

Deeper dive

How to invest in a rising inflation environment

— p. 2

Regional view

The economy in the driver's seat

— p. 3

Market moves

| | CIO view | -1w | -3m | ytd |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| S&P 500 | OW | -0.8% | 9.2% | 2.0% |
| Euro Stoxx 50 | | -2.0% | 9.9% | -0.7% |
| MSCI EM | | -0.4% | 2.9% | 5.9% |
| FTSE 100 | | -0.8% | 4.4% | -0.5% |
| SMI | | -0.7% | 8.2% | 1.3% |
| NIKKEI 225 | | -2.5% | 10.5% | -1.0% |
| US high grade bonds | UW | 0.2% | -2.5% | 0.3% |
| Euro high grade bonds | UW | -0.4% | -2.6% | -1.9% |
| US investment grade bonds | | 0.1% | -1.9% | 0.2% |
| Euro investment grade bonds | | 0.1% | -1.2% | -0.6% |
| US high yield bonds | OW | 0.1% | 3.5% | 1.2% |
| European high yield bonds | | -0.1% | 2.0% | 0.7% |
| EM sovereign bonds | | 0.0% | -1.0% | 1.8% |
| EM corporate bonds | | -0.5% | 0.8% | 1.5% |

Source: Bloomberg, UBS as of 2 February 2017

OW = tactical overweight
UW = tactical underweight

Market comments

Calculations are based on the past five days

- **Equities** retreated across the board amid worries that the new Trump administration is prioritizing restrictions on immigration over a pro-growth fiscal policy. The S&P 500 fell 0.8%, while the Nikkei 225 was down 2.5%.
- **Fixed income** markets trod water over the past week, with US high yield advancing just 0.1%, while European high yield securities were down an equal amount. Emerging market sovereign bonds were flat.
- **Foreign exchange** markets were marked by a broad retreat in the US dollar, which lost ground against all other G10 currencies. The Norwegian krone was the biggest gainer, climbing 1.8%, while the Aussie dollar was up 1.6%.

In focus

US equity jitters. The S&P 500 Index logged its sharpest fall of the year on Monday, ending down 0.6% amid worries that the new Trump administration is prioritizing restrictions on immigration over pro-growth tax cuts and infrastructure spending. The market also declined on Tuesday, its fourth consecutive down session, as investors booked some post-election gains. *CIO believes the US economy remains on sound footing and is overweight US stocks versus high-quality bonds in global tactical asset allocations.*

Fear not. Wall Street's favorite fear gauge, the VIX index of implied volatility for the S&P 500 index, hit its lowest level since January 2007 on Monday. While the gauge climbed through the week on concerns that President Donald Trump was prioritizing immigration policy changes over growth-boosting fiscal measures, the VIX still indicates little investor anxiety. That makes it unusually cheap for investors to protect against falls in US stocks. *CIO is overweight US equities versus higher-quality bonds. But for cautious investors, hedging S&P 500 exposure may be an attractive alternative to sitting on the sidelines in cash.*

Eurozone inflation returns. Prices in the Eurozone rose by 1.8% in the year to January, their fastest rate of growth in four years. Meanwhile Eurozone unemployment fell to a post-recession low of 9.6%, and last year's GDP growth topped forecasts at 1.8%. So is it time for the European Central Bank to withdraw stimulus? Not just yet. The uptick stemmed mostly from the rising oil price. Core inflation was steady at 0.9%. *CIO is overweight the euro versus the US dollar in global tactical asset allocations.*

Finally Abeflation? Not quite. Excluding fresh food, Japan remained in deflation, with "core" prices falling 0.2% in the year to December. But Japanese inflation data did surprise on the upside. Headline consumer prices rose by 0.3% year on year in the final month of last year, above the 0.2% penciled in by economists. *CIO expects inflation to return this year, led by the weaker yen and higher oil prices; a solid pickup in inflation and growth could drive the Bank of Japan to begin tapering. CIO is neutral on Japanese equities in its global tactical asset allocation.*

2016 the Year of the Profit? Full-year profits for Chinese industrial firms rose 8.5% year over year in 2016, the most in three years. A construction boom drove gains in raw commodity producers. The December print increased 2.3% year on year, a deceleration from November's 14.5% expansion. *CIO believes China's economic growth will continue decelerating in an orderly fashion and is overweight Chinese equities in its regional Asia Pacific asset allocation.*

Fed on hold. At its meeting on Wednesday the US Federal Reserve kept its fed funds target range the same at 0.50–0.75%, in line with market expectations. Changes to the statement were minor. Key phrases such as "Near-term risks to the economic outlook appear roughly balanced" were left as is, and there was also no alteration in the forward guidance. In our view, if the Fed intended to raise rates in March it would have sent a stronger signal in the statement. *CIO forecasts 25 basis point hikes in both June and December.*

Deeper dive

How to invest in a rising inflation environment



Mark Haefele



Mark Andersen

Cash has lagged other investments, returning just 2% over the past five years, relative to 61% for global stocks and 20% for investment grade credit (in US dollar terms). Perhaps the only saving grace for it has been low inflation, which has kept purchasing power fairly constant. But that could be set to change this year. Inflation is now on the rise.

Oil prices have doubled in the past 12 months, leading to sharp increases in consumer price indices (CPI) globally. Although oil only contributes around 5% to the US inflation basket, the magnitude of its price move has had a substantial impact, and higher oil prices also increase the costs of other CPI components, such as transportation and food.

Meanwhile, the US jobless rate of 4.7% is close to cyclical lows, and wages are rising at their fastest pace in eight years. Even in the slower-growing Eurozone, unemployment has fallen to 9.6%, a post-crisis low. This is important since local labor costs generate about 70% of the relative increase in prices.

The stage is set for a cash-eroding revival in inflation. We think it is time to shift more assets out of cash and into assets that can perform better in times of higher inflation.

Equities with pricing power

Equities are better positioned than other assets to generate returns in periods of inflation accompanied by growth. CIO expects US revenues in the fourth quarter of last year to have expanded at their fastest pace in more than two years. Still, investors will need to be selective: some companies can respond to wage and input cost pressures by raising prices, while others will face compressed margins.

CIO is overweight global and US equities in its global tactical asset allocation. Sector beneficiaries of rising inflation could include US and Eurozone energy stocks, US banks and real estate investment trusts (REITs), and Swiss dividend-paying stocks.

Inflation-linked bonds and senior loans

Rising inflation is generally not good news for fixed income returns – fixed coupons are eroded in real terms and increases

in central bank rates adopted to curb inflation can also trim bond prices. The main exception to this rule is US Treasury Inflation Protected Securities (TIPS), whose par value climbs along with inflation. They stand to benefit as US inflation expectations rise, and can prove an attractive portfolio diversifier, with a low (+0.37) correlation to a balanced asset allocation.

Although more growth sensitive than inflation-linked bonds, US senior loans, in our view, can also deliver attractive returns if higher inflation is accompanied by rising rates, as their coupons reset higher when borrowing costs climb.

Palladium and platinum

Precious metals have historically benefited from falling real yields, and stand to benefit again today as central banks seem likely to raise rates more slowly than inflation rises. Palladium and platinum should be additionally supported by greater economic growth and industrial demand. The global auto industry accounts for 80% of total palladium and 40% of platinum demand.

CIO's analysis also shows that hedge funds tend to generate superior returns to cash and stocks when higher inflation drives interest rate hikes. The HFRI Fund Weighted Composite Index rose 11.4% per annum on average during the last three US rate-hike cycles, compared to a 4.3% increase for US dollar cash and 7.6% for the S&P 500 Index (based on 1994–2006 data).

For more details on our inflation investment ideas please refer to "CIO Top Ideas – Investment ideas expected to benefit from rising inflation" and "Global economy – Keeping it real."

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Bottom line

Inflation is set to climb further this year due to rising oil prices and falling unemployment. Higher inflation accompanied by growth should benefit equities over cash and bonds. In equities, particular beneficiaries could include US and Eurozone energy companies, US banks and REITs, and Swiss

dividend-paying equities. To take advantage of rising inflation and growth in its tactical asset allocation, CIO is overweight global and US equities, US high yield credit, and US Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities all versus high-quality government bonds.

Regional view

The economy in the driver's seat



Themis Themistocleous
Head CIO European Investment Office

The start of the year has been eventful, continuing a trend set last year. New US President Donald Trump began the process of rolling back some of the old administration's legislation only hours after taking office. He removed the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade negotiations and followed up on his promises on immigration control.

In Europe, UK Prime Minister Theresa May set out her vision on Brexit, making clear she will pull the UK out of the single market. The French also delivered a surprise in the socialist primaries, with Benoît Hamon having been nominated as the party's candidate. In Germany, the leader of the SPD, Sigmar Gabriel, decided to step down and not run for chancellor; his replacement Martin Schulz has boosted SPD approval ratings.

Away from the political developments, the economy continues its strong performance. This year we expect growth to be more synchronized and for global growth to accelerate relative to last year. Inflation is clearly picking up worldwide,

and in Europe it is likely to become much more of a topic for investors in the coming months.

In Europe, where only a few months ago the market feared deflation, we expect headline infla-

"This year we expect growth to be more synchronized and for global growth to accelerate relative to last year."

tion to remain close to the European Central Bank's (ECB) target. However, given the uncertain political landscape and the still-fragile economic recovery, the ECB is likely to shift its focus from headline to core inflation to justify continuing its current quantitative easing (QE) program to the end of the year before possibly winding it down starting next January.

In an election year for Germany, the topic of continuing the current QE program is likely to attract attention and become an election topic. If the market starts anticipating an earlier or sharper tapering, the spreads of peripheral government bonds could widen versus core bonds. Higher interest rate risk in coming years would also pressure EUR government bonds, and we see a high probability of negative total returns for EUR high grade bonds, with four to five year bonds being the least bad choice.

Higher interest rate expectations should support our positive view on the euro versus the USD. In addi-

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tion, we see the USD as overvalued. Of course, what happens in the US will also play an important role in the EURUSD rate, but Trump is unlikely to want a stronger USD, especially if he intends to protect jobs and generate new ones.

After five years of stagnation, earnings for Eurozone equities should start growing again, aided by a meaningful pickup in nominal growth in Europe and more synchronized growth globally. This, together with an attractive dividend yield, should support positive returns from Eurozone equities.

Kind regards,
Themis Themistocleous

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