

# Control of Domain Structures in Multiferroic Thin Films through Defect Engineering

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Domain walls (DWs) have become an essential component in nanodevices based on ferroic thin films. The domain configuration and DW stability, however, are strongly dependent on the boundary conditions of thin films, which make it difficult to create complex ordered patterns of DWs. Here, it is shown that novel domain structures, that are otherwise unfavorable under the natural boundary conditions, can be realized by utilizing engineered nanosized structural defects as building blocks for reconfiguring DW patterns. It is directly observed that an array of charged defects, which are located within a monolayer thickness, can be intentionally introduced by slightly changing substrate temperature during the growth of multiferroic BiFeO<sub>3</sub> thin films. These defects are strongly coupled to the domain structures in the pretemperature-change portion of the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film and can effectively change the configuration of newly grown domains due to the interaction between the polarization and the defects. Thus, two types of domain patterns are integrated into a single film without breaking the DW periodicity. The potential use of these defects for building complex patterns of conductive DWs is also demonstrated.

A domain wall (DW) is a quasi-2D boundary that separates two states that differ in the orientation of their spontaneous polarization, magnetic moment, or strain in a ferroic material. It appears when the material is cooled below the Curie temperature ( $T_c$ ), as a result of symmetry breaking in the crystal structure during the ferroic phase transition.<sup>[1]</sup> The DW pattern that forms during the transition is governed by minimization of the free energy of the system. Over the past few years, there has been increasing evidence showing that DWs can possess

functionalities that are absent in the bulk of the domains. Examples include enhanced ferroelectricity and magnetism,<sup>[2,3]</sup> increased conductivity and photovoltages,<sup>[4,5]</sup> magnetoelectric coupling,<sup>[6,7]</sup> and magneto transport properties,<sup>[8]</sup> all of which make DWs appealing for applications as active elements in future nanodevices.

The presence and spatial distribution of specific types of DWs plays a crucial role in attaining particular properties in a ferroic film, such as conductivity or photoelectricity. For example in BiFeO<sub>3</sub>, one of the most widely studied multiferroics, the 180° and 109° DWs are more conductive than the 71° DWs,<sup>[4]</sup> and a 71° DW shows larger open circuit voltages under illumination than a 109° DW.<sup>[5]</sup> In a BiFeO<sub>3</sub>/ferromagnetic heterostructure, the exchange coupling between the antiferromagnetic BiFeO<sub>3</sub> and the ferromagnetic overlayer can enable either an exchange enhancement or an exchange bias, depending directly on the


type and crystallography of DWs in the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film.<sup>[6]</sup> To make use of these properties, it is necessary to control the characteristics and configuration of DWs and produce desirable domain structures. Such controlled domain structures will be useful both for the fundamental study of DW properties, and the design of novel nanodevices based on well controlled domain structures and DW characteristics.

In ferroelectric and ferroelastic thin films, patterns of DWs depend strongly on the boundary conditions at the two surfaces

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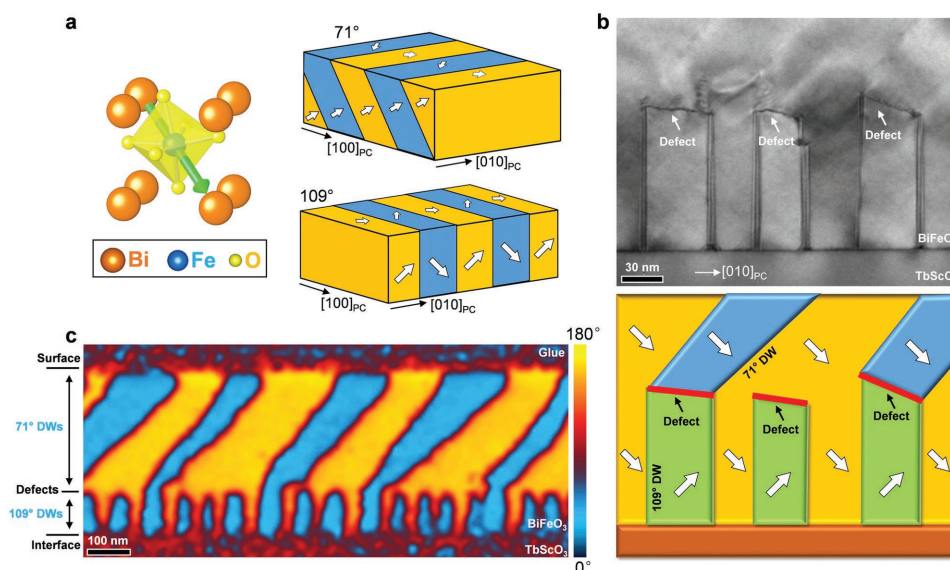
DOI: 10.1002/adma.201802737

or interfaces. First, the lattice mismatch between the film and substrate leads to a biaxial-strain mechanical boundary condition,<sup>[9–12]</sup> which can be altered by choosing substrates spanning a wide range of lattice parameters.<sup>[13–17]</sup> Second, the electrical boundary condition is critically dependent on free charge compensation at the interfaces and can be tailored by choosing substrates or epitaxial buffer layers with different conductivities.<sup>[18–20]</sup> Additional restrictions on the boundary condition can be made by changing the vicinality or atomic termination of the substrates.<sup>[21,22]</sup> By modifying these boundary conditions, previous experimental studies have demonstrated the capability to fabricate large monodomains,<sup>[17]</sup> arrays of flux-closure domain structures,<sup>[17,23,24]</sup> or periodically striped domains<sup>[25–28]</sup> in ferroelectric and ferroelastic thin films. One of the major limitations of such a method, however, has been that once the variable at the boundary condition is set, such as choice of substrate, further modification to control or alter domain patterns during material synthesis becomes difficult. This reduces the parameter space for creating more complex structures with ordered DW patterns and thus imposes restrictions on the functionalities of the system.

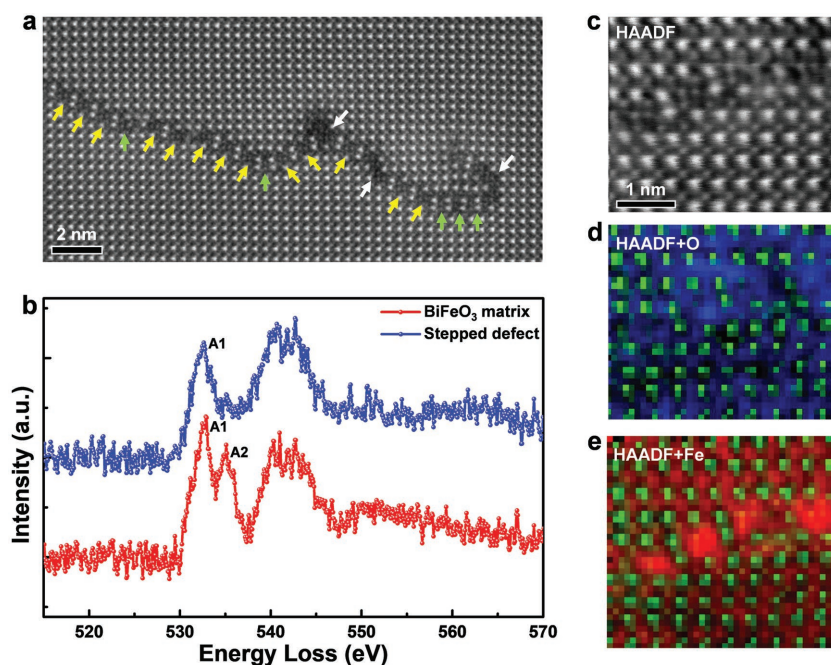
Defects in ferroelectric oxides can also have a remarkable impact on ferroelectric domain structures. It is well known that some common types of defects, such as dislocations and vacancies, can interact with ferroelectric domains and DWs, pinning metastable polarization configurations. Recently, it was also discovered that impurity defects, another major type of defect with a structure different from the host material, can induce dramatic changes in domain structures of ferroelectric thin films.<sup>[29–31]</sup> This finding suggests the possibility of using engineered impurity defects in combination with suitable interface boundary conditions to control domain formation and create complex domain structures. Nevertheless, the observed impurity defects in literature are either accidentally formed

in the films or coupled to polarization-structure changes within a range of only a few nanometers of the defect.<sup>[29–31]</sup> The approach of precisely creating ordered patterns of defects that can control the domain structure in the bulk of the film remains unexplored. Here, using a model system of BiFeO<sub>3</sub>/TbScO<sub>3</sub>, we demonstrate the fabrication of arrays of atomically thin charged planar defects in a controlled manner during the film growth and, most critically, the use of these defects as nanosized building blocks to tailor domain patterns and produce novel periodic DW structures that are inaccessible by conventional boundary-condition-tuning methods.

Epitaxial (001)<sub>PC</sub> oriented BiFeO<sub>3</sub> films were grown on (110)<sub>O</sub> orthorhombic TbScO<sub>3</sub> substrates by the same molecular-beam epitaxy (MBE) method described in ref. [17] with the [100]<sub>PC</sub> || [110]<sub>O</sub>, and [010]<sub>PC</sub> || [001]<sub>O</sub> directions (the subscripts PC and O are used to represent pseudocubic and orthorhombic indices, respectively). Because of the small anisotropic strain due to the dissimilar symmetry of (001)<sub>PC</sub> BiFeO<sub>3</sub> and (110)<sub>O</sub> TbScO<sub>3</sub>, two rhombohedral ferroelastic variants (r1 and r4) usually form in the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> films.<sup>[17]</sup> This leads to the formation of three possible domain structures with good periodicity, including a uniform monodomain structure and two periodic twinning domain structures (**Figure 1a**) namely: inclined domain stripes separated by 71° DWs oriented in the (101)<sub>PC</sub> planes or vertical domain stripes separated by 109° DWs oriented in the (010)<sub>PC</sub> planes. The monodomain or 71° domain structures have a single out-of-plane polarization vector resulting in uniform positive and negative bound charge on opposite surfaces of the film. This bound charge produces a large depolarization field destabilizing the domain structure, unless it can be screened by free charge carriers. It follows that both the monodomain and the 71° domain structures are usually stabilized in BiFeO<sub>3</sub> thin films grown on orthorhombic substrates with the insertion of thick (>20 nm) bottom electrodes.<sup>[26,32,33]</sup> In contrast, if the



**Figure 1.** Domain structures in BiFeO<sub>3</sub> thin films. a) Atomic model of BiFeO<sub>3</sub> pseudocubic structure (left), polarization is shown by the green arrow. Right: 71° and 109° domain patterns in BiFeO<sub>3</sub> thin films. Polarizations are shown by white arrows. b) Cross-sectional bright-field TEM image and corresponding schematic of polarization structures showing ordered 71° and 109° domains separated by an array of defects in a 400 nm BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film. c) PFM phase image showing the same periodically ordered domain patterns in the same BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film.



**Figure 2.** Atomic structures and chemical information at the defects. a) Atomic-scale HAADF STEM image of a linear defect inserted in the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> matrix. Stepped units on the defect are indicated by the yellow arrows; planar units are indicated by green arrows; and white arrows indicate several defect segments with consecutive pairs of Fe atoms with no Bi atoms in between them. b) O-K ELNES of the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> matrix and the stepped defect. c) HAADF STEM image of a segment on the defect and corresponding spectrum images of the same area: d) combined map of O (blue color) and HAADF signal (A-site atoms, i.e., Bi, shown by green color) and e) combined map of Fe (red color) and HAADF signal (green color).

ferroelectric surfaces are uncompensated by free charges, as is the case here where the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> films are directly grown on the insulating TbScO<sub>3</sub> substrates, the system favors the formation of 109° domain patterns with alternating out-of-plane polarization that can reduce the total electrostatic energy (Figures S1 and S2, Supporting Information).<sup>[17]</sup>

We found that the typical 109° domain patterns in the BiFeO<sub>3</sub>/TbScO<sub>3</sub> system can be transformed to 71° domains or a large monodomain by introducing Fe-rich impurity defects during the film growth. Our prior MBE work indicates that a change of substrate temperature during the growth of a BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film, given a constant bismuth and oxygen overpressure at a fixed Bi:Fe flux ratio, can result in three different products: (I) BiFeO<sub>3</sub> +  $\gamma$ -Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (at a higher than optimal temperature), (II) BiFeO<sub>3</sub> (at an optimal temperature), and (III) BiFeO<sub>3</sub> + Bi<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2.5</sub> (at a lower than optimal temperature).<sup>[34]</sup> The presence of the Fe-rich or Bi-rich impurity phases can be detected during growth by in situ reflection high-energy electron diffraction (RHEED).<sup>[34]</sup> In this work, the layer-by-layer growth of a 400 nm thick BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film was initiated at a temperature of  $\approx$ 560 °C at the TbScO<sub>3</sub> substrate. At  $\approx$ 110 nm from the substrate (276 layers) during growth, the temperature was increased by 10 °C and additional spots in the RHEED pattern, that can be indexed to diffraction from (111)-oriented  $\lambda$ -Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, were observed (Figure S3, Supporting Information). Upon the appearance of these spots, the substrate temperature was reduced to  $\approx$ 560 °C. The observed RHEED pattern was present

for more than 20 layers but had disappeared by the termination of the growth process, after which we saw no sign of nonsmooth or nonperovskite phases in the RHEED and no sign of mixed phases appeared in the subsequent ex situ measurement using X-ray diffraction (Figure S4, Supporting Information).

In this 400 nm as-grown BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film, an array of atomically thin linear defects was observed in the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> matrix at a nearly constant depth of 110–130 nm above the bottom interface of the film, shown by a bright-field diffraction-contrast transmission electron microscopy (TEM) image of the BiFeO<sub>3</sub>/TbScO<sub>3</sub> heterostructure (Figure 1b). The resolved domain structures in the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film are depicted schematically below the TEM image (Figure 1b). The polarization vector in each domain was confirmed by directly mapping the polarization based on atomic-scale scanning transmission electron microscopy (STEM) images (Figure S5, Supporting Information). Notably, a linear defect is observed on each 109° domain that is polarized upward (green color in Figure 1b) and the horizontal dimension of the defect matches exactly with the domain width. Above some of the defects, 71° domains (blue color in Figure 1b) are stabilized with the DWs located in the (01 $\bar{1}$ )<sub>PC</sub> planes, which are different from the (101)<sub>PC</sub>-oriented 71° domain stripes previously reported in BiFeO<sub>3</sub>

thin films grown on orthorhombic substrates.<sup>[26]</sup> In contrast, the downward polarized domains (yellow color in Figure 1b) in the lower portion of the film are not blocked by the defects and can extend their volume to the upper portion. As a result, a domain transformation from 109° to 71° across the defects is observed, resulting in the formation of novel mixed-type domains containing “head-to-head” positively charged DWs located exactly at the defects. Periodic ordering of these domain patterns is further confirmed by a piezoresponse force microscopy (PFM) image of the same heterostructure in cross section, in which the defects are not resolvable (Figure 1c). The correspondence between the appearance of each defect and the position of the 109° and 71° domains indicates a strong interaction between the defects and ferroelectric polarization.

The atomic structures and chemical composition of the defects were examined by high-angle annular dark-field (HAADF) STEM imaging and electron energy loss spectroscopy (EELS). **Figure 2a** shows an HAADF STEM image of a typical linear defect embedded in the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> matrix. As there are no other elements introduced during the film growth, the defect should also be composed of Bi, Fe, and O atoms, with the brighter dots in the HAADF image corresponding to the heavier Bi columns, the weaker dots corresponding to the lighter Fe columns, and O columns not visible. This defect is mostly composed of one type of stepped units (indicated by yellow arrows), which have an inclined orientation and are formed from one pair of Bi atoms alternating with two pairs of

Fe atoms. Planar units (indicated by green arrows) oriented on the horizontal (001)<sub>PC</sub> plane of BiFeO<sub>3</sub> are also observed, with the structure of one pair of Bi atoms alternating with one pair of Fe atoms. Additionally, there are segments composed of several consecutive pairs of Fe atoms with no Bi atoms in between them (indicated by white arrows). Across the defect, an atomic shift of one half of a pseudocubic unit cell of the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> lattice along the [010]<sub>PC</sub> direction is observed. This shift occurs mainly through atomic rearrangement at the defects, and thus does not induce obvious strain in the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> matrix, as shown by the quantitative analysis of the high-resolution HAADF images using geometric phase analysis in Figure S6 in the Supporting Information.

The O K-edge electron energy loss near edges structures (ELNES) for the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> matrix and the stepped defect are shown in Figure 2b. The most evident difference between the two spectra is in the A peak region from 530 to 538 eV. While a clear splitting of the A peak into two subpeaks, A1 at 532 eV and A2 at 535 eV, is observed in the spectrum of the BiFeO<sub>3</sub> matrix, the A2 subpeak is absent in the spectrum of the defect. It has been previously identified that A1 stems from hybridization between the O 2p and Fe 3d states, and A2 from hybridization between the O 2p and Bi 5d or 6d orbitals.<sup>[35–37]</sup> The absence of A2 in the spectrum of the defect results in a shape of the A peak that is more similar to  $\gamma$ -Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>.<sup>[38]</sup> The accumulation of Fe and O at the defects is further supported by EELS spectrum images of a segment of the defect (Figure 2c–e). The same type of stepped units in the observed defects has also been observed in a previous study of Nd- and Ti-doped antiferroelectric BiFeO<sub>3</sub> by MacLaren et al.<sup>[39,40]</sup> In their proposed defect structure, the iron atoms are coordinated by six oxygen atoms in the form of edge-sharing oxygen octahedra, resembling  $\gamma$ -Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. With these  $\gamma$ -Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>-like structures, an excess of anions (more oxygen) should accumulate at the defects and thus introduce net negative charge. Assuming Bi<sup>3+</sup>, Fe<sup>3+</sup>, and O<sup>2-</sup> at the stepped units of the defect, the local charge density is calculated to be of  $-1.1 \text{ C m}^{-2}$ .

It is apparent that the negative charge accumulation at the defects can cause strong built-in fields pointing to the defects, which could be at the origin of the observed 109° to 71° domain transition. In fact, the same type of charged defects in the Nd- and Ti-doped nonpolar, antiferroelectric BiFeO<sub>3</sub> can even stabilize tetragonally distorted regions with a strong polarization in  $\approx 4$ –5 unit cells at either side of the defects, as shown by MacLaren et al.<sup>[39,40]</sup> On the other hand, modification of the surface termination layer, occurring when the defects were introduced during the film growth, may also have an impact. Previous studies of the relation between chemical termination and polarization orientation in BiFeO<sub>3</sub> layers suggest that the growth of BiFeO<sub>3</sub> on Fe-O<sub>2</sub> terminated surfaces should result in an as-grown state with downward polarization.<sup>[41,42]</sup> Here, the local termination change due to the introduction of the Fe-rich defects could exert a similar effect, forcing the polarization on top of the defects into the downward direction and thus facilitating the domain transformation.

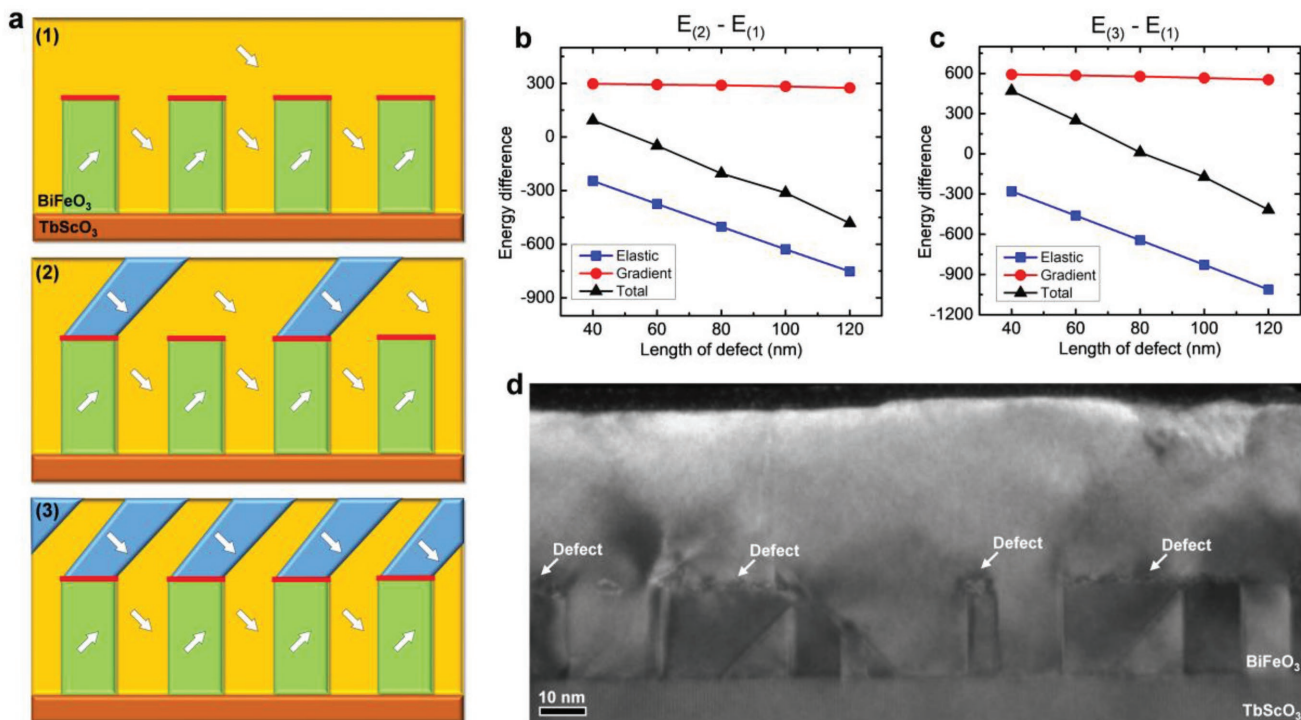
Although now we understand that the introduction of the defects in the thin film can induce the observed domain transformation, the reason for the formation of 71° domains on only a few of the defects, rather than on all of them, requires further explanation. We employed phase-field simulations to

understand the energetic driving force for the formation of the 71° domains. In the simulation, atomically thin linear defects with a uniform charge density of  $-1.1 \text{ C m}^{-2}$  are inserted on top of all upward polarized 109° domains, at a level 100 nm above the bottom interface in 400 nm BiFeO<sub>3</sub> thin films, and the effects of chemical termination change at the defects are ignored. Assuming the upward and downward polarized 109° domains in the lower portion of the film have the same width, we calculated Landau, electric, elastic, gradient, and total energies of the systems with different lengths of defects (i.e., widths of upward polarized 109° domains). The energy differences are compared among the three metastable domain configurations as shown in Figure 3a, i.e., 1) no 71° domains above the defect, 2) one 71° domain on every other defect, and 3) one 71° domain on each defect.

The changes in bulk Landau energy and electric energy between different domain configurations were found to be at least one order of magnitude smaller than the changes in elastic and gradient energy. Thus, we only plot the differences in elastic, gradient, and total energies between cases (2) and (1), or (3) and (1) as a function of defect length in Figure 3b,c, respectively, where a similar trend in energy changes is observed. Gradient energy is a major component of the domain wall energy, and the area of domain wall is roughly proportional to the total gradient energy. The increase in gradient energy is mostly attributable to the formation of 71° DWs in the system, and its value is nearly constant as the change of the defect length does not alter the DW area. Elastic energy, on the other hand, is domain-size dependent; it is found that a larger 71° domain width (i.e., larger defect length) results in a greater drop in elastic energy. In order to stabilize the 71° domains (total energy difference < 0) the defect length must surpass a critical value, which is  $\approx 50 \text{ nm}$  for domain configuration (2) and  $\approx 80 \text{ nm}$  for domain configuration (3). The higher value for the latter case is because this domain structure has more 71° DWs, which introduces higher gradient energy in the system.

Phase-field simulations explain why most of the observed 71° domains are on defects longer than 50 nm in the 400 nm BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film (Figure 1). This knowledge may also be used to further tune the domain structures above the defects. For example, in Figure 3d, we show a dark-field diffraction-contrast TEM image of a 60 nm BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film, in which the same type, but shorter (<30 nm) defects, were introduced at  $\approx 20 \text{ nm}$  above the interface. While the 109° and 180° domain patterns similar to those in 20 nm BiFeO<sub>3</sub> films grown on TbScO<sub>3</sub> are observed below the defects,<sup>[32]</sup> the short defects could not stabilize 71° domains and thus produced a large monodomain in the upper portion of the film.

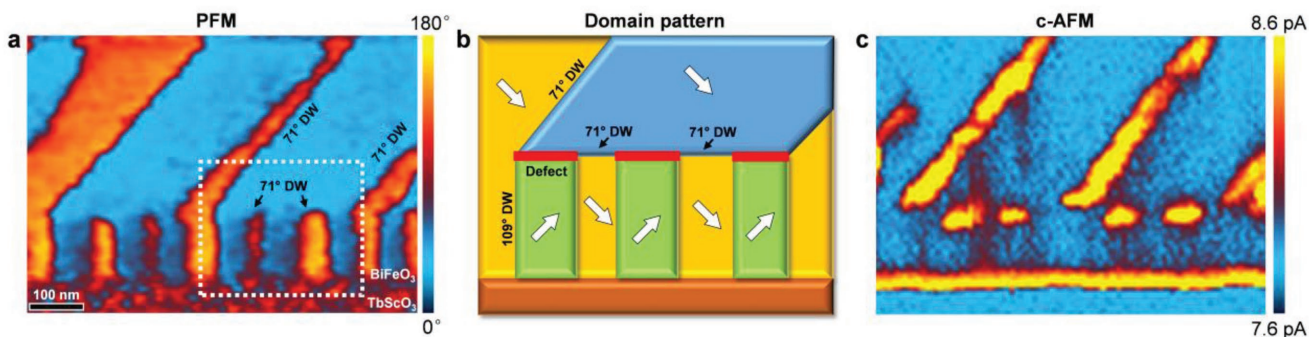
The potential of using these defects for building complex patterns of conductive DWs is illustrated in Figure 4. In a PFM image of a cross-section sample of the 400 nm BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film grown on TbScO<sub>3</sub> (Figure 4a), we observed ordered domain patterns containing one 71° domain on top of five 109° domains stabilized by the linear defects (Figure 4a). The schematic domain structure for the highlighted region in Figure 4a is presented in Figure 4b, which includes not only inclined 71° DWs that penetrate from the top surface to the edge of the defects but also horizontal 71° DWs sitting between the defects. Conductivity mapping of the same area using conductive atomic



**Figure 3.** Energetic driving force for the domain transformation across the defects. a) Schematics of three metastable domain patterns modeled by phase-field simulations: 1) no 71° domains above the defect, 2) one 71° domain on every other defect, and 3) one 71° domain on each defect. The white arrows mark the polarization orientations. b) Calculated elastic, gradient, and total energy difference between domain patterns (2) and (1) shown in (a). c) Calculated elastic, gradient, and total energy difference between domain patterns (3) and (1) shown in (a). d) Cross-sectional dark-field TEM image of a 60 nm BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film, in which a large monodomain in the top portion of the film and ordered 109°/180° domains in the bottom portion of the film are separated by an array of defects.

force microscopy (c-AFM) indicates the conductive nature of all the inclined and horizontal 71° DWs. While conductive vertical or inclined DWs penetrating the thickness of ferroelectric thin films were frequently observed,<sup>[43,44]</sup> the horizontal conductive DWs shown here, buried in the bulk film below the surface, have not been previously reported. These DWs provide additional possibilities for engineering ordered configurations of nanoscale conductive channels in multiple preferred directions in a thin-film system.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated that an array of atomically thin defects inserted during film growth can strongly couple to the domain configuration and the stability of particular domain types in BiFeO<sub>3</sub> thin films. By using these defects as active nanobuilding-blocks we have produced periodic 71° domains or large monodomains that would be expected to be unstable on top of ordered 109° domains under the normal boundary conditions in the BiFeO<sub>3</sub>/TbScO<sub>3</sub> system. Application of these methods opens a path to controllable fabrication of



**Figure 4.** Conductive DW patterns stabilized by the defects. a) PFM phase image of a region in the 400 nm BiFeO<sub>3</sub> film containing ordered patterns of each 71° domain on five 109° domains. b) Schematic domain structures of the highlighted region in (a). The white arrows mark the polarization orientations. c) Corresponding c-AFM map of the same region showing enhanced conductivity at inclined and horizontal 71° DWs. The current map was captured with a constant bias of 1.0 V applied between the tip and the sample. No domain switching or domain wall motion was observed after measuring the current.

complex, multilayer domain structures in ferroic and multiferroic materials, providing novel opportunities for studying the exotic properties of DWs and allowing the design strategy for applicable devices to become more flexible. This study also suggests a route to tune material properties through defect engineering, which can be potentially extended to other ferroelectric and multiferroic oxides, opening up the possibility to stabilize domain structures with novel properties that are inaccessible by conventional methods.

## Experimental Section

**TEM:** Cross-sectional TEM specimens were prepared by conventional methods of mechanical polishing followed by argon ion milling. STEM HAADF and EELS experiments were carried out on Nion UltraSTEM 200 equipped with C3/C5 corrector and high-energy resolution monochromated EELS system in Irvine Materials Research Institute at the University of California, Irvine. The microscope was operated at 100 kV with convergence semi-angle of 30 mrad and with a beam current of  $\approx 100$  pA. The inner and outer semi-angles of the ADF detector were  $\approx 70$  and 200 mrad, respectively, and the pixel dwell time for the HAADF image was chosen to be 32  $\mu$ s. A dispersion of 0.3 eV per channel was used and the dwell time was 0.5 s per pixel for acquisition of EELS spectrum. The pre-edge background in each EELS spectrum was removed by power-law function in commercial software package Digital Micrograph.

**PFM and c-AFM:** Cross-sectional specimens used for scanning probe measurements were prepared by the same methods as the standard procedure for preparing TEM specimens, and a conductive platinum layer was deposited on the back of the specimen by sputter coating. PFM and c-AFM measurements were carried out on a commercial Asylum Research MFP-3D scanning probe microscope by using Nanosensors PPP-EFM cantilevers and conductive diamond-coated probes, respectively. For the conductive mapping, a bias of 1 V was applied between the tip (grounded) and the sample, and a nominal force of 16 N m<sup>-1</sup> was constantly applied at the tip.

**High-Resolution X-Ray Diffraction:** High-resolution reciprocal space mappings (RSMs) were measured to study the film structures at room temperature by using a Rigaku Smartlab diffractometer equipped with a Cu K $\alpha$  source of radiation ( $\lambda = 0.15406$  nm) and a Ge (220  $\times$  2) monochromator. The symmetrical RSMs around TbScO<sub>3</sub> (220)<sub>o</sub> and asymmetrical RSMs around TbScO<sub>3</sub> (240)<sub>o</sub> and (332)<sub>o</sub> were measured.

**Phase-Field Simulations:** The time dependent Ginzburg-landau equation

$$\frac{\partial P_i(r,t)}{\partial t} = -L \frac{\delta F}{\delta P_i(r,t)} \quad (i=1,2,3) \quad (1)$$

was solved in order to obtain the equilibrium domain structure with several embedded charged defects.  $F$  is the total free energy, which can be expressed by integration of four energy densities over the whole simulation system

$$F = \int (f_{\text{landau}} + f_{\text{elastic}} + f_{\text{electric}} + f_{\text{gradient}}) dV \quad (2)$$

in which the landau free energy ( $f_{\text{landau}}$ ) is defined as  $\alpha_1(P_1^2 + P_2^2 + P_3^2) + \alpha_{11}(P_1^4 + P_2^4 + P_3^4) + \alpha_{12}(P_1^2 P_2^2 + P_1^2 P_3^2 + P_2^2 P_3^2)$ .<sup>[45]</sup> The elastic energy ( $f_{\text{elastic}}$ ) can be expressed as  $\frac{1}{2} C_{ijkl} \epsilon_{ij} \epsilon_{kl}$ , where  $C_{ijkl}$  is the elastic modulus tensor,  $\epsilon_{ij}$  is the elastic strain which can be obtained by solving the mechanical equilibrium equation  $\sigma_{ij,j} = 0$ , whose boundary condition was traction free on the film surface and clamped at some distance into the substrate.<sup>[46]</sup> The electric energy ( $f_{\text{electric}}$ ) is  $-\frac{1}{2} E_i (\epsilon_0 \kappa_{ij} E_j + P_i)$ , where  $E_i$  is electric field along  $i$  direction,  $\kappa_{ij}$  is the relative dielectric permittivity,  $P_i$  is polarization

along  $i$  direction. The electric energy can be calculated after solving the Poisson equation  $\nabla^2 \phi = -\frac{\rho}{\epsilon}$ , whose boundary conditions are short circuit conditions for both film top surface and film/substrate interface.<sup>[20]</sup> The expression for gradient energy ( $f_{\text{gradient}}$ ) is  $\frac{1}{2} G_{11} (P_{1,1}^2 + P_{1,2}^2 + P_{1,3}^2 + P_{2,1}^2 + P_{2,2}^2 + P_{2,3}^2 + P_{3,1}^2 + P_{3,2}^2 + P_{3,3}^2)$ ,<sup>[47]</sup> where  $G_{11}$  is the gradient energy coefficient, and  $P_{i,j}$  means the derivative of  $P_i$  component along the  $j$  direction. The general form of gradient energy has more than one coefficient, but due to the lack of parameters, the expression can be simplified to only use  $G_{11}$ , and the normalized value of  $G_{11}$  is set to 0.6. In the simulation, the charged defect was considered by modifying the local charge density  $\rho$  in the Poisson equation, and a uniform charge density of  $-1.1$  C m<sup>-2</sup> was assumed at the defect.

## Supporting Information

Supporting Information is available from the Wiley Online Library or from the author.

## Acknowledgements

L.Z.L. and J.R.J. contributed equally to this work. The experimental work was mainly supported by the Department of Energy (DOE) under grant DE-SC0014430 (L.Z.L., J.R.J., Y.Z., X.X.Y., Q.Y.L., C.G., and X.Q.P.) and partially by the National Science Foundation (NSF) under Grants No. DMR-1420620 and No. DMR-1506535. The TEM work was conducted at the Irvine Materials Research Institute at University of California, Irvine. The theoretical work at the Pennsylvania State University was supported by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Basic Energy Sciences, Division of Materials Sciences and Engineering under Award FG0207ER46417 (X.X.C. and L.Q.C.). Calculations at the Pennsylvania State University were performed on the Cyberstar Linux Cluster funded by the National Science Foundation through grant OCI0821527. The work at Cornell University was supported by the National Science Foundation (Nanosystems Engineering Research Center for Translational Applications of Nanoscale Multiferroic Systems) under Grant No. EEC-1160504 (C.H. and D.G.S.). This work was performed in part at the Cornell Nanoscale Facility, a member of the National Nanotechnology Coordinated Infrastructure (NNCI), which was supported by the National Science Foundation (Grant ECCS-1542081). This work made use of the Cornell Center for Materials Research Shared Facilities which are supported through the NSF MRSEC program (DMR-1719875). The authors thank Dr. Zhan Zhang from Argonne National Lab for useful discussion of X-ray diffraction data.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Keywords

defects, domain control, ferroelectrics, multiferroics

Received: April 29, 2018

Revised: July 1, 2018

Published online: August 6, 2018

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