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## Oxidation inhibition of 3D printed porous steel by ceria-activated multilayers

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### ABSTRACT

A 3D-printed porous 410 L steel support with a novel ceramic multi-coating is fabricated to improve the oxidation resistance of porous metal components for extreme conditions. Simplified support's morphology with straight channels fabricated by laser powder bed fusion enhances the applicability of wet-chemical coating methods. A multi-coating method combining electrophoretic deposition and infiltration improves the ceramic/steel interface. Ceria-based coatings with catalytic activity towards H<sub>2</sub>O and O<sub>2</sub> provide both physical and dynamic chemical protection mechanisms. Excellent electro-chemo-mechanical stability and superior corrosion resistance ( $0.26 \times 10^{-15} \text{ g}^2 \text{ cm}^4 \text{ s}^{-1}$ ) are shown at 750 °C in air-3 % H<sub>2</sub>O for 122 h.

### 1. Introduction

The ceramic-metal joint is an efficient way to combine the mechanical resilience of metals with the hardness, electrical, chemical, and functional properties of certain ceramics. Electrochemical functional metal oxide coatings are especially used in harsh environments for high-temperature electrochemistry and catalysis [1]. This technology includes metal-supported solid oxide cells (MS-SOCs), energy conversion devices that work in particularly harsh thermo-chemical conditions. Typical operations are at temperatures above 600 °C in humid atmospheres. They convert a fuel's chemical energy efficiently into electricity (fuel cell mode, SOFC) or use electricity to produce fuel gases (electrolysis mode, SOEC) [2]. Compared with conventional ceramic SOC, porous metal supports improved the robustness of MS-SOCs, allowing much faster startup and higher power density for wider applications [3, 4]. However, the chemical instability of the interface between the metal support and the functional ceramics, such as metal oxidation/corrosion and element diffusion, limits the long-term stability of MS-SOCs [5].

Conventional porous metal supports by tape casting (one of the traditional powder metallurgy technologies) generally consist of sintered metal particles [6]. A schematic representation of the typical structure is shown in Fig. 1 (left). Metallurgical sintering necks link the metal particles, providing electronic conductivity and mechanical support [2]. As the sintered necks oxidize in the extreme working

environment, the electrical conductivity decreases, resulting in a drastic performance degradation [5,6].

Coating methods, including dip-coating, infiltration, and electrophoretic deposition (EPD) with coating materials, such as spinels [7,8], perovskites [9–11], and other oxides containing rare earth elements [12–14], are used to form anti-oxidation layers to mitigate the corrosion issues of the metal. These methods allow the coating precursors (chemical solutions, suspension, or sol-gel) to fill the inner surface of the porous metal supports and form a protective interface after the reaction has taken place [7–15].

However, making a high-quality coating on the irregular inner surface of porous metal supports is challenging. The high-tortuosity channels of porous metal support formed by sintered powders can aggravate the segregation of the solution or colloid, challenging the uniformity of the coating/protective layer [7,9]. Decreasing the channels' tortuosity and geometrical complexity could be an effective way to improve coatings' applicability eventually. Laser powder bed fusion (LPBF), one of the standard laser-aided additive manufacturing (LAAM) technologies, is highly touted for making porous structures because of its almost unconstrained design freedom and precise forming for many alloys [16]. The porosity formed by LPBF is based on selective melting rather than sintering [17]. The porosity can be much easier to control in size and distribution, with the possibility of designing a 3D structure with low-tortuosity channels [18,19].

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Here, we propose a novel support design: low-Cr (12.5 %) ferritic stainless steel (410 L) supports with regularly distributed vertical straight gas channels. The supports are fabricated by LPBF 3D printing technology. This methodology allows a careful fabrication of the channels (Fig. 1, right), reducing the sintered-necks issue and tortuosity caused by metallic powders sintering (Fig. 1, left) [2,20], thus, enhancing gas diffusion and electrical conductivity of the support. Moreover, due to the simple geometry of the channels, the liquid, e.g. nanosuspension, will flow through the channels with high efficiency, allowing a uniform coating on the inner surface by wet-coatings methods.

Catalytically active materials are used as the coating, i.e. gadolinium-doped ceria and undoped ceria ( $\text{Ce}_{0.9}\text{Gd}_{0.1}\text{O}_2$  and  $\text{CeO}_2$ ). Ceria-based materials have a high chemical activity toward oxygen, hydrogen, steam, etc. [21–25]. Ceria also works as a chemical barrier, i.e., a diffusion barrier layer (DBL), with the ability to inhibit elemental diffusion in SOCs [10,15,26,27]. The ceria-based coating is fabricated by a facile two-step approach that includes EPD of  $\text{Ce}_{0.9}\text{Gd}_{0.1}\text{O}_2$  (CGO) nanoparticles, followed by infiltration with  $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3$ . EPD obtains a uniform coating with nanopores, allowing  $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3$  solution to go through and contact the metal support surface. The uniform contact interface between the metal support and coating is achieved based on this liquid-solid reaction and the fast interdiffusion ability of the ceria with other oxides [28–31].

## 2. Experimental section

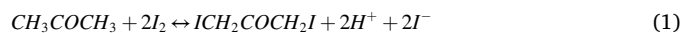
### 2.1. Metal supports fabrication

A home-built DTU open-architecture LPBF (Baxter) [32] equipped with an SPI laser, a ScanLabs IntelliScan Galvo, JenOptik F- $\theta$  lens, custom powder dosing, and wiper solutions integrated with a vacuum-tight chamber was used for metal supports fabrication. Brief manufacturing principles and main parameters are shown in Fig. 2a. The fabrication process was performed in nitrogen gas with an oxygen content lower than 200 ppm. A 410 L stainless steel powder (Höganäs Co.), with a nominal composition of Fe-12.5Cr-0.5Ni-0.5Si-0.03 C (wt. %) and a size range of 20–53  $\mu\text{m}$  (Fig. 2b) were used for the processing. For the sample fabrication, porous cylinders 1.5 cm high and 1 cm in diameter (Fig. 2c) were fabricated at first. Finally, metal supports (Fig. 2d) were obtained by cutting cylinders into slices, grinding (400/800/1200/1500/2000 grit SiC sandpapers were used orderly), polishing (3  $\mu\text{m}$  and 1  $\mu\text{m}$  diamond compound polishing paste were used orderly), and cleaning in an ultrasonic bath.

### 2.2. EPD and infiltration

We fabricated the ceria-based coating by a two-step approach that includes EPD of  $\text{Ce}_{0.9}\text{Gd}_{0.1}\text{O}_2$  (CGO) nanoparticles, followed by infiltration with  $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3$ . The uniform protective layer was obtained by the reactions that occur during subsequent calcination and sintering.

The EPD suspension was prepared by mixing acetone (300 mL, purity-99 %), iodine particles (0.3 g, purity-99.8 %), and  $\text{Ce}_{0.9}\text{Gd}_{0.1}\text{O}_2$  (7.5 g, specific surface area-12  $\text{m}^2 \text{g}^{-1}$ , Cerpotech Co.) with magnetic stirring and ultrasonic bath. After 16-h standing (precipitating the agglomerated particles), 200 mL were taken from the top of the suspension by a syringe for use in EPD. During the EPD coating, the iodine in the suspension reacted with acetone to form protons, as shown below [33,34]:



Positive charges were adsorbed onto the suspended CGO nanoparticles. The CGO nanoparticles were then deposited with an electric field (60 V/cm) onto the metal support that acted as the cathode (Fig. 3a). The deposition time for each sample was 3 min. After calcination, using 600 °C under argon flow for 4 h (600 °C/Ar/4 h), coated samples without infiltration were prepared (Non-Inf). An aqueous 1 M  $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3$  solution for infiltration was prepared by stirring  $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 6 \text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Sigma-Aldrich Co., 99 %), Triton-X 100 surfactant (Talas Co.), and distilled water for 1 h. The Non-Inf samples were infiltrated with  $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3$  solution with the assistance of a vacuum pump. After the calcination with 600 °C/air/4 h, the infiltrated samples were named Inf.

### 2.3. Oxidation and electrochemical measurements

Platinum paste was painted on the top and bottom surfaces of coated samples as the current collector, followed by a treatment of 800 °C/air/4 h. Electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS) was measured by Solartron 1260 at 750 °C in air-3 % $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  with an amplitude of 15 mV and a frequency range of 0.06–30 MHz. The corrosion kinetics of samples were measured with cyclic oxidation experiments. Bare 410 L metal support, Non-Inf, and Inf samples after pre-oxidation (800 °C/air/4 h) were aged at 750 °C in air-3 % $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  with a total ageing time of 122 h using a tube furnace. Samples were taken out and weighed by a Sartorius balance with a resolution of 0.01 mg after 40, 80, and 122 h. The atmosphere of air-3 % $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  was obtained by passing air through a bottle with water at room temperature.

### 2.4. Imaging and phase analysis

3D images were collected by a Nikon XTH 225  $\mu\text{focus}$  X-ray CT system. The voxel sizes are 7.97  $\mu\text{m}$  (using 180 keV, 6.8 W) and 1.90  $\mu\text{m}$

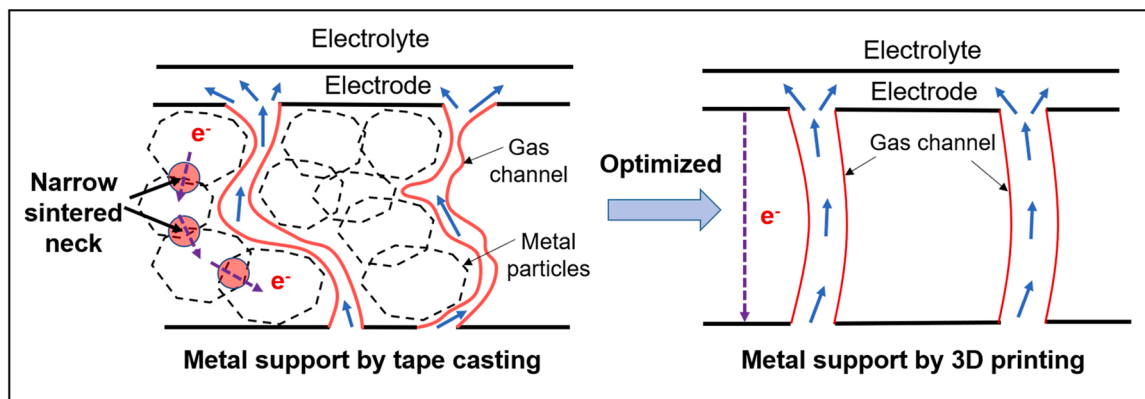
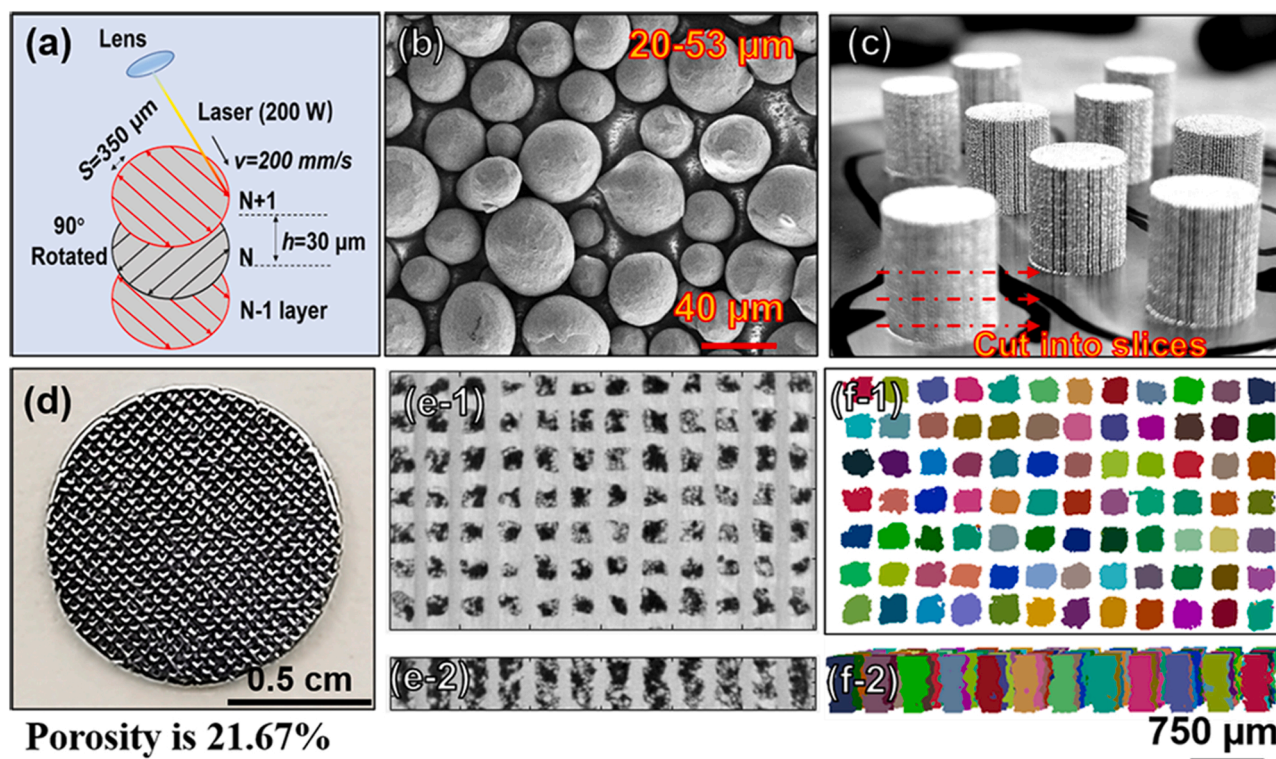


Fig. 1. Schematic diagram for optimizing metal support by 3D printing. (adapted from [2]).



**Fig. 2.** Metal supports by LPBF. (a) Schematic diagram and process parameters of LPBF; (b) Morphology of 410 L powders prepared via argon gas atomization, with a diameter range of 25–50  $\mu\text{m}$ ; (c) Morphology of cylinders (1 cm in diameter and 1.5 cm in height) with straight vertical gas channels by LPBF; (d) Typical plan view of disk sample cut from cylinders in (c); (e) Reconstructed X-ray computed tomography (CT) images of (d) in plan view (e-1) and cross-section view (e-2); (f) Data analysis results by MATLAB corresponding to (e), the colour blocks represent gas channels.

(220 keV, 2.9 W) for the bare metal support (Fig. 2) and aged multi-coated metal support (Fig. 10), respectively. Here, to obtain the high resolution of X-ray tomography images, a piece with around  $1.2 \times 1.0 \times 0.5$  mm cut from the aged multi-coated sample was used for the reconstruction. The Nikon CTpro3D software was used for the reconstruction. A MATLAB script and commercial software Avizo 9.4 were used to analyze samples' porosity and surface area (only interconnected porosity/surface were counted). The microstructure and morphology of the coating were characterized using a Leica optical microscope (OM) and a Zeiss Ultra scanning electron microscope (SEM) with an energy-dispersive (EDS) detector. An accelerating voltage of 15 keV and a working distance of 8 mm was used for SEM and EDS. Phase identification was performed using an Aeris X-ray diffractometer (XRD) with Cu  $K\alpha$  radiation, a scanning rate of  $5^\circ/\text{min}$ , a step size of  $0.01^\circ$ , and a range of 15– $85^\circ$ .

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Fabrication and Characterization

The LPBF method directly prints metallic shapes from a powder bed/metal substrate. The starting metallic powders undergo local heating with melting and solidification depending on the fluence of the input laser energy [35]. Cylinders (Fig. 2c) with straight vertical gas channels were fabricated by LPBF (Fig. 2a) with 410 L stainless steel spherical powders (Fig. 2b). The metal support slices ( $\sim 0.5$  mm thick) were obtained by cutting the cylinders and grinding and polishing (Fig. 2d). Fig. 2e shows the metal support structure in the plan view (Figs. 2e-1) and the cross-section view (Figs. 2e-2) by reconstructing the X-ray computed tomography data. Fig. 2f shows the interconnected porosity distribution corresponding to Fig. 2e, with different colours for each gas channel, making up about 21.67 % of the total volume. The specific surface area is about  $38.27 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ .

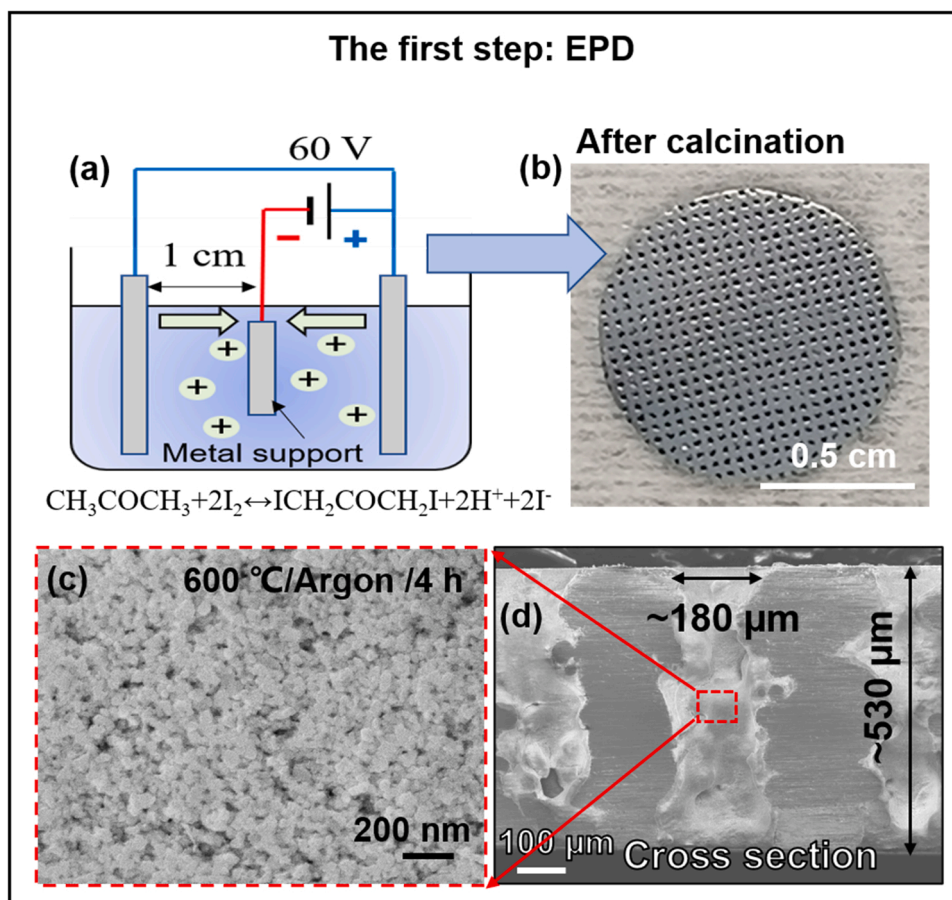
The coating for the metal supports is obtained by a two-step process. Firstly, the metal supports were coated with CGO nanoparticles by EPD (Fig. 3a). Then, after 4 h calcination at  $600^\circ \text{C}$  in argon, a uniform white coating forms on the metal surface (Fig. 3b). Fig. 3c shows the CGO coating with nano porosity covering the channels' surface. For the second step (Fig. 4), the nanoporous structure is thoroughly infiltrated with  $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3$  solution. After the calcination ( $600^\circ \text{C}/\text{air}/4 \text{ h}$ ) and the pre-oxidation ( $800^\circ \text{C}/\text{air}/4 \text{ h}$ ), a homogeneous oxide layer interface with uniform elemental distribution is obtained (Fig. 4c and e).

The oxide layer begins forming during calcination for samples infiltrated with  $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3$  solution (Inf samples). The decomposition of  $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3$  includes a highly diffusive step, forming a uniform mixed metal oxide layer on the steel surface (Fig. 4e) [36]. Therefore, a more uniform interface between the coating and the steel is shown in the Inf sample (see Fig. 4b and c for comparison). Meanwhile, as the products of the decomposition of  $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3$ ,  $\text{CeO}_2$  particles fill the nano porosity of the CGO coating and make the coating more uniform and compact.

#### 3.2. Electrochemical and chemical stability

The coated samples were tested in humid air (3 % vol  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ) at  $750^\circ \text{C}$  to speed up the oxidation [37]. The oxidation of the steel support is accompanied by elemental diffusion/migration at the ceramic/steel interface, which changes the total resistance of the system constituted by the steel support, ceramic/steel interface, and ceramic coatings. The electrochemistry and chemical stability of this system can be evaluated by the stability of the sample's area-specific resistance (ASR) using the ohmic component of the impedance ( $Z_{\text{real}}$ ) [38,39]. The schematic diagram in Fig. 5 shows the oxidation at  $750^\circ \text{C}$  in air-3 %  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  for 122 h. The low-frequency range from 0.06 to 15 Hz describes the resistance of coated samples [39,40], and the  $Z_{\text{real}}$  value measured at the minimum frequency of 0.06 Hz fairly represents the real ohm resistance of samples. The Bode plots in Fig. 5a and b are for the Non-Inf sample when





**Fig. 3.** Nano CGO coating by EPD. (a) Schematic diagram of EPD; (b) Typical coated sample after calcination (600 °C/Ar//4 h); (c) Microstructure of the coating located at the surface of the gas channel; (d) Cross-section of the coated sample.

$t = 0$  h and  $t = 122$  h, and Fig. 5d and e are for the Inf sample. The results indicate that  $Z_{\text{real}}$  values of Non-Inf and Inf samples are stable in the low-frequency range of 0.06–1 Hz. ASR is plotted against ageing time in Fig. 5c for the Non-Inf sample and in Fig. 5f for the Inf sample.

Notably, for the Non-Inf sample, a decrease of about 36 % in ASR is shown after 122 h ageing (Fig. 5a vs 5b). A rapid decrease of ASR with a rate of  $ca. 15 \Omega \text{ cm}^2 \text{ h}^{-1}$  was observed at the beginning of the test. The rate of decrease then remains stable at around  $2 \Omega \text{ cm}^2 \text{ h}^{-1}$  after 80 h (Fig. 5c). An overall decrease of  $ca. 9 \%$  is registered for the Inf sample (Fig. 5d vs 5e). A slight ASR decrease with a rate of about  $0.16 \Omega \text{ cm}^2 \text{ h}^{-1}$  is shown within the first 10 h of the test. Then the ASR remains almost stable at around  $38 \Omega \text{ cm}^2$  with no further decrease. A large difference in ASR values level between Non-Inf and Inf samples is shown (Fig. 5c vs f), which should be ascribed to the increased  $\text{CeO}_2$  and coating density.

Phase and elemental analyses were carried out on the prepared ( $t = 0$  h) and post-mortem ( $t = 122$  h) samples to analyze the results of the corrosion tests. XRD spectra are shown in Fig. 6. Before the ageing ( $t = 0$  h), only peaks of Fe-Cr and CGO were detected in both Non-Inf and Inf samples. Then Fe-Cr-Mn oxide peaks (containing Fe, Cr, or Mn) appeared after the 122-h ageing. The specific oxides' phases are shown in Fig. 6b-d.  $(\text{Fe}_{0.6}\text{Cr}_{0.4})_2\text{O}_3$  phase is detected in both Non-Inf and Inf samples (Fig. 8d), which should be the inner-layer oxides  $(\text{Fe}_{1-x}\text{Cr}_x)_2\text{O}_3$  that were formed at high temperatures in the air [41]. Compared with the Inf sample at  $t = 122$  h,  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  is detected in the Non-Inf sample (Fig. 6b).  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  is an expected corrosion product in humid air at high temperatures [42]. The possible presence of spinel oxides  $\text{MnCr}_2\text{O}_4$  and  $\text{FeCr}_2\text{O}_4$  was revealed in both the Inf and Non-Inf samples (Fig. 6 c), and spinel phases  $\text{Mn}_{1-x}\text{Fe}_x\text{Cr}_2\text{O}_4$  ( $0 \leq x \leq 1$ ) are expected.

These spinels are reported to inhibit the thickening of the oxide layer by suppressing the outward migration of metal ions [7,43,44]. The stronger intensity of the XRD peaks shown in Fig. 6c and d suggest a thicker oxide layer in the Non-Inf sample than in the Inf sample. It is worth mentioning that Fe-Cr relative peak intensity decreases in the Inf sample compared with the Non-Inf sample (see the yellow region in Fig. 6a), which can be ascribed to the increased  $\text{CeO}_2$  in the coating after the infiltration. Besides the phase identification by XRD, SEM and EDS give direct evidence of the oxidation results.

Fig. 7 shows the microstructure and elemental distribution of Non-Inf and Inf samples before and after ageing. Compared with the Non-Inf samples, less porosity is observed in the Inf samples (Fig. 7b vs a, Fig. 7d vs c), indicating a denser coating for the Inf samples. A detailed description of the chemical composition of the active DBL in the Inf sample after ageing is also reported in Fig. 8.

More severe corrosion appeared in the Non-Inf sample after ageing. An oxide layer of  $ca. \sim 1 \mu\text{m}$  thick appeared in the Non-Inf sample, while it was  $ca. 0.2 \mu\text{m}$  for the Inf sample (Fig. 7c vs 7d). Moreover, compared with the Non-Inf sample, the Inf sample formed a more uniform protective layer, including the thin oxide layer and active diffusion barrier layer (DBL). According to EDS line scanning profiles (Fig. 7e-f), steel elements show a dramatic decrease at the active DBL region. These results are attributed to the ability of CGO and  $\text{CeO}_2$  to inhibit elemental interdiffusion by trapping the elements in the reaction products. This effect is highly desirable in SOCs as it prevents electrodes from elemental poisoning through the electrode/electrolyte and electrode/metal support interface [10,15,26,27].

The reaction and interdiffusion between steel's oxides and ceria-based coatings are expected to occur. Taking the reaction between

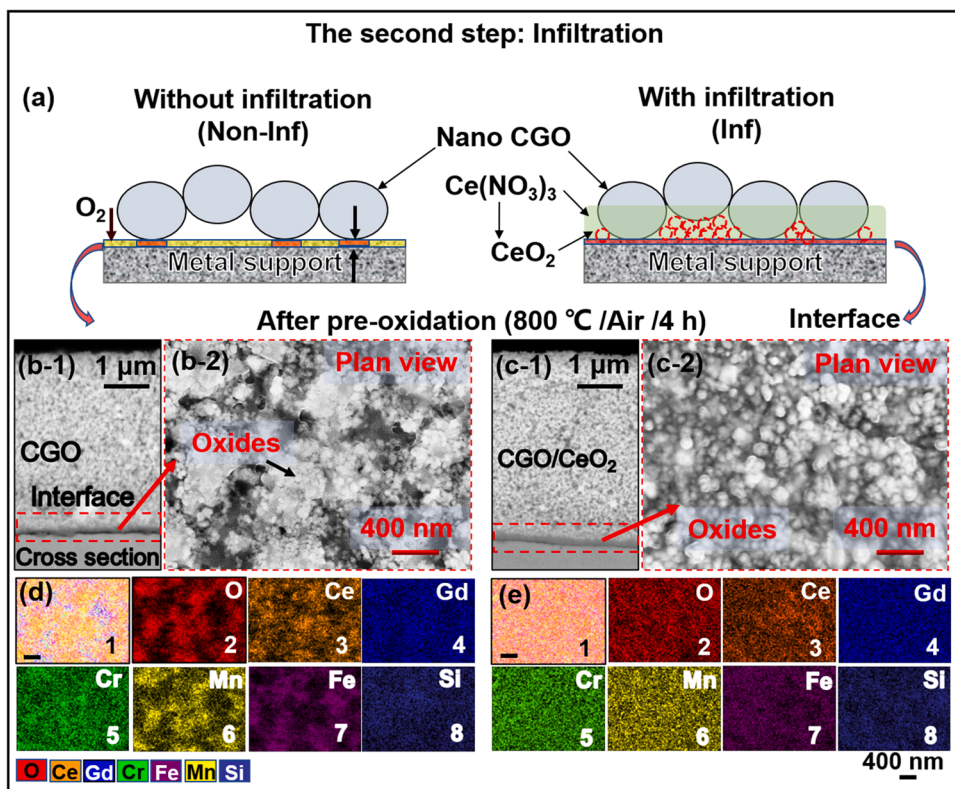


Fig. 4. Multi-coatings with the improved interface by Infiltration. (a) The coating without infiltration (Non-Inf) versus with infiltration (Inf); (b-1) Microstructure of Non-Inf sample in cross-section view; (b-2) Plan view of the polished interface between the coating and the metal support; (c) Microstructure of the Inf sample in cross-section view (c-1) and its polished interface in plan view (c-2); (d) EDS mappings corresponding to (b-2), where (d-1) is the superposition of (d-2)-(d-8); (e) EDS mappings for (c-2), where (e-1) is the superposition of (e-2)-(e-8).

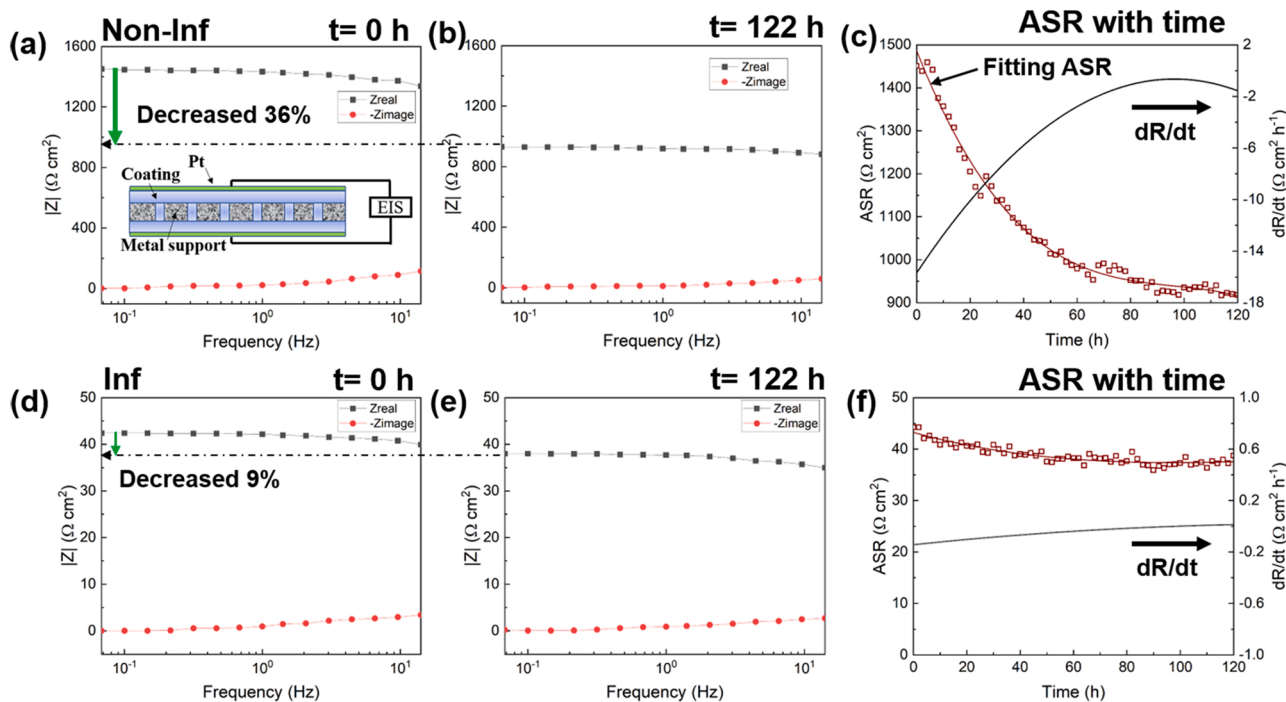


Fig. 5. EIS and ASR at 750 °C in Air-3 %  $H_2O$  for 122 h. (a) and (b) are Bode plots (0.06–15 Hz) of Non-Inf sample when  $t = 0$  h and  $t = 122$  h, respectively; (c) The relationship between ASR and time of Non-Inf sample; (d) and (e) are Bode plots of Inf sample when  $t = 0$  h and  $t = 122$  h, respectively; (f) The relationship between ASR and time of Inf sample, note the ASR curve was obtained by fitting with a cubic polynomial, and the ASR increasing rate was represented by  $dR/dt$ .

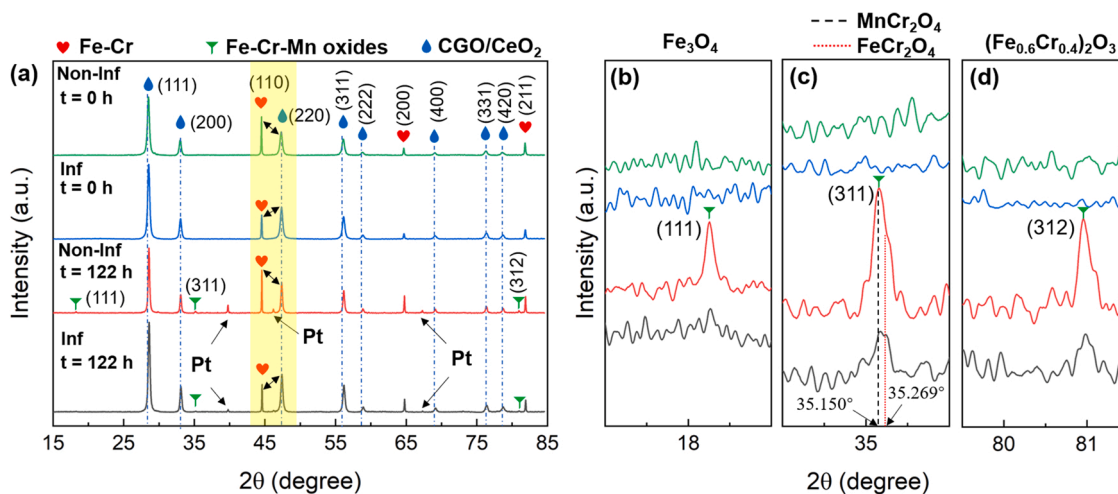


Fig. 6. (a) XRD spectra of coated samples with the status of  $t = 0$  h and  $t = 122$  h; (b), (c), and (d) are enlargements of (a) with the  $2\theta$  range of  $17^\circ - 19^\circ$ ,  $34^\circ - 36^\circ$ , and  $79.5^\circ - 81.5^\circ$ , respectively. The XRD patterns are normalized to the maximum intensity.

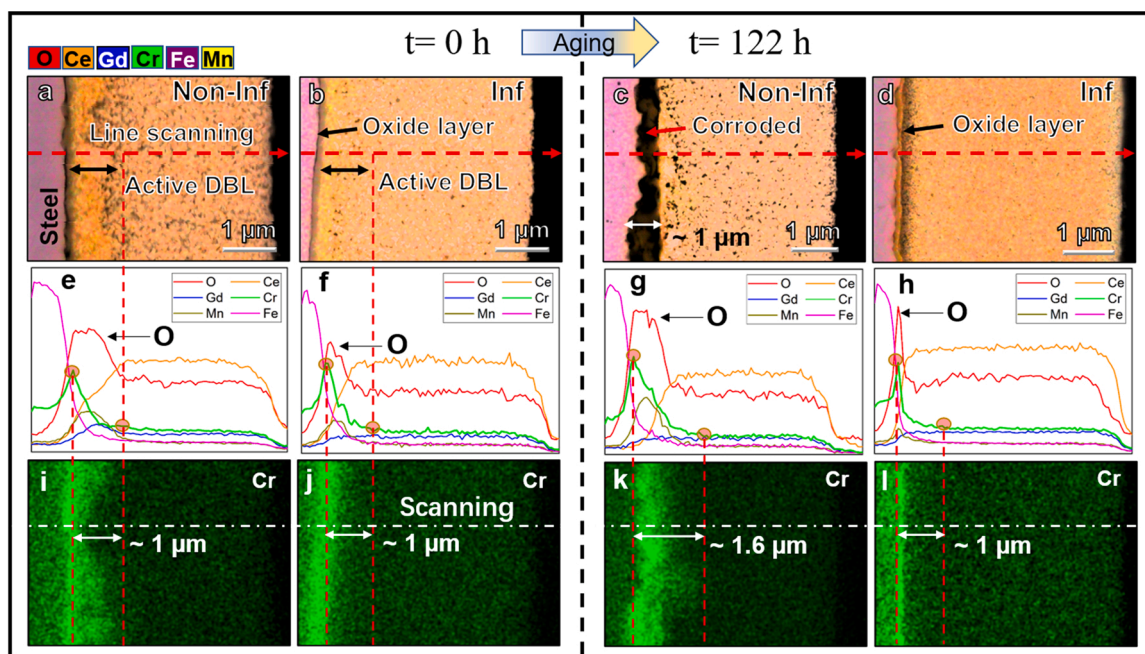
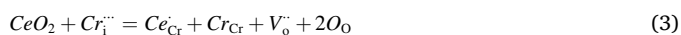


Fig. 7. Cross-sectional elements' distribution of coated samples with the status of  $t = 0$  h and  $t = 122$  h. Figs. (a)-(d) are superimposed images by backscattered electron images (BSE) and EDS mappings of Non-Inf and Inf; (e)-(h) are EDS line scanning profiles corresponding to (a)-(d), respectively; (i)-(l) are EDS mappings shown the distribution of Cr corresponding to (a)-(d), respectively. DBL stands for the diffusion barrier layer.

$CeO_2$  and  $Cr_2O_3$  as a representative example [45,46]:

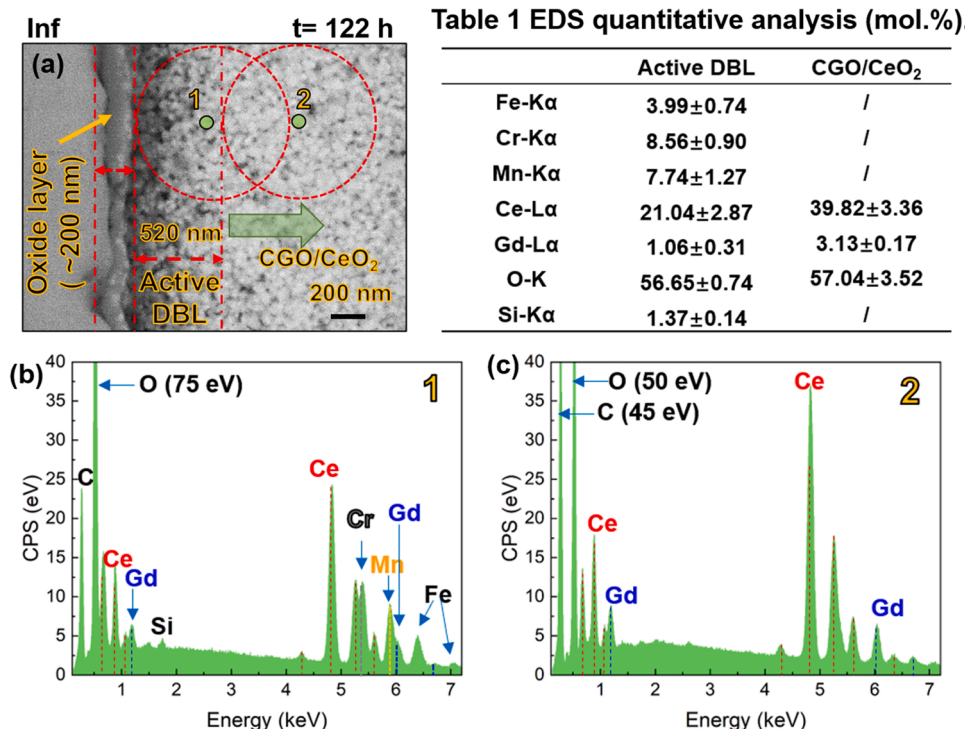


The concentration of interstitial Cr defects decreases due to the substitution of Ce in the Cr lattice, inhibiting the growth/diffusion of Cr. Meanwhile, oxygen vacancies formed in doped-ceria and undoped under these conditions are expected to inhibit further cations' outward migration [13,45,46]. Chalpad calculation indicates that  $CeCrO_3$  could be stable in the air below  $800^\circ C$  (see Fig. S1 and ref. [47]). Other perovskites with a similar composition as  $CeCrO_3$  are often reported in

steel oxidation as  $REMO_3$  phases; they are formed by the reaction between rare earth (RE is primarily Ce, Gd, La, Sm, and Y) oxide and metal (M is Fe, Cr, and Mn) oxides of the steel [13,48-51].

Although XRD cannot directly identify  $REMO_3$  phases in our samples, the elemental analysis indicated that the ceria-coating reacting with steel elements produces the active DBL. It resulted in more effectiveness as the denser. Taking the Cr diffusive path in Fig. 7e and f as a reference, the active DBL was already formed in both Non-Inf and Inf samples (Fig. 7a and b) before the ageing with similar thicknesses. Following the Cr profile, a homogeneous active DBL is shown in the Inf sample. Fast diffusion provided by the infiltration facilitated the formation of a uniform Cr-containing oxide film during the calcination [7]. Meanwhile, the porosity in the coating was filled by  $CeO_2$  nanoparticles, providing a more uniform contact interface with the steel and denser coating. As a result, the improved steel/ceramic interface and protective





**Fig. 8.** EDS quantitative analysis of sample Inf with the status of  $t = 122$  h. (a) Cross-sectional BSE image corresponding to Fig. 7d; (b) and (c) EDS spectra of points 1 and 2 in (a).

layer lead to uniform elemental diffusion during the pre-oxidation (Fig. 7a vs 7b) and ageing process (Fig. 7c vs 7d).

After 122 h of the test, Cr migrated about 0.6  $\mu\text{m}$  into the ceramic coating for the Non-Inf sample (Fig. 7i vs 7k), while there was almost no change for the Inf sample (Fig. 7j vs 7l). The Cr migration in the Non-Inf sample could be caused by Cr evaporation. The volatile Cr vapour species such as CrO<sub>3</sub>, CrO<sub>2</sub>(OH)<sub>2</sub>, and CrO(OH) could be formed when Cr oxides are exposed to the humid air at high temperatures [52]. No obvious Cr evaporation appeared in the Inf sample, indicating that the contact of the oxide layer with the humid air was limited. This effect is attributed to the dense CGO/CeO<sub>2</sub> coating and its chemical activity toward O<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>O at high temperatures (detailed discussion, see Section 3.3).

A detailed representation of the compositions of the Inf-sample after ageing is revealed by EDS quantitative analysis (Fig. 8). A comprehensive analysis of the chemical composition was carried out to track the dilutions on the steel elements across the ceria-based coatings. The real active DBL in Fig. 8 was further distinguished from the ceria-based coatings (no steel elements were detected). Furthermore, the electron beam interactions [53] with steel elements were taken into account, i.e., the red dotted circles surrounding points 1, and 2 represent the interaction zone of EDS for Cr, Mn, and Fe (see S2 in Supporting information for details of the calculation).

Point 2 is selected as the position closest to the active DBL without steel elements (Fig. 8c). Five points in CGO/CeO<sub>2</sub> region were also

**Table 1**  
EDS quantitative analysis (mol. %).

	Active DBL	CGO/CeO <sub>2</sub>
Fe-K $\alpha$	3.99 $\pm$ 0.74	/
Cr-K $\alpha$	8.56 $\pm$ 0.90	/
Mn-K $\alpha$	7.74 $\pm$ 1.27	/
Ce-L $\alpha$	21.04 $\pm$ 2.87	39.82 $\pm$ 3.36
Gd-L $\alpha$	1.06 $\pm$ 0.31	3.13 $\pm$ 0.17
O-K	56.65 $\pm$ 0.74	57.04 $\pm$ 3.52
Si-K $\alpha$	1.37 $\pm$ 0.14	/

measured by EDS at the same distance from the steel surface. They consistently give similar values, which were averaged and reported in Table 1. The mole ratio of Ce/Gd in the CGO/CeO<sub>2</sub> region is about 12.7, i.e., higher than that of Ce<sub>0.9</sub>Gd<sub>0.1</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (~9.2 of EDS detection result), which is caused by the infiltrated CeO<sub>2</sub>.

Point 1 is selected in the active DBL closer to the steel/coatings interface. Five points along the boundary were also measured by EDS and averaged (Table 1). These values show a typical EDS profile as in Fig. 8b. Strong peaks of steel elements, especially Cr and Mn, were detected in the EDS spectrum (Fig. 8b), indicating the intense elemental diffusion occurring in the active DBL. Besides CeCrO<sub>3</sub>, Mn- and Fe-riched perovskite compounds REMO<sub>3</sub> could also be formed during the solid-state elemental diffusion and reactions [54,55]. However, once the uniformly-distributed REMO<sub>3</sub> phases are formed, the elemental diffusion is inhibited, and the further increase of REMO<sub>3</sub> phases is slow. Therefore, as also reported in refs. [47,56], XRD cannot directly detect REMO<sub>3</sub> phases due to their small amount (Fig. 6). Although the existence of REMO<sub>3</sub> phases is not confirmed experimentally here, Chalpad calculation results (Fig. S1) and the DBL working mechanism [6,10,13] of CGO/CeO<sub>2</sub> suggest their formation.

### 3.3. Mechanisms and 3D structure stabilization

No Fe<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> and Cr evaporation was detected or observed in Inf samples indicating that the multi-coatings effectively limit the contact between the humid air and the steel support. This effect cannot be completely attributed to the physical isolation effect of the coatings since the Ce<sub>0.9</sub>Gd<sub>0.1</sub>O<sub>2</sub>/CeO<sub>2</sub> coatings cannot be fully dense at this low sintering temperature (800  $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). Therefore, the effect can be attributed to the chemical reactivity of cerium oxide to the humid air.

CeO<sub>2</sub> is usually regarded as oxygen-defective oxides CeO<sub>2-x</sub> (0 < x < 0.5), with both Ce<sup>3+</sup> and Ce<sup>4+</sup> oxidation states. During ageing, the reaction cycles between CeO<sub>2-x</sub> and the humid air should be considered [57,58]:



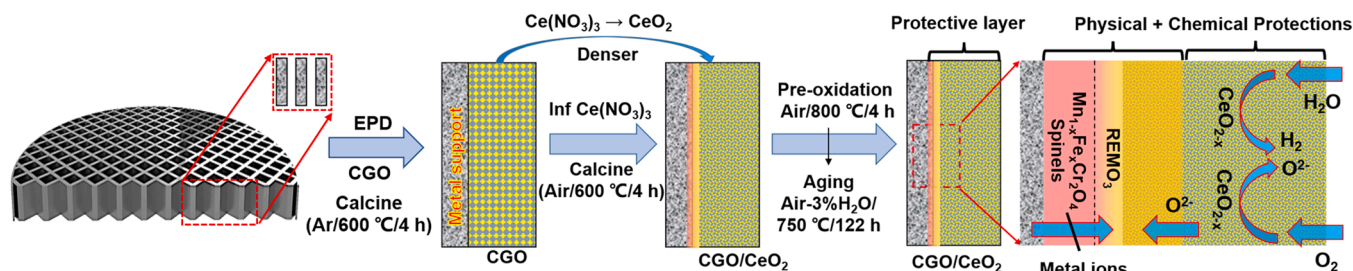


Fig. 9. Schematic of the coating process and oxidation inhibition mechanism.



As a result of such reaction cycles and the slow gas diffusion caused by the relatively dense CGO/CeO<sub>2</sub> coating with catalytic activity, the humid air would be limited to contact with the oxide layer, suppressing the oxygen activity at the steel/coating interface.

On the other hand, Mn<sub>1-x</sub>Fe<sub>x</sub>Cr<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>, and the possible presence of REMO<sub>3</sub> oxides concentrate at the steel/ceramic interface, inhibiting the outward migration of metal ions. The mechanism is schematically represented in Fig. 9. These chemical and physical protection mechanisms improve the corrosion resistance of metal supports.

It is worth mentioning that the protection mechanisms discussed above should exist in both Non-Inf and Inf samples as both contain CeO<sub>2</sub> (CGO is Gd-doped CeO<sub>2</sub>, which contains CeO<sub>2</sub>). The better protection effects of Inf samples should be attributed to the more contained CeO<sub>2</sub> and higher density of coatings. The high-density coating will slow gas diffusion, and highly contained CeO<sub>2</sub> in the coating enhances the humid air's catalytic effect, facilitating the reaction cycles (Eqs. 5–7).

Fig. 10 gives the final evaluations of multi-coated samples on matching, coverage, and corrosion kinetics. Although chemical expansion and fast interdiffusion are expected in ceria by redox reactions [21, 28,29,58], all the samples show excellent electro-chemo-mechanical

stability in the thermochemical process. After 122-h ageing, the coating still matches the steel support, even in the region with a high-tortuosity surface (Fig. 10a). Continuous coatings cover all inner surfaces. A 3D distribution of coatings is obtained by X-ray computed tomography, as shown in Fig. 10b. The oxidation mass gain of metal support is effectively inhibited by this high-quality and stable coating. Superior oxidation resistance is shown according to the evaluation results of corrosion kinetics (Fig. 10c and d).

The evaluations of corrosion kinetics from corrosion resistance according to two equations are shown in Fig. 10c and d. The first equation uses the oxidation weight gain per unit area, as shown below [59,60]:

$$\left(\frac{\Delta m}{A}\right)^2 = K_p t + C \quad (5)$$

where  $\Delta m$  is the measured mass change (g),  $A$  is the surface area of the substrate (cm<sup>2</sup>),  $K_p$  is the parabolic rate constant (g<sup>2</sup> cm<sup>-4</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>),  $t$  is the ageing time (s), and  $C$  is an integration constant defining the onset of parabolic kinetics. Here, the value of  $K_p$  depends on the surface area measurement's accuracy. Therefore, for the porous metal supports with indeterminate morphology, a second equation non-including the effects of the surface area is used, as shown below [38]:

$$\left(\frac{\Delta m}{m}\right)^2 = K'_p t [\%]^2 \quad (6)$$

where  $m$  is the initial mass (g), and  $K'_p$  is the parabolic rate constant (%<sup>2</sup> h<sup>-1</sup>). Eq. (5) gives the more physical result, while Eq. (6) gives the result

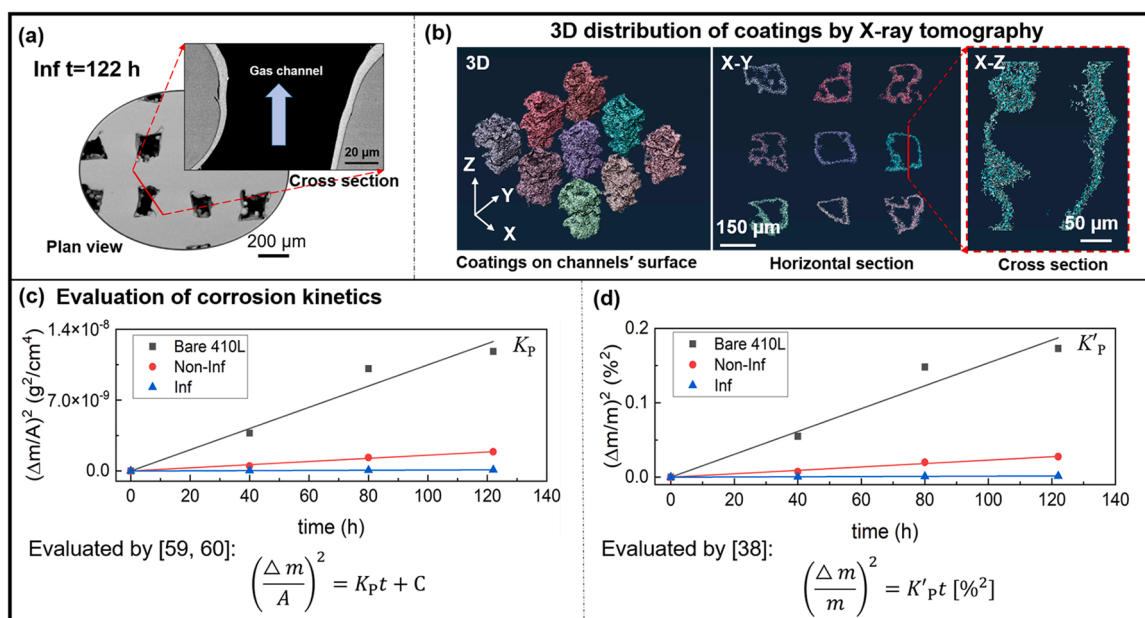


Fig. 10. Evaluation of multi-coated samples. (a) SEM images of after-test multi-coated sample in plan view and cross-section view; (b) 3D distribution of coatings by X-ray computed tomography; (c) and (d) are fitting results of the oxidation mass gain according to Eqs. (5) and (6), respectively.

**Table 2**  
Summary of the anti-oxidation coating in this work and previous results.

Steel type (wt% Cr)	Structure	Coating	Fabrication/Coating method	Test conditions	$K_p$ ( $\times 10^{-15}$ g <sup>2</sup> cm <sup>-4</sup> s <sup>-1</sup> )	$K'_p$ ( $\times 10^{-4}$ % <sup>2</sup> h <sup>-1</sup> )	Ref/year
410L (12.5% Cr)	Porous (21.67%)	Bare	LPBF	Air-3% H <sub>2</sub> O/750 °C/122 h	29.09	15.4	This work
410L (12.5% Cr)	Porous (21.67%)	CGO	LPBF/EPD	Air-3% H <sub>2</sub> O/750 °C/122 h	4.34	2.29	This work
410L (12.5% Cr)	Porous (21.67%)	CGO/Ce(NO <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>3</sub>	LPBF/EPD+Infiltration	Air-3% H <sub>2</sub> O/750 °C/122 h	0.26	0.14	This work
Höganäs ferritic alloy (20.6 % Cr)	Porous (30-35%)	La(Mn,Co) <sub>0.8</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	PM/Infiltration	Air/700 °C/188.6 h	1.7	/	[8]/2020
Höganäs ferritic alloy (20.6 % Cr)	Porous (30-35%)	La(Mn,Co) <sub>0.8</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	PM/Infiltration	Ar-2.5%H <sub>2</sub> O-5% H <sub>2</sub> /700 °C/212.9 h	0.056	/	[8]/2020
IN625 (20.1% Cr)	Porous (30%)	Y(NO <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>3</sub>	PM/Infiltration	Air/700 °C/500 h	/	1.46	[14]/2018
Crofer 22APU (23% Cr)	Dense	CGO	/EPD	H <sub>2</sub> -90% H <sub>2</sub> O/750 °C/2000 h	3.45	/	[11]/2019
Crofer 22APU (23% Cr)	Dense	MnCo <sub>1.7</sub> Fe <sub>0.3</sub> O <sub>4</sub>	/EPD	Air/800 °C/5000 h	3.4	/	[44]/2017

Note  $K'_p$  of  $1.46 \times 10^{-4}$  %<sup>2</sup> h<sup>-1</sup> was calculated according to the data given in Fig. 1b of Ref. [14]. PM is powder metallurgy.

with a minimum error when the samples' porosity is at the same level. Compared with the bare 410 L metal support, coated samples Non-Inf and Inf show much smaller parabolic rate constants. The calculated values of  $K_p$  and  $K'_p$  are shown in Table 2 below.

Large  $K_p$  and  $K'_p$  are registered for the bare 410 L support after the ageing. An uneven oxide layer of ~2 μm thick, accompanied by exfoliating, was observed, as shown in Fig. S3 (supporting information). Taking  $K_p$  and  $K'_p$  of the bare 410 L support as the standard, an order of magnitude reduction is shown for 410 L support with CGO coating (Non-Inf sample), while two orders of magnitude reduction for the Inf sample. The active ceria-based multi-coatings allow low-cost 410 L stainless steel with 12.5 wt. % Cr to achieve acceptable corrosion resistance compared with other high-Cr stainless steel in Table 2. Moreover, the active ceria-based multi-coatings work simultaneously as the anti-oxidation layer and elemental diffusion barrier layer. This feature in SOCs is desirable as it avoids electrode elemental contamination.

#### 4. Conclusions

We show that chemically active ceria-based multi-coatings improve the oxidation/corrosion resistance of 3D-printed metal support. LPBF fabricated 410 L stainless steel supports with regular-distributed vertical gas channels represent an optimized structure with a stable inner surface. The proposed metal support design allows the surface to be coated by a continuous CGO layer with nanopores using EPD. The following infiltration process greatly improved the ceramic coating and ceramic/steel interface in uniformity and density, mainly attributed to the fast mass diffusion-reaction interface and the filled CeO<sub>2</sub>.

The combined action of physical and chemical protection mechanisms inhibits the oxide layer's growth and chromium evaporation. The formation of Mn<sub>1-x</sub>Fe<sub>x</sub>Cr<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub> and the possible presence of REMO<sub>3</sub> oxides layer traps the migration of metal ions; on the other hand, humid air is restricted from contact with the oxide layer due to the coating's catalytic activity to H<sub>2</sub>O and O<sub>2</sub> and its dense structure. The oxidation-resistant metal support showed excellent electro-chemo-mechanical stability with 3D active ceria-based multi-coatings, represented by a stable ASR and a record value of  $K_p$  of  $0.26 \times 10^{-15}$  g<sup>2</sup> cm<sup>4</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> at 750 °C in air-3 % vol of H<sub>2</sub>O.

#### CRedit authorship contribution statement

Zhipeng Zhou: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, and Writing-Original Draft; Venkata Karthik Nadimpalli: Investigation, Resources, Writing-Review & Editing, and Supervision; Aakil Raj Lalwani: Software and Investigation; Shu Wang: Investigation and Formal analysis; Yijing Shang: Software and Formal analysis; Zhihao Pan: Software and Formal analysis; David Bue Pedersen: Resources, Funding acquisition, and Supervision; Vincenzo

Esposito: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing-Review & Editing, Supervision, and Project administration. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

#### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

#### Data Availability

Data will be made available on request.

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#### Appendix A. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at doi:10.1016/j.corsci.2023.111010.

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