# Control Systems for Multi-rotors Principles, Modeling and Software Design

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## **Multirotor Structure and Dynamics**

# Multirotor Structure and Dynamics

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A **multirotor** (a.k.a. "drone") is an aerial vehicle characterised by:

- An even set of equal *horizontal propellers* (and motors), ≥ 4, symmetrically placed in a circular shape
- A symmetric/balanced airframe (even if not strictly mandatory)
- VTOL (Vertical Take-off and Landing) capabilities
- Four degrees of freedom, *XYZ* + Heading
- No critical issues from the mechanical/aerodynamic point of view
- Total control in **software**, no mechanical parts

### **Reference System**

- The body reference system usually employed is the one in figure
- The system also define the **Euler angles** that represents the **attitude**:
  - roll,  $\phi$
  - pitch,  $\theta$
  - yaw,  $\psi$
- The **pose** of the multirotor is represented by:
  - $\{X, Y, Z, \phi, \theta, \psi\}$ , in the **Earth frame**



## Airframes and Constraints

- Motors/propellers must be the same
- Motors/propellers must be even ≥ 4
- Motors/propellers must be placed in a circular shape
- Propellers must rotate in opposite directions in-pair (third Newton's Law compensation)
- Propellers must have opposite pitches in-pair
- The number and position of propellers define the airframe model



# Motion

- Motion is achieved by modulating propeller speeds
- We can assume a *virtual pilot* able to give the commands (as in an airplane):
  - Thrust, the "power" to the motors (throttle control)
  - Roll and Pitch, the "control joke"
  - Yaw, the "pedals"
- Let us assume that these commands are variables belonging to the ranges:
  - thrust\_cmd  $\in$  [0, TH<sub>max</sub>]
  - $roll\_cmd \in [-R_{max}, R_{max}]$
  - $pitch\_cmd \in [-P_{max}, P_{max}]$
  - $yaw\_cmd \in [-Y_{max}, Y_{max}]$
- These commands must be "transferred" to the motors on the basis of the **specific airframe**

### Motion: Hovering and Z-translation



Vertical motion is achieved by keeping all propeller speeds the same and proportional to a **thrust command** (we assume 1-proportionality):

$\omega_1$	=	thrust₋cmd
$\omega_2$	=	thrust_cmd
$\omega_3$	=	thrust_cmd
(1)1	=	thrust cmd

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### Motion: Yaw rotation in X-shaped quads



Yaw rotation is achieved by modulating propeller speeds in-pairs 1 - 3/2 - 4, proportional to a **yaw command**:

- $\omega_1 = thrust\_cmd yaw\_cmd$
- $\omega_2 = thrust\_cmd + yaw\_cmd$
- $\omega_3 = thrust\_cmd yaw\_cmd$
- $\omega_4 = thrust\_cmd + yaw\_cmd$

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# Motion: Roll rotation in X-shaped quads



Roll rotation is achieved by modulating propeller speeds in-pairs 1 - 4/2 - 3, proportional to a **roll command**:

$\omega_1$	=	thrust_cmd - yaw_cmd + roll_cmd
$\omega_2$	=	thrust_cmd + yaw_cmd - roll_cmd
$\omega_3$	=	thrust_cmd – yaw₋cmd – roll_cmd
$\omega_4$	=	$thrust\_cmd + yaw\_cmd + roll\_cmd$

Roll rotation implies a decomposition of the thrust force: a **drag** force appears that drives the frame in a **translated flight** along *Y* axis

# Motion: Pitch rotation in X-shaped quads



Pitch rotation is achieved by modulating propeller speeds in-pairs 1 - 2/3 - 4, proportional to a **pitch command**:

$\omega_1$ =	=	thrust_cmd -	yaw_cmd +	$\textit{roll\_cmd} +$	pitch_cmd
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$$\omega_2$$
 = thrust\_cmd + yaw\_cmd - roll\_cmd + pitch\_cmd

$$\omega_3 = thrust\_cmd - yaw\_cmd - roll\_cmd - pitch\_cmd$$

$$\omega_4 = thrust\_cmd + yaw\_cmd + roll\_cmd - pitch\_cmd$$

Pitch rotation implies a decomposition of the thrust force: a **drag** force appears that drives the frame in a **translated flight** along *X* axis

## Motion in Plus-shaped quads



- $\omega_1$  = thrust\_cmd yaw\_cmd + pitch\_cmd
- $\omega_2$  = thrust\_cmd + yaw\_cmd roll\_cmd
- $\omega_3 = thrust\_cmd yaw\_cmd pitch\_cmd$
- $\omega_4 = thrust\_cmd + yaw\_cmd + roll\_cmd$

# Motion: the Mixer



- The mixer is the software component that *translates* attitude commands to motor commands
- It depends airframe model and basically implements a matrix *M* such that

$$\begin{bmatrix} \omega_{1} \\ \omega_{2} \\ \cdots \\ \omega_{n} \end{bmatrix} = M \begin{bmatrix} roll\_cmd \\ pitch\_cmd \\ yaw\_cmd \\ thrust\_cmd \end{bmatrix}$$

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# The Mixer: practical aspects



• Practically, the outputs of the **mixer** are not the *w<sub>n</sub>* but the **duty cycle** values of the motor PWM drivers

$$\begin{bmatrix} PWM_1 \\ PWM_2 \\ \cdots \\ PWM_n \end{bmatrix} = M \begin{bmatrix} roll\_cmd \\ pitch\_cmd \\ yaw\_cmd \\ thrust\_cmd \end{bmatrix}$$

PWM values are then saturated using a technique that avoids certain side-effects

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# The Control System of a Multirotor

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### Rate and Attitude Control

- The mixer outputs PWM values and does not have control on the real forces of the propellers
- In order to ensure stability, proper sensors must be employed that detects the *attitude* of the multirotor
- The control of stability is achieved by means of two control loops:
  - Rate Control, controls angular speeds  $\dot{\phi}, \dot{\theta}, \dot{\psi}$ , by means of a 3-axis gyro
  - Attitude Control, controls Euler angles φ, θ, ψ, by means of a 6-DOF or 9-DOF IMU

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### Rate Control: the "Acro" Mode



- The **Rate Control** module performs a PID control on angular rates  $\dot{\phi}, \dot{\theta}, \dot{\psi}$  on the basis of:
  - Target Rates, given as input
  - Current Rates, given by the gyro
- When the target rates are given by the RC command, the mode is called **acrobatic**

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# **Rate Control: Practical Aspects**



- Rate Controllers are usually PI or PID controllers (the derivative part is often filtered by a LPF)
- Outputs are saturated to a specific value (usually 100% of PWM duty cycle)
- The anti-wind-up optimisation is included
- Since controllers must operate only "in flight", they are "activated" only when the thrust command is greater than a threshold

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# **Rate Control: Implementation**



- Rate Control module is implemented as a periodic task triggered by:
  - A Timer, with a specific period
  - The gyro sampling frequency
- Periods are in the order of 200 500Hz
- The code implements the classical PID algorithm with anti-wind-up

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# **Rate Control: Implementation**

#### Pseudo-code

```
while True do
     On each \Delta T:
     \{\dot{\phi_T}, \dot{\theta_T}, \dot{\psi_T}, \text{thrust\_cmd}\} \leftarrow \text{read\_remote\_control()};
     \{\dot{\phi}, \dot{\theta}, \dot{\psi}\} \leftarrow read_gyro();
     // Control
     roll\_cmd \leftarrow PID\_roll\_rate\_controller(\dot{\phi}_{T} - \dot{\phi});
     pitch_cmd \leftarrow PID_pitch_rate_controller(\dot{\theta_T} - \dot{\theta});
     yaw_cmd \leftarrow PID_yaw_rate_controller(\dot{\psi}_{T} - \dot{\psi});
     // Mixer
     PWM_1 \leftarrow thrust\_cmd - yaw\_cmd + roll\_cmd + pitch\_cmd;
     PWM_2 \leftarrow thrust\_cmd + vaw\_cmd - roll\_cmd + pitch\_cmd;
     PWM_3 \leftarrow thrust\_cmd - yaw\_cmd - roll\_cmd - pitch\_cmd;
     PWM_4 \leftarrow thrust\_cmd + vaw\_cmd + roll\_cmd - pitch\_cmd;
     // Driving
     drive\_motor(PWM_1, PWM_2, PWM_3, PWM_4);
end
```

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### Rate and Attitude Control

- Rate control ensures that real angular rates are the one desired but do not provide guarantees on the attitude, i.e. that the pose of the airframe is a specific one {φ, θ, ψ}
- Moreover, starting from an horizontal pose  $\phi = 0, \theta = 0$ , if a "glitch" moves suddenly the pitch angle to  $\theta = 10^{\circ}$ , the system is **stable** from the rate control point of view (there are no rotations), but (probably) the attitude is not the desired one
- An Attitude Controller is required, which drives the Rate Controllers and ensures the respect of a certain pose, from the Euler angles point of view
- To this aim, the **current attitude** is **estimated** by integrating data from *gyros, accelerometers* and *magnetometers*.

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# Attitude Control: Basic Schema



- Attitude Controllers are (usually) simple P controllers
- Outputs are saturated to a maximum angular speed, determined experimentally
- Attitude Control module is implemented as a periodic task (like the Rate Control), with a period same as to (or greater than) that of Rate Control

# Attitude/Rate Control: Implementation

#### Pseudo-code

```
while True do
       On each \Delta T:
       \{\phi_T, \theta_T, \psi_T, \text{thrust\_cmd}\} \leftarrow \text{read\_remote\_control()};
       \{\dot{\phi}, \dot{\theta}, \dot{\psi}\} \leftarrow read_gyro();
       \{\alpha_x, \alpha_y, \alpha_z\} \leftarrow read\_accelerometer();
       \{\mu_x, \mu_y, \mu_z\} \leftarrow read\_magnetometer();
       \{\phi, \theta, \psi\} \leftarrow \text{attitute}_\text{estimation}(\{\dot{\phi}, \dot{\theta}, \dot{\psi}\}, \{\alpha_x, \alpha_y, \alpha_z\}, \{\mu_x, \mu_y, \mu_z\});
       // Control
            Mixer
       // Driving
end
```

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# Attitude/Rate Control: Implementation

#### Pseudo-code

```
while True do
       On each \Delta T:
       \{\phi, \theta, \psi\} \leftarrow \text{attitute\_estimation}(\{\dot{\phi}, \dot{\theta}, \dot{\psi}\}, \{\alpha_x, \alpha_y, \alpha_z\}, \{\mu_x, \mu_y, \mu_z\});
       // Control
       \dot{\phi}_{\tau} \leftarrow PD\_roll\_controller(\phi_{\tau} - \phi);
       \dot{\theta_T} \leftarrow PD_pitch_controller(\theta_T - \theta);
       \dot{\psi}_{T} \leftarrow PD_{yaw}-controller(\psi_{T} - \psi);
       roll_cmd \leftarrow PID_roll_rate_controller(\dot{\phi}_{\tau} - \dot{\phi});
       pitch_cmd \leftarrow PID_pitch_rate_controller(\dot{\theta_T} - \dot{\theta});
       yaw\_cmd \leftarrow PID\_yaw\_rate\_controller(\dot{\psi}_{T} - \dot{\psi});
       // Mixer
       // Driving
end
```

# Attitude/Rate Control: Implementation

#### Pseudo-code

```
while True do
    On each \Delta T:
    . . .
    // Control
    // Mixer
    PWM_1 \leftarrow thrust\_cmd - yaw\_cmd + roll\_cmd + pitch\_cmd;
    PWM_2 \leftarrow thrust\_cmd + vaw\_cmd - roll\_cmd + pitch\_cmd;
    PWM_3 \leftarrow thrust\_cmd - yaw\_cmd - roll\_cmd - pitch\_cmd;
    PWM_4 \leftarrow thrust\_cmd + yaw\_cmd + roll\_cmd - pitch\_cmd;
    // Driving
    drive_motor(PWM_1, PWM_2, PWM_3, PWM_4);
end
```

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## Attitude Estimation

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# Attitude Estimator

- The most critical part of Attitude Control is the **Sensor Fusion** algorithm that implements the **Attitude Estimator**
- The literature reports a plethora of solutions:
  - Kalman Filters
  - Complementary Filters
  - Direction Cosine Matrix Algorithm
  - Gradient Descend
  - ...
- Some) quality factors of the estimator:
  - Resilience to vibrations
  - Difference w.r.t. the real attitude
  - Rate of convergence

### Attitude Estimator: Basics

- The basic working scheme of the estimator is the following:
  - Wait sampling period
  - 2 Update Euler angles using data from gyroscopes by performing discrete integration
  - 3 Adjust Pitch and Roll on the basis of data from accelerometers ( $\vec{g}$  vector)
  - 4 Adjust Yaw on the basis of data from magnetometers ( $\vec{N}$  vector)
- The various algorithms differ in the way in which adjustments (steps 2 and 3) are performed

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# The Complementary Filter Algorithm



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# The Direction Cosine Matrix Algorithm

• The DCM is the **rotation matrix** from "Earth reference" and "Body reference" of a rigid body whose attitude is expressed by means of Euler angles  $\theta, \phi, \psi$ 

#### **Direction Cosine Matrix**

$$DCM = \begin{pmatrix} c\theta c\psi & s\phi s\theta c\psi - c\phi s\psi & c\phi s\theta c\psi + s\phi s\psi \\ c\theta s\psi & s\phi s\theta s\psi + c\phi c\psi & c\phi s\theta s\psi - s\phi c\psi \\ -s\theta & s\phi c\theta & c\phi c\theta \end{pmatrix}$$
$$s = \sin, \ c = \cos$$

A vector v' = (x', y', z') in local (body) frame is translated into global (Earth) frame by multiplying it by the DCM: v = DCM · v'

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- The DCM has some properties
- It is orthogonal, its transpose is equal to its inverse:

$$DCM^{-1} = DCM^{T}$$
$$DCM \cdot DCM^{T} = I$$

- Orthogonality implies that the columns (rows)
  - are orthogonal vectors in-pair  $\rightarrow$  their cross product is zero
  - are vector with module equal to 1
- Such properties must be always respected

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# The DCM Algorithm



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# Attitude Estimators: Improving the Quality

#### Sensor Calibration

- Gyros: get (and store) offsets b<sub>w</sub> and remove them from measures: ω = ω b<sub>w</sub>
- Accelerometers: get (and store) offsets  $b_a$  and rotation matrix  $R_A$  remove them from measures:  $\overline{a} = R_A \cdot (a b_a)$
- **Magnetometers:** get (and store) **offsets**  $b_m$  and rotation matrix  $R_M$  remove them from measures:  $\overline{m} = R_M \cdot (m b_m)$
- Sensor Filtering, low-pass filters (with order ≥ 2) are often used to reduce the effect of motor/propeller vibrations
- Mechanical Dampers, to decouple the flight control board from the airframe to reduce the effect of motor/propeller vibrations
- Dynamic g compensation, the contribution of accelerometers is weighted according to the error |g - ||a||| in order to reduce the effect, on a, of body translations

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### Summary of Basic Software Modules

# Summary of basic Software Modules

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### In Summary... the Basic Software Modules



# Other Kind of Controls

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#### **Altitude Control**

- Altitude Z is estimated by means of proper sensors (barometer, in some case integrated with measures from accelerometers, ultrasonic sensors, etc.)
- The Vertical Speed V<sub>z</sub> is determined by a derivative of the altitude
- Control is performed by means of two control loops that drive the *thrust* command
  - An inner PI(D) speed controller driving the thurst
  - An outer P-(FF) position controller driving the speed controller

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#### **Pose Estimator**

- GPS signal is used to determine (and control) the **pose** in the Earth frame
- An EKF estimator is used to fuse data from GPS and IMU to estimate:
  - Position {X, Y, Z}, in NED (or ENP) coordinates
  - Speeds  $\{V_x, V_y, V_z\}$
  - Euler Angles  $\{\phi, \theta, \psi\}$
- The EKF is complex and CPU-time consuming (in PX4, it is a 22-state estimator)

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# **Position Control**



#### **Position Control**

- Position Control is performed by means of two pair of control loops (North and East) that drive the *target roll and pitch* of the **attitude** controller
  - An inner PI(D) speed controller driving the target attitude (roll and pitch)
  - An outer P-(FF) position controller driving the speed controller

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# **Ground Control Station**

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# The Ground Control Station



#### GCS

- Most of the UAV flight stacks have the possibility of connecting a setup, telemetry and maintenance GUI called Ground Control Station
- It can be used for
  - Configuring the UAV and calibrating the sensor
  - Monitoring telemetry data
  - Planning the missions
  - Modifying all the parameters (gains of controllers or of the sensor fusion algorithms, sensor configuration, RC commands, etc.)

# The Ground Control Station



#### MAVLink

- Communication between GCS and the Flight Stack is performed through a standard protocol called MAVLink
- It is designed to be used in serial links (wired or radio) or TCP/UDP channels
- It can be used not only for GCS-like activities but also to control the UAV through an external on-board computer in order to do flight tasks:
  - Arming/Disarming
  - Triggering take-off and land
  - Sending specific set-points (NED positions, or  $V_x$ ,  $V_y$ ,  $V_z$  speeds)
  - Sending and triggering a mission

### **Overall Software Modules**



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# The PX4 Autopilot

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# The PX4 Autopilot

- The PX4 Autopilot is a flight control software designed to drive a large set of autonomous vehicles, including ground and aerial platforms
- It is entirely written in C++ and includes two basic parts:
  - PX4 Flight Stack: modules that implement control algorithms, estimators, etc. for manual and autonomous flight
  - PX4 Middleware: infrastructure for communication among all software modules of the Flight Stack
- PX4 runs on top of NuttX, a Unix-like real-time operating system (developed by Gregory Nutt) that provides a support for:
  - pre-emptive thread scheduling
  - device drivers
  - virtual file system
  - a minimal shell

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### PX4 Middleware



- Since software modules need to interact to each other, a communication middleware is provided called uORB
- It is based on a **publisher/subscriber** mechanism
- Data is identified by a topic, so publishing, subscribing and data copy is handled "by topic"
- Structures of messages used in PX4 are defined in some text files in the directory msg

### PX4 uORB Messages

#### The msg directory

```
...
output_pwm.msg
parameter_update.msg
position_setpoint.msg
pwm_input.msg
sensor_accel.msg
sensor_darcel.msg
sensor_baro.msg
sensor_gyro.msg
sensor_mag.msg
...
```

#### The sensor mag.msg file

```
uint64 timestamp
uint64 error_count
float32 x
float32 z
float32 z
float32 range_ga
float32 scaling
float32 temperature
int16 x_raw
int16 y_raw
int16 z_raw
uint32 device_id
```

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#### **Source Directory Structure**

- **drivers**, abstraction layer for physical equipment (sensors, motors, etc.), and specific device drivers for each supported equipment
- modules, all software modules performing the control of the vehicle
- **lib**, additional libraries for scalar and matrix math, coordinate system handling, control system modules, filters, etc.

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# PX4 Driver Layer

#### **Device Drivers**

- PX4 Device drivers must export a POSIX-compliant interface, with callbacks for functions as open, close, read, ioctl
- Devices handled are mainly **sensors** and the current version of PX4 supports a large number of them:

./src/drivers:	
gps	mpu6050
hc_sr04	mpu6500
hmc5883	mpu9250
irlock	ms5611
13gd20	oreoled
led	pca8574
lis3mdl	pca9685
11401s	pwm_input
lps22hb	pwm_out_sim
lsm303d	sf0x
lsm6ds33	sfl0a
mb12xx	srf02
md25	srf02_i2c
meas_airspeed	uart_esc
mpu6000	
mpu6050	

#### **Multiple Sensors Handling**

- The PX4 firmware is able to use multiple sensors, also of the same type (e.g. two or more gyros, accelerometers, magnetometers, etc.)
- Data relevant to the same sensor type are gathered altogether
- A data quality evaluator algorithm is employed in order to detect the "best" data read and use it in subsequent computations
- The evaluator is based on comparing the data stream with the same stream filtered by a LPF and computing the error variance

#### The modules directory

- PX4 modules are the main control blocks of the autopilot
- Each module is a NuttX task that is started at system startup and implements an infinite loop performing the activities:
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waiting for the sampling period retrieving subscribed data from uORB executing the specific computation publishing the result to uORB

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#### The modules directory

Modules include:

- attitude\_estimator\_ekf, EKF for attitude estimation
- attitude\_estimator\_q, complementary filter for attitude estimation
- commander, sensor calibration routines and GCS command handling (through MAVLink)
- **ekf\_att\_pos\_estimator**, EKF for position and attitude estimation
- fw\_att\_control, attitude (and rate) controllers for fixed-wing UAVs
- fw\_pos\_control\_l1, position controllers for fixed-wing UAVs
- mavlink, MAVLink protocol routines
- mc\_att\_control, attitude (and rate) controllers for multirotor UAVs
- mc\_pos\_control, position controllers for multirotor UAVs
- navigator, controller for handling autonomous missions
- sdlog2, the logger
- segway, attitude controllers for a segway
- systemlib, system modules, including the mixer

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# The CDrone Flight Stack

Corrado Santoro Control Systems for Multi-rotors

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# **CDrone Flight Stack**

#### **CDrone Basics**

- It is a flight stack developed at the DMI@UNICT for educational purposes
- Initially designed in C for Microchip dsPIC33F family MCUs
- Then rewritten in C++ and ported to the STM32 architecture (STM32F401RE)
- It runs in bare metal, with a very light HAL layer written in C++
- It includes only the **basic modules** of a UAV control system (those in figure + the MAVLink interface)



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# **CDrone HAL**

#### **Peripheral and Task Layers**

- CDrone is strongly object-based, so everything is defined as a class
- The **Peripheral layer** includes some (abstract and concrete) classes each representing a specific peripheral
- The **Task layer** includes the abstract class **PeriodicTask** (the base for the implementation of any periodic task) and the (non preemptive) scheduler
- Scheduling is triggered by a timer running at 400 Hz



# **CDrone HAL**

#### **Sensor Drivers**

- IMU Sensors are represented by a generic IMU abstract class that must be extended into the class that implements the code to handle specific sensors
- A IMU\_X\_NUCLEO class that drives (via I<sup>2</sup>C) a X-NUCLEO-IKS01A1 add-on board



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#### **Control System Layer**

- Some (abstract and concrete) classes implementing
  - the PID algorithm (with derivative low-pass filter, anti-wind-up and feedforward)
  - some filters, a 2<sup>nd</sup> order LowPass filter, and a 4<sup>nd</sup> order Chebysev low-pass filter



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# **CDrone Flight Control Classes**

- RemoteControl, interface with the RC
- RateControl, angular rate control algorithms
- AttitudeControl, control algorithms on Euler angles
- AirFrame, abstract class representing an airframe
- AirFrameQuadX, class representing an X-shaped quadcopter
- AHRS, abstract class representing a generic sensor fusion algorithm
- ComplementaryFilter, the complementary filter sensor fusion algorithm
- DCM, the DCM sensor fusion algorithm
- MAVLinkReceiver, MAVLink command handler



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- Loop-time: 2.5ms
- I<sup>2</sup>C Sensor Polling: 930µs
- DCM Sensor Fusion, Rate and Attitude Control: 410µs without FPU
- DCM Sensor Fusion, Rate and Attitude Control: 290µs with FPU
- Total processing time: 1.34ms without FPU
- Total processing time: 1.22ms with FPU

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- Re-designing/modifying the current airframe, it seems vibrating too much
- Porting the software to the STM32F7 flight control board
- Including altitude control, with barometric and ultrasonic sensors
- Including other form of navigation/stabilisation
  - GPS
  - Camera
  - ...

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# Control Systems for Multi-rotors Principles, Modeling and Software Design

Corrado Santoro

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