



**LEAGUE OF NATIONS
1921: ALBANIAN-YUGOSLAV BORDER
WAR
TOPIC GUIDE**

MID-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SECURITY COUNCILS
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LEAGUE OF NATIONS

1921: Albanian-Yugoslav Border War

THE DATE IS 07 November 1921

Following the first Balkan War, the 1913 Treaty of London established the Principality of Albania as an independent state¹⁰, and tasked the Great Powers¹¹ with defining its exact borders. Initial attempts (for example, through the Protocol of Florence in December 1913) were unpopular with the Greek population in Southern Albania, with the Catholic population in Northern Albania, and with many ethnic Albanians who resided outside of the established territory. Efforts by the Great Powers to delineate the exact borders were sidelined with the outbreak of World War I.



On 17 August, 1920, after forming its own government, Albania was unanimously admitted to the League of Nations.¹² By 1921, the Great Powers had yet to define Albania's borders, and a growing Catholic separatist movement in Northern Albania's Mirdita region had gained support and funding from neighboring Yugoslavia.¹³ On 17 July 1921 separatists declared the independence of the Mirdita Republic.¹⁴ Greece formally recognized the Mirdita Republic, and Yugoslavia agreed to defend it against hostilities.¹⁵ At the League of Nations, Yugoslavia and Greece claimed that the new Muslim Albanian government would oppress the Catholic minority in Mirdita, and questioned whether Albania was fit to govern itself. By recognizing the Mirdita region's independence, Yugoslavia strengthened its own claim in the disputed territory.

Albania, meanwhile, asserted that the Mirdita Republic was illegitimate, and denied intentions to suppress the Catholic minority. They further asserted that since 1918 Yugoslav troops had been occupying the Albanian territory broadly agreed in the 1913 Treaty of London, and that this occupation was disrupting political and economic life in Albania.¹⁶

¹⁰ Duggan, Stephen P. (1913). The Balkan Adjustment. *Political Science Quarterly*. Volume 28 (no 4.). pp . 627 - 645. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2141823?seq=6>

¹¹ During the negotiation of the 1913 Treaty of London, pre WWI, the great powers consisted of Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Russia. (http://www.albanianhistory.net/1913_Conference-of-London/index.html).

¹² Lavdosh Ahmetaj (2014). Acceptance of Albania into the League of Nations. *European Scientific Journal*. Volume 10 (No. 23). <https://euijournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/3946/3738>

¹³ Austin, Robert Clegg (2012). *Founding a Balkan State: Albania's Experiment with Democracy, 1920-1925*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. ISBN 9781442644359.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Elsie, Robert (2015). *The Tribes of Albania: History, Society and Culture*. I.B.Tauris. p. 218. ISBN 978-0-85773-932-2.

¹⁶ Memorandum by the Secretary General. 17 November 1921. League of Nations - Albania. C.446.M.328.

By November 1921, Yugoslavia further advanced troops into Albania and began an offensive to assert its territorial claim. Claiming that the Yugoslav advance threatened all of Northern Albania, Albania appealed to the League of Nations to stop the invasion.¹⁷ Albania was simultaneously preparing its troops to quash the Mirdita rebellion and Greece was conducting its own military exercises in Southern Albania.¹⁸ The President of the Council called for an extraordinary meeting to address threats to peace and security and resolve the Albania-Yugoslav border dispute.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Elsie, Robert (2015). *The Tribes of Albania: History, Society and Culture*. I.B.Tauris. p. 218. ISBN 978-0-85773-932-2