

Touchbutton

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Back to school

As summer draws to a close, investors and school children alike look ahead and wonder exactly what will face them in the coming months. Perhaps unlike children on their long summer holidays, investors have had a basinful of events to cope with over the last few months – in fact, it's probably fair to say that if the world's on going geopolitical events were developed into a Netflix box set, the viewing public would regard the script as too far-fetched.

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Despite everything from political upheaval, terrorism, and now the growing threat of a nuclear event, markets seem to have remained remarkably sanguine and level headed. It is hard to know precisely why this is the case, but it increasingly would seem that investors regard economic activity and monetary policy as being key, with pretty much everything else a side show and generally no more than a temporary distraction. The dogs may bark, but the caravan moves on.

Notwithstanding this calmness, we continue to position portfolios for some upset in stockmarkets. We don't know when this may happen, or what the triggers may be, but we continue to err on the side of caution with a lower than normal commitment to equity markets. This does not in any sense mean that we have forsaken the stockmarket: far from it. However, we want to preserve gains which have been hard won over a long period, and we continue to believe that the best way to achieve this is by maintaining portfolios that have, unlike the world itself, de-risked themselves to some extent. Having some firepower in the form of lower risk assets in a portfolio, that can be quickly redeployed if considered appropriate back into the equity market in the event of a setback, still seems to us the sensible way forward as we move towards the final quarter of the year.

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