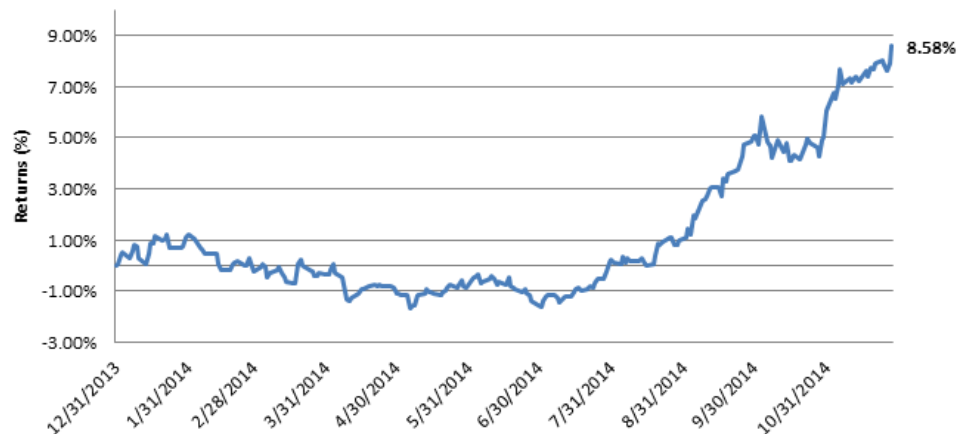


# MAKING SENSE OF DOLLAR STRENGTH

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Over the last several months, investors and economists alike have started to take note of the broad-based appreciation of the U.S. dollar.<sup>1</sup> Should markets remain near current levels through the end of the year, the dollar will have appreciated by approximately 8.6% against a basket of developed and [emerging market](#) currencies, its strongest performance since 2005.<sup>2</sup> However, we believe the magnitude of this year's move tells only a portion of the story. In our view, this summer's rally does not represent a correction or near-term adjustment, but rather the continuation of a broader trend that started in the middle of 2011. Should our analysis prove correct, we believe this period of dollar strength could just be getting started. A key factor driving our view is the breadth and persistence of the most recent move: Of the 55 currencies that WisdomTree tracks, none have managed to appreciate against the U.S. dollar in 2014.<sup>3</sup> Across developed, emerging and frontier markets, the theme of dollar strength is persisting. To us, this signals that this move is primarily being driven by idiosyncratic factors pertaining to U.S. markets and the economy. Below, we discuss three drivers and provide rationale for why we believe these factors are likely to persist. [Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index](#)



Source: Bloomberg, as of 11/28/14. Past performance is not indicative of future results. You cannot invest directly in an index.

(12/31/13–11/28/14)

**Divergence** relates to relative growth rates, potential changes in [monetary policy](#) and the outlook for [inflation](#) in the U.S. compared to its trading partners. In all three instances, the U.S. economy appears to be on the opposite end of the spectrum from its developed market peers. While the Federal Reserve (Fed) and the Bank of England (BOE) are expected to hike [interest rates](#) in 2015, the Bank of Japan (BOJ) and the European Central Bank (ECB) show an increasing desire to expand their [balance sheets](#), engage in nontraditional monetary policy and experiment with [negative interest rates](#). With the Fed ending its [quantitative easing \(QE\)](#) program in October, the European and Japanese central banks are now being seen as primary providers of [liquidity](#) to global capital markets. As a result, we have seen a marked divergence in the [yields](#) of [2-Year Treasury notes](#) compared to European and Japanese 2-years. Additionally, as short-term interest rate differentials rise in the U.S. compared to the rest of the world, we expect the trend of dollar strength to continue. With rates higher in the U.S., the cost of being [long](#) currencies with negative or zero [short-term rates](#) would logically drive flows out of those currencies and into dollar-denominated assets. **Differentiation** is primarily a distinction relating to emerging markets. In our view, taking a one-size-fits-all approach to investing in emerging markets has negatively impacted performance. Over the last year, investment flows (and trade), a strong driver of EM exchange rates, have negatively impacted performance. In the same way that we see central bank policy occurring at varying speeds, we believe that emerging markets also fall along a continuum in terms of their opportunities, risks and stages of economic development. For example, certain EM economies have grown due to commodity wealth and investment, while others

have struggled with inflationary pressures due to the high cost of energy imports. Today, lower energy prices for exporters have the exact opposite effect on the economies of importers such as India. Geopolitical risk and corruption inquiries continue to complicate [fundamental](#) views. While we believe the long-term emerging market growth story remains intact, currencies could continue to face near-term headwinds. Opportunities remain, but growth prospects in some emerging markets appear less attractive in an environment of 3% U.S. economic growth.<sup>4</sup> [Disinflation](#) has proved to be a difficult hurdle for central bankers to overcome since the global financial crisis. Overcoming it can, in many ways, prove to the market that central bank policies are having their desired effect. While disinflation has been most acutely felt in Europe, prices around the world remain constrained. Historically, moderate levels of inflation signaled healthy economic expansion. However, prolonged periods of low or negative inflation can make investors nervous. This is precisely why central banks have been employing aggressive monetary policy. A clear byproduct of QE is a weakening exchange rate. Weaker exchange rates may lead to an uptick in economic growth and, eventually, higher inflation. In the U.S., despite inflation staying below long-term targets, it remains substantially higher than readings in other developed economies. As a result, the recent upswing in U.S. economic momentum has caused not just a rebound in U.S. asset prices, but an increase in the strength of the U.S. dollar as well. While high levels of inflation often cause trouble for currencies, falling prices could be a larger risk due to potential concerns about debt sustainability. While all of these points can help explain a portion of the current market moves, we believe this trend may just be getting started. In all three instances, there is a distinct element of persistence. In other words, these factors are unlikely to change overnight. As a result, we believe investors should consider allocating to currency strategies that are long the U.S. dollar rather than to a basket of foreign currencies. <sup>1</sup>As represented by the [Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index](#). <sup>2</sup>Source: Bloomberg, as of 11/28/14. <sup>3</sup>Source: Bloomberg, as of 11/28/14. <sup>4</sup>Source: Bloomberg composite 2015 forecast, as of 11/28/14.

#### Important Risks Related to this Article

Foreign investing involves special risks, such as risk of loss from currency fluctuation or political or economic uncertainty. Investments focused in Europe or Japan are increasing the impact of events and developments associated with the regions, which can adversely affect performance. Investments in emerging, offshore 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.

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**Emerging market** : Characterized by greater market access and less potential for operational risks when compared to frontier markets, which leads to a larger base of potentially eligible investors.

**Monetary easing policies** : Actions undertaken by a central bank with the ultimate desired effect of lowering interest rates and stimulating the economy.

**Inflation** : Characterized by rising price levels.

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

**Balance sheet** : refers to the cash and cash equivalents part of the Current Assets on a firm's balance sheet and cash available for purchasing new position.

**Negative interest rates** : Usually borrowers make regular interest payments to their lenders for the money they owe. Under a system of negative interest rates this relationship would be reversed and the lender would pay the borrower for the privilege of lending.

**Quantitative Easing (QE)** : A government monetary policy occasionally used to increase the money supply by buying government securities or other securities from the market. Quantitative easing increases the money supply by flooding financial institutions with capital, in an effort to promote increased lending and liquidity.

**Liquidity** : The degree to which an asset or security can be bought or sold in the market without affecting the asset's price. Liquidity is characterized by a high level of trading activity. Assets that can be easily bought or sold are known as liquid assets.

**Yield** : The income return on an investment. Refers to the interest or dividends received from a security that is typically expressed annually as a percentage of the market or face value.

**Treasury notes** : A debt obligation issued by the United States government that matures in less than 30 years.

**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).

**Short-term rates** : the rate of interest on a debt instrument maturing in two years or less.

**Fundamental value** : The value of a firm that is related to a company's actual operations and production as opposed to changes in share price.

**Disinflation** : Term used to describe instances of slowing inflation, different from deflation in that price levels are still increasing overall, just at a slower rate.

**Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index (BBDXY)** : Tracks the performance of a basket of ten leading global currencies versus the U.S. dollar. Each currency in the basket and their weight is determined annually based on their share of international trade and FX liquidity.