

Ariel International Developed Markets / Emerging Markets

Quarter Ended September 30, 2024

Markets worldwide posted gains in the third quarter, although there was a lot of volatility. The “yen carry trade” selloff in Japan and the “deflationary spiral” looming over China logged significant declines followed by a sharp rebound. Meanwhile, market leadership broadened beyond the mega-cap tech stocks and there was a notable shift towards value at the expense of growth with investors rotating into a variety of sectors. The Federal Reserve and European Central Bank’s initiation of a rate-cutting cycle as well as aggressive economic stimulus announcements in China also contributed to improving market sentiment. Against this backdrop, the Ariel International DM/EM Composite traded up +8.58% gross of fees (+8.39% net of fees) in the quarter, ahead of the +8.06% return of its primary benchmark, MSCI ACWI ex-US Index, but trailing the +9.26% gain of its secondary benchmark, the MSCI ACWI ex-US Value Index.

Ariel’s non-consensus approach seeks to identify undervalued, out-of-favor, franchises that are misunderstood and therefore mispriced. The Ariel International DM/EM bottom-up strategy is overweight Consumer Discretionary, Financials, Utilities, Health Care and Information Technology. The portfolio is meaningfully underweight Industrials, Energy, Consumer Staples and Communication Services as well as lacks exposure to Materials. At the sector level, stock selection within Health Care and Information Technology as well as our Energy positioning were the largest source of positive attribution. By comparison, our Consumer Discretionary and Industrial holdings were the greatest performance detractors during in the quarter.

China-based E-commerce company, **JD.com, Inc.** was the top contributor in the quarter as the People’s Bank of China’s (PBOC) comprehensive stimulus measures bolstered investor confidence in the Chinese economy. The improving economic sentiment is fueling consumer spending which benefits the company’s retail operations. Additionally, the company’s strategic decision to diversify general merchandise product offerings, expand its third-party marketplace business and monetize advertising streams has contributed to consecutive quarterly earnings beats. JD.com is also poised to capitalize on the home appliance trade-in program, which is one of its largest product categories. Given the favorable market environment, the company’s strategic positioning and supply chain efficiency improvements, we continue to like its long-term growth prospects.

Israeli based provider of products for information technology security, **Check Point Software Technologies Ltd.** also advanced following solid quarterly earnings results. Double-digit billings growth was particularly strong across geographies. Consumers appear to be adopting more pillars of Check Point’s platform and engaging in larger strategic commitments with Infinity and Quantum Force. The company also announced the appointment of new CEO Nadav Zafrir, whose reputation is well established in the cyber community. Meanwhile, Check Point continues to be an astute steward of capital, pursuing organic growth and utilizing surplus cash to return capital to shareholders. We continue to favor the company’s exposure to the fast-growing cloud security market and its industry leading profitability.

French pharmaceutical company, **Sanofi** was another contributor over the quarter as momentum for Dupixent, a dermatitis treatment, drove earnings. Additionally, positive clinical trials for myeloma drug, Sarclisa and a Phase 3 Multiple Sclerosis asset also boosted shares. At current levels, we view Sanofi’s vaccines business as underappreciated and think the immunology pipeline is being overlooked. Also, we continue to be optimistic Dupixent will be a key growth driver.

Alternatively, Japanese auto manufacturer, **Subaru Corporation** underperformed over the period. Investors have become increasingly concerned with recent foreign exchange fluctuations alongside a weakening macro environment. Earnings results also came in lower than expected as the company reported a rise in incentives. Notably, management maintained full-year guidance as U.S. retail sales trends remain positive, and the company expects to make up for recent shipment delays in the coming quarter. Looking ahead, we remain focused on Subaru’s solid business fundamentals and view its electric vehicle roadmap as a long-term opportunity to increase market share.

Shares of multinational automotive manufacturing company, **Stellantis N.V. (STLA)** also declined following a significant earnings miss. The company attributed the performance to lower sales, production disruptions from a product overhaul and weak performance in North America. Muted demand for electric vehicles in Europe also weighed on performance. In response, STLA is implementing operational improvement initiatives to bring down U.S. inventory levels through production cuts, consumer incentives and gradual price adjustments. Despite these results, management maintained its



previous buyback and dividend commitments. Although we expect discounting to increase as U.S. inventory ages, we maintain a constructive view on the company. We believe STLA's strong global footprint and commitment to industry leading profitability, operational excellence, and strategic foresight will continue to enhance long-term shareholder value.

Lastly, Korean-based mobile phones and smartphones manufacturer, **Samsung Electronics Company, Ltd.** traded lower during the quarter. Investors are concerned about weakness in conventional memory demand, particularly within the personal computer and smartphone market. However, we continue to see a sustained upcycle in the server market for high-bandwidth memory (HBM) in support of artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure. Stronger memory pricing should drive further revenue growth and operating profit expansion in the year ahead. We also like Samsung's diversified business model and see additional upside should the company gain share in both the display market and foundry business.

We initiated two new positions in the quarter.

We added marketing communication company, **Publicis Groupe SA**. We believe the company is poised to deliver solid revenue and operating profit growth over the next few years. We also expect the company's unified digital platform and unique technology offerings to present a compelling opportunity to provide more effective advertising experiences at scale through advanced identity, demographic, behavioral and transactional data analysis.

We also purchased **Tesco plc**, a leading food retailer and wholesaler based in the United Kingdom. Following years of intense disruption from discount retailers, the competitive dynamic in the market has stabilized, creating a favorable backdrop. Tesco is gaining market share through an improved pricing and value proposition. We think the company has the ability to better operating margins, while continuing to benefit from alternative revenue streams such as Marketplace and Retail Media.

By comparison, we sold out of **Vanguard Total International Stock ETF** to deploy the cash into more compelling opportunities.

As broad optimism continues to prevail, geopolitical uncertainties remain elevated. We continually assess potential economic and market drivers in preparation of scenarios that may challenge current market narratives. Many investors appear to be signaling AI fatigue, with a rotation underway towards stocks across a variety of other sectors. In our view, growth stocks are trading at elevated valuations, whereas value stocks remain cheap. We strongly believe reasonably priced, higher quality companies offering sustainable, profitable growth and robust balance sheets will be the drivers

of future outperformance. Meanwhile, we continue to improve our upside capture across our international and global portfolios while remaining laser focused on preserving downside protection.

Investments in non-U.S. securities may underperform and may be more volatile than comparable U.S. stocks because of the risks involving non-U.S. economies, markets, political systems, regulatory standards, currencies and taxes. The use of currency derivatives and ETFs may increase investment losses and expenses and create more volatility. Investments in emerging markets present additional risks, such as difficulties in selling on a timely basis and at an acceptable price. The intrinsic value of the stocks within the strategy may never be recognized by the broader market. The strategy is often concentrated in fewer sectors than its benchmarks, and its performance may suffer if these sectors underperform the overall stock market.

Past performance does not guarantee future results. For the period ended 9/30/2024, the performance (net of fees) of the Ariel International (DM/EM) Composite for the 1-, 5-, and 10-year periods were +19.29%, +5.96%, and +4.68%, respectively. For the period ended 9/30/2024, the performance for the MSCI ACWI ex US Index and the MSCI ACWI ex US Value Index for the 1-, 5-, and 10-year periods were +25.35%, +7.58%, +5.22% and +24.04%, +7.78%, and +4.28%, respectively. Ariel Composite Net of Fees returns are calculated by deducting: (1) for the period from inception to August 31, 2024, the maximum advisory fee in effect for the respective period, applied on a monthly basis; and (2) for the period from September 1, 2024 onwards, the actual monthly advisory fee (on an asset-weighted basis) accrued for the accounts in the composite, using the fee rates in place as of the most recent calendar quarter-end. Gross returns do not reflect the deduction of advisory fees. Client returns will be reduced by advisory fees and such other expenses as may be incurred in the management of the account. Advisory fees are described in Part 2 of Ariel's Form ADV. Returns assume the reinvestment of dividends and other earnings. Returns are expressed in U.S. dollars. Current performance may be lower or higher than the performance data quoted. The Ariel International (DM/EM) Composite differs from its benchmark, the MSCI ACWI (All Country World Index) ex US, because: (i) the Composite has fewer holdings than the benchmark and (ii) the Composite will at times invest a portion of its assets in the U.S.

The opinions expressed are current as of the date of this commentary but are subject to change. The information provided in this commentary does not provide information reasonably sufficient upon which to base an investment decision and should not be considered a recommendation to purchase or sell any particular security. There is no guarantee



that any of the views expressed will come to fruition or any investment will perform as described.

A glossary of financial terms provided herein may be found on our website at www.arielinvestments.com.

As of 9/30/2024, JD.com, Inc. constituted 4.2% of the Ariel International (DM/EM) Composite (representative portfolio); JD.com, Inc. ADR 0.6%; Check Point Software Technologies, Ltd. 5.6%; Sanofi 4.7%; Subaru Corporation 3.0%; Stellantis N.V. 1.6%; Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd. 2.7%; Publicis Groupe SA 1.1%; Tesco PLC 2.5%; and Vanguard Total International Stock ETF 0.0%. Portfolio holdings are subject to change. The performance of any single portfolio holding is no indication of the performance of other portfolio holdings of the Ariel International (DM/EM) Composite.

Indexes are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. The MSCI ACWI (All Country World Index) ex-US Index is an index of large and mid-cap representation across 22 Developed Markets (DM) and 24 Emerging Markets (EM) countries. Its inception date is January 1, 2001. The MSCI ACWI ex-US Value Index captures large and mid-cap securities exhibiting overall value style characteristics across 22 Developed and 24 Emerging Markets countries. Its inception date is December 8, 1997. All MSCI Index net returns reflect the reinvestment of income and other earnings, including the dividends net of the maximum withholding tax applicable to non-resident institutional investors that do not benefit from double taxation treaties. MSCI uses the maximum tax rate applicable to institutional investors, as determined by the company's country of incorporation. MSCI makes no express or implied warranties or representations and shall have no liability whatsoever with respect to any MSCI data contained herein. The MSCI data may not be further redistributed or used to create indices or financial products. This report is not approved or produced by MSCI.



Ariel Investments

200 E. Randolph St., Suite 2900
Chicago, IL 60601

312.726.0140

- arielinvestments.com
- [linkedin.com/company/ariel-investments](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ariel-investments)
- [instagram.com/arielinvestments](https://www.instagram.com/arielinvestments)
- twitter.com/arielinvests

