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MARKET REVIEW

In July, global equities advanced as markets navigated the implications of divergent monetary policies across major economies. Gains in the U.S. stock market were supported by growing expectations that the Federal Reserve would start to cut interest rates as early as September, a view strengthened by a weaker-than-expected CPI print. Asian economies outperformed broader emerging markets, with Japan and India being the better-performing markets on a relative basis, while Taiwan and China lagged.

Japanese equities outperformed other regional markets in USD terms, largely attributable to the yen's appreciation, which was driven by a narrowing of rate differentials after the Bank of Japan hiked interest rates and growing expectations of a Federal Reserve rate cut. Financials perceived to be beneficiaries of higher rates outperformed while exporters and industrials underperformed as the market used the opportunity to take profit on companies that had benefited from a weaker currency and easier policy rates. Indian stocks experienced gains, bolstered by optimism that the strong fundamentals of the Indian economy and robust corporate profits were resilient and that recent national elections were not disruptive. Conversely, Taiwanese equities saw a decline as investor skepticism grew regarding the sustainability of AI-related profits amid heightened geopolitical tensions. Chinese equities also lagged, impacted by ongoing weaknesses in the real estate sector and the depreciation of the yuan.

The MSCI AC Asia ex Japan Net returned -0.1% over the month. Within the index, four out of 11 sectors declined for the month. Information technology and materials were the bottom performing sectors, while health care and utilities were the top performing sectors for the period.

FUND PERFORMANCE AND ATTRIBUTION

- The fund underperformed the index over the period.
- Security selection was the primary driver of relative underperformance. Weak selection in consumer discretionary, information technology and real estate was partially offset by selection in industrials. Sector allocation, a result of our bottom-up stock selection process, modestly contributed to returns. Allocation effect was driven by our lack of exposure to materials, underweight to information technology and overweight to financials, but offset by our underweight to health care and consumer staples. On a market basis, weak stock selection in India and China was partially offset by selection in South Korea.
- At the issuer level, our top two relative contributors were an overweight to HD Hyundai Heavy Industries and an out of benchmark allocation to Life Ins Corp of, while our top two relative detractors were overweights to Macrotech Developers and Axis Bank.
- Shares of HD Hyundai Heavy Industries, the world's largest shipbuilding company and a major heavy equipment manufacturer, rose over the period after reporting operating profit for the second quarter above expectations. Shares also traded higher along with other South Korean shipbuilding stocks after US industrials climbed on rate-cut bets. Shares of Macrotech Developers, an Indian multinational real estate company, declined during the period. The company reported net income for the first quarter that missed consensus.

FUND POSITIONING AND OUTLOOK

From an outlook perspective, we remain constructive on the outlook for Asian equities although performance divergence across markets have been significant. We continue to observe a range of attractive bottom-up opportunities in India, supported by the country's more favorable economic backdrop, younger demographics and rising importance in the context of the global supply chain. Conversely in China, despite earnings have improved gradually, we have continued to see a compression in equity valuation driven by rising geopolitical concerns, a struggling property market and more importantly, a lack of confidence in both consumers and business owners to spend and invest. In the long run, we continue to be focused on finding attractive high-quality companies, which are able to sustain higher returns on capital at undemanding valuations, and we are optimistic on the outlook for portfolio alpha. We believe that over time, high-quality businesses trading at reasonable valuations have good potential to outperform the broader market on the strength of their stock-specific fundamentals.

At the end of the period, our largest overweights were real estate and industrials. We were most underweight to materials, energy and health care, all of which we had no exposure to. From a market perspective, our largest overweights were India and South Korea. We were most underweight to China and Taiwan.

RISKS

CAPITAL: Investment markets are subject to economic, regulatory, market sentiment and political risks. All investors should consider the risks that may impact their capital, before investing. The value of your investment may become worth more or less than at the time of the original investment. The Fund may experience a high volatility from time to time. **CONCENTRATION:** Concentration of investments within securities, sectors or industries, or geographical regions may impact performance. **CURRENCY:** The value of the Fund may be affected by changes in currency exchange rates. Unhedged currency risk may subject the Fund to significant volatility. **EMERGING MARKETS:** Emerging markets may be subject to custodial and political risks, and volatility. Investment in foreign currency entails exchange risks. **EQUITIES:** Investments may be volatile and may fluctuate according to market conditions, the performance of individual companies and that of the broader equity market. **HEDGING:** Any hedging strategy using derivatives may not achieve a perfect hedge. **MANAGER:** Investment performance depends on the investment management team and their investment strategies. If the strategies do not perform as expected, if opportunities to implement them do not arise, or if the team does not implement its investment strategies successfully; then a fund may underperform or experience losses.

PAST PERFORMANCE DOES NOT PREDICT FUTURE RETURNS. AN INVESTMENT CAN LOSE VALUE.

Fund performance is based on USD S Acc share class and are net of fees and expenses. Other share class performance may differ. | Index used in the calculation of attribution data: MSCI All Country Asia ex Japan. | Fund performance is net of actual (but not necessarily maximum) withholding and capital gains tax but are not otherwise adjusted for the effects of taxation and assume reinvestment of dividends and capital gains. | If an investor's own currency is different from the currency in which the fund is denominated, the investment return may increase or decrease as a result of currency fluctuations. | The views expressed are in the context of the investment objective of the Fund only and should not be considered a recommendation or advice.

SUSTAINABILITY: A Sustainability Risk can be defined as an environmental, social or governance event or condition that, if it occurs, could cause an actual or potential material negative impact on the value of an investment.

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