

Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI) for "*Cold plasma activated CO₂ desorption from calcium carbonate for carbon capture*"

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CONTENTS

1	Experimental Section	S - 2
A	Experimental Layout of the Plasma Reactor	S-2
B	Plasma Deposited Energy Measurements	S-3
C	RGA Calibration of the CO ₂ Peak (amu = 44)	S-4
D	Optical Diagnostics: UV-Vis Absorption Spectroscopy	S-4
E	Estimation of the Energy Consumption	S-7
2	Zero-Dimensional Chemical Kinetic Model	S - 7
A	Plasma kinetics	S-7
B	Gas-phase elementary kinetics and transport	S-8
C	Surface kinetics	S-8
3	Supplementary Measurements	S - 11
A	Air Plasma Treatment of Calcium Carbonate and Sodium Carbonate	S-11
B	Comparison between flowing a NO _x mixture through the CaCO ₃ powder and plasma-based carbonate regeneration	S-11
C	Argon and Oxygen Plasma Treatment of Calcium Carbonate Powders	S-12
D	Comparison of Non-Equilibrium and Equilibrium Carbonate Decomposition . . .	S-12
E	Ratio between areas under different peaks for XPS Diagnostics	S-12
F	Reproducibility of Measurements	S-14
G	Effects of Distance	S-15

1. EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

Details of the reactor system, deposited energy, species calibrations, optical diagnostics, measurement uncertainty, and material preparation methods are provided in this section.

A. Experimental Layout of the Plasma Reactor

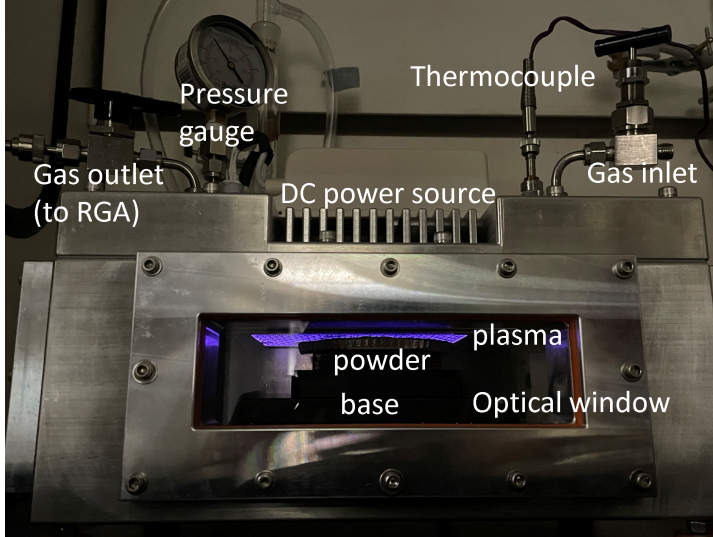


Fig. S1. Experimental layout of the plasma reactor.

The surface dielectric barrier discharge source consists of a flat high-voltage electrode, a buried electrode, and a dielectric layer sandwiched between the two electrodes, and chamber, as shown in Fig. S1. The dielectric layer is an alumina ceramic sheet. The size of the high voltage electrode is $10\text{ cm} \times 15\text{ cm}$, and the corresponding discharge area is 150 cm^2 . The chamber is a $33\text{ cm} \times 21\text{ cm} \times 10\text{ cm}$ cube made of aluminium. A thermocouple and a pressure gauge were placed inside the gas chamber to measure the internal thermodynamic conditions. The high-voltage electrode is connected to a sinusoidal power supply. The experimental layout of the sDBD configuration is shown in Fig. S2. The bath gas flowing into the chamber was controlled by a mass flow meter and the composition was monitored downstream with a Residual Gas Analyzer (RGA). Inside the chamber, carbon capture material is placed in an aluminium base. The optical window is made of quartz, allowing the transmittance of UV light and UV-Vis absorption spectroscopy.

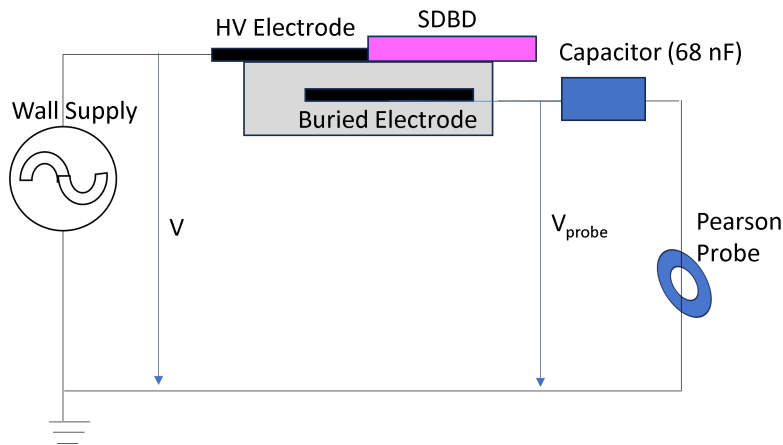


Fig. S2. Experimental layout and diagnostics for the customized sDBD configuration.

B. Plasma Deposited Energy Measurements

The evaluation of the area inside a Lissajous plot is a well-known method [1, 2] for evaluating the power consumed by the surface DBD fed with a sinusoidal high voltage difference. The Lissajous plot is obtained by plotting the charge flowing into the circuit Q as a function of the voltage difference ΔV between the electrodes. In this work, the charge is measured using a capacitor in series with the discharge cell (known as “capacitive probe”).

Three electric probes have been used for studying the discharge properties as shown in Fig. S2. Two high-voltage probes (Tektronix P6015) were employed for evaluating the voltage at the HV electrode (V) and the voltage of the capacitor (V_{probe}), as shown in Fig. S3. The sinusoidal voltage waveform has been modulated. A capacitive probe ($C_{probe} = 68nF$) was placed between the buried electrode and the earth as a diagnostic for measuring power consumption and visualising the Lissajous figures’ shapes. The outputs of all these probes were connected to different channels of a large bandwidth digital oscilloscope (Rigol, DS1104Z) and their signals were acquired simultaneously.

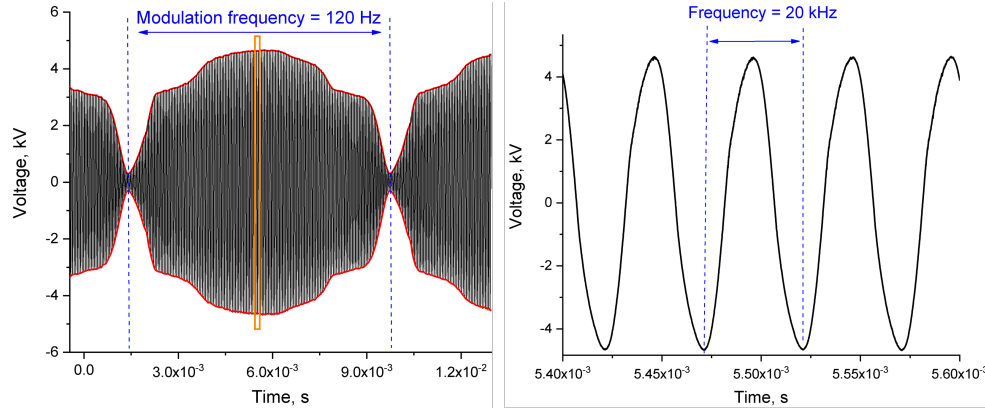


Fig. S3. Experimental measurements of the voltage profile of the sDBD. The sinusoidal waveform has a frequency of 20 kHz (right) while the modulation of the waveform has a frequency of 120 Hz (left). The peak voltage varies from 0.3 kV to 5 kV

The instantaneous charge Q is measured by

$$Q = C_{probe} \cdot \Delta V_{probe} \quad (S1)$$

The energy consumed by the dielectric barrier discharge in a voltage cycle is obtained by averaging the product $Q \cdot \Delta V$ over a whole period T , which is given by N points separated by the time interval Δt :

$$E = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N Q \cdot \Delta V \quad (S2)$$

Once E is obtained, the dissipated power is given by $P = E/T$ as

$$T = \frac{1}{N^2 \Delta t} \sum_{i=1}^N Q \cdot \Delta V \quad (S3)$$

The Lissajous plots with different peak voltages are shown in Fig. S4, with the instantaneous power calculated based on the Eqn. S3. When the imposed electric field is small, the Lissajous plot is closer to a straight line. If the voltage amplitude is high enough for the plasma ignition, during the two phases of plasma activity the Lissajous plot opens up and forms a closed curve figure.

One can further plot the modulated peak voltage and the measured power versus time in one cycle as shown in Fig. S5. The instantaneous power follows the change in the variation of the peak voltage. For one modulation cycle, the averaged power into the plasma discharge is approximately 20-25 watts.

However, in a DBD, the electric current and the deposited power flowing into the circuit can be viewed as the superimposition of a low-frequency sinusoidal capacitive current/energy, which is almost independent of plasma presence along the surface, and a discharge current/energy, which is associated with plasma microdischarges and appears as a series of fast pulses at the

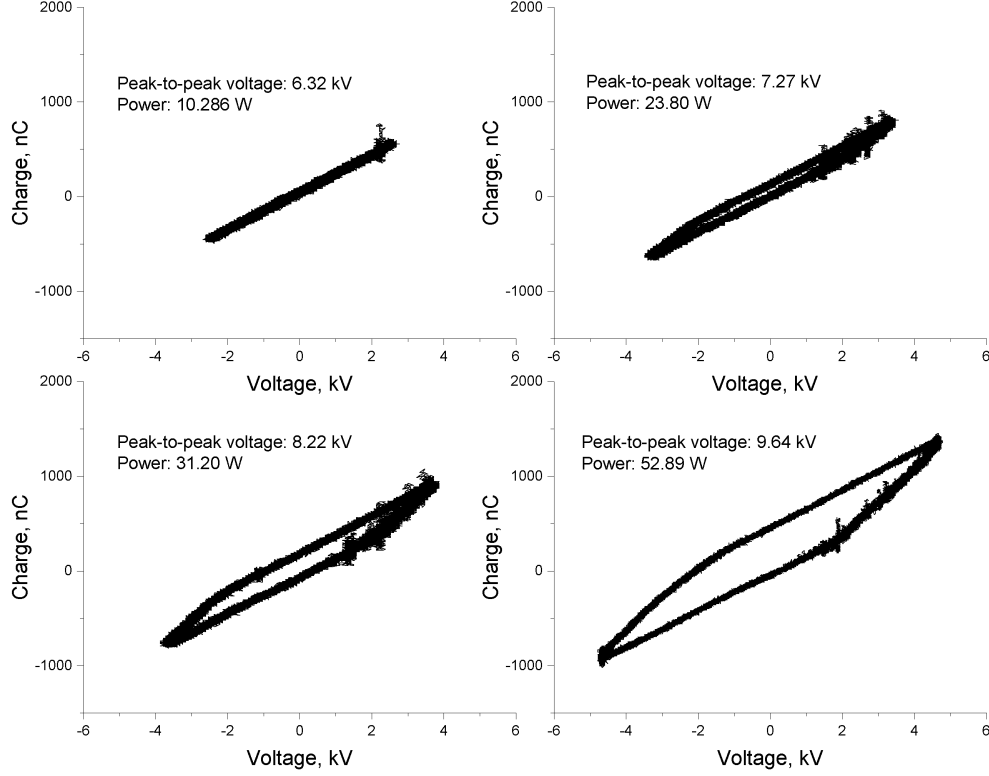


Fig. S4. Experimental measurements of the Lissajous plots at different peak-to-peak voltages, from 6.32 kV to 9.64 kV.

nanosecond time scale. From previous discussions of the heating mechanism of the sDBD [3], the energy inefficiency caused by the heating is determined by the applied voltage, dielectric material, and the geometry.

C. RGA Calibration of the CO₂ Peak (amu = 44)

By flowing a known concentration of CO₂, one can correlate RGA signals (amu = 44) with the molar fractions of CO₂ gas. In the calibration experiment, a 5% CO₂ cylinder (bath: O₂) is mixed with a O₂ cylinder. By varying the flow rates of these two sources, we calibrate the RGA signals (unit: Torr) with molar concentrations, as shown in Fig. S6. The peak CO₂ RGA signals are in the range of $6 \times 10^{-8} - 1.0 \times 10^{-7}$, which correspond to the molar fraction of 2% - 4%.

D. Optical Diagnostics: UV-Vis Absorption Spectroscopy

The concentrations of the O₃, NO, NO₂, NO₃, N₂O₄, and N₂O₅ were calculated by using the optical absorption spectroscopy. Table S1 shows the literature data in which the absorption cross-section data were collected. The averaged cross-section data from 220 nm to 550 nm (in Fig. S7) were used to convert the absorption spectra to gas concentrations. It should be noted that in our experimental setup, N₂O₃ was not a measurable species due to its limited available absorption cross-section data, which did not align with our target wavelengths. Other species such as H₂O, CO₂, N₂O, and O₂ were also possible to be in the product, but they were also excluded from the calculation because of their small cross-sections (H₂O of $10^{-25} \sim 10^{-26}$, CO₂ of 10^{-25} , N₂O of 10^{-24} , and O₂ of 10^{-26} [cm²/molecule]) at our target wavelengths. The absorbance was determined by the Beer-Lambert law as

$$A(\lambda) = -\ln\left(\frac{I(\lambda)}{I_0(\lambda)}\right) = \sum_{i=1}^n n_i \sigma_i(\lambda) d \quad (\text{S4})$$

where A is the absorbance, I is the transmitted light intensity, I_0 is the light intensity before entering the chamber, n_i is the concentration of i^{th} species, and σ_i is the absorption cross-section of i^{th} species. The absorption path length is d , which was determined as 33 cm.

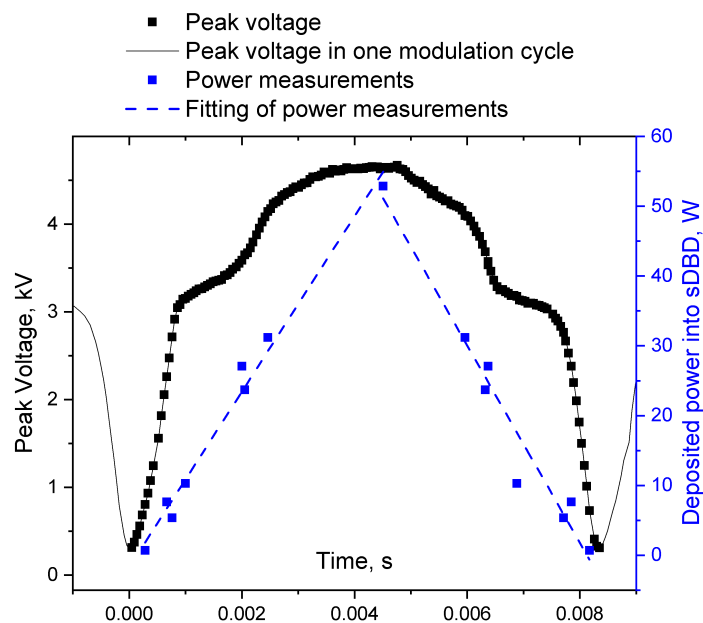


Fig. S5. The modulated peak voltage and the measured power versus time in one modulation cycle.

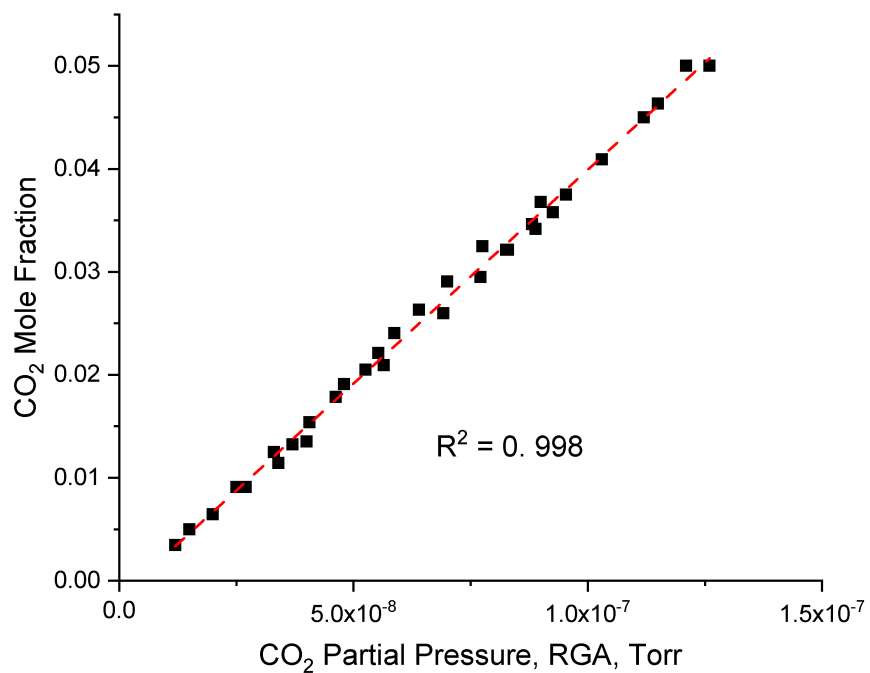


Fig. S6. Calibration at amu = 44: CO₂ RGA ion gauge pressure versus the known CO₂ mole fraction.

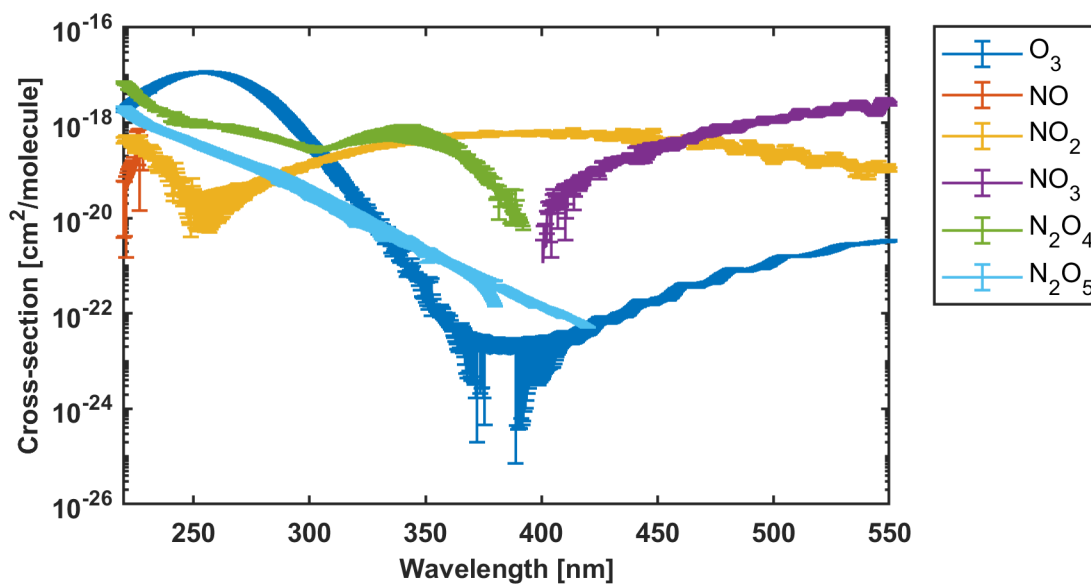


Fig. S7. The absorption cross-section of O_3 , NO , NO_2 , NO_3 , N_2O_4 , and N_2O_5 in the wavelength range of 220 nm \sim 550 nm. The error bars indicate the standard deviation of the cross-section from different references.

Species	Refs
O_3	[4–22]
NO	[23, 24]
NO_2	[7, 15, 25–34]
NO_3	[15, 28, 30, 35–40]
N_2O_4	[25, 27, 33, 41]
N_2O_5	[15, 28, 30, 42–46]

Table S1. The references of absorption cross-section data for O_3 and NO_x species.

The background noise was captured when the lamp was turned off. The noise was removed before the numerical fitting. The gas concentration was calculated only when the signal-to-noise ratio was greater than two at 250 nm. The iteration fitting was implemented by the MATLAB function "fminsearch" to find the best fit between experimental absorbance and simulated absorbance. The wavelength range was divided into four regions, which were 425 nm ~ 550 nm, 330 nm ~ 385 nm, 232 nm ~ 305 nm, and 220 nm ~ 230 nm. This division is to reduce the number of unknowns in each iteration, hence only species with relatively high cross-sections in each region were calculated. At the first region of 425 nm ~ 550 nm, the concentrations of NO₃ and NO₂ were calculated with the initial guesses. The second region of 330 nm ~ 385 nm was for determining the N₂O₄ concentration with the known NO₃ and NO₂ concentrations. The third region of 232 nm ~ 305 nm was used to determine the concentrations of O₃ and N₂O₅. The NO concentration was determined at the fourth region of 220 nm ~ 230 nm. After four calculations, one iteration was performed at the whole wavelength range of 220 nm ~ 550 nm.

E. Estimation of the Energy Consumption

For the experiments conducted in air, the corresponding CO₂ regeneration efficiency, η , defined as:

$$\eta = \frac{\text{Deposited power into the plasma}}{\text{Generated CO}_2 \text{ flow rate}} \text{ [kWh/tCO}_2\text{]}$$

The deposited power varies with time (as shown in Fig. S5). The average power injected into the plasma plate is estimated to be 20 watts. Further taking the overlap area of the plasma discharge and the aluminium tray into account, the averaged plasma power deposited for CO₂ regeneration is ~ 8 w.

Considering the heat loss of the plasma plate, similarly as estimated in previous literature [3], we estimate the heat loss is $\Delta Q = h(T - T_\infty)A$, where $h \approx 10 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$, $A = 60 \text{ cm}^2 = 6 \times 10^{-3} \text{ m}^2$, $(T - T_\infty)$ is $\approx 100 - 150\text{K}$ (T : temperature of the plasma plate, T_∞ : temperature of the free stream air). As a result, the heat loss is 6-9 w. Therefore, the order of magnitude estimate for the energy in activating chemicals is ~ 1w.

2. ZERO-DIMENSIONAL CHEMICAL KINETIC MODEL

Plasma-assisted carbonate regeneration has vast time scale differences, from nanoseconds to hours. Our experimental configuration also has vast spatial scale differences, from the sheath length in micrometres, to the reactor length in centimetres. Therefore, it is unrealistic to replicate the exact experimental results. The objective of the chemical kinetic model is to identify the dominant kinetic mechanism and predict the observed chemical dynamics qualitatively.

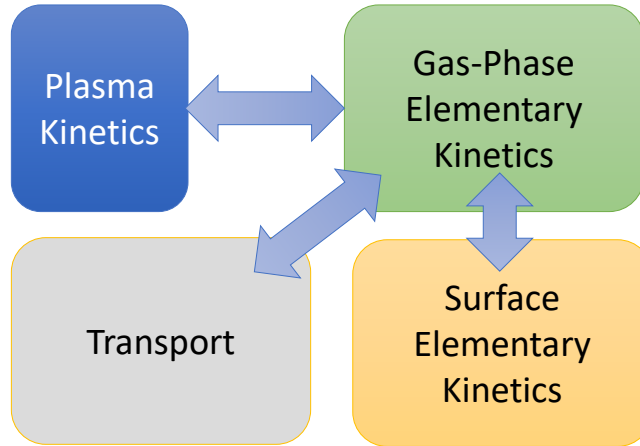


Fig. S8. The modeling consists of four parts, including plasma kinetics, gas-phase elementary kinetics, transport, and surface kinetics.

A. Plasma kinetics

In air plasma kinetics literature [47], NO is believed to be the major quencher of O₃: NO reacts with O₃ to generate NO₂ and O₂. NO₂ further quenches O₃ and is converted into NO₃. However,

during the O₃ to NO_x mode transition reported in this work, the temperature increase in the vicinity of the electrode is minimal, less than ~ 50°C from room temperature. Therefore, the NO generation is not due to the thermal mechanism [48], in which the reaction between N atoms and O₂/O₃ dominate. The alternative channel is the reaction between vibrationally excited nitrogen molecules (N₂(v)) and O atoms. As the discharge power increases, the fraction of vibrationally excited nitrogen increases, thereby greatly increasing the rate of creation of NO.

The detailed modelling of air plasma kinetics, coupling tens of species and hundreds of reactions, has been reported previously [49]. Due to the minute-long time scale of the problem, it is intractable to resolve electron energy evolution and simulate plasma kinetics in a detailed fashion. Instead, three global parameters (summarized in Table. S2) are fitted to characterize the electron-impact plasma kinetics.

Index	Reaction	Global Parameter	Fitting Ranges
E-1	$e + O_2 \rightarrow e + O + O$	n_O	$1.0 \times 10^{10} - 1.0 \times 10^{12} \text{ cm}^{-3}$
E-2	$e + N_2 \rightarrow e + N_2(v)$	T_v^0	5,000 - 8,000 K
		τ_v	500 - 5500 s

Table S2. A list of electron-impact reactions and fitting parameters.

Three fitting parameters include the atomic oxygen number density (n_O), the vibrational temperature at steady state (T_v^0), and the time scale of the vibrational temperature increase (τ_v). These fitting parameters are determined to reproduce the measured profiles of ozone and NO_x density, from the UVAS measurements. The fitted n_O values are reasonable and consistent with previous measurements in similar discharges [50]. The long time scale of fitted τ_v may be caused by the collisional radiation by excitation and de-excitation in the air plasma discharge.

$$n_{N_2(v)} = n_{N_2} F_{v>12} = n_{N_2} \exp\left(-\frac{12\Delta\epsilon_V}{k_b T_v}\right) \quad (S5)$$

$$T_v = T_g + T_v^0 (1 - \exp(-t/\tau_v)) \quad (S6)$$

$\Delta\epsilon_V$ (= 0.29 eV) is the vibrational energy for harmonic oscillators. k_b is the Boltzmann constant and T_g (= 300K) is the gas temperature. In Eqn (S5), vibrationally excited nitrogen at levels above $v = 12$ contributes to the non-equilibrium NO generation. The vibrational energy distribution function (VEDF) is approximated by Maxwell distribution for simplicity.

B. Gas-phase elementary kinetics and transport

For gas-phase kinetics, we developed a simple, parameterized model with reactions listed in S4 to describe the gas-phase kinetics. The focus is the evolution of the number density of key species such as O₃, NO, and CO₂ in a well-mixed control volume without the spatial gradient.

The loss caused by diffusion and convection is considered in the model by adding the extra loss term with $\tau_{dif} = 40 - 200$ s. It is obtained by measuring the decay rate of NO_x density after plasma discharge is turned off.

The equations were solved using an ordinary differential equation solver using ZDPlaskin. Fig. S9 shows a comparison between the measured profile and the model output without the presence of calcium carbonate powders. The fitted parameters are $n_O = 1.4 \times 10^{11} \text{ m}^{-3}$, $T_v^0 = 7500\text{K}$, and $\tau_v = 1.2 \times 10^3 \text{ s}$. These parameters were uniquely determined to reproduce the measured ozone density: n_O and T_v^0 decide the slope of the rising rate and decay rate of ozone density. The cross-over time was determined by τ_v . In this case, the cross-over time, the initial O₃ number density, steady-state NO and NO₂ number density are reasonably well-predicted. Different increasing/decreasing trend for O₃ and NO_x is attributed to the simplified kinetic scheme.

C. Surface kinetics

We further include a simplified and hypothesized surface kinetic mechanism involving atomic oxygen, surface calcium species (CaO₂, CaO, CaCO₃), and surface NO_x species to explain the CO₂ formation in the presence of CaCO₃ powders and plasmas. Here calcium peroxide [55] is

Index	Reaction	Rate constant	Refs
G-1	$O + O_2 + M \rightarrow O_3 + M$	3.4×10^{-34}	[51]
G-2	$O + NO + M \rightarrow NO_2 + M$	1.0×10^{-31}	[52]
G-3	$O + N_2(v) \rightarrow NO + N$	1.0×10^{-11}	[53]
G-4	$O_3 + NO \rightarrow NO_2 + O_2$	1.8×10^{-14}	[54]
G-5	$O_3 + NO_2 \rightarrow NO_3 + O_2$	3.4×10^{-17}	[52]
G-6	$O_3 + M \rightarrow O + O_2 + M$	1.23×10^{-26}	[52]

Table S3. A list of reactions and the rate constants in the gas phase. The unit of the rate constant is cm^3/s for two-body reactions and cm^6/s for three-body reactions. The temperature dependence is neglected as the experiment is performed at room temperature. M denotes the third body.

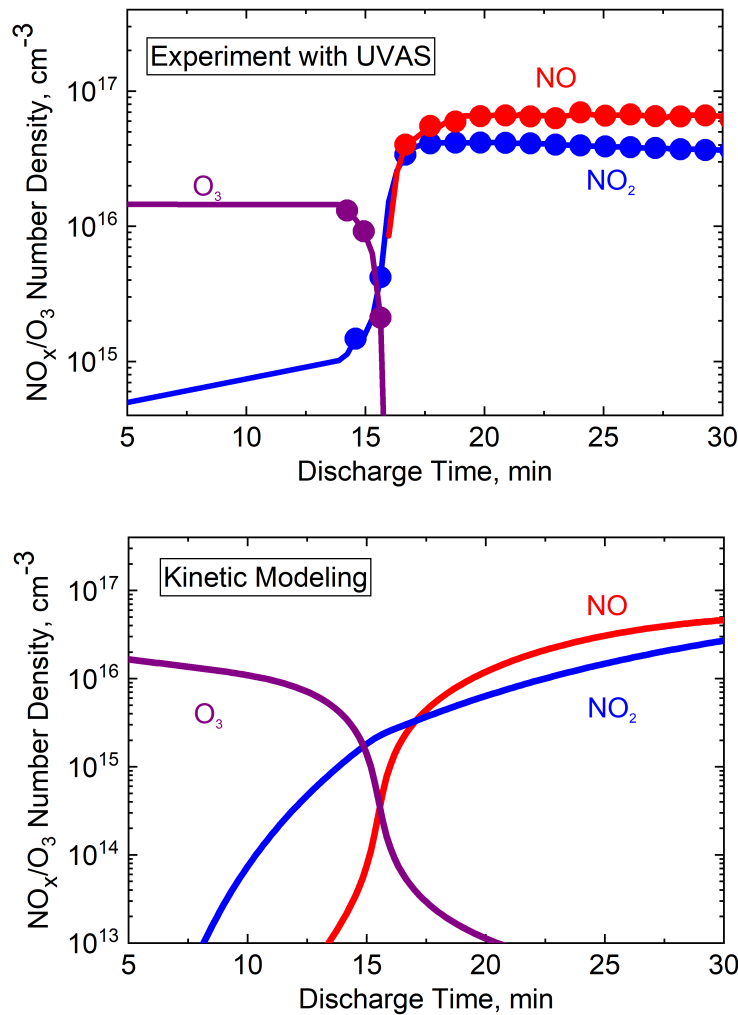


Fig. S9. A comparison between experimental measurements and kinetic modelling for the case without CaCO_3 powders. Fitting parameters: $n_O = 1.4 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. $T_v^0 = 7500 \text{ K}$. $\tau_v = 1.2 \times 10^3 \text{ s}$.

a hypothesized intermediate species. The model output is also provided as shown in Fig. S10. The simplified model can predict the CO_2 formation and the cross-over time. However, the NO_x formation differs from the experiment measurements by almost one order of magnitude. From this simplified kinetic scheme, with the presence of calcium carbonates, the oxygen atom gets adsorbed by the carbonate surface, which delays the vibrational quenching reaction (G-3) to form NO . NO is a key intermediate for O_3 consumption (G-4) and the $\text{NO}_x\text{-O}_3$ mode transition. So with less available oxygen atoms in the gas phase, NO formation is inhibited and the $\text{NO}_x\text{-O}_3$ mode transition is delayed with the presence of the calcium carbonates. Oxygen atoms are adsorbed to the surface to form CaO_2^* to release CO_2 . Future careful modelling for this problem is still needed.

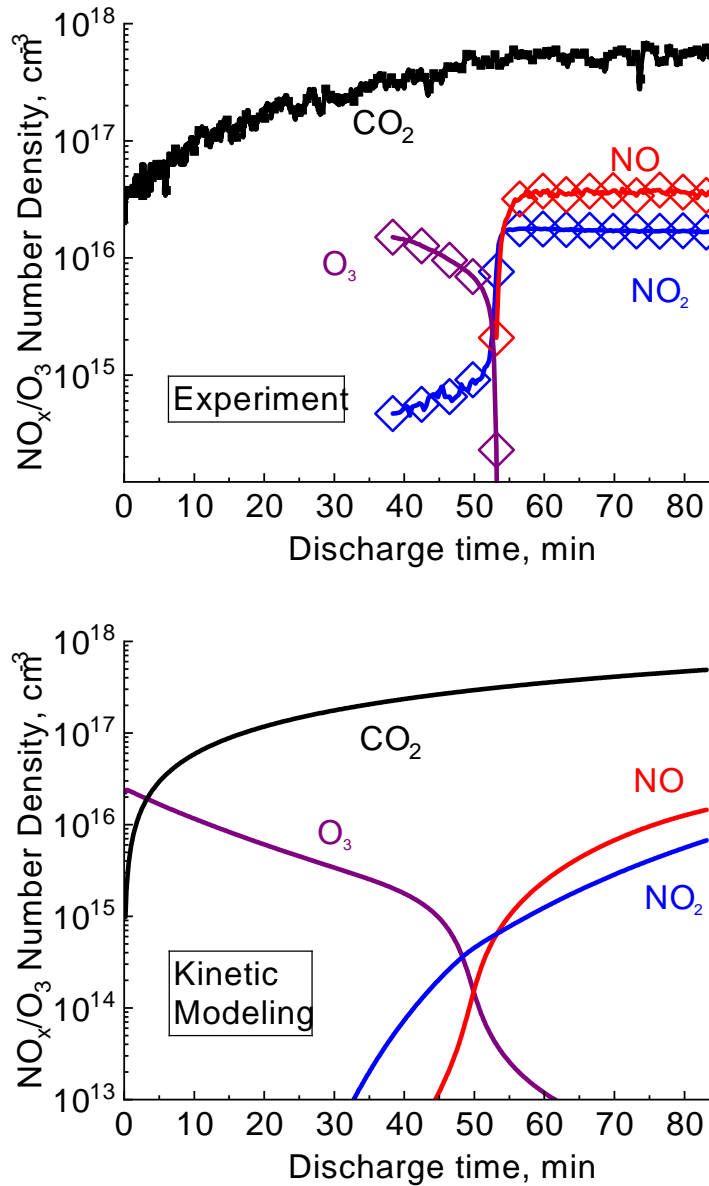


Fig. S10. A comparison between experimental measurements and kinetic modeling for the case with CaCO_3 powders. Fitting parameters: $n_{\text{O}} = 1.4 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. $T_v^0 = 7500 \text{ K}$. $\tau_v = 5.0 \times 10^3 \text{ s}$.

Index	Reaction	Rate constant	Refs
S-1	$O(g) + CaCO_3(s) \rightarrow CaO_2^*(s) + CO_2(g)$	1.0×10^{-12}	[56]
S-2	$CaO_2^*(s) + O(g) \rightarrow CaO(s) + O_2(g)$	2.2×10^{-11}	[56]
S-3	$H_2O(g) + NO_2(g) + NO_2(g) \rightarrow HONO(g) + HNO_3(g)$	7.9×10^{-39}	[57]
S-4	$CaCO_3(s) + 2HNO_3(g) \rightarrow Ca(NO_3)_2(s) + H_2O(g) + CO_2(g)$	1.0×10^{-39}	estimated

Table S4. A list of proposed surface reactions. The unit of the rate constant is cm^3/s for two-body reactions and cm^6/s for three-body reactions. M denotes the third body. $CaCO_3$ number density is estimated, which is determined by the surface density of $CaCO_3$ powders.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY MEASUREMENTS

A. Air Plasma Treatment of Calcium Carbonate and Sodium Carbonate

The non-equilibrium regeneration is sensitive to the sorbent material. Changing $CaCO_3$ to Na_2CO_3 results in a noticeable decrease in the CO_2 yield. This indicates that engineered sorbent materials for non-equilibrium regeneration are needed to optimize energy efficiency.

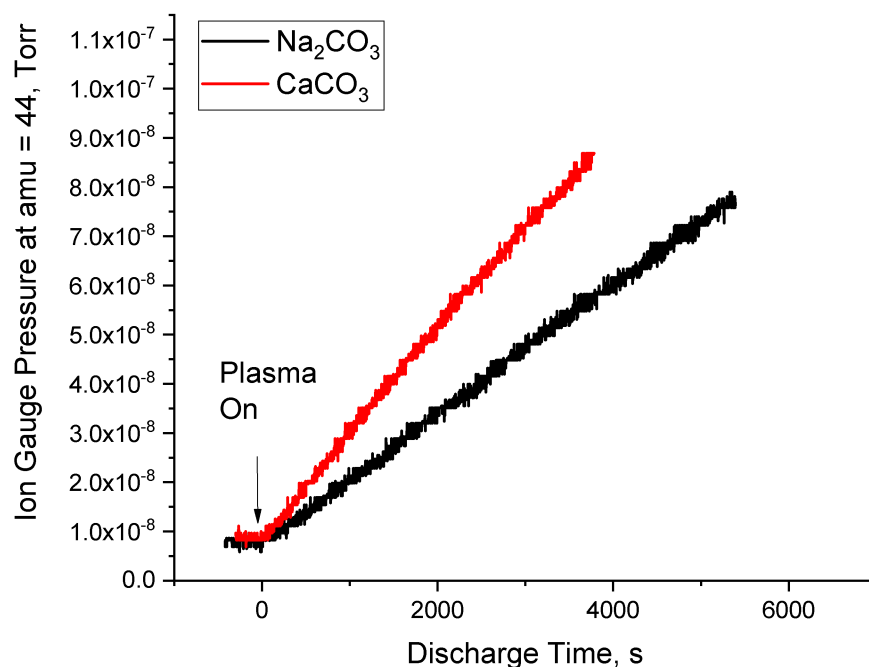


Fig. S11. Under the same air plasma treatment, Na_2CO_3 is less efficient for generating CO_2 , compared with $CaCO_3$.

B. Comparison between flowing a NO_x mixture through the $CaCO_3$ powder and plasma-based carbonate regeneration

To verify the effect of non-equilibrium plasma, a known concentration of NO (2%, balanced by N_2) is flowing into the reactor with plasma off. RGA shows that CO_2 concentration is not increased with the presence of a high concentration of NO_x species. Similarly, when a mixture of NO/O_2 is flowing into the reactor, the CO_2 increase is even minor. These measurements demonstrate that

the non-equilibrium surface process is the key to the CO₂ desorption.

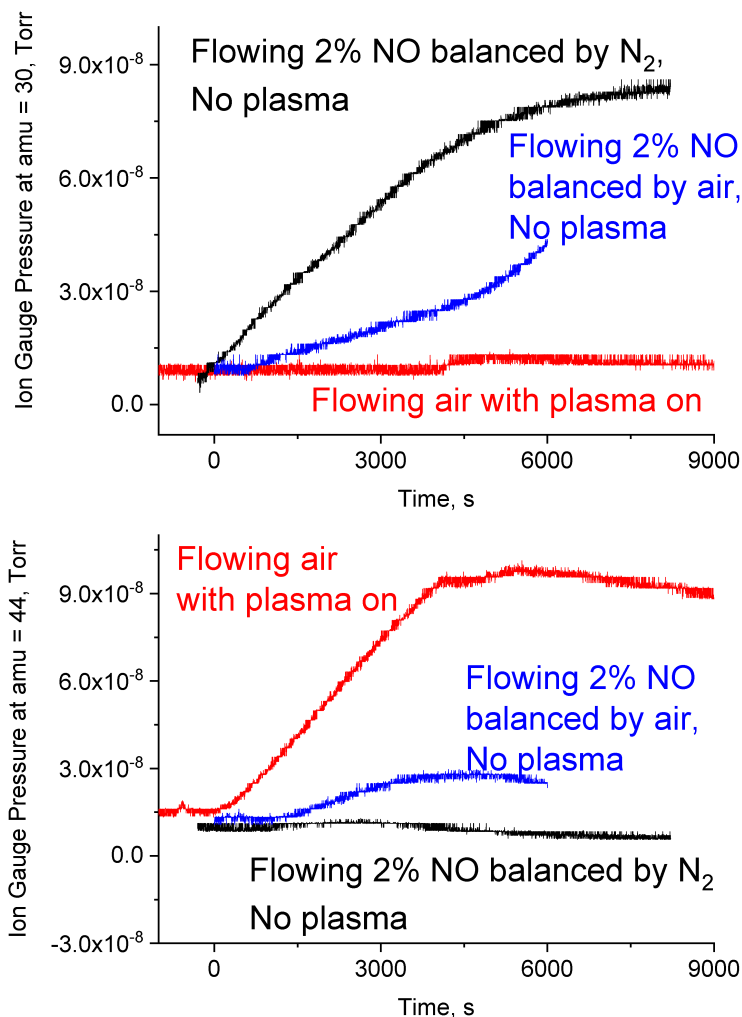


Fig. S12. Comparison of RGA signals at amu = 30 and 44 for three cases: 1) flowing air with plasma on; 2) flowing 2% NO with plasma off; 3) flowing 2% NO with O₂ with plasma off

C. Argon and Oxygen Plasma Treatment of Calcium Carbonate Powders

Suitable gases are critical for the regeneration efficiency. Argon plasma is completely inert to the CO₂ generation. Oxygen plasma can generate CO₂ but is less efficient compared to air plasma. Future work includes the regeneration experiment of sorbent materials using more reactive plasmas such as H₂ and CH₄.

D. Comparison of Non-Equilibrium and Equilibrium Carbonate Decomposition

As shown in Fig. S14, the equilibrium pressure of CaCO₃ is over tens of orders of magnitude larger at 350 K under the plasma operation. In other words, the effects of plasma are non-thermal: instead of heating the carbonate powder to a higher temperature, it goes through chemical conversions to release CO₂.

E. Ratio between areas under different peaks for XPS Diagnostics

We integrate the area under different peaks, *i.e.*, Ca, C and O peaks, and calculate the ratio between different peaks as shown in Table. S5. This is used to qualitatively determine the change in composition in the solid phase.

From Table. S5, after the plasma processing, the ratio of C/Ca drops compared to that in the control group. It means that carbon is released from the powder. For the O peak, the ratio goes

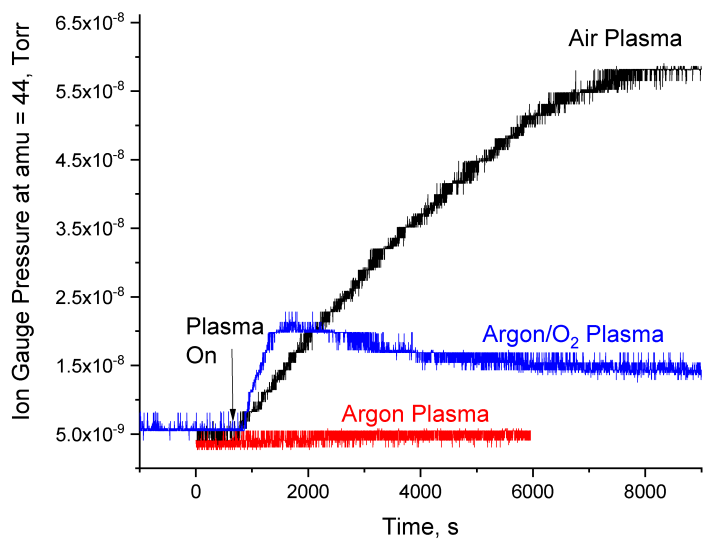


Fig. S13. The comparison of RGA CO₂ signals under argon, 50% oxygen (balanced by Ar) and air plasmas.

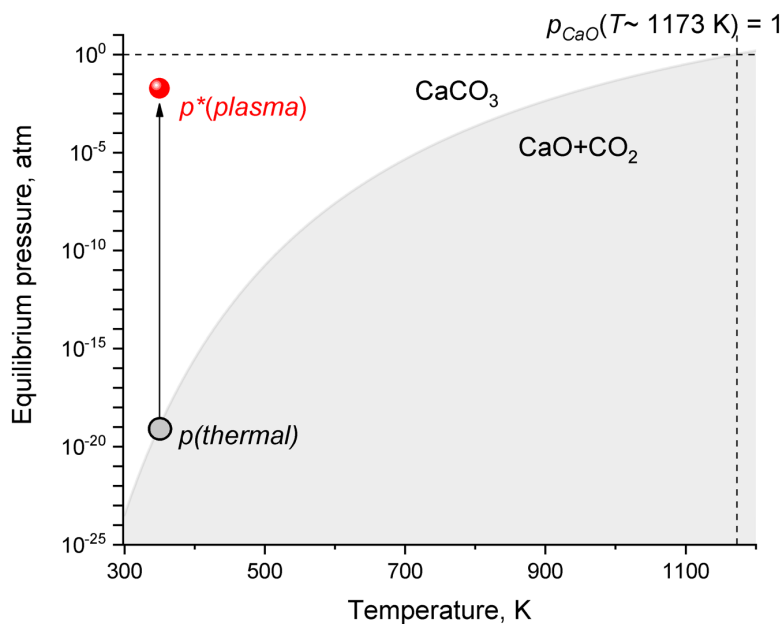


Fig. S14. Equilibrium pressure of CaCO₃ relative to temperature [58]. The red dot indicates the data point in the plasma case.

Case	C/Ca	O/Ca
Base case (without plasma treatment)	0.18	1.6
Case with air plasma treatment	0.16	1.8
Case with oxygen plasma treatment	0.14	1.9

Table S5. Ratio of areas under different peaks from XPS diagnostics. The carbon peak is at ~ 286.4 eV. Another carbon peak is the adventitious carbon (~ 282 eV). The calcium twin peaks are at 343.9 eV and 347.4 eV. The oxygen peak is at ~ 528.8 eV.

up as the oxygen peaks are broadened, as shown in Fig.4 in the main context. The above analysis provides evidence for the proposed non-equilibrium regeneration mechanism: CO_2 is released from the carbonate powder by reactive air plasmas.

F. Reproducibility of Measurements

We repeated the experiments through the summer of 2023. For RGA signals, changes in the NO and O_2 signals are reproducible and significant. We provide additional experiments measured on different dates under the same conditions shown in Figs. S15 and S16 to show the experimental consistency.

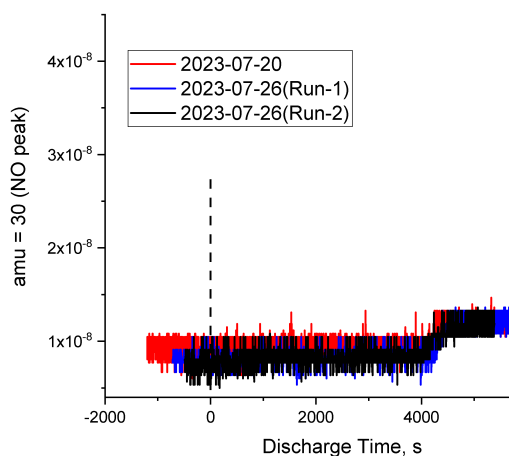


Fig. S15. Repeated RGA measurements at $\text{amu} = 30$ on different runs with same experimental conditions.

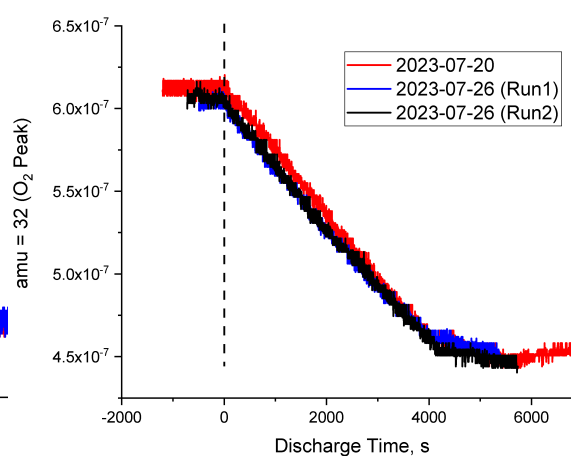


Fig. S16. Repeated RGA measurements at $\text{amu} = 32$ on different runs with same experimental conditions.

In addition, we also conducted RGA measurements under different but similar conditions, for example, with different powder loadings (Fig. S17), with different flow residence times (Fig. S18), etc. These additional experiments were designed to verify the robustness of the observed CO_2 desorption phenomena and to ascertain the reproducibility of the results across a wider range of operational parameters. In all of those controlled experiments, we observed consistent patterns that confirmed our findings. Variations in flow residence time and powder loading did not significantly alter the concentration profiles of the measured species, suggesting that the underlying mechanisms remain stable across these parameters.

We didn't provide those measurements in the main context because the objective of this paper is to reveal a novel mechanism for CO_2 desorption, not to optimize the reaction conditions. Future studies should focus on the parametric and quantitative studies.

For UVAS diagnostics, we conducted experiments repeatedly from 2023-08-15 to 2023-08-18 for various flow conditions. The cross-overs of O_3 and NO or NO_2 are clearly and consistently observed. Here we provide two representative cases conducted on different days with the same

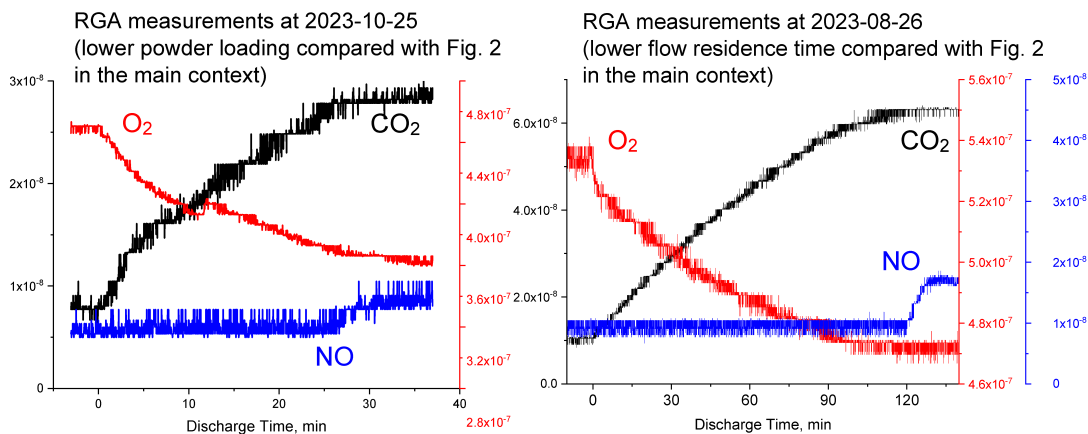


Fig. S17. RGA measurements at amu = 30, 44 and 32 with a lower CaCO₃ powder loading.

Fig. S18. RGA measurements at amu = 30, 44 and 32 with a lower flow residence time.

flow conditions (air flowing through CaCO₃ powders), shown in Fig. S19. Note the flow rate is 50 sccm in those two cases. As a result, the transition time is delayed compared to the result in the main context (10 sccm flow rate).

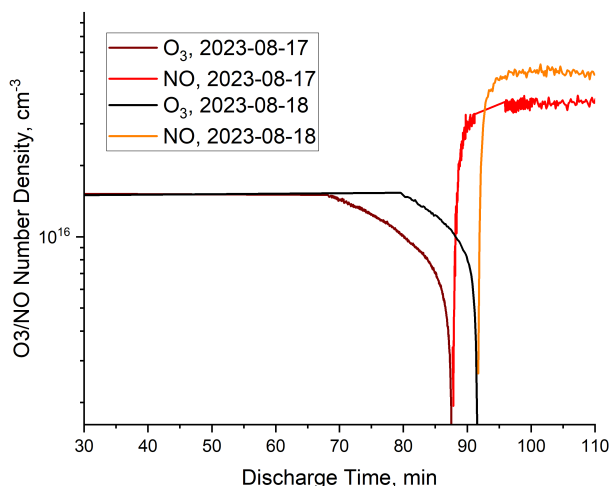


Fig. S19. Representative repeated UVAS measurements for the same flow conditions.

We conducted three series of XPS measurements under different controlled conditions. For similar experiment inputs, the results are consistent and reproducible. We provide representative N1s spectra as an example, as shown in Fig. S20.

In conclusion, the consistency of the data across varying experimental conditions reinforces the reliability of our findings.

G. Effects of Distance

The authors performed a series of experiments to understand the effects of distance. As provided in Fig. S21, when the powder is placed under discharge, the distance between the plasma and the powder will not significantly influence the results. However, if the powder is moved out of the plasma zone but still within the reactor, the CO₂ desorption will decrease dramatically. Clearly, in the plasma zone, the CO₂ desorption is reaction-controlled, while moving out of the plasma zone, it is more diffusion-controlled.

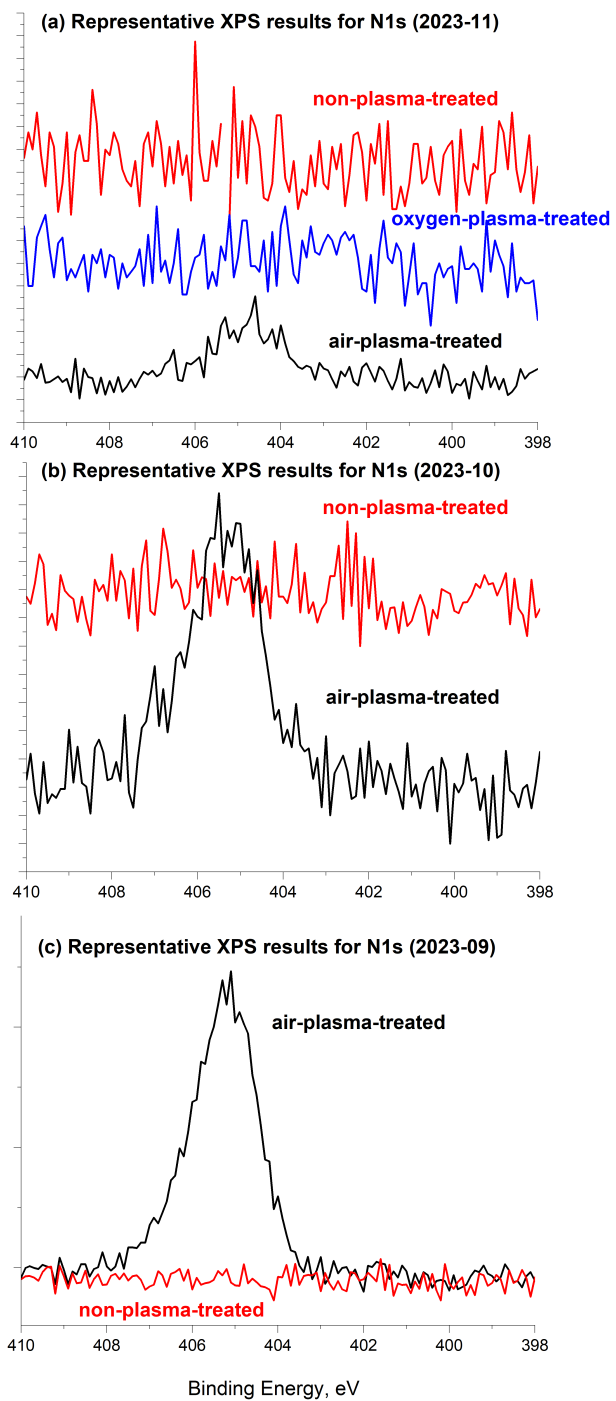


Fig. S20. Representative repeated XPS measurements for N1s peak.

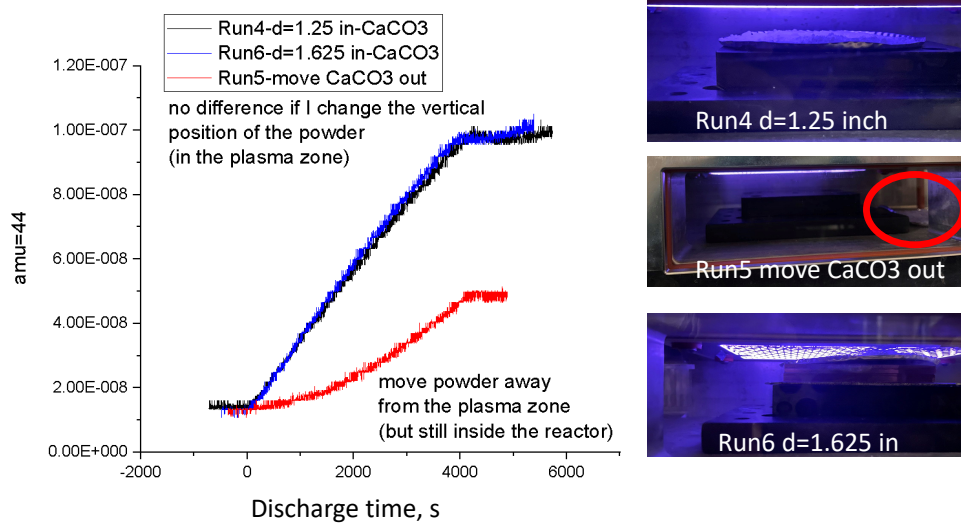


Fig. S21. Supplementary information for varying gap distance d in the chamber.

As the objective of the paper is to propose a new non-equilibrium chemical mechanism, we did not provide a detailed parametric discussion of the effect of distance on CO_2 desorption.

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