

# "Polymer-multiwall carbon nanotube" nanocoatings on macroporous silicon matrix

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## Abstract

Carbon nanotubes are among the most anisotropic materials known and have extremely high values of Young's modulus. The possibilities to enhance the properties of nanostructured surfaces were demonstrated on "polymer-multiwall carbon nanotube" composites and composite nanocoatings on macroporous silicon structures. Influence of  $sp^3$  hybridization bonds on polymer crystallization and strengthening was investigated in composite films of polypropylene and polyamide with carbon multiwall nanotubes. It was established that the effective way to improve the strength properties of "polymer-multiwall carbon nanotube" composites is the composite crystallization and  $sp^3$  C-C tetrahedrons organization between nanotubes supported by  $\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH})$  and  $\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH}_2)$  vibrations in the intrinsic electric field. The effects of blooming, photoluminescence increase and surface bond passivation by nanocoatings of "polymer-multiwall carbon nanotube" on macroporous silicon structures were evaluated.

**Keywords:** *Polymer Composites, Multiwall Carbon Nanotubes, Macroporous Silicon Matrix.*

## 1. Introduction

Multiwall carbon nanotubes are among the most anisotropic materials known and have extremely high values of Young's modulus [1]. Carbon nanotube aspect ratio of length to diameter is more than  $10^3$ ; this distinguishes it from other nanoparticles. New composites with carbon nanotubes (CNTs) as additives were studied intensively during the last decade. Composites are characterized by extremely high specific strength properties [2], electrical and thermal conductivity [3]. The presence of CNT in the matrix improves the composite biocompatibility [4]. CNTs exhibit both semiconducting and metallic behavior depending on their chirality [5]. The researchers have successfully demonstrated field-effect transistors based on semiconducting CNTs [6]. Metallic CNTs have been considered as a potential solution for on-chip interconnects with a current density well above  $10^6$  A/cm<sup>2</sup> [7]. The connection of CNTs to silicon has been realized, using polyethyleneimine (PEI) as a binding material between them [8]. Chemical hydrogen

bonding and electrostatic interaction between PEI, CNTs, and silicon effectively connect CNTs to silicon. Electric transport at this junction shows a tunneling behavior, which verifies PEI as a molecular link between CNT tips and silicon.

Last years structures of macroporous silicon became a promising material for development of 2D photonic structures with required geometry and large effective surface [9]. This determines the optical and electro-optical characteristics of macroporous silicon structures [10-12]. In view of a potential barrier on macropore surface, one should take into account recharging of the local surface centers at energies below that of the indirect interband transition. Macroporous silicon has found application in sensors based on measurements of optical, electric, photovoltaic and photoluminescence characteristics. Thus, macroporous silicon-based optical biosensors were designed to detect low concentrations of DNA [13]. The capacitive humidity sensors [14], gas and biosensors of CMOS-compatible manufacturing, solar cells with efficiency up to 13% [15] and coating with less than 0.1% reflection have been developed [16].

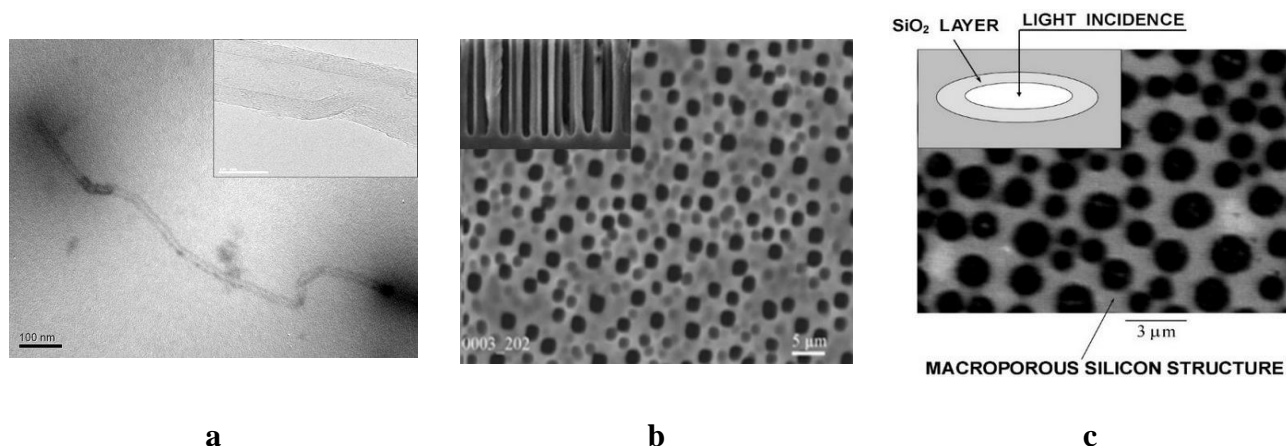
In this paper, the opportunities to enhance the properties of nanostructured surfaces are demonstrated on "polymer-multiwall carbon nanotube" composites and composite nanocoatings on macroporous silicon structures. Influence of  $sp^3$  hybridization bonds on polymer strengthening is investigated in composites of PEI, polypropylene and polyamide with multiwall carbon nanotubes. The effects of blooming, photoluminescence increase and surface bond passivation by nanocoatings of "PEI-multiwall carbon nanotubes" on macroporous silicon structures are evaluated.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Carbon high purity multiwall nanotubes (CNTs) of 2  $\mu\text{m}$  length and 20 nm diameter (Fig. 1a) were obtained by catalytic pyrolysis of unsaturated

hydrocarbons [17]. Nanoparticle morphology was investigated by the atomic force microscopy (AFM, NanoScope IIIa Dimension 3000TM, Advance Surface Microscopy Inc.). The composites were made of PEI,

polypropylene and polyamide filled by a mixture of CNTs with the polymer powder and dried; the samples were formed by hot pressing.



**Fig. 1** a) Morphology of multiwall nanotubes according to the AFM data; b) A fragment of a macroporous silicon structure with arbitrary distribution of macropores; c) Direction of light incidence on the sample (along the main axis of cylindrical macropore).

Compression and tension tests of the polymeric materials and their composites were performed using tensile machine 2167-R50 with automatic recording of the deformation diagram. Thin polymeric films (100-150  $\mu\text{m}$  thick) without and with CNTs were prepared out using Thermo HYDROPRESS.

Macroporous silicon structures with arbitrary distribution of macropores (Fig. 1b) were made of *n*-silicon wafers (the [100] orientation, the electron concentration  $n_0 = 10^{15} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ). We used the technique of electrochemical etching at illumination of the backside of a silicon substrate (thickness  $H = 520 \mu\text{m}$ ) [18, 19]. The initial samples are complex micropore-macropore silicon structures consisting of 150 nm micropore layers on macropore walls. An additional anisotropic etching in 10% solution of KOH was used to remove the microporous layers from macropore walls. According to the results of optical microscopy (Nu, Carl Zeiss Jena, Germany), macropores with depth  $h_p = 40\text{-}120 \mu\text{m}$ , diameter  $D_p = 2\text{-}5 \mu\text{m}$  and concentration  $N_p = (1\text{-}6) \cdot 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2}$  were formed. The oxide layers (thickness of 20 nm) were formed on macroporous silicon samples in dry oxygen for 40-60 min at a temperature of 1050  $^\circ\text{C}$ . The oxide thickness was measured using ellipsometry with 0.2 nm accuracy. The nanocoatings “polymer-multiwall carbon nanotubes” were obtained from a colloidal solution of PEI with CNT onto (1) single crystalline Si, (2) macroporous Si, (3) oxidized macroporous Si, and (4) macroporous Si with microporous Si layer.

The chemical states on the surface of macroporous silicon structures with nanocoatings were identified by IR absorption spectra using a PerkinElmer Spectrum BXII IR Fourier spectrometer in the spectral range of

300-8000  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . The optical absorption spectra were measured at normal incidence of IR radiation on the sample (along the main axis of cylindrical macropores, Fig. 1c). Raman spectra of macroporous silicon structures with nanocoatings of PEI with multiwall carbon nanotubes were measured using a Horiba Jobin-Yvon T64000 spectrometer. The photoluminescence spectra of the nanocoatings on macroporous silicon samples were obtained in the 1.8-3.3 eV range of photon energy. The excitation radiation with photon energy of 0.34 eV falls on the sample through an optical fiber; photoluminescence emission of the test sample falls on the sensor and optical fiber through a slit (width of 2.5 nm). The angle between the excitation radiation and photoluminescence emission is 5 $^\circ$ . The IR absorption, Raman and photoluminescence spectra measurements were carried out in air at room temperature.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. “Polymer-carbon multiwall nanotube” composites

Intensive peaks of  $\text{sp}^3$ -hybrid orbitals (D),  $\text{sp}^2$ -hybrid orbitals (G), 2D and  $\text{CH}_2$  bonds were measured in the IR spectra (Fig. 2a, curve 1) and Raman spectra (Fig. 2a, curve 2) of multiwall carbon nanotubes.

Fig. 2b shows the absorption spectra of PEI (curve 1), the composite “PEI-carbon nanotubes” (curve 2) and the ratio of spectra 1 and 2 (curve 3). After formation of the PEI-CNT composite intensive absorption maxima were measured in area of the  $\text{sp}^3$  hybridization (D) bonds at the frequency of N-H(1) oscillations in the primary amino groups of PEIs and in area of the  $\text{sp}^2$  hybridization (G) bonds for the N-H(2) oscillation frequencies in secondary amino groups of PEIs.

Fig. 3a shows IR absorption spectra of polyamide (curve 1), "polyamide-carbon nanotubes" composite

(curve 2) and the ratio of the curves 1 and 2 (curve 3).

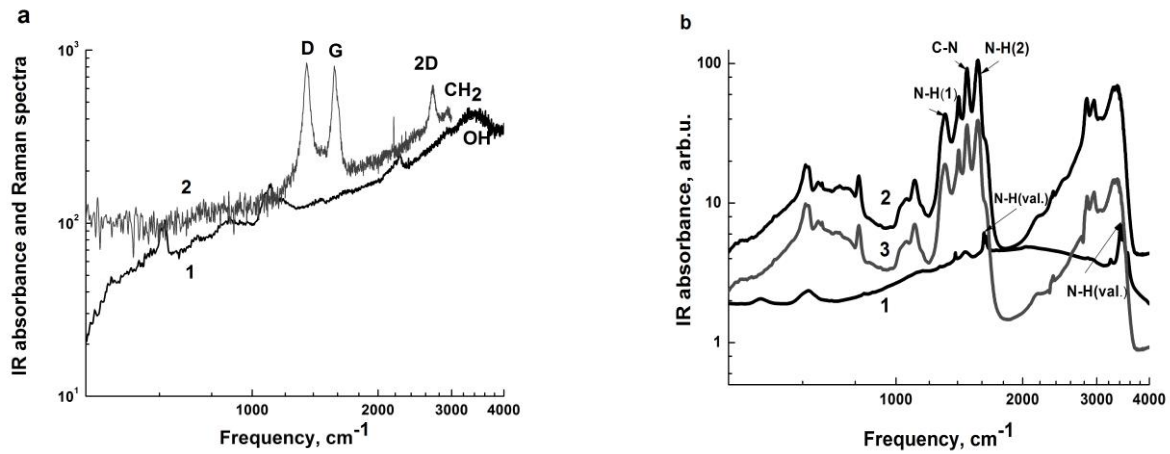


Fig. 2 a) IR absorption (1) and Raman (2) spectra of multiwall carbon nanotubes; b) IR absorption spectra of PEI (1), "PEI-CNT" composite (2) and its relation (3).

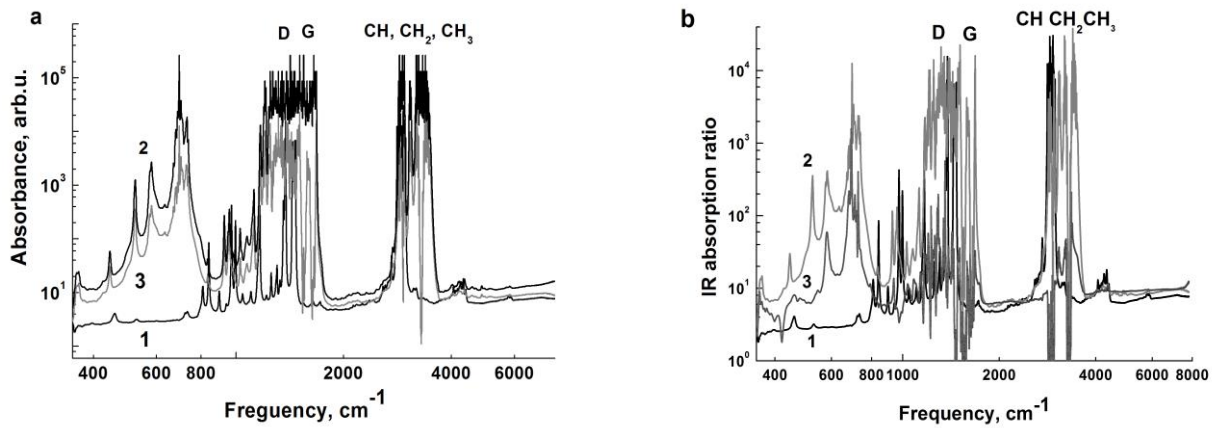


Fig. 3 a) IR absorption spectra: 1 – polyamide-6, 2 – "polyamide-carbon nanotubes" composite and 3 – the ratio of the curves 1 and 2; b) Ratio of IR absorption spectra of "composite/polymer": 1 – polypropylene, 2 – polyamide-6, 3 – polyamide-12.

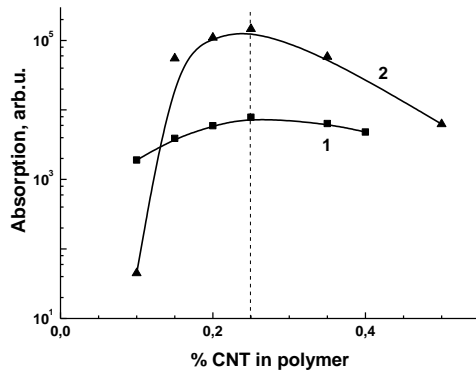
Fig. 3b presents the ratio of IR absorption spectra of "composite/polymer" for films of polypropylene (PP) – curve 1, polyamide-6 (PA6) – curve 2) and polyamide-12 (PA12) – curve 3. After adding CNTs to polymers (concentration of 0.25%), IR absorption of "composite/polymer" films exceeds that of polymer films essentially. Higher C-C fluctuations, CH, CH<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>3</sub> bond absorption correspond to higher absorption of composites at the frequencies of sp<sup>3</sup> hybridization bonds. Table 1 shows type and frequency of bonds for the IR absorption growth at frequencies of

sp<sup>3</sup> hybridization after adding carbon nanotubes to polymers. Thus, higher absorption of composites at the frequencies of sp<sup>3</sup> hybridization bonds is due to  $\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH})$  and  $\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH}_2)$  vibrations (Table 1).

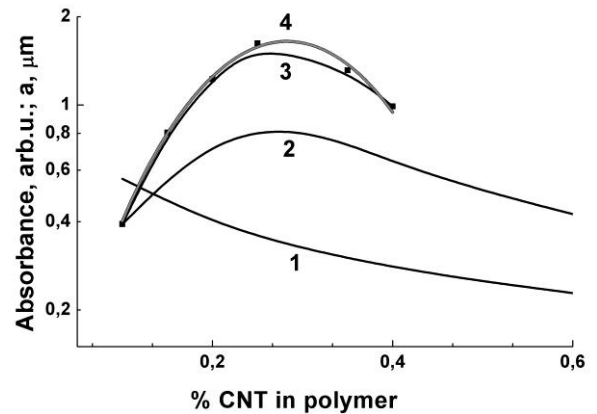
IR absorption by sp<sup>3</sup> hybridization bonds (D) in composites of polymers with multiwall carbon nanotubes has maxima (Fig. 4) at its dependencies on CNT content. Thus, the maxima correspond to fixed distance between nanotubes.

Table 1: Types of bonds for IR absorption growth at frequencies of sp<sup>2</sup> and sp<sup>3</sup> hybridization after adding to polymers carbon nanotubes

PP		PA6		PA12	
Type of bonds	Frequency, cm <sup>-1</sup>	Type of bonds	Frequency, cm <sup>-1</sup>	Type of bonds	Frequency, cm <sup>-1</sup>
$\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH})$	1360	$\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH}_2)$	1319, 1406	$\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH}_2)$	1357



**Fig. 4.** IR absorption by  $sp^3$  hybridization bonds (D) in composites based on polypropylene (1) and polyamide-6 (2) vs CNT content in polymer.



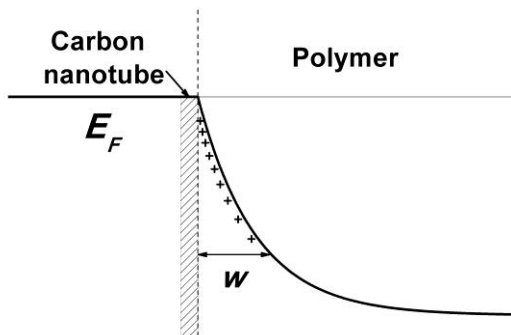
**Fig. 5.** Calculated dependences of average distance  $a$  between CNT (1), geometric approximation (2) – characteristic volume around CNT; experimental dependence from Fig. 4 of the IR absorption peak of  $sp^3$  hybridization of "polypropylene – CNTs" composite (3) and its approximation (4) on CNT content.

Distance between nanotubes in composites depends on the concentration of CNT ( $N_{CNT}$ ), its content (% CNT) and the nanotube volume ( $V_{CNT}$ ):

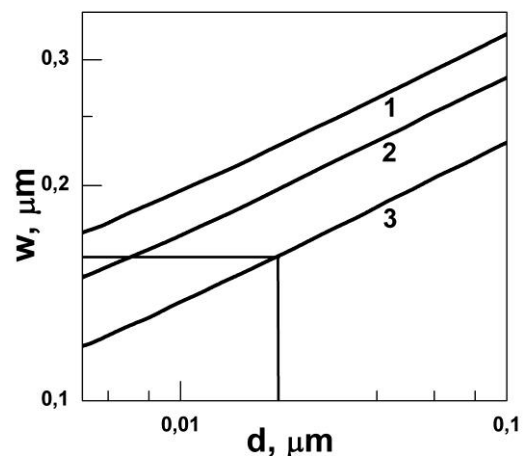
$$a = (N_{CNT})^{1/2} = (\% \text{ CNT} / 100 V_{CNT})^{1/2} \quad (1)$$

The IR absorption maximum for  $sp^3$  hybridization bonds (D) of composites (Fig. 4) corresponds to the average distance  $a = 0.35 \mu\text{m}$  between the cylindrical CNT (diameter of 20 nm, length of 2  $\mu\text{m}$ ). This maximum can be explained by the geometric factor - characteristic volume around the cylindrical CNT at a distance of  $a_m/2$  from nanotubes. As  $a > a_m$ , the characteristic volume around CNT increases due to increasing of the content of CNT (% CNT,  $N_{CNT}$ ), IR absorption increases too. The characteristic volume around CNT and IR absorption decreases with CNT content at  $a < a_m$ ,

Figure 5 shows the calculated (according to Eq. (1)) dependences of average distance  $a$  between CNT (curve 1), geometric approximation (curve 2, characteristic volume around CNT), experimental dependence from Fig. 4 of the IR absorption peak of  $sp^3$  hybridization of "polypropylene-CNTs" composite (curve 3) on CNT content. The obtained geometric approximation (Fig. 5, curve 2) explains only qualitatively the experimental dependence of IR absorption peak in bonds  $sp^3$  hybridization (D) of "polypropylene-carbon nanotube" composite on the CNT content. This relationship is more nonlinear and has the form of a 1D Gaussian curve (Fig. 5, curve 4), which corresponds to the diffusion equation in the electric field. The length  $a = 0.35 \mu\text{m}$  between cylindrical CNT corresponds to the distance between nanotubes  $w = (a_m - d)/2 = 0.17 \mu\text{m}$  for maximum of IR absorption. The electric field between the nanotubes and polymer matrix has a space charge region (SCR) width  $w$  (Fig. 6).



**Fig. 6** Band bending and SCR width  $w$  at the "polymer - CNTs" boundary.



**Fig. 7** Dependence of SCR width  $w$  around cylindrical nanotubes on its diameter for surface potential  $Y_s$ : 1 –  $-12 kT$ ; 2 –  $-8 kT$ ; 3 –  $4 kT$ .

We used the Poisson equation in a cylindrical coordinate system to calculate the SCR width (Fig. 6) around a cylindrical nanotube:

$$\frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} \left( r \frac{\partial Y}{\partial r} \right) = - \frac{\rho_q}{\epsilon \epsilon_0} \frac{e}{kT}, \quad (2)$$

where  $r$  is the radius vector,  $\rho_q$  is the charge density. We used the boundary conditions for the area of the SCR width  $w$  for a cylindrical nanotube diameter  $d$ :  $E(d/2 + w) = 0$ ,  $Y(d/2 + w) = 0$ ,  $Y(d/2) = Y_S$ , where  $E$  is the electric field strength,  $Y_S$  - the value of the potential on the surface of the nanotube. Integrating Eq. (2) and using the above boundary conditions, we obtained the equation [20]:

$$\frac{16\epsilon\epsilon_0 Y_S w}{eq_v d^2} - 1 + \left( 1 + \frac{2w}{d} \right)^2 \left( 1 - 2 \ln \left( 1 + \frac{2w}{d} \right) \right) = 0 \quad (3)$$

Fig. 7 shows dependences of the size of the space charge region of cylindrical nanotubes calculated from Eq. (3) on their diameter at various values of the surface potential. It is shown in Fig. 7 that the SCR width  $w$  decreases with the diameter of nanotubes decrease. Surface potential  $Y_S = -4kT$  (106 mV) and electric field intensity  $E = Y_S / w = 6.3 \cdot 10^3$  V/cm corresponds to  $w = 0.17 \mu\text{m}$  for cylindrical CNT (diameter of 20 nm, length of 2  $\mu\text{m}$ ) maximum at IR absorption peak for bonds of  $sp^3$  hybridization (D).

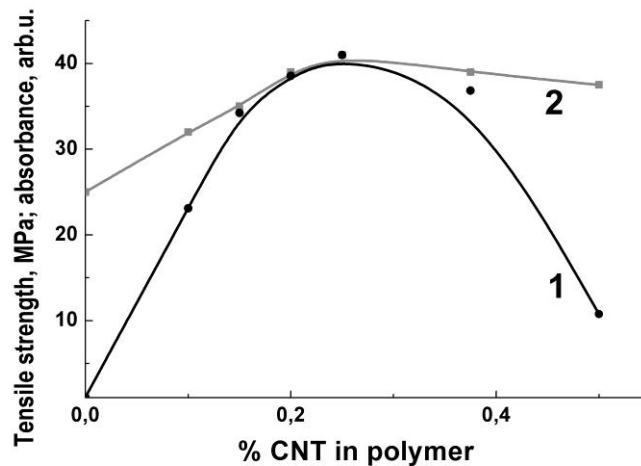


Fig. 8 Experimental dependence of the IR absorption peak of  $sp^3$  hybridization (1) and tensile strength of "polyamide-6-CNT" composite (2) on CNT concentration.

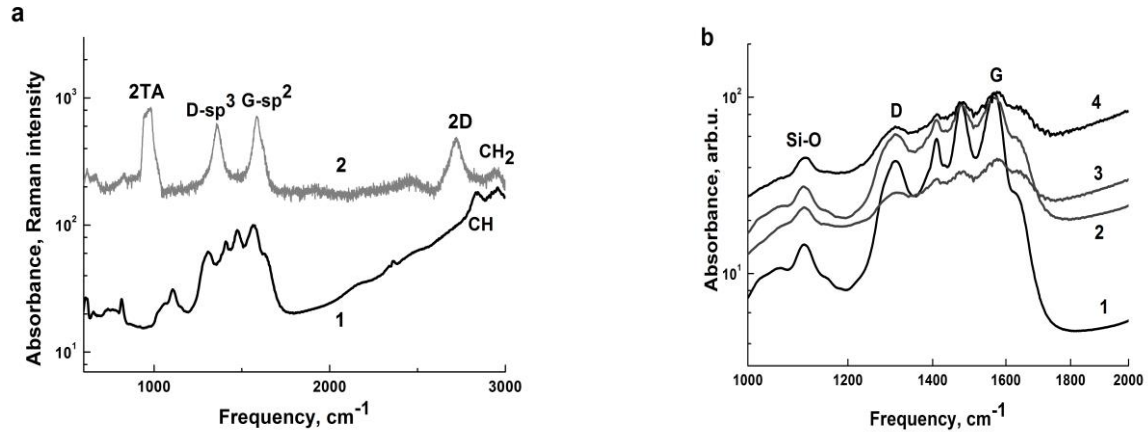
Carbon nanotubes are divided into two main groups: the molecular associated nanotubes linked through weak interactions, van der Waals forces, and nanotubes with additional strong covalent  $sp^3$  type C-C bonding [8]. Thus, one of the way to improve the strength properties of "polymer-CNT" composites is the composite crystallization and  $sp^3$  C-C tetrahedrons organization between nanotubes due to  $\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH})$  and  $\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH}_2)$  vibrations (Table 1) in the intrinsic electric field. Really, the profile analysis of X-ray reflexes confirmed high crystallinity degree of investigated "polymer-CNT" composites - from 72% to 85% [21]. Crystalline polymers demonstrate high tensile strength. Experimental dependences of the IR absorption peak of  $sp^3$  hybridization (Fig. 8, curve 1) and tensile strength of "polyamide-6-CNT" composite (Fig. 8, curve 2) have the same peak at CNTs content of 0.25%. Tensile strength of PA6-CNT system with CNTs content of 0.25% is 30-40 MPa (Fig. 8).

### 3.2. "Polymer-carbon multiwall nanotube" nanocoatings on macroporous silicon matrix.

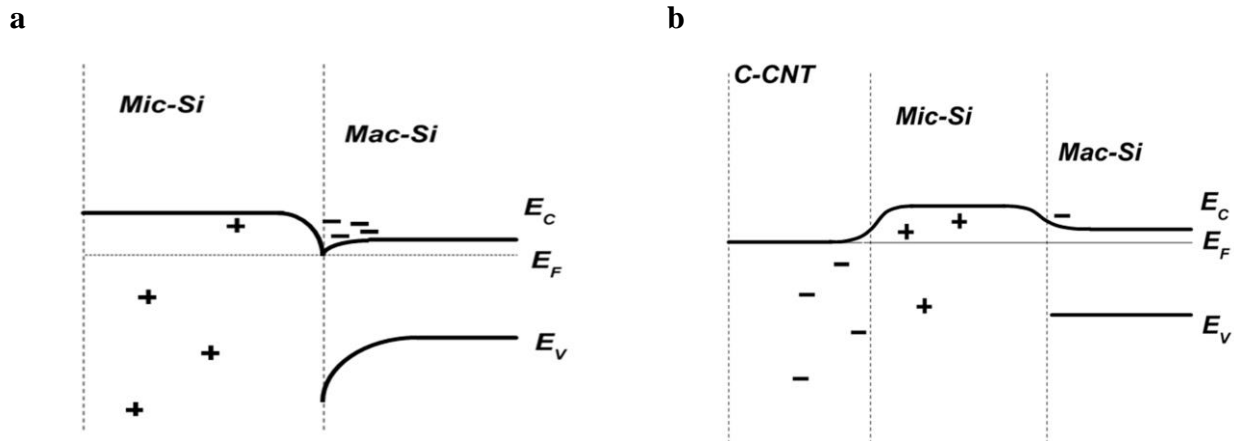
Fig. 9a shows IR (curve 1) and Raman (curve 2) spectra of macroporous silicon structures with "PEI-CNT" nanocoatings. The peaks of one-phonon in Si ( $305 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ), two-phonon in Si ( $514 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ), transverse acoustical phonon in Si (TA),  $sp^2$ - and  $sp^3$ -hybrid orbitals, twice carbon  $sp^3$ -hybrid orbitals (2D) and  $\text{CH}_2$  bonds were measured in Raman spectra. The maximal Raman shift was measured for macroporous silicon with microporous silicon layer, with similar peaks of  $sp^2$ - and  $sp^3$ -hybrid orbitals and  $\text{CH}_2$  bonds. Figure 9b shows the IR absorption spectra of macroporous silicon structures with "PEI-CNT" nanocoatings. The IR absorption spectra have the similar peak frequencies of surface states. High IR absorption was measured on macroporous silicon with microporous silicon layer (Fig.9b, curve 4). The IR absorption for substrates of oxidized macroporous silicon and macroporous silicon with c (Fig.9b. curves 2, 3) is lower and comparable.

Macroporous silicon without nanocoatings has depleted surface band bending (Fig. 10a). Thus, the PEI nanocoatings with carbon multiwall nanotubes increase surface depletion [12] and IR absorption of

macroporous silicon without nanocoatings and decrease surface accumulation [10, 11] for SiO<sub>2</sub> coatings and microporous silicon layer.



**Fig. 9** a) IR (1) and Raman (2) spectra of macroporous silicon structure with “PEI-CNT” nanocoatings; b) IR absorption spectra of silicon structures with “PEI-CNTs” nanocoatings: 1 – silicon single crystal, 2 – macroporous silicon, 3 – oxidized macroporous silicon, 4 – macroporous silicon with microporous layer.



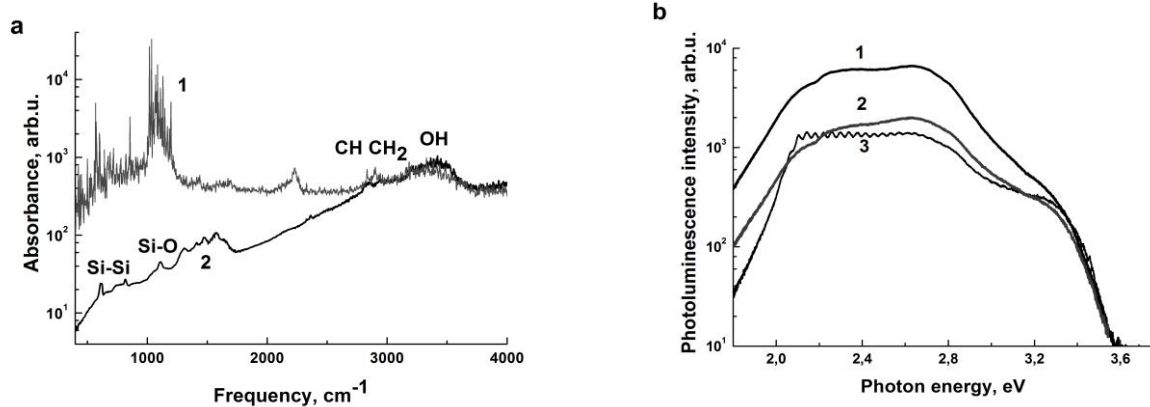
**Fig. 10** a) Accumulation band bending of macroporous silicon with microporous Si; b) depleted band bending of macroporous silicon with microporous Si and “PEI-CNT” nanocoating.

Fig. 11a shows IR absorption spectra of macroporous silicon with microporous layer (curve 1). High oscillations of IR absorption were explained by the resonance electron scattering and Wannier–Stark effect realization [10, 11] on the accumulation surface of macroporous silicon matrix. The model [22, 23] of the resonance electron scattering on impurity states in an electric field of “silicon–nanocoating” heterojunction on macropore surface and realization of the Wannier–Stark effect on randomly distributed surface bonds were confirmed. In this case, the Wannier–Stark effect was measured due to a large-time electron scattering as compared with the period of its oscillations in the strong electric field of “silicon–nanocoating” interface. The “PEI-CNT” nanocoatings reduce IR absorption of macroporous Si with microporous Si (Fig. 11a) layer by 2-3 orders of

magnitude (blooming effect up to frequencies of CH bond absorption) due to strong change of band bending on the macropore surface from accumulation one to flat or depleted band bending (Fig. 10b). It is due to carbon nanotubes in PEI and high concentration of hydrogen atoms [10] in the microporous layer. Thus, the electron charge of nanotubes neutralized the positive hydrogen bonds. Fig. 11b shows photoluminescence spectra (the photon excitation energy of 0.34 eV) of PEI with carbon nanotubes on macroporous silicon with microporous layer (1), on macroporous silicon (2), and on silicon single crystal (3). The photoluminescence intensity of PEI with multiwall carbon nanotubes is maximal for substrate of macroporous silicon with microporous silicon layer (Fig. 11b, curve 1). The photo-luminescence of polymer is determined by the exciton generation and electron-hole radiative

recombination [24]. The photoluminescence intensity of PEI with carbon multiwall nanotubes on macroporous silicon with microporous layer is 5.6 times higher than that of PEI with CNT on single crystalline silicon in the photon energy range of 2.2-

2.7 eV. It is due to decrease of the proton non-radiative recombination on boundary nanocoating “PEI-CNT” and microporous layer (Fig. 10b) layer with positive charge of hydrogen atoms.



**Fig. 11** a) IR absorption spectra of macroporous silicon with microporous layer without (1) and with (2) “PEI-CNT” nanocoatings. The “PEI-CNT” nanocoatings reduce IR absorption of macroporous Si with microporous Si layer by 2-3 orders of magnitude (the blooming effect); b) photoluminescence spectra of PEI with multiwall carbon tubes on macroporous silicon with microporous layer (1), on macroporous silicon (2), and on silicon single crystal (3).

## 4. Conclusions

Carbon nanotubes are among the most anisotropic materials known and have extremely high values of Young's modulus. The possibilities to enhance the properties of nanostructured surfaces were demonstrated on the “polymer-multiwall carbon nanotube” composites and composite nanocoatings on macroporous silicon structures.

Influence of  $sp^3$  hybridization bonds on polymer crystallization and strengthening was investigated in composite films. Intensive IR absorption maxima were measured after formation of the “PEI-CNT” composite in the area of the  $sp^3$  hybridization (D) bonds at the frequency of N-H(1) oscillations in the primary amino groups of PEIs. In addition, high IR absorption at frequencies of  $sp^3$  hybridization bonds of polypropylene, polyamide-6 and polyamide-12 with CNTs is determined by  $\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH})$  and  $\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH}_2)$  vibrations as a result of C-C tetrahedron formation. The IR absorption peak dependencies on CNT content at frequencies of  $sp^3$  hybridization bonds are described by a 1D Gaussian curve for the diffusion equation in the electric field. The electric field intensity between nanotubes and polymer matrix is equal to  $6.3 \cdot 10^3$  V/cm at 0.25% CNT. Thus, the way to improve the strength properties of “polymer-CNT” composites is the composite crystallization supported by  $\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH})$  and  $\gamma_{\omega}(\text{CH}_2)$  vibrations in the intrinsic electric field.

The effects of blooming, surface bond passivation and photoluminescence increase were evaluated on macroporous silicon structures with composite nanocoatings. The “PEI-CNT” nanocoatings reduce IR

absorption of macroporous silicon with microporous layer by 2-3 orders of magnitude (the blooming effect) due to strong change of band bending on the macropore surface from accumulation one to flat or depleted due to surface bond passivation by composite nanocoating. The photoluminescence intensity of “PEI-CNT” on substrate of macroporous silicon with microporous layer is 5.6 times higher than that of single crystalline silicon. It is due to decrease of the proton non-radiative recombination on the “PEI-CNT” boundary and microporous layer with positive charge of hydrogen atoms.

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