



### INVESTMENT MEMORANDUM

A wild month in markets in October meant that international equity investors experienced a negative quarter with nearly all markets falling. The month was marked by periods of high volatility although there were no additional factors, other than those already known, to cause this. Bond markets, too, were unsettled with developments in Italy causing concerns. During this time the US dollar was seen as a safe haven whilst the Italian concerns caused weakness in the euro.

The tables below detail relevant movements in markets:

#### **International Equities 31.07.18 - 31.10.18**

Total Return Performances (%)					
Country	Local Currency	£	US\$	€	
Australia	-6.2	-8.2	-10.6	-7.6	
Finland	-4.8	-5.4	-7.8	-4.8	
France	-6.8	-7.4	-9.8	-6.8	
Germany	-10.0	-10.5	-12.8	-10.0	
Hong Kong, China	-14.1	-11.7	-14.0	-11.2	
Italy	-13.5	-14.0	-16.2	-13.5	
Japan	-5.0	-3.2	-5.7	-2.7	
Netherlands	-10.1	-10.7	-13.0	-10.1	
Spain	-9.2	-9.8	-12.1	-9.2	
Switzerland	-2.0	-1.0	-3.6	-0.4	
UK	-6.9	-6.9	-9.3	-6.4	
USA	-3.4	-0.8	-3.4	-0.2	
All World Europe ex UK	-7.4	-7.7	-10.1	-7.1	
All World Asia Pacific ex Japan	-10.6	-10.1	-12.5	-9.6	
All World Asia Pacific	-8.3	-7.4	-9.8	-6.8	
All World Latin America	+2.0	+2.2	-0.4	+2.8	
All World All Emerging Markets	-8.8	-8.8	-11.1	-8.2	
All World	-5.3	-3.8	-6.0	-3.2	

Source: FTSE All World Indices

FTSE UK Government Securities Index All Stocks (total return): -0.5%

# International Bonds - Benchmark Ten Year Government Bond Yields (%)

Currency	31.07.18	31.10.18
Sterling	1.39	1.26
US Dollar	2.97	3.10
Yen	0.06	0.13
Germany (Euro)	0.33	0.30

# Sterling's performance during the quarter ending 31.10.18 (%)

Currency	Quarter Ending 31.10.18
US Dollar	-2.8
Canadian Dollar	-1.7
Yen	-1.8
Euro	+0.6
Swiss Franc	-0.9
Australian Dollar	+2.2

### Other currency movements during the quarter ending 31.10.18 (%)

Currency	Quarter Ending 31.10.18
US Dollar / Canadian Dollar	+1.1
US Dollar / Yen	+1.1
US Dollar / Euro	+3.5
Swiss Franc / Euro	+1.5
Euro / Yen	-2.3

## Significant Commodities (US dollar terms) 31.07.18 - 31.10.18 (%)

Currency	Quarter Ending 31.10.18
Oil	+1.6
Gold	+0.1

#### **MARKETS**

The positive trend apparent in most recent quarters was halted in this latest one although the setback should be seen in the context of the sharp rise in equities in recent years. The total return this quarter on the FTSE All World Index in local currency terms was -5.3%, in sterling terms -3.8%, in US dollar terms -6.0% and in euro terms -3.2%. Looking at local currency returns first, the only positive return came from the previously out of favour Latin American market. The FTSE All World Latin America Index returned +2.0% in local currency terms. Relative outperformers, although still in negative territory, were the FTSE USA Index, -3.4%, and the FTSE Switzerland Index, -2.0%. Notable underperformers were some of the European markets with the FTSE Italy Index returning -13.5%, the FTSE Netherlands Index -10.1%, the FTSE Germany Index -10.0% and the FTSE Spain Index -9.2%. On a sterling adjusted basis, the FTSE All World Latin America Index was still the only one in positive territory, returning +2.2%. However, the strength of the US dollar against the pound meant that the sterling return on the FTSE USA Index improved to -0.8%. Underperformers were the FTSE All World Asia Pacific ex Japan Index, -10.1%, the FTSE All World All Emerging Markets Index, -8.8%, the FTSE Australia Index, -8.2%, the FTSE All World Europe ex UK Index, -7.7%, and the FTSE UK Index, -6.9%.

Bonds had a mixed quarter with the yield on the ten year US Treasury bond, an important marker, breaking through 3% and causing some turbulence in the equity markets towards the end of October.

In the foreign exchange markets, sterling was generally weaker, falling by 2.8% against the US dollar, 1.8% against the yen, 1.7% against the Canadian dollar and 0.9% against the Swiss Franc. On the other hand, it rose by 2.2% against the Australian dollar and 0.6% against the euro.

In the commodity markets, oil, as measured by Brent crude rose by 1.6%, although it had been higher during the quarter, and gold was almost unchanged.

#### **ECONOMICS**

The jittery start to markets in the fourth quarter reflects the economic and political uncertainties which abound in the world economy. The disparity in performances between the USA and most other countries has been striking so far this year and it is understandable that markets have setbacks from time to time even against the background of a bull market. It is also good in the sense that a setback causes investors to reconsider their positive or negative stance and see if an adjustment is needed in the light of any new developments. For those of a bullish disposition, a meaningful setback is an opportunity to deploy any surplus liquidity, whilst those of a bearish state of mind may feel that a setback is the start of something larger and use the opportunity to raise some cash. The battle between bulls and bears in this situation is healthy, helping to fashion meaningful price discovery.

So, what are the plausible arguments for the bulls and the bears as far as equities and bonds are concerned? If we look at the bond market first and take the ten year government bond as a benchmark, we see negative real yields in most markets, with the exception of the USA. This is not a usual phenomenon and carries obvious dangers in the form of creating asset bubbles or inflation. Negative real interest rates pass the cost on to the lender rather than the borrower and, because the cost of servicing the loans is below what the borrower thinks the increase in the value of the purchased asset will be, this can drive asset price inflation. Reversion to mean in interest rates in a number of

important countries will negatively impact bond prices and, realistically, one cannot expect the long term norm to be negative real interest rates. With US interest rates rising, bond yields relative to inflation are probably the most realistically priced in the USA, but some way away from where they will most likely end up, in this cycle. For the purposes of standard comparisons, we show in the following the ten year government bond yields against the relevant consumer price indices to identify real yields. In the USA, at the time of writing this review just after the quarter end, the ten year US Treasury bond shows a gross redemption yield of 3.153% and the consumer price index shows a year on year increase of 2.3% (it should be noted that the US Federal Reserve used the personal consumption expenditure index which shows a lower figure just below 2%). So, in the USA, there is a small but not insignificant real return. In other markets, where there are no abnormal factors, only Australia, with a ten year government bond yield of 2.643% and inflation of 2.1%, also shows a real return. At the time of writing this just after the quarter end, if we look at the UK, the ten year UK gilt yields 1.458% with inflation at 2.4%, in Germany the respective figures are 0.407% and 2.3%, in France 0.761% and 2.2%, and in Switzerland -0.044% and 1.0%. In Japan, the respective figures are 0.109% and 1.2%. Where there is an unusual situation, Italy, there is a more normal relationship between the bond yield, 3.372%, and inflation, 1.4%, but that is solely due to political concerns about the economic policy of the new coalition government and reflects the perceived higher risk now associated with holding Italian debt. Unless one believes that inflation is abnormally high and will revert to below the levels of yield offered by government bonds, the current unusual relationship is, in our view, a negative one for bonds. More fundamentally, monetary policy is beginning to tighten, albeit that, by historical standards, it is still very loose in most countries. The exception, if there is one, is the USA, where the Federal Reserve has been ratcheting up interest rates and where bond yields have been rising, with the ten year US Treasury bond, as detailed above, breaking well through the 3% barrier. Additionally, the Federal Reserve has been engaging in a quantitative tightening (QT) as it pares back the size of its balance sheet by reinvesting a progressively smaller amount of the asset redemption payments it receives and, with the US federal government borrowing more, this can be expected in most circumstances to push up interest rates. The USA is by far the most advanced of the major economies in its tightening mode. The UK is no longer involved in quantitative easing (QE) and has taken early steps to restore interest rates to more normal levels, although there is still a long way to go. The ECB has been reducing the rate of OE, now down to €15 billion a month, and, in the absence of any unforeseen circumstances, plans to end it altogether at the end of the year, although no QT, as the US Federal Reserve is doing, is planned at present. Nevertheless, stabilising the ECB's balance sheet does, in relative terms, means tighter policy although no ECB interest rate increases seem to be on the horizon until after next summer at the earliest. The Bank of England is likely to tighten monetary policy gently but QT does not seem to be in sight. The most aggressively loose monetary policy being followed is by the Bank of Japan but even here with a targeted 0.0% yield on ten year JGBs, the yield has risen to 0.109%.

The conclusion must most likely be that monetary policy tightening is going to be negative for fixed interest securities. What could be positive is if the world economy were to fall into recession and deflation and that, as a result, investors viewed high quality bonds as safe havens, however low the yield was. In these extreme circumstances, where it could be possible for goods and services prices to be falling, very low or negative yields could still prove to be attractive. Whilst not impossible, we regard this scenario as unlikely.

Our conclusion on fixed interest securities is that, notwithstanding the recent sharp rise in yields across most of the maturity spectrum, there is no reason to revisit our negative view of international bond prices. It is also important to reiterate a point we have often made about fixed interest securities which are well out of line with what, we believe, is a realistic pricing level, namely that, if equities have a temporary fall in value, they are likely to recover and move ahead again. If fixed interest securities return to anywhere near what we consider to be realistic levels, then there are going to be significant losses which may not be recovered or, if the securities are held to maturity, then very low returns will be earned. The further along the maturity spectrum one invests, the more the risks multiply.

So, should we reset our view of equities? There are always concerns about the investment background with the bottom line of whether one or more of these negative factors will cause an economic slowdown or recession which could be negative for equities. For those with an unfavourable view of equities, there are a number of issues for them to focus their attention. The possibility of the US/China trade argument developing into something worse will be upmost in their minds. There is no doubt that trade wars and protectionism are unequivocally a bad development. They introduce huge inefficiencies into the economic system by distorting trade flows and raising prices. Goods and services are not produced or provided in the optimum way, by which we mean that the theory of comparative advantage gets disapplied. At its simplest level, a country will produce and export a product in which it has a comparative advantage and import a product where the comparative advantage lies with another country. If tariffs and/or quotas are applied, trade becomes inefficient, prices rise and economic growth suffers. This is grossly oversimplified but makes the point that almost everyone loses. We are beginning to see the effects of the US and Chinese tariffs in terms of company announcements and forecasts about their trading prospects and the various effects in terms of projections for economic growth which are lower than previous ones. So, if the current US/China trade dispute develops into something much worse, including widening the number of countries drawn into the economic dispute, then a protectionist induced recession could be the result with all the implications for company profits and dividends.

Politics is as important an influence on markets as economics, though both are often interlinked so there are two political developments with potential threats to the oil price. Whilst oil is not such an important input as it was, say, in the oil crisis in 1973, it is still very important and, crucially, an influence on inflation and the implications which that carries. Increased US sanctions due to come into effect on 4<sup>th</sup> November on Iran, still an important oil producer as the third largest in OPEC, threatens oil supplies. The USA's influence is widespread and extra territorial, for example in the clearing of US dollars, so many purchasers of Iranian oil will be wary about continuing to purchase Iranian oil. Iran's great enemy, of course, is Saudi Arabia which has pumped more oil, although it has not reached the record levels of November 2016. However, the serious incident in Turkey which has aroused international ire, also has potentially negative implications for oil production if Saudi Arabia decides to hit back at international criticism by limiting its oil output. At this stage, we do not know how this crisis will develop. So, here are two very real examples of where politics and economics could overlap with negative consequences for international growth and inflation.

Moving on to another example nearer home which is Italy and its seeming defiance of the EU's rules embodied in the Stability and Growth Pact. As we have often remarked in these reviews, the euro is not well underpinned by economics and, with the eurozone's economies having diverged rather than converged as they were supposed to have done, flare ups such as the current one between the recently formed coalition government of Italy and the EU may become more commonplace, especially with the rise of populist political parties. As clients will know, the Italian government plans to raise spending and cut taxes with the consequence that the forecast budget deficit next year will be 2.4% of GDP. That is within the 3% limit set by the Stability and Growth Pact. However, there are two issues which concern the EU. The first is that this budget deficit figure is predicated on a growth rate which Italy is considered unlikely to achieve next year. The coalition is assuming economic growth of 1.5% next year, 1.6% in 2020 and 1.4% in 2021. By 2020, the forecast is for the budget deficit to be 2.1% of GDP and 1.8% in 2021. Most forecasters believe these forecasts to be very optimistic and, if they are correct in this view, the coalition's budget deficit forecasts will be unrealistic. The second problem is perhaps more fundamental in that outstanding public debt as a percentage of GDP is supposed to be moving towards an upper limit of 60% of GDP, where Italy's outstanding debt is over 130% of GDP. The Italian budget therefore threatens to worsen the debt ratio. The coalition government will find it very difficult to backtrack on it election pledges, whilst the EU will be fearful of setting a precedent and risking market turmoil and an existential threat to the euro. One proposal in the coalition's programme was to do with the creation of mini-BOTs. These would be securities issued to pay off individuals and companies who were owed money by the state as payment for services or tax rebates. These would be non-interest bearing tradeable securities which could be used to pay taxes and buy any goods or services provided by the state. The belief would be that, as they gained acceptance, mini-BOTs could be used more widely in Italy as some sort of parallel currency which could immediately be triggered if Italy left the euro. Although it is not in the coalition's plans to leave the euro, the parties are eurosceptic in their approach. This is why we consider the Italian crisis, if that is what it is at this stage, to be far more threatening for the EU than Brexit. Why is this threatening? The market has already taken the view that Italian debt has become much more risky with the yield on the ten year Italian government bond about 300 basis points more than on the German Bund. It has also had a limited spillover into other eurozone bond markets where the country's credit rating is relatively weak. If the worst came to the worst and Italy did leave the euro, it is unlikely that the currency could survive given that Italy is the third largest eurozone member. Through the Target 2 balances it is heavily indebted to some other eurozone countries but, most of all, to Germany. Whilst Italy remains in the eurozone, this is not a problem but, if Italy were to leave the euro at some stage, it most certainly would be. Of course, it is not the central case that Italy will leave the euro but one side or another has to back down and Italy, in the potential form of mini-BOTs, does have some sort of Plan B. Italy is a good example of politics affecting the economics.

Nearer home, but a localised issue in the context of the world economy and international stock markets, is Brexit. The UK economy has slowed down since Brexit, but not significantly, and maintains a number of positive features, namely a very strong employment market in contrast, say, to a number of those in the eurozone. There is not a lot of clarity on the matter at the moment but, if somehow or another, it results in a change of government to one with, by British standards, extreme policies, then those of a bearish disposition do have something to worry about and we are certainly taking this into account in our investment policy. However, for international investors, Brexit is a relatively minor matter compared to say what would happen if the Italian stand off became nasty and there was a probability of Italy leaving the euro.

This list of issues which could support a negative case for international equities is quite formidable and is in the glass half empty school of views but what about the glass half full side?

For this, we might look for some support from the latest projections in the IMF's October 2018 World Economic Outlook. Some of the recent developments outlined above have caused the IMF to reduce its projections, but not dramatically, and, of course, it outlines the uncertainties of the current political and economic situation. Its world growth projections for 2018 and 2019 now stand at 3.7% which, in both cases, is a reduction of 0.2% on its July 2018 update. Those outcomes are the same as for 2017. Within those projections, the IMF has only made a slight change to those for the Advanced Economies with no change for 2018 at 2.4% and a 0.1% reduction for 2019 to 2.1%. Within the Advanced Economies area, the IMF has left unchanged its projection for 2018 at 2.9% but reduced the figure for 2019 by 0.2% to 2.5%. The eurozone has suffered a reduction of 0.2% this year to 2.0% with the 2019 level left unchanged at 1.9%. Amongst the largest eurozone countries, Germany has seen its forecast reduced sharply this year by 0.3% to 1.9% and by 0.2% next year to 1.9%. France has seen a 0.2% downgrade this year to 1.6% and a 0.1% downgrade to 1.6% for next year. Despite all the discussion on Italy the IMF has left its forecasts unchanged for 2018 and 2019 at 1.2% and 1.0% but the background is obviously very fluid there. For the fourth largest eurozone country, Spain, the IMF has slightly reduced its forecast this year by 0.1% to 2.7% but left next year's forecast unchanged at 2.2%. The forecast for Japan has actually been raised by 0.1% to 1.1% this year and left unchanged at 0.9% next year. Projections for the UK have also been left unchanged at 1.4% and 1.5% respectively, as have those for Canada at 2.1% and 2.0%. Perhaps, not surprisingly, in view of developments in some emerging markets, the IMF has made reductions for both years in its Emerging Market and Developing Economies forecast, by 0.2% this year to 4.7% and by 0.4% in 2019 to 4.7% also. Within that area, the IMF has left China's forecast unchanged at 6.6% this year but reduced it by 0.2% next year. The changes for India have been very minor, unchanged this year at 7.3% and reduced by 0.1% next year to 7.4% (fiscal year in the case of India). Brazil, where there has been much turmoil and an election which is likely to bring significant change, has seen its forecasts reduced by 0.4% this year to 1.4% and by 0.1% next year to 2.4%. These reductions might seem to be a

negative pointer for markets but, at this stage, the downgrades are not significant and the absolute levels of growth forecast should be supportive of equity markets. Nevertheless, there has to be a significant level of doubt about the outcome for this year and next, in particular, given the political and economic background.

One reason for the relative outperformance of the US equity market this year is the very strong growth in corporate earnings reported by US companies which is a function of strong US economic growth and the tax cuts announced earlier in the year. Third quarter US corporate earnings growth looks to be coming in at around 25% and the forward price/earnings ratio on the S & P 500 Index does not look significantly out of line with recent periods. That is helpful against the background of rising US interest rates and should provide some support to US share prices. Elsewhere, the corporate earnings prospects are less strong, given lower economic growth and the uncertain effect of the flow through from the US/China trade arguments. On the other hand, in countries where equity dividend yields are well above those on ten year government bonds, to use one widely used benchmark, their relative attractions remain. The yields on government bonds in many countries outside the USA are substantially below those on equities and, therefore, do have a significant gap to close if bond prices do fall, providing a cushion for equities.

As we look at the two sides of the argument above, we can see that, whilst the macro picture still looks broadly satisfactory if the latest IMF projections are anywhere near correct, this picture could be upset if any of the micro or individual issues we discussed above turn nasty. It is the interaction of these positive and negative factors which are causing the stock markets' current volatility.

Whilst the factors above are likely to influence markets more than items of individual data, it is still worthwhile to pick out certain indicators which, in the normal course of events, we would place more weight on in these reviews. In the USA, which continues to perform strongly, the Purchasing Managers Indices continue their very strong readings. The latest PMI for manufacturing stands at 59.8 and that for non manufacturing at 61.6. These levels are consistent with the strong growth registered by the US economy in the second quarter where the annualised growth rate was 4.2%. Industrial production has shown monthly gains for the last four months whilst the unemployment rate has fallen to 3.7%. Notwithstanding a lower level of 134,000 in September, possibly caused by Hurricane Florence, the non farm payroll numbers have been strong so far this year. The Conference Board's Leading Indicators Index increased by 0.5% in September following a 0.4% increase in August and one of 0.7% in July, although there was a suggestion by the board that the economy may be coming up against capacity constraints. The figure for capacity utilisation in the USA has been rising steadily having moved from just under 77 at the beginning of the year to just over 78 now. Although slightly lower in October at 99.0 against 100.1 in September, the University of Michigan's Consumer Confidence index remains strong. Data like this suggests a buoyant economy but, from a macroeconomic point of view, the implementation of a fiscal stimulus on to an expanding economy would not generally be considered optimal in terms of timing even though tax cuts are welcome.

The contrast with the eurozone economy is quite stark. Annualised second quarter GDP growth in the area was 1.8% with some notable areas of weakness in France where it was 0.6% and Italy where it was 0.8%. The PMI indices are well below the equivalent ones in the USA. For the eurozone as a whole, the latest composite PMI stands at 52.7 and, within that, the manufacturing index stood at 52.1 and the services index at 53.3. The latest composite index for Germany stands at 52.7 and that for France at 54.3 The Consumer Confidence Index has been in steady decline, having fallen five months in a row, and unemployment, although it has fallen this year, still stands at 8.1%, quite a contrast with the USA and the UK. Retail sales are sluggish with a year on year growth of 1.8% but declines in the last two months. Data is tending to suggest that the eurozone is slowing down. One of our favoured markets in Europe is Switzerland which, of course, is outside the euro area. Here growth recently has been much stronger. In the second quarter, the annualised growth rate was 2.9% and 3.4% up on a year earlier.

Japan had a strong second quarter with annualised growth at 3.0%. Even very aggressive monetary easing has failed to achieve the Bank of Japan's inflation target of 2% with the year on year rise in consumer prices at 1.2%. This means that the Bank of Japan will continue its aggressive policy in front of a proposed increase in the consumption tax next year to 10%, except for food where it will remain at 8%. This will be a challenge for the Japanese economy as previous consumption tax increases have not ended well. But Japan has a government debt equivalent to 253% of GDP at the end of 2017 and, whilst most of this debt is held internally, it is a problem which has to be tackled and a rise in consumption tax, quite low by international standards, is a start. The country, which has poor demographics, is coming up against constraints in the labour market with unemployment at 2.4%. The country could be affected if the trade war intensifies. In terms of where investors' worries lie, it is not at the top of the list.

The Chinese stock market has performed very poorly this year and now the economy has to adapt to what might be a protracted period of sanctions imposed by the USA. Although the second quarter annualised growth rate was strong at 7.4% and year on year growth at 6.7%, as the IMF's projections suggest, the economy will slow down in 2019. As the government tries to manoeuvre the economy away from fixed asset investment and exports and more towards consumption and services, it now has to deal with US tariffs on part of its exports to the USA and, possibly, all in due course. The latest purchasing managers indices for China are quite modest with the manufacturing PMI standing at 50.8 and that for manufacturing at 54.9. The government is also trying to rein back the shadow banking sector to try to ensure financial stability and also to control soaring property prices in some cities. However, it has found it necessary to counter the effects of tariffs by easing credit conditions in the economy, but this has to be a short term measure in the face of the imperatives it faces, as described above. Investors are concerned by the President's accumulation of power and increasing policy interventions which affect particular companies, Tencent being a case in point where the regulators froze approval of game licences which affected the company's business plans and share price. The regulators do not approve of some of the social aspects of these games. Arbitrary intervention in companies' affairs unsettles investors and this seems to be an increasing trend in China at present, so a disappointing stock market performance can be partially attributed to this effect as well as the USA's tariffs on Chinese exports.

As we said earlier, the main influence on UK markets is, in our view, political, namely the possibility of a change of government at some stage which would be hostile to business and investors. This we consider to be more important than Brexit although, for some investors, Brexit will be informing their investment policy. Whilst it has lost some steam as a result of the uncertainty over Brexit, the UK economy is still performing in an acceptable way, given this factor. Second quarter annualised GDP was 1.6%. The latest composite purchasing managers index is 54.1 which is consistent with this level of growth and unemployment remains low at 4%. Inflation has temporarily come back to 2.4%. It is important to note that the strength of the employment market compares favourably with the position of the eurozone as we mentioned above. What is encouraging is that the UK's public finances seem to be in better shape than is realised. The Office for Budget Responsibility has said that there has been a significant improvement in government borrowing and has raised its growth forecast for next year from 1.3% to 1.6% although cutting it for this year from 1.5% to 1.3%. This meant that the Chancellor's October budget did not have to raise taxes for extra NHS spending as had been hinted earlier. With income tax reduction, through higher tax thresholds, coming in a year earlier than planned, after years of austerity, this budget could almost have been planned with a general election in mind although it is very unlikely that the government would try to force one given what happened in June 2017. The Chancellor warned that, should there be a "no deal" Brexit, he was ready to introduce an emergency budget next Spring. However, whilst the Budget might normally have attracted more headlines, the fact remains that the most important issue for investors is the political risk in the UK. A change of government with quite extreme economic views would most likely adversely affect UK securities and the pound. Whilst it is always sensible to hold a diversified portfolio of assets, it is even more important to do so now because of the uncertainty in the UK. For this reason, our investment policy remains to hold a substantial amount of overseas securities in our clients' portfolios.

The significant increase in stock market volatility in October serves as a useful reminder that price movements are not always one way. A long period of mainly positive portfolio performances can lead to complacency and we have always emphasised in these reviews that there will be some negative quarterly performances. Volatility, such as we have seen in October, provides a useful vehicle for price discovery as investors reassess their policies and views on various asset classes. The tug of war between the positive and negative drives, a number of which we have outlined in this review, is likely to continue, although one would expect the volatility to die down. Our view remains that equities are the preferred asset but we do expect periods of negative price movements against a longer term uptrend as economic growth continues. The caveat has to be that none of the negative items discussed earlier in this review blows up into something much more significant.

October 2018

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