

United States Power Report Q4 2016

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Abstracts

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BMI View: Growth in natural gas-fired capacity and renewables will be the pillars of the US power market as a result of the availability of cheap natural gas and the extension of tax credits for wind and solar power plants. Meanwhile, investment in power infrastructure will be necessary for the system to keep up with growth in intermittent renewables and distributed energy solutions. In the absence of support from public funding, nuclear power will struggle amid low wholesale power prices and growing competition with other technologies, leading to early reactor retirements.

Latest Updates And Structural Trends

We have revised down our forecast for nuclear power capacity and generation through to 2025 as low wholesale power prices, environmental regulations and lack of policy support for nuclear have prompted utilities to plan the retirement of unprofitable plants ahead of schedule or when licences expire. Our view that policy support would be the only upside to the nuclear power sector is also in play, as in August the New York State Public Service Commission approved subsidies that will allow the state's struggling nuclear plants to continue to operate.

As we expect Hillary Clinton to be the next president of the US, we believe the country's energy policy over the next four years will align with the direction set by the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan (CPP), regardless of whether the plan is eventually implemented. We believe a Clinton presidency will not deviate from the Obama administration policy agenda on the environment and power sector, underpinning our upbeat long-term forecast for the US renewables sector.



The US power transmission and distribution sector will offer sizeable business opportunities to companies across the spectrum of EPC providers, electric utilities and new market entrants targeting the smart grid. Significant investment in power infrastructure will be necessary over the coming decade for the US electric system to keep up with growth in intermittent renewable energy, DES and cybersecurity threats. The Senate's Energy Policy Modernization Act (EPMA) takes important steps to facilitate public and private investment in those critical areas. In July, the Senate voted with a large majority to move forward with the EPMA and to enter formal negotiations for reconciling the EPMA with a more divisive energy bill approved by the House of Representatives in 2015.



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