

Macro Snapshot – Chief Economist Jean Ergas

September 30, 2015

Update September 30th 2015

Concerns as to systemic risk appear to have been allayed – for how long?

Markets are off to a stronger start in Europe following the Glencore, "We are not dead" conference", allaying some of the systemic risk concerns - and by some modest month end re-balancing by investors. We however still see a lot of investors as "shell shocked" and likely to proceed cautiously as they grapple with slower growth and new potential sources of systemic risk.

We see the Federal Reserve issue as still hanging over the markets but discern increasing concern as to the likelihood of a "tail risk" event. Markets shall be moving in fits and starts, reacting to news or lack thereof.

US ADP data slightly better than forecast – so what?

US ADP data is slightly higher than expected. We remain of the view that the principal issues pertaining to employment are still the scarcity of new, high paid positions and the vast numbers of Americans who have dropped out of the labor force. We see the key shift in the US labor market in not only lower real wages but far less stability of incomes.

Labor market data remains at odds with the soporific recovery of the US economy as we move ever more towards a "sharing economy" reminiscent of the Southern Mediterranean of my youth.

Where is the change in macro-fundamentals? Weight of money unidirectional

We see no real change in economic fundamentals and remain cautious on the equity markets. We do not expect a major re-positioning by asset managers following month end, if anything, we may see more selling as fund managers scrounge for cash to repay EM investors. The weight of money argument remains quasi unidirectional. EM outflows are at a record since the financial crisis and we see this trend as accelerating.

Further pressure on risk assets shall be exercised by sovereign wealth funds prioritizing liquidity over returns, reflecting a shift from "keepers of the keys" for long term development to playing fullback for their beleaquered currencies.

Not surprised at Euro Zone deflation – Dumping and still slow internal demand are pushing prices lower

Turning to the Euro Zone, we are not surprised to see deflation once again. While much of this is being ascribed to the fall in energy prices, we also see this as reflecting the twin forces of still weak internal demand and lower priced imports from the EM sphere.

ECB's room for action limited – will they buy all of the bonds in the Euro Zone?

Whether this shall spur the ECB to yet greater efforts with regard to monetary measures remains unclear. On the interest rate front there is virtually no room left for action. As concerns bond buying – the next step is to simply buy up all the bonds in circulation.

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Need an increase in inflation or a stronger recovery

The fact is that these efforts have yielded scant results and that in the absence of either:

An increase in inflation

A stronger economic recovery

The real debt burden for Euro Zone companies shall increase.

This may in turn lead to insolvencies and further pressure on the banking system.

With regard to the Euro Zone – we remain cautious as to the "real economy notwithstanding the "good cheer" from Glencore and Euro Zone business confidence.

Should we weep or be amused? A sorry moment for a "master of the universe"!

We do not know whether to weep or be amused by Glencore's protestations that they are not bankrupt! A sorry pass when one of the world's commodities "master of the universe" is forced to fight swirling market rumors. We do not see the only major pressure coming from the banks but also from their suppliers. Commodity trading is built on long term relationships and confidence. Should confidence falter, it can all unravel very quickly.

We seem to have avoided the worst – for the time being. The Glencore situation is a stark reminder of how brittle investor sentiment is. While in 2008, the focus was on the financial economy, we are now increasingly looking at the "Nuts and Bolts" of industry. Up to investors to decide which harbors the most risk.



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He is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at New York University's School of Professional Studies and an Adjunct Faculty member at Manhattanville College. In 2014 he received the award for teaching excellence from NYU School of Professional Studies.

He is fluent in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. He also has a certificate in Arabic – from NYU School of Professional Studies.

His career has spanned the complete range of macro risk analysis - energy / commodities with ENI - Global Fortune 500 17 - leading global natural resources group, capital markets with Swiss Bank Corporation (now UBS) and insurance / reinsurance with the A.M.Best Company. Jean contributes regularly to international media commenting on key macro-economic issues.

Jean is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and has an MBA and an Advanced Professional Certificate in Accounting from New York University's Stern School. He has also passed the FINRA Series 7 examination.



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