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# Mg–C System up to 20 GPa: Its Phase Diagram and Stable Magnesium Carbides

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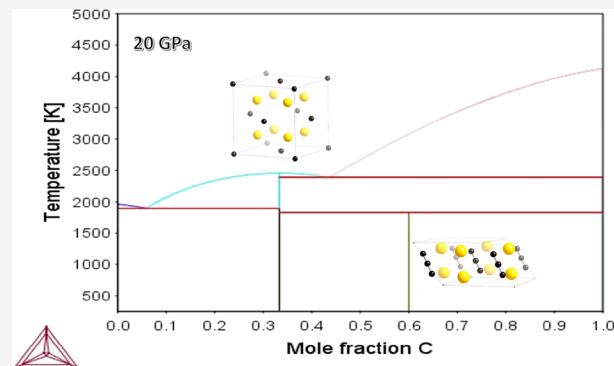


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Supporting Information

**ABSTRACT:** The phase diagram of the Mg–C system has been constructed up to 20 GPa and  $\sim 4000$  K based on complementary Thermo-Calc simulations and experimental data obtained in both *ex situ* and *in situ* experiments using X-ray diffraction with synchrotron radiation. Three high-pressure magnesium carbides, namely,  $\beta$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>, its high-temperature form  $\gamma$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>, and antifluorite Mg<sub>2</sub>C, have *p*–*T* domains of thermodynamic stability. At the same time, the carbides accessible by ambient-pressure synthesis,  $\alpha$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> and MgC<sub>2</sub>, are either metastable or unstable, depending on the temperature, at least up to 20 GPa. Experimental observations show that at ambient conditions, all carbides are metastable and remain unchanged at least for years.



## INTRODUCTION

The magnesium–carbon system at ambient pressure is believed to be simple<sup>1</sup> due to the absence of observable interactions between elements and metastability of known carbides.<sup>2</sup> The phase diagram suggests degenerated eutectic equilibrium between simple substances, hcp-Mg and graphite, and has a quite simple topology. Recent simulations of the phase diagram at ambient pressure with analysis of metastable equilibria have been reported in 2012 using the Calphad method,<sup>3</sup> and experimental values of solubility of C in liquid Mg<sup>4</sup> are in good agreement with modeling suggesting a value of zero for the binary interaction parameter for Mg–C liquid.

At the same time, two magnesium carbides,  $\alpha$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> and MgC<sub>2</sub>, can be obtained (without high pressure, HP) only by nonequilibrium chemical routes<sup>5</sup> in the Mg–C–H or Mg–C–O–H<sup>6</sup> systems with participation of organic compounds (e.g., CH<sub>4</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>2</sub>, and C<sub>5</sub>H<sub>10</sub>).  $\alpha$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> has an orthorhombic crystal structure,<sup>7</sup> while MgC<sub>2</sub> crystallizes in tetragonal syngony.<sup>8</sup> Both carbides are metastable up to quite high temperatures, while their thermochemical study has shown that both compounds have no domains of thermodynamic stability at ambient pressure.<sup>2</sup> Later *ab initio* studies have shown that a high pressure does not make them thermodynamically stable.<sup>9</sup> So, the formal use of the reported experimental high-temperature (HT) (meta)stability domains of magnesium carbides at ambient pressure may lead to alternative phase diagrams<sup>10</sup> with a eutectic of high Mg content contradicting experimental observations.<sup>4</sup>

The first HP formation of Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> from MgC<sub>2</sub> was reported as early as 1983.<sup>11</sup> The evolution of the Mg–C phase diagram

at high pressures has attracted attention because it is one of the systems for synthesis of diamond with particular electronic properties.<sup>12,13</sup> This system still remains very promising for the directed search of new superhard materials with advanced properties such as superconductivity, etc.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the phase diagrams proposed,<sup>15</sup> although explaining correctly the domains of liquid–diamond equilibria at high temperatures, are unsatisfactory in the low- and medium-temperature ranges since they are based on the weakly supported hypotheses of MgC and MgC<sub>2</sub> compounds,<sup>12</sup> not confirmed by later crystallochemical studies of the Mg–C system at high pressures (Table 1).<sup>9,16,17</sup>

The full suite of magnesium carbides has been accomplished quite recently by a methodology of complementary *ab initio* simulations and experimental exploration of the metal–C system at high-pressure, high-temperature (HPHT) conditions (Table 1). Two magnesium carbides, monoclinic  $\beta$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub><sup>9</sup> and cubic antifluorite Mg<sub>2</sub>C,<sup>16</sup> become stable at high pressures and can be recovered at ambient conditions. The composition and the crystal structure of these high-pressure compounds have been confirmed by a large variety of characterization techniques.

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Table 1. Crystallographic Data for Phases of the Mg–C System at Ambient Conditions

phase and reference(s)	Pearson notation/ structure	lattice parameter(s) (Å)	remarks
hcp-Mg	hP2/hcp	$a = 3.209$ $c = 5.2101$	used for calculation of HPHT equilibria
dhcp-Mg	hP4/dhcp	$a = 3.209$ $c = 10.420$	HP phase of Mg; neglected for equilibria calculations (thermodynamic properties similar to hcp-Mg)
Mg <sub>2</sub> C <sup>16</sup>	cF12/Na <sub>2</sub> O	$a = 5.4480$	Used for calculation of HPHT equilibria
MgC <sup>12a</sup>	cF8/NaCl	$a = 5.635$	reported HP phase never confirmed, probably confused with NaCl ( $a = 5.635$ – $5.641$ Å) of the sample environment in the HP cell
$\alpha$ -Mg <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub> <sup>7</sup>	oP10/Mg <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub>	$a = 3.209$ $b = 3.209$ $c = 5.2101$	metastable or unstable at the studied $p$ – $T$ range
Mg <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub> <sup>2</sup>		$a = 7.43$ $c = 10.59$	ambient pressure phase(s) reported without the resolved crystal structure; most probably coincide with $\alpha$ -Mg <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub>
$\beta$ -Mg <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub> <sup>9</sup>	mS10/Mg <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub>	$a = 4.831$ , $b = 4.700$ , $c = 6.029$ , $\beta = 126.71^\circ$	used for calculation of HPHT equilibria
$\gamma$ -Mg <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub>	see the text	see the text	used for calculation of HPHT equilibria
MgC <sub>2</sub> <sup>8</sup>	tP6/MgC <sub>2</sub>		metastable or unstable at the studied $p$ – $T$ range
MgC <sub>2</sub> <sup>2,5a</sup>	tI6/CaC <sub>2</sub>	$a = 4.86$ $c = 5.67$	ambient pressure phases reported without the resolved crystal structure; most probably coincide with tP6-MgC <sub>2</sub>
	t <sup>12a</sup>	$a = 5.54$ $c = 5.02$	
C graphite	hP4/graphite	$a = 2.4704$ $c = 6.7244$	the 2H polytype was used for calculation of HPHT equilibria
C diamond	cF8/diamond	$a = 3.5669$	the 3C polytype was used for calculation of HPHT equilibria

<sup>a</sup>The existence of distinct phase(s) of this composition and crystal structure has not been confirmed.

In the present paper, we propose the refined set of thermodynamic parameters that allows obtaining the phase diagram of the Mg–C system up to 20 GPa and  $\sim 4000$  K using the Calphad method with a number of parameters refined based on our numerous experimental *in situ* and *ex situ* data. The calculated phase diagrams show satisfactory quantitative agreement with experimental  $p$ – $T$  domains of thermodynamic stability for  $\beta$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>,  $\gamma$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>, and Mg<sub>2</sub>C carbides. We correctly predict the  $p$ – $T$  domain of diamond crystal growth (i.e., the equilibrium of diamond with Mg–C liquid). Qualitative agreement with previously suggested topologies at ambient and high pressures has been also established.

## EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

As starting materials, Mg (Sigma Aldrich, 99.5%), glassy carbon (Sigma Aldrich, 99.95%), and graphite (Sigma Aldrich, 99.7%) were used. Samples were prepared under an argon atmosphere.

HPHT experiments up to 6 GPa and 2000 K were performed using the Paris-Edinburgh press (PE) at IMPMC (*ex situ*) and at SOLEIL (*in situ*). Opposite anvils of tungsten carbide and standard gaskets of pyrophyllite or boron-epoxy (pressure medium) were used to compress the reaction volume to high pressures. A resistive furnace of graphite was used for heating at high pressures for 0.5–1 h in the *ex situ* and up to 10 h in the *in situ* experiments. The Mg–C mixtures were typically placed into an MgO capsule or (rarely) into a graphite heater. Pressure and temperature estimations were made either using calibrations obtained *ex situ* and *in situ* by Si and Mg melting,<sup>18,19</sup> thermocouple measurements, and using equations of states of Mg,<sup>18</sup> hBN,<sup>20</sup> MgO,<sup>21</sup> and Si.<sup>22</sup>

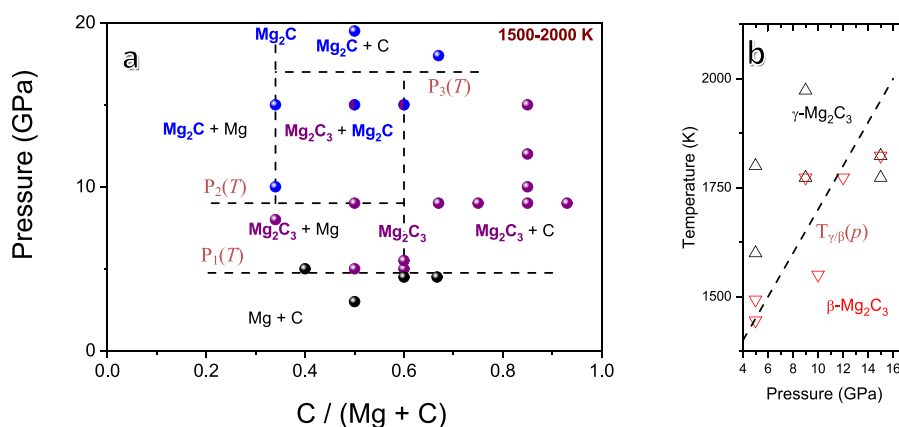
HPHT experiments up to 20 GPa and 2000 K were performed using multianvil presses at the EPL-CIW for *ex situ* studies and at ESRF for *in situ* observations.<sup>23</sup> Tungsten

carbide truncated-cube anvils and standard MgO gaskets (pressure medium) were used. Graphite and reheaters were used to heat the compressed Mg+C mixtures in MgO capsules. The heating time was similar to PE experiments. Pressure and temperature estimations were made either using calibrations obtained *ex situ* and *in situ* by Si and Mg melting, phase transitions in silicates,<sup>24</sup> or by direct thermocouple measurements, and using equations of states of Mg,<sup>18</sup> MgO,<sup>21</sup> and Si.<sup>22</sup>

X-ray diffraction phase analysis was performed using a Rigaku Rapid diffractometer employing Mo K $\alpha$  radiation and a curved area detector (at EPL-CIW), as well as using a diffractometer PANALYTICAL X'Pert Pro MTD with a Cu anode source. The absence of Mg+C interactions up to Mg melting (during at least) was confirmed by *in situ* observations at high temperatures under vacuum conditions (typically 1–5 Pa) that were performed using an HTK 1200N high-temperature oven chamber (Anton Paar) for conventional diffractometry (PANALYTICAL X'Pert Pro MTD).

*In situ* measurements in the PE cell were performed at the beamline PSICHÉ of the SOLEIL synchrotron. The phase transformations were primarily observed by energy-dispersive X-ray diffraction ( $2\theta = 8^\circ$ ). After the crystallization of the new phase, a CAESAR system was used to collect the data and consisted of energy–angle diagrams permitting identification of new structures and removal of artifacts. Several energies ( $\Delta E/E < 5\%$ ) were binned to obtain high-resolution angle-dispersive data. The system was calibrated using an Au standard.

*In situ* multianvil diffraction patterns were obtained at the beamline ID06 of ESRF. Angular-dispersive X-ray diffraction patterns were collected with a wavelength of  $\lambda = 0.3874$  Å, and a scintillation counter served as the detector. The system was calibrated using a LaB<sub>6</sub> standard. Phase recognition of diffraction patterns was performed using PowderCell.<sup>25</sup>



**Figure 1.** Experimental results on phase transformations and chemical reactions in the Mg–C system at HPHT conditions: (a)  $p$ – $x$  domains of magnesium carbide stabilities at 1500–2000 K (dashed lines are guide for the eyes) and (b)  $p$ – $T$  domains of stability of  $\beta$ - and  $\gamma$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  (the dashed line shows the approximate boundary between the two polymorphs).

**Thermodynamic Modeling Methods.** The phase equilibria calculations were carried out using Thermo-Calc software.<sup>26</sup> Thermodynamic data of phases of the Mg–C system at ambient pressure were taken from ref 3.

At ambient pressure, no stable liquid carbon phase exists; however, at high pressures of interest, its contribution to the phase diagram is important. All gaseous phases were suspended in order not only to simplify the diagram, but also to easily compare it to the HP counterpart. The liquid Mg–C phase was described using the ideal solution model at ambient pressure, i.e.,  $\Delta H_{\text{mix}} = 0$  with entropy of mixing  $\Delta S_{\text{mix}}$  equal to the ideal solution value; while  $\Delta V_{\text{mix}} \neq 0$  allowed us to take into account nonideal behavior at high pressures. Solid phases were described in the framework of compound energy formalism (CEF).<sup>27</sup> Pressure dependencies of molar volumes were represented using the Murnaghan approximation.<sup>28</sup> Bulk moduli, their pressure derivatives, and thermal expansion coefficients for simple substances and compounds were taken from previous experimental measurements: Mg,<sup>18</sup>  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$ ,<sup>17</sup>  $\beta$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$ ,<sup>9</sup> diamond, graphite, and liquid carbon.<sup>29</sup> The data for liquid Mg were found on the basis of the  $p$ , $T$  melting curve of magnesium.<sup>18,30</sup> Previous *ab initio* results have shown that  $\beta$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  has formation enthalpy (at 0 K) close to that of the  $\alpha$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  phase;<sup>9</sup> so, for the  $\beta$  phase, we used available thermodynamic data for the  $\alpha$  phase at ambient pressure. The expression  $G_{\text{liquid}} = G_{\text{graphite}} + 100,000 - 24.21 \cdot T$  was adopted from ref 31 instead of the expression  $G_{\text{liquid}} = G_{\text{graphite}} + 117,369 - 24.63 \cdot T$  because of more reasonable agreement with the experimental melting  $p$ , $T$  curve of graphite,<sup>29</sup> which results in the liquid–graphite–diamond triple-point parameters—11.2 GPa and 4140 K (instead of 12.4 GPa and 4700 K).

The molar volume of the liquid phase was described by the following equation:

$$V_L = V_{\text{Mg}}x_{\text{Mg}} + V_{\text{C}}x_{\text{C}} + \Delta V^{\text{mix}}x_{\text{Mg}}x_{\text{C}}$$

where  $\Delta V^{\text{mix}} = -5 \times 10^{-6} \text{ m}^3/\text{mol}$  is the mixing volume, which was found in the way to fix the changing of  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  melting from incongruent to congruent at 15 GPa and 2250 K.

While at temperatures just above 1500 K,  $\beta$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  forms from the mixture of elements at pressures above 5 GPa, higher temperatures show the formation of another phase, which we will denote here as  $\gamma$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$ . The phase forms  $\text{C}_3\text{H}_4$  after hydrolysis and has a  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum similar to the  $\beta$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  phase. The powder XRD pattern of  $\gamma$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  (Figure

S2) shows some similarities to  $\alpha$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  and can be simulated (in order to easily recognize the phase in recovered samples) using a  $P$ -1 subgroup of  $\beta$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  with a modified tilt of  $\text{C}_3^{4-}$  anions in relation to crystal planes. However, the exact crystal structure seems to be more complicated and has not been resolved so far. The experimentally established  $p$ , $T$  curve of  $\beta$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  to  $\gamma$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  transformation (Figure 1b) allowed us to fix the free energy of  $\gamma$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  as  $G_{\gamma\text{-Mg}_2\text{C}_3} = G_{\beta\text{-Mg}_2\text{C}_3} + 20,000 - 20 \cdot T$  (J/mol).

There are no data on the energy of the  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  formation in the literature. In the present study, the expression  $G_{\text{Mg}_2\text{C}} = 3/5 \times G_{\beta\text{-Mg}_2\text{C}_3} + 9000 - 8.0 \cdot T$  J/mol was assumed to fix the temperature interval of the existence of  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  as 1100–1750 K at 10 GPa that was observed experimentally in our *in situ* experiments at ID06 at ESRF.

Parameters of the pressure dependencies of Gibbs energy of the phases in the Mg–C system are listed in Table 2.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The pressure–concentration isothermal sections of the Mg–C phase diagram are presented in Figure 2. Two isotherms, 1500 and 1900 K, are illustrated that correspond respectively to (i) the experimentally observed onset of Mg+C interactions at  $\sim 5$  GPa ( $T_{\text{int}}$  of  $\sim 1500$ – $1550$  K)<sup>9</sup> and (ii) the low boundary of diamond crystallization at  $\sim 7.7$  GPa ( $T_{\text{diam}}$  above 2000 K).<sup>12</sup> The principal domains of phase stability observed (Figure 1a) are satisfactorily reproduced. The onset pressure of  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  formation is  $\sim 5$  GPa ( $P_1$  at Figure 1a, compare to Figure 2 and Figure S3), the pressure range in which diamond is in equilibrium with liquid is between 6 and 8 GPa, which agrees well with a previous report on diamond synthesis in this system.<sup>15</sup>

The evolution of the phase diagram (isobar sections) of the Mg–C system with pressure is shown in Figures 3–5. In addition to the quantitative changes of the diagram parameters (equilibria temperatures and limiting solubilities), variations of the diagram topology are observed, i.e., the incongruent type of  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  melting transforms to the congruent one at about 15.5 GPa, and the  $L + C \rightleftharpoons \text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  peritectic reaction changes to the  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C} + C \rightleftharpoons \text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  peritectoid one above 16 GPa.

The comparison of theoretical and experimental results (for more details, see Figure S3 for superposition of experimental data of Figure 1a with isothermal sections of the phase diagram of Figure 2) shows the following:

**Table 2.** Parameters of the Pressure Dependencies of Gibbs Energy<sup>a</sup>

phase	$V_0$ , m <sup>3</sup> /mol	$B$ , GPa	$B'$	$\alpha$ , K <sup>-1</sup>
graphite	$5.259 \times 10^{-6}$	33.3	12.0	$2.32 \times 10^{-5} + 5.7 \times 10^{-9} \times T$
diamond	$3.412 \times 10^{-6}$	588	5.0	$2.32 \times 10^{-6} + 1.0 \times 10^{-8} \times T$
C <sub>liquid</sub>	$7.626 \times 10^{-6}$	6.25	2.0	$2.32 \times 10^{-5} + 5.7 \times 10^{-9} \times T$
Mg <sub>hcp</sub>	$13.98 \times 10^{-6}$	37.0	4.2	$9.5 \times 10^{-5}$
Mg <sub>liquid</sub>	$15.34 \times 10^{-6}$	40.0	4.2	$5.5 \times 10^{-5}$
$\beta$ -Mg <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub>	$33.03 \times 10^{-6}$	103.1	4.0	$4.0 \times 10^{-5}$
$\gamma$ -Mg <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub>	$34.5 \times 10^{-6}$	103.1	4.0	$4.0 \times 10^{-5}$
Mg <sub>2</sub> C	$24.2 \times 10^{-6}$	87.0	5.1	$6.0 \times 10^{-5}$

<sup>a</sup>Formally\*, the parameters can be interpreted as  $V_0$ —the molar volume extrapolation to 0 K at 0.1 MPa;  $B = -(\partial p / \partial \ln(V))_T$  and  $B' = (\partial B / \partial p)_T$ —bulk modulus and its first pressure derivative of the Murnaghan approximation;  $\alpha = (\partial \ln(V) / \partial T)_p$ —volume thermal expansion coefficient. \*These parameters for elements were (principally) mutually adjusted to fit melting curves using equations and do not always coincide with more common values obtained by fitting the  $V(p, T)$  data.

- $\beta$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> is unstable at atmospheric pressure and stabilizes at  $\sim 5$  GPa. In our experiments, the  $\beta$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> formation was observed only at 5 GPa and heating above 1500 K<sup>9</sup> i.e., at high enough temperature for the formation of the liquid phase in the system (Figure 4a).
- Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> forms from metastable MgC<sub>2</sub> and remains stable up to 1720 K at 6 GPa,<sup>11</sup> well in agreement with Figures 2 and 4a (i.e., present as a solid at 6 GPa at the isotherm diagram section of 1500 K and not at 2000 K).
- Diamond crystallization occurs at pressures above 7.7 GPa (well in agreement with previous reports<sup>12,13,15</sup>) where it stabilizes equilibrium of diamond with the

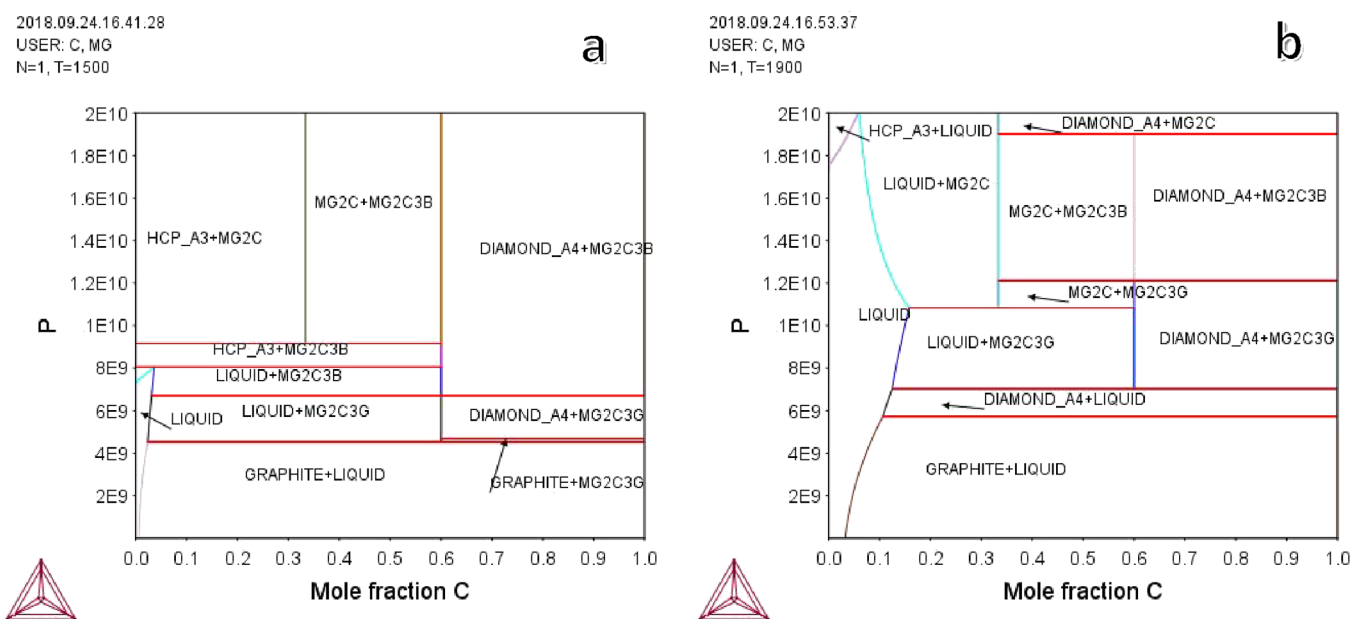
liquid phase. It corresponds to incongruent melting of  $\gamma$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> at 1990 K (Figure 2b).

- Thermodynamic stabilization and experimental formation of Mg<sub>2</sub>C occur at pressures above 9 GPa (Figure 2a), well in agreement of previous *in situ* observations of Mg<sub>2</sub>C decomposition.<sup>17</sup>
- The formation of Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> was not observed at pressures above 17 GPa. There was only Mg<sub>2</sub>C present in the quenched samples. According to the calculated phase diagram, Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> does not have equilibrium with the liquid phase and completely disappears at high temperatures ( $\sim 2000$  K). The kinetics of interactions of Mg<sub>2</sub>C with carbon is not sufficient to provide the formation of  $\beta$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> at temperatures below 2000 K according to the Mg<sub>2</sub>C + C  $\rightleftharpoons$  Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> reaction.

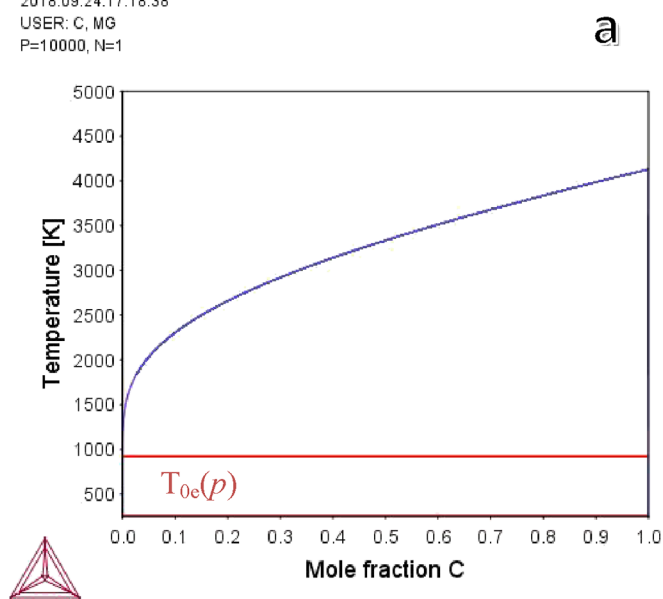
The ambient pressure phase diagram has been calculated without considering the gaseous phases and from this point of view can be considered like a thermodynamic extrapolation from high pressures (since the parameters of interactions in the liquid phase and HP compounds have been adjusted using experimental data obtained at HP).  $T_0(p)$  corresponds to the eutectics close to Mg melting, L  $\rightleftharpoons$  Mg + C<sub>gr</sub> at  $\sim 0$  at. % of Mg at ambient pressure. Previous experimental results also indicate that this eutectic is degenerated, in agreement with the low chemical affinity between graphite and magnesium and low mutual solubilities.

Below 5 GPa, no formation of magnesium carbide has been observed experimentally. Our calculations indicate the stability of Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> below 1000 K at 3 GPa, i.e., below Mg melting, which explains why formation of carbide has not been observed experimentally from elements at such a pressure.

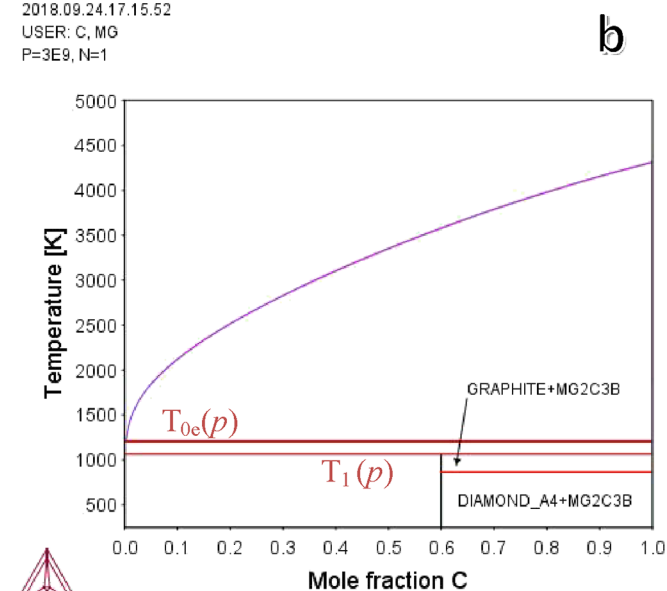
$T_1(p)$  is the temperature of decomposition of high-pressure polymorphs of Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> (similar to decomposition of metastable  $\alpha$ -Mg<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub> at ambient pressure). Above this temperature, carbon can be in direct contact with Mg-bearing liquid, and the single crystal growth of a stable carbon allotrope is possible. At 5 GPa,  $T_1$  is close to diamond-to-graphite transformation, and thus, diamond growth does not occur.

**Figure 2.** Calculated  $p$ - $x$  isotherm sections of the Mg-C phase diagram at 1500 (a) and 1900 K (b).

2018.09.24.17.18.38  
 USER: C, MG  
 P=10000, N=1

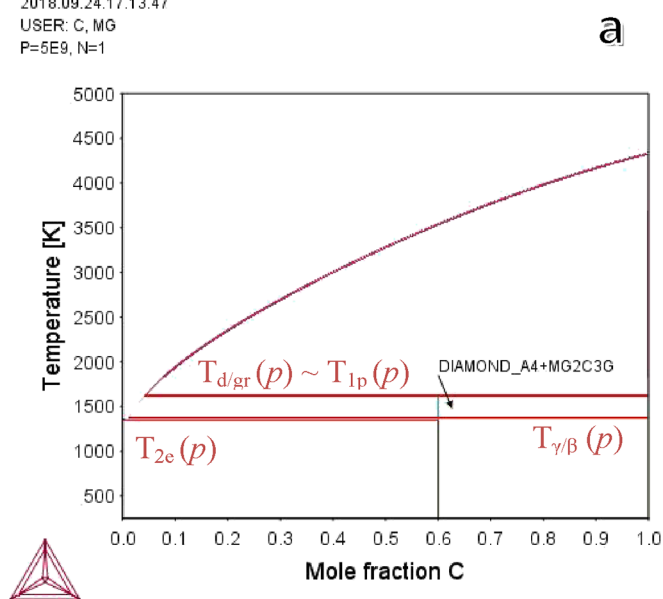


2018.09.24.17.15.52  
 USER: C, MG  
 P=3E9, N=1

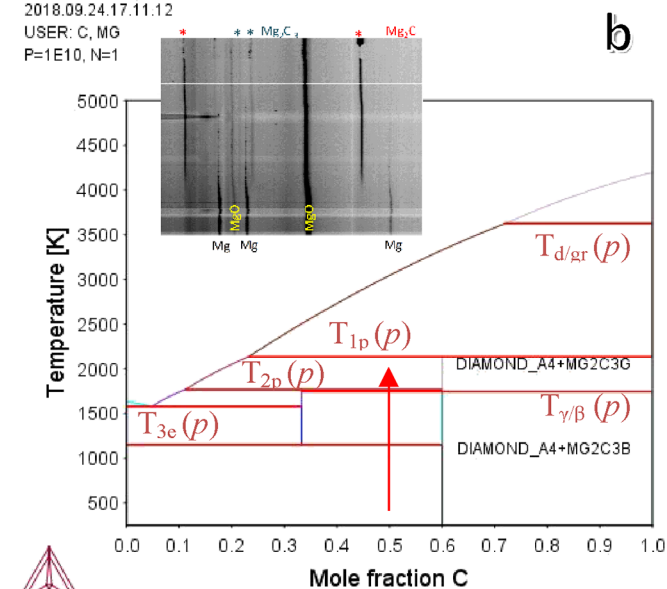


**Figure 3.** Phase diagram of the Mg–C system: isobar  $T$ – $x$  sections at 0.1 MPa (a) and 3 GPa (b). No magnesium carbide formation is expected below 1500 K at any pressure.

2018.09.24.17.13.47  
 USER: C, MG  
 P=5E9, N=1



2018.09.24.17.11.12  
 USER: C, MG  
 P=1E10, N=1



**Figure 4.** Phase diagram of the Mg–C system: isobar  $T$ – $x$  sections at 5 (a) and 10 GPa (b). The inset shows *in situ* XRD collected during heating at 9 GPa of the Mg+C mixture (ID06 beamline at ESRF). Formation and crystal growth of  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  and  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  are possible, as well as liquid–diamond equilibrium.

The calculations predict the stability of  $\beta$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  from at least 3 GPa at low temperatures; however, the low atomic diffusion rate prevents the interaction. The diamond stability range is also located at low temperatures rendering diamond growth impossible (diamond formation requires the presence of a liquid Mg–C phase).

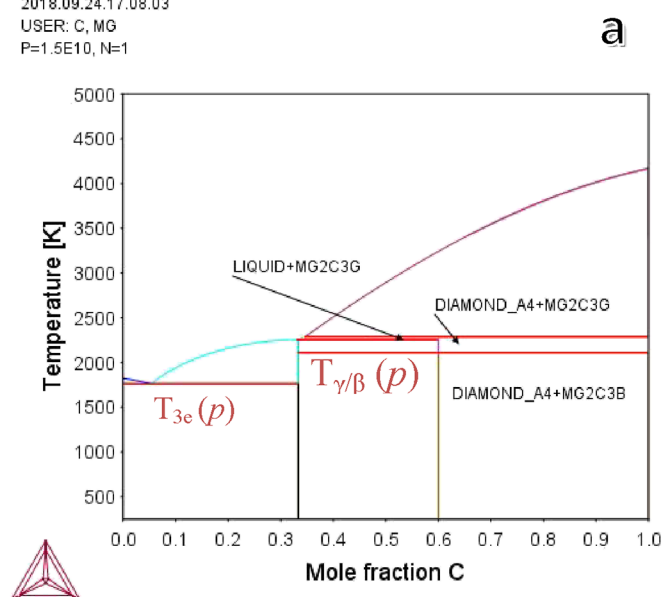
At 5 GPa, the  $\beta$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  stability attains the temperatures where the interaction occurs at a reasonable rate ( $\sim 1500$  K), which has been observed experimentally.<sup>9</sup> Diamond is only in thermodynamic equilibrium with carbide, and the temperature is not sufficient for the observable rate of solid-state diamond growth. The C–Mg eutectic remains degenerated. The calculated  $T_1(p)$  of  $\sim 1600$  K is in agreement with a quite

high experimental value of the  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  decomposition temperature of  $\sim 1700$  K at 6 GPa.<sup>11</sup>

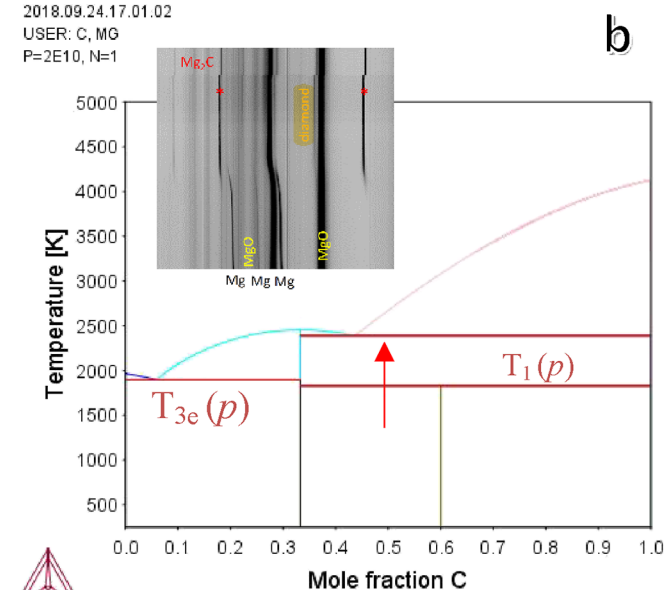
$T_{2e}(p)$  indicates the temperature of the eutectic of  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  and Mg, and calculations show that it is already close to  $\sim 5\%$  at 10 GPa. Eutectic behavior was experimentally observed at 8 GPa. The eutectic composition has been reported at 12 at. % C at 7.7 GPa and 1250 K and peritectic at 15%,<sup>12</sup> somewhat higher than our predicted values of 5 and 12 at. %.

Starting from 9 GPa, the experimental observation of  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  becomes possible and has been observed *in situ* in a quite narrow temperature range, over the dominated  $\beta$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  that forms at lower temperatures.  $\beta$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  is predicted to stable up to  $\sim 1750$  K (Figure 1b); above this temperature that the HT

2018.09.24.17.08.03  
 USER: C, MG  
 P=1.5E10, N=1



2018.09.24.17.01.02  
 USER: C, MG  
 P=2E10, N=1



**Figure 5.** Phase diagram of the Mg–C system: isobar  $T$ – $x$  sections at 15 (a) and 20 GPa (b). The inset shows *in situ* XRD collected during heating at 19 GPa of the Mg+C mixture (ID06 beamline at ESRF).  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  becomes the only stable carbide with congruent melting above 20 GPa and the HT domain.

forms,  $\gamma$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  becomes stable. The diamond stability range increase in temperature and diamond synthesis in the Mg–C system becomes possible at  $\sim 7.7$  GPa.<sup>12</sup>

The calculated phase diagram at 10 GPa (Figure 4b) indicates the extended equilibrium domain between diamond and liquid phases, well in agreement with experimental observations of single crystal diamond growth at  $\sim 7.7$  GPa.<sup>13</sup> At 10 GPa, the topology of the phase diagram remains the same. High-temperature stability of the  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  phase was observed, well in agreement with our experiments. At 15 GPa, we predict that  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  melts congruently, and this result agrees with our experiments on the *ex situ*  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  synthesis of the pure phase at  $\sim 15$  GPa.<sup>16</sup> Our previous observations of the  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  phase during decompression at 1500 K down to  $\sim 8$ – $10$  GPa<sup>17</sup> and its formation during heating at  $\sim 9$  GPa (inset of Figure 4b) agree well with the peritectic character of  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  decomposition predicted by our simulations.

At 15 GPa (Figure 5a), the stability domain of graphite disappears completely, while the  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  compound becomes stable from low temperatures to its congruent melting at  $\sim 2250$  K.

The calculated phase diagram at 20 GPa is shown at Figure 5b.  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  is predicted to melt at  $\sim 2500$  K and is stable at all temperatures below melting.  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  is stable up to 1800 K, i.e., at temperatures below Mg melting, well in agreement with the fact that we observed only  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  with diamond in our HPHT experiments on synthesis above 17 GPa.

*In situ* XRD probing of the Mg–C mixture (Mg:C = 1:1) under heating at 19(1) GPa has shown that diamond crystallizes together with  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  at  $\sim 1750(250)$  (inset of Figure 5b), i.e., without an intermediate of the liquid phase (according to the isobar section at 20 GPa, Figure 5b). This mechanism is possible only at a high enough pressure. Such a phase diagram, together with *in situ* observations, explains the easier synthesis of the  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  phase above 15 GPa.  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  formation was not clearly observed in our experiment at 19(1) GPa, most probably because of the instability of both  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$

polymorphs above the Mg melting. Once quenched, which typically leads to the pressure drop (down to  $\sim 10$  GPa), reheating showed the formation of a noticeable amount of  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  (always together with  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$ ), well in agreement with our phase diagram at 10 GPa (Figure 4b).

## CONCLUSIONS

As a result of our *in situ* and *ex situ* studies of the Mg–C system, only two magnesium carbide compounds  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  (in  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  forms) and  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  participate in phase equilibria at HPHT conditions up to 20 GPa and melting temperatures. The existence of some previously suggested carbides has been disproven. Using this data, the Mg–C phase diagram has been revised by adjusting the observations to thermodynamic CALPHAD simulations. The domains of thermodynamic stabilities of  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  and  $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}$  show satisfactory agreement with numerous experiments of magnesium carbides' syntheses at HPHT conditions, while the  $p$ – $T$  range of possible growth of single crystal diamond agrees well with the calculated domain of diamond–liquid coexistence.

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.jpcc.2c07176>.

Phase diagrams of carbon and magnesium; Mg–C phase diagrams compared with experimental data; hypothetical crystal structure of  $\gamma$ - $\text{Mg}_2\text{C}_3$  and its powder XRD pattern (PDF)

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V.Z.T. and A.C. performed calculation of the phase diagram; A.C. and T.A.S. performed experiments at EPL; C.R.-L. and H.M. performed experiments at IMPMC; A.C., Y.L.G., W.A.C., Y.T., and T.A.S. performed experiments at ESRF; A.C., Y.L.G., and N.G. performed experiments at SOLEIL; this paper was written by the contribution of all authors.

## Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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This paper was published ASAP on January 20, 2023, with author Carlos Renero-Lecuna's name spelled incorrectly. The corrected version was reposted on January 20, 2023.

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