

# A New Projected Gradient Method for Unconstrained Problems

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**Abstract:** In this paper, we propose a new gradient projection method for problems without constraints. Based on the steepest descent method, there is a projection matrix  $P$  constructed from the descending direction and the iterative direction<sup>[1-4]</sup>. We gave a general proof of the convergence for the new projected gradient method in this paper. In numerical experiments using the CUTer test problem library, the new projected gradient method performs better than the classic fastest descent method.

**Keywords:** Projection matrix; Global convergence; Unconstrained optimization

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## 1. Introduction

Rosen's gradient projection method, published in 1960, is the first method for solving constrained nonlinear programming problems in the history of mathematical programming. The importance of this method in the literature of nonlinear programming stems from the fact that many more efficient algorithms developed later incorporated the basic ideas propounded by Rosen<sup>[5-8]</sup>.

Fletcher and Reeves (1964) extended this method to solve nonlinear optimization problems<sup>[9]</sup>.

$$\min f(x), x \in R^n,$$

Where  $f$  is continuously differentiable. Gradient methods start from an initial point  $x_0$  and generate new iterates by the rule

$$x_{k+1} = x_k - \alpha_k g_k,$$

Where  $g_k = \nabla f(x_k)^T$  is the gradient, and  $\alpha_k$  is a stepsize computed by some line search algorithm. In this paper, we choose the  $\alpha_k$  by Wolfe line search.

In the steepest descent (SD) method, which can be traced back to Cauchy (1847)<sup>[10,11]</sup>, the 'exact step-length' is given by

$$\alpha_k \in \arg \min_{\alpha \in R} f(x_k - \alpha g_k),$$

It is well known that SD can be very slow when the Hessian of  $f$  is ill-conditioned at a local minimum<sup>[12]</sup>. In this case, the iterates slowly approach the minimum in a zigzag fashion.

Until a new idea is proposed by Barzilai and Borwein in 1988<sup>[5]</sup>, the basic idea is to regard the matrix  $D(\alpha_k) = 1/\alpha_k I$

as an approximation of the Hessian of  $f$ .

$$\alpha_k = \arg \min_{\alpha \in R} \|D(\alpha)s_{k-1} - g_{k-1}\|_2$$

Where  $s_{k-1} = x_k - x_{k-1}$ ,  $y_{k-1} = g_k - g_{k-1}$

Inspired by these algorithms, we propose a new algorithm—a new unconstrained projected gradient algorithm<sup>[13–15]</sup>.

## 2. Unconstrained projection gradient method

Since the gradient projection method is based on the projection of the gradient on a subspace, some of its properties will be described here for convenience.

**Definition 2.1:** If a matrix  $P_{n \times n}$  satisfies both equations of  $P=P^T$  and  $P^2=P$ , it is defined as a projection matrix<sup>[16–18]</sup>.

Properties of a projection matrix:

1. It is semi-definite;
2. Any matrix  $P$  is a projection matrix, and  $I-P$  is also a projection matrix, which is the necessary and sufficient condition<sup>[19]</sup>.

3. If matrix  $P$  is a projection matrix, let  $Q = I-P$

$$L(x) = \{Px | x \in R^n\}, L^\perp(x) = \{Qx | x \in R^n\}$$

The linear subspaces  $L(x)$  and  $L^\perp(x)$  are orthogonal, so that the projection matrix  $P$  takes any vector  $x \in R^n$  into orthogonal subspaces.

$$x = p + q, p \in L, q \in L^\perp.$$

In this paper, we constructed a projection matrix  $P$  as follows:

$$P = (y^{k-1}, \delta^{k-1})[(y^{k-1}, \delta^{k-1})^T(y^{k-1}, \delta^{k-1})]^{-1}(y^{k-1}, \delta^{k-1})^T$$

Where  $\delta^{k-1} = x^k - x^{k-1}$ ,  $y^{k-1} = g^k - g^{k-1}$ , when they are non-collinear.

When  $\delta^{k-1}$  and  $y^{k-1}$  are collinear, let  $P=I$  that is a unit array<sup>[20,21]</sup>.

### 2.1. Algorithm (the new projection gradient method)

Step1. Choose  $x_0$ ,  $\varepsilon > 0$ , set  $d^0 = -g^0$ ,  $\alpha^0 = 1$ ,  $x_1 = x^0 + d^0$ ,  $k:=0$ ;

Step2. stop if  $x_k$  satisfies the stopping criterion of  $\|g^k\| \leq \varepsilon$ ; or turn step3.

Step3. Compute  $\delta^{k-1} = x^k - x^{k-1}$ ,  $y^{k-1} = g^k - g^{k-1}$  and  $\cos < \delta^{k-1}, y^{k-1} >$ ;

Step4. If  $\cos < \delta^{k-1}, y^{k-1} > = \pm 1$ , set  $P=I$ ;

or else  $P = (y^{k-1}, \delta^{k-1})[(y^{k-1}, \delta^{k-1})^T(y^{k-1}, \delta^{k-1})]^{-1}(y^{k-1}, \delta^{k-1})^T$ ;

Step5. set  $d^k = -Pg^k$ , choose  $\alpha^k$  to satisfy the Armijo-Goldstein-Wolfe conditions:

$$f(x^k + \alpha^k d^k) \leq f(x^k) + \sigma_1 \alpha^k g_k^T d^k,$$

$$g(x^k + \alpha^k d^k)^T d^k \geq \sigma_2 g_k^T d^k;$$

Step6.  $k:=k+1$  reset  $x^{k+1} = x^k + \alpha^k d^k$ , continue with step1<sup>[22,23]</sup>.

### 2.2. Proof of the convergence

Before we prove the convergence for the new projection gradient method, we assumed as follows:

1. Choose the starting point  $x^0$ , the level set  $L(x_0) = \{x \in R^n : f(x) \leq f(x^0)\}$  is bounded.
2. Derivative of  $f$  is Lipschitz continuously differentiable in a neighborhood of the level set  $L(x_0)$
3. let  $x^*$  denotes the unique minimum point in the level set  $L(x^0)$ .
4.  $f(x)$  is uniformly convex and twice continuously differentiable, there exist positive constants  $m$  and  $M$  with the

following property <sup>[24]</sup>:

$$m\|u\|^2 \leq u^T G(x)u \leq M\|u\|^2 \quad \forall x \in L(x^0), u \in R^n \quad (2.1)$$

$$\frac{m}{2}\|x - x^*\|^2 < f(x) - f(x^*) < \frac{M}{2}\|x - x^*\|^2 \quad (2.2)$$

$$m\|x - x^*\| < g(x) < M\|x - x^*\| \quad \forall x \in R^n \quad (2.3)$$

**Lemma 2.1:** since the function  $f(x)$  is satisfied with assumption 4, then

$$\frac{\|y^{k-1}\|}{\|\delta^{k-1}\|} \leq M \quad (2.4)$$

$$\frac{\|\delta^{k-1}\|^2}{y^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1}} \leq \frac{1}{m}$$

**Proof:** from assumption 4, we can know

$$\frac{d}{d\tau} g(x^{k-1} + \tau\delta^{k-1}) = G(x^{k-1} + \tau\delta^{k-1})\delta^{k-1}$$

Use the integration by this equality,

$$y^{k-1} = g^k - g^{k-1} = \int_0^1 G(x^{k-1} + \tau\delta^{k-1})\delta^{k-1} d\tau$$

$$\text{Then } \|y^{k-1}\| \leq \|\delta^{k-1}\| \int_0^1 \|G(x^{k-1} + \tau\delta^{k-1})\delta^{k-1}\| d\tau$$

By  $L(x^0)$  being a bounded closed convex set,  $x^{k-1} + \tau\delta^{k-1} \in L(x^0)$ , and  $f(x)$  satisfies assumption 4, there must be  $M > 0$ , such that  $\|G(x^{k-1} + \tau\delta^{k-1})\| \leq M$

$$\text{Then we can have } \|y^{k-1}\| \leq M\|\delta^{k-1}\| \|y^{k-1}\| / \|\delta^{k-1}\| \leq M$$

Combine all of the above

$$\delta^{k-1T} y^{k-1} = \int_0^1 \delta^{k-1T} G(x^{k-1} + \tau\delta^{k-1})\delta^{k-1} d\tau \geq m\|\delta^{k-1}\|^2 \quad (2.5)$$

$$\text{namely } \frac{\|\delta^{k-1}\|^2}{y^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1}} \leq \frac{1}{m}$$

**Lemma 2.2:** If  $f(x)$  is satisfied with assumption 4 <sup>[25-28]</sup>, then

$$\|g(x)\|^2 \geq m[f(x) - f(x^*)], \quad \forall x \in R^n \quad (2.6)$$

**Proof:** Since  $f(x)$  is a convex function, then for any point  $x \in R^n$

$$f(x) - f(x^*) \leq g(x)^T (x - x^*) \leq \|g(x)\| \|x - x^*\| \quad (2.7)$$

$$\frac{d}{d\tau} g(x^* + \tau(x - x^*)) = G(x^* + \tau(x - x^*))(x - x^*)$$

Use the integration by parts, then

$$g(x) - g(x^*) = \int_0^1 G(x^* + \tau(x - x^*)) (x - x^*) d\tau$$

$$\text{we denote } \overline{G} = \int_0^1 G(x^* + \tau(x - x^*)) d\tau$$

and point  $x^*$  is the minimum point of  $f(x)$ .

Since  $\overline{G}$  is satisfied with formula (2.2), so

$$m \|x - x^*\|^2 \leq (x - x^*)^T \overline{G} (x - x^*) = (x - x^*)^T g(x) \leq \|x - x^*\| \cdot \|g(x)\|$$

Thus, combine  $\|x - x^*\| \leq \|g(x)\| / m$  and formula (2.7), then formula (2.6) holds.

**Lemma 2.3:** Let  $f(x)$  be satisfied by assumption 4,  $\alpha^k$  is satisfied by *Wolfe* line search

$$f(x^k + \alpha^k d^k) \leq f(x^k) + \sigma_1 \alpha^k g(x^k)^T d^k \quad \sigma_1 \in \left(0, \frac{1}{2}\right) \quad (2.8)$$

$$g(x^k + \alpha^k d^k)^T d^k \geq \sigma_2 g(x^k)^T d^k, \sigma_2 \in (\sigma_1, 1) \quad (2.9)$$

$$x^{k+1} = x^k + \alpha^k d^k \quad (2.10)$$

Then

$$f(x^k) - f(x^{k-1}) \leq -\sigma_1 m c_1 \cos^2 \theta_{k-1} (f(x^k) - f(x^*)) \quad (2.11)$$

$$f(x^k) - f(x^*) \leq (1 - \sigma_1 m c_1 \cos^2 \theta_{k-1}) (f(x^k) - f(x^*)) \quad (2.12)$$

Where  $c_1 = (1 - \sigma_2) / M$ ,  $c_2 = 2(1 - \sigma_1) / m$ ,  $\theta_{k-1}$  is the Angle between  $d^k$  and  $-g^k$ .

**Proof:** divided into the following steps:

(1) Prove the inequality of formula 1.8 at the left side <sup>[29-31]</sup>,

From Lemma 2.1, we know

$$\frac{y^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1}}{\|\delta^{k-1}\|^2} \leq \frac{\|y^{k-1}\| \cdot \|\delta^{k-1}\|}{\|\delta^{k-1}\|^2} = \frac{\|y^{k-1}\|}{\|\delta^{k-1}\|} \leq M \quad (2.13)$$

By Wolfe Powell (2.9), then

$$y^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1} = g^{kT} \delta^{k-1} - g^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1} \geq -(1 - \sigma_2) g^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1} \quad (2.14)$$

combine the formulas (2.13) and (2.14), which are hold below

$$\begin{aligned} \|\delta^{k-1}\|^2 &\geq \frac{y^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1}}{M} \geq -\frac{(1 - \sigma_2)}{M} g^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1} = \frac{1 - \sigma_2}{M} \|g^{k-1}\| \cdot \|\delta^{k-1}\| \cos \theta_{k-1} \\ \text{So } \frac{1 - \sigma_2}{M} \|g^{k-1}\| \cos \theta_{k-1} &\leq \|\delta^{k-1}\| \end{aligned}$$

(2) proof of the right-hand inequality of formula (2.2).

According to Taylor's expansion and the formula (2.11) of Wolff's Powell,

$$g^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1} + \frac{1}{2} \delta^{k-1T} G(\xi^{k-1}) \delta^{k-1} = f(x^k) - f(x^{k-1}) \leq \sigma_1 g^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1}$$

Where  $\xi^{k-1}$  is between  $x^k$  and  $x^{k-1}$ . so

$$\delta^{k-1T} G(\xi^{k-1}) \delta^{k-1} \leq -2(1-\sigma_1) g^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1}$$

For the set  $L(x^0)$  is bounded close convex sets, so  $\xi^{k-1} \in L(x^0)$ , from formula (2.1), it is clear

$$m \|\delta^{k-1}\|^2 \leq \delta^{k-1T} G(\xi^{k-1}) \delta^{k-1}$$

Therefore,  $m \|\delta^{k-1}\|^2 \leq -2(1-\sigma_1) g^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1} = 2(1-\sigma_1) \|g^{k-1}\| \|\delta^{k-1}\| \cos \theta_{k-1}$

$$\text{So, } \|\delta^{k-1}\| \leq \frac{2(1-\sigma_1)}{m} \|g^{k-1}\| \cos \theta_{k-1}.$$

(3) proof for formula (2.11) and (2.12)

By the proof of Wolff's Powell and above all, it is clear that

$$f(x^k) - f(x^{k-1}) \leq \sigma_1 g^{k-1T} \delta^{k-1} = -\sigma_1 \|g^{k-1}\| \|\delta^{k-1}\| \cos \theta_{k-1} \leq -\sigma_1 c_1 \|g^{k-1}\|^2 \cos^2 \theta_{k-1} \quad (2.15)$$

By Lemma 2.2

$$\|g^{k-1}\|^2 \geq m [f(x^{k-1}) - f(x^*)]$$

Substituting into equation (2.15), it holds that

$$f(x^k) - f(x^{k-1}) \leq -\sigma_1 m c_1 \cos^2 \theta_{k-1} [f(x^{k-1}) - f(x^*)]$$

We have the required result <sup>[32-35]</sup>.

The global convergence of the new projection gradient method.

**Theorem 2.1:** let  $x^0$  is the initial point, and the  $f(x)$  is satisfied by assumption condition 1 on the level set  $L(x^0)$ , then the iterated point series  $\{x^k\}$  generated by the new algorithm converges to the optimal solution  $x^*$ .

**Proof:** Proof is divided into two steps

1. Assume for any arbitrary small  $\varepsilon > 0$ , there is an integer  $k_0$  when  $k \rightarrow \infty$  for  $k > k_0$  such that  $\cos \theta_k < \varepsilon$

Proof by contradiction:

We assume  $\cos \theta_{k-l} \rightarrow 0$  when  $\|g^k\| > \varepsilon$ ,  $\|d^k\| < \varepsilon$

It holds that  $g^{kT} P g^k \rightarrow 0$  when  $\cos \theta_{k-1} = \frac{-g^{kT} d^k}{\|g^k\| \|d^k\|} = \frac{g^{kT} P g^k}{\|g^k\| \|d^k\|} \rightarrow 0$

thus the matrix  $P$  is singular  $\|g^k\| > \varepsilon$   $k \rightarrow \infty$ , and thus  $\delta^{k-1}$  and  $y^{k-1}$  is linearly dependent on the iterative direction when  $k > k_0$ , so

$$\alpha^{k+1} d^{k+1} = \delta^{k+1} = l(g^{k+2} - g^{k+1}) = -\alpha^k g^{k+1}$$

then  $g^{k+2} = 0$

above all, we get  $\cos \theta_{k-l} \rightarrow 0$   $g^k \rightarrow 0$ , its local optimal solution is the global optimal solution of  $f(x)$  when it is convex.

2. If  $\cos \theta_{k-l} > \eta$  is true for any  $\eta > 0$  as, it is true that

$$f(x^k) - f(x^*) \leq (1 - \sigma_1 m c_1 \cos^2 \theta_{k-1}) (f(x^k) - f(x^*))$$

for the sequence  $\{f(x^k)\}$  is a decreasing monotone column.

Let  $c_3 = 1 - \sigma_1 c_1 m \eta^2$  then  $0 < c_3 < 1$

$$0 < f(x^k) - f(x^*) \leq c_3 (f(x^{k-1}) - f(x^*)) \leq c_3^2 (f(x^{k-2}) - f(x^*)) \cdots \leq c_3^k (f(x^0) - f(x^*))$$

as  $k \rightarrow \infty$   $f(x^k) \rightarrow f(x^*)$   $x^k \rightarrow x^*$  the minimum point is unique.

### 2.3. Rate of convergence

**Hypothesis 2.1:** let  $\lambda_{\min}$  is the minimal eigenvalue of the projection matrix  $P$  and  $\lambda_{\min} < L$ .

**Lemma 2.4:** for an arbitrary integer  $k > 0$ ,  $\|d^k\|^2 \leq \|g^k\|^2$ ,  $g^{kT} d^k \geq \lambda_{\min} \|g^k\|^2$ .

**Theorem 2.2:** Under the assumption that conditions 1 and 2 are true, the iterated points series  $\{x^k\}$  by algorithm 2.1 converges to  $x^*$  at least linearly<sup>[36]</sup>.

**Proof:** we choose  $\alpha^k$  to satisfy the below

$$f(x^k + \alpha^k d^k) \leq f(x^k) + \sigma_1 \alpha^k g^{kT} d^k, \quad g(x^k + \alpha^k d^k)^T d^k \geq \sigma_2 g^{kT} d^k$$

So,

$$f^k - f^{k+1} \geq -\sigma_1 \alpha^k g^{kT} d^k \geq \sigma_1 \alpha^k \lambda_{\min} \|g^k\|^2 \quad (2.19)$$

$$\|g^{k+1} - g^k\| = \frac{\|g^{k+1} - g^k\| \cdot \|d^k\|}{\|d^k\|} \geq \frac{(g^{k+1} - g^k)^T d^k}{\|d^k\|} \geq \frac{(\sigma_2 - 1) g_k^T d^k}{\|d^k\|} \geq (1 - \sigma_2) \lambda_{\min} \|g^k\|$$

Obtained by formula (1.33)

$$L \alpha^k \|d^k\| \geq \|g^{k+1} - g^k\| \geq (1 - \sigma_2) \lambda_{\min} \|g^k\|$$

$$\alpha^k \geq \frac{(1 - \sigma_2) \lambda_{\min} \|g^k\|}{L \|d^k\|} \geq \frac{(1 - \sigma_2) \lambda_{\min}}{L}$$

$$\text{By formula (2.19)} \quad f^k - f^{k+1} \geq -\sigma_1 \alpha^k g^{kT} d^k \geq \sigma_1 \alpha^k \lambda_{\min} \|g^k\|^2 \geq \frac{\sigma_1 (1 - \sigma_2) \lambda_{\min}^2}{L} \cdot \|g^k\|^2$$

let  $\frac{\sigma_1 (1 - \sigma_2) \lambda_{\min}^2}{L} = \zeta \quad (0 < \zeta < 1)$ .

So the above formula can be resolved to:

$$f^k - f^{k+1} \geq \zeta \|g^k\|^2 \geq \zeta m^2 \|x^k - x^*\|^2 \geq \frac{2\zeta m^2}{M} (f^k - f^*) \geq \frac{\zeta m^2}{M + m^2} (f^k - f^*)$$

$$\text{Let } \gamma = \frac{\zeta m^2}{M + m^2} \quad (0 < \gamma < 1)$$

$$f^{k+1} - f^* \leq (1 - \gamma) (f^k - f^*) \leq (1 - \gamma)^2 (f^{k-1} - f^*) \leq \dots \leq (1 - \gamma)^k (f^1 - f^*)$$

$$\frac{m}{2} \|x^{k+1} - x^*\| \leq (1 - \gamma)^k (f^1 - f^*)$$

The main content of this paper is shown above, we constructed a projection matrix  $P$  by the thought of the basic gradient projection method and the steepest descent method, it is an extension of the original projection gradient method. Under certain assumptions, we have proved the convergence and linear convergence rate of the new algorithm. the numerical results are verified in this paper. Through the obvious numerical values, the new algorithm is expected to be more convincing by comparison with the classic steepest descent method<sup>[37]</sup>.

### 3. Numerical experiment

According to the characteristics of the algorithm proposed in this paper, we have done some numerical experiments and compared it with the classic fastest descent method. All the results are obtained in MATLAB 7.1.0, the selected test

function is from the literature, and the running environment is an ASUS computer<sup>[20]</sup> N82J, 2.53vHz, 320GB HDD. The required gradient accuracy is  $10e-006$ , which is taken when the step size is selected  $\sigma_1=0.1$   $\sigma_2=0.5$ .

**Table 1.** The number of iteration steps for two algorithms at different latitudes

| Serial number | Dimension | New projection gradient method | Classic fastest descent |
|---------------|-----------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1             | 2         | 1                              | 3                       |
| 2             | 2         | 1                              | 1                       |
| 3             | 3         | 3                              | 13                      |
| 4             | 3         | 47                             | 60                      |
| 5             | 4         | 698                            | 786                     |
| 6             | 5         | 2609                           | 2632                    |
| 7             | 4         | 186                            | 204                     |
| 8             | 3         | 9                              | 16                      |
| 9             | 5         | 1565                           | 1563                    |
| 10            | 10        | 699                            | 729                     |
| 11            | 20        | 1202                           | 1730                    |
| 12            | 50        | 3002                           | 5320                    |
| 13            | 100       | 4538                           | 10087                   |
| 14            | 120       | 5385                           | 10156                   |

From the above numerical results, we can see that when the dimensions are 2, the speed of the new gradient projection method is approximately 3 times that of the classical fastest descent method. With the increase of the dimension of the test function, the number of iteration steps of the two algorithms is obviously larger, especially when the dimension reaches more than ten, and the iteration exceeds 1,000. However, when the dimension is more than 100, the new projection gradient method is twice as fast as the fastest descending method<sup>[38]</sup>.

The above numerical results are obtained from the same initial point. In short, for low-dimensional test problems, the new projection gradient method proposed in this paper has significant advantages over the classical fastest descent method, and the iteration time is significantly less. As the dimension of the problem increases, the number of iterative steps of the two algorithms increases at the same time, but generally speaking, the new algorithm is better than the classical fastest descent method.

When the test function is selected, the classical method of fastest descent will show that there is no solution or the algorithm is not feasible under the same conditions, but the new projection gradient method rarely shows such a situation. It can be seen that the new projection gradient method can solve more problems than the classical fastest descent method, and the scope of use is also expanded<sup>[39,40]</sup>.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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