

# **Macro Snapshot – Chief Economist Jean Ergas**

July 8, 2016

July 8<sup>th</sup> 2016

Markets on pause ahead of US jobs data – UK consumer sentiment craters – Expect more jolts from UK property – watch out for falling houses! – European banking crisis still in very early stages, expect a new generation of TARPS!

Markets on pause ahead of US jobs data - why is this relevant?

Markets are on pause ahead of the US jobs data with many hoping for an ideal number. This shall be an increase in employment indicating that the US economy is still alive but not strong enough for a short term rise in interest rates to be a realistic possibility. We view this from a dual perspective:

The link between increases in employment and growth is no longer extant The Federal Reserve shall subordinate any concrete move to boost rates to not increasing turmoil in the financial markets

We are seeing the triumph of VIX over macro-economics.

UK consumer sentiment craters – shall get worse!

As concerns the UK – which continues to be the focal point, UK consumer sentiment has collapsed in the wake of "The Vote". This is significant in the context of an economy which is being driven by consumer spending buoyed by unrealized home equity. Buyers are now being simultaneously squeezed by:

Full squeeze on buyers!

Tremors in the property market as both price and liquidity start – to use an understatement - "wobble"

Recession and possible increases in unemployment Collapsing sterling pushing up import prices

Property story far from over – we shall be seeing "A return to consciousness"

We continue to see the property convulsions as far from over. These have historically been characterized by sharp falls as

"The sticky get unstuck" and resulted in massive bank balance sheet damage. A massive speculative build –up based on "store of wealth" is now being re-assessed in humbler terms of cash coverage.

We read that property collapses are usually followed with a one year lag by a reduction in bank lending. In the present context we see this as "real time".

#### European banks – a bad story getting worse!

Moving to the European banking front, we continue to view it as a source of risk predating the UK events. The exit vote has —with concerns as to political, economic and financial dislocation simply added fuel to an already raging fire. Italian banks, we read, are working intensely to resolve their problems — see in this regard MPS. Minor banks state that their stress tests show resilience.

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#### We are not talking about Basel 3 but about systemic risk

We see the above as resolving – possibly – the problem short term. However, with economic growth slowing from an already quasi recessionary pace, bad loans and capital deficiencies shall rise. The focus has shifted from longer term issues of regulation and the impact of low rates to one of finding "unreported payables" in drawers!

### Banking crisis is not immediate – it is now!

We disagree with the view expressed by the head of the Euro group that the Italian banking crisis is not immediate. Stress tests from banks that have balance sheets likely smaller than the commercial banking books of four Citibank branches in Manhattan can move the banking indices. The situation is very serious!

#### Sterling – we are not focusing on WTO versus Norway!

On the FX front, we are seeing a momentary stabilization of sterling. We do not see this as signaling a change of trend. UK economic prospects are shifting from a discussion of long term trade agreements to coping with systemic asset price shocks – commercial property is the tip of the iceberg.

The "big money" has not yet likely started to re-position and central banks shall likely reduce their holdings of sterling reserves. We do not see many buyers and see the change as structural and not cyclical.

#### See cable at 1.20 as first likely entry point for foreigners

We are sticking by our forecast of 1.20 before year end and view this level as the first likely entry point for offshore money. Some are speaking of parity to the US Dollar – which makes more sense for the pound given the massive UK current account deficit than for the Euro.

#### So far – stock market simply balancing out currency fluctuations

Given the drop in the currency we would have expected stock market investors to reap "real" returns – net of the currency effect. We have basically seen the adjustment common following a "step function" depreciation in an emerging market – a lot of dizziness for very little.

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Jean Ergas is the Chief Economist for Tigress Financial Partners LLC (Member FINRA, MSRB,SIPC) based in New York City.

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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