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$$\vec{b} = \langle a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n \rangle \in \mathbb{Q}^n \quad \text{and} \quad \vec{b}' = \langle a'_1, a'_2, \dots, a'_n \rangle \in \mathbb{Q}^n,$$

define the usual dot product $\vec{b} \cdot \vec{b}'$ by

$$\vec{b} \cdot \vec{b}' = a_1 a'_1 + a_2 a'_2 + \dots + a_n a'_n,$$

and set

$$\|\vec{b}\| = \sqrt{a_1^2 + a_2^2 + \dots + a_n^2}.$$

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$$(\vec{b}_1, \dots, \vec{b}_n)UV = (\vec{b}'_1, \dots, \vec{b}'_n)V = (\vec{b}_1, \dots, \vec{b}_n).$$

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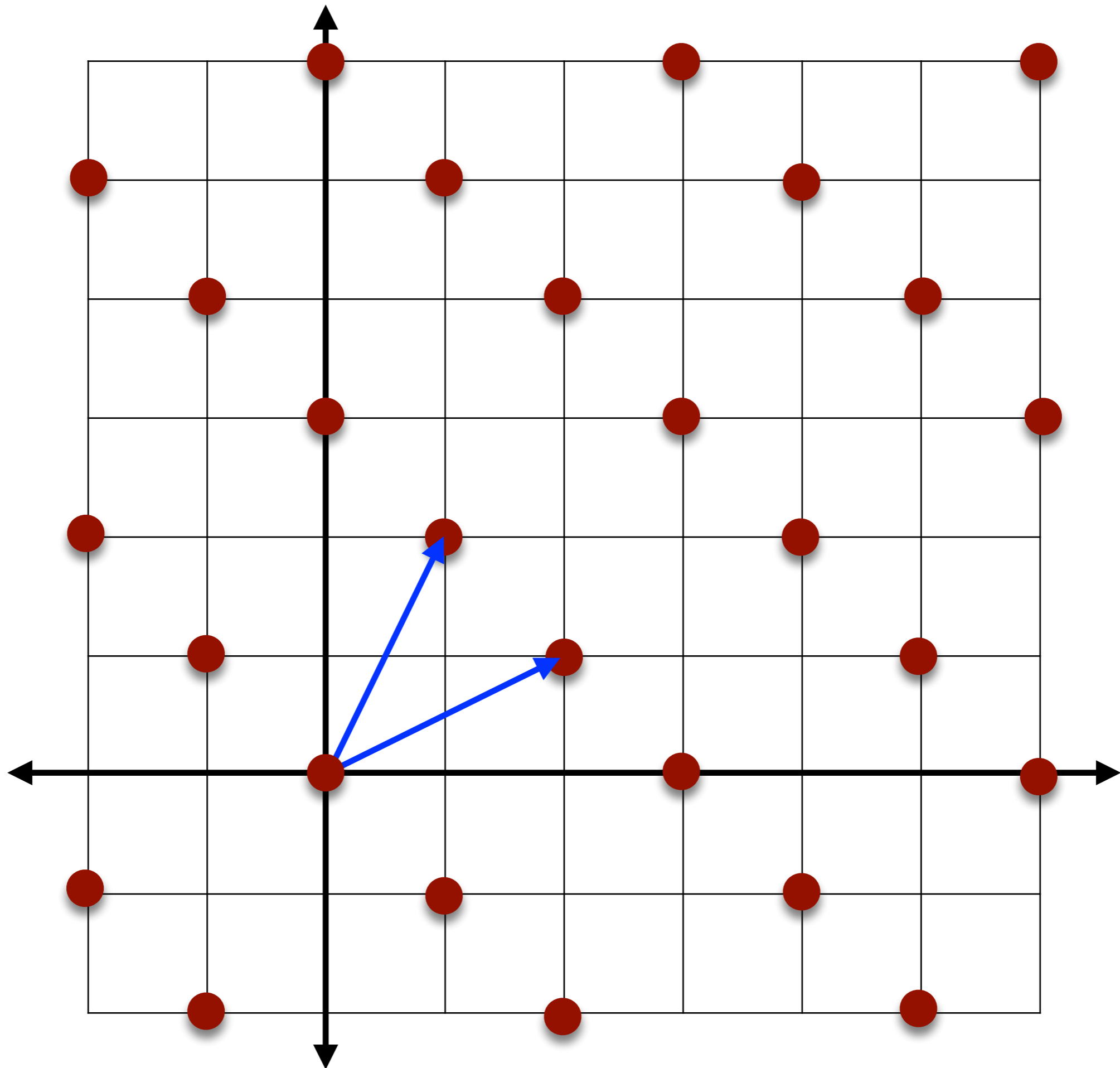
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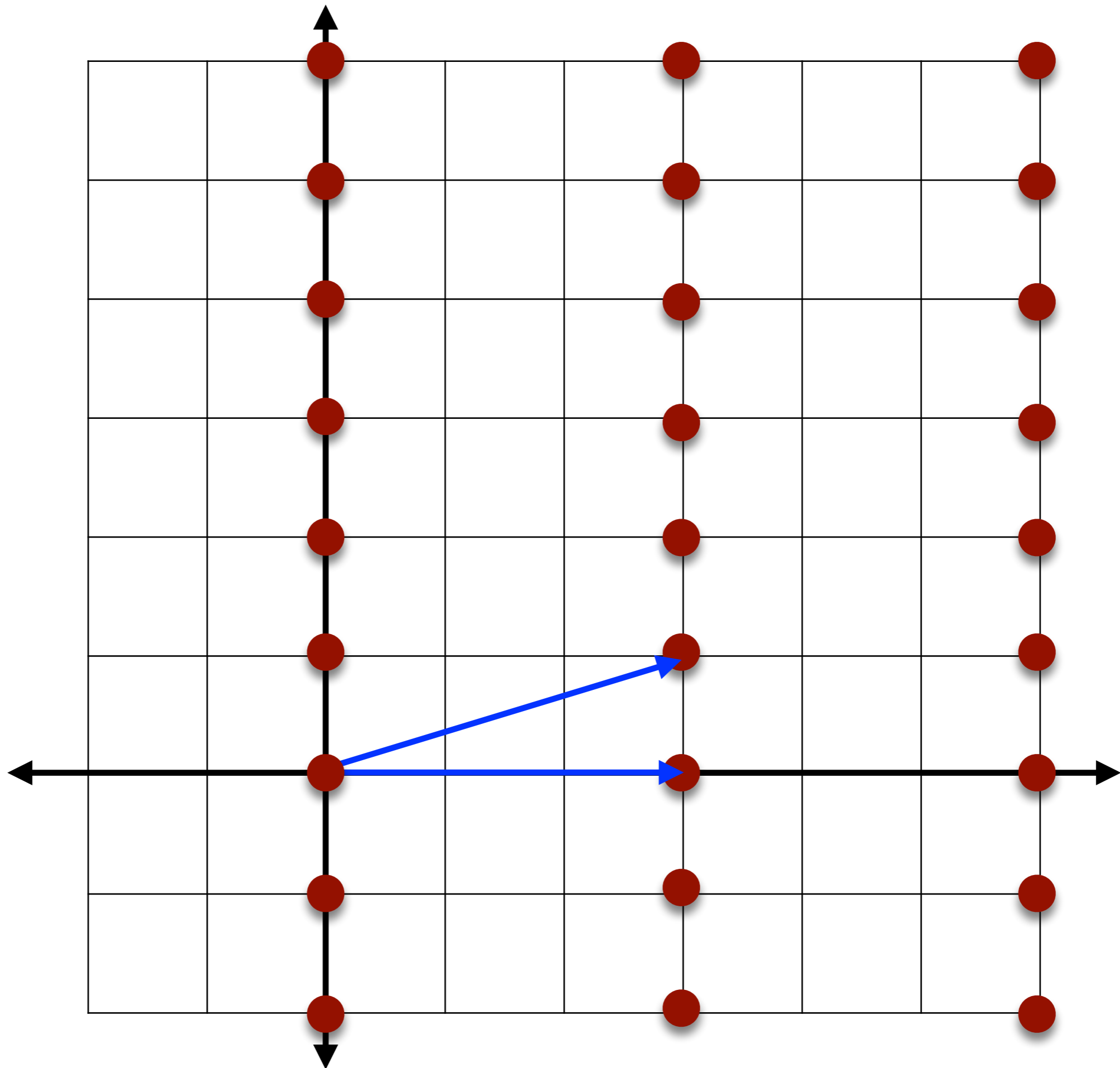
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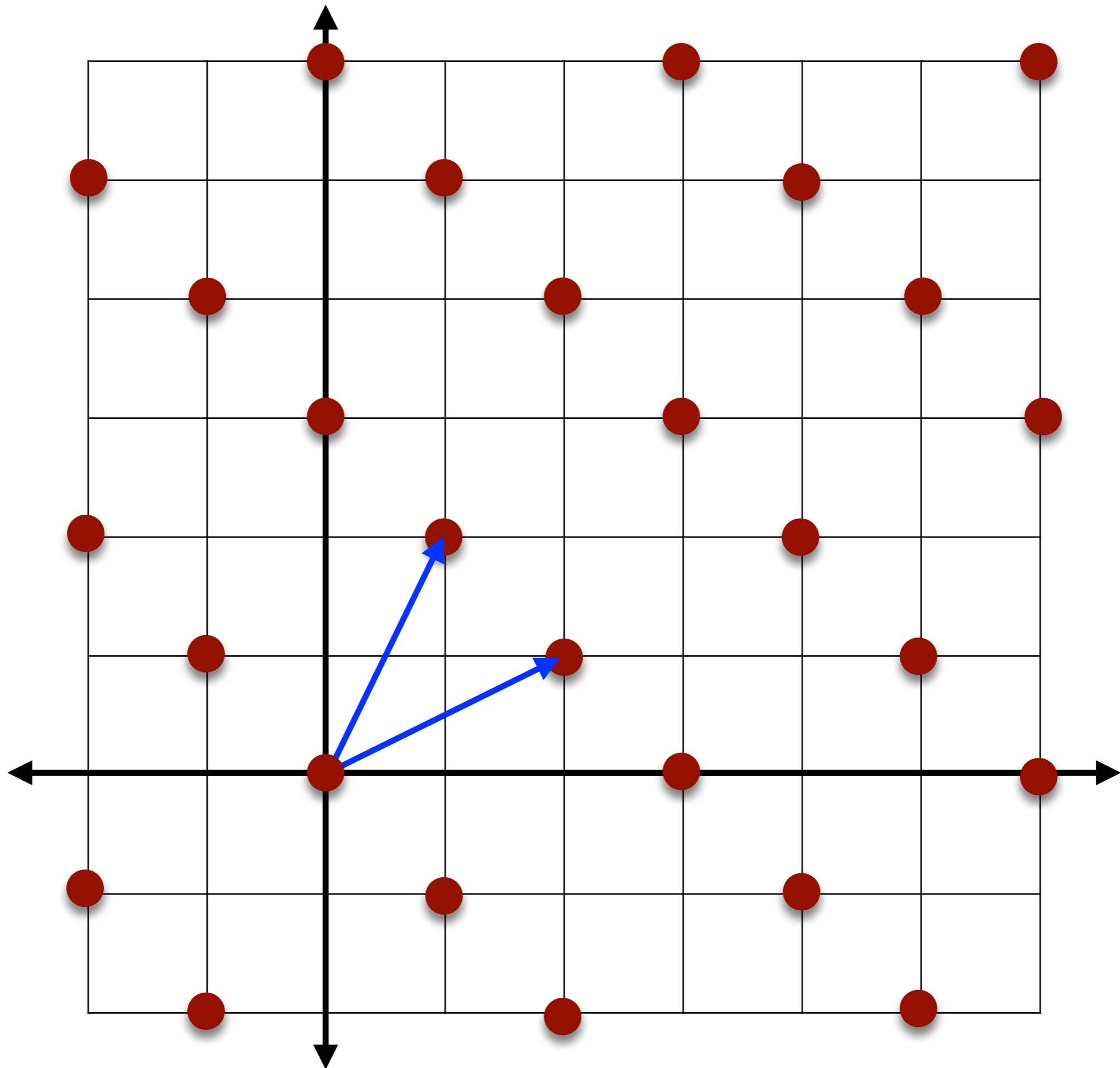
We set $\det \mathcal{L}$ to be this common value.

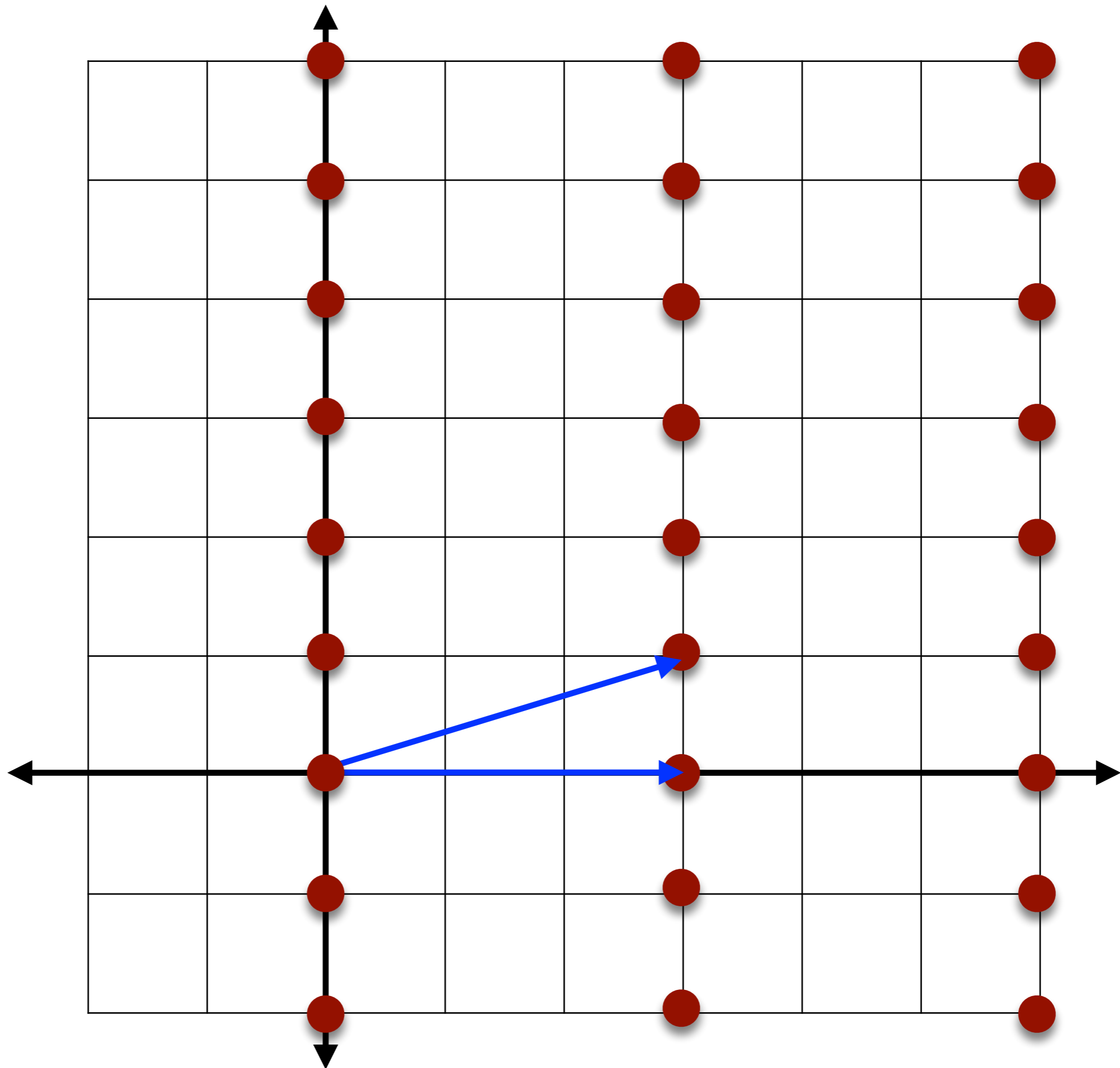
Example. In \mathbb{R}^2 , the lattice formed from the basis $\langle 1, 0 \rangle$ and $\langle 0, 1 \rangle$ is the same as the lattice formed from the basis $\langle 1, 0 \rangle$ and $\langle 1, 1 \rangle$. This can be seen geometrically and algebraically.

Example 2. The lattice \mathcal{L}_1 with basis $\langle 2, 1 \rangle$ and $\langle 1, 2 \rangle$ and the lattice \mathcal{L}_2 with basis $\langle 3, 0 \rangle$ and $\langle 3, 1 \rangle$ are such that $\det \mathcal{L}_1 = \det \mathcal{L}_2$. But the lattices are quite different.









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We set $\det \mathcal{L}$ to be this common value.

The Gram-Schmidt orthogonalization process

Define recursively

$$\vec{b}_i^* = \vec{b}_i - \sum_{j=1}^{i-1} \mu_{ij} \vec{b}_j^*, \quad \text{for } 1 \leq i \leq n,$$

where

$$\mu_{ij} = \mu_{i,j} = \frac{\vec{b}_i \cdot \vec{b}_j^*}{\vec{b}_j^* \cdot \vec{b}_j^*}, \quad \text{for } 1 \leq j < i \leq n.$$

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Then for each $i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$, the vectors $\vec{b}_1^*, \dots, \vec{b}_i^*$ span the same subspace of \mathbb{R}^n as $\vec{b}_1, \dots, \vec{b}_i$. In other words,

$$\begin{aligned} & \{a_1 \vec{b}_1^* + \dots + a_i \vec{b}_i^* : a_j \in \mathbb{R} \text{ for } 1 \leq j \leq i\} \\ &= \{a_1 \vec{b}_1 + \dots + a_i \vec{b}_i : a_j \in \mathbb{R} \text{ for } 1 \leq j \leq i\}. \end{aligned}$$

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Furthermore, the vectors $\vec{b}_1^*, \dots, \vec{b}_n^*$ are linearly independent (hence, non-zero) and pairwise orthogonal (i.e., for distinct i and j , we have $\vec{b}_i^* \cdot \vec{b}_j^* = 0$).

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$$\det \mathcal{L} \leq \|\vec{b}_1\| \|\vec{b}_2\| \cdots \|\vec{b}_n\|.$$

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Proof (in any dimensions). Column operations imply

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The inequality $\|\vec{b}_i^*\| \leq \|\vec{b}_i\|$ follows. 

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No one knows a polynomial time algorithm for finding $\vec{b} \in \mathcal{L}$ with $\|\vec{b}\|$ minimal, but it is not known to be NP-complete. Lagarias has, however, proved that the problem of finding a vector $\vec{b} \in \mathcal{L}$ which minimizes the maximal absolute value of a component is NP-hard.

$$\vec{b} \in \mathcal{L}, \vec{b} \neq \mathbf{0} \implies \|\vec{b}\| \geq \min\{\|\vec{b}_1^*\|, \|\vec{b}_2^*\|, \dots, \|\vec{b}_n^*\|\}$$

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$$(*) \quad \vec{b} \in \mathcal{L}, k \text{ as above} \implies \|\vec{b}\|^2 \geq \|\vec{b}_k^*\|^2$$