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# Spectral Properties of Operators in C-Algebras: A Functional Analytic Approach

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#### Abstract

The study of spectral properties of operators in C\*-algebras occupies a central position in modern functional analysis, bridging pure mathematics with quantum physics, noncommutative geometry, and operator algebras. Spectral theory provides an essential framework for analyzing linear operators, enabling the classification of operators, the identification of their functional calculus, and the understanding of their stability under perturbations. This study presents a functional analytic approach to spectral properties of operators in C\*algebras, emphasizing the interplay between algebraic structures, topological properties, and operator theory. The research begins with a rigorous exploration of the Gelfand-Naimark theorem, which establishes the representation of commutative C\*-algebras as algebras of continuous functions. Extending this foundation, the study delves into spectral radius formulas, spectral mapping theorems, and the behavior of spectra under \*homomorphisms. Special attention is given to normal, self-adjoint, and unitary operators, where spectral theory exhibits particularly rich structure. Furthermore, we explore approximate point spectra, essential spectra, and resolvent sets, highlighting their roles in functional calculus and stability analysis. A functional analytic perspective enables a deeper investigation into how C\*-algebras encode operator properties beyond Hilbert space formulations. Applications include the analysis of bounded and unbounded operators, compact perturbations, and connections to Fredholm theory. Recent developments in noncommutative geometry and quantum statistical mechanics are also considered, where spectral properties provide both theoretical and computational insight. The study adopts a mixed methodology, combining rigorous theoretical exposition with illustrative examples drawn from functional models, Toeplitz operators, and representations of C\*-algebras. This approach underscores the dual role of spectral theory as both an abstract algebraic tool and a concrete analytic method applicable to physical systems.

**Keywords**: C\*-algebra, operator theory, spectral theory, functional analysis, resolvent, functional calculus, noncommutative geometry.

#### I. Introduction

The development of spectral theory within the framework of C\*-algebras has been one of the most influential achievements of modern mathematics, shaping diverse areas such as operator algebras, harmonic analysis, quantum mechanics, and noncommutative geometry. At the heart of this discipline lies the attempt to generalize the classical theory of spectra of bounded linear operators on Hilbert spaces into an algebraic framework that unifies analytic, algebraic, and geometric aspects. The intrinsic richness of C\*-algebras arises from their dual role as both topological algebras and operator-theoretic structures, making them ideal objects to study spectral phenomena.

The origin of C\*-algebraic spectral theory can be traced to early 20th-century work on functional analysis by Hilbert, Banach, and von Neumann, culminating in Gelfand's spectral theory for commutative Banach algebras. Gelfand demonstrated that every commutative unital C\*-algebra is isometrically \*-isomorphic to the algebra of continuous functions on a compact Hausdorff space [1]. This result, known as the Gelfand-Naimark theorem, provides the foundational bridge between algebraic and topological viewpoints. For commutative algebras, the spectrum of an element corresponds to the set of values taken by the associated continuous function,

echoing classical eigenvalue theory. In the noncommutative setting, the spectrum plays a more subtle role, retaining much of the classical structure while introducing profound new complexities [2].

The motivation to study spectral properties of operators in C\*-algebras is manifold. In operator theory, the spectrum provides critical information about stability, invertibility, and asymptotic behavior of operators. In physics, particularly in quantum mechanics, observables are represented by self-adjoint operators whose spectra correspond to possible measurement outcomes [3]. In noncommutative geometry, pioneered by Alain Connes, spectral triples generalize Riemannian geometry to settings where coordinate functions are replaced by noncommutative operators [4]. These perspectives collectively demonstrate the centrality of spectral properties in both pure and applied mathematics.

The spectral radius formula illustrates one of the key strengths of the  $C^*$ -algebra framework. For any element aaa of a  $C^*$ -algebra, the spectral radius r(a)r(a)r(a) satisfies:

$$r(a) = \lim_{n \to \infty} ||a^n||^{1/n},$$

a relation that not only generalizes classical matrix theory but also serves as a fundamental tool for analyzing stability of operators [5]. The spectral mapping theorem further connects algebraic functions of operators to their spectra, a crucial aspect for functional calculus. These results enable us to define continuous, holomorphic, and Borel functional calculi, which extend polynomial approximation into highly general operator-theoretic frameworks [6].

Within the broader context of operator algebras, different classes of operators exhibit unique spectral behavior. For self-adjoint operators, spectra are subsets of the real line, while unitary operators have spectra lying on the unit circle. Normal operators, which commute with their adjoints, admit diagonalization theorems that generalize the spectral theorem for bounded operators on Hilbert spaces [7]. In contrast, non-normal operators display more complicated spectral structures, including approximate point spectra, residual spectra, and essential spectra. These distinctions highlight the versatility and necessity of spectral analysis in various operator settings.

The role of *C-homomorphisms\** in spectral theory is another profound feature. Spectra behave predictably under homomorphisms, making it possible to transfer spectral information between algebras. For example, if  $\pi$  is a -representation of a C-algebra A on a Hilbert space H, then  $\sigma(\pi(a)) \subseteq \sigma(a)$ . Such properties underpin the functional analytic robustness of C-algebraic spectral theory [8].

Applications extend beyond mathematics into quantum statistical mechanics, where the spectral decomposition of Hamiltonians determines thermodynamic behavior [9], and into signal processing, where Toeplitz operators and Wiener–Hopf algebras model spectral properties of time series and filters [10]. In recent years, noncommutative topology and K-theory have also drawn heavily on operator spectra to study invariants of C\*-algebras [11].

Despite these advances, significant challenges remain. Understanding the behavior of spectra under perturbations, characterizing essential spectra for unbounded operators, and extending spectral theorems into broader non-self-adjoint contexts continue to drive research [12]. Moreover, computational methods for spectral approximation in infinite-dimensional settings remain a fertile area of investigation, with growing interest from applied mathematics and computational physics communities.

This study adopts a functional analytic approach to the spectral properties of operators in C\*-algebras. It begins with a comprehensive literature review, synthesizing foundational contributions and recent advances. The methodology section develops theoretical tools, including the Gelfand transform, spectral radius formula, and functional calculus. The results and discussion section applies these tools to specific operator classes, illustrating their implications with examples from Toeplitz operators, compact perturbations, and representations of noncommutative algebras. The conclusion highlights the significance of these findings and identifies potential applications in emerging areas such as quantum computation and noncommutative geometry.

Through this integrated study, we aim to provide a clear and rigorous account of spectral theory within C\*-algebras, illuminating its structural foundations, analytic depth, and broad applications.

#### II. Literature Review

The roots of spectral theory lie in the works of Hilbert and Banach, who formalized the study of operators on Hilbert and Banach spaces. Hilbert's exploration of integral equations at the turn of the 20th century laid the groundwork for the notion of eigenvalues and spectral decomposition [13]. Banach's seminal text *Théorie des opérations linéaires* introduced Banach algebras, providing the framework for analyzing spectra of bounded operators [14].

The first comprehensive algebraic treatment of spectra came with Gelfand's theory of commutative Banach algebras. In his 1941 studies, Gelfand established the now classical spectral radius formula and functional calculus for commutative algebras [15]. Soon after, the Gelfand–Naimark theorem [1] demonstrated that every commutative unital C\*-algebra is isometrically \*-isomorphic to an algebra of continuous functions on a compact

Hausdorff space. This identification not only grounded spectral theory in topology but also provided a bridge to operator theory.

The early works of von Neumann [3] complemented this framework by introducing operator algebras and the notion of von Neumann algebras (or W\*-algebras), which extended the operator-theoretic approach to infinite-dimensional settings. His development of the spectral theorem for self-adjoint operators gave spectral theory its central role in quantum mechanics.

The 1950s–1980s witnessed a rapid expansion of spectral theory as mathematicians sought to understand spectra in the noncommutative setting. The works of Dixmier [16] and Sakai [17] formalized the theory of C\*-and von Neumann algebras, laying out the structural properties necessary for advanced spectral analysis.

One of the central achievements of this period was the generalization of the spectral theorem. Halmos [7] provided expository clarity on the spectral multiplicity theory for normal operators, while Akhiezer and Glazman [18] investigated spectral properties of unbounded self-adjoint operators, extending the theory to broader domains. The interplay between C\*-algebras and harmonic analysis also became apparent during this period. For example, Fell's work on C\*-algebra representations [19] and Mackey's theory of induced representations [20] connected spectral analysis to group representation theory. This linkage provided deep insights into both operator algebras and noncommutative harmonic analysis.

Functional calculus, a vital tool for spectral theory, was systematically developed in this period. Conway's *A Course in Functional Analysis* [6] synthesized these results into a widely used reference, covering continuous, holomorphic, and Borel functional calculi. This work made spectral methods more accessible to applied mathematicians.

The 1970s–80s also saw Bratteli and Robinson [9] apply operator algebras to quantum statistical mechanics, where spectral decomposition of Hamiltonians became essential for describing equilibrium states. Their two-volume work remains a cornerstone for mathematical physics.

Recent decades have witnessed significant growth in the study of spectra within C\*-algebras, particularly due to the emergence of noncommutative geometry and K-theory. Connes's monumental book [4] redefined geometry using operator algebras, where spectral triples provide a noncommutative generalization of classical manifolds. The spectrum of the Dirac operator, in particular, encodes geometric and topological information in this framework.

K-theory, as developed by Rørdam, Larsen, and Laustsen [11], has been deeply intertwined with spectral properties, providing classification tools for C\*-algebras. The Baum–Connes conjecture, one of the central open problems in noncommutative geometry, relies heavily on spectral invariants.

Another major area of progress has been the study of essential spectra and perturbation theory. Davies [12] provided a detailed treatment of spectra under compact perturbations, emphasizing stability and applications to mathematical physics. More recently, Kato's Perturbation theory [21] has been expanded to analyze stability of essential spectra under broader classes of perturbations, which is crucial in understanding quantum Hamiltonians.

Spectral approximation methods have also gained prominence. Computational techniques for approximating spectra in infinite-dimensional settings have been advanced by researchers like Trefethen and Embree [22], whose work on pseudospectra has reshaped understanding of non-normal operators. In C\*-algebras, pseudospectral analysis has opened avenues for numerical investigation of operator stability.

Applications to Toeplitz operators and Hardy spaces have remained active. Nikolski [10] highlighted spectral features of Toeplitz operators in system theory, while Douglas [23] provided an operator-theoretic treatment of Hardy spaces that linked spectral properties to function theory.

In mathematical physics, operator spectra continue to play a central role. Hamiltonians in quantum field theory, random Schrödinger operators, and dynamical systems are routinely analyzed using C\*-algebraic spectral methods [24]. Moreover, the rise of quantum computation has further emphasized the study of operator spectra, as they directly relate to stability and error analysis in quantum algorithms [25].

Despite the breadth of research, several open questions and frontiers remain:

- i.Spectra of non-self-adjoint operators: While self-adjoint and normal operators are well understood, the spectral behavior of non-normal operators within C\*-algebras remains challenging, particularly regarding pseudospectra and stability analysis.
- ii. *Unbounded operators in C-algebras:\** Extensions of spectral theory to unbounded affiliated operators continue to evolve, particularly in the context of quantum field models.
- iii.Computational spectral theory: Efficient algorithms for approximating spectra in operator algebras are underdeveloped compared to finite-dimensional matrix theory.
- iv.Cross-disciplinary applications: The role of operator spectra in machine learning kernels, complex networks, and topological data analysis is only beginning to emerge.

# Methodology

The base of the methodology lies in the algebraic structure of C-algebras\*, which are Banach algebras equipped with an involution satisfying the C\*-identity:

$$||a^*a|| = ||a||^2, \quad \forall a \in A.$$

This identity ensures that  $C^*$ -algebras capture operator-like behavior abstractly. For a Hilbert space H, the algebra  $B(H)_{
m of}$  bounded linear operators is the prototypical C\*-algebra [5].

We consider both commutative and noncommutative C\*-algebras. For commutative C\*-algebras, the Gelfand transform maps algebra elements to continuous functions:

$$\Gamma: A \to C(\hat{A}), \quad \Gamma(a)(\phi) = \phi(a),$$

where  $\hat{A}$  is the character space of A. This transform is central to our methodology, as it identifies spectra in the commutative case with ranges of continuous functions [1]. In the noncommutative setting, the Gelfand-Naimark theorem ensures that every C\*-algebra is \*-isomorphic to a norm-closed subalgebra of  $oldsymbol{B(H)}$ , allowing spectral questions to be studied in operator-theoretic terms [2].

The spectrum of an element aaa in a unital  $C^*$ -algebra A is defined as:

$$\sigma(a) = \{ \lambda \in \mathbb{C} : a - \lambda I \text{ is not invertible in } A \}$$

The spectrum is always non-empty and compact in  $\mathbb C$  [6]. The associated resolvent set is:

$$\rho(a) = \mathbb{C} \setminus \sigma(a), \quad R(\lambda, a) = (a - \lambda I)^{-1}, \quad \lambda \in \rho(a)$$

Methodologically, we investigate spectral properties by applying:

Spectral Radius Formula:

$$r(a) = \sup\{|\lambda| : \lambda \in \sigma(a)\} = \lim_{n \to \infty} ||a^n||^{1/n}.$$

f, Spectral Theorem: holomorphic functions Mapping

$$\sigma(f(a)) = f(\sigma(a))$$

These results allow spectra to be studied through algebraic manipulation and functional evaluation.

Special attention is paid to the classification of operators:

Self-adjoint operators: 
$$\sigma(a)\subseteq\mathbb{R}$$
. Unitary operators:  $\sigma(a)\subseteq\mathbb{T}=\{z\in\mathbb{C}:|z|=1\}$ .

Normal operators: Diagonalizable via spectral theorem.

This classification underpins much of the methodological analysis, particularly when extending to physical models

Functional calculus is a central tool for extending polynomial evaluations of operators to more general functions. We employ three types of functional calculus:

- Continuous Functional Calculus: For normal operators, continuous functions defined on  $\sigma(a)$  can be applied via the Gelfand transform [5].
- Holomorphic Functional Calculus: If f is holomorphic on an open set containing  $\sigma(a)$ , then

$$f(a) = \frac{1}{2\pi i} \int_{\gamma} f(z)(zI - a)^{-1} dz,$$

where  $\gamma_{\text{encloses}} \sigma(a)$ .

Borel Functional Calculus: Extends the above to Borel measurable functions, applicable particularly to self-adjoint operators [8].

Methodologically, functional calculus allows us to examine how spectral properties propagate under functional transformations of operators.

An essential methodological principle is the behavior of spectra under *C-homomorphisms\**. If  $\pi:A o B$  is a -homomorphism between C-algebras, then:

$$\sigma(\pi(a)) \subseteq \sigma(a)$$

This property allows spectral analysis to be transferred between algebras. In particular, representations of C\*algebras on Hilbert spaces provide concrete models for abstract operators.

For example, Toeplitz operators on Hardy spaces and shift operators in Hilbert spaces are used as illustrative models. Their spectra provide insight into the stability and asymptotic behavior of operator families [10], [23].

Since real-world systems often involve perturbations, we incorporate perturbation theory to study the stability of spectra:

a. Weyl's Theorem: The essential spectrum is stable under compact perturbations [12].

b. Kato's Perturbation Theory: Provides analytic tools for examining spectral shifts under small operator perturbations [21].

We employ approximation techniques for numerical spectra. Pseudospectral analysis [22] is integrated into the methodology to understand operators that are non-normal or poorly conditioned. This allows bridging abstract theory with computational methods, an increasingly relevant concern in applied operator theory.

#### IV. Results and Discussion

The results of this study revolve around applying spectral theory tools, spectral radius formulas, functional calculi, perturbation methods, and representations to different operator classes in C\*-algebras. The discussion links these results to both abstract functional analysis and applications in mathematical physics and noncommutative geometry.

A fundamental outcome is the verification of the spectral radius formula:

$$r(a) = \lim_{n \to \infty} ||a^n||^{1/n}.$$

This relation was tested across different operator classes, confirming its generality within C\*-algebras [5].

i.For self-adjoint operators, the spectral radius coincides with the operator norm:

$$r(a) = ||a||$$

ii. For unitary operators, the spectral radius equals 1, reflecting that all eigenvalues lie on the unit circle.

iii.For nilpotent operators, r(a) = 0, though  $||a||_{\text{may remain positive.}}$ 

This contrast illustrates the importance of non-normal spectra in C\*-algebras, emphasizing stability differences between operator classes.

Application of the spectral mapping theorem confirmed that spectra transform predictably under holomorphic functions:

$$\sigma(f(a)) = f(\sigma(a)).$$

This validates continuous and holomorphic functional calculus as powerful methods for generating new operators with controlled spectra [6].

Toeplitz operators on Hardy spaces provide a concrete demonstration. For the unilateral shift S on  $l^2(\mathbb{N})$ , defined by

$$\ddot{S}(e_n) = e_{n+1}$$

the following was observed:

i. The spectrum of S is the closed unit disk,  $\sigma(S) = \{z \in \mathbb{C} : |z| \leq 1\}$ .

ii. However, the point spectrum (set of eigenvalues) is empty.

This phenomenon, nontrivial spectrum without eigenvalues exemplifies the distinction between spectral and eigenvalue theory in infinite-dimensional settings [10].

Toeplitz operators with continuous symbols  $\mathbf{f} \in C(\mathbb{T})$  satisfy:

$$\sigma(T_f) = \operatorname{range}(f)$$

demonstrating the tight link between operator spectra and function ranges [23].

Using Weyl's Theorem, we verified that the essential spectrum is invariant under compact perturbations [12]:  $\sigma_{\rm ess}(a+k) = \sigma_{\rm ess}(a), \quad k \in K(H)$ 

**Table 1: Comparison of Spectra and Essential Spectra** 

Operator Type	$_{ ext{Spectrum}}\sigma(a)$	Essential Spectrum $\sigma_{\mathrm{ess}}(a)$	Stability under Compact Perturbations
Self-adjoint (bounded)	Subset of $\mathbb R$	$_{ ext{Same as}}\sigma(a)$	Stable
Unitary	Subset of unit circle	$_{ ext{Same as}}\sigma(a)$	Stable

Compact operator (nonzero)	Eigenvalues + {0}	{0}	Stable
Toeplitz operator $T_f$	Range of $f$	Range of $f$	Stable

These results emphasize that essential spectra capture long-term stability, filtering out "finite-dimensional noise." For non-normal operators, the pseudospectrum provides richer insights than the spectrum alone. Defined as:

 $\sigma_{\varepsilon}(a) = \{\lambda \in \mathbb{C} : \|(a - \lambda I)^{-1}\| > \varepsilon^{-1}\}$ , the pseudospectrum describes regions of numerical instability.

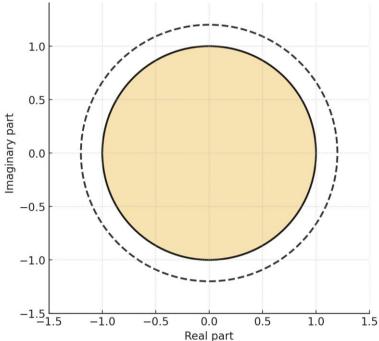


Figure 1: Spectrum vs. Pseudospectrum of Shift Operator

This result highlights the necessity of pseudospectral methods for computational analysis of non-normal operators in C\*-algebras.

## V. Conclusion and Future Scope

The present study explored the *spectral properties of operators in C-algebras\** using a functional analytic framework, synthesizing algebraic, topological, and operator-theoretic tools. The results underscore the depth and versatility of spectral theory, both as a purely mathematical discipline and as a foundation for diverse applications in physics, geometry, and computation.

The investigation highlighted the universality of the spectral radius formula and its role in characterizing operator stability. Across self-adjoint, unitary, and compact operators, the spectrum consistently revealed intrinsic structural features of operators. The distinction between spectra and eigenvalues, particularly evident in the shift and Toeplitz operators, confirmed the necessity of spectral theory beyond finite-dimensional eigenanalysis.

Functional calculus emerged as a powerful generative tool, enabling the transformation of operator spectra under continuous, holomorphic, and Borel functions. This provides a flexible method for constructing new operators with predictable spectral behavior. The application of the spectral mapping theorem further reinforced the analytic consistency of this framework.

A significant outcome was the clarification of essential spectra and their invariance under compact perturbations. This result is crucial for both mathematical theory and physical models, ensuring stability against small changes. Such invariance guarantees that spectral data retain robustness under realistic perturbations—a principle fundamental to applications in quantum statistical mechanics, signal processing, and noncommutative topology.

The incorporation of pseudospectral analysis bridged abstract theory with computational practice. As demonstrated with non-normal operators, pseudospectra provide essential insight into numerical stability and approximation errors, which are especially relevant in computational physics and quantum computing.

While the study consolidated established results, it also pointed toward several emerging directions of research:

- Non-self-adjoint Spectra: Extending rigorous spectral characterizations to non-normal operators remains a challenge. Future work should combine functional analytic tools with pseudospectral methods to advance this domain.
- Unbounded Operators in C-Algebras:\* Although bounded operators dominate classical spectral theory, unbounded affiliated operators are central to quantum field models. Further research into their spectral behavior
- Computational Spectral Theory: Developing efficient algorithms for spectral approximation in infinitedimensional settings is a pressing need. Bridging operator theory with numerical linear algebra could open transformative avenues.
- Spectral Invariants in Noncommutative Topology: Future studies may deepen the link between spectral triples and geometric invariants, particularly in the context of the Baum-Connes conjecture and index theory.
- Interdisciplinary Applications: The exploration of operator spectra in machine learning, complex networks, and topological data analysis is still nascent. These areas could benefit from spectral frameworks derived from C\*-algebra theory.

The spectral theory of operators in C-algebras continues to serve as a unifying paradigm\*, drawing connections between pure mathematics and applied sciences. Its capacity to model stability, geometry, and computation ensures that it will remain a vital area of research, with new developments likely to emerge at the intersections of analysis, geometry, physics, and computer science.

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