



Q4 2019 Quarterly Update

I. Market Summary

The final quarter of 2019 capped the 11th year of the economic expansion with a strongly positive finish for the broad markets. The CBOE Volatility Index trended lower for the quarter, ending down -15% as market participants broadly priced in a resolution to the first stage of a trade agreement between the U.S. and China. The S&P 500 Total Return Index, Dow Jones Industrial Average and NASDAQ performed +9.07%, +6.02% and +12.17% respectively for the quarter. This brings their respective 2019 performances to +31.49%, +22.34% and +35.23%. International stocks also did well for the quarter with the MSCI EAFE Index gaining +7.81% bringing its 2019 performance to +18.44%, lagging the U.S. broad market indices. Yields on the 3-month U.S. treasury bill fell 26.9 bps to end the quarter at 1.556% while the 2-year note declined to 1.571% and the 10-year bond ended the year at 1.919%. Gold increased +3.41% to \$1,523.10/ounce by the end of the quarter and WTI crude oil spiked +12.93% to \$61.06/barrel.

There were several macro tailwinds moving market sentiment higher in the final quarter of 2019 that is also continuing into 2020. The Fed cut rates for the third time in the year at its October meeting bringing the Fed Funds rate to 1.50% to 1.75%. U.S. unemployment for November also fell to 3.5%, it's lowest point in 50 years. Boris Johnson secured a U.K. election win which cleared a path for Brexit to occur at the end of January 2020, mitigating uncertainties around the Brexit event. This was all led by the strongest tailwind in the form of the U.S. and China agreeing to a "phase one" trade deal effectively pausing the trade war and reducing trade tensions between the world's two largest economies.

Market sentiment continues to remain elevated as we move through Q1 of 2020 and market participants are extending the timeline of a potential recessionary start expecting the 2020 election year to remain generally bullish. The largest headwind currently comes in the form of the potential macroeconomic effects of the Wuhan Coronavirus, which by early February has taken the lives of over 700 people globally and infecting over 35,000, pacing much faster than the SARS epidemic of 2003. Greater than 99% of the cases are still in China which is expected to negatively impact the world's second largest economy over the next several quarters. Our expectation, factoring in that the virus is still expanding rapidly and can continue to escalate, is that history has shown this will likely be a temporary headwind to global growth in 2020.

II. Latest Earnings Metrics¹

As of the end of the first week of February, 64% of the companies in the S&P 500 have reported their Q4 2019 results. 71% of the companies have reported a positive EPS surprise and 67% of the companies have reported positive revenue surprise. So far for Q4 2019, the blended earnings

growth rate of the S&P 500 is 0.7%. The forward 12-month P/E ratio for the S&P 500 is currently at 18.8, fairly elevated above its 5-year average of 16.7 and 10-year average of 15.0. The Information Technology sector contributed the most to the earnings surprises for the quarter. Notably, analysts' bottom-up price target for the S&P 500 is 3,628.30, roughly 9% higher than its current level at the time of this writing.

III. Monetary Policy

After its third rate cut of 2019 at its October meeting, the Fed continued to hold rates steady at the 1.50% to 1.75% level at its December and January meetings. Per Fed Fund Futures data as of 02/07, market participants are pricing a 100% chance that rates will remain at its current level or lower through the March meeting and through the end of the year with an 81.9% chance that the Fed will have at least one rate cut through the end of the December 2020 meeting. On this note, market participants are also pricing in a 46.2% chance of potentially two rate cuts through the end of the year. Our expectation is that the probability of at least one rate cut is very elevated, but a second rate cut remains unlikely unless global growth factors start to slow significantly. The Fed's latest dot plot as of December 2019 implies no rate changes through the end of 2020 with a rate increase in 2021.

IV. Summary

Our investment committee's sentiment is that despite the broad market continuing to achieve newer all-time highs, tailwinds generally outweigh headwinds in 2020. Factors that are contributing to this include the following: an election year, institutions still having dry powder reserves, continuing expanding economic growth and earnings upside surprises, a relatively dovish Fed stance over the last several quarters and trade tensions continuing to alleviate as the U.S. and China work out a broader trade agreement beyond the "phase one" agreement. However, given current market valuations, caution is also to be strongly noted as we saw with the escalating Iran tensions and the continuing impact of the Wuhan Coronavirus, many unpredictable variables can quickly derail markets or economic growth. We're holding a moderately bullish stance as we keep the overall equity allocation of our portfolios higher.

Portfolios Recap

Tactical Long/Short Strategy: +18.44% YTD 2019

The Tactical Long/Short Strategy gained +6.41% net of fees for the fourth quarter. In Q4 we decreased the cash weighting of the Tactical Long Short Strategy in order to better capture the broad market's momentum to the upside as the Fed maintained a loosening stance and a pathway to a partial trade agreement between U.S. and China came to fruition. We're continuing to keep the cash weighting lower to reflect our moderately bullish stance and to effectively capture most of the market's upside momentum through the Q1 earnings season.

Core All Cap Strategy: +29.26% YTD 2019

Core Select Strategy: +24.51% YTD 2019

Global Strategy: +27.78% YTD 2019

For the fourth quarter, the Core All Cap Strategy and Core Select Strategy gained +9.04% and +6.75% respectively net of fees. Despite having a cash allocation, our equity strategies were able to capture the vast majority of the broad market's upside move in 2019 due to their selection of strongly performing companies and their higher weighting to the Information Technology sector. Our investment committee continues to maintain conviction that large cap technology stocks will outperform over the longer term while continuing to focus on the fundamental picture and weeding out short term market noise. Our equity strategies remain nimble as we tactically defend downside moves with our long/short broad market allocation.

The Global Strategy gained +10.82% net of fees for the fourth quarter soundly outperforming the MSCI ACWI Global Benchmark. The MSCI ACWI Global Index increased +8.56% for the quarterly period.

For the above three equity strategies, the investment committee is maintaining higher equity exposure and decreased exposure in short term US treasuries as we weigh the global macro picture going into the first quarter. We're cautiously bullish as we expect market momentum to continue to the upside, but are monitoring potential macro risks on the trade front, global tensions and the effects of the Wuhan Coronavirus. The Core All Cap Strategy, Core Select Strategy and Global Strategy invest excess cash into short-term U.S. treasuries which currently have an annualized yield of approximately 1.51%.

Dynamic ETF Option Strategy (DEOS): +5.56% YTD 2019

For the fourth quarter DEOS gained +0.59% net of fees. The strategy continues to perform in-line as volatility moves lower over the last quarter. The target yield for the strategy remains in the 3-6% band with a generally overlay approach. We are continuing to leg further into short term traditional SPY credit put spreads with a conservative stance as we continue to monitor the macro landscape.

As always, we welcome you to reach out to us any time to discuss your portfolio and any questions.

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References

1. Factset Earnings Insight