



# A Phosphanyl-Phosphagallene that Functions as a Frustrated Lewis Pair

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Dedicated to Professor Simon Aldridge on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday

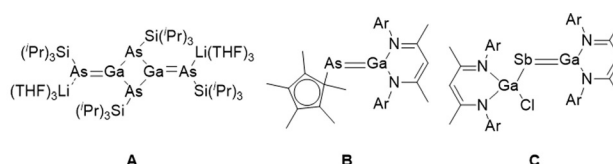
**Abstract:** Phosphagallenes (**1a/1b**) featuring double bonds between phosphorus and gallium were synthesized by reaction of (phosphanyl)phosphaketenes with the gallium carbenoid Ga(Nacnac) (Nacnac = HC[C(Me)N(2,6-*i*-Pr<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)]<sub>2</sub>). The stability of these species is dependent on the saturation of the phosphanyl moiety. **1a**, which bears an unsaturated phosphanyl ring, rearranges in solution to yield a spirocyclic compound (**2**) which contains a P=P bond. The saturated variant **1b** is stable even at elevated temperatures. **1b** behaves as a frustrated Lewis pair capable of activation of H<sub>2</sub> and forms a 1:1 adduct with CO<sub>2</sub>.

Once thought inaccessible, multiple bonds involving main group elements with a principal quantum number (*n*) greater than 2 have been of interest for decades.<sup>[1]</sup> The inherent weakness of these bonds, which is partly due to ineffective p<sub>π</sub>-p<sub>π</sub> orbital overlap, gives rise to reactivity that contrasts with that of their lighter analogues. Heteroatomic multiple bonds between group 13/15 elements are of particular interest due to their valence isoelectronic relationship to C–C bonds. The behaviour of such species is exemplified by compounds containing B=N bonds, which display electronic properties and reactivity that differ significantly from C=C bonds. For example, incorporation of B=N units into aromatic systems has been used for the preparation of materials with unique photophysical and electrochemical properties.<sup>[2]</sup> Additionally, compounds of the type (R)HN=BH(R') (R/R' = H, alkyl, aryl) have been explored as potential hydrogen storage materials.<sup>[3]</sup>

Examples of compounds with E=E' bonds in which one element has *n* > 2 (i.e. E = Al, Ga and E' = N; or E = B and E' = P, As) are less common. Nöth and co-workers reported the first boranylidenephosphane containing a B=P double bond by employing sterically demanding substituents on the boron atom and coordination of the phosphorus centre to a Lewis acid.<sup>[4,5]</sup> This strategy was inverted by Power and co-

workers, who employed a sterically bulky terphenyl group at the pnictogen atom, in addition to the Lewis basic 4-dimethylaminopyridine at the boron centre which gave access to compounds containing B=P and B=As bonds.<sup>[6]</sup> Power also developed a synthetic strategy allowing access to E=N (E = Al, Ga) bonds by employing a group 13 carbenoid E(Nacnac) (Nacnac = HC[C(Me)N(2,6-*i*-Pr<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)]<sub>2</sub>) and sterically encumbered organic azides which liberate N<sub>2</sub> to give the desired compounds.<sup>[7,8]</sup> A similar strategy was recently utilised allowing access to anionic aluminium-imides.<sup>[8d,e]</sup>

Heteroatomic multiple bonds between heavy group 13/15 elements are rarer due to their inherent weakness, and are prone to oligomerization. Von Hähnisch and Hampe reported the dimeric [Li(THF)<sub>3</sub>]<sub>2</sub>Ga<sub>2</sub>[As(Si<sup>*i*</sup>Pr<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>] (**A**, Figure 1) through the reaction of GaCl<sub>3</sub> with two equivalents of Li<sub>2</sub>As(Si<sup>*i*</sup>Pr<sub>3</sub>).<sup>[9]</sup> More recently, the Schulz group reported the synthesis of the monomeric gallaarsene (**B**) by addition of two equivalents of the gallium carbenoid Ga(Nacnac) to Cp\*AsCl<sub>2</sub> (Cp\* = C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>), in which one equivalent of Ga(Nacnac) acts as a sacrificial reductant.<sup>[10]</sup> The same group also reported the first example of a gallastibene, (Nacnac)Ga=SbGa(Cl)(Nacnac) (**C**), by reduction of the radical [(Nacnac)(Cl)Ga]<sub>2</sub>Sb<sup>•</sup> with KC<sub>8</sub>.<sup>[11]</sup>



**Figure 1.** Previously reported examples of heteroatomic group 13/15 multiple bonds. Ar = 2,6-*i*-Pr<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>.

Low-valent species containing heavy group 13 and 15 elements are potential precursors to III/V semiconducting materials which have found applications in optoelectronic devices.<sup>[12]</sup> With this in mind we aimed to expand the known synthetic pathways to access potential molecular precursors to such materials. The stability of **A–C** implies that the absence of structurally authenticated Ga=P (and indeed Al=P and In=P) bonds is likely due to the lack of a suitable synthetic pathway rather than the inherent instability of such compounds. Of particular interest is Power's ligand displacement strategy involving Ga(Nacnac) and azides. Phosphaketenes (RP=C=O) are isoelectronic to azides and are known to undergo decarbonylation processes, with a variety of Lewis

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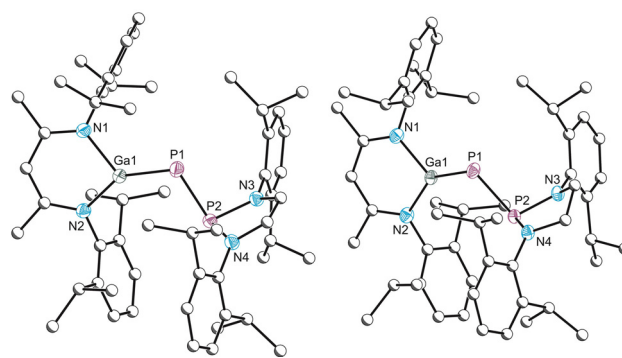
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bases.<sup>[13]</sup> We reasoned that addition of the nucleophile Ga(Nacnac), to a phosphaketene would result in carbonyl displacement to yield a compound containing a Ga=P bond. For this study we selected [(HC)<sub>2</sub>(NAr)<sub>2</sub>P]CO ([P]PCO) and [(H<sub>2</sub>C)<sub>2</sub>(NAr)<sub>2</sub>P]CO ([SP]PCO) (Ar = 2,6-*i*-Pr<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>) due to their previously reported, well-behaved ligand-substitution reactivity.<sup>[14]</sup>

Addition of Ga(Nacnac) to a solution of [P]PCO results in immediate effervescence, accompanied by a colour change from yellow to red (Scheme 1). The formation of [P]P=Ga(Nacnac) (**1a**) is quantitative by NMR spectroscopy, as evidenced by the appearance of a new AX spin system in the <sup>31</sup>P{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectrum displaying two doublet resonances at 176.6 and −43.0 ppm (<sup>1</sup>J<sub>P-P</sub> = 385 Hz) corresponding to the phosphanyl and phosphinidene centers, respectively. The former is comparable to that of the phosphaketene precursor, however the phosphinidene resonance is shifted to a higher frequency (cf. [P]PCO: <sup>31</sup>P{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR = 165.1 and −232.6 ppm; <sup>1</sup>J<sub>P-P</sub> = 253 Hz), consistent with a decrease in shielding due to phosphorus lone pair donation into the gallium *p*-orbital. Attempts to crystallize **1a** by cooling a concentrated hexane solution to −35 °C resulted in a mixture of red and light-yellow crystals. Monitoring a solution containing **1a** by <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>31</sup>P{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectroscopy over 24 hours allows for observation of a new product, **2** (ca. 10% conversion). Heating a solution containing **1a** to 40 °C for 5 days allowed for complete conversion to **2**.

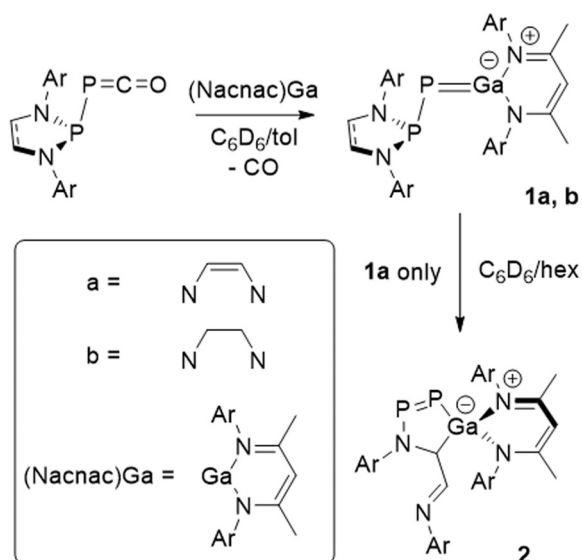
Single crystal X-ray diffraction studies performed on the red crystals confirms the identity of **1a** (Figure 2). The crystal structure reveals a P1–Ga1 bond length of 2.165(1) Å, the *shortest* bond of its type reported to date. It is notably shorter than the sum of the double bond covalent radii for these elements [ $\Sigma_{cov}(\text{P}=\text{Ga}) = 2.19 \text{ Å}$ ],<sup>[15]</sup> consistent with significant P–Ga  $\pi$ -bond character and/or a high degree of bond polarization as described by Su.<sup>[16]</sup> The P1–P2 distance of



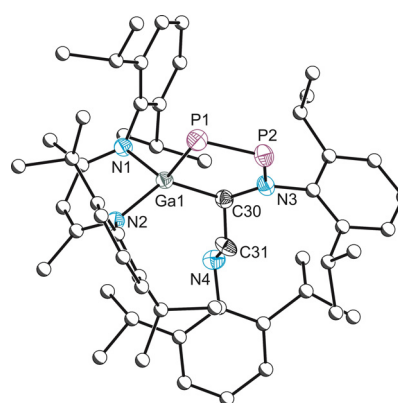
**Figure 2.** Molecular structure of **1a** (left) and **1b** (right). Ellipsoids set at 50% probability; hydrogen atoms omitted for clarity. All carbon atoms are depicted as spheres of arbitrary radius. Selected interatomic distances [Å] and angles [°]: **1a**: Ga1–P1 2.1650(7), P1–P2 2.2022(8), Ga1–N1 1.9186(19), Ga1–N2 1.941(2), P2–N3 1.7517(19), P2–N4 1.734(2); Ga1–P1–P2 101.31(3), N1–Ga1–N2 96.31(8), N4–P2–N3 86.58(9). **1b**: Ga1–P1 2.1766(3), P1–P2 2.2119(4), Ga1–N1 1.9489(10), Ga1–N2 1.9280(11), P2–N3 1.7282(10), P2–N4 1.7343(10); Ga1–P1–P2 101.080(15), N2–Ga1–N1 95.96(5), N3–P2–N4 87.79(5).

2.202(1) Å is significantly contracted with respect to that of [P]PCO (2.441(1) Å),<sup>[14a]</sup> resulting in an increase of the <sup>1</sup>J<sub>P-P</sub> coupling constant from 252 to 385 Hz.

The light-yellow crystals were unambiguously identified as compound **2** (Figure 3), a constitutional isomer of **1a**. It is likely formed from cleavage of one phosphanyl P–N bond and concomitant insertion of the Ga(Nacnac) group. The crystal structure displays a P–P bond length of 2.012(1) Å, in line with what is typically expected of a double bond (2.04 Å).<sup>[15]</sup> The <sup>31</sup>P{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectrum displays AX spin system with doublet resonances at 510.2 and 122.7 ppm which display a large <sup>1</sup>J<sub>P-P</sub> coupling constant of 572 Hz. While we were unable to identify compounds analogous to **2** in the literature, a similar cyclic diphosphene was proposed as an intermediate in the rearrangement of [P]PCO.<sup>[14a]</sup> A related benzo[d][1,2,3]



**Scheme 1.** Synthesis of **1a** and **1b** through addition of Ga(Nacnac) (Nacnac = HC[C(Me)N(2,6-*i*-Pr<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)]<sub>2</sub>) to (phosphanyl)phosphaketenes, and the rearrangement of **1a** to **2**. Ar = 2,6-*i*-Pr<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>.



**Figure 3.** Molecular structure of **2**. Ellipsoids set at 50% probability; hydrogen atoms omitted for clarity. All carbon atoms (with the exception of C30 and C31) are depicted as spheres of arbitrary radius. Selected interatomic distances [Å] and angles [°]: P1–P2 2.0121(10), P1–Ga1 2.3142(7), C1–Ga1 2.045(2), C2–N2 1.241(3), C1–N1 1.479(3), N1–P2 1.688(2), C1–C2 1.448(3), C1–N1 1.479(3); N1–C1–Ga1 108.28(15), P2–P1–Ga1 93.26(3), N1–P2–P1 111.94(8), N4–Ga1–N3 96.07(8).

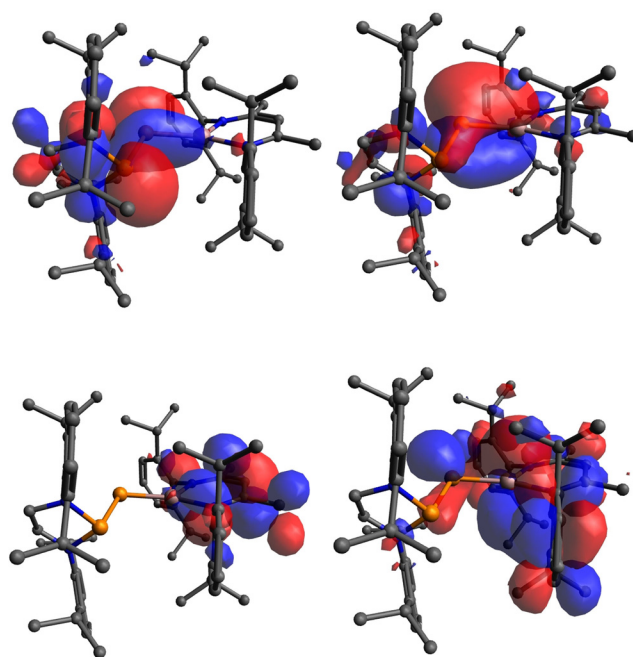
azadiphosphole exhibits resonances at 246 and 354 ppm ( $^1J_{\text{P-P}} = 493$  Hz).<sup>[17]</sup> The discrepancy in the chemical shifts of these structurally similar compounds is likely due to a decrease of aromatic character in **2**, the heterocyclic core exhibits NICS(0) and NICS(1) values of 5.3 and 4.0, respectively, consistent with little aromatic character. The magnitude of the coupling constant of **2** is also greater, however comparable to linear diphosphenes such as  $(\text{C}_5\text{Me}_5)\text{P}=\text{P}(\text{Ar}')$  ( $\text{Ar}' = 2,4,6\text{-t-Bu}_3\text{C}_6\text{H}_2$ ) which displays a  $^1J_{\text{P-P}}$  coupling of 584 Hz.<sup>[18]</sup>

Utilizing a phosphanyl with a saturated backbone, [SP]PCO, yields phosphaketenes with improved stability towards rearrangement.<sup>[14b,19]</sup> Addition of Ga(Nacnac) to a solution of [SP]PCO in non-coordinating solvents results in quantitative formation of [SP]P=Ga(Nacnac), **1b** (Scheme 1). The  $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum displays two doublets at 157.8 and  $-61.3$  ppm with a  $^1J_{\text{P-P}}$  coupling of 346 Hz. As with **1a**, the phosphinidene resonance is shifted to a significantly higher frequency (cf. [SP]PCO  $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\} = 167.9$  and  $-245.6$  ppm;  $^1J_{\text{P-P}} = 252$  Hz). The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum is consistent with a single [SP] and Ga(Nacnac) moiety. It is notable that both **1a** and **1b** display three resonances corresponding to the isopropyl methine groups, indicative of free rotation about the P=Ga bond and a weak  $(3p\text{-}4p)\pi$ -bond. Monitoring a solution containing **1b** by NMR spectroscopy indicated no rearrangement occurs, even upon heating to  $80^\circ\text{C}$ . Crystals suitable for single crystal X-ray diffraction were obtained from a concentrated hexane solution in moderate yields (50 %).

The crystal structure of **1b** (Figure 2) reveals bond parameters comparable to **1a**. The P1–Ga1 bond length is  $2.177(1)$  Å, a small increase with respect to **1a** but still below what is expected of a double bond. The P1–P2 bond length is also slightly elongated ( $2.212(1)$  Å).

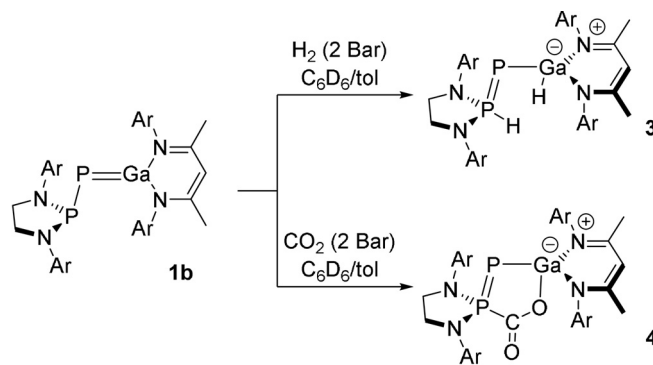
Density functional theory (DFT) calculations were performed to better understand the electronic structure of **1b**. Calculations were performed in the gas phase at the B3LYP level of theory using the basis sets Def2TZVP (Ga, P, N) and Def2SVP (C, H). The optimised structure, **1b<sub>DFT</sub>**, displays bond parameters in good agreement to those of the solid-state structure. The P1–P2 bond length is  $2.257$  Å (cf.  $2.212(1)$  Å) and the P1–Ga1 bond length is  $2.201$  Å, a modest increase with respect to **1b** (cf.  $2.177(1)$  Å). The HOMO of **1b<sub>DFT</sub>** primarily resides on both phosphorus lone pairs, while the HOMO–1 is mainly reflected by the  $\pi$ -bonding interaction between Ga1 and P1 (Figure 4). Natural bond order analysis performed on the Ga=P bond reveals a  $\sigma$ -bond (1.97e occupancy) composed of primarily  $p$ -type (P; 14.55 % s, 84.54 % p) and  $s$ -type (Ga; 83.97 % s, 15.89 % p) atomic orbitals. The Ga–P  $\pi$ -bond (1.89e occupancy) is highly polarized towards the phosphorus center (82.74 % P) and is almost exclusively comprised of  $p$ -orbital character (P 99.39 % p, Ga 99.53 % p). Natural population analysis further corroborates the polarized nature of this bond, with a highly electron deficient Ga1 ( $q = +1.30$ ) and negative P1 ( $q = -0.80$ ), while the phosphanyl P2 is positively charged ( $q = +0.96$ ).

We hypothesised that **1b** may heterolytically cleave hydrogen due to the polarity of the Ga–P bond. Previous



**Figure 4.** Top: HOMO (left) and HOMO–1. Bottom: LUMO (left) and LUMO + 1 of **1b<sub>DFT</sub>**.

examples of homoatomic heavy element multiple bonds have shown that homolytic cleavage is possible, however to our knowledge there have been no examples of a heavy heteroatomic multiple bond capable of heterolytic hydrogen activation.<sup>[20,21]</sup> Exposure of a solution containing **1b** to 2 bar of  $\text{H}_2$  resulted in an immediate formation of **3** (Scheme 2). The  $^{31}\text{P}$  NMR spectrum indicated quantitative formation of a new product with a doublet of doublets resonance at 67.0 ppm ( $^1J_{\text{P-P}} = 578$  Hz,  $^1J_{\text{P-H}} = 457$  Hz), corresponding to the phosphanyl phosphorus atom, and a broad doublet resonance at  $-248.7$  ppm ( $^1J_{\text{P-P}} = 578$  Hz), corresponding to the phosphinidene phosphorus atom. The former resonance collapses to a doublet upon proton decoupling. These data are consistent with protonation occurring exclusively at the phosphanyl phosphorus. The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum displays two new resonances, a doublet of doublets at 8.93 ppm with coupling to both phosphorus centers ( $^1J_{\text{H-P}} = 457$  Hz,  $^2J_{\text{H-P}} = 10$  Hz) corresponding to the proton bound to



**Scheme 2.** Synthesis of **3** and **4** by the reaction of **1b** with  $\text{H}_2$  and  $\text{CO}_2$ , respectively.

the phosphanyl phosphorus and a broad singlet at 5.80 ppm. This latter resonance is in the expected region of a gallium hydride.<sup>[22]</sup>

This unexpected reactivity can be rationalised as frustrated Lewis pair behaviour.<sup>[23]</sup> The lone pair at the phosphanyl phosphorus (HOMO) acts in this case as the Lewis base. The  $\pi$ -bond between the phosphinidene phosphorus and the gallium centre is sufficiently weak and polarized towards the phosphorus that the gallium  $p$ -orbital is available to act as a Lewis acid (LUMO + 1). The reaction is further aided by the generation of a P–P  $\pi$ -bond at the expense of a significantly weaker Ga–P  $\pi$ -bond.

Exposure of a solution containing **1b** to an atmosphere of 2 bar carbon dioxide results in quantitative formation of **4** (Scheme 2), as evidenced by two new doublet resonances in the  $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum at 80.7 and  $-291.0$  ppm ( $J_{\text{P-P}} = 588$  Hz). The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum is consistent with a reduction in symmetry about the Ga(Nacnac) due to restriction in rotation upon formation of the heterocyclic core. The  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum also displays a doublet of doublets resonance at 174.4 ppm with coupling to both phosphorus nuclei ( $^1J_{\text{C-P}} = 100$  Hz,  $^2J_{\text{C-P}} = 11$  Hz). Crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction were grown from a hexane solution at room temperature (74 % yield).

The crystal structure **4** confirms the formation of a  $\text{CO}_2$  adduct with **1b**, with formation of new P–C and O–Ga bonds with bond lengths of 1.894(2) and 1.906(2) Å, respectively (Figure 5). The P1–P2 bond length of 2.064(1) Å is significantly contracted in comparison to **1b**, falling in line with what is expected of a P–P double bond ( $\Sigma_{\text{cov}}(\text{P}=\text{P}) = 2.04$  Å).<sup>[15]</sup> This is accompanied by elongation of the Ga1–P1 bond (2.297(1) Å) which falls in line with what is expected of a single bond [ $\Sigma_{\text{cov}}(\text{P-Ga}) = 2.35$  Å]. It is perhaps best to describe the activation process as a two-electron oxidation of the phosphanyl phosphorus centre (**I**; Figure 6). A second, zwitterionic resonance form can be evoked with a formal positive charge on the phosphanyl site and negative charge on

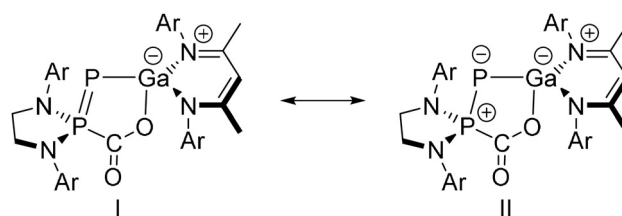


Figure 6. Resonance forms of **4**.

the phosphinidene (**II**), contrary to what is typical of FLP systems the negative charge is localized on the more electronegative P rather than the Ga ( $\chi_{\text{Ga}} = 1.81$ ,  $\chi_{\text{P}} = 2.19$ ). This resonance form is consistent with the low frequency  $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR resonance observed for this nucleus.

Adduct formation is not reversible under mild conditions, treatment of **4** under reduced pressure does not result in reformation of **1b**. This contrasts with a geminal Ga/P FLP system reported by Uhl and co-workers, which only showed a weak, reversible interaction with  $\text{CO}_2$  at low temperatures.<sup>[24]</sup> It is likely the driving force of the forward reaction, the formation of strong  $\sigma$ -bonds at the expense of a weak P–Ga  $\pi$ -bond, provides a thermodynamic sink preventing the reverse process being accessible.

P/Ga FLPs capable of heterolytic cleavage of hydrogen have previously been limited to intermolecular systems in which the Ga feature electron withdrawing groups, that is,  $\text{Ga}(\text{C}_6\text{F}_5)_3$  with phosphines.<sup>[25]</sup> To our knowledge, **1b** represents the first P/Ga FLP to form an isolable adduct with  $\text{CO}_2$  and to activate  $\text{H}_2$  in an intramolecular fashion. It is also remarkable in that it does so with three  $\pi$ -donating substituents adjacent to the Lewis-acidic Ga centre.

In conclusion, we have synthesized a stable species containing a phosphorus-gallium double bond, **1b**, from a ligand exchange reaction between a phosphanyl-phosphaketene and a gallium carbenoid. The reactivity of **1b** towards  $\text{H}_2$  and  $\text{CO}_2$  was investigated, resulting in FLP type behaviour between the phosphanyl phosphorus and the gallium centre.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Keywords:** decarbonylation · gallium · frustrated Lewis pairs · phosphaketenes · phosphorus

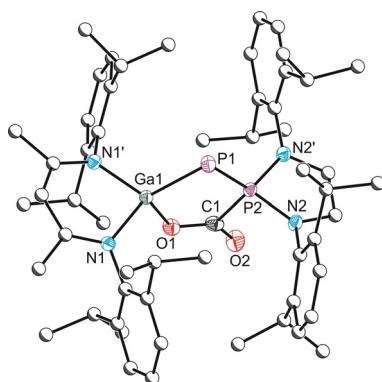


Figure 5. Molecular structure of **4**. Ellipsoids set at 50 % probability; hydrogen atoms omitted for clarity. All carbon atoms (with the exception of C1) are depicted as spheres of arbitrary radius. Selected interatomic distances [Å] and angles [°]: P1–Ga1 2.2971(7), P1–P2 2.0640(8), Ga1–O1 1.9061(18), Ga1–N1 1.9590(14), P2–N2 1.6861(15), P2–C1 1.894(2), O1–C1 1.282(3), O2–C1 1.227(3); P2–P1–Ga1 89.87(3), N2–P2–N2 91.36(10), N1–Ga1–N1 94.31(8), C1–P2–P1 109.57(9), O1–Ga1–P1 103.91(6), C1–P2–P1 109.57(9), O2–C1–O1 124.4(2), O2–C1–P2 116.2(2).

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