# A KINETIC EVALUATION ON NO<sub>2</sub> FORMATION IN THE POST-FLAME REGION OF PRESSURIZED OXY-COMBUSTION PROCESS

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Pressurized oxy-combustion is a promising technology that can significantly reduce the energy penalty associated with first generation oxy-combustion for CO<sub>2</sub> capture in coal-fired power plants. However, higher pressure enhances the production of strong acid gases, including NO<sub>2</sub> and SO<sub>3</sub>, aggravating the corrosion threat during flue gas recirculation. In the flame region, high temperature NOx exists mainly as NO, while conversion from NO to NO<sub>2</sub> happened in post-flame region. In this study, the conversion of  $NO \rightarrow NO_2$  has been kinetically evaluated under representative post-flame conditions of pressurized oxy-combustion after validating the mechanism (80 species and 464 reactions), which includes nitrogen and sulfur chemistry based on GRI-Mech 3.0. The effects of residence time, temperature, pressure, major species  $(O_2/H_2O)$ , and minor or trace species (CO/SOx) on  $NO_2$ formation are studied. The calculation results show that when pressure is increased from 1 to 15 bar, NO<sub>2</sub> is increased from 1 to 60 ppm, and the acid dew point increases by over 80°C. Higher pressure and temperature greatly reduce the time required to reach equilibrium, e.g., at 15 bar and 1300°C, equilibrium is reached in 1 millisecond and the  $NO_2/NO$  is about 0.8%. The formation and destruction of  $NO_2$  is generally through the reversible reactions:  $NO+O+M=NO_2+M$ ,  $HO_2+NO=NO_2+OH$ , and  $NO+O_2=NO_2+O$ . With increasing pressure and decreasing temperature, O plays a much more important role than  $HO_2$  in the oxidation of NO. A higher water vapor content accelerates

 $NO_2$  formation in all cases by providing more O and  $HO_2$  radicals. The addition of CO or  $SO_2$  also promotes the formation of  $NO_2$ . Finally,  $NO_2$  formation in a Pressurized oxy-combustion furnace is compared with that in a practical atmospheric air-combustion furnace and the comparison show that  $NO_2$  formation in a Pressurized oxy-combustion furnace can be over 10 times that of an atmospheric air-combustion furnace.

Key words: NO<sub>2</sub>, pressurized oxy-combustion, detailed mechanism, post-flame region.

Nomenclature				
ASU	Air separation unit	POC	Pressurized oxy-combustion	
FGR	Gas recirculation	PFR	Plug flow reactor	
GPU	Gas processing unit	ROP	Rate of production	
HHV	High heating value	SPOC	Staged Pressurized Oxy-Combustion process	
JSR	Jet-stirred reactor			

#### 1. Introduction

Oxy-coal combustion is one of the routes for controlling CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from coal combustion, however, first-generation oxy-combustion technologies, operated under atmospheric pressure suffered a significant energy penalty in net generating efficiency of more than 10 percentage points. This is primarily due to the auxiliary energy consumption from the air separation unit (ASU), flue gas recirculation (FGR), and gas processing unit (GPU). A promising new technology is pressurized oxy-combustion (POC), which can increase the plant efficiency by recovering the latent heat in the flue gas moisture and coupled it back with the Since 2000, POC technologies have been cycle [1]. developed ThermoEnergy/CANMET and ETEA/ENEL, with the highest net plant efficiency around 33.5% (High heating value, HHV). In recent years, research at Washington University in St. Louis has proposed a unique POC process aiming at minimize the recycled flue gas through fuel staging combustion [2]. The process is termed the Staged Pressurized Oxy-Combustion process (SPOC), and has a net efficiency of 35.7-36.7% (HHV), which is only 4 percentage points lower than that of normal air combustion [3].

POC appears to be a promising way to increase the net efficiency of oxy-combustion, whereas, high pressure enhances the production of strong acid gases, including NO<sub>2</sub>, aggravating the low-temperature corrosion. Another motivation in terms of the importance of NO<sub>2</sub> in POC, is closely related with a new developed technology of integrated SOx/NOx removal during GPU process at elevated pressures [4]. In this technology, only when NO<sub>2</sub> is formed in gas phase, it is able to active the fast dissolution of NOx in liquid [5], and to oxidize SO<sub>2</sub> into SO<sub>3</sub> or oxidize H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> into H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> under the interaction between SOx/NOx in gas or liquid, respectively [6].

 $NO_2$  formation is more significant at lower temperature (in the post-flame region) and higher pressure [7]. However, the formation of  $NO_2$  receive little attention in combustion process, since  $NO_2$  is unstable at high temperatures, regardless of pressure, and only a

neglectable amount can be produced in post-flame area at atmospheric pressure [8]. There are few studies on specific formation of  $NO_2$  formation in post-flame region at elevated pressure, except for the studies of slow conversion kinetics of  $NO \rightarrow NO_2$  in atmosphere chemistry [9] and in post-flame region at atmospheric pressure [10], and the related interaction of  $NO_2$  during gas fuel oxidation process [11].

Glarborg et al. [12] experimentally and numerically studied the impact of NO and NO<sub>2</sub> on CO oxidation at atmospheric pressure in the temperature range of 800-1400 K. It was found that low-concentration of NO enhances CO oxidation in the 900-1100 K range by converting HO<sub>2</sub> to OH through HO<sub>2</sub>+NO=NO<sub>2</sub>+OH (R1) and a catalytic recycle reaction through NO<sub>2</sub>+H=NO+OH (R2). NO<sub>2</sub> is much more efficient than NO in removing radicals and has a strong inhibiting effect on CO oxidation. They also illustrated that the presence of NO<sub>2</sub> impurities may significantly affect the experiments containing NO. Rasmussen et al. [13] continued this study at 20-100 bar and 600-900 K in a pressurized flow reactor. It was found that at elevated pressure, besides R1 and R2, the effect of the recycling reactions  $NO+O+M=NO_2+M$  (R3),  $NO+O_2=NO_2+O$  (R4),  $NO_2+HO_2=HONO+O_2$  (R5), HONO+M=NO+OH+M (R6) also become important. Mueller et al. [14] also observed the similar results, and their further measurement at elevated pressures show that the overall effect of NO on fuel oxidation and the conversion of NO  $\rightarrow$  NO<sub>2</sub> depend strongly on pressure and stoichiometry (oxygen concentration). The model predictions using the detailed mechanism are in good agreement with the experimental data over the wide temperature and pressure ranges. Gersen et al. [15] studied the effect of NO<sub>2</sub> on the ignition of CH<sub>4</sub> and C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub> in a rapid compression machine (25-50 bar), and indicated that the generation of chain-initiating OH radicals through reactions R1 and R2 is one of the most important routes. Krzywanski et.al [16] and Liu et.al [17] also pointed that in circulating fluidized bed the high CO<sub>2</sub> concentration could inhabit the calcination of limestone, which will increase the formation of NOx.

Hori et al. [10] studied the promotion effect of hydrocarbons on the NO  $\rightarrow$  NO<sub>2</sub> conversion in an atmospheric pressure flow reactor at 600-1100 K. It was found that hydrocarbons oxidize NO to NO<sub>2</sub> predominantly through R1, and hydrocarbon oxidation leads to additional HO<sub>2</sub> production, and the effectiveness of hydrocarbon on the NO  $\rightarrow$  NO<sub>2</sub> conversion dependents strongly on fuel type and temperature. Mueller et al. [18] further studied the interaction between SO<sub>2</sub> and NO in the CO/H<sub>2</sub>O/O<sub>2</sub>/NO/SO<sub>2</sub> system, at pressures and temperatures ranging from 0.5-10.0 bar and 950-1040 K, respectively. They concluded that at higher pressures, where the conversion ratio of NO  $\rightarrow$  NO<sub>2</sub> increases, the interaction via SO<sub>2</sub>+NO<sub>2</sub>=SO<sub>3</sub>+NO (R7) also becomes important and cannot not be neglected.

All the above studies have ensured the impact of NOx on multi species oxidation through several recycling reaction pathways. The impacts are closely related to HO<sub>2</sub>, H, OH and other intermediate radicals, and are strongly dependent on pressure, temperature and atmosphere. In POC process, the flue gas composition in the post-flame region is far different from that in traditional air combustion [19], e.g., the SOx concentration is higher by several times; the moisture content depends on warm or cold FGR recycling. Besides of the elevated pressure, the temperature distribution and residence time in post-flame region can also be much different depending on the furnace design. These prominent differences in POC process, indicate a potential different NO<sub>2</sub> emission from traditional air combustion [20].

This study aims to clarify the  $NO_2$  formation mechanism in pressurized oxy-combustion. The conversion of  $NO \rightarrow NO_2$  has been kinetically evaluated under representative post-flame conditions of pressurized oxy-combustion after validating an updated detailed mechanism. The effects of residence time, temperature, pressure, major species  $(O_2/H_2O)$ , and minor or trace species (CO/SOx) on  $NO_2$  formation are studied. Sensitivity analysis and reaction pathway analysis are conducted to demonstrate the interaction mechanism, respectively.

## 2. Modeling Approach

#### 2.1 Experimental reference

Up to now, only two valuable groups related to NO<sub>2</sub> production at high pressure were reported in the literature. Dayma and Dagaut [21] used a spherical fused silica jet-stirred reactor (JSR) [22] wrapped with ceramic wool and located inside a stainless-steel pressure resistant jacket allowing operation up to 10 atm. The effect of NO or NO<sub>2</sub> addition on H<sub>2</sub> oxidation in this reactor were analyzed and their experimental results are plotted in Fig.1(a).

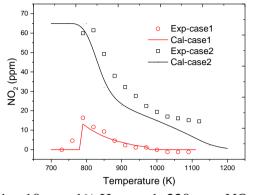
Mueller et al. [18] studied the effect of trace SO<sub>2</sub> and NO on CO oxidation in a pressurized flow reactor [23], which can produce a homogenous, premixed, highly dilute, one-dimensional gas flow at sufficient initial temperatures to initiate chemical reaction of the mixture. The high-pressure experimental results were plotted in Fig.1(b). The uncertainties in these measurements are: H<sub>2</sub>O, 5%; O<sub>2</sub>, 4%; CO, 3%; CO<sub>2</sub>, 3%; NO, 5%; NO<sub>2</sub>, 5%; and SO<sub>2</sub>, 3% of the reading.

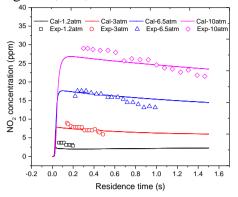
#### 2.2 Gas-phase model

In this study, a detailed gas-phase mechanism including nitrogen and sulfur chemistry based on GRI-Mech 3.0 was adopted for the evaluating calculation. GRI-Mech 3.0 is an optimized mechanism designed to model natural gas combustion, including NO formation and reburn chemistry [24]. To understand the interaction of SOx and NOx in POC condition, in which, the mechanism of sulfur and SOx/NOx interaction are added from Glarborg et al [25]. The full mechanism includes 80 species and 464 steps. CHEMKIN is a software package whose purpose is to facilitate the formation, solution, and interpretation of problems involving elementary gas-phase chemical kinetics. It provides a flexible and powerful tool for incorporating complex chemical kinetics into simulations of fluid dynamics [26]. Plug flow reactor (PFR) is a continuous reaction flow model in CHEMKIN software package, which is used to simulate the post flame region and analyze the products with respect to the residence time. In this model, it is assumed that there is no back mixing in the flow direction and there is good mixing in each reactor section perpendicular to the flow direction, so the mass diffusion is ignorable [27]. Rate of production (ROP) analysis are useful tools in interpreting detailed chemical kinetics calculations and can provide a better understanding of the contribution of each reaction [28]. Sensitivity analysis is also another useful tool in understanding the role of each reaction. This method can find out the Rate-limiting reactions and analyse the importance of each reaction in the whole system.

Two representative experimental result from Dayma and Dagaut [21] are compared with the predicted results by the mechanism in this study. As shown in Fig.1(a), the predicted results agree well with the experimental data at either fuel-rich or fuel-lean condition. Mueller et al. [18] measured NO<sub>2</sub> emissions at 1.2 bar, 3 bar, 6.5 bar, and 10 bar, which are plotted in Fig.1(b) to

compare with the calculation results of this model. The comparison indicates that the mechanism used in this study is able to predict the interaction among NOx, CO, and SOx.





(a) 1 s, 10 atm, 1% H<sub>2</sub>, case1: 220 ppm NO, 0.333% O<sub>2</sub>; case2: 65 ppm NO<sub>2</sub>, 1% O<sub>2</sub> [15]

(b) 950 K, 0.51% CO, 0.75% O<sub>2</sub>, 0.49% H<sub>2</sub>O,97 ppm NO, 500 ppm SO<sub>2</sub> [10]

Fig.1: Mechanism validating by comparison with the data in literatures

#### 2.3 Test conditions

The conditions used are taken according to the real post-flame conditions of pressurized oxy-combustion (1-15 bar, 700-1100  $^{\rm o}$ C), and with the composition of 1000 ppm NO, 5% O<sub>2</sub>, 15% H<sub>2</sub>O, trace CO/SO<sub>2</sub>, while CO<sub>2</sub> is injected as the balance gas to simulate the oxy-combustion atmosphere. The tested ranges of pressure, temperature, and specie concentration are listed in Table 1. The residence time ranges from 0.01 s to 10 s, depending on the temperature and pressure. Gopan et al. [3] found that when the pressure is higher than 16 bar, the effect of pressure on the net plant efficiency is small. Therefore, the pressure range in this paper is selected with 1-15 bar.

Table 1: The range of tested temperature, pressure, and specie concentration.

Parameters	Ranges	Units	Variable gas composition
Temperature	700-1300	°C	1000 ppm NO, 5% O <sub>2</sub> , 15% H <sub>2</sub> O, CO <sub>2</sub> as balance gas
Pressure	1-15	bar	1000 ppm NO, 5% O <sub>2</sub> , 15% H <sub>2</sub> O, CO <sub>2</sub> as balance gas
$O_2$	0-15	%	1000 ppm NO, 15% H <sub>2</sub> O, CO <sub>2</sub> as balance gas
$H_2O$	1-25	%	1000 ppm NO, 5% O <sub>2</sub> , CO <sub>2</sub> as balance gas
CO	0-10000	ppm	1000 ppm NO, 5% O <sub>2</sub> , 15% H <sub>2</sub> O, CO <sub>2</sub> as balance gas
$SO_2$	0-5000	ppm	1000 ppm NO, 5% O <sub>2</sub> , 15% H <sub>2</sub> O, CO <sub>2</sub> as balance gas

#### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Effect of pressure and temperature

The effects of pressure and temperature on NO<sub>2</sub> formation in a pressurized PFR is shown in Fig. 2. Higher pressure and temperature are seen to greatly reduce the time required to reach equilibrium, e.g., at 15 bar and 1300°C, equilibrium is reached in 1 millisecond and the NO<sub>2</sub>/NO is about 0.8%; while at 1 bar and 800°C, it needs more than 100 seconds to reach equilibrium. As shown in Fig.2(a), at 15 bar, as the temperature increases from 1000°C to 1300°C the time up to the equilibrium of NO<sub>2</sub> formation reduces, which means that high temperature is favorable for the NO<sub>2</sub> formation. The influence of pressure on the NO<sub>2</sub> formation is shown in Fig.2(b). At both 900

°C and 1000 °C, NO<sub>2</sub> formation is enhanced as the pressure increases from 1bar to 15bar. Under POC conditions, the NO<sub>2</sub> formation are several times higher than the atmospheric air-combustion.

ROP analysis indicates that the formation of NO<sub>2</sub> is mainly through R1, R3, R4, and R5 by the oxidation by HO<sub>2</sub>, O, and O<sub>2</sub>, respectively; however, the contributions of these three reactions strongly depend on pressure and temperature. At atmospheric pressure and high temperature, R3 runs backwards and consumes NO<sub>2</sub>, and most of the NO<sub>2</sub> is produced through R1 by the oxidation of HO<sub>2</sub>, where the effect of reaction O<sub>2</sub>+H<sub>2</sub>O=OH+HO<sub>2</sub> (R8) is important. However, with decreasing temperature and increasing pressure, R3 runs forward and promotes NO<sub>2</sub> formation, and at certain conditions, its contribution to NO<sub>2</sub> is larger than that of R1.

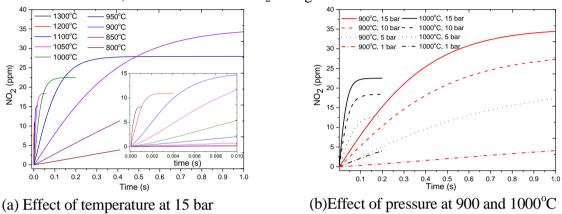


Fig. 2 NO<sub>2</sub> formation along the residence time at different temperatures and pressures (1000 ppm NO, 5% O<sub>2</sub>, 15% H<sub>2</sub>O, CO<sub>2</sub> as balance)

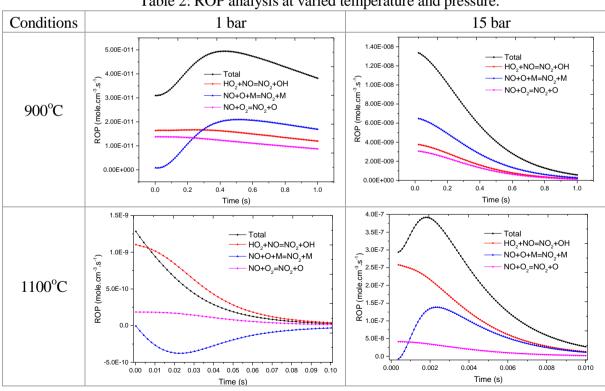


Table 2: ROP analysis at varied temperature and pressure.

#### 3.2 Effect of $O_2$ and $H_2O$

Effect of  $O_2$  concentration on  $NO_2$  formation in POC is shown in Fig. 3(a). With the increasing in  $O_2$  concentration from 0.1% to 15%, the equilibrium  $NO_2$  yield increases with  $O_2$  concentration to the power of 0.5; and the time to reach equilibrium is also reduced.

In the POC system, depending on dry or wet FGR and coal type, the  $H_2O$  concentration in flue gas can vary dramatically. The effect of  $H_2O$  concentration on  $NO_2$  formation is shown in Fig. 3(b). Similar to  $O_2$ , the increasing in concentration also accelerates the formation of  $NO_2$  and shortens the time to reach equilibrium; however, it does not affect the equilibrium point for  $NO_2$  vield.

At 1 bar and 900 °C, NO<sub>2</sub> formation is mainly via R3, R4, R1. In contrast, at 15 bar, R1 can be a little stronger than R4. R1 can become important than R3 and R4 at 15bar and 1300 °C.

The promotion of both  $O_2$  and  $H_2O$  on  $NO_2$  formation is due to the enhancement of OH and  $HO_2$  formation through R8.

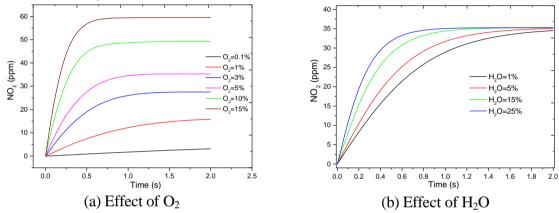
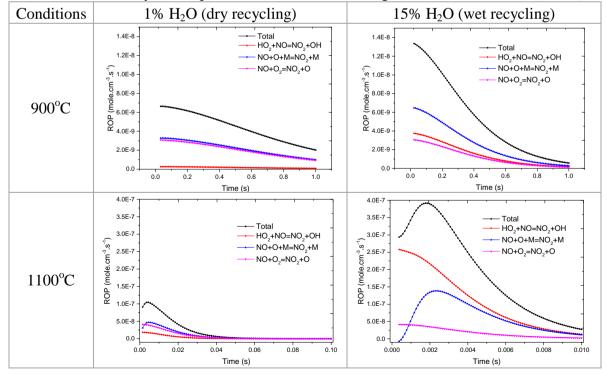


Fig.3 Effect of O<sub>2</sub> (a) and H<sub>2</sub>O (b) (1000 ppm NO, 900°C, 15 bar)

Table 3: ROP analysis comparison between low- and high-moisture conditions (15 bar)



## 3.3 Effect of CO and SO<sub>2</sub>

The effects of CO on  $NO_2$  formation during POC is shown in Fig. 4(a). With increasing the CO concentration, a large amount of  $NO_2$  is produced within about 0.1 s, and then gradually decreases into the equilibrium yield without CO addition. As shown in Fig. 4(b), at initial time, the concertation of CO decreases while  $NO_2$  formation increases quickly, indicating that CO consumption promotes  $NO_2$  formation. To elaborate the  $NO_2$  formation mechanism, the reaction is divided into A and B region by the  $NO_2$  peak.

The ROP and sensitivity analysis on  $NO_2$  formation in the stage A and B is shown in Fig. 5(a) and (b), respectively. CO is mainly oxidized by OH through CO+OH=CO<sub>2</sub>+H (R9), while the conversion of  $NO\rightarrow NO_2$  is through the oxidation by  $HO_2$  through R1. At the starting stage of CO oxidation, the large consumption of OH promotes the forward reaction of R1. With the consumption of  $HO_2$  and the increase in  $NO_2$ , the ROP of R1 producing  $NO_2$  decreases while that of R5 and R6 consuming  $NO_2$  is enhanced, which results in a subsequent decrease of  $NO_2$ .

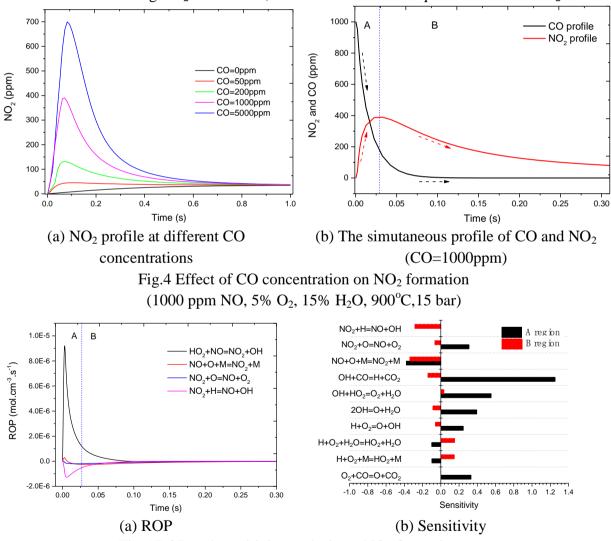


Fig.5 ROP and sensitivity analysis on NO<sub>2</sub> formation (1000 ppm NO, 5% O<sub>2</sub>, 15% H<sub>2</sub>O, 900°C,15 bar)

The effects of  $SO_2$  on  $NO_2$  formation in POC are shown in Fig. 6. It can be seen that the increase in  $SO_2$  concentration promotes the formation of  $NO_2$ , and a large amount of  $SO_3$  is accompanied. The ROP analysis of  $NO_2$  and  $SO_3$  are shown in Fig.7(a) and (b), respectively.  $NO_2$ 

is mainly produced through the oxidation of NO by  $HO_2$  with the production of OH, while consumed by  $SO_2$  so as to enhance the formation of  $SO_3$ .  $SO_3$  formation is mainly through the oxidation of  $HOSO_2$  by  $O_2$  with the production of  $HO_2$ . In related to the formation of  $HOSO_2$ , the consumption of OH is necessary. The production and consumption of OH,  $HO_2$  acts like "catalyst", which promotes the formation of  $NO_2$  and  $SO_3$ . The interaction between  $SO_3$  and  $SO_3$  are elevated pressures can be explained by a cycle which consists of three reactions  $HO_2+NO=NO_2+OH$  (R1),  $SO_2+OH+M=HOSO_2+M$  (R10),  $HOSO_2+O_2=HO_2+SO_3$  (R11) with the global reaction  $NO+SO_2+O_2=NO_2+SO_3$  (R12) [29].

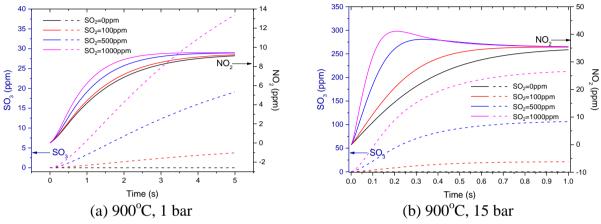


Fig.6 Effect of SO<sub>2</sub> concentration on NO<sub>2</sub> formation (1000 ppm NO, 5% O<sub>2</sub>, 15% H<sub>2</sub>O, 900°C,15 bar; SO<sub>3</sub>-dash line, NO<sub>2</sub>-solid line)

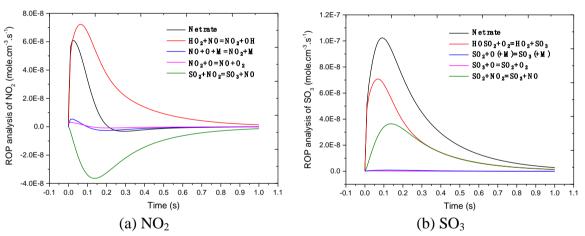


Fig.7: ROP analysis on NO<sub>2</sub> and SO<sub>3</sub> formation when SO<sub>2</sub> is added (1000 ppm NO, 5% O<sub>2</sub>, 15% H<sub>2</sub>O, 900°C,15 bar)

3.4 Comparison of  $NO_2$  formation in the post-flame region of pulverized coal boilers in air-combustion and pressurized oxy-combustion

Based on the analysis results in 3.1-3.3, and according to the boiler temperature profiles shown in Fig. 8 [30], the NO<sub>2</sub> formation is evaluated in a practical atmospheric air-combustion (AAC) furnace and a POC furnace. Because the flue gas volume is compressed proportionally with pressure, the residence time in the POC furnace is much longer. The initial gas composition is from the measurement by Tan et al [31], including bituminous (SB) and lignite (LN) coals.

The results, plotted in Fig.9, show that for the sub-bituminous coal, the NO<sub>2</sub> yield reaches 51 ppm, which is over 10 times that of the AAC furnace (4.6 ppm). Similar results can also be

observed in lean coal. This strong promotion of NO<sub>2</sub> formation is mainly due to the longer residence time and the enhancement of reactions R3 and R12 at elevated pressures.

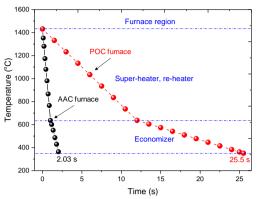


Fig.8 Temperature profile in pulverized coal boilers of air-combustion [30] and pressurized oxy-combustion [32]

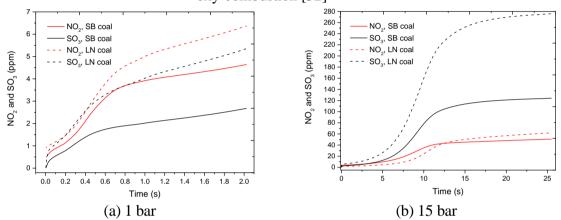


Fig.9: NO<sub>2</sub> formation in pulverized coal boilers of air-combustion (1 bar) and pressurized oxy-combustion (15 bar)

## 5. Conclusion

- (1) Higher pressure and temperature greatly reduce the time required to reach equilibrium, such that NO<sub>2</sub> formation is negligible at sufficiently high temperature, e.g., at 15 bar and 1100°C, the equilibrium of NO/NO<sub>2</sub> system is reached in 10 milliseconds.
- (2) For all cases studied, there was less than 4% conversion from NO to NO<sub>2</sub> within 1 second. The formation and destruction of NO<sub>2</sub> is generally through the reactions: NO+O+M=NO<sub>2</sub>+M, HO<sub>2</sub>+NO=NO<sub>2</sub>+OH, and NO+O<sub>2</sub>=NO<sub>2</sub>+O. At the higher temperatures (e.g., 1100°C), the oxidation of NO by HO<sub>2</sub> and the reaction O<sub>2</sub>+H<sub>2</sub>O=OH+HO<sub>2</sub> become more important. At these temperatures and at lower pressures, NO<sub>2</sub> is reduced via NO+O+M=NO<sub>2</sub>+M, in contrast of producing NO<sub>2</sub> at higher pressures.
- (3) A higher water vapor content accelerates NO<sub>2</sub> formation in all cases by providing more O and HO<sub>2</sub> radicals. The addition of CO or SO<sub>2</sub> accelerates the formation of NO<sub>2</sub>. The effect of CO is mainly through the reaction CO+OH=H+CO<sub>2</sub>. The effect of SO<sub>2</sub> is mainly through the reaction HOSO<sub>2</sub>+O<sub>2</sub>=HO<sub>2</sub>+SO<sub>3</sub>, which produces HO<sub>2</sub> for NO oxidation. The direct interaction of SO<sub>2</sub>+NO<sub>2</sub>=SO<sub>3</sub>+NO inhibits NO<sub>2</sub> formation. At higher pressure and lower temperature (e.g., 1100°C and 1 bar) the influence of SO<sub>2</sub> on NO<sub>2</sub> formation is small.

(4) NO<sub>2</sub> formation in a POC furnace can be over 10 times that of an AAC furnace, such that increase the acid dew point and aggravate the low-temperature corrosion. It is suggested that NO<sub>2</sub> formation and reduction should be taken into consideration in a pressurized oxy-combustion furnace.

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