



Multi-asset market outlook

From deterrence to dividends: Investing in Europe's defense renaissance

June 2025

Marketing materials for professional investors, not for onward distribution.

General overview

Equities continue to dig themselves out of the US tariff barrage

MULTI ASSET	1mo	3mo	YTD	1YR	3YR	5YR
MSCI World (UH, EUR)	6.1%	-6.5%	4.3%	8.7%	11.0%	13.7%
MSCI World local currency	5.9%	0.2%	2.7%	12.1%	13.2%	14.4%
MSCI World (H, EUR)	5.8%	0.0%	2.3%	11.0%	11.5%	12.8%
Oil Index (USD)	5.5%	-10.2%	-10.7%	-8.9%	-8.6%	21.5%
Emerging Markets (UH, EUR)	4.4%	-2.6%	-0.8%	8.1%	3.1%	6.6%
Emerging Markets (LC)	3.1%	3.2%	5.6%	12.2%	7.0%	8.3%
Global real estate (UH, EUR)	2.4%	-8.9%	4.6%	8.3%	0.9%	6.1%
GSCI Commodities (USD)	1.7%	-12.3%	-11.0%	-6.9%	-6.2%	17.3%
EMD local currency (UH, EUR)	1.7%	-3.0%	-0.6%	5.5%	3.3%	1.3%
Global high yield (H, EUR)	1.5%	0.3%	2.2%	8.5%	5.8%	4.0%
EMD hard currency (UH, EUR)	0.8%	-7.1%	-5.1%	3.7%	3.5%	1.2%
Cash (EUR)	0.2%	0.6%	1.1%	3.2%	2.9%	1.5%
Global investment grade bonds (H, EUR)	0.0%	-0.3%	1.6%	4.7%	1.3%	-0.8%
Gold (USD)	-0.6%	15.5%	24.2%	39.8%	20.5%	12.3%
Global inflation-linked bonds (H, EUR)	-0.8%	-1.2%	0.6%	0.3%	-3.4%	-2.6%
Global Gov Bonds (H, EUR)	-0.9%	-0.6%	0.7%	2.9%	-0.8%	-2.7%

Source: Robeco, Bloomberg. Note Returns in Euros

2 All market data to 30 May 2025 unless mentioned otherwise

Equities tread the path of least resistance

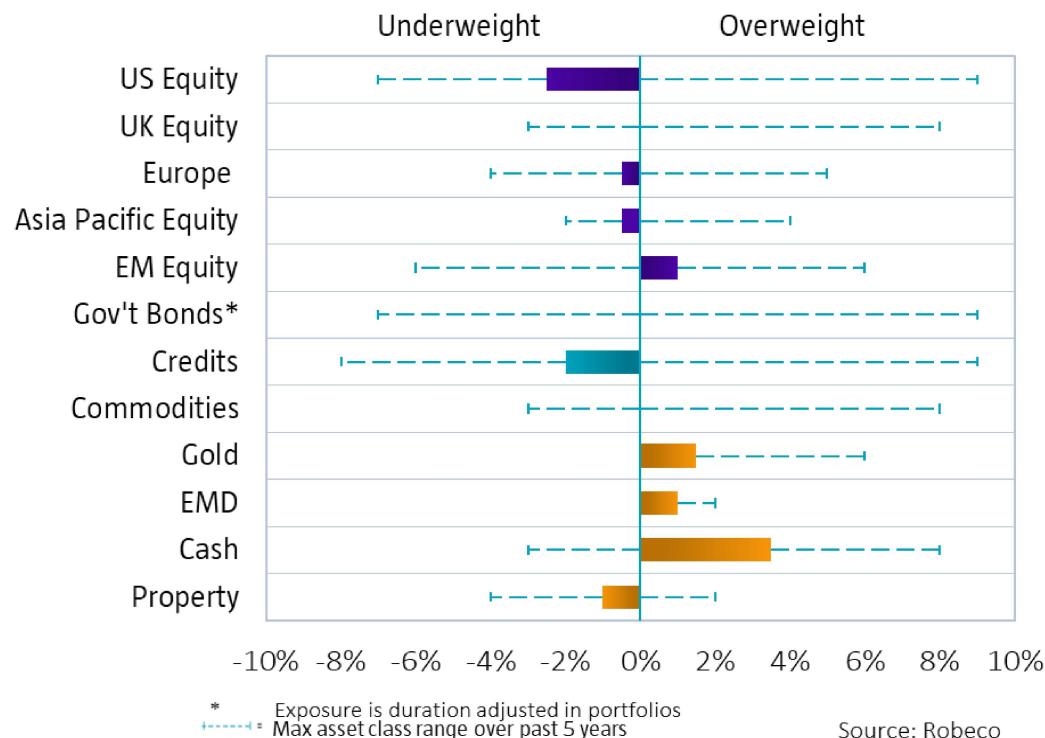
Equity markets outperformed in May, as a series of postponements and legal challenges to President Trump's planned tariffs delayed their enactment. The flimsy unilateral trade deals seemed to soothe short-term nerves but are more hope over substance. We note that tariff revenue is running significantly ahead of 2024 but is still insignificant in dealing with the US debt burden.

Emerging market assets benefited from the benign risk environment and the follow through from a weaker US dollar in April. Sovereign bonds lagged as emergency interest rate cuts by central banks to combat policy uncertainty were priced out across the US, Eurozone and UK.

In the alternatives space, oil helped commodity indices grind higher, though that market is in over supply and OPEC continues to open the taps. Gold took a breather over May but is still the standout positive contributor to our portfolio performance this year.

Robeco Multi Asset views

Investment Solutions multi-asset strategy positions (50:50 portfolio)



Stick to the process

During May, we continued to cautiously add to equities in global and emerging markets, as we balanced the short-term relief rally with the longer-term negative growth effect of higher tariffs.

The conundrum we face is that tariffs will raise the cost of imported goods in the US, as exporters will not drop their prices. This will force companies to decide to either 'eat the tariffs' by accepting lower margins, or pass them on to the consumer.

The dollar appreciated during Trump's previous tariffs wave, dampening their effect on US importers. This time, we are likely to see a weaker US dollar, so there will be no offsetting factor this time.

The outlook is therefore a mix between lower US earnings into Q4 and/or sticky goods inflation. The former will shine a light on equity multiples and the latter gives the Fed room less room to cut rates.

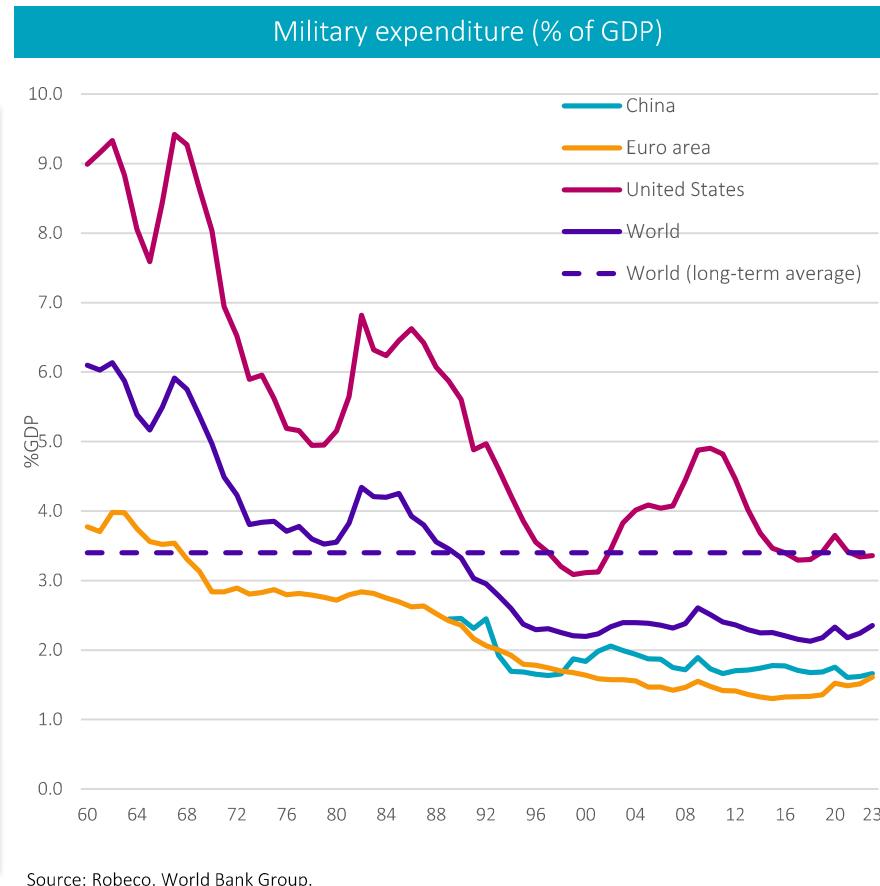
Theme of the month: Defense renaissance

From deterrence to dividends: Investing in Europe's defense renaissance

The pace of global defense spending has picked up steam, supported by continued geopolitical tensions from the ongoing Ukraine-Russian conflict in Europe and the potential shift in US policy around defense spending, which in 2024 accounted for nearly 40% of all military expenditures by countries around the world.

In Europe, the focus has clearly shifted on regaining military autonomy. At the upcoming NATO summit in The Hague at the end of June, expectations are high for an agreement around defense spending commitments to reach 3.5% of national GDP. While it remains to be seen whether these targets will be reached, it is clear that we are in the initial stages of a great rebalancing, and Europe needs to achieve a certain degree of security independence in the future.

What's apparent is that the peace dividend is gone. If we take into account the fact that average military expenditure has been close to the 3.5% mark for the world since 1960, in Europe, we are only mean reverting to a long-term steady state level at a minimum.



Theme of the month: Defense renaissance

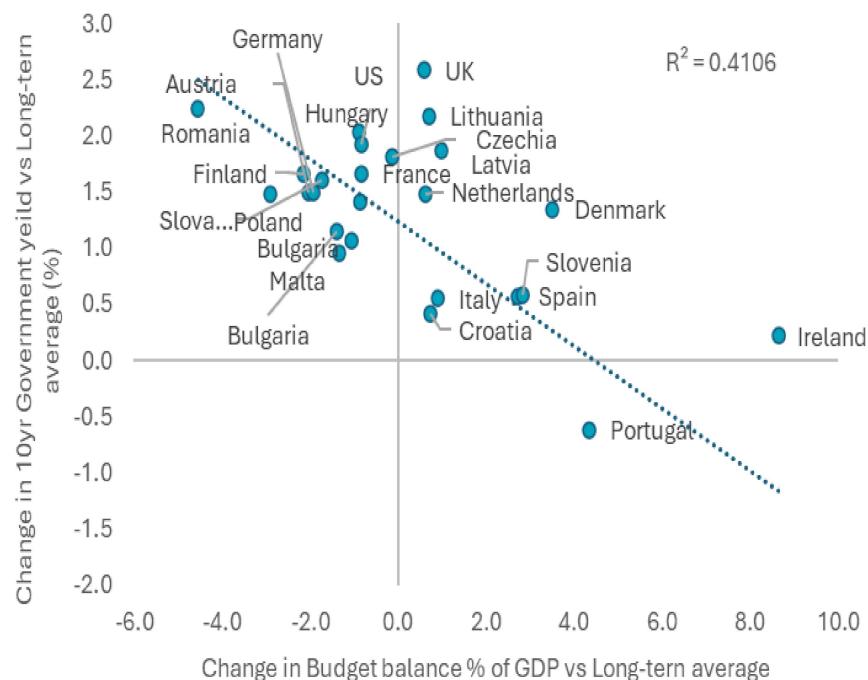
The cost of security

Government borrowing constraints are traditionally a key limiting factor for rising military expenditures, though we believe European countries have more leeway to expand defense capabilities without threatening sovereign debt. The chart on the right shows that as budgets deteriorate, governments are forced to pay higher interest rates on the sovereign debt they issue to fund their spending. This may trigger the 'bond vigilante' phenomenon covered in last month's outlook.

Looking ahead, the ability of a monumental increase in defense spending to trigger another bout of inflation is there if it is not compensated by spending cuts, productivity gains or higher taxation elsewhere. However, we are cognizant of two mitigating factors.

First, German industry is currently facing a lot of slack with capacity utilization far below trend, keeping a lid on inflation in the near term. Second, there are potential positive supply side effects from innovations emerging from elevated defense spending which could be a disinflationary force as potential output is raised versus actual output.

Impact of expansionary fiscal policies in government yields



Source: Robeco, Bloomberg, Eurostat. Data as at May-2025.

Theme of the month: Defense renaissance

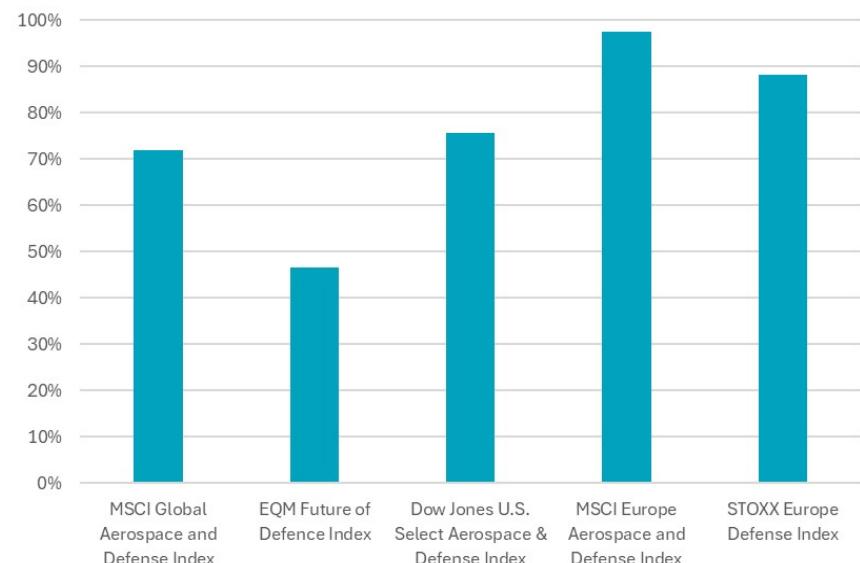
Is this an investible idea? Yes

Investment opportunities for sustainable investors can be identified outside the traditional aerospace and defense sector exclusions. Areas like cybersecurity, medical technology, energy security and infrastructure are expected to benefit from higher levels of capital expenditure; they also offer better valuations relative to the more expensive aerospace and defense stocks. History has many examples where military projects have improved the productivity of the broader economy, such as in the development of GPS.

A more active approach is also preferable for harnessing opportunities in the defense spending theme, as passive indices tend to have narrow definitions and a high concentration of single names. For example, the top five stocks in the MSCI European Aerospace and Defense index constitute 80% of its market cap, leaving limited room for diversification.

Aerospace and Defense index concentration

Top 10 holdings (%)



Source: Robeco, MSCI, STOXX, S&P Dow Jones. Data as at May-2025.

All market data to 30 May 2025 unless mentioned otherwise

Theme of the month: Defense renaissance

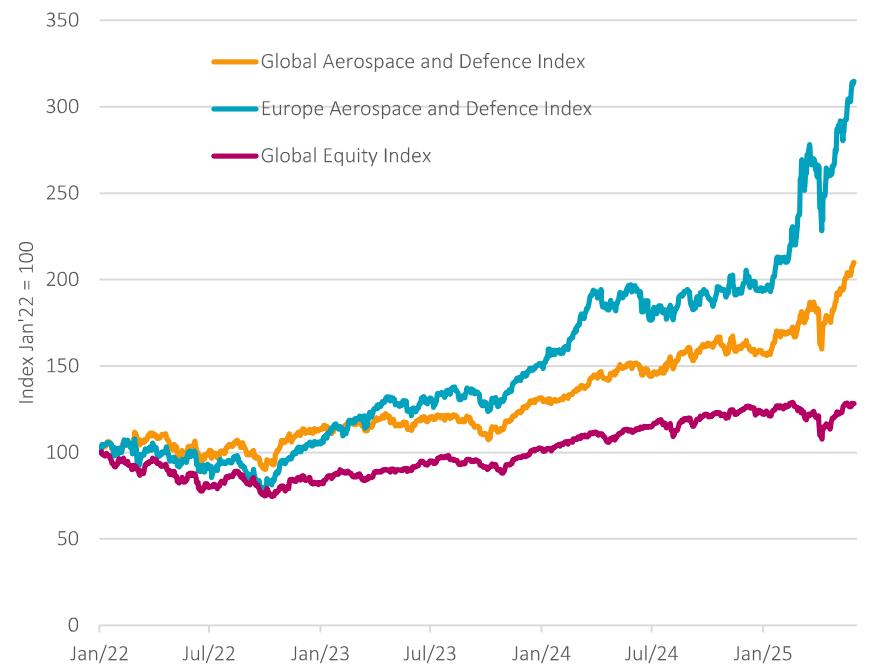
Balancing act: Finding opportunities in a rising defense spending era

The changing geopolitical landscape and greater focus of European governments to increase defence spending has supported the double-digit outperformance of the global aerospace and defense sector versus the broader global equity market since the beginning of the year.

Despite returns of European aerospace and defense companies more than outpacing those of the US, relative forward valuations still favour European defense, which is trading at a 13% discount to the US index. In absolute terms, valuations of aerospace and defence companies are now at levels where earnings delivery will play a key role in future performance.

At Robeco, we continually update our sustainability framework, and we believe there is a broader opportunity set for investors who are committed to integrating sustainability through an active management approach.

Defense industry stock prices have outperformed



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Economy

US consumer inflation expectations have surged to 4%



8 All market data to 30 May 2025 unless mentioned otherwise

A taxonomy of the TACO economy

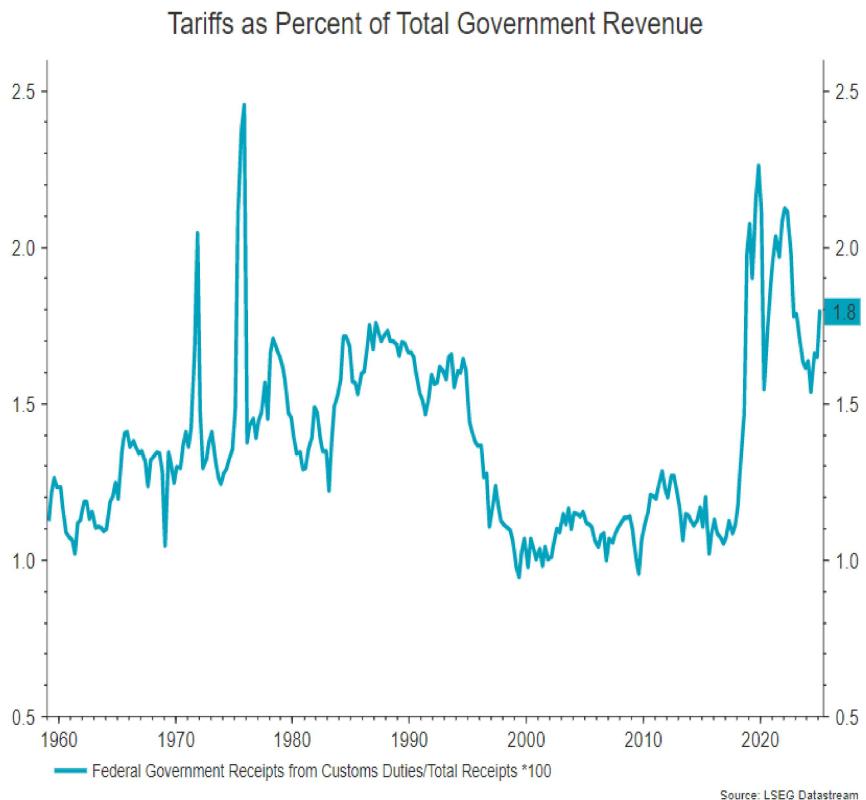
Last month saw inflation surprises as measured by Citi turn to the lowest levels since 2020. Lower commodity prices, especially for oil, are providing the tailwind here. Lower-than-expected inflation is clearly helpful in sustaining real wage growth for the US consumer. Furthermore, lower actual experienced inflation might start to put a floor under the slide in consumer confidence observed in recent months. In addition, it may start to lower consumer inflation expectations on a 1-5-year horizon, as these still hovered around the 4% level in May's surveys.

Order in the policy chaos

Markets and the US consumer have detected there is order in the Trumpian policy chaos evidenced by the surging popularity of the acronym TACO (Trump Always Chickens Out) in recent weeks. After the 10 April pause on implementing universal reciprocal tariffs (the pause ending by 8 July), Trump in May announced a reduction in reciprocal tariffs on China for the next 90 days to 10% from the earlier 34% in April. Nonetheless, the 20% fentanyl penalty remains in place, as well as pre-existing tariffs on China. On 27 May, a 50% reciprocal tariff on all imports from the EU was also delayed. The path towards de-escalation is clearly there.

Economy

Frontloading impact is visible in higher Q1 tariff revenue



CBO estimates might embolden Trump

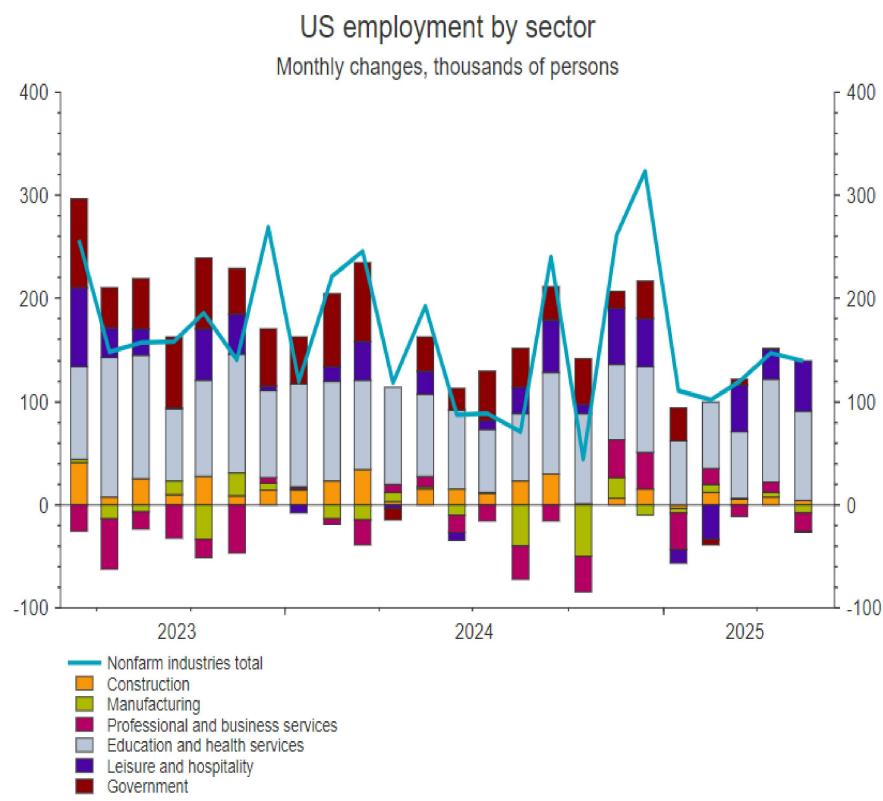
Yet, Trump is aware that he is being perceived as being prone to caving in, and so he might start to push back against the TACO narrative. He might also be emboldened by a recent CBO report that tariff revenue *does* finance his tax cuts, leading to a net deficit reduction of USD 400 billion in over 10 years.

Still, the CBO estimates were made before accounting for tariffs' *overall negative* impact on the US economy. Institutions like the Tax Foundation show only USD 140 billion of annual tariff revenue instead of the USD 280 billion revenue predicted by the CBO, and the US will see rising deficits as a result.

We agree on the latter, but acknowledge that tariffs as a percentage of total government revenue will likely exceed 2.5% as negotiations with the countries affected are settled, the highest number in decades.

Economy

US jobs market; bending, not breaking



10 All market data to 30 May 2025 unless mentioned otherwise

The bark from peak policy uncertainty

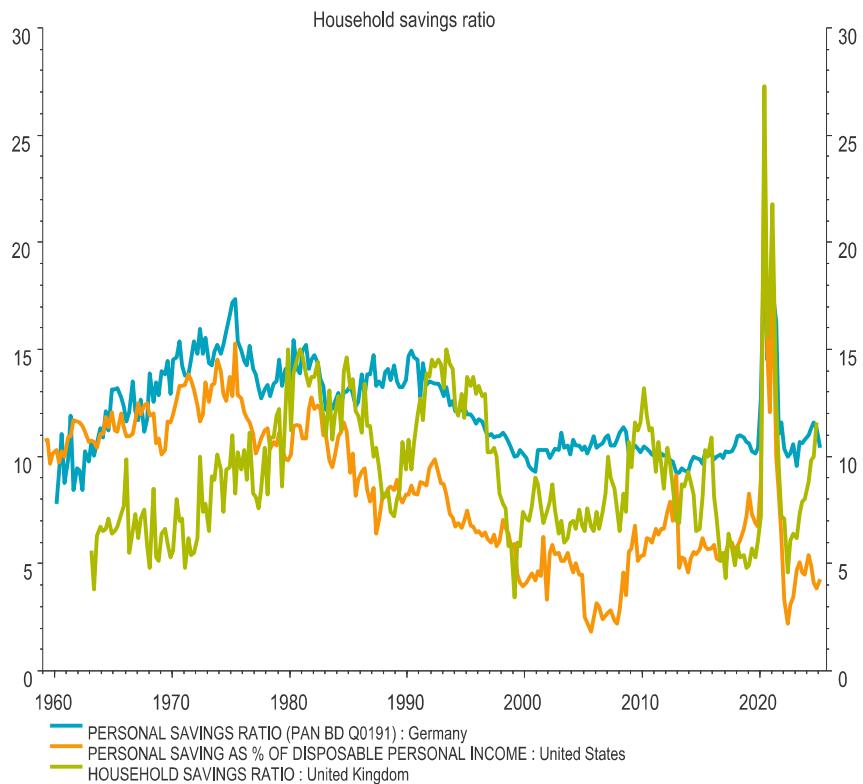
The hard data versus soft data conundrum is still in full swing. The ISM non-manufacturing leading indicator dropped into contraction territory, with consumer sentiment data also remaining downbeat. Yet, hard data from the US labor market – while showing some cracks (US jobless claims rising to 247,000) – seems to be holding up overall. Non-farm payrolls increased by 139,000 in May, with business services shedding jobs compared to prior month. Average hourly earnings increased to 3.9%, with unemployment remaining at 4.2%.

While at first glance this indicates a resilient jobs market, rising wages could also indicate that the influx of migrant workers is reversing, creating wage pressures. All in all, the key question with regard to the US economic outlook in the next few quarters is how much of a slowdown of US consumption is going to materialize, and how sizeable the inflation uptick will be once tariffs start to be implemented.

So far, the immediate fall-out from peak tariff policy uncertainty has almost been non-existent; Q2 US growth is running at a 3.7% rate according to the Atlanta Fed Nowcast.

Economy

Germany's household savings rate has rolled over



11 All market data to 30 May 2025 unless mentioned otherwise

Europe; soldiering on

European unemployment remained at 6.2% in May, around cycle lows. Industrial production has improved on the continent, with a notable catch-up becoming visible on this front versus the US. In Germany, leading indicators are perking up overall. Order intakes are stabilizing in manufacturing. Construction, trade and service sector continue to improve.

ECB President Christine Lagarde delivered a “hawkish” 25 bps rate cut on 5 June. The ECB lowered its 2026 inflation forecast due to a strong euro and lower commodity prices. In our view, a 1.6% CPI reading for 2026 might underestimate the reflationary potential from huge defense spending and a continued recovery in domestic consumption. The June NATO summit in The Hague will likely confirm our monthly theme of a defense renaissance on the European continent.

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Q1/2025