#### MORGAN STANLEY RESEARCH ASIA/PACIFIC

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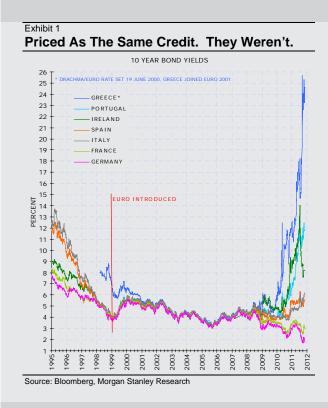
### **Downunder Daily** DM Debt Is A Global Problem

Europe is another example of mis-priced credit, although with peculiar history and institutions. That means the aftermath will probably follow similar credit cycles. What's different to prior cycles is that Europe and the US are dominant providers of global finance.

Europe is another example of the mis-pricing of credit that was endemic through the credit super-cycle. Sovereigns with printing presses almost never default, but investors face currency and inflation risk. Monetary and currency union without fiscal union meant that idiosyncratic currency and inflation risk was gone, but there was now credit risk. Markets ignored the change: they priced German and Greek sovereign paper (and everything in-between) as though they had identical credit quality. They didn't (Exhibit 1).

Markets will not make that mistake again. The good news is that the bond vigilantes will now be vigilant. The Stability & Growth Pact was designed to provide the fiscal discipline missing because the Euro-zone was only a currency union, not a fiscal union. But the Pact was bowdlerized by Germany and France in 2003-04 (at which point my colleague Joachim Fels started to warn about the end-game now playing out). Markets could have provided some discipline, but they did not. The good news is that they will in future, even without a concrete move towards full fiscal union in Europe.

The bad news is that this market vigilance will limit the ability of fiscal policy to manage the economy. In a 'normal' economy in a 'normal' cycle government bond yields fall in a recession. This pro-cyclical behaviour (yields down as growth weakens) enhances the ability of governments to deploy counter-cyclical fiscal policy. Now, however, most European government debt will be seen for what it is – a credit instrument – and credit spreads typically widen in a downturn. Germany aside, this will limit the scope for counter-cyclical fiscal policy. (Arnaud Mares highlighted this after the initial private sector haircut on Greek debt. See <u>Sovereign Subjects:</u> <u>The Economic Consequences of Greece</u>, 31 August.)



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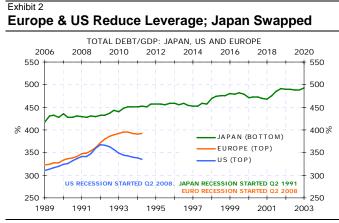
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The mis-pricing of Europe's sovereign credit risk means that what we are now seeing in Europe (and, for different reasons, in the US) is something quite different to Japan. In Japan the extended period of private sector deleveraging was largely offset by the willingness of the public sector to increase its leverage. Total leverage in Japan remains high (in part, of course, because of periods of nominal GDP decline). In contrast, Europe and the US are now seeing total debt-to-GDP ratios decline (Exhibit 2).

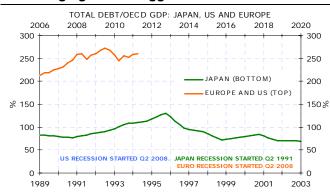


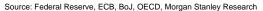
Source: Federal Reserve, BoJ, ECB; Morgan Stanley Research

To this qualitative difference there is an important quantitative difference: Europe and the US are in a global context huge macro blocs, and their banks are critical providers of global finance. Exhibit 3 shows combined leverage in US and Europe, as well as in Japan, but as a share of developed world nominal GDP. This is very important. While the deleveraging process now underway may resemble deleveraging cycles in other economies, the global impact of the current deleveraging will arguably be in a league of its own because of its size.

#### Exhibit 3

**Deleveraging Now A Bigger Pressure For DM** 



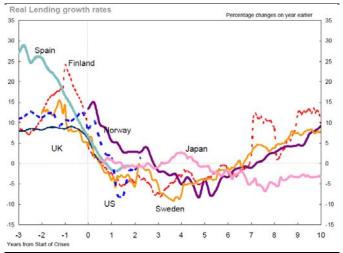


This size issue will have at least two consequences. The first is that reduces the ability of net exports to provide a material growth offset to the likely domestic adjustment. While that's feasible for small, open economies in the aftermath of a credit bubble, it's less feasible when a significant proportion of the developed world is going through process at once.

Second, it means the deleveraging process within the financial sector will likely have global consequences. Huw van Steenis, our head of European banking research, notes that deleveraging cycles go hand-in-hand with extended low credit expansion. Exhibit 4 shows the pattern of credit growth in the decade after prior credit bubbles peaked.

In this case, the banks involved (in Europe and the US) are critical suppliers of credit to the global economy. As Greg Peters discusses in this week's *Cross Asset Navigator (DM Deleveraging, EM Stressing*), financial linkages are likely to be far more important than trade linkages transmitting macro stress to the emerging economies. In fact, it may be that EM economies are disproportionately affected by banks reducing their balance sheets because banks see assets in emerging economies as non-core.

#### Exhibit 4 Low Credit Growth Normal After Bubbles



Crisis year = 0. Year zero is 1990 for Finland and Sweden; 1988 for Norway; 1992 for Japan; 2008 for UK and US; 2009 for Spain. Source: Huw van Steenis, *European Banks: Stress In Bank Funding And Policy Implications*, 8 September 2011; Morgan Stanley Research

My colleagues estimate that European banks could shrink their balance sheets by up to €2 trillion by the end of 2012, with over €500 billion coming from EM assets. Even an orderly balance sheet reduction creates potential problems for EM. If the process becomes disorderly, the effect will be greater.

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