

In February 1998, the KLA had been an almost insignificant presence in Kosovo, but brutish Serbian actions in the countryside drew thousands of young volunteers to its ranks. By the summer, the KLA controlled as much as half of Kosovo's territory. Today, the KLA has a political wing which expects to be a player in any negotiations on Kosovo's final status.

Spillover from Kosovo

Macedonia and Albania are politically and economically vulnerable to spillover effects from the Kosovo crisis. Both countries are being drawn into the conflict through the cross-border transit of weapons, guerrillas and refugees.

Macedonia already has a huge and restive Albanian minority numbering between 20 and 40 percent of its population of two million. Albanians form a majority in Western Macedonia which borders both Albania and Kosovo. Although the Albanians are better off in Macedonia than in Kosovo, many problems remain unresolved, especially regarding the status of the Albanian minority within Macedonia's constitutional framework. Albanians in Macedonia have limited rights in terms of using their own language and national symbols and there are recurring charges of ethnic discrimination by the Macedonian government. Albanian political parties in Macedonia are seeking greater political and national rights for the Albanian minority.

Since the fall of 1997 tensions between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians have risen with several incidents of violent clashes between Albanians and police. In September, the Albanian mayor of Gostivar, where Albanians make up 75 percent of the population, was convicted of spreading ethnic intolerance because he allowed the Albanian flag to fly above city hall. In reaction to the massacre in the Kosovo village of Donji Prekaz on 10 March 1998, tens of thousands of Albanians rallied in Albanian-populated towns in Macedonia in solidarity with Kosovar Albanians and in opposition to Serbia. The demonstrators waved Albanian flags and sang the Albanian national anthem.

The influx of Albanian refugees from Kosovo is creating political tensions in Macedonia and crippling its struggling economy. The ethnic Albanians arriving from Kosovo are, on the whole, more militantly, nationalist-oriented than Macedonia's own ethnic Albanian population. The Kosovo conflict is bringing a flow of arms into Macedonia both from Albania on their way to Kosovo and from Kosovo into the hands of Kosovars guerrillas and their supporters based in Macedonia.

Albania As with Macedonia, the conflict in Kosovo threatens Albania's security and its political and economic stability. The armed conflict in Kosovo undermines efforts in Albania to collect the weapons held by civilians. Albanians have new monetary and nationalist incentives for holding on to the weapons looted in 1997 in order to sell them to Albanian "liberation fighters" in Kosovo. The Kosovo civil conflict is already being brought into Albania not only by increased cross-border gun smuggling, but also by the transit of guerrillas.

If the cross-border smuggling of arms and rebels continues or if the Kosovar guerrillas use the Albanian soil to stage attacks within Kosovo, Yugoslavia may feel compelled to intervene directly in Albania. On several occasions, the Yugoslav military and police forces have massed near the Albanian border and Yugoslav helicopters have flown near the Albanian borders.

The unrest in Kosovo directly affects Albania's democratization process. Until now, the hard-core nationalists in Tirana who call for the unification of Albanian lands have been marginalised and Tirana's policy has been one of restraint. Continued repression in Kosovo will bring to the