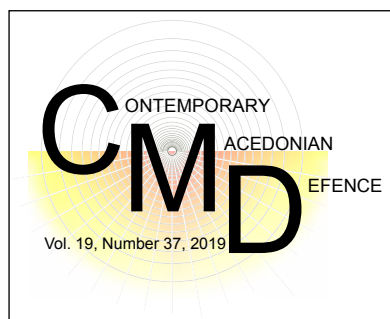


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ANALYSIS OF MILITARY-ECONOMIC REFORMS ON THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA WITH SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AS A PRECONDITION FOR NATO ACCESSION

Andrej ILIEV¹
Zlatko STOJOVSKI²

Abstract: *This paper analyzes the military-economic reforms on the Republic of North Macedonia with some Southeast European countries which are members of NATO, and some are even members of the European Union.*

In this context is the analysis on the Republic of North Macedonia, in terms of meeting the basic prerequisites for NATO accession, such as: defence, political and economic reforms. The focus of the analysis of the defence reform takes the defence spending as a part of the country's annual budget in terms of the size of the armed forces and the needs for a progressive increase in the defence budget.

The research of the size and technological sophistication of the Armed Forces of the Republic of North Macedonia has also been conducted. In order to compare the situation in the Republic of North Macedonia we have considered the member states of Southeast Europe with approximately the same population, such as: the Republic of Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro.

Through analysis of the Freedom House and European Commission's annual reports, we have conducted a comprehensive analysis of the fulfilment of military-political and economic criteria for membership of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO. In addition, by analyzing the strategic position and the armed forces we have made an assessment of the strategic expediency of our country's accession to NATO.

On the basis of analyzing the numerical indicators, a final conclusion and recommendations are given in order to fulfil the military-economic conditions for the final accession of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO.

Keywords: *Analysis, reforms, Republic of North Macedonia, Southeast Europe, NATO*

Introduction

The basic motive behind the political and military determination of the Republic of North Macedonia for membership to NATO, as well as the motive of other aspirant countries from the region of Southeast Europe, stems from the assessment that in this way we shall achieve better

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security of our country, and of the region of Europe. From a security point of view, the Republic of North Macedonia has a partially favourable geographical position as part of Southeast Europe, because it is at the crossroads of the main roads leading from Europe to Asia and Africa. As a result, there are real opportunities for numerous threats to the security on the Republic of North Macedonia in different forms, such as: terrorism, proliferation of weapons for mass destruction, interethnic conflicts, crime, drug trafficking, people and weapons, mass migrations, and other³. The cooperation of the Republic of North Macedonia with the international security structures enables its active participation in the creation of a global defence policy and the enhancement of national capabilities for dealing with new security threats. Without a full Euro-Atlantic integration of all democratic countries in the region of Southeast Europe, including the Republic of North Macedonia, we cannot speak of fulfilling the widely-known vision of unifying the European peoples (United Europe) into a free and democratic community. The defence policy of the Republic of North Macedonia, as part of the national security system is aimed at meeting the requirements and set obligations for its restructuring and preparation for NATO membership⁴.

Defence reforms in function of the integration of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO

The existing functional position of the Ministry of Defence of Republic of North Macedonia, as well as its overall system of defence, represents a result of extensive studies and additional annual analyses of the actual needs and lessons learned for successfully addressing the contemporary security challenges. As a result of the reform process in our state administration body, a significant functional improvement of the internal plan has been achieved, in addition to the strengthening of its planning capabilities in the future direction of involvement in the NATO defence planning.

The Army of the Republic of North Macedonia is one of the most important tools for achieving the defence policy in the area of achieving the strategic interest of the Republic of North Macedonia's membership in NATO. In the past period, significant efforts have been made by the Republic of North Macedonia in the direction of achieving full professionalization of the army, with the aim of forming significantly larger forces that are trained and able to participate in international missions and operations. In order to contribute to the overall spectrum of NATO-led operations, the Republic of North Macedonia is obliged to develop and maintain deployable capabilities at the level of 50 percent of the overall structure of the army's ground forces.

³ Стратегија за одбрана на Република Македонија (СВ на РМ, 30/10), 2-3.

⁴ Национална концепција за безбедност и одбрана, 9-10. http://morm.gov.mk/?attachment_id=39383

At the request of NATO, the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia envisages the deployment of a military force at the level of a medium infantry battalion group and a national support element⁵. The 2003 Strategic Defence Review, 2011-2020 Long-Term Defence Development Plan and the 2014-2023 Long-Term Plan for the Development of Defence are the essential documents for restructuring the Army. In addition, the concentration of human and material resources and capacities, the improvement of the efficiency of the command and control system and the development of new capabilities and capacities necessary for carrying out the missions and tasks of the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia has been achieved⁶. The Army of the Republic of North Macedonia consists of a permanent professional composition and a reserve forces. In addition, the projected number of personnel in the Army is 6500 persons in the permanent composition and 1500 persons in the active reserve or a total of 8000 persons⁷. For comparison, the active component of the Army of the Republic of Slovenia envisages a maximum of 7250 people and the projected number of personnel in the reserve component amounts to 1500 persons or a total of 8750⁸. On the other hand the number of military forces of Montenegro amounts to 1950 persons in total⁹.

The defence expenditures of any NATO member state by the end of 2024 should be no less than 2 percent of their gross domestic product¹⁰.

The defence expenditures as a percentage of the GDP (gross domestic product) of the Republic of North Macedonia (Table 1) are only 50 percent of the reference value for the NATO member states. These expenditures of the Republic of North Macedonia are lower than the expenditures for the defence of NATO member states, such as Croatia and Montenegro, while they are equal to those of Slovenia (column 3 of Table 1).

⁵ Стратегија за одбрана на Р. Македонија (СВ на РМ,30/10),4-5. Strategija_za_odbrana_na_Republika_Makedonija_2010.pdf

⁶ Годишна национална програма на Република Македонија за членство во НАТО (2014/2015). Влада на Република Македонија, 35-37. <http://arhiva.vlada.mk/registar/?q=node/474>

⁷ Долгорочен план за развој на одбраната (2014-2023). Министерство за одбрана на Р. Македонија, 9-10.

⁸ Sodobni vojaski izzivi. Ministrstvo za obrambo, Znanstveno-strokovna publikacija Slovenske vojske, 2017,35.

⁹ Izveštaj o stanju u vojsci Crne Gore u 2015 godini. Ministarstvo odbrane Crne Gore. str.6. Accessed on 16 June 2017. file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/5_152_31_03_2016.pdf

¹⁰ Techau, J. (2015). The Politics of 2 Percent. NATO and Security Vacuum in Europe. Publications Department 1779 Massachusetts Avenue NW Washington, D.C. 20036. p.3. Accessed on 17 December 2017. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_252_Techau_NATO_Final.pdf

Table 1. Defence Expenditures of the Republic of North Macedonia, Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro

State	Defence Expenditures ¹¹	Defence Expenditures as % of GDP ¹²	Peacetime Active Force Size ¹³	Defence Expenditures Per Troop ¹⁴	Defence Expenditures Per Capita ¹⁵
1	2	3	4	5	6
North Macedonia	\$130 million	1,1	6500	\$20000	\$62
Slovenia	\$477 million	1,0	7250	\$65723	\$242
Croatia	\$772 million	1,4	15650	\$49329	\$180
Montenegro	\$74,3 million	1,7	1950	\$38102	\$116

On the other hand, based on the data given in the table we can easily notice that the calculated value of the defence expenditures per soldier of the Republic of North Macedonia is 20,000 dollars, which is significantly lower than the defence expenditure of Montenegro, which amounts to 38,102 dollars, Croatia with 49,329 dollars and Slovenia with 65,723 dollars. The situation is identical when it comes to the defence allocations per capita of the Republic of North Macedonia in relation to the expenditures on this basis by the above-stated countries. The Army of the Republic of North Macedonia belongs to the category of less modern armed forces because its defence expenditure per soldier is less than 25 percent lower than the defence expenditure of the NATO member state with the lowest value, which currently is the Republic of Albania.

The Army of the Republic of North Macedonia is also on the lower end of the scale because its peacetime status is less than 50 per cent of the reference value of the 25,000 troops. By comparison, the Armed Forces of Croatia and Slovenia as NATO member states, fall into the category of small and modern armed forces.

¹¹ Calculated by SIPRI. Military expenditure by country, in constant (2016) US\$m, 2009-2017. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/1_Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988%E2%80%932017%20in%20constant%20%282016%29%20USD.pdf

¹² Calculated by SIPRI. Military expenditure by country as percentage of gross domestic product, 2003-2017. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/3_Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988%E2%80%932017%20as%20a%20share%20of%20GDP.pdf

¹³ International Institute for Strategic Studies. The Military Balance 2018. London: Routledge, 55-59.

¹⁴ Calculated as the defence expenditures rate (column 2) and the number of peacetime armed forces (column 4).

¹⁵ Calculated as the defence expenditures rate (column 2) and the total population number.

Table 2. Troops and border length ratios on the Republic of North Macedonia¹⁶

State	Peacetime Active Force Size	Total Land Border Length + Coastline (km)	Total Border Length with Current Non-NATO or Non-EU States (km)	Troops per km of Current Non-NATO or Non-EU Border	Total Border Length with Current Non-MAP, Non-NATO or Non-EU States (km)	Troops per km of Current Non-MAP, Non-NATO or Non-EU Border
North Macedonia	8000	838+0	261	31	261	31
Montenegro	1950	680+293	475	4	233	8

On the basis of the data given in Table 2, the number of troops available for the defence of one kilometre border line in the Republic of North Macedonia against non-NATO or European Union countries is 31, which is a rough measure for assessing its ability for deterrence from aggression. Of course, this situation does not favour the Republic of North Macedonia in conditions of a real military threat to its territorial integrity.

Nevertheless, the Republic of North Macedonia has greater capability than Montenegro, which, with its available 4 and 8 soldiers per kilometre border line, represents one of the countries with the lowest value in NATO.

Fulfilment of the political criteria

On the basis of the European Commission's Progress Report for the Republic of North Macedonia, it can be concluded that "the country has finally overcome its most serious political crisis in the period from 2001 onwards". In the local elections held in October 2017 year, the citizens supported the policies of the government-led NATO-EU-oriented coalition¹⁷. The government demonstrated its commitment and political will to achieve serious progress in meeting the political category of criteria for admission to NATO.

¹⁶ CIA. World Factbook (page last updated on September 3, 2018). <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

¹⁷ Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2018 Report. European Commission, Strasbourg, 17.4.2018 SWD(2018) 154 final. 5-7. <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-report.pdf>

In this context, progress has been made in the area of judiciary as regards to its functioning as an independent entity in the Republic of North Macedonia. The new judicial reform strategy has been adopted and the key laws have been amended in accordance with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and the priorities for urgent reforms. The Special Public Prosecutor's Office faces fewer obstructions from the courts, which enabled its more efficient work. This report, among other things, states that the legal framework for the protection of human rights is to a large extent in line with the European standards. According to the data published by Freedom House, the Republic of North Macedonia for the period 2015-2019 is estimated as a partially free country with indexes on the scale range from 3.5 to 4.0 (Table 3). In each column of the table, the first number represents the index of political rights, while the second number is the index of civil liberties in the period 2015-2019 year.

Both indexes are based on a scale from 1 to 7, where index 1 represents the highest and index 7 is the lowest level of development of political rights and civil liberties in the country. The countries with an average value of the first two components between 1 and 2.5 are considered free, between 3 and 5.5 partially free, while between 5.5 and 7, non-free countries¹⁸.

Table 3. Freedom House Rating on the Republic of North Macedonia

State	2015 ¹⁹	2016 ²⁰	2017 ²¹	2018 ²²	2019 ²³
North Macedonia	4.0/PF	4.0/PF	3.5/ PF	3.5/PF	3.5/PF

For comparison, the Republic of Slovenia and Croatia as NATO member countries are continuously assessed as free countries whose indexes on the "Freedom House" scale are 1.5 F or 2.0 F. Nevertheless, Montenegro as well as the Republic of North

¹⁸ Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.63. Accessed on 16 August 2016 <https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and-implications>

¹⁹ Freedom in the world 2016: Anxious Dictators, Wavering Democracies, Global Freedom Under Pressure. Freedom House. p.20. Accessed on 4 2016. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FITW_Report_2016.pdf

²⁰ Freedom in the world 2017: Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy. Freedom House. p.20. accessed on 6 March 2017. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FIW_2017_Report_Final.pdf

²¹ Freedom in the world 2017: Democracy in Crisis. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2017-table-country-scores>

²² Freedom in the world 2018: Democracy in Crisis. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2018-table-country-scores>. Accessed on: 20.10.2018.

²³ Freedom in the world 2019: Democracy in Crisis. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/macedonia>. Accessed on 05.02.2019.

Macedonia are ranked as partially free countries in the mentioned period. Regarding the freedom of expression in the Republic of North Macedonia, during 2017, significant progress was made, especially through the improved climate for media and the reduced pressure on journalists. Among other things, the European Commission recommends the continuation of the initiated reforms in the public administration in order to provide the necessary administrative capacity to deal with the high degree of politicization and lack of transparency. The Republic of North Macedonia maintains constant good relations with other countries and actively participates in regional initiatives. In addition to this, decisive and important steps have been taken to improve good neighbourly relations, such as the entry into force of the bilateral agreement with Bulgaria and the signing of the Prespa agreement with Greece, in order to resolve the more than two decade-long “dispute” about the constitutional name of our state.

However, the fact remains that further substantial efforts are needed from the Republic of North Macedonia for fulfilment of the political criteria, in parallel with the serious approach and unreserved support on the path towards NATO by all its political entities.

Economic progress of the Republic of North Macedonia

The European Commission’s report on the economic progress of the Republic of North Macedonia says, that “the country essentially has a good degree of readiness to develop a functioning market economy”. But, the key weaknesses in the economy still remains. They include shortcomings in the business area, such as the poor implementation of contracts and the large informal economy. Structural problems on the labour market are reflected in the low activity and high unemployment rates. Fiscal policy targets are short-term measures and do not have a lasting consolidation plan²⁴. The economy of the Republic of North Macedonia is moderately prepared to deal with the pressure of competition and market forces in the Union. The economy is still suffering from weaknesses which relate to low rates of innovation and investment shortfalls in particular including the public infrastructure²⁵.

In comparison with the real growth rate of Croatia’s gross domestic product for the same period was 2.8 percent, Montenegro 4.2 percent, while Slovenia’s rate was 5 percent. The value of the gross domestic product per capita of the Republic of North Macedonia, according to the data given in the table is 14,900 dollars and it is lower than

²⁴ The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2018 Report. European Commission, Strasbourg, 17.4.2018 SWD (2018) 154 final. 7-8. <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-report.pdf>

²⁵ The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2018 Report. European Commission, Strasbourg, 17.4.2018 SWD(2018) 154 final. 8-9. <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-report.pdf>

Montenegro's which is 17,700 dollars, Croatia's which is 24,400 dollars and Slovenia's which is 34,400 dollars. In addition, the integration of a particular aspirant country in the Euro-Atlantic structures is much easier if the country has higher GDP per capita²⁶.

Table 4. General characteristics of the GDP of the Republic of North Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro²⁷

State	Total Population	Gross Domestic Product (Purchasing Power Parity)	Gross Domestic Product – Real Growth Rate	Gross Domestic Product Per Capita
North Macedonia	2103721	\$30,96 billion	1.5%	\$14 900
Croatia	4 292 095	\$101,03 billion	2,8%	\$24 400
Slovenia	1 972 126	\$71,08 billion	5%	\$34 400
Montenegro	642 550	\$11,05 billion	4,2%	\$17 700

The level of realized income and the living standard of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia are lower compared to most NATO countries. Moreover, it is estimated that the Republic of North Macedonia hasn't invested adequate efforts and political will in direction of improving the management of its public finances, the consequence of which is the continued borrowing and increase in its total public debt. Another problem is the phenomenon of the educated young people leaving the Republic of North Macedonia which has negative consequences for the economy in the country²⁸.

Analysis of the military-political and economic preconditions of the Republic of North Macedonia for NATO accession

The analysis of the Republic of North Macedonia for a future NATO member was made by reviewing its progress on the fulfilment of the basic prerequisites for admission to NATO, as well as by analyzing the strategic goal of NATO enlargement with this country.

²⁶ Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.51. Преземено на 16 август 2016 <https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and-implications>

²⁷ Central Intelligence Agency. The World Factbook (Page last updated on October 1, 2018). <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mk.html>

²⁸ Freedom in the world 2019: Democracy in Crisis. Freedom House. . Пристапено на 05.02.2019 год.

Table 5 gives an overall assessment of the Republic of North Macedonia regarding the fulfilment of the basic prerequisites for NATO membership. The progress in meeting the political criteria, from the possible four levels of evaluation, is valued with medium-low level ("countries with the sum of the first two components in the Freedom House estimates from 2 and 3 are valued with high, from 4 and 5 with medium-high, from 6 to 7 with medium-low and with 8 and more are evaluated with a low degree²⁹"), because the sum of the first two components in the estimate for 2017 in Table 3 is 7 and the same result is for 2018 and the first quarter of 2019 year.

Table 5. Overall analysis for the Republic of North Macedonia in fulfilling the basic criteria

State	Political	Economic	Military	Total	Overall Assessment
1	2	3	4	5	6
Macedonia	Medium-low (2)	Medium-low (2)	Medium-low (2)	6	3,3 (Medium)

Based on the time frame needed for the country to gain the capacity to cope with the pressure of competition and market forces with the Union, the progress of the Republic of North Macedonia in establishing a functioning market economy is also valued with medium-low level. At the same time, the progress of the Republic of North Macedonia in fulfilling the military criteria as a prerequisite for NATO membership is valued at a medium-low level, because the amount of its defence expenditures per soldier ranges from 25 to 50 percent in a negative direction in relation with the European countries the with lowest expenditures in NATO³⁰ (table 1). Each of the above-mentioned degrees in columns 2 to 4 is valued by numerical value: 1 for low, 2 for medium-low, 3 for medium-high and 4 for high degree.

The aggregate value in column 5 of this table is 6. Finally, with the simplified converting the given sum of values into column 5 represented on a scale with 9 matrices (3-12) in the proportional value in column 6 using a measuring scale with fins from 0-10 the overall assessment on fulfilment the basic NATO criteria for the Republic of North Macedonia have been obtained. Overall, the Republic of North Macedonia has been assessed with a medium degree (for values from 3.1 to 6.9), since the obtained value in column 6 of Table 5 is 3.3.

²⁹ Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.68. <https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and-implications>

³⁰ Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.69-70. <https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and-implications>

By recognizing the strategic position and effectiveness of the armed forces, the strategic importance on the Republic of North Macedonia's accession to NATO comes to light. Table 6 gives an assessment of the strategic position of the Republic of North Macedonia³¹.

Table 6. Analysis of the strategic position of the Republic of North Macedonia

State	Power Projection	Interior Borders	New Risks	Impact on NATO Cohesion	Overall
1	2	3	4	5	6
North Macedonia	High (1)	High (1)	Medium (LH) (0.5)	High (1)	3,5 / (Medium)

Moreover, in the part of “projection force” criteria (column 2), the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with high level (1), since its admission to NATO, which is possible to increase the efficiency of NATO in eventual operations in the region of the Balkans and beyond. Also, the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with a high level (1) in the category of “*internal borders*” (column 3), because according to the given data in Table 3, with its accession to NATO the country achieves shortening of the length and exposure of its borders with the countries without a Membership Action Plan, which aren't NATO or European Union members. In the category of “*new risks*” (column 4, table 6), the existence of potential bilateral disputes of the Republic of North Macedonia with any neighbouring country, as the first sub-criterion, is valued at a low level (0), and as a result of the Greek-Macedonian dispute over the constitutional name of the state. In the presence of senior European political representatives and mediators from the United Nations on 17 June 2018, in the Greek part of Prespa in the village of Psarades (Nivitsi), the foreign ministers of the Republic of North Macedonia and Greece signed an agreement aimed at ending the name dispute. So far, great efforts have been made from both governments for the entry into force of the agreement, which the two countries ratified in Prespa. However, we are witnesses that in the middle of January 2019, the Prespa Agreement was first voted with the 2/3 majority in the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia and a few weeks later this agreement was voted in the Greek Parliament. All of this was emphasized as a positive step by the NATO General Secretary, Mr. Jens Stoltenberg and senior representatives of the European Parliament.

In addition, the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with a high level (1) because its admission to NATO has a very positive impact on the overall security environment in Europe, which is actually the second sub-criterion of the mentioned category.

³¹ Freedom in the world 2019: Democracy in Crisis. Freedom House. . Пристапено на 10.02.2019 год.

Accordingly, in the category “new risks”, the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with a medium level (0.5), as an average value of the individual assessments of the afore-mentioned sub-criteria. When it comes to the category “impact on NATO cohesion” (column 5, table 6), the Republic of Macedonia is valued with a high level (1), primarily because of its candidate status for membership in the European Union.

Column 6 of Table 6 presents an aggregate value of the numerical values from columns 2 to 5, and represents the overall assessment of the strategic position of the Republic of North Macedonia. In the context of this, it is easy to conclude that the strategic position of the Republic of North Macedonia, whose aggregate score is 3.5 is assessed with a medium degree (for values from 1.6 to 3.5).

Table 7 gives an assessment of the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia. Moreover, in the part on criterion for achieving the “projection of force” (column 2), the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with a medium-low level (2) because it belongs to the group of small and less modern armed forces.

While in the part of the criterion “deterrence ability”, the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with a high level (4), due to the fact that it has more troops on a kilometre border line towards countries without an Membership Action Plan, which aren’t NATO or members of the European Union, in respect to Montenegro and Latvia, as member states with the lowest value for the size of their Army per one kilometre border line.

Table 7. Analysis of the Armed Forces of the Republic of North Macedonia

State	Power Projection	Deterrence	Overall
1	2	3	4
North Macedonia	Medium-Low (2)	High (4)	Medium (6)

Column 4 of this table presents the aggregate value of the numerical values from columns 2 and 3, with possible values of the aggregate score from 0 to 8, and it represents the overall assessment for the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Moreover, the Armed Forces of the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia are generally assessed with a medium degree, since the cumulative value of the numerical values from columns 2 and 3 is 6 (“low for values from 2 to 3, average for values from 4 to 6 and high for values from 7 to 8”³²). By reviewing the obtained results from the assessment of the strategic position and the Armed Forces of the Republic of North Macedonia, we have insight into the strategic importance of the Republic of North Macedonia’s accession to NATO (Table 8).

³² Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.98. <https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and-implications>

Table 8. Analysis of the Strategic Rationale of the Republic of North Macedonia

State	Strategic Position	Armed Forces	Overall Assessment
1	2	3	4
North Macedonia	8,7	6,6	7,6 (High)

In addition, the numerical value for the category “strategic position” in column 2 of Table 8 is 8.7 and it is obtained by simply converting the given collective value into column 6 of Table 6 represented on a measuring scale from 0-4 in the proportional value in column 2 from Table 8 using a measuring scale with parts from 0-10.

However, the numerical value for the category “Armed Forces” represented in column 3 of Table 8 is 6.6 and it is obtained in a similar manner, with exception that it converts the given sum in column 4 of Table 7 and represented on scale with values from 2 to 8.

Column 4 of Table 8 presents the average value of the sum of the multiple values of columns 2 and 3, with possible values of the aggregate score from 0 to 10, and represents the overall assessment of the strategic validity of the Republic of North Macedonia’s accession in NATO. Moreover, the strategic validity of the Republic of North Macedonia’s accession in NATO is generally assessed with a high degree, since aggregate value of numerical values from columns 2 and 3 is 7.6 (low for values from 0 to 3, average for values of 3.1 to 6.9 and a high degree for values from 7 to 10³³).

By combining the results obtained with regards to meeting the basic criteria and strategic expediency, we came to a final assessment for the Republic of North Macedonia for admission in NATO.

Table 9. Final analysis for the Republic of North Macedonia

State	Criteria	Strategic Attractiveness	Overall
1	2	3	4
North Macedonia	3,3 (Medium)	7,6 (High)	5,45 (Medium)

In column 2 table 9 presents the numerical value of column 6, table 5 and column 3 present the numerical value of column 4, table 8. In column 4 of this table the average value of the sum of numerical values from columns 2 and 3 is 5.45. According to this, the Republic of North Macedonia is finally assessed with a medium degree (low

³³ Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.99. <https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and-implications>

for values from 0 to 2, medium-low for values from 2.1 to 4, average for values from 4.1 to 6, medium-high for values from 6.1 to 8 and a high degree for values from 8.1 to 10) for the readiness and strategic desirability of admission to NATO.

Conclusion

The accession of the Republic of North Macedonia in NATO, is not only a benefit for a higher level of security for the citizens, but in general, it promotes the overall security for the country under the defence “umbrella” of this political and security system, which means accelerating the country’s economic progress by creating favourable working conditions and increasing foreign direct investments, as well as providing the opportunity to share and implement democratic values and principles.

Current development of events will strengthen the role of a credible state and partner that the Republic of North Macedonia plays in the eyes of other European democratic countries and this will speed up the path towards integration into the European Union.

Sending an invitation to the Republic of North Macedonia for starting the process of membership in the Alliance, during the last NATO summit in Brussels, is a confirmation of progress made on its path to NATO.

Nevertheless, the admission of the Republic of North Macedonia as the 30th member of NATO is conditioned by the finalization and full implementation of the Prespa agreement.

Considering the complexity of the social and political relations, the strategic interest and the permanent commitments of the Republic of North Macedonia, it is easy to conclude that in this moment the country has no other viable alternative than joining NATO. In the period that follows, the Republic of North Macedonia needs to undertake measures and activities to create all the conditions for its final admission to NATO, as follows:

- (1) Continuation and consistent implementation of the reform process in all social spheres of the Republic of North Macedonia for NATO membership;
- (2) Overcoming essential differences and assuming the responsibility and concrete steps by all political entities in the country in order to implement the undertaken obligations from the signed agreement with Greece for resolving the name dispute. Everything else implies further deterioration of the positions of North Macedonia in the negotiations and indefinite delays in the Euro-Atlantic integration process;
- (3) Maintaining good neighbourly relations between the Republic of North Macedonia and all neighbouring countries on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation;
- (4) Promoting democratic processes and achieving high standards in respecting citizens’ political rights and freedoms, including the rights of minorities;
- (5) Achieving consistency with the implementation of the reforms in the defence sector and full compatibility of the Armed Forces of the Republic of North Macedonia with NATO member states;
- (6) Actively contributing with its own forces and assets in operations and missions led by NATO, EU or UN, as well as finding means and capabilities to develop capacities for their full logistical support outside the country;

- (7) Strengthening the available capacities of the Republic of North Macedonia in support of international efforts to deal with modern security challenges, such as: terrorism, cybercrime, proliferation of weapons for mass destruction, illegal migration, human trafficking and other.
- (8) Implementation of the undertaken obligations and provisions of the Ohrid Framework Agreement as an issue of essential importance for maintenance of interethnic relations in the Republic of North Macedonia.
- (9) Continuing the commenced economic reforms, establishing and maintaining fair and competitive working conditions for all economic entities, improving the business climate and attracting foreign investments, maintaining economic growth and undertaking effective measures for reducing the high unemployment rate.
- (10) Improving the management of public finances and preventing further borrowing and increasing the total public debt of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The current scientific researches in the process of integration of the Republic of North Macedonia into NATO lead us to the following conclusions: from the independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991 to date, through numerous surveys of the citizens of our country over 80% of the respondents answered that they would vote positively in the direction of integration of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO³⁴.

Another scientific survey concludes that over 60% of Macedonian citizens oppose the change of the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia as the last condition for full-fledged membership to NATO. It is interesting that the research was conducted in three phases in the period from 2016 to 2018, which clearly concludes that almost 70% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, irrespective of the ethnic and religious determination are for admission of our country to NATO under the temporary reference FYROM, even if it become the permanent name of our country³⁵.

In all of aforementioned researches, the Macedonian ethnic Albanians do not set any conditions on the name of our country, and regardless of the change of our country name, they strongly support the integration process of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO³⁶. According to everything we noted above in the paper, through accurate numerical indicators, evaluations and indicators from relevant international organizations for the assessment of the overall validity in fulfilling the conditions of the Republic of North Macedonia for integration in NATO, and having in mind the very fast pace in the ratification of NATO membership protocol by member states at the end of 2019, the protocol for full-fledged membership of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO would be signed from almost all NATO member states, which gives us realistic expectation that all 29 NATO member states will succeed to ratify the protocol for full membership on Republic of North Macedonia to NATO before the NATO Summit³⁷.

³⁴ Mulchinock Niall (2017). NATO and Western Balkans: From neutral spectator to proactive peacemaker. Palgrave Macmillan. p. 241. ISBN 9781137597243

³⁵ Braw, Elisabeth. "Greek troubles prompt Macedonia NATO push". *www.politico.eu. Politico*. Retrieved 27 January 2019

³⁶ Bechev, Dimitar. "What next after the failed Macedonian referendum?". *www.aljazeera.com. Aljazeera*. Retrieved 4 October 2018. "Albanian community, which is traditionally strongly pro-NATO and EU."

³⁷ Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of the Republic of North Macedonia". *Treaty Base*. Retrieved 11 February 2019.

On the other hand, having in mind that in order to complete all administrative procedures for full-fledged membership of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO requires a longer period of time, the full-fledged membership of our country with the right to vote and all this will be finished during April 2020. According to this, the Republic of North Macedonia will the 30th full-fledged member state of NATO.

The next NATO summit is scheduled to take place during the second half of December 2019, in London, the United Kingdom, because London was the seat of NATO's main headquarters in its inception in 1949, and this year's NATO summit is planned to take place there because of the jubilee "*70 years since the establishment of NATO*". In addition to the comprehensive agenda of the upcoming challenges and threats for the functioning of NATO as a military-political alliance, this summit will emphasize the commitment of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Greece in overcoming the nearly three decade-long name dispute and thus meeting all necessary conditions for admission of the Republic of North Macedonia as the 30th full-fledged member state of NATO.

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