

MENA MARKETS REVIEW ISSUE 036

OCTOBER 2019

HIGHLIGHTS

- Serious hope of a breakthrough in trade talks between the US and China provided strong support for global markets during October. Markets, especially in the US, were further bolstered by the Fed cutting its target rate by 25 bps and a series of strong economic data which appeased recession concerns.
- The MSCI AC World Index added 2.64% during October for a year-to-date return of 17.28%, while the MSCI EM Index outperformed for the month with a gain of 4.09% and 7.89% since the beginning of the year.
- Oil prices remain weak and markets clouded by concerns of a slowing demand resulting from a weakening global economy. OPEC reduced its forecast for oil demand for the third straight month in October. It is now projecting a demand of 0.98mb/d for 2019 down from 1.02 mb/d a month ago.
- GCC markets remained under pressure in October as the S&P GCC Composite declined by 2.67% weighed down mainly by a 4.3% loss in Saudi equities, in addition to 1.72% and 1.23% declines in Qatar and Dubai.

US GDP GROWTH STEADY IN Q3 AS FED PUTS POLICY IN NEUTRAL

US economic data continues to come in mixed, but mostly points to moderate growth going forward with risks to the downside. GDP in 3Q19 was actually slightly stronger than expected at an annualized 1.9% (consensus 1.7%), down only fractionally from 2.0% in Q2 and amid a still strong performance from consumer spending, up 2.9%. Meanwhile the labor market remains in decent shape with non-farm jobs rising a solid 128,000 in October and wage growth unchanged at 3.0% y/y. However forward-looking indicators remain in the doldrums, reflecting a loss of momentum compared to last year, the trade war impact, and worries over the aging economic cycle. PMI measures for both manufacturing and services, at 51 in October, indicate barely any growth at the start of 4Q19, while components of GDP sensitive to business confidence and the external sector (investment and exports) were weak in Q3. Early projections by the Atlanta and New York Feds have growth slowing to a range of 0.8-1.1% in 4Q19.

In order to mitigate the downside risks to growth, the Federal Reserve as expected cut interest rates by 25 bps for the third time since July, leaving the Fed Funds target range at 1.50-1.75%. But the cut was considered 'hawkish', with two of 10 members again voting to leave policy on hold and post-meeting comments by Fed chair Jay Powell indicating that what he has termed a 'mid-cycle adjustment' in rates is now over, implying no further cuts ahead. Futures markets expect rates to be on hold until next spring, and a 73% chance of at least one cut by end-2020.

Aside from the prospects for economic activity, another thing that concerns the Fed is the weak outlook for inflation, which fell back to 1.7% y/y in September on its preferred core Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) measure, from 1.8% in August and below the 2% target for the ninth consecutive month. Surveys show inflation expectations dropping and prospects will weaken further if tariff hikes fail to materialize as part of a temporary US-China trade deal, which may be close. The Fed worries about Japan-style deflation risks, which are also now threatening the Eurozone; given the apparent

insensitivity of inflation to ultra-low interest rates in recent years, a further fall in inflation could be tough to address.

EUROZONE GROWTH STILL WEAK; UK FACES CRUCIAL ELECTION

The trade war and Brexit worries continue to drag on growth in the Eurozone. GDP growth in 3Q19 came in slightly better than expected but still modest at 0.2% q/q, unchanged from Q2, with growth in France and Spain holding at 0.3% and 0.4% respectively. Figures for Germany are not yet available but are expected to show a second consecutive quarterly decline in output, indicating recession. The German manufacturing PMI – particularly sensitive to external weakness – remained deep in contraction territory at 42.1 in October despite edging up fractionally from September's 10-year low, with firms forced to slash both employment and prices amid weak order books. Economic sentiment in the region also fell to a four-year low, with signs that pessimism in industry is chipping into until-now more resilient services and consumer sectors.

Following public divisions over recent stimulus measures, policymakers at the European Central Bank presented a more united front at their October meeting, which was Mario Draghi's last as bank president before being replaced by Christine Lagarde on November 1st. Having cut its deposit rate to -0.5% in September, the bank restarted its asset purchase program at a rate of €20 billion per month from November, and pledged not to raise rates until Eurozone inflation – which declined to an almost three-year low of 0.7% in October – has "robustly" returned to its near-2% target. Meanwhile, given a combination of new ECB leadership and continued doubts within the bank about policy efficacy, the barrier to additional stimulus has likely been raised following Draghi's departure. Lagarde looks set to advocate for a more expansionary fiscal stance from national governments with policy space in order to support economic growth, but could also look to shift the bank's policy tools and objectives in light of a persistent inflation undershoot.

In the UK, prime minister Boris Johnson managed to secure a new Brexit deal with the EU, but was forced to request a three-month extension beyond the scheduled

end-October leaving date after parliament refused to ratify the agreement to an accelerated timetable. Faced with further attempts to water down or obstruct his deal, Johnson called a general election that MPs had long resisted in the hope of changing the parliamentary dynamic. While his Conservative party is ahead in the polls by a decent margin, the December election – the UK’s first December poll since 1923 – could yet backfire on the PM given scope for the polls to narrow during the campaign and the prospect of tactical voting by the public across party lines reflecting their views on Brexit. Moreover, given opposition to his Brexit policy among other parties, Johnson is also unlikely to be able to form a coalition government if he fails to win an outright majority. However a decisive win for Johnson that sees his deal pass could lift the cloud of uncertainty hovering over the UK economy and provide a boost for Europe’s economy overall.

BANK OF JAPAN TWEAKS FORWARD GUIDANCE

The Bank of Japan left monetary policy broadly unchanged last month but tweaks to its forward guidance suggest that it is willing to pull its policy rate further into negative territory in a bid to prop up the economy and ultimately reach its (elusive) 2% inflation target. The economy remains weighed down by weaker global demand, not least because of ongoing US-China trade tensions. Indeed, fresh data showed exports falling for the 10th straight month in September by a larger-than-expected 5.2% y/y. Meanwhile imports also fell for the fifth consecutive month, by 1.5%, pointing to continued weakness in domestic demand; although retail sales growth surged to an almost six-year high in September, this was mostly driven by front-loading of spending ahead of the October sales tax hike which could reverse in 4Q19. Against this backdrop, the government downgraded its assessment of the economic climate for the third time this year in October, raising the stakes for additional easing in the months to come.

WEAKNESS IN CHINESE TRADE DATA PERSISTS

China’s external sector continues to face headwinds as the effects of trade tensions with the US are compounded by a broad slowdown in the global

economy. Chinese exports declined for the second straight month in September, but at a sharper 3.2% y/y. Imports also fell at a faster 8.5% on weakness in the domestic economy. Trade talks with the US appear to be closing in on a ‘phase one’ deal, the details of which have yet to be disclosed. Meanwhile, private and official PMI manufacturing data continued to diverge in October: the private PMI index showed activity expanding at its fastest pace in almost three years, but the official PMI pointed to a slightly bigger contraction. The divergence could be due to smaller private companies benefiting more from the government’s pro-growth measures of recent months. Separately, the yuan appreciated for the second straight month in October, with the central rate ending the month up 0.3% at RMB7.05/US\$1 amid trade talk progress.

GCC DEVELOPMENTS

In its pre-budget statement, the Saudi ministry of finance lowered its forecasts for revenue, expenditure and economic growth. The budget deficit for 2019 is now seen at 4.7% of GDP this year (4.2% previously), and is projected to widen to 5.0% of GDP in 2021 (3.7% before). The changes reflect both lower oil prices and lower royalty rates on Aramco’s oil sales, which necessitate lower budgeted spending. GDP growth forecasts were also cut for 2019 to 0.9% (2.6% before) and for 2020-22 to 2.2-2.3% per year (2.7-2.8% before). Saudi Aramco, meanwhile, published its intention to float, with the firm expecting a valuation close to \$2 trillion when it lists on the Riyadh stock exchange while investors are estimating a valuation in the \$1.2-2 trillion range.

Finally, GCC countries did well in both the latest World Bank Doing Business and the latest World Economic Forum Competitiveness rankings. Saudi Arabia’s Doing Business rank jumped 30 places to 62, while the UAE still lead the way in the Gulf with a rank of 16. Kuwait’s score in both metrics also significantly improved.

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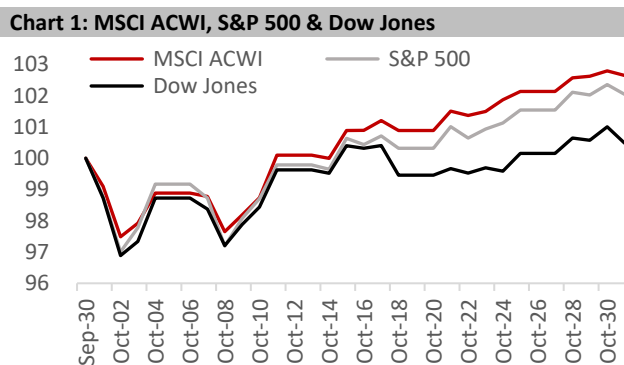
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GLOBAL EQUITIES

Global financial markets found support during October in easing trade tensions between the US and China, a diminishing risk of no-deal Brexit, and expectations of a Fed rate cut which was realized at the end of the month. The MSCI AC World Index added 2.64% during October, bringing its year to date performance to 17.28%. Emerging markets also rallied and the MSCI Emerging Markets Index advanced by 4.09% after having declined by 5.11% during the third quarter.

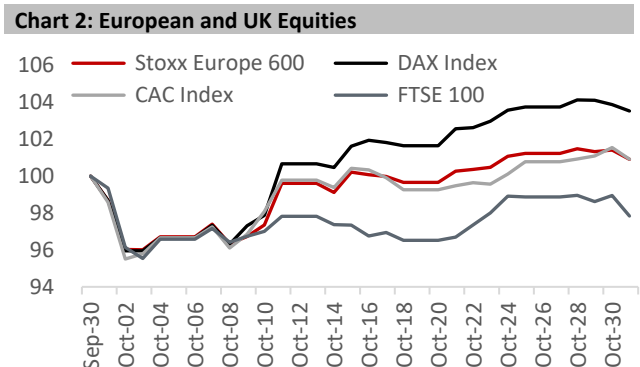


Source: Bloomberg (figures rebased)

In the US, preliminary third quarter GDP estimates showed an advance of 1.9% on an annualized basis compared to a consensus estimate of 1.6% and a second quarter advance of 2.0%. Inflation showed an uptick as core PCE for the third quarter came in at a preliminary 2.2% up from 1.9% for the second quarter. The ISM manufacturing PMI, on the hand, bounced back slightly from 47.8 recorded in September to 48.3 in October but was still below expectations of 48.9. Employment figures also showed signs of stabilization in the US economy which added 128,000 jobs during October against expectations of 89,000, while average hourly earnings continued to recover recording a 3.0% year-on-year increase. The unemployment rate ticked marginally higher to 3.6% from 3.5% during the previous month. The US Federal Reserve cut interest rates for the third time this year by a quarter of a percentage point to a range of 1.50% to 1.75%. The Fed Chair indicated that the rate cut was done to help sustain US growth but clearly signaled that there would be no further cuts “as long as incoming information

about the economy remains broadly consistent with our outlook”.

US Indices advanced steadily during October and reached new all-time highs shortly after the close of the month boosted by strong US economic data. The S&P 500 added 2.04% while the Dow Jones Industrial Average underperformed an advance of 0.48%. The two indices are now up 21.2% and 15.9% since the beginning of the year. The Nasdaq strongly outperformed advancing by 3.7% during October and 25.0% for the year. In the treasury market, the 10-year yield closed the month virtually unchanged at 1.69% compared to 1.67% at the end of September after declining from a month high of 1.85% after the Fed’s decision to cut rates. On the shorter end of the curve, the two-year rate initially declined to a low of 1.42% during the first week of October before recovering steadily and closing the month at 1.52%.

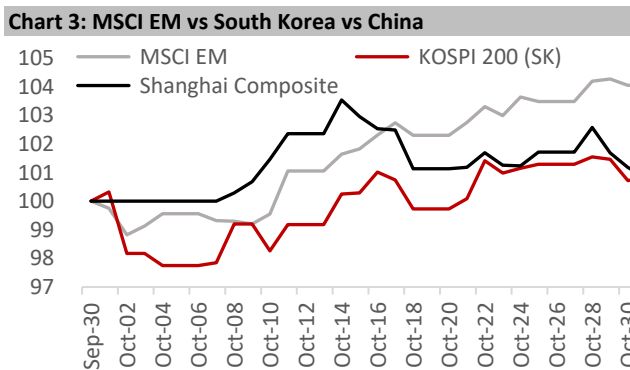


Source: Bloomberg (figures rebased)

In Europe, the ECB left rates unchanged during its October meeting but gave a very negative assessment of the outlook of the European economy. During his last ECB policy meeting before stepping down, president Mario Draghi warned that slowing global growth and uncertainty over Brexit are threatening the eurozone economic growth, especially with a weak German economy, saying that the risks are “all to the downside”. Preliminary European GDP figures for the third quarter showed a year-on-year growth rate of 1.1% down from 1.2% for the second quarter. Inflation ticked slightly upwards as preliminary figures showed the Consumer Price Index increasing by 1.1% in October from 1.0% in September. Manufacturing

activity remains weak with the Markit Manufacturing PMI unchanged from the previous month at 45.7. The German economy is still weighing down significantly. Germany's Markit Manufacturing PMI increased marginally to 41.9 in October up from 41.7 while the unemployment rate stabilized at 5.0%. Despite this generally negative picture, European markets managed to record a good performance during the month. The Stoxx Europe 600 advanced by 0.92% bringing its year-to-date performance to 17.5%. The German DAX and French CAC 40 added 3.53% and 0.92% respectively.

Markets in the UK bucked the global trend as the FTSE 100 saw a -2.16% decline during October. The Gfk Consumer Confidence Index declined to -14 against expectations of -13 and a September level of -12. Inflation numbers for September came in unchanged at 1.70%, while the Markit Manufacturing PMI continued its improvement and climbed to 49.6 in October against consensus estimates of it dropping back to 48.1 from 48.3 in September.



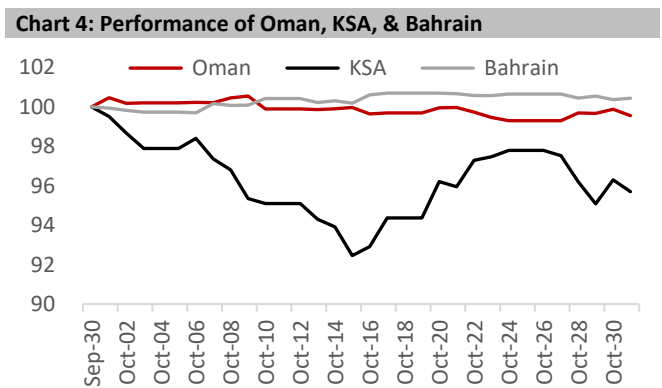
Source: Bloomberg (figures rebased)

Emerging markets strongly outperformed in October led by the performance of Asian markets. The MSCI EM Index advanced by 4.09%, while the MSCI Asia ex-Japan Index added 4.49%. The two indices are up by 7.89% and 8.20% for the year respectively. The Russian Stock Exchange recovered strongly with an advance of 5.34% during the month while the Taiwan Stock Exchange Index added 4.89%. Other notable movers include the India's Nifty 50 which advanced by 3.51% and Turkey's Boursa Istanbul 100 Index which declined by -6.25%

slashing its year-to-date return by half from 15.1% last month to 7.9% in October.

REGIONAL EQUITIES

Oil prices remain weak and markets clouded by concerns of a slowing demand resulting from a weakening global economy. In October, OPEC reduced its forecast for oil demand for the third straight month. It is now projecting a demand of 0.98 million barrels per day down from 1.02 million barrels a month ago. Oil prices dropped by a little more than 5% during the first two days of the month then started a rather choppy recovery throughout October which managed to bring prices back to their end-of-September levels. Brent closed the month of October down 0.90% at USD 60.23/ bbl, reducing its year to date gain to 11.95%. WTI, on the other hand, increased marginally by 0.20% for a year-to-date gain of 19.31%. WTI and Brent are down 17% and 20% respectively over the past twelve months.



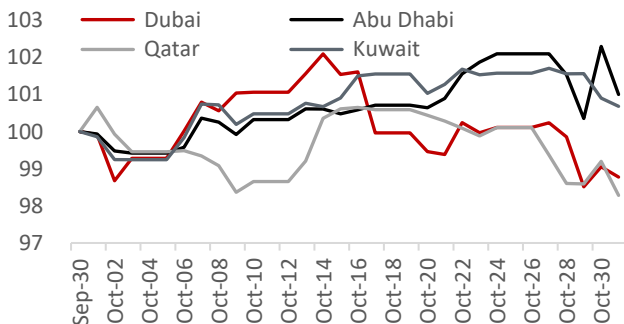
Source: Bloomberg (figures rebased)

GCC central banks followed the US Federal Reserve in cutting benchmark rates in October. The list included Kuwait for the first time this year as it had stayed pat after the first two cuts in July and September. The Central Bank of Kuwait reduced its benchmark discount rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 2.75% from 3.0%. The Saudi Monetary Authority (SAMA) also cut its repo and reverse repo rates by 25 bps, while the central banks of United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain also reduced their rates by a similar magnitude.

The performance of the GCC markets was largely negative in October in a continuation of a general weakness which has been prevailing since the end of April. The S&P GCC Index declined by 2.67% during the month almost exhausting all of the positive year-to-date performance that was accumulated during the first few months of the year. The Index' performance since the beginning of the year now stands at 0.49%, while the twelve-month trailing performance is a negative 0.73%.

Leading the decline was the Saudi Tadawul All Share Index which lost 4.30% in October turning negative for the year at -1.06%. The index was weighed down by sizable declines in the Telecom, Banking and Materials sectors which include the largest listing in the market. The Telecom sector index saw declines of 10.4% during the month, while the Banking and Materials sectors retreated by 4.0% and 5.1% respectively. The Saudi index lost around 16.8% of its value over the past 6 months since the end of April, while Banks and Materials had retreated by 22.0% and 19.0% respectively over the same period.

Chart 5: Performance of Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar & Kuwait



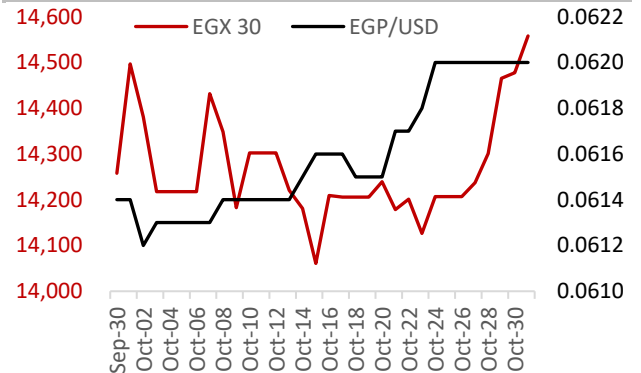
Source: Bloomberg (figures rebased)

In Doha, the Qatar Exchange Index saw declines of 1.72% during October, bringing its year-to-date returns into negative territory at -1.07%. It was followed by declines in the Dubai as the DFM general Index retreated by -1.23% while still holding to a positive performance for the year so far at 8.59%. The DFM is the third best year-to-date performer in the GCC after Bahrain and Kuwait.

After a slight breather in August and September, the Muscat Securities Market Index (MSM 30) returned to negative performance, declining by 0.44% in October and by 7.5% since the beginning of the year.

On the positive side, Abu Dhabi's ADX General Index was the best performer this month climbing by 1.0% for a total of 3.92% since the start of the year. Bahrain's All Share index added 0.44% during the month, bolstering its return for the year to 13.91%.

Chart 6: EGX 30 Index & EGP/USD



Source: Bloomberg

Over in Kuwait, the All Share Index which measures the broad market performance was the second best performer for October with a gain of 0.68%. Its blue-chip counterpart, the Premier Market Index, added 0.59% in October and is still, by far, the GCC leader in terms of year-to-date performance at 17.92%.

The wider S&P Pan Arab index slightly outperformed its GCC counterpart with a loss of 2.30% supported by a positive performance in Egypt as the EGX 30 added 2.11%.

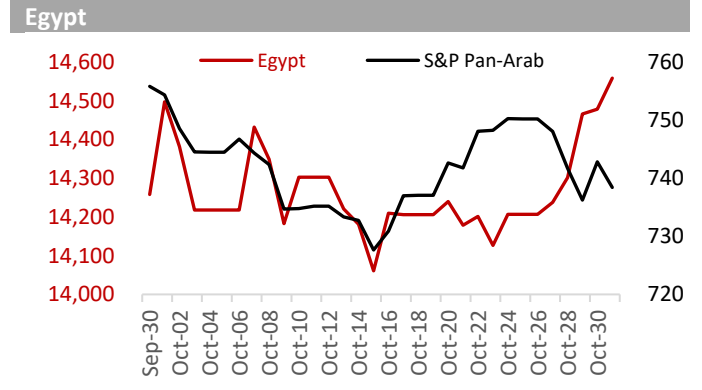
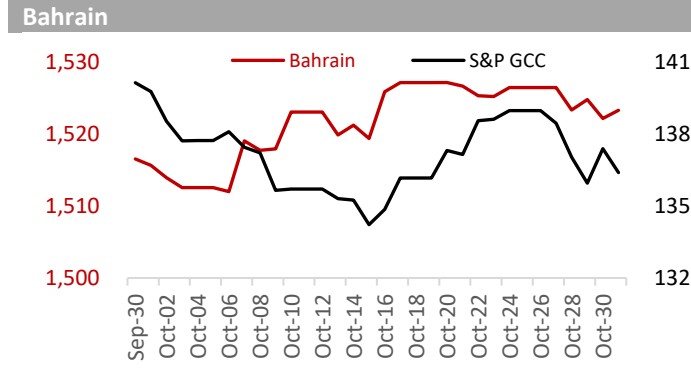
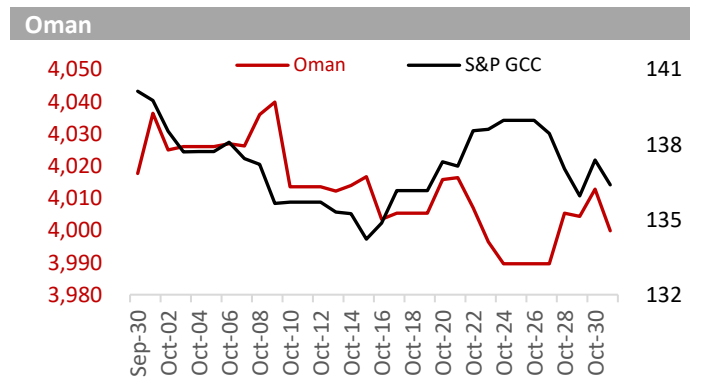
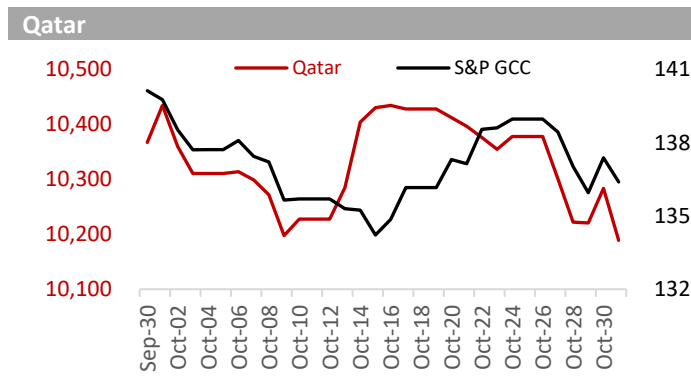
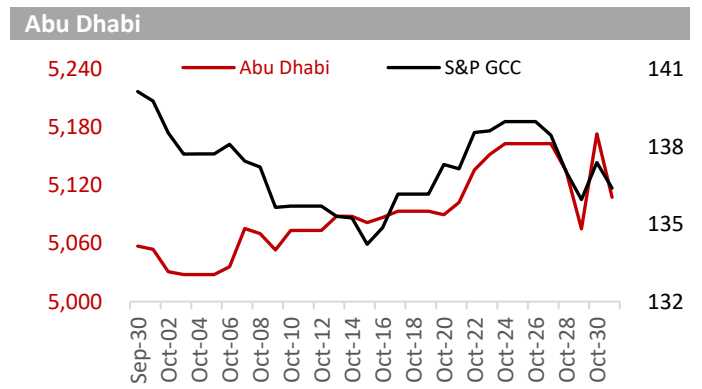
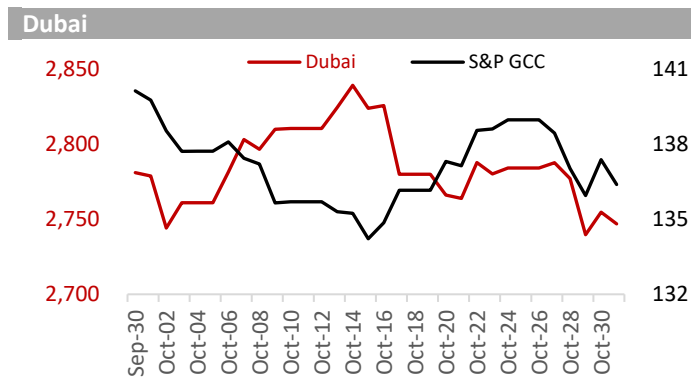
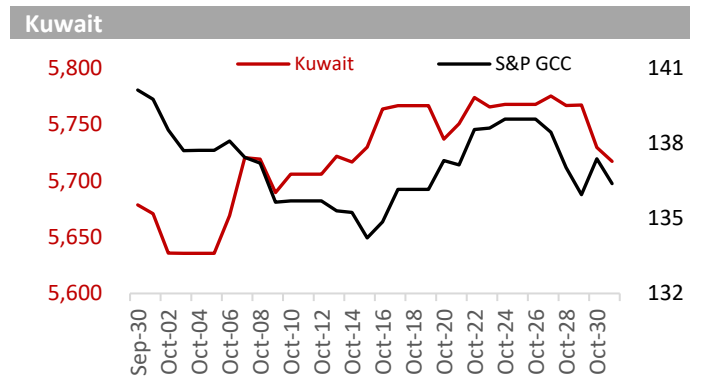
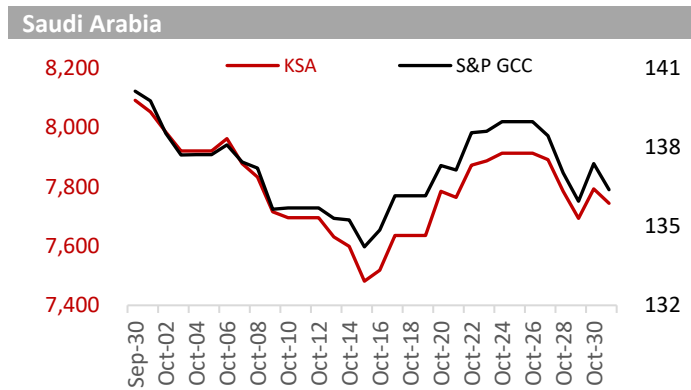
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Stock Market Performance – as of October 31, 2019:



All indices are in local currencies, except for the S&P GCC and S&P Pan Arab, both of which are denominated in USD.

Source: Bloomberg

Market Data – as of October 31, 2019:

Equity*	Last Price	% Change			
		Monthly	Quarterly	YTD	1Yr Trailing
Global					
MSCI AC World Index (USD)	534.41	2.64%	2.64%	17.28%	10.29%
MSCI EAFE (USD)	1,955.48	3.50%	3.50%	13.70%	7.73%
MSCI EM (USD)	1,041.98	4.09%	4.09%	7.89%	9.00%
US					
S&P 500 Index	3,037.56	2.04%	2.04%	21.17%	12.02%
Dow Jones Industrial Average	27,046.23	0.48%	0.48%	15.94%	7.69%
NASDAQ Composite Index	8,292.36	3.66%	3.66%	24.97%	13.50%
Russell 2000 Index	1,562.45	2.57%	2.57%	15.86%	3.38%
Developed					
Stoxx Europe 600	396.75	0.92%	0.92%	17.50%	9.72%
FTSE 100 Index	7,248.38	-2.16%	-2.16%	7.73%	1.69%
DAX Index	12,866.79	3.53%	3.53%	21.86%	12.40%
CAC 40 Index	5,729.86	0.92%	0.92%	21.12%	12.49%
Nikkei 225	22,927.04	5.38%	5.38%	14.55%	4.59%
Hang Seng Index	26,906.72	3.12%	3.12%	4.11%	7.71%
Emerging Markets					
Russia Stock Exchange	2,893.98	5.34%	5.34%	22.14%	23.01%
Turkey - Borsa Istanbul 100 Index	98,468.52	-6.25%	-6.25%	7.89%	9.17%
MSCI Asia ex Japan	645.51	4.49%	4.49%	8.20%	10.53%
Shanghai Composite	2,929.06	0.82%	0.82%	17.45%	12.54%
India - NIFTY 50	11,877.45	3.51%	3.51%	9.34%	14.35%
Taiwan Stock Exchange	11,358.71	4.89%	4.89%	16.77%	15.88%
Brazil Ibovespa Index	107,219.80	2.36%	2.36%	22.00%	22.64%
Mexico Stock Exchange	43,337.28	0.76%	0.76%	4.08%	-1.38%
MENA					
S&P Pan Arab (USD)	738.39	-2.30%	-2.30%	1.33%	0.24%
S&P GCC Composite (USD)	136.39	-2.67%	-2.67%	0.49%	-0.73%
KSA - Tadawul All Share Index	7,744.08	-4.30%	-4.30%	-1.06%	-2.06%
Dubai - DFM General Index	2,746.93	-1.23%	-1.23%	8.59%	-1.35%
Abu Dhabi - ADX General Index	5,107.76	1.00%	1.00%	3.92%	4.20%
Qatar Exchange Index	10,188.97	-1.72%	-1.72%	-1.07%	-1.09%
Boursa Kuwait All Share Index	5,717.33	0.68%	0.68%	12.56%	13.39%
Oman - Muscat Securities Market 30 Index	3,999.88	-0.44%	-0.44%	-7.49%	-9.56%
Bahrain Bourse All Share Index	1,523.27	0.44%	0.44%	13.91%	15.86%
Egypt - EGX 30	14,558.02	2.11%	2.11%	11.68%	9.87%
Morocco - MADEX	9,358.70	-0.61%	-0.61%	1.36%	5.47%
Jordan - ASE Index	1,800.29	-1.50%	-1.50%	-5.69%	-8.09%

*All Indices are in local currency, unless otherwise noted.

Source: Bloomberg

Market Data – as of October 31, 2019:

Fixed Income	Last Price	% Change			
		Monthly	Quarterly	YTD	1Yr Trailing
Bond Indices					
J.P. Morgan Global Aggregate Bond (USD)	607.66	0.59%	0.59%	7.72%	10.48%
Barclays US Aggregate Bond	2,227.69	0.30%	0.30%	8.85%	11.51%
US Government Total Return Value Unhedged (USD)	2,353.55	0.07%	0.07%	7.74%	10.99%
Bloomberg Barclays US Corp Bond Index	3,221.86	0.61%	0.61%	13.89%	15.37%
Bloomberg Barclays US Corp High Yield Bond Index	2,133.02	0.28%	0.28%	11.71%	8.38%
Global Treasury ex US Total Return Index Value Unhedged	669.97	0.66%	0.66%	5.76%	8.96%
Global Agg Corporate Total Return Index Value Unhedged	276.82	1.17%	1.17%	10.83%	11.78%
JPM Emerging Market Bond Index (USD)	867.01	0.37%	0.37%	12.50%	13.69%
Bloomberg Barclays EM High Yield Bond Index (USD)	1,352.70	0.71%	0.71%	8.26%	8.77%
US Treasury Yields (%)					
	Current	3 M ago	6 M ago	12 M ago	
3 Month Yield	1.524	2.048	2.417	2.325	
2 Year Yield	1.524	1.712	2.333	2.867	
5 Year Yield	1.520	1.658	2.323	2.975	
10 Year Yield	1.691	1.845	2.525	3.144	
30 Year Yield	2.179	2.382	2.919	3.391	
Global Treasury Yields (%)					
	Current	3 M ago	6 M ago	12 M ago	
British 10 Year Gilt	0.629	0.550	1.219	1.437	
German 10 Year Bund	-0.407	-0.495	0.025	0.385	
Japan 10 Year Treasury	-0.133	-0.163	-0.040	0.127	
Commodities					
Commodities	Last Price	% Change			
		Monthly	Quarterly	YTD	1Yr Trailing
Precious Metals					
Gold Spot	1,512.99	2.75%	2.75%	17.97%	24.55%
Silver Spot	18.11	6.54%	6.54%	16.85%	27.08%
Energy					
WTI Crude	54.18	0.20%	0.20%	19.31%	-17.04%
Brent Crude	60.23	-0.90%	-0.90%	11.95%	-20.19%
Natural Gas	2.63	13.00%	13.00%	-10.44%	-19.26%
Currencies					
Currencies	Last Price	% Change			
		Monthly	Quarterly	YTD	1Yr Trailing
EUR-USD	1.115	2.32%	2.32%	-2.75%	-1.41%
GBP-USD	1.294	5.31%	5.31%	1.47%	1.38%
USD-JPY	108.030	-0.05%	-0.05%	-1.51%	-4.35%
KWD-USD	3.296	0.30%	0.30%	-0.01%	0.19%
Interbank Rates (%)					
		1M	3M	6M	12M
London Interbank		1.785	1.902	1.916	1.955
Saudi Interbank		2.099	2.236	2.254	2.284
Emirates Interbank		1.978	2.078	2.304	2.256
Qatar Interbank		2.438	2.591	2.726	3.013
Kuwait Interbank		2.563	2.813	3.000	3.188

Source: Bloomberg

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