Is Equilibrium Point Control Feasible for Fast Goal-Directed Single-Joint Movements?

Dinant A. Kistemaker, Arthur (Knoek) J. Van Soest, and Maarten F. Bobbert

Institute for Fundamental and Clinical Human Movement Sciences, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Submitted 19 September 2005; accepted in final form 22 January 2006

INTRODUCTION

It has been widely acknowledged that the viscoelastic properties of muscles facilitate the control of posture (e.g., Milner 2002) and movement (e.g., Brown and Loeb 2000; Van Soest and Bobbert 1993). Equilibrium point (EP) controllers form an important class of control models that exploit these viscoelastic properties. In an EP controlled system, voluntary movements are generated by changing EPs. Various EP controllers have been proposed in the literature, which differ in the way EPs are defined (see McIntyre and Bizzi 1993), but have in common that there is no need to calculate the torques required to move a system along a desired trajectory. However, as was already argued by Gottlieb (1998b), whereas this would be straightforward to implement if the muscles in the effector system had identical invariant angle–torque characteristics, it remains to be shown whether an adequate cocontraction command can be easily generated when realistic muscle models are used. Second, velocity feedback was added to improve the damping characteristics of the system (e.g., Feldman 1986), and it has been advocated to include a contraction velocity reference signal and feed back the difference between desired and actual contraction velocity (de Lussanet al. 2002; McIntyre and Bizzi 1993) rather than the actual velocity.

Kistemaker, Dinant, Arthur (Knoek) J. Van Soest, and Maarten F. Bobbert. Is equilibrium point control feasible for fast goal-directed single-joint movements? J Neurophysiol 95: 2898–2912, 2006. First published February 25, 2006; doi:10.1152/jn.00983.2005. Several types of equilibrium point (EP) controllers have been proposed for the control of posture and movement. EP controllers are appealing from a computational perspective because they do not require solving the “inverse dynamic problem” (i.e., computation of the torques required to move a system along a desired trajectory). It has been argued that EP controllers are not capable of controlling fast single-joint movements. To refute this statement, several extensions have been proposed, although these have been tested using models in which only the tendon compliance, force–length–velocity relation, and mechanical interaction between tendon and contractile element were not adequately represented. In the present study, fast elbow-joint movements were measured and an attempt was made to reproduce these using a realistic musculoskeletal model of the human arm. Three types of EP controllers were evaluated: an open-loop α-controller, a closed-loop λ-controller, and a hybrid open- and closed-loop controller. For each controller we considered a continuous version and a version in which the control signals were sent out intermittently. Only the intermittent hybrid EP controller was capable of generating movements that were as fast as those of the subjects. As a result of the nonlinear muscle properties, the hybrid EP controller requires a more detailed representation of static muscle properties than generally assumed in the context of EP control. In sum, this study shows that fast single-joint movements can be realized without explicitly solving the inverse dynamics problem, but in a less straightforward manner than implied by proponents of conventional EP controllers.

Address for reprint requests and other correspondence: D. A. Kistemaker, Institute for Fundamental and Clinical Human Movement Sciences, Vrije Universiteit, van der Boechorststraat 9, 1081 BT Amsterdam, The Netherlands (E-mail: d.kistemaker@fwb.vu.nl).

The costs of publication of this article were defrayed in part by the payment of page charges. The article must therefore be hereby marked “advertisement” in accordance with 18 U.S.C. Section 1734 solely to indicate this fact.
It has been argued that EP control is not feasible for fast single-joint movements (e.g., Schaal 2002; Schweighofer et al. 1998) or, alternatively, that EP controllers need complex EP trajectories to control fast single-joint movements (e.g., Bellomo and Inbar 1997; Hogan 1984; Latash and Gottlieb 1991; Popescu et al. 2003). However, both claims, as well as attempts to refute them (e.g., Gribble and Ostry 2000; Gribble et al. 1998; St-Onge et al. 1997), were based on results of simulations with models of the musculoskeletal system in which the viscoelastic properties of muscles were inadequately represented or not at all. When testing EP controllers with musculoskeletal models, it is of paramount importance to use a realistic model of the muscles. For example, the maximally attainable movement speed depends on muscle properties such as the force–velocity relationship. It has been argued (Gribble et al. 1998; but see Nakano et al. 1999) that the complex and nonmonotonic nature of (virtual) EP trajectories derived on the basis of comparison of simulation results with experimental results (Gomi and Kawato 1996; Latash and Gottlieb 1991) was attributed to oversimplification of the force–velocity relationship of the modeled muscles. Furthermore, most EP controllers have been tested with models that ignored the series compliance of muscle; especially in pennate muscles, with relatively short muscle fibers, this series compliance may be large (the compliance resides not only in tendons, but also in aponeuroses); we will use “tendon compliance” as shorthand for the total series elasticity. In a musculoskeletal model that does not incorporate tendon compliance, EP controllers can control joint angle by setting the appropriate muscle lengths (i.e., the length of the muscle–tendon complex as a whole) using feedback from muscle spindles (e.g., Gribble et al. 1998; Latash and Gottlieb 1991). In reality, however, muscle spindle feedback is not related to muscle length but to muscle fiber length, and tendon compliance causes the relation between muscle fiber length and total muscle length to depend on muscle force. Furthermore, when tendon compliance is ignored, contraction velocity becomes proportional to angular velocity, which results in physiologically implausible muscle behavior (e.g., Zajac 1989).

Interestingly, both neurophysiological and behavioral studies suggest that humans control their movements intermittently. For example, during voluntary movements of the finger (Evans and Baker 2003; Valbo and Wessberg 1993), wrist (Conway et al. 2004; Kakuda et al. 1999), and elbow (Conway et al. 1997; Doeringer and Hogan 1998), humans typically show 6- to 12-Hz variations in angular velocity. Wessberg and Valbo (1996) provided evidence that reflex responses during finger movements are too weak to account for the observed intermittent modulation of motor output. It is conceivable that motor neuron pool dynamics play a role in the observed intermittency. However, recent studies of Gross et al. (2002) and Pollok et al. (2005) indicated that finger movements are driven by a cerebello-thalamo-cortical loop with a frequency of about 8-12 Hz. These observations are complemented by a recent study of Conway et al. (2004) in which a low-frequency (<12 Hz) coupling was found between motor cortex EEG and muscle EMG during the execution of fast wrist movements. Combined, these findings suggest that, whereas the feedback components of muscle stimulation are sent out continuously, the open-loop components are sent out intermittently. This leads to the question to what extent this intermittency affects the EP control of fast movements.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate whether EP control using simple EP trajectories is feasible for fast single-joint arm movements. Elbow angle and EMG were measured during fast point-to-point elbow movements. Subsequently, it was attempted to reproduce the experimentally observed movements with a realistic musculoskeletal model of the arm, controlled by three types of EP controllers: an open-loop α-controller, a closed-loop λ-controller, and a hybrid open- and closed-loop EP controller. To investigate the influence of intermittent control, we also performed simulations in which the open-loop components of these EP controllers were sent out intermittently. It will be shown that all EP controllers gain movement speed when control signals are sent out intermittently rather than continuously. Furthermore, it will be shown that an intermittent version of the hybrid EP controller is capable of making the model reproduce the fast point-to-point movements observed in the subjects, from which we will conclude that EP control cannot be dismissed when considering fast point-to-point single-joint movements.

METHODS

Experimental protocol

After providing informed consent, six male participants (age 27 ± 2 yr) were seated on a nonrotating chair behind a table with their arm in a horizontal plane through both shoulders. The lower arm was strapped to a light glass fiber tube (0.48 m; 0.345 kg) that was attached to the table with a hinge. The participants were seated such that the flexion–extension axis of the elbow joint was aligned with the axis of the hinge. The shoulder angle was 45° (see Fig. 1, A and B for definitions of elbow and shoulder joint angle). Three blocks made of polystyrene were placed on the table at a distance of 60 cm from the hinge, corresponding to elbow angles of 45, 95, and 145°. A laser pointer was mounted to the end of the tube such that when the tube rotated in the horizontal plane, the laser beam hit the blocks at their centers. Participants were instructed to direct the light of a small laser pointer (13.5 g), mounted on the end of the tube, to the marked middle of one block and then, on an auditory cue, to direct it as fast as possible to the marked middle of another block. Participants performed fast point-to-point movements in six randomized conditions, each consisting of 15 trials: elbow flexion movements Flex1–3 of 100° and Flex1–2 and Flex2–3 of 50°; and extension movements Ext3–1 of 100° and Ext2–1 and Ext3–2 of 50°. Before the 15 trials in each condition, participants practiced until they could move fast to the target with minimal overshoot. Breaks of 5 min were interspersed between conditions.

FIG. 1. Experimental setup (A) and musculoskeletal model (B).
Data collection and signal processing

Elbow angle time histories were recorded using a potentiometer (Sakae, FCP40A, sample rate 1,000 Hz) and low-pass filtered at a cutoff frequency of 20 Hz using a fourth-order zero-lag Butterworth filter. Myoelectric activity was recorded (TMS Porti, Enschede, The Netherlands, sample rate 1,000 Hz) from m. biceps, m. brachioradialis, m. triceps caput longum, and m. triceps caput laterale, using pairs of surface electrodes (Medi-trace, pallet electrodes, center-to-center electrode distance 2 cm) attached to the skin after standard skin preparation (Hermens et al. 1999). EMG signals were amplified, band-pass filtered (10–500 Hz), and full-wave rectified. For each participant, the six movements with the highest peak angular velocity per condition were selected that did not show more than 10° overshoot of the target.

Musculoskeletal model of the arm

The musculoskeletal model of the arm consisted of three segments, connected by two hinges representing the glenohumeral joint and the elbow joint, respectively (Fig. 1B). To reproduce the experimental data, only elbow flexion–extension movements in the horizontal plane were allowed. The lower arm was actuated by four lumped muscles: a monoarticular elbow flexor (m. brachioradialis, m. brachialis, m. pronator teres, m. extensor carpi radialis), a monoarticular elbow extensor (m. triceps brachii caput laterale, m. triceps brachii caput mediale, m. anconeus, m. extensor carpi ulnaris), a biarticular elbow flexor (m. biceps brachii caput longum and caput breve), and a biarticular elbow extensor (m. triceps brachii caput longum). Muscle-specific parameters (maximal isometric force, tendon slack length, optimum contractile element length, and moment arm; see APPENDIX A) were obtained from the literature (Murray et al. 1995, 2000; Nijhof and Kouwenhoven 2000). The parameter values of the lumped muscles were a weighed sum of the parameter values of their component muscles, with the weight factors depending on the contribution of each component muscle to the total moment. Nonspecific muscle parameters were taken from Van Soest and Bobbert (1993).

The muscles were modeled as Hill-type units (see APPENDIX A, Fig. A1) consisting of a contractile element (CE), a parallel elastic element (PE), and a series elastic element (SE). In previous research, it was shown that the implemented Hill-type muscle model is capable of reproducing the characteristic features of the dynamical behavior of muscles (e.g., Bogert et al. 1998; Winters and Stark 1985; Zajac 1989). Activation dynamics, describing the relation between the excitatory signal of the muscle and active state, was modeled according to Hatze (1981; see also Fig. 3). In line with Hatze’s description, the excitatory signal of the model was termed muscle stimulation (STIM).

It was previously shown elsewhere that the resulting muscle model accounts for the experimentally observed length-dependent Ca^2+ sensitivity of a muscle and the stimulation dependency of optimum length (Kistemaker 2005). The parameters used were equal for all controllers and kept constant during the simulations. A detailed description of the muscle model is provided in APPENDIX A and all parameter values are listed in Tables A1 and A2 of APPENDIX A. For relevant abbreviations, see Glossary (APPENDIX C).

A variable step-size ordinary differential equation solver based on the Runge–Kutta (4,5) formula was used to numerically solve the differential equations of the musculoskeletal model. Model and simulations were implemented in MATLAB 6.5 Release 13.

Controllers

An EP trajectory was defined as a “ramp” trajectory from the initial to the final position (see Fig. 2A). Based on the experimental data, desired movement time was estimated to be 0.20 s for the movements of 100° and 0.18 s for the movements of 50°. The stimulation defining an open-loop EP in the absence of external forces will from now on be referred to as STIM_open. As mentioned earlier, three different types of EP controllers were implemented: an open-loop e-controller, a closed-loop e-controller, and a hybrid open- and closed-loop controller. The muscle stimulation generated by the e-controller was only STIM_open. The muscle stimulation generated by the e-controller depended solely on the difference in desired (d) and actual (a) CE length (l_CE) and CE contraction velocity (v_CE). Feedback of l_CE and v_CE was assumed to be linear and a 25-ms time delay in the feedback loop was modeled using a fifth-order Padé approximation (Golub and Van Loan 1989). The muscle stimulation that resulted solely from feedback will from now on be referred to as STIM_closed. The muscle stimulation
generated by the hybrid EP controller was the sum of \( STIM_{open} \) and \( STIM_{closed} \). The contraction velocity feedback in this controller depended on the difference between desired (\( \lambda \)) and actual \( v_{CE} \). Figure 2 shows the \( \lambda \) and \( \dot{\lambda} \) traces for \( \alpha \)- and hybrid EP controller. More details on the implementation of the controllers are provided below.

**\( \alpha \)-Controller**

When the \( \alpha \)-controller was used (see Fig. 3A), \( STIM_{open} \) was the only input of the musculoskeletal system

\[
STIM_{\alpha}(t) = STIM_{open}(t) \tag{1}
\]

Not surprisingly, exploration of the model showed that the fastest movements were generated when \( STIM_{open} \) was set to produce the highest low-frequency joint stiffness possible (results not shown). Because our interest was in fast movements, the \( STIM \) yielding the highest stiffness was selected. The only exception was \( STIM_{open} \) at the equilibrium starting position, which, in line with the empirical observation that muscle activity is practically absent at initial positions (e.g., Gottlieb 1998a; Ostry and Feldman 2003; Suzuki et al. 2001), was chosen such that it minimized the sum of the individual muscle stimulations.

**\( \lambda \)-Controller**

The total muscle stimulation generated by the \( \lambda \)-controller (\( STIM_{\lambda} \)) depended on the difference between \( \lambda \) (activation \( CE \) threshold length) and \( l_{CE} \) and on \( v_{CE} \) (see Fig. 3B)

\[
STIM_{\lambda}(t) = STIM_{closed}(t) = \left[k_p[\lambda - l_{CE}(t - \delta)] + k_d[-v_{CE}(t - \delta)]\right]_0 \tag{2}
\]

where \( k_p \) and \( k_d \) are feedback constants that will be optimized (see following text) and \( \delta = 0.025 \) s is a short-latency reflex delay. In the present study it was assumed that the muscle spindles provide accurate time-delayed information about \( l_{CE} \) and \( v_{CE} \). The expression \( [x]_0^1 \) means that values of \( x > 1 \) were set to 1 and negative values were set to 0.

To set an EP in terms of \( \lambda \) values of the muscles around the elbow joint, the relation between elbow angle and \( CE \) length of the individual muscles must be known. Because \( SE \) length depends on the force delivered by the \( CE \), no one-to-one relation exists between elbow angle and \( CE \) lengths. This implies that a choice had to be made with respect to the mapping of \( CE \) to \( \lambda \). In analogy to the reciprocal command (R) of the \( \lambda \)-model (e.g., Feldman et al. 1990), \( \lambda \) was chosen such that it equaled \( CE \) length in a desired EP with zero stimulation (see Fig. 2B).

**Hybrid EP controller**

McIntyre and Bizzi (1993) hypothesized that a combination of the \( \alpha \)-controller and \( \lambda \)-controller increases movement speed. They also suggested that feedback on the difference between actual and desired velocity, instead of feedback on actual velocity alone (i.e., linear damping), would enhance the performance of the system. Both suggestions provided grounds for formulating a hybrid EP controller of the form (see Fig. 3C)

\[
STIM_{\lambda} = [STIM_{open} + k_p[\lambda - l_{CE}(t - \delta)] + k_d[-v_{CE}(t - \delta)]]_0 \tag{3}
\]

Values were derived from the steady-state solution of the muscle model using the equilibrium angle and \( STIM_{open} \). \( \lambda \) is the time derivative of \( \lambda \) (see Fig. 2, E and G) and \( k_p \) and \( k_d \) are feedback constants. It was assumed that the CNS is capable of generating a reference signal on basis of the desired trajectory (McIntyre and Bizzi 1993), although direct physiological evidence for this assumption is absent in the literature.

---

**FIG. 3.** Flowchart of the musculoskeletal model of the arm and the \( \alpha \)-controller (A), the \( \lambda \)-controller (B), and the hybrid EP controller (C). Activation dynamics describes how muscle stimulation (\( STIM \)) leads to \( \gamma \) (relative amount of free \( Ca^{2+} \)). which, together with contractile element length \( l_{CE} \), affects \( q \) (the relative amount of \( Ca^{2+} \) bound to troponin; Ebashi and Endo 1968). Contraction dynamics describes how muscle moment (\( M \)) depends on \( q, l_{CE}, v_{CE} \), and joint angle (\( \varphi \)). Skeletal dynamics describes the equations of motion of the skeleton. For abbreviations see Glossary (APPENDIX C).

---

J Neurophysiol • VOL 95 • MAY 2006 • www.jn.org
Intermittent controllers

Intermittent control was implemented by updating $\text{STIM}_{\text{par}}$, $\lambda$, and $\lambda$ at a frequency of 10 Hz. Feedback was updated continuously. Note that when sending out $\lambda$ and $\lambda$ intermittently, $\lambda$ is no longer the time derivative of $\lambda$. The algorithms defining the intermittent $\alpha$-controller, $\alpha$-controller, and hybrid EP controller were the same as those for the continuous versions (see also Fig. 2).

Optimization of feedback gains

The feedback gains used for the $\alpha$-controller and the hybrid EP controller were optimized to minimize the total sum of the squared differences between simulated and desired movements for all six conditions. Thus for each controller, only one set of feedback gains was used. It is implausible that endpoint oscillations of the actual movement are part of the desired movement. Therefore for the desired movements, minimal jerk trajectories (see Fig. 2B) were used to optimize the feedback gains, rather than the experimental data themselves. Minimal jerk trajectories have often been used to describe the kinematics of fast point-to-point movements and do not show oscillations (e.g., Hogan 1984). The optimal values for the feedback gains were identified using a combination of a grid search and a Nelder–Mead simplex search method (Lagarias et al. 1998).

Kinematic features

To quantify the performance of the controllers, three movement features were extracted from the simulated and experimental data: peak angular velocity ($\dot{\varphi}_p$), time to peak velocity ($t_{\text{mov}}$), and “movement duration” ($t_{\text{mov}}$). $t_{\text{mov}}$ was defined as the time between the instant that the elbow reached 5% of the total distance to be covered and the instant at which $\varphi_p$ was reached. $t_{\text{mov}}$ was defined as the time needed to move the arm from 5 to 95% of the total distance to be covered. Furthermore, the root-mean-squared (RMS) values were calculated between the simulated and (averaged) experimentally observed position traces. RMS values were calculated by first calculating the cross-correlation function between experimental and simulated data. Subsequently, the lag yielding the highest cross-correlation was identified. Then, the RMS value between experimental data and the simulated data, time shifted with the indicated lag, was calculated (see Table 1).

Statistical analysis

Condition-related differences in kinematic parameters were analyzed using a 2 (Direction) $\times$ 3 (Trajectory) repeated-measures ANOVA. The factor Direction had levels flexion and extension and the factor Trajectory had levels 45–145, 45–95, and 95–145° (and vice versa). Single-sample t-tests ($\alpha = 0.05$) were used to test for differences between the features of the simulated and experimental data.

RESULTS

Column II of Fig. 4 shows the time histories of kinematic data and $\text{STIM}$ of the $\alpha$-controller for conditions Flex1–3 (Fig. 4A) and Ext3–1 (Fig. 4B). Single-sample $t$-test showed that all kinematic features produced by the simulations with the continuous and intermittent $\alpha$-controller were significantly different ($P < 0.01$) from those subtracted from the experimental data (see Table 2). When EPs were set intermittently, the model reacted less sluggishly and movement speed increased, but insufficiently so to match human performance. The overall resemblance between simulated movement using the $\alpha$-controller and experimental data was poor, as indicated by the high RMS values (on average 37.7 and 22.5° for the continuous and intermittent version, respectively; see Table 2).

The movements produced with the $\lambda$-controller (column III of Fig. 4) also failed to match experimental data: all kinematic features were significantly different ($P < 0.001$) from those observed experimentally. Apart from reaching a significantly lower peak angular velocity (see Table 2) and taking more time, the model exhibited marked endpoint oscillations. The relatively high feedback gains, necessary to minimize the error between the actual trajectory and the minimal jerk trajectory, were the main cause of these oscillations. When additional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>$\dot{\varphi}_p$ [deg s$^{-1}$]</th>
<th>$t_{\text{mov}}$ [s]</th>
<th>$t_{\text{mov}}$ [s]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flex1–3</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flex1–2</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flex2–3</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ext3–1</td>
<td>−848</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ext2–1</td>
<td>−668</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ext3–2</td>
<td>−688</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.085</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“penalties” on endpoint oscillations were introduced in the optimization criterion, feedback gains and oscillations decreased, but at the cost of movement speed (results not shown). As with the \( \alpha \)-controller, the RMS values were high (on average 23.5 and 17.9° for the continuous and intermittent version of the \( \Lambda \)-controller, respectively), indicating a poor resemblance between simulated and experimentally observed movements.

In both Fig. 4 and Fig. 5, Column IV shows the simulation obtained with the hybrid EP controller for all six conditions. This hybrid EP controller was the only controller capable of producing movements at least as fast as those observed experimentally (see Tables 2 and 3 for complete results of statistical comparison). In only one of six conditions (Ext3–2) was peak \( \dot{\theta} \r_p \) in the simulation significantly lower than that observed experimentally. Similarly, in only one of six conditions, the duration of the simulated movement was significantly longer than that observed experimentally (Flex2–3). Finally, peak velocity in the simulated movements was never reached later than in the experimental movements. In fact, \( t_{pv} \) was significantly smaller in the simulations in five of six conditions. The close resemblance between movements generated using the intermittent hybrid EP controller and those observed experimentally is reflected by the average RMS value, which was found to be only 2.3° (vs. 3.9° for the continuous EP controller; Table 2). In sum, the intermittent hybrid EP controller was capable of generating point-to-point movements at least as fast as those observed experimentally.

The muscle stimulation patterns generated with the hybrid EP controller were qualitatively similar to the experimentally observed EMG patterns (Figs. 4 and 5). The controller produced the triphasic burst pattern typical of fast point-to-point
movements (e.g., Prodoehl et al. 2003; Wachholder and Altenburger 1926; Yamazaki et al. 1993; see also Fig. 4). It can be seen in Fig. 6, which presents the separate contributions of open-loop and feedback components to the total muscle stimulation of the hybrid EP controller, that the triphasic patterns mainly originated from the contraction velocity feedback (see also Bullock and Grossberg 1992). It is still debated whether triphasic EMG bursts result predominantly from central or peripheral processes (e.g., Prodoehl et al. 2003). In line with the position of Bullock and Grossberg (1992), the results obtained in this study with the hybrid EP controller suggest that triphasic bursts need not be preprogrammed.

TABLE 2. Kinematic features of simulation results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>( \psi_p ) [deg s(^{-1})]</th>
<th>( t_{pre} ) [s]</th>
<th>( t_{move} ) [s]</th>
<th>RMS, [deg]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>( \alpha ) 380 ( \lambda ) 655</td>
<td>( \alpha ) 0.094</td>
<td>( \alpha ) 0.059</td>
<td>0.172 0.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ext3–1</td>
<td>( \alpha ) 417 ( \lambda ) 688</td>
<td>( \alpha ) 0.109</td>
<td>( \alpha ) 0.052</td>
<td>0.181 0.118*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kinematic features indicated by * are not significantly different from those observed in the experimental results.

FIG. 5. Experimental data (columns I and III) and simulation results obtained with the intermittent hybrid EP controller (columns II and IV) for conditions Flex1–2 and Flex2–3 (A) and for conditions Ext2–1 and Ext3–2 (B). Top EMG/STIM traces refer to the 2 elbow flexors, bottom traces to the 2 elbow extensors.
The purpose of this study was to examine whether EP control is feasible for fast goal-directed single-joint movements. In an attempt to reproduce the experimentally observed fast movements, a realistic model of the human arm was used that was controlled by several types of EP controllers. All controllers generated faster movements when the control signals were sent out intermittently. However, movements as fast as those produced by the subjects could be generated by the musculoskeletal model only when the intermittent hybrid EP controller was used.

The speeds generated by the $\alpha$-controller strongly depended on the local stiffness of the EP that was set. The stiffness in an EP can be seen as the change in steady-state net torque for a given deviation from that EP. Even though $\text{STIM}_{\text{open}}$ was chosen such that it maximized joint stiffness, and even though in a previous study it was shown that the maximal stiffness of the model was in agreement with the literature (Kistemaker et al., unpublished observations), maximal movement speed was insufficient to match the experimental data. By sending out the control signals intermittently rather than continuously, deviations of the current position from the (intermittent) target were initially larger, so that greater forces were produced, resulting in faster movements (see Fig. 4). The requirement that at least start and endpoint be set resulted in a minimal modulation frequency of 5 Hz. Movement speed increased when this frequency was used, but stayed well below actually observed speeds.

The $\lambda$-controller was also incapable of generating movements fast enough to match experimental data. This was mainly attributed to the fact that muscle stimulation resulted from feedback only, whereas feedback gains had to be limited to prevent time-lag–related instability and oscillatory behavior. A shorter time lag diminished this effect, but a time lag $<25$ ms used in this study is physiologically unrealistic (e.g., Funase and Miles 1999). Implementing a reference contraction velocity and intermittency in the $\lambda$-controller enhanced maximal movement speed, but the resulting movement was still not fast enough to match experimental data and, moreover, did not eliminate the oscillations shown in Fig. 4. Other studies (Gribble et al. 1998; St-Onge et al. 1997) used a duration of the EP trajectory of half that of the intended movement. Additional simulations with the present model indeed showed that the $\lambda$-controller reacted less sluggishly and gained movement speed when the duration of the EP trajectory was halved. However, again, the resulting movement speed stayed well below that observed experimentally and, as a result of the increased velocity, the endpoint oscillations increased in amplitude. Even when both options (i.e., halved duration of EP trajectory and reference feedback) were implemented, the $\lambda$-controller was still incapable of reproducing the experimental data (see APPENDIX B).

Although substantially faster than the movements controlled by both the (intermittent) $\alpha$- and $\lambda$-controller, the movements controlled by the continuous version of the hybrid EP controller were not fast enough to match the experimental data. Maximal movement speed could be increased to about the experimentally observed value by raising the feedback gains, but only at the cost of a large overshoot of the target (results not shown). However, when the control signals of the hybrid EP controller were sent out intermittently, the musculoskeletal model produced movements that were in general as fast or faster than the fast point-to-point movements observed in our experiments. Additional simulations (APPENDIX B) further showed that the reference velocity adopted in the hybrid EP controller was indispensable to achieve a close match between simulated and experimentally observed results. As an aside we note that, given the main question of this study, it was not attempted to maximize the fit between experiment and simulation. Several possibilities exist to further improve this fit, for example by condition-specific manipulation of the duration of the EP trajectory or by allowing different feedback gains for the different muscles. Similarly, the unrealistically high levels of cocontraction near movement completion could easily be reduced by lowering the level of cocontraction (lowering $\text{STIM}_{\text{open}}$) near the end of the movement (see APPENDIX B).

### DISCUSSION

**TABLE 3. Kinematic features of intermittent hybrid EP controller**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>$\omega_p$ [deg s$^{-1}$]</th>
<th>$t_{mv}$ [s]</th>
<th>$t_{mov}$ [s]</th>
<th>RMS, [deg]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flex1–3</td>
<td>987*</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.120*</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flex1–2</td>
<td>601*</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.090*</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flex2–3</td>
<td>547*</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ext3–1</td>
<td>−1,018</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ext2–1</td>
<td>−689*</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ext3–2</td>
<td>−628*</td>
<td>0.057*</td>
<td>0.083*</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIG. 6. Contribution of $\text{STIM}_{\text{open}}$, feedback of $v_{CE}$ ($\text{STIM}_{s}$) and feedback of $v_{CE}$ ($\text{STIM}_{d}$) to the total muscle stimulation of agonists (column A) and antagonists (column B) generated by the intermittent hybrid EP controller ($\text{STIM}_{\text{open}}$) for the Flex1–3 condition. Continuous lines refer to the monoarticular elbow flexor and extensor, dashed lines refer to the biarticular elbow flexor and extensor.**
Some studies used a duration of the EP trajectory that was half the intended duration (Ghafouri and Feldman 2001; St-Onge et al. 1997). The performance of the continuous hybrid EP controller improved when such an EP trajectory was used, but its performance was worse than that of the intermittent EP controller (see Appendix B). The model reacted slightly faster, but was incapable of keeping up with this much faster (1,000 instead of 500°/s) EP trajectory. As a consequence, damping arising from feedback started to counteract the movement at the instant the EP trajectory reached the endpoint because from this instant onward the reference velocity equaled zero. Although an experimental study indicated that the shifts in EP during fast point-to-point movements may end approximately near peak velocity (Ghafouri and Feldman 2001), it does not seem directly beneficial for the control of fast movements when the difference between desired and actual velocity is fed back.

The hybrid EP controller, which combined open- and closed-loop components, was not simply a combination of the implemented α-controller and λ-controller. This is because the desired CE length (λ) depends on the total muscle stimulation (recall that, because of tendon compliance, steady-state CE length at a given joint angle depends on stimulation). In other words, the λ values set by the λ-controller are not equal to the CE lengths in a desired EP defined by the STIMopen of the α-controller. The hybrid EP controller requires an internal representation of the following static properties of the musculoskeletal system: 1) a map relating desired EP to STIMopen, 2) a map relating STIMopen to joint stiffness, and 3) a map relating STIMopen to steady-state CE length. (In essence, the implemented α-controller uses the first two maps.) Thus as a result of the complexity of the musculoskeletal model, the hybrid EP model requires a more detailed representation of static properties of the musculoskeletal system than generally used in the context of EP controllers (e.g., Gribble et al. 1998; Latash and Gottlieb 1991; McIntyre and Bizzi 1993). The feedback parameters were optimized to minimize the error between actual and desired movement and, consequently, were implicitly tuned to the parameters determining the dynamics of the musculoskeletal system. Additional simulations showed that the performance of the hybrid EP controller model was not noticeably affected when the inertial parameters of the musculoskeletal model were changed by 10% without reoptimizing the feedback gains (see Appendix B). This result suggests that for single-joint movements, EP control is not critically dependent on representation of dynamical parameters of the musculoskeletal system. To conclude, the present study showed that fast single-joint movements of a realistic musculoskeletal model can be adequately controlled without the requirement of solving the “inverse dynamics problem” and without an internal representation of the dynamical properties of the musculoskeletal system, albeit in a less straightforward manner than implied by most proponents of conventional EP controllers.

A major difference between the λ-controller presented in this study and most λ-models presented in the literature is that our λ-controller lacked a cocontraction or coactivation (C) command: a “simple” command that shifts all λ values to a shorter length (Feldman 1986). Because of the nonlinear behavior of the musculoskeletal system, such a simple C-command could not be derived for the present musculoskeletal model without affecting the equilibrium position (see also Gottlieb 1998b; Windhorst 1994, 1995). However, using the internal representation of the static properties that was required for the hybrid EP controller, cocontraction can be added to the λ-controller without affecting the equilibrium position. In fact, it can be shown that such a λ-controller is mathematically equivalent to the hybrid EP controller. Basically, we need to use the same three maps as those used for the hybrid EP controller, but “replace” STIMopen by a cocontraction command (note that this cocontraction command is specific for each muscle involved). As a result of tendon compliance, the steady-state CE lengths in an EP can match the λ values (in terms of CE lengths) only if the controller is generating exactly the appropriate muscle stimulation at the EP; this may be accomplished by STIMopen in the case of the hybrid EP controller and by a cocontraction command in the case of the λ-controller (note that at the EP, cocontraction is the only “source” of muscle stimulation). Once a desired EP with a desired stiffness is selected, it can easily be deduced that the cocontraction command (λ*) for each individual muscle must equal

\[ \lambda^* = \frac{\text{STIM}_{\text{open}}}{k} \]

This also shows that λ* is in essence an open-loop component: the cocontraction command is the open-loop muscle stimulation defined in terms of CE length. Because steady-state CE length is completely determined by the cocontraction command no insight is gained by referring to the set of λ values as the “position” command (note again that, because of tendon compliance, λ does not relate one to one with joint angle). By substituting λ by (λ + λ*) in Eq. 2, it can be seen that the modified λ-controller is mathematically equivalent to the hybrid EP controller. Therefore it can be concluded that when an appropriate cocontraction command is added to the (intermittent) λ-controller, using the representation of the static properties of the musculoskeletal system mentioned before (e.g., represented in maps), the controller is capable of generating fast point-to-point movements that resemble experimental movements. Interestingly, Feldman et al. (1990) acknowledged the need for maps relating the number of active motoneurons and their firing rates to control variables and kinematic variables; the present study provides a more detailed description of the variables that need to be coded in such maps.

When the EP controllers sent out their control signals in an intermittent rather than continuous fashion, the movements were faster and corresponded better with experimentally observed data (see Fig. 4 and Table 2). Although several studies provided evidence that humans control their movements intermittently rather than continuously (e.g., Craik 1947; Gross et al. 2002; Vallbo and Wesberg 1993; Wesberg and Vallbo 1996), intermittent control at first sight appears to be irreconcilable with the experimental results reported by Bizzi et al. (1984). Based on experiments with deafferented monkeys, Bizzi et al. (1984) showed that the final position is not set immediately at movement onset and proposed a gradual evolution of EPs. In the experiments in question, monkeys were trained to move their invisible arm to a target position. During some trials, a servo-motor was used to move the monkey’s arm unnoticed from the initial position to the target position. Because the monkeys were encouraged to move their arm to this very position one would expect the arm to stay put, but
instead, when released, it started to move back in the direction of initial position. This result militates against a control scheme in which the endpoint is immediately set at movement onset. Using an estimation of movement time and distance from Fig. 6 in Bizzi et al. (1984), the intermittent versions of our controllers would generate an EP trajectory in steps of 6°. Thus the intermittent versions of the α-, λ- (if extended with the cocontraction command), and hybrid EP controllers would be capable, at least qualitatively, of reproducing Bizzi’s data. Furthermore, as suggested by Bizzi and colleagues (1984), it is conceivable that for very fast movements, as studied here, the shifts in EP are more abrupt. Taken together, intermittent control as implemented in the current study does not contradict the results of experimental studies on trajectory formation during arm movement such as those reported by Bizzi et al. (1984).

A consequence of sending out control signals intermittently is that the EP trajectory is no longer identical to the desired trajectory. Other studies also suggested that EP trajectories other than the desired trajectories, such as N-shaped EP trajectories (Hogan 1984; Latash and Gottlieb 1991), underlie other than the desired trajectories, such as N-shaped EP trajectories (Hogan 1984; Latash and Gottlieb 1991), underlie trajectory formation during arm movement such as those reported by Bizzi et al. (1984).

In this study we have assumed that the feedback gains did not vary during the movement. Although to our knowledge all studies on EP control have used continuous feedback, several studies suggest that the short-latency reflex contributions to stimulation of muscles are significantly lowered at movement onset and termination (e.g., Shapiro et al. 2002, 2004). Because this could militate against the feasibility of an EP controller (Shapiro et al. 2004), we performed additional simulations in which the contribution of feedback was gated using a Gaussian function such that feedback was absent at the beginning and end of the movement (the gating of feedback did not interact with the open-loop muscle stimulation, as may be noted from Eq. B1 in APPENDIX B). It was found that the hybrid EP controller suffered no performance loss when feedback was gated (see APPENDIX B); the lack of feedback at the beginning of the movement was compensated by the much higher (optimized) feedback gains. Because feedback is absent at the beginning and end of the movement, the high feedback gains used did not result in instability or oscillatory behavior. Thus the hybrid EP controller is still capable of controlling fast single-joint movements when feedback is diminished at movement on- and offset.

All in all, the results of this study refute the claim that EP controllers cannot account for fast single-joint movements (e.g., Schaal 2002; Schweighofer et al. 1998), as well as the claim that EP controllers need complex EP trajectories to control fast single-joint movements (e.g., Bellomo and Inbar 1997; Hogan 1984; Latash and Gottlieb 1991; Popescu et al. 2003). However, they do not refute the claim that EP controllers predict high stiffness during fast single-joint movements (e.g., Gomi and Kawato 1997; Popescu et al. 2003). Given the intricacies of experimental determination of stiffness, we would suggest addressing this issue by comparing experimentally estimated stiffness to that predicted by the EP controlled model when subjected to the same perturbation. This remains a challenge for further research.

Although we showed that EP control is feasible in the context of fast point-to-point single-joint movements in the absence of external forces, the question remains whether the present results are generalizable to the control of movements under various circumstances involving, for example, multijoint movements and gravity. The presented hybrid EP controller is presumably able to generate control signals for multijoint movements, provided that the maps mentioned earlier are expanded for all joints and muscles involved. However, the resemblance between experimental and simulated data of single-joint movements does not guarantee that simulated multijoint movements will match experimental data as well. An important difference between single- and multijoint systems is that, in the latter, stiffness is no longer a single-valued function of STIM open. This implies that nontrivial assumptions have to be made to select STIM open. Also, it has been shown that “interaction torques” (i.e., torques that arise at one joint as a result of movements at the other) are taken into account by the CNS, which would be inconsistent with EP control (but see Gribble and Ostry 2000). Furthermore, it has been suggested in the literature that mono- and biarticular muscles have distinct roles during movement (Hof 2001; Van Ingen Schenau 1987), a proposition not taken into account by EP controllers, at least not explicitly.

In this study, the arm was restricted to move in a horizontal plane, so that the movement was not affected by gravity. When the arm is moved outside the horizontal plane, static errors between desired EP and actual position will occur, unless gravity on the arm and on loads possibly carried by the hand is accounted for in the maps used by the EP controller. Errors (or their compensations) will depend on the exact orientation of the arm in the gravitational field, its static properties, and the stiffness induced by both muscles and feedback. When the upper arm of the model was placed vertically and the lower arm horizontally (thereby maximizing the influence of gravity), the deviation from the desired EP was <2° if STIM open was set such that open-loop stiffness was maximal (in this case about 20 Nm rad⁻¹), and about 5° with the lowest possible amount of cocontraction. When external loads on the hands are considered, however, the deviation from the desired position soon became unacceptably large. Thus in our view, external forces such as gravity should be taken into account by the controller.

In sum, although this study has demonstrated that EP control cannot be dismissed when considering fast point-to-point single-joint movements, it remains to be established whether EP control is feasible when multijoint movements in the presence of external forces are considered.
The implemented Hill-type muscle model consists of a contractile element (CE), a series elastic element (SE), and a parallel elastic element (PE) as shown schematically in Fig. A1. The mechanical behavior of the muscle is described by two coupled first-order differential equations. One first-order dynamical system describes the activation dynamics and related the muscle stimulation (STIM) to active state \( q \). The other first-order dynamical system describes the relation between the contraction velocity \( v_{CE} \) and the length of the contractile element \( l_{CE} \), depending on \( q \), the force–length–velocity relationship of CE, and the passive forces of SE and PE. The length of the muscle–tendon complex \( l_{MTC} \) and moment arm \( (am) \) are functions of joint angle. A detailed description of the muscle model is provided below (see also the flowchart of the model presented in Fig. 3; see Glossary in APPENDIX C for the relevant abbreviations).

### Activation dynamics

Activation dynamics was modeled according to Hatze (1981; see also Kistemaker et al. 2005) and related muscle stimulation (STIM) to active state \( q \) in two steps. A first-order dynamical system related the free \( Ca^{2+} \) concentration (relative to its maximum value; \( \gamma_{rel} \)) to STIM. Subsequently, an algebraic relation described how active state \( q \) depends on \( \gamma_{rel} \) and (by \( \rho \)) on CE length relative to its optimum \( l_{CE,rel} \)

\[
\dot{q} = m(\text{STIM} - \gamma_{rel})
\]

(A1)

\[
q = q_0 + \frac{(\rho \gamma_{rel})}{1 + (\rho \gamma_{rel})}
\]

(A2)

with \( \rho \) a function of \( l_{CE,rel} \)

\[
\rho = \frac{k}{l_{CE,rel}}
\]

(A3)

where \( \eta, k, c, m, \) and \( q_0 \) are constants (see Table A1).

The original equations of Hatze are slightly simplified for clarity. For a graphical representation of the STIM–\( q \) relationship as a function of \( l_{CE,rel} \), see Fig. A2C.

### Contraction dynamics

Contraction dynamics was modeled by relaying the contraction velocity \( v_{CE} \) to \( l_{CE} \)

\[
v_{CE} = f(l_{CE}, q, \varphi)
\]

(A4)

The contraction velocity was derived from the difference between the isometric force \( F_{isom} \), calculated using the force–length relationship, and the actual force to be generated by the CE \( F_{CE} \). Assuming that the mass of the muscle was negligible with respect to the force it is producing, \( F_{CE} \) equaled the difference between the force of SE \( F_{SE} \) and that of PE \( F_{PE} \). The concentric \( v_{CE} < 0 \) or \( F_{CE} < F_{isom} \) and eccentric \( v_{CE} > 0 \) or \( F_{CE} > F_{isom} \) parts of the force–velocity relationship were modeled separately. The concentric part was described based on the classic Hill equation, which was solved for \( v_{CE,rel} \) (the time derivative of \( l_{CE,rel} \))

\[
\frac{v_{CE,rel}}{F_{CE,rel} + q_{CE,rel}} = \frac{b^*_{m}(F_{CE,rel} - q_{isom,E})}{F_{CE,rel} + q_{CE,rel}}
\]

(A5)

with \( F_{CE,rel} = F_{CE,MAX} \) and \( F_{isom,E} = F_{isom,F_{MAX}} \). Based on experimental results (Stern 1974), maximal contraction velocity was made dependent on \( F_{isom,E} \) by setting: \( q_{CE,rel} \) for \( F_{CE,rel} > F_{CE,MAX} \) and \( q_{CE,rel} \) for \( F_{CE,rel} < F_{CE,MAX} \) further, based on experimental results of Pertofsky and Phillips (1981), for low values of \( q \), maximal contraction velocity was made dependent on \( q \) by setting

\[
v_{CE,rel} = \frac{b^*_{m}(F_{CE,rel} - q_{isom,E})}{F_{CE,rel} + q_{CE,rel}}
\]

(A5)

### Muscle nonspecific parameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( m )</td>
<td>11.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( c )</td>
<td>1.37e-4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \eta )</td>
<td>5.27e4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( q_0 )</td>
<td>5.00e-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( k )</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{width} )</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( a_{rel} )</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( b_{rel} )</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( q_{crel} )</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### APPENDIX A

![Fig. A1. Schematic representation of the Hill-type muscle model used in this study. For abbreviations see Glossary (APPENDIX C).](http://jn.physiology.org/doi/10.1152/jn.00823.2004)
FEASIBILITY OF EP CONTROL FOR FAST SINGLE-JOINT MOVEMENTS

b_{rel}^* = b_{rel} \left[1 - 0.9 \left(\frac{q - q_{crit}}{q_0 - q_{crit}}\right)^2\right] \quad (A6)

when \( q < q_{crit} \) and \( b_{rel}^* = b_{rel} \) when \( q \geq q_{crit} \). The values for the constants \( a_{rel}, b_{rel}, \) and \( q_{crit} \) are given in Table A1.

The eccentric part of the force–velocity relationship was modeled using a hyperbola. To prevent numerical problems, a hyperbola with a slightly slanted asymptote was used (for the sake of conciseness, it was not solved here for \( v_{CE,rel} \)).

\[
F_{CE,rel} = p_1 + p_2 v_{CE,rel} + p_3 (v_{CE,rel})^2 = p_4
\]

(A7)

The parameters \( p_1, p_2, p_3, \) and \( p_4 \) were calculated using four criteria: 1) the concentric and eccentric curve are continuous; 2) based on Katz (1939), the derivative of \( F_{CE,rel} \) with respect to \( v_{CE,rel} \) at \( v_{CE,rel} = 0 \) of the eccentric curve was twice that of the concentric curve; 3) the asymptote had a value of 1.5\( q F_{iso,n} \) at \( v_{CE,rel} = 0 \); and 4) an arbitrary small value for the slope of the asymptote. Note that the calculated parameters were functions of \( F_{iso,n} \) such that both parts of the force–velocity relationship depended on \( F_{iso,n} \) and \( F_{CE,rel} \). See Fig. A2, E and F for a graphical representation of the force–velocity relationship at different values of \( q \) and \( l_{CE,rel} \).

Normalized isometric force \( F_{iso,n} \) was modeled as a second-order polynomial with an optimum at \( l_{CE,rel} = 1 \) and two zero-crossings at \( l_{CE,rel} = 1 \pm width \)

\[
F_{iso,n} = a l_{CE,rel}^2 + 2a l_{CE,rel} - a + 1 \quad (A8)
\]

with \( a \approx \frac{1}{width^2} \). For a graphical representation of the isometric force–length–stimulation relation, see Fig. A2D.

The passive force–length characteristic of the PE was modeled to depend quadratically on \( l_{CE,rel} \) (note that \( l_{PE} = l_{CE} \))

\[
F_{PE} = k_{PE} \max \left[0, l_{CE,rel} - l_{PE,0}\right] \quad (A9)
\]

\( l_{PE,0} = 1.4 l_{CE,\text{opt}} \) and \( k_{PE} \) was chosen such that \( F_{PE} = 0.5 F_{\text{MAX}} \) at \( l_{CE,rel} = 1 + \text{width}. \) The passive force characteristic of the SE was modeled to depend quadratically on \( l_{SE} \)

\[
F_{SE} = k_{SE} \max [0, l_{SE} - l_{SE,0}] \quad (A10)
\]

\( k_{SE} \) was chosen such that at \( F_{\text{MAX}} \) \( SE \) is at 104% of \( l_{SE,0}. \) For a graphical representation of the force–length relationships of the elastic components see Figs. A2, A and B. The muscle parameters, \( F_{\text{MAX}} \), \( l_{CE,\text{opt}} \), \( l_{SE,0} \), and \( l_{CE,\text{opt}} \) were obtained from the literature (Murray et al. 1995, 2000; Nijhof and Kouwenhoven 2000; Kistemaker et al., unpublished observations). \( F_{SE} \) and \( F_{PE} \) were calculated using the muscle tendon complex length \( l_{MTTC} \) and \( l_{CE,\text{opt}} \).

Muscle Parameters were varied one by one: \( m \) (increased by 10%; see Eq. A1), \( a_{rel} \) (increased by 10%; see Eq. A5), and \( b_{rel} \) (decreased by 10%; see Eqs. A5 and A6). For each new parameter setting, the feedback gains were reoptimized and a simulation using the intermittent hybrid EP controller for the condition Flex1–3 was carried out. It was found that the changes in these parameters led to a small increase in RMS values (from 2.2 to 2.5, 2.6, and 2.8°, respectively), but that \( \varphi_p \) and \( t_{\text{mov}} \) were not significantly different from those observed experimentally (see Table B1). These results showed that the outcome of the present study was relatively insensitive to changes in parameters affecting the dynamical properties of the used muscle model.

The feedback gains found during the optimization process depended on the dynamics of the musculoskeletal system. This led to the question how sensitive the simulation outcome was to both changes in the dynamics of the system (e.g., inertia of the arm) and the feedback gains themselves. We performed simulations with 10% increased inertia, without reoptimizing the feedback gains, and we also performed simulations with feedback gains 10% lower than optimal. It was found that the performance of the model was not noticeably different: \( \varphi_{\text{max}} \) and \( t_{\text{mov}} \) were not significantly different from those observed experimentally, whereas the RMS values were 2.4 and 2.3, respectively. This implies that for small changes in inertia, no adjustment of the feedback gains was needed and that the controller was robust for small errors in the feedback gains used.

In the introduction it was stated that most EP controllers considered to date neglected tendon compliance and that joint angle was usually controlled by setting the appropriate muscle length using feedback from muscle spindles. However, muscle spindle feedback is related to muscle fiber length, whose relation to joint angle depends on force because of tendon compliance. To investigate the importance of tendon compliance into account, we investigated the static errors that occurred when the hybrid EP controller did not take the tendon compliance of the musculoskeletal model into account. The static error was found to depend on joint angle and cocontraction level and could be as large as 8°. Because humans are normally capable of controlling posture with much smaller error margins (also at maximal

TABLE A2. Muscle specific parameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muscle</th>
<th>( F_{\text{MAX}} ) [N]</th>
<th>( l_{CE,\text{opt}} ) [m]</th>
<th>( l_{SE,0} ) [m]</th>
<th>( l_{PE,0} ) [m]</th>
<th>( a_0 ) [m]</th>
<th>( a_{1r} ) [m]</th>
<th>( a_{1s} ) [m]</th>
<th>( a_{2r} ) [m]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEF</td>
<td>1420</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>0.286</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-3.96e-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEE</td>
<td>1550</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>0.187</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2.15e-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEE</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td>0.192</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>-5.73e-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEE</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>0.217</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>-3.18e-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEF, monoarticular elbow flexor; BEE, biarticular elbow extensor.

J Neurophysiol • VOL 95 • MAY 2006 • www.jn.org
Feedback time delay diminishes the usefulness of feedback. To assess the influence of the delay on the present results, we also tested the model performance when δ was increased by 20%. Simulations showed that a longer delay gave rise to an increase in the RMS value (from 2.2 to 3.0°), but that neither \( \dot{\phi}_v \) nor \( t_{\text{mov}} \) was significantly different from values observed experimentally (see Table B1). This demonstrates that the hybrid EP controller would be capable of reproducing the experimentally observed data when longer latencies in the feedback loop are adopted.

Several experimental studies indicated that feedback is inhibited at movement onset and termination (e.g., Shapiro et al. 2002, 2004). We tested the performance of the hybrid EP controller when feedback was gated such that it was absent at movement onset and offset. This was implemented by multiplying the feedback components with a Gaussian function

\[
STIM_\lambda = \left[ \text{STIM}_{\text{open}} + \left( k_0 \lambda - v_{CE}(t - \delta) \right) + k_1 \lambda \right] e^{-(t-t_{\text{mov}})^2/2 \sigma^2} \quad (B1)
\]

Parameter \( t_\delta \) determines when this function attains its peak and \( \sigma \) determines its width. Parameter \( t_\delta \) was set to 0.140 s and \( \sigma \) was set rather arbitrarily to 0.04 such that the Gaussian function was almost zero (0.002) at the start of the simulation. The results of the simulation showed that feedback gating did not distort the performance of the controller. \( \dot{\phi}_v \) still matched the experimentally observed peak angular velocity and the RMS value even decreased slightly to 2.1°. The diminished contribution of the feedback at movement onset was compensated by higher feedback gains. Because feedback was absent at movement onset and offset, the high feedback gains did not result in instability or oscillatory behavior. This result indicates that for the hybrid EP controller the presence of feedback at movement onset and offset is not necessary for adequately controlling fast point-to-point movements.

St-Onge et al. (1997) suggested that the duration of the EP trajectory underlying the control of fast movements was about the half of the duration intended (see also Ghafouri and Feldman 2001). It was investigated whether such a time-compressed EP trajectory improved the performance of the \( \lambda \) - and hybrid EP controllers. The simulations showed that the performance of the intermittent \( \lambda \)-controller improved, but not enough to match that of the subjects: \( \dot{\phi}_v \) was significantly lower than that observed experimentally (\( P < 0.001 \)) and the RMS value was rather high (11.2°; see Table B1). Thus halving the duration of the EP trajectory did not allow the \( \lambda \)-controller to reproduce experimentally observed data. With such an EP trajectory the continuous hybrid EP controller reacted faster and reached a peak velocity (967°/s) that was not significantly different from the experimentally observed value (see Table B1). However, the RMS value was larger than that when the same controller was used with a normal EP trajectory (for which feedback gains were optimized for two conditions; see Table 2) and was almost twice as large as that of the intermittent hybrid EP controller with a normal EP trajectory (see Table B1). The reason was that the musculoskeletal model was not able to keep up with the time-compressed EP trajectory. Consequently, from the instant that the EP trajectory “reached” its endpoint and the reference velocity was set to zero, damping arising from feedback counteracted the movement. Clearly, an EP trajectory that “reaches” the endpoint long before the actual limb does (St-Onge et al. 1997) is not necessarily beneficial for the control of fast movements.

In this study, we used a cocontraction level that remained relatively high (yielding maximal stiffness) even when the final position was high (yielding maximal stiffness) even when the final position was reached. Yet, EMGs of subjects show a gradual decrease near the end of the movement (see Figs. 4 and 5). To investigate whether a high level of cocontraction near the end of the movements was required to suppress overshoot or oscillations, simulations were carried out with the hybrid EP controller in which \( STIM_{\text{open}} \) (and accompanying \( \lambda \) and \( \lambda \)) was exponentially reduced toward the lowest possible \( STIM_{\text{open}} \) that defined a stable EP at the final position. The exponential functions

\[
STIM_\lambda = \left( \text{STIM}_{\text{open}} + \left( k_0 \lambda - v_{CE}(t - \delta) \right) + k_1 \lambda \right) e^{-(t-t_{\text{mov}})^2/2 \sigma^2} \quad (B1)
\]
Intermittency in preplanned elbow movements were applied 0.35 s after movement onset and contained a time constant of 0.080 s. The results of these simulations showed that the high level of cocontraction was not required to suppress the oscillations near the end of the movement (see Fig. B1). Obviously, peak angular velocity was not affected as the movement attained its peak velocity well before STIMopen was diminished (see Table B1).

Experimental studies provided evidence that humans control their movements intermittently in frequencies in the range from 6 to 14 Hz. To test the sensitivity of the EP controller for the update frequency, we carried out additional simulations using a range of frequencies. When the update frequency was increased from 10 to 15 Hz, performance of the model did not change noticeably. However, simulations with update frequencies >20 Hz did not produce movements that matched those observed experimentally (see Table B1). Thus for the range of frequencies reported in the literature, the intermittent EP controller would be capable of reproducing the experimentally observed data.

Finally, we used a minimal jerk trajectory in the optimization process of the feedback gains, based on the rationale that the endpoint oscillations are not part of the desired trajectory (see METHODS). However, one might argue that even though the endpoint oscillations are not part of the desired trajectory, feedback gains should be optimized to reproduce features of experimentally observed movements. We investigated this option by reoptimizing the feedback gains for the hybrid EP controller for all six conditions using the trajectory including endpoint oscillations, and found that the RMS values decreased only slightly [in the case of condition Flex 1–3] from the RMS value of 2.5 (see Table 3) to 2.3. Because valid arguments can be given for both optimization options, it is reassuring that they yielded comparable results.

In sum, the additional simulations showed that the outcome of this study did not critically depend on the values used for the model parameters.

**APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY**

| STIMclosed | EP  | contractile element |
| STIMopen | Flex1–3 | series elastic element |
| STIM | PE | parallel elastic element |
| STIMopen | STIMopen | open-loop muscle stimulation |
| STIMclosed | STIMclosed | closed-loop muscle stimulation |
| STIMα | total STIM generated by α-controller |
| STIMα | total STIM generated by A-controller |
| STIMh | total STIM generated by hybrid EP controller |
| lCE | CE length |
| λ | desired lCE |
| lCE_opt | CE optimum length |
| lCE_rel | lCE/lCE_opt |
| vCE | CE contraction velocity |
| λ | desired vCE |
| lPE | PE length |
| lPE,0 | PE slack length |
| lSE | SE length |
| lSE,0 | SE slack length |
| kp | lCE feedback constant |
| kd | vCE feedback constant |
| δ | short-latency feedback delay |
| φp | peak angular velocity |
| tpe | time to peak velocity |
| tmove | movement duration |
| lMTC | muscle–tendon complex length |
| q | active state |
| γrel | relative amount of Ca2+ |
| Fisom | isometric force |
| FCE | force delivered by CE |
| FMAX | maximum isometric force |
| FSE | force delivered by SE |
| FPCE | force delivered by PE |

**REFERENCES**

Bellomo A and Inbar G. Examination of the gamma equilibrium point hypothesis when applied to single degree of freedom movements performed with different inertial loads. *Biol Cybern* 76: 63–72, 1997.


