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PLASMA PERFORMANCE OF TFCX AND JET WITH SAWTOOTHING

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ABSTRACT

The plasma performance is assessed for two tokamak reactor experiments, the Tokamak Fusion Core Experiment (TFCX) and the Joint European Torus (JET). Both machines appear ignitable for a reasonable range of transport assumptions.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this report we assess performance for the Tokamak Fusion Core Experiment (TFEX) and the Joint European Torus (JET). We use both the Plasma Operation CONTOUR (POPCON) analysis and dynamic startup simulations using the WHIST transport code.¹ For a given set of transport assumptions and machine parameters, we find there is a significant operating regime in density-temperature space. The performance and auxiliary heating requirements are altered substantially by variations in the transport assumptions, so flexibility and robustness in the performance have also been assessed.

2. PHYSICS MODEL

Plasma simulations are based on the work of Houlberg et al.¹ Previous work and details of the model are described in ref. 2; a summary of the model follows. The noncircular plasma equilibrium (consistent with particle, temperature, and current profiles) is treated using the Lao moments method.^{2,3} By using flux-coordinate labeling, the noncircular (two-dimensional) transport problem is reduced to one dimension. Evolution of the various profiles is followed in flux coordinates using conservation of particles (five ion species plus electrons), energy (ions and electrons), and poloidal flux. The model includes simple edge/divertor physics and fixed impurities (five species) with coronal radiation losses using the model of Post et al.⁴ Ohmic heating and local, instantaneous alpha particle deposition are supplemented by Gaussian heating $\{\sim \exp[-(r/r_0)^2]\}$, which is strongly peaked in the local minor radius (r) similar to ion cyclotron resonance heating (ICRH). The rf-like power is split between ions (75%) and electrons (25%) with $r_0 = 0.8$ m. Fueling of the deuterium-tritium (D-T) plasma is by gas puffing with a 95% recycling fraction.

Sawtoothing is an important aspect of these simulations that occurs when the on-axis safety factor $q(0)$ drops below one. The strong central heating lowers the plasma resistivity and restricts the current channel. The centrally peaked current density rises, lowering $q(0)$ below unity

and initiating the sawtooth instability. The density, temperature, and current profiles are flattened by turbulence inside the sawtooth region, which is consistent with conservation of particles, energy, and helical flux. Further poloidal flux diffusion allows this cycle to periodically repeat with an expected period of 400 ms in TFCX⁵ as compared with an energy confinement time >1 s. The resulting central turbulence typically extends to three-fourths of the minor plasma radius; this is consistent with experiments.⁶ The profile for q is flat for $r/a < 0.75$, rising abruptly to $q(a)$ for $r/a > 0.75$. Consequently, plasma losses are dominated by confinement in the outer plasma, where gradients are large and the typical temperature is low, resulting in a current relaxation time ~ 30 s. Plasma parameters are time averaged over each sawtooth period to obtain the quasi-static POPCON performance. Without sawtoothing, $q(0) \approx 0.4$ is typical with a well-confined core plasma, lower gradients, and higher temperature that result in a resistive decay time ~ 250 s. The performance with sawtoothing is much poorer than without sawtoothing.

The transport assumptions include neoclassical losses that are twice those given by Hinton and Hazeltine.⁷ The Hastie-Hitchon model⁸ is used for the thermal ion conduction loss by toroidal field ripple, assuming an edge ripple of 1.5% and 16 toroidal field (TF) coils. Ripple losses increase as the magnetic axis shifts outward during evolution of the magnetohydrodynamic (MHD) equilibrium. Anomalous electron energy confinement and particle diffusion ($D = \chi/5$) are a version of neo-Alcator (NA) scaling,⁹

$$\chi_{NA} \text{ (cm}^2/\text{s)} = \left[\frac{1.5 \times 10^{17}}{n_e \text{ (cm}^{-3}\text{)}} \right] \left[\frac{r}{43 \text{ (cm)}} \right] \left[\frac{250 \text{ (cm)}}{R_0} \right]^2, \quad (1)$$

and a modified form of ref. 10 (GMS),

$$\chi_{GMS} \text{ (cm}^2/\text{s)} = 65 [1 + 4(r/a)^2] \frac{a \text{ (cm)} \sqrt{\kappa}}{I \text{ (MA)}}. \quad (2)$$

Here, n_e is the local electron density, I is the plasma current, and r is the local minor radius on the midplane. A finite-beta enhancement of the GMS scaling is included:

$$f(\beta) = 0.384 \exp[(\beta/\beta_c)^2] , \quad (3a)$$

$$\beta_c = \left[\frac{a}{5R_0 q(a)} \right] \left(\frac{1 + \kappa^2}{2} \right) , \quad (3b)$$

so that $f(\beta = \beta_c) \sim 1$, with β_c generalized from ref. 11 for a non-circular plasma. An anomalous electron conduction coefficient is taken as

$$\chi_e = \chi_{NA} + 0.72\chi_{GMS} \times f(\beta) \quad (4)$$

to model the ohmic confinement (χ_{NA}) together with the high-beta, auxiliary heating scaling [$0.7\chi_{GMS} \times f(\beta)$]. The anomalous particle diffusion coefficient is taken as $D = \chi_{Ee}/5$.

3. RESULTS FOR TFCX

3.1 PLASMA PERFORMANCE

The nominal copper TFCX design¹² was chosen as a representative example having the following parameters:

Parameter	Value
Major radius, R_0 (m)	3.25
Minor radius, a (m)	1.30
Elongation, κ	1.6
Triangularity, δ	0.3
On-axis field, B_0 (T)	4.00
Safety factor, $q(a)$	2.4

Other TFCX devices have similar performance parameters.

Using the method of ref. 1, Fig. 1 shows the Plasma Operation Contours (POPCONS) assuming neo-Alcator confinement [Eq. (1)] with sawtoothing. There is 10% hydrogen to simulate dilution of the fusion source during ICRH H-minority heating. The auxiliary power at quasi-static equilibrium (P_{aux}^{eq}) is required to maintain the operating point in density (n_e) and temperature (T) space [Fig. 1(a)] against confinement losses. Ignition corresponds to the contour of zero auxiliary power ($P_{aux}^{eq} = 0$) in Fig. 1(a). The minimum ignition density lies at $n_e = 7 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ and $T = 16 \text{ keV}$, corresponding to a fusion power P_{fus} of 200 MW [Fig. 1(b)], a toroidal beta β_T of 7% [Fig. 1(c)], and a poloidal beta β_p of 0.7 [Fig. 1(d)]. Large auxiliary powers [Fig. 1(a)] at low density and high temperature are needed to overcome thermal ion losses due to TF ripple. Increasing auxiliary power allows this ripple loss to be surmounted as fusion power becomes dominant. An ignition margin M of 1.5 is denoted by the dotted contour in Fig. 1(a), where

$$M = \frac{\text{(fusion power from alphas)}}{\text{(power lost) - (ohmic heating power)}} \equiv \frac{P_\alpha}{P_L - P_{OH}},$$

and indicates the depth of the superignited domain. Ignition is the same as $M = 1$. The performance for neo-Alcator scaling is optimistic, making a large extrapolation from ohmically heated experiments.

Figure 2 shows POPCONS, assuming GMS scaling [Eq. (2)] with sawtoothing and 10% hydrogen. The minimum ignition density lies at $n_e = 7 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ with $14 \text{ keV} \leq T \leq 18 \text{ keV}$ [Fig. 2(a)], corresponding to $200 \text{ MW} \leq P_{fus} \leq 300 \text{ MW}$ [Fig. 2(b)], $6\% \leq \beta_T \leq 8\%$ [Fig. 2(c)], and $0.6 \leq \beta_p \leq 0.7$ [Fig. 2(d)]. Since GMS scaling is more optimistic than neo-Alcator for auxiliary heating, lower powers are necessary to overcome the thermal ion TF ripple losses. At low β_T values, the shift in the magnetic axis is small, requiring less plasma current than at high β_T with fixed $q(a) = 2.4$. There is a corresponding reduction in confinement since $\chi_{GMS} \sim 1/I$ [Eq. (2)], thus requiring somewhat larger auxiliary powers [Fig. 2(a)] to maintain operation at high density and low temperature. There is a saddle point in the intermediate region

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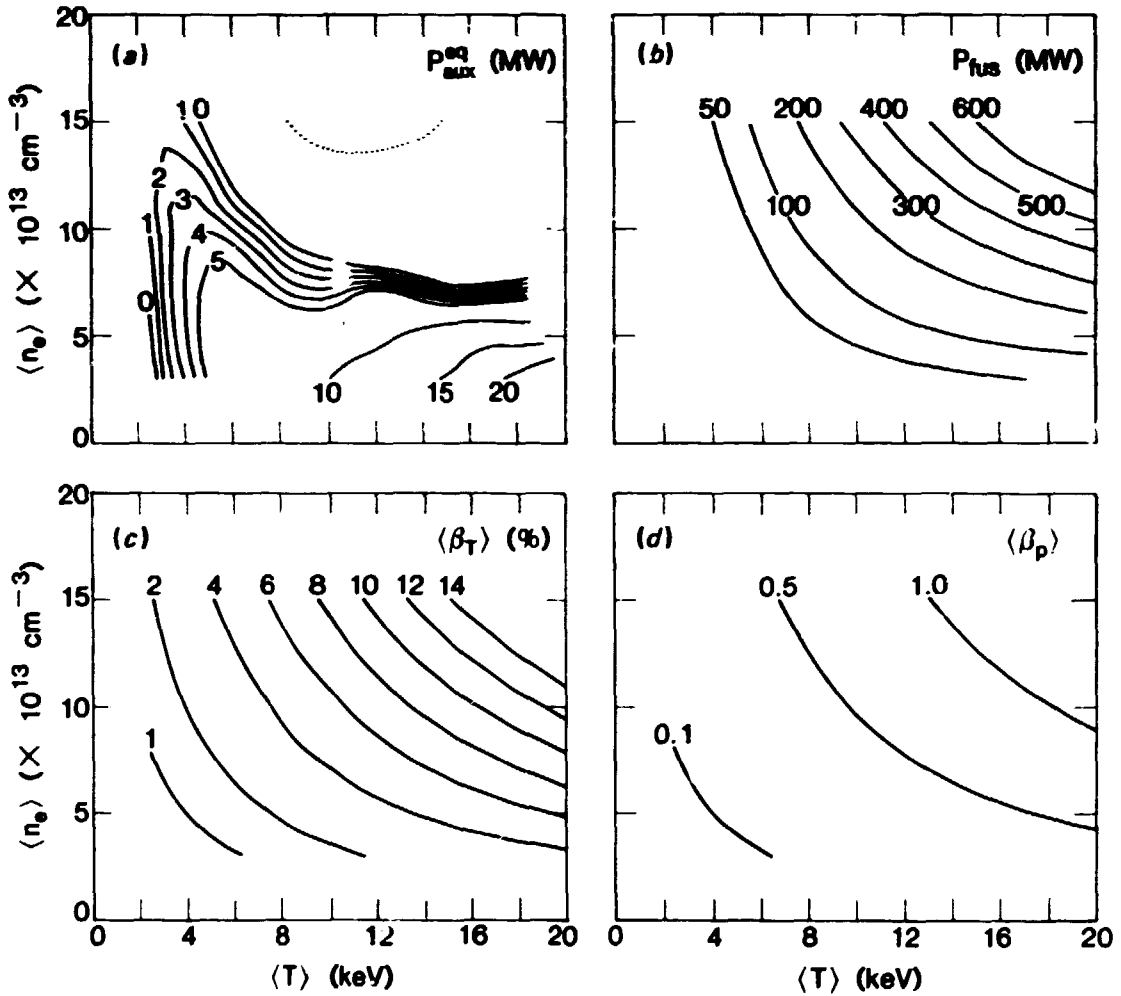


Fig. 1. Plasma OPERATION CONTOURS (POPCONS) for (a) auxiliary power, (b) fusion power, (c) toroidal beta, and (d) poloidal beta, assuming neo-Alcator confinement.

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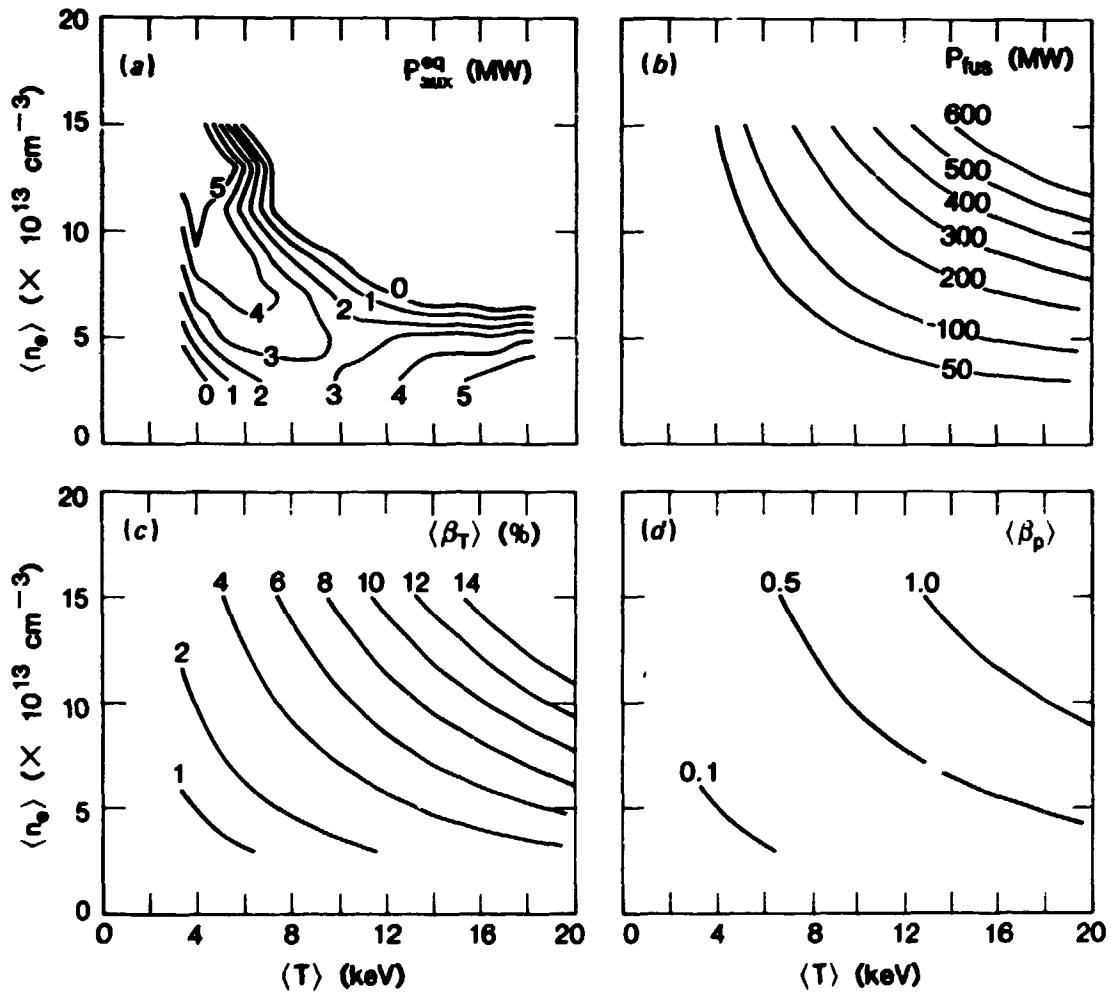


Fig. 2. POPCONS assuming GMS scaling.

[Fig. 2(a)] near $n_e = 4 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ and $T = 10 \text{ keV}$. The performance for GMS scaling alone is also optimistic because ohmic losses (i.e., neo-Alcator scaling) are not included.

Figure 3 shows POPCONs assuming a combination of GMS scaling with a soft-beta enhancement [Eq. (4)], sawtoothing, and neo-Alcator scaling of the form:

$$\chi_{\text{NA}} \text{ (cm}^2\text{/s)} = \left[\frac{1.5 \times 10^{17}}{n_e \text{ (cm}^{-3}\text{)}} \right] \left[\frac{a \sqrt{\kappa}}{83 \text{ (cm)}} \right] \left[\frac{250 \text{ (cm)}}{R_0} \right]^2. \quad (5)$$

The minimum ignition density lies at $n_e = 7 \times 10^{13}$ with $T = 12 \text{ keV}$ [Fig. 3(a)], corresponding to $P_{\text{fus}} = 150 \text{ MW}$ [Fig. 3(b)], $\beta_T = 5.5\%$ [Fig. 3(c)], and $\beta_p = 0.5$ [Fig. 3(d)]. The finite-beta enhancement to χ_{Ee} limits the ignition region [Fig. 3(a)] to $P_{\text{fus}} < 300 \text{ MW}$ [Fig. 3(b)], $\beta_T < 8\%$ [Fig. 3(c)], and $\beta_p < 0.7$ [Fig. 3(d)]. These results are optimistic at low temperature because impurity radiation losses are not included.

Figure 4 illustrates POPCON results assuming a combination of neo-Alcator and β_T -enhanced GMS scalings [Eqs. (4) and (5)] with sawtoothing and 1.5% oxygen. There is no ignition region. The minimum power near ignition is $< 2 \text{ MW}$ at $n_e = 0.9 \times 10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ and $T = 10 \text{ keV}$ [Fig. 4(a)], corresponding to $P_{\text{fus}} = 150 \text{ MW}$ [Fig. 4(b)], $\beta_T = 5\%$ [Fig. 4(c)], and $\beta_p = 0.5$ [Fig. 4(d)]. The large auxiliary powers required to operate at low temperature and high density are due to oxygen impurity radiation loss. This result is probably pessimistic because experiments can obtain a constant impurity density with increasing n_e (rather than a constant impurity fraction).

Figure 5 displays POPCON results with transport scaling given by Eqs. (4) and (5) with sawtoothing and a constant oxygen density of $6 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. The minimum ignition point lies at $n_e = 10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ and $T = 9 \text{ keV}$, corresponding to $P_{\text{fus}} = 150 \text{ MW}$ [Fig. 4(b)], $\beta_T = 5\%$ [Fig. 4(c)], and $\beta_p = 0.5$ [Fig. 4(d)]. The dotted contour in Fig. 4(a) corresponds to an ignition margin M of 1.05. As before, large auxiliary powers [Fig. 4(a)] at low n_e and high T are needed to overcome thermal ion losses due to TF

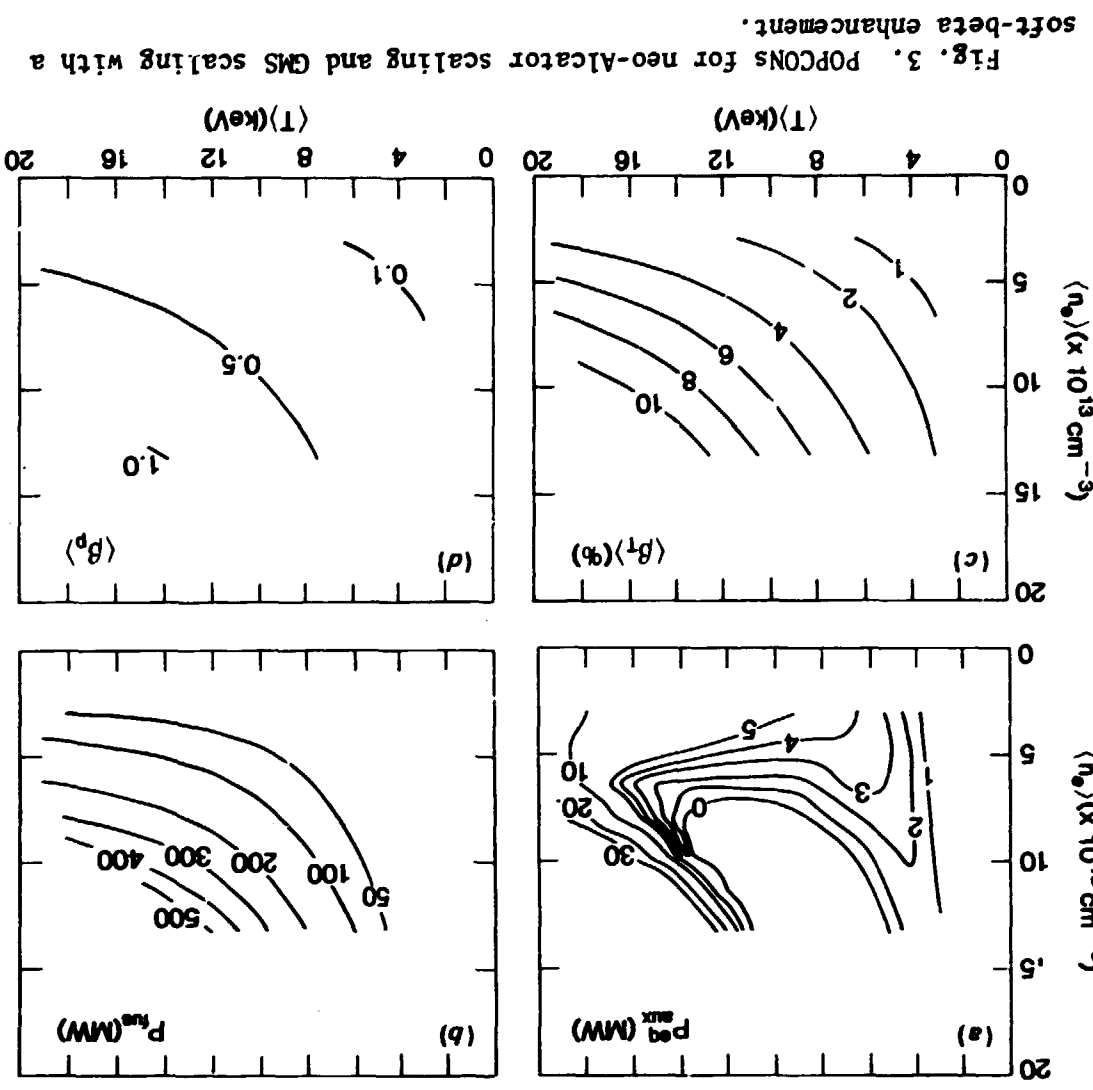


Fig. 3. POPCONS for neo-Alcator scaling and GMS scaling with a soft-beta enhancement.

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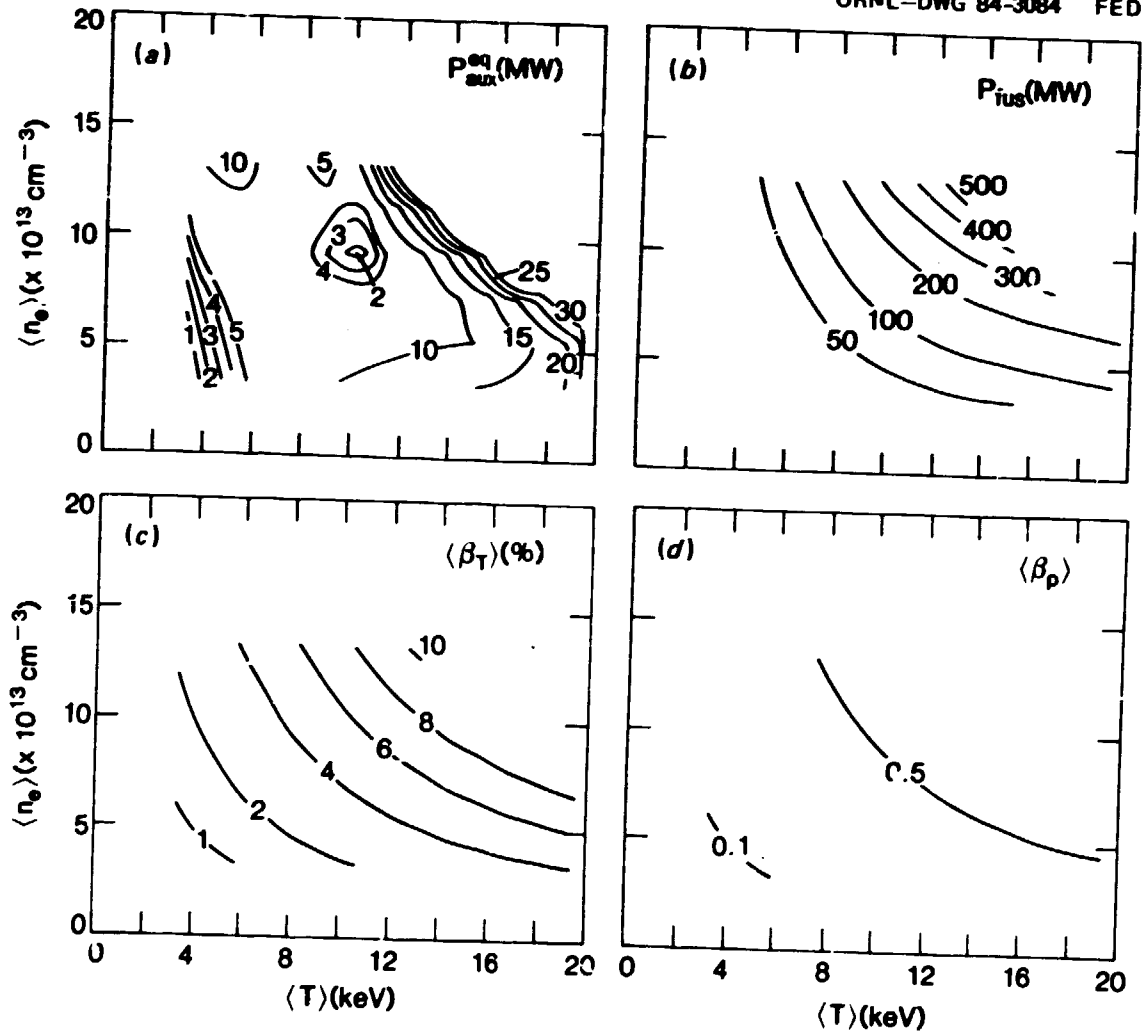


Fig. 4. POPCONs assuming $\chi_{\text{NA}} + 0.72\chi_{\text{GMS}} \times f(\beta/\beta_c)$ with 1.5% oxygen impurity.

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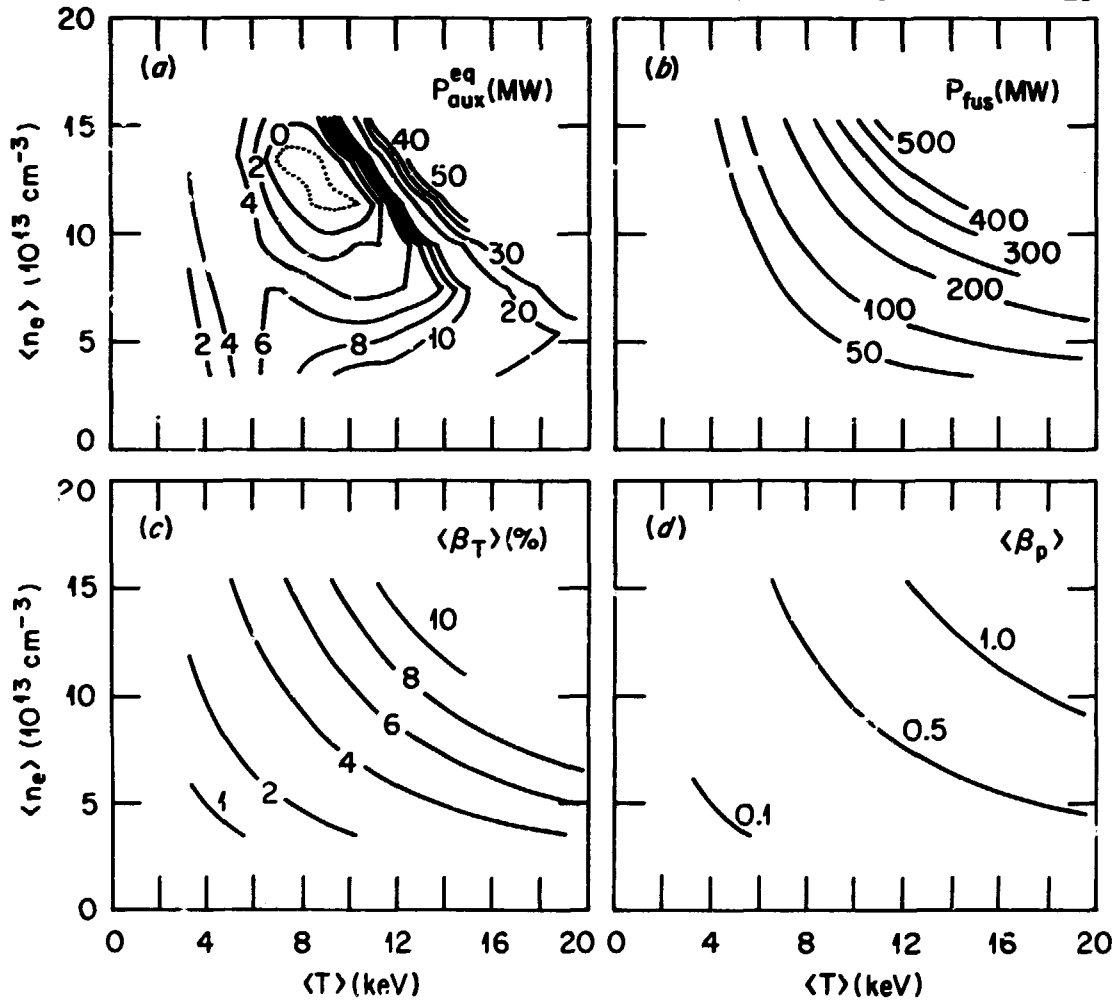


Fig. 5. POPCONs assuming $\chi_{NA} \approx 0.72\chi_{GMS} \times f(\beta/\beta_c)$ and $n_{ox} = 6 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-3}$.

ripple. High powers at low T and high n_e are required to offset impurity radiation losses. The finite-beta enhancement to χ_{Ee} limits the ignition region [Fig. 5(a)] to $P_{fus} < 300$ MW [Fig. 5(b)], $\beta_T < 7.5\%$ [Fig. 5(c)], and $\beta_p < 0.7$ [Fig. 5(d)]. There is a shallow saddle point in Fig. 5(a) ($P_{aux}^{eq} \sim 5$ MW); an auxiliary power of >5 MW would barely surmount this saddle point, corresponding to an infinite startup time. Applying 10 MW of ICRH-like auxiliary power results in a 10-s startup time from ohmic state to the minimum ignition point. There is a ± 10 to 15% variation in the power to the divertor and ion source rate to the plasma due to sawtoothing. A maximum auxiliary heating power of <25 MW therefore appears more than adequate to start up and maintain the plasma over a wide range of operation points and confinement scaling.

Figure 6 shows the performance of TFCX when $q(a)$ is increased from 2.4 to 2.6. Ignition lies inside the small closed contour [Fig. 6(a)] centered at $T = 8$ keV and $n_e = 1.3 \times 10^{14}$ cm^{-3} , corresponding to $P_{fus} \sim 200$ MW [Fig. 6(b)], $\beta_T \sim 5.5\%$ [Fig. 6(c)], and $\beta_p \sim 0.6$ [Fig. 6(d)]. Ignition occurs for $\beta_T \leq 6\%$, which is somewhat lower than the previous case because β_c is inversely proportional to $q(a)$ from Eq. (3b).

Figure 7 illustrates the performance when the toroidal field is reduced from 4 T to 3.5 T. There is a plateau in the auxiliary power ($P_{aux}^{eq} \sim 7$ MW) centered at $T = 7$ keV and $n_e = 10^{14}$ cm^{-3} [Fig. 7(a)]. There is no ignition region.

Figure 8 illustrates the improved performance if the soft-beta limit β_c is raised by 33% consistent with ref. 13 for a TFCX plasma; that is, if the right side of Eq. (3b) is multiplied by 1.33. The ignition region is expanded [Fig. 8(a)] in comparison to Fig. 5 with a maximum ignition margin M of 1.25 as shown by the dotted contours in Fig. 8(a). The minimum in the ignition contour lies at $T = 13$ keV and $n_e = 8.5 \times 10^{13}$ cm^{-3} , corresponding to $P_{fus} = 200$ MW [Fig. 8(b)], $\beta_T = 7\%$ [Fig. 8(c)], and $\beta_p = 0.6$ [Fig. 8(d)]. The auxiliary power to reach ignition is unchanged from Fig. 5.

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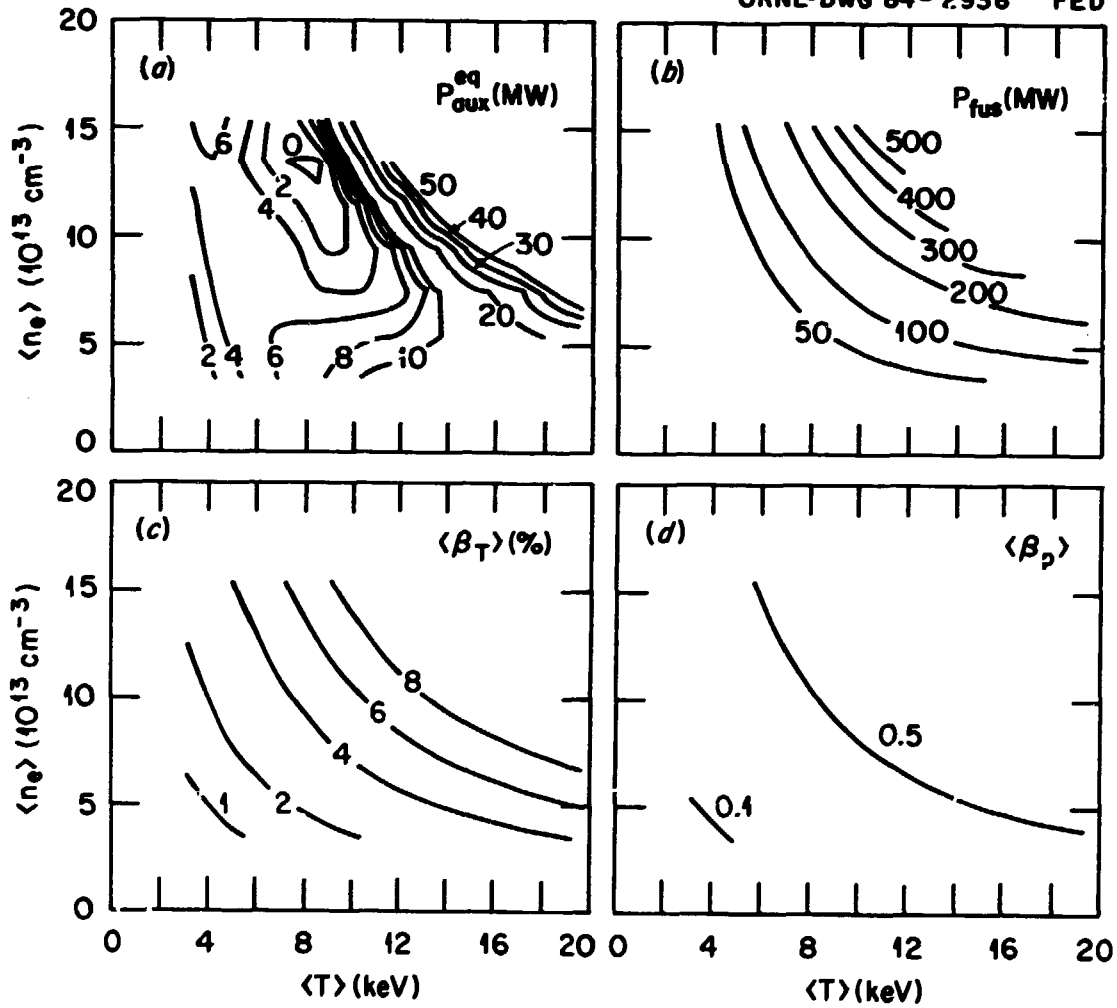


Fig. 6. POPCONS assuming $\chi_{NA} + 0.72\chi_{GMS} \times f(\beta/\beta_c)$ and $n_{ox} = 6 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ with $q(a) = 2.6$.

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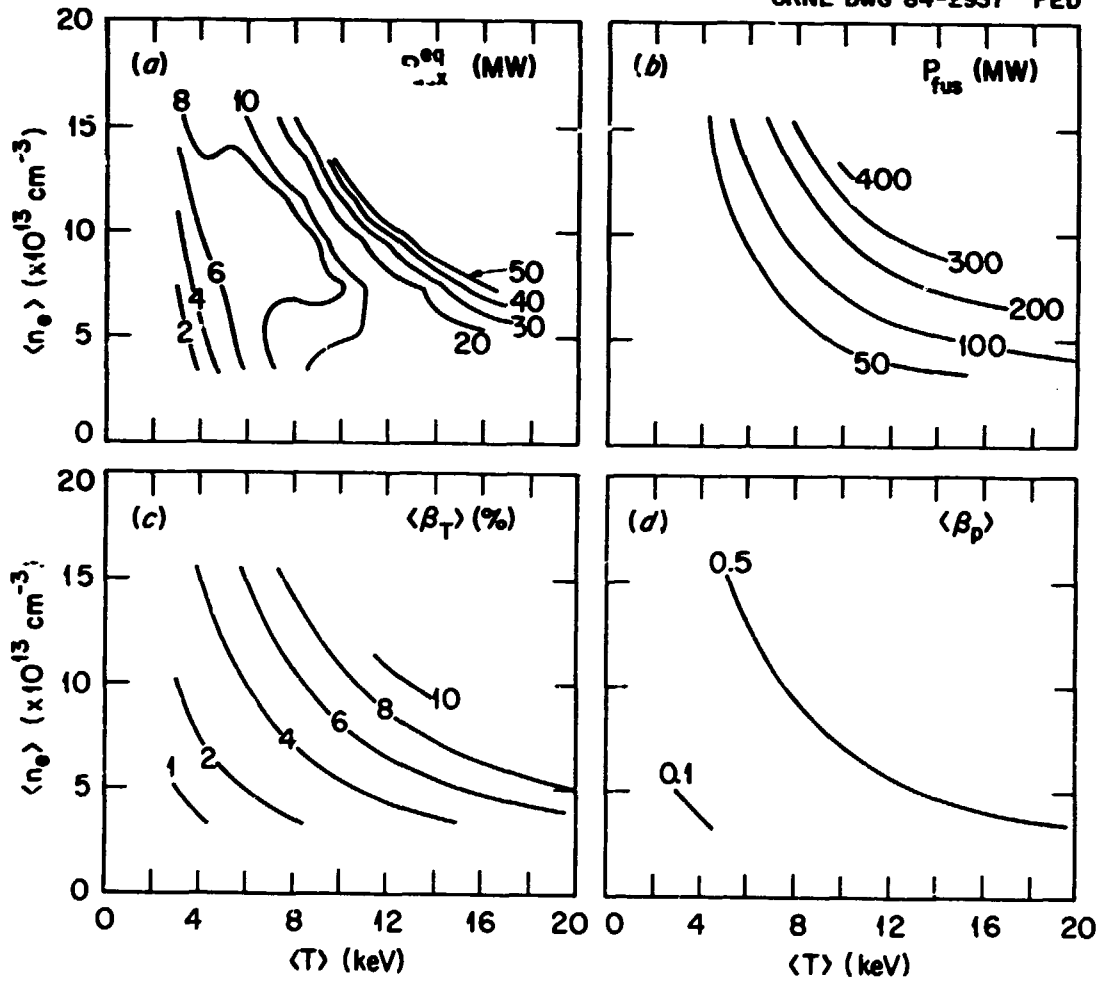


Fig. 7. POPCONs assuming $\chi_{\text{NA}} = 0.72\chi_{\text{GMS}} \times f(\beta/\beta_c)$ and $n_{\text{ox}} = 6 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ with $B_T = 3.5 \text{ T}$.

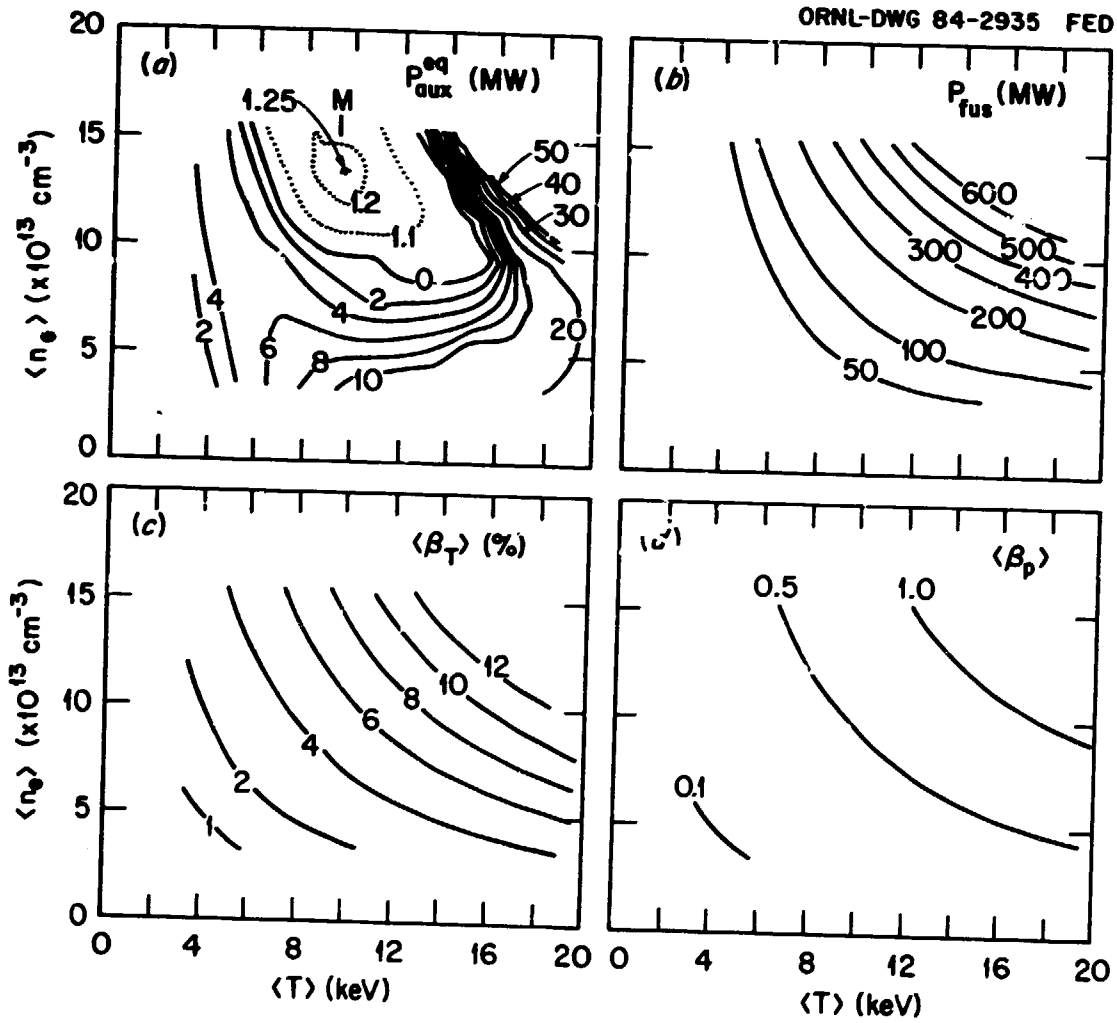


Fig. 8. POPCONS assuming $\chi_{NA} + 0.72\chi_{GMS} \times f(\beta/1.33\beta_c)$ and $n_{ox} = 6 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-3}$.

3.2 SENSITIVITY OF RESULTS

Several modeling parameters introduce variability in these results, although the qualitative features of the POPCONs are as shown above. A somewhat different device [with $R_0 = 3.75$ m, $a = 1.07$ m, $\kappa = 1.6$, $\delta = 0.3$, $B_0 = 4.3$ T, and $q(a) = 2$] was chosen for these studies assuming GMS scaling with sawtoothing; the results are representative. The fractional change in the minimum ignition density (Δ) is the most important result. When the sawtooth period τ_{ST} is varied, the change is $\Delta(\tau_{ST} = 0.75 \text{ s}) = +8\%$ and $\Delta(\tau_{ST} = 0.1 \text{ s}) = -5\%$. If sawtoothing is triggered instead by $q(0)$, then, in going from $q(0) = 0.98$ to $q(0) = 0.999$, the change is $\Delta \leq 1\%$. Quasi-static performance during sawtoothing has been obtained by time averaging the various plasma quantities over each sawtooth period. The parameters associated with the best (worst) confinement are also obtained corresponding to the lowest (highest) auxiliary power during each sawtooth. An ignition contour based on this maximum (minimum) auxiliary power has $\Delta = +33\%$ (-9%). For the larger device discussed in Sect. 3.1, this variation is $\Delta = \pm 10\%$. This sensitivity indicates the importance of using time-averaged values for quasi-static performance. The feedback time (800 ms) for the auxiliary heating response was chosen to be longer than the sawtooth period (400 ms) but shorter than an energy confinement time (>1 s). A shorter feedback time (400 ms) yields bumpier contours, indicating the importance of proper feedback time. Thus, the quasi-static POPCON analysis is relatively insensitive to details of the sawtoothing transients but sensitive to experimental parameters like feedback time and plasma size. The Δ value is -8% when the Gaussian width of the ICRH-like deposition is narrowed from $r_0/a = 0.5$ to 0.3 , and $\Delta = 2\%$ if r_0/a is broadened from 0.5 to 0.6 . The narrow ICRH deposition is spread over the entire sawtoothing region, yielding performance that is insensitive to the Gaussian width. There is very little sensitivity to the fraction of rf power to the ions (f_i) and electrons (f_e) because the fusion power is completely dominant at ignition. However, the power to surmount the saddle point in P_{aux}^{eq} is 33% lower for $f_i/f_e = 100/0$ than for $f_i/f_e = 75/25$ due to the hotter ions below ignition. This simple rf model seems adequate; sophisticated

ICRH modeling of mode conversion and ray tracing may not be needed in the presence of sawtoothing. Raising $q(a)$ to 2.5 yields $\Delta = 23\%$ because χ^{GMS} increases [$\propto q(a)$] faster than the effective decrease in transport due to the smaller sawtoothing region. The value of minimum ignition density rises rapidly for an edge ripple, $\delta(a) > 1.8\%$; when $\delta(a) > 3\%$, more than 100 MW is needed to reach ignition, which lies well above $1.6 \times 10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. Therefore, the plasma performance modeling is insensitive to the details of sawtoothing and ICRH; edge ripple and $q(a)$ have an important impact.

4. RESULTS FOR JET

The plasma performance of JET has also been examined for both a base case and a smaller bore plasma.

Parameter	Base	Smaller
R_0 (m)	2.96	2.71
a (m)	1.25	1.00
κ	1.6	1.6
δ	0.3	0.3
B_0 (T)	3.45	3.77

These simulations assume a high-current (7-MA) plasma, making the results optimistic. The nominal current is ≤ 5 MA. Without sawtoothing, GMS scaling yields optimistic ignition contours for both the basic (curve 1 of Fig. 9) and small-bore JET (curve 2). With sawtoothing (curves 3 and 4 in Fig. 9), ignition is less optimistic but attainable. A soft- β modification¹⁴ can be made to GMS scaling of the form

$$\chi_e = \chi^{GMS} \times 0.5 \exp(\epsilon\beta_p/0.4) ,$$

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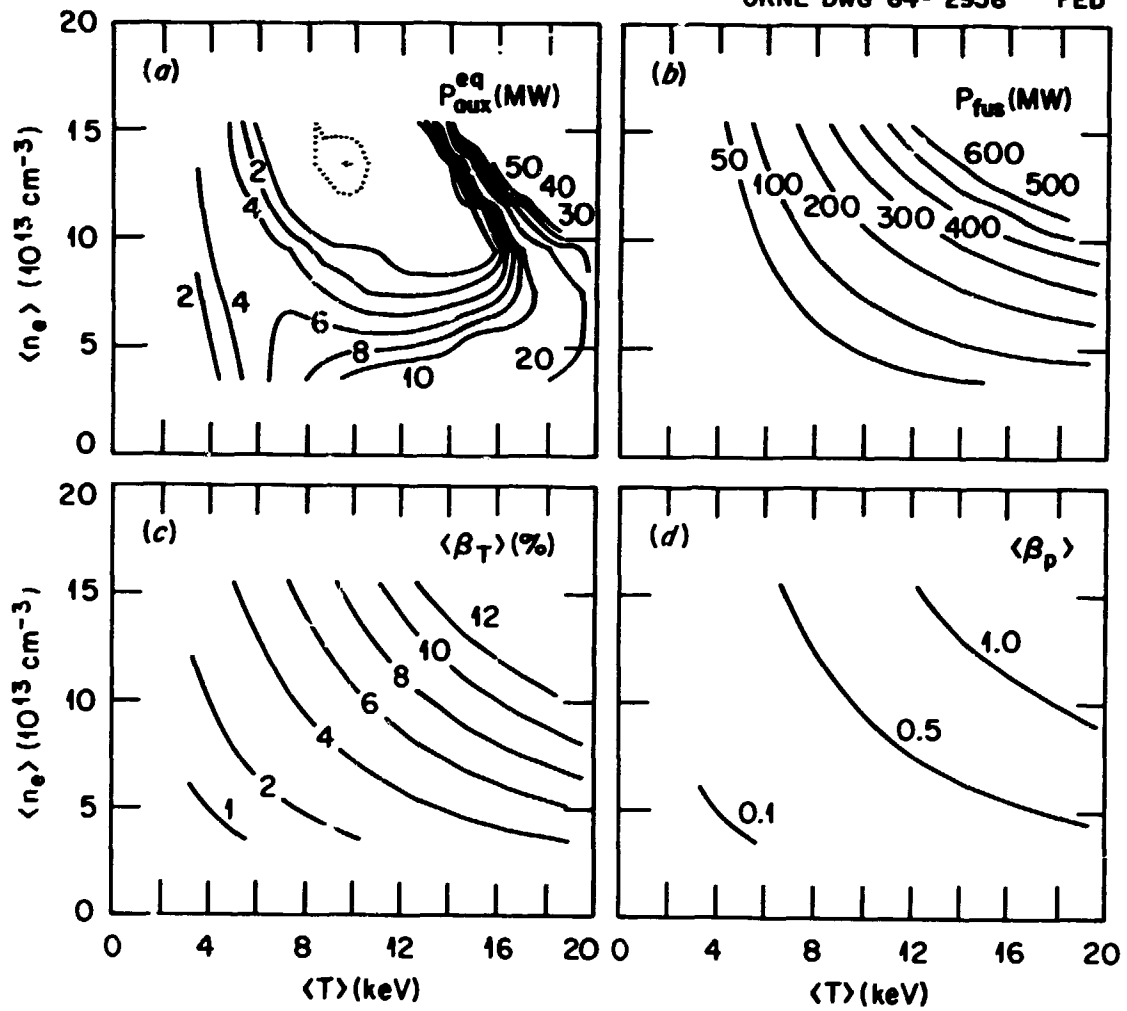


Fig. 9. Ignition contours for JET (see text).

to fit present experiments without sawtooth. Curve 5 in Fig. 9 is the resulting ignition contour for the basic JET; the smaller-bore JET has no corresponding ignition curve for $n_e < 2 \times 10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. The associated plasma parameters for the minimum-density ignition points are summarized in Table 1. JET appears ignitable using transport assumptions similar to TFCX.

Table 1. Ignition parameters for JET

Curve	Sawtoothing	n_e (10^{14} cm^{-3})	T (keV)	β_T (%)	β_p	P_{fus} (MW)
1	No	0.51	9.0	3.8	0.28	50
2 (small)	No	0.63	9.5	4.0	0.28	40
3	Yes	0.52	17.1	7.9	1.05	130
4 (small)	Yes	0.67	19.0	9.7	0.90	150
5 (soft beta)	No	1.45	12.3	15.0	3.20	530

5. PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

TFCX appears ignitable with sawtooth and a reasonable range of electron thermal diffusivity scalings. Transport simulations show that ≤ 25 MW of ICRH is adequate for heating in TFCX. Ignition appears inaccessible if $\chi_e = 2 \times \chi^{\text{GMS}}$ with sawtooth, but performance at the nominal burn point would be unchanged. The model is insensitive to the details of sawtooth transients and ICRH deposition. Edge ripple and $q(a)$ have a large impact. For optimistically high currents, JET appears ignitable using transport scalings similar to TFCX.

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