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Stability and reactivity of C_{60} studied by all-electron mixed-basis molecular-dynamics simulations at finite temperatures

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Carrying out ab initio molecular-dynamics simulations with an all-electron mixed-basis approach at constant temperatures including Fermi distribution of electronic states, we found that ideal C_{60} with I_h symmetry is selectively regained from a C_{58}+C_2 reaction; ideal C_{60} and its C_{58} isomer become unstable, respectively, at about 4500 and 1500 K; and the deformation observed in a reaction with C_2 at 1000 K is bigger in the C_{2v} isomer than in ideal C_{60}.

I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, C_{60} and higher fullerenes have attracted considerable interests,\textsuperscript{1–13} since they are unbelievably stable and have specific cage structures. By using the electric arc discharge technique with controlled atmosphere, C_{60} can be produced with relatively high percentage.\textsuperscript{2} As well as other fullerenes, C_{60} satisfies the isolated pentagon rule (IPR).\textsuperscript{3} stating that more than two pentagons are not fused on the cage surface. The reason why only structures obeying the IPR are produced during the formation process is nontrivial.\textsuperscript{4}

So far, several plausible ideas\textsuperscript{5–9} have been proposed to explain the mechanism of the cage structure formation and the selectivity of special isomers. The possibility of spontaneous change of the cage structures during the formation has been discussed in the context of Stone-Wales transformation\textsuperscript{4,10} or C_2-loss process.\textsuperscript{10,11} (Theoretical studies have indicated that a C_2 loss requires at least 7 eV\textsuperscript{10} if the electronic ground state is assumed.) Meanwhile, classical molecular dynamics\textsuperscript{6,11,12} and tight-binding\textsuperscript{13,14} simulations have been performed to understand the formation and reaction processes of C_{60}. The obtained results, however, depend strongly on the initial condition, and potential parameters. Moreover, all these theoretical treatments assumed just 60 carbon atoms to form C_{60} cage under suitable temperature control only for the atomic movements.

Ab initio molecular dynamics\textsuperscript{15–17} and related simulated annealing technique,\textsuperscript{16} which do not use any conventional matrix-diagonalization method, are known to be quite efficient with respect to both memory size and CPU time. So far, such simulations have, however, been restricted for fullerenes only to finding the optimized structures of assumed icosahedral cage and small vibrations around them.\textsuperscript{18–21}

In this paper, we perform ab initio molecular-dynamics simulations with an all-electron mixed-basis approach at constant temperatures including also Fermi distribution of electronic states to study stability and reactivity of C_{60} fullerene. Here we confine ourselves to the following elementary processes: (A) Stability of C_{60}, (B) reproducibility of C_{60} from C_{58}+C_2 reaction, (C) reactivity of C_{60} with C_2 (or C_3).

In these simulations, we consider not only an ideal C_{60} with I_h symmetry but also its isomer with C_{2v} symmetry which has two fused pentagons in each side of one hexagon-hexagon bond (hereafter we call this 6/6 bond), and is constructed by 90° rotation of the 6/6 bond in ideal C_{60}.\textsuperscript{4,22}

II. METHODOLOGY

Now we take for granted the Born-Oppenheimer (BO) adiabatic approximation, and consider the grand canonical ensemble for the electronic states, where both the temperature and the chemical potential are fixed. For equilibrium system, it is natural for the electronic states to maintain the same temperature as assumed for the atomic dynamics. It will be shown that this effect is really important in the formation process. We adopt the density functional formalism extended to the grand canonical ensemble by Mermin.\textsuperscript{23} (In a plasma state at extremely high temperatures, an alternative approach was proposed quite recently.\textsuperscript{17}) We then use the corresponding local density approximation due to Gunnarsson and Lundqvist.\textsuperscript{24} For the exchange-correlation function, $F^\text{xc}[\rho]$, we utilize the Xα method with $\alpha=0.7$. Within this formalism, the charge density is given by

$$\rho(\mathbf{r}) = 2 \sum_i \frac{\psi_i^*(\mathbf{r}) \psi_i(\mathbf{r})}{e^{\varepsilon_i - \mu} + 1},$$

where the prefactor 2 means the spin duplicity at each level. The chemical potential $\mu$ is determined by

$$2 \sum_i \frac{1}{e^{\varepsilon_i - \mu} + 1} = N,$$

where $N$ is the total number of electrons in the system. $\varepsilon_i$ and $\psi_i(\mathbf{r})$ are the eigenvalue and eigenfunction of a one-particle Hamiltonian $H$

$$H = -\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \nabla^2 + e^2 \int \frac{\rho(\mathbf{r}')}{|\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{r}'|} - \sum_n \frac{Ze^2}{|\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{R}_n|} + v^\text{xc}(\mathbf{r}),$$

where $R_n$ denotes the position of the $n$th atom, $Z$ the nucleus charge of carbon atom, and $v^\text{xc}(\mathbf{r}) = \delta F^\text{xc}[\rho]/\delta \rho(\mathbf{r})$.

In the all-electron mixed-basis approach, wave functions are expanded by not only plane waves (PW’s), but also Slater-type atomic orbitals (STO’s).\textsuperscript{21} This method has the following advantages: (1) reduction of the number of plane
waves, (2) account of core electrons, (3) no usage of pseudo-potential, (4) analytic evaluation of intra-atomic forces and a part of potential matrix elements (interatomic forces and matrix elements of aspherical part of the potential are evaluated numerically), (5) reduction of both memory and CPU time. Note that the pseudopotential approach requires a large number of plane waves, typically 100 000, even for a single C60. (Our method can reproduce fairly well the result of Ref. 25 in the C60 crystal with much smaller number of plane waves.)

To achieve convergence of electronic states and orthogonalize different electronic levels, we adopt Gram-Schmidt orthogonalization and Payne algorithm, which are commonly used as a usual steepest-descent (SD) algorithm. Moreover, since basis functions are not mutually diagonal in a mixed-basis approach, we start from the modified equation, which guarantees the orthogonality:

\[ \mu S \Psi_j = - (H - \Psi_j^\dagger H \Psi_j) S \Psi_j, \]

where \( \mu \) denotes the friction constant for updating the electron wave functions \( \Psi_j \). \( H = (k|H|l) \) is the Hamiltonian of the electrons, and \( E \) the total energy of the system.

The distinction of the present equations of the mixed-basis approach from those of the original PW approach is the presence of the overlap matrix \( S = (k|l) \) in Eq. (4), which is due to the fact that the bases are not mutually orthogonal. Introducing the lower half triangular matrix \( U \), which satisfies \( S = U U^\dagger \), and writing \( U^\dagger \Psi_j = \Phi_j \) and \( H' = U^{-1} H U^{-1} \), we have

\[ \mu \Phi_j = - (H' - \Phi_j^\dagger H' \Phi_j) \Phi_j. \]

Once we adopt this representation, the main algorithm of updating the wave function \( \Phi_j \) is the same as the original PW approach.

Five STO's (\( 1s, 2s, 2p_x, 2p_y, 2p_z \)) being located at each atomic site, and 2969 plane waves are adopted as a basis set. The exponential damping factors are chosen to be rather narrow, \( \alpha = 1/0.18 \) a.u.\(^{-1} \) (for \( 1s \)) and \( \beta = \gamma / 1/0.24 \) a.u.\(^{-1} \) (for \( 2s, 2p \)), in order to avoid overlaps between neighboring atoms. Matrix elements and forces associated with STO's are evaluated analytically as far as possible. We use a supercell approximation; a unit cell is divided into \( 64 \times 64 \times 64 \) meshes, where 2.7 meshes in length correspond to 1 a.u. \( = 0.529 \) Å. For the computation, we used HITAC S-3800/380 supercomputer (24 GFLOPS) at our Institute with parallel coding. Each SD iteration step took about 20 s, and the present code requires 370 MB in main memory. We adopt 8 a.u. = 0.2 fs as the basis time step \( \Delta \tau \) for simulation (A), and 4 a.u. = 0.1 fs for simulations (B) and (C).

For each simulation, we first fix atomic positions until the electronic states well converge to the BO surface. Atomic dynamics are governed by classical mechanics with the Hellmann-Feynman force at constant temperature by usual velocity rescaling technique. We perform typically 6 SD iterations of electronic states before each update of atomic positions, and one velocity rescaling in every 10 atomic movements. At each SD step, we make new electronic charge density by mixing 50% with the density at the last step in order to stabilize the convergence.

III. RESULT

Let us start by showing the results of the stability simulation (A). We adopted the Fermi distribution, Eq. (1), for the electronic states, and found that an ideal C60 and its C2v isomer are unstable, respectively, at 5000 and at 2000 K; breathing modes are excited and finally fragmentations occur, after ca. 300 fs. We confirmed that they (\( I_h \) and \( C_{2v} \) isomers) are stable, respectively, at 4000 and 1000 K. These results were nontrivial, because, if we assumed the ground state for the electronic states, we observed that these molecules were stable at least up to 10 000 K. The fragmentation temperature of the ideal C60 observed in the present simulation is somewhat smaller than 5600 K obtained by the tight-binding study. The electron excitation is of course negligible at low temperatures but becomes important at higher temperatures where \( k_B T \sim E_g \) (highest occupied molecular orbital−lowest unoccupied molecular orbital gap energy). Since 10 000 K corresponds to \( \sim 1 \) eV, electron excitation is quite important at these temperatures. Our results explicitly show that the fragmentation is not only due to the excitation of strong atomic vibrations but also due to the weakened interatomic potential caused from electronic excitations at finite temperatures.

We also investigated the optimal structure and vibrational frequencies of C60 at 0 K by performing 20 SD iterations per each update of atomic positions. The obtained optimal bond lengths are 1.43 ± 0.02 and 1.46 ± 0.02 Å, respectively, for double bonds and single bonds. The values are not singly peaked but rather scattered because of the usage of the supercell approximation and the shortage of the number of plane waves. But, these data are not very different from the experimental values, 1.397 and 1.455 Å. On the other hand, to estimate vibrational frequencies of the breathing modes (\( A_g \) modes) and the rotational modes of hexagonal rings (\( H_g \) modes) from our result, we investigated time sweeps of the radius of each atom from the center and the angle of each hexagon from fixed (\( z \)) direction. Then, Fourier transforming the corresponding velocities during 500−1900 steps (we omitted data at the first 500 steps in order to avoid initial relaxations), we obtained rough vibration spectra. For \( A_g \) modes, we observed several strong peaks between 200 and 500 cm\(^{-1} \), and a few weaker peaks between 600 and 1300 cm\(^{-1} \), while, for \( H_g \) modes, we observed many strong peaks between 200 and 1100 cm\(^{-1} \), and several weaker peaks between 1300 and 1800 cm\(^{-1} \). These data are comparable to the previous studies.

In the reproducibility simulation (B), we started from C58, which was made from ideal C60 by removing two carbon atoms sharing one double bond. After 100 steps for relaxing the initial structure, we injected C2 dimer from vertical direction toward the C2 hole of the C58 cage; see Fig. 1. In this and all the following figures, we draw bonds only if the bond length is smaller than 1.6 Å. After 400 fs, we found that the incident C2 is absorbed to reproduce almost an ideal C60, i.e., \( \text{not a } C_{2v} \) isomer of C60 that could be generated by 90° rotation of the adsorbed C2. Hence, IPR is proved in this process of the C60 formation. We found, however, that small distortion, i.e., asphericity, around the absorption site still remained after 400 fs. The radius difference was about 0.3 Å. After a sufficient time, this asphericity would experi-
mentally be removed in an atmosphere. This simulation was performed at 7000 K assuming electronic ground state. We observed the similar reproducibility at 1000 K with Fermi distribution from the electronic states also.

In the reactivity simulations ($C_{2}$), we put a $C_{2}$ molecule outside a $C_{60}$ with a distance, 4.0 Å, and set the system at $T = 1000$ K. The incident $C_{2}$ had a tendency to increase its velocity during the reaction, since the reaction heat is equally partitioned to $C_{2}$ and $C_{60}$. Thus, $C_{2}$ may have a large velocity when it hits $C_{60}$, and the damage of $C_{60}$ in this shock is generally not small.

In order to always achieve a good convergence of the electronic states at 1000 K, we applied an additional temperature control just for the incident $C_{2}$ molecule so as to keep its kinetic energy below 2000 K. Hereafter we call this the condition of quasistatic addition. Under this condition, $C_{2}$ was adsorbed vertically on a double bond of ideal $C_{60}$ at 100 fs [Fig. 2(a)]. Since the electron affinity of $C_{2}$ is 3.3 eV (Ref. 27) and that of ideal $C_{60}$ is 2.65 eV, a charge transfer occurs from $C_{60}$ to $C_{2}$. The reaction site at a double bond of $C_{60}$ is therefore reasonable. We performed a similar simulation for the case of $C_{2v}$ isomer of $C_{60}$. In this case, $C_{2}$ is adsorbed on the pentagon closer to the 6/6 bond bridging the fused pentagons at 1200 fs; see Fig. 3(a). The reaction site at the two fused pentagons is consistent with a theoretical conjecture based on the Hückel picture. Dangling bonds exist outward from the carbon atoms violating IPR, and they are active with incident $C_{2}$. The present simulation reveals that the dangling bonds in the pentagons closer to the 6/6 bond bridging the fused pentagons are more active with respect to the $C_{2}$ addition compared to those in the other pentagons.

Note that these final structures are only stable at low temperatures. In fact, if we remove the condition of quasistatic addition before the reaction is completed (at 80 fs) and keep the temperature of the total system at 1000 K, we found a considerable deformation of the final structure of the ideal $C_{60}$ adsorbed by $C_{2}$: The reaction proceeds strongly on the half sphere of $C_{60}$, and recombinations of bonds occurs on this side. On the opposite half sphere of $C_{60}$, the ideal cage structure is maintained; the structures at 200 and 300 fs are depicted in Fig. 2(b). The overall structures are somewhat similar to the optimized structure of $C_{60}$ in the tunneling junction that was calculated recently by Joachim et al. This reaction is not due to the initial velocity of $C_{2}$ (the kinetic energy of each carbon atom of $C_{2}$ at 80 fs corresponds to at most 2000 K only) but due to the interaction energy between $C_{2}$ and $C_{60}$.

On the contrary, in the case of $C_{2v}$ isomer+$C_{2}$, the cage structure was destroyed also on the opposite half sphere of the $C_{2v}$ isomer, and $sp_{2}$ character was lost almost everywhere; the structures at 200 and 300 fs are depicted in Fig. 3(b). In order to obtain a stable final structure, much longer simulation time would be required.

We also determined the most stable configuration of $C_{60}$ with $C_{3}$ at 1000 K under the condition of the quasistatic addition. As a final structure, the $C_{3}$ forms a cross link on a hexagon of $C_{60}$, between the center of one double bond and the center of an opposite single bond of the hexagon; see Fig. 4. Note that the electron affinity of $C_{3}$ is 1.6 eV (Ref. 27) and charge transfer occurs from $C_{3}$ to the single bond of $C_{60}$, in contrast to the case of the $C_{2}$ addition.
FIG. 3. (a) Initial configuration (0 fs) of $C_{2v}$ isomer + $C_{2}$, and the stable structure (100 fs) of the $C_{2v}$-adsorbed $C_{2v}$ isomer at 1000 K under the condition of quasistatic addition of $C_{2}$. (b) Snapshots (at 200 and 300 fs) observed at 1000 K after removing the condition of quasistatic addition at 80 fs.

IV. SUMMARY

In summary, we have found that the finite temperature effect on the electronic states is important in order to discuss the stability and reactivity of fullerenes at finite temperatures, and to understand the formation processes. Only with the finite temperature effect on the electronic states could we estimate correctly the temperatures at which an ideal $C_{60}$ and its $C_{2v}$ isomer (Fig. 1) become unstable. The estimated temperatures are much higher in ideal $C_{60}$ (about 4500 K) than in the $C_{2v}$ isomer (about 1500 K). Moreover, at 1000 K, we have found relatively strong reactivity of the $C_{2v}$ isomer with $C_{2}$ compared to ideal $C_{60}$. At the same temperature, if we adopt the condition of quasistatic addition, we could find stable configuration of $C_{2}$ (or $C_{3}$) adsorbed $C_{60}$. Finally, we could regain $C_{60}$ with almost $I_{h}$ symmetry (not its $C_{2v}$ isomer, although there was an equal possibility) by injecting $C_{2}$ to the hole of a $C_{58}$ molecule, which was constructed from an ideal $C_{60}$ by subtracting $C_{2}$ and relaxing. These results offer evidence of IPR in the late stage of the formation process of $C_{60}$.

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