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Author(s): Sadhukhan, J.; Mazurek, K.; Dobaczewski, Jacek; Nazarewicz, W.; Sheikh, J.A.; Baran, A.

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MULTIDIMENSIONAL
SKYRME-DENSITY-FUNCTIONAL STUDY
OF THE SPONTANEOUS FISSION OF $^{238}\text{U}^*$

J. SADHUKHAN^{a,b,c}, K. MAZUREK^{a,b,d}, J. DOBACZEWSKI^{a,e,f}
W. NAZAREWICZ^{b,e,g}, J.A. SHEIKH^{a,b}, A. BARAN^h

^aDepartment of Physics and Astronomy, University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996, USA

^bPhysics Division, Oak Ridge National Laboratory
P.O. Box 2008, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831, USA

^cPhysics Group, Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre
1/AF Bidhan Nagar, Kolkata 700064, India

^dThe Henryk Niewodniczański Institute of Nuclear Physics, PAN
Radzikowskiego 152, 31-342 Kraków, Poland

^eInstitute of Theoretical Physics, Faculty of Physics, University of Warsaw
Pasteura 5, 02-093 Warszawa, Poland

^fDepartment of Physics, University of Jyväskylä

P.O. Box 35 (YFL), 40014 University of Jyväskylä, Finland

^gDepartment of Physics and Astronomy and NSCL/FRIB Laboratory
Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824, USA

^hInstitute of Physics, University of M. Curie-Skłodowska
Radziszewskiego 10, 20-031 Lublin, Poland

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We determined the spontaneous fission lifetime of ^{238}U by a minimization of the action integral in a three-dimensional space of collective variables. Apart from the mass-distribution multipole moments Q_{20} (elongation) and Q_{30} (left–right asymmetry), we also considered the pairing-fluctuation parameter λ_2 as a collective coordinate. The collective potential was obtained self-consistently using the Skyrme energy density functional SkM*. The inertia tensor was obtained within the nonperturbative cranking approximation to the adiabatic time-dependent Hartree–Fock–Bogoliubov approach. The pairing-fluctuation parameter λ_2 allowed us to control the pairing gap along the fission path, which significantly changed the spontaneous fission lifetime.

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This study of spontaneous-fission lifetimes is based on the energy-density-functional (EDF) theory and relies on the collective potential and inertia determined within the adiabatic time-dependent Hartree–Fock–Bogoliubov (ATDHFB) approach. In practical calculations, we use the Skyrme EDF parametrization SkM* [1] and density-dependent pairing. The methodology adopted in this work strictly follows Refs. [2–4].

The ATDHFB inertia is calculated as

$$\mathcal{M}_{ij}^C = \frac{1}{2\dot{q}_i\dot{q}_j} \sum_{\alpha\beta} \frac{\left(F_{\alpha\beta}^{i*}F_{\alpha\beta}^j + F_{\alpha\beta}^iF_{\alpha\beta}^{j*}\right)}{E_\alpha + E_\beta}, \quad (1)$$

where \dot{q}_i and \dot{q}_j represent time derivatives of the collective coordinates. The sum is evaluated over all quasiparticle states and E_α denotes the quasiparticle energy. Matrices F^i are obtained from

$$-F^{i*} = \left(B^T \frac{\partial \rho}{\partial q_i} A + B^T \frac{\partial \kappa}{\partial q_i} B - A^T \frac{\partial \kappa^*}{\partial q_i} A - A^T \frac{\partial \rho^*}{\partial q_i} B \right) \dot{q}_i, \quad (2)$$

where A and B are the Hartree–Fock–Bogoliubov (HFB) matrices, obtained self-consistently from the constrained HFB equations. The particle and pairing densities, ρ and κ respectively, are determined uniquely from A and B .

The total Routhian is

$$H'_{\text{HFB}} = \hat{H}_{\text{HFB}} - \sum_{l=2,3} q_l \hat{Q}_{l0} - \sum_{\tau=p,n} \left(\lambda_\tau \hat{N}_\tau - \lambda_{2\tau} \left(\hat{N}_\tau^2 - \langle N_\tau^2 \rangle \right) \right), \quad (3)$$

where \hat{H}_{HFB} is the HFB Hamiltonian, \hat{Q}_{20} and \hat{Q}_{30} are quadrupole and octupole moments, respectively, and \hat{N}_τ is particle-number operator. The terms associated with $\lambda_{2\tau}$ modify the pairing correlations of the system [2, 5] that can be assessed through the average pairing gaps

$$\Delta_\tau = \frac{\text{Tr}' \hat{\Delta}^\tau \rho_\tau}{\text{Tr} \rho_\tau}, \quad (4)$$

where $\hat{\Delta}^\tau$ is the pairing field and $\text{Tr}' A = \sum_n A_{n\bar{n}}$, with bar over n indicating the time-reversed state.

Calculations presented in this work were performed in a three-dimensional (3D) collective space, where moments Q_{20} and Q_{30} control axial nuclear shapes and $\lambda_2 = \lambda_{2p} = \lambda_{2n}$ allows for simultaneously changing proton and neutron pairing correlations. An early discussion of the effect of pairing fluctuations on fission dynamics was presented, for example, in Refs. [6, 7]

(see Ref. [2] for a comprehensive list of references). Although the potential energy V increases as the pairing gap deviates from the HFB value, the collective inertia behaves as $\sim 1/\Delta^2$ and, therefore, the minimum-action path favors stronger pairing correlations [2].

In this contribution, we carry out a comparative study of ^{238}U , assuming axial geometry. The role and importance of other degrees of freedom, such as triaxiality [2], will be discussed elsewhere.

Potential energy surfaces shown in Fig. 1 allow us to study competition between the deformation and pairing effects. It turns out that the pairing

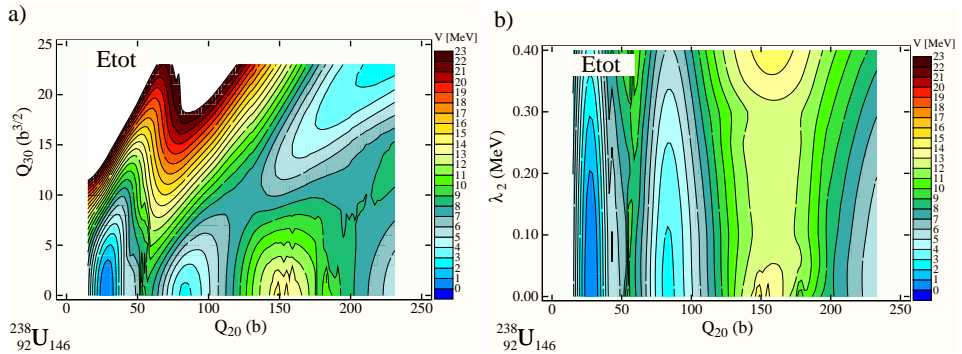


Fig. 1. Potential energy surfaces of ^{238}U in the $(Q_{20}-Q_{30})$ plane for $\lambda_2 = 0.0$ (left) and in the $(Q_{20}-\lambda_2)$ plane for $Q_{30} = 0.0$ (right).

fluctuations are more important around the first saddle than in the ground-state energy minimum. As it is shown in Fig. 2, with increasing pairing, the potential energy increases, whereas the mass tensor, in general, decreases. Such a competition significantly affects the fission lifetimes. For example, our 2D calculations (along the $\lambda_2 = 0$ path) yield $T_{\text{SF}} = 2.34 \times 10^{21}$ y, while the 3D calculations including pairing predict $T_{\text{SF}} = 3.63 \times 10^{17}$ y, which is closer to the experimental value of 8.2×10^{15} y. This is consistent with findings of recent Refs. [8, 9] based on Gogny-EDF framework.

In summary, we performed a preliminary axial-symmetry study of spontaneous fission of ^{238}U , in which pairing fluctuations were treated dynamically by minimizing the collective action. Using the microscopic input based on the ATDHFB approach, we obtained a fair agreement with experiment.

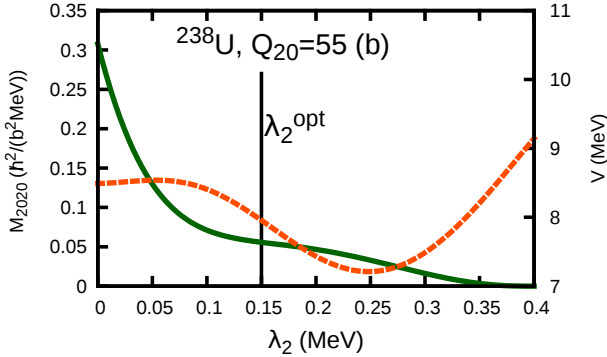


Fig. 2. The quadrupole diagonal inertia (solid line) and potential energy (dashed line) as functions of the pairing-fluctuation parameter λ_2 . The multipole moments ($Q_{20} = 55 \text{ b}$ and $Q_{30} = 0$) correspond to the fission barrier. The vertical line marks the value of λ_2^{opt} that corresponds to the calculated dynamical fission path.

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