

Securing Europe's Energy Future

The U.S. Investment Imperative in
Southeast Europe and Eurasia


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Southeastern Europe and Eurasia have emerged as critical fronts in the battle for energy security and geopolitical influence.

For decades, Russia used dominance in natural gas and nuclear fuel supply to exert leverage over European countries. Meanwhile, China has quietly poured capital into European energy infrastructure—from power grids to pipelines—seeking strategic footholds. These trends carry serious national security implications for the U.S. and its allies. American policymakers must recognize that investing in the region’s energy infrastructure is not just economic diplomacy, but a strategic necessity to counter malign Russian and Chinese influence.

In the Balkans, for example, U.S. officials have noted how heavy reliance on Russian gas and aging coal plants leaves nations vulnerable. Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine underscored Europe’s dangerous over-reliance on Russian energy; since 2022, Europe has scrambled to diversify supplies. The U.S. stepped up as a major LNG provider, now supplying nearly half of Europe’s liquefied natural gas imports. This shift directly reduces Russia’s coercive power. At the same time, Chinese state-backed firms have acquired stakes in regional power transmission networks (e.g., 24% of Greece’s grid operator) and are financing energy projects, raising alarms about long-term leverage.



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The U.S. has a compelling interest to offer an alternative – by becoming the partner of choice for energy investment in Southeast Europe and Eastern Partnership countries. Doing so strengthens allies’ energy independence and blunts the influence of rival powers. As one Congressional hearing put it, Washington must strive to be a “reliable energy partner” for the Balkans through greater U.S. gas exports and nuclear cooperation.

Opportunities for American Industry

Investing in these regions isn't charity – it's a win-win that advances U.S. economic interests. Many Southeast European and Eurasian countries urgently need modern energy infrastructure—from gas pipelines and LNG terminals to electricity grids and nuclear reactors—and they are seeking partners. By stepping in with capital and expertise, the U.S. can lock in long-term economic opportunities for American companies while helping allies. American companies are already leading high-profile energy ventures in the region, signaling both the demand and the opportunity. From cutting-edge nuclear projects to new gas import facilities, U.S. technology and capital are filling critical gaps. The table below highlights recent U.S.-linked investments and initiatives in Southeast Europe and the Eurasian neighborhood:

Country	Project Type	Investment	American Involvement
Romania	Small Modular Reactors (Nuclear)	\$98M U.S. EXIM loan for design (part of ~\$4.9 B project)	NuScale SMR technology; Fluor engineering; USDA, U.S. EXIM & DFC financing/technical support
Bulgaria	New Nuclear Units (2 × AP1000)	Up to \$14 B (planned cap)	Westinghouse & Hyundai E&C consortium building two reactors at Kozloduy; backed by U.S.–Bulgaria cooperation agreement
Kosovo	Grid Battery Storage Systems	\$202 M U.S. MCC grant	Millennium Challenge Corp. (U.S.) financing a 340 MWh battery storage project – largest energy investment in Kosovo in 50 years.
Albania	LNG Import Terminal & Power	<i>In development</i> (projected hundreds of millions)	Excelerate Energy & ExxonMobil planning a floating LNG terminal and gas power conversion at Vlora to supply the Balkan.

Each of these projects serves U.S. strategic goals: diversifying allies' energy sources away from Russia, preventing a vacuum that China could fill, and integrating these countries into a transatlantic energy network. For instance, Romania's SMR project, the first of its kind in Europe, will deploy U.S. nuclear technology and know-how, strengthening Western nuclear supply chains in the region. Bulgaria's Kozloduy expansion will likewise use advanced American reactor designs, boosting regional energy security and making Sofia an electricity exporter to neighbors. And in the Western Balkans, U.S.-funded battery parks in Kosovo and planned LNG infrastructure in Albania promise to improve resilience and supply diversity, opening markets for U.S. LNG and energy storage technologies.



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U.S. Gas Exports: A Strategic Game-Changer

Liquefied natural gas has become a linchpin of U.S. engagement in Europe's energy security. After Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine, Europe drastically cut its imports of Russian pipeline gas – and the U.S. rushed to fill the gap with LNG cargoes. American LNG cargoes are now landing at new import terminals from Poland to Greece, keeping factories running and homes heated across Europe. The strategic value of this shift cannot be overstated: in December 2024, Ukraine received its first-ever shipment of U.S. LNG, delivered via a Greek LNG terminal through pipelines into Ukraine.

This milestone demonstrated a new “vertical gas corridor” stretching from an FSRU in Alexandroupolis, Greece, up through the Balkans to Ukraine. It not only replaces Russian supply but also leverages Ukraine's massive underground gas storage (the largest in Europe) as a regional buffer against winter shortages. American LNG deals are reinforcing this emerging architecture. For example, Venture Global LNG (USA) has signed a five-year agreement to send up to 1 million tons per year of LNG (about 12 cargoes) through the Alexandroupolis terminal, securing roughly 25% of that facility's capacity for U.S.-sourced gas.

This U.S.-Greece partnership is a “game changer” for Southeast Europe's energy diversification, ensuring countries like Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and even Ukraine can access non-Russian gas reliably. Every billion cubic meters of U.S. gas delivered is a direct reduction in Moscow's erstwhile energy leverage. It also creates export revenue for American producers and supports jobs in the U.S. LNG industry. In short, U.S. gas exports are simultaneously bolstering allies' security and creating economic value at home – a textbook example of energy statecraft.

Ukraine: The Next Big Opportunity

If Southeast Europe is today's frontline for energy investment, Ukraine represents the centerpiece of tomorrow's strategy. Even as war rages, Ukraine is charting a vision to rebuild a modern, integrated energy system that can anchor Europe's future supply. Kyiv is already working with U.S. companies to end its dependence on Russian energy: Westinghouse now supplies nuclear fuel to Ukraine's reactors, replacing Russia's fuel entirely, and has been tapped to eventually construct new reactors in Ukraine using its AP1000 technology. U.S. firms like GE Vernova have sent over mobile gas turbines to keep the lights on in Kyiv. American oil & gas service companies (Halliburton, Baker Hughes) are expanding operations to boost Ukraine's domestic gas production. These efforts not only support Ukraine's immediate needs but position U.S. industry to lead in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction.

Looking ahead, Ukraine could become a pivotal European energy hub with U.S. help. It has huge untapped potential, from Europe's largest gas storage facilities to ample wind and solar resources and an experienced energy workforce. As President Zelenskyy noted, Russia's influence has already been dealt a historic blow with the halt of Russian gas transit across Ukraine (down from 130 bcm/year in 1991 to 0 today). The focus now is on turning Ukraine into an exporter and connector: plans include expanding cross-border power lines with neighbors, deploying decentralized power, and potentially using Ukraine's grid to supply the EU. U.S.-backed investment will be crucial to realize these goals. American companies are poised to provide modular reactors, LNG infrastructure, smart grids, and renewables as Ukraine modernizes. As Ukraine stabilizes, there is no doubt that it will be a cornerstone market for U.S. energy firms—and a linchpin of Europe's energy security architecture—for decades to come.

Investing in Allies, Investing in Ourselves

By financing and facilitating projects in Southeast Europe and Eastern Partnership countries, the United States can undercut the influence of strategic rivals and foster a stronger, more unified alliance. At the same time, these investments unlock billions in contracts for U.S. companies, support American jobs in energy and engineering, and expand markets for U.S. exports from LNG to advanced reactors. In an era when energy security is national security, initiatives that deploy American capital and technology abroad deliver a double dividend: they make our allies stronger and create economic value at home.

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