Dynamic interplay between interfacial nanobubbles: Oversaturation promotes anisotropic depinning and bubble coalescence

Sarthak Nag, †ab Yoko Tomo, †a Hideaki Teshima, bc
Koji Takahashi, bc Masamichi Kohno*ab

a Department of Mechanical Engineering, Kyushu University, Fukuoka 819-0395, Japan
b International Institute for Carbon-Neutral Energy Research (WPI-I2CNER), Kyushu University, Fukuoka 819-0395, Japan
c Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Kyushu University, Fukuoka 819-0395, Japan

*Corresponding Author: kohno@mech.kyushu-u.ac.jp
†Equal Authorship
Supplementary Information 1

Movie M1 is included as supplementary material for this manuscript.

Legend for Movie M1: TEM movie of the anisotropic depinning and pull-push phenomenon observed in the surface nanobubbles.

Supplementary Information 2

(Additional Figures and Plots)

Static contact angle of water on the SiNₓ window

Figure S1. Static contact angle of the water droplet on the SiNₓ window, before and after the plasma treatment. The plasma treatment rendered high hydrophobicity to the surface, thus making the contact angle <5°. The contact angles were measured using the half-angle method (\( \theta = 2 \tan^{-1}(h/r) \)).
**Time history of observed nanobubbles**

![Image of nanobubbles](image_url)

**Figure S2.** Time history of the nanobubbles A and B. **A.** Nanobubble nbA was formed after the coalescence of nbA₁ and nbA₂. **B.** nbA during the merging process of its two constituent nanobubbles. The shape formed by nbA during merging reverifies that the formed bubble is a surface nanobubble. nbB is a pinned surface nanobubble, exhibiting deformation induced due to its neighboring nanobubbles. Scale bar: 50 nm.

**Interactions between the nanobubbles present on adjacent SiNₓ window**

![Image of nanobubbles](image_url)

**Figure S3.** Time sequence TEM images of the nanobubbles nbA, nbB and the other nanobubbles (discussed in the manuscript) observed on the adjacent SiNₓ window. Yellow arrow shows the contact line of the nanobubble present on the top window. As this nanobubble shrinks, no changes were observed in the shape and size of nbA. This demonstrates that the behavior of the top bubble does not induce any remarkable size changes in nbA persistently, and the interactions between nbA and nbB are stronger due to lower interfacial distance between them. Scale bar: 25 nm.
♦ **Nanobubble contact area and interfacial gap before the observed phenomenon**

![Graph showing nanobubble contact area and interfacial gap](image)

**Figure S4.** Variation of nanobubble contact area and the gap between their 3-phase contact lines before the observed phenomenon. **A.** The nbA is a growing nanobubble, exhibits a growth rate of ~17 nm²/s for the initial 100 s. The nbB is a strongly pinned nanobubble and exhibits negligible changes in its contact area. **B.** The gap between their 3-phase contact lines reduces monotonically from 20 nm to 12.5 nm in 100 s.

♦ **Time sequence TEM images of the pull-push phenomenon and anisotropic depinning observed in other nanobubbles**

![Time sequence TEM images](image)

**Figure S5.** (A-D) Time sequence TEM images of the observed pull-push phenomenon observed in another nanobubble pair (nbP and nbQ). The yellow arrow shows the direction of the contact line’s movement and distortion in nanobubble induced due to the growth and shrinking of the other nanobubble. The magnitude of the depinning in the bubble was observed to be less as compared to
the results discussed in the manuscript, possibly due to the lower oversaturation. In the presented images, the electron beam intensity measured was ~0.32 A/cm$^2$, while for the images presented in the main manuscript, the electron beam intensity was ~1.03 A/cm$^2$. Scale bar: 25 nm. (E) Edge detected overlapped image of the nanobubbles observed at t=t$_0$+10 s and t = t$_0$+14.5 s. The extend of depinning is highlighted in the image. Scale bar: 20 nm.

**Figure S6. (A-I)** Time sequence TEM images of three nanobubbles demonstrating anisotropic depinning. The time interval between each image frame is 10 s. The initial positions of the 3-phase contact lines of nanobubbles $P,Q$ and $R$ are shown in (A). Nanobubble $Q$ begins shrinking, which leads to the distortion in the adjacent interfaces of nanobubble $P$ and $R$, as shown in (C), (D) and (E). After ~50 s, nanobubble $Q$ exhibits growth, as shown in (F-H), which increases the circularity of the 3-phase contact line of nanobubble $P$ and $R$. Scale bar: 50 nm.
Figure S7. (A) TEM image of multiple nanobubbles nucleated in a single image frame. Scale Bar: 200 nm. (B-J) Time sequence TEM images of two nanobubbles (P and Q) exhibiting pull-push phenomenon. Images (B-G) are captured while the bubbles are over-focus (bright fringes around the bubble), whereas images (H-J) are captured while the bubbles are under-focus (dark fringes). The yellow dotted curve highlights the pinned three-phase contact line of nanobubble Q. Due to the size fluctuations of P, distortion in the three-phase contact line of nanobubble Q close to the nanobubble P is observed, which has been highlighted by an arrow in (D, E, H and J). Scale bar: 50 nm.

*Long term variation of the mean radii of nanobubbles nbA and nbB*

Figure S8. Variation of mean radii ($\sqrt{\text{area}/\pi}$) of nanobubbles nbA and nbB during the complete observation of ~18 minutes. nbA exhibits high variations in its radius and is deemed as unpinned nanobubble. nbB has low variations due to the strong pinning of its contact line. Series of shrink-growth behavior of nbA were observed in the study, as depicted by dotted rectangles [I] – [V]. The merging of nanobubbles was observed at 1065 s.