

In this edition of Laser Focus:

- Ethereum ETF Inflows continue to gain momentum as market participants diversify beyond Bitcoin.
- Bitcoin reached new all-time highs on May 22nd (Pizza Day) and remains poised for further gains.
- MACRO FOCUS: Heavy data releases led to a reassessment of interest rate expectations, with markets now pricing in fewer potential Fed rate cuts. The S&P 500 posted its strongest May performance since 1990 and major agreements were signed between the UAE and the U.S. as Trump seeks to strengthen the position of U.S. firms in the region.

Ethereum ETF Inflows Gaining Momentum

While recent coverage has largely focused on the rapid growth of Bitcoin ETFs, now exceeding \$120 billion in assets under management (AUM) since their launch in early 2024, attention is beginning to shift toward Ethereum ETFs. Launched in July 2024, these funds have so far attracted a more modest \$9 billion in AUM. However, that dynamic may be changing.

Ethereum's role as the foundational blockchain for decentralized finance (DeFi), stablecoins, and tokenization is increasingly being recognized. In the last 20 trading days alone, Ethereum ETFs have seen net inflows of \$815 million, turning year-to-date (YTD) net flows positive at approximately \$658 million. This reflects growing institutional awareness and investment interest. Major payment networks including Visa, Mastercard, and Stripe are developing stablecoin payment solutions built on the Ethereum network. As these systems scale, transaction fees paid to Ethereum increase, enhancing its economic utility. Simply put, real businesses are building on blockchain infrastructure and Ethereum sits at the core of much of this development.

Investor interest is starting to reflect this value proposition. Recent developments reinforce Ethereum's strategic position:

- **Coinbase**, now a constituent of the S&P 500 (as of May), is expanding beyond trading to launch stablecoin payment pilots via its **Base Layer 2** network.
- Robinhood is moving into tokenized real-world assets.
- Kraken has announced plans to offer tokenized U.S. equities to international clients.

These are not isolated events, they signal a broader shift from speculative retail activity toward real-world financial applications built on blockchain rails. While not all digital assets will retain long-term value, Ethereum stands apart as a foundational blockchain asset, now transitioning from speculative narrative to infrastructure-grade relevance. As market participants diversify beyond Bitcoin, Ethereum is well positioned to capture increasing investor interest, particularly via the ETF channel. Expect Ethereum ETF flows to accelerate.







Bitcoin and Gold Reach New Highs May 22nd (Pizza Day), Poised for Further Gains

In May, Bitcoin reached an all-time high of \$112,006.33 while gold hit a record in April at \$3,500.10. This significant milestone coincided with the anniversary of Laszlo Hanyecz's well-known 10,000 BTC pizza purchase in 2010, valued at \$41 at the time. Despite differing narratives, both gold and Bitcoin continue to be viewed by wealth managers as potential hedges against currency debasement and broader instability in the traditional financial system. While these are notable claims, recent momentum may also be influenced by investor sentiment and fear of missing out (FOMO). Year-to-date, over \$14 billion has flowed into the four largest gold ETFs, while the top four Bitcoin ETFs have attracted \$8 billion in new capital.

We continue to maintain a constructive view on both assets whether held directly or via ETFs and expect further upside this year. For Bitcoin, a technical Fibonacci projection points to a target of \$118,280, a method often used to estimate future price levels in uncharted territory based on historical trends.

Bitcoin weekly chart with 39-week moving average







Ethereum Posts Strong Weekly Gains in May; Technical Outlook Remains Bullish

Ethereum recorded a weekly gain of over 36% in May the strongest move of this magnitude since May 2021. We maintain a bullish outlook, with an initial target of \$2,815, corresponding to the 123.6% Fibonacci projection level on the weekly chart. A further move toward \$3,000 remains in view, with the all-time high still 33.2% above, in the \$4,100 region. From a technical perspective, the current price action suggests the formation of a bullish triangle continuation pattern. For this scenario to remain valid, support at \$2,378 marking the lower boundary of the triangle must hold.







MACRO FOCUS

Last week was marked by a heavy data calendar and reassessment of interest rate expectations.

In the U.S., the prospect of an imminent Federal Reserve rate cut was pushed further out following the stronger-than-expected May jobs report. Job creation rose by 139,000, above the 120,000 consensus. Wage growth also exceeded forecasts, rising 0.4% month-on-month and 3.9% year-on-year, compared to expectations of 0.23% and 3.7%, respectively. These figures weaken the case for near-term rate cuts, despite political pressure from former President Donald Trump, who criticized Chair Jerome Powell, stating "He is costing our Country a fortune."

With the Fed now in its blackout period, immediate focus shifts toward U.S. fiscal concerns. The national debt has reached \$36.2 trillion, and recent movements in the long end of the yield curve have reignited fears of renewed bond market volatility. The 30-year Treasury yield has climbed back toward 5.15%, raising the risk of a fresh bond sell-off. Trump's advocacy for lower rates aligns with his objective of reducing government borrowing costs.

In contrast, the European Central Bank (ECB) delivered a 25 basis point rate cut last Thursday, its eighth in the current cycle as expected. Indications suggest the ECB may be approaching the end of its easing phase. President Christine Lagarde stated during the post-meeting press conference: "At the current level of interest rates, we believe that we are in a good position to navigate the uncertain conditions that will be coming up." She added explicitly, "we are getting to the end of a monetary-policy cycle."

While the rate cut was not a unanimous decision, Lagarde's comments imply a terminal policy rate near 2.0%, following a cumulative 200 basis point reduction. With the July 9th deadline for EU-U.S. trade talks approaching, the ECB retains the option to cut further to 1.75%, aligning with the lower bound of its estimated nominal neutral rate. However, Lagarde's tone suggests limited appetite for further accommodative policy in this cycle.

Currency markets responded accordingly, with EUR/USD climbing to a high of 1.1495 last week the strongest level since mid-April. The pair touched 1.1573, marking the highest level since early 2022. Given the current trajectory, 2-year German yields which rose 12 basis points last week to 1.88%, could test the 2.0% level in the near term.

Technically, as long as EUR/USD holds above the 1.1100 support level, the bias remains to the upside, with a target at the April high of 1.1573 and a potential move toward 1.1685, corresponding to the 76.4% Fibonacci retracement from the 2021 highs. A sustained break below 1.1100 would invalidate this bullish continuation pattern, based on weekly candlestick signals.



Source: Bloomberg





Global Asset Allocation Shift: U.S. Exceptionalism Losing Ground For Now

Equity markets outside the U.S. have significantly outperformed in the first half of the year, pointing to a broader diversification trend in global asset allocation. The MSCI Latin America Index is off to its strongest start since 2009, with Colombia (+25.7%), Chile (+22.5%), Mexico (+19.2%), Peru (+16.5%), and Brazil (+9.8%) leading the charge. In contrast, the S&P 500 has posted a more modest year-to-date return of +2.02%. Meanwhile, Europe has also delivered strong gains, with the German DAX Index up +22.08% and the Euro Stoxx 50 rising +10.91% YTD both reflecting a shift away from U.S.-centric allocations.

For the last 10 years, U.S. equities particularly tech have dominated global portfolios, driven by the TINA (There Is No Alternative) narrative. That dominance has started to erode since early this year, notably following the January 20 "DeepSeek moment" a development that saw Chinese AI startup DeepSeek disrupt the AI landscape with a cost-effective, transparent open-source model. This has prompted investors to reassess U.S. concentration risk, with renewed interest in China, Japan, and broader emerging markets.

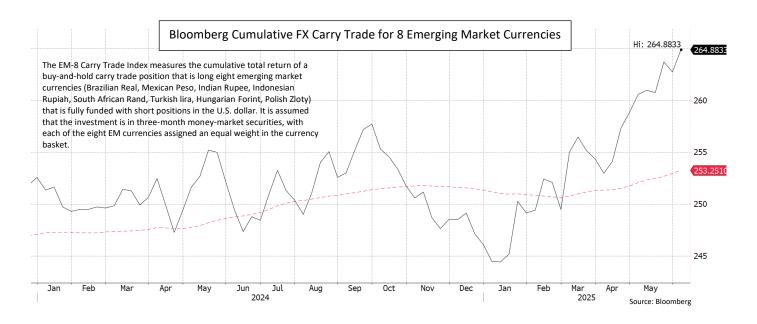
With the U.S. dollar weakening and gold up more than +26% YTD (having reached +31% at its April peak), portfolios heavily skewed toward U.S. assets are increasingly being rebalanced.

Asia remains central to this realignment. The long-standing dynamic of Asian economies exporting to the U.S. and reinvesting the proceeds into U.S. stocks and bonds is under strain at a level not seen since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. Roughly \$7.5 trillion in Asian investments are now exposed to shifting U.S. trade policy. Since 1997, the top 11 Asian economies have acquired \$4.7 trillion in U.S. assets. Notably, foreign exchange holdings in U.S. dollars as a percentage of total reserves have declined from 72% in 1999 to ~58% today.

This shift is already visible. China reduced its U.S. Treasury holdings in March, Japan's Nippon Life is seeking greater diversification, and a \$96 billion Australia-based pension fund recently declared its U.S. allocation had peaked.

Nonetheless, the argument for the end of American exceptionalism faces a counterpoint: the U.S. economy is performing better than expected. The uncertainty and real effects of tariffs are not as bad as feared just yet, keeping the Fed content with its current policy stance. This supports a positive risk sentiment backdrop, renewing capital inflows, and appreciating the dollar as a counter argument.

For choice though we see in coming weeks and months EM FX as a beneficiary of the weaker US dollar for now and the carry trade is back. Currency carry trade is a strategy that involves borrowing in a low-yielding currency, investing in a high-yielding currency, and collecting the interest rate differential.







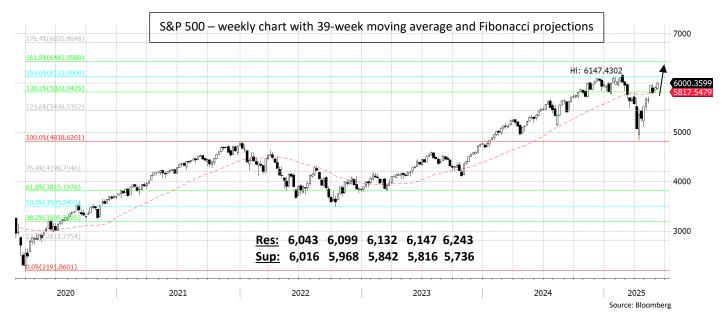
The S&P 500 posted the best May performance since 1990

Equities	Price	1M	3M	6M	12M	YTD	QTD
MSCI World (USD)	3,862	+5.66%	+1.50%	+1.37%	+12.92%	+4.17%	+6.44%
MSCI EM (USD)	1,170	+5.15%	+6.65%	+8.49%	+10.59%	+8.80%	+6.24%
S&P 500	5,911	+6.15%) -0.72%	-2.00%	+12.92%	+0.51%	+5.34%
Nasdaq Comp	21,340	+9.04%	+2.19%	+1.96%	+15.12%	+1.56%	+0.80%
Euro STOXX 50	5,366	+4.00%	-1.77%	+11.70%	+7.72%	+9.61%	+2.25%
DAX	23,997	+6.67%	+6.41%	+22.27%	+29.74%	+20.53%	+8.27%

Data taken up to end of May 2025

The price action in May exceeded our expectations, with the S&P 500 gaining +6.15% for the month its strongest May performance since 1990 well above our initial target of +4.5%. The S&P 500 Information Technology sector, initially targeted at +6.9%, ended the month at +10.79%. The Consumer Discretionary sector, with a target of +5.4%, delivered a +9.33% return.

S&P 500 has now rallied +24% since the early April lows, where it rebounded off key technical support near 4,818 the 100% Fibonacci projection level from the prior all-time high range seen at the end of 2021 and start of 2022. With the current all-time high only 2.92% away, at 6,147, the index may retest this level before the July 9th deadline for U.S.-EU trade negotiations.



In Europe, German fiscal spending and ongoing accommodative monetary policy continue to support equity performance. Notably, cyclical sectors have outperformed defensive sectors, with travel, industrials, and technology leading gains on the Stoxx 600 in May. The ratio of cyclical to defensive stocks is now near its highest level since 2007, indicating growing investor confidence in the economic outlook despite global trade uncertainties.





UAE and U.S. Finalise Major Agreements as Trump Seeks to Strengthen U.S. Business Presence in the Region

Saudi Arabia has announced \$600 billion in investment commitments, although some of the projects listed were already underway. In addition, 145 separate deals worth over \$300 billion were signed during a high-profile investor conference attended by several U.S. billionaires and prominent business leaders. Included in the overall agreement is a \$142 billion commitment for Saudi Arabia to purchase military equipment and services from more than a dozen U.S. defence firms.

The \$600 billion package also features a \$20 billion investment by Saudi firm DataVolt into AI data centres and energy infrastructure in the U.S., as well as \$80 billion in joint technology projects between the two countries involving Google, DataVolt, Oracle, Salesforce, AMD, and Uber.

Over \$2 billion worth of contracts for American firms to support Saudi infrastructure projects such as King Salman International Airport and the Qiddiya City entertainment complex were also part of the broader agreement. Separately, Elon Musk confirmed that Saudi Arabia had agreed to deploy his Starlink satellite internet service for aviation and maritime shipping.

Nvidia is set to sell 18,000 AI chips to the new Saudi-backed company, Humain. U.S.-based AMD also announced a \$10 billion initiative with Saudi Arabia to deliver chips and software for AI data centres spanning from Saudi Arabia to the U.S. Humain has also signed agreements with Global AI, Cisco, and Amazon to build an "AI zone" in Saudi Arabia. The initiative includes the development of AI infrastructure, servers, and network systems aimed at enhancing the efficiency of AI training.

Note: The UK is close to finalising a £1.6 billion trade agreement with Gulf states.

Laser Focus | Issue #19, June 19, 2025



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