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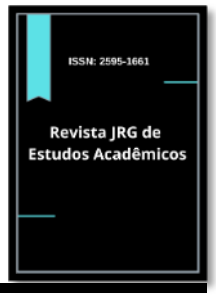

Peace and Prosperity: An Empirical Analysis Using GPI and GDP per Capita

Paz e Prosperidade: Uma Análise Empírica Utilizando o GPI e o PIB per Capita

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Abstract

This paper investigates the empirical relationship between national peacefulness and economic wealth using recent cross-sectional data. By combining Global Peace Index (GPI) scores for 2023 with GDP per capita figures from the World Bank for the same year, the study analyzes a stratified sample of thirty countries divided into three groups: the ten most peaceful, ten mid-ranked, and the ten least peaceful countries. Descriptive statistics, summary measures, and a scatter plot reveal a clear pattern indicating that higher levels of peacefulness are generally associated with higher national income. The Pearson correlation coefficient for the full sample is –0.7544, confirming a strong negative linear relationship between GPI scores and GDP per capita. Although outliers such as Portugal, Slovenia, the United Arab Emirates, and

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the United States illustrate that peace and prosperity do not always align perfectly, the overall trend remains robust. These findings reinforce the theoretical claim that peaceful environments promote economic development by reducing the costs associated with conflict and insecurity, enhancing governance, and attracting investment. The paper also highlights that peace alone is not sufficient: factors such as governance quality, resource endowments, and technological capacity shape how peace translates into wealth. The results offer valuable insights for policymakers, suggesting that promoting peacefulness should be integral to development strategies aimed at sustainable growth. Future research could build on this evidence by employing panel data to track peace–prosperity dynamics over time and by incorporating broader development metrics beyond GDP per capita.

Keywords: Global Peace Index; GDP per capita; peace economics; economic development; conflict and prosperity.

Resumo

Este artigo investiga a relação empírica entre a paz nacional e a riqueza econômica utilizando dados transversais recentes. Combinando as pontuações do Global Peace Index (GPI) de 2023 com os valores do PIB per capita do Banco Mundial para o mesmo ano, o estudo analisa uma amostra estratificada de trinta países divididos em três grupos: os dez mais pacíficos, os dez intermediários e os dez menos pacíficos. Estatísticas descritivas, medidas resumidas e um gráfico de dispersão revelam um padrão claro que indica que níveis mais elevados de paz estão geralmente associados a maiores rendas nacionais. O coeficiente de correlação de Pearson para a amostra total é –0,7544, confirmando uma forte relação linear negativa entre as pontuações do GPI e o PIB per capita. Embora outliers, como Portugal, Eslovênia, Emirados Árabes Unidos e Estados Unidos, ilustrem que paz e prosperidade nem sempre estão perfeitamente alinhadas, a tendência geral permanece robusta. Esses achados reforçam a tese teórica de que ambientes pacíficos promovem o desenvolvimento econômico ao reduzir os custos associados a conflitos e insegurança, melhorar a governança e atrair investimentos. O artigo também destaca que a paz, isoladamente, não é suficiente: fatores como qualidade da governança, dotação de recursos e capacidade tecnológica influenciam a forma como a paz se traduz em riqueza. Os resultados oferecem importantes insights para formuladores de políticas, sugerindo que a promoção da paz deve ser parte integrante das estratégias de desenvolvimento voltadas ao crescimento sustentável. Pesquisas futuras podem expandir essa evidência utilizando dados em painel para acompanhar a dinâmica paz–prosperidade ao longo do tempo, além de incorporar métricas de desenvolvimento mais amplas que vão além do PIB per capita.

Palavras-chave: *Índice Global da Paz; PIB per capita; economia da paz; desenvolvimento econômico; conflito e prosperidade.*

1. Introduction

National peacefulness has become an essential prerequisite for achieving long-term economic prosperity and sustainable development. In today's globalized and interdependent world, peace is not simply the absence of war but a multidimensional condition involving low levels of violence, strong governance, social cohesion, and resilient institutions (Institute for Economics and Peace [IEP], 2023). Countries that maintain high levels of peace typically have robust legal frameworks, effective property rights, inclusive institutions, and stable policies that create an environment conducive to economic activity and investment (Abadie & Gardeazabal, 2003).

The Global Peace Index (GPI), published each year by the IEP, is a widely recognized benchmark for measuring peacefulness at the national level. It covers more than 160 countries and territories, using a composite framework that combines three main domains: societal safety and security, the extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict, and the degree of militarization (IEP, 2023). The index has become a key reference for scholars, policymakers, and international organizations seeking to understand patterns of peace and violence and to develop strategies for conflict prevention and resolution.

At the same time, the concept of prosperity remains central in economics and development research. Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, reported in current US dollars, is one of the most common indicators used to estimate national wealth and average income levels (World Bank, 2024). While GDP per capita does not capture income inequality or all aspects of human wellbeing, it is a consistent and comparable metric for assessing the capacity of countries to generate goods and services for their populations (OECD, 2023).

Theoretical work and empirical studies have long suggested a connection between peace and economic development. Numerous researchers have documented the harmful effects of conflict, terrorism, and civil unrest on economic performance (Abadie & Gardeazabal, 2003). Violent conflicts can destroy infrastructure, reduce human capital through forced migration and casualties, disrupt production and trade, and divert public funds toward military expenditures instead of productive investments (Rohner & Thoenig, 2020)(Asere et al., 2024). In contrast, peaceful societies benefit from conditions that promote savings, investment, technological advancement, and efficient allocation of resources (IEP, 2023). Empirical evidence also shows that peace supports long-term productivity growth, lowers transaction costs, and attracts foreign direct investment by providing a predictable business environment (Collier, 1999).

However, despite these insights, there is still a clear need for more direct evidence of how national peacefulness and economic wealth relate when measured simultaneously across a broad range of countries. Much of the literature focuses on case studies of conflict-affected regions or uses longitudinal analyses that look at peace and growth over time within a single country or small group of countries (IEP, 2023). Few studies provide a global, cross-sectional snapshot that combines a robust peace index and official income data for a diverse sample of nations in a single reference year.

Filling this gap is important not only for academic understanding but also for informing policy. Demonstrating a clear link between peace and prosperity can help governments and international organizations design policies that prioritize conflict prevention, strengthen institutions, and allocate resources toward peacebuilding as a pathway to economic growth. According to the IEP (2023), even modest improvements in peacefulness could lead to significant economic benefits by reducing costs related to violence containment and freeing up funds for productive use.

This paper aims to contribute to the discussion by providing an original empirical analysis of the association between national peacefulness and GDP per capita using the most recent available data. The study uses the Global Peace Index scores for 2023 as a measure of peacefulness and matches them with GDP per capita (current US dollars) from the World Bank for the same year (World Bank, 2024). To capture variation across peace levels, the sample includes thirty countries divided into three groups: the ten most peaceful, ten countries from the middle of the GPI ranking, and the ten least peaceful countries in 2023.

The methodology combines descriptive statistics, graphical analysis through scatter plots, and correlation analysis to explore whether a pattern exists linking higher peacefulness scores with higher national income levels. By examining a cross-sectional sample with clear and transparent data sources, this research adds evidence to the peace economics literature and provides practical insights for policy and future research.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next section describes the dataset, country selection criteria, and analytical approach. The third section presents the results and discusses key observations, including any outliers and limitations of the findings. The final section offers conclusions and policy recommendations, highlighting how this evidence can support strategies for sustainable economic development through investment in peace and good governance.

2. Literature review

Understanding the intricate link between peacefulness and economic wealth requires situating the current empirical analysis within a robust theoretical and empirical context. This section synthesizes key strands of literature that have shaped the discourse on peace, conflict, governance, and economic development, while highlighting the main theories and findings that inform the present study.

2.1 The Nexus Between Peace and Economic Performance

The foundational idea that peace is essential for sustainable economic development dates back to Galtung's (1969) distinction between negative and positive peace, which underscored that societies flourish when structural violence and injustice are minimized. Building on this framework. Authors like Makdisi and Soto (2020) demonstrated that conflict imposes large economic costs, not only by destroying physical capital but also by deterring investment and reducing human capital accumulation. Abadie and Gardeazabal (2003) quantified these effects, showing that terrorism and political instability significantly lower regional GDP growth.

Blomberg, Hess, and Orphanides (2004) provided further macroeconomic evidence by documenting that terrorism and internal conflicts lead to contractions in consumption and investment, undermining long-term prosperity. Murdoch and Sandler (2002) similarly highlighted how civil wars have adverse spillover effects on neighboring countries, exacerbating regional economic instability. More recent empirical research confirms that peaceful contexts foster business confidence, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), and enable steady productivity growth (Schneider & Gleditsch, 2010)

2.2 Institutions, Governance, and Conflict Mitigation

The role of institutions in sustaining peace and facilitating economic growth is central in development economics. North (1990) emphasized that credible institutions reduce transaction costs, enforce contracts, and secure property rights, creating the predictability necessary for economic activity. Similarly, it has been argued that the type of political institutions in place deeply influences a country's economic development. Inclusive institutions, which encourage broad participation in governance and protect individual rights, tend to promote sustained growth. In contrast, extractive institutions concentrate power and resources in the hands of a few, leading to persistent inequality and increasing the likelihood of prolonged conflict and social instability (Acemoglu et al., 2001)

Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2009) empirically established that governance quality—measured by control of corruption, rule of law, and regulatory effectiveness—significantly predicts economic growth and social stability. Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) "greed and grievance" theory connects weak governance to resource exploitation and conflict onset. Mauro (1995) further argued that corruption reduces public investment efficiency, indirectly raising conflict risks.

Studies by Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Stewart (2002) expanded this perspective by showing that ethnic fractionalization and horizontal inequalities increase the likelihood of civil war, implying that promoting inclusive governance structures is central to conflict prevention.

2.3 The Resource Curse Debate

Resource wealth represents a paradox in the peace–development nexus. Sachs and Warner (1995) famously highlighted that natural resource abundance often correlates with slower economic growth—a phenomenon known as the resource curse. Humphreys (2005) argued that resource rents can fuel patronage networks, finance rebel groups, or incentivize rent-seeking behavior, thus increasing conflict risk.

However, recent evidence suggests that good governance can mitigate the resource curse. Hertog (2010) analyzed the UAE and Norway as examples of rentier states that successfully leveraged resource revenues for diversification and social stability. Karl's (1997) historical analysis similarly shows how petro-states that lack institutional checks tend to face recurring governance crises and conflict flare-ups. These insights underscore that resource wealth alone does not guarantee prosperity; it must be managed through robust institutions and inclusive policies.

2.4 Global Evidence on Peace, Institutions, and Development

Cross-country empirical studies provide broad support for the link between peace, institutional quality, and economic outcomes. Alesina et al. (1996) found that political instability significantly slows economic growth, while Easterly and Levine (2003) showed that poor institutional quality impedes technological adoption and capital accumulation. Dollar and Kraay (2003) confirmed that open trade regimes and strong institutions jointly drive growth, even in fragile states.

Recent research by Pinker (2011) illustrates the historical decline in violence and its relationship with rising human development indicators. Thomas (2021) reinforces this by demonstrating that countries with high peace indices tend to score better on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), suggesting that peace is intertwined with broader wellbeing metrics beyond GDP per capita.

Rodrik (2008) argues that institutional frameworks must adapt to local conditions, proposing that second-best institutions can be more effective than blindly transplanting best practices.

2.5 Methodological Approaches and Research Gaps

Methodologically, many studies have employed cross-sectional and panel data models to test peace–growth hypotheses (Baltagi, 2005). However, cross-sectional snapshots, like the approach adopted in this study, provide a clear but static picture. As Fearon and Laitin (2003) caution, temporal dynamics and endogeneity issues remain critical challenges for identifying causality.

Sen (1999) critiques the narrow focus on income-based measures of development, advocating for multidimensional frameworks that include education, health, and freedoms. This perspective implies that future empirical work should incorporate indicators such as the Human Development Index (HDI) and inequality metrics to fully understand how peacefulness shapes human welfare.

Despite these complexities, the empirical consensus remains that peace and good governance form the bedrock of sustained prosperity. As Stewart (2002) and Kaufmann et al. (2009) conclude, reducing structural inequalities and enhancing institutional performance are essential strategies for both conflict prevention and economic advancement.

The present study builds on this extensive body of work by providing updated cross-country evidence using recent data. By stratifying nations into peace-level tiers and quantifying the correlation with GDP per capita, it reinforces the broader narrative that peaceful societies enjoy significant economic dividends while acknowledging that peace interacts with multiple contextual factors.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate whether there is a statistically significant association between national peacefulness and economic wealth in the year 2023. The rationale for selecting a cross-sectional approach is to provide an updated snapshot of how countries differ in peace and prosperity levels within a single, comparable time frame. Such an approach complements previous longitudinal studies by offering fresh empirical evidence from the latest available data.

3.1 Data Sources

The two primary variables examined in this study are national peacefulness and GDP per capita. National peacefulness is measured using the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2023, which is produced annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). The IEP is an independent, non-profit think tank that specializes in analyzing the drivers and impacts of peace worldwide. The GPI is widely cited in academic research and policy reports due to its comprehensive framework that integrates both qualitative and quantitative indicators. These indicators include measures of perceived criminality, intensity of internal conflicts, political instability, relationships with neighboring countries, and levels of militarization, among others. The GPI scores were obtained directly from the *Vision of Humanity* data portal, which is the official online platform maintained by the IEP for publishing peace-related statistics and analytical reports.

Economic wealth is proxied by GDP per capita (current US dollars), one of the most common macroeconomic indicators used to represent the average income and economic output per person in a country. The GDP per capita figures were collected

from the World Bank Open Data portal, which is one of the most authoritative and up-to-date sources of macroeconomic statistics. The World Bank gathers these figures from national statistical offices and standardizes them to ensure cross-country comparability. Using the World Bank's dataset ensures that the income figures are aligned with internationally recognized accounting standards and reflect the most recent reporting for each country. All data were collected for the same reference year, **2023**, to ensure full temporal consistency between the peace and economic variables.

3.2 Sample Selection

The study uses a carefully stratified sample consisting of thirty countries to capture a broad spectrum of peacefulness and income levels. Specifically, three distinct groups were defined to facilitate comparative analysis. The first group comprises the ten countries ranked as the most peaceful according to the GPI 2023 scores. These countries typically exhibit very low levels of internal and external conflict, strong governance structures, and minimal military expenditures relative to their GDP. The second group includes ten countries selected from around the midpoint of the GPI ranking, providing a representative segment of nations with average levels of peace and security. The third group comprises the ten countries with the lowest peacefulness scores, which are characterized by high conflict intensity, political instability, or significant internal security challenges.

This tripartite grouping strategy is intended to maximize variation in the key variables and to allow robust comparative insights between nations at different points on the peace spectrum. The country selection within each group was based solely on official rankings and scores; no additional sampling criteria were applied.

3.3 Variables and Measures

The primary variables analyzed are the GPI score and GDP per capita (current US dollars). The GPI score is a continuous numerical variable where lower values indicate higher peacefulness. GDP per capita is also a continuous variable, reported in nominal US dollars, reflecting the market value of final goods and services produced per person in a given year. Both variables were treated without any transformation to preserve interpretability. No inflation adjustment was required since the GDP data are already reported in current prices.

3.4 Analytical Procedure

Descriptive statistics were first computed for each of the three groups as well as for the full sample to understand central tendencies and dispersion. Mean, median, standard deviation, and range were calculated for both variables. To visually inspect the potential relationship between peacefulness and economic wealth, a scatter plot was generated with GPI scores on the x-axis and GDP per capita on the y-axis. Each country was represented by a unique marker and color code, with an overlaid number that corresponds to its position in the accompanying country list. This design choice enhances readability and facilitates identification of outliers or clusters.

To formally assess the strength and direction of the linear relationship between peacefulness and prosperity, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. Pearson's r is suitable for examining the degree of linear association between two continuous variables when both are assumed to be approximately normally distributed in large samples. While this study uses a sample of thirty countries, the results provide an indicative measure of the degree to which higher peacefulness (lower GPI score) is associated with higher GDP per capita.

All statistical computations and visualizations were carried out using Python 3.12 with standard open-source packages such as pandas for data management, matplotlib for plotting, and scipy.stats for correlation analysis.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Results

Table 1 presents the Global Peace Index scores and corresponding GDP per capita values for the thirty selected countries, grouped by peace level (top ten, mid-ranked ten, and bottom ten). This compilation illustrates the range and variation across the sample.

Rank	Country	GPI Score	GDP per Capita (USD)
1	Iceland	1.091	79,637.0
2	New Zealand	1.287	48,280.8
3	Austria	1.291	56,033.6
4	Ireland	1.297	103,887.8
5	Denmark	1.316	68,453.9
6	Switzerland	1.329	99,564.7
7	Portugal	1.333	27,331.2
8	Slovenia	1.343	32,610.1
9	Singapore	1.358	84,734.3
10	Canada	1.368	53,431.2
75	Nepal	1.980	1,377.6
76	Malawi	1.981	602.3
77	Tanzania	1.990	1,224.5
78	United Arab Emirates	2.004	49,040.7
79	Jamaica	2.006	6,839.7
80	China	2.008	12,614.1
81	Equatorial Guinea	2.017	6,677.8
82	Tunisia	2.019	3,977.7
83	Uzbekistan	2.033	2,849.5
84	Kazakhstan	2.034	12,918.9
150	Burkina Faso	2.885	882.7
151	Central African Republic	2.901	496.0
152	Myanmar	2.947	1,233.2
153	Iraq	2.955	5,565.1
154	Mali	2.975	869.3
155	Somalia	3.038	597.5
156	Sudan	3.063	2,183.4
157	Ukraine	3.088	5,069.7
158	Syria	3.150	1,051.7
159	Yemen	3.200	477.4

Source: Vision of Humanity (IEP, 2023) and World Bank (2024), author's compilation.

4.2 Summary Statistics

Table 2 summarizes the average peacefulness and economic wealth for each group. The results show a clear trend: as peacefulness decreases (higher GPI scores), average GDP per capita also decreases sharply. This pattern provides preliminary evidence supporting a positive relationship between national peacefulness and economic prosperity.

Table 2. Summary Statistics of GPI Scores and GDP per Capita by Group, 2023

Group	Mean GPI	Std. Dev. GPI	Mean GDP per Capita (US$)	Std. Dev. GDP per Capita
Top 10 Peaceful Countries	1.3013	0.0788	65,396.46	26,421.44
Middle 10 Countries	2.0072	0.0193	9,812.28	14,480.91
Bottom 10 Countries	3.0202	0.1054	1,842.60	1,899.72

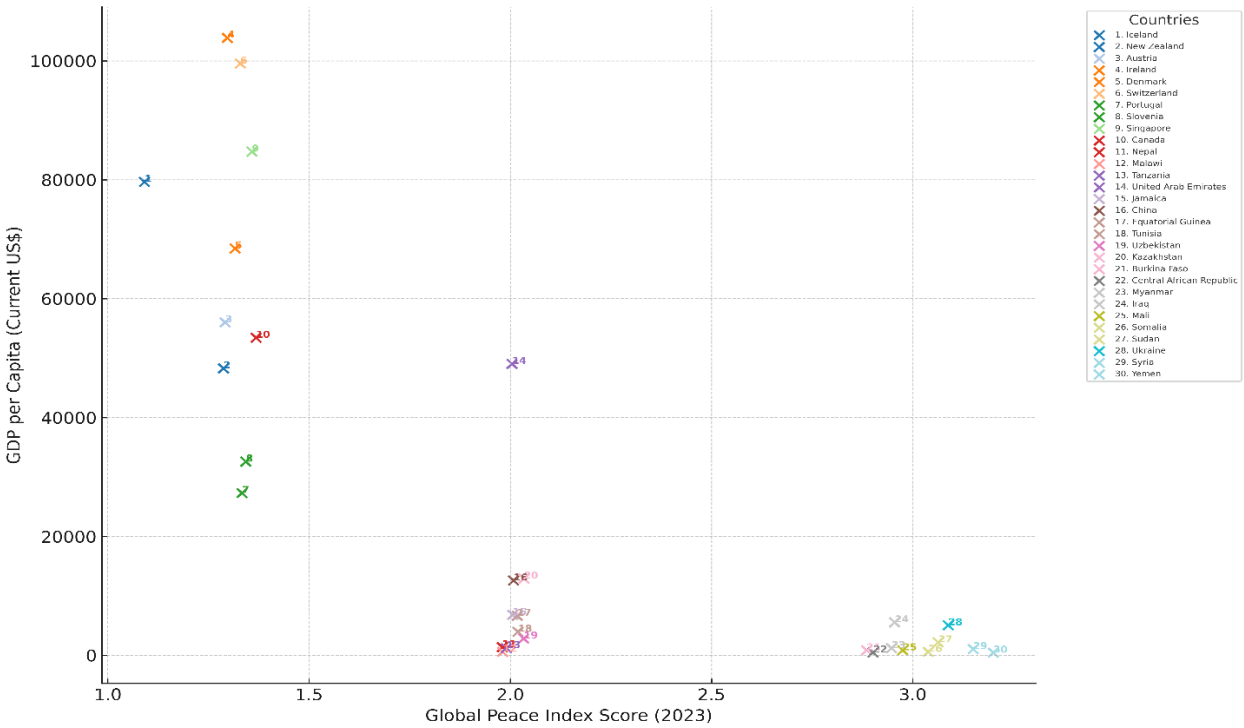
Source: Author's calculations based on data from Vision of Humanity (IEP, 2023) and World Bank (2024).

4.3 Correlation Analysis

To formally test the linear relationship between peacefulness and economic wealth, the Pearson correlation coefficient was computed for the full sample of thirty countries. The result shows a correlation of **r = –0.7544**, indicating a strong negative association: countries with lower GPI scores (higher levels of peace) tend to have significantly higher GDP per capita. Figure 1 visually represents this relationship, showing how most countries follow the expected downward trend.

While most countries align with the overall negative correlation, a few outliers such as Portugal and Slovenia display relatively high peacefulness but lower-than-expected income levels compared to other highly peaceful nations. Conversely, the United Arab Emirates appears as an exception with a mid-level peace score but significantly higher GDP per capita than other countries with similar peacefulness. For additional context, the United States, which was not included in the analyzed sample, has a GPI score of 2.39 and a GDP per capita of approximately 82,769.4 USD, illustrating that high income can coexist with moderate peacefulness. Despite these individual deviations, the general pattern confirms that higher peacefulness is generally associated with higher economic wealth.

Figure 1. Scatter plot showing the relationship between GPI scores and GDP per capita for the 30 countries. Each point represents one country.



Source: Author's compilation based on data from Vision of Humanity (IEP, 2023) and World Bank (2024).

5. Discussion

This study contributes to the literature on peace economics by providing updated cross-sectional evidence that higher levels of national peacefulness are generally associated with greater economic wealth, measured by GDP per capita. The empirical findings demonstrate a strong negative correlation (r = –0.7544) between the Global Peace Index (GPI) score and income levels among thirty countries representing diverse peace conditions. This observation aligns with prior theoretical and empirical studies emphasizing that peace creates the institutional and social conditions necessary for sustainable economic growth (Galtung, 1969; Kuznets, 1955; Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023).

The results support the long-standing argument that conflict and insecurity are significant barriers to development (Abadie & Gardeazabal, 2003; Stewart, 2002). Violent environments disrupt production, displace populations, destroy infrastructure, and deter both domestic and foreign investment (Murdoch & Sandler, 2002; Miguel et al., 2004). In contrast, peaceful contexts promote trust, allow efficient governance, and encourage the flow of capital and technology (Galtung, 1969; Kaufmann et al., 2009). The link between peace and prosperity is also reinforced by the empirical observation that fragile states are often characterized by chronic poverty and stagnant economic performance (Fearon & Laitin, 2003).

While the general trend is robust, the data reveal interesting deviations that highlight the nuanced nature of this relationship. For instance, Portugal and Slovenia are highly peaceful but have lower GDP per capita compared to other top-ranking peaceful nations such as Ireland or Switzerland. Such discrepancies can be explained

by factors including industrial composition, historical economic legacies, and levels of innovation and trade openness (Rodrik, 2008; Sachs & Warner, 1995). Conversely, the United Arab Emirates stands out with a mid-range peace score but a significantly high GDP per capita due to its hydrocarbon wealth and aggressive diversification strategies (Hertog, 2010).

A relevant point of reference is the United States, which, though not included in the selected sample, illustrates that high income can coexist with only moderate peacefulness. The United States has a GPI score of 2.39 and a GDP per capita of approximately 82,769.4 USD (World Bank, 2024; IEP, 2023), underlining that factors such as technological leadership, global reserve currency status, and geopolitical influence can sustain prosperity despite certain internal and external security challenges.

These exceptions confirm that while peace is a critical driver, it interacts with a complex set of factors such as institutional quality, education, resource management, and integration into global markets (Kaufmann et al., 2009; Rodrik, 2008).

Furthermore, the relationship between peace and prosperity materializes through specific channels that extend beyond the mere absence of conflict. One such channel is a country's ability to develop high-quality infrastructure, which reduces trade costs and enhances global connectivity. In fact, a cross-sectional analysis of 2023 data showed a strong, statistically significant positive correlation between a country's Logistics Performance Index (LPI) infrastructure score and its export volumes, even after controlling for the effect of GDP (Yacoubian & Merdinian, 2025). The study includes countries also treated in this paper. This reinforces the idea that a stable environment, capable of attracting long-term investment in port, road, and multimodal systems, gains a fundamental competitive advantage for its integration into the global economy (Yacoubian & Merdinian, 2025).

Moreover, institutional quality and the perception of sovereign risk can become more decisive than other economic factors, explaining why a country's wealth may deviate from global trends. A study on the stock performance of YPF, Argentina's primary oil company, found that its valuation on the New York Stock Exchange was influenced more by domestic factors, such as sovereign risk, political uncertainty, and international litigation, than by fluctuations in global Brent crude oil prices (Yacoubian et al., 2024). This finding underscores how institutional fragility and macroeconomic instability, common features in less peaceful nations, profoundly affect investor confidence and asset valuation, regardless of a country's natural resource endowments (Yacoubian et al., 2024).

Scholars have long debated that economic outcomes are shaped by the interplay of governance, geography, and social capital (North, 1990; Sachs & Warner, 1995).

This cross-sectional approach, though insightful, has limitations. First, the reliance on a single year's data does not capture temporal dynamics or causality. Longitudinal analyses would better illuminate how changes in peacefulness affect economic trends over time (Miguel et al., 2004). Second, GDP per capita, while widely accepted, does not fully account for income distribution or other aspects of human welfare such as education and health (Sen, 1999).

Additionally, the sample size, though carefully stratified, covers only thirty countries out of over 160 included in the GPI and World Bank datasets. Future studies could benefit from larger samples and more sophisticated econometric techniques, such as panel data methods, to control for unobserved heterogeneity (Baltagi, 2005).

Despite these constraints, the policy implications are clear. The robust negative correlation reinforces the argument that investing in peacebuilding and conflict prevention has substantial economic returns (IEP, 2023; Kaufmann et al., 2009). Policymakers should prioritize inclusive governance, social cohesion, and institutional resilience as key pillars to sustain both peace and prosperity.

Future research could expand on this study by incorporating multidimensional indicators of development, such as the Human Development Index or measures of inequality, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how peacefulness interacts with broader welfare dimensions (Sen, 1999; Rodrik, 2008).

In conclusion, this study confirms that while the peace–prosperity link is not absolute, peaceful environments provide a strong foundation for economic growth and human development. The results support both theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence that stress the vital role of stable institutions and social harmony in sustaining economic success.

6. Conclusion

This study provides new empirical evidence reinforcing the long-held premise that national peacefulness and economic wealth are closely intertwined. By analyzing thirty countries stratified by their Global Peace Index scores and corresponding GDP per capita for the year 2023, this research confirms a strong negative linear relationship: nations with higher levels of peace tend to enjoy significantly higher average income levels. Despite notable exceptions—such as Portugal, Slovenia, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States—the overall pattern remains robust, supporting the notion that peace serves as a vital enabler of sustained economic development.

The clear gradient observed across the three peace groups illustrates that societies investing in security, social cohesion, and institutional stability often reap substantial economic dividends. In peaceful environments, businesses operate with lower transaction costs, communities benefit from secure property rights, and governments can allocate more resources toward productive investments rather than conflict containment or military spending. These benefits, in turn, foster a virtuous cycle in which economic growth further reinforces social stability and peace, as noted in prior development literature

Importantly, while peace is a crucial pillar of prosperity, it does not act in isolation. The findings highlight that additional factors—including resource endowments, innovation capacity, trade integration, and governance quality—modulate how effectively a country converts peacefulness into economic wealth. This explains why some highly peaceful countries still face income constraints, and why certain moderately peaceful nations maintain high living standards through alternative pathways such as resource wealth or global economic influence.

The insights drawn from this study carry practical implications for policymakers and international development practitioners. Strengthening peaceful conditions should be viewed not merely as a social or moral goal but as a sound economic strategy. Governments and development partners are encouraged to prioritize conflict prevention, inclusive governance, and institution-building as integral parts of national development plans. Doing so can lay the groundwork for long-term prosperity and resilience in the face of global shocks.

Future research should expand on this cross-sectional snapshot by exploring longitudinal trends, employing panel data techniques, and incorporating broader development indicators beyond GDP per capita. By doing so, scholars can deepen

understanding of how peace interacts with other drivers of human wellbeing and help craft policies that harness peace as a catalyst for equitable and sustainable growth.

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Conflict of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability
The data used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. The GDP per capita figures are sourced from the World Bank Open Data portal (2024), and the Global Peace Index scores are available from the Vision of Humanity website (IEP, 2023).

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