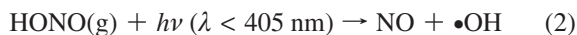


Anion-Catalyzed Dissolution of NO<sub>2</sub> on Aqueous MicrodropletsA. Yabushita,<sup>†</sup> S. Enami,<sup>‡</sup> Y. Sakamoto,<sup>†</sup> M. Kawasaki,<sup>†</sup> M. R. Hoffmann,<sup>‡</sup> and A. J. Colussi<sup>\*‡</sup>*Department of Molecular Engineering, Kyoto University, Kyoto 615-8510, Japan, and W. M. Keck Laboratories, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California 91125**Received: January 23, 2009; Revised Manuscript Received: March 19, 2009*

Fifty-seven years after NO<sub>x</sub> (NO + NO<sub>2</sub>) were identified as essential components of photochemical smog, atmospheric chemical models fail to correctly predict •OH/HO<sub>2</sub>• concentrations under NO<sub>x</sub>-rich conditions. This deficiency is due, in part, to the uncertain rates and mechanism for the reactive dissolution of NO<sub>2</sub>(g) (2NO<sub>2</sub> + H<sub>2</sub>O = NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> + H<sup>+</sup> + HONO) in fog and aerosol droplets. Thus, state-of-the-art models parametrize the uptake of NO<sub>2</sub> by atmospheric aerosol from data obtained on “deactivated tunnel wall residue”. Here, we report experiments in which NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> production on the surface of microdroplets exposed to NO<sub>2</sub>(g) for ~1 ms is monitored by online thermospray mass spectrometry. NO<sub>2</sub> does not dissolve in deionized water (NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> signals below the detection limit) but readily produces NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> on aqueous NaX (X = Cl, Br, I) microdroplets with NO<sub>2</sub> uptake coefficients  $\gamma$  that vary nonmonotonically with electrolyte concentration and peak at  $\gamma_{\max} \sim 10^{-4}$  for [NaX] ~ 1 mM, which is > 10<sup>3</sup> larger than that in neat water. Since I<sup>-</sup> is partially oxidized to I<sub>2</sub><sup>•-</sup> in this process, anions seem to capture NO<sub>2</sub>(g) into X–NO<sub>2</sub><sup>•-</sup> radical anions for further reaction at the air/water interface. By showing that  $\gamma$  is strongly enhanced by electrolytes, these results resolve outstanding discrepancies between previous measurements in neat water versus NaCl-seeded clouds. They also provide a general mechanism for the heterogeneous conversion of NO<sub>2</sub>(g) to (NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> + HONO) on the surface of aqueous media.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), the pollutant that imparts its brownish hue to urban skies, is produced by photooxidation of the nitric oxide (NO) emitted by high-temperature combustion sources (Scheme 1).<sup>1</sup> In the gas phase, NO<sub>2</sub> is photolyzed to (O + NO) during the daytime and oxidized to NO<sub>3</sub> at night.<sup>2</sup> However, NO<sub>2</sub> also disproportionates into nitric and nitrous acids on cloud and fog droplets via reaction 1<sup>3–6</sup>



Photochemical smog is particularly sensitive to reaction 1, which launches a pathway that converts NO<sub>2</sub> into •OH, the most reactive atmospheric intermediate, at longer wavelengths and higher solar zenith angles than the conventional route via O<sub>3</sub> photolysis (see Scheme 1).<sup>7–11</sup> Recently, measurements based on improved detection techniques revealed unexpectedly high HONO daytime concentrations, which would require reaction 1 to proceed >60 times faster at noon than at nighttime.<sup>4,12,13</sup> This finding evokes the lingering discrepancies between observed and under/overestimated •OH/HO<sub>2</sub>• concentrations in atmospheres containing >100 pptv NO<sub>x</sub><sup>10,14–17</sup> and revives unsolved issues about reaction 1.<sup>18</sup>

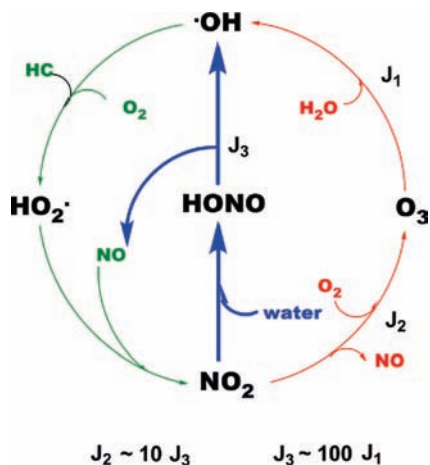
Predictions that reaction 1, the bimolecular disproportionation of a sparingly water-soluble gas, should be exceedingly slow on clouds and fogs because it is so on pure water,<sup>19–21</sup> were not confirmed in the field or the laboratory.<sup>3,22</sup> NO<sub>2</sub>(g) uptake coefficients on “water” range from  $\gamma < 10^{-7}$  up to ~10<sup>-3</sup> and are independent (rather than linearly dependent) of [NO<sub>2</sub>(g)].<sup>3,19,23–28</sup> Although the second-order disproportionation of NO<sub>2</sub>(aq) in bulk water is not assisted even by strong nucleophiles,<sup>29</sup> its heterogeneous uptake is significantly enhanced by various solutes, particularly by reducing ones,<sup>30</sup> such as amines, sulfite, or iodide.<sup>5,31,32</sup> This apparent anomaly suggests that the mechanism of reaction 1 at the air/water interface may be different from that in bulk solution. Few techniques, however, can instantly monitor the formation of products without further processing, under essentially wall-less conditions, on the surface of fresh microdroplets exposed to ppmv NO<sub>2</sub>(g) levels at atmospheric pressure for less than ~1 ms.

We investigated reaction 1 on microdroplets generated by pneumatic nebulization of aqueous electrolyte solutions into ppmv NO<sub>2</sub>(g)/N<sub>2</sub> mixtures at atmospheric pressure. Solutions are injected into the spraying chamber of an electrospray mass spectrometer through a grounded stainless steel nozzle issuing nebulizer N<sub>2</sub> gas (see Figure S1 in Supporting Information). The high-velocity nebulizer gas breaks up the liquid jet into micrometer-size droplets carrying excess charges of either sign.<sup>33</sup> The negatively charged microdroplets generated in this process carry modest excess charges,<sup>33</sup> in contrast with those produced in conventional electrospray sources maintained at high voltage relative to ground.<sup>34,35</sup> Microdroplets rapidly evaporate solvent

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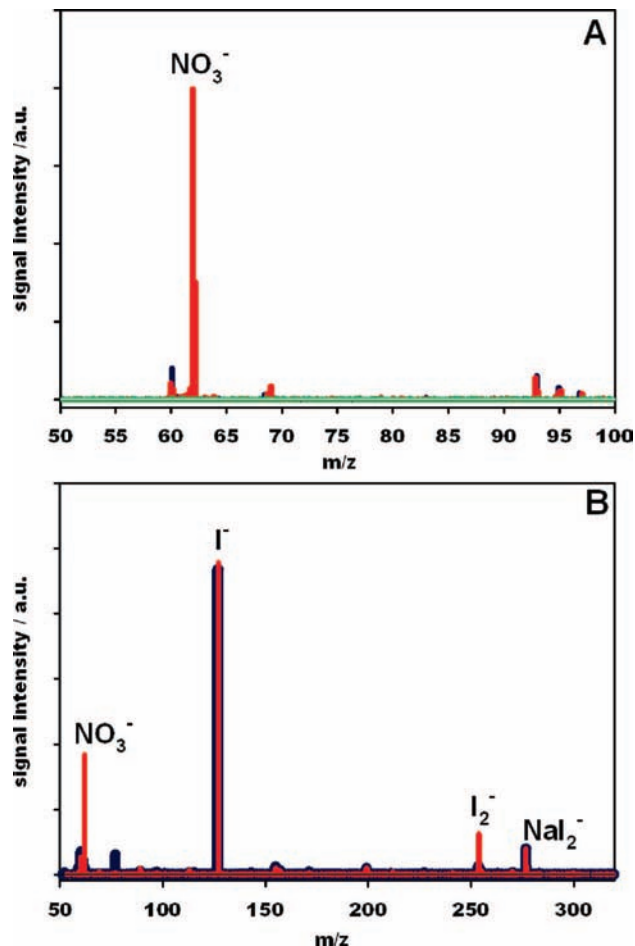
<sup>‡</sup> California Institute of Technology.

SCHEME 1: Photochemical Smog Cycles<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>  $J_1$ ,  $J_2$ , and  $J_3$  are the first-order rate constants (in  $\text{time}^{-1}$ ) for the solar photolysis of  $\text{O}_3$ ,  $\text{NO}_2$ , and HONO, respectively. HC stands for reactive hydrocarbons, and “water” represents fog or cloud droplets.

in the dry  $\text{N}_2(\text{g})$  emanating from the electrically polarized inlet to the mass spectrometer while being drawn to it with increasing acceleration,  $a = (ze/m)E$ , because the electric field  $E$  becomes more intense in its vicinity and because they rapidly lose mass  $m$  while keeping their excess charges  $ze$ . The spraying chamber is not, therefore, a conventional well-stirred reactor with a normal distribution of microdroplet residence times but a unidirectional flow reactor which shrinking microdroplets traverse at exponentially increasing speeds (and shorter residence times). The strong direct correlation between residence time and droplet size, in addition to the perpendicular crossing of the spray with the  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  plume, ensures that  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  mostly interacts with nascent microdroplets (see Figure S1, Supporting Information). Solvent evaporation leads to charge crowding, whereby droplets shed their interfacial films carrying (from electrostatics) the excess charges into smaller offspring.<sup>36</sup> These events ultimately produce nanodroplets from which bare ions are electrostatically ejected into the gas phase.<sup>34,37,38</sup> Given the orthogonal configuration of the instrument, mass spectra report on gas-phase ions sampled from the periphery of the spray cone rather than from its axis, along which the bulk of the liquid advances (Figure S1, Supporting Information).<sup>39</sup> Thus, these experiments probe, within 1 ms, the ion composition of the interfacial layers (see below) of nascent microdroplets that had just reacted with  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$ . Further details can be found in previous publications from our laboratory (see also Supporting Information for further details).<sup>40–43</sup>

Negative ion mass spectra ( $m/z \geq 50$ ) of deionized water (pH 7.0) microdroplets nebulized into a chamber continuously flushed with  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  are verifiably and consistently featureless, that is, mass spectral signals are within noise levels (background trace in Figure 1A). This result (1) excludes detectable levels of  $\text{HNO}_3$  impurities in our  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})/\text{N}_2$  mixtures, (2) precludes artificial  $\text{NO}_3^-$  production in our instrument, and (3) provides direct evidence that the negative excess interfacial charges carried by our droplets are insufficient to trap  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  in significant amounts (see below). Strong  $\text{NO}_3^-$  signals ( $m/z = 62$ ), however, develop on aqueous NaOH microdroplets above pH  $\sim 10$ . Since the aerial surfaces of aqueous electrolyte solutions as a rule are negatively charged relative to the bulk, that is, anions approach the interface closer than cations,<sup>44,45</sup> this finding actually implies that  $\text{OH}^-$  is able to catalyze the disproportionation of  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  into ( $\text{NO}_2^- + \text{NO}_3^-$ ) at the

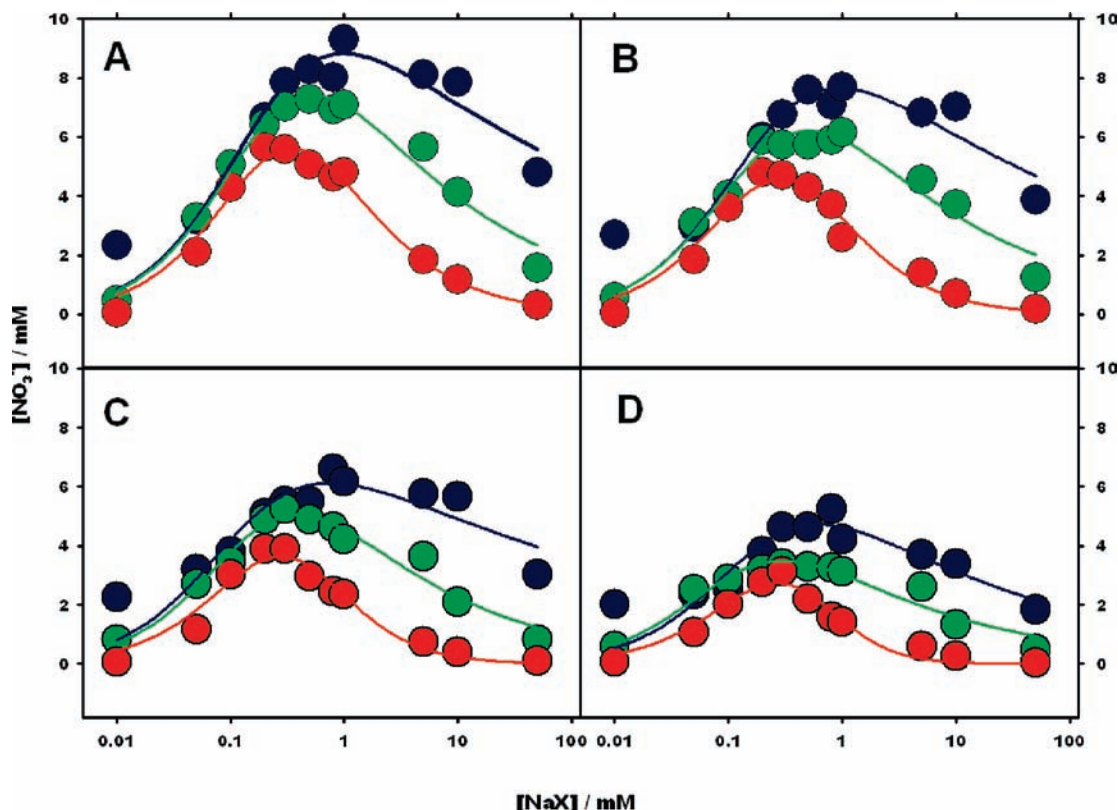


**Figure 1.** Anion-catalyzed nitrate formation on aqueous microdroplets. (A) Thermospray mass spectra (TSMS) of pure water at pH  $\sim 7$  in the presence of 8.0 ppmv  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  (green) and of 1 mM NaCl droplets at pH  $\sim 7$  in the absence (blue)/presence (red) of 0.7 ppmv  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$ . (B) TSMS of 1 mM NaI droplets at pH  $\sim 7$  in the absence (blue)/presence (red) of 0.4 ppmv  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$ . One ppmv  $\equiv 2.4 \times 10^{13}$  molecules  $\text{cm}^{-3}$  at 1 atm and 300 K.

interface<sup>29</sup> and prompted us to explore the possibility that other anions  $\text{X}^-$  could also promote reaction 1.

Figure 1A also shows the mass spectrum acquired from 1 mM NaCl microdroplets at pH 7.0 sprayed into  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})/\text{N}_2$  under identical conditions. New, sizable  $m/z = 62$  signals are observed that can be ascribed to  $\text{NO}_3^-$  as the exclusive anion product in the  $m/z \geq 50$  mass range accessible to our instrument. Similar results were obtained with NaBr, NaF, and  $\text{NaHSO}_4$  solutions (see Figure S2, Supporting Information) without detectable  $\text{Br}^-$ ,  $\text{F}^-$  or  $\text{HSO}_4^-$  losses, confirming that reaction 1 undergoes general base catalysis.<sup>46</sup> Although  $\text{NO}_2^-$  ( $m/z = 46$ ) lies below the instrumental mass threshold, it should have been possible to detect it as its cluster  $\text{Na}(\text{NO}_2)_2^-$  ( $m/z = 115$ ) had  $\text{NO}_2^-$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  been present at similar ( $>2$  mM) concentrations at the air/water interface (see Figure S3, Supporting Information). The absence of detectable  $m/z = 115$  signals therefore implies that neutral HONO ( $\text{p}K_a = 3.37$ ) is quantitatively released (whereas  $\text{HONO}_2$ ,  $\text{p}K_a = -1.64$ , is not) to the gas phase. It should be emphasized that the oxidation of  $\text{NO}_2$  to  $\text{NO}_3^-$  under present strictly anoxic conditions can only occur via  $\text{NO}_2$  disproportionation (reaction 1). We verified that  $\text{NO}_3^-$  signal intensities increase linearly with  $[\text{NO}_2(\text{g})]$  in the presence of electrolytes (Figure S4, Supporting Information) (see below).

Figure 2 shows  $[\text{NO}_3^-]$  versus  $[\text{NaX}]$  data at various  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  concentrations in the range of  $0.01 \leq [\text{NaX}]/\text{mM} \leq 100$  for X

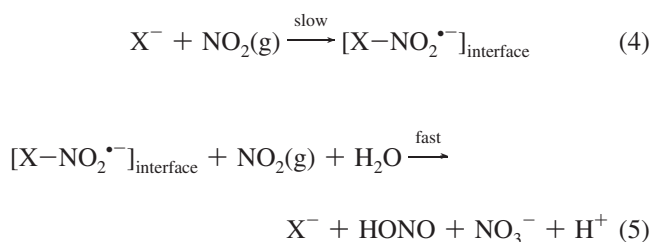


**Figure 2.** Anion-dependent efficiency of the  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g}) \rightarrow \text{NO}_3^-$  conversion on aqueous electrolyte microdroplets.  $[\text{NO}_3^-]$  versus  $[\text{NaX}]$  at  $\text{pH} \sim 7$ ;  $\text{X} = \text{Cl}$  (blue),  $\text{Br}$  (green) and  $\text{I}$  (red) at (A)  $[\text{NO}_2(\text{g})] = 7.2 \times 10^{14}$  molecules  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ , (B)  $[\text{NO}_2(\text{g})] = 4.8 \times 10^{14}$  molecules  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ , (C)  $[\text{NO}_2(\text{g})] = 2.4 \times 10^{14}$  molecules  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ , and (D)  $[\text{NO}_2(\text{g})] = 1.2 \times 10^{14}$  molecules  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ . Solid curves are best fits based on eq 3.  $[\text{NO}_3^-]$  is calculated from a ( $m/z = 62$ ) signal intensity versus  $[\text{NaNO}_3]$  calibration plot. See text for details.

$\equiv \text{Cl}$ ,  $\text{Br}$ , and  $\text{I}$ . The curves correspond to best fits based on three-parameter ( $\alpha$ ;  $\beta$ ;  $\Gamma$ ) expressions given by

$$[\text{NO}_3^-] = \Gamma \vartheta (1 - \vartheta)^\beta \quad \vartheta = \frac{[\text{X}^-]}{\alpha + [\text{X}^-]} \quad (3)$$

where  $\vartheta$  is the anion interfacial fractional coverage,  $\alpha$  is the reciprocal of the partitioning coefficient of  $\text{X}^-$  to the interface,  $\beta$  gauges the attenuation of  $\text{NO}_3^-$  signals by excess  $\text{X}^-$ , and  $\Gamma$  is a factor that converts surface coverages in measured  $[\text{NO}_3^-]$  values. Independent calibrations show that anion signal intensities are directly proportional to bulk concentrations  $[\text{X}^-]$  but generally plateau above  $[\text{X}^-] \sim 10$  mM under present conditions (Figure S3, Supporting Information). The gentle (i.e.,  $0.4 > \beta > 0.1$ ) decline of  $\text{NO}_3^-$  signals beyond peak values therefore implies that excess  $\text{X}^-$  competes with  $\text{NO}_3^-$  for the air/water interface, thereby attenuating  $m/z = 62$  signals. The preceding observations are accounted for by the following mechanism



The reality of  $\text{X}-\text{NO}_2^{\bullet-}$  intermediates having finite lifetimes at the interface is confirmed by experiments on 1 mM NaI

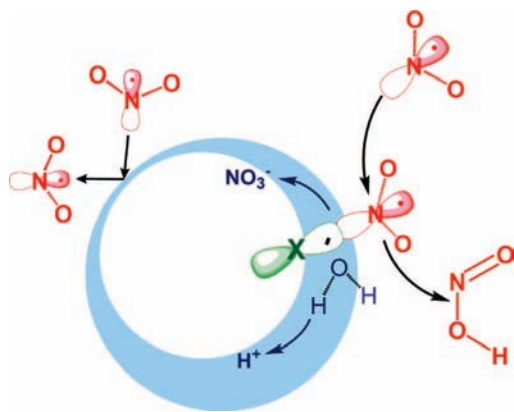
microdroplets. In this case, the detection of  $\text{I}_2^{\bullet-}$  ( $m/z = 254$ ) (Figure 1B) in yields that level off above  $[\text{NO}_2(\text{g})] \sim 3$  ppmv (Figure S5, Supporting Information) indicates that  $\text{I}-\text{NO}_2^{\bullet-}$  undergoes intramolecular electron transfer,  $\text{I}^- - \text{NO}_2 \rightarrow \text{I}^\bullet + \text{NO}_2^-$  (followed by  $\text{I}^\bullet + \text{I}^- \rightarrow \text{I}_2^{\bullet-}$ ), in competition with reaction 5 at the interface. Given the exceedingly small sticking probability of  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  on pure water (see below), only at the interface could a second  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  molecule be rapidly captured by  $\text{I}-\text{NO}_2^{\bullet-}$  intermediates.

Mass balance and the stoichiometry of reaction 1 require that

$$\delta [\text{NO}_3^-] = \frac{1}{8} \gamma c \tau [\text{NO}_2(\text{g})] \quad (6)$$

where  $\delta$  is the average thickness of the interfacial layers in which  $\text{NO}_3^-$  is generated and detected,  $\gamma([\text{NaX}])$  is the  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  uptake coefficient,  $c = 3.72 \times 10^4$   $\text{cm s}^{-1}$  is the average  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  molecular speed at 300 K, and  $\tau = 1$  ms is the average  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$ /microdroplets contact time. In Figure 2D,  $[\text{NO}_3^-]_{\text{max}} = 4.72$  mM =  $2.83 \times 10^{18}$  ions  $\text{cm}^{-3}$  were generated at the interface of  $[\text{NaCl}] = 0.62$  mM droplets exposed to  $1.2 \times 10^{14}$   $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  molecules  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ . Hence,  $\gamma_{\text{max}} \sim 5.1$  [ $\delta(\text{cm})/\tau(\text{s})$ ]. A lower value  $\gamma_{\text{max}} > 2.6 \times 10^{-4}$  can then be obtained by assuming realistic  $\delta \geq 5 \times 10^{-8}$  cm,  $\tau \leq 1$  ms bounds. Considering that the detection limit for  $\text{NO}_3^-$  is  $< 0.1$   $\mu\text{M}$  under present conditions, the failure to detect  $m/z = 62$  signals on pure water droplets further implies that  $\gamma_{\text{water}} < 2 \times 10^{-8}$ , in accord with previously reported  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  uptake coefficients on water nanofilms.<sup>23</sup> These estimates are robust because the ratio of  $m/z = 62$  signal intensities measured on 1 mM NaCl ( $I_{m/z=62}$ ) and neat water microdroplets ( $I_{m/z=62}^0 \leq 2 \times$  baseline average signal intensity) under 14 ppmv  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$

## SCHEME 2



yields  $\gamma_{\max}/\gamma_{\text{water}} = (I_{m/z=62}/I_{m/z=62}^0) \geq 5.6 \times 10^4$ . These results rationalize the similar  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  dissolution rates measured in pure water by the Berkeley and Brookhaven teams<sup>19,28</sup> versus the much larger values determined on clouds consisting of  $\sim 3$  mM NaCl droplets,<sup>25</sup> in which  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  uptake is controlled by reaction 4. From Figure 2, uptake coefficients determined on wet/dry seasalt,<sup>47</sup> or concentrated (5.3 M) NaCl aerosols,<sup>24</sup> are expected to be somewhat smaller than the present  $\gamma_{\max} > 2.6 \times 10^{-4}$  value.

The exceedingly low probability of reaction 1 on pure water is consistent with MD calculations showing that the hydrophobic free radical  $\text{NO}_2$  has strong propensity for the surface of neutral clusters  $\text{NO}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_n$ .<sup>48</sup> Figure 2 shows that the catalytic efficiency of halide anions ( $\text{Cl}^- > \text{Br}^- > \text{I}^-$ ) in reaction 1 follows neither nucleophilicity nor interfacial affinity trends<sup>29,44</sup> but tracks reported  $\text{X}-\text{NO}^+$  bond energies,  $\text{BDE}(\text{X}-\text{NO}^+) = 34.7, 17.2, 14.2,$  and  $11.3 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  ( $\text{X} \equiv \text{F}^-, \text{Cl}^-, \text{Br}^-, \text{I}^-$ , respectively).<sup>49</sup> Since  $\text{BDE}(\text{X}-\text{NO}_2^{\bullet})$ 's are expected to be similarly ordered, we infer that anions capture the 17 electron  $\pi$ -radical  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  at the air/water interface via charge transfer into its semiooccupied molecular orbital<sup>50</sup> rather than by catalyzing  $\text{NO}_2(\text{aq})$  disproportionation in the bulk phase (Scheme 2).

Maximum rates of  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  reactive dissolution in clouds and fogs consisting of aqueous electrolyte droplets can be calculated from  $R_d = k_d[\text{NO}_2(\text{g})]$ ,  $k_d = 0.25\gamma c(S/V)$ , where  $S/V$  is the total droplet surface per volume of air. Typical  $S/V$  values vary between  $\sim 2 \times 10^{-5} \text{ cm}^{-1}$  in clear weather and  $\sim 5 \times 10^{-5} \text{ cm}^{-1}$  during foggy events.<sup>3,18,51</sup> Total electrolyte concentrations of typical cloud and fog droplets naturally display wide variability spanning the 0.1–3 mM range.<sup>52</sup> Thus, from  $\gamma_{\max} \sim 2 \times 10^{-4}$ , one could estimate  $k_{d,\max} \sim 5 \times 10^{-5} \text{ s}^{-1}$ , that is, maximum  $\sim 20\%$   $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  hourly conversions in clear day conditions, which encompass recent HONO daytime field measurements in Mediterranean urban areas.<sup>53</sup> Note that smaller  $\gamma$ 's  $< \gamma_{\max}$  would account for the diurnal  $\text{NO}_2 \rightarrow \text{HONO}$  conversion rates required by most field studies.<sup>7,23,51,54</sup>

Real cloud and fog droplets are not, however, aqueous solutions of simple electrolytes but also contain a wide array of hydrophilic, hydrophobic, and amphiphilic organic substances that could enhance or inhibit in various ways the  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  hydrolytic disproportionation rates calculated above.<sup>55,56</sup> The nonmonotonic dependence of  $\gamma$  on  $[\text{X}^-]$  suggests that the relative humidity and the level of pollution could indeed impact  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  uptake by atmospheric particles.<sup>8,51,57,58</sup> This phenomenon alone could modulate  $\gamma$  during the day, but we decline to elaborate further at this time. We only wish to emphasize that the presence of electrolytes alone greatly enhances  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  uptake relative to pure water, rendering

alternative proposals, such as the photosensitized reduction of  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  on aerosolized humic matter,<sup>4,59–61</sup> less relevant. The uncertainties surrounding this issue are highlighted by the fact that the most recent chemical models parametrize the heterogeneous production of HONO in air masses downwind from metropolitan areas using  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  uptake data obtained on “deactivated tunnel wall residues”.<sup>10,62</sup>

Since  $J_3 \sim 100J_1$ , Scheme 1 shows that under hazy/foggy conditions, that is, at high humidity and reduced insolation, the “HONO cycle” might overtake the “ $\text{O}_3$  cycle” producing “smog without ozone”.<sup>7</sup> A more efficient HONO cycle than that previously assumed likely underlies the larger discrepancies between observed and predicted  $\text{HO}_x$  ( $\bullet\text{OH} + \text{HO}_2\bullet$ ) at higher  $\text{NO}_x$  levels and high solar zenith angles.<sup>14</sup> Direct  $\bullet\text{OH}$  production from electronically excited  $\text{NO}_2$  ( $+ \text{H}_2\text{O}$ ) may also contribute to this phenomenon.<sup>63</sup>

Summing up, anions catalyze the heterogeneous disproportionation of  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  on cloud and fog droplets by capturing it at the air/water interface.  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  uptake coefficients are enhanced several orders of magnitude by increasing electrolyte concentration in the sub-millimolar range, peaking at  $\gamma_{\max} \sim 2 \times 10^{-4}$  values that provide for the elevated, and heretofore unaccounted for,  $\text{NO}_2(\text{g})$  diurnal conversion rates (1–30%  $\text{h}^{-1}$ ) reported in the literature. Our results provide a benchmark upper bound for the probability of reaction 1 on dilute aqueous microdroplets.  $\text{NO}_2$  uptake on actual cloud/fog/aerosol droplets will depend, of course, on their overall makeup. Time-dependent ionic compositions of clouds and fogs are henceforth required to model these processes.

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**Supporting Information Available:** Additional data, data analysis, and experimental details. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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