

# The Hitchin map and the spectral base

Jie Liu

(Joint with Sigi He, Ngaiming Mok)

## Lecture 1

$X = \text{proj mfd} / \mathbb{C}$ ,  $n = \dim X$ .

### § Def of Higgs bundles and Hitchin map

Def A Higgs bundle  $\mathcal{E}$  is a pair  $(\mathcal{E}, \varphi)$  s.t.

(1)  $\mathcal{E} \rightarrow X$  holo vec bundle of rk r.

(2)  $\varphi: \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{E} \otimes \Omega_X^1$  (Higgs field) s.t.  $\varphi \wedge \varphi = 0$ . (\*)

Examples (1) If  $\dim X = 1$ , then (\*) is automatic.

(2)  $\omega \in H^0(X, \Omega_X^1)$ ,  $\mathcal{E} \xrightarrow{\times \omega} \mathcal{E} \otimes \Omega_X^1$ .

(3) Locally we can choose a trivialization of  $\mathcal{E}$ .

May write  $\varphi = \sum_{i=1}^n A_i \cdot dz_i$   
tr matrix.

( $\varphi \wedge \varphi = 0 \Leftrightarrow [A_i, A_j] = 0, \forall i, j$ )

(4) As usual we can define (semi-/poly-) stability  
for Higgs bundles by considering  $\varphi$ -inv subsheaves of  $\mathcal{E}$ .

$M_{\text{Higgs}}^{\text{stack}}$

Moduli stack of Higgs buns

$M_{\text{Higgs}}^{\text{polystab}}$

Moduli stack of polystab Higgs buns

$M_{\text{Dol}}$

Moduli space of top trivial polystab Higgs buns

- top trivial  $\Leftrightarrow C_i(E) \in H^0(X, \mathbb{Q})$
- $M_{\text{Dol}} \xleftarrow[\text{Hodge}]{\text{non-abelian}} M_B = \{ \rho: \pi_1(X) \rightarrow G_{\text{tr}}(\mathbb{C}) \mid \text{reductive} \} / \sim$   
 $\uparrow$   
 Betti moduli space.  
 [Hitchin, Donaldson, Corlette, Simpson].

Def The Hitchin map is def'd as

$$h_x: M_{\text{Higgs}}^{\text{stack}} \longrightarrow A_x = \bigoplus_{i=1}^r H^0(X, \text{Sym}^i \Omega_X^1)$$

Hitchin base.

$$(E, \varphi) \longmapsto \begin{aligned} &\text{coeffs of char poly of } \varphi. \\ &(\text{tr } \varphi, \dots, \text{tr } \varphi^r) \\ &(-1)^r \det \varphi. \end{aligned}$$

Thm (Hitchin, Simpson)

(1)  $h_x|_{M_{\text{Dol}}} : M_{\text{Dol}} \longrightarrow A_x$  is proper.

(2) If  $\dim X = 1$ , then  $h_x|_{M_{\text{Dol}}}$  is surj.

Q What happens if  $\dim X \geq 2$  around  $M_{\text{Higgs}}^{\text{stack}} \xrightarrow{h_x} A_x$ ?

### § Spectral base

Def (Chen-Ngô)

The spectral base  $\mathcal{Y}_x \subseteq A_x$  is the subset def'd as

$$(s_1, \dots, s_r) \in \mathcal{Y}_x \Leftrightarrow \forall x \in X, \exists w_1, \dots, w_r \in T_x^* X \text{ s.t.}$$

$$s_i(x) = (-1)^i \sigma_i(w_1, \dots, w_r) \quad (\ast\ast)$$

where  $\sigma_i = i\text{-th symm poly in } r \text{ variables}$ .

Rmk  $w_i$ 's may NOT be pairwise distinct.

Facts (1)  $\mathcal{Y}_X$  is closed & stable under natural  $\mathbb{C}^*$ -action

$$\mathbb{C}^* \curvearrowright \mathcal{A}_X = H^0(X, \Omega_X^1) \oplus \cdots \oplus H^0(X, \text{Sym}^r \Omega_X^1).$$

$wt=1 \quad \cdots \quad wt=r$

(2) It is enough to check (\*\*\*) for general pts of  $X$ :

- In particular,  $\mathcal{Y}_X$  is birat inv

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \hat{X} & \xrightarrow{f} & X \text{ birat proper.} \\ \text{so } f^*: \mathcal{A}_X & \xrightarrow{\quad} & \mathcal{A}_{\hat{X}} \\ & \scriptstyle{w_i} & \scriptstyle{w_r} \\ & \mathcal{Y}_X & \xrightarrow{\quad} \mathcal{Y}_{\hat{X}}. \end{array}$$

Prop  $\text{Im}(h_X) \subseteq \mathcal{Y}_X$ .

Proof  $\varphi \wedge \varphi = 0 \Leftrightarrow [A_i, A_j] = 0, \forall i, j \quad (\varphi = \sum_i A_i dz_i)$ .

Choose a suitable trivialization of  $E$

s.t.  $A_i$ 's can be upper-triangulized simultaneously.

$$A_i = \begin{pmatrix} * & * \\ 0 & * \end{pmatrix} \Rightarrow \varphi = \begin{pmatrix} w_1 & * \\ 0 & w_r \end{pmatrix}, w_i \in T_X^* X.$$

$$\Rightarrow h_X(E, \varphi) = (s_1, \dots, s_r) \in \mathcal{Y}_X.$$

□

Consider  $M_{\text{Higgs}}^{\text{stack}} \xrightarrow{h_X} \mathcal{Y}_X \subseteq \text{closed}$

$\text{VI}$

$M_{\text{Dol}} \xrightarrow{h_X|_{M_{\text{Dol}}}} \mathcal{Y}_{X, \text{Dol}} \subseteq \text{closed}$

(for  $X = \text{curve}$ ,  $M_{\text{Dol}} = M_{\text{Higgs}}^{\text{stack}}$ .)

Examples (1)  $\mathcal{Y}_{X, \text{Dol}} \not\subseteq \mathcal{Y}_X$  [Bogomolov-de Oliveira]

Let  $Y \subseteq \mathbb{A}^3$  hypersurface of deg  $\gg 1$  (specially chosen)  
 $\uparrow$  3-dim'l abelian var.

$\theta = \text{involution of } \mathbb{A}^3$ .

$\rightsquigarrow X \rightarrow Y/\theta$  min resolution

s.t.  $\pi_*(x) = f, f \in \mathcal{Y}_X \neq 0$  (2nd symm power  
 $\downarrow$   
 $\mathcal{Y}_{X, \text{Dol}} = 0$ ,  $0 \neq \mathcal{Y}_X^2 \subseteq \mathcal{A}_X^2$ ).

(2) Shimura surface.

$\Gamma \in \text{Aut}(\mathbb{D} \times \mathbb{D})$ ,  $\mathbb{D} = 1\text{-dim'l disc}$ .

irred torsion-free cocompact lattice.

$\Lambda = \mathbb{D} \times \mathbb{D} / \Gamma$  surface  $\rightsquigarrow \Omega_X^1 = \mathcal{L}_1 \oplus \mathcal{L}_2$ .

Then for  $m \geq 1$ , have

$$H^0(X, \Omega_X^1) = H^0(X, \mathcal{L}_1^{\otimes m}) = H^0(X, \mathcal{L}_2^{\otimes m}) = 0$$

Let  $\mathcal{A}_X^2 = H^0(X, \Omega_X^1) \oplus H^0(X, \text{Sym}^2 \Omega_X^1)$

$$(0 = s_1, s_2) \in \mathcal{Y}_X$$

$$s_2(x) = w_x^2 \quad (\forall x \in X, \exists w_x \in T_x^* X).$$

$$\text{But } \text{Sym}^2 \Omega_X^1 = \mathcal{L}_1^{\otimes 2} \oplus \mathcal{L}_1 \otimes \mathcal{L}_2 \oplus \mathcal{L}_2 \otimes \mathcal{L}_1^{\otimes 2}$$

$$\Rightarrow H^0(\text{Sym}^2 \Omega_X^1) = H^0(X, \mathcal{L}_1 \otimes \mathcal{L}_2) = H^0(X, K_X)$$

$$\Rightarrow \text{If } (s_1, s_2) \in \mathcal{Y}_X, \text{ then } s_1 = s_2 = 0.$$

$$\exists \Gamma \text{ s.t. } H^0(X, K_X) = H^0(X, \text{Sym}^2 \Omega_X^1) \neq 0 \Rightarrow \mathcal{A}_X^2 \neq 0.$$

## § Application: Rigidity problem

Def  $\rho: \pi_1(X) \rightarrow \mathrm{GL}_r(\mathbb{C})$  a reductive repr.

- (1)  $\rho$  is rigid if  $[\rho] \in M_B$  is isolated
- (2)  $\rho$  is integral if it is conjugate to a map  $\pi_1(X) \rightarrow \mathrm{GL}_r(\mathcal{O}_K)$   
( $K = \text{number field} \supseteq \mathbb{Q}_\chi$ ).

Thm (Simpson, Arapura, Klingler, He-Liu-Mok).

$X$  proj mfd with  $\mathcal{G}_X = 0$ . Then

$\forall \rho: \pi_1(X) \rightarrow \mathrm{GL}_r(\mathbb{C})$  reductive map is rigid & integral.

Proof (1)  $\mathfrak{h}_{X, \mathrm{Dol}}: M_{\mathrm{Dol}} \longrightarrow \mathcal{G}_{X, \mathrm{Dol}}$  proper  
 $\cap \mathcal{G}_X = 0$

$\Rightarrow M_{\mathrm{Dol}}$  compact

Have  $M_{\mathrm{Dol}} \xrightarrow{\sim} M_B$  affine var  $\Rightarrow \dim M_B = 0$ .

(2) Up to conjugate,  $\rho$  is def'd /  $K$  number field.

To prove integrality of  $\rho$ , it is enough to show  
that for  $\forall v$  finite place of  $K$ ,

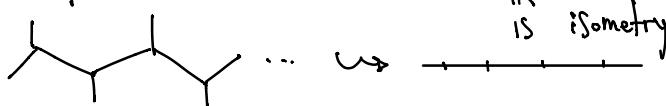
$\rho: \pi_1(X) \rightarrow \mathrm{GL}_r(K_v) =: G$  is bdd.

$\xrightarrow[\text{univ cover}]{} X \xrightarrow[\text{Lipschitz harmonic}]{d_p} \Delta(G)$

Bruehet-Tits building for  $G$ .

$\xrightarrow[\text{ }]{\rho-\text{equiv}} [Gromov-Schoen]$

E.g.  $\Delta(G)$  for  $G = \mathrm{GL}_2(\mathbb{Q}_2)$ :



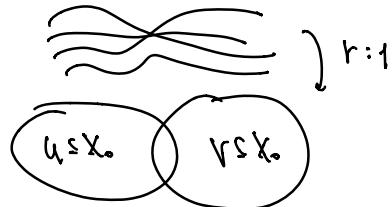
$\forall x \in \Delta(G), \mathrm{Stab}_x \subseteq G$  is bdd.

$(b_p : \tilde{X} \rightarrow G$  exists when given any red rep  $p$ ).

Fact  $b_p$  constant  $\Rightarrow p$  is bdd.

Assume  $b_p$  is not constant.

$\Rightarrow \exists$  holo mult-sections of  $\Omega_X^1 \rightarrow X$  over an open subset  
 $X_0$  s.t.  $X \setminus X_0$  has Hausdorff codim  $\geq 2$ .  
 by harmonicity of  $b_p$ .



$\Rightarrow (s_1^\circ, \dots, s_r^\circ) \in \mathcal{G}_{X_0}$ .

Now Lipschitz + Hausdorff codim( $X \setminus X_0$ )  $\geq 2$

$\Rightarrow s_i^\circ$  extends  $s_i \in H^0(X, \text{Sym}^i \Omega_X^1)$

$\Rightarrow (s_1, \dots, s_r) \in \mathcal{G}_X$ .

\*

## Lecture 2

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{M}^{\text{stack}}_{\text{Higgs}} & \xrightarrow{h_X} & \mathcal{G}_X \xrightarrow{\text{closed}} \mathcal{A}_X = \bigoplus_{i=1}^r H^0(X, \text{Sym}^i \Omega_X^1) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ \mathcal{M}_{\text{Dol}} & \xrightarrow{h_{X, \text{Dol}}} & \mathcal{G}_{X, \text{Dol}} \end{array}$$

$s = (s_1, \dots, s_r) \in \mathcal{G}_X \Leftrightarrow \forall x, \exists w_1, \dots, w_r \in T_x^* X$

s.t.  $s_i(x) = (-1)^i \sigma_i(w_1, \dots, w_r)$ .

Application  $\mathcal{F}_{x=0} \Rightarrow \forall [\rho] \in M_B$  is rigid & integral.

### § Quotient of bounded symmetric domains (BSDs)

Def  $\Omega \subseteq \mathbb{C}^n$  is called a BSD if  $\forall x \in \Omega$ ,  
 $\exists \sigma: \Omega \rightarrow \Omega$  a biholo involution s.t.  
 $x$  is an isolated fixed pt of  $\sigma$ .

Examples (1)  $B^n \subseteq \mathbb{C}^n$  ball

(2)  $D^n = D \times \dots \times D$  disk product

(3)  $\text{BSD} = \prod \text{irred BSDs}$

$\exists$  a classification of irred BSDs:

4 classical types + 2 excep types.

(4)  $\Omega \subseteq M = \text{cpt dual of } \Omega$

↳ Herm symm space of cpt type (Fano & homogeneous).

e.g.  $\Omega = B^n \subseteq P^n = M$

$\Omega_{\mathbb{R}(m,n)} \subseteq \text{Gr}(m, m+n)$ .

Bmk  $\Omega$  BSD,  $\Gamma \subseteq \text{Aut}(\Omega)$  an irred torsion-free cocompact lattice  
 $\rightsquigarrow X = \Omega/\Gamma$  proj mfd.

Note (1)  $\Omega_x^1$  big  $\Rightarrow \limsup h^0(X, \text{Sym}^m \Omega_x^1) \sim O(m^{\dim X - 1})$  as  $m \rightarrow +\infty$   
 $\Rightarrow d_X$  is very large for  $r \gg 1$ .

(2) Margulis' super-rigidity thm  
 $\Rightarrow \Gamma$  is arith if  $\text{rank } \Omega \geq 2$

$\Rightarrow [\rho] \in M_B$  is rigid & integral  
 $\Rightarrow \mathcal{G}_{X, D_0} = 0.$

(g)  $\text{rank } \Omega = 1 \Leftrightarrow \Omega = \mathbb{B}^n$  ball.

Thm A (He-Liu-Mok)

$X = \Omega/\Gamma$ ,  $\text{rank } \Omega \geq 2$ ,  $\Gamma$  = irreducible torsion-free cocompct lattice.  
 Then  $\mathcal{G}_X = 0$ .

Idea of the proof of Thm A ( $r=2$ ,  $\Omega$  irreducible)

(i) minimal characteristic bundle

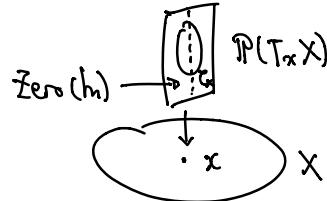
$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 C_x & \longrightarrow & x & \longleftarrow & \tilde{x} \\
 \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\
 C & \longrightarrow & X & \longleftarrow & \Omega^{\text{dual}} \subseteq M \\
 \pi & \searrow & & & \\
 P(T_x) & \text{geometric} & & & (\text{Fano mfd of } p(M)=1)
 \end{array}$$

$$C_x \subseteq P(T_x X) \cong P(T_{\tilde{x}} \Omega) = P(T_{\tilde{x}} M)$$

"tangent directions of lines in  $M$  passing through  $\tilde{x}$   
 "VMRT of  $M$  at  $\tilde{x}$ .

e.g.  $\mathbb{B}^n \subset \mathbb{P}^n$ .  $C_x = P(T_x X)$

e.g.  $\Omega_{\mathbb{I}(m,n)} \subseteq \text{Gr}(m, m+n)$ ,  $C_x = \mathbb{P}^{m-1} \times \mathbb{P}^{n-1} \xrightarrow{O(1,1)} P(T_x X)$



Fact  $C_x \subseteq P(T_x X)$  is linearly normal.

(2) Finsler metric rigid thm

Thm (Mok's rigidity thm)

$$\text{rank } \Omega \geq 2, \quad X = \Omega / \Gamma,$$

$\Gamma$  = irreducible free cocompact lattice.

$h$  = Finsler pseudo-metric on  $\mathcal{O}_{PTX}(-1) \rightarrow PTX$

$g$  = Herm metric on  $\mathcal{O}_{PTX}(1) \rightarrow PTX$

induced by canonical metric on  $TX$ .

If  $\Theta_h \leq 0$ , then  $h|_C = cg|_C$ .

(3)  $S = (S_1, S_2) \in \mathcal{F}_X$ .

Want  $S_1 = S_2 = 0$ .

- If  $S_1 \neq 0$  then  $0 \neq S_1 \in H^0(X, \Omega_X^1) = H^0(PTX, \mathcal{O}_{PTX}(1))$   
 $\Leftrightarrow h(v) = \|S_1(v)\|$  with  $\Theta_h = -\text{div } S_1 \leq 0$

By rigidity thm, get  $h = cg|_C$

$\Rightarrow$  For  $x \in X$  general pt.

$$\exists 0 \neq h|_{C_x} = cg|_{C_x} \Rightarrow c \neq 0 \quad (\#)$$

as  $\text{Zero}(h|_{PT_x}) = \text{Zero}(S_1(x)) = \text{hyperplane in } PT_x$ .

(e.g.  $S_2(x) = z^2 + y^2$ ,  $C_x = \{z^2 + y^2 = 0\}$ .)

- $S_1 = 0 + S = (S_1, S_2) \in \mathcal{F}_X \Rightarrow \forall x \in X, S_2(x) = w_x^2, w_x \in T^*X$ ,  
 $\Leftrightarrow h_2(v) = \|S_2(v)\|^{\frac{1}{2}}$ .

Apply a same argument yields a contradiction.

### § Chen-Ngo's conjecture & spectral correspondence

Conj (Chen-Ngo)  $f_X : \text{M\"obius}^{\text{stack}} \longrightarrow \mathcal{F}_X$  is always surjective.

- Rmk
- (1) Cannot replace  $M_{\text{Higgs}}$  by  $M_{\text{def}}$ .
  - (2) Conj holds if  $\dim X = 2$  (Chen-Ngô, Song-San).

↪ spectral correspondence

(Beaumville-Narasimhan-Ramanan corr if  $\dim X = 1$ ).

Def Given  $s = (s_1, \dots, s_r) \in \mathcal{S}_X$ , the spectral var  $X_s$

is def'd by  $\{ \lambda^r - s_1 \lambda^{r-1} + \dots + (-1)^r s_r = 0 \} \subseteq T^* X$   
 $H^*(T^* X, \pi^* \text{Sym}^r \Omega_X^1), \quad \downarrow \pi$   
 $X$

Thm (Chen-Ngô) Assume that  $X_s \rightarrow X$  is r:1.

i.e.  $\lambda^r - s_1 \lambda^{r-1} + \dots + (-1)^r s_r = 0$  has distinct roots at a generic pt.

$$\{(E, \varphi) \mid h_X(E, \varphi) = s\} / \sim \xleftarrow{\text{1-1}} \begin{cases} \text{maximal Cohen-Macaulay} \\ \text{sheaves of rk 1 on } X_s \end{cases} / \sim$$

$$(\pi_X^* \mathcal{F}, \pi_X^* \lambda) \longleftrightarrow \mathcal{F}$$

where  $\lambda$  is char'd by  $\mathcal{F} \xrightarrow{\lambda} \mathcal{F} \otimes \pi^* \Omega_X^1$   
 $\hookrightarrow \pi_{X*} \mathcal{F} \xrightarrow{\pi_{X*} \lambda} \pi_{X*} \mathcal{F} \otimes \Omega_X^1$ .

- maximal  $\Rightarrow \text{Supp } \mathcal{F} = X_s$
- Cohen-Macaulay  $\Leftrightarrow \pi_{X*} \mathcal{F}$  locally free.

Thm (\*) (Chen-Ngô, Song-San)

CN conj holds if  $\dim X = 2$ .

Thm B (He-Liu-Mok)

Given  $s \in \mathcal{F}_X$ ,  $\exists (\xi, \varphi)$  w/  $\xi$  reflexive s.t.  $f_X(\xi, \varphi) = s$ .

Thm B  $\Rightarrow$  Thm (\*\*) b/c nef sheaves are loc free in codim 2.

### Proof of Thm B

(i) Reduces to  $X_S \rightarrow X$  is  $r=1$ .

Indeed,  $[X_S] = \sum m_i [X_S^i]$   
 multiplicity of  $\uparrow$   $\uparrow$  irreducible comp  
 general pts

$$P(\lambda) = \lambda^r - s_1 \lambda^{r-1} + \cdots + (-)^r s_r = \prod P_i(\lambda)^{m_i}$$

$$\text{Set } (\xi, \varphi) = \bigoplus_{i=1}^r (\xi_i, \varphi_i)^{\otimes m_i} \Rightarrow f_X(\xi, \varphi) = s.$$

(2)  $(\pi_{*}(\mathcal{O}_{X_S}), \pi_{*}\chi)$  taking nef hull,  $((\pi_{*}(\mathcal{O}_{X_S}))^{**}, (\pi_{*}\chi)^{**})$   
 can be very bad

Rank (i) If  $X_S \rightarrow X$  is  $r=1$ ,  $\mathcal{F}$  carries a natural  $\mathcal{O}_X$ -alg str.

$$\text{co} \quad \text{Spec}_{\mathcal{O}_X} \mathcal{F} =: \tilde{X}_S \xrightarrow{\quad} (X_S)_{\text{red}} \xleftarrow{\quad} X$$

finite, isom in codim 1.

Can replace  $X_S$  by  $\tilde{X}_S$  in the spectral corr.

(ii) If  $\dim X = 2$  then  $\tilde{X}_S$  is Cohen-Macaulay.

### § Chen-Ngô conj in rank 2 case

Thm C (He-Liu) Assume  $r=2$ .

For  $s \in \mathcal{F}_X$  s.t.  $X_S \rightarrow X$  is 2:1,

$\exists \tilde{X}_S \rightarrow (X_S)_{\text{red}}$  finite, isom in codim 1 s.t.

(1)  $\tilde{X}_S$  is Cohen-Macaulay

(2) spectral corr holds for  $\tilde{X}_S$ .

Rmk If  $r=2$ , then  $h_x|_{\mathcal{M}_{\text{Higgs}}} \longrightarrow \mathcal{G}_x$ .

(Thm C  $\Rightarrow$  CN conj for  $r=2$ ).

Proof of Thm C

(1)  $S = (S_1, S_2) \in \mathcal{G}_x$ ,  $\varphi \mapsto \varphi - \frac{1}{2}S_1 =: \varphi'$

Reduce to  $S_1 = 0$ .

(2)  $S_1 = 0 + S = (S_1, S_2) \in \mathcal{G}_x \Leftrightarrow S_2(x) = w_x^2 \quad (\forall x \in X, \exists w_x \in T^*x)$

$\Leftrightarrow S_2$  rank 1 symm diff

(3)  $S \in \mathcal{B}_x \Rightarrow S = \alpha^2 \bar{L}$  with  $\alpha: L \rightarrow \Omega_x^1$  inj in codim 1  
 $\bar{L} \in H^0(X, L^{\otimes 2})$ .

Indeed,  $S \in H^0(\mathbb{P}T_x, \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}T_x}(2))$ .

Then  $S \in \mathcal{B}_x \Leftrightarrow \text{div } S = 2\Delta + D$

$\begin{matrix} & \downarrow \\ \text{horizontal} & \text{vertical} \end{matrix}$

$\Delta \rightsquigarrow \alpha: L \rightarrow \Omega_x^1$

$D \rightsquigarrow \tau \in H^0(X, L^{\otimes 2})$ .

(4)  $\tilde{X}_S$  = double cover defined by  $\tau$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \downarrow & & \lceil \text{embedding in codim 1} \\ X & \xrightarrow{\sim} \tilde{X}_S \subseteq L & \xrightarrow{\alpha} \Omega_x^1 \\ & \searrow & \downarrow u \\ & & X_S \end{array}$$

here  $\tilde{X}_S \subseteq L$  hypersurface  $\Rightarrow \tilde{X}_S$  Cohen-Macaulay.

□

Cor If  $X$  = proj mfd of  $\dim \geq 2$  s.t.  $f^{11}(x) = 1$ , then  $\varphi_x^2 = 0$ .

e.g.  $X$  = fake proj space (ball quotient)

$$\text{i.e. } b_i(x) = b_i(\mathbb{P}^n) \quad + \quad X \neq \mathbb{P}^n.$$