A HEIGHT INEQUALITY FOR RATIONAL POINTS ON ELLIPTIC CURVES IMPLIED BY THE ABC-CONJECTURE

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Abstract. In this short note we show that the uniform *abc*-conjecture puts strong restrictions on the coordinates of rational points on elliptic curves. For the proof we use a variant of Vojta's height inequality formulated by Mochizuki. As an application, we generalize a result of Silverman on elliptic non-Wieferich primes.

1. Introduction

If $E/\mathbb{Q}$ is an elliptic curve in Weierstrass form with point at infinity O and $P \in E(\mathbb{Q})\setminus\{O\}$, then it is well known that we can write

$$P = \left(\frac{a_P}{d_P^2}, \frac{b_P}{d_P^3}\right),$$

where a_P, b_P, $d_P \in \mathbb{Z}$ satisfy $\gcd(d_P, a_Pb_P) = 1$ and $d_P > 0$.

The structure of the *denominators* d_P has been studied, for instance, by Everest-Reynolds-Stevens [ERS07] and Stange [Sta11], and has recently received increasing attention in the context of elliptic divisibility sequences first studied by Ward [War48]. See for instance [EEW01] or [Rey12] and the references therein. In this paper we derive strong conditions on the denominators d_P from the uniform *abc*-conjecture over number fields (see Conjecture 2.2 or [GS00]).

If n is a positive integer, we let $\mathrm{rad}(n)$ denote the product of distinct prime divisors of n. We call n *powerful* if $\mathrm{ord}_p(n) \neq 1$ for all prime numbers p. The *powerful part* of n is defined to be the largest powerful integer dividing n.

Theorem 1.1. *Let $E/\mathbb{Q}$ be an elliptic curve in Weierstrass form and suppose that the uniform abc-conjecture holds. Then, for all $\varepsilon > 0$, there exist constants c and c', only depending on E and ε, such that for all $P \in E(\mathbb{Q}) \setminus \{O\}$ the following hold:*

(i) *We have*

$$\max\left\{\frac{1}{2}\log|a_P|, \log d_P\right\} \leq (1+\varepsilon)\log\mathrm{rad}(d_P) + c.$$

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(ii) *Let v_P be the powerful part of d_P and write $d_P = u_P v_P$; then*

$$\log v_P \leq \varepsilon \log |u_P| + c'.$$

Remark 1.2. A strong form of Siegel's Theorem implies a weaker upper bound (and an analogous lower bound) on $\log |a_P|$: There is a constant $c = c(E, \varepsilon)$ such that

$$(1-\varepsilon)\log d_P - c \leq \frac{1}{2}\log |a_P| \leq (1+\varepsilon)\log d_P + c,$$

see [Sil86, Example IX.3.3].

Remark 1.3. Mochizuki [Moc12] has recently announced a proof of the uniform *abc*-conjecture over number fields.

If, in the notation of Theorem 1.1, d_P is powerful, then $|u_P| = 1$. Hence the following result is an immediate consequence of Theorem 1.1 (ii):

Corollary 1.4. *Let $E/\mathbb{Q}$ be an elliptic curve in Weierstrass form and suppose that the uniform abc-conjecture holds. Then the set of all $P \in E(\mathbb{Q}) \setminus \{O\}$ such that d_P is powerful is finite.*

Remark 1.5. In particular, Corollary 1.4 implies that only finitely many $P \in E(\mathbb{Q}) \setminus \{O\}$ have prime power denominator if the uniform *abc*-conjecture holds. The question of prime power denominators was studied, for instance, in [ERS07]; there it is shown ([ERS07, Theorem 1.1]) that for a fixed exponent $n > 1$, there are only finitely many $P \in E(\mathbb{Q}) \setminus \{O\}$ such that d_P is an nth power. Moreover, it is claimed ([ERS07, Remark 1.2]) that the uniform *abc*-conjecture over number fields implies that for $n \gg 0$, there are no $P \in E(\mathbb{Q}) \setminus \{O\}$ such that d_P is an nth power. Together, these results would also imply that the finiteness of the set of $P \in E(\mathbb{Q}) \setminus \{O\}$ such that d_P is a perfect power is a consequence of the uniform *abc*-conjecture. However, no proof of [ERS07, Remark 1.2] has been published so far.

Another application of Theorem 1.1 concerns *elliptic non-Wieferich primes*. For a prime p of good reduction for an elliptic curve $E/\mathbb{Q}$, we define $N_p := \#E(\mathbb{F}_p)$. If $P \in E(\mathbb{Q})$ is non-torsion, let

$$W_{E,P} := \left\{p \text{ good prime for } E : N_p P \not\equiv O \bmod p^2\right\}$$

be the set of elliptic non-Wieferich primes to base P.

Corollary 1.6. *Let $E/\mathbb{Q}$ be an elliptic curve in Weierstrass form and suppose that the uniform abc-conjecture holds. If $P \in E(\mathbb{Q})$ is non-torsion, then*

$$|\{p \in W_{E,P} : p \leq X\}| \geq \sqrt{\log(X)} + \mathcal{O}_{E,P}(1) \qquad \text{as} \quad X \to \infty. \tag{1}$$

Remark 1.7. Assuming the *abc*-conjecture over $\mathbb{Q}$, Silverman has already proved that (1) holds for all non-torsion $P \in E(\mathbb{Q})$ if $j(E) \in \{0, 1728\}$, cf. [Sil88, Theorem 2].

Proof: The only place in Silverman's proof of (1) where the *abc*-conjecture and the assumption $j(E) \in \{0, 1728\}$ are invoked is in the proof of [Sil88, Lemma 13]. In order to deduce the statement of [Sil88, Lemma 13] for arbitrary E, it suffices to show that for all $\varepsilon > 0$ there exists a constant $c = c(E, \varepsilon)$ such that

$$\log v_{nP} \leq \varepsilon \log(d_{nP}) + c$$

for all $n \geq 1$, where v_{nP} is the powerful part of d_{nP}. But this follows at once from part (ii) of Theorem 1.1. □

Corollary 1.6 is the analogue of [Sil88, Theorem 1], giving an asymptotic lower bound (dependent on the *abc*-conjecture over $\mathbb{Q}$) for the number of classical non-Wieferich primes up to a given bound. See [Vol00] for further results concerning elliptic non-Wieferich primes.

In Section 2 we recall work of Mochizuki from [Moc10], which we use in Section 3 for the proof of Theorem 1.1.

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2. The uniform *abc*-conjecture and Vojta's height inequality

In this section, we discuss the uniform *abc*-conjecture and a variant of Vojta's height conjecture.

Let K be a number field with ring of integers $\mathcal{O}_K$, let X be a smooth, proper, geometrically connected curve over K and let D be an effective divisor on X. Extend X to a proper regular model $\mathcal{X}$ over $\mathrm{Spec}(\mathcal{O}_K)$ and D to an effective horizontal divisor $\mathcal{D} \in \mathrm{Div}(\mathcal{X})$.

Suppose that $P \in X(F)$, where F is some finite extension of K. We can define the *conductor* $\mathrm{cond}_{\mathcal{X},\mathcal{D}}(P)$ of P as follows: Let $\pi : \mathcal{X}' \to \mathcal{X} \times \mathrm{Spec}(\mathcal{O}_F)$ be the minimal desingularization and let $\mathcal{P} \in \mathrm{Div}(\mathcal{X}')$ be the Zariski closure of P in $\mathcal{X}'$. Then we define

$$\mathrm{cond}_{\mathcal{X},\mathcal{D}}(P) := \prod_{\mathfrak{p} \in S} Nm(\mathfrak{p})^{\frac{1}{[F:\mathbb{Q}]}} \in \mathbb{R},$$

where S is the set of finite primes $\mathfrak{p}$ of F such that the intersection multiplicity $(\mathcal{P} \,.\, \pi^*\mathcal{D})_{\mathfrak{p}} \neq 0$.

Remark 2.1. For different constructions of the (logarithmic) conductor, see [Moc10, §1] or [BG06, §14.4]. It is easy to see that, up to a bounded function, these constructions are all equivalent. By [Moc10, Remark 1.5.1] changing the model $\mathcal{X}$ only changes log-cond$_{\mathcal{X},\mathcal{D}}$ by a bounded function. Hence, up to a bounded function, $\mathrm{cond}_{\mathcal{X},\mathcal{D}}$ only depends on D.

If $P \in X(\overline{K})$, then we write $k(P)$ for the minimal field of definition of P. Mochizuki [Moc10, §2] has rewritten the uniform *abc*-conjecture over number fields ([GS00]) as follows:

Conjecture 2.2. *(Uniform abc-conjecture) Let $D = (0) + (1) + (\infty) \in \mathrm{Div}(\mathbb{P}^1)$ and let h denote a Weil height on $\mathbb{P}^1$ with respect to the divisor (∞). Extend D to an effective horizontal divisor $\mathcal{D}$ on $\mathcal{X} = \mathbb{P}^1_{\mathbb{Z}}$.*

If $\varepsilon > 0$ and $d \in \mathbb{N}$, then there exists a constant $c = c(\varepsilon, d)$ such that

$$h(P) \leq (1+\varepsilon)\left(\log \mathrm{disc}(k(P)) + \log \mathrm{cond}_{\mathcal{X},\mathcal{D}}(P)\right) + c$$

for all $P \in X(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$ satisfying $[k(P) : \mathbb{Q}] \leq d$.

Remark 2.3. The *abc*-conjecture over $\mathbb{Q}$ (see for instance [BG06, Conjecture 12.2.2]) is a special case of Conjecture 2.2. Indeed, let a and b be coprime positive integers, let $c = a + b$ and consider the point $P = [a : c] \in \mathbb{P}^1$. Then, up to a bounded function, we have $h(P) = \log \max\{|a|, |c|\} = \log c$. Moreover, $\mathrm{disc}(k(P)) = 1$ and

$$\mathrm{cond}_{\mathcal{X},\mathcal{D}}(P) = \prod_{p \in S} p = \mathrm{rad}(abc),$$

where S is the set of prime numbers p such that $\mathrm{ord}_p(a) > 0$, $\mathrm{ord}_p(b) > 0$ or $\mathrm{ord}_p(c) > 0$.

The following version of Vojta's conjectured height inequality was stated by Mochizuki [Moc10, §2].

Conjecture 2.4. *(Vojta's height inequality) Let X be a smooth, proper, geometrically connected curve over a number field K. Let $D \subset X$ be an effective reduced divisor, and ω_X the canonical sheaf on X. Fix a proper regular model $\mathcal{X}$ of X over $\mathrm{Spec}(\mathcal{O}_K)$ and extend D to an effective horizontal divisor $\mathcal{D}$ on $\mathcal{X}$. Suppose that $\omega_X(D)$ is ample and let $h_{\omega_X(D)}$ be a Weil height function on X with respect to $\omega_X(D)$.*

If $\varepsilon > 0$ and $d \in \mathbb{N}$, then there exists a constant $c = c(\varepsilon, d, \mathcal{X}, \mathcal{D})$ such that

$$h_{\omega_X(D)}(P) \leq (1+\varepsilon)\left(\log \mathrm{disc}(k(P)) + \log \mathrm{cond}_{\mathcal{X},\mathcal{D}}(P)\right) + c$$

for all $P \in X(\overline{K}) \setminus \mathrm{supp}(D)$ satisfying $[k(P) : \mathbb{Q}] \leq d$.

Obviously Conjecture 2.4 contains Conjecture 2.2 as a special case. In fact, the converse also holds:

Theorem 2.5. *Conjecture 2.2 and Conjecture 2.4 are equivalent.*

Proof: See [Moc10, Theorem 2.1]), [BG06, Theorem 14.4.16] or [VF02, Theorem 5.1]. □

3. Proof of Theorem 1.1

Proof: We specialize Conjecture 2.4 to the case $K = \mathbb{Q}$, $X = E$, $d = 1$ and $D = (O)$. Let $P \in E(\mathbb{Q}) \setminus \{O\}$; then we have $\omega_E(D) \cong \mathcal{O}_E(D)$ and hence

$$h_{\omega_E(D)}(P) = \max\left\{\frac{1}{2}\log|a_P|, \log d_P\right\} + \mathcal{O}(1),$$

since the function $P \mapsto \max\left\{\frac{1}{2}\log|a_P|, \log d_P\right\}$ is a Weil height on E with respect to $\mathcal{O}_E(D)$.

In order to compute the logarithmic conductor of P we consider the minimal desingularization $\mathcal{X}$ of the normal model over $\mathrm{Spec}(\mathbb{Z})$ determined by the given Weierstrass equation of E and extend D to $\mathcal{D} \in \mathrm{Div}(\mathcal{X})$ by taking the Zariski closure. Then a prime number p of good reduction satisfies $(\mathcal{P} \,.\, \mathcal{D})_p \neq 0$ if and only if $p \mid d_P$; therefore we have

$$|\log \mathrm{cond}_{\mathcal{X},\mathcal{D}}(P) - \log \mathrm{rad}(d_P)| \leq \sum_{p \text{ bad}} \log p.$$

Hence the functions $P \mapsto \log \mathrm{cond}_{\mathcal{X},\mathcal{D}}(P)$ and $P \mapsto \log \mathrm{rad}(d_P)$ coincide up to a bounded function and Conjecture 2.4 implies

$$\max\left\{\frac{1}{2}\log|a_P|, \log d_P\right\} \leq (1+\varepsilon)\log \mathrm{rad}(d_P) + c.$$

By Theorem 2.5, this finishes the proof of (i).

To prove part (ii), let $\varepsilon > 0$, let $c = c(E,\varepsilon)$ be the corresponding constant from part (i) of the theorem and fix some $\varepsilon' > 0$ such that $\frac{2\varepsilon'}{1-\varepsilon'} < \varepsilon$.

Let $P \in E(\mathbb{Q}) \setminus \{O\}$. Then (i) implies

$$\begin{aligned}\log|u_P| + \log v_P &\leq (1+\varepsilon')\left(\log \mathrm{rad}(u_P) + \log \mathrm{rad}(v_P)\right) + c \\ &\leq (1+\varepsilon')\left(\log|u_P| + \frac{1}{2}\log v_P\right) + c\end{aligned}$$

and hence we conclude

$$\log v_P \leq \frac{2\varepsilon'}{1-\varepsilon'}\log|u_P| + \frac{2c}{1-\varepsilon'},$$

which proves (ii). □

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