

Public Debt and Economic Growth in Tunisia: An ARDL Analysis

Sabrina Channoufi

Faculty of Economics and Management of Tunis, University of Tunis El Manar, Tunis, Tunisia
sabrine.channoufi@fsegt.utm.tn

ARTICLE INFO

Original Scientific Article

Article history:

Received May 2026

Revised June 2026

Accepted June 2026

JEL Classification

H63, O47, C32, E62

Keywords:

Public debt

Economic growth

Tunisia

ARDL

Debt overhang

Fiscal policy

UDK: 336.27:330.34(611)

DOI: 10.2478/ngoe-2026-0007

Cite this article as: Channoufi, S. (2026). Public Debt and Economic Growth in Tunisia: An ARDL Analysis. Naše gospodarstvo/Our Economy, 72(2), 1-9. DOI: 10.2478/ngoe-2026-0007

©2026 The Authors. Published by the University of Maribor, Faculty of Economics and Business, Slovenia, in partnership with Paradigm Publishing Services. This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Abstract

This paper examines the effect of public debt on economic growth in Tunisia over the period 1986-2024. Using an autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) model, the analysis distinguishes between short-run dynamics and long-run relationships while controlling for inflation, trade openness, population growth, investment and the budget balance. The bounds testing approach indicates the existence of a long-run relationship among the variables. The results suggest that public debt is negatively associated with economic growth in the long run. In the short run, the immediate coefficient of public debt is positive but statistically insignificant, whereas negative effects appear with a delay. These findings are consistent with debt-overhang and crowding-out arguments, but they must be interpreted cautiously because the diagnostic tests reveal residual autocorrelation. The study therefore highlights the importance of debt sustainability, the productive allocation of borrowed resources and the strengthening of fiscal governance in Tunisia.

Introduction

Public debt occupies a central position in contemporary macroeconomic debates, especially in developing and emerging economies where governments face persistent financing needs, social pressures and limited fiscal space. Public borrowing may finance infrastructure, education, health and stabilization policies, thereby supporting aggregate demand and productive capacity. However, when debt accumulates faster than the economy's ability to generate growth and fiscal revenue, it can become a source of macroeconomic vulnerability through higher interest payments, weaker investor confidence, lower private investment and reduced room for productive public expenditure.

^{*}Corresponding author

The debt-growth relationship is theoretically ambiguous. Keynesian arguments emphasize the possibility that public borrowing can stimulate output when the economy operates below potential and when borrowed resources finance productive expenditure. Classical and neoclassical perspectives, by contrast, stress the risk of crowding out, rising interest rates and intergenerational fiscal burdens. The debt-overhang approach further suggests that high debt may discourage investment because economic agents anticipate future taxation, fiscal adjustment or macroeconomic instability (Krugman, 1988; Kumar & Woo, 2015). The empirical literature is also mixed: some studies identify negative linear effects of debt on growth, while others highlight nonlinear or threshold effects that depend on country characteristics, institutional quality and the composition of public expenditure (Panizza & Presbitero, 2014; Law et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2025).

Tunisia provides a relevant case for examining this issue. Before 2011, the public-debt-to-GDP ratio was relatively contained and growth was generally positive, although volatile. After 2011, the country experienced political transition, weaker growth, fiscal pressures and rising public debt. The COVID-19 shock in 2020 further intensified these vulnerabilities by reducing output and increasing the need for public financing. According to the data used in this study, the public-debt-to-GDP ratio declined from 57.4% in 1986 to 38.8% in 2010, before rising to 84.9% in 2024. This trajectory raises an important question: has public debt supported economic growth in Tunisia, or has it become a constraint on long-run growth?

The objective of this paper is to empirically assess the effect of public debt on economic growth in Tunisia during 1986-2024. The contribution of the study is threefold. First, it focuses on a single-country time-series case where the debt-growth nexus is economically and politically important. Second, it applies the ARDL bounds testing approach, which is suitable when variables are integrated of order zero and one, provided none is integrated of order two (Pesaran et al., 2001). Third, it explicitly distinguishes short-run and long-run effects and discusses the results in relation to theoretical mechanisms and recent empirical evidence on developing economies and Tunisia.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents stylized facts on growth and public debt in Tunisia. Section 3 develops the theoretical

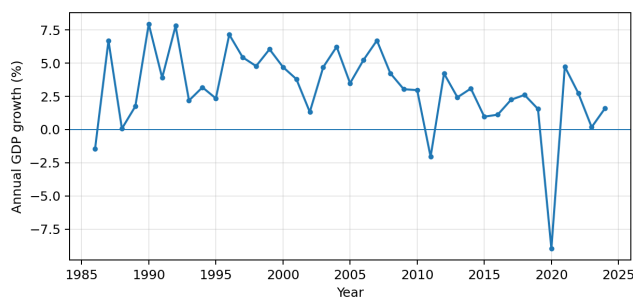
background and links it to the debt-growth mechanisms. Section 4 reviews the empirical literature. Section 5 describes the data and methodology. Section 6 reports the empirical results. Section 7 discusses the findings and their policy implications. Section 8 presents diagnostic tests and limitations. Section 9 concludes.

Stylized Facts on Growth and Public Debt in Tunisia

The Tunisian economy over 1986-2024 can be divided into three broad phases. During 1986-2010, real GDP growth was generally positive but volatile, with several episodes of acceleration and slowdown. The public-debt-to-GDP ratio remained broadly controlled and even declined over the period, suggesting a relatively more stable fiscal position. During 2011-2019, the post-revolution period was marked by weaker and more unstable growth, rising public spending pressures and increasing public debt. The third phase, from 2020 onward, was dominated by the COVID-19 shock, which caused a severe contraction of output in 2020 and intensified fiscal vulnerabilities. The recovery that followed remained fragile, with growth rates well below the strongest pre-2011 episodes.

Figure 1

Economic growth in Tunisia, 1986-2024



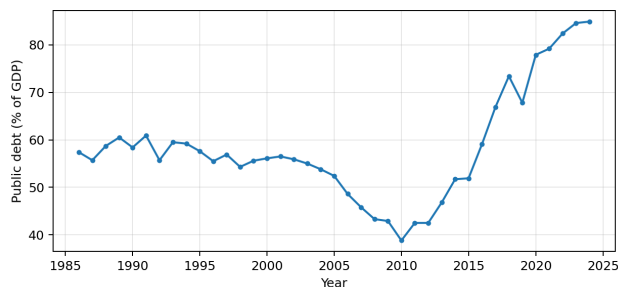
Note: Annual GDP growth is expressed in percent.

Source: Author's elaboration based on World Bank data.

Figure 1 shows that growth was highly volatile over the full period. The negative growth observed in 1986 and 2011, and especially the sharp contraction in 2020, reflects the sensitivity of the Tunisian economy to domestic and external shocks. The post-2011 period is characterized not only by lower average growth but also by a weaker capacity to sustain strong rebounds. This macroeconomic background is important because debt sustainability depends not only on the level of debt but also on the growth rate of the economy and the fiscal capacity of the state.

Figure 2

Public debt ratio in Tunisia, 1986-2024



Note: Public debt is expressed as a percentage of GDP.

Source: Author's elaboration based on Tunisian Ministry of Finance data.

Figure 2 indicates a clear structural change in the debt trajectory after 2011. The ratio of public debt to GDP fell from 57.4% in 1986 to 38.8% in 2010, but increased afterwards, reaching 84.9% in 2024. This rise coincided with weaker growth, higher current expenditure pressures and repeated macroeconomic shocks. The stylized facts therefore provide preliminary motivation for an econometric analysis of whether the increase in debt has been associated with lower growth in the long run.

Theoretical Background: Mechanisms Linking Public Debt and Growth

Keynesian Perspective

From a Keynesian perspective, public debt can have a positive effect on growth when the economy faces insufficient aggregate demand. Borrowing allows the government to increase expenditure without immediately increasing taxes, and the resulting fiscal stimulus may raise output through the multiplier effect (Keynes, 1936). This mechanism is especially relevant during recessions or exceptional shocks, when private demand is weak. Public debt can also support long-run growth if it finances productive investment such as infrastructure, education, health and digital transformation. In this case, the sign of the expected effect is positive, particularly in the short run and when idle resources exist.

Classical and Neoclassical Perspective

The classical and neoclassical approaches emphasize the potential negative effects of public debt. When the government borrows heavily, it may absorb domestic

savings and reduce the resources available to the private sector. This crowding-out mechanism can increase the cost of credit and reduce private investment, thereby weakening capital accumulation and growth. In addition, persistent deficits may raise expectations of future taxes and create uncertainty. Under the Ricardian-equivalence argument formalized by Barro (1974), forward-looking agents may increase saving in anticipation of future taxation, reducing the expansionary impact of debt-financed expenditure.

Debt-Overhang Perspective

The debt-overhang theory argues that high debt can reduce growth by lowering expected returns to investment. If investors believe that a significant share of future income will be used to service debt, they may postpone or reduce investment. High debt can also increase sovereign risk, raise borrowing costs and reduce fiscal space for productive spending (Krugman, 1988; Pattillo et al., 2002). The expected effect is therefore negative when debt exceeds the economy's repayment capacity or when borrowed resources are used mainly for current expenditure rather than productivity-enhancing investment.

Implications for This Study

These theoretical perspectives imply that the effect of public debt on growth may differ between the short and long run. A short-run positive effect may occur if debt finances temporary stabilization. A delayed or long-run negative effect may occur when debt accumulation increases servicing costs, reduces fiscal space, crowds out private investment or weakens confidence. The ARDL framework is therefore appropriate because it allows short-run dynamics and long-run relationships to be examined simultaneously.

Empirical Literature Review

The empirical literature on public debt and growth has expanded considerably, but the findings remain heterogeneous. Differences across studies are explained by sample composition, debt indicators, estimation methods, institutional quality, fiscal structure and the possibility of nonlinear thresholds. Early contributions often focused on external debt and debt overhang in developing economies, while more recent studies examine public debt, domestic debt, governance, nonlinear effects and country-specific dynamics.

Table 1*Literature review*

Study	Sample/context	Method	Main finding relevant to this paper
Pattillo et al. (2002)	Developing countries	Panel regressions	External debt has nonlinear effects; high debt reduces growth.
Kumar & Woo (2015)	Advanced and emerging economies	Panel estimation	Higher public debt is associated with lower subsequent growth.
Panizza & Presbitero (2014)	Advanced economies	Survey and empirical discussion	The negative correlation between debt and growth should not be interpreted mechanically as causality.
Law et al. (2021)	Developing countries	Nonlinear/threshold analysis	The debt-growth relationship is nonlinear and depends on thresholds and country characteristics.
Aloulou et al. (2023)	Tunisia, 1965-2019	ARDL and NARDL	External debt affects growth asymmetrically; Tunisia's growth is more sensitive to debt increases and decreases.
Ibañez Martín et al. (2024)	47 developing countries, 1970-2019	Panel threshold and dynamic panel threshold models	External debt becomes detrimental above certain thresholds; Tunisia appears in the higher initial-GDP regime in their sample.
Shah et al. (2025)	Developing countries, 1990-2020	Dynamic panel threshold model	Public debt negatively affects growth above estimated threshold levels, with heterogeneous effects by income group.
Musa et al. (2025)	High-income countries, 1990-2020	MMQR panel approach	The effect of public debt varies across growth quantiles and depends on governance quality.
Chirwa & Odhiambo (2020)	Euro area countries	Dynamic panel ARDL	Public debt is negatively associated with growth in both short and long run.
Nabli (2023)	Tunisia	Debt sustainability analysis	Tunisia faces rising public debt sustainability risks under adverse scenarios.

Source: Author's compilation.

Overall, the literature review from Table 1 suggests four lessons that guide the present study. First, the impact of debt is not automatically negative: it depends on how borrowing is used and on macroeconomic conditions. Second, high debt is more likely to harm growth when it creates debt-servicing pressure, fiscal uncertainty or crowding-out effects. Third, nonlinear and threshold effects are important in developing economies. Fourth, country-specific analysis remains necessary because institutional quality, debt composition and fiscal structure differ across countries. In this respect, the Tunisian case is particularly relevant because the post-2011 rise in debt coincided with weak growth, increasing

current expenditure and repeated shocks.

Data and Methodology

Data and Variable Definition

The empirical analysis uses annual data for Tunisia over 1986-2024. The dependent variable is real GDP growth. The key explanatory variable is public debt as a percentage of GDP. Control variables include inflation, trade openness, population growth, gross fixed capital formation and the budget balance. Data are obtained from the World Bank and the Tunisian Ministry of Finance.

Table 2
Variable definition

Variable notation	Definition	Source
GDPGROWTH	Annual GDP growth rate (%)	World Bank (2026)
DEBT	Public debt-to-GDP ratio (%)	Ministry of Finance of Tunisia (2026)
INF	Inflation rate, consumer prices (%)	World Bank (2026)
OPEN	Trade openness, exports plus imports as % of GDP	World Bank (2026)
POP	Annual population growth (%)	World Bank (2026)
INV	Gross fixed capital formation as % of GDP	World Bank (2026)
DEF	Budget balance/deficit as % of GDP	Ministry of Finance of Tunisia (2026)

Source: Author's compilation.

Model Specification

The starting point is a growth equation in which economic growth depends on public debt and a set of macroeconomic control variables:

$$GDPGROWTH_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 DEBT_t + \alpha_2 INF_t + \alpha_3 OPEN_t + \alpha_4 POP_t + \alpha_5 INV_t + \alpha_6 DEF_t + \varepsilon_t \quad (1)$$

Where GDPGROWTH denotes the annual growth rate of real GDP, DEBT is the public debt-to-GDP ratio, INF represents the inflation rate, OPEN denotes trade openness, POP represents population growth, INV is gross fixed capital formation, and DEF denotes the budget deficit-to-GDP ratio. The term ε_t is the error term.

Because the relationship between public debt and economic growth may involve delayed effects, and because the variables are integrated of mixed orders $I(0)$ and $I(1)$, this study estimates an autoregressive distributed lag model. The general ARDL specification can be written as follows:

$$GDPGROWTH_t = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^p \beta_i GDPGROWTH_{t-i} + \sum_{j=0}^{q1} \gamma_j DEBT_{t-j} + \sum_{k=0}^{q2} \delta_k INF_{t-k} + \sum_{l=0}^{q3} \varphi_l OPEN_{t-l} + \sum_{m=0}^{q4} \theta_m POP_{t-m} + \sum_{n=0}^{q5} \lambda_n INV_{t-n} +$$

$$\sum_{s=0}^{q6} \psi_s DEF_{t-s} + u_t \quad (2)$$

Where p is the lag order of the dependent variable and $q_1, q_2, q_3, q_4, q_5, q_6$ are the lag orders of the explanatory variables. This specification allows the model to capture both the contemporaneous and lagged effects of public debt and the control variables on economic growth.

The error-correction representation of the ARDL model is specified as follows:

$$\Delta GDPGROWTH_t = c + \sum_{i=1}^{p-1} \beta_i \Delta GDPGROWTH_{t-i} + \sum_{j=0}^{q1-1} \gamma_j \Delta DEBT_{t-j} + \sum_{k=0}^{q2-1} \delta_k \Delta INF_{t-k} + \sum_{l=0}^{q3-1} \varphi_l \Delta OPEN_{t-l} + \sum_{m=0}^{q4-1} \theta_m \Delta POP_{t-m} + \sum_{n=0}^{q5-1} \lambda_n \Delta INV_{t-n} + \sum_{s=0}^{q6-1} \psi_s \Delta DEF_{t-s} + \eta ECM_{t-1} + v_t \quad (3)$$

Where Δ denotes the first-difference operator and ECM_{t-1} is the lagged error-correction term derived from the estimated long-run relationship. The coefficient η measures the speed of adjustment toward the long-run equilibrium. It is expected to be negative and statistically significant. A value between -1 and 0 indicates monotonic convergence, whereas a coefficient lower than -1 may indicate an overshooting adjustment process and therefore requires cautious interpretation.

Table 3
Correlation matrix

	GDPGROWTH	DEBT	INF	OPEN	POP	INV	DEF
GDPGROWTH	1						
DEBT	-0.3103	1					
INF	-0.1967	0.6190	1				
OPEN	-0.0580	0.1955	0.2430	1			
POP	0.1231	-0.2011	0.3085	-0.5661	1		
INV	-0.1067	0.3510	0.3528	0.3104	-0.1842	1	
DEF	0.4515	-0.6786	-0.4950	-0.1896	0.2172	-0.2602	1

Source: Author's calculations using Stata.

Table 3 reports the correlation matrix for the variables used in the empirical analysis. It indicates a negative simple correlation between GDP growth and public debt (-0.310). This preliminary association is consistent with the debt-overhang hypothesis, but it should not be interpreted as causal evidence. Overall, the correlations remain below the conventional threshold of 0.70, suggesting that severe multicollinearity is not detected among the selected variables. The ADF tests (Table 4) show that the variables are integrated either of order zero or order one, while no variable is integrated of order two. This supports the use of the ARDL bounds testing approach.

Table 4

Results of stationarity tests

Variable	ADF level	ADF first difference	Order of integration
GDPGROWTH	-5.925***	--	I(0)
DEBT	-2.345	-5.872***	I(1)
INF	-1.830	-5.675***	I(1)
OPEN	-1.208	-4.327***	I(1)
POP	-1.578	-2.712*	I(1)
INV	-2.097	-12.718***	I(1)
DEF	-1.978	-5.617***	I(1)

Notes: ***, ** and * denote significance at 1%, 5% and 10%, respectively.

Source: Author's calculations using Stata.

Table 6

Short-run coefficients

Variable	Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation
ECM adjustment term	-1.250222	0.000	Negative and significant; possible overshooting because $ \text{coefficient} > 1$
ΔDEBT	0.195249	0.269	Positive but not statistically significant
$\Delta\text{DEBT}(-1)$	-0.096826	0.564	Negative but not significant
$\Delta\text{DEBT}(-2)$	-0.386841	0.007	Negative and significant
$\Delta\text{DEBT}(-3)$	-0.222218	0.093	Negative and weakly significant at 10%
ΔINF	-1.147216	0.035	Negative and significant
ΔOPEN	0.348914	0.003	Positive and significant
$\Delta\text{OPEN}(-1)$	0.230188	0.006	Positive and significant
$\Delta\text{OPEN}(-2)$	0.128048	0.027	Positive and significant
ΔPOP	13.24036	0.104	Not significant at 5%
$\Delta\text{POP}(-1)$	-18.34893	0.022	Negative and significant
ΔINV	-0.002502	0.335	Not significant
ΔDEF	1.106659	0.010	Positive and significant

Source: Author's calculations using Stata.

The long-run coefficient of public debt (Table 7) is negative and statistically significant. A one-percentage-point increase in the public-debt-to-GDP ratio is associated with a reduction of about 0.20 percentage points in annual GDP growth, all else equal. This result supports the view that public debt in Tunisia may have

The calculated F-statistic (Table 5) exceeds the upper bound at the 5% level. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no long-run relationship is rejected. This result supports the estimation of the ARDL model and its error-correction representation.

Table 5

Bounds test

F-statistic	Lower bound I(0), 5%	Upper bound I(1), 5%	Decision
11.444	2.897	4.615	Cointegration

Source: Author's calculations using Stata.

The short-run results (Table 6) should be interpreted carefully. The immediate coefficient of public debt is positive, but it is not statistically significant; therefore, the study cannot claim a reliable immediate positive effect of debt on growth. The negative coefficients at the second and third lags suggest that the adverse effect of public debt appears with a delay, although the third-lag coefficient is only weakly significant at the 10% level. This delayed pattern is consistent with the idea that debt-servicing costs, confidence effects and fiscal constraints require time to affect real activity.

become growth-reducing over the long run. However, the result should be presented as an association estimated within the ARDL framework, not as an unconditional causal statement, especially given the diagnostic limitation related to residual autocorrelation.

Table 7
Long-run coefficients

Variable	Long-run coefficient	p-value	Economic interpretation
DEBT	-0.198803	0.031	A higher debt ratio is associated with lower long-run growth.
INF	1.540866	0.036	Positive coefficient; should be interpreted cautiously in the Tunisian context.
OPEN	-0.319860	0.003	Negative long-run association, possibly reflecting import dependence or competitiveness constraints.
POP	-2.671799	0.146	Not statistically significant.
INV	0.000068	0.983	Not statistically significant.
DEF	-0.103058	0.745	Not statistically significant.

Source: Author's calculations using Stata.

Discussion of Results

The negative long-run relationship between public debt and growth can be interpreted in light of debt-overhang and crowding-out mechanisms. In the Tunisian case, the increase in public debt after 2011 occurred in a context of slower growth, increased fiscal pressures and reduced fiscal space. When public debt rises without being sufficiently accompanied by a sustained improvement in the economy's productive capacity, it may adversely affect growth through several channels, including higher debt-service costs, reduced fiscal room for maneuver, macroeconomic uncertainty and a lower capacity to finance public expenditures with high economic and social returns. In this context, the effect of debt on growth depends largely on the quality of the allocation of borrowed resources, their contribution to productive investment and the overall sustainability of fiscal policy.

The short-run dynamics provide a more nuanced picture. The immediate debt coefficient is not statistically significant, meaning that the evidence does not support the claim that debt has an immediate growth-enhancing effect. The significant negative coefficient at the second lag and the weakly significant negative coefficient at the third lag indicate delayed adverse effects. This is

economically plausible: after borrowing occurs, its costs may appear gradually through higher interest payments, weaker investor confidence, reduced fiscal space and adjustments in public expenditure.

The error-correction coefficient is negative and statistically significant, which confirms the presence of an adjustment mechanism toward the long-run equilibrium. However, its value exceeds one in absolute terms. This should not be described simply as very rapid convergence; it may also reflect overshooting or instability in the adjustment process.

The findings are broadly in line with recent evidence showing that debt-growth effects are context-dependent and often nonlinear. Aloulou et al. (2023) find, using ARDL and NARDL models, that external debt has symmetric and asymmetric effects on economic growth in Tunisia. Ibañez Martín et al. (2024) and Shah et al. (2025) show that debt can become harmful above certain thresholds in developing economies. Panizza and Presbitero (2014), however, warn that the debt-growth relationship should not be interpreted mechanically because reverse causality and omitted factors may exist. The present study therefore contributes to the literature by providing updated Tunisian evidence up to 2024 while acknowledging econometric limitations.

Policy implications should be formulated carefully. The results do not imply that all borrowing is harmful. They suggest that the growth effect of debt depends on its use, cost and sustainability. Borrowing that finances productive investment may support long-run growth, while borrowing devoted mainly to current expenditure can weaken growth by increasing future fiscal burdens. Tunisia should therefore prioritize debt management, improve public investment efficiency, strengthen fiscal transparency and redirect borrowing toward projects with measurable economic and social returns.

Diagnostic Tests and Limitations

The diagnostic tests (Table 8) show that the model has several favorable properties: the stability tests are acceptable, heteroskedasticity is not detected and residual normality is not rejected. Nevertheless, the Breusch-Godfrey test reveals residual autocorrelation. This is an important econometric limitation because autocorrelation can affect standard errors, statistical inference and confidence in the estimated coefficients. For this reason, the conclusions should be stated cautiously and the results should be interpreted as indicative evidence rather than definitive proof.

Table 8*Diagnostic tests*

Test	Purpose	Result	Implication
CUSUM and CUSUMSQ	Stability of coefficients	Stable	Supports parameter stability over the sample.
Breusch-Godfrey LM test	Residual autocorrelation	$p = 0.0000$	Serial correlation is detected; inference must be cautious.
Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg	Heteroskedasticity	$p = 0.6002$	No evidence of heteroskedasticity.
Skewness/Kurtosis test	Normality of residuals	$p = 0.1287$	Normality is not rejected.

Source: Author's calculations using Stata.

Future work could address this limitation by considering alternative lag structures, robust standard errors, dynamic specifications with additional controls, structural-break tests, or alternative methods such as ARDL with corrected standard errors, VAR/VECM or nonlinear ARDL. In addition, the analysis could be extended by distinguishing between domestic and external public debt, productive and non-productive expenditure, and pre- and post-2011 subperiods.

Conclusion

This paper examined the relationship between public debt and economic growth in Tunisia over 1986-2024 using an ARDL model. The bounds test indicates a long-run relationship among the variables. The long-run coefficient of public debt is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that higher public debt is associated with lower economic growth in Tunisia. In the short run, the immediate coefficient of public debt is not statistically significant, while negative effects appear with a delay, particularly after two periods.

The results support the interpretation that public debt may become growth-reducing when it is not sufficiently directed toward productive expenditure and when it creates fiscal pressure through debt servicing. However, the conclusions must remain cautious. First, the immediate short-run positive coefficient is statistically insignificant. Second, the third-lag negative coefficient is only weakly significant at the 10% level. Third, the error-

correction coefficient exceeds one in absolute value, which may indicate overshooting. Fourth, residual autocorrelation is detected, which limits the strength of the statistical inference. The positive long-run inflation coefficient may reflect Tunisia-specific episodes in which nominal demand pressures, administered-price adjustments or post-shock recoveries coincided with growth, rather than evidence that inflation is intrinsically growth-enhancing. The negative long-run coefficient of trade openness may be explained by import dependence, weak export upgrading and competitiveness constraints, which can reduce the growth gains expected from trade integration.

These findings are also subject to important limitations, including residual autocorrelation, possible endogeneity and reverse causality between debt and growth, the small annual sample size, and potential structural breaks associated with the post-2011 transition and the COVID-19 shock.

The main policy implication is that Tunisia should not focus solely on reducing the level of debt, but also on improving the quality and productivity of debt-financed expenditure. A sustainable debt strategy requires stronger fiscal governance, better prioritization of public investment, improved domestic revenue mobilization and transparent monitoring of debt risks. Public borrowing can contribute to development only when it strengthens the economy's productive capacity and supports future repayment ability.

References

- Aloulou, R., Kalai, M., & Helali, K. (2023). The symmetric and asymmetric impacts of external debt on economic growth in Tunisia: Evidence from linear and nonlinear ARDL models. *SN Business & Economics*, 3, Article 112. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43546-023-00482-9>
- Barro, R. J. (1974). Are government bonds net wealth? *Journal of Political Economy*, 82(6), 1095-1117.

- Chirwa, T. G., & Odhiambo, N. M. (2020). Public debt and economic growth nexus in the euro area: A dynamic panel ARDL approach. *Scientific Annals of Economics and Business*, 67(3), 291-310. <https://doi.org/10.47743/saeb-2020-0016>
- Ibañez Martín, M. M., Rojas, M. L., & Dabús, C. (2024). Debt, economic growth and threshold effects: Evidence from developing countries. *EconomiA*, 25(1), 92-114.
- Keynes, J. M. (1936). *The general theory of employment, interest and money*. Macmillan.
- Krugman, P. (1988). Financing vs. forgiving a debt overhang. *Journal of Development Economics*, 29(3), 253-268.
- Kumar, M. S., & Woo, J. (2015). Public debt and growth. *Economica*, 82(328), 705-739. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecca.12138>
- Law, S. H., Ng, C. H., Kutan, A. M., & Law, Z. K. (2021). Public debt and economic growth in developing countries: Nonlinearity and threshold analysis. *Economic Modelling*, 98, 26-40.
- Ministry of Finance of Tunisia. (2026). Public debt data and fiscal statistics. Retrieved June 1, 2026, from <https://www.finances.gov.tn/>
- Musa, K., Janssen, M., Said, J., Zakaria, N. B., & Erum, N. (2025). The impact of public debt and quality of governance on economic growth in high-income countries. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 16, 2817-2843. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-024-02073-x>
- Nabli, M. K. (2023). The tale of three public debt crises in Tunisia, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire in the 1860s and 1870s. *Middle East Development Journal*, 15(2), 311-328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17938120.2023.2206754>
- Panizza, U., & Presbitero, A. F. (2014). Public debt and economic growth: Is there a causal effect? *Journal of Macroeconomics*, 41, 21-41.
- Pattillo, C., Poirson, H., & Ricci, L. (2002). External debt and growth. *IMF Working Paper* No. 02/69.
- Pesaran, M. H., Shin, Y., & Smith, R. J. (2001). Bounds testing approaches to the analysis of level relationships. *Journal of Applied Econometrics*, 16(3), 289-326.
- Shah, S. S. A., Dickinson, D., Tao, K., et al. (2025). The heterogenous threshold effects of public debt on economic growth: Empirical evidence from developing countries. *Open Economies Review*, 36, 243-280. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11079-024-09756-7>
- World Bank. (2026). *World Development Indicators*. Retrieved June 01, 2026, from <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>

Javni dolg in gospodarska rast v Tuniziji: analiza ARDL

Izvleček

Članek preučuje vpliv javnega dolga na gospodarsko rast v Tuniziji v obdobju 1986–2024. Z uporabo avtoregresivnega modela z razporejenimi odlogi (ARDL) analiza razlikuje med kratkoročno dinamiko in dolgoročnimi odnosi, pri čemer upošteva inflacijo, odprtost trga, rast prebivalstva, naložbe in proračunsko ravnovesje. Pristop preizkušanja mej kaže na obstoj dolgoročnega odnosa med spremenljivkami. Rezultati kažejo, da je javni dolg dolgoročno negativno povezan z gospodarsko rastjo. Kratkoročno je neposredni koeficient javnega dolga pozitiven, vendar statistično neznačilen, medtem ko se negativni učinki pojavijo z odlogom. Te ugotovitve so skladne z argumenti o prekomernem zadolževanju in izrivanju naložb, vendar jih je treba razlagati previdno, saj diagnostični testi razkrivajo avtokorelacijo. Študija zato poudarja pomen vzdržnosti dolga, produktivne porazdelitve izposojenih sredstev in krepitve fiskalnega upravljanja v Tuniziji.

Ključne besede: javni dolg, gospodarska rast, Tunizija, ARDL, presežek dolga, fiskalna politika