A linked democracy, peace and free trade is the guarantee of peace and cooperation. With the rise of middle class commercially and politically, war would come to an end. In the past, it was assumed that once people are liberated from the fear of violence, the world order would be replaced by what Thomas Jefferson termed “an aristocracy of talent and virtue” (Howard, p. 28: 2002).

Democracy and peace are empirically linked with each other. Democracy is a process in which people express their political will without resorting to violence. It encompasses human relationships in a peaceful manner. This results in political cooperation, which in turn brings amicable economic, political and social cohesion within a nation and a neighborhood.

For establishing principles of peace, Immanuel Kant is at the forefront. His philosophy stressed on strengthening democracy as vital as well as effective strategy to reduce the chances of war. However, is the relationship between peace and democracy linear? It has been witnessed that the democracies of the world- US, Britain, and France have resorted to the use of force in achieving their national objectives. At times, they have supported ruthless dictators. This means democracy strengthens peace under specific conditions. When people not only exercise their democratic right but also control policies of the government, they rein the plans of armed intervention.

The Enlightenment era philosophers reject old order of war. They preferred merchant class over aristocracy. In 1923, Emeric Cruce said that the peace needed a new social class within nations. He supported liberalization of trade. For him, expansion of commerce and trade would bring people closer to each other thereby resulting in reciprocal understanding and interdependence. As feudal worriers were the order pronouncers, this will reduce their power and result in an amicable polity (Howard, p. 20: 1978).

Montesquieu built his argument in similar tone with John Locke. He had a conviction that business leads to progression of a lawful society. Such a society is more peaceful, orderly and less violent. In 1748, he wrote, “Commerce is the cure for the most destructive prejudices” (Doyle, p.306: 1997). He also said, “the natural effect of commerce is to lead to peace. Two nations that trade together become mutually dependent: if one has an interest in buying, the other has an interest in selling; and all unions are based on mutual needs” (Quoted in Mansfield & Pollins, p. 03: 2003). With freedom of business, thought and governance, a society produces progress, prosperity and peace.

Thomas Paine was also an exponent of peace and democracy. He stated that with replacement of monarchies with democracy, war comes to an end. “A delegation of power for the common benefit …promotes a system of peace”, he urged (Quoted in Howard, p. 29: 1978).

A one day seminar titled: “Peace in Pakistan and South Asia: Desirable and Possible” was held at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Peshawar. Eminent scholars and speakers talked about regional trade, democracy, economy, environment, refugees and conflict linked with peace.

Dr Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, Director of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Peshawar said that a linked democracy, peace and free trade is the guarantee of peace and cooperation. With the rise of middle class commercially and politically, war would come to an end. He further said that democracy and peace are empirically linked with each other. Democracy is a process in which people express their political will without resorting to violence. It encompasses human relationships in a peaceful manner. This results in political cooperation, which in turn brings amicable economic, political and social cohesion within a nation and a neighborhood. He urged that it has been witnessed that the democracies of the world- US, Britain, and France have resorted to the use of force in achieving their national objectives. At times, they have supported ruthless dictators. This means democracy strengthens peace under specific conditions. However, Dr Soherwordi said that when people not only exercise their democratic right but also control policies of the government, they rein the plans of armed intervention. He sighted the examples of Pakistan’s trade with India and Afghanistan. Pak-India has almost nil trade but the smuggling (shadow economy) is more than $3 billion. Hence, both countries are hostile to each other. Similarly, he said that the soring relations between the two countries directly affect Pak-Afghan trade relations. Hence, the trade volume in the past i.e $3.5 billion has been reduced to S 1.5 billion. Such a reduction of trade contributed to war mongering elements in these countries.

Prof Dr Shah Jehan, Vice Chancellor, Iqra National University Peshawar gave a detailed view of climate refugees. People from the areas with no rain and water migrate to nurtured areas even for begging what to think of finding employment. He said that the conflict has different dimensions- philosophical, social, economic. Philosophical aspect of conflict is a constant struggle for a survival. Psychological dimension is the threat. Threat is a security from the fear, he said. Fear from nature, natural disaster, disease and want wants security. Social security wants the continuation of past glory. Every one is also confined to ethnocentricity, he further elaborated. The economic aspect is domination of markets. Every one is trying to encroach others markets and hence a conflict emerges. He cited US-China trade war as a latest example in this regard. In person, Dr Shah Jehan said that the there has always been a struggle between heart and mind. This produces stress not only at home, organization but also in office and in group. He spoke in detail about Conflict that takes place on three levels: Communal (Dispute Resolution Council); National (ethnic division) and International (wars between the nations).

Ms Sadia Mahboob, a recently returned Fulbright fellow from the American University Washington DC, spoke about war economy. She said that the war economy pumps more funds into the conflicts for their own profits. Thus sustainable peace is far from reality. Thus economics diminishes its importance and contributes to prolonging of a conflict. Collapse of markets and cost of security phenomenon increases hunger and want and reduces chances of peace. War costs social economic structure. In general peace, livelihood and social position of a society is directly affected which is a direct bearing of war economy. Peace and prosperity is inherently good and has an intrinsic value for the people. The solution of the problem prevailing around South Asia is development and trade, which include health and education. They are the reasons and the dividends of peace.

Dr Asif Khan , Assistant Professor at the Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Peshawar spoke on Peace and Environment. He said that the water crisis is related to peace and development process in the country. Peace is inherently linked with the environmental degradation in Pakistan. The government has allocated funds to generate water and energy by constructing two dams- Momand and Diamer-Bhasha. We are not able to attract enough funding to help us in addressing two important issues- Water storage and Power generation. He said that these dams will help to ensure power generation and these goals are in line with the sustainable development goals. Dr Khan further said that the problem of water scarcity’s root cause is climate change. Climate change and its impact on our livelihood and development such as greenhouse effect is ignored by our governments. Dr Asif said that only this year we have a national water policy, which is also in line with sustainable development goals. The need of the moment is the energy production- policy measures: on the use of indigenous renewable resources. Naturally renewable and reduce our imports of such resources such as fossil fuels. Coal is disastrous for the environment, so we need renewable energy sources. He favored construction of environmentally friendly dams because water resources facilitate peace building amongst the nations.