



# Axis Capital Holdings Limited (AXS)

Updated January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021 by Josh Arnold

## Key Metrics

<b>Current Price:</b>	\$45	<b>5 Year CAGR Estimate:</b>	7.5%	<b>Market Cap:</b>	\$3.8 B
<b>Fair Value Price:</b>	\$53	<b>5 Year Growth Estimate:</b>	1.0%	<b>Ex-Dividend Date:</b>	03/30/21 <sup>1</sup>
<b>% Fair Value:</b>	85%	<b>5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:</b>	3.3%	<b>Dividend Payment Date:</b>	04/15/21 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Dividend Yield:</b>	3.7%	<b>5 Year Price Target</b>	\$56	<b>Years Of Dividend Growth:</b>	19
<b>Dividend Risk Score:</b>	F	<b>Retirement Suitability Score:</b>	D	<b>Last Dividend Increase:</b>	2.4%

## Overview & Current Events

Axis Capital is a global insurer and reinsurer that was founded in 2001. It is split into Insurance and Reinsurance divisions, with the former making up about 55% of total revenue. It offers a broad range of risk transfer products for a diverse base of customers and has a market capitalization of \$3.8 billion and more than \$4.6 billion in annual revenue. Axis also has an impressive 19-year streak of dividend increases.

Axis reported fourth quarter and full-year earnings on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 with results coming in ahead of expectations for profits, but Axis missed revenue estimates. The top line fell -1% year-over-year to \$785 million, as measured by net written premiums. However, Axis did report gross written premiums that increased by 7% year-over-year to \$1.3 billion. The insurance segment posted a 15% year-over-year gain while the smaller reinsurance business saw a -19% decline.

The company's current accident year combined ratio, which excludes catastrophe and weather-related losses, was up 450bps year-over-year. Pre-tax catastrophe and weather-related losses, net of reinsurance and reinstatement premiums came to \$198 million, or 18.4%, with \$125 million, or 11.6% related to COVID-19 losses.

Axis posted a loss of six cents per share in Q4, and a loss of -\$2.08 per share for the full year as earnings remain extremely volatile. We expect a strong rebound in earnings for this year to \$4.25 but note that earnings are notoriously difficult to forecast for insurers like Axis.

Book value ended 2020 at \$55.09 per share, nearly equal with the end of 2019. The company also boosted its dividend for the 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, adding 2.4% to the payout for a new annualized dividend of \$1.68 per share.

## Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2026
<b>BV/S</b>	\$37.79	\$43.23	\$46.32	\$51.50	\$54.54	\$59.54	\$54.91	\$49.72	\$55.79	\$55.09	<b>\$55.64</b>	<b>\$58.48</b>
<b>EPS</b>	-\$0.90	\$3.41	\$5.49	\$5.32	\$4.02	\$4.48	-\$3.15	\$1.92	\$2.70	-\$2.08	<b>\$4.25</b>	<b>\$4.47</b>
<b>DPS</b>	\$0.93	\$0.97	\$1.02	\$1.10	\$1.22	\$1.43	\$1.53	\$1.57	\$1.61	\$1.65	<b>\$1.68</b>	<b>\$1.95</b>
<b>Shares<sup>3</sup></b>	131	122	112	101	96	86	84	84	84	84	<b>84</b>	<b>84</b>

Earnings-per-share have been tremendously volatile during the past decade, which is expected for an insurer. Axis' profits rise and fall based upon how efficiently it writes premiums along with factors that are out of its control, including claims, as we saw in 2019, and especially in 2020. Typical weather/catastrophe losses weighed on 2020, but COVID-19 did as well, which shouldn't be repeated going forward from 2021.

Axis benefits from higher interest rates as its investment income rises commensurately. We see modest growth going forward of just 1% from the current base, however. Axis continues to grow its business organically through prudent risk taking, in addition to further acquisitions. There is potential room for additional upside should Axis avoid years like 2017 in the future, or if it completes a sizable acquisition. Overall Axis looks well positioned for maintaining its current book

<sup>1</sup> Estimated date

<sup>2</sup> Estimated date

<sup>3</sup> Share count in millions

Disclosure: This analyst has no position in the security discussed in this research report, and no plans to initiate one in the next 72 hours.



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value and in our view, continues to be well-managed. However, the fact remains its earnings are largely outside of its control, and the long-term earnings growth outlook is quite murky from here.

We see the dividend growing at a low single digit rate and may reach \$1.95 or so in the next five years.

## Valuation Analysis

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Now	2026
Avg. P/B	85%	78%	95%	90%	99%	94%	113%	111%	106%	85%	81%	95%
Avg. Yld.	2.9%	2.9%	2.3%	2.4%	2.3%	2.6%	2.5%	2.9%	2.7%	3.5%	3.7%	3.5%

The company's price-to-book ratio has moved around significantly as its fortunes have risen and fallen, similar to other insurance companies' valuations. The stock has moved lower post-earnings, bringing the valuation back below our fair value estimate. We therefore expect a tailwind to total returns from the valuation.

Given this, we see the yield coming down slightly in the coming years but maintaining a mid-3% yield.

## Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2026
Payout	---	28%	19%	21%	30%	32%	---	82%	60%	---	40%	44%

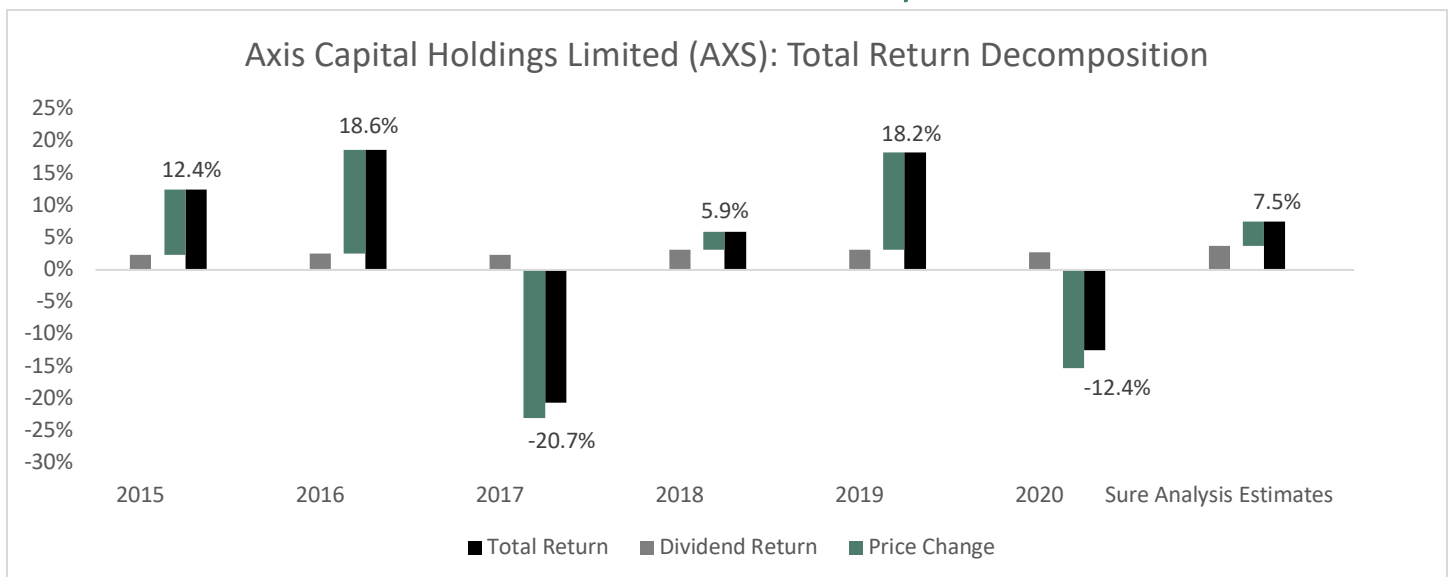
Axis' payout ratio is only about 40% of operating earnings, so we find the dividend to be reasonably safe, even with the volatility the stock has shown. Importantly, management has proven willing and able to prioritize dividend increases over the past two decades, and we don't see that changing.

Competitive advantages are tough to come by for insurers, and Axis is no different. On the bright side, recessions tend not to sway performance one way or the other, so there is a diversifying component to adding Axis to one's portfolio.

## Final Thoughts & Recommendation

We see Axis as undervalued and offering investors total annual return potential of 7.5% in the coming years. We see very limited growth from 2021 levels given the company's history of large, unexpected losses on events like the pandemic, typhoons, etc. We still believe Axis is well managed but note that its earnings and book value growth are largely out of its control. We maintain our hold rating on the stock given the undervaluation, and strong yield.

## Total Return Breakdown by Year



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## Income Statement Metrics

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Revenue	3846	3897	4170	4451	4233	4127	4442	5120	5185	4761
SG&A Exp.	459	561	575	622	597	603	579	627	635	580
D&A Exp.	17	14	23	25	26	25	31	10	75	---
Net Profit	46	547	727	811	642	513	-369	43	323	-120
Net Margin	1.2%	14.0%	17.4%	18.2%	15.2%	12.4%	-8.3%	0.8%	6.2%	-2.5%
Free Cash Flow	1190	1121	1097	862	791	407	259	11	199	---
Income Tax	15	3	7	26	3	6	-8	-29	24	-12

## Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Assets	17806	18852	19635	19956	19982	20814	24760	24133	25604	25878
Cash & Equivalents	982	760	923	922	988	1039	949	1233	1241	903
Acc. Receivable	3,184	3,339	3,619	3,735	4,064	4,648	6,351	6,789	7,277	7669
Goodwill & Int.	100	97	90	89	87	85	567	379	342	320
Total Liabilities	12362	13073	13767	14076	14115	14541	19419	19102	20060	20582
Accounts Payable	207	271	234	249	356	493	899	1,339	1,349	1092
Long-Term Debt	995	995	996	991	992	993	1,377	1,342	1,808	1310
Total Equity	4,944	5,277	5,190	5,193	5,239	5,146	4,566	4,255	4,769	4746
D/E Ratio	0.18	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.26	0.27	0.33	0.25

## Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Return on Assets	0.3%	3.0%	3.8%	4.1%	3.2%	2.5%	-1.6%	0.2%	1.3%	-0.5%
Return on Equity	0.9%	10.7%	13.9%	15.6%	12.3%	9.9%	-7.6%	1.0%	7.2%	-2.5%
ROIC	0.7%	8.3%	10.7%	11.8%	9.3%	7.3%	-5.3%	0.7%	4.7%	-1.7%
Shares Out.	131	122	112	101	96	86	84	84	84	84
Revenue/Share	30.02	31.52	36.16	42.10	42.48	45.08	52.81	60.94	61.39	56.50
FCF/Share	9.29	9.06	9.51	8.16	7.94	4.44	3.08	0.13	2.36	---

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.

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