

weekly market view

macro strategy | 17 May 2019

This reflects the views of the Wealth Management Group

Editorial

Where to seek shelter?

- **Equity markets have held above key support levels despite escalating trade tensions. We believe domestic-focused defensive sectors offer safe havens amid the volatility.**
- **Equities:** The consumer staples, real estate and utilities sectors are likely to be relatively resilient if trade uncertainties continue.
- **Bonds:** While Emerging Market (EM) bonds have been hurt by trade tensions, Asia USD bonds offer stability on strong demand.
- **FX:** Volatility around 23 May EU elections is likely to provide a tactical opportunity to add GBP exposure. USD/INR is likely to face resistance around 71.00 as the Indian election concludes.

What's new?

- **Where to seek shelter?** Benchmark equity indices in the US, UK, Euro area, Asia ex-Japan, China and Hong Kong held above their 200-day moving averages (DMA) – a key support – after falling 2%-6% in USD terms since the start of May as trade tensions escalated again. Only Japan's Topix index fell below both the 200- and 100DMAs. In the US, domestic-focused consumer staples and real estate sectors have been relatively resilient. Similarly, in China, the domestic-focused consumer staples sector has been stable. Although we believe the two sides will eventually reach a deal, possibly by the G20 meeting in end-June, the coming weeks could see heightened uncertainty. While buying-the-dips remain a valid strategy over a 12-month view, domestic-focused defensive sectors are likely to provide safe havens against any near-term volatility, in our assessment.
- **Asian USD bonds stay resilient.** Escalating trade tensions have stalled this year's EM bond rebound as yield premiums rose. However, Asia USD bonds have been relatively resilient. We see limited impact on Asian USD corporate bond issuers as only a small segment of the market has direct exposure to the US. Second-order effects (i.e. a hit to Chinese growth) are a risk, but we believe the probability of a deeper sell-off (similar to 2018) is relatively low. We continue to view Asia USD bonds as a preferred holding given their defensive characteristics and sticky investor base. Also, the weakness in Asian currencies over the past few weeks (see page 3) could enhance the attractiveness of USD bonds for Asian onshore investors who have become larger buyers of Asia USD credit in recent years.
- **Weaker China data raises chances of more policy stimulus.** China's fixed asset investment, industrial production and retail sales growth data slowed in April as the economy gave back some of Q1's gains. We expect Beijing to accelerate policy easing if data continues to weaken, and especially if the US goes through with its plan to impose tariffs on all Chinese imports. The authorities have significant tools to offset the growth-slowing impact of an all-out trade war, including liquidity and interest rate easing, consumer subsidies and property market easing.

What we are watching

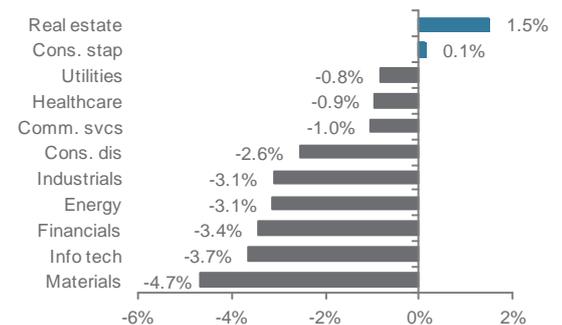
- Further China stimulus; US car tariff decision (18 May); US Fed meeting minutes (22 May); EU elections (23-26 May); Indian poll results (23 May); US home sales data.

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US real estate and consumer staples sectors have outperformed in the downturn amid trade tensions

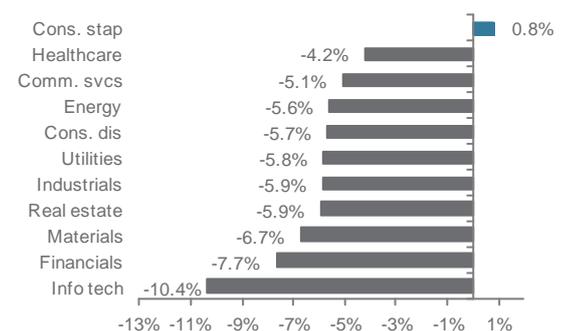
Performance of MSCI US index sectors since end-April



Source: Bloomberg, Standard Chartered

China's consumer staples sector has outperformed, underscoring its relative resilience

Performance of MSCI China sectors since end-April



Source: Bloomberg, Standard Chartered

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What does this mean for investors?

Global equities stabilised after a pullback in early-May, with Developed Markets (especially Europe) rebounding. Government bonds outperformed corporate bonds. The USD rebounded.

Equities: Is there a safe-haven sector amid escalating tensions?

- In the US, the consumer staples and real estate sectors stand out as being relatively shielded from the trade tension fallout. The consumer staples sector is dominated by the food and beverages industry. Although it has some exposure to China, it is largely focused domestically. The sector has been flat since the start of May, while the S&P500 index has fallen c.3% since hitting a record high on 1 May.
- The US real estate sector is a beneficiary of falling bond yields and lower Fed rate expectations as markets price in more than 70% probability of a rate cut by the end of the year. The sector has been up 1.5% since the start of May, while most other sectors have slumped. US consumer staples and real estate are core holdings in our 12-month asset allocation view; they could prove relatively resilient if trade uncertainties continue.
- In China, domestic-focused sectors such as utilities and consumer staples are likely to outperform, while property and aviation could underperform as a weaker CNY raises the cost of foreign debt.
- There is growing expectation that China may roll out more stimulus measures, particularly if the US proceeds with plans to impose a 25% tariff on another USD 300bn worth of Chinese goods by end-June. China's sustained policy support is a key reason why China is our preferred equity market in Asia ex-Japan.

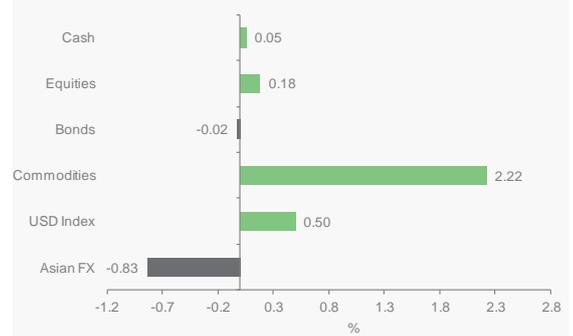
Bonds: Is the bond market signalling an economic downturn?

- The US 10-year government bond yield briefly fell below the 3-month yield for the first time since March. This 'inversion' in yields is usually seen as one warning that investors expect a growth downturn. Although we believe this is an important indicator of future activity, we've noted before that the curve has to stay inverted for a few months in order to provide a strong signal of an impending recession. Also, it is not a precise indicator in terms of timing – a better approach is to read this in conjunction with other signals, such as the US Leading Economic Indicator (LEI). Currently, the US LEI does not point to a sharp slowdown in growth in the near future.

FX: What is the outlook for GBP and INR given the elections?

- GBP volatility around the 23 May EU elections is likely to provide an opportunity to add exposure to the undervalued GBP. Initial supports around 1.2750 in GBP/USD and 1.7350 in GBP/SGD are likely to attract longer-term investors. Recent polling shows the Brexit party is likely to win the largest share of votes, gaining not only from Conservatives, but also from Labour. We believe the chances of a cross-party Brexit deal, which is positive for GBP, is under-priced by the market.
- USD/INR is likely to face resistance around 71.00 as the Indian election concludes, offering attractive levels to position for a return to 68.50. Investors are likely to price in a growth recovery and continued pro-business reforms if official results on 23 May confirm that the BJP-led NDA coalition will achieve a majority, albeit with lesser number of seats than in the current parliament. If US-China tensions rise, Indian assets could become more attractive to overseas investors if a stable government is formed. A key risk would be any escalation of the US-Iran tension that causes a sharp rise in oil prices.

Benchmark (USD) performance w/w*



*Week of 09 May 2019 to 16 May 2019

Source: MSCI, JP Morgan, DJ-UBS, Citigroup, Bloomberg, Standard Chartered (Indices used are JP Morgan Cash, MSCI AC World TR, Citi World Big, DJ-UBS Commodity, DXY and ADXY)

US equity market technicals have turned positive

Technical levels of key market indicators as on 16 May

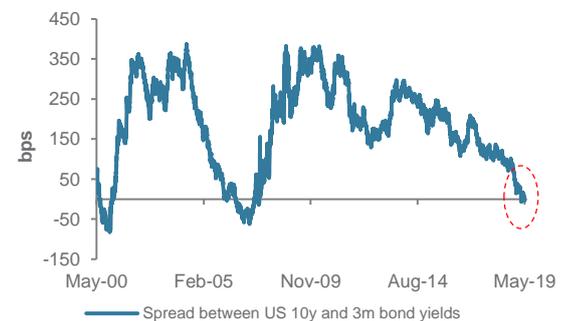
| Index | Spot | 1st support | 1st resistance | Short-term trend |
|--------------------|--------|-------------|----------------|------------------|
| S&P500 | 2,876 | 2,813 | 2,916 | ↑ |
| STOXX 50 | 3,439 | 3,332 | 3,468 | → |
| FTSE 100 | 7,354 | 7,265 | 7,359 | → |
| Nikkei 225 | 21,063 | 20,300 | 21,900 | ↓ |
| Shanghai Comp | 2,956 | 2,800 | 3,090 | ↓ |
| Hang Seng | 28,275 | 27,250 | 29,300 | ↓ |
| MSCI Asia ex-Japan | 633 | 595 | 663 | ↓ |
| MSCI EM | 1,011 | 967 | 1,067 | ↓ |
| Brent (ICE) | 73 | 69 | 73 | ↓ |
| Gold | 1,286 | 1,270 | 1,322 | ↑ |
| UST 10Y Yield | 2.39 | 2.20 | 2.57 | ↓ |

Source: Trading Central, Standard Chartered

Note: Arrows represent short-term trend opinions

US 10-year government bond yields briefly fell below 3-month yields in March and again in May, signalling investors expect a slowdown in growth ahead

Yield premium on US 10-year government bonds over 3-month bonds



Source: JPMorgan, Bloomberg, Standard Chartered

USD/INR faces a major resistance around 71.00

USD/INR



Source: Bloomberg, Standard Chartered

Top client questions

Q1. Is the weakness in Asian currencies over?

Not yet, from a technical perspective.

Currencies of export-reliant Asian economies, such as the CNY, the KRW and the TWD, have suffered since the start of the month as renewed US-China trade tensions raised concerns that business and consumer confidence could be hurt further. On technical charts, the Bloomberg JPMorgan Asia Dollar index (ADXY Index) stayed in a range over the past three months, marked approximately by a horizontal trendline at 107 on the top and 106 on the bottom. However, it has broken below the lower end of its range earlier this month.

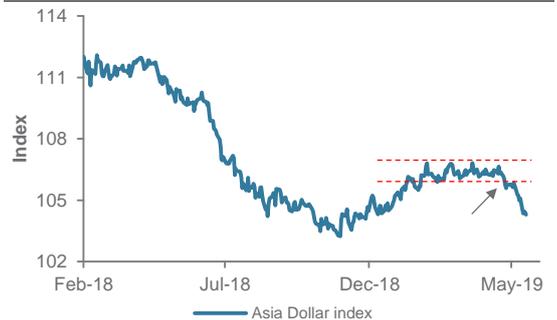
This break out from the range is bearish, especially in light of the feeble rebound from late 2018. After a rally from September 2018, the rebound ran out of steam in January at the key resistance at 106.65 (the 38.2% retracement of the 2018 slide), following which the index consolidated sideways. In technical parlance, a Fibonacci retracement of 38.2% is deemed to be a reasonable retracement after prolonged moves. In other words, the rebound from late last year can be viewed as a 'correction' rather than the start of a new (up)trend.

In our assessment, the bearish break this month indicates that the corrective rebound from 2018 is now over and the index could maintain a weak bias in coming weeks. While the index looks oversold and could rebound in the short term, any rebound could be capped at the 1 May high of 106.00. On the downside, the index has moderate support at about 104.00, followed by strong support at the November low of 103.20.

Having said that, we see scope for differentiation within Asia. Currencies of economies exposed to the US-China trade war could underperform, including KRW, TWD, SGD and MYR. Meanwhile, we expect INR to appreciate if elections results show a majority for the ruling coalition (see page 2).

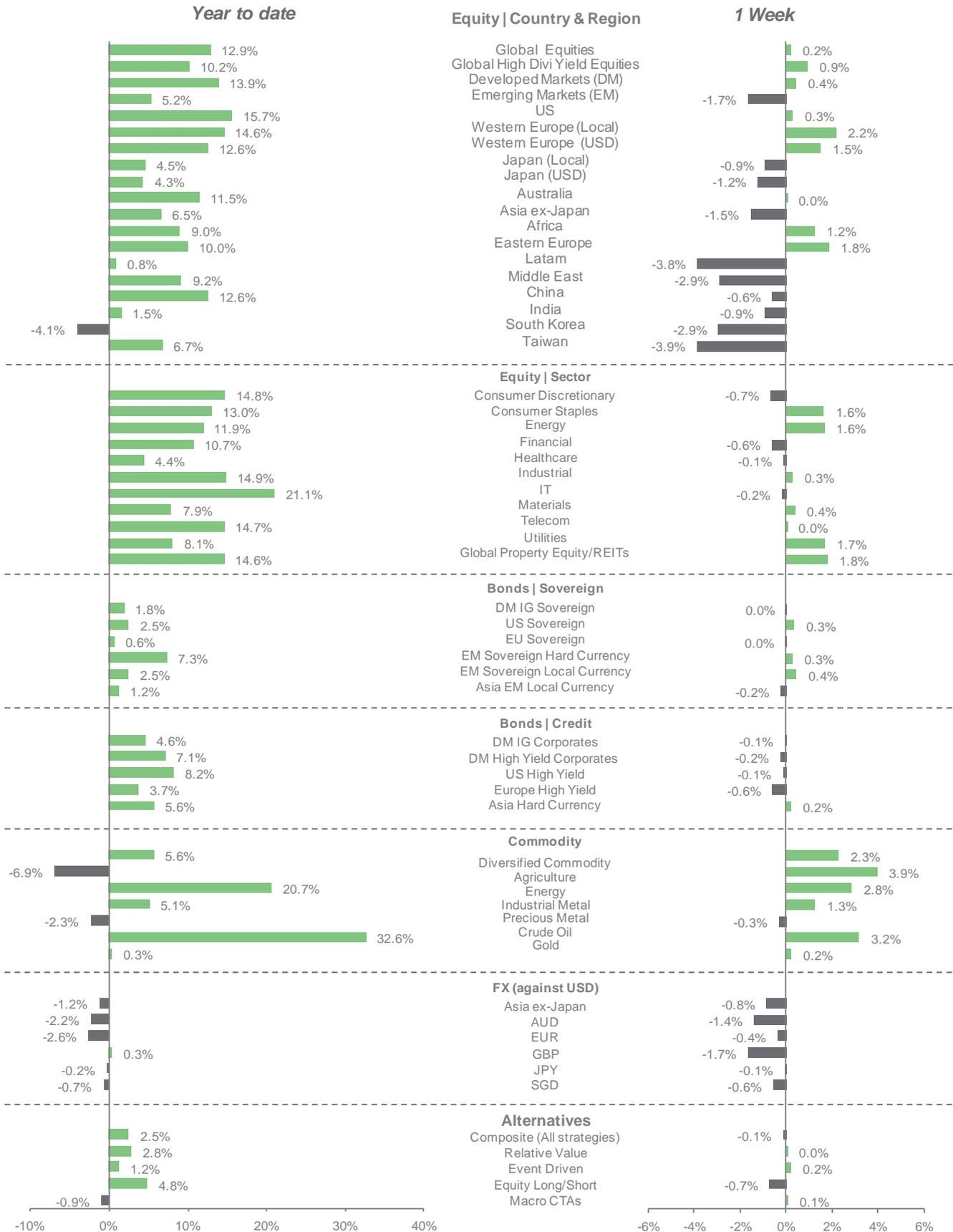
The Asian currency index's break below the range spells further weakness

ADXY Index (Daily Chart)



Source: Bloomberg, Standard Chartered

Market performance summary*



*Performance in USD terms unless otherwise stated, YTD period from 31 December 2018 to 16 May 2019, 1 week period: 09 May 2019 to 16 May 2019

Sources: MSCI, JP Morgan, Barclays Capital, Citigroup, Dow Jones, HFRX, FTSE, Bloomberg, Standard Chartered

Economic & Market Calendar

| | Event | Next Week | Date | Period | Expected | Prior |
|----------------|-------|------------------------------------|-----------|--------|----------|-------|
| MON | EC | ECB Current Account SA | 20-May-19 | Mar | – | 26.8b |
| TUE | EC | Consumer Confidence | 21-May-19 | May A | – | -7.9 |
| | US | Existing Home Sales | 21-May-19 | Apr | 5.34m | 5.21m |
| WED | JN | Exports y/y | 22-May-19 | Apr | -1.4% | -2.4% |
| | US | FOMC Meeting Minutes | 22-May-19 | 1 May | – | – |
| THUR | JN | Nikkei Japan PMI Mfg | 23-May-19 | May P | – | 50.2 |
| | GE | Markit/BME Germany Composite PMI | 23-May-19 | May P | – | 52.2 |
| | EC | Markit Eurozone Manufacturing PMI | 23-May-19 | May P | – | 47.9 |
| | EC | Markit Eurozone Services PMI | 23-May-19 | May P | – | 52.8 |
| | EC | Markit Eurozone Composite PMI | 23-May-19 | May P | – | 51.5 |
| | GE | IFO Expectations | 23-May-19 | May | – | 95.2 |
| | US | New Home Sales | 23-May-19 | Apr | 673k | 692k |
| FRI/SAT | JN | Natl CPI Ex Fresh Food, Energy y/y | 24-May-19 | Apr | 0.5% | 0.4% |
| | UK | Retail Sales Ex Auto Fuel y/y | 24-May-19 | Apr | – | 6.2% |
| | US | Cap Goods Orders Nondef Ex Air | 24-May-19 | Apr P | – | 1.4% |

| | Event | This Week | Date | Period | Actual | Prior |
|----------------|-------|-------------------------------|-----------|--------|----------|----------|
| MON | IN | CPI y/y | 13-May-19 | Apr | 2.9% | 2.9% |
| TUE | JN | BoP Current Account Adjusted | 14-May-19 | Mar P | ¥1271.0b | ¥1896.7b |
| | EC | ZEW Survey Expectations | 14-May-19 | May | -1.6 | 4.5 |
| WED | IN | Exports y/y | 15-May-19 | Apr | 0.6% | 11.0% |
| | CH | Fixed Assets Ex Rural YTD y/y | 15-May-19 | Apr | 6.1% | 6.3% |
| | CH | Industrial Production y/y | 15-May-19 | Apr | 5.4% | 8.5% |
| | CH | Retail Sales y/y | 15-May-19 | Apr | 7.2% | 8.7% |
| | US | Retail Sales Ex Auto and Gas | 15-May-19 | Apr | -0.2% | 1.1% |
| | US | Industrial Production m/m | 15-May-19 | Apr | -0.5% | 0.2% |
| THUR | JN | PPI y/y | 16-May-19 | Apr | 1.2% | 1.3% |
| | US | Housing Starts | 16-May-19 | Apr | 1235k | 1168k |
| | US | Building Permits | 16-May-19 | Apr | 1296k | 1288k |
| | US | Initial Jobless Claims | 16-May-19 | 11-May | 212k | 228k |
| FRI/SAT | MX | Overnight Rate | 17-May-19 | 16-May | 8.25% | 8.25% |
| | US | U. of Mich. Sentiment | 17-May-19 | May P | – | 97.2 |

Previous data are for the preceding period unless otherwise indicated

Data are % change on previous period unless otherwise indicated

P - preliminary data, F - final data, sa - seasonally adjusted

y/y – year-on-year, m/m - month-on-month

Source: Bloomberg, Standard Chartered; key indicators highlighted in blue

Disclosure Appendix

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