Helium Catalyzed D-D Fusion in a Levitated Dipole

Jay Kesner, L. Bromberg, MIT
D.T. Garnier, A. Hansen, M.E. Mauel Columbia University

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Abstract

Fusion research has focused on the goal of deuterium and tritium (D-T) fusion power because the reaction rate is large compared with the other fusion fuels: D-D or D$_3$He. Furthermore, the D-D cycle is difficult in traditional confinement devices, such as tokamaks, because good energy confinement is accompanied by good particle confinement which leads to an accumulation of ash. Fusion reactors based on the D-D reaction would be advantageous to D-T based reactors since they do not require the breeding of tritium and can reduce the flux of energetic neutrons that cause material damage. We propose a fusion power source based on the levitated dipole fusion concept that uses a "helium catalyzed D-D" fuel cycle, where rapid circulation of plasma allows the removal of tritium and the re-injection of the $^3$He decay product, eliminating the need for a massive blanket and shield. Stable dipole confinement derives from plasma compressibility instead of the magnetic shear and average good curvature. As a result, a dipole magnetic field can stabilize plasma at high beta while allowing large-scale adiabatic particle circulation. These properties may make the levitated dipole uniquely capable of achieving good energy confinement with low particle confinement. We find that a dipole based D-D power source can provide better utilization of magnetic field energy with a comparable mass power density to a D-T based tokamak power source.
Outline

• “Helium catalyzed D-D” fusion cycle

• Summary of Dipole Physics
  - Linear and non-linear MHD; convective cells
  - Kinetic theory; low frequency modes

• Dipole based power source
  - Pre-conceptual Dipole D-D design
    - Plasma parameters
    - High Tc floating coil; neutronics, refrigeration
  - Compare with DT tokamak
Requirements for “ideal” Fusion device

- MHD does not destroy confinement (no disruptions)
- Steady State
- High $\bar{B}$ for economic field utilization
- High $T_E$ before ignition
  - Ignition in small device
  - Advanced fuels (D-D, D-3He)
- Low $\bar{T}_p$ for ash removal
- Low divertor heat load - want plasma outside of coils for flux expansion
- Circular, non-interlocking coils
- Levitated dipole may fulfill these requirements if the physics and technology does not produce show-stopper.
Is toroidal field necessary for confinement?

**Tokamak, stellarator, RFP, etc.**

- Add $B_T$ -> MHD stable from well and shear
- $\delta << 1$ ($\delta_p \sim 1$)
- Drift off flux surfaces -> neoclassical effects
- Particles trapped in bad curvature -> trapped part modes
- Magnetic shear eliminates convective cells

- **Critical Issues**
  - Divertor
  - Steady state
  - Disruptions

**Dipole**

- Levitated ring -> MHD stable from compressibility if $\frac{p}{p_{crit}}$
- $\delta > 1$ (requires large size)
- No drift off flux surfaces (drifts are toroidal)
- No tpm’s but “entropy” mode can be unstable near ring
- Can form convective cells. But w/o energy transport.

- **Critical Issues**
  - Internal ring heating
  - Power density
Summary of theoretical Results

**Between $p_{\text{max}}$ and wall**
(“bad” curvature)

- stable to MHD interchange when $\frac{\partial(pV)}{\partial p}>0$
- Weak resistive modes at high $\frac{\partial}{\partial p}$ ($\Pi_{\text{res}}$)
- Stable to electrostatic (drift) modes if MHD stable & $\frac{\partial}{\partial p}2/3$
- ES “entropy” mode persists at high $\frac{\partial}{\partial p}$ for $\frac{\partial}{\partial p}2/3$
- Unstable interchange modes evolve into convective cells
  - convective cells primarily transport particles
  - Can give rise to small non-local energy transport

**Between coil and $p_{\text{max}}$**
(“good” curvature region)

- Can have negative density gradient
- “Entropy (drift) mode” when $\frac{\partial}{\partial p}(n_e) < 0$.
- Stable to all modes $\frac{\partial}{\partial p}(n_e) > 0$.
- Drift cyclotron mode can be unstable;
  - Little energy transport
MHD Results

- Equilibria exist at high-\(\mathcal{M}\).
- Marginally stable for interchange modes satisfy adiabaticity condition at all \(\mathcal{M}\).
    \[ \mathcal{J}(pV^\mathcal{M}) = \mathcal{J}(S) = 0, \text{ where } V = \oint \frac{dl}{B}, \quad \mathcal{M} = \frac{5}{3} \]
- Stable to ideal MHD ballooning when interchange stable
- No Magnetic Shear \(\rightarrow\) Convective cells develop when interchange stability violated
  - Keeps \(\mathcal{M}p\) near critical value.
  - For marginal profiles, convective cells will convect particles but not energy.
    - Leads to have low \(\mathcal{M}_p\) with high \(\mathcal{M}_E\).
Plasma can be stable to drift frequency modes

- Plasma outside pressure peak stable for $\bar{\omega} > 2/3$
- Stability in good curvature region depends on $\text{grad}(n_e)$
- Results independent of collisionality [Kesner, Hastie, Phys Plasma 9, 2002, 4414]
- Electrostatic “Entropy” mode persists at high $\bar{\omega}$ [Simakov et al, Ph Pl 9, 2002, 201]

\[ \bar{\omega} = \frac{d \ln T}{d \ln n_e} \]
\[ d = \bar{\omega} \frac{d \ln p}{d \ln V} = \bar{\omega} (1 + \bar{\omega}) / \bar{\omega d} \]
\[ V = \int \frac{dl}{B} \]
Fusion reactions of primary interest

\[
\begin{align*}
D + T & \rightarrow ^4He(3.5 \, MeV) + n(14.1 \, MeV) \\
D + ^3He & \rightarrow ^4He(3.6 \, MeV) + p(14.7 \, MeV) \\
D + D & \xrightarrow{50\%} ^3He(0.82 \, MeV) + n(2.45 \, MeV) \\
D + D & \xrightarrow{50\%} T(1.01 \, MeV) + p(3.02 \, MeV)
\end{align*}
\]

- **D-T**: Highest fusion x-section
  - Must breed tritium
  - 14.1 MeV neutrons
    - (a) Damage and activate structure
    - (b) Necessitate a massive shield
- **D-\(^3\)He**: Lower x-section, reduced neutron flux
  - \(^3\)He source requires lunar mining
- **D-D**: Smallest x-section - Ignition requires decoupling of particle and energy confinement [Ref: Nevins, JFE 17 (1998) 25.]
  - Plentiful fuel source
  - Can eliminate energetic neutrons if we can pump tritium
  - Fusion products mostly charged particles -> high power/structure volume
Lawson Criteria for Fusion Reactions

- He catalyzed D-D: remove T, burn $^3$He, re inject and burn the $^3$He decay product.
- Requires $p_{\text{max}} > 3$ MPa and $T_i \sim 40$ KeV
Helium Catalyzed D-D (self fueled D-\(^3\)He cycle)

- Primary D-D reaction produces 3.65 MeV plus T & \(^3\)He.
- Permit the \(^3\)He to burn.
  - D-\(^3\)He reaction produces 18.3 MeV.
- Remove T and re inject the \(^3\)He decay product (T \(\rightarrow\) \(^3\)He + e\(^-\)).
  - Some tritium will fuse (4 to 6%) before removal,\(^{\text{DT}}\) (during slowing down).
  - Half life \(~12\) years. Can store tritium in Ti bed.
    - No need to remove tritium, only \(^3\)He decay product.
- This produces 22 MeV per DD fusion with 94% of power in charged particles (along with a 2.45 MeV neutron)
  - Mostly surface heating of first wall
    - can utilize thin walled vessel with high power density
  - 2.45 MeV neutron produces little structural damage
  - Minimize heating of the floating coil superconductor
Tritium can fuse while slowing down

- Assume thermal tritium removed after slowing down
- Calculate tritium slowing down on warm deuterium background
  ➢ Result: 4-8% of tritium will fuse while slowing down
- Tritium removal requires $\nabla_{\text{conv}} << \nabla_{\text{DT-fusion}}$
Levitated Dipole is ideal system for D-D

- Dipole obtains stability from compressibility, not curvature and shear
- Closed field lines, no shear -> convection -> decouples $\mathcal{E}$ & $\mathcal{B}$
- MHD: high $\mathcal{E}$ results:
  - Peak pressure determined by interchange stability: marginal stability when $pV\frac{\mathcal{E}}{\mathcal{B}} = \text{constant}$ with $V(\mathcal{E}) = \oint dl/\mathcal{B}$ and $\frac{\mathcal{E}}{\mathcal{B}} = 5/3$; $p'' = p''_{\text{crit}}(\mathcal{E})$
  - Ballooning modes stable when interchanges stable.
  - Peak pressure $p_{\text{peak}} / p_{\text{edge}} \sim (V_{\text{edge}} / V_{\text{peak}})^\frac{\mathcal{E}}{\mathcal{B}} \sim 10^4$
  - For sufficiently large reactor can reach ignition without violating interchange stability
    * Once ignited pressure will push against stability boundary leading to convective cells
- Convective cells need not degrade energy confinement (Dawson).
  - Can we have high energy confinement and low particle confinement
- “Entropy mode” (drift) wave stable when $\mathcal{E} = d\ln T_j / d\ln n_j > 2/3$
Convective Cells in Dipole

- Convective cells can form in closed-field-line topology
  - Field lines charge up -> R-\(\vec{\omega}\) convective flows
  - 2-D nonlinear cascade leads to large scale vortices
  - Cells circulate particles between core and edge
    - No energy flow when \(pV=\text{constant}\), (i.e. \(p'=p'_{\text{crit}}\)).
    - When \(p'>p'_{\text{crit}}\) cells get non-local energy transport. Only transport sufficient energy transport to maintain \(p' \approx p'_{\text{crit}}\).
    - Selective ``pumping” at plasma edge can remove tritium.
  - Non-linear calculations use reduced MHD or PIC


Conceptual Dipole Reactor

- Floating coil: R=9 m, a=0.7 m
  - High TC superconductor within B4C/WB shield
    - Coil current: 36 MAT
    - Magnetic stored energy: 31 MJ
- Large vacuum chamber; R=30 m, d=4 cm.
- Fusion Power: 610 MW
  - $P_{\text{Brem}}=430$ MW
  - $P_n(2.45 \text{ MeV})= 34$ MW
  - $P_n(14.1 \text{ MeV})=14$ MW
D-D Dipole and ITER (D-T)

- Dipole is large, but with few and non-interlocking coils
  - Requires one (high technology) coil plus levitation coil.
- D-D reactor can eliminate both the shield and breeding blanket
Conceptual Dipole Based Power Source

- \( p_{\text{max}} = 5.4 \text{ MPa} \), \( \bar{\rho}_{\text{max}} = 3.1 \)
- \( T_{\text{max}} = 41 \text{ KeV} \), \( n_e^{\text{max}} = 5.7 \times 10^{20} \text{ m}^{-3} \)
- Plasma stored energy: 3 GJ
- Global Energy confinement: 5.1 s
# Conceptual Dipole Reactor Parameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>D-D Power Source (A)</th>
<th>D-D Power Source (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vac. vessel midplane radius (m)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>First wall volume ($m^3$) †</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>269</td>
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<tr>
<td>Floating coil major radius (m)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Floating coil minor radius (m)</td>
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<td>Coil Current (MAT)</td>
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<td>Peak field at conductor (T)</td>
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<td>Coil current density ($MA/m^2$)</td>
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<td>276</td>
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<td>Magnet Stored Energy, $W_B$ (GJ)</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>21.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parameter</td>
<td>Source (A)</td>
<td>Source (B)</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peak Plasma Pressure, (MPa)</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
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<td>Peak $\beta$</td>
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<td>Peak pressure radius, $R_p$ (m)</td>
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<td>Peak ion Temp (KeV)</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<td>Peak electron temperature (KeV)</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electron density at $R_p$ ($m^{-3}$)</td>
<td>$5.7 \times 10^{20}$</td>
<td>$4.4 \times 10^{20}$</td>
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<tr>
<td>B field at $R_p$ (T)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>Edge Temp (eV)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edge density ($m^{-3}$)</td>
<td>$3.7 \times 10^{18}$</td>
<td>$3.7 \times 10^{18}$</td>
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<td>Fusion Power, $P_{fus}$ (MW)</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>384</td>
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<td>2.45 MeV Neutron Power (MW)</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>14.1 MeV Neutron Power (MW)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.8</td>
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<td>Bremsstrahlung radiation (MW)</td>
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<td>Plasma Stored Energy, $W_P$ (GJ)</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.43</td>
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<td>Energy Confinement time, $\tau_{E^{\text{global}}}$ (s)</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
High TC Floating Coil will run steady state

- High temperature superconductor; assume $T_{sc}=50$ K
- MCNP monte-carlo code
  - Calculate neutron heating to coil and shield
  - Calculate Bremsstrahlung distribution on coil surface
- Steady state operation requires refrigerator internal to coil.

MCNP Results: LDR with $\text{B}_4\text{C}/\text{WB}$ shield

- 21% neutron power to shield; (14 MW)
- 0.005% neutron power to coil superconductor
- 24% Bremsstrahlung to coil surface (110 MW)
Use internal refrigerator to run steady state

- Surface heat flux peaked on outside of floating coil vacuum jacket.
- Temperature difference between outer and inner jacket drives refrigerator

- \( R_{out}/R_{in} \approx 2.57 \)
- Surface power balance:
  \( A_T \cdot T^4 = a_1 P_{rad} + a_2 P_{neut} + a_3 P_{conv} \)
  \( \rightarrow T_{surf} = 1800 \text{ K} \)
- Thermodynamics yields
  \( T_{out}/T_{in} \)
Internal Refrigerator; Thermodynamics

- Heat removed from sc to inner surface by refrigerator: $\Delta r = T_{in}/(\Delta T_{sc})$

- Refrigerator power generated by outer/inner temperature difference. 
  $\Delta = \eta (T_{out} - T_{in})/ T_{out}$

\[
A_h \sigma T_h^4 = P_{out} + P_{shield} - \frac{\eta_r(T_{in})}{\eta(T_{in}, T_{out})} P_{sc}
\]

\[
A_c \sigma T_{in}^4 = P_{in} + \frac{\eta_r(T_{in})}{\eta(T_{in}, T_{out})} P_{sc}
\]

- Find $T_{out} = 1925 \text{ K}$, $T_{in} = 1641 \text{ K}$

- $P_{out} = 85 \text{ MW}$, $P_{in} = 52 \text{ MW}$, $P_{shield} = 14 \text{ MW}$, $P_{sc} = 3.65 \text{ KW}$
Compare LDR to ARIES-AT

\[ \Sigma = \frac{\text{plasma stored energy}}{\text{magnetic stored energy}} \]

- \( \Sigma_{\text{LDR}}=0.096, \Sigma_{\text{ARIES}}=0.75/45=0.017 \)
Dipole has 5.5 times better field utilization (due to high-\( B \))

\[ \Delta = \frac{\text{fusion power}}{\text{Volume(coil + blanket + shield)}} \]

- \( \Delta_{\text{LDR}}=1.1 \text{ to } 1.7, \Delta_{\text{ARIES}}=1.5 \)
Dipole has comparable mass power density *

The engineering challenge of LDR is internal high TC coil.

Can we utilize D-T in a Dipole?

- It is difficult to shield internal coil from 14.1 MeV neutrons but tritium can still be useful:

  ➢ Start-up of D-D reactor. Use tritium as “starter fluid”

  ➢ Small, pulsed, dipole ignition research experiment - “DIRE”

    - $R_{\text{coil}}=1.5$ m, $R_{\text{wall}}=8$ m
    - $p_{\text{max}}=0.55$ MPa, $\bar{n}_{\text{max}}=3.0$, $T_{\text{max}}=9.7$ KeV
    - $P_{\text{fus}}=10.3$ MW, $P_{\text{Brem}}=0.84$ MW
    - Assume coil temperature can rise 50 K
      - $\text{B}_4\text{C}$ shield -> $t_{\text{float}}=14.3$ s
      - $\text{LiH}$ shield -> $t_{\text{float}}=12.8$ s
Conclusions

- D-D fusion would eliminate the need for tritium breeding and the structural damage and massive blanket and shield of DT power sources.
- DD fusion can be practical for sufficiently high $t_E$ and high $\beta$ if we can decouple $t_E$ and $\beta$.
- Dipole has unique capability due to the shear free, closed field line geometry.
  - Reactor challenge will be to develop high TC coils and innovative refrigeration.
- Exploration of plasma physics about to begin in LDX

Website: www.psfc.mit.edu/ldx/