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## RESEARCH ARTICLE



# Flame-assisted ultrafast synthesis of functionalized carbon nanosheets for high-performance sodium storage

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## Abstract

The unique structural features of hard carbon (HC) make it a promising anode candidate for sodium-ion batteries (SIB). However, traditional methods of preparing HC require special equipment, long reaction times, and large energy consumption, resulting in low throughputs and efficiency. In our contribution, a novel synthesis method is proposed, involving the formation of HC nanosheets (NS-CNs) within minutes by creating an anoxic environment through flame combustion and further introducing sulfur and nitrogen sources to achieve heteroatom doping. The effect of heterogeneous element doping on the microstructure of HC is quantitatively analyzed by high-resolution transmission electron microscopy and image processing technology. Combined with density functional theory calculation, it is verified that the functionalized HC exhibits stronger Na<sup>+</sup> adsorption ability, electron gain ability, and Na<sup>+</sup> migration ability. As a result, NS-CNs as SIB anodes provide an ultrahigh reversible capacity of 542.7 mAh g<sup>-1</sup> at 0.1 A g<sup>-1</sup>, and excellent rate performance with a reversible capacity of 236.4 mAh g<sup>-1</sup> at 2 A g<sup>-1</sup> after 1200 cycles. Furthermore, full cell assembled with NS-CNs as the can present 230 mAh g<sup>-1</sup> at 0.5 A g<sup>-1</sup> after 150 cycles. Finally, in/ex situ techniques confirm that the excellent sodium storage properties of NS-CNs are due to the construction of abundant active sites based on the novel synthesis method for realizing the reversible adsorption of Na<sup>+</sup>. This work provides a novel strategy to develop novel carbons and gives deep insights for the further investigation of facile preparation methods to develop high-performance carbon anodes for alkali-ion batteries.

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#### KEYWORDS

carbon nanosheets, heteroatom doping, sodium-ion battery, sustainable materials

# 1 | INTRODUCTION

After decades of development, lithium-ion battery (LIB) is one of the most successful secondary batteries with high energy density and safety. Nonetheless, the global distribution of lithium resources, coupled with various constraints, has contributed to an escalation in its cost and has presented challenges in its application for large-scale grid-level energy storage systems. Recently, sodium-ion battery (SIB) has been considered an ideal supplement for LIB due to its similar physicochemical and electrochemical attributes and ubiquitous sodium resources.<sup>2-4</sup> Meanwhile, the production line of LIB can serve as a similar production of SIB to further save production costs, whereas graphite, the commercial anode for LIB, fails to provide excellent Na<sup>+</sup> storage performances due to the unstable thermodynamic properties and inadequate ionic activation.<sup>5</sup> Hard carbon (HC), composed of abundant pores, defects, and graphitic crystallites, has been demonstrated as a potential SIB anode material, providing highly reversible capacity and suitable working potential by integrating Na<sup>+</sup> storage mechanisms of adsorption, insertion, and pore-filling.6-8

However, traditional HC materials face challenges of poor rate and cycling capabilities. A prevalent approach involves structural modification of HC materials through heteroatom doping (e.g., N, S, P, and B). This method leads to the creation of a profusion of active sites, thereby augmenting electrochemical kinetics. 9,10 Another strategy is constructing unique carbon morphologies (such as microspheres, nanotubes, nanosheets, and fibers) to provide a stable host structure for ion/electron storage and a shortened distance for ion/electron diffusion. 11-13 To synthesize the high-quality modified carbons, scientists usually employed some special equipment such as an electrospinning machine, 14,15 microwave heater, 16,17 spark plasma sintering, 18 or a combination of these devices, which were usually expensive and exhibit high energy consumption. Besides, the corresponding synthesis process may face some challenges, including low throughput and complex preprocessing steps. 19,20 In addition, some reported HCs were directly prepared from nonrenewable fossil resources or expensive precursors, which were against the basic foundation of sustainability. Therefore, it is urgent to reduce energy consumption, save cost, simplify the synthesis process, and rationally design HCs with excellent electrochemical performance.

Herein, we proposed a facile and fast ethanol flame combustion strategy to develop a kind of N-, S-, and O- codoped carbon nanosheet. Sucrose was used as a carbon source. During the combustion process, CO<sub>2</sub>, NH<sub>3</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub> and other gases are generated by the decomposition of NaHCO<sub>3</sub>. Thiourea was used to isolate air, inhibit the combustion of carbon sources, and push the carbon materials away from the flame area. Meanwhile, varieties of N- and S-containing by-products were generated by pyrolysis of thiourea, and the precursor could be doped by N and S elements in an oxygen-deficient environment with the assistance of an ethanol flame. The synthesis of heteroatom-doped carbon nanosheets could be completed in minutes. Further experimental results and density functional theory (DFT) calculations demonstrated that this novel strategy could not only endow carbons with abundant active sites to promote Na<sup>+</sup> adsorption but also provide ideal transport channels for Na<sup>+</sup> diffusion. As a result, the functionalized carbon nanosheets as SIB anodes exhibited excellent sodium storage performance, with a high specific capacity  $(542.7 \text{ mAh g}^{-1} \text{ at } 100 \text{ mA g}^{-1})$ , superior rate performance  $(97.2 \text{ mAh g}^{-1} \text{ at } 10 \text{ A g}^{-1})$ , and excellent cycling capability (capacity retention 236.4 mAh g<sup>-1</sup> after 1200 cycles at 2 A g<sup>-1</sup>). Furthermore, a full cell based on the as-prepared HC anodes delivered excellent electrochemical performances. This study presented a novel approach to designing functionalized carbon nanosheets for excellent Na<sup>+</sup> storage performances.

# 2 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1A illustrates the growth of the functionalized carbon nanosheets (NS-CNs). Ethanol was used as fuel, sucrose and thiourea served as carbon, nitrogen, and sulfur sources, and sodium bicarbonate was employed as a structural control agent. Here, the carbon samples without thiourea addition are labeled as CN, and the samples with different thiourea addition ratios are labeled as NS-CN-1, NS-CN-2, and NS-CN-3, respectively. Thermogravimetric-Fourier transform infrared (TG-FTIR, Figures 1B and S1) is applied to analyze the changes of various components during flame combustion. During the whole reaction process, NaHCO3 in the mixture was thermally decomposed to produce a large amount of CO<sub>2</sub> gas (2NaHCO<sub>3</sub> → Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>+  $CO_2 + H_2O$ ).<sup>21</sup> The huge number of  $CO_2$  can not only promote the expansion and growth of the reactants but also dilute the air around the sample, reduce the O<sub>2</sub> concentration, and play a role in gas-phase flame

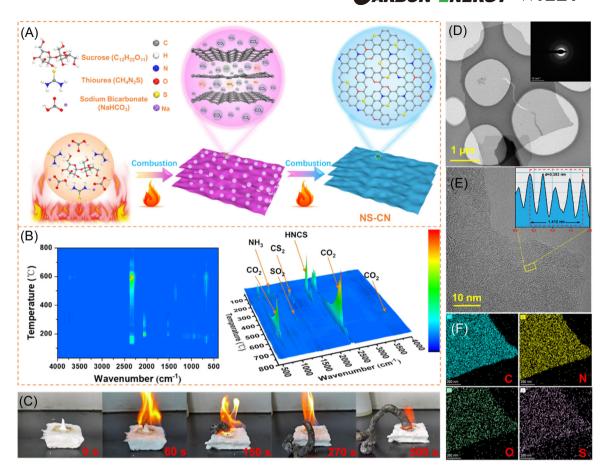


FIGURE 1 (A) Schematic illustration of NS-CN-2. (B) Two-dimensional (2D) and 3D TG-FTIR of NS-CN-2 precursors. (C) Digital photos of NS-CN-2 at different times. (D) TEM image (the inset is corresponding SAED pattern). (E) HRTEM image (the inset is lattice distance). (F) EDS mappings of NS-CN-2.

retardancy to prevent the complete combustion of sucrose.<sup>22</sup> Thiourea has low thermal stability, and the thermal decomposition will not only generate HNCS, NH<sub>3</sub>, CS<sub>2</sub>, and SO<sub>2</sub> gases but also produce by-products such as sulfur and urea.<sup>23</sup> While sucrose gradually dehydrated into carbon with the generation of some carbon oxidizes under the limited O<sub>2</sub> concentration, most of the carbon expanded and extended outward under the push of abundant gas. Finally, the thermal decomposition products of thiourea reacted with sucrose to form N, S-doped carbon materials under ethanol flame-assisted (~550°C) in a local anoxic environment (Figure 1C). 22,24 As shown in the video footage (Supporting Information), the black columnar reactants continued to expand and grow until the white powder was completely consumed by the thermal motivation. The whole reaction process took less than 10 min.

Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) (Figure S2) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM) (Figures 1D and S3A) images indicate that both CN and NS-CN-2 exhibit an irregular sheet-like structure, attributed to the overflow

and formation of the microstructure motivated by the gases such as CO<sub>2</sub> formation during the rapid synthesis. The selected area electron diffraction (SAED) pattern shows no obvious diffraction ring of NS-CN-2, suggesting its amorphous feature. High-resolution TEM (HRTEM) images of CN (Figure S3B) and NS-CN-2 (Figure 1E) show the characteristics of HC with short-range ordered and longrange disordered carbon grains. Lattice spacing measurements on the ordered parts indicate interlayer spacing of 0.403 and 0.353 nm for CN and NS-CN-2, respectively, which is consistent with the X-ray diffraction results (Figure S4). It was reported that the decreased interlayer spacing after doping is mainly due to the fact that S heteroatoms tend to be doped at defect sites of HC. 10,25,26 Energy-dispersive spectra (EDS) elemental mapping images (Figures S3C and 1F) indicate that C, O, N, and S are uniformly distributed within the sample. Atomic force microscopy (Figure S5) shows that the thickness of NS-CN-2 sheets is about 1.7 nm, which facilitates the fast transport of Na<sup>+</sup>.<sup>27-29</sup> According to N<sub>2</sub> adsorption/desorption data (Figure S6), the specific surface area of NS-CN is much

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larger than that of CN, which is attributed to the corrosive gas generated by the pyrolysis of thiourea and the nanopores caused by heteroatom doping. The large specific surface area ensures adequate contact between the electrolyte and active materials, providing enhanced ionic activation. 30–32

To determine the effect of heteroatom functionalization on the microstructure of the carbon material, Fourier transform and inverse fast Fourier transform were conducted on the HRTEM image (Figure S7A,B), and ArcGIS software was used to extract the stripe structure in the carbon skeleton to obtain a binarized image (Figure S7C,D).33-35 According to the length of the lattice fringe, it is divided into three parts  $(L \ge 0.3 \text{ nm}, 0.09 \le L \le 0.3 \text{ nm}, \text{ and } L \le 0.09 \text{ nm})$ with different colors (black, blue, and red; Figure 2A,B). Compared to CN, there are more red lattice fringes and curved lattice fringes in NS-CN. The number of lattice fringes with a length less than 0.09 nm in NS-CN-2 increased from 52.35% to 69%, indicating that the size of graphite crystallites in NS-CN decreased (Figure 2C). The lattice fringe orientation distribution of NS-CN-2 (Figure 2E) is also more uniformly distributed than CN's (Figure 2D),

demonstrating that the carbon structure tends to be more disordered with functionalization. Meanwhile, Raman spectra (Figure 3A and Table S1) and electron paramagnetic resonance (EPR, Figure 3B) spectra also show that NS-CN-2 has less sp<sup>2</sup> planar carbons and more defects and heteroatom doping contents. The above results show that the effective introduction of N and S elements could suppress the graphitization of carbon materials and distort the carbon layer due to the exposed abundant active sites, promoting the efficient capture of Na<sup>+</sup>.

The chemical composition of the carbon material was further investigated by X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS). As shown in Figure 3C, NS-CN-2 consists of C, N, O, and S elements, which is consistent with the results of EDS. To quantitatively obtain the specific content of elements, the content of each element in NS-CN-2 and CN is determined using an organic element analyzer (Table S2). The total content of O, N, and S in NS-CN-2 can be as high as 41.12%, and the abundant defects and heteroatoms would contribute more active sites to promote Na<sup>+</sup> capture. <sup>36,37</sup> XPS results of C 1s (Figure S8) indicate that N and S elements are

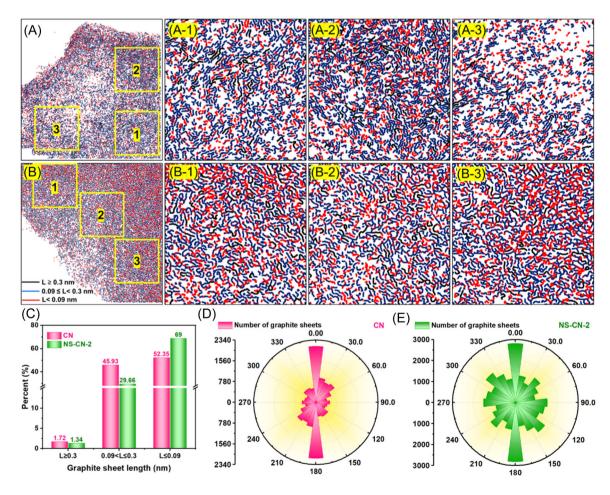


FIGURE 2 False-colored micrograph of (A) CN and (B) NS-CN-2 by length (the part marked with numbers is a partially enlarged view). (C) Length distribution of graphite fringe; graphite fringe orientation distribution of (D) CN and (E) NS-CN-2.

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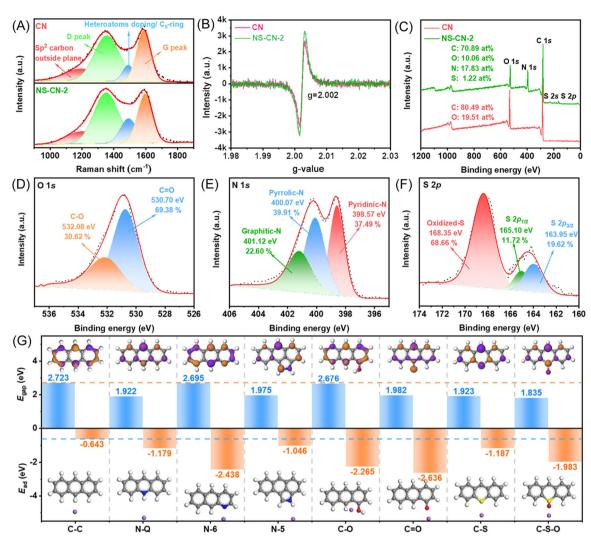


FIGURE 3 (A) Raman spectra, (B) EPR spectra, (C) XPS survey spectra, and high-resolution XPS spectra of (D) O 1s, (E) N 1s, and (F) S 2p of various samples. (G) Energy energy gaps and adsorption energies of different bonding types.

successfully doped into the carbon skeleton with carbon bonding. The high-resolution spectrum of O 1s (Figures 3D) and S9) can be fitted with two peaks, corresponding to C-O (532.08 eV) and C=O (530.70 eV), respectively, and it was reported that a higher C=O bond content could help to improve the reversible capacity of carbons. 38,39 N 1s spectrum (Figure 3E) can be fitted to three peaks of pyridinic-N (398.57 eV), pyrrolic-N (400.07 eV), and graphitic-N (401.12 eV). Pyridinic-N and pyrrolic-N usually exhibit high electrochemical activity, which can enhance the surface-induced capacitance and improve the Na<sup>+</sup> diffusion capacity. 40,41 In addition, the S element spectrum (Figure 3F) can be divided into three peaks, two of which are S  $2p_{3/2}$ (163.95 eV) and S  $2p_{1/2}$  (165.10 eV) representing C-S-C covalent bonds, and the other is oxidized-S (168.35 eV). S atoms are mainly located in defects and edges in the carbon structure, which would tend to distort the carbon structure and thus construct more Na<sup>+</sup> storage sites. 31,42,43

It is well known that different bond types of heteroatoms show different adsorption capacities and reactivities for Na<sup>+</sup>.44-46 Therefore, the bonding type between heteroatoms and carbon was determined by peak fitting of O, N, and S spectra, in which the effect of heteroatoms on electrochemical performance is further evaluated by DFT calculations. Since the electronegativities of N (3.04) and O (3.44) atoms are higher than that of the carbon (2.55) atom, the introduction of N and O atoms can attract the surrounding electrons, thereby making themselves an electron-rich state, which is helpful for the adsorption of Na<sup>+</sup> (Figure S10). Although the electronegativity of the sulfur (2.58) atom is close to that of carbon, when it combines with the oxygen atom to form a C-S-O bond, this unique combination can produce orbitals different from that of the neutral C and affect the Mulliken charge of surrounding atoms. By observing the energy gap  $(E_{gap})$  of the molecular frontier

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orbital (Figure 3G and Table S3), the smaller energy gap generally exhibits higher reactivity. Heteroatom doping can improve electronic conductivity and reactivity in stark contrast to the pure carbon (pure-C) model. Adsorption energy results ( $E_{ad}$ ; Table S4) confirm that heteroatom doping can significantly improve the capture ability of carbon materials for Na<sup>+</sup>, among which N-6, C=O, and C-S-O bonds have the strongest adsorption capacity for Na<sup>+</sup>. Besides, the above three chemical bonds are relatively high in NS-CN-2, implying that NS-CN-2 has a strong Na<sup>+</sup> adsorption capacity.

The electrochemical performance of the anode material was analyzed in a half-cell system. Figure S11 shows cyclic voltammetry (CV) curves of the CN and NS-CN-2 at 0.1 mV s<sup>-1</sup>. Both samples show different profiles. In the first cycle, NS-CN-2 exhibits a large irreversible reduction peak. This is attributed to the large specific surface area and abundant heteroatom functional groups. resulting in the generation of solid-state electrolyte interfacial (SEI) films. In the subsequent cycles, NS-

CN-2 does not display an obvious redox peak around 0.2/ 0.01 V, different from the pristine CN sample, indicating that the sodium storage behavior of NS-CN-2 is an adsorption-dominated capacitive behavior. 10 It is worth mentioning that there is no redox peak generated by the reaction of elemental S in the CV curve, indicating that S is mainly doped into the carbon structure, thereby generating active sites to capture Na<sup>+</sup>. Figures 4A and S12 show that the initial discharge/charge capacities of NS-CN and CN are 1189.7/490.3 and 465.2/201.7 mAh g<sup>-1</sup>, with initial Coulombic efficiencies of 41.2% and 43.3% at 0.1 A g<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. From the second cycle to the tenth cycle, their galvanostatic charge-discharge (GCD) profiles are identical, indicating excellent electrochemical kinetic properties and performance stability. Figure 4B shows the cycling performance of carbons. NS-CN-2 exhibits a highly reversible capacity of  $541.4 \,\mathrm{mAh}\,\mathrm{g}^{-1}$  at  $0.2\,\mathrm{A}\,\mathrm{g}^{-1}$  after 400 cycles, with an excellent capacity retention of around 100%. It is worth noting that the reversible capacity first increases and

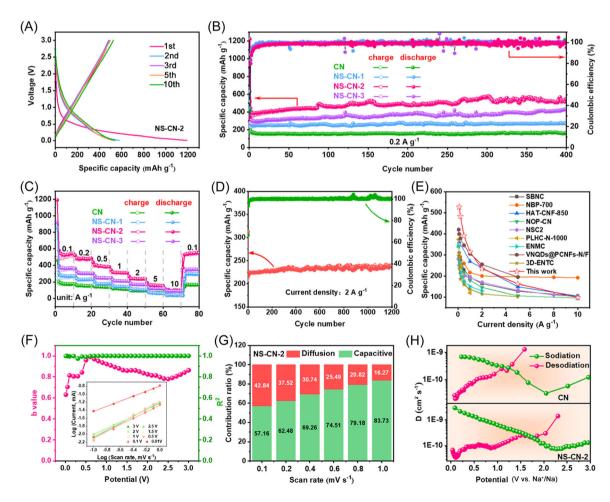


FIGURE 4 (A) GCD curve of NS-CN-2 at 0.1 A g<sup>-1</sup>. (B) Cyclic performances. (C) Rate performances. (D) Long cycle performance of NS-CN-2. (E) Comparisons of rate performances. (F) b Value at different operation states. The inset is log(scan rate) versus log(peak current). (G) Capacitive contribution. (H)  $D_{Na}^+$  of CN and NS-CN-2 during sodiation/desodiation process.

then stabilizes at the subsequent cycles, which is attributed to the activation of porous materials.47-49 Figure 4C indicates reversible capacities of 540.1, 484.9, 390.1, 314.5, 237.2, 158.3, and 97.2 mAh  $g^{-1}$  for NS-CN-2 at 0.1, 0.2, 0.5, 1, 2, 5, and 10 A g<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. When the current density is restored to 100 mA g<sup>-1</sup>, the reversible capacity recovered to 542.7 mAh g<sup>-1</sup>, indicating excellent rate capability. Figure \$13 shows the GCD curves of NS-CN-2 at different current densities with lower polarization, indicating excellent electrochemical kinetics. Meanwhile, compared with CN at the same current density, the NS-CN-2 exhibits higher capacity in the high voltage region (1-3 V), indicating that the abundance of heteroatoms and pores could induce more electrochemical active sites. Subsequently, the long-term cycling stability of sodium storage capacity for NS-CN-2 (Figure 4D) was evaluated at 2 A g<sup>-1</sup>, and the reversible capacity was maintained at 236.4 mAh g<sup>-1</sup> after 1200 cycles, showing excellent cycling stability. As compared with other reported advanced carbon anodes (Figure 4E and Table S5), the NS-CN-2 presents more excellent electrochemical performances. 10,28,50-56 Interfacial resistance  $(R_s)$  and charge transfer resistance  $(R_{ct})$  of the carbon materials are evaluated through electrochemical impedance spectra (Figures S14 and S15). In comparison, the  $R_s$  and  $R_{ct}$  of NS-CN-2 are smaller, indicating the enhanced charge transfer ability of carbon materials after modification. As cycling progresses, the impedance of NS-CN-2 and CN (Figure S16) gradually decreases; this can be attributed to the gradual infiltration of electrolytes and the stabilization of carbon structure during repeated sodiation/desodiation.57

Generally, the sodium storage process of HC is mainly divided into a diffusion-controlled intercalation process and a surface-induced capacitance process. Figure 4F shows the evaluation of different-state b value (b values of 0.5 and 1.0 indicate diffusion-controlled and surface capacitive-controlled processes, respectively; please see detailed calculation in Supporting information). Except for the b Value of 0.6 near 0.01 V, the b Value of the other voltages is above 0.7, indicating that NS-CN-2 shows a hybrid sodium storage mechanism dominated by capacitive processes.<sup>58,59</sup> In addition, the proportion of the capacitance contribution for CN and NS-CN-2 in the sodium storage process is further quantitatively analyzed, and the surface-induced capacitance contributions of CN and NS-CN-2 are 80.37% and 83.73% at 1 mV s<sup>-1</sup>, respectively (Figure S17). Meanwhile, the capacitance contribution of NS-CN-2 is higher than that of CN at different scan rates (Figures 4G and S18). This is mainly due to the abundant surface functional groups and high specific surface area of modified carbons for improving electrochemical kinetics. The diffusion behavior of Na<sup>+</sup> in carbon materials can be observed by the galvanostatic intermittent

titration technique curve (Figure S19). The trends of Na<sup>+</sup> diffusion in CN and NS-CN-2 are similar during the sodiation/desodiation process (Figure 4H). In comparison, the NS-CN-2 shows a higher Na<sup>+</sup> diffusion coefficient ( $D_{\rm Na^+}$ ), indicating the boosted Na<sup>+</sup> diffusion kinetics after N and S doping.

Changes in microstructure and chemical composition of electrode materials are observed via ex situ studies. Ex situ TEM images of NS-CN-2 after 400 cycles (Figure S20) indicate that the nanosheets maintained their initial microstructural morphology, demonstrating excellent structure stability after long-term cycling. HRTEM images (Figure 5A,B) also reveal that the overall microstructure is maintained with indicated short- and long-ranged disorder even after long cycles. It is worth noting that the graphite interlayer spacing of carbon (Figure 5C) increased by only 9.9% after repeated sodiation/desodiation processes, further confirming the stable microstructure. In situ Raman tests (Figure 5D) show that the intensity ratio of the defect or disorder-induced D band and the first-order graphite G band  $(I_{\rm D}/I_{\rm G})$  decreases during the discharging process and increases during the charging process. This indicates that Na<sup>+</sup> is adsorbed at graphitic defect sites during the sodiation process with high reversibility. Ex situ XPS (Figure 5E) spectra show that peak intensities of C=O bond and pyrrolic-N first decrease at the sodiation process and then return to the original intensities after the next desodiation processes. further indicating the high structure reversibility. 38,60 Notably, peak intensities of S 2p and graphitic-N could not fully recover to the initial intensities during cycling, demonstrating partial reversibility of functional groups. 61,62 Moreover, oxidized-S bond and pyridinic-N peaks show high reversibility during cycling, further supporting the dominant Na<sup>+</sup> adsorption reaction mechanism.

The effects of N and S doping on Na<sup>+</sup> adsorption, diffusion barrier, and electronic conductivity were further evaluated by DFT calculations. Since carbon materials usually contain defects and oxygen elements, four models of pure-C, defective carbon (defect-C), oxygen-doped carbon (O-C), and N/O/S-doped carbon (N/O/S-C) were established for the situation. Figure 5F shows that the Na<sup>+</sup> adsorption kinetics of pure-C is unstable, and the introduction of defects can slightly improve the Na<sup>+</sup> adsorption kinetics. The adsorption energy of NOS-C is much higher than those of the other three models. By comparing the differential charge densities of the four models, NOS-C has more charge accumulation, indicating that the introduction of N, S, and O can significantly enhance the capture ability of carbon materials for Na<sup>+</sup>. The diffusivity is assessed by evaluating the Na<sup>+</sup> diffusion barrier (Figure S21). As compared with graphite, NOS-C has a lower Na+ diffusion barrier (Figure 5G), demonstrating better diffusivity. The density of states (DOS) (Figures S22 and 5H) shows that N, S, and O

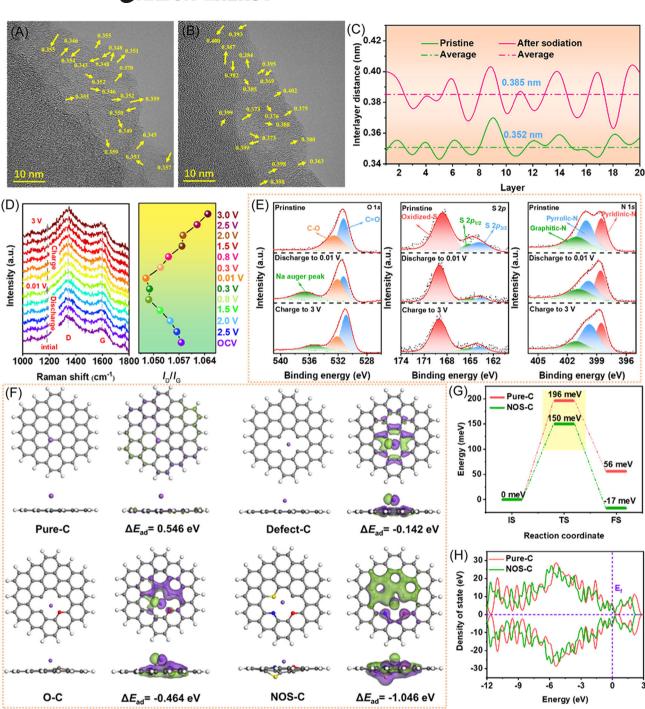


FIGURE 5 (A) The HRTEM image of pristine NS-CN-2. (B) The HRTEM image of NS-CN-2 after 400 cycles at 0.2 A g<sup>-1</sup>. (C) Graph of graphite layer spacing change for CN and NS-CN-2. (D) In situ Raman of NS-CN-2. (E) Ex situ XPS of NS-CN-2. (F) Adsorption energy models and differential charge densities for pure-C, defect-C, O-C, and NSO-C. (G) Diffusion barrier of Na<sup>+</sup> in pure-C and NOS-C. (H) Density of states of pure-C and NOS-C.

doping can endow carbon with higher DOS at the Fermi level, indicating enhanced electronic conductivity.

To highlight the practical application prospect of NS-CN-2, we assembled coin-type full cells with NS-CN-2 as the anode material and  $Na_3V_2(PO_4)_3$  (NVP) as the cathode material (Figure 6A). The NVP cathodes exhibit

stable cycling performance with a reversible capacity of  $104.3 \, \text{mAh g}^{-1}$  at  $0.1 \, \text{A g}^{-1}$  (Figure S23). According to the specific capacity of NS-CN-2 and NVP at  $0.1 \, \text{A g}^{-1}$  (Figure 6B), the active mass ratio of the cathode to anode in the full cell is about 5:1. Before assembling the full cell, NS-CN-2 is first cycled at  $0.05 \, \text{A g}^{-1}$  for  $10 \, \text{cycles}$ 

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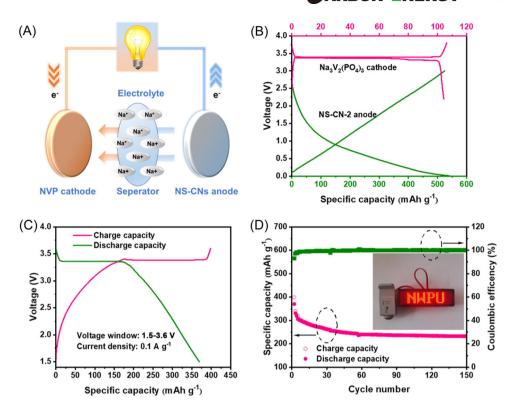


FIGURE 6 (A) Schematic diagram of an SIBs full cell. (B) GCD of the NVP and NS-CN-2 half cell at  $0.1 \, \mathrm{Ag^{-1}}$ . (C) GCD of the NVP//NS-CN-2 full cell. (D) The cycling performance of NVP//NS-CN-2 full cell at  $0.5 \, \mathrm{Ag^{-1}}$  (the inset is the LED device showing "NWPU" by two full cells).

to form a stable SEI film. As shown in Figure 6C, the ICE of NVP//NS-CN-2 can reach 92% with the voltage window of 1.5–3.6 V. Meanwhile, NVP//NS-CN-2 can display a highly reversible capacity of 230 mAh g $^{-1}$  after 150 cycles at 0.5 A g $^{-1}$  (Figure 6D). The illustration shows that the light-emitting diode (LED) device with "NWPU" can be lit by two fully charged batteries in series.

# 3 | CONCLUSIONS

In summary, a novel and facile flame-assisted ultrafast combustion strategy was conducted to develop the N, S, and O codoped carbon nanosheet for high-performance SIB anodes. Under the high-temperature flame, NaHCO $_3$  decomposes to generate a large amount of CO $_2$  to dilute the air, inhibiting the oxidation of the precursor and promoting the nanosheets expansion growth. Meanwhile, thiourea provides abundant nitrogen and sulfur sources for the precursor and endows carbon with rich heteroatom doping content (41.12%) and nanosheet morphology under the high-temperature activation of the flame. As a result, the modified carbons exhibit excellent sodium storage properties with a high specific capacity (542.7 mAh g $^{-1}$  at 100 mA g $^{-1}$ ), superior rate performance (97.2 mAh g $^{-1}$  at

10 A g<sup>-1</sup>), and excellent cycling capability (capacity retention 236.4 mAh g<sup>-1</sup> after 1200 cycles at 2 A g<sup>-1</sup>). Furthermore, theoretical calculations and in/ex situ investigations reveal the effect of functionalized structures on the sodium storage properties of HC materials and confirm that the excellent sodium storage properties are attributed to the reversible adsorption of Na<sup>+</sup> by designed defect sites and heteroatom groups. This study provides an efficient and versatile synthetic method to fabricate HC materials for further commercial applications.

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# CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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