

Allianz

China A-Shares

Monthly commentary

- The Fund aims at long-term capital growth by investing in the China A-Shares markets of the People's Republic of China ("PRC") in accordance with environmental and social characteristics. The Fund aims to achieve an outperformance (i.e. achieve a higher Environment, Social and Governance ("ESG") score) of the Fund's weighted average ESG score compared to weighted average ESG score of Fund's benchmark index by the adoption of the ESG Score Strategy. The Fund does not constitute as an ESG fund pursuant to the SFC's circular issued on 29 June 2021.
- The Fund is exposed to significant risks of investment/general market, country and region, emerging market, company-specific and currency (in particular RMB), and the adverse impact on RMB share class due to currency depreciation.
- The Fund may invest in the China A-Shares market directly via the Stock Connect or other foreign access regimes and/or other permitted means and/or indirectly through all eligible instruments and thus is subject to the associated risks (including quota limitation, change in rule and regulations, repatriation of the Fund's monies, trade restrictions, China market volatility and uncertainty, potential clearing and/or settlement difficulties, change in economic, social and political policy in PRC and Mainland China tax risks).
- The Fund is exposed to risks relating to ESG Score Strategy investment (such as foregoing opportunities to buy certain securities when it might otherwise be advantageous to do so, selling securities when it might be disadvantageous to do so, and/or reducing risk diversifications compared to broadly based funds) which may result in the Fund being more volatile and have adverse impact on the performance of the Fund and consequently adversely affect an investor's investment in the Fund.
- The Fund may invest in financial derivative instruments ("FDI") which may expose to higher leverage, counterparty, liquidity, valuation, volatility, market and over the counter transaction risks. The Fund's net derivative exposure may be up to 50% of the Fund's net asset value.
- Investment involves risks that could result in loss of part or entire amount of investors' investment.
- In making investment decisions, investors should not rely solely on this material.

Note: Dividend payments may, at the sole discretion of the Investment Manager, be made out of the Fund's capital or effectively out of the Fund's capital which represents a return or withdrawal of part of the amount investors originally invested and/or capital gains attributable to the original investment. This may result in an immediate decrease in the NAV per share and the capital of the Fund available for investment in the future and capital growth may be reduced, in particular for hedged share classes for which the distribution amount and NAV of any hedged share classes (HSC) may be adversely affected by differences in the interests rates of the reference currency of the HSC and the base currency of the Fund.

What Happened in August

The Fund outperformed the benchmark in August. Stock selection in the Industrials and Information Technology sectors were the key contributors.

At a stock level, a key contributor last month was Eoptolink Technology*. The company makes high speed optical transceivers which are an essential component for areas such as high-speed internet, cloud computing, and data centre communication. Eoptolink previously announced a set of strong quarterly results, well ahead of market expectations, buoyed by healthy artificial intelligence (AI)-related demand both in China and overseas.

Conversely, a detractor was China Construction Bank*, one of the largest banks in China. Having previously been an outperformer, the Financials sector lagged last month with the market rotation into high growth areas. China Construction Bank remains one of our preferred bank stocks given its higher return on equity and stronger capital ratios compared to most peers. The high dividend yield should also support valuations.

Outlook and Strategy

August was another good month for both onshore and offshore China equities. China A-shares were particularly strong with gains led by the Technology sector. Over the last 12 months, both China A- and H-shares have returned more than 40% in USD terms, a dramatic turnaround from the doldrums of previous years.

There have been a number of reasons for this turnaround. On the one hand, some factors that previously weighed heavily on markets have eased. Although China's housing market continues to be weak, for example, its impact on the country's financial markets has been lessening for some time. In the bond market, real estate indices bottomed out almost two years ago. It's taken a lot longer – and several false dawns – for confidence in equities to rebuild. But the breakout in recent weeks, supported by record trading volume, suggests that China equities have finally turned the corner.

Much of the recent equity market strength has been focused on the Tech sector. While the open-sourced AI model developed by an emerging Chinese startup was the high-profile catalyst earlier this year, the groundwork for China's AI surge has been laid for over a decade. In 2017, the government established AI as a national strategic focus, prioritising computing infrastructure, AI chips and cloud services.

Supported by a vast pool of STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) talent, extensive data centre infrastructure, abundant and low-cost electricity, and substantial capital, China has brought together the ingredients for an AI boom. The recent news that the US revoked export curbs that required American companies to obtain licenses to provide chip design software to customers in China – as part of an agreement intended to ease trade tensions – has also provided a further boost to China's AI ambitions.

Linked to this, another catalyst for the positive market sentiment is related to geopolitics, and the turn of events since the US and China traded ever-higher tariff numbers post "Liberation Day". China's control of processed rare earth minerals has subsequently provided powerful negotiating leverage. For the time being, at least, US-China relations appear to have found a floor and previous concerns about a sharp slowdown in China's exports to the US have eased.

While each of these factors have played their part in providing the foundation for the market upturn, the most notable short-term change has been the return of China's retail investors, who until recently have largely stayed on the sidelines.

Bank deposits have been ballooning for several years reflecting the macro weakness, increased job uncertainty, and the decline in house prices. Households in China used to save around USD 1 trillion a year in aggregate, but that roughly doubled during and since COVID. As a result, there are around USD 7 trillion of "excess savings", about half the size of the China A-share market. With bond yields and deposit rates having fallen to significantly lower levels, this is leading to some reallocation from cash deposits into risk assets.

While the rapid pace of the recent upturn might prompt some profit taking, with this combination of factors in place our view is to buy the dips, not sell the rally.

Portfolio activity was quite limited during the month. We had previously added to several names that had pulled back during the period of tariff-induced weakness earlier in the year, but where we saw growth opportunities related to AI demand as well as China's ongoing push for self-sufficiency. We also added to Health Care stocks in previous months, with a focus on the biotech space where out-licensing deals with global pharmaceutical companies have become an important new growth driver.

The portfolio continues to have relatively close-to-benchmark sector allocations, so that stock selection remains the key relative performance driver. At month end, the largest sector overweight is Consumer Discretionary (+3.8%), while the largest underweight is Materials (-2.7%).

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All data sourced from Bloomberg, Allianz Global Investors, as of 31 August 2025 unless otherwise stated.

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