ON REGULARITY CRITERIA IN TERMS OF PRESSURE FOR THE NAVIER-STOKES EQUATIONS IN $\mathbb{R}^3$

YONG ZHOU

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Abstract. In this paper we establish a Serrin-type regularity criterion on the gradient of pressure for the weak solutions to the Navier-Stokes equations in $\mathbb{R}^3$. It is proved that if the gradient of pressure belongs to $L^{\alpha,\gamma}$ with $2/\alpha + 3/\gamma \leq 3$, $1 \leq \gamma \leq \infty$, then the weak solution is actually regular. Moreover, we give a much simpler proof of the regularity criterion on the pressure, which was showed recently by Berselli and Galdi (Proc. Amer. Math. Soc. 130 (2002), no. 12, 3585-3595).

1. Introduction

We consider the following Cauchy problem for the incompressible Navier-Stokes equations in $\mathbb{R}^3 \times (0, T)$:

$$
\begin{cases}
\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} + u \cdot \nabla u + \nabla p = \Delta u, \\
\text{div} u = 0, \\
u(x, 0) = u_0(x),
\end{cases}
$$

where $u = u(x, t) \in \mathbb{R}^3$ is the velocity field, $p(x, t)$ is a scalar pressure, and $u_0(x)$ with $\text{div} u_0 = 0$ in the sense of distribution is the initial velocity field.

The study of the incompressible Navier-Stokes equations in three space dimensions has a long history (see [5, 19]). In the pioneering work [12] and [7], Leray and Hopf proved the existence of its weak solutions $u(x, t) \in L^\infty(0, T; L^2(\mathbb{R}^3)) \cap L^2(0, T; H^1(\mathbb{R}^3))$ for given $u_0(x) \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^3)$. However, we do not yet know whether or not the solution develops singularities in finite time even if the initial datum is $C^\infty$-smooth. In [15], Scheffer began to study the partial regularity theory of the Navier-Stokes equations. Deeper results were obtained by Caffarelli, Kohn and Nirenberg in [3]. Further results can be found in [20] and the references therein.

On the other hand, the regularity of a given weak solution $u$ can be shown under additional conditions. In 1962, Serrin [16] proved that if $u$ is a Leray-Hopf weak solution belonging to $L^{\alpha,\gamma} = L^\alpha(0, T; L^\gamma(\mathbb{R}^3))$ with $2/\alpha + 3/\gamma < 1$, $2 < \alpha < \infty$, $3 < \gamma < \infty$, then the solution $u(x, t)$ belongs to $C^\infty(\mathbb{R}^3 \times (0, T))$, while the limit case $2/\alpha + 3/\gamma = 1$ was covered much later by H. Sohr [17] (recently,
Remark 1.2

Beirão da Veiga [1] added Serrin’s condition on only two components of the velocity field). From then on, there are many criterion results added on $u$. In [21] and [6], von Wahl and Giga showed that if $u$ is a weak solution in $C([0, T); L^3(\mathbb{R}^3))$, then $u(x, t) \in C^\infty(\mathbb{R}^3 \times (0, T])$. Struwe [18] proved the same regularity of $u$ in $L^\infty(0, T; L^3(\mathbb{R}^3))$ provided $\sup_{0 < t \leq T} \|u(x, t)\|_{L^3}$ is sufficiently small, and Kozono and Sohr [10] obtained the regularity for the weak solution $u(x, t) \in C^\infty(\mathbb{R}^3 \times (0, T])$ provided $u(x, t)$ is left continuous with respect to the $L^1$-norm for every $t \in (0, T)$. Recently Kozono and Taniuchi [11] showed that if a Leray-Hopf weak solution $u(x, t) \in L^2(0, T; BMO)$, then $u(x, t)$ is actually a strong solution of (1.1) on $(0, T]$. Recent progress concerning another limit case $u \in L^\infty(0, T; L^3)$ can be found in [8].

It is well known that if $(u, p)$ solves the Navier-Stokes equations, then so does $(u_\lambda, p_\lambda)$ for all $\lambda > 0$, where $u_\lambda(x, t) = \lambda u(\lambda x, \lambda^2 t)$, $p_\lambda(x, t) = \lambda^2 p(\lambda x, \lambda^2 t)$. The class of Serrin’s type is important from a viewpoint of scaling invariance, which implies that $\|u_\lambda\|_{L^{\alpha, \gamma}} = \|u\|_{L^{\alpha, \gamma}}$ holds for all $\lambda > 0$ if and only if $2/\alpha + 3/\gamma = 1$, and we say that the norm $\|u\|_{L^{\alpha, \gamma}}$ has the scaling dimension zero [3].

It is easy to check that if $2/\alpha + 3/\gamma = 3$, $\|\nabla p\|_{L^{\alpha, \gamma}}$ has scaling dimension zero. As far as we know, there are only few regularity criteria in terms of $\nabla p$; see [2, 14]. The best result [2] for the whole space is that

$$\nabla p \in L^\alpha(0, T; L^\gamma(\mathbb{R}^3)) \quad \text{with} \quad \frac{2}{\alpha} + \frac{3}{\gamma} = 3, \quad \text{for} \quad \gamma \in [9/7, 3].$$

In [2], regularity criteria were established not only for the whole space, but also for a domain with boundary (bounded, exterior or the half-space). The purpose of this paper is to establish a final regularity criterion in terms of the gradient of pressure. Our main theorem reads

**Theorem 1.1.** Let $u_0(x) \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^3) \cap L^q(\mathbb{R}^3)$, for $q \geq 4$, and let $\text{div} u_0 = 0$ in the sense of distribution. Suppose that $u(x, t)$ is a Leray-Hopf weak solution of (1.1). If

$$\nabla p \in L^\alpha(0, T; L^\gamma(\mathbb{R}^3)) \quad \text{with} \quad \frac{2}{\alpha} + \frac{3}{\gamma} \leq 3, \quad \frac{2}{3} < \alpha < \infty, \quad 1 < \gamma < \infty,$$

or $\nabla p \in L^{2/3, \infty}$, or else $\|\nabla p\|_{L^{\infty, 1}}$ is sufficiently small, then $u(x, t)$ is a regular solution on $[0, T]$.

**Remark 1.1.** For Navier-Stokes equations in a domain $\Omega \subseteq \mathbb{R}^3$, it is very difficult; cf. [2, 22].

In section 3, we will give a much simpler proof for the following known result. Moreover, our method can treat $\gamma$ uniformly instead of a different trick for different $\gamma$ as done in [2, 4].

**Theorem 1.2** ([2]). Under the same assumption as Theorem 1.1, if

$$p \in L^\alpha(0, T; L^\gamma(\mathbb{R}^3)) \quad \text{with} \quad 2/\alpha + 3/\gamma \leq 2, \quad 1 < \alpha < \infty, \quad 3/2 < \gamma < \infty,$$

then $u(x, t)$ is a regular solution on $[0, T]$.

**Remark 1.2.** The limit cases $p \in L^{1, \infty}$ or $\|p\|_{L^{\infty, 3/2}}$ being sufficiently small were treated in [4].
2. Proof of Theorem 1.1

First, we should establish an a priori estimate. Taking \( \nabla \text{div} \) on both sides of (1.1) for smooth \((u, p)\), one can obtain

\[
-\Delta (\nabla p) = \sum_{i,j=1}^{3} \partial_i \partial_j (\nabla (u_i u_j)).
\]

Therefore the Calderon-Zygmund inequality

\[
\|\nabla p\|_{L^q} \leq C \|u\|_{L^q} \|\nabla u\|_{L^q}
\]

holds for any \(1 < q < \infty\). This relation (2.1) between \(\nabla p\) and derivatives of the velocity plays a very important role in the following proof. As far as we know, no one has used (2.1) before.

Then applying Gronwall inequality on (2.3), we have

\[
\frac{d}{dt} \|u\|^4_{L^4} + 4\|\nabla u\|_2^2 + 2\|\nabla |u|^2\|_2^2 \leq 4 \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla p| |u|^3 dx \leq 4 \|\nabla p\|_{L^{6\gamma}}^{1/2} \|\nabla p\|_{L^{12\gamma/(3\gamma - 2)}}^{1/2} \|u\|_{L^{12\gamma/(3\gamma - 2)}}^3
\]

\[
\leq \epsilon \|\nabla p\|_{L^2}^2 + C(\epsilon) \|\nabla p\|_{L^{2\gamma}}^2 \|u\|_{L^{12\gamma/(3\gamma - 2)}}^4 \leq \epsilon C \|\nabla u\|_2^2 + C(\epsilon) \|\nabla p\|_{L^{2\gamma}}^2 \|u\|_{L^{12\gamma}}^4 \|u\|_{L^{12\gamma/(3\gamma - 2)}}^{4(1-1/\gamma)} \|u\|_{L^{2\gamma}}^4
\]

(2.2)

where we used (2.1) for \(q = 2\). Since

\[
\|u\|^4_{L^4} = \|\nabla |u|^2\|^2_{L^2} \leq C \|\nabla u\|_2^2 \|u\|^2_{L^2},
\]

after choosing suitable \(\epsilon\) and \(\delta\), it follows from (2.2) that

\[
\frac{d}{dt} \|u\|_4^4 \leq C \|\nabla p\|_{L^{2\gamma}}^{2\gamma/(3\gamma - 1)} \|u\|_{L^4}.
\]

Then applying Gronwall inequality on (2.3), we have

\[
\sup_{0 \leq t \leq T} \|u(., t)\|_{L^4}^4 \leq \|u_0\|_{L^4}^4 \exp \left\{ \int_0^T \|\nabla p(., \tau)\|_{L^{2\gamma}}^{2\gamma/(3\gamma - 1)} d\tau \right\}.
\]

If \(1 < \alpha, \gamma < \infty\), note that \(2\gamma/(3\gamma - 1) < \alpha\). Due to the integrability of \(\nabla p\), it follows that

\[
\sup_{0 \leq t \leq T} \|u(., t)\|_{L^\alpha}^\alpha \leq C(T) \|u_0\|_{L^4}^\alpha.
\]

For \((\alpha, \gamma) = (2/3, \infty)\), by taking the limit case in (2.2), we obtain that

\[
\frac{d}{dt} \|u\|_{L^4}^4 + 4\|\nabla u\|_2^2 + 2\|\nabla |u|^2\|_2^2 \leq \epsilon C \|\nabla u\|_2^2 + C(\epsilon, \delta) \|\nabla p\|_{L^{6\gamma}}^2 \|u\|_{L^4}^4 + \delta \|u\|_{L^{12\gamma}}^4.
\]

(2.5)

Then by Gronwall inequality, (2.4) follows from (3.9).
Similarly, for \((\alpha, \gamma) = (\infty, 1)\), we have
\[
\frac{d}{dt} \|u\|_{L^4}^4 + 4\|\nabla u||u||_{L^2}^2 + 2\|\nabla |u|^2\|^2_{L^2}
\]
So if \(\sup_{0 \leq t \leq T} \|\nabla p(\cdot, t)\|_{L^1}\) is sufficiently small, say \(\epsilon C \leq 2\) and
\[
C(\epsilon) \sup_{0 \leq t \leq T} \|\nabla p(\cdot, t)\|_{L^1}^{2/3} \leq 2,
\]
then
\[
\sup_{0 \leq t \leq T} \|u(\cdot, t)\|_{L^4}^4 \leq \|u_0\|_{L^4}^4.
\]
In order to prove Theorem 1.1 we recall a result of Giga [6] (see also [9]).

**Theorem 2.1** ([9]). Suppose \(u_0 \in L^s(\mathbb{R}^3)\), \(s \geq 3\). Then there exists \(T_0\) and a unique classical solution \(u \in BC((0, T_0); L^s(\mathbb{R}^3))\). Moreover, let \((0, T_*)\) be the maximal interval such that \(u\) solves (1.1) in \(C((0, T_*); L^s(\mathbb{R}^3))\), \(s > 3\). Then
\[
\|u(\cdot, \tau)\|_{L^s} \geq \frac{C}{(T_* - \tau)^{(s-3)/2}}
\]
with constant \(C\) independent of \(T_*\) and \(s\).

**Proof of Theorem 1.1.** Since \(u_0 \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^3) \cap L^q(\mathbb{R}^3)\) for some \(q \geq 4\), then \(u_0 \in L^4(\mathbb{R}^3)\). Due to Theorem 2.1, there is a maximal interval \([0, T_*]\) such that there exists a unique solution \(\tilde{u}(x, t) \in BC([0, T_*]; L^4(\mathbb{R}^3))\). Since \(u\) is a Leray-Hopf weak solution which satisfies the energy inequality, we have by the uniqueness criterion of Serrin-Masuda [10], [11]
\[
u \equiv \tilde{u} \quad \text{on} \quad [0, T_*].
\]
By the a priori estimate, (2.4) or (2.7), and combined with the standard continuation argument, we can continue our local smooth solution corresponding to \(u_0 \in L^4(\mathbb{R}^3)\) to obtain \(u \in BC([0, T_*]; L^4(\mathbb{R}^3)) \cap C^\infty(\mathbb{R}^3 \times (0, T))\). This completes the proof of Theorem 1.1.

**Remark 2.1.** By the same trick as that used in section 3, one can establish an a priori estimate for \(\|\nabla p\|_{L^s}\) with \(3 \leq s < 4\).

### 3. A NEW PROOF FOR THEOREM 1.2

The first step is to give an interpolation inequality.

**Lemma 3.1.** Suppose a measurable function \(f \in L^{\infty, s} \cap L^{s, 3s}\) on \((\mathbb{R}^3 \times [0, T])\). Then \(f \in L^{p, q}\) with \(s \leq p, s \leq q \leq 3s\) and \(\frac{s}{p} + \frac{3s}{2q} \geq \frac{3}{2}\), and
\[
\|f\|_{L^{p, q}} \leq C(s, p, q, T) \|f\|_{L^{\infty, s}}^{\frac{s}{3s}} \|f\|_{L^{s, 3s}}^{\frac{(3q-3s)/2q}{3q}}.
\]
where \(C(s, p, q, T)\) depends on \(s, p, q, T,\) and \(C(p, q, T) = 1\) if \(\frac{s}{p} + \frac{3s}{2q} = \frac{3}{2}\).

**Proof.**
\[
\|f\|_{L^{p, q}} = \left( \int_0^T \|f(\cdot, \tau)\|^p_{L^q} d\tau \right)^{1/p} \leq C(s, p, q, T) \|f\|_{L^{\infty, s}}^{\theta(p)} \|f(\cdot, \tau)\|_{L^{s, 3s}}^{(1-\theta)p} d\tau \right)^{1/p} \leq C(s, p, q, T) \|f\|_{L^{\infty, s}}^{\theta(p)} \|f\|_{L^{s, 3s}}^{(1-\theta)p}.
\]
where we use the interpolation theorem
\[(3.2) \quad \frac{1}{q} = \frac{\theta}{s} + \frac{1 - \theta}{3s}, \quad s \leq q \leq 3s,\]
and H\"older’s inequality, provided \((1 - \theta)p \leq s\).

From (3.2), \(1 - \theta = \frac{3q - 3s}{2q}\), we obtain \(\frac{s}{p} + \frac{3s}{2q} \geq \frac{3}{2}\). If \(\frac{s}{p} + \frac{3s}{2q} = \frac{3}{2}\), which implies\(1 - \theta = \frac{s}{p}\), then obviously \(C(s, p, q, T) = 1\).

The idea of the proof of Theorem 1.2 is similar to that of Theorem 1.1. Now the only thing we need is the following a priori estimate.

**Theorem 3.2.** Let \(s \geq 3, 1 < \alpha < \infty\) and \(\frac{2}{3} < \gamma < \infty\) be given. Suppose \(u_0 \in L^s(\mathbb{R}^3)\) with \(\text{div}u_0 = 0\). Assume \((u, p)\) is a smooth solution of (1.1) in \(\mathbb{R}^3 \times (0, T)\) with \(u \in L^{\infty, 2}\) and \(\nabla u \in L^{2, 2}\). If \(p \in L^{\alpha, \gamma}\) with \(\frac{2}{\alpha} + \frac{1}{\gamma} = 2\), then \(u \in L^{\infty, s} \cap L^{s, 3s}\)
\[(3.3) \quad \sup_{0 \leq t \leq T} \|u(\cdot, t)\|_{L^s}^s \leq 2^{[C\|p\|\!L^{\alpha, \gamma}]} + 1\|u_0\|_{L^s}^s,\]
where \(C = C(s, \alpha, \gamma)\).

**Proof.** In order to prove (3.3) we multiply both sides of equation (1.1) by \(su|u|^{s-2}\), and integrate over \(\mathbb{R}^3 \times (0, t), \quad 0 < t \leq T\). After suitable integration by parts, we obtain
\[(3.4) \quad \|u(\cdot, t)\|_{L^s}^s + s \int_0^t \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u|^2|u|^{s-2}dxd\tau + \frac{4(s - 2)}{s} \|\nabla |u|^{s/2}\|_{L^{2, 2}}^2 \leq 2(s - 2) \int_0^t \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |p||u|^{s/2-1}|\nabla |u|^{s/2}|dxd\tau + \|u_0\|_{L^s}^s,\]
where we used
\[-s \int_0^t \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \nabla p \cdot u|u|^{s-2}dxd\tau = s(s - 2) \int_0^t \sum_{i,j=1}^3 \left( \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} p \frac{\partial u_j}{\partial x_i} |u_j|^4 dxd\tau \right) \leq 2(s - 2) \int_0^t \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |p||u|^{s/2-1}|\nabla |u|^{s/2}|dxd\tau.\]

If we use the fact that \(|\nabla |u|^{s/2}| \leq \frac{s}{2}|u|^{s/2-1} |\nabla u|\),

then (3.4) will be reduced as follows:
\[(3.5) \quad \|u(\cdot, t)\|_{L^s}^s + 2\|\nabla |u|^{s/2}\|_{L^{2, 2}}^2 \leq 2(s - 2) \int_0^t \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |p||u|^{s/2-1}|\nabla |u|^{s/2}|dxd\tau + \|u_0\|_{L^s}^s,\]
\[\quad \quad \quad \quad \quad A + \|u_0\|_{L^s}^s.\]
Before going to estimate \(A\), we recall the well-known equality given by
\[(3.6) \quad - \Delta p = \sum_{i,j=1}^3 \partial_i \partial_j (u_i u_j).\]
The Calderon-Zygmund inequality implies
\[(3.7) \quad \|p\|_{L^\gamma} \leq C_1 \|u\|_{L^{2, \gamma}}^2, \quad 1 < \gamma < \infty.\]
Now,

\[ A \leq C_2 \int_0^t \|p\|_{L^s} \|u\|_{L^s}^{s/2-1} \|\nabla|u|^{s/2}\|_{L^2} d\tau \]

(Hölder’s inequality \( \frac{1}{a} + \frac{s/2 - 1}{b} = \frac{1}{2} \))

\[ \leq \frac{1}{2} C_2 \int_0^t \|p\|_{L^s}^2 \|u\|_{L^s}^{s-2} d\tau + \int_0^t \|\nabla|u|^{s/2}\|_{L^2}^2 d\tau \quad \text{(Young’s inequality)} \]

\[ \leq \frac{1}{2} C_2 \int_0^t \|p\|_{L^s}^{2(1-\theta)} \|p\|_{L^{s/2}} \|u\|_{L^s}^{\theta} d\tau + \int_0^t \|\nabla|u|^{s/2}\|_{L^2}^2 d\tau \]

(interpolation inequality \( \frac{1}{a} = \frac{1-\theta}{\gamma} + \frac{\theta}{b/2} \))

\[ \leq C_3 \int_0^t \|p\|_{L^{\infty,\alpha}}^{2(1-\theta)} \|u\|_{L^{\infty,b}}^{4\theta + s - 2} d\tau + \int_0^t \|\nabla|u|^{s/2}\|_{L^2}^2 d\tau \quad \text{(by (3.7))} \]

\[ \leq C_3 \|p\|_{L^{\infty,\alpha}}^{2(1-\theta)} \|u\|_{L^{\infty,b}}^{4\theta + s - 2} + \int_0^t \|\nabla|u|^{s/2}\|_{L^2}^2 d\tau \]

(Hölder’s inequality \( \frac{2(1-\theta)}{a} + \frac{4\theta + s - 2}{q} = 1 \)).

We can choose the number \( \theta = \frac{1}{2} \); then

(3.8) \quad a = \frac{2\gamma s}{2\gamma + s - 2}, \quad b = \frac{\gamma s}{\gamma - 1}, \quad q = \frac{\alpha s}{\alpha - 1}.

From (3.8), by direct computation, \( q \) and \( b \) satisfy

\[ \frac{s}{q} + \frac{3s}{2b} = \frac{5}{2} \left( \frac{1}{\alpha} + \frac{3}{2\gamma} \right) \geq \frac{3}{2}, \quad s < q, \quad s < b < 3s, \]

so we can use inequality (3.1). Therefore

\[ A \leq C_3 \|p\|_{L^{\infty,\alpha}} \|u\|_{L^{\infty,b}}^s + \int_0^t \|\nabla|u|^{s/2}\|_{L^2}^2 d\tau \]

\[ \leq C_4 \|p\|_{L^{\infty,\alpha}} \|u\|_{L^{\infty,\alpha}}^{2s} \|u\|_{L^{2,3\alpha}}^s + \int_0^t \|\nabla|u|^{s/2}\|_{L^2}^2 d\tau \]

\[ \leq C_5 \|p\|_{L^{\infty,\alpha}} \|u\|_{L^{\infty,\alpha}}^{2s} + C_6 \|u\|_{L^{2,3\alpha}}^s + \int_0^t \|\nabla|u|^{s/2}\|_{L^2}^2 d\tau, \]

where \( C_5 \) is constant depending only on \( \alpha, \gamma \) and \( s \), while \( C_6 \) is an absolute constant to be determined later. Substituting the above inequalities into (3.3) and using the Sobolev inequality for suitable \( C_6 \),

\[ C_6 \|u\|_{L^{2,3\alpha}}^s = C_6 \|u\|_{L^{2,3\alpha}}^{s/2} \|u\|_{L^{2,3\alpha}}^2 \leq \|\nabla|u|^{s/2}\|_{L^2}^2, \]

one has

(3.9) \quad \|u(.t)|_{L^s}^s \leq C_5 \|p\|_{L^{\infty,\alpha}} \|u\|_{L^{\infty,\alpha}}^s + \|u_0\|_{L^s}^s.

Theorem 3.1 follows from (3.9) and the integrability of \( p \). \( \square \)

Remark 3.1. From the proof of Theorem 1.2, it is obvious that Theorem 1.2 holds for arbitrary dimension \( N, N \geq 3 \).
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Department of Mathematics, East China Normal University, Shanghai, 200062, People’s Republic of China

E-mail address: yzhou@math.ecnu.edu.cn