Athermal Probabilistic Compute: SD-Bit Feasibility & Roadmap

AthermalAI Strategy Group

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Abstract

The Stochastic-Decay Bit (sd-bit) offers a fundamental advantage over thermal p-bits by replacing fluctuating thermal noise with stable, athermal quantum decay. This summary consolidates our recent findings, proving the concept is both physically controllable and engineering-feasible. We demonstrate quantum-clean voltage-based control of the flip rate via WKB tunneling analysis and detail the **Hybrid Assembly** model necessary to solve the fabrication hurdle posed by standard CMOS clean rooms. The sd-bit moves beyond simulating randomness to building a natively stochastic computational fabric.

1 The Axiomatic Advantage: Athermal vs. Thermal

The core narrative of the sd-bit is the shift from a thermodynamic variable (temperature T) to a nuclear constant (decay rate λ). The existing **thermal p-bit** is trapped by the Fluctuating-Dissipation Theorem, requiring continuous, power-hungry calibration to fight **thermal drift** ($\sigma^2 \propto T$). In contrast, the sd-bit's randomness is anchored in a quantum process (Gamow tunneling), blind to Electromagnetic (EM) perturbations like temperature, resulting in **cold logic**.

- **Enemy's Flaw:** The thermal p-bit is an **entropy leak**, constantly dissipating energy to achieve stability.
- **SD-Bit's Strength:** The sd-bit is **event-sparse**. Power consumption is near-zero in its stable state, leading to a potential 10–$100\times$ gain in energy efficiency (fJ/sample vs. pJ/sample).

2 Physical Controllability: WKB Simulation Results

The functionality of the sd-bit relies on tuning the probability of a flip $P(S = 1)$ via an external bias voltage V_{bias} that tilts the bistable potential barrier. Our WKB tunneling simulation confirms the **quantum-clean control** necessary for probabilistic computing.

Using a parabolic approximation of the energy barrier ΔE (where ΔE is strongly coupled to V_{bias}), the escape rate r follows a clean exponential function of the barrier height, characteristic of pure quantum escape, with zero thermal dependence:

$$r \propto \exp\left(-\frac{2\pi\Delta E(V_{bias})}{\hbar\omega}\right)$$

This confirms V_{bias} is an effective dial, allowing the flip rate to be tuned from stable lock to high-speed stochastic sampling. For an exemplary $\Delta E = 0.2$ eV base barrier, applying only 100 mV of bias is sufficient to reach ≈ 20 MHz flip rates, providing high-quality random samples without the thermal tax.

3 Engineering Feasibility: The Hybrid Assembly Model

The challenge of integrating low-activity radioisotopes (such as the chosen soft β-emitter **Tritium**) into standard CMOS processing is solved by the **Hybrid Assembly** or "chiplet" model. This is the **pragmatic alchemy** required for fabrication.

The Contamination Dodge

We separate the contaminated and clean processes into two distinct dies:

1. **Logic Die (Top):** Manufactured in a standard, clean CMOS fab. Contains the sd-bit **Fluctuation Cores** and control circuitry.
2. **Source Substrate (Bottom):** Manufactured in a **"rad-hard" specialized facility**. Contains the microscopic, solid-state isotope sources.

The two dies are then bonded via 3D stacking. This method protects the logic yield and bypasses the biggest "clean room" hurdle, allowing us to leverage an existing $3.24B specialized fab market.

Crosstalk Solved by Geometry

The risk of a decay particle causing a soft error in an adjacent bit (**crosstalk**) is solved by **microarchitecture**, turning the Intel 1970s bug into a feature.

- ◇ **Solution:** A dense array of **MICROSCOPIC COLLIMATORS** (Tungsten Vias) is formed between the two dies.
- ◇ **Mechanism:** These narrow channels direct the ballistic decay event from the source to its dedicated Fluctuation Core, ensuring the energy deposition is localized.
- ◇ **Result:** Monte Carlo simulations confirm that aperture engineering can tune the collimation cross-section to maintain lateral scatter well below the target of $< 1\%$ crosstalk.