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Explanatory Factors of Bank Performance in Tunisia: A Panel Model Approach

By Ines Ghazouani Ben Ameer & Sonia Moussa Mhiri

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Abstract - Using the GMM estimator technique described by Blundell and Bond (1998), this paper tend to identify factors explaining Tunisian bank performance. Retaining the main 10 commercial Tunisian banks during the 1998 to 2011 period, we look at whether, for banks operating in similar macro-economic and financial structure environments, one can make judgments concerning the success of their competitive strategies and other managerial procedure by using different profitability measures. Our investigation includes bank-specific as well as industry-specific and macroeconomic factors affecting bank performance.

The empirical results reveal a high degree of persistence of bank performance. By the other hand, our findings suggest that the bank capitalization, as well as the best managerial efficiency, have a positive and significant effect on the bank performance. Private owned banks seem to be more profitable than state owned ones.

Keywords : *performance, banking industry, macroeconomic, gmm system, tunisia.*

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Explanatory Factors of Bank Performance in Tunisia: A Panel Model Approach

Ines Ghazouani Ben Ameur ^α & Sonia Moussa Mhiri ^σ

Abstract - Using the GMM estimator technique described by Blundell and Bond (1998), this paper tend to identify factors explaining Tunisian bank performance. Retaining the main 10 commercial Tunisian banks during the 1998 to 2011 period, we look at whether, for banks operating in similar macro-economic and financial structure environments, one can make judgments concerning the success of their competitive strategies and other managerial procedure by using different profitability measures. Our investigation includes bank-specific as well as industry-specific and macroeconomic factors affecting bank performance.

The empirical results reveal a high degree of persistence of bank performance. By the other hand, our findings suggest that the bank capitalization, as well as the best managerial efficiency, have a positive and significant effect on the bank performance. Private owned banks seem to be more profitable than state owned ones. That's why, privatizing state-owned Tunisian banks is recommended in order to improve their performance. Industry-specific factors, as the concentration and that of the system bank size have a negative and a significant effect on performance. As for the impact of the macroeconomic indicators, we conclude overall that the variables do not have a significant effect on bank performance. However inflation seems to affect negatively bank's net interest margin.

Keywords : performance, banking industry, macro-economic, gmm system, tunisia.

I. INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades the worldwide financial sector has experienced most important changes. These changes have affected its structure and performance. In front of these international transformations and under the auspice of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Tunisian financial sector has undergone major financial reforms since 1980. However, despite the increased trend toward bank disintermediation undertaken in Tunisia, the role of banks remains fundamental in financing economic activity in general and different sectors of the market in particular. Restructuring of the Tunisian banking system was intended to enhance competition in the banking sector and lead to a more efficient allocation of resources.

The determinants of bank performance have attracted the interest of academic research as well as

of bank management, financial markets and bank supervisors. While several studies on bank performance have been conducted widely for US and European markets and, to lesser extent, for large emerging markets us Brazil, China, and others, relatively little is known about bank performance among other developing countries as Tunisia. The first group of studies were carried out by Short (1979), Bourque (1989), Molyneux and Thornton (1992) and Demircuc-Kunt and Huizinga, (1999, 2001), who focused mainly on bank performance of US and European banks. More recently, the same purposes were undertaken for some emerging countries, such as Colombia (Barajas et al., 1999), Brasil (Afanasieff et al., 2002), Malaysia (Guru et al., 2002).

Added to that, the majority of investigations on bank profitability, such as Short (1979), Bourke (1989), Molyneux and Thornton (1992), Demircuc-Kunt and Huizinga (2000) and Goddard et al. (2004), use linear models to estimate the impact of various factors that may explain profits. However, some issues are not dealt with sufficiently. First, the literature principally considers determinants with the selection of variables sometimes lacking internal consistency (e.g. credit risk). Second, the econometric methodology held by major previous research, does not account for some features of bank profits (e.g. persistence), which implies that the findings may be biased and inconsistent.

The purpose of this paper is to empirically assess the main explanatory factors that might affect the banks performance in Tunisia. In this way we examine whether, for banks operating in similar macroeconomic and financial development environments, one can make judgments concerning the success of their competitive strategies and other managerial procedure by using different profitability measures. This paper investigates, in a single regression, the effect of bank-specific, industry specific and macroeconomic factors on Tunisian's bank performance. Added to that it consider several regressions with different measures of the bank performance; Return on Assets, Return on Equity, and Net Interest Margin. In view of the findings, we should be able to draw some policy implications that may be useful for bank management, shareholders, and policymakers in Tunisia.

To that end, we use data from the 10 conventional commercial banks on the longest relevant period (from 1998 to 2011). To account for performance

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persistence and potential endogeneity problems, we apply a dynamic panel data estimation approach, and address these problems by employing the generalized method of moments (GMM), following Blundell and Bond (1998), also known as GMM system estimator.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 presents a review of the relevant literature regarding the explanatory factors of bank performance. Section 3 describes data, defines variables, and exposes model specification and estimation methodology. Section 4 provides the findings and major results. We conclude in Section 5.

II. EXPLANATORY FACTORS OF BANK PERFORMANCE: LITERATURE REVIEW

An extensive body of literature have examined the explanatory factors of banks' performance in many countries around the world. While some studies focus on the understanding of bank performance in a particular and single country (Berger et al. (1987), Berger (1995), Neely and Wheelock (1997), Mamatzakis and Remoundos (2003), Ben Naceur and Goaid (2008), Athanasoglou et al. (2008) and García-Herrero et al. (2009)), others concentrate their studies on a panel of countries; Short (1979), Bourke (1989), Molyneux and Thornton (1992), Demirgüç-Kunt and Huizinga (1999), Abreu and Mendes (2002), Staikouras and Wood (2004), Goddard et al. (2004), Athanasoglou et al. (2006), Micco et al. (2007) and Pasiouras and Kosmidou (2007).

All of the above studies examine combinations of three categories of factors effecting on bank performance, namely bank-specific, industry-specific, and macroeconomic factors. The empirical results vary significantly, since both data sets and environments differ. There exist, however, some common elements that allow a further categorization of the explanatory factors. Molyneux and Thornton (1992) is one of the first works who nicely illustrated this approach by investigating bank profitability of 18 European countries over the period 1986–1989. Demirgüç-Kunt and Huizinga (1999) underlined the internal and external determinants of profitability for banks of 80 countries over the period 1988–1995. Most researchers have measured performance using either Return on Equity (ROE) or Return on Assets (ROA). The major studies dealing with micro-specific factors employ variables such as size, risk, capital adequacy and operational efficiency.

The bank size is generally introduced to account for existing economies of scale in the market banking. The relationship between size and profitability is an important part of the firm's theory. Since larger banks are more capable to realize economies of scale and reduce the cost of gathering and processing information (Demirgüç-Kunt and Huizinga (1999), Toni Uhomobhi, (2008), Dietrich and Wanzenried (2011), the

bank size should be positively associated with its performance. However, extremely large banks might illustrate a negative relationship between size and profitability. This is due to agency costs, the overhead of bureaucratic processes, and other costs related to managing large firms (e.g. Stiroh and Rumble, 2006; Pasiouras and Kosmidou, 2007).

Smirlock (1985) find a positive and significant relationship between size and bank profitability. More recently, Pasiouras and Kosmidou (2007) report the same result and argue that larger banks might have a higher degree of production and loans diversification than smaller ones. Other studies suggest that small cost saving can be achieved by increasing the size of a banking firm (Berger et al., 1987). Ayadi and Boujelbene (2012) in their banking performance study of twelve Tunisian deposit banks over the period of 1995-2005, notice a significant positive relation between size and Return on Average Assets proving the existence of economies of scale in the Tunisian banking sector. On the contrary, Ben Naceur, and Goaid (2010), show that size impact negatively on profitability which involves that Tunisian banks operating above their optimum level. Similarly, Sinkey (1991) concludes that larger banks are more profitable than smaller ones. So, the impact of bank size on its profitability cannot be theoretically anticipated.

Given by the international prudential regulation, capital ratio was considered as an important tool for assessing capital adequacy and should capture the general safety and soundness of banks. Consequently, highly capitalized banks might reduce their funding costs, which affect positively their profitability. By the other hand, highly capitalized banks usually have a reduced need to external funds, which has again a positive effect on their profitability. However, if we consider the conventional risk-return hypothesis, we have to expect banks with lower capital ratios to have higher returns in comparison to better-capitalized financial institutions. Bourke (1989) report a positive and significant relationship between capital adequacy and profitability. He concluded that the higher the capital ratio is, the more the bank's profitability is. Kosmidou et al., (2005) confirm a positive and highly significant relationship between the equity ratio to total assets and profitability, measured by Net Interest Margin (NIM). Thus, banks are seeking to slight the cost of their relatively high capital ratios by requiring higher NIM. In this vein, Molyneux and Thornton (1992) confirm the positive relationship but in only state-owned banks. Recently, Chien-Chiang Lee and Meng-Fen Hsieh (2013) examine the impacts of bank capital on profitability and risk for 42 Asian countries over the period 1994 to 2008. Their results point out a positive and significant relationship between capital adequacy and performance (proxied by ROA, NIM, and Net Result) for overall Asian banking system. However, Dietrich and

Wanzenried (2011), find no significant effect of capital ratio on bank profitability before the crisis in Switzerland. Nevertheless, it has a negative and significant impact on bank's profitability as measured by Return on Average Assets during the financial crisis 2007–2009. Again, anticipating the net impact of changes in this ratio is complex.

While some studies considered the overall bank risk as a determinant of their performance, other studies focus on one particular and major risk affecting bank profit, such as the credit risk. In the literature on bank profitability, the bank loans over total assets ratio is mainly used as a proxy for credit risk when data do not permit the calculation of the non performing loans (Maudos and De Guevara, 2004). Delis Dietrich, and Wanzenried (2011) was the first study approximating credit risk or credit quality by the Loan loss provisions over total loans ratio. Bourke (1989) and Molyneux and Thornton (1992), among others show that the level of credit risk tend to be negatively associated with bank's profitability. Miller and Noulas (1997) suggest a negative relationship between credit risk and profitability because a higher loan to asset ratio increases the exposure of banks to bad loans and hence lowers profit margins. This result might reflect the fact that the higher the loans-to-assets ratio (as a proxy for credit risk) is, the more financial institutions are exposed to high-risk loans and by far the greater accumulation of nonperforming loans will be. However, Kosmidou et al. (2005) and Fernandez (2007) provide the evidence that credit risk affect positively the bank profitability.

In addition, many researchers include operational efficiency as a specific-bank factor affecting their profitability. Theoretically more operational efficient bank is expected to be more profitable. However, measured by the cost-income ratio or by overhead costs to total assets ratio, some empirical literature found a negative relationship between operational efficiency and bank's profitability (Athanasoglou et al., 2008; Goddard et al., 2009). Others authors, show a positive relationship between profitability and expenses. Molyneux and Thornton (1992) provide the evidence that bank's expenses affect positively the European banking profitability. Their results defend the efficiency wage theory, which states that employee's productivity increases with the wage's rate. Similarly, Guru et al. (2002) and Ben Naceur (2003), suggest that banks are able to pass their overheads to depositors and borrowers in terms of lower deposit rates and/or larger lending assets. Nevertheless, Ben Naceur and Omra (2011) on MENA countries, find the opposite results when they consider the total operating costs divided by the sum of total earning assets and total deposits as a proxy of operational efficiency.

A further bank-specific variable is the ownership of a bank. According to Micco et al. (2007), in developing countries, state-owned banks tend to have a

less profitability, less important margins, and higher overhead costs than privately owned banks. Barth et al. (2004) and Iannotta et al. (2007) report a similar result; government ownership of banks is negatively related to bank efficiency. On the contrary, the results of Bourke (1989), Molyneux and Thornton (1992) suggest that ownership type is irrelevant for explaining profitability. Authors find a little evidence to support the theory that state-owned banks are less profitable than privately owned ones. However, we can notice that ownership structure is always measured in empirical literature by a dummy variable that take a value of one if bank is publicly owned and Zero otherwise.

Concerning the industry specific variables, empirical literature underline the market concentration, the ownership statue, the financial market development and the size of bank system among others as variables affecting bank profitability. Smirlock (1985), Bourke (1989) and Staikouras and Wood (2003) provide evidence that industry concentration has a positive impact on banking performance. They show that high concentrated bank system allows to a large monopolistic power of firms, and then improve profit margins of banks. Similarly, Bourke (1989) and Molyneux and Thornton (1992), find a positive and significant relationship between bank concentration ratio and bank's profitability. Thus, they confirm the structure–conduct–performance hypothesis which stipulates that higher market power submit monopoly profits. However, BenNaceur (2003) and Staikouras and Wood (2004), among others, conclude that an inverse relation exists between concentration and bank profitability.

Regarding to the bank size system, Demerguç-Kunt and Huizingha (1999) provide the evidence that small size bank system allow to high margins and profits, when they explore the bank profitability of 80 countries over the 1988-1995 period. In further study, using a larger sample of developed and developing countries over the period 1990-1997, Demerguç-Kunt and Huizingha (2001), investigate whether financial structure plays a key role in determining banking performance. They conclude that the less profitable banks are those operating in high developed bank system. This means that more competitiveness bank sectors, where bank asset-to-GDP ratio is high, allow for lower margins and less profitability. As well, BenNaceur (2003), reports that the growth of bank system does not necessary contribute to improve profitability of the banking sector in Tunisia. From their part, Eichengreen and Gibson (2001) investigate market-specific profitability determinants in Greek over the 1993–1998 period. They find, that concentration ratios and market shares, as market-specific variables, reveal positive but not significant effect on profitability proxies.

The last category of bank's factors affecting bank performance deals with macroeconomic environment. Those external factors cannot be controlled by

bank's managerial power. They just reveal the economic and legal environments within banks operate and that might affect their procedure and then their performance. Among a number of macroeconomic variables, the growth of the gross domestic product, the long-term interest rate, and inflation are often held in previous literature.

According to the literature on the association between economic growth and financial sector profitability (e.g. Demircuc-Kunt and Huizinga, (1999); Bikker and Hu, (2002); Kosmidou and al., (2005), Pasiouras and Kosmidou, (2007) and Athanasoglou et al., (2008), GDP growth affect positively bank's profitability. However, Ben Naceur and Goaid, (2005) suggest that GDP growth does not tell any characteristic of the banking regulation and the advanced technology in the banking sector. By the other side, Staikouras and Wood (2003) find two of their three macroeconomic indicators, the variability of interest rate and the growth of GDP, have a negative impact, while the level of interest rate have a positive effect on bank performance.

Association between inflation and bank's profitability is ambiguous. Revell (1979) initiates the question of the relationship between bank performance and inflation. He highlights the fact that inflation's effect on bank profitability depends on whether banks' wages and other operating expenses increase at a similar rate than inflation. In this vein, Perry (1992) suggests that the extent to which inflation affects bank profitability depends on whether inflation expectations are fully anticipated. So, if inflation rate is appropriately anticipated by the bank's management, banks may be able to appropriately adjust interest rates, and thus increase their revenues faster than their costs, acquiring higher profits.

A large number of studies (e.g. Bourke, 1989; Molyneux and Thornton, 1992; Guru et al. (2002) and Jiang et al. (2003), although different, have revealed a positive relationship between inflation and profitability. However, Abreu and Mendes (2000), point out a negative relationship between the inflation rate and bank's profitability in European countries. Likewise Ayadi and Boujelbene (2012), report a negative effect of inflation on Tunisian bank profitability over the 1995-2005 period. In the same way, Demircuc-Kunt and Huizinga (1999) suggest that banks with high capital ratio in developing countries tend to be less profitable in inflationary environments.

III. DATA, VARIABLES AND MODEL SPECIFICATION

This section identifies the sources of our data, presents the data itself, describes the regression model we use to investigate the effects of bank specific, industry-specific and macroeconomic factors on bank profitability and summarizes the empirical results for

our profitability measures. The empirical study on determinants of bank's performance can suffer from two sources of inconsistency: highly persistent profit and endogeneity bias (Poghosyan and Hesse, 2009). To correct for these potential problems, we adopt the dynamic panel model in our empirical analysis.

a) Data

To examine factors explaining bank profitability in Tunisia, we collected data related to the main deposit banks in Tunisia (10 banks) over the period 1998-2011. Micro data used in the empirical work is collected from annual reports of each selected banks. Only for non performing loans variable who's sourced from the Central Bank of Tunisia. The financial structure and macroeconomic indicators were extracted World Bank Development Indicators database. It consists of 14 years of observation on 10 banks. As all the banks in our sample are observed for the entire period, we will use in our empirical work balanced panel data. The quality of accounting in Tunisia has improved since the adoption of the new accounting reforms in 1997.

b) Variables Definition

We proxy the bank performance (BPer) by different measures commonly used in literature. We compute three standard measures of profitability for each bank throughout the period under study on the basis of annual accounting data; Both the Return on Assets (ROA), the Return on Equity (ROE), and Net Interest Margin (NIM) are considered in alternative specifications.

The first measure (ROA) reflects the ability of a bank's management to generate profits from the bank assets. As Golin (2001) points out, the ROA has emerged as the key ratio for the evaluation of bank profitability and has become the most common measure of bank profitability in the empirical literature. The ROA is defined as the ratio of net profits to total assets.

The second (ROE) reflects the return earned on the funds invested in the bank by its stockholders. ROE, on the other hand, reflects how effectively a bank management is using shareholders' funds. The ROE is defined as the ratio of net profits to total equity. Although many authors use the ROE to evaluate bank's performance, one may think that it is not the best indicator of profitability. Dietrich and Wanzenried (2011) suggest that banks with a lower leverage ratio (higher equity) usually report a higher ROA but a lower ROE. However, the ROE disregards the higher risk that is associated with a high leverage and the effect of regulation on leverage.

Finally, the NIM variable focuses on the profit earned on interest activities. It is defined as the net interest income divided by total assets. As a measure of the return on assets, the net interest margin has been used in many studies of bank performance. While the

ROA measures the profit earned on assets and reflects how well bank management uses the bank's real investment resources, the NIM focuses on the profit earned on lending, investing and funding activities.

Thus, in our analyses, we consider the ROA and NIM as the better-quality measures of bank's profitability and use them as the main dependent variables, although we also report the results for the ROE.

We attempt to examine the bank's profitability impact of an extended number of factors with distinguishes internal determinants of bank's profitability to external ones. The internal factors include bank-specific factors (size, capital ratio, credit quality, operational efficiency, bank deposit growth and ownership). The external ones reflect environmental variables that are expected to affect the profitability of financial institutions. External factors include both industry-specific variables (Concentration and size bank system) and macroeconomic (GDP Growth and inflation).

i. *Bank's Specific Factors*

Size (Size): is measured by the natural log of the book value of total assets as a percentage. The impact of bank size on its profitability cannot be theoretically anticipated.

Capital Adequacy (CAPAD): reflect the bank risk taking along with international prudential regulation. Capital adequacy is defined as the ratio of book value of equity to total assets. Large size of equity is expected to reduce the bank risk.

Nonperforming Loans (NPL): reflect bank's credit quality and it is measured by the proportion of nonperforming loans in total bank loans.

Cost-Income Ratio (CIR): reflect bank's operational efficiency and it is computed by total operating expenses (the sum of salaries and other operating expenses) over total generated revenues. More operational efficient bank is expected to be more profitable.

Growth Deposit (GDEP): reflect bank's growth and it is measured by the annual growth of the sum of its institutional and clientele deposits. Dietrich and Wanzenried (2011) suggest that the effect of this variable on profitability cannot be theoretically anticipated: One might anticipate that a faster growing bank would be able to increase its business and thus generate greater profits. But, the contribution of

increasing deposits to profits depends upon a number of factors. The bad credit quality of those assets and bank's operating inefficiency might inverse the positive effect of deposit growth. Therefore, anticipating the sign of this variable is complex.

Ownership (OWN): measured by the percentage of bank equity hold by private sector, we use this variable to test whether privatization of banks promote their profitability.

ii. *Industry-Specific Factors*

Concentration (CONC): reflect the competitiveness among bank sector is measured by bank assets held by the three largest banks to total assets banks.

Size Bank System (SBS): reflect the importance of bank financing in the economy and it is measured by the ratio of total assets of banks to GDP.

iii. *Macroeconomic Factors*

GDP growth (GDP): this variable is used to account for economic environment and it is measured by reel GDP per capita growth. GDP growth varies over time but not among the banks.

Inflation (INF): This variable is used to represent the changes in the general price level or inflationary conditions in the economy and it is measured by annual country inflation rate.

c) *Model Specification and Estimation Methodology*

In order to check the bank-specific, industry-specific and macroeconomic factors affecting the Tunisian bank's profitability, we develop the following regression:

$$BPer_{it} = \alpha_0 + \beta_{it}X_{it} + \sigma_{it}Y_{it} + \delta_{it}Z_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Where:

- i refers to an individual bank,
- t refers to the year,
- B Per is the dependent variable referring to the profitability measured by ROA, ROE and NIM,
- X is a vector of the individual-specific factors of a bank,
- Y is a vector of the industrial-specific factors,
- Z is a vector of the macroeconomic factors.

The complete model is then:

$$BPer_{i,t} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 BPer_{i,t-1} + \alpha_2 SIZE_{i,t} + \alpha_3 CAPAD_{i,t-1} + \alpha_4 NPL_{i,t} + \alpha_5 CIR_{i,t} + \alpha_6 GDEP_{i,t} + \alpha_7 OWN_{i,t} + \alpha_8 CONC_{i,t} + \alpha_9 SBS_{i,t} + \alpha_{10} GDP_{i,t} + \alpha_{11} INF_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (1)$$

Given the dynamic nature of our model, least squares estimation methods are biased and inconsistent (Baltagi, 2001). Then, we have to use techniques for dynamic panel estimation that are able to deal with the biases and inconsistencies of our estimates. Further,

estimation of bank profitability refers to the endogeneity problem. According to García-Herrero et al. (2009), more profitable banks, may be able to increase their equity more easily by retaining profits. Similarly, they could also pay more for advertising campaigns and

increase their size, which in turn might affect profitability. However, the causality could also go in the opposite direction, because more profitable banks can hire more personnel, and thus reduce their operational efficiency. Another important problem is unobservable heterogeneity across banks, which might exist in the Tunisian banking industry.

To study the empirical determinants of Tunisian banks performance, we will follow the study of García-Herrero et al. (2009), and address these problems by employing the generalized method of moments (GMM), following Blundell and Bond (1998), also known as GMM system estimator.

This last methodology retains a system of two equations-the original equation as well as the transformed one-. The Arellano and Bond test for autocorrelation has a null hypothesis of no autocorrelation and is applied to the differenced residuals. The test for AR (2) in first differences is more important, because it detects autocorrelation in terms of levels. The

validity of the instrumental variables is tested using Sargan test of over-identifying restrictions and over a test of the absence of serial correlation of the residuals. As our data contain a small number of banks, we use the method one-step GMM-in-System estimator. All in all, this estimator yields consistent estimations of the parameters.

IV. FINDINGS AND MAJOR RESULTS

This section provides empirical evidence on the determinants of bank profitability in the Tunisian Banking industry. We introduce summary statistics for all variables in Table 1. A broad description of the characteristics of the variables used in the study is given in Table 1, which reports their statistical means, standard deviation, minimal and maximal level. The correlation matrix for the independent variables can be found in Table 2. Next, we report the results of all the return on asset, return on equity and net interest margin regressions, respectively in column 2, 3 and 4.

Table 1 : Descriptive statistics for variables

Variables	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
ROA	140	0.8070952	1.342196	-10.31148	2.912641
ROE	140	315.1361	2058.555	-176.478	17000
NIM	140	2.897413	1.163921	0.7681571	7.319218
Size	140	21.61731	.5610169	20.45424	22.69988
CAPAD	140	9.349399	3.048374	-1.094332	17.48179
NPL	140	21.98929	18.07802	5.2	98
CIR	140	49.71864	11.86809	24.57	84.8
GDEP	140	818.0655	9194.508	-11.63083	104845.1
OWN	140	81.0521	23.08661	31.65	100
CONC	140	45.74847	1.521739	42.74229	47.4283
SBS	140	65.24694	5.157415	55.99841	76.53999
GDP	140	3.056032	2.113941	-2.947252	5.249388
INF	140	3.301598	.8538632	1.983333	4.920696

According to the descriptive statistics reported in Table 1, Tunisian banks have a ROA of 0.80% over the entire period from 1998 to 2011. The difference between Min and Max clearly shows that there are large differences in profitability among the Tunisian banks. The same holds true for our second main profitability measure, the NIM, which amounts to 2.89% on average. This significant amount of variation can be explained by the factors included in our analyses.

Now, let us briefly highlight a few interesting facts. Concerning bank-specific indicators, the capitalization of Tunisian banks is 9.34% on average, which largely respects the key international prudential regulation of Basel II. However, this ratio differs among banks, like the other variables as well. The best-capitalized bank in our sample, for instance, has a capital ratio of 17.48%, whereas, capital ratio is negative for some banks at some years. The non performing loans relative to total

loans, which is an indicator of the credit risk, amounts to 21.98% on average, which seems very high comparing to the limit fixed by national prudential regulation (Tunisian Central Bank). But there exist again large differences among the banks in our sample.

In addition, private sector holds 80% of Tunisian banks equity with a minimum of 30% in public state banks. The concentration, as a bank assets held by the three largest banks over total bank system assets, amounts to 45.74% on average.

Table 2 : Correlation Matrix

	Size	CAPAD	NPL	CIR	GDEP	OWN	CONC	SBS	GDP	INF
Size	1.0000									
CAPAD	-0.2811	1.0000								
NPL	0.0270	-0.2042	1.0000							
CIR	0.0325	-0.4800	0.2642	1.0000						
GDEP	0.1180	-0.0349	-0.0507	-0.0505	1.0000					
OWN	-0.4244	0.2009	-0.1085	-0.3129	-0.1170	1.0000				
CONC	-0.4557	0.1119	0.0284	0.1508	-0.1670	-0.0582	1.0000			
SBS	0.5273	-0.1309	-0.0547	-0.1143	0.1179	0.0665	-0.6126	1.0000		
GDP	-0.3400	0.0507	0.0404	0.0896	-0.0434	-0.0373	0.5373	-0.8081	1.0000	
INF	0.4064	-0.1502	-0.0930	-0.0898	0.1101	0.0711	-0.3575	0.3091	-0.0494	1.0000

Examination of the correlation coefficients, allows us to study the null hypothesis of no correlation between explanatory variables. Following Kennedy (1985), we consider 0.8 as the limit value of the correlation coefficient to confirm the null hypothesis. So, if correlation between two variables exceeds 0.8, we have to reject the null hypothesis; it's not possible to hold the two variables in the same model.

As shown in the table 2, all correlation coefficients are smaller than 0.8 at which the phenomenon of colinearity is pronounced. Then, there is no problem of multicollinearity.

The lagged dependent variable, which measures the degree of persistence of profitability, measured by ROA, ROE or NIM, is statistically significant across all models, indicating a high degree of persistence of bank performance and justifying the use of a dynamic model. However, we observe some significant differences between the estimation results of the different regressions.

Considering the internal factors related to the bank-specific characteristics, as to bank size, which we track by the logarithm of bank total assets, we find some empirical evidence that smaller commercial banks were more profitable than larger ones. This finding corroborate those of Smirlock (1985) and Bikker and Hu (2002) who suggest that larger banks were able to benefit from higher product and loan diversification possibilities, and economies of scales. The main reason for this negative relationship between size and profitability is that larger banks in Tunisia had relatively higher loan loss provisions during the retained period. Added to that, this negative impact implies that Tunisian banks are operation above their optimum level as reported by Bennaceur and Goaid (2010).

Table 3 : Explanatory factors of Tunisian banks' profits

	ROA	ROE	NIM
Π_{t-1}	-0.1470469** (0.015)	.5587899*** (0.000)	0.346462*** (0.000)
Constant	5.971277 (0.530)	2385.733 (0.824)	42.19357*** (0.000)
Bank Specific Variables			
Size	-0.0165835** (0.028)	172.3497 (0.714)	-1.48617*** (0.000)
CAPAD	0.2883721*** (0.000)	-77.99849 (0.197)	0.0208083*** (0.005)
NPL	0.0022443** (0.011)	7.0688 (0.315)	0.00267 (0.291)
CIR	-0.0683811*** (0.000)	-29.23915** (0.041)	-0.0394382*** (0.000)
GDEP	-0.0000116 (0.227)	.0029982 (0.785)	-3.68e-06 (0.396)
OWN	0.0081584* (0.082)	-2.227418 (0.861)	0.0093819** (0.027)
Bank Industry Variables			
CONC	-0.1034975** (0.013)	67.48607 (0.431)	-0.1213633*** (0.001)
SBS	-0.0134696** (0.039)	-109.3861** (0.020)	-0.0253263 (0.217)
Macroeconomic Variables			
GDP	0.0139725 (0.844)	-171.466** (0.027)	-0.0651441** (0.036)
INF	-0.1224765 (0.309)	183.0932 (0.159)	-0.2104966*** (0.000)
<i>N</i>	130	130	130
<i>Wald test</i>	1.56e+08	501.79	495.54
<i>P-value Wald test</i>	0.000	0.000	0.000
<i>AR (2)</i>	61.1769	0.5432	1.2457
<i>P-value AR (2)</i>	0.2392	0.5870	0.2129
<i>Sargan test</i>	0.7014	2.83e-22	1.24e-23
<i>P-value Sargan test</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000

This table presents the results from regressions conducted to determine explanatory variables of Tunisian bank profitability. Estimations were performed using GMM dynamic model estimation in system. p-values in brackets; * Significance at the 10%; ** Significance at 5%; *** Significance at 1% AR (2): test of null of zero second-order serial correlation, distributed N (0, 1) under null.; Sargan-statistics is the test of over-identifying restrictions.

Next, Consistent with the results of Buser, Chen and Kane (1981) and Bennaceur and Goïd (2008), we confirm the positive relationship between capital ratio and bank profitability, whether we use interest margin or return on assets as a proxy of bank performance. This may indicate that well-capitalized banks have higher margins and profitability, which is consistent with theories stressing that highly capitalized banks can charge more for loans and pay less on deposits because they face lower bankruptcy risks. Although, using return on equity as a proxy of bank performance we found a negative and no significant correlation. This is can be explained by the fact that some listed banks

may have effectively lower their equity capital to increase the ROA.

Consider non performing loans to total loans ratio, bank risk enters positively in all the ROA, ROE and NIM regressions but only significant in ROA regression. The positive impact of credit risk on bank profitability could be explained by the fact that higher credit risk should improve bank incomes since loans are the most risky and, hence, the highest-yielding type of assets. Thus, our result confirms those found by Kosmidou et al. (2005) and Fernandez (2007).

Our operational efficiency indicator is negatively related to profitability for all regressions. It is particularly

high significant when we profitability is measured by return on assets and net interest margin. This mean that the more efficient a bank is the higher is its profitability. This result confirms our expectation and stands in line with the results of Athanasoglou et al. (2008). However, our finding corroborates those of Bennaceur and Omra (2011) on MENA countries, when they consider the total operating costs divided by the sum of total earning assets and total deposits as a proxy of operational efficiency.

The yearly growth of deposits has no significant impact on Tunisian bank profitability and this effect is mainly driven by the crisis years. It seems that banks in Tunisia were not able to convert the increasing amount of deposit liabilities into significantly higher income earnings above all in recent time.

Added to that, table 3 shows that privatization of Tunisian banks positively and significantly affects profitability. According to the findings of Micco et al. (2007) and Iannotta et al. (2007), who's point out that government-owned banks reveal a lower profitability than privately owned ones, our results confirm the advantage of private banks in a matter of performance. The relationship between either NIM and ROA and private ownership variable (OWN) is positive and significant meaning that private owned banks generate better profit than their state counterparts. This is a clear signal to encourage the privatization policy taken by Tunisian authorities.

Turning to the external factors related to the financial structure in Tunisia, our study finds that the more the market is concentrated, the lower the banks profit is. Bank concentration is negative and significant in all the return on assets and net interest margin regressions. This finding is consistent with Berger (1995), who supports the argument that concentration is usually negatively associated with profitability once the institutional and regulation variables are controlled for. However, bank concentration enters positively and not significantly in the return on equity regression.

Turning to bank activity (SBS) and its impact on bank performance, our results show that the increase of size bank system do not contribute to enhance profitability in the Tunisian banking industry. Therefore the bank assets to GDP ratio enters negatively and significantly related in all return on assets and return on equity regressions. According to Demircuc-Kunt and Huizinga (1999), our results suggest that in countries where the banking assets largely contribute to GDP, banks are less profitable.

Regarding the external factors related to the macroeconomic environment in Tunisia, the coefficient on economic growth variable (GDP) is negative and significant in all return on equity and net interest margin regressions. Those results are contrary to our expectations and corroborate the major study relating real output to performance. Nevertheless, Staikouras and

Wood (2003) found two of the three macro-economic indicators, the variability of interest rate and the growth of GDP had a negative impact, while the level of interest rate had a positive effect on bank performance.

By the other hand, our results show weak significance about the impact of inflationary conditions in the economy on bank performance. It seems that only net interest margin is negatively and significantly affected by inflation. This means that Tunisian banks do not adjust their lending rates accordingly to inflation and consequently they allow the entire negative cost of inflation.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined how bank-specific characteristics, industry-specific and macroeconomic factors affect the profitability of 10 listed commercial banks in Tunisia over the period from 1998 to 2011.

For this purpose, we used a dynamic model specification that allows for profit persistence. Our results clearly showed that differences in profitability among the Tunisian banks can be explained by the factors included in our analyses. Furthermore, our results illustrated that bank-specific and industry-specific characteristics explain a substantial part of the within-country variation in performance.

First, we found that bank profitability is mainly explained by adequate capital and operational efficiency. So, Banks that hold a relatively high amount of capital is more profitable than less capitalized ones. And efficient banks are more profitable than banks with high cost income ratio. We also found some evidence that ownership is an important determinant of profitability. Larger is the percentage of foreign-owned banks more profitable is the bank. So, at the nation level, privatizing state owned banks is recommended in order to improve bank performance.

The bank size generally had negative and significant coefficients on the bank profitability. This negative impact may simply implies that Tunisian banks are operation above their optimum level.

Concerning industry-specific characteristics and its impact on Tunisian bank performance, we found concentration and size bank system has a negative impact on bank profitability, essentially measured by return on assets and net interest margin.

Second, as for the impact of macroeconomic indicators on bank performance, we concluded that these variables have no significant impact on the return on assets. However, GDP growth and inflation are significantly related to the net interest margin. Inflation shocks seem to be passed mainly through the deposit rates, and this means that banks bear the entire negative cost of inflation.

On the whole, our findings provided some remarkable new insights into the mechanisms that determine the Tunisian commercial banks performance.

These results are relevant for a number of reasons. First, because we considered a larger set of bank-specific, industry-specific and macroeconomic determinants of bank profitability, which extends our comprehension of bank profitability. Second, we used the GMM system estimator developed by Blundell and Bond (1998). So, we applied an advanced econometric procedure that addresses the issue of endogeneity of independent variables, which, in this type of study, can lead to inconsistent estimates. Finally, our dynamic model specification allowed for the fact that bank profits show a tendency to persist over time, reflecting impediments to market competition, informational opacity, and sensitivity to macroeconomic shocks. Further, our approach seems to be incomplete in that way that do not consider other managerial aspects that may influence Tunisian bank performance. Internal mechanism governance can be one of those managerial aspects which may be important in understanding bank profitability.

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Financial Time Series- Recent Trends in Econometrics

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Abstract - The paper points to a coverage of the latest research techniques and findings relating to the econometric analysis of financial markets. It contains a wealth of new materials reflecting the developments during the last decade or so. Particular attention is paid to the wide range of nonlinear models that are used to analyze financial data observed at high frequencies and to the long memory characteristics found in financial time series. There is also a discussion, briefly, of the treatment of volatility, chaos, the Fed model, stochastic estimation and Bayesian estimation, the Fed model and tail dependent time series models.

Keywords : *high frequency data, chaos, stochastic volatility, brownian motion, markov process, garch process.*

GJMBR-C Classification : *JEL Code: F39, B23*



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



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I. INTRODUCTION

We start off by a quote from Engel. "There is nothing in our chosen career that is as exhilarating as having a good idea. But a very close second is seeing someone develop a wonderful new application from your idea." Most of the econometric researches in recent days are about modeling financial time series. They seem to be crowding out macroeconomic data as objects of econometric research. The reasons are obvious:

- In financial time series, you can get thousands of observations, whereas with macro data, a few hundred observations is a rare luxury, and
- The data are exact; no revisions are necessary

The evolution of financial data shows a high degree of volatility of the series coupled with increasing difficulties of forecasting the shorter is the time horizon, when using standard (based on linear methods) forecasting methods. Alternative forecasting and other econometric methods for nonlinear time series based on the literature on complex dynamic systems, have recently been developed, which can be particularly useful in the analysis of financial time series. Since the nonlinear methods require the usage of very long time series, the availability of high frequency data for these variables make them the best candidates among economic and financial time series for the application of this methodology. The long financial series are particularly useful for testing recent non-linear models that do not require second-order stationarity i.e., methods that owe their roots to Granger and Engle's work long time ago.

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II. USING HIGH FREQUENCY DATA

Although the *beta* coefficient appeared in the 70.s, a debate is still going on about whether these betas are constant or varying over time. Anderson, *et al* (2006) has eloquently shown that although individual variances and co-variances are highly persistent, the betas of some major company shares are not because of an on linear fractional co-integration between individual equity and the market. Using the mean square error as the measure of accuracy in beta estimation, Anderson *et al* (2006) obtained the optimal pair of sampling frequency and the trailing window and this is found to be as short as 1 minute and 1 week, respectively. The sampling result may be due to the low market noise resulting from its high liquidity and econometric properties of the errors-in-variables model. Moreover, the realized beta obtained from optimal pair out-performed the constant beta from the CAPM when overnight returns are excluded. The comparison further strengthens the argument that the beta is time-varying.

A non-parametric approach using high frequency data is one of the recent methods utilized to estimate financial measures, such as market volatility. The method utilizes price data with a very short term horizon, which is now widely available. By using the observed variables for calculation, the approach is very handy in that it trivializes calculation and avoids many distortive assumption necessary for parameterized modeling. The realized measures such as realized variances, for instance, are known to be efficient estimators of underlying values like variance, co-variance etc Zhang *et al* (2005). The realized variance converges to integrated variance plus the jump component as the time between observations approaches zero. That is the sampling interval converges to zero.

Where $\int_{t-1}^t \sigma^2 (s) ds$ is a consistent estimator

of the integrated variance and N_t is the number of jumps. Unlike the constant period-by-period beta from the CAPM, the realized beta allows continuous evaluation in the beta estimation.

Given the mass of data of the stock market, the most elusive goal of the econometricians is to find a model that forecasts the stock prices; because if these

are known by the public, the gain would be eliminated through arbitrage. Still, people often continue to try to test their linear models against random walk forecasts only to find that the latter are hard to beat. Important advances in nonlinear time series analysis, multivariate includes ARCH and GARCH nonlinear stochastic process by Engle (1982), nonlinear deterministic chaotic dynamic model by Anderson *et al* (2001) (1995) non parametric analysis by Ebens (1999), multivariate adaptive regression splines by Lewis *et al* (1994), These works fuelled analyses on nonlinearities in financial data and opened new possibilities in forecasting and other areas.

Alt recent empirical evidences seem to suggest that financial asset returns are predictable to some degree. Thirty years ago this would have been tantamount to an outright rejection of market efficiency. However modern financial economies teach us that the fine structure of securities market and friction in the trading process can generate predictability. ¹The interest in the area of nonlinear dynamics to deal with a complex process that has been renewed during the last decade is due to the surprising finding that even a very simple deterministic model of a dynamic system can reflect a very complex 'motion' that exhibits the characteristics of chaotic behavior. A chaotic system is one in which the long-term prediction of the system's trajectory is impossible because any uncertainty on its initial state grows exponentially fast along time. The characteristic property is called sensitive dependence on initial condition and the reason of the rapid loss of prediction power in chaotic system. However chaotic system is deterministic and show a crucial difference with random process.

III. CHAOS AND THE NEAREST NEIGHBOR

Econometrics has been concerned with complex phenomenon providing successful stochastic models that are capable of describing financial behavior. The key concept in stochastic models is again randomness assuming that the process under study is governed by chaos and probability laws. Based on a philosophy opposite to randomness, nonlinear dynamic system and chaos offer the possibility of describing a complex phenomenon by a nonlinear dynamic process. ²Starting with a seminal work of Pallard *et al* (1980) the development of econometric techniques for chaotic time series were followed by Farmer and Sidorowitch (1987), Trippi (1995) and others. Based on a time series in a state space these authors proposed a forecasting technique by using delayed coordinates and looking for past patterns of the nearest neighbor (NN). In this way the NN method is a prediction technique where segments with similar dynamic behavior are detected in the series and then used to define the next term at the end of the series which is computed by some average

of the actually observed terms next to the segments involved. ³Even though several theoretical models on complex economic dynamics suggest the possibility of chaos (Pesaron and Potter (1993), detecting chaos between financial time series is often an elusive task. A few researchers have proposed the use of non-parametric locally weighted regression to detect deterministic chaos in financial markets⁴.

Recently one of the most fascinating essays by Nicolas *et al* (2005) test various nonlinear models on Standard & Poor's 500 index (S & P 500) and come up with an astonishing result. Forecasting entire distribution one period ahead, they are able to beat the naïve forecast only for the right tail of the distribution. (see below the last section of this article) At the same time, it is hard to see how one can make money from this knowledge and the authors do not claim that one could. However, these are new procedures being made to test model specification and parameter estimation errors simultaneously often enriched by Kulback-Leibler Information Criterion⁵.

1. In line with these considerations, special attention has been paid to testing predictable components in stock market prices, for example, Lo and Mackinlay (1988).
2. The origin of deterministic process dates back to planet dynamics and in particular the three bodies problem and its unpredictable dynamics. Even though the work on deterministic complex dynamics remained isolated of the main body of science during many years, the publication of Lorenz's work on weather prediction followed by an outburst of new research on the study of nondeterministic nonlinear systems with an irregular behavior which will be called chaotic behavior.
3. Notice that the philosophy behind the NN approach is quite different from that of the Box-Jenkins methodology. In contrast to the Box-Jenkins where extrapolation of past value into the immediate future is based on the correlation among lagged observations and error terms, The NN method select relevant prior observation based on their levels and geometric trajectories, not their location in time.
4. When we have a set of simultaneous time series, the NN predictor can be extended to a multivariate case using the simultaneous neighbor predictors (SNN). To simplify, let us consider a set of two time series:

$$X_t = (t=1, \dots, T) \quad Y_t = (t=1, \dots, T)$$

We are interested in making predictions of one of these series (e.g., X_{T+1}) by simultaneously considering nearest neighbor in both series. To this we embed each of these series in the vector space \mathfrak{R}^{2m} paying attention to the following vector :

$$(x_t^m \quad y_t^m) \in \mathfrak{R}^m \times \mathfrak{R}^m$$

which gives the last available m - history for each time series. In order to establish nearest neighbors to the last m -histories (x_t^m, y_t^m) we can look for the closest k -points that maximize the function

$$\rho(x_t^m, x_T^m) + \rho(y_t^m, y_T^m)$$

The predictor for x_{T+1} and y_{T+1} can be obtained from a linear autoregressive predictor with varying coefficients obtained by OLS

IV. SEASONAL TIME SERIES MODELS

Recently a new time series model incorporating a common trend component function and a seasonal component has been proposed by Cai and Chen (2006) and others. The general flexible seasonal effect is as follows.

$$y_{ij} = \alpha(t_i) + \beta_j(t_j) + r_j + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad i=1\dots n \quad j=1\dots d$$

Where $t = i / n$, α is a function in $[0, 1]$, $\{\beta_j(\cdot)\}$ are smooth seasonal effect function, either fixed or random subject to a set of constraints and the error term $\{\varepsilon_{ij}\}$ is to be stationary and weak dependent random variables. ⁶The following constraints are needed for fixed seasonal effects

$$\sum_{j=1}^d \beta_j(t) = 0, \nabla_t$$

The main advantage is that such a kind of dependence contains lots of pertinent examples and can be used in various situations just as the Central Limit Theorem for weak dependent variables is being studied in recent years.

Cai and Chen (2006)'s recent seasonal time series model is a locally linear factorization of trend with seasonal components. The authors use a sliding window and a kernel smoother. The method is illustrated through using simulation and is also applied to two real time series. They derived consistency and asymptotic normality of the weighted least square estimates by a local linear method, and by assuming that error terms are k - weak dependent and λ - weak dependent random variables.

The proposed methodology is illustrated with a simulated example and two economic and financial time series, which exhibit nonlinear and non stationary behavior.

Since Granger and Joyeux (1980) introduced ARFIMA (Autoregressive Fractionally Integrated Moving Average), the maximum likelihood estimation of their parameters has intrigued many researchers. Methods such as exact ML based on the Cholesky decomposition of the covariance matrix tend to be complex and even inefficient especially in small samples⁷. A procedure would be a Levinson- Durbin algorithm. But ⁸But to both the estimation of autocorrelations is critical.⁹

V. THE FED MODEL AND THE STOCK MARKET

The "Fed model" is a theory of equity valuation that has found broad application in the investment community. The model compares the stock market's

ment bonds. In its strongest form the Fed model states that bond and stock markets are in equilibrium, and fairly valued, when the one- year forward looking earnings yield equals the 10-year Treasury note yield (Y_{10})

$$\frac{Y}{P} = Y_{10}$$

The model is often used as a simple tool to measure attractiveness of equity, and to help allocating funds between equity and bonds. When, for example, the equity earnings yield is above the government bond yield, investors should shift funds from bonds into equity.

"...Changes in this ratio [P/E of the S & P 500 index] have often been inversely related to changes in the long-term Treasury yields, but this year's stock price gains were not matched by a significant net decline in interest rates. As a result, the yield on ten-year Treasury notes now exceeds the ratio of twelve-month-ahead earnings yield (E/P) to the yield on long-term government-earnings to prices by the largest amount since 1991, when earnings were depressed by the economic slowdown."

5. In probability theory and information theory, the **Kullback–Leibler divergence** (also information divergence, information gain, relative entropy, or KLIC) is a non-symmetric measure of the difference between two probability distributions P and Q . Specifically, the Kullback–Leibler divergence of Q from P , denoted $D_{KL}(P||Q)$, is a measure of the information lost when Q is used to approximate P . For distributions P and Q of a continuous random variable, KL-divergence is defined to be the integral:

$$D_{KL}(P||Q) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \ln\left(\frac{p(x)}{q(x)}\right) p(x) dx$$

where p and q denote the densities of P and Q .

6. The concept of weak dependence makes explicit the asymptotic independence between the 'past' and the 'future'. This means that the past is progressively forgotten. Roughly speaking, for convenient function f and g they assumed $Cov[f(\text{'past'}), g(\text{'future'})]$ is small when the distance between the past and the future is sufficiently large.
7. The Cholesky decomposition (the lower triangular squared root) of the covariance matrix for a conditional independent normal model under is obtained under our equivariant loss functions. By introducing a special group of lower-triangular block matrices, it obtains the best equivariant estimator of the Cholesky decomposition under each of the four losses. Because both the maximum likelihood estimator and the unbiased estimator belong to the class of equivariant estimators with respect to the special group, they are all inadmissible.
8. The algorithm provides parameterizations of a model by a finite set of positive numbers. It can be used for computing the covariance structure of the process, for testing the validity of such a structure, and for stability testing.
9. Casting ARFIMA models into state-space form leads to exact ML estimates. Estimating the moving average part of time series models has always been the trickier part. Many 'quasi' ML methods have been presented, where a long AR polynomial approximates the MA side. In simulation experiments Granger and Joyeux (1980) show that all of the ML methods, exact and quasi, are about equally accurate. All have a small downward bias in the d estimate of the degree of differencing.

Surprisingly, the Fed model was never officially endorsed by the Fed, but the former Fed chairman Alan Greenspan seemed to make a reference to it in his memoir: "The decline of real (inflation adjusted) long-term interest rates that has occurred in the last two decades has been associated with rising price-to-earnings ratios for stocks, real estate, and in fact all income-earnings assets." A bond yield versus equity yield comparison has been used in practice long before the model was given this name. ¹⁰The recently proposed capital structure substitution theory argues that the Fed model indeed needs to be re-specified. It suggests that supply (company management), rather than demand (investors) drive the relationship between E/P and interest rates. Stock market earnings yield tends to be at equilibrium not with the government bond yield but with the average after-tax corporate bond yield, as companies adjust capital structure (mix of equity and bonds) to maximize earnings per share. If managements consistently optimize capital structure by substituting stocks (repurchasing shares) for bonds or vice versa, equilibrium is reached when:

$$\frac{E_x}{P_x} = R_x [1 - T]$$

Where E is the earnings-per-share of company x, P is the share price, R is the nominal interest rate on corporate bonds and T is the corporate tax rate. For a long time, the after-tax interest rate on corporate bonds was roughly equal to the 10-year Treasury rate. But during the 2008 financial crisis this relationship broke down, as Baa rated corporate bonds peaked at over 9%, and 10-year treasuries bottomed under 2.5%.

VI. STOCHASTIC VOLATILITY AND BAYESIAN ESTIMATION

Continuous time models are widely used in modern mathematical finance, providing the basis for option pricing, asset allocation and term structure theory. A classic example is the so-called Black-Scholes model (Black and Scholes (1973) which characterizes the log of an asset price $x^*(t)$ as the solution of the stochastic differential equation

$$dx^*(t) = [\mu + \beta \sigma^2] dt + \sigma dw(t)$$

Where $w(t)$ is the standard Brownian motion. Implying that the aggregate returns are normally distributed with constant variance, well-known stylized features of financial time series such as heavy tails, skewness, volatility, clustering are not captured by this model. To improve the model, stochastic volatility has been introduced.

$$dx^*(t) = \{ \mu + \beta \sigma^2(t) \} dt + \sigma(t) dw(t)$$

Where the volatility $\sigma^2(t)$ is allowed to change over time.¹¹ Fruhwirth-Schnatter (2001) proposed a Bayesian estimation of the stochastic volatility model with marginal Gamma law which results as a special case when the marginal distribution $\sigma^2(t)$ is a Gamma distribution.

$$\sigma^2(t) \sim g(\alpha, \delta)$$

If the underlying asset is an integrated variable, for instance the log of foreign exchange rates, a discrete time series (y_1, \dots, y_T) of aggregated returns $y_n = x^*(t_n) - x^*(t_{n-1})$ would be used to estimate the unknown parameter driving the distributional law of the underlying asset prices like $\theta = (\alpha, \theta, \lambda)$ for a process with marginal gamma law.¹²

Estimation is based on parameterization which is derived from Rosinski representation ¹³and has the advantage of being a non-centered parameterization. The parameterization is based on a market point

10. The competing asset argument listed above argues that only when stocks have the same yield as government bonds, both asset classes are equally attractive to investors. But the earnings yield (E/P) of a stock does not describe what an investor actually receives as not all earnings are paid out to the investor. And how do corporate bonds (with a yield above the government bond yield) fit into this picture? A number of assumptions need to be made to go from the constant growth dividend discount model to the Fed model. Estrada starts with the Gordon growth model

$$P = \frac{D(1+G)}{R_f + RP - G}$$

where P is the current price and D the

current dividend, G the expected long term growth rate, R_f the risk free rate (10-year treasury notes) and RP the equity risk premium. If one now assumes that 100% of the earnings are paid as dividend (D=E), the growth rate is equal to zero, and the equity risk premium is also equal to zero, one gets the Fed model: E/P = R_f. The three assumptions seem unrealistic at best. It is also pointed out that the Fed model compares a real magnitude (E/P) with a nominal interest rate. Inflation should affect the bond yield, but not the earnings yield.

11. Various assumptions have been made concerning the stochastic nature of the volatility process. Most of them based on diffusion type models e.g., square root process or Orustein – Uhlenbeck (OU) process for log volatility see Anderson and Lund (1997).

12. The problem stems from the fact that the conditional distribution of the aggregated returns y_n , although being normal, depends on the latent process $\hat{h}(\lambda_t)$ and $\sigma^2(t)$:

$$y_n | \sigma^2(t) \sim N(\mu \Delta + \beta \sigma_n^2, \sigma_n^2)$$

$\Delta = (t_n - t_{n-1})$ and σ_n^2 may be expressed as where

$$\sigma_n^2 = \frac{1}{\lambda} [\hat{h}(\lambda t_n) - \hat{h}(\lambda t_{n-1}) - (\sigma^2(t_n) - \sigma^2(t_{n-1}))]$$

13. Both the Barndorff-Nielson and Shephard considered a separate Rosinski representation of the process $\sigma^2(t) \hat{h}(\lambda t)$ for each observation interval $[(n-1)\Delta, n\Delta]$ See Rosinski (2001).

process, living on the positive real line with uniformly distributed marks. Researchers define a Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) that enables multiple updates of the latent point process. Barndorff-Nielson and Shephard (2001) deal with superposition models when it discusses how the identifiability problem inherent in the superposition model may be avoided by the user of a Markov priors. They applied the technique to simulated as well as exchange rate data.

VII. TAIL DEPENDENT TIME SERIES

In time series modeling, a key step is to determine a finite dimensional representation of the proposed model, i.e., to determine statistically how many parameters have to be included in the model. In linear time series models, such as AR (P) and MA (q), auto covariance functions or partial auto covariance functions are often used to determine the dimension, such as the value of p and q. but in nonlinear time series models, these techniques may no longer be applicable. In the context of the max-stable process, since the underlying distribution has no finite variance, the dimension of the model cannot be determined in the usual manner.

Danielsson (2002) and Mikosch and Straumann (2002) used the gamma test to determine the order of the lag - k tail dependence existing in financial time series. Using standardized return series, based on the test results show that jumps in returns are not transient. New time series models which combine a specific class of max - stable process, Markov process and GARCH process are proposed and used to model tail dependencies within asset returns. ¹⁴They used the gamma test to check whether there exists tail dependence for the S & P 500 return data.

The approach is hierarchical i.e., to apply GARCH (1, 1) fitting and to get estimated standard deviations first, then based on standardized return series M3 and Markov process modeling are applied. It is also possible, perhaps, to study Markov process, GARCH process and M3 process simultaneously, But this may further additional research. Attention is restricted to M# process. This sub-class has the advantage of efficiently modeling serial tail dependent financial time series, while of course, other sub class specification are possibly also suitable.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND COMMENTS

Many empirical studies have uncovered significant nonlinearities in stock prices. If stock returns are governed by chaos of low complexity, we should be able to make predictions much better than using simple methods such as the random walk. The NN approach to forecasting financial time series is attractive because it means a certain mixture of technical analysis and chaotic behavior. There has been non-parametric

approaches in estimating the time-varying beta with high frequency data denoted as the realized data. The market micro structure, noise, the lag of price adjustment, the true asset price is known to cause high level of distortion when price data is sampled at extremely high frequency. The Fed Model, an equity valuation model does matter because people use it. Analysts across JP Morgan, ING, to Prudential use the Fed model in their calculation. The Bayesian estimation of the stochastic volatility with marginal gamma law has much to offer in practical parameterization; Recently statistical evidence of impacts in financial time series are also observed. A new time series model is introduced combining Markov process, GARCH process and M3 process.

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14. A bivariate random variable (x_1, x_2) is tail independent if $\lambda = \lim_{\mu \rightarrow x_F} P(x_1 > \mu | x_2 > \mu) = 0$. Where x_1 and x_2 are identically distributed with $x_F = \sup\{x \in \mathcal{R} : p(x_1 < x) < 1\}$. If $\lambda > 0$, then (x_1, x_2) is called tail dependent

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Financial Structure and Economic Growth: Evidence from Nigeria

By Onwumere J.U.J, V. Onudugo & Imo G. Ibe

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Abstract - A nation's financial system is much more than just an intermediary that ensures the allocation of savings to investment. The efficiency of such a system is endogenously achieved if the financial structure of that economy promotes optimal use of the resources available for development. It is against the importance of finance in enhancing economic growth and development especially in developing economies like Nigeria, that we questioned whether financial structure has positive and significant impact on economic growth and development in Nigeria. The results revealed from our findings support existing literature that total financial structure has positive and significant impact on economic growth. However, while some sectors exert more influence (banking and market), other sectors (such as insurance) were found to have non-significant impact on economic growth. We therefore recommend that greater efforts should be made by government and the regulatory authorities at ensuring that an enabling environment is provided (through strengthening of existing laws and regulations) where all the components of the financial sector can compete favorably.

Keywords : financial structure, economic growth, nigeria.

GJMBR-C Classification : JEL Code: F43



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I. INTRODUCTION

The search for ways of bettering the standard of living of citizens through enhanced sustainable development has opened new corridors for alternative view points on paradigms of economic growth and development¹. These alternative view points and paradigm for sustainable development have led to postulation of new developmental theories by economists all aiming at ensuring sustainable development. Sustainable growth and development entails that development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs². However, in most developing economies including Nigeria, the needs of future generations are really not adequately articulated in policies. Again, the implementation and management of these policies leave so much to be desired.

There appears to be a general consensus on the link between sustainable growth and development and finance³. The important role of finance in the

process of economic growth and development could be traced to the works of Bagehort (1873)⁴, Schumpeter (1911)⁵ and Hicks (1969)⁶. Bagehort (1873) and Schumpeter (1911) have argued strongly on the promotive role of finance in the economic growth and development process. They posit that the industrial revolution in England was the result of a functioning financial system that was instrumental in mobilizing and allocating long-term capital to the productive enterprises of the country. Hick (1969) has also posited that a well functioning financial system provides intermediation services to productive entrepreneurial activities that spur technological, innovative, and productive activities which lead to growth (Hick, 1969).

A nation's financial system is much more than just an intermediary that insures the optimal allocation of savings to investment. The efficiency of such a system is endogenously achieved if the financial structure of that economy makes greater use of the resources available for development. This fact was buttressed by King and Levine (1993b)⁷ when they posit that;

...better financial structures stimulate faster productivity growth and growth in per capita output by funneling society's resources to promising productivity-enhancing endeavours...

It is against the importance of finance in enhancing economic growth and development especially in developing economies, that we questioned whether financial structure has positive and significant impact on economic growth and development in Nigeria. This paper seeks to provide evidence-based answers to the question. It is divided into five sections. Section one is the introduction, section two reviews

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2. World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) Our Common Future.
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related literature in this area. Section three contains our methodology, while section four discusses the results of our findings. Lastly, in section five, we provided recommendations based on evidence, inclusive of our conclusion.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There is no gainsaying that the financial systems, all over the world, play an important role in the development and growth of the economy. In Nigeria, the financial system comprises financial institutions, financial markets, financial instruments, rules, conventions, and norms that facilitate the flow of funds and other financial services within and outside the national economy⁸. In a nutshell, it consists of banks and non-bank financial institutions regulated by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC), Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the National Insurance Commission (NIC), and the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) as well as the Federal Ministry of Finance.

The Central Bank of Nigeria was established by Act of 1958 and commenced operations on 1st July 1959. The Act, which has undergone several amendments, was re-enacted as the CBN Act No 24 of 1991. In addition to the CBN Act, the Banks and other financial Institutions Act No 25 of 1991 was also promulgated to complement the operations of the CBN in enhancing growth of the Nigerian Banking sector. The Nigerian Deposit Insurance Corporation was established by Decree No. 22 of 15th June 1988 and took off in February 1989 with the mandate of insuring depositors' liability in Nigerian Banks. The regulatory organ of the Nigeria Capital market is the Securities and Exchange Commission, formerly called Capital Issues Commission which was established by SEC Act of 27th September 1979 and strengthened by SEC Decree of 1988 to regulate the activities of the Nigerian Capital Market. At the apex of the Insurance sub-sector is the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM), which replaced the Nigerian Insurance.

Supervisory Board, established by Decree No. 62 of 1992. This body is responsible for the regulation of activities in the Nigerian Insurance Industry. The Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) is at the apex of mortgage financial institutions in the country. The FMBN was established by Decree No. 7 of 1977 and it took over the assets and liabilities of the Nigerian Building Society, which was performing the statutory regulatory mortgage role before then.

The Nigerian financial system has undergone remarkable evolution in terms of ownership, structure of its institutions, the number of instruments traded, and the regulatory framework within which the system operates⁹. This evolution could be traced to three major periods vis-a vis the Pre-SAP Era (between 1970 and

1986), the SAP Era (between 1986 and 1993) and the Post-SAP Era (the period following the termination of SAP till date). While the Pre – Sap Era witnessed the emergence of wholly owned Nigerian financial institutions and was characterized by minimal competition and poor capitalization. The SAP Era was characterized by an economic reform package designed to liberalize the economy with emphasis on the financial system. The reforms brought about the removal of various administrative controls and ushered the country into a progressive move towards a market-oriented economy. The Post-Sap Era witnessed a brief period (1994) of renewed regulation and subsequently, the period of guided deregulation. At the outset of this era, the financial industry witnessed serious waves of distress that caused crisis of confidence in the industry. The Failed Banks (Recovery of Debts) and Financial Malpractice in Banks Decree was promulgated in 1994 to sanitize the banking industry. A further notable feature of this era was the consolidation policies introduced both in the Nigerian Banking sector as well as in the Insurance Sector in 2004 and 2005. All these changes were all aimed at ensuring a more effective and efficient financial system¹⁰.

As stated earlier, the earliest establishment of the finance-growth nexus in literature could be traced to the earlier works of Bagehort (1873) and Schumpeter (1911) in which they contend that finance plays an important role in promoting economic growth and development. In this way, it is expected that a well functioning financial system will provide intermediation services to productive entrepreneurial activities which will spur technological, innovative, and productive activities that increase growth. Following this work of Bagehot (1873) and Schumpeter (1911), Gurley and Shaw (1955)¹¹, Goldsmith (1969)¹² and Hicks (1969), McKinnon (1973)¹³ and Shaw (1973)¹⁴ have also emphasized the important role, financial intermediaries and financial markets play in the growth process of nations.

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Recent empirical and theoretical studies have also been conducted in several jurisdictions on the relationship between finance and economic growth. Prominent among such works is the work of King and Levine (1993a)¹⁵. In a study of 80 countries over the period 1960-89 in which they controlled for other factors that affect long-run growth, their results showed that initial level of financial development is a good predictor of the subsequent rates of economic growth. Benhabib and Spiegel (2000)¹⁶, Levine, Loayza and Beck (2000)¹⁷, Rioja and Valev (2004)¹⁸ also point to the same conclusion that financial development has a positive impact on economic growth, however, these studies are often conducted at aggregate and level as such are unable to account for the complexities of individual nations.

Literature examined in this study indicates that financial development is a necessary causal factor of economic growth, although the strength of the evidence varies across countries and across proxies used to measure financial development¹⁹. Also, it has been argued that evidence of a dampening effect from financial deepening on cyclical fluctuations in the short-run has strong effects in the long-run. However, the expected growth benefit from financial development, in the long-run is slow to materialize²⁰.

The determinants of financial development are thus co-integrated in the long-run suggesting that financial development, private capital stocks and the labor force exert a positive impact on economic development whereas the accumulation of public capital appears to curtail output expansion in the long-run²¹. No wonder, measures suggested are that government policy should be geared towards strategically increasing money supply and promoting efficient capital market that will enhance overall economic efficiency, create and expand liquidity, mobilize savings, capital accumulation, transfer of resources from traditional sectors to growth inducing sectors; and also promote competent entrepreneurial response in various sectors of the economy²².

On the impact of financial structure on economic growth, it is suggested that financial structure increases the performance of the economy, through such studies used bank-level data for a large number of developed and developing countries (Ang, 2007).

Countries that have underdeveloped financial systems tend to grow slower than developed economies; hence, financial structure per se does not have an independent effect on economic growth²³. It is evident therefore, that in countries' with legal systems that more effectively protect the rights of outside investors, greater financial development enhances economic growth²⁴. It is thus, important to develop models that not only are better able to mimic the actual relationships between economic growth determinants and financial structure but also that will allow the impact

of government policies on the financial system to be explicitly analyzed²⁵.

Empirical evidence also exists that suggest weak evidence in support of an employment growth channel linking financial structure to subsequent economic growth, thus implying that, job creation is not consistently a major channel through which financial structure stimulates income growth²⁶. The corollary therefore, is that the macroeconomic benefits of financial structure accrue primarily to those already working, rather than to new workers hence no direct evidence suggests that an expanding financial structure plays an important supporting role in economic growth²⁷.

For meaningful studies on the impact of financial structure and economic growth, proxies of financial structure should be positively correlated with economic growth. This will ensure that, the channels of transmission mechanism of financial development to growth are efficient in financial sector development rather than in the quantum of investment. Viewing from the perspective of discussions on the Nigerian financial system, financial development and economic growth, it is still not conclusive from empirical literature on what impact financial structure might have on economic growth and development, most especially in a developing economy like Nigeria. There is still a paucity of literature on the finance-growth nexus in the country thus, the gap which this study seeks to fill is providing an empirical study that will examine the impact of financial structure on economic growth in Nigeria.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the ex-post facto research design. The study covered the period, 1988 to 2011.

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The choice of 1988 as the base year is due to availability of data for all the model proxies, thus ensuring uniformity. The adoption of ex-post facto research design hinges on two reasons; the study relied on historic data obtained from the Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin from 1988 – 2011, as such the event under investigation had already taken place. Also, the researcher does not intend to control or manipulate the variables²⁸. This research design, also called causal comparative research, is used when the researcher intends to determine cause-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables with a view to establishing a causal link between them²⁹. Data used are, therefore, of secondary nature.

The endogenous growth theory³⁰ which assumes away population growth and technological change

Expanding Equation (i) to accommodate indicators of total financial structure, we have:

$$gdppcgr = \alpha + \beta_1 tfa/gdp + \beta_2 dcpbs/gdp + \beta_3 mcap/gdp + \beta_4 tvst/gdp + \beta_5 insp/gdp \quad (2)$$

where;

α = Equation Constant

$\beta_1.. \beta_5$ = Coefficient of Total Financial Structure

gdppcgr = Gross domestic product per capita growth rate (%)

tfa/gdp = Total Financial Assets percentage of gross domestic product

dcpbs/gdp = Domestic credit provided by the banking sector percentage of gross domestic product

mcap/gdp = Market capitalization percentage of gross domestic product

tvst/gdp = Total value of shares traded percentage of gross domestic product

insp/gdp = Insurance premium percentage of gross domestic product

The specific objective of this study is to determine the impact of total financial structure on economic growth. Three (3) core sectors of the Nigerian financial sector were used to represent the total financial structure viz banking, stock market, and insurance sectors; based on available data. Following similar studies in previous literature such as Demircug-Kunt and Levine (1999) and Guha Deb and Mukherjee (2008), the growth rate of Nigeria's gross domestic product per capita was adopted as the index of economic growth. This measures the penetration of total of goods and services produced in Nigeria that directly go into the lives of ordinary Nigerians. The bank-based indicators of the total financial structure are represented by total financial assets as a percentage of GDP and domestic credit provided by the banking sector as a percentage of GDP which measures financial opportunities available to investors. It is expected that both proxies should have positive and significant impact on economic growth. The market based indicators of total financial structure used in this study are market capitalization as a percentage of gross domestic product and the total value of shares traded as a percentage of gross domestic product. While the formal proxy assumes that the overall market size is positively correlated with the ability of the market to mobilize capital and diversify risk on an economy-wide basis³¹, the latter measures the organized trading

and states that growth is driven by capital accumulation formed the basis for this study. The choice of the model is based on, theoretical perspectives of the finance-growth nexus, that financial development enhances economic growth, hence, in this case the aggregate financial structure has a positive and significant effect on economic growth. Therefore, economic growth is mathematically expressed as a function of financial structure as denoted in (i):

$$Y_t = f(TFS_t) \quad (1)$$

where:

Y_t = Economic Growth at time t

TFS_t = Total Financial structure at time t

of firm equity as a share of national output and therefore should positively reflect liquidity on an economy-wide basis and complements the market capitalization ratio³². Again, it is expected that both proxies will have positive impact on economic growth. Insurers collect

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premium for their risk transfer and indemnification services. Thus, in this study, insurance penetration is measured by total insurance premium as percentage of GDP. This measure captures the role of insurance in an economy³³. It is expected that, the coefficients of parameters for insurance penetration to be positive implying a positive impact on economic growth.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents and analyzes the results. Table 4.1 presents the descriptive statistics of the measurement indicators.

Table 4.1 : Descriptive Statistics

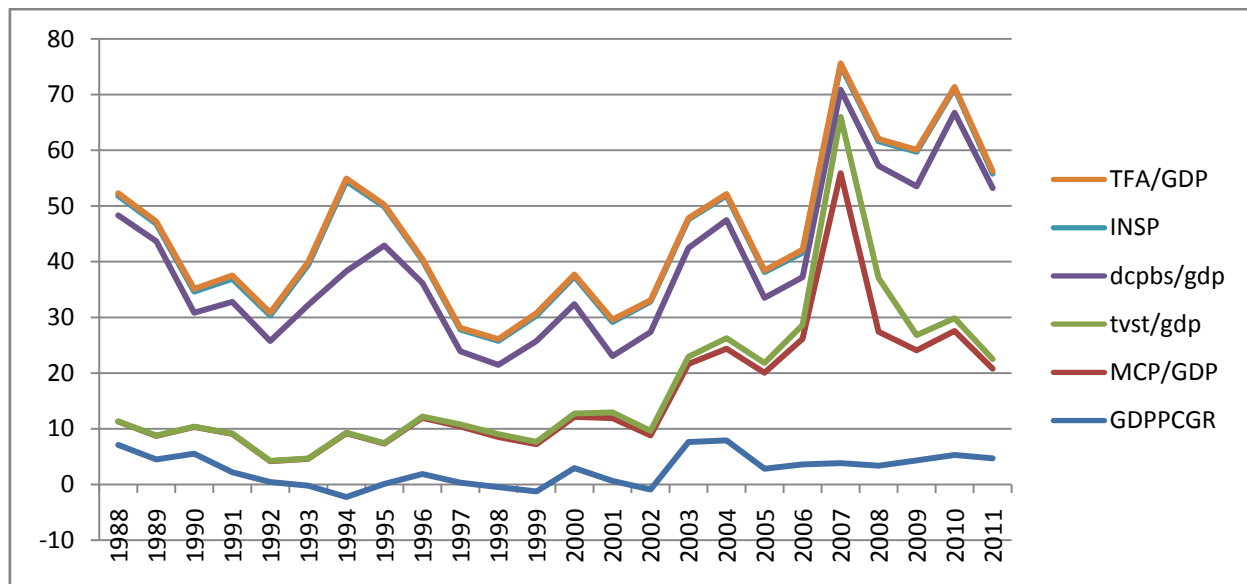
	GDPPCGR	MCAPGDP	TVSTGDP	DCPBSGDP	INSPGDP	TFAGDP
Mean	2.667150	13.31866	1.584228	21.89165	5.137825	0.392917
Median	2.872155	10.07444	0.534636	20.83450	4.403850	0.410000
Maximum	7.897959	52.04102	10.10976	37.02163	16.13480	0.590000
Minimum	-2.248560	3.729704	0.016776	4.909461	2.583700	0.220000
Std. Dev.	2.885401	10.29288	2.695900	9.143040	2.588442	0.106014
Skewness	0.159231	2.308351	2.504521	0.076962	3.350549	0.030214
Kurtosis	2.057489	9.356054	8.190316	2.177788	14.89147	1.913754
Jarque-Bera	0.989744	61.71337	52.02989	0.699726	186.3117	1.183582
Probability	0.609649	0.000000	0.000000	0.704785	0.000000	0.553335
Observations	24	24	24	24	24	24

Source : Authors'

As indicated in tables 4.1, the mean value of Nigeria's per capita income growth rate from 1988 to 2011 in Nigeria was 2.67%. The year with the highest per capita income growth rate was in 2004 when it grew by 7.90% per cent while the least growth in per capita income was recorded in 1994 when the gross domestic product fell by 2.25% from the previous year rate. This fall may not be unconnected with the sanctions placed on the then military regime in Nigeria by the international community due to the annulment of the historic June 12 election in 1993. Overall the growth rate of Nigeria's per

capita income showed fluctuations over the period of the study. As revealed from table 4.1, there was a positive skewness of gross domestic product (0.16) indicating that the degree of departure from symmetry of the distribution was positive. Also, the kurtosis value of 2.06 reveals that the degrees of peakedness of gross domestic product within the period of this study were not normally distributed as it tended to deviate from the mean. Figure 4.2 presents the model proxies performance in a graphical format.

Figure 4.1 : Graphical Presentations of Model Proxies



Source : The Authors

33. Arena, M. (2006), "Does Insurance Market Activity Promote Economic Growth? A Cross-Country Study for Industrialized and Developing Countries", World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4098.

a) *Unit Root Test*

Time series data are prone to problems of spuriousness if the data are not stationary. Thus in order to eliminate this problem, the unit root test was carried out³⁴. The first stage in the unit root test was to determine the stationarity of the variables under study. It has been asserted that if a times series data is non-stationary, all the usual regression results will suffer from spurious regression³⁵. Hence, the Augmented Dickey Fuller unit root was used to test the stationarity of the time series data. Table 4.2 presents our results.

Table 4.2 : Augmented Dickey-Fuller Unit Root Test

ADF Test Statistic	-7.519565	1% Critical Value*	-3.8067
		5% Critical Value	-3.0199
		10% Critical Value	-2.6502
*MacKinnon critical values for rejection of hypothesis of a unit root.			

Source : *The Authors*

The result reveals that all values were stationary at 1%, 5% and 10%. This can be seen by comparing the observed values of the ADF test statistics with the critical values of the test statistics at the 1%, 5% and 10% level of significance. More results are presented in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 : Correlation Matrix

	GDPPCGR	MCAPGDP	TVSTGDP	DCPBSGDP	INSPGDP	TFAGDP
GDPPCGR	1.000000					
MCAPGDP	0.252666	1.000000				
TVSTGDP	0.233355	0.874906	1.000000			
DCPBSGDP	0.192364	-0.425249	-0.359324	1.000000		
INSPGDP	-0.490913	-0.064603	-0.136905	0.133193	1.000000	
TFAGDP	-0.176374	-0.100676	-0.011773	0.023946	0.206764	1.000000

Source : *Authors'*

As revealed from table 4.3, market capitalization has a positive relationship with economic growth. Thus, 1% increase in economic growth in Nigeria over the period is due to 0.26% increase in market liquidity of the Nigerian Stock Exchange, This may be attributed to increased confidence of Nigerian investors in the ability of the market to enhance liquidity. The total value of shared traded ratio which measures the organized trading of firm's equity as a share of national output on an economy-wide basis as well as complementing market capitalization indicated from the correlation results, shows there was a positive relationship between

total values of shares traded ratio and economic growth. Domestic credit provided by the banking sector as revealed from the correlation matrix had a positive relationship with economic growth. This shows that Nigerian banks have been able to provide funds for investment which had translated into growth of the Nigerian economy. It was also revealed from the correlation matrix that insurance penetration and size of the financial system has negative relationship with economic growth. Table 4.4 display our regression results.

Table 4.4 : Regression Results

Dependent Variable: GDPPCGR					
Included observations: 24					
Variable	Expected Sign	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
MCAPGDP	+	0.172064	0.090680	1.897487	0.0731
TVSTGDP	+	-0.206360	0.374349	-0.551251	0.5879
DCPBSGDP	+	0.152955	0.049211	3.108148	0.0058
INSPGDP	+	-0.581659	0.200572	-2.899997	0.0092
TFAGDP	+	0.778182	3.543709	0.219595	0.8285
R-squared		0.442178	Mean dependent var		2.667150
Adjusted R-squared		0.324742	S.D. dependent var		2.885401
S.E. of regression		2.371052	Akaike info criterion		4.747596
Sum squared resid		106.8158	Schwarz criterion		4.993024
Log likelihood		-51.97115	Durbin-Watson stat		1.501953

34. Gujarati, D.N. and Porter D.C (2009), Basic Econometrics Fifth Edition, Singapore: Mcgraw-Hill International Edition.

35. Granger C.W.I and P. Newbold (1977), "Spurious Regressions in Econometrics", Journal of Econometrica, Vol 2, pp 111-120.

Model Equation:

$$\text{Gdppcgr} = 1.000 + 0.172\text{Mcapgdp} - 0.206\text{tvstgdp} + 0.153\text{Dcpbsgdp} - 0.582\text{inspgdp} + 0.778\text{Tfagdp}$$

(0.0731)* (0.5879) * (0.0058) * (0.0092) * (0.8285) *

Note : * (p-values)

As revealed from table 4.4, the two indicators of bank-based financial structure (domestic credit provided by the banking sector as a percentage of gross domestic product and total financial assets as a percentage of gross domestic product) had positive impact on economic growth. While domestic credit provided by the banking sector was found to be significant, total financial asset ratio was non-significant at 5% level of confidence. The impact of market-based financial structure (market capitalization ratio) was found to be positive though had non-significant impact on economy growth, while the total value of shares traded ratio (another measure of market-based financial structure) was negative and non-significant at 5% level of confidence. The insurance penetration as revealed from the regression results indicates that its impact on economic growth was negatively significant at 5% level of confidence.

V. IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results from this paper reveal some interesting aspects of the Nigerian economy. While some sectors exerted greater impact on economic growth, other aspects of the Nigerian financial sector did not show any significant impact on the variable. The impact of the insurance sector on economic growth was found to be negatively significant. Unfavourable macro-economic environment; poor regulatory framework; market suspicion of insurance companies, among others³⁷, has been blamed as contributing to the poor state of the industry. For the industry to take its place in enhancing economic growth, government needs to create a conducive macro-economic environment for the practice of insurance and reinsurance as it is the lack of these that has led to reduced international interest in the Nigerian insurance industry³⁸.

Bank-based financial indicators proved to have positive impact on economic growth within the period of the study. The Nigerian banking sector has proved to contribute significantly to economic growth in Nigeria. This may be connected to the various reform policies over the years put in place by the monetary authorities most notably in 2005 through the consolidation exercise and the subsequent post-consolidation reforms all aimed at ensuring a well functioning and effective financial system. A well functioning financial system creates an enabling environment for the mobilization of household savings, allocation of resources efficiently, assisting in diversifying risk, and enhancing the flow of liquidity, reduction of information asymmetry and transaction cost as well as providing an alternative to

raising funds through individual savings and retained earnings. The post-consolidation reforms in Nigeria's banking sector have increased focus on risk management procedures and healthy corporate governance among the Nigerian banking industry.

These have subsequently strengthened and repositioned the banking industry in contributing effectively and efficiently to the development of the Nigerian economy through its intermediation functions³⁹.

The capital market is a network of specialized financial institutions, series of mechanisms, processes and infrastructure that, in various ways, facilitate the bringing together of suppliers and users of long term capital for investment in socio-economic developmental projects⁴⁰. It has been shown that large stock markets can decrease the cost of mobilizing savings, thus facilitating investment in most productive technologies⁴¹ and at the same time the stock market liquidity enables investors to trade equity easily is crucial for growth⁴². Findings of this study reveal that, market capitalization ratio had positive though non-significant impact while the total value of shares traded ratio was negative. This indicates that the confidence level of investors on the ability of the capital market to provide the much needed liquidity which investors craved for has not been fully realized. Greater efforts should therefore, be made by regulators such as the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to ensure that confidence of operators as well as investors are enhanced in the system. This will encourage investor to invest in the market which will obviously lead to increased productivity by various sectors of the Nigeria economy.

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Study of the Trilemma Policies and their Impacts on Inflation, Growth and Volatility for Brazil

By Yu Hsing

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Abstract - This paper finds support for the trilemma for Brazil, suggesting that the three trilemma policies are binding and constrained. Adopting an independently floating exchange rate regime, Brazil has pursued the policy combination of monetary independence and financial integration in recent years. More exchange rate stability or more financial integration reduces the inflation rate, and more financial integration reduces inflation volatility. More monetary independence reduces the growth rate. More financial integration reduces output volatility. Hence, more exchange rate stability and more financial integration produce positive benefits whereas more monetary independence yields a negative impact on the growth rate.

Keywords : *trilemma; exchange rate stability; monetary independence; financial integration; inflation; growth; volatility.*

GJMBR-C Classification : *JEL Code: M1*



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Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



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Yu Hsing

Abstract - This paper finds support for the trilemma for Brazil, suggesting that the three trilemma policies are binding and constrained. Adopting an independently floating exchange rate regime, Brazil has pursued the policy combination of monetary independence and financial integration in recent years. More exchange rate stability or more financial integration reduces the inflation rate, and more financial integration reduces inflation volatility. More monetary independence reduces the growth rate. More financial integration reduces output volatility. Hence, more exchange rate stability and more financial integration produce positive benefits whereas more monetary independence yields a negative impact on the growth rate.

Keywords : *trilemma; exchange rate stability; monetary independence; financial integration; inflation; growth; volatility.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Many countries have considered or applied exchange rate stability, monetary autonomy and free capital mobility in order to protect the value of their currency, engage in monetary tightening or easing to dampen an over-heated economy or to improve a sluggish economy, and attract foreign investments to promote economic growth. The trilemma of international economics and finance suggests that only two of these three policies can be achieved simultaneously (Ghosh, Gulde and Ostry, 1997; Edison, Klein, Ricci and Sløk, 2002; Prasad, Rogoff, Wei and Kose, 2003; Levy-Yeyati and Sturzenegger, 2003; Eichengreen and Leblang, 2003; Frankel, Schmukler and Serven, 2004; Shambaugh, 2004; Obstfeld, Shambaugh and Taylor, 2005, 2009, 2010; Henry, 2006; Kose, Prasad, Rogoff and Wei, 2006; Prasad and Rajan, 2008; Aizenman, Chinn and Ito, 2008b, 2011a; Aizenman and Ito, 2012; and others). The U.K. pursues monetary independence and free capital flows and adopts an independently floating exchange rate regime. Hong Kong has a currency board arrangement, permits free capital mobility, and allows the internal interest rate to follow the world interest rate. China pursues a crawling peg exchange rate system and independent monetary policy and imposes some controls on international capital flows.

This paper tests the trilemma hypothesis and examines potential effects of these three trilemma

policies on inflation, economic growth, inflation volatility and output volatility for Brazil. The study of this subject is important. Brazil is the largest country in South America and is expected to consider whether the trilemma policies would result in low inflation, high economic growth and less volatility.

Several recent studies have examined the related subjects. Based on a sample of 155 countries including Brazil during 1973–2000, Shambaugh (2004) shows that the trilemma is a reasonable guide for policy study, that countries adopting fixed exchange rates would follow the interest rate in the base country more closely than countries pursuing floating exchange rates, and that monetary autonomy would decrease due to the pursuit of a fixed exchange rate regime.

Based on a sample of 18 industrial countries and 28 developing countries, Frankel, Schmukler and Serven (2004) find that although several large advanced countries can select their own rates over the long run, most other countries with flexible exchange rates react fully to international interest rates in the long run. In the short run, countries with flexible exchange rates respond to international interest rates with slower speed, suggesting that they possess some degree of monetary autonomy.

Using a multi-country sample including Brazil in the post-Bretton Woods data, Obstfeld, Shambaugh and Taylor (2005) reveal that the trilemma can be considered as a guide for macroeconomic policy framework. Countries without pegging exchange rates and capital controls would retain sufficient amount of monetary autonomy whereas countries pegging exchange rates and not having capital controls would lose significant monetary autonomy.

Using a large sample of 179 countries including Brazil, Aizenman, Chinn and Ito (2008b) indicate that greater exchange rate stability leads to more inflation or output volatility and a lower inflation rate; greater monetary independence results in higher inflation; and more financial integration lowers the inflation rate. Aizenman, Chinn and Ito (2011a) state that those emerging market countries with more converged policies and relatively large foreign reserves would experience less output volatility whereas those countries with relatively low foreign reserves would suffer more output volatility. Aizenman and Ito (2012) find that the three macroeconomic policies in emerging economies are converging toward an intermediate ground as they

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pursue managed exchange rates backed up by large international reserves, some degree of monetary autonomy, and restrained financial integration. These emerging economies experience less output fluctuations whereas emerging economies with relatively low international reserves as a percent of GDP would suffer relatively high output fluctuations if they select policy divergence.

a) *The Model*

Extending Aizenman, Chinn and Ito (2008b, 2011a), Aizenman and Ito (2012) and other previous studies, we can express the trilemma equation as:

$$K = f(ES_t, MI_t, FI_t) \quad (1)$$

where

- K = a constant,
 ES = exchange rate stability,
 MI = monetary independence, and
 FI = financial integration or free capital mobility.

If the goodness of fit in equation (1) is relatively high, it suggests that these three policies are binding and constrained. An increase in the value of one of the trilemma policies will reduce the value of one or both of the other policies. Note that equation (1) is written in the general form because different functional forms such as the linear, log-log, log-linear and linear-log relationships will be considered and tested.

We test potential impacts of exchange rate stability, monetary independence and financial integration on the inflation rate, the growth rate of real GDP, inflation volatility and output volatility:

$$Y_t = h(ES_t, MI_t, FI_t) \quad (2)$$

Where Y represents one of the following dependent variables

- π = the inflation rate,
 GY = the growth rate of real GDP,
 VI = inflation volatility, and
 VY = output volatility.

More exchange rate stability is expected to stabilize the currency value and price level, reduce uncertainty, and help economic growth. On the other hand, more exchange rate stability may increase or reduce inflation or inflation volatility, depending upon whether the pegged anchor currency would appreciate, depreciate or be volatile. Depending upon monetary easing or tightening, the timing and the magnitude, more monetary independence may increase or reduce the inflation rate, the growth rate of real GDP, inflation volatility and output volatility. More capital inflows are expected to increase aggregate demand and the supply

of funds, reduce lending rates, help economic growth, and may increase or reduce the inflation rate or inflation volatility. However, large amounts of abrupt capital outflows would reduce aggregate demand, destabilize an economy, cause currency depreciation, hurt economic growth, and may increase or reduce the inflation rate or inflation volatility (Chinn and Ito, 2008b; Aizenman, Chinn and Ito, 2011a; Aizenman and Ito, 2012).

b) *Empirical Results*

ES, MI and FI are obtained from Aizenman, Chinn and Ito (2008b, 2010, 2011b) and Chinn and Ito (2006, 2008) and have values ranging from zero to one. A higher value of ES, MI or FI indicates more exchange rate stability, monetary independence or financial integration. Exchange rate stability is represented by:

$$ES = 0.01/[0.01 + s(\Delta \log(\varepsilon))] \quad (3)$$

Where s and ε stand for the standard deviation and the nominal exchange rate. Monetary independence is measured by:

$$MI = 0.5 - c(i, i^*)/2 \quad (4)$$

Where c, i and i^* stand for the correlation coefficient, the money market rate in Brazil and the money market rate in the U.S. The index for financial integration is derived from the information regarding the requirement of the surrender of export proceeds, the presence of multiple exchange rates, and restrictions on current and capital account transactions, which are published by the International Monetary Fund. π is represented by the percent change in the consumer price index. VI is represented by the standard deviation of the inflation rate over a five-year period. GY is measured by the percent change in real GDP. VY is measured by the standard deviation of GY over a five-year period. The consumer price index and real GDP are obtained from the International Financial Statistics published by the International Monetary Fund and updated based on the data from the Central Bank of Brazil. The sample period ranges from 1970 to 2010.

In Table 1, the trilemma equation is estimated for the linear, log-log, log-linear and linear-log relationships. To avoid any negative values when a logarithmic scale is used, a value of 2 is added to ES, MI and FI, and a value of 2 is assigned to the constant K in equation (1). As shown, relatively high values of R-squared suggest that the goodness of fit is relatively high. Hence, there is support for the trilemma hypothesis, and the three trilemma policies have a tradeoff and are constrained. The coefficients are significant at the 1% level regardless of the functional forms used. The log-linear regression performs better than the linear, log-log and linear-log regressions due to smaller values of the mean absolute percent error or

Akaike information criterion. The log-log, linear and linear-log regressions rank second, third and fourth, respectively. According to the magnitude of the estimated coefficients in the log-linear regression, Brazil places similar weights on exchange rate stability, monetary independence and financial integration.

Based on the estimated coefficients in the log-linear regression, Graph 1 presents the logarithmic value of the constant, the predicted value of the regression, and three different policy combinations, namely, exchange rate stability and monetary independence, exchange rate stability and financial integration, and monetary independence and financial integration. The

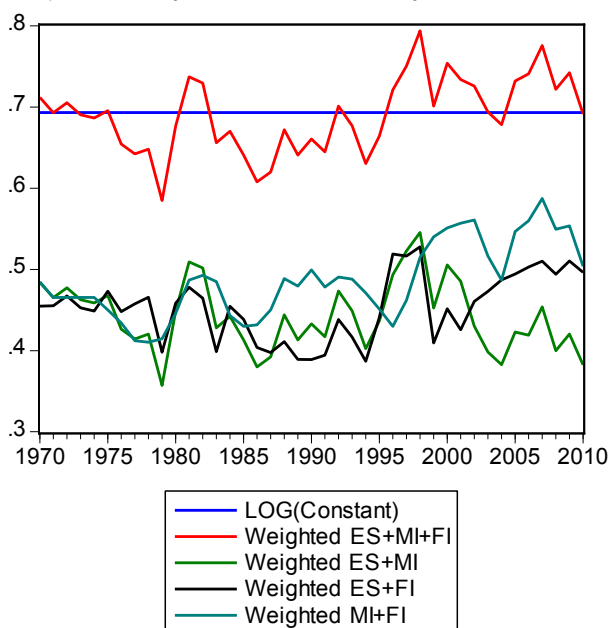
policy mix of exchange rate stability and monetary independence had been dominant during 1997-1998. Due to the 1997 Asian crisis and 1998 Russian crisis, the Brazilian authority switched from an adjustable band exchange rate regime to an independently floating exchange rate regime on February 1, 1999. Since 1999, the policy combination of monetary independence and financial integration has been prevalent. At present, the policy mix of exchange rate stability and financial integration ranks second whereas the policy combination of exchange rate stability and monetary independence ranks third.

Table 1 : Estimated Regressions for the Trilemma Test

Variables	Linear	Log-log	Log-linear	Linear-log
Exchange rate stability	0.438 ^a (4.395)	0.629 ^a (4.289)	0.152 ^a (4.395)	1.816 ^a (4.289)
Monetary independence	0.457 ^a (4.318)	0.885 ^a (6.000)	0.159 ^a (4.318)	2.554 ^a (6.000)
Financial integration	0.579 ^a (4.392)	0.657 ^a (4.615)	0.201 ^a (4.392)	1.895 ^a (4.615)
R ²	0.9983	0.9977	0.9983	0.9977
AIC	-1.067	-0.860	-3.187	1.259
MAPE	5.334	11.324	3.688	16.803

Notes: Figures in the parenthesis are t-statistics. Superscript letter a indicates that a coefficient is significant at the 1% level. There is no intercept in the estimated regression. In the log-linear form, the dependent variable is transformed into the logarithmic scale. In the linear-log form, the independent variables are transformed into the logarithmic scale. Sample period: 1970-2010.

Graph 1 : Analysis of Different Policy Combinations



Note: ES, MI and FI stand for exchange rate stability, monetary independence and financial integration, respectively.

As Table 2 shows, the regressions for the inflation rate and inflation volatility have higher explanatory power than the regressions for the growth rate and output volatility. The inflation rate is negatively affected by exchange rate stability and financial integration. More financial integration reduces inflation volatility. More monetary independence reduces the growth rate. Output volatility is negatively associated with financial integration.

Table 2 : Estimated Regressions for the Inflation Rate, the Growth Rate, Inflation Volatility and Output Volatility

	Inflation Rate	Inflation Volatility	Growth Rate	Output Volatility
Constant	2265.474 ^a (3.167)	983.850 ^c (2.082)	9.051 ^a (3.844)	4.515 ^a (3.964)
Exchange rate stability	-1716.093 ^a (-2.856)	558.734 (1.529)	0.057 (0.021)	-0.022 (-0.019)
Monetary independence	-675.521 (-0.867)	-561.058 (-1.503)	-8.884 ^a (-2.936)	-1.033 (-0.749)
Financial integration	-2980.051 ^a (-3.618)	-1526.433 ^b (-2.779)	-1.846 (-0.514)	-3.916 ^a (-3.244)
R ²	0.490	0.817	0.203	0.280

Notes: Figures in the parenthesis are t-statistics. The superscript a, b or c indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 1%, 5% or 10% level. Sample period: 1970-2010.

II. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has tested the trilemma hypothesis that only two of the three trilemma policies can be achieved simultaneously and studied their potential impacts on inflation, growth and volatility for Brazil. It has found support for the trilemma for Brazil, implying that the relationship among exchange rate stability, monetary independence and financial integration is constrained and binding. The policy combination of monetary independence and financial integration has been prevalent since 1999. More exchange rate stability reduces the inflation rate. More monetary independence reduces the growth rate whereas more financial integration reduces the inflation rate, inflation volatility and output volatility. In comparison, the findings that more exchange rate stability or more financial integration reduces the inflation rate are similar to that reported by Aizenman, Chinn and Ito (2008b). Other results in the paper are different from those found by Aizenman, Chinn and Ito (2008b). Therefore, a study of the trilemma and impacts of the trilemma policies for an individual country may generate different outcomes from those studies based on a pooled data with a large number of countries.

There are several policy implications. The adoption of an independently floating exchange rate policy makes it possible for Brazil to pursue the policy combination of monetary independence and financial integration. As the annual inflation rate of 5.81% and the money market rate of 10.87% in December 2011 in Brazil are higher than those in most advanced countries, there may be room for a change in monetary policy so that positive benefits would be achieved. While an independently floating exchange rate regime is expected to result in a fair value of the *real* exchange rate, large exchange rate volatility may lead to more inflation or output volatility. Brazil may continue to achieve more financial integration as it yields positive benefits. When there are more sample data, these

regressions may need to be re-estimated in order to determine whether the results would remain similar.

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The Competitiveness Dynamics in the Eurozone

By Antonin Rusek

Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove

Abstract - The goal of this paper is to analyze the long term dynamics of the competitiveness in the individual Eurozone countries and to estimate how their competitiveness is affected by the dynamics of both external (i.e. the current account) and internal (the fiscal stance and the credit dynamics) positions. It is today increasingly recognized that the diverging competitiveness between the Eurozone members is at the root of the current crisis. But the competitiveness dynamics and how it is impacted by the crucial fiscal and financial variables during the common currency existence is seldom analyzed and compared, especially as far as the different countries are concerned. This paper aims to contribute to filling this gap.

GJMBR-C Classification : JEL Code: O16, P33



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The Competitiveness Dynamics in the Eurozone

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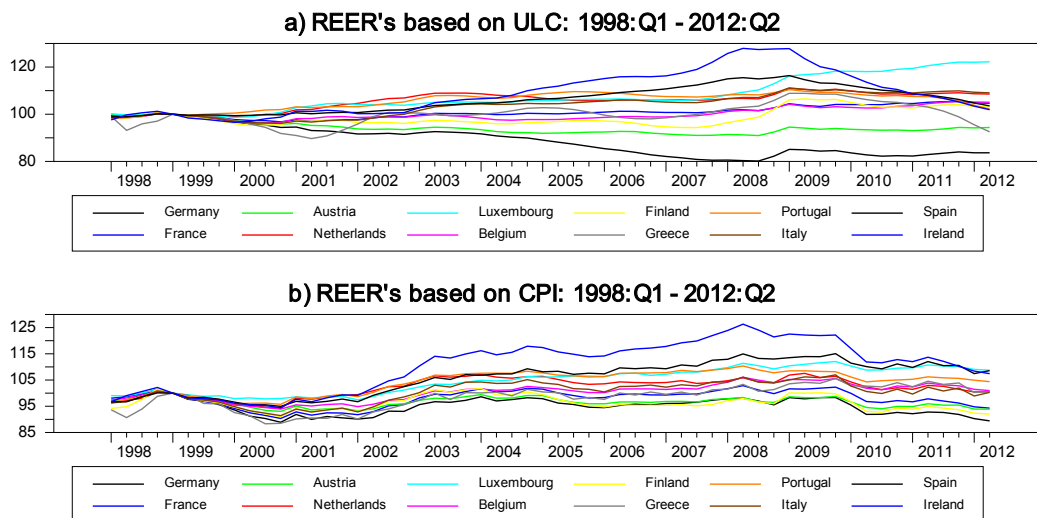
I. INTRODUCTION

In the first 10 years of its existence, the common European currency (Euro) appeared to be highly successful (DG ECOFIN, 2008). Indeed, the problems existed but were considered to be either insignificant or solvable. Most visible at the time were the divergences in competitiveness as measured by both the unit labor costs based or the CPI based real effective exchange rates – REERs. (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Real Effective Exchange Rates (REER's) for the Euro

1999:Q1 = 100



However, these were usually explained by pointing out that the Germany entered the Eurozone with the overvalued exchange rate, hence the observed divergencies were actually equilibrating processes. This explanation (false, as it turned out) was sometimes supplemented by pointing out at the possibility (and desirability) of the Ballasa–Samuelson phenomenon to be expected in the economically less advanced Mediterranean countries, together with possible statistical biases as a consequence of the structural changes associated with the advancing globalization processes. (For the more detailed discussion, see Rusek, 2012.)

The fastly diverging current account positions (growing deficits of countries on the Mediterranean littoral and growing surpluses especially in Germany) were attributed to the “catching up” processes and (to a lesser degree) to the observed German economic malaise (Sinn, 2007). At any case, the prevailing theory maintained that current account positions play no role within the currency union. Similarly, the persistent inflationary differentials – especially between the Mediterranean countries and Germany – were attributed to both the catching up processes and the structural inertia. Basically nothing to be concerned about as long as the overall inflation in the Eurozone remained close to the ECB target of 2% (even if this target was more often than not exceeded, causing some uneasiness).

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On the other side, the expansion (the “Europeanization”) of the large European banks outside their home countries, together with the development of the Eurozone-wide government and commercial bonds market and the continuous reduction in the “home bias” of financial asset holders were hailed as the common currency successes. In the opinion of many, these developments heralded the arrival of the Euro on the international scene as the equal (and perhaps, in the not so distant future, the successor) of the US dollar.

There were, indeed, the matters of concern. The sluggishness of the German economy (till 2006) was the major one. So was an increased international competition on some markets (sometimes referred to as the “impact of globalization”). It was felt that the “underperformance” of the major EU economy combined with the need to stay competitive with emerging markets may pose a threat (even if undefined) to the cherished “European” economic and social model. Finally, the Stability and Growth Pact (concluded in 1997 to provide a fiscal underpinning to the common currency arrangement) appeared to be under some pressure.

When the “problems” were recognized the effort was made to find remedies within the confines of the common currency. The German reforms of the labor markets and (to a degree) the welfare state (known as the Hartz IV and enacted in 2004) were successful. German economy re-acquired its dynamism (in the European scale and context) in 2006, mostly via an increased flexibility and global competitiveness. The globalization impact was to be addressed by adopting the so called Lisbon Agenda (March 2000 – please do not confuse with the Lisbon Treaty of 2009). This agenda aimed at “making the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy by 2010”. (Euractiv, 2004.) Finally, the SGP was revised (practically, watered down) in 2005.

Nevertheless, one has to distinguish between the “problems being addressed” and the “problems being solved”. Whereas the German Hartz IV reforms were undoubtedly successful for Germany, the Lisbon Agenda failed and with the onset of the ongoing crisis was for all practical purposes abandoned. Revised SGP was the subject of controversy from its inception, but it mitigated tensions and incipient conflicts.

Given the above outlined dynamics – including its political and institutional elements – how did it happen that the Euro, successful in its first 11 years, is today often doubted and many analysts question its survival in its current form? To answer this question, let us look at the actual interplay of economic dynamics, institutions and politics during the first decade of the Euro’s existence.

II. ECONOMIC DYNAMICS

The first effect of the common currency was the convergence of the nominal interest rates. This result

is understandable as long as markets consider the Eurozone an area where risks between different asset issuers (member countries) are very similar. Arbitrage then imposes an uniform return on the assets of the same currency denomination and (perceived) very similar risk properties.

Inflation remained close (but often above) the ECB’s target rate. However, within this overall number the persistent differences between the North and the Mediterranean littoral remained. This phenomenon requires more research, however one may surmise that the goods arbitrage remained imperfect in the spatially separated markets, supporting the price setting inertia (a tradition of higher inflation) in the South (the Mediterranean littoral countries).

The combination of those two phenomena resulted in the diverging real interest rates – the Southern (Mediterranean) ones being significantly less than the Northern ones. This, indeed, increased the “Southern” demand for credit, accelerating the economic growth and hence increasing the tax receipts. Spain and Ireland run large budget surpluses, reducing significantly their debt to GDP ratios. Italy achieved a primary surplus. After violating SGP criteria at the beginning of the 2000’s, Portugal achieved a budgetary stability. Only Greece remained a significant public finance problem, but it was not known at the time (even if suspicions existed).

The increase in credit was financed by the domestic banks which in turn obtained resources on the interbank markets – i.e. basically by tapping the “Northern” savings. Statistically, this phenomenon appeared as the capital inflow – i.e. the current account deficits.

However, this dynamics had important effects which remained unnoticed (or noticed but ignored) at the time. Most of the capital inflow financed the increase in consumption, especially in housing and related consumer durables. Given the generally lower consumption and the lower quality of the housing stock of the “Southern” countries, this kind of behavior may be sociologically and psychologically understandable, nevertheless.... Capital inflows maintained the domestic demand, a significant part of which fell on the non-tradeables sector. Combined with the labor markets rigidities, this tended to increase both employment and wages. However, the growth was mostly in the low productivity sectors (construction and services). Hence the unit labor costs (ULC) increased and the REERs based on ULC tended to appreciate. Simultaneously the Hartz IV reforms in Germany led to the (statistically observed) wage restraint and increases in productivity – i.e. the German ULC based REER tended to depreciate. These two phenomena led to the increase of the competitiveness gap between the “North” and “South”. Moreover, the capital inflow induced demand (and wage and credit) expansion in the South tended to perpetuate

the inflation and hence the real interest rate differentials. This prolonged the just described processes and led to increased “North-South” divergencies.

III. REER'S DETERMINATION – IN LIEU OF A MODEL

There is no generally accepted model which would formulate the determination of the REER's (or even a bilateral real exchange rate) in the context of an economic dynamics.

Recent studies (Akmal, et al. 2012, Combes et al. 2010, Mirdala, 2010) analyzed the real exchange rates (for developing and transition countries) as the function of economic fundamentals, even if the actual choice of relevant variables differed.

In this analysis we follow this approach, with the choice of the relevant economic fundamentals cum explanatory variables guided by the discussion of the Eurozone's economic dynamics above.

Eurostat reports two types of the real effective exchange rates – one based on the unit labor costs (ULC), other based on consumer prices. In our analysis we concentrate on the ULC based variable, which, in our opinion, better reflects the main interest of this paper – the competitiveness.

Real effective exchange rate (REER) is the weighted average of the bilateral exchange rates with major trading partners, with trade volumes as weights. Bilateral real exchange rate based on the ULC is the product of the nominal exchange rate and the ratio of the unit labor costs measures. Eurostat calculates the REER's for the individual countries as indexes. In their approach an increase in the relevant index indicates REER appreciation. Decrease then indicates (the real) depreciation.

Consequently, in cross-country comparisons, higher (and/or increasing) REER indicates the loss of competitiveness and vice versa.

“Fundamental” variables used in the empirical analysis are: debt to GDP ratio (Debt), unemployment (Unemp), current account to GDP ratio (CUGDP), net foreign investments to GDP ratio (NFIGDP), labor productivity per person (LPP), total labor costs (TLC) and the credit to non-financial institutions outstanding to GDP ratio (CRGDP).

This choice reflects the need to include both financial and non-financial variables and the impact of both public and private sector. (It should be noted that the choice was constrained by both the availability of variables and the need for consistency).

The debt variable (DEBT) reflects the impact of the public expenditures on the aggregate demand and

hence on both the income and GDP dynamics. If the GDP impact dominates the income effect (labor costs) the ULC decline and the competitiveness improves – and vice versa. (I.e. the estimated sign can be either positive or negative.) The debt to GDP ratio was preferred to the net surplus to GDP ratio because the latter is rather unstable and volatile in the quarterly observations.

The unemployment variable (UNEMP) effects both overall labor expenditures and GDP as well. Here, if the GDP effect (negative) dominates the ULC increases and competitiveness declines and vice versa. (Again, the estimated sign can be either positive or negative).

The current account to GDP ratio (CUGDP) reflects the impact of capital flows (current account is the negative of net capital inflows) on domestic demand – hence both the labor costs and the GDP. The net impact can be again either positive or negative, depending on the relative roles of GDP and labor costs.

The net foreign investments to GDP variable (NFIGDP) most likely reflect the impact of the changing domestic savings – investment nexus.

An increase in the labor productivity per person (LPP) should reduce the unit labor costs and hence to result in a real depreciation (decline in REER). However, in the context of European economic structure it is possible that in some countries the productivity increases result in higher wages and more leisure (i.e. relatively less GDP). It is then possible that ULC actually increase, resulting in REER appreciation.

An increase in total labor costs (TLC) implies higher ULC and hence the REER appreciation.

Finally, the total credit to nonfinancial institutions as a share of GDP (CRGDP) variable reflects the impact of the private expenditures on the aggregate demand and hence on both the income and GDP dynamics. Its impact on REER is similar to the debt variable discussed above.

IV. ESTIMATION AND RESULTS

The extensive interdependencies and feedbacks between the variables would suggest the VAR methodology as the appropriate estimation technique. However, given the quarterly frequency of variables (REER's are reported only quarterly), the potentially significant contemporaneous effects between variables cannot be excluded ex ante. That, indeed, renders the VAR approach infeasible. Hence the single equation approach was selected, specifying the REER as the function of the above elaborated variables (eq.1).

$$\text{REER} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{Trend} + \alpha_2 \text{DEBT} + \alpha_3 \text{UNEMP} + \alpha_4 \text{CUGDP} + \alpha_5 \text{NFIGDP} + \alpha_6 \text{LPP} + \alpha_7 \text{TLC} + \alpha_8 \text{CRGDP} \quad (1)$$

The feasibility of this approach was confirmed by testing all variables for stationarity – all variables for all estimated countries were found either stationary or trend stationary.

The adjusted form of eq.1 was applied (individually) to data for 12 Eurozone countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal). (Remaining 5 countries – Slovenia, Slovakia, Malta, Greek Cyprus and Estonia – joined the Eurozone to late to provide enough data for an empirical analysis.) The data used are in the quarterly frequency, spanning the 1999:Q1 to 2012:Q2 period (the data available at the time of writing). For the each country, the REER was specified as the function of the constant, trend, 3 own lags and the contemporaneous value and two lags of the each explanatory variable.

The STWISE procedure from the RATS software was used to perform the estimation. This procedure evaluates the estimated coefficients on the cross-recursive basis and provides the result which includes the statistically significant variables only. Using the SUMMARIZE utility of RATS, the summary values and significance levels (over all observations found

statistically significant by the STWISE procedure for each variable) were estimated for all explanatory variables specified above.

The results are reported in Table 1. The lack of uniformity across the countries is to be expected, however, some results are somewhat surprising, given the prevailing conventional wisdom.

Debt variable displays the positive coefficient (i.e. an increase in the debt to GDP ratio tends to appreciate REER) for Austria, Germany, Finland and Luxembourg, whereas the negative coefficient (an increase in debt to GDP ratio tends to depreciate REER) is estimated for Spain, Ireland, Italy and Netherlands. This indicates that in the latter countries an increase in public expenditures increases GDP faster than the wage bill, which tends to increase macroeconomic competitiveness. In all other countries the public debt to GDP ratio does not affect the competitiveness – the result of some significance especially for the Greece and Portugal.

Unemployment variable is negative for Belgium, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Netherlands and Portugal, positive for Austria and no impact for Germany, Ireland, Italy and Luxembourg.

Table 1 : Estimates for the REER's based on the ULC

Variable	Con	Trend	RXULC	Debt	Unemp	CUGDP	NFIGDP	LPP	TLC	CRGDP
Country										
AT			0.966 (74.69)	0.023 (1.41)	0.170 (1.33)			0.007 (0.52)		
			1	2				0 2		
BE			0.924 (35.76)		-0.124 (1.47)	-0.033 (1.96)	0.004 (2.20)	0.097 (3.84)	-0.017 (2.83)	
			1 2		2	1	1 2	0 to 2	2	
DE			0.877 (30.7)	0.047 (2.04)		-0.108 (2.75)	-0.006 (1.29)			0.111 (4.44)
			1 2	1			0 to 2			
ES			0.929 (29.6)	-0.59 (2.57)	-0.130 (4.12)			0.122 (2.94)		
			1 to 3		1			2		
FI			1.007 (28.02)	0.143 (4.54)	-0.872 (3.58)	0.067 (3.25)		0.008 (0.45)	0.026 (2.03)	-0.105 (4.10)
			1 2	0 to 2	0 1	2		0 1	0 1	1
FR			1.009 (100.9)		-0.201 (2.42)		0.010 (2.93)			0.018 (2.11)
			1 to 3		0 1		2			2
GR		-0.123 (5.15)	0.787 (22.05)		-0.20 (3.32)			0.222 (6.79)		0.067 (2.10)
			1 3		0 2			0 2		
IE			0.880 (32.21)	-0.040 (4.45)			0.003 (1.67)	0.105 (4.31)		0.029 (3.48)
			1 2	0 2			0 2	2		
IT	60.16 (8.79)		0.729 (18.98)	-0.074 (5.95)		-0.45 (6.66)	-0.018 (3.67)	-0.285 (6.40)	0.061 (6.66)	-0.103 (4.69)
			1	2		0 1	2		0 1	1
LU	21.78 (3.86)		0.78 (17.54)	0.080 (2.23)		0.036 (1.70)		-0.076 (2.07)	0.063 (4.27)	

			1 2			0 to 2		0 2	0 2	
NL	68.59	0.135	0.817	-0.117	-0.048	-0.098		-0.436		
	(5.44)	(5.28)	(14.68)	(5.72)	(0.36)	(3.42)		(5.23)		
			1 3	0 2	1 2	2				
PT			1.023		-0.114			-0.022	0.007	
			(38.95)		(3.68)			(0.82)	(1.80)	
			1 2					0 1	1	

Note : For each country, the numbers in parenthesis in the line below the estimated coefficients are the relevant t-statistics. On the line before that are the lags included in the reported number.

Negative sign indicates that an increase in unemployment affect wage bill relatively more than output – i.e. the recession (an increase in unemployment) increases competitiveness. This result is not entirely unexpected, but it raises a question of the competitiveness dynamics if (or when) the economic growth and employment are restored.

An improvement in the current account to GDP ratio reduces the REER (i.e. it improves the competitiveness) in Belgium, Germany, Italy and Netherlands, increases REER in Finland and Luxembourg and has no impact in the rest of the countries. Indeed, some may argue that this result reflects the reverse causality – from REER to current account. However, the role of the lagged current account observations puts doubt on this argument. Alternatively, we may surmise that the current account improvements reflect the rise of domestic savings relative to domestic investments. That put a damper on the domestic demand, reducing the wage bill relative to GDP and hence reducing (depreciating) the REER. The observations for Finland and Luxembourg then may reflect the shift from domestic demand to exports, which may increase the labor income relative to GDP.

An improvement in net foreign investments to GDP positions improves the competitiveness (reduction in REER) in Germany and Italy, reduces it in Belgium, France and Ireland and leaves the other countries unaffected. Here the explanation probably lays in the causality behind the net foreign investment dynamics. The lack of domestic profitable opportunities may induce an increase in investments abroad, reducing the domestic demand for labor and the wage bill relative to GDP – hence the decline in REER. Alternatively, the raising domestic labor costs may induce the shift of investments abroad, reducing the GDP relative to labor and hence increasing the REER.

The impact of the increases in the labor productivity per person increases REER (i.e. reduces the competitiveness) in Austria, Belgium, Spain, Finland and Ireland, but reduces the REER (i.e. improve the competitiveness) in Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Portugal. No impact is indicated for Germany and France. Indeed, we would expect an increase in productivity to improve the competitiveness. The positive coefficients then may reflect the peculiarities of the labor market (and public policy) functioning. In

particular, it would indicate that the productivity gains are dissipated in higher wages and (probably) the reduced work hours reflected then in a lower GDP.

The total labor costs impact is positive for Finland, Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal, negative for Belgium and neutral (i.e. zero) for all other countries. This is indeed to be expected – an increase in the total labor costs should have a negative (or, at best, the neutral) impact on the competitiveness in the globalized world economy. The estimate for Belgium is an anomaly, probably to be explained by the special characteristics of the Belgium labor markets.

Finally, the total credit to nonfinancial institutions as a share of GDP variable has positive coefficients for Germany, France, Greece and Ireland, negative coefficients for Finland and Italy and zero coefficients for the rest. The positive coefficients (REER appreciation) imply that domestic credit expansion affects wages more than GDP (i.e. credit is more likely for households rather than productive investments). and indeed, the vice versa.

V. CONCLUSION

The discussion above indicates that REERs for the Eurozone countries are influenced by the widely differering variables. Not all variables considered influence individual REERs and the impact of the same variables is often in opposite direction for different individual countries. The only variable with the common impact (its increase reduces REER – hence it improves the competitiveness) is unemployment.

The implication of this finding is that the current stabilization policies of a fiscal restraint may improve the competitiveness via rising unemployment – which is probably behind the recent competitiveness “improvements” in the Mediterranean littoral countries (especially Greece, but Spain and Portugal as well). Debt reduction per se improves competitiveness in Spain, Ireland and Italy, but has no measurable impact for Greece and Portugal.

The other side of the coin is: what happens if (and when) the growth returns and the unemployment declines. Will the competitiveness divergencies return? And if so, what will be the impact on the long run stability and convergence on the Eurozone itself?

It appears that the structural changes basically across the board, of the sort which channels the

improvements in productivity and the current account and the credit expansion (i.e. the basic elements of restored growth and employment) into the reduction of the unit labor costs, are absolutely necessary to address the competitiveness divergence issue.

It should always be kept in mind that unless the diverging competitiveness is addressed on the medium to long term basis, the Eurozone in its current configuration is unlikely to survive the next electoral cycle.

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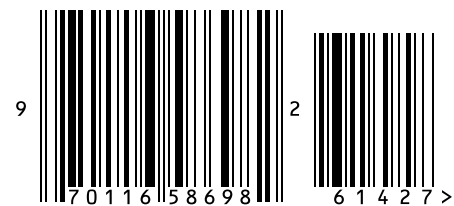
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