

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Research article

THE RSA'S OPPOSITION PARTIES' APPROACHES TO SOLVING THE ENERGY CRISIS: A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE ANC?

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NESTEROVA Elena Sergeevna, Junior Research Fellow, Centre for Sub-Saharan Africa, Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russian Federation. ORCID: 0009-0002-1815-1635. E-mail: nesterova.elena99@yandex.ru

Abstract. The energy crisis in South Africa became a byword within the South African society, having transformed into a critical factor in the political infighting. The shortage of generating capacity, the lack of qualified personnel, the widespread corruption and other challenges have significantly undermined the energy sector. It has contributed to the mood of protest in the population. These protest sentiments among the public resulted in their voting for opposition parties promising to find a way out of the energy crisis by a range of the South African citizens. The paper considers the ideas of the most popular South African opposition parties in the context of the resolution of the long-standing energy crisis. One of the main materials for analysing the parties' approaches to resolving the energy crisis was their 2024 manifestos. Since it was the parties' pre-election views on the energy crisis that were examined, all of them are called in this text as "opposition" regardless of whether they joined the Government of National Unity/GNU after the elections.

The views of the South African opposition parties, including those, which entered into the Government of National Unity (GNU) following the 2024 elections, on the pathways out of the energy crisis are often utopian and radical. Thus, they can potentially lead to unpredictable consequences. In particular, the privatisation of the energy sector advocated by some parties poses the risk of the nuclear power plant, controlled by the state-owned company Eskom, being transferred to private companies. It, in turn, implicates the loss of the state control over a highly sensitive economic sector that requires significant, unprofitable investments in the safe storage and disposal of radioactive wastes. The opposition's emphasis on renewable energy sources is detrimental due to its underestimation of the domestic fossil fuels' use; it is fraught with overexpenditure, inefficient redistribution, as well as lack of attention to the detrimental effect of certain types of green energy on both the environment and human health.

Keywords: energy crisis, South Africa, green agenda, coal-fired power generation, nuclear energy, political parties, opposition

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Despite being one of the most advanced nations in relation to both industrial and energy development on the whole African continent, South Africa faces a major challenge: the growth in electricity generation lags behind the rate of consumption, resulting in numerous negative outcomes. These include underemployment and unemployment, low educational attainment, persistent poverty, and diminished quality of life in rural and traditionally disadvantaged areas. A particular issue to be underlined is the impact of the energy crisis on the healthcare sector, including postponed or canceled surgeries, sharply increased expenses on maintaining lung ventilators, and power outages in refrigeration units storing medicines and vaccines [Lamidi, Juta 2024].

Inefficient management of the state-owned electricity utility Eskom ended in substantial debt to creditors, having limited opportunities for infrastructure modernization (for an in-depth analysis of the Eskom's problems, see [Skubko 2023]). It has led to the slow rates of investment, undermining the company's position [Müller 2023: 4]. Contributing factors include frequent changes in leadership coupled with permutation of personnel, managerial incompetence [Hendrickse 2022: 291], misappropriation of funds, insufficient generating capacity, operational failures, pending technical maintenance issues with respect to the power grids, and a shortage of adequately trained staff owing to their retirement or switching to other industries [Davidson, Filatova 2009: 423].

The huge problem, which is the clients' refusal to pay for substandard electricity supply services, commonly referred to as the "culture of non-payment," is widespread in South Africa [Shubin 2020: 59]. From the point of view of several political parties, the privatization of the energy sector would address the issue of non-paying customers and indebted municipalities. Currently, the Eskom is legally prohibited from cutting electricity to municipalities, since such actions would also adversely affect responsible payers residing in those areas.

THE ENERGY CRUNCH IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE ANC'S PERSPECTIVE

The African National Congress (ANC) party, while in power since 1994, has consistently placed emphasis on the energy sector development, having converted the universal access to electricity into one of its principal objectives. Therefore, the share of the electrified households soared from nearly 40% in 1993 to approximately 70% in 2003 [Eberhard 2005: 5309]. Lately, facing the challenges connected to the energy crisis, the party has sought to balance the expansion of the renewable energy sources with the need for a stable electricity supply, pushing forward the use of the fossil fuels as well as renewables. For instance, the ANC supports projects in gas, nuclear, and hydroelectric power, endorses the retention of coal capacity in the foreseeable future, and shows interest in wind and solar power. To add to this, in recent years, the attention has focused

on the implementation of the Battery Energy Storage Independent Power Producer Procurement Program (BESIPPPP) to accumulate and store energy via the batteries' network expansion for the grid stability, particularly during peak workload periods¹. According to the ANC, this approach will help overcome the limitations of solar plants and wind installations, which generate electricity only under sufficient sunlight and wind conditions.

For the ANC, providing energy supply to households, in particular, low-income ones and workers' families, remains one of the priorities. In 2009, the South African government announced a launch of the Solar Water Heating Program (SWHP) to furnish both households and commercial buildings with solar water heaters. The program aimed to install 1 million heaters² by 2014 and 4 million by 2030, providing 100 liters of hot water per day to low-income households. The initiative sought to reduce electricity costs by 30–50% and curb carbon emissions [Netshiozwi 2019], while creating jobs through installation and maintenance of the above-mentioned water-heaters [Wlokas 2011]. As of March 2025, of the 87,000 purchased solar water heaters, only 59,000 were installed by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE)³, culminating in substantial overspending (over 324 million rands) merely for storage of the unused equipment⁴. In such a way, planning, implementation, and monitoring issues of the program are left unsolved.

The ANC also considers the investment in the expansion of the transmission network to be an essential point. In 2024, for this purpose, a 440 billion rands⁵ transmission expansion project was devised, arousing interest from international companies, inter alia, from India and China⁶. According to the Eskom's updated Transmission Development Plan, the most recent updated version of which was adopted in December 2024, over 14,000 kilometers of new transmission lines are expected to be put into operation by 2033 to ensure the country's energy security.

The ANC believes that South Africa's transition to a low-carbon economy should be carried out with due regard for the interests of society and workers employed in the

¹ See: Minister Kgosientsho Ramokgopa on Battery Energy Storage Independent Power Procurement Programme. *South African Government*. 30.05.2025. <https://gov.za/news/media-statements/minister-kgosientsho-ramokgopa-battery-energy-storage-independent-power> (accessed: 24.11.2025); Augustine C. Tapping into new ways of storing energy. *Government communications*. <https://gcis.gov.za/Tapping-into-new-ways-of-storing-energy> (accessed: 24.11.2025)

² Mineral Resources and Energy Budget: Committee Report; Update on Solar Water Heater programme. *Parliamentary monitor*. 02.06.2020. <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/30362/#:~:text=The%20Committee%20received%20a%20progress> (accessed: 22.11.2025)

³ Formed in June 2019 as a result of the merger of the Department of Energy and the Department of Mineral Resources.

⁴ Media Statement: Committee Expresses Concerns Over Failures and Wasteful Expenditure in Solar Water Heater Programme. *Parliament*. <https://parliament.gov.za/press-releases/media-statement-committee-expresses-concerns-over-failures-and-wasteful-expenditure-solar-water-heater-programme#:~:text=The%20Chairperson%20of%20the%20committee> (accessed: 23.10.2025)

⁵ National Treasury on Independent Transmission Programme. *South African Government*. 06.06.2025. <https://gov.za/news/media-statements/national-treasury-independent-transmission-programme-06-jun-2025> (accessed: 23.10.2025)

⁶ Burkhardt B. South Africa's R440bn grid build draws Adani, Chinese firms. *MoneyWeb*. 23.10.2025. <https://moneyweb.co.za/news/south-africa/south-africas-r440bn-grid-build-draws-adani-chinese-firms/> (accessed: 23.11.2025)

energy sector. Therefore, the ruling party supports the transition to a carbon-neutral economy at a pace consistent with development goals, while paying particular attention to the ensurance of the reliable energy supply to the population at an affordable price. This, in its turn, defines the ANC's stance as balanced and well-thought-out⁷.

As part of the transition to a low-carbon economy, the South African government is placing particular focus on the Mpumalanga province, where the majority of coal utilized in heavy industry, petrochemical, and other sectors is extracted, and where the majority of electricity is produced (the largest number of coal-fired power plants are located here) [Shikwambanaa et al. 2020]. The ANC leadership acknowledges that shifting to “green energy” will have a negative influence on a lot of people in this province, who are employed in the coal industry [Nel, Marais 2025: 249, 253].

WAYS TO SOLVE THE ENERGY CRISIS: APPROACHES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The acute issue of the insufficient electricity generation and, consequently, rolling blackouts is viewed by the opposition parties as a tool for political pressure on the government [Chernenko 2020: 53]. Virtually every opposition party is prepared to propose its own ways of resolving this burning question. Apparently, the “high-voltage tension” between the South African government and opposition forces regarding the prolonged energy crisis reaches its peak during the pre-election period.

In the seventh general elections held in South Africa on May 29, 2024, the ANC for the first time faced a real threat of losing its parliamentary majority, having secured only 40.18% of the votes. Hence, the ANC reached a strategic decision to establish a Government of National Unity (GNU), comprised of: the Democratic Alliance (21.8% of the vote), the Inkatha Freedom Party (3.85%), the Freedom Front Plus (1.36%), the Patriotic Alliance (2.05%), the GOOD Party (0.18%), the United Democratic Movement (0.49%), and the Rise Mzansi (0.42%). Other parties discussed in this article, such as the uMkhonto weSizwe Party (14.59%), the Economic Freedom Fighters (9.52%), the Action South Africa (1.19%), the Build One South Africa (0.41%), and the African Christian Democratic Party (0.60% of the vote), remained in opposition⁸.

⁷ See: ANC Elections Manifesto 2024. Pp. 24–25. <https://anc1912.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/ANC-2024-Elections-Manifesto.pdf> (accessed: 17.11.2025); Electricity and Energy Budget Vote 10 Debate by Hon. Fasiha Hassan, MP – ANC Parliament. 10.07.2025. <https://ancparliament.org.za/electricity-energy-budget-vote-10-debate-by-hon-fasiha-hassan-mp-african-national-congress/> (accessed: 17.11.2025); Nel L. Bread and energy: What South African political parties have to say. *Natural Justice*. 23.05.2023. <https://naturaljustice.org/bread-and-energy-what-south-african-political-parties-have-to-say/> (accessed: 17.11.2025); Energy manifestos: Comparing what ANC, EFF, DA have in mind to end load shedding. *IOL*. 28.02.2024. <https://iol.co.za/business-report/economy/2024-02-28-energy-manifestos-comparing-what-anc-eff-da-have-in-mind-to-end-load-shedding/> (accessed: 17.11.2025); Political parties share their views on renewable energy. *Techcentral*. 24.04.2024. <https://techcentral.co.za/political-parties-views-renewable-energy/243650/> (accessed: 17.11.2025)

⁸ Election Results and Allocation of Seats in Parliament (National Assembly) and Provincial Legislatures: 2024. *Parliamentary monitoring group*. 02.06.2024. <https://pmg.org.za/blog/Election%20Results%20and%20Allocation%20of%20Seats%20in%20Parliament%20National%20Assembly%20and%20Provincial%20Legislatures%202024> (accessed: 17.11.2025)

One of the main reasons for the decline in electoral support for the ANC was both the rolling blackouts themselves and the party's inability to properly regulate the performance of the state-owned energy company, i.e., the Eskom [Skubko 2023]. Although some changes did occur during the pre- and post-election period, they came down to the mitigation of the consequences rather than to the provision of a comprehensive solution to the energy crisis and the removal of its root causes (see *Table 1*). The largest opposition parties dedicated up to 10% of their 2024 manifestos to this very problem.

Table 1. Opposition parties' views on the key factors in addressing the energy crisis

Party	Position on:			
	Non-renewable energy (particularly, coal)	Renewables	Nuclear energy	The role of the private business in the economy
Democratic Alliance (DA)	+	+++	+	+++
uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP)	+++	+	+++	-
Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)	+++	++	+++	+
Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)	++	++	++	++
Freedom Front Plus (FF+)	+	+++	+	+++
Rise Mzansi (RM)	+	+++	+	++
Action South Africa (ASA)	+	+++	+	+++
GOOD Party (GOOD)	-	+++	-	++
Patriotic Alliance (PA)	++	+++	++	++
Build One South Africa (BOSA)	++	++	++	+++
United Democratic Movement (UDM)	++	+	++	++
African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)	+++	++	+	++

Source: Compiled by the author.

Note:

" + " indicates weak positive attitude;

" ++ " indicates a moderate/compromise position;

" +++ " indicates an actively promoted position;

" - " indicates a negative attitude.

The liberal **Democratic Alliance (DA)**, led by John Steenhuisen, views the rolling blackouts as the only tangible obstacle to the sustainable development and investment attraction⁹, as well as the gravest threat to both economic and social stability in the state.

As outlined in the party's 2024 manifesto, the DA proposed the division and restructuring of the Eskom and the establishment of an open electricity market to foster competition among producers. This position aligns with the party's ideology, which asserts that a free-market system is more efficient than a state monopoly. The DA believes that the key solution to South Africa's energy crisis lies in transferring the energy system to the control of an independent organization¹⁰ and increasing electricity generation outside of the Eskom. A large number of private suppliers would encourage competition, thereby improving service quality, expanding supply, and reducing electricity prices.

One of the DA's overriding priorities is the development of the network infrastructure, in that the South African transmission grid, which meets modern standards, is concentrated around coal-fired power plants in the Mpumalanga province. The DA also intends to concentrate on achieving zero carbon emissions through the diversification of the energy mix and the putting of new energy sources into service.

While coal usage is not planned to be phased out in the short term, the DA appears to over-rely on solar panels among renewable energy sources. Indeed, of all the renewable energy sources generating up to 17% of the country's electricity¹¹, solar panels account for 8%¹². The party claims that in the long term, solar panels may become the cheapest electricity source, for the price of solar power engineering in 2024 fell below 1 rand per kWh, while the Eskom's average internal tariff increased to 1.92 rand per kWh¹³. Consequently, the DA deems protectionist policies regarding high tariffs on the import of technologies like photovoltaic panels and batteries¹⁴ inappropriate.

The left-populist uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP) vehemently condemns plans to privatize the key state assets, in particular, the Eskom, and strongly opposes its division¹⁵, arguing that such steps would deny millions of South Africans access to essential services and cause the state to lose its ability to determine the country's vector of development. The MKP calls for a people-centered economic program aimed at restoring the state's potential, not least by ensuring energy independence via

⁹ Oosthuizen J. DA hou eie alternatiewe staatsrede. *Voertaal*. 08.02.2023. <https://voertaal.nu/da-hou-eie-alternatiewe-staatsrede/> (accessed: 25.05.2025)

¹⁰ Oosthuizen J. Eskom is in totale verval, sê opposisie. *Voertaal*. 11.11.2021. <https://voertaal.nu/eskom-is-in-totale-verval-se-opposisie/> (accessed: 27.07.2025)

¹¹ 17% of South Africa's electricity was generated from low-carbon sources in 2024, less than half the global average of 41%. *Ember*. 10.04.2025. <https://ember-energy.org/countries-and-regions/south-africa/> (accessed: 21.06.2025)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Power to the people, now! *DA*. <https://da.org.za/powertothepeople> (accessed: 24.07.2025)

¹⁴ Ajala S. The implication of South Africa's 2024 election on its energy transition plan. *Energy Transition. The Global Energiewende*. 05.06.2024. <https://energytransition.org/2024/06/the-implication-of-south-africas-2024-election-on-its-energy-transition-plan/> (accessed: 17.07.2025)

¹⁵ The People's Mandate. MK Manifesto. *MK*. 2024. P. 11. <https://mkparty.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/MK-Manifesto-The-Peoples-Mandate-Paths-Final-2.pdf> (accessed: 25.09.2025)

investments in coal and nuclear energy, while simultaneously rejecting the services of independent energy producers¹⁶.

The MKP is the only party opposed to the transition to low-carbon energy. In its efforts to modernize the coal-based infrastructure and accelerate nuclear energy development¹⁷, the party discourages what it calls the “unjust transition” from coal¹⁸, underlining that the South African energy system is designed to use coal, not renewables, which require a decentralized network capable of processing energy from multiple sources.

According to the party, the ongoing rolling blackouts, which have already demonstrated the complete failure of the Government of National Unity, will further exacerbate the investment problem, paralyze business to an even greater degree, destroy jobs, and deepen poverty. The MKP argues that power outages are a deliberately provoked crisis aimed at weakening and ultimately ruining the Eskom. The party declares that the ultimate goal is to sell the Eskom at a bargain price to the white monopolistic capital.

The left-populist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) identifies nuclear energy as a trusted energy resource¹⁹. In their 2024 manifesto, the EFF stated its intention to establish international cooperation with strategic partners, particularly the Russian Federation, to build a nuclear power plant²⁰. The party plans for the plant to produce between 3,000 and 6,000 MW of electricity under a 20-year “build–operate–transfer” contract²¹.

If victorious in the elections, the EFF has committed to decarbonizing the electricity sector at a pace, scale, and cost that is feasible and beneficial for South Africa²². It prioritizes supporting communities and workers affected by the transition to a low-carbon economy²³. However, before focusing on promoting the green economy model, the party acknowledged the need for expanded industrialization and the creation of new jobs²⁴. For example, concerning the issue of repairing and restoring the coal-fired power plants, the EFF expressed its intent to enhance international cooperation, notably with China²⁵. The

¹⁶ Ntanzu H. MK Party warns of deeper economic crisis amid VAT suspension. *IOL*. 29.04.2025. <https://iol.co.za/news/politics/2025-04-29-mk-party-warns-of-deeper-economic-crisis-amid-vat-suspension/> (accessed: 21.05.2025)

¹⁷ The People’s Mandate. MK Manifesto. *MK*. 2024. P. 11. <https://mkparty.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/MK-Manifesto-The-Peoples-Mandate-Paths-Final-2.pdf> (accessed: 25.09.2025)

¹⁸ Nel L. Bread and energy: What South African political parties have to say. *Natural Justice*. 23.05.2023. <https://naturaljustice.org/bread-and-energy-what-south-african-political-parties-have-to-say/> (accessed: 20.07.2025)

¹⁹ Our Land & Jobs Now. Stop Loadshedding! 2024 Election Manifesto. *EFFonline*. 2024. P. 46. <https://effonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/A5-EFF-2024-Manifesto-full-version.pdf> (accessed: 12.08.2025)

²⁰ *Ibid.* P. 47.

²¹ *Ibid.* P. 48.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Nel L. Bread and energy: What South African political parties have to say. *Natural Justice*. 23.05.2023. <https://naturaljustice.org/bread-and-energy-what-south-african-political-parties-have-to-say/> (accessed: 20.07.2025)

²⁴ The Political Party Manifesto Debate and The Manifesto Assessment. *Project 90 by 2030*. 13.05.2024. P. 3. <https://90by2030.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Political-Parties-Manifestos-Assessment-2024.pdf> (accessed: 29.07.2025)

²⁵ *Ibid.*

party also included in its manifesto the point regarding the deployment of the “clean coal” technologies, including carbon capture and storage²⁶.

The manifesto provides for the abolition of preferential electricity tariffs for corporations in order to reduce their electricity demand. In contrast to its main opponent among the opposition parties, i.e., the MKP, the EFF proposes subsidizing the supply of the alternative energy sources to public institutions (hospitals, schools, police stations) as well as to residential buildings during construction²⁷. The party intends to eradicate all illegal grid connections but promises the low-income households up to 200 kWh of free electricity.

The position of the **Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)**, whose main support base is the KwaZulu-Natal province [Heñ 2009: 107], can generally be described as relatively measured. The IFP proposes to abandon the monopoly in the energy sector, allowing other market participants to demonstrate their potential, while concurrently retaining the sensitive nuclear energy sector exclusively under state control.

The party supports the use of hydro, wind, and solar energy. For instance, the IFP calls for the construction of houses with pre-installed solar panels provided free of charge to residents²⁸ as well as for their installation in low-income households²⁹. It also proposes subsidizing electricity prices for small businesses, communities historically subjected to various forms of discrimination over extended periods, and low-income households³⁰.

Most notable in the IFP manifesto is its positioning as a staunch defender of nuclear energy. The party emphasizes that nuclear energy must firmly remain under state ownership³¹. At the same time, the IFP considers that an ideal solution for managing the Eskom could involve a public–private partnership³². The party appeals for the division of the utility into three separate sectors to ensure operational efficiency and foster competition. The IFP upholds the participation of independent power producers in the overall energy mix to enhance energy security.

Nevertheless, in its 2024 pre-election manifesto, the IFP pays tribute to South Africa’s mining industry, recognizing the value of the coal-fired power plants for the country’s energy sector. Furthermore, the party sees the potential of coal in the production of a wide range of chemical products³³.

²⁶ Winkler H. South Africa’s electricity crisis: what political parties say in their election manifestos about solving it. *Conversation*. 27.03.2024. <https://theconversation.com/south-africas-electricity-crisis-what-political-parties-say-in-their-election-manifestos-about-solving-it-226518> (accessed: 30.07.2025)

²⁷ *Ibid.* P. 44.

²⁸ 13-point Manifesto Plan for the 2024 National and Provincial Elections. *Inkatha Freedom Party*. 2024. P. 14. <https://ifp.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Inkatha-Freedom-Party-2024-Manifesto.pdf> (accessed: 04.07.2025)

²⁹ Nel L. Bread and energy: What South African political parties have to say. *Natural Justice*. 23.05.2023. <https://naturaljustice.org/bread-and-energy-what-south-african-political-parties-have-to-say/> (accessed: 20.07.2025)

³⁰ 13-point Manifesto Plan for the 2024 National and Provincial Elections. *Inkatha Freedom Party*. 2024. P. 14. <https://ifp.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Inkatha-Freedom-Party-2024-Manifesto.pdf> (accessed: 04.07.2025)

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ The Political Party Manifesto Debate and The Manifesto Assessment. *Project 90 by 2030*. 13.05.2024. <https://90by2030.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Political-Parties-Manifestos-Assessment-2024.pdf> (accessed: 29.07.2025)

The right-wing **Freedom Front Plus/FF+ (Vryheidsfront Plus/VF+)**, which declares the protection of the linguistic (particularly, the Afrikaans language) and cultural interests of ethnic minorities, especially the Afrikaners, as its primary political goal, does not speak out for an immediate energy transition in spite of presenting itself as an ardent promoter of the “green technologies” in energy supply. The shift from coal-fired power plants should only be put into action once there is a sufficient portfolio of renewable energy sources to ensure the collection, storage, and distribution of “green energy.”

At the same time, the FF+ maintains that the country would be much safer without nuclear power plants. The party insists that a state-owned company, which has proven unable to properly operate technologically relatively simple coal plants, cannot be entrusted with far more complex nuclear facilities. The FF+ is highly concerned about brain drain from the country’s only nuclear power plant, Koeberg³⁴, as well as the staffing problem arising from the replacement of the knowledgeable engineers and operators with personnel lacking experience in nuclear technology.

It is worth noting that the party’s concerns are not entirely without foundation. Over the past 20 years, several serious incidents occurred at Koeberg: in 2005, an unsecured bolt in the generator of Unit 1 required a shutdown and repair³⁵; in 2010, several fires occurred, and 91 workers were contaminated with the radioactive isotope cobalt-58³⁶; in 2021, air contamination by iodine-131 was detected³⁷; and in 2022, a worker closed the safety valve on Unit 1 instead of Unit 2³⁸. Nevertheless, the party allows for the potential inclusion of small modular reactors (SMRs) in the national energy mix³⁹.

The 2024 pre-election manifesto states that, if the FF+ were to assume power, South Africa would take a leading position in the use of renewable energy, as reflected in the manifesto’s call to reject products, methods, and energy sources harmful to the environment⁴⁰. According to public statements by former FF+ leader Pieter Johannes Groenewald, cooperation with domestic and international partners to achieve a rapid

³⁴ Boshoff W. Koeberg-voorval bevestig alles wat die VF Plus oor kernkrag in Suid-Afrika sê. *Vryheidsfront Plus*. 17.03.2022. <https://vfplus.org.za/latest-news/koeberg-voorval-bevestig-alles-wat-die-vf-plus-oor-kernkrag-in-suid-afrika-s/> (accessed: 29.07.2025)

³⁵ Creamer T. Koeberg marks 30 years of operations as SA mulls new nuclear chapter. *Polity*. 04.04.2014. <https://polity.org.za/article/koeberg-marks-30-years-of-operations-as-sa-mulls-new-nuclear-chapter-2014-04-04> (accessed: 26.07.2025)

³⁶ LTO Koeberg Nuclear Power Station. Oral presentation. *National Nuclear Regulator*. 03.02.2024. P. 1, 2. https://nnr.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/WRITTEN-SUBMISSION-NNR-PUBLIC-HEARINGS-3-FEB-24_CONCERNED-CITIZEN.pdf (accessed: 25.07.2025)

³⁷ Airborne contamination incident at Koeberg Power Station. *Eskom*. 2021. <https://koebergalert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/cas-airborne-event-r1.png> (accessed: 23.07.2025)

³⁸ LTO Koeberg Nuclear Power Station. Oral presentation. *National Nuclear Regulator*. 03.02.2024. P. 1, 2. https://nnr.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/WRITTEN-SUBMISSION-NNR-PUBLIC-HEARINGS-3-FEB-24_CONCERNED-CITIZEN.pdf (accessed: 25.07.2025)

³⁹ Boshoff W. Energievoorsiening: inploffing van die staat skep geleentheid. *Vryheidsfront Plus*. 15.12.2022. <https://vfplus.org.za/af/mediaverklarings/energievoorsiening-inploffing-van-die-staat-skep-geleentheid/> (accessed: 28.07.2025)

⁴⁰ Parker D. Multi-Party Charter reveals its plans to end loadshedding if ANC can be ousted. *Creamer Media. Engineering Plus*. 28.02.2024. <https://engineeringnews.co.za/article/multi-party-charter-reveals-its-plans-to-end-loadshedding-if-anc-can-be-ousted-2024-02-28> (accessed: 05.11.2025)

energy transition from coal to cleaner and more diversified energy sources is an urgent priority⁴¹.

The **Rise Mzansi (RM)** party, which declares a social-democratic ideology but demonstrates neoliberal tendencies, supports the decentralization of the energy sector, advocating a move away from coal dependence, which is expected to benefit communities neighboring coal enterprises. Regarding low-income groups, the RM considers it necessary to support them in creating their own energy cooperatives, enabling them to become both producers and consumers of electricity⁴². Like the FF+, the party does not rule out the use of small modular reactors and also supports the incorporation of green hydrogen technology into the national energy profile. The RM places particular emphasis on solar energy, planning to equip every building with photovoltaic systems and solar water heaters.

The RM's manifesto is unique in explicitly acknowledging the possibility of "restorative justice", that is, correcting the errors of the past by addressing climate change—since the party views climate and social justice as inextricably linked, with one being inconceivable without the other⁴³.

The right-centrist **Action South Africa (ActionSA)** party's pre-election plan for addressing the energy crisis, comprising nine points, included, among other things, such measures as:

- Ensuring the Eskom is staffed with highly skilled personnel based on meritocracy principles, as well as retraining workers from the non-renewable energy sector to redirect them into "green energy" industries⁴⁴;

- Decentralizing the energy market. The party considers the decentralized microgrids for the future of energy, particularly for rural areas, aligning its position with that of the FF+ and the RM. In common with the RM, it stands up for the accessibility of rooftop solar panels and solar-powered geysers for low-income households, particularly via tax incentives. The ActionSA seeks to encourage municipalities to reduce dependency on Eskom through the use of microgrids powered by renewable energy⁴⁵.

The ActionSA believes that economic growth, linked to the absence of any problems within the energy sphere, can be achieved through foreign investment. While some logic can be traced in this position, the insights into the state energy sovereignty of the small social-democratic party, the Western Cape-based **GOOD Party (GOOD)**, which seeks to

⁴¹ Boshoff W. Energievoorsiening: inploffing van die staat skep geleentheid. *Vryheidsfront Plus*. 15.12.2022. <https://vfplus.org.za/af/mediaverklarings/energievoorsiening-inploffing-van-die-staat-skep-geleentheid/> (accessed: 28.07.2025)

⁴² Nel L. Bread and energy: What South African political parties have to say. *Natural Justice*. 23.05.2023. <https://naturaljustice.org/bread-and-energy-what-south-african-political-parties-have-to-say/> (accessed: 20.07.2025)

⁴³ The People's Manifesto Booklet – 20 January 2024. P. 53. https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6512abc58b1468c2e0784360/65ab627c5faa95ea313ab276_RISE%20Mzansi%20Manifesto%20%2B%20.pdf (accessed: 20.07.2025)

⁴⁴ Nel L. Bread and energy: What South African political parties have to say. *Natural Justice*. 23.05.2023. <https://naturaljustice.org/bread-and-energy-what-south-african-political-parties-have-to-say/> (accessed: 20.07.2025)

⁴⁵ Mashaba H. ActionSA's Nine-Point Plan to End Load Shedding. *ActionSA*. 06.03.2024. <https://actionsa.org.za/actionsa-submits-objections-to-irp-2023-provides-nine-point-plan-to-end-load-shedding/> (accessed: 21.08.2025)

“capture” DA votes in this province [Turyanitsa 2020: 70, 71] and permanently stresses environmental justice, overstep the boundaries of the rational. For instance, it is convinced that developed countries should bear the costs for South Africa’s energy transition⁴⁶. While supporting a rapid shift to the renewables, the GOOD simultaneously opposes constructing new or extending the lifespan of existing coal plants, yet promoting a gradual departure from coal, considering non-renewable fuels necessary in the short- and medium-term alongside the renewables. In addition to CO₂ emissions, the GOOD plans to account for methane, which has 34 times the environmental impact of carbon dioxide⁴⁷.

The right-wing **Patriotic Alliance** (PA) takes a hard line against non-payment and illegal connections by citizens. The 2024 pre-election manifesto does not reflect any intention to support vulnerable populations such as the unemployed or low-income groups⁴⁸.

The PA believes that the country must build safe, modern nuclear reactors to ensure base-load power. Rapid adoption of the “green resources” is a top priority, to be pursued according to principles of a wartime economy aimed at achieving the state’s objectives as quickly as possible⁴⁹.

The centrist **Build One South Africa** (BOSA) plans to open the market to multiple energy companies, allowing consumers to choose among them and purchase electricity at affordable prices. According to the BOSA, all energy market participants must ensure that their activities and infrastructure comply with safety standards. The BOSA intends to provide market participants with the ability to freely raise capital for the modernization of South Africa’s energy infrastructure on account of the environmentally sustainable technologies, motivated by tax incentives, which ought to boost R&D investment, that, according to the party, are to enhance human capital and attract valuable specialists to the country⁵⁰.

The left-centrist social-democratic **United Democratic Movement** (UDM) asserts that since 2008, no successful plan has been developed to lift South Africa out of its “energy quagmire.” The party points out that the coal-fired power plants, namely, the Medupi and the Kusile, envisioned as mega-projects intended to transform the South African energy landscape, have far from fully justified high hopes⁵¹.

The United Democratic Movement (UDM) does not support granting the Eskom a monopoly on the generation, distribution, and supply of electricity. The party proposes a

⁴⁶ Nel L. Bread and energy: What South African political parties have to say. *Natural Justice*. 23.05.2023. <https://naturaljustice.org/bread-and-energy-what-south-african-political-parties-have-to-say/> (accessed: 20.07.2025)

⁴⁷ How can GOOD fix climate change? *Forgood*. P. 4. <https://forgood.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Climate.pdf> (accessed: 21.05.2025).

⁴⁸ Patriotic Alliance. Turnaround strategy 2024. *Centre for Early Childhood Development*. P. 21. <https://cecd.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/patriotic-alliance-turnaround-strategy-2024.pdf> (accessed: 31.03.2025)

⁴⁹ Political parties share their views on renewable energy. *Techcentral*. 26.04.2024. <https://techcentral.co.za/political-parties-views-renewable-energy/243650/> (accessed: 13.05.2025)

⁵⁰ BOSA’s Jobs Plan. A blueprint to building a South Africa that works. P. 23–24. https://static.pmg.org.za/BOSA_JOB_PLAN.pdf (accessed: 18.02.2025)

⁵¹ “Corruption destroys our Freedom.” United Democratic Movement Manifesto. 2024. P. 9. <https://static.pmg.org.za/2024-Election-Manifesto.pdf> (accessed: 16.02.2025)

public-private partnership model for the privatization of the holding company, with the state retaining a 51% share.

According to the party, renewable energy sources should occupy a more significant role in South Africa's energy balance. However, in addition to solar, wind, nuclear, and hydro energy, the UDM also includes coal in this category⁵². While there is ongoing fierce debate both in academic and political circles about whether nuclear energy should be classified as "green," coal is universally regarded as a non-renewable energy source.

According to the **African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)**, a just energy transition in South Africa should include coal in the energy balance (for example, the party welcomed the commissioning of additional power units at the Kusile and Medupi power stations)⁵³. The party believes it would be unjust and equivalent to willfully sabotaging the economy to avoid utilizing the high-quality South African coal reserves, which, if used with clean technologies, could last for 200 years. Against this backdrop, the ACDP aims to stimulate investment in the mining sector⁵⁴.

The ACDP also advocates for the continued growth of renewable energy, particularly wind and solar power. The party believes independent power producers should play a far more significant role in the energy sector than they currently do.

“CLEAN GREEN ENERGY” IN EXCHANGE FOR “DIRTY COAL”?

Despite the overwhelming commitment of most of the above-mentioned parties to expanding the use of renewable energy sources, none of them are currently prepared to completely abandon the use of coal (even if they plan to phase it out eventually).

In South Africa, the majority of electricity generation (estimated between 75% and 86%⁵⁵) is “dirty” [Dirksen 2022], as this portion of the country's energy needs is covered by coal. South Africa ranks 7th in the world in coal production [Williams 2018: 239] and 3rd in the amount of this fossil fuel used for electricity generation [Lamidi, Juta 2024: 512], consuming 40% more coal than the average across African countries [Jahns 2023: 4]. Moreover, the country is forced to burn low-quality coal (mixed with refuse, stones, and scrap metal)⁵⁶, which leads to breakdowns, operational failures, and reduced generating capacity [Van der Westhuizen 2019; Skubko 2023: 38], while high-quality coal is exported abroad. It should be noted that the high-grade coal reserves in South

⁵² The Political Party Manifesto Debate and The Manifesto Assessment. *Project 90 by 2030*. 13.05.2024. P. 4. <https://90by2030.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Political-Parties-Manifestos-Assessment-2024.pdf> (accessed: 29.07.2025)

⁵³ Swart S. SARS Commissioner says energy crisis may have cost the country R150 billion. *ACDP*. 24.10.2023. <https://acdp.org.za/sars-commissioner-says-energy-crisis-may-have-cost-the-country-r150-billion/> (accessed: 24.11.2025)

⁵⁴ Ibid. P. 7.

⁵⁵ See: Xaba N. South Africa's shift from coal to renewables: how it's going. *The Conversation*. 01.05.2025. <https://theconversation.com/south-africas-shift-from-coal-to-renewables-how-its-going-253880> (accessed: 15.11.2025); 17% of South Africa's electricity was generated from low-carbon sources in 2024, less than half the global average of 41%. *Ember*. 10.04.2025. <https://ember-energy.org/countries-and-regions/south-africa/> (accessed: 21.06.2025); Our ongoing coal dependency. Toolkit 3. *Energy Council of South Africa*. <https://energy-council.org.za/mzansi/coal/> (accessed: 15.11.2025)

⁵⁶ Augustine C. Success against coal smugglers. *South African Government*. 02.02.2024. <https://gov.za/blog/success-against-coal-smugglers> (accessed: 23.11.2025)

Africa's Central Highveld Basin are gradually depleting and deteriorating in quality, which presents a severe problem for the coal and energy sectors [De Korte 2015: 569].

The mining and use of coal negatively impact all elements of the environment—land, water, and air—and are notorious for their detrimental effects on human health. Among the most common diseases caused by the intensive burning of coal are tuberculosis and other respiratory ailments, low birth weight, cardiovascular diseases, and eye infections, all of which not only reduce productivity and increase medical costs for individuals but also increase government healthcare expenditures [Phiri, Nyoni 2023].

How realistic are the parties' plans to transition from fossil fuels to decarbonized "green energy"? The integration of some renewable energy sources into the power grid would be beneficial in terms of reducing pollution and decreasing dependence on non-ecological fossil fuels. However, despite the increased interest from the government in renewable energy, as evidenced by the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Program (REIPPPP) launched as early as 2011, it is unlikely that South Africa will achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Full decarbonization is the ultimate goal of a long process, which South Africa will obviously not complete in the foreseeable future, given the current challenges in integrating renewable energy into the national energy mix due to insufficient investment in infrastructure [Lamidi, Juta 2024: 511]. At present, several roadmaps are focused on addressing the urgent energy crisis. These include the Energy Action Plan (EAP)⁵⁷, Just Energy Transition (JET)⁵⁸ [Patrick et al. 2025], Hydrogen Society Roadmap (HSRM) [Ignatov 2023: 136], and the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP)⁵⁹ [Lamidi, Juta 2024: 511]. However, despite their diversity, the situation regarding the resolution of the energy crisis is still far from being resolved.

Despite the Eskom being widely recognized as a troublesome producer and distributor of electricity, not all South Africans back the controversial ideas articulated by certain political parties regarding the privatization of the company. Influential South African trade unions supported mass protests against the privatization of the state-owned energy company at the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 [Uys, Holtzhausen 2016: 1179]. Protesters argued that such a step would leave tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of people unemployed, considering that the mining industry is one of the country's largest employers.

Although some parties are inclined to offer alternative employment opportunities to those affected by the transition to renewable energy, fulfilling this intention is challenging in a country with an unemployment rate of 33.2%⁶⁰ (around 60% among

⁵⁷ See: Magaxa K. Minister of Electricity briefing on the Energy Action Plan. *Parliamentary Monitoring Group*. 15.11.2023. <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/37984/> (accessed: 14.09.2025); Energy Action Plan. 18 months Progress Report: March 2024. Republic of South Africa. P. 2. https://gov.za/sites/default/files/progress_on_EAP.pdf.pdf (accessed: 14.09.2025)

⁵⁸ Implementing South Africa's Just Energy Transition. *Just Energy Transition*. <https://justenergytransition.co.za/> (accessed: 14.09.2025).

⁵⁹ Matinde E. South Africa's green hydrogen strategy: Challenges and opportunities. *SAIMM*. 24.07.2025. <https://saimm.co.za/journal-presidents-corner/1271-south-africa-s-green-hydrogen-strategy-challenges-and-opportunities> (accessed: 14.09.2025)

⁶⁰ South Africa Unemployment Rate. *Trading Economics*. <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/unemployment-rate> (accessed: 01.09.2025).

youth, making South Africa one of the countries with the highest youth unemployment rates).

In practice, the “competitive environment” for energy producers, as advocated by several political organizations, which they believe would enhance management efficiency, provide market diversity, and reduce retail electricity prices, is a futile scheme. Private business is driven by the interests of owners, while the government is supposed to make decisions in the interest of society as a whole. If the energy sector were privatized, the government would have to pay for electricity used by state institutions, including public enterprises, healthcare organizations, educational institutions, and other social facilities, at commercial prices.

SOLAR ENERGY AND HYDROGEN: THE PATH TO A BRIGHT FUTURE?

Among all renewable energy sources, solar panels are preferred by the South African opposition parties. It should be noted that from 2022 to 2024, the capacity of consumer solar panels installed on rooftops increased more than fivefold. In 2024, South Africa accounted for 50% of all new photovoltaic installations in Africa, surpassing Egypt (28%)⁶¹ [Jahns 2023]. It is considered that photovoltaic panels will remain the most cost-effective renewable energy technology in South Africa until 2050.

However, relying on solar energy as a reliable “safety cushion” for sustainable development is naïve. The Democratic Alliance (DA) completely supports the European Union’s decision to allocate 4.4 billion euros to South Africa for its “energy transition.” However, it is difficult to believe that solar panels supplied from the EU will be of impeccable quality, as South Africa could be flooded with second-hand panels from China or India.

Moreover, in addition to the direct costs of electricity production, the use of renewable energy sources (including the promoted solar energy) entails associated infrastructure costs. Thus, using supposedly inexpensive panels will lead to significant expenses. Furthermore, the issue of solar panel disposal is an urgent global problem. Without a well-thought-out strategy for recycling photovoltaic modules, they will significantly pollute the environment and detrimentally impact human health due to the toxic heavy metals they contain. Additionally, over time, the previously available prices for panels could rise for various reasons, including South Africa’s possible deviation from the political direction desired by “suppliers.” Therefore, the “sustainable transition” actively promoted by some parties will be extremely costly for the country, not only financially but also in other respects.

Neither the sun nor the wind can be considered 100% stable, reliable sources of energy generation due to their dependence on weather conditions, which sharply limits the reliability of power supply during periods of high demand (especially in winter). At present, hopes are pinned on gaseous fuels such as green hydrogen⁶², which in the future

⁶¹ Rimblas M. A bright future for South Africa’s solar power. *Rated Power*. 15.04.2025. <https://ratedpower.com/blog/South-Africa-solar-power/> (accessed: 12.06.2025)

⁶² Serkerbaeva M. In recent years, there has been a huge leap in the development of green hydrogen energy. *HSE*. 23.10.2023. (In Russ.). <https://economics.hse.ru/ecjournal/news/867907449.html> (accessed: 14.09.2025).

may prove to be economically viable. However, issues related to its initial high cost, transportation, maintenance, and potential price volatility should not be dismissed prematurely. For instance, producing one kilogram of “green” hydrogen requires up to 30 liters of fresh water. This means that in areas with water scarcity, desalination plants or water treatment facilities will also be required. Furthermore, hydrogen must be transported through costly specific pipelines to avoid losing up to half of the energy, which implies that the infrastructure must be built almost from scratch⁶³.

Due to the existing difficulties, the demand for “green” hydrogen is currently low. However, by 2030, South Africa is to build production facilities capable of supplying enough hydrogen to simultaneously power up to 7 million households. Overall, South Africa nourishes plans to use “green” hydrogen for various purposes: from producing fertilizers for farms to providing energy for factories and fueling heavy trucks⁶⁴. Moreover, this promising clean fuel can serve as an energy storage medium to help balance the intermittency of renewable energy sources, and products made from it, such as ammonia and methanol, could be exported [Dyantyi-Gwanyanya et al. 2025].

It is also important to underscore that hydrogen can only be considered “green” if the main prerequisite is met—its production must harness energy exclusively from renewable sources, namely, solar, wind, or hydropower. It seems that the vicious cycle has come full circle.

CONCLUSION

The production of electricity from renewable sources can, to some extent, offset the costs associated with addressing the electricity deficit. However, the long-standing energy crisis cannot be approached lightly, relying solely on “green energy,” as it will not be able to fully satisfy the diverse needs of the state. According to the estimates by the Eskom, by 2032, the installation of new, predominantly renewable, generation capacity will require more than 14,000 km of high-voltage power lines and 170 transformers, which will cost approximately 210 billion rand. For South Africa, abandoning fossil fuel sources of energy is tantamount to disregarding its own resource potential at the expense of the economy and—quite possibly!—to its independence in decision-making on the global stage.

In contemporary South Africa, the issue of sustainable energy supply has become a subsidiary coin in the political game among South African political forces. Although the origins of the energy crisis are largely seen in the same way by most political actors (negligence, corruption, incompetence), the methods for resolving the remaining crisis differ. The situation could be remedied by maintaining a balance between the objective need to transition away from the “coal addiction” and preserving the economic viability of the coal industry, as well as public calm, which is directly influenced by a reliable

⁶³ 2023 Hydrogen Transport Comparison Report. *Listcorp*. 22.05.2023. <https://listcorp.com/asx/pv1/provaris-energy-ltd/news/2023-hydrogen-transport-comparison-report-2876613.html> (accessed: 10.05.2025)

⁶⁴ McGregor C., Douglas Young B. Green hydrogen is a clean fuel, but South Africa’s not ready to produce it: energy experts explain why. *Conversation*. 10.02.2025. <https://theconversation.com/green-hydrogen-is-a-clean-fuel-but-south-africas-not-ready-to-produce-it-energy-experts-explain-why-248777> (accessed: 03.02.2025)

electricity supply—something that is unimaginable today without the continued operation of coal plants and nuclear energy.

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Научная статья

ПОДХОДЫ ОППОЗИЦИОННЫХ ПАРТИЙ К РАЗРЕШЕНИЮ ЭНЕРГЕТИЧЕСКОГО КРИЗИСА В ЮАР: АЛЬТЕРНАТИВА АНК?

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НЕСТЕРОВА Елена Сергеевна, младший научный сотрудник, Центр изучения стран Африки южнее Сахары, Институт Африки РАН, Москва, Российская Федерация. ORCID: 0009-0002-1815-1635. E-mail: nesterova.elena99@yandex.ru

Аннотация. Проблема энергетического кризиса в ЮАР превратилась в один из важных факторов внутриполитической борьбы. Нехватка генерирующих мощностей, недостаток компетентных кадров, широкомасштабная коррупция и другие проблемы существенно подорвали энергетическую отрасль. Это сказалось на протестных настроениях населения, став одной из причин роста популярности оппозиционных партий, обещающих найти выход из энергокризиса.

В статье рассматриваются мнения наиболее популярных оппозиционных партий ЮАР в контексте разрешения давней проблемы энергокризиса. Одним из основных материалов для анализа подходов партий к решению энергокризиса служили их манифесты 2024 г. Поскольку рассматривались точки зрения, высказанные именно в предвыборный период, все партии в данном тексте продолжают называться «оппозиционными» вне зависимости от факта вхождения в Правительство национального единства после выборов.

Взгляды южноафриканских оппозиционных партий, включая те, которые по итогам выборов 2024 г. вошли в Правительство национального единства, на пути выхода из энергокризиса нередко отличаются утопичностью и радикализмом и способны привести к непредсказуемым последствиям. В частности, в случае пропагандируемой рядом партий приватизации энергетики возникает угроза перехода атомной электростанции, подконтрольной госкомпаниям *Eskom*, в ведение частных компаний, что означает потерю государственного контроля над сверхчувствительным сектором экономики, требующим

существенных вложений в безопасное хранение и уничтожение радиоактивных отходов. Продвигаемый оппозицией упор на возобновляемые источники энергии опасен недооценкой эффективного использования ископаемых ресурсов, высокими затратами и возможным негативным влиянием некоторых типов «зеленой энергетики» на окружающую среду и человеческое здоровье.

Ключевые слова: энергетический кризис, ЮАР, «зеленая повестка», угольная энергетика, атомная энергетика, политические партии, оппозиция

Конфликт интересов: автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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