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Phosphorus, Sulfur, and Silicon and the Related Elements

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713618290>

Can Four Membered Heterophosphete Structures Exist? “Heterogen” Hetero Antiaromaticity as a Destabilizing Effect

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To cite this Article Mucsi, Zoltán, Körtvélyesi, Tamás, Novák, Tibor and Keglevich, György (2008) 'Can Four Membered Heterophosphete Structures Exist? “Heterogen” Hetero Antiaromaticity as a Destabilizing Effect', *Phosphorus, Sulfur, and Silicon and the Related Elements*, 183: 2, 726 — 727

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/10426500701807657

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10426500701807657>

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Can Four Membered Heterophosphete Structures Exist? “Heterogen” Hetero Antiaromaticity as a Destabilizing Effect

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Keywords Antiaromaticity; heterophosphetes; p-heterocycles; ring opening

Four-membered heterophosphetes (Figure 1), existing as two conformers (**1A** and **1B**), are thermodynamically unstable and they readily undergo ring-opening reactions to form oxo-, imino-, or thiaphosphoranes **3**.¹ This may be one of the reasons that earlier synthetic attempts to produce heterophosphetes have mostly failed. Their saturated counterparts heterophosphetanes (**2A** and **2B**), which are well-known intermediates of the Wittig reaction are, however, stable and cannot undergo ring-opening reaction. The question arises: What is the reason for this sharp difference between the stability of **1** and **2**?

Our results based on quantum chemical calculations revealed that the instability of **1A** and **1B** should be attributed to their antiaromatic character, originated from the conjugation of the empty d-orbitals of the P atom and the occupied p_z orbital of the Y moiety. This type of antiaromaticity is defined as a “heterogenic” antiaromaticity. Compounds **1A** with equatorial Y possess a more considerable extent of antiaromatic character than species **1B** with axial Y, which practically can be considered as non-aromatic compounds. It has been shown that strong electron withdrawing substituents (F, Cl, CN) bound to the phosphorus atom are able to stabilize the ring system. The thermodynamic

The authors are grateful for the financial support from the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA, Grant No. T 067679).

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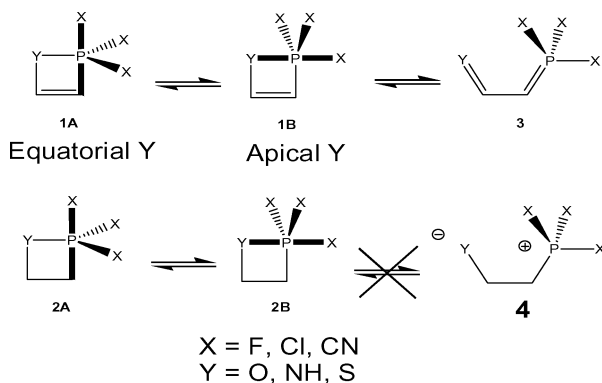


FIGURE 1 Transformations of heterophosphetes (**1A** and **1B**) and heterophosphetanes (**2A** and **2B**).

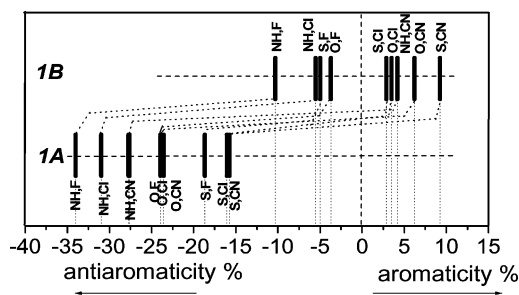


FIGURE 2 Computed aromaticity and antiaromaticity scale for **1A** and **1B**.

stability of **1A** and **1B** has been studied systematically and the extent of antiaromaticity of these species was quantified by a linear aromatic and antiaromatic scale (Figure 2). An overall 3-D potential surface, as well as an antiaromaticity % surface of **1** have been discovered.

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