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Numerical simulation of magnetohydrodynamic problems: application to dynamo action and liquid metal batteries

We study the generation of magnetic fields by flows of electrically conducting fluids (called dynamo action) and the stability of liquid metal batteries using direct numerical simulations. We have been developing a so-called code SFEMaNS since 2002 [1] capable of simulating the nonlinear magnetohydrodynamic (MHD) equations in heterogeneous domains (with electrical conductivity or magnetic permeability jumps) in axisymmetric geometries and with several fluids. We present in this talk a case of dynamo action obtained in a cylindrical tank [2], namely a model of the von Kármán Sodium experiment (VKS), which could generate a steady or intermittent magnetic field in 2007 [3]. We will also discuss liquid metal batteries that would be less expensive than traditional batteries to store renewable energy produced intermittently and which are developed by a US start-up AMBRI [4]. We investigate a possible instability of these batteries [5].

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Key words : Magnetohydrodynamics, dynamo effect, direct numerical simulation, Multiphase flows.

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