

Towards Multi-Sensor Equivariant Filter Design

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Abstract—Equivariant filters (EqFs) are on the rise for robotic localization applications. In its design derived from the extended Kalman filter (EKF), the EqF provides many advantageous properties, though they grow in design complexity with multiple sensors. Each state added to the filter necessitates new derivations for corresponding symmetries and group actions. This paper presents a basic setup – the building blocks – for future equivariant filter design. We outline the symmetries and group actions for all possible rigid-body calibration states (rotational, translational, and pose) and states for direction vectors and height sensor biases. These fundamental components enable equivariant multi-sensor fusion for UAVs equipped with the most common sensors, such as GNSS, magnetometer, pressure sensor, or loosely coupled pose sensors (e.g., vision). Our results demonstrate such a multi-sensor EqF.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND RELATED WORK

In recent years, a new type of filter-based estimation has emerged: the equivariant filter (EqF). Originally introduced by *van Goor et al.* [1], [2], this filter is an extension of the well-known extended Kalman filter (EKF), which introduces an equivariant symmetry group to perform estimation on. This group change comes with a set of advantageous properties: guaranteed convergence, consistent estimation, and better error linearization, to name just a few. Compared to other state-of-the-art filters like the invariant EKF (IEKF) [3], EqFs can more efficiently include additional states such as bias terms or calibrations on the symmetry group and thus inherit the aforementioned properties for these states as well [4].

Brommer et al. [5] introduced a state-of-the-art truly modular method for EKF-based multi-sensor localization, extending the insights of *Lynen et al.* [6]. To the knowledge of the authors, many more methods for multi-sensor localization exist [7], but do not facilitate modularity. In addition, other filters such as the better performing TF-IEKF by *Baurrau and Bonnabel* [8] do not consider a multitude of additional calibration or sensor states, but rather individual sensor setups [9], [10].

The theory suggests EqFs should be the choice of filter for uncrewed aerial vehicle (UAV) localization [4]. However, their derivation can be quite complex, especially when a multitude of sensors, such as global navigation satellite system

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TABLE I
SENSOR STATES AND MEASUREMENTS

Magnetometer	ξ_M $h_M(\xi)$	$(\mathbf{S}, \mathbf{m}) \in \mathcal{SO}(3) \times \mathbb{R}^3$ $({}^G \mathbf{R}_I \mathbf{S})^\top \mathbf{m} \in \mathbb{R}^3 \setminus \{\mathbf{0}_3\}$
Position	ξ_T $h_T(\xi)$	$\mathbf{t} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ ${}^G \mathbf{R}_I^\top (\boldsymbol{\pi} - ({}^G \mathbf{p}_I + {}^G \mathbf{R}_I \mathbf{t})) \in \mathbb{R}^3$
Velocity	ξ_V $h_V(\xi)$	$\mathbf{t} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ ${}^G \mathbf{R}_I^\top (\boldsymbol{\nu} - ({}^G \mathbf{v}_I + {}^G \mathbf{R}_I \mathbf{t} \wedge {}^I \boldsymbol{\omega})) \in \mathbb{R}^3$
Pose	ξ_P $h_P(\xi)$	$\mathbf{L} \in \mathcal{SE}(3)$ $\mathbf{P} \mathbf{L} \in \mathcal{SE}(3)$
Pressure	ξ_H $h_H(\xi)$	$(\mathbf{t}, h) \in \mathbb{R}^3 \times \mathbb{R}$ $\mathbf{e}_z^\top ({}^G \mathbf{p}_I + {}^G \mathbf{R}_I \mathbf{t}) + h \in \mathbb{R}$

(GNSS) sensor, magnetometer, or pressure sensor, are used. Recent examples of equivariant filters for inertial navigation system (INS) provide single and individual derivations for, e.g., attitude estimation [11], (multi) GNSS estimation [12], [13], or tightly-coupled visual-inertial odometry (VIO) [14], [15]. Yet, combining the filter derivation of these separate works is not straightforward.

Therefore, with this paper, we introduce a general guide on equivariant filter design for robotic systems in 3D space. By providing the basic building blocks for core navigation states, rigid-body calibration states, and common UAV sensor modalities, we aim to provide a basis for future, simpler equivariant estimation. The measurement functions and additional states considered for estimation are presented in Table I.

II. MULTI-SENSOR BIASED INS

This section introduces the biased INS for multi-sensor setups problem using the mathematical expression of our previous works [4], [12], [15]. For additional sources on equivariant filters, symmetry groups, and Lie algebra we refer the interested reader to [1], [16], [17].

A. Core Navigation State

For the equivariant theory and system modeling, it is easier to use the matrix notation of Lie groups (where applicable). Therefore, by considering $\xi_C = (\mathbf{T}, \mathbf{b}) \in {}^C \mathcal{M} := \mathcal{SE}_2(3) \times \mathbb{R}^9$ to be the core state space of the system, with the extended pose $\mathbf{T} = (\mathbf{R}, \mathbf{v}, \mathbf{p}) \in \mathcal{SE}_2(3)$ and biases $\mathbf{b} = (\mathbf{b}_\omega, \mathbf{b}_a, \mathbf{b}_\nu) \in \mathbb{R}^9$, and defining the input $u = (u, \boldsymbol{\tau}) \in \mathbb{L} \subset \mathbb{R}^{18}$, with $u = (\boldsymbol{\omega}, \mathbf{a}, \boldsymbol{\nu}) \in \mathbb{R}^9$ and $\boldsymbol{\tau} = (\boldsymbol{\tau}_\omega, \boldsymbol{\tau}_a, \boldsymbol{\tau}_\nu) \in \mathbb{R}^9$, we can write the systems dynamics in the following matrix form

$$\dot{\mathbf{T}} = \mathbf{T}(\mathbf{W} - \mathbf{B} + \mathbf{N}) + (\mathbf{G} - \mathbf{N})\mathbf{T}, \quad (1a)$$

$$\dot{\mathbf{b}} = \boldsymbol{\tau}, \quad (1b)$$

where, $\mathbf{W} = u^\wedge$, and $\mathbf{B} = \mathbf{b}^\wedge$. \mathbf{G} and \mathbf{N} are defined according to [15].

B. Sensor Models

1) *Magnetometer*: A magnetometer measures the magnetic field direction $\mathbf{m} \in \mathbb{R}^3 \setminus \{\mathbf{0}_3\}$ in the sensor frame. Given that the sensor frame might not align with the inertial measurement unit (IMU) frame, an additional calibration state $\mathbf{S} \in SO(3)$ is introduced to generate the following sensor measurement

$$h_M(\boldsymbol{\xi}) = (\mathbf{R}\mathbf{S})^\top \mathbf{m} = y_M \in {}^M\mathcal{N} \subset \mathbb{R}^3. \quad (2)$$

The dynamics for these additional states can in general be defined with the arbitrary inputs $u_S \in {}^S\mathbb{L} \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ and $u_m \in {}^m\mathbb{L} \subset \mathbb{R}^3$:

$$\dot{\mathbf{S}} = \mathbf{S}u_S^\wedge, \quad \text{and} \quad \dot{\mathbf{m}} = u_m. \quad (3)$$

2) *GNSS*: Global navigation satellite system sensors can provide both position and velocity information. They also require a calibration for the translation $\mathbf{t} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ between the sensor frame and the IMU frame. In general, the measurements are modeled as

$$\pi = \mathbf{R}\mathbf{t} + \mathbf{p}, \quad \text{and} \quad \tau = \mathbf{v} + \mathbf{R}\mathbf{t}^\wedge\boldsymbol{\omega},$$

for position and velocity, respectively. However, these measurement models cannot produce an transitive right output action. Therefore, we reconstruct the measurement function to measure ideally $\mathbf{0}_d$ in a body-centric formulation [13]

$$h_T(\boldsymbol{\xi}) = \mathbf{R}^\top(\pi - (\mathbf{p} + \mathbf{R}\mathbf{t})) = y_T \in {}^T\mathcal{N} \subset \mathbb{R}^3, \quad (4)$$

$$h_V(\boldsymbol{\xi}) = \mathbf{R}^\top(\tau - (\mathbf{v} + \mathbf{R}\mathbf{t}^\wedge\boldsymbol{\omega})) = y_V \in {}^V\mathcal{N} \subset \mathbb{R}^3. \quad (5)$$

Similar to the rotational calibration, if it is added as a state, the dynamics for the translational calibration are

$$\dot{\mathbf{t}} = u_t, \quad (6)$$

with $u_t \in {}^t\mathbb{L} \subset \mathbb{R}^3$.

3) *Pose Sensor*: Pose sensors measure the 6-DoF pose of a vehicle within a navigation frame. For this work, we consider that this navigation frame coincides with the global frame through a static, known calibration. Additionally, a pose sensor can have a rigid body calibration $\mathbf{L} := (\mathbf{L}_R, \mathbf{L}_p) \in \mathcal{SE}(3)$ between the sensor frame and IMU frame. The measurement function and eventual dynamics are then

$$h_P(\boldsymbol{\xi}) = \mathbf{P}\mathbf{L} = y_P \in {}^P\mathcal{N} \subset \mathbb{R}^{4 \times 4}, \quad (7)$$

$$\dot{\mathbf{L}} = \mathbf{L}u_L^\wedge, \quad (8)$$

where \mathbf{P} is the $\mathcal{SE}(3)$ pose of \mathbf{T} , i.e. $\mathbf{P} = \theta(\mathbf{T})$, and $u_L \in {}^L\mathbb{L} \subset \mathbb{R}^6$ is an arbitrary input.

4) *Pressure Sensor*: Generally pressure sensor models depend on the medium they are used in, for robotics either barometric or liquid pressure. To simplify the usage of this sensor for any robotic platform, within this letter we consider the pressure sensor as a 1D height sensor with respect to a specific reference frame (typically sea level). However, the sea level rarely coincides with the z-origin of the global navigation frame, and therefore an additional ‘‘bias’’ term $h \in \mathbb{R}$ needs to

be added to the state. Further, $\mathbf{t} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ represents the calibration between the sensor and the IMU, and $\mathbf{e}_z \in \mathbb{R}^3$ is the unit vector in z-direction,

$$h_H(\boldsymbol{\xi}) = \mathbf{e}_z^\top(\mathbf{p} + \mathbf{R}\mathbf{t}) + h = y_H \in {}^H\mathcal{N} \subset \mathbb{R}. \quad (9)$$

III. FILTER SYMMETRY AND RESULTS

In multi-sensor equivariant filter design, it is desirable to find state-independent symmetry groups to allow modular sensor suits. Indeed, it is possible to define all additional symmetries and group actions independently of each other, with the exception of the core state symmetry. However, this does not introduce any problems, as the core state needs to be tracked anyway, regardless of the sensor type. Therefore, we first present the biased-INS symmetry and then the derived, individual state symmetries, based on the states introduced in the section above.

A. Core Navigation State Symmetry

Let the symmetry group of the core state be the tangent group as defined in [4], ${}^C\mathbf{G} := \mathbf{SE}_2(3) \ltimes \mathfrak{se}_2(3)$. Let $X_C = (D, \delta) \in {}^C\mathbf{G}$ be an element of the symmetry group, with $D = (A, a, b) \in \mathbf{SE}_2(3)$. The inverse element is given by $X^{-1} = (D^{-1}, -\text{Ad}_{D^{-1}}[\delta])$ with $D^{-1} = (A^\top, -A^\top a, -A^\top b)$, and the identity element of \mathbf{G} is $\text{id} = ((\mathbf{I}_3, \mathbf{0}_{3 \times 1}, \mathbf{0}_{3 \times 1}), \mathbf{0}_{9 \times 1}^\wedge) \in {}^C\mathbf{G}$.

Lemma 3.1. *The right state group action of ${}^C\mathbf{G}$ on ${}^C\mathcal{M}$, $\phi : {}^C\mathbf{G} \times {}^C\mathcal{M} \rightarrow {}^C\mathcal{M}$ and the right input group action of ${}^C\mathbf{G}$ on ${}^C\mathbb{L}$, $\psi : {}^C\mathbf{G} \times {}^C\mathbb{L} \rightarrow {}^C\mathbb{L}$, are defined as*

$${}^C\phi(X, \boldsymbol{\xi}) := \left(\mathbf{T}D, \mathbf{Ad}_{D^{-1}}^\vee(\mathbf{b} - \delta) \right), \quad (10a)$$

$${}^C\psi(X, u) := \left(\mathbf{Ad}_{D^{-1}}^\vee(u_T - \delta) + \Omega(D), \right. \\ \left. \mathbf{Ad}_{D^{-1}}^\vee(u_b) \right), \quad (10b)$$

with $\Omega(D)$ as defined in [4].

To lift the dynamics of (1) onto the symmetry a system lift is further required:

Lemma 3.2. *The lift $\Lambda : {}^C\mathcal{M} \times {}^C\mathbb{L} \rightarrow {}^C\mathbf{G}$ is defined as*

$${}^C\Lambda_D(\boldsymbol{\xi}, u) = \mathbf{T}(\mathbf{W} - \mathbf{B} + \mathbf{N}) + \mathbf{T}^{-1}(\mathbf{G} - \mathbf{N})\mathbf{T} \quad (11a)$$

$${}^C\Lambda_\delta(\boldsymbol{\xi}, u) = \mathbf{ad}_b^\vee(\Lambda_D(\boldsymbol{\xi}, u)) - u_b, \quad (11b)$$

where Λ_D and Λ_δ refer to the lifted elements for D and δ of X_C , respectively.

We then add the sensors of Table I to our filter system and present the following results.

B. Results

We implemented the presented EqF¹ with each of the sensor modalities as shown in Table I being used once. Our filter is then tested using the *Insane* dataset [18], as it provides all presented sensors on various different UAV flights.

¹Source code will be made available on GitHub with full paper publication.

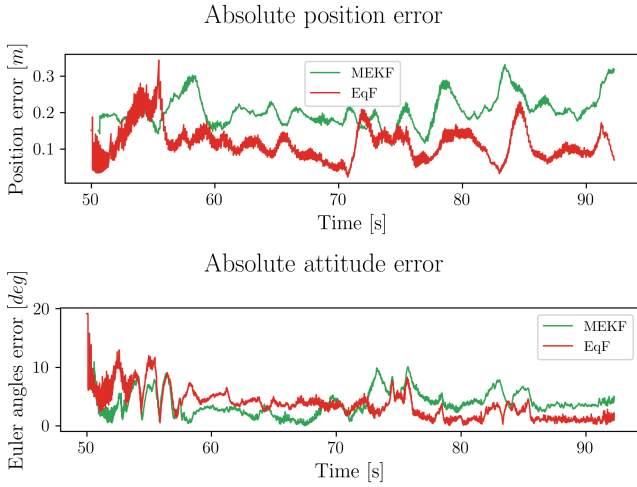


Fig. 1. Error plots for the position and attitude results for the *Mars 5* trajectory from the *Insane* dataset, comparing the performance of our EqF (red) and the MEKF of [5] (green).

In Fig. 1 the position and attitude error is displayed using the provided ground truth of the dataset. As the EqF is initialized with the core states set to identity the attitude experiences a slightly longer transient phase. We compare it to the truly-modular multiplicative EKF (MEKF) *MaRS* [5], which has the same states and estimates enabled as the EqF.

Additionally, the auxiliary state estimates for two GNSS sensors, a magnetometer, and a pressure sensor are displayed in Fig. 2. As can be seen, the calibration states converge rather fast. Further, the magnetic world vector is estimated correctly, while the pressure bias can handle the noisy and drift-affected measurements of the pressure sensor.

IV. CONCLUSION

With this paper we presented the building blocks of an equivariant filter for UAV localization using various sensor modalities. We introduced additional tracking states, symmetry group actions, and dynamics lifts required for such a filter and showed its performance using the *Insane* dataset.

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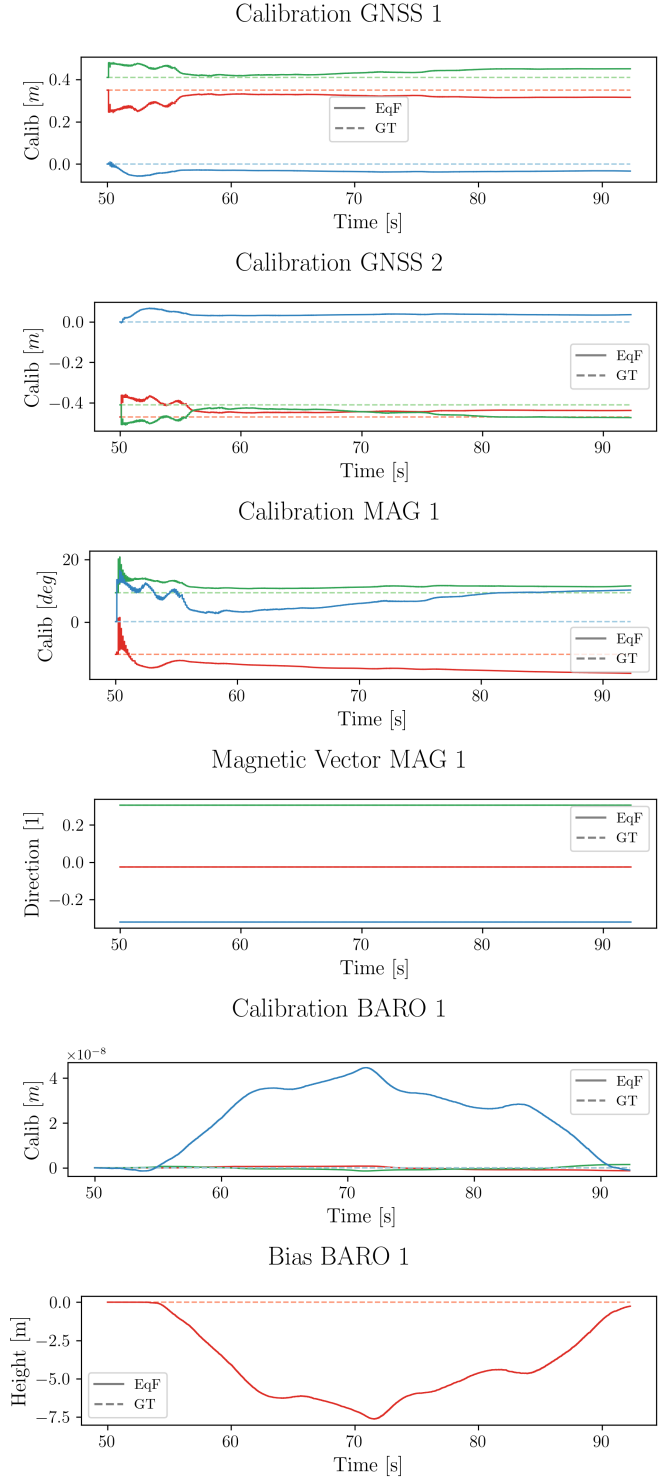


Fig. 2. Auxiliary state estimates of the presented EqF (solid lines) compared to the ground truth values (dashed lines). For the calibration states and magnetic vector the colors red, green, and blue represent the x , y , and z axes, respectively.

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