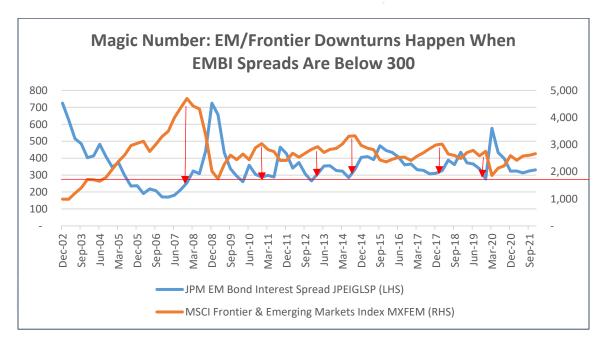
Outlook: Why We Think Interest Rates Won't Crater Our Markets

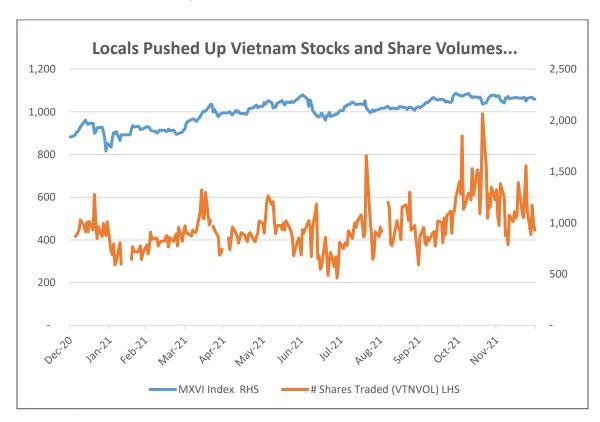
"Distinguishing the signal from the noise requires both scientific knowledge and self-knowledge." Nate Silver

Higher interest rates are usually cited as 2022's biggest macro risk for our markets. As a bottom-up manager, Kyklos targets companies more than macro trends, and most macro commentary is noise to us. For consistency and efficiency, we use specific tools to monitor macro risk, one of which is the interest rate premium required by investors to buy Emerging government bonds instead of US Treasuries, to compensate for Emerging country risks.

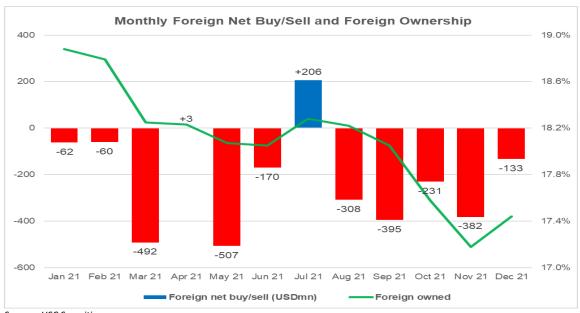
Our tool tells us that **our markets** are **unlikely to fall apart right now**. The chart below shows the interest rate spread between the JPMorgan Emerging Markets Bond Index (EMBI) and US Treasuries, versus the price of the MSCI Frontier & Emerging Markets Index (MXFEM). Almost every major downturn in these stock markets over the past 20 years was preceded by a drop in the Emerging bond interest rate premium to less than 300 basis points (i.e. 3%). That 300 "magic number" reflects points in time when investors were overly-optimistic on the economic prospects of those markets. Right now, investor optimism is moderate, with Emerging bonds paying about 325 basis points (i.e. 3.25%) more than Treasuries. That spread is somewhat lower than the long-term average of about 360, but it means that some investors have already sold positions, and prices already reflect some amount of fear.



Another reason for our confidence is that **foreign stock ownership in small Emerging and Frontier markets is already low,** because those investors have already sold. Even in market favorites like Vietnam, foreign investors sold as share prices and volumes rose in 2021 thanks to local buyers. We think that the risk of a downturn in our markets caused by foreign selling is lower in 2022 than in recent years.



.. While Foreigners Sold and Foreign Ownership in Vietnam Fell in 2021.



Source: HSC Securities

We continue to look for fresh opportunities in 2022. Watching, not waiting.

Charlie Gushee December 31, 2021

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