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(54) Title: METAL COMPLEXES FOR ENHANCED DISPERSION OF NANOMATERIALS, COMPOSITIONS AND METHODS THEREFOR

(57) Abstract: Metal complexes ("compatibilizers") having properties particularly useful for treating and compatibilizing nanomaterials (i.e. carbon nanotubes, nanofibers, nanographite) include metal cations, anionic surfactants, and neutral donor ligands. The treated nanomaterials can be isolated as solid treated nanomaterial and used in further applications where increased dispersion is desirable.



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Metal Complexes for Enhanced Dispersion of Nanomaterials, Compositions and Methods Therefor

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/730,098 filed October 26, 2005.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates generally to the compatibilization of nanomaterials to various matrix materials as well as to related compositions and methods therefor. The present invention relates more specifically to metal complexes, herein also termed "compatibilizers," that non-covalently bond/adsorb onto the surface of nanomaterials, such as carbon nanotubes, to yield a treated nanomaterial that can easily be dispersed into a matrix material such as solvents, monomers, oligomers and/or polymers, thereby producing a composite material that has enhanced mechanical, thermal and electrical properties. The composites will have end-use applications in the aerospace, automotive, biomedical, textile, and electronic fields.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Applications for carbon nanotubes are enormous due to their mechanical, thermal, and electronic properties. Incorporation and dispersion of carbon nanotubes into polymers have proven difficult due to the inherent bundling of the carbon nanotube due to van der waal forces and incompatibility at the polymer/nanotube (NT) interface.

[0003] Pristine nanotubes are generally insoluble/incompatible in common solvents, oligomers and polymers. Such nanotubes are also difficult to chemically

functionalize without altering the desirable intrinsic properties of nanotubes. Single-walled nanotubes (SWNTs) have been solubilized/dispersed in organic solvents and water by polymer wrapping (Dalton et al., (J. Phys. Chem. B (2000) 104, 10012); Star et al. (Angew. Chem., Int. Ed. (2001) 40, 1721), and O'Connell et al. (Chem. Phys. Lett. (2001) 342, 265)), and non-covalently functionalized by adhesion of small molecules for protein immobilization (Chen et al., (J. Am. Chem. Soc. 123:3838 (2001))). The polymer wrapping approach works poorly for dissolution of small diameter SWNTs possibly due to unfavorable polymer conformations.

[0004] One known process for non-covalent functionalization and for dispersion of carbon nanotubes is described by Chen, J. et al. (J. Am. Chem. Soc., 124, 9034 (2002)), incorporated herein by reference. The process results in nanotube dispersion using a non-wrapping approach. Specifically, SWNTs were solubilized in chloroform with poly(phenylene ethynylene)s (PPE) along with vigorous shaking and/or short bath-sonication as described by Chen et al. (ibid) and in U.S. Patent Publication No. U.S. 2004/0034177 published Feb. 19, 2004, and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/318,730.

[0005] The chemistry of arene-silver(I) complexes is well established. Many examples exist in the literature to demonstrate the ability of Ag(I) to coordinate to polyaromatic systems in a π -bonding fashion (see, for example, Megumu et. al., Coordination Chemistry Reviews 2000, 198, 171–203).

[0006] Further, silver complexes for compatibilizing nanomaterials, and related compositions, and methods therefor are described herein.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] The present embodiments provide a metal complex for compatibilizing a nanomaterial into a matrix, the metal complex comprising a metal cation capable of being adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial; a surfactant anion compatible

with the matrix; and at least one neutral donor ligand attached to the metal cation capable of stabilizing the metal complex and stabilizing any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial, and between the metal complex and the matrix.

[0008] The present invention also provides a coating for a surface of a nanomaterial, the coating comprising a metal complex containing a metal cation capable of being adsorbed onto the surface of the nanomaterial; an anionic surfactant; and at least one neutral donor ligand attached to the metal cation and capable of stabilizing the metal complex and stabilizing any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial.

[0009] The present invention further provides a nanocomposite comprising a matrix; and a nanomaterial treated with a metal complex and dispersed in the matrix. The metal complex contains a metal cation capable of being adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial; a surfactant anion compatible with the matrix; and at least one neutral donor ligand attached to the metal cation and capable of stabilizing the metal complex and stabilizing any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial, and between the metal complex and the matrix.

[0010] Still further, the present invention provides a method for making a nanocomposite comprising a matrix and a nanomaterial, wherein the nanomaterial is compatible with the matrix upon treatment thereof. The method comprises treating the nanomaterial with a metal complex, the metal complex containing a metal cation, a surfactant anion, and at least one neutral donor ligand, wherein the metal cation is adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial, wherein the surfactant anion is compatible with the matrix, and wherein the neutral donor ligand is attached to the metal cation and stabilizes the metal complex and stabilize any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial, and between the metal complex and the matrix; and dispersing the treated nanomaterial into the matrix.

[0011] Yet another embodiment of the present invention provides for an article comprising a nanocomposite made of a matrix and a nanomaterial, wherein the nanomaterial is compatible with the matrix upon treatment thereof. The method comprises treating the nanomaterial with a metal complex, the metal complex containing a metal cation, a surfactant anion, and at least one neutral donor ligand, wherein the metal cation is adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial, wherein the surfactant anion is compatible with the matrix, and wherein the neutral donor ligand is attached to the metal cation and stabilizes the metal complex and stabilize any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial, and between the metal complex and the matrix; and dispersing the treated nanomaterial into the matrix.

[0012] Still another embodiment of the present invention provides for an article comprising a nanocomposite comprising a matrix; and a nanomaterial treated with a metal complex and dispersed in the matrix. The metal complex contains a metal cation capable of being adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial; a surfactant anion compatible with the matrix; and at least one neutral donor ligand attached to the metal cation and capable of stabilizing the metal complex and stabilizing any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial, and between the metal complex and the matrix .

[0013] The advantages of the present invention over existing prior art relating to the compatibilization of nanomaterials, such as, for example, carbon nanotubes, with matrix materials, such as, for example, solvents, monomers, polymers, and the like, which shall become apparent from the description which follows, are accomplished by the invention as hereinafter described and claimed.

DESCRIPTION OF ONE OR MORE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0014] As noted hereinabove, at least one embodiment of the present invention provides for a metal complex having properties that are particularly useful and

suitable for compatibilizing nanomaterials with a matrix material such that, upon subsequent dispersion of the nanomaterials into the matrix material, a useful nanocomposite is provided that can be used as an useful article or as a precursor to improving another article.

[0015] In at least one embodiment, the metal complex includes a metal cation capable of being adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial; a surfactant anion compatible with the matrix; and at least one neutral donor ligand attached to the metal cation. The metal complex can be made by any technique known in the art, but must have at least one functional group capable of compatibilizing the nanomaterial. This means that at least one unit of the metal complex is a substituent capable of interacting with another chemical group to form a covalent or non-covalent bond. Similarly, in another embodiment, the metal complex must also have a substituent or functional group capable being compatible with the matrix material. In the present invention, the metal cation is preferably the substituent that is capable of interacting with the nanomaterial while the anionic surfactant is the substituent that is capable of interacting with the matrix.

[0016] The metal cation can be any metal cation known to be useful for the purposes of the present invention. That is, essentially any non-radioactive metal capable of being non-covalently bonded or adsorbed onto the surface of a desired nanomaterial can be used. Such metal cations may include any of the alkali metals, alkaline earth metals, or the transition metals from groups 4-12 of the transition series of the periodic table.

[0017] In one embodiment, the metal cation is silver. Silver complexes have properties that are believed to be particularly useful for compatibilizing certain types of nanomaterials, such as carbon nanotubes, and for effecting subsequent dispersion of a solid nanomaterial within a matrix material such as a polymer or a solvent.

[0018] Essentially any anionic surfactant compatible with the matrix material can be used in the present invention. More particularly, it will be appreciated that such an anionic surfactant may include any anionic species that would balance the charge of the metal cation selected and useful to the present invention.

[0019] In at least one embodiment of the present invention, the surfactant anion can be any molecular moiety useful as a counteranion and capable of acting as a compatibilizer between the desired nanomaterial and the desired matrix material. Such anions would include a moiety selected from the group of nitrate, triflate, sulfate, sulfonate, phosphate and carboxylate. These anionic surfactants work particularly well with silver cations in the formation of metal complexes, such as silver nitrates for example, that are believed to be excellent compatibilizers of carbon nanomaterials as discussed hereinbelow. One particularly useful metal complex is silver alkyl sulfate, wherein the metal cation is silver and the surfactant anion is, for example, dodecyl sulfate.

[0020] In at least one embodiment of the present invention, the surfactant anion has a surfactant tail. Such a tail can be a long tail having 10 atoms or more in its backbone chain, or a short tail, having less than 10 atoms in its chain. The longer the chain forming the surfactant tail, the easier the surfactant tail can debundle the nanomaterial, such as nanotubes, that may be held together by van der Waals forces and the like, and the easier it can prevent the re-aggregation of the nanomaterial. Of course, such a surfactant tail will also aid significantly in the ability of the metal complex to act as a compatibilizer between the desired nanomaterial and the desired matrix material.

[0021] Generally, the surfactant tail may be linear, branched or cyclic. Where suitable, the surfactant tail of the anionic surfactant may include from 1 to about 100 carbon atoms. As such, the surfactant tail may contain an organic functional moiety selected from the group consisting of aromatic, alkyl, olefinic, allyl, ether, amide, carboxylic, carbonate, and combinations and mixtures thereof. Such organic tails

are useful for compatibilizing those nanomaterials and those matrix materials that, while not necessarily compatible with each other, are compatible with the metal complexes of the present invention having such organic functional moieties.

[0022] In another embodiment, the surfactant anion has a surfactant tail comprising from 1 to about 100 inorganic atoms. As such, the surfactant tail may contain a functional moiety selected from the group consisting of silanes, siloxanes, germanes, germoxanes, stannanes, stannoxanes, phosphanes, phophenes, arsanes, arsenes, and combinations and mixtures thereof. Of course, inorganic tails such as these are suitable for compatibilizing those nanomaterials and those matrix materials that, while not necessarily compatible with each other, are compatible with the metal complexes of the present invention having such inorganic functional moieties.

[0023] In the present invention, it will be appreciated that it is the metal cation that attaches to or bonds to the nanomaterial, and the surfactant anion that is compatible with the matrix material into which the nanomaterial treated with the metal complex of the present invention will be mixed. In the prior art, it is often the anionic species of a metal complex that is bonded to the nanomaterial, thereby preventing the use of an anionic surfactant to act as the compatibilizer between the nanomaterial and the matrix material into which it is mixed.

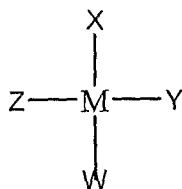
[0024] As earlier described, the present invention also provides a metal complex having at least one neutral donor ligand. Each neutral donor ligand is monofunctional or multifunctional, meaning it has one or more functional groups capable of bonding to the metal cation. Each neutral donor ligand in the present invention is attached to the metal cation; hence the use of the word "ligand." Each neutral donor ligand should be capable of stabilizing the metal complex. Moreover, one or more of these ligands should also be capable of stabilizing any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial or any interactions between the metal complex and the matrix material.

[0025] Essentially any neutral donor ligand that can act as a donor ligand toward the metal cation, and provide favorable interaction with the nanomaterial and/or the matrix material, would be suitable for the present invention. Some select neutral donor ligands include but are not necessarily limited to phosphate ester, phosphine, amine, or pyridine. In one embodiment, at least one of the neutral donor ligands contains a functional group that favors compatibility with solvents, monomer, oligomers, polymers, elastomers, thermosets and thermoplastics.

[0026] In one embodiment of the present invention, a metal complex may employ at least one bifunctional neutral donor ligand. Such a bifunctional neutral donor ligand may be a bipyridine such as 4,4-bipyridine.

[0027] It will be appreciated that each neutral donor ligand may be the same or different from every other neutral donor ligand that may be provided as a part of the metal complex. In one embodiment of the present invention, the metal complex may use at least one neutral donor ligand that is bifunctional, such as bipyridine, and at least a second neutral donor ligand that is the same or different than the first donor ligand. In other words, the second neutral donor ligand may be a bipyridine or may be some other ligand, such as a phosphate ester, a phosphine, an amine, or some other pyridine.

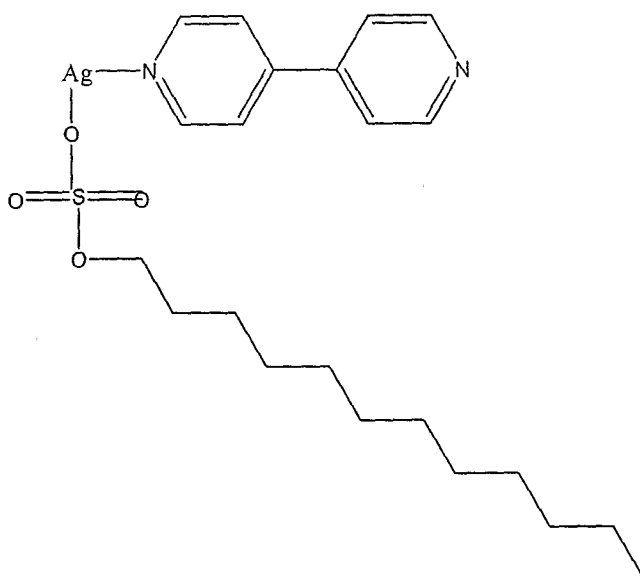
[0028] In view of the foregoing, a metal complex of the present invention may be depicted schematically as shown in Formula I below:



(I)

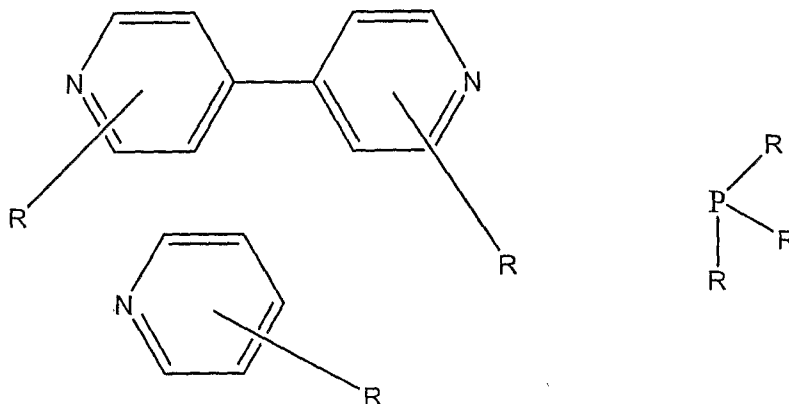
wherein M is a metal cation, W is a surfactant anion, and X, Y, and Z are additional ligands, namely neutral donor ligands.

[0029] In one embodiment, the metal complex may be a silver complex. One example of a silver complex suitable for use in the present invention is shown in Formula (II) below.



(II)

[0030] It will be appreciated that any of a wide variety of neutral donor ligands can be used in conjunction with the metal complexes of the present invention. Some examples of neutral donor ligands are shown below as Formulas (III), (IV) and (V):



(III), (IV), (V)

Wherein the Rs are intended to depict moieties that are useful to compatibilize and for favorable interactions that will promote good dispersion and good load transfer between the nanomaterial and the matrix material.

[0031] Yet another embodiment of the present invention provides a metal complex for use as a coating for a surface of a nanomaterial. The coating comprises a metal complex containing a metal cation capable of being adsorbed onto the surface of the nanomaterial; an anionic surfactant; and at least one neutral donor ligand attached to the metal cation and capable of stabilizing the metal complex and stabilizing any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial.

[0032] The term "nanomaterial," as used herein, includes, but is not limited to, carbon nanotubes (including multi-wall carbon nanotubes and single-wall carbon nanotubes), carbon nanoparticles, carbon nanofibers, carbon nanoropes, carbon nanoribbons, carbon nanofibrils, carbon nanoneedles, carbon nanosheets, carbon nanorods, carbon nanohorns, carbon nanocones, carbon nanoscrolls, graphite nanoplatelets, graphite nanoparticles, nanodots, other fullerene materials, or a combination thereof. The term, "multi-wall," is meant to include double-wall nanotubes (DWNTs) and few-wall nanotubes (FWNTs). In one embodiment the nanomaterials are made from carbon, given that the present invention is generally directed to a method of dispersing carbon-based nanomaterials into matrix materials with which such nanomaterials typically are not compatible.

[0033] The term "nanotubes" may be used broadly herein in some instances and, unless otherwise qualified or more strictly identified, is intended not to be limited to its technical definition. In a technical sense, a "nanotube" is a tubular, strand-like structure that has a circumference on the atomic scale. However, it will be understood that other nanomaterials would work with the present invention.

[0034] A method for making metal complexes of the present invention comprising reacting a metal salt with an anionic surfactant. For example, the reaction of silver nitrate with sodium dodecyl sulfate yields the silver(I) dodecyl sulfate complex. Upon completion of that reaction or during it, equal molar portions of other substituents, to be used as the neutral donor ligands, can be added. For example, the addition of equal molar portions of 4,4-bipyridine yields the silver(I)-4,4-bipyridine dodecyl sulfate complex.

[0035] Upon forming the metal complex, it may be used to treat any of a number of different types of nanomaterials, including particularly, nanotubes. In one embodiment, the nanomaterial may be "treated" by mixing it with the metal complex, typically in a solvent to form a solution. Any method of mixing the nanomaterial and the metal complex known in the art may be used in the present invention. The term "mixing," as used herein, means that the nanomaterial and the metal complex are brought into contact with each other in the presence of the solvent. "Mixing" may include simply vigorous shaking, or may include sonication for a period of time of about 10 min. to about 30 min.

[0036] A solvent may be used to disperse the nanomaterial and incorporate and treat the nanomaterial with the metal complex. The solvent may be organic or aqueous such as, for example, CHCl_3 , chlorobenzene, water, acetic acid, acetone, acetonitrile, aniline, benzene, benzonitrile, benzyl alcohol, bromobenzene, bromoform, 1-butanol, 2-butanol, carbon disulfide, carbon tetrachloride, chlorobenzene, chloroform, cyclohexane, cyclohexanol, decalin, dibromomethane, diethylene glycol, diethylene glycol ethers, diethyl ether, diglyme, dimethoxymethane, N,N-dimethylformamide, ethanol, ethylamine, ethylbenzene, ethylene glycol ethers, ethylene glycol, ethylene oxide, formaldehyde, formic acid, glycerol, heptane, hexane, iodobenzene, mesitylene, methanol, methoxybenzene, methylamine, methylene bromide, methylene chloride, methylpyridine, morpholine, naphthalene, nitrobenzene, nitromethane, octane, pentane, pentyl alcohol, phenol, 1-propanol, 2-propanol, pyridine, pyrrole, pyrrolidine, quinoline, 1,1,2,2-

tetrachloroethane, tetrachloroethylene, tetrahydrofuran, tetrahydropyran, tetralin, tetramethylethylenediamine, thiophene, toluene, 1,2,4-trichlorobenzene, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, 1,1,2-trichloroethane, trichloroethylene, triethylamine, triethylene glycol dimethyl ether, 1,3,5-trimethylbenzene, m-xylene, o-xylene, p-xylene, 1,2-dichlorobenzene, 1,3-dichlorobenzene, 1,4-dichlorobenzene, 1,2-dichloroethane, N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone, methyl ethyl ketone, dioxane, or dimethyl sulfoxide. In certain embodiments of the present invention, the solubilization solvent is a halogenated organic solvent and, in at least one embodiment, the solubilization solvent is chlorobenzene.

[0037] Of note, upon treatment of the nanomaterial with the metal complex, an interaction occurs between the metal complex and nanomaterial. The interaction is a noncovalent bonding instead of covalent bonding. Therefore, the underlying electronic structure of the nanomaterial and its key attributes are not affected.

[0038] Typically, treating the nanomaterials comprises the step of coating the metal complex onto a surface of the nanomaterial by any manner known in the art. Upon treatment, the treated nanomaterial can be used for a variety of purposes as described hereinbelow.

[0039] In one embodiment of the present invention, treated nanomaterial may comprise an amount of metal complex by weight ratio of greater than zero and less than 1.0. The weight ratio is calculated as the weight of the coated nanomaterials minus the weight of uncoated nanomaterials divided by the weight of the uncoated nanomaterials. In the present invention it is preferable that the ratio is in the range of 20-30 wt%.

[0040] In yet another embodiment of the present invention, the treated nanomaterials dispersed in solvent may not settle out even over a period of weeks. The treated nanomaterials can be isolated by filtering onto filter paper.

[0041] In another embodiment of the present invention, solid coated nanomaterial may be obtained from solution by removing the solvent. That is, solid coated nanomaterial can be obtained from the solutions of coated nanomaterial as described above by removing the solvent by one of many standard procedures well known to those of ordinary skill in the art. Such standard procedures include drying by evaporation such as by evaporation under vacuum or evaporation with heat, casting, precipitation or filtration and the like. A solvent for precipitating solid coated nanomaterials has a polarity that is opposite in the polarity of the metal complexes. For material obtained by methods of the present invention, the solid coated nanomaterial is generally black in color with a uniform network of carbon nanotubes. Solid coated nanomaterial may be pulverized to produce a powder.

[0042] As an example of making a treated nanomaterial, a silver complex as described above, *i.e.*, the silver(I)-4,4-bipyridine dodecyl sulfate complex, may be dispersed with carbon nanotubes in a solvent such as chlorobenzene. The silver complexes attach (non-covalently bond) to the surface of the carbon nanotubes, but do not affect their electrical conductivity abilities. Moreover, in some embodiments, because the metal complexes may have long chain anionic surfactant tails, the ability of the nanotubes to re-aggregate is disrupted. The result of this mixing yields carbon nanotubes coated with the silver complex. The coated nanomaterial can be isolated as a dispersion of the coated nanomaterial in a solvent or it may be isolated as a solid coated nanomaterial. Such coated nanomaterials can then be easily be dispersed in solvents, monomers, oligomers, polymers, various hydrocarbon and/or inorganic matrices or the like, as described hereinbelow.

[0043] Upon forming the treated nanomaterials, these nanomaterials may then be dispersed in a matrix material to form nanocomposites. That is, a nanocomposite comprises a matrix; and a nanomaterial treated with a metal complex and dispersed in the matrix. The metal complex contains a metal cation capable of being adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial. The metal complex also contains a surfactant

anion compatible with the matrix; and at least one neutral donor ligand attached to the metal cation and capable of stabilizing the metal complex and stabilizing any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial, and between the metal complex and the matrix.

[0044] The terms "matrix" and "matrix material" are used interchangeably herein. Any matrix material desired may be used in the present invention, provided the metal complex selected provides for desirable and favorable interactions between the nanomaterial and the matrix material. Matrix material may include, but is not necessarily limited to solvents, monomers, polymers, elastomers, thermoplastics, thermosets or any combinations or mixtures thereof. In one embodiment, the matrix is a solvent or a polymer. Where a solvent is used, such a solvent may be selected from the group consisting of water, methanol, methoxybenzene, methylamine, methylene bromide, methylene chloride, methylpyridine, morpholine, naphthalene, nitrobenzene, nitromethane, octane, pentane, pentyl alcohol, phenol, 1-propanol, 2-propanol, pyridine, pyrrole, pyrrolidine, quinoline, 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane, tetrachloroethylene, tetrahydrofuran, tetrahydropyran, tetralin, tetramethylethylenediamine, thiophene, toluene, 1,2,4-trichlorobenzene, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, 1,1,2-trichloroethane, trichloroethylene, triethylamine, triethylene glycol dimethyl ether, 1,3,5-trimethylbenzene, m-xylene, o-xylene, p-xylene, 1,2-dichlorobenzene, 1,3-dichlorobenzene, 1,4-dichlorobenzene, 1,2-dichloroethane, methyl ethyl ketone, dioxane, acetic acid, acetone, acetonitrile, aniline, benzene, benzonitrile, benzyl alcohol, bromobenzene, bromoform, 1-butanol, 2-butanol, carbon disulfide, carbon tetrachloride, chlorobenzene, chloroform, cyclohexane, cyclohexanol, decalin, dibromomethane, diethylene glycol, diethylene glycol ethers, diethyl ether, diglyme, dimethoxymethane, N,N-dimethylformamide, ethanol, ethylamine, ethylbenzene, ethylene glycol ethers, ethylene glycol, ethylene oxide, formaldehyde, formic acid, glycerol, heptane, hexane, iodobenzene, mesitylene, or dimethyl sulfoxide.

[0045] Where a polymer is used, it may be selected from inorganic or organic polymers. Inorganic polymers may include, but are not limited to, polysiloxanes, polysilanes, polygermanes, polystannanes, polyphosphazenes, and combinations thereof. Organic polymers may include, but are not limited to, polyolefins (PO), polyamides (nylons), polystyrenes (PS), ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymers (EVA), polyimides, polyurethanes (PU), poly(ethylene terephthalate) (PET), polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polystyrenes (PS), poly(ethylene-co-vinyl acetate) (PEVA), epoxies, polyanilines, polythiophenes, cyanate esters, polycarbonates, and copolymers, terpolymers, and mixtures thereof. In one embodiment, organic polymers selected from the group consisting of polystyrenes, polycarbonates, epoxies and polyurethanes are preferred. In another embodiment, organic polymers selected from the group consisting of polyesters, polyamides, and polyimides are preferred. In yet another embodiment, the preferred matrix material may be oligomers selected from the group consisting of polyols and prepolymers.

[0046] A further embodiment of the present invention comprises a method for making a nanocomposite comprising a matrix and a nanomaterial, wherein the nanomaterial is compatible with the matrix upon treatment thereof. The method comprises treating the nanomaterial with a metal complex, the metal complex containing a metal cation, a surfactant anion, and at least one neutral donor ligand. The metal cation is adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial. The surfactant anion is compatible with the matrix. At least one neutral donor ligand is attached to the metal cation and stabilizes the metal complex. One or more other neutral donor ligands may do likewise, and/or may stabilize any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial, and/or any interactions between the metal complex and the matrix. The treated nanomaterial is then dispersed into the matrix.

[0047] As described above, treating a nanomaterial may comprise coating the metal complex onto a surface of the nanomaterial. There are several ways in which to disperse the nanomaterial into the matrix.

[0048] For example one way to disperse the treated nanomaterial in the matrix is to melt the matrix and mix the nanomaterial into the melted matrix. This is known as melt compounding. Alternatively, the treated nanomaterial may be dispersed by solvating the matrix in one of the solvents described above and mixing the nanomaterial into the solvated matrix. Still further, the treated nanomaterial may be dispersed by mixing the nanomaterial into a monomer of the matrix and polymerizing the matrix. All of these methods are generally known in the art for mixing/dispersing compounds.

[0049] Another method for making a nanocomposite comprising a matrix and a nanomaterial includes the steps of coating the metal complex onto a surface of the nanomaterial and dispersing the nanomaterial in the matrix to make a masterbatch of the resultant nanocomposite. Then, additional nanomaterials may be dispersed into the masterbatch.

[0050] Yet a further embodiment for making a nanocomposite is to provide a masterbatch of the resultant nanocomposite as described above and then to further disperse the masterbatch into another matrix. In this manner, it will be appreciated that new articles and compositions can be made that include the nanocomposites of the present invention having nanomaterials dispersed therein that have been coated with metal complexes of the present invention that enable the nanomaterial to be compatible with the matrix material into which they are dispersed.

[0051] Another embodiment of the present invention relates to the dispersion of coated nanomaterial. Solid coated nanomaterial obtained as described above is dispersed by mixing the solid coated nanomaterial with a matrix such as a solvent, oligomer and/or polymer. For dispersions of coated nanomaterials in solvents the term "mixing," as used herein for dispersion, means that the solid coated nanomaterial and the solvent are brought into contact with each other. "Mixing" for dispersion may include simply vigorous shaking, or may include sonication for a period of time of about 10 min to about 30 min.

[0052] The dispersion solvent may be the same solvent as the solvent used in the coating process or may be a different solvent. Accordingly, the solvent may be organic or aqueous such as, for example, CHCl_3 , chlorobenzene, water, acetic acid, acetone, acetonitrile, aniline, benzene, benzonitrile, benzyl alcohol, bromobenzene, bromoform, 1-butanol, 2-butanol, carbon disulfide, carbon tetrachloride, chlorobenzene, chloroform, cyclohexane, cyclohexanol, decalin, dibromomethane, diethylene glycol, diethylene glycol ethers, diethyl ether, diglyme, dimethoxymethane, N,N-dimethylformamide, ethanol, ethylamine, ethylbenzene, ethylene glycol ethers, ethylene glycol, ethylene oxide, formaldehyde, formic acid, glycerol, heptane, hexane, iodobenzene, mesitylene, methanol, methoxybenzene, methylamine, methylene bromide, methylene chloride, methylpyridine, morpholine, naphthalene, nitrobenzene, nitromethane, octane, pentane, pentyl alcohol, phenol, 1-propanol, 2-propanol, pyridine, pyrrole, pyrrolidine, quinoline, 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane, tetrachloroethylene, tetrahydrofuran, tetrahydropyran, tetralin, tetramethylethylenediamine, thiophene, toluene, 1,2,4-trichlorobenzene, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, 1,1,2-trichloroethane, trichloroethylene, triethylamine, triethylene glycol dimethyl ether, 1,3,5-trimethylbenzene, m-xylene, o-xylene, p-xylene, 1,2-dichlorobenzene, 1,3-dichlorobenzene, 1,4-dichlorobenzene, 1,2-dichloroethane, N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone, methyl ethyl ketone, dioxane, or dimethyl sulfoxide. In certain embodiments of the present invention, the solvent may be a halogenated organic solvent such as 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane, chlorobenzene, chloroform, methylene chloride, or 1,2-dichloroethane and, in at least one embodiment, the solvent is chlorobenzene.

[0053] Another embodiment of the present invention relates to coated nanomaterial as provided herein dispersed within a host matrix. The host matrix may be a host polymer matrix or a host non-polymer matrix.

[0054] The term "host polymer matrix," as used herein, means a polymer matrix within which the coated nanomaterial is dispersed. A host polymer matrix may be an

organic polymer matrix or an inorganic polymer matrix, or a combination thereof. Examples of a host polymer matrix include polyamide (nylon), polyethylene, epoxy resin, polyisoprene, sbs rubber, polydicyclopentadiene, polytetrafluoroethylene, poly(phenylene sulfide), poly(phenylene oxide), silicone, polyketone, aramid, cellulose, polyimide, rayon, poly(methyl methacrylate), poly(vinylidene chloride), poly(vinylidene fluoride), carbon fiber, polyurethane, polycarbonate, polyisobutylene, polychloroprene, polybutadiene, polypropylene, poly(vinyl chloride), poly(ether sulfone), poly(vinyl acetate), polystyrene, polyester, polyvinylpyrrolidone, polycyanoacrylate, polyacrylonitrile, polyamide, poly(aryleneethynylene), poly(phenyleneethynylene), polythiophene, thermoplastic, thermoplastic polyester resin (such as polyethylene terephthalate), thermoset resin (e.g., thermosetting polyester resin or an epoxy resin), polyaniline, polypyrrole, or polyphenylene or a combination thereof.

[0055] Further examples of a host polymer matrix include a thermoplastic, such as ethylene vinyl alcohol, a fluoroplastic such as polytetrafluoroethylene, fluoroethylene propylene, perfluoroalkoxyalkane, chlorotrifluoroethylene, ethylene chlorotrifluoroethylene, or ethylene tetrafluoroethylene, ionomer, polyacrylate, polybutadiene, polybutylene, polyethylene, polyethylenechlorinates, polymethylpentene, polypropylene, polystyrene, polyvinylchloride, polyvinylidene chloride, polyamide, polyamide-imide, polyaryletherketone, polycarbonate, polyketone, polyester, polyetheretherketone, polyetherimide, polyethersulfone, polyimide, polyphenylene oxide, polyphenylene sulfide, polyphthalamide, polysulfone, or polyurethane. In certain embodiments, the host polymer may include a thermoset, such as allyl resin, melamine formaldehyde, phenol-formaldehyde plastic, polyester, polyimide, epoxy, polyurethane, or a combination thereof.

[0056] Examples of inorganic host polymers include a silicone, polysilane, polycarbosilane, polygermane, polystannane, a polyphosphazene, or a combination thereof.

[0057] More than one host matrix may be present in a nanocomposite. By using more than one host matrix, mechanical, thermal, chemical, or electrical properties of a single host matrix nanocomposite are optimized by adding coated nanomaterial to the matrix of the nanocomposite material.

[0058] In one embodiment, using two host polymers is designed for solvent cast epoxy nanocomposites where the coated nanomaterial, the epoxy resin and hardener, and the polycarbonate are dissolved in solvents and the nanocomposite film is formed by solution casting or spin coating.

[0059] In a further embodiment of the invention, the coated nanomaterial of the nanocomposite may be a primary filler. In this case, the nanocomposite may further comprise a secondary filler to form a multifunctional nanocomposite. In this embodiment, the secondary filler comprises a continuous fiber, a discontinuous fiber, a nanoparticle, a microparticle, a macroparticle, or a combination thereof. In another embodiment, the treated nanomaterial of the nanocomposite is a secondary filler and the continuous fiber, discontinuous fiber, nanoparticle, microparticle, macroparticle, or combination thereof, is a primary filler.

[0060] It will be understood that the nanocomposites themselves can be used as a host matrix for a secondary filler to form a multifunctional nanocomposite. Examples of a secondary filler include: continuous fibers (such as carbon fibers, carbon nanotube fibers, carbon black (various grades), carbon rods, carbon nanotube nanocomposite fibers such as nylon fibers, glass fibers, nanoparticles (such as metallic particles, polymeric particles, ceramic particles, nanoclays, diamond particles, or a combination thereof, for example), and microparticles (such as metallic particles, polymeric particles, ceramic particles, clays, diamond particles, or a combination thereof, for example). In a further embodiment, the continuous fiber, discontinuous fiber, nanoparticle, microparticle, macroparticle, or combination thereof, is a primary filler and the coated nanomaterial is a secondary filler.

[0061] A number of existing materials use continuous fibers, such as carbon fibers, in a matrix. These fibers are much larger than carbon nanotubes. Adding coated nanomaterial to the matrix of a continuous fiber reinforced nanocomposite results in a multifunctional nanocomposite material having improved properties such as improved impact resistance, reduced thermal stress, reduced microcracking, reduced coefficient of thermal expansion, or increased transverse or through-thickness thermal conductivity. Resulting advantages of multifunctional nanocomposite structures include improved durability, improved dimensional stability, elimination of leakage in cryogenic fuel tanks or pressure vessels, improved through-thickness or in plane thermal conductivity, increased grounding or electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding, increased flywheel energy storage, or tailored radio frequency signature (Stealth), for example. Improved thermal conductivity also could reduce infrared (IR) signature. Further existing materials that demonstrate improved properties by adding coated nanomaterial include metal particle nanocomposites for electrical or thermal conductivity, nano-clay nanocomposites, or diamond particle nanocomposites, for example.

[0062] In light of the foregoing, it will be appreciated that an article of manufacture comprising a polymer, a solution, a solid, a coated solid, or an insoluble solid containing a metal complex, a nanomaterial or a nanocomposite of the present invention as set forth herein can be produced. Such articles of manufacture include, but are not limited to, for example, epoxy and engineering plastic composites, filters, actuators, adhesive composites, elastomer composites, materials for thermal management (interface materials, spacecraft radiators, avionic enclosures and printed circuit board thermal planes, materials for heat transfer applications, such as coatings, for example), aircraft, ship infrastructure and automotive structures, improved dimensionally stable structures for spacecraft and sensors, reusable launch vehicle cryogenic fuel tanks and unlined pressure vessels, fuel lines, packaging of electronic, optoelectronic or microelectromechanical components or subsystems, rapid prototyping materials, fuel cells, medical materials, composite fibers, or improved flywheels for energy storage.

[0063] The following examples are presented to further illustrate various aspects of the present invention, and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention.

[0064] **Example 1:** This example is used to illustrate how a silver complex is synthesized for use in coating nanomaterials.

[0065] Sodium dodecyl sulfate (SDS) (1.5 g, 5.0 mmol) was added by solid addition to an aqueous solution (1.0 mL) of silver nitrate (0.85 g, 5.0 mmol) and stirred at RT for 10 min. Chloroform (10 mL) was added to dissolve the silver(I) dodecyl sulfate. The solution was filtered to remove the NaNO_3 . 4,4-bipyridine (0.78 g, 5.0 mmol) was added to the filtrate and stirred for 30 minutes to yield a viscous solution. The solvent was removed under reduced pressure to yield an off-white solid material that is ready for use as a compatibilizer. Thermal gravimetric analysis (TGA) of the compatibilizer demonstrated thermal stability with the loss of 4,4-bipyridine and dodecyl sulfate at ca. 220 °C. The molecular composition was confirmed by ^1H and ^{13}C NMR and elemental analysis.

[0066] **Example 2:** The following example is used to illustrate the treatment of MWNT with the silver complex.

[0067] The MWNT (Baytubes® C 150 P) used in this study were supplied by Bayer MaterialScience AG. It will be understood, however, that any nanomaterials, including other nanotubes, made by other methods/suppliers known to one of skilled in the art in light of the present disclosure may be used. They had a 95% purity, outer mean diameter of 13-16 nm and a length of 1-10 μm . The MWNT were used as received/without any purification.

[0068] Sonication was performed with the SONICATOR® 3000 supplied from Misonix, Inc. The sonicator was equipped with a 3/4" horn and operated at a control setting of 6.5 (approximately 40 W).

[0069] An embodiment of the present invention comprises the formation of solutions of coated nanotubes, and solid compositions thereof. It is preferable to coat the carbon nanotubes with the silver complex in situ. For example, 2.0 g of carbon nanotubes were dispersed in 200 mL of chloroform by sonicating for 5 minutes. In a separate flask, silver nitrate (0.16 g) was dissolved in 0.5 mL of water and SDS (0.27 g) was added and mixed. Chloroform (20 mL) was added to dissolve the complex and this solution was added to the dispersed carbon nanotubes and sonicated for 5 additional minutes. 4,4-bypyridine (0.13 g) in chloroform (20 mL) was added to the carbon nanotubes/AgNO₃/SDS/chloroform solution and sonicated for an additional 5 minutes. Sonication is terminated and this solution is stable for weeks without settling out. The treated carbon nanotubes can be isolated by vacuum filtration to yield a black solid that weighs 2.48 g after drying at 70 °C for 10 h. The ratio (w/w) of the silver complex to carbon nanotubes is calculated as 0.24. This same ratio is obtained in further experiments where the addition of silver complex is in excess of the amount needed to produce a 0.24 weight ratio.

[0070] **Example 3:** This example illustrates the dispersion of coated nanotubes.

[0071] The isolated coated nanotubes above can be re-dispersed in organic solvents by mixing the coated nanotubes in the solvent. For example, 3.0 mg of coated nanotubes are added to 1 mL of chloroform. The mixture was sonicated at room temperature for about 10 seconds. The resulting solutions are stable and do not settle, even after weeks.

[0072] **Example 4:** This example is used to illustrate the formation of an epoxy/nanotube composite using treated nanotubes.

[0073] Dispersion of Treated Nanotubes into Epoxy Resin: Treated nanotubes can be dispersed into epoxy resins by addition of the treated nanotubes into either component of a two component epoxy resin system. Chloroform is added to the

nanotube containing component in the amount needed to sufficiently lower the viscosity so that sonication is possible. The nanotube component is sonicated and the chloroform is removed under vacuum. An equal portion of the non-nanotube component is added and the mixture is mixed for 1 min using a propeller blade mixer. The mixture is poured into a mold and allowed to cure overnight to yield an epoxy/nanotube composite. Composite with varied loadings of treated nanotubes and untreated carbon nanotubes were prepared (1.0, 0.5, 0.1 and 0.01 wt% carbon nanotubes) and evaluated by microscope and it was determined that the treated nanotubes provided composite material with superior dispersion properties.

[0074] **Example 5:** This example is used to illustrate the dispersion of treated nanotubes into a Nylon-12.

[0075] Coated nanotubes were dispersed in nylon-12 at 3 wt% and 6 wt% carbon nanotubes using the following procedure. Dry blends of coated carbon nanotubes (20 wt % coated with silver(I)-4,4-bipyridine dodecyl sulfate) and nylon 12 powder were prepared and vacuum dried for 16 h under reduced pressure at 70 °C. Control batches were prepared using identical experimental conditions, however, uncoated carbon nanotubes were tested. All blends were then mixed for 2 minutes at 60 rpm at 190 °C using Volkume Brabender Mixer fitted with intermix type rotors. The resultant nanocomposites were cut into pieces, vacuum dried at 70-80 °C/29 in Hg/16h then compression molded into 4' x 4' x 0.036' plaques @ 180 °C. Volume resistivity was measured across the thickness using 3/8" diameter electrodes coated with conductive silver paste. Ohm readings were taken with a Fluka model 16 digital multimeter. The volume resistivity (Ohm-cm) recorded were 2.10E+06, 1.38E+03, 1.20E+08, and 1.13E+08 for the resulting nanocomposites containing 3.0 wt% coated nanotubes, 6.0 wt% coated nanotubes, 3.0 wt% uncoated nanotubes and 6.0 wt% uncoated nanotubes respectively.

[0076] An embodiment of the present invention include methods for incorporating treated nanomaterial into host polymer matrix. This includes, but are not limited to:

(i) in-situ polymerization of monomer(s) of the host polymer the presence of coated nanomaterial; (ii) mixing both coated nanomaterial and host matrix in a solvent system; or (iii) mixing coated nanomaterial with a host polymer melt.

[0077] Other embodiments of the present invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from a consideration of this specification or practice of the embodiments disclosed herein. However, the foregoing specification is considered merely exemplary of the present invention with the true scope and spirit of the invention being indicated by the following claims.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A metal complex for compatibilizing a nanomaterial into a matrix, the metal complex comprising: a metal cation capable of being adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial; a surfactant anion compatible with the matrix; and at least one neutral donor ligand attached to the metal cation capable of stabilizing the metal complex and stabilizing any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial, and between the metal complex and the matrix.
2. The metal complex of claim 1, wherein the metal cation is selected from the group consisting of alkali metals, alkaline earth metals, and the transition metals from groups 4-12 of the transition series of the periodic table.
3. The metal complex of claim 2, wherein the metal cation is Ag.
4. The metal complex of claim 1, wherein the metal cation has a charge and wherein the surfactant anion is selected from the group consisting of any anionic species that would balance the charge on the metal cation.
5. The metal complex of claim 4, wherein the surfactant anion is a moiety selected from the group consisting of nitrate, triflate, sulfate, sulfonate, phosphate, and carboxylate.
6. The metal complex of claim 5, wherein the surfactant anion is dodecyl sulfate.
7. The metal complex of claim 1, wherein the surfactant anion has a surfactant tail comprising from 1 to about 100 carbon atoms.

8. The metal complex of claim 7, wherein the surfactant tail is linear, branched or cyclic.
9. The metal complex of claim 7, wherein the surfactant tail contains a organic functional moiety selected from the group consisting of aromatic, alkyl, olefinic, allyl, ether, amide, carboxylic, carbonate, and combinations and mixtures thereof.
10. The metal complex of claim 1, wherein the anion surfactant anion has a surfactant tail comprising from 1 to about 100 inorganic atoms.
11. The metal complex of claim 10, wherein the surfactant tail contains a functional moiety selected from the group consisting of silanes, siloxanes, germanes, germoxanes, stannanes, stannoxanes, phosphanes, phophenes, arsanes, arsenes, and combinations and mixtures thereof.
12. The metal complex of claim 1, wherein each neutral donor ligand is monofunctional or multifunctional.
13. The metal complex of claim 12, wherein each neutral donor ligand is selected from the group consisting of phosphite ester, phosphine, amine, and pyridine.
14. The metal complex of claim 12, wherein at least one neutral donor ligand is bifunctional.
15. The metal complex of claim 14, wherein at least one neutral donor ligand is a bipyridine.
16. The metal complex of claim 1, wherein at least a first neutral donor ligand is bipyridine and at least a second neutral donor ligand is the same or different than the first neutral donor ligand.

17. The metal complex of claim 1, wherein at least one neutral donor ligand contains a functional group that favors compatibility with solvents, oligomers, polymers, elastomers, thermoplastics and thermosets.

18. A coating for a surface of a nanomaterial, the coating comprising: a metal complex containing a metal cation capable of being adsorbed onto the surface of the nanomaterial; an anionic surfactant; and at least one neutral donor ligand attached to the metal cation and capable of stabilizing the metal complex and stabilizing any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial.

19. The coating of claim 18, wherein the nanomaterial is made of carbon.

20. The coating of claim 19, wherein the nanomaterial is selected from the group consisting of carbon nanotubes, carbon fibers, carbon rope, carbon needles, carbon fibrils, carbon nanoparticles, nanosize graphite and carbon black.

21. The coating of claim 20, wherein the nanomaterial is carbon tubes.

22. The coating of claim 21, wherein the carbon tubes are single walled carbon nanotubes or multiwalled carbon nanotubes.

23. A nanocomposite comprising:

a matrix; and

a nanomaterial treated with a metal complex and dispersed in the matrix, the metal complex containing a metal cation capable of being adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial; a surfactant anion compatible with the matrix; and at least one neutral donor ligand attached to the metal cation and capable of stabilizing the metal complex and stabilizing any interactions between the metal complex and the nanomaterial, and between the metal complex and the matrix.

24. The nanocomposite of claim 23, wherein the matrix is selected from the group consisting of solvents, monomers, polymers, elastomers, thermoplastics, thermosets and any combinations or mixtures thereof.

25. The nanocomposite of claim 24, wherein the matrix is a solvent or a polymer.

26. The nanocomposite of claim 24, wherein the matrix is a solvent selected from the group consisting of water, methanol, methoxybenzene, methylamine, methylene bromide, methylene chloride, methylpyridine, morpholine, naphthalene, nitrobenzene, nitromethane, octane, pentane, pentyl alcohol, phenol, 1-propanol, 2-propanol, pyridine, pyrrole, pyrrolidine, quinoline, 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane, tetrachloroethylene, tetrahydrofuran, tetrahydropyran, tetralin, tetramethylethylenediamine, thiophene, toluene, 1,2,4-trichlorobenzene, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, 1,1,2-trichloroethane, trichloroethylene, triethylamine, triethylene glycol dimethyl ether, 1,3,5-trimethylbenzene, m-xylene, o-xylene, p-xylene, 1,2-dichlorobenzene, 1,3-dichlorobenzene, 1,4-dichlorobenzene, 1,2-dichloroethane, methyl ethyl ketone, dioxane, acetic acid, acetone, acetonitrile, aniline, benzene, benzonitrile, benzyl alcohol, bromobenzene, bromoform, 1-butanol, 2-butanol, carbon disulfide, carbon tetrachloride, chlorobenzene, chloroform, cyclohexane, cyclohexanol, decalin, dibromomethane, diethylene glycol, diethylene glycol ethers, diethyl ether, diglyme, dimethoxymethane, N,N-dimethylformamide, ethanol, ethylamine, ethylbenzene, ethylene glycol ethers, ethylene glycol, ethylene oxide, formaldehyde, formic acid, glycerol, heptane, hexane, iodobenzene, mesitylene, or dimethyl sulfoxide.

27. The nanocomposite of claim 24, wherein the matrix is oligomers selected from the group consisting of polyols and prepolymers.

28. The nanocomposite of claim 24, wherein the matrix is inorganic polymers selected from the group consisting of polysiloxanes, polysilanes, polygermanes, polystannanes and polyphosphazenes.

29. The nanocomposite of claim 24, wherein the matrix is organic polymers selected from the group consisting of polyolefins (PO), polyamides (nylons), polystyrenes (PS), ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymers (EVA), polyimides, polyurethanes (PU), poly(ethylene terephthalate) (PET), polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polystyrenes (PS), poly(ethylene-co-vinyl acetate) (PEVA), epoxies, polyanilines, polythiophenes, cyanate esters, polycarbonates, and copolymers and mixtures thereof.

30. The nanocomposite of claim 29, wherein the matrix is selected from the group consisting of polystyrenes, polycarbonates, epoxies, and polyurethanes,

31. The nanocomposite of claim 29, wherein the matrix is selected from the group consisting of polyesters, polyamides, and polyimides.

32. The nanocomposite of claim 23, wherein the nanomaterial is made of carbon.

33. The nanocomposite of claim 32, wherein the nanomaterial is selected from the group consisting of carbon nanotubes, carbon fibers, carbon rope, carbon needles, carbon fibrils, carbon nanoparticles, nanosize graphite and carbon black.

34. The nanocomposite of claim 33, wherein the carbon tubes are single walled carbon nanotubes or multiwalled carbon nanotubes.

35. A method for making a nanocomposite comprising a matrix and a nanomaterial, wherein the nanomaterial is compatible with the matrix upon treatment thereof, said method comprising:

treating the nanomaterial with a metal complex, the metal complex containing a metal cation, a surfactant anion, and at least one neutral donor ligand, wherein the metal cation is adsorbed onto a surface of the nanomaterial, wherein the surfactant anion is compatible with the matrix, and wherein the neutral donor ligand is attached to the metal cation and stabilizes the metal complex and stabilize any interactions

between the metal complex and the nanomaterial, and between the metal complex and the matrix; and

dispersing the treated nanomaterial into the matrix.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein the step of treating comprises coating the metal complex onto a surface of the nanomaterial.

37. The method of claim 35, wherein the step of dispersing comprises melting the matrix and mixing the nanomaterial into the melted matrix.

38. The method of claim 35, wherein the step of dispersing comprises solvating the matrix in a solvent and mixing the nanomaterial into the solvated matrix.

39. The method of claim 35, wherein the step of dispersing comprises solvating the matrix into a solvent, dispersing the nanomaterial into a solvent, and mixing the dispersed nanomaterial into the solvated matrix.

40. The method of claim 35, wherein the step of dispersing comprises dispersing the nanomaterial into a monomer of the matrix and polymerizing the matrix.

41. The method of claim 35, further comprising the steps of making a masterbatch of the resultant nanocomposite and further dispersing nanomaterials into the masterbatch.

42. The method of claim 35, further comprising the steps of making a masterbatch of the resultant nanocomposite and further dispersing the masterbatch into another matrix.

43. An article comprising a nanocomposite produced by the method of claim 35.

44. An article comprising a nanocomposite of claim 23.