

CONTROL OF COMPLEX SYSTEMS

*Methods and
Technology*

APPLIED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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CONTROL OF COMPLEX SYSTEMS: Methods and Technology

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CONTROL OF COMPLEX SYSTEMS

*Methods and
Technology*

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Drouin, M.

Control of complex systems : methods and technology / M. Drouin
and H. Abou-Kandil and M. Mariton.

p. cm. -- (Applied information technology)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-4757-9855-5 ISBN 978-1-4757-9853-1 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-4757-9853-1

1. Control theory. 2. Computational complexity. I. Abou-Kandil,
H. II. Mariton, M. III. Title. IV. Series.

QA402.3.D76 1990

629.8'312--dc20

89-26612

CIP

© 1991 Springer Science+Business Media New York
Originally published by Plenum Press, New York in 1991
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1991

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PREFACE

Since the beginning of the sixties, control theorists have developed a large body of knowledge concerning complex or large-scale systems theory. Using the state space approach, their purpose was to extend methods to cope with the increasingly sophisticated automation needs of man-made systems. Despite several remarkable contributions, and some successful applications, it can be stated that this theory has not yet become an engineering tool.

On the other hand, the emergence of cheap and reliable microprocessors has profoundly transformed industrial instrumentation and control systems. Process control equipment is organized in multilevel distributed structures, closely related to the concepts introduced by complex systems control theory. This similarity should favor a fruitful intersection for practical applications. However, a gap still exists between the literature on control theory and the world of technological achievements. In the many books on complex systems, few have given attention to the technological aspects of a practical control problem. The present book is an attempt to fill this gap.

To do this, it consistently reflects the viewpoints that:

- Theory and technology are two indivisible facets of the same problem.
- On-line implementation for real time applications is the ultimate goal of a control study.

In consequence, the notion of control structure is heavily emphasized. It is shown how the overall control task can be split into several tasks in order fully to exploit the advantages of a distributed computing power. Typical of the philosophy behind the book is the feedback effect of technology on theory, described in chapters VI and VII: through the introduction of Local Area Networks, the information constraints which strongly influenced the early work in large-scale systems theory become less significant. No ex-abrupto presentation of control theories is attempted. The general philosophy of the present text is to introduce additional theoretical developments only when they are needed in an application. An exception is chapter II, which was included to make the book more self-sufficient, and also to provide a condensed review of discrete-time optimal control results previously scattered in various papers or more general books.

In this sense, the book is addressed to several audiences. First, it can serve as a complement to more classical graduate textbooks on complex systems theory. Chapters I and II could then be overlooked, while the material of chapters IV to VII would provide some ideas on how to implement control solutions. Research workers could find some interest in the original method presented in chapter III and in its refinements given in subsequent chapters. Finally, control engineers should find that the complete book provides a convenient bridge between theory and practice.

If the reader is convinced that theory and technology should be combined in a practical control study, and if work on the application of complex systems theory is stimulated, this book will have fulfilled its ambition.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: COMPLEX CONTROL SYSTEMS	1
Introduction	1
1.1. Control problem	2
1.2. Complex technological systems	3
1.3. Control structures	4
1.4. Decomposition- coordination methods	6
1.4.1. Historical background	6
1.4.2. Principle and classification of existing methods	6
1.4.3. A new method: The "Direct Decomposition" Method	7
References	8
CHAPTER II: BASIC CONCEPTS OF DISCRETE-TIME OPTIMAL CONTROL THEORY	11
Introduction	11
2.1. Statement of the problem	11
2.2. Derivation of optimality conditions	15
2.2.1. Nonlinear programming	16
2.2.2. The discrete maximum principle	17
2.2.3. Dynamic programming	19
2.3. Solution of optimality conditions	20
2.3.1. Open-loop and closed-loop control laws	20
2.3.2. The Two-Point Boundary Value Problem	23
2.3.3. Hamilton-Jacobi-Bellman Equation	24
2.3.4. The Linear Quadratic regulator	25
2.3.5. Feedback control for nonlinear systems	31
2.4. On-line implementation: Suboptimal structures	31
2.4.1. Intermittent closed-loop structure	32
2.4.2. Guidance-stabilization structure	32
2.4.3. Mixed structure	33
Conclusion	35
References	36
CHAPTER III: DECOMPOSITION-COORDINATION METHODS: A NEW APPROACH	39
Introduction	39
3.1. Large-scale systems control	40
3.1.1. Problem formulation	41
3.1.2. Temporal decomposition	41
3.1.3. The interaction-prediction approach	43

3.1.4. Decentralized solution	44
3.1.5. On-line implementation	48
3.1.6. Remarks	48
3.2. Principle of a direct decomposition method	49
3.3. Application to linear systems	51
3.3.1. Temporal decomposition: A centralized solution	51
3.3.2. Spatio-temporal decomposition: A decentralized solution	56
3.4. Generalization of partial feedback laws for linear systems	59
Conclusion	61
References	62

CHAPTER IV: APPLICATION OF THE DIRECT DECOMPOSITION METHOD 63

Introduction	63
4.1. The role of criterion decomposition	63
4.1.1. Where the feedback gain matrix vanishes	63
4.1.2. Where the closed-loop term becomes untractable	65
4.1.3. Where decentralization affects stabilization	66
4.1.4. Constrained systems	67
4.1.5. Conclusion	72
4.2. Relaxation procedures	73
4.2.1. Relaxation matrix tuning	74
4.2.2. Mixed relaxations	74
4.2.3. Numerical experimentation	75
4.3. Example	77
4.4. Extension to linear systems with time-lags	78
4.5. Extension to nonlinear systems	85
Conclusion	92
References	92

CHAPTER V: OPTIMIZATION OF THE FEEDBACK LOOP 95

Introduction	95
5.1. Problem formulation	95
5.2. Optimization of the feedback part in the control law	96
5.3. Application to power systems	97
5.3.1. Control of a single synchronous machine	98
5.3.2. Control of a turbo-generator unit	103
5.3.3. Control of a large-scale power network	108
5.4. ARCODECO: A computer-aided design software	113
5.5. Application to an industrial problem: Control of a missile	117
5.5.1. Problem description	118
5.5.2. Linear design for a simplified model	121
5.5.3. Design for several flight conditions	122
Conclusion	127
References	128

CHAPTER VI: PROCESS CONTROL SYSTEMS 131

Introduction	131
6.1. Evolution of process control systems	131
6.1.1. The transformation of control computers	131
6.1.2. Influence on Man/Machine interaction	135
6.1.3. Influence on control concepts	136
6.2. Local Area Networks	137
6.2.1. Basics of Local Area Networks	137
6.2.2. LANs for industrial process control	141

6.2.3. Two extreme examples of LANs	142
6.2.4. Conclusion: Towards the MAP standard	143
6.3. Real time control	144
6.3.1. Mutitasking	145
6.3.2. Interrupt processing	146
6.3.3. Task management	146
6.3.4. Intertask coordination	147
6.3.5. Multiprogramming	149
6.3.6. Dynamic memory allocations	149
Conclusion	149
CHAPTER VII: THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON CONTROL METHODS	151
Introduction	151
7.1. Multilevel control structures: Real time implementation	151
7.1.1. A two-level control law design	152
7.1.2. Real time implementation of a two-level control for a synchronous machine	155
7.2. The influence of LANs on large-scale systems theory	157
7.2.1. Information measure and information selection	158
7.2.2. An optimal synthesis adapted to LANs	161
7.3. Distributed control with a LAN: An experimental application	166
7.3.1. Local and control levels	166
7.3.2. Communication system via Gixinet LAN	167
7.3.3. Different control structures	170
Conclusion	177
References	177
INDEX	179