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MARKET REVIEW

Global equities advanced in November. Donald Trump's presidential reelection and the Republican Party's sweep of both chambers of Congress led the US to significantly outperform other regions amid expectations for deregulation, additional tax cuts, and a more accommodative US business environment. The breadth of change anticipated from the new US administration reverberated across the globe with far-reaching implications for foreign policy, trade dynamics, inflation, and economic growth. Prospects for a soft landing appeared to remain intact, and central banks in the US, UK, New Zealand, Mexico, and Sweden continued to lower interest rates. Inflation neared central bank targets in many regions. A stronger US dollar pressured emerging markets, and Chinese equities declined amid underwhelming government aid and weak consumer demand.

Asian economies outperformed broader emerging markets over the month with Singapore and Japan being the better-performing markets on a relative basis, while Indonesia and South Korea lagged. Singaporean equities advanced supported by strong gains in financials as renewed optimism around the city-state's banks provided a lift to the wider market. On the flip side, Indonesian markets ended the month lower, weighed down by continued foreign investor selling on the back of a strengthening US dollar and sluggish domestic demand. South Korea's central bank slashed its base rate by 25 bps amid slower-than-anticipated economic growth.

The MSCI AC Asia ex Japan Net returned -3.3% over the month. Within the index, 10 out of 11 sectors declined over the month. Materials and consumer discretionary were the bottom performing sectors, while communication services and financials were the top performing sectors over the month.

FUND PERFORMANCE AND ATTRIBUTION

- The fund outperformed the index over the period, however delivered negative returns.
- Security selection was the primary driver of relative outperformance. Strong selection in industrials and consumer discretionary was modestly offset by selection in communication services. Sector allocation, a result of our bottom-up stock selection process, also contributed to returns. Allocation effect was driven by our lack of exposure to materials, overweight to industrials and underweight to information technology, but offset by our overweight to real estate and consumer discretionary. On a market basis, strong stock selection in South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan was modestly offset by selection in China.
- At the issuer level, our top two relative contributors were overweights to Grab Holdings and HD Hyundai Heavy Industries, while our top two relative detractors were overweights to KE Holdings and SK Hynix.
- Shares of Grab Holdings rose during the period. The Singapore-based multinational super app platform company reported 3Q24 results and raised revenue and earnings guidance for FY2024. Management cited record monthly transacting users for its robust on-demand GMV growth. Shares of KE Holdings declined during the period. The company reported third quarter revenue slightly below expectations. Revenues increased 26.8% year-over-year but cost of revenues increased 35% and adjusted earnings were down. The existing home market has been stable, but the new home market remains weak with lower supply and demand and a broader negative market sentiment in China persists.

FUND POSITIONING AND OUTLOOK

We remain constructive on the outlook for Asian equities. In China, we believe the recently-announced monetary and fiscal support packages signify a – long awaited by us – recognition at the highest levels within the Chinese government of the serious consequences of slowing economic growth and depressed investor confidence. We are assessing implications and have modestly added to our existing holdings in China. We continue to observe a range of attractive bottom-up opportunities in India, supported by the country's favorable long-term economic backdrop, young demographics and the country's rising importance in the global supply chain. We continue to focus 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 consumer discretionary. We were most underweight to information technology and had no exposure to materials and health care. From a market perspective, our largest overweights were India and Indonesia. We were most underweight to Taiwan and China.

RISKS

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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.

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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