

Investable AI for Volatility Trading

Deep Learning Model for Cross Asset Volatility Strategies

- We introduce an attention-based deep learning mechanism leveraging high-frequency data to determine relative value among the volatility of over 50 assets across a variety of asset classes, including Equity, FX, Commodities, Rates and Credit.
- We have provided two ways to construct a cross asset portfolio: a risk parity style portfolio aggregating intra-asset RV strategies, as well as a narrow but liquid universe for cross asset RV trading.
- The model achieves solid performance at both individual asset and the portfolio levels after accounting for transaction costs, over an extended back test period from 2010 to 2023. Its performance in recent years is comparatively strong.

Global Quantitative and Derivatives Strategy

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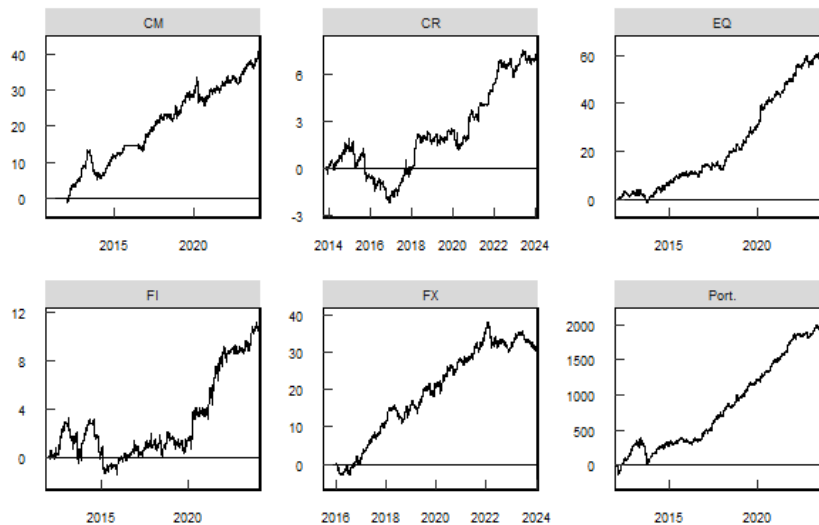
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Figure 1: Model performance by asset class



Source: J.P. Morgan

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Introduction

Attention mechanisms are known to lead to improvements in learning long term dependencies and have recently been harnessed for time-series modeling. Readers may recall that a newer version of the [ETF Relative Value Volatility model](#) was launched this April. In contrast to the old hierarchical regression model with daily frequency data which covers 80 ETFs over three month tenor, the new methodology leverages attention based neural network and high frequency data to determine the richness/cheapness of one-month implied volatility for 30 highly liquid ETFs. Thanks to the improvement in computational power and availability of high frequency data, we explored opportunities to extend the framework to other asset classes, including FX, Equities, Credit and Commodities.

The rest of the report is divided into three sections: we first review in detail the methodology of our deep learning based framework; then illustrate its uses and the backtest results within each individual asset class as well as at the portfolio level; finally, we select 23 underliers as representatives and build a Cross Asset Relative Value (CARV) model.

Data and Methodology

The main idea behind our RV model is to find the relationship between the current implied volatility with model forecast “fair” value of realized volatility across names at one point in time. The complete list of assets can be found in the Appendix. In our model setting, we continue using each security’s first two moments of the return distribution, daily return and daily realized power, to forecast the realized volatility. Daily realized power is defined as the sum of five-minute absolute returns across trading hours within a trading day. In the previous [note](#), we discussed and proved this variable outperforms realized volatility when predicting future volatility. Our approach coincides with Ghysels, Santa-Clara and Valkanov (2006) ¹, which applied the same concept to equities data and found realized power dominates other predictors such as squared returns and absolute returns at all horizons. Daily returns are used as an additional feature to account for the leverage effects. For both, we use a truncation over the last 60 business days.

Each security’s volatility is modeled using its own historical data instead of a cross-sectional sample with other securities’ history. Therefore, for each security, there are 2 features / day * 60 days = 120 features. These features are first passed through an attention layer with sigmoid activation. We discussed our preference to self-attention mechanism than other deep learning methods such as RNN and LSTM [here](#). As a reminder, the attention mechanism incorporates a learnable similarity score to assign a measure of importance to previous time-steps, and the weights don’t have to obey a specific decay rate (i.e. the recent observations are always assigned higher weights than the distant ones). A flatten layer is then added to make the output linear before passing onto a dense layer. We applied 20% dropout for the hidden units given the large number of neurons and to prevent over-fitting. Mean squared logarithmic error is chosen to be our loss function so that securities with different vol levels are treated the same.

1. Ghysels, E., P. Santa-Clara, R. Valkanov, 2006, "Predicting volatility: getting the most out of return data sampled at different frequencies", Journal of Econometrics, Volume 131, Issues 1-2, 2006

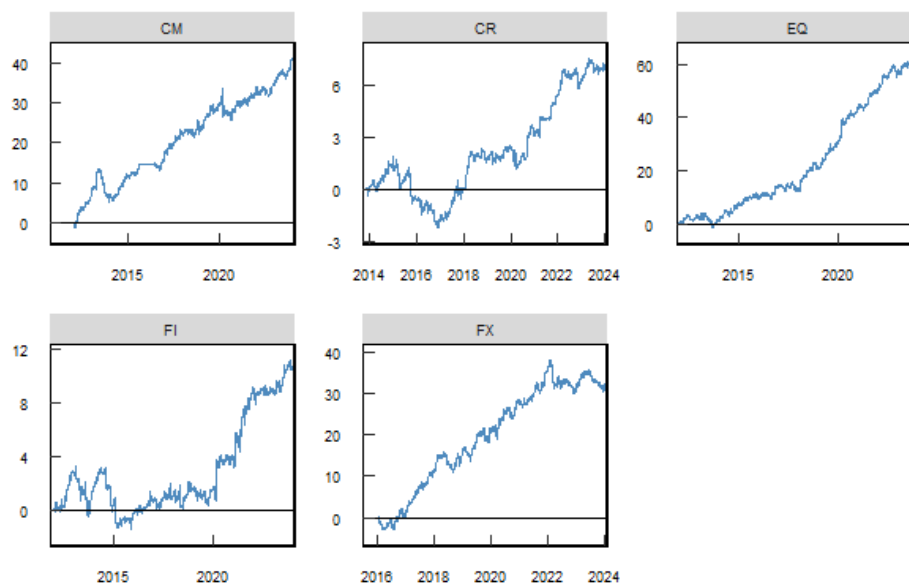
We keep using an expanding window approach and retrain the model on a monthly basis. The initial training period is 2 years. We leave one-month window between training and testing period to avoid forward looking bias, and use the trained model to predict realized volatility for the subsequent month. For example, the first prediction for majority of assets is as of 2012-02-01 using training sample from 2010-01-01 to 2011-12-31; the last prediction is as of 2023-12-31 using training sample from 2010-01-01 to 2023-10-31.

Intra-asset Strategy and Portfolio Performance

In our first back-test, the trading strategy is implemented within each asset class individually (as seen in Appendix): on a daily basis, we rank each asset based on model prediction and construct a portfolio with the same number of long vol and short vol candidates. Each position is scaled by its inverse vol level when entered and positions are held for 1 month. PNL is calculated MtM everyday. The number of names in the trading basket (n) can be different for asset classes, depending on the number of securities contained in each asset (N) (Figure 5). Effectively, in each portfolio, we hold $n \times 22$ short and same number of long overlapping positions. On any given day, the P&L is calculated on a mark-to-market basis. The out-of-sample performance are shown in Figure 2.

Our cross asset portfolio is then constructed by aggregating those five individual strategies (Figure 3), where the allocation to each is determined by its inverse volatility (Figure 4). Note that Credit and FX were added later due to the limitation of data prior to 2012 and 2014, respectively. On average, we allocate the largest weights to Credit (34%) and Fixed Income (30%), relatively evenly between Commodities and Equities (16% and 13%), and least to FX (7%).

Figure 2: Individual strategy performance



Source: J.P. Morgan

Figure 3: Portfolio performance

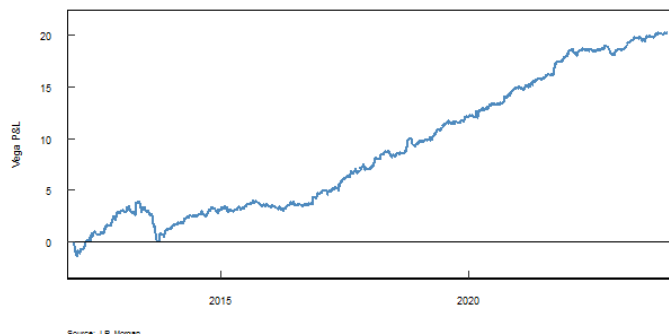
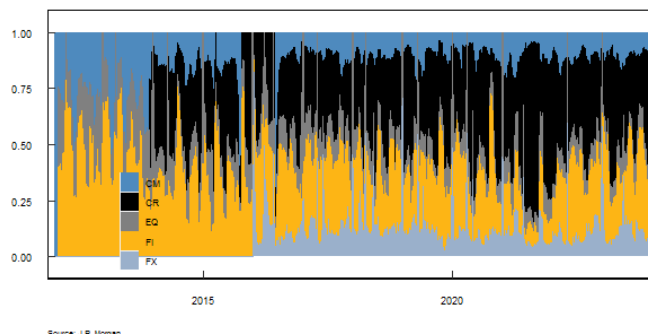


Figure 4: Portfolio allocation



We detailed out the metrics for each assets as well as the portfolio level for below categories (Figure 5), in order to provide insight into the relative strengths and weaknesses of each architecture. Since we completely rerun each experiment five times, we have reported the average across all runs, for each metric.

- 1) **Profitability** through annualized vega P&L, and percentage of positive captured returns;
- 2) **Risk** through annualized volatility, annualized downside deviation, skewness and maximum drawdown;
- 3) **Risk-adjusted** performance through annualized Sharpe and Sortino.

The model performs best on Equities and Commodities, and reasonably well on FX, which could have simply benefitted from breadth. The average hold-to-maturity hit ratio is 53%. Our portfolio has delivered an annualized vega profit of 1.63 through the past 12 years, with a lower vol (1.26 vega) and a higher Sharpe (1.29) than any individual asset, suggesting the portfolio is benefit from diversification.

Figure 5: Performance metrics for individual strategy and the entire diversified portfolio

Excl. TC.

Asset	N	n	PNL (Vega)	Vol (Vega)	Sharpe	Down.Dev. (Vega)	Sortino	Skewness	MDD (Vega)	% Hit Ratio
CM	9	2	3.28	3.76	0.87	2.96	1.11	-4.34	-7.80	56.3
CR	4	1	0.68	1.33	0.52	1.41	0.49	-0.91	-1.61	50.8
EQ	13	3	4.71	4.33	1.09	3.35	1.41	1.13	-4.27	53.4
FI	4	1	0.89	2.06	0.43	1.8	0.49	0.43	-2.44	53.2
FX	23	5	3.74	4.53	0.82	4.8	0.78	-0.23	-4.30	52.9
Port.	-	-	1.63	1.26	1.29	-	-	0.14	-1.55	-

Source: J.P. Morgan

To make the strategy more realistic, we incorporate proper treatment to transaction cost: Instead of applying a universe assumption to all assets, we assume TC as x% of implied vol strike for each trade so that a reasonable transaction cost is applied for each asset across different vol regimes through time. Figure 5 exhibits the impact on P&L and Sharpe Ratio over a wide range of TC that taken from 0.5% to 4% of implied vol strike for each trade. When moving from raw returns to 4% TC, the portfolio experiences a total reduction of 1.69 vega, translating to a drop of 1.2 in Sharpe ratio. We see the

model performs very well on Equities and Commodities as the average decay is 0.13 vega by every 0.5% increase of transaction cost, compared with FX which suffered an average loss of 0.61 vega every step up. It should be note that even when TC was taken at 3% of implied, Equities and Commodities perform well, and the portfolio still delivers a positive Sharpe at 0.3.

Figure 6: Transaction cost impact on Sharpe Ratio for individual strategy and for the entire diversified portfolio

TC ranges from 0.5% ~ 4% of implied vol strike for each trade.

		0.50%	1.0%	1.5%	2.0%	2.5%	3.0%	3.5%	4.0%
CM	PNL (vega)	3.03	2.79	2.54	2.29	2.05	1.80	1.56	1.31
	Sharpe	0.81	0.74	0.68	0.61	0.55	0.48	0.41	0.35
CR	PNL (vega)	0.56	0.43	0.31	0.18	0.06	-0.07	-0.19	-0.32
	Sharpe	0.42	0.33	0.23	0.14	0.04	-0.05	-0.15	-0.24
EQ	PNL (vega)	4.33	3.96	3.58	3.21	2.83	2.45	2.08	1.70
	Sharpe	1.00	0.91	0.83	0.74	0.65	0.57	0.48	0.39
FI	PNL (vega)	0.76	0.64	0.51	0.38	0.26	0.13	0.01	-0.12
	Sharpe	0.37	0.31	0.25	0.19	0.13	0.06	0.00	-0.06
FX	PNL (vega)	3.13	2.51	1.90	1.29	0.67	0.06	-0.55	-1.17
	Sharpe	0.69	0.55	0.42	0.28	0.15	0.01	-0.12	-0.26
Port.	PNL (vega)	1.40	1.19	0.98	0.77	0.56	0.35	0.14	-0.06
	Sharpe	1.13	0.97	0.80	0.63	0.46	0.29	0.12	-0.05

Source: J.P. Morgan.

Cross Asset Relative Value Model

Next, we built up the cross asset model from another angle by shrinking our universe to the 23 assets shown in Figure 6. The universe selection is not intended to be exhaustive but instead represent the assets that are the most liquid within each asset class.

Based on the data and methodology described above, we obtain daily signals and rankings for each asset over the last 12 years. The lower the ranking, the greater richness bias from the model, and therefore the higher chance to profit from short vol. Figure 8 shows that the ranking is effectively predicting the subsequent implied to realized vol spread. Figure 9 exhibits the correlation of ranking across asset classes. Commodities appear to be negatively correlated with all other asset classes, meaning when major names under commodities are identified as cheap, other assets are normally on the other side of the ranking. Equity vs. Credit and FX vs. Fixed Income have positive correlations. In Figure 10, we observed the Credit assets dominate the most expensive vol rankings, whereas Commodities and G3 tend to be ranked on the cheaper end. The model has a relatively neutral bias to equity indices.

Figure 7: 1M vol of the following assets are used in this study

Name	Type	Asset
Gold	Metal	Commodity
Copper	Metal	Commodity
Soybean	Ags	Commodity
Crude Oil	Energy	Commodity
AUDUSD	USD-G10	FX
EURUSD	USD-G10	FX
GBPUSD	USD-G10	FX
NZDUSD	USD-G10	FX
USDJPY	USD-G10	FX
USDBRL	USD-EM	FX
UST10Y	UST	Fixed Income
UST5Y	UST	Fixed Income
UST2Y	UST	Fixed Income
AS51	Index	Equity
SPX	Index	Equity
SX5E	Index	Equity
NKY	Index	Equity
UKX	Index	Equity
RTY	Index	Equity
CDX-NAIG	IG	Credit
CDX-NAHY	HY	Credit
ITRAXX-Europe	Main	Credit
ITRAXX-Xover	XOver	Credit

Source: J.P. Morgan

Figure 8: RV ranking is strongly correlated with subsequent implied realized vol spread

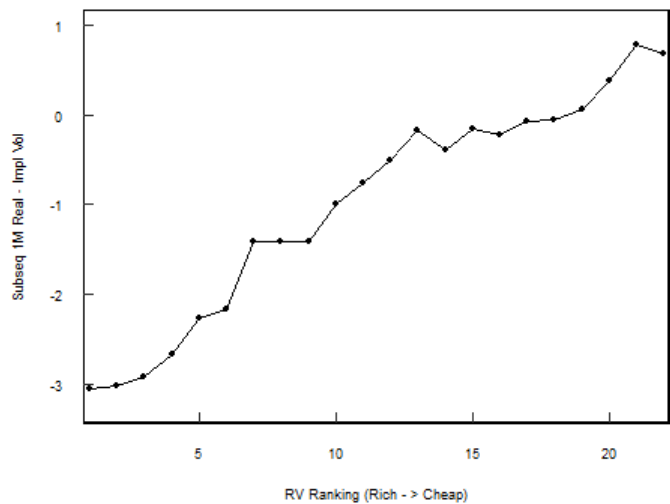


Figure 9: CARV ranking correlation across asset classes

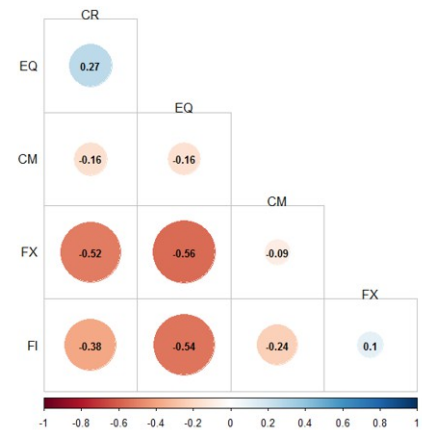
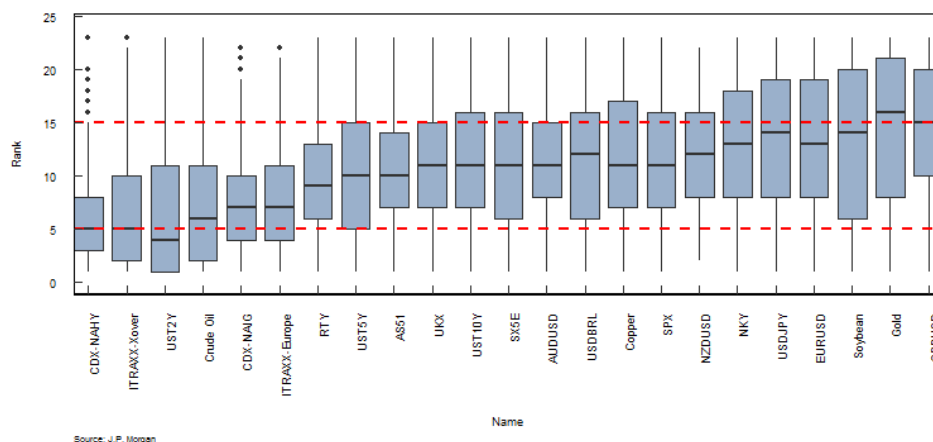


Figure 10: Average ranking per asset class



In Figure 11 and Figure 12, we show the hypothetical performance by allocating to the top 4 assets with the cheapest / richest volatility. As a comparison, we take short-only benchmark portfolio where we go short vol on all assets regardless of the signal. Our RV portfolio would have delivered an annual profit of 8.46 vega with a Sharpe of 1.49 prior transaction cost, outperforming the short-only benchmark portfolio significantly. We display the the impact on P&L and Sharpe Ratio over a wide range of TC in Figure 13. It should be highlighted that the portfolio would have performed well even net the transaction cost of 4% IV. Additionally, by varying the number of assets being invested in our portfolio (i.e. basket size) from 2 to 6, we didn't witness significant change in Sharpe ratio.

Figure 11: Hypothetical performance of long/short strategy on cross asset vol portfolios

Go long and short 4 names daily, holding for 1 month (i.e. 4 x 22 short and same amount of long overlapping positions). Excl. TC.

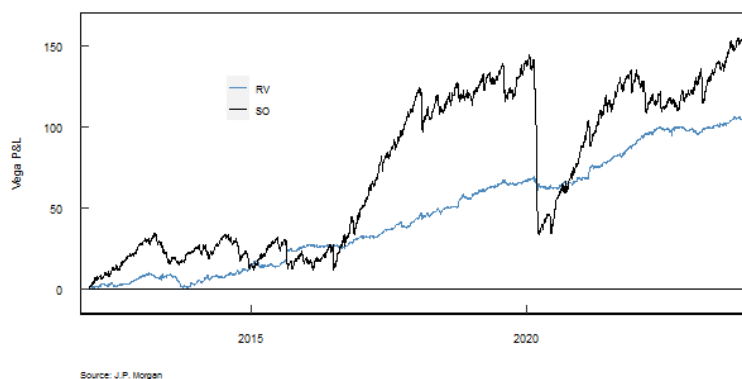


Figure 12: Portfolio performance excl. TC

Excl.TC	PNL (Vega)	Vol (Vega)	Sharpe	Down.Dev. (Vega)	Sortino	Skewness	MDD (Vega)	% Hit Ratio
RV	8.46	5.66	1.49	4.34	1.95	-0.22	-5.60	55.8
SO	12.01	20.82	0.58	17.98	0.67	-5.27	-27.32	63.1

Source: J.P. Morgan

Figure 13: Transaction cost impact on Sharpe Ratio for CARV

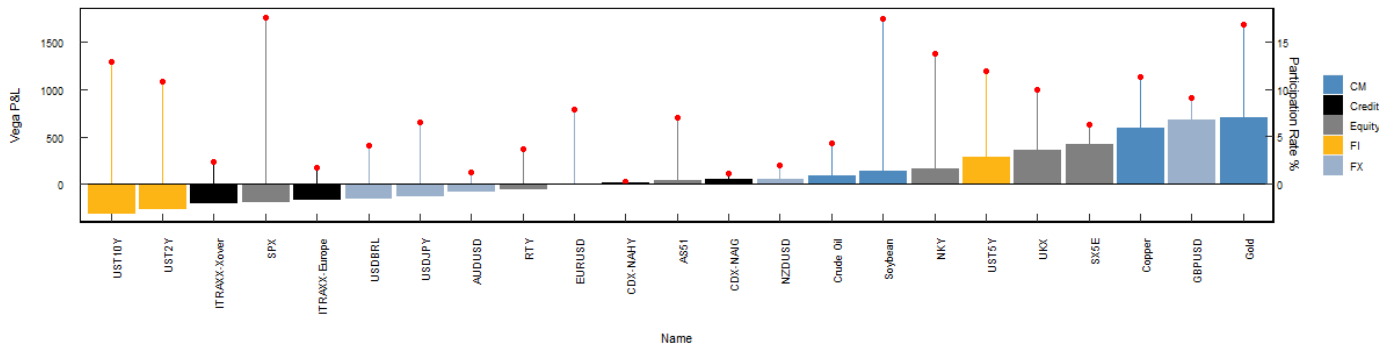
TC ranges from 0.5% ~ 4% of implied vol strike for each trade.

		0.50%	1.0%	1.5%	2.0%	2.5%	3.0%	3.5%	4.0%
CARV	PNL (vega)	7.96	7.47	6.98	6.49	6.00	5.51	5.01	4.52
	Sharpe	1.41	1.32	1.23	1.15	1.06	0.97	0.89	0.80

Source: J.P. Morgan

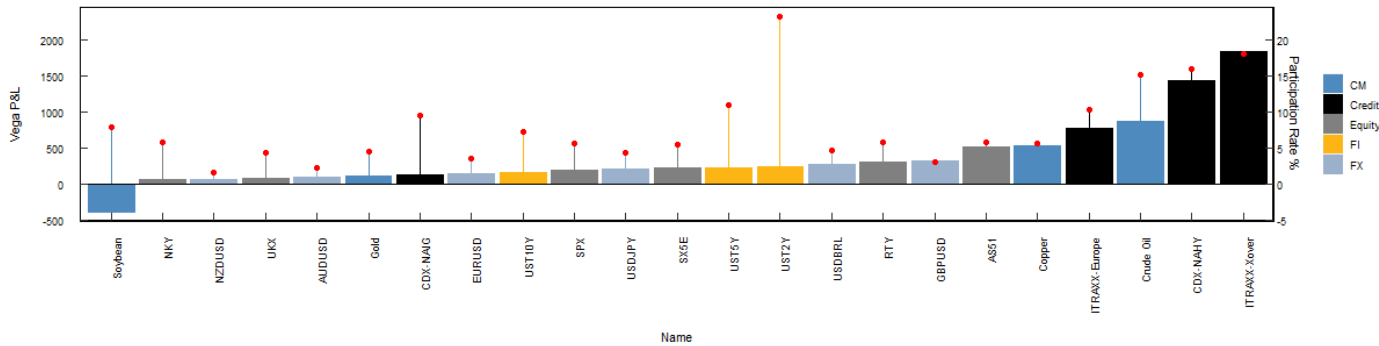
To add more colour, we plot the participation rate and P&L contribution by asset per each leg in Figure 14 and Figure 15. The short leg would have outperformed the long leg over the past years. The most notable feature is that credit and oil vol P&L dominates the short vol leg, whereas metals, sterling, and EU/UK equities vol were most profitable in long leg.

Figure 14: P&L contribution by asset class in long leg



Source: J.P. Morgan

Figure 15: P&L contribution by asset class in short leg



Source: J.P. Morgan

Conclusion

In this report, we build an attention-based deep learning framework leveraging high-frequency data to determine relative value among the volatility of over 50 assets across

Equity, FX, Commodity, Fixed Income and Credit. We have illustrated the suitability of the model by back-testing over a long time period from 2012 to 2023 and noting its comparatively strong performance in recent years. Our detailed study of the results by asset class demonstrate Equities and Commodities are overall the best performers.

We provide two views of portfolio construction: a risk parity style portfolio aggregating intra-asset RV strategies; as well as a narrow but liquid universe for cross asset RV trading. It's important to note that the portfolio that constructed both ways achieve good performance net of transaction costs assumptions.

An interesting avenue of future study would be to further customize model selection and parameters to each asset class to account for their unique characteristics. Moreover, we intend to further explore model interpretability to extract more information embedded in the deep learning models.

Appendix

Figure 16: Portfolio assets details

Asset	Name	TestFrom
Commodity	Gold	2011-12-01
Commodity	Silver	2011-12-01
Commodity	Copper	2011-12-01
Commodity	Platinum	2011-12-01
Commodity	Soybean	2011-12-01
Commodity	Wheat-SRW	2010-11-01
Commodity	Crude Oil	2011-12-01
Commodity	Brent	2011-12-01
Commodity	Natural Gas	2011-12-01
FX	AUDUSD	2015-07-01
FX	EURUSD	2015-12-15
FX	GBPUSD	2015-07-01
FX	NZDUSD	2015-12-01
FX	USDCAD	2015-12-01
FX	USDCHF	2015-12-01
FX	USDJPY	2015-07-01
FX	USDSEK	2015-12-01
FX	USDNOK	2015-07-01
FX	USDBRL	2015-12-01
FX	USDMXN	2015-12-01
FX	USDCZK	2015-07-01
FX	USDHUF	2015-07-01
FX	USDKRW	2015-12-03
FX	USDPLN	2015-12-01
FX	USDZAR	2015-12-01
FX	AUDJPY	2015-12-01
FX	GBPJPY	2015-12-01
FX	CADJPY	2015-12-01
FX	CHFJPY	2015-11-19
FX	AUDCAD	2015-12-01
FX	AUDNZD	2015-12-01
FX	GBPCHF	2015-12-01
Fixed Income	UST10Y	2011-12-01
Fixed Income	UST5Y	2011-12-01
Fixed Income	UST2Y	2011-12-01
Fixed Income	UST20Y	2011-12-01
Equity	AS51	2011-12-01
Equity	SPX	2011-12-01
Equity	NDX	2011-12-01
Equity	HSCEI	2011-12-01
Equity	HSI	2011-12-01
Equity	NIFTY	2011-12-01
Equity	SX5E	2011-12-01
Equity	NKY	2011-12-01
Equity	KOSPI2	2011-12-01
Equity	DAX	2011-12-01
Equity	UKX	2011-12-01
Equity	SMI	2011-12-01
Equity	RTY	2014-11-03
Credit	CDX-NAIG	2013-10-01
Credit	CDX-NAHY	2014-07-01
Credit	ITRAXX-Europe	2013-10-01
Credit	ITRAXX-Xover	2013-10-01

Source: J.P. Morgan.

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