

# The role of SO<sub>2</sub> in the reduction of NO by CO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S

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## Abstract

The decomposition of NO and the reduction of NO by CO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S were studied using temperature-programmed reaction technique coupled with fast mass spectrometry, powder X-ray diffraction and X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy. The role of SO<sub>2</sub> plays in the reduction is explored. It is found that the decomposition of NO is a favorable reaction step for the reduction of NO by CO achieved through a sulfur-assisted path. The oxygen produced in the decomposition is removed by the sulfur in the oxysulfide as SO<sub>2</sub>, which in turn is reduced back to sulfur by CO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S. An external supply of sulfur, such as SO<sub>2</sub>, in the feed is needed to maintain the population of sulfur in the oxysulfide and thus make the reduction sustainable.

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*Keywords:* Lanthanum oxysulfide; Decomposition; Reaction step; Temperature-programmed reaction; XPS

## 1. Introduction

Lanthanum oxysulfide (La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S) has been shown to be highly active for the simultaneous reduction of SO<sub>2</sub> and NO by CO, but when SO<sub>2</sub> is absent, the reduction of NO cannot be sustained, and the conversion of NO drops significantly with time [1]. This suggests that the reduction of NO is closely coupled to the reduction of SO<sub>2</sub>. However, the role that SO<sub>2</sub> plays in the reduction of NO remains unknown, and the reaction steps involved in the reduction of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S have not been studied and reported. In contrast, the reduction and decomposition of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> have been studied extensively [2–8] and can be used as a reference for the study of the oxysulfide reaction system. La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, the precursor of La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S [9], has a structure close to that of La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S, with one oxide ion replaced by a sulfide ion.

The reduction and decomposition of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> are usually associated with oxygen anion vacancies. In particular, Winter [2] proposed that the decomposition of NO starts with the adsorption of NO molecules at R2 centers. An R2 center is basically a pair of adjacent oxygen anion vacancies; the oxygen remaining from the NO occupies the center after decomposition. The study of the adsorption and decomposition of NO on

La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> by Huang et al. [7] supports the R2 center decomposition mechanism. It is interesting to note that when NO is fed to La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> that has been heated in helium at 973 K and cooled to room temperature, a small amount of N<sub>2</sub>O is produced. This indicates that decomposition of NO will readily occur even at room temperature if anion vacancies are made available:



On La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S, oxygen anion vacancies are probably formed in a manner comparable to that on the oxide, and also can be produced via the sulfur pathway, as reported by Lau and Fang [10]:



where \*S is a sulfide ion in the surface lattice and \* is an anion vacancy with a negative charge. Thus, it is fair to suggest that NO is also readily decomposed on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S provided that these anion vacancies are available. Winter [11] pointed out that in the decomposition of NO, the desorption of oxygen to regenerate the vacancies can be the limiting step. Thus, if we can identify a chemical species in La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S that promotes the removal of oxygen and regenerates the anion vacancies at temperatures typical of NO reduction, then the proposition that the decomposition of NO is an important step in the reduction of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S can be substantiated. The goal of this paper is to identify the species in the oxysulfide that can remove the

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oxygen at the typical reaction temperatures, and by doing so demonstrate that the decomposition of NO is an important reaction step for the reduction of NO by CO on  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_2\text{S}$ .

In this study, we used temperature-programmed reaction coupled with fast mass spectrometry (TPR/MS) to track the decomposition and the reduction of NO in the presence and absence of  $\text{SO}_2$  by CO on  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_2\text{S}$  with reference to those on  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_3$ . Changes in the catalyst composition due to the NO reactions were monitored with powder X-ray diffraction (XRD) and X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS). The TPR/MS technique temporally and thermally isolates the interactions between the reactants and the catalyst and allows identification of the active species in the catalyst.

## 2. Experimental

### 2.1. Catalyst preparation

$\text{La}_2\text{O}_2\text{S}$  was synthesized in situ in a quartz microreactor following the sulfidization procedure reported by Ma et al. [9] from  $\text{La}(\text{OH})_3$  powder (Yiaolong, China) at  $700^\circ\text{C}$  for 3 h. The sample was kept in flowing Ar or He before use. The composition of the sample material synthesized was  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_2\text{S}$ , as confirmed by XRD, and the sample's specific surface area was approximately  $4\text{ m}^2\text{ g}^{-1}$  as obtained with the BET method (ASAP2000, Micromeritics).

$\text{La}_2\text{O}_3$  was also prepared in situ in a quartz microreactor by calcining the  $\text{La}(\text{OH})_3$  powder at  $700^\circ\text{C}$  for 3 h in flowing Ar at  $\sim 90\text{ ml min}^{-1}$ . The composition of the sample was  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_3$ , as confirmed by XRD, and the sample's specific surface area was approximately  $4\text{ m}^2\text{ g}^{-1}$ , as obtained with BET.

### 2.2. TPR/MS

TPR/MS measurements were obtained using the experimental setup shown in Fig. 1. A 0.1-g sample of  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_2\text{S}$  was used in each measurement. The feed gas, at  $100\text{ ml min}^{-1}$ ,  $25^\circ\text{C}$ , and 1 atm, with typical composition

- (C1) 0.04%v NO,
- (C2) 0.4%v  $\text{SO}_2$ , 0.8%v CO,
- (C3) 0.16%v NO, 0.16%v CO, and
- (C4) 0.16%v NO, 0.4%v  $\text{SO}_2$ , 0.96%v CO,

was obtained by diluting the preblended reaction gases with Ar in the gas-mixing flask before it was fed to the reactor. The composition of the effluent gas from the reactor was continuously monitored with the mass spectrometer (Extrel MS250), which reported the composition data each second.

The typical TPR procedure started with purging the sample with feed gas at room temperature ( $\sim 25^\circ\text{C}$ ) until the composition of the effluent from the reactor was steady. The sample was then heated from room temperature to  $700^\circ\text{C}$  at  $10^\circ\text{C min}^{-1}$  and kept at  $700^\circ\text{C}$  for 2 h or until the composition of the effluent gas was steady.

### 2.3. Catalyst composition

The bulk composition of the catalyst was monitored with XRD using a Philips model PW1830 powder X-ray diffraction system equipped with a Cu anode and a graphite monochromator operated at 2 kW. The samples were spread and pressed onto glass sample holders with no pretreatment.

The surface composition of the catalyst was measured by XPS (Perkin–Elmer Surface Science Analysis System model PHI 5600) equipped with a monochromatic  $\text{AlK}\alpha$  X-ray source according to the procedure described by Lau and Fang [10]. The powder samples were pressed into cup-shaped sample mounts for direct insertion into the instrument. Low-energy flooding electrons were used to neutralize the charges built up on the samples, and the binding energy (BE) scale was so adjusted to make the adventitious carbon peak at 284.5 eV. Multiplex scans of carbon C1s, nitrogen N1s, oxygen O1s, sulfur S2p, and lanthanum La3d were acquired at constant pass energy of 23.5 eV.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Change in catalyst composition

The XPS C1s, O1s, S2p, and La3d spectra of  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_2\text{S}$  used in the decomposition and reduction of NO in the presence and absence of  $\text{SO}_2$  are shown in Fig. 2. The as-sulfidized sample is also presented as a reference. The typical O1s and S2p peaks are listed in Table 1. The as-sulfidized sample XPS spectra are comparable to those reported by Lau and Fang [10]. Although most of the samples were subjected to the reactions involving NO, no detectable amount of nitrogen was found on their surfaces. The C1s spectrum contained two peaks: a higher-intensity peak at 284.5 eV, attributable to adventitious carbon, and a lower-intensity peak at  $\sim 289\text{ eV}$ , associated with C–O species, such as carbonate. S2p at BE  $\sim 160.1\text{ eV}$  can be assigned to the sulfide in the lattice or the sulfur in the surface not bonded to oxygen. The broader group of S2p at  $\sim 166.4\text{--}168.5\text{ eV}$  can be attributed to S–O species, such as  $\text{SO}_2$  adspecies, sulfite, and sulfate. O1s also contained two peaks, one at lower BE

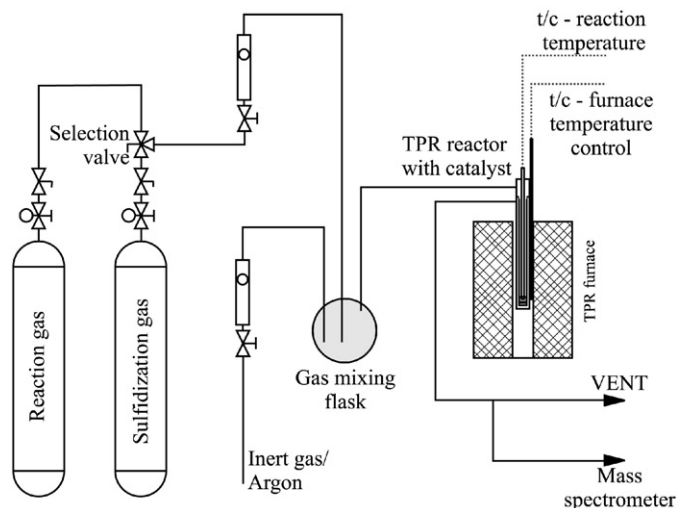


Fig. 1. Flow schematic of experiment setup.

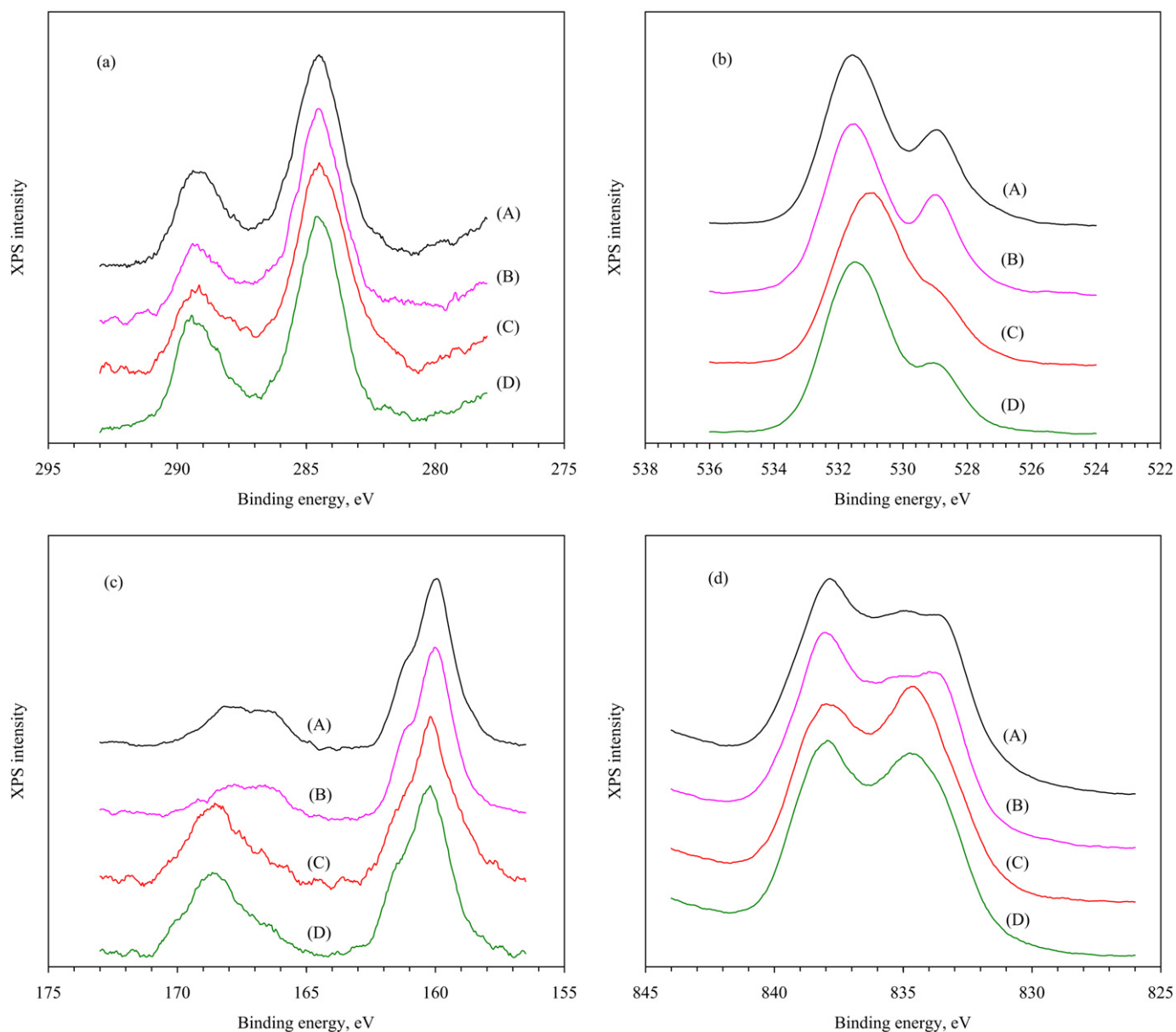


Fig. 2. XPS spectra (a) C1s, (b) O1s, (c) S2p and (d) La3d<sub>5/2</sub> of La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S—effect of NO. Curves in the figures from top to bottom, (A) no treatment (as-sulfidized), (B) TPR reaction with NO, SO<sub>2</sub> and CO, (C) TPR reaction with NO and CO, and (D) TPR reaction with NO. All the spectra have been rescaled to the same vertical span.

Table 1  
Effect of NO reactions on XPS O1s and S2p peaks of La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S

Reactions	Binding energy (eV)			
	O1s		S2p	
As-sulfidized	531.6	528.9	160.0	166.4–168.0
NO decomposition	531.5	528.9	160.2	168.5
NO reduction by CO	530.9	–	160.2	168.3
NO reduction by CO in the presence of SO <sub>2</sub>	531.5	528.9	160.1	166.4–167.7

The oxysulfide was produced by sulfidizing lanthanum hydroxide powder with a stoichiometric mixture of SO<sub>2</sub> and CO.

(~528.9 eV) due to lattice oxygen or oxygen not related to C–O or S–O species, and the other at higher BE comprising contributions from the C–O and S–O species.

XRD revealed no significant changes in the bulk composition of the La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S catalyst after the NO reactions, although XPS revealed subtle changes in the surface composition. Table 2 shows the changes in the carbon, oxygen, and sulfur species in the surface of the catalyst due to the NO reactions. The decomposition of NO significantly decreased the concentration of sulfur in the surface relative to lanthanum (S/La), especially the sulfur not associated with the oxygen (S<sub>ONLY</sub>/La), while increasing the concentrations of oxygen (O/La) and S–O species in the surface. Similar changes were also observed on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S subjected to the reduction of NO by CO. The lattice oxygen O1s was almost completely diminished, and the O1s at higher BE shifted to 530.9 eV, indicating a dominant contribution from the carbonate [12]. The reduction of NO in the pres-

Table 2  
Effect of NO reactions on the surface concentration of carbon, oxygen and sulfur in La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S

Reactions	C/La	O/La	S/La	S <sub>ONLY</sub> /La	S–O/La	S–O/S
As-sulfidized	1.3	3.2	0.65	0.46	0.20	0.30
NO decomposition	1.9	4.0	0.55	0.32	0.23	0.41
NO reduction by CO	1.5	4.1	0.40	0.24	0.16	0.40
NO reduction by CO in the presence of SO <sub>2</sub>	1.2	3.2	0.52	0.40	0.12	0.23

C/La, O/La and S/La are the relative atomic concentration of carbon, oxygen and sulfur to lanthanum obtained with the XPS measurements. S<sub>ONLY</sub> is the sulfur species in the surface that is not bonded to oxygen such as sulfide. S–O/S is the relative atomic concentration of surface S–O species to the total sulfur species S.

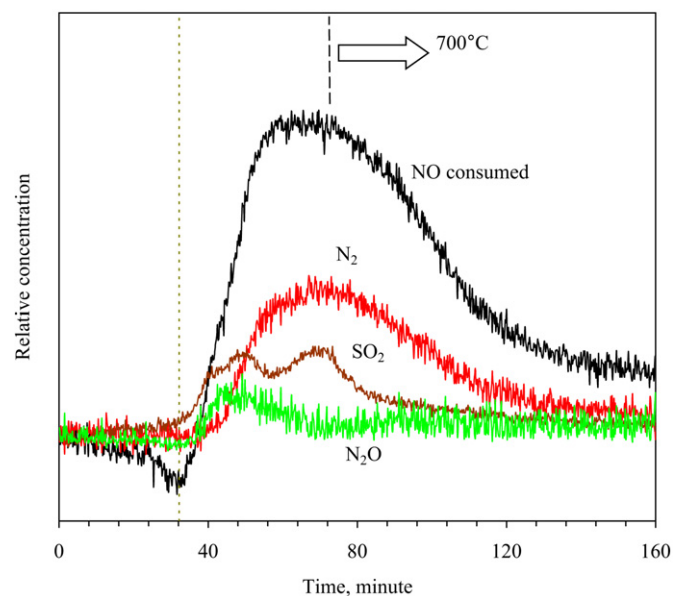


Fig. 3. Decomposition of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S. The nominal feed composition was 0.04%v NO. The relative concentrations of the species were obtained by correcting the intensity of  $m/z = 28, 30, 44$  and  $64$  for zeroes and fragmentation effect, and then adjusting for the sensitivity of the compounds. The dashed line marks the beginning of the 700 °C reaction temperature zone. The dotted line marks the maximum NO desorption point.

ence of SO<sub>2</sub> reduced the concentrations of the sulfur and S–O species in the surface but did not change the surface oxygen concentrations. Thus, the decomposition and reduction of NO in the absence of SO<sub>2</sub> consumed surface sulfur and produced S–O species, whereas the reduction by CO kept the concentration of S–O species low. In the presence of SO<sub>2</sub>, the sulfur consumed during NO reduction likely was replenished by the sulfur produced during SO<sub>2</sub> reduction.

### 3.2. Decomposition of NO: TPR/MS results

In Fig. 3, the temporal TPR/MS profile of the decomposition of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S shows that N<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O were produced as NO was consumed. This indicates the following decomposition reactions:



and



Instead of oxygen, SO<sub>2</sub> was produced; its formation was closely associated with the decomposition of NO. As NO decomposition diminished with time, SO<sub>2</sub> formation also slowed. SO<sub>2</sub> started to form at ~320, ~40 °C below the temperature at which significant amounts of N<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O are formed. Furthermore, the SO<sub>2</sub> formation curve consisted of two temperature peaks. Based on the formation of COS by the reaction between CO and sulfur in La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S [10], the lower peak can be attributed to the reaction with labile sulfur in the surface, whereas the higher peak may be associated with the reaction with the lattice sulfur. Note that a significant amount of NO was desorbed immediately before the start of decomposition.

### 3.3. Reduction of NO: TPR/MS

Fig. 4 shows the thermal TPR/MS profile for the reduction of NO in the presence of SO<sub>2</sub>. The conversion,  $C$ , is computed from the mass intensities using the following equation:

$$C = \frac{I_0 - I}{I_0}, \quad (4)$$

where  $I$  and  $I_0$  are the net intensities of the selected mass fragment of the reactant species in the effluent and feed streams, respectively. For example,  $C_{\text{CO}}$ , the CO conversion, is computed from the intensities of fragment with mass-to-charge ratio  $m/z = 28$  in effluent and feed. This intensity usually measures the CO concentration when CO is involved in the reaction. However, the formation of N<sub>2</sub> in the reduction of NO apparently lowers the conversion of CO due to the interference of N<sub>2</sub>. The mass fragment also includes the contribution from CO<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O, but their contribution is usually negligible relative to CO and N<sub>2</sub>. Similarly,  $C_{\text{NO}}$  and  $C_{\text{SO}_2}$ , the conversions of NO and SO<sub>2</sub>, are computed from intensities  $m/z = 30$  and  $64$ , respectively.  $C_{\text{NO}}$  also contains the fragment contribution from N<sub>2</sub>O, but this usually is very small.  $C_{\text{SO}_2}$  is usually not affected by other species except S<sub>2</sub> vapor. S<sub>2</sub> vapor is not volatile and is usually deposited on the cool surface of the reactor and transfer line; only a negligible fraction can enter into the mass spectrometer. The CO<sub>2</sub> intensity ( $m/z = 44$ ) measures the concentration of the products of CO<sub>2</sub> but also may include contributions from N<sub>2</sub>O. When there is significant conversion of CO, CO<sub>2</sub> will be the dominating species; however, when CO conversion is low, N<sub>2</sub>O can be the dominant species.

In the presence of SO<sub>2</sub>, the reduction of NO by CO began readily on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S at ~440 °C, and high and sustained conversions of NO, CO, and SO<sub>2</sub> were attained at >500 °C. The reduction was almost impossible on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>; only very low conversions of NO, SO<sub>2</sub>, and CO were detectable at >600 °C. This is consistent with the findings of Lau et al. [13] that anhydrous La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> could not be sulfidized to La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S and is inactive for the reduction of SO<sub>2</sub> by CO.

When SO<sub>2</sub> was absent (Fig. 5), the reduction of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S could not be sustained. Although a significant amount



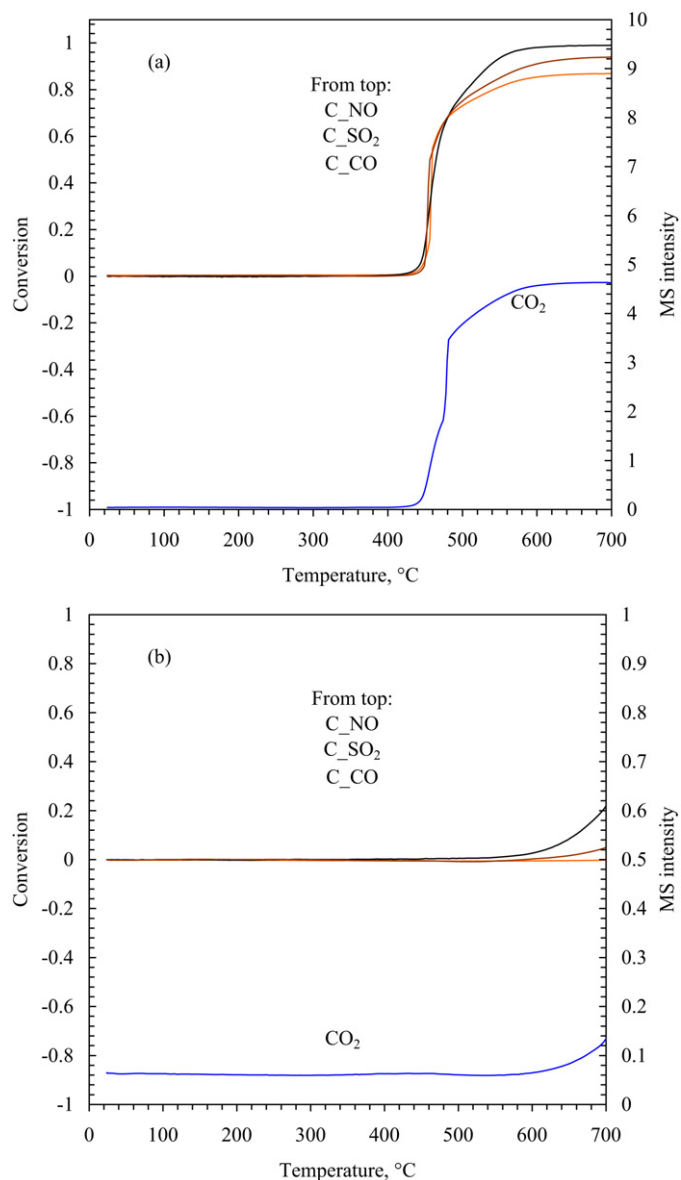


Fig. 4. Catalytic reduction of NO by CO on (a)  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_2\text{S}$  and (b)  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_3$  in the presence of  $\text{SO}_2$  ( $\text{NO}/\text{SO}_2 = 0.4$ ). The  $C_{\text{CO}}$ ,  $C_{\text{NO}}$ , and  $C_{\text{SO}_2}$  are the conversion curves for CO, NO, and  $\text{SO}_2$  obtained with the mass intensities  $m/z = 28, 30$  and  $64$ , respectively, and use the left scale. The scale of the  $\text{CO}_2$  ( $m/z = 44$ ) intensity curve is on the right.

of NO was reduced with the formation of  $\text{SO}_2$ ,  $\text{CO}_2$ , and possibly  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  in the first TPR program at  $>320^\circ\text{C}$ , a negligible amount of NO and CO reacted in the second TPR, with no  $\text{SO}_2$  formed. The conversion of CO in the first TPR was significantly lower than that of NO, probably due to the interference of  $\text{N}_2$  to  $C_{\text{CO}}$  and the fact that NO decomposition was the dominant reaction. Almost no reduction was observed on  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_3$ .

In summary, the reduction of NO by CO did not occur on  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_3$  irrespective of the presence or absence of  $\text{SO}_2$ ; however, on  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_2\text{S}$ , the reduction was sustained with high conversion of NO, CO, and  $\text{SO}_2$  in the presence of  $\text{SO}_2$ . In the absence of  $\text{SO}_2$ , the NO reaction also could not be sustained, and it eventually died out when the formation of  $\text{SO}_2$  ceased.

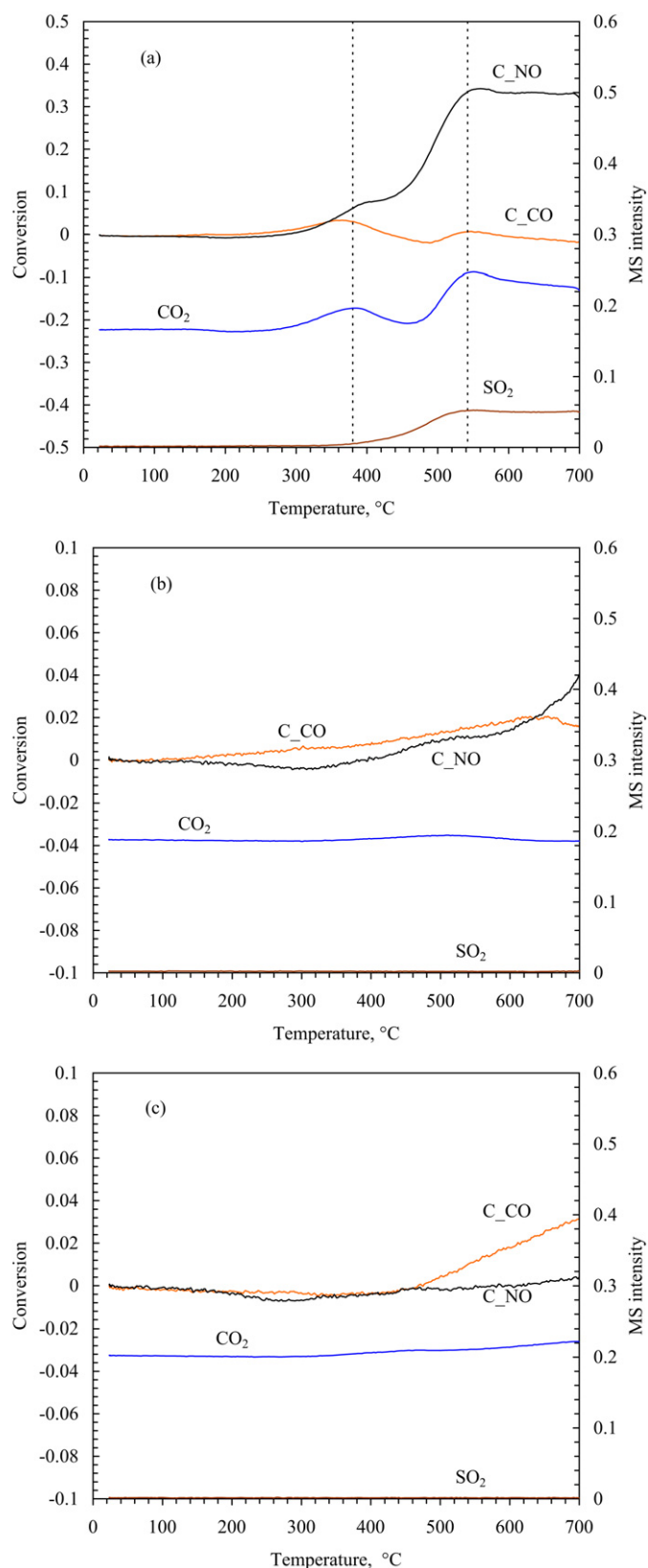


Fig. 5. Catalytic reduction of NO by CO on (a–b)  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_2\text{S}$  and (c)  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_3$  in the absence of  $\text{SO}_2$ ; (a) is the result of the first temperature program. The  $C_{\text{CO}}$  and  $C_{\text{NO}}$  are the CO and NO conversion curves obtained with the mass intensities  $m/z = 28$  and  $30$ , respectively, and use the left scale. The scale of the  $\text{CO}_2$  ( $m/z = 44$ ) and  $\text{SO}_2$  ( $m/z = 64$ ) intensity curves is on the right. The dotted lines mark the two  $\text{CO}_2$  bumps in (a).

#### 4. Discussion

The TPR/MS and XPS results both show that the decomposition and reduction of NO are closely associated with the sulfur in the catalyst and the oxidation of the sulfur to SO<sub>2</sub>. This was also observed in the reduction of NO on supported sulfides on  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> [14], CoS<sub>x</sub>-TiO<sub>2</sub> [15], and Ti-Sn solid solution catalysts [16]. The sulfur produced in the reduction of SO<sub>2</sub> helps remove the oxygen from the decomposition of NO as SO<sub>2</sub>, that is, the sulfur-assisted reduction of NO. It is possible that the reduction of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S also follows a similar pathway:



Removing the oxygen helps regenerate the anion vacancies for the next NO decomposition cycle.

Taking SO<sub>2</sub> formation as an indicator for the decomposition of NO, the NO decomposition ignition temperature (Fig. 3) will be ~320 °C. This is approximately the same temperature at which a significant amount of NO was reacted in the reduction of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S in the absence of SO<sub>2</sub>. This temperature was also ~100 °C lower than the temperature at which significant NO reduction was observed in the presence of SO<sub>2</sub>. Thus, the decomposition of NO is a favored reaction between NO and La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S.

As sulfur is consumed to remove the oxygen and regenerate the anion vacancies, the available sulfur in the oxysulfide is eventually used up if not replenished. Presumably, the SO<sub>2</sub> produced in the decomposition of NO can be reduced to replenish the oxysulfide. But insufficient sulfur is available for this, because a portion of the sulfur species is lost to the effluent stream. An additional supply of sulfur, such as the SO<sub>2</sub> in the feed, is needed. This is why the reduction of NO can be sustained only in the presence of SO<sub>2</sub> in the feed.

The reduction of NO by COS is probably one of the competing reaction paths for the reduction of NO over La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S, especially when COS is present in the feed. Ma et al. [1] reported that the reduction of NO by COS can be significant at temperatures as low as 150 °C over La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S. However, if COS is absent from the feed and must be produced by the reaction between the sulfur in the oxysulfide and CO [10], then the COS reaction path probably will not be as effective as the reaction path via NO decomposition. This is because the NO decomposition path is a more direct reaction path involving the sulfur, whereas the COS path is an indirect path in which COS must be formed at temperatures above 340 °C [10] and there is serious competition for COS from the reduction of SO<sub>2</sub> [18].

Fig. 3 indicates that SO<sub>2</sub> was produced before the NO decomposition reaction. Some of the SO<sub>2</sub> could be the residual adspecies from the sulfidization process when we synthesized the oxysulfide, whereas the remainder could be formed by the oxidation of sulfur by the oxygen produced in the decomposition of the adsorbed NO on the oxysulfide. A significant amount of NO was desorbed from the oxysulfide when SO<sub>2</sub> started to form, as shown in Fig. 3. The desorption created vacant adsorption sites. This suggests that additional vacant sites promoted the decomposition of NO. Furthermore, nitrogen products (N<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O) were formed well after SO<sub>2</sub> was produced, indicating

that nitrogen was held more tightly by the oxysulfide, probably at the anion vacancies (the adsorption sites). This suggests that the NO is adsorbed on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S with the N-end at the vacancies differing from Winter's decomposition scheme with the O-end at the vacancies [2]. The DRIFTS study on the decomposition of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> by Huang et al. [7] also reported NO adspecies with the N-end at the oxysulfide. In addition, nitrogen, being less electronegative than oxygen, can be slightly more positively charged, making the N-ends more readily approach the negatively charged anion vacancies. There is also another possibility that the decomposition of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S can be accomplished with two adjacent anion vacancies,



where \* represents an anion vacancy. However, further research is needed to clarify this issue.

Furthermore, N<sub>2</sub>O is the preferential product for the decomposition of NO at low temperatures when the reaction started (see Fig. 3). As more NO is consumed at higher temperatures, N<sub>2</sub> becomes the dominant product. This shift in N<sub>2</sub> selectivity may be associated with the population of N resulting from NO decomposition. When plenty of N is produced at sufficiently high temperature, N<sub>2</sub> is readily and preferentially formed by the combination of N. At low temperatures, where N is relatively scarce, there is greater likelihood of N reacting with another NO to form N<sub>2</sub>O before N<sub>2</sub> formation can occur.

Therefore, it is likely that the reduction of NO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S follows these reaction steps:

- Step 1: Adsorption of NO at the adsorption sites.
- Step 2: Decomposition of NO to N and O.
- Step 3: Removal of O by the oxidation of sulfur in La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S to SO<sub>2</sub>.
- Step 4: Desorption of nitrogen as N<sub>2</sub>.
- Step 5: Reduction of SO<sub>2</sub> by CO to sulfur.

The adsorption sites are the anion vacancies in the surface of La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S. Step 5 maintains the sulfur population in the oxysulfide and guarantees that sufficient sulfur is available to remove O in Step 3.

The role of SO<sub>2</sub> in NO reduction is schematically illustrated in Fig. 6. This diagram also explains how NO reduction is linked to the reduction of SO<sub>2</sub> on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S. The lower reaction cycle shows the COS-intermediate mechanism for the reduction of SO<sub>2</sub> by CO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S [10,17,18]. The COS intermediate is formed when CO reacts with sulfur in the oxysulfide. The intermediate then reacts with SO<sub>2</sub> on the La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S to produce sulfur and CO<sub>2</sub>. The NO reaction cycle is represented by the upper cycle. Sulfur in the oxysulfide fuels the decomposition of NO to N<sub>2</sub> by forming SO<sub>2</sub>, which is in turn reduced by CO to sulfur in the SO<sub>2</sub> reduction cycle. Thus, the S-SO<sub>2</sub> pair facilitates the NO reaction—an indirect reduction path of NO by CO.

#### 5. Conclusion

This study of the decomposition of NO and the reduction of NO by CO in the presence and absence of SO<sub>2</sub> on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S

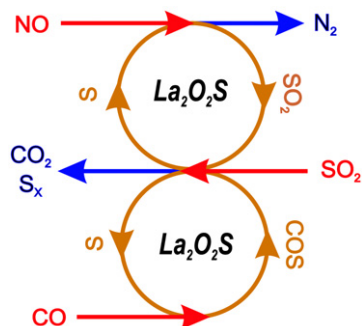


Fig. 6. Coupling between the reduction of NO and the reduction of SO<sub>2</sub> on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S—an illustration.

found that the decomposition reaction is the favored reaction step in the reduction of NO by CO and that the reduction proceeds via the sulfur-assisted path. The oxygen produced in the decomposition is removed by sulfur in the oxysulfide as SO<sub>2</sub>, which is then reduced back to sulfur by CO on La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S. This step helps regenerate the anion vacancies for NO decomposition. The S–SO<sub>2</sub> pair facilitates the indirect reduction of NO by CO to nitrogen through the SO<sub>2</sub> reduction cycle. An external supply of sulfur, such as SO<sub>2</sub> in the feed, must be available to sustain the NO reduction process.

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