Journal of Advances in Science and Technology
Vol. 20, Issue No. 1, March-2023, ISSN 2230-9659

Studying the properties of antimatter and its potential uses

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Abstract - Antimatter is a unique type of matter that consists of antiparticles with electrical charges opposite to those of ordinary particles and different quantum numbers.

The contemporary theory of antimatter originated in 1928 when Paul Dirac published a paper that laid its foundations. In a 1931 paper, Dirac predicted the existence of antimatter and referred to the positron as the "anti-electron."

Dirac's wave equation postulated the existence of anti-particles like anti-protons and anti-neutrons, which scientists later discovered through experimental observations in 1955 and 1956.

Keywords - Antimatter, Antiparticles, Properties, Potential, Application

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INTRODUCTION

In 1995, physicists created the first anti-atom, an antimatter equivalent of an ordinary atom. Subsequently, scientists produced 18 heavy anti-atoms, the nucleus of anti-helium-4, at the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider. The detection of these anti-atoms by the Spectrometer on the International Space Station suggested the abundance of antimatter in the universe. However, scientists have yet to find evidence of large-scale antimatter in the universe.

Despite this, scientists have been able to bind a small number of antiparticles together to form antimatter at particle accelerators, although this only amounts to a few nanograms. As humans continue to produce antimatter, it is essential to examine its potential benefits and applications in various industries while addressing general challenges and issues

OBJECTIVES

- To identify potential applications of antimatter on a commercial and industrial scale
- To recognize the critical challenges in the implementation of anti-matter

METHODOLOGY

This study derived the most critical properties of antimatter based on experimental findings and contemplated the variety of applications in the fields of military, medicine, and energy production.

The challenges were identified based on the use in each industry and properties of anti-matter.

RESULTS

The properties of antimatter are:

- Antiparticles, also called antimatter, are produced throughout the universe whenever there are high-energy particle collisions. When cosmic rays with high energy interact with the Earth's atmosphere, they create minuscule quantities of antiparticles as a by-product in the resulting particle jets. These antiparticles immediately collide with nearby ordinary matter and are annihilated.
- Antiparticles have the same mass as ordinary particles, but they possess opposing electric charges and different quantum numbers.
- When antimatter combines with matter, it results in annihilation, producing enormous amounts of energy in the form of photons, gamma rays, neutrinos, and antiparticle pairs. The amount of energy produced is proportional to the total mass of the colliding matter and antimatter, as per Einstein's famous equation, $E = mc^2$.
- Just like ordinary matter, antimatter particles can bond with one another to form antimatter. They can combine in almost identical ways to create antiatoms and other anti-molecules, making it theoretically possible to construct electrical equipment and buildings using antimatter
- Antimatter behaves the same as normal matter in terms of physical laws, such as gravity, electromagnetism, and quantum mechanics. This is known as the CPT

symmetry, which states that the laws of physics are invariant under the simultaneous reversal of charge, parity, and time

Military applications:

Creation of Antimatter weapon: *An antimatter weapon is a device that uses antimatter as a propellant or explosive. Based on property 3, large amounts of energy in the form of ionizing radiation are released during particle-antiparticle annihilation, and using the convention of 1 kiloton of TNT=roughly* $4.184 * J$ *, 0.5g of matter on reacting with 0.5 g of antimatter would be as explosive and destructive as the primitive atomic bomb of the 1940s*

- **Directed energy weapons:** Antimatter can be used to create beams of radiation, such as gamma rays or neutrinos, that can be directed at targets. Antimatter beams could be used for communication, surveillance, or destruction.

- **Thermonuclear weapons:** Antimatter can be used as a trigger for powerful nuclear fusion reactions, resulting in massive explosions. Antimatter bombs could have a much higher yield than conventional nuclear bombs but would require enormous amounts of antimatter

This provides a significant advantage from a military point of view, especially in terms of strategic planning and deterrence.

Medicine:

- ***Positron Emission Topography:*** *Antimatter is already in use in this field to create high-resolution images of the body. Antimatter can potentially reveal images of the location of the tumor and highlight metabolic processes in the body.* Antimatter medicine could offer more precise and effective therapies than conventional methods, such as using antiprotons to kill cancer cells or using positrons to stimulate nerve regeneration.
- *According to the scientists at CERN, antiprotons were found to be 4 times as lethal as a proton in human cells. This provides an opportunity for using antimatter in curing cancer and other aggressive tumors, that might be invisible to X-rays or MRIs*

Fuel and Energy Production

- Antimatter energy production is feasible by harvesting antiprotons and positrons in space and forming stable antimatter atoms and molecules. This is theoretically the most efficient way of generating electricity as energy per unit mass is about 2 times the order of energy produced by fusion reaction (about $6.3 * 10^{14} J\ kg^{-1}$ for proton-proton chain).
- It is a potential candidate for use in interplanetary and interstellar travel as a source of energy since a few grams of antimatter are capable of sending an unmanned mission to Mars in about a month. An antimatter rocket would possess a greater impulse and energy density than any proposed class of rocket.
- Antimatter-catalysed fusion: This is a hybrid system that uses small amounts of antimatter to trigger fusion reactions, which are more efficient and cleaner than fission reactions. Antimatter-catalyzed fusion could be used for space propulsion or power generation
- Antimatter beam: This is a system that uses the charged particles from antimatter-matter annihilation to create a beam of radiation, which can be directed by magnetic fields. Antimatter beams could be used for weapons, communication, or scientific research

RESEARCH

Antimatter gravity is a theoretical experiment that aims to measure the gravitational interaction between matter and antimatter. Antimatter gravity could test the validity of the equivalence principle and general relativity, and reveal new aspects of gravity.

CHALLENGES

- Cost: Based on current information, antimatter costs 62.5 trillion dollars per gram, which makes it the most expensive material in the commercial world. By comparison, the global economy is barely 100 trillion dollars. This is a major deterrent to the production and implementation of antimatter and makes it near impossible to implement any of the potential uses of antimatter on a military, let alone a civilian scale.
- Storage: Based on property 2, antimatter annihilates instantly on interaction with matter. Therefore, it is impossible to use a container made of matter and it necessitates the use of electromagnetic fields through coils for instance in a vacuum to prevent annihilation. However, this method is feasible only for a few moments. Scientists are trying to keep antimatter from annihilating on an atomic scale with mixed success with a record of 405 days at a stretch.
- Low efficiency: As much as 50% of the energy produced in pair annihilation of nucleons and antinucleons is carried away by neutrinos and current technology is incapable of utilizing all of the energy produced.

- Safety and Ethics: The use of antimatter raises some safety and ethical issues, such as:

  1) The potential for misuse: Antimatter could be used for destructive purposes, such as weapons of mass destruction or terrorism. Antimatter weapons could have devastating effects on the target and the surrounding area, releasing huge amounts of radiation and heat. Antimatter could also be used to blackmail or coerce other nations or groups, creating geopolitical instability and conflict.

  2) The environmental and health impacts: Antimatter could have negative effects on the environment and human health, as it releases huge amounts of radiation and heat. Antimatter could cause pollution, contamination, or damage to natural resources and ecosystems. Antimatter could also pose a risk to the people who work with it or are exposed to it, causing radiation sickness, cancer, or genetic mutations.

CONCLUSION

Anti-matter presents a plethora of potential benefits, ranging from medical to energy production applications. However, the industrialization of anti-matter faces significant challenges that are currently difficult to overcome. The cost of producing just one gram of anti-matter is equivalent to the entire economy of human civilization. It will require decades, if not centuries, before anti-matter can be utilized for commercial purposes on a civilian scale. Furthermore, the storage of anti-matter is a formidable challenge, rendering it challenging to employ even on a nano-level. While the research industry is endeavoring to find a solution, there is currently no long-term solution for storing anti-matter. The existing technologies are inadequate to harness the colossal amounts of energy produced by anti-matter and matter annihilation. Unless significant breakthroughs in physics are achieved to address the two primary challenges of cost and storage, anti-matter technologies will remain in the domain of research and science fiction.

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