



May in perspective – global markets

Similar to most months so far this year, May was full of “excitement” i.e. volatility. What made it different was that the month ended with most indices registering losses. During March developed equity markets register losses but the May’s losses were almost twice as deep. Two major influences were brought to bear on global investment markets during the month. The first was sovereign debt-related issues. During the last two thirds of the month markets stressed over the implications of another chapter in the peripheral European debt crisis. In addition, throughout the month the US debt crisis was never far from the surface. The US officially reached its debt ceiling early in the month, and it has until 3 August to “shuffle its deck chairs” before standing a good chance of defaulting on its debt. And all the time US politicians play an extremely dangerous game of one-upmanship. It is scarcely believable! As Dave Rosenberg would say, “you can’t make this stuff up!”

The effects were most visible in the euro dollar exchange rate. Having benefitted from the increase in European interest rates, the euro had been strong until the beginning of the May when European Central Bank (ECB) Governor Trichet signalled that an ongoing increase in interest rates was not assured. That led to a sharp decline in the euro – in Chart 1 the two horizontal lines demarcate the month of May. The euro weakness was exacerbated by the political doodling around how to conclude the next chapter of the Greek sovereign debt fiasco.

Chart 1: The euro dollar exchange rate



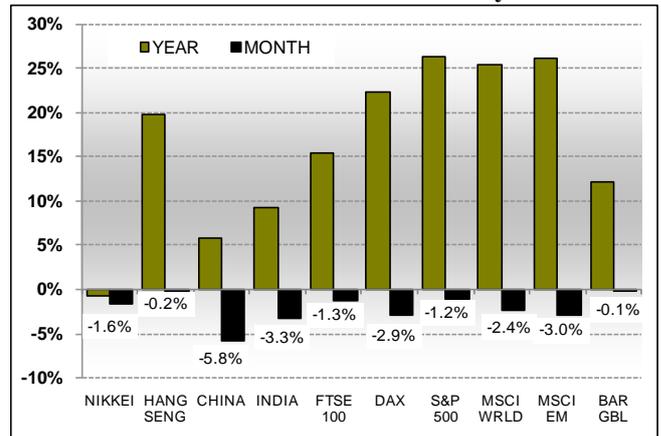
Source: Saxo Bank

The second major factor was the realisation amongst investors that the global economy really was slowing down and that expectations would have to be downgraded accordingly. In Chart 1, the trough of the euro during May

(on the 24th to be exact) coincided with the release of a swathe of very negative US economic data, from housing sales to retail sales and economic growth. Shortly afterwards light at the end of the EU-Greek tunnel began to appear and the euro recovered some of the lost ground. Markets have fallen into a very predictable pattern: a weak euro leads equity markets lower and a strong euro leads to firmer equity markets. It was unsurprising then that equity markets followed the euro’s direction during May.

Chart 2 depicts the monthly returns as usual. I should point out that the May 2010 returns were very poor, therefore the annual returns to May 2011 have actually risen quite a lot, despite the negative (May 2011) monthly returns. Here, then, is another useful reminder of the “base effect” that should be taken into account whenever analysing returns over time. The MSCI world index lost 2.5% and the emerging market index lost 3.0%. The German market down 2.9%, Japanese 1.6% and US 1.2% markets were the leading decliners amongst developed markets, while Russia, down 8.8%, China 5.8%, India 3.3% and Brazil 2.3% led emerging markets lower. The (SA) All share index declined 4.3% in dollar terms. The Barcap Global bond index ended down 0.1%. Given the concern about slowing global growth, commodity prices were generally weaker. Silver declined 20.6%, oil 7.3%, nickel 12.8%, aluminium 4.3% and copper 1.6%. Major commodity indices declined between 5% and 7%. As we can see from Chart 1, the euro lost 3.1% against the dollar on the month. The greenback was generally firmer, which stands in stark contrast to its weaker tone so far this year. It firmed 3.7% again the rand, 1.3% against sterling (which was itself quite strong in May), but continued to lose ground against the Swiss franc, which over time has regained its status as the world’s ultimate safe haven currency; the Swiss franc rose 1.8% against the dollar, bringing its annual gain against the latter to an astonishing 35.5%!

Chart 2: Global market returns to 31 May 2011



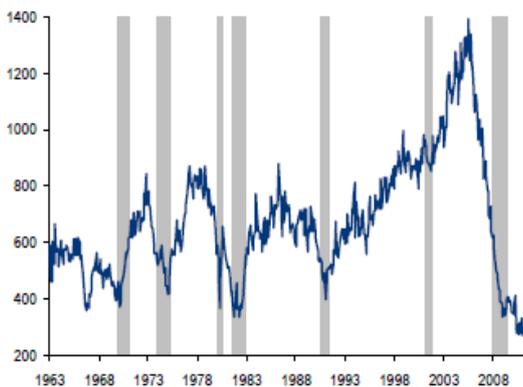


What's on our radar screen?

Here are a couple of items we are keeping a close eye on:

- The US economy:** without going into too much detail on the US economy, no matter which way you looked at the new data this month, *it was bad – very bad*. Whether it be retail sales, the housing market (which is into a severe second downturn – refer to Chart 3), the labour market (where 45m – yes, that's 45 million – US citizens now receive food stamps!) or the economy as a whole (where the revised first quarter of 2011 [Q1 11] growth rate was retained at 1.8% versus expectations of an increase to 2.2%), all the evidence points to a marked slowdown in the engine of global growth, the US economy. Bearing in mind that one of the least unpleasant and most powerful ways for the US to resolve its massive debt problems is to *grow its way out of trouble*, a slowdown in growth is what that economy can *least* afford right now.

Chart 3: US New home sales (thousands, annualised)
Shaded areas represent US recessions



- The SA economy:** The SA Reserve Bank (SARB) left its repo rate unchanged, at 5.5%, despite increasing its inflation forecast. It now expects SA inflation to breach the official target range of 3% to 6% in the fourth quarter of 2011 and reach a peak of 6.1% in the first quarter of 2012. It increased its 2011 inflation rate to 5.1%, from 4.7%, and its 2012 forecast to 5.7% from 6.0%. The actual inflation to April rose to 4.2% from 4.1% although the increase was lower than expected. Very significantly – and I say this in the light of the other economic growth rates listed in this section – the SA economic first quarter (Q1 11) growth rate rose to 4.8% (that's a quarter-on quarter rate, seasonally adjusted and annualised, or "saar" in economic speak) from 4.5% in Q4 10 (revised up from 4.4% initially).

Table 1: The make-up of Q1 11 SA growth (%)

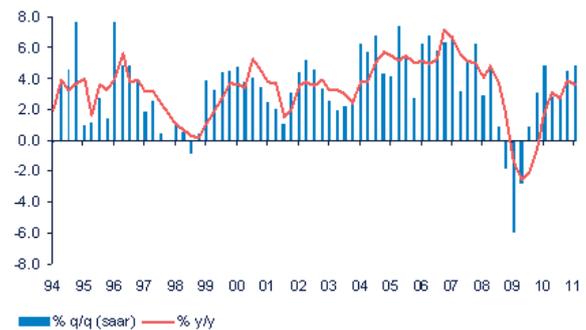
Sector	GDP growth qoq saar		More balanced	
	4Q10	1Q11		
Agriculture	12.5	-2.6		
Mining	17.1	1.8		
Manufacturing	4.1	14.5		
Electricity	5.6	2.3		
Construction	0.2	0		
Domestic trade	3.5	4.4		
Transport	4.2	3.6		
Finance and business services	1.7	4.8		
General government	5.3	1.8		

Source: Deutsche Securities

Table 1 shows the manufacturing, and finance and service sectors fared particularly well. The annual rate of growth i.e. Q1 10 versus Q1 11 declined from 3.8% to 3.6% as depicted in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Real SA economic growth (%)

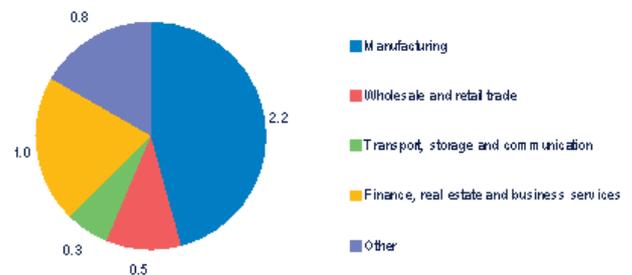
Quarter-quarter (saar) versus annual rates



Source: Investec Securities

And in case you ever wanted to see which sectors were the most important in the SA economy, Chart 5 shows what the "pie" looks like.

Chart 5: Q1 11 quarter contribution to GDP (% points)



Source: Investec Securities

- The Chinese economy:** inflation in China rose 5.3% in April, down from 5.4% in March. That was sufficient for the authorities to increase the bank reserve requirement ratio yet again. They lifted it by 0.5% to 21.0%, which means large Chinese banks now have to retain 21.0% of their deposits with the central bank. April retail sales grew at an annual rate of 17.1% (from 17.4% in March) while industrial production decelerated to 13.4%.



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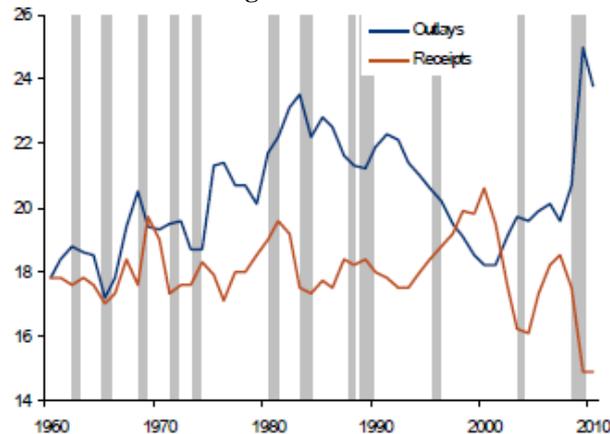
11th Edition | June 2011

- The European economy:* The Q1 11 economic growth numbers were released during the month. France and Germany, which constitute nearly half of the Eurozone, performed well in the first quarter. Germany registered growth during the first quarter 1.5% higher than the previous quarter and some 5.2% higher than the first quarter of 2010. France's quarterly growth (Q1 11 versus Q4 10) grew 1.0% but Italy and Spain did less well, growing only 0.1% and 0.3% respectively. Portugal contracted by 0.7%. Growth for the Eurozone as a whole during the March quarter was 0.8% higher than the December quarter.

Charts of the month

Last month we focussed on the US's level of indebtedness, specifically on the budget deficit and the US's inability to make any progress resolving it. We continue to focus on it as it remains, at least in our opinion, one of the biggest inherent risks in global investment markets today. I recently came across a chart showing how unprecedented the US's present debt levels are, and specifically the effect of the recent financial crisis on US public finances.

Chart 6: Deficit divergence – as a % of US GDP

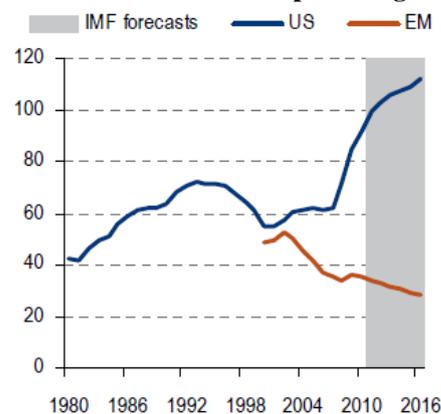


Source: Merrill Lynch

Chart 6 shows US government outlays and receipts as a percentage of their GDP. As can be seen from the chart, government receipts averaged 18.4% from 1960 to 2007, while outlays averaged 20.2%. The effect of the financial crisis on both of these factors is clear: government outlays jumped to 25.0% of GDP, their highest level since 1945, while receipts declined to 14.9%, their lowest level since 1950. One "natural remedy" for this situation would be another round of strong growth, but as we have already seen, US growth is shrinking – rapidly – and looks to be in short supply in the immediate future, so little help will be forthcoming from that quarter. What is also immediately obvious is the fact that remedial action will have to be taken on both issues i.e. it is insufficient to only deal with government receipts (taxes). Outlays (spending) will have

to be significantly curtailed as well if there is any hope of restoring these ratios back to "traditional" levels. And while we are on the issue of US debt, chart 7 places the size of the US debt in perspective. Gross debt to GDP in the US is forecast to rise to nearly three times that of emerging market (EM) debt to GDP.

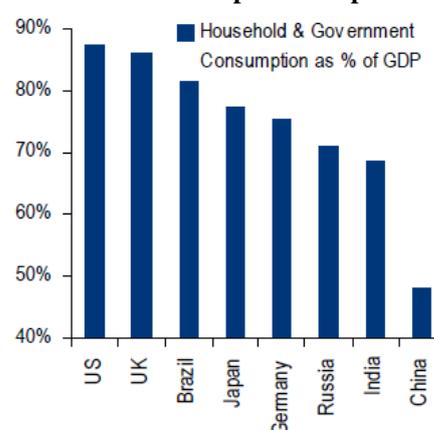
Chart 7: Gross debt as a percentage of GDP



Source: Merrill Lynch

One final chart "while I'm on a roll"... I used to, particularly in the first half of last decade, refer to the US as "the land of excess". Their ability to "consume" everything in sight never ceased to amaze me. Of course, in the second half of the decade the proverbial chickens came home to roost; and have they made their nest permanent! Chart 8 depicts the level of US consumption, which despite the recent crisis, current lack of economic growth and high unemployment, remains high relative to the rest of the world.

Chart 8: US consumption as a percentage of GDP



Source: Merrill Lynch

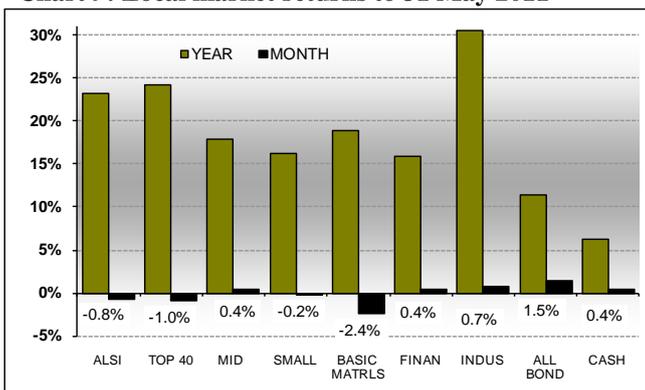
It is interesting to note how low other countries, particularly emerging giants Russia, India and China are. It makes one realise how far these emerging countries have to go before they start to have the type of impact on the global economy that the US has had during the past three decades.



May in perspective – local markets

With tangible evidence of a slowdown in global growth now well entrenched, the SA equity market, with its heavy reliance on basic material shares, was always going to struggle. So it is not surprising to learn that the All share index declined 0.8% in May, although I would hasten to point out that a week before the end of the month it was down 4.5%. The basic material index fell 2.4% but the financial and industrial indices managed to post gains of 0.4% and 0.7%, which lent a great deal of support to the All share index. The mid cap index posted a respectable 0.4% rise while small caps ended down 0.2%. The best performing sectors during May were tech hardware up 9.9% and software 6.7% while the coal sector, down 8.4% and platinum 5.2% brought up the rear. I just have to also draw your attention to the gold index, which declined 4.9%, bringing its annual return to only 3.1% - hardly the return you would expect with the gold price flirting with all-time highs. Maestro has a long-held aversion for direct investment into SA gold mines, and I am happy to say the returns have vindicated this often controversial view. The All bond index rose 1.5%, despite the weak rand, which is an indication of the increasing search for “yield” i.e. attractive interest rates, against the prospect of increasingly low yields as the rate of global growth decreases in the coming months – both the US and German 10-year bond yields closed below 3.0% shortly after month-end.

Chart 9: Local market returns to 31 May 2011



We have already commented on the rand’s 3.5% decline against the dollar. I would hasten to add that the rand put in sterling (no pun intended ☺) performance during the month, thanks in large part to the excellent SA growth numbers, when one considers how strong the dollar was and how weak other emerging currencies were. Bear in mind that April ended with a surging rand (it closed at R6.5872 in April). Chart 10 shows how sharply the rand firmed in the last few days of May – after reaching a peak of R7.07 – and it also depicts what a rollercoaster the rand dollar exchange rate has been on during 2011 so far. It has traded in a range of 11.1% (and that was in the first six weeks of the year

alone) and has declined 3.1% so far this year (although this is off a very “low” base, as can be seen from the chart).

Chart 10: The rand dollar exchange rate so far this year



Source: Saxo Bank

For the record

Table 2 lists the latest returns of the mutual funds under Maestro’s care. You can find more detail by visiting our website at www.maestroinvestment.co.za. Returns include income and are presented after fees have been charged. Fund Summaries for each respective fund listed in the table are available on [our website](#).

Table 2: The returns of funds under Maestro’s care

	Period ended	Month	Year to date	Year
Maestro Equity Fund	May	-1.1%	-3.8%	15.4%
<i>Maestro equity benchmark *</i>	May	-0.2%	4.8%	26.1%
<i>JSE All Share Index</i>	May	-0.8%	2.6%	23.2%
Retirement Funds				
Maestro Growth Fund	May	-0.3%	-2.7%	11.5%
<i>Fund Benchmark</i>	May	-0.3%	2.6%	16.6%
Maestro Balanced Fund	May	-0.1%	-1.6%	10.3%
<i>Fund Benchmark</i>	May	-0.1%	2.6%	14.9%
Maestro Cautious Fund	May	0.0%	0.1%	10.6%
<i>Fund Benchmark</i>	May	0.4%	2.4%	12.9%
Central Park Global				
Balanced Fund (\$)	Apr	3.2%	3.7%	13.6%
<i>Benchmark**</i>	Apr	2.6%	5.1%	10.4%
<i>Sector average ***</i>	Apr	3.1%	5.4%	11.8%

* 50% JSE Top 40 Index, 50% JSE Financial & Industrial 30 Index
 ** 40% MSCI World Index, 20% each in Barclays US Aggregate Bond Index, Credit Suisse Tremont Hedge Index and 3-month US Treasury Bills
 *** Lipper Global Mixed Asset Balanced sector (\$)



Largely for space sake last month we omitted to list the returns achieved on the equity portfolios under management. For the benefit of new readers let me remind you that on a quarterly basis we publish, in *Intermezzo*, the quarterly returns on all the fully discretionary equity portfolios under our management. As each client situation is unique, publishing client's total returns is meaningless, but their equity portfolios are similar, so this return is more meaningful. The returns to March 2011 are listed below.

Table 3: Maestro annual returns to 31 March 2011 (%)

SA equity returns	6m *	1 yr	2 yrs	5 yrs	7 yrs	9 yrs
<i>Maestro long-term equity portfolios</i>	7.2	14.0	5.1	12.3	22.0	20.2
<i>Maestro Equity Fund</i>	4.8	9.5	1.9	7.3		
Maestro equity benchmark **	9.3	16.3	8.3	12.6	20.4	14.3
JSE All Share Index	10.7	15.2	5.9	12.7	20.3	14.3

* 6-month returns are un-annualised

** 50% JSE Top 40 Index, 50% JSE Financial & Industrial 30 Index

It is clear from the data that Maestro's returns during the March quarter were very disappointing. The reasons for this have been shared with our clients, in short we were short of rand hedges during (refer again to Chart 10 to see what the rand did in January) and many of the shares we have held for a long time and which performed very well during the December 2010 quarter (during which we performed very well) were coming off a high base and were quite heavily marked down. Of particular interest to me is the increasing convergence of the All share index and Maestro equity benchmark returns over the longer periods. Remember that the Maestro equity benchmark is nothing but an equally weighted index across the basic material (mining), financial and industrial indices i.e. we compiled it to overcome the heavy weighting of the resource sector of the JSE, which we feel is not a suitable index to use as a long-term benchmark, particularly not for retirement funds. Increasingly though, the data seem to be indicating that over longer periods this concern is becoming less relevant. Of course, the risk (which we define as the volatility of returns) implicit in the All share index is higher. It is also appropriate to mention that the volatility of Maestro's equity returns is a lot lower than that of the All share index and the equity benchmark, which is gratifying from our point of view.

To QE or not to QE?

An increasing talking point in global investment circles is whether or not the US Federal Reserve will undertake another injection of money into the global system. To refresh your memories, in May 2009, shortly after the depth of the crisis in March of that year, the Fed undertook a massive monetary injection into the US, but effectively into the global economy. The intention, officially at least, was to bring US down interest rates so as to stimulate borrowing. But the most obvious effect was not on interest rates, but rather on the dollar, which weakened 11% over the period,

and the level of the US share market, which rose 71%. Officially the first round of "Quantitative Easing" or QE1, ended on 31 March 2010, by which stage investors had realised the effects that QE would have on financial markets and commodity and emerging markets in particular. The US economy was already "running out of steam" which resulted in the Fed embarking on QE2, another round of artificial stimulation which saw \$600bn of dollars being injected into the system. There are many – and we are partial to this view – who feel that this "free" or "loose" money is debasing the dollar and simultaneously pushing the value of commodities and emerging market currencies higher. Ironically, exactly the opposite of the stated intention of QE came about; US interest rates have risen during most of the time that QE has been in force. Table 4 lists movements in selected markets during the tenure of QE1 and QE2. A close analysis of the table highlights why investors are so keen to see whether "Boom boom Ben" Bernanke will roll out QE3.

Table 4: Returns during QE phases

Asset Classes	QE1	Between QE	QE2
Global equities	75%	-9%	24%
US equities	71%	-9%	26%
Small-cap equities	94%	-9%	35%
EM equities	107%	-4%	20%
VIX	-65%	39%	-25%
US High Yield Corp	68%	3%	12%
US Treasuries	0%	7%	0%
US Dollar Exchange Rate	-11%	0%	-9%
Brent Crude Oil	48%	-6%	35%
Gold	19%	11%	21%
Copper	112%	-4%	18%
Global Sectors			
Energy	56%	-12%	35%
Industrials	90%	-8%	31%
Materials	105%	-10%	31%
Cons Discr	86%	-5%	30%
Tech	83%	-12%	26%
Health Care	47%	-10%	23%
Cons Staples	54%	-3%	19%
Financials	126%	-11%	17%
T/Cm Svs	34%	0%	16%
Utilities	31%	-4%	7%

Source: Merrill Lynch

Underlying the concern about the possibility of QE3 is the effect it will have on the dollar. Our views on the latter are well-known by now; it is highly unlikely that the dollar will muster any renewed strength in a QE3 environment. In fairness though, there has been real underlying strength in commodity prices – we must assume that to have emanated from real increased demand – as Chart 11 shows. Since QE2 was announced on August 27, the dollar has declined against a basket of currencies (referred to in industry jargon as the "DXY") by about 12% whereas the CRB Commodity index is up 35%. It is therefore hard to argue that the weak dollar was the only reason or sole cause behind recent commodity strength.

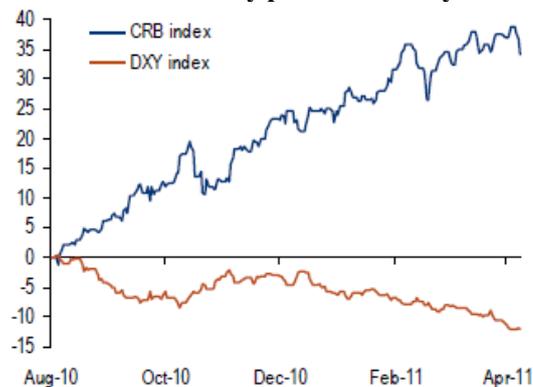


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11th Edition | June 2011

Chart 11: Commodity prices – not only a dollar story



Source: Merrill Lynch

A quote to chew on

And of course the dollar has an unfair advantage, given its status as the world's reserve currency. Given the sovereign debt issues in peripheral Europe (Greece, Portugal and Ireland in particular), the euro has by and large shot itself in the foot in terms of its credibility and suitability for this role, although that is not to say it will not still be used for that purpose in an increasing fashion in the future. But for now though, the dollar's role in this regard looks assured, despite its structural weaknesses (read US debt crisis) if only because of the lack of alternative candidates. *Ethan Harris, Merrill Lynch's North American economist* put it this way; "Does this mean the US will lose its reserve currency status? Well, not in the immediate future. The loss of the dollar's hegemony status will be a marathon, not a sprint. Remember that it took two wars, a declining empire and the emergence of a clearly more powerful rival for the UK to cede its place in the global monetary system to the US. Of course, the UK always shared its position with gold. Certainly, some of this sounds familiar; the US is involved in wars in Middle East and the rise of China is a frequent topic in the popular press. However, today there is no obvious currency for the dollar to cede to – the euro is deeply damaged and Chinese capital markets are too small and regulated."

File 13: Information almost worth remembering

A little insight in business in China

We often refer to our phrase "the law of large numbers" as a means of expressing our view that if you want to understand the dynamics in large economies such as India or China, you have to think according to the law of large numbers. Many people fail to appreciate the effects of this law, and it is amusing to see how few US businesses and politicians have grasped this simple principal. So many of them still go on and on about China trying to "under cut or under- price" US goods, thereby "stealing" US jobs and undermining US business. What they don't understand is that prices in China, generally speaking, are low because the competition in

China is so intense that businesses just survive if they are uncompetitive. Sure, labour there is cheaper (but labour costs are rising), etc, but don't underestimate the law of large numbers and the effect it has on competitive imperative and the resultant effect on pricing. Let me illustrate the law of large numbers again by way of an example. eHi is a car rental company in China that is preparing for a listing in the US. eHi was launched by Ray Zhang in Shanghai in 2006. At that stage car rental was only a novelty and there were only a few car rental companies. Car ownership is still relative low in China, but with 1.4bn people it is likely to increase dramatically in the future. Last year China became the largest car market in the world and it is estimated that if Chinese penetration levels reach those of the US (which no one thinks possible right now) the Chinese car park would swell to 1bn cars. Clearly China could not afford that in terms of infrastructural and environmental considerations, but it shows the power of the law of large numbers. Car rental is thus a critical component of the authorities' efforts to manage the rising demand for cars. At present there are already between 5 000 and 10 000 car rental companies in China, most still being run as "mom and pop" shops with only a handful of cars. The top ten rental companies control only 11% of the market – analysts estimate eHi is in the top 3. There are only 180 000 cars in the national rental pool at present, but Zhang estimates that the Chinese rental pool will eventually rise to between 5m and 10m cars. That compares to the current US pool of 2.5m. Another interesting aspect of the Chinese car rental market is that US companies have been largely unsuccessful in their attempts to penetrate that market because they build their models on self-drive. However, whereas in the US 90% of the rental market relies on customers who drive the cars themselves, in China this figure is only 18%. The status attached to being driven by a chauffeur is so strong that most car rentals come with a driver.

The global economy as defined by a laager

SAB Miller recently produced results to March 2011. Whilst digging through the numbers, I was amused that the growth in laager volumes seemed to reflect the global economy so accurately. Expressed in volume terms, the growth rates for laager was as follows: South Africa 2%, Miller Coors (US) -3%, Europe -3%, Africa 13%, Asia 10% and Latin America 0%. There you have it – the world in laager terms.



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11th Edition June 2011

The true cost of the Royal wedding

I am sure some of you watched the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton last month. But did you stop to consider the cost of effectively “shutting down” the UK economy for a day? The common estimate I have seen is around £8bn i.e. about R88bn to shut down the UK for a day – hardly the cost needed by a country struggling to lift itself out of the jaws of recession.

The times, they are a-changing

I’m not sure if you picked it up, but Amazon announced recently that the sale of e-books (books in electronic format for Kindles and other electronic devices) had surpassed the number of sale of printed books for the first time. It also announced that it has sold more than three times the number of e-books so far this year as it had over the same period last year and the Association of American Publishers announced that US e-book revenues had grown 146% in March from a year earlier.

Table 5: MSCI returns to 31 May 2011 (%)

	May'11	YTD	Q1'11
Egypt	10.1	-22.8	-23.7
Colombia	2.3	6.6	0.0
Israel	1.8	-4.2	-2.9
Peru	0.8	-18.5	-14.0
Indonesia	0.4	10.2	4.7
Hong Kong	-0.2	1.3	-0.8
China	-0.3	3.9	2.9
Taiwan	-0.4	1.7	-4.2
Malaysia	-0.5	4.8	3.6
Morocco	-0.6	4.1	5.5
Argentina	-1.3	-16.0	-12.0
Pakistan	-1.3	1.1	-0.6
Japan	-1.7	-7.1	-5.9
EM Asia	-1.8	3.1	1.3
Chile	-1.8	-1.8	-8.3
MSCI DM	-2.4	5.8	4.3
Singapore	-2.6	1.4	-0.7
AP ex Japan	-2.6	2.9	1.5
MSCI EM	-3.0	1.4	1.7
LatAm	-3.2	-2.8	0.4
Mexico	-3.4	-1.7	0.5
Korea	-3.5	9.5	6.5
Brazil	-3.7	-2.9	2.0
Poland	-3.7	13.7	6.9
Thailand	-4.2	4.6	3.5
Philippines	-4.3	-3.3	-4.4
India	-4.4	-10.4	-5.2
South Africa	-5.2	-3.4	-2.8
Australia	-5.5	3.2	3.2
Czech	-5.8	20.2	16.3
EMEA	-6.4	1.7	4.7
Russia	-7.7	7.6	16.3
Hungary	-7.8	23.9	20.2
Turkey	-13.3	-10.5	-5.5

Source: Merrill Lynch

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