NUCLEAR NETWORK AFRICA

THE WORLD OF NUCLEAR

YES, NUCLEAR FOR SMALL COUNTRIES IN AFRICA!
DAVID CHERRY

KOEBERG AT 40: A PIONEER'S MEMORIES OF SOUTH AFRICA'S FIRST NUCLEAR POWER PLANT (PART 1)
GEERT DE VRIES

AND MORE.....

A GIRAFFE'S LONG VISION, ADAPTABILITY, AND STEADY STANCE SYMBOLIZE THE FORESIGHT, FLEXIBILITY, AND STABILITY REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS IN NUCLEAR POWER DEVELOPMENT.

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N²A HIGHLIGHTS

FROM THE EDITOR

As the world navigates an era of rapid change, the energy landscape is transforming before our eyes. Global shifts in policy, technology, and economics are pushing nations to reassess their energy security, sustainability, and resilience. Africa, with its vast potential and growing energy demands, is no exception.

At the heart of this transition is nuclear power, a reliable energy source that can drive industrial growth, economic development, and energy security across the continent. But realising this vision requires more than just political will and technological advancements; it demands a robust supply chain and a network of skilled professionals to support the industry's growth.

From engineers and project managers to fuel suppliers and regulatory experts, every step in the nuclear value chain relies on expertise, collaboration, and investment. Africa's nuclear future depends on building this ecosystem, developing local capabilities, securing reliable partnerships, and ensuring that the right people are in the right roles to drive progress forward.

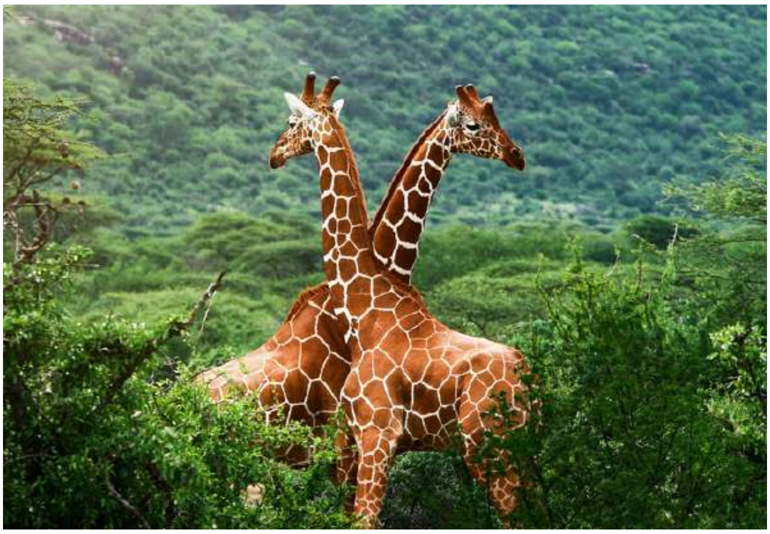
In this issue of N²A Nuclear Network Africa, we explore the essential role of the supply chain in nuclear development. We highlight key players, examine challenges, and showcase opportunities for professionals, businesses, and investors to be part of Africa's nuclear journey. As the world changes, Africa has the chance to shape its energy future with nuclear at its core.

The time to act is now.

Warm regards,

Heather Veldhuis

HEATHER VELDHUIS
EDITOR



The Giraffe is a powerful symbol of vision, foresight, and strategic awareness. Qualities that define professionals shaping the future of nuclear power in Africa. Just as the giraffe stands tall above the savanna, seeing far beyond the immediate horizon, nuclear professionals with a "giraffe mindset" possess the ability to anticipate industry trends, navigate challenges, and make informed decisions that drive sustainable energy progress.

YES, NUCLEAR FOR SMALL COUNTRIES IN AFRICA!

DAVID CHERRY

Only yesterday it was unthinkable that nuclear power could be available to most African nations. But today, nuclear power is no longer the privilege of the industrialized countries. Technological apartheid has been largely defeated.

The up-front expense of a nuclear power plant is still a consideration, however. Doesn't this expense restrict nuclear to African nations with relatively small budgets? On the continent today, only South Africa has a functioning nuclear power plant. Egypt's large plant—comprising four reactors, each producing 1200 megawatts of electricity (1200 MWe)—is now under construction.

And the other countries? Small modular reactors (SMRs) and microreactors give most small African countries the nuclear option. Because these reactors are small and their major components can be produced on an assembly line, their price is within reach of most countries. With these small reactors, the revenue from the first installed reactor can help pay the cost of adding more units on the same site. There are about 80 SMRs designed or being designed worldwide. Russia and China have SMRs in operation. South Africa's HTMR-100 is fully designed and ready to be built.

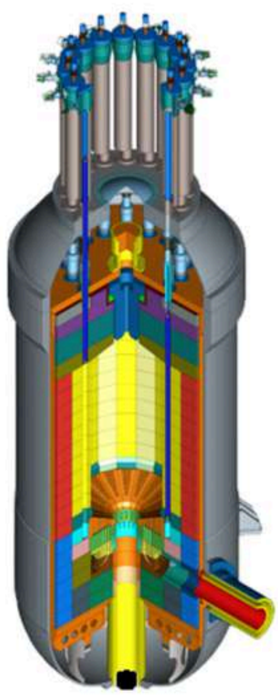
A reactor that produces 20 to 300 MWe is called a Small Modular Reactor (SMR) and one under 20 MWe is a Microreactor. Nuclear reactors produce a significant amount of heat that can also be used, but SMRs and Microreactors are defined in terms of their electric output. In Japan, Toshiba has its 4S model that will produce 10 MWe, while in the U.S. the TVA model is designed for 15 MWe. There are even smaller ones. The South African HTMR-100 will put out 35 Mwe, and the South African AMR will produce 3.3 MWe. Other sizes include Russia's RITM-200 at 55 Mwe, now operating; and in China, two SMRs are now operating: the ACP100 producing 125 MWe, and the HTR-PM, 210 MWe.

Different designs are suitable for different conditions. Some use water to keep the reactor sufficiently cool, and must therefore be near a large water body. Designs that use circulating Helium for cooling can be placed inland.

But the cost of the reactor itself is not the only problem. No power plant can function if the electricity network lacks the capacity to deliver the electricity to users. Another problem is having enough trained technicians for plant operation. For both problems, the SMR provides relief. The first SMR will not need a large staff, and it can grow as more reactors are added. As for transmission capacity, the first SMR may not require much upgrade of the network.

Why Nuclear and Why Now?

For now, many African governments will expand their use of coal and hydro-power and possibly add natural gas, because even small reactors are not mail-order items that will arrive next week. But now is the time to start along the path to nuclear because of its longer lead time. These other sources will still be important in the energy mix, long after nuclear is first up and running. CONTINUED ON PG5



CONT.... FROM PG 4

But why, then, is nuclear necessary? Nuclear is the energy source of the future because Uranium and Thorium are vastly more energy dense than any conventional source, especially solar and wind. For example, a kilogram of Uranium-235 contains two or three million times the energy of a kilogram of coal or oil. (Imagine avoiding the cost of the constant flow of coal-laden trucks from mine to power plant. Nuclear fuel lasting years weighs only a few kilograms.) Not only that; a nuclear power plant does not have a large footprint compared to any other power plant of equivalent output. These two factors together are the "energy-flux-density" of the given combination of fuel and technology. Higher energy-flux-density indicates greater efficiency and lower cost per megawatt.

Africa is now on a path toward industrialization. There can be no sovereignty without the national power that comes from industrialization, and that's where nuclear power comes in. It is no accident that the first five BRICS nations all have nuclear power plants— Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa. It is no accident that the other five full BRICS members either have nuclear power (Iran, UAE), or are building their first plant (Egypt), or have concrete plans for nuclear power (Ethiopia, Indonesia).

TRISO fuel (TRI-structural isSOtropic fuel) consists of tiny uranium fuel kernels coated with protective layers of ceramics and carbon, making it highly resistant to extreme temperatures and radiation.

David Cherry has an MA in history. After graduating in the US he worked in England for a year doing post-graduate research. He expanded his vision to include appreciating the whole world, and also developed an interest in the history of science, and its status in world affairs. He is formerly of 21st Century Science & Technology and the International Journal of Fusion Energy. He is now an editorial staff member of the Executive Intelligence Review in Washington, D.C.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WHY SHOULD LOCATION MATTER?

For decades, traditional nuclear power stations have required specific locations due to their immense size, cooling requirements, and reliance on well-developed infrastructure. These large-scale facilities were typically built near coastlines or major rivers, where they could access vast amounts of water for cooling. Additionally, they needed to be close to stable electrical grids capable of distributing high-voltage power over long distances. These constraints meant that many remote and landlocked areas in Africa were unable to benefit from nuclear energy, as the necessary infrastructure was either too costly or entirely unavailable.

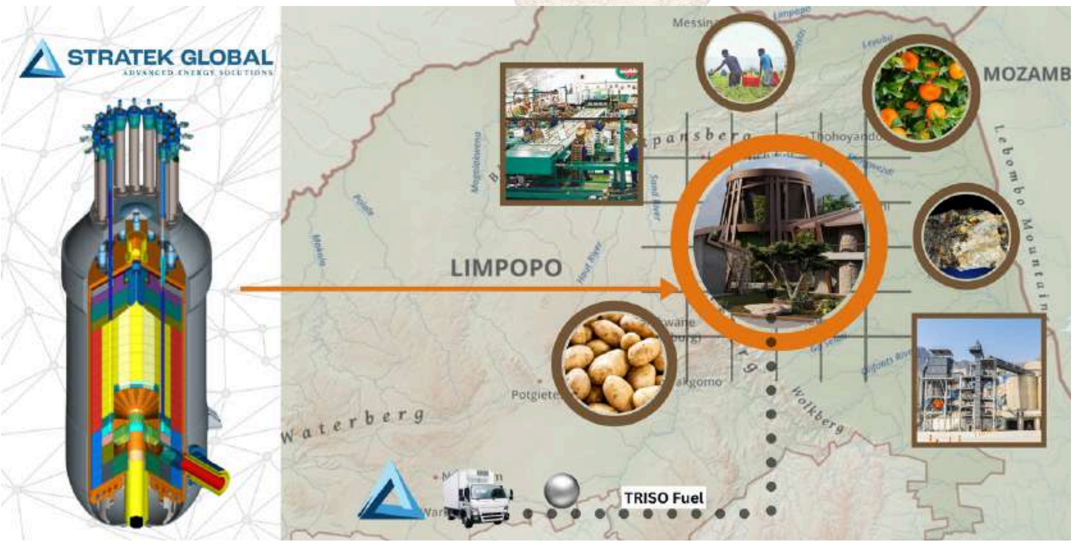
Beyond geographical challenges, traditional nuclear plants also required extensive construction periods, often over a decade, along with large financial investments and complex regulatory approvals. These factors made them impractical for many African nations seeking rapid energy expansion. The need for seismic stability, minimal natural disaster risks, and secure supply chains further narrowed the viable locations for deployment.

In contrast, Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) are revolutionising nuclear energy by eliminating many of these restrictions. Their compact, factory-assembled design allows them to be transported and installed in a variety of environments, including arid deserts, remote mining operations, and isolated rural communities. Unlike conventional reactors, SMRs do not necessarily require proximity to large water sources, as many models utilise air or alternative cooling systems. This makes them suitable for landlocked nations and regions where traditional nuclear plants would be unfeasible.

Moreover, SMRs have a significantly shorter construction time, with some models ready for deployment within three to five years. Their modular nature means they can be scaled up or down based on energy demands, making them ideal for industrial applications such as mining and manufacturing, as well as for powering entire communities. By decentralising energy production, SMRs reduce the need for extensive grid infrastructure, providing electricity directly where it is needed.

This adaptability is particularly valuable for Africa, where energy demand is rising, and many regions remain underserved. With SMRs, African nations can leapfrog traditional energy development barriers and bring stable, carbon-free power to previously inaccessible locations. This shift not only supports economic growth and industrialisation but also enhances energy security.

By breaking free from the location constraints of traditional nuclear power, SMRs present a transformative solution for Africa's energy future, offering reliable, flexible, and sustainable electricity for all terrains and conditions.



This diagram describes the placement of an SMR in the agricultural, mining and production areas of Limpopo. The ease of fuel transport and the local grid structure supporting the modular reactors are ideal to power the region. This area is far from large bodies of water. This layout supports the decentralised nature of the enegry plans proposed by the South African government

KOEBERG AT 40: A PIONEER'S MEMORIES OF SOUTH AFRICA'S FIRST NUCLEAR POWER PLANT (PART 1)

GEERT DE VRIES

Geert de Vries has an MSc in physics and an MBL. He fluently speaks English, Afrikaans, Dutch, German, and French.

During the early part of his career, he worked at Iscor and the CSIR. He then worked at the Max Planck institute in Germany, and later at the Centre d'Etudes Nucleaires (CEA) in France. Subsequently he spent six months as a visiting scientist at the Reactor Centrum Netherland, at Petten in Holland

Later he worked for the French company Framateg, on the building of Koeberg Nuclear Power Station, and subsequently found himself at Eskom working on the PBMR project.

Koeberg has two nuclear reactors. The one reactor reached its 40th Anniversary on 4 April 2024, and the other one will reach its 40th Anniversary on 25 July 2025. This achievement is a huge milestone for any nuclear power plant. Koeberg has had a particularly good record of supplying reliable, inexpensive, electricity to the country. N2A was aware of a physicist who is one of the first ever people involved in the building of Koeberg, so we asked him to give us some comment about his first ever memories of the beginning of the construction.

Geert de Vries is a mechanical engineer and nuclear physicist who also obtained a management qualification when he was young. He was identified as an ideal candidate to be part of the very initial Koeberg construction team.

Geert tells us part of his story.

My involvement with Koeberg began in the first week of June 1976, after Eskom had moved the French bidder from second to first place on the short list, on Friday 28 May 1976. They notified the French, by telephone, late that night, at around 23:00. **CONTINUED ON PG9**

CONT.... FROM PG 08

This caused a huge surprise and a hectic weekend in Paris, where the French contractor, already resigned to having lost the bid, scrambled to mobilise their team to fly to Johannesburg, the following week, to negotiate timelines and contract details.

It also caused a ripple in the local news in South Africa, which I picked up over the weekend. I decided to approach that French team to see if I could get a job. So I located their hotel in Johannesburg, met their spokesperson, and, later in the year, met their personnel-cum-logistics manager. I got the job.

Meanwhile the Eskom and French technical and legal teams finalised the contract.Together they did a mammoth job, producing a 300+ page contract in seven weeks. It was signed at the end of July, and on 4 August 1976 the 'first spade in the ground' ceremony took place on the Duynefontein Farm, 30 km north of Cape Town.

I started in February 1977, so I missed the first six months of the project. In France the nuclear construction process was managed by Electricité de France (EDF). In South Africa, Eskom did not have that expertise. The same was the case in Iran where the French had a contract to build the Bushehr Nuclear Power Station on the Persian Gulf. So, a company Framateg was created to fill the management roles for both Koeberg and Bushehr. The name framateg (FEG) was a concoction of framatome, alstom atlantique and 'entreprise general'.

So Koeberg's contract execution started in Aug 1976. For about the first three years of the project, the civil engineering partner, Spie-Batignolles (SB), was the only active partner working at the Koeberg site. Alstom Atlantique (AA) and Framatome (FRA) only came into play after sufficient civil structures had been completed.

So, while SB, the fully operational partner, had an office in Braamfontein and at site, AA used the offices of their agent IMS in Loveday Street, and FRA initially needed no presence in South Africa. FEG, however, needed presence from day one, in Johannesburg near Eskom HQ at Megawatt Park, and at the Koeberg site, to manage the project itself.

So, notwithstanding my inexperience in large project management, I found myself in the project management company FEG, in its Johannesburg office, initially in Loveday Street, but shortly after, in Killarney Mall, 14 km from Eskom HQ. The FEG office consisted of a French manager, a French financial person, several office ladies, a driver, and me.

During the first months of the project that I had missed, SB and FEG Site had mainly been busy with site establishment: building a site-entry office, roads, stores, fence, parkings, and so on. They also erected prefabs on concrete slabs for site offices for themselves, and for early subcontractors, and for Eskom's Site Office. Also built was an 11 MW substation, a large transformer on a plinth that became a landmark, and for which a new powerline had to be constructed. There was a water supply to the site when SB began, but it was too small, and in late 1977 or early '78, a new pipeline was laid along Otto du Plessis Drive, all the way to Koeberg. That job took many months.

Our mail came and went to Paris by courier. We communicated with Paris and Site by phone, and a 5-hole paper-tape telex. Fax did not exist yet. The manager of FEG in South Africa was Henri Bonin who, very early on, took me to Koeberg to meet the FEG and SB site people, like the managers and others, such as the QA manager and the office ladies. ..TO BE CONTINUED IN APRIL EDITION

NUCLEAR POWER: THE RELIABILITY BENCHMARK IN CAPACITY FACTORS

In the evolving energy landscape, reliability remains a crucial factor in determining the viability of different power sources. One key metric used to assess this is the Capacity Factor. The Capacity Factor is a measure of how much electricity you actually get, over a year, in comparison to the theoretical maximum output. Among all energy sources, nuclear power stands out with the highest Capacity Factor, typically exceeding 90%.

Unlike solar and wind, which are intermittent due to weather conditions, or gas and coal, which can fluctuate based on the continuous supply of coal or gas, nuclear power plants operate continuously, providing stable, round-the-clock electricity. This is largely due to the unique characteristics of nuclear reactors, which are designed to function as baseload power sources, meaning they supply a constant output of electricity regardless of external factors.

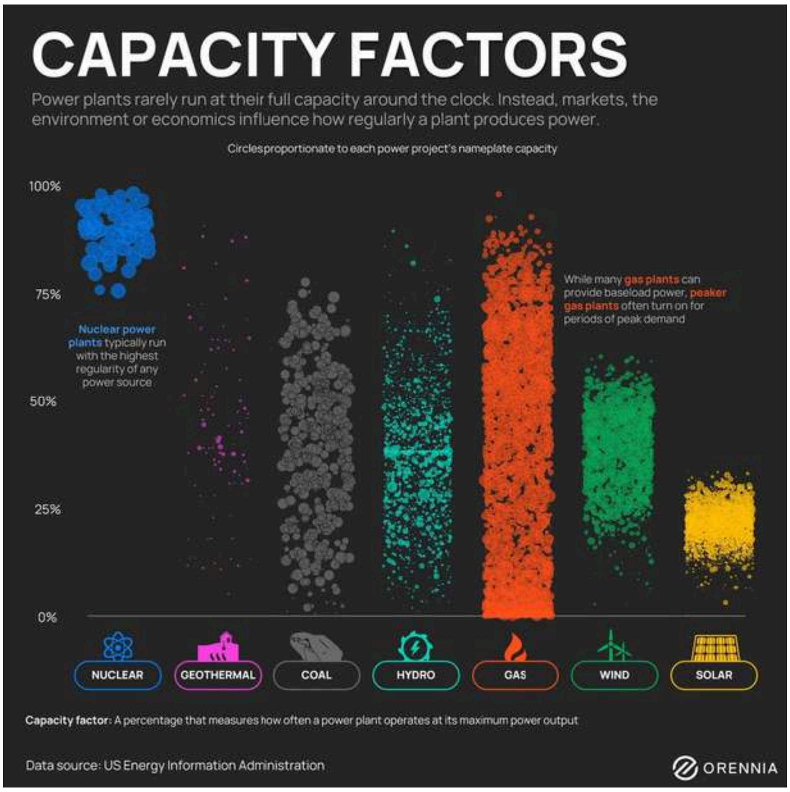
The reliability of nuclear energy is further reinforced by its fuel cycle. Unlike fossil fuel plants, which depend on a continuous supply of coal or gas, nuclear reactors use uranium fuel, which is loaded in advance and can sustain operation for 24 to 36 months before requiring refuelling. This makes nuclear power far less susceptible to fuel supply disruptions. By contrast, natural gas plants, while capable of providing baseload power, include peaker plants that operate only during periods of high electricity demand. This leads to a far lower average Capacity Factor for gas overall. Similarly, solar and wind power, while valuable for a diversified energy mix, operate at much lower Capacity Factors due to their dependence on sunlight and wind availability.

For Africa, where grid stability and reliable electricity access remain major challenges, nuclear power presents a compelling solution. A high-capacity-factor energy source ensures that critical infrastructure, such as hospitals, data centres, and manufacturing industries, can function without the risk of intermittent supply. Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), in particular, offer a scalable, efficient option for nations seeking energy security without the risks of fuel shortages or market price volatility.

As the global energy transition accelerates, the importance of nuclear power's unparalleled reliability cannot be overstated. It remains the cornerstone of a stable, low-carbon electricity supply, making it a key player in Africa's energy future.

A visual representation of capacity factors across different energy sources, showing that nuclear power has the highest Capacity Factor, operating at over 90%, while other sources like gas, coal, hydro, wind, and solar have significantly lower capacity factors.

Image Credit: Orennia, sourced from the US Energy Information Administration.



NUCLEAR LAW IN THE NUCLEAR ENERGY ECOSYSTEM

NKAZIMULO MOYENI

Nuclear energy is one of humanity's greatest double-edged swords. It is an immense force capable of powering cities, revolutionising medicine, and driving economies, yet requiring unwavering control and responsibility. Like a river, held in place by strong banks, nuclear technology must be guided, contained, and regulated to ensure its benefits outweigh its risks. This is where nuclear law comes in, not as a bureaucratic hurdle, but rather as a bastion upon which the entire nuclear industry stands. It is the invisible force that keeps power plants safe, international treaties respected, and public fears addressed. Without it, nuclear energy would be an unpredictable force, lacking the structure necessary for responsible growth.

Role of lawyers in nuclear energy

When people think of nuclear energy, they imagine reactors, radiation, and scientists in white coats. But behind every successful nuclear project stand lawyers, ensuring that power plants operate within legal frameworks, waste is managed responsibly, and international agreements are honoured. Without law, nuclear energy would be a wild force, unregulated and unpredictable. Some key roles that nuclear lawyers play include; developing policies, licenses, and regulations. Lawyers ensure that nuclear projects comply with both domestic and international laws.

Nuclear lawyers also facilitate nuclear contracts and financing deals. The building of a nuclear power plant is a massive financial undertaking that requires complex agreements between multiple stakeholders. Lawyers structure these deals, ensuring that all parties, from investors to governments, are protected.
The managing of international relations is also a factor for nuclear lawyers.

Nuclear energy projects often involve collaborations between countries, and lawyers who play a vital role in negotiating agreements, ensuring compliance with treaties, and maintaining diplomatic relationships.

Nuclear safety and security is a significant issue as far as the public is concerned, so nuclear law covers critical areas like waste disposal, radiation protection, and emergency preparedness. It is necessary to ensure that nuclear facilities operate safely and therefore there are legal mechanisms in place to handle operations.

An important factor for nuclear professionals is the building of public trust. Numbers of members of the public are sceptical about nuclear energy because of all the negative images which have been created, largely by the anti-nuclear establishment. Lawyers help address these concerns by drafting transparent policies and safety standards.

Specialised education in nuclear law

Despite the critical role of nuclear law, there are very few lawyers who specialise in this exciting field. Most law schools do not offer nuclear law as part of their curriculum, leaving a gap in expertise. To build a strong nuclear energy sector, we need to develop and train a new generation of nuclear lawyers. We need to address this by introducing nuclear law at the undergraduate level, to spark interest in the field. Universities should also create postgraduate programs dedicated to nuclear law, allowing lawyers to gain some in-depth expertise.

There should also be much more collaboration with nuclear scientists and engineers, so that the lawyers can understand the technical aspects of nuclear energy, to enable them to draft effective laws and policies. Joint programs between law schools and science faculties would be ideal in moving towards bridging this gap.

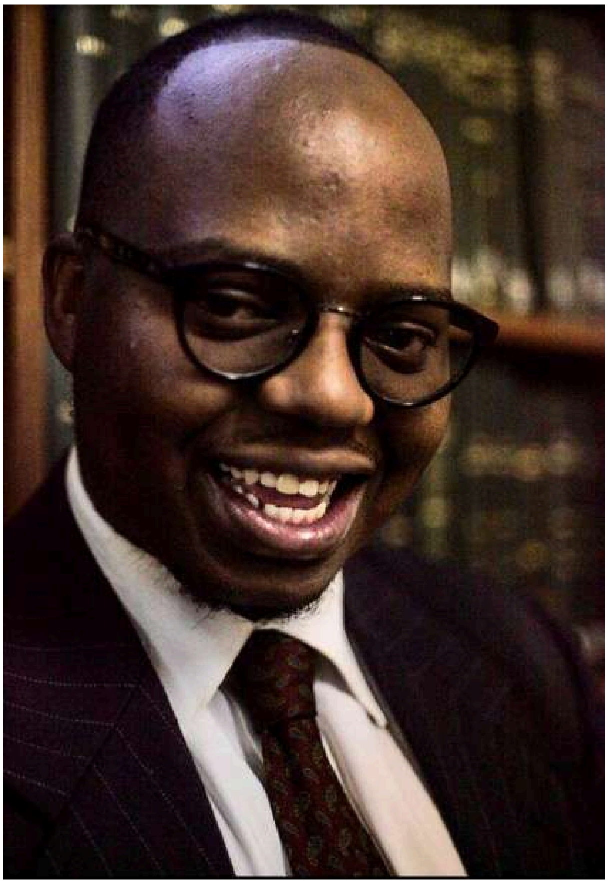
Opportunities in nuclear law

Nuclear law is not just a niche field, it is a growing industry with massive employment potential. This will open up specialised work in a variety of nuclear sectors, such as drafting and enforcing nuclear regulations, issuing licenses, and overseeing nuclear safety. In State Owned Enterprises and private energy companies, it is necessary to manage legal compliance, arrange contracts, and advise on nuclear investments. Working with international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is also most important. Also bear in mind that nuclear does not just cover nuclear reactors, but also functions like nuclear measuring systems in factories. So, consulting firms and private practice also need to be able to provide legal advice to companies, investors, and governments.

The future beckons

Nuclear law is an invisible force that keeps the nuclear industry running safely and efficiently. Without trained nuclear lawyers, the development of nuclear energy would be filled with legal uncertainties. By investing in legal education in the nuclear field, we can build a strong, safe, and sustainable nuclear energy future.

If we truly want to harness the power of nuclear energy for the betterment of society, whether for electricity, medicine, or scientific advancement, we must empower lawyers to play their role in this ecosystem. The future of nuclear energy is not just in the hands of scientists and engineers, it is also in the hands of lawyers who understand the law, the risks, and the possibilities.



Nkazimulo Moyeni, LLB (WITS, Cum Laude), is a seasoned lawyer specialising in compliance, regulatory affairs, governance, and contract management, with a particular focus on capital markets. His expertise spans debt and equity capital markets, securities regulation, and corporate transactions, including mergers and acquisitions, IPOs, and public offerings. With a deep understanding of regulatory frameworks, he helps businesses navigate legal complexities, ensuring compliance with listing requirements and mitigating risks in financial transactions.

Beyond his legal practice, Nkazimulo is a passionate advocate for nuclear energy, recognizing its potential to drive sustainable development and energy security in South Africa. He is actively pursuing specialisation in nuclear law and energy policy, aiming to contribute to regulatory advancements, investment strategies, and legal frameworks that support the growth of nuclear infrastructure. His vision is to bridge the gap between law, governance, and energy innovation, ensuring a legally sound and forward-thinking approach to nuclear energy's role in Africa's future.

NUCLEAR SKILLS ARE SPECIAL AND RESPECTED

BERTIE JACOBS

South Africa is faced with a question, and the answer should be simple: Either the country must train and retain expertise in the field of nuclear engineering, or risk being left behind technologically.

Given that South Africa is a 'nuclear power', Professor Vishana Naicker of the Unit for Energy and Technology Systems (UETS) at the North-West University (NWU) believes that "South Africans must have ownership of this technology, at least in terms of safety and decommissioning. South Africa, and Africa, in terms of its sovereignty, cannot afford not to have South African expertise in the operation and maintenance of nuclear reactors. We should not rely on others when it comes to operations, safety and decommissioning."

There is more. "Of course, there are other benefits of training South Africans and Africans through nuclear engineering, such as localisation and job creation."
In this regard, the NWU is uniquely positioned to meet South Africa's diverse nuclear engineering needs. "In South Africa, to my knowledge, there are two institutions which can carry out reactor engineering analysis of nuclear reactor cores: the NWU and the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (NECSA). At the NWU, being an academic institution, we have the advantage of being able to look at research and industrial issues from both an operator and regulatory perspective. We also perform state-of-the-art calculations using international computer codes, and publish our findings in accredited journals," Naicker explains.

The NWU's expertise is further underscored by its participation in benchmark studies through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and research projects in collaboration with the National Nuclear Regulator (NNR), NECSA and Eskom (via Koeberg). The NWU's area of research is computational nuclear engineering analysis.

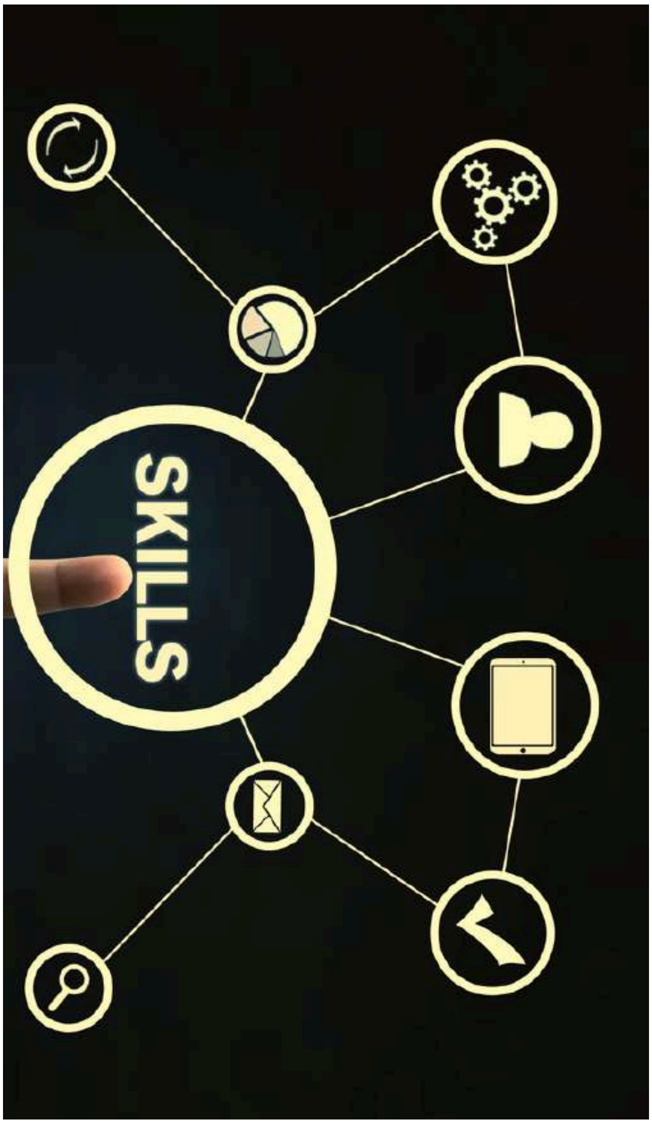
Naicker also strongly encourages prospective students to consider studying nuclear engineering at the NWU.

"**T**here are two reasons. Firstly, as a career, it is a top-end career. Graduates do get employed in the nuclear industry. However, it is not a big market. If the South African government goes ahead with the planned nuclear build, the nuclear engineering job market will expand. The second reason is that South Africa is a nuclear power country. It is important that people are trained to run this industry. Without properly trained people, we will have a big problem with the nuclear waste that we already have, given that we have three reactors that have been running for many decades. With the new reactors that may be built, this need would be even more important."

Looking to the future, Naicker highlights two aspects that are crucial to ensuring that South Africa reaps the many benefits of nuclear power.

"**T**he first is the financing of the nuclear reactors. In this respect, the South African government has to be the main stakeholder, because in the South African context, the costs may be too high for a private enterprise. Secondly, we need to ensure that the reactor is properly licensed. The design must be a proven design, so that the licensing processes can be based, to some extent, on previous licensing in other countries. In addition, the Regulator must be adequately prepared to carry out the licensing task.

At present, the Regulator can regulate the current fleet of reactors. However, if the new reactors are of a different design, and they most likely will be, the Regulator would need to assess its current capabilities and proactively build more capabilities if needed."
Then there is the issue of the civilian nuclear power industry.



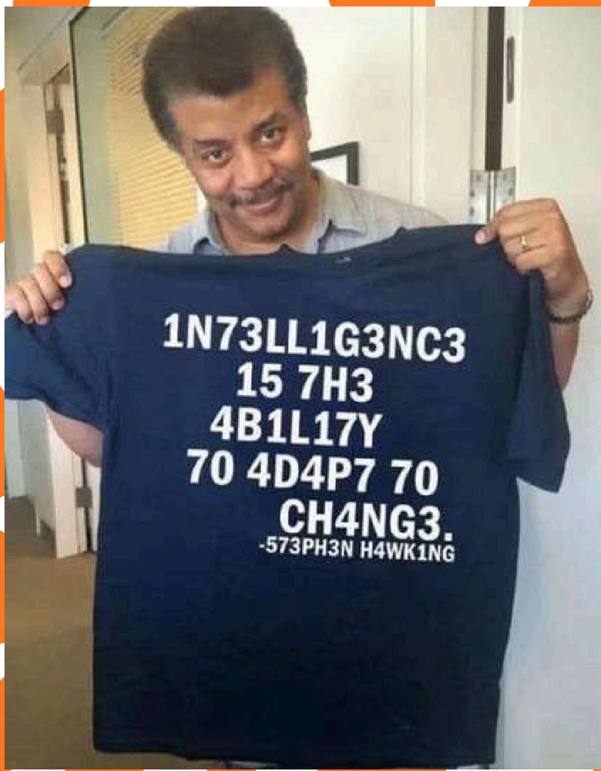
"**T**his industry is often compared to the pharmaceutical and aeronautical industries. Given the necessity of the latter two industries, they will continue to play a major role in today's global society. These two industries have stringent controls in place, given the risks. The same applies to nuclear energy, with institutions such as the IAEA acting as watchdogs. With global warming and climate change scares, and the thirst for energy in the world, the world has no choice but to include nuclear power in the energy mix. However, we must ensure that what we do does not put a burden on future generations.

This means that we must be sure that the systems that we deploy are engineered to the highest standards, and that we make our decisions based on clear, non-emotional thinking."

Bertie Jacobs is a former journalist and currently a Communications Specialist at North-West University.

He has a passion for research communication, particularly regarding sustainable energy solutions, and believes that nuclear energy must play an integral role in the global energy mix.

WORTH KNOWING



Dr Neil deGrasse Tyson is an American astrophysicist, and he is showing a T-shirt with a quote by famous physicist Prof Stephen Hawking. Since 1996 Tyson has been the director of the Hayden Planetarium at the Rose Center for Earth and Space in New York City. The center is part of the American Museum of Natural History, where Tyson founded the Department of Astrophysics in 1997 and has been a research associate in the department since 2003.

NUCLEAR NETWORK AFRICA

THE WORLD OF NUCLEAR

Any person who has influence and a role to play in representing any Nuclear-Related Developments to advance nuclear power in Africa. or in any international entity, which can contribute to the development of Africa's nuclear energy capability is encouraged to be part of this great journey.

Any company, ranging in capability from a nut and bolt to the most sophisticated piece of equipment, should join the journey now.

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Rachel has been involved with Stratek Global and our nuclear projects for over 10 years. She handles sales and marketing functions related to conferences, meetings, brochures and publications like N²A