



Eminent Person's Lecture Series (EPLS)



Eminent Person's Lecture by

**H E Dr José Ramos-Horta**

Honourable President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

on

**Peace in the Contemporary World**

Tuesday, 17 December 2024



Organised by

**Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)**



Eminent Person's Lecture Series (EPLS)



Eminent Person's Lecture by

**H E Dr José Ramos-Horta**

Honourable President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

on

**Peace in the Contemporary World**

Tuesday, 17 December 2024



Organised by

**Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)**



**Published by**

**Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)**

1/46, Old Elephant Road (West of Ramna Police Station)  
Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.

Phone: (880-2) PABX: 9353808, 9336287, 8315808, Ext. 136

Fax: (880-2) 48312625

E-mail: [po@biiss.org](mailto:po@biiss.org)

website: [www.biiss.org](http://www.biiss.org)

**Printed by**

**General Printing Press**

98, Naya Paltan, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

Phone: +88 02 583 177 42, +88 01710 956 575

Email: [general.ppress@gmail.com](mailto:general.ppress@gmail.com)

**Date of Publication : 07 March, 2025**

**Price : TK. 120 | US\$ 5**



His Excellency Dr José Ramos-Horta, Honourable President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste with the researchers and officers of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)

## Eminent Person's Lecture Series (EPLS)

### Eminent Person's Lecture on Peace in the Contemporary World



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) organised a Lecture under its flagship programme, Eminent Person's Lecture Series (EPLS) on "Peace in the Contemporary World" on Tuesday, 17 December 2024, at the BIISS Auditorium. **H E Dr José Ramos-Horta**, Honourable President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste delivered the Eminent Person's Lecture. **H E Mr Md Touhid Hossain**, Honourable Foreign Affairs Adviser, Interim Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was the Guest of Honour. The Director General of BIISS, **Major General Iftekhar Anis, BSP, awc, afwc, psc, PEng**, delivered the welcome address. **Ambassador AFM Gousal Azam Sarker**, Chairman, BIISS, chaired and moderated the session.

Senior officials from different ministries, ambassadors, high commissioners, former diplomats, senior civil and military officials, media, academia, researchers, faculties and students from various universities, and representatives from international organisations participated in the EPLS. They enriched the event by presenting valuable questions, opinions, comments, suggestions and observations during the open discussion session.

## Welcome Address



**Major General Iftekhar Anis, BSP, awc, afwc, psc, PEng**  
*Director General, BISS*

**Major General Iftekhar Anis, BSP, awc, afwc, psc, PEng**, Director General, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) welcomed the audience for the unique privilege of listening to one of the world's foremost champions of peace—His Excellency Dr José Ramos-Horta, Honourable President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. He introduced the Honourable President as an avid promoter of peace and an extraordinary personality whose life embodies resiliency, diplomacy and an unrelenting dedication to justice.

General Iftekhar mentioned that the Nobel Laureate lived an impactful life to merit a biography which includes unparalleled accomplishments. To grasp His Excellency's narrative, one must be familiar with the history of Timor-Leste. It is a nation which endured colonisation, initially from the time when Portuguese traders regarded this island as their colony although in 1975 following the Carnation Revolution, Portugal abandoned Timor-Leste but only after nine days of being an independent country, it got invaded again which lasted for 24 years. And in the journey of Timor-Leste's road to independence, His Excellency Dr Ramos-Horta played the crucial role in advocating for the Timorese people's struggle for self-determination. During the occupation of Timor-Leste, he became the international voice of the resistance, tirelessly campaigning at the United Nations (UN) and other global forums.

The Director General noted that H E Dr José Ramos-Horta is a towering figure in the global quest for peace and justice. He carried out his people's struggle to international stages with

unmatched eloquence and determination. His diplomatic prowess earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996. After East Timor's hard-won independence in 2002, he initially served as the Foreign Minister, then Prime Minister and later as the President, skillfully guiding the young republic through its formative years. A philosopher at heart and a statesman in practice, Dr José Ramos-Horta today remains a symbol of inspirations for younger generation with his vision of peace and prosperity.

General Iftekhar said that when we refer to peace in the contemporary world, we need to understand how the changes in recent world shape the term peace. States, laws, constitutions,



and civil society which were the foundations of the international system of the 20<sup>th</sup> century exemplified a more forward-thinking approach to peace. Hence, contemporary perspective on peace places emphasis on issues pertaining to democracy, human rights, politics and security.

The Director General noted that when we look at the complexities of peace in the contemporary world, we find that these complexities are multifaceted, shaped by a web of interwoven challenges that extend far beyond traditional warfare. In an era of globalisation, conflicts are no longer confined to borders but are influenced by economic disparities, excessive militarism, technological advancements and shifting power dynamics. Furthermore, he mentioned that the aftermath of conflicts often leaves deep scars, with issues of displacement, human rights violations, and long-standing grievances requiring nuanced, multifaceted solutions. Therefore, achieving peace today demands not only resolving immediate political disputes but addressing underlying structural inequalities and fostering cooperation in an increasingly fragmented world.

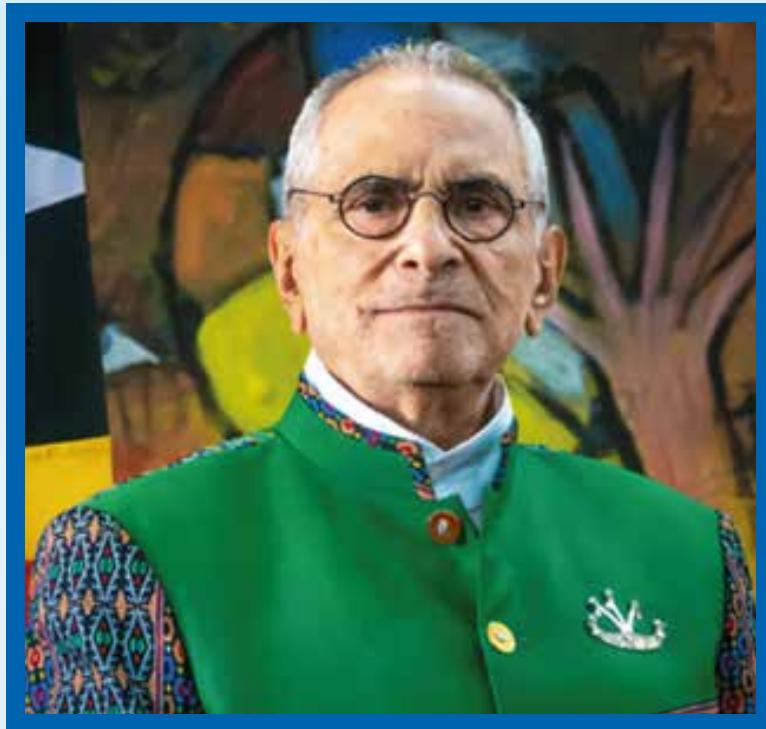
He noted that if we look for a voice that can elucidate the complexities of peace in the turbulent world that we live in today, we can find only a few personalities and he strongly believes

H E Dr José Ramos-Horta, is one of those figures. He emphasised that the topic of the lecture, “Peace in the Contemporary World,” is extremely relevant to understand how to achieve lasting peace in today’s world that is marked by complex conflicts, geopolitical tensions, and shifting alliances.

General Iftekhar again expressed his profound gratitude to His Excellency Dr José Ramos-Horta for making time to share his wisdom with the audience. The Director General concluded by saying that we all are eagerly looking forward to hearing about his experiences and his vision for global peace in today’s ever-changing world.



## Eminent Person's Lecture



### **H E Dr José Ramos-Horta**

*Honourable President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste*

In his Lecture, **H E Dr José Ramos-Horta**, the Honourable President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, eloquently shared a series of reflections on his country's journey, regional dynamics and global affairs, offering deep insights into the process of nation-building and the impact of visionary leadership. His narrative weaves personal anecdotes and political milestones that span from his first experiences in Bangladesh to the evolution of Timor-Leste after its independence.

At the commencement of his speech, the Honourable President Dr José Ramos-Horta expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to deliver a lecture at BIISS, emphasising the privilege of returning to Bangladesh for the third time, a country that has significantly impacted his life and the development of Timor-Leste. Reflecting on his first visit in 2007, shortly after leaving the office, he recalls the initial struggles of his nation after gaining independence. Timor-Leste faced severe economic challenges in the post-independence period, with no circulating currency and a lack of infrastructure. At that time, the country relied on currencies like the Indonesian Rupiah and the Australian Dollar.

A crucial turning point came in the year 2000, when he first learned about the work of Professor Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank. This led to the establishment of a microcredit

initiative in Timor-Leste, an endeavour that, unfortunately, did not succeed. Despite initial failures, this experience ignited a deeper understanding of how microcredit could potentially uplift impoverished communities. In a twist of fate, Professor Yunus, who would later become a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, visited Timor-Leste in 2004. At that time, H E Dr José Ramos-Horta took the opportunity to propose Professor Yunus for the Nobel Peace Prize and convinced Nobel Committee that his contribution to poverty alleviation deserved global recognition.

H E Dr José Ramos-Horta then recounts how this event sparked his reflections on the causes of extreme violence, notably countering the simplistic narrative that poverty breeds violence and extremism. At a World Economic Forum of 2002, following the devastating 9/11 attacks, he boldly disagreed with the notion that poverty was the root cause of terrorism. Rather, he argued that terrorism is primarily an ideology, rooted in politics, and sometimes manipulated by those seeking power. His assertion sought to emphasise that eliminating poverty alone would not resolve the deeper issues that fuel violent extremism. The speech highlights his belief that providing hope and opportunities is far more effective in creating a peaceful society.



Drawing a parallel between the leadership of Professor Yunus and other global figures, H E Dr Ramos-Horta praised Professor Yunus's revolutionary approach to social change. He compared the youth-led movements in Bangladesh to those of historical figures like Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and Mahatma Gandhi, emphasising that while movements in Latin America and Africa were often fuelled by armed struggle, the youth-led revolution in Bangladesh exemplified a peaceful transformation. This peaceful change, H E Dr Ramos-Horta argues, was steered by exceptional leadership—leaders who are not only compassionate and visionary but who also possess the ability to communicate and inspire others.

Turning his attention to Timor-Leste, H E Dr José Ramos-Horta reflects on the progress that this nation has made since its independence in 2002. From an economy with an annual budget of just US\$ 68 million and a medical workforce of only 20 doctors, the country has made significant strides. Today, Timor-Leste boasts a vastly improved education system, with 18 universities and over 40,000 students. Life expectancy has increased from under 60 years to around 71 years, and the country is now one of the least indebted in the world. The president highlighted the importance of strategic investments, such as the 'sovereign wealth fund' funded by oil and gas revenues, which allowed the country to stabilise and grow its economy.

He also underscored the importance of maintaining strong diplomatic ties with neighbouring Indonesia. He acknowledged that while he held leadership roles in Timor-Leste, the true leadership of the country has always been embodied by Mr Xanana Gusmão, who led the struggle for independence and endured years of imprisonment under Indonesian rule. H E Dr José Ramos-Horta's reflections on his interactions with Mr Gusmão further cemented the deep respect he holds for the national hero and the unwavering commitment to Timor-Leste's sovereignty and future.

H E Dr Ramos-Horta also shared a personal anecdote from his visit to South Africa, where he had the rare privilege of meeting President Nelson Mandela. During his time in Johannesburg, he managed to secure a personal meeting with President Mandela, who had undergone knee surgery during that time. This intimate exchange between the two leaders exemplified the profound relationships forged due to their respective struggles for independence, as well as the enduring friendship between two freedom fighters, President Mandela and Dr Ramos-Horta, who shared a common commitment to justice and human rights.

President Mandela expressed admiration for H E Dr José Ramos-Horta's leader, Mr Xanana Gusmão, saying, "I met your leader, a great man, and I am very impressed." Then, he asked, "When can you come to South Africa?" H E Dr Ramos-Horta responded, "Comrade President, whenever you wish, I will come tonight." At that moment, H E Ramos-Horta realised he had no money and no ticket, but President Mandela reassured him, saying, "Just go to the airport; a ticket will be waiting for you." He followed President Mandela's advice, and indeed, the ticket was there as promised.

President Mandela shared the details of his meeting with Mr Xanana Gusmão and recounted how he had informed Suharto of his desire to visit Mr Xanana Gusmão. Mr Suharto had ordered that Mr Xanana Gusmão to be brought out of prison and taken to the Istana Merdeka, where he would meet with President Mandela, and the two of them would share a dinner. President Mandela's account was confirmed by Mr Xanana Gusmão himself. This meeting, according to H E Dr Ramos-Horta, marked the beginning of Mr Gusmão's leadership in the reconciliation process in Timor-Leste. Gusmão's extraordinary moral authority was instrumental, and from the very first day of independence, he had called for no revenge, no prosecutorial justice and emphasised reconciliation among the Timorese people.

Mr Gusmão's stance was rooted in the understanding that the violence during the struggle was not only between the Timorese and the Indonesian army but also within the Timorese community itself. In the Timorese literature and publications, never once the Indonesian people were demonised. Even their rebels never harmed a single Indonesian civilian. Captured

Indonesian soldiers were treated with respect and released after a few weeks or months, walking back to their base.

When the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited Timor-Leste, H E Dr Ramos-Horta had the opportunity to host a television show facilitating a dialogue between Mr Gusmão and Mr Guterres. Mr Gusmão shared that during the struggle, he personally tended to the wounds of several captured Indonesian soldiers. This reflected Timorese commitment to not demonise the Indonesian people, even though Timor-Leste's population is comprised of 99.6 per cent Catholics, a demographic that could have easily been used to foster animosity.

The truth is that, when independence was achieved, there was no hatred to carry forward, and it was easier for Mr Gusmão to call for reconciliation. They rejected the idea of international tribunals. H E Dr José Ramos-Horta even argued with the late Mr Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General regarding a proposed hybrid international tribunal. He insisted that the UN did not have the authority to create such a tribunal, bypassing the Security Council. They were embarrassed and although indictments were issued, Timor-Leste's Prosecutor General and police were instructed to disregard them.



For peace to prevail in Timor-Leste, they needed to understand their own history, find the courage, wisdom, and compassion to move forward and honour the dead while taking care of the survivors. Their country, during World War II, was invaded by Japan and, tens of thousands of Timorese lost their lives. However, they are the only country in Asia that did not demand compensation from Japan.

When the reform of the UN Security Council was discussed in 2005, H E Dr Ramos-Horta reassured the audience that Timor-Leste was not interested in permanent membership. He

noted that the expansion of the permanent members, such as Germany, Brazil, India and Japan, might not necessarily lead to a more representative or democratic Security Council. While the debate is going on, he believes that expanding permanent membership does not necessarily make the UN more effective in preventing conflicts, as seen in situations like Ukraine, Gaza, and Myanmar.

H E Dr José Ramos-Horta has often been concerned about conflict prevention. For example, He met with Pope Francisco in Rome and spent significant time discussing the tragedy of the Rohingya people. He emphasised that as long as Myanmar's constitution remains unchanged, the conflict will continue. He suggested that dialogue without preconditions, facilitated by the Pope, might be the only way to prevent further escalation in Myanmar, as it affects not only Myanmar but also Bangladesh, Thailand, and the larger ASEAN region.

In discussing Ukraine, Gaza, and Myanmar, it is clear that, despite ongoing talks about conflict prevention, he said we repeatedly fail to address the underlying issues. Even when we fail to prevent conflict, the global community should reassess its approach, particularly the permanent members of the Security Council, many of whom are implicated in these conflicts.

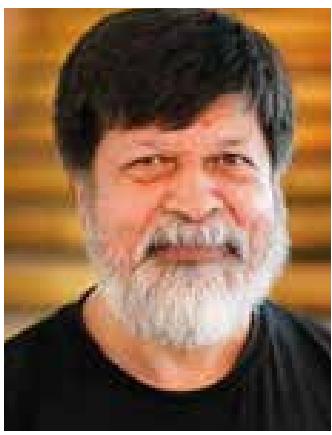
On Syria, H E Dr José Ramos-Horta reiterated one statement he made in 2013, that the war would continue for many years, and more than a million people would perish. Unlike the Iran-Iraq War, Syria's conflict involves multiple factions, making peace negotiations much more complicated. The polarisation of the Security Council further complicates efforts to resolve the crisis.

Through his experiences and observations, H E Dr Ramos-Horta realises that the global power structure needs reform, especially in the context of post-pandemic recovery. The G7 and G20 should consider implementing a new Marshall Plan that addresses key challenges in developing countries, with a focus on environmental sustainability, clean water, renewable energy, and education. Such a plan could promote a more ethical and peaceful global order.

In light of the economic crises and the current state of affairs, it is crucial to rethink the existing power dynamics and support the countries most in need, His Excellency noted. The crises of Gaza and Ukraine show that speeches alone are not enough. True peace can only come through action.

In the concluding part of his speech, His Excellency expressed his optimism as he saw young people across Europe and the United States advocating for change. Perhaps this energy can be harnessed to create a new global order. As Professor Mohammad Yunus and others have demonstrated, such changes are possible. It will take time and effort, but he focused on the need for action, as the future depends on the collective ability to work together.

## Open Discussion



### Dr Shahidul Alam

*Managing Director, Drik Picture Library Ltd, Bangladesh*

**Dr Shahidul Alam** shared his thoughts with a practical and reflective tone and acknowledged the honourable president's focus on reconciliation, addressing the ongoing inequality in Gaza and the need for action in developing countries as significant issues. However, despite these discussions being raised repeatedly over the years, he pointed out that meaningful progress has often been lacking.

Turning to Bangladesh, he opined that Bangladesh can learn from the rich experiences of the honourable president. He noted, revolutions in the past have often failed, and while there may be excitement about current developments, it is important to stay grounded, as outcomes do not always go as planned. He concluded by asking the President to share insights into the factors behind the success of his revolution, hoping to find valuable lessons that could be applied in the Bangladeshi context.



### Air Commodore Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, ndc, psc

*Treasurer, East West University*

**Air Commodore Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, ndc, psc**, expressed his gratitude to the honourable President and mentioned about the security situation in Timor-Leste highlighting that the country is situated near the South China Sea- an area marked by ongoing disputes and rising superpower rivalries. He then inquired about how Timor-Leste is navigating these challenges, particularly concerning security and maritime boundaries.



## Ambassador M Humayun Kabir

*President, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI)*

**Ambassador M Humayun Kabir** posed two thought-provoking questions starting with the ongoing debate about the future of the global order— for some which is the potential for a new and improved global system, while others fear the rise of a new global disorder. He thus, wanted to know the perspective of the honourable President on these contesting ideas: if he is optimistic about the direction of the global order, or he sees it leaning toward disorder?

His second question drew a parallel between the issues the speaker had highlighted and the current situation in Myanmar. He sought the honourable President's insights on whether a similar scenario could unfold in Syria or the broader region, given the complexities of the situation there.



## Rear Admiral (Retd) A S M A Awal, ndc, psc

*Former Ambassador and Assistant Chief of Naval Staff,  
Bangladesh Navy*

**Rear Admiral (Retd) A S M A Awal ndc, psc**, acknowledged the success of the revolution of Timor-Leste and highlighted that it is ranked 20th in the World Freedom Index, significantly higher than countries like France, the UK, and, notably, the US- which ranked 55th. He inquired about the method and process of achieving such a laudable position. Additionally, referring to the US National Security Strategy, he wanted to know the shortcomings of emphasising ASEAN as central to the Indo-Pacific strategy.



## **Lieutenant General (Retd) Abu Tayeb Muhammad Zahirul Alam, rcds, psc**

*Former Commandant, National Defence College, Bangladesh*

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Abu Tayeb Muhammad Zahirul Alam, rcds, psc**, opined that the global order, dominated by Western powers, had failed due to being driven by self-interest. He expressed scepticism about any positive outcomes emerging from this existing world order and pondered whether Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia, with support from Africa and South America, could collaborate to establish a new world

order that would serve as a counterforce to the current system. He added, whether leaders and countries with necessary resources could spearhead the creation of a new global order and development strategy.



## **Commodore (Retd) Syed Misbah Uddin Ahmad, (C), NUP, ndc, afwc, psc, BN**

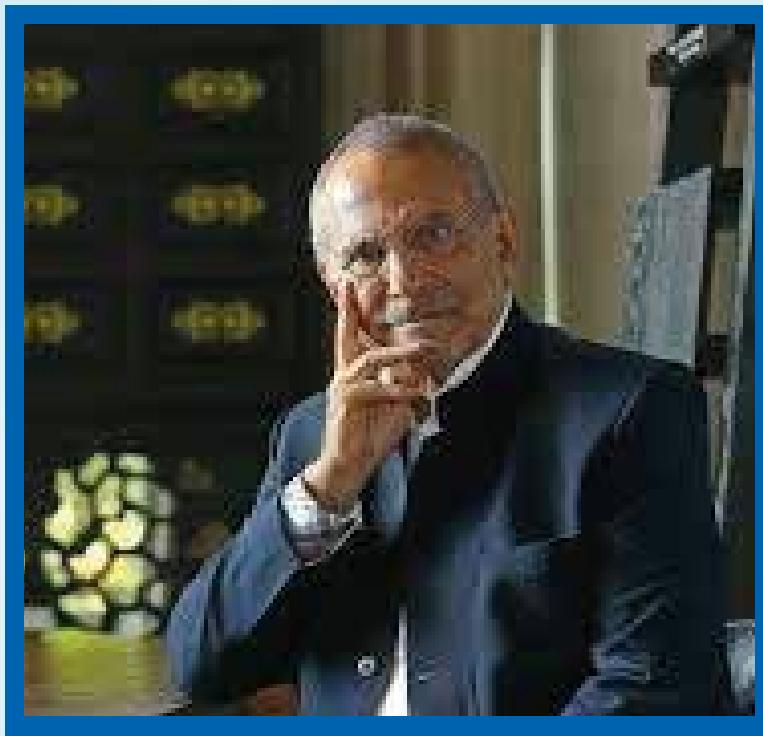
*Director General,*

*Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research and Development (BIMRAD)*

**Commodore (Retd) Syed Misbah Uddin Ahmad, (C), NUP, ndc, afwc, psc, BN** noted that Timor-Leste and Bangladesh share several commonalities including but not limited to being small states surrounded by much larger neighbours. Referring to the strong relationship of Timor-Leste with Indonesia, he asked about Bangladesh's efforts over the past 54 years to build a similarly

strong relationship with its largest neighbour. From his point of view, these efforts have been hindered by the misinterpretation of neighbouring states on Bangladesh's revolution and the spirit of its people. He concluded by asking the honourable President to shed light on what might go wrong in such situations.

## Responses of the Honourable President



### **H E Dr José Ramos-Horta**

*Honourable President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste*

In response to questions and queries, Honourable President **H E Dr José Ramos-Horta**, shared his perspective on various global and regional issues, emphasising the interconnectedness of the world and the complexities of governance. He clarified that he was not referring to any specific country but speaking about global realities, noting that even in wealthier Western countries, which enjoy better protection and fewer conflicts, setbacks and failures are not uncommon. He pointed out that challenges exist everywhere, including in countries like Indonesia, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Bangladesh and India.

Commenting on global political dynamics, he mentioned that some people tend to be overly pessimistic. For instance, after the re-election of President Trump, some of his friends in Washington considered relocating abroad, but he reminded them that political terms are temporary. Reflecting on Trump's first term, he stated that while some policies, like the tariff war with China, were harmful, no irreparable damage occurred. He also observed the interconnected nature of the global economy, highlighting the significant financial ties between China and the US.

Speaking about Timor-Leste's own experience, honourable President Ramos-Horta shared how the country's petroleum sovereign fund was wisely invested in US treasury bonds, helping it



becoming wealthier although amidst the 2008 financial crisis better than many other nations. He also recalled the losses the country faced due to market fluctuations during the Ukraine war, emphasising resilience and the ability to recover over time.

On resolving disputes, he praised the use of international law in Timor-Leste's negotiations with Australia over maritime boundaries. He described how years of dialogue, facilitated by the UN, resulted in a fair agreement in 2018, boosting the nation's fortunes. He emphasised the importance of goodwill and pragmatism, citing how Timor-Leste's leaders refrained from demanding compensation for past colonial exploitation, instead focusing on future cooperation.

Discussing the South China Sea, he advocated for bilateral negotiations among claimant states while urging all parties, including ASEAN member countries and China, to transform the region into a "sea of peace and cooperation," free from militarisation and environmental hazards. He shared that during a meeting with President Xi Jinping, there was mutual agreement on pursuing peaceful resolutions and fostering stability.

President Dr Ramos-Horta expressed his scepticism about the narrative that China poses a threat, instead he argued about viewing Chinese growth as beneficial for the region. He noted China's advancements in technology and clean energy and contrasted them with past economic tensions, such as Japan-bashing in the 1980s, suggesting that current concerns about China may similarly subside over time.

On Timor-Leste's anticipated ASEAN membership, he said the country's best contribution would be maintaining peace and stability at home. He humorously remarked on the rigorous process of joining ASEAN, comparing it to entering heaven, but noted progress and optimism about the future.



Reflecting on global power dynamics, he touched upon the rise of BRICS as a potential alternative to the G7, urging dialogue and cooperation rather than competition. He recalled his accurate prediction of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and its political repercussions, emphasising that systemic challenges often lead to necessary change.

On climate change, he urged nations to take local responsibility alongside global efforts, stressing the importance of environmental restoration through tree planting and river management. He advocated for Asian-led initiatives to address global challenges, suggesting the creation of a regional fund to tackle carbon emissions and support Africa, emphasising the region's growing financial strength and potential for leadership.

In conclusion, he called for collaboration and innovation to address global challenges, sharing his optimism for a more unified and sustainable future.

## Remarks by the Guest of Honour



**H E Mr Md Touhid Hossain**  
*Honourable Foreign Affairs Adviser*  
*Interim Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*

In his remarks, Honourable Foreign Advisor, **H E Mr Md Touhid Hossain** acknowledged and appreciated the speech by H E Dr José Ramos-Horta, describing it as compelling and thought-provoking. While highlighting the enduring global inequalities and citing Thucydides' assertion that "the strong do what they want, and the weak accept what they must", the Honourable Adviser emphasised the need for bilateral problem-solving approach. He pointed out that despite the end of the Cold War, conflicts have persisted and often intensified, calling for vigilance to prevent miscalculations between powerful states that could lead to greater suffering worldwide.

Addressing the inadequacies of global governance, Honourable Advisor, Mr Md Touhid Hossain criticised the UN veto power structure, arguing that expanding veto power to more nations would create new centres of privilege without benefiting the broader international community. He also turned his attention to the regional crisis in Myanmar, emphasising the plight of 1.3 million Rohingyas in Bangladesh and the urgency of resolving the issue for regional stability. He expressed doubt about Myanmar's return to its former status quo, given the changing dynamics, and stressed that peace in Myanmar is unattainable without addressing the Rohingya crisis. He underscored the moral and justice dimensions of the issue, urging ASEAN and regional leaders



to prioritise the Rohingyas in their resolutions to ensure peace for Myanmar, Bangladesh, and the broader region. Concluding his speech, he appealed to the President Dr Ramos-Horta to leverage his influence in advocating for a just and peaceful resolution to this critical issue.

## Concluding Remarks by the Chair



**Ambassador A F M Gousal Azam Sarker**  
*Chairman, BIISS*

**Ambassador AFM Gousal Azam Sarker**, Chairman, BIISS, extended his gratitude to the Chief Guest and all distinguished guests for their presence. He paid homage to those who laid down their lives and participated in the student-led popular movement in Bangladesh in 2024 in pursuit of a new Bangladesh. Against this backdrop, he acknowledged that the nation's struggle for peace and prosperity frequently encounters challenges, roadblocks and disruptions, which have become even more pronounced in contemporary times. The world is now increasingly fragmented especially, due to the rise of exclusionary blocs and alliances, a tendency to pursue zero-sum geopolitics, ideological divides, cultural revisionism, neocolonial practices and the creation of dependency through political maneuvers. These issues manifest in various conflicts, violence and hostilities across different regions, ultimately affecting all nations, including Bangladesh. The roots of conflict and violence were identified as stemming from unregulated, self-centered, and unsettled mindsets, which contribute to intolerance and provocations through both state and non-state agendas.

In this context, Ambassador Sarker emphasised that peace, empathy and harmony, if understood as a concept of societal friendship, requires: (a) collective efforts to ensure shared benefits; and (b) to cultivate a culture of peace to nourish its values. To discuss the challenges of peace in the contemporary world with special reference to the recent sacrifices made by younger

generations, he stated that no one could be better suited than a distinguished Nobel Laureate for Peace - Dr Ramos-Horta, whose insights have significantly enriched the discussion. He extended his special appreciation to the Honourable President of Timor-Leste Dr José Ramos-Horta, whose presence is a source of great pride for the people of Bangladesh. His wisdom, insightful keynote speech, and willingness to engage in this important discussion have been instrumental for understanding challenges of peace in the contemporary world, he argued. He also thanked the Honourable Foreign Advisor for his valuable insights, and for voicing a collective aspiration for peace, which resonated with all participants. It was reaffirmed that peace remains a shared goal that requires persistent efforts at every level and across all platforms.

Ambassador Sarker further extended his gratitude to the excellencies and diplomats from South and Southeast Asia, whose presence underscored the importance of regional collaboration in fostering peace and prosperity. The contributions of distinguished attendees from various sectors of society were also acknowledged, recognizing the significance of their engagement in the discussions. Appreciation was also conveyed to the media representatives for their efforts in ensuring the dissemination of the seminar's key messages and collaborative spirit.







## — Editorial Team —

*Chief Editor*  
**Iftekhar Anis**  
*Director General*

*Editor*  
**Shahriar Jабed Chowdhury**  
*Research Director*

*Assistant Editors*  
**M Ashique Rahman**, *Senior Research Fellow*  
**A S M Tarek Hassan Semul**, *Research Fellow*  
**Md. Rafid Abrar Miah**, *Research Officer*  
**Md Nahiyan Shajid Khan**, *Research Officer*

The Editorial Team thankfully acknowledges Research Interns **Shohanur Rahman Shuvo** and **Israt Jahan** for their assistance in preparing the proceedings

# **BISS Publications**

---

## **Books**

South Asian Regional Cooperation: A Socio-economic Approach to Peace and Stability

Nation Building in Bangladesh: Retrospect and Prospect

The Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace

The Security of Small States

ASEAN Experiences of Regional and Inter-regional Cooperation: Relevance for SAARC

Development, Politics and Security: Third World Context

Bangladesh and SAARC: Issues, Perspectives and Outlook

Bangladesh: Society Polity and Economy

South Asia's Security: Primacy of Internal Dimension

Chandabaji Versus Entrepreneurship: Youth Force in Bangladesh

Development Cooperation at the Dawn of the Twenty First Century: Bangladesh-German Partnership in Perspective

Conflict Management and Sub-regional Co-operation in ASEAN: Relevance of SAARC

National Security of Bangladesh in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Civil Society and Democracy in Bangladesh

Regional Co-operation in South Asia: New Dimensions and Perspectives

Confidence Building Measures and Security Cooperation in South Asia : Challenges in the New Century

Bangladesh-Southeast Asia Relations: Some Insights

Security in the Twenty First Century: A Bangladesh Perspective

25 Years of BISS: An Anthology

Politics and Security in South Asia: Salience of Religion and Culture

Small States and Regional Stability in South Asia

Religious Militancy and Security in South Asia

Global War on Terror: Bangladesh Perspective

Towards BIMSTEC-Japan Comprehensive Economic Cooperation: Bangladesh Perspective

Democracy, Governance and Security Reforms: Bangladesh Context

Whither National Security Bangladesh (2007)

National Security Bangladesh (2008)

Human Security Approach to Counter Extremism in South Asia: Relevance of Japanese Culture

National Security Bangladesh (2009)

Energy Security in South Asia Plus: Relevance of Japanese Experience (2016)

Changing Global Dynamics: Bangladesh Foreign Policy (2018)

Bangladesh in International Peacebuilding: Discourses from Japan and Beyond (2019)

Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation (2021)

Militancy and National Security of Bangladesh: Policy Options and Strategic Outlook (2021)

Glimpses on Bangladesh: A Country of Hope, Love, Courage and Resilience

Developmet-Human Security Nexus: A Study on Padma Bridge Resettlement Areas

Look Africa: Exploring New Horizons (2025)

# **BIISS Publications**

---

## **South Asia Human Security Series**

Nepali State, Society and Human Security : An Infinite Discourse  
Evolving Security Discourse in Sri Lanka: From National Security to Human Security  
Violence, Terrorism and Human Security in South Asia  
Women and Human Security in South Asia: The Cases of Bangladesh and Pakistan  
Human Security in India: Health, Shelter and Marginalisation  
Pakistan: Haunting Shadows of Human Security  
Human Security in India: Discourse, Practices and Policy Implications  
Human Security Index for South Asia: Exploring Relevant Issues  
Ethnicity and Human Security in Bangladesh and Pakistan

## **BIISS Papers (Monograph series)**

The Assam Tangle : Outlook for the Future (1984)  
The Crisis in Lebanon: Multi-dimensional Aspects and Outlook for the Future (1985)  
India's Policy Fundamentals, Neighbours and Post-Indira Developments (1985)  
Strategic Aspects of Indo-Sri Lanka Relations (1986)  
Indo-Bangladesh Common Rivers and Water Diplomacy (1986)  
Gulf War : The Issues Revisited (1987)  
The SAARC in Progress : A Hesitant Course of South Asian Transition (1988)  
Post-Brezhnev Soviet Policy Towards the Third World (1988)  
Changing Faces of Socialism (1989)  
Sino-Indian Quest for Rapprochement: Implications for South Asia (1989)  
Intifada : The New Dimension to Palestinian Struggle (1990)  
Bangladesh : Towards National Consensus (in Bangla, 1990)  
Environmental Challenges to Bangladesh (1991)  
The Gulf War and the New World Order : Implication for the Third World (1992)  
Challenges of Governance in India : Fundamentals under Threat (1995)  
Bangladesh in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (1998)  
Nuclearisation of South Asia : Challenges and Options for Bangladesh (1998)  
The Middle East Peace Process and the Palestinian Statehood (2000)  
Pakistan and Bangladesh : From Conflict to Cooperation (2003)  
Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Bangladesh : A Case for People's Management (2003)  
WTO Dispute Settlement System and Developing Countries: A Neorealist Critique (2004)  
State Sovereignty and Humanitarian Intervention : Does One Negate the Other? (2006)  
Unipolarity and Weak States: The Case of Bangladesh (2009)  
Japan's Strategic Rise (2010)  
The Fallacy of Fragile States Indices: Is There a Fragility Trap (2017)  
Implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative for Bangladesh: A Strategic Analysis (2020)  
Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience: A Quest for Human Security in Bangladesh (2020)  
Covid-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh: Economic Impacts and Policy Implications (2020)  
Understanding Bangabandhu's Foreign Policy: Principles, Priorities and Diplomatic Strategies (2021)  
Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance (2022)

# **BIISS Publications**

---

## **BIISS Seminar Proceedings**

Contemporary Development Debate: Bangladesh in the Global Context (2014)

Moving from MDGs to SDGs: Bangladesh Experience and Expectation (2015)

SAARC at 30: Achievements, Potentials and Challenges (2015)

Bangladesh's Relations with Latin American Countries: Unlocking Potentials (2016)

Civil-Military Relations in Democracy: An Effective Framework (2016)

Recent Extremist Violence in Bangladesh: Response Options (2016)

25 March – Gonohottya Dibosh (Genocide Day) (2017)

Reconciling Divided Societies, Building Democracy and Good Governance: Lessons from Sri Lanka (2017)

Promoting Cultural Diversity of Small Ethnic Groups in Bangladesh (2017)

Upcoming 45th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, Dhaka: Revisiting A Shared Journey (2018)

রোহিঙ্গা সংকটঃ বাংলাদেশ কর্তৃক গৃহীত পদক্ষেপ ও পর্যালোচনা (Rohingya Crisis: Measures Taken by Bangladesh and Appraisal) (2018)

Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (2018)

Bangladesh in International Peacebuilding: Experience from Japan (2018)

Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100: Implementation, Challenges and Way Forward (2019)

1971 Genocide in Bangladesh (2019)

Bangladesh-India Cooperation: In the Changing Regional and Global Context (2019)

Commemorating the Silver Jubilee of Diplomatic Relation Between South Africa and Bangladesh (2019)

International Day of Peace 2019 and Launching of Book Titled “Bangladesh in International Peacebuilding: Discourses from Japan and Beyond” (2020)

Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative for the Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh (2020)

Bangladesh-Nepal Relations: Prospects for Sub-regional Cooperation (2020)

Bangladesh and India: A Promising Future (2020)

Track 1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue Forum (2020)

Bangabandhu's The Unfinished Memoirs: A Review (2020)

ASEM Day: Celebrating and For Strengthening Connectivity (2020)

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Bangladesh: Options for Building Resilience (2020)

Leadership of Bangabandhu and Its Relevance to the Contemporary World (2021)

Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: Leadership and Foreign Policy (2021)

Bangabandhu's Vision of Sonar Bangla: Bangladesh at 50 (2021)

The Rohingya Crisis: Response of the International Community and the Repatriation Process (2021)

Revisiting Contemporary Peace and Security Challenges in the South Region (2021)

Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation (2021)

Exploring Korea-Bangladesh Relations in the Last Five Decades and Beyond (2021)

The Rohingya Exodus in Bangladesh: Regional and Global Security Implications (2021)

Bangladesh-South Africa Bilateral Relations: Exploring the Potentials for Future Engagement and Cooperation (2021)

Geopolitics of Indo-Pacific and Reconnecting the Bay of Bengal Littorals (2022)

Human Rights in the 21st Century: Rhetoric and Reality (2022)

Roundtable Discussion with H.E. Michele J. Sison, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization

# **BIISS Publications**

---

## **BIISS Seminar Proceedings**

Affairs, US Department of State and Her Delegation (2022)  
Bangladesh and the United States Relations: Moving Towards Enhanced Cooperation and Partnership (2022)  
Hybrid Seminar on Blue Economy and Maritime Security: Bangladesh Perspective (2022)  
Bangladesh-India Relations: Confluence of Ideologies and Evolving Perspectives (2022)  
The EU in the Indo-Pacific: A Committed Partner for Stability, Prosperity and Peace (2022)  
Bangabandhu's Vision: Relevance in the Context of 21st Century (2022)  
Climate Diplomacy: Constraints and Choices for Bangladesh (2022)  
Bangladesh-Portugal Relations Quest for Deeper Bilateral Cooperation (2022)  
Changing Global Order Securing Bangladesh's National Interest (2022)  
New Frontiers of Human Rights Climate Justice in Perspective (2022)  
Hybrid Seminar on Look Africa: Exploring New Horizons for Bangladesh (2022)  
Hybrid Seminar on Promoting Multilateral Cooperation to Prevent Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (2022)  
BIISS Research Colloquium 2022 (2022)  
Celebrating 50 Years of Bangladesh-Nepal Friendship: Shared Vision of Peace, Progress and Prosperity (2023)  
Roundtable Discussion with Senior Director Eileen Laubacher, Senior Director for South Asia, United States National Security Council (USNSC) (2023)  
Seminar on Gig Economy and Bangladesh: Opportunities, Challenges and Way Forward (2023)  
Evolving Strategic Scenario in the Bay of Bengal Region: Bangladesh Perspective (2023)  
Seminar on Contemporary Bangladesh: Security and Economic Perspectives (2023)  
International Seminar on Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook: Opportunities and Way Forward (2023)  
Roundtable Discussion on Bangladesh's Strategic Autonomy: Participation in International/Regional Organisations including BRICS (2024)  
Seminar on The Rohingya Crisis: Contemporary Security Dimensions and Future of Repatriation Process (2024)  
Roundtable Discussion on Strategic Autonomy of Bangladesh: Alternative Trading Arrangements (2024)  
Interactive Session on Rohingya: Repatriation Process (2024)  
Seminar on Global Economic Slowdown Bangladesh's Apparel Industry and Decent Work (2024)  
Proceedings on the Regional Workshop on Bluer, Greener and Inclusive Growth in the Sundarban through an Ecosystem-based Approach (2024)  
Seminar on Economic Diversification and Global Market: Bangladesh's Opportunities and Way Forward (2024)  
Book Launching Ceremony Bangladesh on a New Journey: Moving Beyond the Regional Identity (2024)  
Book Launching Seminar on Development-Human Security Nexus: A Study on Padma Bridge Resettlement Areas (2024)  
Defence Diplomacy: Strategy for Bangladesh (2024)  
Regional Seminar on Labour Migrants from South Asia: Issues and Concerns (2024)  
Seminar on Application on Carbon Financing: Challenges and Policy Options for Bangladesh (2024)  
Bangladesh's Climate Resilience and Financing: Challenges, Opportunities and Way Forward (2024)  
Proceedings 17th Edition of Country Lecture Series (CLS) 2024 Bangladesh-Malaysia Relations (2024)  
Seminar on Tourism for Attaining SDGs: Challenges and Prospects for Bangladesh (2024)  
Seminar on Bangladesh-China Relations: A Future Outlook (2024)  
Reconnecting the Bay of Bengal Region: Exploring the Convergence of Interests (2025)  
Global Climate Negotiations: Challenges and Priorities for Bangladesh (2025)

- **BIISS Country Lecture Series**  
**BIISS Country Lecture Series: Part- 1**  
**BIISS Country Lecture Series: Part- 2**





The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) is a statutory institution established in 1978 and affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh. BIISS Law-2013 mandates BIISS to undertake study, research, and dissemination and achieve excellence in all matters relating to international relations, national affairs, and state policy, including security, defence, foreign affairs, and international peace and security and its strategic aspects. The priority areas of the Institute's research activities are foreign policy, strategic studies, geopolitics and traditional and non-traditional security with specific relevance for Bangladesh; regional, inter-regional, and international cooperation; conflict studies; peacekeeping; disarmament; non-proliferation; and area studies.

BIISS assists the Government in planning, formulating and implementing policies in relevant fields. It functions as a forum for debate and deliberation by scholars, decision-makers, and members of various professional groups to achieve a greater public understanding of national, regional, and international issues and policies. BIISS promotes institutional and professional collaboration, particularly the exchange of information, views and materials with the agencies and scholars engaged in similar studies and research within and outside the country. BIISS holds regular meetings and arranges lectures, seminars and conferences to better understand relevant national and international issues in the abovementioned fields. Often, the deliberation made in these events and results from different studies get published as proceedings, books, periodicals, monographs, journal articles and reports by the Institute. BIISS Journal, the flagship publication of BIISS, is a peer-reviewed quarterly journal. BIISS Journal has been in publication since 1980, and it provides a forum for debate and discussion on international affairs, strategic studies, security and peace and conflict issues from national, regional and global perspectives.

The general guidance and superintendence of the Institute affairs are vested upon the Board of Governors, headed by a Chairman and consisting of representatives of ministries, armed forces, academics and professionals. The Director General is the Member-Secretary of the Board and the Institute's Chief Executive. The main activities of the Institute are carried out by the Research Faculty, which consists of a team of full-time researchers with varied backgrounds in social sciences.

### Mailing Address

1/46, Old Elephant Road (West of Ramna Police Station), Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.  
Fax: 88-02-48312625, [info@biiss.org](mailto:info@biiss.org), website: [www.biiss.org](http://www.biiss.org)