

rule in Kosovo in 1912. Moreover, Kosovo is the cradle of Serb nationhood. Serbs view Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia and the Albanians there not as a majority in Kosovo, but as a minority within Serbia.

Kosovar Albanians claim the right of national self-determination by virtue of their majority status within the region. In an unfortunate twist of historical fate, Kosovo is not only the birthplace of Serb nationhood, but also birthplace of the Albanian national awakening in the 19th century. Kosovar Albanians have always believed that they deserve equality with the other nations of federal Yugoslavia, which, in political terms, has meant having their own republic.

A second factor underlying decades of ethnic conflict in Kosovo is the persistent repression of ethnic Albanians by Serb authorities. The Albanian demand for greater autonomy or independence has risen and fallen in step with the increase and decrease in violations of their basic human and political rights. The mass killings by Serb forces in March 1998 has eroded the Albanian people's willingness to trust any political settlement within Serbia, and garnered support for the militants who call for full independence and employ terrorist tactics.

The absence of economic opportunity the third main factor contributing to instability in Kosovo. Unemployment among Albanians is as high as 80 to 90 percent. Unemployment of the educated youth is a particularly troublesome problem. (Thirty percent of the population are students.) Even without Serb repression or ethnic conflict, this region would be ripe for upheaval.

It should be noted that the sudden escalation of violence in March may not be solely attributable to Serbia's need to eliminate the KLA's terrorist activities. Yugoslav President Milosevic may also want the conflict in order to divert his public's attention away from the collapsing Yugoslav economy and growing discontent in Montenegro. A crackdown against Albanians in Kosovo unites Serbs. Milosevic is skilled at manipulating Serb nationalist feelings to serve his agenda.

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. 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