

**Kyoto Peacebuilding Center (KPC)**

**In cooperation with**

**Global Peacebuilding Association of Japan (GPAJ)**

**and**

**Academic Council on the United Nations System Tokyo Office (ACUNS)**

Presents

**Boris Tadić**

**Former President of Serbia**

**The Ukrainian Crisis: A View from a Former  
President of the Republic of Serbia**

**Saturday, July 2, 2022**

20:00-21:30 Tokyo, 13:00-14:30 Geneva, 7:00-8:30 New York

**Report compiled by: Maciej Witek**

**Part I: Presentation**



**Boris Tadić**

**Former President of the Republic of Serbia**

President Tadić started the presentation from his view on Kosovo. In his address as a president in 2008, at the 63rd session of the UN General Assembly, he warned that Kosovo is a crisis that threatens world peace. He underlined that Kosovo's potential precedence represents a huge problem for international peace and stability. That addressing was in the context of seeking support for the Serbian resolution requesting an advisory opinion on Kosovo's independence from the International Court of Justice (ICJ). He believes that was the first official warning sent to the international community about a global responsibility that the ICJ carried while deciding how to answer Serbia's question if Kosovo broke the international law by the unilateral declaration of independence. It was a warning that such precedence set by the West, would be a justification for igniting hotspots worldwide. The ICJ avoided answering the question by saying that institution that declared independence was not recognized as an actor of international law, so in that context, it could not break the international law. Serbian side interpreted this answer as the international law was broken, and ever since the Albanian side interpreted it as not breaking the law. Russia never recognized

Kosovo as an independent state and was protecting Serbia's territory integrity at the Security Council. But a decade and a half later, when Russia attacked Ukraine, Putin's main argument in front of the international community was that if Albanians in Kosovo can do it on the territory of a sovereign country, Russians in Donbas and Crimea can do that too. Here we are facing multiple paradoxes. West claims right on Ukraine and disclaims the same right for Serbia, and Russia protects Serbian integrity while attacking Ukraine. But what we are facing is the consequences of the ICJ setting clear international law standards where they have already set their political interests. In other words, what they do in reality is oppose what they claim to be their international law and moral standards. When a great power loses moral authority, every other authority is based only on dominance, which is in the end transformed into violence. Already, next year, in 2009, he assessed that there is no doubt that the court's confusion will represent strong legal precedence with the far-reaching consequences for the UN system.

President Tadic warned that the outcome will either strongly deter other separatist movements from attempting secession, or the result could be such that it encourages them to do the same. He added that in a case when the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence is legally recognized, it would be an open door to challenge the territorial integrity of any member of the UN. Practically, ICJ avoided answering the question. That response allowed different arbitrary interpretations according to the interests of world powers, not according to what was once known as international law. The consequence of this decision of the ICJ has only begun to be seriously considered during the war in Ukraine. Almost 15 years after the first warning that we sent to the West, to the UN, and to the world Russia attacked Ukraine, and Putin's key argument before the international community is precisely the Kosovo precedence.

How the international community behaves towards the Kosovo issue was not the end of the Kosovo problem, but the opening of new Kosovos around the world. While the conflict is still unsolved, upon its examples we now have a new conflict that followed the model. The Albanian side of Kosovo has been strategically advised all the time on what to do, it is advised in accordance with the interest of great powers that recognized and supported the independence of Kosovo, and that crushed the system of international law on the subject. Following the same model of interest, Ukraine was also advised and guided until it burned in the war. In his opinion, it was advised wrongly and against all Ukrainian people who are losing their lives today in the war that Russia and NATO are waging on their territory. The key point is that, at that time, they have in mind the impression that we have reached the end of history, and only one power will rule, and expected that this would not have consequences in other important strategic positions. That is precisely why he is deeply convinced that the war in Ukraine cannot be resolved until the international community returns to the year 2009 and gives a clear answer in the context of international law, not of political and strategic interest. If that doesn't happen, new Donbases and Crimeas will open around the world, and not only Ukraine but many countries will be burning in war.

The illusion of the end of history originated from the illusion that the Cold War has never ended, and one of the places where that war was heated up in all previous decades, was precisely Kosovo. However, all illusions were dispelled at the moment when the ICJ was unable to respond to the history created by the great powers in the meantime. The international hypocrisy

took a place of international law, and the Pandora's box cannot be closed until we return to the moment when it was opened. Since 2014 Ukraine was not only a European Russian problem but also a global problem. In 2014 in Ukraine, the sustainability of the international law and order, newly established in Kosovo is being tested. The possibility to form a new state on a territory of one state under certain circumstances was tested. The test failed in advance, as any test was and will be as long as we at least formally believe that we live in the world order based on international law. That shows that every political precedence leaves potential consequences for any point in the world in the context of international law and relations. When President Tadic warned world officials about it, they ignored the danger. And now the danger has arrived. The world is faced with the decision of whether to create an entirely new world order and international law or to go back and continue history made of all the lessons from all the catastrophes from the history of the world and mankind. The shame is that these decisions could have been made already in 2014, before the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine. That was the last chance to confront the hypocrisy. If there is a conflict with human victims, any solution is more difficult and achievable only in a long period of time. President Tadic has always advocated for the territorial integrity of sovereign states, both Serbia and Ukraine. At the same time, he has never avoided flexibility and inventions in solutions that adhere to the principle of territorial integrity of UN member states. But what we are facing now is far away from any flexibility. The conflict in Ukraine is exposing inconsistency at the heart of western policy. It is important to understand that this inconsistency and hypocrisy are as dangerous as any Russian aggression. The West cannot call for territorial integrity to be sacred in some cases, and negotiable in other cases. As long as the world order is based on double standards, any conflict will be left to the voluntary interpretation of the sides involved. And their interpretations will naturally be opposed to each other.

In 2014 when the conflict in Ukraine began, President Tadic gave a lecture at a Diplomatic Academy in Kyiv and then warned that although this conflict threatens to escalate into the global cold war, it also represents a serious opportunity to find a long-term solution to re-defining relations between the West and Russia. But it was wrong as a cold war was not about to start but about to be finished. For decades there have been debates on whether the cold war has ever ended, and from time to time these debates topic is no war in Ukraine. However, this debate is based on the wrong foundations since it's not even a question of whether the cold war ended – it has been obvious for a long time that it did not. The problem is that war in Ukraine is not a question of opening the new cold war, but of ending the old one. Ukraine is the end of the cold war in the sense that this war is once again starting to be a hot war, just this time its borders of it have been moved from Poland, and Czechoslovakia to Ukraine. Today, when the global community discusses a possible solution for Ukraine, they are aware that Putin's main argument is Kosovo, but nobody discusses if and how that argument could be annulled by revising the resolution for Kosovo. It takes a step back to take a step forward, but the West shows no will to take that step back. That means that even if the Ukraine war will be solved soon, the same war can start worldwide based on the same argument. Any solution will be an interest, not morally based without clear moral stances and consistent standards, especially the one between the West and East will sooner or later lead to conflict.

And that conflict is the discourse of the cold war that never ended. History never ended, and the world always paid the price whenever it wanted to end it. That price was always paid in human lives. The Western powers want to declare the end of history at the moment when their power peak, believing that this kind of declaration will keep that peak as an endless reality. That is one of the greatest curses in the history of mankind. I am one of those who believe that every crisis is a chance, and this war is also a chance to learn the importance of moral authority and the danger of underestimating it. This Russian aggression against Ukraine is characterized by a changeable warlock. The reasons for starting this war are multiple, and the greatest responsibility for this tragedy is carried by Russia because it committed aggression on a sovereign country, but the US and the West, and NATO also have their undoubted responsibility for this war, because after the collapse of the USSR they constantly avoided finding a sustainable solution to the security issues that will guarantee security to both Russia and NATO. Instead of that, they have provoked that extremely dangerous reaction by step by step expanding NATO to Russia's borders. After the first defeats in the war with the attempt to conquest Kyiv, today Russia is an advantage on the battlefield conquering step by step the entire territory of Donbas and joining it territorially with Crimea. The dramatic question of this war and the real strategy of Putin remains whether they will merge and claim Transdnistria with a Furter attack on Odessa. If that happens, Ukraine will be left without access to the Black Sea, but also the whole of Europe and the world will be affected in terms of energy, food production, and supply. However, the big problem is that the sides are not looking for a peaceful solution, but instead, all three sides Russia, Ukraine, and NATO want the war to continue. And perhaps the bigger problem is that today it is very difficult to imagine what that peace treaty would even look like.

## **Part II: Discussion**



**Takahiro Shinyo**  
**Councilor of the Kyoto Peacebuilding Center, Professor of**  
**Kwansei Gakuin University, and Former Ambassador to the**  
**United Nations and the Federal Republic of Germany**

Mr. Shinyo stated that the comparison between Ukraine and the Kosovo issue is somewhat different and difficult. Ukraine was an independent country, one of the original members of the UN. The relationship between Russia and Ukraine is different from than relationship between other sovereign countries and there is no comparison at all talking about Serbia and Kosovo relations – it is a separate issue. Many countries recognized Kosovo, but the country is not able to participate in the UN because some countries are against it, particularly Russia. This is just an entirely different category of problems, so we should not intermingle those two. The aggression of Russia is aggression against another independent country which is clearly against the UN Charter and international law. Both Russia and other countries were members of the CSCE – Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki. In the final act, it is clearly stated that a change of the border with the use of force is prohibited, Russia is acting against this principle. Russia has more

responsibility than the other normal member of the UN, as a permanent member has a heavy responsibility to observe international law, and it was broken. It is not only a legal issue but also a political problem. The responsibility of Russia and the US and NATO is somehow different. NATO and the US's responsibility is moral and ethical, and we should not intermingle those two.

**Boris Tadić**  
**Former President of the Republic of Serbia**

President Tadic responded that first of all, he is not talking about Serbia and Kosovo, Russia and Ukraine. Talking about the province of Kosovo that declared independence by provisional institutions of Kosovo – that is exactly what happened in Donbas. Russia didn't recognize those two different enclaves until the war started. They recognized on the basis that if it was possible in Kosovo, it is possible in Donbas. UN wasn't involved in the Kosovo declaration, only western powers – the US and their allies. Now, many countries which recognized Kosovo's independence after arguments, are withdrawing that recognition, there is no majority of countries recognizing that independence. The focus is on the response of ICJ, and countries that were not very responsible for triggering so many problems around the world. He clarified that from the beginning he is totally against that war, accusing Russia of violating Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. This is clear aggression against international law. Serbia is not imposing sanctions because of our history. The country lived under sanctions, suffered a lot, and know that the sanctions didn't affect Milosevic's regime, but ordinary people. Sanctions will not affect Putin's regime, Western countries never took into account the experience of Serbia. We have to negotiate a peaceful solution and imagine how that solution is going to look.



**Tadamichi Yamamoto**  
**Visiting Professor at Doshisha University, Councilor at the International Peace Building Center of the Kyoto University of Arts**

Mr. Yamamoto mentioned that regarding the “End of History”, around the same time the book was published, the Economist magazine of London, published an article called the “Last ideology”. They both said the same thing – that liberal democracy is the ideology that humankind would pursue. Therefore the promotion of liberal democracy throughout the world is going to be important because when liberal democracy prevails, the world would be safe. The state department had a very strong policy of promoting liberal democracy around the world, including in the Middle East in the late 90s and early 2000s. Then Mr. Yamamoto asked President Tadic if he is arguing that Kosovo's independence had been welcome by the western world because that was part of the movement to bring liberal democracy to Kosovo, and now is opposing the Russian invasion looking at it as trying to choke the democracy in Ukraine? If that is the case, then what we are seeing is a cold war between liberal democracy and the other force which opposes, what does he suggest we do with those two conflicting sides?



**Satoru Kurosawa**

**External member of the consultant selection committee of JICA**

Mr. Kurosawa mentioned that as a member of the Western bloc and a country aspiring to join the EU, it is imperative to normalize relations with Kosovo as soon as possible. What are the perspectives of normalization with Kosovo? From the viewpoint of responsibility as a member of the Western world, as well as from the perspective of international cooperation, I think Serbia should consider joining NATO.

**Boris Tadić**

**Former President of the Republic of Serbia**

President Tadic underlined the main message, that Kosovo, as well as Donbas, were never independent states – those issues are triggering problems around the world. In 2008 when Kosovo claimed independence, Serbia was a democratic country. In that case, Kosovo is not connected with the liberal democracy ideological issue. Historically speaking it was fighting for living space. Kosovo is the origin of Serbia, there are cultural sites there, and it is historically the center of the Serbian state. There were so many demonstrations even within former Yugoslavia, on both sides were communists, not liberal democrats, they opposed liberal democracy. President Tadic was always in favor of liberal democracy, but against that solution – independence from Serbia because it is not only violating international law but bringing instability everywhere. If every ethnic community would like to declare independence, we would have a horrible problem around the world, and it is not an issue of liberal democracy, but in fact, fighting for living space. Russia is not liberal democracy. Ukraine is showing an attempt of becoming a liberal democracy but the spirit of communism had been existing there even in 2014. In Ukraine, there is a need for a solution that will involve not only legitimate Ukrainian leadership, not only NATO but also Russia. Otherwise, there will be an extremely dangerous situation – and this is what we are facing now. I am not sure if Ukraine is now a liberal democracy, but it is in this way, Russia is not. Everyone is using these circumstances and conditions for their interests, and this is problematic. In Donbas, there are not only Ukrainians but also Russians who do not want to live under the sovereign Ukrainian roof. This is not an issue of liberal democracy.

Regarding Mr. Kurosawa's question, he agreed with normalization with Kosovo. However, due to the Ukraine crisis, any negotiations bring us difficult situations by triggering internal problems in Serbia. Even though NATO attacked us in 1999 without the Security Council Resolution, 40% supported joining NATO according to the poll conducted in 2004. However, this figure dropped to 8% in 2008 when NATO countries recognized the independence of Kosovo. Now, it is impossible for Serbia to join NATO. Serbia remains neutral.

**Prit Kaur**

Ms. Kaur stated that she has friends in Ukraine and Russia, but with this conflict, she is really worried about them. This is not a political statement, but she is worried about human rights. How did these conflicts stop and how could they be resolved by the international community?



Her concern is whether it is happening in India, China, or Japan, we must be talking about how to resolve it. The human rights violations are happening now, while we are talking. They are not worried about thinking about the UN or history. There should not be any war, even if it is the last resort between countries. How to stop this war? How to prevent similar conflicts in the future? Ms. Kaur stated that after today's conversation she thinks there are membership issues in the UN, and conflicts can be resolved in different regions easily. Then all the regions will be bringing their opinions, problems, and misunderstandings.



**Alistair Edgar**

**Associate Professor, Wilfrid Laurier University, Executive Director, Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS)**

Mr. Edgar understood the connection between the response to the unilateral declaration of Kosovo and the precedence it gave to president Putin. In a sense in reverse order, can the West address some of the problems that it may have caused by readdressing the Kosovo situation? Is there anything to take the excuse from president Putin? Or is the Kosovo issue now separated?

**Takahiro Shinyo**

**Councilor of the Kyoto Peacebuilding Center, Professor of Kwansai Gakuin University, and Former Ambassador to the United Nations and the Federal Republic of Germany**

Mr. Shinyo agreed with what president Tadic said. Nevertheless, the solution to this problem should be of course between the democratic countries. The way how Russia tried to solve the issue of independence of Donbas, was just military. Russia should be punished. The comparison between former Yugoslavia and USSR. After the USSR dissolved, Russia declared itself a succeeding country, but this new Russia has never applied for membership in the UN but succeeded in every right and opportunity – including veto. In the case of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro needed to become a new members of the UN. We should raise questions about whether Russia should have acceded to the UN as a new country? This analogy should be applied to Russia, and according to Ukraine, it is illegal that Russia still has the veto. Maybe Yugoslavia's experience can tell very clearly that when a country dissolves, then every member of the former country must apply to the UN as a new – which Russia never did.

**Boris Tadic**

**Former President of the Republic of Serbia**

President Tadic agreed that it would be pretty normal if new countries would have to apply for UN membership. This is not a matter of political principles but power. Whether the Western world can come back to the previous period when they decided to support Kosovo's independence, is a very interesting question. Underlining, the Kosovo issue triggered somehow the problem in Ukraine. By using this as an argument, Putin is violating international law in the

same way as Western countries did by recognizing the independence of Kosovo. Ukraine is a very important country, it can be a buffer zone between NATO and Russia. It can become a closer partner of Europe than ever. Regarding possible solutions to the current conflict, diplomacy and negotiations are the only solutions. If someone thinks that Russia can be defeated on the battlefield, I am afraid they are naïve. And the war is not the solution.