

## CFD SIMULATION OF A CONDUCTING MAGNETOFLUID PROBLEM

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### ABSTRACT:

The magnetoplasmadynamic (MPD) thruster is of significant interest to the high power in-space propulsion research. This paper verifies the applicability of the MACH2 finite volume research code to designing practical self-field MPD thruster. Theoretical development for a diverging annular geometry is documented and analyzed for a partially ionized two temperature computational model that addresses potential understanding of effect of geometric scales, and predictions of self-field magnetic effects.

### INTRODUCTION:

The Center for Plasma Theory and Computation at the Air Force Research Laboratory has developed a Multiblock Arbitrary Coordinate Hydromagnetic (MACH) family of complex geometry codes that can study collisional plasmas. These codes are written in fortran 77, use Cray-style fortran pointers, and are designed for UNIX-type environment (see Peterkin and Frese) [1]. The two and half dimensional MACH2 and the three-dimensional MACH3 are now widely being utilized to model a variety of laboratory plasma experiments such as, MARAUDER compact toroid program (Degnan et al. [2]), pulsed plasma thrusters (Turchi et al. [3]), implosion liners and MPD thrusters.

This paper focuses on the application of MACH2 code for practical magnetofluid problem<sup>A</sup> by specifically documenting a

design simulation of a magnetoplasmadynamic (MPD) thruster with an expansion chamber outlet. MPD thrusters are of considerable interest to the NASA Earth Science, Space Science, and Human Exploration and Development of Space Strategic Enterprises for developing high-power in-space electric propulsion system. In this device, the gaseous propellant is ionized by an arc current that interacts with the self-induced magnetic field to accelerate the plasma, and produces the required thrust through an inherently unsteady process [4-6].

Computational researchers have tried to effectively capture the physics of self-field MPD thrusters [7,8] using two-dimensional time-independent model for argon propellant. While Lapointe [7] utilized finite difference methodology to solve the fully ionized MPD equations with ideal gas equation of state, Slezione et. al [8] implemented the finite volume methodology for solving the velocity, pressure, electron-ion temperature and current field equations. Results in both these papers were reasonably compared with experimental thrust data.

Kawaguchi et. al [9] reported numerical solutions that included the temporal contributions via a special consideration to the difference between characteristic time scale of fluid-thermal (msec) and electromagnetic (*msec*) effects. A detail comparison of thrust versus current curves for various mass flow rates is presented by Auweter-Kurtz et. al in [10]. These results show a wide variation of numerical solution accuracy for DT series and hot anode thrusters (HAT).

Berry and Roy [11] developed a two-dimensional steady state algorithm utilizing a combination of the Galerkin weak statement and least squares finite element (GLS) methods for MPD applications. The Galerkin method is used to analyze the

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<sup>A</sup>This work started during the first author's tenure at Glenn Research Center as a NASA/OAI Collaborative Research Fellow during the summer of 2000.

single fluid Navier-Stokes regime subjected to electromagnetic forces, while the least squares solve the electromagnetic Maxwell's equations. This *loosely-coupled* GLS algorithm allows for a very robust and mathematically complete approach. The GLS algorithm has been applied for quantitative documentation of achievable practical MPD thruster solutions.

Tanaka and Kimura [12] used two-dimensional electromagnetic equations with quasi-one-dimensional fluid equations to examine applied-field acceleration mechanism. The analysis showed that substantial Hall currents and plasma rotation were produced from interaction of the applied field with discharge current. For a thruster modeled with argon propellant at 0.1g/s, discharge current of 1000-2000 Amp and applied field strength of 0.1-0.2 Tesla at the cathode tip, the generated plasma rotation was converted to axial momentum via expansion through a magnetic channel.

Applications of MACH2 finite volume code in general two-dimensional unsteady plasma dynamics have been reported by Peterkin, et. al [13]. The methodology involves solutions of mass, momentum, electron and ion energy, radiation energy density, magnetic induction and elastic stress equations in arbitrary Lagrangian/Eulerian (ALE) coordinate. Recent publication of Mikellides and Truchi [14] documents the utility of this code for applied-field MPD thrusters. MACH2 has also been advocated by Mikellides et. al in [15] for designing a gigawatt-level fusion propulsion system with specific impulse exceeding ten thousand seconds. In the following section, we document the block-based MACH2 numerical simulation of an annular self-field thruster.

#### NOMENCLATURE:

$A$	= atomic weight, amu
$B, \mathbf{B}$	= magnetic induction, Tesla
$e$	= elementary charge, $1.6 \times 10^{-19}$ C
$G$	= shear modulus, kg/m-s <sup>2</sup>
$g$	= metric tensor
$I$	= current, Amp
$j$	= current density, Amp/m <sup>2</sup>
$K$	= thermal conductivity, J/m-s-eV
$M$	= Mach number
$m$	= mass of electron, $9.1 \times 10^{-31}$ kg
$n$	= number density, /m <sup>3</sup>
$P$	= pressure, J/m <sup>3</sup>
$Q$	= numerical viscosity, J/m <sup>3</sup>
$q$	= heat flux, W/m <sup>2</sup>
$T$	= temperature, eV
$t$	= time, s
$u, \mathbf{u}$	= flow velocity, m/s
$V$	= plasma voltage, V
$w$	= azimuthal speed, m/s
$\mathbf{d}$	= Kronecker delta
$e$	= specific internal energy, J/kg
$z$	= number of free electrons/ion
$g$	= specific heat ratio

$h$	= electrical resistivity/ $m_0$ , m <sup>2</sup> /s
$m$	= viscosity coefficient, kg.m-s
$m_0$	= permeability in free space, H/m
$n_{eq}$	= thermal equilibration frequency
$\mathbf{r}$	= mass density, kg/m <sup>3</sup>
$\mathbf{s}$	= stress tensor, J/m <sup>3</sup>

#### Subscripts

$e$	= electron
$ex$	= exit condition
$I$	= ion
$L$	= Lagrangian step
$o$	= neutral
$r, q, z$	= radial, azimuthal, axial components
$rad$	= radiation effect
$s$	= stagnation
$t$	= throat

#### NUMERICAL MODEL:

The MACH2 system of equations for single fluid unsteady, compressible flows, including continuity, momentum, the electron-ion energy model, and the magnetic field transport has been given in detail by Peterkin and Frese [1].

$$\text{Continuity: } \frac{\partial \mathbf{r}}{\partial t} = -[u^i \nabla_i \mathbf{r} + \mathbf{r} \nabla_i u^i] \quad (1)$$

Momentum:

$$\mathbf{r} \frac{Du^i}{Dt} = \nabla_j \left[ (-P + Q) g^{ij} + \frac{\mathbf{s}^{ij}}{m_0} \left( B^j B^i - \frac{B^2 g^{ij}}{2} \right) \right] \quad (2)$$

Electron specific internal energy:

$$\mathbf{r} \frac{De_e}{Dt} = -P_e g^{ji} \nabla_i u^j + \mathbf{h}_{ij} J^2 g^{ij} + \nabla_i (k_e^{ij} \nabla_j T_e) - \dot{q}_{rad} - \mathbf{r} v_{el} (\mathbf{e}_e - \mathbf{e}_i) \quad (3)$$

Ion specific internal energy:

$$\mathbf{r} \frac{De_i}{Dt} = [- (P_i + Q) g^{ji} + \mathbf{s}^{ji}] \nabla_i u_j + \nabla_i (k_i^{ij} \nabla_j T_i) + \mathbf{r} n_{el} (\mathbf{e}_e - \mathbf{e}_i) \quad (4)$$

Magnetic induction:

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t} = \nabla \times (\mathbf{u} \times \mathbf{B}) - \nabla \times (\mathbf{h} \nabla \times \mathbf{B}) - \nabla \times \frac{1}{e m_0 n_e} (\nabla \times \mathbf{B} \times \mathbf{B}) \quad (5)$$

Equations (1)-(5) constitute a system of non-linear differential equations that is closed with the addition of an equation of state (EOS) and a caloric equation of state that prescribe the species' pressure and specific internal energy as a function of species number densities and temperatures. They can be either analytical or tabular. The analytical equations include the ideal gas model and a model appropriate for solids. The tabular database, called SESAME library (Holian [16]), includes the standard thermodynamic quantities, along with the fractional ionization state based on local thermodynamic equilibrium and transport coefficients.

We used classical plasma resistivity model based on both electron-ion and electron-neutral collisions:

$$\mathbf{h} = 1.0328 \times 10^{-4} \frac{\mathbf{z} \ln \Lambda}{T_e^{3/2}} + \frac{m_e^{1/2}}{e^{3/2}} \mathbf{s}_e T_e^{1/2} \frac{1 - \mathbf{z}}{\mathbf{z}} \quad (6)$$

For classical thermal conductivity, the Spitzer-Härm model is implemented for considering electron-ion collision frequency in which thermal conductivity for species  $s$  scales as

$$K_e = \frac{3.103 \times 10^4 [4.1 - 15.5 / (4 + \mathbf{z})] T_s^{5/2}}{\mathbf{z}^2 \ln \Lambda} \quad (7)$$

where,  $\ln \Lambda$  is the Coulomb logarithm. The physical model described above is solved using a time-split time-marching numerical algorithm. The Lagrangian hydrodynamics, radiation and resistive diffusion models are solved by implicit time-differencing. Corresponding convective transport, radiation cooling and the Hall effect are analyzed by explicit differencing. The code also includes various models for external electric circuits, anomalous resistivity, three different models for radiation (namely Stefan-Boltzmann, equilibrium and non-equilibrium model), and an ablation model. The spatial problem is simulated using finite volume (FV) technique.

## ALE AND MULTIGRID FORMULATION

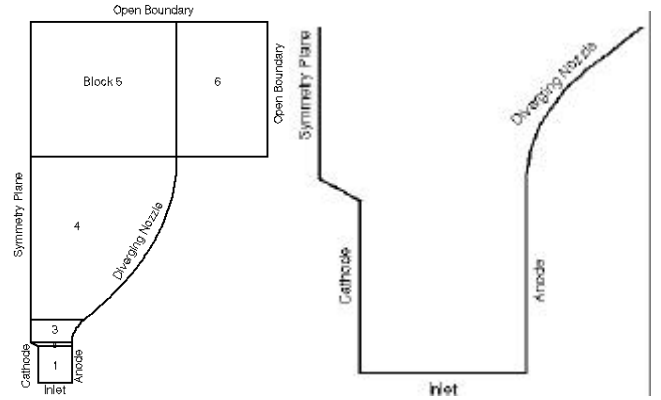
For transport through the mesh in general applications, the magneto-fluid velocity  $\mathbf{u}$  in (1)-(5) is replaced by the relative velocity,  $\mathbf{u}_{rel} \equiv \mathbf{u}_g - \mathbf{u}$ , where  $\mathbf{u}_g$  is the grid velocity at which the boundary of the primitive cell moves. In pure Lagrangian motion, relative velocity vanishes, i.e., the fluid velocity becomes identical with the grid velocity. In ALE formulation of Peterkin et. al [11], the grid and the fields supported by it are advanced during each computational cycle of incremental time,  $\Delta t$  in two steps. First, the grid and its fields are moved such that each node of the grid is moved by a displacement  $\Delta \mathbf{x}_L = \mathbf{u} \Delta t$ . Then, the *remapping* of each node is done using the relative velocity such that,  $\Delta \mathbf{x} = \mathbf{u}_{rel} \Delta t$ .

The corresponding FV magnetic flux advance is computed following these three steps: (1) calculate three fluxes through three Lagrangian surfaces from three Lagrangian field components for each cell; (2) redistribute the three magnetic fluxes as a response to the relative velocities of the grid and fluid; and (3) compute three new magnetic field components in each remapped cell from the three new fluxes. The diffusive process of thermal conduction and magnetic diffusion are computed in MACH2 iteratively via an implicit Jacobi method that uses a multigrid algorithm to increase the rate of convergence. The code also allows solution adaptive mesh-refine

## SIMULATION SETUP:

The MACH2 code was utilized to simulate steady-state, Mega-watt class MPD thruster operation. Figure 1a-b describes the schematic of a typical thruster including two electrodes, an inlet and an

expanding nozzle. The numerical model consists of six computational blocks. The central cathode is of 9.5mm diameter and 45mm length with a 5mm taper in the downstream end, and the annular anode is of inner diameter 50mm. At the exit plane of these electrodes, an expanding nozzle is introduced to convert static enthalpy to axial kinetic energy for greater thrust. The height of this outlet nozzle is 205mm and at its end the maximum diameter is 178mm. Figure 1b is showing the details of the region near the electrodes.



(a) Geometry (b) Zoomed near inlet  
Figure 1. Schematic of the analysis domain.

Proper and accurate nozzle design of a magnetized, non-isentropic plasma flow with distributed heat addition that extends into the diverging section can of course only be achieved by sophisticated numerical tools, such as the MACH2 code. However, a first-iteration approximation based on simplifying assumptions can establish general nozzle dimensions and shape. Thus, if we assume isentropic flow with the sonic point at the exit of the constant-area discharge chamber we can design a diverging section that will expand the plasma flow to a desired temperature ratio.

Specifically, the Mach number at the exit,  $M_{ex}$  is determined by the temperature ratio,  $T_s/T_{ex}$ ;

$$M_{ex} = \sqrt{\frac{2}{\gamma - 1} \left( \frac{T_s}{T_{ex}} - 1 \right)} \quad (8)$$

where  $T_s$  and  $T_{ex}$  are the stagnation and exit temperatures, respectively, and  $\gamma$  is the ratio of specific heats. For steady-state we can approximate a magnetized plasma as a  $\gamma=2$  gas, a consequence of its magnetic pressure, which in turn implies that for a temperature ratio of 30, the exit Mach number is  $M_{ex}=7.6$ . The exit Mach number defines the exit-to-throat area ratio,  $A_{ex}/A_t$  as follows (White [17]),

$$\left( \frac{A_{ex}}{A_t} \right)^2 = \frac{1}{M_{ex}^2} \left[ \frac{2}{\gamma + 1} \left( 1 + \frac{\gamma - 1}{2} M_{ex}^2 \right) \right]^{\frac{\gamma + 1}{\gamma - 1}} \quad (9)$$

The particular nozzle simulations presented in this paper model a discharge chamber of an experimentally-tested thruster with a cathode and anode radius of 4.75 mm and 25 mm, respectively. These dimensions establish the throat area and allow calculation of the exit radius at 84 mm.

The actual contour of the diverging section is designed to assure a shock-free flow. It is generally divided into two sections; the expansion section during which the contour angle increases and a smooth “straightening” section that assures cancellation of all the expansion waves generated upstream. Traditionally, the expansion section is a circular arc of a radius larger than the throat radius with its length defined by the maximum expansion angle desired. For a minimum-length nozzle, a feature that is desirable for rocket nozzles due to weight considerations, the maximum expansion angle is half the Prandtl-Meyer function,

$$v(M) = \sqrt{\frac{\gamma+1}{\gamma-1}} \tan^{-1} \sqrt{\frac{\gamma-1}{\gamma+1} (M^2 - 1)} - \tan^{-1} \sqrt{M^2 - 1} \quad (10)$$

based on the design exit Mach number,  $M=M_{ex}$ . In this first iteration the maximum angle is  $25.5^\circ$  that establishes the length of the expansion section at 45mm after the radius has been chosen at twice that of the anode radius.

The remaining section’s contour design is based on shock-free flow and it generally requires accurate and tedious method of characteristics. However, in this particular plasma flow we expect heat addition downstream of the chamber exhaust that will tend to diffuse shocks. Further, employing the elaborate method of characteristics for such an approximation is a redundant process, so the straightening section also employs a circular arc that is defined by the maximum expansion angle and assures a purely axial exhaust flow. Further, finer adjustments have also been made to the final shape of the diverging section in order to assure smooth grid transition.

The plasma is modeled as a real, two-temperature, viscous fluid. The real equation of state that provides the thermodynamic properties including average degree of ionization, is obtained by the semi-empirical tabular SESAME tables (Holian, [16]). Radiation and the Hall effect are excluded. The following boundary conditions are applied by the ghost-cell technique. The wall boundary conditions are imposed as no-slip for the hydrodynamics and constant temperature for thermal conduction. The latter utilizes a uniform wall temperature of 1000 K for the anode and 2000K for the cathode that are typical for these power levels based on experimental measurements (Sakiyama, et. al [18]). The inlet boundary condition prescribes uniform flow at sonic speed for a 300K Hydrogen gas at a mass flow rate of 1.37 g/s. The downstream outlet boundary conditions impose zero gradient on the pressure, internal energy, magnetic field and density. The discharge current is 10kA. The electrodes are conductors and the backplate (inlet) is an insulator. Finally, symmetry boundary condition is used at the centerline of the annular thruster geometry.

Steady-state was declared after integrated quantities such as thrust and voltage only varied within 0.1% along with qualitative interrogation of the two-dimensional distributions of the main variables. Typically, such simulations converged to state-state within 500 microsec which implies cycling through the full set of the magnetohydrodynamic equations in the excess of 100,000 times at an average timestep of less than 5 nsec.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

A computational mesh of 2368 finite volumes was created using MACH2 block mesh generator. MACH2 allows both Eulerian (fixed) mesh and Lagrangian (moving) mesh capability. Figure 2a shows Eulerian mesh description inside the thruster for the present problem and figure 2b is the zoomed view of the mesh near the inlet.

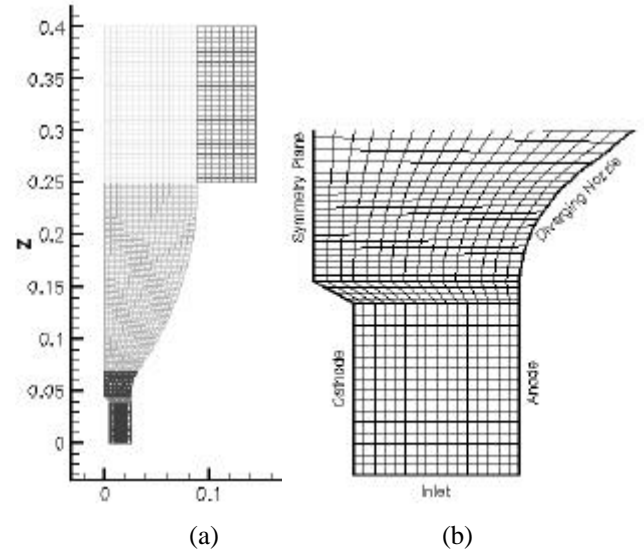
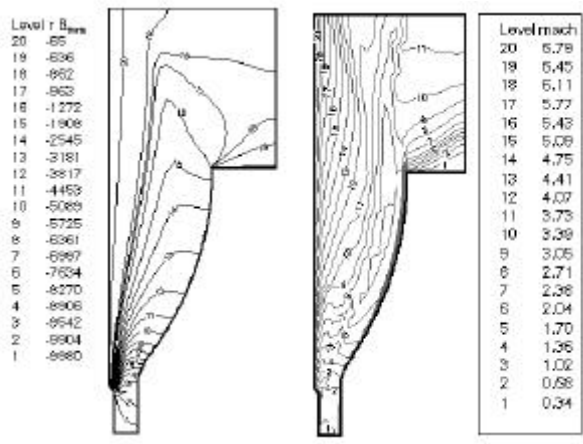


Figure 2. (a) Thruster mesh; (b) Mesh near the electrodes.

Examination of the two-dimensional distributions establishes the emergence of certain physical processes that are not expected from an electromagnetic accelerator. Specifically, Figure 3a displays severe current distention downstream of the discharge chamber with values in the excess of 1000 Amps extending well into the plume region. This implies a low magnetic Reynolds number flow with a diffuse arc and thus a significant electrothermal contribution. Indeed, a comparison between the electromagnetic and electrothermal contribution to the axial kinetic power confirms an approximately 50/50 operation. This is a consequence of the electron-atom contribution to the electrical diffusivity of the plasma that in effect decreases the effective magnetic Reynolds number by two orders of magnitude. (Typically, classical diffusivity for such plasmas is of the order of  $1000 \text{ m}^2/\text{s}$ . In this particular simulation the maximum diffusivity is in the excess of  $10^5 \text{ m}^2/\text{s}$ .) In turn, such operation has significant implications regarding the plasma voltage and consequently power deposition and thrust efficiency.

In addition, such distention implies continuous heat deposition into the nozzle section that impedes conversion to axial kinetic energy. This is shown in Figure 3b that displays the MACH number distribution. For the particular area-ratio expansion the exit MACH numbers were expected to be of the order of 10 while we note that the high density plasma (see Figure 5a) does not exceed  $M_e=3$ . The inadequate static enthalpy conversion is confirmed by the two-dimensional solutions of the average degree of ionization (Figure 4) and temperature (Figure 5). Both show that the exhaust plasma retains substantial enthalpy

into thermal and ionization modes implying that the main inefficiency is due to frozen flow losses as opposed to fall-voltage and external-circuit-element losses.



(a) Current ( $rB_0$ ) (b) Mach number  
Figure 3. MACH2 solution contours.

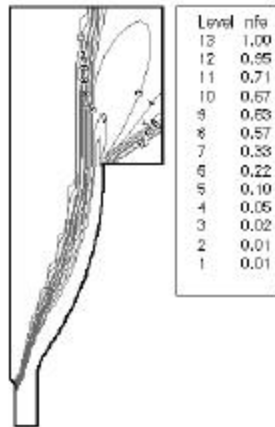
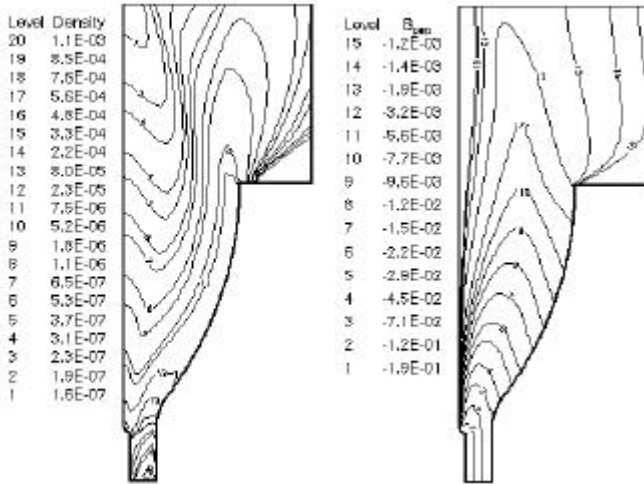
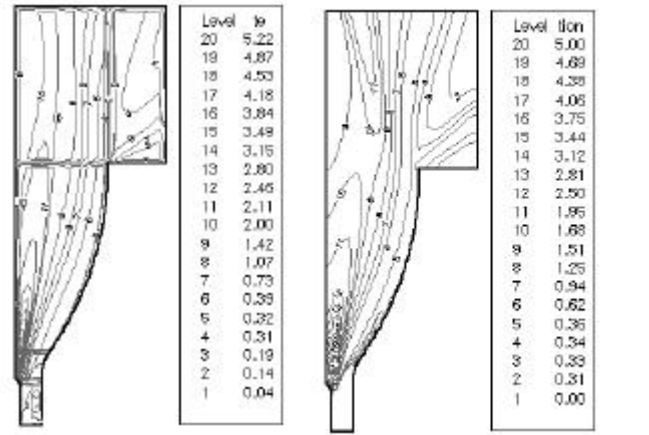


Figure 4. Average degree of ionization.



(a) Density (b) Magnetic field ( $B_{\perp}$ )  
Figure 5. MACH2 solution contours.



(a) Electron temperature (b) Ion Temperature  
Figure 6. Temperature solution contours.

### CONCLUSIONS:

This paper verifies the applicability of the MACH2 finite volume research code to designing practical self-field MPD thruster. Theoretical development for a diverging annular geometry is documented and analyzed for a partially ionized two temperature computational model that addresses potential understanding of effect of geometric scales, and predictions of self-field magnetic effects.

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