Microscopic Description of Induced Nuclear Fission: Static Aspects

INT Workshop on Large Amplitude Collective Motion
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NNSA Needs

- Predictive model of nuclear fission
  - Use where experimental data is missing
  - High accuracy, high precision, known error bars
- Fission fragment properties
  - Charge and mass of all fragments
  - Coulomb repulsion between the fragments = the total kinetic energy (TKE)
  - Excitation energy (TXE)
- Fission fragment distributions
- Fission spectrum: pre-, post-scission neutrons, gammas, etc.
- Important constraint: quantitative evolution as function of incident neutron energy
Theoretical Approach

- Compound nucleus at given excitation energy
  - Separation between intrinsic and collective degrees of freedom
  - Collective variables describe, e.g., nuclear shape
  - Time evolution gives fragment distributions

- Requirements for a predictive theory
  - Use many-body methods of quantum mechanics
  - Build upon best knowledge of nuclear forces
  - Keep number of free parameters to strict minimum

- Nuclear density functional theory
  - Effective nuclear forces between protons and neutrons
  - Various levels of approximations
  - Time-dependent extensions exist
  - Suitable for large-scale applications
Posing the problem

Potential Energy

Collective wave-packet

Inner barrier

|φ(q_i)⟩

g.s.

Fission Isomer

|φ(q_j)⟩

Outer barrier

Scission point
Some Details

- **Basic Ingredients of nuclear DFT**
  - An effective interaction / energy functional: Skyrme, Gogny
    - Form of the functional guided by theory of nuclear forces
    - Challenge of determining unknown parameters
  - Identification of suitable collective variables
    - Number of collective variables drives the scale of the computational challenge
    - Optimal set of collective variables may change
  - Need to introduce a scission point
  - Account for excitation energy
    - Low-energy: Intrinsic-collective couplings
    - High-energy: Finite-temperature description

- **Fast and/or powerful DFT solvers**
  - Take advantage of leadership class computers
  - Computational nuclear structure
Highlight 1
Potential Energy Surfaces
Managing the Scale

- Testbench: $^{239}\text{Pu}(n,f)$
- Relevant collective variables: $q_{20}$, $q_{22}$, $q_{30}$, $q_{40}$
  - Triaxiality near ground-state and first barrier
  - Octupole and hexadecapole beyond first barrier

Elongation and triaxiality

Fission and fusion valleys

Mass asymmetry and “cluster radioactivity”
A Closer Look
Fission Barriers

- Calculations: J. McDonnell
- DFT methods better than semi-empirical models
- Small errors on fission barriers = orders of magnitude in lifetimes
Full Fission Pathways

![Graph showing energy vs. Q20 with different lines for UNEDF0, UNEDF1, and SkM*]
Triaxiality at Scission

- Local PES in the \((q_{20}, q_{22})\) plane around least-energy fission path
- Shallow axial valley:
  - Distributions of fission fragments will be different
  - Dissipation of energy in “transverse” modes
Highlight 2
Validation of Nuclear Density Functional Theory at Finite Temperature
### Dealing with Excitation Energy

- **Question:** how to describe highly-excited compound nucleus?
- **Potential energy surfaces from finite-temperature DFT calculations**
  - System in thermal equilibrium
  - Ground-state is statistical superposition of pure quantum mechanical states
- **Attention:** at given $0 < T \lesssim 2.5$ MeV (or $0 < E^* \lesssim 100$ MeV excitation energy), **there is still a barrier!**
  - Temperature must be such that the system remains fissile
  - There is not a single good recipe here
Potential Energy Surface at T>0

Maxwell Relations of Thermodynamics

\[ F(Q_{20}, T) = E(Q_{20}, S) \]
Evolution of Fission Barriers

![Fission Height vs Excitation Energy Graph]

- Inner Barrier (points)
- Outer Barrier (points)
- Inner Barrier (fit)
- Outer Barrier (fit)

$^{240}\text{Pu}$

Excitation Energy [MeV]

Fission Cross-section $\sigma_f$ (barns)

1 barn = $10^{-28}$ m$^2$
Highlight 3
Fission Fragment Properties at Finite Temperature
Approaching Scission

- Discontinuities: poor man's way to define scission
- Need to introduce another collective variable: $Q_N$
- Discontinuities $\Rightarrow$ smooth pathway to scission

- Impact of $Q_N$ of the order of 10 MeV on precission energy
- Where is scission?
Fragment Interaction Energy (T=0)

- After scission: independent fragments with nuclear interaction energy equal to 0: use as criterion for scission
- Disentangle the two fragments by unitary transformation of individual quasi-particles
- Does the method work at finite temperature?
Coupling to the Continuum

- Contribution to total density comes from localized and delocalized pieces at $T>0$
  \[ \rho = V^* (1 - f) V^T + U^* f U^T \]

- Can we localize the fragments?
- Delocalized contribution negligible until $T \geq 1.5$ MeV ($E^* \sim 40 - 50$ MeV!)
- Localization should work
Fragment Interaction Energy (T>0)

- Localization works indeed
- At high temperatures, scission point moves to thicker necks: glass-like behavior
Conclusions

- Solving nuclear fission with microscopic methods and HPC capabilities
- Recent progress discussed in this talk
  - Mapping five-dimensional collective spaces including triaxiality
  - Assessing the sensitivity on the parametrization of the energy functional
  - Predicting evolution of fission barriers at finite temperature
  - Understanding the impact of finite temperature on fission fragment properties
- Open questions
  - Need better UQ to assess model dependence: model space (HO basis), parametrization of functionals, form of functionals, etc.
  - Dynamics of induced fission: dependence on scission point, on collective inertia
  - Finite-temperature caveats: statistical fluctuations, excitation energy of the fragments, collective mass
Collaborators

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