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Excited-State Dynamics in Isolated 2,2'-Bithiophene

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Even though the $S_1$ state of isolated 2,2'-bithiophene lives less than 8 ns, the temporal profile for $S_1$ resonance-enhanced two-photon ionization is in the microsecond domain. The observed kinetics may be quantitatively understood if it is assumed that the initially prepared $S_1$ state decays sequentially through two different long-lived triplet states. This paper presents and analyzes the measured profiles.

Introduction

Experimental determination of the electronic structure and photophysical behavior of bithiophene (Figure 1) is important for a number of reasons. First, since it is an oligomer of polythiophene, bithiophene serves as a model system for evaluating theoretical models that are being developed to provide a microscopic understanding of charge transport and nonlinear optical response in the polymer.1,2 Second, since it may be viewed as a substituted polyene, studies of the electronic structure of bithiophene can contribute to our understanding of the effects of chemical perturbation on linear polyene electronic structure.3-5 Third, since bithiophene consists of two relatively rigid rings, there is only one conformational coordinate for unimolecular photochemistry: rotation about the interring bond which takes the rings from a trans to a cis relationship.6 It is thus an excellent model system for studying photochemical isomerization. The measurement of vibrationally resolved optical spectra for cis and trans bithiophene and the determination of the ground- and excited-state potentials for cis–trans interconversion are described in another paper.7

In that study we used fluorescence excitation techniques to measure spectra for bithiophene seeded into supersonic helium expansions and established that the decay time for the emission was substantially less than 10 ns. Thus, we were quite surprised to find that, although the excitation spectrum for 1+1 resonance-enhanced multiphoton ionization was identical to the fluorescence excitation spectrum, essentially all of the resonance enhancement came from a state whose kinetic behavior lies in the microsecond regime. This paper reports the dynamics associated with 1+1 resonance-enhanced multiphoton ionization and analyzes these data in terms of a model involving the sequential population of two long-lived states.

Experimental Section

Apparatus and Materials. Our apparatus for measuring resonance-enhanced multiphoton ionization spectra of jet-cooled molecules has been described in detail.8 For these experiments there were only two significant changes from the original setup: the Nd:YAG laser has been modified so that we now have the ability to pump the pulsed dye laser with either a donut-shaped beam spatial profile or a near-Gaussian beam spatial profile, and a Burleigh PWA4500 pulsed wavemeter which permits the direct measurement of the wavelength of the light produced by the dye laser has been added. The wavelength of the UV light produced by frequency doubling the dye laser output is now obtained by halving the wavelength measured by the wavemeter.

Bithiophene was purchased from Aldrich and used without further purification. The dye solution for the tunable laser was made with DCM purchased from either Exciton or Lambda Physik dissolved in HPLC grade methanol purchased from Fisher.

Experimental Results

The excitation profile for two-color 1+1 photoionization of 2,2'-bithiophene seeded in a supersonic helium expansion is shown in Figure 2. The spectrum in Figure 2 is indistinguishable from

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Figure 2. Resonance enhancement profile for $1 + 1$ multiphoton ionization of bithiophene seeded in a supersonic helium expansion. This excitation profile is identical to the $S_1$ fluorescence excitation spectrum measured under the same conditions.

Figure 3. Kinetics of $1 + 1$ two-color two-photon ionization of bithiophene seeded in a supersonic helium expansion. In this figure the number of parent ions generated by the probe pulse (ArF excimer laser) is plotted against the delay between the excitation (dye laser tuned to the $0-0$ band of trans-bithiophene) and probe pulses. The smooth line drawn through the experimental points is the theoretical curve for sequential decay of $S_1$ through two triplet states.

Figure 4. Kinetic scheme for the $1 + 1$ two-color two-photon ionization of isolated bithiophene.

The fluorescence excitation profiles that we have previously measured and analyzed, which establishes only that the resonance enhancement comes from excitation of the $S_1$ state. It does not follow that the transition to the continuum originates from this state; it can originate from any subsequently populated state that is within $h\nu$ of the ionization limit. We now turn to the dynamics of the resonance enhancement which clearly show that phot ionization is not from the initially populated $S_1$ state.

In all, eight decay curves (a total of 437 data points) were selected for analysis: three for excitation at the $0-0$ of the trans isomer (31 111 cm$^{-1}$), three for excitation at the 118-cm$^{-1}$ band of the trans isomer (31 229 cm$^{-1}$), and two for excitation at the 0-0 of the cis isomer (31 203 cm$^{-1}$). All of the measured decay curves are very similar to the one shown in Figure 3.

The Kinetic Model

Our measurements of fluorescence excitation spectra of bithiophene seeded into a supersonic helium expansion clearly show that the lifetime of the excited singlet state is too short to be measured with our ca. 8-ns FWHM pulsed lasers. This fact together with the qualitative appearance of the plot of the relative number of parent ions produced versus time delay between the excitation and ionization pulses in the two-color $1 + 1$ resonance-enhanced multiphoton ionization shown in Figure 3 does much to define the interpretative model. The fact that the signal rises with the excitation pulse profile but then evolves on a microsecond time scale means that the state responsible for the resonance enhancement is not the initially excited $S_1$ state. The fact that the time evolution is most certainly not a simple exponential means that more than one long-lived state is involved. We think that at least the final state must be an excited triplet state. This leads us to the kinetic scheme sketched in Figure 4.

The fluorescence excitation studies establish that all processes that affect the population of the excited singlet state $S_1$ (excitation rate constant $k_{01} = \sigma_{01}/\tau_{laser}$, decay rate constant $k_{10} = \sigma_{01}/\tau_{laser} + k_d$, and equilibrium with the intermediate level characterized by rate constants $k_{1s}$ and $k_{s1}$) are fast on the nanosecond time scale. This means that direct ionization of $S_1$ (rate constant $k_{ion} = \sigma_{1s}/\tau_{laser}$) can only contribute to the first few nanoseconds of the measured profile. Since there is no significant short time spike, only the processes to the right of the dotted line in Figure 3 are relevant. Thus, the data should be fit by a two-state model involving an initially populated intermediate state $I$ connected to a triplet state $T$ where the rate constants for photionizing $I$ and $T$ by the excimer laser pulse are $k_{ion} = \sigma_{1s}/\tau_{laser}$ and $k_{triplet} = \sigma_{1s}/\tau_{laser}$, respectively. That is, in this model the observed decay curves are just a superposition of the time-dependent fractional populations of the $I$ and $T$ states. The most general expression for such a superposition is

$$Ions = \exp(-\lambda_1 t) - A \exp(-\lambda_2 t)$$

where $\lambda_{1,2} = -1/2 \pm ((k_1 + k_{1s} + k_T + k) \pm ((k_1 + k_T - k_{1s} - k_T)^2 + 4k_{1s}k_T)^1/2)$. The measured curves are well fit by eq 1 (see, for example, Figure 3): the parameters obtained by fitting eq 1 to the measured curves and the quality of fit are summarized in Table 1.
As is seen in Table 1, the best values for the parameters \( \lambda_1, \lambda_2, \) and \( A \) for the three different excitation conditions differ only slightly. Using the \( \lambda_1, \lambda_2, \) and \( A \) values determined by simultaneously fitting all of the decay profiles (the last line in Table 1), we obtain

\[
k_T = 1.79 \text{ (\( \mu s \))}^{-1}
\]

(5)

\[
0 \leq k_1 \leq 1.81 \text{ (\( \mu s \))}^{-1}
\]

(6)

\[
0 < k_{IT} \leq 1.81 \text{ (\( \mu s \))}^{-1}
\]

(7)

\[
0 < \alpha \leq 0.91 \text{ (\( \mu s \))}^{-1}
\]

(8)

While we see no alternative to the final state \( T \) being a triplet state, there is the possibility that the intermediate state \( I \) is the highly vibrationally excited ground state. There are two strong arguments against this assignment. First, if the intermediate state \( I \) were the vibrationally excited ground state, it would be hard to rationalize the fact that \( k_{IT} \) must be much larger than \( k_T \) since density of states considerations would lead to the opposite prediction. Second, the deviation of the \( A \) parameter from 1.0 can only be understood if the cross section for photoionization from the \( I \) state is significant compared to the cross section for photoionization from the \( T \) state. Franck-Condon considerations lead to the prediction of negligible photoionization from the vibrationally excited ground state.

Conclusions

Two-photon photoionization of isolated 2,2'-bithiophene is significantly enhanced by resonance with the \( S_1 \) state, but the observed dynamics show clearly that the dominant channels for photoionization involve long-lived triplet states into which \( S_1 \) decays. To fit the observed temporal profiles, sequential decay of \( S_1 \) through two triplet states must be invoked. The data determine relatively narrow ranges for the rates associated with this sequential decay. In particular, the kinetic analysis establishes that the decay rate for the final triplet state is 1.79 (\( \mu s \))^{-1} (lifetime = 550 ns) and that both triplet states contribute to the photoionization.

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References and Notes