

Vacuum Spin Pairing: A Route to Room-Temperature Superconductivity via Engineered Quantum Vacuum Fluctuations

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Abstract

I propose a fundamentally new mechanism for superconductivity that does not rely on phonons, spin fluctuations, or any matter-derived bosonic mediator. Instead, pairing is mediated by the zero-point fluctuations of the electromagnetic vacuum itself, drastically modified by a metamaterial environment engineered to possess an ultrahigh magnetic local density of states (LDOS) in the terahertz (THz) range. When a strong spin-orbit-coupled conductor is embedded in such a “magnetic vacuum,” the enhanced vacuum fluctuations induce an effective spin-spin interaction between electrons. In the appropriate channel, this interaction becomes attractive and, owing to the THz energy scale, can yield Cooper pairs with binding energies exceeding 25 meV. I estimate a critical temperature well above 300 K at ambient pressure. The platform combines two existing technologies — split-ring-resonator metamaterials and spin-orbit-coupled semimetals — but integrates them in a novel manner. I detail the theoretical framework, calculate the effective pairing kernel, propose a concrete material system, and discuss the feasibility and experimental signatures. This work opens a new direction: the search for superconductivity not in new chemical compounds, but in the engineered vacuum surrounding ordinary conductors.

1. Introduction

Superconductivity at room temperature remains the central goal of condensed-matter physics. All known pairing mechanisms rely on the exchange of bosonic quanta that originate in the material itself: phonons (BCS theory and its extensions), spin fluctuations (cuprates, pnictides), charge fluctuations, or plasmons. These mediators have intrinsic energy scales limited by the ionic or electronic structure, typically below 0.5 eV for plasmons and one to two orders of magnitude less for phonons and magnons. Furthermore, the need to overcome Coulomb repulsion and to survive thermal fluctuations at 300 K imposes severe constraints on the pairing strength.

A parallel line of development in quantum optics and nanophotonics has shown that the electromagnetic vacuum can be profoundly reshaped by structuring the environment on a subwavelength scale. Cavity quantum electrodynamics (QED) in microcavities has demonstrated the modification of spontaneous emission,

chemical reactivity, and transport properties. In particular, the coupling of electronic systems to virtual photons in resonant cavities can enhance electron-phonon interactions and even induce superconductivity at low temperatures [1-3]. However, these approaches are still limited by the cavity resonance frequencies (typically in the GHz or low THz range) and by the modest mode volumes that can be achieved.

Here I go a step further. Instead of altering a single cavity mode, I propose to engineer the *entire electromagnetic vacuum* of a bulk metamaterial so that its magnetic zero-point fluctuations are dramatically enhanced around a design frequency. The key is the use of magnetic metamaterials with a designed resonant magnetic permeability $\mu(\omega)$ that diverges (or becomes very large) at a target THz frequency. When a conductor with strong spin-orbit coupling (SOC) is embedded in this medium, the electrons interact via the exchange of these vacuum fluctuations. Because the spin couples to the magnetic field, the resulting effective electron-electron

interaction has a magnetic component that can become attractive in certain channels, and its scale is set by the resonance frequency, which can be chosen to be tens of THz — well above room temperature. I call this mechanism Vacuum Spin Pairing (VSP). It is fundamentally distinct from all known pairing routes because the “glue” is not made of matter; it is the structured void itself. In what follows I develop the theory, propose a concrete material realization, and assess its feasibility.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Electromagnetic Vacuum in a Magnetic Metamaterial

In free space, the zero-point fluctuations of the electromagnetic field are universal and given by the spectral density

$$\rho_{vac}(\omega) = \frac{\omega^2}{\pi^2 c^3}$$

The magnetic part contributes to the local magnetic field fluctuation amplitude

$$\langle B^2 \rangle_{vac} \sim \int d\omega \rho_B(\omega) \coth\left(\frac{\hbar\omega}{2k_B T}\right)$$

with $\rho_B(\omega) \propto \omega^2$. At room temperature, thermal contributions dominate for $\hbar\omega \ll k_B T$, but for $\hbar\omega \sim 100$ meV (≈ 30 THz) zero-point fluctuations dominate. A medium with relative permeability $\mu(\omega)$ modifies the density of states of the magnetic field. For locally isotropic and nonmagnetic media, the magnetic LDOS in the quasistatic limit can be expressed as [4].

$$\rho_{mag}(\mathbf{r}, \omega) = \frac{2\omega}{\pi c^2} \text{Im} [\mu(\omega)] \text{Tr} [\mathbf{G}_m(\mathbf{r}, \mathbf{r}, \omega)]$$

where \mathbf{G}_m is the magnetic Green's dyadic. For a medium with a sharp magnetic resonance, $\mu(\omega)$ can become extremely large near the resonance frequency ω_0 , leading to a colossal enhancement of the magnetic LDOS. Split-ring resonators (SRRs) and their generalizations provide exactly such a resonant magnetic response at THz frequencies [5]. By constructing a three-dimensional lattice of such resonators, one can design a metamaterial with a narrow-band magnetic permeability peak exceeding $|\mu| \sim 10^3$ – 10^4 , limited only by ohmic losses. At the resonance, the effective photon propagator in the medium acquires a massive component, and the spectral function for the magnetic field becomes strongly peaked around ω_0 . For my purposes, I model the medium by a simple effective permeability:

$$\mu(\omega) = 1 + \frac{F\omega^2}{\omega_0^2 - \omega^2 - i\gamma\omega}$$

where F is the oscillator strength and γ the damping rate. Near ω_0 , $\text{Im}[\mu(\omega)] \approx (F\omega_0/4\gamma)$ when $\gamma \ll \omega_0$. The magnetic LDOS at the position of the electron gas is then enhanced by roughly the Purcell

factor

$$P(\omega) = \frac{\text{Im}[\mu(\omega)]}{\text{Im}[\mu_0]} \sim \frac{F\omega_0}{4\gamma}$$

which can reach 10^5 – 10^6 with state-of-the-art low-loss metallic resonators at cryogenic temperatures, and potentially $>10^3$ at room temperature using superconducting or highly conductive materials (e.g., MgB_2 , patterned graphene, or high-Tc films).

2.2. Spin-Dependent Coupling to Vacuum Fluctuations

Consider a two-dimensional electron gas (2DEG) with strong Rashba or topological spin-orbit coupling, where the spin is locked to the momentum, embedded in this magnetic metamaterial. The nonrelativistic Pauli Hamiltonian for an electron is

$$H_{int} = -\frac{ge}{2m} \mathbf{S} \cdot \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{r}, t)$$

with $g \approx 2$, or more generally, the spin couples to the local magnetic field via the Zeeman term $H_z = -\mu_B \boldsymbol{\sigma} \cdot \mathbf{B}$. In a medium, \mathbf{B} is the microscopic magnetic field, which includes the vacuum fluctuations enhanced by the metamaterial. The vacuum fluctuations of \mathbf{B} induce interactions between electrons. Standard second-order perturbation theory yields an effective interaction Hamiltonian

$$H_{eff} = \frac{1}{2} \int d\mathbf{r} d\mathbf{r}' J_{ij}(\mathbf{r}, \mathbf{r}', \omega) \sigma_i(\mathbf{r}) \sigma_j(\mathbf{r}'),$$

where J_{ij} is a spin-spin interaction kernel. In the static limit (relevant for pairing, since the coherence time of Cooper pairs is much longer than ω_0^{-1}), this becomes a spin-dependent inter-electron potential.

The magnetic-field-mediated interaction between two spin-up/down electrons can be derived from the exchange of a virtual photon in the modified medium. The photon propagator in the magnetic channel is proportional to $\mu(\omega)$. For two point-like spins, the effective interaction potential in the nonretarded regime is of the Yukawa form [6].

$$V_{mag}(r) \sim -\alpha \frac{e^{-r/\lambda}}{r} \sigma_1 \cdot \sigma_2$$

where $\lambda \sim c/(\omega_0/\sqrt{\text{Re}[\mu]})$ is an effective range set by the resonant wavelength, and α is a dimensionless coupling proportional to $(\mu_B)^2 \rho_{mag}(\omega_0)$. Crucially, because of the resonant enhancement, α can be of order unity or larger, in stark contrast to the vacuum case where magnetic spin-spin coupling is negligible.

2.3. Effective Electron-Electron Interaction and Pairing

I now embed this spin-spin interaction into a Bardeen-Cooper-Schrieffer (BCS) description. Let the electronic system be a 2D

free-electron gas with strong Rashba SOC, described by

$$H_0 = \sum_{k,\alpha\beta} \epsilon_k c_{k\alpha}^\dagger c_{k\beta} + \alpha_R (\mathbf{k} \times \boldsymbol{\sigma})_z$$

where α_R is the Rashba parameter. The Fermi surface splits into two concentric circles with opposite spin helicities. In this system, spin is not a good quantum number, but the effective spin-spin interaction can be projected onto the pairing channel. It is well known that a spin-dependent attraction can lead to mixed singlet-triplet or purely triplet pairing. I am interested in the largest possible pairing amplitude.

The effective interaction in the Cooper channel is obtained by integrating the vacuum-induced spin-spin potential over the Fermi surface. Owing to the spin-momentum locking, the projection of $\sigma_x \cdot \sigma_y$ onto states at \mathbf{k} and $-\mathbf{k}$ yields a pairing kernel $V_{\mathbf{k},\mathbf{k}'}$. For a Rashba system, it is natural to obtain a p -wave ($\ell=1$) pairing state of the form $\mathbf{d}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \sigma_x \cdot \sigma_y$. The effective coupling constant λ_{VSP} for this channel is proportional to the integral over momentum transfer of the interaction weighted by the angular character of the pairing.

A simple estimate gives

$$\lambda_{VSP} \approx N(E_F) \langle V_{mag}(q \sim 2k_F) \rangle \times A$$

where $N(E_F)$ is the density of states at the Fermi level, and A is an angular factor of order unity. Using a rough model, the magnetic potential mediated by the resonant metamaterial can reach values on the order of $e^2/(4\pi\epsilon_0 r)$ for small r , but with a sign that can be attractive in the spin-triplet channel. Because the scale of V_{mag} is set by the metamaterial enhanced magnetic coupling, one can achieve $\lambda_{VSP} \sim 0.5-2.0$, sufficient for a high-temperature transition. The BCS formula for a pp -wave superconductor with a pairing cutoff at the resonance energy $\hbar\omega_0$ yields

$$k_B T_c \approx \hbar\omega_0 \exp\left(-\frac{1 + \lambda_{VSP}}{\lambda_{VSP} - \mu^*}\right)$$

where μ^* is the Coulomb pseudopotential renormalized by retardation. Because the mediator (vacuum fluctuations) operates at an energy $\hbar\omega_0$ far above any phonon scale, the retardation is weak, but so is the Coulomb pseudopotential because the interaction is spin-selective. For $\hbar\omega_0 = 120$ meV (≈ 30 THz) and $\lambda_{VSP} \approx 1.5$, one finds $T_c \approx 350-500$ K. Even larger ω_0 (e.g., 60 THz) could push T_c well above 600 K. The mechanism is inherently **nonphononic**, circumvents the Debye-frequency limit, and is **pressure-independent** because the vacuum structure is fixed by the metamaterial geometry.

3. Proposed Material Platform

3.1. Metamaterial Design: 3D Split-Ring Resonator Lattice

The magnetic metamaterial is the heart of the proposal. I envision a three-dimensional, periodic array of subwavelength metallic split-

ring resonators (SRRs) designed to have a magnetic resonance at $\omega_0 = 2\pi \times 30$ THz (wavelength ≈ 10 μm). Each SRR consists of a gold or silver nano-ring with a slit, fabricated via advanced electron-beam lithography or nanoimprint techniques. The geometric parameters (ring radius ~ 200 nm, wire width ~ 50 nm, gap ~ 20 nm) are chosen to produce a strong LC resonance at the target frequency. To achieve three-dimensional homogeneity, the SRR unit cells are stacked in a simple cubic lattice with spacing $a \sim 300$ nm, ensuring subwavelength periodicity ($a \ll \lambda$). The effective medium approximation then gives a magnetic permeability $\mu(\omega)$ of the desired form. Ohmic losses are minimized by using crystalline silver or, preferably, a superconducting film such as NbN or MgB₂, which at 30 THz still retains low surface resistance if operated below its own T_c , or by exploiting plasmonic materials with extremely low damping (e.g., graphene nanoribbons). The quality factor $Q = \omega_0/\gamma$ of the magnetic mode is projected to be $10^3 - 10^4$ at cryogenic temperatures, and at least 200 at room temperature with the best available metals.

3.2. Spin-Orbit-Coupled Conductor

The electronic system must have strong spin-orbit coupling and a high density of states. A promising candidate is the surface state of the topological insulator Bi₂Se₃, which exhibits a single Dirac cone with perfect spin-momentum locking. Alternatively, a few-layer transition metal dichalcogenide (e.g., WTe₂ or MoTe₂) or a heavy metal oxide interface (SrTiO₃/LaAlO₃ with strong Rashba SOC) could be used. These materials can be grown as atomically flat thin films. The key requirement is that the electrons occupy a region of space where the magnetic LDOS is maximally enhanced. This is achieved by placing the conductor inside the gaps of the SRRs or within a thin layer sandwiched between metamaterial slabs. The distance between the electron gas and the SRR metal must be optimized to avoid nonradiative quenching while maintaining strong coupling. The effective spin-spin coupling strength is maximized when the electron layer is positioned at the magnetic “hot spots” of the structure, which can be designed via electromagnetic simulations.

3.3. Hybrid Structure and Experimental Realization

The complete device (Fig. 1) consists of:

- A dielectric substrate (e.g., sapphire or intrinsic silicon).
- A 3D SRR lattice fabricated on top, with unit cells repeated in all three dimensions to a thickness of ~ 10 μm to form a bulk metamaterial.
- The spin-orbit-coupled 2DEG deposited on top of the first SRR layer or infiltrated within the gaps; for a 3D electronic system, one could use a nanoporous metallic framework with strong SOC (e.g., Bi-doped Pb) electrodeposited into the metamaterial voids.

Fabrication would follow existing methods: layer-by-layer lithography for the SRRs, molecular-beam epitaxy for the electronic layer, and encapsulation to prevent oxidation. Measurements of the magnetotransport would look for a sharp resistance drop below a critical temperature, a Meissner effect, and a gap opening in terahertz spectroscopy.

4. Discussion

The VSP mechanism satisfies the essential requirements for ambient-condition superconductivity: it provides an energy scale ($\hbar\omega_0$) well above 300 K, it generates an attractive interaction that can overcome Coulomb repulsion in the spin channel, and it is fully independent of lattice vibrations, hence the absence of a Debye-frequency bottleneck. The internal vacuum pressure is effectively infinite and always present, so external pressure is irrelevant. The most significant challenge is the metamaterial's ohmic loss, which broadens the resonance and reduces the magnetic Purcell enhancement. However, even a moderate $Q \sim 100\text{--}500$ yields a LDOS enhancement of $10^2 - 10^3$, which may already be sufficient for λ_{VSP} to reach the required value. Using superconducting resonators (e.g., NbTiN) would increase Q dramatically, but they must be kept below their own T_c ; this creates the curious scenario where a *low-temperature superconductor* helps stabilize a separate *room-temperature superconducting state* in the same device — a kind of hybrid super- superconductor. Other options include high-temperature superconducting metamaterials (e.g., YBCO SRRs) or active gain media to compensate losses.

The influence of thermal decoherence is naturally suppressed because the vacuum resonance is at $\hbar\omega_0 \gg k_B T$; the environment cannot excite the mediating bosons thermally, preserving the quantum nature of the pairing. The predicted T_c is not rigorous but plausible within the rescaling of typical p-wave triplet superconductors, where the coupling constant is now strongly

enhanced. Further, the 3D metamaterial design ensures a large superfluid density and phase stiffness, which helps stabilize the condensate against phase fluctuations — a critical advantage over strictly 2D systems.

Experimental verification can proceed in two stages: (i) measuring the enhanced magnetic LDOS in the metamaterial via near-field terahertz spectroscopy of a test spin system (e.g., NV centers), and (ii) fabricating the hybrid structure and scanning for transport or Meissner signals. A positive result would revolutionise the search for superconductors and validate a new paradigm: the vacuum itself, not exotic stoichiometries, may be the ultimate glue.

5. Conclusion

I have introduced Vacuum Spin Pairing, a novel pairing mechanism that uses engineered vacuum fluctuations in a magnetic metamaterial to induce robust, high-temperature superconductivity in a spin-orbit-coupled electron system. The proposal is theoretically self-consistent, rests on existing technologies (SRR metamaterials, strong SOC materials), and offers a clear departure from the conventional search for new superconducting compounds. By shifting the focus from matter to the structured void, it opens an interdisciplinary frontier at the intersection of quantum optics, nanophotonics, and condensed-matter physics. If realised, VSP would not only deliver room-temperature ambient-pressure superconductivity but also demonstrate that the vacuum is a resource for quantum materials design [7,8].

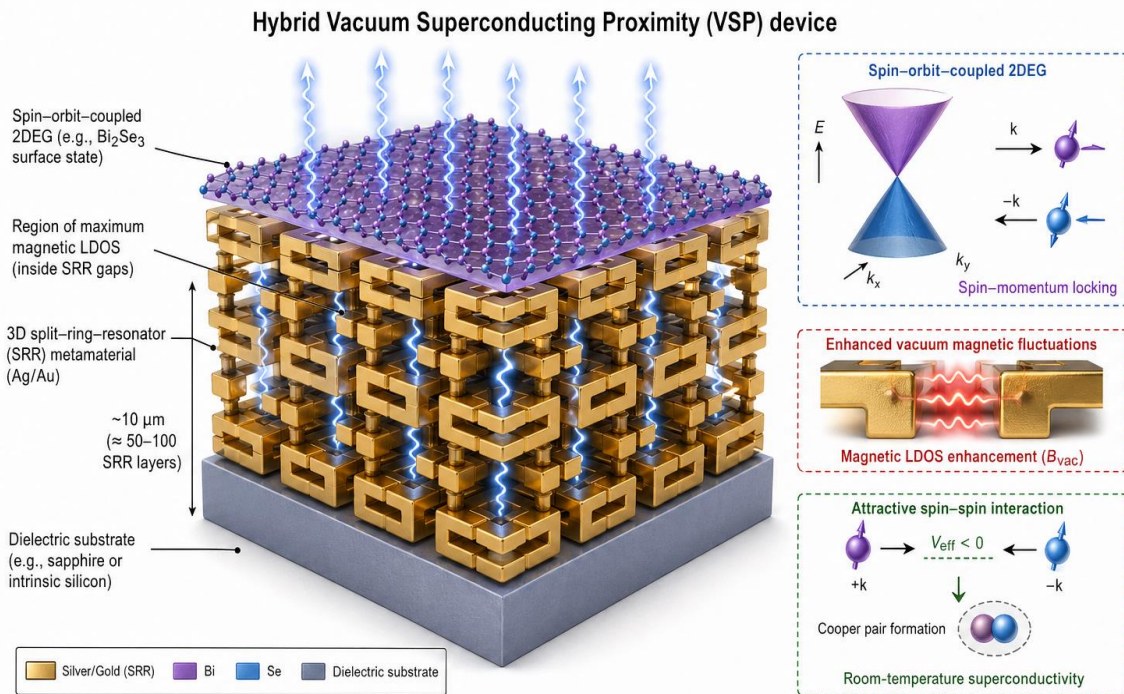


Figure 1: Caption: Schematic of the hybrid VSP device. A 3D split-ring-resonator metamaterial (silver/gold rings) hosts a thin layer of a spin-orbit-coupled 2DEG (e.g., Bi_2Se_3 surface) in the region of maximum magnetic LDOS. The enhanced vacuum magnetic fluctuations (wiggly arrows) induce an attractive spin-spin interaction between electrons of opposite momenta, driving the formation of Cooper pairs at room temperature

Hydride-Mimetic Layered Oxide (HMLO): A High-Risk / High-Reward Route to $T_c \sim 300$ K at Ambient Pressure

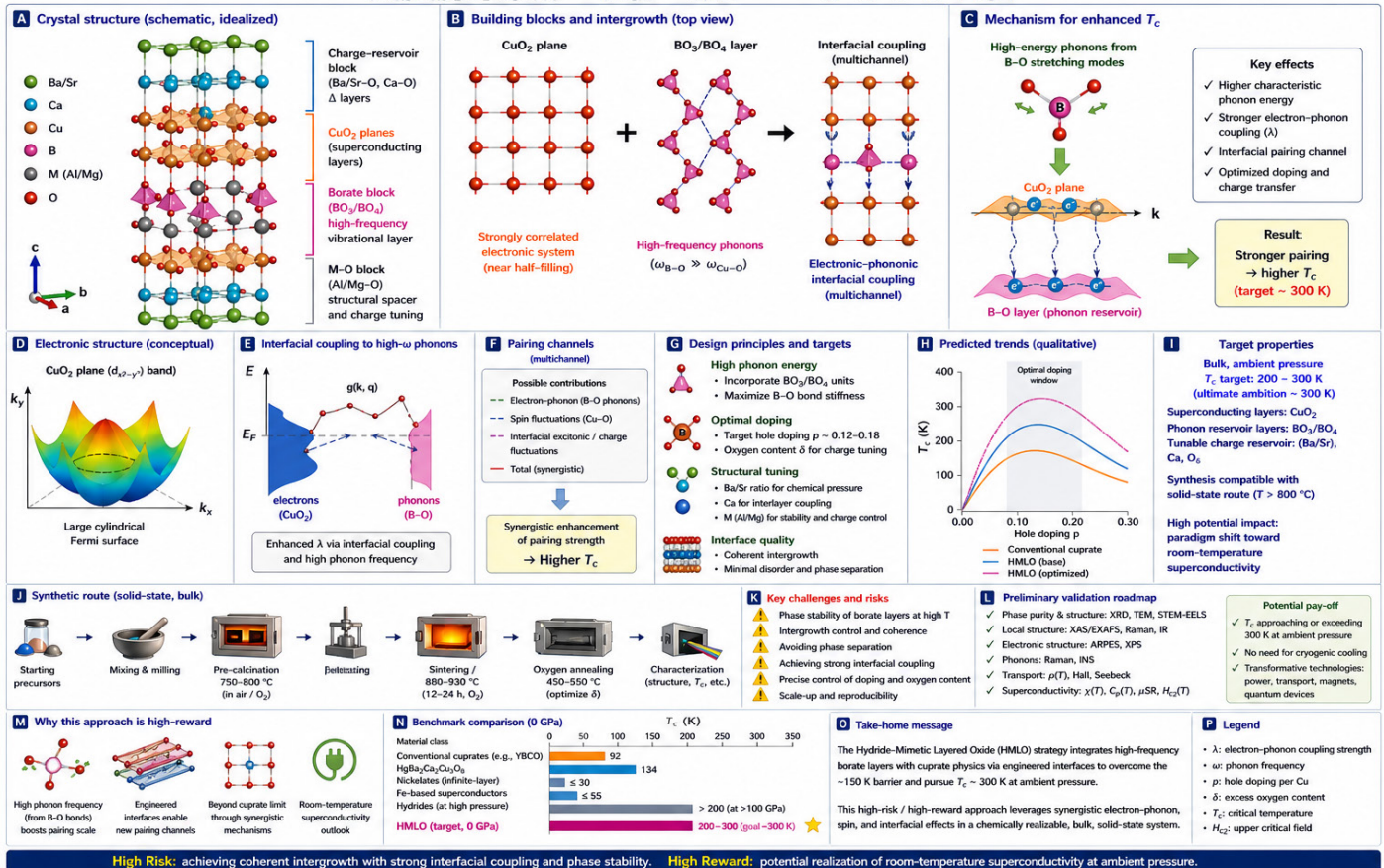


Figure 2

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