

# **SF<sub>6</sub> Decomposition Gas Sensor Based on Metal-Organic Framework Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> Monolayer: A First-Principles Study**

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## **Abstract**

Detecting the decomposition gas of SF<sub>6</sub> insulating medium is essential for ensuring the safe and stable operation of the gas insulated switchgear (GIS). In this work, we utilized density functional theory (DFT) calculation based on first-principles theory to investigate the adsorption behavior and electronic properties of the five main sulfur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>) decomposition components (H<sub>2</sub>S, HF, SO<sub>2</sub>, SOF<sub>2</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub>) on newly synthesized MX<sub>2</sub>Y<sub>2</sub>-type Metal-organic framework (MOFs), Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub>. The stable adsorption structures were obtained by adsorption energy. The outcomes from charge transfer, density of states (DOS), and electron density difference (CCD) calculations provide a more comprehensive insight into the adsorption mechanism between the five decomposition gases and the Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer. Meanwhile, we conclude that the chemical interaction of substrate with HF (-1.06 eV) and SO<sub>2</sub> (-0.83 eV). Furthermore, our results demonstrate that the substrate was highly sensitive to SO<sub>2</sub> because of the obvious change in electrical conductivity, and the selectivity strength of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> to gases is HF > SO<sub>2</sub> > H<sub>2</sub>S > SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub> > SOF<sub>2</sub>. The recovery time of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> is 298 K (10.8 s) and 398 K (2.62 s) toward SO<sub>2</sub> and HF, respectively. The above calculation would be explored the chemical sensing application of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer in SF<sub>6</sub> decomposition gas sensing.

## **Keywords**

Density functional theory (DFT), Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer, SF<sub>6</sub> decomposition gases, gas-sensitive.

## **1. Introduction**

Gas insulated switchgear (GIS) is commonly applied in high-voltage equipment and gas insulation systems. It relies heavily on the sulfur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>) gas as the insulating medium due to their compound advantages, such as excellent insulation performance, strong electronegativity, arc extinguishing performance and non-toxicity [1,2]. However, the active components of high-voltage GIS are usually made of copper and aluminum, while enclosures are manufactured from aluminum or steel [3,4]. Operating at elevated voltage levels, GIS is susceptible to internal arc faults, resulting in serious damage to the switches and their immediate surroundings, inevitably causing the dissociation of SF<sub>6</sub> gas into low-fluoride sulfides (SF<sub>n</sub>, n=1-5) [5, 6]. In addition, SF<sub>n</sub> easily react with trace moisture and impurity present in GIS, ultimately forming sulfides (SO<sub>2</sub>, SOF<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>S) and HF [7, 8]. Unfortunately, these decomposition gases will not only accelerate the aging of solid insulating materials, but also damage the quality of the surrounding air [9,10]. Therefore, it is of great significance to

explore suitable gas-sensitive material for testing decomposition components of SF<sub>6</sub> to ensure the safe operation of GIS.

Currently, great efforts have been made to explore gas-sensitive materials for detecting SF<sub>6</sub> decomposition gases. For instance, Li et al.[11] investigated the adsorption characteristics of TiO<sub>2</sub> doped HfSe<sub>2</sub> monolayer for SF<sub>6</sub> decomposition gas. Their research confirmed that the TiO<sub>2</sub>-HfSe<sub>2</sub> material is capable of effectively adsorbing gases and possesses high sensitivity and stability. Moreover, Peng et al. [12] reported that metal Mg modified monolayer graphene significantly improved the electrical conductivity and enhanced the chemical stability of gas adsorption. In addition to graphene and two-dimensional dihalogens, metal oxide (such as zinc oxide [13] and titanium dioxide [5]) and metal-organic framework (MOFs) [14] have also been reported to capture SF<sub>6</sub> decomposition gases. Among these, MOFs have attracted broad attention based on their high porosity, structural diversity and tunable framework structure in recent years [15, 16]. Due to these advantages, MOFs have been applied in the fields of electrocatalysis [17, 18], gas adsorption [19] and chemical sensing [20]. For example, using MOFs as a template, Pan et al. [21] synthesized A-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> nanomaterials doped with different levels of rGO. This material has a strong electrical conductivity and electron transfer rate, showing superior responsiveness to NO<sub>2</sub>. Zhai et al. [22] confirmed that MOFs (IO-66-NH<sub>2</sub>) /PAN NM material has excellent selectivity and excellent response to SO<sub>2</sub> molecule.

Although many articles have reported that MOFs materials can be effectively used as gas-sensitive materials [23-25], there are few reports on MOFs as gas sensitive materials for SF<sub>6</sub> decomposition gases. Especially for MX<sub>2</sub>Y<sub>2</sub>-type MOF (M=metal, X, Y = N, O, S, and X ≠ Y) materials, it is still in the development stage [24,26]. Besides, the Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> is an MX<sub>2</sub>Y<sub>2</sub>-type MOF and has been successfully prepared by Jiang et al. [27] in an inert gas environment. Interestingly, Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> exhibits diverse properties such as high porosity, excellent electrical conductivity (0.78S/cm) and charge carrier density (5.0 × 10<sup>17</sup>cm<sup>-3</sup>). In addition, the Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> material has been successfully reported as a catalyst for carbon dioxide reduction [28]. Based on this, Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> exhibits catalytic, electrical and other properties. Adsorption of related gases by Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> material leads to fluctuations in its electrochemical properties, resulting in detectable signals. Therefore, the feasibility of using Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> as a gas sensitive material for detecting SF<sub>6</sub> decomposition gases was investigated.

In this study, the adsorption behavior and sensing properties of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> to five decomposition gases (SO<sub>2</sub>, SOF<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub>, HF and H<sub>2</sub>S) of SF<sub>6</sub> is predicated by density functional theory (DFT) calculation. The potential adsorption configurations of SO<sub>2</sub>, SOF<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub>, HF and H<sub>2</sub>S were examined based on the structure of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub>. The most stable adsorption configuration of SF<sub>6</sub> decomposed gases was determined by comparing the adsorption energy, and it was found that HF (-1.06 eV) and SO<sub>2</sub> (-0.83 eV) exhibited ideal adsorption energy. Therefore, the density of states (DOS), charge density difference (CDD), charge transfer of HF@Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub>@Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> systems were systematically analyzed in order to understand the adsorption behavior of gas. Furthermore, the gas sensing properties of the substrate were assessed based on changes in work function, gas recovery time. It was concluded that Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> material could serve as a suitable gas-sensitive material for detecting SO<sub>2</sub> at room temperature.

## 2. Computational details and methods

The spin-polarized density functional theory (DFT) calculations have been performed using the Vienna Ab-initio Simulation Package (VASP) code [29]. The Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof (PBE) [30] functional form the generalized gradient approximation (GGA) [31], [32] was utilized for description the exchange correlation energy. The interaction of ionic core and valence

electrons were described by the projected augmented wave (PAW) [33] method. The van der Waals (vdW) effects between substrate and gas molecules was corrected using Grimme's DFT-D3 method [34], [35]. The cutoff energy of the electronic wave function was truncated with a plane wave and was set 500 eV, the convergence criterion of energy and force on each atom were  $10^{-5}$  eV and  $0.02\text{eV \AA}^{-1}$ , respectively. The Brillouin zones were sampled using the  $3 \times 3 \times 1$  Monkhorst-Pack [36] meshes strategy, for the geometry optimization of all structures, while a  $6 \times 6 \times 1$  k-point grid is used for the calculation of the density of states (DOS). A vacuum space of 20 Å was set in the z-direction to prevent coupling between adjacent images. The Bader charge [37] [38] analysis was employed to evaluate the charge redistribution and quantify the amount of charge transfer between the gases and the substrate.

The adsorption energy ( $E_{ads}$ ) of the SF<sub>6</sub> decomposition gas molecule attached to substrate was calculated by the following equation (1) [39]

$$E_{ads} = E_{\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2/\text{gas}} - E_{\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2} - E_{\text{gas}} \quad (1)$$

Where  $E_{\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2/\text{gas}}$ ,  $E_{\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2}$ , and  $E_{\text{gas}}$  represent the total energies of the gas adsorption system, the Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer, and the isolated gas molecules, respectively. The more negative the value of adsorption energy, the more stable the adsorption of gas molecules on the surface. Moreover, the charge density difference (CDD) was defined by this relation [40]

$$\Delta\rho = \rho_{\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2/\text{gas}} - \rho_{\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2} - \rho_{\text{gas}} \quad (2)$$

Where  $\rho_{\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2/\text{gas}}$ ,  $\rho_{\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2}$  and  $\rho_{\text{gas}}$  are the charge density of substrate adsorbed gas, the isolated Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub>, and the isolated gas molecules, respectively.

The work function (WF)  $\varphi$  is determined in equation (3), measuring the Fermi level to the vacuum energy difference

$$\varphi = E_0 - E_F \quad (3)$$

$$\Delta\varphi = \frac{\varphi_a - \varphi_b}{\varphi_b} \% \quad (4)$$

Here,  $E_0$  denote the vacuum energy level, and  $E_F$  means the Fermi level. The WF growth rate is calculated by formula (4), the  $\varphi_a$  and  $\varphi_b$  are the total work function of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> system after and before adsorbed gas molecule.

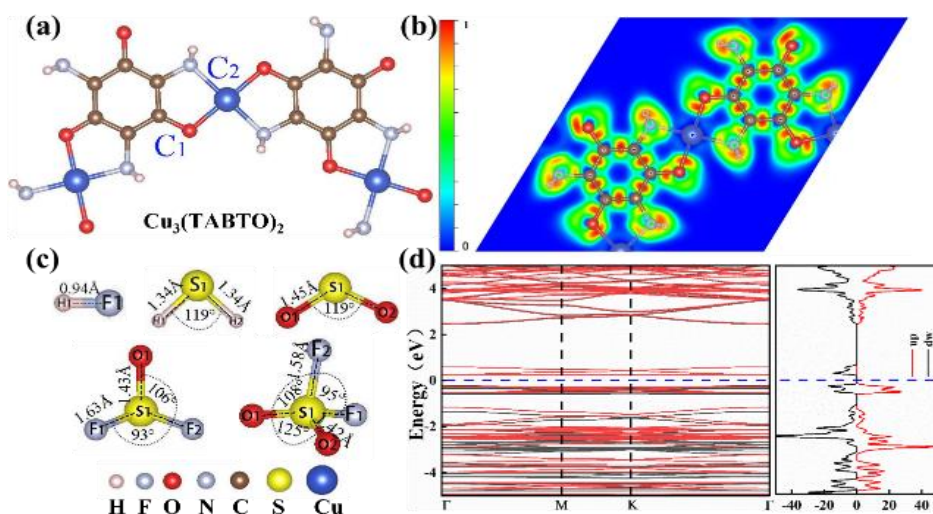
### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. The structure of gases and Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub>

Fig. 1(a) illustrates the relaxed structure of the Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer. The lattice parameters ( $a = b$ ) of the Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer with a unit cell were measured as 13.45 Å. These structural parameters are in excellent agreement with the previously reported literature [27]. The substrate possesses a considerable number of pore structures, maintaining outstanding gas permeability and ensuring that a greater amount of gas can be

adsorbed within a short period. Additionally, the electron localization function (ELF) of  $\text{Cu}_2(\text{TABTO})_2$  was also calculated, as shown in Fig. 1(c). The O atom has a stronger charge localization in its vicinity compared to the N atom, and the Cu atom has almost no charge localization around it. Therefore, we select two kinds of possible adsorption sites on the surface of the  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$ , which are: (i) the site C1 is directly above the O atom, (ii) the site C2 above the center of Cu atom as the adsorption site of  $\text{SF}_6$  decomposition gases as presented in Fig. 1(a). Fig. 1(d) depicts the band structure and total density of states (TDOS) of the  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  monolayer, the conduction band minimum (CBM) and the valence band maximum (VBM) were located at the r point of the Brillouin zone. A direct band gap of 0.485 eV, indicating the substrate exhibits obvious semiconducting property and conducive to electron transfer between valence band and conduction band. The peak of TDOS near Fermi level confirms the position of CBM and VBM, and the asymmetry of spin up and spin down peaks suggests that  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  has certain magnetic properties.

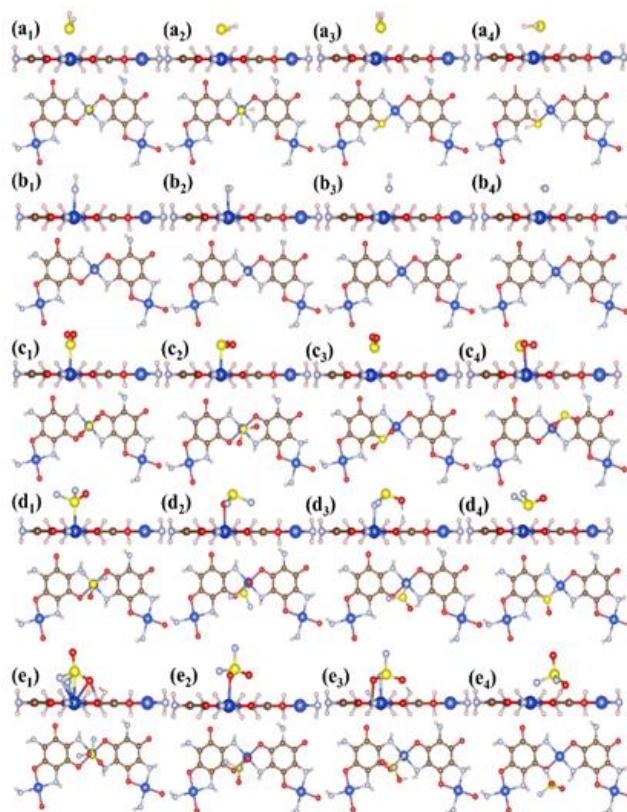
The  $\text{SF}_6$  decomposition gas structure illustrates in Fig. 1(b). The  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$  and  $\text{SO}_2$  molecules exhibit a V-shaped structure, with the bond angle for H-S-H and O-S-O are  $91.642^\circ$  and  $119.25^\circ$ , respectively, the S-H bond and S-O bond length of 1.34 Å and 1.45 Å, respectively. The  $\text{SOF}_2$  molecule possesses a pyramid configuration and the  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  molecule possesses a planar triangular spatial configuration, their bond lengths and bond angle as summarized in Fig. 1(b). HF gas has a basic plane structure, its H-F bond length of 0.94 Å. The gas structure described above is consistent with the literature.



**Figure 1.** (a) The optimized structure of  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$ . (b) The optimized structure of HF,  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ ,  $\text{SO}_2$ ,  $\text{SOF}_2$ ,  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  molecules. (c) Electron localization functions (ELFs) for  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$ . (d) The diagram of band structure for  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  near Fermi level and total density of states in corresponding range. The Fermi level is set to zero.

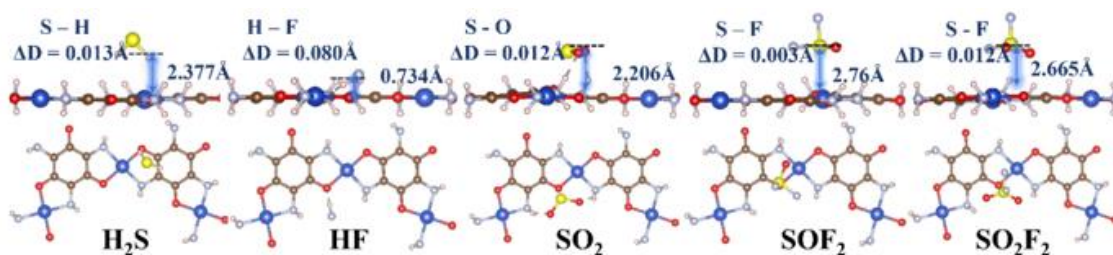
### 3.2. Gases adsorption Performance on the $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$ monolayer

After studying the configuration of the  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  monolayer and the gas molecules, the adsorption behavior of five gases on  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  were investigated. Taking into account the aforementioned regarding adsorption sites, two distinct adsorption models were devised for  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ , HF and  $\text{SO}_2$  gases: one in which the S atom and F atom pointed downward the substrate and another in which the gas is oriented parallel to the surface. In the case of  $\text{SOF}_2$  and  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$ , the two possible directions are to keep the S and O atoms towards the adsorption site. The possible adsorption mode for each gas is shown on Fig. 2.



**Figure 2.** Different configurations of  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  adsorbed gas for (a)  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ ; (b)  $\text{HF}$ ; (c)  $\text{SO}_2$ ; (d)  $\text{SOF}_2$ ; (e)  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$ .

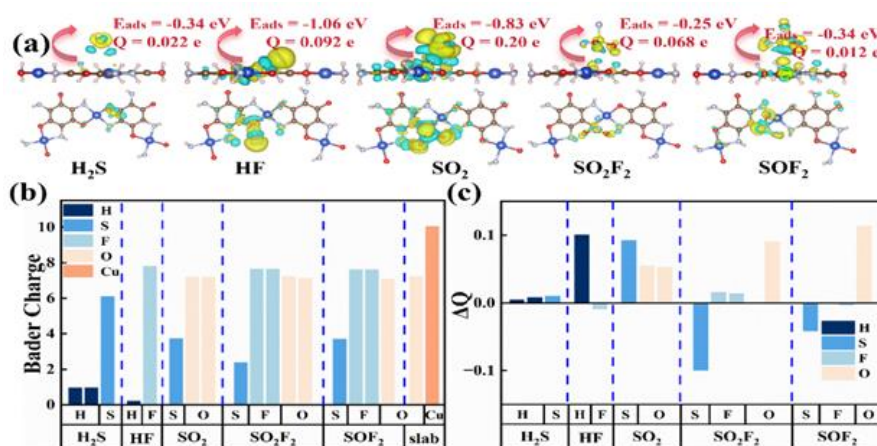
After structural relaxation, the most stable adsorption configuration of each gas was obtained by comparing the adsorption energy, as shown in Fig. 3. The most preferred adsorption configuration for  $\text{HF}$ ,  $\text{SOF}_2$  and  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  molecules were stably adsorb at the O location, while for  $\text{SO}_2$  and  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$  the most favorable was O site and H atom. Since the  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$  and  $\text{HF}$  molecules are attached to the substrate via the H atom, they do not form bonds with the atoms of  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$ . Fig. 3 demonstrates the average adsorption distances of  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ ,  $\text{HF}$ ,  $\text{SO}_2$ ,  $\text{SOF}_2$ , and  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  to  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  are  $2.377\text{\AA}$ ,  $0.374\text{\AA}$ ,  $2.206\text{\AA}$ ,  $2.76\text{\AA}$ , and  $2.665\text{\AA}$ , respectively. Meanwhile, the calculated variations in bond lengths prior to and subsequent to the adsorption of gas molecules have been shown in Fig. 3. The adsorption height of the  $\text{SF}_6$  decomposition gases and the changes in bond lengths before and after adsorption indicate that  $\text{HF}$  and  $\text{SO}_2$  molecules have chemical interactions with the surface. Furthermore, the calculation stable adsorption energy for  $\text{HF}$ ,  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ ,  $\text{SO}_2$ ,  $\text{SOF}_2$  and  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  were  $-1.06$ ,  $-0.34$ ,  $-0.83$ ,  $-0.25$  and  $-0.34\text{eV}$ , respectively. Except for  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2@ \text{SO}_2$  and  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2@ \text{HF}$ , the low adsorption energies in the remaining three examples indicated the role of long-range interaction between the gases and the  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  monolayer.



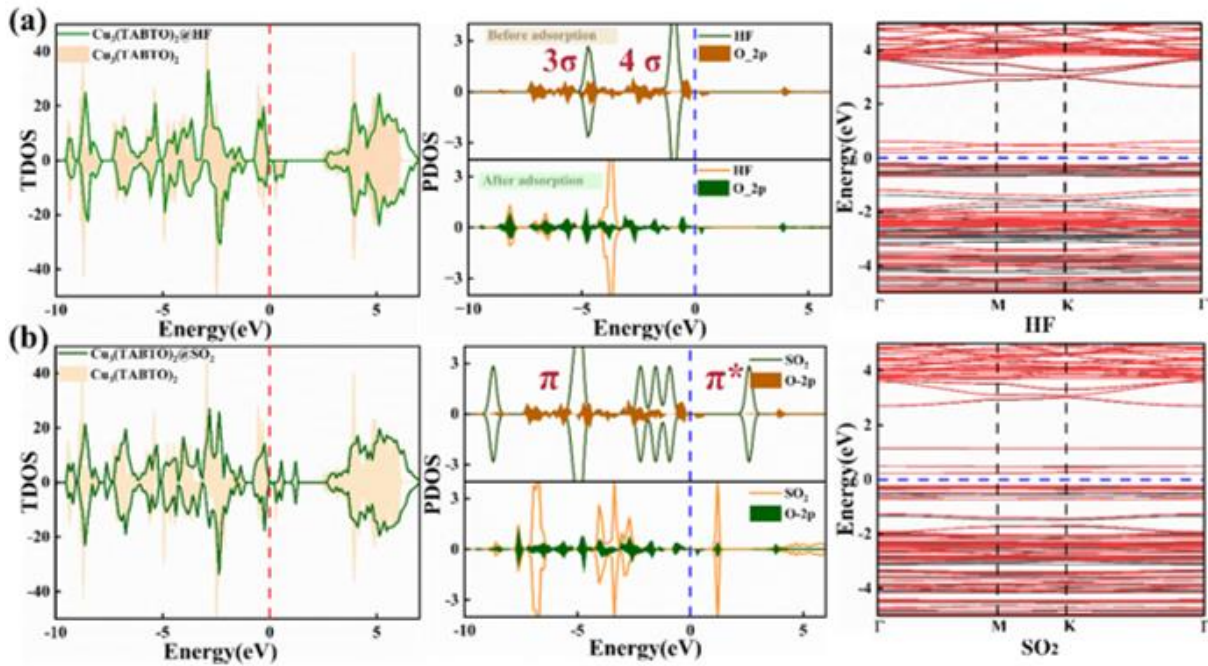
**Figure 3.** The most stable adsorption configurations of  $\text{SF}_6$  decomposition gas on  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$ .

In order to elucidate the adsorption mechanism of gases, the Bader charges are calculated, and the results are summarized in Fig. 4 (a). For all gas molecules, electrons are transferred from the  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  to the HF,  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ ,  $\text{SO}_2$ ,  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  and  $\text{SOF}_2$  molecules, with values of 0.092 e, 0.022 e, 0.200 e, 0.068 e, 0.012 e, respectively. The evident chemisorption behavior in these cases was supported by the substantial charge transfers, particularly in the systems of  $\text{SO}_2$  and HF adsorbed on  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  monolayer. Furthermore, Fig. 4 (b) illustrates the Bader charges before at the Cu and O site of the substrate material and prior to gas adsorption. It is observed that the Cu atom within the system maintains stable state with 10 electrons, while the O atom exists in an unsaturated state characterized by 7 electron spin polarization, thereby facilitating enhanced gas molecules adsorption at the C2 site. Additionally, it can be noted that in HF gas, the H atom donates electrons to the F atom, resulting in its 1s orbital approaching an empty orbital configuration, indicative of strong electron philicity. Consequently, in  $\text{HF}@\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$ , the H atom preferentially interacts with an O atom on the substrate. For  $\text{SO}_2$  gas, S atom donates electrons to O atoms leading to increased availability of empty orbitals on S atoms, thus during  $\text{SO}_2$  adsorption, S atoms exhibit a tendency to interact with the O atoms present in the system.

To intuitively demonstrate the change of charge transfer after gas adsorption, we investigated the Charge density difference (CDD) and the variation in charge amount for each atom ( $\Delta Q$ ), as depicted in Fig. 4(a) and (c). For  $\text{SO}_2$  adsorbed on the  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$ , the yellow area of charge accumulation appears around  $\text{SO}_2$  molecule, while an obvious charge depletion region can be observed on  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$ , consistent with the result shown in Fig. 4(c). Furthermore, the increase in charge of the O atom within the  $\text{SO}_2$  molecule can be attributed to electron transfer from S atoms that acquire charges from the surface before transferring them to O atoms. For HF adsorption, yellow regions surrounding the gas molecules, indicating that the substrate has a relatively obvious charge transfer to the HF gas; the  $\Delta Q$  analysis reveals that it is predominantly H atoms that gain electrons in the substrate. In contrast, for  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$  gas, minimal charge interaction is detected; however, for  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  and  $\text{SOF}_2$  gases, CDD primarily concentrated around these gas molecules--a finding corroborated by  $\Delta Q$  analysis. The characteristics of CDD suggest that the adsorption capacities of  $\text{SO}_2$  and HF is derived from the S-O bond and the interaction between H and O, respectively. Meanwhile, combined with the adsorption energy of the gas adsorption system and Bader charge transfer, it is indicated that there is a weak physical interaction between  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ ,  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  and  $\text{SOF}_2$  molecules and the surface.

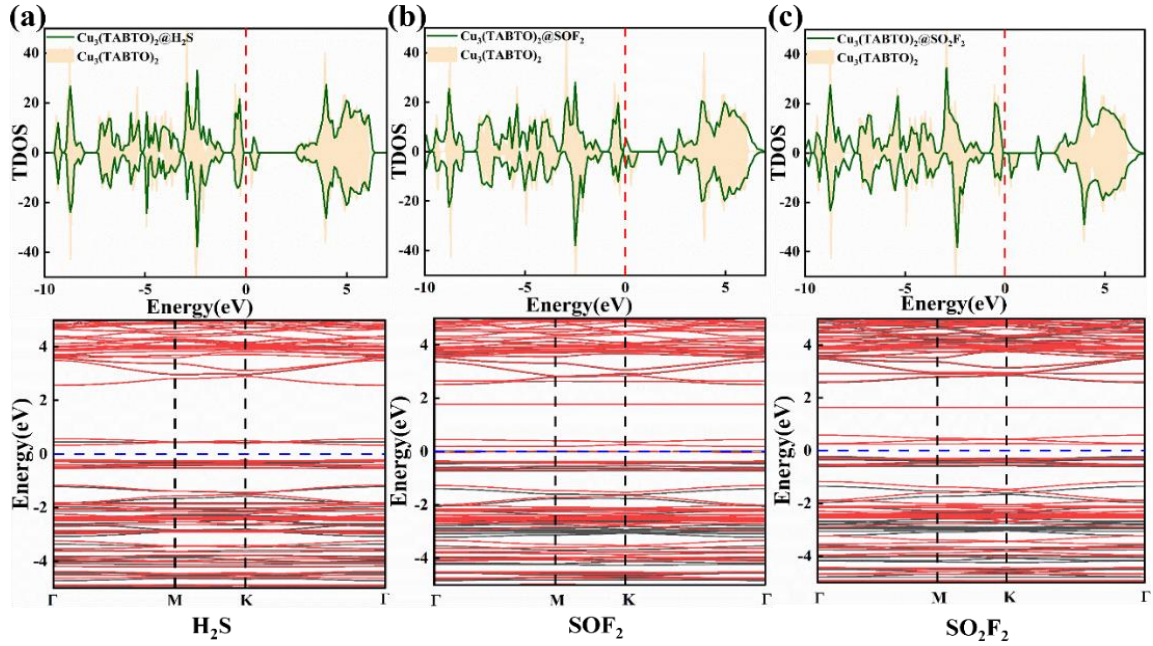


**Figure 4.** (a) Charge density difference (CDD) of various adsorption systems, and the isosurface value is  $0.003 \text{ e} \text{ \AA}^{-3}$ , where blue and yellow areas represent the loss and reception of electrons, respectively; (b) The Bader charge associated with each atom in the gas molecule, as well as that of the O and Cu atoms within the substrate. (c) Charge transfer of atoms on the adsorbed gases.



**Figure 5.** The TDOS, PDOS and band structure of adsorption systems (a) HF, (b) SO<sub>2</sub>. The Fermi level was set to zero.

To gain a more profound understanding of the interaction between the adsorbed gas molecule and the Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer, we analyzed the density of states and band structure. Fig. 5(a - e) displayed the spin-polarized total densities of states (TDOS), projected density of states (PDOS) and band structure for various adsorption systems. Specifically, Fig. 5(a) illustrates the DOS for HF@Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub>, it can be seen that prior to HF adsorption, the 2p orbitals of oxygen atom at the substrate adsorption site are continuously occupied between -7 and 0 eV, while isolated molecular orbitals of 3σ and 4σ of HF occupy within energy level -5 to 0 eV. Following HF adsorption, the orbital characteristics of HF@Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> become delocalized in relation to the isolated surface orbitals. Furthermore, it is observed that the molecular orbitals are hybridized with the 2p orbitals of O, this results in a splitting of the original 3σ orbital into two new distinct orbitals as well as the molecular orbitals downward shift to lower energy position. Additionally, the π and non-bonding type orbitals of the SO<sub>2</sub> molecule, which occupy energy levels between -5 and 0 eV, are summarized in Fig. 5 (b). After the adsorption of SO<sub>2</sub>, the TDOS reveals new peaks in the orbitals structure of the adsorption system at -7.5 and 1.6 eV, respectively. The PDOS analysis indicates that at -7.5 eV, the π type orbitals of the SO<sub>2</sub> molecule hybridizes with the 2p orbitals of the substrate, resulting in a downward shift and subsequent splitting into a new orbital configuration. Furthermore, the new peak observed at 1.6 eV arises from interactions between π\* type and O<sub>2p</sub> orbitals, leading to a downward movement to this energy level. The changes in the molecular orbitals of SO<sub>2</sub> and HF both proved that the gas molecules gain electrons during the adsorption process. In summary, the TDOS and PDOS analyses of HF@Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub>@Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> show that the interaction between HF and SO<sub>2</sub> molecules and the substrate from the mutual hybridization of molecular orbitals with O<sub>2p</sub> orbitals on Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub>. However, for the remaining three gas adsorption systems, their TDOS is shown in Fig. 6(a - c). When the gas is adsorbed, the TDOS of the adsorption system changes slightly, but it remains stable compared with the original peak, indicating that the interaction between H<sub>2</sub>S, SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub>F molecules and the surface belongs to Van der Waals.



**Figure 6.** The TDOS and band structure of adsorption systems (a) H<sub>2</sub>S, (b) SOF<sub>2</sub>, (c) SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub>. The Fermi level was set to zero.

### 3.3. Gas-Sensing Prediction of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> to SF<sub>6</sub> Decomposition Products

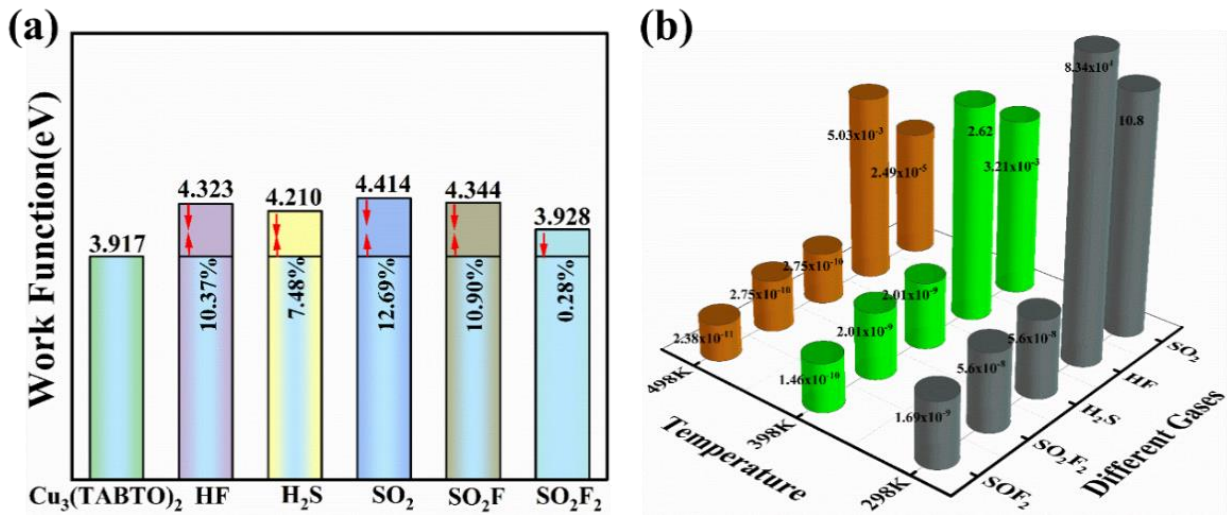
For resistive gas sensors, measuring the change of electrical conductivity after adsorbing gas is one of the ways to evaluate their response characteristic, hence, the work function (WF) was calculated to measure the adsorption sensitivity of SF<sub>6</sub> decomposition gases. It is known that the WF represents the least energy required for a substance to eject an electron from its interior and into vacuum and also the ability of the material to bind electrons. In order to clearly demonstrate the ability of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer to detect gases, the WF of the adsorption system and its growth rate are summarized in Fig. 7(a).

The WF of the Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer was measured to be 3.917 eV. After adsorbed HF, H<sub>2</sub>S, SO<sub>2</sub>, SOF<sub>2</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub> on the Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer, the WF increased to 4.323, 4.210, 4.414, 4.344 and 3.928 eV, respectively. It is noted that the surface adsorption gas, the WF of the SO<sub>2</sub>@Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> system is the largest and the WF of the SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub>@Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> system is the smallest. Furthermore, the greater the change in work function, the more pronounced the alteration in conductivity. It is evident that the exceptional response performance of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer towards the SO<sub>2</sub>, HF and SOF<sub>2</sub> molecules could be validated by the larger growth rates  $\Delta\phi$  of 12.69%, 10.37% and 10.9%. Meanwhile, within gas adsorption systems, the band structure of SO<sub>2</sub> (0.464 eV), HF (0.406 eV) and SOF<sub>2</sub> (0 eV) molecules has decreased compared to the original surface, indicating an enhancement in electrical conductivity and adsorption capacity of these systems. The WF growth rate and bandgap for H<sub>2</sub>S were 7.48% and 0.547 eV; for SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub>, there were 0.28% and 0.473 eV, suggesting that after H<sub>2</sub>S adsorbed, there is an increase in bandgap leading to less stable adsorption while showing negligible response to SO<sub>2</sub>F<sub>2</sub> molecule adsorption. Additionally, weak physical adsorption was observed for SOF<sub>2</sub> on the substrate material, hence Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer only has the potential to be developed as a WF-based gas sensor for detection SO<sub>2</sub> and HF.

In addition to exhibiting excellent sensitivity, a high-performance gas sensor also requires fast desorption capability. Hence, the recovery time was calculated as defined in Equation (5):

$$\tau = A^{-1} \exp\left(\frac{|E_{\text{ads}}|}{k_B T}\right) \quad (5)$$

Where, the  $A^{-1}(10^{12} \text{ s}^{-1})$  represent the apparent frequency, the  $E_{\text{ads}}$  is adsorption energy of gases. It can be deduced from the formula that the recovery time can be minimized by elevating the temperature when other parameters remain constant. As depicted in Fig.7(b), it can be discerned that the  $\text{SO}_2, \text{HF}, \text{H}_2\text{S}, \text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  and  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  exhibit the recovery time of 10.8 s,  $8.34 \times 10^4 \text{ s}$ ,  $5.6 \times 10^{-8} \text{ s}$ ,  $5.6 \times 10^{-8} \text{ s}$  and  $1.69 \times 10^{-8} \text{ s}$  at room temperature, respectively. It is obvious that  $\text{SO}_2$  has excellent recovery time at 298 K. Moreover, as the temperature elevates, the recovery time of all gases progressively decreases. It's noteworthy that at 398 K, the recovery time for HF is reduced to a mere 2.62 seconds. This implies that the  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  monolayer can be reused as a gas sensing material for  $\text{SO}_2$  detection at 298 K and for HF detection at 398 K. On the other hand, the  $\text{H}_2\text{S}, \text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  and  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  exhibit brevity recovery times at room temperatures, further suggesting that  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  cannot detect these three gases.



**Figure 7.** (a) Work function and WF growth rate of adsorption systems; (b) The predicted recovery time of various optimized systems.

## 4. Conclusions

In this paper, the interaction mechanism between  $\text{SF}_6$  decomposition gases molecule and  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  monolayer surface was investigated based on DFT calculation. The optimal adsorption configuration of  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  for these five gases is discussed, and the best adsorption system was determined based on comparison of adsorption energy. The calculation results of electron transfer, charge density difference and density of states were analyzed to further explore the electronic characteristics of the adsorption systems. Furthermore, the sensing mechanism of  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  monolayer for five gases was examined.

The conclusion obtained provides a theoretical basis for the potential application of  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  as the detection sensor for  $\text{SF}_6$  decomposition gas. The following are the main conclusions:

(1) Based on the analysis of adsorption energy and charge transfer, it is inferred that the adsorption of  $\text{Cu}_3(\text{TABTO})_2$  monolayer for  $\text{H}_2\text{S}, \text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  and  $\text{SO}_2\text{F}_2$  belong to physical adsorption, while for HF and  $\text{SO}_2$  can be categorized as chemical adsorption. Moreover, the

TDOS and PDOS analyses validate that the 2p orbital of the O atom on the surface exhibits significant hybridization with the HF and SO<sub>2</sub> molecular orbitals, implying the strong chemical interaction between substrate and HF, SO<sub>2</sub>.

(2) The WF analysis offers the sensing mechanism of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> monolayer as resistance-type chemical sensor. Furthermore, Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> has excellent response to SO<sub>2</sub> and HF molecules.

(3) The Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> can be promising gas sensing material to HF at 389 K and SO<sub>2</sub> at 298 K, as evidenced by the recovery time for SO<sub>2</sub> and HF.

In summary, this study holds considerable promise for the advancement of SF<sub>6</sub> decomposition gas sensors, introducing novel insights and strategies for the design and development of Cu<sub>3</sub>(TABTO)<sub>2</sub> materials.

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