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RMB starts catching up to the USD

Talking Points

- The global financial markets have renewed their risk appetite and developed a tentative pattern of hunting for yield.
- The contagion from Brexit appears to be fairly contained for now and this has seen the Chinese authorities allow the RMB index to start creeping up.
- It appears that the Chinese authorities are comfortable with reversing the gap that formed between the RMB index and the DXY over June.
- We maintain our long USD positions, against THB and TWD as well as relative trade like short MYR/INR. We initiated long CNH/SGD and exited long USD/KRW.

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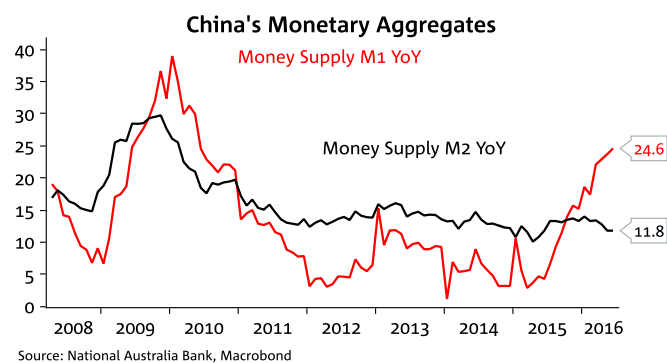
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Trade recommendations

Entry Date	Currency pair	Recommendation	Opening level	Target	Stop
26 May	USD/TWD 6M NDF	Long	32.58 (spot ref 32.56)	33.60 (spot)	31.70 (spot)
26 May	USD/THB 6M FWD	Long	35.81 (spot ref 35.62)	37.50 (spot)	34.80 (spot)
26 May	MYR/INR 6M NDF	Short	16.88 (spot ref 16.50)	15.20 (spot)	17.20 (spot)
25 Jul	CNH/SGD 1M FWD	Long	0.2031 (spot ref. 0.2033)	0.2094 (spot ref.)	0.2000 (spot ref.)

Chart of the month



Policy Rates

	Q1 2016	Q2 2016	Q3 2016	Q4 2016	Q1 2017	Q2 2017	Q3 2017	Q4 2017
Korea	1.50	1.25	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Thailand	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.75
Malaysia	3.25	3.25	3.00	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	3.00
India	6.75	6.50	6.50	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.50	6.75
Indonesia	6.75	6.50	6.50	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25
China	4.35	4.35	4.35	4.35	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10

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USD bears in action, USD bulls inaction

- The global financial markets have renewed their risk appetite and developed a tentative pattern of hunting for yield.
- After hitting a post-Brexit bottom before the end of June, the MSCI Asia ex-Japan index rebounded strongly, selected bond curves in Asia bull flattened and the ADXY index rose over 1%.
- USD weakness extended post FOMC, even though a stand pat stance was widely expected and the statement reflected a slightly more favourable environment for hiking rates.
- We maintain our long USD positions, against THB and TWD, as well as relative trade like short MYR/INR. We initiated long CNH/SGD and exited long USD/KRW.

The “tsunami warning” has been lowered and the Brexit-triggered shockwaves to financial markets was surprisingly shortlived. Investors staged revival in global risk appetite, followed by a global hunt for yield while at the same time staying mindful of the potentially long drawn two-year “separation” process between the UK and European Union. The MSCI Asia ex-Japan index rebounded strongly since bottoming at the end of June, selected bond curves in Asia bull flattened and the ADXY index rose more than 1% over that period.

FOMC drives USD bulls deeper in the hibernation cave

USD weakness extended post FOMC, even though a stand pat stance was widely expected and the statement reflected a slightly more favourable environment for hiking rates. The kneejerk reactions saw the KRW at the top of the leaderboard with 0.8% gains vs the USD. Interestingly, China did not take full opportunity to push the RMBX higher, which will then require a much lower USD/CNY fix. Instead, the PBoC lowered the RMBX by 0.03% compared to the DXY's -0.43%. While the gap between DXY and RMBX closes further on the downside, it was mainly driven by the fall in DXY. While the cautious stance is understandable, the underlying resistance toward allowing significant CNY appreciation signals a growth supportive policy preference.

Effectiveness of monetary loosening in question

After Korea's Finance Ministry detailed its KRW11tn additional budget, the Bank of Korea found it opportune to cast some doubt over the effectiveness of more monetary loosening and instead suggested structural reforms. The BoK cautioned about the possibility of an increase in financial imbalance if monetary easing is excessive. The structural problems of low growth and inflation will need structural reforms to play a bigger role.

Elsewhere, the call for a proactive fiscal policy has gotten louder in China. The Chinese authorities have begun to manage expectations of a bigger budget deficit of up to 5% from the current target of 3%, as the effectiveness of future policy easing may be limited.

Accordingly, our economics team has reviewed Asia's policy rate path and direction and made some adjustments. We think policy differentiation will not be confined to Asia and the US, but also within Asian economies, to a lesser extent. With our existing Fed view of one hike by the end of this year and two from the second half of next year, we now expect one more cut in the benchmark rate in Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Korea and China.

Event risks ahead – tread with care

As markets enter the European summer, investors are expected to tread cautiously in light of risk events from central banks, political tensions, terrorist threats as well as US elections developments. We stay prudently long USD against TWD and THB. We also hold on to a short MYR/INR and recently initiated long CNH/SGD position. The long CNH/SGD position is premised on the Chinese authorities allowing some normalisation and a narrowing of the gap between USD index and the RMBX, via a stronger CNY appreciation versus the non-USD currencies within the index. The SGD came across as a better candidate in light of its cheap funding cost, strength within its S\$NEER basket and also that it is not a constituent of the DXY. We exited long USD/KRW position as the stop was triggered post-FOMC, but look to reinstate the trade at some point.

Chart 1: Monetary stimulus needs more time

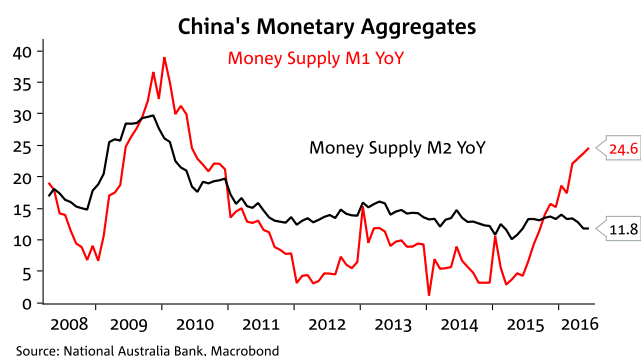
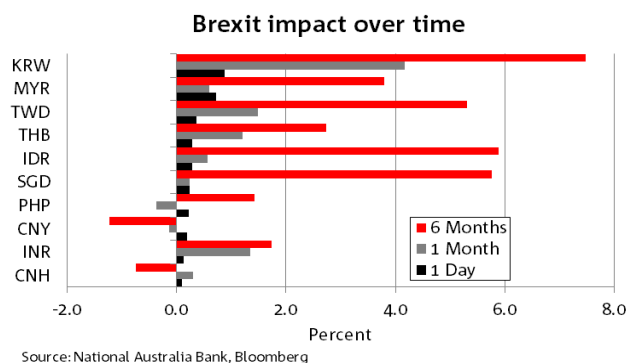


Chart 2: FX reactions to “Brexit” vote and July FOMC



China Spotlight:

Predictably unpredictable

- Q2 GDP steadied at 6.7% yoy, reflecting the positive effects of the government's targeted stimulus.
- With some returning calm after Brexit event, the wide gap between the USD index and the RMB index looks set to normalise.
- This sets the stage for our Long CNH/SGD trade recommendation, while maintaining our core view that USD/CNY will head higher toward 6.80 by end 2016.

China's macro growth performance suggests a softlanding situation and that the targeted fiscal stimulus have shown some results. Growth in industry and construction edged up from 5.8% y/y in Q1 to 6.1%. Surging stimulus-linked investment by state firms appears to have compensated for the private sector's investment inertia.

China's services sector growth remained relatively healthy, easing only slightly, from 7.6% y/y to 7.5%. It seems likely that services output was supported by the acceleration in property sales (which lifts real estate output) that followed cuts to mortgage rates and relaxation of controls on purchases. By contrast, a year after the peak of the equity bubble, y/y growth in financial sector output will have slowed.

Capital outflows contained despite stealth depreciation

Concerns over capital outflows were further allayed in June, after the FX reserves and trade data indicated there could be some deliberate USD purchases by the Chinese authorities. The intention could possibly be to ride on the rising USD index in June to push the RMB index lower. The gap between the RMBX and the USD index has started to widen since early June and we do not think this is sustainable as it might engender some complaints as the RMB officially attains SDR status in October. Closing the gap though would entail the RMBX rising significantly and should require that the RMB appreciate against the smaller components of the CFETS basket. Beyond the majors like the EUR and the JPY, we think that the SGD is well positioned to be the main candidate for losing against the CNY. The CNY/SGD has fallen 8.3% from the since Nov 2015 until Jul 15 but has since risen 1.0%. Accordingly, we recommend long CNH/SGD

1M forward to reflect a potential narrowing of the gap between RMBX and DXY index.

Wider fiscal deficit increasingly conceivable

The calls for more proactive fiscal policy are getting louder. The PBoC went as far as saying that China could handle a deficit of 3 to 5 percent and recommended trimming corporate tax burdens, issuing more government debt and increasing the fiscal deficit to make monetary policy more effective. An increase in the fiscal deficit is needed along with better policy coordination as China appeared to be falling into a liquidity trap where money-pumping failed to spur corporate investment. China targeted a fiscal deficit of 3 percent this year, or 2.18 trillion yuan (HK\$2.62 trillion).

Bonding time ahead

Beijing has started to move ahead with initiatives for an SDR capital market. The plan will entail a platform for investments into bonds issued in China with FX exposures. Somewhat related, the World Bank is planning to sell bonds in China denominated in SDRs. The offering would be in China's interbank note market and may take place in a month.

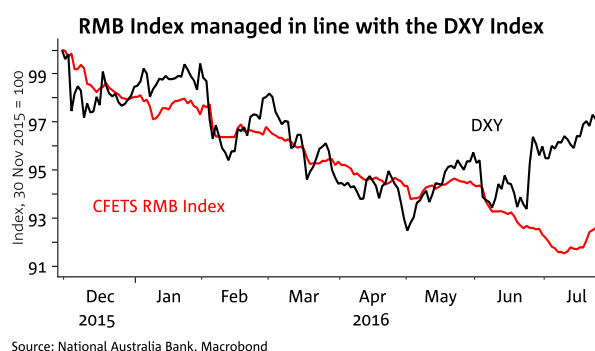
In the meantime, appetite for municipal bonds have increased visibly, reflected by narrower premium required over sovereign bonds, as well as a surge in trading volume to an unprecedented 227 billion yuan (\$34 billion) in June. Comparatively, the notes are increasingly perceived as almost as safe as sovereign bonds, with no failures reported so far, while the number of corporate defaults has surged to all-time high this year. The increased popularity of the municipal debt comes at an opportune time for China's regional authorities, which are ramping up sales as they refinance existing borrowings and boost spending to help the economy. Local governments are scheduled to issue about 6.2 trillion yuan of securities this year, compared with 3.8 trillion yuan in 2015.

Elsewhere, the sales of dollar bonds by some of China's biggest state-run firms rose to a record \$18.7 billion in the April-June period, about 80 percent higher than the average of the previous four quarters. In comparison, overall issuance by Chinese companies shrank 11 percent as a weakening yuan drove up the cost of servicing overseas debt. This came on the heel of rules relaxation as NDRC allowed 21 companies including some banks to sell FX debt without having to seek approval.

Chart 1: Financial sector continues to decline in 2Q



Chart 2: RMB Index diverges from DXY during risk off



Korea Spotlight: Third time's a charm?

- Korean financial markets have been charmed by the latest fiscal stimulus plan. This is the third supplementary budget since President Park took office, totalling KRW11tn.
- As expected, the BoK held its key policy rate unchanged at 1.25% in July, but maintained a dovish stance in light of Brexit.
- USD/KRW stopped short of breaking below 1130 key support. KRW strength looks overdone as exports continue to disappoint.

Q2 GDP growth improved sequentially, rising 0.7% qoq seasonally adjusted, from 0.5% in Q1. The yoy growth also surprised on the upside with 3.2% rise vs 2.8% in Q1. Private-sector consumption rose 0.9% compared with a contraction in the previous three months. Construction investment expanded 2.9%. Government spending expanded 0.2%. Facilities investment rose 2.9% after a 7.4% dip in the previous quarter.

Of the 0.7% growth from the first quarter, private consumption and construction investment contributed the most, adding 0.4% point, respectively. Facilities investments added 0.2% point, while net exports stripped 0.3% point, the statement shows.

Let's get fiscal

Korea's financial markets have been responding positively to the extra stimulus announcement since Brexit. Portfolio flows have returned along with the recovery in global risk appetite for EM equities. The Brexit event and also the downward revision in Australia's sovereign ratings outlook have also prompted the search for yield and a shift into Asian debt. Korean bond yields fell visibly lower with June's surprise rate cut adding another motivation for going long bonds. All these overshadowed the scope that the KRW11tn supplementary budget will add a mere 0.2-0.3% points to overall growth. Recently, the growth outlook for 2016 was reduced to 2.8 percent from 3.1 percent, while the government's inflation projection was cut to 1.1 percent from 1.5 percent.

Admittedly, the expansionary fiscal policy helps to lift some of the pressure on the BoK to cut rates. The BoK has recently signalled some doubt over the effectiveness of more monetary loosening but instead suggested structural reforms. BoK Governor cautioned that there is a possibility of an increase in financial imbalance if monetary easing is excessive.

Structural problems play considerable role in low growth, inflation facing South Korea's economy; it's insufficient to address the issues solely with monetary and fiscal policies; structural reforms are also needed.

KRW bulls will need more reasons

USD/KRW has given back all the gains triggered by Brexit event, which triggered the rally to 1188.4 high. Technically, the pair looks like it is headed lower towards 1127, but with the positive news and rate cuts priced in, more will be needed for additional long KRW positions. Looking at the interaction between the USD index and USD/KRW in recent years, the KRW's new found vigour is clearly overdone.

While the JPY's strength has availed the opportunity of a divergence between the USD index and USD/KRW, even that support is looking flimsy as the JPY/KRW has recently lost nearly 6%. The KRW has also been outperforming the Asian dollar index and the gap has widened significantly this year. With growth risks prevailing and the authorities increasingly concerned over the ineffectiveness of monetary policy via rate cuts, they may prefer to loosen monetary conditions further via a weaker exchange rate.

Chart 1: KRW bulls may get nervous

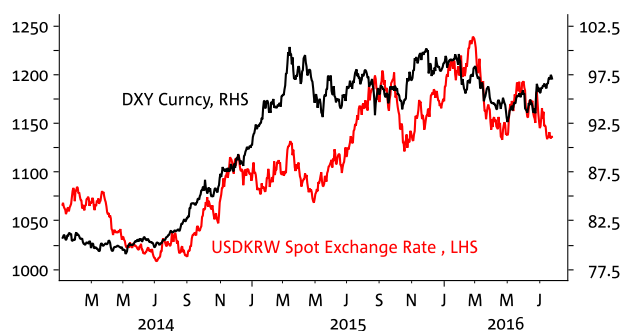
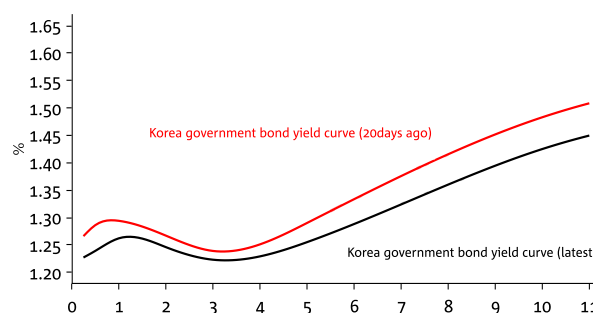


Chart 2: Strong appetite for Korean bonds



India Spotlight:

Reserve Bank Interregnum

- August could see the focus of financial markets fixate more on the nomination of a new RBI governor, with the attendant speculation on how this will affect the central bank's credibility.
- Investment continues to be soft but inflation still poses a constraint on further monetary policy easing.
- Robust inflation is likely to continue to serve as a cap on the nominal strength of the INR, especially on a trade-weighted basis.

The month of August is likely to be dominated by speculation about who will succeed Raghuram Rajan as RBI governor and consequently, what the trajectory for policy interest rates. These questions will be discussed against the backdrop of a resurgent USD on the back of resilient US economic data and cautiously increasing hawkish expectations regarding US Fed rates.

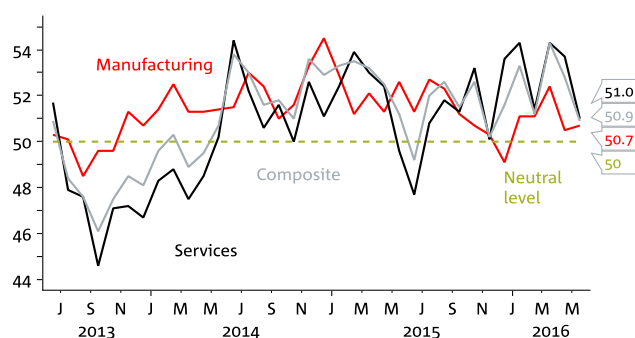
The new RBI governor will inherit a rather tricky situation. Growth is fairly strong but investment is waning; and inflation is stable at a lower rate but has stopped falling and the INR REER continues to diverge from the NEER on the upside. Meanwhile, the government has not bothered to hide the fact that it is very keen on further cuts but the RBI needs to maintain its independence, including the appearance of independence.

Elsewhere though, there are some signs of improvement. The recent regional elections have seen the composition of the upper house Rajya Sabha shift in favour of the government and this increases the likelihood of passage of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). However, there are still impediments to a bill being passed in the near term so the actual timing remains up in the air for now.

Economic growth positive but slowing

The Markit Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) illustrates this mixed picture. Both the Manufacturing and Services PMIs have spent much of 2016 in expansionary territory and continue to remain so. However, Services has plunged sharply in the last few months. Manufacturing appears to be quite supported but is also much lower to the neutral line and sentiment there looks somewhat precarious.

Chart 1: Sentiment wanes but still positive



Source: NAB, Macrobond

Exports in June had positive growth after a long slump but India's exports sector remains hampered by a slew of competitiveness issues so a sustained rebound is unlikely. Beyond structural issues like land and labour laws, external competitiveness is also becoming an issue. The INR REER has been rising steadily since 2014 but more recently it's started to cleave away from the INR NEER, which has actually falling over the last 12 months. Clearly, inflation is something that needs to be watched.

Inflation is still a policy issue

Despite remaining steady for a few months now in the 5%-6% yoy range, and 5.8% yoy in June, inflation is still significantly above the RBI's March 2017 target of 5.0%. The resilient inflation against the backdrop of soft consumer prices globally also serves to push up the INR REER, and leave the Indian economy with lower export competitiveness combined with lower external purchasing power (in the form of a falling INR NEER).

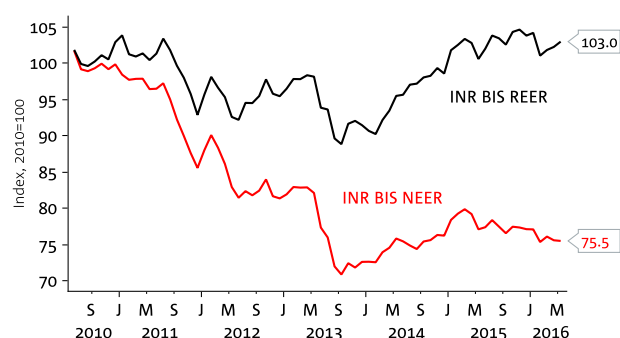
Indeed, outgoing RBI governor once again reiterated his view that India's monetary policy has not been too tight and that the slowdown in lending has not been due to interest rates being too high but rather due to stress in the state-run banks. The government seems to agree with the second part but not the first, and that's been a source of friction between many previous Finance Ministers and RBI Governors.

Perceptions of independence will be key

Rajan also reiterated his view that low and stable inflation are key to medium term growth and warned that central bank independence is needed for stable growth. His call was also echoed by his predecessor Duvvuri Subbarao, who has also spoken about pressure from the government to be more supportive of growth via lower interest rates.

Rajan's current term ends on 3 September 2016 so August could see this issue loom over Indian financial markets. The market seems to be primed for his replacement to be someone more dovish, but this could be counterproductive in the long-run if it undermines the RBI's credibility.

Chart 2: Inflation is weighing on competitiveness



Source: NAB, BIS, Macrobond

Singapore Spotlight:

Don't S\$NEER at USD strength

- With the fallout from Brexit now appearing to be fairly contained, the market's focus is likely to shift back to fundamentals.
- Robust US numbers and the prospect of fiscal stimulus in Japan could increase both global risk appetite and the likelihood of US rate hikes.
- USD strength could return gradually over the next six months but improved risk appetite could see flows back into Asian financial markets, which would benefit Singapore's financial sector.

After the bout of volatility post-Brexit, the USD/SGD has settled into a slow grind higher, albeit from a relatively low level. The S\$NEER still remains close to 1% above the mid-point of the policy band as the market so there is scope for the SGD to underperform its peers when USD strength takes hold.

The caveat to this might be a return of risk appetite, especially for Asian financial assets. This though might not be enough to outweigh the combined attraction of a resurgent US economy plus a very gradual rise in US interest rates.

Singapore's growth is also likely to remain somewhat tepid as China's economic growth continues to remain soft. The slowdown in the financial sector will likely remain a drag on the economy as long as asset managers remain leery of financial assets in Asia.

MAS wary but not spooked

In its annual report for 2015/16, the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) highlighted its wariness about the fallout over Brexit but simultaneously placed these in the context of a slow but positive global growth situation. MAS opined that while the fallout from Brexit has so far been limited to financial markets, the UK's economy could still take a hit and multiple elections in the EU next year could still see the Brexit spillover manifest. MAS also sees moderate US growth continuing and China avoiding a hard landing while continuing to slow. The tone suggests that a further policy easing in October is not likely but April 2017 is still dependent on how events pan out.

Slow growth could accelerate in Q3

The advance estimate for Q2 2016 GDP growth saw QoQ growth accelerate to 0.8% from 0.2% in Q1. Q2's growth numbers saw a reversal of the Construction and Manufacturing led growth in Q1, with Services stabilizing after a fairly sharp sequential fall in Q1. That weakness in Services was underpinned by a slide in the financial sector, as investors pulled out of Emerging Markets, Asia included. Q2 should have seen some stability in the financial sector as the fears of an RMB-devaluation subsided and US data started to show resilience. There is a likelihood that the final number will be a downward revision as June's Brexit impact is added in.

Going forward however, if the spillover from Brexit continues to remain contained, and US growth momentum continues unabated, the financial sector could see some recovery. Asian equity markets have generally performed quite well in the early part of July so it does appear that risk appetite could recovery to some degree in Q3.

It would then follow that if global (or at least US and China growth) stabilises, Singapore's should follow to some degree and in turn reduce the likelihood of further easing by the MAS at its October monetary policy meeting.

Inflation another deterrent to further easing

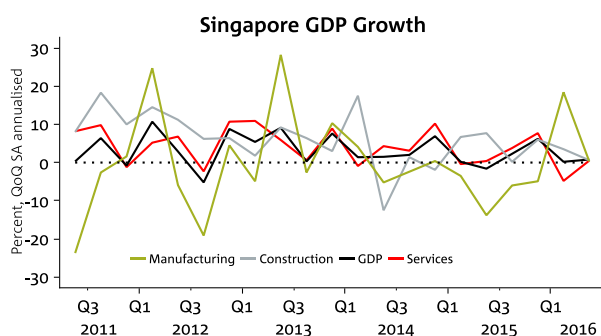
While headline CPI inflation continues to remain in negative territory, the MAS Core CPI inflation number remains firmly in positive, albeit low territory, of 1% yoy. The deflationary parts of the CPI are clearly those heavily administered – housing and private automobiles.

With Core inflation not just positive but actually climbing, MAS is probably not going to be likely to further ease its monetary policy stance, after already having eased in April. Besides, with the S\$NEER already comfortably in the stronger half of the policy band, there exists sufficient downside room for depreciation.

US Fed hike expectations could be the catalyst

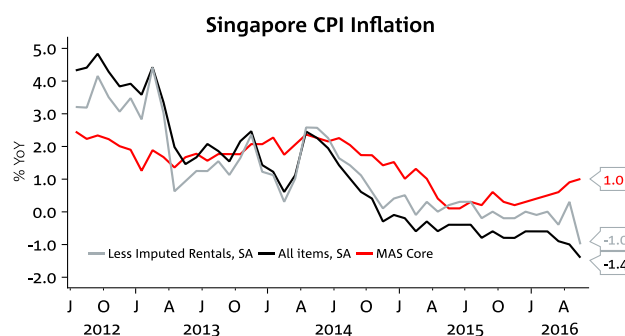
While we continue to expect only one hike this year in December, it is not beyond the pale for market expectations of a September hike to gain currency. This could underpin a gradual rise in the broad USD. Additionally, if the Chinese authorities also allow the RMB Index to rise over the next few months, the CNY/SGD is also likely to climb and add to downward pressure on the S\$NEER.

Chart 1: Growth is low but supported



Source: National Australia Bank, Macrobond, CEIC

Chart 2: MAS Core inflation resilient



Source: National Australia Bank, Macrobond

Selected Indicators

Table 1: NAB Asian FX Forecasts

	Sep-16	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18		Sep-16	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18
USD/CNY	6.73	6.80	6.78	6.76	6.74	6.73	6.72	6.70	AUD/CNY	4.85	4.76	4.68	4.66	4.65	4.71	4.77	4.82
USD/IDR	13600	13700	13700	13600	13500	13300	13200	13150	AUD/IDR	9792	9590	9453	9384	9315	9310	9372	9468
USD/INR	67.0	67.0	66.0	65.0	64.0	63.0	62.0	62.0	AUD/INR	48.2	46.9	45.5	44.9	44.2	44.1	44.0	44.6
USD/KRW	1190	1220	1200	1200	1180	1150	1100	1100	AUD/KRW	857	854	828	828	814	805	781	792
USD/MYR	4.15	4.30	4.40	4.40	4.38	4.35	4.30	4.30	AUD/MYR	2.99	3.01	3.04	3.04	3.02	3.05	3.05	3.10
USD/PHP	47.0	47.2	47.0	46.6	46.2	46.0	46.0	45.5	AUD/PHP	33.8	33.0	32.4	32.2	31.9	32.2	32.7	32.8
USD/SGD	1.39	1.40	1.39	1.38	1.38	1.37	1.37	1.36	AUD/SGD	1.00	0.98	0.96	0.95	0.95	0.96	0.97	0.98
USD/THB	36.5	37.0	37.0	37.5	37.5	37.5	37.0	37.0	AUD/THB	26.28	25.90	25.53	25.88	25.88	26.25	26.27	26.64
USD/TWD	33.2	33.5	33.5	33.2	33.0	32.7	32.5	32.2	AUD/TWD	23.90	23.45	23.12	22.91	22.77	22.89	23.08	23.18

Table 2: NAB Key FX Forecasts

		Sep-16	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18
Australian Dollar	AUD/USD	0.72	0.70	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.70	0.71	0.72
New Zealand Dollar	NZD/USD	0.68	0.66	0.66	0.65	0.66	0.68	0.69	0.70
Japanese yen	USD/JPY	105	105	103	103	102	101	100	99
Euro	EUR/USD	1.08	1.06	1.05	1.05	1.06	1.07	1.08	1.09
British Pound	GBP/USD	1.28	1.25	1.22	1.20	1.22	1.25	1.25	1.25
Swiss Franc	USD/CHF	0.99	1.01	1.00	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02
Canadian Dollar	USD/CAD	1.33	1.40	1.40	1.42	1.42	1.41	1.39	1.38
Chinese New Yuan	USD/CNY	6.73	6.80	6.78	6.76	6.74	6.73	6.72	6.70

Table 3: NAB Asia Macro Forecasts

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Hong Kong	3.1	2.7	2.5	1.4	1.4
Indonesia	5.6	5.0	4.8	4.9	4.9
Singapore	4.6	3.3	2.0	2.7	2.7
Taiwan	2.2	3.9	0.7	0.3	0.3
Thailand	2.7	0.8	2.8	3.7	3.7
Malaysia	4.7	6.0	5.0	4.3	4.3
S Korea	2.9	3.3	2.6	2.7	2.7
Philippines	7.1	6.2	5.9	6.0	6.0
Total	4.2	4.1	3.5	3.5	3.5
China	7.7	7.3	6.9	6.7	6.5
India	6.3	7.0	7.2	7.7	7.7

Table 4: NAB Key Macro Forecasts

Country/region	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
United States	1.6	2.2	1.5	2.4	2.4	1.8	2.1	1.9
Japan	-0.4	1.7	1.4	-0.1	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6
Euro-zone	1.6	-0.8	-0.3	0.9	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.5
United Kingdom	2.0	1.2	2.2	2.9	2.3	1.2	0.6	1.2
Emerging Asia	4.4	4.6	4.2	4.1	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.4
Latin America	4.5	2.3	2.5	0.4	-0.6	-1.0	0.9	1.7
China	9.5	7.7	7.7	7.3	6.9	6.7	6.5	6.3
Canada	3.1	1.7	2.2	2.5	1.1	1.4	1.8	2.0
Australia	2.7	3.5	2.0	2.7	2.5	2.9	2.9	2.5
New Zealand	1.8	2.4	2.4	3.7	2.5	2.9	2.9	1.9
India	7.9	4.9	6.3	7.0	7.2	7.7	7.7	7.5
Africa	5.4	4.4	5.2	5.1	3.4	3.0	3.2	4.0
Eastern Europe	5.4	1.4	2.9	2.8	3.5	3.1	2.8	3.0
Middle East	3.9	4.8	2.4	2.8	2.5	2.3	1.8	2.0
Other advanced	3.3	2.0	2.2	2.8	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.6
World	4.45	3.40	3.30	3.33	2.97	2.80	3.03	3.11

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