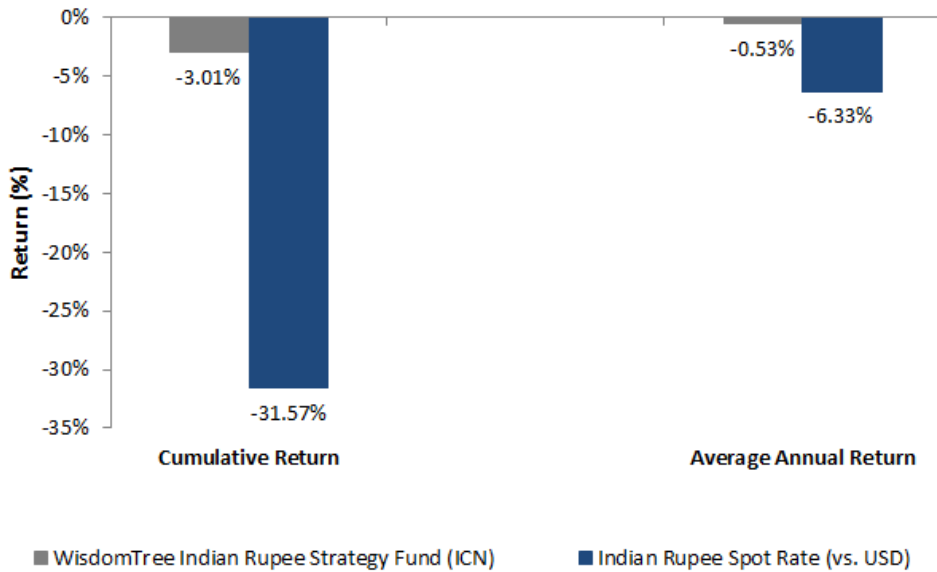


# SHOULD INVESTORS HEDGE EXPOSURE TO THE INDIAN RUPEE?

Jeremy Schwartz — Global Chief Investment Officer

04/02/2014

In our last [blog post](#) on the performance of Indian equities, we showed them reaching all-time highs.<sup>1</sup> This fact may surprise U.S. investors, as certain indexes of India's equities are down over 30% cumulatively since 2007, a result of the Indian rupee's decline by approximately 36% over the same period.<sup>2</sup> **An Obvious Case for Hedging... or Not?** Now seems like a perfect time to use [currency-hedged](#) strategies in India as protection against these declines in the rupee. But the currency-hedging story in India is not as straightforward as it is in Europe or Japan today. Why? It would be too expensive to hedge the Indian rupee now, with the cost eroding the protection from loss in the currency's value against the U.S. dollar. **Developed Market Currency Hedging Is Different Than Currency Hedging in India** One reason we advocate currency hedging in Europe and Japan is because it is relatively inexpensive to hedge. The primary cost of currency hedging is based on short-term [interest rate differentials](#) between the foreign market and the home market. The difference between Japanese or European [interest rates](#) and U.S. interest rates is currently so low that hedging their currencies is essentially a free option for U.S. investors. At some point, if short-term interest rates in the U.S. normalize and become higher than those similar interest rates in Japan or Europe, one might actually get paid the higher interest rate differential to hedge the yen or the euro. But in India the situation is very different. Interest rates are high, making the cost to hedge the rupee high for U.S. investors. The sizable short-term interest rate differential between India and the U.S. represents a "[hurdle rate](#)" for how much the rupee has to depreciate before U.S. investors can break even on the cost of that hedge. Given these high hurdle rates we think it's difficult to make a case that the hedge adds long-term value, specifically given the extraordinarily low U.S. short-term interest rates. Right now, the spread between [implied yields](#) for [1-month rupee forwards](#) and [1-month London Interbank Bid \(LIBID\) rates](#) is 7.53%.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, in neutralizing rupee exposure, investors face a 7%-plus annual headwind or—in other words—can expect to lose about 65 [basis points](#) a month. If one is convinced the rupee could depreciate more than that over the investment horizon, then it would make sense to hedge. **Our Strategic Approach to India's Currency** We would argue that strategic investors would rather be on the opposite end of that trade, with the potential to collect the higher interest rate in India's local markets. That is why we created the [WisdomTree Indian Rupee Strategy Fund \(ICN\)](#), which benefits from high short-term interest rates available to investors in India. This Fund takes the opposite side in the same instruments—[non-deliverable forward contracts](#)—to collect the [interest rate premium](#), instead of paying it, as one would need to do to hedge the exposure. The forward contracts in the Fund are also collateralized by U.S. cash investments. The combination of interest from the U.S. cash instruments with the interest rate premium approximates the local money market rates in India, which is how the strategy seeks to accomplish its objective. The differential in the exchange rate performance of the rupee and the return of this Fund over its life provides a simple estimate for how much it would have cost to hedge the rupee over nearly five years of live performance history. **Illustrating the Impact of India's Higher Short-Term Interest Rate**



Source: WisdomTree. Period: 5/14/2008–2/28/2014, which covers the since-inception return for ICN. Past performance is not indicative of future results.

For definitions of terms in the

chart, please visit our [Glossary](#).

**Average Annual Returns (as of December 31, 2013)**

	Fund Information			Total Return NAV (%)				Market Price (%)			
	Ticker	Exp. Ratio	Inception Date	1-Year	3-Year	5-Year	Since Fund Inception	1-Year	3-Year	5-Year	Since Fund Inception
WisdomTree Indian Rupee Strategy Fund	ICN	0.45%	5/14/2008	-4.94%	-4.27%	0.37%	-0.73%	-5.10%	-4.45%	0.26%	-0.91%
Indian Rupee (INR)				N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-11.42%	-10.16%	-4.70%	-6.45%

Source: WisdomTree. Performance is historical and does not guarantee future results. Current performance may be lower or higher than quoted. Investment returns and principal value of an investment will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Performance data for the most recent month-end is available at [www.wisdomtree.com](http://www.wisdomtree.com).

Indian Rupee (INR) is a measure of the currency spot rate and hence does not have a NAV price.

**The Case for the Rupee:**

**Currently at a Significant Discount** On a long-term basis, the Indian rupee is an emerging market currency selling at the greatest discount to [purchasing power parity](#) of all emerging market currencies. Some of this discount is warranted—the high inflation levels in India will likely be a [headwind](#) for the currency, as it erodes India's purchasing power over time. But the convergence of India's demographics and income growth potential with those of the rest of the world argues the long-term [fundamental](#) case for the country's ability to catch up as money flows into its economy.

**India's Central Bank Establishing Credibility** There is no question India's currency has been [volatile](#). But the new head of its central bank, Raghuram Rajan, has been a very positive influence. By hiking interest rates during his early days in office, he made it more expensive for speculators and hedgers to short the rupee. He also re-established the inflation-fighting credibility of the central bank in the eyes of many investors. This has made it more attractive to get exposure to the rupee via a fund, such as ICN, that seeks to collect the interest rate differential after expenses.

**Macroeconomic Tide May Be Turning** Additionally, India has been proactive in addressing its external vulnerabilities and fiscal corruption concerns. Its [current account](#) position has improved considerably, inflation has slowed—even though it remains high, specifically for [core consumer prices](#)—and slow but encouraging progress on fiscal reforms has been made. There is also an emerging consensus that the opposing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its coalition for the upcoming national elections will have the potential to provide a boost for investor confidence in India. From a [valuation](#) standpoint, [long positions](#) in the rupee against the dollar offer a high level of [carry](#) or potential interest return per unit of [risk](#). The rupee ranks third in its measure of carry to its volatility amongst other emerging market currencies, behind the Peruvian new sol and the Brazilian real.<sup>4</sup>

**Conclusion: Portfolio Perspective on the Rupee** If one is looking to get access to emerging markets, the high interest rates in India are an interesting way to achieve that exposure. We think allocations to ICN have broad applications within client portfolios, such as: 1) Augmenting emerging market fixed income portfolios: For many investors, assessing the pros and cons of exposure to rupee debt can be challenging; ICN can facilitate access to the Indian currency and its local short-term rates. 2) Blending in with Indian equities to help mitigate the risk profile of one's overall Indian investments. <sup>1</sup>Refers to the [S&P BSE SENSEX Index](#) hitting 21,934 as of 3/10/2014. <sup>2</sup>Refers to the [WisdomTree India Earnings Index](#) and the Indian rupee's cumulative returns from 12/3/2007 to 2/28/2014. <sup>3</sup>Source: Bloomberg, as of 2/26/2014, effectively the last day of the month with viable data. <sup>4</sup>Source: Bloomberg, as of 02/28/2014.

Important Risks Related to this Article

There are risks associated with investing, including possible loss of principal. Foreign investing involves special risks, such as risk of loss from currency fluctuation or political or economic uncertainty. This Fund focuses its investments in India, thereby increasing the impact of events and developments associated with the region, which can adversely affect performance. Investments in emerging or frontier markets are generally less liquid and less efficient than investments in developed markets and are subject to additional risks, such as risks of adverse governmental regulation and intervention or political developments. Investments in currency involve additional special risks, such as credit risk and interest rate fluctuations. Derivative investments can be volatile, and these investments may be less liquid than other securities, and more sensitive to the effect of varied economic conditions. As this Fund can have a high concentration in some issuers, the Fund can be adversely impacted by changes affecting those issuers. Unlike typical exchange-traded funds, there are no indexes that the Fund attempts to track or replicate. Thus, the ability of the Fund to achieve its objectives will depend on the effectiveness of the portfolio manager. Due to the investment strategy of this Fund, it may make higher capital gain distributions than other ETFs. Please read the Fund's prospectus for specific details regarding the Fund's risk profile. Investments focused in Europe and Japan may increase the impact of events and developments associated with those regions, which can adversely affect performance.

For standardized performance and the most recent month-end performance click [here](#) NOTE, this material is intended for electronic use only. Individuals who intend to print and physically deliver to an investor must print the monthly performance report to accompany this blog.

For more investing insights, check out our [Economic & Market Outlook](#)

View the online version of this article [here](#).

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**U.S. investors only: Click [here](#) to obtain a WisdomTree ETF prospectus which contains investment objectives, risks, charges, expenses, and other information; read and consider carefully before investing.**

There are risks involved with investing, including possible loss of principal. Foreign investing involves currency, political and economic risk. Funds focusing on a single country, sector and/or funds that emphasize investments in smaller companies may experience greater price volatility. Investments in emerging markets, currency, fixed income and alternative investments include additional risks. Please see prospectus for discussion of risks.

Past performance is not indicative of future results. This material contains the opinions of the author, which are subject to change, and should not to be considered or interpreted as a recommendation to participate in any particular trading strategy, or deemed to be an offer or sale of any investment product and it should not be relied on as such. There is no guarantee that any strategies discussed will work under all market conditions. This material represents an assessment of the market environment at a specific time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events or a guarantee of future results. This material should not be relied upon as research or investment advice regarding any security in particular. The user of this information assumes the entire risk of any use made of the information provided herein. Neither WisdomTree nor its affiliates, nor Foreside Fund Services, LLC, or its affiliates provide tax or legal advice. Investors seeking tax or legal advice should consult their tax or legal advisor. Unless expressly stated otherwise the opinions, interpretations or findings expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of WisdomTree or any of its affiliates.

The MSCI information may only be used for your internal use, may not be reproduced or re-disseminated in any form and may not be used as a basis for or component of any financial instruments or products or indexes. None of the MSCI information is intended to constitute investment advice or a recommendation to make (or refrain from making) any kind of investment decision and may not be relied on as such. Historical data and analysis should not be taken as an indication or guarantee of any future performance analysis, forecast or prediction. The MSCI information is provided on an "as is" basis and the user of this information assumes the entire risk of any use made of this information. MSCI, each of its affiliates and each entity involved in compiling, computing or creating any MSCI information (collectively, the "MSCI Parties") expressly disclaims all warranties. With respect to this information, in no event shall any MSCI Party have any liability for any direct, indirect, special, incidental, punitive, consequential (including loss profits) or any other damages ([www.msci.com](http://www.msci.com))

Jonathan Steinberg, Jeremy Schwartz, Rick Harper, Christopher Gannatti, Bradley Krom, Tripp Zimmerman, Michael Barrer, Anita Rausch, Kevin Flanagan, Brendan Loftus, Joseph Tenaglia, Jeff Weniger, Matt Wagner, Alejandro Saltiel, Ryan Krystopowicz, Kara Marciscano, Jianing Wu and Brian Manby are registered representatives of Foreside Fund Services, LLC.

WisdomTree Funds are distributed by Foreside Fund Services, LLC, in the U.S. only.

You cannot invest directly in an index.

## DEFINITIONS

**Hedge** : Making an investment to reduce the risk of adverse price movements in an asset. Normally, a hedge consists of taking an offsetting position in a related security, such as a futures contract.

**Interest Rate Differentials** : The Difference between the 2 Year interest rate swaps of the United Kingdom vs. the United States.

**Interest rates** : The rate at which interest is paid by a borrower for the use of money.

**Hurdle rate** : Rate at which the currency needs to depreciate in order to compensate for the high carry of the currency.

**Implied yield** : The annualized rate of return generated by a fund's investment in forward currency contracts. The calculation is intended to show the yield of forward currency contracts, assuming that foreign exchange rates remain constant.

**1-month rupee forwards** : Agreements to either buy or sell rupees in exchange for U.S. dollars at a specified exchange rate one month into the future.

**1-month LIBID rates** : Good indication of the cost of borrowing U.S. dollars for one month's time in European markets.

**Basis point** : 1/100th of 1 percent.

**Non-deliverable forward currency contract** : An agreement to buy or sell a specific currency at a future date at an agreed-upon rate that is settled in U.S. dollars.

**Interest rate premium** : Refers to the difference between short-term interest rates in different domiciles.

**Purchasing power parity** : Academic concept stating that exchange rates should adjust so that equivalent goods and services cost the same across countries, after accounting for exchange-rate differences.

**Headwind** : challenges to performance or expectations of performance.

**Fundamentals** : Attributes related to a company's actual operations and production as opposed to changes in share price.

**Volatility** : A measure of the dispersion of actual returns around a particular average level.&nbsp;nbsp;.

**Current account** : The difference between a nation's total exports of goods, services and transfers, and its total imports of them.

**Core consumer prices** : Measure of prices that excludes certain items, such as food and energy, that face volatile price movements.

**Valuation** : Refers to metrics that relate financial statistics for equities to their price levels to determine if certain attributes, such as earnings or dividends, are cheap or expensive.

**Long (or Long Position)** : The buying of a security such as a stock, commodity or currency, with the expectation that the asset will rise in value, the opposite of Short (or Short Position).

**Carry** : The amount of return that accrues from investing in fixed income or currency forward contracts.

**Risk** : Also standard deviation, which measures the spread of actual returns around an average return during a specific period. Higher risk indicates greater potential for returns to be farther away from this average.

**WisdomTree India Earnings Index** : A fundamentally weighted Index that measures the performance of companies

incorporated and traded in India that are profitable and that are eligible to be purchased by foreign investors. Companies are weighted in the Index based on their earnings in their fiscal year prior to the Index measurement date, adjusted for a factor that takes into account shares available to foreign investors.