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on the CHS Low-Aspect-Ratio Heliotron/Torsatron**

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MHD AND CONFINEMENT CHARACTERISTICS IN THE HIGH- β REGIME ON THE CHS LOW-ASPECT- RATIO HELIOTRON/TORSATRON

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MHD AND CONFINEMENT CHARACTERISTICS IN THE HIGH- β REGIME ON THE CHS LOW-ASPECT-RATIO HELIOTRON/TORSATRON

Abstract

The MHD and confinement characteristics associated with the finite- β effect have been investigated in the low-aspect-ratio heliotron/torsatron Compact Helical System (CHS). $\langle\beta\rangle$ values of 1.8% in the quasi-steady state and 1.9% in the transient phase have been realized and β_0 has reached 5.8%. The experimentally observed equilibrium characteristics are in good agreement with current 3-D analysis. Significant instabilities suppressing β value or terminating the discharges have not yet been observed in standard operation. This is supposed to be due to self-stabilization of the ideal interchange mode by spontaneously generated magnetic wells, which is a distinguishing feature of the low aspect ratio. Magnetic fluctuations with the frequency range less than 100 kHz have reached as much as 0.1% of the poloidal equilibrium field. The predominant modes are globally coherent with the low mode number and do not affect confinement. The scaling of β follows the prediction from LHD scaling. The thermal diffusivity depends on the local scale length of β , the characteristics of which is emphasized for the magnetic hill region. The present β value is limited by saturation of confinement with increasing density and degradation of confinement with increasing power rather than by MHD characteristics.

KEYWORDS: *Shafranov shift, resistive interchange mode*

1. INTRODUCTION

Toroidal helical systems (stellarator/heliotron/torsatron) have traditionally had large aspect ratios, as seen in a series of Wendelstein and Heliotron devices (for a review, see Ref.[1]). Recently, low-aspect-ratio helical systems have attracted much interest because of favourable MHD aspects as well as their potential use as reactors[2,3]. In this paper, we have investigated the characteristics of MHD equilibrium and stability, and the confinement properties associated with finite- β effects in a low-aspect-ratio heliotron/torsatron configuration, i.e. the Compact Helical System (CHS)[4] ($l/m = 2/8$, $R/a \sim 1$ m / 0.2 m). The CHS has an aspect ratio as low as 5, which is uniquely low for toroidal helical devices and induces strong breaking of helical symmetry. The Shafranov shift, Δ_{Sh} , is estimated for the low β case to be $\Delta_{Sh} = \beta_0 A_p a / \tau_a^2$. Since τ_a is approximately proportional to A_p , Δ_{Sh} is enhanced in a low-aspect-ratio configuration. The profile of τ which is opposite to that of the tokamak facilitates a large Shafranov shift ($\tau_0 \sim 0.3$ and $\tau_a \sim 1$ in CHS). Efficient generation of a magnetic well due to a large Shafranov shift tends to stabilize the interchange instability, but a large distortion of the magnetic surface structure might cause deterioration of confinement. The experimental results obtained here are of importance in demonstrating the advantage of a low-aspect-ratio configuration and clarifying the relevance of available 3-D theoretical models.

2. EXPERIMENTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The target plasmas have been produced by ECH (28 and 53 GHz) or ICRF (7.5 and 13 MHz) and heated by two balance injected neutral beams with a total power of 1.7 MW. The magnetic field has been operated in the range between 0.5 T and 1.6 T.

The procedure reconstructing a finite- β equilibrium from the experimental kinetic data of quasi-steady plasmas using the 3-D equilibrium code VMEC[5] has been established for the CHS experiments[6]. The description of finite- β equilibria is a prerequisite for MHD stability analysis as well as various transport analyses. The reconstructed equilibrium with anisotropic pressure due to a tangentially injected beam[7] is in good agreement with the experimental observations. Figure 1(a) shows a comparison of the Shafranov shift estimated from the reconstructed equilibrium with that from the ion temperature profile measured by 34 ch-charge-exchange-recombination spectroscopy with 7.5 mm spatial resolution[8]. The shift of the plasma outboard boundary derived from the VUV emission profile (350 Å~1700 Å) also indicates good correlation with the 3-D computation of the last closed flux surface (see Fig.1(b)). It should be noted that the quality of the discharge significantly affects the effective minor radius of the plasma; the discharges with lower temperature have smaller minor radius.

The maximum value of $\langle\beta\rangle$ including the beam pressure in the available profile database is 1.2% in the case of the vacuum magnetic axis position $R_{ax} = 0.92$ m, $B_t = 0.5$ T, $\bar{n}_e = 5.0 \times 10^{19}$ m⁻³, $P_{abs} = 720$ kW. On a single shot basis, the highest measured diamagnetic $\langle\beta_{dia}\rangle$ in quasi-steady state is 1.5% when $R_{ax} = 0.92$ m, $B_t = 0.5$ T, $\bar{n}_e = 5.4 \times 10^{19}$ m⁻³ and $P_{abs} = 770$ kW. In the transient phase realized by a reheated mode [9], $\langle\beta_{dia}\rangle$ has reached 1.7% when $R_{ax} = 0.95$ m, $B_t = 0.65$ T, $\bar{n}_e = 5.7 \times 10^{19}$ m⁻³ and $P_{abs} = 820$ kW. If we assume a reasonable parabolic profile, these shots have $\langle\beta\rangle$ of 1.8% and 1.9%, and β_0 of 5.4% and 5.8%, respectively; the last value corresponds to 80% of the conventional equilibrium β limit defined by the Shafranov shift reaching a value of half the minor radius.

Poloidal field flexibility in CHS enables external control of the magnetic well and shear by changing the magnetic axis position. In a significantly inward shifted configuration, i.e $R_{ax} = 0.89$ m, where the magnetic hill is increased, sawtooth phenomena in the core region ($\rho \sim 0.25$) accompanying magnetic fluctuation with resonant $m/n = 3/1$ mode have sometimes been observed by soft X-ray diagnostics. In other experimental magnetic configurations, self-stabilization of the ideal interchange mode due to spontaneously generated magnetic well enables a Mercier stable discharge towards the equilibrium β limit. Strong instabilities invoking major disruption and sawtooth oscillation have not been observed experimentally except for the case of $R_{ax} = 0.89$ m. However, since the magnetic hill cannot be excluded in the peripheral region, the resistive interchange mode is destabilized, even for low β [10]. A magnetic fluctuation of a level of up to 0.1% of the poloidal equilibrium magnetic field at the surface has been observed experimentally. The dominant component has a globally coherent structure with $m \leq 4$ and $n \leq 3$, with its resonance in the magnetic hill region. These modes usually rotate in the ion diamagnetic direction

and are not synchronized with the bulk plasma rotation estimated from the Doppler shift of impurity line emission. The characteristics of magnetic fluctuation depend on the pressure profile. Figure 2(a) shows the pressure profiles in the intermediate region for different discharges with $R_{ax} = 0.89$ m and $B_t = 0.95$ T. Periodic bursts of the coherent $m/n = 2/1$ mode have been detected for the lowest pressure case (see Fig.2(b)). No events correlating with these bursts have been observed in soft X-ray and fast ion loss. In spite of the appearance of the instability, the pressure gradient around $\tau=1/2$ can be increased by increasing density and/or power. This suggests that the coherent instability with low mode number does not limit local confinement. With increasing pressure, the ensemble averaged fluctuation continued increasing but the coherent component was suppressed. Also the burst of $m/n = 2/1$ mode became less distinct and the power spectrum of the magnetic fluctuation changed into a $1/f$ like shape. In the highest pressure case, an $m/n = 1$ mode emerged instead of the $m/n = 2/1$ mode.

Confinement scaling can easily be rewritten for β scaling. When we apply the LHD scaling[11], we get β (%) = $1.44P_{abs}^{0.42} \bar{n}_e^{0.69} B_t^{-1.16} R^{-0.25}$, where P_{abs} , \bar{n}_e , B_t and R are in MW, 10^{20}m^{-3} , T and m units, respectively. The experimental data based on diamagnetic measurements follow this scaling well in the realized range with $\langle \beta_{dia} \rangle \leq 1.5\%$ (see Fig.3(a)). A small decline in the higher β region corresponds to high density discharges. Since the dependence of β on B_t is not degraded down to 0.5 T operation, the trend of degradation in the high- β regime is supposed to be due to confinement saturation with increasing density or power, and not with an MHD effect related to the increase of β . Improvement of confinement by inward shifted configuration[12], which is unfavourable to the interchange mode, could be realized in high- β oriented discharges down to 0.5 T.

Although the global mode destabilized in the magnetic hill region does not seem to degrade the confinement in CHS, it is probable that the resistive interchange mode with microscopic scale dominates transport [13]. If anomalous transport in CHS plasmas is related to resistive interchange mode, the thermal diffusivity χ should show a dependence on the pressure gradient and change its characteristics in the magnetic well region. To distinguish these features, χ_e and χ_i derived from the power balance for discharges in the profile database are normalized by $T_e^{3/2} B_t^{-2}$ and shown as a function of the local scale length of β , L_β , in Fig.2(b). Strong coincidence of χ_e and χ_i has been observed, which is a common feature of the microinstability. The normalized χ is a decreasing function of L_β , and the dependence appears to be enhanced in the magnetic hill region ($\propto L_\beta^{0.8}$ in the hill region and $\propto L_\beta^{0.3}$ in the well region).

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FIGURE CAPTIONS

FIG.1 Equilibrium characteristics. (a) Comparison of Shafranov shift of the reconstructed equilibrium from experimental data, Δ_{Sh}^{cmp} with that from the peak position of T_i , Δ_{Sh}^{exp} at the vertically elongated cross section ($\phi=0$). The data are normalized by the radius on the shorter axis; a_s . The top abscissa is the toroidally averaged value of Shafranov shift. The database covers $R_{ax} = 0.89 \sim 1.02$ m, $B_t = 0.5 \sim 1.6$ T, $\bar{n}_e = (0.8\sim 5.5) \times 10^{19} \text{ m}^{-3}$, $P_{abs} = 190 \sim 760$ kW and $\langle\beta\rangle = 0.15 \sim 1.2\%$. (b) Shift of the outboard boundary derived from the emission profile of VUV compared with that of the last closed flux surface given by the 3-D computation.

FIG.2 Instability characteristics. (a) Electron kinetic pressure profile measured by Thomson scattering. The \bar{n}_e , P_{abs} , and $\langle\beta_{dia}\rangle$ are Case1: $1.0 \times 10^{19} \text{ m}^{-3}$, 180 kW and 0.16%, Case2: $2.5 \times 10^{19} \text{ m}^{-3}$, 480 kW and 0.40%, Case3: $4.3 \times 10^{19} \text{ m}^{-3}$, 740 kW and 0.57%, Case4: $5.3 \times 10^{19} \text{ m}^{-3}$, 970 kW and 0.74 %, respectively. Arrows show the location of $\tau = 1/2$. (b) Observed magnetic fluctuations with the frequency band between 3kHz and 100kHz.

FIG.3 Confinement characteristics. (a) Comparison of experimental $\langle\beta_{dia}\rangle$ based for quasi steady plasma with the scaling derived from the LHD scaling. Closed symbols are for $B_t \leq 0.6$ T. The database covers $R_{ax} = 0.89 \sim 1.02$ m, $B_t = 0.5 \sim 1.6$ T, $\bar{n}_e = (0.6\sim 7.1) \times 10^{19} \text{ m}^{-3}$, $P_{abs} = 160 \sim 950$ kW. Symbols are plotted for different density regions with reference to the empirical critical density limit on helical devices [11]; $n_c = 0.25 P_{abs}^{0.5} B_t^{0.5} a^{-1} R^{-0.5}$. (b) Thermal diffusivity as a function of the local scale length of β . The database is the same as described in Fig.1(a).

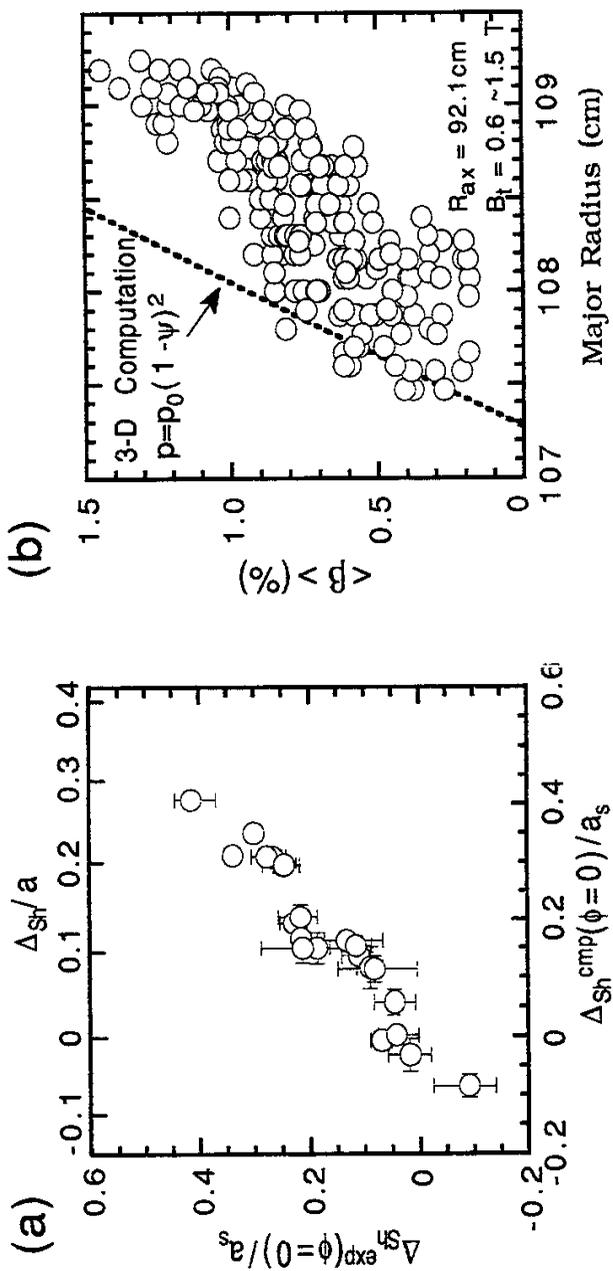


Fig.1

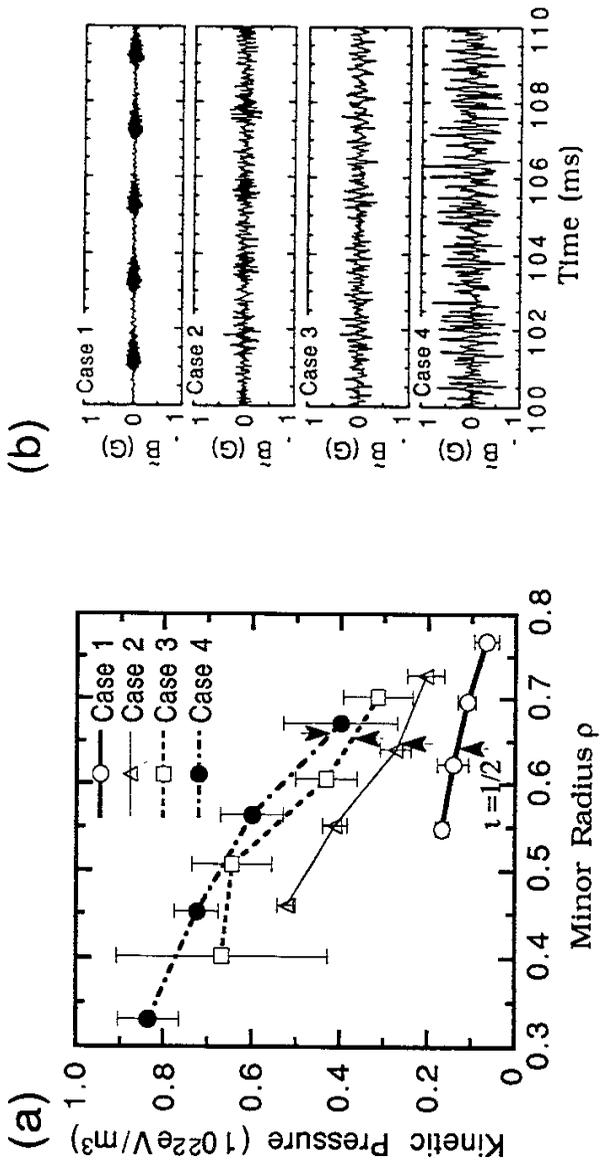


Fig.2

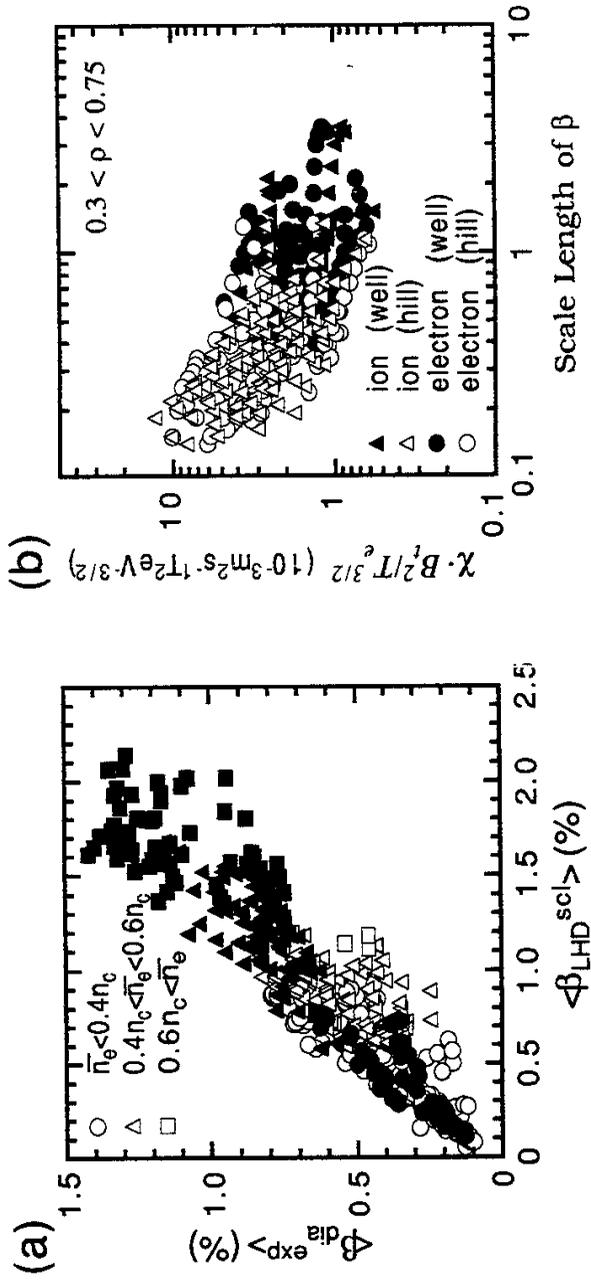


Fig.3

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