

A Turning Point and a Reckoning: The Markets Adjust to the End of the Pandemic

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Critical Observations:

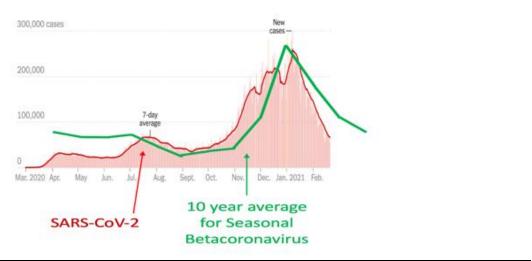
- The rapid change in the bond market's perception of accelerating growth will continue to roil stock markets. We expect further volatility and even a "normal" correction near term.
- Growth and inflation expectations have risen markedly in a very short time. Fears of inflation have been stoked by
 the fact that the Federal Reserve Bank does not seem worried enough about inflation that might ensue in a rapid
 economic recovery. With nearly 10 million US jobs lost during the pandemic, income and output can potentially
 be so much higher during several years of recovery before the economy is overly stretched.
- Our view is that rising yields do not portend the end of the bull market in equities. We fully expect that EPS growth
 in 2021 and 2022 will offset higher and more normal levels of interest rates. While there can be parts of the
 economy that see price increases (housing, certain commodity-exposed products, and in time some services like
 airline flights) underlying inflation is likely to remain within normal ranges.
- The correction in high growth and highly valued companies does present an interesting opportunity within our "Unstoppable Trends". We believe investments exposed to themes like increasing health care spending, 5G & Hyper-Connectivity, Asian consumption growth, and the transition to renewables should represent core allocations in portfolios. Selloff dislocations will present opportunities to buy long-term growth engines at 10-30% cheaper than they were just a few weeks ago as their future earnings prospects are un-diminished.
- We have been overweight Latam, and specifically Brazil, since mid-2020, due to global reflation expectations, the
 highly pro-cyclical nature of the regional economies and the post-Covid normalization that we expect to begin in
 2H21. Firm commodity prices, historically competitive real effective exchange rates, more fiscal stimulus and
 earnings recovery should provide further upside from a low starting base. The most recent sell off in Brazilian
 markets makes our tactical play even more compelling in our view.

A Turning Point and a Reckoning: The Markets Adjust to the End of the Pandemic

Yogi Berra, the garrulous and gaffe-prone catcher for the New York Yankees, once said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." Last week was a turning point, marking the end of the pandemic and the true beginning of the New Economic Cycle. Such proverbial forks in the road are not clear until you see where they lead. Understanding them is important to see if they suggest a change in our approach to the markets or in our expectations about the path markets are likely to take in this new global recovery.

Last week, bond investors finally realized that the economic recovery so firmly expected by the stock market was actually upon us. The reckoning took place due to a cascade of news and events. Earnings forecast revisions for 2021 surged in the past three months. US consumer spending was well above expectations in January (+2.4%), bolstered by checks issued in the second US stimulus package. Johnson and Johnson's one-shot vaccine was approved for use and the rate of virus transmission began a rapid fall (Figure 1.) Fed Chairman Powell signaled his intent to keep short-term interest rates low in testimony to the Senate Banking Committee. Fears of inflation have been stoked by the fact that the Fed does not seem worried enough about inflation that might ensue in a rapid economic recovery. **Top all that off with the passage of a massive \$1.9 trillion bill by the House of Representatives and you have the "fork in the road"**.

Figure 1: Seasonality Explains the Current Decline in Coronavirus Rates Even Before the Massive Impact of the Vaccines Takes Hold



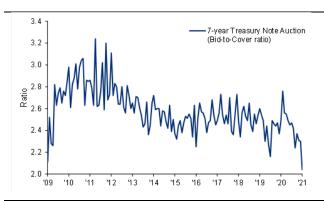
Source: Dr. Michael Mina, Harvard University, 2/26/2021.

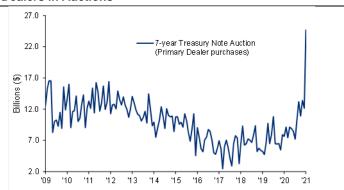
The Bond Market "Flash Crash"

What if you had a US Treasury auction and no one showed up? That's what happened last Thursday. Regular Treasury auctions are set on a known calendar and the pricing mechanism is designed to create demand to sell all the notes and bonds the Treasury has to sell. This week that process sputtered badly (see Figures 2 and 3.) Investor bids for the \$62 Billion in 7-Year notes failed to provide enough buyers at the clearing interest rate and primary dealers were forced to buy a huge amount of them as a result. (Primary dealers take this risk to make markets and earn small spreads on "safe" notes.) Then, these dealers had to sell their positions which were likely unhedged. The failed auction caused a "flash crash" in Treasuries with the 10-year yield spiking to near 1.60% in minutes, blowing through the 1.50% threshold many economists believed would mark the top of the range in yields.

Figure 2: 7-yr Treasury Note Bid-to-Cover Ratio

Figure 3: 7-yr Treasury Note Amount Accepted by Primary Dealers in Auctions





Source: Haver Analytics as of February 26, 2021

As discussed in our recent communications (CIO Strategy Bulletin: Beware the Cash Thief and Fixed Income Strategy Bulletin: Bond Investors Confront Inflation Risk With Valuations Still High), US Treasury (UST) markets were expected to continue weakening throughout 2021 as the likelihood of a fiscal mega-stimulus increases and the economy re-opens. Thursday, however, US Treasury yields violently re-priced higher across the curve into our expected second half 2021 range of 1.5%-2.0%, with the closely watched 10y Treasury yield jumping almost 25 basis point intra-day. Bond market implied volatility also spiked to the highest levels since last March.

Rates are catching up to the reality of stronger growth outlook. With 10-year yields having risen 55bps over the last month, the most abrupt monthly rise in long-term yields in two years, bond investors were clearly spooked, and this worries investors in every asset class.

Growth and inflation expectations have risen markedly in a very short time (Figure 4), reflecting the new economic realities of this post-pandemic period. Looking closely at the 10-year rate objectively (Figure 5), however, we see that the current levels of rates are hardly onerous given where we are in the recovery.

Figure 4: US Treasury 10-2 Yield Spread

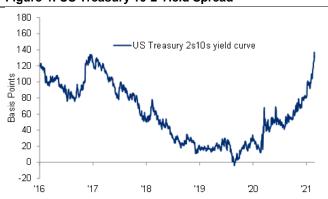
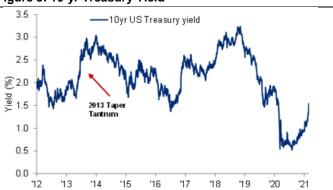


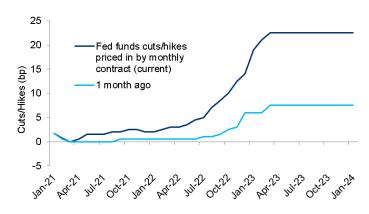
Figure 5: 10-yr Treasury Yield



Source: Haver Analytics as of February 26, 2021

In our view, it appears that the central bank's willingness to tolerate a higher rate of inflation temporarily despite the likely growth surge just ahead has fueled market concerns. (CIO Strategy Bulletin: Beware the Cash Thief and Fixed Income Strategy Bulletin: Bond Investors Confront Inflation Risk With Valuations Still High). Chairman Powell stated earlier this week that he did not see inflation sustaining levels over 2% for quite some time: "It may take more than three years". He also expressed his acceptance with higher long-term rates, saying: "In a way, it's statement on confidence on the part of markets that we will have a robust and ultimately complete recovery". The continuation of this "lower for longer" communication has led the market to ponder a future Fed "catch up" assuming there will be higher levels of inflation after a sharp economic recovery (see figure 6).

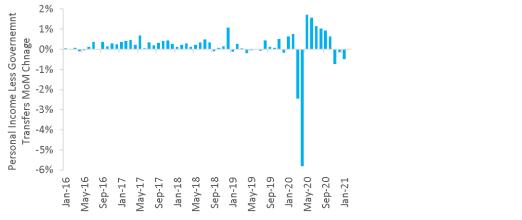
Figure 6: Federal Funds Rate Cut/Hike Expectation



Source: Haver Analytics as of February 26, 2021. All forecasts are expressions of opinion, are subject to change without notice, and are not intended to be a quarantee of future events.

Yet let's not lose perspective. The U.S.'s likely future stimulus is extremely large, but temporary. Looking at Figure 7, household income in the US would have been negative these last three months if not for stimulus. That's the truth behind the reported 9.7% rise. With nearly 10 million US jobs lost during the pandemic, income and output can potentially be so much higher during several years of recovery before the economy is overly stretched. Both supply and demand will recover together in the coming reopening. Certainly in 2021, it is highly unlikely that the Fed will raise rates and withdraw stimulus.

Figure 7: Personal Income Less Government Transfers Month-over-Month Change



Source: Haver Analytics as of February 26, 2021.

The Stock Market's Wobbly Response

A week like the one past leaves no place to hide.

The rapid change in the bond market's perception of accelerating growth will continue to roil stock markets. Expect further volatility and even a "normal" correction near term. This apparent fragility reflects a normalization of valuations relative to the rise in yields. The stock, bond and commodities markets have to "negotiate" a resting point "or equilibrium" for bond yields after a "turning point" moment.

Positive growth news, unusually low interest rates and the resultant rapid increases in stock prices since last summer left US and global stock markets vulnerable to a correction. We have pointed this out before in CIO Strategy Bulletin: The 2020 Tech Growth Equity Summer Barbeque and suggested trimming allocations to US technology if they exceeded 20% of total portfolio wealth.

Our view is that rising yields do not portend the end of the bull market in equities. We fully expect that EPS growth in 2021 and 2022 will offset higher and more normal levels of interest rates. While there can be parts of the economy that

see price increases (housing, certain commodity-exposed products, and in time some services like airline flights) underlying inflation is likely to remain within normal ranges. The January 2021 University of Michigan consumer survey data suggests that longer-term inflation expectations remain anchored, suggesting that consumers view a near-term rise in inflation as temporary.

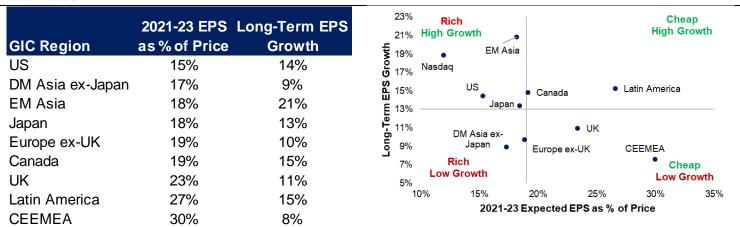
Why Growth Stocks are Especially Vulnerable

When the price-to-earnings ratio of a stock rises, it implies that a larger share of that price is a bet on earnings out into the future. In a world where interest rates are near zero, betting on long-term growth can be easier to justify. But when far-out earnings are discounted at increasingly higher rates, markets become biased toward favoring assets were value is concentrated in the present.

Thus, we see why markets that contain a disproportionate amount of technology and growth stocks are vulnerable at this point in time. In Figure 8, we add up EPS expectations for 2021 through 2023 across the major global equity regions, and divide that sum by the index level for each region. This value is essentially a multi-year earnings yield. It demonstrates that a lower share of near-term earnings are embedded in the US and China, while areas like EM ex-Asia and the UK are much more heavily weighted towards shorter term prospects (i.e. they are cheaper).

In our view, investors need to balance valuation with long-term growth prospects. In Figure 9, we plot this relationship between valuation and growth at the regional level. Asian and US equities, and especially US and Chinese tech names, are very much priced for long term growth while regions like Europe present a short-term value opportunity but with more limited long-term prospects. Latin America is the only region in the inexpensive AND high growth quadrant, as some Wall Street analysts have re-rated commodity producers in the region in anticipation of significantly higher metals and energy prices.

Figure 8: 2021-23 EPS Expectations as % of Regional Equity Figure 9: Balancing Valuations and Long-Term Growth Index Levels



Source: Factset as of February 25, 2021. Indices are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. They are shown for illustrative purposes only and do not represent the performance of any specific investment. Index returns do not include any expenses, fees or sales charges, which would lower performance. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Real results may vary. All forecasts are expressions of opinion, are subject to change without notice, and are not intended to be a guarantee of future events

Where the Buying Opportunities Are as the New Economic Cycle Really Starts

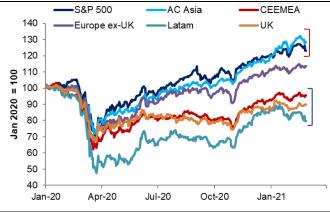
The sharp rise in bond yields is encouraging equity investors to reconsider valuations among the world's most expensive companies. Concerns over inflation have dominated recent market conversations (CIO Strategy Bulletin: Beware the Cash Thief), as the Fed appears ready to allow the economy to "run hot" to allow for more rapid improvement in unemployment relative to the last recession.

The rally in the "Leave your Home" basket is consistent with a selloff in US government bonds. Given the data and our projections for growth, we view the rise in interest rates as a reflection of upgraded economic expectations. With that said, an increased focus on the "reopening" – the true beginning of the New Economic Cycle - will likely mean a shift in global consumption towards services and temporarily away from home technology goods and services such as video conferencing. This is likely to have market-moving implications.

Tech-heavy US and North Asia have performed much better than more cyclically-oriented regions like the UK, Southeast Asia, and Latam since COVID locked down the global economy almost one year ago (Figure 10). However, higher rates will make the frothier valuation of technology and growth stocks quite vulnerable. We have written extensively about the relative performance of COVID beneficiaries versus those firms hardest hit by lockdowns. Since the news of the efficacy of vaccines from November, 2020, our "Leave your Home" basket of equities has risen by over 50% (Figures 11-12). While we do not expect the performance gap between "Stay at Home" tech beneficiaries and "Leave your Home" shares to close in full, these COVID-impacted value cyclicals are likely to maintain momentum over the medium term.

As we move toward reopening and ultimately herd immunity, we expect a boom in global trade and economic activity to benefit sectors like financials, industrials and real estate and regions like Europe and EM ex-North Asia, certainly relative to US and Chinese tech valuations.

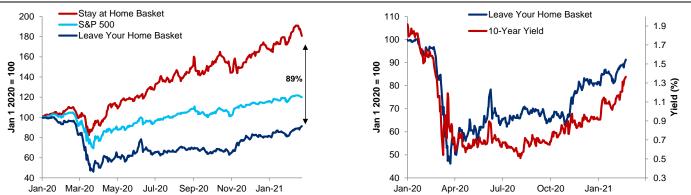
Figure 10: Regional Large Cap Performance since January 2020



Note: Europe, Latam, CEEMEA and AC Asia are MSCI indices. Source: Bloomberg as of February 25, 2021. Indices are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. They are shown for illustrative purposes only and do not represent the performance of any specific investment. Index returns do not include any expenses, fees or sales charges, which would lower performance. For illustrative purposes only. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Real results may vary.

Figure 11: "Stay at Home" vs "Leave your Home" Baskets

Figure 12: "Leave your Home" Basket vs 10-year Yield



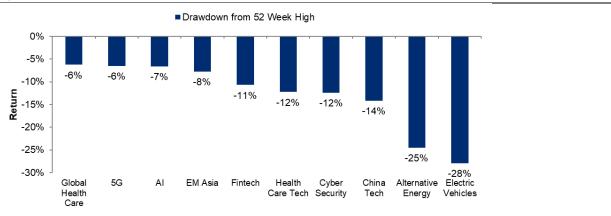
Bloomberg: as of February 12, 2021. Note: "Stay at Home" basket includes names identified to benefit from COVID-related disruptions and a shift to working from home "Leave Your Home" basket includes Buy and Neutral Rated US names in the following sub-industries: Banks, Industrial Conglomerate, Machinery, Oil Gas & Consumable Fuel, Textiles Apparel & Luxury Goods, Energy Equipment & Services, Hotels Restaurants & Leisure, Building Products, Retail REITs, Construction & Engineering, Leisure Products, Airlines, Multiline Retail. Indices are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. They are shown for illustrative purposes only and do not represent the performance of any specific investment. Index returns do not include any expenses, fees or sales charges, which would lower performance. For illustrative purposes only. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Real results may vary.

Unstoppable Trends on Sale

The correction in high growth and highly valued companies does present an interesting opportunity within our "Unstoppable Trends". We outlined these <u>Unstoppable Trends in Outlook 2021</u>, and we believe investments exposed to themes like increasing health care spending, 5G & Hyper-Connectivity, Asian consumption growth, and the transition to renewables should represent core allocations in portfolios. A re-evaluation of valuations is healthy and normal for certain sectors that had likely gotten ahead of themselves when pricing in significant future growth. But selloff dislocations will

also present opportunities to buy long-term growth engines at 10-30% cheaper than they were just a few weeks ago as their future earnings prospects are un-diminished (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Unstoppable trends returns



Source: Bloomberg as of February 25, 2021. Note: Thematic proxies are: MSCI AC World Health Care Index, BlueStar 5G Communications Index, Indxx Artificial Intelligence and Big Data Index, MSCI Emerging Asia Index, Indxx Global FinTech Thematic Index, ROBO Global Health Care Technology and Innovation Index, Prime Cyber Defense Index, CSI Overseas China Internet Index. Electric Vehicles proxied using equal-weighted average of Citi Research Theme Machine constituents with high exposure to "electric vehicles" theme. Indices are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. They are shown for illustrative purposes only and do not represent the performance of any specific investment. Index returns do not include any expenses, fees or sales charges, which would lower performance. For illustrative purposes only. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Real results may vary.

We advise adding exposure to strong firms in rapidly growing industries while avoiding overvalued or unproven firms that were free-riders during the boom (think Microsoft vs Pets.com in 2000). Special Purpose Acquisition Companies (SPACs) demonstrate how much investor demand there is for renewables and electric vehicle innovation (Figure 14). Thus, given positive supply and demand dynamics for capital, research and selectivity are critical investor elements.

We are neither surprised nor concerned by the recent volatility in growth stocks benefiting from Unstoppable Trends. In fact, if you look at the long-term performance of the FANG stocks, for example, the history is filled with significant selloffs that turned out to be good buying opportunities (Figure 15). Exuberance over revolutionary growth trends tends to lead to temporary busts following excessive booms, but given the powerful forces moving the trends ahead, holding such exposures can potentially create long term value and alpha in portfolios over the long-run. For example, within relatively nascent industries like renewable energy and electric vehicles, we saw strong contenders rise with more speculative business models throughout much of last year, only to give some of those gains back in recent weeks. The growth stock washout has also hit more established firms in areas like Fintech and cyber security, again presenting good entry points for leaders in these industries.

Figure 14: Completed US SPAC mergers by industry group since January 2020

Figure 15: FANG drawdowns since 2000

Business Model	Share (%)	Business Model	Share (%)		—FB —AMZN —NFLX —GOOGL
EVs/Renewables	18.8%	Gambling/Gaming	6.3%	10,000	
Pharma/Biotech	10.9%	Financial Services	6.3%	January 2004 = 100 -	GOOGL NFLX -85%
Retail	9.4%	Entertainment	4.7%		
Professional Services	9.4%	Health Care Tech	3.1%		
Industrial/Materials	9.4%	Food & Bev.	3.1%		
Fintech	9.4%	Energy	1.6%		
Software	6.3%	Education	1.6%		In the same of the
					AMZN 65% FB
					-65% FB -54%
				10	
					04 '05 '06 '07 '08 '09 '10 '11 '12 '13 '14 '15 '16 '17 '18 '19 '20 '21

Source: Bloomberg and Factset as of February 26, 2021. Note: Business models determined by Citi Private Bank Office of the CIO based on business descriptions in company regulatory filings of recent SPAC mergers. For illustrative purposes only. This should not be construed as an offer of, or recommendation of companies discussed. Past performance is no guarantee of future returns. Real results may vary.

Blending Cyclical Recovery and Long-Term Themes

The companies and technologies that prevented a complete economic collapse by allowing us to live and work from home saw their shares recover sharply from the March 2020 lows. Many of them finished the year at fresh record highs. We believe that by blending exposure to these themes with certain undervalued cyclical shares and sectors, there is a potential for attractive returns.

In terms of macro and fundamental drivers, one would be hard pressed to find two consecutive years as different as 2020 and 2021. In 2021, we expect consumer-linked themes, especially those tied-into discretionary spending such as travel & leisure to help offset any near-term weakness in tech-related themes. We expect companies exposed to climate, sustainability and infrastructure to behave similarly.

The grand stay-at-home experiment of 2020 has shone a light on key innovations, accelerating their adoption, in some cases by years and putting on investors' radar. While the use of telehealth or video conferencing may slow in near-term, expenditures on cyber security and clean energy are likely to prove much stickier. Even if growth slows near-term from record levels of adoption in 2020, the runway for many of these technologies has become a lot more visible than before.

Thus, investors who blend portfolios to gain exposure to businesses that may benefit both from economic re-opening while maintaining their above-average growth beyond the initial "hot" phase are wise positions. These include some major media, consumer and automotive names. Similarly, while growth rates might cool, the long term beneficiaries of the Covid period will develop strong, enduring franchises in their sectors. By scanning the globe for all types of thematic opportunities, we can find both value and growth-oriented companies that will potentially benefit in the years to come.

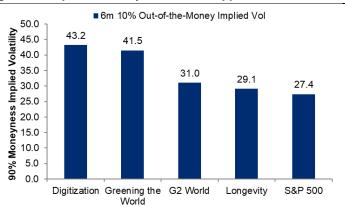
Using Volatility in Growth Stocks

As markets are uncertain about the short-term path of equities, levels of implied volatility like the VIX have risen modestly this week (Figure 16). The volatility for growth shares, however has risen more aggressively. We therefore recommend that under-invested clients take advantage of the rising "price of fear" to add portfolio yield and improve entry points, especially among high-growth areas that trade with elevated implied volatility (Figure 17).

Figure 16: S&P 500 implied volatility vs T-bills



Figure 17: Implied volatility in CPB Unstoppable Trends



Source: Bloomberg and Citi Research as of February 26, 2021. Note: Unstoppable trends baskets leverages Citi Research Theme Machine and include companies with high exposure to each identified theme. Indices are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. They are shown for illustrative purposes only and do not represent the performance of any specific investment. Index returns do not include any expenses, fees or sales charges, which would lower performance. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Real results may vary. All forecasts are expressions of opinion, are subject to change without notice, and are not intended to be a guarantee of future events.

The Valley that is Brazil

Brazilian markets have been in the headlines recently after President Bolsonaro indicated that he would be replacing Petrobras CEO Castello Branco.

This move sparked concerns over the potential beginning of economic interventionism by the federal government. Markets sold off sharply on Monday, with Petrobras shares taking the brunt of the pain, down 29% between 18-22 February. The reason behind Bolsonaro's decision is rooted in a long standing policy spat. For more than a

decade, Petrobras (publicly listed but 54% State owned) domestic fuel pricing policy has been used as a political tool. By periodically demanding the company charge below international market prices for fuel, the government effectively subsidized consumers through the company's balance sheet. This policy cost Petrobras an estimated \$40bn between 2011 and 2014 and led, in part, to a political crisis in 2015-2016 which ended in the impeachment of then President Dilma Rousseff. In 2018, then CEO Pedro Parente resigned over this same issue, after an attempt to adjust fuel prices triggered a trucker's strike that briefly paralyzed the economy.



Figure 18: Petrobras ADR Share Price (USD)

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Source: Bloomberg as of February 25, 2021.For illustrative purposes only. This should not be construed as an offer of, or recommendation of companies discussed. Past performance is no guarantee of future returns. Real results may vary.

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While we certainly agree that these latest developments constitute a negative event for the country, we do not think that they present a dramatic shift in policy. As such, we think markets might have overreacted.

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While at the center of this potential policy shift, Petrobras just reported a better than expected 4Q2020 EPS, up 635% vs 4Q19 (Source: Bloomberg as of 02/25/2021). The company has steadily improved its operations and financial conditions since 2016 to the point that it now compares favorably in many financial metrics to large integrated producers such as Exxon. These most recent company figures, under the helm of Castello Branco, might soften the tone coming from the executive

In addition, the Brazilian economy continues to show signs of adjusting and adapting to what is one of the world's most impacted countries from the Covid-19 pandemic. Brazil's free-floating exchange rate has depreciated by 37% since January 2020, and along with the drop in aggregate demand (the economy is expected to have contracted more than 4% last year) has significantly shrunk the current account deficit to less than 1% GDP, its lowest in 13 years, thereby sharply reducing external financing needs and vulnerabilities. Consumer confidence in February rebounded after 5 months of declines. Recent preliminary inflation readings have been in line with expectations at 4.6% from a year ago.

We have been overweight Latam, and specifically Brazil, since mid-2020, due to global reflation expectations, the highly pro-cyclical nature of the regional economies and the post-Covid normalization that we expect to begin in 2H21. Firm commodity prices, historically competitive real effective exchange rates, more fiscal stimulus and earnings recovery should provide further upside from a low starting base. The most recent sell off in Brazilian markets makes our tactical play even more compelling in our view.

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