

CIO OFFICE MORNING MARKET WRAP 8 April 2025

The week started with a massive spike in risk-aversion, where stocks lost -13% in Hong-Kong, their worst one-day loss of the millennium. Markets were close to panic, with VIX futures opening at 60, a level only seen during covid or the great financial crisis. A rumor of a 90-day delay in "reciprocal" tariffs briefly generated a \$2tn rebound which quickly evaporated. Fortunately, US stocks found some balance to end the session flat, but volatility had moved to the Treasury market with a 25 bps increase in long-dated yields. No doubt, volatility is here to stay, and not in small numbers. Overall, stocks lost -8% in emerging markets and -2% in developed regions. Bonds suffered with US Treasury yields having a brutal bear-steepening: +11bps for the 2-year to 3.76%, and +21bps for the 10-year to 4.18%. Gold continued to see profit taking, dropping -2% to \$2,983. Oil logically continued to suffer from downgrades in the economic outlook: the Brent closed at \$64.2.

The center theme of our Outlook was that 2025 was not about the present, which is still fine, but about the future. US tariffs are a massive threat to global activity and inflation, with no winner in a trade-war. To that extent, reactions are diverse. China is ready to fight "to the end", and the EU commission proposes, in what is currently just a working document, 25% counter-tariffs on a selection of US goods, with France (which weirdly doesn't have a trade surplus with the US but is world champion in taxes) being at the forefront and suggesting targeting US tech companies and services. By contrast, Japan has chosen to engage with the US as quickly as possible, sending a "top team" to Washington to reduce the trade deficit and increase investments, while India is more on a status-quo, but with no retaliation. They all reach out to the US, as well as, among others, Israel, Thailand, and Vietnam. The latter is said to have offered to cut their tariffs on US imports to zero, but this would not change much given the calculation formula of the "liberation day" tariffs. President Trump is not in a mood to back-off, as he threatens China to retaliate on their retaliation by adding an extra 50%. This doesn't sound good. We continue to think that there is ample room for negotiations from the currently outrageous level of "reciprocal" tariffs. However, it takes two to tango, and the current US narrative of "Main Street over Wall Street" does not suggest that they will be proactive and spontaneously help markets. They may probably respond positively to negotiation requests, but the risk of escalation is real. It's not a small one, with no small consequences.

On the corporate side, Apple plans to import more iPhones from India to the US to offset tariffs on China. Samsung delivered one of the rare good news of the day with a material beat on their quarterly numbers, along with Broadcom announcing a share buyback.

Markets this morning:

Asian stocks are well oriented as we write this morning, partially recovering after their worst day ever. Stocks are up +5% in Japan, +2% in Hong-Kong (now flat YTD), +1% in Shanghai-Shenzhen and +0.5% in Korea. Future contracts on Western equity indices suggest +2% in Europe and +1% in the US. US Treasury yields are only slightly lower in Tokyo trading, giving back -3 to -5 bps across the curve. Gold is slightly higher, approaching \$3,000 again, and oil prices gain \$0.8. Within currencies, the dollar continues to slip against trade-weighted counterparts, and interestingly the onshore yuan fell to 7.32 following the daily fixing by the PBOC. It's now flat against the dollar in 2025.

Upcoming key events/data:

There won't be any major economic data or corporate earnings to distract markets from their trade war anxiety today, which will remain front and center. We will watch (anxiously as well) any sign of further escalation especially with the EU and China. Market action will also matter: the VIX around 47 is kind of an intermediate level: high enough to generate a material rebound from any good news, but not in full panic (60 and above) which makes a spontaneous technical rebound more probable. Investment is a long-term game. Have a great day.

Chief Investment Office Wealth Management Emirates NBD.

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