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## Two-qubit gate operations in superconducting circuits with strong coupling and weak anharmonicity

Xin-You Lü<sup>1,3,5</sup>, S Ashhab<sup>1,2</sup>, Wei Cui<sup>1</sup>, Rebing Wu<sup>1,4</sup>  
and Franco Nori<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Advanced Science Institute, RIKEN, Wako-shi, Saitama 351-0198, Japan

<sup>2</sup> Physics Department, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1040, USA

<sup>3</sup> School of Physics, Ludong University, Yantai 264025, People's Republic of China

<sup>4</sup> Department of Automation, Center for Quantum Information Science and Technology, Tsinghua University, Beijing 100084, People's Republic of China  
E-mail: [xinyoulu@riken.jp](mailto:xinyoulu@riken.jp)

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**Abstract.** We theoretically study the implementation of two-qubit gates in a system of two coupled superconducting qubits. In particular, we analyze two-qubit gate operations under the condition that the coupling strength is comparable with or even larger than the anharmonicity of the qubits. By numerically solving the time-dependent Schrödinger equation under the assumption of negligible decoherence, we obtain the dependence of the two-qubit gate fidelity on the system parameters in the case of both direct and indirect qubit–qubit coupling. Our numerical results can be used to identify the ‘safe’ parameter regime for experimentally implementing two-qubit gates with high fidelity in these systems.

<sup>5</sup> Author to whom any correspondence should be addressed.

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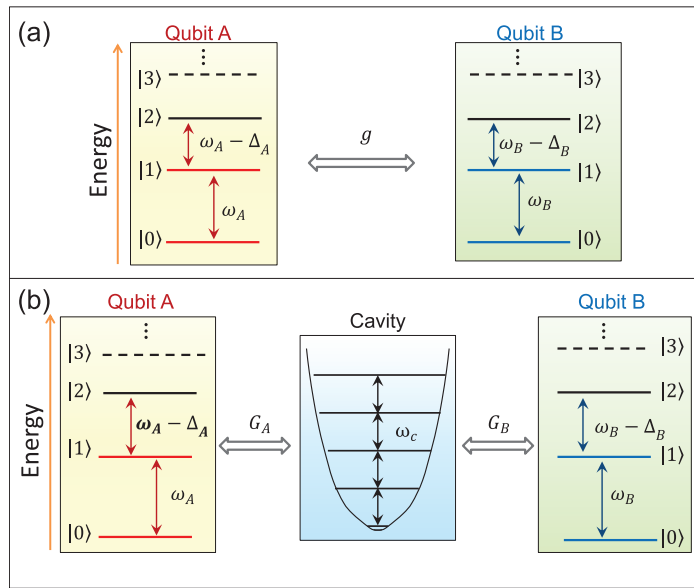
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**1. Introduction**

Superconducting (SC) circuits based on Josephson junctions are promising candidates for the realization of scalable quantum computing on a solid-state platform, owing to their design flexibility, large-scale integration and controllability (see the reviews in [1–7]). SC qubits include charge [8], flux [9] and phase qubits [10, 11] as well as their variants, capacitively shunted flux qubits [12] and capacitively shunted charge qubits (transmon qubits) [13]. The phase qubit, the capacitively shunted flux qubit and the transmon qubit are relatively insensitive to charge noise and can be operated over a wide range of parameters. Single-qubit gates [14], two-qubit gates [15, 16] and simple quantum algorithms [17] with these types of qubits have been demonstrated experimentally in recent years. However, compared with flux qubits, a common disadvantage of these types of qubits is their weakly anharmonic energy level structure, i.e. the detuning between adjacent transition frequencies is small.

Generally, the influence of the small anharmonicity (denoted by  $\Delta$ ) on quantum gate operations can be neglected when the qubit–field and qubit–qubit coupling strengths are very small compared with  $\Delta$ . However, for the practical application of quantum computation, one has to maximize the number of quantum gate operations with a given coherence time. In other words, we must implement quantum operations as fast as possible, which requires a strong qubit–qubit or qubit–field coupling to be employed during the single- and two-qubit gate operations [18]. The anharmonicity of SC qubits will influence the quality of quantum gates more and more with increasing coupling strength. In recent years, there have been a number of theoretical studies analyzing the effects of the weak anharmonicity of SC qubits on the operation of single-qubit gates, and several optimization strategies have been proposed based on different driving pulse shapes and sequences [19–23]. Similar to single-qubit gates, the weak anharmonicity of SC qubits will also influence the implementation of two-qubit gates. Then two questions arise naturally: (i) how much does the weak anharmonicity of the qubits influence the implementation of two-qubit gates in a system of coupled SC qubits? (ii) How strong can the coupling be while allowing a high two-qubit gate fidelity? In other words, how fast can two-qubit gates with high fidelity be implemented, given the weak anharmonicity of SC qubits?

Motivated by the above questions, we study in this paper the implementation of two-qubit gates with SC systems in the strong coupling regime. First, we introduce some possible methods for implementing two-qubit gates and qualitatively discuss the effect of strong coupling



**Figure 1.** Systems with direct (a) and indirect (b) qubit–qubit coupling. Here,  $g$ ,  $G_j$  and  $\Delta_j$  ( $j = A, B$ ) are the qubit–qubit coupling strength, qubit–cavity coupling strength and anharmonicity, respectively.

(section 2). Then, in section 3, we numerically simulate the influence of the coupling strength and anharmonicity on the fidelities of two-qubit gates in different SC systems, and show that the ‘safe’ parameter regime for implementing two-qubit gates with high fidelity can be identified, which is useful in guiding experimental efforts based on SC qubits. Finally, we conclude with a brief summary in section 4.

## 2. The model and qualitative discussion

As shown in figure 1, as model systems we consider two directly (a) or indirectly (b) coupled SC qubits with weakly anharmonic multilevel structure (such as transmon or phase qubits). Here it should be pointed out that flux qubits have a strong anharmonicity, and the problem discussed in this paper is not a serious limitation. The two lowest levels  $\{|0\rangle_j, |1\rangle_j\}$ , separated in energy by  $\hbar\omega_j$  ( $j = A, B$ ), are the computational basis, and the ( $n \geq 2$ ) higher levels are different from  $n\hbar\omega_j$  by  $\hbar\epsilon_n^j$ . Here  $\epsilon_n^j$  has the standard nonlinear oscillator form  $\epsilon_n^j = \Delta_j(n-1)n/2$  [24] and  $\Delta_j$  is the anharmonicity of the qubit, and it is positive in our paper.

In the case of direct qubit–qubit coupling, two qubits are directly (capacitively) coupled, while they are dispersively coupled to a common transmission line resonator in the case of indirect qubit–qubit coupling. The Hamiltonian of these two types of coupled systems is given by ( $\hbar = 1$ ) [25–32]

$$H^{\text{direct}} = \sum_{n=1}^{N-1} \left[ (n\omega_A - \epsilon_n^A) |n\rangle_A \langle n| + (n\omega_B - \epsilon_n^B) |n\rangle_B \langle n| \right] + g J_A^x \otimes J_B^x, \quad (1a)$$

$$H^{\text{indirect}} = \omega_c a^\dagger a + \sum_{j=A,B} \left[ \sum_{n=1}^{N-1} (n\omega_j - \epsilon_n^j) |n\rangle_j \langle n| + G_j (a + a^\dagger) J_j^x \right], \quad (1b)$$

$$J_A^x = \sum_{n=1}^{N-1} \eta_{n-1,n}^A \sigma_{n-1,n}^{Ax}, \quad J_B^x = \sum_{n=1}^{N-1} \eta_{n-1,n}^B \sigma_{n-1,n}^{Bx}, \quad (1c)$$

where  $H^{\text{direct}}$  and  $H^{\text{indirect}}$  denote the Hamiltonians for the system with direct and indirect qubit–qubit coupling,  $N$  is the number of levels in each SC qubit,  $\eta_{n-1,n}^j \approx \sqrt{n}$  is the level-dependent coupling matrix element and  $\sigma_{n-1,n}^{jx} = |n-1\rangle_j \langle n| + |n-1\rangle_j \langle n|$  is the effective Pauli spin operator for levels  $|n-1\rangle$  and  $|n\rangle$ . Also,  $\omega_c$  is the frequency of the quantized cavity mode;  $g$  and  $G_j$  denote the qubit–qubit and qubit–cavity coupling strengths.

In order to qualitatively analyze the implementation and fidelity of two-qubit gates, we assume that each qubit has three levels. Then, the Hamiltonian of the direct qubit–qubit coupled system ( $H^{\text{direct}}$ ), under the rotating-wave approximation (RWA), can be reduced to

$$H_I^{\text{direct}} = \sum_{j=A,B} \left[ \omega_j |1\rangle_j \langle 1| + (2\omega_j - \Delta_j) |2\rangle_j \langle 2| \right] + g[|01\rangle \langle 10| + \sqrt{2}|02\rangle \langle 11| + \sqrt{2}|20\rangle \langle 11| + 2|12\rangle \langle 21| + \text{h.c.}], \quad (2)$$

where  $|mn\rangle$  denotes  $|m\rangle_A |n\rangle_B$ .

For the system with indirect qubit–qubit coupling, under the dispersive qubit–cavity-coupling condition, i.e.  $|\delta_j| = |\omega_j - \omega_c| \gg G_j$  ( $j = A, B$ ), the qubits will exchange energy by virtual photon processes. Then we can obtain the Hamiltonian of the effective qubit–qubit interaction by a Fröhlich transformation [33–36],

$$H_{\text{eff},1}^{\text{indirect}} = \exp(-S) H^{\text{indirect}} \exp(S) \approx \sum_{j=A,B} \left\{ \left[ \left( \omega_j + \frac{G^2}{\delta_j} \right) |1\rangle_j \langle 1| + \left( 2\omega_j - \Delta_j + \frac{2G^2}{\delta_j - \Delta_j} \right) |2\rangle_j \langle 2| \right] + \frac{G^2}{2\delta_j} a^\dagger a (|1\rangle_j \langle 1| - |0\rangle_j \langle 0|) + \frac{G^2}{\delta_j - \Delta_j} a^\dagger a (|2\rangle_j \langle 2| - |1\rangle_j \langle 1|) \right] + \left[ \frac{\sqrt{2}G^2}{2} \left( \frac{1}{\delta_j - \Delta_j} - \frac{1}{\delta_j} \right) a^2 |2\rangle_j \langle 0| + \frac{G^2}{2} \left( \frac{1}{\delta_A} + \frac{1}{\delta_B} \right) |01\rangle \langle 10| + \frac{\sqrt{2}G^2}{2} \left( \frac{1}{\delta_B - \Delta_B} + \frac{1}{\delta_A} \right) |02\rangle \langle 11| + \frac{\sqrt{2}G^2}{2} \left( \frac{1}{\delta_A - \Delta_A} + \frac{1}{\delta_B} \right) |20\rangle \langle 11| + G^2 \left( \frac{1}{\delta_A - \Delta_A} + \frac{1}{\delta_B - \Delta_B} \right) |12\rangle \langle 21| + \text{h.c.} \right] \right\}, \quad (3)$$

where

$$S = \sum_{j=A,B} \left[ \frac{G}{\delta_j} a^\dagger |0\rangle_j \langle 1| + \frac{\sqrt{2}G}{\delta_A - \Delta_A} a^\dagger |1\rangle_j \langle 2| - \text{h.c.} \right]. \quad (4)$$

Here, we have assumed that  $G_A = G_B = G$ .

The terms proportional to  $G^2$  in the first four terms of equation (3) represent level shifts, and the fifth term describes two-photon processes. Under the dispersive qubit–cavity-coupling condition, the cavity mode is only virtually excited during the gate operation and therefore the third, fourth and fifth terms of equation (3) vanish. Then, Hamiltonian (3) can be simplified further as [37–41]

$$H_{\text{eff},2}^{\text{indirect}} = \sum_{j=A,B} [\tilde{\omega}_j |1\rangle_j \langle 1| + (2\tilde{\omega}_j - \Delta_j) |1\rangle_j \langle 1|] + \left[ \sqrt{2}g_{\text{eff},1} |02\rangle \langle 11| + \sqrt{2}g_{\text{eff},2} |20\rangle \langle 11| + g_{\text{eff},3} |01\rangle \langle 10| + 2g_{\text{eff},4} |12\rangle \langle 21| + \text{h.c.} \right]. \quad (5)$$

where

$$\tilde{\omega}_j = \omega_j + \frac{G^2}{\delta_j}, \quad (6a)$$

$$\tilde{\Delta}_j = \frac{2G^2}{\delta_j} - \frac{2G^2}{\delta_j - \Delta_j} + \Delta_j, \quad (6b)$$

$$g_{\text{eff},1} = \frac{G^2}{2} \left( \frac{1}{\delta_B - \Delta_B} + \frac{1}{\delta_A} \right), \quad (6c)$$

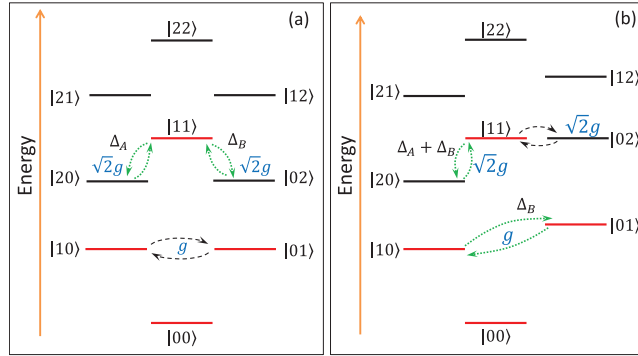
$$g_{\text{eff},2} = \frac{G^2}{2} \left( \frac{1}{\delta_A - \Delta_A} + \frac{1}{\delta_B} \right), \quad (6d)$$

$$g_{\text{eff},3} = \frac{G^2}{2} \left( \frac{1}{\delta_A} + \frac{1}{\delta_B} \right), \quad (6e)$$

$$g_{\text{eff},4} = \frac{G^2}{2} \left( \frac{1}{\delta_A - \Delta_A} + \frac{1}{\delta_B - \Delta_B} \right). \quad (6f)$$

Now, we obtain an effective interaction Hamiltonian similar to Hamiltonian (2) in the system with direct qubit–qubit coupling.

From Hamiltonians (2) and (5), it is easily seen that various two-qubit gates can be realized by appropriately adjusting the qubit frequencies ( $\omega_A$ ,  $\omega_B$ ) in both the systems with direct and indirect qubit–qubit coupling. For example, by setting  $\omega_A = \omega_B$  ( $\omega_B = \omega_A + \Delta_B$ ), the resonant transition between states  $|01\rangle$  and  $|10\rangle$  ( $|11\rangle$  and  $|02\rangle$ ) can be obtained as shown in figure 2. Then the two-qubit iSWAP [15] (CZ [16, 17]) gate can be realized after an interaction time  $gt_g = \pi/2$  or  $g_{\text{eff},3}t_g = \pi/2$  ( $\sqrt{2}gt = \pi$  or  $\sqrt{2}g_{\text{eff},1}t = \pi$ ). Here it should be pointed out that some undesired transitions (see the (green) dotted arrows in figure 2) have been neglected in the weak-coupling regime  $g \ll |\Delta_j|$  or  $g_{\text{eff},m} \ll |\Delta_j|$  ( $m = 1 - 4$ ;  $j = A, B$ ). However, with increasing coupling strength ( $g$  or  $g_{\text{eff},m}$ ), the average amplitude  $g/|\Delta_j|$  or  $g_{\text{eff},m}/|\Delta_j|$  of undesired transitions will become larger and larger, which cannot be neglected anymore and will reduce the fidelity of the two-qubit gate. As a result, the ratio of coupling strength  $g$  or  $g_{\text{eff},m}$  to the anharmonicity  $\Delta_j$  is an important parameter for the quality of the two-qubit gate. In the two-qubit gate scheme based on SC qubits, a very strong qubit–qubit or qubit–cavity coupling strength cannot be employed owing to the weak anharmonicity of the qubits, if one wants to obtain a high fidelity. How strong the coupling can be, while allowing high two-qubit-gate fidelities, will be analyzed in detail in section 3.



**Figure 2.** The energy-level diagram of two-qubit product states for the iSWAP gate (a) and the controlled-Z gate (b) in the system with direct qubit–qubit coupling. Red levels denote the states in the computational basis. The black dashed arrows are the resonant transitions used for realizing the two-qubit gates and the green dotted arrows are the main *undesired* transitions, which adversely affect the implementation of two-qubit gates. The couplings  $g$  and  $\sqrt{2}g$  are indicated in blue, while the detuning between levels is indicated in black. This figure also applies to the system with indirect qubit–qubit coupling when the corresponding couplings are replaced by  $g_{\text{eff},m}$  ( $m = 1, 2, 3$ ).

### 3. Numerical results

In this section, we will numerically calculate the fidelity of two-qubit gates in the circuits with either direct or indirect qubit–qubit coupling. Importantly, the present numerical results can help identify the safe parameter regime for implementing two-qubit gates with high fidelity. Here, we neglect the noise and decoherence of the system in order to show explicitly the influence of coupling strength and anharmonicity on the fidelity of two-qubit gates. Here, it should also be pointed out that the single-qubit gates are performed using microwave pulses (with frequencies of a few GHz), while the frequency tuning for the two-qubit gates is implemented using trapezoidal pulses.

Here, the fidelity of a two-qubit gate is defined as the Euclidean distance between the target  $U_T$  and the actual evolution  $U(t_g)$  [22],

$$F = 1 - \frac{1}{16} \|U_T - P^\dagger U(t_g) P\|_2^2, \quad (7)$$

where  $U(t)$  is the usual time evolution operator obeying the Schrödinger equation  $\dot{U}(t) = -\frac{i}{\hbar} H(t)U(t)$  in the full space of the quantum system. Here  $\|X\|_2^2 = \text{tr}(X^\dagger X)$ , where  $X$  is an arbitrary operator.  $P$  is the projection operator on the two-qubit computational basis  $\{|00\rangle, |01\rangle, |10\rangle, |11\rangle\}$ ; note that

$$U_T = |00\rangle\langle 00| - i|01\rangle\langle 10| - i|10\rangle\langle 01| + |11\rangle\langle 11|$$

corresponds to the two-qubit iSWAP gate, and

$$U_T = |00\rangle\langle 00| + |01\rangle\langle 01| + |10\rangle\langle 10| - |11\rangle\langle 11|$$

corresponds to the two-qubit CZ gate. Here it should be pointed out that single-qubit rotations and overall phase factors  $U_z^A = e^{i\theta_A \sigma_z^A}$ ,  $U_z^B = e^{i\theta_B \sigma_z^B}$  and  $U_I = e^{i\theta I}$  are used in the numerical

calculations to eliminate any extra phase factors;  $I$  is the unit matrix and

$$\begin{aligned}\sigma_z^A &= |00\rangle\langle 00| + |01\rangle\langle 01| - |10\rangle\langle 10| - |11\rangle\langle 11|, \\ \sigma_z^B &= |00\rangle\langle 00| - |01\rangle\langle 01| + |10\rangle\langle 10| - |11\rangle\langle 11|.\end{aligned}$$

Specifically, in our numerical calculations, we replace the unitary operation  $U(t_g)$  in equation (7) by  $U'(t_g) = U_I U_z^B U_z^A U(t_g)$  and choose  $\theta_A$ ,  $\theta_B$  and  $\theta$  that maximize the fidelity.

We also note here that, in our numerical calculations, we do not use the RWA. But there is almost no difference between these results shown below and the numerical results with the RWA (not shown in this paper). The reason is that the parameter regime we consider does not reach the ultrastrong coupling regime and thus the RWA is valid here. Very recently, the influence of the counter-rotating terms in the Hamiltonian on the two-qubit gates in the ultrastrong coupling regime has been studied in a related system [42]. Also, the effect of counter-rotating terms was studied in [43].

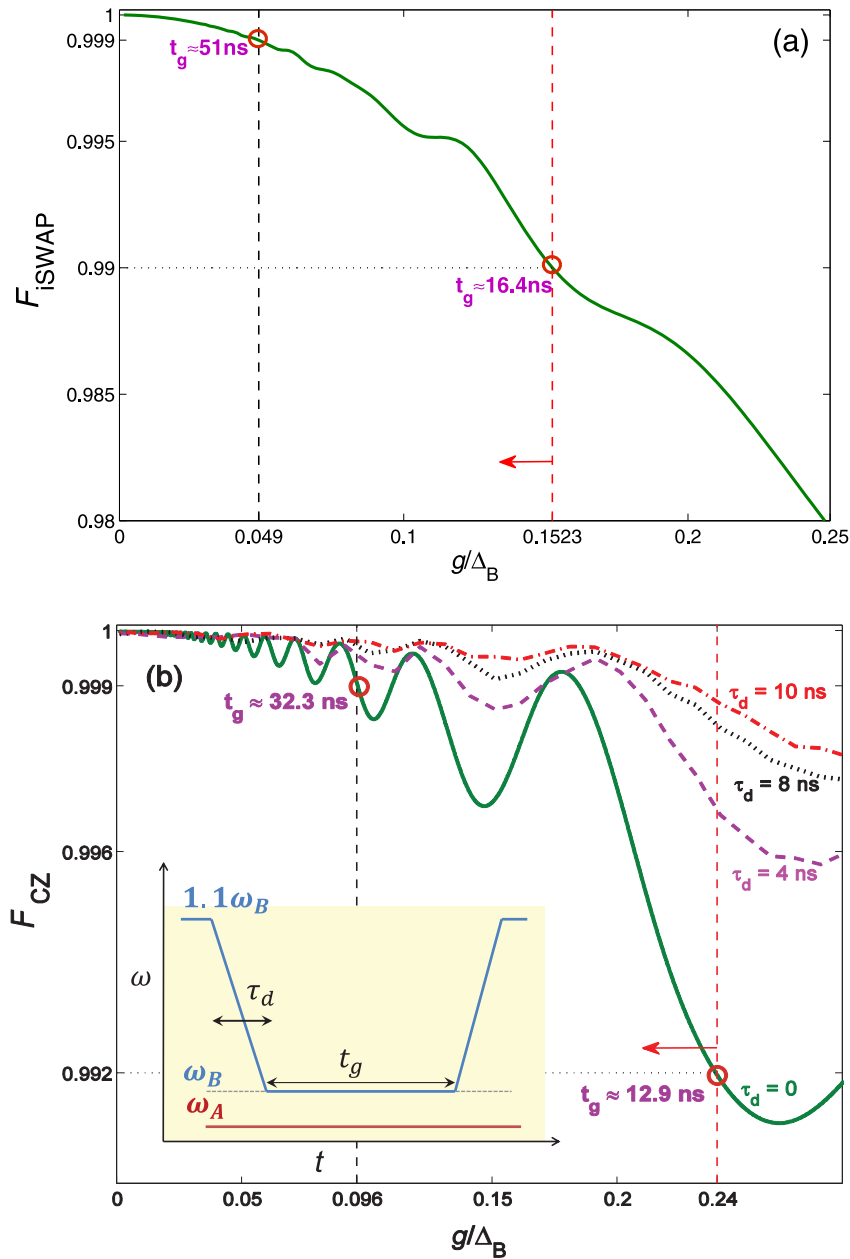
### 3.1. System with direct qubit–qubit coupling

In this subsection, based on the original Hamiltonian equation (1a), we numerically calculate the influence of the coupling strength  $g$  and anharmonicity  $\Delta_j$  on the fidelities of the two-qubit iSWAP and CZ gates (see figures 3–5). Here we consider the two-qubit iSWAP and CZ gates implemented in experiments [15]. In figures 3(a) and (b), we plot the fidelities of the two-qubit iSWAP gate ( $F_{\text{iSWAP}}$ ) and the CZ gate ( $F_{\text{CZ}}$ ) as functions of  $g/\Delta_B$  in a circuit with direct qubit–qubit coupling, where we consider each SC qubit to have three levels (the same approximation will be used in figures 4 and 5). From figure 3(a) and the (green) solid line in figure 3(b), it can be seen that the fidelities of these gates decrease with increasing  $g/\Delta_B$ , and the present numerical results can help identify the safe parameter regime for realizing two-qubit gates with high fidelities. As shown in figure 3(a), if we want to implement the two-qubit iSWAP (CZ) gate with fidelity higher than 99% (99.2%), the safe parameter regime is  $g/\Delta_B < 0.152$  ( $g/\Delta_B < 0.24$ ). In other words, based on the relationship  $gt_g = \pi/2$  for the iSWAP gate and  $\sqrt{2}gt_g = \pi$  for the CZ gate, the present numerical results can also identify the time limit for implementing two-qubit gates with high fidelity. For example, here the shortest gate time is  $t_g \approx 16.4$  ns ( $t_g \approx 12.9$  ns) for implementing a two-qubit iSWAP (CZ) gate with fidelity higher than 99% (99.2%).

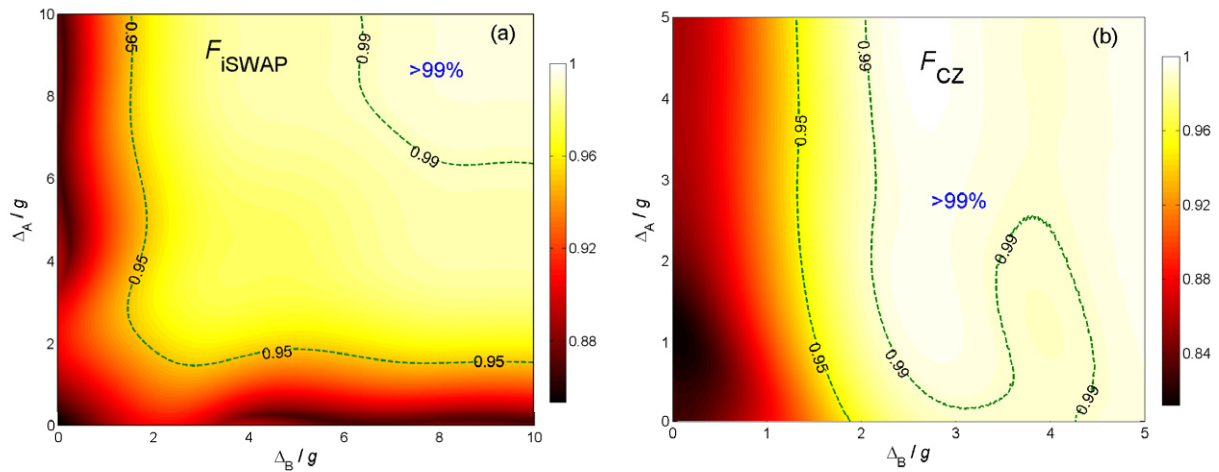
The (green) solid line in figure 3(b) shows small oscillations in the fidelity of the two-qubit CZ gate. These oscillations can be reduced by slowly adjusting the frequencies of the qubits during the gate operation. As shown in the inset of figure 3(b), the frequency of qubit B starts at  $1.1\omega_B$ , is first ramped down to  $\omega_B$  in  $\tau_d$  and then ramped up to  $1.1\omega_B$  after an interaction time  $t_g$  ( $\sqrt{2}gt_g = \pi$ ). During the full gate operation time ( $2\tau_d + t_g$ ), the frequency of qubit A is fixed. Using such pulses, we numerically calculate the fidelities of the two-qubit CZ gate for different values of  $\tau_d$  and present the results in figure 3(b) (see dashed, dotted and dot-dashed lines in figure 3(b)). It can be seen that the oscillations of the fidelity can be eliminated by adiabatically adjusting the qubit frequencies during the gate operation.

In order to show the influence of  $\Delta_A$  and  $\Delta_B$  on the two-qubit gates, we plot the fidelities of the two-qubit iSWAP and CZ gates as functions of  $\Delta_A/g$  and  $\Delta_B/g$  in figure 4. It is easily seen from figure 4(a) that the anharmonicities  $\Delta_A$  and  $\Delta_B$  have an equal effect on the two-qubit iSWAP gate; that is, the stronger the anharmonicities  $\Delta_j$  ( $j = A, B$ ), the higher the

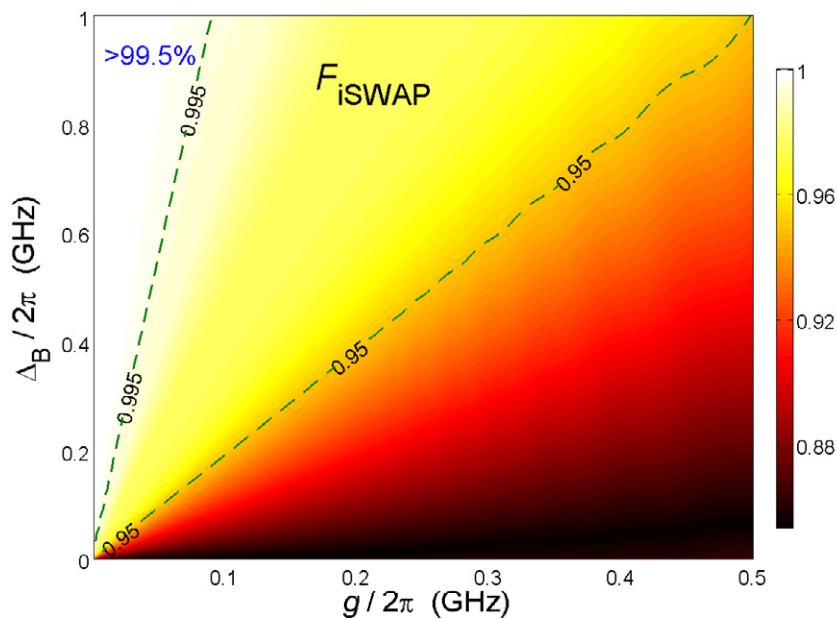




**Figure 3.** The fidelities of the two-qubit iSWAP (a) and CZ (b) gate as functions of  $g/\Delta_B$  in a circuit with direct qubit–qubit coupling. Some representative dots are denoted by the dashed lines and red circles in order to present the relationship between the gate time  $t_g$  and fidelity  $F$ . The red arrows point out the parameter regime corresponding to the two-qubit gate with high fidelity. In panel (b), the qubit frequencies are adiabatically adjusted during the gate operation, as shown in the inset. The system parameters used here are (a)  $\omega_A/2\pi = 5.5 \text{ GHz}$ ,  $\omega_B = \omega_A$ ,  $\Delta_A/2\pi = 0.15 \text{ GHz}$  and  $\Delta_B/2\pi = 0.1 \text{ GHz}$ ; (b)  $\omega_A/2\pi = 7.16 \text{ GHz}$ ,  $\Delta_A/2\pi = 0.087 \text{ GHz}$ ,  $\Delta_B/2\pi = 0.114 \text{ GHz}$  and  $\omega_B = \omega_A + \Delta_B$ .

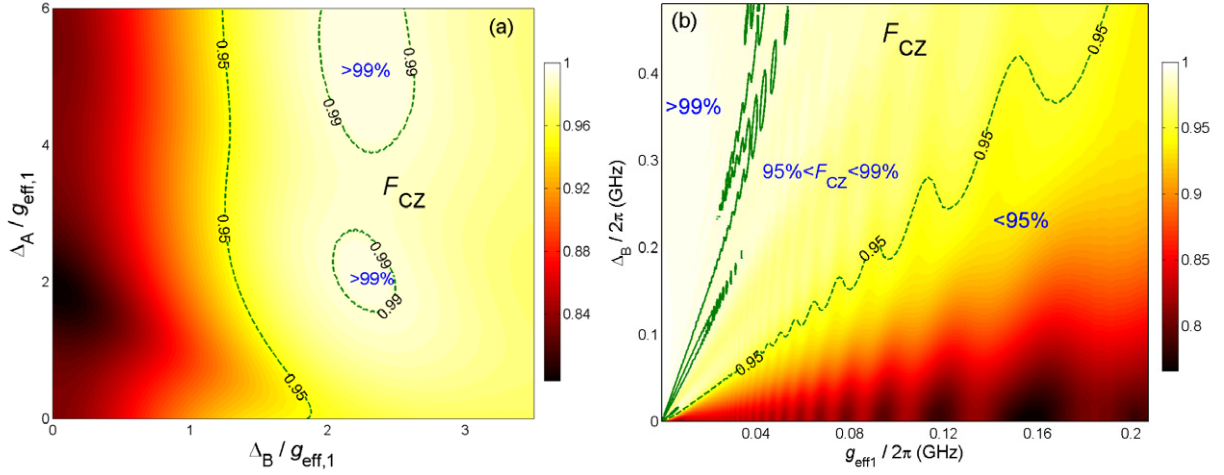


**Figure 4.** The fidelities of the two-qubit iSWAP gate  $F_{i\text{SWAP}}$  (a) and the CZ gate  $F_{\text{CZ}}$  (b) versus  $\Delta_A/g$  and  $\Delta_B/g$  in a circuit with direct qubit–qubit coupling. The dashed lines correspond to the fidelities 95 and 99%. The system parameters are the same as in figure 3 except for  $g/2\pi = 0.2$  GHz.



**Figure 5.** The fidelities of the two-qubit iSWAP gates versus  $\Delta_B$  and  $g$  in a circuit with direct qubit–qubit coupling. The dashed lines correspond to the fidelities 95 and 99.5%. The system parameters are the same as in figure 3 except for  $\Delta_A = \Delta_B$ .

fidelity. This symmetric property disappears in the two-qubit CZ gate due to the asymmetry in the condition on the parameters,  $\omega_B = \omega_A + \Delta_B$  (see figure 4(b)). In other words, the influence of the anharmonicity  $\Delta_A$  on the two-qubit CZ gate can be neglected when  $\omega_B = \omega_A + \Delta_B$  is chosen. In addition, the dashed lines in figure 4 indicate the safe regime of  $\Delta_j/g$  ( $j = A, B$ ) for implementing two-qubit iSWAP and CZ gates with fidelity higher than 99%.



**Figure 6.** The fidelity of the two-qubit CZ gate versus  $\Delta_A/g_{\text{eff},1}$ ,  $\Delta_B/g_{\text{eff},1}$  (a) and versus  $g_{\text{eff},1}$ ,  $\Delta_B$  (b) in the system with indirect qubit–qubit coupling. The dashed lines correspond to the fidelities 95 and 99%. The basal system parameters are  $\omega_c/2\pi = 6.9$  GHz,  $\omega_A/2\pi = 8.2$  GHz,  $\omega_B = \omega_A + \Delta_B$ ,  $\delta_j = \omega_j - \omega_c$  ( $j = A, B$ ); and  $G = 0.2$  GHz for panel (a) and  $\Delta_A/2\pi = \Delta_B/2\pi$  GHz for panel (b).

In figures 3 and 4, either the anharmonicity  $\Delta_j$  or the coupling strength  $g$  has been set to a fixed value. A natural question is whether the conclusions obtained from figures 3 and 4 are universal. In other words, will the properties of figures 3 and 4 change much when either  $\Delta_j$  or  $g$  is changed? Thus, we now present in figure 5 three-dimensional (3D) plots of the dependence of  $F_{\text{ISWAP}}$  on  $g$  and  $\Delta_B$ . It is shown that the fidelity of two-qubit gates is approximately determined by the ratio of the qubit–qubit coupling strength  $g$  to the anharmonicity  $\Delta_j$  of the SC qubits. As a result, the conclusion obtained from figure 3(a) (or figure 4(a)) will not be changed when adjusting  $\Delta_B$  (or  $g$ ). A similar property is also obtained from the two-qubit CZ gate (the corresponding figures are not shown in this paper because they are very similar to figure 5).

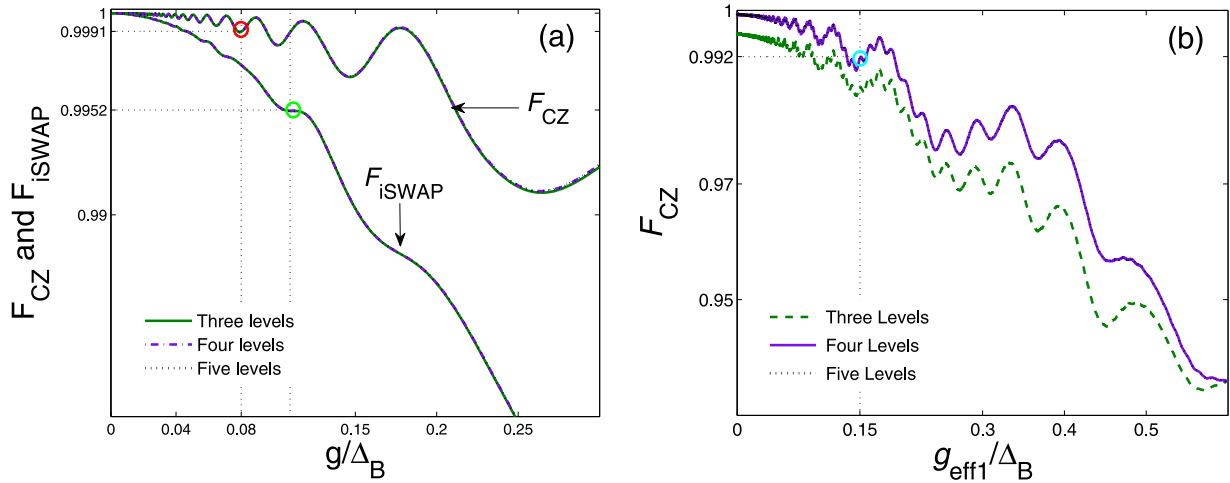
### 3.2. System with indirect qubit–qubit coupling

In this subsection, based on the Hamiltonian equation (1b), we present the results of numerical calculations for the dependence of the fidelity of the two-qubit gates on the effective qubit–qubit coupling  $g_{\text{eff},1}$  and anharmonicity  $\Delta_j$  of SC qubits. Here the two-qubit CZ gates are realized based on the qubit–cavity dispersive interaction method [17], and the parameter

$$g_{\text{eff},1} = \frac{G^2}{2} \left( \frac{1}{\delta_B - \Delta_B} + \frac{1}{\delta_A} \right) = \frac{G^2}{\delta_A}$$

under the condition  $\omega_B = \omega_A + \Delta_B$ .

In figure 6, we present 3D plots of the dependence of  $F_{\text{CZ}}$  on  $\Delta_A/g_{\text{eff},1}$  and  $\Delta_B/g_{\text{eff},1}$  (panel (a)) and  $g_{\text{eff},1}$  and  $\Delta_B$  (panel (b)), where we consider the SC qubits to have three levels. Dashed lines denote the parameter regime for implementing the two-qubit CZ gate with fidelities 95 and 99%. It is shown in figures 6(a) and (b) that high-fidelity areas correspond to the weak-coupling regime  $g_{\text{eff},1}/\Delta_j \ll 1$  ( $j = A, B$ ), while low fidelity corresponds to the strong-coupling regime,



**Figure 7.** The fidelities of the two-qubit gates as a function of  $g/\Delta_B$  (a) and  $g_{\text{eff},1}/\Delta_B$  (b) in systems with direct (a) and indirect (b) qubit–qubit coupling, when the three, four or five lowest levels are considered for each qubit. The system parameters are the same as in figure 3 or 6. The green and red circles in (a) and cyan circle in (b) mark, respectively, the experimental parameters regime in [15–17].

where  $g_{\text{eff},1}$  is comparable to or larger than  $\Delta_j$ . This property is similar to that in the system with direct qubit–qubit coupling. The present numerical results can be used to identify the safe parameter regime for implementing the two-qubit CZ gate with high fidelity in the circuit with indirect qubit–qubit coupling.

### 3.3. Going beyond the three-level approximation

Until now, three-level system approximation for qubits has been used in the above numerical calculations. It is then natural to ask the following question: will our conclusions, obtained from the above numerical results, still be valid for qubits with  $N$  ( $N > 3$ ) levels? To explore this, in figure 7, we plot the fidelities of the two-qubit iSWAP and CZ gates as functions of  $g/\Delta_B$  (or  $g_{\text{eff},1}/\Delta_B$ ) in the system with direct (or indirect) qubit–qubit coupling when each qubit has three, four or five levels. It can be seen from figure 7 that there is not much difference between the numerical results based on the three-, four- and five-level approximations for the qubits. So, our conclusions obtained from the above numerical calculations are still valid for  $N$ -level (with  $N > 3$ ) SC qubits.

### 3.4. Limits on the gate fidelities of recent experiments imposed by weak anharmonicity

In order to serve as a guide for future experiments, we compare our numerical results with corresponding experiments and show the limited fidelity of the two-qubit gate based on SC qubits with weak anharmonicity. Based on the experimental parameters ( $\omega_A/2\pi$ ,  $\omega_B/2\pi$ ,  $\Delta_A/2\pi$ ,  $\Delta_B/2\pi$ ,  $g/2\pi$ ) equal to (5.5, 5.5, 0.15, 0.1, 0.011) GHz and (7.16, 7.274, 0.087, 0.114, 0.0091) GHz, two-qubit iSWAP [15] and CZ [16] gates with fidelities 63 and 70% were implemented in the circuit with direct qubit–qubit coupling. In the circuit with indirect

qubit–qubit coupling, a two-qubit gate [17] with fidelity 85% was realized with system parameters ( $\omega_c/2\pi$ ,  $\omega_A/2\pi$ ,  $\omega_B/2\pi$ ,  $\Delta_A/2\pi$ ,  $\Delta_B/2\pi$ ,  $G_A/2\pi = G_B/2\pi$ ) equal to (6.9, 8.2, 8.45, 0.2, 0.25, 0.199) GHz. Corresponding to the above experimental parameters, in figure 7 we indicate the ideal fidelity (see the green, red and magenta circles) based on our theoretical calculations. From the comparison between experiments and our numerical calculations, we show that two-qubit gates with fidelities 99.52, 99.91 and 99.2% can be realized, in principle, if the influence of decoherence can be eliminated. Recently, the effects of decoherence on quantum gates and possible optimization routes were studied in [44].

#### 4. Conclusion

We have studied the performance of two-qubit gates in a system of two coupled SC qubits under the condition that the coupling strength is comparable to or larger than the anharmonicity of the qubits. First, by using the three-level approximation for the qubits, we analyzed and numerically calculated the dependence of the two-qubit gate fidelity on the qubit–qubit coupling strength and the anharmonicity of the qubits. Based on extensive numerical results, the safe parameter regime was identified for experimentally implementing two-qubit gates with high fidelity. Secondly, we numerically calculated the fidelity of the two-qubit gates in the case of four- and five-level approximations for the qubits, and demonstrated the validity of our numerical results for  $N$ -level qubits with  $N > 3$ . Our results can serve as a guide for future experiments based on SC qubits.

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