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Battery-like Supercapacitors from Vertically Aligned Carbon Nanofibers Coated Diamond: Design and Demonstrator

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To fabricate battery-like supercapacitors with high power and energy densities, big capacitances as well as long-term capacitance retention, vertically aligned carbon nanofibers (CNFs) grown on boron doped diamond (BDD) films are employed as the capacitor electrodes. They possess large surface areas, high conductivity, high stability, and importantly are free of binder. The large surface areas result from their porous structures. The containment of graphene layers and copper metal catalysts inside CNFs leads to their high conductivity. Both electrical double layer capacitors (EDLCs) in inert solution and pseudocapacitors (PCs) using $\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6^{3-/4-}$ redox-active electrolytes are constructed with three- and two-electrode systems. The assembled two-electrode symmetrical supercapacitor devices exhibit capacitances of 30 and 48 mF cm^{-2} at 10 mV s^{-1} for EDLC and PC devices, respectively. They remain constant even after 10 000 charging/discharging cycles. The power densities are 27.3 kW kg^{-1} and 25.3 kW kg^{-1} for EDLC and PC devices, together with their energy densities of 22.9 Wh kg^{-1} and 44.1 Wh kg^{-1} , respectively. The performance of these devices is superior to

most of reported supercapacitors and batteries. Vertically aligned CNFs/BDD hybrid films are thus useful to construct high-performance battery-like and industry-orientated supercapacitors for future power devices.

1. Introduction

Battery-like supercapacitors refer to these electrochemical capacitors (ECs) that possess the features of both ECs (e.g., high power density, P) and batteries (e.g., high energy density, E), as well as big capacitances (C) and long capacitance retention. These ECs meet the demands for powering future multifunctional electronics, hybrid electric vehicles, and industrial equipment.^[1] The construction of such battery-like supercapacitors is thus becoming the core activity of EC researches in recent years.

To fabricate battery-like supercapacitors, the first issue to be considered is the choice of suitable capacitor electrodes. Besides large surface areas, it is essential for them to facilitate high electron and ion mobilities. To produce capacitor electrodes with such properties, several strategies have been proposed^[2] by means of 1) improving the conductivity of the electrodes; 2) employing nano-sized electrode materials to reduce the diffusion length and meanwhile to enhance the surface areas; 3) utilizing three-dimensional (3D) materials to realize ion diffusion in multiple directions (e.g., porous materials); and 4) reducing the diffusion activation energy of the ions. In these studies, various carbon materials with different hybridization of atomic orbitals (sp^2 and sp^3), different allotropes of carbon (e.g. fullerenes, nanotubes, graphene and diamond etc.), and various dimensionalities (e.g., 0 to 3D) have been intensively investigated.^[3] For most ECs in these approaches, carbon materials have to be mixed with organic binders (e.g., polytetrafluoroethylene^[4]) and further pressed or coated on an electrode supporter (a current collector). Due to the low conductivity and relatively poor stability of these organic binders, both electron mobility inside the formed capacitor electrodes and ion diffusion on the surface of these capacitor electrodes are partially hindered.

In most cases, the theoretically expected performance of the fabricated ECs has not been observed. Therefore, novel capacitor electrodes, namely binder-free carbon capacitor electrodes, are highly needed for the construction of battery-like supercapacitors.

The second crucial issue for the construction of battery-like supercapacitors is the selection of the electrolytes. For example, inert electrolytes are widely employed for the formation of electrical double layer capacitors (EDLCs). In these solutions, redox species coated conductive substrates with polymer and metal oxides are also employed as the capacitor electrodes to produce pseudocapacitors (PCs).^[5] An alternative, but more efficient approach to construct PCs is to introduce soluble redox species into the electrolyte.^[6] One of the main advantages of this novel approach is that the amount of redox species, which determines the charge storage capacity, is easy to be controlled. However, the contribution of soluble redox electrolytes to the performance of ECs has not been clearly clarified.^[7] Therefore, the development of battery-like supercapacitors in both inert and redox electrolytes should be conducted.

We are thus interested in the growth of a novel binder-free carbon capacitor electrode as well as its employment for the construction of battery-like supercapacitors, including EDLCs in inert electrolytes and PCs in redox electrolytes. The binder-free carbon capacitor electrode is constructed using boron doped diamond (BDD) as the electrode supporter and vertically aligned carbon nanofibers (CNFs) as the active electrode materials. The CNFs are directly grown on BDD with a thermal chemical vapor deposition (TCVD) process (**Figure S1**). Namely, such a TCVD process eliminates the need to use low conductive organic binders. For such growth, C_2H_2 is employed as the reaction gas. The copper (Cu) thin film sputtered with a physical vapor deposition (PVD) device acts as the catalyst. Moreover, in this way the CNFs are covalently bonded to BDD via stable C-C bonds, i.e. the CNFs on diamond exhibit good adhesion, increased conductivity, and long-term stability. Furthermore, the CNFs feature high electrical conductivity, large specific surface area, good chemical stability, and 3D porous

structures.^[8] Abundant diffusion channels and plenty of active sites are thus expected to be available for our capacitor electrode. Therefore, the hybrid structure of CNFs/BDD films will offer integrated properties of both carbon materials used and resolve the key bottlenecks for the construction of battery-like supercapacitors mentioned above.

In this contribution, we first present the details about the growth of vertically aligned CNFs on BDD, followed by the characterization of their morphology, chemical structure and wettability using SEM, TEM, XPS, Raman, and water contact angle measurements. The construction of ECs with CNFs/BDD hybrid films as the capacitor electrodes is then shown. Using both three- and two-electrode configurations, their performance is evaluated in the inert solution (1.0 M H₂SO₄) as well as in the redox species contained electrolyte (1.0 M Na₂SO₄ + 0.05 M Fe(CN)₆^{3-/4-}). At last, a stand-alone supercapacitor is demonstrated.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. Design of CNFs/BDD Capacitor Electrodes

A good capacitor electrode features high electrical conductivity, a large specific surface area, good chemical stability, and a 3D porous structure. CNFs grown on BDD are believed to be the potential candidates since it has been shown that in a TCVD technique the growth (e.g., size, length, density) of CNFs is actually determined by the thickness of a catalyst (in our case, the Cu film).^[9] To fabricate such a capacitor electrode, the growth of CNFs grown on BDD was first optimized. The SEM images of Cu films sputtered on BDD with different sputtering times ($t_{\text{Cu,s}}$) of 15, 30, 60, 90, and 120 s were thus recorded. **Figure 1a** shows one typical SEM image of a Cu film with $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 60 s. The SEM images of Cu films with $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 15, 30, 90, and 120 s are shown in **Figure S2**. In all these images, BDD films are fully covered with Cu. The thicknesses of Cu films vary from a dozen to tens of nanometers, increasing as a function of $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$. With $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ from 15 to 90 s, the crystal boundaries of BDD can be clearly observed, but become indistinct once $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ is up to 120 s. These Cu films were then applied as the catalyst for

the growth of CNFs. The surface morphologies of as-grown CNFs/BDD hybrid films were then checked using SEM. As an example, the SEM images in top and side views for $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 60 s are shown in **Figure 1b**. Those for $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 15, 30, 90, and 120 s are shown in **Figure S3**. For $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 15 s, the growth of CNFs is random. While CNFs are quasi vertically aligned when $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ is up to 30 s. When $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ is longer than 60s, vertically aligned CNFs with much denser arrangement are acquired. The thicknesses of CNFs (insets in SEM images) are measured to be about 2.5, 2.8, 3.6, 4.3, and 5.0 μm for $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 15, 30, 60, 90, and 120 s, respectively. Interestingly, all CNF films exhibit 3D porous properties. Lots of channels or pores exist between CNFs, even for the CNFs with $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ longer than 60 s. This is partially because the growth direction of CNFs is perpendicular to the substrate. The surface morphology of CNF films is closely dependent on that of the substrate. For instance, the surface characteristic of the CNF film for $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 60 s (**Figure 1b**) shows actually the morphology of BDD surface. At some irregular crystal boundaries of BDD, tilted CNFs are then obtained and pores are generated. Such a statement is further supported by the control experiments using a smooth Si substrate as the supporter for the growth of CNFs. In this case, only a smooth surface of the CNF films was obtained under identified conditions (**Figure S4**).

To figure out the effect of the morphology of Cu catalysts on the growth of CNFs on BDD, the growth of CNFs using Cu particles as catalyst was further tested. These Cu particles were generated via annealing the Cu films at 500 °C for 60 min (**Figure S5**). Vertically aligned CNFs are gained with $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 90 and 120 s (**Figure S6**). Interestingly, the thicknesses of CNF films are slightly smaller than those CNFs films obtained without annealing (WOA) of the Cu films. More details can be found in the experimental session of the supporting information. Therefore, the copper films WOA were used throughout our studies.

DFG Proposal

Title: Electrochemical Reduction of CO₂ into C₂ Chemicals Using Hybrid Electrocatalysts of Doped Diamond and Metal-Organic Frameworks

Applicant: Dr. Nianjun Yang, Institute of Materials Engineering, University of Siegen

Duration: 36 months

Abstract: Electrochemical reduction of carbon dioxide (ECCO₂R) into useful chemicals and liquid fuels is of scientific significance and industrial importance. Especially, ECCO₂R into C₂ chemicals is highly demanded because industrial synthesis of C₂ chemicals is usually more complicated and energy intensive than that of C₁ ones. However, only C₁ reduction products are obtained on most electrocatalysts. Therefore, we propose in this project the employment of hybrid electrocatalysts for the realization of highly efficient, selective, and stable reduction of CO₂ into C₂ chemicals in aqueous solutions. The hybrid electrocatalysts consist of doped diamond and metal-organic frameworks (MOFs). Doped diamond is chosen in that on this non-metal electrocatalyst ECCO₂R into C₂ chemicals is possible. It also features high stability at negative potentials and minimized degree of hydrogen evolution during ECCO₂R. Selective production of C₂ chemicals during ECCO₂R will be realized through controlling and altering the type and density of catalytic sites, namely nitrogen- and/or boron- doped sp³ carbon atoms. Moreover, three-dimensional (3D) diamond will be fabricated and further coated with porous MOFs. Then the surficial concentration of CO₂ will be enhanced, leading to improved faradic efficiencies for selective ECCO₂R into C₂ chemicals. Furthermore, the synergistic effects of MOFs and 3D-BNDD are expected during the formation of C₂ chemicals (namely C-C bonds) from the intermediates generated on both doped diamond and MOFs. In addition, such a hybrid electrocatalyst will have improved stability, especially MOFs. The 3D boron- and nitrogen- doped diamond (BNDD) will be fabricated through either a top-down etching of a BNDD film with a nickel hard mask or a bottom-up overgrowth of SiO₂ sphere templates with BNDD films. The type and density of boron- and/or nitrogen- doped sp³ carbon atoms will be varied during microwave plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition processes. MOFs will be electrochemically deposited on 3D diamond by means of a reductive approach. CO₂ surficial concentrations will be calculated using quartz crystal microbalance. Its variation will be realized through changing the morphology and composition of MOFs. Their synthesis is thus conducted with different precursors and at different potentials. The reduction products will be detected using high performance liquid chromatogram, gas chromatogram, and related techniques. Based on the type and amount of monitored reduction products, the faradaic efficiencies and selectivity of ECCO₂R into C₂ chemicals will be evaluated for different hybrid electrocatalysts. Besides the investigation of the stability of hybrid electrocatalysts at different reduction potentials for long electrolysis times, the synergistic effects between

MOFs and 3D-BNDD will be cleared. The reduction pathways for efficient and stable ECCO₂R into selective C₂ chemicals will be proposed based on the results by use of in situ spectroelectrochemical techniques, electrochemical methods, and density functional theory simulations.

Figure 1. Characterization: SEM images of (a) a Cu film on BDD, (b) a CNF film on BDD with a growth time of 60 min, (c) a CNF film with a growth time of 90 min. The time for Cu sputtering was 60 s. The inset images show the cross sections of as-grown CNFs.

Obviously, altering the growth time leads to the formation of CNFs with various lengths. In a case study, Cu films sputtered with $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 60 s WOA were applied for the growth of CNFs using different growth times. The SEM images of CNFs grown using a growth time of 30, 60, 90, and 120 min are shown in **Figure S7a**, **Figure 1b**, **Figure 1c**, and **Figure S7b**, respectively. As expected, the surface morphologies of these CNFs/BDD hybrid films are almost identical. The lengths of CNFs are about 1.8, 3.6, 5.5, and 7.2 - 8.0 μm for a growth time of 30, 60, 90, and 120 min, respectively. Consequently, much longer CNFs are possible to be attained once a longer growth time (e.g., > 120 min) is applied or a higher C_2H_2 concentration (e.g., > 500 mbar) is used.

Prior to employing CNFs/BDD hybrid films as the capacitor electrodes, their wettability was checked. The as-grown CNFs/BDD hybrid films were not water-wettable. This is characteristic of the CNFs. these CNFs was then wet-chemically treated via immersing them in a mixture of H_2SO_4 and HNO_3 (v/v=3:1) for 30 minutes. As a case study, the wettability of CNFs with $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 60 s WOA (**Figure 1b**) was examined. The detected static contact angle of water on the as-grown CNFs is $110.4^\circ \pm 1.0^\circ$ (**Figure S8a**), revealing its hydrophobic nature. Its XPS survey spectrum (**Figure S8c**) exhibits the C 1s (98.1 atom-%) and O 1s (1.9 atom-%) signals at 284.0 and 532.0 eV, respectively. After such a wet-chemical treatment, the contact angle of water on the treated CNFs surface is changed to be $24.0^\circ \pm 0.6^\circ$ (**Figure S8b**). Accordingly, the oxygen content estimated from its XPS survey spectrum rises to 11.6 atom-% (**Figure S8d**). Therefore, the wet-chemical treatment enhances the content of oxygen on the surface of CNFs. The enhanced degree of the hydrophilic terminations then leads to significantly improved wettability of CNFs/BDD hybrid films in aqueous solution. Such a wet-chemical treatment was then always applied for the CNFs used for electrochemical experiments.

To optimize the CNFs/BDD hybrid films for the later construction of both EDLCs and PCs, cyclic voltammograms (CVs) of different CNFs/BDD hybrid films were recorded in 1.0 M H₂SO₄ at a scan rate of 100 mV s⁻¹. For the growth of these films, $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ were varied from 15 to 120 s. Within investigated CNFs/BDD hybrid films, half of them were grown using annealed copper films (WA) as the catalysts, the rests were grown using those copper films without annealing (WOA) as the catalysts. The growth time for these CNFs was 60 min. For these tests, a three-electrode system was used. **Figure S9a** shows two typical CVs for CNFs/BDD WA and WOA films with $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 60 s. At the same potential, the capacitive current of the CNFs/BDD hybrid film WOA is larger, an indication of a higher capacitance. **Figure S9b** summarizes the calculated capacitances of all CNFs/BDD hybrid films as a function of $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$. These capacitances were estimated from their correspondent CVs. In the case of CNFs/BDD hybrid films WA, almost no variation of capacitances is observed when different $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ is applied. The nearly unchanged capacitances suggest the constant electrode areas of these CNFs. By using CNFs/BDD hybrid films WOA, the magnitude of the capacitance improves with an increase of $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ up to 60 s and then remains almost constant until 90 s. On the contrary, a further increase of $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ longer than 90 s leads to a decrease of the magnitude of the capacitance. Again, the change of the capacitance reflects directly the variation of surface areas of the formed CNFs/BDD hybrid films WOA. For $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ in the range from 60 to 90 s, the highest capacitance (about 36 mF cm⁻²) is achieved. For further capacitance investigation, CNFs/BDD hybrid films WOA grown with a relatively shorter copper sputter time (e.g., $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ = 60 s) were chosen as EC capacitor electrodes.

To reveal the structures of these CNFs, they were further examined with TEM and Raman. **Figure 2a** shows one representative TEM image of a CNF, whose lateral size is about 200 nm. The black triangle inside the CNF is a Cu catalyst. Its selected area electron diffraction (SAED) pattern of the [110] zone axis is shown in the inset of **Figure 2a**, proving good crystallinity of a Cu catalyst. **Figure 2b** shows the high magnification of the interface

between a Cu catalyst and a CNF, where graphite is formed around the Cu catalyst. Lattice fringes with a distance of about 0.34 nm of the CNF are seen from the high resolution TEM (HRTEM) image of **Figure 2c**, confirming the formation of graphene-like layers around the Cu catalyst.^[10] In the region far away the Cu catalyst the characteristics of amorphous carbon are detected, based on the HRTEM image and the fast Fourier transformation (FFT) image showed in **Figure 2d**. In addition, observation of a large number of the CNFs confirms that graphitization only occurs in the region around the Cu catalyst.

Figure 2. Characterization: (a) TEM image of a CNF with a Cu catalyst. The inset shows the SAED pattern of the Cu catalyst. (b) TEM image of the interface between a CNF and a Cu catalyst. (c) High-magnification TEM image of image b. The inset reveals the lattice fringes of graphite. (e) HRTEM and FFT (inset) images of the amorphous phase in the CNF.

A Raman spectrum of the CNFs/BDD hybrid film (**Figure S10**) reveals two major Raman bands: D band at $\sim 1370\text{ cm}^{-1}$ and G band at $\sim 1650\text{ cm}^{-1}$. The D band is attributed to the disordered structure or defects of graphitic sheets. The broad peak observed at around 2800 cm^{-1} is probably related to the 2D band of graphite layers. Furthermore, the G band indicates the crystalline graphitic structure.^[11] The ratio of the intensity of the G band (I_G) to that of D band (I_D) is known to be proportional to the graphitization degree of carbon materials. In our case, the value of I_G/I_D , calculated using Gaussian fitting of two peaks, is about 0.42, confirming the large amount of amorphous phases and relatively few graphitic crystallites in the CNFs.^[10]

The existence of graphite and Cu inside the CNFs improves the electrical conductivity of the formed material. A more detailed study of the conductivity using scanning tunneling microscope (STM) is still under investigation. Together with its large surface area and a porous structure, CNFs/BDD hybrid films with $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 60 s WOA are expected to facilitate ion transfer in the solution and electron mobility on the interface of a CNFs/BDD electrode.

2.2. Performance of CNFs/BDD ECs

2.2.1. Capacitance

The CNFs/BDD hybrid film with $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 60 s WOA was employed as the capacitor electrode to fabricate ECs. Its capacitances were first studied using a three-electrode system. For the construction of EDLCs, its cyclic voltammograms (CVs) in 1.0 M H_2SO_4 were recorded within the potential range of 0 - 1.0 V at different scan rates (**Figure S11a**). The CVs are nearly rectangular, indicating ideal EDLC behavior. The slight deviation of the CVs from rectangular shape is due to the altered charge transfer resistance (R_{ct}) between CNFs pores and electrolyte interfaces as well as a generated over-potential.^[12] The estimated capacitances are 36.4, 48.2, 80.1, and 116.3 mF cm^{-2} at the scan rate of 100, 50, 20, and 10 mV s^{-1} , respectively. **Figure S11b** presents the galvanostatic charging/discharging (GCD) curves at

current densities ranging from 2 to 20 mA cm⁻². At high current densities, the curves are almost symmetrical, demonstrating high reversibility of this EDLC. The IR drop observed at the scan rate of 2 mA cm⁻² is probably due to the internal resistance of CNFs films and R_{ct} caused mainly by diffusion kinetics of the ions. The calculated capacitances are 17.6, 27.7, 56.6, and 137.9 mF cm⁻² at the current density of 20, 10, 5, and 2 mA cm⁻², respectively.

The CNFs/BDD PCs were then fabricated by introducing redox species (here 0.05 M Fe(CN)₆^{3-/4-}) into 1.0 M Na₂SO₄ aqueous solution. **Figure S11c** shows the CVs recorded in a potential window of -0.2 – 0.8 V at different scan rates. At all scan rates, the CV curves show a pair of redox waves corresponding to the redox reaction of $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-} + \text{e}^- \leftrightarrow [\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}$. The peak potential separation (ΔE_p) is relatively small (e.g., $\Delta E_p = 96$ mV at a scan rate of 10 mV s⁻¹). Moreover, the anodic peak currents are identical to the absolute values of the cathodic ones, indicating the excellent reversibility of these PCs. The evaluated capacitances are 35.0, 52.5, 94.8, and 136.8 mF cm⁻² at the scan rate of 100, 50, 20, and 10 mV s⁻¹, respectively. The related GCD curves are shown in **Figure S11d**. All these recorded curves show nonlinear behavior with plateaus, relating to redox reactions of Fe(CN)₆^{3-/4-}. The times for the charging and discharging processes are almost identical at all current densities, again demonstrating perfect reversibility of this PC. The estimated capacitances are 14.5, 34.7, 84.6, and 232.0 mF cm⁻² at the current density of 20, 10, 5, and 2 mA cm⁻², respectively.

At high scan rates (e.g., 100 mV s⁻¹) and high current densities (e.g. 20 mA cm⁻²), the capacitances of a PC are slightly smaller than those of an EDLC. Besides two different charge storage mechanisms (namely charge accumulation for EDLCs, charge transfer and accumulation for PCs), there exist additional aspects. First, different supporting electrolytes are employed for these ECs. Namely, the supporting electrolyte used for PCs is Na₂SO₄, while for EDLCs H₂SO₄ is applied as the electrolyte. To clarify the effect of these electrolytes, the CVs of an EDLC in 1.0 M H₂SO₄ and in 1.0 M Na₂SO₄ were recorded at the scan rate of 100 mV s⁻¹ (**Figure S12**). The capacitive current obtained in 1.0 M Na₂SO₄ is much smaller,

resulting in a low capacitance of 8.3 mF cm^{-2} . The difference can be interpreted as altered conductivity of the electrolytes. For the electrolyte of $1.0 \text{ M H}_2\text{SO}_4$, the conductivity is 1000 mS cm^{-1} . For the electrolyte of $1.0 \text{ M Na}_2\text{SO}_4$, it is only 80 mS cm^{-1} .^[13] Moreover, the size of Na^+ ions in hydrated state is larger than that of hydrated protons. The mobility of Na^+ ions in the solution is slower. Their accessibility and accumulation to the pores of the densely packed CNFs are thus hindered. If one compares the capacitance of the EDLC using Na_2SO_4 with that of a PC, the capacitance of a PC is enlarged for more than 4 times even at high scan rates (e.g., 100 mV s^{-1}). Such enhancement of the capacitance is similar or even better than those reported by using other porous carbon materials.^[14] Second, the inferior behavior of the PC at high scan rates or current densities can be attributed to kinetically unfavorable diffusion of ions inside the narrow pores because of slow Na^+ ionic motion and low conductivity of the electrolyte, leading to loss of the full contribution of active surface area of a CNF film.

To figure out clearly the contribution of CNFs into the construction of these ECs, the capacitance of the fabricated EDLC is compared with that of reported EDLCs constructed using diamond nanostructures or hydride films of BDD with carbon materials (**Figure S13**). Clearly, BDD nanostructures (e.g., honeycomb diamond,^[15] porous diamond,^[16] and diamond networks,^[17] etc.) own enhanced surface areas and thus exhibit significantly improved capacitances in comparison to flat BDD films. The hybrid films of BDD with other carbon materials (e.g., carbon nanotube,^[18] carbon fiber,^[19] etc.) also deliver larger capacitances than BDD EDLCs. This is attributed partially to further increased surface areas, partially to the addition of the capacitances from other carbon materials. Compared with these values, the capacitance of CNFs/BDD EDLC in this study is the highest. Moreover, the comparison of the capacitances of different diamond PCs is shown in **Figure S13**. The capacitance of the CNFs/BDD PC reaches the highest value of 232.0 mF cm^{-2} . It is much larger than that of metal oxide (e.g. Ni(OH)_2 ^[20]), conducting polymer (e.g. PEDOT^[21]), and diamond nanowires based PCs. It is also higher than that when a diamond network was utilized as the capacitor

electrode and the redox solution was the electrolyte.^[17a] In summary, the large surface area, the improved electrical conductivity, and the unique porous structure of these vertically aligned CNFs on BDD lead to the high-performance of these EDLCs and PCs.

The effect of the growth time of CNFs on the capacitances of CNFs/BDD hybrid films were also examined in 1.0 M H₂SO₄ using a three-electrode system. The CVs of CNFs with a growth time of 30, 90, and 120 min were recorded at a scan rate of 100 mV s⁻¹ (**Figure S14a**). The capacitances calculated from the related CVs are listed in **Figure S14b**. The magnitude of the capacitance improves almost linearly with an increase of growth time of CNFs. This is because the lengths of CNFs, namely the surface area of a CNF film, are enhanced nearly linear of as a function of the growth time. In other words, the capacitance of these CNFs/BDD ECs is possible to be further improved as required only through applying longer TCVD growth times.

For practical applications of these ECs, a two-electrode symmetrical supercapacitor device was assembled. Two CNFs/BDD hybrid films were used as the capacitor electrodes. These films were grown with $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ of 60 s WOA. The performance of as-fabricated ECs was first investigated in 1.0 M H₂SO₄ aqueous solution. **Figure 3a** shows the CV curves recorded at the scan rates of 100, 50, 20, and 10 mV s⁻¹ and with a cell voltage of 1.0 V. Similar as the results obtained by a three-electrode system, CVs show nearly rectangular shape at low scan rates, revealing good double layer capacitive behavior. The calculated capacitances are 7.7, 11.7, 21.6, and 30.4 mF cm⁻² at the scan rate of 100, 50, 20, and 10 mV s⁻¹, respectively.

The related GCD curves of the EDLC device recorded at the current densities from 1 to 20 mA cm⁻² are presented in **Figure 3b**. The curves are almost symmetric at high current densities, demonstrating the high reversibility of the EC. When lower current densities (here smaller than 2 mA cm⁻²) are applied, asymmetrical curves are acquired, due to the charge transfer resistance at the electrode and electrolyte interfaces. The times required for charging and discharging processes are almost equivalent, indicating a high columbic efficiency of the

EDLC. The calculated capacitances are 2.1, 4.0, 6.8, 19.6, and 34.0 mF cm^{-2} at the current density of 20, 10, 5, 2, and 1 mA cm^{-2} , respectively.

Figure 3. Performance of a CNFs/BDD symmetric EDLC device in 1.0 M H_2SO_4 : (a) CVs recorded at the scan rates of 100, 50, 20, and 10 mV s^{-1} ; (b) Charging/discharging curves at the current densities of 1, 2, 5, 10, and 20 mA cm^{-2} ; (c) Capacitance retention at the charging/discharging current density of 5 mA cm^{-2} . The inset SEM images show the

morphologies of two used CNFs/BDD hybrid films after 10 000 charging/discharging cycles.

Considering that fast charging/discharging processes are required for ECs, CV measurements at high scan rates (e.g., up to 3 V s^{-1}) were carried out. The related CVs are displayed in **Figure S15a**. Deformation of the CV curves is noticed at these high scan rates. This is quite normal due to insufficient time for ion adsorption/desorption and diffusion into the inner pores. In this context, the capacitance decreases with an increase of the scan rate, as shown in **Figure S15b**. Consequently, these CNFs/BDD EDLCs are possible to be applied for fast charging/discharging processes.

On the other hand, the capacitance of a PC device was then evaluated in a cell voltage of $-0.5 - 0.5 \text{ V}$ in $1.0 \text{ M Na}_2\text{SO}_4$ solution containing $0.05 \text{ M Fe(CN)}_6^{3-/4-}$. At all scan rates, the CV curves (**Figure 4a**) show a pair of well-defined peaks, relating to the redox reaction of $\text{Fe(CN)}_6^{3-/4-}$. In addition, the integrated charges from the anodic and cathodic cycles evidence that the charges stored on the electrodes during a charging process are nearly identical to those removed during a discharging process. The calculated capacitance are 15.7, 23.3, 36.1, and 48.1 mF cm^{-2} at the scan rate of 100, 50, 20, and 10 mV s^{-1} , respectively.

Figure 4b presents the GCD curves of this PC device at different charging/discharging current densities. The plateaus in the curves are relative to the redox reactions of $\text{Fe(CN)}_6^{3-/4-}$. Almost same times are required for charging and discharging processes even at a low current density of 2 mA cm^{-2} . The estimated columbic efficiency is about 100%, confirming the excellent reversibility of such a PC device. The calculated capacitances are 6.4, 12.8, 25.6, and 65.4 mF cm^{-2} at the current density of 20, 10, 5, and 2 mA cm^{-2} , respectively.

Figure 4. Performance of a CNFs/BDD symmetric PC device in 0.05 M $\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6^{3-/4-}$ + 1.0 M Na_2SO_4 : (a) CVs at the scan rates of 100, 50, 20, and 10 mV s^{-1} ; (b) Charging/discharging curves at the current densities of 2, 5, 10, and 20 mA cm^{-2} ; (c) Capacitance retention at the charging/discharging current density of 10 mA cm^{-2} . The inset SEM images show the surface characteristics of two used CNFs/BDD hybrid films after 10 000 charging/discharging cycles.

Interestingly, the capacitance of a PC device is several times larger in comparison to that of an EDLC device. Such an enlarged capacitance is sum of both electrical double layer capacitance and pseudocapacitance. The former results from the charge/ion accumulation on the surface of CNFs/BDD films. The latter originates from the rapid occurrence of faradaic reaction of $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-} + \text{e}^- \leftrightarrow [\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}$ on the CNFs/BDD interfaces. Moreover, when soluble redox species of $\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6^{3-/4-}$ are added in the electrolyte, the charge-transfer resistance at the CNFs/BDD interfaces is expected to be reduced, but the ionic conductivity of the solution is expected to be enhanced. Those results are similar with those obtained on diamond networks.^[17a] This pseudocapacitance is thus much higher than that of the electrical double layer capacitance. In short, both fabricated CNFs/BDD EDLC and PC devices feature the characteristics of battery-like supercapacitors, in this case a large capacitance.

2.2.2. Capacitance retention

The cycling stability of a CNFs/BDD EDLC device was further examined using GCD technique at the current density of 5 mA cm^{-2} . After 10 000 cycles, the capacitance remains unchanged (**Figure 3c**). The morphologies of both capacitor electrodes were then checked after the lifetime test. Their SEM images are shown in the insets of **Figure 3c**. In comparison to that of as grown CNFs films shown in **Figure 1b**, neither obvious surface damages nor differences regarding surface morphology or porosity are observed, demonstrating the excellent stability of the CNFs/BDD capacitor electrode.

For the cycling stability test of a CNFs/BDD PC device, a long time charging/discharging process (e.g., for 10 000 cycles) was carried out using GCD technique at the current density of 10 mA cm^{-2} . The capacitance retention as a function of the cycle number is shown in **Figure 4c**, illustrating that the initial capacitance maintains unchanged after the lifetime test. The surface morphologies of two electrodes (the inset of **Figure 4c**) show almost no change, compared to the as grown CNFs films (**Figure 1b**), again

demonstrating the perfect stability of the electrodes and also a high degree of the reversibility in the electrolyte.

Therefore, the CNFs/BDD based EDLC and PC devices have long-term cycle ability, one of the important advantages of battery-like supercapacitors.

2.2.3. Energy and Power Densities

To clarify the overall performance of the CNFs/BDD EC devices, their energy and power densities were further calculated. The related Ragone plots are displayed in **Figure 5**. The estimated maximal E and P reach the values of 22.9 W h kg^{-1} and 27.3 kW kg^{-1} for an EDLC device, respectively. While for a PC device, they are 44.1 W h kg^{-1} and 25.3 kW kg^{-1} , respectively. Compared to other energy devices (e.g., ECs, batteries, etc.^[22]) shown in **Figure 5**, the proposed CNFs/BDD EC devices exhibit not only much higher P , but also higher E than those of some reported supercapacitors. The value of E is similar to that of batteries. The reason is ascribed to the structure of the electrodes and also the “battery-like” behavior of the $\text{Fe(CN)}_6^{3-/4-}$ redox electrolyte.^[17a]

Figure 5. Performance of a CNFs/BDD EC device in both inert solution and redox electrolyte:

Ragone plots of CNFs/BDD EDLCs (closed dots) and PCs (closed squares) in comparison with those^[22] of traditional capacitors, ECs and batteries. Reproduced with permission.^[22] Copyright 2008, Macmillan Publishers Limited.

Table S1 further compares the performance (e.g., E and P) of our CNFs/BDD EC devices with that of other CNFs based EC devices reported in the literature. The E and P values of our CNFs/BDD EC devices are higher than those of many reported CNFs based EC devices.^[23] For instance, porous CNFs based EDLC devices only show an E of 17 W h kg^{-1} and a P of 20 kW kg^{-1} .^[24] The E and P of EDLC devices fabricated by N,P – co-doped CNFs networks reach the values of 7.8 W h kg^{-1} and 26.6 kW kg^{-1} , respectively.^[25] By applying $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{CNFs}$ composites as electrode material, the PC devices exhibit an E of 18.8 W h kg^{-1} , as well as a P of 20.0 kW kg^{-1} .^[26]

In conclusion, both EDLC and PC devices fabricated from the CNFs/BDD capacitor electrodes exhibit high power densities and high energy densities. They are characteristic for battery-like supercapacitors. Together with obtained large capacitances, long-term capacitance retention, battery-like EDLCs and PCs are successfully formed using vertically aligned carbon nanofibers grown on BDD as the capacitor electrodes.

2.2.4. Battery-like Supercapacitor Demonstrator

A stand-alone and portable system was designed to demonstrate the proposed CNFs/BDD ECs for practical applications. The built demonstrator (**Figure 6a**) consists of three EDLC devices assembled in series, a single-board microcontroller to control the charging/discharging processes, a red LED (working voltage: 1.8 V), and a USB cable to charge this device. The designed prototype of a CNFs/BDD EC device is schematically illustrated in **Figure 6b**. Two CNFs/BDD capacitor electrodes are attached tightly to both sides of the cell, made from transparent acrylic glass. The efficient area of each electrode

exposed to the electrolyte is about 0.785 cm^2 . A $50\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ Nafion membrane is fixed with two sheets in the middle of the cell. As a case study, the electrolyte ($1.0\text{ M H}_2\text{SO}_4$) was filled in the cell from the top.

Figure 6c shows the electrical circuit diagram of such a demonstrator. In the first step, the switch '1' is closed, the devices are charged by an external power supplier with the USB connector. The resistance in the circuit is used to adjust the charging current, or charging duration. When the measured voltage of the EC devices is up to 3 V , the switch '1' opens and then the switch '2' is closed, leading to powering and illuminating a commercial red LED. Moreover, the discharge process of the EC devices is possible to be tested. When the voltage is lower than 1.6 V , the switch '2' opens and the switch '1' is closed, and the EC devices are charged again. Such a process is automatically controlled by a single-board microcontroller. In other words, such ECs are also possible to be charged by connecting to a computer or a power supplier with the USB connector (**Figure 6a**). **Figure 6d** shows the variation of voltages in the recorded curves during the charging/discharging processes as a function of time. The good repeatability of the curves reveals the excellent reversibility and stability of the device. With a charge time of about 70 s , the red LED lights up (**Figure 6d**). The light intensity is varied as a function of the applied voltages (the insets in **Figure 6d**). With a high voltage at an initial stage, the LED is very bright, indicating the capacitor features of ECs. The light lasts for few seconds and becomes weaker till it ceases. Therefore, the fabricated battery-like supercapacitors made from CNFs/BDD hybrid films are promising for the employment of practical energy storage applications.

Figure 6. A stand-alone CNFs/BDD EC demonstrator: (a) a photograph of the demonstrator consisting of three CNFs/BDD EDLC devices in series, a single-board microcontroller connected to the computer with a USB cable, and a red LED; (b) the design of a CNFs/BDD EC prototype used in the system; (c) the schematic electrical circuit diagram related to (a); (d) typical curves of the voltage as a function of time during the charging/discharging processes. The insets show the variation of light intensity of the red LED in relation to the cell voltage.

3. Conclusion

Vertically aligned carbon nanofibers directly grown on BDD, novel hybrid carbon materials, have been utilized as the capacitor electrodes to develop supercapacitors. Both electrical double layer capacitors using inert solutions and pseudocapacitors using redox electrolytes have been fabricated. These ECs feature large capacitance (in the range of mF cm^{-2}), long-term capacitance retention, high power densities, and high energy densities. Such high energy and power densities achieved from the CNFs/BDD EC devices are superior to those of reported batteries and supercapacitors. The high performance of these battery-like ECs is

attributed to the large surface areas, improved electrical conductivity, and porous structures of these binder-free CNFs/BDD hybrid films. Their performance is possible to be further enhanced only with longer CNFs (e.g., simply by applying a longer growth time). Future research activities can be focused on the employment of water-soluble but multi-electrons transferred redox electrolyte (e.g., heteropolyacids) as well as ionic redox electrolytes for the construction of battery-like supercapacitors. By use of these redox electrolytes, the improved performance of battery-like capacitors is expected, including their capacitances, capacitance retention, as well as power and energy densities. Moreover, these battery-like supercapacitors should be constructed at the large scales on the flexible substrates (e.g., carbon clothes). Together with the stand-alone demonstrator, the battery-like supercapacitors will be promising and possible for powering future multifunctional electronics, hybrid electric vehicles, and industrial equipments in near future.

4. Experimental Section

Electrode materials: **Figure S1** illustrates schematically the steps for the growth of CNFs/BDD hybrid films using a TCVD technique. First, BDD films were grown on silicon wafers using microwave plasma assisted chemical vapor deposition (MWCVD) technique.^[27] Then, the coating of BDD with copper films was carried out on a PVD device. A high purity (99.999%) copper disk (4 inch in diameter) was used as the source material. The RF magnetron sputtering tool was equipped with a turbo molecular pump and its base pressure was lower than 5×10^{-6} mbar. Prior to coating, a pre-sputtering of the target for 10 min with a closed shutter was applied to clean the target. Applied coating conditions were: the substrate at room temperature, argon atmosphere, an argon gas flow of 50 sccm, a pressure of $3.5 - 4.5 \times 10^{-3}$ mbar. The thickness of copper films on BDD was varied through altering $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$. In this study, $t_{\text{Cu,s}}$ was varied from 15, 30, 60, 90, to 120 s. After that, copper coated BDD films were introduced in the center of a quartz tube in a TCVD device. To grow CNFs, these sputtered

copper films were utilized as the catalysts. At a pressure of about 5×10^{-2} mbar, the tube was heated to 250 °C with a heating rate of 5 °C min⁻¹. Subsequently, the reaction gas of C₂H₂ was filled into the tube till a pressure of 500 mbar was reached. The growth times were varied from few minutes to few hours. After the growth, the reactor was rapidly evacuated. Once the pressure in the tube was lower than 5×10^{-2} mbar, the carbonization of CNFs was carried out. The carbonization temperature was 800 °C and the time applied was 60 min. As control experiments, copper films were annealed before the growth of CNFs in the TCVD device under the conditions of an annealing temperature of 500 °C, a pressure of about 5×10^{-2} mbar, and an annealing time for 60 min. To change the wettability of CNFs/BDD hybrid films, they were immersed in a mixture of H₂SO₄ and HNO₃ (v/v = 3:1) for 30 min, then cleaned with deionized water, and finally dried in a N₂ atmosphere before the electrochemical experiments.

Characterization: The surface and cross section morphologies of CNFs/BDD hybrid films were investigated with field emission scanning electron microscopy (FESEM, Zeiss Ultra55, Germany). The Raman spectra of these films were recorded on a homemade micro Raman configuration with a 532 nm laser. An X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS, Surface Science Instruments, SSX-100 S-probe photoelectron spectrometer, USA) with an Al K α radiation of 200 W was used to characterize the elemental composition of these films. Static contact angle measurements were carried out on an OCA 15plus instrument (Data Physics Instruments GmbH, Filderstadt, Germany) with Milli-Q water drawn from a Millipore Direct Q8 system (Millipore, Schwalbach, with Millimark Express 40 filter, Merck, Germany) with a resistivity of 18.0 M Ω cm. The nanostructure of CNFs was further examined with transmission electron microscopy (TEM, FEI Tecnai G2 F30, USA). CNFs were collected via mechanical scratching from the BDD and then dispersed in ethanol. Subsequently, the ethanol containing nanostructures were dropped on a thin carbon film covered copper grid using a drip pipe. After drying, the copper grid was examined under TEM.

Electrochemical measurements: Electrochemical measurements were conducted on a CHI660E Potentiostat / Galvanostat (Shanghai Chenhua Inc., China). A standard three-electrode cell was utilized where a CNFs/BDD hybrid film acted as the working electrode, an Ag/AgCl (3 M KCl) electrode as the reference electrode, and a coiled Pt wire as the counter electrode. In a two-electrode symmetrical supercapacitor device, two CNFs/BDD hybrid films were served as the capacitor electrodes and a 50 μm thick Nafion[®] film (Alfa Aesar) as the separator. The geometric area of a CNFs/BDD hybrid capacitor electrode was 0.05 cm^2 . For EDLCs, the electrolyte was 1.0 M H_2SO_4 . For PCs, the electrolyte was 1.0 M Na_2SO_4 containing 0.05 M $\text{K}_3\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6/\text{K}_4\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6$. The cyclic voltammograms (CVs) were recorded at the scan rates ranging from 10 to 100 mV s^{-1} . The galvanostatic charging/discharging (GCD) curves for EDLCs and PCs were obtained at different current densities. The specific capacitances (C , F cm^{-2}), energy density (E , Wh kg^{-1}), and power density (P , W kg^{-1}) of ECs were calculated according to the reported methods.^[17a, 28]

Supporting Information

Supporting Information is available from the Wiley Online Library or from the author.

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