj Handziski, when visiting the US on May 12 1995, made plenty of meetings with prominent Americans. During these conversations, a special accent was put on the interest of Macedonia for access to the initiative Partnership for peace. After the discussions with Handziski with the state secretary Perry, Pentagon made an announcement where, among other things, it was stated that the survival of the Republic of Macedonia had vital significance for the safety of the region.¹¹

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the US Army, John Shalikashvili, on October 13 1995, was officially visiting the Republic of Macedonia. On November 15 1995, the Republic of Macedonia

⁹ ДАРМ, фонд: Влада на Република Македонија (1305), к. 15, ае. 24.

¹⁰ ДАРМ, Фонд: Собрание на Република Македонија (1304), к. 64, ае. 32.

¹¹ ДАРМ, фонд: 1305, к.34, ае.68.

joined NATO's peacekeeping initiative in the *Partnership for Peace* program as the 27th member state. For this occasion, a Macedonian delegation led by its Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski, visited Brussels. This was a key turning-point in Macedonia's foreign politics and firsthand evidence for its adoption of Western values. With the acceptance into *Partnership for Peace*, Macedonia made the first step that led to the integration of the Republic of Macedonia into NATO.

On November 27 1995, the Republic of Macedonia gave NATO the document called *Basic Principles of Safety Politics of the Republic of Macedonia* and *Basic Principles of Defense of the Republic of Macedonia*.

The Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia achieved the status of associated delegation of the North-Atlantic Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA).¹² In Brussels, on December 6 1995 was held the ministry council of *Partnership for Peace*, with the participation of the Minister of foreign affairs of Macedonia, Ljubomir Frckoski.

The cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and NATO continued in the following years. From 1996, the activities intensified even more, with the purpose of improving the military cooperation with the member states of NATO and deepening the connections and the collaboration with NATO's structures. A memorable event is the meeting between the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Macedonia, Blagoj Handziski, on January 10 1996, in Washington, with William Perry, Secretary of Defense of the USA, where they discussed the equipping of the units of the Macedonian Army. On March 12 1996, Macedonia was accepted as an equal member of the North-Atlantic council-forum for dialogue between NATO and the new democracies. As a member state of the program *Partnership for Peace*, the territory of the Republic of Macedonia was used for an organized drill called *Savior*. The Macedonian ambassador Jovan Tegovski signed the Agreement with the member states of NATO and other participating countries in the *Partnership for Peace* (PFP) on May 30 1996, regarding the status of their forces in Macedonia, so-called SOFA, which regulated the presence and movement of foreign military forces in the Republic of Macedonia, NATO and the countries of the *Partnership* and the additional protocol of the Republic of Macedonia-NATO agreement, with which the status of the forces of the member states of the Alliance

¹² ДАРМ, фонд: 1304, к.32, ае.27.

and PFP. From July 1996, Macedonia has had its officers for relations in the seat of NATO in Brussels and Coordination Cell of PFP in Mons.¹³

On June 4 1996, the Decree for Proclamation of the Law of Ratification of the Agreement between the states-parties of the North-Atlantic Treaty and the participating states of the North-Atlantic Treaty and the participating states in the Partnership for peace for the status of their forces.

On June 15 1996, Macedonia was visited by William Perry, the US Secretary of Defense. During this visit he held a speech in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia. In Macedonia, they opened a training center for the Macedonian Army, named after Joseph Kruzal, an American military official who contributed to the establishment the relations between Macedonia and the USA.¹⁴ A Macedonian delegation led by the undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, Ognen Maleski, in Brussels, on September 18, 1996, participated in the discussion of expanding NATO. The so-called "White book" of Macedonia was presented.¹⁵

On July 12 1996, at the ceremonious session of the North-Atlantic council of NATO, the individual program of the Republic of Macedonia was accepted in the framework of the Partnership for Peace for the period between 1996 and 1998. At the meeting of ministers for defense of the Partnership for Peace in Brussels, held on July 14 1996, Blagoj Handziski, the Macedonian minister of defense, participated as well. That same day saw the opening of an office of the Republic of Macedonia for relations with NATO. It was opened by the minister Blagoj Handziski. From July 1996 onwards, Macedonia has had its own officers for relations at the seat of NATO in Brussels and the Coordination Cell of PFP in Mons.

Over the course of 1997, the collaboration between Macedonia and NATO was becoming more and more official and acquired new dimensions. The General Secretary of NATO, Javier Solana, between March 24 and 25 1997 paid an official visit to Macedonia for the first

¹³ ДАРМ, фонд: 1305, к.35, ае.22.

¹⁴ Џозеф Крузел, билмеѓу првите претставници на Пентагон што доаѓал во Македонија и учествувал во давањето помош на АРМ. Загинал во авионска несреќа во Босна

¹⁵ Види: Бела книга на одбраната, Министерство за одбрана на Република Македонија, Скопје, 2005.

time.¹⁶ During April 1997, the expanded individual program of Macedonia for the Partnership for Peace for the 1997-1999 was accepted. The Republic of Macedonia joined the process of planning and analysis (PARP) for 1997-1999.

On the military polygon “Pepeliste” in the vicinity of Negotino, from May 12 to 16, 1997, a drill was organized with participation by the following NATO countries: USA, Turkey, Greece and Italy, as well as the countries from Partnership for Peace: Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, Slovenia and Romania, while Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary took part as observers. At the invitation of the president of the USA, Bill Clinton, on June 16, 1997, the Macedonian president Kiro Gligorov paid an official visit to the USA. Apart from the conversations in the White House, he made many advantageous meetings at the Senate and the US Congress, the State Department, as well as the Pentagon. On July 9, 1997, a Macedonian delegation led by president Gligorov, which also included the Minister of Foreign Affairs Blagoj Handziski and the Minister of Defense Lazo Kitanovski, who participated in the session of the extended Euro-Atlantic partnership council (EAPC), where Macedonia was also a member, who summoned the NATO members and other members of Partnership for Peace in Madrid. The objective of the new Council was to secure regular contacts between the partners and help the preparations for the countries with NATO aspirations. The Euro-Atlantic partnership council represents a wide framework for collaboration between the partners, whose main purpose was to stop bigger crisis in Europe and turn from a continent of sharing ideals to sharing responsibilities.¹⁷

At the Madrid meeting, in his speech president Gligorov, among other things, welcomed the initiative for the expansion of NATO and put special emphasis on the final interest of Macedonia to join the Alliance, whereupon he pointed out the achieved consensual agreement, both in the Macedonian parliament and between the political parties. In Madrid, the Macedonian delegation also met the Secretary-General of the UN, Javier Solana, who, along with the other councilors of president Gligorov, confirmed that “Macedonia has an open door in NATO”.¹⁸

¹⁷ Нано Ружин, НАТО пред новите предизвици и перспективите на РМ, Фондација „Ф. Еберт“, Скопје 2005, 48-52.

¹⁸ ДАРМ, фонд: 1386,к.6, ас.15.

On August 17 1997 a mission of the Republic of Macedonia was formed in NATO, with its seat in Brussels.¹⁹ The Macedonian ambassador in Belgium, Jovan Tegovski, was appointed as the mission leader (November 1997).

The general Wesley Clark, the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO for Europe, visited Macedonia on August 25 1997 for the marking and the performed multinational drill in Krivolak, between August 25 and 29 1997.

In Sofia, on October 3 1997, there was a Conference of the Ministers of Defense from the countries of Southeast Europe. The Macedonian Minister Lazar Kitanovski also participated and met the US Secretary of Defense William Cohen.

On December 1 1997, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia brought a decision to form a Committee for Euro-Atlantic integrations.²⁰ The Committee included: the President of the Republic of Macedonia, who managed the work of the Committee; the vice-presidents of the Government, and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finances, Defense, Home Affairs, Justice, Economy, Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Urbanism, Construction and Environment Protection. At the suggestion of the president of the Government, they could have hired three additional members in the work of the Committee, as well as the Governor of the National Bank of Macedonia. The primary urpose of their inclusion in the work of the Committee was to secure successful work, when the agenda included questions that needed a higher level of expertise concerning the content of the issues. The essence of the work of the Committee has got a coordinative character. It basic task was to coordinate the activities connected to preparing the Republic of Macedonia, not only for membership in the UN, but also in NATO.

The US Secretary of Defense William Cohen paid working visit to Macedonia on December 24 1997. The subject of the conversations was the safety model for Macedonia according to UNPREDEP.²¹

The intense activities continued in the following years, with the goal of Republic of Macedonia entering NATO. Hence, on February 3 1998 the individual dialogue Macedonia-NATO in Brussels continued

¹⁹ Кузев С., Збирка на документи од областа на безбедноста и одбраната, Југореклам, Скопје, 2002, 51-53.

²⁰ Кузев С., Збирка на документи....., 53-54

²¹ Кузев С., Збирка на документи....., 63-64.

in Brussels, where Branko Crvenkovski, the Macedonian Prime Minister, also participated. General Wesley Clarke, the Commander of NATO forces in Europe, on March 8 1998, visited Macedonia and discussed the political and safety situation in the region. The Secretary-General of NATO, Javier Solana, visited Macedonia on April 30 1998. During his conversations with the Macedonian representatives, Solana pointed out that the Alliance would not tolerate the worsening of the situation in the region. The visits of Javier Solana and General Wesley Clark in Macedonia became more and more frequent. The discussions were about improving the collaboration between Macedonia and NATO.

On September 3 1998 the President of the Republic of Macedonia presented the first Macedonian defense strategy.²² Item 3, in the second part of this strategy, among other things says: “one of the basic defense interests is NATO membership.”²³ In the same part of the Strategy of Defense, item 4 points out that the Republic of Macedonia considers its NATO membership as a permanent destination.²⁴

On September 12 1998 in Krivolak, the military drill named “The Best Collaborative Operation '98.” This military drill included the participation of units from the 26 NATO member states and the Partnership for Peace.

It is well known that the final months of 1998 saw the escalation of the Kosovo crisis, and therefore the role of NATO in the region underwent essential changes, and the collaboration between Macedonia and NATO became more dynamic and appropriately specific. President Slobodan Milosevic received the following warning from the NATO forces: either peace in Kosovo, or NATO would deliver an airstrike on FRY (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia).²⁵

Due to the escalation of the Kosovo crisis, on September 24 1998, the UN Security Council brought the Resolution for immediate breaking of military activities and the start of negotiations for peaceful conclusion of the Kosovo conflict.

²² Службен весник на РМ, бр. 45/98.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Види поопширно: Кљусев, д-р Никола, Трајан Гоцевски, Стојан Спасевски, Оливер Бакрески, Интересите на република Македонија за членството во НАТО, проект на Центарот за стратемиски истражувања при МАНУ, Македонска ризница, Куманово, 2007, XVIII,2007.

In this period, in accordance with the peace criterion, Macedonia participated in building and regulating peace in the region and was actively included in the activities performed in the framework of Partnership for Peace, with the goal of avoiding unwanted activity on its territory.

Because of the dramatic events in Kosovo and FRY, it was necessary for the Republic of Macedonia to cooperate with its partners and friends to be able to contribute to the prevention of new risks for the safety of the country. Macedonia went in this direction and gave its contribution in order to escape risks in the region. Macedonia expressed its determination for total solidarity and support of the international community with the purpose of preserving the peace and safety in Macedonia and would offer specific measures with the goal of contributing the solution of the urgent questions.²⁶

On September 26 1998, in Skopje, a Conference of the Ministers of Defense from the countries of southeast Europe was held. The conversations between president Gligorov and the US Secretary of State William Cohen were about the safety situation in the Republic of Macedonia.

At the request of NATO, on October 19 1998, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia made the decision to place “a cell of NATO that would serve the flying objects of NATO in Kosovo.”²⁷

On November 4 1998, NATO formed forces for extraction of the verifiers of OSCE in Kosovo. It was planned for them to be stationed in Macedonia (after getting permission from the Macedonian government). Concerning the solution of this issue, the visits of the Secretary-General of NATO Javier Solana and general Wesley Clark became more frequent, who discussed the stationing of the NATO extractors in Macedonia with President Kiro Gligorov, Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski and Minister of Defense Blagoj Handziski.

On December 2 1998, the Republic of Macedonia agreed to locate NATO forces on its territory. That same day, the Government of the Republic Macedonia brought the Decision to form a Coordinating Body

²⁶ Гоцевски, д-р Трајан, „Република Македонија на патот кон евроатланските структури“, Перспективите на Република Македонија на патот кон НАТО и ЕУ, Скопје, 2006, 58-60.

²⁷ Гоцевски, д-р Трајан, „Кризите на Балканот и Македонија“, Науката и културата во заедничка акција за мир и развој : зборник на трудови, Скопје, 2001, 125-127.

of the Republic of Macedonia for relations with the NATO missions already present, or arriving in Macedonia at that time. The Ministry of Defense had the task of presiding with the Coordinating Body, constituted of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Coordinating Body was authorized, if necessary, to solve operative and technical issues in the relations between the Republic of Macedonia and NATO missions.

On March 19 1999, the Macedonian Government and NATO were prepared to accept more fugitives from Kosovo. On March 27 1999, the Security Council of the Republic of Macedonia asked NATO to guarantee the safety of Macedonia.

On March 24 1999, NATO began bombing strategic targets in FRY. The US President Bill Clinton sent a letter to the President Kiro Gligorov on March 26 1999, informing him that due to the large surge of fugitives he promised support for Macedonia, in case of endangerment by Yugoslavia.

On April 3 1999, the Council decided to place General Michael Jackson as the Commander of NATO forces in the Republic of Macedonia, who was supposed to assume responsibility for the humanitarian support of the Republic of Macedonia and use all the available forces of NATO in that area to help with the humanitarian actions, not only by UNCHR, but also by other international organizations who send help in the areas endangered by the crisis.²⁸

On April 6 1999, NATO soldiers began building a refugee camp near Stenkovec for 60,000 fugitives. The Secretary-General of NATO, Javier Solana talked to Macedonian ministers Aleksandar Dimitrov and Nikola Kljusev on April 9, 1999 and stated that the safety of the Republic of Macedonia is a direct concern of the NATO alliance.

With the opening of the Macedonian border for the Kosovo fugitives, around 600 fugitives crossed the border over the course of one day, according to the data presented by NATO on April 21, 1999, at a press conference in Washington. Furthermore, between 3000 and 7000 people were on the other side of the border and did not have basic means for personal hygiene, food, clothes etc. The last refugee camp was given over to the High Commissioner of the UN.²⁹

²⁸ Д-р Трајан Гоцевски, *Кризите во независна Република Македонија*, Скопје, 2010, 208-209

²⁹ Ахил Гунтев, *Република Македонија, прва декада (1990-1999)*, МИ-АН, Скопје, 2005, 59.

Macedonia was ready to accept only around 20,000 refugees. The number of Kosovo refugees increased more and more, and in a short while the total number of Albanian refugees, coming from Kosovo to Macedonia, reached 379,523 people, so Macedonia faced a humanitarian disaster, and its damage was around 660 million US dollars. There was around 16,000 NATO soldiers on Macedonian territory during the Kosovo crisis, and soon the number reached 20,000.³⁰

In Washington, on April 23, 1999, there was a summit of the NATO alliance, where the principal topic was the role of NATO in the upcoming millennium (the summit was held in the shadow of the Kosovo crisis).

At the leadership summit of NATO in Washington, 19 member states were present, and decisions were made mainly about Kosovo. There primary goal was to prevent the brutality of Milosevic, solve the issues in Kosovo and find a solution in order to reach peace and stability in the region. In his address, NATO's Secretary-General Javier Solana said: "...We want to point out the huge support that we have from the countries in the region, who work to help the NATO allies, ... with the NATO allies to solve this humanitarian disaster; I also want to compliment the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Albania for welcoming a large number of coming refugees. These two countries have not only our sympathy, but also all the help that the NATO allies can give them."³¹

At the NATO summit in Washington, a Macedonian delegation led by the President Kiro Gligorov participated; it also included the Minister of Foreign Affairs Aleksandar Dimitrov, the Minister of Defense Nikola Kljusev, as well as the chief of the General Staff, General Trajce Krstevski. President Gligorov made a speech at this summit, stating among other things that the territory of the Republic of Macedonia cannot be used for military actions against any of our neighbors. In his speech, president Gligorov put special emphasis on the problem Macedonia had due to the large number of Kosovo refugees. In Washington, the Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aleksandar

³⁰ Press conference by NATO Secretary General, Mr Javier Solana
and General Wesley K. Clark, SACEUR, www.ndato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_27571.htm?selectedLocale=en, 23 april 1999,35.

³¹ Press conference by NATO Secretary General, Mr Javier Solana
and General Wesley K. Clark, SACEUR, www.ndato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_27571.htm?selectedLocale=en, 23 april 1999,35

Dimitrov participated in the general meeting of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright with the Ministers from the neighboring countries of former Yugoslavia.³²

The strategic purpose and hard determination of the Republic of Macedonia for NATO integration continued. It was presented via the Annual National Program for the Preparation of the Republic of Macedonia for NATO Membership (ANPM). Thus, in April 1999 the Republic of Macedonia became a candidate for entering NATO. Its realization would facilitate the use of possibilities and help offered by the Membership Action Plan (MAP) presented at the NATO Summit in Washington (April 1999).³³ Also, Macedonia was prepared to present the experiences through EAPS and PFP, which would strengthen the regional collaboration in southeast Europe. It took active participation in the Consultative Forum of EAPS for safety issues in southeast Europe.

On June 8, 1999, in Kumanovo, began the negotiations between NATO and Yugoslavia for signing a peace treaty. On June 8, 1999, after the adoption of the UN Resolution for mediation of international forces in Kosovo, under the command of NATO, a peace treaty was signed between General Jackson and Yugoslav generals. By signing the treaty in Kumanovo on June 9, 1999, the war in FRY ended.³⁴ NATO stopped the airstrikes in FRY.

The Republic of Macedonia aspires to become a NATO member and thus create conditions to begin the process toward Euro-Atlantic integration; it would have powerful allies, who would protect it during military aggression due to the territory it occupies in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula. The Balkans have been and will be a place for unpredictable scenarios, and because of this Macedonia, as a small country, has to be a part of that safety system and protect its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

³² ДАРМ, фонд: 1386,к.16, ае.25

³³ Изјава на министерот за одбрана Никола Кљусев по враќањето од Вашингтон, „Зачленување во НАТО по 2002“, Нова Македонија, 30 април, 1, 2 и 3 мај 1999 година, 3.

³⁴ .М. Војната заврши, весник „Вечер“, 11.6. 1999, год. XXXVII, бр. 11117, 3.

CONCLUSION

Immediately after gaining its independence, the Republic of Macedonia found itself in a difficult situation in the area of defense. During its retreat, the Yugoslav Army removed all weapons from Macedonia. The Republic of Macedonia realized that in case someone attacked its territory, it would have difficulty defending itself with a small army.

The Republic of Macedonia has shown initiative for joining NATO. One of the strategic goals of Republic of Macedonia is a fully entitled NATO membership. This fully entitled membership should produce stability, peace etc.

The process of Macedonia's advancement toward the NATO alliance, due to understandable reasons, was connected to the establishment and improvement of the relations between the Republic of Macedonia and NATO member states, above all with the USA.

On November 15, 1995, the Republic of Macedonia joined NATO's peacekeeping initiative in the Partnership for Peace program as the 27th member state. For this occasion, a Macedonian delegation led by Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski visited Brussels.

In November 1995, the Macedonian Parliament achieved the status of associate delegation of the North-Atlantic Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA).

From 1996, the activities meant for improving the military collaboration with the NATO member states and deepening the relations and cooperation with NATO structures intensified more and more. From July 1996, Macedonia has had its officers for relations in the seat of NATO in Brussels and the Coordination Cell of PFP in Mons.

During 1997, the collaboration between Macedonia and NATO became more official and got new dimensions.

At the Madrid meeting, President Gligorov, among other things, welcomed the initiative for NATO expansion and placed special emphasis on Macedonia's final interest to join the Alliance and pointed out the achieved consensual agreement, both in the Macedonian Parliament and between political parties concerning this issue. In Madrid, the Macedonian delegation also met the Secretary-General of NATO, Javier Solana.

On August 17, 1997, a mission of the Republic of Macedonia was formed in NATO, located at Brussels.

General Wesley Clark, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO, visited Macedonia on August 25, 1997. The multinational drill in Krivolak, between August 25 and 29, 1997, is also worth mentioning.

On December 1, 1997, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia decided to form a Committee for Euro-Atlantic integrations.

On September 3, 1998, the President of the Republic of Macedonia brought the first Macedonian strategy for defense.

Due to the escalation of the Kosovo crisis, on September 24 1998, the UN Security Council brought the Resolution for immediate breaking of military activities and the start of negotiations for peaceful conclusion of the Kosovo conflict.

On March 24 1999, NATO began bombing strategic targets in FRY. The number of Kosovo refugees was increasing, and in a short while the total number of Albanian refugees who entered Macedonia from Kosovo reached 379.523 people in June 1999, and Macedonia faced a humanitarian disaster.

On June 9, 1999, after adopting the Resolution of the UN for mediating international forces in Kosovo under NATO's command, a peace treaty was signed between General Jackson and the generals of FRY.

The Republic of Macedonia aspires to become a member of NATO, which would create conditions for the beginning of the Euro-Atlantic integration process.³⁵

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