

Global Markets Analyst

Markets Outlook 2025: Trading Tails and Tailwinds

We recently laid out our *Global Macro Outlook for 2025—Tailwinds (Probably) Trump Tariffs*. We provide more detail on our Global Markets Outlook here, highlighting as usual 10 core investment themes that drive many of our market views. More detailed outlooks for the individual asset classes are forthcoming.

- 1. A wider distribution after the soft landing:** Solid growth, higher equities and stronger Dollar in base case, but markets have moved and tails are fatter.
- 2. Weighing the tariff tail:** Tariffs on China are largely expected and manageable; ‘across-the-board’ tariffs would be more inflationary, more USD-positive and more ‘risk-off’.
- 3. Finding terminal rates in a world of fiscal risks:** US post-election fiscal expansion (joining Japan, UK and some EMs) raises risks of higher terminal rates.
- 4. Renewed divergence reinforces Dollar strength:** US growth stronger than DM peers, and consensus; broader tariff agenda is where the real Dollar upside remains.
- 5. China in the cross-hairs but some scope to respond:** Ultimately, challenges and prospects for China asset picture still mainly rest on domestic policy delivery.
- 6. Europe and EM—a more challenging picture:** European growth and EM face headwinds from Trump agenda, raising bar for capital inflows.
- 7. Energy markets—ample supply, watch the tails:** Range-bound oil: upside from geopolitics in short term, downside from spare capacity as the year goes on.
- 8. A bit more inflation risk but growth shocks still in focus:** Equity-yield correlations likely to drift higher; value in Treasuries/TIPS, and especially Bunds and Gilts, in portfolios.
- 9. The growing valuation challenge:** US equity valuations highlight long-term challenge; valuation penalty normally paid when cycle turns, fattening downside tail.
- 10. Diversification, tails and hedges:** Friendly (US) base case with protection. Optionality in equities after vol reset; long USD alongside tails in oil and gold; 2017 parallel suggests non-US assets could benefit if risks recede.

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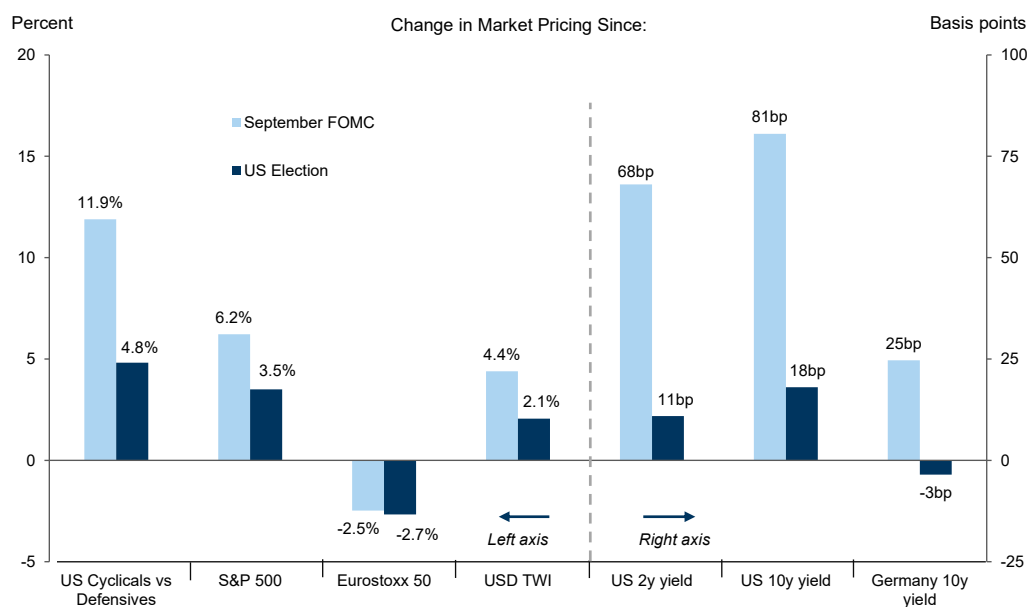
Markets Outlook 2025: Trading Tails and Tailwinds

1. A wider distribution after the soft landing

- Solid US growth, low inflation still the right base case
- Trump policy agenda reinforces divergence but markets have moved
- Wider distribution of policy shifts and market outcomes, especially risk of broader trade war
- Higher equities, higher rates, stronger Dollar in central scenario but hedge the tails

Our baseline forecast remains essentially benign for the US: solid growth, cooling inflation and further non-recessionary rate cuts, alongside a range of policies that could be friendly to corporate earnings. And while the US is a clear outperformer, non-US economies still see stable growth, falling inflation and monetary easing in our central scenario. This backdrop would naturally push towards a friendly risk asset backdrop, alongside US outperformance. Although our forecasts for 2025 have that flavour, two issues complicate those judgments. The first issue is that markets have already moved a long way towards pricing this kind of outlook. Both ahead of and since the election, markets have upgraded US growth, pushing US equities and the USD higher, and building in a larger divergence between US and European rate markets. We think our baseline forecasts justify higher equity prices and further USD outperformance, but that judgment is more finely balanced than it was. As US equity markets take more credit for potential favourable policies, the risks of disappointment as the policy agenda ultimately becomes reality will rise.

The second issue is that the tails around our base case look quite fat and the US election outcome—the broad mandate it has given to President-elect Trump—widens the distribution of possible policy shifts. We generally worry less about a sustained increase in fiscal risk premia in bond markets, though ongoing fiscal support could push views on the neutral rate higher. But while the market has focused on risks to the most likely tariff recipients, the risks of a broader trade war look underpriced. If the market comes to place more weight on that outcome, we think that would reinforce USD upside, but add to pressures on non-US, and ultimately US, equities. Unusually high US equity valuations may amplify the reaction to any economic weakness and dampen long-term expected returns. Positive tailwinds are also possible if tariffs are narrowly targeted, if oil prices fall more sharply on enhanced supply, or if inflation or fiscal fears prove overdone. We think this backdrop justifies investors maintaining upside exposure to US equities, while diversifying or using options to limit the major tail risks.

Exhibit 1: Market Pricing Has Already Shifted Towards Our More Positive US Growth View

Source: Bloomberg, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

2. Weighing the tariff tail

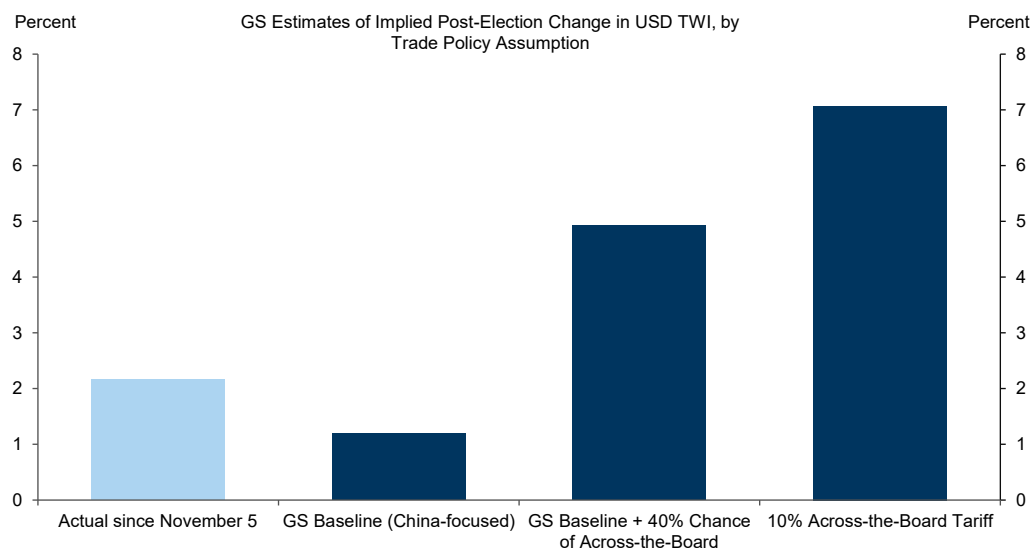
- China tariff in base case is largely expected and manageable; real tail risks beyond (Mexico/Autos/elsewhere)
- Across-the-board tariffs would be more inflationary and more 'risk off'
- Broader trade war would have much larger impacts on FX and likely on equities
- Rates impact ambiguous but increases risks of flattening, lower term yields

Tariffs pose a direct threat to our benign central economic forecast of solid growth and lower inflation. Unlike many market participants, our expectation is that tariffs against China taking the effective rate up to 20% could be implemented relatively early in the administration. But we suspect that this would be less disruptive this time around—both to the US economic picture and to China's trade and markets—given the experience since the first round of tariffs in 2018-19 and China's reduced trade exposure to the US. The larger impacts are likely to come if other countries are targeted or if tariffs are applied 'across the board', neither of which is part of our baseline expectations. Even as US imports have rotated away from China, they have increased from other countries, such as Mexico, Korea and India. In the case of Mexico, tariff threats have been articulated a number of times, and reflected in the pressure on the Mexican Peso. Looking ahead, the USMCA review process may prove the point of maximum risk, although ultimately we think it is in the interest of both countries to have a constructive relationship on the border and trade.

A tariff on Europe or an across-the-board tariff would be more disruptive to global trading arrangements, have a larger impact on US inflation (upwards of 1 percentage point on core PCE on our US team's estimates) and, as a consequence, drive more

financial conditions tightening with higher front-end rates, a flatter curve and lower equities. The impact on the rest of the world would also be substantial, with significant further broad Dollar upside beyond what has already been priced since the elections. We would not be surprised if at some point in the coming months and years the threat of an across-the-board tariff becomes a serious market focus. Ultimately, the disruptive macro and market impacts in that case, which could spill back into the US, are part of the reason we don't have across-the-board tariffs in our baseline scenario. But we do see a 40% chance of them being enacted, making them an underpriced tail risk.

Exhibit 2: Markets Have Not Yet Priced a High Risk of Broader Tariffs



We use the market reaction to tariff announcements in the 2018-2019 China trade war to estimate the USD move associated with shifts in tariff expectations

Source: Bloomberg, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

3. Finding terminal rates in a world of fiscal risks

- Republican sweep raises risks of fiscal expansion, inflation and higher terminal rates
- Higher term premium already from macro performance, but accentuated by new policy agenda
- Japan likely to stay on path towards higher terminal rates
- Post-election fiscal loosening across UK, Japan, EMs likely to push terminal rates higher globally
- UK at the cutting edge of DM fiscal worry, but may be overpriced

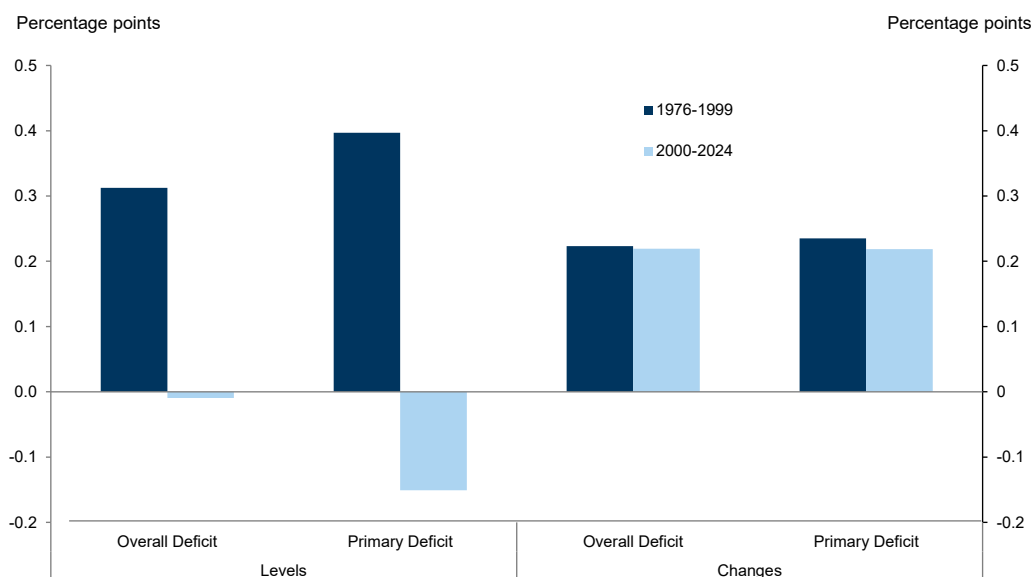
Apart from tariffs, the Republican sweep also raises the prospect of more expansionary fiscal policies. Any incremental expansion is likely to be much more modest than after the 2016 or 2020 election: we expect that congressional Republicans would support a scaled-down version of additional tax cuts to accommodate some of Trump's campaign proposals, primarily focused on individuals and domestic manufacturers, representing a few tenths of a percent of GDP. We also expect federal spending to rise somewhat, particularly on defence, though a clearer majority in both houses may increase the support for spending cuts. Alongside lower immigration and higher tariffs, even a

modest further fiscal loosening risks putting upward pressure on inflation and the Fed stopping the easing process earlier. It is not just the terminal rate that is biased upwards by the new policy agenda, but changes in long-term yields have also been consistently responsive to changes in the fiscal picture.

In reality, the potential for higher terminal rates than in the last cycle and higher term premia is a broader global phenomenon with a number of reinforcing impulses. In Japan, fiscal policy is also likely to be loosened after a disappointing election outcome for the ruling LDP, and we are increasingly confident in a domestic wage-price spiral and the ability of the BoJ to take policy rates to a higher terminal rate than the consensus among many market participants. The new UK government has also just recently proposed a substantial front-loaded fiscal expansion and while there is some justifiable scepticism that more restraint can be delivered in subsequent years, we do think that concerns around a ‘Truss-style’ fiscal risk premium are overdone. That said, the additional spending will keep the BoE on only a gradual easing path with higher terminal rates again possible. Similar concerns are more pressing in EM, where Brazil has already been forced to dial back some of its rate cuts in the face of fiscal concerns. So the picture is more mixed across EM: more focus on fiscal consolidation post-elections in South Africa, but scope for looser fiscal policy, for example in Indonesia, and higher terminal rates in this cycle.

Exhibit 3: Yield Levels Have Become Less Responsive to Deficit Levels, Changes in Fiscal Outlook Still Matters

Regression coefficients of 5y5y Treasury yields on the level of, and changes in, CBO’s 5-year-ahead projected deficit-to-GDP ratio, controlling for 5y-ahead CBO projected GDP growth, inflation expectations, and the equity risk premium following Laubach (2009)



Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

4. Renewed divergence reinforces Dollar strength

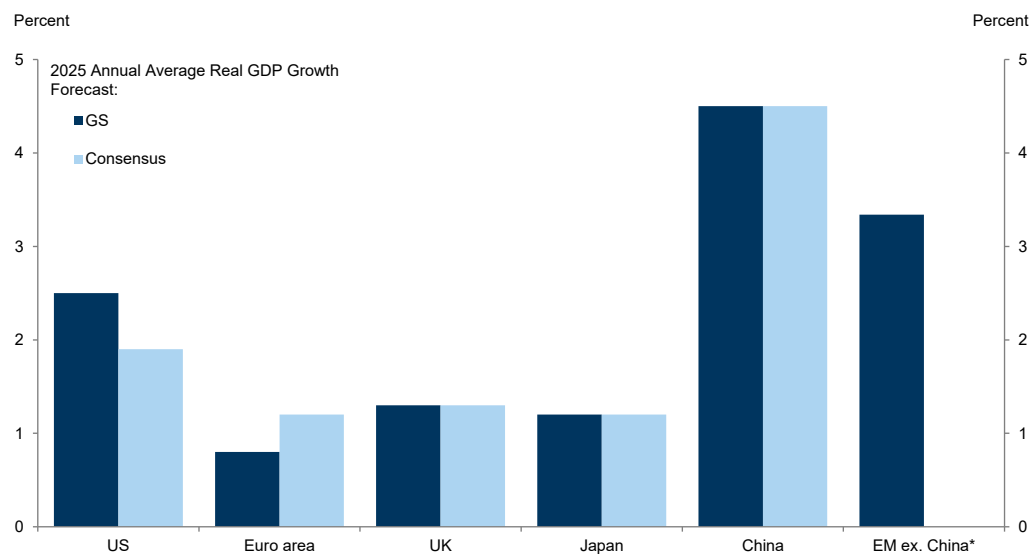
- US growth stronger than DM peers, and stronger than consensus
- Trade uncertainty to weigh heavily on Europe, actual tariffs on China

- Hard to see capital moving to rest of the world, and mix should strengthen Dollar
- But watch for fiscal responses and 'deals'; broader tariff agenda is where the real Dollar upside remains

Going into the US elections, our economic outlook envisaged a global picture where US growth was stronger than DM peers and stronger than consensus expectations. That picture has been reinforced by the Republican sweep at the polls. Tariffs are likely to feature prominently in the new Trump Administration, coupled with modest additional tax cuts, more federal spending, and a light touch on regulation. That combination, meant to boost domestic business and weigh on foreign activity levels, should continue to keep capital flows tilted towards the US versus the rest of the world and support the Dollar on a broad basis. So a Dollar that is stronger for longer is the correct modal view under the economic and policy outlook we expect.

As with many parts of the Trump agenda, a number of conflicting dynamics mean that there is a wide distribution of risks around that view. So even with tariffs on the agenda, Dollar strength is far from guaranteed. While a 'currency pact' that weakens the Dollar is unlikely to be sustainable without a shift in underlying macro factors, it is possible that a strong fiscal policy response abroad could mitigate or even dominate the effect of tariff threats. Already China's ongoing fiscal stimulus package has helped offset some of the potential impact, and Germany's evolving fiscal debate bears watching. The more subtle issue revolves around market pricing. In many cases, the Dollar has already reset higher in response to the election results, and has been highly valued for some time in recognition of sustained strong US economic and market performance. So the scope for sharper Dollar strength—that sends the EUR towards parity and beyond—is only likely if the tariff agenda broadens and deepens beyond our base case, or if bolder fiscal ambitions and a steeper rates curve don't weigh on US equity markets.

Exhibit 4: US Growth Still Above Consensus and Above DM Peers



*Bloomberg consensus data not readily available for EM ex. China GDP growth.

Source: Bloomberg, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

5. China in the cross-hairs but some scope to respond

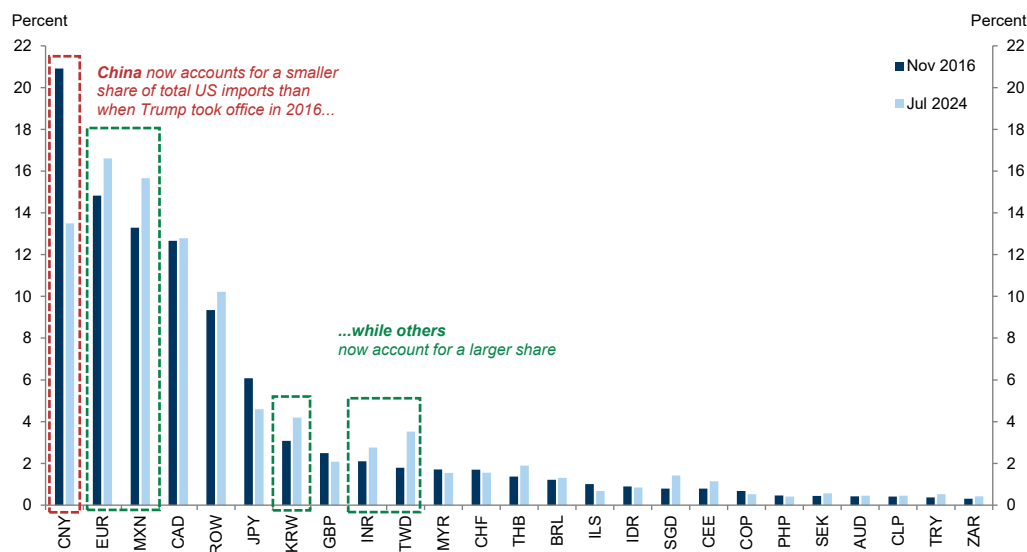
- China may not be hit as hard by tariffs given lower US exports than in 2016
- FX/fiscal/monetary response should offset hit—more weight on fiscal versus currency compared with 2018/19
- Ultimately, challenges and prospects for China asset picture still mainly domestic
- Underwhelming response so far, but policymakers may wait to show their hand

We expect the US to impose additional tariffs averaging 20% on Chinese goods, with much or all of this imposed in the first half of 2025. A fresh hit to external demand and investor sentiment would come on top of what is already a tough cyclical picture for the Chinese economy. But it is also possible that tariffs will have a smaller impact than in 2018-19. First, tariffs on China are widely expected at this point, so it should constitute less of a surprise. Second, China's export exposure to the US has declined as a consequence of the tariffs in the first Trump term. And third, it is not likely to change the broader policy efforts to foster a rotation of Chinese growth towards domestic demand in 2025. To the extent that China responds to any tariffs with a mix of retaliatory measures, currency depreciation, and monetary and fiscal policy, the emphasis on the latter may be greater relative to the 2018-19 episode.

Ultimately we still think that the bigger challenges and prospects for the China macro and market picture are domestic rather than international. While renewed trade disruptions may impede any rebound in international capital flows to China, the reality is that international investors have already shed a large proportion of China risk on perceived disappointments on stimulus delivery. So the key to China and China-linked assets is whether policymakers succeed in putting a floor under local activity and equities in line with their objectives. Recent data have been stabilising, and while the recently concluded NPC meeting offered only limited detail beyond measures on local government debt resolution, our China team still expects the official fiscal deficit target to be raised to 3.6% of GDP in 2025 from 3.0% in 2024, and an increase in government bond issuance quotas. While the overall urgency seems less than investors would like, it is also possible that policymakers are waiting to see measures from the new Trump administration to respond.

Exhibit 5: A Shift in Trade Patterns Following The First Round of Trump Tariffs

Fraction of US goods imports exported from the displayed country or region. 'ROW' stands for Rest of World.



Source: Haver Analytics, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

6. Europe and EM—a more challenging picture

- Renewed risks to European growth from Trump agenda, while policy space is constrained (by defence spending)
- Deeper ECB cuts, European rates should outperform US, though market has moved to reflect this
- EM headwinds from higher rates, stronger USD
- Focus on markets that can withstand shocks, provide support (India/China stocks, CEE rates)

Our European economists have downgraded their GDP forecasts across the region in anticipation of higher trade uncertainty, the ongoing pressures from China competition in key industries, and other spillovers. Moreover, the policy space to respond to these headwinds is already limited given fiscal concerns in core economies such as France, alongside the typical worries in the periphery. That space is likely to be further constrained by pressure to increase spending on Ukraine and the broader security architecture of Europe. That leaves the ECB again as the primary and perhaps only institution that will need to respond, and a deeper rate cut path is the most likely outcome. That should sustain the outperformance of European rates relative to the US, although the market has moved a long way to reflect this. Better market opportunities may therefore lie in outright longs in Bunds, or a renewed compression of rate spreads between core Europe and Central and Eastern Europe, where the lower growth and rate outlook should spill over eventually. Given the otherwise soggy growth outlook in Europe, the UK's relative outperformance is likely to stand out and benefit a procyclical currency like the Pound and other UK assets on a relative basis.

Tariffs, higher US rates, and a stronger Dollar also provide a negative backdrop for EM.

As with Europe, many EMs are open economies that are vulnerable in a global trade war, further delaying the prospect for portfolio capital flows. So the EM complex will need to rely on its own macro and asset market fundamentals. That should favour EM jurisdictions where vulnerabilities to external risks are lower (higher reserve buffers and smaller overall current account deficits, although bilateral surpluses with the US may also pose a risk); internal imbalances are smaller (fiscal/inflation constraints less binding), and ultimately where policymakers can find room to support domestic growth and asset markets. Given subdued valuations and a pro-cyclical backdrop, EM equities are likely to outperform fixed income, with greater room for policy support in China (and to a lesser extent India). EM equities will likely struggle to generate higher returns relative to US equities, however, especially in vol-adjusted terms. And while EM hard currency fixed income should prove more defensive than local currency in a strong Dollar environment, tight hard currency spreads mean that local currency assets have more scope to outperform if the tails are avoided, especially in procyclical markets, including Brazil and Mexico, which already embed decent premium in FX and rates.

Exhibit 6: European Rates Heading Back Lower



Source: Goldman Sachs FICC and Equities, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

7. Energy markets—ample supply, watch the tails

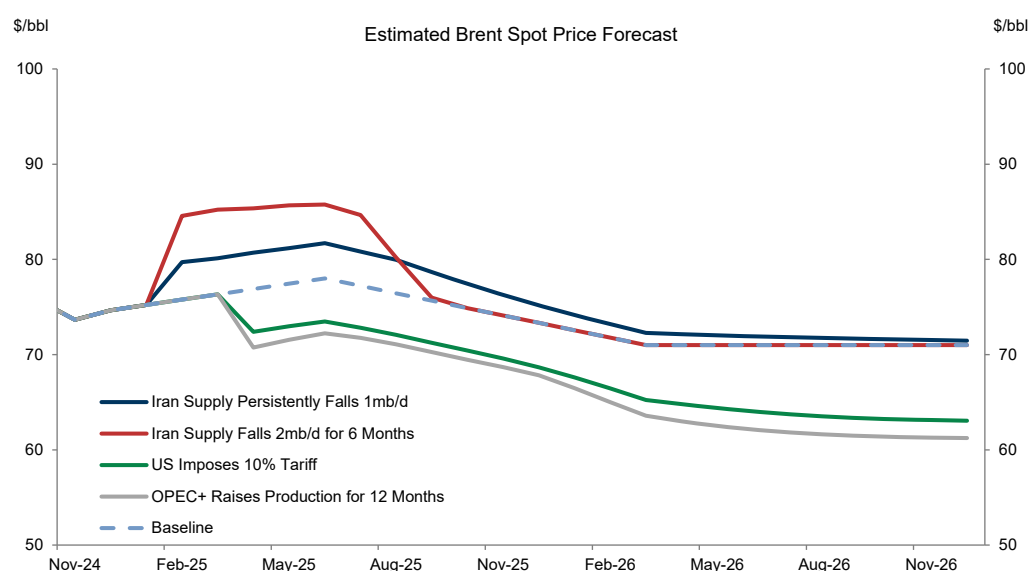
- Oil market still range-bound in the central case
- But US election reinforces tails on both sides
- Upside tail from geopolitical risk, Iran supply in short term
- Downside risks from spare capacity, trade escalation, as the year goes on

In our baseline forecast, we continue to see oil prices as range-bound, with Brent likely to stay in a \$70-\$85/bbl range. Including the roll return, this means that energy and our broader commodity indices should offer modest positive returns in the central case. But we think the risks of breaking outside those ranges are growing and the US election

outcome reinforces that. In the short term, we think the new Administration raises the risks to Iranian supply, where disruption risks have already been elevated due to the Israel-Iran conflict. That upside tail risk adds to the value of commodity longs in a portfolio context.

But we think the medium-term risks skew to the downside of our forecast range. In part, that is because ample supply is still being kept off the market, which could begin to find its way back into the system in 2025. But it is also because a clear shift towards a broad-based tariff agenda from the Trump Administration could hurt global demand. In those scenarios, oil prices might again become a tailwind for disinflation trends. If supply increases, rather than demand shortfalls, that would push prices lower and would constitute a positive global supply shock at a time when other recent favourable supply dynamics (higher immigration, for instance) are fading.

Exhibit 7: Oil: Upside Risks From Disruptions, Downside Risks from Supply and Trade War



Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

8. A bit more inflation risk but growth shocks still in focus

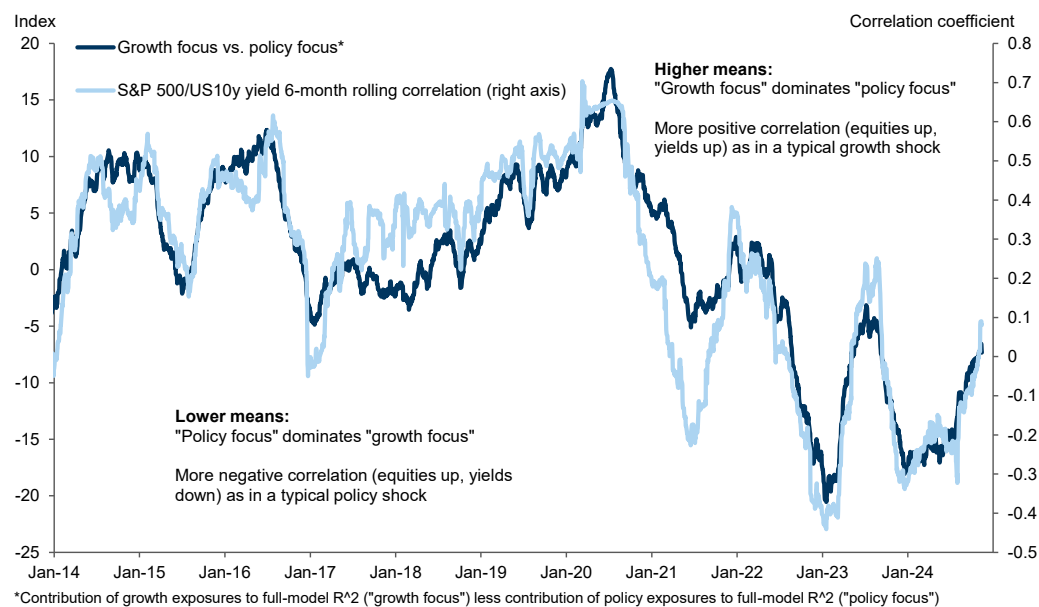
- Inflation declines allowing central banks to focus more on growth downside
- Trade/fiscal agenda could put a sting in the tail-end of inflation normalisation
- Recession fears have faded fast but could return; equity-yield correlation should drift higher
- Value in Treasuries/TIPS, and especially Bunds and Gilts, in portfolios

The ongoing decline in inflation across a range of economies in 2024 has allowed central banks, including the Fed, to focus more on the risks to growth and begin to lower policy rates from restrictive levels. With markets also worrying more about potential risks to growth, the period of a strong negative correlation between equities and Treasury yields has given way to a more mixed picture (over the past six months, the correlation between US equities and Treasury yields has been close to zero). In our baseline

forecast, the process of inflation normalisation is on course to continue. We estimate that an across-the-board US tariff would raise US core inflation to 3%, however. And although we expect any US fiscal impulse to be modest even with a new Administration, there is clearly some risk that a mix of higher term premium or higher neutral rate assumptions lead to upward pressure on the bond yield path too. On the other side of the ledger, a more positive oil supply backdrop could provide a tailwind to inflation declines, particularly in EM.

Set against that, we think downside growth risks are likely to remain in focus, particularly outside the US. A broader trade war would clearly increase global growth risks, as would some potential geopolitical shocks. Markets priced real recession fear as recently as early August. We have seen a sharp cyclical upgrade since then, both before and after the US election, but this means that markets are more vulnerable if we revisit those fears. We see risks from both growth and inflation/policy shocks, particularly in the next few months as the Trump policy agenda takes shape. But although the market may still oscillate between these two kinds of risks, we think the correlation of bond yields and equities is more likely to drift higher than lower over the medium term. This means that Treasuries and TIPS, and even more so Bunds and Gilts, can still play an important diversifying role in portfolios.

Exhibit 8: Easing Inflation Has Helped Push Correlation Between US Equities and Yields Higher



Source: Bloomberg, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

9. The growing valuation challenge

- US equities and credit spreads highlight growing valuation challenge
- But valuation penalty normally paid the most when cycle turns
- Credit premium compressed but protected by high all-in yield
- Watch for a different 'valuation challenge' when macro themes are fully priced

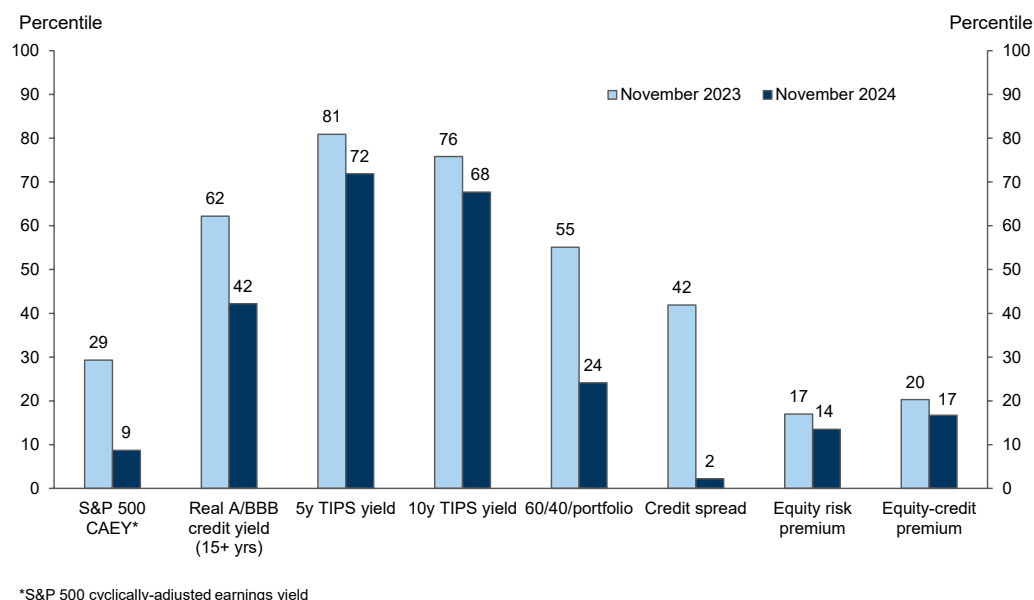
US equity valuations continue to climb and are now at levels that have not been

exceeded in the post-war era except in the late 1990s. Some of the recent uplift is coming on expectations that upcoming policies will boost after-tax earnings. But even after adjusting for the macro backdrop, which makes that comparison a little more favourable, US equity valuations look historically high. Credit spreads too are at the 6th percentile of the last 15 years, and even those segments of the market that were pricing more elevated risk premium have now compressed. As our Portfolio Strategy team recently showed, long-term expected returns from equities now look low as a result (they estimate 3% annualized returns over the next decade when accounting for the risks from unusually high market concentration). The prospective returns on government bonds on that longer horizon now look relatively better, as do the returns on credit (though largely from the risk-free yield).

High valuations are not an obstacle to further gains if the cyclical tailwinds are powerful, as we have seen already in 2024—although we can expect more of the back-and-forth where upside growth surprises make rate cuts less likely. High all-in yields are also supporting demand for credit even with compressed spreads. We have shown that in equities, the price for higher valuations is often paid disproportionately when the cycle deteriorates. Our baseline forecast means that challenge will most likely be avoided in 2025. But it means that if growth risks do rise more sharply than we anticipate, equity downside could be faster and deeper than normal. The sharp drops in risk assets, and spikes in volatility, that we saw in early August may be a harbinger of that kind of sensitivity. That fatter downside tail also highlights the importance of keeping an eye on another kind of ‘valuation challenge’—the point at which our more optimistic macro forecasts seem fully reflected in assets. That has been the story in 2024 too—to push harder when the market is clearly in doubt about elements of our macro picture and to take more care to protect against downside tails when those views seem more clearly reflected (as they are starting to now).

Exhibit 9: Equity Valuations High Relative to Bonds, Dampening Long-Run Expected Returns

Percentile rank, 1999-present



Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

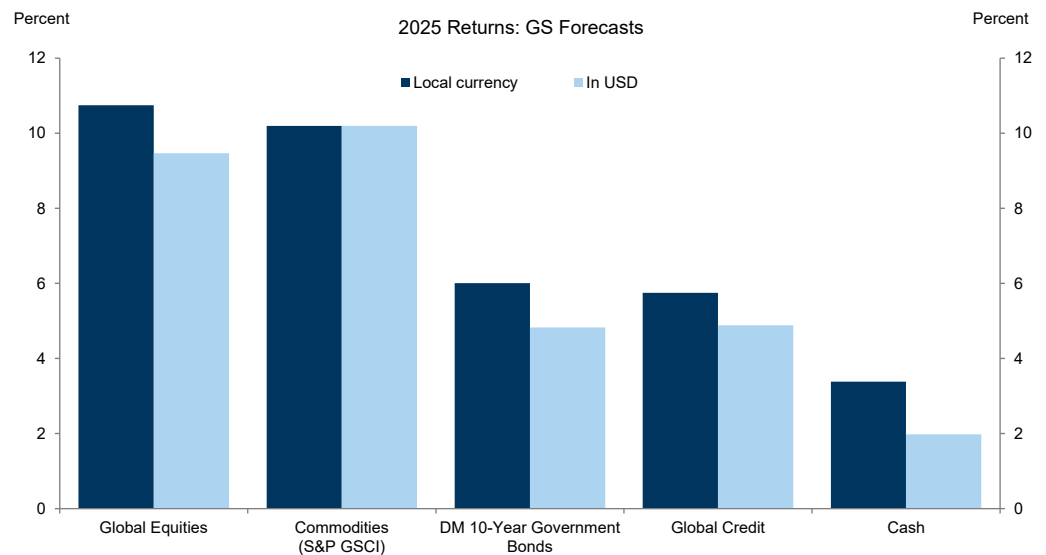
10. Diversification, tails and hedges

- Friendly (US) base case with protection still the key; optionality in equities more appealing post-election vol reset
- Positive returns in core assets but benefits from diversification
- A wider distribution of outcomes with tariffs, rate upside among key risks
- Long USD (vs EUR) attractive in portfolios, alongside tails in oil and gold
- 2017 parallel suggests non-US assets could benefit if policy risks recede

Despite the heightened tension between our baseline macro forecasts, high valuations and markets that have moved to reflect the better US growth picture, we still forecast modest positive returns across the key asset classes. US growth resilience is reflected in outperformance of US equities and underperformance of US bonds, alongside some further expected upside to the US Dollar. The challenge is that tail risks are greater than before, and the new Administration's policy agenda creates a wider distribution of potential outcomes. The prospect of a broader trade war is the clearest example and a risk that looks under-priced, and upward pressure on US yields is still clearly possible, particularly in the near term. Diversification can help address some of these challenges. Bonds, particularly non-US bonds, should provide some protection against growth risks including those from a deeper trade war. Although US inflation risks are quite well-priced at the front end of the curve, expectations are more moderate further along the curve, so TIPS may offer a good portfolio hedge too. And broadening US equity exposure towards mid-cap equities or a more equal-weighted allocation may mitigate concentration and valuation risks. Long USD positions should also provide protection against both US rate upside and broadening tariff risks, reinforcing the case for US investors to keep hedging their overseas bonds (and equity) exposures.

As in 2024, we think there are strong arguments for using options to provide protection against macro tails. Equity volatility has fallen post-election, making it easier to gain upside exposure to US assets through calls again. Deeper downside exposure (including in European equities, which are vulnerable to some key risks) also looks more attractively priced. Long USD optionality also remains appealing (especially against EUR, CAD, SGD and KRW), while upside in gold and oil can also protect against some key tails. With the market already pricing the impact of some potential US policy shifts, it is also possible that some assets could benefit if those policy risks fail to materialise. 2017, the first year of the first Trump Administration, was ultimately a year of strong outperformance for EM stocks and currencies. A more restrained US fiscal impulse, or a more narrowly focused trade agenda, could now provide relief, particularly in parts of the EM universe where those risks have been most clearly reflected. So while the outlook for non-US equities looks more challenging than before, some exposure to that kind of upside tail may be useful too. The wider range of potential market outcomes means that any declines in volatility across assets in 2025 are likely to be opportunities to add hedges.

Exhibit 10: Modest Positive Returns Across Assets In Our Base Case



Source: Bloomberg, Bloomberg-Barclays, Datastream, iBoxx, ICE-BAML, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

Disclosure Appendix

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