Dissipation induced coherence and stochastic resonance of an open two-mode Bose-Einstein condensate

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We discuss the dynamics of a Bose-Einstein condensate in a double-well trap subject to phase noise and particle loss. The phase coherence of a weakly-interacting condensate, experimentally measured via the contrast in an interference experiment, as well as the response to an external driving become maximal for a finite value of the dissipation rate matching the intrinsic time scales of the system. This can be understood as a stochastic resonance of the many-particle system. Even stronger effects are observed when dissipation acts in concurrence with strong inter-particle interactions, restoring the purity of the condensate almost completely and increasing the phase coherence significantly. Our theoretical results are backed by Monte Carlo simulations, which show a good qualitative agreement and provide a microscopic explanation for the observed stochastic resonance effect.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Stochastic resonance (SR) is a strongly surprising, yet very general effect in nonlinear dynamical systems. Against our naive understanding, the response of a system to an external driving can be facilitated if an appropriate amount of noise is added. In fact, the maximum of the response – the stochastic resonance – is found if the timescale of the noise matches an intrinsic time scale of the system. The effect was first described for strongly damped classical systems such as the overdamped particle in a driven double well trap. In this case the noise is strong enough to induce the transition between the wells, whereas it is still weak enough not to randomize the dynamics completely. The particle will then hop to and fro almost deterministically if the average transition time between the wells due to the noise equals half of the driving period [1]. By now, a stochastic resonance has been shown in a variety of systems, an overview can be found in the review articles [2, 3, 4, 5]. In addition to numerous examples in classical dynamics, stochastic resonance has also been found in a variety of quantum systems (see, e.g., [6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11]).

Recently, there has been an increased interest in the effects of dissipation and the possibilities to control these in interacting many-body quantum systems. For instance, the entanglement in a spin chain assumes an SR-like maximum for a finite amount of thermal noise [12]. Methods to attenuate phase noise for an open two-mode BEC were discussed in [13], and the effects of particle loss on the spin squeezing of such a system were analyzed in [14]. Furthermore, it has been shown that dissipative processes can be tailored to prepare arbitrary pure states for quantum computation and strongly correlated states of ultracold atoms [15, 16] or to implement a universal set of quantum gates [17]. Actually, a recent experiment has even proven that strong inelastic collisions may inhibit particle losses and induce strong correlations in a quasi one-dimensional gas of ultracold atoms [18, 19].

In the present paper, we investigate the effects of noise and dissipation for a Bose-Einstein condensate (BEC) in a double-well trap. The essential idea has been introduced in a recent letter [20], and here we extend the discussion to a detailed analysis of the predicted SR-phenomenon. The setup under consideration has been experimentally realized by several groups only in the last few years [21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26]. Ultracold atoms in optical potentials have the enormous advantage that they allow to observe the quantum dynamics of an interacting many-particle system in situ. Thus they serve as excellent model systems, bringing together aspects of nonlinear dynamics, solid-state physics and the theory of open quantum systems. Here we show that the coherence of the two condensate modes assumes a maximum in the fashion of the stochastic resonance effect for a finite dissipation rate, which matches the time scales of the intrinsic dynamics. In this case the particle loss is strong enough to significantly increase the condensate purity, whereas it is still weak enough not to dominate the dynamics completely. Similarly the response to an external driving is increased if a proper amount of dissipation is present. Even more remarkable results are found when dissipation acts in concurrence with strong inter-particle interactions, leading to an almost complete revival of the purity of the BEC. These effects are of considerable strength for realistic parameters and thus should be readily observable in ongoing experiments.

This paper is organized as follows: First, we introduce the theoretical description of the open two-mode Bose-Hubbard system. We discuss the main sources of noise and dissipation and derive the corresponding mean-field approximation of the many-particle system. The result-
ing dynamics for weak inter-particle interactions is analyzed in Sec. III. It is shown that the phase contrast between the two modes assumes an SR-like maximum if the time scales of tunneling and dissipation are matched. This result is explained within the mean-field approximation as well as for the underlying many-particle quantum dynamics with Monte Carlo simulations backing up the approximative results. The response of the open system to an external driving is discussed in Sec. IV. The amplitude of the forced oscillation also shows a pronounced stochastic resonance effect. Sec. IV then investigates the case of a strongly interacting BEC, which is a problem of both, fundamental theoretical interest as well as high experimental relevance. The interplay between interactions and dissipation can restore the purity of the condensate almost completely and significantly increase the phase coherence in comparison with situations where one of the two is weak or missing. This counter-intuitive effect is robust and can be explained by the appearance of novel nonlinear eigenstates.

II. NOISE AND DISSIPATION IN A TRAPPED BEC

The basic setup under consideration is depicted in Fig. 1. Ultracold atoms are confined in a double-well trap that can be realized e.g. by superimposing an optical lattice with an optical dipole trap [21, 22, 23], in a bichromatic optical lattice [24, 25], or on an atom chip [26]. We consider the case where only one mode in each trap is significantly populated, whereas all higher modes contribute to the heat bath (see below). The unitary dynamics of the atoms is then described by the two-mode Bose-Hubbard Hamiltonian [27, 28, 29, 30],

$$\hat{H} = -J \left( \hat{a}^\dagger_1 \hat{a}_2 + \hat{a}^\dagger_2 \hat{a}_1 \right) + \epsilon_2 \hat{n}_2 + \epsilon_1 \hat{n}_1 + \frac{U}{2} \left( \hat{n}_1(\hat{n}_1 - 1) + \hat{n}_2(\hat{n}_2 - 1) \right),$$

where $\hat{a}_j$ and $\hat{a}^\dagger_j$ are the bosonic annihilation and creation operators in mode $j$ and $\hat{n}_j = \hat{a}^\dagger_j \hat{a}_j$ is the corresponding number operator. Furthermore, $J$ denotes the tunneling matrix element between the wells, $U$ the interaction strength and $\epsilon_j$ the on-site energy of the $j$th well. We set $\hbar = 1$, thus measuring all energies in frequency units.

In order to clarify the algebraic structure of the model and to analyze the dynamics in the Bloch representation we introduce the collective operators

$$\hat{L}_x = \frac{1}{2} \left( \hat{a}^\dagger_1 \hat{a}_2 + \hat{a}^\dagger_2 \hat{a}_1 \right),$$
$$\hat{L}_y = \frac{i}{2} \left( \hat{a}^\dagger_1 \hat{a}_2 - \hat{a}^\dagger_2 \hat{a}_1 \right),$$
$$\hat{L}_z = \frac{1}{2} \left( \hat{a}^\dagger_1 \hat{a}_2 - \hat{a}^\dagger_2 \hat{a}_1 \right),$$

which form an angular momentum algebra su(2) with quantum number $\ell = N/2$ [27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32], where $N$ is the actual particle number. The Hamiltonian then can be rewritten as

$$\hat{H} = -2J \hat{L}_x + 2\epsilon \hat{L}_z + U \hat{\hat{L}}^2_x$$

up to terms only depending on the total number of atoms. Here, $\epsilon = \epsilon_2 - \epsilon_1$ denotes the difference of the on-site energies of the two wells.

A model for noise and dissipation in a deep trapping potential has been derived by Anglin [33] and later extended by Ruostekoski and Walls [34] to the case of two weakly coupled modes. The dynamics is then given by the master equation

$$\dot{\rho} = -i [\hat{H}, \rho] - \frac{\gamma_a}{2} \sum_{j=1,2} \left( \hat{n}_j \rho \hat{n}_j - \hat{n}_j \hat{n}_j \rho - \rho \hat{n}_j \hat{n}_j \right) + \gamma_a \sum_{j=1,2; \pm} \left( \rho \hat{C}_j \pm \hat{C}_j \pm \hat{C}_j \pm \rho \hat{C}_j \pm \hat{C}_j \pm \hat{C}_j \pm \right)$$

with the Lindblad operators

$$\hat{C}_{j+} = \hat{a}_j^\dagger$$
$$\hat{C}_{j-} = e^{3/2(\epsilon_j - \mu + U \hat{n}_j)} \hat{a}_j,$$

describing growth and depletion of the condensate.

Let us briefly discuss the effects of the noise and dissipation terms. The second term $\sim \gamma_p$ in Eqn. (1) describes phase noise due to elastic collisions with the background gas atoms. It is usually the dominating contribution, effectively heating the system, but leaving the total particle number invariant. If only phase noise is present, the system relaxes to an equilibrium state where all coherences are lost and all Dicke states $|n_1, N - n_1\rangle \sim \hat{a}_{1n_1}^\dagger \hat{a}_{1N-n_1}^\dagger |0, 0\rangle$ are equally populated

$$\langle n_1, N - n_1 | \rho | n'_1, N - n'_1 \rangle = \frac{1}{N+1} \delta_{n_1, n'_1},$$

as long as $J \neq 0$ [35, 36]. This corresponds to a thermal state of infinite temperature with $\langle \hat{L} \rangle = 0$. The remaining terms $\sim \gamma_a$ in the master equation (1) describe amplitude noise, i.e. the growth and depletion of the condensate due to inelastic collisions with the background.
gas. In contrast to phase noise, amplitude noise heats and cools the system. If both amplitude and phase noise are present, the system will relax to the proper thermal state with a density operator \( \hat{\rho} \propto \exp(-\beta(H - \mu N)) \).

In current experiments amplitude noise and dissipation is usually extremely weak in comparison to phase noise, if it is not introduced artificially as for example by forced evaporative cooling during the preparation of the BEC. For example, phase noise damps Josephson oscillations on a timescale of a few hundred milliseconds in the experiments, while less than 10% of the atoms are lost during a 30s experiment. This is much too weak to produce the effects discussed in the present paper. In contrast, a strong and tunable source of dissipation can be implemented artificially by shining a resonant laser beam onto the trap, that removes atoms with the site-dependent rates \( \gamma_{aj} \) from the two wells \( j = 1, 2 \). In magnetic trapping potentials, this can also be achieved by a forced rf-transition to an untrapped magnetic substate. Non-trivial effects of dissipation such as the stochastic resonance discussed below require strongly biased loss rates, i.e. \( \gamma_{a1} \neq \gamma_{a2} \). For a laser beam focused on one of the wells an asymmetry of \( f_a = (\gamma_{a2} - \gamma_{a1})/(\gamma_{a2} + \gamma_{a1}) = 0.5 \) should be feasible. The master equation description of both, phase noise and particle loss, is well established and routinely used in the context of photon fields. In the following we will thus consider the dynamics generated by the master equation

\[
\dot{\hat{\rho}} = -i[\hat{H}, \hat{\rho}] - \frac{\gamma_{a2}}{2} \sum_{j=1,2} (\hat{a}_j^\dagger \hat{a}_j \hat{\rho} + \hat{\rho} \hat{a}_j^\dagger \hat{a}_j - 2 \hat{a}_j \hat{\rho} \hat{a}_j^\dagger) - \frac{1}{2} \sum_{j=1,2} \gamma_{aj} (\hat{a}_j^\dagger \hat{a}_j \hat{\rho} + \hat{\rho} \hat{a}_j^\dagger \hat{a}_j - 2 \hat{a}_j \hat{\rho} \hat{a}_j^\dagger). \tag{7}
\]

The macroscopic dynamics of the atomic cloud is to a very good approximation described by a mean-field approximation, considering only the expectation values \( s_j(t) = \langle \hat{\rho} \rangle \langle \hat{L}_j \rangle(t) \rangle \) of the angular momentum operators and the particle number \( n(t) = \langle \hat{N} \rangle \). The evolution equations for the Bloch vector \( \mathbf{s} = (s_x, s_y, s_z) \) are then calculated starting from the Master equation via \( \dot{s}_j = \text{tr}(\hat{L}_j \hat{\rho}) \) with the exact result (cf. [38])

\[
\begin{align*}
\dot{s}_x &= -2s_y - U(s_y s_z + \Delta_{xz}) - T_2^{-1} s_x, \\
\dot{s}_y &= 2J s_z + 2s_x + U(s_x s_z + \Delta_{xz}) - T_2^{-1} s_y, \\
\dot{s}_z &= -2J s_y - T_1^{-1} s_z - T_1^{-1} f_a n, \\
\dot{n} &= -T_1^{-1} n - T_1^{-1} f_a s_z,
\end{align*}
\tag{8}
\]

where we have defined the transversal and longitudinal damping times by

\[
T_1^{-1} = (\gamma_{a1} + \gamma_{a2})/2 \quad \text{and} \quad T_2^{-1} = \gamma_p + T_1^{-1}. \tag{9}
\]

These equations of motion resemble the celebrated Bloch equations in nuclear magnetic resonance, with some subtle but nevertheless important differences. The longitudinal relaxation is now associated with particle loss and, more important, the dynamics is substantially altered by the \( U \)-dependent interaction term.

The exact equations of motion still include the covariances

\[
\Delta_{jk} = \langle \hat{L}_j \hat{L}_k + \hat{L}_k \hat{L}_j \rangle - 2\langle \hat{L}_j \rangle \langle \hat{L}_k \rangle. \tag{10}
\]

The celebrated mean-field description is now obtained by approximating the second order moments by products of expectation values such that \( \Delta_{jk} \approx 0 \). This truncation is valid in the macroscopic limit of large particle numbers, since the covariances vanish as \( 1/n \) if the many particle quantum state is close to a pure BEC.

In the following, we will show that a finite amount of dissipation induces a maximum of the coherence which can be understood as a stochastic resonance effect. In this discussion we have to distinguish between two different kinds of coherence, which will both be considered in the following. First of all we consider the phase coherence between the two wells, which is measured by the average contrast in interference experiments as described in [21, 22, 23] and given by

\[
\alpha(t) = \frac{2\langle \hat{a}^\dagger_1 \hat{a}^\dagger_2 \rangle}{\langle \hat{a}^\dagger_1 \rangle \langle \hat{a}^\dagger_2 \rangle} = \frac{\sqrt{s_x(t)^2 + s_y(t)^2}}{n(t)}. \tag{11}
\]

Secondly, we will analyze how close the many-particle quantum state is to a pure Bose-Einstein condensate. This property is quantified by the purity

\[
p = 2 \text{tr}(\hat{\rho}^2_{\text{red}}) - 1 \tag{12}
\]

of the reduced single-particle density matrix [29, 30, 31, 41]

\[
\hat{\rho}_{\text{red}} = \frac{1}{N} \left( \frac{\langle \hat{a}^\dagger_1 \hat{a}_1 \rangle}{\langle \hat{a}^\dagger_2 \hat{a}_1 \rangle} \right). \tag{13}
\]

One can easily show that the purity is related to the Bloch vector \( \mathbf{s} \) by \( p = |\mathbf{s}|^2/n^2 \). A pure BEC, corresponding to a product state, is, of course, characterized by \( p = 1 \).

\section{III. DISSIPATION INDUCED COHERENCE IN A WEAKLY-INTERACTING BEC}

In this section, we show that a proper amount of dissipation can indeed increase the phase coherence of a two-mode BEC similar to the stochastic resonance effect. For simplicity, we start with the linear case \( U = 0 \), where the mean-field equations of motion for the expectation values are exact. The linear equations resemble the Bloch equations for driven nuclear spins in the rotating wave approximation, which are known to show a pronounced stochastic resonance effect [38]. The amplitude of forced oscillations of the spins given by \( s_y \) assumes a maximum for a finite value of the relaxation rates \( T_1^{-1} \) and \( T_2^{-1} \), provided these are coupled. For the two-mode
BEC considered here this is automatically the case as given by Eqn. (9). Thus we also expect a maximum of the steady state value of the phase coherence \( \alpha \) for a finite value of \( T_1^{-1} \).

Let us now determine the steady state value of the contrast \( \alpha \) which quantifies the phase coherence of the two wells, as a function of the system parameters and the relaxation rates. Obviously, the only steady state in the strict sense is given by \( s = 0 \) and \( n = 0 \), corresponding to a completely empty trap. However, the system rapidly relaxes to a quasi-steady state where the internal dynamics is completely frozen out and all components of the Bloch vector and the particle number decay at the same rate:

\[
s(t) = s_0 e^{-\kappa t}, \quad n(t) = n_0 e^{-\kappa t}.
\]

Substituting this ansatz into the equations of motion \( \mathbf{S} \), the quasi-steady state is determined by the eigenvalue equation

\[
\mathbf{M} \begin{pmatrix} s_x(0) \\ s_y(0) \\ s_z(0) \\ n_0 \end{pmatrix} = \kappa \begin{pmatrix} s_x(0) \\ s_y(0) \\ s_z(0) \\ n_0 \end{pmatrix},
\]

with the matrix

\[
\mathbf{M} = \begin{pmatrix}
T_2^{-1} & 2\epsilon & 0 & 0 \\
-2\epsilon & T_2^{-1} & -2J & 0 \\
0 & 2J & T_1^{-1} & f_a T_1^{-1} \\
0 & 0 & f_a T_1^{-1} & T_1^{-1}
\end{pmatrix},
\]

which is readily solved numerically.

Fig. 2 shows the resulting values of the contrast \( \alpha \) as a function of the dissipation rate \( T_1^{-1} \) and the tunneling rate \( J \) for \( U = \epsilon = 0 \) and \( \gamma_p = 5 \text{s}^{-1} \). For a fixed value of one of the parameters, say \( J \), one observes a typical SR-like maximum of the contrast for a finite value of the dissipation rate \( 1/T_1 \) as shown in part (b) of the figure. In particular, the contrast is maximal if the time scales of the tunneling and the dissipation are matched according to

\[
4J^2 \approx f_a^2 T_1^{-2} + f_a \gamma_p T_1^{-1}.
\]

Furthermore, the contrast \( \alpha(J) \) shows a similar maximum for a finite value of the tunneling rate \( J \) when the dissipation rate is fixed as shown in Fig. 2 (c). Contrary to our intuition this shows that an increase of the coupling of two modes can indeed reduce their phase coherence.

In the special case \( \epsilon = 0 \), illustrated in Fig. 2, one can solve the eigenvalue equation \( \mathbf{M} \) exactly. In this case one has \( s_x = 0 \) and the contrast \( \alpha \) is related to the eigenvalue \( \kappa \) by

\[
\alpha = \frac{2J(1 - \kappa)}{f_a T_1^{-1}(2 - \kappa)}.
\]

Evaluating the roots of the characteristic polynomial to determine \( \kappa \) leads to an algebraic equation of third order which can be solved analytically. The resulting expressions are quite lengthy, but the limits for small and large values of the tunneling rate are readily obtained as

\[
\alpha \approx \frac{2J}{f_a T_1^{-1} - (1 - f_a)T_1^{-1}} \quad \text{for} \quad J \ll T_1^{-1},
\]

\[
\alpha \approx \frac{f_a T_1^{-1}}{2J} \quad \text{for} \quad J \gg T_1^{-1}.
\]

These approximations are plotted as dashed red lines in Fig. 2 (c). Their intersection given by (17) gives a very good approximation for the position of the SR-like maximum of the contrast \( \alpha(J) \).

An important experimental issue is the question whether the quasi-steady state is reached fast enough, such that the typical SR-like curve of the contrast as shown in Fig. 2 can be observed while still enough atoms are left in the trap. To answer this question, we integrate the equations of motion \( \mathbf{S} \) starting from a pure BEC with \( s(0)/n(0) = (\sqrt{3}/2, 0, 1/2) \) and \( n(0) = 100 \) particles. Fig. 3 (a) shows the relaxation of the contrast for \( J = 4 \text{s}^{-1} \) and \( T_1 = 1 \text{s} \). The steady state value is nearly reached after \( t = 1 \text{s} \), when still 40% of the atoms are left in the trap. Fig. 3 (b) shows the development of the contrast \( \alpha(J) \) in time. It is observed that the character-
istic SR-like maximum is already well developed after 1 second, where roughly half of the atoms are lost. Thus we conclude that the SR-like maximum of the contrast should be observable in ongoing experiments.

The stochastic resonance effect introduced above is robust and generally not altered by changes of the system parameters or in the presence of weak inter-particle interactions. For instance, a change of the bias $\epsilon$ of the on-site energies of the two wells preserves the general shape of $\alpha(1/T_1, J)$ shown in Fig. 3 and especially the existence of a pronounced SR-like maximum. At most, the function $\alpha(1/T_1, J)$ is stretched, shifting the position of the SR-like maximum. This shift is illustrated in Fig. 3 (a) where we have plotted the contrast as a function of $J$ for the dissipation rate $T_1^{-1} = 2 s^{-1}$ and different values of $\epsilon$. Thus, this effect provides a useful tool to shift the maximum to values of $J$, which are easier accessible in ongoing experiments.

Similarly, the position of the maximum of the coherence $\alpha(J)$ is shifted in the presence of weak inter-particle interactions. An interacting BEC will usually not show a simple exponential decay of the form (14) because the instantaneous decay rate depends on the effective interaction strength $U n(t)$, which also decreases $[42, 43, 44]$. However, the discussion of quasi-steady states and instantaneous decay rates is still useful if the decay is weak. In this case the system can follow the quasi-steady states adiabatically and the decay of the population is given by

$$\frac{dn(t)}{dt} = -\kappa(n(t))n(t)$$

and

$$\frac{ds(t)}{dt} = -\kappa(n(t))s(t)$$

(20)

in good approximation. Substituting this ansatz into the equations of motion (15) yields four coupled nonlinear algebraic equations, which can be disentangled with a little algebra. For a given number of particles $n$, the instantaneous decay rate $\kappa$ is obtained by solving the fourth order algebraic equation

$$[(\kappa - T_2^{-1})^2 + (U n)^2(\kappa - T_1^{-1})^2] \left[(\kappa - T_1^{-1})^2 - f_a T_1^{-2}\right] + 4 J^2 f_a^2 T_1^{-2}(\kappa - T_1^{-1})(\kappa - T_2^{-1}) = 0. \quad (21)$$

The Bloch vector for the corresponding quasi-steady state is then given by

$$s_{x0} = \frac{\kappa - T_1^{-1}(\kappa - T_1^{-1})^2 - f_a^2 T_1^{-2}}{\kappa - T_2^{-1} - 2 J f_a^2 T_1^{-2}} U n^2$$

$$s_{y0} = \frac{(\kappa - T_1^{-1})^2 - f_a^2 T_1^{-2}}{2 J f_a T_1^{-1}} n$$

$$s_{z0} = \frac{\kappa - T_1^{-1}}{f_a T_1^{-1}}.$$  

(22)

The fourth order equation (21) yields four solutions for the decay rate $\kappa$. Discarding unphysical values, one finds either one or three quasi-steady states. This appearance of novel nonlinear stationary states has been discussed in detail in the context of nonlinear Landau-Zener tunneling $[45, 46, 47, 48]$ and nonlinear transport $[49, 50]$.

The resulting contrast $\alpha(J)$ in a quasi-steady state is shown in Fig. 3 (b) for different values of the effective
interaction constant \( g = Un \). One observes that the position of the SR-like maximum of the contrast is shifted to larger values of the tunneling rate, while the height remains unchanged. Furthermore the shape of the stochastic resonance curve \( \alpha(J) \) is altered, becoming flatter for \( J < J_{\text{max}} \) and steeper for \( J > J_{\text{max}} \). For even larger values of the interaction constant \( Un \) one finds a bifurcation into three distinct quasi-steady states as introduced above. This case will be discussed in detail in Sec. V.

The reasons for the occurrence of an SR-like maximum of the contrast in terms of the underlying many-particle dynamics are illustrated in Fig. 5. To obtain these results we have simulated the dynamics generated by the Master equation (20) using the Monte Carlo wave function (MCWF) method [51, 52, 53] averaging over 100 quantum trajectories. For a given particle number \( n \), the probabilities \( P \) to obtain the population imbalance \( s_z \) and the relative phase \( \phi \) in a projective measurement are thereby given by

\[
P(s_z) = \text{tr}(s_z | \rho_0 \rangle \langle s_z |) \quad \text{and} \quad P(\phi) = \text{tr}(\phi | \rho_0 \rangle \langle \phi |),
\]

where the \( \hat{L}_z \) eigenstates

\[
|s_z\rangle = |n/2 - s_z, n/2 + s_z\rangle \quad \text{with} \quad s_z = -n/2, -n/2 + 1, \ldots , n/2
\]

and the phase eigenstates

\[
|\phi\rangle := \frac{1}{\sqrt{n + 1}} \sum_{s_z = -n/2}^{+n/2} e^{i\phi s_z} |s_z\rangle \quad \text{with} \quad \phi = 0, 2\pi \frac{1}{n + 1}, \ldots, 2\pi \frac{n}{n + 1}
\]

each form a complete basis.

Part (a) of Fig. 5 shows a histogram of the probabilities to observe the relative population imbalance \( s_z/n \) and the relative phase \( \phi \) in a single experimental run for three different values of the tunneling rate \( J \) after the system has relaxed to the quasi-steady state. With increasing \( J \), the atoms are distributed more equally between the two wells so that the single shot contrast increases. Within the mean-field description this is reflected by an increase of \( \sqrt{s_z^2 + s_y^2}/|s| \) at the expense of \( |s_z|/|s| \) (cf. part (b) of the figure). However, this effect also makes the system more vulnerable to phase noise so that the relative phase of the two modes becomes more and more random and \( |s|/n \) decreases. The average contrast (11) then assumes a maximum for intermediate values of \( J \) as shown in part (b) of the figure.

IV. STOCHASTIC RESONANCE OF A DRIVEN BEC

So far we have demonstrated a stochastic resonance of the contrast for a BEC in a static double-well trap with biased particle losses. In the following we will show that the system’s response to a weak external driving also assumes a maximum for a finite dissipation rate – an effect which is conceptually closer to the common interpretation of stochastic resonance. From a mathematical viewpoint, however, one can rather relate the undriven case discussed above to the stochastic resonance effect in nuclear magnetic resonance [39]. In fact, the Bloch equations for the magnetization have constant coefficients in the rotating wave approximation, and should thus be compared to the undriven equations of motion (8).

Let us consider the response of the system to a weak sinusoidal driving of the tunneling rate

\[
J(t) = J_0 + J_1 \cos(\omega t)
\]

at the resonance frequency \( \omega = \sqrt{J_0^2 + \epsilon^2} \), while the amplitude of the driving is small and fixed as \( J_1/J_0 = 10\% \).
A variation of $J$ can be realized in a quite simple way in an optical setup [21, 22, 23], where the tunneling barrier between the two wells is given by an optical lattice formed by two counter-propagating laser beams. A variation of the tunneling rate $\epsilon$ results directly in a variation of the tunneling rate $J$. Fig. 6 shows the resulting dynamics for $T_1 = 0.5$ s and three different values of $J_0$ and $U = 0$. After a short transient period, the relative population imbalance $s(t)/n(t)$ oscillates approximately sinusoidally. One clearly observes that the response, i.e. the amplitude of the forced oscillations, assumes a maximum for intermediate values of $J_0$ matching the external time scale of the dissipation given by $T_1^{-1}$.

For a detailed quantitative analysis of this stochastic resonance effect, we evaluate the amplitude of the oscillation based on a linear response argument for $U = 0$. In the following, we will use a complex notation for notational convenience, while only the real part is physically significant. The equations of motion (8) are then rewritten in matrix form as

$$\frac{d}{dt} \begin{pmatrix} s \\ n \end{pmatrix} = (M_0 + M_1 e^{i\omega t}) \begin{pmatrix} s \\ n \end{pmatrix}. \tag{27}$$

The matrices $M_0$ and $M_1$ are defined by

$$M_0 = \begin{pmatrix} T_1^{-1} & 2\epsilon_0 & 0 & 0 \\ -2\epsilon_0 & T_1^{-1} & -2J_0 & 0 \\ 0 & 2J_0 & T_1^{-1} & f_s T_1^{-1} \\ 0 & 0 & f_s T_1^{-1} & T_1^{-1} \end{pmatrix} \tag{28}$$

and

$$M_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -2J_1 & 0 \\ 0 & 2J_1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}. \tag{29}$$

The amplitude of the oscillations, i.e. the system response, is thus directly given by $s_1/n_0$. Substituting this ansatz in the equations of motion and dividing by $e^{-\kappa t}$ yields

$$-\kappa \begin{pmatrix} s_0 \\ n_0 \end{pmatrix} + (i\omega - \kappa) \begin{pmatrix} s_1 \\ n_1 \end{pmatrix} e^{i\omega t}$$

$$= \left[ M_0 + M_1 e^{i\omega t} \right] \times \left[ \begin{pmatrix} s_0 \\ n_0 \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} s_0 \\ n_0 \end{pmatrix} e^{i\omega t} \right]. \tag{31}$$

Neglecting the higher order terms $\sim e^{2i\omega t}$ in a linear response approximation and dividing Eqn. (31) in the time-dependent and the time-independent parts yields the equations

$$[-M_0 + (i\omega - \kappa) I] \begin{pmatrix} s_1 \\ n_1 \end{pmatrix} = M_1 \begin{pmatrix} s_0 \\ n_0 \end{pmatrix} \tag{32}$$

and (15), which determine $s_1$ and $n_1$. The resulting values of the system response are shown in Fig. 7.
with oscillations within the linear response theory, however, as above we can evaluate the amplitude of the forced oscillations within the linear response theory. The remaining parameters are \( U = 0, \epsilon_1 = 1 \text{s}^{-1}, \gamma_p = 5 \text{s}^{-1}. \)

observes the characteristic signatures of a stochastic resonance: If one of the two parameters \( J_0 \) and \( T_1 \) is fixed, the response assumes a maximum for a finite value of the remaining parameter as shown in part (b) and (c) of the figure. Part (a) shows that this maximum is assumed if the external \( (T_1^{-1}) \) and the internal \( (J_0) \) timescale are matched similar to the undriven case illustrated in Fig. 2. Let us stress that this scenario is again not fundamentally altered in the case of weak interactions as numerically tested but not shown here.

A different situation arises if the energy bias is driven instead of the tunneling rate \( J \) such that

\[
\epsilon(t) = \epsilon_1 \cos(\omega t).
\]

As above we can evaluate the amplitude of the forced oscillations within the linear response theory, however with

\[
M_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -2\epsilon_1 & 0 & 0 \\ 2\epsilon_1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.
\]

Solving the equations (32) and (13) then yields \( s_{1y} = s_{1z} = 0. \) Remarkably, a driving of the energy bias does not affect the population imbalance in leading order. Only the first component of the Bloch vector \( s_x \), and thus also the contrast \( \alpha \) is strongly affected.

This is illustrated in Fig. 8(a) and (b) where the relative population imbalance \( s_x(t)/n(t) \) and the first component of the Bloch vector \( s_x(t)/n(t) \) are plotted for \( J_0 = 2 \text{s}^{-1}, T_1^{-1} = 4 \text{s}^{-1} \) and \( \epsilon_1 = 1 \text{s}^{-1}. \) The coherence oscillates strongly at the fundamental frequency \( \omega \), while the population imbalance oscillates only with a tiny amplitude at the second harmonic frequency \( 2\omega. \) The oscillation amplitude of the coherence then again shows the familiar SR-like dependence on the parameters \( J_0 \) and \( T_1 \) as illustrated in Fig. 8(c).

V. DISSIPATION INDUCED COHERENCE IN A STRONGLY-INTERACTING BEC

Let us finally discuss the case of strong interactions, which is experimentally most relevant and theoretically most profound. An example for the dynamics of a strongly-interacting BEC is shown in Fig. 9 (a) for an initially pure BEC with \( s_z = n/2 \) and \( n(0) = 100 \) particles. The results of a MCWF simulation averaged over 100 runs are plotted as a thin solid line in (a) and (c), while the mean-field results are plotted as a thick line in (a) and (b). Note that the mean-field approximation is exact in case (b), whereas it breaks down in case (c) and is thus not shown (cf. [24, 32]).
more importantly, due to the interactions. This is an effect well-known from the non-dissipative system and can be attributed to a dynamical instability which also leads to the breakdown of the mean-field approximation [29, 30, 32, 54]. However, a surprising effect is found at intermediate times: The purity $p$ is restored almost completely and the contrast $\alpha$ is slightly increasing.

Most interestingly, the observed values of the purity and the coherence are much larger than in the cases where one of the two effects – interactions and dissipation – is missing. The time evolution for these two cases are also shown in Fig. 9. In the case of no interactions both purity and coherence rapidly drop to values of almost zero and do not revive. This case has been discussed in detail in Sec. III. In the interacting case without dissipation one observes regular revivals, which are artifacts of the small particle number in the simulation and become less pronounced with increasing particle number. Apart from these occasional revivals, however, the purity and the coherence relax to values which are much smaller than in the occasional revivals, however, the purity and the pronounced with increasing particle number. Apart from small particle number in the simulation and become less one observes regular revivals, which are artifacts of the effects of particle loss, we have plotted the 'classical' semiclassical phase space picture. In order to visualize the short-time dynamics of the Bloch vector and not in the decay of the particle number on longer time scales, this is an appropriate treatment. Moreover, in the quantum jump picture this approximation corresponds to the periods of constant particle number between two loss processes [58, 61, 62].

Parts (a) and (b) of the figure show the phase space structure without dissipation and $U n = 0$ and $U n = 4 J$, respectively. One observes the familiar self-trapping bifurcation of the fixed points for $U n > 2 J$ [28, 29]. The phase space structure is significantly altered in the presence of particle loss as shown in part (c). The most important consequence is the occurrence of an attractive and a repulsive fixed point instead of the elliptic fixed points in the dissipation-free case [28].

In the course of the time the system will thus relax to the attractive stationary state illustrated Fig. 10 (c). A many-particle quantum state can now be represented by a quasi-distribution function on this classical phase space, for instance the Husimi Q-function [51, 52]. In this picture, a pure BEC is represented by a maximally localized distribution function and the loss of purity corresponds to a broadening or distortion of the Q-function. The existence of an attractive fixed point clearly leads to the contraction of a phase space distribution function and thus to a re-purification of the many-particle quantum state as observed in Fig. 10 (a).

However, this nonlinear stationary state exists only as long as the particle number exceeds a critical value given
VI. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

In summary, we have shown that the coherence properties of a weakly and, in particular, also of a strongly interacting Bose-Einstein condensate in a double-well trap can be controlled by engineering the system’s parameters and dissipation simultaneously. Surprisingly, dissipation can be used to stimulate coherence in the system, rather than – as may be expected – solely reduce it.

In the weakly interacting case, the contrast of the quasi-steady state of the system assumes a maximum for a finite value of the tunneling and the dissipation rate. This stochastic resonance effect is robust against parameter variations. A Monte Carlo wave function simulation of the full many-body quantum dynamics shows a good agreement to the mean-field description and provides a microscopic explanation of the observed effect. Moreover, a similar effect can be observed in the case where either the tunneling or the energy bias is driven, which is conceptually even closer to the common interpretation of stochastic resonance.

In the last section, we have studied the effects of dissipation on the strongly interacting system. An important conclusion is that the interplay of interactions and dissipation can drive the system to a state of maximum coherence, while both processes alone usually lead to a loss of coherence. We show that this effect can be understood from the appearance of an attractive fixed point in the mean-field dynamics reflecting the metastable behaviour of the many-particle system.

Since the double-well BEC is nowadays routinely realized with nearly perfect control on atom-atom interactions and external potentials [21, 22, 23], we hope for an experimental verification of the predicted stochastic resonance effect. An interesting perspective is to lift our results to extended dissipative setups, as e.g. studied in [55, 56]. Besides the general idea of controlling many-body dynamics [57], one may also investigate the possibility of dynamically engineering entanglement in similar systems, as to some extend possible in state-of-the-art experiments [58].

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