



The High Field Compact Mirror Path to Fusion Energy

Cary Forest¹, Jay Anderson¹, Ken Fowler, Jan Egedal¹, Doug Endrizzi¹, Jim Anderson⁴, Pyotr Bagransky⁹, Ted Biewer⁷, Peter Catto, Mike Clark¹, Manaure Francisquez⁸, Kieran Furlong¹, Ammar Hakim⁸ Bob Harvey⁵, Mykola Ialovega¹, Alexander Ivanov⁹, Mi Joung⁶, Jeremiah Kirch¹, Grant Kristofek², Roderick McNeill¹, John Lohr⁴, Elijah Martin⁷, Vladimir Mirnov¹, Bob Mumgaard², Ethan Peterson³, Yuri Petrov⁵, Jon Pizzo¹, Steve Oliva¹, Charlie Moeller⁴, Kunal Sanwalka¹, Oliver Schmitz¹, Mary Severson¹, Bhuvana Srinivasan⁸, Danah Velez¹, John Wallace¹, Dennis Whyte³, Mason Yu, Jim Yeck¹

¹ University of Wisconsin-Madison

² Commonwealth Fusion Systems

³ MIT

⁴ General Atomics

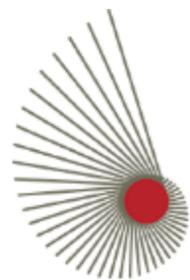
⁵ CompXCo

⁶ Kstar

⁷ ORNL

⁸ Virginia Tech/PPPL

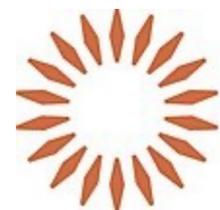
⁹ Budker Institute



WARF
Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation



COMPX



Commonwealth
Fusion Systems

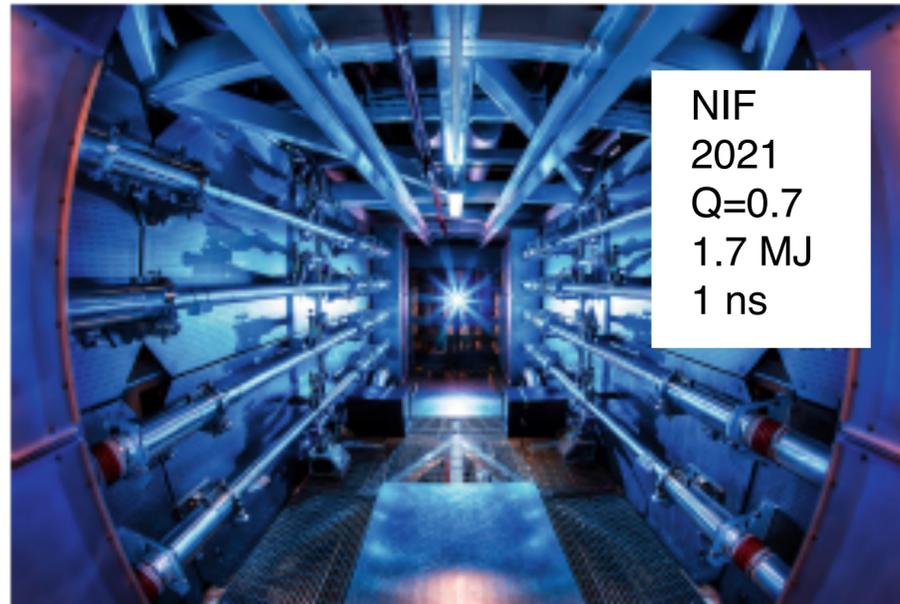
MIT PSFC



50+ years of research has us at the cusp of using fusion energy from deuterium and tritium

Fusion news ignites optimism

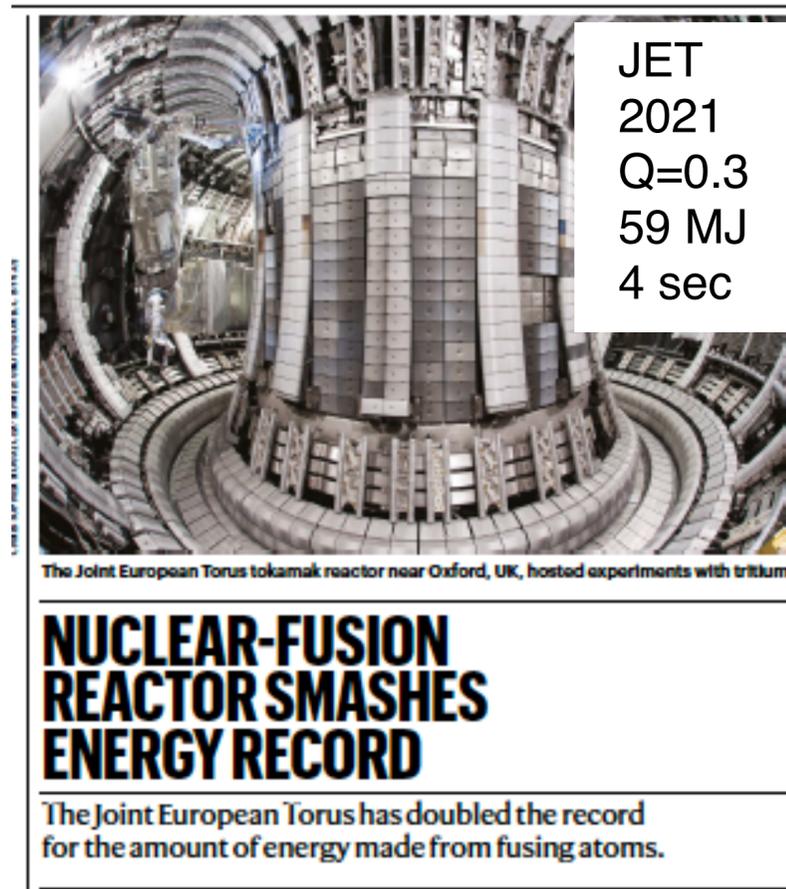
News of a 1.3-MJ-output-energy experiment at the National Ignition Facility in the United States in August has raised hopes that laser-based fusion is back on track.



NIF
2021
Q=0.7
1.7 MJ
1 ns

Credit: Damien Jemison / Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

Nature PhotoNics | VOL 15 | OCTober 2021 | 713 |
www.nature.com/naturephotonics

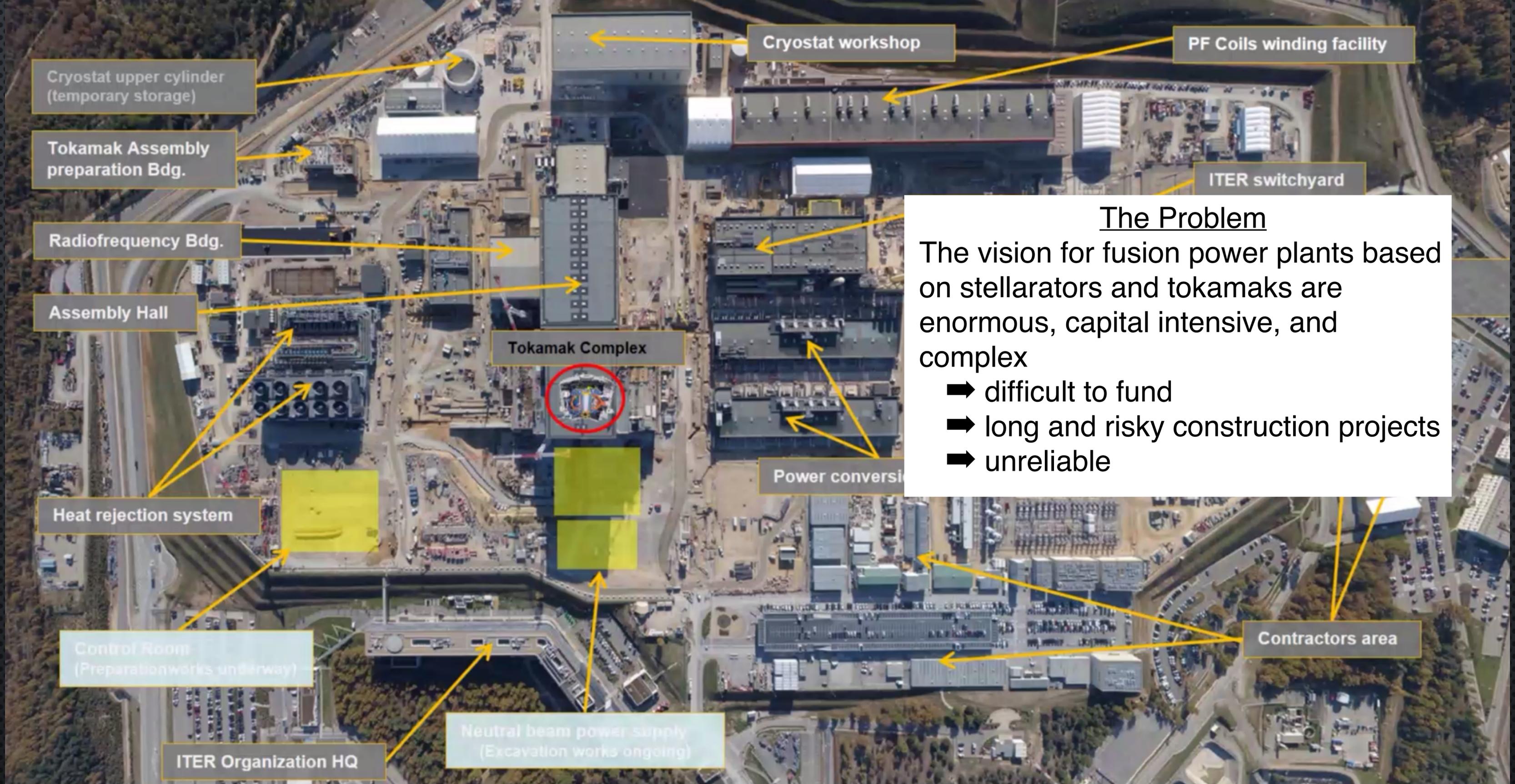


Phoenix and SHINE Achieve New World Record for Strongest Nuclear Fusion Reaction in a Steady-State System

October 02, 2019 08:00 ET | Source: [Phoenix](#); [SHINE Medical Technologies LLC](#)



- During the next decade we will see at least two experiments demonstrate viability of the tokamak
 - Iter, dt planned for 2035, 500 MW_t for 1000 sec, Q~10
 - SPARC, DT planned for 2027, Q~10
- Appetite in the private sector is growing
 - > \$4B investment by venture capital in past few years
 - CFS likely leading the US Pilot Plant Race with ARC



Cryostat upper cylinder (temporary storage)

Tokamak Assembly preparation Bdg.

Radiofrequency Bdg.

Assembly Hall

Heat rejection system

Control Room (Preparation works underway)

ITER Organization HQ

Neutral beam power supply (Excavation works ongoing)

Tokamak Complex

Cryostat workshop

PF Coils winding facility

ITER switchyard

Power conversion

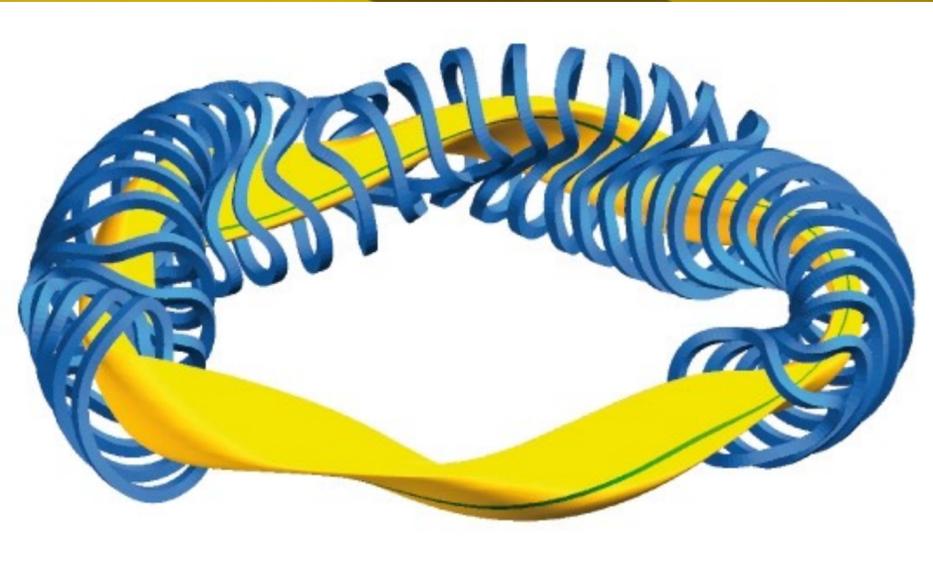
Contractors area

The Problem
 The vision for fusion power plants based on stellarators and tokamaks are enormous, capital intensive, and complex

- ➡ difficult to fund
- ➡ long and risky construction projects
- ➡ unreliable

Wendelstein 7X
conceived 1992
First plasma 2015
cost > 1B Euros

Its not just Iter:
also W7-X, NCSX, NSTX-U...



The Solution (one person's opinion)

Simplify and innovate, embrace risk as a necessity, to make fusion more compact and dependable

Reducing size and simplifying will make fusion more viable

Iter: \$20B

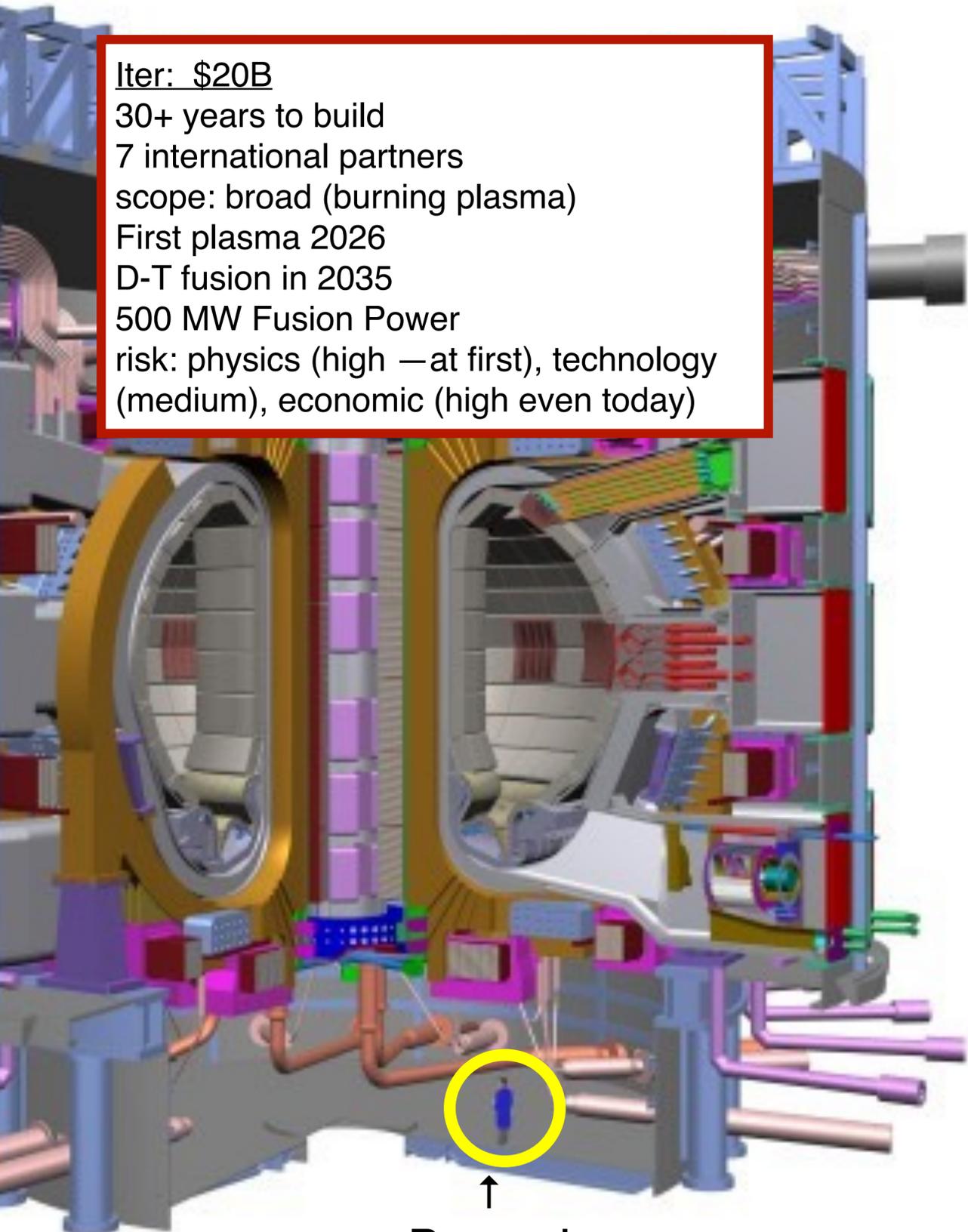
30+ years to build
7 international partners
scope: broad (burning plasma)
First plasma 2026
D-T fusion in 2035
500 MW Fusion Power
risk: physics (high —at first), technology (medium), economic (high even today)

Sparc: \$2B

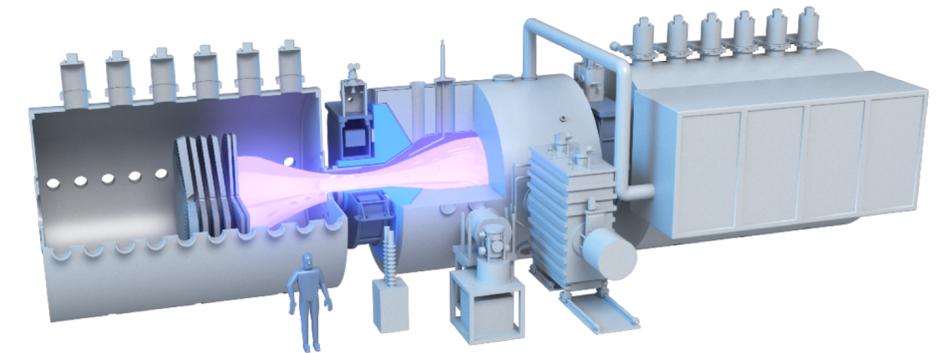
5 years to build
one company
 $Q_{\text{scientific}} > 1$ limited scope
First plasma 2025
140 MW fusion power
risk: physics (low), technology (high), economic (medium)

WHAM++: \$200M

5 years to build
one company
 $Q_{\text{electric}} > 1$ limited scope
First plasma 2027
5 MW fusion power
risk: physics (high for integration), technology (medium), economic (low—by fusion standards)



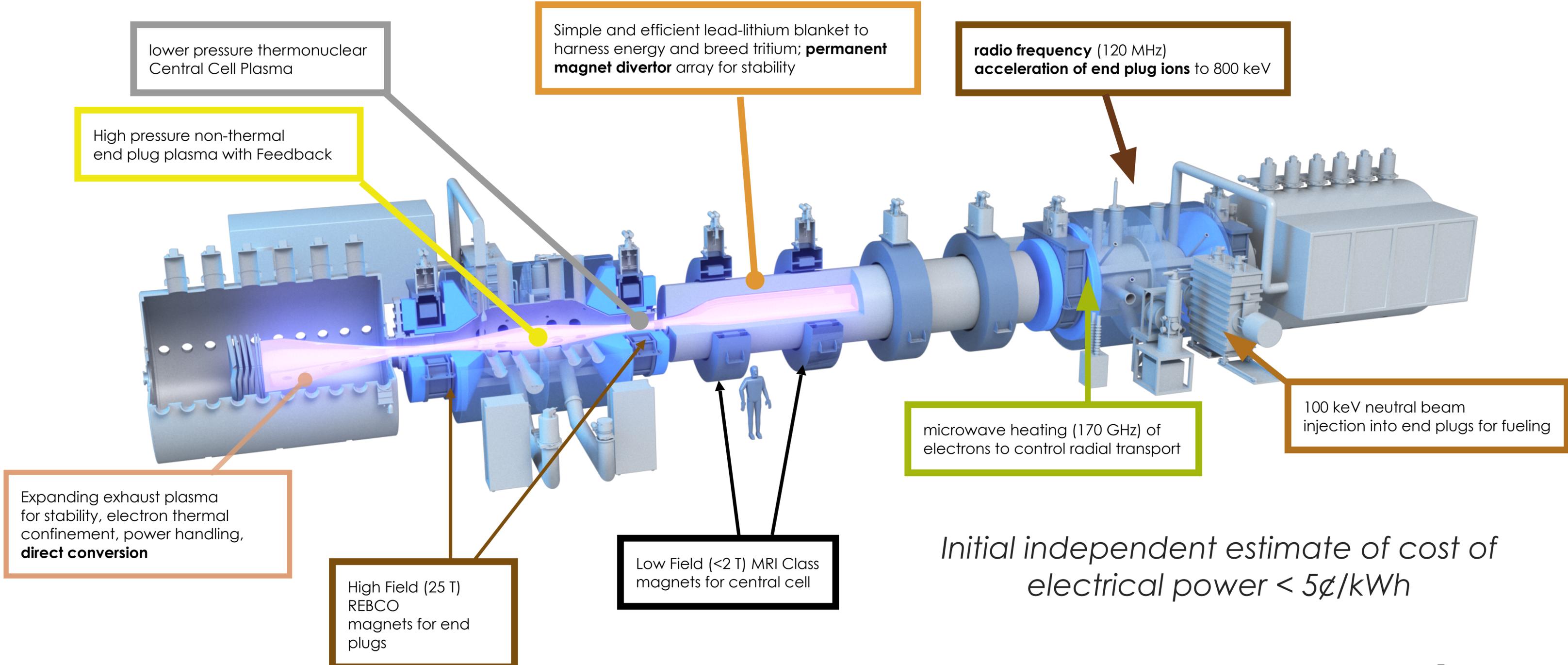
↑
Person!



conjecture: simpler and less costly $Q > 1$ demonstration will translate to a more economical and reliable pilot plant

High-Field Axisymmetric Magnetic Mirror (HAMMiR)

The *lowest capital and least complex* fusion reactor suitably scaled for industrial use



Initial independent estimate of cost of electrical power < 5¢/kWh

Image from Fowler, NF 2017

Attractive Features of Mirror

1. Simple cylindrical geometry for construction
 - ➡ high-field, insulator free planar coils, lower tech central cell magnets
 - ➡ Linear geometry attractive for *Reliability, Availability, Maintainability, Inspectability*
2. Simple high temperature blanket geometry
3. no minimum power
 - ➡ extensible in length to control output power output
 - ➡ $Q \sim 1$ milestone can be met with a bitesize chunk
4. Intrinsically steady-state, no plasma current and no disruptions
5. The obvious geometry for a fusion powered rocket engine...
6. Development path provides low-tritium-use materials testing, component testing, fuel cycle demonstration platform

conjecture: simpler and less costly $Q > 1$ demonstration will translate to a more economical and reliable pilot plant

Outline

1. Weakly collisional axisymmetric mirror (review)

- ➔ high mirror ratio leads to lowest capital cost $Q \sim 1$ device (component testing)
- ➔ directly on path to an axisymmetric tandem mirror for power
- ➔ enormous progress in short time was made on tandem— technology wasn't ready

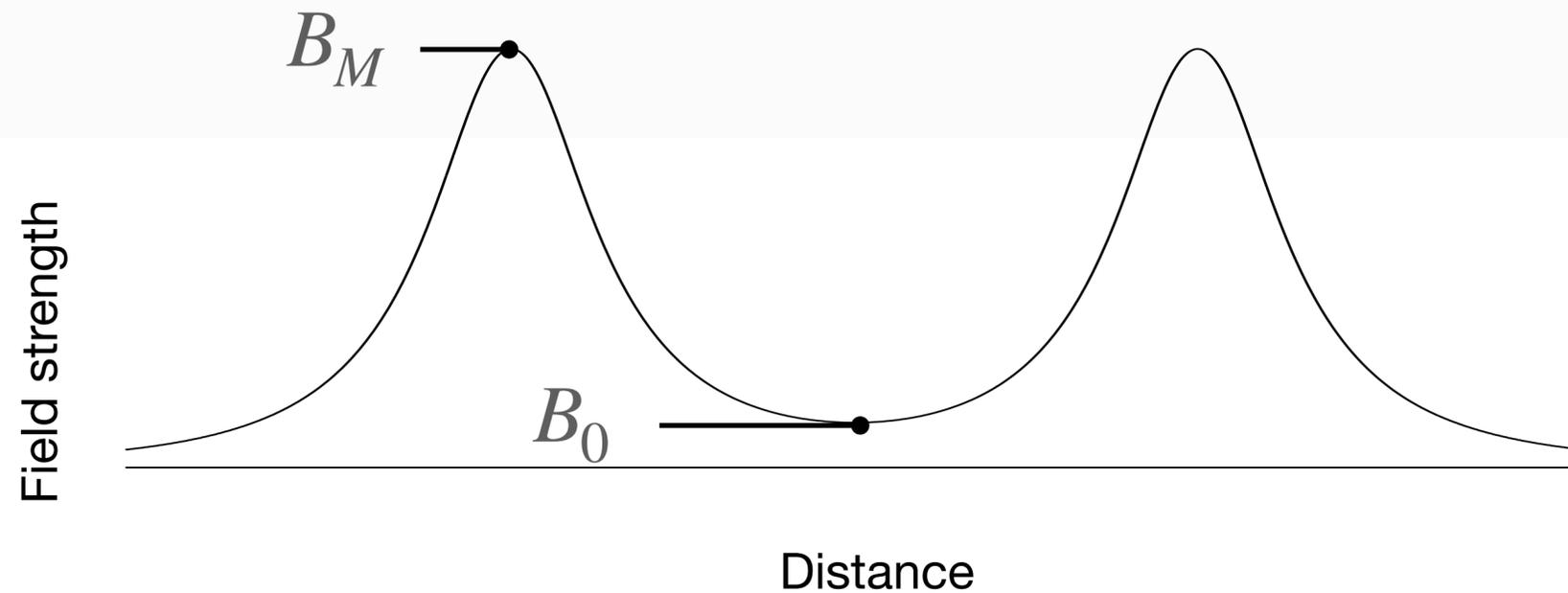
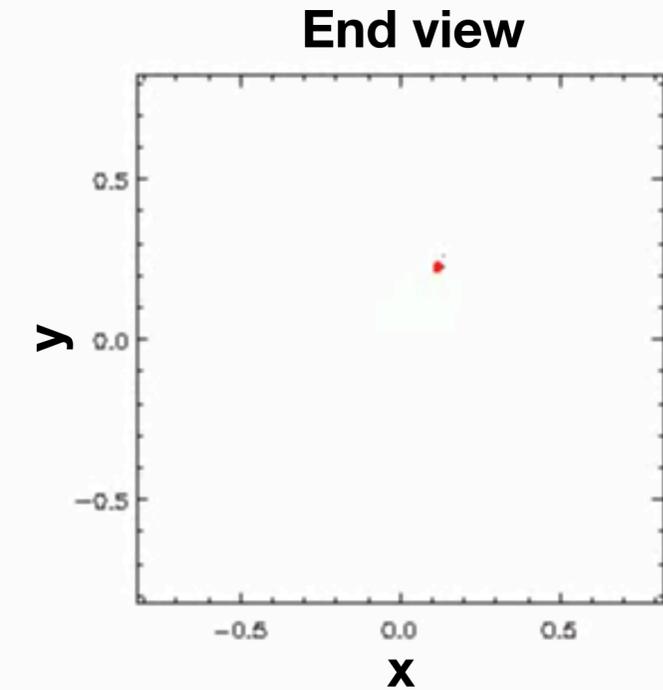
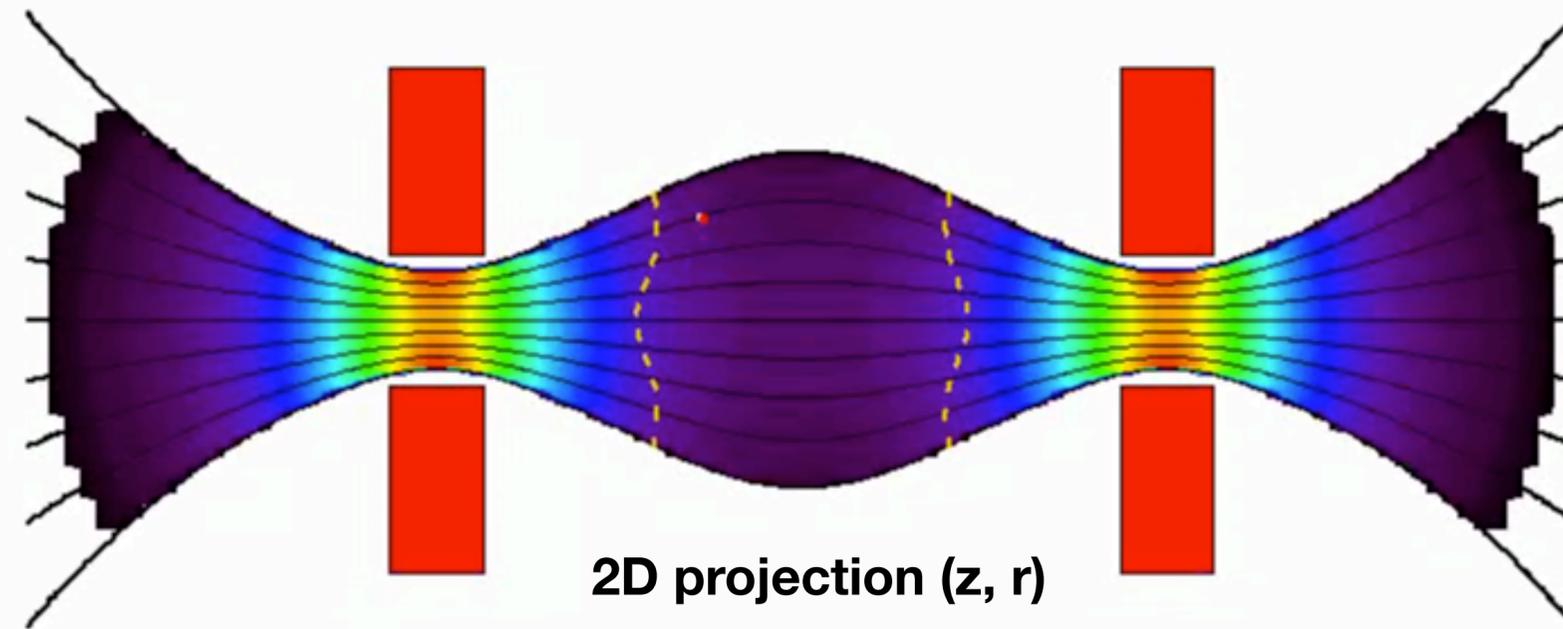
2. What has changed?

- ➔ axisymmetric mirrors can be made to work
- ➔ Rebcu magnets and other technological advances

3. WHAM Prototype Status

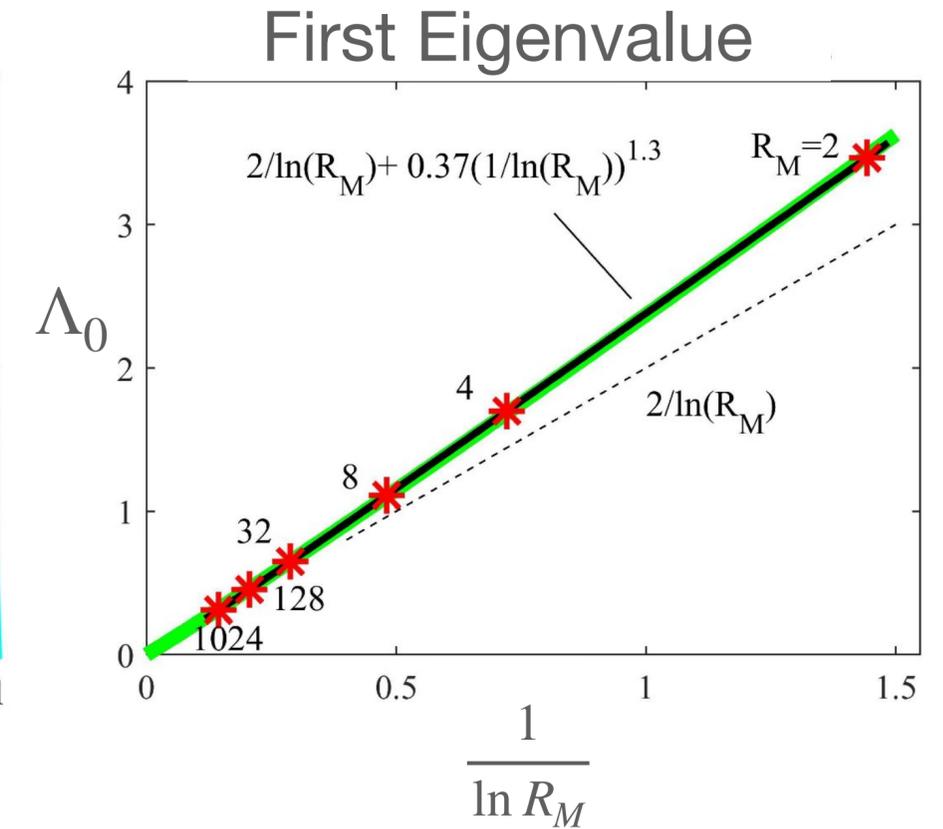
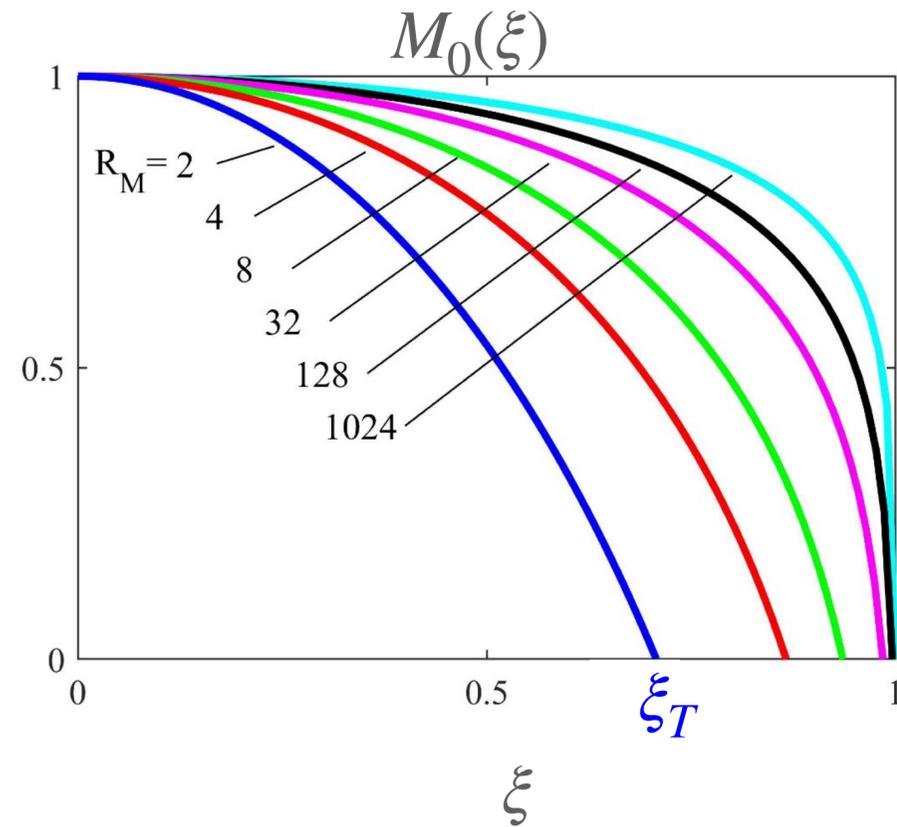
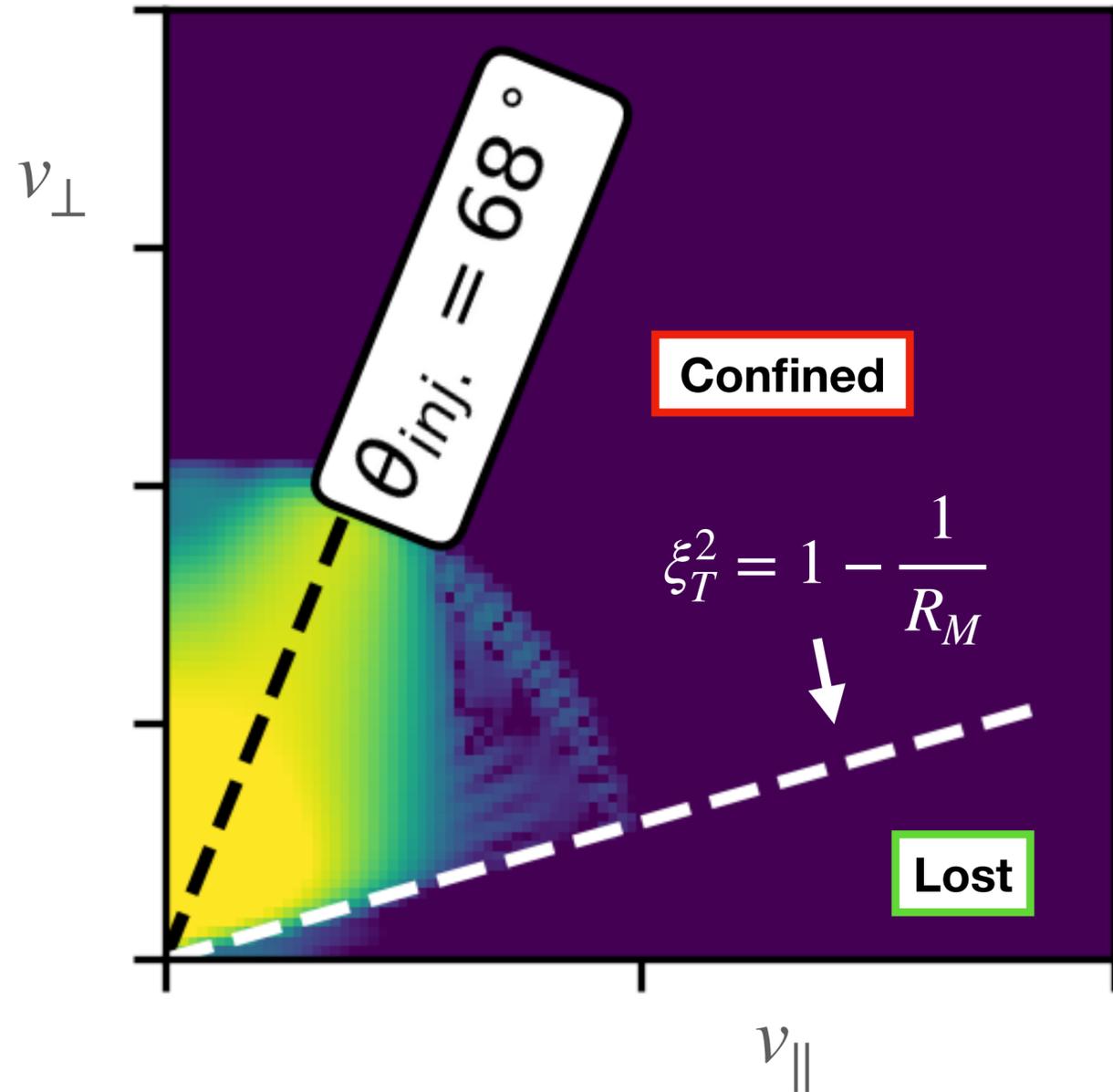
- ➔ on schedule for first plasma later this summer

Probkotron (simple mirror): conservation of magnetic moment provides parallel confinement



- Conservation of $\mu = \frac{mv_{\perp}^2}{2B}$ and $E = \frac{1}{2}mv_{\parallel}^2 + \mu B$ confines particles of $v_{\perp}^2 \geq v_{\parallel}^2 (R_M - 1)$.
- Confinement limited by angular scattering: $\tau \approx 0.4\tau_{ii} \ln R_M$ (When non-adiabaticity and scattering by waves are in check)

Ion confinement is set by collisional slowing on electrons and pitch angle scattering off each other into the loss cone



$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial t} = \frac{1}{\tau_s v^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial v} [(v^3 + v_c^3) f] + \frac{1}{2\tau_s} \frac{v_c^3}{v^3} \mathcal{L} f + S(v, \xi)$$

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{\partial}{\partial \xi} (1 - \xi^2) \frac{\partial}{\partial \xi}, \quad \xi = \frac{v_\parallel}{v}$$

$$\tau_s = 0.005 \frac{T_{e,keV}^{3/2} \mu}{n_{20} Z^2} \text{ sec}$$

$$\frac{1}{2} m_i v_c^2 \approx 20 k T_e$$

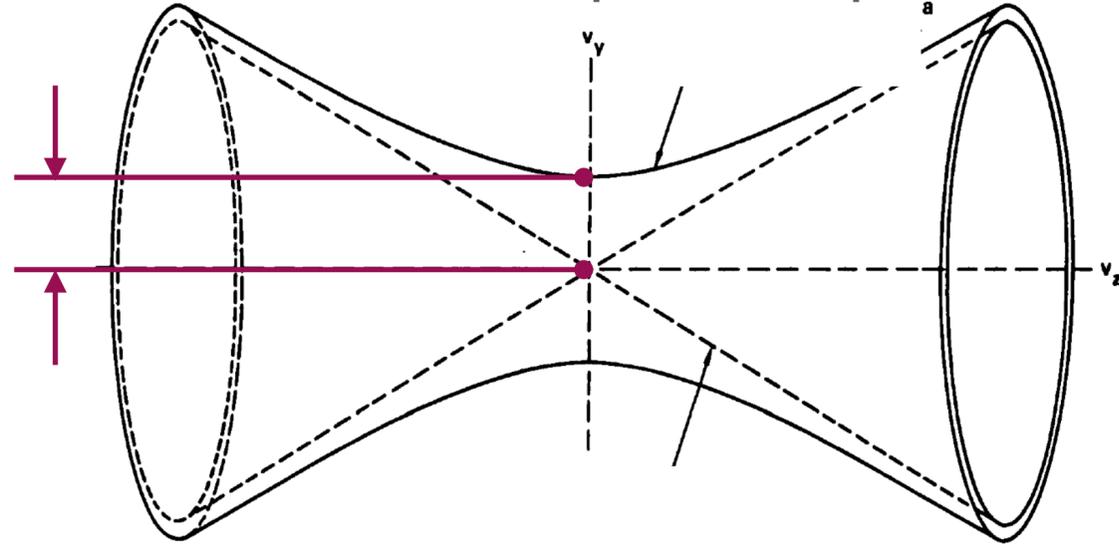
$$\mathcal{L} M(\xi) = \Lambda M(\xi), \quad M(\xi_T) = 0$$

$$\Lambda \approx -1/\ln R_M$$

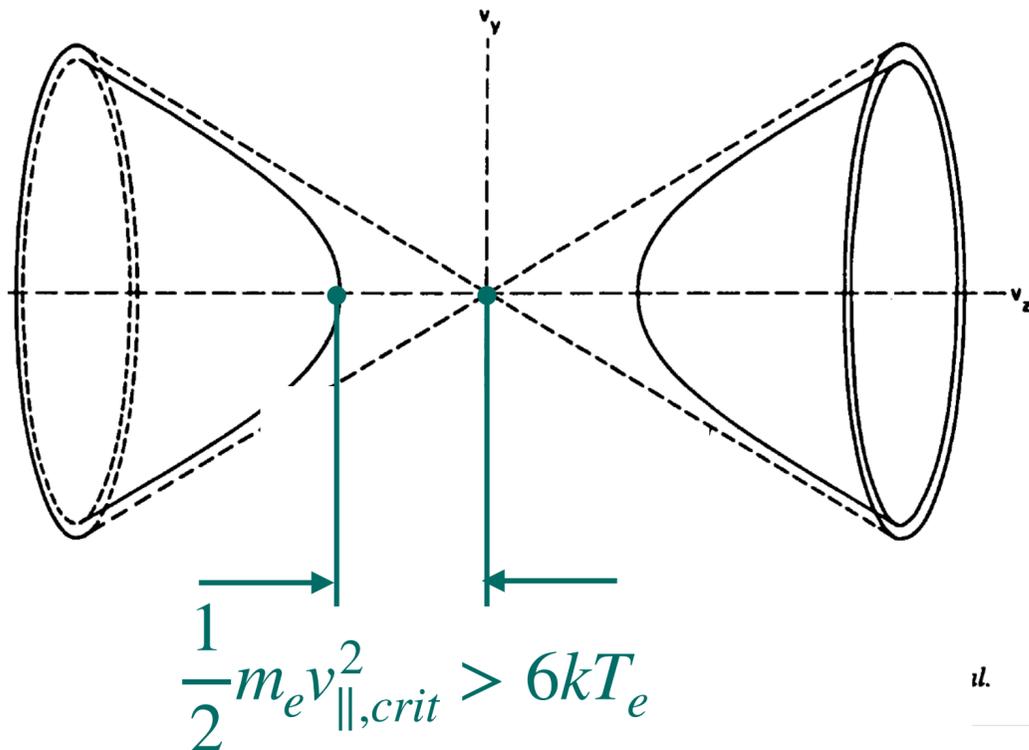
An ambipolar potential is established to equilibrate ion and electron losses

$$\frac{1}{2} m_i v_{\perp, crit}^2 < \frac{6kT_e}{R_M - 1}$$

Ion loss cone for positive potential



electron loss cone for positive potential



$$\frac{1}{2} m_e v_{\parallel, crit}^2 > 6kT_e$$

Electron Energy Losses

$$P_e \approx 7 I_{inj} kT_e$$

1. Ambipolar hole formed at low ion energy — extra losses and source of instability

2. electrons confined electrostatically for many scattering times → nearly thermal

3. confinement improved by Pastukhov Factor

$$\tau_{ii} \ln R_M = \tau_{ee} \ln R_M \frac{e\phi}{kT_e} \exp - \frac{e\phi}{kT_e}$$

$$\frac{\tau_{ii}}{\tau_{ee}} = \sqrt{m_i/m_e} = \frac{e\phi}{kT_e} \exp - \frac{e\phi}{kT_e}$$

$$e\phi \sim 5 - 7kT_e$$

Breakeven in beam heated weakly collisional mirror

- Fokker Planck calculations for coupled ion and electron losses showed

$$\tau_p = 0.00028 \frac{E_{b,keV}^{3/2}}{n_{20}} \log_{10} R_M \text{ sec}$$

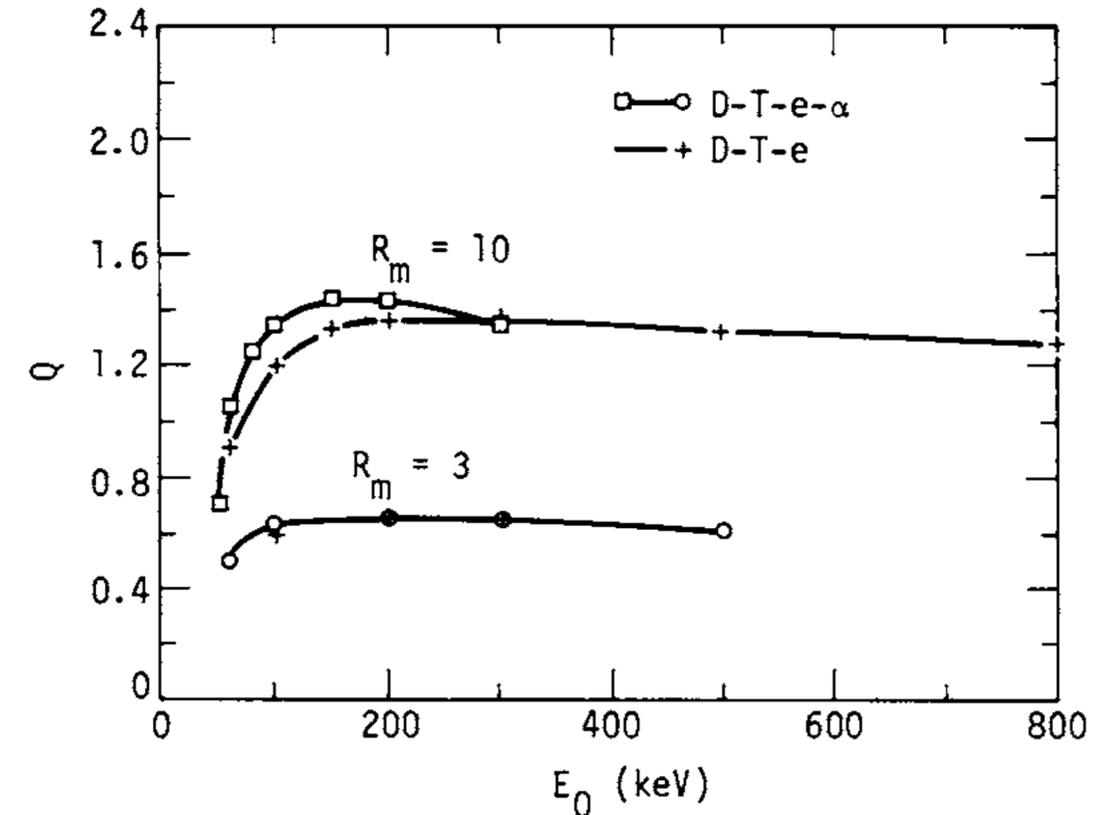
- Optimizes around $E_b \sim 100 \text{ keV}$

$$P_{nbi} = I_b E_b = \frac{enV}{\tau_p} E_b \sim \frac{10^{20}}{3} \frac{n_{20}^2}{E_{b,100keV}^{1/2} \log_{10} R_M} V \frac{MeV}{sec}$$

$$P_{fus} = \frac{1}{4} \langle \sigma v \rangle n^2 \mathcal{E}_{fusion} V \sim 5 \times 10^{19} n_{20}^2 V \frac{MeV}{sec} \text{ for } \mathcal{E}_{fusion} = 22.4 \text{ MeV and } T_i \sim 100 \text{ keV}$$

- Independent of plasma parameters, size or B

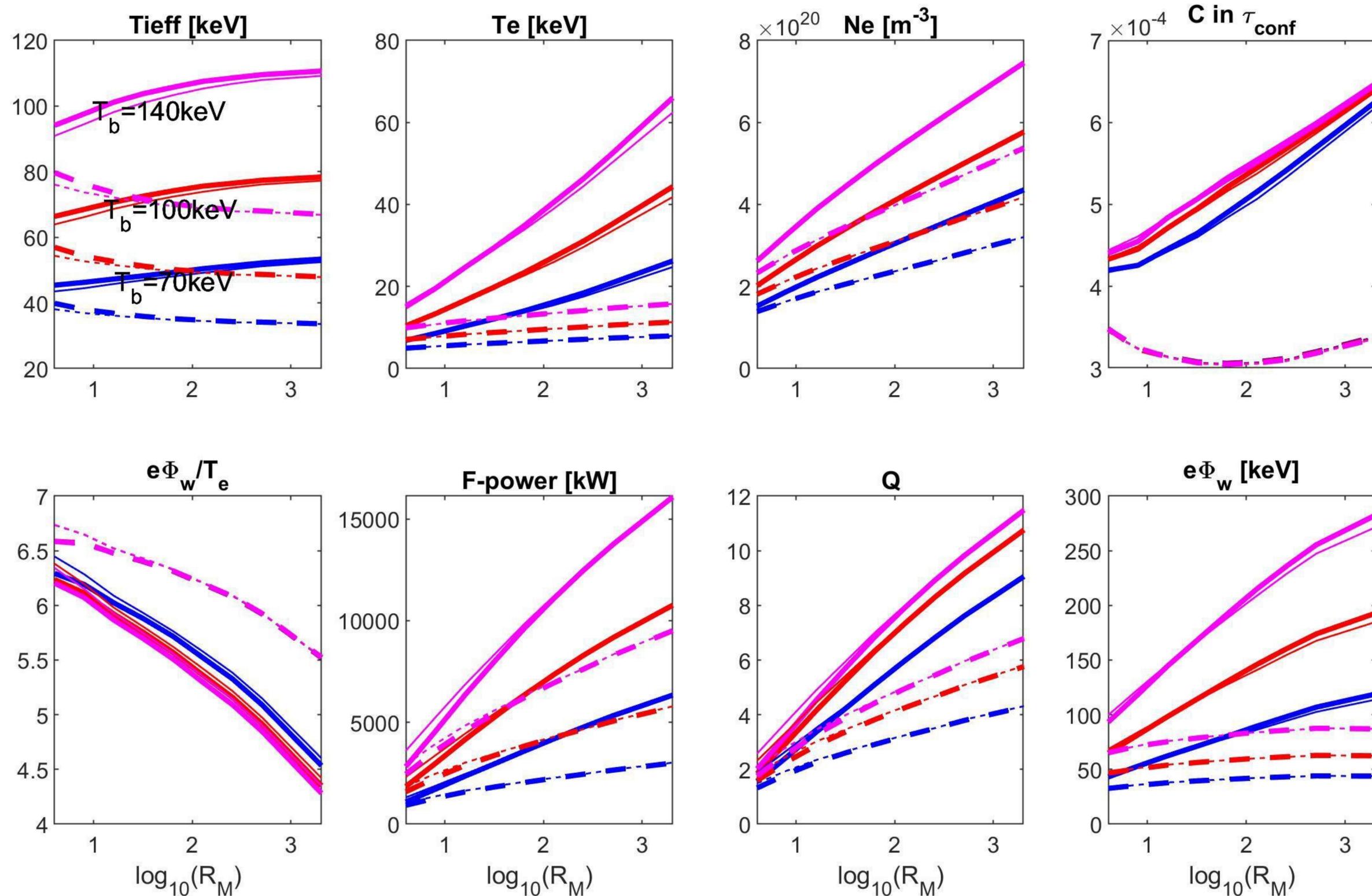
$$Q \equiv \frac{P_{fusion}}{P_{nbi}} \propto \langle \sigma v \rangle E_b^{1/2} \log_{10} R_M \sim 1.5 E_{b,100keV}^{1/2} \log_{10} R_M$$



COMPARISON OF Q VALUES ($R_m = 10$)

Code description	Plasma species			
	D-e-T	D-e-T- α	D-e- ^3He	D-e- ^3He - α -p
One-dimensional code; P_0 only	1.22	1.39	0.244	0.264
One-dimensional code; P_0 and P_2	1.44	1.68	0.289	0.312
Two-dimensional code; normal mode source	1.38	1.61	0.278	0.301
Two-dimensional code; narrow source	1.71	1.99	0.337	0.365

Confirmed by modern bounce-averaged Fokker Plank/DKE solver valid for arbitrary Rm and real equilibria (Egedal)



What could possibly go wrong?

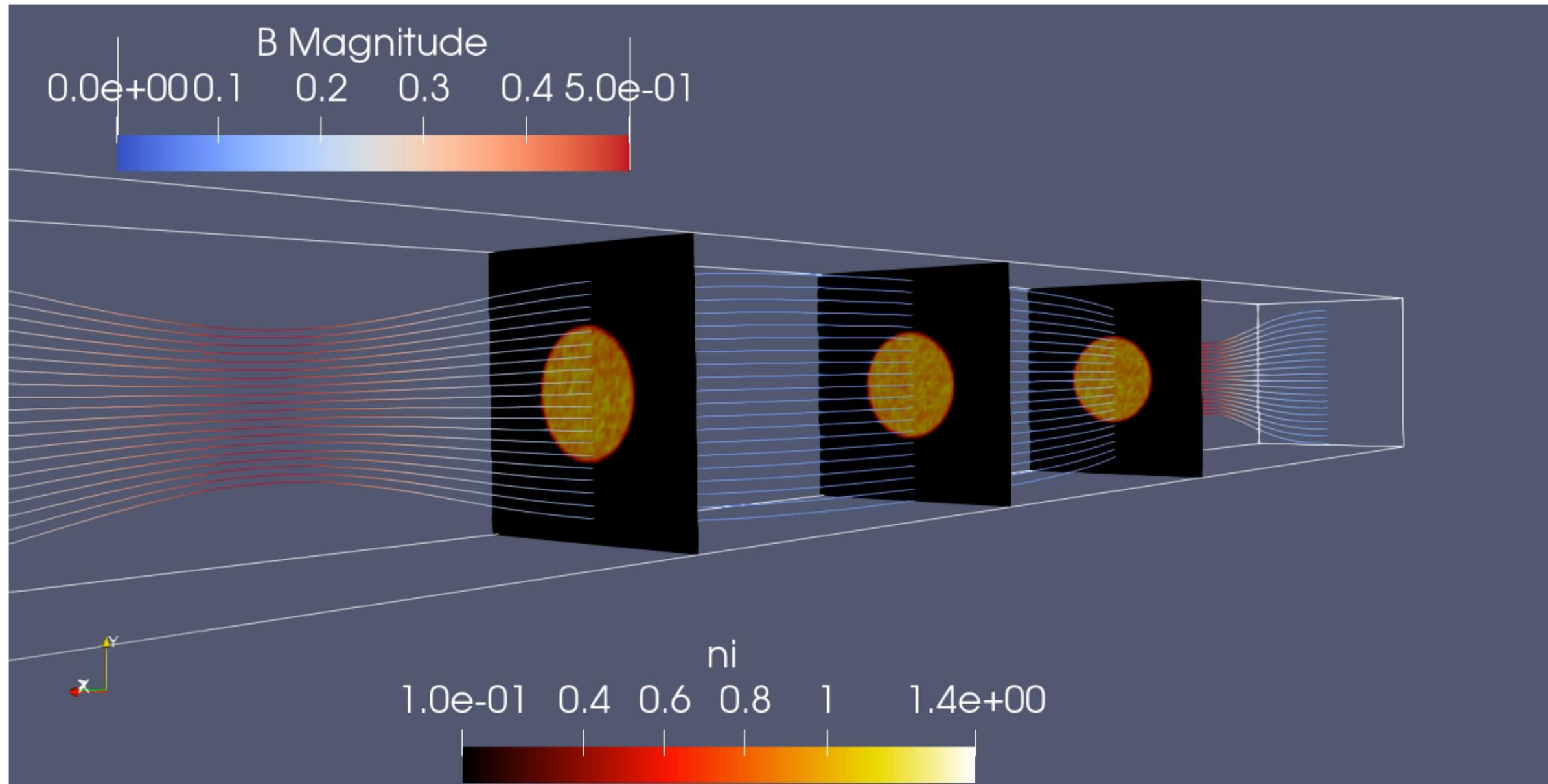
and

Hasn't this been tried before?

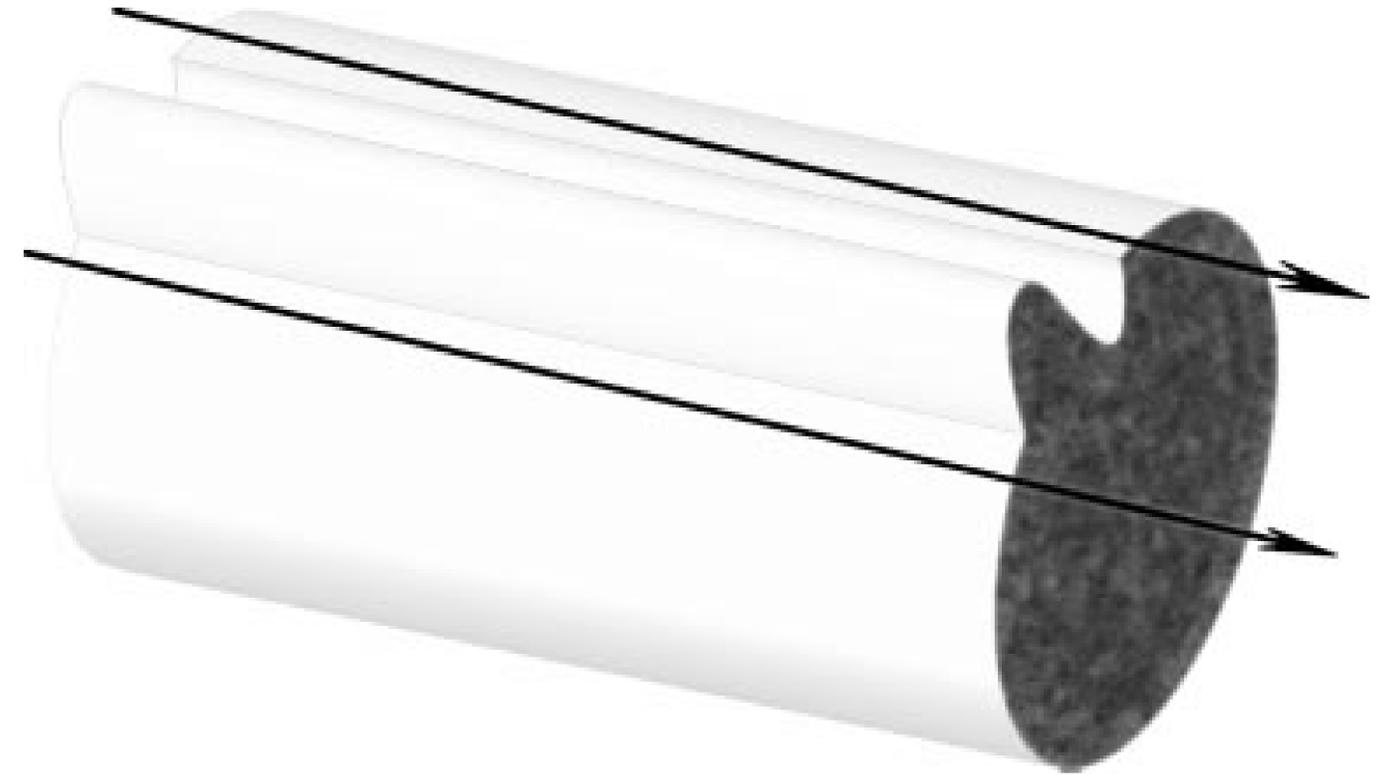
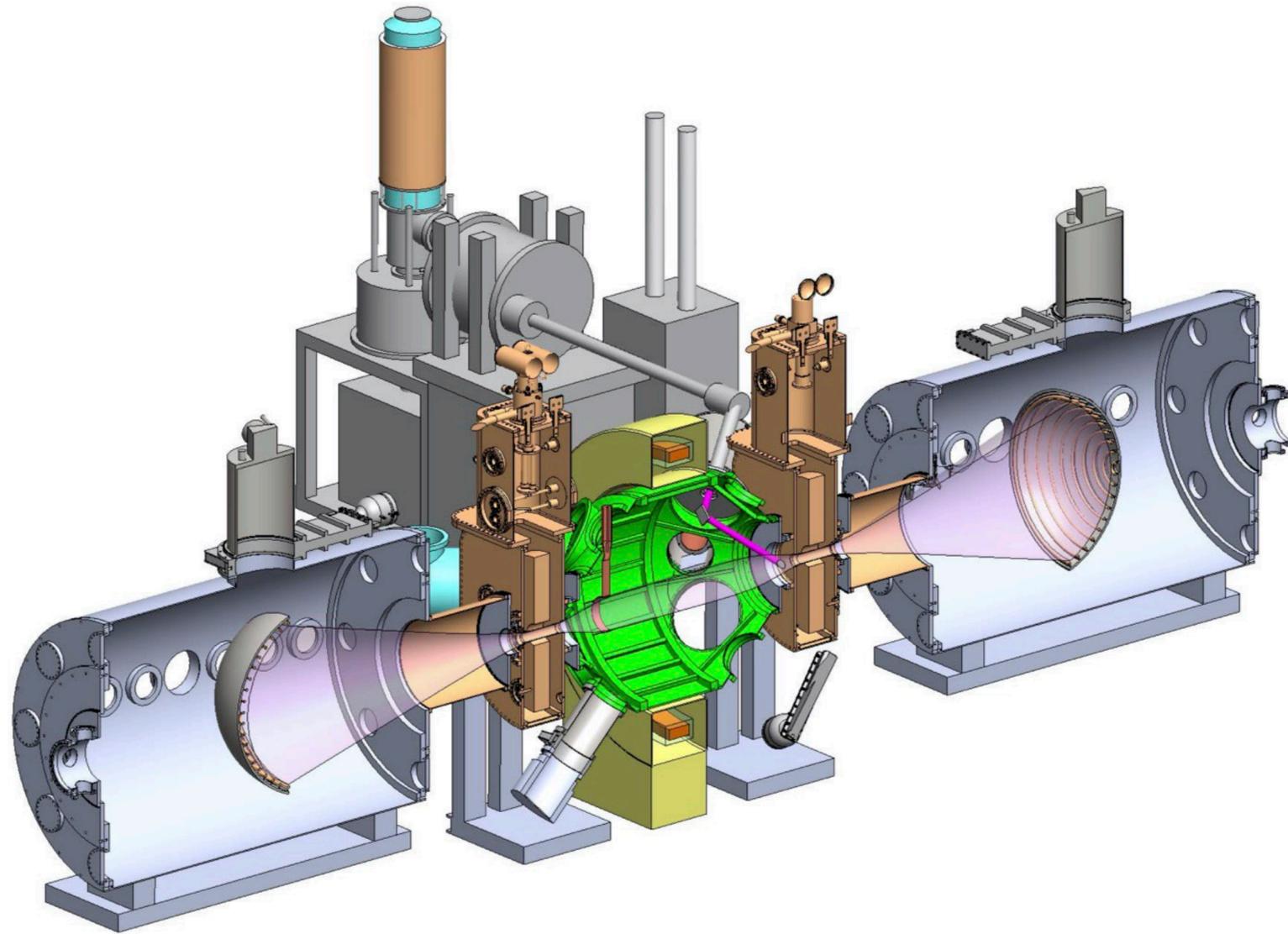
Hint: MHD and Kinetic Instability

So what could go wrong?

Instability in a 3D Hybrid simulation using VPIC: Plasma science and computation has now advanced so far that we can simulate almost anything before building it

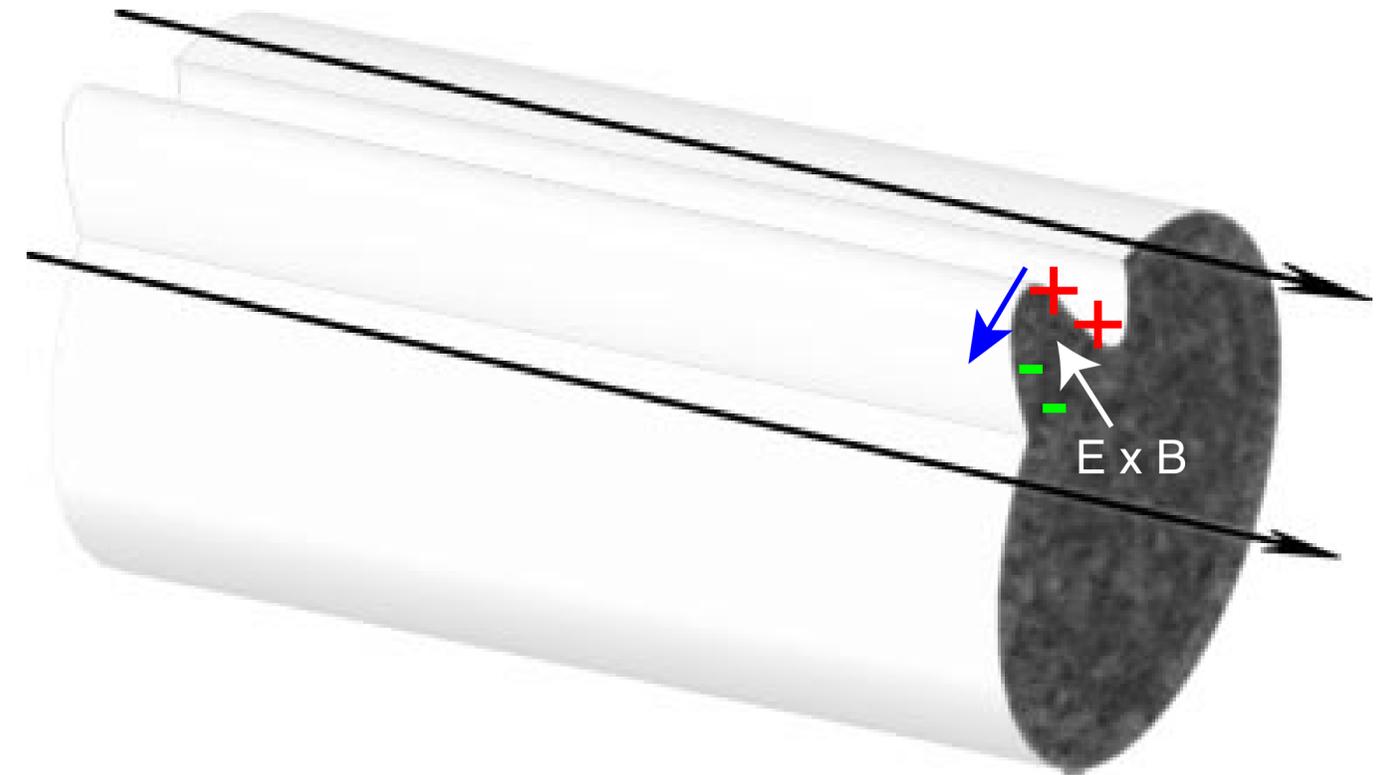
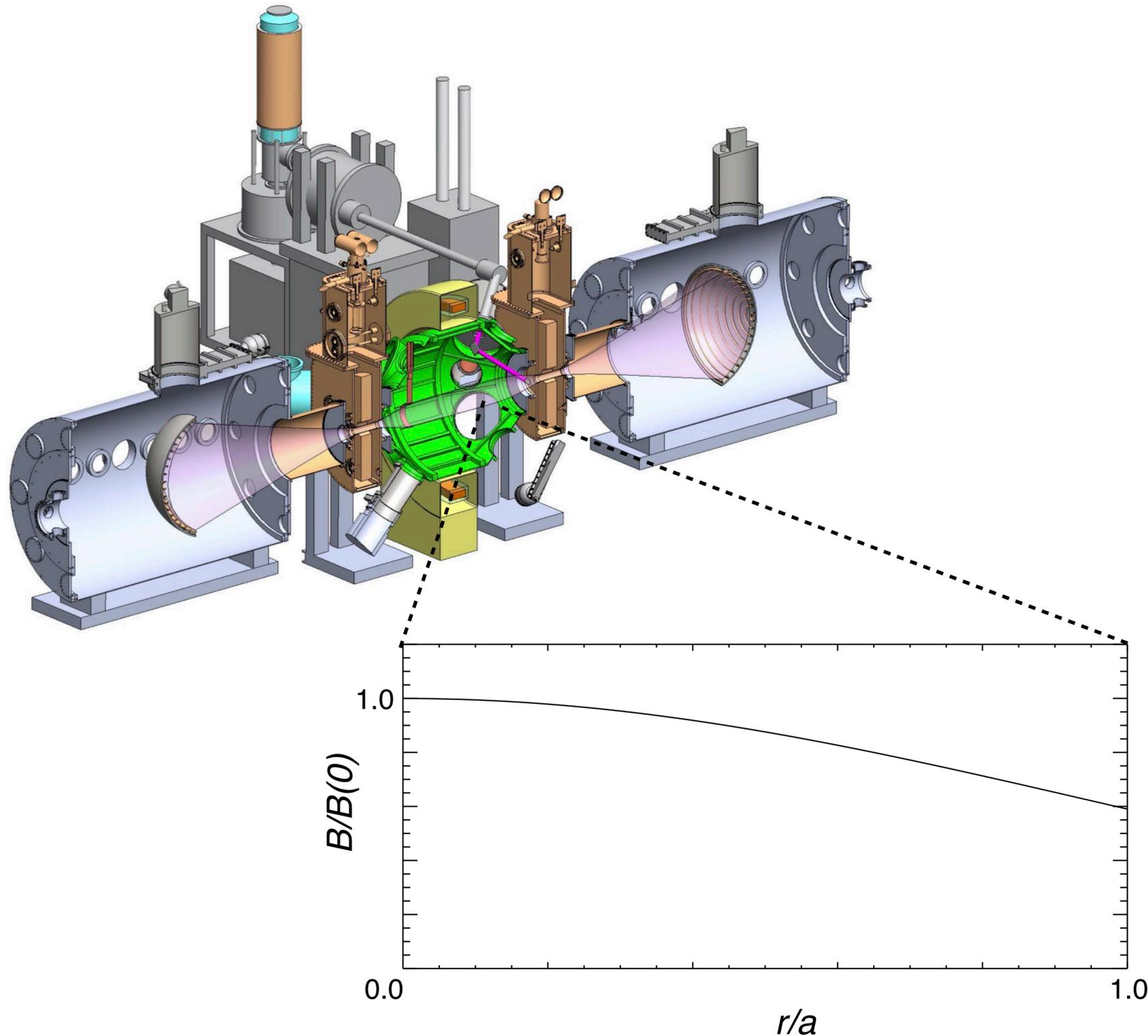


Axisymmetric mirror prone to Interchange



The “flute” mode; $m=1$ is expected to be most unstable.

Axisymmetric mirror prone to Interchange

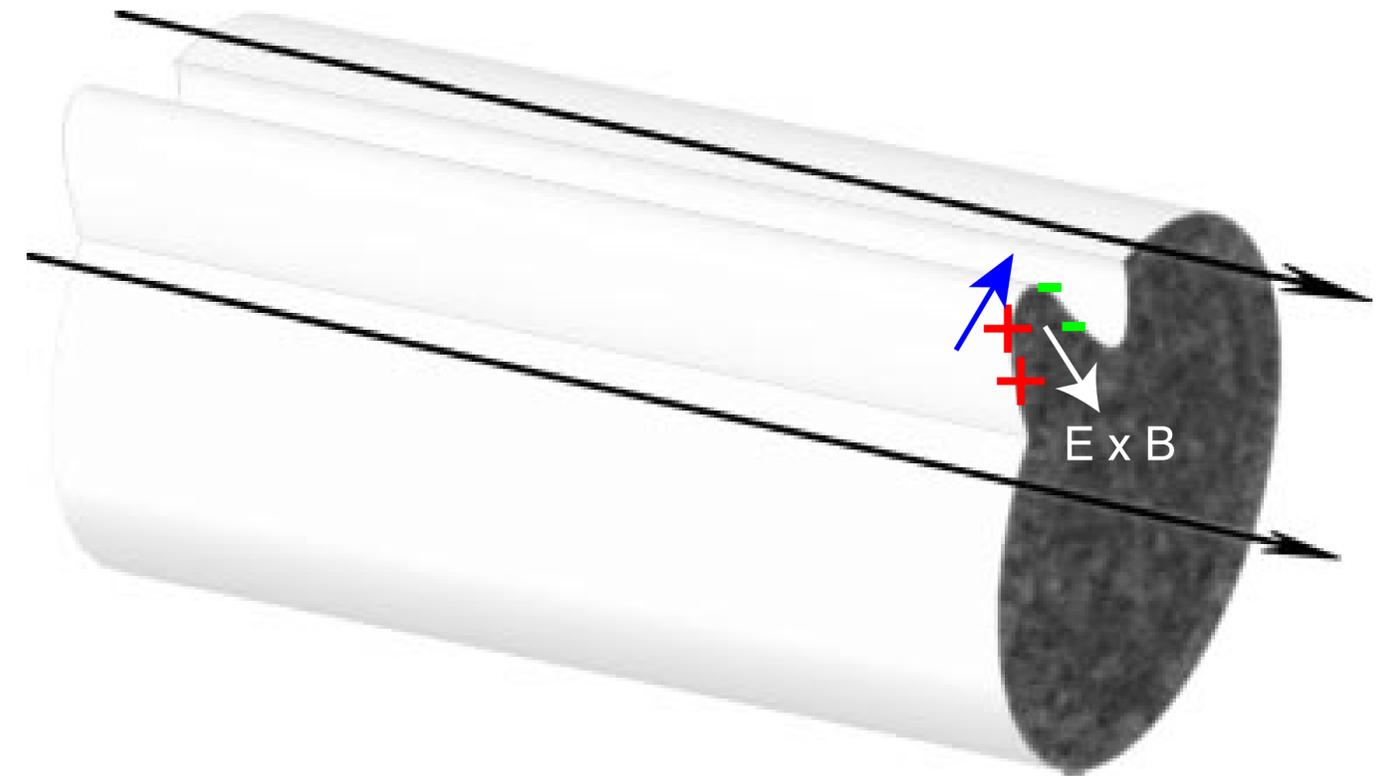
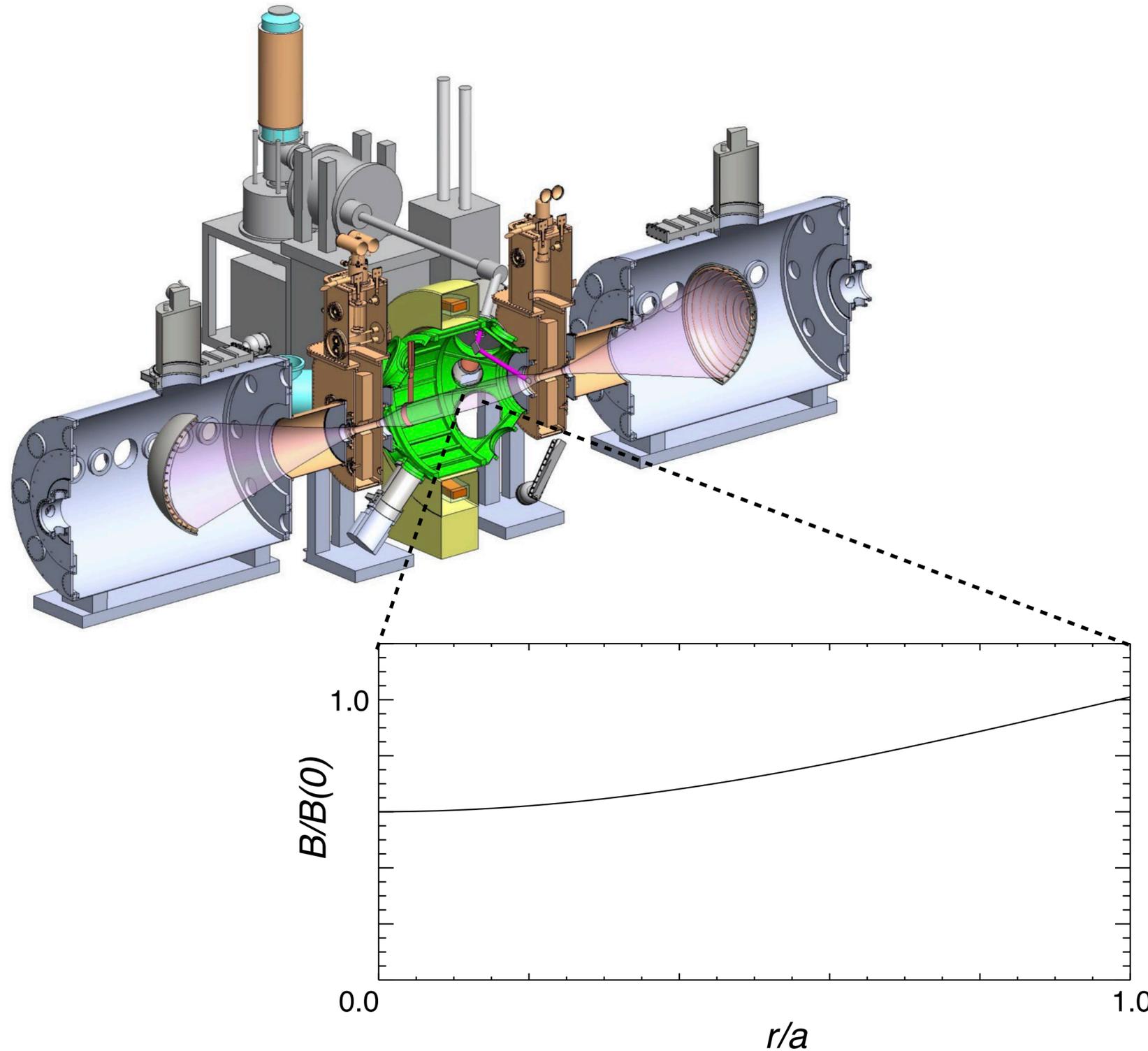


Curvature and ∇B lead to charge separation in perturbed region creating electric field.

For “bad curvature”, resulting $E \times B$ reinforces perturbation \implies instability.

Growth rate $\gamma \propto v_i/L$ (fast!).

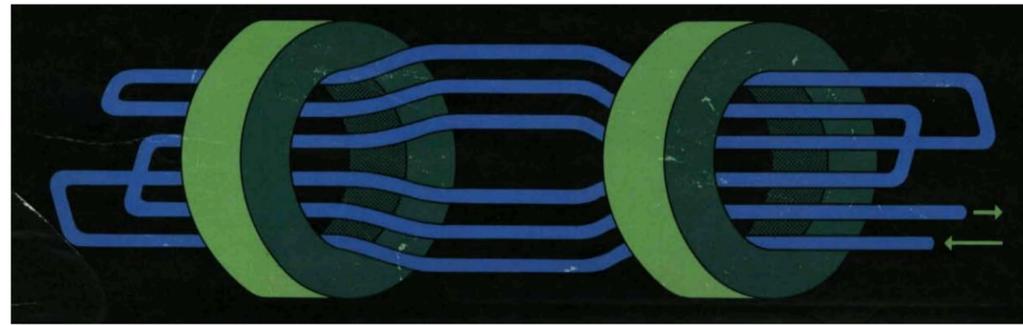
Create instead a radially increasing magnetic field



Opposite signs on drift velocities;
 $E \times B$ returns boundary to equilibrium.

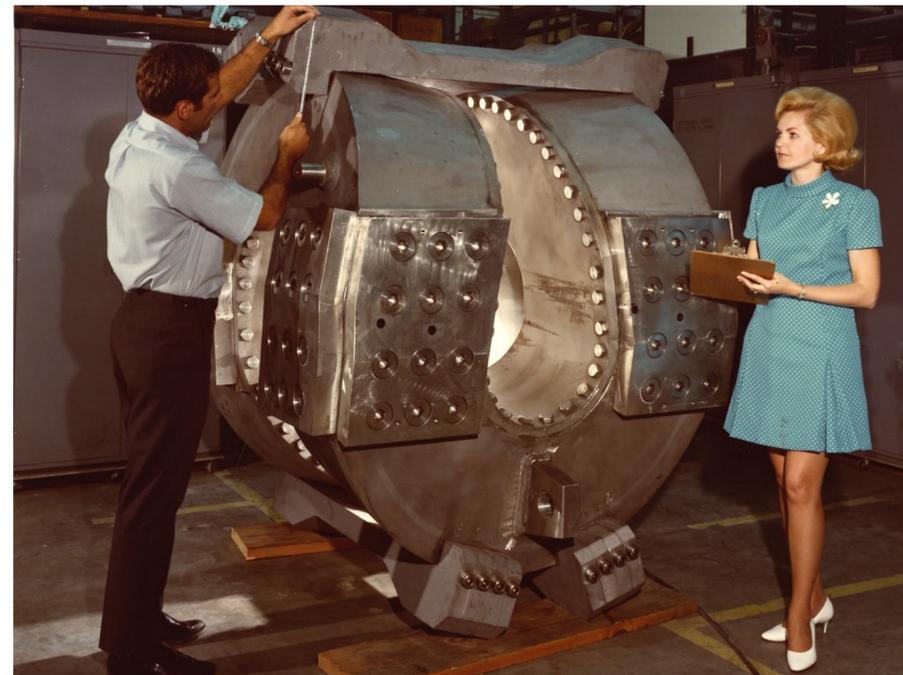
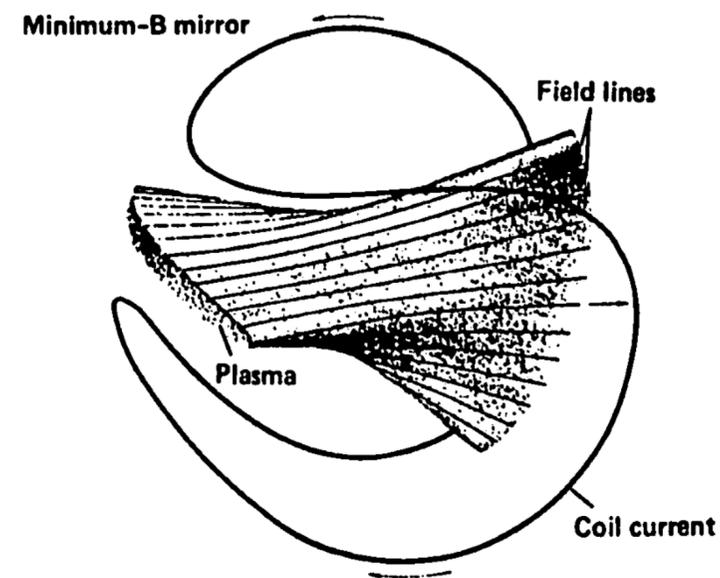
“Min B stabilization”

Minimum-B MHD stable configurations



- Ioffe bars. (Kurchatov Institute)

- Baseball coil. (Culham, LLNL)

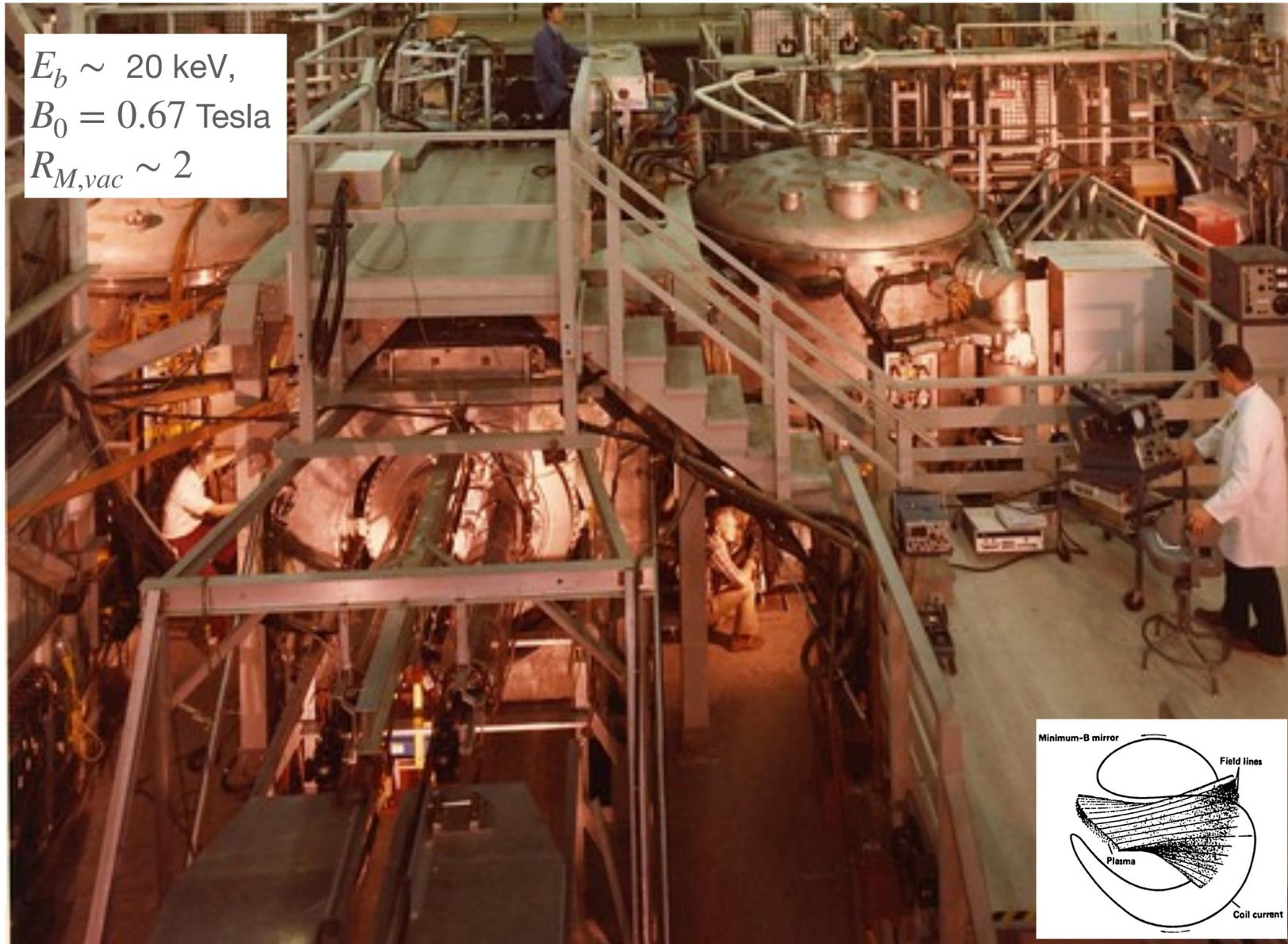


- Ying-Yang coils. (LLNL)

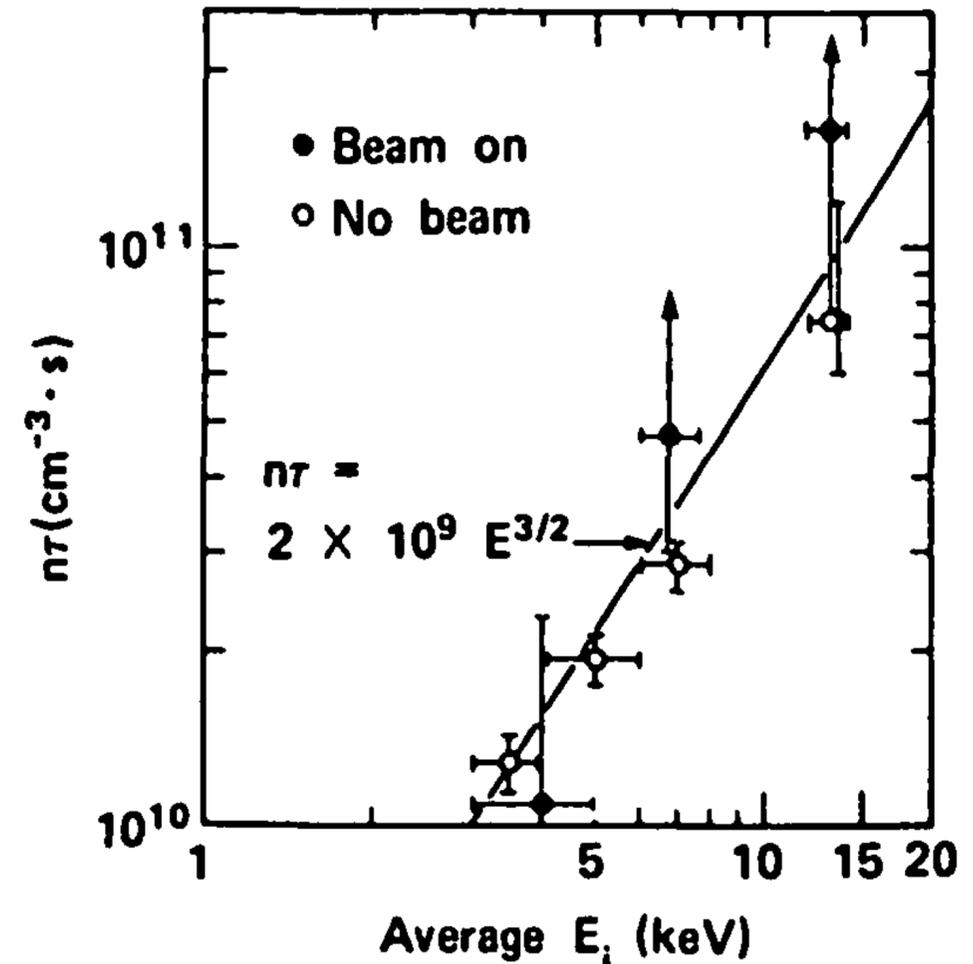
Non-circular coils successful in stabilizing the plasma;
Major downsides are decreased particle confinement, simplicity and field strength/mirror ratio.

FIG. 1. Schematic representation of the coil and field lines in a magnetic-well field as produced by a "Baseball" coil.

2XIIB showed near classical scaling of confinement and $\beta \sim 1$



- Mirrors want to run at high ion energy
 $\tau \sim E_b^{3/2} \ln R_M/n$
- Kinetic Instability stabilized by plasma guns at ends filling ambipolar hole
 - later on TMX with skewed NBI injection to trap warm plasma



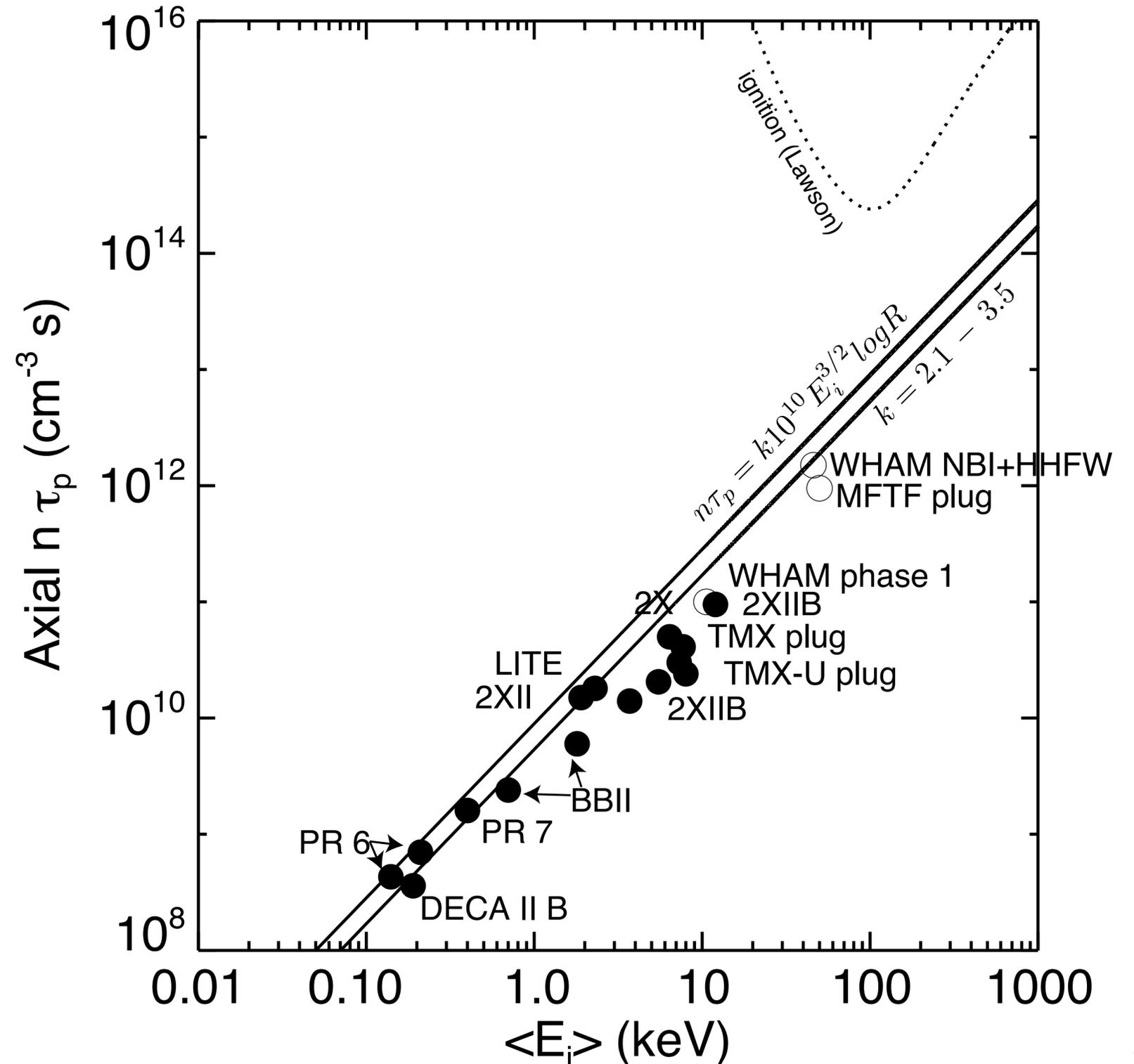
In retrospect: skewed injection, $E_b=100$ keV, and high beta $R_M = R_{M,vac} / \sqrt{1 - \beta}$ would have been close to $Q \sim 1$ with optimistic assumptions

ca. 1980 simple mirror is abandoned due to low projected Q — Imagine if we had achieved $Q \sim 1$ in 1980!

- High energy NBI not yet available
- Ignition out of reach in minB simple mirror at modest R_M ($\sim 2-3$ because of geometry and magnet technology)

“Disappointing from a fusion context, but important and valuable in context of a tandem mirror endplug, where the ability to maintain non-equilibrium angular distribution of ions is highly advantageous.” R.F. Post 1987

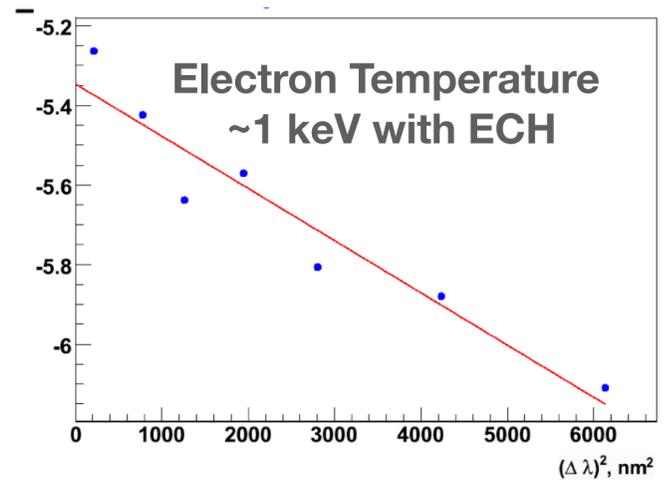
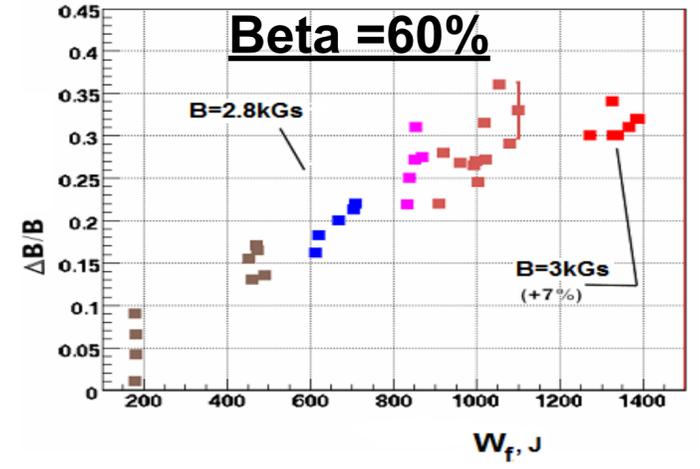
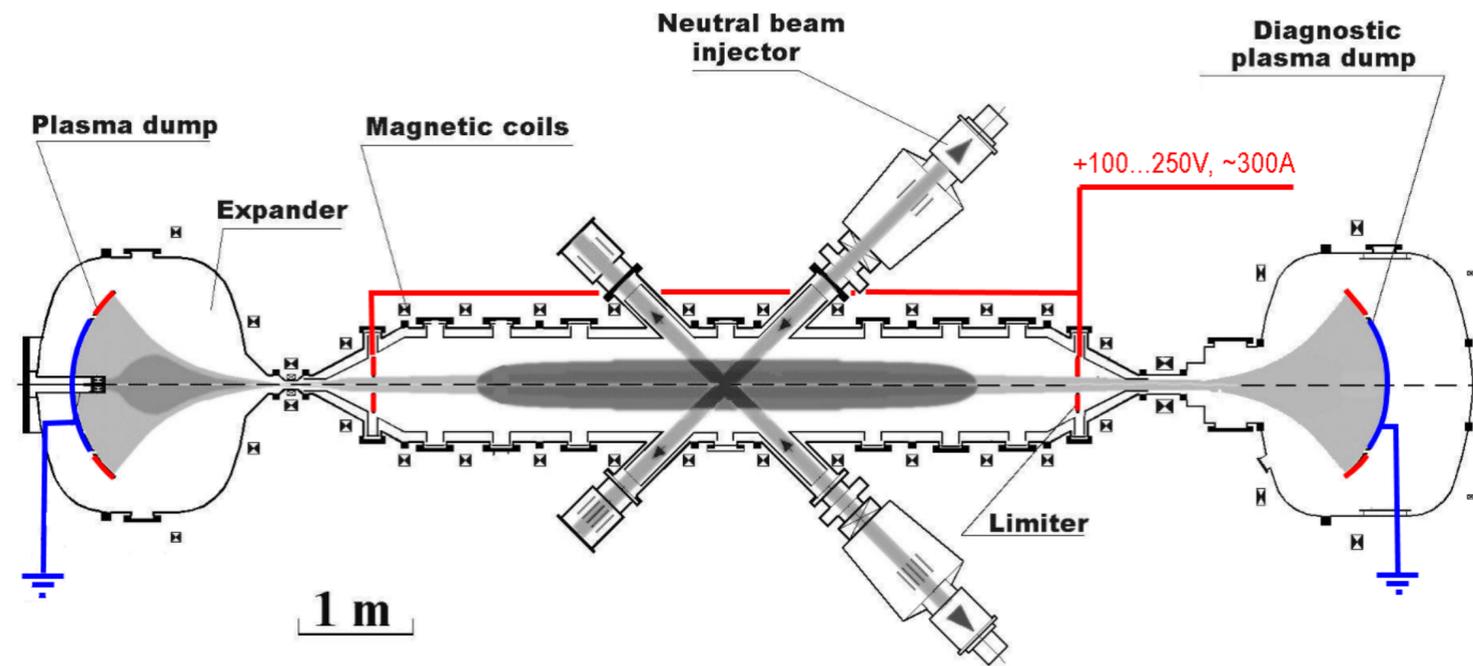
R.F. Post “The magnetic mirror approach to fusion” Nuc. Fusion 1987



So what has changed?

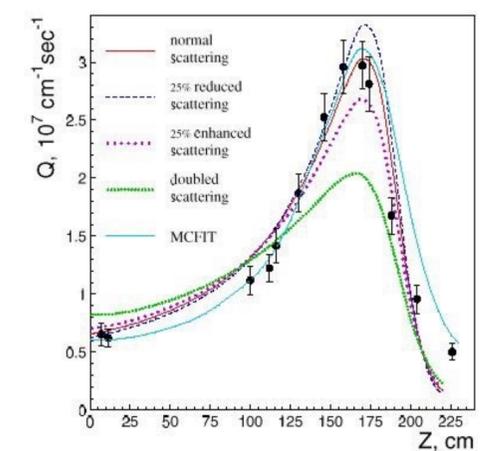
Hint: axisymmetric physics breakthroughs,
HTS Magnets, computation, and 40 years
of advancement of fusion technology

Three (*four!*) myths about axisymmetric mirror performance have been shattered by the GDT device in the past decade

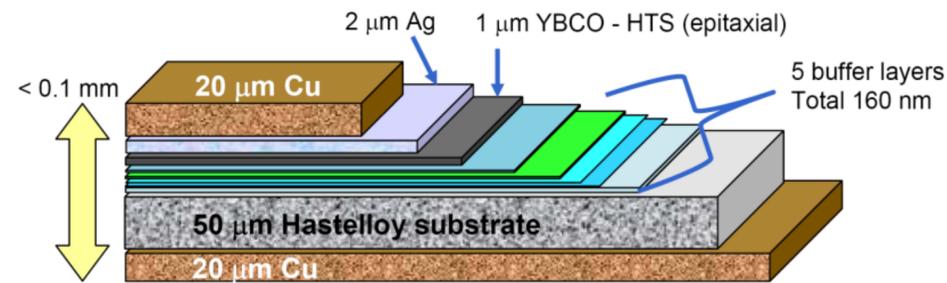


1. Axisymmetric mirrors can't overcome interchange: high pressure observe ($\beta \sim 0.4$)
2. Electrons in mirrors are always cold: high electron temperatures $T_e \sim 1$ keV generated with ECH and ambipolar confinement
3. Non-thermal plasmas are always unstable to micro instabilities: classical fast ion confinement and fusion products observed
4. *mirror reactors must be complicated: ATM reactor is possible!*

neutron yield profile



High Temperature Superconductors are a game-changing technology for fusion



New developments in superconductor technology mean a smaller, more maintainable fusion reactor than the ITER-like reactor that was previously envisioned.

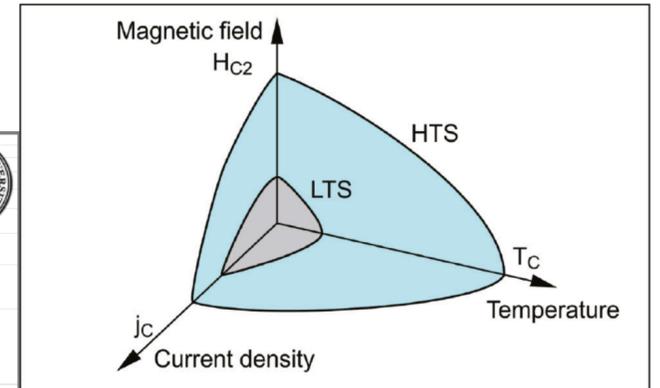
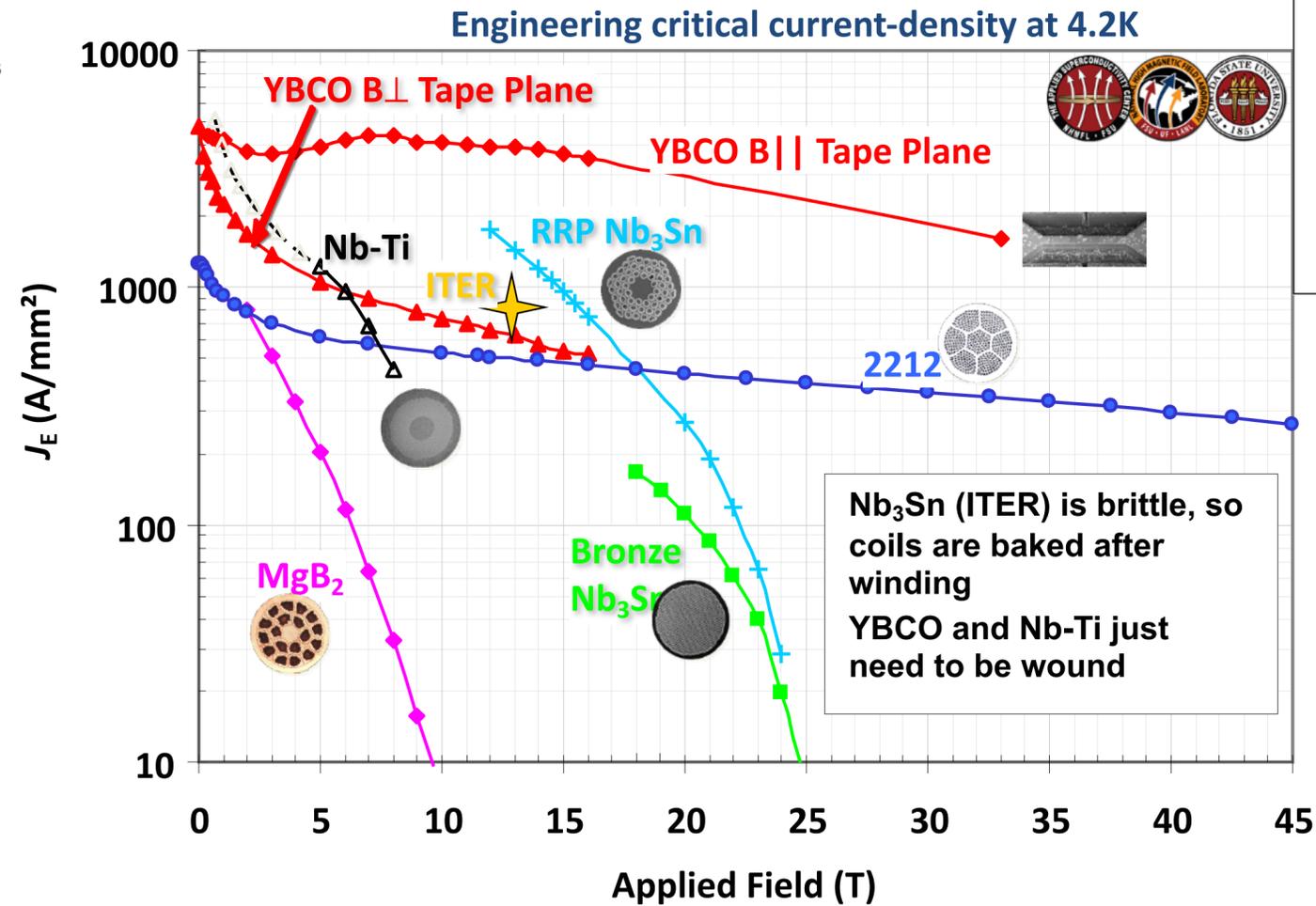


Figure courtesy of National High Magnetic

ARC = 1/10 Iiter using twice the field

0D Design of a Simple Mirror

$$nT_i\tau = 33.5 \times 10^{20} \text{ m}^{-3} \cdot \text{keV} \cdot \text{sec}$$

$$Q = 1.33$$

1. Choose B_M , R_M , magnet bore a_M

$$B_M = 25, a_M = 15 \text{ cm}$$

2. $B_0 = B_M/R_M$, $a = \sqrt{R_M a_M} \rightarrow V = \pi a^2 L$

$$R_M = 10, B_0 = 2.5, a = 0.47 \text{ m}, L = 1 \text{ m}, V = 1.4 \text{ m}^{-3}$$

3. Choose $\langle E_i \rangle$

$$\langle E_i \rangle = 120 \text{ keV}, kT_e = 0.9 \langle E_i \rangle \text{ for classical energy transfer}$$

4. check $N_{gyro} = a/\rho_i$

$$N_{gyro} \approx 30 \text{ (maybe not big enough to stabilize DCLC, need sloshing)}$$

5. Choose $\beta \rightarrow n = \frac{\beta B_0^2}{\mu_0 (kT_e + \langle E_i \rangle)}$

$$T_e = 11 \text{ keV}, \beta = 0.5, n = 0.9 \times 10^{20} \text{ m}^{-3}$$

6. $\tau_P = 2.8 \times 10^{-4} \frac{\langle E_{b,keV} \rangle^{3/2}}{n_{20}} \log_{10} R_M \text{ sec}$

$$\tau_P = 0.49 \text{ sec} \quad \tau_s = 0.005 \frac{T_{e,keV}^{3/2}}{n_{20} Z^2} \text{ sec} = 0.583 \text{ sec}$$

7. Calculate $I_{inj} = \frac{enV}{\tau_P}$,

40 amps

8. $P_{nbi} = E_b I_{inj}$, $P_{rf} = (\langle E_i \rangle - E_b) I_{inj}$,

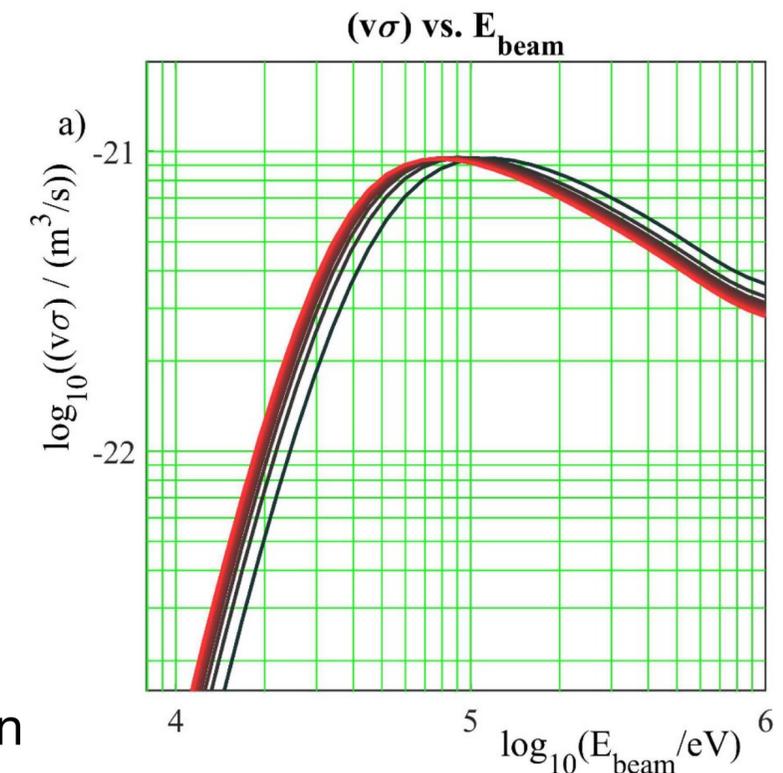
$$E_b = 120 \text{ keV}, P_{nbi} = 4.8 \text{ MW}, P_{rf} = 0$$

9. $P_{ech} = (2 + A) \frac{kT_e}{e} (I_{inj} + I_{cool}) - (P_{nbi} + P_{rf}) \frac{\tau_P}{\tau_s}$

$$A = 5, P_{ech} = 0 \text{ MW}$$

10. Compute neutron yield:

$$2.3 \times 10^{18} \text{ n/s (DT)}, P_{DT} = 6.45 \text{ MW, neutron}$$



Aspirational WHAM++

WHAM ++

$B_M=25$ T, $B_0=2.5$ (5) T, $a = 0.5$ m

$P=2-5$ MW (100 keV NBI) CW and DT

$Q \sim 3$ (6-15 MW of fusion power)

$R_M=15$ at $\beta=0.5$

WHAM+

-full power performance verification of end plug
-test direct energy conversion boost to $Q \sim 6-10$

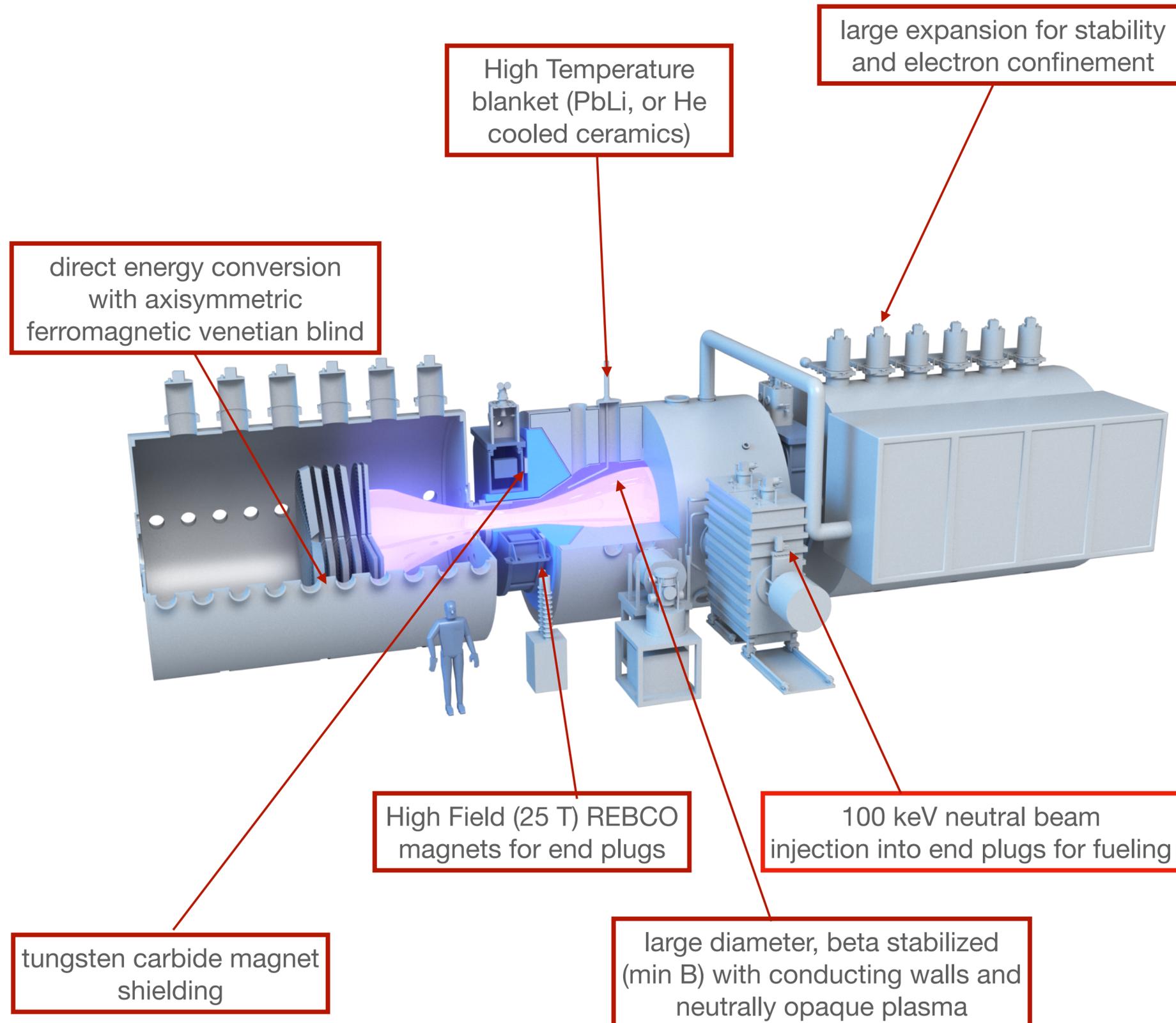
WHAM++

steady-state operation with dt

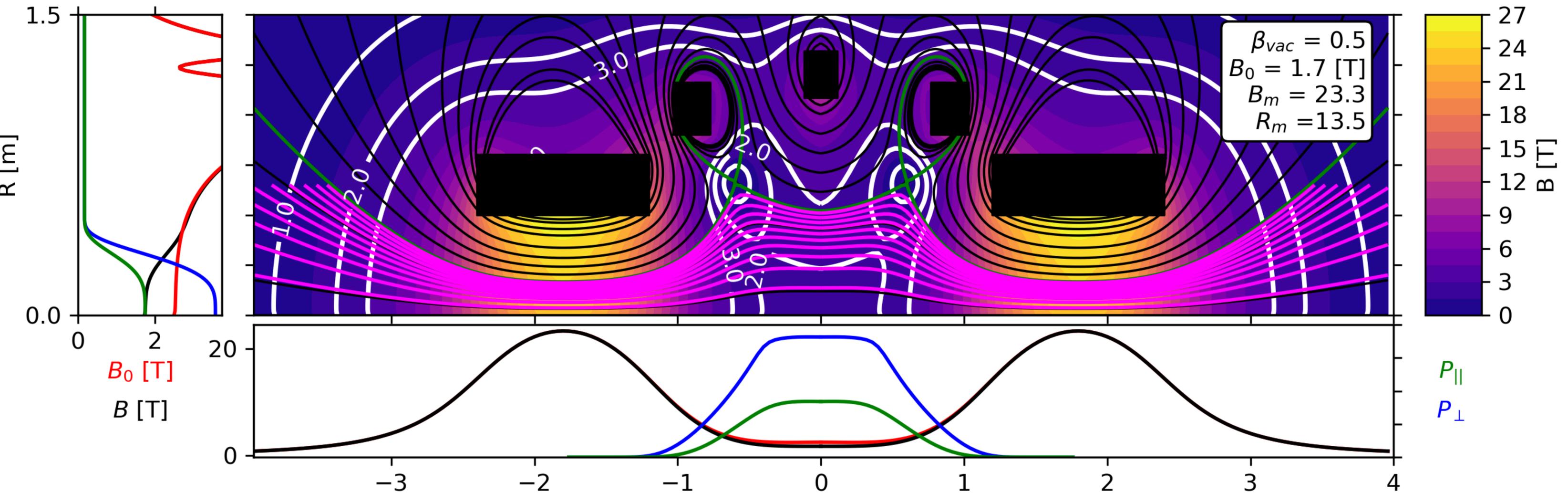
High temperature blanket testing (PbLi ?)

Cost (driven by magnets)

ca. \$50M of Rebcoc tape

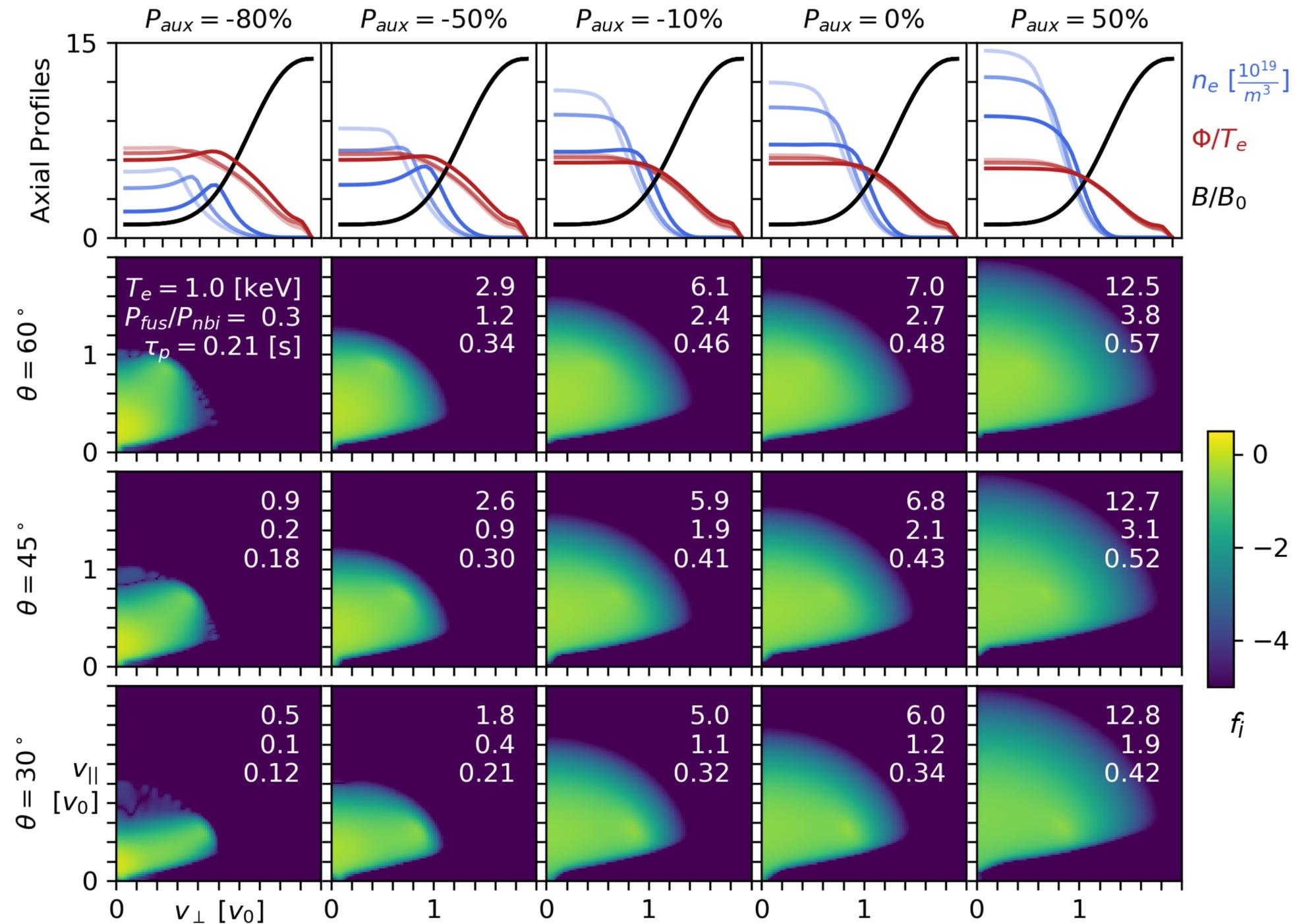


High β , $p_{\perp} \neq p_{\parallel}$ solution to Grad-Shafranov equilibrium model shows enhancement allows shape optimization for confinement and stability



Bounce-averaged Fokker Plank solution show tradeoffs with beam injection angle and role of extra electron cooling (or heating)

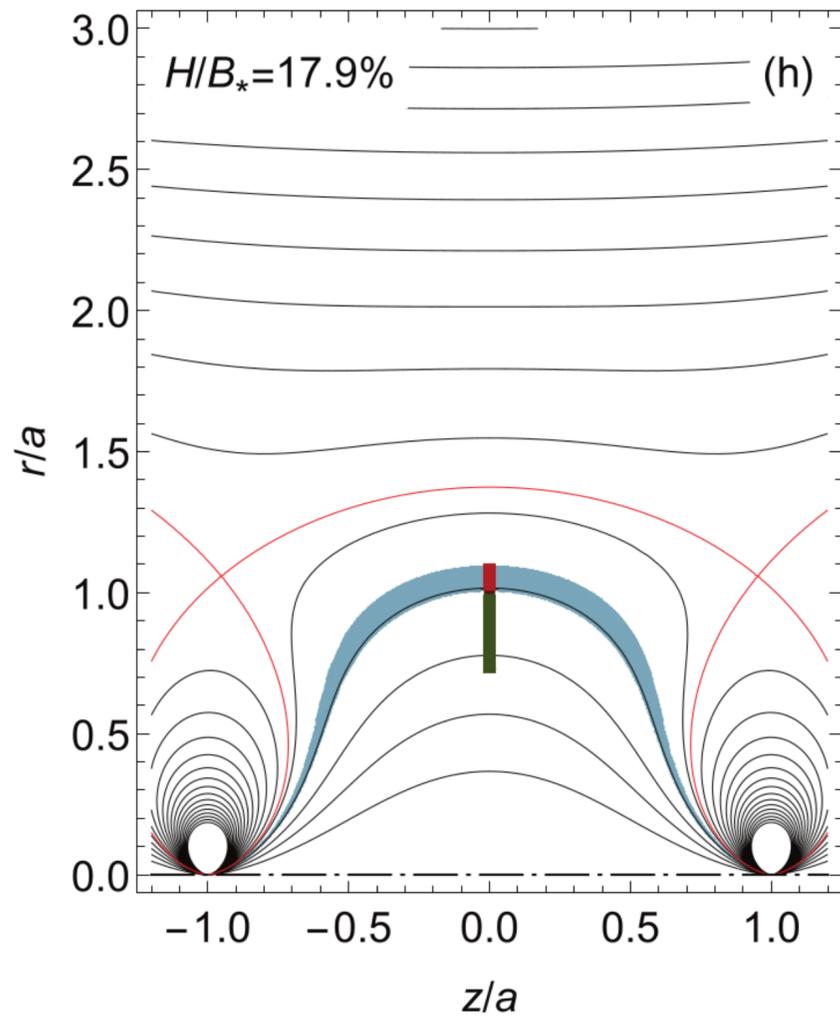
Ion Slowing Distributions for $E_0 = 100$ [keV], $I_{nbi} = 1.0$ [A]



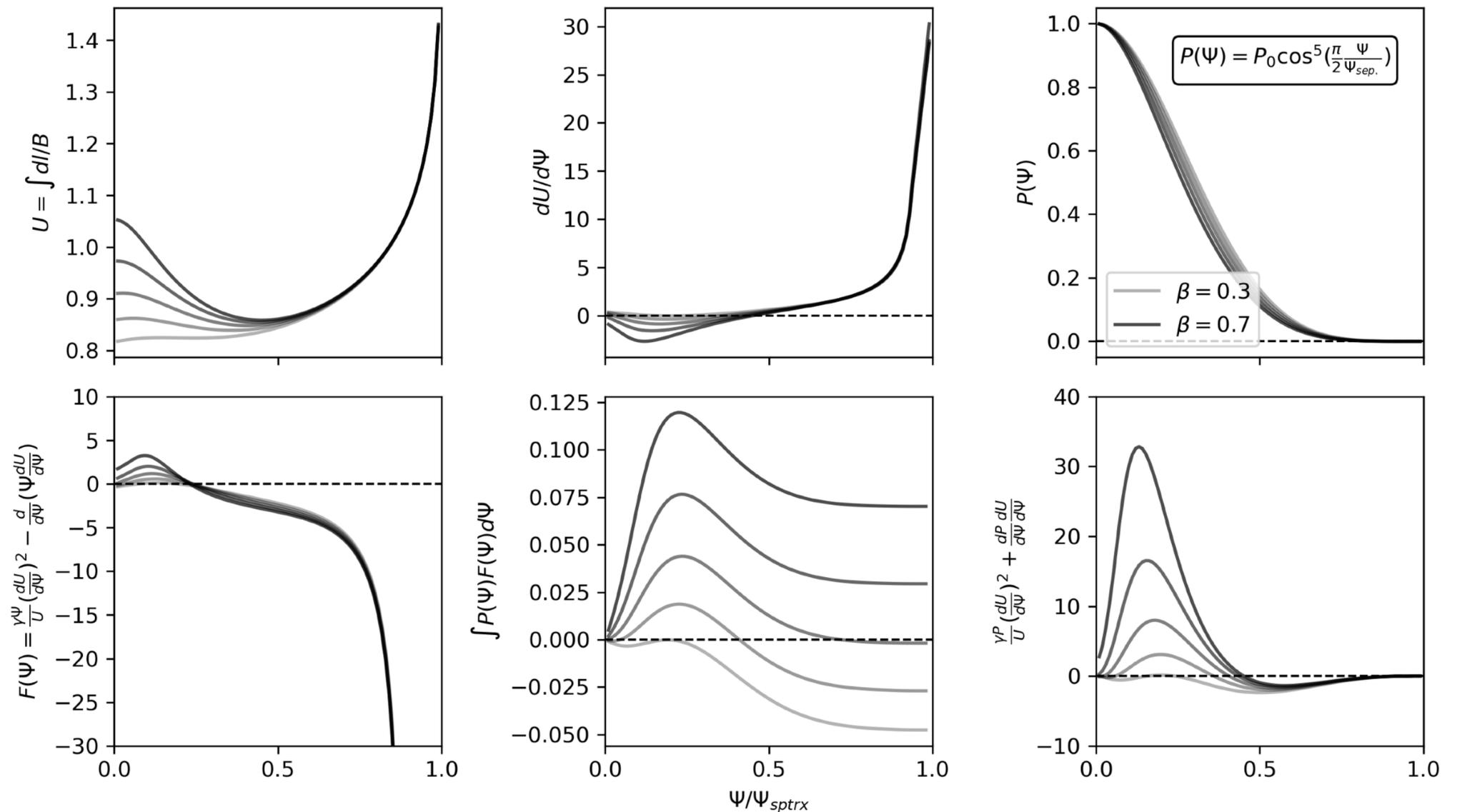
Diverters and non-paraxial (short-fat) effects may help solve MHD stability

I.A. Kotelnikov *et al* 2020 *Nucl. Fusion* **60** 016008

$$\delta W = \mathbf{const.} \int d\Psi (r_0 \xi_r B_0)^2 \left[U' p' + \gamma \frac{p}{U} U^2 \right]$$



- High-beta configuration may be stable ($\delta W > 0$) to rigid shift $m=1$ interchange mode.
- Remains marginally unstable to higher order ballooning modes (to be FLR stabilized)



Axisymmetric Tandem uses high pressure end plugs to confine thermal central cell plasma

Four species to consider:

1. High density plug
2. High Te plug electrons
3. Central cell electrons
4. Central cell thermal ions

Confined by:

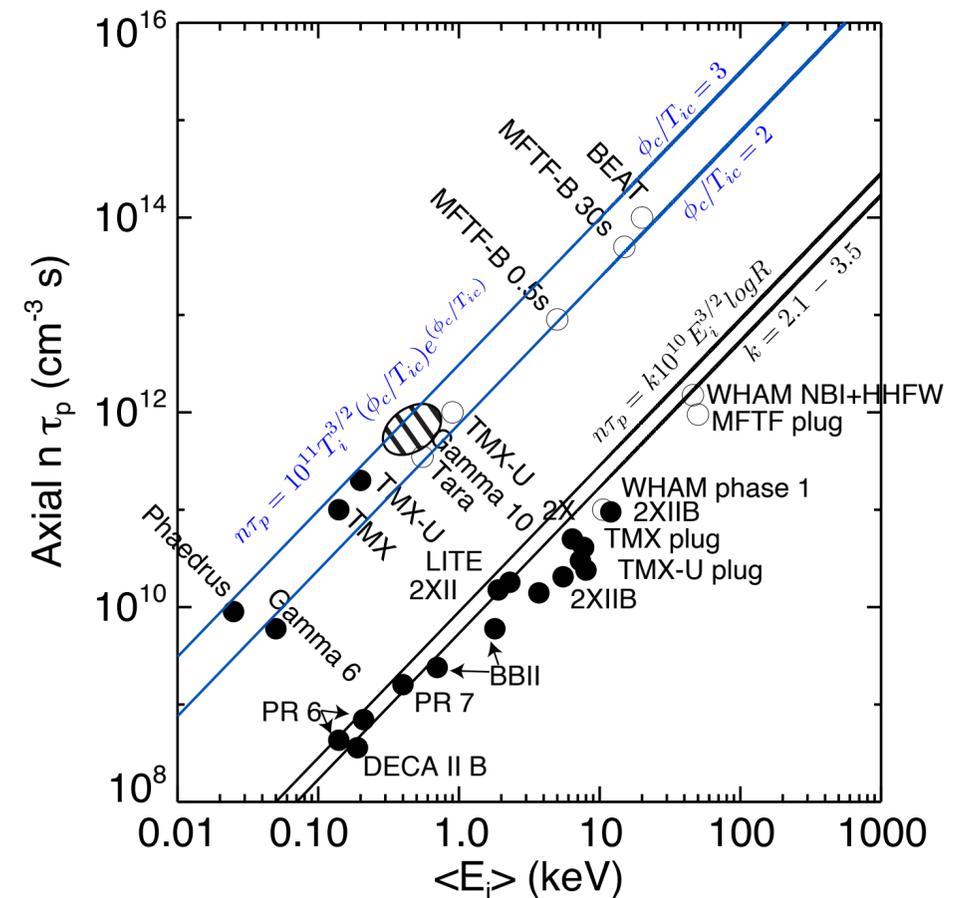
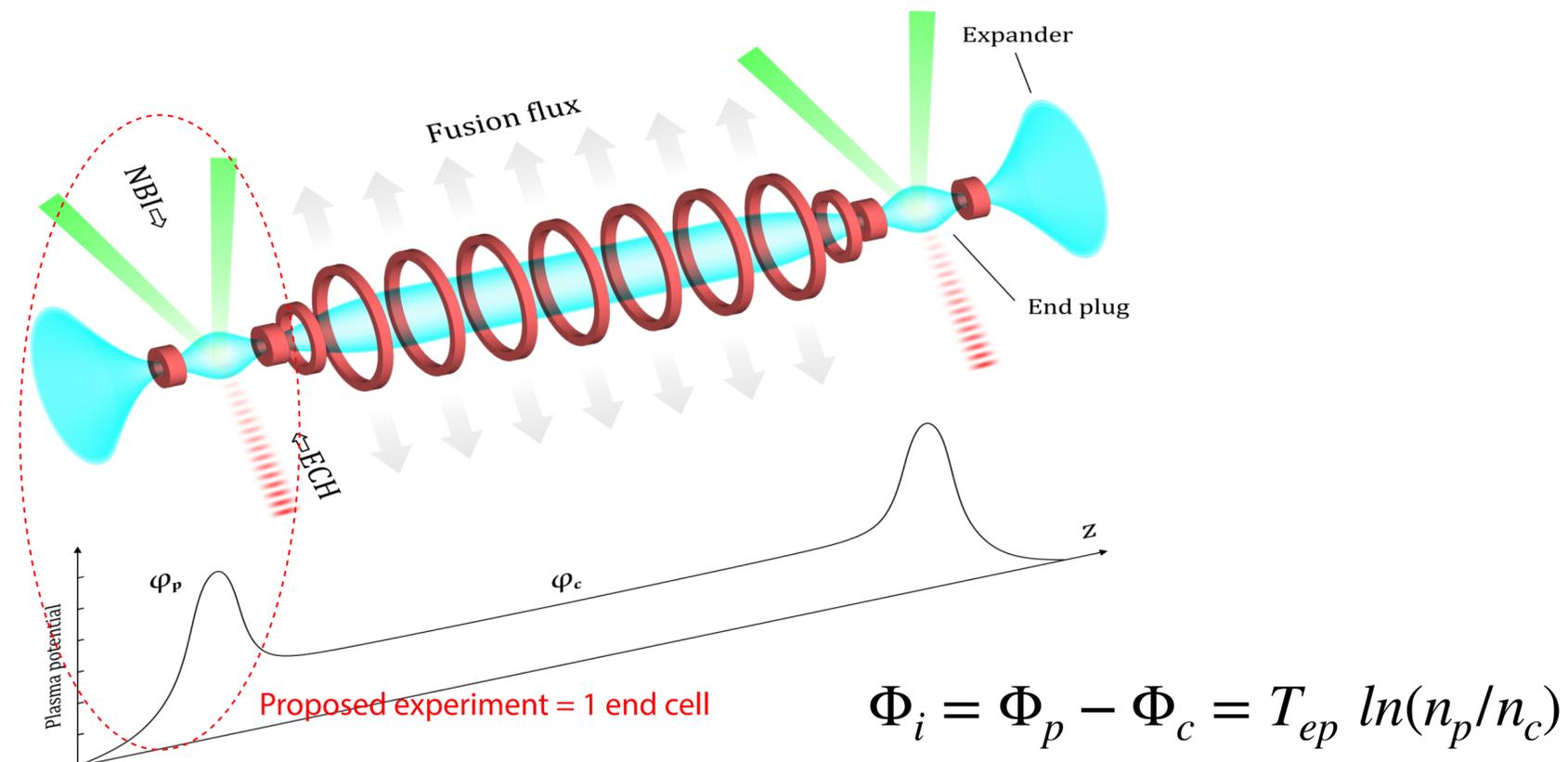
high energy ions

ambipolar potential associated with fast plug ions

Confined by potential of expander

Electrostatically confined by end plug potential $\tau_i \sim \tau_{ii} \ln R_M \Phi_i / T_{ic} e^{\Phi_i / T_{ic}}$

Pastukhov factor



What's New (Summary)

1986: US cuts mirror research budget by ~95%

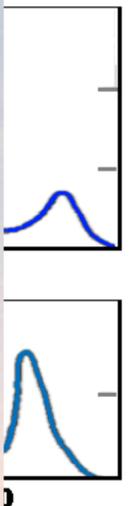
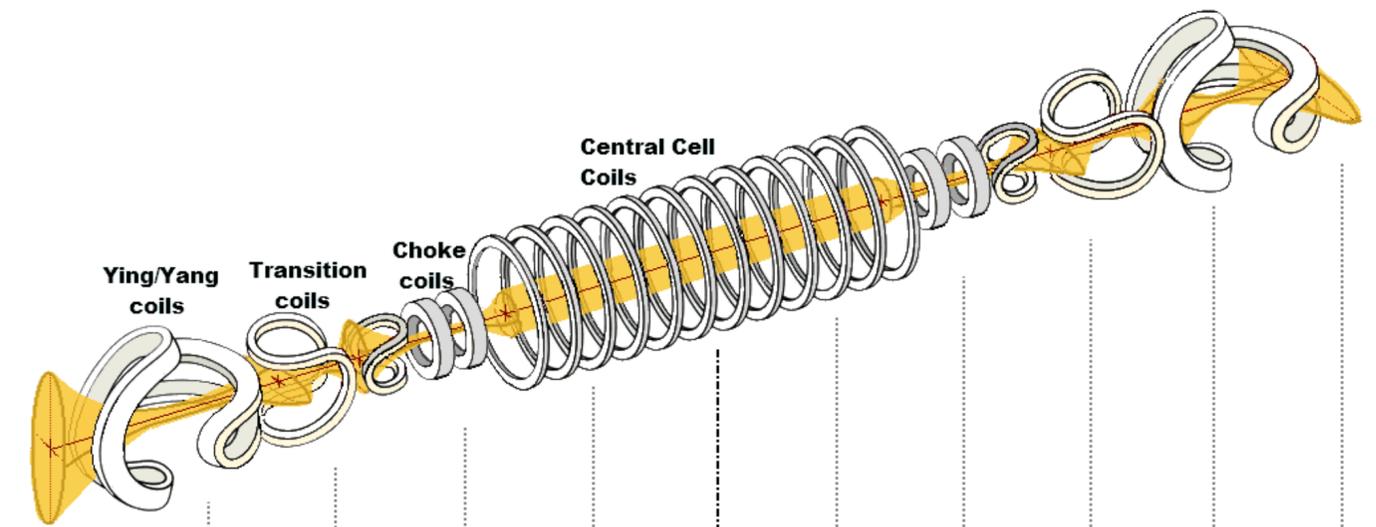
Perceived physics flaws

- required 3D coils
- mirror ratio limited by superconductors
- Complicated thermal barrier
- Low Te, poor electron confinement
- micro instabilities
- major technology gaps
 - superconducting magnets limited to < 12 T
 - >100 ghz cw gyrotrons nonexistent
 - MeV beams not available

Today:

Remarkable physics achievements

- Axisymmetric high β MHD stability
- High field enables simpler path to high Q (without thermal barrier)
- Axial electron thermal confinement from electric fields: Te~1 keV
- Major micro instabilities stabilized
- high mirror ratios now possible



WHAM is a ARPA-E funded and aims to prototype the ATM end plug

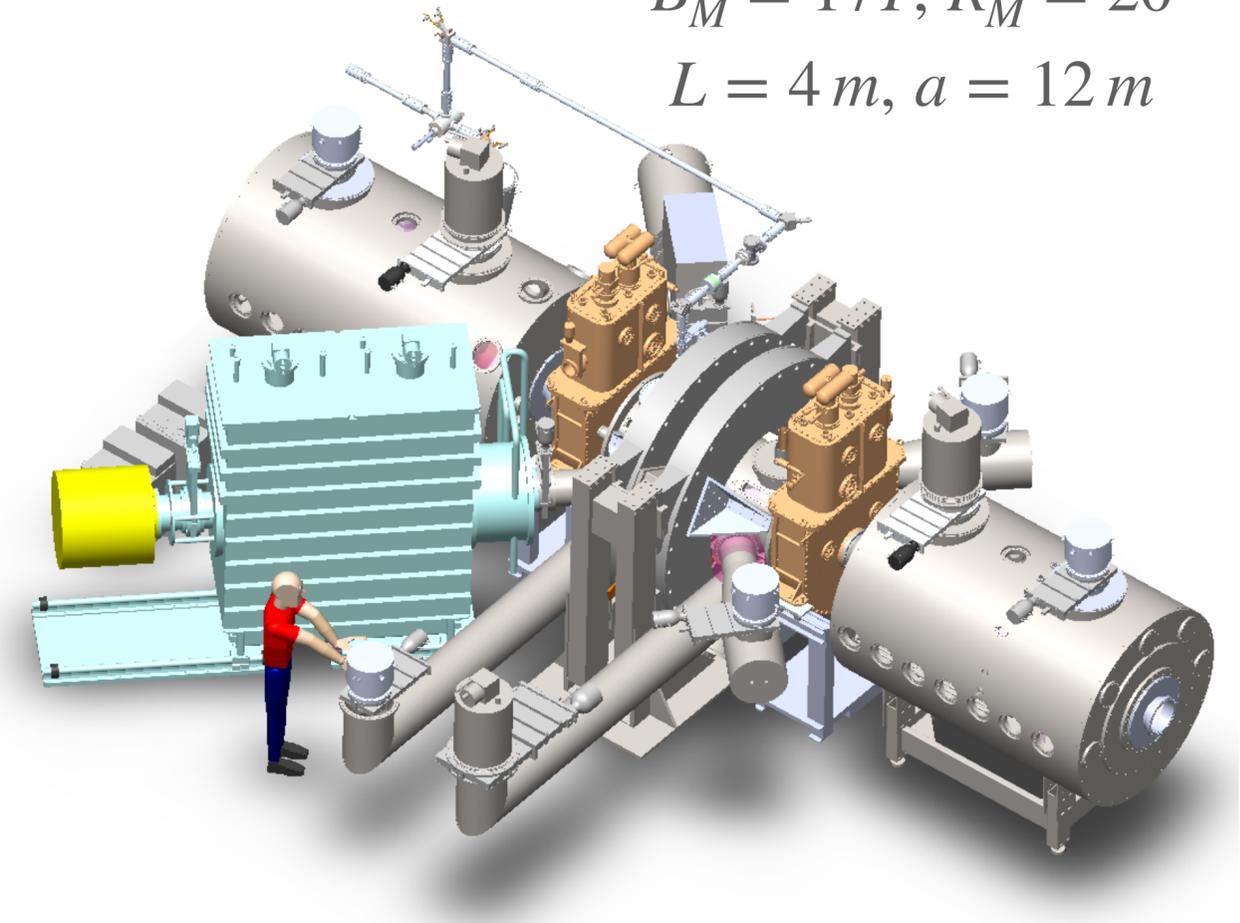
Physics Missions:

1. **Confine MHD stable, high Te plasma in axisymmetric mirror**
 - demonstrate vortex stabilization combined with electron heating and expander confinement
 - create high plasma pressure allowed by strong magnetic field
2. **Demonstrate novel in-situ ion acceleration**
 - combine radio-frequency heating with neutral beam fueling
 - show confinement benefit of high energy ions

Technology Missions: (intertwined with physics goals)

1. **Build REBCO HTS mirror reactor magnets**
 - build and operate 17 T, 5.5 cm bore HTS coils
 - design 25 T, 50 cm integrated end plug for WHAM++, Hammir
2. **Demonstrate advanced particle handling techniques**
 - Novel non-evaporable tantalum getters
 - test advanced plasma facing components

$$B_M = 17T, R_M = 20$$
$$L = 4m, a = 12m$$



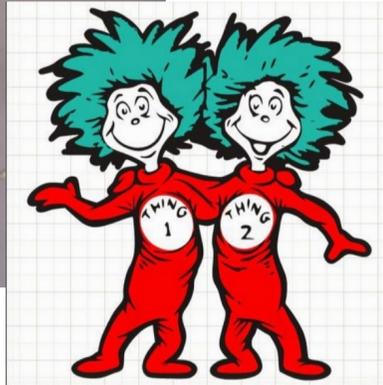
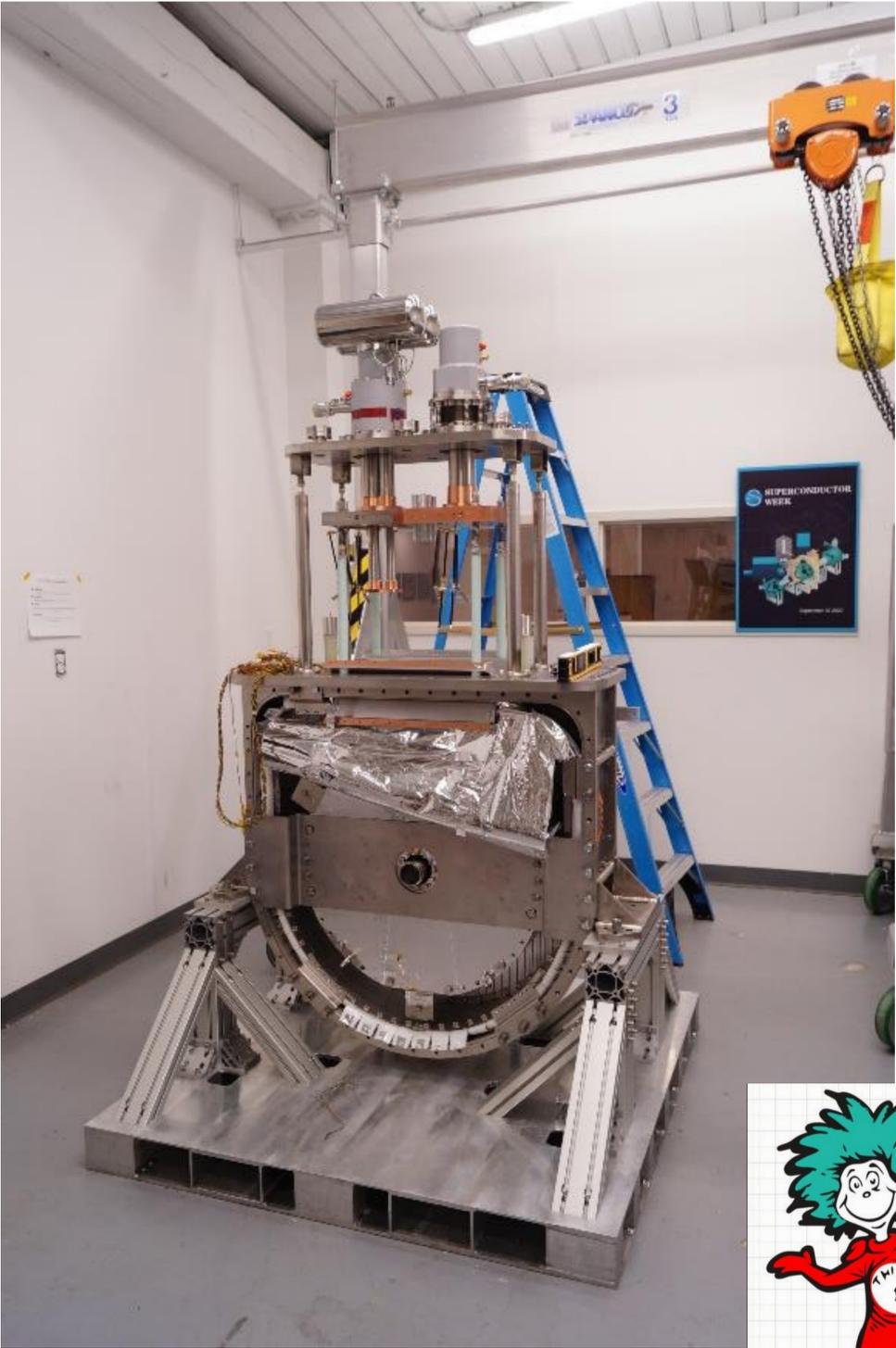
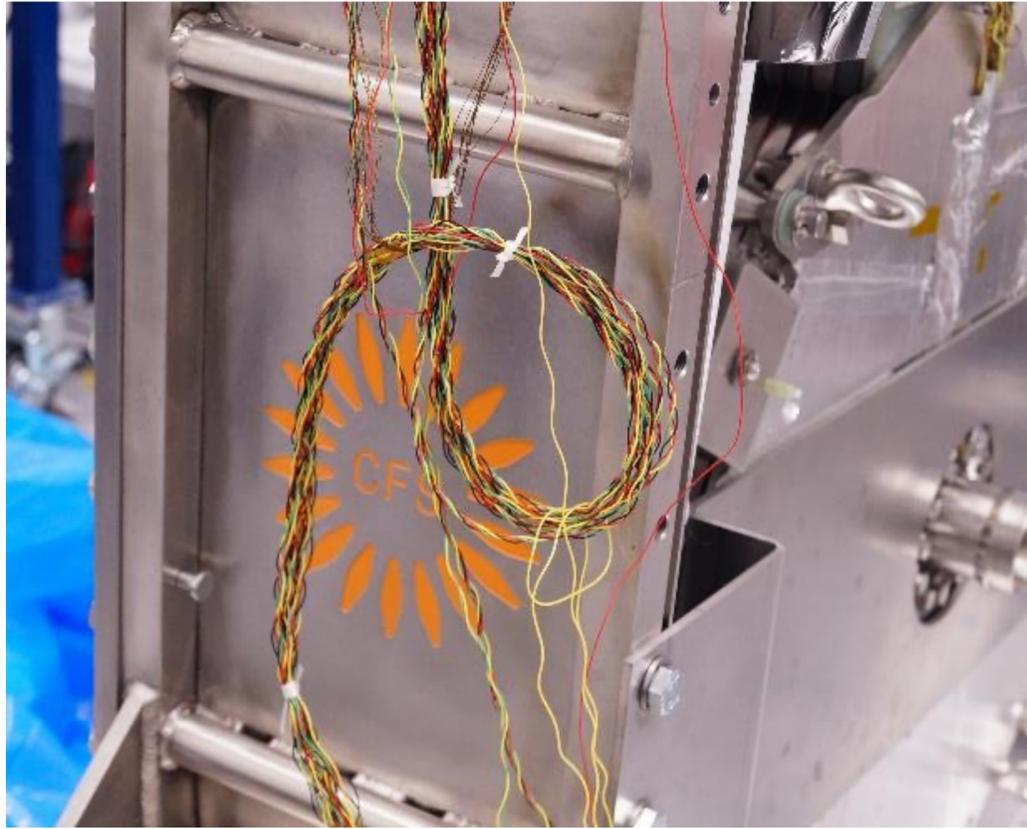
Additional ARPA-E directives:

1. **Refine reactor concept**
 - low cost/length central cell solution
 - neutronics analysis for shielding
2. **Develop commercialization plan**

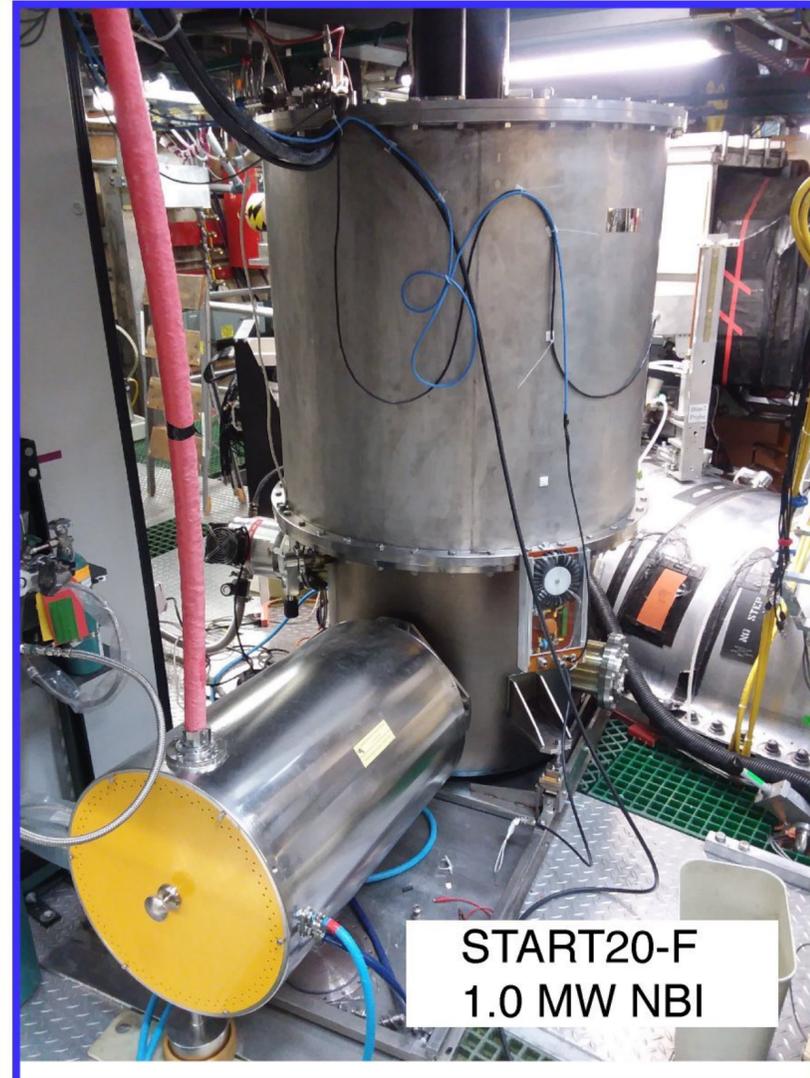
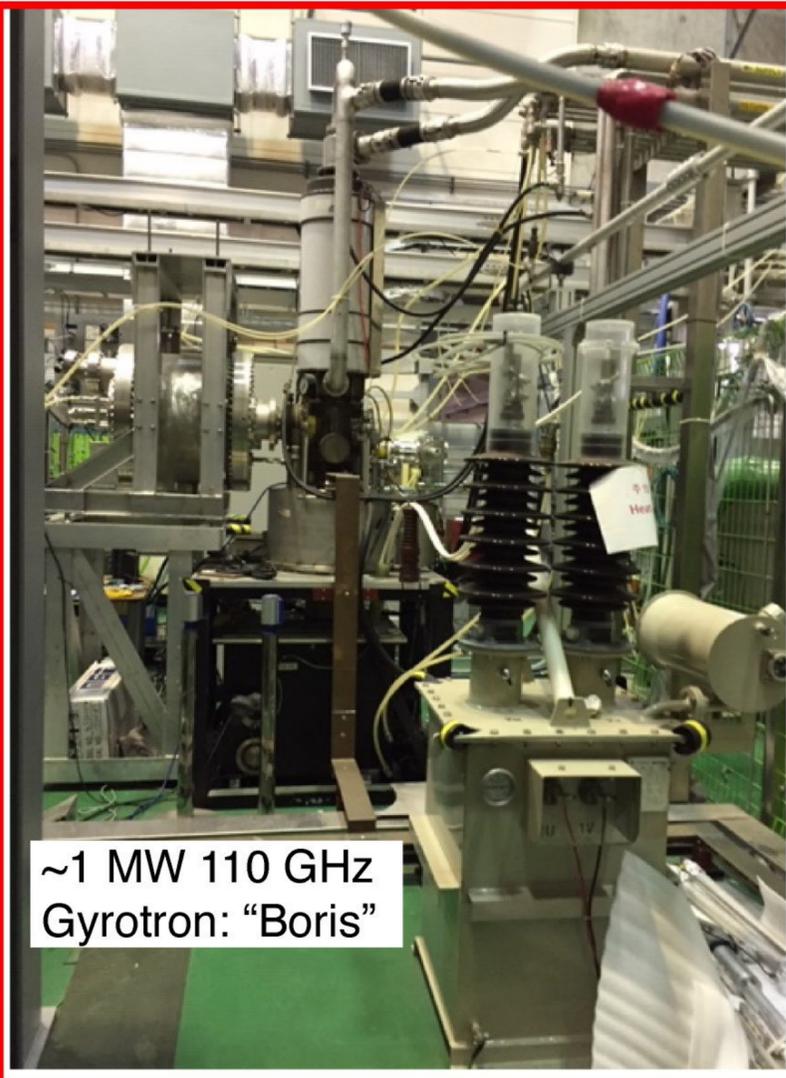
WHAM magnet specifications (Thing 1 is testing next week)



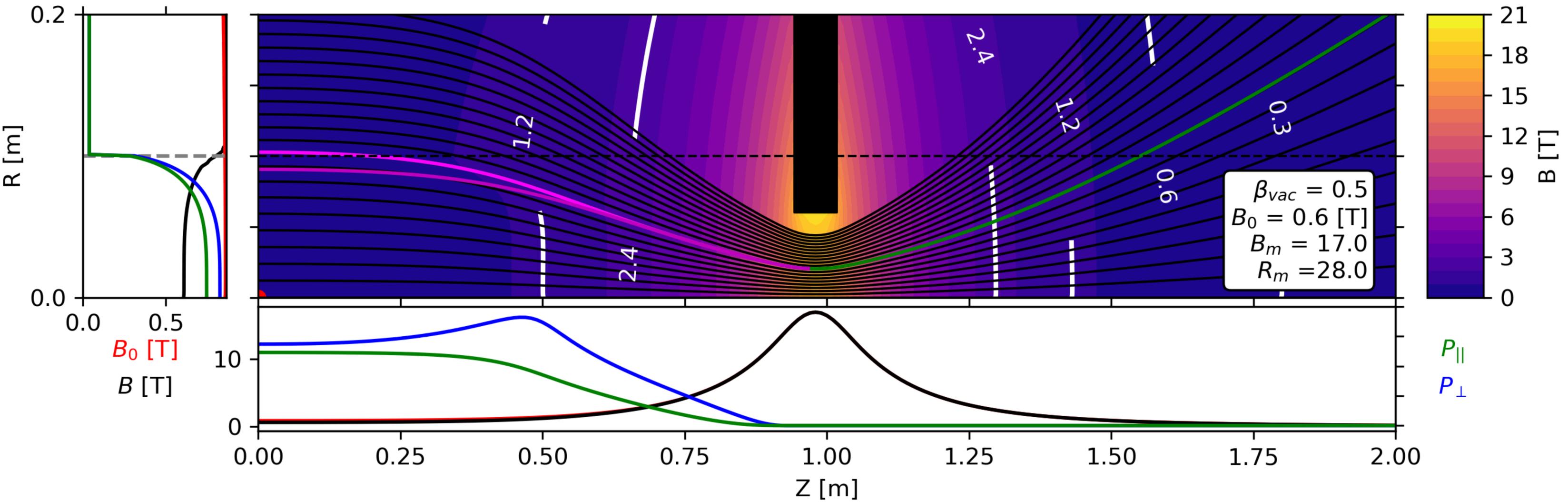
Stored energy	3.2	MJ
Magnetic field at center	17	T
Maximum magnetic field	20	T
Operating current	2000	A
Inner diameter	0.05	m
Outer diameter, WP	0.7	m
Thickness	0.15	m
Height	2.1	m
Winding pack mass	500	kg
Magnet mass	1500	kg
Operating temperature	20	K



WHAM will use existing heating systems to create high T_e , $\langle E_i \rangle$ plasmas



High β , $p_{\perp} \neq p_{\parallel}$ solution to Grad-Shafranov Equation shows enhancement of $R_M : 20 \rightarrow 28$
 (even more maybe possible)

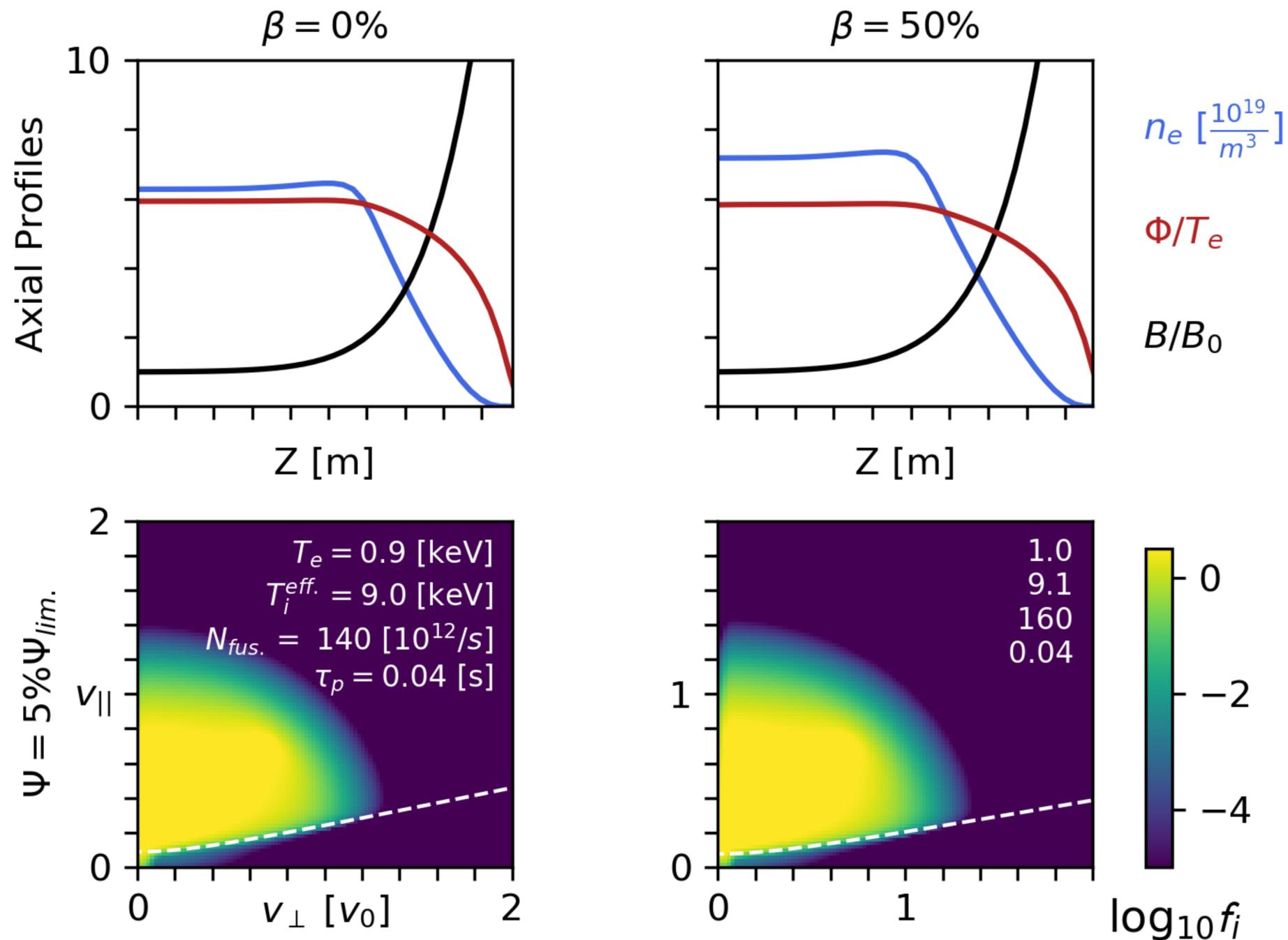


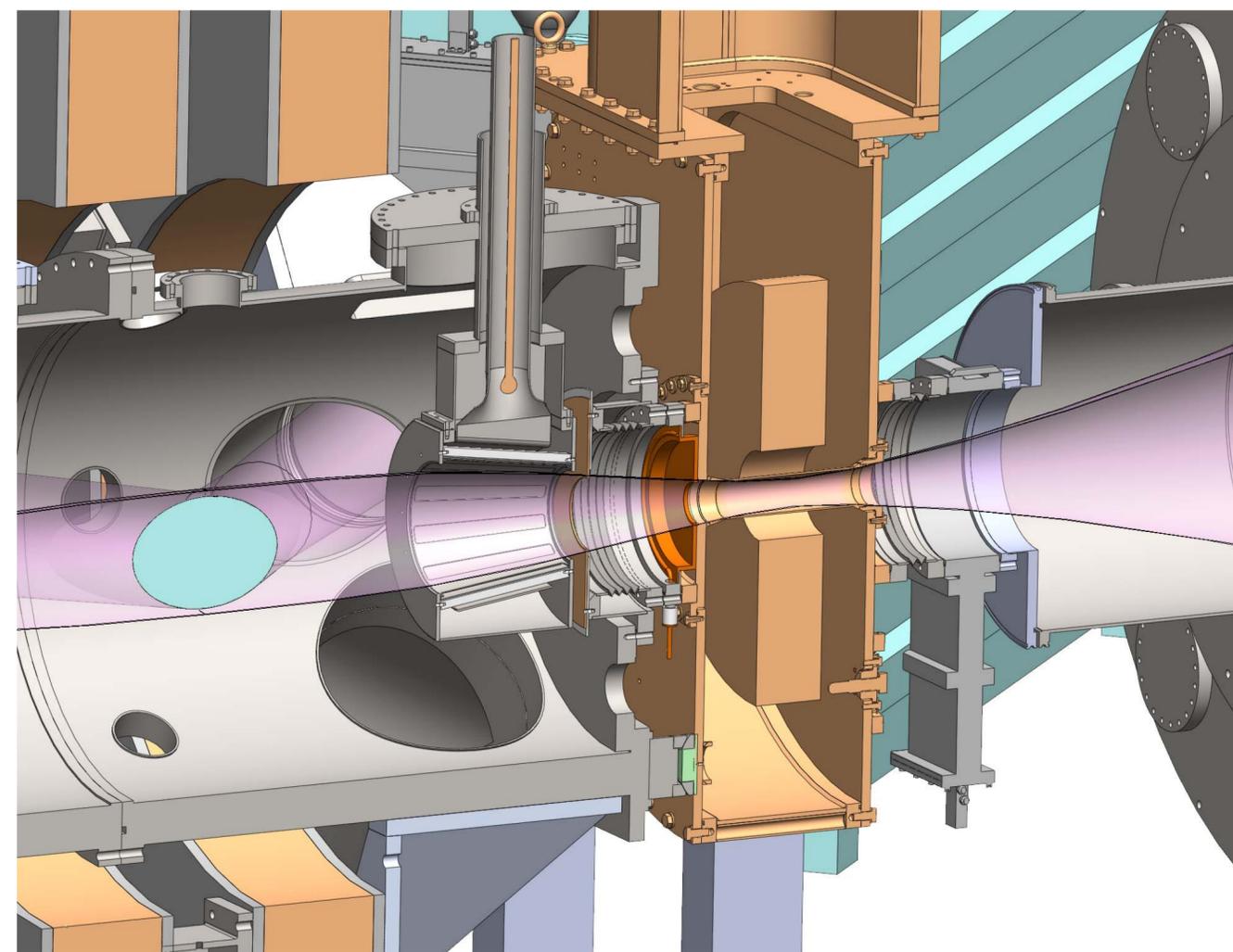
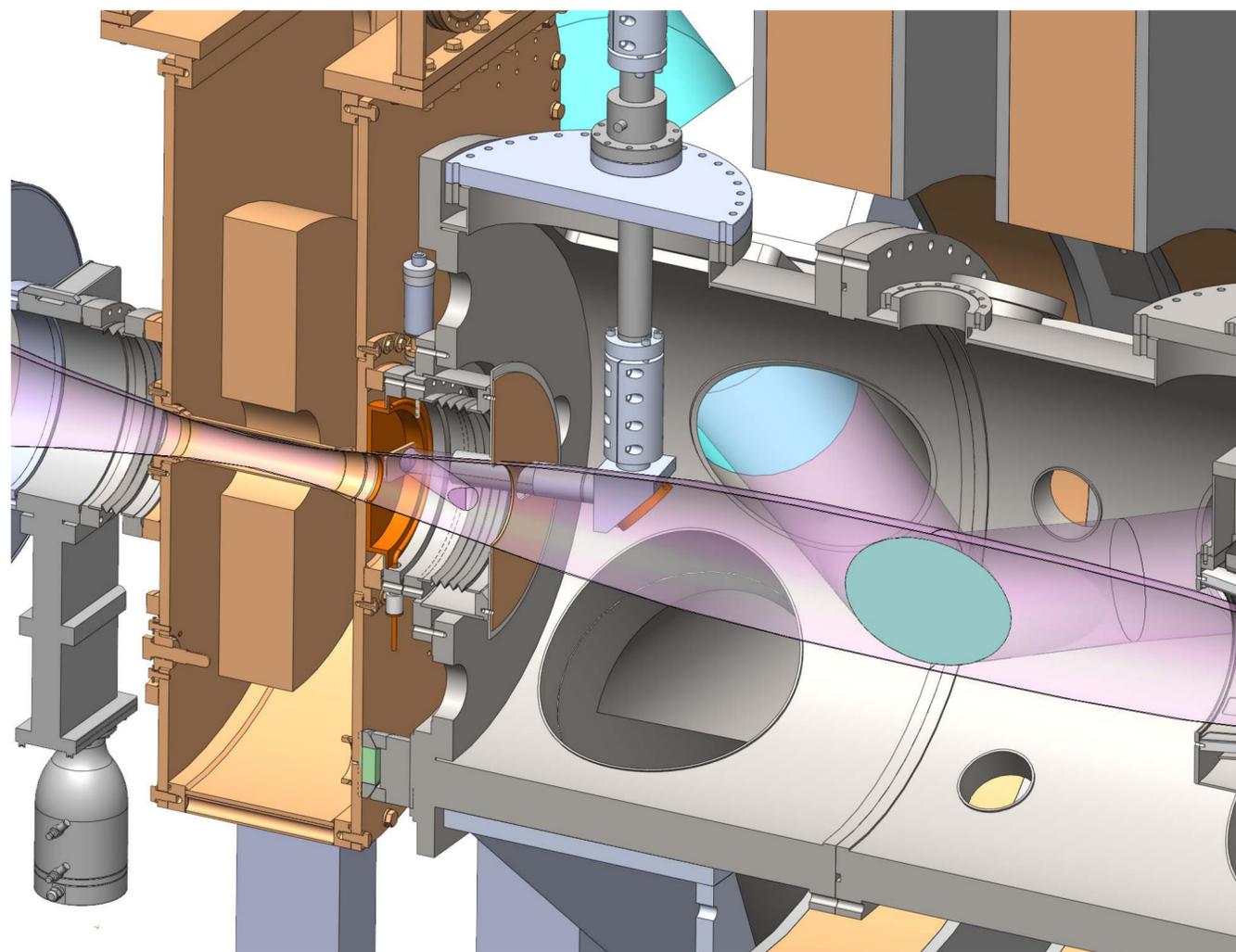
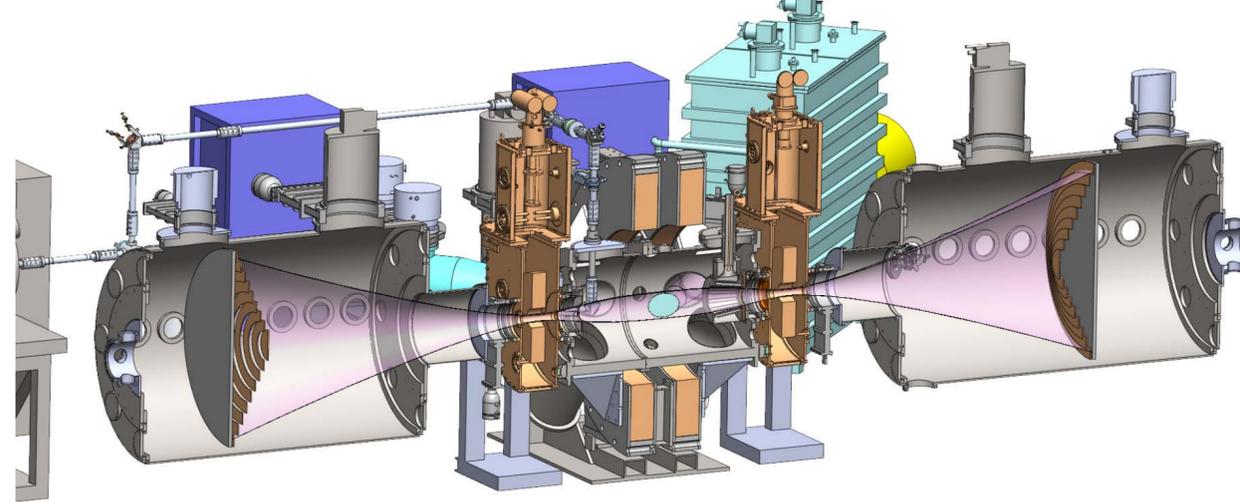
$$P_{NBI} = 250kW$$

Mild sloshing ions help fill ambipolar hole (solve DCLC)

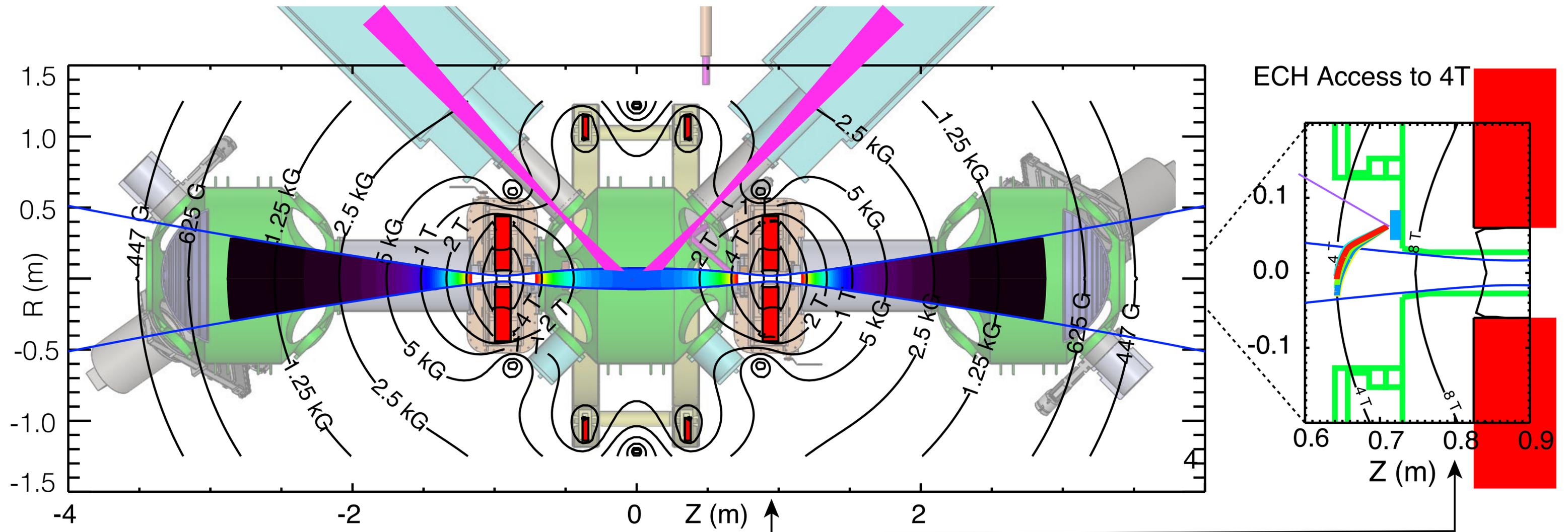
$T_e=1$ keV, $T_i=10$ keV, $n=6 \times 10^{19} \text{ m}^{-3}$, $\tau_p=40$ ms, $S_{dd}=10^{14}$ n/s

WHAM $B=0.86$ [T], $E_0 = 25$ [keV], $I_{nbi} = 10$ [A], DD

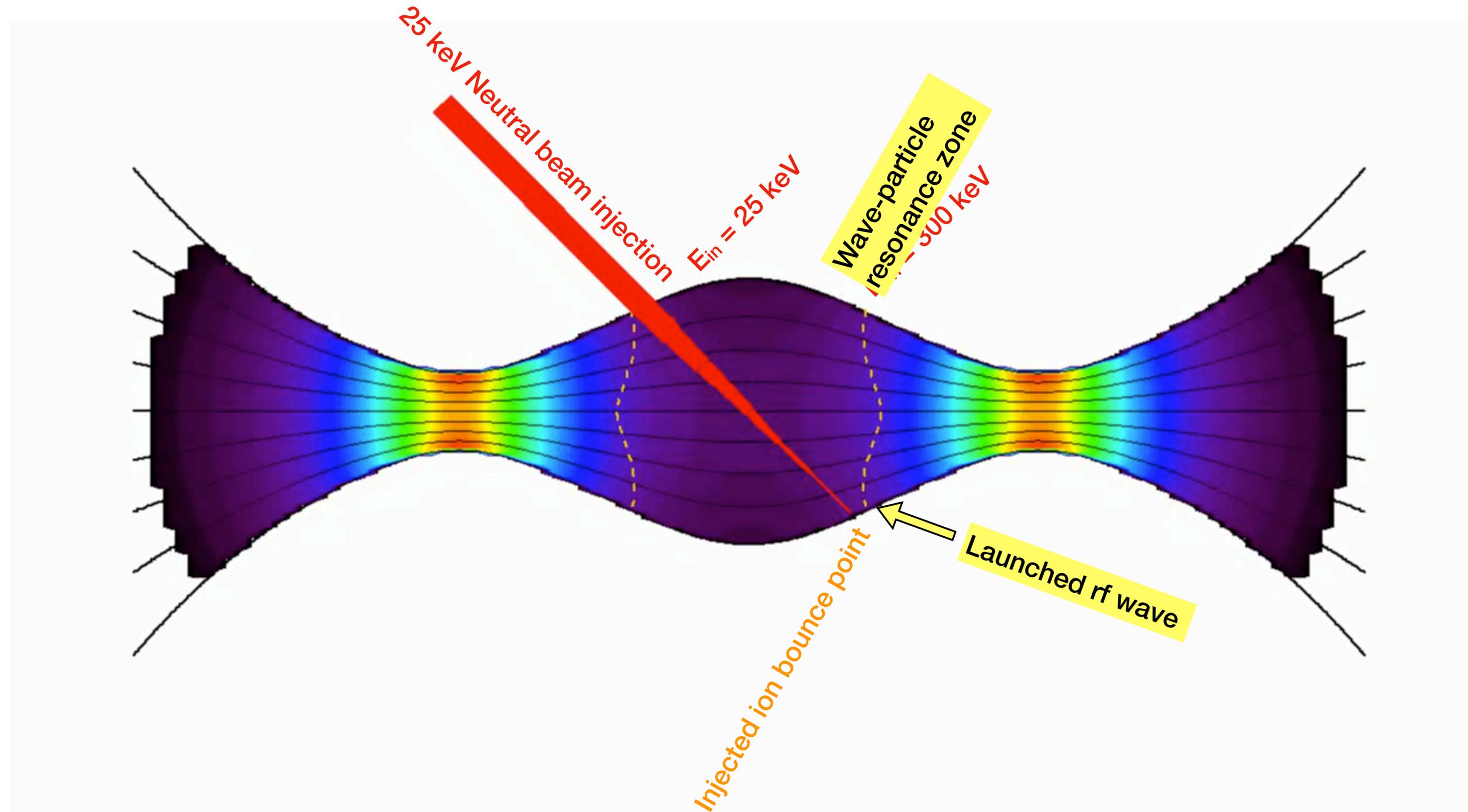




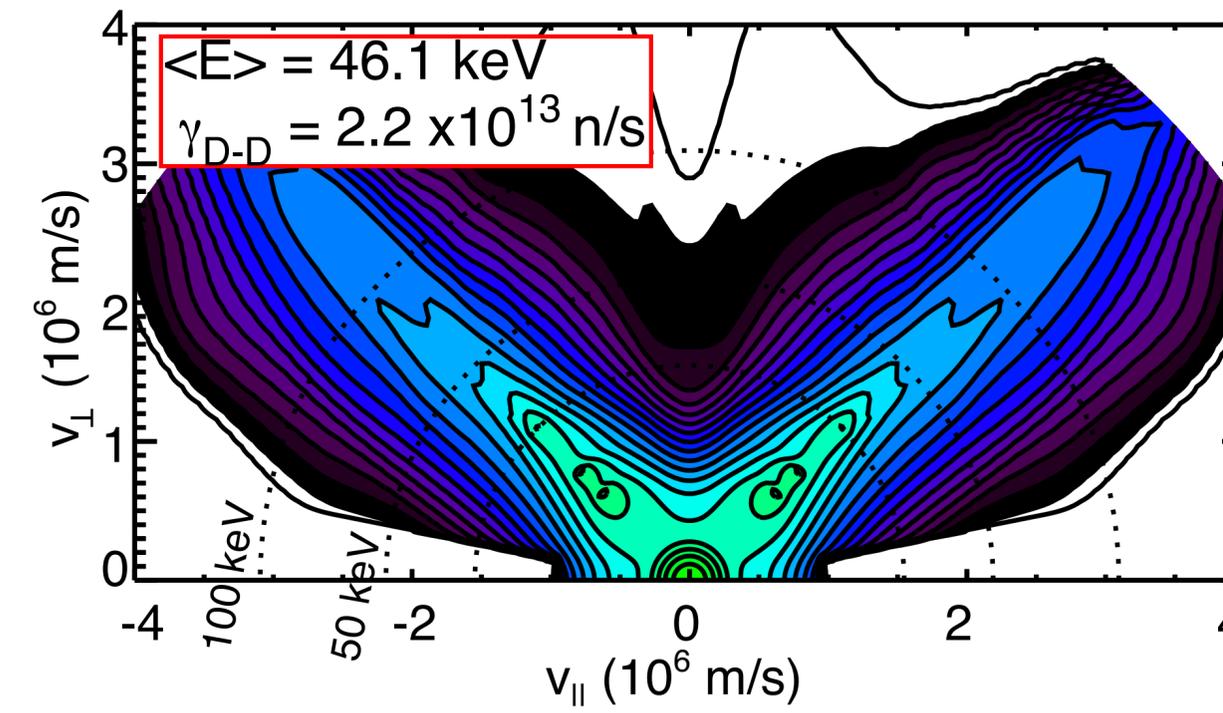
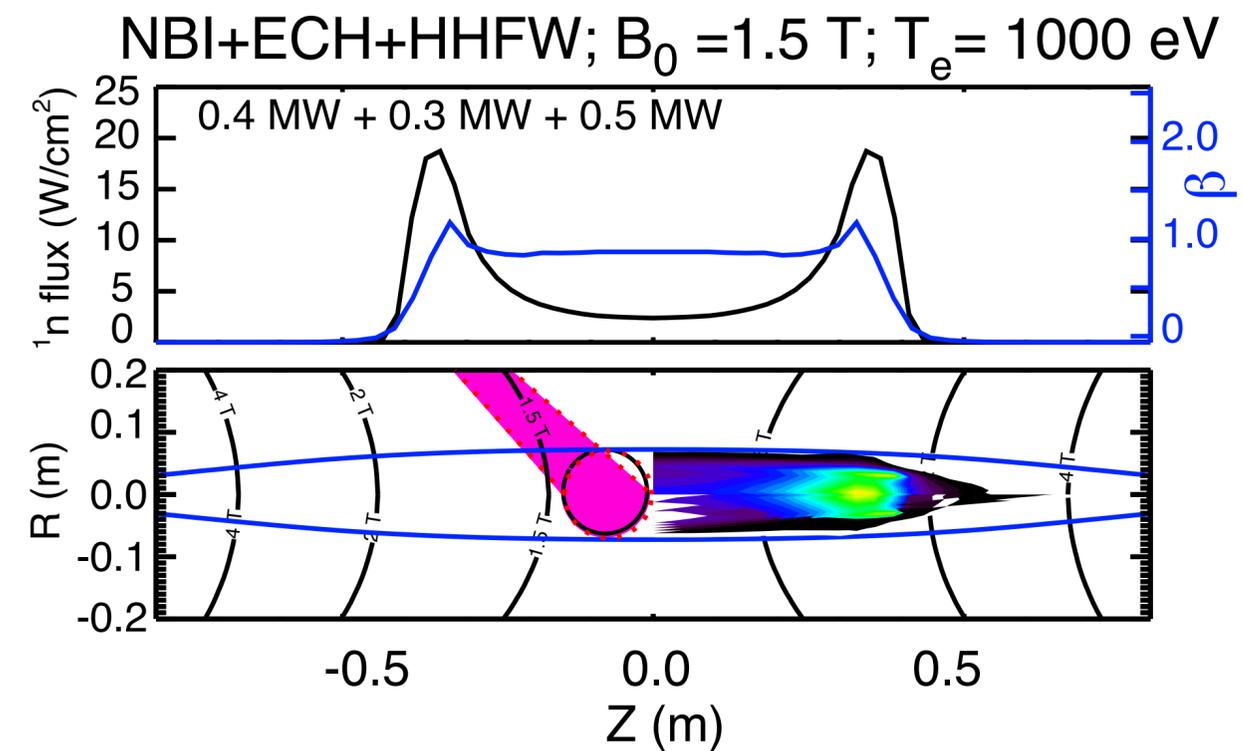
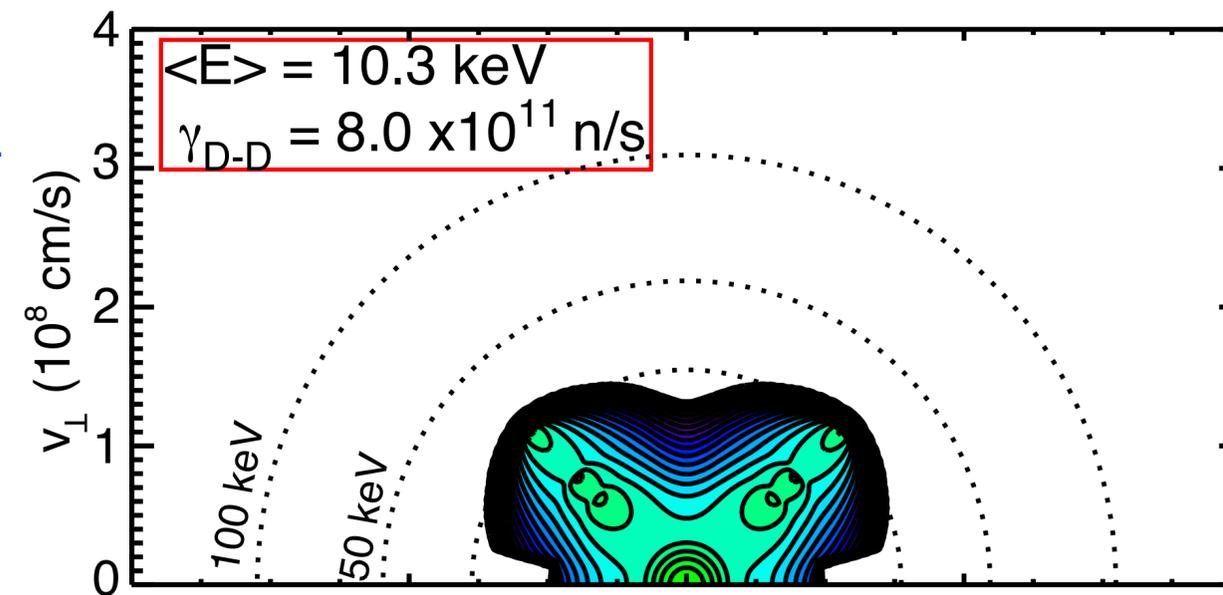
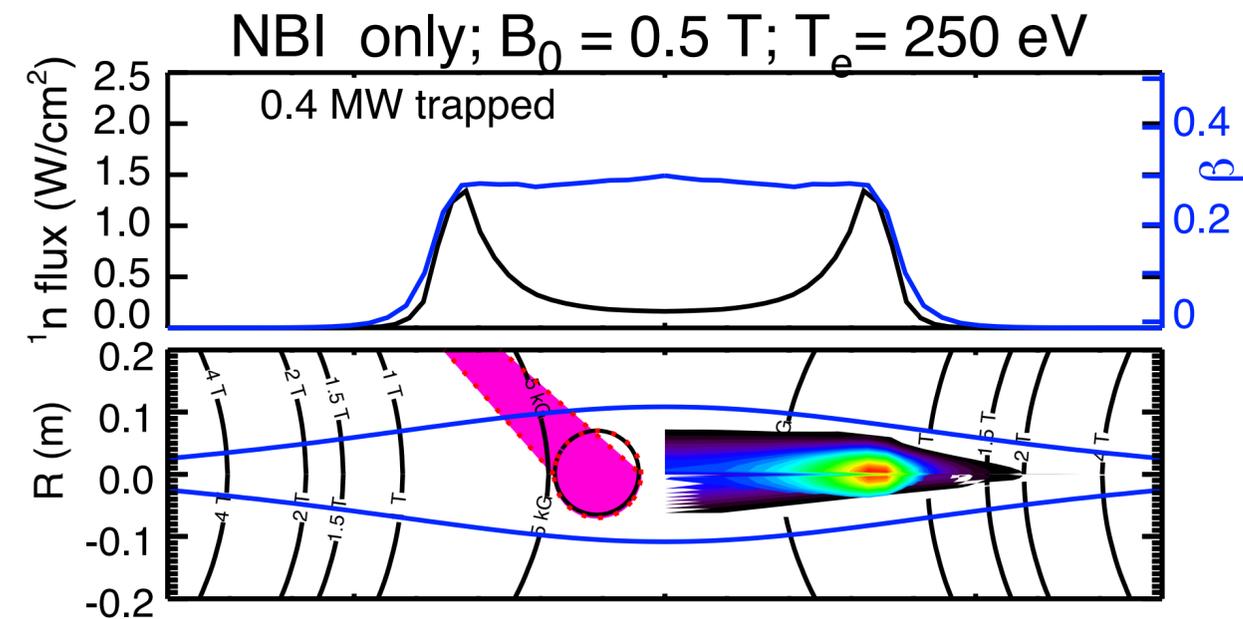
The heating cocktail for WHAM has been modeled using the CQL3D-genray suite of codes



Wave/ ion resonance leads to in-situ energization

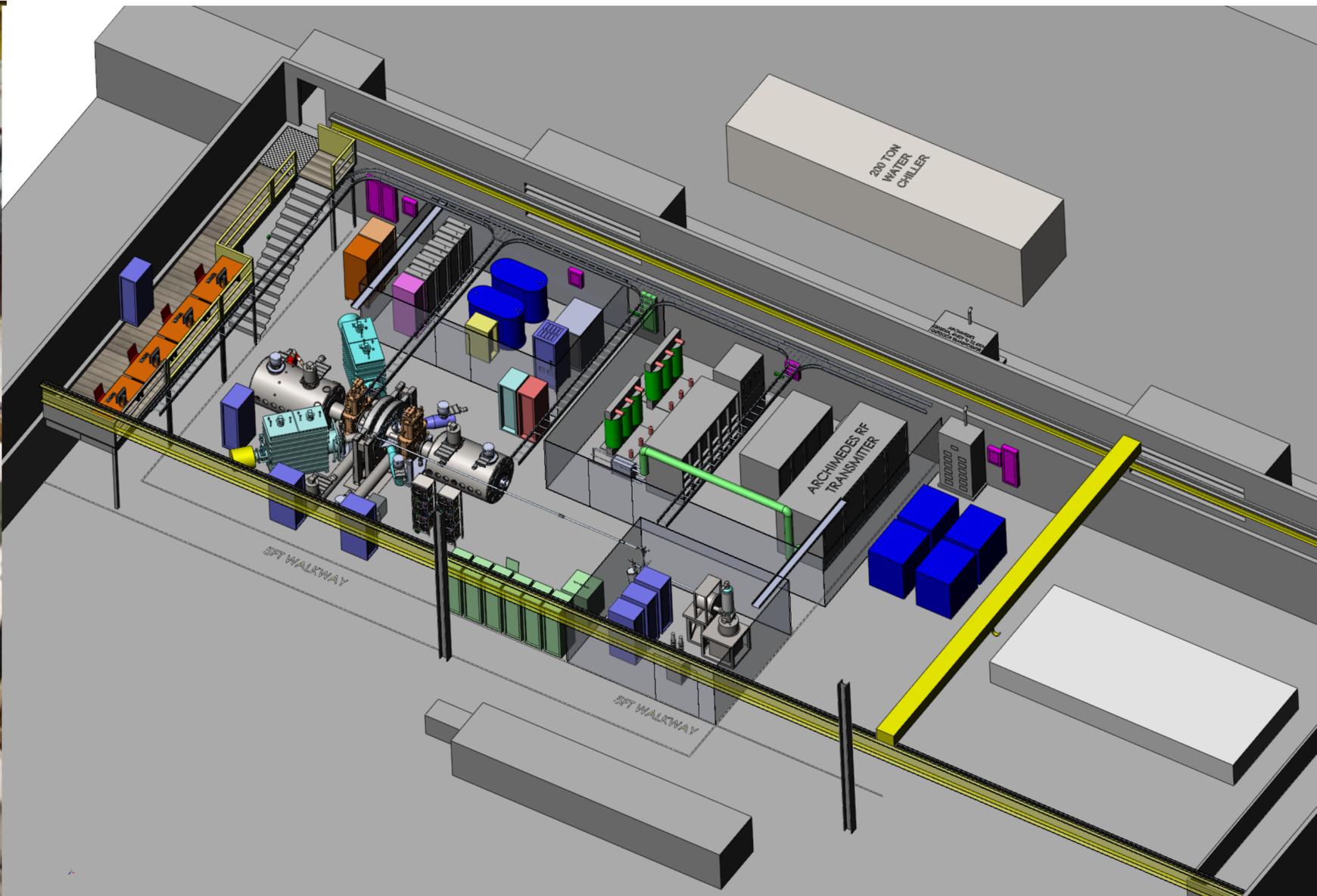


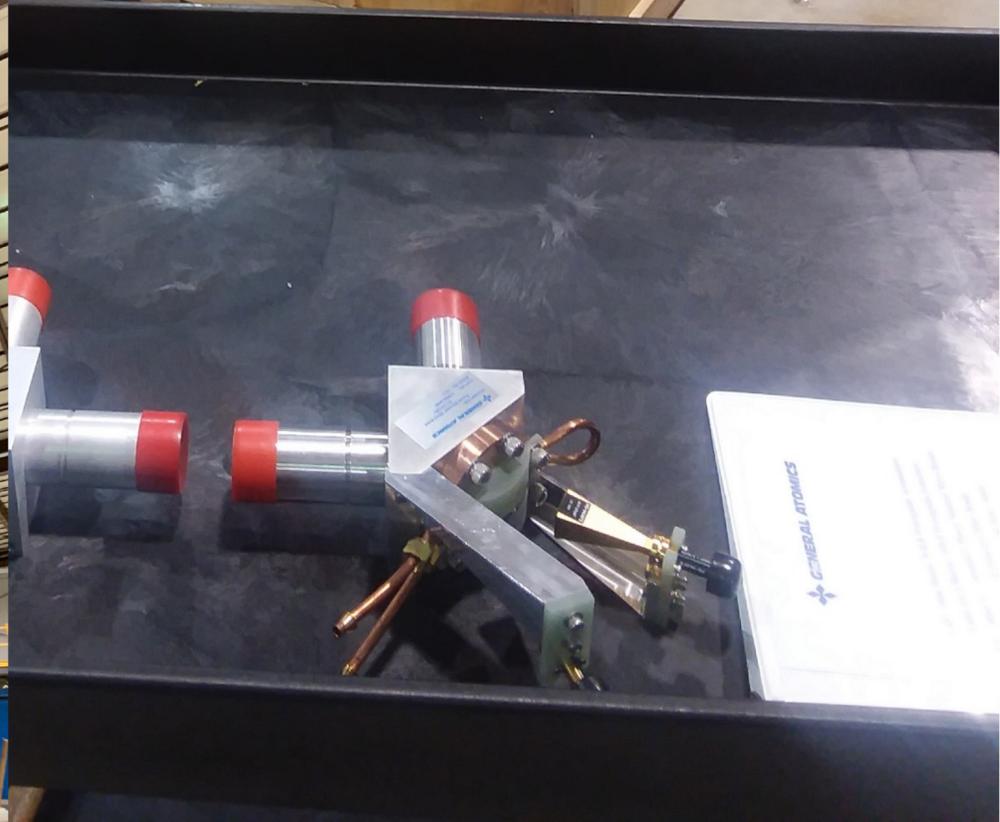
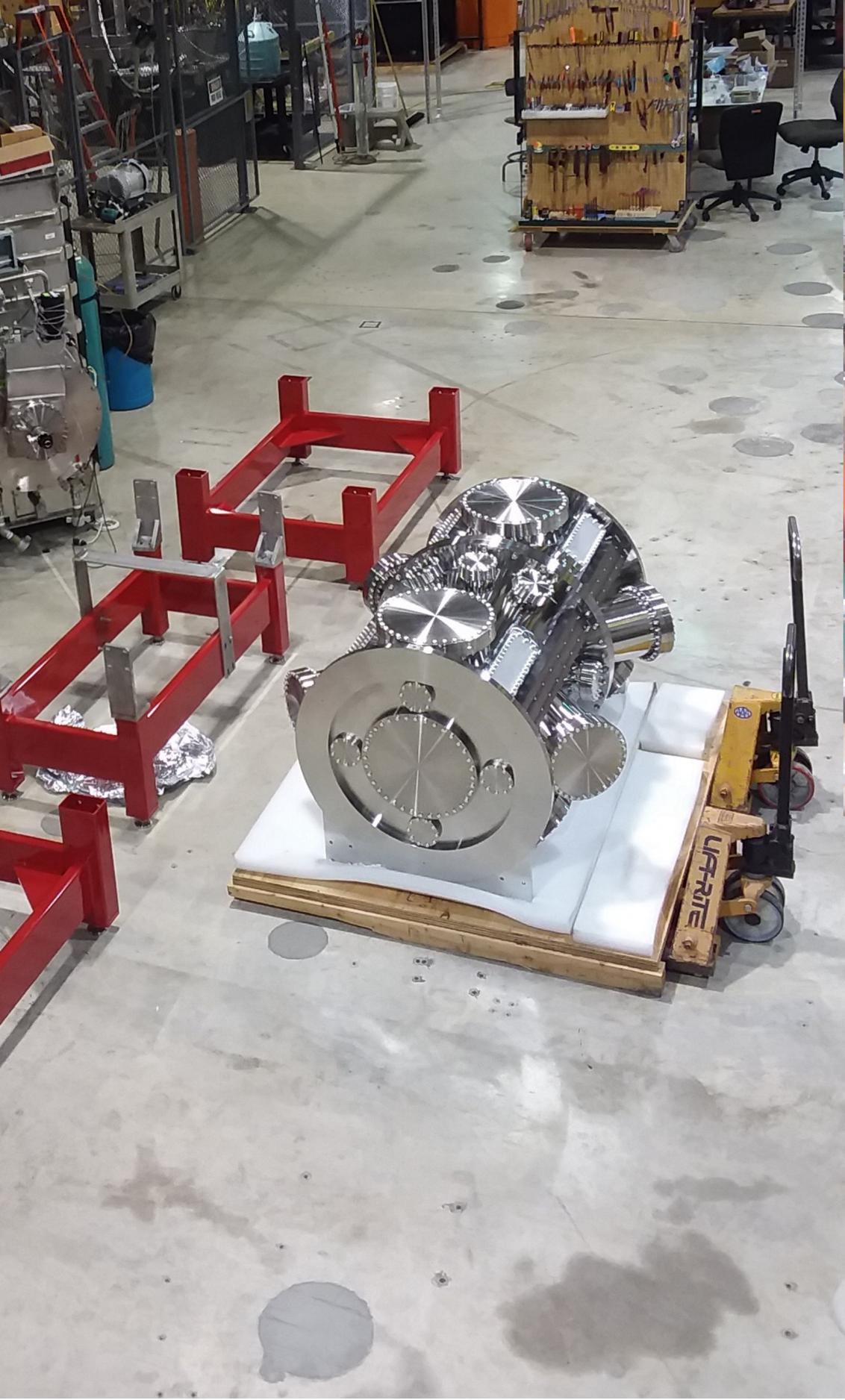
Fokker-Planck modeling of synergistic heating scheme shows in-situ ion acceleration; improved confinement



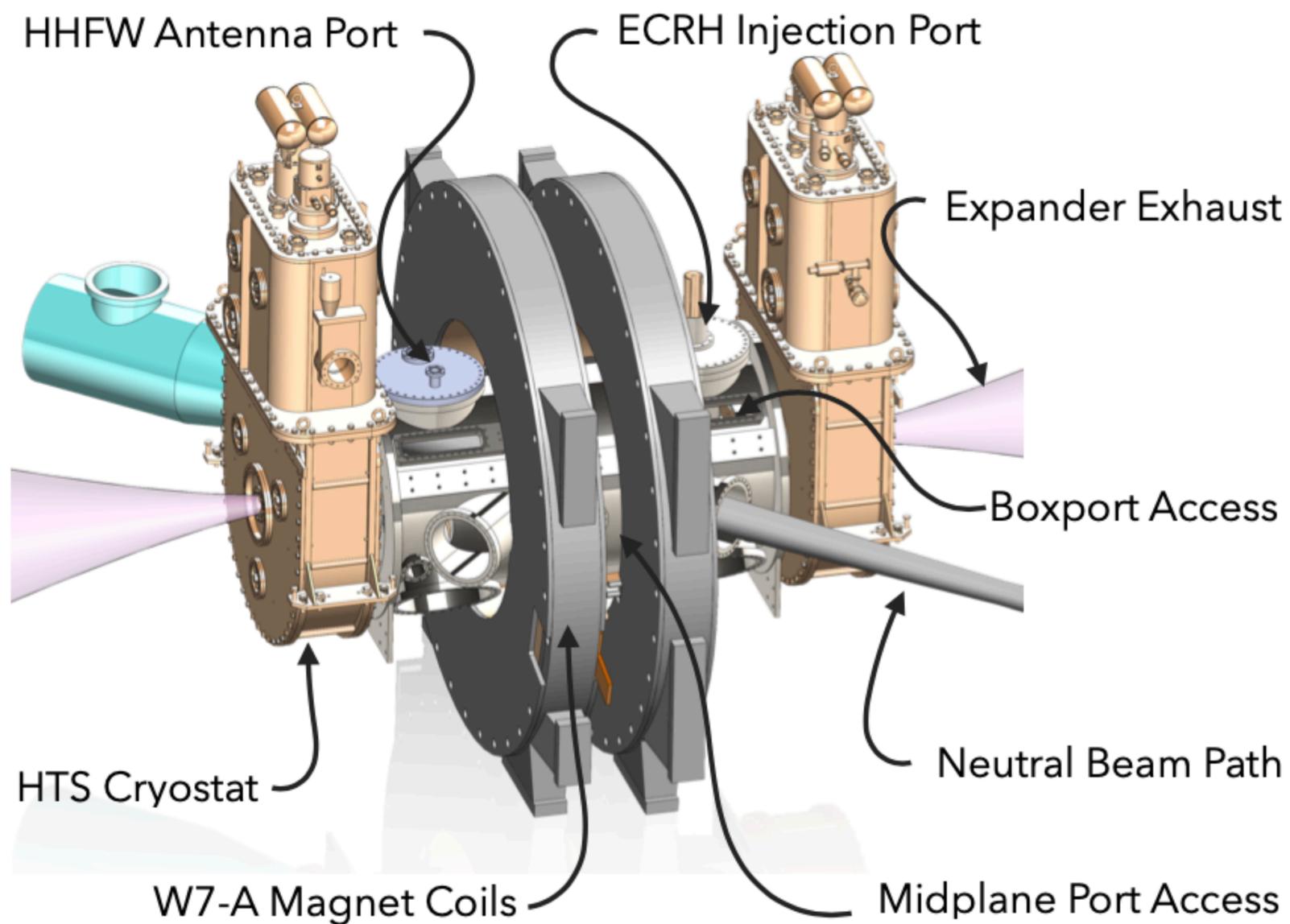
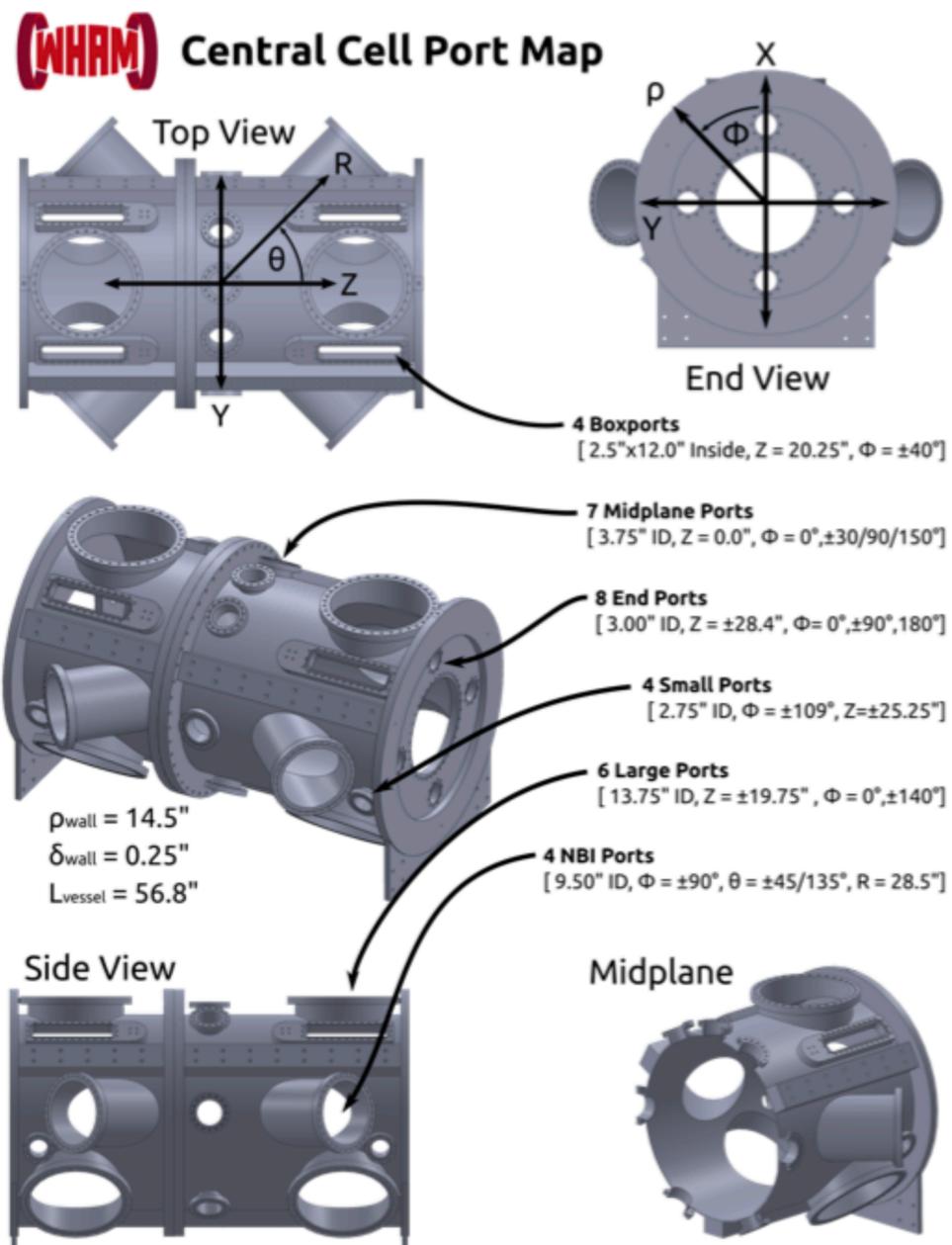
R. W. Harvey, Y. V. Petrov, and C. B. Forest, "3D distributions resulting from neutral beam, ICRF and EC heating in an axisymmetric mirror,"

WHAM is now under construction at the Physical Sciences Lab of the University of Wisconsin: First plasma expected summer 2022





WHAM Central Cell Diagnostic Access





UW Physics, Engineering Physics and Physical Sciences Lab



Jan Egedal



Cary Forest



Jay Anderson



John Wallace



Steve Oliva

Students



Kunal Sanwalka



Danah Velez



Douglass Endrizzi

Post Docs



Mykola Ialovega



Oliver Schmitz



Mike Clark



Jeremiah Kirch



Oscar Anderson



Jake Murawski



Jon Pizzo

MIT and CFS



Sergey Kuznetsov



Alexey Radovinsky



David Meichle



Alex Zhukovsky



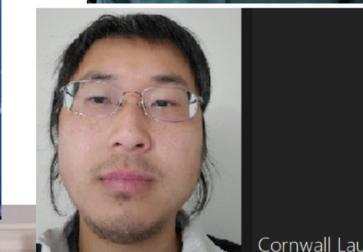
Dennis Whyte



Mark Stowell



Abhay K Ram

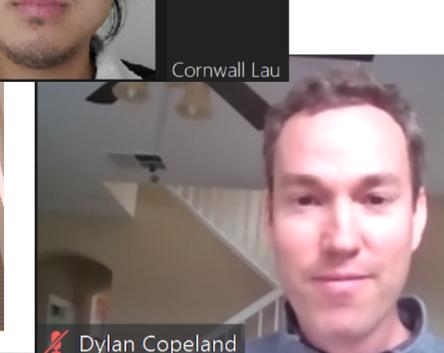


Cornwall Lau

MIT rf C



John C Wright



Dylan Copeland



Ethan Peterson



Yuri Petrov

GA ECH hardware



Charles Moller



Grant Kristofek



Blake Mitchell



Dan Nash



Nick Kelton



Bob Mumgaard



Atul Kumar



Bob Harvey



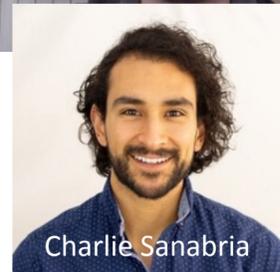
Juan Francisco Caneses Marin



David Green ORNL



John Lohr



Charlie Sanabria

End of talk

Thank you for your attention and please help us !