

Cross Asset Factors: Portfolio Construction

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Setting the scene

- The often accepted approach to building a portfolio of cross asset risk premia is to use risk parity.
- Accepting risk parity as the “optimum” portfolio makes a number of “hidden” assumptions. Are these right? And can we do better?
- Before we can answer these questions we need to consider what estimates of both risk and correlation we use.
- The data we are using as an example data set are 16 cross asset factor indices, which are available on Bloomberg.

What problems are we trying to solve?

- There are three (inter-related) problems we need to solve
 - Volatility forecasting
 - Correlation forecasting
 - Which portfolio construction method to use?

} These could be combined into a “risk model”
- We note that even within these there are other choices that have to be made (rebalancing frequency, perhaps turnover constraints). And these feed back into the choice of volatility / covariance forecast methodology.
- Testing portfolio construction techniques is hard; in any backtest one particular approach will win. This doesn't mean much, but it is often the case that a piece of research on a particular approach will run a few backtests and use these to overgeneralise.
- Hence we cannot say “this is the best portfolio construction approach”. What we can understand is, for example, the sensitivity of the approach to estimation error.
- This all assumes that we are not doing any “timing” or explicit return forecasting; this would add another layer of complexity.

Section 2

Forecasting volatility

Literature review

- There is a huge literature on volatility forecasting - see Granger and Poon (2003) & Chen, He and Poon (2010) for a comprehensive overview
- In the 2003 summary of 66 studies, which compared out-of-sample volatility forecasts, they found that various forms of historical volatility beat various members of the GARCH family in 56% of the papers comparing the two. When implied volatility was compared to historical volatility, implied vol won 76% of the time; when compared to GARCH, implied volatility won 94% of the time.
- However, many of the surveyed papers were looking at shorter-term volatility forecasts; there were fewer looking at longer-term forecasting.
- Figlewski (2004) points out that the sample mean is unlikely to be the true mean of the distribution, and imposing a mean of zero (or the risk-free rate) is likely to be more accurate than using the sample mean.
- He goes on to show that for forecasts of longer-term volatility using 60 months worth of data beats any shorter-term forecast. However he measures the out-of-sample volatility using monthly data, which could lead to errors in this conclusion. We will run our own tests on this below.

Literature review (cont.)

- Ederington and Guan (2010) point out that the parameter estimates for a GARCH model which is forecasting one day ahead are not those that give the best longer horizon forecast. They contrast various GARCH models and their Absolute Restricted Least Squares model (ARLS) over horizons of 10, 20, 40 and 80 days.
- Recent work on volatility forecasting has included a large literature on realised volatility which uses shorter-term data for measuring volatility.

Volatility forecasting

- Historical volatility

- We use a simple historical volatility measure over differing periods. The only slight difference from normal is we impose a zero mean

- EWMA

$$h_{t+1} = (1 - \lambda)r_t^2 + \lambda h_t$$

- where h_t is the forecast of variance in the single period t

- GARCH & Restricted Least Squares

- The basic GARCH (1, 1) model is $h_{t+1} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 r_t^2 + \beta h_t$

- which can be rewritten as $H_{t,s} = \alpha'_0 + \lambda \sum_{j=0}^J \beta^j r_{t-j}^2$

- Ederington & Guan (2010) suggest a small variation to this where the beta is dependent on the forecast period, their restricted least squares (RLS) model:

$$H_{t,s} = \alpha'_0 + \lambda \sum_{j=0}^J \beta_s^j r_{t-j}^2$$

Volatility forecasting

- Absolute Restricted Least Squares

- This is a variant on the RLS model where we forecast the actual volatility rather than the variance:

$$\sqrt{H_{t,s}} = \alpha'_0 + \lambda \sqrt{\pi/2} \sum_{j=0}^J \beta^j |r_{t-j}|$$

- Stochastic volatility

- There are many stochastic volatility models. We use the basic one where

$$h_{t+1} = \alpha + \phi h_t + \eta_t$$

$$\log r_t = \exp(h_t / 2) \varepsilon_t$$

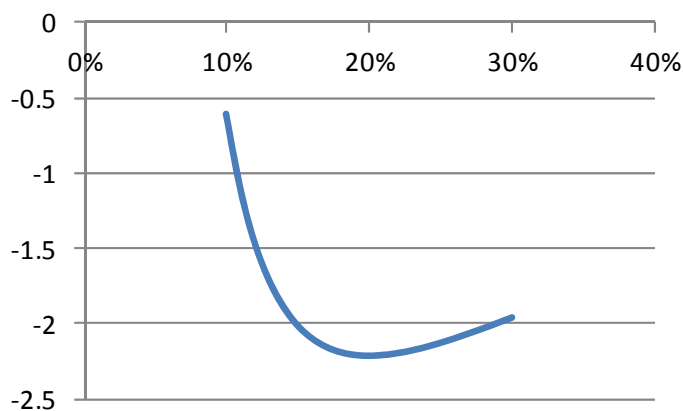
How should we measure this difference?

- Patton (2011) compares various ways of looking at the difference between the actual and the forecast volatility. He suggests using the sum of the squared returns of the asset as the estimator of the actual volatility.
- In that paper, and in Patton and Sheppard (2007), they compare a number of ways of comparing the forecast of variance, h , and the estimate of the actual variance $\hat{\sigma}^2$
- They suggest using one of two functions

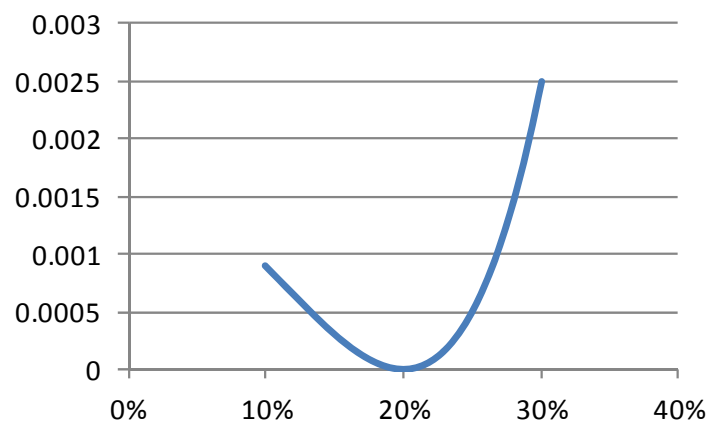
$$QLIKE : L(\hat{\sigma}^2, h) = \log h + \frac{\hat{\sigma}^2}{h}$$

or

$$MSE : L(\hat{\sigma}^2, h) = (\hat{\sigma}^2 - h)^2$$



Source: UBS



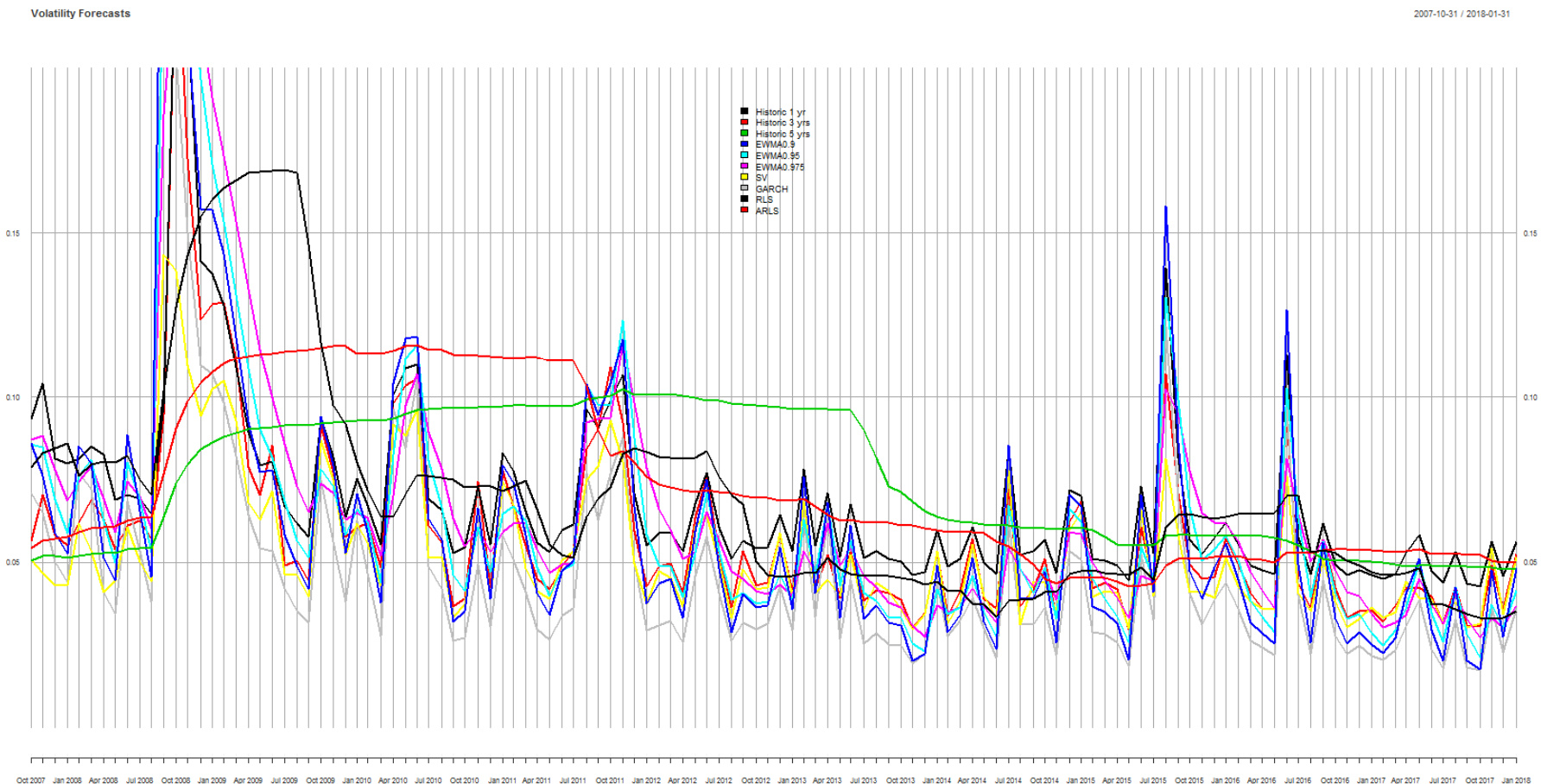
Source: UBS

Set up of our tests

- We use the 19 indices detailed earlier
- We compare the following forecasting methodologies for forecasting the 1 month out-of-sample volatility
 - Historical volatility (1, 3 and 5 years)
 - EWMA – weekly data with a lambda of 0.9, 0.95 and 0.975
 - Stochastic volatility, GARCH, RLS and ARLS. Each one forecasting over 4 weeks
- We use the QLIKE and the MSE loss function to rank our forecasts and the proxy for the true volatility is the sum of the 1 month daily squared returns.

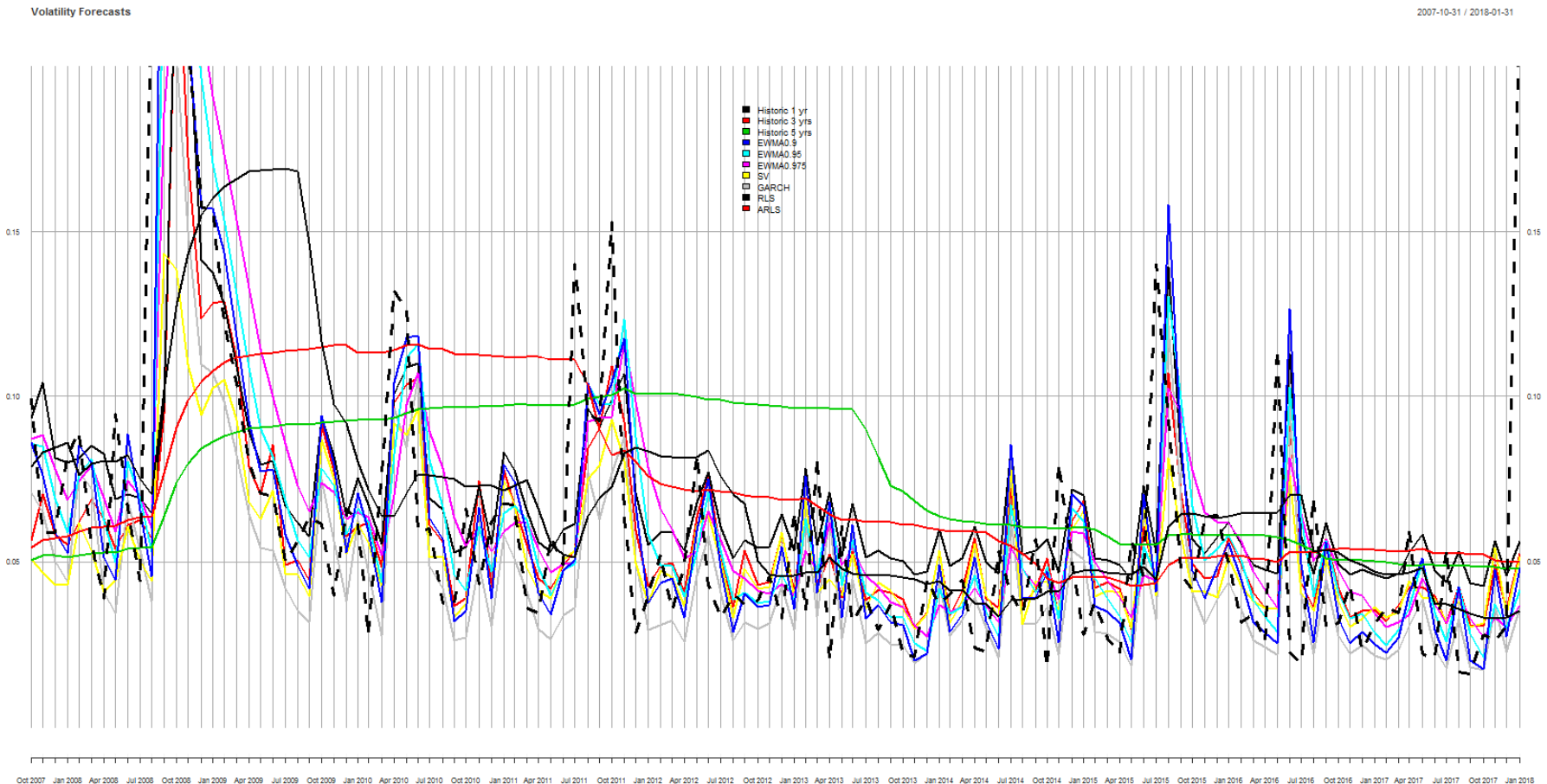
What do the different models forecast?

- Chart shows the various 1 month forward volatility forecasts for the US Delta Hedged Strangle index.



And what are they forecasting?

- Chart shows the various 1 month forward volatility forecasts for the US Delta Hedged Strangle index.
- The dotted line is the actual 1 month forward volatility (21 day sum of squared returns)



Example results

- Table shows the results for the Index 1 back test. The stochastic volatility methodology does well under the MSE metric, the RLS under the Qlike one. The red cells are the best forecast – the grey cells are those which are significantly worse than this at a 5% level.

	Qlike	MSE
Historic 1 yr	-810.70	-0.0030
Historic 3 yrs	-811.11	-0.0025
Historic 5 yrs	-789.20	-0.0036
EWMA0.9	-790.31	-0.0039
EWMA0.95	-813.61	-0.0046
EWMA0.975	-819.71	-0.0044
SV	-817.21	-0.0315
GARCH	-711.91	-0.0296
RLS	-845.24	-0.0059
ARLS	-832.85	-0.0203

Summary results

NAME	QLIKE	MSE	NAME	QLIKE	MSE
1	RLS	SV	9	GARCH	SV
2	GARCH	SV	10	ARLS	SV
3	EWMA 0.975	SV	11	SV	ARLS
4	Historic 5 years	SV	12	EWMA 0.975	GARCH
5	GARCH	SV	13	SV	ARLS
6	RLS	SV	14	EWMA 0.975	EWMA 0.9
7	GARCH	SV	15	GARCH	ARLS
8	SV	SV	16	SV	SV

Source: UBS

- The table shows the best approach in each case. The stochastic volatility model seems to do the best overall using the MSE error measure; for the QLIKE measure the picture is very mixed.

Volatility forecasting: current conclusions

- Stochastic volatility appears to be pretty good at forecasting one month volatility, although many other models cannot be rejected.
- There are other approaches in the literature. For example Bollerslev et al (2016) suggest a procedure where the parameters of the model are allowed to change with the estimated degree of measurement error. This type of approach could improve our forecasts.

References

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