MERRILL
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CHIEF INVESTMENT OFFICE

Viewpoint

Time To Remain Calm and Balanced

March 2022

All data, projections and opinions are as of the date of this report and subject to change.

IN BRIEF

- The tragic crisis in Ukraine continues to express the need for diversification, portfolio stability, and the detriment of overexposure in any one area.
- Overall, although we expect equity market volatility and uncertainty to remain high in the short term, we believe we are in the final stages of the repricing of risk, revaluation and expect rebalancing opportunities to develop in the coming weeks.
- For now, strong nominal growth is powering robust corporate earnings that will help serve to reinforce the business cycle expansion. Leading economic indicators point toward above trend real economic growth over the balance of the year. Economic reopening in parts of the world should also help support near-term growth. This is a positive backdrop for Equities.
- Treasury market volatility may continue to increase in the coming months as the market grapples with persistent inflation and a more aggressive and proactive Federal Reserve (Fed). However, geopolitics in Eastern Europe have slowed the rise in longer yields, at least temporarily.

Stocks resumed their extreme volatility and negative pressure on February 24 on the back of a further escalation of the crisis in Ukraine. Over the weekend, Western nations announced plans of harsher economic and financial sanctions on Russia including new sanctions on the central bank of Russia, and restrictions on specific banks in the global financial messaging/transactions system. Oil prices rose back above $100 per barrel, the Russian ruble fell over 30%, and the central bank of Russia raised rates up to 20%. In addition, concerns have now increased that counter-party risk globally could rise given the potential collateral effect of the latest sanctions and restrictions on Russia. Many are now expecting the Fed to be ready to expand liquidity if needed.

With developments changing by the day and uncertainty likely to remain at extreme levels, we expect negative market commentary to continue in the short term, and headline risk to potentially increase and remain high. However, we believe it's more important to first assess the various likely outcomes in the medium term, and analyze the long-term potential effect on the economy, profits and asset price trends before succumbing to knee-jerk reactions at a time of heightened concerns. We prefer to remain balanced and calm and look for opportunities to rebalance exposure in areas that correct too much. We want to also remain diversified across and within asset classes and expect the repricing of risk to find a short-term floor in the coming weeks. This tragic crisis in Ukraine continues to express the need for diversification, portfolio stability and the detriment of overexposure in any one area.

CIO ASSET CLASS VIEWS

This month, the Global Wealth & Investment Management Investment Strategy Committee did not make any tactical asset allocation adjustments. We reaffirm our positive view on Equities relative to Fixed Income with a preference for U.S. Equities relative to International. Maintain diversification across and within asset classes as volatility remains elevated.

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	CIO View				
Asset Class	Underweight		Neutral	Overweight	
Global Equities				●	
U.S. Large Cap Growth			●		
U.S. Large Cap Value				●	
U.S. Small Cap Growth				●	
U.S. Small Cap Value				●	
International Developed			●		
Emerging Markets			●		
Global Fixed Income		●			
U.S. Governments		●			
U.S. Mortgages		●			
U.S. Corporates				●	
High Yield		●			
U.S. Investment Grade Tax Exempt			●		
U.S. High Yield Tax Exempt		●			
International Fixed Income	●				
Alternative Investments*					
Hedge Funds			●		
Private Equity			●		
Real Assets			●		
Cash					

*Many products that pursue Alternative Investment strategies, specifically Private Equity and Hedge Funds, are available only to qualified investors.

CIO asset class views are relative to the CIO Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA) of multi-asset portfolio.

Geopolitical risk and the ultimate economic and market effects are impossible to forecast at this point in time. There are various scenarios that can develop through time, with markets trying to price this in with each passing day. Surprise moves in asset markets may develop when we least expect them. The market's direction during the pandemic of 2020 is another example. We continue to emphasize diversification overall and opportunistic rebalancing of portfolios if risk budgets fall too far.

In order to better assess the effect of the crisis in Ukraine, we are highlighting some of BofA Global Research's[1] recent main conclusions to investors' concerns. These concerns are segmented into four groups: Economic, Defense, Commodity and Markets. Briefly stated, BofA Global Research concluded that the direct effect on the U.S. and global economy is low, but, given Europe's excessive reliance on Russian oil and gas exports, Europe's economic growth and inflation effect could be larger than some currently expect. In addition, it believes U.S. inflation to be further pressured as oil and commodity prices head higher in the short term. This prospect should keep the Fed on target to continue its monetary policy tightening campaign, which is likely to include seven interest rate hikes for 2022. However, investors now expect only a 25 basis points (bps) hike at the March meeting, which is down from 50 bps expected just a week ago. In terms of defense spending, both the U.S. and European nations should raise spending considerably in both the short and long terms. Moreover, we expect energy and commodity prices to rise further and stay stronger for longer until order is restored, given the difficulties of adding capacity at present. Finally, the overall willingness to take risk remains low. Therefore, we believe markets, particularly Equities, should remain volatile and vulnerable to both headline risk and technical factors. Regarding the U.S. corporate sector, although the exposure to Russia is tiny, the derivative effects from elevated oil prices, wider credit spreads and potential liquidity concerns could overhang forward profit clarity. Therefore, shorter-term investors are more than likely to wait until the dark clouds dissipate before helping to stabilize the markets completely.

With all of this considered, our Chief Investment Office (CIO) highlights several main points for long- term investors to consider:

- Increased volatility and wide-range bound Equity prices in the short term. As order is restored, we expect volatility to remain at above-average levels, but the focus should shift toward the Fed's monetary pivot, the new economic growth equilibrium, profit fundamentals, and the interplay between Fixed Income yields and Equity total return prospects. With our belief that ultimately, the economy averts a hard landing, the reopening accelerates through the summer months, and profit guidance remains good, long-term investors should consider rebalancing Equity exposure upward if exposure falls below tactical targets in the coming weeks. Individual investor sentiment is at a multiyear extreme low, which leaves markets vulnerable to any positive surprise, in our opinion.

- On a potential rebalancing, we continue to prefer high quality across the board, areas of solid dividend growth, and low earnings variability. On a sector basis, we still prefer Energy (large diversified dividend providers), Industrials (aerospace, defense, infrastructure), Financials (high-quality banks and asset managers), and established Technology (hardware, semiconductors, select software, dividend growers). For more passive investors, we continue to emphasize high-quality U.S. indexes relative to the rest of the world.

- The Fed's tightening campaign designed to roll over inflation to continue with seven hikes still expected for this year, starting in March. But prospects for 50 bps at the March meeting are virtually off the table now. In addition, if concerns grow over counter-party risk, we would expect the Fed to slow down its balance sheet contraction exercise and provide liquidity to global partners if needed.

- Oil and commodity prices to remain under upward pressure while the Ukraine crisis continues. However, they are vulnerable to a sizable move lower if order is surprisingly

[1] BofA Global Research, *"Investment Strategy: Top 15 FAQ on the Ukraine Crisis"*, as of February 25, 2022.

restored sooner rather than later. Consider remaining constructive but be cautious on overexposure here.

- Longer term, the deglobalization theme or move toward regional economic blocks, and trade accelerates. This is U.S. dollar supportive, underpins higher defense spending, and supports our overweight to U.S. assets in general.

- The full reopening of the U.S. economy to continue, supporting our preference for travel, leisure, and entertainment areas, for those interested in specific ideas. These areas have undergone many head fakes in the past year, but we expect a more solid uptrend in 2022 as we inch toward potential endemic status and restrictions begin to lift.

- Established Technology areas (not to be confused with "stay-at-home," or "concept-driven, low-profitability companies") of semiconductors, hardware, software and networking segments are now back to attractive levels relative to historical price-to-earnings (P/E) growth levels and relative to the market overall, in our view. These areas are high quality in our opinion and also, in many cases, have solid dividend prospects as well.

In more volatile market environments, particularly those that include heightened geopolitical risk and/or major monetary policy pivots, the opportunity set for Alternative Investments for qualified investors tends to increase. The increased opportunity set can include capital preservation objectives and return enhancing strategies. Higher volatility tends to create greater dispersion within asset classes, namely Equities. The dispersion could become large at the company, industry, sector and geographic levels which helps create various investment opportunities. As we work through this highly uncertain time, Alternative investments may help diversify a portfolio further, in our view.

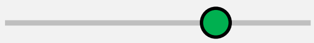
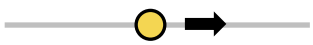
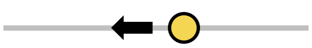
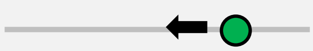
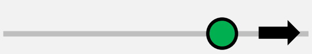
From a more cautionary perspective, regarding specific areas of concern, given the recently announced sanctions on Russia and the expectation for continued financial/economic/trade/commerce restrictions, we expect growth forecasts to be reset lower primarily throughout Europe and Eastern Europe. Higher oil and commodity costs, lower trade, higher inflation, disruption in corporate commerce, and pressure to release asset ownership are also likely to create significant global and local liquidity concerns in individual Russian investments/assets. In addition, global index providers will likely adjust their index weightings to remove exposure to Russia which could increase volatility and further reduce liquidity. As we have stated previously, the entire situation is very fluid but we expect the uncertainty specifically regarding Russian investment exposure to remain at the highest level for an extended period of time, potentially even in the face of order being restored.

Overall, although we expect equity market volatility and uncertainty to remain high in the short term, we believe we are in the final stages of the repricing of risk, revaluation and expect rebalancing opportunities to develop in the coming weeks.

CIO INVESTMENT DASHBOARD

The outlook for global economic activity remains strong in 2022 given elevated consumer net worth, pent-up demand and job growth. However, recently the risk for a slowdown has risen as inflation has been running hot, the Fed has pivoted to a more aggressive tightening bias, and geopolitical uncertainty has increased. Corporate earnings continue to demonstrate considerable momentum across styles, sectors and regions. Corporate credit conditions are generally supportive due to rising corporate earnings and cash flows. Relative valuations continue to favor Equities over Fixed Income, although a disorderly move higher in yields would be a headwind for Equities. Investor sentiment has moved to bearish levels following recent volatility. We believe the repricing of risk and valuation adjustment is in its final stages and expect a "grind-it-out" type of atmosphere for markets in the near term.

Current readings on the key drivers of Equities for investors to consider, with arrows representing the recent trend:

Factor	Implication for Equities Negative Neutral Positive	CIO View
Earnings		In Q4, the S&P 500 has so far reported profits that have positively surprised the aggregated consensus estimate by roughly 5.9%, according to Bloomberg. This magnitude has fallen since peaking in Q1. After year-over-year (YoY) growth in S&P 500 profits of 40% in Q3, the Q4 YoY blended growth rate, which combines actual results for companies that have reported and estimated results for those that haven't yet, is over 30%. If sustained through the end of the earnings season, it would mark the first time since 2009-2010 that four consecutive quarters saw YoY growth north of 30%, according to FactSet. Annual 2022 S&P 500 earnings growth is expected at 8.2%. While still suggesting positive earnings trends, upward earnings revisions in the U.S., Europe and Japan have cooled down, while global emerging markets have seen more cuts to earnings revisions.
Valuations		Absolute valuations for U.S. Equities have become less extended, though remain higher than the historical average. The S&P 500 P/E ratio (next 12 months) has fallen to 18.8x from over 23x in late 2020, due to both price volatility and rising earnings estimates. Relative to Fixed Income, valuations are still attractive. The S&P 500 earnings yield is 332 bps above the 10-year Treasury yield, indicating upside for Equities relative to Fixed Income. The recent rise in rates has pressured richly valued, long-duration Equities, while supporting cyclical areas.
U.S. Macro		U.S. economic growth reaccelerated in Q4 by a 7.0% seasonally adjusted annual rate, driven by a buildup of inventories, according to the Commerce Department. This results in 2021 growth of real gross domestic product (GDP) of 5.7%, the most since 1984. After weakness in January, the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the services sector has bounced back strongly, as the latest wave of the coronavirus has ebbed. The indicator tracking the manufacturing sector remains robust. The U.S. economy is expected to reaccelerate in Q2. On the demand side, consumer spending remains supported by an improving labor market, economic reopening, record-high household net worth and excess savings. Supply-chain challenges and labor shortages remain impediments to growth. BofA Global Research expects growth of 3.6% for 2022.
Global Growth		Despite recent normalization across the global economy, uncertainty remains high. Geopolitical developments risk exacerbating energy inflation and destabilizing Europe's economic outlook. While new cases of the coronavirus have peaked in most regions, many countries in Asia have seen them increase. Led by China, the global economy is expected to have grown by 6.0% in 2021 and is expected to expand by 4.3% in 2022, according to BofA Global Research.
Monetary Policy / Inflation		The Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) began tapering central bank asset purchases in November. Should conditions allow, it's likely the Fed will begin raising interest rates at its March meeting, as stated by Fed Chairman Jerome Powell. His and other officials' rhetoric has helped sustain anticipation for a quicker pace of tightening monetary policy, including multiple rate hikes and balance sheet runoff in 2022. Overall, inflation data, such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the Producer Price Index (PPI) and consumer expectation for nearer-term price inflation, has surprised to the upside. Driven by strong demand, constrained supply in the global economy faces rising geopolitical risks.
Fiscal Policy		Including the Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework approved in October, fiscal relief in the U.S. equates to nearly 31% of GDP since the start of the pandemic. Undermined by persistent inflation, momentum towards approving President Biden's Build Back Better economic agenda through the reconciliation process by the Democratic-controlled Congress has stalled.
Corporate Credit		While past measures taken by the Fed and rising corporate profitability have underpinned benign corporate financing conditions, credit spreads have widened slightly. While those of High Yield (HY) and Investment-grade (IG) have risen to their highest since late-2020, these levels still imply accommodative financial conditions, amid strong economic fundamentals.
Yield Curve		While most yield curves continue to flatten, the all-important fed funds/10s curve has been steepening, signaling a positive economic outlook. Rates on the front end have moved higher to reflect higher expectations for Fed hikes sooner rather than later. Rates on the back end have recently risen on expectations for more persistent inflation, Fed policy and strong GDP growth. However, flattening in other yield curve segments may reflect some emerging concern of the latter's sustainability.
Technical Indicators		Throughout February, the Chicago Board Options Exchange (CBOE) Volatility Index (VIX) had remained in a range between 20 and 30, signaling near-term expectations for historically elevated volatility. Market breadth has deteriorated. The cumulative advance/decline line for New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) Equities has broken down to its lowest since early April 2021. Meanwhile, the percentage of NYSE stocks above their 200-day moving average remains under 40%.
Investor Sentiment		Bears now outnumber bulls by the most since April 2013, according to the American Association of Individual Investors. Meanwhile, institutional portfolio cash levels continue to signal a contrarian "buy" signal, according to the Fund Manager Survey. However, the BofA Global Research Bull & Bear Indicator is at 3.9, signaling a neutral reading.

Source: Chief Investment Office. Data as of March 1, 2022.

EQUITIES

We expect Equities to outperform Fixed Income: While near-term risks remain, global Equities should benefit from higher nominal growth levels, healthy corporate profits, rising consumer spending, and an improvement in the service sectors. However, bond yields may further rise as the Fed begins to hike interest rates and potentially does quantitative tightening, a headwind for multiples. We continue to favor U.S. Equities on a risk-adjusted basis and are neutral International Developed Equities and Emerging Markets (EM).

We are overweight U.S. Equities overall: The U.S. remains our preferred Equity region relative to the rest of the world, with stronger balance sheets on aggregate, prospects for higher levels of nominal growth and a favorable earnings backdrop. U.S. Large-caps generally offer a balance of Quality, Yield and Growth factors, while Small-caps offer higher cyclicality and more attractive relative valuations.

We expect earnings per share (EPS) for the S&P 500 to improve to $220 in 2022, with potential for upside as earnings estimates trend higher. U.S. Equity valuations are still higher than historical averages, but the recent selloff has brought the forward P/E to a more reasonable 18.8x level from 21.5x in December. Near-term risks for Equities come from uncertainty surrounding the conflict in Eastern Europe, ongoing coronavirus concerns, China's slowdown and its effect on multinational companies' earnings, and elevated levels of inflation. We would expect volatility to continue as financial conditions tighten as the Fed begins their hiking cycle.

We continue to prefer Energy, Materials and Financials as well as big, established areas in Technology and Industrials with high free cash flow; the more defensive sectors such as Healthcare are likely to provide some growth and stability. We continue to maintain a positive outlook for the consumer; however, the Consumer Discretionary sector is discounting the reopening, and rising input costs pose a risk to margins.

We believe portfolios should incorporate both Growth and Value factors that would simultaneously gain from cyclical and secular forces gaining traction. Growth should continue to benefit from accelerated secular investments in 5G, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, robotics and health infrastructure globally. However, current economic conditions suggest that investors may want to consider emphasizing Value, which has higher exposure to cyclical sectors that benefit from an improved pace of earnings growth and economic normalization. We also favor Small-cap Equities, given their cyclical nature, correlation to interest rates and inflation and the rising capital expenditures (CapEx) cycle. Both Value and small-caps are trading at discounted relative valuations.

We are neutral Emerging Market Equities: Emerging Market Equities appear attractively valued but remain vulnerable to further escalation of conflict in Eastern Europe and the lingering effects of the pandemic. Looking forward, we see further challenges stemming from slower economic growth in China and rising U.S. interest rates. We nonetheless continue to expect a wide return dispersion between individual EM countries and regions. Central and Eastern European markets are most exposed to further fallout from the Ukraine crisis through the effect of international sanctions and high dependency on natural gas imports from Russia. Cyclically oriented markets in Latin America and elsewhere in EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) should be relatively well positioned as global economic activity continues to recover and commodity prices remain high. While markets in Asia may be more at risk from high energy and food import prices in the near term, they remain longer-term beneficiaries of the expanding digital economy given their large exposure to digital industries. For the heavyweight Chinese market, we also see ongoing policy risks related to industry-specific regulation. The continued rise in EM consumer spending remains a big reason that we believe investors should maintain a strategic allocation to EM Equities. The emerging world now constitutes around 40% of global personal consumption expenditures (PCE) according to the United Nations, and ongoing convergence with developed economies should support GDP growth and corporate earnings over the longer term. We favor active management[2] when investing in EM, as fundamentals differ across countries based on commodity exposure, external funding needs, corporate governance and other factors.

We are neutral International Developed Market Equities: We continue to prefer U.S. versus International Developed given our higher-quality view. European economies are highly exposed to rising oil and gas prices, and the elevated geopolitical risk in Eastern Europe, potentially causing lower growth and higher inflation. However, these markets have attractive relative valuations, strong sensitivities to improving global economic activity, and can add cyclicality and Value orientation in portfolios.

EQUITY WATCH LIST

- Regional economic reopenings, coronavirus case trends, vaccination distribution timeline
- Rising expectations for Fed tightening as inflationary pressures persist
- Economic data for production, labor, consumer expectations, and credit and liquidity conditions
- Progression of earnings estimates amid margin pressures
- Fiscal policy adjustments and taxes
- Reorganization of global supply chains and U.S.-China relationship
- Further escalation of conflict in Eastern Europe

FIXED INCOME

We are underweight Fixed Income: We prefer portfolios to be positioned short duration relative to a Fixed Income benchmark aligned to specific investment goals. The Fed has pivoted hawkishly and has even higher conviction that it must withdraw monetary policy accommodation at a somewhat-faster pace to deal with the concerns of inflation. The Fed signaled that the market should expect every FOMC meeting to be “live” in terms of potential interest rate hikes, and also indicated quantitative tightening may begin at any time after the first rate hike, now expected in March. Treasury market volatility may therefore continue to increase in the coming months as the market grapples with persistent inflation and a more aggressive and proactive Fed. However, geopolitics in Eastern Europe have slowed the rise in longer yields, at least temporarily.

The 10s/30s spread has stopped narrowing over the last three months, even after the last FOMC meeting, which is encouraging. The current 10s/30s level is not at a worrying level, but, if the flattening trend started again, it would bear watching. The 2s/10s curve, however, did significantly flatten, but is still not anywhere near a level that signals a recession is a near-term risk. We expect Treasury rates to rise overall, with sharper increases on the shorter end, once geopolitical risks ebb and inflation and economic strength become more determinant factors.

While there should be upside to Treasury rates over the medium term, Treasurys should still be considered for most investors’ portfolios, especially to complement portfolios with Equity risk. However, investors less focused on managing short-term Equity volatility, with all Fixed Income portfolios, or with better ability to withstand price volatility, should still underweight Treasury allocations while favoring high-quality, IG spread products—corporates and municipals. We still expect Fixed Income to be a diversifier—in the long run, coupon income is a larger determinant to total returns than price changes due to rate moves—and this diversification effect has proven true when rate volatility decreases.

[2] Active management seeks to outperform benchmarks through active investment decisions such as asset allocation and investment selection.

We remain slightly overweight Investment-grade corporates and slightly underweight High Yield: Investment-grade credit continues to trend at 12-month wides (around 115 to 120 bps) on concerns regarding tightening monetary policy, higher Treasury yields, and the associated negative total return pressures. Technicals have also weakened amid a deterioration in sentiment, investor outflows, and issuance being pulled forward. That being said, while volatility could remain elevated over the near term, spreads have been relatively resilient, and we believe that credit should modestly outperform Treasurys this year as the global economic recovery continues to support strong underlying corporate credit fundamentals. We continue to believe that excess returns versus duration-matched Treasurys are likely to come mostly from carry and likely not from significant spread tightening. Further widening in credit spreads in response to an unexpected or large move in Treasury yields, inflation or both remains a key risk; however, with the strong earnings/fundamental backdrop a more material move wider in spreads should be viewed as a repositioning opportunity.

Credit losses in IG are generally manageable and not a large component of spreads, but the same cannot be said in HY. Despite an improving fundamental backdrop, credit losses may rise and meaningfully reduce total returns. The yields now available in HY (roughly 4%) provide very meager compensation. Within HY allocations, we prefer larger allocations to secured floating-rate leveraged loans versus unsecured high-yield bonds, although both should be included, and we caution investors to be aware that strong near-term performance may not be sustainable.

Municipal bond valuations have cheapened significantly versus Treasurys this year and are now cheaper than pre-pandemic average levels. We believe fundamental conditions for munis remain strong, with improving tax collections, stronger pension funding levels and generous fiscal stimulus. However, technicals have weakened; demand has slackened due to rising yields and the lower likelihood of tax rate increases, while tax-exempt supply may grow moderately due to issuers leveraging infrastructure stimulus funds. Muni credit spreads (e.g. BBB vs AAA) have also widened modestly, although we believe this too is based on technical, not fundamental weakness. We still expect munis to provide value over Treasurys for tax-sensitive investors in 2022, particularly carefully researched mid-to-lower-quality credits. However, munis are unlikely to outperform as strongly as they did in 2021 due to the weaker technicals, in our view.

We are slightly underweight Mortgage-Backed Securities: Due to concerns about Fed tapering/quantitative tightening, along with reduced demand from commercial banks as long demand recovers, we expect MBS spreads to come under pressure. The rapid move in Treasury yields has also caused mortgage duration to extend from the low 2s seen in mid-last year to the high 4s, according to the Bloomberg U.S. MBS Index. Further duration extension may be more limited from here, as duration remains near multi-year highs. Going forward, increased volatility and fluctuating mortgage rates may mean a higher prepayment risk. Furthermore, any miscommunication or negative surprise as a result of rising inflation, particularly as it relates to balance sheet reduction, is a material risk. Hence, it is prudent to position conservatively within the sector, in our opinion. In the long run, MBS appears attractive versus Treasurys, and the sector is a large component of the high-quality bond market. Therefore, investors should maintain exposure in the sector as appropriate for their particular investment objectives and risk tolerance.

FIXED INCOME WATCH LIST

- Potential Fed policy error, in either direction
- The 10s/30s spread, which may signal slowing growth if it narrows more dramatically
- Uneven Treasury market sell-off as taper progresses and fed funds rate hikes begin
- Signs of any risk aversion in terms of spreads, yields or new issue activity
- Potential tax changes if consensus is eventually reached on the Build Back Better bill

- Dislocations in Commercial Real Estate (CRE) markets

ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS

Given the differences in liquidity characteristics between Alternative Investments (AI) and traditional investments, the CIO asset class views on AI portfolio positioning continue to be neutral-rated versus our strategic allocations. These types of investments, in our opinion, should not be viewed at the asset class level on a tactical basis, but rather the tactical positioning should be expressed at the sub-asset class level.

We will continue to provide strategy-level guidance for qualified AI investors. We believe allocations to AI can introduce differentiated returns that can help complement existing traditional holdings by potentially enhancing returns, helping to reduce risk and capitalizing on opportunities not available through traditional investments.

We favor a strategic approach when allocating to Hedge Funds: In line with our overall overweight view on Equities, we currently see favorable opportunities for select Hedge Fund strategies for qualified investors, such as Equity Long/Short. U.S. GDP dipped in Q3, but growth rebounded strongly in Q4, and the economy has started 2022 with a full head of steam. The larger effect on markets has been the focus on the timing and path of the Fed's interest rate policy.

As mentioned above, we are maintaining our moderately positive view for Equity Hedge strategies, unchanged from previous quarters. We continue to believe the market environment is attractive for skilled stock pickers. As the interest rate environment changes, managers are generally optimistic that company fundamentals should be a more significant driver of stock performance going forward. We believe such an environment to be conducive to alpha—measure of the active return on an investment generation on both longs and shorts.

Equity Hedge Funds tend to have a quality bias in their long books. At the start of an economic recovery, low-quality stocks tend to lead the early stages of a rally but then underperform once the recovery peaks after a few quarters and until the next recession. Some fund managers believe we are entering this second phase during which higher-quality stocks tend to outperform. If true, this could be a tailwind to Equity Hedge Funds' alpha generation going forward. If stock correlations are low, this should contribute to a favorable stock selection backdrop for Equity Hedge managers, as stocks are more likely to trade on fundamentals. Valuation levels are not favorable and are elevated relative to their five- and 10-year averages. However, this could be conducive to an attractive opportunity set for short sellers. Despite the challenging shorting environment in 2021, managers generally maintained their discipline although some decided to reduce the practice of shorting individual stocks. Managers focused on alpha shorts are generally constructive on the prospect of this practice, as they expect there will be less competition going forward.

Recently, we have become more cautious on Event Driven and Relative Value strategies. Even as credit spreads have widened somewhat recently, they are still tight relative to historic levels. Rising interest rates are likely to be a headwind for some strategies— with the yield on the 10-year now in a higher range—while still low from a historical perspective, the trend for short-term interest rates is clearly upward. In addition, there is a lack of opportunities for distressed strategies. For qualified investors seeking diversified return streams, trading strategies (especially trend-following strategies) are currently benefiting from greater and more diverse opportunities than seen in recent years and have the potential to provide competitive and less-correlated returns. There is also a level of asset class diversification to consider, as these managers invest across all parts of the investment spectrum: stocks, bonds, currencies and commodities.

We favor a strategic approach when allocating to Private Equity: We view these strategies as long-term potential portfolio return enhancers with unique access to specialized investments and strategies unavailable in traditional portfolio construction. We see opportunities in buyout and Growth Equity as the global economy continues to rebound. Mergers & Acquisitions activity continues to be robust. Up until very recently, exits activity remained strong; however, with a market correction underway, initial public offerings (IPOs) and special purpose acquisition company (SPAC) mergers could slow significantly. The strength of deal activities is observed across the board with the Technology sector continuing to dominate. Deal size has increased dramatically.

Private Credit strategies are benefiting from the concerns of higher interest rates, as many of these investments are more credit- than interest rate-sensitive. Also, many of these types of investments are floating rate, offering some buffer to higher rates compared to a traditional Fixed Income portfolio. These strategies may be of interest to qualified investors seeking potentially enhanced yield and may complement traditional Fixed Income holdings.

We favor a strategic approach when allocating to Private Real Estate: The Commercial Real Estate market continues to rebound, and returns in Q4 were stronger than Q3 in all sub-sectors except for office, according to the National Council of Real Estate Investment Fiduciaries (NCREIF). Industrial had a blowout year, gaining 43%, benefiting from the surge in logistical needs. Multifamily housing also did well, gaining just under 20% for the year. Hotels, office and retail posted positive returns for the year, but muted compared to other sectors as these areas will likely be the last to recover from the fallout of the coronavirus, according to NCREIF. While we still favor the Industrial sector, valuations have become rich.

The macro backdrop is supportive of the investment case for Core/Core-Plus Real Estate, which emphasizes quality investments in well-located and well-positioned assets in growing and liquid primary and secondary markets. While we do not necessarily expect returns over the next year to match the outperformance seen in 2021, we do believe that 2022 has the potential to be another strong year for Core/Core-plus Real Estate, and we maintain a positive view on the asset class longer term, given attractive supply/demand characteristics. A large increase in new supply would likely lead us to reevaluate, but various barriers to new construction (as well as the visibility afforded by permitting and construction timelines) significantly reduce the supply-side risks over the near term.

Commodities and the dollar: For investors, there is a growing list of reasons to shore up strategic exposure to commodity prices. Supply-side shortcomings related to coronavirus, bad weather and crop failures are short-term factors that may fade as tailwinds, but rising geopolitical risk and positive commodity supply/demand dynamics related to decarbonization efforts appear to have staying power. A weaker dollar, potentially driven by valuations, could eventually emerge as an additional catalyst. At the same time, investor flows are revisiting the diversification benefits of Commodities. From a business cycle timing perspective, Commodity allocations often exhibit relative outperformance versus stocks and bonds when the labor market is tight and inflation is bubbling over. Ultimately, global growth anchors demand, in our view, and is the most important factor to consider when allocating to Commodities and that outlook is positive for 2022 despite recent downward revisions to global growth forecasts.

Positioning within Commodities could be important to helping mitigate the risk of rising real interest rates. Rising real interest rates would have the biggest effect on Commodities like gold because the price of gold is largely determined by speculation relative to other more fundamental commodities. For this reason and others, we favor cyclical commodities (industrial commodities and energy, for example) over gold.

The U.S. dollar continues to benefit from relatively stronger economic growth and a Fed that has shifted its rhetoric to acknowledge higher inflation and a tight labor market, and that extremely accommodating monetary policy is coming to an end and higher interest rates are in the future. This has helped the dollar to remain strong, exploiting the relative interest rate advantage versus the developed world. However, relatively higher inflation expectations as compared to other developed countries could weigh on longer-term valuations.

Tangible assets: Over the long term, especially given the unprecedented fiscal stimulus and monetary reflation now in place, tangible assets—such as real estate, timber, and farm and ranch land—may benefit portfolios through increasing diversification, helping to position for higher inflation, generating cash flows and providing possible favorable social-impact opportunities.

MACRO STRATEGY

- For now, strong nominal growth is powering robust corporate earnings that will help serve to reinforce the business cycle expansion. Leading economic indicators point toward above trend real economic growth over the balance of the year. Economic reopening in parts of the world should also help support near-term growth. This is a positive backdrop for Equities.
- With the economy overheating and inflation far above target, the Fed is likely to have a difficult time reining in inflation without causing a recession. Elevated geopolitical risk adds to this risk. This is likely to keep markets volatile.

ECONOMIC FORECASTS (AS OF 2/25/2022)

	2021A	Q1 2022E	Q2 2022E	Q3 2022E	Q4 2022E	2022E
Real global GDP (% y/y annualized)	6.0	-	-	-	-	4.3
Real U.S. GDP (% q/q annualized)	5.7	1.0	5.0	3.0	2.0	3.6
CPI inflation (% y/y)	4.7	7.8	7.0	6.2	5.0	6.5
Core CPI inflation (% y/y)	3.6	6.3	5.5	5.0	4.3	5.3
Unemployment rate (%)	5.4	3.8	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.5
Fed funds rate, end period (%)	0.07	0.38	0.88	1.38	1.88	-

The forecasts in the table above are the baseline view from BofA Global Research. The Global Wealth & Investment Management (GWIM) Investment Strategy Committee (ISC) may make adjustments to this view over the course of the year and can express upside/downside to these forecasts. **Past performance is no guarantee of future results.** There can be no assurance that the forecasts will be achieved. Economic or financial forecasts are inherently limited and should not be relied on as indicators of future investment performance.

A = Actual. E/* = Estimate. Note: BofA Global Research 2022 end period S&P 500 estimate is 4600; end period 10-year Treasury estimate is 2.25%; 2022 average West Texas Intermediate Oil estimate is $82/barrel. Sources: BofA Global Research; GWIM ISC as of March 1, 2022.

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The table below provides a rough indication of where the S&P 500 Index's central tendency could be, given various scenarios for EPS in 2023 and price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio multiples. These scenarios are not official price targets and are not meant to signal levels where portfolio actions may always be needed. However, during times of market volatility, it's useful to keep this basic framework in mind when considering whether to incrementally add to or trim risk from portfolios while staying invested in one's strategic asset allocation framework.

S&P 500 SCENARIOS BASED ON FORWARD P/E AND 2023 EPS

Forward P/E (Next 12 months)

2023 EPS	Forward P/E (Next 12 months)				
	18.0x	19.0x	20.0x	21.0x	22.0x
$275	4,950	5,225	5,500	5,775	6,050
$265	4,770	5,035	5,300	5,565	5,830
$255	4,590	4,845	5,100	5,355	5,610
$245	4,410	4,655	4,900	5,145	5,390
$235	4,230	4,465	4,700	4,935	5,170
$225	4,050	4,275	4,500	4,725	4,950
$215	3,870	4,085	4,300	4,515	4,730

For illustrative purposes only. Forecasts are subject to change. Source: Chief Investment Office as of March 1, 2022.

CIO ASSET CLASS VIEWS

Asset Class	CIO View: Underweight		Neutral	Overweight		Comments
Global Equities				●		We retain our positive view on Equities based upon favorable relative valuations and improving global growth. Corporate profits remain in an uptrend as forward estimates have increased, policy remains supportive and global growth continues to accelerate. We remain overweight the U.S., neutral International Developed and neutral EM.
U.S. Large-cap Growth			●			Growth should continue to benefit from accelerated secular trends, but Value, which has higher exposure to cyclical sectors, should benefit from an improved pace of earnings growth and economic normalization. We believe portfolios should incorporate both Growth and Value factors. At the sector level, we continue to favor Technology for long-term secular growth exposure but are also constructive near term on cyclical sectors like Industrials, Financials, Energy and Materials.
U.S. Large-cap Value				●		
U.S. Small-cap Growth				●		Small-caps have relatively attractive valuations and could benefit from further cyclical rotation.
U.S. Small-cap Value				●		
International Developed			●			Global economic recovery is expected to continue, which should benefit more cyclically oriented International Developed markets. A substantial monetary and fiscal policy drive in Europe and Japan paired with relatively attractive valuations is a support for International Equities, though underlying rates of nominal growth are expected to trail behind U.S. levels.
Emerging Markets			●			We are neutral EM Equities overall with cyclical regions relatively well positioned for normalization in global activity and Asian markets geared to long-term growth in the digital economy. Key risks stem from escalation of conflict in central and Eastern Europe, ongoing fallout from the pandemic, rising U.S. interest rates and industry-specific regulation in China.
International						
North America				●		The U.S. remains our preferred region on corporate earnings and balance sheet strength, with a domestic demand-driven recovery likely to remain resilient as the economy continues to reopen.
Eurozone			●			Exposure to cyclical sectors should benefit from normalization of economic activity. Downside risk stems from higher oil and gas prices and elevated geopolitical uncertainty in Eastern Europe.
U.K.			●			Post-Brexit withdrawal from the EU single market remains a negative for medium-term growth. Large weighting in cyclical sectors should benefit from normalization of economic activity. Ongoing coronavirus concerns could present a potential headwind.
Japan			●			Large fiscal and monetary stimulus are key sources of support for growth in the domestic economy, though market-based inflation expectations remain among the lowest for the major developed economies. We expect long-term tailwinds from exposure to automation machinery and equipment including from robotics, while valuations remain attractive.
Pac Rim*			●			Large weighting in financials and other cyclical sectors should benefit from normalization of economic activity. China exposure and international shifts on foreign policy toward Hong Kong remain an ongoing source of uncertainty for the region.

* Pacific Rim refers to the geographic area surrounding the Pacific Ocean. The Pacific Rim covers the western shores of North America and South America, and the shores of Australia, eastern Asia and the islands of the Pacific.

CIO ASSET CLASS VIEWS (CONTINUED)

Asset Class	CIO View					Comments
	Underweight		Neutral		Overweight	
Global Fixed Income		●				Bonds diversify multi-asset class portfolios by providing income and relative stability. Below-benchmark duration is preferred, as fiscal and monetary policy supports higher inflation, stronger nominal growth and higher long-term rates over the medium term.
U.S. Governments		●				Yields are very expensive relative to inflation. Some allocation to Treasurys for liquidity and principal preservation is still advised, as Treasurys continue to provide one of the best short-term diversification benefits to Equities among Fixed Income assets. Interest rate volatility has increased and may remain high.
U.S. Mortgages		●				Although the Fed has successfully started to tighten monetary policy without markets overreacting, any miscommunication or persistent inflation leading to increased MBS balance sheet reduction remains a key risk. Furthermore, MBS purchases from banks may slow as lending increases, presenting a headwind. Finally, recent geopolitical challenges can increase interest rate volatility, a negative driver of MBS performance. In the short term, we expect MBS to underperform Treasurys and recommend conservative positioning in short-duration assets.
U.S. Corporates				●		Credit spreads have continued to widen amid interest rate volatility and weaker technical dynamics. With IG at +120 bps, the index is well off the last 12 months lows in spread, and also at a level which we continue to believe is consistent with a technical selloff and not indicative of fundamental deterioration. That said, markets could remain choppy over the near term. With the Fed's commitment to markets, stable fundamentals, and yields well above Treasurys, credit should provide modest positive excess return over the medium term. Credit curves have steepened, which could attract incremental buyers once uncertainty regarding the path of long end rates has abated.
International Fixed Income	●					Compressed yields and risk premiums around the globe compared to the U.S., combined with potentially higher volatility in non-U.S. markets, present unfavorable risk/reward conditions for non-U.S. Fixed Income, in our view, justifying an underweight position.
High Yield		●				Valuations present mediocre absolute long-term returns after estimating credit losses. Near-term performance may be reasonable—given where the economy is in the business cycle – however we don't view the risk/reward favorably. Any additions to HY risk need to have a long time frame. Within HY, we prefer more floating-rate loan exposure versus HY unsecured.
U.S. High Yield Tax Exempt		●				HY muni credit spreads have narrowed and remain supported for now by improving credit conditions, strong technicals and investors' search for yield.
U.S. Investment-grade Tax Exempt			●			Muni fundamentals are benefiting from growing tax collections, generous fiscal stimulus, and higher pension funding levels. However, muni valuations have cheapened and credit spreads have widened because of weaker technicals. Demand has slackened due to rising yields and the lower likelihood of tax rate increases, while tax-exempt supply has grown. We still believe munis provide value over Treasurys over the medium term for tax-sensitive investors, particular well-researched, lower-quality credits.
Alternative Investments*						Given the differences in liquidity characteristics between AI and traditional investments, the CIO asset class views on AI portfolio positioning continue to be neutral-rated versus our strategic allocations. These types of investments, in our opinion, should not be viewed at the asset class level on a tactical basis, but rather the tactical positioning should be expressed at the sub-asset class level. We will continue to provide strategy-level guidance for qualified AI investors. We believe allocations to AI can introduce differentiated returns that can help complement existing traditional holdings by potentially enhancing returns, helping to reduce risk and capitalizing on opportunities not available through traditional investments
Hedge Funds						The shift in Fed policy has led to greater volatility in the Equity and rate markets. An allocation to Hedge Funds has the potential to lower the impact of the volatility and possibly take advantage of the dislocation and sector rotation. For a Hedge Fund allocation at the strategy level, we continue to recommend incremental overweight to equity long/short strategies as part of a diversified portfolio of Hedge Fund strategies. Additionally, we continue to see opportunities in the macro space given the rise in geopolitical risk, the potential for uneven economic growth, interest rate differentials and inflation expectations between countries and regions and its impact on rates, commodities and foreign currencies.
Private Equity						We see opportunities across a number of different PE strategies. With the strong GDP numbers, we believe that buyout and Venture/Growth Equity managers will benefit from the robust economic activity. Private Credit strategies will likely outperform a traditional Fixed Income portfolio as interest rates rise as many of these investments are more credit- than interest rate-sensitive, generally have a shorter duration and tend to be floating-rate securities.
Real Assets						Demand for many Commodities remains strong and we are seeing significant price appreciation across a wide swath of sectors. Problems and dislocations in global logistics are causing bottlenecks and aggravating the supply/demand imbalance, adding upward pressure on prices. Our outlook remains positive over the short and medium terms. An allocation to Tangible Assets/Commodities could be a good buffer to rising inflation.

Tactical qualitative investment strategy weightings are relative in nature versus the strategic weightings for a fully diversified portfolio. Weightings are based on the relative attractiveness of each asset class. Tactical strategy weightings are for a 12- to 36-month time horizon. CIO asset class views are relative to the CIO Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA) of a multi-asset portfolio. Because economic and market conditions change, recommended allocations may vary in the future. Asset allocation cannot eliminate the risk of fluctuating prices and uncertain returns. All sector and asset allocation recommendations must be considered in the context of an individual investor's goals, time horizon, liquidity needs and risk tolerance. Not all recommendations will be in the best interest of all investors. **Alternative investments such as derivatives, hedge funds, private equity funds and funds of funds can result in higher return potential, but also higher loss potential. Changes in economic conditions or other circumstances may adversely affect your investments. Before you invest in alternative investments, you should consider your overall financial situation, how much money you have to invest, your need for liquidity and your tolerance for risk.** * Many products that pursue Alternative Investment strategies, specifically Private Equity and Hedge Funds, are available only to qualified investors. Source: Global Wealth & Investment Management Investment Strategy Committee as of March 1, 2022.

CIO EQUITY SECTOR VIEWS

The CIO Equity sector view is developed by applying a multi-input process combining the CIO's factor views and fundamental bottom-up industry outlook with top-down macro-economic changes and trends. The factor approach emphasizes valuation and momentum as key inputs, with a fundamental overlay taking into consideration forward-looking views of growth, profits, policy, events and sentiment as well as inclusion of certain investment themes. BofA Global Research's sector strategy views are also captured as an input into the CIO process. Our sector views are developed with a 12- to 18-month outlook but are revisited monthly by the GWIM Investment Strategy Committee.

	CIO View					
Sector	**Underweight**		**Neutral**	**Overweight**		**Comments**
Energy	○	○	○	●	○	The potential for global disruptions, strong global energy demand, tight inventories, limited spare capacity and the inflationary environment are supportive for energy stocks. Higher energy prices combined with substantial cost-cutting initiatives over recent years built significant operating leverage into energy companies. Further, earnings and free cash flow outlooks remain solid for upstream energy companies on higher realized oil and natural gas prices and continued capital discipline. Additional cyclical and value rotations could improve flows, positioning and sentiment, and potentially pull some investors back into the sector. Lower CapEx budgets and fewer long cycle investments in the Energy sector over recent years could support higher oil prices in the near- and intermediate-term. Positive view on energy for its cyclical reflation trade, but, longer-term the secular headwinds still confront the sector. Headwinds include the transition to clean energy, lower renewable energy costs and increasing Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) focus by investors. Continue to emphasize companies that are low-cost producers with high free cash flows, balance sheet strength and low break-evens. Even given year-to-date gains, Energy still provides attractive valuations with positive momentum.
Financials	○	○	○	●	○	Banks resumed stock buybacks and dividend increases based on excess capital instead of earnings power. In addition, loan loss reserve release should moderate after significant reserve releases last year given a better macro backdrop and loan portfolio performance, which could be a modest tailwind to earnings and help enhance capital return. Given structural headwinds in Insurance, we prefer market exchanges that evolved into fee-based data and analytics providers. We also favor alternative asset managers, like Private Equity, which consistently draw fund inflows, typically benefit from low interest rates and maintain pricing power in management fees. U.S. banks remain well capitalized and, in our view, are likely to return more capital to shareholders in coming quarters in buybacks and dividends, and provide some attractive Price/Book valuations.
Materials	○	○	○	●	○	Remain constructive on the Materials sector given the inflationary backdrop, low inventories, strong demand trends and tight commodity markets. Supply constraints are helping to keep prices elevated. Low inventory levels relative to consumption are helping companies to pass through cost inflation and help protect margins, and could extend the cycle, as inventories need to be rebuilt. There is high potential operating leverage embedded in the sector, driven by lower-cost profiles when compared to prior cycles, which could help enhance profitability if volume growth trends persist. Packaging and specialty chemicals are benefiting from healthy U.S. consumer demand, while the greatest improvement in marginal demand is occurring in cyclical commodities exposed to automotive, construction and aerospace end markets, which have yet to fully recover. Rising input and labor costs are building in specific areas of the sector and could compress margins in the future but supply cannot keep up with strong demand currently and supports higher prices in many cases. Valuation and momentum are both neutral after recent consolidations.
Industrials	○	○	○	●	○	The economic reopening and recovery are driving better fundamentals despite supply chain issues in cyclical end markets, including transportation, automotive, power, machinery and manufacturing, although aerospace is still relatively weaker given international flights are still below pre-coronavirus levels. Higher volumes amidst somewhat constrained supply are driving sequential earnings and prices higher. Broad-based improvements in orders and increasing backlogs signal healthy activity levels and volume trends could continue over the near-to-medium term. Further, potential improvements in the global CapEx cycle could support the transportation, machinery, and freight and logistics industries longer-term. Cyclical rotations and fund flows could also continue to support the Industrial stocks. Valuation is elevated and momentum is neutral.
Information Technology	○	○	○	●	○	The pandemic accelerated the digital transitions for many industries and supports the secular growth trends for cloud computing, machine learning and artificial intelligence, data centers, software, cybersecurity and semiconductors. We are in the early innings for machine learning and Artificial Intelligence, and the pandemic increased the adoption of digital payments by older generations, who are now frequent users. This accelerated the digital payments industry by several years without cannibalizing future sales. Traditional hardware exposure is still increasingly commoditized. Valuation is extended, and a move higher in interest rates could pressure multiples for high-growth and high-valuation tech stocks; therefore, look for GARP (growth at a reasonable price) in software and cyclical exposure in semiconductors. Free cash flow, balance sheet strength, dividend growth and earnings growth remain strong fundamental drivers for the sector. Technology is deflationary by nature, therefore long term investors should look to add to transformational and industry leading businesses on weakness from the Fed's pivot and the re-rating of Technology stocks. Avoid companies that trade at very high valuations and without profits. Elevated valuations and declining momentum.

Sector	CIO View: Underweight		Neutral		Overweight	Comments
Real Estate			●			The outlook for Real Estate improved over recent quarters, driven by the gradual re-opening of the economy, but the sector maintains a mixed outlook among its sub-sectors. Consumer and corporate changes like remote work, eCommerce, less business travel, etc., are potential longer-term headwinds for CRE companies (e.g., office), leisure (e.g., hotels), mall operators and owners. However, Real Estate's positive correlation with inflation, relative underweight positioning and opportunity to provide both a potential inflation hedge and reopening exposure makes the sector more attractive. Continue to emphasize longer-term secular trends in data centers, communication infrastructure and industrial real estate with a focus on eCommerce distribution facilities. Consider being selective in the sector with mixed outlooks for different sub-sectors of the Real Estate industry. Neutral valuation and stalling momentum.
Healthcare			●			Underperformance of the high-growth and high-valuation biotech and healthcare tech companies is overshadowing some of the opportunities presenting themselves in large pharmaceuticals (pharma) and life science equipment, and is creating some headwinds for the healthcare sector during the current economic recovery. Over the long term, we still expect rising spending on global healthcare—focused primarily on diagnostics, healthcare consumables, and drug development equipment/tools and differentiated medical devices. Emergency department visits and inpatient hospital admissions remain areas to watch and could have a notable effect on capital equipment spending and labor pressures. Drug pricing pressures appear to be fading in the near term with the assumption that pricing reforms are likely to be passed and viewed by investors as a clearing event. Large pharmaceutical companies are becoming more attractive as they trade at a large discount to healthcare sector peers and the broader market. Further, significant cash on strong balance sheets, combined with more aggressive business development efforts and a greater focus on explaining long-term growth drivers make large pharma more attractive over the intermediate term. Over a longer duration, drug pricing headwinds may return as demographic shifts put more pressure on government payors and as value-based care initiatives pick up momentum. Emphasize exposure to long-term, positive trends in animal health, cost-savings medical technology and telemedicine, tools, diagnostics and select biotech, as well as more intermediate opportunities in large-cap pharma. Valuation is a bit extended in certain subsectors with lower momentum.
Consumer Discretionary			●			Consumer Discretionary's relative performance peaked and made a turn lower, and higher costs could potentially pressure margins and earnings going forward. The consumer reopening cadence is entering the "mobility phase," as consumers are out of the house and engaging in pre-pandemic activities and events. The ongoing shift to omnichannel retailing should continue to alter consumer behaviors due to the pandemic. Favor strong global consumer brands with solid balance sheets and a history of dividend growth over weaker brick-and-mortar retailers that could face declining store traffic trends. Cyclical tailwinds from both housing and autos could provide additional potential upside opportunities to the growth outlook. The pent-up demand for reopening activities and services could be an additional catalyst for the consumer. Despite a solid outlook for the consumer, rising input costs, higher freight costs, increased labor costs and supply chain disruptions could provide potential headwinds. Valuation is elevated, and momentum is stalling.
Communication Services		●				Traditional media continues to see pressure from cord-cutting, a negative trend for traditional cable and media companies, but the positive trends for internet usage, video streaming and gaming can provide growth in the sector. However, some of this growth was pulled forward last year due to the pandemic and work-from-home trends. Advertising could see a rebound to some degree, but regulatory uncertainties and concerns could be a near-term overhang for the sector. News headlines could increase scrutiny on some internet- and social media-focused companies. Long duration stocks without profits could see additional valuation re-ratings in 2022. Valuation is neutral and momentum has deteriorated.
Consumer Staples	●					Consumer Staples face tougher revenue and earnings comps as we lap the pandemic-driven stay-at-home benefits. Ongoing risks of a rotation out of defensive positioning and into risk-on positioning with greater visibility and availability of vaccines and the anticipation of a return to reopening activities. The potential for increases in labor, input, freight and packaging costs could further pressure year-over-year profitability as companies potentially increase promotional activity in an attempt to retain pandemic-effected consumers. Historically, Consumer Staples performance is a function of relative earnings growth and the sector could face decelerating earnings growth early in 2022, especially compared to cyclical areas that are expected to see improving earnings growth. Neutral valuation and better momentum recently.
Utilities	●					Expect consistent earnings results however, higher interest rates could potentially weigh on this interest rate sensitive sector and be a potential headwind as a bond proxy sector. Emphasize Utilities with growing renewable power generation from wind and solar and de-emphasize ones that rely strictly on coal-power generation. Earnings and dividend growth opportunities remain for Utilities that can capitalize on the transition to greater renewable power generation and positive demographic trends. Neutral valuation and improving momentum recently.

Source: Chief Investment Office as of March 1, 2022. BofA Global Research is research produced by BofA Securities, Inc. ("BofAS") and/or one or more of its affiliates. BofAS is a registered broker-dealer, Member SIPC, and wholly owned subsidiary of Bank of America Corporation. All sector and asset allocation recommendations must be considered in the context of an individual investor's goals, time horizon, liquidity needs and risk tolerance. Not all recommendations will be in the best interest of all investors.

CIO THEMATIC INVESTING

Taking the long view, the following themes and subthemes are considered among the most powerful structural forces in the world. They are macro in nature but carry significant risks and reward for companies, both large and small. Although constructed with a global lens, in today's tightly woven world, what transpires or disrupts in Asia has a tendency to emerge in Europe or North America, and vice versa. These themes are transformational and carry long-term implications for economic growth, the cost of capital and global earnings. Gaining exposure to these themes is a key ingredient to investing.

Theme	Comments
Big Data	The massive growth in unstructured data being created by connected machines, devices and systems is fueling data processing and **Data Analytics**. Complementing **Artificial Intelligence** technologies are replete with applications for big data. The size of the digital world and **Internet of Things (IoT)** is accelerating the migration of data and applications to a **Cloud Computing** environment. **Data Centers** and cloud-based Storage will likely capture incremental data created.
Demographics	Several demographic transitions serve as important arbiters of future growth. With elongated life expectancies globally, **longevity** for older populations will likely mean a renewed focus on healthcare, aged-care, financials, and consumer products and services for longer, serving as a multitrillion-dollar potential opportunity. Both the **Millennials** (born 1981-1996) and **Gen Z** (born 1997-2012) could have greater influence over the next decade on consumer spending and preferences. While we are neutral the EM asset class on a tactical basis, we believe the **EM Consumer** represents a powerful middle-class consuming cohort over the longer term. Uplifting the **Bottom Billions**, or poorest socioeconomic group with growing access to electricity, internet and sanitation can also offer a demographic dividend for multinational companies.
Climate Change	With emphasis from the new administration, a much greater focus is on health, renewable energy, clean water and sanitation, and other industries that tend to support a more sustainable future. Companies that embrace more climate-friendly business models and operations, as well as consumer products and services, are likely to enjoy sustained growth opportunities over the long term. Key investment opportunities: Renewable Energy (**Solar**, **Wind** and **Hydrogen**), **Energy-Efficiency** such as building systems, **Water/Waste Management**, and **Energy Storage** & **Distribution**.
Future Mobility	The future of mobility hinges on **Next-Gen Infrastructure**. This includes the telecom industry's deployment of the 5G network, which is expected to prove to be the greatest accelerant and enabler to **Smart Cities** (smart buildings, safety and security), **Autonomous Vehicles** and unmanned Drones. The growing **Electric Vehicle** market will likely demand installation of charging equipment and fuel peripheral industries such as battery material demand.
Security	Expanding the **IoT** means security for a growing ecosystem of devices and end points. With the increase in time spent on online platforms, (as well as adoption of online **Payments/FinTech**), **Data Privacy/Surveillance** and governance is expected to play a larger role in a post-pandemic world, as will bolstering **Cybersecurity** defenses and budgets. With the commercialization of space, cybersecurity will likely extend to Space-based assets (think satellites, data links, weather monitoring and GPS).
Post-coronavirus World	In the post-pandemic economic recovery, the factory of the future tends to be based closer to home and driven by Robotics (**Industrial/Service Automation**) not humans, hastening reshoring by creating **Dual/Local Supply Chains**, notably in high-end activities and manufacturing. The post-pandemic world will likely demand a new wave of **Infrastructure** investments, both mineral and material-intensive for cleaner and greener infrastructure. The fusion of Healthcare and Technology through **HealthTech** capabilities, should result in greater investments in telemedicine, disease surveillance and patient monitoring. Just as healthcare has gone digital, technology could increasingly dictate **e-Everything**, as we've seen **eCommerce**, eSports and eLearning gain traction. An increased focus on **ESG** factors and metrics promotes the shift toward stakeholder capitalism.

Source: Chief Investment Office as of March 1, 2022.

Index Definitions

Securities indexes assume reinvestment of all distributions and interest payments. Indexes are unmanaged and do not take into account fees or expenses. It is not possible to invest directly in an index. Indexes are all based in U.S. dollars.

S&P 500 Index includes a representative sample of 500 leading companies in leading industries of the U.S. economy. Although the index focuses on the large-cap segment of the market, with approximately 75% coverage of U.S. equities, it is also an ideal proxy for the total market.

Chicago Board Options Exchange (CBOE) Volatility Index (VIX) is a real-time market index that represents the market's expectation of 30-day forward-looking volatility.

Bloomberg US Mortgage Backed Securities Index tracks fixed-rate agency mortgage backed pass-through securities guaranteed by Ginnie Mae (GNMA), Fannie Mae (FNMA), and Freddie Mac (FHLMC).

Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a basket of consumer goods and services, such as transportation, food, and medical care.

Producer Price Index (PPI) program measures the average change over time in the selling prices received by domestic producers for their output.

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is a measure of the prevailing direction of economic trends in manufacturing.

Important Disclosures

Investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal. Past performance is no guarantee of future results.

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The Global Wealth & Investment Management Investment Strategy Committee (GWIM ISC) is responsible for developing and coordinating recommendations for short-term and long-term investment strategy and market views encompassing markets, economic indicators, asset classes and other market-related projections affecting GWIM.

All recommendations must be considered in the context of an individual investor's goals, time horizon, liquidity needs and risk tolerance. Not all recommendations will be in the best interest of all investors.

Asset allocation, diversification and rebalancing do not ensure a profit or protect against loss in declining markets.

Dividend payments are not guaranteed, and are paid only when declared by an issuer's board of directors. The amount of a dividend payment, if any, can vary over time.

Investments have varying degrees of risk. Some of the risks involved with equity securities include the possibility that the value of the stocks may fluctuate in response to events specific to the companies or markets, as well as economic, political or social events in the U.S. or abroad. Small cap and mid cap companies pose special risks, including possible illiquidity and greater price volatility than funds consisting of larger, more established companies. Investing in fixed-income securities may involve certain risks, including the credit quality of individual issuers, possible prepayments, market or economic developments and yields and share price fluctuations due to changes in interest rates. Bonds are subject to interest rate, inflation and credit risks. Municipal securities can be significantly affected by political changes as well as uncertainties in the municipal market related to taxation, legislative changes, or the rights of municipal security holders. Income from investing in municipal bonds is generally exempt from federal and state taxes for residents of the issuing state. While the interest income is tax-exempt, any capital gains distributed are taxable to the investor. Income for some investors may be subject to the Federal Alternative Minimum Tax. Investments in high-yield bonds (sometimes referred to as "junk bonds") offer the potential for high current income and attractive total return, but involves certain risks. Changes in economic conditions or other circumstances may adversely affect a junk bond issuer's ability to make principal and interest payments. Treasury bills are less volatile than longer-term fixed income securities and are guaranteed as to timely payment of principal and interest by the U.S. government. Mortgage-backed securities are subject to credit risk and the risk that the mortgages will be prepaid, so that portfolio management may be faced with replenishing the portfolio in a possibly disadvantageous interest rate environment. Investments in foreign securities (including ADRs) involve special risks, including foreign currency risk and the possibility of substantial volatility due to adverse political, economic or other developments. These risks are magnified for investments made in emerging markets. Investments in a certain industry or sector may pose additional risk due to lack of diversification and sector concentration. Investments in real estate securities can be subject to fluctuations in the value of the underlying properties, the effect of economic conditions on real estate values, changes in interest rates, and risk related to renting properties, such as rental defaults. There are special risks associated with an investment in commodities, including market price fluctuations, regulatory changes, interest rate changes, credit risk, economic changes and the impact of adverse political or financial factors.

Alternative investments are speculative and involve a high degree of risk.

Alternative investments are intended for qualified investors only. Alternative Investments such as derivatives, hedge funds, private equity funds, and funds of funds can result in higher return potential but also higher loss potential. Changes in economic conditions or other circumstances may adversely affect your investments. Before you invest in alternative investments, you should consider your overall financial situation, how much money you have to invest, your need for liquidity, and your tolerance for risk.

Nonfinancial assets, such as closely-held businesses, real estate, fine art, oil, gas and mineral properties, and timber, farm and ranch land, are complex in nature and involve risks including total loss of value. Special risk considerations include natural events (for example, earthquakes or fires), complex tax considerations, and lack of liquidity. Nonfinancial assets are not in the best interest of all investors. Always consult with your independent attorney, tax advisor, investment manager, and insurance agent for final recommendations and before changing or implementing any financial, tax, or estate planning strategy.

Special Purpose Acquisition Companies (SPACs) IPOs differ significantly from traditional equity IPOs, with unique conflicts of interest and incentives for SPAC managers, underwriters and financial advisors. Firms and their customers who invest in SPACs should be aware of these differences and all other risks related to the offering before participating in a SPAC IPO. There is no guarantee that investments applying Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategies will be successful, there are many factors to take into consideration when choosing an investment portfolio and ESG data is only one component to potentially consider.

Sustainable and Impact Investing and/or Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) managers may take into consideration factors beyond traditional financial information to select securities, which could result in relative investment performance deviating from other strategies or broad market benchmarks, depending on whether such sectors or investments are in or out of favor in the market. Further, ESG strategies may rely on certain values based criteria to eliminate exposures found in similar strategies or broad market benchmarks, which could also result in relative investment performance deviating.