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# Model Reference Adaptive Stabilizing Control With Application to Leaderless Consensus

Dongdong Yue , Member, IEEE, Simone Baldi , Senior Member, IEEE, Jinde Cao , Fellow, IEEE, and Bart De Schutter , Fellow, IEEE

**Abstract**—This article describes an extension of the well-known model reference adaptive control (MRAC) approach. The extension relies on explicitly involving the tracking error in the feedback control law: it is shown that including this term along with its appropriate extra adaptive gain allows one to handle possibly unstable reference dynamics. Owing to its stabilizing nature, the proposed framework is referred to as model reference adaptive stabilizing control. Such an extension turns out to be particularly useful in leaderless consensus of heterogeneous uncertain agents, since the literature has discussed that leaderless adaptation may not avoid unstable closed-loop dynamics. In such consensus setting, the framework, referred to as model reference adaptive stabilizing consensus, generalizes the existing MRAC-based consensus schemes and can achieve consensus when state-of-the-art MRAC-based schemes may fail.

**Index Terms**—Adaptive stabilization, consensus, directed spanning tree, model reference adaptive control (MRAC), multiagent systems.

## ABBREVIATIONS

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| MRAC    | Model reference adaptive control.               |
| MRACon  | Model reference adaptive consensus.             |
| CMRAC   | Closed-loop model reference adaptive control.   |
| CMRACon | Closed-loop model reference adaptive consensus. |
| MRASC   | Model reference adaptive stabilizing control.   |
| MRASCon | Model reference adaptive stabilizing consensus. |

## I. INTRODUCTION

MRAC is a longstanding and powerful tool for controlling uncertain systems, with the goal of tracking a reference model specified by the designer. As sketched in Fig. 1 (left), the idea of MRAC is to tune the behavior of the closed-loop system so as to match that of the reference model [1], [2], [3].

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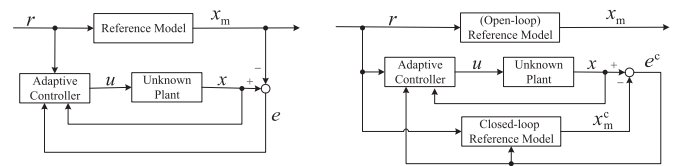


Fig. 1. Block diagrams of MRAC (left) and CMRAC (right). CMRAC modifies the original reference model: the modified closed-loop reference model plays a role of an observer of the original reference model.

Recent years have seen increasing research devoted to improving MRAC. One modification of MRAC is recognized as CMRAC [4], [5], sketched in Fig. 1 (right): this comes from the fact that the classic (open-loop) reference model is modified into a closed-loop reference model by explicitly involving the tracking error in the reference dynamics. In CMRAC, the tracking problem is separated into two objectives, i.e., the tracking of the closed-loop reference and the convergence of the closed-loop reference to the original open-loop reference. These two objectives arise because the closed-loop reference model plays the role of an observer. This observer introduces a new degree of freedom in CMRAC, which can provide better transient behavior than MRAC under suitable observer gains [4]. Nevertheless, owing to its separation nature, CMRAC may tend to deviate from the target open-loop reference model (cf. our simulations in Section IV).

In recent years, several interesting results have been reported when applying MRAC to multiagent systems. For linear heterogeneous uncertain agents, it has been shown that leader–follower tracking is attainable via hierarchical distributed model reference adaptation [6] or via MRAC-based adaptation in both the feedback and coupling gains [7]. Meanwhile, the idea of CMRAC has also been adopted in a multiagent setting to address leader–follower tracking problems [8], [9].

The problem of leaderless consensus is essentially different from that of leader–follower tracking: without a leader, the agents have to reach consensus by purely collaborating with each other. It has been shown, for a network of linear heterogeneous harmonic oscillators with unknown frequencies, that leaderless consensus is attainable by adaptively learning an a priori unknown group model [10]. More recently, the MRACon framework has been proposed for leaderless consensus [11], assuming that the communication graph among the agents is directed (asymmetric) with a spanning tree structure: this is widely known as a general assumption in the field of multiagent systems [12], [13], [14], [15], [16].

The main contribution of this article is twofold.

- 1) A novel extension of MRAC is proposed, which is called MRASC and is sketched in Fig. 2. Partly inspired by CMRAC [4], [5], MRASC also involves the tracking error for feedback. However, differently from CMRAC, MRASC feeds the tracking error directly into the control loop. As such, MRASC does not modify the

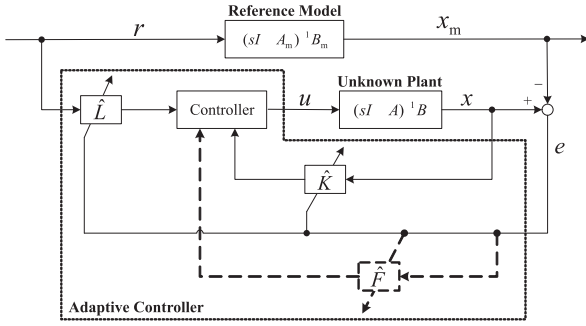


Fig. 2. Diagram of the proposed MRASC approach. MRASC modifies the adaptive controller: the tracking error is explicitly involved for feedback control along with its appropriate extra adaptive gain.

target reference model to track. Compared with MRAC/CMRAC, MRASC can exhibit better transient behavior and, more importantly, can handle marginally stable or unstable reference models thanks to a properly designed adaptive stabilization term.

- 2) Motivated by its ability to track unstable reference models, MRASC is suitably adopted in leaderless multiagent systems, resulting in a new framework named MRASCon. The novelty comes from the result known in the literature [17] that the consensus manifold in MRAC-based leaderless adaptation cannot be specified a priori and might even be divergent. MRASCon allows us to specify the consensus manifold by selecting proper reference dynamics. We show that when unstable closed-loop dynamics arise, embedding state-of-the-art MRAC within the framework of MRACon [11] may fail to solve the consensus problem.

*Notations:* Denote  $\mathbb{R}$  and  $\mathbb{C}$  as the real and complex space of numbers, respectively. For  $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}$ , denote  $\lambda^H$  as its complex conjugate and  $\Re(\lambda)$  as its real part. For a vector  $a$ ,  $\text{span}(a)$  is the real space spanned by  $a$ , i.e.,  $\{\kappa a | \kappa \in \mathbb{R}\}$ . For a matrix  $A$ , let  $\text{null}(A)$  be its zero space; if  $A$  is square, let  $\lambda_i(A)$  with some subscripts  $i$  be its eigenvalues. Let  $I$  be the identity matrix and  $\mathbf{1}$  be the vector with each element being 1, where the dimensions are omitted when clear from the context. The operator  $\otimes$  stands for the Kronecker product.

*Basics of graph theory:* A directed graph (or simply *digraph*)  $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E}, \mathcal{A})$  consists of a node set  $\mathcal{V} = \{1, 2, \dots, N\}$ , an edge set  $\mathcal{E} = \{\mathcal{E}_{ij} | i \rightarrow j, i \neq j\}$ , and a weighted adjacency matrix  $\mathcal{A} = (a_{ij}) \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times N}$  such that  $a_{ij} > 0$  if  $\mathcal{E}_{ji} \in \mathcal{E}$ , and  $a_{ij} = 0$  otherwise. The Laplacian matrix  $\mathcal{L} = (l_{ij}) \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times N}$  associated with  $\mathcal{G}$  consists of  $l_{ij} = -a_{ij}$  for  $i \neq j$ , and  $l_{ii} = \sum_{j=1}^N a_{ij}$ . For  $\mathcal{E}_{ij} \in \mathcal{E}$ ,  $i$  is called an in-neighbor of  $j$  and  $j$  an out-neighbor of  $i$  in return:  $i \in \mathcal{N}_{\text{in}}(j)$  and  $j \in \mathcal{N}_{\text{out}}(i)$ . A path is a sequence of edges connecting a pair of nodes, which respects the edge directions. A directed spanning tree  $\bar{\mathcal{G}}(\mathcal{V}, \bar{\mathcal{E}}, \bar{\mathcal{A}})$  of  $\mathcal{G}$  is a subgraph with the same nodes and selected edges from  $\mathcal{G}$ , such that there exists a root (i.e., a node that has no in-neighbors), and one can find a unique path from the root to every other node. Let  $p_k$  denote the unique in-neighbor (parent) of node  $k+1$  in  $\bar{\mathcal{G}}(\mathcal{V}, \bar{\mathcal{E}}, \bar{\mathcal{A}})$ ,  $k = 1, \dots, N-1$ .

## II. MRASC: MODEL REFERENCE ADAPTIVE STABILIZING CONTROL

### A. Problem Formulation

Consider a linear time-invariant (LTI) system with dynamics

$$\dot{x}(t) = Ax(t) + Bu(t) \quad (1)$$

in which  $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$  is the state, and  $u \in \mathbb{R}$  is the control input. The matrices  $A \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$  and  $B \in \mathbb{R}^n$  are assumed to be *unknown*. The control objective of a standard MRAC framework is to design  $u$  such

that the plant state follows the state  $x_m \in \mathbb{R}^n$  of a reference model specified by the LTI system

$$\dot{x}_m(t) = A_m x_m(t) + B_m r(t) \quad (2)$$

where the pair  $(A_m, B_m)$  has the same dimension as the pair  $(A, B)$ , and the reference input  $r \in \mathbb{R}$  is continuous. The reference model (2) is open loop as its dynamics will not be directly influenced by the tracking error  $e = x - x_m$ .

In line with the standard MRAC formulation (see, e.g., [2, Ch. 3.3.2] and [3, Ch. 6.2]), the following condition is assumed.

*Assumption 1 (Matching condition):* There exist ideal gains  $K^* \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times n}$  and  $L^* \in \mathbb{R}$  such that

$$A + BK^* = A_m, \quad BL^* = B_m \quad (3)$$

where  $K^*$  and  $L^*$  are unknown, but  $\text{sgn}(L^*)$  is a priori known.

However, differently from standard MRAC, the matrix  $A_m$  is not necessarily stable. Instead, we make the following more general assumption.

*Assumption 2 (Stabilizability):* The pair  $(A_m, B_m)$  is stabilizable.

*Remark 1:* It is known in the MRAC literature that Assumption 1 amounts to imposing some structural requirements so that the unknown plant (1) can match the behavior of the reference model (2) for some unknown gains. Notice that the single-input case is considered here as in the standard MRAC formulation. Addressing multiple inputs is possible provided that other structural conditions are satisfied.

In the following, let us show how the standard MRAC needs to be modified in such a way as to handle the more general Assumption 2.

### B. MRASC: Design and Stability

Under Assumption 2, it follows from [18, Th. 3] that there exists a unique solution  $P > 0$  of the algebraic Riccati equation<sup>1</sup>:

$$A_m^T P + P A_m - P B_m B_m^T P + I = 0. \quad (4)$$

Furthermore, upon defining

$$G = -B_m^T P \quad (5)$$

the matrix  $A_m + B_m G$  is asymptotically stable, i.e.,  $G$  is a stabilizing gain of  $(A_m, B_m)$ .

Consider the following feedback adaptive law, which we call MRASC law:

$$\begin{aligned} u &= \hat{K}(t)x + \hat{L}(t)r + \hat{F}(t)e \\ \dot{\hat{K}} &= -\gamma \text{sgn}(L^*) B_m^T P e x^T \\ \dot{\hat{L}} &= -\gamma \text{sgn}(L^*) B_m^T P e r^T \\ \dot{\hat{F}} &= -\gamma \text{sgn}(L^*) B_m^T P e e^T \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

where  $\hat{K}(t)$  and  $\hat{L}(t)$  are the estimates of  $K^*$  and  $L^*$  in (3), respectively, and  $\hat{F}(t)$  is the estimate of  $F^* \triangleq L^* G$  with  $G$  as in (5). Moreover,  $\gamma \in \mathbb{R}^+$  is a constant adaptation gain. It is clear that, as compared with the standard MRAC scheme, the proposed scheme (6) includes an explicit feedback gain from the tracking error (cf. Fig. 2), leading to an extra adaptive law. Define  $\tilde{K} = \hat{K} - K^*$ ,  $\tilde{L} = \hat{L} - L^*$ , and  $\tilde{F} = \hat{F} - F^*$  as the parameter estimation errors.

*Remark 2:* The additional term  $\hat{F}e$  can be seen as a consensus term between the reference model (2) and the system (1). The idea

<sup>1</sup>This holds as  $(I, A_m)$  is detectable. Equation (4) may be generalized to  $A_m^T P + P A_m - P B_m B_m^T P + C^T C = 0$  for a detectable pair  $(C, A_m)$ . For the sake of simplicity, we choose  $C = I$ .

of introducing a consensus between the reference model and the system was introduced in CMRAC [4], [5]. However, in CMRAC, the consensus term is introduced as a closed-loop action in the reference model (called, for this reason, closed-loop reference model), which modifies its original open-loop dynamics. In (6), the consensus term is introduced in the controller, without modifying the reference dynamics.

We have the following result for MRASC.

*Theorem 1:* Under Assumptions 1 and 2, consider the MRASC (6) law applied to the plant (1) with reference model (2). Then, the tracking error  $e$  converges to zero asymptotically, and the parameter estimation errors  $\tilde{K}$ ,  $\tilde{L}$ , and  $\tilde{F}$  are globally uniformly bounded.

*Proof:* In the ideal case that  $K^*$  and  $L^*$  are known, so that  $F^*$  would also be known, the ideal controller  $u^* = K^*x + L^*r + F^*e$  would result in the stable error dynamics

$$\dot{e} = (A_m + B_m G)e \quad (7)$$

which is stable by the design of  $G$ .

However,  $K^*$  and  $L^*$  are unknown since the pair  $(A, B)$  is unknown, which prevents us from using the ideal controller  $u^*$ . Nevertheless,  $u^*$  can be used for stability analysis by adding and subtracting  $Bu^*$  in (1), which leads to the closed-loop plant  $x$  as

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{x} &= Ax + B\hat{K}x + B\hat{L}r + B\hat{F}e + BK^*x \\ &\quad + BL^*r + BF^*e - BK^*x - BL^*r - BF^*e \\ &= A_mx + B_mr + B_mGe + B(\tilde{K}x + \tilde{L}r + \tilde{F}e). \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

Then, the error dynamics becomes

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{e} &= (A_m + B_m G)e + B(\tilde{K}x + \tilde{L}r + \tilde{F}e) \\ &= (A_m + B_m G)e + B_m L^{*-1}(\tilde{K}x + \tilde{L}r + \tilde{F}e). \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

Equation (9) relates the tracking error with the parameter estimation errors and can be used to prove stability. To proceed, consider the Lyapunov candidate

$$V = e^T P e + \gamma^{-1} \left( \text{tr}(\tilde{K}^T \Gamma \tilde{K}) + \text{tr}(\tilde{L}^T \Gamma \tilde{L}) + \text{tr}(\tilde{F}^T \Gamma \tilde{F}) \right) \quad (10)$$

where  $P$  is defined in (4) and  $\Gamma \triangleq L^{*-1} \text{sgn}(L^*)$ . Note that both  $P$  and  $\Gamma$  are positive definite.

The derivative of (10) along the trajectory of (9) is given by

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{V} &= 2e^T P (A_m + B_m G)e + 2e^T P B_m L^{*-1} (\tilde{K}x + \tilde{L}r + \tilde{F}e) \\ &\quad + 2\gamma^{-1} \left( \text{tr}(\tilde{K}^T \Gamma \dot{\tilde{K}}) + \text{tr}(\tilde{L}^T \Gamma \dot{\tilde{L}}) + \text{tr}(\tilde{F}^T \Gamma \dot{\tilde{F}}) \right). \end{aligned} \quad (11)$$

Substituting (4) and (5) leads to

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{V} &= -e^T (I + P B_m B_m^T P) e \\ &\quad + 2e^T P B_m L^{*-1} (\tilde{K}x + \tilde{L}r + \tilde{F}e) \\ &\quad + 2\gamma^{-1} \left( \text{tr}(\tilde{K}^T \Gamma \dot{\tilde{K}}) + \text{tr}(\tilde{L}^T \Gamma \dot{\tilde{L}}) + \text{tr}(\tilde{F}^T \Gamma \dot{\tilde{F}}) \right). \end{aligned} \quad (12)$$

Note that

$$\begin{aligned} e^T P B_m L^{*-1} \tilde{K}x &= x^T \tilde{K}^T L^{*-1} B_m^T P e \\ &= \text{tr}(\tilde{K}^T L^{*-1} B_m^T P e x^T) \end{aligned} \quad (13)$$

where the second equality holds since the trace operator is invariant under cyclic permutations. Clearly, with the definition of  $\Gamma$  and the designed  $\hat{K}$  in (6)

$$\begin{aligned} e^T P B_m L^{*-1} \tilde{K}x + \gamma^{-1} \text{tr}(\tilde{K}^T \Gamma \dot{\tilde{K}}) \\ = e^T P B_m L^{*-1} \tilde{K}x - \text{tr}(\tilde{K}^T L^{*-1} B_m^T P e x^T) = 0. \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

Similar analysis as (13) and (14) can be performed for the other terms related with  $\tilde{L}$  and  $\tilde{F}$ . Then, it follows from (12) that

$$\dot{V} = -e^T (I + P B_m B_m^T P) e \leq 0. \quad (15)$$

Let us denote the right-hand side of (9) as  $\dot{e} = f(e, t)$ . Since both  $f$  and  $\frac{\partial f}{\partial e}$  are continuous,  $f(e, t)$  is locally Lipschitz in  $e$  uniformly in  $t$  [19, Lem. 3.2]. Then, applying the LaSalle–Yoshizawa Theorem [1, Th. 2.1], all the signals  $e$ ,  $\tilde{K}$ ,  $\tilde{L}$ , and  $\tilde{F}$  are globally uniformly bounded and

$$\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} e^T (I + P B_m B_m^T P) e = 0 \Rightarrow \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} e = 0. \quad (16)$$

This completes the proof.  $\blacksquare$

*Remark 3:* In MRAC and CMRAC, the matrix  $A_m$  of the reference model must be stable. The proof of Theorem 1 shows that the novel adaptive stabilization term in (6) makes the tracking error converge to zero even without the condition that  $A_m$  is stable. This feature endows MRASC with the power to track an unstable reference model with asymptotic convergent errors: though possibly resulting in unbounded control signals at infinity, in practice, one may exploit such a feature in a short time interval to generate certain patterns in the state response, e.g., spikes, as discussed in [20].

*Remark 4:* As known from classical MRAC results, there is no guarantee, in general, that the estimates  $\hat{K}$ ,  $\hat{L}$ , and  $\hat{F}$  converge to their ideal values (cf. [3, Ch. 6.4] and recent relaxed persistence of excitation conditions to guarantee convergence of the estimation errors to zero [21], [22]). With this in mind, we will address a consensus problem in the following section, where the proposed MRASC law plays an important role.

### III. MRASCON: MODEL REFERENCE ADAPTIVE STABILIZING CONSENSUS

#### A. Problem Formulation

Consider a network of  $N$  heterogeneous LTI agents where the dynamics of the  $i$ th ( $i \in \{1, 2, \dots, N\}$ ) agent follows

$$\dot{x}_i(t) = A_i x_i(t) + B_i u_i(t) \quad (17)$$

in which  $x_i \in \mathbb{R}^n$  is the state, and  $u_i \in \mathbb{R}$  is the control input. The matrices  $A_i \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$  and  $B_i \in \mathbb{R}^n$  are assumed to be *unknown*. The interaction graph between the agents (17) is a digraph denoted by  $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E}, \mathcal{A})$  or simply  $\mathcal{G}$ .

The control objective is to design  $u_i$  such that the agents reach consensus, i.e.,  $\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \|x_i(t) - x_j(t)\| = 0, \forall i, j \in \mathcal{V}$ . Along with the previous Assumption 2, the following assumptions are made.

*Assumption 3 (Decentralized matching condition):* There exists a family of homogenization gains  $K_i^* \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times n}$  and  $L_i^* \in \mathbb{R}$  such that

$$A_i + B_i K_i^* = A_m, \quad B_i L_i^* = B_m \quad (18)$$

where  $K_i^*$  and  $L_i^*$  are unknown, but  $\text{sgn}(L_i^*)$  is a priori known,  $\forall i \in \mathcal{V}$ .

*Assumption 4 (Connectivity):* The communication digraph  $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E}, \mathcal{A})$  contains a directed spanning tree  $\bar{\mathcal{G}}(\mathcal{V}, \bar{\mathcal{E}}, \bar{\mathcal{A}})$  (the specific structure of the tree is not necessarily known).

*Remark 5:* Assumption 3 extends Assumption 1 from a single plant to a multiagent network. Assumption 4 is standard in the field of multi-agent systems [12], [13], [14], [15], [16]. In fact, undirected or directed acyclic communication graphs are often required in state-of-the-art distributed MRAC [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], which is more conservative than Assumption 4.



### B. Technical Lemma

Under Assumption 4, let us construct two matrices based on  $\bar{\mathcal{G}}(\mathcal{V}, \bar{\mathcal{E}}, \bar{\mathcal{A}})$ . Define  $\Xi \in \mathbb{R}^{(N-1) \times N}$  as

$$\Xi_{kj} = \begin{cases} -1, & \text{if } j = k + 1 \\ 1, & \text{if } j = p_k \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}. \quad (19)$$

In fact,  $\Xi$  is the difference matrix along the tree:  $\Xi x = (x_{p_1} - x_2, x_{p_2} - x_3, \dots, x_{p_{N-1}} - x_N)^T$  for any vector  $x$ . Define  $Q \in \mathbb{R}^{(N-1) \times (N-1)}$  as

$$Q_{kj} = \sum_{c \in \bar{\mathcal{V}}_{j+1}} (\mathcal{L}_{k+1,c} - \mathcal{L}_{p_k,c}) \quad (20)$$

where  $\bar{\mathcal{V}}_{j+1}$  represents the vertex set of the subtree of  $\bar{\mathcal{G}}$  rooting at node  $j + 1$ . Note that  $\mathcal{L}$  is the Laplacian matrix of the communication digraph  $\bar{\mathcal{G}}$ .

*Lemma 1* (see [15] and [16]): Under Assumption 4, the following statements hold for  $\mathcal{L}$  (of  $\bar{\mathcal{G}}$ ) and  $\Xi$  and  $Q$  defined above.

- 1)  $0 = \lambda_1(\mathcal{L}) < \Re(\lambda_2(\mathcal{L})) \leq \Re(\lambda_3(\mathcal{L})) \leq \dots \leq \Re(\lambda_N(\mathcal{L}))$ .
- Moreover,  $\text{null}(\mathcal{L}) = \text{span}(\mathbf{1}_N)$ .
- 2)  $\Xi \mathcal{L} = Q \Xi$ . Moreover,  $\text{null}(\Xi) = \text{span}(\mathbf{1}_N)$ .
- 3)  $\lambda_i(Q) = \lambda_{i+1}(\mathcal{L})$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, N - 1$ .

### C. MRASCon: Design and Stability

Inspired by MRACon [11], we propose a novel MRASCon framework in this section. The idea of MRASCon is to separate the consensus problem into two parts: 1) the decentralized tracking of each agent to a local reference model by MRASC established in the previous section and 2) the consensus over the reference models by manipulating their external inputs. This results in a reference model for each agent  $i \in \mathcal{V}$  as

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{x}_{m,i}(t) &= A_m x_{m,i}(t) + B_m r_i(t) \\ r_i(t) &= r(t) + cG \sum_{j=1}^N a_{ij} (x_i(t) - x_j(t)) \end{aligned} \quad (21)$$

where  $A_m$  and  $B_m$  are defined in (18),  $a_{ij}$  is from the adjacency matrix  $\mathcal{A}$ , and  $r(t)$  is a user-designed common reference input playing a similar role as the reference model input in (2). Here,  $c \in \mathbb{R}^+$  is the coupling gain of the network, and  $G \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times n}$  is the stabilizing gain as defined in (5). The reference models (21) are open loop as they are not affected by the tracking errors  $e_i = x_i - x_{m,i}$ ,  $i \in \mathcal{V}$ .

Consider the following feedback adaptive law, which we call MRASCon law:

$$\begin{aligned} u_i &= \hat{K}_i(t)x_i + \hat{L}_i(t)r_i + \hat{F}_i(t)e_i \\ \dot{\hat{K}}_i &= -\gamma_i \text{sgn}(L_i^*) B_m^T P e_i x_i^T \\ \dot{\hat{L}}_i &= -\gamma_i \text{sgn}(L_i^*) B_m^T P e_i r_i^T \\ \dot{\hat{F}}_i &= -\gamma_i \text{sgn}(L_i^*) B_m^T P e_i e_i^T \end{aligned} \quad (22)$$

where  $\hat{K}_i(t)$  and  $\hat{L}_i(t)$  are the estimates of  $K_i^*$  and  $L_i^*$  in (18), respectively, and  $\hat{F}_i(t)$  is the estimate of  $F_i^* \triangleq L_i^* G$ . Moreover,  $\gamma_i \in \mathbb{R}^+$  is the constant gain for adaptation.

*Theorem 2:* Under Assumptions 2–4, consider the MRASCon law (22) applied to the multiagent system (17) with reference models (21). Then, for each agent  $i \in \mathcal{V}$ , all the tracking errors  $e_i$  converge to zero asymptotically, and all the parameter estimation errors  $\tilde{K}_i$ ,  $\tilde{L}_i$ , and  $\tilde{F}_i$

are globally uniformly bounded. Furthermore, if  $c \geq \frac{1}{2\Re(\lambda_2(\mathcal{L}))}$ , the multiagent system (17) reaches consensus asymptotically.

*Proof:* Following similar steps as in the proof of Theorem 1, the dynamics of  $e_i$  can be obtained as

$$\dot{e}_i = (A_m + B_m G)e_i + B_i(\tilde{K}_i x_i + \tilde{L}_i r_i + \tilde{F}_i e_i). \quad (23)$$

Similarly to (10), consider the Lyapunov candidate

$$V_i = e_i^T P e_i + \gamma_i^{-1} \left( \text{tr}(\tilde{K}_i^T \Gamma_i \tilde{K}_i) + \text{tr}(\tilde{L}_i^T \Gamma_i \tilde{L}_i) + \text{tr}(\tilde{F}_i^T \Gamma_i \tilde{F}_i) \right) \quad (24)$$

where  $P$  is defined in (4) and  $\Gamma_i \triangleq L_i^{*-1} \text{sgn}(L_i^*) > 0$ . Along similar lines as the proof of Theorem 1, one can conclude that the closed-loop error signals  $e_i$ ,  $\tilde{K}_i$ ,  $\tilde{L}_i$ , and  $\tilde{F}_i$  are globally uniformly bounded, and the tracking errors  $e_i$  converge to zero asymptotically.

Let  $\mathbf{x}_m$ ,  $\mathbf{x}$ , and  $\mathbf{e}$  be the stacked vectors of  $x_{m,i}$ ,  $x_i$ , and  $e_i$ , respectively (e.g.,  $\mathbf{x}_m = (x_{m,1}^T, x_{m,2}^T, \dots, x_{m,N}^T)^T$ ). It follows from (21) that

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{\mathbf{x}}_m &= (I \otimes A_m) \mathbf{x}_m + c(\mathcal{L} \otimes B_m G) \mathbf{x} + (\mathbf{1}_N \otimes B_m r) \\ &= (I \otimes A_m + c\mathcal{L} \otimes B_m G) \mathbf{x}_m \\ &\quad + c(\mathcal{L} \otimes B_m G) \mathbf{e} + (\mathbf{1}_N \otimes B_m r). \end{aligned} \quad (25)$$

Let  $\bar{\mathbf{x}}_m = (\Xi \otimes I) \mathbf{x}_m$  where  $\Xi$  is defined as in (19). Since  $\text{null}(\Xi) = \text{span}(\mathbf{1}_N)$  (see Lemma 1), one has  $\Xi \mathbf{1}_N = 0$ , and  $\bar{\mathbf{x}}_m = 0$  if and only if  $x_{m,i} = x_{m,j}$  for any  $i, j \in \mathcal{V}$ . Based on statement [2] of Lemma 1, we have

$$\dot{\bar{\mathbf{x}}}_m = (I \otimes A_m + cQ \otimes B_m G) \bar{\mathbf{x}}_m + c(\Xi \mathcal{L} \otimes B_m G) \mathbf{e} \quad (26)$$

where  $Q$  is defined as in (20).

Next, we claim that the first part of the dynamics in (26) is stable, i.e., the matrix  $I \otimes A_m + cQ \otimes B_m G$  is Hurwitz. Note that any square matrix is unitarily similar to an upper triangular matrix with diagonal entries being its eigenvalues. When this fact is applied to  $Q$  and noticing statement [3] of Lemma 1, it is sufficient to show that the upper triangular matrix

$$\begin{pmatrix} A_m + c\lambda_2(\mathcal{L})B_m G & & * \\ & \ddots & \\ 0 & & A_m + c\lambda_N(\mathcal{L})B_m G \end{pmatrix}$$

is Hurwitz, which is then equivalent to show that the blocks on the main diagonal are Hurwitz. In fact, based on (4) and (5)

$$\begin{aligned} &(A_m + c\lambda_i(\mathcal{L})B_m G)^H P + P(A_m + c\lambda_i(\mathcal{L})B_m G) \\ &= A_m^T P + P A_m^T - c\lambda_i(\mathcal{L})^H P B_m B_m^T P - c\lambda_i(\mathcal{L}) P B_m B_m^T P \\ &= A_m P + P A_m^T - 2c\Re(\lambda_i(\mathcal{L})) P B_m B_m^T P \\ &= -I + (1 - 2c\Re(\lambda_i(\mathcal{L}))) P B_m B_m^T P \end{aligned} \quad (27)$$

for any  $i \in \{2, 3, \dots, N\}$ . Then, provided  $c \geq \frac{1}{2\Re(\lambda_2(\mathcal{L}))}$ , the blocks  $A_m + c\lambda_i(\mathcal{L})B_m G$  are indeed Hurwitz.

Since  $\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \mathbf{e} = 0$  and the dynamics of  $\bar{\mathbf{x}}_m$  in (26) is internally stable, we have  $\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \bar{\mathbf{x}}_m = 0$ , which implies the consensus over  $x_{m,i}$ .

Now, since  $x_i \rightarrow x_{m,i}$  and  $x_{m,i} \rightarrow x_{m,j}$  as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ , we conclude that  $\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \|x_i(t) - x_j(t)\| = 0$ ,  $\forall i, j \in \mathcal{V}$ . This completes the proof. ■

*Remark 6:* Similarly to Theorem 1, Theorem 2 confirms that MRASCon drives the consensus error to zero asymptotically, even in the case that the homogeneous dynamics matrix  $A_m$  not necessarily stable. As known from [17], MRAC-based leaderless consensus does not allow one to specify the consensus manifold a priori since the consensus manifold is completely unknown, and it can be either bounded or

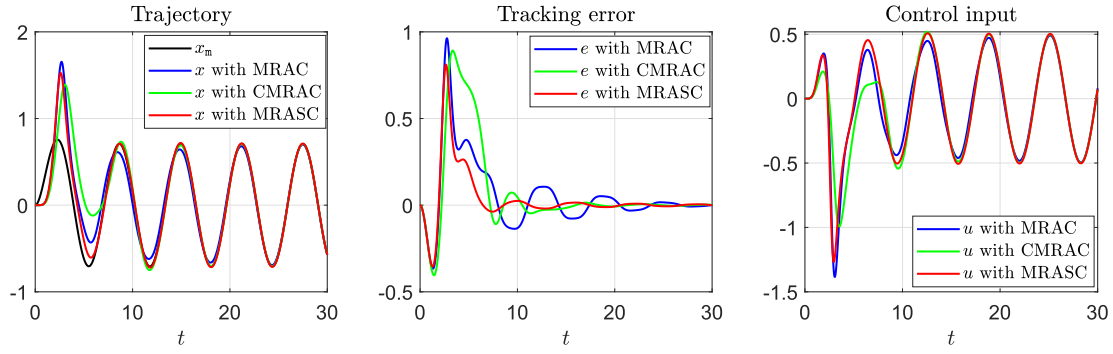


Fig. 3. Example 1: MRAC, CMRAC, and MRASC (6) for tracking a stable reference model ( $a_m = -1$ ).

TABLE I  
MRAC, CMRAC, AND MRASC FOR A SCALAR UNKNOWN PLANT

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Plant                      | $\dot{x} = ax + bu$ ;<br>only $\text{sgn}(b)$ is known, $b \neq 0$ (controllable).   |
| Reference                  | $\dot{x}_m = a_m x_m + b_m r$ ;<br>$a_m, b_m$ , and $r$ are user specified, $r(t)$ is bounded.   |
| MRAC<br>(see, e.g., [3])   | $u = \phi^T \theta(t)$ , $\dot{\theta} = -\gamma \text{sgn}(b) \phi e$ .<br>$\phi = (x, r)^T$ , $\theta = (\hat{k}, \hat{l})^T$ , $e = x - x_m$ .  |
| CMRAC<br>(see [4] and [5]) | $u = \phi^T \theta(t)$ , $\dot{\theta} = -\gamma \text{sgn}(b) \phi e^c$ .<br>$\phi = (x, r)^T$ , $\theta = (\hat{k}, \hat{l})^T$ , $e^c = x - x_m^c$ .<br>$\dot{x}_m^c = a_m x_m^c + b_m r - \rho e^c$ ; $\rho < 0$ . |
| MRASC                      | $u = \phi^T \theta(t)$ , $\dot{\theta} = -\gamma \text{sgn}(b) \phi e$ .<br>$\phi = (x, r, e)^T$ , $\theta = (\hat{k}, \hat{l}, \hat{f})^T$ , $e = x - x_m$ .  |

divergent depending on the initial conditions and the system dynamics. MRASCon allows one to specify rich classes of consensus manifolds a priori via proper design of the reference dynamics matrix  $A_m$  and the reference input  $r(t)$ .

*Remark 7:* The reference input  $r(t)$  in (21) can be designed to manipulate the leaderless consensus manifold, as will be illustrated in Example 3 of Section IV; however, this requires the knowledge of a common reference among all the agents. In case no such knowledge is allowed, it is still possible to set  $r(t) \equiv 0$  in (21), in which case the consensus manifold will be specified only by  $A_m$ .

*Remark 8:* MRASCon (22) encompasses MRACCon [11] in the case of known and homogeneous system matrices. Specifically, Mei et al. [11] consider the special case when the agents' dynamics follows a (known) homogeneous pair  $(A_m, B_m)$  perturbed by some (unknown) matching gains  $K_i^*$ , i.e.,

$$\dot{x}_i = A_m x_i + B_m (u_i - \Phi_i(t, x_i) K_i^*). \quad (28)$$

Here,  $\Phi_i$  is a known and bounded continuous function. In this case, the reference models can be designed the same as in (21), considering that  $r(t) \equiv 0$  in [11]. Owing to the fact that the special dynamics (28) imposes  $B_i = B_m$ , it follows that  $L_i^* = I$  and  $F_i^* = G$  [with  $G$  defined as in (5)],  $\forall i$ . As these matrices are known, the controller (22) degenerates to MRACCon proposed in [11]

$$\begin{aligned} u_i &= \Phi_i \hat{K}_i(t) + r_i + G e_i \\ \dot{\hat{K}}_i &= -\gamma_i \Phi_i^T B_m^T P e_i. \end{aligned}$$

The above discussions also imply that MRACCon is not directly applicable when the agent dynamics  $(A_i, B_i)$  is heterogeneous and unknown, as is the case considered in this article.

#### IV. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

*Example 1 (MRASC):* For illustration, Table I summarizes the classical MRAC, CMRAC, and the proposed MRASC law for a scalar unknown plant. Then, we take  $a = 1$  and  $b = 2$ , which are assumed to be unknown for the control design.

We select  $b_m = 1$  and  $r = \sin(t)$ ; let  $\rho = -1$  for CMRAC and  $\gamma = 1$  for all three methods. Then, we select  $a_m = -1$  for a stable reference and  $a_m = 0.1$  for an unstable one for comparisons. All the initial values are set to zero.

The simulation results are shown in Fig. 3 (stable reference model) and Fig. 4 (unstable reference model). When tracking the stable reference model, MRASC improves the transient of classical MRAC thanks to the adaptive stabilization process; meanwhile, MRASC realizes faster tracking as compared with CMRAC since MRASC targets the reference model  $x_m$  directly instead of the closed-loop reference model  $x_m^c$ . More importantly, Fig. 4 shows that MRASC can track the unstable reference asymptotically, while MRAC fails and CMRAC realizes bounded tracking with some bias. The estimated parameters in the unstable case converge to some finite values, as shown in Fig. 5.

*Example 2 (MRASCon):* Consider a network of  $N = 6$  heterogeneous unknown second-order agents. Their true parameters (unknown for control design) are

$$A_i = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ i & i \end{pmatrix}, \quad B_i = \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ (-1)^i i \end{pmatrix}. \quad (29)$$

The communication topology among the agents is a directed ring with edge set  $\mathcal{E} = \{\mathcal{E}_{12}, \mathcal{E}_{23}, \mathcal{E}_{34}, \mathcal{E}_{45}, \mathcal{E}_{56}, \mathcal{E}_{61}\}$  along with unitary weights: in this case,  $\Re(\lambda_2(\mathcal{L})) = 0.5$ , leading to the lower bound of the coupling gain  $c \geq 1$ . Let us select  $c = 1$ .

Consider a stabilizable (but unstable) pair

$$A_m = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & 0.2 \end{pmatrix}, \quad B_m = \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix}. \quad (30)$$

The control direction  $\text{sgn}(L_i^*)$  is known as  $\text{sgn}(L_i^*) = -1$  for  $i = 1, 3, 5$ , and  $\text{sgn}(L_i^*) = 1$  for  $i = 2, 4, 6$ . It can be easily verified that Assumptions 2–4 hold. Assume that  $r(t) \equiv 0$  in (21).

Solving the algebraic Riccati (4) with the `are` command in MATLAB gives

$$P = \begin{pmatrix} 1.4765 & 0.3090 \\ 0.3090 & 0.6880 \end{pmatrix}$$

resulting in  $G = (-0.6180, -1.3759)$ .

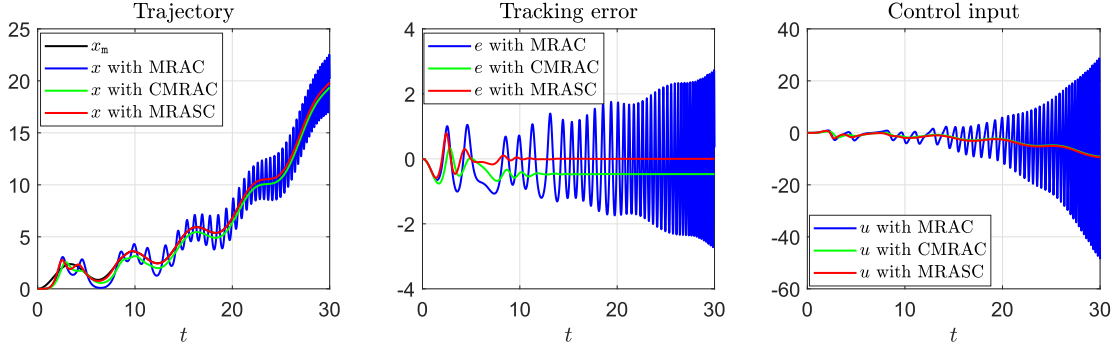


Fig. 4. Example 1: MRAC, CMRAC, and MRASC (6) for tracking an unstable reference model ( $a_m = 0.1$ ).

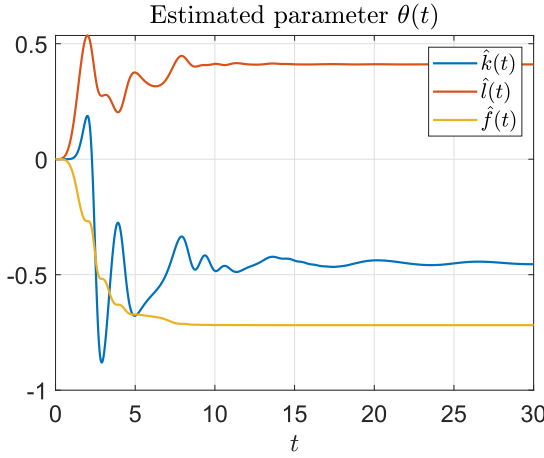


Fig. 5. Example 1: Estimated parameter  $\theta(t)$  (with  $a_m = 0.1$ ).

In order to highlight the advantages of MRASCon as defined in (22), let us first consider two methods, namely, MRACon<sup>\*</sup> and CMRACon. MRACon<sup>\*</sup> can be obtained by simply removing the adaptive feedback term  $F_i(t)e_i$  from the MRASCon law (22). CMRACon is the leaderless consensus version of CMRAC [4], [5] and is expressed as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} u_i &= \hat{K}_i(t)x_i + \hat{L}_i(t)r_i \\ \dot{\hat{K}}_i &= -\gamma_i \operatorname{sgn}(L_i^*) B_m^T P e_i^{\text{cl}} x_i^T \\ \dot{\hat{L}}_i &= -\gamma_i \operatorname{sgn}(L_i^*) B_m^T P e_i^{\text{cl}} r_i^T \\ \dot{x}_{m,i}^{\text{cl}} &= A_m x_{m,i}^{\text{cl}} + B_m r_i - \rho e_i^{\text{cl}} \end{aligned} \quad (31)$$

where  $e_i^{\text{cl}} = x_i - x_{m,i}^{\text{cl}}$ ,  $r_i = cG \sum_{j=1}^N a_{ij}(x_i - x_j)$ , and  $\rho < 0$  is an observer gain. Clearly, CMRACon converges to MRACon<sup>\*</sup> as  $\rho$  converges to zero.

Without the adaptive stabilization term, both MRACon<sup>\*</sup> and CMRACon give a closed-loop dynamics of  $x_i$  as

$$\dot{x}_i = A_m x_i + B_m r_i + B_i (\tilde{K}_i x_i + \tilde{L}_i r_i).$$

This indicates that a singular case may happen near the origin  $\mathbf{x} = 0$ : the states of all agents decay to zero, while all the local (open-loop)

<sup>2</sup>To avoid confusion, notice that MRACon<sup>\*</sup> is not the same as MRACon in [11]. In fact, MRACon in [11] is not directly applicable to heterogeneous and unknown agents (cf. Remark 8). Therefore, MRACon<sup>\*</sup> is a reformulation of the method in [11] to handle heterogeneous and unknown agents.

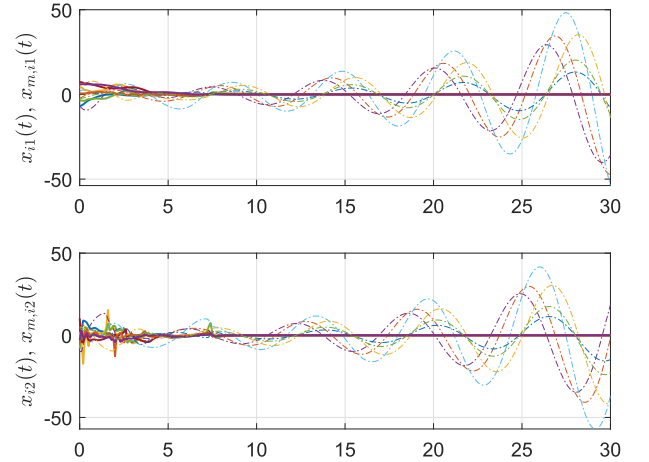


Fig. 6. Example 2: States of the agents under MRACon<sup>\*</sup> law [obtained by removing  $F_i(t)e_i$  in MRASCon (22)]. The agents (solid lines) reach a trivial consensus at zero but fail to track the corresponding local reference models (dashed lines): that is, a trivial consensus is reached without tracking.

reference models diverge to infinity. This singular case is extremely undesired since the agents are expected to track the corresponding local reference models. Fig. 6 shows an example of this singular case occurring in MRACon<sup>\*</sup>, where, although consensus (to zero) is achieved, the tracking task is completely neglected. In the simulation of Fig. 6, we select  $\gamma_i = 1$ ; the initial adaptive gains are set to zero, and the initial states of the agents and the reference models are randomly chosen according to a Gaussian distribution with standard derivation 5.

CMRACon law (31) can also make the agents trapped into the origin  $\mathbf{x} = 0$ , especially when  $\rho$  is small in magnitude: in this case, the closed-loop reference model acts more as a reference model than as an observer. For example, by selecting  $\rho = -1$ , CMRACon leads to similar results as in Fig. 6 (omitted due to the space limits), i.e., a trivial consensus is reached without tracking. In addition, we show in Fig. 7 that, even with a larger (in magnitude)  $\rho = -100$ , CMRACon fails to drive the agents to consensus. The main reason for this phenomenon is that CMRACon cannot guarantee asymptotic tracking performance when the reference model is unstable. The scenarios mentioned in Figs. 6 and 7 will not occur in MRASCon since all the tracking errors  $e_i$  are guaranteed to converge to zero asymptotically, i.e., consensus is achieved along with the tracking of the reference models. Fig. 8 shows the results of the proposed MRASCon approach (22) with the same initial conditions



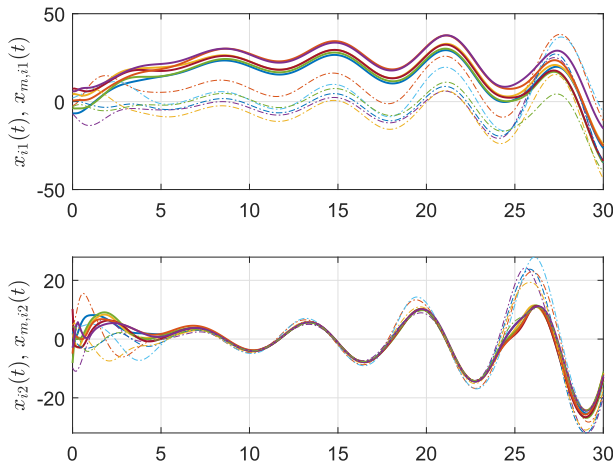


Fig. 7. Example 2: States of the agents under CMRASCon law (31) with  $\rho = -100$ . The agents (solid lines) fail to accomplish the consensus and tracking tasks.

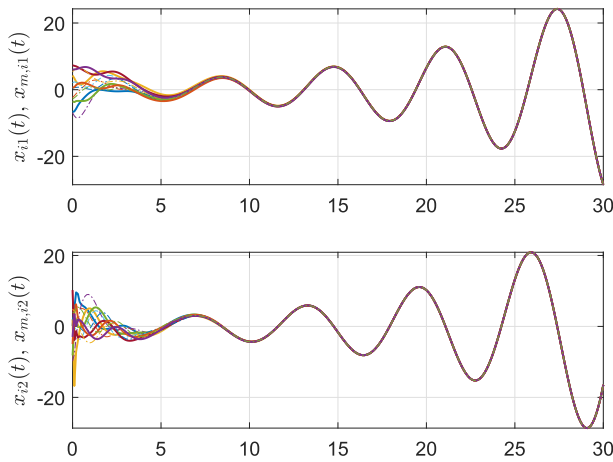


Fig. 8. Example 2: States of the agents under the proposed MRASCon law (22) with the same initial conditions as in Figs. 6 and 7. Consensus and tracking are both achieved.

as in Figs. 6 and 7. The comparisons highlight the effectiveness of MRASC and MRASCon in tracking unstable reference dynamics.

*Example 3 (MRASCon with switching reference models):* To support Remarks 6 and 7, this example illustrates how the final consensus value can be easily designed by MRASCon. As a matter of fact, MRASCon is able to specify a priori the consensus dynamics via  $A_m$  and  $r(t)$ , thanks to the guarantee of asymptotic tracking and consensus. Note that a priori knowledge of the consensus manifold is absent in [17] since the unstable consensus manifold depends on the unknown system dynamics and, thus, cannot be specified a priori. Let us consider the following specifications for consensus of agents (29): diverging for 50 s, then oscillating for 30 s, and finally converging to a stable equilibrium point (200; 0). This can be accomplished by choosing  $A_m$  to be the same as in (30) with  $r(t) = 0$  for  $t \leq 50$ ,  $A_m = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$  with  $r(t) = 0$  for  $50 < t \leq 80$ , and  $A_m = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & -0.5 \end{pmatrix}$  with  $r(t) = 100$  thereafter. The states and control inputs of the agents are shown in Fig. 9. The consensus behavior meets the prior specifications, thus resulting in a

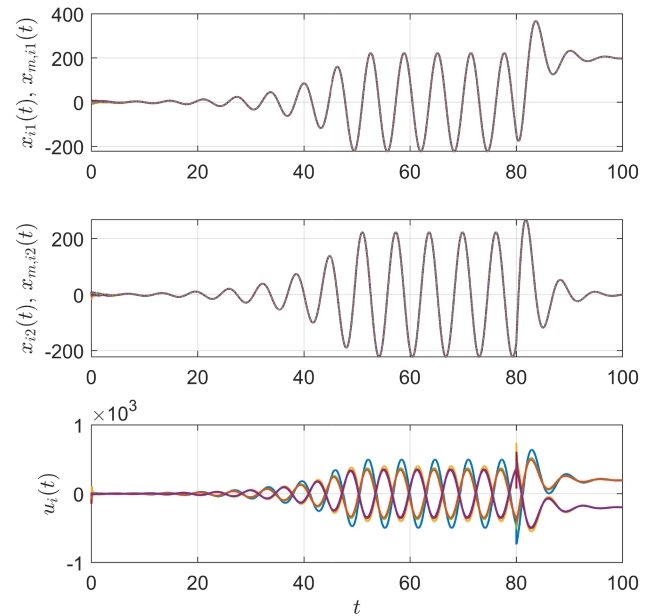


Fig. 9. Example 3: States and control inputs of the agents under the proposed MRASCon law (22) with switching reference models (unstable for  $t \leq 50$ ; marginally stable for  $50 < t \leq 80$ ; stable for  $t > 80$ ).

predictable behavior of the leaderless, heterogeneous, and uncertain agents.

## V. CONCLUSION

In this article, we proposed a natural extension of the classical MRAC approach, where the main novelty arose from an extra adaptive stabilization loop. For this reason, this extension was called MRASC. It was rigorously proved that with MRASC, the tracking error is driven to zero even when the reference model is unstable. This feature, absent in state-of-the-art MRAC schemes, allowed us to extend MRASC into an MRASCon law for a leaderless consensus problem. We can identify two future lines of research. The first is to study MRASC with switched dynamics rigorously: by handling unstable reference dynamics, MRASC can potentially address switched reference dynamics where one or more subsystems are unstable. The second is to further increase the allowed uncertainty in the multiagent MRASCon scenario, e.g., to get rid of the knowledge of the Laplacian eigenvalues, possibly with the methods of [13], [14], [15], [16], and [23].

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