

Deeper dive

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### Market moves

	CIO view	-1w	-3m	ytd
S&P 500	OW	-0.3%	5.6%	0.9%
Euro Stoxx 50		1.1%	9.8%	0.7%
MSCI EM	OW	2.8%	-4.9%	0.7%
FTSE 100		1.5%	2.2%	0.5%
SMI	UW	0.9%	1.3%	1.4%
NIKKEI 225		1.0%	17.2%	2.5%
US high grade bonds	UW	0.7%	-3.1%	0.0%
Euro high grade bonds	UW	-0.1%	-2.6%	-0.4%
US investment grade bonds		0.9%	-2.4%	0.0%
Euro investment grade bonds		0.0%	-1.3%	-0.1%
US high yield bonds		0.6%	1.4%	0.3%
European high yield bonds	OW	0.4%	2.0%	0.2%
EM sovereign bonds		0.5%	-4.0%	0.3%
EM corporate bonds		0.6%	-1.2%	0.3%

Source: Bloomberg, UBS as of 5 January 2017

OW = tactical overweight

UW = tactical underweight

### Market comments

Calculations are based on the past five days

- **Equities** had a strong week overall, led by a 2.8% rise in emerging markets. Stocks in the Eurozone and Japan also moved higher. US stocks fell 0.3%.
- **Fixed income** markets were mixed, with European high yield bonds climbing 0.4% and euro high grade bonds declining 0.1%. US high yield bonds were up 0.6%.
- **Currency markets** were characterized by broad weakness in the US dollar versus other G10 currencies. The Canadian dollar was the biggest winner, rising 1.5%

## In focus

**Wait a minute.** The minutes of its December meeting further confirmed that the US Federal Reserve is in go-slow mode. Participants agreed that it was too soon to adjust to the fiscal expansion expected under a Donald Trump presidency. Just as the markets are trying to figure out what Trumponomics will mean for government policy, so is the Fed. The minutes make it clear that more or less fiscal stimulus will likely be met with more or fewer rate hikes. Overall, they leave the impression that the Federal Open Market Committee expects to hike at a gradual pace. *CIO maintains its view that the Fed will hike twice this year.*

**US activity accelerates.** Last month the ISM manufacturing index showed the fastest US growth in two years. The 54.7 December reading was up by 1.5 points, beating Wall Street forecasts and comfortably above the 50 level that separates expansion from contraction. *CIO believes US industry is rebounding from a period of weakness last year, which supports our overweight position in US equities versus government bonds.*

**Piñata peso.** Mexico's currency was among last year's worst performers as investors worried over the impact of a Trump presidency. The new year didn't start any better for it. The peso fell nearly 2% versus the US dollar earlier this week, approaching a record low after US auto-maker Ford said it was abandoning plans for a new USD 1.6bn factory in the country. Trump had threatened to impose tariffs on some cars made by General Motors in Mexico. *CIO expects Mexican inflation to climb to 4% this year, up from its year-end close of 2.8%.*

**Eurozone inflation highest since 2013.** The region's consumer prices rose 1.1% in the 12 months to December, the first time inflation has exceeded 1% in over three years. Core inflation, which strips out the effects of the recent increase in energy prices, also nudged higher.

Despite the rise, inflation remains some distance from the European Central Bank's target, promising a continuation of accommodative policies. *This sustained monetary stimulus supports the CIO overweight position in euro high yield bonds since it encourages investors to reach further down the credit curve.*

**Britain's Brexit bonus.** The Markit manufacturing purchasing managers' index hit a two-and-a-half year high, with activity spurred by the post-referendum slump in sterling. The reading reached 56.1 in December, up from 53.6 the previous month. Meanwhile the FTSE 100 opened the year by setting a record. *But CIO expects losers from Brexit too. Higher inflation, set to average 2.8% this year, will likely erode consumer spending power.*

**A bigger basket for China.** The People's Bank of China has been eager to direct market attention away from the yuan's value against a soaring US dollar. In late 2015 it disclosed that it was looking at the yuan in relation to a basket of main trading partners' currencies. Now it has expanded this reference basket from 13 currencies to 24 – adding the likes of the South African rand and Mexican peso, effective 1 January. The dollar weighting falls from 26.4% to 22.4%, while the euro's influence was scaled back even more aggressively. *CIO expects USDCNY to weaken further and reach 7.2 by mid-year due to capital outflows and slower economic growth.*

**Asia's services sector gains ground.** The latest round of services' PMIs signaled that the service sector activities of both China and Japan remained strong as the year ended; the Caixin China Services PMI rose for the fourth straight month to 53.4 in December, its highest reading since July 2015. Meanwhile, the Nikkei Japan Services PMI also improved for the third month in a row, reaching 52.3, the highest mark since last January, thanks to a solid gain in new orders.

Deeper dive

# How I learned to stop worrying and love the bonds



**Justin Waring**



**Michael Crook**

Last year’s market performance in Twitter form? Equity returns strong, bond returns flat. Despite institutional investors appearing to be engaged in a record shift from US stocks into bonds, the weak performance of the latter has many private investors asking whether bonds are still worth owning.

We think they continue to play a vital portfolio role, even when rates are rising, for the following reasons:

### 1. Income and stability

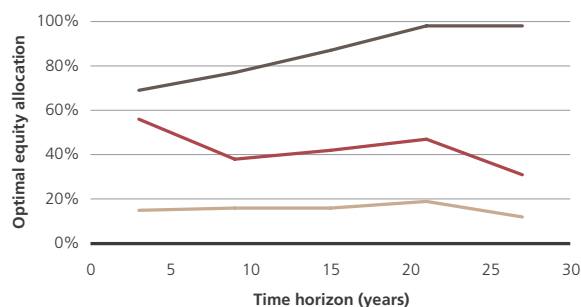
A bond owner is entitled to periodic interest payments and principal repayment at maturity; the predictability of the amount and the timing of the payments are fundamental to low bond market volatility.

### 2. Portfolio diversification

Stocks and bonds are uncorrelated over the long run, so the two markets’ returns move independently. Yet bonds tend to benefit from a “flight to quality” during

## Equities add return but also volatility and uncertainty

Optimal equity allocation for maximizing different criteria, 1926–2016



— Max. return  
 — Highest chance of meeting 5% hurdle  
 — Max. risk-adjusted return

Source: Ibbotson, UBS, as of 4 January 2017

equity market declines. Holding bonds can help reduce portfolio drawdown intensity and duration when stocks are falling, giving investors the psychological and financial wherewithal both to hold the course and to take advantage of opportunities. In fact, despite the long-term outperformance of stocks, the highest-returning portfolio of a given time frame shorter than 20 years typically includes some bonds (see figure).

### 3. Liability matching

Finally, bonds provide a clear mechanism for meeting spending objectives with assets. This is the most fundamental rationale for holding them. It also explains why pension funds buy fixed income. Like them, investors who lock in spending goals with bond interest and maturing principal can dedicate the remainder of their assets to long-term growth instead of reaching for yield across their portfolio.

Day-to-day volatility (or price swings) isn’t really risk, which should be measured relative to goals. The lowest-risk asset you can own for a liability due tomorrow is cash, for a liability due in five years a five-year bond, and so on. Looked at this way, higher rates offer an opportunity to meet goals with less capital.

Rising rates are a short-term headwind for bond returns (due to duration risk), but they’re a long-term tailwind as reinvestment risk (the possibility of bond payments needing to be reinvested at lower interest rates) reverses course. Investor impact will depend on the pace of interest rate changes, the rate sensitivity of the bond investment, and the investor’s holding period.

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## Bottom line

Diversified investors stand to benefit from a rising rate environment, with interim bond losses likely offset by higher risk-asset returns as growth accelerates and inflation firms. We remain underweight US government

bonds relative to Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities and US equities in global portfolios, though improved bond yields led us to reduce our underweight versus US stocks.

## Regional view

# Who is buying the euro?



**Paul Donovan**  
Global Chief Economist  
UBS Wealth Management

With the US Federal Reserve raising interest rates and President Mario Draghi of the European Central Bank still seemingly addicted to quantitative policy easing, many investors are wondering who wants to buy the euro. The answer is simple: the whole world. The problem this year is more likely to be finding anyone who wants to buy the US dollar.

Take the example of the Middle East. Even with the recent oil price rally, most Middle Eastern countries are expected to run sizable fiscal deficits this year. The IMF expects Saudi Arabia's to reach almost 10% of GDP. To fund them, the Gulf countries are selling central bank reserves and pools of assets held by their sovereign wealth funds.

Imagine Saudi Arabia selling US Treasuries and using the dollars it receives to pay its civil servants. Then imagine those civil servants using their pay to buy a BMW car in euros. What is happening? Saudi Arabia is selling dollars and buying euros. No matter that an asset is on one side of the transaction and an automobile on the other – the for-

eign exchange market implication is the same whether Bunds or BMWs are being bought.

*"The problem this year is more likely to be finding anyone who wants to buy the US dollar."*

When the Middle East buys assets, it likes them to be made in the US (central banks buy roughly twice as many US assets as others). When it buys products and services, it prefers them produced in Europe (it purchases twice as much from Europe as the US). Thus if the Middle East is selling assets to buy goods, it sells dollars to buy euros.

This pattern holds true around the world, as the relative current account balances of the Eurozone and the US tell us. China, another economy divesting itself of US assets of late, imports more from the Eurozone than it does the US, as do the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation members as a bloc. Africa's preference for Eurozone products over American ones is overwhelming. Only Latin America exhibits any relative desire to buy "made in America."

So why isn't the euro stronger? Last year the US basically pleaded with the rest of the world to lend it money. US interest rates have been exceeding those of the Eurozone (whose interest rates are negative), as have US bond yields (many Eurozone bond yields are also negative). US equities outperformed those of

 **Podcast**  
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the Eurozone last year (by about 15%, with Eurozone equity performance negative).

In other words, the US basically did everything it could to persuade investors to buy dollars – and despite all of that effort the euro still trades within 4% of where it did a year ago against the dollar.

The challenge the US faces is that it needs foreigners to buy its currency daily to stop it from falling. In the first nine months of last year, foreigners had to purchase USD 2.7bn every day, more than the daily GDP of the Netherlands. Whenever they were disinclined to do so, the dollar weakened.

If they decide to wait and see what incoming President Donald Trump's policies will be before committing to buying more dollars, the greenback will fall. Wait and see is not good enough for the US.

So the question for the new year is not who wants to buy euros but, in the new abnormal of uncertain US policy reactions, who can be persuaded to buy dollars.

Kind regards,  
**Paul Donovan**

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