The Electric Discharge in Superhigh Density Gas at Current Amplitude up to $5 \cdot 10^5$ A

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Abstract – The investigations of powerful discharge in high density hydrogen were carried out on an installation with preliminary adiabatic compression. The experiments were performed under the following conditions: stored energy of the capacitive storage 140–450 kJ, charging voltage 8.0–14.0 kV, discharge current amplitude 200–600 kA, current rise rate $10^9–10^{10}$ A/s. The maximum particle density $n_{max}$, achieved just before the discharge, was about $2.0 \cdot 10^{22}$ cm$^{-3}$. Arc parameters were calculated on the basis of the channel model. It is shown that increase of the initial density of particles at increase of a current rate of rise results in reduction of arc diameter with increase of channel temperature.

The investigation results of power pulse electric discharge in hydrogen with preliminary adiabatic compression at current amplitude $(1–2) \cdot 10^5$ A are presented in [1, 2].

Modernization of the experimental installation resulted in increasing of current rate of rise from $10^9$ A/s to $10^{10}$ A/s. Current amplitude was driven to $5 \cdot 10^5$ A. The construction of a diagnostic window of 3 mm, made of high impact strength organic, was designed for optical measurements. It has permitted to obtain a photostreak of the discharge channel and its photo.

The discharge was initiated after the adiabatic compression up to 100–180 MPa in the discharge chamber just before the discharge. It corresponded to maximal hydrogen molecule concentration above $10^{22}$ cm$^{-3}$. Oscillogram of pressure in the discharge chamber is shown in Fig. 1.

The dynamic volt-ampere character is changed at current amplitude increasing up to $5 \cdot 10^5$ A at increasing of its rate of rise. Oscillograms for the electric current and voltage in the discharge gap are presented in Fig. 2 for different current rates of rise. It was found that the strength of field and near electrode voltage drop values increase with initial gas density [1, 2] and with increasing of current rate of rise (Figs. 3, 4). The values of near electrode voltage drop were obtained from extrapolation of interelectrode gap length on zero.
Fig. 3. Arc voltage vs interelectrode gap length: • – \( \frac{dJ}{dt} = 10^9 \) A/s; O – \( \frac{dJ}{dt} = 10^{10} \) A/s.

Fig. 4. Field strength vs initial particle density.

The photostreak in visible spectrum is presented in Fig. 5. The split was perpendicular to the axis in the middle of the discharge gap. In Fig. 5,a photostreak of the discharge channel was made at initial hydrogen pressure of 5 MPa without preliminary adiabatic compression. Fig. 5,b corresponds to the preliminary compression to 110 MPa. In the first case the maximal channel contraction was observed to radius \( \leq 0.8 \) mm. In the second case the minimal radius was 1.9 mm, which corresponds to weak glow in the photostreak. Increasing in arc voltage and dropping or “peculiarity” in the discharge current corresponds to the moment of the channel contraction. It ought to be mentioned that sometimes several channel contractions or one but more strong are observed according to the voltage oscillograms. Usually time from the discharge initiation to channel contraction increases at increasing of hydrogen initial particle density before the discharge.

Channel contraction can take place both before and after current maximum. At the moment of maximum channel contraction the intensity of radiation in visible part of spectrum decreases sharply.

The discharge channel parameters were estimated in two extreme cases: the discharge burns in pure hydrogen (initial concentration of hydrogen is \( \sim 10^{22} \) cm\(^{-3} \)) and discharge burns in metal vapour of initiating wire.

The system of equations has the following form:

\[
IE = \left( A n_i T_0^{-1/2} + B n_i T_0^{-1/2} \right) \pi r_0^2;
\]
\[
2n_i kT_0 = P + C \frac{I^2}{r_0};
\]
\[
E = \frac{1}{I} \left( \pi r_0^2 \sigma (T_0, n_0) \right);
\]
\[
n_i = n_0 \sigma (T_0, n_0).
\]

Here \( T \) – channel temperature, \( n_i \) – ion concentration, \( r_0 \) – channel radius, \( \sigma \) – conductivity, \( P \) – pressure after adiabatic compression, \( I \) – current, \( E \) – strength of field. The system decision give \( T = 3\cdot10^5 \) K, \( n_0 = 1.0\cdot10^{21} \) cm\(^{-3} \), \( r_0 = 0.06 \) cm.

In the second case the optical density of the channel is high. Therefore it was considered that it radiates as a black body. In this case from the system

\[
IE = 2\pi r_0^2 \sigma T^4;
\]
\[
(1 + \pi) kT_0 = P + \frac{C I^2}{r_0};
\]
\[
E = \frac{1}{I} \left( \pi r_0^2 \sigma (T_0, n_0) \right)
\]

we receive result \( r_0 = 0.2 \) cm, \( T = 1.25\cdot10^5 \) K, \( n_0 = 10^{20} \) cm\(^{-3} \).

**Conclusion**

Estimations show that experiment corresponding conditions in Fig. 5,a is more suitable to burning arc in
hydrogen. The condition in Fig. 5b closely corresponds to arc burning in initiating wire vapour, its radius of expansion on this condition is 0.2 cm according to independent estimations and close to the measured channel radius. Field strength and near electrode voltage drops are increasing as current rise rate and initial particle density increase.

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References
