## No-Scale Supergravity Realization of the Starobinsky Model of Inflation

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We present a model for cosmological inflation based on a no-scale supergravity sector with an  $SU(2, 1)/SU(2) \times U(1)$  Kähler potential, a single modulus T, and an inflaton superfield  $\Phi$  described by a Wess-Zumino model with superpotential parameters  $(\mu, \lambda)$ . When T is fixed, this model yields a scalar spectral index  $n_s$  and a tensor-to-scalar ratio r that are compatible with the Planck measurements for values of  $\lambda \simeq \mu/3M_P$ . For the specific choice  $\lambda = \mu/3M_P$ , the model is a no-scale supergravity realization of the  $R + R^2$  Starobinsky model.

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The initial release of cosmic microwave background data from the Planck satellite [1] confronts theorists of cosmological inflation [2,3] with a challenge. On the one hand, the data have many important features that are predicted qualitatively by the inflationary paradigm. For example, there are no significant signs of non-Gaussian fluctuations or hints of nontrivial topological features such as cosmic strings, and the spectrum of scalar density perturbations exhibits a significant tilt:  $n_s \approx 0.960 \pm 0.007$ , as would be expected if the effective scalar energy density decreased gradually during inflation. On the other hand, many previously popular field-theoretical models of inflation are ruled out by a combination of the constraint on  $n_s$  and the tensor-to-scalar ratio r < 0.08 as now imposed by Planck et al: see, e.g., Fig. 1 of [1]. The only model with truly successful predictions displayed in Fig. 1 of [1] is the  $R^2$  inflation model of Starobinsky [4], though similar predictions are made in Higgs inflation [5] and related models [6].

In the following paragraphs we motivate the approach to inflation taken in this Letter, which casts a new light on the Starobinsky model [4] and embeds it in a more general theoretical context that connects with other ideas in particle physics. Specifically, the upper limit on r implies that the energy scale during inflation must be much smaller than the Planck energy,  $\sim 10^{19}$  GeV. Such a hierarchy of energy scales can be maintained naturally, without fine-tuning, in a theory with supersymmetry [7]. As is well known, (approximate) supersymmetry has many attractive features, such as providing a natural candidate for dark matter and facilitating grand unification, as well as alleviating the fine-tuning of the electroweak scale. In the context of early-universe cosmology, one must combine supersymmetry with gravity via a suitable supergravity

theory [8], which should accommodate an effective inflationary potential that varies slowly over a large range of inflaton field values. This occurs naturally in a particular class of supergravity models [9], which are called "no scale" because the scale at which supersymmetry is broken is undetermined in a first approximation, and the energy scale of the effective potential can be naturally much smaller than  $\sim 10^{19}$  GeV, as required by the cosmic microwave background data. No-scale models have the additional attractive feature that they arise in generic four-dimensional reductions of string theory [10], though this does not play an essential role in our analysis. The attractive features of this no-scale supergravity framework for inflation do not depend sensitively on the supersymmetry-breaking scale, which could be anywhere between the experimental lower limit  $\sim 1$  TeV from the LHC [11] and  $\sim 10^{10}$  TeV from the tensor-to-scalar ratio.

We now discuss these motivations at greater length before entering into the details of our inflationary model.

Since the energy scale during the inflationary epoch is typically  $\ll M_P$ , it is natural to study renormalizable models, i.e., some combination of  $\phi^2$ ,  $\phi^3$ , and  $\phi^4$  in the single-field case. In this spirit, it was shown in [12,13] that a single-field model with a potential of the form

$$V = A\phi^2(\nu - \phi)^2 \tag{1}$$

could easily produce Planck-compatible values of  $(n_s, r)$  for a suitable number of e-folds before the end of inflation  $N \sim 50$ –60. This simple symmetry-breaking potential has a long pedigree, having been proposed initially in [14] (for a review, see [2]), where it was argued that successful inflation would require a small value of A and  $v > M_P$ .

As we pointed out in [7], in addition to all the well-known reasons for postulating low-scale supersymmetry, the small values of the quartic and quadratic couplings that would be required in a successful inflationary model, e.g., A in the above example, become technically natural in the presence of low-scale supersymmetry. In particular, small values of  $\delta \rho/\rho$  become technically natural if approximate supersymmetry is invoked [7], and if the grand unified theory Higgs boson is distinguished from the singlet field that produces inflation, that later became known as the inflaton [15].

The simplest globally supersymmetric model is the Wess-Zumino model with a single chiral superfield  $\Phi$  [16], which is characterized by a mass term  $\hat{\mu}$  and a trilinear coupling  $\lambda$ , with the superpotential

$$W = \frac{\hat{\mu}}{2} \Phi^2 - \frac{\lambda}{3} \Phi^3. \tag{2}$$

As was discussed in [13], the effective potential of the Wess-Zumino model reduces to (1) when the imaginary part of the scalar component of  $\Phi$  vanishes, in which case this model yields Planck-compatible inflation for a suitable small value of  $\lambda$ .

However, global symmetry is not enough. As discussed above, in the context of early-universe cosmology one should certainly include gravity and hence construct a locally supersymmetric model, i.e., upgrade to supergravity [8]. The first attempt at constructing an inflationary model in N = 1 supergravity proposed a generic form for the superpotential for a single inflaton [17], the simplest form being  $W = m^2(1 - a\Phi)^2$  [18]. As discussed in [19], while this relatively simple model is capable of sufficient inflation, it is an example of accidental inflation in the sense that the coefficient of the linear term in the superpotential a must be extremely close to unity. This model has also become one of Planck's casualties. The scalar-totensor ratio in this model is very small, but the value of  $n_s$  predicted in this model is  $n_s \simeq 1-4/N = 0.933$  for N = 60 [20], since the effective potential varies insufficiently slowly.

In a supergravity model with a generic Kähler potential for the chiral supermultiplets there are quadratic  $|\phi|^2$  terms, which cause variations in the effective potential that destroy its suitability for inflation, an obstacle known as the  $\eta$  problem [3]. As was pointed out in [21], a natural solution to this problem is offered by no-scale supergravity [9], whose motivations were summarized earlier. In such a model, quadratic terms are suppressed, and the effective scalar potential resembles that in a globally supersymmetric model, thanks to an underlying noncompact  $SU(N, 1)/SU(N) \times U(1)$  symmetry.

Other no-scale supergravity approaches have also been proposed [22], as well as models based on a noncompact Heisenberg symmetry [23], a shift symmetry [24–26], or string theory [27]. The SU(N, 1) model [21] was based on the superpotential  $W = m^2(\phi - \phi^4/4)$  and gives similar

predictions for the inflationary parameters as the minimal N=1 model discussed above. This too is an example of accidental inflation [19], and a small change in the coefficient of the quartic term would lead to parameters consistent with Planck data [1].

In this Letter we show how one can elevate the simplest globally supersymmetric Wess-Zumino inflationary model of [13] to a no-scale supergravity version (NSWZ). Concretely, we study a model in which the inflaton superfield is embedded in an SU(2, 1)/SU(2) × U(1) no-scale supergravity sector together with a modulus field T (which we assume to be fixed by other dynamics [28]) and find a range of the parameters where it is compatible with the Planck data [1]. Quite remarkably, as we show, the NSWZ model is the conformal equivalent of an  $R + R^2$  model of gravity for one specific value of  $\hat{\mu}/\lambda$ , so that in this case our realization of inflation in the NSWZ model is equivalent to the Starobinsky model of inflation [4]. Thus, we embed this model in a broader and attractive theoretical framework.

We first recall the basic relevant formulas governing the kinetic term and the effective potential of scalar fields  $\phi$  in  $\mathcal{N}=1$  supergravity, specializing to the no-scale case with noncompact  $\mathrm{SU}(N,1)/\mathrm{SU}(N)\times\mathrm{U}(1)$  symmetry. The scalar sector may be characterized in general by a Hermitian Kähler function K and a holomorphic superpotential W via the combination  $G\equiv K+\ln W+\ln W^*$ . The kinetic term is then given by  $K_i^{j^*}\partial_\mu\phi^i\partial\phi^j_j$ , where the Kähler metric  $K_i^{J^*}\equiv\partial^2 K/\partial\phi^i\partial\phi^j_j$ , and the effective potential is

$$V = e^{G} \left[ \frac{\partial G}{\partial \phi^{i}} K_{j^{*}}^{i} \frac{\partial G}{\partial \phi_{j}^{*}} - 3 \right], \tag{3}$$

where  $K_{i^*}^i$  is the inverse of the Kähler metric  $K_{i}^{j^*}$ .

In the minimal no-scale SU(2, 1)/SU(2) × U(1) case, there are two complex scalar fields: T, a modulus field, and  $\phi$ , which we identify as the inflaton field, with the Kähler function  $K = -3\ln(T + T^* - |\phi|^2/3)$ . In this case, the kinetic terms for the scalar fields T and  $\phi$  become

$$\mathcal{L}_{KE} = (\partial_{\mu}\phi^*, \partial_{\mu}T^*) \left( \frac{3}{(T + T^* - |\phi|^2/3)^2} \right) \times \left( \frac{(T + T^*)/3 - \phi/3}{-\phi^*/3} \right) \left( \frac{\partial^{\mu}\phi}{\partial^{\mu}T} \right), \tag{4}$$

and the effective potential becomes

$$V = \frac{\hat{V}}{(T + T^* - |\phi|^2/3)^2} : \hat{V} \equiv \left| \frac{\partial W}{\partial \phi} \right|^2.$$
 (5)

In early no-scale models [21,23] it was assumed that K was fixed so that the potential up to a rescaling was simply  $\hat{V}$ . Here we assume that the T field has a vacuum expectation value (VEV)  $2\langle \text{Re}T\rangle = c$  and  $\langle \text{Im}T\rangle = 0$  that is determined by nonperturbative high-scale dynamics [28], as in the Kähler correction provided in [29]. In this case, we may

neglect the kinetic mixing between the T and  $\phi$  fields in (4), and are left with the following effective Lagrangian for the inflaton field  $\phi$ :

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{eff}} = \frac{c}{(c - |\phi|^2/3)^2} |\partial_{\mu}\phi|^2 - \frac{\hat{V}}{(c - |\phi|^2/3)^2}.$$
 (6)

We assume as in [13] the minimal Wess-Zumino superpotential (2) for the inflaton field.

To better study the potential for the inflaton, we first transform  $\phi$  to the field  $\chi$ :

$$\phi = \sqrt{3c} \tanh\left(\frac{\chi}{\sqrt{3}}\right). \tag{7}$$

With this field redefinition, the Lagrangian becomes

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{eff}} = \operatorname{sech}^{2}[(\chi - \chi^{*})/\sqrt{3}] \left[ |\partial_{\mu}\chi|^{2} - \left(\frac{3}{c}\right) |\sinh(\chi/\sqrt{3}) \right] \times \left[ \hat{\mu} \cosh(\chi/\sqrt{3}) - \sqrt{3c}\lambda \sinh(\chi/\sqrt{3}) \right]^{2} . \tag{8}$$

Clearly the VEV of the T field can be absorbed into the definition of the mass and, writing  $\hat{\mu} = \mu \sqrt{c/3}$ , the potential becomes

$$V = \mu^2 \left| \sinh(\chi/\sqrt{3}) \left( \cosh(\chi/\sqrt{3}) - \frac{3\lambda}{\mu} \sinh(\chi/\sqrt{3}) \right) \right|^2.$$
(9)

Writing  $\chi$  in terms of its real and imaginary parts:  $\chi = (x + iy)/\sqrt{2}$ , and, for reasons which will become clear, considering the specific case where the quartic coupling  $\lambda = \mu/3$  (in Planck units), we have

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{eff}} = \frac{1}{2} \sec^2(\sqrt{2/3}y) [(\partial_{\mu}x)^2 + (\partial_{\mu}y)^2] - \mu^2 \frac{e^{-\sqrt{2/3}x}}{2} \sec^2(\sqrt{2/3}y) (\cosh\sqrt{2/3}x - \cos\sqrt{2/3}y).$$
 (10)

The imaginary part of the inflaton is fixed to y=0 by the potential, having a mass  $m_y=\mu/\sqrt{3}$  during inflation when x is large and  $m_y=\mu/\sqrt{6}$  at the end of inflation when x=0. Thus we expand the Lagrangian about y=0, in which case we have minimal kinetic terms for x and y, accompanied by derivative interaction terms. The potential for the real part of the inflaton now takes the form

$$V = \mu^2 e^{-\sqrt{2/3}x} \sinh^2(x/\sqrt{6}). \tag{11}$$

This potential is depicted in Fig. 1, where we also display the potential for values of  $\lambda$  slightly perturbed from the nominal value of  $\mu/3$ .

We use the standard slow-roll expressions for the tensor-to-scalar ratio r and the spectral index  $n_s$  for the scalar perturbations in terms of the slow-roll inflation parameters  $\epsilon$ ,  $\eta$  [3], which we evaluate in terms of the canonically

normalized field x. In the NSWZ model described above, the VEV of T is absorbed in the definition of the mass parameter  $\mu$ , which is determined by the normalization of the quadrupole. For the special case  $\lambda = \mu/3$ , we have

$$A_s = \frac{V}{24\pi^2\epsilon} = \frac{\mu^2}{8\pi^2} \sinh^4(x/\sqrt{6}),$$
 (12)

implying a value  $\mu = 2.2 \times 10^{-5}$  in Planck units for N = 55:  $\mu$  varies between  $(1.8-3.4) \times 10^{-5}$  over the range of NSWZ models considered here. Setting the remaining NSWZ parameter  $\lambda = \mu/3$ , we have

$$\epsilon = \frac{1}{3}\operatorname{csch}^{2}(x/\sqrt{6})e^{-\sqrt{2/3}x},\tag{13}$$

$$\eta = \frac{1}{3}\operatorname{csch}^{2}(x/\sqrt{6})(2e^{-\sqrt{2/3}x} - 1),\tag{14}$$

which allows us to determine the quantities  $(n_s, r)$ , once the value of the field x is fixed by requiring N = 50–60 e-folds. The nominal choice of N = 55 yields x = 5.35,  $n_s = 0.965$ , and r = 0.0035.

Figure 2 displays the predictions for  $(n_s, r)$  of the NSWZ model for five choices of the coupling  $\lambda$  that yield  $n_s \in [0.93, 1.00]$  and  $N \in [50, 60]$ . The last 50–60 *e*-folds of inflation arise as *x* rolls to zero from  $\sim 5.1-5.8$ , the exact value depending on  $\lambda$  and N. As one can see, the values of  $\lambda$  are constrained to be close to the critical value  $\mu/3$ , for which we find extremely good agreement with the Planck determination of  $n_s$ . The values of r are rather small for  $\lambda = \mu/3$ , varying over the range 0.0012–0.0084, in the models considered.

At first sight, this success might appear to be another example of accidental inflation [19], but, as we now show, this choice of  $\lambda$  has a more profound geometric interpretation. The alert reader may have noticed resemblances of both the potential shown in Fig. 1 and the values of  $(n_s, r)$  found for the  $\lambda = \mu/3$  model with results for inflation in the  $R + R^2$  model proposed by Starobinsky [4]. To further probe this resemblance, we examine the generalization of the Einstein-Hilbert action to contain an  $R^2$  contribution, where R is the scalar curvature,

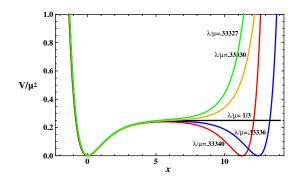


FIG. 1 (color online). The potential V in the NSWZ model for choices of  $\lambda \sim \mu/3$  in Planck units, as indicated.

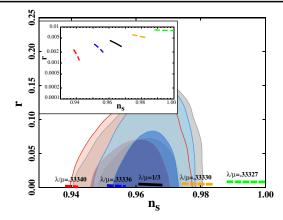


FIG. 2 (color online). Predictions from the NSWZ model for the tilt  $n_s$  in the spectral index of scalar perturbations and for the tensor-to-scalar ratio r, compared with the 68% and 95% C.L. regions found in analyses of Planck and other data [1]. In the main panel the lines are labeled by the values of  $\lambda/\mu$  (in Planck units) assumed in each case. In the inset, the same cases are shown on a log scale to better display the values of r.

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} (R + R^2 / 6M^2), \tag{15}$$

where  $M \ll M_P$  is some mass scale. This theory is conformally equivalent to canonical gravity plus a scalar field  $\varphi$  [30]. Making the transformation  $\tilde{g}_{\mu\nu} = (1 + \varphi/3M^2)g_{\mu\nu}$  and the field redefinition  $\varphi' = \sqrt{3/2} \ln[1 + (\varphi/3M^2)]$ , we obtain the action

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-\tilde{g}} \left[ \tilde{R} + (\partial_{\mu} \varphi')^2 - \frac{3}{2} M^2 \left( 1 - e^{-\sqrt{2/3}\varphi'} \right)^2 \right], \tag{16}$$

corresponding to a potential

$$V = \frac{3}{4}M^2(1 - e^{-\sqrt{2/3}\varphi'})^2. \tag{17}$$

The potential (17) is identical with the potential (11) along the real direction of the NSWZ model. Moreover, we have the identification  $M^2 = \mu^2/3$ , which equals  $\hat{\mu}^2$  for  $c = \langle (T + T^*) \rangle = 1$ . Thus the Starobinsky mass M is directly related to the NSWZ mass  $\hat{\mu}$  in the superpotential (2). We note that similar potentials are also obtained in Higgs inflation and related models [5].

We have shown in this Letter that the simplest  $SU(2,1)/SU(2) \times U(1)$  no-scale supergravity model with a single modulus field T and a single matter field  $\phi$  with the simplest renormalizable Wess-Zumino superpotential, identified with the inflaton, is capable of yielding cosmological inflation with values of the scalar spectral tilt  $n_s$  and the tensor-to-scalar ratio r within the region favored by Planck and other data at the 68% C.L. Successful inflation is obtained for  $\lambda \simeq \mu/3$  in Planck units. This NSWZ model is a proof of the existence of acceptable models of inflation based on no-scale supergravity, and normally we would not

advocate that its details should necessarily be taken literally. For example, a realistic no-scale model derived from a generic compactification of string theory would have more moduli fields, with many matter fields that could be the inflaton, with a superpotential more complicated than assumed here.

However, it is truly striking that the NSWZ model is conformally equivalent to the Starobinsky  $R^2$  model [4] for the specific choice  $\lambda = \mu/3$  in Planck units. This correspondence suggests that there is a profound geometric interpretation of this model that remains to be understood.

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