

Market Outlook:

Selective prognosis

Global hotspots, such as Syria, North Korea, Myanmar, and the Mid-East prompt a *moment-in-time* effect for investors and global bourses to ponder near-term consequences and how polarized and dysfunctional some of our geopolitical dynamic really is. What's particularly worrisome is that we've had these "moments" before in other conflict spots and thus we can extrapolate rather easily their significant cost upon the financial markets.

The direct impact of these global conflagrations, of course, is not contemporaneous. Yet, the very starting point which makes us human has to give any of us with a conscience pause about what type of world we are going to leave to our heirs.

What we have learned from previous carnage is that it is not the actions we witness today that matter....although heinous....but the generational repercussions for the afflicted upon infrastructure, social institutions, and emotional well-being.

With global financial stock markets perched at lofty levels, one has to ask if making money is the panacea for all human ills, or simply an antiseptic arms-length way of keeping our "heads on straight" while ignoring all the perversions going on around us?

Whether because of or in spite of this obsession with making money, the markets recent cornucopia tells quite a story. Isn't it amazing how marginalized these conflict zones become the further from their epicenter one resides? Believe me, the closing price of Amazon is the furthest thing from the mind of a refugee in Aleppo or an orphaned child in Baghdad.

There are, as earlier noted, historical precedents for how the world's financial markets have moved in concert with, or in opposition to, explosive man-upon-man atrocities. Not too long ago the drum beat noisily for war in Iraq. Yet the markets slowly migrated laterally for nearly half a decade. The crescendo of political rhetoric was not enough to rally the stock markets then.

Going back further generations, it didn't matter which side you were on during the Cuban missile crisis....everyone was scared and the markets were paralyzed as we considered an "Armageddon-like" outcome. One year later, though, a steadier political climate netted a Dow Jones gain in excess of 30 percent.

Steady hand

Markets are constantly traversing crisis transitions. The impact of the fear of war or the plight of the less-fortunate is a debate for theologians, scientists, politicians, ethicists, and economists. The repercussions of these conflict periods can have fundamental generational impact. The message of those affected by war, racism, intolerance, or bigotry should not be dismissed because we, miles away and disinterested, don't feel it in our pocketbooks today.

The ramifications of economic and political oppression reverberate...if not today, later...into our households; our politics; our military; our religion; and, ultimately, our economy. Worse, the disruptions they cause to our belief systems and psyche are mostly *un*-quantifiable.

Variables exist which either quell or exacerbate regional conflict. Our priority, however, should be to galvanize sanity where there is none and to be committed to providing economic, spiritual, and political opportunity for all players equally.

It's not unusual that trade and industry institutions spend a great deal of time worrying about how to acquire greater profitability from their clients rather than using their financial leverage to broaden their sphere of influence for the common good. It's not complicated, really. We all live on this "blue marble" together. Why not try to use all that brain power to improve the lot of ourselves and others with whom we share the ride?

By all accounts, such "mundane" human issues....such as hunger, poverty, conflict....didn't deter the Dow Jones Industrial Average from powering forward last week, breaking into super-stratospheric levels, and helping fortunate investors to pad their 401-k retirement accounts. Even as economic fundamentals improve, the amount of time shareholders spend working towards magnifying their net worth intensifies, as well. While a significant percentage of us worry about holding on to financial security, there is an even larger percent of the world's population who are simply trying to acquire some.

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