Innovation in Hybrid Rocket Propulsion System

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ABSTRACT

The hybrid rocket propulsion system is a one-of-a-kind propulsion method that integrates aspects of both solid rocket engines and liquid rocket engines. It has a number of benefits over conventional rocket propulsion systems, such as greater safety, simplicity, and the capability to be controlled. This abstract offers a summary of hybrid rockets, including information on their operating principles as well as the current state of research and development in this area. The use of a solid fuel grain and a liquid or gaseous oxidizer is the primary component of the hybrid rocket design concept. The solid fuel grain, which is normally made up of a compound that is similar to rubber, is set ablaze and allowed to burn while in the presence of the oxidizer, which results in the production of hot gases. These gases are forced out of the rocket through a nozzle, which generates thrust and drives forward movement of the rocket. A hybrid rocket engine incorporates components for rocket motors that run on liquid fuel as well as those that run on solid fuel. The fuel itself is often a solid grain (paraffin or hydroxyl-terminated polybutadiene, or HTPB), whilst the oxidising agent is typically a liquid (hydrogen peroxide or liquid oxygen). These components are brought together in the fuel chamber of the hybrid motor, which also performs the function of the combustion chamber. In this research, we investigate the various technological advancements that have taken place in the production of these motors from the year 1995. There are methods available for measuring the thrust of rocket motors as well as monitoring the combustion reaction products that are present in the rocket plume.

Keywords: Applications, Advantages, Hybrid rocket motors, Limitations.

INTRODUCTION

Rocket engines are the most efficient means of propulsion for spacecraft and certain types of weapon systems. This is not only because they contain their own oxidizer, which allows the propulsion to be independent of the atmosphere around them, but also because they offer a high energy system. One can think of a combustion chamber and a nozzle as the two primary components that make up every rocket engine. The combustion chamber is responsible for producing gases that are extremely hot and under a great deal of pressure. The thermal energy is effectively converted into kinetic energy as the gases are blasted from the nozzle at a high velocity (on the order of 2-3 kin/s). The acceleration of the exhaust gases contributes to the production of thrust. One form of rocket motor known as a hybrid rocket motor is a sort of rocket propulsion system that includes aspects of both solid rocket engines and liquid rocket engines. The use of a solid fuel and a liquid or gaseous oxidizer, which are normally kept in separate locations, is required for its operation. When the oxidizer is lit, it is injected into the combustion chamber, which is where it reacts with the solid fuel to produce thrust. When the oxidizer is ignited, it produces thrust. The combustion chamber, fuel grain, oxidizer injection system, and nozzle are the fundamental elements that make up a hybrid rocket motor. The fuel grain is contained within the combustion chamber, which also serves as the area in which the combustion process takes place. The fuel grain, which is typically a solid substance like rubber or a compound based on plastic, is intended to burn persistently and produce a regulated release of energy. This is accomplished by the use of a design that incorporates both of these characteristics.

The oxidizer, which may be a liquid or a gas like nitrous oxide (N2O), is kept in a location that is distinct from the fuel grain. Typically, it is kept in a tank that is pressurised to a high level and then pumped into the chamber that houses the combustion process using a valve or injector system. The reaction between the oxidizer and the fuel grain produces high-temperature combustion gases, which are then released through a nozzle to generate thrust. When compared to more conventional solid and liquid rocket engines, hybrid rocket motors have an inherent level of safety that makes them an attractive alternative. Because the oxidizer and fuel are kept in different storage areas, there is less of a chance that they will accidentally detonate or explode. In addition, hybrid motors can have their thrust readily controlled by managing the flow of oxidizer, which enables the hybrid motor to have better throttling and shutoff flexibility. In order to develop a hybrid rocket engine, some of the qualities that are associated with solid-fuel and liquid-fuel rocket motors are merged. However,

the hybrid motor operates in a manner that is distinct from rockets that use either solid or liquid fuel. The solid fuel rocket engine actually mixes the fuel and oxidizer into a single solid mass, which is then set ablaze by a flame at the exposed end. This causes the mass to burn, which in turn produces gases that accelerate the rocket motor. The fuel and the oxidizer are kept separately in their own chambers within the liquid fuel rocket motor until the ignition process, during which time they are combined at the injector port and become combustible. Because of this, the combustion chamber of a rocket that uses solid fuel is the same size as the chamber in which the fuel is stored.

On the liquid fuel rocket, the components are brought together in a relatively small combustion chamber. In spite of this, the combustion chamber of each type of rocket burns its fuel and oxidizer in a consistent mixture throughout the whole process. Within the hybrid rocket motor is a chamber that keeps the liquid oxidizer and solid fuel separated from one another. Because the fuel catches fire when it comes into contact with the liquid oxidizer, the ratio of oxidizer to fuel in the combustion chamber is constantly shifting to accommodate the new conditions. Therefore, the performance of the motor is determined by the typical proportions of the oxidizer and fuel combination [1].

The Development of the Hybrid Rocket Motor

The development of rocket engines in general is roughly contemporaneous with the introduction of hybrid rockets. During the 1930s, the development of liquid and solid fuel rockets coincided with the development of the first rocket motors, which are broken down into the following categories:

Early Concepts and Experiments (Mid-20th Century): In the 1940s and 1950s, the concept of hybrid rocket propulsion began to emerge. Experiments were conducted in this time period. Researchers from a variety of disciplines have started looking into the possibility of combining solid fuel grains with either liquid or gaseous oxidizers. The initial experiments concentrated on creating prototypes on a modest scale and conducting proof-of-concept demonstrations.

Experiments Conducted in Britain in the 1960s Concerning Hybrid Rocket Motors In the 1960s, British aerospace engineer Stephen Jacob began substantial research concerning hybrid rocket motors. In the course of his work at the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE), he investigated a number of different combinations of fuel and oxidizer, one of which utilised rubber-based fuels and nitrous oxide as the oxidizer.

Solid Rocket Boosters for the Space Shuttle (1970s): Although the Space Shuttle Solid Rocket Boosters (SRBs) were not technically hybrids, they did integrate some hybrid-like characteristics. The SRBs made use of a solid propellant, but the addition of a liquid oxidizer known as ammonium perchlorate to the combination made it possible to adjust the amount of thrust they produced while in flight.

The development of hybrid rocket motors gained traction in the amateur rocketry community in the 1980s, which was a pivotal decade for the field overall. Hobbyists first began experimenting with a wide variety of fuel compositions and oxidizer injection methods, which ultimately led to the development of hybrid motors that are dependable and economical for use in leisure activities.

NASA Hybrid Research (1990s): The NASA Hybrid Rocket Engine Development Programme was begun in the 1990s with the objective of investigating the viability of hybrid propulsion for space applications as well as the possible benefits associated with its use. NASA carried out a significant amount of research and development, looking into better fuel compositions and injectors, as well as combustion stability and performance optimisation.

Applications in the Commercial Sector (Decades of the 2000s): The 21st century saw an increase in interest in hybrid rocket motors for use in the commercial sector. Hybrid propulsion systems for suborbital space tourism vehicles were researched and developed by several companies, including Armadillo Aerospace and XCOR Aerospace. These undertakings sought to make use of the hybrid motors' reputations for simplicity, safety, and dependability in their operations.

Recent Projects and Developments: Over the course of the past few years, hybrid rocket motor technology has continued to make strides forward. The primary goals of this line of research are to increase performance, efficiency, and reliability through the development of unique fuel grain designs, improved combustion processes, and novel combinations of oxidizers. In addition, hybrid motors are currently being investigated for use in specialised applications such as the propulsion of CubeSats and sounding rockets.

OVERVIEW OF HYBRID ROCKET MOTOR

When compared to other types of rocket propulsion systems, a hybrid motor is distinguished by its utilisation of propellants that are stored in distinct stages. In most cases, liquid oxidizer and solid fuel are utilised in the process. In contrast, the opposite is true of a hybrid arrangement that is inverted. A case is used to store the fuel, which is most frequently a polymer. The shape of the fuel cross section is normally either a ring or a star [2], however this is determined by the amount of thrust that is required. Within the interior port of a fuel grain is where a combustion chamber can be found. The inner fuel surface begins to melt and then vaporise as a result of the heat that is transmitted through convection and radiation. In the combustion chamber, a liquid oxidizer is fed through the system. The injector plate in a hybrid is far less complicated than the one in a liquid rocket engine due to the fact that a hybrid only uses a single liquid propellant. The formation of the mixture and the beginning of the combustion process both take place in close proximity to the inner surface of the fuel.

When building a hybrid motor, you will need a second vessel, as here is where the afterburning process will take place. It is referred to as a post-combustion chamber in the industry. This chamber is essential for the process of full combustion because the inner port does not provide sufficient time or space for it. The thruster is represented as a convergent-divergent nozzle. There are two types of systems that can be used to feed liquid oxidizers: pressurising and turbopump systems. Hybrid rocket motors are now utilised as one of the three chemical rocket propulsion technologies that are currently in use. This classification type is defined by the physical phase that the chemical reactants are retained in while they are being used in the rocket engine. A solid rocket motor (SRM1) has a fuel and an oxidizer that are commonly an ammonium perchlorate-based oxidizer that is carefully combined with aluminium powder in a polymeric matrix (typically HTPB2). This mixture is then cast inside the combustion chamber so that it can be used to form the propellant grain. In a liquid rocket motor (LRM3), both the fuel and the oxidizer are present as liquids.

A form of propulsion system known as a hybrid rocket motor is a type of rocket engine that incorporates aspects of both solid and liquid rocket engines. The use of a solid fuel and a liquid or gaseous oxidizer, which are normally kept in separate locations, is required for it to function properly. When the oxidizer is lit, it is injected into the combustion chamber, which is where it reacts with the solid fuel to produce thrust. When the oxidizer is ignited, it produces thrust.

The following are the fundamental elements that make up a hybrid rocket motor:

1. The Chamber of Combustion

This is the key part of the device that is responsible for the combustion process to take place. It serves as a home for the fuel grain and supplies the environment required for the fuel to be burned in a regulated manner.

2. Fuel Grain

The fuel grain is a solid material that serves as the propellant. It is typically formed of rubber or a composite based on plastic, and it is known as the fuel grain. It has been crafted to maintain a steady burn and deliver a measured supply of energy to the user. When it comes to figuring out how well a motor will work, the shape and arrangement of the fuel grain are two of the most important factors.

3. System for the Injection of Oxidizer

The oxidizer, which can be a liquid or a gaseous chemical like nitrous oxide (N2O), is kept in a location that is distinct from the fuel grain in the reactor. Typically, it is kept in a tank that is pressurised to a high level and then pumped into the chamber that houses the combustion process using a valve or injector system. In order to start and maintain the combustion process, the oxidizer must first combine with the fuel grain.

4. Nozzle

The nozzle is the component that is accountable for directing and accelerating the high-temperature combustion gases that are produced by the combustion process. It is constructed to facilitate the most effective flow of exhaust gases and to provide the necessary amount of thrust.

The following are some of the primary advantages that hybrid rockets have [3].

1. Safety

Because hybrid rocket fuel is an inert substance, its manipulation is not dangerous in any way. In contrast to an SRM, a hybrid system is not explosive since it is not able to properly mix the fuel and oxidizer together. This prevents an explosion from occurring. As a consequence of this, a hybrid system that has been developed has more leeway in terms of its ability to be handled, stored, and transferred compared to an SRM.

2. Simplicity

The rate of combustion in a hybrid system is determined by the flow of oxidizer through the combustion chamber; hence, the rate of combustion in a hybrid system may be easily adjusted by merely regulating the oxidizer flow rate via a valve. As a consequence of this, it is significantly simpler to throttle a hybrid system than it is an LRE, which requires the operator to control two flow rates while also preserving a predetermined ratio of fuel to oxidizer. Because the hybrid system's oxidizer flow can be controlled, it also has the advantage of being able to be shut off, which increases both its use and its level of safety.

3. Propellant Versatility

The use of hybrid systems is compatible with a wide range of fuel types. Solid additives, such as energetic metals, can be utilised to increase performance, as opposed to liquid rockets, which are often used. Additionally, liquid oxidizers often provide a significantly higher specific impulse compared to that of solid rockets. Because there is such a wide selection of propellants available for hybrid systems, they can be used in virtually any circumstance in which rockets are deployed. The most popular applications for hybrid systems are in sounding rockets, tactical missiles, and space engines.

4. Affordable Price

The overall operational expenses of hybrid systems are typically lower than those of liquid rockets and solid rockets. This is due to the fact that hybrid systems are less complicated than liquid rockets and more secure than solid rockets. It's possible that traditional propulsion systems are more expensive than hybrid rockets, but for a number of different reasons. The hybrid rocket provides a lot of benefits to the whole process of creation, as well as in terms of how it is handled and stored. The lower operational costs of hybrid rocket motors are due to the safety measures that have been discussed previously. During ground operations, it is incontestably simpler to control a non-explosive system that contains reactants that are difficult to put together. Additionally, because to the inert nature of the fuel grain, it is expected that the production costs will be cheaper in comparison to those connected with the production of solid propellant [4,5].

5. Reliability

Rocket engines that use hybrid propulsion systems are known for their exceptional dependability. Because oxidizer and fuel are kept in separate containers, there is no chance that the two will interact chemically during storage, which reduces the risk of any degradation of the propellant or instability. Because of this separation, there is less of a chance of the combustion becoming unstable, which in turn makes hybrids more reliable and predictable.

6. The Capability to Regulate the Oxidizer Mass Flow

In the event that it is necessary to do so, the mass flow of the oxidizer into the combustion chamber can be controlled. Controlling the oxidizer mass flow has two significant effects: first, throttling can be accomplished by commanding the engine's thrust on demand; second, the thrust can be stopped (the mission can be aborted), and if an appropriate ignition system is used, the motor can be repeatedly started and stopped if it can be repeatedly started and stopped. Even if a liquid system is capable of achieving both the ability to throttle and the ability to restart, the mechanical complexity of the control system of a liquid motor is twice as complex as that of a hybrid system, as was previously mentioned. These characteristics can be difficult to accomplish in solid rocket propulsion systems. The only option to regulate the thrust is to adjust the pressure inside the combustion chamber, which is the only method possible given the complexity of SRM thrust termination systems.

7. The Consistency of the Temperature

Temperature does not have a major impact on the rate at which fuel grain regression occurs. This shows that the ambient

temperature does not have much of an impact on the actual pressure inside the combustion chamber. Because a rise in pressure could cause the MEOP to be exceeded, designers of SRM are worried about the link between the pressure inside the combustion chamber and the temperature of the grain. However, some HRM systems that are claimed as being self-pressurized are extremely sensitive to variations in temperature. This is because the oxidizer is maintained in the tank as a saturated liquid, and the equilibrium pressure is impacted by the temperature at which the liquid is stored. To achieve the desired level of management over this matter, the installation of an in-line flow control valve may be necessary.

8. Environmental Friendliness

When compared to solid rocket motors, hybrids have a more environmentally friendly combustion process since they normally use non-toxic and non-corrosive oxidizers like nitrous oxide (N2O) and environmentally friendly fuels like hydroxyl-terminated polybutadiene (HTPB). This makes the combustion process much cleaner. As a result, hybrids have a lower impact on the environment, as their combustion processes don't produce potentially hazardous byproducts. Many of the propellant formulations that are now on the market and contribute to HRM's adaptability are "green," which means that the reaction process does not include the use of any components that are hazardous to the environment or that are poisonous. Ammonium perchlorate is the most frequent form of oxidizer used in SRM because it contains chloride, which does not emit very environmentally friendly vapours. The O2/H2 rocket propellant formulation that is used in LRMs is the most environmentally benign formulation of rocket propellant; nevertheless, it cannot be stockpiled. Hydrazine is hazardous in its undegraded state because it can be kept in liquid form and because it is used in liquid form. In some applications, such as those that already make use of hazardous reactants, hybrid rockets might prove to be a more environmentally benign option. At the University of Padova, we are delighted to make use of hydrogen peroxide in combination with hydrocarbons as a formulation for a green, storable propellant.

DISADVANTAGES OF HYBRID ROCKET MOTOR

1. A low rate of regression.

The lower rate of regression that hybrid fuels often have contributes to the narrower fuel web (grain thickness) that these fuels typically have. It's possible that in order to generate the necessary levels of thrust, you'll need to produce fuel grains that have a lot of holes in them. It is possible that the use of multiport fuel grains is required in order to enlarge the grain surface area in order to fulfil the criteria for thrust; nevertheless, this may result in a relatively low bulk density and a large number of unburned fuel slivers. The fact that recent efforts have made it possible to raise regression rates, which in turn decreases the impact of this limitation, is a positive development. It is essential to bear in mind that long-duration applications with moderate thrust requirements, including target drones and hovering vehicles, might profit from a low regression rate. It is also essential to keep in mind that these applications can benefit from a low regression rate.

2. Effectiveness of the Combustion Process

Because of the diffusion fans, fuel and oxidizer in hybrid systems don't become thoroughly mixed together as much as they do in traditional systems. The efficiency loss associated with hybrids is roughly 1% to 2% more than that associated with liquids and solids respectively. In contrast to solids and liquids, reactants in a hybrid rocket are not intimately mixed or compelled to come into contact with one another. The possibility of finding any unreacted oxidizer and fuel near the back of the combustion chamber is not eliminated as a result of this finding. As a consequence of this imperfect diffusive combustion, the characteristic velocity that was actually obtained, denoted by the letter c, is noticeably lower than the one that was predicted. A number of different processes are used to bring an end to the combustion. Among the most noteworthy are the utilisation of diaphragms, mixing plates, and swirling injection [6-8].

3. Problems with Packaging and the Volume Efficiency of the Product

When it comes to liquids and solids, hybrid rocket motors have less design flexibility than traditional rocket motors. When it comes to an LRM, the propellant accounts for the vast majority of the volume. This liquid can be moulded into whatever form you choose as long as the tank design allows for it to fill up to the desired volume. The space devoted to combustion is not an excessively huge one. Within a solid rocket, the combustion chamber accounts for the vast part of the overall system. Because the regression rate is dependent on the pressure within the combustion chamber, there are a variety of different propellant grain designs that are capable of meeting the same impulse requirements. When it comes to packing, the solid rocket is a flexible configuration that can imply a broad variety of geometries and aspect ratios.Because the oxidizer in a

hybrid rocket is a liquid, the hybrid rocket can maintain the same degree of packing flexibility as a liquid rocket would. When the design of the combustion chamber is taken into consideration, there are problems with the packing. Because of the connection between regression rate and oxidizer mass flux [9], there are not a great deal of different fuel grain designs that can be devised that are capable of meeting the same total impulse demand.

4. Slower Transients

The combustion chamber of a hybrid rocket is significantly larger than the one of a liquid rocket with the same thrust because the hybrid rocket uses fuel grains in place of liquid propellant. During the course of burning, there is also a fluctuation in the amount of petrol contained within due to fuel grain regression. This leads one to believe that the filling/emptying characteristic time is significantly longer when compared to that of LRMs. The transitions between states during throttle control and ignition are more gradual. Due to the fact that hybrids have a slow transient nature, they cannot be utilised in some applications that require an accurate, rapid, and repeatable motor response [10].

APPLICATIONS OF HYBRID ROCKET MOTORS

1. The Engines That Drive Spacecraft

The propulsion systems of spacecraft have been known to make use of hybrid rocket motors. Applications such as attitude control, orbit insertion, and orbital corrections have been contemplated for them. Because of their capacity to be controlled and throttled, they are well-suited for the exact motions that are required for space missions.

2. Research Missions to a Suborbital Altitude

In suborbital research flights, hybrid rockets have been used to provide propulsion for scientific experiments, technology demonstrations, and atmospheric study. These flights have taken place in low Earth orbit (LEO). The fact that they are risk-free, dependable, and economical makes them an appealing option for the aforementioned applications.

3. Educational Opportunities and Recreational Rocketry

The use of hybrid rocket motors is becoming increasingly common in amateur rocketry societies as well as educational institutions. They are a safer alternative to solid rocket motors and allow students and hobbyists to obtain hands-on experience with rocket propulsion systems. This makes them ideal for educational and recreational applications.

4. Research Conducted at High Altitudes

In high-altitude research missions, including as monitoring the weather, conducting studies of the atmosphere, and launching balloons into the stratosphere, hybrid rockets have been employed. Because of their superior controllability and dependability, hybrid motors are ideally suited for use in demanding situations in the collection of scientific data.

5. Small Satellite Launchers

It has been suggested that compact satellite launchers could use hybrid rocket motors as their primary means of propulsion. Because of their ease of use, dependability, and relatively low cost, they are a desirable option for placing relatively light payloads into orbit.

6. Systems for Aborting Launch in Case of Emergency

There has been some thought given to the possibility of using hybrid rockets as emergency launch abort devices for crewed space missions. During the crucial phases of launch and ascent, their ability to remain secure and under control offers an additional layer of protection for astronauts.

7. Propulsion of the Upper Stage

Research has been done to investigate the viability of hybrid rocket motors as potential propulsion systems for higher stages of launch vehicles. Because of their ability to be throttled and their high specific impulse, they are suitable for accurate orbital manoeuvres and the deployment of payloads.

8. Tourism in Outer Space

As suborbital space tourism vehicles have been developed, hybrid rocket motors have been utilised in their propulsion systems. When it comes to giving space visitors with an experience that is both comfortable and safe, their safety, reliability, and capacity to be controlled are critical aspects.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, hybrid rocket motors provide a number of benefits, which make them appealing for a variety of applications due to their versatility. Hybrid motors stand out from other types of propulsion systems because of their innately high levels of controllability, safety, and dependability. The fact that they can be turned off quickly, that they store their oxidizer and fuel in separate containers, and that they have a lower risk of unstable combustion all contribute to the fact that they are fundamentally safer than solid rocket motors. A wide variety of applications, such as spacecraft propulsion, suborbital research flights, educational endeavours, high-altitude research, tiny satellite launchers, emergency launch abort systems, and space tourism, have shown that hybrid rocket motors have the potential to be useful. The continuation of research and development efforts in this area will most likely result in additional breakthroughs, which in turn will lead to an expansion of the use of hybrid rocket motors in the future.

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