

Martian thermosphere scale height from SPICAM dayglow measurements

A.Stiepen (1), J.-C. Gérard (1), S. Bouger (2), F. Montmessin (3)

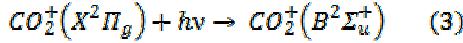
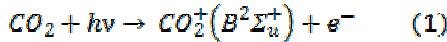
(1) Laboratoire de Physique Atmosphérique et Planétaire, Université de Liège, Liège, Belgium, (2) Atmospheric, Oceanic and Space Sciences, University of Michigan, (3) Laboratoire Atmosphères, Milieux, Observations Spatiales, Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin, France (arnaud.stiepen@ulg.ac.be Tel: +32-43669781)

Abstract

We analyze the ultraviolet dayglow in the atmosphere of Mars through CO_2^+ and CO Cameron emissions. These emissions are accumulated on a large dataset of dayside grazing limb performed by the Spectroscopy for Investigation of Characteristics of the Atmosphere of Mars (SPICAM) instrument on board the Mars Express spacecraft. The temperature of the Martian upper atmosphere can be retrieved from these limb emission profiles. We present discussion on the validity domain for such retrieval. We also show evidence for local (spatial and temporal) variability in the scale height of the atmosphere at the altitude of these emissions.

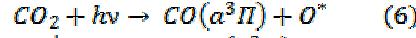
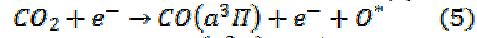
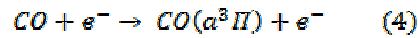
1. Introduction

The Mariner 6 mission, as early as the 1970's, performed the first observations of the CO_2^+ and CO Cameron ultraviolet emissions in the dayside of Mars [1]. The CO_2^+ emission at 289 nm arises from the relaxation of the CO_2^{++} molecule in the $\text{B}^2\Sigma^+$ state to the $\text{X}^2\Pi$ state. CO_2^+ ($\text{B}^2\Sigma^+$) molecules are produced mainly in the dayside of Mars through photoionisation (1), photoelectron impact (2) and fluorescent scattering (3), as following [2,3,4]:



The CO Cameron bands range from 170 nm to 270 nm and correspond to the forbidden transitions of CO molecules excited into the $a^3\Pi$ state to the ground state. CO molecules are excited to the $a^3\Pi$ state following electron impact (4), photoelectron dissociative impact (5),

photodissociation (6) and dissociative recombination (7) [4,5,6]:



2. Observations

The Spectroscopy for Investigation of Characteristics of the Atmosphere of Mars (SPICAM) instrument on board the Mars Express spacecraft collected dayside airglow ultraviolet emissions of the CO Cameron bands and the CO_2^+ doublet in the Martian atmosphere. Its ultraviolet domain ranges from 118 nm to 320 nm and therefore fully covers the range of the CO Cameron and CO_2^+ emission bands. Among a very large amount of limb profiles obtained since 2004, a subset makes it possible to derive the temperature of the Martian atmosphere from the emission topside scale height [7].

3. Achievements

Limb profiles scale heights are determined by fitting the topside of the profile with an exponential function. We discuss conditions for the scale height derived from CO_2^+ and CO Cameron limb profiles to represent the neutral atmosphere scale height. These conditions are met above the homopause and for altitudes where processes (3) and (7) and negligible compared to other processes that populate $\text{CO}(a^3\Pi)$ and $\text{CO}_2^+(\text{B}^2\Sigma^+)$. Volume emission rate associated with processes (3) and (7) are calculated [8,9,10] and compared to total $\text{CO}_2^+(\text{B}^2\Sigma^+)$ and CO Cameron ($a_3\Pi$) volume emission rate calculated by atmospheric model [12]. Comparisons with other studies at different solar activities using different

techniques as well as the latest MTGCM-MGITM

modeling [13] are also discussed.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the SPICAM and the Mars Express teams for the excellent quality of their work. We also thank F. Leblanc and N. Schneider for fruitful discussions. S. W. Bouger is supported by the NASA Mars Data Analysis Program. This research was supported by the PRODEX program of the European Space Agency (ESA) managed with the help of the Belgian Space Policy Office (BELSPO).

References

- [1] Barth et al, Mariner 6 : Ultraviolet Spectrum of Mars Upper Atmosphere, Planetary Atmospheres, IAU Symposium, Vol.40, p. 253, 1971.
- [2] Padial N., Csanak G., McKoy B.V., Langhoff P.W., Photoexcitation and ionization in carbon dioxide: Theoretical studies in the separated-channel static-exchange approximation, Phys. Rev., A23, 218-234, 1981
- [3] Itiwaka Y., Cross sections for electron collisions with carbon dioxide, J. Chem. Phys. Ref. Data, Vol. 31, No. 3, 2002
- [4] Dalgarno, A. and Degges, T., CO_2^+ dayglow on Mars and Venus. Plan. Atm., 337-345, 1971.
- [5] Shirai T., Tabata T., Tawara H., Analytic cross sections for electron collisions with CO, CO₂ and H₂O relevant to edge plasma impurities, At. Data Nucl. Data Tables, 79, 143-184, 2001
- [6] Lawrence G.M., Photodissociation of CO₂ to produce CO a3II, J. Chem. Phys., 56, 3435-3442, 1972
- [7] Fox J.-L., CO_2^+ dissociative recombination: A source of thermal and nonthermal C on Mars, J. Geophys. Res., 109, 2004
- [8] Leblanc F., Chauffray J.Y., Lilenstein J., Witasse O., Bertaux J.-L., Martian dayglow as seen by the SPICAM UV spectrograph on Mars Express, J. Geophys. Res., 111, 2006
- [9] Hanson, W.B., Sanatani, S., Zuccaro, D.R., The Martian ionosphere as observed by the Viking retarding potential analyzers. J. Geophys. Res. 82, 4351-4363, 1977.
- [10] Fox, J.L., Zhou, P., Bouger, S.W., The Martian thermosphere/ionosphere at high and low solar activities. Adv. Space Res., 17, 11, 203-218, 1996.
- [11] Seiersen, K., et al., Dissociative recombination of the cation and dication of CO₂. Phys. Rev. A, 68, 022708, 2003.
- [12] Jain, S.K. and Bhardwaj, A. Impact of solar EUV flux on CO Cameron bands and CO₂⁺ UV doublet emission s in the dayglow of Mars. Plan. And Space Science, 63-64, 110-122, 2011.
- [13] Bouger S.W., McDunn T.M., Zoldak K.A. And Forbes J.M., Solar cycle variability of Mars dayside exospheric temperatures: model evaluation of underlying thermal balances, Geophys. Res. Lett., 36, 2009