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Setting the PID Controller for Controlling Quadrotor Flight: a Gradient Approach

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Abstract— The paper deals with the design of an autopilot for a quadrotor based on a PID controller. A mathematical description of the control object in form of the system of second-order differential equations is also presented. Setting the parameters of the PID controller is an iterative procedure. The paper investigates three optimal tuning algorithms based on minimizing the quality integral: coordinate descent, gradient descent, and steepest descent. During the research, a number of advantages of the gradient search algorithm are established. Gradient search is used as the main design method; on its basis, the autopilot model is synthesizing. Some simulation results are presented, which are confirmed by the Simulink autopilot model.

Keywords—PID controller, unmanned aerial vehicle, controller setting, Quadrotor, optimization, gradient

I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, there has been an extraordinary activity in research into the governing of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) with a multi-rotor design. Interest in the study of these means is explained by the increased capabilities of microelectronics and their exceptional characteristics of maneuverability. UAVs of this type have the properties of a helicopter design, namely, vertical takeoff and landing, as well as hovering in the air for the required time. In addition, unlike helicopters, they are able to dramatically change course without additional time spent on turning the aircraft.

These capabilities proved to be useful in military matters for solving reconnaissance and guidance problems, are widely used for carrying out high-quality photography and filming under the necessary angle, and are also useful for the delivery of small loads, monitoring of road traffic, a state of supply electricity lines, etc.

II. RELATED WORKS

To control an unmanned flying object with four rotors with a vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) with four rotors, known as a quadrotor, the most commonly used proportional-integral-derivative (PID) regulator [1]–[8]. The development of a PID regulator for stabilizing motion is described by *Salih et al* [1]. The authors propose quadrotor stabilization with the help of four PID controllers, one pair is independent regulators used to stabilize the flight and roll heights, another pair of regulators combined (on one chassis) to stabilize the yaw and pitch of the aircraft. The simulation was carried out using the Simulink tools of the Matlab package.

The design of a reliable PID controller for high-order systems, using the example of an unmanned aerial vehicle, is presented by *Kada et al* [2]. The developed methodology combines an insensitivity reaction, reliable control, and

methods for reducing models to increase the performance and reliability of the PID controller under condition parametric uncertainty. The approach is based on the use of the settings to a single cascade gain, which allows the authors to obtain a practical method for tuning the controller.

The SISO method for controlling, stabilizing and suppressing the interference of the quadrotor ratio subsystem was developed by *Bolandi et al* [3]. The PID controller was synthesized analytically for the desired response of the closed loop. The performance of the constructed control structure is estimated by factors in the time domain, such as overshoot, settling time and an integrated error index reliability. A comparison is made between the developed controller and the controller used in the basic quadrotor model.

A comparison of the different types of controllers that can be used to control the quadrotor is presented by *Arge et al* [4]. In this paper, the PID ITAE, LQR regulator, and PID are compared with the LQR loop, tuned to the performance of the dynamic platform. The results presented by the authors concern only the control in the vertical plane.

A simulation study of a PID controller and a linear quadratic regulator (LQR) under noise conditions to assess the stability of a hexacopter relative to the terrestrial environment using the LabVIEW software package is presented by *Ibrahim et al* in [5]. The authors have established the advantages of optimization techniques for constructing a controller based on solving a linear quadratic problem. A similar conclusion was obtained in [6] for the synthesis of the effective ship's autopilot when comparing the controller and the time-optimal regulator.

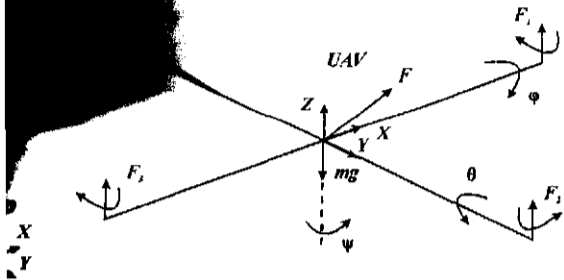
The construction of an aircraft with an optimal digital type autopilot is presented by *Zhiteckii et al* in [7]. The autopilot consists of two regulators P and PI-type, which are controlled by feedback on position and speed. The parameters of the regulators are found in the condition of ensuring the stability of the autopilot. The approach allows providing roll control under conditions of the uncertainty of parametric nonparametric type.

A complete mathematical model of the quadrotor is presented in [8]. The quadrotor model is described by a system of second-order differential equations in Cartesian and Eulerian coordinates. The model is approved for longitudinal and lateral movement.

In this paper, the problem of synthesizing a PID controller to govern the UAV to supply the desired response of object control on position and velocity in the presence of parametric and nonparametric disturbances is discussed.

LEM STATEMENT

A UAV in the Earth's inertial coordinate system is considered. We also introduce a body coordinate system (AV-frame) associated with a flying object, connected to the center of gravity of the object. The coordinate system is given by the axes X, Y, Z , Fig. 1.



Inertial and angular coordinate systems associated with UAVs.

The angular position of the aircraft in relation to the inertial coordinate system is determined through the angular coordinates $\zeta = (\varphi, \theta, \psi)^T$, where the angles φ, θ, ψ denote roll, pitch, yaw, respectively, the angles φ, θ are in the interval $[-\pi/2, \pi/2]$, and $\psi \in]-\pi; \pi[$.

We also introduce the vector of linear velocities of the moving object $V = (V_x, V_y, V_z)^T = (\dot{x}, \dot{y}, \dot{z})^T$, and the angular velocity vector $\Omega = (\Omega_\varphi, \Omega_\theta, \Omega_\psi)^T = (\dot{\varphi}, \dot{\theta}, \dot{\psi})^T$. Then, using the results of [8], the generalized system of differential equations describing the linear and rotational dynamics of the controlled object can be represented in the form

$$\begin{bmatrix} mI & 0 \\ 0 & J \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \dot{V} \\ \dot{\Omega} \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} \Omega \times mV \\ \Omega \times I\Omega \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} F \\ M \end{bmatrix}. \quad (1)$$

In equation (1), m is the mass, $I \in \mathbb{R}^{3 \times 3}$ is the inertia matrix, $J \in \mathbb{R}^{3 \times 3}$ is the inertia of the rotor, F is the total force, M is the total moment acting on the center of mass of the moving object.

neglecting the small values of the components of the forces operating at the aircraft, we write the total forces acting on the UAV moving in the vertical plane in the form

$$F = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ -mg \end{bmatrix}. \quad (2)$$

We also write down the forces of the total forces u_i , which ensure the movement of the aircraft, providing translational movements

$$M_1 + M_3 - M_4 - M_2 = k_1 \Omega_1^2 + k_3 \Omega_3^2 - k_4 \Omega_4^2 - k_2 \Omega_2^2, \quad (3)$$

$$u_2 = M_4 - M_2 = k_4 \Omega_4^2 - k_2 \Omega_2^2, \quad (4)$$

$$u_3 = M_1 - M_3 = k_1 \Omega_1^2 - k_3 \Omega_3^2. \quad (5)$$

In equations (3) – (5) k_i is some proportionality coefficient that relates the moment to the angular velocity Ω_i . In more detail, the equations of dynamics describing the translational motion of a UAV are of the form

$$\ddot{\varphi}(t) = \frac{(I - I_3)}{I} \dot{\theta}(t) \dot{\psi}(t) - \frac{Jr}{I} \dot{\theta}(t) \Omega + \frac{c}{I} u_2(t), \quad (6)$$

$$\ddot{\theta}(t) = -\frac{(I - I_3)}{I} \dot{\psi}(t) \dot{\varphi}(t) + \frac{Jr}{I} \dot{\varphi}(t) \Omega + \frac{c}{I} u_3(t), \quad (7)$$

$$\ddot{\psi}(t) = \frac{1}{I} u_1(t), \quad (8)$$

$$\ddot{x} = \frac{\bar{u}_1 (\cos(\psi) \sin(\theta) \cos(\varphi) + \sin(\psi) \sin(\varphi))}{m}, \quad (9)$$

$$\ddot{y} = \frac{\bar{u}_1 (\cos(\psi) \sin(\theta) \cos(\varphi) - \sin(\psi) \sin(\varphi))}{m}, \quad (10)$$

$$\ddot{z} = \frac{\bar{u}_1 \cos(\theta) \cos(\varphi)}{m} - g. \quad (11)$$

In equations (9)–(11) \bar{u}_i is sum of M_i . Then the dynamics of the controlled object model described by equations (6)–(11) can be represented by such a scheme, Fig. 2.

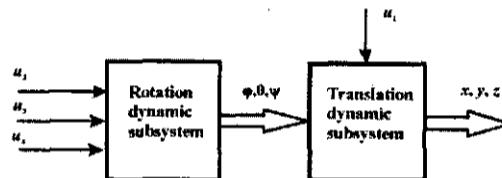


Fig. 2. Scheme of quadrotor dynamics.

As an autopilot, consider, typically used to control moving objects, a PID controller whose output signal is written as

$$u(t) = k_p e(t) + \frac{1}{T_i} \int e(t) dt + T_d \frac{de(t)}{dt}, \quad (12)$$

where k_p, T_i, T_d are the adjustable parameters of the PID controller, denote the transmission coefficient of the proportional link, and the time constants of the integral and differentiating link. In the interest of further synthesis, we introduce the notation for the parameters of the PID controller $q_1 = k_p, q_2 = 1/T_i, q_3 = T_d$, then (12) can be rewritten as

$$u(t) = q_1 e(t) + q_2 \int e(t) dt + q_3 \frac{de(t)}{dt}. \quad (13)$$

The diagram of the quadrotor dynamics taking into account the PID controller has the form shown in Fig. 3.

The quality of the control system will be estimated by an integral index of productivity in the form

$$I = \int_0^{\infty} (e^2 + \mu_1 \dot{e}^2 + \mu_2 \ddot{e}^2) dt, \quad (14)$$

where e, \dot{e}, \ddot{e} is the vector of the deviation of the controlled quantity and its time derivatives, parameters μ_1, μ_2 are the weight coefficients specified by the system designer. The minimum value of the quality index (14) provides the minimum values of the components of the integrand on the control interval, which ensures smoothness and time of the transient process.

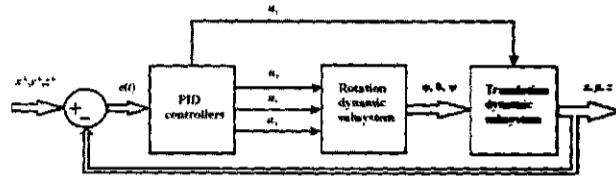


Fig. 3. Structure of the control system with autopilot based on the PID controller

The problem of optimal adjustment of parameters of PID controllers satisfying the minimum value (14) for the control object, whose dynamics is described by equations (6)–(11), is set and solved in the paper.

IV. OPTIMIZATION PID CONTROLLER

Setting the parameters of the PID controller is a long iterative procedure, which does not always lead to optimal tuning in practice. In most cases, the use of regulators of this type is associated with a priori uncertainty about the parameters of the controlled objects. Therefore, in practice, methods of experimental adjustment of the PID regulator are used.

In the problem under consideration, we will assume that the mathematical model of the control object is given, it is a third-order dynamic object. As in [3], the mathematical model of the control object is represented by a transfer function of the form

$$W(s) = \frac{ke^{-\tau_d s}}{s^2(Ts+1)}, \quad (15)$$

assuming that the small delay τ_d is a presence. In equation (15), k, T, ξ are the parameters of the control object characterizing the gain, and inertia, respectively, $s \equiv d/dt$ is the differentiation operator.

The search values are the parameters of the PID controller, so the optimized function is transformed into a

$$I(\mathbf{q}) = \int_0^{\infty} (e^2(\mathbf{q}) + \mu_1 \dot{e}^2(\mathbf{q}) + \mu_2 \ddot{e}^2(\mathbf{q})) dt, \quad (16)$$

where $\mathbf{q} = (q_1, q_2, q_3)^T$ is the vector of controller parameters.

A. Coordinate descent method

This method allows you to find the direction along which the optimization criterion decreases most strongly. The algorithm for changing the values of the adjustable parameters in the selected direction can be written in expression

$$q_i[l] = q_i[l-1] - h[l] \text{sign} \frac{\partial I(q_i[l-1])}{\partial q_i}, \quad (17)$$

where $q_i[l]$ is the value of the parameter being adjusted at the l th step of the algorithm, $h[l]$ is the magnitude of the step, $\text{sign}(\cdot)$ is the sign function.

The direction of the greatest decrease in the optimization criterion corresponds to the largest values of the components of the partial derivatives. The algorithm is executed until the condition

$$\sum_{i=1}^3 \left(\frac{\partial I}{\partial q_i} \right)^2 \leq \varepsilon$$

is true.

In expression (18), ε is a sufficiently small quantity. The idea of the algorithm for determining the parameters is illustrated as path A in Fig. 4. Letter O is the optimum

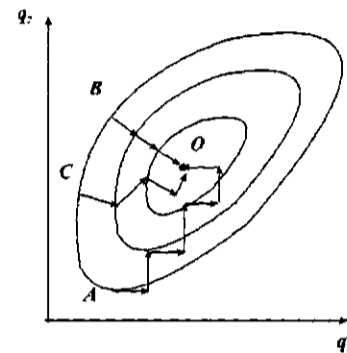


Fig. 4. Search paths for optimization algorithms.

B. Gradient descent method

The algorithm for setting parameters, in this case, is defined as follows

$$q_i[l] = q_i[l-1] - h_i[l] \frac{\partial I(q_i[l-1])}{\partial q_i}$$

In accordance with this algorithm, the step of each parameter is made proportional to the corresponding component of the gradient. The stopping criterion is (17). For the convergence of the algorithm to a minimum, the step size should be chosen from condition

$$h_i[l] = (q_i[l] - q_i[l-1]) \frac{\frac{\partial I(q[l])}{\partial q_i} \frac{\partial I(q[l-1])}{\partial q_i}}{\left| \frac{\partial I(q[l])}{\partial q_i} \frac{\partial I(q[l-1])}{\partial q_i} \right|}$$

When approaching the endpoint, the step size is reduced, and therefore the determination of the direction of the fastest decrease of the function is more accurate. It is the steepest descent approach. In Figure 4 this search path is indicated by the letter B.

C. Method of steepest descent

The main idea of this method is to determine the direction of the fastest decrease of the function at each step, which a step is taken in the same direction. The step size is determined, and further, a new direction of

The following mathematical algorithm

$$-h \left[\frac{\partial I(q_i)}{\partial q_i} \right], \quad (21)$$

$$-h \left(\mathbf{q} - h \frac{\partial I(\mathbf{q})}{\partial \mathbf{q}} \right). \quad (22)$$

(22) serves as the Lagrange multiplier. Each step in determining the direction makes the search too slow, which is its essential disadvantage. For the algorithm, the search path of the optimal parameters q_i is shown by the letter C in Fig. 4.

V. DESIGN PID CONTROLLERS

The model of the dynamics of UAV in the plane of roll and pitch also, as in [11], is described by a transfer function of the form

$$W_{R,P}(s) = \frac{27.5e^{-0.022s}}{s^2(s+4.1)}, \quad (23)$$

roll yaw

$$W_Y(s) = \frac{17.42e^{-0.022s}}{s^2(s+4.1)}. \quad (24)$$

The index of productivity is given in the form

$$I = \int_0^{\infty} (e^2 + \dot{e}^2 + \ddot{e}^2) dt. \quad (25)$$

The initial parameters for the gradient adjustment algorithm are the value $q_1 = q_2 = q_3 = 1$; the application of the gradient adjustment algorithm allows to obtain the values of the PID controller parameters satisfying (25). The optimum values are given in Table I. The results are obtained using the Simulink Matlab software.

TABLE I PID CONTROLLER PARAMETERS

q_1	q_2	q_3	t_r, s	$\sigma, \%$
0.027	0.00036	0.3036	0.672	10.5
0.89	0.00187	0.073	0.38	15.4

The analysis of Table I shows that on all channels the rise time satisfies the requirement $t_r < 1$ s. The algorithm setting is tested in ideal conditions when measurement noise is not taken into account. Future research is planned to focus on the effect of noise in measurement channels.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presented the problem of PID controller design to control the quadrotor system. The parameters of the PID controller are set from the condition of the minimum of the quality functional, the components of which are the deviation of the output value from the job and its derivatives. The representation of the quality functional by a dependence on unknown parameters made it possible to apply iterative optimization methods.

During the design, such optimization methods were studied: the method of coordinate-wise descent, gradient, and steepest descent. Of greatest interest are the methods of gradient search, where the direction of the step at the next iteration turns out to be strictly perpendicular to the lines of equal values of the quality function.

The resulting controller was compared to a similar model built using Simulink. The results of the comparison make it possible to establish the possibility of applying the tuning algorithm developed in the problems of constructing a quadrotor control system for constructing an effective flying vehicle.

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