

MARKET OVERVIEW

The third quarter of 2018 saw a sharp escalation in the trade war between the US and China, in addition to still-strong US growth, rising US interest rates, a strengthening US dollar and financial crises in Turkey and Argentina. The result: developed equity markets (as measured by the MSCI World Index) returned 5.1% in US dollars, while emerging equity markets (as measured by the MSCI Emerging Markets) delivered -1.1% in US dollars due to heightened investor risk aversion. In South Africa, negative local economic news weighed on financial markets, as did poor global sentiment, with local bonds losing ground but the weaker rand underpinned rand hedges and Resource shares on the JSE.

Global bonds lost 0.9% (in US\$) during the quarter, largely on the back of rising US interest rates. More bond issuance also weighed on the US Treasury bond market as the Trump tax cuts expanded the budget deficit. As widely expected, the US Federal Reserve hiked interest rates by 25bps at its September FOMC meeting, while also upping its 2018 growth outlook to 3.1%. The Fed still foresees another 25bp hike this year (consensus in December) and three more 25bp hikes through 2019, as well as one in 2020.

The US economy picked up steam, recording 2.9% GDP growth in Q2 (q/q annualised) stoked by Trump's tax cuts as consumer and business spending rose, while inflation remained under check. Equity markets reflected the bullish sentiment as the S&P 500 returned 7.7%, the Nasdaq 8.6% and Dow Jones Industrial 30 Index 9.6% (all in US\$), although September returns were much more muted due largely to rising trade tensions.

In contrast with the US, Eurozone growth slowed to 2.2% (q/q annualised) in Q2 from 2.5% previously. The European Central Bank (ECB) kept its benchmark interest rate unchanged at 0% at its 13 September meeting, as had been expected, and the Dow Jones Eurostoxx 50 returned -0.2% for the quarter. Meanwhile, UK growth picked up slightly to 1.3% (q/q annualised) from 1.2% in the previous quarter, and the Bank of England surprised by hiking its interest rate by 25bps in August - the first time since the Financial Crisis. The UK's FTSE 100 Index returned -1.8% for the quarter.

After contracting by a revised 0.9% (q/q annualised) in Q1 2018, the Japanese economy rebounded to 1.9% growth in Q2, beating expectations of 1.4%. The Nikkei 225 Index returned 6.3% in Q3, reaching 27-year highs. In China, Q2 GDP growth came in at 6.7% (q/q annualised), as expected, slightly down on the 6.8% reported for Q1 due to slower industrial output and business fixed investment. Business confidence is being hit by growing concerns over the widening impact of US tariffs on Chinese exports, the full extent of which is set to be felt later in the year and is likely to exacerbate the slowdown. Chinese stocks were weaker as a consequence.

Emerging markets (EMs) in general experienced capital outflows during the quarter, with bonds hit particularly hard. Financial crises in Turkey and Argentina in late August and early September worsened already-poor investor sentiment, with the contagion effect spreading across most EMs. For the quarter the MSCI Turkey lost 20.5% (in US\$), despite returning 20.6% in September, and the central bank was forced to hike interest rates by nearly 7.0% to 24% to protect a plunging lira. The MSCI China returned -7.4% and the MSCI South Africa delivered -7.2%, while Russia returned 6.6% and Brazil 5.0% (all in US\$).

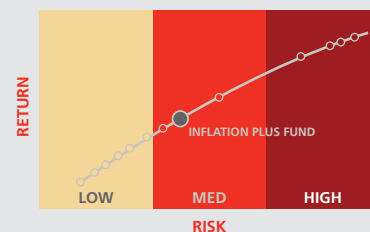
In South Africa, Q3 2018 was another difficult quarter for investors, as the rand, bonds and equities all came under selling pressure from the risk-averse global sentiment, as well as a further broad deterioration in the economy. The land expropriation debate also continued to exacerbate uncertainty. The rand was exceptionally volatile, hitting a worst level of R15.69 versus the US dollar on 5 September amid the strong sell-off in EM currencies and assets, and exacerbated by President Trump's exaggerated tweet about land seizures and white farmer killings. The local currency did recover somewhat to end the quarter at around R14.14 per US\$, some 3.2% weaker over the three months. It deteriorated 2.7% against the euro and ended 1.9% weaker versus the UK pound sterling over the quarter.

Headlining the disappointing data, South Africa's Q2 GDP data shocked the market with a contraction of -0.7% (q/q annualised), coming on the heels of a revised -2.6% in Q1 and putting the economy into recession. This, in turn, sparked concerns over the government's longer-term fiscal policy and raised the spectre of further credit rating downgrades. Moody's, however, said the prospects of it changing its investment-grade sovereign rating in the next eight months were low, although it did halve its 2018 growth estimate to only 0.7%.

In a close vote at its September Monetary Policy Committee meeting, the SA Reserve Bank (SARB) kept interest rates on hold, as expected. Although August CPI slowed to 4.9% y/y from 5.1% in July, economists expect it to rise closer to 6% towards year-end as second-round inflation effects take hold.

For the quarter, the BEASSA All Bond Index returned 0.8% - the yield on the benchmark R186 SA government bond barely moved, ending the quarter at around 9.0% from 9.1% at the beginning of the quarter. However, this masked substantial volatility as the benchmark yield traded as low as 8.57% and as high as 9.25% over the three months. Meanwhile, inflation-linked bonds delivered 0.5%, and cash as measured by the STeFI Composite Index produced 1.7%. For local equities, the FTSE/JSE All Share index (ALSI) returned -2.2% over the three months, led lower by Industrial counters with a -7.8% return (impacted by a decline in Naspers). Financials defied the lower-growth, weaker rand environment with a return of 2.8% and Resources were again the star performers, delivering 5.2%. Listed property produced -1.0% as the inflation and growth outlooks further deteriorated. For 2018 so far, the ALSI remains in negative territory with a -3.8% return.

RISK/RETURN PROFILE:



FUND MANAGERS:

Michael Moyle, David Knee, Duncan Schwulst and Johny Lambridis

ASISA CATEGORY:

South African - Multi-Asset - Low Equity

OBJECTIVE (BEFORE FEES):

CPI+5% p.a. over a rolling 3-year period

INCEPTION DATE:

1 June 2001

FUND SIZE:

R35 026 108 242

AWARDS:

Raging Bull: 2013
 Morningstar: 2015

ANNUALISED PERFORMANCE	A CLASS	OBJECTIVE*	T CLASS	X CLASS	B CLASS
1 year	2.3%	8.3%	2.8%	2.6%	3.1%
3 years	5.2%	8.6%	5.8%	5.5%	6.0%
5 years	7.5%	8.7%	n/a	7.8%	8.3%
7 years	10.3%	8.8%	n/a	10.6%	11.1%
10 years	10.2%	8.6%	n/a	n/a	11.0%
Since inception	12.3%	9.5%	5.5%	10.4%	12.3%

* Objective (After A Class Fees) over a rolling 3-year period. Fee adjustment to gross Fund Objective for different classes: A class -1.6%, T class -1%, X class -1.4%, B class -0.9%.

** Inception dates: X Class: 1 July 2011, B Class: 1 July 2002, T Class: 2 January 2015

ASSET CLASS RETURNS

ASSET CLASS RETURNS	TOTAL RETURN Q2 2018
Global equity – MSCI World (US\$) (Developed)	5.1%
Global equity – MSCI Emerging Markets (US\$)	-1.1%
Global bonds – Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Bond Index (US\$)	-0.9%
Global property – FTSE EPRA/NAREIT Global Property REIT Index (US\$)	-0.3%
SA equity – FTSE/JSE All Share Index	-2.2%
SA bonds – BEASSA All Bond Index	0.8%
SA listed property – SA Listed Property Index	-1.0%
SA inflation-linked bonds – JSE CILJ Index	0.5%
SA cash (STeFI Composite Index)	1.7%

PERFORMANCE

The fund returned 0.6% (net of fees) for the third quarter of 2018, compared to its inflation objective of 1.9%. Over the 3-year period ending 30 September 2018, the fund delivered 5.2% per annum (net of fees), while its inflation objective returned 8.6% per annum over the same period.

Contributing the most to absolute performance for the quarter was the fund's exposure to global equities, together with positions in US investment grade bonds and a local currency Mexican bond. This was further aided by rand weakness. The primary detractors from absolute performance were the fund's holdings in South African listed property and selected South African equities, specifically Naspers and Aspen.

STRATEGY AND OUTLOOK

We recognise that the fund's returns have been disappointing for investors over the recent past. While we cannot predict when it will happen, our valuation-based approach suggests that the fund is currently well positioned to meet its objective over the medium to long term.

In global fixed income, as in previous quarters, despite rising government bond yields, they continue to trade at very low yields (and high valuations) historically, and remain at risk to rising interest rates globally. We remain underweight global sovereign bonds and underweight duration to reduce interest rate risk, preferring to hold investment-grade US and European corporate bonds.

For global equities, gains in the US pushed valuations to higher levels there as we maintained our underweight in that market. Other developed markets like Germany and Japan remained broadly attractive, however, and valuation disparities between developed and EMs widened further in Q3. Broad EM selling made many even more attractive compared to markets like the US. We continue to prefer the global banking sector, which has underperformed the broader market, as well as certain developed markets where equities are undervalued but fundamentals for earnings growth remain positive, including Germany and Japan, and selected emerging markets such as South Korea, Indonesia and China. These overweight positions are financed primarily by an underweight in global bonds, as well as US equities to a lesser extent. Many regions offer better value than the South African equity market, which is why we continue to be overweight global equities in our house view portfolios. SA equity earnings have been depressed relative to their long-term trends, and therefore have the potential to improve if the current government has even modest success in lifting the rate of potential growth.

SA equities moved cheaper during the quarter: the FTSE/JSE ALSI 12-month forward P/E fell to around 12.8X at quarter-end from around 13.7X in Q2, below our long-term fair value estimate of 14.5X. At current levels the market is priced to deliver attractive medium-term returns. However, in the context of the low-equity Inflation Plus Fund's 40% total equity exposure limit, we still see better opportunities offshore due to stronger earnings growth potential in certain markets. Consequently we remain slightly underweight SA equities and overweight global equities in the fund, with total equity exposure close to the maximum allowed.

The fund still holds resources stocks with exposure to global growth like Anglo American, BHP Billiton, Exxaro, Sasol and Sappi, as well as global giants such as Naspers and British American Tobacco. We have also maintained our overweight exposure to financial shares including Old Mutual, Standard Bank and Barclays Group Africa, which have offered attractive valuations with relatively high dividend yields. Meanwhile, we are still underweight retail stocks, given the pressure under which local consumers find themselves, but do hold a select overweight in Pick 'n Pay, having sold down our Foschini exposure during the quarter.

SA listed property became marginally cheaper over the quarter, but we continue to have a neutral exposure in our multi-asset portfolios. Even though the overall sector is priced to deliver attractive low double-digit returns over the medium term, we remain concerned about the risks to the sector, including slow growth and rising inflationary pressures.

In SA nominal bonds, despite volatility there was little change in valuations from the start and end of the quarter, and remained cheap compared to their longer-term average. Consequently, we maintained our overweight position in this asset class. We continue to prefer longer-dated government bonds due to the more attractive yields on offer, and are comfortable with the compensation bonds offer given the risk involved. However, inflation remains a threat and the SA government and businesses have not yet done enough to eliminate the prospects of further credit rating downgrades, especially given the deterioration in the country's growth rate.

For SA inflation-linked bonds, following the quarter's small gains valuations were little changed. We continue to be neutrally positioned in this asset class. Real yields are attractive, but we still believe that better value exists elsewhere – in long-dated nominal bonds and equities. ■

DISCLAIMER

Prudential Portfolio Managers Unit Trusts Ltd (Registration number: 1999/0524/06) is an approved CISC management company (#29). Assets are managed by Prudential Investment Managers (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, which is an approved discretionary Financial Services Provider (#45199). The Trustee's/Custodian details are: Standard Bank of South Africa Limited - Trustee Services & Investor Services, 20th Floor, Main Tower, Standard Bank Centre, Heerengracht, Cape Town. Collective Investment Schemes (unit trusts) are generally medium-to long-term investments. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future investment performance. Unit trust prices are calculated on a net asset value basis. This means the price is the total net market value of all assets of the unit trust fund divided by the total number of units of the fund. Any market movements – for example in share prices, bond prices, money market prices or currency fluctuations - relevant to the underlying assets of the fund may cause the value of the underlying assets to go up or down. As a result, the price of your units may go up or down. Unit trusts are traded at the ruling forward price of the day, meaning that transactions are processed during the day before you or the Manager know what the price at the end of the day will be. The price and therefore the number of units involved in the transaction are only known on the following day. The unit trust fund may borrow up to 10% of the fund value, and it may also lend any scrip (proof of ownership of an investment instrument) that it holds to earn additional income. A Prudential unit trust fund may consist of different fund classes that are subject to different fees and charges. Where applicable, the Manager will pay your financial adviser an agreed standard ongoing adviser fee, which is included in the overall costs of the fund. A Collective Investment Schemes (CIS) summary with all fees and maximum initial and ongoing adviser fees is available on our website. One can also obtain additional information on Prudential products on the Prudential website. The Manager may, at its discretion, close your chosen unit trust fund to new investors and to additional investments by existing investors to make sure that it is managed in accordance with its mandate. It may also stop your existing debit order investment. The Manager makes no guarantees as to the capital invested in the fund or the returns of the fund. Excessive withdrawals from the fund may place the fund under liquidity pressure and, in certain circumstances, a process of ring fencing withdrawal instructions may be followed. The Fund may hold foreign securities including foreign CIS funds. As a result, the fund may face material risks. The volatility of the fund may be higher and the liquidity of the underlying securities may be restricted due to relative market sizes and market conditions. The fund's ability to settle securities and to repatriate investment income, capital or the proceeds of sales of securities may be adversely affected for multiple reasons including market conditions, macro-economic and political circumstances. Further, the return on the security may be affected (positively or negatively) by the difference in tax regimes between the domestic and foreign tax jurisdictions. The availability of market information and information on any underlying sub-funds may be delayed. Fund prices are published daily on the Prudential website. These are also available upon request. The performance is calculated for the portfolio. Individual investor performance may differ as a result of initial fees, the actual investment date, the date of reinvestment and dividend withholding tax. Purchase and repurchase requests must be received by the Manager by 13h30 SA time each business day. All online purchase and repurchase transactions must be received by the Manager by 10h30 (for all Funds) SA time each business day.