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is the complex number

$$T(\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \sigma_3) = (1 - \sigma_2^* \sigma_1)^{-1} (1 - \sigma_2^* \sigma_3) (1 - \sigma_1^* \sigma_3)^{-1}.$$

The group $GL(q, \mathbf{C}) \simeq \mathbf{C}^*$ acts on the upper halfplane by $(\lambda, z) \mapsto |\lambda|^2 z$ and so the orbits are described by the argument of the complex number z . So the characteristic invariant in this case is just

$$\arg \left((1 - \sigma_2^* \sigma_1)^{-1} (1 - \sigma_2^* \sigma_3) (1 - \sigma_1^* \sigma_3)^{-1} \right).$$

It is equivalent to the invariant θ considered in [KR]. This invariant, almost in our terms, was known to E. Cartan (see [Ca]).

REMARK 2. Let us consider the case where $p = q$. Then the Stiefel manifold is $U(q)$, and the content of Proposition 4.2 is that for $(\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \sigma_3) \in S_{\top}^3$

$$T(\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \sigma_3) = (1 - \sigma_2^* \sigma_1)^{-1} (1 - \sigma_2^* \sigma_3) (1 - \sigma_1^* \sigma_3)^{-1}$$

is an invertible skew-Hermitian matrix. The orbits of $GL(q, \mathbf{C})$ in its action on nondegenerate Hermitian forms are characterized by the signature. So the characteristic invariant as described in Theorem 4.3 in this case reduces to $\text{sgn } iT(\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \sigma_3)$. As concerns Theorem 4.4, notice that the invariant S is trivial (equal to $-\mathbf{1}_q$), so one is only concerned with the invariant $\arg \det T$. The bounded domain D is of tube type and the description of the invariant through the function $\arg \det$ coincides with the approach of this problem in [CØ], where the invariant was introduced under the name of *generalized Maslov index*.

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