



PORTFOLIO UPDATE – MARCH 8, 2019

For the most part, these are good problems to have. After one of the more turbulent quarters in the history of the market, complete with an unusually active week between Christmas and New Year's Day, we have booked a powerful and rapid recovery nearly retaking previous high watermarks. The quickness of these types of reversals seems to point toward informationless reactivity, which is to say things move far and fast based more on mood and less on fundamentals. About the only thing of any substance that is different is the tonality of the Fed's comments, and even that is not particularly material because Powell was already signaling that we were closer to the end than the beginning of the current tightening cycle.

We see growth moderating in the US and abroad, but we still see growth. This keeps us positive about equities and less concerned about rates. But, the market giveth and the market taketh away. Double-digit moves to the upside tend to be followed by periods of healthy consolidation. There are some clouds looming on the horizon as well which may not provide enough substance to take the market down and keep it there, but certainly could be the trigger for that short term retracement. Brexit in particular sits out there as a key concern. There is little to suggest any of the stakeholders within the UK or across Europe are inclined toward compromise at the moment, and the Brits crashing out of the Union could create enough upset to trigger some volatility and a rush for safety. We are also aware of, but less concerned about, trade tensions with the US since we have now been there and back multiple times over the last two years. Markets now seem to be trundling along ignoring the side show until there is something material to price. If anything, trade issues are dragging on the US growth story, but even with that factored in, it is still a (slower) growth story.

Taking this all into account, we stepped back toward a more neutral footing for stocks proportionally from large, mid and small cap equities in the US, kept our underweight in cash instruments, and within our bond allocations reduced direct exposure to corporate risk. By moving into a more "core" position in bonds we effectively raised duration in recognition that the risk of rising rates has receded into the distance for the time being. The rest of the portfolio allocations remain the same, with an overweight to emerging market stocks in Asia, and counterbalancing that and the increased US bond position, a continuing underweight to developed international stock and bond markets.



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