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Big switch: Powerships transition to gas and LNG

South Africa's decision in March to shortlist Turkey-based Karpowership to supply three LNG-to-powerships totalling around 1.2 GW of capacity to the country by August 2022 has stirred a fair amount of controversy. Critics say there are better alternatives to powerships and that, just as the global decarbonisation agenda accelerates, the duration of the contracts – 20 years – is far too long and at a price far too high.

On the flip side, LNG-to-powerships could contribute to reducing South Africa's dependence on coal and diesel in power generation and bolster security of electricity supply. Also, increasing number of units are now being switched from fuel oil to natural gas or LNG, and powerships can be quickly deployed to combat power shortages in developing countries where energy infrastructure is lacking.

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