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Effect of the Small-Scale Field on the Heating of the Polar Cap of the Radio Pulsar J0901-4046

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Abstract—The effect of a small-scale magnetic field on the heating of the polar cap of the pulsar J0901-4046 by the reverse current of positrons is considered. It is shown that under some configurations of a small-scale field, the luminosity of its polar cap can reach 10^{25} erg/s.

Keywords: radio pulsars, neutron stars, positrons
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INTRODUCTION

Radio pulsar J0901-4046—the slowest known radio pulsar [1]. Its rotation period P is only $P = 75.89$ s [1]. Estimation of its magnetic field from $\dot{P} = 2.25 \times 10^{-13}$ gives the value of the dipole magnetic field B_{dip} at the magnetic pole $B_{dip} = 2.6 \times 10^{14}$ G [1], while its characteristic age $\tau = P/2\dot{P}$ is $\tau = 5.3 \times 10^6$ yr, rotational energy loss $E = 2.0 \times 10^{28}$ erg/s [1]. The distance D to it is either 328 or 467 pc [1]. Such pulsars lie below the "off line" and are usually explained by the presence of a small-scale component of the magnetic field on the surface of the neutron star, see e.g., [2–5]. In this paper, we consider the effect of a small-scale field on the heating of the polar cap of this pulsar.

1. MODEL

The magnetic field near the magnetic pole of the pulsar is modeled using a two-dipole model [3]:

$$B(x) = \frac{3x(x \cdot m) - mr^2}{r^5} + \frac{3r_{sc}(r_{sc} \cdot m_{sc}) - m_{sc}r_{sc}^2}{r_{sc}^5}, \quad (1)$$

where $r = |x|$ is the distance from the center of the star, the plane $z = 0$ corresponds to the surface of the neutron star, z—the height above the surface of the star, $m = me_z$ is the dipole magnetic moment of the star, $B_{dip} = 2m/r_{ns}^3$, $r_{sc} = x + \delta r_{ns}e_x - (r_{ns} - l)e_z$, $B_{sc} = 2m_{sc}/l^3$ is the strength of the small-scale magnetic field at the magnetic pole of the star, Fig. 1. In this paper we have limited ourselves to the case of $l = r_{ns}/20$. The angle of inclination of the radio pulsar χ Fig. 1 was assumed to be $\chi = 30°$. The pulsar was considered in a model of the polar cap with a steady state charge limited flow of electrons from the surface of the star. The generation of electron-positron pairs was calculated in the same way as in [6]. At the same time, it was considered that the pairs are born in a bound state (positronium), which are then ionized by thermal radiation from the surface of the star. The photoionization rate parameter W_0 was assumed to be $W_0 = 6 \times 10^5$ s^{-1}, see [6, 7]. In order to estimate the possible effects of photon splitting and positronium annihilation, we assumed that only a fraction of f pairs were photoionized, and the remaining $(1 - f)$ pairs were annihilated immediately after formation. The surface temperature of the star T_{surf} was thought to be $T_{surf} = 3 \times 10^5$ K.

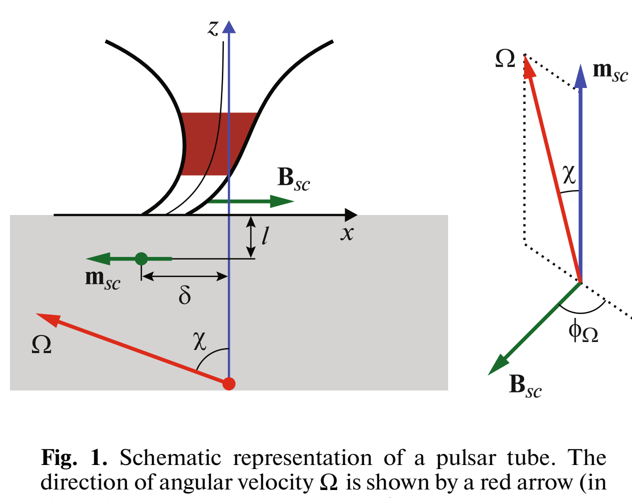

Fig. 1. Schematic representation of a pulsar tube. The direction of angular velocity Ω is shown by a red arrow (in the online version), χ—the angle of the pulsar, the brown area (in the online version) shows the location of the pulsar diode.

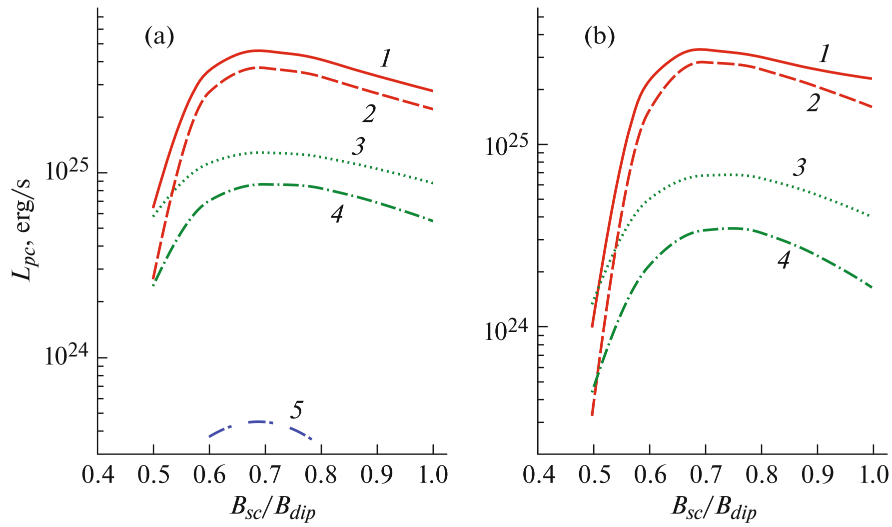

Fig. 2. The luminosity L_{tot} of the polar cap is shown due to its heating by reverse current positrons for various small-scale field configurations. (a) Corresponds to the case $f = 1$, (b) $f = 0.1$. *1*—$\delta = 0.03$, $\varphi_\Omega = 0$, *2*—$\delta = 0.03$, $\varphi_\Omega = 0.2\pi$, *3*—$\delta = 0.02$, $\varphi_\Omega = 0$, *4*—$\delta = 0.02$, $\varphi_\Omega = 0.2\pi$, *5*—$\delta = 0.01$, $\varphi_\Omega = 0$.

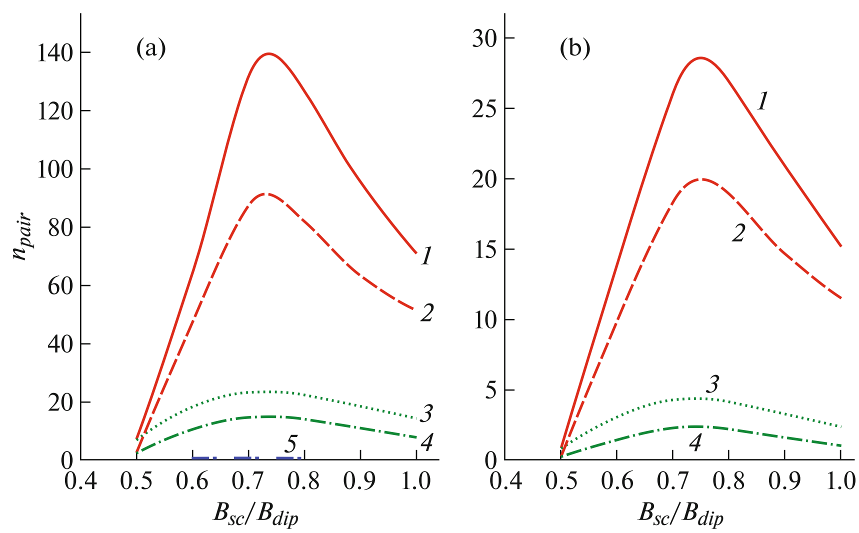

Fig. 3. Same as Fig. 2, but for the number of electron-positron pairs formed n_{pair} in units $(\Omega B_{dip})/(2\pi ce)$. *1*—$\delta = 0.03$, $\varphi_\Omega = 0$, *2*—$\delta = 0.03$, $\varphi_\Omega = 0.2\pi$, *3*—$\delta = 0.02$, $\varphi_\Omega = 0$, *4*—$\delta = 0.02$, $\varphi_\Omega = 0.2\pi$, *5*—$\delta = 0.01$, $\varphi_\Omega = 0$.

2. RESULTS

Figure 2 shows the effect of a small-scale field on the luminosity of the polar cap L_{tot}. The heating of the polar cap was calculated in the scope of the "model of rapid screening", see the calculation details in [8]. Figure 3 shows the number of electron-positron pairs formed n_{pair} in units $(\Omega B_{dip})/(2\pi ce)$, where $\Omega = 2\pi/P$ is the angular velocity of rotation of the star. In the case $\varphi_\Omega = 0$, $\delta = 0.01$ at $f = 1$ the pulsar is on the verge of shutting down $n_{pair} \sim 0.2(\Omega B_{dip})|(2\pi ce)$, at $f = 0.1$ it is already off. In the present paper, we hypothesized that the neutron star has a surface temperature of $T_{surf} = 3 \times 10^5$ K and a noticeable small-scale field with a scale of $l \sim 1$ km, even though its age is $\tau = 5.3 \times 10^6$ yr. First, it is worth noting that the older pulsar B0950+08 with an age of $\tau = 17.5 \times 10^6$ yr has a star surface temperature of $T_{surf} = (1–3) \times 10^5$ K [9]. Second, the star may have been further heated by the rotochemical mechanism [10] or, like perhaps J0250+5854, the pulsar J0901-4046 has recently passed through the Hall attractor stage [11], during which, in particular, its small-scale field may have formed. In addition, it is possible that its real age is not so great, and is only $\sim 10^3$–10^5 year [12], so the star may simply not have had time to cool down, and the small-scale field may have noticeably disintegrated. In this paper, we assumed that the angle of inclination of the pulsar is $\chi = 30°$, which is not much different from the $\chi = 10°$ value used in the paper. However, if in [5] it is assumed that the dipole magnetic field is 2 orders of magnitude higher than the estimate [1], reaching the values of $B_{dip} \sim 3 \times 10^{16}$ G on the surface of the star, then in this paper we were able to show that in order to preserve the work of J0901-4046, we can do with only doubling the surface field. At the same time, it should be noted that in our explanation, unlike the one proposed in [5], there are still problems associated with the suppression of the generation of electron-positron pairs due to the splitting of photons in a strong magnetic field.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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