Output Regulation of Perturbed Nonlinear Systems by Nested Sliding Mode Control

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Abstract—In this paper, we consider nested sliding mode control of SISO nonlinear systems, perturbed by bounded matched and unmatched uncertainties. The systems are assumed to be in strict-feedback form. A step wise procedure is introduced to obtain the controller. In each step, a continuous sliding mode controller is designed as virtual control law. Then the next step sliding surface is defined by using this virtual controller. These sliding surfaces are selected as nonlinear static functions of the system states. Finally in the last step, smooth static state feedback control law is determined such that the output reaches the desired set-point while the system is forced arbitrary close to the intersection of sliding surfaces and the states remain bounded.

Keywords— Sliding mode control, Strict-feedback form, Unmatched uncertainty, output regulation.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the conventional Sliding Mode Control (SMC), the control of an $n^{th}$ order dynamical system is effectively replaced by the controllers design for two lower order systems. Thus each sliding mode controller design contains two steps: 1) Design a discontinuous control term to force the system states onto the sliding mode in finite time (reaching phase), 2) design the sliding surface such that the reached states slide to the origin (sliding motion). Sliding surfaces in SMC can be chosen static linear as in [1]-[4], dynamic linear as in [7], static nonlinear as in [5] and [6], and dynamic nonlinear as in [8].

The ideal sliding mode control provides robustness against matched uncertainties; it means that if a discontinuous switch is used in the SMC (ideal SMC), regardless of any matched uncertainties and disturbances, system states slide to the origin, [1] and [2]. In continuous SMC, effects of matched disturbances and uncertainties in the closed-loop system can be reduced arbitrarily by tuning the continuous switch sharpness, [1] – [3] and [5].

Generally this desirable sliding action can not be maintained, if the uncertainties and disturbances are unmatched. Some control methodologies such as [7] and [8] have been developed to combat this problem. In [7] the problem is addressed for linear systems with the dynamic sliding surface, whereby the so called 'reaching phase' dynamics are of higher order. In [8], higher order sliding mode control is considered for nonlinear systems in strict-feedback form, perturbed by bounded and unmatched disturbances. These methods have the advantage that any external disturbances only affect the system reaching phase, and not the sliding motion. But these methods only concern the external disturbances and do not guarantee the closed-loop stability or any other performance in the presence of unmatched uncertainties.

This paper introduces a new methodology to achieve set-point regulation with arbitrary attenuation level against any bounded matched and unmatched uncertainties for the nonlinear systems in strict-feedback form. The method is based on the continuous sliding mode control and backstepping design. In each step of the design procedure, a continuous sliding mode controller is designed as virtual control law for the next state. In this method any unmatched uncertainty can be seen as a matched uncertainty due to its virtual control input. In the last step, the obtained control law attenuates the effects of all uncertainties. The attenuation level of each uncertainty depends on the sharpness of its related continuous switch. All the sliding surfaces in this procedure are selected as nonlinear static functions as in [5].

The reminder of the paper is organized as follows: section II contains the problem formulation and used notations. In section III the design procedure of the nested sliding mode controller is introduced and discussed. Finally, in section IV an analytic example is employed to show the effectiveness of the proposed method which clearly indicates the advantages gained by the nested SMC. The paper ends with some concluding remarks in Section V.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Suppose the perturbed nonlinear system is in the strict-feedback form (1).

$$\begin{align*}
\dot{x}_1 &= f_1(x_1) + g_1(x_1)x_2 + \delta_1(x_1) \\
& \quad \vdots \\
\dot{x}_i &= f_i(x_1, \ldots, x_i) + g_i(x_1, \ldots, x_i)x_{i+1} + \delta_i(x_1, \ldots, x_i) \\
& \quad \vdots \\
\dot{x}_n &= f_n(x_1, \ldots, x_n) + g_n(x_1, \ldots, x_n)\mu + \delta_n(x_1, \ldots, x_n) \\
v &= x_1
\end{align*}$$

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where \( x = [x_1 \ldots x_n]^T \in \mathbb{R}^n \) is the state vector, \( y \in \mathbb{R} \) and \( u \in \mathbb{R} \) are the output and control input, respectively. \( f_i, g_i : R^i \to R \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, n \) are known and sufficiently smooth functions, and \( g_i (x_1, \ldots, x_n) \neq 0 \), \( \forall [x_1 \ldots x_n]^T \in R^i \). \( \delta_i : R^i \to R ; i = 1, \ldots, n \) are bounded uncertainties. \( \delta_i ; i = 1, \ldots, n \) are called unmatched uncertainties and \( \delta_n \) is called matched uncertainties.

The goal is to design the control law that regulates the output \( y \) of system (1) to arbitrary small neighborhood of the set-point \( y_d \). Also state boundedness is desired.

Before proceeding, it is important to formally list the notation and terminology used through the paper.

- The \( i^{th} \) subsystem will be presented by the following functions and vectors definitions:
  \[
  x_i = [x_1 \ldots x_i]^T \\
  \delta_i = [\delta_1 \ldots \delta_i]^T \\
  f_i = [f_1 g_1 x_2 \ldots f_{i-1} + g_{i-1} x_i, f_i]^T \\
  g_i = [0 \ldots 0 \ldots g_i]^T \\
  \]

- Continuous switch function used instead of signum in design steps is defined by (2) and depicted in Fig.1.

\[
sigm(x) = \frac{2}{\pi} \tan^{-1}(x) \quad (2)
\]

![Fig1. sigm(x) as a continuous switch function](image)

### III. DESIGN PROCEDURE

Design of Nested SMC for system (1) consists of \( n \) steps. In the first step sliding surface is chosen as the difference between output and desired set-point to guarantee output regulation. In each of the other steps, continuous sliding mode controller with nonlinear sliding surface is designed as virtual controllers. The difference between this virtual control law and the next state forms the next step sliding surface.

**Step1:** Suppose the dynamic of \( x_1 = x_1 \) subsystem (3) with virtual control signal \( x_2 = \phi_1 (x_1) \) and sliding surface (4).

\[
\begin{aligned}
  \dot{x}_i &= f_i (x_i) + g_i (x_i) \phi_1 (x_1) + \delta_1 (x_1) \\
  s_1 &= y - y_d = x_1 - y_d \\
\end{aligned} \quad (3) \quad (4)
\]

in this system \( \delta_1 \) is matched uncertainty. If a sufficiently smooth function \( \beta_1 (x_1) \) that satisfies inequality (5) exists, the continuous sliding mode control law for this system will be (6).

\[
\beta_1 (x_1) = \left| \delta_1 (x_1) \right| + b_1 \quad (5)
\]

where \( b_1 \) is an arbitrary positive scalar.

\[
\phi_1 (x_1) = g_i^{-1} (x_1) \left[ -f_1 (x_1) - \beta_1 (x_1) \text{sgn} (e_i s_i) \right] \quad (6)
\]

where \( e_i > 0 \) is a parameter for tuning the sharpness and smoothness of the continuous switching function. It means by increasing \( e_i \), the continuous function \( \text{sgn} (e_i s_i) \) approaches the ideal discontinuous signum nonlinearity \( \text{sgn} (e_i s_i) \).

Using inequality (5) leads to:

\[
\dot{s}_1 \leq -b_1 |s_1| \quad (9)
\]

(9) shows that \( y \) converges to \( y_d \) (\( x_1 \) met the sliding surface \( s_1 \)) in finite time. It can be easily shown this time is less than \( |x_1 (0)|/b_1 \).

Now if \( x_2 = \phi_2 (x_1) \) the \( x_1 \) subsystem will be robustly regulated. Thus \( s_2 = x_2 - \phi_2 (x_1) \) is selected for the next sliding surface (step2).

**Step i:** Suppose \( x_i \) subsystem (10) and set \( x_{i+1} = \phi_i (x_i) \) as virtual control.

\[
\begin{aligned}
\dot{x}_i &= f_{i-1} (x_{i-1}) + g_{i-1} (x_{i-1}) x_i + \delta_{i-1} (x_{i-1}) \\
\dot{x}_{i-1} &= f_{i-1} (x_{i-1}) + g_{i-1} (x_{i-1}) x_i + \delta_{i-1} (x_{i-1}) \\
\end{aligned} \quad (10)
\]

in system (10) \( \delta_{i-1} \) and \( \delta_i \) are unmatched and matched uncertainties, respectively.

In step \( i-I \) virtual control law \( \phi_{i-1} (x_{i-1}) \) has been designed for \( x_i \), thus (11) is selected for \( i^{th} \) sliding surface.

\[
s_i = x_i - \phi_{i-1} (x_{i-1}) \quad (11)
\]

by this surface definition the robust stabilizing controller (12) is obtained.

\[
\phi_i (x_i) = g^{-1}_i \left[ -f_i (x_i) - \beta_i (x_i) x_i \right] \quad (12)
\]

- Continuous switch function used instead of signum in design steps is defined by (2) and depicted in Fig.1.

\[
sigm(x) = \frac{2}{\pi} \tan^{-1}(x) \quad (2)
\]
where $\beta_i$ is a sufficiently smooth function which satisfies
\begin{equation}
\begin{aligned}
\delta_i - \frac{\partial \phi_i}{\partial x_i} \delta_i + b_i &\leq \beta_i(x_{i-1}, x_i) \\
\end{aligned}
\end{equation}
(13).

$b_i$ is a positive scalar constant.

Lyapunov function $V_i = S_i^2/2$ can show the states of (10) reach the sliding manifold (11).

\begin{equation}
V_i = S_i \left( f_i + g_i \phi_i + \delta_i - \frac{\partial \phi_i}{\partial x_i} \left( f_{i-1} + g_{i-1} x_i + \delta_{i-1} \right) \right)
\end{equation}
(14)

Replacing $\phi_i(x_i)$ by (12) after some simple manipulations, (14) leads to:

\begin{equation}
V_i = S_i \left( -\beta_i \text{sigm}(\epsilon_i, S_i) + \delta_i - \frac{\partial \phi_i}{\partial x_i} \delta_{i-1} \right)
\end{equation}
(15)

If $\epsilon_i$ is sufficiently large (15),

\begin{equation}
V_i \leq |S_i| (-\beta_i + \delta_i - \frac{\partial \phi_i}{\partial x_i} \delta_{i-1})
\end{equation}
(16)

then with respect to (13), we have

\begin{equation}
V_i \leq b_i |S_i|
\end{equation}
(17)

(17) shows that the states of $x_i$ subsystem converge to surface (11) in a time less than $t_{\text{max}} = \|x_i(0)\|/b_i$ and remain on it. This means that after this time $x_i = \phi_i \cdot (x_{i-1})$ and the effect of $\delta_i$ is rejected (when $v \to \infty$).

Step $n$: The design procedure is completed in this step by setting $i = n$ in step $i$. The control law (18) is obtained in this step to force the overall system states to sliding surface $S_n = x_n - \phi_n(x_{n-1})$.

\begin{equation}
u(x_n) = g_n \left( f_n + \frac{\partial \phi_n}{\partial x_n} \left( f_{n-1} + g_{n-1} x_n \right) \right)
\end{equation}
(18)

where $\beta_n$ is a function which satisfies (19) with scalar constant $b_n$.

\begin{equation}
\left| \delta_n - \frac{\partial \phi_n}{\partial x_n} \delta_{n-1} \right| + b_n \leq \beta_n(x_{n-1}, x_n)
\end{equation}
(19)

Now the desired control law is obtained. Some remarks and hints should be noticed.

- Since $\phi_i$ in the first $n-1$ steps of the proposed method should have $n-1$th bounded derivatives, unlike the sliding mode control, discontinuous switch cannot be used even theoretically. Also, in the last two steps discontinuous switches are not used to avoid chattering problem.

- In the 1st step of this method, $\delta_1$ is seen as matched uncertainty, thus all these uncertainties are rejected by obtained control law (18), when $\epsilon_i \to \infty$ $i = 1, \ldots, n$.

For actual $\epsilon_i < \infty$ effect of these uncertainties are reduced arbitrarily depend on $\left| [\epsilon_1 \cdots \epsilon_n] \right|$.

IV. EXAMPLE

Consider the third order nonlinear system in strict feedback form, [5].

\begin{align*}
x_1 &= \theta_1 x_1^2 + x_2 \\
x_2 &= \theta_2 \sin x_3 + x_3 \\
x_3 &= x_1 - x_3 + u
\end{align*}
(20)

Suppose the parameters $\theta_i \in [0, 2]$, $\theta_2 \in [-1, 1]$ are uncertain, and let $\hat{\theta}_1 = 1$, $\hat{\theta}_2 = 0$ be their known nominal values. The system can be represented in the form

\begin{align*}
x_1 &= x_1^2 + x_2 + \delta_1(x_1) \\
x_2 &= x_3 + \delta_2(x_2) \\
x_3 &= x_1 - x_3 + u
\end{align*}
(21)

where $\delta_1 = (\theta_1 - 1)x_1^2$ and $\delta_2 = \theta_2 \sin x_2$ are bounded unmatched uncertainties.

Using the design procedure, we have in step 1:

\begin{equation}
\begin{aligned}
\beta_1 &= x_1^2 + b_1 \\
\phi_1 &= -x_1^2 - \beta_2 \text{sigm}(\epsilon_1(x_1 - y_d))
\end{aligned}
\end{equation}

step 2:

\begin{equation}
\begin{aligned}
\beta_2 &= b_2 + 1 + x_1^2 \left[ 2(x_1^2 + 1) + 2x_2 \text{sigm}(\epsilon_1(x_1 - y_d)) + 2y_d \right] \\
&+ \frac{2\epsilon_1 x_1^2 + b_1}{\pi + \epsilon_1 x_1} \\
\phi_2 &= -x_1^2 - \beta_2 \text{sigm}(\epsilon_2(x_2 - \phi_1))
\end{aligned}
\end{equation}

step 3:

\begin{equation}
\begin{aligned}
\beta_3 &= b_3 + x_1^2 \left[ \frac{\partial \phi_1}{\partial x_1} + \frac{\partial \phi_2}{\partial x_2} \right] \\
\phi_3 &= -x_1^2 - \beta_3 \text{sigm}(\epsilon_3(x_3 - \phi_1))
\end{aligned}
\end{equation}

(22)

Fig. 2 shows the closed-loop response when $y_d = 1$, $\delta_1 = \delta_2 = 0$ and $x(0) = [0 \ 0 \ 0]'$. The controller parameters are chosen as $\epsilon_1 = \epsilon_2 = \epsilon_3 = 10$ and $b_1 = b_2 = b_3 = 1$. This figure illustrates the effectiveness of nested sliding mode controller for the nominal system. The required control effort is $\int_0^T \|u(t)\| \, dt = 18.15$.

Response of the perturbed system by $\delta_1 = x_1^2$ and $\delta_2 = \sin x_2$ ($\theta_1 = 2, \theta_2 = -1$), are shown in Fig. 3. Control parameter and initial conditions are the same as the first
simulation. In this situation, output reaches to \( y_\infty = 1.17 \). the control signal energy is \( \int_0^t |u(t)| dt = 37.8 \).

Fig2. Nested sliding mode control response for nominal system with \( \varepsilon_1 = 10 \).

Second simulation is repeated by setting \( \varepsilon_1 = \varepsilon_2 = \varepsilon_3 = 10 \), the results are shown in Fig.4. Final output and required control signal energy are \( y_\infty = 1.025 \) and \( \int_0^t |u(t)| dt = 172 \).

Comparison of second and third simulations clearly illustrates the role of \( \varepsilon_1 \) s in the closed-loop response. Larger \( \varepsilon_1 \) s leads to lower tracking error and Required control cost increases in this situation. Chattering (high frequency signal with limited amplitude) in control signal may occur when too large \( \varepsilon_1 \) s are used. Thus \( \varepsilon_1 \) s should be tuned to make a trade off between control energy and tracking error.

Fig3. Nested sliding mode control response for perturbed system with \( \varepsilon_1 = \varepsilon_2 = \varepsilon_3 = 50 \).

V. CONCLUSION

Robust control of perturbed nonlinear system in strict feedback form is achieved via introduced method called nested sliding mode control. Step wise algorithm is followed to obtain the controller. In each step, the unmatched uncertainties are seen as a matched one for its virtual controller, thus using virtual sliding mode controller rejects them. The obtained controller in the last step, contains \( n \) (\( n \) is the system dimension) nested continuous switch functions where each of them reduces the effect of the related unmatched uncertainty. For each switch function and virtual sliding control law, an static nonlinear sliding surface is designed.

REFERENCES